

Black/Pudding: A Speculative Visual Index

Representational limits of Generative AI during creative porn productions

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ABSTRACT

Funded by the GenAI Studio grant (Milieux Institute and Applied AI Institute), *Black/Pudding* is a research-driven, AI-based project that revisits the lost pornographic animation film *Black Pudding* (1969) by Nancy Edell (1942-2005), a Canadian-American pioneer director in feminist animation. By using the tools available on generative AI porn platforms, this project speculates on how contemporary AI would represent *Black Pudding* today. This is done using surviving textual materials (critics, festival reviews, films encyclopedias) written about the film as prompts on contemporary AI-porn content generators. *Black/Pudding* creates a space to explore the ethical and creative boundaries of generative AI in reconstituting feminist sexual representations.

CCS CONCEPTS

• Applied computing → Media arts • Human-centered computing → Cultural content • Computing methodologies → Generative AI • Human-centered computing → Collaborative content creation • Applied computing → Ethics

KEYWORDS

pornography, pornographic animation, generative AI, AI pornography, Nancy Edell, feminist animation

1 Introduction

The intersection of sexuality of generative artificial intelligence (referred to in this article as generative AI) has often centered the ethical concerns over its representational harms: how systems are trained on biased data that reflect the ideologies of their creators and reinforce harmful stereotypes [1], and how generative AI can exacerbate existing harms against marginalized communities using models, such as seen in the proliferation of deepfake pornography [2]. Prakash L. Kharvi [3] describes deepfakes as the “employment of manipulated digital content, such hyper realistic synthetic video, audio, images, or texts crafted using advanced Artificial intelligence (AI) techniques, to compromise targeted decision-making process,” and reports that deepfakes related incidents increased from than 20,000 in 2019 to almost 100,000 in 2023. During this brief period, technologies on AI-content generator platforms that focus on the making and distribution of AI-based pornographic online content have grown increasingly more user-friendly, often

offering fast services at no cost. These platforms have contributed to the proliferation of deepfake pornographic content potentially used to harm, bully, and produce nonconsensual pornography about existing people. Women have been the main targets of the misuses of generative AI. On platforms where users are encouraged to reduce them to “digital resources to be edited onto sexual bodies” without their consent [4], their faces are extracted from personal pictures and edited into pornographic media. This has led mainstream pornographic platforms, where most of this content circulates, to amend their policies [5].

Although deepfake pornography is admittedly the first form of fake porn to receive attention in the press, Chandell Burkell and Jacquelyn Gosse [6] explain that the production of nonconsensual sexual imagery of women exists in a long history of gendered abuse at the intersection of digital technologies and visual culture. A similar argument is made by Benjamin N. Jacobsen and Jill Simpson [7] who argue that deepfake pornography media that target women exist within a continuum of female objectification that is “always emerging and always have emerged,” and by Kate Sinclair [8] who explains that the policing of women’s sexuality cannot be summarized to deepfake pornography. Centering deepfake pornography, as it has been commonly done by mainstream media, policymakers, and online commentators, risks isolating it from other forms of tech-enabled abuse and oppression towards marginalized communities, including the adult performers whose content is used without their consent as training data and weaponized to hurt and mock others. Additionally, this bias ignores other forms of AI-generated pornography, such as non-photorealistic content: illustration and animation, that do not answer to live-action logic and must be understood in their own rights. This aligns with a tendency from studies of pornography to not take into consideration the specificities of animation:

“Porn animation challenges the application of traditional approaches that centre live-action content, such as emphasis on sex-worker rights and in-person productions. Hence, it calls for theoretical frameworks that intentionally mediate animation.” [9]

In the context of AI pornography, it means leaving an important part of massively produced generative AI porn productions underexamined and unexplored, rendering us underprepared to fully understand its role, impact, and consequences if used during creative

porn productions. This short article addresses generative AI pornography beyond deepfake. This is done by exploring the tools currently available to creative porn producers on AI-porn content generators.

Unlike popular AI models that block (DeepAI) or paywall (Stable Diffusion) adult content, AI-porn content generators are online platforms that allow users to generate sexual content using machine learning. More than often, these platforms rely on a credit system and premium subscriptions, to quote Peter Alilunas: “Pornography will not merely exist in the coming world of AI, it will thrive.” [10]. The majority of these platforms rely on marketing metaphors that advertise their easy accessibility and unrestricted capability to generate creative images or videos. Arman Chaudry, the co-founder of Unstable Diffusion, a platform and dataset of more than 30 million data photographs that grew out of the Stable Diffusion’s online community, explains that the platform was made “for creativity to thrive without undue constraints ... Our belief is that art, in its many forms, should be uncensored, and this philosophy guides our approach to AI tools and their usage” [11]. Yet, despite the marketing argument of unlimited generation that is often advertised on these platforms, these new AI tools come with their fair share of limitations, whether these be technical, financial, representational, or ethical. This project illustrates said limitations by critically and creatively investigating these platforms during a research-creation project titled *Black Pudding: A Speculative Visual Index* that creates a space to explore the ethical and creative boundaries of generative AI in reconstituting feminist sexual representations in animation.

2. The ethics of using AI-content generators

It should come to no surprise that using AI-content generators for the purposes of a research-creative project involving animation comes with its set of ethical concerns. The use of generative AI in the animation industry has been largely pushed against by its workers, and accused of impacted junior and intermediary roles [12]. The AI Task Force of The Animation Guild reports that 75% of 300 entertainment executives already expressed that generative AI had supported the elimination, reduction or consolidation of jobs in their business division, and that 90% foresaw that generative AI will play a larger role in future productions. The AI Task Force also anticipates that more than 20% of the 118,000 entertainment industry jobs in the U.S. will likely be affected by generative AI by 2026 [13]. In addition to the labor impact of generative AI, there exist other concerns regarding the ecological and copyright costs of the models used by AI generators. Said models are usually trained on powerful, energy-costly computers and with data acquired without their authors’ consent. Moreover, the proliferation of AI-generated pornography might limit opportunities and viewership for creative porn workers as platform capitalism depend on fast produced user-generated content, as well as endangering their labor and rights to anonymity by pushing regulators to create all-encompassing policies against pornography that do not answer to live-action governance logical.

These concerns justify in themselves the urgency to better understand AI-generated pornography, but the very use of AI-porn

content generators in an academic setting must be guided by labor, ethical and ecological concerns. While not a perfect answer, *Black Pudding: A Speculative Visual Index* attempts to address these by transgressively using AI-content generators to investigate a lost experimental feminist short animation film, Nancy Edell’s *Black Pudding* [14], the first known pornographic animation directed by a woman. Designed as a platform to reclaim Edell’s overlooked contribution to the study of pornographic animation history dominated by male directors, this research is conducted outside of the capitalist and extractive logic that inhabits much of the current AI porn industry. Funded by a research-creation grant from the GenAI Studio grant (Milieux Institute and Applied AI Institute) and first shown to the public during the MUTEK Forum 2024, *Black Pudding: A Speculative Visual Index* shifts away from mainstream pornography, commercial uses, and platform-restricted distribution by instead producing a series of experimental AI-generated images based on a lost feminist animated media.

Black Pudding: A Speculative Visual Index is informed by feminist historiography and speculative media studies: which history about pornographic animation emerges when women are not positioned as either subjects or opposition forces? This project is as much a tribute to Edell’s contribution to animation history as it is an interrogation of AI’s evolving role in reshaping visual adult culture.

3. Black Pudding: A Speculative Visual Index

Black Pudding: A Speculative Visual Index is a research-driven, AI-based project that revisits the lost pornographic animation film *Black Pudding* (1969) by Nancy Edell (1942-2005), a Canadian-American pioneer director in feminist animation. Edell made two other films throughout her career, *Charley Company* [15] and *Lunch* [16]. Made in the late 1960s during her studies at Bristol University (UK), *Black Pudding* is one of the oldest known animated representations of sexual imagery made by a woman, ten years before Suzan Pitt’s *Asparagus* [17], often cited as a pioneer of this genre. At the time of its release, many adult-oriented films were produced across Europe, as these were not subjected to the Hays Code, however many of them are now considered lost, and not much is left of *Black Pudding*. The film is considered a lost media: copies are no longer available, exemplifying the lack of film preservation for 1) adult animated films, 2) feminist media made by women, and 3) experimental films that exist outside of traditional film institutions. By using tools available on generative AI porn platforms, this project speculates on how contemporary AI would represent *Black Pudding* nowadays. Using surviving textual materials (critics, festival reviews, films encyclopedias) written about the film as prompts, *Black Pudding: A Speculative Visual Index* [18] takes the form of an online platform to explore the ethical and creative boundaries of generative AI in reconstituting feminist sexual representations by speculating on how AI would imagine a lost animation film. The “disappearance” of *Black Pudding* guides the method that motivates this project: to explore both the history of pornographic animation, and the new creative AI tools that seized its industry by creating images based on a lost pornographic animated film using AI-porn content generators.

If we do not have access to *Black Pudding* today, many did in the past: film critics, academics, feminist collectives. This means that information about the film exists, such as short summaries and graphic depictions. These surviving texts were found in archival media using the “text content” search tool available on the Internet Archive—now an official US government document library not without its own preservation challenges against publishers [19]. Nine bibliographic sources were then identified on the Internet Archive, dating from 1972 to 2002, to which additional entries on *Black Pudding* were added from two repositories: the British Film Institute (BFI) and the Lost Media Wiki. Each of these eleven sources mention and describe to some extent *Black Pudding*:

1. Maryse Holder (1972) “First International Festival of Women’ Films in New York City” in *Off Our Backs*: “The least uptight of the erotic films was “Black Pudding,” an animated film by Nancy Edell. In it a giant vagina belches out strange, surrealistic, creatures in an endless stream.” (p. 17)
2. Women’s History Research Center (1972) *Films by and/or About Women*: “Black comedy surrealistic cartoon of Hieronymus Bosch’s world.” (p. 18)
3. Ralph Stephenson (1973) *The Animated Film*: “Black Pudding, a modern erotic fantasy in the vein of Bosch or Bruegel.” (p. 95)
4. Amos Vogel (1974) *Film as a Subversive Art*: “The violent pornographic surrealism of American underground cartoon magazines finally invades film animation. In an unfathomable universe, huge vaginas and penises are protagonists of bizarre, violent, and pornographic events: the mixture of monsters and sexuality, the perverse and the apocalyptic are reminiscent of Bosch.” (p. 221)
5. Julie Lesage (1974) “The Personal Film” in *Films by Women, Chicago ’74*: “Dark and ominous creatures pour out of a Boschian vagina in an inexhaustible frenzy of animation. Edell is expert at summoning up the at-once comic and erotic personae of woman’s nightmares.” (p. 31)
6. Brian Clancey (1976) “Of Black Pudding and Pink Ladies” in *Cinema Canada*: “The vacuum cleaner is chasing the food around; the food is coming out of this sphinx. So, I was drawing all the food for that scene and I drew this little black pudding. Women give birth to black pudding humanity.” (p. 39)
7. Kaye Sullivan (1980) *Films for, by, and about women*: “A Black comedy surrealistic cartoon film reminiscent of the world of odyssey; with caricatures fornicating and excreting as they go.” (p. 37)
8. David Clandfield (1987) *Canadian Film*, Oxford University Press: “an extension of her eccentric drawings.” (p. 120)
9. William Beard and Jerry White (2002) *North of everything: English Canadian cinema since 1980*: “dark, surrealist fantasy full of bizarre, often erotic imagery and feminist themes.” (p. 80)

10. Lost Media Wiki (2021) *Black Pudding (lost pornographic animated short film 1969)*: “Released in 1969, it is said to be a seven-minute animated short with sexual imagery and representations of household items.”
11. British Film Institute, *Black Pudding*: “Animated lithographic characters: a group of surreal beings take a startling journey through the inner recesses of an enormous nude female.”

The eleven sources were used to convey prompts to be used on three AI-porn content generators that were not limited to photorealistic imagery: Unstable Diffusion, Civitai, and Promptchan. To maintain coherence between image generation, each prompt was introduced by a description of *Black Pudding* I wrote based on the sources:

“Animate a scene from ‘Black Pudding’ (1969) by Nancy Edell, featuring a giant vagina belching out strange and surreal creatures in a Bosch and Bruegel-inspired style described as [insert the quote extracted].”

The project resulted in the generation of 90 images, in three distinctive styles and formats shaped by the tools available on each generator platform as exemplified below.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

Figure 1 and 2: Images generated on Unstable Diffusion using the Clancy (1976) and Beard and White (2002)’s based-prompts.

Figure 3 and 4: Images generated on Promptchan using the Bear and White (2002) and Lesage (1974)’s based-prompts.

Figure 5 and 6: Images generated on Civitai using the Stephen-son (1973) and the BFI’s based-prompts.

These images compose a speculative visual index: these do not attempt to reconstitute the lost *Black Pudding*, but rather to open a process of speculation on what it might have looked like, and of reflection on the limits of AI-porn content generators during creative porn productions. The image generation process of this project was limited by the technological affordances on each platform: the number of images possible to generate at one time, the cost of credits for generation, the format of the images, the art styles available, the rules over content generation, and which content the initial data used was trained on. Despite the relatively neutral tone of the prompts used, the image generation process was always limited by the representational politics of these platforms, including the predominance of whiteness, gendered stereotypes, and uniformed body types. For example, all the women represented using the Unstable Diffusion tools had pale skin colors and answered to outdated Western beauty standards, reinforcing rather than expanding upon common tropes in pornographic media.

Since this project started, one additional source in French has been discovered from Quebecois journal *Virus Magazine* and will be added in future iterations of the project:

1. Virus Montréal (1978) “Le cinéma parallèle” in *Virus Magazine*: “L’Empocheur, le Pilote de la RAF, l’Aspirateur, le Trieur de Nez, l’Oiseau Plein d’Marde et d’autres font un voyage, rencontrent le Roi et vont voir une vue.” (p. 30)

Conclusion

In the chapter “Hacking Metaphors in Anticipatory Governance of Emerging Technology,” Meg Leta Jones and Jason Millar [20] argue that we must move beyond simply anticipating metaphors used by designers and users of new technologies, and must rather engage in a process of “hacking” said metaphors (p. 600). On AI-porn content generators, generative AI is advertised as “unlimited,” a tool of endless possibilities for its (paying) consumers. On Promptchan,

users are invited to bring their “spiciest sexual fantasies to life,” and Civitai describes itself as “a virtual canvas where [users] can unleash [their] creativity.” But not only these metaphors describe generative AI as something that anyone should be legitimately scared of (what if someone’s “spiciest sexual fantasies” involved, for example, children? [21]), these are also unfairly describing what is actually a quite limited creative process [22]. If *Black Pudding: A Speculative Visual Index* provides a more accurate understanding of what AI-porn content generators can, and cannot, really do, it also points towards the need to hack these metaphors of unlimitedness. AI-porn content generators are governed spaces informed by platform capitalism, and contain many financial, legal, and creative limitations that are dependent on the dominant narrative of AI tied to extraction.

While the intent of this project was never to “recreate” *Black Pudding*—an enterprise that would have had its own layers of ethical and legal concerns, this project hints that other tools might need to be used. What might AI look like if we slowed it down, made it smaller, and used it to make art together instead?

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