Application for Artist In Residence Program. Factory Berlin - Project proposal idea

17th June 2020

What is the most generative thing you know?

The dictionary gives this simple definition of the word generative: "able to produce or create something"(1). The example of using it gives is even more stunning: "the generative power of the mind".
Thanks to the advent of software like vvvv, Touchdesigner and the easier accessibility of GPUs, such a generic term in the last few years has been used more and more often in the design world.

But what do we mean when we say generative?
From a natural point of view, we could say that the design comes from a process of selection, breeding, and mutation. The "survival of the fittest" process (2).
Another natural approach is the turbulence flows behaviour that is still vastly unexplained. (3)
From a design perspective, by looking at works of Manfred Mohr (4) or Lillian F. Schwartz (5) to arrive at the latest software like the mentioned vvvv and Touch designer, we could define generative as a procedural process.
Then there is generative in machine learning which is more a statistical definition where a 'generative model' refers to a system which captures the distribution of some observations (e.g. 'training data') (6)

These three perspectives are quite different but still connected by a human bias that associates what is non-human-made as generative.
But where are the limits of these non-human interventions and what is the effort we have to do in order to move away as much as possible from human consciousness? What's the least man-made artwork?

I have been touching on all those topics separately in my projects and some recent ML experiments but I would like to further explore this intricate topic from a philosophical, scientific, and design perspective with the goal of observing what are the outcomes in the path towards increasing non-human creativity.

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Resources
(1) https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/generative
(2) https://medium.com/generative-design/learning-from-nature-fe5b7290e3de
(3) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zI9sG3pjVU
(4) https://art.daimler.com/en/artwork/p-197-j-manfred-mohr-1979/
(5) http://lillian.com/biography/
(6) https://medium.com/@memoakten/deep-meditations-meaningful-exploration-of-ones-inner-self-576aab2f3894