# Between codes and dreams:
# hallucinatory cut-ups as a poetic in creation with AI

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## Abstract

This text discusses the results obtained from experimenting with Artificial Intelligence technologies as assistive tools for artistic creation, carried out during the course "Artificial Intelligence as a Platform for Artistic Creation," held in the first semester of 2024 at the Institute of Arts of UNESP. Throughout the course, the aim was to discuss the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in the field of Art and Technology, exploring their limits and creative possibilities. The central objective of the classes was to consider the use of AI, especially Large Language Models (LLM), as intelligent tools that can assist artists in the creative process. After the course period, an Artificial Intelligence study group was established so that these reflections could be further explored. Presented here is the result of an experiment conducted during the course, its conceptual proposal, and reflections arising from that practice.

## Introduction

The objective of the proposed exercise was to explore the limits and possibilities of generative AI, considering that all such systems, including the Large Language Models (LLMs) that underpin chatbots, invent things, or hallucinate (Jones, 2025). According to Menkman (2011), it is important to recognize the inherent imperfection of media. However, in the realm of Glitch Art, such imperfections offer opportunities for creative exploration. In her manifesto, the author considers it necessary to use the flaw "as an exoskeleton for progress," an opportunity for catharsis, thereby criticizing technologies and their inherent policies through disintegration, ruptures, and cracks (p.11).

From a Glitch Art perspective, the experiment involved feeding the ChatGPT prompt with text designed to break from the best practices of prompt engineering and logic. The chosen alternative was the use of cut-up techniques. Thus, using prompts without a rational narrative to underpin them would introduce unforeseen input, provoking unexpected responses, or glitches in the machine. Exploring the operational limits of the device is a concept present in Vilém Flusser's (1985) book *Filosofia da Caixa Preta*, where he argues that the photographer struggles to push the technology beyond the limits set by the camera's programming (Fogliano, 2013). According to the philosopher, the photographer seeks to obtain unforeseen images from the machine and, to this end, explores the "programming of the apparatus" intending to reach "regions never before navigated, to produce images never before seen... And wants to discover them inside the apparatus" (Flusser, 1985, p.19).

We argue, however, that the images are not inside the device as potential outcomes anticipated by the designer, but rather reside in the artist's mind (Fogliano, 2013). The function of the technological apparatus, through its design or programming, is to make the abstract content contained within the images and narratives in the artist's mind concrete, communicable, or perceptible. In this sense, this resonates with the ideas of Simondon (1980), who considers the openness of technical objects, situating them within the realm of emergence, creativity, unpredictability, and inexhaustible innovation. As open systems, technical objects are inherently novelty-generating.

## The experiment

Based on the considerations above, the question arose regarding the possibility of drawing an analogy between LLMs equipped with image generation tools and other semiotic devices, such as photographic or video cameras, with the aim of including them in the creative toolkit for Art and Technology. It is important to consider that the experiment described here was developed using a methodology specific to the artistic realm. Our objective in experimenting with artificial intelligence devices was to push the logical limits of programming with the aim of inducing error, deviation, and hallucination. In this context, failures take on the status of a creative event. This approach is situated within a perspective in which technology acquires a more complex ontology than that of

a mere tool, becoming a semiotic machine capable of operating in the field of symbolic possibilities. When the artist subverts the intended functioning and provokes error—whether through unconventional inputs or by accepting failure as form—they surpass the game proposed by Flusser and enter the territory that Gilbert Simondon (2005) names functional superabundance: the machine's capacity to exceed the purposes for which it was designed. Glitch Art, in this context, serves as a paradigm: it embraces dysfunctionality as a poetic force and suggests that technical error can be converted into an expressive sign. In the artistic-experimental use of AI, hallucination, seen as a flaw under the paradigm of rationality, becomes an aesthetic opening, evidence that meaning can emerge from the heuristic relationship between artist and machine. The proposed experiment did not aim to confirm hypotheses or ensure the reproducibility of results, but, as an artistic practice, it sought to dislodge error from its negative place, discovering its creative potential and stretching the expressive potential of LLMs.

To enable exploration of the limits of LLMs and make room for that which differentiates us from the machine—creativity, intuition, the unconscious—the choice was made to employ Glitch Art, using prompts constructed with the aid of cut-up techniques.

This is an artistic technique rooted in the avant-garde of the early 20th century, in which text is physically cut up and reorganized to generate unexpected meanings. Its conceptual seeds were planted by the Dadaists in the 1920s. Tristan Tzara, for example, instructed poets to randomly pull words from a newspaper to create verses, subverting traditional authorship. Recognizing its potential, the American writer William S. Burroughs, in the 1950s, became an eminent literary representative of this compositional technique. Filmmaker Antony Balch collaborated with Burroughs and Brion Gysin, painter and writer, to explore cut-ups in films, while musicians, like David Bowie, adopted the technique for song lyrics in the 1970s. Although rooted in analog practices, the method anticipated today's remix culture and digital randomness. The cut-up is present in postmodern literature, music, visual arts, and even in AI-generated texts.

For Burroughs, the cut-up wasn't merely a technique; it was a method where random juxtapositions revealed manifestations of the unconscious. Both collage and cut-up invite accident as a collaborator, transforming the chaotic into the poetic and found fragments into revelations, creating meaning not through control, but through serendipity.

Considering that the operational domain of both the artist and LLMs is language, interest arose in exploring the output of these technologies within the context of image production that could bring forth content from the unconscious as language: symbolic, dreamlike, distant from mimesis and objectivity (de Castro, 2009). Our choices were influenced by collages such as Hannah Höch's feminist work "Cut with the Kitchen Knife" (1919) and Raoul Hausman's socially critical and emblematic production "ABCD" (1923-1924). The proposal involved pushing the logical boundaries of the programming, subverting it by requesting the machine process prompts phrased in the specific language of the unconscious, aiming to induce hallucinations in the AI within the aesthetic framework of Glitch Art.

To ensure the objectives were met, each student in the course was asked to bring a cherished book on the scheduled date, from which the base words would be obtained. Furthermore, to accentuate the randomness of the experiment, one student used three different dice. When rolled, these would respectively indicate: the page number from which to extract the word, the line number on that page, and finally, the position of the selected word within that line. It was then the student's task to follow these instructions, counting words to arrive at the one designated for use in constructing the prompt.

With ten students and the professor present, the selection process began. The same procedure was executed eleven times, until all participants had the eleven words in hand. All words selected in the books happened to be in Brazilian Portuguese language. These were the selected words (with one possible English translation): "Rabino (Rabbi)", "vez (time)"; "certos (certain)"; "mídias (media)"; " norte (north)"; "ninguém (nobody)"; "camarão (shrimp)"; "simples (simple)"; "rejeição (rejection)"; "caçaba (not directly translatable)"; "opor (to oppose)". Each participant individually arranged the words according to their intended meaning, thus drafting their own prompt. The prompt had



**Figure 1 -** *Prompt: "Create an image based on the following text: Time certain media north rabbi nobody shrimp simple rejection caçaba oppose." (Translated from Portuguese)*

**Figure 2 -** *Prompt: "Create an image based on the following text: Certain rabbis from the north will occasionally oppose nobody out of simple rejection of the caçaba and the shrimp in the northern media." (Translated from Portuguese)*

to contain all the selected words, and participants were forbidden from inserting any other words, even for the purpose of connecting or giving sense to the obtained word set.

Another student volunteered to access the GPT-4 model (DALL-E 3) and input the prompts, requesting the machine generate images in response. For example: "Create an image based on the following text: Time certain media north rabbi nobody shrimp simple rejection caçaba oppose" (translated from Portuguese).

After generating the third image, it was observed that using the same chat window to generate subsequent images



**Figure 3 -** *Prompt: "Create an image based on the following text with a Dadaist montage style: certain media reject the caçaba from the north of the shrimp rabbi." (Translated from Portuguese)*

resulted in outputs maintaining a consistent image style. To overcome this limitation, the group began using a new chat window for each prompt. Subsequently, the words were rearranged within the prompts, this time permitting the insertion of other words—such as connecting words (e.g., 'of', 'with', 'in')—to help construct a short narrative, while attempting not to significantly alter the core sense derived from the original word set. Now the prompt "*Create an image based on the following text: Time certain media north rabbi nobody shrimp simple rejection caçaba oppose*" (translated from Portuguese) evolved into "*Create an image based on the following text: The [story] this time is that certain media say that, when opposing the rabbis of the north, nobody presents a rejection of a simple shrimp in the caçaba*" (translated from Portuguese). The AI's response differed substantially from the one obtained with the first prompt, a finding that was also noted in the other instances.

In the next step, the group proceeded to intentionally select the style to be used by the AI for each image—for instance, "expressionist style," "in the style of artist Adriana Varejão's sculpture technique," or "surrealist style with paper cutouts"—representing a move towards increasing complexity. The translation of a prompt into a foreign language (English) was also tested. For example: "*Create an image based on the following text in a Dadaist montage style: certain media reject the hunt in the north of the rabbi shrimp*" (original text prompt).

## Results

The AI's response made it possible to observe several biases. Notable among these were the characteristics attributed to the rabbi (religious bias), the representation of media (with a prevalence of digital and TV media over other forms), and even social stereotypes—such as poverty, the predominance of television, juvenile delinquency, etc.—when Brazil was mentioned in the prompt. Furthermore, the absence of certain concepts or words from the AI's vocabulary—often because they lack a direct equivalent or common usage in English—led to gaps in the image content. For example, the program ignored or misinterpreted the concept "*caçaba*" (coarse cassava flour), which was either replaced by another symbol or omitted entirely. The conclusion drawn is that this points to a colonial bias in the machine's learning process, as it overlooks culturally specific or regionally known items like the "*caçaba*".

## Concluding Remarks

Based on the results obtained, the viability of exploring LLMs for artistic purposes is evident, positioning them as tools that enable artists to expand their creative horizons.

**Figure 4 -** *Prompt:* "*Create an image based on the following tex considering Brazil as the setting:* Rejection of the shrimp: opposing certain media to a simple rabbi." (Translated from Portuguese)

Even if the focus of the present work is aesthetic experimentation with artificial intelligence, we cannot ignore the ethical, political, and social implications inherent in the technologies with which we work. The machines we use—AI algorithms, neural networks, language models—are not neutral; they operate based on data and patterns constructed within historical contexts marked by racial, gender, and class inequalities.

Jacques Rancière (2004) offers us a key to understanding the political role of art, not as a bearer of explicit ideological content, but as a reconfigurer of the sensible. In this sense, by appropriating AI to explore its errors, glitches, and hallucinations, the artist intervenes in the functional regime of technology, producing other possibilities of sensibility and thought. Failing to do so may, in turn, ultimately lead to the "symbolic emptying of artistic practice with AI" (Ferro, 2025). Despite verifying the creative and collaborative potential in using these tools, it is imperative to address the ethical issues stemming from the choices made when utilizing such models. Ethics, in this context, must be viewed as an essential part of technological practice, considering how the accumulation of social, economic, and environmental risks associated with these technologies intersects with human vulnerabilities (Kaufman, 2024).

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