

# Open call: ghost in the loop

inverted worlds lab



[Apply for free on Submittable](#)

The Photographers' Gallery and Goethe-Institut London invite proposals for two micro-commissions from artists or collectives based in the UK or Germany.

This free open call marks the beginning of a new collaboration between The Photographers' Gallery and Goethe-Institut London. Together, we seek to explore the cultural, societal, emotional, and aesthetic implications of creating art for — and with — machines. The resulting research and artworks will be presented on [Unthinking Photography](#), our platform exploring photography's automated, networked life.

Through this open call and future discussions, workshops and opportunities, we hope to make visible and interrogate where this next generation of photography is situated, what form it takes and how its symbolism, data and networks reconfigure the visible worlds being built around us.

The opportunity is open to artists and collectives engaged in photography and visual practices. Each selected proposal will receive a fee of €1,500.

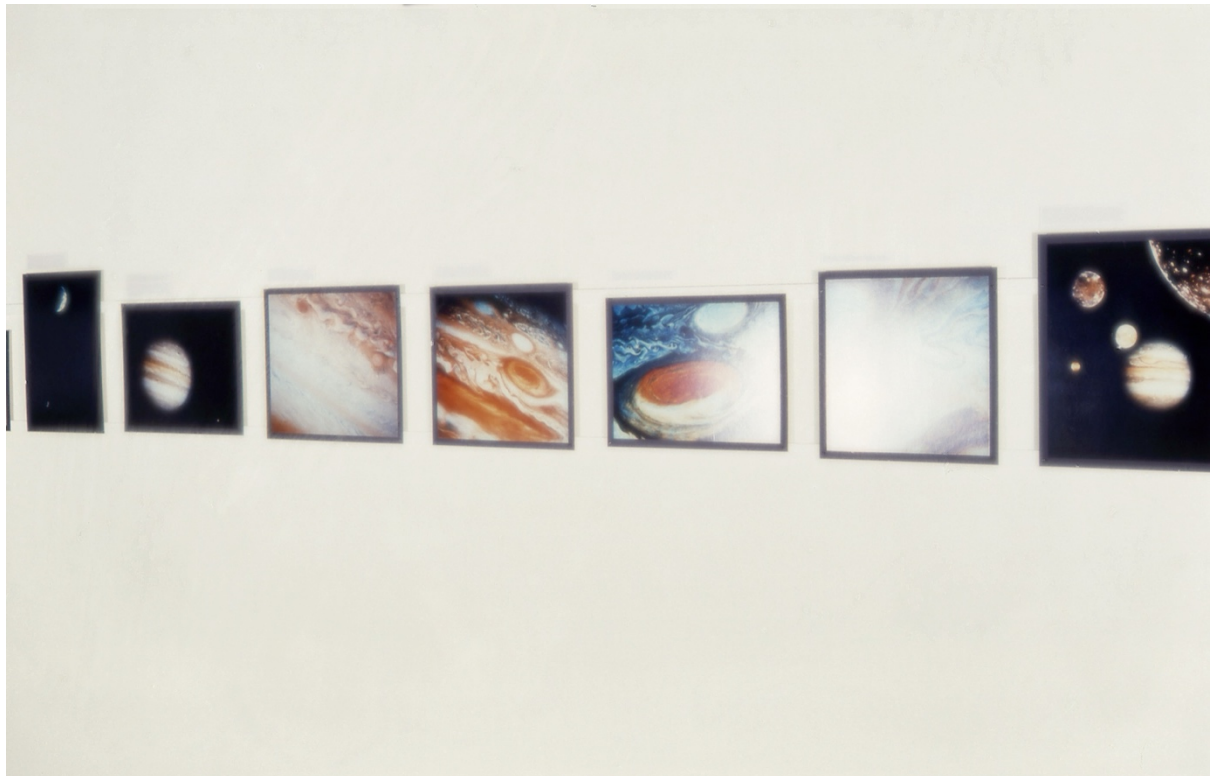
## **We are particularly interested in proposals that consider:**

- How cultural practices shift within computational environments
- How feedback loops shape artistic production
- The implications of making work for machine viewers

## **Proposals may address (but are not limited to) themes such as:**

- Human-in-the-loop
- Ghost in the machine
- Machinic audiences: artworks created for systems or non-human agents e.g. social media bots, automation, digital twins, AI companions
- Emotion detection and affective computing
- Anthropomorphic intelligence
- Synthetic cultures
- Training, reinforcement, or continuous learning systems

- Intersections between creativity and AI-driven infrastructures
- computation pipelines between creativity and other uses of AI
- Prompt engines
- Geographical restrictions of knowledge and censored response
- Emerging aesthetics shaped by AI
- AI psychosis and machine hallucination
- Collective intelligence and distributed cognition
- Computation and data colonialism



# Context for the open call

[The Photographers' Gallery](#) explores how photography is connecting, captivating and radically changing our world today. Since 2012, TPG's extensive work around digital and new technologies has been pioneering in thinking through photography's relationship to computational culture. The Gallery's programmes have supported artists commissions, exhibition, [academic research](#) and public events through the Gallery and the online platform [Unthinking Photography](#) that explores photography's increasingly automated, networked life.

The [Goethe-Institut London](#) places a strong emphasis on exploring the intersection of art, technology, ecology and society. Through exhibitions, residencies, commissions, workshops, discursive programmes, publications, and interdisciplinary collaborations, it supports cultural practitioners and institutions engaging with digital culture, experimental media, and critical perspectives on technological change. Recent areas of focus include artistic and theoretical explorations of decentralised autonomous organisations (DAOs), blockchain, artificial intelligence, and quantum technologies — particularly in relation to their potential impact on civil society. The programmes foster dialogue between German and UK-based practitioners and aims to create space for forward-thinking, socially engaged artistic practices.

The Photographers' Gallery and Goethe-Institut London are initiating a new R&D collaboration (Inverted Worlds Lab) to investigate the cultural, societal, emotional and aesthetic implications of producing art for machines. In developing this programme, we are interested in the radical shifts in image and content generation where the idea of the end user has changed, and work is no longer made specifically for human audiences.

For example, in computer science labs and tech companies, digital creators are employed to design and produce cultural content (such as images, video games and music) specifically for AI systems to interact with and be tested on. This could be seen as an 'inversion' of cultural production – rather than creating work for human audiences, humans produce work for the stimulation and testing of machine learning. The work in producing these works are rarely exhibited or seen outside of labs, or not recognised as a creative practice or output.

## Further resources

[unthinking.photography](#)

[In and out of space \(1980 exhibition of photography sent to space on Voyager\).](#)

[John Tagg: Mindless Photography](#)

[Automated Photography](#)

[Knowing Machines](#)

[Synthetic media and computational capitalism: towards a critical theory of artificial intelligence](#)

[Pretending to be machine, still human](#)

# Application Process

**Applications are now open and accepted through the Submittable platform.**

If you have any accessibility requirements and would like to send an application in any other format, please contact us at [digital.programme@tpg.org.uk](mailto:digital.programme@tpg.org.uk).

## **Deadline for Submissions: Thursday 20 November 2025, 17.00 GMT**

The micro-commissions will be selected by members of The Photographers' Gallery, Goethe-Institut London and an external selector. This includes Sam Mercer (Curator, Photography and Technologies, The Photographers' Gallery London), Mario Schruff (Visual Arts Programme Manager, Goethe-Institut London).

**The two micro-commissions will be selected by Monday 1 December 2025.** A schedule will be drawn up with the artist(s) with the work expected to be completed in December 2025 and January 2026. We are not conducting interviews, however if any questions arise during the shortlisting process about your proposal, we may be in touch.

The grants will be offered to artists upon signing the contract, with the selected micro-commissions will be presented on [Unthinking Photography](#) in early 2026.

## **Timeline**

Monday 20 Oct 2025	Open call announced
Thursday 20 Nov 2025	Open call deadline
Thursday 27 Nov 2025	Selection panel
Monday 1 Dec 2025	Selected projects contacted
Feb 2026	Projects presented on Unthinking Photography

**If you have any questions** regarding your application, contact [digital.programme@tpg.org.uk](mailto:digital.programme@tpg.org.uk). Responses may feedback into the FAQ.

# Frequently asked question

## Who can enter?

The open call is open to all practitioners over the age of 18 based in the UK and Germany. There is no need to have studied at an educational institution in the UK or elsewhere. TPG encourages applications from all individuals and groups who meet the criteria and whose work shows outstanding talent, originality and innovation. The Photographers' Gallery is committed to equal opportunities and we encourage applications from all persons without discrimination.

## How do you apply?

Online applications will be accepted between Monday 20 October and Thursday 20 November 2025 [here](#). If you have accessibility needs and would prefer to submit in any other format (such as video), please contact us at [digital.programme@tpg.org.uk](mailto:digital.programme@tpg.org.uk).

1. Each submission should include:
  - a. Your name and contact details
  - b. A project proposal, addressing how your proposal links to the open call and likely outcomes, including technical requirements and how will you make this or what support will you need. (around 400 words)
  - c. Examples of previous work and/or a link/attachment to a portfolio.
2. The selection process will be undertaken in English.
3. Artists, groups and collectives are able to submit. Applicants are also allowed to use human-machine collaborative projects of their own creation.
4. Adaptations of pre-existing works are accepted.
5. One submission by each person or group will be accepted.
6. All submissions are free.

## Who can apply?

The open call is open to artists' and collectives engaged in photographic and visual practices, such as photography, moving image, digital and computational arts. Applications are welcome from people based in the UK and Germany.

## How will the selection happen?

One work will be selected by a team of people including members of The Photographers' Gallery and Goethe-Institut London, as well as an external invited selector. We are not conducting interviews, however if any questions arise during the shortlisting process about your proposal, we may be in touch.

## How much is the micro-commission?

Each of the two micro-commissions will receive €1500 or the current GBP equivalent (around £1,300) for production and fee, paid in full upon signing a contract. The budget and timeframe will be developed upon selection.

**What is expected from a micro-commission?**

Forming part of this R&D project, micro-commissions are intended to support the production of small-scale, experimental works that are suitable for online presentation. Applicants are encouraged to propose work that is feasible within these financial parameters.

**What is expected as outcomes?**

The micro-commissions will be displayed on the platform [Unthinking Photography](#), run by The Photographers' Gallery as a resource that explores photography's increasingly automated, networked life. The selected artists will be expected to provide a schedule of work with timelines, information and images for communications in a timely manner, as per the contract, as well as taking part in a public presentation/event and video interview.

## Terms & Conditions

By submitting your application for the *ghost in the loop* Open Call you are accepting the following Terms and Conditions. This agreement constitutes the entire and only agreement between you and The Photographers' Gallery. The Photographers' Gallery is a not-for-profit, independent, educational charity (UK Charity commission no. 262548).

> I confirm all the works submitted are my own and I have the intellectual copyright to use, exhibit and distribute them.

> I am not a staff member at The Photographers' Gallery or Goethe-Institut London, nor a sponsor of either organisation.

> I understand that the name, captions, texts and images or moving image files I upload to the ghost in the loop Open Call application site will be reviewed by The Photographers' Gallery curatorial staff to create a shortlist, and the commissions will be selected by a panel.

> Unless agreed otherwise, The Photographers' Gallery will only accept applications submitted through the Submittable website and cannot offer feedback on any individual application.

> If selected, I allow my images to be used in print and online (including social media and other platforms) for marketing, press, promotional and educational purposes related to the programme and The Photographers' Gallery's wider activities. Any images used will be fully and accurately credited when sent to press and third parties by The Photographers' Gallery. Copyright for all texts and images is retained by their respective author.

> If my application is successful, my name, text and selected works, can be uploaded to The Photographers' Gallery website and will be accessible to the public. My work will remain part of the Gallery's online archive for an indefinite period. Occasionally images may be cropped for purposes of fitting into the website format, this will only be done when absolutely necessary.

> The Photographers' Gallery reserves the right to edit extended texts submitted through the application process, this will be done in consultation with the artist.

> All submitted information, text and images are my sole responsibility, not The Photographers' Gallery's, and do not breach any third-party copyright. I am entirely responsible for all content that I have uploaded or make otherwise available.

> I do not hold The Photographers' Gallery, including all its staff and trustees, responsible for any losses, claims, liabilities, expenses, damages and costs, including reasonable legal fees, resulting from any violation of these Terms and Conditions or any activity related to the service (including negligent or wrongful conduct) by myself or any other person.

If you have any questions regarding your application, contact [digital.programme@tpg.org.uk](mailto:digital.programme@tpg.org.uk). If you have not been notified that your work has been selected by 10 December 2025, please assume your application has not been successful.