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1 Beyond Human Perception: Challenges in AI Interpretability of

2 **Orangutan Artwork**

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- 16
- Abstract: Drawings serve as a profound medium of expression for both humans and apes,
 offering unique insights into the cognitive and emotional landscapes of the artists, regardless
 of their species. This study employs artificial intelligence (AI), specifically Convolutional
 Neural Networks (CNNs) and the interpretability tool Captum, to analyze non-figurative
 drawings by Molly, an orangutan. The research utilizes VGG19 and ResNet18 models to

decode seasonal nuances in the drawings, achieving notable accuracy in seasonal 22 classification and revealing complex influences beyond human-centric methods. Techniques 23 such as occlusion, integrated gradients, PCA, t-SNE, and Louvain clustering highlight critical 24 areas and elements influencing seasonal recognition, providing deeper insights into the 25 drawings. This approach not only advances the analysis of non-human art but also 26 demonstrates the potential of AI to enrich our understanding of non-human cognitive and 27 emotional expressions, with significant implications for fields like evolutionary anthropology 28 29 and comparative psychology.

30 Keywords: deep learning, non-human primates, primatology, apes, explicability

31 **1. Introduction**

The potential for anthropocentric bias emerges when deciphering the content of drawings, a 32 common focus in studies of figurative artwork. However, meanings also permeate non-33 34 figurative sketches, as evidenced in creations by young children (Gardner 1981; Goodnow 35 2013; Restoy et al. 2022). Drawings are rich in information, yet reliance on a limited set of manually selected features can restrict the depth of analysis. This is especially pertinent in 36 37 examining drawings by non-human primates, where an anthropocentric selection bias may overlook features significant to other species (Saito et al. 2014; Martinet and Pelé 2021). 38 Consequently, such an approach fails to harness the full informational value of these 39 40 drawings. In human contexts, querying the artist about their intent offers a partial solution (Martinet et al. 2021; Sueur et al. 2022), though this method falls short when artists cannot 41 verbally articulate their intentions, such as in the scribbles of young children or individuals 42 with communication impairments. This limitation extends to non-verbal non-human drawers 43 like non-human primates (Pelé et al. 2021; Martinet et al. 2023). 44

In a previous study, we employed artificial intelligence to scrutinize the artwork of Molly, a 45 female orangutan who produced 1,299 drawings as part of a behavioral enrichment program 46 at Tama Zoo in Japan until her passing in 2011 (Pelé et al. 2021). Previous research on 47 48 Molly's drawings revealed influences from her caretaker's identity and daily events, like the 49 birth of peers (Hanazuka et al. 2019). Traditional ethological approaches were used to distinguish changes in Molly's drawings over time and seasonal variations, noting preferences 50 for certain colors and line styles across different seasons. However, these manual feature 51 extraction methods, focused on elements commonly analyzed in children's drawings, such as 52 53 loops and circles, might not align with orangutan perception (Kellogg 1969). Deep learning, leveraging artificial neural networks (Jacob et al. 2021), offers a robust alternative for image 54 analysis, excelling in tasks like microscopy image classification (Buetti-Dinh et al. 2019) and 55

disease diagnosis (Zhou et al. 2021) without the need for predefined features. Convolutional
Neural Networks (CNNs), a prevalent deep learning tool in image analysis, autonomously
learn to identify relevant features, evolving from simple shapes to complex objects through
layers. While CNNs enhance accuracy, they struggle with interpretability, prompting the
development of techniques to demystify model decisions (Zhang and Zhu 2018; Carabantes
2020).

62 Artificial intelligence's application to drawing behavior remains very little explored (Beltzung et al. 2023), despite its success in classification tasks, like identifying stroke patterns (Wu et 63 al. 2018) or categorizing drawings by object (Zhang et al. 2016). Our prior study in 2022 64 65 (Beltzung et al. 2022) harnessed AI to examine seasonal trends in Molly's artwork, utilizing the VGG19 (Dutta et al. 2016) model for seasonal classification, achieving a 41.6% accuracy. 66 We explored how different features, from simple to complex, influenced these seasonal 67 variations, highlighting the roles of color and pattern. We found with deep learning models 68 similar results that we found using classical measures in ethology and drawing analyses. The 69 70 research underscored deep learning's potential to objectively analyze non-figurative art, 71 encouraging its application beyond primates to include human toddler scribbles. However, it was impossible to open the black-box and to fully decipher and interpret the mechanisms 72 73 through which the deep learning model identifies and classifies elements within the drawings. Here, we used interpretability and explicability models to reach this aim (Zhang and Zhu 74 2018; Spannaus et al. 2023). Interpretability in deep learning refers to the ability to 75 understand and explain the decision-making process of deep neural networks. Deep learning 76 77 models are often considered black boxes because they lack transparency and it is difficult to 78 comprehend how they arrive at their predictions (Shwartz-Ziv and Tishby 2017; Carabantes 2020). Captum (Kokhlikyan et al. 2020) is a novel, unified, open-source model 79 interpretability library for PyTorch. It contains implementations of various gradient and 80

perturbation-based attribution algorithms for both classification and non-classification 81 82 models, including graph-structured models built on Neural Networks (NN). Captum emphasizes multimodality, extensibility, and ease of use. It supports different modalities of 83 inputs such as image, text, audio, or video, and allows the addition of new algorithms and 84 features. Captum also introduces an interactive visualization tool called Captum Insights, 85 which enables sample-based model debugging and visualization using feature importance 86 metrics. Integrating Captum into our study enhances the explicability further by providing a 87 comprehensive toolkit for model interpretability. Captum supports various interpretability 88 algorithms, including Occlusion and Integrated gradients (Selvaraju et al. 2017), allowing 89 90 researchers to not only visualize important regions but also understand the attribution of each input feature to the model's output. By applying Captum's visualizations on the validation 91 data for our model, we can gain deeper insights into the discriminative features recognized by 92 93 the models. This integration will facilitate a more nuanced understanding of model predictions, particularly in complex cases where direct interpretation of features is not 94 95 straightforward. At our knowledge, this is the first time that Captum is applied to drawing and 96 artwork.

97 2. Materials and Methods

98 *2.1. Dataset*

99 The dataset comprises 1,299 drawings created by Molly, a female orangutan who began 100 drawing around the age of 50, from 2006 to 2011. Molly, who seldom interacted with her 101 group members, had a daily routine: spending mornings in an enclosure (either indoors or 102 outdoors) and afternoons in a restroom equipped with crayons, allowing her to draw at her 103 leisure for about 2 to 3 hours, producing 1–2 drawings each day. She indicated the end of a 104 drawing session by placing the drawing materials on the floor. She was given paperboard and

crayons daily, but as the drawing activity was not initially aimed at studying her drawing 105 106 behavior, only minimal metadata were recorded. The exact dates of the drawings, marking the only external information, enabled categorization into seasons: autumn (374 drawings), 107 108 summer (284), spring (269), and winter (372). The drawings were adjusted to square shapes and resized to 224x224 pixels for analysis. The dataset was divided into training (907 images) 109 and validation sets (392 images), with seasonal distribution as follows: autumn (28.8%), 110 spring (20.7%), summer (21.9%), and winter (28.6%). For additional information on Molly 111 and her artwork, see references (Hanazuka et al. 2019; Pelé et al. 2021). 112

113 2.2. Convolutional Neural Network (CNN)

114 Acknowledging that human-selected features might not capture the intricate details in drawings, our study focused on deep learning, particularly convolutional neural networks 115 (CNNs). Initially, we trained CNNs, specifically VGG19 (Beltzung et al. 2022) and ResNet 116 18 (Liang 2020), to predict the seasons depicted in drawings by Molly. To address the 117 limitations of our dataset's size, we utilized transfer learning, repurposing models pre-trained 118 on different tasks. This method enabled us to leverage the capabilities of ResNet18 and 119 120 VGG19, both pre-trained with ImageNet weights, enhancing our analysis. ResNet18 is 121 renowned for its efficiency and depth, achieved through residual learning, which we adapted for our study. This model's architecture addresses the vanishing gradient problem with 122 shortcut connections that bypass layers, facilitating the training of deeper networks. We 123 124 applied this approach to both models, adjusting various parameters and hyperparameters, such as learning rate and the configuration of fully connected layers, to find the optimal setup. 125 Each model's final layer was a fully connected layer with four neurons, each representing a 126 season, using softmax activation for classification. We employed a categorical cross-entropy 127 loss function and optimized the models using stochastic gradient descent (SGD) with a 128

learning rate of 0.1 and a batch size of 16. Performance was evaluated through early stopping,
based on validation set accuracy, ceasing training after no improvement over three epochs. To
prevent overfitting, we froze the convolutional blocks and implemented data augmentation
techniques, like horizontal and vertical flips, to improve model accuracy.

133 2.3. Interpretability with Captum.

Following the initial training and optimization of our convolutional neural network models using ResNet18 and VGG19 architectures, we applied advanced analytical techniques to further interpret the deep learning model's decisions and to gain insights into the features influencing the classification of seasons in Molly's drawings. These techniques included the use of Captum (Kokhlikyan et al. 2020) and Scikit learn (Kramer and Kramer 2016; Bisong and Bisong 2019; Hao and Ho 2019) for model interpretability, dimensionality reduction, and clustering algorithms.

Captum – Occlusion: We utilized the Occlusion method from Captum, a model
interpretability library for PyTorch (Stevens et al. 2020; Imambi et al. 2021), to understand
the impact of different regions of the drawing on the model's prediction (figure 1). By
systematically occluding parts of the input image and observing the effect on the model's
output, we could identify which areas of the drawings were most significant for determining
the season. This method helps in pinpointing the 'positive' pixels or regions that contribute
most to the classification decision.

Average Number of Positive Pixels Per Season: Building on the occlusion analysis, we
calculated the average number of positive pixels per season. This step involved aggregating
the pixels that positively influenced the model's seasonal classification across all drawings
attributed to a specific season. By analyzing these averages, we aimed to discover seasonal

- 152 patterns or features that were consistently influential across Molly's drawings, providing a
- 153 quantitative measure of the visual elements most associated with each season (figure 1).



154

Figure 1: Seasonal Examples of Occlusion Analysis Using Captum Across Various Pixel
Sizes. For each season, the sequence displays: the original drawing (top), followed by positive
attribution (in green) highlighting pixels crucial for identification and classification, negative
attribution (in red) indicating non-essential pixels, and finally, the differential attribution
showcasing the contrast between positive and negative contributions. The top row represents a
threshold (t) of 0, and the bottom row a threshold (t) of 0.5 for each depicted example.

161

162 Captum – Integrated Gradients: We employed Integrated Gradients (Kwon et al. 2021),

163 another interpretability technique from Captum, to attribute the prediction of the model to its

164 input features (figure 2). This method offers a way to visualize the importance of each pixel in

the original drawing for the classification decision. By highlighting the pixels and regions
within the drawings that had the most significant impact on the model's prediction, Integrated
Gradients provided a deeper understanding of the model's behavior and the features it deemed
important.



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Figure 2: Integrated Gradients Analysis Using Captum. This illustration juxtaposes theoriginal drawing on the left with its positive attribution on the right, where black denotes the

172 pixels of utmost importance for classification.

173

Removal of the Linear Layer from the Network: To explore the features extracted by the CNN 174 175 in a more interpretable form, we removed the final linear (fully connected) layer of the network. This allowed us to access the raw features extracted by the convolutional layers 176 177 directly, which represent a high-level abstraction of the drawings. 178 Application of PCA / t-SNE in Scikit learn: With the linear layer removed and raw features extracted, we applied Principal Component Analysis (PCA) (Holland 2008) and t-Distributed 179 Stochastic Neighbor Embedding (t-SNE) (Van der Maaten and Hinton 2008; Wattenberg et al. 180 2016) for dimensionality reduction. These techniques reduced the high-dimensional feature 181 space into a two- or three-dimensional space, making it possible to visualize the distribution 182

and relationships between different drawings. This visualization helped us to observe patterns
and clusters within the data, potentially revealing intrinsic similarities between drawings of
the same season or identifying outliers.

186 Clustering (Louvain Algorithm): Finally, we applied the Louvain algorithm (Combe et al.

187 2015; Emmons et al. 2016) for clustering the drawings based on their reduced-dimensional

188 features. The Louvain algorithm is a community detection method known for its efficiency in

large networks. By clustering the drawings, we aimed to discover natural groupings within the

190 data, which could indicate distinct styles, motifs, or themes recurring across different seasons.

191 This unsupervised learning approach provided a bottom-up perspective on the dataset,

potentially uncovering new insights into Molly's drawing behavior and how it varied with theseasons.

Through the application of these advanced techniques, our study sought to deepen the analysis
of non-human drawing, leveraging the power of deep learning and interpretability tools to
uncover the nuances of seasonal variation in Molly's productions.

197

198 2.4. Statistical analyses

In our analysis, we employed the occlusion process to identify the most significant pixel in each drawing. This pixel was evaluated based on several criteria: its positional deviation from the center of the cardboard, the presence of lines, the variety and intensity of colors present, the total number of distinct colors, and the presence of additional elements. These elements included the cardboard backing, any signs of moisture damage, and traces not intended for drawing, as well as any tears or damage at the specific pixel's location.

205 Subsequently, we conducted a Kruskal-Wallis test for each of these dependent variables, with

the season acting as the independent variable. This non-parametric test was chosen to

- 207 determine if there were statistically significant differences across the seasons. The analysis
- was performed using the R statistical software, with a significance level set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Image analyses are available at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10973649. All codes are

210 available at https://github.com/cedricsueur/drawinganalyses

211 **3. Results**

212 *3.1. CNNs: VGG19 and ResNet18.*

The VGG19 model trained to classify drawings according to seasons achieved 42% accuracy 213 on the test set. The ResNet18 reached an accuracy a bit higher of 50%. These accuracies are 214 215 higher than that expected by random (approximately 29%, by always classifying drawings as the most common class). To provide further context, the same models were also tasked with 216 217 differentiating between drawings by Molly and humans drawings. In this classification challenge, both models demonstrated a remarkable accuracy higher than 93%. Additionally, 218 when the model was retrained for a binary classification task—distinguishing between 219 220 drawings with low and high coverage by Molly—it achieved an even accuracy higher than 95%. These outcomes suggest that the model is highly capable of distinguishing between 221 drawings when the distinctions are pronounced. Consequently, the relatively modest accuracy 222 223 in the seasonal classification task likely stems from the more nuanced differences present among Molly's drawings across different seasons. 224

225 *3.2. Captum Occlusion and integrated gradients*

Expanding upon our occlusion analysis, we computed the average number of positive pixels for each season, which are pixels crucial for correctly identifying the season depicted in the drawings. Our comparison across seasons, accounting for varying degrees of occlusion, revealed that independent of pixel size, Winter and Spring drawings consistently had a higher
count of significant pixels for accurate season identification than those from Summer and
Autumn. While we also explored the use of Integrated Gradients as an interpretive tool, this
method proved less definitive than Occlusion in providing clear insights. Consequently, we
chose not to pursue further analysis with Integrated Gradients, focusing instead on the more
revealing outcomes derived from the occlusion technique.

235 Our analysis revealed that 78.5% of the pixel identified as most significant per drawing contained markings attributable to the ape's drawing activities. In contrast, the average area 236 covered by markings on the paperboard for Molly was approximately 60%. Notably, the 237 238 positional data of these key pixel per drawing exhibited seasonal variation (Kruskal-Wallis chi-squared = 16.721, df = 3, p-value = 0.0008064), with pixels from drawings made in 239 Autumn tending to be more centrally located compared to those from Spring and Winter 240 (figure 3). However, when examining other characteristics of the most significant pixel per 241 drawing —such as the number of colors present, specific colors used, and the presence of 242 243 additional marks or traces-no seasonal differences were observed (Kruskal-Wallis chisquared < 6.7164, df = 3, p-value > 0.08151). 244



Figure 3: Comparative Analysis of Positive Attribution Pixel Counts. This graph presents the
average number of pixels significant for seasonal drawing classification at two thresholds: t=0
(indicating smaller pixels) and t=0.5 (representing larger pixels), highlighting the role of pixel
size in determining drawing classification importance.

250

251 3.3. PCA and Louvain Clustering

252 After the linear layer removed and raw features extracted, the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and t-Distributed Stochastic Neighbor Embedding (t-SNE) for dimensionality 253 254 reduction did not reveal any clusters according to the season (figure 4). We obtained similar results with the Louvain clustering algorithm. However, it revealed two clusters, one with 255 many drawings and one with a lower number of drawings (figure 4). The small cluster 256 257 revealed to be a cluster with many second drawings, meaning drawings made the same day after a first one. These second drawings have much more lines than the first drawings but are 258 also made at the back of the paperboard which is not white as its front. Surprisingly, despite 259 these differences, these second drawings are correctly classified with the season by the 260 models. 261



Figure 4: PCA Two-Dimensional Visualization. This graph displays clusters identified
through Louvain algorithm, with each color representing a different season, illustrating the
distribution and grouping of seasonal variations within the PCA-reduced feature space.

267

268 **4. Discussion**

In synthesizing insights from our deep learning-based analysis of non-human drawings, 269 270 particularly those by Molly the orangutan, with discussions on the interpretability of these 271 models, several key themes and conclusions emerge that bridge the gap between traditional 272 drawing analysis and advanced AI methodologies. The use of Captum (Kokhlikyan et al. 2020) specifically for the analysis of drawings and artwork appears to be a novel application. 273 While interpretability tools have been increasingly applied in various domains to understand 274 275 the decision-making processes of AI models-ranging from healthcare and finance to autonomous vehicles and natural language processing-their application within the realm of 276 art analysis, especially in studying non-human drawings, marks a pioneering step. As Nagel 277 pointed out (Nagel 1980), it's beyond human capability to fully understand the experience of 278 being another animal. However, we believe that artificial intelligence can play a role in 279 reducing the prevalence of biases. 280

281 4.1. Deep Learning Models: VGG19 and ResNet18

The performance disparities between VGG19 and ResNet18 in classifying seasonal variations
in Molly's drawings underline the nuanced nature of this task. While both models
significantly outperform random chance, indicating an ability to detect some form of seasonal
patterning, the modest accuracies highlight the challenge of discerning subtle distinctions
within the drawings. The stark contrast in model performance when tasked with more defined
classification problems, such as differentiating between non-human and human drawings or

assessing drawing coverage, reinforces the notion that deep learning excels in identifying
pronounced differences. This suggests that the complexity of seasonal variation in Molly's
drawings may encompass more intricate, less overt features that challenge the models'
classification capabilities. Indeed, Molly may change mood and personality across days,
seasons and age affecting drawings (Hanazuka et al. 2019; Pelé et al. 2021) as other apes also
having these activities (Martinet et al. 2023).

294 4.2. Interpretability: Captum Occlusion and Integrated Gradients

The employment of Captum's interpretability tools, especially Occlusion, has shed light on 295 the decision-making processes of our models, pinpointing certain pixels and areas as pivotal 296 for recognizing different seasons in the drawings. This method enriches our grasp of the 297 model's perceptual focus, but it's crucial to acknowledge a limitation: while we can identify 298 299 which pixels influence seasonal classification, the underlying features leading to these distinctions remain less clear (Gilpin et al. 2018). The inherent challenge lies in discerning the 300 301 specific attributes-be it color, texture, or shape-that these critical pixels represent, as the 302 models do not explicitly reveal this.

Opting for Occlusion over Integrated Gradients was driven by the former's ability to yield more direct insights into the importance of various image regions for model predictions. However, this preference also brings to the fore the complexity of interpreting deep learning models. Even as Occlusion helps highlight influential regions within the drawings, it underscores a broader challenge in AI interpretability: understanding the 'why' behind the model's reliance on these regions (Gilpin et al. 2018; Fan et al. 2021; Rudin et al. 2022; Li et al. 2022).

This cautious approach to interpreting Occlusion results emphasizes the necessity ofcombining interpretability tools with domain expertise. By doing so, we can hypothesize

about the features these critical pixels may correspond to, such as seasonal color palettes or
thematic elements unique to certain times of the year. Yet, the exact nature of these features
often requires further investigation, possibly through additional analytical techniques or crossreferencing with domain-specific knowledge.

316 4.3. PCA and Louvain Clustering

The utilization of PCA, t-SNE, and Louvain clustering further extends the analytical depth of this study, revealing unexpected patterns such as the clustering of drawings based on sequential order rather than seasonal attributes. This finding suggests that Molly's drawing behavior—and potentially that of other non-human artists—may be influenced by factors unrelated to season, such as the physical context of the drawing or the events of the day. The ability of the models to accurately classify these drawings despite such confounding factors speaks to the robustness of deep learning in extracting relevant features from complex data.

324 *4.4. Implications and Future Directions*

325 This study with the previous ones illustrates the complementary strengths of traditional drawing analysis and AI-driven methodologies as made in other domains (Soto and Adey 326 2016; Lu et al. 2024). Where traditional analysis provides a framework for understanding the 327 328 thematic and stylistic components of drawings, deep learning models offer a means to systematically and objectively analyze these components across large datasets. The 329 330 intersection of these approaches, facilitated by interpretability tools like Captum, holds the promise of enriching our understanding of non-human art, offering nuanced insights that 331 neither approach could achieve in isolation. However, it is needed to think and to build a 332 333 framework to know how to work in complementary with traditional approaches and AI-driven approaches. 334

The implications of this research extend beyond the specific case of Molly's drawings, touching on broader themes in evolutionary anthropology, comparative psychology, and animal welfare. By applying deep learning to the study of non-verbal drawing behavior across different species, we can explore evolutionary trajectories of artistic expression and cognitive processes (Sueur and Pelé 2023). Additionally, the potential for deep learning to assist in the early detection of neurodegenerative diseases in apes presents a novel application of AI in enhancing animal welfare and healthcare (Pelé et al. 2021).

342 In conclusion, the integration of deep learning into the analysis of non-human drawings not

only challenges and expands the boundaries of traditional art analysis but also opens new

344 avenues for interdisciplinary research. As we continue to refine these models and

interpretability techniques, the potential for AI to deepen our understanding of the cognitive

346 and emotional worlds of non-human artists becomes increasingly evident, promising insights

into the universal language of art and expression.

348

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354

355 Institutional Review Board Statement

356 The Tama Zoological Park Ethics Board approved this noninvasive behavioral study, which

357 complied with the Code of Ethics of the Japanese Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

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359	Informed Consent Statement
360	Not applicable.
361	
362	Data Availability Statement
363	Dataset is available at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10973649. All codes are available at
364	https://github.com/cedricsueur/drawinganalyses
365	
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368	
369	Conflicts of Interest
370	The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the study design;
371	collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; writing of the manuscript; or decision to publish
372	the results.
373	
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474	Figure Captions
475	Figure 1: Seasonal Examples of Occlusion Analysis Using Captum Across Various Pixel
476	Sizes. For each season, the sequence displays: the original drawing (top), followed by positive
477	attribution (in green) highlighting pixels crucial for identification and classification, negative
478	attribution (in red) indicating non-essential pixels, and finally, the differential attribution
479	showcasing the contrast between positive and negative contributions. The top row represents a
480	threshold (t) of 0, and the bottom row a threshold (t) of 0.5 for each depicted example.
481	Figure 2: Integrated Gradients Analysis Using Captum. This illustration juxtaposes the
482	original drawing on the left with its positive attribution on the right, where black denotes the
483	pixels of utmost importance for classification.

- Figure 3: Comparative Analysis of Positive Attribution Pixel Counts. This graph presents the
 average number of pixels significant for seasonal drawing classification at two thresholds: t=0
- 486 (indicating smaller pixels) and t=0.5 (representing larger pixels), highlighting the role of pixel
- 487 size in determining drawing classification importance.
- 488 Figure 4: PCA Two-Dimensional Visualization. This graph displays clusters identified
- through Louvain algorithm, with each color representing a different season, illustrating the
- 490 distribution and grouping of seasonal variations within the PCA-reduced feature space.