

Agnieszka Kurant
Variantology

Opening Thursday 4 December 2025 h 6 pm – 8 pm
Galleria Lia Rumma | Via Vannella Gaetani 12 | NAPLES
Gallery opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday 11.00 am – 1.30 pm / 2.30 pm – 7.00 pm

Lia Rumma Gallery is pleased to present *Variantology*, Agnieszka Kurant's first solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from December 4, 2025. The show features a selection of new and recent works.

Kurant's multidisciplinary practice explores collective and nonhuman intelligences, the future of labor and creativity, and the exploitations within digital capitalism. Drawing on philosophy, anthropology, technology, and science, her work centers on the emergence and evolution of forms shaped by collective agency, be they termite mounds, minerals, languages, signs, tools, currencies, or social movements. In collaboration with scientists, she sets up complex systems, networks, and environments where multiple agents—molecules, bacteria, animals, AI algorithms, or human crowds—interact to generate hybrid, unstable forms undergoing constant metamorphosis, like living organisms. Oscillating between biological, digital, and geological, natural and artificial, life and nonlife, deep past and deep future, her works explore plural subjectivity, the evolution of living systems, culture and technology, transformations of the human, automation and cybernetics.

Kurant's research-based works draw on processes of networked value creation in the digital economy and investigate collective authorship and the global system of labor exploitation embedded in artificial intelligence. The hybrid forms she produces often counter algorithmic predictions with uncomputable, unpredictable processes. Her assemblages and amalgamations, grown, evolved, crystalized, or shaped on a molecular level, emerge from the mutations of matter in the Anthropocene and reflect shifts in collective subjectivity influenced by technology. These speculative experiments propose ideas for how human and nonhuman life might evolve.

The exhibition title - *Variantology* - draws on the interdisciplinary research concept introduced by media archeologist Siegfried Zielinski, which questions linear technological progress and explores the variations and alternatives to dominant narratives of the history of technology and media. Variantological approach investigates "deep time" relations, looking at how arts, sciences, and technologies in diverse cultures of knowledge have evolved together, often in unexpected ways, from ancient to modern times. By combining a possible past to a possible future, it seeks to understand how these variations have shaped our world and to challenge the idea of a single, correct path of development. The unusually important role of Naples in the history of alchemy and technology plays an important part in the Variantological approach.

In Kurant's take on *Variantology*, the predictions of the future, which technology currently produces, are entangled in a recursive relationship with the world, influencing the present and the future, regardless of whether they ever come true.

The exhibition opens with *Evolutions III* (2025) which draws from the Princeton mathematician Nils Aall Barricelli and his 1950s experiments with artificial life using an ENIAC, the first general purpose computer. Punch cards modeling these algorithmic organisms evolving in a digital universe form the basis for Kurant's lenticular prints.

In the first room, Kurant juxtaposes pivotal moments in the formation of language and signs with the emergence of life out of mineral forms. The wall paintings *Adjacent Possible* (2021), investigate alternative directions in which human culture could have evolved. These works fuse Paleolithic technologies used by early humans (ochre painting) with artificial intelligence. Kurant collaborated with the computational social scientist Justin Lane to apply an artificial intelligence algorithm (machine learning) to an archive of thousands of various iterations of thirty-two graphic signs—the earliest known forms of symbolic communication, dating 40,000 BC to 14,000 BC—identified by the paleoanthropologist Genevieve von Petzinger as the only ones recurring in the Paleolithic caves all over Europe. The algorithm produced other potential signs that could have emerged as products of collective subjectivity.

In *Chemical Garden* (2021/2025), Kurant combines liquid glass with salts of metals used in computer components to grow inorganic crystal formations resembling plants or organoids. The piece draws on the work of various alchemists throughout history, as well as current experiments by NASA scientists and exobiologists speculating about the possibility of non-carbon-based life forms existing elsewhere in the universe. The work considers the ways organic and inorganic substances are continuously reorganized into various unstable forms, and highlights how, paradoxically, inorganic chemicals, whose extraction causes destruction of ecosystems, were once crucial to the origin of life on earth. *Nonorganic Life* (2025) extends this exploration. Vivid metal-salt crystals are grown on anodized-aluminum surfaces printed with macro photographs of past *Chemical Garden* works. These paintings, blending micro and macro scales, blur distinctions between the technological, mineral, and biological.

Present and future merge in *Semiotic Life 2* (2025), in which a 62-year-old Juniper Bonsai tree becomes entangled with its algorithmically predicted, optimized future form. Speculation on the species' evolution over millennia alters the living tree's growth, dramatizing the tension between natural and artificial evolution, and questioning whether AI can predict complex phenomena like life itself.

The exhibition also features two sculptures from the series *Post-Fordite* (2025), a body of work made in part from a quasi-geological formation known as Fordite or "Detroit agate," which consists of thousands of layers of car paint that have accumulated and fossilized over decades on automotive production lines. Sourced by former workers from now defunct factories, Fordite is cut, polished, and sold on the market as a gemstone, with value increasing as this resource is being exhausted. Kurant assembles fragments of this industrial byproduct into new hybrid rock formations that, on the one hand, encapsulate a century of human labor and shifting consumer tastes and, on the other, speculate about the footprints that might be left behind by our world of post-Fordist, digital capitalism, in which society functions as a distributed factory of data production and exploitation.

Three levitating sculptures - *Air Rights* (2025) - emulate meteorites suspended in an electromagnetic field, sensitive to the movements and speech of passing visitors. This precarious balance evokes the market of "air rights," which turns the commons of the sky into speculative property, and the fragility of value systems shaped by predictive models and market speculation.

The final room features *Risk Landscape* (2025), which borrows its title from financial risk management strategies. This practice simulates near and far future scenarios of measurable and unmeasurable threats such as natural disasters, geopolitical conflicts, financial crisis or terrorism. Working with data scientists and catastrophe modelling specialists, Kurant employs artificial intelligence to produce simulations of financial, political and climate events predicted to arise in specific locations around the world. Based on the portfolio of predicted risks the artist uses game engine programs to develop evolving animations of physical "landscapes", executed as laser holograms on glass. The one presented here was developed based on data collected from Naples. The recursive feedback loop between the forecast and its impact on how the future will unfold is rendered as a warping of the animated landscape emerging as the viewer passes along the hologram.

In *Sentimentite* (2025), Kurant invents a new mineral by fusing pulverized objects once used as currencies throughout history, including shells, beads, whale teeth, salt, corn, tea, soap, cigarettes, batteries, candy, detergent, phone cards, stamps, and electronic waste. Drawing on collective value creation and on AI mining of digital footprints of human emotions by corporations, the work speculates about the mineral-currency of the future, investigating the relationship between digital capitalism and geology. The artist collaborated with computational social scientists who used Artificial Intelligence sentiment-analysis algorithms to harvest data from hundreds of thousands of Twitter and Reddit posts related to recent historic seismic events, including the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Brexit, the Arab Spring, the pandemic, the Chelyabinsk Meteorite event, Bitcoin's meteoric rise etc. These aggregated emotions of millions of people shaped a finite amount of one hundred digital fragments of *Sentimentite*, issued as NFTs, a few of which were cast in the new mineral that Kurant shaped on a molecular level. The ongoing online circulation of the digital fragments of *Sentimentite*, now owned collectively by many individuals as quasi-shareholders, contributes to the perpetually shifting value of this work.

Kurant was the recipient of the 2020 LACMA A+T Award and the 2019 Frontier Art Prize. She has presented solo exhibitions at Mudam, Luxemburg (2024), Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2021) and Sculpture Center (2013) among others. Her work was featured at Basel Parcours (2025), Jeu de Paume, Paris (2025), MCA Australia, Sydney (2025), the Gwangju Biennial (2024), Sydney Biennial (2024); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2024); Pinault Collection - Bourse de Commerce, Paris (2024), Gropius Bau, Berlin (2024); Louisiana Museum, Denmark (2023); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2021); and Istanbul Biennial (2019). In 2021–22 Kurant realised a permanent commission for the MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge and in 2015 a commission for the façade of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

A comprehensive monograph, *Agnieszka Kurant: Collective Intelligence*, was published in November 2025 by Sternberg Press / MIT Press. Edited by Stefanie Hessler, Jenny Jaskey, and Kurant, it includes texts by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Rosi Braidotti, Franco "Bifo" Berardi, Nicolas Bourriaud, Kate Crawford, Caroline A. Jones, Nora Khan, Jussi Parikka, Matteo Pasquinelli, and Elvia Wilk, among others.