

THE GENERATIVIZATION OF THE ARTS,
2018-2024: COLLECTS DOCUMENTS
FROM A WORKSHOP ON THE
METHODOLOGICAL HISTORICIZATION OF
A NEW MEDIUM AND MATERIAL OF
ARTMAKING, FOCUSED ON ARTISTIC
PRACTICES INTERNATIONALLY THAT USE
AND TAKE ISSUE WITH GENERATIVE
AI SYSTEMS AND AI MORE BROADLY
IN THEIR PRODUCTION AND APPLICATION,
I.E., ON GENERATIVIZED ARTISTIC
PRACTICES: CONSISTING OF A
COLLECTIVELY COMPILED AI ART
DATASET, INDIVIDUALLY PORTRAYED
AND TOGETHER ASSESSED IN TEXTUAL
CONTRIBUTIONS ON VARIOUS
POLITICAL, ECOLOGICAL, AND
AESTHETIC ASPECTS, PLUS A TIMELINE
OF AI DEVELOPMENTS AND CONCURRENT
HISTORY, EDITED AND PREFACED
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AND OTHERS.

THE GENERATIVIZATION OF THE ARTS
2018–2024

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DISTANZ

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Mattis Kuhn, Christoph Marischka, Emily Martinez,
Lars Pinkwart, Rainer Rehak, and others.

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23 2024

SIX YEARS

THE GENERATIVIZATION OF THE ARTS

2018–2024

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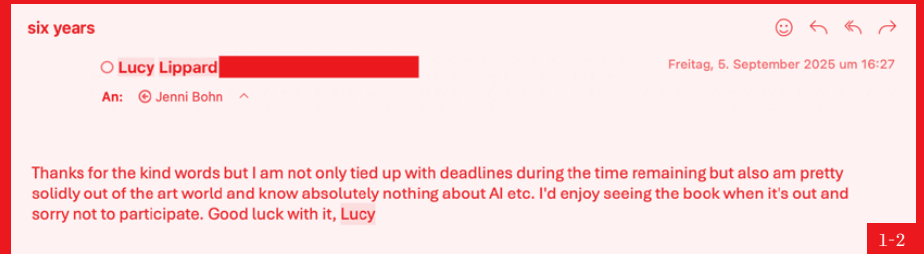
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Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972: a cross-reference book of information on some esthetic boundaries: consisting of a bibliography into which are inserted a fragmented text, art works, documents, interviews, and symposia, arranged chronologically and focused on so-called conceptual or information or idea art with mentions of such vaguely designated areas as minimal, anti-form, systems, earth, or process art, occurring now in the Americas, Europe, England, Australia, and Asia (with occasional political overtones), edited and annotated by Lucy R. Lippard.

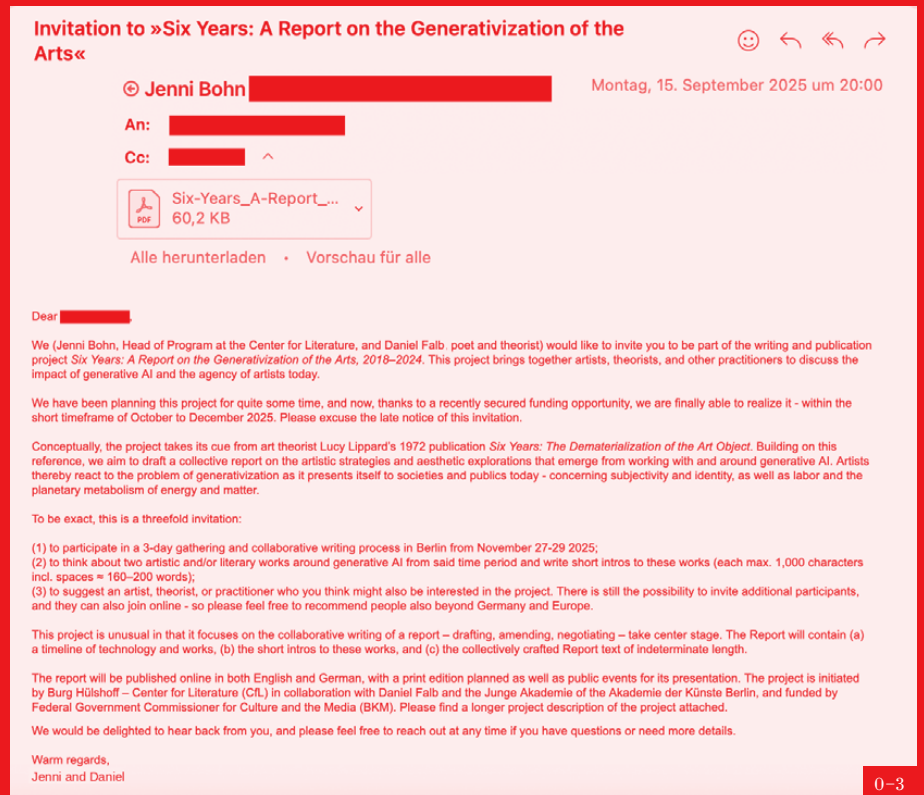
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FIG. 1: LUCY R. LIPPARD, *SIX YEARS: THE DEMATERIALIZATION OF THE ART OBJECT FROM 1966 TO 1972* (BERKELEY: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 1997), BOOK COVER

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1-2



0-3

FIG. 2: EMAIL FROM LUCY R. LIPPARD

FIG. 3: INVITATION EMAIL

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Von: A.A. Cavia
Datum: Freitag, 19. September 2025 um 12:54
An: Jenni Bohn
Betreff: Re: invitation to Join »Six Years: A Report on the Generativization of the Arts«

Hi Jenni,

Thanks a lot for extending the invitation to contribute to your 'Six Years' project.

Naturally, I'm familiar with Lucy Lippard's text, and I think the framing regarding generative AI and its impact on the arts in this period is apposite.

A note on the language—the term 'Generativization' is not a word in English, as I imagine you know, and could be replaced by something more natural sounding (such as 'Vectorization', or 'Diffusion... of the Art Object').

Best,
A.A. Cavia

0-4A

On Sun, 21 Sept 2025 at 10:14, Jenni Bohn wrote:

Hi,

wonderful that you'll be part of the project! Just to note: on Thursday we'll only start in the late afternoon, so hopefully that makes things a little easier. We'll be able to share a more detailed time schedule towards the end of the month.

Regarding your point on terminology: the choice of „Generativization“ is very intentional within the project. We're less interested in describing a technical process with an existing term, and more in shaping a word that we can use to frame and articulate the phenomenon we want to investigate. Part of the aim is to let the project itself define and give meaning to this concept.

In our preliminary understanding, the notion of the generative interlaces some of the key technological, societal and artistic aspects at play in the current rise of machine learning technologies. Technologically, the term emanates from Ian Goodfellow's work on Generative Adversarial Networks, from where it is carried over into early OpenAI publications on Generative Pretrained Transformers. Societally, it is the generative capabilities of LLMs and diffusion models that enables them to compete with human labor, change workflows and disrupt people's working biographies. Aesthetically, generative AI in the several stages of its accelerated evolution 2018-2024 both through its failures/glitches and its normalizations/homogenizations contributes to new artistic and literary vocabularies. „Generativization“ thus signals complexities that resonate with those present in Lippard's idea of „dematerialization“, which after all arose in the context of 1960s information technologies and the „aesthetics of administration“ (Benjamin Buchloh).

warmly,

Jenni (& Daniel)

0-4B

On Thu, Sep 25, 2025, 15:1 A.A. Cavia wrote:

Hi Jenni,

Thanks a lot for the reply and great that you can include me for two of the days.

Thanks for clarifying your use of the term 'generativization', it does give me a better sense of what you're trying to achieve. This is not a term used by Ian Goodfellow in his famous GAN paper however, nor is it used by OpenAI anywhere that I can find. If you are referring to generativity, it is a key property of the computational arts that goes back to the 1960s, of course, and in my work I distinguish a new 'mode' of generativity in the shift from algorithmic composition to synthetic media. But 'generativization' instead seems to me like a neologism and it does not read like grammatical English. If the intent is to capture the process which renders art generative, then I would argue 'generativity' is sufficient ('A Report on the Generativity of the Art Object'). Of course, it does not echo Lippard as closely. I won't belabour the point, it's just intended as constructive feedback, since the title does not read as if written by a native English speaker.

I look forward to chatting further with you in November. In the meantime, let me know if you need anything from me.

Best,
A.A. Cavia

0-4C

Von: Jenni Bohn
Datum: Dienstag, 7. Oktober 2025 um 10:02
An: A.A. Cavia
Cc: danielfalb
Betreff: AW: Invitation to Join »Six Years: A Report on the Generativization of the Arts«

Hi,

Many thanks for your message .

You're right that Goodfellow and OpenAI speak of "generative" models, not generativization, and that the word generativization doesn't (yet) appear in the English dictionary. However, as a neologism, generativization is a fairly regular construction following the same morphological logic as, e.g., digitization, vectorization, or aestheticization – essentially signifying a process of becoming-generative.

We deliberately want to use generativization – becoming-generative – to capture the ways in which artistic practices today become charged with the *problem of the generative* in its technological, social and aesthetic dimensions. Also, through the parallelism dematerialization-generativization, we want to carry the discursive charge of Lippard's term via-à-vis conceptual art into our thinking about art in the age of AI.

Thanks again for the thoughtful exchange and your constructive feedback - we really appreciate the discussion and look forward to continuing it in November.

Further information about the workshop will follow by tomorrow at the latest.

All best,
Jenni

0-4D

PREFACE

The year 2018 marked the rise of technologies later known as generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). OpenAI's GPT introduced the generative pre-training approach that underlies today's large language models (LLMs), while generative adversarial networks such as StyleGAN reached a new level of photorealism in image making. GPT-3 followed in 2020, and in 2022 ChatGPT became the first mass-market application for machinic language generation, alongside popular image generators (Stable Diffusion, Midjourney) released that same year. Text-to-video generators (Sora) arrived in 2024. The workshop and report *Six Years: The Generativization of the Arts, 2018–2024*, together with its participants and collaborators, set out to draw up an initial assessment of these generative technologies in their appropriation by the contemporary arts.

Considering the implications, dangers, and opportunities of these technologies with regard to questions of representation and subjectification, infrastructures of domination, labor, and planetary metabolism, this report seeks to address questions such as the following: How did artists and authors deal with these developments in 2018–2024? How did they affect artistic production? How were these

new tools taken up and appropriated? What were the focal points of artistic practices during that period? Where are the gaps? Does art take a critical stance toward automation and artificially intelligent systems, and if so, how is it expressed? What are the aesthetic trends associated with generativization? And, last but not least, what materials are used to make artworks in the age of AI?¹

We aim to capture generativization as a characteristic present in a notable share of artistic production today, provisionally labeled here as AI Art. While this term is broad and not universally beloved, it turns out to be the most straightforward way of referring to the object of this collective investigation. An alternative designation, Dataset Art, will be developed to articulate certain aspects of these contemporary works more precisely, and to elucidate how they differ from their historical antecedents.

To get a grasp on AI Art, the participants and collaborators collectively assembled an AI Art Dataset. Everyone was asked to add two artworks. These thirty-four individual works—or data points, referred to throughout this book as items—are described in this report by the person who selected them. We acknowledge that the dataset contains only a small sample of AI-related artworks produced between 2018 and 2024, and that this selectivity may introduce considerable bias, depending on who was part of this report and who was not. At the same time, the choices made shall be taken seriously. Hence our discussion will focus exclusively on these works.

This report rests on two foundational ideas.

The first concerns the semantics of generativity itself: both recent, in their association with current machine learning systems, and old,

1 These questions overlap with those posed to a group of artists, art historians, curators, critics, and media theorists by Michelle Kuo and Pamela M. Lee in their "Questionnaire on Art and Machine Learning" for *October*, which assembles the contributions of 24 respondents. Michelle Kuo and Pamela M. Lee, "A Questionnaire on Art and Machine Learning," *October*, no. 189 (Summer 2024): 6–130, doi.org/10.1162/octo_a_00533.

in their history spanning mathematics, cybernetics, linguistics, and particularly early generative and systems art of the 1960s, they provide a crucial conceptual lens for looking at AI and AI Art. With that as a backdrop, the methodological historicization of contemporary art that is implied by working with the time frame of 2018 to 2024 comes with a working hypothesis formulated ahead of the workshop: generativization is a recurring trait in contemporary art. What does that entail? Artistic practices are marked by generativization if and insofar as they utilize GenAI—or AI more broadly—in the production of their works. These systems often function as tools or agents that not only open up new possibilities, problems, and ways of working, but also become topical in their own right. This reflexivity toward AI as medium potentially extends the characteristic of generativization to works that foreground AI agency without necessarily making direct use of it: generativized artistic practices and works may or may not make use of AI directly.

The second foundational idea comes from our understanding that the analysis of AI Art must proceed through a reconsideration of Conceptual Art, to which it is connected in multiple ways: first in the sense that Conceptualism is inextricably bound to the very media, information, and early digital technologies of the 1960s and 1970s that form the prehistory and figure as the genealogical source of current AI systems. Second, in the sense that the theorizing around Conceptual Art at the time—the conceptualizations of Conceptualism that were part of the movement from the get-go—can serve as a template for understanding AI Art by allowing us to capture differences and commonalities. Hence this report’s reference to Lucy Lucy R. Lippard’s *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* {→ fig. 0-1, p.8}, from which it not only borrows the gesture of methodological historicization, but whose art theoretical lynchpin—the idea of dematerialization—functions as a template, point of comparison, and ultimately the starting point for our contemporary thinking about generativization. (Throughout this book, the → symbol is used to cross-reference a figure

or an item, helping readers navigate its intertextual structure.) Lippard’s slightly unusual notation—covering six years from 1966 to 1971 while putting 1972 on the cover—gave us the opportunity to sneak in one more year into our coverage, which seemed more plausible than a 2023 cut-off. We asked Lucy Lucy R. Lippard whether we could use the title, and invited her to take part in the project in whatever form she saw fit. She agreed to the former and kindly declined the latter. {→ fig. 0-2, p.9}

With these ideas in mind, the writing workshop that instigated this book {→ fig. 0-3, p.9} took place in Berlin over three days in November 2025, with participants gathering at the premises of the Berlin Artistic Research Program on Bergstraße. Three talks had been scheduled—on the work of data labelers (Joan Kinyua), marginalized datasets (Emily Martinez), and the weaponization of AI (Christian Heck)—which were intended to set the stage for the collective thinking process to follow. The input on weaponization unfortunately did not take place but is now part of this publication. Our original ambition had been to draft a raw version of the report in a truly collective manner on-site—but that proved to be an overextension of our capabilities. Instead, discussions took place around key terms and themes, and the AI Art Dataset was extensively examined. Plans were made for potential individual contributions to a report that would now be less collective and more pluralist than intended, while staying consistent through a continued focus on the dataset and the two foundational ideas. Not everyone took part in the Berlin workshop; some people joined this project at different points and in different ways.

Six Years: The Generativization of the Arts, 2018–2024 thus takes the following shape:

PART 1 lays out our—the organizers’—thoughts on the semantics of generativity and AI Art’s relation to Conceptualism. It gives an overview of the themes in the AI Art Dataset, as well as some of the