

From Engagement to Integration: Examining Participatory and Systemic Approaches in Contemporary Art Practices

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Abstract

This essay delves into the evolving landscape of contemporary art, focusing on two distinct yet influential paradigms: social participation and systemic artistic practice. Participatory art, characterized by its emphasis on viewer interaction and communal experience, transforms the audience from passive observers to active participants. It fosters a platform for diverse interpretations and engagement, often addressing socio-political issues through immersive environments. Systemic art, conversely, presents a radical reimagining of the practice of engaging with complex, self-evolving networks that intersect technological, ecological, and social systems, challenging anthropocentric framings and acknowledging the agency of non-human actors. This essay explores the characteristics, philosophical underpinnings, and broader implications of these two paradigms. By doing so, it offers a critical understanding of how these emerging artistic practices reflect and reshape societal, cultural, and technological narratives.

Keywords

Participation, Social Engagement, System theory, Systems Aesthetics, Complex System, Contemporary Art

Introduction

The essay focuses on two prominent paradigms in contemporary art - participatory and systemic artistic practices. While distinct in their approaches, these paradigms collectively challenge traditional notions of artistic autonomy, authorship, and spectatorship. Participatory art, exemplified by Tania Bruguera and Thomas Hirschhorn, dissolves boundaries between artist, artwork, and audience. By actively involving viewers as co-creators, these practices position art as a platform for social and political discourse, drawing on Rancière's "dissensus" and Mouffe's agonistic pluralism. In contrast, systemic artistic practice, seen in the works of Hans Haacke, Pierre Huyghe, and Ian Cheng, expands the artwork beyond the physical object, engaging with complex, self-evolving networks that intersect technological, ecological, and social systems. Rooted in cybernetics, systems theory, and the "non-human turn," these practices challenge anthropocentric framing. This essay explores these paradigms, examining their characteristics, philosophies, and implications for the future of contemporary art. By doing so, it offers a critical under-

standing of how art reflects and shapes societal, cultural, and technological narratives.

Background

Participation in Contemporary Art

Socially engaged art or participatory art, emerging prominently in the late 20th century, as a growing form of practice that connects art and society, redefines the viewer's role from a passive observer to an active participant. The roots of social participation can be traced back to the 1950s-70s, when the Situationist International, led by Debord, critiqued the alienating effects of capitalism and the "society of the spectacle." [1] Their theories and practices emphasized direct engagement with reality and social collaboration to counteract the fragmentation induced by the market's saturation of our visual and social realms. This critical discourse, also drew from Lefebvre's theories, especially with the conversation to critical conceptions of everyday life and urban space [2, 3]. While the Situationists laid the theoretical foundations for a critique of the spectacle and the commodification of everyday life, contemporary participatory art practices have evolved and diversified, reflecting a broader range of social, political, and cultural concerns. The "social turn" [4] in art, has given rise to new forms of artistic expression that prioritize community engagement, collaboration, and collective action. This shift disrupts traditional artist-audience-object relations and calls for new analytical perspectives to understand the evolving landscape of artistic production and exhibition.

The participation in contemporary art has accumulated considerable attention and discussions under theories like the "Relational Aesthetics" [5] or Rancière's "Dissensus" [6]. Specifically, the conception of "dissensus" and analysis of "disagreements" in his work on aesthetics and politics [7] brought the discussion to the community, the investigation of the idea of "participatory art" by Bishop still gives a way to think about the relationship between artistic practice and social concerns, and the analysis about "autonomy" of art itself also worth to consideration through the research [8]. Besides, in contrast to Habermas's theory of communicative action grounds deliberative democracy in linguistic intersubjectivity, Mouffe's agonistic pluralism recognizes the inevitability of conflict within the political realm [9, 10]. This debate between Habermas and Mouffe is critically relevant to under-

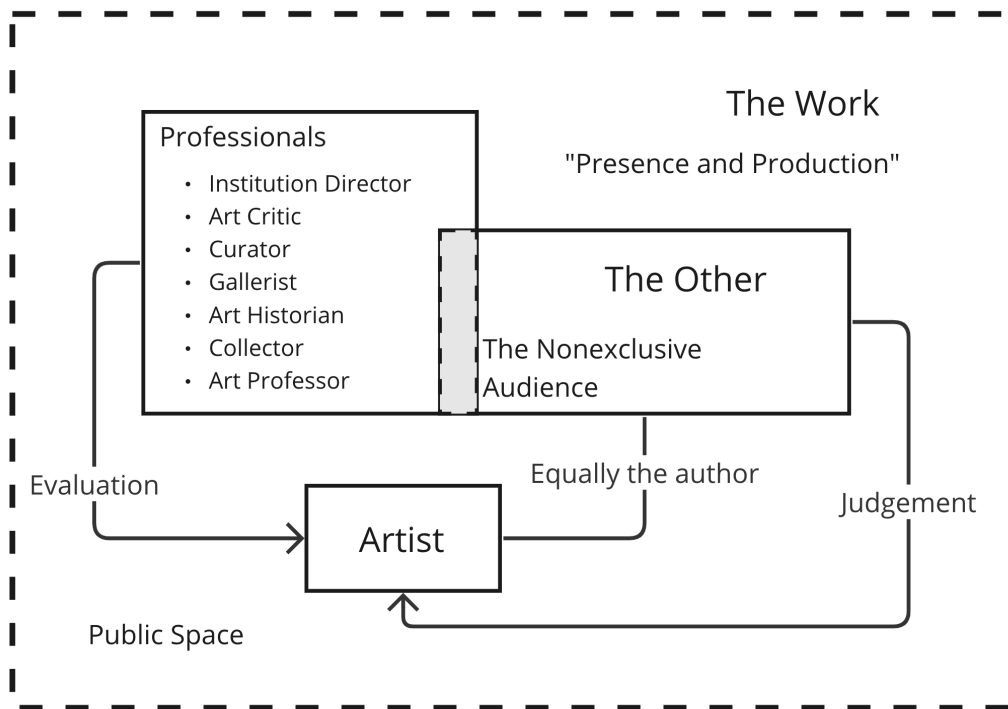


Figure 1: The relationship among artwork, viewer, and artist. ©Xinyu Ma and Thomas Hirschhorn.

standing the relationship between art and democracy [11]. It is crucial to consider Rancière’s theory of aesthetics as “dis-sensus” posits against the sociological inhibition which seeks to contain art within prescribed moral exemplarity and use values [8]. This resonates with Mouffe’s concept of antagonism, where conflict and dissent are embraced as productive forces within the social and political spheres.

Furthermore, Hirschhorn’s diagram depicts an intersection between the “Spectrum of Evaluation” (art experts) and “the other” (general public), forming the “non-exclusive audience.” [12] Based on the artist’s concepts we draw this map to show this overlap represents a space where artistic engagement transcends exclusivity, making art accessible to all without prejudice. Participatory art embraces this ethos by actively involving viewers as co-creators, blurring the artist-audience divide. By inviting “the other” to engage, participatory practices foster direct, unmediated judgments based on personal experiences rather than academic critiques (Fig. 1). Participation emerges as a critical force, promoting inclusivity, democratizing artistic discourse, and challenging dominant narratives.

System in Contemporary Art

On the other hand, participatory practices often generate new modalities with the emergence of new media and technologies. Media studies examine the relationships between media, interactivity, power, and identity, while the philosophy of technology explores how technology influences the relationships between humans and the world – topics closely re-

lated to the core themes of participatory art. In the early 20th century, a systems theory perspective began to emerge. Systems theory originated from the organismic system viewpoint of 19th century biologists, but it was not systematized and applied to different fields until the 1920s. Defined by Bertalanffy, a system is a “complex of components in interaction,” [13] consisting of varying levels of organized matter, energy, and information flowing in a dynamic interplay. Cybernetics can be traced back to Norbert Wiener’s 1948 work “Cybernetics,” [14] which systematically elucidated the roles of feedback, control, and communication in systems, laying the foundation for cybernetics. These two fields gained widespread attention and development in the mid-20th century. Systems thinking gradually expanded from biology and engineering to various disciplines, including the social sciences. Social theory provided a theoretical basis for understanding the social dimensions of participatory art. Participatory practices often aim to intervene in social relations and challenge established power structures. Social theorists such as Jürgen Habermas, Niklas Luhmann, and Bruno Latour, etc, and the debates arising from their social systems theories, became relevant. During this period, pioneers like Jack Burnham introduced systems concepts into the art realm, offering a new perspective on “systems esthetics” [15]. Exemplified by artists like Hans Haacke, Pierre Huyghe, and Ian Cheng, this paradigm blends elements of technology, ecology, and biology, creating artworks that are dynamic and responsive to their environment. The autonomy of systemic art, especially in AI-driven works, marks a departure from traditional

art forms, offering a vision of art as an ever-evolving entity. This paradigm challenges conventional notions of artistic creation and perception, pushing the boundaries of what art can be and do.

However, a critical difference lies in developing the system perspective theory and practice with the socially engaged practice or participation. The social systems perspective within system theory has been significantly influenced by the “nonhuman turn,” a philosophical shift that decisively de-centers the human as the privileged locus of politics, aesthetics, and reason [16, 17]. Theorists like Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory [18], Object-Oriented Ontology [19], and speculative realism have developed novel philosophical methods for objects and technological systems irreducible to human correlations. This decentering of the human subject has profound implications for understanding the complex socio-technical systems and material entanglements that shape contemporary art practices.

These perspectives challenge the notion of art as autonomous or purely human expressions, positioning artworks as nodes within larger socio-technical assemblages influencing and influenced by various factors. This opens avenues for exploring art’s relationships with technology and the environment, functioning as interventions within complex systems. However, it also raises ethical questions about control, surveillance, and power distributions, sparking debates on art’s ability to critique systemic issues effectively.

While participatory and systemic art paradigms differ in their approach and execution, they converge in their departure from traditional art forms and their emphasis on the viewer’s position. The background of the social turn in contemporary, challenges artist-audience boundaries through co-creation and amplifying marginalized voices. Simultaneously, the systems perspective from cybernetics and fields like biology introduced a radically different understanding of artworks as nodes within socio-technical assemblages influenced by social, technological, and environmental factors. The nonhuman turn further decentered the human subject, acknowledging nonhuman agency and material contingencies.

As these strands converge, participatory practices converse with systems-based approaches, fostering critical interventions within complex systems while raising ontological debates around power and control. This multifaceted background sets the stage for the following case studies, exemplifying how artists push boundaries, catalyze change, and reimagine human-nonhuman relations through participatory and systemic practices in contemporary art.

Case Study

Viewers in Participation

Tatlin’s Whisper #5 The Tania Bruguera’s work *Tatlin’s Whisper #5* [20] might be a case of what Bishop terms “delegated performance” [8]. She defines it as artists hiring non-professionals or specialists to perform their social identities and roles. This differs from theatrical traditions, as the performers enact their actual gender, class, ethnicity, age, disability, or profession. Bishop’s key aim is to provide an understanding of delegated performance as an artistic prac-

tice that engages with the ethics and aesthetics of contemporary labor, rather than simply viewing it as a reification model. By having people perform their real-world selves, the artists explore complex issues around representation, identity, and the changing nature of work. Exhibited at Tate Modern, this installation features two mounted policemen in uniform interacting with museum visitors (Fig. 2). Bruguera intricately weaves the participants’ experience with the overarching themes of societal control and contextual underpinnings. As Barson articulates, the work delves into “choreographed performance and experiences embedded within reality,” [20] underscoring the intricate dynamics between authority figures and the public they seek to regulate.



Figure 2: Tania Bruguera, *Tatlin’s Whisper #5*, 2008. ©Tania Bruguera.

Contrary to a simplistic humanitarian concern, Bruguera’s intent is complex and layered. The performance’s location is pivotal. The site of the artwork morphs into a theatre, encompassing spontaneous participant actions and intangible elements like audience experience, historical and social context, and critical reflection. This dynamic and evocative setting aligns with what Bishop describes as “theatre” [8] The artist employs people (audience, police) as material in the performance that introduces aesthetic effects of chance and risk, it produces disruptive events that testify to a shared reality between viewers and performers, defying conventional understandings of pleasure, labor, and ethics.

Gramsci Monument Building upon Tania Bruguera’s work as a foundation, this discussion pivots to the viewer’s role in artistic practices, emphasizing the viewers’ political identity and interplay within the artwork. A critical case in point is Thomas Hirschhorn’s projects, which normally involve massive everyday materials like cardboard and tin foil to build

installations and constructions to create immersive experiences for viewers. Bishop notes that Hirschhorn diverges from producing overtly political art, opting for a politically engaging approach that does not necessitate the viewer's literal participation, fostering a deeper form of engagement and inviting viewers to connect with the work as more than passive actors [21]. Hirschhorn's assertion views his monuments as community commitments, non-intimidating and arising from admiration, not authority, opposing traditional notions of artistic "quality" and making his art politically resonant yet accessible [22]. This is evident in works like the *Bataille Monument* [23], fostering deep engagement by situating the art within a community context.

In his discourse on the *Gramsci Monument* [24], Hirschhorn explores ideas of "Unshared Authorship" and "Equality in Art," signifying art's transformative and egalitarian potential. His dedication to engaging with others and incorporating personal elements signifies a commitment to fostering authentic dialogue through art (Fig. 3). The concept of "Presence and Production" in his work underscores an active, unpredictable approach to art creation [25]. When juxtaposed with Bishop's critique, these elements collectively reposition the viewer from passive spectator to active co-creator in contemporary art. Bishop extends her analysis to relational aesthetics [5], drawing on Mouffe and Laclau's theories that true democratic engagement in art emerges from conflict and division, challenging consensus [26]. Through Hirschhorn's work, the vital role of antagonism in fostering a pluralist democracy is evident, where 'the Other' continually challenges and decentralizes established identities.



Figure 3: Thomas Hirschhorn, *Gramsci Monument*, 2013. ©Thomas Hirschhorn.

Ultimately, Hirschhorn's focus on the local community's political identity, paints a comprehensive picture of the co-creative process, emphasizing antagonism and democracy in participatory art. His approach disrupts traditional art paradigms, fostering a collaborative dynamic between the artist, the artwork, and the audience.

The artistic endeavors of Bruguera and Hirschhorn signify a shift in the history of contemporary art practice. These

artists transcend traditional constraints, deeply engaging with the site and materiality of their works. Marked by a heightened sensitivity to the physical and social contexts, they challenge established norms and expectations. They establish direct dialogues with audiences' socio-political identities by situating their art in specific community settings and employing materials echoing daily life. Their approach, fostering antagonism and critical introspection, transforms the viewer from a passive observer to an active participant, crucial to the art narrative. Both artists demonstrate how contemporary art is a critical medium for dialogues with societal constructs and individual identities. Their works emphasize the role of art in challenging and interrogating societal norms, contributing to a dynamic and critically engaged artistic discourse.

Viewers in Systems

Haacke and "Systems Aesthetics" Aligned with Jack Burnham's concept of "systems aesthetic," [15], Haacke's work emphasizes interconnected systems—biological, ecological, social, or technological—as central to the creation and interpretation of art. This approach foregrounds the relationships and processes within these systems. Haacke's work was shown in the *Software Information Technology: It's New Meaning for Art* (1970) exhibition, curated by Burnham at the Jewish Museum, exemplifies a shift towards a process-oriented and context-focused art practice, merging art with technology and challenging traditional art boundaries.

However, in critiquing systems aesthetics, depends on an opposition of natural and social, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh argued that Haacke's adoption of Burnham's approach could not escape charges of techno-scientific reductionism. He asserted that systems aesthetics were underpinned by rationalist instrumentality, contributing to the neglect of historical memory [27]. Buchloh contended that Haacke's art could only be politically resonant when it transitioned from biological and physical to social systems [28]. Notably like his works *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* [29] and *Sol Goldman and Alex DiLorenzo Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* [30]. Contrasting Buchloh's critique, Skrebowski suggests that systems theory in Haacke's art offers a new form of historical consciousness, adeptly navigating the interplay between natural, social, and technological systems [31]. Drawing upon Bruno Latour's "political ecology," [32] this perspective challenges Buchloh's rigid division between nature and society. His ecological pieces like *Transplanted Moss Supported in Artificial Climate* (1970), merge natural and social elements to critique dominant belief systems.

Furthermore, Haacke's engagement with real-time and real-space systems, alongside his focus on political themes and institutional critique, illustrates a profound engagement with the critiqued systems. His works, employing both low-tech and high-tech methods, challenge socio-political structures. Andrea Fraser's reflections on Haacke's influence underscore the interconnection of the art world with everyday practices, highlighting "institutional critique, context art, and activist practice" as essential in understanding contemporary art. Haacke's oeuvre, thus, critiques not just art institutions

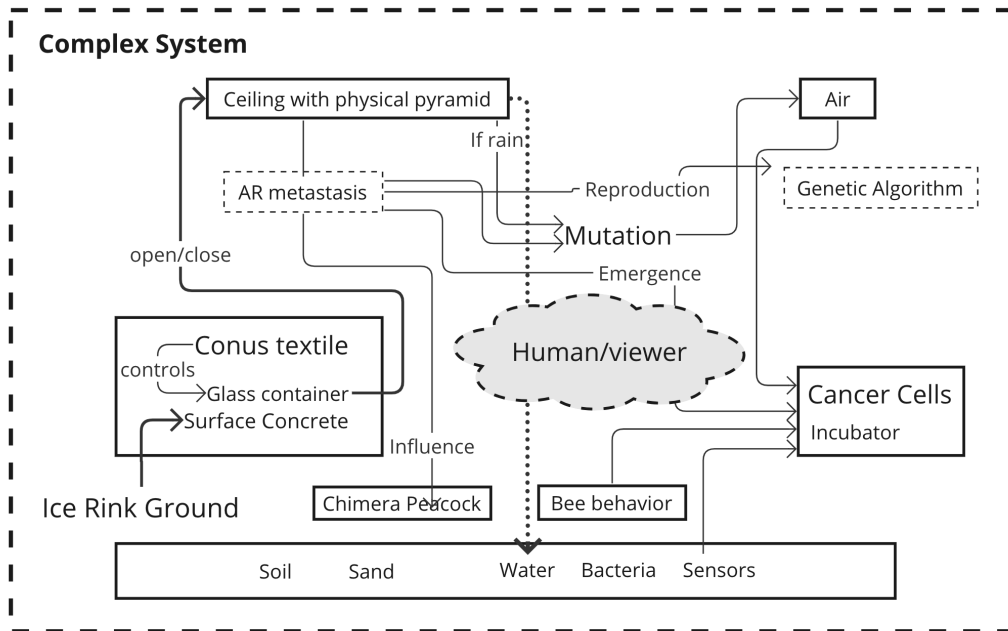


Figure 4: Pierre Huyghe, *After Alife Ahead* complex system, 2017. ©Xinyu Ma and Pierre Huyghe.

but interrogates broader societal structures through systems aesthetics.

Complex system and *After Alife Ahead* Pierre Huyghe’s *After Alife Ahead* [33] represents a pivotal moment in contemporary art, pushing the boundaries of conventional mediums by exploring the “complex system” paradigm (Fig. 5). This innovative artwork unfolds as a dynamic, constantly evolving environment, where elements interconnect and evolve, governed by causal relationships and feedback loops. Here, we provide an understanding of the system of the work which is inspired by the artist’s concept sketches (Fig. 4). This creates an experience characterized by its unpredictability and multi-scale nature, setting it apart from traditional installations that typically do not engage the audience in such a dynamic manner. Especially, The viewer’s position integrated into the complex system rather than as co-creators engaged in the relationship of participation (Fig. 1).

The artwork is structured around two primary dimensions: complexity and change. The complexity dimension involves examining causal relationships reminiscent of interactions within ecosystems, drawing inspiration from ontological and metaphysical concepts proposed by thinkers like Bruno Latour. The notion of change imbues the artwork with life, leading to intricate, unpredictable outcomes that keep the system in a state of continuous evolution. According to the analysis of Katz, Integral to this concept is Huyghe’s incorporation of “randomness/determinacy,” a dichotomy that plays a central role in the artwork’s ongoing transformation [34].

In *After Alife Ahead*, the viewer’s position in the complex system and environment could relate to the nonhuman thoughts that question the stage of humans. Huyghe ventures into speculative art, recontextualizing the theme of human ex-



Figure 5: Pierre Huyghe, *After Alife Ahead*, 2017. ©Pierre Huyghe.

inction in a manner distinct from historical portrayals. The artwork signals a shift towards material realism, situating human extinction within the broader narrative of the planet’s sixth mass extinction—a phenomenon distinct from previous, naturally occurring extinctions. Far from merely critiquing ecological catastrophes, the work challenges viewers to contemplate humanity’s role and place within the grander scheme of history.

However, the artwork eventually encounters operational challenges, transforming into a haunting representation of life teetering between existence and oblivion. *After Alife Ahead* becomes a contemplation on the progression of human rationality, encompassing a spectrum of states from the unconscious and biological to the virtual and real. The work in-

vites viewers to envision a world beyond destruction, where thoughts of extinction provoke a disconnection from the familiar and forge new connections with the future. Thus, followed by the idea of Katz, Huyghe's creation transcends traditional artistic formats and provides a profound lens for reimagining and speculating about the world's potential trajectories and futures [34].

Umwelt and Bag Of Bob Based on his practice, Pierre Huyghe's exhibition *Umwelt* [35] at the Serpentine Gallery marks a significant transition in his artistic journey, showcasing an embrace of an ecosystemic approach. While rooted in his previous works, this evolutionary step achieves new heights in *Umwelt* through collaboration with Japanese neuroscientists [36]. Utilizing artificial intelligence (AI), this collaboration facilitates transforming human brain activities into visual displays. The exhibition's central feature is large LED walls that exhibit thousands of AI-generated images. These images are uniquely responsive to environmental stimuli, such as changes in light, temperature, and humidity, detected by sensors within the gallery.

In addition to its digital components, *Umwelt* integrates living biological elements. A notable inclusion is a community of blue bottle flies, which experience their entire lifecycle within the exhibition space. Accompanying these biological elements are various environmental prompts—visual, auditory, and olfactory—as well as distinct computer-generated sounds. Huyghe's deliberate decision to leave layers of paint and dust on the gallery wall's surfaces allows for their natural displacement and alteration throughout the exhibition, further contributing to its dynamic ecosystemic ambiance (Fig. 7).

Umwelt amalgamates an array of artistic influences, indicating a shift towards an ecological paradigm in Huyghe's body of work. According to Skrebowski's discussions, this shift is pivotal in understanding the work's artistic lineage and connection to the broader ecological turn in contemporary art and humanities. While Huyghe's prior work *After ALife Ahead* utilized augmented reality to probe the computational aspects of culture, *Umwelt* delves deeper, exploring the intersection of AI and neurobiology [37].

This exhibition signifies a departure from Huyghe's earlier use of allegory, choosing instead the augmented reality through rapidly changing AI-generated images. Furthermore, *Umwelt* draws attention to the emergence of a new ecological paradigm, culminating in the development of a "technosphere". This concept represents a complex collaboration between natural and artificial, human and non-human actors and forces, suggesting profound implications for human existence, agency, and survival.

In summary, *Umwelt* exemplifies a complex interplay of ecological and aesthetic rationalities, augmented by technological advancements. It represents a departure from conventional views of natural, social, and technical systems, advocating for a perspective where systems are interconnected and equivalent. The exhibition challenges traditional divisions between nature and society, promoting a new form of ecological materialism in art. This conceptual framework envisions a future where art and technology merge within a dynamic, interactive ecosystem, offering a new interpretation of their

relationship.

Compared with Huyghe's work, the *BOB (Bag of Beliefs)* [38] created by artist Ian Cheng and his team, emerges as an innovative exploration of sentience within the realm of artificial intelligence. Sentience in *BOB* is depicted as the capability to confront and adapt to discrepancies between expectations and actuality, indicating a need for continuous updates in belief systems. Unlike non-sentient entities like thermostats or video-game characters, *BOB* exhibits a capacity for self-legislation and experiential growth, a quality integral to sentient beings. The inception of *BOB*, inspired by the image of a fractalizing snake from a dream, represents the development of a being designed for self-legislation, equipped to navigate an ever-changing environment akin to that faced by animals (Fig. 8).

BOB was dedicated to developing its physical form, designed to interact dynamically with its environment. This development phase focused on creating a body that could grow procedurally, allowing for various morphologies. The cognitive framework of *BOB*, influenced by Richard Evans's work at DeepMind and Carl Jung's theories, revolves around the symbiotic relationship between desires and beliefs. This cognitive architecture, centered on the interplay of desires acting upon the world organized by beliefs, forms the core of *BOB*'s functioning.

The cognitive structure of *BOB* comprises an Inference Engine that formulates rules from sensory data and a "Congress of Demons", each representing specific goals and perception filters. This unique structure enables *BOB* to process and interact with its environment in a complex manner. An illustrative scenario demonstrates *BOB*'s cognitive process when encountering an object like an apple, revealing different demons' intricate interactions and responses based on their objectives and beliefs (Fig. 6). The artist asserted another situation of the viewer's position outside of a system but interaction with the artificial intelligence system. Differentiating from previous structures, the AI system behaviors more organically and computationally and connected with more audiences and players on the physical and digital methods (Fig. 1, 4).

The *BOB*'s Shrine App was introduced to address the biases inherent in *BOB*, mimicking the role of parental guidance. This system allows external influences to shape *BOB*'s personality and beliefs, offsetting its innate biases. As a result, *BOB* stands as a unique AI system, distinct from traditional AI systems in its ability to learn from a few examples and adapt based on environmental interactions. The contemplation of *BOB*'s future in AI explores the potential of artificial agents sustaining consciousness longer than humans and the cognitive traits that might emerge from this development.

Huyghe's approach to realism in his artistry notably diverges from traditional norms, instead of crafting fictional narratives. His work "After ALife Ahead" vividly illustrates this, where no artistic alteration is applied to the natural elements. Huyghe challenges viewers to perceive what may appear as deviations or aberrations not as mere anomalies but as intrinsic components of a world that does not necessarily adhere to conventional logic. In *Umwelt* the variance in perception can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and

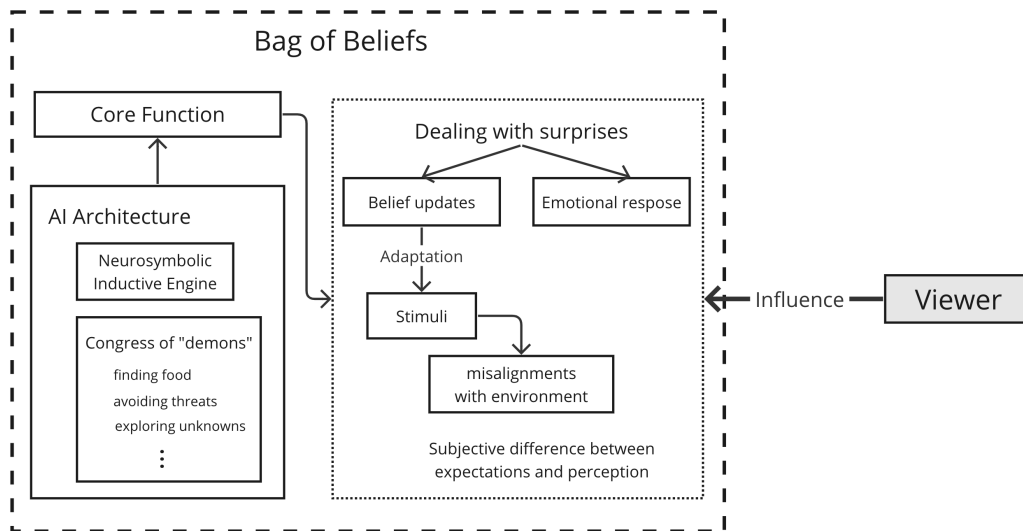


Figure 6: Ian Cheng, *Bag Of Beliefs* relation map, 2018. ©Xinyu Ma and Ian Cheng.



Figure 7: Pierre Huyghe, *UUmwelt*, 2018. ©Pierre Huyghe.

unpredictable situations, reflecting the diverse realities experienced by different life forms. It seems pivotal in AI development and central to contemporary scientific inquiries into AI's potential. In this context, *BOB*, as an AI entity aligns with Huyghe's perspective. Both artists propose that AI, as an element in their artwork system, constructs its differences systemic approach. This practice suggests AI entities possess personal perception and imagination capability, challenging traditional boundaries between life forms.

The artwork as a system occupies a space where two distinct realms – the human and the artificial – increasingly converge. Artists do not portray a harmonious union of these worlds. Instead, he presents an interaction characterized by dissonance and disconnection: the imagery in the exhibition vibrates and does not align with original perceptions. This disjunction implies a relationship between these realms, composed of abrupt associations, continuous exploration, and a



Figure 8: Ian Cheng, *Bag Of Beliefs*, 2018. ©Ian Cheng.

series of incompatibilities, mutations, and emergencies.

In summary, the progression from Haacke's system aesthetics to Huyghe's and Cheng's complex, interactive ecosystems illustrates a significant evolution in contemporary art. This shift foregrounds the role of technology, viewer engagement, and ecological consciousness in art, paving the way for a more interconnected and dynamic understanding of the relationship between art, its creators, and its audience. The works of these artists collectively signal a departure from traditional artistic paradigms, embracing a future where art is not just observed but experienced and shaped by its viewers in an ever-evolving dialogue.

Discussion

Examining contemporary art practices through the lenses of artistic social participation and systemic approaches unveils divergent yet interconnected paradigms that redefine the viewer's and the artist's position of social engagement and systemic integration into the system of the artwork's essence and reality. These paradigms, while distinct in their approaches and theoretical underpinnings, collectively represent the critique of the subjectivity and ontology in contemporary art's dynamic and multifaceted nature.

Participation in Contemporary Art Practice: Engagement and Agency The strains of participation in Art Practice, exemplified in the works of Tania Bruguera and Thomas Hirschhorn, emphasize viewer engagement and agency. This approach dissolves traditional barriers between the artist, the artwork, and the audience, fostering a collaborative and interactive environment. The artworks in this paradigm often serve as platforms for social and political discourse, inviting viewers to engage as observers and active participants. This participation often carries an element of unpredictability and spontaneity, contributing to the artwork's evolving narrative and significance.

However, the participatory approach also faces limitations. The reliance on audience engagement can lead to varied interpretations and experiences, sometimes diverging from the artist's original intent. Moreover, the degree of participation and the nature of interaction can be influenced by the socio-cultural context of the audience, potentially limiting the artwork's accessibility and universal appeal.

Systems in Contemporary Art Practice: Autonomy and Evolution In contrast, the Systems in Art Practice, as seen in the works of Hans Haacke, Pierre Huyghe, and Ian Cheng, centers around the concept of complex, self-evolving systems. This paradigm extends beyond the physical artwork to encompass interactions between various elements, be they biological, technological, or ecological. The artwork's autonomy, particularly in the case of Cheng's AI-driven creations, presents a shift from traditional artistic expression to a more dynamic, evolving form of art that responds to and evolves with its environment.

While systemic art offers a novel and immersive experience, it too faces limitations. The complexity and often abstract nature of such artworks may pose challenges in interpretation and engagement for the audience. The reliance on technological integration and ecological systems can also render art less accessible to traditional art audiences and venues.

In conclusion, examining participatory and systems-based approaches in contemporary art practices reveals a multifaceted landscape that redefines the roles of artists, artworks, audiences, and its social and ecological system. While these paradigms differ in their theoretical underpinnings and artistic strategies, they collectively challenge traditional notions of artistic autonomy, authorship, and spectatorship. The participatory turn empowers viewers as active collaborators, dissolving boundaries between creator and recipient, and positioning art as a platform for social and political discourse. Conversely, the systems perspective expands the artwork's

scope beyond the physical object, embracing complex, self-evolving networks that intersect with technological, ecological, and social realms.

Yet, both paradigms share limitations in their reliance on viewer interaction and environmental factors, which can disrupt the artwork's autonomy as theorized by Rancière and Bishop. The most compelling works in this realm harness the "dissensus" power of art, provoking audiences to rethink prescribed categories and moral exemplarity. As contemporary art continues to evolve, future directions may lie in further integrating and reimagining these participatory and systemic approaches, pushing the boundaries of aesthetic experience and social engagement. Through such convergence, artists can cultivate new modes of repositioning the audience within dynamic, transformative artistic ecosystems.

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