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Artistic Creativity And The Transformation Of Aesthetic Judgment In The Age Of Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract. The growing use of artificial intelligence in painting, literature, music and digital design has renewed a philosophical question that technology alone cannot settle: what makes an artistic product meaningful, and who can be regarded as its creator? This article examines the transformation of artistic creativity, aesthetic subjectivity and the concept of beauty under conditions of algorithmic production. Its methodological basis is conceptual analysis and a comparative reading of research in aesthetics, computational creativity and media philosophy. The study distinguishes the generation of perceptible forms from the human practices through which those forms acquire cultural significance. It argues that AI does not simply replace an artist's manual labour; it redistributes choices among designers, datasets, systems, artists, curators and audiences. Aesthetic judgment is likewise changing as recommendation systems and automated image assessment participate in the formation of public taste. The article proposes a five-dimensional framework for evaluating AI-assisted art: formal coherence, contextual meaning, creative accountability, cultural plurality and ethical provenance. The central conclusion is that technological novelty can expand artistic possibilities, but cannot, by itself, constitute aesthetic value or resolve the question of authorship.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; artistic creativity; aesthetic thinking; generative art; beauty; artistic subjectivity; algorithmic judgment; human–machine collaboration.

The arrival of generative artificial intelligence in everyday artistic practice has made an old philosophical difficulty unusually visible. We can now encounter an image whose surface resembles an oil painting, a poem with a convincing rhythm or a melody that seems carefully composed, without being able to identify a single human hand responsible for its details. The perceptible object is there. The story of its creation, however, has changed. How should such work be judged? Does artistic value belong to the finished form, to the intention behind it, or to the relationships it establishes within a culture?

These questions cannot be answered merely by comparing the technical performance of machines with that of professional artists. Art has never been reducible to the efficient production of attractive objects. It also involves memories, expectations, conflicts and the social circumstances in which a work becomes legible. Walter Benjamin's account of technological reproduction remains relevant because it connects artistic authenticity to the changing historical conditions in which works are made and encountered [1, 220]. Contemporary generative systems extend that problem: instead of reproducing an existing artefact alone, they can produce new arrangements whose visible features draw on extensive histories of cultural production.

Margaret Boden identifies combinational, exploratory and transformational routes by which artificial systems can participate in creativity [2, 347]. Yet the existence of computational novelty does not necessarily settle whether a system experiences the significance of what it produces. The more urgent issue may be the relation between the emergence of a form and its subsequent interpretation. This article therefore examines three connected transformations: the philosophical understanding of artistic creativity, the position of the human creator in AI-assisted production, and the reconstruction of aesthetic criteria in digital culture. Its aim is not to declare machines artists or non-artists once and for all. Rather, it seeks to clarify which distinctions remain useful when human judgment and algorithmic generation increasingly coexist.

The article uses a theoretical, qualitative research design. The material consists of selected philosophical and interdisciplinary studies addressing technological reproduction, computational creativity, generative art, algorithmic aesthetics, authorship and the ethics of AI. Benjamin's account of reproducibility provides a historical point of departure; the studies of Boden and Edmonds clarify the different roles of computation in artistic processes [1, 220; 3, 21]. Manovich's analysis illuminates algorithmic influences on

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cultural selection and taste, while Zylinska, McLoughlin and Ukpaka offer contrasting perspectives on agency, authorship and responsibility [4, 6; 5, 31; 6, 371; 7, 2455].

Four analytical operations guide the inquiry. First, historical comparison distinguishes earlier rule-based and mechanical practices from contemporary data-driven generation. Second, conceptual differentiation separates artistic output, aesthetic experience, creative intention and social recognition. Third, a relational analysis considers the participants in the creative process rather than treating the machine and human being as isolated competitors. Finally, normative synthesis develops criteria suitable for assessing works in which algorithms materially influence the result. No survey, laboratory experiment or quantitative dataset is claimed. The findings are philosophical propositions derived from the literature and from the logical comparison of its arguments.

From the production of forms to the interpretation of meaning

Computer-assisted creation did not begin with contemporary image generators. Artists have used mathematical procedures, automated systems and computational structures for decades. Boden and Edmonds distinguish forms of generative art and show why the involvement of a computer does not automatically identify where creativity is located [3, 21]. Their account of Ernest Edmonds's practice is particularly revealing: a generative process may accelerate the cycle of making, perceiving and revising, while the artist remains concerned with the rules that organize the work [3, 25–26].

A new tool can alter the scale and rhythm of this process. Instead of drawing each possible composition, an artist may describe a direction, examine numerous variants and gradually select a result. In other cases, the artist may deliberately accept a system's unexpected outcome as part of the concept. These practices differ in the degree of human intervention, but they share an important characteristic: form emerges through an organized relationship between constraints and choices.

The philosophical challenge begins when novelty is mistaken for meaning. An unfamiliar visual arrangement may surprise its viewer without articulating a significant artistic problem. Conversely, a familiar form can become powerful when placed within an unexpected historical or personal context. The difference is not merely technical. It concerns interpretation. An artwork does not disclose all of its value in the moment of its physical or digital production; some of that value develops through criticism, reception and continued cultural use. Thus, generation should be understood as one phase of artistic activity, not as its exhaustive definition.

The changing subject of artistic creativity

Traditional accounts frequently place the individual artist at the centre of artistic intention. This perspective remains useful, but AI-assisted creation makes its limits easier to observe. A generative image may depend on the work of software engineers, data contributors, a person who develops the concept, another who selects the output, and a curator who frames its public presentation. The apparent simplicity of a finished picture can conceal a complicated process of cultural and technical mediation.

John McLoughlin argues that increasingly convincing AI outputs require renewed attention to where substantive artistic work occurs during production [6, 371]. This is a productive shift. Rather than asking only whether the software can be called an author, one can examine the concrete decisions through which a work comes to exist. Who establishes its purpose? Who rejects unsuccessful possibilities? Who understands the social associations of its imagery? Who is prepared to defend the result before an audience?

One philosophical position gives particular weight to lived experience and intentionality. Ukpaka, for example, contends that large language models cannot straightforwardly be treated as independent creative authors because they do not possess a first-person relation to the world and their outputs depend on numerous human contributions [7, 2455–2456]. This argument should be read as a position in an active debate, not as an experimentally established final answer about every possible AI system. Nevertheless, it identifies a distinction worth retaining: the capacity to produce intelligible material is different from the capacity to account for what that material means.

The resulting conception of creativity is neither purely individualistic nor wholly machine-centred. It is relational. The artist may become a designer of conditions, an editor of possible worlds or a critic of the technology being used. Human agency is not guaranteed simply because a person enters a prompt. It becomes aesthetically significant when that person makes consequential choices, connects the result to a discernible purpose and assumes responsibility for its presentation.

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Aesthetic feeling and the limits of algorithmic simulation

Images and texts generated by AI can evoke sorrow, delight, unease or admiration. This observation concerns the audience's response and does not, by itself, establish the existence of corresponding emotions in the generating system. A viewer may be moved by a fictional character, an instrumental composition or an abstract image without believing that every element of the work possesses a private inner life. In aesthetic experience, emotion often emerges from the encounter between form, personal memory and cultural knowledge.

The distinction matters because discussions of AI art sometimes move too quickly from the language of appearance to claims about machine subjectivity. A generated face may look melancholy. A poem may speak of longing. Such qualities describe a perceptible form and its possible interpretations; they do not transparently reveal the psychological condition of the system. At the same time, denying machine experience does not imply that the audience's feelings are false. The emotional response can be genuine even where its artistic stimulus is computationally produced.

Zylinska suggests that reflection on AI art should move beyond fascination with whether a machine is creative and attend to the human, technical and social conditions of making [5, 49]. On this account, aesthetic feeling must be studied as a relation rather than as a property residing entirely inside an object or an algorithm. A viewer's response is shaped by knowledge of provenance, by the setting of an exhibition and by the stories attached to an image. The same generated composition may be read differently when it is presented as an anonymous experiment, as part of an artist's sustained project, or as a deliberate imitation of another person's recognizable work.

Beauty and the algorithmic reconstruction of taste

The concept of beauty has repeatedly changed with artistic technique, philosophical thought and social taste. Generative AI introduces a further pressure: certain aesthetic preferences can now be represented as measurable patterns, learned from image collections and used to predict which outputs are likely to please particular audiences. Smoothness, symmetry, recognizable style and compositional balance may become operational targets for optimization. Such indicators can be useful, but they do not comprise the entire field of aesthetic value.

A work can be unsettling and still be artistically important. It may intentionally resist harmony, reject familiar proportions or expose violence and social exclusion. If aesthetic assessment is reduced to immediate visual attractiveness, these critical possibilities become difficult to recognize. An algorithm can rank pictures according to a particular model of preference while remaining silent about why a less popular image matters to a community or historical moment.

Manovich describes a tension within cultural AI: automated editing and recommendation can standardize visual habits, yet technological tools can also multiply creative options and expose users to unfamiliar material [4, 6]. This ambivalence is essential. It would be inaccurate to treat every algorithm as an instrument of cultural uniformity. The outcome depends partly on what the system optimizes, the diversity of the material available to it and the freedom viewers and creators retain to challenge its suggestions.

Consider a hypothetical digital artwork drawing on Central Asian miniature painting or architectural ornament. A generator could produce a polished pattern that combines recognizable motifs. But aesthetic assessment would require more than identifying successful formal resemblance. One would also ask whether the artist understands the source tradition, whether the combination changes its meaning and whether the work offers an interpretation rather than merely a decorative quotation. Cultural beauty involves histories of belonging, adaptation and disagreement. These histories cannot be compressed into a single universal score.

A multidimensional framework for assessing AI-assisted art

The preceding analysis suggests that traditional attention to composition and expressive power should be retained, but supplemented. The following framework is proposed as an interpretive instrument, not as a validated numerical scale.

Formal coherence concerns the relationships among a work's elements: rhythm, balance, tension, internal contrast and the deliberate use of material or medium. Technical polish contributes to this dimension but is not identical to artistic success.

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Contextual meaning asks how the work relates to a recognizable artistic question, a social experience or a cultural conversation. A compelling work may reinterpret inherited forms rather than merely repeat their appearance.

Creative accountability concerns the decisions of the human participants and the transparency of their contributions. The issue is not whether every technical step was performed manually, but whether significant choices can be discussed and defended.

Cultural plurality evaluates whether a practice expands the range of expressive possibilities or reinforces a narrow ideal of beauty. This dimension is especially important where training material and recommendation practices unevenly represent languages and visual traditions.

Ethical provenance considers the conditions under which source material was obtained and transformed, as well as the treatment of artists whose work informs a system's outputs. It includes questions of consent, attribution, labour and misleading presentation. Zylinska's criticism of purely technical narratives of AI encourages this broader social perspective [5, 31–32].

These dimensions do not always point in the same direction. An AI-assisted image might be formally impressive yet culturally shallow; another might be visually rough but artistically significant because it exposes an overlooked problem. A responsible critic should therefore offer an argued judgment rather than a single automated score.

The analysis indicates that artificial intelligence is reshaping artistic creativity at three levels. At the level of production, it changes how possible forms are generated and selected. At the level of authorship, it complicates the relationship among intention, execution and responsibility. At the level of reception, it affects not only the images people encounter but also the habits by which they learn to recognize beauty. These levels are connected, yet none can be explained through the others alone.

A technologically optimistic interpretation emphasizes access. People without advanced training may now experiment with visual composition, narrative structure or sound. An artist can test ideas quickly, explore variations and reserve more time for conceptual development. The history of generative practice supports the view that automation need not remove the artist from the process; it may redirect attention toward the principles governing the work [3, 26].

A critical interpretation reaches a different conclusion. When production becomes inexpensive and abundant, recognizable styles may be repeated without attention to the experiences that originally gave them force. Systems that preferentially display immediately agreeable material may also make aesthetic risk less visible. The danger is not simply that machines will produce too much art. It is that the criteria through which works become visible and valuable may shift toward predictability, circulation and instant approval.

Neither perspective should be accepted without qualification. AI is not one uniform creative agent, and artistic practice is not one uniform human activity. A model used for restoration, a tool used for preliminary sketches and a system used to imitate a living artist raise different aesthetic and ethical questions. The significance of human involvement must be examined in each situation. Benjamin's historical approach offers a useful reminder here: changes in artistic technique alter the conditions of reception as well as production [1, 220–221]. The task is to investigate those changes rather than assume that they automatically improve or destroy art.

For aesthetic education, this implies a shift from teaching students only how to generate appealing images toward teaching them how to interpret and question those images. Learners should be encouraged to compare sources, identify visual conventions, examine the consequences of stylistic borrowing and explain why one result is more meaningful than another. Such practices can make AI a subject of criticism as well as a creative instrument. The proposal remains theoretical; classroom research would be needed to determine which methods most effectively develop independent aesthetic judgment.

The study has limitations. It does not measure audience responses or compare particular models under controlled conditions. Its claims about creativity and beauty are conceptual and should not be represented as empirical findings about all AI-generated artworks. Future work could combine philosophical interpretation with interviews involving artists, curators and viewers from different cultural settings. In particular, research on Uzbek and broader Central Asian artistic traditions could explore how locally situated aesthetic knowledge interacts with widely distributed generative systems.

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CONCLUSION. Artificial intelligence does not merely introduce a new device into artistic production. It makes visible the distinction between generating a form and giving that form artistic significance. The production of images, texts and sounds can be partly automated; the interpretation of their meaning remains embedded in human relationships, institutions and histories. This does not diminish the importance of technological experimentation. It clarifies what experimentation needs in order to become culturally consequential.

The central philosophical result of this article is a relational understanding of artistic creativity. Human agency should be examined through meaningful decisions and accountability rather than through the amount of manual labour performed. Aesthetic feeling should be distinguished from assumptions about machine consciousness. Beauty, finally, should not be equated with the preferences that an algorithm can readily measure. Its critical, historical and culturally specific dimensions deserve independent attention. A future-oriented aesthetics of AI therefore requires more than the celebration of surprising outputs. It requires careful judgment, openness to unfamiliar forms and responsibility for the cultural materials through which those forms are made. The most productive question is not simply whether artificial intelligence can create beauty, but how people can preserve and enlarge the human capacity to recognize, challenge and remake it.

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