

The Meeting of Art and Ai: Exploring New Frontiers in Visual Expression

By

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Abstract

The world today has continued to be simplified into a digital space, due to the activities of emerging technologies and their attendant benefits. The advent of trending Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed various aspects of life, including art. So, the meeting of art and AI marks a paradigm shift in the landscape of visual expression. It is no longer confined to traditional mediums. Artists now increasingly collaborate with algorithms, neural networks, and machine learning systems to chart new aesthetic territories. This paper explores the evolution of AI, as a creative partner, analyzing its impact on authorship, originality, and artistic identity. Through historical context, theoretical frameworks, and case studies which include the works of foreign artists like Refik Anadol, and Sougwen Chung, as well as Nigerian artists, such as Osinachi and Ekene Ijeoma, AI assisted art is growing. The paper examines how AI reconfigures both the making and meaning of art. By framing AI not merely as a tool but as a co-agent of expression, the study argues that the future of art lies in embracing hybrid, pluralistic forms of creativity. In conclusion, the paper addresses ethical concerns and philosophical questions while, charting and proposing a more inclusive and global trajectory, for AI-infused visual expression.

Keywords: Art, Artificial Intelligence, Meeting, New Frontiers, Visual Expression

Introduction

Throughout history, art has evolved alongside new technologies. From the invention of oil paint in the Renaissance, according to Smulovics in Adeyemo (2024), to the camera in the 19th century, each technological advancement has brought about a significant shift in artistic methodologies and styles. Every technology carries within it the seeds of a new imagination. Thus, when art meets artificial intelligence (AI), it is not the machine that dreams, it is humanity dreaming through new eyes. It is imperative to note that the evolution of art alongside emerging technologies over time has continued to shape human perception, and each innovation has redefined the very idea of seeing. Today, AI presents a transformative frontier, one in which creativity is no longer the sole province of human consciousness, but a shared domain between artist and machine.

This paper opines that, the meeting between art and AI is not merely a technical collaboration, but a profound rethinking of what it means to create. As art traverses this new terrain, it calls for new vocabularies, ethics, and aesthetics. It is an expanded field, where algorithms dream alongside human imagination, and where diverse global voices, including African creators, assert their visions. This perhaps, might be the reason why Adeyemo (2021), warns that in this digital age, an artist who does not have the requisite computer knowledge or engage in the prevailing technological approaches may soon be completely thrown off balance, in the field. It is against this background therefore, that this paper attempts to explore how artists around the world, especially here in Nigeria, are engaging with AI, not as passive consumers, but as active visionaries.

Historical Entanglements between Art and Technology via AI

To begin with, what is artificial intelligence? Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems capable of performing complex tasks, that historically, only humans could do, such as reasoning, making decisions, or solving problems (Staff, 2024). In other words, from this definition, it is deduced that AI aims to create applications that can think, learn and act intelligently, mimicking human cognitive abilities. This involves developing computer systems that can learn from data, adapt to new situations and make decisions based on available information.

Now, the dialogue between art and technology is as ancient as civilization itself. The Renaissance saw the fusion of artistic mastery and scientific inquiry, with polymaths, like Leonardo da Vinci treating anatomy, engineering, and painting as interconnected pursuits (Kemp, 2006). In the 20th century, Cabanne (1971), also notes that the Dadaists embraced chance operations, while Marcel Duchamp's *readymades*, challenged the idea of authorship and intentionality, concepts now eerily resonant in AI art. Later, Harold Cohen's *AARON* programme which, begun in the 1970s, was among the first attempts to encode the heuristics of art-making into software (McCorduck, 1991). *AARON*'s semi-autonomous drawings, foreshadowed today's machine-generated aesthetics. Hence, AI art is not an anomaly, but a continuation, a deepening of the historical entanglement between human ingenuity and technology mediation.

Key Terms Described

The following key terms, in this paper, are described to ease the understanding of readers. **Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs)** – AI models that generate new content by competing between two neural networks.

- **DALL-E** – An AI model generating images from text prompts.
- **Midjourney** – An AI tool creating images from text descriptions.
- **Algorithms** – Step-by-step procedures for AI model computations.
- **Data** – Information used to train AI models.
- **RunwayML** – A platform enabling machine learning model experimentation and deployment.
- **Neural Networks** – AI models inspired by human brain structure.
- **Machine Learning System** – AI systems/models learning from data.
- **Transformer-based Models** – AI models processing sequential data (like texts).
- **Diffusion Models** – AI models generating content through iterative refinement.

AI as Co-Creator in Collaborative Models

AI does not replace human creativity. It only amplifies it, by offering new methods of exploration and expression. This paradigm shift raises a profound question: how can we reimagine AI, not just as an asset, but as a collaborator, empowering both humans and machines to innovate

together, co-live and co-create to achieve more Co-creation with AI, according to Mani (2025), involves treating these systems not as subordinates but as partners capable of contributing unique insights and capabilities. For example in creative arts, AI-generated art, music, and literature are increasingly seen as collaborative efforts, where human creators guide the vision and AI enhances the execution. Given the foregoing, this collaboration, if well utilized, would amplify human potential, accelerate innovation and democratize access to expertise, to enable smaller organizations and individuals to contribute to innovation on a global scale.

Today, AI systems, such as generative adversarial networks (GANs), transformer-based models (e.g., DALL-E, Midjourney), and diffusion models, expand the artist's palette exponentially. These tools, do not simply execute commands; they generate outputs through complex processes of learning, prediction, and synthesis. Artists like Refik Anadol treat machine learning models as raw material, using datasets of urban memory or cosmic phenomena, to create data-driven environments that "dream" on behalf of the collective unconscious (Anadol, 2019). Similarly, Sougwen Chung collaborates with robotic arms trained on her drawing style, engaging in performances where human and machine gestures coalesce into a new hybrid choreography (Chung, 2018).

Beyond the Global North, African artists are also pioneering new models of AI engagement. They are not simply adopting these technologies; they are transforming them to weave their histories, dreams and visions, into the evolving fabric of visual culture. BBC (2021) asserts that, Osinachi, a Nigerian digital artist, challenges Western-centric notions of digital art by creating intricate works using Microsoft Word and distributing them through blockchain-based (Non-Fungible Token) (NFT) platforms. While not trained in AI models per se, Osinachi's work critically aligns with AI's broader themes of automation, decentralization, and rethinking traditional creative processes. In the same vein, Ekene Ijeoma, a Nigerian-American artist, employs data-driven systems to interrogate issues of race, migration, and social inequality. His project *A Counting* uses algorithmic systems to create participatory art, blending AI, data visualization, and community engagement (Ijeoma, 2020). These African voices, demonstrate that the AI-

art encounter, is not monolithic; it is diverse, political, and deeply rooted in local contexts.

The Birth of a New Visual Language through Generative Aesthetics

It is good to reiterate that, the visual arts landscape has been visibly transforming over decades, and particularly, the era of Generative AI which has significantly changed how the arts are conceived and experienced. To corroborate this, Caldwell (2023), states that, the art world has recognized that, AI-generated images are art. Hence, generative art has exploded in the wake of accessible AI tools. Artists now use AI algorithms (GANs, diffusion models, machine learning) to produce visuals beyond traditional techniques. According to Christie's (2018), works like *Portrait of Edmond Belamy*, created by the Paris-based collective Obviously using GANs, sold at Christie's, for \$432,500, igniting debates about value, authenticity, and authorship. This is because, the aesthetics emerging from AI collaboration are distinct, amorphous, recursive, and often imbued with a strange uncanniness. These images, feel simultaneously familiar and alien, tapping into deep reservoirs of pattern recognition, while also subverting them.

Likewise, as mentioned earlier, Nigerian and African artists are not left out of these generative aesthetic experiences. They too, are redefining AI art, by embedding cultural narratives, decolonizing technology, and innovating global visual languages. Ishola Akpo, a Beninese multimedia visual artist and photographer, is a typical example. He uses machine-learning filters to reconstruct and reimagine pre-colonial imagery, merging photography, history, and algorithmic distortion. Such practices show that AI aesthetics can be deeply rooted in cultural memory, as well as, speculative imagination. As Galanter (2003), observes, generative systems “amplify rather than replace human creativity,” allowing artists to engage with complexity, beyond human cognitive limits, across all geographies.

Philosophical and Ethical Faultlines

Questions about authorship, bias, and access, remain critical as AI becomes a more dominant creative tool. While the creative potentials are immense, so too, are the conceptual and ethical challenges, such as authorship and authenticity, bias and representation as well as, democratization versus gatekeeping. All of these will be briefly reviewed thus:

Authorship and Authenticity. Even though AI art, is one of the newest mediums for expression, it is forbidden in the U.S. from copyright protection, because it fails the human authorship requirement, under the current law. However, with the widespread recognition of AI art, the U.S. Copyright Office's exclusion of AI art from copyright protection, as Cadwell (2023) posits, is their failure to evolve. Hence, the U.S. Copyright Office is advised to recognize the registrability of AI art. The author queries that, perhaps, AI is just a tool used by a human. If creating AI art is a human using a tool, then this would likely be registrable based, on Section 313.2 of the Copyright law.

Sequel to the preceding agitation, one may ask if an AI generates an artwork trained on thousands of images, who is the author – the programmer, the artist who guided it, or the application itself? This question has continued to unsettle traditional ideas of artistic genius and originality, but this paper supports the author's argument and holds the view that, the end user, the artist, should be the author of AI art based on practical, legal, and philosophical understanding of copyright authorship. This is because the artists only leverage the AI tools, through their infusion of creative processes. For African artists like Osinachi, working through decentralized platforms, authorship also becomes a way to assert sovereignty, against historically exclusionary art systems.

Bias and Representation: AI art, is influenced by the data it learns from, which can sometimes lead to AI art bias, in the images it generates. Writecream (2024), asserts that, when AI tools are used to create art, the algorithms rely on vast amounts of training data. This data might contain biases, especially if it has limited diversity in terms of race, culture, or gender. For example, if the AI system was trained on images that mostly represent a specific demographic, it could amplify those patterns, leading to racial bias in its depiction of people. This can be problematic, because AI art bias that lacks inclusivity may not reflect the diversity of the real world. In essence, AI systems inherit the biases of their training data. As a result, Buolamwin & Gebru (2018) stress that artists must grapple with how racial, gendered, and cultural biases may be encoded into application outputs. This is particularly acute for African artists, who work to ensure that AI art, does not reproduce colonial visual hierarchies, but instead becomes a space for radical new representations.

Democratization versus Gatekeeping: AI can disrupt traditional gatekeeping mechanisms. This shift, according to Herd (2023), can be unsettling, for those who have long held influential positions in determining what is considered valuable or acceptable in the realm of creativity. So, the rapid expansion of access to creative tools and platforms challenges established norms and hierarchies. It allows a more diverse range of voices and perspectives to emerge, which can be both exciting and threatening to the status quo. For example, one of the exciting things, according to Adeyemo (2021), is that many local artists who are hitherto unknown, are now gaining international prominence, patronage, connections and collaborations.

However, while platforms like RunwayML promise accessible tools, the cutting edge of AI art development remains resource-intensive. African and Global South artists, face structural inequalities in accessing computational resources and funding. An inclusive future demands open-source cultures, fair access, and the recognition of diverse narratives.

Futures of Symbiotic and Pluralistic Creativity: It is imperative to stress, at this juncture, that the beneficial relationships, between humans and technology cannot be overemphasized, considering the way the world is evolving, in this digital age. Imagine a future where creativity is collaborative, inclusive and innovative. A future where humans and technology, seamlessly work together using diverse voices and perspectives to engender new forms of creative expression. This means that the future lies not in replacing human artists, but in fostering symbiotic and pluralistic collaborations. In this new vision therefore, creativity becomes a distributed phenomenon, a network of human intuition, machine computation, and cultural memory. As philosopher Bernard suggests, technics are not external to humanity but intrinsic to its becoming AI. Thus is not an alien force, but a prosthesis of imagination; an extension of diverse human world-making (Stiegler, 1998).

Consequently, future African artworks may evolve dynamically, learning from oral traditions, ecological rhythms, and communal participation. Art may become less an artefact and more an event: dynamic, evolving, and alive.

Conclusion and Suggestions

This paper unequivocally submits that, the meeting between art and AI, is not about machines replacing artists, but about expanding the very possibilities of human creativity. Hence, the meeting is getting beyond the horizon; it is not the end of human creativity, but it is deepening and redefining. Together, artists and machines can weave new textures of seeing, new grammars of feeling, and new vocabularies of resistance to venture into unexplored areas of artistic expression, creativity, or innovation that is enabled by AI. This paper suggests therefore, and as posited by Adeyemo (2021), that artists who want to be relevant and have sway, in this era, technology application, should promptly equip themselves with pertinent technological skills. This would enable them to chart a more inclusive and global trajectory, for AI-infused visual expression, to showcase diverse artistic expressions, bridge cultural gaps, and explore new frontiers

From all over the globe, from Lagos to New York, Dakar to Berlin, creativity demands not only technical mastery, but philosophical courage; a willingness to embrace uncertainty, co-creation, and metamorphosis. In the frontier where art meets AI, it is not glimpse of a mechanized dystopia, but a vibrant expansion of human vision, an invitation to dream beyond the known, that is anchored in the rich soils of global imagination. This writer, therefore, invites artists all over the world, particularly in Nigeria, to embrace AI not as a strange force but as an extension of human imagination, a medium through which they can dream larger, deeper, and also globally.

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