Changing Aesthetics and Society in the Digital Age
2025 Symposium of the Dutch Association of Aesthetics / Nederlands Genootschap voor Esthetica (NGE)

18-19 September 2025, University of Antwerp

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1. Conference description

This conference focuses on the **changing relationship between art, aesthetics, and society in the digital age**. In recent years, it has become clear that art and the aesthetic experience are being transformed by digital tools, media, and environments. Not only the production, reproduction, distribution, and archiving of artworks, but also the social impact and political potential of art and its experience are rapidly changing. This conference aims to address this digital shift by asking how we can and should rethink art and aesthetic concepts in relation to their social and political ramifications.

The program offers **four parallel sessions** in which various perspectives on the conference theme are discussed. The first session reflects on the aesthetic experience and how it is impacted by digitalization in and of art. The second parallel session explores various aspects of gaming in relation to art and aesthetics. The third session focuses on the effects of digitalization in the arts on decolonizing and emancipatory dynamics in society. Finally, the fourth parallel session addresses the influence of the digital turn on various topics in art theory, such as creativity, technology and aesthetic judgment. There are contributions by creating artists and researchers in various disciplines, ranging from philosophy to media studies, from art theory and musicology to architecture. In this way, the conference aims to offer a wide range of topics to reflect on the most recent developments in a diversity of art disciplines in relation to society.

In addition, **five keynote speakers** present their own research findings in relation to the conference's theme. Media scholar and digital culture researcher LUCIE CHATEAU discusses the emergent political potential of memes as new aesthetic forms that have arisen in digital capitalism. Architectural designer CRISTINA NAN explores how computational design and additive manufacturing are reconfiguring both the aesthetic and tectonic language of architecture. Philosopher SANEM YAZICIOĞLU reflects on new ways of perceiving and remembering the world through art and the changing meanings of reality and visibility in with the rise of digital art forms. Artist DAVID CLAERBOUT talks about his artistic use of digital technology to distort the perception of time and to blur the boundaries between photography, video art, and painting. Finally, philosopher JÖRG NOLLER discusses the question of experience in the digital lifeworld, drawing on Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic and Husserl's phenomenology.

In this booklet you can find practical information, the detailed program, the abstracts of the contributions and biographies of the speakers. As the organizing committee, we wish you two fascinating days and hope you return home full of new insights and inspiration.

This conference is organised by the Center for European Philosophy (University of Antwerp), the Dutch Association of Aesthetics (Nederlands Genootschap voor Esthetica), and LUCA School of Arts (KU Leuven), with additional financial support from the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO).
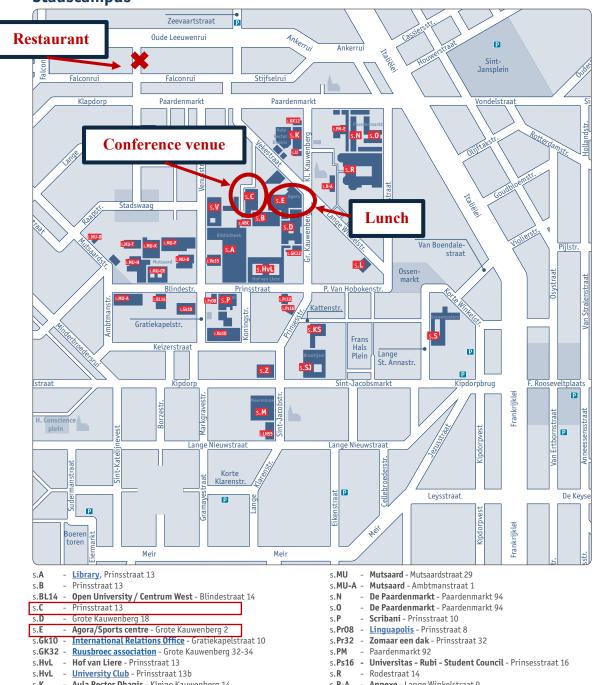
2. Practical information

Relevant links:
- Conference webpage: https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/research-groups/center-for-european-philosophy/activities/ngeconference2025/
- General info about city campus: https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/about-uantwerp/campuses/stadscampus/
- Travel info: https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/about-uantwerp/campuses/travel-info/
- Finding the right room: https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/about-uantwerp/campuses/#492938

Please don't hesitate to speak to anyone of the organizing committee if you have any questions:
- prof. dr. Arthur Cools (University of Antwerp) – arthur.cools@uantwerpen.be
- prof. dr. Jacob Voorthuis (TU Eindhoven/Chair Dutch Association of Aesthetics) - j.c.t.voorthuis@tue.nl
- Dr. Frank Maet (LUCA School of Arts/KU Leuven) - frank.maet@luca-arts.be
- Dr. Marlies De Munck (University of Antwerp) – marlies.demunck@uantwerpen.be
- Dr. Anthony Longo (Tilburg University) – a.n.longo@tilburguniversity.edu
- General e-mail Dutch Association of Aesthetics: ng.esthetica@gmail.com

Stadscampus

s.**A** - **Library**, Prinsstraat 13
s.**B** - Prinsstraat 13
s.**BL14** - **Open University / Centrum West** - Blindestraat 14
s.**C** - Prinsstraat 13
s.**D** - Grote Kauwenberg 18
s.**E** - **Agora/Sports centre** - Grote Kauwenberg 2
s.**Gk10** - **International Relations Office** - Gratiekapelstraat 10
s.**GK32** - **Ruusbroec association** - Grote Kauwenberg 32-34
s.**HvL** - **Hof van Liere** - Prinsstraat 13
s.**HvL** - **University Club** - Prinsstraat 13b
s.**K** - **Aula Rector Dhanis** - Kleine Kauwenberg 14
s.**KK12** - **Linguapolis** - Kleine Kauwenberg 12
s.**Ko10** - **komida / Labotheek** - Koningstraat 8
s.**KS** - **Het Brantijser** - Kattenstraat 10
s.**L** - Lange Winkelstraat 40-42
s.**M** - **De Meerminne** - Sint-Jacobstraat 2

s.**MU** - **Mutsaard** - Mutsaardstraat 29
s.**MU-A** - **Mutsaard** - Ambtmanstraat 1
s.**N** - **De Paardenmarkt** - Paardenmarkt 94
s.**O** - **De Paardenmarkt** - Paardenmarkt 94
s.**P** - **Scribani** - Prinsstraat 10
s.**Pr08** - **Linguapolis** - Prinsstraat 8
s.**Pr32** - **Zomaar een dak** - Prinsstraat 32
s.**PM** - Paardenmarkt 92
s.**Ps16** - **Universitas - Rubi - Student Council** - Prinsesstraat 16
s.**R** - Rodestraat 14
s.**R-A** - **Annexe** - Lange Winkelstraat 9
s.**S** - **Grauwzusters** - Lange Sint-Annastraat 7
s.**SJ** - **Het Brantijser** - Sint-Jacobsmarkt 13
s.**V** - Venusstraat 23
s.**Ve35** - **Moral consultant / Prevention Service** - Venusstraat 35
s.**Z** - **Peter Benoit** - Kipdorp 61

University of Antwerp

3. Conference program

Day 1 – Thursday 18 September

9:00	Welcome address (S.C.102)
9:30	Keynote 1: Lucie Chateau (Utrecht University), "Anxious Aesthetics: The Memetic Origins of Slop and Brainrot" (S.C.102)
10:30	Coffee break
11:00	**Parallel session 1 (S.C.101):** Aesthetic experience *Moderator: Marlies De Munck* 1.1 Daan Geysen, "Algorithmic Steering on Platforms" 1.2 Eef Schoolmeesters, "A Blurred Frame: Experiencing Immersive Digital Art through Everyday Aesthetics" 1.3 Kristof Timmermans, "The Blind, A Lecture Performance on Immersion, Disorientation and Digital Disappearance" 1.4 Kristí Fekete, "Mundane Digital Formats as Novelistic Forms"	**Parallel session 2 (S.C.102):** Gaming *Moderator: Anthony Longo* 2.1 Nele Van de Mosselaer & Kathleen Murphy-Hollies, "Conspiracy Thinking and Virtual World Interpretation" 2.2 Afra Willems, "Repair to Play: Unlearning Imperialism in Digital Games" 2.3 Xiaoou Ji & Steven Malliet, "Artificial Desire in the Digital Age" 2.4 Bernadette Geiger, "Between Real and Realistic"
13:00	Lunch (Agora Caffee)
14:30	Keynote 2: Cristina Nan (Eindhoven University of Technology), "Towards a Situated Digital Materiality. Beyond the Layer: Craft, Culture, and Computation in Printed Architecture" (S.C.102)
15:30	Coffee break
16:00	Keynote 3: David Claerbout (S.C.102)
17:00	End of program day 1
18:00	Conference dinner *Restaurant De Lokeend: Generaal Belliardstraat, 11, 2000 Antwerpen*

9:00	Coffee
9:30	Keynote 4: Jörg Noller (University of Augsburg), "Experiencing the Digital Lifeworld" (S.C.102)
10:30	Coffee break
11:00	**Parallel session 3 (S.C.101):** Emancipation, Decolonization *Moderator: Marlies De Munck* 3.1 Frank Maet, "Digital Art and the End of all Neo-Liberalism and Authoritarianism" 3.2 Vinicius de Aguiar, "Flusser, Opera, and the Emancipatory Potential of Technical Images" 3.3 Lisa Ezrati, "Decolonizing from the Margins: Virtual Museums in the Context of War and Political Struggle" 3.4 Virgilio Vasconcelos, "Animating the Postdigital: Pharmacological Reflections on Gen-AI, Cannibalism and Artistic Practice"	**Parallel session 4 (S.C.102):** Art Theory *Moderator: Clinton Peter Verdonschot* 4.1 Errol Boon, "One Last Miracle: On Creativity and Artificial Intelligence" 4.2 Yasmine J. Erden, "AI Art, Aesthetics (and Ethics) in a Digital Age" 4.3 Alexandra Crouwers, "Form Follows Machine: Digital Tools, Agency, and Authorship" 4.4 Jacob Voorthuis, "Aesthetic Judgment: An Inferentialist Reckoning"
13:00	Lunch (Agora Caffee)
14:30	Keynote 5: Sanem Yazicioğlu (Istanbul University), "Appearances of the World: Art and Durability" (S.C.102)
15:30	Coffee break
16:00	Panel discussion and round-up (S.C.102)
17:00	End of program day 2

4. Book of abstracts

Keynote 1: Lucie Chateau, "Anxious Aesthetics: The Memetic Origins of Slop and Brainrot"

Abstract: Under digital capitalism, unique modes of image circulation have given rise to new aesthetic forms that have had a long-term effect on arts, politics and culture: memes. This talk examines the aesthetic lineage of memes and discusses their role in society as a distinct aesthetic category of our time. It will elaborate on underground and surface aesthetics, two aesthetic undercurrents that explain the evolution of meme aesthetics and their function. Moreover, understanding the aesthetic categories of underground and surface aesthetics helps us unpack the significance of two recent aesthetic trends: Brainrot and Slop. Brainrot is a meme genre that collects the detritus of the internet, low-quality content, both aesthetically and intellectually speaking. Brainrot content is bad for your brain: it quite literally rots your brain. It tries to take up space in the crowded attention economy by being provokingly ugly, bad or stupid. Slop, on the other hand, is glossy, sleek and disquietingly hyperreal. Slop is a term that has gained traction in the last year as a way to refer to the constant and overwhelming output of GenAI. Slop is engaged with lazily, sloppily and spontaneously, not created with the aim of embodying a particular aesthetic mode, but rather mimicking others. This talk will put these two aesthetic phenomena in context and expand on their role in the digital economy.

Bio: Dr. Lucie Chateau is a media scholar and digital culture researcher interested in meme aesthetics. Her PhD entitled *Anxious Aesthetics: Memes and Alienation in Digital Capitalism* investigates the subversive potential of aesthetics online and argues we are witnessing the emergence of experimental aesthetic forms that negotiate new forms of representation under digital capitalism. Therefore, her work has looked at a variety of meme genres such as depression memes, anti-capitalist memes and climate change memes through the lens of critical theory and contemporary work on digital capitalism. She specifically looks at the meme economy as a phenomenon within digital capitalism that can mobilise and instigate critique through aesthetics, and has written about the place of alienation as a mediator in this process.

Parallel session 1: Aesthetic experience

1.1 Daan Geysen, "Algorithmic Steering on Platforms"

Abstract: Algorithmic streaming platforms have sparked a crisis in artistic autonomy. Since the mid-2010s these platforms have shifted music discovery from exploration to platform-driven selection, employing algorithmic recommendations and trending

playlists to structure preferences and categorize users. In doing so, they do not simply suggest music; they reshape its ecosystem, dictating what reaches listeners and, therefore, the conditions under which it is experienced and composed, causing unconventional artistic practices to keep losing visibility. A growing body of work in music sociology, platform studies, and digital media has highlighted how these algorithmic systems reinforce existing social inequalities, compel artists to adapt their work to platform norms, intensify competition for attention and diminish diversity in listening habits. Even engineers within these platforms acknowledge the narrowing effects of recommendation algorithms. In this context, it becomes urgent to ask how artists might reclaim agency in a digital music ecosystem increasingly dominated by commercial algorithms. Through critical artistic engagement, the fuel of these platforms, creative agency can be reclaimed by (1) forging intergeneric composition practices through intermedial strategies, (2) disrupting algorithmic curation in digital music ecosystems via custom-built tools, and (3) revealing the impact of these interventions on stylistic intersections experienced by creators and listeners. Combining artistic inquiry with music sociology and digital media studies, I begin a project offering an in-depth theoretical study from multiple perspectives, a practical framework for both creators and observers and a novel artistic output. Building on concepts and methodologies of Georgina Born, Tia DeNora and Nick Seaver, the methodology compares a nuanced literature study through the construction of a theoretical framework, mapping out the algorithmic influence on music creation and experience. This framework is consistently evaluated through qualitative interviews with two large, diverse focus groups of artists engaging with digital platforms and listeners open to alternatives to traditional streaming services. This evaluated framework serves as inquiry for practice-based prototype development and intermedial and intergeneric compositional experimentation, which in turn reinforms the framework through new qualitative interviews with the focus groups. Following this strategy, it confronts algorithmic power structures by developing musical works and tools that defy genre and medial boundaries, challenging platform-driven aesthetics, and offering pathways to transform digital music culture from within. It empowers artists to foster a more equitable digital music ecosystem.

Bio: Daan Geysen (1998) is an intermedial electroacoustic composer and musicologist, interested in the intersection of aesthetic and socio-cultural practices, digital technology, intergeneric composition and the impact of those topics on artistic and listening practices. His compositions, often derived from artistic research, have been played in Flagey (Brussels), Arsonic (Mons), Gaudeamus Festival (Utrecht) and Grachtenfestival (Amsterdam) among others.

1.2 Eef Schoolmeesters, "A Blurred Frame: Experiencing Immersive Digital Art through Everyday Aesthetics"

Abstract: Traditional aesthetic appreciation of an artwork often involves forming critical judgements through a disinterested, detached attitude. We bracket our suppositions, focus on its appearance and do not include the work's social use or signification, to allow for imaginative interpretation (Rancière, 2009). This distancing, or defamiliarization, is a

strategy focused on categorizing and classifying the framed, isolated object (Saito, 2017). However, digital and immersive art forms like virtual reality challenge this framework, as they blur the boundaries between viewer and artwork. Therefore, I aim to rethink our aesthetic attitude through this digital turn in art as its consequences could also impact our future daily lives.

To address this, I will explore everyday aesthetics and the concept of an aesthetic atmosphere, which offers a broad, more inclusive, aesthetic perspective. Following Saito (2017), I will approach aesthetics as value-neutral in a classificatory sense, as it allows us to incorporate subjective, bodily experiences into describing the aesthetic atmosphere. This proves important for our understanding of immersive digital experiences.

Next, I examine Meiro Koizumi's VR work *Prometheus the Fire-Bringer* (2023) as an example. The audience is invited to physically engage with the work through mimicking certain hand movements, allowing one to identify with a digital self. Even though Koizumi himself sees moving images as a time-object, this VR work shows that one enters the artwork rather than observing it from a distance, an important characteristic of most VR artworks. This immersive quality complicates traditional framing and emphasizes the possibility to think of a future where the distinction between technology, art, and life becomes   blurred.

Through this breakdown of artwork-viewer, I will also look at the possibility that VR and AR will become deeply integrated into our everyday lives to emphasize the need for a more immersive aesthetics. According to Saito, aesthetics is about bringing background to foreground, whether its a (framed) artwork or something from everyday life (Saito, 2017). Where this characterization can include a disinterested position, it more importantly allows us to integrate everyday experiences into our aesthetic understanding. In turn, this can help us reflect on future digital and technological changes and its aesthetic impact on our lives.

Finally, I will discuss some strengths and limits of everyday aesthetics and aesthetic atmosphere in relation to immersive digital (art) experiences. For example, while some immersive experiences may still clearly be framed since the experience ends, and one can discuss the art object as such just like after a movie, advancing technology may render such boundaries less clear. Understanding the aesthetic atmosphere could be important for when the art-object is less straightforward and our experiences change, and digital technology becomes integrated even more frameless within our lives.

Bio: Eef Schoolmeesters works as a philosophy teacher at Tilburg University and has a practice in visual arts and writing. She also has experience working with various cultural platforms, from producing to coordinating projects. Trained as an artist and philosopher, she is particularly interested in aesthetic issues, from contemporary art and nature to everyday aesthetics and their potential social, political and ethical impact. This is expressed in the short philosophical essays she has published and through her artistic research practice, as seen for example in the video-essay 'Dust Seeding '(2024) on the aesthetic impact of climate change.

1.3 Kristof Timmermans, "The Blind, A Lecture Performance on Immersion, Disorientation and Digital Disappearance"

Abstract: This lecture performance draws on Maurice Maeterlinck's 1890 symbolist play *The Blind (Les Aveugles)* to explore the political and aesthetic implications of immersive technology in the digital age. In Maeterlinck's play, a group of blind characters waits in vain for guidance, abandoned in a forest by a priest who has died. Our adaptation places the audience in their shoes—both physically and virtually—inside a hybrid installation where reality and digital simulation gradually displace one another.

The audience becomes "the blind," navigating an environment composed of abstract physical structures and layered virtual worlds. Through the use of real-time portals—both spatial and sensory—the performance explores how presence, disorientation, and agency are reshaped in immersive environments. Sound design plays a crucial role: using spatial audio and 3D sound technologies, voices and environmental sounds circulate through the space, responding to the audience's movements and influencing not only individual but collective perception. As spectators cross virtual thresholds, they descend deeper into the simulated forest while the physical world fades away—until, at the climax, the virtual collapses and the real returns in an uncanny, estranged form.

This project is part of the research *Sense of Wonder: Artistic Portals Between the Real and the Virtual* (Kristof Timmerman, Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp), which investigates how transitions between the physical and the virtual can intensify immersion and affect subjectivity. The performance confronts audiences with themes of loss, political disorientation, and the disappearance of leadership—mirroring contemporary crises of governance, collective action, and technological overwhelm. Rather than offering clarity or catharsis, *The Blind* foregrounds a shared state of sensory and ideological suspension.

Drawing from both symbolist aesthetics and current digital technologies, this lecture performance proposes an experiential and philosophical reflection on how immersive digital art may not only augment reality, but obscure it. It questions whether the promise of digital immersion is one of liberation or of blindness—and whether the transition back into the real still offers meaning.

The lecture performance will combine live narration, video documentation, sound recordings and symbolic gestures to evoke the immersive experience of *The Blind* in a lecture hall setting. It invites the audience to inhabit the memory of immersion rather than immersion itself, oscillating between experiential testimony and critical reflection. By blurring the boundary between performance and presentation, it offers a sensory-philosophical inquiry into what it means to be disoriented—digitally, politically, and aesthetically.

Bio: Kristof Timmerman is ontwerper en regisseur van digitale performances en installaties, werkzaam op het gebied van live, interactieve digitale omgevingen en virtual reality. Hij werkte voor verschillende theatergezelschappen, waaronder het experimentele CREW. In 2006 richtte hij het digitale kunstenaarscollectief studio.POC op waarmee hij theatervoorstellingen en installaties maakte zoals IPEX (2006), Kroes (2008), Bloggers (2010), EGG (2014), Bodymap (2015) en Empty Mind (2021). Hij is voorzitter en coördinator van MAXlab, de onderzoeksgroep rond de interactie tussen kunst en digitale

technologie aan de Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen. Hij is als promotor en onderzoeker betrokken bij verschillende onderzoeksprojecten rond virtual en augmented reality, meestal in een multidisciplinaire context, en werkt momenteel aan zijn doctoraatsonderzoek 'Sense of Wonder. Artistic portals between the real and the virtual'. Hij was een van de oprichters van het Immersive Lab van de AP Hogeschool en organiseert jaarlijkse de zomerschool 'Storytelling in Virtual Reality. An Immersive Encounter'. Hij is docent en veelgevraagd coach voor VR producties en digital storytelling.

1.4 Kristí Fekete, "Mundane Digital Formats as Novelistic Forms"

Abstract: My current research is a novel titled Garabonciás. It explores the impact of migration on an individual's sense of native language. This is rooted in my experience of growing up in different cultures and languages. The thinking tools for this are the concepts of heteroglossia (coexistence of multiple voices) and nomadic subject (constantly changing subjectivity). Heteroglossia is a concept of the literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin. Novels depict the social life of discourse by experimenting with stylisations. A novel characterises individual speech.

I put Bakhtin's heteroglossia in dialogue with Rosi Braidotti's nomadic subject. For migrants, various, often contrarian experiences are challenging to express with universal truths. Braidotti proposes a fabulative style of writing, one that allows different modes and truths to coexist. This adds social action to heteroglossia.

As a graphic designer and writer, such a nomadic writing style suggests both a textual and visual methodology. How can digital interactions and interfaces stylise language? How can analogue and digital spaces host various modes of truth? How are these co-shared, co-authored?

My practice explores the shared physicalities between digital and analogue writings and publications. Books can be paperbacks or PDF files; texting is a form of dialogue; organizing content in folders has curatorial potential; handwritten notebooks are compilations of knowledge, just like the notes application.

In my previous work, PDF features (comments, hyperlinks, etc.) are used as separate storylines that create one overarching narrative. In a similar note, I type-set poems as file names. I see a particular poetic sensitivity in mundane digital tools. To tell current stories, coinciding analog and digital is an aesthetic challenge. I propose the novelistic concept of heteroglossia and the philosophical approach of a nomadic subject as methodological tools to handle this.

Bio: Kristí an artist with dual graphic design and writing practice. In her work, language is a collective space to phantasise alternative truths. She works as a lecturer at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp. Kristí has a degree graphic design (Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp) and an advanced master of research in art and design (Sint Lucas, Antwerp). Her writing has been previously published in De Witte Raaf, Belgium, and Land, Luxemburg. Her book we are all liches now has been published by bodiless in 2023. Kristí is a member of the collective spring pears. We are rooted in feminist ethics of care. Through friend- and mentorship, we are working on creating frameworks that support artistic inquiry beyond institutional inhibitions.

Parallel session 2: Gaming

2.1 Nele Van de Mosselaer & Kathleen Murphy-Hollies, "Conspiracy Thinking and Virtual World Interpretation"

Abstract: There are surprising similarities between conspiracy theorists and videogame players. This is exemplified by players' decade-long (and ultimately fruitless) search for the function of a certain door in *Shadow of the Colossus* (documented in Geller (2019)). Yet, whereas real-life conspiracy theorists are judged for creating epistemically hostile environments, videogame players are often praised for their inquisitive attitudes and far-fetched or even false theories. One plausible reason for this is that players adopt an explicitly aesthetic attitude, *imagining* what is fictionally true within artificial worlds. Conspiracy theorists, on the other hand, form *beliefs* not similarly bracketed from the actual world.

Despite this belief/imagination distinction, we propose that the modes of engagement of conspiracy thinking and videogame interpretation are very similar. In this presentation, we focus on the following three influences on interpretative practices in conspiracy communities and game fandoms:

1) **A focus on intentionality.** Conspiracy theorists often exhibit "hypersensitive agency detection" (Douglas et al. 2016). They reject coincidence as an explanation, instead perceiving *unseen, intentional forces* as responsible for events. Videogame players reason similarly when interpreting virtual worlds. The knowledge that there *is* an unseen force—the game designer—who carefully planned every "virtual event", justifiably guides players' interpretations of such events (Van de Mosselaer & Gualeni 2020).

2) **A desire for clarity.** Nguyen (2021) notes how both conspiracy thinking and videogame play are made pleasurable by the "thought-terminating" sense of clarity they offer. Conspiracy theorists strive for aha-moments, where all pieces of a (perceived) puzzle fall into place (Van de Cruys et al. 2024), clearing the world of bothersome "ambiguities and complexities" (Nguyen 2020, 68). Virtual worlds are deliberately designed to enable such experiences, causing players to perceive any problem in such worlds as a solvable puzzle.

3) **The need for a sense of belonging.** Conspiracy theories can meet social needs by creating communities through shared processes of interpretation (Uscinski & Parent 2014). Again, virtual worlds are often designed to prompt multiplayer experiences of deciphering and solving problems together, thus similarly shaping fan communities.

By discussing these three aspects, we reveal the entanglement of the aesthetic and epistemic appeal of conspiracy-like interpretation. Through various examples, we show how conspiracy thinking often has aesthetic motivations and how the aesthetic appreciation of virtual worlds, in turn, is particularly well-suited to satisfying epistemic needs that many—if not all—of us have. This might worry us that virtual worlds are dangerous training grounds for conspiracy thinking. We suggest, instead, that virtual worlds demonstrate and offer alternative means to fulfilling aesthetic/epistemic needs, which are less harmful but still embrace the relevant positive aesthetic/epistemic experiences.

As a final consideration, we reflect on the implications of new developments like AI and procedural generation. These introduce new kinds of realism, complexity, and unpredictability into virtual worlds. This threatens the clarity and crispness of these worlds, making them potentially *less* suitable as providers of meaningful interaction, both in an aesthetic and epistemic sense.

Bio: Dr Nele Van de Mosselaer is Assistant Professor in Philosophy at the Tilburg University School of Humanities and Digital Sciences. Her research is situated within aesthetics, game studies, narratology, and the philosophy of fiction, with a particular focus on virtual worlds. Her work explores the relation between imagination, emotions, actions, and desires in the context of fiction experiences. She is especially interested in how the boundaries between reality and fiction are blurred within virtual environments. She also co-designed a philosophical videogame that engages with these themes, available to play at https://doors.gua-le-ni.com.

Dr Kathleen Murphy-Hollies is a Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham. She works on philosophy of cognitive science, social and political epistemology, and psychopathology. In particular, she's interested in rationality and emotion as they vary across the spectrum of strange belief from everyday to clinical contexts. As part of Project EPIC (Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare), she conceptualises what epistemic justice looks like in cases of sharing highly implausible beliefs, such as delusions. She is also book review editor at Philosophical Psychology, and leading a project group on "Film, Storytelling and Conspiracies" at the University of Birmingham.

2.2 Afra Willems, "Repair to Play: Unlearning Imperialism in Digital Games"

Abstract: From the beginning, many videogames have contained imperial storylines or reiterated colonial interactions. In the past decade, a growing number of scholars have started to address problematic colonial ideas and biases in games, and the field of postcolonial games studies is expanding. This paper aims to contribute to this emerging field by approaching these colonialities in videogames through a philosophy of technology lens: the paper argues that colonial bias in videogames is not only embedded in narratives, audiovisual content, or interactions but colonial bias also resides in the technological foundations of the medium itself. Building on Anna Anthropy's (2012) redefinition of 'videogames' as 'digital games' , the paper explores how videogame engines impact the positions of independent developers, particularly game makers from 'the non-West' . Anthropy's term 'digital games' foregrounds technology as a foundational videogame element. Simultaneously, the label allows us to situate videogames in the larger tradition of 'games' , which welcomes wider interpretations of cultural roots and inspirations that are easily missed otherwise. Important for this paper, Anthropy's material focus on technology makes room for a Benjaminian analysis of videogames, power and (de)colonisation based on the reproducibility of the medium. Walter Benjamin (1968) famously argues that artworks lose (some of) their authenticity or 'aura' when being reproduced. Yet simultaneously, these 'weakened' artworks gain political power because their reproductions increase the artwork's public reach. Videogames challenge Benjamin's theory since they are almost always reproducible yet only exist when played or performed. Based on this unique feature, the paper suggests that marginalised game

designers can use videogames to increase their visibility and keep their authenticity. Finally, the paper engages with Ariella Aïsha Azoulay's (2019) critique of Benjamin's theory of reproducibility and authenticity, which she claims unknowingly reiterates imperial biases. The paper concludes that a decolonial analysis of videogame engines can contribute to a broader understanding of some of the more covert colonial biases in videogames. Knowledge about the imperial roots and impact of videogame technology may also help marginalised game developers to use the medium in a way that respects their authentic voices yet helps them to make themselves heard.

Bio: Afra Willems (she/her) is interested in imagery & politics. Afra got her fine art and philosophy degrees from ArtEZ University of the Arts (MFA) and the University of Twente (MSc). Afra teaches at Saxion University of Applied Sciences for the Creative Media and Game Technologies (CMGT) program and works for the Saxion research group for Ethics & Technology.

2.3 Xiaoou Ji & Steven Malliet, "Artificial Desire in the Digital Age: an artistic research approach"

Abstract: We scroll, we click, we accept the next video the algorithm serves. We watch ads, we purchase, and we repeat this series of actions unconsciously, as if caught in a carefully woven trap of artificial desire and gradually losing the ability to resist in the invisible process of continuous self- alienation (Simondon, 1958; Hui, 2016). As Stiegler (2014; 2015) posits, we are living in an era of 'Symbolic Misery': material production no longer constitutes the primary base structure of society, instead, the manipulation of desire and perception becomes the main force that sustains power structures (Stiegler, 2014; Foucault, 1980-88). Driven by technological apparatuses (Agamben, 2009; Foucault, 1977), aesthetics, as a medium of perception and desire, carries the promise to trigger creative understanding, but is outsourced, standardized and commoditized. It becomes an industrial mechanism that generates passive sensory pleasure and uniform tastes, weakening its potential for generating subjectivity and individuation through neutral and unified consciousness (Stiegler, 2015). Based on Stiegler, this paper examines: How can digital art, through experiential externalization (Stiegler, 2015), encourage individuals to regain agency over their perception and desires (aesthetics), and disclose the systematic manipulation of subjectivity by technological apparatuses in the digital society?

Applying the method of artistic research, this paper reflects on the creation of I Don't Know Who I Am (Ji, 2024), an installation game by the first author of this paper, to engage with this question. It invites the player to watch a five-minute monologue (video) about a cow, exploring his secrets and desires. The monologue is inspired by philosophy of technology, reconstructing the ambiguous ways in which the technological apparatuses guide consciousness, regulate behavior, and blur the player's perception of the boundaries of their desires (Lacan et al., 2001). Through meaningless details, such as eating habits (Figure 1), watching cow porn (Figure 2) and worries about climate change (Figure 3) an artificial desire is promoted in the players, resulting in an ethical dilemma that follows the monologue.

After watching the monologue, the player will be invited to face a plate of real grass and choose whether to eat it. This act, as a practice of experiential externalization, forces the player to face the unconscious choice between their own desires and artificial desires, stimulating critical reflection on the meaning of individuation (Stiegler, 2015; Hui, 2016), as facilitated by a discussion with the artist-researcher at the end of the game. This game encourages players to reflect on the relationship between individuals, technology and society through multi-sensory play and the re-cognition of individuation boundaries, and to make meaning (aesthetic) an act of capturing based on experience rather than a simple reception process. It showcases how artistic creation can be a paradigm to complement existing philosophical approaches to critically reflect on the relationship between art, aesthetics and society in the digital age.

Bio: **Xiaoou (Olivia) Ji** is a PhD researcher at LUCA School of Arts, KU Leuven (Belgium). Her research explores the philosophy of technology through arKsKc-experimental game design. She experiments with the creaKon of embodied and mulKsensory installaKon games, creaKng a circular dialogue between arKsKc creaKon, philosophical theory, societal reflecKon and player experience through criKcal and ethically meaningful play.

Steven Malliet is an Associate Professor at the University of Antwerp, and a lecturer- researcher at LUCA School of Arts, where he is head of the Meaningful Play research cluster. He is acKve in several research projects that involve the arKsKc creaKon of games in a dialogue with philosophical and ethical concepts, and among others co-editor of the book 'Vice City Virtue: Moral Issues in Digital Game Play'. He has published internaKonally on the topics of game analysis, game realism, and arKsKc research in games and animaKon.

2.4 Bernadette Geiger, "Between Real and Realistic"

Abstract: »Between Real and Realistic« investigates how the visual and narrative design of video games affects the perception of social realities — specifically labour and trade unions. In the format of a lecture performance, insights into the research are presented as a live voice over along with in-game video recordings. Through an in-depth study of the triple-A game Red Dead Redemption 2 (RDR2), the lecture demonstrates how the boundaries between real and realistic become blurred, while at the same time reinforcing hegemonic notions of labour struggles and political agency. Games as a genre are settled between art and entertainment which makes them a significant aspect of popular culture. The aim is to gain an understanding of the impact role-playing games (RPGs) have on social and political discourse. What limitations does the game exhibit in addressing the complexities of labour struggles and to what extent does it influence our perception of labour? The lecture performance reveals not only contemporary political mindsets, but also how games as a medium influences our collective political imagination. To analyse RDR2, qualitative image and video interpretation (Bohnsack, 2011) is used to decipher the implicit meaning in images and videos. Focusing on how the content is displayed, selected scenes are examined to contextualise labour and trade unions as well as their historic backgrounds. Video games offer the opportunity to reflect on social power relations - at the same time, they harbour the danger of naturalising systemic inequalities through aestheticization and narrative structures. The study shows that game mechanics

create a set of rules that contain an implicit rhetoric, which influences the perception of social, political and economic realities. The increasing realism in the aesthetics of the game conveys a depth that creates a connection to reality. The analysis of the selected scenes has shown that the non-playable characters are portrayed as interchangeable and dispensable. Their value is reduced to their labour, as tools in the service of capital. This representation reinforces the assumption that workers are powerless against the forces of capital and that capitalism is an immutable system that cannot be challenged or changed. The reproduction of hegemonic values in RPGs such as RDR2 reflects the exploitative conditions under which video games are produced called crunch. In constant competition with one another, the video game becomes a refuge for one ' s own powerlessness in the face of the bourgeois-capitalist contradictions of reality. Video games are more than entertainment — they are cultural artefacts that shape and reinforce social norms and ideologies. A medium that is so omnipresent in our society, requires a discourse that critically scrutinises this and to which I want to contribute beyond this study.

Bio: Bernadette Geiger investigates the impact of technologies on society, in particular artificial intelligence, automation, and labour. Her focus is on exploring possibilities outside of current paradigms - whether they are paradigms of aesthetics, usage, technology, or economic boundaries. She studied Design: Product and Communication at HTW Dresden and Experimental Publishing at Piet Zwart Institute Rotterdam. As part of the live event Prompt Battle she performed at several conferences and media festivals like re:publica, Transmediale and Beta Festival and published as a co-author in the peer-reviewed journal feministische studien. She is currently based in Rotterdam.

Keynote 2: Christina Nan, "Towards a Situated Digital Materiality. Beyond the Layer: Craft, Culture, and Computation in Printed Architecture"

Abstract: In an era where digital tools are reshaping the fabric of architectural production, this talk explores how computational design and additive manufacturing are reconfiguring both the aesthetic and tectonic language of architecture. Moving beyond efficiency and automation, robotic 3D printing enables a renewed engagement with ornament—not as surface decoration, but as an integral expression of material behavior, process, and form. Through experimental projects and material research, the lecture examines how the layered logic of printing introduces a novel form of tectonic legibility, where construction, expression, and digital craft converge. What emerges is a new kind of ornamentality and possibly aesthetic—rooted in code, extruded through matter, and responsive to the ecological and cultural challenges of our time.

Computation often addresses complex geometric problems—but in architecture, it should also address a cultural dimension: how space is broken down, patterned, and inhabited. This narrative looks at how computational design paired with robotic fabrication can become a vehicle for encoding tradition, ritual, and regional identity within contemporary fabrication.

This lecture explores how computational design and robotic fabrication in architecture, can move beyond industrial repetition to engage with cultural nuance,

architectural expression, and the realities of making. It argues for a shift from product-driven optimization toward a craft-informed, site-aware, and architecturally grounded approach—where advanced fabrication isn't merely a technical operation but a cultural and spatial act. At the center of this shift could be the emergence/invention of the computational ornamentalist: a designer who leverages algorithmic tools not for formal novelty alone, but to cultivate material sensibility, expressive tectonics, and place-specific meaning. In this context, ornament is reimagined—not as superficial decoration, but as a deeply embedded language of making, rooted in process, matter, and digital craft.

Bio: Cristina Nan is an Assistant Professor in the Unit of Architectural Design and Engineering (ADE) in the Department of the Built Environment of Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e). In her research, Cristina focuses on emerging technologies relating to computational design and digital fabrication, such as additive manufacturing, automation, architectural robotics and material experimentation. The process of making is central in her research, in which she considers algorithm-aided design, aspects of conventional craftsmanship and digital fabrication as equal, interlinked parameters. Cristina explores hybridized material systems and both digital and non-digital fabrication strategies in relation to non-standard geometries. 3D clay printing, 3D concrete printing, form optimization, the concept of digital materiality and material circularity are key areas of Cristina's focus. During her PhD, Cristina, focused on architectural robotics and machinecraft. She was part of the research team that developed the Minibuilders at the Institute of Advanced Architecture of Catalonia in Barcelona (Spain), which was internationally widely published. Her work was exhibited at the National Museum of Scotland, Festival of Architecture Montpellier 2019, London Design Fair, ArcInTex Edinburgh, Concrete Construction Centre part of Futurebuild 2019 at ExCel London, the Venice 2023 Architecture Biennial Time Space Existence and Dutch Design Week 2021/22/23.

Keynote 3: David Claerbout (video-artist)

Bio: David Claerbout is a Belgian contemporary artist, born on October 2, 1969, in Kortrijk, Belgium. He is renowned for his innovative work in the realm of digital art and video art. Claerbout studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp and later at the National Higher Institute for Fine Arts in Antwerp. His artworks often explore the concept of time and reality, utilizing digital technology to distort the perception of time and blur the boundaries between photography, video art, and painting. Claerbout's works are often contemplative and introspective, inviting the audience to ponder the relationship between image, time, and experience. Some of his most notable works include "The Algiers' Sections of a Happy Moment" (2008), "Kindergarten Antonio Sant'Elia" (2014), and "Radio Piece (Hong Kong)" (2015). Claerbout's work has been exhibited in prominent museums and galleries worldwide, earning him international recognition as a leading figure in the contemporary art world.

Keynote 4: Jörg Noller, "Experiencing the Digital Lifeworld"

Abstract: The talk discusses the question of experience in the digital lifeworld, drawing on Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic and Husserl's phenomenology. The talk deals with our experience of digital phenomena such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and digital games. Furthermore, the talk discusses how we experience and shape reality through these media.

Bio: Jörg Noller is Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Augsburg. He studied philosophy, literature studies, history and theology at Tübingen and Munich, and obtained his PhD in 2015 with a thesis on Kant's concept of autonomy. He has published numerous books on Kant and German idealism, including *The Concept of Will in Classical German Philosophy* (with Manja Kisner, 2020) as well as articles in journals including the *European Journal of Philosophy* and *Kant-Studien*. Since 2023, he is the head of the DFG project "Kant's Theory of Error" at the University of Leipzig. He also serves as Co-editor of the OA journal *Philosophy and Digitality* and is co-founder of the DGPhil-AG "Philosophical Digitality Research".

Parallel session 3: Emancipation, decolonization

3.1 Frank Maet, "Digital Art and the End of all Neo-Liberalism and Authoritarianism: A Look at Today's Culture Through a Newman-Lyotard Lens"

Abstract: When asked in a 1962 interview about the meaning of his paintings for the world, the artist Barnett Newman responded that if someone looked carefully at his abstract paintings, it would signify "the end of all state capitalism and totalitarianism." Referring to Newman's colour field paintings, French post-structuralist philosopher Jean-François Lyotard later explained the emergence of the sublime in the 1980s. According to Lyotard, the sublime in art reveals the existence of something unpresentable. He recognized this particular appearance of the sublime in modern art, which, as he stated, "make(s) visible that there is something which can be conceived, and which can neither be seen nor made visible" (Lyotard 1984).

Furthermore, Lyotard argued that modern visual abstraction emerged in contrast to the influence of modern technology, which had become omnipresent in both art and society. Industrial technology, he claimed, is associated with an inhuman tendency, as it reduces everything to machinic measurements and calculations. Returning to Barnett Newman's statement about the end of state capitalism and totalitarianism, and interpreting it through Lyotard's analysis, it becomes clear that we can attribute a positive, anarchic power to the sublime. Its appearance breaks away from dominant political structures as Newman suggested. At the same time, the aesthetic experience of art enables a shared group feeling, a form of intersubjectivity, which can give rise to a new kind of politics.

In my talk, I will elaborate on this Newman-Lyotard reading of art and politics and extend it to our current societal condition. I take into account the deep digitalization of society and the rise of generative AI on the one hand, and a shifting geopolitical landscape on the other. In my title, I replaced Newman's reference to state capitalism and totalitarianism with the more contemporary terms neo-liberalism and authoritarianism. Nevertheless, even in the face of digital transformation, the pursuit of presenting the unpresentable continues and is explicitly tied to an anarchic stance.

I will explore this through the work of contemporary philosophers Cathérine Malabou and Bernard Stiegler, focusing on Malabou's notion of "irreducible responselessness" and Stiegler's pursuit of incalculability. The project of modern art, as interpreted by Lyotard, continues within the broader horizon of global contemporary art. I will discuss how visual artist David Claerbout aesthetically engages with algorithmic processes, in a way that echoes how modern avant-garde painters like Degas incorporated the rise of photography into their image-making practices.

All of the thinkers and artists I reference share a political ambition. I present them as true anarchists who reveal that dominant political and technological systems are constructs built upon a void. This implies that these systems can still be dismantled and transformed, thanks to the presence of an inherent, irrecoverable emptiness. By reviving and recontextualizing the Newman-Lyotard theses for our time, I hope to shed new light on the current condition of art and society.

Bio: PhD, is affiliated as a lecturer and researcher in philosophy of art and philosophy of technology at LUCA/KU Leuven School of Arts, Belgium. He has published on contemporary art theory (Danto, de Duve, Fried), contemporary artists and designers (Sikander, Murakami, Snibbe), and philosophy of technology (McLuhan, Latour, Stiegler, Nancy, Verbeek). He was involved in the professional scientific research project "Digital Designers: Co-Creators of Participatory Democracy." Furthermore, he gives public lectures on "Philosophy of the Internet," "Artists as Educators of Robots," and "In Search of an Ethics for Human-Computer Interaction."

3.2 Vinicius de Aguiar, "Flusser, Opera, and the Emancipatory Potential of Technical Images"

Abstract: Forty years ago, in his seminal book Into the Universe of Technical Images, media philosopher Vilém Flusser anticipated many aspects of today's debates surrounding generative artificial intelligence (AI) and its social and political implications. Notably, Flusser identified the arts as a critical framework for orienting the emancipatory use of (then-emerging) digital technologies. Instead of underlining how technology transforms the arts, Flusser shows how the arts transform technology, freeing it from total submission under what we now recognize as the attention economy paradigm. Given that background, in this paper, I address the following question: How did Flusser distinguish between aesthetically, politically, and socially emancipatory and non-emancipatory uses of digital technologies?

To answer this, I will critically reconstruct Flusser's argument using a largely overlooked example from his work as my leitmotif: the filmed opera. While only briefly mentioned by Flusser, the example of watching a televised version of Mozart's Così fan

tutte proves illuminating for understanding his position. It is also strikingly relevant today, as the pandemic has further accelerated opera's migration from theaters to streaming platforms.

According to Flusser, the cinematographic remediation of the operatic performance decomposes the real performance into data and reconstructs it technologically as a technical image. By doing so, it enables the filmmaker to 'envision,' make concrete, and share with the audience novel dimensions of Così fan tutte. I argue that this example illustrates Flusser's claim that digital technologies possess emancipatory potential when they make aspects of our social lived experiences—otherwise inaccessible—visible, sensible, concrete, and therefore intersubjectively sharable. In this sense, digital technologies can be informative: both in the sense of 'giving form' and of 'informing' the spectator. This, for Flusser, is the mark of an artistic engagement with technology.

Conversely, Flusser warns that digital technologies also carry a tendency to facilitate the generation of redundancy, triviality, and distraction, reinforcing the logic of control and promoting social dispersion and apathy. Against this backdrop, he sees the role of technology in the hands of artists, photographers, and filmmakers as offering models for how a society mediated by technical images might resist total social and political alienation.

Extending Flusser's insights, I will argue, however, that even the artistic use of digital technologies risks losing its emancipatory force when it abandons its orientation toward the social world of everyday experience (in the phenomenological sense articulated by Alfred Schütz) and instead becomes preoccupied with the artistic exploration of scientific concepts and abstractions (e.g., through data visualization or sonification).

By revisiting Flusser's thought, the paper aims to contribute to a broader philosophical reflection on how aesthetic thinking might retain its transformative capacity in the face of technological, scientific, and commercial pressures.

Bio: Vinícius de Aguiar studied musicology and philosophy. He is currently an FCT Junior Researcher at the Centre for Music Studies (CESEM) - NOVA FCSH - UNL, in Lisbon. In his current project (2023.08394.CEECIND), funded by FCT—Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, Vinícius analyzes AI in music through the lens of philosophical aesthetics, philosophy of technology, and media philosophy. More broadly, he is interested in the interplays between aesthetics and technology.

3.3 Lisa Ezrati, "Decolonizing from the Margins: Virtual Museums in the Context of War and Political Struggle"

Abstract: How can virtual museums become a relay for traditional museums in heritage and memory preservation? This is the question posed by two virtual museums that were created in contexts in which material heritage is being destroyed: the Museum of Stolen Art and the Sahab Imaginary Museum. The first one stems from the war crimes committed on art by Russian armies during their invasion of Ukraine, displaying artworks that have either been stolen or destroyed, whereas the second one defends the need for a public museum of art in Gaza. In both cases, the preservation and construction of physical

exhibition buildings is impossible – rendering therefore the virtual spaces the safest option, and probably the freest as well. Located on the metaverse, these museums are accessible from anywhere in the world, thus moving memory, art, and stories beyond borders and across dimensions. Through the daily violence faced in Ukraine and Palestine, these museums allow a dynamic transnational and translocal memory. Moreover, through their digitization, the artworks and objects acquire a new memory, the one of the war that forced their move towards those virtual spaces. In a post-Benjamin reflection, we could think of these artworks as gaining a new – different and often tragic – aura. In that case, the virtual museums mediating it become regenerative agents, reattaching a memory to the artworks they display and the reason for their exhibition. On the other hand, these museums offer a counter-narrative to Russia and Israel. The Ukrainian identity is defended and acclaimed in its integrity while Palestine is shown to be not only a land with a people but also an intense artistic creation place. These museums have to be considered resistant museum, rooted in anti-colonial theories, community practice and political demands. They showcase how museum institutions can become powerful tools in resisting colonial narratives. Through the global participation they allow, not only do they manage to reunite people from around the world, but they also give them a place for dialogue. This aspect of virtual museums in context of war is particularly important to give people – and particularly the indigenous populations and their diaspora – agency over the political events they are facing. The creation of such spaces is a way for them to regain control over their land and territories, as well as becoming a space of political support for the visitors. In the end, more than a relay, the virtual museums showcase a new way of thinking heritage and memory, where preservation choices belong to the communities, redefining the dreams of ecomuseums thinkers and enabling agency in contexts where civil society often feels powerless.

Bio: Lisa Ezrati is an interdisciplinary researcher based in The Netherlands. After a Bachelor in Art History, she obtained a research Master degree in History and Critics of Arts at the University of Rennes (France), that she completed with another 1 research Master degree in Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology, specializing in Museum Anthropology, at the University of Bologna (Italy). She specializes on the impact of virtual technologies on art and museums through anthropological and visual analysis approaches.

3.4 Virgilio Vasconcelos, "Animating the Postdigital: Pharmacological Reflections on Gen-AI, Cannibalism and Artistic Practice"

Abstract: Drawing upon insights from Bernard Stiegler's philosophy of technology, as well as different perspectives linked to decolonial thinking, this presentation reflects on the current practices of animation artists, and the latest applications in the field of machine learning - specifically, those involving generative artificial intelligence (Gen-AI). Understanding this technology through the pharmacological nature of technics - its ambivalent capacity to act as a remedy or poison, and looking at past events that have also shaped the collective individuation of the animation socio-technical field - such as the advent of digital interpolation and motion capture, allows us to position these events

within a series of successive misleading technocentric propaganda about the complete automation and replacement of artists by machines.

Like photography and cinema, animation emerged as a form of artistic expression that is highly mediated by what Gilbert Simondon (2017/1958) defined as technical objects, with its social, technical, and aesthetic foundations stemming from the early Western industrial age. That context was initially analysed in terms of its effects on the reproducibility of works of art, artistic practices, and society at large by Benjamin (2008/1939) and other members of the Frankfurt School, whose works described the Culture Industry. More recently, Stiegler (2017) coined the term "Program Industries" to describe the contemporary, amplified, digital iteration of these arrangements, whose effects include the "proletarianisation of sensibility" and a loss of "savoir faire". While these analyses remain very relevant for understanding current developments, we also argue in favour of the ideas of Viveiros de Castro (2018), seeking epistemologies beyond Western practices to avoid reducing intelligence or thinking to mere "recognition apparatuses".

Also, from different standpoints, authors associated with decolonial thinking, such as Aníbal Quijano and Rolando Vázquez, as well as anthropologists like David Graber, relate Western modernity (its episteme and socio-technical entanglements) as emerging from colonial processes that simultaneously embedded and denied those epistemes. In line with this understanding, contemporary practices by companies such as Meta, Alphabet, Amazon and Microsoft in developing Gen-AI systems using vast datasets produce the digital equivalent of the systematic colonial commodification of human activities, in a process described by Couldry and Mejias (2018) as 'data colonialism'. Alongside providing an important framing to the current technological developments by relating insights from decolonial thinking to ideas from philosophy of technology, propositions such as "decolonial cracks" (Walsh, 2023), "re-existence" (Achinte, 2013), and the Brazilian anthropophagic movement of the early 20th century also point to other aesthetic possibilities in the digital age.

In this presentation, we discuss the retrograde nature of Gen-AI, which primarily mimics existing patterns and datasets rather than pointing towards something new (McQuillan, 2022). We also explore how earlier actions related to digital technology, such as the notions of copyleft, digital commons, and the free/libre software movement, can contribute to practices linked to Openshaw's (2015) concept of 'postdigital artisans'.

Bio: Virgilio Vasconcelos is a researcher and lecturer at LUCA School of Arts (Campus C-mine, Genk), where he coordinates the "Critical Reflections of and through animation" research cluster. His work critically examines animation through the lenses of decoloniality, philosophy of technics, and social power relations embedded in technology. With extensive experience using Free and Open-Source Software like Blender, he investigates the impact of emerging technologies, including Generative AI. He is involved in projects like "AI.D – Artificial Intelligence and the Shaping of Democracy," and coordinates the Re:Anima Erasmus Mundus Joint Master.

Parallel session 4: Art theory

4.1 Errol Boon, "One Last Miracle: On Creativity and Artificial Intelligence"

Abstract: In the context of advanced forms of generative artificial intelligence, one question that immediately arises is how we can distinguish AI-generated images, sounds or texts from a work of artistic creation. Is there a principal difference between human creativity and artificial production that no technology could ever surpass? Thus, the rise of generative artificial intelligence has brought renewed urgency to the old question of the ontology of creativity. In contemporary analytic philosophy—through scholars such as Boden, Carvalho, Buckner, Livingston, and Gaut—there is a growing inclination to attribute forms of creativity to generative AI. As a result, creativity is increasingly assumed to be a calculable, formalizable process of rule- following. Although these rules may be in fact unconscious or untraceable, they do exist in principle. Consequently, proponents of the idea of artificial creativity often reject classical accounts that ground creativity in an inexplicable or ontologically indeterminate element—such as theories of divine inspiration, unaccountable ingenuity, or spontaneous natality. For thinkers like Boden, such notions only "mystify" creativity instead of trying to understand it. Yet rarely is the epistemic function of this indeterminacy seriously examined. This paper explores three classical accounts of creativity—Plato's concept of divine inspiration, Kant's theory of genius, and Hannah Arendt's notion of natality—to examine why each considers ontological indeterminacy indispensable for understanding the creative act. I argue that these thinkers do not deny the presence of rules in creative processes; rather, they insist that creativity requires an unruled relation to rules. Ultimately, I contend that this classical perspective challenges us to either accept the reality of ontological indeterminacy or to forgo a meaningful concept of creativity altogether. If we believe that there are artistic creations that could in no way be produced through algorithms and existing data, then we must assume that such artworks, at least to a certain extent, are expressive of something that does not exist. The question, posed by generative artificial intelligence, is thus whether artworks must have an autonomous relation to being, which can show being anew, without merely reproducing the existing rubrics through which reality is already understood.

Bio: Errol Boon is a doctoral researcher at Leiden Centre for Continental Philosophy and Freie Universität Berlin. His research fo uses on ancient Greek and modern German philosophy, particularly on questions at the intersection of theoretical philosophy and aesthetics. His dissertation is about notions of 'truth' in the arts. He studied Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam and Freie Universität Berlin. Before commencing his PhD, he worked as a lecturer at the University of Arts Utrecht, assistant lecturer at the University of Amsterdam, and as a researcher and curator for various institutes in the Dutch art sector. He was a visiting researcher at the Royal Dutch Institute Rome, the Netherlands Institute Athens, the Van Doesburghuis in Paris and the Dutch University Institute for Art History in Florence. He has published on a wide variety of issues at the intersection of art and society.

4.2 Yasmine J. Erden, "AI Art, Aesthetics (and Ethics) in a Digital Age"

Abstract: AI generated art o,ers scope to explore familiar questions in aesthetics in new ways. This includes on the function and value of art, and on creativity and authenticity, concepts which can be challenged or strengthened as a result. Meanwhile, the use of these technologies and how they are developed raise deep philosophical and ethical questions about the labour and recognition of creative people. In this paper I explore these issues by asking what might be some di,erences between human and AI generated art, and when and how such di,erences matter. Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is sometimes described as providing "complex models that generate high-quality, human-like material" , with the "production of previously unseen synthetic content, in any form and to support any task " (García- Peñalvo & Vázquez-Ingelmo 2023). Applied to art, this can take the form of image generators that 'translate' text-to-image models or from image to image. Some of these models have scope to generalise beyond their original training. Yet in all this, the 'human-like' nature of the output is a quality that is very di,icult to quantify, especially in relation to art. Some consider these changes part of the evolution of art: "As creativity is reimagined, so too may be many sectors of society... We argue that generative AI is not the harbinger of art's demise, but rather is a new medium with its own distinct a,ordances" (Epstein et al. 2023). Meanwhile, others point to values that go beyond the production of outputs, arguing that art is tied with the lived experiences and cultures of humans (Jiang et al. 2023). Without agency, intentionality, and understanding, AI generated art cannot be considered to be 'inspired', they say, but as something that 'merely imitates' what humans do. To call AI an 'artist' "devalues artists' works, robs them of credit and compensation, and ascribes accountability to the image generators rather than holding the entities that create them accountable" . Such disputes about art are not new. In 1935, Walter Benjamin talked about emerging methods for the reproduction of art. "In principle a work of art has always been reproducible" , he explained, while pointing to a long tradition of imitation, replicas, and forgery. Yet he considered mechanical reproduction a particular risk to what he considered the "uniqueness" of a work of art, that which is "inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition [...even if] This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable" . He explained this uniqueness in terms of authenticity, or "presence in time and space" with a unique existence and history, including condition (chemical, physical) and ownership (tradition, situation). The original is the authority, on this account, and it brings a uniqueness that he calls an aura, without which, authenticity withers. For this paper, I explore whether such arguments stand up against our newest methods for the (re)production of art, and what it could mean to deny AI art the label of art as a result of a failure to meet authenticity and uniqueness criteria.

Bio: Dr Y . J. Erden is an Associate Professor in Philosophy at the University of Twente. Her research covers artificial intelligence, neurotechnology and human enhancement. For the latter, she co-authored ethics guidelines on human enhancement adopted by the European Commission and published in Science. Her philosophical work spans philosophy of language, personal identity, ethics, and aesthetics. She is Vice-Chair for the Society for the Study of Artificial Intelligence and Simulation of Behaviour (AISB) and council member of The Royal Institute of Philosophy. This paper builds on her 2010 article on AI creativity that defends important di,erences between AI and human creativity.

4.3 Alexandra Crouwers, "Form Follows Machine: Digital Tools, Agency, and Authorship"

Abstract: This presentation focuses on how digital technologies actively shape the visual and (im)material outcomes of my art practice. Drawing on a practice based in 3D software, digital animation, virtual sculpture, and symbolic reinterpretation, it expands on the idea that the final appearance of a work is often determined by the limitations and behaviours of the tools involved. In this process, form follows the machine. The artistic concept sets the direction, but the visual qualities of the work are co-produced with the technology.

Two examples from my practice explore collaborative authorship between artist and machine. *Emoji Proposals* (2020) reimagines prehistoric hand stencils and stone tools within the strict visual conventions of the emoji format. These icons are shaped not by expressive mark-making but by technical standards and platform-specific constraints.

The ongoing *Tools* series extends this thinking into the realm of 3D scanning. Assemblages of objects, often of a cultural or archaeological nature, are digitised using consumer photogrammetry tools. The resulting virtual sculptures have broken surfaces, missing geometry, and fused textures. These defects are not corrected, but become central to the work. The result is what Hito Steyerl describes as "wrecked data": images that are unstable, degraded, and incomplete. Rather than aiming to seamlessly replicate reality, these scans present digital ruins, demonstrating the limits of technological translation between the real and virtual worlds.

These examples show how the limitations and errors of digital media open up questions of materiality, presence, and authorship. Where does the artist's control end and the system take over? The process becomes a collaboration in which decisions are shaped by both human intention and machine behaviour, recalling Donna Haraway's idea of the cyborg: a fusion of human and machine into a hybrid operator. In my digital practice, the artist and the computer meet in a shared space that is neither fully physical nor fully virtual.

The inclusion of digital tools as co-authors of the work raises questions about the autonomy of both the artist and the artwork. Rather than expressing a singular authorial voice, the pieces are produced by systems beyond the full aesthetic control of the artist. This redistribution of agency positions digital art as a potential space for collective creation between human and non-human bodies. In this way, digital practices challenge the notion of individual artistic autonomy and can open up a path beyond anthropocentric models of authorship.

Bio: Alexandra Crouwers (NL, 1974) is a visual artist and doctoral researcher at LUCA School of Arts/KU Leuven. Her practice responds to ecosystem breakdown through digital media, using 3D scanning, animation, and simulation to explore nonhuman agency, authorship, and technological mediation. Working with video, virtual sculpture, and symbolic systems, she constructs speculative spaces that reflect on environmental loss. Her work has been exhibited at Ludwig Museum (Budapest), Technische Sammlungen (Dresden), Museum M (Leuven), and PARCUM (Heverlee), as well as on digital platforms and festivals. She lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium.

4.4 Jacob Voorthuis, "Aesthetic Judgment: An Inferentialist Reckoning"

Abstract: Aesthetics is one of the three normative disciplines of philosophy, together with Metaphysics and Ethics. They are normative disciplines in that all three concern themselves with judgment made on the basis of evaluative and normative practices evolving in and though the activities of communities of knowers. It is the remit of these three disciplines to analyse and critique the inferential paths that lead from value and norm to judgment regarding truth, goodness and beauty and to clarify those paths linguistically so as to make them perform more robustly in discourse.

In this paper I want to argue that of the three kinds of judgment, aesthetic judgment is in fact the most common as it concerns itself with judging the coherence, consistency and harmony of that which is to be judged as a whole made up of working parts and itself a working part in a greater whole. At the same time it is also the form of judgment that must - because of the role I shall argue it plays in reasoning - complete any judgment by bringing together any alethic and/or ethical considerations in judgment.

If my argument is acceptable it will show how aesthetics cannot be allowed to play out its role in the shadows and periphery of philosophical discourse but ought to take a central role in all philosophical and indeed societal discussions. This abstract does not immediately fit within the theme of the symposium but can be considered relevant on a more general level and could well be used to teach Artificially Intelligent algorithms to look differently at certain issues.

Bio: Jacob Voorthuis lectures in the philosophy of the built environment at TU/e. He graduated in Art History at Leiden University of Leiden in 1988, specializing in Art Theory and Aesthetics. In 1996 he defended his doctorate, which attempted to confront the subject of architectural design and its role in society with philosophical analysis. He has a special interest in the relationship between spatial practice and design, his research is concerned with the possibility of judging designs and design decisions from the perspective of a developing ontology of use, the attempt to remodel our conception of use and the useful in design thinking.

Keynote 5: Sanem Yazicioğlu, "Appearances of the World: Art and Durability"

Abstract: In many forms of art, the appearance of artwork is linked to reification that can reveal itself from different perspectives. Phenomenologically this "thing" character of artwork is interpreted in relation to embodiment and the world. In the digitalized practices of art production, not only is the relationship between the artwork and the embodied sense of the world and people altered, but the relationship between the artwork and recollection—both on a personal and collective level—is also transformed. This talk will aim to explore this new way of perceiving and remembering the world through art and examine how digital forms of art mutually influence and transpose the meaning of reality and visibility.

Bio: Sanem Yazıcıoğlu is a full professor in the Department of Philosophy at Istanbul University. Her research focuses on contemporary philosophy, particularly the

theoretical foundations of phenomenology and hermeneutics, and their applications in aesthetics and political philosophy. She previously held a position at Tilburg University (Netherlands) and was a visiting professor at Boston College (USA). She is the recipient of the Alexander von Humboldt Experienced Researcher Award, conducting her research at the Husserl Archive in Freiburg. Yazıcıoğlu is a member of the Philosophy Commission of UNESCO in Turkey. She is the author of *Time, Memory, Perception in Husserl's Phenomenology* (2022), and has edited several volumes and special journal issues. Her editorial work includes *Heidegger and Arendt: Metaphysics and Politics* (co-editor, 2002), *Hannah Arendt on Her Birth Centenary* (2009), *Das Zwischen / In-Between* (2013), *The Future of Phenomenology* (co-editor, 2025), and *Social Sciences and Artificial Intelligence* (VI-volume series, editor-in-chief, forthcoming 2026).