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The artrepreneur's Kintsugi: ethics of repair in platformized creativity

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1 Introduction

Social media is the new kiln of creativity in the age of curated fractures, synonymously, celebrated imperfections. Artrepreneurs—artist entrepreneurs—use social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Etsy, etc., to mold and shape their careers. Social media platforms may appear as a democratic, open gallery, but the content curation is anything but impartial. Hidden under the latent and enchanting grids of an AI-powered mechanism, it is often influenced by algorithmic filters that prioritize visibility and content based on engagement metrics. Social media platforms tend to blur and downplay the vast content moderation they engage in, as well as the way they algorithmically rank and emphasize their content, which affects the discourse being discussed by people. As a result, platforms have the power to control visibility such that certain content is visible, therefore pushing other content or even a community of users out of sight (Gillespie, 2019). In this machine-mediated and AI-integrated virtual world, does the act of self-expression really matter? And so we ask a prominent question, in a platform dominated by likes, loops, and logarithms: What kind of aesthetic expression survives in the relentless heat of digital culture, and which imperfections are permitted to flourish? Besides, the conflict between what is rewarded by the platforms and what is desired to be created by artists can also be explained in terms of the difference between the beautiful and the aesthetic. Whereas, the platform-friendly smoothness, symmetry and optimization are those attributes that define the beautiful, experience, rupture and emergence qualities that are praised in Kintsugi and inhibited in algorithms are those of the aesthetic. The neuro-aesthetics and complexity theory inform that aesthetic experience is in the irregular, new, and deviated, often instead of the smooth uniformity (Chatterjee, 2013). In that regard, the beautiful is promoted by digital platforms, at the expense of the aesthetic, and Kintsugi is not only a metaphor of restoration, but also a counter-aesthetic position. For emerging artrepreneurs, social media platforms provide a promising climate in which to deliver their creative freedom, yet only things eerily closer to aesthetic servitude. Beneath the sleek interface of Instagram and TikTok lies an invisible machine: a machine that favors stability over spontaneity, predictability over exploration and enhancement over originality. In this paper, "artrepreneurs" refers specifically to creators whose artistic visibility and livelihood rely substantially on platform-based ecosystems (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Etsy). While some insights may extend to broader cultural and creative industries, the analysis is intentionally centered on platform-dependent art entrepreneurship, where algorithmic governance most directly shapes creative labor.

2 The Kintsugi metaphor and its origins

The underlying reality invites the metaphor to the limelight—Kintsugi, the art of repairing broken pottery with gold. Kintsugi translates to "Golden Journey" and emerged in fifteenth-century Japan when a shogun sent a broken tea bowl to China for repair. The eventual dissatisfaction with the returned version of the bowl, modified using unsightly metal staples, acted as the muse for the creation of a new, aesthetically pleasing technique. Japanese artists renewed the bowl by mending broken pieces using lacquer dusted with powdered gold, silver or platinum. Kintsugi is a lot more than a technique- it is a deeply rooted philosophy for an aesthetic cognition of finding beauty in imperfection and incompleteness. It highlights the damage rather than hiding it. Kintsugi is not reluctant to reveal and exhibit the flaws; rather, it amplifies them, turning fractures into features. It celebrates imperfections, teaching the value of highlighting the wound rather than concealing it. In this regard, Kintsugi stands both as a literal and symbolic act—it honors transformation and safeguards the quiet dignity of broken things. In contrast, AI that governs social media aesthetics reward only smooth and polished art, disabling Kintsugi from trending. The algorithm lacks polish, is unpredictable, and relies on seamless perfection for rewards. But it is high time the fragmented, patched and raw art gets its recognition, which it deserves in contemporary discourse.

2.1 Kintsugi within Japanese aesthetic and philosophical traditions

Kintsugi is not just an individual craft method but a reflection of profound Japanese aesthetic philosophies. It is grounded in wabi-sabi—accepting imperfection, asymmetry, and incompleteness—and mono no aware, the recognition that all things are fleeting and acquire significance through transformation. In the tea culture of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, bowls that had been repaired were valued not only for being fixed, but because their visible seams told a story of attention, time, and use. Often, a mended item acquired more cultural significance than an unblemished one due to its evidence of human presence and fragility. By situating Kintsugi within these customs, its ethical significance becomes more apparent: it prioritizes slowness over haste, deliberate focus over mechanization, and visible flaws over flawless disguise. Kintsugi is thus not an abstract metaphor from outside, but a contextual aesthetic principle rooted in a cultural legacy of mending and change.

3 Theoretical foundations

Digital platforms monetize attention, data, and labor by making them the central element of a new phase of capitalism where economic exploitation of data is the most significant characteristic. They act as market coordinators, and they have the necessary structure to facilitate transactions among various groups. One of the most important strategies is the exploitation of network effects, in which the value of the platform grows linearly with the number of users, which inevitably causes the tendency toward monopolization as more users will result in more attracted users, which would result in a more efficient platform. Also, platforms use cross-subsidization, where they provide a high number of services free to users, and then they monetize these services through other sources that offset the services provided in the form of free services. This provides an opportunity to collect enormous data with a high number of users and monetize it. Finally, platforms themselves have considerable governance compared to other actors since they influence the interactions, value creation, and distribution within the ecosystems of their platforms by defining rules of interaction, which makes algorithmic curation more of a type of economic control than technical mediation (Silva Neto, 2019).

The concept of algorithmic governance is introduced as a constructive force, actively entailing social order, behavior, and norms, and abandoning the notion of digital technologies as the passive mirror of the current social organization. This model characterizes algorithms as modes of social organization, which involve sophisticated logics of computers to organize actors and to govern social situations in a non-state-centered, decentralized fashion. Claiming that the institutional nature of software as a form of regulation, the paper suggests that algorithmic curation is a kind of power that selectively controls the risk, changes behavior intentionally, which is observable in such applications as predictive policing or automated content moderation. Finally, the paper disavows a techno-determinist perspective, in the sense that algorithms are closely tied to economic, cultural, and political circumstances, and as complex entities with the potential to be biased, they are not at all neutral, and can tend to reinforce the status quo (Katzenbach and Ulbricht, 2019).

The Culture of Connectivity by Jose van Dijck assumes a non-neutral but coded system of social participation, visibility and influence by social architecture through social activities, which are coded to a computational architecture on the social media platforms. This engineering is studied within the framework of technology, usage/user, content, ownership, governance and business models. Technology (defined as software, hardware, and services) employs such components as algorithms and interfaces to shape social acts to draw a distinction between the connecters (social value) and the connectivity (automated, revenue-driven connections). Platforms affect user interaction by shaping the type of interaction and the production and flow of content on the platform through its technological affordances. This engagement forms an ecosystem of connective media in which the design of platforms and their usage are mutually shaped and show how participation, visibility, and affect are systematically designed in such digital spaces (Kaun, 2014).

Playing the visibility game is a way of explaining the process by which digital influencers engage with algorithms on social media platforms such as Instagram in a conscious way, continuing the tradition of gaming the system. As this framework points out, although algorithms organize the behavior of users, they do not dictate it in isolation. The influencers actively conduct research activities to learn the opaque structure of the Instagram algorithm and consider it an influential and enigmatic power that determines visibility. This usually means running their own A/B

testing to figure out effective tactics to gain more interaction and more followers, which they consider necessary to win the game. These algorithmic cues are interpreted differently by them, resulting in different strategy selections, as informed by current discourses of authenticity and entrepreneurship to achieve either a relational approach based on truth or a simulated approach based on measurements and manipulation of strategy. This dynamic can explain why the algorithmic cues are internalized by the influencers that shape the creative and strategic work in a way that it supports its perceived platform expectations to maneuver around a landscape in which visibility is both a reward and an ongoing negotiation (Cotter, 2019).

These platform dynamics echo the larger concept of the fact that contemporary art exists in what can be termed as an aesthetic regime, where art is characterized not by ideal representation but the capacity to destabilize what is seen, known or reasonable. Instead of following more traditional practices that prized harmony, symmetry and mimetic precision, contemporary creative practices tend to prefigure disruption, vagueness and independence. The algorithmic environments, however, have a tendency of reinstating a sort of representational discipline by giving precedence to formats that are predictable, polished and classifiable easily. Kintsugi, with its practice of fractures and open seams, is in line with this aesthetic inclination to disrupt and break expressively, and is a counter to the tendency of the platform to smooth out, optimize, and standardize creative objects.

4 Algorithmic coercion and the artrepreneur

Social media's promise of equitable visibility has shifted into a system of curated prominence, where algorithms designed to maximize engagement impose behavioral constraints on artists. Rather than free experimentation, artrepreneurs now engage in calibration: they produce what "works" for the platform instead of what they intend to create. Creativity becomes forced and filtered—hashtags replace brush strokes, thumbnails replace composition, and the golden seams of Kintsugi, once symbolic of individuality and endurance, appear instead as commercial scars optimized for visibility. AI not only shapes what is seen, but increasingly determines what is made.

This coercion operates differently across platform environments. On Instagram and TikTok, recommender systems elevate content based on engagement metrics—likes, shares, retention rates—which drives creators to adopt specific stylistic templates. TikTok's 'For You' feed privileges short, loopable clips that maximize watch time, while YouTube's recommendation engine rewards long-form consistency, encouraging series-based production. Etsy selectively ranks products based on conversion rates and commercial viability, influencing artists to alter pricing, titling, tagging practices, and even the aesthetic of the product itself to comply with algorithmic discoverability. Together, these platform-specific pressures form a programmable creative environment: artists adjust not to audiences, but to machine logics.

There are two Forms of Algorithmic Coercion:

(1) **Structural coercion** is defined as restrictions in the platform architecture ranking rules, moderation tools, and optimization metrics which constrain directly what can be done or how one is perceived by creators. This is a system-based external power.

(2) **Internalized coercion** is a situation where creators internalize the expectations of platforms into their own concept of themselves, and punish themselves in an attempt to produce work that is friendly to the algorithms. In this case, creators change their style, pace, and even identity under the expectation of algorithmic judgement. Kintsugi answers to each of them differently—To structural coercion, it requires openness and exposed stitching. To internalized coercion, it offers an ethic of creative self-compassion, resisting the pressure toward optimization-driven perfection.

Under such conditions, creativity becomes a form of labor shaped by data analytics rather than imagination. Many artrepreneurs describe themselves as content machines rather than artists, and the dopamine economy of likes often leads to exhaustion rather than fulfillment. Original creators increasingly compete with AI-generated art, further diminishing visibility. The concept of the "visibility game" helps explain this dynamic: creators must learn to "fit the feed" rather than challenge it, making creative freedom conditional—artists are free to be seen only if they obey.

This structural pressure is reinforced by the cultural economy of platform labor. The rise of the artrepreneur is tied to the conversion of cultural capital into economic capital within platform capitalism. The neoliberal ideology of self-branding is described as a response to unstable labor markets—positions artists not merely as creators, but as entrepreneurial subjects responsible for their own success or failure (Khamis et al., 2017). Algorithmic systems intensify this expectation. Artists market themselves to stay relevant, optimize content to satisfy algorithms, and internalize market logic as personal identity. In this convergence of labor, livelihood, and self-image, artistic autonomy is eroded. The character of the artrepreneur is another aspect that should be examined more closely. Although the rhetoric of entrepreneurship, and more generally, portrays creators as nimble, self-empowered agents, scholars believe that this rhetoric tends to downplay the structural precarity that platforms exacerbate. Entrepreneurial discourse personalizes the risk, obscuring the asymmetrical labor relations where creators take the risk but platforms gain value (Lindström, 2017). Therefore, artrepreneurship turns not only into a form of self-branding, but also a process by which creative labor is disciplined, responsibility given and optimized. Kintsugi ethics opposes this rationale by shifting the definition of value to care, process, and publicly acknowledged vulnerability as opposed to performance indicators. Creativity is reinvented as a reactionary act—a response to platform metrics—rather than an expressive one.

These worries are not hypothetical. TikTok has recorded instances where its moderation system has muted posts from disabled, queer, and marginalized creators on the grounds of stopping bullying, thereby obscuring the voices

that are already lacking representation. Likewise, YouTube's automated demonetization often marks artistic or activist content as harmful, only to reverse the decision later following appeals from creators. In both instances, the algorithmic split is present, yet the platform hides it. A Kintsugi-inspired principle would emphasize that these mistakes should be visible, recognized, and mended, rather than quietly removed.

5 The illusion of participation

We may be in a trap called "Artificial hell" where participation appears liberating but is always pre-scripted to be optimized. Artists and artrepreneurs are told that they are free to navigate, but there are invisible boundaries set by the platforms themselves. The feed adjusts itself, and ultimately, the algorithm is the winner. Eventually, our repairs too are performative (Bishop, 2013).

Participatory art installations, in contrast to platform participation, are governed by rules of engagement that are designed by the artist, whereas in platform participation, rules on what can be done are dictated by algorithmic architectures. Similar to the way that Bishop criticizes participatory art, where participation is structured toward some set aesthetic or political purpose, platform participation is also pre-scripted, but in this case by the logic of optimization, as opposed to preserving a creative purpose. The user is seen to participate but the parameters of participation are pre-determined by the design of the platform and not by an artistic agency.

6 Kintsugi as methodology

In an age obsessed with perfection, we can still choose to value the rough edge. We can create through the crack. In doing so, we reclaim the artistic agency from automated logarithms and digital validity. To include this shift, we must see platforms not as blank canvases but as advancing systems of limitations- treating frames as dynamic networking, always revamping influence and identity (Kearney, 2019). Artists are not just passive attention seekers, but active negotiators of relevance.

Kintsugi thus becomes more of a methodology than a metaphor. It reminds us that you can be imperfect and still be beautiful. You don't have to hide the cracks or scars. You don't have to heal invisibility. You can dismiss the autocracy of trendiness within the platform by cracking it open from within.

Viewed in this perspective, Kintsugi can be regarded as a resistance of aesthetics. Kintsugi anticipates the irregular, the unfinished and the expressive break instead of fitting in to platform-legible formats that prioritize coherence, speediness and optimization. This is congruent with the complexity-based conceptions of creativity where variation in systems is not based on uniformity but rather emergent variation, fractures, and adaptational evolution. The cracks are not a fault but the required aspect of artistic agency in platform spaces.

7 Distinguishing Kintsugi as metaphor, methodology, and aesthetic resistance

Kintsugi as a metaphor serves as a descriptive prism: it assists us to recognize how platforms conceal the faults of algorithms, moderation mistakes, and optimization wounds. The metaphor sheds light on the usually hidden stuff, messiness, biasness, and breakage of creativity.

Kintsugi as a process is however prescriptive: it suggests an ethic of visible mending and slow platform design. In this case, Kintsugi is a prescriptive model that proposes how platforms should respond to failure, namely, revealing seams instead of covering them with plaster.

Kintsugi as aesthetic resistance is the practice of a creator: artists accept the principle of incompleteness, improvisation and are opposed to optimization-related perfection. This makes Kintsugi a cultural strategy where artrepreneurs disorient platform coercion by pre-empting the discontinuous and unfinished.

All these differences explain the analysis, normative and creative labor Kintsugi submits in this paper so that it does not seem to be a single or excessively generalized analogy.

8 Kintsugi ethics: embracing imperfection and rebirth

Kintsugi (also known as kintsukuroi—the act of repairing with gold), the Japanese art of Kintsugi, offers a comprehensive moral response, which is grounded in the acceptance and appreciation of the fractures and vulnerabilities of the wholeness of life. It brings out this sensitive form of beauty in which the breaking is taken as an opportunity to create something new and more beautiful rather than to conceal the defects. The activity of overcoming crises and restoring itself is embodied in the golden scars, which are not merely the seals, but the vital markings of the interaction of a given physiognomy, a specific state of a subject or an object obtains. It means that not self-enforced, but open-minded to the world, true singularity manifests itself when it is the so-called alien and valuable material, or the manifestation of relations of care, that aids in healing and enriching oneself. And lastly, the Kintsugi ethics says that wounding, when befriended as an opening, and incorporated in it, is the significant residue of an expressive mode of relating to the world that produces a profound sense of individuality that incorporates a prior experience and interaction.

Kintsugi ethics is another development of the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with gold, in which the cracks are not regarded as the location where the pottery has been destroyed and lost its meaning, but as the location where new value is developed. This model assumes, on an ethical basis, that creative systems are not designed to remove imperfection, failure or diversion, but rather bring it into view in the designer. Kintsugi, instead of repairing seamlessness, extolls process, contingency and repair as values of the aesthetic and ethical. This exposure of cracks is not concerned with closure but rather a repetitive process of exposure and transformation between weakness and change. In this respect, Kintsugi ethics supports the heterogeneity, capacity for creative

agency, and expressive autonomy that are typically destroyed by algorithmic optimization (Randazzo and Ammari, 2025).

Kintsugi equally embodies a philosophy of compassion. A damaged item is not thrown away; it is carefully kept, repaired, and allowed time. This contrasts sharply with the platform ethic of scale, where human judgment is supplanted by automation, and deliberation is overshadowed by speed. Kintsugi values the artisanal and the purposeful, indicating that creative processes ought to accommodate exploration, unsuccessful efforts, and projects still under development. An ethical platform does not eliminate roughness, but lets it stay apparent. In this regard, Kintsugi contests the industrialization of creativity by appreciating the gradual and flawed instead of the mechanized and flawless.

In attempting to situate Kintsugi ethics within the framework of existing debates concerning digital ethics and media studies, one might aim to compare it to three strong frameworks that include Value-Sensitive Design (Friedman, 1996), algorithmic fairness (Katzenbach and Ulbricht, 2019) and design justice (Costanza-Chock, 2018). Their attempts to seek harm minimization in digitally mediated spaces are both efforts to find ethical improvement, but each of them takes it as an assumption that ethical improvement is achieved through the process of system behavior smoothing or optimization. In contrast, Kintsugi ethics implies that the imperfection and friction is hidden, as the aesthetic and political capital of those who are not homogenized consists in visibility. Value-Sensitive Design (VSD) brings the values of the stakeholders to the technology design, where the ethical values are diagnosed and corrected at the earliest stage, and the systems are modified to be ethically favorable to promote the morally desirable behavior. It considers human values such as independence and justice as a priority. Frameworks of algorithmic fairness attempt to offset the discriminatory implications mathematically, typically by attempting to equalize statistical parity between the classes of society. Design justice re-imagines design authority by placing the powerless groups at the center and destabilizing the structures that perpetuate structural inequality. All three frameworks aim at minimizing harm; however, in most instances, restoring order, seamlessness, and optimization.

Kintsugi ethics offers a third way: it is not focused on the perfection of systems but on exposing their seams. Instead of polishing the creative conflict, it retains the cracks, the trace of exploration and deviation or repair as a part of cultural production. Kintsugi ethics also involves visibility (unlike the comfort of VSD, which is more worried about mitigation, and algorithmic fairness, which is more worried about correction); creators should be capable of seeing how algorithms affect their practice, influence aesthetics, and restrict what can be seen on the internet. In contrast to design justice that concerns itself with the redistribution of participating power, Kintsugi ethics are aesthetic. It claims the right to fragmentation, roughness, incompleteness, and even to presence.

Although the Kintsugi philosophy provides an intriguing perspective on media restoration, not every aspect transfers effortlessly. Kintsugi depends on carefulness, artistry, and human discernment, while platform systems are designed for automation, efficiency, and expansion. In Kintsugi, repairs are apparent and accentuated, while digital platforms typically hide flaws like algorithmic bias, ranking issues, and moderation mistakes to preserve their commercial integrity. Consequently, it's worth is not as an idealized answer, but as a vital counter-logic—a means to reconsider platform culture by highlighting the flaws that platforms tend to conceal. This clarification is crucial to ensure that Kintsugi does not turn into a one-size-fits-all solution; rather, it serves as a specific ethical perspective that questions the standards of platform governance (Table 1).

To take an example, on TikTok, fairness metrics can even diversify the recommended, although the algorithm still bans what seems messy, low-production, and experimental. Kintsugi ethics dictate that these imperfect pieces of work must not merely exist, but be brought out as culturally significant donations as opposed to being buried under the veil of engagement-based optimization. Unlike optimization-driven frameworks, which assume that ethical improvement relies on smoothing system behavior, Kintsugi ethics insists that friction, opacity, and rupture are part of cultural meaning-making rather than pathologies to eliminate. Platform ethics is reconceptualized in this as reducing volatility to pursue aesthetic pluralism, experimentation, and visible repair.

8.1 Kintsugi-inflected responses to platform harms

The current opinion piece highlights specific platform issues—algorithmic opacity, content moderation, monopolization, and user exploitation—but each becomes clearer when associated with a Kintsugi-inspired approach to repair:

- Algorithmic Transparency → Apparent Flaws.
  Platforms may implement transparency dashboards that display how ranking systems prioritize content. Kintsugi ethics prioritizes visible seams over seamless curation, allowing creators to grasp why certain works gain traction while others fade away.
- Errors in Content Moderation → Correction by the Public.
  When removals, shadow bans, or demonetization happen, platforms can offer repair logs: public clarifications, user rights to challenge decisions, and clear documentation of rectified errors. The mistake is not concealed, but recognized and corrected.
- Platform Monopolies and Optimization Culture → Nurturing and Deliberation.
  While optimization promotes rapid posting and quickness, Kintsugi ethics prioritize gradual creation, revisions, and incomplete projects. Platforms might develop voluntary "slow feeds" or trial zones that aren't regulated by engagement metrics.
  Mixed results are recorded on some empirical research into the topic of alternative or experimental digital spaces: although niche or non-optimized feeds can be beneficial in making marginalized creators more visible, they are also a potential source of segregated so-called alternative spaces low in cross-platform coverage(Bishop, 2013; Cotter, 2019) Recognition of this tension would mean that designs inspired Kintsugi should not be ghettoized but instead be incorporated into the mainstream feed instead of being segregated.
- User Exploitation and Data Retrieval → Crafted and Deliberate Design.

TABLE 1 What Kintsugi ethics contributes beyond existing digital ethics frameworks.

Framework	Core goal	What it protects	What it hides	What Kintsugi ethics adds
Value-sensitive design	Incorporate stakeholder values in system design	Human-centered values	Friction, flaws, creative conflict	Makes friction visible; treats imperfection as part of ethical design
Algorithmic fairness	Statistically equalize outcomes	Bias mitigation	How optimization shapes behavior and creativity	Demands transparency of algorithmic influence; values heterogeneity even if imperfect
Design justice	Redistribute design power	Marginalized users	Systemic aesthetic homogenization	Artistic and cultural pluralism as outcome, not just access
Kintsugi ethics	Visibility of imperfection and creative repair	Artistic agency, process, and heterogeneity	-	Treats "cracks" as value; resists perfection enforced by algorithms

Rather than viewing users as mere data sources, platforms might focus on human-curated playlists, non-algorithmic exploration methods, and purposeful exposure for innovative, chaotic, or non-commercial art.

These do not romanticize Kintsugi as a solution for everything, but illustrate how its principles of visible mending, attention, and purpose can transform platform governance.

9 Ethical frameworks for algorithmic creativity

Creativity, unlike algorithmic optimization, must have an ethical structure that takes into consideration artistic freedom and technological agency. Algorithms are not value-neutral since they are embedded into systems of efficiency, interaction and predictability. Ethical governance ought to be based upon three core values, namely transparency, accountability and inclusivity, so that it can foster, not suppress creativity. To empower artists to make informed creative decisions, transparency requires platforms to reveal how algorithmic logics are applied to work out which works are shown, boosted, and monetized. Platform designers have a moral obligation not to act in a manner that endorses optimization policies that hide artistic diversity or reinforce cultural hierarchies to be accountable. Inclusivity focuses on the plurality of creative values by the system by ensuring that the algorithm design process includes artists, ethicists and users into the process, ensuring the system incorporates a multiplicity of creative values, as opposed to a single metric of interaction. The strategy is consistent with a theoretical view referred to as Kintsugi ethics, which places the restoration of objects above their replacement, as well as valuing inhomogeneity above homogeneity. In the same way Kintsugi acknowledges cracks to create beauty, ethical design in digital creativity must reveal the existence of algorithms instead of hiding them and allow creators to have a more significant agency over the limits of technology. Through their synthesis, platforms can be shifted to an ecosystem of algorithmic pluralism where the algorithms will not exclude innovation, but facilitate it.

Algorithmic pluralism refers to the coexistence of multiple algorithmic logics—beyond a single optimization metric—allowing different forms of creative value to surface. Rather than ranking content solely by predicted engagement, pluralistic systems incorporate diversity, experimentation, and creative process as parallel evaluative criteria (Helberger, 2019).

10 Conclusion: defiantly complete

Kintsugi is not a comprehensive remedy for platform capitalism; it cannot alone address monopolization, surveillance, or algorithmic abuse. Nonetheless, it provides a significant aesthetic principle that questions the quest for flawless perfection. By embracing transparency, noticeable repair, and diversity, Kintsugi creates an environment for creative freedom within frameworks that typically prioritize optimization and uniformity. Not all beauty is made to be admired. Some creations are anchored in endurance—imperfect, obvious, and defiantly complete.

By situating Kintsugi within broader debates in aesthetics, platform labor, and emerging AI systems such as SLMs, this article affirms that ethical creative practice requires embracing—not erasing—fracture. A pluralistic, visible, and process-oriented digital ecology is not merely desirable but essential for artistic autonomy in platformed culture. The algorithm may orchestrate what's seen, but it cannot control or dictate the value of creations. In choosing to create through fragments and showcasing imperfections, we remind both ourselves and our audiences in the social media age that true art, like Kintsugi pottery, carries its roots with pride.

10.1 Theoretical contribution

This article is relevant to the ethics of media as it re-expresses the problems of platform governance as an aesthetic problem, but a technical or regulatory one. Rather than assuming that the harms that an optimization process can heal require continuous optimization, according to Kintsugi ethics, the imperfection, fragmentation or visible processes are ethical good in themselves, which protect creative autonomy. Cultural labor scholarship in the creative industries is argued to be related to the algorithmic systems since it shows how the logic of visibility recodes the creative work and the logic of self-branding, and creative labor conditions. Finally, this is one more work in an algorithmic culture, where the questions of fairness and transparency are postulated, but to make the creative process and aesthetic heterogeneity possible, the interventions of algorithms are not to be hidden but made transparent instead.

10.2 Practical implications

This orientation comes with specific policy and platform design principles. First, platforms could provide creators with an

overview of the visibility of their works and how it is evaluated by recommendation systems and ranked. Second, platforms could experiment with additional ranking models like the process-first feeds that prefer experimenting, incomplete work, and non-optimized art. Third, the regulators and the government of the industry may engage artists and small-scale creators in the audit of platforms, such that cultural and aesthetic values will be considered along with economic indicators. These interventions would ensure that the creative platforms are not only based on the optimization-only rationales of creative media but also on an infrastructure that will guarantee the availability of diversity, experimentation and freedom of expression.

Lastly, Kintsugi ethics redefines the production in online platforms as a restoration and not an excellence. The creators who are opposed to homogenization can be encouraged by admitting that cracks are valuable remnants useful to be embraced rather than errors that should be hidden, and by making art to be rebelliously complete.

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