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Artificial Intelligence Art: The End of Creativity or the Start of Something New?

Throughout history, art, music, and language have been considered the purest forms of human expression, representing our deepest emotions and enriching our cultures. But what if technology stripped this facet of humanity from us? Similar to automation overtaking the labor industry, technology using artificial intelligence (AI) has led to the creation of AI-driven art, music, and literature. By scraping through existing artwork and analyzing certain features, these models only need text prompts when generating artwork. Although a future where robots and humans are indistinguishable may feel far off, AI-driven art has already surpassed works made by humans, opening up limitless possibilities for the future of these innovations. However, despite the implications, AI-driven art will not lead to the demise of the art world, as previous technological advancements have expanded into new facets of creation rather than disrupting the field; the potential of this technology will work in collaboration with artists to challenge their creativity and push the boundaries of art; and, most importantly, art possesses intangible factors that simply cannot be captured by prewritten algorithms, which will instead expand the field.

First, this development in technology can be compared to past advancements, many of which were initially viewed as threats to the art world due to their newfound convenience. For example, “many painters recoiled at the invention of the camera, which they saw as a debasement of human artistry” (Roose). Artists felt threatened by the camera’s ability to

perfectly capture and encase moments on film, as they could never create art as realistic as what a camera was able to preserve. However, nowadays, it is clear that cameras have not overtaken the art scene, and instead developed into their own subgenre of art while intertwining and pushing the possibilities of traditional art. The fact that the camera did not dominate the art scene shows that emotion and personal connection are core to the creation of art, a connection that is often captured best through the brutal, yet gratifying process of physical creation.

It is natural for many to feel cautious of change, especially change that is surrounded by so much hype, but AI is simply another tool that allows art to be approached from a different perspective and is limited once intangible factors are involved. Furthermore, as Deirdre Loughridge, an associate professor of music at Northeastern University, says, as new technology becomes more popular in the mainstream, it will push artists “to radically rethink how they do their work, spend their time and structure their creative process” (Mello-Klein). In this case, AI-driven art can allow artists to explore their limits by generating novel works and sparking new ideas that could not be considered otherwise, while preserving the value of creativity.

This idea further extends to music, a field where technologies have become the norm when producing new songs. Today, many are not familiar with the prevalence of AI when creating music; for example, Auto-Tune, a once controversial pitch correction processor, is now a default tool accepted by music producers, musicians, and listeners alike (Mello-Klein), and quantization is a popular technique that can eliminate imprecise rhythm and articulation. As a musician myself, I look forward to witnessing the impact of technology on the art of music, as it is already present in my practice and performances through the use of tuners, metronomes, and recordings. Furthermore, sound technology now defines how music is experienced, with audio

engineers influencing the perception of performances as much as the musicians themselves. Many artists today are leveraging technology in unique ways to further shape their sound, producing new funky licks that wouldn't have been possible just a decade earlier. Many times, caution surrounding the use of new technologies stems from a lack of understanding, so establishing the positive potential of these technologies is critical for favorable perceptions. It is inevitable that technology, something so prevalent in our daily lives, will continue to influence all aspects of humanity, but it is important to understand that progress does not necessarily signify the loss of human qualities; rather, this technology can serve as a catalyst for further advancements that continue "to blur the line between curation and creation" (Millière).

As AI continues to grow, so does the recognition to collaborate with it, rather than resist it out of fear. It is important to note that current AI-driven art is still lightyears away from the dystopian fantasy that many people envision. As shown by a study conducted by the creators of the artificial intelligence creative adversarial network (AICAN), when participants were asked to differentiate between AI-created and human-created artworks, the latter was consistently rated higher for its composition, degree of expression, and aesthetic value (Cetinic and She 11). Clearly, the value of art stems from its ability to evoke the viewer's emotion, which is most effective when a human artist imbues their meaning and purpose within a piece. This becomes even more apparent in music, where technical accuracy and rigidity may hinder a performance's impact, as the music relies heavily on the emotions and passion the performance exudes.

With AI-based models, it is important to note that to create a "creative [model] is the integration of self-reflection and the ability to change behaviour accordingly" (Sturm et al. 10). However, existing AI-based models are "built by scraping millions of images from the open web,

then teaching algorithms to recognize patterns and relationships in those images and generate new ones in the same style” (Roose), meaning they are more so creating compilations of existing pieces rather than new works. This is why algorithms will likely never fully capture the nuance of human art, as art entails the existence of an intention, purpose, and emotion for both the artist and the audience; in the rare case that these models do become complex enough to produce human-like artwork, they can provide valuable insight into the creativity of the human brain. Furthermore, human artists can use AI-driven art to their advantage; similar to how the turntable was initially “designed to facilitate playback at home but has become a performance tool in ways that were not intended by its developers or manufacturer” (Sturm et al. 12), these models can provide inspiration for designers as they outline their own ideas for new, creative pieces.

When discussing AI-driven art, most hesitancy stems from knowing that artists spend years honing their skills and dedicate hundreds of hours towards their pieces, only to be replaced by a programmed model that can tailor-make pieces within seconds. Considering this, why would clients pay hundreds of dollars when a computer can generate such pieces for much cheaper and quicker? Before answering this question, however, it is important to understand that this technology isn't inherently good or bad; rather, its impact will be solely dependent on how it is used. As established previously, this technology will not replace artists, and at most will merely surpass traditional art in its technical composition; no matter how advanced art-producing technology becomes, traditional art will continue to elicit emotion to a far greater extent. As Jon McCormack, a professor at Monash University, explains, there are many factors “considered important to aesthetic theory that cannot be measured directly. These features or properties are generally interpreted rather than measured, often in a context-sensitive way” (Romero and

Machado 437), solidifying that these models will never be able to fully quantify art.

Where this technology will shine is in its ability to increase the accessibility of the art world to the general populace. Many who initially felt intimidated by the art world can start experimenting with their own ideas without the need for expensive tools and materials thanks to systems like Midjourney and DALL·E 2; the latter of which sparked a trend that encouraged many to create unique and humorous prompts to generate the strangest images possible, such as a bottle of ranch testifying in court. These models will allow individuals to explore their brewing ideas and visualize the outcome of their artistic vision. Soon, individuals will transition towards creating their own art without the aid of these programs. No matter how advanced these models may become, their use will never completely emulate what it is to truly create art; creating art is a therapeutic, cathartic journey that allows people to be vulnerable and pour their deepest emotions onto the canvas. Of course, this technology can be misused, both by greedy corporations and those who claim the products of these models as their own artwork, prompting some to consider the true authors of AI art: “The notion of AIs as authors might be adopted to prevent humans from claiming too much, rather than preventing AIs from not getting credit due” (Galanter 4). However, if these models continue to grow and are used responsibly, both by artists and consumers, the sky is the limit for what new forms of art can be discovered and developed.

Through AI-driven art, AI has entered the mainstream and interacted with the production of art, a process thought to be exclusive to humans. Although the current state of AI art does not present any significant dangers to the art world, it is critical to examine technological advancements and determine whether they will have any unintended consequences. As AI

progresses and fully integrates into our daily lives, technological literacy will be integral to properly control this exponential transition. Ensuring we use AI as a tool to learn more about ourselves and the world around us, while also accepting the shift in what it means to create art, and what constitutes a piece of art itself, will be most important. Many may develop myopia when considering technology in the long term, so ensuring that we understand its impact, effects, and consequences will be a necessity as we take more steps to digitize the world around us.

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