# Preface

New media, digital elements, and computer art are at the core of my artistic practice. These media are referred as Unstable media. Rephrasing the V2 Unstable Media Manifesto (1987), my artistic practice uses electronic waves, frequencies, engines, sound, light, video, sensors, and computers. All those media have an inherent instability, and embracing that instability makes them challenging yet interesting to me.

In an environment like DOGtime at the Rietveld Academy, unstable media is present on paper rather than in practice. In my year and years ahead, no more than a handful of persons embrace unstable media in their artistic practice. Most of my classmates focus on painting, sculpture, installations, video, and mixed media. In the DOGtime terminology, this falls under the “Expanded Painting” umbrella. The use of digital media rarely goes beyond a video playing a loop.

Another recurrent element in practice is interactivity. In most of my works, the viewer must take an active for the work to come to life. Interactivity is also seldom seen at the DOGtime program. Some people embrace it with performative elements, like workshops, during the creation process. However, even in these cases, I do not see how interactivity is at the core of the final artwork. In my perspective, most of the time, the viewer is dissociated from the work.

This has led me to use this thesis as an opportunity to reconcile the principles of Unstable Media, Interactivity and Computer art with the more traditional forms of “Expanded Painting” that I see at the Rietveld Academy.

During the lectures of Dyveke Rood, I encountered the theory of the Avantgarde movements. I hypothesise that Unstable Media art is a natural evolution of the Avantgarde into the digital age of information.

This thesis aims to set up a theoretical to encompass my creative practice. The theory of the Avantgarde and the views of V2\_ will be the starting point. I will include theoretical concepts and pointers to artists and groups that use unstable media and interactivity in creative practice.

# Introduction

In the landscape of contemporary art, the emergence of digital technologies has not only transformed artistic practices but also challenged the conventional structures of art institutions. This thesis delves into the challenges emerging from digital art practices facing established art practices and institutions.

We unravel this dissonance through the lens of lessons learned from Avantgarde movements. As we navigate this exploration, it will become apparent that the principles once championed by avantgarde pioneers are actual and alive for establishing a digital art practice against the established institutional frameworks that aim to house and legitimise artistic endeavours.

This thesis has as its departure point the exploration of how the Avantgarde movements sowed the seeds of rebellion against established norms, challenging the existing order and laying the foundation for a discourse that continues to resonate today. These radical artistic endeavours, born out of a genuine desire to break away from tradition, questioned the essence of art's autonomy, art institutions, and the role of art in the praxis of life. These elements will come back when we discuss the establishment of a contemporary digital art practice.

Central to our inquiry is the concept of the autonomy of art, a principle cherished by avantgarde visionaries juxtaposed against the institutionalisation of art. More explicitly, there is a tension between the inherent freedom of artistic expression and the institutional structures that seek to categorise, validate, and often stifle innovation. Such tension gave fruitful soil to the historical avantgarde movements to develop. The clash between the avantgarde spirit and institutional expectations sets the stage for examining digital art's place in the contemporary art world.

To demonstrate this, we structure this thesis as follows:

In Chapter 1 (Historical Contexts), we elaborate on the historical context that will play a role in this thesis.

Section 1.1 (Avantgarde movements) addresses the *Historical Avantgarde* movements of the beginning of the 20th century and the subsequent *neo-Avantgarde* that emerged at the end of 1940 and onwards. We will follow the *“Theory of the Avantgarde”* by Peter Burger (Burger, 1984) and *“Historische Avantgarde”* by Ferdinand Drijkoningen et al. (Drijkoningen et al. 1991) to underpin the understanding of the theory of Avantgarde used in this thesis. This theoretical framework will set the stage for an in-depth exploration of the clash between contemporary digital art and established art institutions.

In Section 1.1.1 (The core avantgarde subjects), we draw inspiration from the rebellious spirit of avantgarde movements by revisiting their views concerning the autonomy of art, art institutionalisation, the societal role of art to challenge the status quo, and how art should integrate into the everyday life. As we unravel these interconnected threads, it will become evident that avantgarde art challenges institutional norms and societal expectations, inviting us to rethink the role of art in our daily lives. Those challenges will come back in Chapter 2 (Computer art) and Chapter 3 (Originality in the digital age) when we look at digital art in the contemporary world.

In Section 1.2 (Unstable Media), we venture further into contemporary art. We beckon our attention to the transformative impact of digital technologies on artistic expression. *“Unstable Media”* encapsulates the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of artistic practices influenced by digital tools and platforms. We follow the 1987 Unstable Media Manifesto (V2\_, 1987) to make the concept of Unstable media more precise.

Section 1.2.1 (Illustration, Light-Space-Modulator) presents a first bridge between avantgarde ideals and Unstable Media by discussing the *Light-Space-Modulator* (1930) by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy.

Chapter 2 (Computer art) is the core of this thesis. Here, we present illustrations and case studies to unravel the intricacies of unstable media and computer art compared to traditional forms. For example, we discuss the switch from *“static”* art objects of traditional art to *“dynamic”* art objects of computer art. This chapter lays the groundwork for understanding the nuanced relationship between contemporary digital art practices, the institutional frameworks that seek to encapsulate them, and the paradigm shifts accompanying the digitalisation of artistic creation.

The chapter begins with Section 2.1 (The digitalisation of life) with an inquiry into the digitalisation of life itself. One reason is that the increasing interdependence between art and technology prompts a revaluation of our understanding of artistic objects and their place in an environment saturated with digital stimuli. We draw inspiration from the film *“Ghosts in the Shell”* (Oshii, 1995) as we navigate the intricacies of identity, existence, and the transformative power of the digital realm. This will delve into the profound implications of the cyborg metaphor. Donna Haraway's proclamation that *“we are all cyborgs”* becomes a guiding principle, inviting reflection on the symbiotic relationship between humans and technology. This interconnectedness extends beyond mere tools and engenders a new perspective on artistic creation, where the relationship between artist and medium blur into a collaborative dance.

We continue with Section 2.2 (Computer art vs Traditional art – Practical differences), where we scrutinise the differences between creating art objects with computer art and using traditional means.

In Section 2.2.1 (Three paradigm shifts), we contextualise the paradigm shifts brought about by unstable media. Each of those challenges established norms and invites a redefinition of artistic processes and outcomes.

In Section 2.2.2 (Illustration Vera Molnar – from the imaginary machine to the real machine), we show how those paradigms come to life within the work of Vera Molnar. She is an artist who navigated the transition from the imaginary realm to the tangible, marrying the ethereal possibilities of digital creation with the materiality of the real machine. This

personal final remarks on my practice and my take on the Digital Avantgarde.

# Historical Contexts

In this chapter, we follow the historical context that will play a role in this thesis. Here, we aim to use this historical context to clarify what we mean by Avantgarde and Unstable Media.

## Avantgarde movements

In this section, I will provide (historical) context to the Avantgarde view on aesthetics, art objects and art practice in general.

The first thing to understand about the Avantgarde is that it does not refer to one artistic movement. The Avantgarde encompasses a group of artistic movements considered innovative for their time. For this reason, neither this section nor this thesis aims to provide an exhaustive description or definition that will fit all Avantgarde movements.

This section aims to clarify the concepts we take from the theory of the Avantgarde used in this thesis. For this purpose, we will follow “Theory of the Avantgarde” by Peter Burger (Burger, 1984) and “Historische Avantgarde” by Ferdinand Drijkoningen et al. (Drijkoningen, Fontijn, Grygar, De Meijer, & Wuerzner, 1991) as primary sources.

To illustrate why we need to make the concept of Avantgarde more specific, let’s look at the Wikipedia entry on the Avantgarde.

*“In the arts and literature, the term avantgarde (advance guard and vanguard) identifies as a genre of art, an experimental work of art, and the experimental artist who creates the work of art, which usually is aesthetically innovative, whilst initially being ideologically unacceptable to the artistic establishment of the time.”* (Wikipedia, 2014-2023)

We should keep this definition in the back of our minds as a general idea. However, this is not our primary definition because it has at least two challenges for our argumentation. In the first place, the definition needs to be narrower. Any artistic expression outside the mainstream falls under the avantgarde umbrella if we follow that. This would imply that any art object using innovative media would fall under the Avantgarde; as we will later see, in Section 3.3, this is not the case. In the second place, we are looking for a definition that clarifies the ideals and motivations of the avantgarde movements.

Chronological speaking, (Drijkoningen, Fontijn, Grygar, De Meijer, & Wuerzner, 1991), in its introduction, situates the first wave of Avantgarde movements from the beginning of the 20th, before World War II, until the mid-1930s. This wave, called the *“Historical Avantgarde,"* encompasses artistic movements like Dada, Surrealism, Futurism, and Constructivism.

New Avantgarde impulses emerged at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, giving rise to a second wave called the *"neo-Avantgarde"*. Some of the movements in this new wave include Pop Art, Conceptual Art, Kinetic Art, Feminist Art, Minimalism and Fluxus.

As mentioned before, avantgarde is not one single movement. Because of that, principles vary significantly between movements and periods. Some movements, such as Dada and Surrealism, may embrace absurdity and irrationality, while others, like constructivism, prioritise structure and interdisciplinarity. Nevertheless, the following overarching themes of avantgarde art will be relevant for this thesis:

Reaction to the autonomy of art (Burger, 1984).

Rejection of art institutionalisation (Drijkoningen, Fontijn, Grygar, De Meijer, & Wuerzner, 1991),

Challenging the status quo in art and society (Burger, 1984) and (Drijkoningen, Fontijn, Grygar, De Meijer, & Wuerzner, 1991).

The role of art in everyday life (Burger, 1984).

Commitment to innovation and experimentation (Wikipedia, 2014-2023).

There are more principles related to Avantgarde art. For example, radicalism, interdisciplinarity, social and political engagement, rejection of tradition, and democratisation of art, but we will not discuss those here in detail.

### The core avantgarde subjects

I will now proceed to describe and discuss the core avantgarde subjects that will make the common thread of this thesis. Any art movement that claims to be Avantgarde ought to at least address the subjects presented here. In Chapter 2, we will discuss how those apply to computer art.

#### The autonomy of art

The concept of the autonomy of art refers to the idea that art should be self-contained, self-referential, and independent of external influences, particularly those of politics and society. It implies that art should be valued for its own sake without the need to serve a specific function or purpose in society. This is often called “*l’art pour l’art” or “art for art’s sake”.*

sought to break down the barriers between art and everyday life. Movements, such as Dada and Surrealism, believed art should not exist in isolation but should actively address pressing concerns. Therefore, they engaged with political and social issues and challenged the bourgeois order.

#### Art institutionalisation

The developments on the autonomy of art also promoted the “autonomous art institution”.

Ferdinand Drijkoningen quotes Bourdieu as follows: *“…the process of art's autonomization correlates with the emergence of a distinct societal category of art producers. These producers are increasingly inclined to recognise only those rules that have been handed down by their predecessors, which can either serve as a starting point or be the rules they choose to break. Over time, they become more capable of shedding any societal servitude, whether it be related to moral censorship and aesthetic programs imposed by a proselytising Church, or academic control and demands from a political authority that seeks art as a propaganda instrument. In other words, just as the emergence of law as law, i.e., as an "autonomous domain," is associated with the advancing division of labour leading to a community of professional jurists, the process that leads to the constitution of art itself is accompanied by a change in the relationships that artists maintain with non-artists and, as a result, with other artists. This change leads to the formation of a relatively independent intellectual and artistic field. It is also related to the development of a new definition of artists and their art”* (Drijkoningen, Fontijn, Grygar, De Meijer, & Wuerzner, 1991, p. 16)[[1]](#endnote-2).

The eleven above points are neither chronological nor complete, but rather give a broad overview of the reactions to art institutionalisation of different Avantgarde movements.

#### Art and the status quo of society

In the previous two sections, we followed (Burger, 1984) and (Drijkoningen, Fontijn, Grygar, De Meijer, & Wuerzner, 1991) and their argument that one of the intrinsic motivations of the historical avantgarde movements was a reaction to the rise of the bourgeois society and the autonomy of art and autonomous art institutions. We also suggested that several other neo-avantgarde movements reacted similarly to art's autonomy and its institutions. This brings us to a third common characteristic of avantgarde movements: the challenge of the status quo.

As a final remark common to both Marcel Duchamp and Elaine Sturtevant, Siri Hustvedt (Hustvedt, 2019) presents evidence that suggests *“Fountain”* was first created by Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven but due to patriarchal structures, we have not heard of her or recognize her contribution.

#### Art and everyday life

The cases of Elaine Sturtevant and Marcel Duchamp show how an artist can integrate their practice into the reality they live in. This brings us to the fourth common characteristic of avantgarde movements we will use during this thesis—namely, the position of art in everyday life.

life. Therefore, architecture, performing arts, design, fashion and even parties were given as much weight as fine arts.

### Section Roundup

In this section, we illustrated how the historical Avantgarde and neo-avantgarde movements challenge to the autonomy of art influenced cultural change, including a shift away from traditional notions of art as an isolated, purely aesthetic pursuit and institutions surrounding it. They advocated for more engaged, politically aware, and socially relevant art. This perspective played a crucial role in shaping the direction of avantgarde art in the 20th century and beyond. The impact of these ideas is still felt nowadays. This is summarised with the following subjects:

Reaction to the autonomy of art.

Rejection of art institutionalisation.

Challenging the status quo in art and society.

The role of art in everyday life.

Chapter 2 will discuss how these principles relate to the contemporary digital art practice. This will lead us to a proposal for a Digital Avantgarde.

## Unstable Media

In the introduction, we are immersed in a digital age where technology and information mediate many interactions. Artistic practice has not been immune to this. Around 1984, there was a pivotal point where artistic practice moved from a primarily analog to a predominantly digital practice (Moller Hansen, 2023). The digital practice involves using computers and? more generally, using so-called unstable media.

*the world of art which reaches us through the publicity media. This has come to a standstill and has become a budget for collectors, officials, historians, and critics…”*

### Illustration, Light-Space-Modulator

At first glance, it may seem that unstable media is related to computers and digital media. However, this is not necessary to make an unstable media artwork. Let’s take the example of the Light-Space Modulator (1930) by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. Here is a description of the work by Moholy-Nagy himself:

*“This piece of lighting equipment is a device used for demonstrating both plays of light and manifestations of movement.*

*The model consists of a cube-like body or box, 120 x 120 cm in size, with a circular opening (stage opening) at its front side. On the back of the panel, mounted around the opening are a number of yellow, green, blue, rot, and white-toned electric bulbs (approximately 70 illuminating bulbs of 15 watts each, and 5 headlamps of 100 watts). Located inside the body, parallel to its front side, is a second panel; this panel too, bears a circular opening about which are mounted electric lightbulbs of different colors. In accordance with a predetermined plan, individual bulbs glow at different points. They illuminate a continually moving mechanism built of partly translucent, partly transparent, and partly fretted materials, in order to cause the best possible play of shadow formations on the back wall of the closed box. (When the demonstration occurs in a darkened space, the back wall of the box can be removed, and the color and shadow projection shown on a screen of any chosen size behind the box.)*

*The mechanism is supported by a circular platform on which a three-part mechanism is built. The dividing walls are made of transparent cellophane, and a metal wall made of vertical rods. Each of the three sectors of the framework accommodate a different, playful movement study, which individually goes into effect when it appears on the main disc revolving before the stage opening.*

*The first sector’s playful movement study: three rods move jerkily (since the plan of the edges and base are somewhat different) on an unbroken path. Different materials, translucent screening, parallel horizontal rods, and wire netting are mounted to the three rods.*

*The second sector’s playful movement study: found within three levels arranged one behind the other is a large immobile aluminium disc; moving up and down in front of this is a small, bent and highly-polished perforated brass disc; at the same time—between the two—a small ball is set in motion as if on a roller coaster.*

*The third sector’s playful movement: a glass rod topped by a spiral of glass. This describes, in the reverse, the movement of the pin of the large disc, whose tip touches the base made of a diagonally-arranged and sector-shaped glass disc, levitating over a reflecting circular platform.*

*This piece of lighting equipment can be used to arrive at countless optical conclusions, and it seems correct to me that the development of these attempts be continued as planned, as a way to approach the designing of light and movement.”* (Moholy-Nagy, 1930)

<pictures>

perspective will be essential for our look at computer art and the avantgarde in the following chapters.

# 

# Computer art

Section 1.2 defined Unstable media as *“…all media which makes use of electronic waves and frequencies, such as engines, sound, light, video, computers, and sound.”* (V2\_, 1987)*.*

However, computers have become the primary tool for interacting with sound, light, and video. But more generally, thanks to sensors and the Internet of Things (IoT)*,* they are often used to interact with electronic waves, frequencies and much more. In other words, nowadays, computers are used to interact with all the media we define as Unstable Media. This makes them an essential medium in which unstable media takes an aesthetic side.

Computer art is relatively new. The CODA Museum in Apeldoorn just had an exhibition, *“Behind the Screens - 50 years of digital art” (2023), which* put digital art practice[[2]](#endnote-3) as a child compared to the centuries, or millennials, of traditional art practices.

I do not intend to develop a Digital Avantgarde theory that fits all the possible uses of computers in art.

## The digitalisation of life

From the beginning of robotics and artificial beings, robots have been seen as servants to humans. We can trace this idea back to Greek mythology to the myth of Talos. The myth is briefly summarised as follows.

The gods created Talos, but in modern literature, humans are still at a higher level than artificial beings. For example, in the book *“I, Robot”* (Asimov, 2019) by Isaac Asimov postulates the first law of robotics as follows:

*“A robot shall not harm a human, or by inaction allow a human to come to harm.”*

In the book, Isaac Asimov explores several situations where the first law of robotics is essential for humans to keep control over robots. In his futuristic universes, robots have become so advanced and superior to humans that the only thing that prevents them from taking control is the first law of robotics embedded in the core of their positronic brains. For the law to apply, robots ought to show servitude to humans.

have become commonplace. Notably, depending on one's physical side of the conflict, media and technology will influence and manipulate our notions of morality and self, our superego and ego, shaping our perception of identity.

### Of Ghosts and Shells

Another crucial aspect tied to the rise of hypermediality in shaping our perception of the world is that the term "world" is no longer confined solely to the *"physical world."* We now have alternative *"digital worlds"* where individuals can establish a distinct existence and identity. We draw inspiration from the well-acclaimed film “Ghost in the Shell” (Oshii, 1995) and the associated franchise to explore this.

The core of the plot of the first film is as follows:

"Ghost in the Shell" is set in a futuristic cyberpunk world, where mechanical augmentation is not the exception but the norm. The story revolves around Major Motoko Kusanagi, a cyborg policewoman, and her partner, Batou, also a cyborg. They are part of Section 9, a special operations unit tasked with apprehending a mysterious hacker, the Puppet Master, or Project 2501.

transcend its existence.

### We are all cyborgs…

In 1995, when the first Ghost in the Shell film was aired, these ideas were seen as Sci-Fi dissociated from physical reality. However, nowadays, my Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn profiles, digital data the government has collected, and many faces on the blockchain are essential to my identity beyond my physical body. Moreover, society does expect us to have such digital identities; without them, we will be just shells.

In this perspective, we could rephrase Donna Haraway’s discussion on companion species (Haraway, 2003) and argue that technology has become, to me, a companion species. I spend more time with my phone than with my dog, and most of my interactions with other humans are mediated by technology.

All this illustrates how computers are changing our reality in a broader sense. We will now focus on how computers require a different perspective when creating art objects.

## Digital art vs Traditional art – Practical differences

Before the upcoming of computers, art objects had a very clear physical component. A painting has a frame; you can see the paint's textures and the artist's brush strokes, etc. Even during the creation process, this physicality is very present. For example, a painter can make decisions based on the physicality of the paint or the canvas to use. Even works like *“Fountain”* or the *“Light-Space-Modulator”* have a physical object that occupies space. However, with computers, much of the physicality is hidden from the artists and viewers.

In this section, we present some of the practical differences that artists should embrace during the creation process when computers are Involved. In Section 2.3.2, we will even argue that there is no need for the art object to leave the computer. The computer is the canvas itself. In digital art, there is no need for a physical object.

*are made… …A new generation of electronic artists has turned to code as fertile ground for conceptual and formal experimentation, simultaneously providing a pragmatic framework for computational creativity and a theoretical context for the created artwork.”* (Pearson, 2011, p. x)

### Three paradigm shifts

This section presents three paradigm shifts that we believe are relevant to this thesis. Those are:

Embracement of remediation,

Conversation with the machine,

Technical craftsmanship in the praxis of art practice.

We chose these because they align well with the core avantgarde subjects presented in Section 1.1.1. In Section 2.2.2, we show how those paradigms come to life within the work of Vera Molnar. She is an artist who navigated the transition from physical art objects to the ethereal possibilities of digital creation.

#### Embracing remediation

Making digital art implies the use of a computer. A computer is usually a (black) box with a processor and some peripherals for input and output. Standard peripherals for input are a mouse, a keyboard and an electronic pen. Standard peripherals for output are a screen, sound speakers, and a printer.

In Section 2.2.2, we will illustrate this conversation with the work of Vera Molnar.

#### Technical craftsmanship in the praxis of artistic practice

The third paradigm shift we want to discuss relates more directly to the avantgarde perspective. Namely, the difference between the “digital artist” and the “software engineer” becomes very diffuse.

This aligns well with the core avantgarde subjects we presented in Section 1.1.1. As we mentioned, the educational ideals of the Bauhaus promoted the abolishment of differences between the artist and the artisan; in Walter Gropius's words, *“The artist is an exalted artisan”* (Gropius, 1919). I would reformulate this by claiming that *“the digital artist ought to be an exalted software engineer”*. Here, we present three arguments for this.

A first argument for why artistic practice with computers requires a fusion between art and craftsmanship is that technology is not usually developed or designed for artistic purposes. We can argue that *“art is mind over matter”* (Mul, Creative Strategies, 2018); because of this, using technology as an artistic medium requires the artist to have the craftmanship to hack the machine to do something it was not intended to do.

Timo Hoogland created a programming language, Mercury, to make music. He is actively promoting it is adoption to different audiences and describes the above point as follows: *“My workshops on Mercury are attended both by people from computer science backgrounds and music backgrounds. I have noticed that those from a computer background are very quick to grasp the syntax and technicalities of Mercury but have difficulties making music with it. It is musicians who can leave the technicalities aside and quickly start making music with it. Mercury was made to make music.”* (Hoogland, 2023)

### Illustration Vera Molnar – from the imaginary machine to the real machine

Here, I will illustrate the paradigm shifts of the previous section with the work of one of the pioneers of computer art Vera Molnar[[3]](#endnote-4). As we will see, she is an artist who navigated the transition from imaginary to tangible machines. She fuses the ethereal possibilities of digital creation with the materiality of the real machine.

*to the extreme of ignoring his own taste and convictions in order to please others. There should be an intermediate ground where aesthetic satisfaction is experienced mutually.”* (Molnar, 1975, p. 189)

## Digital art objects vs Traditional art objects – Conceptual differences

In the previous section, we discussed the paradigm shift of artistic practice when computers are involved. We hinted at several points that such practicalities also implied more conceptual differences in how digital art objects are perceived when digital media are involved. In this section, we will go deeper into those differences.

### The new digital art.

To illustrate how digital art objects challenge the traditional perception of art objects, let’s recall the example of *“Structure des Quadrilaters”* by Vera Molnar; we will generalise from there.

We will address these questions in the following section.

#### Is it science, or is it art?

In Section 2.2.1.3, we mentioned that digital practice asks for technical craftsmanship in the praxis of artistic practice. In Section 2.2.2, we presented how Vera Molnar's creative practice embraces this. In her case, this goes even further. In (MuDA, 2019), she describes how she systematically uses randomness to broaden her perspective and explore the possibilities of the aesthetic object she is interested in. She goes even further in (Molnar & Molnar, 1989) using randomness to define form formally.

t is just a digitalisation of its physical counterpart. That is just a pretty bird in a cage.

### Relation to the avantgarde

In this chapter, we have illustrated how digital art practice is made for different paradigms on the creative process (Section 2.2.1) and how the digital art object deviates from traditional perspectives 2.3.1. This and its relation to the other avantgarde principles was already foreseen in 1986 in an earlier version of the *Unstable Media Manifesto* by V2\_ (V2\_, 1986). In this version they not only aim to define unstable media, as in the version of 1987, but also address how unstable media requires a new type of aesthetics that ruptures from the *“traditional”* aesthetic and audience of fine arts[[4]](#endnote-5). Here, I have extracted the parts of the manifesto that most illustrate this divergence:

*“WE DO NOT WANT TO BRING EXISTING ART TO THE PUBLIC,*

*WE WANT NEW ART AND A NEW AUDIENCE…*

*…WE WANT TO PROPAGATE CONTINUOUS REVOLUTION IN A WORLD FULL OF SO-CALLED CERTAINTIES, AND WITH THESE CERTAINTIES, WE WANT TO BREAK.*

*IT IS THE ART TO PREVENT THE INSTITUTIONAL AND THE CERTAIN. QUANTUM THEORY AND RELATIVITY THEORY HAVE MADE IT CLEAR TO US THAT THE SENSIBLE REPRESENTATION OF OUR EXPERIENCE ONLY APPLIES TO A LIMITED AREA. AND THAT THIS DOES NOT BELONG TO AN UNDENIABLE STATEMENT OF SCIENCE IN ANY CASE…*

use to facilitate the proliferation of digital art.

# Originality in the digital age

One of the practical and conceptual challenges digital creative practice has brought into the picture is that of originality or reproducibility.

In digital art, replicability is not a flaw but a feature. Internet pioneer Steward Brand captured it under the slogan *“Information wants to be free”*.

Even more, if the new digital aesthetic is about information flows, what does *“information wants to be free”* imply for the digital creative practice?

## Originality as a myth of traditional art

Before going deeper into originality in digital art, let’s look back to traditional arts.

Already in 1935, Walter Benjamin (Benjamin, 1969) was philosophising about how machines would influence creative practice.

NFTs. The question here is: *What is the right thing to mint?*

# Conclusion: Towards a Digital Avantgarde

This thesis began with a personal exploration, seeking to harmonise my engagement with unstable media and interactive practices with the more conventional realm of *"Expanded Painting"* encountered at the Rietveld Academy.

WE WANT NEW ART AND A NEW AUDIENCE."

In its quest for innovation and independence, the Digital Avantgarde charts a new trajectory for the digital age's evolving landscape of artistic expression.

# Bibliography

MuDA. (2019, November 12). *Vera Molnar: Randomness.* Retrieved December 13, 2023, from Vimeo: https://vimeo.com/372579247

Christie's. (2018, December 12). *Is artificial intelligence set to become art’s next medium?* Retrieved December 13, 2023, from christies.com: https://www.christies.com/en/stories/a-collaboration-between-two-artists-one-human-one-a-machine-0cd01f4e232f4279a525a446d60d4cd1

Rozendaal, R. (2014). *Digital Art - DLD14.* Retrieved December 2013, from https://www.youtube.com/@DLDconference: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eR5ITqKx\_9c

V2\_, O. (1986). *Manifest.* Retrieved December 2023, from v2.nl: https://v2.nl/events/manifest

V2\_, O. (1987). *Manifesto for the Unstable Media.* Retrieved December 2023, from v2.nl: https://v2.nl/articles/manifesto-for-the-unstable-media

http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/aesthetics\_of\_the\_digital/cybernetic\_aesthetics/

Rietveld, A. (2023). *Technodiversity.* Retrieved December 2023, from Gerrit Rietveld Academie web site: https://studiumgenerale.rietveldacademie.nl/program\_points/technodiversity

Rietveld, A. (2023). *Studium Generale Rietveld Academie.* Retrieved December 2023, from Gerrit Rietveld Academy website: https://studiumgenerale.rietveldacademie.nl/

Gianneti, C. (2004). *Art, Science and Technology.* Retrieved December 2023, from Media Art Net: http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/aesthetics\_of\_the\_digital/art\_science\_technology/

Gianneti, C. (2004). *Digital aesthetics: Introduction.* Retrieved December 2023, from Media Art Net: http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/aesthetics\_of\_the\_digital/editorial/

Burnham, J. (1968, September). *System Aesthetics.* Retrieved December 2023, from monoskop.org: https://monoskop.org/images/0/03/Burnham\_Jack\_1968\_Systems\_Esthetics\_Artforum.pdf

Peter, W. (1998). The Unreasonable Effectiveness of the Methodological Convergence of Art and Science. In C. Sommerer, & L. Mignonneau (Ed.), *Art @ Science.* Vienna/New York.

Bremmer, I. (2023, April). *The next global superpower isn't who you think.* Retrieved December 2023, from ted.com: https://www.ted.com/talks/ian\_bremmer\_the\_next\_global\_superpower\_isn\_t\_who\_you\_think?language=en

Haraway, D. (2003). *The companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness.* Prickly Paradigm Press.

Hyde, M. (2022, November 12). *When AI can make art – what does it mean for creativity?* Retrieved December 13, 2023, from www.theguardian.com: https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/nov/12/when-ai-can-make-art-what-does-it-mean-for-creativity-dall-e-midjourney

Braidotti, R., & Hlavajova, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Posthuman Glossary.* Bloomsbury Academic.

Khos, G. (Director). (2017). *Alpha Go - The Movie* [Motion Picture].

Bohnacker, H., Gross, B., & L. J. (2012). *Generative Design.* (C. Lazzeroni, Ed.) Princeton Architectural Press.

Mul, G. (2016, August). *Match of the day.* Retrieved from https://geertmul.nl: https://geertmul.nl/projects/match\_of\_the\_day/

Rozendaal, R. (2013). *Here 2013: Rafaël Rozendaal.* Retrieved December 2023, from https://www.youtube.com/@itsnicethat: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ad8YDQjCEWo

Asimov, I. (2019). *I, Robot.* HarperCollins.

Hustvedt, S. (2019, March). *A woman in the men's room: when will the art world recognise the real artist behind Duchamp's Fountain?* Retrieved January 2024, from https://www.theguardian.com/books: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/mar/29/marcel-duchamp-fountain-women-art-history

In addition to these sources, ChatGPT and Grammarly have been used to review and rewrite the text.

1. translation by chatGPT [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. From now on, we will use the terms “Computer Art” and “Digital Art” as interchangeable of each other. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. Some may differ whether Vera Molnar is really one of the pioneers of computer art but since I do not want to not encourage the male dominated culture on art and its institutions, I will Illustrate the thinking behind computer art with her work. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. This in contrast to the 1987 Unstable Media Manifesto by V2\_ used in section (V2\_, 1987) where we see a focus on defining what unstable media is and not its relation to art institutions or as a reaction to the status quo. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)