The Direction Provenance Model (DPM)

A White Paper on Human Authorship in the Age of AI

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Version 1.0 — January 2026

Abstract

The rapid adoption of generative artificial intelligence has fundamentally altered the conditions of artistic production. As visual outputs become instantaneous, abundant, and increasingly indistinguishable from one another, traditional notions of authorship, labor, and provenance are destabilized. The Direction Provenance Model (DPM) is presented as a publicly auditable framework for identifying and documenting human authorship within AI-assisted creation. Rather than assigning value to output alone, DPM locates authorship in the human decisions that structure, constrain, direct, and commit creative outcomes.

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1. Context: Generative Abundance and Authorship Drift

Digital art systems once relied on technical scarcity—file uniqueness, tokenization, or controlled distribution—to support value and authorship claims. Generative AI disrupts this logic by collapsing production cost and scale. Images can be produced in unlimited quantity with minimal effort, eroding the relationship between output, labor, and responsibility.

As a result, authorship increasingly drifts away from the artist toward the system itself. Without a clear record of where human judgment enters the process, the distinction between authored work and automated output becomes ambiguous. The problem is not the presence of AI, but the absence of structural clarity around decision-making.

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2. The Direction Provenance Model

The Direction Provenance Model addresses this condition by shifting the locus of authorship from the generated image to the **directional process** that produces it. DPM treats generative systems as instrumental resources—capable of producing variation, but not authorship. Authorship is instead located in the human decisions that define constraints, evaluate possibilities, and accept responsibility for outcomes.

DPM is not a style, aesthetic, or technical invention. It is a framework for documenting **where and how human agency operates** within automated systems.

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3. The Cycle Band of Human Decisions

DPM is structured as a four-stage, cyclical process. Each stage records a distinct form of human decision-making, creating a traceable provenance band that surrounds and contains generative output.

Stage I — Initial Drawing (Origin)

The process begins with a manual drawing, typically charcoal or graphite. This stage establishes the initial directional intent of the work. It is the first point of authorship and the first scarce act of human labor. The drawing defines composition, emphasis, and conceptual orientation.

Stage II — 3D Modeling (Constraint)

The drawing is translated into a custom, artist-authored three-dimensional model. Decisions regarding spatial structure, light, perspective, and form are made at this stage. The resulting model functions as a formal constraint, limiting the range of possible generative outcomes and embedding human judgment directly into the system.

Stage III — AI Direction (Synthesis)

Within the constraints established by the previous stages, generative AI is used to produce multiple variations. The artist does not author these variations individually, but instead exercises **directional selection**—evaluating, rejecting, and committing to a specific result. Authorship at this stage resides in judgment, not generation.

Stage IV — Final Painting (Anchor)

In some applications, the selected digital outcome is translated into a physical painting through manual execution. This stage reintroduces material scarcity and functions as a physical anchor within the provenance cycle. While not mandatory for all uses of DPM, it demonstrates how the model can culminate in a non-fungible physical work that embodies the preceding decisions.

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4. Provenance and Publication

This document is published as a time-stamped public record to establish the structure, terminology, and authorship logic of the Direction Provenance Model at the time of release. DPM v1.0 represents the initial articulation of the model. Subsequent refinements, expansions, or alternative implementations may be released as versioned updates, preserving continuity and traceability over time.

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5. Conclusion

The Direction Provenance Model does not attempt to restrict generative technology or reassert outdated forms of scarcity. Instead, it clarifies what automation cannot replace: human judgment, responsibility, and commitment. By making decision-making visible and traceable, DPM offers

artists, collectors, and institutions a practical framework for navigating authorship in an age of generative abundance.

Authorship, under DPM, is not a function of output volume or technical novelty. It is the result of deliberate direction exercised across a structured process. This paper serves as a reference point for that position and as an invitation for continued evaluation and use.

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DPM v1.0