

# DESMA 2: AI & Art

UCLA Broad Art Center

Monday–Friday, 10am–1pm and 2–5pm

This course explores how artificial intelligence interacts with the visual arts, and proposes automated algorithms as a tool for creative expression. It explores the past, present, and future of how artists engage with digital media through its remix and adaptation of increasingly more automated algorithms. Starting from early collage and montage practices, we'll explore how artists have used cultural fragments as their medium to explore meaning through juxtaposition and appropriation. We will turn towards how computational methods enabled artists to explore such practices with increasing fidelity and magnitudes of data. We will consider the recent surge in interest in the field of AI, and what that might mean for our understanding of art. Throughout, we will also extend the discussion into topics such as perception, augmentation, deep fakes, surveillance, privacy, and automation.

The class is composed of short lectures, discussions, workshops, time to work in class and feedback sessions. No prior programming or machine learning knowledge is required.

This course asks the following questions:

- How are artists engaging with AI, both as a tool and as a subject?
- What is the potential and what are the implications of AI within the visual arts?
- What AI-enabled tools are available and how do they work? How can I choose among them?

## Assignments

This class is built around three exercises and a final project. Each exercise has an in-class workshop and a discussion about your finished exercise on the day that it's due.

## Evaluation

This is a Pass / No Pass (P/NP) class. Grading is based on the exercises and active engagement. Focus, articulation of ideas, keeping up with the work and assignments, and contribution to class discussions are all part of class engagement. All work will be evaluated based on (1) the fundamental idea you develop and (2) the craft, meaning the details of the images, videos, and text.

The numeric breakdown for all assignments follow:

15% — Exercise 1

15% — Exercise 2

15% — Exercise 3

35% — Final Project  
20% — Engagement

I have the strong expectation that you will join for each class and workshop session. If something happens and you can't join the class, please email me. If you feel frustrated or you come across other problems, please communicate with me directly and quickly.

### **Commitment To Equity And Diversity**

We understand the classroom as a space for practicing freedom; where one may challenge psychic, social, and cultural borders and create meaningful artistic expressions. To do so we must acknowledge and embrace the different identities and backgrounds we inhabit. A collaborative effort between the students and the teacher is needed for creating a supportive learning environment. While everyone should feel free to experiment creatively and conceptually, if a class member points out that something you have said or shared with the group is offensive, avoid being defensive; instead approach the discussion as an opportunity for everyone to grow and learn from one another. All class members are encouraged to discuss such instances with me so they can be addressed with greater care in the future.

### **Media**

We'll cover everything you need to know in class, but we will be assigning different readings and videos to inform our work. We'll have discussions to encourage further exploration, reinforcement, and inspiration. Will we be assigning a wide range of media including the following:

- [\*The Wizard of AI \(2023\)\*](#) video essay by Alan Warburton
- [\*AI Aesthetics\*](#) essay by Lev Manovich
- [\*What Models Make Worlds: Critical Imaginaries of AI Reading List\*](#) from the exhibition with the same name, curated by Mashinka Firunts Hakopian and Meldia Yesayan
- [\*Cultural Appropriation with Machine Learning\*](#) lectures by Parag K Mital
- [\*Practical Deep Learning\*](#) course by Fast.AI (free, requires prior coding knowledge)

### **Exercise 1 — Generative Text**

Starting from the examples provided in class, explore the use of text generation tools as a means for creative expression. What are some creative ways in which you could use generative text in your own work? Create multiple experiments that show a wide range of possibilities. At the end, you will present your idea to the group. The presentation format is open to student preference, but should be limited to 3-5 minutes.

### **Exercise 2 — Generative Images**

Explore the image generation tools presented in class. What kinds of images are you most interested in creating? Does AI generate certain types of images better than others? What does

it mean to collaborate with a machine or an algorithm to create images? Experiment and be ready to discuss. Generate many images and narrow them down to a final selection.

You will present your concept and the series of images to the class as a presentation. A template will be provided. You will have 4 minutes to present, and there will be 3 minutes for discussion and feedback.

### **Exercise 3 — Generative Video**

This is your first group project. Form groups of 2 to 3 people and develop an idea for a short generative film, between 1 and 2 minutes long. Using the video, animation, or moving image generation tools presented in class, create a short generative film on a topic of your choice. What cinematic methods covered in class can you incorporate, and how does AI-generated video change our understanding of filmmaking?

Your group will have 4 to 5 minutes to present your film to the class, followed by a discussion and feedback. The presentation format is open to your preference.

### **Final Project — Synthesis**

After exploring different ways of making art with AI, what has captured your interest the most? Combine what you've learned about generating **text, images, and video** into a single artwork of your imagination. We'll develop this together over multiple days, checking in to discuss its progress. You can choose to work independently or in a group.

This is your opportunity to develop your unique artistic voice while speculating on how artificial intelligence can fit into your practice. What ideas and topics from the first part of the course have fascinated you the most? Which ones would you like to explore further?

On the final Friday afternoon of class, we will host a public presentation where you will present your concept and project.