

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN DRAWING AND PAINTING: A REVIEW OF TECHNOLOGIES, ARTISTIC PRACTICES, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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Abstract: Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force in drawing and painting, redefining artistic practice and expanding contemporary visual language through data-driven creativity (Manovich, 2019; Paul, 2015). This paper reviews major AI techniques—including neural style transfer (Gatys et al., 2015), generative adversarial networks (GANs) (Goodfellow et al., 2014; Elgammal et al., 2017), diffusion models (Rombach et al., 2022), and transformer-based architectures—and examines their role in image-making, aesthetic production, and visual culture. The study analyzes applications such as AI-assisted drawing, algorithmic painting, creative ideation, art restoration, art education, and commercial visual design (Shanken, 2014; Paul, 2015). It also discusses evaluation approaches that combine computational metrics with human aesthetic judgment (McCormack & d’Inverno, 2012), along with ethical and legal concerns related to authorship, originality, cultural representation, and data ethics (Manovich, 2019). By situating AI-generated art within broader discourses of creativity and artistic agency, this paper highlights the emergence of a hybrid human–AI creative paradigm and outlines future directions for artist-centric and ethically grounded AI art practices.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Drawing and Painting; AI Art; GANs; Diffusion Models; Computational Creativity; Visual Culture; Contemporary Art.

1. Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence into drawing and painting represents one of the most significant shifts in contemporary visual art since the emergence of photography and digital media (Paul, 2015; Shanken, 2014). Once restricted to analytical and industrial applications, AI systems are now active participants in image production, capable of generating stylistic compositions, assisting creative ideation, and simulating painterly aesthetics (Manovich, 2019). Artists, designers, and researchers increasingly employ AI tools not merely as instruments of automation, but as collaborators that reshape authorship, materiality, and visual language (McCormack & d’Inverno, 2012).

This paper examines how AI technologies influence drawing and painting practices, tracing their technical foundations, artistic applications, and theoretical implications. The discussion situates AI-generated imagery within the broader historical trajectory of art and technology, acknowledging parallels with earlier innovations such as the camera obscura, mechanical reproduction, and computer-generated art (Shanken, 2014; Paul, 2015).

2. Historical Context: Art, Technology, and Machine Vision

The relationship between art and technology has long been characterized by experimentation and resistance (Shanken, 2014). From Renaissance perspective systems to photographic realism and digital graphics, technological tools have continually altered artistic production and perception (Paul, 2015). Early computer art in the 1960s and 1970s, pioneered by artists such as Frieder Nake and Vera Molnár, explored algorithmic aesthetics and generative systems, foregrounding rule-based creation and machine participation in aesthetic decision-making (Shanken, 2014).

Contemporary AI differs from earlier computational art forms by employing machine learning models trained on vast visual datasets (Manovich, 2019). Rather than following explicit rules, these systems statistically infer patterns, styles, and structures from images (Goodfellow et al., 2014). This shift enables AI to simulate painterly gestures and compositional strategies traditionally associated with human creativity, challenging conventional distinctions between tool and creator (Elgammal et al., 2017; McCormack & d’Inverno, 2012).

3. Core AI Techniques in Visual Art

Neural style transfer marked one of the earliest widely recognized intersections of AI and fine art. Introduced by Gatys, Ecker, and Bethge (2015), this technique separates content and style representations in convolutional neural networks, enabling the recomposition of images that merge photographic structures with painterly textures. Artists quickly adopted style transfer to explore aesthetic hybridity and reinterpret canonical artworks (Manovich, 2019).

Generative adversarial networks (GANs), proposed by Goodfellow et al. (2014), further advanced AI image generation by establishing a competitive learning framework between generator and discriminator networks. GANs facilitate the production of novel images that emulate the statistical qualities of training datasets, enabling the creation of portraits, abstract compositions, and speculative visual forms (Elgammal et al., 2017). GAN-based artworks have significantly influenced exhibition practices and public engagement with AI art (Manovich, 2019).

More recently, diffusion models have redefined AI image synthesis. Rombach et al. (2022) demonstrated how latent diffusion enables high-resolution image generation through iterative denoising processes, allowing for greater visual

coherence and stylistic control. These systems support text-to-image translation, expanding the expressive scope of AI-assisted drawing and painting (Manovich, 2019).

4. Applications in Drawing and Painting Practices

AI technologies are increasingly integrated into studio practice as tools for ideation, composition, and visual experimentation (Paul, 2015; Manovich, 2019). Artists use AI systems to generate preliminary sketches, explore alternative color palettes, and simulate compositional variations, positioning AI as a conceptual catalyst rather than a replacement for manual creation (McCormack & d’Inverno, 2012).

In digital painting and algorithmic art, AI facilitates the production of complex visual textures and forms that challenge traditional mark-making (Elgammal et al., 2017). Some artists translate AI outputs into physical paintings, while others present machine-generated imagery as finished works, emphasizing process transparency and curatorial framing (Shanken, 2014; Paul, 2015).

5. AI in Art Restoration, Conservation, and Education

AI systems play a growing role in art restoration and conservation, assisting in the reconstruction of damaged artworks, pigment analysis, and stylistic attribution (Manovich, 2019). Machine learning models can generate visual hypotheses about missing sections of paintings, supporting non-invasive conservation strategies (Paul, 2015).

In education, AI-based platforms enable students to analyze composition, stylistic variation, and visual semiotics through generative experimentation (McCormack & d’Inverno, 2012). These tools encourage interdisciplinary engagement and critical dialogue around creativity, authorship, and cultural ethics (Shanken, 2014).

6. Evaluation of AI-Generated Artworks

Evaluating AI-generated art requires hybrid methodologies integrating computational analysis with human-centered aesthetic judgment (McCormack & d’Inverno, 2012). While technical metrics assess resolution and coherence, artistic evaluation emphasizes originality, emotional resonance, and conceptual depth (Manovich, 2019). Curatorial interpretation and audience reception remain essential in contextualizing AI artworks (Paul, 2015).

7. Ethical and Legal Considerations

AI-generated art introduces complex ethical and legal challenges concerning authorship, copyright, and originality (Manovich, 2019; Elgammal et al., 2017). Dataset bias and cultural misrepresentation risk reinforcing dominant visual narratives, raising concerns about homogenization and appropriation (Shanken, 2014). Ethical AI art practice requires transparency, critical engagement with training data, and responsible curatorial framing (Paul, 2015).

8. Future Directions and Artistic Research

Future research in AI drawing and painting should prioritize artist-centered tool design, interpretability, and interdisciplinary collaboration (McCormack & d’Inverno, 2012; Manovich, 2019). Practice-led research can expand inquiry into machine agency, process aesthetics, and posthuman creativity (Shanken, 2014). Emerging directions include embodied AI systems and culturally responsive datasets (Paul, 2015).

9. Conclusion

Artificial intelligence has become a significant agent in contemporary drawing and painting, influencing both visual production and theoretical discourse (Manovich, 2019; Paul, 2015). By examining AI techniques, artistic applications, evaluation frameworks, and ethical challenges, this paper demonstrates that AI-generated art constitutes a hybrid creative paradigm rooted in collaboration between human sensibility and machine intelligence (McCormack & d’Inverno, 2012; Elgammal et al., 2017).

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