

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON AI-GENERATED ARTWORKS AND ETHICS: PERSPECTIVES FROM SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL DIGITAL ARTISTS

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Abstract

The rapid growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI), driven by technological advancements and humanity's persistent pursuit of innovation has led to ongoing debates. One factor affected by this current trend in using AI is digital art. Discussions about considering AI-generated artworks as "real art" can be commonly seen on various social media platforms. To gain insights and perspectives on dilemmas concerning AI-generated artworks, the study collected inputs from Senior High School (SHS) students digital artists from the Arts and Design Track. Employing a qualitative-phenomenological approach, the study uncovered student digital artists' opinions on the emergence of AI-generated artworks, perspectives on considering it as "real art," and the ethical issues that surround this current phenomenon brought by AI. Overall, this study highlights the importance of balancing human-created and AI-generated artworks, suggesting that AI should serve as a tool to inspire and enhance human creativity rather than replace original artistic expression.

Keywords: Senior High School, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Art.

Introduction

The development of technology, especially the internet, has significantly transformed personal and professional lives, driving economic growth and modernizing industries. These advancements fuel the global rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

AI's growing influence reflects humanity's pursuit of innovation (Wang, 2023). Recent progress has enabled machines to perform tasks once requiring humans (Zhou & Kawabata, 2023). AI now generates information and creates images and artwork on demand.

Since the 2010s, AI art has gained cultural relevance, with 2022 marking the emergence of generative AI tools like ChatGPT and Stable Diffusion, sparking debates on the authenticity of AI Art (Grba, 2022; Hutson & Harper-Nichols, 2023). This evolution is reshaping the definition of art.

AI's ability to create high-quality art blurs the line between human-made and AI-generated works, raising concerns about public recognition (Li et al., 2024; Grassini & Koivisto, 2024). AI art presents complex issues around copyright, ownership, and security, as current laws do not protect AI-generated

works (Chen, 2023). Disputes over who owns or profits from AI art and whether it can be considered "real art" are growing. The question of whether copyright should belong to the AI or its user remains unresolved (Kambur & Dolunay, 2024). Without legal protections, AI creations are at risk of misuse or forgery. These challenges highlight the need for updated regulations. Additionally, Young (2024) warns that AI's rise may devalue human creativity, overshadowing the uniqueness of human artists.

This study explored the impact of AI on art from the perspective of Senior High School (SHS) digital artists, examining whether they view AI as a threat or a tool. It assessed whether AI-generated artworks can be considered "art," considering traditional definitions and creativity, and addressed ethical concerns like unauthorized use, copyright issues, and the risk of AI overshadowing human-created works.

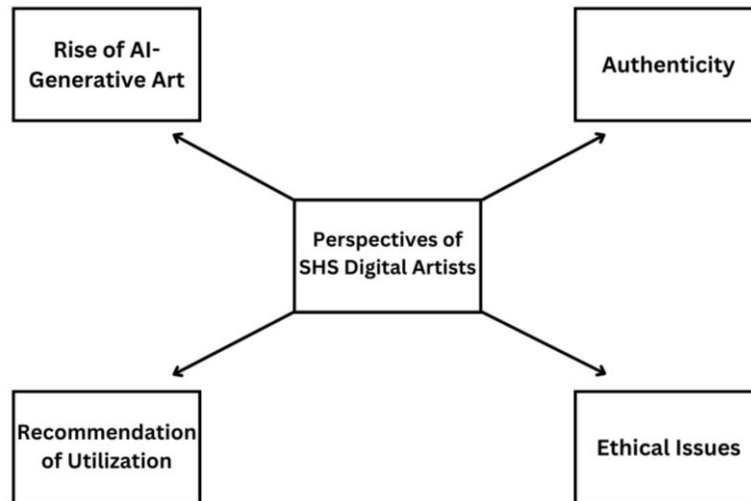
The research expanded the understanding of AI art, weighing its benefits, such as enhancing creativity and skills, against potential drawbacks, like dependency on technology and reduced focus on manual artistic skills. The study concluded that AI should be seen as a tool, not a solution.

Conceptual Framework

The figure illustrates the conceptual paradigm of the study on Senior High School digital artists' perspectives regarding AI generative artworks. The researchers explored their views on the emergence

of AI generative art, its authenticity, and the ethical issues surrounding it. Lastly, they examined whether SHS digital artists would recommend the use of AI-generated art.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework of the Study



Statement of the Problem

Given the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence AI in the art world, using AI to create artworks for various purposes has become timely. The researchers addressed the following questions:

Central Question: What are the perspectives of digital artists on the ethics that surround AI-generated artworks?

1. How do digital artists feel about the emergence of AI-generated artworks?
2. Can AI-generated artworks be considered "real art"?
3. What are the ethical issues that surround AI-generated artworks?
4. As Senior High School students, can the utilization of AI in creating digital artworks be recommended?

Scope and Delimitation

This research explored digital art students' perspectives on AI-generated art, focusing on their views on its authenticity, ethical concerns, and usage recommendations. One-on-one interviews were conducted with SHS students limited from the Arts and Design (A&D) strand of a private institution in Malolos, Bulacan, during the 2024-2025 academic year. Students from other grade levels, departments, or artistic expression, including traditional artists and those specializing in AI-generated written works, were excluded.

Methodology

Methods and Techniques of the Study

The researchers made use of a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore SHS digital artists' perspectives on AI-generated artworks. This method, ideal for interpreting experiences and beliefs, provided in-depth insights into the artists' feelings, perceptions, and views on the rise of AI art (Johnson, 2024; Delve & Limpaecher, 2022).

Respondents of the Study

The researchers selected 15 digital artists from the A&D Track using purposive sampling, where participants are chosen based on specific criteria aligned with the study's objectives (Bisht, 2024). Participants were classified as digital artists if they; (1) primarily used digital technologies for creation, (2) had at least one year of experience using technology as an art medium, and (3) actively engaged on online platforms, following Chen and Li's (2024) description of digital artists.

Instruments of the Study

The researchers conducted structured interviews with key informants, using standardized questions and a predefined rubric to ensure consistency and minimize bias (Bergelson et al., 2022). Following Owokuhaisa et al.'s (2023) guidelines, the researchers developed an interview guide and established the following protocol:

- The research team invited the key informants for one-on-one interviews.

- The researchers reviewed the consent form with each key informant, emphasizing their right to withdraw from the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable.
- The researchers requested permission from the key informants to audio record the entire interview to ensure more accurate data collection.
- Each interview lasted a minimum of 10 minutes.
- After each session, the researchers discussed the confidentiality of the key informants to ensure compliance with the agreed-upon terms of their participation.

Data Gathering Procedure

This study examined how SHS digital artists view AI-generated art, exploring its role as a threat or creative tool, its recognition as "art," and concerns like unauthorized use, lack of copyright protection, potential misuse, and overshadowing human art. The goal was to understand the opportunities and challenges AI presents in the art world.

Using purposive sampling and a qualitative approach, the researchers executed a structured one-on-one interviews with SHS digital artists from a private institution in Malolos, Bulacan. They coordinated schedules with participants and obtained consent to ensure accurate data collection and analysis.

Data Processing & Statistical Treatment of Data

The researchers used thematic analysis to interpret the data, focusing on recurring themes and patterns of meaning (Caulfield, 2023). Specifically, they applied Colaizzi's Phenomenological Method, a seven-step process involving data familiarization, identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, creating a detailed description, and verifying the structure. This comprehensive method helped analyze participants' lived experiences while reducing confirmation bias and organizing the data effectively (Morrow et al., 2015, as cited in Shorey & Ng, 2022).

Ethical Considerations

This study explored SHS digital artists' perspectives on AI-generated artworks. It examined AI as a threat or creative tool, its authenticity, and issues like unauthorized use, lack of copyright protection, weaponization, and overshadowing human art. The aim was to highlight AI's opportunities and challenges in the art world.

Participants were selected based on strict criteria to ensure professionalism and mitigate conflicts of interest. Participation was voluntary, with informants free to withdraw, refuse questions, or inquire about the research. Informed consent was

obtained, along with permission for recording, while ensuring privacy and compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173). AI tools were used to enhance the study's structure and grammatical accuracy.

Results and Discussion

Central Question: What are the perspectives of digital artists on the ethics that surround AI-generated artworks?

SOP 1: How do digital artists feel about the emergence of AI-generated artworks?

Emergent Theme #1: On the feelings of digital artists regarding AI-generated Artworks

The sentiments of digital artists regarding AI Artworks include: (1) Digital artist students fear that AI will use their artwork without consent. (2) They're frustrated by the speed AI is creating art, a skill that takes years to hone. (3) Students are anxious that AI could replace their roles in the future. (4) The convenience of AI art disappoints them, and they're often accused of using AI. (5) Compared to AI art, students feel ridiculed and undervalued. Overall, the SHS digital artists have unsettling feelings toward AI art.

AI is increasingly adept at analyzing human-created digital art, often using artists' works without consent to train generative models (Lovato et al., 2024). This leaves student digital artists feeling threatened and anxious, fearing that AI could replace the opportunities they once aspired to. This anxiety is compounded by sadness over a future where the creative process and the effort behind mastering their craft may be undervalued (Chekalina, 2024; Ali & Breazeal, 2023).

SOP 2: Can AI-generated artworks be considered "art"?

Emergent Theme #2: On considering AI-generated artworks to be 'art'

The take of SHS digital artists in considering AI Artworks to be 'art' includes: (1) AI art isn't genuine; it reuses existing art based on prompts. (2) AI tools lack independent creativity. (3) AI art lacks emotional depth. Overall, SHS digital artists do not consider AI art to be "real art".

According to Coeckelbergh (2023), AI generates images by automating the process after receiving a human-inputted prompt. These programs create "art" by referencing large datasets of human-made works (Lima et al., 2024), producing outputs that often mimic human creations. However, AI lacks the human soul essential for authentic expression. True art requires skill to convey the human experience, not just commercial intent. Artworks with greater

artist control are considered more genuine and valued (Messer, 2024, as cited from Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008; Kirk et al., 2009; Valsesia et al., 2016).

SOP 3: What are the ethical issues that surround AI-Generated Artworks?

Emergent Theme #3: On the ethical issues that surround AI-Generated Artworks

The key ethical issues in AI art includes: (1) AI imitates digital artists' work without consent (2) AI art lacks clear ownership, making it vulnerable for anyone to claim and profit, violating copyright; (3) AI's ability to create realistic images can be exploited for forgeries and deep fakes, causing harm. Overall, AI art raises concerns about consent, ownership, and misuse.

AI art generates new works by analyzing human-made art, often without consent, raising ethical and legal concerns (Interaction Design Foundation, 2023). It can mimic an artist's style, harm reputations (Jiang et al., 2023), and allow users to claim ownership and profit, as seen when an AI painting sold for \$450,300 (Cheng, 2022). This raises issues of copyright infringement, plagiarism (Zhuang, 2024), and misuse, such as creating fraudulent content like deep fakes (Cetinski et al., 2024), including inappropriate celebrity images (Brigham et al., 2024).

SOP 4: As Senior High School students, can the utilization of AI in creating digital artworks be recommended?

Emergent Theme #4: On the recommendation of utilizing AI-Generated Artworks

The table above displays the take of SHS digital artists on the recommendation of utilizing AI Artworks; (1) The use of AI in art should be limited to inspiring ideas. (2) Dependence on AI art hinders learning and appreciation of the artistic process. (3) AI art shouldn't be monetized as it threatens the income of artists. Overall, AI in art should be limited to inspiration, shouldn't be depended on, and shouldn't be used for profit.

The majority of SHS digital artists strongly opposed using AI for creating artwork, though some recognized its potential to inspire and enhance creativity. While AI use is unlikely to stop entirely, it should be used within clear boundaries to respect artistic processes (Cai et al., 2023). AI can imitate but not replace uniqueness or the creative journey (Swift & Chattopadhyay, 2024). Additionally, AI could lead to job losses in the art world if businesses prioritize it over human artists (X. Chen et al., 2024). AI should assist creativity, not replace the dedication artists bring to their work.

Limitations of the Study

The scope is limited to SHS digital artists students under the A&D strand from a private higher educational institution in Malolos, Bulacan. The researchers were unable to gather data from professional artists thus; the perspectives are only limited to students with various specializations within the craft and can't be generalized.

Conclusion

1. Digital artist students fear AI will use their works without consent. With AI's rapid generation of realistic art, they feel frustrated and devalued, as it undermines their years of skills. Some face accusations of using AI, increasing anxiety about being replaced.
2. Digital artist students don't consider AI artwork as real art - as it is only created through human prompts and cannot act independently to produce creative pieces that have emotional depth.
3. AI art uses existing works without consent to train algorithms, enabling imitation and potential plagiarism. Its ability to generate images from real-world patterns also makes it a tool for forgeries and deep fakes, posing risks of weaponization.
4. AI generative art should be limited to giving ideas to preserve artistic integrity and reduce over-reliance on such tools, ensuring continued learning and appreciation of the artistic process. It should also not be used for profit, as it threatens artists' livelihoods.

Recommendations

1. Artists are encouraged to begin advocacies that empower them to voice out their concerns and experiences related to AI, that could potentially lead to future policies and guidelines on protecting artists' rights to foster greater support for the art community.
2. Art education programs should start adapting a mindset of evolving definitions of art. This can potentially highlight educating individuals in the emergence of new technology challenging the boundaries of digital art to convey that AI art should be a complementary and not be a replacement of digital art.
3. Developers of websites that artists use to post their artworks must consult professionals to strengthen their cybersecurity algorithms to prevent AI generative art tools from analyzing the artists' datasets and using them to prompt art.

4. AI is only encouraged among users to be a starting-point, and a source of inspiration to create art while emphasizing skill development. Additionally, if in the future, a guideline or policy on AI-generated artwork will be crafted, it should include fines for violations.
5. Future researchers conducting a similar study should gather perspectives from professional digital artists, including their specialization, since AI-generated art has different effects within the craft.

Implications

Digital artists conveyed unpleasant feelings about the emergence of AI-generated art, expressing their ethical concerns aligning with Mazzi (2024), who found that despite AI's efficiency, it presents ethical and legal challenges that can harm others and rattle the art world. The researchers proposed strategies to prevent misuse and protect artists' rights;

1. Artists should promote fair use of policies and propose the creation of ethical guidelines to protect their work from being used by AI systems without their knowledge.
2. AI should be disqualified in any art contest as it's not entirely human-made. Moreover, submitting a time-lapse or documentary of making an artwork should be a requirement when participating in these events.
3. AI art developers should obtain artists' consent and offer compensation before using their works. Users should refrain from mimicking and claiming others' art. Copyright laws and plagiarism penalties must be enforced, and AI should be restricted from using real people's faces or identities to prevent weaponization.
4. Artists, as well as aspiring artists, should take advantage of free workshops from professionals online through various online platforms. These workshops can provide valuable lessons, guidance and discussions that can further better their skills in their craft.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this manuscript.

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