

Videographic Performativity and Generative AI: For a Study of Generative Art in the Work of Alexandre Rangel and Pedro Alves da Veiga

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Abstract

The article aims to relate videographic performativity and the use of generative AI tools to contribute to the debate on the creative process in *Artemídia* and *Videoart*. The methodology brought together the concepts of videographic performativity and generative art and undertaken a brief study of two video arts, *G.O.D.L.E.S.S. Gaza Ominous Dataset Lawless Evil Systematic Slaughter* (2024) by Pedro Alves da Veiga, a generative video art that results from generative processes and the use of generative algorithms developed by the artist, and *Sopa Primordial* (2023) by Alexandre Rangel, produced with GenerativeAI and displayed as audiovisual triptych. The results indicate that videographic performativity can be driven by generative AI tools, but production that aims to generate creative material and works of art that are conscious and integrated with time and technology, essentially needs the artist's imaginative mind and his critical and conceptual capacity to weave ethical and poetic relationships.

Keywords: videographic performativity; generative art; generative AI; Alexandre Rangel; Pedro Alves da Veiga.

Introduction

In recent years numerous debates have arisen around art produced with generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools, bringing the term *generative* to the centre of attention. Seeking to contribute to the current discussions on the creative processes in New Media and Video Art, as well as the use of Artificial Intelligence tools, this study aims to bring together concepts such as videographic performativity and generative art. The focus of the debate is *technodiversity* and the concept of *generativity*. The study discusses the extent to which GenAI tools have accelerated the indiscriminate and often questionable use of “text-to-video” GenAI

tools in certain sectors of the cultural and creative industries. It contrasts this with artistic works and experiences that have long been committed to exploring digital tools to expand creativity and the potential of digital art, through generativity and audience participation.

The methodology is based on case studies and comparative analyses of concepts. In this article, there is a brief analysis of two video artworks: *G.O.D.L.E.S.S. Gaza Ominous Dataset Lawless Evil Systematic Slaughter* (2024), created by Pedro Alves da Veiga, and *Sopa Primordial* (2023), authored by Alexandre Rangel. The theoretical framework draws on concepts proposed by contemporary thinkers, including Yuki Hui's *technodiversity* (2020), Byung-Chul Han's *infocracy* (2021), Jacques Rancière's *work of images* (2021), Mariah Brochado's *ethics in the cybernetic age*, as well as Pedro Alves da Veiga's studies on *new media art* (2023) and Regilene Sarzi-Ribeiro's on *videographic performativity* (2022; 2023).

Broadly speaking, the term *generative* can be defined as the ability to produce something, pertaining to a generational capacity, to a generator (Oxford Languages, 2024). Thus, the term *generative* refers to the inherent generational competence of nature, life and different materialities and/or languages, long before it was ever associated with a specific type of digital technology.

The term 'generative' was first coined by Nees in 1965 to describe the attainment of aesthetic experiences through computational systems (NAKE, 2018). Among the many definitions of "generative art", those of Philip Galanter (2014) and McCormack *et al.* (2014) stand out. These can be summarised by Sol LeWitt's concept: the idea is embodied in a machine that produces art.

This essay critically reflects on new media art and generative art, focusing on artistic works that can be characterised as video art. These works are marked by audiovisuality produced through digital tools and reflect on the concepts of *technodiversity* and *video activism*. This is in the context of broader reflections on the role of art in fostering sensitivity and awareness of technology in contemporary times.

1. Videographic performativity and *technodiversity*

Videographic performativity is the term used by Sarzi-Ribeiro (2023), one of the authors of this study, to define the performative exercise of language (SARZI-RIBEIRO; ROCHA, 2022), through which video projects itself via its social and media agencies, permeating audiovisual expression and communication in order to become a cultural phenomenon that influences human behaviour, while also being continuously subverted and rewritten by human action.

Based on studies of videographic performativity through analyses undertaken with generative video art and video artworks produced with GenAI tools between 2022 and 2023, Sarzi-Ribeiro (2024) observed and classified videographic action into four categories: (1)

Identity and presentness: the condition that allows for the maintenance of existence, the relation between acting and existing as language; (2) Simultaneity and repetition: involving temporality in flux and the permanence of action; (3) Editing and mutation: linguistic operations that ensure innovation and the construction of new audiovisualities within the videographic system; and (4) Projection and diffusion: concerning the competencies of the videographic system, which extend to different media and other languages, ensuring circulation and interchanges across different visual and sonic systems.

The term *technodiversity* derives from the theoretical development recently elaborated by the Chinese philosopher Yuki Hui, who advocates for the necessity of a distinct or alternative conception of technology, one that recognises its diversity rather than adhering to the logic of technological universality. Hui argues that the latter has resulted in the failure of the human species to confront the challenges of the Anthropocene. This crisis manifests itself, among other issues, in warfare, world hunger, the difficulty of combating ignorance and denialism, the rise of the far right and geopolitical tensions, as well as in social and economic inequality and global-scale technological competition.

In order to foster a rupture from the hegemonic system legitimised by European Western culture—which disseminated technology as a structural element of its action and power, particularly by promoting the universality of technology including over nature—the philosopher asserts that there must urgently be a transformation in the very conception of technology and its role in human life.

According to Hui, for this ontological shift in the conception of technology to occur, it is necessary to acknowledge the differences, from one society to another, in the cosmic and moral orders that organise technical activities, which are unified through what the philosopher terms *cosmotecnics*.

We do not reject the notion that there is a universal dimension to technology, but this is only one among others. From a cosmotecnical perspective, technique is, in essence, motivated and constrained by geographical and cosmological specificities. If we are to respond to the prospects of global self-extinction, we shall need to return to a carefully elaborated discourse on localities and on the position that the human being occupies within the cosmos (HUI, 2020, p.89).¹

Instead of conceiving technology as universal, it is necessary to seek locality and the relations between the local, a search for the places where the development, application, and use of technology occur in the manner of the local, which differs across the many cultures of the West and the East, as they are the result of long-standing processes of distinct cosmologies and moral conceptions.

¹ Translated into English by the authors.

Broadly speaking, technodiversity proposes the rupture with the contradictory relations that conceive technology as something external to the human and its universality as synthesis. For Yuki Hui, technology is an integral part of human life and its materiality, which takes on forms for the expression and communication of meanings. For the comprehension and respect of these different forms, the author indicates cosmotechnics and the implementation of cosmopolitics. As Hui states, “Rediscovering multiple cosmotechnics does not imply rejecting artificial intelligence or machine learning, but rather re-appropriating modern technology, assigning different positions to the compositions (Gestell) that are at the core of modern technology” (HUI, 2020, p.95)².

From cosmopolitics to video activism, in this context associated with videographic performativity, it is worth highlighting the role of video in this epistemological shift in the conception and use of technology, and in particular, our attention is drawn here to artistic practices that result in videoart and/or experimental video. As Mateos and Sedeño (2018) affirm, video activism, in addition to producing artistic works in video, intervenes in cultural practice because it acts within the symbolic field, “distributing the sensible” through practices of shared transformation, in the sense developed by Jacques Rancière (2012, 2021).

The Punk movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s, heir to the *Internationale Situationniste, détournement*, and the rebellious spirit of May 1968, is one of the precursors of modern activism (art + activism). The do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos characteristic of Punk is further related to the artistic experimentations of Dadaism. Its dynamism, its expressiveness, the rupturing structure of its language, makes it an art for non-artists, an instrument of creation for the non-creative, and therefore, an ideal way toward change and social evolution. It is a new form of freedom. society, recovering playfulness and irreverence (ENSMINGER, 2016).

The idea of DIY was later absorbed by those who sought to penetrate the, at first inaccessible, universe of digital information technology. Hacktivism appropriated this concept and influenced not only groups connected with cyberculture, but also the technology industry itself (LEÃO *et al.*, 2017). Contemporary digital activists create events by infiltrating and transgressing social spaces, using non-conventional media and communication structures to capture public attention and raise awareness: installations, performances, video, and cyberart are part of the lexicon of many contemporary activists.

By exploiting the media convergence that the digital medium favours and stimulates, as well as the ease of disseminating activist messages through social networks, this practice becomes pervasive, whether through its participatory characteristics or through its exposure to wide audiences. Within this complex environment, in which digital social networks themselves

² Translated into English by the authors.

become more intelligent—collecting data and information on users’ tastes, habits, and biometrics—artivism seeks to employ that very complexity for its own ends, usually contrary to those of the neoliberal machine: what it sustains, artivism seeks to subvert. Eva Aladro-Vico suggests that “Its dynamism, its expressiveness, the rupturing structure of its language, makes it an art for non-artists, an instrument of creation for the non-creative, and therefore, an ideal way toward change and social evolution. It is a new form of freedom” (ALADRO-VICO *et al.*, 2018, p.16). Yet it is not only for the non-creative and the non-artists: this freedom can (and should) be enjoyed by all, albeit with clearly distinct results—ranging from the innocuous and ephemeral experience to socially interventionist and deliberate action.

2. Videoart and generative art

In generative art, the production of sound and image generated through programming and computer graphics operationalises original visualities and audiovisualities. These are produced through artistic conceptualisation which, by means of experimental exercises, seeks to shape projects planned and executed with the assistance of mathematical algorithms, in dialogue with the aesthetics of artistic movements such as Surrealism and Abstractionism. Digital art and new media artists have explored algorithm design, broadening the ethical and aesthetic concepts that involve the collaborative creative process between human and machine, as in *Algorithmic Art*, *Data Art*, *AI Art*, and *Fractal Art*.

Among the aspects that arouse particular interest regarding generative art are its underlying assumptions and the rise of algorithmic aesthetics, in the contemporary art world during the 1990s. These compel us to revisit the topic in the present in order to pay due attention to a remarkable body of works that have always operated within a generational or generative field, but which today risk being overlooked amidst the current euphoria surrounding the use of artificial intelligence tools in the production of images and videos.

In tracing the possible origins and lineage of generative videoart, Bonet (2007) identifies the beginnings of *calculated cinema* as early as 1916, with the experiments of the Futurist artists Arnaldo Ginna and Bruno Corra in conceiving the film *Vita Futurista* as a series of episodes or autonomous segments. At the end of the 1940s, John Whitney and his brother James won the prize for best sound at the Brussels Film Festival with *Five Abstract Film Exercises*. They classified their works as *audio-visual-music*, and their objective was to create films from light in its pure form, acting directly and physically upon the film through cut-out shapes, as opposed to capturing images of objects and real-world scenes (PATTERSON, 2009, p. 39).

Nam June Paik and Wolf Vostell, two artists associated with the Fluxus movement, exhibited their video artworks for the first time in 1963, thereby establishing the date commonly recognised as the birth of this artform. Over the following decades, it adopted different formats,

ranging from complex installations of intervened technological equipment, exhibited in galleries or museums, to screenings of videos or performances incorporating television sets, video monitors, and projections, with moving images and sound.

In 1967, A. Michael Noll (1967) highlighted the connection between computers and the visual arts and the advantages of artistic exploration of those technologies, including the reduction of intensive, repetitive tasks that required large amounts of labour and precision. Noll proposed ways of automating the creation of artworks—optical, geometric, kinetic, psychedelic, and stereoscopic. Due to the limitations of the computers of the time, particularly concerning image and sound processing, but also because of contemporary tendencies in the visual arts—Abstractionism, Cubism, and Constructivism—those new artistic approaches mostly adopted a minimalistic aesthetic.

The use of generative systems with current digital computers now allows for the near-instantaneous and simultaneous execution of various complex operations, not only in numerical terms but, crucially, in media manipulation—images, videos, and audio—and even in the synthesis of graphics and sound. Contemporary computers also provide practical solutions for stochastic generative systems through the introduction and manipulation of randomness produced by the machines themselves.

A common feature across various definitions of generative art is thus the presence of an algorithmic system endowed with a certain degree of autonomy, iteratively combining structure with controlled randomness/probabilistic calculation. This set of rules is, in fact, what defines generative art. The execution of such a system produces a complex flow of graphics, text, and audio, which may be synthesised, manipulated, and recombined independently, or used in the creation of cross-media patterns. The outcome is an infinite, iterative sequence of states or combinations, within a specific aesthetic boundary and the defined intention of the artist/programmer (DORIN, 2013).

Veiga (2023) proposes a definition of generative videoart as a form of art in which the artist relinquishes control to a system with functional autonomy. This system is designed with an initial vocabulary containing static and moving images, the provenance of which is mainly external to the system. Employing a structuring device and a set of rules of recomposition and amplification, the system is executed within selected aesthetic limits, producing events that contribute to, or result in, a complete video flow.

What follows are two video works through which it is possible to observe videographic performativity in synergy with video-activism and technodiversity, expressed in both the form (videographic language) and the content (themes and concepts) of the video artworks *G.O.D.* | *Generative Ominous Dataset* (2023) by Pedro Alves da Veiga and *Sopa Primordial* (2023) by Alexandre Rangel.

2.1. PEDRO ALVES DA VEIGA

The work *G.O.D.L.E.S.S. | Gaza Ominous Dataset Lawless Evil Systematic Slaughter* (2024) represents an evolution of an earlier piece by the transdisciplinary artist Pedro Alves da Veiga, entitled *G.O.D.*. In *G.O.D. (Generative Ominous Dataset)* (Veiga, 2023), the artist appropriates the traditional iconographic representation of the divine through the “all-seeing eye”, from which emanate coloured rays. These stretch outwards in elongated, continuous motion until reaching the edges, gradually saturating the entire surface of the frame. The rays are accompanied by rounded forms surrounding the great all-seeing eye, and with each new burst of colour, the *mandala* (circle in Sanskrit, symbol of spirituality, healing, and connection for Hindus and Buddhists) shifts in gentle outward movements, unfolding from itself and from the central eye that originated it. The colours range from lilac and violet-blue hues to deep blues and coppery oranges, including light pink, aquamarine, soft browns, and reddish tones.

During these expansive movements, produced by a kind of centrifugal force, one observes graphic forms whose precise definition eludes us, in continuous and fluid transformation. These generate octagonal and trapezoidal points, are reminiscent of the faceting of gemstones, crystals, and emeralds. As they move further away from the centre, such forms slowly dissolve and blend into a formless whole, ultimately composing a homogeneous mass of chromatic mixtures and fusions, from which emerges a tangled weave of (fragments of) almost (un)recognisable images.

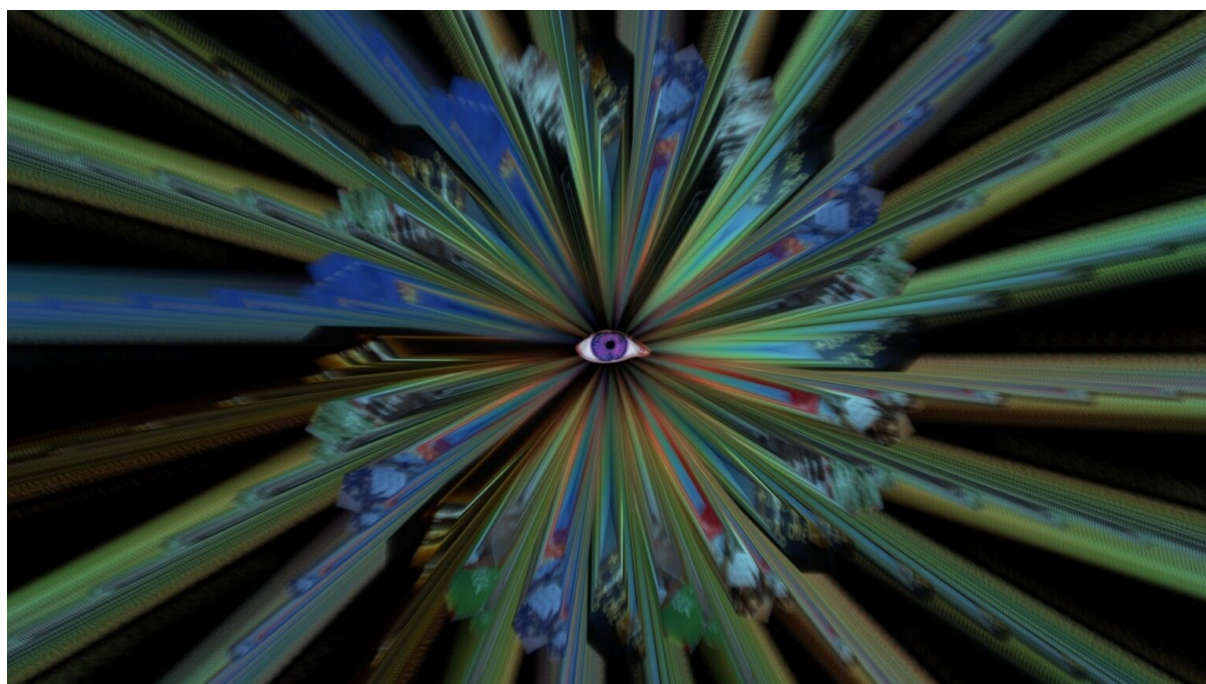


Figure 1 – *G.O.D. | Generative Ominous Dataset* (2023), Pedro Alves da Veiga, generative video art; source: <https://pedroveiga.com/g-o-d-generative-ominous-dataset/>

This chromatic and formal mutation exerts a force upon our attention, and before we realise it, we find ourselves hypnotised and immersed in the image-movement of *G.O.D.*, dazzled by the emanations of the all-seeing eye (Figure 1).

All the formal and symbolic power of the work described above is the result of its conceptual aspects, that is, of the content which underpins the generative videoart *G.O.D.*. According to Pedro Alves da Veiga (2023), the work was conceived around three key ideas: 1) “Data = God”: a metaphor that relates data to God, alluding to the vast quantity of personal data collected daily by multiple public and private computational systems, used to feed the datasets that train AI systems; 2) “Ominous Dataset”: a sinister set of data (digital images), as the images used in *G.O.D.* were expressly gathered from those depicting sinister situations: violence, war, destruction, conflict, harassment, cruelty, street protests, violent repression, and natural disasters. These images were sourced from the Internet in an equally sinister process, in every respect similar to AI systems—that is, without the express permission of their authors—intended precisely to provoke debate on the violation of copyright; and 3) “Generative Epiphanies”: resulting from combinations of symmetry and chaos, producing hypnotic and aesthetically striking images from depictions of the worst aspects of the Anthropocene. As a generative installation, in run time, *G.O.D.* consists of a continuous flow of unique patterns, which justifies the description of the resulting experience as an infinite succession of epiphanies, akin to an aesthetic rapture, a sensory inundation of the divine.

This work was created in 2023, before the attack carried out by the terrorist movement Hamas on Israeli soil, and before the subsequent genocidal war waged by the State of Israel against the territory of Gaza. Thus, in 2024, *G.O.D.L.E.S.S. | Gaza Ominous Dataset Lawless Evil Systematic Slaughter* was born, with three significant alterations in relation to the earlier work: 1) The divine all-seeing eye is now a blind eye; 2) The dataset is composed, in this instance, exclusively of images of destruction and death from Gaza—which, tragically, are abundant across various sites on the Internet, many of them shared directly by inhabitants of the territory; and 3) The epiphanic emanations which, in the former version, scarcely revealed the (ominous) images used in their construction, now become more explicit, allowing for recognition—albeit partial—with greater frequency. The blind eye disperses them in bursts, like explosions, sniper gunfire, or missiles, sowing destruction under the radiant mantle of self-proclaimed justice: the beautiful reds, oranges, and yellows of lethal explosions; the soft greys of rubble and devastation; and the bluish and lilac pastels of the livid faces of the wounded and the dead, as can be seen in Figure 2 (VEIGA, 2024).

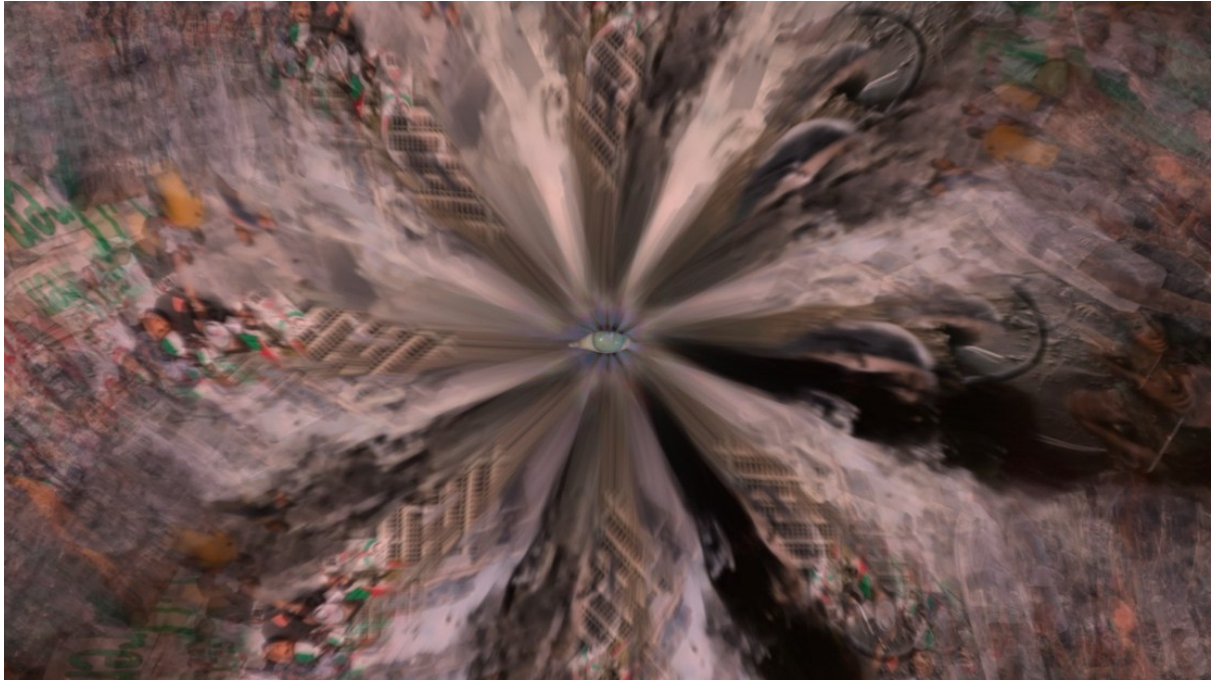


Figure 2 – G.O.D.L.E.S.S. | *Gaza Ominous Dataset Lawless Evil Systematic Slaughter* (2024), Pedro Alves da Veiga, generative video art; source: <https://pedroveiga.com/godless-g-a-z-a-ominous-dataset-lawless-evil-systematic-slaughter/>

2.2. ALEXANDRE RANGEL

The work *Sopa Primordial* (2023), by multimedia artist Alexandre Rangel, is described as a video art triptych composed of images generated by artificial intelligence. The artist defines it as

[...] an exploration of the generation and perception of visual meanings. The work proposes an immersion into an ocean of creative possibilities, emotions, and visual interpretations. The search for meaning in the emergence of forms assisted by Artificial Intelligence algorithms aims at the creation of transformative poetic objects” (RANGEL, 2023).³

The triptych with its three simultaneous screens offers a visual experience analogous to a dive into the ocean, constructed from elements such as temporality, the aquatic landscape, and the constant mutation of images. Although distinct across the three screens, the images may be enjoyed simultaneously, provoking the perception of different facets of the same oceanic landscape—coincidentally diverse and singular (Figure 3).

Temporality evokes a time in which materiality, forms, and colours are in continuous mutation: everything is rapidly transformed, though the produced sensation is one of small

³ Translated into English by the authors.



Figure 3 – *Sopa primordial* (2023), Alexandre Rangel, audio visual triptych;
source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhW0u2sblqs&t=1s>

changes generated through the visualization of successive instances of the present. This effect—definable as a mutable aesthetic, always in a state of *becoming*—is the outcome of algorithmic activity, which animates and manifests the visual generativity of data, continuously elaborated and re-elaborated by the generative AI tool. Hora, Miertschink, and Pereira (2022, p.69), in their study on generative art, aesthetics, and generativity, emphasise: “Its diverse production is characterised by associating the predetermination of rules with the apparent indeterminacy of results, resulting from a vast combinatorial heterogeneity.”⁴

The diverse and polymorphic aquatic landscape reveals various marine species, exuberant corals, and aquatic plants of many forms and sizes, which metamorphose and hybridise, producing a *soup*, a potent mixture that generates new life forms, recalling the ocean as the locus of life’s origin on Earth.

The colours accompany the mutation of forms and the swiftness of temporality, alternating from blues, greens, lilacs, and pinks to shades of orange, yellow, and red, fostering figurative forms, beyond a psychedelic and otherworldly aesthetic, to the ocean in its chromatic magnitude—until it materialises as an ocean that disintegrates into warm colours, overheated by the climatic effects of planetary warming, including of the oceans themselves.

⁴ Translated into English by the authors.

The movement of ocean waters, the mutation of forms, and the rapid passage of time draw us into immersion within this life-generating world, expressed through *Morphos* (a genus of blue butterflies, belonging to the *Morphoidae* family), whose very essence is mutation—rapid and constant—out of which new species emerge: the *Sopa Primordial* (primordial soup), as manifested in Alexandre Rangel’s video art.

3. Videoart and generative AI – approaches and repercussions

The four categories that, in synthesis, define videographic performativity, as presented at the beginning of this text, can be observed in generative video artworks such as *G.O.D.L.E.S.S. | Gaza Ominous Dataset Lawless Evil Systematic Slaughter* (2024), by Pedro Alves da Veiga, but equally in video artworks produced with generative AI tools, such as *Sopa Primordial* (2023), by Alexandre Rangel.

It is worth noting that, in parallel with the discussion on big data and its defining aspects—volume, velocity, and variety, and more recently, value and veracity—data that feed content generation and solutions derived from the use of AI tools are becoming increasingly essential, as too are research and debates about them. Academic and educational discussions (FOLTYNEK *et al.*, 2023) highlight the need to adopt a collaborative and critical approach to the use of generative AI tools, instead of a passive and uncritical utilisation, whereby they replace the human element. One of the arguments, based on logical reasoning, asserts that since these tools are, in most cases, limited to recombining pre-existing elements, one should not expect them to produce unprecedented creative breakthroughs or avant-garde innovations. However, it must be acknowledged that many of these recombinations would be unimaginable to us humans, and therein lies the creative potential of their partnership-based use.

We are witnessing the advances of a field of visual and audiovisual content production, stimulated by the technology industry and propelled by the massification of automation and the use of generative AI tools, which exploit large datasets necessary for content creation. In the vast majority of cases, the results generated by such tools bears little difference from what has already been created in the fields of sound and image across centuries, particularly regarding visual arts. Beyond appropriating the aesthetics of artistic movements already legitimised or referenced in the History of art, these appropriations create discomfort and may infringe copyright by encouraging the generation of new images or sounds prompted by the use of well-known artists’ names and styles. This practice, besides being questionable, has led to an enormous proliferation of images and sounds that amount to “more of the same”, that is, an excess or a misuse of remix culture without criteria of taste or discernment, which has awakened in the artistic community a sense of repulsion towards the massification and automation of visual and audiovisual content production.

Two extreme, diametrically opposed effects deserve our attention. One produces deepfakes and fuels the phenomenon of post-truth; the other reveals how artists may rupture the logic of such tools, generating disruptive results that function as counter-images, in the sense described by Jacques Rancière (2021). The first—post-truth—through the production of deepfake videos, challenges all ethical frameworks and calls urgently for regulation and, above all, digital literacy. The second—artistic experimentation—enables artists to explore these tools and their unknown, unexpected results, generating unusual visualities (Sarzi-Ribeiro & Sedeño-Valdellós, 2024) within aesthetics legitimised by art movements such as Surrealism, Hyperrealism, Abstractionism, and Psychedelia. Once shared, such works can provoke reflection and constitute friction points between art, technology, science, and society (SARZI-RIBEIRO; BRESSANIN, 2023).

The debate necessarily touches ethical issues, such as the use of images that compose datasets. Most of these are aesthetic creations resulting from the poetic elaboration of artists who have spent a lifetime constructing their own identity or style; yet, from a brief textual prompt or even a single word, such as their name—Picasso, Van Gogh, and others—they are plagiarised or mimicked, in the name of a so-called remix culture (NAVAS, 2012).

Videographic performativity can indeed be propelled by generative AI tools. However, the challenge is immense, as are the ethical dilemmas. Contemporary digital art is produced within a scenario dominated by the distinctive architecture of *Infocracy* (HAN, 2022), characterised by an information regime that exerts evident social, political, and economic domination over human beings. In this context, new media art may play an important role in rupturing the void of meaning provoked by infocracy.

Final considerations

The term *generative*, when applied to artificial intelligence, designates a type of technology capable of generating texts, images, and sounds from data used as a source for machine learning, with the purpose of enabling such systems to produce other images, texts, and sounds. Although the advances achieved with generative AI have been considerable in recent times, and although it has proven itself efficient in the production of visual, textual, or audiovisual content—as in the case of videos created with generative AI tools, for instance, as an output of those tools that use deep learning techniques—the vast majority of results depend upon the dataset, that is, the quality and quantity of material made available for machine training.

In conclusion, any production that aims to generate creative material and works of art essentially requires the imaginative mind of the artist, as well as their conceptual capacity to weave critical and reflective relations, manifesting themselves in audio-visual creations expressed through algorithmic, generative, or AI-based aesthetics. Such works must be capable of generating sensory immersion and provoking alternative experiences, in order to

raise awareness to the urgency of technodiversity. With these results, we hope to contribute to the current debate on the creative use of generative AI tools, fostering a critical-reflective perspective on algorithmic aesthetics and on the poetic operations that constitute generative art, explored here through research on generative videoart and its contextual framework.

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