

AI as a Pathway for Creativity Draws Strong Reactions

By Don Sutherland

In an [opinion piece](#) written by *Washington Post* Opinion Graphics Reporter Yan Wu, Wu proclaimed that AI “is opening new pathways for creativity.” “Consider visual arts,” she continued. “Just as photography changed the course of art in the 19th century, AI image generators now stand to revolutionize how humans create.” Wu went on to explain that the key to unlocking this pathway involved the interaction between humans and machines through the prompts develop.

The piece drew strong and often negative reactions. Underpinning the arguments were worries of “Deep Fakes,” concern about AI’s displacing artists, and perhaps a touch of fear of what a ‘democratization’ of creativity might bring in the artistic realm and beyond. A sample follows:

Playnamedis: “I guess, if your experience of art is via representations of it your computer screen or inkjet printer, you might not realize anything is amiss. But it is.”

Amskeptic: “AI steals from our individual perception of reality and fakes out our neurons and muddies our understanding of Reality, it is cotton candy sugary excitement giving us no gift of the efforts of another...”

Charley 42: “Face it. As AI gets even more accurate, the artist will be thrown aside. Who would want to pay much money for something AI could generate exactly what you love or are overwhelmed by in an instant? Plus, you could modify it in an instant and as many times as you want?”

Mindfulpath: “WAPO, why would you give out AI prompts or explain them in detail? It’s one thing to write an article about AI art in an objective reporting, and another to give explanations of how to increase one’s use of AI with more professional prompts... Please stop encouraging AI technology with these instructional prompts.”

Jim Nelson: “Shame on the Post for publishing this horse manure of a column.”

The comments were brutal. But a brutal backlash cannot alter the broader currents of change that are shaping the future. AI has burst onto the scene. It is here to stay. The challenge now becomes how to leverage AI for human benefit.

One commenter recognized that AI is a tool, not the outcome itself. FromMe2U wrote:

Art is the result of human consciousness, creativity and enterprise. The operative word here is 'human.' AI is not that. Instead, it is better seen as a tool. AI is akin to the brush that the painter holds in his hands, the chisel the sculptor employs when striking marble, or the pen guided by the hand of an author. Once seen in this way, though AI can be used to help create extraordinary works of art in its generative and regenerative capacities, it is not pre-generative. In art, only the human psyche is that.

Nineteenth Century English art and literary critic Walter Pater offered timeless observations that are as relevant in the dawning age of AI as they were when he evaluated the art of his contemporaries.

He observed, “Art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass.” He advised, “What we have to do is to be forever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions.”

Within Pater’s framework, AI is a tool that allows one to “curiously” test new creations in pursuit of providing “the highest quality” to one’s experiences. That was the point of Wu’s piece.

Finally, there is room both for fine art and AI-generated visualizations. Timeless works ranging from paintings by Claude Monet to sculptures by Auguste Rodin will not be displaced by AI. Their quality, depth and originality will continue to captivate and inspire audiences all across the world. AI-generated work will merely expand the frontier of human imagination, as it is the people who provide the prompts and use AI to translate their ideas into images.



The Artist's Garden in Argenteuil
Claude Monet, 1873
National Gallery of Art



Lighthouse in a Stormy Frozen World (Generated by *DaVinci*, 2024)