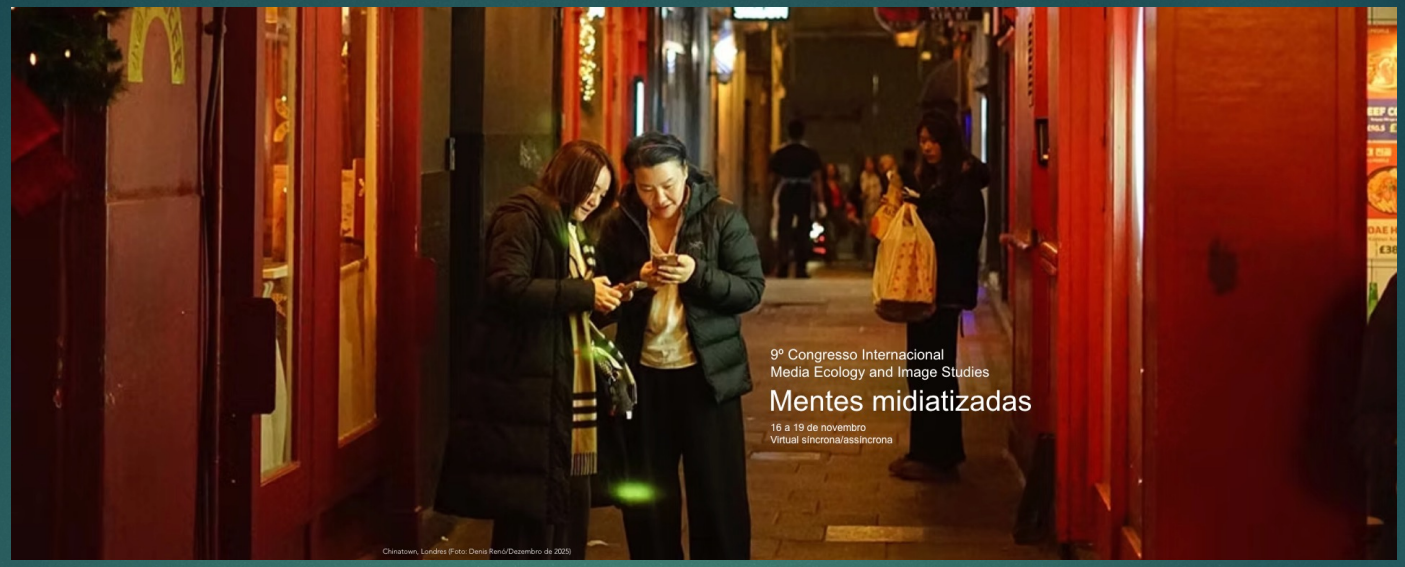


Aesthetics, Video Art and Generative AI: The Case of Origin (2024)

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Research topic and objectives

- In 2023, when the generative AI market for video production was booming, artists were already appropriating generative AI to create contesting and deviant video arts that denounce the impact on human life.
- To reflect on the role of digital art in the debate on video and generative AI, the objectives of this research were to understand how video art deals with ethical issues today and how artists use generative AI to criticize technology itself in the production of synthetic images.

Methodology and corpus selection criteria

- The qualitative and exploratory research mapped two hundred and thirty video arts produced with generative AI between the years 2020 and 2024, collected iconographic and videographic data, and analyzed five works in the light of the aesthetic regime of contemporary philosopher Jacques Rancière.

- The criterion for selecting the works to compose the mapping was aesthetic and followed four categories: grotesque, strange, surreal, and mutant.

- The aesthetic analysis was applied based on Jacques Rancière's aesthetic regime (2009, 2023).

Results and discussion

- This article presents the analysis of the aesthetic regime of Origin (2024), by the Chinese artist David Chang.

- The results demonstrate that the aesthetic regime in the video Origin establishes an aesthetic experience through ambiguous and contradictory forms that express the symbology of the advancement of life, the emergence of man, the civilizing process, the arrival of technology, the impacts on the planet and the ways of reintegration with nature, from the technology itself.

Aesthetics, Video Art, and Generative AI: The Origin Case (2024)

- Origin, 2024's, by Chinese artist Davis Chang invites audiences to explore open storytelling through an innovative use of artificial intelligence technologies.
- The experimental video was made using the artificial intelligence tools Midjourney, Runway, Krea, and Luma Dream Machine and challenges conventional perceptions of art and storytelling by promoting a dynamic, non-linear, and visually impactful exploration of the evolving relationship between humanity, nature, and technology.
- Origin moves away from photorealism and closed or linear narratives to make room, through the symbolism and ambiguity of images, for forms, figures, and visuals generated by generative AI.

- The experimental video Origin (2024) reports the emergence of man in nature, animals, civilization, the urban, the degradation of the planet until the advent of technology and the fusion between nature, man and technology. All images pass on the screen in the sense of Western reading. The video begins with abstract images, originating from a small black circle outlined by a white band, which multiplies and divides, filling the frame with several moving images, composed of symmetrical abstract drawings (Figure 1).

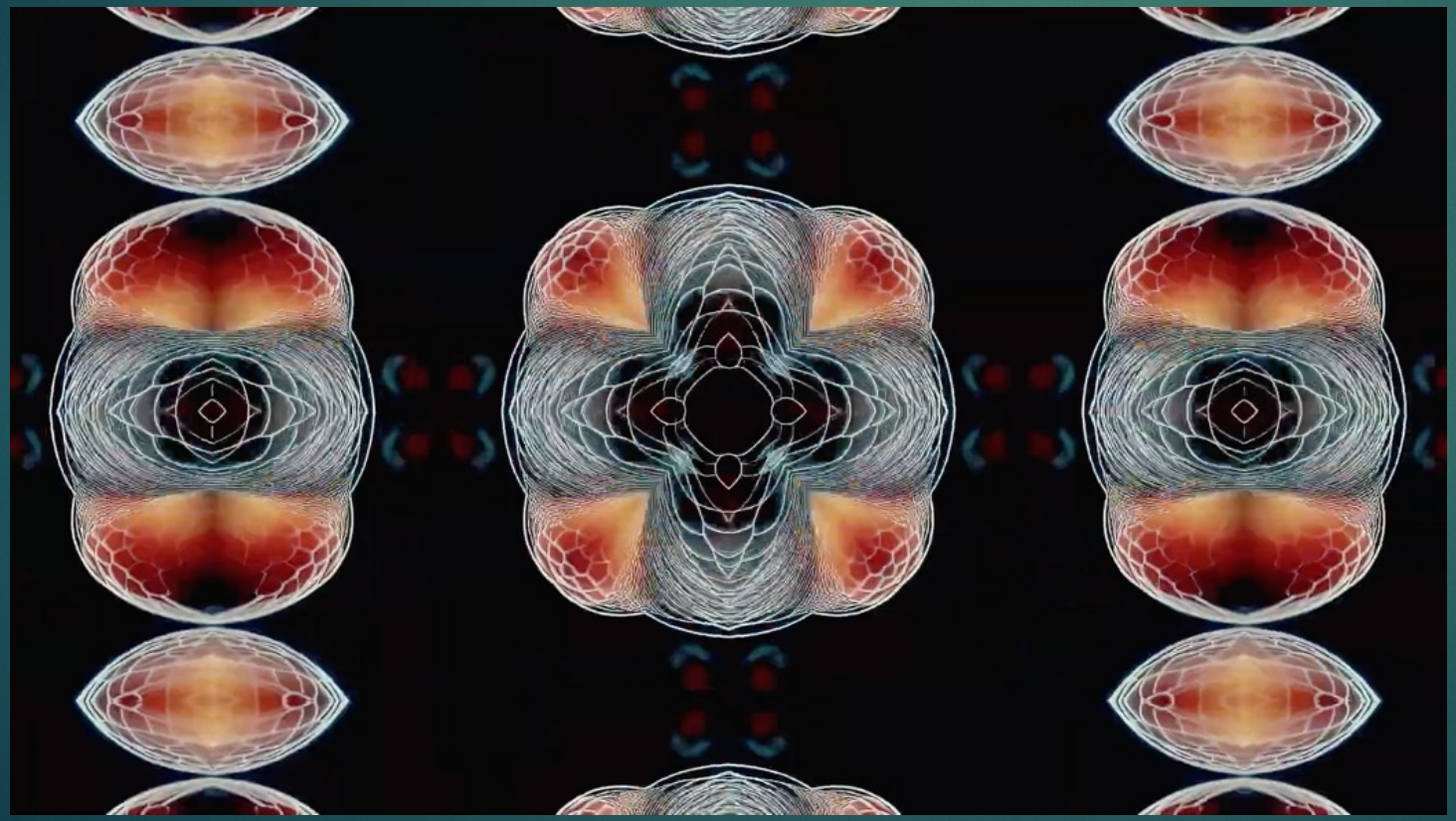


Figure 1

Frame from Davis Chang's Origin (2024) video. Experimental video made with Midjourney, Runway, Krea, and Luma Dream Machine. 2'20"

Note: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jjse0jTzbk0

hybrid, biocybernetic figures emerge, representing the fusion of human beings with technology…

- The video art consists of scenes that record the destruction of the planet, nature, and urban spaces. Yet, the ruined city gives way to daisies and colorful wildflowers set against a blue background; the vertical division of the screen expands, making the space on the right—previously occupied by humanity—larger than the space occupied by nature, causing the wildflowers to encroach upon the city in ruins.

- At the two-minute mark, hybrid, biocybernetic figures emerge, representing the fusion of human beings with technology: a biocybernetic brain—half human cortex and half electronic components—and a blend of forest, devices, and conductive wires connected by fiber-optic networks and electronic sensors, forming hybrid bodies and a single, unified entity (Figure 2)

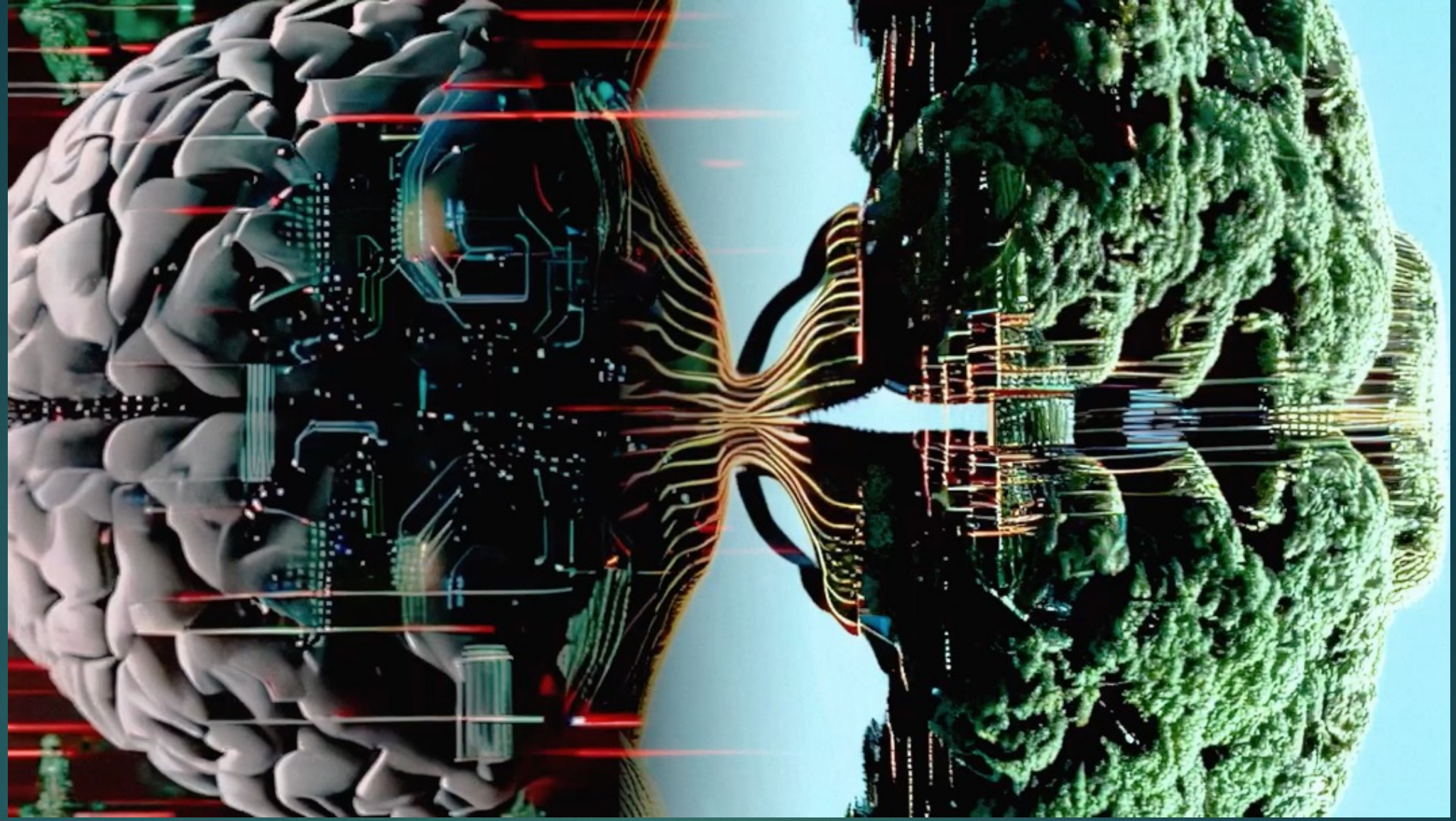


Figure 2. Frame from Davis Chang's Origin (2024) video. Experimental video made with Midjourney, Runway, Krea, and Luma Dream Machine. 2’20”
Note: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jjse0jTzbk0

an original circle, a black hole…

- In the final seconds of the video, an expressive blue eye gains the size of the screen and the shape of a digital forest, in which two trees like two brains, connect to each other through fiber optic wires, electronic components and digital sensors.

- A flower with blue and violet petals is shaped like a planetary system, with orbits and stars around a sun. The violet-blue flower turns green with illuminated petals connected to electronic sensors and digital components, composing a fractal flower-hardware that becomes pink and yellow, abstracted quickly to generate a vortex of light in space visualized by a dark circle that attracts everything into itself, like an original circle, a black hole (Figure 3).

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Figure 3. Frame from Davis Chang's Origin (2024) video. Experimental video made with Midjourney, Runway, Krea, and Luma Dream Machine. 2’20”
Note: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jjse0jTzbk0

Conclusion

- The results demonstrate that the aesthetic regime (Rancière, 2023) in the video Origin is responsible for establishing an aesthetic experience that acts on the viewer's perception through ambiguous and contradictory forms, which aim to express the symbology of the advancement of life, the emergence of man, the civilizing process, the arrival of technology, the impacts on the planet and the ways of reintegration with nature, from the technology itself.

- In the video Origin, the aesthetic regime breaks with the regime of representation and the ethical regime to establish the work of images (Rancière, 2021) and the sharing of the sensible (Rancière, 2009), as the analysis demonstrates (Rancière, 2023).

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- Although it is a theme that refers to life and the advancement of technology and, therefore, common to all human beings, critical reflection must be political so that it can achieve the sharing of the sensible or the creation of common spaces, reiterating collective and collaborative aspects.

- In this context, the sharing of the sensible occurs when all people have access, each in their own way and through a free game between action and passivity in the face of images, to the sensitive experience as an emancipated individual, who occupies this place of the sensitive.

- The video does not present a defined ending and allows the viewer to imagine possible worlds and to create endings for life, nature and man, stimulated by what he sees.

- There is a creative deviation in the narrative marked by dissent. The images are full of ideas about the fact that through technology man will save the Earth and even that through technology man will reach the awareness of how to save life on the planet.

- But this thought is expressed without being assigned a specific form that indicates this thought, leaving open to the viewer how the ending would take place in the Origin video.

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Thank you for your attention!

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