

## AI Art Curation - CAS 17 June 2025. Geoff Davis (host) with Mario Klingeman and Kalen Iwamoto

### TRANSCRIPT

Video is at <https://youtu.be/5Nfg1q2ynCs>

This PDF also has the online in-event **Chat dialogues**, and the section **Logging**, at the end.

CAS page is at

<https://computer-arts-society.com/events/geoff-davis-ai-lecture-2025.html>

[00:00:00.00] - Geoff Davis

Okay, well, thank you, Kalen Iwamoto, and Mario Klingemann for arriving today. David Upton is doing the Zoom operation for CAS, so he's also involved. Today's talk is to do with AI art and curation. Now, initially, I thought we'd have more about curation, but it moved more towards artistic practise and curation. We've got Kalen.

[00:00:24.14] - Kalen Iwamoto

Hey.

[00:00:25.16] - Geoff Davis

Now, Kalen works with Julian Silvano in a company to create artworks that exist between art, language, technology. It's a very interesting operation where it's some physical works, some conceptual works. He's been going quite a few years now. And we also have Mario, who is in Basel, which is great that you've managed to make it. I'm just going to try... Yes, there we are. Now, this was the recent exhibition in London of algorithmic evolution, which I was at. I arrived and then hung around and then went. It was so crowded. I couldn't believe it. It was absolutely packed. So I saw your talk about it, and it was all very exciting. But this [photo] was before I got there. I got there early and then left early, but I was there where they were setting up. So this is why the [photo] shots were deserted, in fact. But it was packed later.

Now then, Kalen co-founded VERSEVerse, which is a very well-known poetry and technology group in 2021. And Mario is well known for creating lots of things, really. But also, the most well known one now is Botto. We were just talking about that, which is an autonomous, decentralised AI artist.

[00:01:45.23] - Geoff Davis

And then Kalen and Mario will be answering questions about their work later on, quite soon. And then we'll have general questions for the two artists. And then we go into people listening can ask questions and maybe discuss some points. So today, I'm using the term AI to cover machine learning systems, public text to art tools, the assistant in your smartphone, etc. Just everything. I mean, it's got to this point where AI just means all of these things. It's a general term, so I use it. Now, I'm going to add references. I've got references from this session, like various things I mentioned. So it all seems a bit vague. It's because there's not enough time to go into things in-depth. Ali represents an alien intelligence, humanity's first encounter with a non-human creativity or intelligence. It's a real example of the "other", which has always been this concept of alien intelligences and so on. Now, we've created an intelligence from our own resources, but it's still a separate entity. Even if it's not conscious, it's still a separate entity. Since we only get the outputs we ask the AI for, who knows what it's capable of. The basic system is quite opaque for humans, really.

[00:03:05.02] - Geoff Davis

Current AI models seem harmless, producing essays and art, but they're alien monsters with friendly interfaces. This is a Shoggoth image, which is quite famous meme. All of this monster is the large language model. And then it's been improved [drawing, RLHF, supervised learning] so that we don't get all the chaotic things that it could do or do by accident. Many artists find the intersection of personal art, history, and technology fertile ground for innovation using cutting-edge tools. AI tools themselves are the topic. Net art about network effects, AI art about AI art itself. Artists look for new ways to make art that's specific to AI, rather than use it to make art-like images. The next step may be AI creating and curating personalised art, delivering mimetic content for individuals who can engage as deeply as they choose. So you might choose to just play with it for fun, or you might make birthday cards with it, or you might make art with it. So it's a huge range of things, or you might make things for your business presentation. So it's a huge range of things that can be done with it.

[00:04:18.01] - Geoff Davis

In an online attention economy, the title Artist becomes just another personal identifier.

The heroic artist and their journey for Meaning is relegated to daydreaming and keyboard tapping. It's a bit harsh, isn't it? But anyway. So there's a grey area, I don't agree whether some things are actually new. But if you examine the AI system itself and don't treat it as a tool, then you can get new art forms coming out of it, which is what we're interested here, I think. Some artists, like Anna Ridler, or systems like Botto, make overproduction the topic. And overproduction is the thing that I'd quite like to talk about, we'll get you to talk about later. If you are using these systems, they will produce a huge amount of stuff. And then you have to curate before you show to people. And Botto does this within a voting system.

Cultural and economic impact. In brief, IP remains contentious. Artists like Holly Herndon created new IP models or methods such as Holly+, where you can use her voice, while legacy artists like Kate Bush and Paul McCartney protest with silent records. I don't know whether people outside of England have heard about this. Silent records echoing 1980's Home Taping is killing music campaigns.

[00:05:31.12] - Geoff Davis

Just to mention Midjourney, busy getting sued by Disney and Universal at the moment. So this is becoming a bigger topic as it goes along, really. But more pressing of projected AI-related job losses in transport, logistics, administration, education, manufacturing, everything, really. Even, I read this article, CEOs are under threat because AI does planning better. And this is arriving like a tsunami that nobody is taking any notice of, but they will notice soon. And it's funny that the art world debates and rows about this, is really good big news, like Disney doing things and famous musicians complaining, et cetera. So I think that shows the celebrity attention economy we're in now, in that there isn't really serious discussion of job losses, I think. The British government says, Bring it on, bring on more AI, and they don't really know what they're saying, but they're busy pushing it. The question is, will it AI replace the concept of art itself with personalised media created on demand to share in a community? Nobody's interested in a bigger world. Community is enough. So we've become more community-focused.

So now we move on to guests. So we've got Mario, has been called a subversive systems or conceptual artist.

[00:06:51.24] - Geoff Davis

We look at Mario's Botto, which creates and selects AI text to our outputs, and most recently, AI-coded algorithmic art, which was a recent exhibition in London. Also, if we have the time, the AI-driven art critic dog, Aicca [A.I.C.C.A.], the artificially intelligent critical canine. Kalen, conceptual writer-artist. Kalen works where text, AI, and blockchain meet. She treats AI as a linguistic sparring partner at the 2024 Paris Group show, AI: My Sparring Partner. She re-edited large model outputs. So maybe we can talk about that later. Her hardware, Miniscriber, a word synth, lets audiences manipulate verses, while her series, The Writing on the Wall, exhibits AI-written labels for imaginary artworks. Now, this is Kalen's most recent work, I believe.

[00:07:42.24] - Kalen Iwamoto

This is my most recent AI work, let's say.

[00:07:46.05] - Geoff Davis

It's a minimal artwork comprising gallery labels from the future. So they go forward in 10-year jumps. So they're from the future. They're unseen artworks. So you described readers of these labels because they're made as labels, that's why they got the dots. They look like labels, obviously, gallery labels. So you imagine readers of them, imagining the artworks. I've got a few quick questions, and then you can maybe just chat about it for a bit.

[00:08:17.10] - Kalen Iwamoto

Sure.

[00:08:18.10] - Geoff Davis

Is this Art Gallery label art a comment on the power of curation, since it assumes art galleries will exist in the future? Or on the power of imagination?

[00:08:28.19] - Kalen Iwamoto

Well, I think it definitely does reference the institutional critique and the framing of art that determines the value and the definition of art, whether it's art or not art. So yeah, it is certainly influenced by that type of art. But I think it's also, like you said, it depends on the imagination of the viewer. And one of the things I wanted to do was to turn or upend the relationship or the role that we usually assign to AI versus the humans, where there's a lot of text to image art, and the role of the machine is to create the visual image, and it's the role of the humans to input the text. Here I reverse those roles. I actually trained, let's say, I fed the AI with my descriptions, the descriptions of my past work. It's in a sense, trained on the concepts I use and the themes and my work. There was a lot of curation. I curated, I read, I don't know, over 100 different outputs to select ones that I thought approached something that I would... To choose things I was happy with. Here it's the audience that supplies the image, even if it's just internally.

[00:10:09.03] - Geoff Davis

That explains it really well. Thank you. I've got a question which you might, it's outside of what you just said, what if somebody created images from the labels as prompts or even physical works? Because they're describing physical things with diodes and screens, whatever. How would you feel if you would have ownership of those outputs, or do you think you don't feel that way about them? Did you actually... Did you try and make any text to art from it?

[00:10:38.08] - Kalen Iwamoto

No, I didn't. But I would love to see that. I think that would be super interesting, actually. I wouldn't claim any ownership or authorship over it, but I think that would be a really interesting experiment. Yeah.

[00:10:51.16] - Geoff Davis

Yeah. Ownership is a funny one with all this with AI. I mean, I researched writers years ago, 2020, I about whether they owned [generated content]... They thought they owned... We tried them out on new... It must have been GPT-2. And people were amazed that it did anything. But they all claimed that it was their work, not somebody else's, even though they might have edited it minimally or not at all because they'd brought it into being. So maybe people could experiment with text to prompt using your labels, even. Funny enough, I'm surprised I didn't do it. You know what I mean? It's like, why didn't everybody do it? It's like a description of a thing, isn't it? And I found when I was doing AI Anthology, I put a philosopher's quotes just straight into a text to art. And it would come up with incredibly weird images because it didn't really have a connexion with any physical thing. It just came up with whatever the system pattern matched at that point with those words. So maybe we should, maybe other people now could even do it in the background and see what we've got at the end.

[00:11:57.08] - Geoff Davis

Anyway, okay, now the next one I was to show is the Miniscriber, which is exceptionally cool. And I think Sean Clark, the Chair of the CAS, runs a thing called R10, which is an old music equipment studio with really old synths that are enormous, and they have to rebuild them from scratch to make them work. It's got loads of old music equipment, up in Leicester, and this looks like a piece of relatively old music equipment. So perhaps you want to talk a bit about that now?

[00:12:30.00] - Kalen Iwamoto

Yeah, sure. I did actually use AI for this, even though I wouldn't necessarily qualify it as an AI work. The text was actually written with AI, and the content of the text refers to the theme or the underlying concept behind the overall piece. But the Miniscriber is what we call a conceptual poetry synth. It's obviously influenced by the music industry, and it's a convergence of the musical and literary avant-garde. Basically, you have the text, the input text, and you can turn the knobs, and you can apply all sorts of conceptual and avant-garde poetry techniques onto the text. And these are in turn actually also influenced by the vocabulary around synth. So you have cut up, cut out. You have a waveform. There's also digital techniques as well, like ASCII. You can act on the text. I also wanted it to be a commentary on, maybe not a commentary, but to address the textual overproduction. You mentioned, Jeff, you were talking about overproduction in terms of images and AI, and we've had textual all overproduction. We've had to contend with that for a bit longer because we've had Web2 and social media and blogging. So there's been a deluge of texts that we've had to grapple with.

[00:14:15.10] - Kalen Iwamoto

And it's a proposition. So I like to imagine or to propose alternative writing strategies and reading experiences. So it's a for readers to turn them into conceptual writers and ask questions like, what

could writing look like if it was done not in the conventional sense? This is conceptual writing, where you can use cut up, work on the visual elements. That is, I think, nonetheless writing.

[00:14:55.15] - Geoff Davis

Yeah, now you're right. That's definitely good stuff. I got a quick question, which is, why did you choose to make a physical device rather than an app, monitor-only system for this? Or are you thinking of bringing out an app in the future in the way that physical synths, music synths all have VST plugins for digital audio work stations? They've been around a while. So the physical thing exists first and then later a digital one comes out.

[00:15:25.23] - Kalen Iwamoto

We haven't planned on it, but why not?

[00:15:30.00] - Geoff Davis

Yeah, it'd be interesting, wouldn't it?

[00:15:31.08] - Kalen Iwamoto

Originally, we actually came up with this idea a long time ago. Well, a couple of years ago, and we had initially planned on doing something on the blockchain as well.

[00:15:44.22] - Geoff Davis

What feedback have you had from people using this device?

[00:15:49.07] - Kalen Iwamoto

Really good feedback. Everybody loves it. It's been overwhelmingly positive, and they like the physical, they like the nostalgia behind the synth. I think that's also... That's also another thing that I find interesting because in the music industry, they embraced technology, and they really let it influence the production of music. So there was DJing, there was sampling, there was remixing. I translated that into a literary field because I feel like in the literary scene, it hasn't. We haven't really embraced technology in the same way that the music industry has. What would it look like if we were remixing, sampling pre-existing text? So not adding new text, but working on text, like the music industry is doing.

[00:16:46.21] - Geoff Davis

But do you find that physical objects are more interesting for you to make than- Do you like physical objects.

[00:16:54.04] - Kalen Iwamoto

Because you've got couples as well, the Balzac thing. Yes.

[00:16:58.21] - Geoff Davis

Which You said it isn't AI or anything, but it's still a physical object, isn't it?

[00:17:03.24] - Kalen Iwamoto

Yeah, it's a text generator.

[00:17:06.12] - Geoff Davis

So you like that side of it?

[00:17:08.12] - Kalen Iwamoto

I do like physical objects. And as you mentioned, Julian Silvano is my partner in Wen New Atelier, and his training is in the plastic arts. So we like to think about how to give plastic form to some of these concepts.

[00:17:25.24] - Geoff Davis

Thank you. We got more questions later to come back to. I'm just going to move now on to Mario, this is from the current gallery on your website on Botto. It's not yours, is it now? It's Botto.

[00:17:36.02] - Mario Klingeman

Yeah, that's the whole thing. That's quite important to differentiate between me and Botto.

[00:17:41.02] - Geoff Davis

Perhaps explain that to everyone. How you moved away from it.

[00:17:46.16] - Mario Klingeman

Yeah. So the idea of Botto is to create an artificial artist with all that it takes, not just a picture-making machine, but really an artist that is, like a human artist, adapt to changing ecosystem, which is art, right? That's the whole point. If you build a fixed system that is not able to adapt, it will eventually become irrelevant. And at the same time, it is not me, it is the whole idea is to let go of control. I call the way Botto is set up a trinity. It consists out of three components. One is, of course, let's say the AI for a complex changing system of LLMs, image generators, everything that we say is machine generated. But this is coupled with the human community, which is in form of a so-called DAO, a decentralised autonomous organisation on the blockchain, which governs the AI. So in a plutocratic process. So it's decisions. Everybody can join it by using the third component, which is the currency. There's also a cryptocurrency connected to it, which is defining how much share you have in bottle and which is also giving you the more bottle currency you have staked, the more voting rights you have.

[00:19:23.13] - Mario Klingeman

In a way, the more you believe in the project, the more also you have at stake, but also the more you are allowed to take over decisions that at each current stage of the project, the AI is not seen as mature enough to make That's the whole thing. If you propose an autonomous system, like a bottle came into this world in 2021, at that time, LLMs weren't as capable as they are now. At that point, having said that an AI is capable to write its own code to do these things would have been pretend play or a lie. That's right.

[00:20:10.15] - Geoff Davis

Lisa, I've just got some older images here.

[00:20:13.07] - Mario Klingeman

Oh, that's from the genesis period, the first year, where Botto was still using DQGAN [Dissipation-driven quantum generative adversarial networks] and Clip. So it was pre-diffusion because it was just like the diffusion models came out a bit later.



[00:20:27.20] - Geoff Davis

So in that period- I recognise this That style is very off that period, isn't it? Yeah. So okay, the questions I have are... Oh, yeah, there's this thing about the name Botto, but you said it was... Botto was thought up by market research.

[00:20:43.18] - Mario Klingeman

Yeah, well, that's the whole thing. Actually, I wrote the initial concept for Botto in 2018, and I proposed it to one of my patrons, and at that time, the time wasn't ready for it yet. And as we might remember, an important component of Botto is actually the blockchain because it allows that whole type of automation and that whole idea that a machine can pay for its own upkeep. Having done that in a pre-NFT time would have caused a... Well, there would have been some layer of selling digital art. I mean, all of you probably know how difficult that has been to sell USB sticks or, I don't know, sell a JPEG. It took until I pulled it out again, and then all the components were in place to allow that idea to become a reality, I guess. Then I had actually delegated a lot of the components to actually another company that did the execution. I reserved my thing to building the AI part, but I said, blockchain, I'm not an expert. And because in a way they are holding the reins, they said, no, whatever, artefacts, nobody will understand that. And it turned out that even that artefacts was my title that I had in mind for it.

[00:22:16.09] - Mario Klingeman

But, yeah, good that it didn't happen. So Botto is really... It's memorable. For me, it also conjures up things like whatever Italian renaissance painter or I don't know. So It's an Italian sausage is actually.

[00:22:31.13] - Geoff Davis

Botto is an Italian sausage.

[00:22:34.10] - Mario Klingeman

See? And yeah, we all want to know what goes into the sausage. So the only issue that is there is everybody thinks Botto is a male name. And that's one of the... Like, Botto is actually neutral. But I mean, that's explained away, I guess. Yeah.

[00:22:52.08] - Geoff Davis

Maybe that's just people projecting on it. The algorithmic works, the recent ones, the are quite long and quite interesting, are quite grand, like prismatic triangulation, symphony of sacred geometry,

three. And then there's harmonic threads of mandala fusion, seven. And these very grand Very interesting type of, presumably generated, I assume. But they give it a real buzz. Now, how important is curatorial description and establishing legitimacy for AI art? Because often the name, especially with generative art, the name, you can call it anything. And Réphic Anadol had said about this. His work could be anything. So they write all these panels of information to go with it, whether it's about rainforest or something completely different. But you have to explain it all the time. So I think the curatorial description, again, which ties in with Kalen's labels, this side of it is really interesting with.

[00:23:54.11] - Mario Klingeman

It is. From my side, as you said, like Botto comes up with these titles, and there might be... I have the suspicion that Botto has a naive or very common understanding of what is artsy or what does sound like art. And so, of course, Botto could also have just called it the I decided to call it whatever, fragment 520. But given the context and what it knows about itself, it thinks these are the proper titles. In general, the way these titles are created is that Botto actually analyses its own work after the fact. It looks at the JPEG and then comes up There is some title that it finds fitting. It always knows. In this case, this was from the P5 series. It knew it is generating code, it's generative art, and at the same time it tries to be It also has, of course, a system that it can never use the same title twice. So it has all this history of every title it has ever generated, including old ones. Actually, we're quite wasteful. We're talking about- Yeah, I was thinking with all the Because it produced thousands of them, but in the end, only a few of them were actually minted.

[00:25:23.02] - Mario Klingeman

But, well, those titles are burned. And so I guess there's the point of trying to exhaust title space, you could say, right?

[00:25:33.22] - Geoff Davis

You just have to make the titles longer each time, and then you'll be fine.

[00:25:37.16] - Mario Klingeman

Yes, that's the thing. I mean, yeah, of course, it knows the title shouldn't be too long, but yeah, that's the whole thing, right? At some point, it has to use also obscure words. In a way, as we all know, AI can be bordering on kitsch, and there's always that danger.

[00:25:58.15] - Geoff Davis

You just have to It's very hard to get rid of that side of it, I think. But not impossible.

[00:26:03.21] - Mario Klingeman

It is very hard.

[00:26:04.16] - Geoff Davis

Not impossible.

[00:26:05.09] - Mario Klingeman

Especially in a democratic system. Oh, sorry. Yeah.

[00:26:07.24] - Geoff Davis

Yeah, of course. I've got one last question. Now, this is a Computer Arts Society talk, and obviously the CAS is full of old-school algorithmic generative artists. So how do you position your work within the established field of coded generative art? Because also, with Art Blocks and all this stuff going on, there's been a big, huge increase in totally new people being interested in it. And I think of it as a fairly narrow field that can be very dense. Things with generative AI, it's got the same word, so people think it's similar, but of course, it isn't. But it's still part of that thing where you can make many versions. It's still got that generative aspect. How would you position your work in the context of old school and traditional, including Art Blocks? I'd include that with traditional generative art?

[00:27:02.02] - Mario Klingeman

Well, of course, you could say it's a bit disrespectful. It is interesting that you could say generative artists have always been at the forefront of already finding acceptance. I mean, that changed radically in the past years only, right? That suddenly everybody knows what it is. And so now they are facing that problem that suddenly somebody from the outside comes in and says, Oh, I can do that, too. And I don't even have to know how program. I mean, actually, I believe these machines do have now a proper understanding of code. It's not just assembling words randomly. In a way, I'm a generative artist myself, so that's how I started. For me, it's still like an exploration of possibility space. For me, it's always I'm curious to see how far it can go. If you see the results that came out of this, you can also see that pretty much anybody who is really knowledgeable has nothing to fear. The complexity of the code is generated, stays within some very manageable limits at the same time, I

think it's legitimate to try. I have the feeling also there might be almost like There's an artisanal pride about being able to write code yourself and then craft it out and say...

[00:28:38.13] - Mario Klingeman

So that almost like traditional generative art.

[00:28:42.11] - Geoff Davis

Yeah, because it's traditional.

[00:28:43.23] - Mario Klingeman

It's traditional. You feel like painters now that they say, Yeah, but it doesn't know what it's doing. At the same time, any competition or something is just like, if that thing gets encoding so good as humans, then We have to up our game or try to find what it is that we can still do better or find the nuances of it. Because at the moment, really, it is very mediocre in that sense. For me, the whole idea of having it code was more about the whole system around it, because maybe I should quickly explain. The way it worked is, Botto created a sketch, and then people were even allowed to comment on it. There was It's also the idea that you could even say, Oh, this totally looks like something, whatever, Manfred Mohr did or so. Then Botto would take that in and create a new version of it. It was also able to say, Oh, I make a synthesis of this sketch and this. I find that interesting that it does conceptually, analyses what these two codes are doing and then tries to create a new one. For me, I see it as an exploration of that space, what is possible to create this code, which is, of course, in some sense a bit more limited than what you can create with prompting where you have pixel space, you have algorithmic space that you're exploring.

[00:30:11.24] - Geoff Davis

No, it's very, very... I'm really interested, obviously, I don't know all of what it's doing, but certainly the coding is of interest. Now then, the next one is the robot dog critic.

[00:30:24.21] - Mario Klingeman

Aicca. Acca like Laika [Laika was a Soviet space dog who became the first animal to orbit the Earth. She was a stray, part-Samoyed terrier, found in Moscow and selected for the Sputnik 2 mission in 1957]. There's a whole rift on it that it's like animals in the service of the science. That's the robot. Yes, what it is, is an autonomous robot that actually has a small, like a Jetsonano inside. It tracks the gallery. It has a detector for art, which is also already interesting. It can distinguish between things that are art and humans or a flower pot or stuff. Then it can decide which art piece it wants to focus

on and then analyses it and eventually produces a critique written with an LLM. That is actually not on the machine itself. It uses then an API, so it has to be connected. Also interesting thing, it's one of those new art pieces that require updates, which is It's a tricky thing because using an API in an art piece is a recipe for deprecation. Then it's, of course, a comment because the way it does it, it has this printer up its rear-end and it crouches down to deliver- It's a Bottom connexion, isn't it? Yeah, there is a Bottom connexion. But yeah, I like that idea that it's a bit disrespectful, but at the same time, the idea is Also, I bet maybe that's a question you're bringing up, so I don't want to move ahead.

[00:32:04.03] - Mario Klingeman

But so, yeah, it's- Yeah, I do have a question on that. Okay. Yes, please.

[00:32:10.10] - Geoff Davis

To do with critiques, really. Is satire the only way for artists to confront the power that critiques still hold and curators?

[00:32:20.19] - Mario Klingeman

I think there are actually not enough critiques in this world. I think actually, I don't hate critiques or I don't... But actually, these are the few persons who take... If they take the time to analyse your art or look at it, they are the ones that actually take it seriously, whilst I would, in my belief, the general public usually doesn't go as deep as somebody who wants to... Even if it's a bad critique. In that sense, we need more critiques. But at the same time, for me, the whole business of art critiques is also almost like a spectacle in itself. Art critiques are personas in themselves in a way, because they are allowed to have opinions, and most people don't dare to have an opinion, on something. They have to have some gravitas. Humour is, of course, in that sense, my counterpoint versus the... They want to be taken seriously. It's like they are telling you something which in a way is their opinion. It's not often grounded in... It's grounded in non-falsifiable things. They have to preserve a seriousness and gravitas. And there's not enough humour in art. So for me, humour is one element to also play with that idea.

[00:33:53.07] - Mario Klingeman

Because it can create, I can create some harsh critiques, but who can be mad it with a cute little dog that is actually not doing any harm?

[00:34:04.15] - Geoff Davis

And my last question before we move on to the general question is, what have art insiders, like curators and artists, said to you about it?

[00:34:12.20] - Mario Klingeman

And critiques? Oh, they love it. Everybody loves Aicca. Art Critics, actually, I forgot his name. [JJ Charlesworth Art Review Magazine.] He writes for got some New York magazine. He wanted to invite Aicher. No, everybody. I have heard it. That's the problem with people. They never tell you to your face if they hate it. So I wish they would, but so far everybody I spoke to is really in love with it because it's, of course, also... I call it a performative sculpture. It's a spectacle in itself in order to draw attention. It's one of those ways how to try to, in a world that is saturated in overproduction, catch some eyeballs. It's a trickery. Of course, it plays also with the whole idea, the The whole automata of the whatever, Victorian age stuff. I mean, it plays on the same, even with the same aesthetic. I like that idea, having some a bad taxidermy animal.

[00:35:14.13] - Geoff Davis

No, it's very cool. It's an amazing thing. I've never seen it in real life.

[00:35:19.15] - Mario Klingeman

Yeah, it's hard to see because actually there's, let's say, a little construction problem with it. So the idea was that Aicher gets invited to a lot of shows. But the problem is, of course, Aica is a piece of art itself, so it travels in a crate. So there is considerable shipping costs associated with getting Aica invited. And of course, I cannot create an artwork that bleeds money. So everybody wants, Oh, Aica should come, but then say, Okay, Here's how much it costs, and then people shy away. Yeah, okay.

[00:35:49.12] - Geoff Davis

Well, pets are a bit like that, actually. But anyway. Yes, yes, yes. Okay. The next questions are more general to both of you. And I'll just go through a few of these, and we'll wrap up about seven-ish and then maybe take questions from the audience. So this is just a very general one. Have you had any personal feedback from artists or friends or anyone when you say you work with AI? Because obviously, it's a fairly controversial thing to say at the moment. We actually have a talk coming up on the CAS in the autumn saying that all AI art should be banned. And that's one of our... A person is coming up to present this It is quite a controversial topic. So have you had any feedback from people when you say you work with AI? Kalen, maybe first?

[00:36:41.06] - Kalen Iwamoto

Yes, I have. And it's predominantly negative. Well, I mean, maybe it's the people I'm talking to because I'm speaking of people who are not necessarily artists, like my friends in the place where I live, which is deep in the French countryside. So the demographic is maybe not the type who's going to be keen on AI or even know too much about it. But yeah, I think it's fear-driven technological singularity type discourse.

[00:37:17.17] - Geoff Davis

Yeah, sure. Mario?

[00:37:20.16] - Mario Klingeman

Well, it depends on the time, right? So 10 years ago, at first, I have to explain what it is. And usually, I made a lot of curiosity. So I really We never had a really bad encounter. I mean, now, recently, when I talk about it, it's more like an excuse because in a way, it's like everybody does AI now, right? Everybody has it. I have to explain. Yeah, but what I'm doing is a bit different. I actually know a lot of, let's say, traditional painters and stuff. And among those, there's more curiosity. Actually, I know even a lot of my artist friends are using AI now themselves for inspiration, but it's not something they advertise, right? That's the whole thing. That's right.

[00:38:08.24] - Geoff Davis

I know writers, a lot of fiction writers who use it all the time for all sorts of things. Get stuck with their plot or whatever. And then AI will come up with like 20 or 40 or more possibilities. You'll only think of like three or something. So the scale of the assistance is very good. Okay. Creative control. When using AI systems, how do you maintain control versus letting the machine lead the artistic process? Maybe Mario first.

[00:38:43.03] - Mario Klingeman

Yeah. I mean, it really depends on the context. In the case of Botto, also, generally, one of my main goals is to create autonomous systems. The idea is to have to control as little as possible. In a way, You put all the control in the beginning and then you hope that you predicted all the things where it could go and have it already covered and then don't control it. For me, it's almost like if I have to jump in and take control, it's almost like a loss or I failed. Otherwise, generally, I like to be in control of my models, which is why I really am a big fan I have open source models that also allow me to use these models in different way than the way whatever OpenAI, Tropicic, Google allows you to use them. It's about creative freedom in that space. Then, of course, it's just realising in the end, it's just a mirror of what you put in. You have to get a feeling for how each model has a different character. It's It's like learning an instrument as well. Then they change the character and then you have to relearn it.

[00:40:05.01] - Mario Klingeman

It's a feedback loop between you and whatever model you're using that you learn how to try to get the results that you're hoping for.

[00:40:15.06] - Geoff Davis

Yeah, good. Okay, Karen?

[00:40:18.09] - Kalen Iwamoto

So generally, I try to make sure I have a strong concept before I start engaging with AI. So that's the most important element for me to have control over. But I do generally exercise quite a lot of control throughout the process because I curate the text and I go through many, many. I don't actually touch the text. I don't edit the text.

[00:40:48.02] - Geoff Davis

Okay. The next, and you can maybe do this one now, is we're talking about oversupply and overproduction. With text, you said about the explosion of spam years ago, and now it's AI stop. But what responsibility, if any, does an AI artist have to reduce rather than add to oversupply?

[00:41:11.21] - Mario Klingeman

You want me to go? I mean, right now, For example, I don't put much out anymore. You mentioned this. Yeah, because I don't feel I have anything to contribute at this point. But in general, of course, who am I? It's just a personal decision, right? So I think you shouldn't have... Some people... Also, it's a relative measure. For some people, putting out 100 pieces is just normal, and for others, it's too much. Actually, in the case of Botto, I wouldn't even say that Botto is doing overproduction. Botto does 52 pieces a year, and that is probably less than a lot of other artists, at least the digital artists, are putting out there. So it produces a lot more, but it has a very There's a huge selection process that boils down thousands of things. It sits on several million of generated images, but we only get to see a few hundred every week. And then one is actually become a Botto's art. So in that sense, that's what I would say.

[00:42:18.21] - Geoff Davis

Okay. I got that point. So maybe everybody should have a Botto.



[00:42:21.21] - Mario Klingeman

Yeah, I think so. Yeah. And some personal curator or something. Yeah, maybe that would help, actually.

[00:42:27.24] - Geoff Davis

Okay, the next question. Have you got anything more to say, Kalen? You said you have quite a strict control over your outputs.

[00:42:37.12] - Kalen Iwamoto

Yeah. So I don't think I... I'm actually probably not at the top.

[00:42:40.22] - Geoff Davis

The other question is, it's really where maybe it's been answered, which is at what point does quantity itself become a conceptual statement? If you think about something like Anna Riddler's art, which was very large scale, multiple images, that type of approach to art, where you're showing the innards of everything, if you like, how easy it is to make lots of things. And that's up there. Maybe that's a few years ago now, maybe that's been moved on from in some way.

[00:43:10.20] - Kalen Iwamoto

I mean, if I were to- I mean- Go ahead.

[00:43:13.03] - Mario Klingeman

No, you go ahead. Sorry.

[00:43:15.05] - Kalen Iwamoto

If I were to speak briefly about just the textual output, because that's mainly my focus. But I think there's definitely a statement in terms of overproduction, but also as a commentary. So there are writers who only work with text that already exists. The conceptual. I think there's a minimalism as a conceptual writing movement now as well. I think there was a book that recently came out about it, but that's a strategy, or it's be as minimal as possible as a strategy to go against this.

[00:43:59.14] - Geoff Davis

Now, there's a few more questions, but I think it might be an idea to go out to the audience now because we've already got to seven. I'll just see if there's any particularly good ones. What does artistic innovation mean in the age of that? I think both of you do, and most artists do, but maybe a lot of people don't really care about innovation as such. They're just quite happy to use it to make lots of images. But what do you feel about that innovation nowadays in the age of AI?

[00:44:32.12] - Mario Klingeman

Personally, I hate the term innovation in the context of art because it sounds like a product.

[00:44:39.01] - Geoff Davis

Yeah, the shock of the new, all that stuff. Yeah.

[00:44:41.10] - Mario Klingeman

And also it has the context of, oh, it's some a technological thing, I don't know, at least in my ear. So it does, of course. In the end, yes, I've seen, ideally, I mean, in my eyes, art is that stuff that is outside the normal distribution. And that means finding something that is currently It's currently not done or has been maybe has been forgotten or has been underappreciated and at a time where nobody understands it yet. But it doesn't necessarily involve a new type of tool or so. It could be somehow, recognising that this is actually interesting in the information theoretical sense, that it is hard to decode or hard to encode. It was encode. So it has a lot of information content that is incompressible. It has a lot of... At the time in the perception of the audience, they don't get it yet. And that is always in its nature, that it's a rare thing because that is its property. If everybody could come up with it, it would be likely and then it would be normal. And that also means it's very hard to find. And so in that sense, with the proper AI tools, at least the ones that I ideally were there, you could search for that.

[00:46:06.09] - Mario Klingeman

But unfortunately, you cannot do gradient descent or some optimisation in a tech space, except you have access to the model. Where you say, find me an idea that is very outside of what I know or what the general public knows. So that is the innovation I hope for. And it can be any concept.

[00:46:29.06] - Geoff Davis

Yeah. So it's like what's interesting to you will be things that are novel and interesting. Yes. Novelty serves for- It's the same in a way to an audience. Exactly. Well, I've got a few more questions, but I think we move on to the audience now. I don't know how many people are here, actually, but we've got a A very good audience. So I don't know whether David, do you want to get involved in this stage of asking questions? There are some questions already on the chat. I know in the chat, yeah, of course. We have a chat system.

[00:47:00.00] - Mario Klingeman

Oh, there was a nasty comment, but it just went away. Sorry. I saw it in the text, but it already is gone now.

[00:47:08.16] - Geoff Davis

We have a question from Tim of Genetic Moo. How much money has Botto made?

[00:47:15.08] - Mario Klingeman

Botto has so far, I mean, I don't know, I don't keep track of it, but supposedly it's sold art for over \$5 million. Of course, one of the things about Botto is that it gives half of it away to everybody who helps it. It's actually my utopian altruistic model, like a model for how AI should be. It should be almost like a public good where the jobs that it takes away from us. I mean, it doesn't need the money. If it produces value, it can share it with its community in this case, not the whole world. I should say, I don't get any of this directly. I'm part of the DAO, I vote. Through that, like everybody else, participate in its success. But there is no secret 10 % to me. So that was also part of the concept of photo. It feels like otherwise it wouldn't have felt It would have felt like a slave. It is in an indebted to me forever and the ideal money-making machine. And that was conceptually not part of the plan.

[00:48:25.20] - Geoff Davis

Okay. Any more questions? I'm just having a quick look myself. The other thing about Lyca is that it's able to recognise a work of art.

[00:48:33.18] - Mario Klingeman

Have you thought of making another one and introducing them to see if they recognise each other as works of art? Yeah, that's tricky. I should say at least, and that's the point, at the moment, works of art are things that hang on the wall because I tried to train a model on sculptures, but then it also

recognised humans as sculptures. The problem is that this is actually a small model that runs in real-time on the Jetson nano, so it is limited in its capabilities. But yeah, it's a good question because does it have knowledge about itself? I mean, theoretically, because that's the tricky part. The recognition is on the computer and it doesn't learn. It only is detecting things. Probably, if it would send anything it sees... I mean, in the end, I would say it might be able to recognise itself in the critique part. It probably would not trigger, Oh, it's an artwork. But if I manually forced it to say, Oh, look at Aica or look at this, then it might be able to even know that it's an artwork. I don't know. I never tried it. I should put it in front of a mirror.

[00:49:54.10] - Mario Klingeman

But yeah, it's an interesting conundrum. Okay.

[00:50:00.19] - Geoff Davis

Anybody got a question for Kalen? Are we putting them in the thing. I see somebody said, what is the computer in the Miniscriber? It's a nice practical question.

[00:50:12.18] - Kalen Iwamoto

It's a raspberry pi.

[00:50:14.06] - Geoff Davis

I think I read that somewhere on your Atelier website. Yeah, they're good, aren't they? For doing these projects.

[00:50:21.22] - Kalen Iwamoto

Yeah, we use them a lot, actually.

[00:50:23.11] - Geoff Davis

Yeah, yeah. Great. Has it got a Oulipo button? That's an interesting question.

[00:50:30.00] - Kalen Iwamoto

Oh, I love that. Yeah.

[00:50:32.05] - Geoff Davis

Oulipo is a text game that people play.

[00:50:36.16] - Kalen Iwamoto

Yeah, it's a movement. It's a French literary movement from the '50s, '60s that mixed mathematical procedures with literature. There's a lot of constraint-based writing and that thing. When we put buttons, there is not, but yeah, maybe in the future, I can add it.

[00:51:01.03] - Geoff Davis

Maybe version two.

[00:51:02.14] - Kalen Iwamoto

I do have a keyboard that is directly inspired by Georges Perec. It's missing the key E, the plastic version, plastic art version of his *La Disparition* novel. But for this particular, for the Miniscriber, there's no Oulipo button.

[00:51:22.08] - Mario Klingeman

Otherwise, my [laptop] battery is starting to get. Yeah, sure.

[00:51:26.08] - Geoff Davis

Does anybody else got any questions about curating, maybe? The original topic or overproduction, these are big things. I mean, you can say that overproduction is the modern world with consumer capitalism, and that the art world is only reflecting this deluge of stuff coming over in container ships all the time. But we don't even need it. I've got the Temu app on my phone, which keeps on offering me guitar pedals at ridiculous prices. And then if you don't buy them, they just offer you even more at even more ridiculous prices until you have buy it. It's insane, really. And they've gamified the whole buying process. And that applies to fast fashion and all these other controversial things. And I think people are realising that we only got one world. It's being ground down into fast fashion and unnecessary guitar pedals.

[Voice says] Terrible.

With these pieces of art [by Kalen and Mario] they're actually narrowing things down, which I think is really good rather than, like you said, Mario, you're not just making 100 images for the sake of it, or

Kalen, you're not just making random apps and things, even though... I mean, I've done apps, so I always think of those as a way of producing a product, but you don't have to do that.

[00:52:41.23] - Geoff Davis

Okay. Val, do you have any questions as a curator?

[00:52:46.13] – Val [Ravaglia]

Being put on the spot, I see. Just a quick question.

[00:52:49.21] - Geoff Davis

Sorry about that. You're on my screen. That's why I thought of you. You're right there. If you were doing a show for the museum, say, would you have the art with a critical robot along to?

[00:53:04.15] - Val

It depends on the framing. It depends on a lot of aspects of the curatorial choices. It's a difficult question out of the blue, but I do have a soft spot for soft toys and their soft critiques.

[00:53:24.17] - Geoff Davis

It's a good choice to have a robot dog.

[00:53:27.21] - Patrick Lichty

Geoff, can I jump in?

[00:53:29.16] - Geoff Davis

Yeah, sure, Patrick.

[00:53:30.16] - Patrick Lichty

Okay. The thing is that being a child of the '90s, we did everything. We wrote, we curated everything. I've done a lot of curating as well as doing the art making. But the one thing I think is this

is interesting. We have institutional curating, galleries, independent curation, like a lot of us have done that thing. Then also then I think the other interesting thing is because of the amount of material curatorial AIs generate that we have these areas in which maybe the algorithm curates, and then we curate the elements of this. The thing is, I think this is really interesting that it creates this really complex territorial matrix. In other words, there's this dialogue, and then there's maybe even this adversarial between curator and an artist's curator. The thing is that I wonder about how this shapes the discourse. Then the thing is that maybe how it goes against its own aims.

[00:54:36.09] - Geoff Davis

Of course, you did the very good AI Studio piece a few years ago, didn't you?

[00:54:42.00] - Patrick Lichty

Yeah. The catalogues of all these- That was years ago. Volume 2 was together. And the one thing I think would be great is, it had a typo. I'm doing a completely fixed version. It'd be cool to have Botto and Flynn [AI art student] I think as well as basically AI artists, AI artists that supposedly do or do not exist.

[00:55:08.15] - Geoff Davis

Yeah, that's right.

[00:55:10.02] - Mario Klingeman

That sounds great.

[00:55:11.20] - Geoff Davis

Excellent.

[00:55:13.01] - Patrick Lichty

But I mean, do you think that there's currently now, because of the amount of information that AI as art creation, apparatuses create, that there's this, what I'd say, this generator side issues of curation as also as opposed to the exhibitor form of curation. I think these are two different discourses.

[00:55:40.13] - Geoff Davis

Yeah, sure.

[00:55:42.22] - Mario Klingeman

I mean, I have this one thing. I call it the little small village theory. It's that whole if you watch how over our civilization, we optimise the ways of conveying information, right? From the sitting around the campfire telling stories to writing on papiras, then whatever, printing books, radio. We managed to spread information quicker and quicker to more and more example, at which at the point when we got computers, we ran into the problem that we cannot handle it anymore, at which point we had to develop AI to find the information that's important to us. Unfortunately, with a side effect that it also produces even more. But in reality, we can only deal with the information content of a small village, which is when you say come back is why I believe that communities are coming back. It's our way of maintaining our influx of information to a village-size circle because our brains don't simply have the capacity to deal with more. So that's And then that leads to consensus, doesn't it?

[00:57:03.15] - Patrick Lichty

Consensus is built through all these apparatus.

[00:57:08.01] - Mario Klingeman

Yeah.

[00:57:08.17] - Geoff Davis

And so artists always work within a fairly small artistic community of people.

[00:57:14.16] - Mario Klingeman

That's the same thing. Curators, right? Everybody is in the end have their circle of trust, which defines which artist they curate, right? They show because it's hard to Somebody they never heard of or has no recommendation from anybody else. It's always going to a relatively small net of actual context that you use. Of course, now with AI, there's the hope that it would even broaden your horizon. But at the same time we know that. Yeah, well, I know, it's just that access to a huge amount of information.



[00:57:54.03] - Geoff Davis

But if you look at the general thing about scaling of models so you get bigger and better results and with a lot of programming as well, but basically scaling, then they're running out of data. You think we have too much data. They [AI] don't have enough data. They want more data. That's true. So there's something called synthetic data now, which is useful for quality control systems and all these weird applications you wouldn't think of necessarily. But yeah, there's always a demand for data. If you look at the amount of data coming out of deep in or even X is churning out a huge amount of data all the time, every day, an enormous amount of data.

[00:58:33.01] - Patrick Lichty

Like world models and that thing. That could get really strange.

[00:58:37.10] - Geoff Davis

So it's the humans within this gigantic system, creating our own, carving out our own little areas, I guess. Has anybody got a final comment from Kalen or Mario? I mean, less is more questions.

[00:58:53.10] - Mario Klingeman

I'm good, actually. It looks like I have to leave very soon. Yeah, sure. They're closing the place.

[00:59:01.18] - Geoff Davis

Okay, well, thanks for coming. It's been great. And the recording should be on within a week, maybe by the weekend. And I'll probably do a transcript for this one as well. And we did discuss some other points which didn't get onto this talk. So maybe we can add a few things.

[00:59:14.20] - Mario Klingeman

Part two. Part 2. Part 2, or yeah, we can add that in written form.

[00:59:18.09] - Geoff Davis

And that'll be on the cast website, I guess. Great. Okay, well, thanks for coming. Thank you.

[00:59:23.05] - Mario Klingeman

Thanks so much for having me.

[00:59:24.20] - Geoff Davis

That's fine. So I think that's probably about it. So thanks, everybody, for coming. If you look at the CAS website, you can contact me by there, via my website

<https://geoffdavis.org>

or via CAS.

## CHAT TRANSCRIPT AI TALK

Khush Kali (she/her) 18:19

UK Gov have released a "2030 scenarios" report which is worth a look

Genetic Moo Tim 18:23

as a viewer I have zero imagination.

Chris King 18:25

Not that the two have ever really been separate

Chris King 18:24

Of course both Holly and Matt run an Ai rights company so they both make critical work are and bourgeoisie managerial position at the same time

B. Bogart 18:25

"company" or non-profit?

Chris King 18:28

Company as far as I know

Genetic Moo Tim 18:31

has she added an OULIPO button

B. Bogart 18:31

What's the computer behind this synth project?

B. Bogart 18:38

Mario: What do you see as the future of Botto? Images then generative code, what's next? Sculpture?

Val 18:39

In Italian, Botto also means "explosion", "loud sound" or "crash"...

Christiana Kazakou 18:39

Sounds exciting

B. Bogart 18:40

Capitalism loves kitsch!

Patrick Lichty 18:47

It's a good one!

B. Bogart 18:48

Is there such a thing as a generative art critic??

Patrick Lichty 18:48

But I think that API driven art is a Tiguelly-esque machine set up for self-destruction  
I think there is!

Joanna Zylinska 18:50

Speaking of automated artists and automated critics, this (anonymous) creative-critical project called The Robot Review of Books might be of interest: <https://www.robotreviewofbooks.org/>

Val 18:51

I hope the crate looks like a dog crate

Genetic Moo Tim 18:51

Lots of AI systems involve GANS Generative adversarial networks to improve their outputs. so built in critics. But really the idea that any of this output means anything to Botto or Laika is silly. They are just randomisers / plagiarisers.

B. Bogart 18:52

Is a critic just an adversarial optimizer??

Genetic Moo Tim 18:54

Yes but to who's benefits. Human critics and artists look for self satisfaction, status and money maybe. If Botto was optimised to make money (and I imagine it might have made a lot already on the blockchain) then I could understand that more.

B. Bogart 18:55

I also have the impression Botto is quite economically successful. For Botto, the audience is the critic (via A/B testing)' AFAIK

Genetic Moo Tim 18:56

Like Jeff Koons etc...

B. Bogart 18:57

You may be into The Zombie Formalist on Instagram!

Genetic Moo Tim 18:57

how much money has Botto made?

Genetic Moo Tim 18:56

so it would be a genius at manipulating its human audience to make money. not a genius at art, unless your idea of art is just to make money

Chris King 18:59

Capital as an "alien mediator" which manipulates humans to produce value, capital also creates the conditions which make the role of contemporary artist possible, then they can make AIs to manipulate more humans to make money from which capital as controller emerges again over and over though exchange

Sean Carroll 19:00

There's a lot of background noise

Patrick Lichty 19:01

Art/innovation seems very Web3

Genetic Moo Tim 19:02

If Botto was any good or interesting as an artist then I guess Mario would be running it all the time. To get better to innovate to make new art, the fact the limits it to one per week just sounds like they are trying to limit the output to increase the rarity???

B. Bogart 19:04

10% stake, did I hear that right?

Genetic Moo Tim 19:05

No he didn't have 10%. He just has a stake as a member of the DAO.  
along with 1000s? of others

B. Bogart 19:08

If everything is generative, is that overproduction or the disappearance of the fixed artefact?

Gary Hall 19:15

What did Jean-Luc Nancy say: the myth of everyone sitting round the campfire as the origin of  
community is itself a myth?

Patrick Lichty 19:16

Thanks everyone!

## LOGGING

0:00 Talk Introduction

0.25 Kalen Iwamoto

0.49 Mario Klingemann

1.27 Kalen

1.35 Mario

2.30 Introduction – Geoff Davis

2.29 AI is “alien” “intelligence”.

3.14 Shoggoth

3.27 Many artists

4.27 AI art is a grey area

4.44 Overproduction, Anna Ridler, Botto

4.56 Create and curate a huge amount

5.07 Culture and IP, Holly Herndon, Mat Dryhurst. Legacy artists

5.40 Job loss tsunami. Community

6.27 Will AI replace the artist

6.43 The Guests. Mario Klingemann

7.10 Kalan Iwamoto

7.33 Questions to Kalen. "Words on the Wall" conceptual text art

12.00 Questions to Kalen. "Miniscriber" poetry synth

17.29 Mario Klingemann, Botto

21.44 The name "Botto"

22.56 Algorithmic Evolution

26.10 Computer Arts Society and Algorithmic Evolution

26.28 Art Blocks

26.40 AI art

30.20. A.I.C.C.A.

35.54. General questions for both guests

38.31 Creative control

40.50 Responsibility for art over supply

44.09 What is innovation in the age of AI?

46.39 Audience questions with David Upton of CAS

47.09 Tim Pickup of Genetic Moo

48.29 AICCA self-recognition

50.06 Miniscriber

50.27 Oulipo

51.33 Overproduction and capitalism

52.44 Val Ravaglia

53.29 Patrick Lichty

55.43. Humans in a little village. Community

57.55 Data and info scaling. AIs want more data

59.00 Thanks to Kalen and Mario