

Nanopublication – Protocol Art moves authorship into the rule, but its rhetoric dissolves the given layer the framework refuses to dissolve

by Arnaud Quercy

The boundary runs between 'authorship migrates to the rule' – which the framework holds cleanly via P3a and P26 – and 'the manifestation dissolves into the rule,' which Protocol Art's rhetoric flirts with and which P3a's constraint against dissolving the given invariant refuses to grant.

WHAT THE SOURCE SAYS [1]

Reviewing the Venice exhibition 'Strange Rules,' the article reports the curators' concept of 'Protocol Art': practices where the artwork is not the visual or sonic thing encountered but the underlying rule, algorithm, or infrastructural logic that generates it – 'the protocol is not the subject of art: it is the art.' Authorship, on this account, resides in designing the generative structure (e.g., Ken Stanley's Picbreeder interface, Michael Levin's genetic manipulation protocol) rather than in any particular resulting image or object, whose 'location' can shift across formats and instances. Elsewhere in the piece, Chatonsky and Soulard argue that AI-era authorship survives not in the final image but by an author choosing models, training corpora, configuring processes, and 'accepting the material consequences of their choices' across the whole operational chain – distinguishing authored work from anonymous 'slop.'

WHERE THE LENS GRIPS

The central move – authorship located in the generative structure rather than in any single manifestation, 'the location of the art isn't fixed' – grips P3a's distinction between the given invariant (the material fact) and the instituted invariant (the rule that elects relations, decipherable only through the codex). The description of Picbreeder's authorship lying 'in the orchestration of participation' rather than in the resulting images reads cleanly through P26's engineered, designed diffraction. Chatonsky and Soulard's definition of authorship as 'accepting the material consequences of their choices' across 'the entire operational chain' also grips P31's eth-

ical center: responsibility for conditions surviving the release of control over outcomes.

WHERE IT BREAKS

Protocol Art pushes one step further than P3a licenses. Where the framework insists the given invariant 'cannot be dissolved' and 'is received as constraint' regardless of codex access, Protocol Art's rhetoric demotes the manifestation to contingent surface – near-interchangeable, almost eliminable, since 'the location of the art isn't fixed.' P3a's carefully maintained duality (both layers real, neither collapsing into the other) is not what the source argues; the source argues for a near-collapse of the given into the instituted. This is a real edge rather than a refutation: nothing here contradicts P3a, but the source's rhetoric would need P3a's 'existence is not success' clause to hold the given layer's status against its own erasure of it. Separately, Picbreeder's participant-shaped image generation is a poor fit for P17's model of N distinct receptions of one fixed wave – the image does not yet exist as emission when participants act on it, which is closer to iterative co-construction than to post-hoc diffraction; citing P17 here would be a stretch the source does not support.

PROPOSITIONAL GRID [2]

Read this grid. “Not evaluated” does **not** mean the source has nothing to say about that proposition. It means **the reading did not instruct it**. That is not a result, and it counts in no denominator. A silence, by contrast, is a finding: the reading touched the proposition without concluding, or noted its absence itself.

Evaluated

proposition		audit status	relational verdict
P3a	Double Structure of the Invariant	audited	evidence-for
P17	Multiplication of Creation	not audited	pressure-against
P26	Induced Diffraction	not audited	evidence-for
P31	Ethical Center	not audited	evidence-for

What was instructed. These propositions have been judged and carry a current statement: it is **that** statement the reading tested, not the founding one.

- **P3a** – judged in Note 05 · current statement : say GIVEN invariant and INSTITUTED invariant, never 'physical' and 'intentional' – the axis is MODE OF EXISTENCE, read as regime of access: the given is what a sensor measures on the surface WITHOUT the codex; the instituted is the rule that elects relations in that surface and that only the disclosed codex deciphers

Not evaluated (33) – P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P14a, P14b, P15, P16, P16a, P18, P18a, P19, P19a, P20, P21, P22, P23, P24, P25, P27, P28, P29, P30

Overall verdict: Bounded – taxonomy of the August 2026 pass, predating the move to relational verdicts. Kept as metadata: the gap between the two forms is data, not residue. This reading's judgement is in the grid above.

Reading of 2026-08-18 · model claude-sonnet-5
· source 15,882 chars · 2 attempt(s)

REFERENCES

- [1] In 'Strange Rules,' an Epic Show with a Bold Vision For What Counts as Art. ARTnews.com, 2026-08-18. <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/artists/strange-rules-venice-exhibition-asks-what-is-art-1234795127/>
- [2] Quercy, A. (2026). The 31 Propositions of Ideamorphism. <https://ideamorphism.org/en/publications/2026/03/the-31-propositions-of-ideamorphism.html>

EPISTEMIC PROFILE

Claim type	boundary reading
Voice	third person analysis
Epistemic status	bounded grip
Methodology	Boundary-finding lens applied to one source, model claude-sonnet-5, 2 attempt(s), traceability check passed.

CHECKSUM (SHA-256)

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