

# Creative Practice in the Age of Algorithmic Governance: Aesthetic Democracy and Participatory Curation

## Authors

1. **Mengyao Xia**, Strategic Design, Faculty of Design, Kyushu University
2. **Marija Griniuk**, Nordlandsmuseet, Norway
3. **Melanie Sarantou**, Strategic Design, Faculty of Design, Kyushu University

As algorithmic systems increasingly govern aesthetic visibility in cultural production, understanding their curatorial power becomes critical to aesthetic democracy. While existing scholarship examines algorithmic culture and cultural industries separately, the intersection remains undertheorized. The study propose "**cultural algorithmic industries**" as a synthesized framework—ecosystems where algorithms automate cultural production, aesthetic judgment, and distribution as industrialized, data-driven processes that preset the aesthetic frameworks within which AI Generated Content is experienced.

This research asks: How do algorithmic systems curate aesthetic visibility, and can participatory curation foster aesthetic democracy in the AI era? Employing mixed methods—participatory workshops ("Paper Sculpture Workshop—Touching the Algorithm"), curator interviews including curatorial reflections from Nordlandsmuseet on institutional AI guidelines, and platform analysis—Investigate the material and institutional dimensions of algorithmic governance.

The workshop data demonstrates how tactile translation of AI images into handcrafted sculptures enables participants to materialize and critically interrogate "algorithmic feeling," exposing the tension between computational efficiency and curatorial intentionality. The data was analysed applying multiperspective reflexive analysis. Key findings reveal an "algorithmic aesthetic loop": preference learning mechanisms invisibly convert subjective responses into standardized data, feeding model retraining cycles that institutionalize engagement metrics as aesthetic principles.

This study argues that reclaiming aesthetic agency requires transparent algorithmic curation processes and participatory practices that challenge platformized erosion of individual aesthetic choice, offering pathways toward more democratic cultural production.

**Keywords:** algorithmic curation, aesthetic democracy, cultural algorithmic industries

## Bios:

### 1. **Mengyao Xia** [xia.mengyao.137@s.kyushu-u.ac.jp](mailto:xia.mengyao.137@s.kyushu-u.ac.jp)

PhD researcher at Kyushu University's Social Design Lab. Her current work investigates the reconfiguration of aesthetic values and creative agency under algorithmic culture. She previously earned a Master's degree in Curating and Cultural Leadership from the University of New South Wales (UNSW), bringing curatorial and cross-cultural perspectives to her research on art, design, and AI.

### 2. **Marija Griniuk** [marija.griniuk@gmail.com](mailto:marija.griniuk@gmail.com)

Lithuanian artist with a background in visual arts, performance art, and performance pedagogy. Griniuk explores new ways of presenting the inner feelings of performing artists to the audience. She holds a Doctor of Arts degree from the University of Lapland in Finland, and from 2024 to 2026, she will be a postdoctoral researcher at Vilnius Academy of Arts in Lithuania. She is the leader of the Southern Department at Nordlandsmuseet, which comprises seven museums in the Nordland region of Norway.

### 3. **Melanie Sarantou** [sarantou@design.kyushu-u.ac.jp](mailto:sarantou@design.kyushu-u.ac.jp)

Melanie Sarantou is a Full Professor of Social Design at Kyushu University in Japan. She explored the role of transformational social design and arts-based methods in generating a more holistic understanding and workable solutions for ethically navigating cultural tensions existing with the processes of digitalising Indigenous Cultural Heritage. Sarantou co-edited eight highly ranked books, of which five are published by Routledge.