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## **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND CONCERNS ABOUT 'TRUE' ART.**

Remarks on why human art is overrated and AI-made art unjustifiably undervalued

**Abstract:** The rapid development of artificial intelligence has recently provoked anxiety among many professional groups, including artists, art critics and curators. The sale of AI-made objects at art auctions and art prizes awarded to computer-generated images have undermined many beliefs about art that exist both in the art community and among the general public. It seems, however, that the fear of AI is a result of wishful thinking about artistic creation and its characteristics. Referring to the categories of originality, professionalism, empathy and 'black boxes', this article argues that AI is devalued for the same features we find in the works of humans and art created by humans is overrated for features we can also find in the work of AI.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, originality, professionalism, black boxes, empathy, concerns about AI, art, amateurs

### **Delusions-based panic**

Vast development of AI constitutes a phenomenon which often evokes pessimistic or even catastrophic visions of the future. Such an approach is especially characteristic for a group termed as the "creative class" by Richard Florida<sup>1</sup>. Its manifestation was a strike by screenwriters and actors that broke

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<sup>1</sup> R. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Basic Books, 2002.

out in Hollywood in June 2023, half a year after the release of Chat GPT 4.0. The strikers made social and legal demands, but mainly economic ones, demanding regulations which would guarantee that the use of AI by film studios would not reduce the strikers' salaries<sup>2</sup>. This strike became a flagship example of concerns globally expressed by the creative class towards the development of AI. When reporting on the strike, mainstream media exaggerated the feeling of an impending calamity. They widely informed the public about risks related to randomness and unpredictability in the functioning of AI-based applications (the performance of which has often surprised AI developers themselves<sup>3</sup>) and about the potential for using this technology in bad faith by simulating real content with fake news or 'deep fake' in order to, for example, blackmail people, manipulate public opinion, impersonate individuals or spread racial and gender prejudices and stereotypes<sup>4</sup>.

Broadly speaking, being part of the creative class, the contemporary art-world has also been touched by some concerns, although they have remained less known and gained less public interest than those aroused in the film industry. The first serious shocks appeared already in 2018, when an inkjet print on canvas, made by a group of machine learning and business students from Paris, was sold at Christie's auction house for nearly half a million dollars<sup>5</sup>. Many art critics were appalled by the amount of money paid for an artifact made by an unknown group of students who appeared out of nowhere and dared to identify themselves as artists, as well as by considering the object they made to be a legitimate work of art. Some critics emphasized the mediocre aesthetic and artistic value of that object<sup>6</sup>, while others pointed out that it was genuinely at odds with

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., A. Cullins, K. Kilkenny, *As Writers Strike, AI Could Covertly Cross the Picket Line*, „The Hollywood Reporter”, 3 May 2023, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/writers-strike-ai-chatgpt-1235478681/> [accessed: 21 June 2024].

<sup>3</sup> C. Metz, *Chatbots May 'Hallucinate' More Often Than Many Realize*, „New York Times”, 6 November 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/06/technology/chatbots-hallucination-rates.htm> [accessed: 5 November 2023]; T. Acres, *ChatGPT turns one: The first year of the chatbot that changed the world*, „Sky News”, 30 November 2023, <https://news.sky.com/story/chatgpt-turns-one-the-first-year-of-the-chatbot-that-changed-the-world-13014185> [accessed: 21 June 2024].

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., D. Milmo, *AI doomsday warnings a distraction from the danger it already poses*, warns expert, „Guardian”, 29 October 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/oct/29/ai-doomsday-warnings-a-distraction-from-the-danger-it-already-poses-warns-expert> [accessed: 21 June 2024].

<sup>5</sup> The auction's details are given at <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6166184> [accessed: 21 June 2024].

<sup>6</sup> J. Saltz, *An Artwork Made by Artificial Intelligence Just Sold for \$400,000. I Am Shocked, Confused, Appalled*, „New York Magazine”, 25 October 2018, <https://www.vulture.com/2018/10/an-artificial-intelligence-artwork-just-sold-for-usd400-000.html> [accessed: 21 June 2024].

the very nature of art, which is to express intentions and emotions that, by definition, could not be found in a work of algorithms<sup>7</sup>. Another serious blow was dealt in the spring of 2022, when an AI-produced “photograph” was bestowed with an award during the Colorado State Fair. It provoked a scandal, even though, after the sale at Christie’s and due to proliferating AI-made images in the public sphere, the audience was already familiar with art made with the help of computers. This time, some criticism focused on the creation and production process, arguing that feeding AI with prompts is not enough to consider the results of this process to be art<sup>8</sup>.

Regardless of how one evaluates the aesthetic or artistic quality of the aforementioned images, it is undeniable that the sudden and successful appearance of some AI-based works was shocking and confusing. The belief that machines cannot achieve the level of technical skills needed for art production was put at risk. Their success also undermined the social prestige of art as a domain of professional individuals, privileged due to their talent and unique perception of reality, where works are selected by aesthetic gatekeepers such as gallery owners, art critics, collectors and curators. Yet, first and foremost, AI imagery undermines the concept of art as an exclusively human activity that cannot be automated. This notion is arguably rooted in German idealist philosophy, particularly in the writings of Schelling. By emphasising the special cognitive value of art, he assigned it a superior status compared with other human activities and treated it as the pinnacle of human achievement<sup>9</sup>. Perhaps this romantic view of art allows both critics and the general public to believe that art is a niche activity, completely immune to algorithmization, as it represents the very essence of humanity, demonstrating an inalienable human capacity for free and intentional action. When it became apparent that this allegedly exclusive human skill of creating art can be automated – i.e., free and intentional human creation in art is quite repetitive and based on patterns, it dangerously blurred the boundary between humans and machines, challenging common beliefs on art.

AI had started knocking on the door of the artworld’s exclusive niche and raising anxiety levels to those of a pending catastrophe. Indeed, over the last few years, we have observed a growing number of voices expressing concerns

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<sup>7</sup> J. Jonson, *A portrait created by AI just sold for \$432,000. But is it really art?*, “The Guardian”, 26th of October 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/shortcuts/2018/oct/26/call-that-art-can-a-computer-be-a-painter> [accessed: 21 June 2024].

<sup>8</sup> R. Metz, *AI won an art contest, and artists are furious*, “CNN Business”, 3rd of September 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/09/03/tech/ai-art-fair-winner-controversy/index.html> [accessed: 21 June 2024].

<sup>9</sup> See D. Z. Shaw, *Freedom and Nature in Schelling’s Philosophy of Art*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London & New York, 2012, pp. 113-141.

or anxiety about AI and predicting the disastrous effects it might bring. Some of those concerns are clearly justified to an extent. Important issues arise regarding AI-made artworks which imitate styles of human artists, violating the copyrights of artists or artwork owners and raising questions about the legal status of such images<sup>10</sup>. The problem of massive job losses is also real and particularly affects individuals involved in illustration, graphic design or image post-production<sup>11</sup>. However, and this is the main argument that the author wants to address in this paper, a significant part of the concerns and criticism levelled at AI seem to be questionable, stemming either from a misunderstanding of AI's mechanics or an overestimation of art's capacities.

### Another avoided catastrophe?

Before elaborating on which specific myths have been questioned and how, it is worth briefly introducing a historical perspective. If we look back at writings about the relationship between technology and culture that appeared after World War II, we realize that the current anxiety and apocalyptic predictions about the future provoked by AI are not really a novelty. Generally speaking, they are surprisingly familiar, as they echo well-known narratives about the crisis of culture that appeared as a reaction to the advent of new technologies after World War II. It is only a working hypothesis, but one may arguably assume that there have been three waves of such narratives.

The first wave took place mainly due to the development of the mass media industry, especially television, around the 1940s and 1950s, and resulted in a critique of popular culture arising from both conservative and Marxist intellectuals. Both sides criticised the dominant model of mass media content reception, asserting that it reduced viewers or listeners to passive, alienated consumers of commodities. In addition, they condemned the model of content production, arguing that it used repetitive formulas which did not require high cultural competence<sup>12</sup>.

In the early 1980s, in response to mass use of consumer-grade cameras, crisis narratives were driven by pessimistic views on the proliferation of photographic images in developed industrial countries. Among prominent followers

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<sup>10</sup> A. Guadamuz, *Artificial intelligence and copyright*, "Wipo Magazine", October 2017, [https://www.wipo.int/wipo\\_magazine/en/2017/05/article\\_0003.html](https://www.wipo.int/wipo_magazine/en/2017/05/article_0003.html) [accessed: 21 June 2024].

<sup>11</sup> S. Shaffi, *It's the opposite of art: why illustrators are furious about AI*, "The Guardian", 23 January 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/jan/23/its-the-opposite-of-art-why-illustrators-are-furious-about-ai> [accessed: 21 June 2024].

<sup>12</sup> See S. Morawski, *Sztuka masowa a elitarna - za i przeciw*, in: idem, *Na zakręcie od sztuki do po-sztuki*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1985, pp. 74-104.

of this kind of narratives was Vilém Flusser who argued that ubiquitous pictures would dominate human communication and replace rational, critical and analytically oriented communication through conceptual language and texts<sup>13</sup>. As most camera users do not fully understand processes responsible for the creation of images, cameras constitute 'black boxes' of sorts which tend to subordinate users by reducing their activity to mechanical operations imposed by preset camera functions. Thus, Flusser stated that the use of cameras became a model for a general and progressing subjugation of humankind to technology.

The third wave of concerns relates to the development of the Internet, particularly its iteration known as Web 2.0 or UGC (user-generated content) platforms. This dominant structure of online space, now primarily recognised as social media, has also worried some researchers. Among them was Andrew Keen, who predicted the rapid decline of journalism and the music industry in his 2007 book *The Cult of the Amateur*<sup>14</sup>. According to Keen, UGS platforms, enabling masses of amateurs to publish their content freely and quickly, led to the proliferation of low-quality unverified information. Keen believed that the same mechanism was responsible for flooding the Internet with amateur music offending refined tastes and ultimately causing the demise of music labels run by experts who employed professional musicians.

As can be seen, some motifs which appeared in writings on the negative impact that new technologies might have on culture – repetitiveness and schematic modes of image production, human subjugation to technology, proliferation of low-quality content throughout, job losses and disappearance of professional artists – are also present in today's discussions on risks that we face with the development of AI. However, forty years after the publication of *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* by Vilém Flusser, we know that his predictions have not been fulfilled. It is also difficult to consider Andrew Keen's diagnosis as true. Although the development of social media has had an impact on the functioning of the music industry, it would be risky to say that the quality of music has generally declined or that professional musicians have been pushed out of the public space. The future has turned out to be better than believed by "techno-pessimists". Thus, we might also assume that recent concerns about the impact of AI on visual arts or culture as a whole are largely exaggerated. Perhaps, they should rather be considered as typical human reactions to the unknown and, as such, not necessarily based on an accurate diagnosis but on a purely emotional need to protect the current, familiar *status quo*.

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<sup>13</sup> V. Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, Reaktion Books, translated by Anthony Mathwes, London 2020.

<sup>14</sup> A. Keen, *The Cult of Amateur. How Today's Internet Is Killing Our Culture*, Currency 2007.

It seems that the automation of image making is often perceived as a danger not only because of the actual threats it might create, such as job losses or copyright violation. The concerns focus rather on those aspects of AI performance which undermine certain myths fostering the uniqueness of art among other human activities. Those myths constitute a complex system of assumptions that have both an artistic and aesthetic nature, as well as socio-economic consequences. On the one hand, they are related, for example, to the idea of originality, the figure of the individualistic artist who, like the biblical God, creates a work of art from scratch. Allied with this notion is also the perception of a work of art as a vehicle for conveying emotions and intentions between the artist and the viewer. On the other hand, the concern is about the status of the professional artist, their superiority over amateurs and the related elitist nature of artistic activity.

The relationship between human art and AI-art is more complex than sceptics would like to admit. It seems that, on one hand, the value of human art is inflated for some features considered as inherently human, while, in fact, they can be easily found in art made by computers. On the other hand, AI-art is despised and criticised for some characteristics that it actually shares with human-made art. In other words, whether we accept it or not, human art can be computer-like in some cases and vice versa – AI-art has some features which make it surprisingly human. Based on this distinction between overrated elements of human art and underrated elements of computer-generated art, the author discusses some criticisms that have been raised pertaining to AI art. With references to such categories as originality, professionalism, intentionality and empathy, as well as black boxes, it is argued that the difference between the two types of art is not as significant as AI critics would like to believe. Furthermore, the author suggests that it is also difficult to find features that would definitively set apart human and AI art.

### **What is human-made art overrated for?**

Although it may seem unrelated to the discussion about AI, the author would like to recall the famous essay by Claire Bishop, in which this British art historian attacked Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics two decades ago<sup>15</sup>. She pointed out that the works of artists belonging to the movement she criticised were very similar to each other. She considered this resemblance to be a weakness and assumed that it resulted from the nature of the relational artists' work. Emphasising the social dimension of art, they used to cooperate

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<sup>15</sup> See. C. Bishop, *Antagonism and relational aesthetics*, "October", vol. 110, Fall 2004, pp. 51-79.

and influence each other. However, the conclusions of the British art critic were both based on rather simplified logic and a false premise. The former was that the collaborative work and mutual influences of relational artists made their works difficult to distinguish. As for the latter, relational artists hardly ever worked together and the group they formed was an artificial construct by the curator, Nicolas Bourriaud. Liam Gillick, one of the flagship figures of relational art, was aware of this and, in his polemics with the British critic in "October", he did not hesitate to sarcastically mock her assumptions. As he put it:

Bishop accompanies this claim with a revealing assertion that it is often hard to identify who has made a specific work. This may also be true for a visitor to the National Gallery in London who is unfamiliar with pre-twentieth-century art<sup>16</sup>.

Mockingly refuting Bishop's criticism, Liam Gillick reiterated the lesson given in the 1960s and 1970s by Structuralism and Poststructuralism: art of all time is based on patterns and appropriation of preexisting formulas. Artists do use repetitive formulas in their works, but only a few of them are aware that it is normal and inevitable.

This lesson has been largely overlooked recently, but it might shed some light on how we evaluate human art in relation to AI-made art objects. Firstly, human-made art is mostly mediocre and contains a significant amount of repetitiveness, while originality and novelty – the Holy Grail of the avant-garde – happens rarely, both in terms of art history and the lifetime progress of an individual artist. Secondly, according to the Structuralist approach, originality is always a result of recomposing or reconfiguring preexisting "building blocks" and is never a creation *ex nihilo*. Moreover, repetition creates the foundational possibility for any artwork to be perceived as such. Every artwork, even the most unusual one, must be situated within a certain artistic context, which means it needs to be characterised by some repetitive features that allow it to be recognised as art in the first place. Would Duchamp's *Fountain*, renowned as one of the most radical gestures of the avant-garde, be possible without the prior introduction of ready-made objects, such as tickets, buttons, postcards, etc. into works by the Cubists? Would *Fountain*'s credibility as an artwork be intact if it did not include a play with the signature, an emblematic component of modern paintings? From this perspective, originality and novelty emerge as a series of small changes that are primarily made possible due to a scale effect (their slow and massive proliferation) rather than solely by individual decisions of artists.

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<sup>16</sup> L. Gillick, *Contingent Factors: A Response to Claire Bishop's "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics"*, "October" no. 115, Winter 2006, p. 100.

The Structuralist and Poststructuralist view that language structure predominates over individual speech not only challenges the avant-garde notion of originality but also, to some extent, bridges the gap between human artists and AI performance. As a language, art relies on repetitive grammar rules and vocabulary that both viewers and artists need to learn, so the language is communicative. Knowledge of this language requires understanding certain motifs, methods of representation, composition, juxtaposition, etc. In this regard, artists and AI performance are no different, since they rely on a data archive with which they had to become familiar beforehand. The dataset consists of a plethora of preexisting images that have been created in art history. Both human artists and AI are taught how to use this storage and extract the parts that are most suitable for the creation of images. Schemes and repetitiveness constitute integral elements of this process.

Some critics of artificial intelligence would probably agree with such a comparison. Indeed, to an extent, artists and AI operate in the same way, as they both apply learned rules to create images. The fundamental difference, however, would be that AI remains purely imitative, while only human agents can be creative. It seems that a similar conclusion was reached in 2009 by Margaret Boden. Her research was based on the belief that creativity is not something mysterious but a phenomenon that can be described and translated into a set of rules. Following this premise, the British researcher distinguished three types of creativity: combinational (combining already stored concepts), exploratory (exploring the storage and creating new things with an awareness of generative rules and their boundaries) and transformational, in which, as she defines it:

the space or style itself is transformed by altering (or dropping) one or more of its defining dimensions. As a result, ideas can now be generated that simply *could* not have been generated before the change<sup>17</sup>.

In other words, the third type of creativity would involve a human or non-human agent able to step beyond the imposed boundaries and create new operational rules. Boden presents several arguments affirming that we can already recognise AI as creative in both the combinational and exploratory meanings of the word. Although she also seems close to admitting that AI can achieve the third type of originality, at a certain point she concludes that answering this question actually goes beyond the competence of empirical studies and belongs in the realm of philosophy<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> M. A. Boden, *Computer Models of Creativity*, "AI Magazine", Fall 2009, p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

If we translated the types of creativity defined by Boden into the language of art, combinational creativity would indicate simply combining motifs and mixing styles, while exploratory creativity would mean masterfully operating within the conventions imposed by a given style, yet without the ability to go beyond them. As for the third type, there are artists able to go beyond established styles and create new paradigms. However, an important but not entirely obvious question arises: who *de facto* makes changes and who creates new artistic paradigms? Are artists fully responsible for this?

The institutional definition of art suggests that changes are not only made through individual gestures of artists but constitute the activity of many artworld representatives. All changes that occur in art are collective in nature and result from social negotiations of sorts between artists, curators, gallerists, directors of institutions, collectors and the public. In this sense, no object is original or creative as such but becomes so as a result of a collective process happening between dispersed artworld decision makers. New styles, tendencies or paradigms in art turn out to be not only the results of artists' activity but also the activity of other artworld representatives who take risks to confer "the status of candidate for appreciation"<sup>19</sup> to certain artifacts. Following this logic, we may assume that there is no reason for human artists to be more privileged than computers in terms of potential originality and creativeness, as products of both human and non-human artists may become "candidates for appreciation".

Again, it seems that sceptics who express worries about mass production of images created with the assistance of AI are driven more by the need of protecting the *status quo* and the prestige of art as an elitist activity than by any actual difference between the potential of humans and computers. A term that often appears in this context is "professional art", which functions as a tool to underrate allegedly low-quality production by amateurs. It resembles the aforementioned arguments by Andrew Keen who, in 2007, predicted that Web 2.0 meant an advent of amateurs "many with no more talent in the creative arts than our primate cousins" who were supposed to create "an endless digital forest of mediocrity."<sup>20</sup> The same is believed to happen if masses of non-professionals make use of AI-based applications for visual content creation: flooding mediocrity and the collapse of professional art.

Yet, the value of professionalism understood as artistic legitimacy given by a diploma of a fine arts academy is often fetishised and delusional. Firstly, it is obvious that a diploma does not save an artist from making bad or mediocre art. Secondly, even a short look at the history of art proves that throughout the

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<sup>19</sup> G. Dickie, *Aesthetics. An Introduction*. Pegasus, Indianapolis, p. 101.

<sup>20</sup> A. Keen, *The Cult of Amateur...*, p. 2.

last 150 years, from the moment when the history of the avant-garde began, the artworld has incorporated many artists and works of art that did not meet standards imposed by academic art. This pertains equally to the art of amateurs, tribal societies, individuals with mental challenges, or children – they have all been included in the official artworld in search for originality. Moreover, one could even say that the history of the avant-garde was, to some extent, possible due to amateurs. Prominent figures of Impressionist and Post-impressionist movements, such as Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne or Paul Gauguin, were amateurs in a formal sense, since none of them ever graduated from a fine arts academy. Their education in art was limited to private courses they took at Charles Suisse's studio (Monet, who was not accepted by the Fine Arts Academy in Paris, and Cézanne) and Filippo Colarossi's studio (Gauguin, who devoted himself to a career in painting when he was over 35 years old). Their only legitimacy as professionals in art was, to use Pierre Bourdieu's term, social consecration<sup>21</sup>. It referred to their cooperation and friendships with other "legitimate" artists as well as economic efficiency, i.e. the ability to make a living by selling their works.

### **What is AI-art underrated for?**

The cult of the professional artist is especially strong among the visual arts, where the distinction between professionals and amateurs is still sustained. It appears to be irrelevant in literature and, broadly speaking, popular music. This might be why the argument of low-quality content hardly ever arises among musicians and writers. They focus on the economic impact of AI, such as job losses and copyrights, rather than on prestige or the social status of their jobs that AI might endanger. Yet, one argument against AI is commonly shared by visual artists, writers and musicians. It relates to the fact that there is no human actor – with their emotions and intentions – behind the work of algorithms. In other words, AI-made art cannot satisfy the basic need of viewers, listeners or readers for an empathetic relationship with another human being.

Surprisingly, however, with reference to many studies conducted in recent years, the problem of emotions and intentions 'expressed' by AI is much subtler than it might seem. Some studies show that the presence of human intentions and emotions does not necessarily play an important role in the evaluation of art. For example, according to a paper published in 2021 by Harsha Gangadharbatla<sup>22</sup>, the participants in his study rated abstract images much higher

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<sup>21</sup> See P. Bourdieu, *Rules of art. Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, transl. S. Emmanuel, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1995, pp. 166-173.

<sup>22</sup> H. Gangadharbatla, *The Role of AI Attribution Knowledge in the Evaluation of Artwork*, "Empirical Studies of the Arts", 40 (1), pp. 1-19.

and were much more willing to declare their intention to purchase them when they learnt that these images were created by AI. The author of the paper also noted an interesting inverse relationship: the individuals rated figurative images higher and were more likely to purchase them when they were created by humans<sup>23</sup>. Gangadharbatla also observed that the participants tended to attribute the authorship of abstract works to computers, while figurative images, regardless of whether they were created by AI or humans, were more often attributed to human authors. The study does not explain the reasons for this tendency, but it shows that people may rate works made by AI higher than those made by humans, even though they know they are perceiving images devoid of human emotions and intentions.

Moreover, there are also studies which provide some evidence (although it sounds quite paradoxical) that individuals often declare they can feel emotions and intentions conveyed by AI-made images. The possibility for emotions to be stirred and the level of their intensity depended on various factors, such as cultural or behavioural differences. In an interesting article from 2021, for example, four researchers presented the results of a study on how a cultural context may influence the perception of AI-created art<sup>24</sup>. The study involved approximately 400 participants from the USA and 300 participants from China, who were tasked with evaluating poetry written by AI (one poem in Chinese for the Chinese participants and one poem in English for the American participants) as well as an AI-made painting that won the 2017 Robot Art Competition. The researchers hypothesized that the Chinese would be more positively inclined toward AI-created art than the Americans for two reasons. First, the Chinese have greater exposure to various digital technologies, including AI, in their daily lives. Secondly, the Chinese are a collectivist society and traditionally have greater respect for authority, which was expected to correlate with the "bandwagon effect" following the Chinese government's announcement in 2017 that the development of AI would be a national strategy for China<sup>25</sup>. The results of the study, at least partially, confirmed the researchers' hypotheses. However, in the context of intentions and emotions, the important point is that, compared to the US participants,

the Chinese participants perceived the AI-generated poem to have higher quality and imaginativeness. They also reported higher empathy with the AI authors and considered machines as more competent<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Y. Wu, Y. Mou, Z. Li, K. Xu, *Investigating American and Chinese Subjects' explicit and implicit perceptions of AI-Generated artistic work*, "Computers in Human Behavior", vol. 104, March 2020, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

With relevance to the evaluation of the human vs AI-authored paintings, “the Chinese participants did not report significantly different attitudes toward them.”<sup>27</sup> However, if we consider that AI critics generally assume that AI-made art is inferior to human art due to a lack of emotions and intentions, the ambiguous reaction of the Chinese participants showed that this was not an important issue for them. Moreover, the study results indicated that even if a certain group of the participants rated human art higher than AI art, the differences between those who had a positive attitude and those who had a negative attitude were not significant. This applied to both the Americans and Chinese participants<sup>28</sup>.

An inspiring and important study on perceiving intentions and emotions in AI-art was conducted at the Vienna University<sup>29</sup>. During the study, the participants were asked to describe the type and intensity of emotions they felt whilst viewing abstract images created either by humans or by AI. The results were surprising. Firstly, as the researchers noted, “the actual computer-made artworks tended to be slightly more negatively rated [...] when people were told that they were, in fact, from a computer”<sup>30</sup> and human-made art “suggested, again, slightly more positive (e.g., happy, amused, free, harmony, stimulated) emotional responses”<sup>31</sup>. The word “slightly” seems crucial in the context of the aforementioned criticisms toward AI-made art, as it negates the relevance of human or AI authorship in terms of appreciation. Secondly, one of the most important findings of the study was that “people also generally reported that they thought specific emotions were *intended* – even when told that the art was from a computer.”<sup>32</sup> The researchers explained the study results with a general behavioural human tendency to anthropomorphize objects and attribute intentions to them. As they concluded:

the findings are in line with theories regarding the arts and other forms of human interactions [...], which postulate that generally, feeling emotions and intentionality in objects and artifacts is a rather common human practice, with or without an artist<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Th. R. Demmer, C. Kühnapfel, J. Fingerhut, M. Pelowski, *Does an emotional connection to art really require a human artist? Emotion and intentionality responses to AI-versus human-created art and impact on aesthetic experience*, “Computers in Human Behavior”, vol. 140, March 2023, pp. 1-19.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 8

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

This approach radically blurs the differences between art created by humans and AI, at least in terms of establishing empathetic communication between art and the viewer. It is evident, however, that even if people attribute intentions to objects created by AI, it does not mean that AI's actions are actually driven by any motivations or intentions. The abovementioned studies may seriously undermine some beliefs on the empathic potential of AI. However, a sceptical approach to AI can still rest on the argument that not only does AI lack intentions, but its mechanisms of operation, unlike those of human artists, are unknown. In this sense, AI functions like a 'black box'. We know the input and output, but we do not understand the mechanisms responsible for the results. In other words, the supposed advantage of human art over AI art in this regard would be that, unlike AI, human artists operate consciously and rationally.

It seems, however, that there is a long tradition in aesthetics that also suggests the artist and their methods can be viewed as a kind of a 'black box'. This tradition draws on to the concepts of inspiration and "furor poeticus" [Eng. poetic madness], which were well-known already in ancient Greece. From a perspective relevant to the discussion on AI, the artist becomes merely a medium, serving as a tool to convey content that they did not create themselves and may not even understand. They also did not control the creative act in the sense that they neither decided about its beginning nor its end. In ancient times, this understanding of the creative process had a religious connotation, as some supernatural forces were believed to guide the artist. However, in modern times, a secular form of this belief can be found in Immanuel Kant's writings. In his *Critique of Judgment* Kant argues that the author:

does not know how he came by the ideas for it; nor is it in his power [Gewalt] to devise such products at his pleasure, or by following a plan, and to communicate his procedure to others in precepts that would enable them to bring about like products<sup>34</sup>.

Kant's view of the artistic creation process did not diminish the artist's prestige; on the contrary, it enhanced their status and made them someone exceptional, even though they did not know precisely what or how they were creating. In other words, their operation as a 'black box' was considered a desirable feature. How is the mechanism of AI different in this context and why should we depreciate it as a method of creating art? Is a lack of awareness a well-

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<sup>34</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, transl. W. S. Pluhar, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis-Cambridge, 1987, p. 175.

justified reason to depreciate the results of its performance in terms of aesthetic quality, especially if there is always a human author in the background who consciously writes the prompt?

### **What is next?**

It seems that fears regarding the relationship between art and AI reveal more about perceptions on art shared by artists, art critics and the general public, than the actual potential negative impact of AI on art. On the one hand, it is often forgotten that some problems supposedly inherent in AI, such as low-quality art and the presence of amateurs, had long been part of art before AI emerged. On the other hand, the mechanics of AI operation as a tool for creating art, evoking emotions and functioning as a 'black box', show that the line between human and non-human creators of art is blurred and the reasons to protect the specificity and superiority of human art are quite weak. If there are any real concerns about the impact of AI on art, it appears that they arise from whether artists will be able to set aside their egos and start creatively using this technology for their own purposes.

The first shockwave caused by the events at Christie's auction house in 2018 and at the Colorado State Fair in 2022 has already passed. It is difficult to predict the future and that is not the aim of this paper, but it can be said with certainty that the presence of AI offers a great opportunity to rethink the role of art and its place in a world dominated by new technologies. This world is completely different from the one we knew in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the key concepts that we still use in art discourse were being shaped. Like other new technologies, from photography and film to digital media, AI thus leads to a collision of this old analogue world with the new one. Importantly, these worlds differ not only in terms of technology but also social premises. Categories such as originality or professionalism used to have both an individualistic and elitist character, and they taught us to talk about art in the same individualistic and elitist way. AI provides an opportunity to change these old habits, to break away from the notions of art shaped by 19<sup>th</sup>-century aesthetics, still deeply ingrained in common beliefs.

The remarkable evolution of visual arts over the past 150 years has drawn on the fearlessness of novelty and willingness to experiment with new technologies and social ideas. The real concern about the future of art, therefore, is not related to AI, but to the question whether artists will be ready to take risks and go down paths that are not yet well-known. In other words, art is facing a serious dilemma. It will either share the fate of ballet or opera, whose best years are long gone, and which resemble an artificially sustained living museum or fossils, despite attempts to adapt them to the present times, or it will conti-

nue to be a vibrant and contemporary language that can contribute something new to our understanding of the contemporary world.

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## SZTUCZNA INTELIGENCJA A TROSKA O „PRAWDZIwą” SZTUKĘ

Jak przeceniamy sztukę ludzi i niesprawiedliwie deprecjonujemy sztukę AI?

**(streszczenie)**

Gwałtowny rozwój sztucznej inteligencji wywołuje niepokoje wśród wielu grup zawodowych, również wśród artystów, krytyków sztuki i kuratorów. Sprzedaż wykonanych przez AI obiektów na aukcjach sztuki oraz nagrody artystyczne przyznawane komputerowo wygenerowanym obrazom podważają wiele wyobrażeń na temat sztuki, które istnieją zarówno w środowisku artystycznym jak też wśród szerokiej publiczności. Wydaje się jednak, że lęk przed AI jest efektem myślenia życzeniowego na temat działalności artystycznej i jej charakterystyki. Odwołując się do kategorii oryginalności, profesjonalizmu, empatii i „czarnych skrzynek”, artykuł przekonuje, że AI deprecjonowana jest za te same cechy, które znajdujemy w twórczości ludzi, a sztuka tworzona przez ludzi przeceniana jest za cechy, które możemy znaleźć w działaniu AI.

**Słowa kluczowe:** sztuczna inteligencja, oryginalność, profesjonalizm, czarne skrzynki, empatia, obawy wobec AI, sztuka, amatorzy

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