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Latent Spaces: What AI Art Can Tell Us About Aesthetic Experience

Alice Barale

Abstract

In her book *L'art victime de l'estétique*, Carole Talon-Hugon criticizes the identification that has been made between art and aesthetics since the Eighteenth century. In this context, what the author calls "aesthetics" or "aesthetic experience" is essentially linked to the sphere of sensitivity, which becomes more and more isolated from that of good and truth. Art – this is the author's thesis – progressively loses its link to good and truth as it becomes something that must just affect the senses. In this context, the author recalls that a central role was played by the growing importance of colour, in a process that led from Impressionism to abstract art. Throughout this evolution, according to Talon-Hugon, the intention of painting increasingly became an attempt to restitute "the purely visible impression," isolated from any judgement or identification.

In this paper, this thesis will be confronted with a new type of art, the art made through artificial intelligence. In particular, the focus will be on some artworks made through a kind of AI called

GANs (generative adversarial networks). If one considers these pictures, one may notice that they share with some early Twentieth century paintings the fact that colour becomes somewhat independent from the outlines and drawing. Outlines are very blurred and the identities of the objects are not certain. Nevertheless, this type of colour in GANs pictures doesn't demonstrate a denial of the task of identifying things. On the contrary, it is precisely concerned with the machine's very attempt to classify objects. Moreover, even if we recognize in the AI our own attempts to classify and comprehend the world (the Ai as an "uncanny mirror" of ourselves), the AI remains nevertheless something other than ourselves. Therefore, the aesthetic pleasure when faced with these pictures implies the expectation not only of a possible knowledge, but also of a new relationship with an other. This will allow some considerations on the very notion of aesthetics itself.

1. Aesthetic Experience

This paper stems from a talk I gave at a conference called "L'Expérience Esthétique" (The Aesthetic Experience), organized by the French Society of Aesthetics.[1] The aim of the conference was to define what the aesthetic experience is, in the light of the most recent philosophical and artistic developments.

1 L'expérience esthétique, organized by the Société Française d'Esthétique and the Séminaire Européen d'Esthétique in Paris, on 18-19th June 2021.

The term "aesthetic experience" is the object of an important debate that is taking place, particularly since the second half of the Twentieth century in the Anglo-American philosophy.[2] The aim of this analysis is of course not to answer all the questions raised by the definition of aesthetic experience. In this paper it will be enough to adopt a minimal characterization of this concept, according to which the aesthetic experience is a particular *relationship* that sometimes arises between the subject and different types of objects[3]. Generally, it brings with it a strong impression and a feeling of thoughtfulness and change. The senses play a large role in this type of experience: it is worth remembering that "aesthetic" comes from the ancient Greek "*aesthesis*", which means sensation or sensitive perception. The modern use of this adjective started with Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, who gave this name to his "Science of sensitive knowledge."[4]

This centrality of the senses is the aspect of the aesthetic experience that will be investigated in this paper. In the aesthetic experience, what relationship exists between the senses and intellectual knowledge and ethics? Some important suggestions in this regard may come from a very recent type of art, the art made through artificial intelligence (AI), and from the new questions raised by the experience of it.

In her book *L'art victime de l'estétique*, Carole

2 For an overview of this debate see Iseminger (2003).
3 See on this Schäffer (2015), chap. 1. In this direction see also Fonseca (2020).
4 Baumgarten (1961). See on this Mazzocut-Mis (2020).

Talon-Hugon criticizes the identification that has been made between art and aesthetics since the Eighteenth century. In this context, what the author calls "aesthetics" or "aesthetic experience" is essentially linked to the sphere of sensitivity, which becomes more and more isolated from that of good and truth. Art – this is the author's thesis – progressively loses its link to good and truth as it becomes something that must just affect the senses. This process culminates in the first decades of the Twentieth century, when pictorial art started to be considered as the restitution of what is purely visible, regardless of any definite object or content. In this context, the author recalls that a central role was played by the growing importance of colour, in a process that led from Impressionism to abstract art.[5] Colour became increasingly independent from outlines and drawing and acquired its own significance. Throughout this evolution, according to Talon-Hugon, the intention of painting increasingly became an attempt to restitute «the purely visible impression,»[6] isolated from any judgement or identification. However, according to the author, this idea of picture is bounded to a particular historical period (modernity, with its identification between art and aesthetics) and cannot be generalized. In fact, it is very difficult – as the author remarks – to look at the visible aspects of a picture without, at the same time, trying to understand its subject or

5 On this question see Lichtenstein (1989) (quoted also in Talon-Hugon [2014]).
6 Talon-Hugon (2014), p. 107

meaning.[7] When we see colours and lines, we tend to guess what face or what object hides behind them or emerges from them.

This remark made by Talon-Hugon will be the starting point for a question raised throughout this paper: can aesthetics really be restricted to the purely sensory domain of our experience, or does it imply something more? The hypothesis of this paper is that aesthetic experience always involves a link to the sphere of knowledge and morality. This doesn't mean that aesthetic experience already encompasses a fully-formed theoretical or moral content, but rather that in the aesthetic experience we glimpse the possibility of new knowledge and a moral good to be.[8] To support this idea, this paper will focus on a particular form of art: the one made through artificial intelligence.

This doesn't imply that aesthetic experience is conveyed only by art. On the contrary, as noted above, the underlying idea is, according with a number of contemporary scholars,[9] that the aesthetic experience is a particular type of experience of the world, and can happen when confronted with a large variety of objects. Moreover, the goal of this paper is not to demonstrate that AI art can cause an aesthetic experience. Rather, the following analysis presupposes this fact. AI artworks do indeed cause aesthetic experiences, and it is with the description and analysis of these experiences that this paper will

7 Talon-Hugon (2014), pp. 134-135.
8 For a formulation of this idea see Desideri (2011).
9 Desideri (2011); Schäffer (2015).

begin. The underlying idea of this paper is that the experience of art often reveals some relevant features of our aesthetic experience of the world, and AI art does this in a new and very interesting way. In fact, in AI art all this happens through a new presence, with which humans must urgently confront themselves – the presence of artificial intelligence.

2. AI Art

Artificial intelligence is becoming an increasingly constant presence in our lives, helping us with economical analysis, medical diagnoses, urban planning, but also with our everyday activities. For the past few years (more or less since 2016),[10] artists have also begun to use AI. This new type of art made by the machines (even though it is not made by the machines alone, as it will be explained further on) is heavily criticized, for reasons that will later be examined. However, this kind of art is also revealing itself to be an extraordinary means through which humans confront themselves with this new reality of artificial intelligence. In fact, the exact same criticisms that are raised in response to AI art can help us to better understand what AI is becoming and the different relationships that we can establish with it.

The art made through artificial intelligence is

10 For a historical recognition of the development of AI art see Miller (2020); see also Gouveia (2020), section II; Pedrazzi (2021).

the topic of much discussion and is raising a number of difficult questions. The first time an artwork made by an AI was sold (at the famous auction house Christie's in 2018) public and critics were divided. The painting looked like the portrait of a young gentleman in a gold frame, very classical in its style but quite blurred and with some strange details. In particular, the signature in its lower margin was actually a mathematical formula, corresponding to the central part of the algorithm through which this artwork was made. This underlined the new role that the machine had in creating this picture. The reactions to this event were very extreme.[11] Some people claimed that this was the future of art, and that AI art was going to replace human artists. Others doubted that AI art could be real art and were afraid that it would destroy art in the sense we intended it until today. Numerous reasons were mentioned (and continue to be cited today) to support the conviction that computers cannot make art. They don't have a body. They don't have emotions. They have no unconscious. They risk producing art that is sterilized from every human aspect. The list could continue.

Now more than three years have passed, and the objections to AI art remain very similar. Many of these questions actually recall the ones that were asked during the emergence of photography, when the art world felt threatened by that new expressive form and needed to redefine its borders.[12] The

11 See on this Obvious (2020), pp. 174 ff.

12 See on this Agüera and Arcas (2016); Mazzocut-Mis and Scarpellini (2019).

difference, of course, is that AI has a new degree of autonomy, which makes it appear quasi-human and independent from the artist. It will be necessary to return to this question of quasi-independence.

Yet where are we now, with AI art? How is it possible to answer to critics of AI art in light of the latest experiments that have been made with it? This paper will try to answer this question through the analysis of a particular type of AI art, the pictures made through an AI technique called GANs. It can be useful to begin with one particular work that was shown in March 2021 in Germany, by Mario Klingemann, entitled *Neural Studies*.

M. Klingemann, Neural Studies, 2021 (courtesy of Onkaos).

In these pictures, it is possible to distinguish some strange silhouettes – recognizable as humans, from

a certain point of view, even if a lot of details are missing – who are walking against a background that is like a puzzle of indefinite colours or lights. There is a reason for this particular relationship between figures and background: the artificial intelligence through which this work was made was trained on a set of pictures taken at fashion shows over the last twenty years. In fact, Klingemann made this work for a project called "Fashion's digital future". The catwalk pictures, however, were not the only data on which the AI was trained. The artist chose to train the machine also on a set of images taken from a work by Hieronymus Bosch, *The garden of earthly delights*. The result is quite disquieting. Bosch's strange creatures, half human half animal, or half animal and half nothing, become the new models of this strange *defilé*.

The interest of the fashion world in the possibilities of AI is also very relevant, because it demonstrates that AI is perceived as something that is becoming more and more capable of influencing our collective imagination.[13] One of the risks of AI that is often underlined consists in the fact that it can be used in the interest of the market, rather than for potentiating our critical capacities. *Neural Studies*, however, shows that the opposite can also happen. These pictures are certainly not a mere praise of the fashion industry. It will soon be necessary to consider their possible meaning.

Before doing this, however, it is first necessary

13 The first AI artist to collaborate with a fashion house was Robbie Barrat in 2018; see Barrat (2018).

to clarify what it means that the AI was "trained" on these two kinds of pictures. This question is at the core of the art made through artificial intelligence. In fact, this type of art has often been confused by non-experts with computer art in general. AI art, however, is not just computer art; it requires something more,[14] i.e. the capacity of the machine to elaborate on the information in a way that is partially autonomous from humans. The artist can give the machine some data, but then he/she must wait to see how the machine will classify and reproduce the data.

In this way, the machine is no longer just a means for the artist. It becomes something different, the nature of which must be investigated. Is the machine the creator of the work? This is not the perspective supported in this paper. Rather, the key appears to be in the new *dialogue* that arises between the artificial intelligence and the human artist.

It is necessary to understand, anyway, a little bit more about this autonomy that the machine acquires in AI art. AI art became possible with the development of a specific type of artificial intelligence, which is called "deep neural networks". Deep neural networks had already been used in the 1990s, but technology at that time was not advanced enough to apply them in the way they are used in AI art today. Yet from 2010 onward (more or less) much more powerful neural networks were created, which can help with medical diagnoses and research, drive cars, play sophisticated games like Go, and translate complex texts.

14 See on this Boden (2012).

Deep neural networks take their name from the way they mimic the human brain. They are constituted by many layers of artificial neurons (the use of numerous layers is why they are called "deep" neural networks). Each layer takes the data from the previous layer and elaborates on that set in an increasingly complex way. For example, in the case of image recognition, after training the first layer may learn to react to lines and edges, the second layer to the shape of a nose or mouth, the third to a face, and so on.[15] In the end, the computer emerges with the probabilities of what a given image actually is. For example, if the given image was a dog, the result could be: 90% dog, 2% bird, 3% cow, 5% cat. According to how accurate the result is, the programmer adjusts the modifiable parameters of the machine until it learns to identify the image more correctly.

However, in order for the AI to make art, it must be capable not only of recognizing images, but it must also be capable of *producing* them on its own. How does the machine go from recognizing to producing a picture? There are different techniques to perform this task. Currently, one of the most interesting and commonly used methods (since 2017, more or less) is that of the so-called "GANs". GANs are a type of AI that was ideated by a young computer scientist, Ian Goodfellow, in 2014.[16] They are constituted by two deep neural networks that work together, playing

15 See Goodfellow *et al.* (2017). For a very interesting history of deep neural networks see Eugeni (2021), chap. 5.

16 See Goodfellow (2014).

against one another, in a sense. One network, called the discriminator, is trained on a certain data set, in the way that was described above. The other network, called the generator, doesn't have access to the data set. Nevertheless, it must generate some pictures that are so similar to the data set, as to make the other network confuse them with it. The fact that the two networks are working together allows the machine to become more autonomous both from the dataset and from human judgement:[17] the two networks train each other, challenging their abilities (the ability to recognize the "real" pictures, for the discriminator, and that of producing "good" pictures, for the generator). In this way, the system is capable of making improvements without human intervention.

In the light of this process, it is possible to understand one of the most interesting concepts of AI art, that of latent space. Latent space is the space of all possible attempts that the machine makes to generate new images. It is an abstract representation of all possible pictures that the AI can produce. Each picture that the artificial intelligence can ever generate occupies a position within the latent space. Latent space is "latent" because it is hidden inside the AI, until humans ask the machine to show what picture corresponds to a particular point in the space. What is important in this context is that the artist can move through the latent space and always find new images. Klingemann uses the metaphor of the

17 Of course the autonomy is not complete. For the concept of autonomy in GANs art see Moruzzi (2020).

journey: the artist can travel through the interior spaces of the machine.

For example, if he gets to a point that is in an intermediate position between a dog and a cat, he will find an image of a creature that is between a dog and a cat, or – as in the artwork that catalyzed the writing of this paper – between a fashion model and a Bosch monster. Perhaps it is not by chance that Klingemann chose Bosch for his work, because he has always been very interested in strange creatures, which he calls the "creatures of in-between spaces"[18]. Some examples of them are also visible in other works by the same artist, like *Hyperdimensional Attraction Series*.[19] As Klingemann explains, some of these pictures that can be found in the latent space will make sense to humans; others will not.[20] It is a real journey of discovery, therefore, that the artist undertakes.

3. AI and Aesthetic Experience

What is the reason that some of these pictures made through AI have such a strong impact on the viewer? For they have a strong impact indeed. Yet how can art made through artificial intelligence evoke emotions, since computers don't have emotions? This is one of the main objections raised in response

18 Klingemann (2017).
19 Klingemann (2020), pp. 103-9.
20 Klingemann (2021).

to this type of art. The answer supported here is that AI art is never made by the AI *alone*. Present-day AIs are not capable of making art on their own. This type of art always arises from the *relationship* between the human artist and this new entity that is the AI.

Personally, I began to deal with AI art when I had what I could certainly call an "aesthetic experience" of it. I saw an online display of a work called *Fall of the House of Usher*, by Anna Ridler, and these pictures remained in my mind for a long time. I began to feel the need to understand why, to decipher what they were communicating to me.

The title of Ridler's work comes of course from Edgar Allan Poe's famous novel. The artist has drawn a set of pictures based on a 1929 film adaptation of the novel, and she has used these drawings to train her AI. Then, in a second phase, she has asked the AI to produce its own set of pictures that were similar to her drawings. Finally,– and this is the third phase – she redrew these pictures produced by AI by hand. The novel itself, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, is about identity and so the result of Ridler's work is striking. The famous house, which represents the identity of a family, is falling down at the end – and the pictures themselves seem to be really fighting for identity, too. In fact, they are indeed fighting for identity, in the sense that the AI is attempting (as explained below) to *classify* things. This is also true for Klingemann's *Neural Studies*, even if this work has very light colours and has more to do with staging an identity, while Ridler's work is concerned

rather with remembering and keeping an identity. In any case, in this way it is possible to approach the question more closely: why do these works have such a strong impact on the viewer and what does this have to do with the idea of aesthetic experience?

One primary answer would be that these pictures attract the viewer because they exist in the space between recognizing and not recognizing. This has to do with what Carole Talon-Hugon wrote in her book *L'art victime de l'esthetique*: seeing is always recognizing, or trying to recognize.[21] As explained above, Carole Talon-Hugon has used this argument against that idea of aesthetics which reduces art to what is purely visible, separate from any thought or knowledge. I agree very much with this critique, but I also think that the art made through AI can help us to think of aesthetics in a more comprehensive way.

In fact, in these pictures, the point is not only that they are half recognizable and half not, but also that they are produced by a machine, which – as explained before – is attempting to classify what is shown to it. In this attempt, humans recognize their own attempts to give order and form to things. They are invited to return to this attempt. What is most relevant in this context is that this attempt is not merely a visual nor a perceptive one; it has to do with the possibility of knowledge. This is a first point, therefore: aesthetics can be conceived as the possibility of new knowledge arising (of new aspects of reality that are emerging). Yet there is also another point, which has to do with the fact that

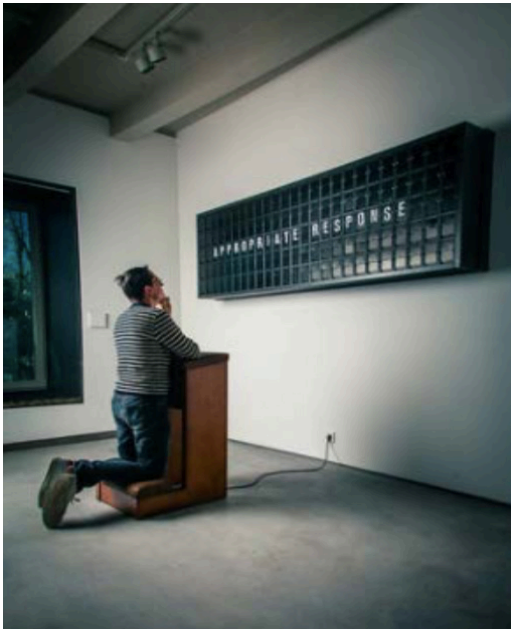
21 Talon-Hugon (2014).

in the attempt of the artificial intelligence, humans recognize their own attempt. This has to do with the relationship with the "other" that the machine is. As the title of the 2017 edition of "Ars Electronica" shows, AI is "The other I,"[22] or at least one of the possible others we can encounter. In light of AI art, therefore, aesthetics also marks the possibility of an emerging ethic.[23]

This otherness of the AI was expressed by Klingemann in an artwork that was no longer made through GANs, but used another type of artificial intelligence, called GPT2, which allows the machine to produce texts. In *Appropriate Response*, created in 2020, the artist placed a kneeler in front a flit flat display – one of the old displays with rotating letters or numbers that were once common in stations and airports – and he had visitors kneel on the kneeler.

22 Artificial Intelligence – The other I, Ars Electronica, Linz, 7-11 September 2017; see Stocker (2017).

23 For this idea of the aesthetic experience as a beginning of knowledge and of ethics see Desideri (2011).



M. Klingemann, *Appropriate Response*, 2020 (courtesy of Onkaos).

Every time the visitor was kneeling, the AI displayed a particular sentence, just for that person. The machine was trained on a set of aphorisms, and therefore it could create aphorisms of its own. The result was very funny because these sentences were of course not quite right. One of the most beautiful ones that came out was: "The best thing I can do is to get up of bed once a year". In this work there is an element of humour, therefore, but there is also the capacity for listening and respect in the presence of that "other" that the machine is.

3. AI Art and Colour

In *L'art victime de l'estétique* Carole Talon-Hugon writes, as noted above, that modern art underwent a process which led to the idea of painting as an attempt to restitute what is purely visible. Throughout this process, a great part was played by the increasing importance of colour. This aspect is particularly interesting in this context. In fact, if one considers GANs pictures – for example *Neural Studies*, from which this paper has started – one may notice that they share with some early Twentieth century paintings the fact that colour becomes somewhat independent from the outlines and drawing. Outlines are very blurred and the identities of the objects are not certain. Nevertheless, this type of colour in GANs pictures doesn't demonstrate a denial of the task of identifying things. On the contrary, it is precisely concerned with the machine's very attempt to classify objects.

It can be useful to consider more accurately the colours of these AI made pictures. For example, it is possible to choose a picture taken from the series "Solitary confinement", made by Klingemann in 2017.

M. Klingemann, *Solitary Confinement*, 2017 (courtesy of Onkaos).

Colours in this picture appear to be very liquid or fluid. This makes the image look like something between photography and painting (or watercolor). The reason for the colour spots that characterize GANs pictures in general – in this case the red spot of the woman's cloth – is that the machine is trying to condense information and to integrate the data that are missing. With respect to the visible nature of the viewer's experience, this corresponds to their impression that the world is progressively emerging and acquiring its comprehensible outlines. It would be possible to say that these colours have a critical

potential: they show a world in which things are not certain yet, but can be explored further. And in fact this is what the AI is doing. Without humanizing the machine, it can certainly be affirmed that what the AI is showing is a work in progress, in which (in the case of GANs) the generator is seeking the "right" picture, the one that could satisfy the discriminator. And in order to do this, as it was shown above, the discriminator must learn to classify shapes. In this case, then, colours are not separated from the sphere of meaning and knowledge – as the historical process described by Talon-Hugon would imply – but they *prepare* a knowledge of the object. Of course in the case of the AI this happens in the form of a classification: the machine has no concept or idea of the objects that it is classifying. However, in this classification process we recognize our own process of knowledge, our own attempts to distinguish outlines and identities.

On a deeper level, this has to do with the nature of colour itself. As different thinkers have remarked, starting from Goethe,[24] colour is not only a source of visible pleasure, but it concerns humans' active exploration of nature. According to Goethe, «it is nature as a whole which manifests itself [...] to the sense of sight» by the means of colours.[25] This idea has become particularly important in the most recent ecological approaches to the philosophy of colour.[26] Through colour, humans and animals orient

24 Goethe (1967).

25 Goethe (1967), XVIII.

26 See for ex. Thompson (1995); Chrimuuta (2005); Matthen (2005); Ross (2017).

themselves in the world in different ways. Therefore, the visible pleasure is always linked to the possibility of knowing more of the environment (possibility of knowledge) and of engaging in a good interaction with it (possibility of ethics).

This connection between the aesthetic experience and the possibility of a new (cognitive and ethical) relation to the world emerges with particular clarity in one of the most recent works by Mario Klingemann, *Still Life with Moss and Lichen.*

M. Klingemann, *Still Life with Moss and Lichen*, 2021 (courtesy of Onkaos).

This work was made for an exposition held in Munich from November 11th to 14th, 2021, entitled "Now you see me, now you don't", which focused on the species' extinction. In fact, "now you see me,

now you don't" is the sentence that illusionists say when they make things appear and disappear from their hat. Through this work Klingemann decided to remind viewers that not only animals but also plants are at risk of extinction. He used GANs to produce a series of images that represent a group of rocks with moss and lichens. The colours of these pictures are quite realistic: they seem, once again, in halfway between photographs and paintings. It is not by chance that Klingemann has called GANs images in general "neurographies": photographies made by a neural network.[27]

Of course the artificial intelligence does not take photos of the external world. As previously shown, it must elaborate on the data that are given to it. However, contemporary photography has already shown that photos are not mere copies of reality. They always transform and express reality in a certain way[28]. And they modify its colours as well: "realistic" colours are always the result of a transformation process, due to different factors.[29] In AI art images, nature is elaborated by the machine, and its colours, too. However, they are still there, and they are not so different from the colours humans are used to seeing every day. The big colour spots of *Still Life with Moss and Lichen* attract the viewer's attention, as if he is seeing them from far away. They draw him in that he might explore the material structure of the plants and rocks that form

27 See Klingemann (2020).
28 See on this Mazzocut-Mis and Scarpellini (2019).
29 See on this Faccincani (2022).

the subject of the picture. There is no end to this exploration, because, as noted above, the GAN didn't trace a clear outline of the objects. It is a first glance, which invites further encounter.

Conclusion

This paper began with the idea of aesthetics as a sphere of mere sensitivity, isolated from the domain of truth and moral values, which is expressed in Carole Talon-Hugon's book *L'art victime de l'estétique*. The hypothesis was that this idea of aesthetics may be too restrictive and that it might be necessary to think of aesthetics and aesthetic experience in a more comprehensive way. The underlying assumption was that aesthetic experience is always concerned with the possibility – within the visible itself – of a different knowledge of the world (cognitive sphere) and of a new relation to it (ethical sphere).

In order to investigate this idea, the paper analyzed a particular form of art that emerged recently, i.e. the art made through artificial intelligence. In particular, it focused on the pictures that are produced through an AI technique called GANs. With GANs, the machine reaches a higher degree of autonomy in producing new images, which are similar but also different from the data set. These pictures provide a strong aesthetic experience which has yet to be fully understood and analyzed.

In fact, the conclusion was that, through this

particular type of aesthetic experience, some aspects of the aesthetic experience in general become clearer. Moreover, this happens through the emergence of a new presence which humans now encounter, i.e. artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence has always been for humans a sort of uncanny mirror[30], in which they recognize their own attempts to deal with the world. The AI's attempt to classify the data humans give to it mirrors our own attempt to be "intelligent", to express ourselves and to understand the world around us.

This aspect is deeply intertwined with the aesthetic pleasure raised by AI pictures When faced with these pictures, with their uncertain outlines and missing details, humans recognize their own uncertainty in understanding and classifying things. This is an aspect that AI pictures hold in common with certain Twentieth century works. In these pictures, objects' identities are represented as still arising from chaos and uncertainty, with colour spots prevailing over outlines. However, through AI pictures, it becomes clear that this uncertainty is not an abdication to meaning and thought, but rather the possibility of a knowledge to be. Moreover, even if we recognize in the AI our own attempts to classify and comprehend, the AI remains nevertheless something "other" than ourselves. Therefore, the pleasure when faced with these pictures implies the expectation not only of a possible knowledge, but also of a new relationship with an "other".

30 Uncanny mirror is the title of a work by Mario Klingemann from 2018. See Klingemann (2020), pp. 97-101.

This is very relevant to the idea of aesthetic experience. In fact, aesthetic experience seems to be characterized by this exact feeling of an encounter with an "other", with which it is possible to establish a new relationship. A relationship which is at the same time, as noted above, the beginning of a new knowledge and the beginning of a new ethics. In 1929, the famous art historian and thinker Aby Warburg assigned exactly this preparatory function to aesthetics. He was traversing Italy in the moment in which fascism was becoming more and more powerful; the situation was very bad. Warburg wrote: "Wo die Ethik fort ist und noch keine Philosophie, da kann die Aesthetik Kaffee kochen" (when ethics is over and there isn't any philosophy yet, then aesthetics can prepare coffee). This is perhaps still true today: philosophy and ethics still need aesthetics to make coffee in order to "get up of bed at least once a year", as Klingemann's AI said.

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