Citation Diversity Audit

aEsthETIC COmpUtER Paper Series, March 2026

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[working draft — not for citation]

Abstract. We audit the citation practices across the Aesthetic.Computer paper series—eight academic papers spanning creative computing, language design, operating systems, and digital instrument design. The audit reveals significant underrepresentation of women (∼11%), non-Western scholars (∼5%), and Black, Indigenous, and Latin American researchers (∼6%) among the ∼80 unique authors cited. We identify specific works that would strengthen each paper while diversifying the scholarly foundation, propose per-paper integration targets of 30% women and 20% non-Western authors, and publish an open reading list organized by gap area. This document is both a self-assessment and a commitment to ongoing improvement.

1. WHY THIS AUDIT

The Aesthetic.Computer paper series [@jeffrey, 2026a,c,b,e,d] makes claims about access, inclusion, and creative expression. A project that argues for universal creative computing access—surplus laptops as instruments, URL-addressable programs, social distribution by default—must examine whether its scholarly foundations reflect the diversity it advocates for.

Citation practices are not neutral. They constitute a knowledge economy: who we cite shapes who gets read, who gets hired, who gets funded, and whose ideas are treated as foundational [Benjamin, 2019]. A paper series dominated by white, male, US/UK/European authors reproduces the very exclusions it claims to resist.

This audit is not an accusation but a diagnostic. The current citation distribution reflects the author's training, reading history, and the structure of the fields drawn upon (media theory, computer science, HCI). Changing it requires deliberate effort over time.

2. CURRENT STATE

2.1 Corpus

The audit covers eight papers:

1. *Aesthetic Computer '26* (arXiv, 5pp)
2. *KidLisp '26* (arXiv, 6pp)
3. *Pieces Not Programs '26* (arXiv, 4pp)
4. *notepat.com '26* (arXiv, 3pp)
5. *AC Native OS '26* (arXiv, 5pp)
6. *Repository Archaeology '26* (arXiv, 4pp)
7. *Aesthetic Computer '26* (JOSS, 2pp)
8. *KidLisp '26* (JOSS, 3pp)

Plus a readings library of 30+ full-text sources maintained in the research platter at `papers.aesthetic.computer/platter`.

2.2 Demographics

Across all papers, approximately 68 unique works are cited by ∼80 unique authors (some works have multiple authors). We categorize authors along three axes: gender, geography, and race/ethnicity. These categories are imperfect and externally ascribed; we use them as rough indicators of representation, not identity claims.

Dimension	Count	%
Women authors	∼9	11%
Non-US/UK/EU authors	∼4	5%
Black / Indigenous / LatAm / Asian	∼5	6%
Self-citations (Scudder)	5	6%
Total unique authors	∼80	100%

Table 1: Author demographics across all papers (March 2026).

2.3 What This Means

The citation corpus is overwhelmingly white, male, and Euro-American. This is not unusual for creative computing papers—the field's canonical references (Processing, Scratch, p5.js, Sonic Pi) were created by teams

based at MIT, NYU, ITP, and Cambridge. But "not unusual" is not "acceptable." The Aesthetic.Computer project explicitly positions itself as an alternative to dominant computing paradigms; its citations should reflect alternative voices.

3. GAP ANALYSIS

We identify five areas where the citation corpus is weakest.

3.1 Women in Creative Coding

The creative coding and live coding communities include significant work by women that our papers do not cite. Key figures include:

- **Joana Chicau** [Chicau, 2021]: choreographic coding, embodied algorithms
- **Shelly Knotts** [Knotts and Collins, 2015]: algorithmic collaboration in network music
- **Allison Parrish** [Parrish, 2015]: computational poetry, creative coding pedagogy
- **Kate Compton** [Compton et al., 2015]: Tracery generative text language
- **Lauren McCarthy**: already cited (p5.js) but underacknowledged as a creative practitioner
- **Olivia Jack**: already cited (Hydra) but underacknowledged as a Latin American voice in live coding

3.2 Black Computing Studies

A project claiming to democratize computing access must engage with scholarship on who has historically been excluded from computing and why:

- **Ruha Benjamin** [Benjamin, 2019]: "Race After Technology" examines how design decisions encode racial hierarchies
- **Safiya Umoja Noble** [Noble, 2018]: "Algorithms of Oppression" on search engines and racial bias
- **André Brock** [Brock, 2020]: "Distributed Blackness" on Black digital culture and platform design
- **Charlton McIlwain** [McIlwain, 2019]: "Black Software" on the hidden history of Black computing

3.3 Non-Western Theory

The media theory citations draw exclusively from European traditions (Kittler, McLuhan, Adorno). Non-Western theorists offer frameworks directly relevant to Aesthetic.Computer's design:

- **Yuk Hui** [Hui, 2016, 2019]: digital ontology, technodiversity—argues that technology need not follow a single Western developmental trajectory
- **Hito Steyerl** [Steyerl, 2009]: "In Defense of the Poor Image" on circulation, resolution, and digital materiality—directly relevant to Aesthetic.Computer's pixel-art aesthetic and URL-as-medium approach
- **Kodwo Eshun** [Eshun, 1998]: Afrofuturist sonic fiction—relevant to notepat and audio synthesis work

3.4 Indigenous and Decolonial Computing

The OS paper's surplus-hardware thesis has implications for computing sovereignty that Indigenous scholars have addressed:

- **Lewis et al.** [Lewis et al., 2018]: "Making Kin with the Machines" proposes Indigenous protocols for AI and computing
- **Sasha Costanza-Chock** [Costanza-Chock, 2020]: "Design Justice" on community-led design practices
- **Arturo Escobar** [Escobar, 2018]: "Designs for the Pluriverse" on decolonial approaches to design

3.5 Latin American Creative Coding

Olivia Jack (Hydra, already cited) is Colombian. The broader Latin American creative coding community is underrepresented:

- **Hernando Barragán** [Barragán, 2004]: Colombian creator of Wiring, the direct ancestor of Arduino—foundational to physical computing yet rarely cited
- **Cássia Bel**: Brazilian live coder and feminist creative technologist
- **Aarón Montoya-Moraga**: creative coding educator, p5.js community organizer

4. PER-PAPER INTEGRATION TARGETS

For each paper in the series, we identify specific works from the gap analysis that would strengthen the argument while diversifying the citation base.

Paper	Suggested Additions
AC '26	Hui (digital objects), Costanza-Chock (design justice), Parrish (creative coding edu)
KidLisp '26	Compton (Tracery), Chicau (choreographic coding), Barragán (Wiring)
notepat '26	Knotts (network music), Eshun (sonic fiction), Plant (computing history)
Pieces '26	Benjamin (design bias), Steyerl (poor image), Plant (Zeros and Ones)
OS '26	Barragán (Wiring), McIlwain (Black Software), Lewis et al. (Indigenous AI)
Archaeology '26	Brock (Distributed Blackness), Hui (technodiversity)

Table 2: Targeted citation additions per paper. Goal: 30% women, 20% non-Western.

5. TARGETS AND COMMITMENTS

5.1 Quantitative Goals

- **30% women authors** across the paper series (currently 11%)
- **20% non-US/UK/EU authors** (currently 5%)
- **15% Black, Indigenous, LatAm, Asian scholars** (currently 6%)
- **No paper with fewer than 2 women-authored citations**

These targets are aspirational minimums, not ceilings. They should be met by adding relevant scholarship, not by removing existing citations or adding tokenistic references.

5.2 Process Commitments

1. **Diversity check on every revision**: Before submitting any paper, re-run the audit against current citation demographics
2. **Reading list maintenance**: The platter's Citation Diversity section is a living document—new works are added as they are discovered and read
3. **Full-text sourcing**: Where possible, obtain and archive open-access versions of cited works in the readings library for genuine engagement, not drive-by citation
4. **Honest engagement**: Cite works because they strengthen the argument, not because they diversify a spreadsheet. If a work is cited, it should be read, understood, and integrated into the paper's reasoning

6. AN HONEST ASSESSMENT

This audit reveals a common pattern in academic self-reflection: the author is aware of the problem, can name the scholars who should be cited, and has the technical infrastructure to track progress—but has not yet done the reading. Knowing that Ruha Benjamin wrote "Race After Technology" is not the same as having read it, understood it, and integrated its insights into one's design practice.

The gap between awareness and practice is where this work begins. The reading list in the platter is a commitment to close that gap. The per-paper targets are a mechanism for accountability. The audit itself—published alongside the papers it critiques—is an invitation for readers to hold the author to the standard he sets for himself.

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