

HUMAN-MACHINE CREATIVITY: COLLABORATION AND AUTONOMY IN AI ART

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Abstract: This article explores the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in art creation by analysing the work of two notable artists, Sougwen Chung and Mario Klingemann. By adopting a case study approach, we analyse *Chung's Recursions series* and *Klingemann's Memories of Passersby I* as two different models of human–AI interaction in art: collaborative co-creation and machine autonomy. The findings show that Chung's work is based on a continuous interaction between human gestures, biofeedback systems, and robotic responses. This process demonstrates a fluid collaboration between human and machine. Meanwhile, Klingemann's work emphasizes algorithmic autonomy through generative adversarial networks (GANs). The artist guides the system's outputs through curatorial and aesthetic decisions. The article concludes that AI in art may not be considered solely as a tool or as a completely independent creator. Instead, AI works together with human artists, and it is shaped by their decisions, datasets, and creative direction. The comparison of these two models contributes to the literature on collaboration, creativity, and agency in AI art.

Keywords: AI art; human–AI collaboration; generative adversarial networks; creativity; art creation.

CRIATIVIDADE HUMANO-MÁQUINA: COLABORAÇÃO E AUTONOMIA NA ARTE COM IA

Resumo: Este artigo explora o papel da inteligência artificial (IA) na criação artística, analisando o trabalho de dois artistas notáveis, Sougwen Chung e Mario Klingemann. Adotando uma abordagem de estudo de caso, analisamos a série *Chung's Recursions* e *Klingemann's Memories of Passersby I* como dois modelos distintos de interação humano-IA na arte: cocriação colaborativa e autonomia da máquina. Os resultados mostram que o trabalho de Chung se baseia em uma interação contínua entre gestos humanos, sistemas de biofeedback e respostas robóticas. Esse processo demonstra uma colaboração fluida entre humanos e máquinas. Enquanto isso, o trabalho de Klingemann enfatiza a

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autonomia algorítmica por meio de redes generativas adversárias (GANs). O artista guia as saídas do sistema por meio de decisões curatoriais e estéticas. O artigo conclui que a IA na arte não pode ser considerada apenas como uma ferramenta ou como uma criadora completamente independente. Em vez disso, a IA trabalha em conjunto com artistas humanos e é moldada por suas decisões, conjuntos de dados e direção criativa. A comparação desses dois modelos contribui para a literatura sobre colaboração, criatividade e agência na arte com IA.

Palavras-chave: arte com IA; colaboração humano-IA; redes generativas antagônicas; criatividade; criação artística.

CREATIVIDAD HUMANO-MÁQUINA: COLABORACIÓN Y AUTONOMÍA EN EL ARTE DE LA IA

Resumen: Este artículo explora el papel de la inteligencia artificial (IA) en la creación artística mediante el análisis del trabajo de dos artistas destacados, Sougwen Chung y Mario Klingemann. A través de un enfoque de estudio de caso, analizamos la serie *Recursions* de Chung y *Memories of Passersby I* de Klingemann como dos modelos diferentes de interacción entre humanos e IA en el arte: la co-creación colaborativa y la autonomía de la máquina. Los hallazgos muestran que la obra de Chung se basa en una interacción continua entre gestos humanos, sistemas de biofeedback y respuestas robóticas. Este proceso demuestra una colaboración fluida entre el ser humano y la máquina. Mientras tanto, la obra de Klingemann enfatiza la autonomía algorítmica mediante redes generativas antagónicas (GANs). El artista guía los resultados del sistema a través de decisiones curatoriales y estéticas. El artículo concluye que la IA en el arte no debe considerarse únicamente como una herramienta o como un creador completamente independiente. En cambio, la IA trabaja junto con artistas humanos y está moldeada por sus decisiones, conjuntos de datos y dirección creativa. La comparación de estos dos modelos contribuye a la literatura sobre colaboración, creatividad y agencia en el arte generado con IA.

Palabras clave: Arte con IA; colaboración humano-IA; redes generativas antagónicas; creatividad; creación artística.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) can be defined as technologies that display characteristics which are associated with human reasoning and behaviours (Caluori, 2024). As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly integrated across various industries, including healthcare and education, the arts sector is no exception. AI is utilized both as a physical entity such as humanoid robots and as an invisible, software-based system operating through algorithms. Within artistic practice, AI is assigned different roles depending on its mode of use. In some cases, the artist assumes the role of a curator, directing AI to generate artworks based on prompts. In other instances, AI independently produces art through algorithmic processes. The collaboration between human and AI is therefore significant, as it reflects both the creativity of the artist and the emerging, autonomous creative capacities of machines (Rozental et al., 2025). Therefore, understanding AI usage in the arts creation is timely and important. While some artists and scholars approach AI as a tool, others see it as a collaborator or a partner (Hermerén, 2024; Nordström et al. 2023). Thus, artificial intelligence has evolved from being a technical support to becoming a direct part of the creative process. As a result, the role of the artist has shifted from a designer who guides the process to a co-creator who partners with AI (Ozturk and Gumus, 2025).

Existing studies on AI in art highlight both negative and positive perceptions among viewers. On the one hand, critics often express scepticism toward AI-generated art, arguing that it lacks emotional depth and the experiential narrative traditionally associated with human-created works. On the other

hand, more favourable perspectives frame AI as a tool that supports artists in the creative process, enhancing efficiency and expanding artistic possibilities.

Despite these contrasting views, there remains a gap in understanding how artists themselves assign roles to AI in the creation of art, and how their works reflect varying degrees of human versus machine contribution. Thus, the aim of this article is to examine and compare two prominent AI artists, Sougwen Chung and Mario Klingemann, focusing on how they assign roles to AI in their work.

The Method

This study adopts a qualitative comparative approach using two artists as case studies. In this context, Sougwen Chung and Mario Klingemann's artworks and exhibition contexts have been analysed. These cases were selected to represent contrasting models of AI–human collaboration: co-creation (Chung) and autonomous creation (Klingemann).

The qualitative method was selected to gain deeper insights, emphasising the quality of analysis rather than relying on quantitative measures such as a large number of cases or comparisons. Furthermore, the selected artists are increasingly gaining recognition in the field of AI art and appear to shape contemporary understandings of creativity by integrating machine systems, artificial intelligence, and human artistic practice.

The analytical procedure is based on three main aspects regarding the case studies: (1) The amount and the role of AI autonomy; (2) the role of the artist as a collaborator in the artwork process; (3) the relationship between the algorithm and final artistic output.

The study examines the role of artists and artificial intelligence in the artistic creation process, with a particular focus on how two different artists conceptualise and assign roles to AI in art production.

Data Collection

Data were collected from certain artwork series and exhibition catalogues: *Recursions* (2026) for Sougwen Chung and *Memories of Passersby I* (2018) for Mario Klingemann.

Data and Document Analysis

Sougwen Chung Recursions (2026): The *Recursions* series features Recursion 0, a large-scale human–AI collaboration, and six related works, *Recursions* 1–6, which distil moments from the same process into individual paintings (Critical Playground, 2026). Underlying these works are datasets, such as Dataset 1314, which record Chung's gestures, brainwave data, and robotic responses to train the AI system. In this article, Recursion 0 and Dataset 1314 are discussed.

Mario Klingemann Memories of Passersby I (2018): *Memories of Passersby I* is an AI installation that continuously produces unique portraits using neural networks and generative adversarial networks (GANs) (Google Arts & Culture, n.d.). In contrast to earlier generative systems it does depend on a static dataset but generates images through a continuous feedback process, which also ensures that no output is repeated. The system was trained on previous portrait datasets and exhibited as a physical installation that combines a custom cabinet with two display screens.

Sougwen Chung

Sougwen Chung's method reflects a system that is based on a collaboration between humans and AI. In 2022, Sougwen Chung introduced Drawing Operations Unit Generation 5 (D.O.U.G. 5), a multi-robotic system powered by a machine learning model trained on her extensive drawing archives (Wang, 2025; Andrews & Hawcroft, 2025). AI systems track her hand movements in real time, and

she coordinates them while simultaneously creating the artwork (Öztürk & Gümüş, 2025). These systems combine machine learning with biofeedback tools, such as EEG headsets that read the artist's brain activity and bodily signals, creating art that feels alive and deeply personal. This data guides robotic arms, creating a dynamic process where human gestures and machine responses continually influence each other.

Chung's work represents an assignment division between her and the humanoid robot during artistic production. She does not simply instruct the robot to draw according to her intentions. Instead, she begins the artwork by making the first strokes, after which the robot responds by predicting and generating the next marks (Wang, 2025). This creates a collaborative process in which both the artist and the machine influence the outcome. At the same time, the robot's responses are not always predictable, which introduces unexpected variations and makes the process feel more natural and dynamic.

Chung's multidisciplinary practice spans installation, drawing, performance, and sculpture in dialogue with robotics, machine learning, and bio-sensing. Through these interwoven forms, they investigate the shifting relationships between the gesture of the hand and the gesture of the machine. Their work conceives collaboration as an evolving coaesthetic system, in which human, machine, and environment co-produce open choreographies of perception and meaning (Fellowship, n.d.).

Sougwen Chung describes her collaboration with AI as follows: "Traditional forms of creativity must shape but not be replaced by technological development. Building our own tools and AI systems for art can help us sit with the existential questions posed by new technologies, in a way that fear and hope can be held in the mind at the same time" (Fellowship, n.d.).

Koch (2026) described the feedback loop between artist and machine as follows:

1. Training phase: The system is trained on Chung's drawing data.
2. Co-creation: Human and robot draw together in real time.
3. Data collection: Each session generates new data.
4. Updating model: The system is updated with this data.
5. Evolution of style: Over time, the robot's responses evolve and influence Chung's gestures.



Figure 1. RECURSION 遞迴 0.

As seen in Figure 1, Recursion 0 (2026) is a large-scale work created using a robotic system trained on the artist's own drawing data. The real-time biosensor input guides the system in responding to Chung's gestures and produces marks that build without a clear source. By combining traditional materials with EEG data and neural network-guided robotic gestures, the work reflects both physical

expression and computational input. The marks emerge through a continuous feedback loop, in which the artist's movements and the machine's responses shape one another.

RECURSION Dataset 1314 explores the idea of attention through light (see Figure 2). The title references a Chinese homophone 一生一世 meaning “a lifetime.” Brainwave and drawing data are displayed on an elevated LED structure, changing in response to ongoing output. The work visualizes attention as something that unfolds over time; tightened, steady, and visible (Fellowship, n.d.).

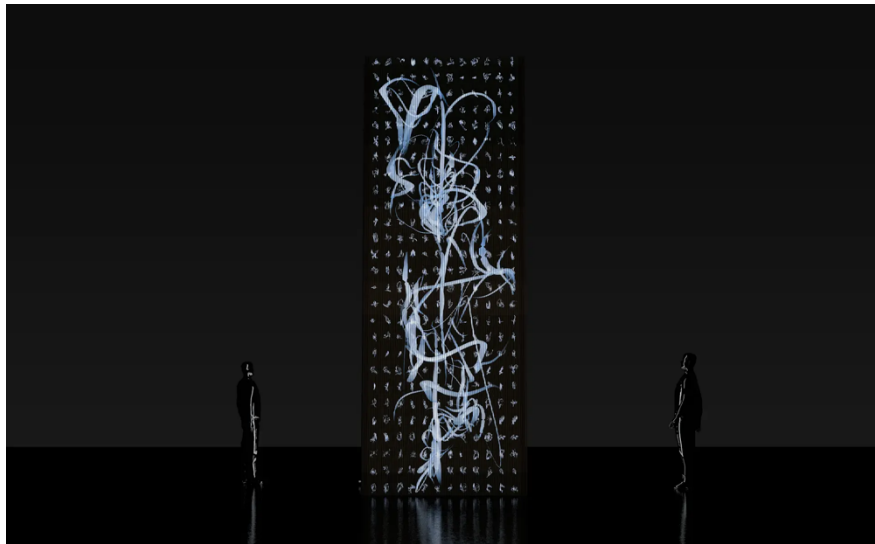


Figure 2. RECURSION 遞迴 Dataset 1314.

RECURSION (as a whole) explores what Chung calls Operational Art, a framework for shared protocols, ethics, and co-creation between humans, machines, and the environment. In this context, collaboration evolves into something surpassing a mere method: control is shared, and co-creation blends with authorship (Fellowship, n.d.).

Mario Klingemann

Mario Klingemann is one of the notable artists in AI art. Early in his career, he experimented with generative adversarial networks (GANs) to create portraits and images that explore the interplay between algorithmic autonomy and artistic intention. Klingemann began his work by using GANs to generate portraits and images, investigating the balance between AI-driven processes and human artistic vision (Górska, 2025). For Klingemann, collaborating with AI is a trial-and-error process in which the machine's autonomy engages with the artist's intuition (Rozental et al., 2025). Klingemann tries to understand whether AI algorithms can autonomously create images, and how they learn to represent human faces, objects and scenes (Górska, 2025). While Chung's work is grounded in interactive and immediate co-creation between artist and machine, Klingemann's approach is more consistent with algorithmic autonomy. In Klingemann's generative systems take on a primary role in producing visual form. Klingemann's practice relies on machine learning systems that process images across multiple levels, from surface details to more complex visual patterns and stylistic references. Rather than using fixed algorithms, he works with AI as an active creative partner, embracing its unpredictable outputs and allowing surprise to shape the artistic process (Górska, 2025). Klingemann acknowledges that AI systems can produce repetitive or excessive outputs, and according to his statement, he continuously works on the technology to produce more impactful results:

There are typical things that neural networks do that I consider a fault – repetitive patterns, overemphasizing of certain elements, a certain GAN style. I work against it and figure out why certain things happen, trying to understand the technology and to exactly see

which parts limit it to this potential output and where can I hack it or escape that aesthetic that it produces (Poscic, 2018).

On the other hand, while Klingemann appreciates unexpected outcomes, he emphasizes the importance of maintaining control: “Happy accidents are nice, but I like to have control even over the accidents!” (Poscic, 2018).



Figure 3. Mario Klingemann, *Memories of Passersby I* (2018).

Source: Sotheby's. (2019, November 15). #109 Mario Klingemann | *Memories of Passersby I* [Auction lot]. *Contemporary Art Day Auction*. Sotheby's.
<https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2019/contemporary-art-day-auction-119021/lot.109.html>

Memories of Passersby I is a significant example of AI art created by Mario Klingemann. As an AI installation, it relies on neural networks and generative adversarial networks (GANs) to continuously generate a sequence of unique portraits in real time (Sotheby's, 2019). Two displays move through the latent space of multiple GANs, where human faces appear and fade like smoke (Browne, 2022). Unlike earlier generative artworks, it does not rely on a stored image database; instead, it creates entirely new images pixel by pixel through a self-sustaining feedback process, ensuring that no output is ever repeated (Sotheby's, 2019). In its installation format, the artwork features a specially designed cabinet made of chestnut wood, accompanied by two framed screens (Betancor et al., 2019-2020). Klingemann built the AI by feeding it thousands of portraits from the 1600s to 1800s and shaping its artistic style using a Tinder-style interface, drawing inspiration from surrealist art, especially Max Ernst (Sotheby's, 2019).

A Reflection of Chung and Klingemann

The involvement of artificial intelligence in the works of Chung and Klingemann demonstrates how contemporary art can engage with emerging technologies both as a form of real-time collaboration and as a means of testing the boundaries of computational creativity. When AI is approached as a collaborator, authorship becomes distributed between human and machine, although the responsibility for the final work ultimately remains with the artist. At the same time, pushing AI to explore the limits of artistic production raises questions about the nature of human creativity within such systems. In some cases, creativity is no longer solely driven by direct prompts, as AI systems

can generate outputs that emerge from learned patterns and internal structures rather than explicit instructions. If we consider the artwork's owner to be the machine or humanoid robot, then the artist's contribution may be overlooked; the same issue arises in reverse, where the role of the machine is ignored and only the human is credited.

This instability of authorship can also be understood through Roland Barthes' theory of the "death of the author." Barthes (1977) argues that the meaning of a work is not tied to the creator's intentions or authority and it emerges from the interaction between the artwork and viewer. In this case, the creator is no longer the origin of meaning but rather a "scriptor" who combines existing cultural elements (Barthes, 1977). In AI-generated art, it can be observed authorship is fragmented across multiple agents, including the programmer, the machine, and the viewer.

Moreover, there are social (prestige) and financial (high artistic value and income) dimensions within the art market (Yeşildağ, 2025), where a robot or machine can also acquire recognition. However, for now, this recognition is difficult to grant, as current technologies have not yet developed to a point where such authorship can be fully acknowledged or integrated into established systems (Yeşildağ, 2026). A relevant example is Ai-Da, which has gained recognition in the art world but still operates as a hybrid entity (Ai-Da robot studios, n.d). The inputs given to Ai-Da are a combination of AI processes, human programming and curatorial direction. Therefore, Ai-Da's case shows us how much the independent machine authorship claims can be complicated.

In this context, Chung's work *RECURSIONS* invites viewers to reconsider the artist's role in the creative process, as the boundary between human gesture and machine response becomes increasingly blurred. In contrast, Klingemann's generative practice raises questions about the nature of creativity in contexts where human intervention is limited or reduced. In Chung's case, this leads to a question regarding authorship: when technology plays such an essential role, who can be considered the true creator of the work? (Gomez, 2024). On the other hand, Klingemann's work *Memories of Passersby I* raises questions on originality itself: can an artwork still be considered original when it is produced through algorithmic processes? (Gomez, 2024). Both practices highlight how AI art complicates conventional understandings of authorship, creativity, and the evolving relationship between humans and machines in art creation. Overall, Chung and Klingemann can be understood as artists whose work in AI art does not simply replace human creativity but instead reshapes it.

Conclusion

This study examines how artificial intelligence is situated within art creation by comparing two prominent AI artists whose practices may reflect different forms of human-machine art: Sougwen Chung's co-creation and Mario Klingemann's autonomous model. The role of AI varies according to the artist's conceptual approach, the technical structure of the system, and how much control the artist has over the final work. In this context, the study contributes to the literature by showing that AI is not just a neutral tool, but also can function as a creative partner, a responsive medium in a distributed process of authorship. Furthermore, it adds depth to literature that compare contemporary artists to understand the role of AI in art (Górska, 2025; Ozturk and Gumus, 2025).

Our findings suggest that there is not fixed distinction between "co-creative" and "autonomous" AI art. Instead, this distinction can be shaped by artistic intention, and material use. Moreover, so-called autonomous AI systems still contain human agency as a central force, which is presented as a collaboration and curation.

The case of Sougwen Chung is consistent with studies that describe AI-assisted art as co-creative and relational (Wang, 2025; Sklar & Jiang, 2025). In Chung's work, the artwork develops through a continuous cycle of interaction, where human gestures, machine learning, robotic actions, and biosensory input all influence each other.

On the other hand, Mario Klingemann's *Memories of Passersby I* presents a different approach, in which AI operates with increased autonomy. The installation continuously generates new portraits without repetition, highlighting the machine's own creative potential. This contributes to literature (Bomba & De Angeli, 2025; McCormack et al., 2019) that discuss AI art as a challenge to conventional understandings of originality, intention, and artistic authorship. However, in Klingemann's work, the artist remains involved in shaping the system and its installation, showing that such autonomy should not be overstated. The study shows that autonomous AI art remains shaped by human decisions, from dataset selection to aesthetic judgment.

Moreover, artists working with GANs have been criticized for producing works that resemble the styles present in their training datasets (Doherty, 2019; Elliott, 2017). In contrast, Mario Klingemann takes a more active role in directing his algorithms toward the creation of distinctive artworks. This is obvious in his installation *Memories of Passersby I*, which presents AI-generated portraits that continuously change over time. Although the work is sometimes described as "fully autonomous," the AI remains guided by Klingemann's artistic preferences and decisions (Doherty, 2019).

The study makes a contribution to the state-of-the-art by showing how AI in art may not be considered a simple tool versus agent distinction. In contrast, it illustrates AI as a partial creative agent, in which the work is not entirely or fully delegated to the machine.

As in other social sciences studies, this study also has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis relies mainly on artworks and catalogues rather than interviews, or observation of the creative process. Second, while the comparison between Sougwen Chung and Mario Klingemann is analytically useful, their works differ in medium, and exhibition form, which makes direct comparison more complex. Future research could incorporate interviews, and artist's studio observation to provide a clearer understanding of how creative processes are divided between the artist and machine. Further work may also engage more closely with the ethical and cultural dimensions of AI art, including dataset origins, bias, and environmental impact, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of AI's role in artistic production.

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