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The Ethics and Psychology of AI-Generated Art: Authorship, Ownership, and Artistic Freedom

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Abstract

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The rapid proliferation of generative AI systems such as DALL·E, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion has fundamentally disrupted conventional understandings of artistic creation, prompting urgent philosophical, legal, and psychological questions. This presentation examines three interconnected dimensions of the AI art phenomenon. First, it interrogates authorship by tracing the tension between Romantic ideals of individual genius and poststructuralist critiques of singular creative agency, arguing that AI-generated art demands a spectrum model of distributed authorship across human and computational agents. Second, it analyzes ownership through the lens of copyright doctrine, exploring the legal and moral implications of training models on artists' works without consent, and evaluating whether prompt engineering constitutes sufficient creative labor to ground intellectual property claims. Third, it investigates artistic freedom, weighing the democratizing potential of AI tools against risks including aesthetic homogenization, cultural appropriation at scale, and the erosion of trust through deepfakes. A fourth, integrative dimension addresses the psychology of artistic creation. The paper considers how AI transforms the cognitive and emotional processes central to art-making, including flow states, embodied practice, and identity formation, and examines whether the simplification of creative labor diminishes the psychological meaning that both artists and audiences derive from art. The paper concludes by proposing an ethical framework grounded in transparency, consent, and philosophical pluralism, calling for interdisciplinary collaboration among philosophers, legal scholars, technologists, and practicing artists to co-construct norms for this rapidly evolving domain.





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