ARTIFICIAL AESTHETICS: RETHINKING AUTHORSHIP, AESTHETICS, AND AFFECT IN AI-GENERATED CINEMA

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how artificial intelligence is changing the work of filmmakers and the way we understand authorship in today's cinema. It looks closely at three short films made entirely with AI tools: The Frost (Waymark, 2024), Thank You for Not Answering (Paul Trillo, 2023), and Poof (Pizza Later, 2024). Rather than treating creativity as the expression of a single author, these films show it as something that takes shape between human decisions, machine outputs, and the viewer's interpretation. Using ideas from Barthes, Foucault, Manovich, Zylinska, and Arielli, the article argues that the filmmaker's role shifts from controlling images to working with what the system generates and making sense of it.
Visually, these films reveal a kind of aesthetic that comes from the technology itself; glitches, unstable textures, and partial forms that reflect the way AI "sees" and constructs the image. The emotional impact also works differently: instead of being predetermined by the filmmaker, it emerges through the viewer's response to the uncertainty and strangeness of the images. Ethically, the films raise questions about responsibility and transparency, reminding us that any creative work involving AI depends on the data, tools, and systems that make it possible.
Taken together, these films suggest that AI does not necessarily push human creativity aside. Instead, it expands the space where meaning can be produced, creating a kind of shared authorship in which humans and machines both play a part. The article uses the term "relational authorship" to describe this shift and argues that it offers a useful way to understand how aesthetics, emotion, and ethics come together in AI-generated cinema.

KEYWORDS

AI cinema, authorship, artificial aesthetics, relational ethics, nonhuman vision, affect, posthuman creativity

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence is transforming our perspective on art, creativity, and the filmmaker's role. Cinema, perhaps more than any other art form, now finds itself confronted with an old question posed under radically new conditions: who—or what—creates? The long-standing notion of authorship, once closely tied to individual expression and artistic control, is being challenged by the logic of algorithmic systems and machine learning. At the same time, the very nature of aesthetics and affect, how images move us and how visual meaning is formed, is undergoing a profound transformation.

As AI-generated cinema develops, it intensifies a set of concerns that touch on the foundations of artistic practice. Many filmmakers express a subtle but persistent worry that cinema, traditionally regarded as a deeply human art form, may be slipping away from its human makers. When algorithms can generate scenes, construct visual environments, or produce atmospheric cues, the boundaries between human creativity and machine production become increasingly difficult to define. These anxieties are not merely technical; they reach into the realm of imagination itself. If machines can simulate ways of seeing, remembering, or feeling, what remains uniquely human? This tension, around who or what can create, represent, and shape meaning, lies at the heart of contemporary debates on representation and representability.

Throughout the twentieth century, the concept of the auteur shaped both the making and interpretation of cinema. From François Truffaut's *politique des auteurs*[1] in the 1950s to Andrew Sarris's 1962 formulation of auteur theory, cinema was celebrated as the medium of individual artistic vision. Yet this modernist ideal did not go unchallenged. Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author" (1967) questioned the idea of a single origin of meaning, suggesting instead that the viewer plays an essential role in interpretation. Two years later, Michel Foucault's "What Is an Author?" reframed authorship as a social and discursive function, one that organizes cultural production and distributes responsibility. Together, these

perspectives reveal authorship to be relational rather than absolute, shared, negotiated, and context-dependent.

Half a century later, artificial intelligence reactivates these debates under dramatically altered circumstances. Generative systems such as Runway's Gen-2, Stable Diffusion, and Midjourney extend filmmaking beyond traditional tools, enabling images to be produced through prompts rather than cameras or physical sets. Text-to-video technologies transform the filmmaker into a designer of instructions, a curator of algorithmic outputs, and an interpreter of computational unpredictability. As Lev Manovich argues, the author in digital culture is no longer a creator of fixed forms but a "programmer of cultural experiences." In this sense, creation becomes less a matter of direct control and more an act of orchestration, a process of setting conditions under which meaning can emerge through human–machine collaboration.

This article examines these shifts through an analysis of three AI-generated short films that exemplify different forms of this collaborative dynamic: *The Frost* (Waymark, 2024), *Thank You for Not Answering* (Paul Trillo, 2023), and *Poof* (Pizza Later, 2024). Together, these works show how creativity in AI cinema operates across three interconnected dimensions:

1. **Authorship**, reconceived as a distributed and relational process that blurs the boundaries between human intention and algorithmic agency;

2. **Aesthetics**, shaped by the unstable, imperfect, and often fragmentary vision characteristic of generative systems, what this study terms artificial aesthetics[2];

3. **Affect**, understood as an experience co-constructed by viewers as they engage with the ambiguity and uncertainty of algorithmic images.

Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Barthes, Foucault, Manovich, Zylinska, and Arielli, this study argues that AI cinema requires a new conceptual vocabulary, one that understands creativity as collective, procedural, and ethically attentive. By

analyzing these three films in depth, the article proposes *relational authorship* as a framework for understanding cinematic creation in the algorithmic age: an approach that treats cinema as a shared imaginative space in which code, consciousness, and emotion converge to produce meaning.

Theoretical Framework: Authorship, Aesthetics, and Affect in the Algorithmic Age

Understanding how artificial intelligence reshapes cinematic authorship requires examining the parallel transformations occurring in aesthetics and affect. These three dimensions, authorship, aesthetic form, and emotional resonance, frame the approach of this article and guide the analysis of *The Frost*, *Thank You for Not Answering*, and *Poof*. Together, the films demonstrate that creativity and perception in AI cinema no longer belong exclusively to human agents; instead, they emerge through interactions among human intentions, algorithmic systems, and the interpretive work of viewers. Drawing on the ideas of Barthes, Foucault, Manovich, Zylinska, and Arielli, this section outlines a theoretical foundation for understanding how artistic creation, visual experience, and emotional meaning are reorganized in an era of machine-generated imagery, an era that invites renewed questions about representation and the limits of representability.

Authorship: From Singular Vision to Distributed Process

In classical film theory, authorship was closely linked to individuality and artistic coherence. The auteur functioned as the unifying force behind narrative, style, and tone, the singular mind whose vision shaped the film. Roland Barthes questioned this model in *The Death of the Author* (1967), arguing that meaning does not originate from a single source but is produced through the interplay of cultural voices and textual traces. His claim that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author"[2]

reframed creation not as the expression of an isolated subject but as a relational process shaped by interpretation.

Michel Foucault extended this critique two years later in *What Is an Author?* (1969), describing authorship as a discursive function that organizes meaning rather than as a personal trait. For Foucault, the author is not the sovereign origin of discourse but a category that regulates its circulation, assigns responsibility, and structures how texts are understood. When considered in the context of AI-generated cinema, the author-function shifts further away from the individual. The filmmaker does not command the image in the traditional sense; instead, they configure conditions under which images may be generated, selected, and shaped.

Lev Manovich captures this shift in digital culture by describing the contemporary creator as a "programmer of cultural experiences."[3] Instead of determining every aspect of the finished form, the filmmaker designs parameters and rules through which images emerge. Creative agency remains present but becomes procedural and distributed, less about dominance and more about responsiveness. Across *The Frost*, *Thank You for Not Answering*, and *Poof*, authorship appears as a negotiation between human decision-making, algorithmic inference, and viewer participation. It becomes a mode of orchestration, a coordinated interaction between code and human intentionality.

Aesthetics: From Representation to System — The Logic of Artificial Aesthetics

If authorship increasingly resembles a process, aesthetics in AI cinema increasingly resembles a system. The term *artificial aesthetics* refers to forms of beauty generated not through human perception or craft but through computational processes. These visual qualities, shifting textures, unstable bodies, and spectral compositions result from how algorithms interpret prompts and assemble images. Lev Manovich's concept of *database aesthetics* offers a useful framework for understanding this logic: digital art

constructs meaning through modularity[4], repetition, and variation rather than through linear storytelling. The viewer's experience becomes a matter of recognizing emerging patterns and navigating the interplay between order and unpredictability.

This logic is visible across all three films. *The Frost*, *Thank You for Not Answering*, and *Poof* inhabit a visual space that oscillates between the photographic and the painterly, the recognizable and the abstract. Faces dissolve, objects stretch or merge, and environments shift unexpectedly, reminders that the machine's way of constructing visual reality differs fundamentally from human vision. Joanna Zylinska refers to this as *nonhuman vision*[5], urging us "to see with the machine rather than against it."[6] In this perspective, perception itself becomes a collaborative act: the algorithm produces possibilities, and the viewer interprets them.

Emanuele Arielli's concept of *aesthetic agency* deepens this understanding by emphasizing the viewer's role in assigning meaning to algorithmic unpredictability. What initially appears as an error or distortion becomes part of the aesthetic field, evidence of a dialogue between computational systems and human sensibility. Artificial aesthetics thus transforms the filmic image from a stable representation into a process of emergence. Each film becomes less a completed object and more an ongoing negotiation between human vision and machine-generated form, raising further questions about what can be represented and what becomes unrepresentable in algorithmic image-making.

Affect: Emotional Resonance as Co-Creation

Affect forms the emotional dimension of this distributed creative network. In classical cinema, emotional expression typically flowed from the filmmaker's intention to the spectator's response. AI-generated cinema disrupts this one-directional model. Here, emotion arises through the relationship between the viewer's interpretive work and the machine's imperfect attempts at visualizing the world.

Joanna Zylinska's reflections on *nonhuman intimacy* help clarify this shift. The emotional force of AI imagery does not depend on the machine's ability to feel; rather, it depends on our capacity to respond to its fragmented, unstable vision. We do not simply observe the machine's output; we engage with it, turning its ambiguities into feeling. Arielli reinforces this view by proposing that affect becomes a human response to computational uncertainty, a form of co-creation that results from interpreting what the system struggles to articulate.

Each of the three films illustrates this dynamic in different ways. *The Frost* constructs emotion through fading faces and dissolving landscapes, evoking fragility and memory. *Thank You for Not Answering* uses silence and blurred interiors to evoke longing and disconnection. *Poof* plays with comedic and melancholic tones as bodies appear and disappear within unstable worlds. Across these examples, affect is not delivered to the viewer; it is built through interaction. Emotion, like authorship and aesthetics, becomes a shared event shaped by human involvement with algorithmic vision.

Toward a Unified Model of Posthuman Authorship

Authorship, aesthetics, and affect function not as separate domains but as components of a single creative system. Authorship organizes relationships, aesthetics gives them visible form, and affect completes the process through perception. This framework reveals creativity in AI cinema to be both distributed and coherent, fundamentally relational rather than controlled.

The Frost, *Thank You for Not Answering*, and *Poof* embody this posthuman mode of creation by translating conceptual questions into sensory experience. They show that meaning in AI cinema emerges not from singular intention but from interaction among human, machinic, and spectatorial agencies. Beauty becomes evidence of collaboration, and emotion becomes the marker of shared engagement. What results is a paradigm of authorship

defined by transparency, responsiveness, and distributed agency, a model suited to an age in which representation is increasingly shaped by systems that both extend and unsettle human creative capacities.

Comparative Case Study: Authorship, Aesthetics, and Affect Across Three AI Short Films

The rapid emergence of AI-generated cinema between 2023 and 2024 has opened new pathways for artistic creation while raising fundamental questions about authorship, visual representation, and affective experience. Among the early works that shaped this field, *The Frost* (Waymark, 2024), *Thank You for Not Answering* (Paul Trillo, 2023), and *Poof* (Pizza Later, 2024) offer three distinct yet complementary examples of what it means to make films with and through artificial intelligence. Each film translates the collaboration between human intention and machine agency into a different audiovisual form: poetic, melancholic, and ironic, allowing us to observe how authorship in AI cinema shifts from individual vision to a distributed and relational practice. Examining them together also reveals how representation and representability are reshaped when images are generated not by cameras or bodies but by computational systems.

***The Frost*: Distributed Authorship and Poetic Perception**

The Frost, directed by Josh Rubin and produced entirely through Runway's Gen-2 text-to-video model,[7] is often described as one of the earliest attempts at constructing a narrative film without any traditional cinematic apparatus. The film follows humains wandering through a frozen, dreamlike landscape composed of white light, reflective surfaces, and silhouettes that continuously dissolve and reform. This unstable visual world, neither fully representational nor abstract, foregrounds the extent to which AI-generated imagery operates according to a different logic of perception than human vision.

From the perspective of authorship, the film exemplifies a mode of creation defined by orchestration rather than full control. Rubin's work consists primarily of designing prompts, selecting outputs, and arranging the material produced by the algorithm. Rather than functioning as the sole creator, he collaborates with the system in an iterative process where meaning is shaped jointly by human intention and algorithmic inference. This distributed mode of authorship challenges traditional notions of the director and highlights the degree to which representation in AI cinema depends on the interplay between human curation and machinic generation.

Aesthetically, *The Frost* is marked by instability: faces fade, textures tremble, and bodies fail to resolve into coherent forms. These qualities reveal the limits of representability within algorithmic image production. The machine attempts to construct a human figure or environment, yet its outputs remain partial and fragile. This incompleteness becomes part of the aesthetic experience, drawing attention to the gap between what the system can represent and what it struggles to articulate.

Affect emerges through the viewer's engagement with this incompleteness. Because the film provides traces rather than fully formed representations, viewers must actively interpret the atmosphere and emotional tone of each scene. In this way, the film turns ambiguity into a site of co-creation, where meaning and feeling arise not from the system alone but from the viewer's attempt to make sense of what the machine can, and cannot, show.

***Thank You for Not Answering*: Fragmentation and the Machinery of Empathy**

Paul Trillo's *Thank You for Not Answering* offers a different exploration of AI-generated cinema, one grounded in fragmentation and introspection. The film depicts a series of unanswered phone calls accompanied by a synthetic voice-over reflecting on distance, memory, and connection. The visuals, produced through Runway's Gen-2 model[8], consist of dim interiors, blurred figures, and shifting

environments that resemble fragments of recollected moments rather than coherent scenes.

Authorship in this film appears as negotiation rather than dominance. The system misrenders bodies, merges spaces, and interrupts continuity, and Trillo incorporates these disruptions into the film's tone and meaning. Instead of correcting the algorithm's inconsistencies, he uses them as expressive elements that reflect the difficulty of communication in technologically mediated environments. The director's task becomes one of interpreting machine-generated errors and integrating them into a coherent structure.

Aesthetically, the film departs from narrative cohesion and relies on intermittent, disrupted visual signals. These interruptions highlight the limits of representability in AI-generated images: the machine attempts to reconstruct human interiors and gestures but repeatedly produces partial or ambiguous forms. The resulting inconsistencies underscore the instability of identity and memory in a world increasingly shaped by digital traces.

Affect in this film emerges from a paradoxical dynamic. Although the imagery is artificial and the voice-over synthetic, the viewer is drawn into a form of empathy that arises from the system's very inability to represent fully human experiences. Viewers sense the gap between what the machine renders and what it fails to express, a gap that becomes the emotional core of the film. *Thank You for Not Answering* thus suggests that empathy in AI cinema is not generated through realism but through the viewer's encounter with the system's limitations.

Poof: Irony, Simulation, and the Aesthetics of Play

Poof takes a markedly different approach from *The Frost* and *Thank You for Not Answering*, embracing a playful and exaggerated visual style that openly foregrounds its artificial construction. Generated through Midjourney, Runway's Gen-3 model,[9] and arranged into a sequence of short, surreal vignettes, the film

presents puppet-like digital characters moving through bright, stylized environments that resemble motion-graphics animation more than traditional cinematography. From the outset, *Poof* makes no attempt at realism; its synthetic aesthetic is central to how the film positions itself.

In terms of authorship, *Poof* adopts a self-aware mode of collaboration between filmmaker and system. Instead of hiding the algorithm's tendencies, its abrupt jumps, exaggerated motions, and impossible transformations, the film incorporates them into its expressive vocabulary. The filmmaker's creative agency lies in selecting and organizing these generative outputs, turning the system's unpredictability into a source of visual humor and commentary.

Aesthetically, the film operates within a logic of simulation rather than representation. It draws on recognizable cinematic tropes, cartoon physics, action-style beats, playful disappearances, but exaggerates them to the point where their link to embodied experience becomes intentionally thin. By highlighting Midjourney's tendency to imitate stylistic patterns without grounding them in physical realism, *Poof* invites reflection on the limits of representability in AI-generated images.

Emotionally, the film produces a mixture of amusement and reflective distance. Its humor invites the viewer to enjoy the spectacle, while its overt artificiality encourages a more analytical engagement with how AI assembles and mutates visual material. Instead of eliciting empathy for characters, *Poof* prompts viewers to observe the mechanics of generative image-making. In this way, the film uses spectacle and irony to turn technological artifice into a site of insight, showing that AI cinema can be engaging not by imitating human experience, but by revealing the processes through which its images come into being.

Comparative Synthesis: Three Modes of Posthuman Authorship

Taken together, the three films present complementary models of authorship and affect within AI cinema. Across these modes, a shared pattern becomes evident: authorship shifts from control to collaboration, aesthetics becomes a negotiation between representation and its limits, and affect is shaped by the viewer's attempt to interpret machine-generated ambiguity. These films suggest that AI cinema does not eliminate the human author but redefines authorship as a relational, distributed process in which imagination, computation, and spectatorship contribute together to the production of meaning.

From Artificial Aesthetics to Relational Ethics

The expanding body of AI-generated cinema, exemplified by *The Frost*, *Thank You for Not Answering*, and *Poof*, reflects more than a technological development; it signals a deeper reconfiguration of how creation, perception, and emotional meaning are produced and interpreted. These films do not simply demonstrate the operational capacity of generative systems; they invite a reconsideration of what it means to create and to perceive at a moment when images are increasingly generated without cameras or embodied human vision. In this sense, AI cinema directly challenges established assumptions about representation and the limits of representability, revealing how algorithmic processes both extend and constrain what can be shown, imagined, or felt.

Across all three films, authorship shifts from a singular gesture to a relational configuration. The filmmaker initiates the process, but the machine interprets; the viewer observes, but also completes. What emerges, therefore, is not a film authored exclusively by a person or a system, but a work that takes shape in the interaction between them. This is where artificial aesthetics becomes most visible: within the mediated space where human intention and algorithmic inference intersect. The aesthetic,

emotional, and ethical dimensions of these films stem precisely from this shared field of mediation.

Authorship as Mediation

Across all three films, authorship no longer appears as an act of full control but as a process shaped by negotiation between what the filmmaker intends and what the system produces. In *The Frost*, Josh Rubin works less like a traditional director and more like an editor responding to the flow of algorithmic output. His authorship is expressed through choosing, arranging, and interpreting the material generated by the model, highlighting how creation becomes a shared process distributed across human decisions and machine inference.

In *Thank You for Not Answering*, Paul Trillo confronts the fragility of communication when expression passes through an automated system. The synthetic voice, the blurred interiors, and the unstable visuals make visible the gaps that emerge when human experience is filtered through machine interpretation. Trillo's authorship resides in accepting these fractures and allowing them to shape the emotional rhythm of the film, rather than smoothing them out.

In *Poof*, authorship becomes openly self-aware. Using Midjourney and other generative tools, Pizza Later embraces the constructed nature of the imagery, letting the seams of the process remain visible. Instead of hiding the artificiality of the generative pipeline, he turns it into part of the film's identity. Here, authorship is a playful exchange between human intention and algorithmic improvisation, an approach that foregrounds mediation as the core of the creative act.

Taken together, these films demonstrate a shift toward relational authorship: a model in which meaning emerges not from a single creative source but from the dynamic interaction between human vision, computational processes, and the viewer's interpretive engagement.

Artificial Aesthetics and the Informed Viewer

Despite their differences, the three films share an aesthetic grounded in an explicit awareness of mediation. Their unstable faces, dissolving bodies, flickering textures, and shifting environments are not merely technical byproducts. They reveal how generative systems construct images based on statistical inference rather than embodied experience. In this sense, artificial aesthetics draws attention to the new ways in which images are formed and to the layers of representation encoded within machine vision.

This aesthetic depends on an informed viewer. Contemporary audiences increasingly recognize the mechanisms behind generative imagery, prompting, datasets, and model training, and this awareness becomes part of the interpretive process. Viewers do not merely consume images; they read the traces of computation within them, recognizing both the capacities and the limits of what the system can represent.

In *The Frost*, hesitation in the generated footage produces a lyrical form of ambiguity. In *Thank You for Not Answering*, fragmented editing mirrors the fractured nature of digital communication. In *Poof*, exaggeration and distortion expose the representational conventions the system imitates but does not fully control. Collectively, these films suggest that artificial aesthetics is less about visual novelty and more about the viewer's recognition of representation as a mediated, algorithmic event.

Feeling With and Through the Machine

Affect in AI cinema emerges from the interaction between human empathy and machinic limitation. Emotional resonance no longer flows unidirectionally from filmmaker to spectator. Instead, it circulates across a network of human and nonhuman actors.

In *The Frost*, the instability of faces and landscapes produces a sense of vulnerability that invites viewers to interpret what the system cannot fully resolve. In *Thank You for Not Answering*, emotional meaning is shaped by gaps in representation by the

silences, distortions, and partial images that reflect the fragmentation of mediated communication. In *Poof*, the humor and strangeness of algorithmic exaggeration generate a form of reflective distance, prompting audiences to engage emotionally not with the illusion of realism but with the visible artificiality of the generated scenes.

Affect thus becomes a shared construction: the viewer contributes meaning precisely where the system reveals its limits. The emotional dimension of AI cinema arises through the recognition of representational incompleteness, transforming the machine's constraints into sites of feeling.

Ethics of Awareness

The act of viewing AI-generated images carries ethical implications that extend beyond aesthetic response. These films draw attention to the infrastructures and datasets that underpin their creation, reminding us that every generated image is supported by layers of computational labor, training data, and algorithmic processing. Following Zylinska's concept of minimal ethics[10], responsibility in this context is not defined by mastery but by attentiveness: to processes, to limitations, and to the conditions under which representation becomes possible.

In *The Frost*, ethical transparency emerges through the film's refusal to disguise the algorithmic foundations of its imagery. In *Thank You for Not Answering*, emotional engagement comes through acknowledging the failures of communication embedded within automated systems. In *Poof*, ethical awareness is expressed through humor and exposure, inviting viewers to consider the constructed nature of the images they encounter.

Across the three films, ethical seeing involves recognizing mediation itself, understanding that the human and the algorithm contribute jointly to the final image. To perceive clearly is to acknowledge these relations; to create responsibly is to make them visible.

Relational Creativity and the Future of AI Cinema

Taken together, these films point toward a redefinition of creativity in the algorithmic age. Authorship becomes shared, aesthetics becomes procedural, and affect becomes participatory. This model of creativity rejects both the ideal of the solitary genius and the fantasy of fully autonomous machine production. Instead, it frames art as an ecology of participation, in which human imagination, algorithmic processes, and viewer interpretation collectively shape meaning.

AI cinema does not signal the end of artistic imagination; rather, it expands its field of operation. It challenges us to reconsider how we understand representation, how we navigate the limits of representability, and how we take responsibility for the technological systems through which creative work is now produced. In this expanded framework, the viewer becomes the final co-author—not by accepting the illusion of realism, but by recognizing and interpreting its construction. Artificial aesthetics thus reveals a new form of beauty grounded not in mastery, but in relation.

Conclusion: Artificial Aesthetics and Relational Authorship

The rapid emergence of AI-generated cinema reopens a familiar question under new technological and conceptual conditions: what happens when artistic creation is no longer produced solely through human perception, memory, and imagination? The development of text-to-video systems has introduced both possibilities and anxieties, particularly the concern that cinema, historically grounded in embodied vision, may be gradually shifting away from human authorship. As algorithms generate visual worlds based on statistical inference rather than lived experience, the boundary between human creativity and machine production becomes increasingly difficult to define. These concerns extend beyond technical innovation; they directly engage contemporary debates on representation and the limits of

representability. If machines can construct images, gestures, or atmospheres, to what extent can they represent human experience, and where do their representational limits become visible?

The comparative analysis of *The Frost*, *Thank You for Not Answering*, and *Poof* demonstrates that AI cinema does not displace human authorship but reconfigures it. Creation unfolds not from a singular origin but within a relational network that includes human intention, algorithmic procedures, and viewer interpretation. In this sense, authorship becomes distributed: a form of shared agency shaped by negotiation rather than mastery, and by attentiveness rather than unilateral control. As Manovich suggests, digital authorship increasingly operates through procedural design rather than fixed authorial expression, a dynamic clearly illustrated in these films.

Across the three works, artificial aesthetics foregrounds mediation rather than concealing it. The images openly reveal their algorithmic origins through unstable faces, flickering textures, and shifting environments. These examples show that aesthetic value in AI cinema arises not from the illusion of seamless representation but from the viewer's recognition of how the image is produced. Representability therefore becomes a central question: the films make visible both what the system can reliably generate and where its capacity to represent human experience breaks down.

This aesthetic transformation carries ethical implications. Drawing on Zylinska's notion of minimal ethics, responsibility in posthuman artistic practice arises through attentiveness to the infrastructures, datasets, and processes that enable image generation. Ethical authorship, in this context, involves acknowledging the system's contributions and its limitations, while the informed viewer participates by reading the traces of computation embedded in the image. Care becomes a methodological stance: to create and to perceive with awareness of the relations that sustain the work.

Together, the three films outline a continuum of posthuman creativity. Each film demonstrates that meaning in AI cinema arises from interaction rather than from intention alone. What becomes visible through these works is not the disappearance of human authorship but its evolution into a relational model that incorporates algorithmic processes as active partners in creation.

Looking ahead, the future of cinematographic authorship will rely on the capacity to engage critically with these hybrid forms to understand how images are generated, what they can represent, and where their representational limits appear. Artificial aesthetics, in this sense, is not merely a stylistic category but an ethical and conceptual framework for understanding creative practice in the algorithmic age. It reminds us that every act of creation, whether human or computational, is grounded in relation: a dynamic interplay between imagination, technology, and the shared spaces in which meaning is made.

ENDNOTES

1. *François Truffaut introduced the notion of "politique des auteurs" in the pages of* Cahiers du Cinéma *in the 1950s; Andrew Sarris later adapted and formalized this idea for American film criticism in his seminal essay "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962," published in* Film Culture.
2. Artificial aesthetics refers to the distinctive visual qualities produced by generative AI systems. Unlike traditional aesthetics shaped by human perception and intentional artistic practice, artificial aesthetics emerges from algorithmic processes, dataset structures, and machine vision. Its characteristic features—glitches, unstable textures, fluid morphing, and ambiguous forms—reflect how AI systems interpret and construct images, revealing a mode of visual production that is neither fully human nor entirely machine.
3. Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001)
4. *In digital aesthetics, "modularity" refers to the organization of images or media into discrete, reusable units, such as fragments, layers, or components, that can be rearranged, combined, or transformed by algorithmic systems. This structure enables generative models to assemble visuals through the recombination of modular parts rather than through a continuous, human-directed process.*

5. *"Nonhuman vision" refers to modes of seeing produced by computational systems rather than by biological perception. The term, used by Joanna Zylinska, highlights the fact that AI-generated images are shaped by datasets, algorithms, and machinic processing rather than by human sensory experience. It invites viewers to understand AI imagery as a distinct form of visuality with its own logic, constraints, and aesthetic signatures.*
6. Joanna Zylinska, *AI Art: Machine Visions and Warped Dreams* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2020)
7. According to Waymark, *The Frost* was generated entirely using Runway's Gen-2 text-to-video model, which allowed the team to produce 18-second sequences at 24fps and construct the film without traditional cameras or sets.
8. According to industry coverage, *Thank You for Not Answering* was created entirely using Runway's Gen-2 generative video model, which Trillo employed to produce the film's fragmented visual sequences.
9. As reported by *Shots Magazine*, *Poof* was created using a combination of generative tools, including Midjourney, Luma Labs' Dream Machine, and Runway Gen-3, which collectively shaped the film's distinct synthetic aesthetic.
10. Joanna Zylinska develops the concept of *"minimal ethics"* in her book *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene* (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2014). In this work, she argues that ethical responsibility in the posthuman era should not be grounded in control or mastery, but in attentiveness, responsiveness, and care toward the networks of human and nonhuman relations that sustain life and creation.

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