# Making Art in an Age of Noise

 I often feel that I am making art against a background hum that never switches off. Before I enter the studio, I have already absorbed hundreds of images: artworks, advertisements, social media posts, and increasingly, AI-generated images that seem to multiply endlessly. They arrive without invitation and disappear just as quickly. This constant flow creates a condition of "noise"—visual, mental, and emotional—that shapes how I think, how I look, and how I work.
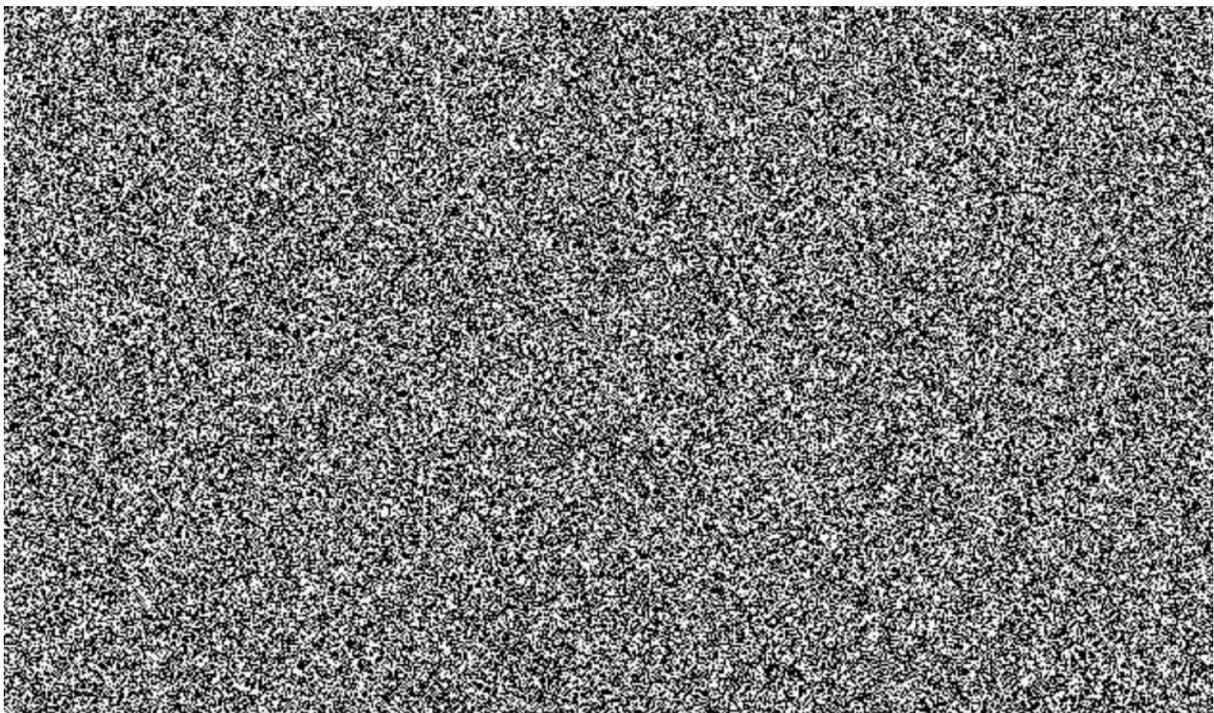
Noise today is not simply about quantity; it is about speed. Images circulate faster than reflection. Social media platforms reward immediacy, recognisability, and repetition, encouraging images to behave almost like flies: spreading rapidly, landing briefly, then moving on. AI-generated images intensify this condition. They appear fully formed, frictionless, and infinite, produced without visible labour or duration. Their ease of creation alters the visual environment in which human-made art now has to find its place.

As an artist, this raises difficult questions. What does it mean to spend weeks or months with a work when images can now be generated in seconds?

What kind of value does slowness hold when production has become instantaneous?

These are not only practical concerns, but philosophical ones. They touch on ideas of authorship, originality, and attention—concepts that have long underpinned artistic practice but now feel increasingly unstable.

Walter Benjamin, in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, argued that reproduced images lose their "aura": their unique presence in time and space. While Benjamin was writing about photography and film, his ideas resonate strongly today. AI-generated images push reproduction beyond copying into synthesis. These images have no original in the traditional sense, no singular moment of making, and no embodied encounter between artist and material. They are assembled statistically rather than lived into being. And yet, they circulate with extraordinary force, often indistinguishable from human-made images at first glance.   This contributes to a flattening of visual experience. When everything is instantly available; do we have a time to resonate fully? I notice this not only as a viewer, but within my own practice. There is a temptation to think about how a work will appear on a screen before considering how it behaves in physical space, how it unfolds over time, or how it asks for sustained looking.

The imagined audience is always present; the studio risks becoming an extension of the feed.   Contemporary theorist Hito Steyerl describes today's images as "poor images"—compressed, accelerated, and endlessly circulated. While AI images are often technically slick rather than "poor," they share this condition of rapid movement and disposability. They are designed to travel, not to stay. Art, by contrast, has the potential to slow images down, to give them weight again - not by rejecting digital circulation entirely, but by refusing to be governed by it.   At the same time, I am wary of treating this moment as a simple decline. Noise is not only oppressive; it can also be generative. Social media has enabled many artists, myself included, to connect across distance and outside traditional institutions. AI raises important questions about creativity, intelligence, and imitation that artists should not ignore.

The issue is not technology itself, but the economy of attention it produces. Here, the idea of attention becomes crucial. Simone Weil wrote that "attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity." In an age of noise, attention is constantly fragmented, pulled away by novelty and speed. Making art increasingly feels, to me, like a practice of attention: staying with a material, a gesture, or an unresolved question longer than feels efficient or productive. It is an insistence on care rather than optimisation.   AI images spread quickly because they are optimised for recognition and impact. They often confirm what we already expect to see. Art can do something different. It can remain ambiguous, resistant, or slow to reveal itself. It can demand presence rather than

instant comprehension. This does not make art superior, but it does make it distinct.

When I make work now, I am conscious of choosing what kind of time I am working in. I cannot compete with the speed or volume of machines, and I no longer think that is the point. What I can offer is evidence of attention: traces of hesitation, decisions shaped by doubt, and surfaces that carry the memory of touch. These qualities may not translate easily online, but they matter deeply in physical space and sustained encounter.   Perhaps art's place in an age of noise is not at the centre of the show, but slightly to the side. It operates in a different rhythm - one that allows complexity and contradiction to exist without being resolved immediately. In a culture increasingly filled with images that arrive complete and disposable, art can remain by the site of unfinished thinking.

The noise will not disappear. AI images will continue to multiply, no matter we like it or not and the visual field will only grow more crowded. But making art, for me, is a way of carving out a small zone of attentiveness within that condition. Beyond the philosophical questions and the digital speed, there is a fundamental, quiet joy in the process itself—the tactile resistance of paint, the unexpected harmony of two colors meeting, and the thrill of seeing a thought take physical form. It is a way of saying that not all images are equal, not all seeing is the same, and not everything meaningful needs to spread like a fly. In the end, the noise makes the silence of the studio even sweeter, and the slow act of creation remains a profound source of delight.

References

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Steyerl, H. (2009). *In Defense of the Poor Image*. e-flux journal, Issue #10.

Weil, S. (2002). *Gravity and Grace*. London: Routledge Classics

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