When the Audience Steps In: Art, Participation, and Artificial Intelligence

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From my perspective, the idea of collective intelligences in the arts and culture today might be understood as any project that uses AI as a central component. Specifically, some of these projects reveal how AI works by helping visitors to understand, at least to some extent, what is behind the interface and the possibilities these systems open up. This awareness may encourage audiences to engage in knowledge production and feel closer to understanding a field that often seems out of reach for the average user.

In my proposal, I would like to discuss some AI-based artworks and use them as examples of this approach. Furthermore, the idea of collective intelligence and Audience Science resonates deeply with me, especially concerning any form of interactive art—whether intentionally interactive or provoking unexpected interaction with the audience. If we move from focusing on individual projects to considering the space where these experiences are taking place, as a visual artist, I envision museums and cultural centers as the venues for implementing such systems. In there, audience interaction with exhibitions or performances based on collective intelligence can be either passive or active. This conscious/unconscious dichotomy is also worth exploring.

By ‘interactive’, I do not refer only to digital or computer-based artworks, but also to analog systems and non-computational interactive models. For instance, any exhibition or artwork that requires the audience to physically interact in order to complete the work may be considered interactive. Alongside this interactivity, machine learning is inherently based on data collection, which opens up the possibility of designing interactions where collective intelligence anticipates audience needs through predictive systems. Sharing their experience may help develop perspectives and viewpoints whose value exceeds the sum of their parts, thanks to how neural networks work. Therefore, collective intelligence is also closely tied to participation and the creation of more or less ephemeral working groups, in which the audience contributes as co-researchers.