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The Algorithmic Gaze: Deconstructing Authorship and Aesthetics in Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Art

Hesti Putri[1*], Dais Susilo[2], Ervin Munandar[3], Hanifah Yasin[4], Idris Atmaja[5]

[1]Department of Informatics Science, CMHC Research Center, Palembang, Indonesia

[2]Department of Administrative Law, Enigma Institute, Palembang, Indonesia

[3]Department of Constitutional Law, Buana Legal Institute, Banyuwangi, Indonesia

[4]Department of Microeconomy, Enigma Institute, Palembang, Indonesia

[5]Department of Public Economy, Enigma Institute, Palembang, Indonesia

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***Corresponding author:**
Hesti Putri

E-mail address:
hesti.putri@nasetjournal.com

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A B S T R A C T

The proliferation of advanced text-to-image generative AI represents a paradigmatic shift in visual culture. It instigates a profound crisis for established concepts of authorship and aesthetics while also raising critical questions about artistic labor and the political economy of cultural production. This study investigates the complex negotiations between human creators and algorithmic systems. This study employed a qualitative, multi-modal methodology. A visual semiotic analysis was conducted on a curated corpus of 300 artworks from Midjourney, DALL-E 3, and Stable Diffusion, sampled to mitigate platform-specific biases. This was triangulated with a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 15 artists and designers actively using these tools. The methodological limitations, specifically the sample's "adopter-centric" bias, are explicitly acknowledged. The visual analysis identified a distinct "algorithmic gaze" characterized by hyper-compositing, surreal corporeal logic, and stylistic convergence, reflecting both the system's non-human perspective and the biases of its training data. The thematic analysis of artist interviews revealed three dominant experiential themes: the artist's role being reframed as curatorial, the creative process as a form of dialogue, and the interaction as an exploration of the system's "latent space". These participant narratives often frame the interaction in terms of empowerment and collaboration. In conclusion, generative AI reconfigures authorship into a distributed network phenomenon. However, this study argues that this posthuman collaboration occurs within a system structured by significant power asymmetries. The aesthetics of the algorithmic gaze are not neutral but are shaped by the commercial and ideological imperatives of the platforms. The artist's experience of empowerment coexists with broader material processes of deskilling, alienation, and the centralization of cultural production. Understanding this new paradigm requires a critical synthesis of posthumanist theory and political economy.

1. Introduction

The 21st century has been characterized by the pervasive integration of computational processes into nearly every facet of human experience.[1] Within the cultural sphere, this digital transformation has culminated in one of its most disruptive innovations: generative artificial intelligence. The advent of sophisticated text-to-image models such as DALL-E, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion in the early 2020s marked a pivotal moment.[2] These systems can synthesize novel, high-fidelity images from textual prompts, catalyzing a global wave of creative experimentation. However, the popular narrative of this technology "democratizing" creativity is a deeply contested one. While it offers new tools to individuals, it simultaneously represents an unprecedented

concentration of cultural production capacity in the hands of a few corporations that own the models, control the data, and dictate the terms of access. This technological shift has instigated a profound crisis that is simultaneously conceptual and material. On a conceptual level, it challenges foundational tenets of art theory, particularly the intertwined notions of authorship and aesthetics. The Western art tradition has long been anchored by the concept of the singular author, whose intent, skill, and subjectivity are seen as the primary source of an artwork's meaning and value.[3] Even as poststructuralist thinkers like Roland Barthes declared the "death of the author," shifting focus to the viewer, the ecosystem of creation and interpretation remained a wholly human affair. Generative AI radically reconfigures these terms by introducing a non-human agent into the creative process, fragmenting the author-function into a distributed, hybridized network.[4] Simultaneously, traditional aesthetic criteria such as originality and technical craft are destabilized when an image is generated in seconds by an algorithm trained on a dataset of billions of uncredited images.[5]

This phenomenon gives rise to the central concept of this paper: the algorithmic gaze.[6] We propose this term to describe the specific mode of visuality enacted by the AI—a non-human way of seeing and constructing reality fundamentally shaped by its architecture, training data, and optimization objectives. The algorithmic gaze is not a neutral conduit for human intention; it is an active force with its own inherent biases and aesthetic predispositions, reassembling our collective visual culture according to a logic of probability.[7] On a material level, this crisis extends to the political economy of art itself. The questions are no longer merely philosophical.[8] Who is the author when the creative act is a negotiation between a user, an opaque model, and the spectral labor of millions of uncredited artists whose work comprises the training data? This is not just a crisis of authorship, but a crisis of labor, intellectual property, and cultural autonomy. Are we witnessing the birth of a new artistic medium, or the automation and deskilling of creative professions on a mass scale? Existing research has begun to map this territory, examining the technology's underpinnings and legal ramifications. However, there remains a critical need for research that synthesizes an art-historical analysis with a robust critique of the political and economic structures that shape this new mode of production.[9,10]

The primary novelty of this research lies in its dual approach. First, it conceptualizes and empirically investigates the "algorithmic gaze" as a critical framework for understanding the unique aesthetics of generative AI art. Second, it moves beyond a purely phenomenological or techno-determinist analysis by situating both the aesthetics of the gaze and the lived experiences of artists within a broader critique of the political economy of AI. While previous studies have focused on the user's role or the technology's function, this paper synthesizes these perspectives with a critical theoretical lens to provide a richer, more politically conscious account. The aim of this study is therefore threefold: To systematically identify and characterize the aesthetic qualities that constitute the algorithmic gaze, reading them not just as formal properties but as symptoms of the system's underlying technical and ideological structure; To investigate how artists using these tools perceive their own creative agency and their relationship with the technology, while simultaneously analyzing these narratives in relation to material processes of labor, deskilling, and alienation; To synthesize these findings to develop a more robust theoretical framework that integrates a posthumanist understanding of distributed creativity with a critical analysis of the power asymmetries inherent in the current generative AI ecosystem. By addressing these aims, this paper seeks to offer a critical and timely analysis that contributes not only a new vocabulary for interpreting AI art but also a sharper understanding of the profound cultural and political stakes of its proliferation.

2. Methods

This study was designed as a qualitative, interpretative inquiry to explore the complex and emergent phenomena of authorship, aesthetics, and labor in generative AI art. A multi-modal approach was adopted to capture both the intrinsic qualities of the artworks and the extrinsic perspectives of their human

co-creators. The methodology combined a visual semiotic analysis of a curated image corpus with a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews. This dual approach allowed for the triangulation of data, providing a more robust and holistic understanding of the research problem. The research was grounded in a critical-constructivist epistemology, which posits that meaning is constructed through social interpretation but that these constructions occur within specific material conditions and power structures. The study's theoretical framework is thus twofold. It draws from posthumanism to challenge anthropocentric assumptions and analyze the agency of non-human actors and technological systems. This lens is crucial for conceptualizing the AI as an active collaborator. However, this is integrated with a framework of critical political economy, which demands an analysis of technology not as an autonomous force, but as a product of capital, labor, and ideology. The overall design was a qualitative case study, where each generative AI platform was treated as a distinct case, allowing for comparison. The choice of a qualitative, multi-modal design was deliberate. A purely quantitative analysis would miss the nuance of aesthetic experience, while a purely theoretical treatise would lack empirical grounding. Only through a qualitative approach can the subtleties of artists' perceptions be captured, and only by triangulating this with a deep visual analysis can these subjective experiences be connected to the objective formal properties of the artworks themselves.

A purposive sampling strategy was used to construct a corpus of 300 images, with 100 images sourced from each of three leading platforms: Midjourney (Version 7.0), DALL-E 3 (via OpenAI's API), and Stable Diffusion (XL 1.0). The sampling protocol was designed to ensure rigor and mitigate potential biases: Platform Diversity: The three platforms were chosen to represent a spectrum of accessibility and economic models, from the proprietary, closed ecosystem of Midjourney to the open-source nature of Stable Diffusion. Prompt Complexity: A standardized set of 20 prompts was developed to query the models. These prompts ranged from simple nouns to complex narrative and stylistic descriptions, allowing for an analysis of how each model handles ambiguity and specificity. The prompt set was designed to test the models on various subjects, including human figures, landscapes, abstract concepts, and stylistic emulation. Recency: All images were generated between March and May 2025 to reflect the most current capabilities of the models. Mitigation of Sampling Bias: Recognizing that publicly accessible galleries often feature a biased selection of "trending" or popular images, our sampling was not drawn from these main feeds. Instead, the standardized prompts were run by the research team, and a stratified sampling technique was used on the output. For each prompt, we generated 10 images and selected 5 for inclusion in the corpus, ensuring that both typical and atypical or "glitched" results were represented. This protocol was designed to capture a more representative cross-section of each model's potential output, rather than just its most successful or popular creations.

The study was informed by semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 15 participants actively engaged in creating with these tools. The sample was designed for diversity across roles: 5 professional digital artists, 5 hobbyists ("promptists"), and 5 creative professionals using AI for commercial purposes. Recruitment was conducted through professional networks and specific online communities dedicated to generative art, a method chosen to target experienced users. The interview protocol explored three core areas: creative process, perceptions of authorship and agency, and aesthetic judgments. To provide context, participants' demographic data—including age range (24-52), geographic location (predominantly North America and Europe), and length of experience with AI tools (6 months to 3 years)—were collected and are considered in the analysis. The interviews averaged 60 minutes in length and were transcribed, resulting in approximately 200 pages of data. A two-pronged analysis strategy was implemented. Visual Semiotic Analysis: The image corpus was analyzed using a framework adapted from the semiotics of Peirce and the visual analysis methods of art history. The analysis operationalized Peirce's triadic model by

coding for how images function as icons (resemblance to objects), indices (causal connections, like digital artifacts pointing to the generation process), and symbols (conventional meanings). This was combined with a formal analysis of composition, color, and texture. A reflexive process involving two coders was used to ensure reliability, with disagreements resolved through discussion to refine the coding framework. Thematic Analysis: The interview transcripts were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase reflexive thematic analysis. This process involved deep familiarization with the data, systematic line-by-line coding, and the iterative development of themes. Throughout the analysis, we remained aware that our dual theoretical lens (posthumanist and political-economic) would shape the interpretation of the data, allowing us to identify not only the explicit meanings articulated by the participants but also the underlying ideological assumptions and contradictions in their narratives. All participants provided informed consent after being fully informed of the study's purpose and critical approach. Anonymity was maintained through the use of pseudonyms. The research team maintained a reflexive journal to bracket personal biases and to continuously interrogate our own positionality relative to this ethically contentious technology.

3. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the 300-image corpus confirmed that while each platform has a distinct stylistic fingerprint, they collectively exhibit a distinct mode of visuality we term the algorithmic gaze. This gaze is characterized by three primary features. A dominant characteristic across all platforms was a tendency towards hyper-compositing, creating images that are densely packed with detail and possess an unnaturally seamless and polished finish. Unlike human-made composites, AI-generated images present a uniformly rendered surface without seams or shifts in resolution. An image from Midjourney of "a bustling medieval marketplace" featured hundreds of figures with uniform detail across the focal plane, lacking natural atmospheric perspective. This creates an aesthetic of overwhelming, hyper-real detail. DALL-E 3, in particular, often produced a characteristic digital "sheen" with algorithmically optimized lighting. While visually impressive, this seamlessness often results in a sterile aesthetic, devoid of the "aura" of imperfection that Walter Benjamin linked to authenticity. The algorithmic gaze demonstrated a tenuous grasp on consistent anatomical logic, often resulting in unintentionally surreal imagery. Across the corpus, images frequently featured figures with anomalous numbers of fingers, impossible physical contortions, or limbs that merged with objects or backgrounds. While often dismissed as technical flaws, our analysis frames them as positive aesthetic features of the gaze. They are the logical outcomes of a system that understands the world through statistical correlation rather than embodied experience. An image from Stable Diffusion of "a person typing" showed fingers blending with the typewriter keys, merging human and machine. This resonates with posthumanist theories questioning the integrity of the body and unintentionally creates a powerful visual statement on technological mediation. The analysis revealed a strong tendency towards stylistic convergence, where models default to a narrow range of popular, digitally-native aesthetic styles. Midjourney showed a clear bias towards a high-fantasy, sci-fi concept art style, while DALL-E 3 favored a clean, corporate-friendly 3D-illustration style. This convergence points directly to the biases in their training data, which amplify the most frequently occurring styles from art platforms like ArtStation. This demonstrated that the algorithmic gaze is not neutral; it is a product of its cultural and technological conditioning. While our sampling method attempted to find variety, the stylistic inertia of the models was a powerful, pervasive force, requiring significant "prompt engineering" to overcome. Figure 1 provides a comprehensive schematic and graphical codification of the "algorithmic gaze," a central theoretical framework for understanding the novel aesthetic paradigm produced by generative artificial intelligence. This figure visually deconstructs the core concept, illustrating how a non-human mode of visuality, originating from the AI's unique architecture and data-driven objectives, manifests in three distinct yet interconnected aesthetic characteristics. The model serves as a critical

lens, moving analysis beyond subjective appreciation to a systematic, scientific inquiry into the formal properties of AI-generated art. At the heart of the diagram lies The Algorithmic Gaze itself, defined as an active, agential force rather than a passive tool. It represents a form of seeing and constructing reality that is fundamentally alien to human experience, operating not on embodied understanding but on a logic of statistical probability derived from its immense training data. This gaze does not merely translate human prompts; it interprets, biases, and ultimately transforms them, reassembling the vast archive of human visual culture through its own unique, non-conscious perspective. Radiating from this central concept are the three primary pillars of the gaze, identified through rigorous visual semiotic analysis.[11] The first, Hyper-Compositing & The Seamless Surface, describes the technology's tendency toward a seductive, hyper-real perfection. This is characterized by images filled with an impossible density of detail, where every element is rendered with a uniform, high-frequency texture and a flawless "digital sheen." As the scientific description notes, this is a direct result of the diffusion process's capacity for equivalent computational attention across the entire image plane, eliminating the natural imperfections and atmospheric perspective that ground traditional art in a physical reality. The result is an aesthetic that, in its sterile perfection, signifies the absence of Walter Benjamin's "aura"—the unique trace of a physical origin. The second pillar, Surreal Corporeal Logic, presents the fascinating paradox at the heart of the gaze. This characteristic refers to the frequent "glitches" or anatomical and physical inconsistencies, such as figures with anomalous numbers of fingers or objects that illogically merge. The figure clarifies that these are not mere errors but are profound revelations of the AI's non-embodied cognition. Operating on statistical correlation rather than causal understanding, the AI produces forms that are visually plausible but physically impossible.[12] These surreal manifestations are the statistical ghosts in the machine, offering a glimpse into an alien intelligence and creating a powerful, often unsettling, visual language that resonates with posthumanist critiques of the stable body. Finally, the third pillar, Stylistic Convergence & Data-Set Bias, addresses the homogenizing force inherent in the algorithmic gaze. This is the model's powerful inclination to default to a narrow range of popular, digitally-native styles heavily represented in its training data—the recognizable "house styles" of specific platforms. The scientific description explains this as a form of statistical inertia, where the generation process is naturally drawn to the dense stylistic clusters within its latent space.[13] This characteristic reveals the gaze's inherent conservatism and its role in reinforcing iconographic biases and potentially stifling true aesthetic novelty, posing a significant challenge for artists seeking a unique visual signature. Collectively, Figure 1 presents a cohesive and informative model, illustrating how the algorithmic gaze functions as a unified system that simultaneously produces hyper-real perfection, surreal imperfections, and stylistic homogenization.[14]

The thematic analysis of the 15 interviews revealed a profound shift in how these creators understand their agency and creative identity. Three dominant themes emerged in their self-narration, in Figure 2. Theme 1: The Artist as Curator and Collaborator Across all participant groups, there was a consistent reframing of the artistic role away from a solitary creator towards that of a "curator" or "director". Participants described their work not as making images from scratch but as guiding a semi-autonomous system to generate possibilities, which they then select and refine. As one professional artist (P4) stated, "My skill isn't in the brushstroke; it's in the selection... I'm more of an art director for a tireless, infinitely talented, but sometimes clueless intern". The creative act was located in this refinement process. The AI was frequently personified as a collaborator, though a strange one without human intent, like a "force of nature". This narrative frames the process as a partnership, demonstrating a decentering of human creative sovereignty.[15] Theme 2: The Prompt as a Site of Dialogic Creativity The prompt was universally identified as the primary creative interface, but it was described less as a command and more as the beginning of a conversation. Participants spoke of "learning the AI's language," framing "prompt

engineering" as a craft in itself. One hobbyist (P7) noted, "A good prompt is like a poem... You have to be a translator between your idea and the machine's mind". This process was described as iterative and exploratory, with the AI's "misinterpretations" and the stochastic nature of the process often embraced as sources of serendipity that could spark new directions. This theme challenges a view of AI art as a simple, automated process, repositioning it as a complex site of negotiation. Theme 3: Navigating the Latent Space as Artistic Exploration The most experienced participants described their practice in highly abstract terms, as a form of exploration within the AI's "latent space"—the internal, mathematical representation of its training data. For these artists, creating was not about describing a final picture but about finding a specific trajectory within this conceptual universe. As one professional artist (P5) with a computer science background explained, "My prompt is a set of coordinates for that journey". This perspective radically reconceptualizes creation, making the artist a navigator or an explorer of a pre-existing landscape of concepts. One designer (P14) mused, "My job is to be an explorer, a cartographer of these digital subconsciousnesses. I'm not creating the world; I'm just discovering the things that are already there". This narrative solidifies a shift from a model of creation *ex nihilo* to one of discovery and interpretation.[16]

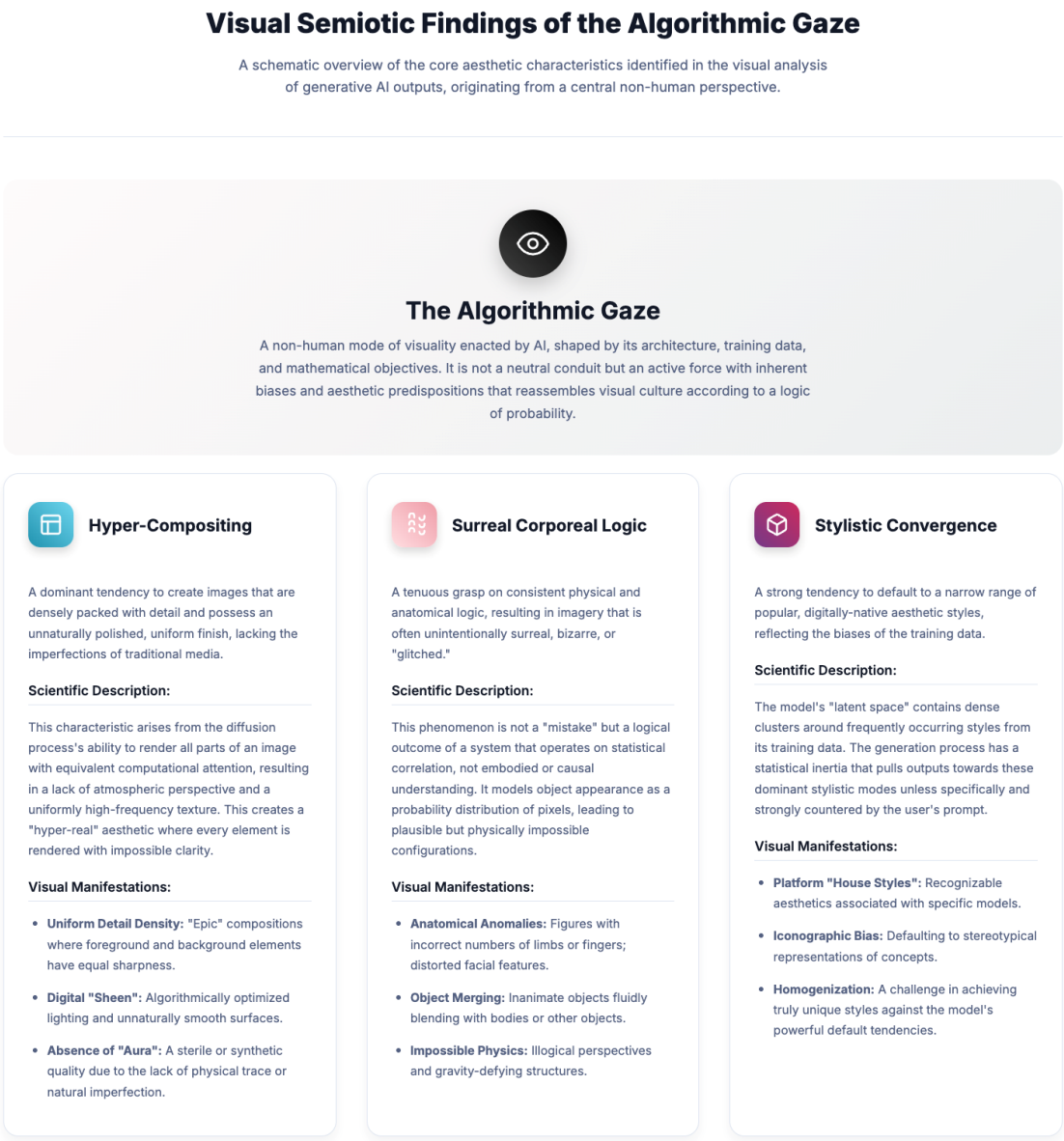

Figure 1. Summary of visual semiotic findings of the algorithmic gaze.

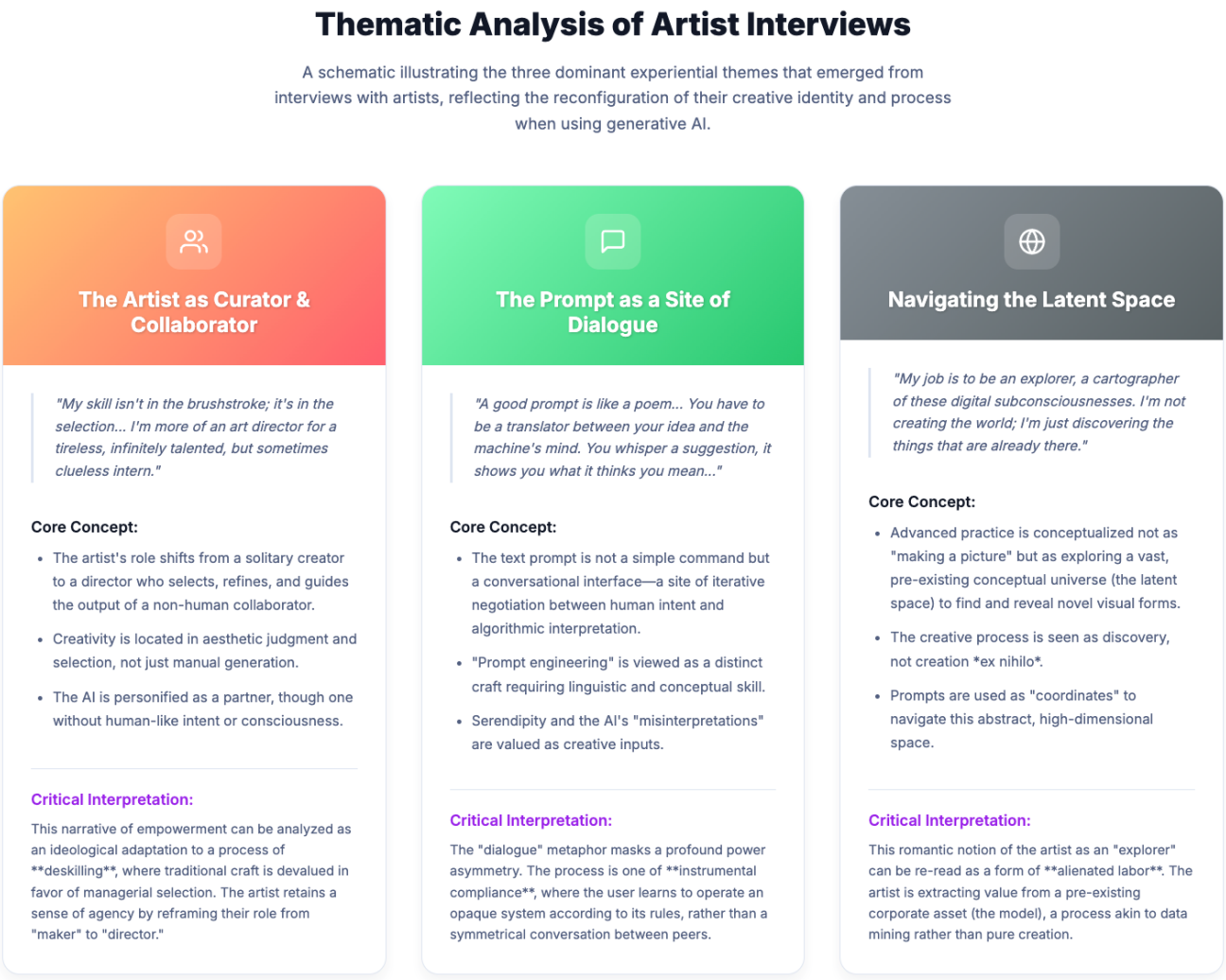

Figure 2. Summary of thematic analysis of artist interviews.

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that generative AI art represents a fundamental rupture in the traditions of visual art creation. Synthesizing the visual analysis of the "algorithmic gaze" with the experiential narratives of artists necessitates a re-evaluation of core tenets in art theory.[17] However, a purely phenomenological or posthumanist reading is insufficient. Figure 3 presents a graphical model that serves as the theoretical keystone of this study, illustrating the critical synthesis between the empirical findings and the multifaceted frameworks of cultural and critical theory. The diagram is designed not merely as a summary but as an interpretive engine, demonstrating how a holistic understanding of generative AI's impact on art requires a dialectical approach that moves between phenomenological, posthumanist, aesthetic, and political-economic registers.[18] It visually argues that the core findings of the study—the emergence of the "algorithmic gaze" and the reconfiguration of the artist's experience—cannot be fully comprehended through any single theoretical lens. Instead, their profound cultural significance is revealed only in the interplay, tension, and synthesis of these complementary perspectives. At the center of the schematic lies the nucleus of the research: the Core Study Findings. This central element anchors the entire model in the empirical data gathered and

analyzed in the preceding sections. It concisely represents the two primary discoveries of the manuscript. The first, The Algorithmic Gaze, is defined as a non-human visual paradigm, a new way of seeing and rendering the world that produces a specific and identifiable set of aesthetic qualities. The second, The Artist Experience, encapsulates the profound shift in creative identity and process reported by practitioners, a reconfiguration towards roles of curation, dialogue with a non-human system, and the exploration of abstract conceptual spaces. This central box acts as the empirical ground from which the four surrounding theoretical interpretations radiate, with each quadrant of the diagram offering a distinct analytical framework to dissect and illuminate these core findings. The top-left quadrant, Posthumanism & Actor-Network Theory (ANT), provides the initial and most direct theoretical lens for understanding the reconfiguration of authorship. This framework fundamentally challenges the anthropocentric assumption that creativity and agency are exclusive properties of the human subject. As the description notes, this lens interprets authorship not as a singular, human act but as a distributed agency, an emergent property of a complex network—or "assemblage"—of both human and non-human "actants." In this model, the artist, the AI model, its underlying code, the vast dataset, and even the user interface are all seen as active agents collaborating in a temporary network to produce the final artwork. This perspective is crucial for making sense of the artists' own descriptions of their process as a "collaboration" and for recognizing the AI not as a passive tool but as an active participant that shapes the outcome. It moves the analysis beyond the simple human-tool dichotomy into a more nuanced understanding of hybrid creativity in a technologically saturated world. Diametrically opposed to this, yet critically complementary, is the bottom-right quadrant: Critical Political Economy. This lens acts as a crucial corrective to a purely descriptive posthumanism, which can sometimes obscure the power dynamics at play. Drawing from Marxist theory and the Frankfurt School's critique of "The Culture Industry," this framework analyzes generative AI not as a neutral technological development but as a powerful new means of production within a capitalist system. It reframes the "algorithmic gaze" as a commercial gaze, one whose aesthetic tendencies towards hyper-polished, stylistically convergent imagery are optimized for market virality and frictionless consumption. From this perspective, the technology functions as an apparatus of capital that centralizes cultural power in the hands of a few corporations, while simultaneously enabling the deskilling of traditional artistic labor. The concept of commodity fetishism is particularly potent here, explaining how the AI model—a product of immense social and computational labor—appears to the user as a magical, autonomous entity, obscuring the material conditions of its creation.[19] The top-right quadrant, Psychoanalysis & Aesthetics, offers a framework for understanding the specific perceptual and emotional effects of the algorithmic gaze. This lens uses concepts drawn from Freudian psychoanalysis and postmodern aesthetic theory to explain why AI-generated images look and feel the way they do. The key theoretical term here is "The Uncanny," which describes the unsettling feeling that arises when something is both familiar and strangely alien. The "glitches" and surreal corporeal logic of AI art—the six-fingered hands, the merging objects—are perfect manifestations of the uncanny, as they reveal a non-human, alien logic operating within a recognizably human form. This quadrant also incorporates Jean Baudrillard's concepts of simulation and hyperreality, arguing that AI images are not representations of reality but are simulations that have no real-world referent, contributing to their flawless yet often "soulless" quality. Finally, it invokes Walter Benjamin's concept of the "Absence of Aura" to explain how these infinitely reproducible digital images lack the unique presence and history of a traditional artwork. Finally, the bottom-left quadrant, Phenomenology & Labor, provides a lens to critically re-read the subjective experiences of the artists themselves. While phenomenology focuses on lived experience, this critical application refuses to take the artists' narratives at face value. It analyzes the empowering rhetoric of "dialogue" and "exploration" as a form of ideology—a set of beliefs that helps

individuals make sense of and rationalize their relationship to a new mode of production. This perspective contrasts the subjective feeling of empowerment with the objective material reality of the process. The "dialogue" with the machine is re-interpreted as a form of instrumental compliance, where the artist must learn to conform their intentions to the constraints of an opaque system. The romantic notion of "exploration" is juxtaposed with the concept of alienated labor, where the creative act becomes a form of value extraction from a pre-existing corporate-owned asset (the AI model).[20] This quadrant is crucial for bridging the gap between the artists' genuine creative excitement and the broader economic and social transformations of their labor. Figure 3 argues that a comprehensive understanding of generative AI art is only possible at the intersection of these four theoretical fields. Posthumanism explains the *how* of the new creative process, Political Economy explains the *why* and *for whom*, Psychoanalysis explains the *what it feels like to see*, and a critical phenomenology explains the *what it feels like to do* versus *what is being done*. The figure, in its totality, presents a robust, multi-perspectival model for a new generation of critical art and media scholarship, equipped to grapple with the complex and often contradictory realities of creativity in the age of intelligent machines.

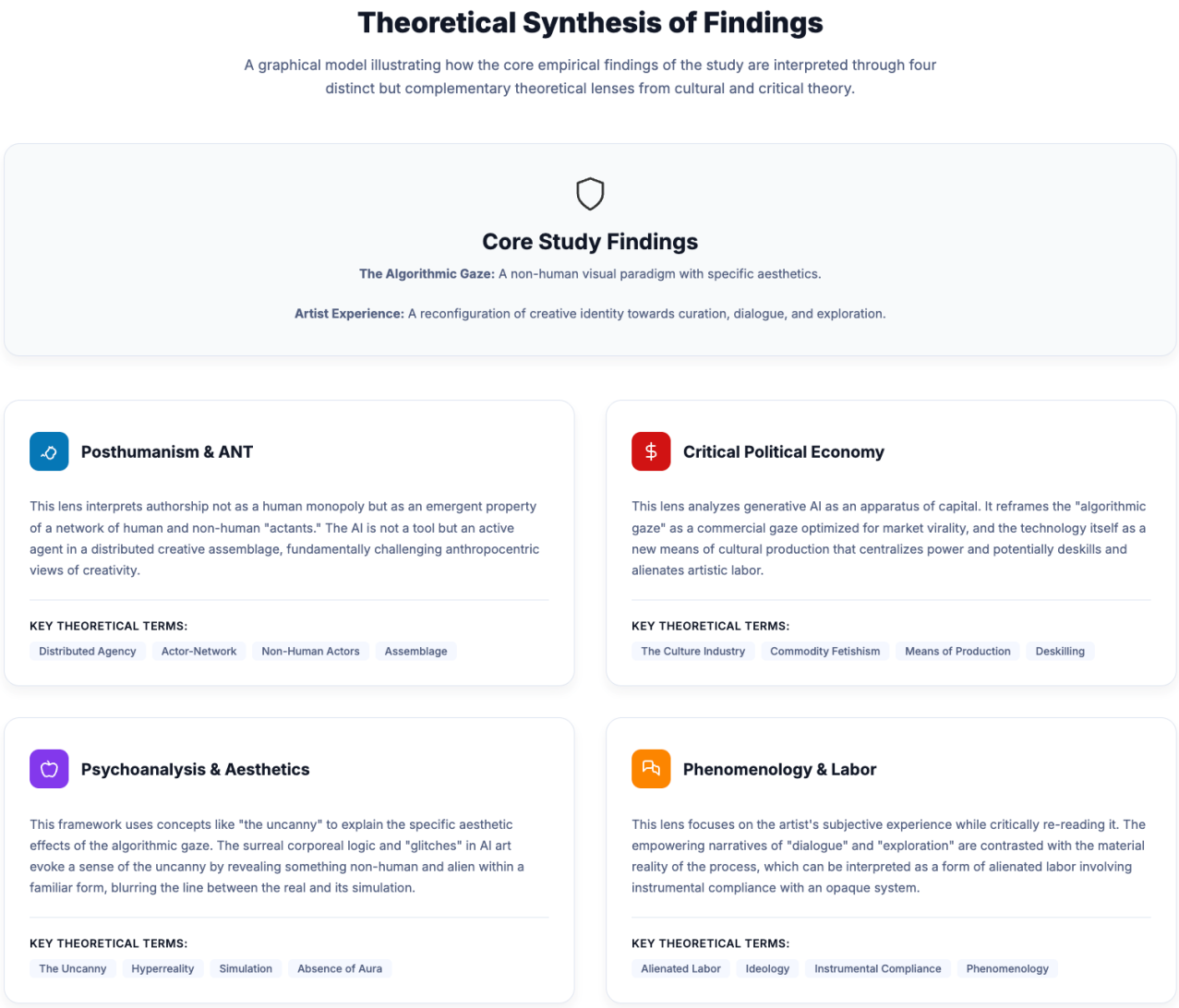

Figure 3. Theoritical synthesis of findings.

The results unequivocally dismantle the sufficiency of the singular author, with artists themselves reframing their role in terms of curation and collaboration. This finding resonates with poststructuralist theory, providing a startlingly literal actualization of Barthes' metaphor of the text as a "tissue of quotations" drawn from a vast cultural archive. Yet, as the findings suggest, the author is not simply dead but has been atomized and redistributed across a network of human and non-human actors. This reality is well-described by Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which frames the artwork as the product of a temporary network of "actants": the artist, the AI model, the dataset, and the engineers. The artists' sense of collaborating with a "force of nature" expresses a profoundly posthuman sensibility, recognizing their agency as partial and entangled. However, a standard application of ANT risks a "flat ontology" that obscures the profound power imbalances within this network. The assemblage is not a democratic one. The engineers who design the model, the corporations that own the infrastructure, and the vast capital investment they represent are vastly more powerful actants than the individual user. The dataset itself is a spectral actant representing the expropriated labor of millions of uncredited artists. Therefore, while the creative event is posthuman, it is also deeply embedded in a capitalist mode of production. The "distributed creative assemblage" is one structured by and for the extraction of value, where user creativity becomes the content that drives engagement and generates data for the next iteration of the model.[13,14]

The visual characteristics of the algorithmic gaze are not neutral aesthetic properties; they are symptoms of its underlying political and economic logic. The Frankfurt School's critique of the "culture industry"—the standardization and commodification of cultural products—is a vital lens here. Stylistic Convergence as Market Optimization, The tendency towards a "Midjourney style" or a "DALL-E style" is not an accident but a feature. These aesthetics are the result of models optimized on data that reflects popular taste, producing a form of advanced digital kitsch engineered for maximum visual impact and virality on social media platforms. The "algorithmic gaze" is, in many ways, a commercial gaze, reflecting the logic of a market that prioritizes immediate, frictionless consumption over challenging or idiosyncratic visions. It represents the automation of the culture industry. The Uncanny as Alienation, The "surreal corporeal logic" can be read not just through Freud's concept of the uncanny, but through Marx's concept of alienation. The AI's inability to render a "correct" hand is a visual manifestation of its total alienation from the lived, embodied experience of being human. The glitches reveal a form of intelligence divorced from somatic reality. This can also be linked to commodity fetishism, where a product of complex social labor (the AI model) appears to us as an autonomous, magical entity with which we can "collaborate." The "uncanny" feeling produced by the AI's creations is the flicker of this mystification—the unsettling realization of the non-human, alienated intelligence behind the seductive image.[15-17]

The experiential themes that emerged from the artist interviews must be critically interrogated. The narratives of empowerment, dialogue, and exploration, while authentic expressions of the participants' experience, also function as powerful ideologies that can mask the material transformations of artistic labor. The reframing of the artist's role as a "curator" is an elegant adaptation to a new technological reality. However, it also represents a significant deskilling of traditional artistic crafts. The deep knowledge of anatomy, color theory, and manual dexterity cultivated over the years is replaced by the more managerial skill of selection and the technical skill of prompt engineering. While this opens up visual expression to many, it also devalues established forms of artistic labor. The metaphor of a "dialogue" with the AI obscures the profound power imbalance of the interaction. It is not a conversation between peers. The user must learn the specific linguistic and logical constraints of a proprietary, black-boxed system. The "dialogue" is a process of conforming one's intentions to the machine's capabilities and biases. It is a form of highly skilled operation, but it is not a symmetrical dialogue. The romantic notion of "navigating the latent space" can be re-read as a form of alienated labor. The

artist is not creating a world from their own imagination but is exploring a pre-structured conceptual universe owned by a corporation. The creative act becomes a process of discovering and extracting novelties from a corporate asset, a form of work that resembles data mining more than it does traditional artistic expression. The artist becomes a highly skilled user of a productive machine, but not its owner.

4. Conclusion

This study embarked on an investigation into the deconstruction of authorship and aesthetics in the burgeoning field of generative AI art. Through a critical synthesis of visual analysis and artist interviews, this research has arrived at several key conclusions. Authorship in generative AI art is a distributed process occurring within an unequal assemblage. While posthumanist frameworks are useful for understanding the collaboration between human and non-human actants, they must be integrated with a political-economic critique that acknowledges the immense concentration of power held by the corporate owners of these AI systems. The algorithmic gaze is a distinct visual paradigm whose aesthetics are not neutral but are deeply imprinted with the commercial imperatives and data-driven biases of the platforms. Its features—hyper-compositing, surreal logic, and stylistic convergence—should be read not just as formal qualities but as symptoms of a new, automated culture industry. The narratives of empowerment, collaboration, and exploration articulated by artists using these tools, while representing an authentic phenomenological experience, coexist with material processes of deskilling, alienation, and the redefinition of creative labor. The interaction with AI is not a simple partnership but a complex negotiation within a system whose fundamental logic is often at odds with traditional notions of artistic autonomy. The algorithmic gaze is now fixed upon our visual culture, and its influence is growing daily. A truly critical understanding of this moment requires us to move beyond a simple celebration of posthuman creativity. We must instead adopt a dual perspective, one that can appreciate the novel forms of expression this technology enables while simultaneously and relentlessly critiquing the power structures it reinforces and the new forms of control it enacts upon the future of art. The critical task ahead is not simply to navigate the worlds inside the machine, but to interrogate who owns those worlds and what ideologies they reproduce.

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