Can AI-Generated Artwork be Authentic?

Many people regard AI as the intersection between creativity and technology, but to what extent is AI art truly creative? Creativity, often correlated with authenticity, is a subjective topic, especially when it relates to artificial intelligence. Therefore, there are various opinions regarding the authenticity of AI art generators such as Fotor, the tool I used to generate the photo on the left-side above this paragraph. Personally, I believe that AI art can neither be expressively authentic or nominally authentic. The difference between the two is that expressive authenticity is dependent on "committed, personal expression", while nominal authenticity is heavily based on authorship and the explicit origin of the art's creation.

For the image on the left, I gave the AI art generator Fotor the query, "Depict a cityscape of San Francisco showing the impact of recent political mayhem and local housing crises". I chose this prompt because of my authentic connection to San Francisco. I have lived in the same home in the heart of Haight-Ashbury my entire life. Additionally, I went to school right next to market street in the financial district, and then high school in the tenderloin district. These three neighborhoods have some of the highest rates of homelessness in the city and are historic in terms of political movements in the bay area. However, artificial intelligence cannot process real-world connections like humans do, such as the unique relationships one develops over time or the city one lives in. It is not fair to say that AI art is expressively authentic if it cannot have the "committed, personal expression" that Denis Dutton values so heavily in her piece "Authenticity in Art". The generator instead imitates original pieces like the Austin Leong photograph on the right that appeared after searching the exact same prompt into google images.

Dutton describes expressive authenticity as "the problematic sense of authenticity". I believe that Dutton's issue with this lens is the lack of a factual basis in which one can determine an artwork's authenticity. An artwork's expressive authenticity is defined by its personality, audience, and intended meaning. Since these are all highly subjective parameters, this concept plagues many people interested in the realm of AI authenticity, including Dutton. One point I like to focus on regarding this topic is that the term AI itself stands for "artificial intelligence". Unlike AI, humans have experience with the real world; The unique relationships, values, locations, etc. that each human holds dear shapes the creative process of making art. Most artists know that the true art behind a piece is the amount of effort

it took to make the audience feel a certain way or evoke a certain emotion. The photographer of the photo above, Austin Leong, has spent decades in San Francisco, inspired by how this beautiful, yet damaged city, evokes unique public behavior. As a San Francisco native, I felt that he captured San Francisco wonderfully by the bleak backdrop that the depicted resident still finds immense joy in. However, there is seemingly no emotion in the AI piece, even though the query asks the generator to focus on the impact of recent struggles in the city. The art does not come from personal experience or one's mind attempting to grasp the concept of the query. Without these connections to the outside world, AI artwork cannot possess intent and instead has to use an algorithm that takes from artists that have already created authentic works. In Dutton's "Authenticity in Art", he uses the analogy of the audience in La Scala playing a vital role in the expressive authenticity of the music played. How the intended audience is affected by a piece of art is critical, and I doubt that San Francisco natives like me feel more of an authentic connection to the city through the AI work than Austin Leong's photo.

When moving on towards nominal authenticity, Dutton's main criteria shifts towards "determining how the work came to be" (Authenticity in Art). The key concept that leads me to the conclusion that AI art does not hold nominal authenticity is that there is no provenance in regards to where AI gets its inspiration behind each generated work. How can an artwork be deemed nominally authentic if there is no creator? AI generations are a combination of algorithms and previous human-created artworks, so there is no way to determine true ownership. In the AI-generated image above, there are bits and pieces of hundreds of pieces of artwork, jumbled together through an algorithm to produce it. However, Fotor does not list the sources it takes techniques, styles, and

content from. This also goes against Dutton's nominal criteria of being "true to an historical tradition" (Authenticity in Art), by imitating another artist's work. It is visible that the style in both pictures above are very similar and both focus on the same prompt, yet only the Austin Leong piece is authentic and original.

Furthermore, many AI art generated platforms sell their images for a profit, even though it is merely an imitation of hundreds of works put together into one. Dutton likes to compare these for-profit generators with his viewpoint on "forging". In "Authenticity in Art", he highlights that "A forging artist paints or sculpts a work in the style of an artist in order to market the result as having been created by the famous artist". While AI art generators don't simply copy one artist, oftentimes AI art gets misconstrued as another artist's work, just like how the two images above could be stylistically confused with one another. AI art is not meant to create works that are stylistically identical to other artists, but it still happens quite frequently because they analyze large data sets of artworks in order to comprehend specific aesthetics and techniques that are then used to generate new pieces. My point is not that AI art is forgery, because it technically is not, rather that there are aspects of AI's art generation and selling process that can lead the buyer or consumer to believe it is an original work, which is not the case.

Supporters of authentic AI-generated works like to argue that humans often use past work and past experiences to inspire new creations, similarly to how AI feeds off of data from past artworks; Therefore, are these new pieces of artwork not authentic? However, this is where the criteria of intent comes back into play. Artificial intelligence, without having human experience programmed into it,

cannot determine the difference between imitation and taking inspiration from something. When taking inspiration from a piece, humans intend to utilize their own twist as a result of their unique experiences on Earth, while AI can only merge styles from pieces that have already been entered into its data set. We cannot allow AI art to be classified as authentic, both nominally and expressively, because it undermines the human condition that gives us the ability to create something new, rather than compiling the old.

Works Cited

"Authenticity in Art." , by Denis Dutton. Excerpt originally published in

Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics, 2004.