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EDITORIAL

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On the importance of transgression in academic outcomes

ABSTRACT

This Special Issue of Technoetic Arts (TA) journal is dedicated to the explorations and provocations emerging from the latest edition of the conference Taboo–Transgression–Transcendence in Art & Science (TTT). These seven articles, initially selected, presented and discussed on the island of Malta (2023), show the international and interdisciplinary range of a community which started to take shape almost a decade ago. At the time of the release of this publication, practically two years after TTT2023, we stand on a particular moment in between post-pandemic exhaustion and inability to conceive the practicality of bellic conflict. How distasteful, the lack of better narrative still based on dubious nationalist ideas, hideously hiding economic interests of an elite who seems to care less, and blame more, the anonymous citizen as scapegoat to induce self-blame on ecological precarity and the loss of vision for possible grassroots – the themes of taboo, transgression and transcendence have never been more relevant. As Goya perceived wonders in the collaboration between reason and imagination Machiavelli (2004) too saw hope along unmapped roads which were the sole reason why giving up was not the wisest choice and why those who embrace the unexplored should not

KEYWORDS

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despair. In this line of thought, the authors included in this issue demonstrate how art and humanities are responding to these post-truth conditions by questioning assumptions about citizen vs. technology power relations and the ethics of life and death research practices.

INTRODUCTION

It is a fortune when one's vision materializes in a concrete project that assembles the support of the community within which it has been conceived. The conference *Taboo–Transgression–Transcendence in Art & Science (TTT)* illustrates the attempt to provide a safe space for critical discussion, to collectively challenge established boundaries and reimagine what is possible beyond the comfort zone. Present at *TTT* opening in 2016 was the visionary Roy Ascott. Since then, the conference has been supported by *TA* through the publication of a dedicated curated part of the proceedings. It was Ascott who firmly stated the potential of *TTT* to become a series. For me, personally, a challenge to proceed on unknown ground: of embodying *Laboratory Life*, to overcome imposter syndrome and thankfully talk the talk and walk the walk.

There is wisdom in understanding the physics of balance which seems to be adequate to the sustainability of a conference grounded in its community. Criticizing larger conferences that make it impossible to attend most of the program presented. Obsessive–compulsive repetition of consonants extended to vowels in 2018, when the itinerant was added to the international and interdisciplinary character of *TTT*, switching from the Ionian University in Corfu, Greece, its first venue for two consecutive years, to Mexico City, Vienna, Austria (online), Valletta, Malta and Ljubljana, Slovenia. For three days, in two parallel sessions, reaching twelve hours of programme per day and including its own art show, *TTT* gathers both practitioners and theorists presenting and discussing, as they see fit, the status of art and science focusing on the nature of the forbidden, the aesthetics of liminality and the opening of spaces for creative transformation in the merging of science and art. The major outcome of the conference is the publication of its proceedings in this journal and an open-access book. This brings us the current *TA* issue. This edition (Honorato 2025: 3–7) builds upon a line of boundary-crossing scholarship that has defined the journal's (a.k.a speculative research) engagement with these themes and for *TTT* specifically since *TA* volume 15, issue 2 (2017: 89–228), followed by *TA* volume 16, issue 3 (Honorato 2018: 235–36) and *TA* volume 18, issues 2&3 (Honorato 2020: 95–96).

The seven contributions to this fifth *TTT* issue of *TA* are written by authors based in Norway, the United States, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan and Turkey and come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds focusing on the topics of bioethics, human–technology integration, epistemological boundaries, mortality, ontological categories and political constraints.

Hege Tapio (2025) questions the ethical implications of commercializing and technologically manipulating human emotions in our AI-driven future, raising concerns about biochemical modification and emotional autonomy. Through her art project 'Ephemeral', Tapio continues her research on the extraction and use of human fat as a medium (Tapio 2018: 259–65; Mackenzie et al. 2020: 279–97) extending bodily substances to the molecular level.

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Jordan Kokot (2025) explores the potential of cyborg technologies in alternative human–technology integration through disabled artists’ work, confronting transhumanist narratives of bodily ‘improvement’, using Neuralink promotion content as a case study. Kokot contrasts ‘aesthetics of cure’, which treats disabled bodies as defective, with an ‘anaesthetics’ approach that explores bodies’ political potential through cyborg art practices.

Claudio de Melo Filho (2025) examines how contemporary art practices challenge western epistemological foundations by engaging with other-than-human entities, artificial intelligence and ecological systems and underlines that this decentring of human exceptionalism represents a significant transgression against centuries of anthropocentric thought.

Lyn Hagan (2025) presents a deeply personal exploration of abortion and capital punishment juxtaposing these contentious subjects through auto-poetic methodology, philosophical reflection and unconventional academic writing. Hagan reflects on her own subsequent motherhood to interrogate the moral ambiguities that characterize the power to decide who lives and dies.

Gregorio Tenti (2025) critiques Simondon and Deleuze’s creation theories through the analysis of contemporary artworks by Neri Oxman and Pierre Huyghe. To facilitate creative thinking beyond the limitations of traditional philosophical approaches, Tenti proposes a postnatural creativity model to transgress ontological boundaries based on the principles of grafting, hacking and nesting.

Yosaku Matsutani (2025), through the observation of Japanese artist Soichiro Mihara’s web-based installation *Making Soil* (2021) which livestreams composting processes in a transparent container, contends that artistic engagement with decomposition challenges conventional understandings of environmental cycles, prompting viewers to reconsider their relationship with nature, mortality, waste and transformation.

Ebru Yetiskin (2025) analyses five art projects that challenge state environmental narratives in Turkey while addressing urban transformation, forest wildfires and water resources. She describes how artistic research can generate critical knowledge and envision alternative environmental futures through ‘paratactic commoning’. This article represents a development in her previous research on ‘paratactical’ approaches to the curation of bio art and performative political imaginaries (Yetiskin 2017: 203–13). It also develops her research on art-practices employing algorithmic technologies as assemblages of human and nonhuman entities to explore ‘absurdities and contingencies’ and perform ‘subversive ways of thinking, acting and enacting’ (Yetiskin 2018: 353–62).

Throughout this issue of *TA*, and not for the first time, we, the editorial organism of this journal, struggled with the challenge and embraced the vision that new modes of participation (Bardakos et al. 2021: 221–25) are a constant requirement to create, provide and offer new publishing space to art-practice-based research texts. As Kathleen Fitzpatrick states in the introduction to her book *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academia*:

In order for new modes of communication to become broadly accepted within the academy, scholars and their institutions must take a new look at the mission of the university, the goals of scholarly publishing, and the processes through which scholars conduct their work.

(Fitzpatrick 2011: 10)

We hope that you will enjoy reading the articles as much as we enjoyed working with the authors, peer-reviewers and the publisher on this issue of TA.

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