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From Mental Concept to Algorithmic Exemplification: Rethinking the Aesthetic Situation in the Age of Generative AI

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Abstract: The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) necessitates a re-evaluation of the foundational structures of artistic creation and reception. This article utilises the “aesthetic situation” theory, originally formulated by Maria Gołaszewska (1984) and recently expanded through a managerial lens by Michał Szostak (2023b), to analyse the transformative impact of computational agents on the creative process. Building upon the distinction between “supporting” and “substituting” AI roles (Szostak & Modliński, 2025), this paper introduces a conceptual model of “algorithmic exemplification”. It posits that generative AI functions as a technical mediator, translating an artist’s internal “mental concept” into a publicly accessible artefact through iterative prompting and latent-space navigation. By systematically analysing the five components of the aesthetic situation—the artist, the artwork, the recipient, the world of values, and the real world—this article argues that generative AI does not merely automate production but reconfigures the ontic status of the artwork and the agency of the creator. The discussion highlights

the shift from direct craftsmanship to “aesthetic situation management”, in which the artist’s role evolves into that of a curator and prompt engineer, potentially substituting for traditional manual skills while supporting higher-order conceptual synthesis.

Key words: aesthetic situation, generative artificial intelligence, Maria Gołaszewska, algorithmic exemplification, mental concept, computational creativity

Introduction

The integration of generative artificial intelligence into the arts has moved beyond a technical novelty to a fundamental disruption of aesthetic theory. Traditional frameworks of aesthetics often assume a human-centric creative act, in which the bridge between an internal vision and a physical object is crossed through human labour and technical skill. However, the capacity of Large Language Models (LLMs) and diffusion models to generate high-fidelity artefacts challenges the traditional definitions of authorship and the nature of the artwork itself.

The aesthetic situation, as a structural totality, has historically presupposed a direct, causal link between the artist’s cognitive states and the material properties of the artwork. This link was forged through the artist’s physical interaction with a medium—whether paint, clay, or musical notation—where the “mental concept” was externalised through a series of motor and technical choices. In the era of generative AI, this causality is disrupted. The artist no longer engages in the manual manipulation of matter but instead interacts with a high-dimensional latent space. This shift introduces a layer of algorithmic mediation that complicates the ontic relationship between the creator’s intent and the final artefact, necessitating a radical rethink of how an aesthetic situation is managed and sustained.

Furthermore, the emergence of generative systems forces a reconsideration of the “artistic act” itself. If the creative process is viewed as a series of managerial decisions, as suggested by Szostak (2023b), then the introduction

of AI offers new solutions that either augment human capability or replace it entirely. This “supporting versus substituting” dichotomy (Szostak & Modliński, 2025) is not merely a technical distinction but a philosophical one. It questions whether the “artist” node in Gołaszewska’s (1984) model requires a human consciousness to initiate the situation, or whether a human acting as a “prompt manager” is sufficient to maintain the integrity of the aesthetic encounter.

The disruption of the causal chain between the mental concept and its physical manifestation implies a shift in the location of “creativity” within the aesthetic situation. In classical interpretations, creativity was often viewed as a form of *poiesis*—a bringing-forth that required the artist’s direct, hands-on struggle against the material’s resistance. However, when an algorithmic interface replaces the medium, the “resistance” shifts from the physical to the linguistic and the statistical. The artist must navigate the probabilities of a pre-trained model, making the creative act an exercise in “reflexivity” and selection (Szostak, 2023a). This suggests that the essence of the artistic act in the age of AI is no longer found in the execution, but in the precision of the initial mental concept and the critical evaluation of the algorithmic output.

Moreover, this reconfiguration suggests a new ontology for the artwork, moving away from the “intentional object” described by Ingarden (1981) toward what might be termed a “computational by-product” that requires human re-contextualisation to achieve aesthetic status. If the generative model lacks intentionality, the responsibility for the “world of values” (Gołaszewska, 1986) rests entirely on the human agent’s ability to manage the situation. The implications are profound: if the AI substitutes the creator’s technical role, the human artist must double down on their role as a moral and aesthetic gatekeeper to prevent the “devaluation” of the art market (Fortuna & Modliński, 2021). The “real world” context thus demands greater transparency into the level of algorithmic mediation to preserve the social trust inherent in the artist-recipient relationship.

The transition from a purely human-driven process to one mediated by algorithms also affects the “world of values” surrounding the artwork. Values such as originality, authenticity, and genius have long been anchored in the scarcity of human talent and the uniqueness of human effort. When

generative AI can produce infinite variations of an aesthetic style, the value of the resulting “algorithmic exemplification” must be re-evaluated. This does not necessarily lead to a devaluation of art, but rather a shift in value toward the conceptual and reflexive stages of the creative process—the initial mental concept and the final curation.

Moreover, the recipient’s role is fundamentally altered when the artwork’s provenance is non-human. The aesthetic situation is a communicative event; when the “sender” of the aesthetic message is a machine, the recipient’s capacity for empathy and interpretation is challenged. As Fortuna and Modliński (2021) note, the perception of an AI as a “counterfeiter” rather than a creator can significantly alter the market and cultural reception of the work. This suggests that the “real world” component of the aesthetic situation is increasingly sensitive to the transparency of the algorithmic mediation used during the creative process.

Ultimately, this article addresses the problem of how generative AI alters the structural dynamics of the “aesthetic situation”. The central inquiry focuses on the transition from the “mental concept”—the artist’s internal, subjective intention—to the “algorithmic exemplification”, defined here as the computationally generated manifestation of that intent. By utilising the framework established by Gołaszewska (1984) and refined by Szostak and Modliński (2025), this study explores whether AI serves as a support mechanism for human creativity or a substitute for the human creator within the aesthetic ecosystem.

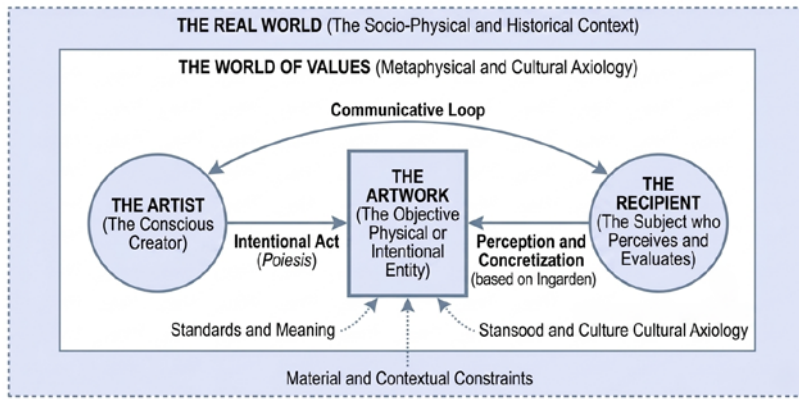
Theoretical Framework

The Concept of Aesthetic Situation

The foundation of this analysis is the “aesthetic situation”, a concept developed by Maria Gołaszewska (1984, 1986), who posited that aesthetics should not focus solely on the artwork or the observer in isolation but on a complex, dynamic system comprising five essential elements: (1) The Artist: The conscious creator who initiates the process; (2) The Artwork: The objective physical or intentional entity;

(3) The Recipient: The subject who perceives and evaluates the work; (4) The World of Values: The metaphysical or cultural context providing meaning; and (5) The Real World: The socio-physical environment in which the situation occurs.

Figure 1. The structure of the aesthetic situation according to Gołaszewska (1984)



Source: Own elaboration based on Gołaszewska (1984).

Gołaszewska's approach was influenced by Roman Ingarden's (1970, 1981) phenomenology, emphasising that the artwork is an "intentional object" that requires the recipient's participation to realise its aesthetic qualities fully. Within this framework, the aesthetic situation is not a static arrangement but a processual event. The "Artist" does not merely produce an object; they encode a specific set of values derived from the "World of Values" into a material substrate. The "Recipient" then decodes these values, but this decoding is always situated within the "Real World"—the physical, social, and historical conditions that dictate how an object is perceived. The logical coherence of this system depends on the "Artist" maintaining a primary, intentional role as the source of the aesthetic impulse.

Building upon this, the relationship between the "Artist" and the "Artwork" is traditionally one of direct ontic dependence. The artwork exists because the artist willed it into being through a specific technical act. In Gołaszewska's

(1984) view, this act is saturated with the artist's personality and their unique grasp of the "World of Values". Consequently, the "Artwork" serves as a bridge, a material crystallisation of a spiritual or conceptual intent. If the intervention of a non-conscious agent fractures this bridge, the entire structural integrity of the aesthetic situation is called into question, as the "Recipient" may no longer be engaging with a human consciousness, but with a statistical facsimile of one.

The Aesthetic Situation Management

Szostak (2023b) extended this theory by introducing the concept of "aesthetic situation management". In this view, the creative process is not only an inspired act but a managed sequence of decisions. Szostak and Modliński (2025) further refined this by categorising AI's role into two distinct modes: supporting and substituting. In the supporting role, AI acts as a tool (e.g., software for refining textures), leaving the primary agency to the human. In the substituting role, AI takes over core creative decisions (e.g., generating a complete composition from a brief prompt), potentially displacing the human from the traditional "artist" node in the aesthetic situation.

The shift toward "management" implies that the artist's virtuosity is no longer confined to manual dexterity or technical execution. Instead, the artist acts as a meta-creator, overseeing the interactions among the five elements of the situation (Szostak, 2023b). When AI enters this system in a supporting capacity, it enhances the artist's ability to manifest their "mental concept" by reducing technical friction. In this modality, the intentional link between the artist and the artwork remains robust; the AI is simply an extension of the artist's "real world" tools. The logical structure of Gołaszewska's (1984) model remains intact, with the human creator serving as the definitive "conscious initiator" of the situation.

However, the substituting role of AI introduces a structural tension within the aesthetic situation. If an algorithmic system generates the formal qualities of the "Artwork" based on probabilistic patterns rather than a subjective "mental concept", the causal path from "Artist" to "Artwork" becomes fragmented. In this scenario, the AI performs functions traditionally reserved for the human

creator—such as selecting colour palettes, harmonic progressions, or linguistic structures—thereby assuming a quasi-authorial position. This substitution challenges the “World of Values” (Gołaszewska, 1986), as the recipient may no longer be interacting with a human’s intentional expression, but with a “counterfeit” of creativity (Fortuna & Modliński, 2021). The management of the situation thus shifts from content creation to the validation of algorithmic outputs.

This substitutive capacity forces a logical re-evaluation of the “Artist” node. If the AI generates the work, the human agent’s role moves from *poiesis* (making) to *proairesis* (choosing). The artist becomes a manager of possibilities within a latent space, where the “mental concept” serves as a filtering mechanism for algorithmic outputs. This suggests that the “Artist” in the age of generative AI is defined less by their ability to generate form and more by their “reflexivity”—the capacity to critically evaluate whether an algorithmic exemplification aligns with a specific “World of Values” (Szostak, 2023a). Without this reflexive oversight, the aesthetic situation loses its teleological direction, becoming merely a by-product of data processing.

Furthermore, the “Real World” implications of this substitution affect the “Recipient’s” trust. As noted by Fortuna, Modliński, and McNeill (2022), the perception of the creator matters significantly in how art is priced and valued. If the “Recipient” perceives the “Artist” as having been substituted by a machine, the aesthetic situation may undergo a “devaluation”, as the work is seen as lacking the “cyborg” or human labour that typically justifies its status as high art (Fortuna & Modliński, 2021). This necessitates a more transparent form of “aesthetic situation management”, where the artist clearly defines the boundaries of AI intervention to maintain the situation’s authenticity.

The “World of Values” also undergoes a transformation when AI serves as a substitute agent. Generative models operate by identifying and replicating existing patterns in cultural data. Consequently, they are inherently conservative, drawing from a “World of Values” that is already documented and digitised. This raises the question of whether a substituting AI can ever truly introduce new value into the aesthetic situation, or merely reshuffle existing values (Akerkar, 2019). The human artist’s role, therefore, becomes even more critical in injecting

genuine novelty and ethical grounding into a process that might otherwise result in “stylistic stagnation”.

Finally, the logical extension of Szostak and Modliński’s (2025) distinction suggests that the “Artwork” itself becomes a dynamic variable. In a supporting role, the artwork is a finished, static object. In a substituting role, the artwork is often part of an iterative loop—an “algorithmic exemplification” that is constantly refined by the artist-manager. This fluidity requires the “Recipient” to engage with the work not as a finality, but as a specific instance of a broader computational potential. The aesthetic situation, therefore, shifts from the contemplation of a fixed object to the appreciation of a managed process, where the “Real World” constraints of time and computing power become part of the aesthetic experience itself.

Ultimately, the integration of AI into Gołaszewska’s (1984) model does not delete any of the five components but redefines their internal hierarchy. The “Artist” must now manage the “Real World” technicalities of AI while simultaneously anchoring the “Artwork” in a human “World of Values”. This dual responsibility highlights that while AI can substitute for the labour of art, it cannot substitute for the responsibility of art. The aesthetic situation in the age of generative AI is thus characterised by a heightened need for “reflexive management” (Szostak, 2023a) to ensure that the algorithmic exemplification remains a true reflection of a human mental concept.

From Mental Concept to Algorithmic Exemplification: A Conceptual Model

This article proposes a new conceptual model to describe the creative act in the age of generative AI. This model centres on two poles: the mental concept and the algorithmic exemplification.

Mental concept is defined as the pre-reflective, subjective aesthetic intention held by the human agent. It includes the emotional state, the desired stylistic parameters, and the work’s teleological goal. In traditional art, the mental concept is transformed into an artwork through the artist’s physical mastery of a medium.

Algorithmic exemplification refers to the artefact produced by an AI system in response to human input. It is “algorithmic” because its formal properties are determined by probabilistic patterns learned from training data (Cetinic & She, 2022). It is an “exemplification” because it provides a concrete, perceptible instance of the abstract parameters defined by the user.

The transition from the mental concept to the algorithmic exemplification represents a fundamental shift in the “technicity” of the aesthetic situation. In conventional artistic production, the “Artist” (Gołaszewska, 1984) serves as the primary engine of transduction, converting an internal, non-material vision into a material reality through the exertion of physical skill. In this new model, however, the artist’s “mental concept” does not interface directly with the medium. Instead, it must be translated into a symbolic linguistic or visual code (the prompt), which then triggers the generative model’s navigation of its latent space. This introduces a “semantic gap” in which the artist’s original intent may be altered, expanded, or constrained by the algorithm’s internal logic.

Logical reasoning suggests that this mediation redefines the “Artwork” from a finished intentional object to a specific selection from a vast field of possibilities. If the mental concept acts as a teleological guide, the algorithmic exemplification serves as a feedback mechanism. The artist provides a prompt, observes the algorithm’s output, and iteratively refines the mental concept in response. This “dialogic” relationship implies that the mental concept is no longer a static blueprint but a dynamic state that evolves through its interaction with the AI (Szostak, 2023a). The “Artistic Act” thus becomes an iterative management of this loop, in which the artist seeks to minimise the discrepancy between their internal vision and the algorithmic result.

Furthermore, the algorithmic exemplification possesses an ontic status that is distinct from traditional artistic “mimesis”. While a human painter might imitate reality through observation, a generative AI imitates the statistical distribution of existing art (Cetinic & She, 2022). This means that the algorithmic exemplification is essentially a “style-translation” of the mental concept. The artist is not merely creating an object; they are navigating a pre-existing “World of Values” (Gołaszewska, 1986) encoded in the machine’s parameters. Consequently, the algorithmic exemplification is always a collaborative output

between the individual human intent and the collective cultural data upon which the AI was trained.

The implications for “Aesthetic Situation Management” (Szostak, 2023b) are significant. The artist must develop a new form of “digital virtuosity” that is not based on motor skills but on the ability to manipulate the latent space effectively. This requires a deep understanding of how specific inputs (prompts, seeds, hyperparameters) correlate with specific aesthetic outputs. If the artist lacks this “algorithmic literacy”, the transition from mental concept to exemplification becomes haphazard, and the AI effectively shifts from a “supporting” tool to a “substituting” agent that dictates the final form of the work (Szostak & Modliński, 2025).

Moreover, the algorithmic exemplification introduces the element of “randomness” or “stochasticity” into the aesthetic situation. Unlike the precision of a controlled brushstroke, generative models often produce unexpected artefacts. These “emergent properties” can either enhance or detract from the original mental concept. The artist’s role as a manager is to decide whether these unintended algorithmic variations possess aesthetic value. This reinforces Szostak’s (2023a) emphasis on “reflexivity”—the artist must be a critical judge of the machine’s “creativity”, ensuring that the final “Artwork” still resonates with human values and intentions.

This model also highlights a shift in the “Real World” manifestation of art (Gołaszewska, 1984). Because the transition to an algorithmic exemplification is near-instantaneous compared to traditional methods, the “scarcity” of the artistic act is diminished. This speed enables rapid exploration of many mental concepts, potentially leading to a more “concept-heavy” form of art. However, it also poses a risk of “aesthetic saturation”, where the market is flooded with high-fidelity exemplifications that lack a profound mental grounding. The stability of the aesthetic situation thus depends on the recipient’s ability to recognise the human “mental concept” behind the “algorithmic facade”.

Finally, the relationship between the mental concept and the algorithmic exemplification suggests a new form of “cyborgian” creativity (Harbisson, 2019). When the machine seamlessly translates the human intent, the boundary between the “Artist” and the “Tool” blurs. The algorithmic exemplification

is not just a representation of the artist's thought; it is an expansion of it. In this sense, generative AI provides "new solutions supporting the creator" (Szostak & Modliński, 2025) by externalising complex visions that would be technically impossible for a human to execute manually. The aesthetic situation is thus transformed into a collaborative space where human imagination and algorithmic power co-create the final intentional object.

Ultimately, the conceptual model of "From Mental Concept to Algorithmic Exemplification" posits that the value of AI-assisted art lies in the intentionality of the transition. If the process is managed with reflexivity, the resulting artwork remains an authentic component of an aesthetic situation. If the transition is left entirely to the algorithm, the work risks becoming a mere "counterfeit" (Fortuna & Modliński, 2021), a formal shell without the core of human value that Gołaszewska (1986) identified as the heart of aesthetics.

Rethinking the Aesthetic Situation

The introduction of generative AI necessitates a systematic re-analysis of Gołaszewska's (1984) five components. This section deconstructs how algorithmic mediation reconfigures the ontic and functional roles of each element within the aesthetic situation.

The Artist

The artist's role shifts from a "maker" to a "director" or "curator". When AI serves a substituting role (Szostak & Modliński, 2025), the manual technical skill traditionally associated with the artist is diminished. However, the "reflexivity" of the artist (Szostak, 2023a) remains crucial in selecting which AI-generated exemplification possesses aesthetic value. Logically, the artist remains the "conscious initiator" of the situation, but their agency is now expressed through the management of the "semantic gap" between intent and output. The artist must ensure that the "algorithmic exemplification" does not become an autonomous entity that obscures the original "mental concept".

The Artwork

The artwork loses its status as a unique “autographic” trace of human labour. It becomes a manifestation of a “latent space”—a mathematical representation of stylistic and conceptual possibilities (Cetinic & She, 2022). The ontic status of the AI-generated artwork is precarious; it is often perceived as a “counterfeit” of human creativity (Fortuna & Modliński, 2021). Within the framework of “aesthetic situation management”, the artwork is no longer a static end-product but a specific, managed instance of a computational process. This shift implies that the “Artwork” node in Gołaszewska’s (1984) model must now account for the “virtual” nature of its creation, where the intentional object exists as a co-production between human selection and algorithmic probability.

The Recipient

The recipient now faces the challenge of “anthropomorphising” the machine or questioning the authenticity of their emotional response (Chen & Ibrahim, 2023). Research indicates that recipients often struggle to differentiate between human and AI-generated works, yet they tend to devalue art once its AI origins are revealed (Fortuna et al., 2022; Köbis & Mossink, 2021). The recipient’s role in “completing” the intentional object (Ingarden, 1981) becomes more complex, as they must decide whether to attribute meaning to the AI’s “choices” or only to the human artist’s prompts. This suggests that the recipient’s evaluative capacity is increasingly directed toward the process of management rather than the perfection of the form.

The World of Values

The “World of Values” is complicated by algorithmic bias (Roselli et al., 2019). Because AI models are trained on existing human datasets, they may reinforce historical biases rather than generate truly “new” aesthetic values. The value of “originality” is contested when the work is a probabilistic recombination of existing styles. In a substituting AI context, the “World of Values” risks becoming

a closed loop of historical data (Akerkar, 2019). Therefore, the artist's "reflexivity" (Szostak, 2023a) is the only mechanism through which the aesthetic situation can transcend mere repetition and engage with contemporary moral or metaphysical values. The implication is that "aesthetic value" in the age of AI is increasingly tied to the ethical and conceptual depth of the "mental concept" rather than the technical execution of the "algorithmic exemplification".

The Real World

In the "Real World", the aesthetic situation is governed by the art market and institutional frameworks. The substitution of human labour with AI has significant economic implications. Furthermore, the technology enables "situated art education" and new immersive experiences through VR and AR (Kwon & Morrill, 2022). Beyond the immediate concerns of market devaluation, the "semantic gap" (defined here as the loss of direct physical transduction between the artist's mind and the material medium) fundamentally reconfigures the "Real World" component of the aesthetic situation. In traditional craftsmanship, the "Real World" validates the artwork through the scarcity of manual execution and the physical evidence of labour. However, because the transition from a mental concept to an algorithmic exemplification is near-instantaneous and computationally mediated, the "Real World" must pivot toward valuing the transparency of the management process.

Application of the Concept

This shift necessitates that institutional frameworks, such as galleries, auction houses, and legal bodies, develop new protocols for "provenance". These protocols must account for the semantic mapping of prompts and the iterative history of the "reflexive loop", as the artwork's value becomes inextricably linked to how the human intent bridged the algorithmic gap. Consequently, this transition marks a "technological trans-role conflict", in which the social contract of art no longer relies on the "hand" of the creator but on the ethical disclosure of their role as a meta-manager. The "Real World" thus evolves from

a marketplace of physical artefacts into a marketplace of verified intentionality, where the “authenticity” of the work is substantiated by the documented rigour of the artist’s algorithmic navigation.

The socio-physical environment of the aesthetic situation is now permeated by the “black box” of the algorithm, creating a new tension between the accessibility of art production and the transparency required for market authenticity.

The logical integration of these shifts suggests that the “Real World” is currently undergoing a “technological trans-role conflict”. As AI systems begin to replicate the functions of the human “Artist”, the social and professional boundaries of the creative class are blurred. If the “Real World” institutions (museums, galleries, legal frameworks) fail to distinguish between “supporting” and “substituting” AI applications, the traditional hierarchy of the aesthetic situation may collapse. The management of the situation must therefore extend into the public sphere, where the artist justifies the use of algorithmic mediation as a tool for “persuasive creativity” rather than a mere efficiency measure (Szostak, 2022).

Furthermore, the “World of Values” is fundamentally challenged by the “transparency” of the creative process. In the age of AI, the value of an artwork is inextricably linked to the recipient’s knowledge of its provenance. If the “algorithmic exemplification” is presented as purely human-made, the aesthetic situation is built on a “counterfeit” foundation (Fortuna & Modliński, 2021), leading to an inevitable rupture in the recipient’s trust once the truth is revealed. This implies that “aesthetic situation management” (Szostak, 2023b) now includes a mandatory ethical component: the disclosure of the AI’s role to preserve the “intentional object’s” integrity within the “World of Values”.

Finally, the implications for the “Recipient” involve a shift from passive observation to “active verification”. Because the “Real World” is increasingly saturated with high-fidelity, low-intent artefacts, the recipient must exercise a higher degree of critical reflexivity to distinguish between a “mental concept” externalised through AI and a purely algorithmic output lacking human teleology. The aesthetic situation thus becomes a more demanding cognitive event for all participants. The “Artist” must manage the technology with precision, while the “Recipient” must navigate the “World of Values” with increased scepticism, ensuring that the “Artwork” remains a meaningful bridge between two human subjectivities.

Discussion

The conceptual model of transition from the mental concept to algorithmic exemplification provides a necessary framework for deconstructing the contemporary aesthetic situation. However, a deep analytic interrogation of this model reveals latent contradictions and shifting ontological boundaries that challenge traditional axiology. By examining the three analytic strata—ontological, epistemic, and evaluative—this discussion elucidates the broader implications of generative AI as a mediator in art management.

Revisiting the Supporting-Substituting Dichotomy: The Co-creative Entanglement

The distinction between AI's supporting and substituting roles, as proposed by Szostak and Modliński (2025), serves as a vital taxonomic starting point. Yet, the theoretical analysis indicates that generative AI may be facilitating a third, hybrid mode: "co-creative entanglement". In this state, the boundary between the artist's mental concept and the algorithm's latent space becomes porous. Unlike traditional tools that merely support execution, generative models often "hallucinate" or provide divergent outputs that retroactively alter the artist's original intention. This suggests that the mental concept is not a static precursor to the work but a fluid state that emerges through a feedback loop with the machine. On this view, the AI is neither a mere assistant nor a total replacement, but a non-conscious collaborator that reshapes the "Artist" node into a manager of stochastic possibilities.

The Ontological Status of Algorithmic Exemplification versus Ingarden's Stratification

A comparison of algorithmic exemplification with Roman Ingarden's (1970) theory of the stratification of the artwork reveals a fundamental shift in the "intentional object". Ingarden posited that an artwork consists of several layers—material, phonetic, schematic, and intentional—which require

the recipient's "concretisation" to achieve aesthetic existence. Algorithmic exemplification, however, complicates this hierarchy. Because the "material" layer is often a digital transient, and the "schematic" layer is derived from a statistical latent space (Cetinic & She, 2022), the work's intentionality becomes diffused. The theoretical analysis indicates that while a traditional artwork is an intentional object willed by a human, an algorithmic exemplification is a "probabilistic object". This creates a tension where the recipient may attempt to concretise an intention that the algorithm, by its very nature, does not possess.

Destabilisation of the Originator: The Distributed Mental Concept

Generative AI destabilises the artist's role as the sole originator of the mental concept by introducing "distributed creativity". In Gołaszewska's (1984) framework, the artist is the conscious initiator who draws from a personal world of values. In the age of generative AI, the "mental concept" is often prestructured by the model's capabilities and biases. The artist's imagination is arguably "channelled" through the software's linguistic and visual parameters. A corollary of this argument is that the "World of Values" (Gołaszewska, 1986) is no longer solely external to the machine; it is partially embedded within the training data. Consequently, the creative impulse is divided between the human's subjective desire and the machine's statistical probability, leading to a situation in which the "origin" of the aesthetic idea becomes increasingly difficult to locate.

The Simulation versus Embedding of Values

A critical evaluative question arises: can algorithms embed aesthetic values, or do they merely simulate them? Based on the review by Cetinic and She (2022), AI models do not "understand" beauty or meaning but replicate the formal markers associated with those values in human datasets. Therefore, the "World of Values" in an AI-mediated aesthetic situation is a simulated one. The analysis reveals a latent contradiction: if a recipient experiences genuine aesthetic emotion

(Chen & Ibrahim, 2023) from a simulated value, does the “authenticity” of the source matter? Fortuna and Modliński (2021) suggest that the perception of AI as a “counterfeiter” devalues the situation. This indicates that while the algorithm can exemplify the form of a value, it cannot exemplify its moral or historical weight, which remains the sole province of the human manager.

Epistemological Limits and Embodied Intuition

There are significant epistemological limits to the current model, particularly concerning the role of embodied intuition and the unconscious. Gołaszewska (1984) and Ingarden (1981) emphasise the importance of the lived experience in the aesthetic act. Algorithmic exemplification is a purely cognitive and mathematical process that lacks the “physical resistance” of a medium—the tactile feedback of clay or the resistance of a bow on a string. The theoretical analysis indicates that the current model cannot fully account for the loss of “haptic knowledge” during the transition from a mental concept to an output. Future theoretical work should examine whether the “reflexive management” described by Szostak (2023a) can compensate for the absence of the artist’s physical presence and the spontaneous, unconscious “accidents” of manual craft.

Implications for the “Real World” and Art Market Integrity

The transition to algorithmic exemplification has profound implications for the “Real World” component of the aesthetic situation. As high-fidelity artefacts become infinitely reproducible and low-cost, the traditional scarcity that underpins the art market is threatened. If the “Artist” node is perceived as having been substituted by an algorithm, the social contract between the creator and the recipient may fracture. The evidence from Fortuna, Modliński, and McNeill (2022) suggests that the “human element” is the primary driver of value. Therefore, aesthetic situation management must evolve into a practice of “transparency management”, in which the artist’s primary labour is not the creation of the image but the substantiation of the human intent that justifies the image’s existence in a world saturated by synthetic media.

Limitations and Future Research

This conceptual analysis is limited by its primary focus on the structural components of the aesthetic situation and may not fully capture the nuance of specific artistic genres, such as performance art or music, where the role of “supporting” AI might differ significantly from the visual arts. Furthermore, the model assumes a certain level of “algorithmic literacy” among artists, which may not be universally present. Future empirical research could examine whether recipients’ “concretisation” of AI art differs when they are informed about the specific prompting process versus when they are told the work is purely human-made. Additionally, researchers should investigate the “long-term stylistic drift” that may occur in the “World of Values” if generative models begin to be trained on their own outputs, potentially leading to a recursive narrowing of aesthetic diversity.

Conclusion

Summary of Principal Findings. This article has demonstrated that the integration of generative artificial intelligence into the creative process effects a fundamental transition from manual craftsmanship to a model of “algorithmic exemplification”. The primary theoretical yield of this analysis is the identification of a triadic mediation—comprising the artist’s mental concept, the generative interface, and the resulting artefact—which reconfigures the “Artist” node in Gołaszewska’s (1984) aesthetic situation into a role of reflexive management. The foregoing reconstruction suggests that while AI may substitute for the technical execution of an artwork, it remains a supporting component of human intentionality only when the artist maintains critical oversight of the transition between internal concept and externalised output.

Theoretical Implications. The conceptualisation of the artist as a manager of the aesthetic situation (Szostak, 2023b) has significant implications for the fields of art management, digital aesthetics, and AI ethics. Within art management,

the shift toward algorithmic exemplification necessitates new frameworks for authenticating “human-centric” value in a market increasingly populated by synthetic media. A corollary of this position is that the “World of Values” (Gołaszewska, 1986) must now account for the “semantic gap” introduced by machine learning models, where the preservation of authenticity depends on the transparency of the artist’s intervention. In the realm of AI ethics, this analysis reveals a necessary distinction between “simulated creativity” and “intentional expression”; if the AI substitutes the human without a corresponding mental concept, the resulting situation risks being perceived as a “counterfeit” (Fortuna & Modliński, 2021), thereby eroding the communicative trust between the creator and the recipient. Furthermore, the model suggests that digital aesthetics must move beyond the study of the finished artefact to analyse the iterative “prompt-and-select” loop as a distinct site of artistic virtuosity.

Future Research Directions. While the proposed model provides a robust framework for discrete digital artefacts, its generalizability is limited for performative, ephemeral, or embodied AI installations, which may require further adaptation to account for real-time physical interaction or site-specific variables. To build upon this conceptual foundation, future research could address the following inquiries:

- 1) How does the recipient’s awareness of “algorithmic exemplification” specifically alter their “concretisation” of the intentional object (Ingarden, 1970) compared to traditionally produced works?
- 2) To what extent does the “black-box” nature of generative models constrain or expand the artist’s “reflexive management” (Szostak, 2023a) during the evolution of the mental concept?
- 3) Empirical studies could investigate whether the perceived “aesthetic value” of a work is more strongly correlated with the complexity of the artist’s linguistic prompts or the formal perfection of the algorithmic output.

The transformation of the aesthetic situation by generative AI does not signify the obsolescence of the human creator but rather the elevation of

the “mental concept” as the ultimate arbiter of artistic truth. As the technical barriers to exemplification diminish, the artist’s capacity to anchor an algorithmic artefact within a coherent world of human values becomes the defining challenge of the contemporary era. This analysis indicates that the future of aesthetics lies not in the competition between human and machine, but in the rigorous management of the movement from mental concept to algorithmic exemplification.

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