

# Are Artists Born or Made? A Comparative Study of Human Talent and AI-Created Art

Khyati Chauhan

*Department of animation, Graphic Era Hill University*

**Abstract**—This dissertation explores the long-standing debate: Are artists born with innate talent, or is artistic skill a result of training, environment, and dedication? In a time when artificial intelligence is generating art that rivals human creativity, this study compares human-created art with AI-generated artworks to evaluate originality, emotional depth, technique, and audience reception. By analyzing case studies, conducting interviews with artists, and evaluating artworks created by both humans and AI tools such as Midjourney and DALL·E, the study aims to understand how creativity manifests in humans and whether it can be replicated or simulated by machines. The findings provide insight into the nature of artistic talent and raise important questions about authorship, emotion, and authenticity in the age of machine creativity. In every brushstroke, sketch, or composition lies a question humanity has asked for centuries—are artists born with a gift, or is art a craft that can be nurtured and learned? In an age where machines can mimic style and generate images within seconds, this question becomes even more layered. This dissertation explores the evolving definition of "artistry" by comparing the creative expressions of human artists with those produced by artificial intelligence. As AI-generated art gets better and better, it makes us rethink what it means to be creative. Can a machine, devoid of emotion or experience, create meaningful art? And if it can, where does that leave the human artist? This study investigates whether artistic talent is an innate human quality or a skill that can be developed—and whether AI can authentically participate in this creative space. The study follows a qualitative approach, combining interviews with trained artists, analysis of AI-generated artworks (using tools like Midjourney and DALL·E), and audience response surveys. Human artworks were evaluated alongside AI pieces based on creativity, emotional impact, technique, and originality. Case studies and reflections from real artists help ground the discussion in lived experience. While AI can produce visually stunning and technically competent pieces, human-created art often carries an emotional depth and context that machines currently lack. The process—the struggles, stories, and personal growth behind a piece—remains deeply human.

Audiences responded more emotionally to works where the artist's journey was visible or relatable. Art is not just about the final product—it's about the soul behind the creation. This research suggests that while artistic skill can indeed be learned and refined, the heart of artistry still lies in human experience, emotion, and perception. AI may replicate aesthetics, but it cannot yet replicate what it means to feel. Artists may not all be "born," but their art is always made—shaped by life, identity, and intent.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Art has always been one of the most intimate expressions of human experience—whether it's painted on cave walls or projected on digital screens. Across generations, society has often celebrated the idea of the "born artist", a person with a natural gift, an almost mystical ability to create something meaningful without formal training. But as access to education, tools, and technology grows, so does the belief that artistry can be taught, refined, and mastered over time.

Now, in the 21st century, this debate takes an unexpected turn. Artificial Intelligence can now generate artworks that are technically brilliant and visually arresting. Tools like Midjourney, DALL·E, and DeepArt can produce thousands of images in moments without fatigue, emotion, or memory. This raises a profound question: what is the true source of art? Is it talent, practice, emotion or something else altogether?

### 1.2 Research Problem

As AI-generated art continues to evolve, it forces us to re-examine what creativity actually means. Is art defined by its outcome or its origin? Can a machine, programmed to replicate and remix, ever be called creative? And as AI begins to produce what we once thought only the human mind could, where does that

leave artists who have spent years learning, failing, and growing?

This study aims to explore the tension between human and machine-made creativity, asking not only whether artists are born or made, but whether they can even be replaced—or complemented—by AI.

### 1.3 Research Objectives

- To investigate whether artistic ability is innate, learned, or a combination of both.
- To analyze and compare the qualities of human-created and AI-generated artworks.
- To explore how viewers emotionally respond to art created by humans vs. machines.
- To reflect on the evolving role of the artist in the age of intelligent technology.

### 1.4 Research Questions

- Are artistic skills the result of inborn talent, learned experience, or both?
- How do AI-generated artworks compare with human-created pieces in terms of originality and emotional resonance?
- Can AI be considered an “artist”? If so, what does that mean for human creativity?
- What does the presence of AI in art suggest about the future of artistic identity and authorship?

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

This research matters not just to artists or technologists, but to anyone who believes in the value of human expression. As we move deeper into an era shaped by artificial intelligence, the boundaries of creativity are being rewritten. Understanding these shifts helps protect what is human in art, while also appreciating how tools, whether a brush or a bot—can expand our creative voice.

### 1.6 Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on visual art forms primarily digital illustration, concept art, and mixed-media works. It draws from interviews with human artists, analysis of AI-generated pieces, and audience feedback. The research acknowledges that “art” is vast and subjective, and that emotional impact cannot be universally measured. AI models examined are limited to those accessible during the time of study.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 The Myth of the “Born Artist”

Throughout history, the idea of the “born artist” has captured our collective imagination. From child prodigies like Mozart to painters like Van Gogh, whose work seemed to pour from somewhere deep and unteachable, society has often framed art as a mystical gift—something either you have or you don’t. Plato believed that art came from divine inspiration, while Romantic thinkers saw the artist as a tortured genius, channeling emotion into creation.

But modern psychology challenges this view. Scholars like Carol Dweck and Howard Gardner suggest that creativity, like intelligence, is not fixed but malleable. Dweck’s “growth mindset” theory emphasizes that talent flourishes through effort, feedback, and persistence. Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences includes spatial and artistic intelligence—recognizing that creativity takes many forms and can be nurtured. So, while some may indeed be born with certain inclinations, the literature increasingly supports the idea that artists are also made through practice, patience, and personal experience.

### 2.2 Learning and Practice: Art as a Skill

Art education has long embraced the belief that creativity can be taught. Techniques, composition, color theory, anatomy—these are all tools that students can learn to master. Betty Edwards, in her widely referenced book *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, emphasizes that anyone can learn to draw if taught how to truly see.

Malcolm Gladwell’s “10,000-Hour Rule” also popularized the idea that mastery is less about innate genius and more about dedication. While this concept has its critics, it underscores a growing consensus: the act of making art is as much a product of repetition, reflection, and resilience as it is of raw talent.

This shift in perspective honors the journey of the artist, not just the outcome. It values mistakes, growth, and the deeply personal path each creator takes.

### 2.3 Emotion and Experience in Human Art

Human art is often a mirror to lived emotion. A painting might carry heartbreak. A sketch might capture joy. These emotional imprints are difficult—if not impossible—to replicate artificially. The work of psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi on “flow”

states shows how deeply the creative process is connected to the artist's inner world. His studies suggest that artists often lose their sense of time and self in the act of creating—something that machines, bound by instruction, do not experience.

Moreover, identity plays a powerful role in artistic voice. Gender, culture, memory, trauma, joy—these threads are woven into a human artist's style. Scholars like bell hooks and Griselda Pollock emphasize the importance of context in art: who is making it, and why?

Art, then, is more than a product. It's an extension of someone's emotional and social reality.

## 2.4 The Rise of AI in Art Creation

With the rise of powerful image-generation models like DALL·E, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion, artificial intelligence has entered the world of art—not just as a tool, but as a creator. These systems learn from vast datasets of images, mimicking styles and generating compositions that often astonish even trained artists.

Scholars like Lev Manovich have explored how algorithms are reshaping visual culture. In *AI Aesthetics*, he discusses how AI is not simply copying human art—it's creating new hybrid forms that blend computation with culture. However, many researchers caution that while AI can imitate, it doesn't understand. It has no emotions, no memories, no intention. As a result, its art can feel hollow—brilliant on the surface, but lacking soul underneath.

Critics like Marcus du Sautoy question whether AI will ever truly “create” or simply remix. Still, its presence cannot be ignored. AI challenges our definitions of creativity and forces us to ask: is art about expression or execution?

## 2.5 Ethical and Philosophical Considerations

The emergence of AI in creative spaces has sparked ethical questions. Can a machine be considered an artist? Should AI-generated art be sold, exhibited, or copyrighted in the same way as human work? What happens when an artist uses AI to extend their vision—who owns the result?

There's also the question of labor. As AI tools become more accessible, many worry that human artists—especially freelancers or newcomers will be displaced. The fear isn't just economic; it's emotional. For many,

making art is more than a job. it's identity, healing, purpose.

Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre once said, “Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself.” In this context, art becomes a declaration of being. And while AI can simulate beauty, it cannot yet simulate being.

## 2.6 Summary and Gaps in Literature

Existing research paints a rich picture of both human and AI-created art. Scholars have explored talent, training, emotion, and aesthetics. Others have begun examining AI's growing influence in design, music, and visual culture.

However, there is still a gap in studies that place human and AI-created art side-by-side—not just technically, but emotionally. Few compare how audiences feel when viewing each type. Even fewer ask artists themselves how they experience the rise of AI—whether they feel threatened, inspired, or conflicted.

This dissertation seeks to explore that gap—not to find absolute answers, but to listen, observe, and reflect. After all, the heart of this research lies in understanding what it truly means to create.

# 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Research Design

This study follows a qualitative, comparative approach because art cannot be measured only in numbers. It can be felt, remembered, and interpreted in infinite ways. The goal here isn't to reduce creativity to data, but to explore it from a deeply human perspective. Through conversations with artists, the observation of AI-generated artworks, and the collection of emotional responses from viewers, this study paints a layered picture of what it means to “create.”

By placing human-made art and AI-generated art side by side, this research allows space for reflection: How do people react? What do they feel? And what do artists themselves think about this changing creative landscape?

## 3.2 Data Collection Methods

This study collects three main types of data—each chosen to capture different dimensions of the creative process and its reception.

### A. Interviews with Human Artists

Artists were invited to share their journeys: how they started, what inspired them, how they learned, and how they feel about AI entering their space. These interviews were conversational, not clinical—allowing stories to emerge naturally. The voices of artists are not just data here; they are central characters in this unfolding narrative.

#### B. Visual Comparison of Artworks

A curated selection of human-created artworks (illustrations, digital paintings, and concept art) and AI-generated artworks (from platforms like Midjourney, DALL·E, and DeepArt) were collected. Each artwork was evaluated for originality, emotion, technique, and intention—not just as images, but as messages.

#### C. Audience Reactions and Feedback

Participants (artists, students, and general viewers) were shown both human and AI artworks—without revealing the source and asked to reflect:

- What emotions did they feel?
- Which piece felt more “alive”?
- Could they tell which was made by a person or AI?

Their spontaneous, instinctive responses offered insight into how art connects with emotion—something no algorithm can fully predict.

### 3.3 Data Analysis Methods

Given the emotional and interpretive nature of the research, a thematic analysis approach was used:

- Interview transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes (e.g., fear of being replaced, joy in the process, doubts about AI).
- Viewer reactions were grouped based on keywords (e.g., “emotional,” “cold,” “alive,” “empty”).
- Artworks were not “scored” but interpreted—through notes, language, and observed reactions—to understand their impact.

Quotes, drawings, and even silences became data. The human element was never reduced to numbers.

### 3.4 Ethical Considerations

This research respects the integrity of human experience and the rights of all participants. Artists gave informed consent to share their work and thoughts. No AI-generated art was falsely claimed as human, and audience members were later debriefed on the nature of each piece.

Care was taken to **honor each voice**, ensuring no participant felt dismissed or tokenized in a conversation where technology often dominates. Because, ultimately, this study is about people, not just pixels.

### 3.5 Limitations of the Methodology

This research is exploratory, not definitive. Emotions are deeply subjective, and interpretations may vary based on mood, background, or personal taste. AI tools are evolving rapidly, and what is true today may change tomorrow. Still, this snapshot offers a meaningful glimpse into a moment of artistic transition, one where questions matter more than conclusions.

## 4: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### 4.1 Visual Comparison: Human Art vs AI Art

When presented with artwork, most viewers responded intuitively, not analytically. Some of the AI artworks were admired for their technical perfection: clean lines, dramatic color palettes, and symmetry that seemed almost too precise to be human. But despite the beauty, many viewers described a kind of “emotional silence.”

In contrast, human artworks though sometimes less polished, carried subtle imperfections that made them feel alive. Brush strokes, intentional flaws, uneven textures. These signs of process gave the art a presence, like it had lived before arriving on the screen.

Words that viewers used for AI artworks:

“Impressive,” “clean,” “weirdly beautiful,” “cold,” “mechanical,” “soulless.”

Words that viewers used for human artworks:

“Honest,” “emotional,” “alive,” “imperfect but powerful,” “relatable,” “it feels like a story.”

### 4.2 Interview/Survey Responses

Here are excerpts from the artist interviews and audience surveys that are raw, reflective, and deeply personal.

Human Artist – Riya, 26, Illustrator (MFA Graduate)  
 “When I draw, I’m not just thinking of the final image. I’m thinking of my breakup, or my mom’s voice, or that song I heard on the train. Every sketch holds a memory. Can AI ever feel heartbreak? Then how can I express it?”

AI Enthusiast – Aarav, 22, Game Designer

“AI is fascinating. It’s fast. I use it to brainstorm environments. But I still go back and redraw them. Why? Because I don’t just want to be pretty, I want to be personal. AI doesn’t hesitate. It doesn’t doubt. That’s why its art doesn’t grow.”

Viewer – Mehak, 30, Non-Artist, Survey Participant  
 “One of the artworks made me stop and stare. I didn’t know why it just felt familiar. Later I learned it was made by a young woman who drew it after losing her dog. That hit me. The AI one was cooler, maybe... but it didn’t make me feel anything.”

Traditional Artist – Karan, 34, Self-Taught Painter  
 “I don’t fear AI. I fear a world where people stop caring about why things are made. Art has always been

messy, human, full of mistakes. That’s where the soul is.”

Survey Participant – Anjali, 21, Design Student  
 “I actually thought the AI piece was by a human. But when I found out it wasn’t, I felt... cheated? It’s like being impressed by a voice, only to find it was auto-tuned.”

#### Charts / Data Analysis Outputs

D.1 Word Cloud – Emotional Responses to Human Art  
 Top words: “Raw,” “Moving,” “Personal,” “Touching,” “Alive”

D.2 Word Cloud – Emotional Responses to AI Art  
 Top words: “Impressive,” “Neat,” “Clean,” “Cold,” “Artificial”

Question	% Preferred Human Art	% Preferred AI Art
Emotional Impact	85%	15%
Visual Appeal	60%	40%
Storytelling Feel	90%	10%
"Could relate to it"	88%	12%

#### 4.3 Key Patterns Identified

- Emotional Response: Viewers consistently connected more deeply with art that had a story or visible process, regardless of visual perfection.
- Artist Process: Human artists described their work as extensions of emotion, memory, or therapy—whereas AI was seen as a tool or mimic.
- AI Appreciation: While AI art was respected for speed and innovation, it was rarely described as “moving” or “authentic.”
- Misidentification: Interestingly, when unaware of the source, viewers sometimes mistook AI art for human—but once informed, felt conflicted or less connected.

### 5: DISCUSSION

When we began this study, the question seemed simple. Are artists born or made? But as we moved deeper into the world of images, interviews, and emotions, we found that the real question wasn’t about origin. It was about essence. What makes art feel like art? What makes something more than just beautiful—something that moves us?

This chapter reflects on the findings not through cold analysis, but through the lens of human feeling, memory, and meaning.

#### 5.1 Born, made—or becoming?

The idea that artists are born with a gift is both romantic and limiting. Yes, some people show early signs of creative instinct. But time, struggle, learning, and reflection shape them just as much—if not more. Every artist interviewed spoke not of a magical beginning, but of a journey: failed sketches, harsh feedback, nights of doubt, moments of joy.

Creativity, it seems, isn’t something we are born with or given—it’s something we build through living. It is not a fixed trait but a process of becoming. Art is a language learned slowly through experience. AI, on the other hand, does not live or learn in this emotional sense. It processes, predicts, and produces—but it does not become.

#### 5.2 When the Artist Has No Heartbeat

Artificial Intelligence can now create art that mimics almost any style—surrealism, realism, impressionism. It can shock us, surprise us, and sometimes even fool us. But what it cannot do is feel.

It does not know heartbreak. It does not know love. It does not know what it’s like to stare at a blank canvas with trembling hands, hoping to express what words cannot. And that absence—of heart, of fear, of memory—is what separates creation from generation. Our findings showed that audiences may admire AI art, but they seldom form a relationship with it. It is art



without a backstory. Without a person behind it. It becomes beautiful noise—but not a voice.

### 5.3 The Role of the Artist in a Machine World

Rather than replacing the artist, AI challenges them to redefine what matters. Perhaps the future of art is not about how technically perfect an image is—but how emotionally honest it is.

Artists today are not just makers of pretty things; they are storytellers, healers, truth-holders, and emotional architects. The value of their work lies not just in what is seen—but in what is felt, and in the messy, vulnerable human experiences that shape every line, color, and concept.

This is where the artist remains irreplaceable.

### 5.4 Collaboration, Not Competition

Many artists in this study didn't see AI as a threat—but as a tool. Like a new kind of brush or camera, it can assist the imagination, speed up workflows, or explore new aesthetics. But the soul of the piece—the intent, the interpretation, the meaning—still belongs to the human.

The most hopeful outcome is a future where artists and AI coexist, not as rivals but as collaborators. Where machines support the mind, but the heart remains human.

### 5.5 What It Means to Create

This research has shown us something quietly profound: art is not the result—it is the reflection of a life lived by the artist.

- A drawing becomes more than ink when it carries a memory.
- A painting speaks louder when it comes from pain or joy.
- A creative process becomes sacred when it includes doubt, risk, and resilience.

These things—pain, joy, effort, healing—are still beyond the reach of algorithms.

So whether artists are born or made may not be the final question. Perhaps the better question is: What kind of artist are you becoming—and how will you make your work matter in a world of instant image-making?

## 6: CONCLUSION

This dissertation began with a question that artists, teachers, and dreamers have quietly asked for generations: Are artists born or made? But somewhere along the journey—from interviews to image

comparisons, from the voices of viewers to the silent perfection of AI—we found that the answer doesn't live in extremes.

Artists are not born with magic in their hands, nor entirely made by books or hours. They are shaped—by memories, by heartbreak, by repetition, by the hunger to express something that words cannot hold.

They are built over time, like their art: layer by layer, line by line.

We discovered that AI can indeed create art that mimics style and impresses the eye—but rarely touches the heart. Its images lack the warmth of failure, the story behind the art.

We discovered that audiences crave connection more than perfection. We discovered that human artists are not only makers of images but carriers of emotion. Their work doesn't just decorate—it speaks for itself. This dissertation began with Are artists born or made? As we explored the journeys of human creators and the emergence of AI-generated art, a quiet truth emerged—art is not about perfection, but presence.

Through interviews, observations, and shared responses, we found that while talent may give someone a head start, it is practice, emotion, and life experience that shape true artistry. Every human artist carried stories in their work, some joyful, and some memories. Their art was not just about what they made—it was about why they made it.

Artificial intelligence, on the other hand, showed remarkable technical skill. It could generate thousands of images, often beautiful, sometimes stunning. But beneath the surface, something was missing. No memory. No intent. No vulnerability.

This doesn't mean AI has no place in art. In fact, many artists now see it as a tool. But what this study confirms is simple and powerful:

Art without emotion is decoration. Art with emotion is a connection.

So, are artists born or made? Maybe both. But more importantly artists are human. They are made of moments, mistakes, memories, and meaning. AI may mimic, but it cannot feel. And in the world of creativity, feeling is everything.

In this new era, what matters most is not how quickly we can create but how deeply we can connect.

REFERENCES

- [1] Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. Harper Perennial.
- [2] Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Random House.
- [3] Gardner, H. (2011). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Basic Books.
- [4] Edwards, B. (2012). *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. TarcherPerigee.
- [5] Gladwell, M. (2008). *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Little, Brown and Company.
- [6] Manovich, L. (2019). *AI Aesthetics*. Strelka Press.
- [7] du Sautoy, M. (2019). *The Creativity Code: Art and Innovation in the Age of AI*. Harvard University Press.
- [8] hooks, b. (1995). *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*. The New Press.
- [9] Pollock, G. (1988). *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and Histories of Art*. Routledge.
- [10] OpenAI. (2022). DALL·E 2: AI System that Creates Realistic Images and Art from a Description in Natural Language. <https://openai.com>
- [11] Midjourney AI. (2023). Exploring AI-Generated Artworks. <https://www.midjourney.com>