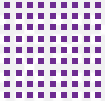


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: THE CONVENIENCE THAT KILLS MEANING IN WORK OF ART



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Abstract: The presence of artificial intelligence (AI) has had a significant impact on convenience, especially in the aspect of creativity. But now anyone can create works with the ease available, even often just for the sake of profit so that the process of meaning is no longer present in the work. This research starts with the following two questions, “Is meaning no longer important in creating art? And what do artists think about creating with the help of AI?”. The analysis used in this study is a qualitative descriptive analysis, to describe, summarize the data and analyze the literature collected. The findings of this study show that there are many artists who are serious about AI, who not only use AI as a tool in their creative process, but also use AI as a research project, thus inspiring other artists, which is good for the progress of the art world itself. This is clearly different from people who only use AI to create art for profit. This research emphasizes the need for classification so that we can see the intersection between AI artists who seriously explore in the context of working with AI and people who work with AI for profit.

Keywords: Artist, AI, Creative, Meaning

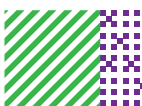
Introduction

Technological development is a natural part of human life and cannot be avoided. In addition to bringing many conveniences, technological progress also often raises various debates and conflicting views. The presence of artificial intelligence (AI) in various fields has had a significant impact on convenience. Indeed, technology should have the initial goal of providing convenience to humans (Ngafifi, 2014).

In the context of art, the use of AI itself is actually not a recent phenomenon, Harold Cohen, with his creation project called AARON for example, started in the 60s, so he is considered to be the first AI artist (Art Basel, 2024). Different from Cohen who uses AI in the context of digital painting, David Cope, a music professor from the University of California has also used AI in making his music, his project is called EMI (Experiments in Musical Intelligence), EMI itself has been around since the 90s, the way it works itself is by the process of making recombinant music, music written in the style of various composers by means of contextual recombination of elements that exist in the music of these composers (Cope, 1991).

Although it is convenient and innovative, it is not uncommon for the use of technology to cause controversy. Jason Allen, for example, who won after using AI assistance, but became controversial afterwards as reported by CBSColorado.com (2022). Criticism also emerged, one of which came from Steven R. Kraaijeveld, who invited us to question the meaning of art, especially AI-assisted art in his article entitled "AI-generated art and fiction: signifying everything, meaning nothing?" (Kraaijeveld, 2024). Not only that, according to the news written by Noor Al-Sibai on Futurism.com (2024), someone was arrested for making fake bands from AI, along with fake streamers.

These conveniences seem to tell us that there is no longer a process of contemplation and meaning so that every creative worker or artist can tell a story in every detail of his work, making work increasingly dry and tends to



only pursue personal gain. Isn't it as Aristotle said that art is a philosophical medium and the artist as a storyteller who not only conveys what has existed but also what will exist (Martin, 2016), or in the language of Heidegger, every art is poetic, which is conveying the unspeakable, saying things that are not continued (Bambang, 2018). In line with the two previous opinions, Danto explained that although not everything that is representative is a work of art, with the meaning or story behind it, it at least helps to sort out which works of art are and are not (Danto, 1998).

From the brief explanation above, this research departs with the following two questions, "is meaning no longer important in making art? And what do artists think about working with AI?". It is hoped that these two questions can provide an overview of the position of meaning in the process of creating with the help of AI to the status of the artist himself.

Methodology and Theoretical Studies

In this study, the method used is literature review, in terms of understanding literature review is a method that is a theoretical study and other references that are closely related to developments in the social situation under study (Sugiyono, 2018). This is the process of identifying, analyzing, and interpreting the main themes in relevant previous research and linking them to the research focus (University of Sydney, 2024). The analysis used in this research is a qualitative descriptive analysis, to describe, summarize the data and analyze the literature collected. Because descriptive analysis is based on the philosophy of Post positivism, the researcher is placed as the main instrument in conducting analysis by paying attention to the object of research. As a result, the data that has been collected is then analyzed which comes from books, journals, literature, websites and others that are closely related to this research problem. The research data that has been processed is then summarized and a comprehensive review can be poured through the text.

Results and Discussion

A. Meanings in Arts and AI

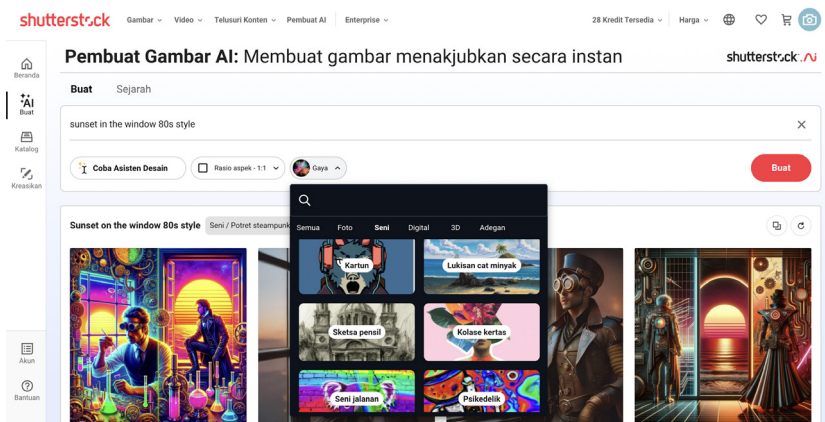
Art is often valued based on various aspects of meaning, which can include symbolic, contextual, aesthetic and emotional meanings. Here are some ways in which meaning plays a role in the valuation and appreciation of art. John Dewey, for example, sees that a work is closely related to experience (Bambang, 2018), when someone has an experience of a delicious meal or more commonly the feeling of falling in love, for example, from that experience the work of art is able to articulate which output may vary, it may be painted, writing a poem or a song. Danto also sees the same thing, how meaning is very



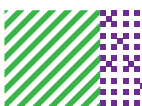
influential, because with it the object is not only seen as an object, but is able to be interpreted, so that we can always, hypothesize that we are transacting with a work of art and not just an object (Danto, 1998). From this perspective, it can be seen how important and close the meaning is in the process of creating art, such as expressionist works, which are interpreted as an expression of the soul or emotions of the artist so that they are able to form strokes, shapes, colours, strikes, blows, rhythms and so on (Made, 2010), but it turns out that it is not just strokes, colours, rhythms that are limited to sound or whatever, more than that is a responsibility of the artist so that he is able to tell a story from every expression that is poured into the work.

Indeed, this kind of thing feels like going back to the old days, where we need to question what a work of art is, when something can be said to be a work of art and so on. As Steven R. Kraaijeveld stated in his article mentioned in the introduction when criticizing a work called *“Théâtre d’O péra Spatial”* after winning a competition with the help of AI. The writer is not here to enter a debate about a single definition of art, as it would be too long. But if we continue with Steven’s concerns and the short definition of art in relation to meaning, perhaps in the future the art world will be full of people who produce works by simply typing their thoughts.

The following will attach some examples when the author tries to use AI features as a simulation of working with the help of AI, if Jason Allen uses Midjourney—one of which AI that uses natural language descriptions to create images — in the process, the author tries with what is more commonly used in companies or creative industries, namely Shutterstock. In the picture below, it can be seen that we can type whatever we want, if the image doesn’t match or doesn’t feel right, we can press the repeat or recreate button.



Picture 1: Shutterstock Display. Source: Personal



It is true to say that the result created by AI is from the mind of the person typing as in the example above. But if you want to make an example, for instance, there is an artist and we tell or describe our thoughts to the artist, then the artist begins to paint it into a work, can it be considered that it is the work of the describer, and how to explain such work when asked how the process is, what meaning is contained in it and other details, let's assume the describer can explain it, then how someone who goes through the process of creating it labels himself as an artist.

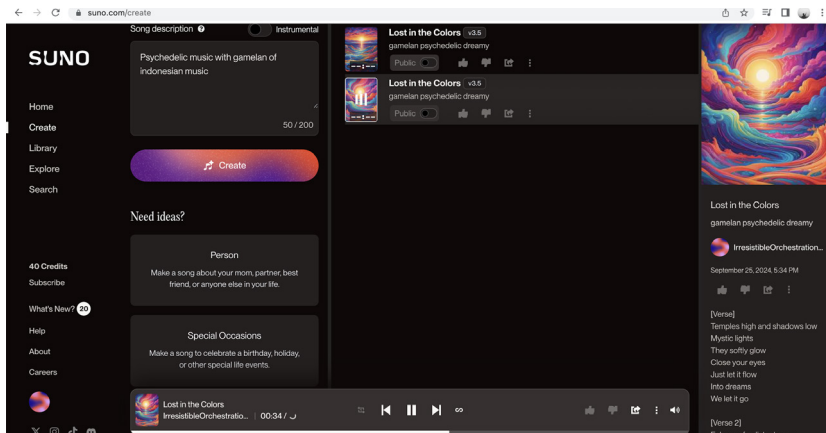
Continuing the previous analogy, although typing or describing comes from the mind, the works produced by AI are not entirely new creative processes, rather they are representations or abstractions of previous works. Based on this explanation, works created with artificial intelligence certainly do not fulfill the concept of originality, because they are not created by humans, but are also the result of machine combination and modification of previous existing works. Thus, this work does not reflect the unique identity or personal characteristics of the author (Hasibuan, 2024).

In relation to the above context, Hannes Bajohr gives a rather harsh view as he says that AIs are dumb systems, lacking consciousness. However, they produce complex artificial semantics that contradict our understanding of meaning. Not even a good knowledge of the meaning of culture (Eckart, 2024). However, Maya Ackerman, a scientist who also focuses on AI and creativity, has a different point of view from Bajohr, saying that computers actually have a meaningful role, where they can do what we cannot. She further argues that humans are often more biased than computers themselves (Ornes, 2019).

In addition to the examples above, AI Suno, for instance, focuses on song creation. As mentioned in the introduction, someone was caught making a fake band and ended up getting arrested. Below is an image of how we can create a song according to what we describe. Not much different from the previous explanation when using Shutterstock, Suno can also produce works especially in the form of songs just by typing, not only the music, but also the lyrics. Again, there is no need to go through moments of sadness or happiness, for example when making it, because everything will be realized with just a description. In fact, music is an experience in which imagination, feelings, ideas and cultural frameworks are combined (Bambang, 2018).

The examples above are only some of them, of course there are many other AI tools that can be used for the creation of a work. All the conveniences presented by AI may help an artist explore in the process of making a work





Picture 2: Suno AI Display. Source: Personal

so that the artist is able to touch unreachable points, for example in terms of technique, finishing, coloring or ideas. But on the other hand, it will also give birth to new artists who have never even touched the world of art at all. As Paul Brown describes, before the computer age, art was out of reach for the unskilled masses. He admits that he almost gave up on his work, but with the help of computers, his career has now been successful and he was able to exhibit at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, DC, in an exhibition titled Process, Chance, and Serendipity: Art That Makes Itself (Ornes, 2019).

B. Artists' Views on Art and AI

Harold Cohen, who is said to be the first AI artist with his project AARON, said that his project was more of a research tool, meaning that he experimented with AARON to research the extent of computer exploration in the creation of his work and was not intended for public use, as reported by computerhistory.org. As Cohen's research with AARON has developed, it has inspired other artists, Roman Verostko, for example, a pioneer of algorithmic art from Minneapolis revealed how AARON and Cohen have inspired him, "I want to teach my machine how to draw like I draw, and to produce shapes," he said. In Cohen's work, he sees a soulful harmony. "I'm impressed with how his works evolve," Verostko says. "Her work gives me confidence and inspires me to keep doing it." (Ornes, 2019).

Sougwen Chung, a Canadian-born artist who grew up in China and lives in London, also uses AI in her work as a form of exploration and research. As quoted from an interview article entitled "Machines as Collaborators for Art and Rituals: An interview with Sougwen Chung" (2023), she explains that over the past decade she has been developing collaborative AI systems, biosensors, and



virtual reality environments to investigate the relational potential of emerging technologies. I involved myself as a creative and technical practitioner in this process, encouraging new curiosities and research directions. He further explains that the path he has chosen since 2014 is a pivotal moment on collaboration between humans and machines as visual artifacts for aesthetic as well as investigative research.



Picture 3: Sougwen Chung's Performance
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpEE_sOpN64

Not much different from Sougwen Chung, Solange Smith also combines and explores between traditional art and modern technology, as reported by the Nowness website, her work entitled "*La Sage*" is a form of collaborative project between an AI robot named Akira, which is tasked or helping to express Smith's words and poetry in abstract layers that complement her brushstrokes. The process was also documented in a short film titled "*Le Sage*" directed by Jan Hellwich (NOWNESS, 2024).



Picture 4. Solange Smith's Instagram post
Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DAGvaehoJin/?img_index=1

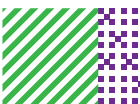
Mario Klingemann is a German artist known for his work involving neural networks, code and algorithms. Regarding the involvement of AI in the creative process, he revealed that an important element in any creative process is to have encouragement or help from external parties that are beyond your control. If you only take from within yourself and it doesn't produce results, then you need external help. She further said that one of the important aspects that makes a work interesting to us is the fact that it is made by human hands or minds and the story behind the work is often as important as the work itself (Alice Barale, 2021).

In addition to seeing it as an explorative tool in their work, it is not uncommon for artists to also focus or question AI on the aspect of copyright. A digital artist Alexander Nanitchkov for example, quoted from an article written by Verity Babbs, wrote as follows, "today, AI 'art' is made by utilizing hundreds of thousands of artists and photographers who have created billions of images, spent time, love, and dedication to their work, which is now stolen soullessly and utilized by selfish people for profit, without the slightest understanding of ethics". Furthermore, he also emphasized the need for clear legal regulations, a protest he named "no AI" (Babbs, 2023).



Picture 5. No AI's Instagram post
Source: hyperallergic.com

Besides the convenience provided by AI, the issue of copyright is indeed one that deserves serious attention. This is because countries around the world are facing challenges in formulating policies in response. There is much uncertainty as to whether the use of copyrighted material to train image generators constitutes copyright infringement (Jiang, 2023). Still on the subject of copyright, Jason Allen, who had become controversial, which was also mentioned in the previous discussion, as reported by the Detikpop news site, he actually questioned his work that could not be copyrighted, his controversial work because he won with the help of AI with the title *Théâtre d'Opéra Spatial* will instead be copyrighted by him (Tia, 2024).



Aside from the copyright issue, it's also noteworthy and perhaps commonplace to talk about technology replacing humans. Artists are concerned that the market will be flooded with AI-generated works, which is problematic because it makes it difficult to distinguish between works created by humans and those produced by machines. It is also feared that this will increase the competition in the market and could result in lower prices (Hasibuan, 2024).

Of course, this is a negative impact for artists, although AI technology can indeed facilitate the creative process, but on the other hand AI can raise concerns that AI can replace human artists or create soulless works of art. AI Influencers who work with brands to promote brands or recommend certain lifestyles, for example, are an example of human jobs that can be replaced by AI (Dwina Satrinia, 2023). In line with this concern, Harari in his book *Homo Deus* describes as follows, in a world where computers have replaced doctors, drivers, teachers, and even landlords, is it now possible for everyone to become an artist? (Harari, 2021).

Despite the rejection and concerns by artists towards AI technology, as explained above, we all know that AI is still an auxiliary tool and depends on how it is used, Nanitchkov's rejection, for example, is actually more aimed at the aspect of copyright and originality, and what is done by Cohen to Chung etc., for example, where they are helped and even inspired by working with the help of AI and continue to explore it to see how far the collaboration between humans and computer technology can help themselves in producing works.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this research is that there is a need for emphasis or a classification of the status of the artist himself, because now anyone can use AI to create a work. If not, we will find it difficult to distinguish because anyone can be labeled or named as an artist, while only capitalizing on pouring out thoughts with the help of AI, where there is no meaning in other words through a dry process, even just for profit. On the other hand, there are many artists who are serious about AI, who not only use AI as a tool in their work process, but also use AI as a research project, to inspire other artists, which is good for the progress of the art world itself. And if you look at it, the artists who focus on exploring AI do focus on their projects and often have their own project names, often even their projects are not intended for the public. Clearly different from people who only use AI to work for profit.



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