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A Pixel Imperfect World
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Moveable Type is a Graduate, Peer-Reviewed Journal based in the Department of English at UCL.

A Pixel Imperfect World by Jennie Gilman
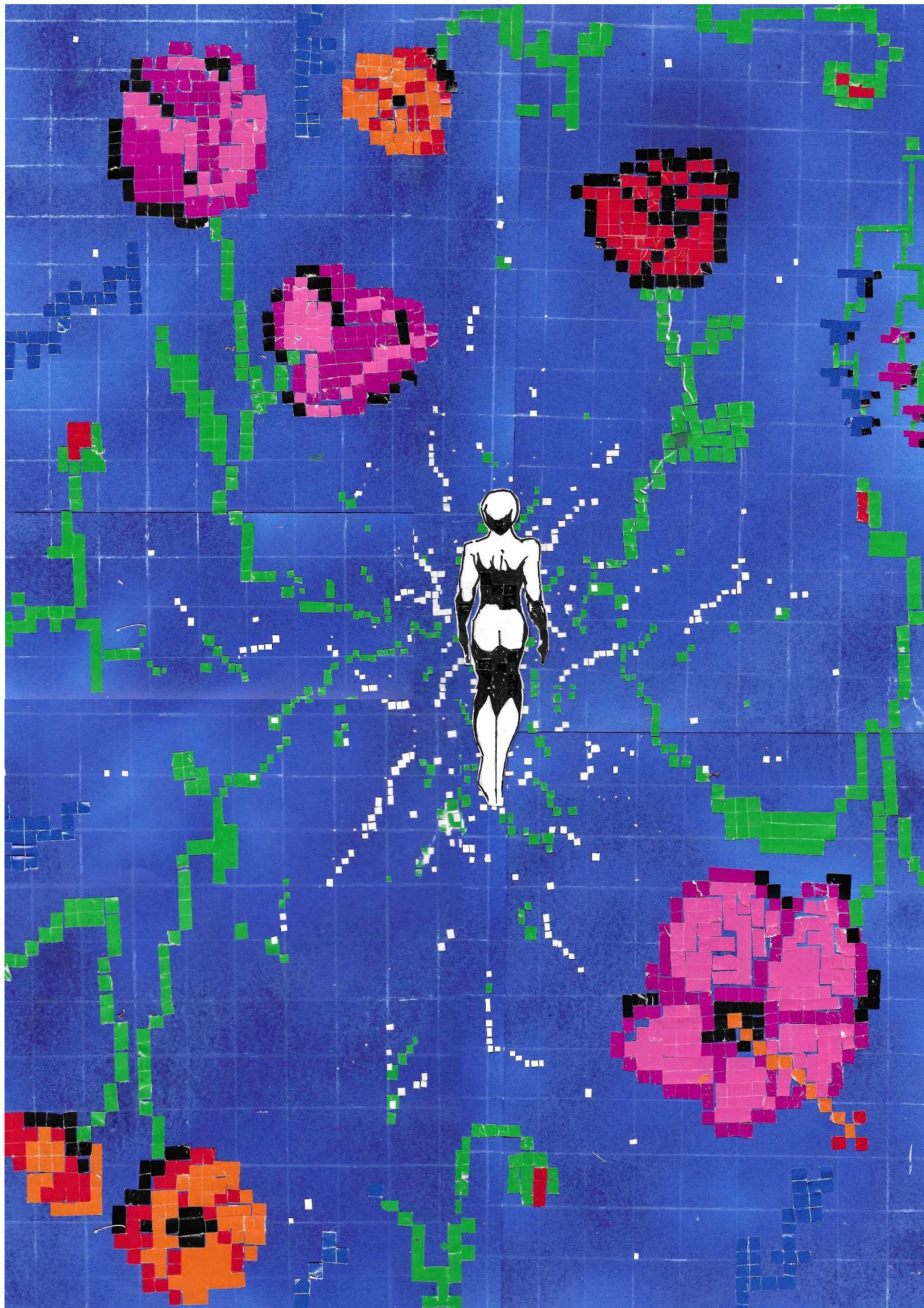
This piece, entitled "A Pixel Imperfect World", approaches the theme of 'unfeeling' through a character most feared for their unfeeling disposition, the cyborg. In this piece, the cyborg can be seen walking through a world of pixelated flowers and foliage. I like to think of the cyborg here as the creator of this natural world, an image of nature viewed from the perspective of a non-human machine. Though made up of pixels, the bricks of digital world-building and a definitively unnatural material, this artificial nature is undeniably beautiful. This challenges anthropocentric ideas of what constitutes "nature", "beauty" and "human", by blurring the boundary between nature and technology, just as the cyborg blurs the boundary between human and machine. This piece was inspired by my attempts to draw 3D images of "nature" in Tilt Brush, a 3D-painting Virtual Reality app. Despite my efforts, the results of my drawings of flowers, trees and natural landscapes in the VR world are absurdly unnatural. And yet in spite of this, they are beautiful. Taking this experience as its focus, I have used hand cut squares of different coloured paper and stuck these on individually to form mosaic shapes as flowers and foliage. This piece could have easily been produced as a digital illustration, with far more accurate results. But by taking an analogue approach to the digital material of the pixel, there is an imperfection to the pixels in the image, they are creased and wonky and at times disjointed. This gives a fallibility and "humanness" (though I tend to avoid terms like this which fall into humanist ideologies) to the digital world depicted here, further blurring the digital/natural binary transcended by the "unfeeling" cyborg.