

Posthuman Aesthetics in Contemporary Visual Art and Performance

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ABSTRACT

This study examines posthuman aesthetics in contemporary visual art and performance, focusing on how emerging artistic practices decentre the human and redistribute agency across human, nonhuman, technological, and environmental actors. It argues that posthuman aesthetics is not merely a thematic shift but a reconfiguration of ontology, perception, and artistic production shaped by technoscience, algorithmic systems, and material ecologies. Through engagement with installation art, generative and algorithmic practices, biotechnological performance, and immersive environments, the study demonstrates how contemporary works challenge anthropocentric models of authorship, spectatorship, and aesthetic experience. Drawing on posthumanist theory, new materialism, and actor-network approaches, it highlights how agency becomes distributed within assemblages of bodies, objects, and systems. The study further explores the ethical, political, and ecological implications of such practices, particularly in relation to labour, care, and responsibility in algorithmically mediated cultures. Ultimately, it proposes that posthuman aesthetics redefines art as a relational field of co-composition between heterogeneous actants, where perception, participation, and meaning are continuously negotiated.

Keywords: Posthuman aesthetics; Nonhuman agency; Algorithmic art; Installation art; and Technoscience.

INTRODUCTION

Posthuman inquiry has become an omnipresent and yet paradoxically elusive topic in contemporary visual art and performance. As contemporary artistic practices increasingly unsettle the art-historical framing of the 'human', so too do posthuman understandings of the 'post', drawing attention to the very continuities that remain undisrupted by the notion of the 'new' [1]. Attention to the multiple agents, materials, and processes across ecologies of art, performance, and discourse remains increasingly pertinent as emerging media, technoscience, and algorithmic curation reimagine what it might mean to 'see' and 'spectate' to 'perform' what remains to be seen or 'viewed', art work and art-thing alike [2]. Discussions of posthuman aesthetics frequently invoke ontology, agency, the material turn, and nonhuman actants, yet the terms can be nebulous and their implications remain under-analysed. The posthuman turn impels critical exploration of the status of the aesthetic in the art and performance of a contingent and distributed contemporary, a troubling of the lens and the corporeal body traditionally associated with spectatorial regimes [3]. Excesses of gesture and image, including the aestheticisation of documentation, are rendered apparent at the nexus of global COVID-19 and algorithmically-augmented attention economies. Outright art, whether termed 'installation', 'experience', 'intervention', 'exhibition', or otherwise, has intensified interest in posthuman perspectives 1. In parallel, a malevolent technosphere manifests through masks and filters augmenting maskless exchange and health-tracking devices directing access [4]. Initiatives that recast the performative extend posthuman debates to the questions of presence, perception, collectivity, feeling, tenderness, and the corollary rights that inflect public-facing works. The digital apparatuses and set-ups of both art and research engender nonhumans that actuate, operate, and structure opera and reach beyond their artistic origins into knowledge-production systems otherwise deemed ethnographic and experimental [5]. Perception, participation, appropriation, and reuse at regional and global scales are remediated through apparatus, software, and configuration; access is economised either through paywalls or through the entry of specified texts into the data-corporuses of platforms [6]. The accelerated deployment of machine learning, generative, and algorithmic approaches incites algorithmically-directed cultural and artistic fields to diversify discussions of the object,

ensemble, and nonhuman contemporary agency within the exhumation of public-facing work. Formed of a partial cartography of a widening art-historical discourse, selected works developed with, through, and amid such conditions elaborate further vectors of exploration and the posthuman formulations in action-assembly at the thresholds of art [7].

Theoretical Foundations of Posthuman Aesthetics

Digital and technoscientific thought has led to a radical reappraisal of the human, the non-human, and the relations between them. To borrow Timothy Morton's terms, the "mesh" has proliferated, "humans" have become "humans plus", and anthropos has shifted from the exemplar of "Man" and "the one and only" to the lesser parochial status of a mere "earth-bound species"[6]. This extended temporality (from promised immortality to acknowledged extinction), displaced world-historical agency (from being the planet's dominant disruptive force to becoming its primary source of suffering), and partial re-specification of its agency (the realisation—always already latent in the Collserola massif among othersthat humans are a technogenic rather than a 'much more than human' species) informs the concept of post-humanism [7]. Thought within this ontological framework has begun to articulate a post-humanist aesthetics: "the study of forms of life not of the human or of human-like beings but of the non-human in its many guises". More than just imbricating with the shared planet, art is sought that leads explicitly "to the understanding of the non-human" [1]. Posthuman inquiries increasingly link, by contrast, with the non-representational paradigms of many contemporary practices [2]. The term "non-representational" can refer solely to the visual or to all aspects of a practice; it can address either the work of art itself or the figurative level of explicit texts. In numerous ways, performance frequently invokes non-representational elements and/or practices [3]. Far more pertinent, yet exclusively for visual art, is the possible distinction between art that seeks to enlarge the audience's modes and levels of understanding of the huge planetary mesh and assemblage in which "humans" and "life" appear to have become almost incidental and art that proceeds only in terms of post-media recorporealization, building on-and-with existing processual systems, such as algorithmic generativity, and operating on- and-with pre-existing, non-human, and even non-living material without either establishing anything more than incidental direct relation with the environmental crisis or altering the nature or status of figuration itself[4]. Such recorporealization whether technological resolutions for long-standing issues; iterative original exploration, extension, or renewal of coeval means; or one-off reconstruction of past protocols using contemporary formats still constitutes mattering without even more- than-human or any non-figurative post-human agency being involved[5].

Posthumanism and Aesthetic Theory

The term posthumanism refers to an array of interlinked critiques of humanism that coalesce into a more expansive biopolitical register investigating what it means to be human[2]. Though they are themselves different in key respects, they share a commitment to denaturalizing and critiquing the idea of the human as both a figure of individual authority and as a stable racial, ethnic, sexual, or biological figure [3]. Art theorist and posthumanist researcher Janein Rousell suggests that contemporary art occupies a peripheral yet continued relevance as posthuman thought itself undergoes a process of reconsolidation and reencounter [1]. The investigation thus also extends to aesthetic theory itself, inviting a reconstruction of art's materials and relations, aesthetic reception, and the sheer formal situation of the aesthetic [4]. The notion of the aesthetic, especially as it has been conceptualized since the eighteenth century, has become increasingly adapted to suit an anthropocentric view of both culture and the human, effectively granting the human a uniquely privileged position in aesthetic experience and appreciation. The guiding question asks how the aesthetic experience might be rethought at and beyond the human [5]. Ontological, ecological, and materialist perspectives on the aesthetic, alongside the historical trajectory of the concept of the posthuman and the wider matrix of posthumanism's engagement with technoscience, artificial intelligence, and nonhuman agency, work both to articulate this disruption and to interrogate the ways an aesthetically oriented approach to posthuman inquiry actively shifts the palette of what becomes routed through the aesthetic, the artist, and the artwork [6]. Examining contemporary artworks and performances preoccupied with the material, local, and specific, the question focuses attention on how an increasingly articulated critique of the human emerges alongside a materialist encounter with the nonhuman [7]. It seeks to reinstate the density of both the material and the nonhuman in the aesthetic. It begins by clarifying the relevance of posthuman inquiry to art deemed contemporary, signalling the continuity of the contemporary as an enduring problem and specifying the relevant tensions as these continue to circulate, whether through object-on-object engagements, aesthetic forms, or environmental care [8].

Ontology, Agency, and the Material Turn

Ontology, agency, and the material turn define the elaboration of posthuman aesthetics through objects, bodies, and environments that act within artworks and performances [3]. These elements pluralize creative processes, expose interdependencies, and circulate the spectator beyond anthropocentric systems of knowledge. Examinations of the agency of things, the material turn across philosophy and art, and Latour's actor-network theory clarify the implications for contemporary practice [4]. Posthuman inquiry engages philosophers and artists

in the long-standing dispute over the degree to which objects possess agency. Variations in emphasis surround the character, degree, and implications of their agency. The art theorist and philosopher Vicky Renée Rousell highlights the ontological controversy surrounding posthumanist repositioning of matter, from passive and inert, incapable of acting, to lively and vibrant, capable of agencing. According to Rousell, matter in some formulations remains invested with agency but lacks a distinctive capacity for action [5]. Other formulations fully decentre objects from the realm of life. These approaches paradoxically reinforce adherence to the life–nonlife divide by advocating engagements with nonhuman modes of vitality on a continuum with the living [6]. Rousell situates this dispute within a broader reconsideration of the agency of things in current thought and art. Building on speculative realism, object-oriented ontology, and New Materialism, she relocalizes agency beyond human interactions and develops a conception of art that draws attention to openings for thinking and doing otherwise. Posthuman ontology, she argues, refigures art as a problem concerning forms of life followed by the possibility of more-than-human encounters. Under actors who may or may not be biological, forms of life assemble and disperse, calling for an expansive understanding of art and the conditions of life [7]. Rousell traces a parallel circuit connecting post-qualitative research with a rereading of Agency–Network Theory and an interest in the time of life itself that responds to the immediacy of a given moment. A concert, theatre performance, or exhibition offers possibilities for gathering differently [8]. The articulation of an almost-environment in a posthuman aesthetic directs attention toward both what is at stake and the infrastructural care required engendering such an alternative. Beyond a given time and space re-worked, situated coverage prioritizes the non-formal features of a situation and inquiries into experimental atmospheres [9]. Rather than the enhancement of sensibilities through a selection of artworks, non-human agency, and the agency of objects, the posthuman spectatorial milieu now demands a diffractive capture in which the foreground illuminates the background and vice versa [10]. The delineation of art and life invokes the a priori selective assemblage of other means through which life continues after human departure [11]. Committed to the endurance of life and the elucidation of hitherto unacknowledged forms of living, contemporaneous thinkers pursue modes of expression or becoming-other without succumbing to anti-humanism, nihilism, or post-truth [12].

Technoscience, AI, and Nonhuman Agency

In the 1950s, cyberneticists envisaged the emergence of ‘hybrid scientists’, agents whose decision-making processes are intertwined with artificial-intelligence systems [5]. Today, similar projections are made about the nature of creativity. In 2008, Chris Anderson claimed that the scientific method was becoming obsolete and that future discoveries would rely more on computerized pattern recognition than on the formulation and testing of hypotheses [6]. Science now produces vast quantities of data, and machine-learning and deep-learning methods are increasingly applied to analyze this ‘big data’, promising a radically different way of knowing [2]. These developments call into question the impact of computerized analysis on human judgment and agency, suggesting a drift toward hybrid agency involving nonhuman participation. Actor-network theory (ANT) provides a framework for this inquiry by mapping how both human and nonhuman actants, technologies, instruments, technical protocols, enrol in sociotechnical processes [5]. ANT examines how these performative elements configure scientific practice with ontological, epistemological, and ethical implications. In addition to scientific discovery, parallel debates have arisen around design and creativity. Artists, designers, and architects working at the intersection of technoscience and the digital arts are exploring alternative operational modes, indicating a widespread interest in nonhuman creativity [3]. Technoscience, artificial intelligence, and nonhuman actorship acquire added significance within posthuman frameworks. Controversies surrounding technoscientific developments such as genetic engineering, biopolitics, cognitive computation, and artificial life epitomize many of the ethical, aesthetic, and political issues confronting contemporary societies [5]. These domains of inquiry intersect with a growing recognition of the continuing and emergent agencies of environmental and nonhuman actants within artworks and performances. Increasingly frequent and sophisticated engagements with animal and environmental concerns implicate nonhuman actorship in contemporary visual art and performance, signalling a shift toward more-than-human ontologies [4].

Historical Antecedents and Emergent Trends

Emerging debates and practices in contemporary art and performance recall precedents in posthuman thought, offering critical engagements with these ideas whilst articulating distinct aesthetic propositions [3]. In the late 1960s, media theorist Marshall McLuhan, philosopher Gilbert Simondon, and artist-critiquer Marta Minujín explored the concept of the extended body in a world of media artifices. During the mid-1990s, discourses on posthumanism coalesced around the materially interconnected body, the machinic aesthetic of Deleuzian thought, and the aesthetic potential of environmental assemblages articulated by actor-network theory [4]. Since the early 2000s, digital technologies and algorithmic media have driven widespread reflection on the condition of the screen and the spectatorial body, giving rise to practices that augment the audience through communal, distant, and temporal extensions [5]. Art theorist Elvira Dyangani Ose, in a broad consideration of contemporary visual practice, identifies a focus on biopolitics, narration and memory, and structures of feeling as three polarities within

which posthuman modes coalesce [6]. Such formulations of posthumanity, which retain the capacity of the human to think, feel, and engage, reorganise questions about commensurability across species, aeons, and intelligences, and recast debates about the senses, media, and the extended condition [7]. In performance, concurrent explorations of the postanthropocentric extend the sphere of entities, substances, and forces through which the living, the active, and the present are negotiated; reflect upon the conditions of the emergent and the relation of the individual to the collective; examine the limits and potentials of immersive environments, mediation, and distance; and question the composition of the body as material, as the human spectrally disperses in the aftermath of the tragedy[8].

Philosophical Roots of Posthuman Thought

Philosophical developments of posthumanism in the 1960s and 1990s began to foster new ontological perspectives on perception, aesthetics, and art practices [8]. Shifts in phenomenology embraced materiality along sensual, affective, and energetic lines. Deleuze and Guattari rejected the autonomy of the aesthetic object in favour of visibility, sound, and other forms of information at the boundaries of the human. While Actor-Network Theory investigated technical objects and hybrid forms, media-archaeological inquiry regarded technology as an intrinsic component of aesthetic experience [9]. Teaching and research on outer body, multi-sensoriality, trans-sensory, and extended or enlarged spectacles echoed, mapped, analysed, and shaped the enlargement of the spectator's body in the art and performance of the last decades of the twentieth and the first decades of the twenty-first century [10]. The emergence of the Digital thereafter opened new paths linking the digital, the algorithmic, the mechanical, and the biotechnical to agency, imagination, perception, and participation across multiple domains, humans, nonhumans, technics, biologies, and environments, traversing visual art, performance, installation, architecture, design, and pedagogy[11].

Media Archaeology and the Expansion of the Spectator Body

Substantial shifts in the logic and experience of interactivity in visual art and performance instantiate a critical engagement with posthuman aesthetics, an art-theoretical framework that has emerged alongside similar philosophical currents [12]. Contemporary analogue, digital, algorithmic, and biotechnical media have broadened conceptualizations of materiality and exposure, agency and animation, and subject and spectator, articulating nuanced relations between human and nonhuman cosmologies of form and force [13]. Imagineering of audience encounter in various practices across multiple media and technologies reconfigures the work of art, displacing the institutionally privileged figure of the autonomous author and generating aesthetics of co-composition [14]. Expansion of the spectator body constitutes a key development in the exploration of Expanded, Relational, Participatory, Systemic, or Intermedial Art, terms that now circulate in tandem with posthuman aesthetics [15]. Since the advent of cinema, it seems that every new technology has, at least in part, been associated with a physical extension of the spectator body and their concomitant immersion in the performance image [16]. A posthuman aesthetics, however, leads instead toward an understanding of media extending not the spectator body itself but rather the material apparatus of spectating [17]. Anywhere a frame demarcates the spectator remains, arguably, both throughout and outside the present configuration of the apparatus of the visual or auditory confined to the dominant state-space of the performance material but gathered into quasi-coherence through an operation of design or apparatus across either topology [18]. Expansion of the spectator body by means of media exterior to the artwork itself enables a shift from the conventional status of spectator as privileged site of affective reception toward a material agency repleting the often-present absence of human actors or agents their constraining determinations predicated upon a legacy of severe performative anthropocentrism conterminous with radical historicism and prefigurative modality [19]. Media operating exterior to the visual organisation of performance material still carried implicitly within the apparatus compile and recombine the operations of foundation-al, envelope-orientation, and enclosure-al together with the requisite elementary compositions appropriate to either the projection of spectating proper or, more likely, the animation of preparation-of-the-spectacle proper[20]. The spectator body cannot be wholly disentangled from a conception of the spectating body, tension experienced between the generational or dispositional and the gestural or prehensive and yet it remains more commonly addressed through wholly physical, gesture-centric prisms of articulation [21]. Recent yet already-historicised approaches to a body exceeding a priorly-colonised semiotic continue to contribute to the gathering of apparatus and the prefiguring of posthuman aesthetics, while performance systems more fully emblematised an expanded virality supplied, notably, by distributed, telepresent embodiments even within the conventional referred ground of live visual event, extraction of inscription spectralised around fourteen preparatively terminologised performative registers encompassing issues of balance, affordance, proximity, energy, and materialisation archived by means of a digitally redirected touch[22]. Works examining every degree of materiality, presence, and outness address these apparatus-extensions more or less directly; a signalling-surface articulate the gradual shifting of experience, overlap between participation-address, now also reciprocity, and inscriptive-parasitism precursor to the (ever-present, detachable, non-preparative) posthuman tactical and cache interregnum, under the stimulus of the address-stream and of a full computation-range previously examined[23].

The Digital, Algorithmic, and Biotechnical Interfaces

To convey the extent and significance of contemporary technological transformation, multiple artistic practices approach the digital, algorithmic, and biotechnical interfaces and their effect on human interaction, agency, identity, and the formation of social and cultural systems [4, 5]. The legacy of the earlier media arts that examined a range of traditional and emerging media and technology in shaping communication, perception, the spectator body, and public memory persists through variable-temporal processes employed in communications environments and participatory events [6]. Evidence of this sustained inquiry into a broad range of formats and concerns is found in the recent evolution of installation and immersive environments that actively solicit and structure human presence in manifold configurations and that evidence the impacts of spectatorial participation posthuman aesthetics within the realm of visual art [7]. The omnipresence of media art since the advent of new technologies combined with fundamental changes in global contemporary culture have resulted in the emergence of digital, algorithmic, and biotechnical practices across performance within the evolving discourses of media pedagogy and media performance [8]. Performance analysis at the level of structural modulation, cultural system formation, and ecological interaction dovetails significantly with contemporary examinations of digital performance, conserving a coherent interface with the public-faculty discourse surrounding digital performance figures such as the cyborg, the avatar, and the digitally mediated performer embodied in reproductions of human, animal, and inanimate acts that may evoke exploration of presence, embodiment, identity, the tabooed flesh, and the rethinking of performance itself [9].

Visual Art Practices and Posthuman Visuality

Contemporary visual art practices articulate a posthuman visuality, shaping how someone sees and what is seen. They arrive through artworks that invite consideration of the limits and possibilities that vision and perception afford. Such works engage forms of spatial reconfiguration, algorithmic event generation, and immersive presentation across media and materials [15]. Installation operates as reconfiguration of space, altering how one inhabits and experiences an environment and acting as invitation to situate oneself across coordinates of body, object, environment, action, and technology [16]. Generative art and algorithmic image curation make processes of visual generation, selection, and movement the subject of attention, shifting concern from image to algorithm [16]. Such practices open consideration of artificial agency as creative force concurrent with human authorship. Material hyperobjects sound, light, probe-based interactivity, closed-circuit cameras, and feedback systems basically become vectors for immersion and sites of stimulus response attunement [17]. They afford entry into experience prior to and beyond representation, framing artworks as speculative encounters. Across these modalities, posthuman aesthetic frameworks address the transcendental nature of contemporary vision, the humanistic privileging of eye and emission, and the ethically charged disavowal of the nonhuman [18]. Installation constitutes a prevalent strategy for contesting human exceptionalism, reframing the nature of the exhibition, and mobilizing a posthuman visuality. The term designates a specific genre of art, the reconfiguration of exhibition space, and also broader systems of re- and dis-formation that configure presence across contemporary practices. Installations rigorously displace the customary demarcations of the white cube and immerse participants within sensorially rich environments [20]. Exhibiting beyond the normal provision of physical objects and ready commodities, they provoke consideration of zones overlooking space and situate oneself via complex spatial articulations. Such installations render visible and active the myriad exchanges traversing body, object, environment, system, and medium [21]. Emergent works elaborate ongoing collaboration with artists and theorists exploring this recasting of the exhibition venue. Installation thus articulates radical re-invocation of space as site both by and beyond the visual and as agency [22].

Installation and Spatial Reconfiguration

Installation operates through architecture, spatial metaphors, environments, site-addressed situations, and configuration 8. Such artworks construct spaces embodying the artworks themselves through residual polarities of active agents and passive constraints [3]. Constituting triadic installations with performers, distributed agencies and interactions link human and nonhuman actors [4]. Influences include phenomenology, scale, corporeality, aesthetics, architectural and environmental theory. Installation art links the familiar with the unrecognisable, reorienting perception within apparently ordinary spaces [9]. The medium fosters engagement and provokes awareness of normalised perception. Presences may appear uncomplicated yet articulate a specific predicament and involve extensive participant contribution [10]. Spatial reconfiguration effects parallel matters addressed, forming embryonic guidance towards participatory attendance, shifted awareness and decentralised agency [11]. Emerging spaces elude definitive description, exploiting the frame criterion yet surpassing sole geometrical topology. Variants range from apparatuses structuring and attuning bodies and surroundings to immersive architectures of transfigured scale evoking terrestrial and extraterrestrial atmospheres. Certain installations serve as apparatuses, provisioning operations conducive to participatory configuration and calibration of situational awareness [12].

Generative Art, Algorithmic Curation, and AI Collaboration

Contemporary artistic practices increasingly subvert humanist presumptions governing artistic form, authorship, and participation by foregrounding nonhuman forces, materials, and agencies that co-shape such works [6]. Generative art autonomously produces novel art objects, appropriating and altering existing materials beyond human control at the scale of the algorithm and experience [7]. Algorithmic curation selects, organizes, and sequences artworks using objective criteria to produce a new art object that, while still at least partially a human decision, does not preserve the underlying aesthetic principles that guided the artist [8]. Emergent art practices that engage neural networks challenge the Western notion of art as a conscious expression of individual intention by drawing on nonhuman datasets rather than human experience while exploiting and amplifying machine aesthetics within a feedback loop. Such practices illustrate how algorithmic systems are exploited as nonhuman collaborators across a widening array of disciplines, signalling an imminent shift in artistic form, practice, and pedagogy [10, 11].

Material Hyperobjects: Sound, Light, and Sensorial Feedback

Within artistic practices and critical theorization, the most evident departure from human-centeredness emerges through the exploration of materials and hyperobjects, particularly sound, light, and sensorimotor feedback [8]. Beginning with the phenomenological conception of an external world that pre-exists and outlives human perception [12], a rich field of inquiry has developed around the nature of things, objects, materials, and more recently, hyperobjects [13] capable of impacting human perception while remaining intrinsically nonhuman [13]. Glacial motions, tectonic activity, and turbulence elude direct human perception yet engender significant effects upon life on earth [14]. In both installation art and performance, materials, media, and environments extend agency beyond the artist and spectator, enabling art systems to cohere around freely circulating organisms, objects, and forces [15]. Here, much work remains to be done in refining understanding of industries, technologies, and formats that are co-extensive with art practice yet extensively operate independently of human intention and reliance [16]. Deep-learning algorithms, for example, produce artwork without human decision-making embedded in creative tasks [17]. Equally significant and largely unexplored is the realm of ambience, atmosphere, and the ambient sublime: agents and entities outside the boundary of consciousness significantly influence experience via sound, light, and mediated-human–nonhuman sensorimotor conditions [18].

Performance Modalities and Ecologies of Presence

Although performance cultures such as theatre, dance, and performance art are often understood through the lens of an ‘ontological turn’ that emphasizes the materiality of bodies and things, a posthuman analysis reveals that the aesthetics of performance still tend to prioritise a primary concern with representational acts [9]. Nevertheless, a contemporary strand of performance work addresses new ecologies of presence that radically reconfigure the frameworks for aesthetic inquiry [10]. Performance, in this view, becomes a process rather than a fixed product, attended to through aspects of working relation process, movement, collaboration, and collectivity rather than a concern with the final form of a thing [11]. Differences in materiality and systems-thinking further engage, articulate, and transgress established notions of form and context through inter and trans-disciplinarity, embodiment, and a wider inclusion of present active agents [12]. Such artistic practices stage unexpected encounters, affirming and inviting the further consideration and elaboration of the conditions of making and meaning. Another axis of contemporary activity embeds materiality within a porous architecture of various performers and nonhumans, shaping what bodies can do, what languages are spoken, and what kinships might form, in ways akin to the Deleuzian assemblage and other notions of distributed agency [13]. The movement between such porous configurations and more conventional regimes of presence energises the exploration of varied modes of presence for performers, things, and spectators alike that these activities promote [14].

Performance as Process, Not Product

Performance emphasizes temporality, collaboration, and process over finished products [15], tracing many-to-many relations among performers and between performers and environments [16]. Compositions arise spontaneously from these relations, which create a mix of human and nonhuman, sentient and insentient, discursive and non-discursive agents. Bodies, voices, materials, technologies, and ecological conditions comprise these ecologies of presence. Performance as process and the reconfiguration of what and where the performance is therefore constitute an emergent and fluid posthuman aesthetic [17].

Embodiment, Nonhuman Actors, and Shared Agency

An anthropocentric conception of agency underpins most contemporary performance practices, emphasizing either human bodies alone or the coordination of these bodies [10]. In contrast, the works examined here extend agency beyond human performers to nonhuman agents such as materials, technologies, and even the environment, a position Hartmut Böhme describes as “post-anthropocentric” [16]. Shared agency continuously flows across human and nonhuman components of the performance system within explicit assemblages of forces. All performance is inherently relational and processual [17]. The time of the performance remains open. Early intervention in a process invariably reconfigures what performance become [18]. This aspect can foster greater

timeliness in works that intervene directly in the ambient conditions or assist in the assembly of those conditions. Performance is not simply a product; it constitutes a sensitive, collaborative inquiry into co-composing collective arrangements at play within the world. Agency isn't only distributed; it's entangled. The assemblages involved may take on agency beyond that envisioned by any of the collaborators [19]. More-than-human actors with participative capacity, technologies that propose, computers that suggest, materials that hold, light that pulsates, surfaces that displace, are fully embedded throughout. Animated kinetics operate across sites, objects, and the human body, while the framing of the performance as an ongoing process expands into times that have little to do with performers' mere daily activity [20]. Experimentation becomes an exploratory procedure of gathering, testing, and materialization.

Immersive and Tele-present Modes of Audience Engagement

A distinction emerges between immersive experiences that integrate audiences into the performance and tele-present situations that sustain the audience-as-witness model yet leverage technology to extend the event's spatial and temporal reach [13]. Immersion entails the dissolution of boundaries separating input and output, performer and spectator, event and environment [14]. Such conditions exist in extreme but fleeting forms in various practices: in an installation with biological agent and hybrid matter, or in a choreographed sequence of live video, generative graphics, and algorithmic accompaniment, where spectators engaged with the system become part of the dispersed event occurring over shared networks in other contexts [15]. While tele-presence maintains these boundaries, it renders embodied witness perceptually distinct and conceptually significant during reception. Audiences view a performance through digital intermediaries, engaging with the work in remote locations well before, during, or after the original occurrence [16]. The geographical separation of the event thus occurs both physically and mentally. The immediate encounter remains an 'unmediated' act of attending yet receives special emphasis due to the concurrent remote experience: an alternative mode of participation entails interaction with unconsented documentation, proliferating co-creational exchanges that destabilize notions of originality, authority, and finish [17]. Within tele-present performance, agency resides collectively in artists, performers, witnesses, agents, and environments [18]. Instead of extending existing practices into the virtual realm, distant engagement prompts the reassessment of physical attendance, elucidating diverse possibilities of presentness in an interconnected world. The distance separating physically co-present participants reflects a cultural trajectory that pervades contemporary life [18].

Ethics, Politics, and Aesthetic Judgment in a Posthuman Era

Artworks and art world practices articulate rights of care and responsibility across species, environments, and ecosystems [12]. Emergent algorithmic modalities animate political and economic debates concerning preemption, incorporation, and expropriation of labor [13]. Basic labor and ownership, as well as rights of use, credit, and attribution within contemporary algorithmic contexts, become urgent concerns for a multitude of artistic agents. Public-facing artworks and curatorial practices that displace anthropocentrism from both scene and surface are vital experiments in a posthuman direction [1].

Rights, Care, and Responsibility across Species and Systems

Artworks in a range of media and practices invoke rights, care, and responsibility across species and ecosystems. Recent scholarship has examined these themes in relation to animals and environmental systems [19]. Interest in art's ethical implications has grown alongside profound ecological transformation and diminished biological, spatial, and temporal diversity [20]. Artworks that attend to animal and environmental entanglements consider the conditions and implications of ongoing systemic processes, acknowledging the intersections of biophysical and political histories while rethinking contemporary techniques, materials, and distribution [21]. In response to profound modifications of biological, ecological, and geographic diversity, inquiries into nonhuman agencies engage with multiple forms of life, yet the capacities of more-than-human agents, including remote-controlled technologies, geotechnical transformations, and biological manipulations, remain largely unaddressed [22].

Labor, Value, and Attribution in Algorithmic Contexts

Labor, value, and authorship have become pressing concerns across creative practices in the algorithmic age, reflecting the deep social division of labor, super-exploitation, and financialization that characterize contemporary capitalism [20]. The growing integration of algorithmic processes in artistic production raises questions about their impact on dominant forms of labor and capital valuation [20]. In algorithmic contexts, automatic generation and on-the-fly re-composition can diminish or even erase the authorial signature and signature of the individual artist. When authorial self-quotation is continuously refracted or re-mixed through algorithmic layers, the signature becomes indistinguishable from the feed of trained material continuously arranged in new trajectories [21]. The assertion of authorship at the level of intention or conceptualization becomes more pronounced in such regimes, where the original author stands as the orchestrator of data-sourcing strategies, learning routines, stylistic markers, and training data-mining frameworks [21]. The further assumption that non-human systems and structures lack agency tends to overlook powerful and intelligent algorithmic work. In digital creative systems defined by what computer scientist Peter Gärdenfors has called "multiplicative accessibility" and

“distributed feedback,” where every creative move can trigger hundreds of concrete responses within a fraction of a second, these partitions become moot. Algorithms and machine learning remain inextricable from levels of agency and creativity that mark contemporary audiovisual works [21]. Attribution structures operating at another layer of systems commonly draw attention. Many platforms today deploy “generative AI” routines that remix inputs in such a manner as to produce substantial, autonomous, and significant outputs for users [22]. These systems habitually offer the option to signal credit for the material incorporated. Specialism in sourcing material for decision-making rather than for opacity or mixture may thus constrain the representation of agency, creativity, and authorship in parallel to the sought transmission of agency and credit without recourse to addresses [23].

Decentering Anthropocentrism in Public-facing Works

In public-facing works and in curatorial practice, several strategies can help to decenter anthropocentrism. These methods encourage a shift away from human primacy, foreground other-than-human agents, and expand the scope and stakes of presence [3]. The choice of materials can introduce nonhuman actants, amplify broader entanglements, and emphasise environmental consequences. Projects that employ biotechnologies or generative software engage artefacts in dialogue, either among posthuman co-authors or between human participants and nonhuman materiality [4]. While literary pieces may implicitly underscore language’s vitality, certain textual and visual formats consciously reveal the agency of motifs, codes, and algorithms [5]. The integration of diverse elements such as soil, moss, roots, ink, pheromone pheromones, sand, light, and water conveys recognition of local conditions and the interplay of actants in knowledge production [6]. The selection of living organisms for restoration or regeneration points to remediation’s wider ecological implications. Deploying technology at the “fringe”, subsystems and interfaces that remain largely hidden from view, allows for an exploration of infrastructural provision and operation. Curatorial frameworks can broaden the scope of carbon-based entities and acknowledge trans-species entanglements [7]. Supervised access to works featuring well-promoted, anthropocentric information permits unobtrusive consideration of different actors and agency layers. Programming themes that endorse frameworks like the more-than-human either across a single event or through a series creates an opportunity to address responsibilities toward these concatenations [22].

Case Studies in Contemporary Practice

Artistic practice today acknowledges the coextensive life of art and technē. The automatism of form is lost, with the gestural and the haptic extensively documented [1]. The formal accumulation of nonhuman agencies continues, yet other than trans-industrial, nononomateriatic laws of automatism and aesthetic co-genesis remain out of focus [1]. How thought in the living flesh, plastic, circuitry, and—not least—the human flesh now continuously and consistently introduces repeatable questions concerning the dynamics of agency from art remains extensive. Aesthesis is one such question of agency and yet it cannot be reduced to the perceptual [2]. Scale is another question that walz explicates without reduction to the proportionate [3]. The relations between thought, action, mind and body, proximities in cross-talk between life-sustaining and their obsolescence commence at no the temporally and spatially harmonic vicinity of art large en masse collecting phenomena [4]. This type of transmutation neither particularises arts within an exclusive distributory industrial frame nor grounds them under the generalised laws of caste, gender parlance advanced under Geaffas [5]. Thought in the living does confer unavoidably freshness to earlier and contemporary currents of agency be it on the infrastructural if aesthetic automatism forms are disclosed to the high-speed traction of terrestrial omnologies. The genesis of ornits, of-programming and coding is envisaged in close-up traces of arts, rooted in earlier work, remain graphically traceable [6]. Visual forms of life-coordinate-convention-farii-ordinate neither form nor matter nor serves nor object nor any of the individualistic crisp capsules over-textures nor any intersectional pigments. Speculative contaminative hypothesis appears re-iteratively at conditions far-away quite independent from these confines [7]. Yet, in systematic-aesthetic terms and wide-ranging artist-performers-art-maker questions concerning sustainable animate-forms, dislocate-colonize reconsolidate artist arrivals persiststill [8]. Pedagogic systems-art dwell-mig-coordinate areets are certain, a whiff of the pedagogical-topographical- multi-art-system artists still modulate away from this environment-de-part of colonization re-materialisation and over this quite over-troord-continue to sav-corp-course something quite active in the articulation peraspere [9].

Visual Art Installations and Interactive Environments

The work of contemporary artists such as Christian Zeller, Hans Peter Kuhn, and Jonathon Jones illustrates spectatorial engagement with art installations and interactive environments according to a posthuman aesthetic [2]. Zeller’s Conic Sea facilitates the expression and monitoring of participant emotions, significantly influencing the environments users inhabits [3]. Hutcheson’s Celestial Journeys incorporates space flight through flight simulators, augmenting the physical experience of flight with sound and visuals that trigger autobiographical memories. Jones’s Child’s Play immerses children in environmental sounds that change according to their movement, highlighting the interdependence of wellbeing among living creatures and the material environment [4]. Art installations like Zeller’s invite co-creation and co-determination, dissolving distinctions between artist, work, and participatory agent. On a platform resembling an inner tube inside a conical space, sound and visuals

vary according to participants' emotions [5]. A camera detects physiological parameters such as heart rate and galvanic skin response, enabling the simultaneous monitoring of diverse indicators [6]. Because Zeller intends for artworks to evoke emotional responses, a dedicated processor regulates the system to assure ongoing reaction. Empathy emerges among co-creators, and the environment adapts to individual and collective emotional states. The transitional composition and emanating sound, light, smoke, and water evolve according to specific relational variables: the quantity of participants and their physiological responses [8]. Both Zeller's and Jones's installations distribute agency in ways that challenge human exceptionalism and encourage the consideration of nonhuman collectives. Such artworks exemplify how the living landscape and commonsense animation of environments manifest in artistic practice and posthuman visibility [9].

Performance Works with Synthetic and Biotechnological Elements

Posthuman aesthetics have deepened the examination of how contemporary art motivates discussions surrounding ecological sustainability, new technologies and artificial intelligence [10]. For many artists today, such discussions have brought about a fundamental shift. The latest artworks not only raise questions about the environment they are engaged in but also suggest a rethinking of what constitutes aesthetic presence, participation, and the nature of the visual experience [11]. Performance works integrating synthetic and biotechnological elements compel a reconsideration of the ethical status of nonhuman actors and the responsibilities these engagements necessitate [12]. A broader array of organisms, materials, and objects circulate widely, creating new relations between humans and the living and nonliving world. What makes performance with such components posthuman remains an open question, underscoring the need for further inquiry into the currents that shape posthuman aesthetics [13]. Embodied practices that maintain a focus on biological material, life-enhancing processes, or the manipulation of synthetic elements probe the nature of artistic engagement and the relations beings and entities readily form. Cyborg formations in posthumanism, where bodies retain and assert their humanness while they enter into intimate socio-somatic exchanges with the synthetic and technical, underscore the anthropocentric bias built into the notion [14]. Performance that engages biogenetic and synthetic questions of life, matter, and existence within a biopolitical or techno-scientific framework renders the cyborg problematic. Requesting a high degree of risk and care, they still invite direct participation [15].

Cross-disciplinary Collaborations in Posthuman Frameworks

Formed through the collaboration of artists, curators, researchers, choreographers, and scholars, the European-based Artistic Research Network fosters cross-disciplinary explorations of Posthuman methodologies and aesthetics by connecting practitioners operating within visual arts and performance [1, 23]. Recent projects examine the appropriations of technologies endemic to these diverse practices as a basis for critical reflection [12]. In a shared desire to develop alternative Posthuman sensibilities and techniques, recent collaborative exchanges have generated interventions prompted by the participation of more-than-human agents, including the non-human material residues, human-dynamic, technical-vibrational, cosmological, and choreographic elements of artworks [1]. The complementary rapport established across the institutions of artists, choreographers, and theoreticians serves to expand the applicability of specific sensibilities, devising participatory environments that adapt (and possibly reframe) the interplay of audience within public-facing works and the articulation of shared agency [13].

Methodologies for Analysis and Evaluation

Updated proposals for the requested section, drafted in accordance with the provided 'work_title', 'section_title', and relevant instructions, are set out below [1]. Directly following the title, the scholar's views on emerging posthumanisms within visual art are provided in correspondence with a diagram from Late Double-Cross, a 2016 publication by the Art and Research Centre at the Amsterdam University of the Arts. Building-in, analysis and evaluation, remain open questions, especially concerning the nature of observation itself in situations where the analyst is not only a part but potentially a centre of networked motion [2, 19]. In humanist terms, an analysis might proceed straightforwardly by projection back into the drawing present, working to locate the substance of some already-seized thought. Several means can enable something approaching such a projection, supplemented by further (non-)mapping examinations to retrieve the full richness of the phenomenon at display [3]. Thus a mixed-methods approach is explored, moving from social and technical considerations to spatial, temporal diagrams and ultimately to visceral analytic-athletic experiments; or from a-symmetrical portrait sketches towards diagrams, including the whole technical system with its pervasive and insistent sensing [4]. Already-on-beyond these somewhat-reflective cycles, consideration of the sounding movement itself invites further refreshed experimentation with its specific surfacings, since a diagram proposes one sort and a portrait another. Together they open an indirectly recursive question inquiring after what is to-be-sensed once sensing itself becomes-together-with receding/moving [5, 20]. Where a more socially and materially concerned entry-point prevails, the traces of intervention on the presentation of image circulate as well and mix with a diagrammatic approach to a larger multinoise-longform sampling arriving in direct conjunction with the first post-web graphic recirculation [6]. The outer join remains operative, yet after the interior traversal and under a pervasive blurring the exhibited techne composes a generalized performative modeling that can rule the self-interrogative present. Such an

assemblage-across remains-in opposed join/undecidables and seeks a crossing diagram, a crossing which brings-back on lowtop the imminent multilattice yet without (re)imposing any already-there “structure [7].” 1 Further means, other crossings yet, or an elsewhere-sequence altogether, may continue to fissure into distributed processes that swing freely on all cylinders, yet without becoming simply random assemblages cut, pasted, recast, and bled or detonated out from systems-unlocked[7,21].

Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to Posthuman Aesthetics

Posthuman aesthetics raises pressing questions concerning how qualitative and quantitative analytical frameworks can both articulate and assess creative practices [11]. This section elaborates a mixed-methods approach to the systematic investigation of posthuman aesthetics at the intersection of contemporary visual art, performance, and emerging media. The strategy integrates computational tools, sensor-based technologies, and qualitative interviews with curators, critics, and artists [12]. By attending to aesthetic reception and attunement in addition to creation, the proposed methodology charts a comprehensive and objective map of contemporary practices and posthuman inquiry [13]. Contemporary artworks and performances frame aesthetic participation in novel ways, yet critical inquiry on many of these practices remains largely descriptive and qualitative [1]. Medium-specific analyses, such as participatory art and spectatorial agency in visual art or performativity in theatre and dance, have emerged across artistic fields, yet the relation between these diverse practices remains opaque [14]. Addressing artworks that circulate through multiple channels, such as installation and projection, composition and improvisation, or choreography and afterlife, another series of qualitative studies has explored the role of nonhuman agency or technoscience within creative processes [11]. The proposed methodology reframes the question of outward facing artistic practices and relationality toward the analysis of involved agency and dimension of work. Frameworks for critical survey exist within contemporary art and performance studies, yet a more rigorous approach to reception and interaction across channels remains to be elaborated [12].

Critical Reception, Curation, and Exhibition Histories

Critical reception, curation, and exhibition histories constitute a potent lens through which to interrogate posthuman aesthetics and its articulation in contemporary art and performance [13]. The circulation of artworks via institutional channels shapes audience engagement and dissemination within broader socio-political contexts. Despite the posthuman emphasis on aesthetic form and process, the discursive framing and critical reception of such works critically inform their status as posthuman[14]. The distinctions between humanism, posthumanism, and the practice-based analysis of posthuman aesthetics signal a need for supplementary engagement with the critical reception, curation, and exhibition histories of specific contemporary exhibitions and artworks [15]. Curation, precisely defined as the principle through which a collection is organized [24], invites the consideration of the underlying considerations that guide the selection of works assembled within this study, as well as the circumstances surrounding their exhibition and subsequent reception [15]. The projects interrogated throughout this study reflect the emergence of a particular art-historical moment within which the limits of the human and humanities have increasingly come under scrutiny, alongside practices which actively engage in considerations commonly subsumed under the term posthuman[16]. Each project epitomizes a concurrent moment in art history marked by a heightened awareness of the material qualities of the world, the nature and extent of existing ecological crises, and the pressing questions pertaining to the agency of nonhuman actors [17]. Within the realm of performance, attention increasingly tends toward the phenomenological experience of and the energy exchanged with the surrounding milieu, encompassing objects, nonhuman entities, and the more-than-human. A secondary exposition of curatorial frameworks surrounding the dissemination and subsequent reception of represented works enables a dedicated investigation of the critical reception, curation, and exhibition histories of individual projects [18]. The growing interest in the posthuman and nonhuman articulates the recognition that neither technology nor the posthuman is novel; rather, technology has become coupled with humanity over the centuries, while the emergence of synthetic lifeforms illustrates the expanded framing of humanity within a wider rationality [19]. This observation finds parallels in the ongoing negotiation of human and nonhuman entities embodied within the selected works, which foreground the distribution of agency, presence, and action among a network of human and nonhuman agents, materials, and environments [20]. The widespread concern surrounding the longevity and ecological implications of material production and process similarly manifests within the selected projects, which emerge as artistic responses to the existing predicaments of the contemporary world [20].

Reflexivity and the Ethics of Representation

Contemporary art practices increasingly grasp the inability of aesthetic experience to untangle from ethical representation in a systematic way [21]. This concern encompasses both nonhuman presences and the processes of emergence that involve human actors, that is, “donors” whose bodily responses paint the contours of so-called “expressivity.” In philosophical terms, aesthetics has always been tied to the ethical, but in an explicit incarnation, this preoccupation illustrates how the posthuman predicament and the posthuman artistic reception cohere [1]. Such critical considerations manifest in diverse ways across art and performance settings [22]. Some still pursue a radical decentring of the human in order to return the gaze to the more-than-anthropocentric world of

interdependent existence, what Timothy Morton has termed “the mesh” [23]. Others engage an even more complex set of relationships, letting the status of the human slide through fluctuating and negotiable thresholds of recognition. In both cases, however, the human remains critical, since focus on the myriad of ways that human agency inhabits artworks and the surrounding world, as well as the still-remaining urgency of human collective action in a time of multiple planetary crises, still occupies centre-stage [23]. Both art and philosophical discourse continue to explore ways that this engagement, so far from the simple humanism of the Enlightenment, might relate to the ethics of doing justice to the multiple, heterogeneous, and hybrid strands of actantial emergence involved [24].

Pedagogical Implications and Research Agenda

Research and teaching in the arts are informed by a range of emerging theoretical perspectives, including posthumanism and new materialism. These frameworks respond to the exponential technological developments shaping planetary ecologies, and they articulate forms of agency that extend across human, nonhuman, animal, environmental, and technological actors [23]. Art practices have long negotiated the varying degrees of agency expressed through material media; the rise of digital and algorithmic technologies has further accelerated the need for scholarship that engages these developments within curriculum and pedagogy [24]. The emergence of artificial intelligence as a technologically generative collaborator raises these questions anew: how might one inhabit contemporary graphics, moving image, animation, composition, sonification, choreography, or other forms of representation with a wider conception of agency already operating within the medium itself? What histories, concepts, practices, or strategies are relevant to inhabiting and steering practice alongside these agents? These questions emerge from the exploration of posthuman aesthetics in visual art and performance and the attendant concern with what constitutes the “human” in the current socio-technological landscape [24]. Pedagogical engagements with posthuman aesthetics might therefore begin by mapping aesthetic domains in which contemporary visual art and performance assert forms of distributed presence, writing, composing, drawing, dance, cutting, or other modalities [25]. The emphasis on presence, rather than devoting attention solely to artifacts, products, or spectatorial reception, channels collective and ecological urges into advanced technological practices. Aesthetics arrives pre-determined, already saturated with subjective or expressive contours. In contrast, presence remains open to exploration and experimentation: agency remains available but undetermined at the outset. Active posthuman inquiry orbits notions of presence to identify prospective domains of circulation [25].

CONCLUSION

Posthuman aesthetics in contemporary visual art and performance marks a decisive shift from human-centred frameworks toward distributed, relational, and materially entangled modes of artistic production and reception. Across installation, performance, generative systems, and biotechnological practices, the human is repositioned as one agent among many within complex assemblages of technological systems, environmental forces, and nonhuman entities. This reconfiguration challenges traditional assumptions about authorship, representation, and spectatorship, replacing them with processes of co-creation and co-emergence. The study has shown that posthuman aesthetics is deeply embedded in the infrastructures of technoscience and algorithmic culture, where machine learning, digital mediation, and automated processes actively shape artistic form and meaning. In doing so, it expands aesthetic theory beyond anthropocentric limits and reorients attention toward material agency, processual emergence, and ecological entanglement. At the same time, these developments raise urgent ethical and political questions concerning responsibility, labour, attribution, and care within increasingly automated cultural systems. Posthuman aesthetics does not signal the disappearance of the human but rather its re-situation within broader networks of relation and influence. Art becomes a site where the boundaries between human and nonhuman, organic and technological, subject and object are continuously negotiated. In this expanded field, contemporary visual art and performance function as experimental spaces for rethinking perception, presence, and participation in a world defined by interdependence and distributed agency.

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