



AESTHETICS OF AI IMAGES (AIIM)

NEWSLETTER #3



WELCOME AND SIGN UP

Welcome to the third newsletter for the Centre for Aesthetics of AI Images (AIIM). A lot of exciting things have happened since our last newsletter, and we are looking forward to sharing them with you in this one!

Please forward this newsletter to those of your contacts, who may be interested, and remind them to sign up for the AIIM newsletter on our website: <https://cc.au.dk/en/aiim/newsletter>.

NEW POSTDOCS

We are very happy to announce that Maja Bak Herrie and Lea Laura Michelsen have been appointed postdocs in the research project **"NEW VISIONS: Image cultures in the era of AI"**. **Maja Bak Herrie** will be working the epistemics of AI image aesthetics, by focusing on the relations between seeing and knowing, she explores how AI images generate knowledge

and articulate new understandings of truth and representation. **Lea Laura Michelsen** explores the aesthetics of fake faces by investigating how AI deepfakes and face filters in popular culture create new concepts of identity.



Maja Bak Herrie (left) and Lea Laura Michelsen (right).

AIIM MEMBER IN NEW POSITION

Asker Bryld Staunæs, artist and member of AIIM, is a new PhD student at Aarhus University in collaboration with Novo Nordisk with the project ***Automatic Uprisings: Archiving a Techno-Social Sculpture***.

The project is artistic research between Aarhus University and Kunsthall Aarhus. It is both media-based and politically-engaged and explores new imaginaries for social protest with artificial intelligence (AI). Its practical aim is to document a potential network, The Synthetic International (SI), which depicts a global web of political parties driven by AIs. This offers an antidote to a centenary of doomsday visions on “the robot uprising” by explicating how this already takes place in today’s society. The SI artwork - a “techno-social sculpture” that follows in a tradition of e.g. Joseph Beuys - presents a series of participatory interfaces where one can engage with AI propaganda, twisted diagrams, etc. By facilitating exhibitions, labs, publications, workshops, and scholarly debate, Automatic Uprisings’ objective is to outline a form of digital citizenship where everyone contributes to determining the role of AI in democracy.



Asker Bryld Staunæs.

AIIM MEMBER RECEIVES GRANT FUNDING

Maja Bak Herrie from our center and Danish Technological Institute have received seed funding from Interacting Minds Centre at Aarhus University to undertake the project ***The limits of AI semiotics: A pilot study probing generative AI image models' understanding of causality and abstraction*** this fall.

The project is to investigate the foundational limitations to the way state-of-the-art AI image generation models respond to different types of visual signification, i.e., their understanding of the relation between the prompt and what that prompt means. While AI image generation models show great promise in simulating high quality imagery, they also tend to fail in subtle and strange ways: producing hands with 6 fingers or text that resembles no language. Applying the semiotics of Charles S. Peirce, specifically his tripartite model of signs, the project explores how successfully different image generation models respond to prompts relying on each of the three different types of signification in Peirce's model and trace the results back to the underlying techniques used to make the models. The results of these experiments, whether positive or negative, open new questions of the depth or shallowness of AI image generation models' understanding of signs.

WORKSHOP REPORT

AI Images and the Democratization of Art was the topic of the AIIM workshop held May 3rd, 2023, in collaboration with Art Hub Copenhagen. Guided by artist Asker Bryld Staunæs and Kristoffer Ørum, 22 artists, curators, and academics explored different AI image tools and discussed how they may affect the creation of art. While new AI image tool, in principle, enable more people to create technically impressive images and encourage them to explore text-image relations, this also raised a number of questions concerning the tools' business models, technical literacy, distinctions between art and images, and the role of the art world. The workshop was great food for thought. Thank you very much to all participants and to SHAPE, AU, for funding!



To the left: Prompt: "a painting of a group workshop on AI and the democratization of art in the style of Picasso's Guernica".

To the right: Group selfie automatically altered by use of prompt: "An out-of-this-world landscape with an astronaut walking in the dark, void of space and heading towards Earth, illuminated by a breathtaking double galaxy: 4K resolution, RTX On, volumetric lighting effects, star trails, abstract elements and #trendingonartstation".

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

WORKSHOP: AI ART AS WELFARE TECHNOLOGY?

On June 14th, AIIM organises a workshop with DokkX on the relation between art and AI welfare technology.

For the past couple of years, an increased awareness has emerged on the role of art as a creative tool in the treatment of loneliness, mental health, and psychological vulnerability. Traditional art therapy often requires considerable resources to hire artists as facilitators as well as materials and spaces to create art. Now, however, it has become easy and accessible to create new and unique images via a simple text prompt on a computer.

The workshop investigates whether AI-generated images are able to support existing art therapy techniques and how they differ from more traditional and physical practices. We also discuss who is really the 'artist' behind the images and whether it is safe for psychologically vulnerable people to use such a powerful and unpredictable tool.

This workshop aims to be at the forefront in understanding and critically discussing the potentials and challenges that automated visual arts production pose to citizens. In collaboration we will investigate the psycho-social effects and possibilities that synthetic images create for vulnerable citizens and develop a humanistic understanding of this innovative technology. The goal is to prepare practitioners for encountering artificial intelligence in the healthcare sector.

The workshop includes oral presentations, practical exercises, exciting discussions, and a lunch. Asker Bryld Staunæs from Aesthetics of AI Images will facilitate presentations,

discussions, and various image generation exercises.

Workshop details:

- Date: June 14, 10:00am-14:00pm
- Sign up: Participation by registration only
- Location: CFIA Workshop Zone on the 2nd floor, Dokk1, Hack Kampmanns Plads 2, 8000 Aarhus C

More info: <https://cc.au.dk/en/aiim/events/view/artikel/default-5e3460a8c6>

We thank the research centre SHAPE at Aarhus University for their generous funding for this workshop.

THEORY LAB: AI IMAGE CURATING

Friday June 16th, 13:00-15:00
Bld. 1580, room 249
Langelandsgade 139, 8000 Aarhus C

AIIM member Laura Herman will share in-progress research on algorithmic curation. In a recent exhibit in London, Laura used Instagram's algorithmic system to determine which images to display from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Open Access collection. The algorithmic selection reveals aspects of the machine's "ways of seeing," which Laura will contrast to the human perception and curation process. Leveraging computational methods, it is possible to surmise the visual elements that led the algorithmic system to select certain images. This will be contrasted with the results of visitor surveys and questionnaires unpicking what human visitors saw in the algorithmic curation, as well as interviews with professional artists and curators reflecting on how algorithmic curation has impacted their practice. This research is part of Laura's PhD at the University of Oxford.

More info and sign up: <https://cc.au.dk/en/aiim/events/view/artikel/default-307de5f7f5>

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