

JAY PAYTON
LISTE Basel | Booth 87

15 – 21 June 2026

The booth brings together four paintings, and a wallpaper installation designed by the artist. Payton's work contemplates the development of human experience through research into critical theory, technology, biology and a wide range of other subjects. By using both familiar and unusual mediums, his work navigates the theory of abstraction and how it can be visualized in the 21st century and beyond.

This particular presentation continues his investigation into the complex relationship that humans have established with violence and how it currently affects the human experience. The result is a compelling tension between radiance, chaos, and discovery.

In the work *Improvised Explosive Device (IED)* (2026), the steel spheres are not only used in ball-bearing systems—one of the key inventions of industrial modernity—but also in fragmentation bombs. Here, they are juxtaposed with ants and glue, creating a striking collision between biological and technological elements, natural processes and human violence. Payton's interest in technology echoes New York artist Gregory Green's investigations into power, information, and technological systems.

Who's The Leader of The Club That's Made for You and Me? M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E (...) (2026) is inspired by the psychological and physical complexities of engaging in war. This work borrows its title from not only the Mickey Mouse Clubhouse's theme song but more directly extracted from the closing scene of Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*.

Based on the title of Arthur Koestler's influential book, *Ghost in the Machine* (2026)'s composition echoes non-Western art and early human image-making, relying on a reduced set of elements and traces, including the artist's own sneaker footprints. In the upper section of the painting, a cluster of colored marks applied directly from the paint tube resembles a magnified view of digital pixels—as if an early human culture was attempting to represent a macro zoom of a technological image. One of Koestler's central arguments is that our technological and intellectual capacities have evolved far more rapidly than our emotional and social development, and so we're not able to manage the technological power we've invented.

On a broader geopolitical meditation, *Yubitsume* 指短 (2026) refers to a Japanese “finger shortening” practice. This ritual, today used by Yakuza, is made to atone for offenses and to show apology to another, by means of amputating portions of one's own finger. In Payton's painting, the Yubitsume's practice becomes a metaphor about how leaders in power or organizations seem to be willing to sacrifice the lives of their own people to maintain their covenant and prove their loyalty to each other's at the expense of people.

Payton's exploration of painting as a site of confrontation draws on multiple lineages within recent art history. His interest in entropy recalls Steven Parrino's treatment of abstract painting as a physical event, in which the stressing and assaulting of the canvas became a reflection on contemporary society's obsession with death. An anthropological concern likewise resonates with David Hammons's *Tarpaulin* and *Plastic* series, which evoke homelessness and the violence of street life in America. Jay Payton's work operates at the intersection of abstraction and critical thought, examining the capacity of painting to crystallize the intellectual, emotional, and material complexities of our world.



Booth 87
Messe Basel, Hall 1.1
Maulbeerstrasse / corner Riehenring 113,
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Opening hours:

- Tuesday, 16 June – Saturday, 20 June: 12 – 8 pm
- Sunday, 21 June: 11 am – 4 pm