
Creative Resistance: Algorithmic Governance, Cultural Policy, and the Precarity of Digital Art Labor on Global Platforms

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Abstract

This paper explores the emerging contestations and organizing efforts within the field of digital art labor, with a focus on platform-based curatorial and creative work. As global platforms increasingly mediate access, monetization, and visibility in the creative economy, media artists, curators, and cultural workers find themselves navigating a hybrid terrain of algorithmic governance, copyright precarity, and transnational labor fragmentation.

Drawing from my dual expertise in cultural policy and digital art curation, this research investigates how creative workers resist exploitative platformization through both institutional and grassroots strategies. The study builds on qualitative data from artist interviews, policy documents, and case studies, including platform ecosystems like Niiro Art and collaborations across public institutions in Korea and Europe. It maps out how algorithmic curation, tokenized exposure, and contractual asymmetries impact artistic agency, authorship, and economic survival—particularly for freelance and underrepresented creators.

The paper situates these findings within a broader policy context, including recent legislative interventions such as Korea's artist employment insurance system and international debates on platform accountability in the cultural sector. It highlights how creative resistance is not only expressed through traditional labor protests, but also via digital counter-use practices: metadata manipulation, open-source cultural activism, artist unions, and cooperatively run curatorial tools that subvert centralized control.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the growing field of digital labor studies by placing the cultural and artistic sector—often overlooked in labor analysis—at the center of debates on platform capitalism and algorithmic control. It expands the concept of "worker organizing" to include affective labor, curatorial negotiations, and policy interventions that challenge invisibility and precarity in digital creative work.

By bridging cultural policy research and digital labor theory, the paper advocates for a new framework to understand how creative workers collectively navigate and contest their conditions. It calls for a redefinition of resistance that includes not only formal unionization efforts but also creative, transnational, and hybrid strategies emerging from within the digital cultural industries.

Keywords: Creative economy Algorithmic governance Platform capitalism Digital art labor Platform, based curatorial work

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