

Call for chapters in an edited volume

# Comics as Computation:

## An uninterrupted thread of operational intensity

edited by

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While considerations of the growing role of automation in artistic production have been a consistent trope in modern and contemporary art debates since the mid-twentieth century (from Siegfried Giedion to Jack Burnham and Rosalind Krauss), in comics, industrial manufacturing, automation and scalability are hard-coded features of the medium's production routines. Concepts such as efficiency, marginal utility, and computability hold significant conceptual and technical importance in comics. As a medium, comics have developed within a dense information economy driven by the standardization of best practices for the transformation of craft into mass production. The industrial scale of these operations, from the early stages of ideation down to the last-minute editorial revisions, relies on a carefully orchestrated labor and an operative architecture of human/machinic determination. Their production depends on sets of discrete, decentralized and somewhat asynchronous operations that should be captured in terms of what computer scientist Rudy Rucker describes as computation; any "process that obeys finitely describable rules," involving operations of calculating, processing and transforming information employing diverse substrates, digital or otherwise.

This collective volume aims to provide a historical understanding of the intensification of automation in the comics industry, leading to today's integration of algorithmic tools for the production of comics. It has the goal to examine to which extent comics are the direct output of industrial processes of completion based on instituted sets of standardization practices and how deeply automation is embedded in the conceptualization of artistic practices in the medium. *Comics as Computation* ambitions to analyze how the integration of computational processes for the production of contemporary comics is consistent with the industry's early experiments in automation. By tracing an account of the medium's very early attempts to industrialize and automate its production, and by identifying the precedents foregrounding the importance of human-machine relationships in comics from early on, *Comics as Computation* reshifts the understanding of comics craftsmanship as a symbiotic expansion alongside the early development of printing, distribution, and communication technologies. This volume should be positioned to suggest historical continuities by following the uninterrupted thread of the same operational intensity with today's synthetic comics and generalized adoption of computational tools such as Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, chatgpt, Hugging Face, among many others.

In the present volume, we are particularly interested in contributions examining the following research areas:

- scalability and efficiency in comics and comics craft
- international perspectives on formats, production procedures, best practices and standardization
- comics as data
- (dis)similarities between AI-assisted creation and standardized drawing methods
- longer history of computational tools
- historical perspectives on the role of engineering and its impact on comics craft
- role of audiences and users in practices of automation and standardization; forms of (digital) playbor
- data-mining techniques in the (re)circulation of comics
- informatization and discretization of comics archives
- integration of machine learning tools for comics artists
- against automation: resistance and discontent to increased technological mediation in the production of comics

The volume is particularly open to international contributions; we are happy to consider translation possibilities. Based on the selected abstracts, the volume will be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed book series with an international academic publisher. More details will follow based on proposals.

Abstract length : 250 words

Short bio (150 words)

Deadline for abstracts: 1st November 2023

Notifications of acceptance: 30th November 2023

Send to [reader@echochamber.be](mailto:reader@echochamber.be)

**ECHO CHAMBER** is a small-scale, non-profit organization based in Brussels with the mission to research, document and occasionally raise funds for the production of radical works and to strengthen speculative practices in the field of contemporary comics.

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