

# Signal, Noise and Complexity as Poetic Vectors in Recent Generative Video Art

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## Abstract

This article surveys recent video art practices which employ generative artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning resources, distinguishing between three poetic vectors currently in evidence in the field. These creative directions concentrate on aspects of the signal, noise and complexity in such systems. These notions are proposed through the analysis of selected works of interest and the past repertoire of video art practices which they sustain ties with, while also answering to the *modus operandi* of AI models and issues relevant to “computational art”, as discussed by Abraham Moles, among others. A contrastive debate between these creative directions is elaborated, focusing on works by Refik Anadol, Casey Reas and Pierre Huyghe, as a way of highlighting distinctive characteristics of their recourse to AI models, mapping current artistic directions in exploration. On the final remarks, the role of artists as social mediators of these technologies is reflected upon.

**Keywords:** video art; generative artificial intelligence; machine learning; signal-to-noise ratio; complexity.

*Is there a term to express the moment where we accept error,  
accidents, doubt, non-negative or opposite things?*

Pierre Huyghe<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the last decade, with the popularization of Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) and the launch of commercial generative artificial intelligence (AI) models trained to generate images from prompts, machine learning and AI tools have prominently figured in the creative process of video artists. Since then, a significant repertoire of works and diverse approaches has emerged among those who choose to investigate the creative possibilities, limitations, and compromises issuing from these resources. In this context, such practices engage in (and occasionally incite) controversies regarding the potential risks, fallacies,

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<sup>1</sup> PCA-Stream, 2017.

biases, and questionable infrastructure behind these sophisticated technologies along with the economic, political, and cultural rhetoric associated with them.<sup>2</sup>

Given the context, one challenge faced by artists who employ these resources is that of ensuring that the poetic gesture contained in their artworks is not overshadowed by either the machines' technical prowess or by cultural controversies, with these pioneering artworks usually assuming the dimension of statements regarding the field of art practice and its possible directions. They thus outline a certain "game" to be played with AI in the artistic field, sometimes positioning technology as an ally in innovation, sometimes as an antagonist to be contained in order to safeguard what is presumed to be incalculable. Or, additionally, artworks may cast AI as an artifact to be liberated from its instrumental use: more generally, the debate over the adoption of "new technologies" in poetic creation is reinvigorated here – a polemic that, in the case of video art, dates back to its own origins.

Indeed, to overcome the veneer of novelty surrounding supposed computational "intelligence" and some of its chimeras, it is possible to describe generative AIs and machine learning (applied to audiovisual media) as sophisticated instances of digital signal processing and synthesis. This article adopts this approach to evaluate artists' forays into these interfaces between art and technology at such a "signaletic"<sup>3</sup> level. Therefore, at least initially, the ongoing controversies surrounding the extent to which AIs relate to notions of consciousness, agency, creativity, and the like can be sidestepped in favor of observing the actual uses of these systems through a careful investigation of how AIs are employed in video art, approaching it from the more practical (and less hermeneutic) aspects of artistic work. The expected outcome is that of a better understanding of these developments within the field's repertoire and poetic lines of investigation, emphasizing formal strategies of expression among the conceptual and philosophical repercussions also mobilized in these works.

To study video art at this "signaletic" level does not imply restricting oneself to mere technicalities, as such aspects direct our analysis to the formal processes and practices mobilized in video art through its own basic operations. As defined by the theorist of "cultural techniques" Bernhard Siegert (2015), media, at their operational and material (or "non-hermeneutic") level, are the substrates of our codes of semiotic distinction and transmission that not only convey culture and its dispositions of the world but also actively and fundamentally participate in its constitution, formalization, regulation, and articulation – processes which are

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<sup>2</sup> In a recent example, controversy surrounded a Christie's auction of "augmented intelligence" art, with signed petitions criticizing AI databases' use of copyrighted materials (Nelson, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> I employ this term found in Max Bense's *Kleine Aesthetik* (Bense, 2003), where Haroldo de Campos translates "Signalprozess" as "processo sinalético" (signaletic process), to refer to the dynamics, in a physical-energetic support, of information transmission and circulation in a communication (which Bense extends to aesthetics). The same term appears in Edgar Morin's "O Método 1: A Natureza da Natureza" (1977), in relation to "generative information": the signaletic level is its circulating form, the material instantiation that enables its propagation, its entry into communication circuits (and its susceptibility to noise).

also aesthetic. Among the primary distinctions involved in technical mediation, highlights Siegert, is that of signal-noise, in which the signal is culturally situated in the realm of the articulable and imbued with pattern and information (and eventually, meaning), while noise encompasses that which resists or disrupts symbolization, in defiance of cultural standards. Its own devaluation in the cultural code makes it, however, a possible source of new expressive forms, unforeseen in the repertoire, as Siegert claims via Serres (2007).

Also implicit in the signal-to-noise relationship are the primary dynamics of figure/ground and order/disorder in perception. Naming them as the matrix operations of his “aesthetic information theory,” semiologist Abraham Moles (1971, p. 25; 1978, p. 130) associated these structural (and structuring) tensions with the “dialectical” aspects of arts that depend on technical systems. In a topic also pertinent to Siegert, Moles further emphasizes how increasing degrees of semiotic complexity emerge when considering the non-fixed, subjective role of the observer and their repertoire in these basic distinctions. Signal, noise, and complexity thus emerged as relevant technical and aesthetic parameters in such debates, having particular relevance for thinking about media art.

Even before intertwining with the computational medium, it is clear that video art demonstrated from its beginnings an aptitude for working with such fundamental dynamics of technical culture, making of basic media operations its poetic processes: signal modulation and synthesis as well as the incorporation of noise figured as primary concerns among the concepts and practice developed by pioneering artists in the field, such as Nam June Paik (see *Electronic Art II*, 1968), Bill Viola (see *Information*, 1973) and the Vasulka couple (see *Noisefields*, 1974), among others. The issue of levels of complexity catalyzed by the play with the role of the observer and the inclusion of cultural and symbolic repertoires in a technical artwork (such as ecology, politics, gender, among others) were also central to the practice of artists who consolidated the field, such as Peter Weibel (see *Observation of the observation: uncertainty*, 1973), Martha Rosler (see *Semiotics of the kitchen*, 1975) and Steina Vasulka (see *The West*, 1983).

More than heuristic keywords to segmentate video art production, this study proposes that the notions of signal, noise, and complexity constitute three main axes of artistic investigation, or poetic vectors, effectively mobilized by the practice. In a heterogeneous field like video art, reflecting upon these vectors allows us to approach a large number of works and poetics based on the formal biases they share, allowing us to contrast notable axes of artistic investigation without claiming to exhaust all practices in the field. Suggesting a formal succession between recent artistic practices and the poetic repertoire already consolidated in video art in past decades, this study observes a continuity between works created using generative AI and machine learning and the different poetic dispositions associated with these vectors of creative practice.

This line of argument will be pursued through a contrastive analysis of certain video art pieces and poetic practices, in order to attest the maintenance and relevance of these constitutive axes of production even in the most recent developments in the field, in addition to qualifying different poetic strategies related to the employment of such “sophisticated” signal processing techniques. Furthermore, in addition to highlighting ways in which generative AIs have been incorporated into video art, to constitute and discern this inventory of works and poetic vectors allows for the detection of new forms that insinuate themselves in these productions, paving the way for speculating yet unexplored facets of the phenomenon.

In the following sections of this article, therefore, each of these three basic poetic vectors (signal, noise, and complexity) will be detailed, contrasted, and discussed based on a selection of video works and practices by artists who make use of generative AI and machine learning in their creative processes. A diverse range of productions (and AI models) will be covered, outlining their similarities and distinctions— without implying, for the moment, in their hierarchical ordering in terms of aesthetic quality, each being equally relevant to the proposed framework. In any case, in the pursuit of a certain didacticism and precision of scope, well-documented works or those more readily available were prioritized for analysis, as well as those with more significant formal elaboration and critical engagement – a bias that here results in a repertoire more geared toward veterans in the visual arts field. With these caveats in mind, the investigation now proceeds to detail and compare the proposed vectors through these artworks.

### **Signal – adapting parameters and navigating possibilities**

When dealing with new technologies, there are artists, such as digital glitch artists or Nam June Paik in electronic video art, who by default resort to technical artifacts and distortions as a way of surveying the innards of media. Ultimately, as Luciana Parisi and Stamatia Portanova describe, for these artists, “the accident shows how code can be productive of an aesthetic effect that results from uncertainty, random indeterminacy, or what goes against its own logic” (Parisi; Portanova, 2011, p. 2). In contrast, the authors highlight another creative axis, which involves a “performative conception” of systems, codes, and algorithms, in which what matters is to observe (and modulate) the machine in action, aiming to “extract or amplify the qualitative, organic sensations emerging from the aesthetic experience” (*ibid.*, p. 4).<sup>4</sup> These artists utilize technology without major interventions under the hood of its “black box”: as any user, they don’t hesitate in enacting the programs embedded

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<sup>4</sup> The authors critically review both poles of production, to then propose a third possibility, which calls for the “construction of complexity” (Parisi; Portanova, 2011, p. 20). The argument developed here echoes these reflections on digital aesthetics but avoids their hierarchization between the three modalities (as well as the associated rhetoric, which even at the time already inflated the “cognitive” capacities of machines).

within the machine—or they extend and specialize its applications, like specialists. In either case, there is an expectation that the mobilized system will work, that its technical protocols will be fulfilled, that certain purposes will be strictly followed. This is the poetic direction identified here as oriented toward the unimpeded articulation of the technical “signal,” making plain use of the functions in which generative AIs specialize in: data interpolation and extrapolation.

In electronic and digital systems, it is the signal, after all, that ensures the cohesive operation, control, calculation, and formatting of data – thus, unwarranted disruptions are avoided when an artistic project requires a certain degree of precision, control, or optimal performance. As an introductory example, the premise of the video art *Duck* (2023), by artist Rachel McLean, can be considered a prime example of how AI processes are used in this functional mode, requiring a utilitarian application of these technologies’ signal processing capabilities. It is a narrative work laden with VFX, shot entirely in chroma key, in which the artist portrays all the characters in the scene, as is typical in her works.

In *Duck*, these characters are iconic figures from cinema’s history, such as Marilyn Monroe and James Bond (and his celebrated performers), with deepfake technology being applied to blend MacLean’s face and performance with the celebrities’ features and voices. For the work and its interplay of reality and illusion to work, therefore, the code must fulfill its program, the “signaletic” process must function. Even though part of the fun lies in recognizing the artificiality of the effect and the lingering traces of MacLean in the performances, the suspension of disbelief is still suggested, encouraging the viewer to reflect upon the possibilities and limitations of the deepfake signals themselves, in addition to appreciating the interplay between gender and genre stereotypes mobilized by the artist’s performance.

The very choice of characters for the project, McLean emphasizes, was conditioned by the attempt to convincingly perform the “digital mask” effect, since employing a clear and distinct database repertoire like that of Hollywood celebrities facilitated the application of the extensive facial transformation VFX required by the artwork.<sup>5</sup> The challenge of making the technique work also involved collaboration with specialized technicians and researchers, a dynamic that highlights another characteristic of poetics that pursue the vector of the “signal” generated by AIs: whether aiming at visual attraction or criticism, these artworks ultimately provide the audience with a display of the capabilities of these technologies, sometimes bumping up against their limits, and sometimes even contributing to the improvement or expansion of their applications.

In other instances of this vector of production, it is sometimes the artists who position themselves as experts, customizing but not reinventing or breaking down systems, in order to

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<sup>5</sup> YaleBritishArt, 2024.

better utilize their signal processing capabilities: this is the case with Refik Anadol, known for large-scale installations with vibrantly colored animations and detailed textures on light panels. Anadol's immersive video installations fill large screens and sometimes entire rooms. To meet the demands of these projects, all the signal processing machinery supporting the project must operate at high capacity, thus requiring significant expertise and leaving no room for jerry-rigs. In a series of the artist's works, what is presented is a "stroll through the latent space" of the AI model, interpolating a selection of vectors from that space. Specializing in visualization and data interpretation, Anadol typically feeds a generative AI application with a specific database—for example, images of ocean coral or Renaissance paintings<sup>6</sup>—whose distinctive elements and patterns are stored and compressed by the system in what is called its "latent space."

From this sort of internal diagram that stores up key information (or "representations") from the database, once commanded, the computer can synthesize diverse images by extrapolating the patterns it has archived and parameterized. Furthermore, the system can generate variations of these images by interpolating values between adjacent zones of these internal representations, resulting in visually similar sequences that can be merged into a fluid animation. The result, then, is a continuous morph of images, an animation in which the artist can regulate certain parameters but cannot determine all the outputs in advance, generating what Anadol (2025) calls the machine's "memory," "hallucination," or "imagination." Also calling the results data sculpture and painting, or even "information narratives" and "a visualization of the invisible world of data," the artist sees the AI system as an ally and collaborator: both he and the machine specialize in the modulation of digital signals (Louisiana Channel, 2023).

Another artist, Jon Rafman, positions himself as a common "user" of generative AIs, utilizing available tools without major modifications, even preferring more accessible models (RISD, 2024). Thus, unlike Anadol's high-quality, fine-detailed visualizations, Rafman's animations use "poor" images, more riddled with artifacts and incongruities, in fact close to productions shared by users in online communities like "Cursed AI" on Facebook. If this focus on the most bizarre images and teratological forms that result from generative AIs seems to bring Rafman closer to a poetics that explores the "noise" of these systems, in a manifesto that accompanies his video *Counterfeit Poast* (2022) the artist circumscribes his poetics as the elaboration of prompts (command signals to be followed by the machine), affirming that with AIs the user rightfully assumes the place of a Creator, by "creating with the word" (Rafman, 2024).

Rafman's *Counterfeit Poast* is a blend of animation and photofilm using "precarious" techniques, conceived around the most disconcerting synthetic images that GANs can

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<sup>6</sup> Anadol, 2025.

generate, around which Rafman constructs disturbing narratives with odd characters. These characters narrate bizarre stories to the viewer, with scripts similar to “creepy pasta”-style posts that gain traction in social media back alleys. The artist compares this style to a form of digital decadence, in which the sublime and the abject blend (RISD, 2024). Just as the film’s images seem to emerge from the darkest and most incongruent corners of the generative AI system’s “latent space”, Rafman’s characters and their unstable identities are immersed in peculiar obsessions and perversions, entangled in niches, absurd conspiracies, disturbing memories, and useless accumulations of information. From its themes to its techniques, his work is proposed as a symptom – or signal – of the current times.

By using more accessible AI models and the everyday tool of words, Rafman’s works attempt to display possibilities executable today by any internet user with “a keyboard at hand and an idea their head” (to paraphrase Glauber Rocha). Even when he resorts to a certain amount of tinkering to animate characters and add more “detail” to images, Rafman does so with the aim of elevating the system’s limited results to the articulated form of audiovisual narrative, raising along these erratic artifacts to the signal level. While *Counterfeit Poast* incorporates the incongruent but still legible results produced by generative AI as functional images – Rafman claims to use GAN models trained via CLIP<sup>7</sup> and expands his results from low to high resolution – in the recent music video *Like the End* (2024) for James Blake, the artist stays up to date with the development of these technologies and their popular use, which double down on AI’s ability to achieve verisimilitude at any cost: cinematic and realistic shots are generated even from absurd concepts, such as a pug flying a drone.

As in his previous practice, in which the artist explored images from internet niches, trolls, shitposts, memes, and user-generated content on communities like Reddit – material that presumably became part of AIs’ learning database – the “signals” synthesized by AI easily conform to the principles which guide his poetics. The process echoes the practice that Gene Youngblood (1970) coined, back in the 1970s, as a “cybernetic cinema,” in which certain stages of creating an audiovisual work began to be relegated to the computer and its signal processing capabilities. If, back then, this computer was a *tabula rasa* to be programmed from scratch, today it is a pile of files and data detritus from the networks that traverse it, with artists like Rafman seeking to excavate this imaginary compost.

Recent productions by artist Hito Steyerl have followed an approach which is also close to cybernetic cinema, with videos that adopt a cinematic format through the montage of AI-generated shots and the editing of a soundtrack with music and dialogue. Although Antonio Somaini (2022) regards them as enacting a poetics of “altered states” of the machine, in the case of the production choices that concern us here, it is possible to understand how the videos

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<sup>7</sup> *Contrastive Language Image Pretraining*.

*Leonardo's Submarine* (2019) and *This is the Future* (2019) remain at the level of a poetics of the generative “signal”, seeking for abstractions and extrapolations that are still within the system’s standard functions (next-frame prediction algorithms) within an articulated audiovisual format. Without interfering with the AIs’ overall performance, Steyerl’s approach in these videos (the first one also has a VR version) is to navigate the visual possibilities and limitations of the generative AIs which are already built into their own “program”: the interpolation and customization of the database, along with the prediction of image sequences.

Steyerl, who has theorized about the value of “poor” images and criticized the technocratic provenance of AI (Steyerl, 2013; 2023), seeks to resolve the apparent contradiction of resorting to these sophisticated processes (even collaborating with an external team for the videos) by attempting to formulate a “countercommunication” practice in relation to the hegemonic uses of technology. The intention is clear in the ironic title of “This is the Future” and in its rhetorical montage device, in which, at a given moment, a cut transports the viewer from the machine’s fabrications directly to the rawness of reality, presenting footage of anti-immigration demonstrations in Germany, in addition to constantly referring to the present and addressing the spectator, who throughout the video listens to a monologue by the character Heja, an imaginary AI agent.

Meanwhile, *Leonardo's Submarine* seeks to offer a counter-image of the relationship between art and contemporary technology: it juxtaposes the dubious homage of a technology company named after Leonardo da Vinci with Leonardo’s own intentions to withhold the publication of his sketches for a submarine, hoping to protect his idea from the bellicosity of the society of his time. The video tells this story amid AI-generated underwater imagery, in a curious connection to da Vinci, who conducted numerous technical studies to represent the turbulence of water via drawings (Siegert, 2015). Steyerl’s videos also display a certain fascination with images of nature synthesized (and drawn) by computers, investing in the speculative potential of the machine’s signaletic operations, thereby envisioning a more utopian intertwining between the natural and the artificial, aimed at the fabrication of alternative combinations.

Taking up the metaphor implicitly present in the way neural networks generate images from input signals named “seeds,” the metamorphic imagery of Steyerl’s “futuristic” flowers which populate *This Is the Future* – one of which would be capable of “poisoning autocrats” – seems to enact a return to the metaphor of the “blue flower in the field of technology,” postulated by Walter Benjamin in his moment of greatest enthusiasm for cinema (Hansen, 1987): Steyerl’s poetics flirts with the imaginative capacities of the synthetic images in these videos, finding in their speculative potential openings for more fruitful relationships with technology, “optimistic” insofar as they can be imagined in the present.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> 180 Facts, 2021.

In contrast, in other poetics which focus more on the noise of technology, it is the thorns and parasites of these “flowers” that matter. In them, artists focus on the materiality and unforeseen aspects of signaletic processes, their imperfections, roughness, and openness to interference. As highlighted below, in a more unsettling, disjunctive, and intense contact with the medium, by sabotaging circuits and inverting the signals of what is valuable in their operation, these practices instigate and amplify failures and deviations in technology’s (mal)functioning.

### **Noise – sabotage and specters of failure**

Statements by artist and programmer Casey Reas are didactic in discerning a poetic vector which focuses on the technical noise of generative AI applied to visual creation: “some artists seek and desire fidelity, while others seek a specific kind of distortion” (Reas, 2019, p. 34). More than the (successful) application of the technology, what matters to the latter are the disturbances and deviations instigated in the execution of its programs. Unlike the usual artifacts found at the user level of these systems (as seen in Rafman), poetics that follow the path of distortion like Reas’s require interventions and short-circuits in the workflow they establish with artificial intelligence. The focus is on “coaxing unexpected images from latent space” (*ibid.*, p. 11) – whether by force or by jerry-rigging the machine.

Rather than positioning himself as an expert who collaborates with the software, Reas claims not to want to cede his authorship to an external mechanism, using loopholes and flaws as openings for reconfiguring the system, or at least its visual outputs. In these cases, then, the artist assumes the attitude of a kind of expert nemesis to the synthesis program. This dynamic duplicates that found in the type of network Reas uses in a series of works: so-called GANs (Generative Adversarial Networks), composed of an image “generator” and a “discriminator” that judges the results of the former, self-regulating until the desired results are achieved. As the artist explains, if “for the machine learning researcher, the goal of training a GAN is to compare the fidelity of the decoded image in relation to the original images in the training data” (*ibid.*, p. 31), an artist may not only desire discrepancies between the two but may also seek to amplify them.

This occurs, for instance, in the video series *Compressed Cinema* (2020): in it, Reas interferes with the initial input of a GAN network, not only by handpicking a database that combines stills from narrative and abstract films, but also by enlarging and cropping some of these images to ensure greater diversity in the material the system analyzes, leading to more imprecise results. Furthermore, the amount of material fed to the system is also regulated to provide sufficient data for the network to synthesize more cohesive or more amorphous images when programmed to perform a “walk” through its latent space, whose parameters of cohesion Reas also drives up to threshold points.

The series explores the “noise” of this system which, forced to operate suboptimally, accumulates anomalies in its output signals. Reas not only starts with low-quality images but also amplifies them in a noisy way to compose the videos, without generating higher-definition versions after a further pass through the AI (the path Rafman appears to follow). As Reas (2019) points out, in his videos, his AI output imagery only goes through classic filters of magnification, blur, and visual noise, which keeps the final visuals fuzzy in their contours but with textures that reinforce perceptual deviations for the viewer—“pareidolia,” or visual pattern hallucinations, is thus reinforced.

By weaving in Jan St. Werner’s atmospheric drone and electronic noise tracks in these works, Reas amplifies feelings of uncertainty, resonating along with the videos’ ambiguous titles, which juxtapose “Untitled” with a sample of vague dialogue and the work’s number in the series, for example, *Untitled 2 (Kiss Me)* (2020). Without dialogue or characters, these works result in metamorphic collages of low-resolution, shaky images with occasional photorealistic elements, in some cases in the black-and-white of old films and in others with colors within an organic spectrum. It’s a protean mode of abstraction, composed of figures that never stabilize or stand out from their backgrounds, existing within a low signal-to-noise ratio.

This *collage* aspect, along with Reas’s use of sample images by experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage to compose his database (a filmmaker known for his interferences with photographic media to generate abstractions), reinforce the connection of his poetics to previous repertoires of the audiovisual arts. Another procedure used in these works focused on noisy signals re-connects to one of the most basic repertoires of video art and generative art: feedback, which stimulates chaotic dynamics in signal processing, amplifying noise (as in microphone feedback). Amplified and self-resonant, in such processes noise becomes raw material for image transformations, as well as revealing deeper layers of the data processing of these systems – which, through deviations and disturbances, demonstrate their lability.

The amplification of internal noise, in addition to damaging signal structure, can reveal limitations, particularities, and the intrinsic logic of technical supports, as occurs with feedback in electronic video – a dynamic which researcher Arid Fetveit (2013) terms “media-specific” noise, because it emphasizes the materiality of a given medium. In the case of generative AI, this exploitation of noise takes on an even more revealing role in the system’s mechanisms, since in GANs and data diffusion models, image synthesis itself involves (and removes) noise throughout almost its entire image-making process.

In diffusion models, the training “signals” are first immersed in visual noise – that is, their structures are diffused into random data - with the next stage of image synthesis filtering this block of noise toward distinct (“learned”) patterns, much like sculpting a figure from a shapeless block of marble (Briz, 2023). In GANs, the process is more like trial-and-error (Reas, 2019): the generating part of the model progressively filters out synthetic noise to arrive at a target

image that the “discriminating” part of the system can approve, on a loop that ultimately improves the generated images relative to the program’s target signal (or prompt).

While poorly trained discriminators and generators are sufficient to obtain noisy results in GANs, exploiting the noise in diffusion models requires more strategic sabotage, a hacker-like approach pursued by artist Eryk Salvaggio. In the videos *Beyond Response* (2023) and *Sensual Noise* (2023), the artist introduces prompts into the system that aim to incite a short circuit logic and make the program fail: his commands request human forms, such as hands, which the models were known to have difficulty generating realistically; and they also call for “sensual noise”, a target devised to crash the system and generate anomalous results, since diffusion models are designed to filter out both noise and erotic images during their signal processing, with Salvaggio finding ways to coax abstract, haptic imagery from the program.

In another of his works, the video essay *Flowers Blooming Backwards into Noise* (2023), noise once again figures as a key tool. Seeking to expose and deconstruct the internal logic of generative AI models, the video revisits the trope of images of synthetic plants. Instead of blossoming into new morphologies, as in Steyerl, the artist regresses them back into the visual noise from which they have risen from in order to explain the machine’s operations. Contrasting with the poetics of the “signal” (and command prompts), the work’s narration asserts that, in the use of AIs, what occurs is not a magical and demiurgic creation from words, but rather a statistical operation from random data.

For the artist, this is not merely a game of playing with these loopholes, but rather an attempt to sabotage the machine’s internal logic and expose its flaws and blind spots. The fact that AIs incorporate noise is a cultural omen for Salvaggio, who claims to seek an “antidote to the chaos” of the contemporary media ecosystem, given that “the challenge of this Age of Noise is to find and preserve meaning” (Salvaggio, 2024), thereby justifying the hermeneutic and prescriptive stance of his poetics. Like Reas, Salvaggio does not seek to collaborate with the machine: to create, he maintains, it is necessary to “contort” the system, and its noises, in favor of artistic intention, which implies demystifying the “black box” and distorting its built-in programs, just as Flusser (1985) prescribed regarding creative processes with technical means.

It is possible, however, to utilize visual noise in a way distinct from antagonism, in which the active presence of noise in the system (rather than its use behind the scenes, as in AIs) in itself assumes a generative value. The aesthetic investigation of this possibility is reminiscent of dynamics present in the early days of video art and computer art, such as the “statistical” abstraction mobilized by artist and former radar engineer Karl Otto Götz, who was inspired by electronic “rasters” (a technique for scanning and rendering electronic images that preceded the television screen) to generate images that were precursors to pixel art. Composed out of square dots, stipulated via equations and hand-inscribed into a support, he called these

images “statistical-metric modulations”, positive-negative textures, and compositions of superfields of density (ko-goetz.de, 2025).

A short-circuit between order and disorder, micro- and macrostructures, the results – whose countless permutations Götz captured in the “low resolution” of Super 8 (as video output from a computer was not yet feasible) – resemble the patterns seen today in QR codes or static on televisions. Critic Sven Beckstette (2009) calls them “controlled white noise” and “productive image disturbances”, noting Götz’s influence on Nam June Paik, who would soon forge the links between video art and an affirmative visual noise within his practice. It can be stated that, through aesthetic investigation, Götz’s experiments anticipate the logic of data diffusion processes for image generation, the techniques that today underpins generative AI processes such as Stable Diffusion models: in the 1960s, the artist carried out a series of statistical “degradations” of images through incremental steps of random pixelation, ranging from discernible figures to indistinct visual noise, as reported by Abraham Moles (1971, p. 29).

Such an entropic process, as visually displayed, could also be viewed backwards, creating the impression of a form emerging from background noise, thus pointing to the latent two-way street in digital data processing. As former engineer Moles already knew, every analysis (and cryptography) machine “can also serve as a synthesis machine” (*ibid.*, p. 95), further emphasizing that the progressive destruction of “messages” in random data can serve as a method for learning the minimal patterns (autocorrelations) that compose them, since these are the elements that require the most noise to be degraded.<sup>9</sup> Injecting noise into a system would therefore be a way to arrive at such “genetic” structures of the forms organized in an image, as Götz and engineers detected.

Gradually, electronic and digital video technologies formalized their own noise-based “generative” method, with white noise generators in video synthesizers quickly consolidating themselves as plug-ins and algorithms (such as fractal and Perlin noise) in software applications for creatives – relevant predecessors of the instrumentalization of noise currently enacted in generative AI and its current integration into contemporary video art poetics. These corrosive-generative aspects of noise are stressed in recent works by artist Rainier Kohlberger, who, after synthesizing noisy images and sounds for his live performances (using software such as Pure Data), began employing the more computationally intensive processes of machine learning in works that transition between cinema, music videos, and live AV.

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<sup>9</sup> From the broader perspective of media archaeology and cultural techniques, Siegert (2015, p. 25) also notes how, depending on contexts of implementation, the same techniques of control and construction can equally serve as techniques of disorder and destruction (and vice versa). Friderich Kittler (2012, p. 120) explains that the apparent reversal of entropic processes is a constitutive phase of technical media: analog photography, he highlights, took advantage of the “corrosive” capacity of light (which degraded paintings) to burn negatives and then generate visual reproductions from their inversion.

In *Emergence Collapse* (2021), a music video for a track by electroacoustic composer Jung An Tagen that also serves as a showcase for the duo's live performances, the viewer is confronted with a saturated and malfunctioning audiovisual system. Amidst noisy, discordant signals, diverse and multicolored patches accumulate in the images, suggesting mere traces of confusing structures that seem to melt and fade. The effects resemble a synthesized version of video datamosh effects, with abrupt compositional shifts in which elements blend their colors and textures. No form holds up in this noisy, pulsating visual magma, but patterns always suggest themselves before disintegrating, in a short-circuit between emergence and collapse.

As Kohlberger explains (Tone Glow, 2021), his synthetic images come from a database composed of his previous visual practice, where he would begin with visual noise (such as Perlin noise) and then pass it through various filters to obtain moving images, thus enabling his neural network system to learn to replicate the chaotic and formless visuality of this usually neutralized and purified element of the output "signal" of these systems. Kohlberger's poetics – even before instrumentalizing noise to reveal the internal mechanisms of systems or placing these under scrutiny – seeks to make of noise an output and bring it into perception, assuming that "everything new is noisy," with noise bringing with it the "promise of maximal indeterminacy" (It's Nice That, 2016), having it erupt in his works as a generator of stimuli.

Philosophically, this approach is similar to the rhetoric of Michel Serres (1995; 2007), who, inspired by cybernetics in the 1970s, rethought the role of noise in communication and repositioned it from being an interference (parasitic or invading a system) to recognizing it as a source of difference, multiplicity, or chaos, out of which orders and patterns would be the result of regulated rectifications and filtering. This is what Kohlberger, who directly cites Serres in his work, finds in the noise internal to generative imagery, which his works externalize – without neglecting the potentially negative aspect of their disruptive nature. As the title "Emergence Collapse" already indicates, his noisy poetics operates on the border between failure and the "productive disturbance" of the signalitics of generative AI.

While Kohlberger makes stylized interventions in the machine learning process and Salvaggio makes more conceptual hacks in the use of AI, there is a more structural interference technique in generative AI processing, developed and explored by other artists. Less "artisanal" than Reas's process, this is the case of "neural glitch", a technique developed by Quasimondo/Mario Klingemann, in which the artist forces a GAN network trained for one type of task to perform another, or connects two divergent models, resulting in inconsistent and inaccurate output signals (Klingemann, 2018). In a programmatic implementation of the process, in the video *What I saw before the darkness I will not forget* (2019), attributed to the user AI Told Me, what is seen is described as a face generated by a neural network, whose nodes (or "neurons") are turned off one by one, resulting in progressive degradation of the visual signal, in a haunting animation of the figure's "death." The piece renews Götz's digital corrosion studies

for the age of neural networks: the cumulatively improved signal of generative AI regresses down to a zero degree of information.

Between Kohlberger's practice and "neural glitch," one observes a tendency for noise, once assumed as a poetic vector, to lead to works that sometimes saturate and sometimes exhaust the mediation channel, occurring between the excess that jams the system and the failure that corrupts the fabrication of data. Less playful and more Luddite, these artists jam the systems and signals they come into contact with, in order to explore states of failure. In the poetic axis that addresses complexity, a strategy of curation and semantic reverberation stands out, in works less focused on making machines work or fail than on inserting them into a network of multiple viewpoints and entry points. Open to unforeseen events, displacements, and resignifications, these artists' practice not coincidentally turns to the installation format and curatorial approaches in their use of artificial intelligence.

### **Complexity – contingency and other systems**

While the poetic vectors of signal and noise are driven towards the performance and failures of generative AI systems, in the vector that will be described as focused on complexity it is the relationship of AIs with other systems and points of view that gains relevance in artworks. In them, in short, AIs are confronted with real-world (and historical) problems, raising a dilemma inherent to the notion of intelligent systems that, adopting an analysis by poet and writer Stefan Themerson (1974), can be identified as the conflict between "logic, labels, and flesh" – that is, between the demands of rational formalism, the limits of language, and the dynamics of reality that exceed the categories of both.

Well-versed in cybernetics, Themerson first articulated his hesitations towards it in a speculative, existentialist essay from 1972, in which he envisioned the possibility of the creation of a "super-intelligent" machine based on neural networks. Through a dialogue between two characters (a scientist-general and the author's alter-ego), the text quickly raises questions about the system that prove prescient about the limits of generative AIs and LLMs.<sup>10</sup> His alter-ego quickly questions the provenance of the "notions" embedded in the machine, warning the scientist-general of the risk involved in feeding it with concepts that are supposedly universal but are, in fact, based on language – and thus compromised by specific viewpoints, historical-cultural biases, and respective belief systems.

Ahead of his time – or, at least, up to date on the philosophy of the critique of language – Themerson demonstrated his awareness of the limits (and flaws) not only of formal logic, but also of the conceptual slippages and semantic inheritances of words. Considering this culturally biased machine, which starts from a world pre-processed by humans and their labels

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<sup>10</sup> Large Language Models.

to climb to the supposed “top” of the intellectual chain (symbolic processing) with the help of the “ladder” of the values and biases acquired and stimulated during its training, Themerson speculated what would happen if this ladder were removed. There would be an opportunity to allow the machine “to react non-linguistically to the non-verbal events of the world” (*idem*, 1972, p. 23), thus conceiving of a radically “unsupervised” form of learning.

The author also proposed another way to address biases in the system’s learning: providing a second “ladder” for the machine, one that would allow it to return from symbolic processing, and its rigidly confined to categories, back to the wide ambiguities of raw reality. As if falling from a paradise of sterile data to re-immense itself in a chaotic world, the system speculated by Themerson would forgo preprocessed, predictable, and controllable values to cope with an existence more vulnerable to the uncertain and the unknown, as well as being more aware of its program’s limitations in the face of the complexity of reality. The works presented below propose poetic exercises that instigate complexities similar to the issues addressed by Themerson, by intervening at the crossroads between “logic, labels, and flesh” where generative AI, as a cultural technique, inhabits.

The first of these works can be introduced based on another excerpt from the author’s essay: in it, his alter ego discerns between two epistemic paths a system can follow in order to identify and classify flowers, their shapes, and their colors. The first approach (universal and fundamental), he argues, would aim at the chance to discover a fundamental rule and thus arrive at unchanging structures; the second approach (local and social) would first immerse itself in the “chameleon-like, inconstant, and variable” conditions of the historical-geographical world” (*ibid.*, p. 48) – the metamorphic images of generative AIs, which search for underlying patterns in data collected from the world and culture, seem to be caught up in both possibilities at once.

The tension between these categories, following the trope of flower images analyzed and synthesized by computers, emerges in Giselle Beiguelman’s exhibitions *Botannica Tirannica* (2022) and *Venenosas, nocivas e suspeitas, (Poisonous, Noxious, and Suspicious,* 2025). As the titles already indicate (the double N in the former presumably comes from Neural Network), the artworks in these exhibitions not only criticize the biases and prejudices that AIs reproduce but also reflect upon those embedded in language itself, as an active part of the “media ecology” in which generative AIs, understood as cultural data-processing techniques, find themselves entangled.

The theme that unites these multimedia installations (which include videos of images generated by GANs) is that of denouncing racist, colonial, and misogynistic legacies still present in the colloquial and scientific nomenclature of various plant species. And just as language (and its sociocultural provenance) comes to imbue plants which are alien to it with such stigmas, the machines fed by these databases also absorb such offensive categories, replicating and amplifying them with their operations.

In the videos included in the *Botannica Tirannica* exhibition, displayed on CRT TVs amidst real plants in a nod to media ecology, the artist explores such issues by providing prompts that contain biased terms to a generative AI, as a means to generate images of plants and create animations of “walks” through the latent space that these models constructed in order to “imagine” the prompted vegetation.<sup>11</sup> The system’s statistical biases feed back into the semantic biases of language, and the artists’ process instigates deviations and remixes of these patterns. Some of the images, selected by Beiguelman for printing and display, are given unpronounceable scientific names, scrambled by the computer: from the xenophobia inscribed in certain plant names, this poetics makes xenogenesis flourish.<sup>12</sup>

In *Venenosas, nocivas e suspeitas*, which transforms the exhibition space into a greenhouse by including in it species of several culturally stigmatized plants, the focus is on the blind and “forbidden” spots in the database (and, by extension, in our archives). The artist’s prompts generate images of women scientists and their scientific illustrations of plants, as figures who contributed to botanical science but were overlooked in the history of the field. There are also videos that focus on “forbidden” flowers and fruits (hallucinogens, aphrodisiacs, or otherwise stigmatized), with interpolations of their AI-generated images and narrations of their histories that bring to light the cultural life of these organic artifacts, revitalizing the idea of “still life.” The way AIs are biased toward generating humans in their “prime of life” is also confronted, as the artist’s prompts request images of the scientist-illustrators at the end of their lives, entangled in plants.

Beyond proposing a critical reflection on the possible uses of technology and the databases they inherit, the videos included in these exhibitions increase their complexity by questioning how these systems ultimately depend on particular legacies and perspectives on language and representation, leading to political and cultural consequences. Thus, the skewed “ladder” of words and their semantic intersections – the “conformed and standardized” mode of operation of AIs (Laurentiz, 2022) that allows them to process data in a semiotically directed manner and thus “calculate meanings” or cultural symbols (Bunz, 2019) – undergoes a curatorial and informative overhaul through Beiguelman’s gestures. The system is guided to generate series of images for what is not usually recorded in culture, that which its repertoire does not include, like the forgotten female scientists (and illustrators) of the past. The latent space is thus reinterpreted as an archival and speculative source, formulating a museum of imaginary artifacts, “excavated” from the system.

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<sup>11</sup> Canal USP, 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Adapted from a trilogy of fictions by Octavia Butler, in Fisher (2018) the term refers to “alien” and machinic modes of (re)production in relation to the human and the familial, in addition to being used in Parisi and Portanova (2011), already cited.

Another example of the reformulation of modes of interaction with language and archives occurs when the artist seeks to create the other ladder Themerson spoke of – the one that drives AI models to lose the guarantees of their well-filtered and modeled semantic repertoire, as they return to the complex struggle with the multiplicity of reality. Towards this direction, seeking to emphasize what is erased or not even inscribed in databases, British artist Jake Elwes resorts to a single “label” and the diverse non-normative bodies it encompasses: “queer”, and its seismic shift of binary patterns and logic. For the *Zizi* project (or *Queering the dataset*, 2019-), which resulted in video art pieces, an interactive website, exhibitions, and performances, Elwes performed a “curatorial” intervention on the system: the database of a generative AI model was recalibrated to “drown it in a flood” of images of drag performers – one of the (many) blind spots of this system that tends to reflect the standards of the “white cis heteronormative patriarchy that controls our society” (Elwes, 2021a).

After this step, with Elwes now employing deepfake technology, the AI’s faltering attempts to generate queer bodies were applied to motion-capture data from actual drag performances, putting the formal model and its real referent into friction. In the video *Zizi and Me* (2021), for example, the real performer named Me interacts with the synthetic drag Zizi to perform the duet “If you can do it, I can do better” – the lyrics’ meaning is displaced as a comment upon human-machine relationships, becoming generative of double entendres in the context of the work. Elwes shares interests with artists who pursue the “noise” of the system, but the Zizi project adds several semantic layers to these signaling “failures”, which are reinterpreted from a queer perspective. In an even clearer gesture of bringing the abstractions of AI models back to the “ground,” one of the exhibitions of the *Zizi* project included an evening of live drag performances, bringing the community and its forms of expression to the center of the debate (Elwes, 2021b).

The signal processing behind the project and its synthetic characters is also emphasized, as Elwes produced explanatory videos of the technical process involved and added a “stripping the digital mask” function for the project’s interactive online version. In it, the user can choose to change the appearance of the drag avatar to be rendered and see there the underlying animated “skeleton” that directs the generation of the deepfake, much like a puppet. The project thus points the way (provides a “ladder”) toward more reflective uses and appropriations of generative AIs by placing them in greater dialogue with real bodies and contexts, generating complexity by altering the repertoire of their applications and exposing their internal processing logic.

Between botany and drag, two distant categories or “labels” that reveal something about categorization practices themselves (the contingent discursive formations that regulate and connect “words and things,” as Michel Foucault would say), Beiguelman and Elwes provoke the database of generative AIs to reveal their historical-cultural implications, pointing to their possible transmutations. Artist Pierre Huyghe, with his cryptically titled installation *Umwelt*

(2018-2019), further strained the symbolic field with a more ambiguous gesture by attempting to eschew categories and language altogether. In the work, both the audience and the AI are exposed to contingent data, to be processed without the supervision of (and conditioning by) easily recognizable concepts/labels.

Bypassing language also means removing the ladder, the heuristic shortcut that helps containing the chaotic plurality of the world into certain practical labels that guide machine learning: Huyghe's project began as a collaboration with a team of scientists (from Tokyo's KamitaniLab) who were developing a study of "mind reading" through AI (Serpentine Galleries, 2018). In short, based on correlations between stimuli and MRI data of brain activity from observers, a generative AI was trained to generate visual approximations of these original stimuli, using only new examples of neural patterns. In *Umwelt*, Huyghe thus moved the outputs of this system from the scientific laboratories to LED screens in the Serpentine art gallery. He also subtracted from the public the original stimuli provided to the experiments' participants who generated the MRI data: one blindly tries to guess what the AI is trying to reconstruct, just as the system gropes for the vectors in its latent space that correspond to the neural signals.

The confused synthetic images of unnameable beings and machines that morph on the canvases Huyghe placed throughout the gallery were just one aspect of *Umwelt*: the variable daylight leaked into the space, its intensity being captured by sensors to influence the speed of the AI-generated videos; each room in the exhibition had its own lighting and even exhaled odorous "essences" chosen to generate subjective associations. Some walls of the Serpentine were also sanded, revealing layers and stains, with the residual dust then left amidst the exhibition, while sound transpositions of neural data (a "pink noise") was also amplified in the rooms. In an even more unusual intervention, the artist also included 9,000 free-roaming bluebottle fly specimens in the space – whose two-week life cycle was absorbed into the work's "ecosystem," with their processes of conforming to and learning from the environment juxtaposed with machine learning.

The single word Huyghe allowed to permeate the work, the title "*Umwelt*", provides a path to understanding the systemic complexity that the installation brings into play. It is a corruption of "umwelt," a term taken from the biologist and pioneer of ecology and systems theory Jacob von Uexküll, who used it to refer to the environment as it relates to a specific organism. As Edgar Morin explains the term, between each being there is "an environment which is their eco and which echoes them" (Morin, 1977, p. 345): the human *Umwelt* and the *Umwelt* of a fly are therefore distinct environments even if they share the same space, because they conform to this environment in sensorially distinct ways, as the work highlights.

With the addition of a parasitic "u" to the term, there is also a suggestion of a dissolution or transformation of the organic nature of this being-environment relationship. The artwork evokes this possibility by utilizing artificial intelligence and its interpretations of data which

emerge as a reflection of, but also diverging from, human categories, playing with the imaginary tensions surrounding AI: between mimesis and emancipation, its correlation and decorrelation with the human sensorium. To suggest an undoing or disturbance of the *Umwelt*, as the work incites in its title, is to instigate an intrinsic disturbance in this “interface that selects and filters information from the environment” (Laurentiz, 2017, p. 3611), a perceptual dynamic essential to the shaping of thought through representations, codes, and signs.

Thus, more than integrative, the system proposed in *Umwelt* is contrastive and disjunctive, juxtaposing the human (the audience), the artificial (AI), and the natural organism (the flies) in an environment that is no longer the traditional and passive “white cube” of the art gallery, making Huyghe’s gesture also a “curatorial” intervention in the medium it occupies. If his assembly of elements seems to mirror classical hierarchies and analogies of systems theory – which would see increasing levels of complexity as well as common links between the machine, the fly, and the human – by emphasizing their differences and autonomy from one another, “Huyghe’s sprawling media-ecological aesthetic [...] departs precisely from this analogy”, emphasizes André Rottmann (2019, p. 91). In the work’s “ecological” gesture, he points out, there is a leveling of agents in a reticular assemblage that puts “technological, human, and inhuman states and forms of action” in conflict (*ibid.*, p. 93). If the values of communication and self-organization in vogue in ecological and systems art of the 1970s already found their obverse in the entropy and disorder reclaimed by self-destructive art (as in Jean Tinguely and Gustav Metzger), *Umwelt* returns to the notion of system under the vector of complexity, inscribing heterogeneous beings and signals in a network of indeterminate, disjunctive and ephemeral relations.

Regarding the inclusion of generative AI in this environment, by having a machine learning process operate upon neural signal to generate images that, to us, seem confusing and formless, Huyghe’s work contrasts the habits of our intelligence that name and distinguish stimuli (to resolve them into an unequivocal identity) with the machine’s process of circumventing demands for clarity and distinction by performing statistical (and thus imprecise) operations on its database. As computer scientist Brian Cantwell Smith puts it, in AI models that analyze patterns in more raw databases, without precise guidelines or extensive pre-training in language, there is a capacity for systems “get in underneath the [traditional] categories [...] without having to force-fit those patterns of relation into a small number of conceptual forms” (Smith, 2019, p. 61-62), not limiting themselves to the application of formal axioms with strictly defined categories, as in first-generation AI models.

Even though it points to the emergence of a visual “intelligence” alien to our own, with kamitaniLab researchers indeed having claimed that their AI can identify categories and reconstruct images beyond training patterns (Horikawa; Kamitani, 2017) – the theme of xenogenesis returns here –, the success and sophistication of such computational operations are not the focus of *Umwelt*. The program takes a back seat to the peculiar and fleeting

community of people, insects, and hybrid images, amidst biomorphic and mechanical traits, that the work instantiates. Going beyond a poetics of the signal, the work envisions the constitution of a composite, complex, and arbitrary environment, with Huyghe speaking of establishing “zones of non-knowledge” (PCA-Stream, 2017) and the activation of his works as invitations to acentric situations, with all their elements (audience included) suspended from their usual roles, emphasizing their unfamiliarity.

Following upon an idea from philosopher Reza Negarestani, it can be said that, while Huyghe’s work points to systemic complexity, its driving principle is a complicity with the indeterminate, projecting itself as a “playground for contingency” (Mackay, 2015, p. 13) by being at once an arbitrary and meticulously composed environment to instigate this effect. More than resulting in an “open” work, the elements of *Umwelt* find themselves in a peculiar human-insect-machine entanglement, involved in a network of “secret collusions, conspiracies, antagonisms, indifferent attitudes [...] strange games” (*ibid.*, p. 14). By reimagining *Umwelt* for new spaces, the artist added even more “contingent” layers to this complex: in *After Umwelt* (2021-), the video screens are surrounded by sculptures that materialize, three-dimensionally, some of the decoded signals from the AIs latent space. Made of biodegradable materials, these are objects also thrown into entropy and chance, existing in an “ambiguous continuity between human visual imagination, artificial intelligence, data, and matter” (Luma, 2021) – a still unnamable assemblage.

Unlike Elwes and Beiguelman’s explorations of generative AI through the introduction of new contexts and semantic foci, the form of complexity which Huyghe stimulates emerges from its inclusion in a hybrid system that involves the subtraction of coherent hermeneutical contexts. Equally stimulating a disorienting interaction with technology, without the typical interface of language, the work’s environment consists of a series of raw stimuli, such as the pink noise sound and the background activity of flies. Still, despite inserting AI into a debate on ecology and hybrid systems between the natural and the artificial, it is clear that Huyghe’s work – and, indeed, all those cited so far – does not problematize the ecological costs of these systems (IEA, 2024). Pertinent to the “signaletic” level of the use of AI, this aspect of the material and climatic repercussions of technology, with its high demand for data centers and water, remains to be “computed” by contemporary artistic practice, although ecology is being promoted as a key topic.

## Concluding remarks

With a focus on the formal aspects and “signaletic” operations of contemporary video art works, notable for their use of generative AI technologies, this article identified and contrasted such works under the poetic vectors (or strands) of signal, noise, and complexity. Avoiding to reduce these artworks to such labels, but rather seeking to ascertain the capacity of these axes

to encompass the heterogeneity of their approaches, the proposal has allowed for connecting recent practices to the field's previous repertoire, addressing continuities and discontinuities that accompany the incorporation of sophisticated signal processing techniques. Furthermore, addressing the level of the signaletic operations performed through these "intelligent" systems has allowed the study to gather and trace an inventory of the diverse attitudes assumed by the artists, ranging from collaboration to antagonism toward the machine.

Characterizing recent video art that incorporates generative AI through such vectors and approaches also means observing the tests to which this now more established creative practice subjects the new technology. In this sense, the question that philosopher Gilbert Simondon, focusing on the "technoaesthetics" of cinema, posed as a means to assess the potential of technical images for creation, perception, and thought, still resonates: "what appeal does it [the medium] create in favor of other forms?" (Simondon, 2014, p. 356). Extending to media art, the reflections raised in this study confront a similar proposal in the context of the use of generative AI. And in this sense, while the examples listed throughout this article invest in a search for new sensitive forms – sometimes literally extracting them from the latent space of models – the continuity of these investigations with previous poetic axes already established in the field of media art has been highlighted.

As elaborated in the study, machine learning and AI neural networks complement the exploration of signal processing capabilities, the anomalies of systemic noise, and the relationships of complexity that video art and media art have been promoting for decades through their rhetoric of poetic appropriation and critique of technology. The very technique of "walking through latent space" and its data interpolations, present in several of these works, recalls *collage*, remix, and morph, all elements that were already part of the repertoire of the digital turn (Spielmann, 1999). Even so, under the test of the "new forms" as proposed by Simondon and overcoming chimeras surrounding the notion of intelligence, a truly novel aspect at the heart of generative AI technologies is their training and control through natural language, as several of these artists explore and stress.

Such an interface—with more limited and schematic precedents in voice assistants like Siri—arises, however, with all the risks of limiting the machine to reproducing the blind spots of our discourses and the flaws of our semantic tools. These problems are compounded by the way in which, like any program, the very *modus operandi* of generative AI systems limits (pre-conforms) their results and functions to certain protocols and interaction parameters (Laurentiz, 2022), however numerous these may be, an issue that the poetic vectors of noise and complexity, as well as the bibliography reviewed here, can aid us in confront and become more sensitive to.

In such instances, the repertoire of video art has demonstrated a renewed potential to instigate other receptions (and inscriptions) of AI technologies in our environment, with the

ecological and curatorial gestures of artists such as Elwes, Huyghe, and Beiguelman provoking both systems and audiences to unlearn certain biases and entangle themselves with other points of view. If there is a risk, when focusing on these biases, of conforming artistic practice (and by extension, the museum and gallery) to the functional role of an “auditor” verifying methodological successes and errors and prescribing “best practices” for science and industry – which, in the same way, can inherit the presumptions and blind spots of the field itself – several of these artists go a step further. They adapt the technology at hand to their own poetics and rhetoric, preserving a space for fabulation, chance, perplexity, and formal exploration amid the rigor of their inspections of these systems.

Beyond confronting in a close encounter with the labels and internal logics that comprise these technologies, testing the boundaries of poetic production in the (rhetorical) era of “intelligent machines”, another productive aspect of these works is their inevitable contribution to archiving the outputs of these systems and their modes of presentation and operation in the present. Rachel McLean (YaleBritishArt, 2024) comments that, by recreating James Bonds from various cinematic incarnations, her video *Duck* ended up containing within itself an archive of different moments (and visual phases) of film technology – and, to the same extent, to insist in working with AIs ends up encapsulating phases in the development of this very technology, notes Rafman (RISD, 2024). As Refik Anadol (Louisiana, 2023) observes, at each day he returns to his studio, his working materials may have changed.

Through their forays into AI processes, these artworks contribute to the ways in which this technology is inserted into our daily lives and collective imagination (our Umwelt), potentially requalifying them beyond technocratic and progressive rhetoric – especially in the gaps explored by the poetic axes of noise and complexity. As Simondon has already suggested, for technology to truly produce forms other than those already in circulation, the cards are on the table of aesthetic interpellation: and between signal, noise, and complexity, we have listed some of the most prominent cards played in the last decade – awaiting any future twists and turns, hoping they won’t remain solely in the hands of the big tech players.

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