Generative Art History – Full Presentation Notes

Complete notes with Background, Significance, Relevance, Presentation Tips, Image Links, and Enrichment from ArtNome.

■ Additional Content from *Why Love Generative Art?*

• Generative art continues 20th■century themes: geometry, abstraction, chance, machine aesthetics.

• Controlled randomness: artists design rules + parameters, then let variation emerge.

• Scale & iteration: computers enable patterns and complexity beyond manual means.

• Artist as system designer: the algorithm is the artwork; outcomes may surprise even the creator.

• Women's contributions: Vera Molnár, Lillian Schwartz, Muriel Cooper shaped early generative aesthetics.

• Importance of tools: Processing, Media Lab, open source culture democratized generative art.

• Generative AI: extends the paradigm—artists curate systems, data, and prompts.

Hilma af Klint – *The Ten Largest, Youth* (1907)

Background: Swedish painter, pioneer of abstraction, working decades before Kandinsky and Mondrian. She drew inspiration from mysticism and theosophy.

Significance: Large-scale abstract forms with biomorphic and symbolic structures.

Relevance: Af Klint's emphasis on symbolic systems and coded visual languages anticipates algorithmic thinking — encoding ideas into formal rules.

Presentation Tip: Share the story of her secrecy and visionary approach; connect to generative art's forward-looking nature.

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Image: View Image

Enrichment:

Her encoded symbolism resonates with ArtNome's framing of abstraction and systems as precursors to generative practice.

Kasimir Malevich – *Suprematist Composition* (1916)

Background: Founder of Suprematism, radically simplifying art to pure geometric forms.

Significance: Established a visual vocabulary of square, circle, and cross; removed representational content.

Relevance: Suprematism's limited set of rules parallels algorithmic recombination in generative art.

Presentation Tip: Compare Malevich's minimal shapes to programming syntax.

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Image: MoMA Collection Link

Enrichment:

ArtNome highlights this as the kind of systemic art generative practice builds upon.

Wassily Kandinsky – *Circles in a Circle* (1923)

Background: Bauhaus teacher, theorist connecting art to music and spirituality.

Significance: Organized geometric forms within larger structures, focusing on harmony.

Relevance: Treated visual art as a system of syntax, foreshadowing computational rules.

Presentation Tip: Invite audience to see it like a musical score.

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Image: Guggenheim Link

Enrichment:

Aligns with ArtNome's themes of language, rules, and systems.

Paul Klee – *Highway and Byways* (1928)

Background: Swiss painter, Bauhaus master, emphasized rhythm and pedagogical systems.

Significance: Grid-like paths suggesting ordered improvisation.

Relevance: Influenced computational aesthetics by stressing growth and rule-driven design.

Presentation Tip: Compare grids in Klee to pixels or weaving patterns.

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Enrichment:

ArtNome connects Klee's systematizing of rhythm to coding logic.

Marcel Duchamp – *Rotoreliefs* (1935)

Background: Dada and conceptual art pioneer.

Significance: Created optical disks producing illusions when spun.

Relevance: Early example of procedural and machine-mediated art.

Presentation Tip: Show a spinning GIF or animation to illustrate.

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Image: Pompidou Link

Enrichment:

ArtNome themes of randomness and machine-play link directly here.

Josef Albers – *Concentric Squares* (1941)

Background: Bauhaus teacher, later Yale professor, pioneer of color theory.

Significance: Serial variations of color inside geometric structures.

Relevance: Parametric iteration mirrors computational processes.

Presentation Tip: Ask how perception changes with color only.

Ask how perception changes with color only.

Image: Albers Foundation

Enrichment:
Reflects ArtNome's theme of iteration and scale made systematic.

Ellsworth Kelly – *Study for Meschers* (1951)

Background: American minimalist, often employed chance in compositions.

Significance: Bold flat colors arranged semi-randomly.

Relevance: Bridges rule-based abstraction with randomness, echoing generative logic.

Presentation Tip: Compare to dice rolls or random() in code.
Compare to dice rolls or random() in code.

Enrichment:
ArtNome's concept of balancing control and chance is central here.

Anni Albers – *Red Meander* (1954)

Background: Bauhaus-trained textile artist, influential in American modernism.

Significance: Woven patterns with modular, coded designs.

Relevance: Weaving is inherently algorithmic; looms are early generative machines.

Presentation Tip: Show weaving as code executed line by line.
Show weaving as code executed line by line.

Image: National Gallery of Art

Enrichment:
ArtNome stresses iteration, repetition, and structure—all inherent in weaving.

Bridget Riley – *Burn* (1964)

Background: Leading Op Art figure.

Significance: Rhythmic optical effects generated by simple repeated elements.

Relevance: Emergent complexity from systematic rules—akin to algorithms.

Presentation Tip: Highlight perceptual trickery from simple inputs.
Highlight perceptual trickery from simple inputs.

Enrichment:
ArtNome frames this as complexity through controlled rules.

Sol LeWitt – *Wall Drawing 11* (1969)

Background: Conceptual artist, instructions were the art.

Significance: Differentiated idea from execution.

Relevance: Clear analogue to algorithms in generative practice.

Presentation Tip: Read his instructions aloud, compare to source code.

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Image: MASS MoCA

Enrichment:

ArtNome aligns this with 'artist as system designer.'

Georg Nees – *Schotter* (1968)

Background: Among the first computer artists.

Significance: Progressive randomness applied to squares in a grid.

Relevance: A textbook generative work balancing control and variation.

Presentation Tip: Animate increasing randomness to illustrate.

Animate increasing randomness to illustrate.

Enrichment:

Embodies ArtNome's theme of controlled randomness.

Frieder Nake & Manfred Mohr

Background: Early pioneers in computer-based abstraction.

Significance: Nake's Hommage à Paul Klee (1965) & Mohr's cube permutations.

Relevance: Codified algorithmic aesthetics in art.

Presentation Tip: Compare to voxel-based art or parametric design.

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Enrichment:

ArtNome notes how iteration + system design shaped the field.

Vera Molnár, Lillian Schwartz, Muriel Cooper

Background: Female pioneers of generative art.

Significance: Molnár worked with imaginary computers, Schwartz explored animation at Bell Labs, Cooper bridged typography & code.

Relevance: They proved systems can encode creativity.

Presentation Tip: Quote Molnár: 'Without the aid of a computer, such images could only exist in the mind.'

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Enrichment:

ArtNome emphasizes women's contributions despite barriers.

John Maeda & MIT Media Lab

Background: Designer, programmer, educator.

Significance: Bridged design and computation through Aesthetics + Computation group.

Relevance: Foundation for creative coding pedagogy.

Presentation Tip: Frame as 'design by numbers'—art meets computation.
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Enrichment:
ArtNome links this to democratization of generative art.

Processing & Jared Tarbell

Background: Ben Fry & Casey Reas developed Processing (2001).

Significance: Made creative coding accessible, community-based.

Relevance: Expanded generative art into a movement.

Presentation Tip: Show Processing sketches live.
Show Processing sketches live.

Image: Processing.org

Enrichment:
ArtNome highlights community and tool-building as central.

Joshua Davis & Praystation

Background: Flash artist in early 2000s.

Significance: Shared open source code, created a remix culture.

Relevance: Spread generative aesthetics into design.

Presentation Tip: Stress open sharing and community.
Stress open sharing and community.

Enrichment:
Reflects ArtNome's point on accessibility and culture.

AI & Generative Art

Background: Neural networks, GANs, diffusion models.

Significance: Artists design meta-systems and curation strategies.

Relevance: Extends generative paradigm into AI-driven creation.

Presentation Tip: Ask where authorship lies—rules, curation, or data.
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Enrichment:

ArtNome sees AI as a natural continuation of generative logic.