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The presence of digital art: towards the oblivion of aesthetics sense and beyond

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we discuss the impact of accelerating the distribution of digital art which in the future can lead to the disappearance of appreciation for people's daily aesthetic sensations. Our life is in constant changing by the forces that are beyond the complete control of human beings as such as current corona's endemic and disruptive spot force by it. However, digital art has never been praised before in such current situation. Two decades ago, the theoretical, aesthetic and philosophical dimensions of the digital art medium were still underrated area of investigation. Nevertheless, although digital art is too popular and being used practically by everyone on the globe, yet, it doesn't mean that everybody just can create the work of art out of it. In this preliminary study, our research based on re-reading thoroughly library research looks for some historical moment from the past situation happened to digital art and compare its changing appreciation in current situation. Library or so called literature research is research that is carried out using literature, both in the form of books, notes, and reports on the results of previous study or any available information. With the enormous coming of the uses artificial intelligence and machine learning become more and more subtle immerse in our daily devices, like it or not, the art also has to be re-questioned in relation to the human senses, the aesthetic. The artistic part of humanity probably can contribute as sparring partner to sciences which is not just a matter of mimicry of an aesthetic feeling, but the truthfulness of being a living human.

1. Introduction

Interlude, about more than a hundred years ago, F.T. Marinetti had proclaimed his 'Manifesto of Futurism' which echoing the presence of a new beauty of the world. Stuart Kendall in his book The Ends of Art and Design (Kendall 2011), mentions that Marinetti and his Italian Futurist colleagues (Cundy 1981)," ...attempted to shift its ground and purpose, to transform art into a paean on behalf of technological culture, a paean to a world created by design (p.1)." The harsh slogan of 'the future is achieved today' is getting its challenges right now by the uncertain situations; that our world are in constant changing by the forces that are beyond the complete control of human beings as such as current corona's endemic and disruptive spot force by it. On one or another occasion, digital art has never been praised like this current situation. Along with the incoming demand on immersive technology including

augmented reality, virtual reality and extended reality, indeed, the electronic commercial boosted by non-fungible token, also known as a nifty (NFT) with the 'digital' currency or virtual money called crypto-currency. Digital art – beside the issues and developing uses of blockchain technologies in attempts to create proprietary digital art and the efforts to assimilate it into the high-stakes commercial art market (Zeilinger 2018), has arisen the debate on the truthful meaning of the Art itself. Two decades ago, the theoretical, aesthetic and philosophical dimensions of the digital art medium were still underrated area of investigation by the fine artist, who characteristically develops work outside normal market demands (Bob Griffin 1996).

As if a traditional artist must learn to recognize materials, use equipment and the technique to handle them, inasmuch as a digital artist must also learn to master the technology needed to produce visual works. Technology is used by the artists to show emotions and intentions to viewers beyond data processing. It seems strange that there is a debate about the validity of digital art as an art form when there are so many similarities amongst the way using tools and equipment in traditional and digital way. Nevertheless, although digital art is too popular and being used practically by everyone on the globe, yet, it doesn't mean that everybody just can create the work of art out of it. Anyone who think digital art is easier to be mastered, one should be learn and create, and may be surprised by the difficulties of mastering the digital art techniques (Mullennix n.d.). If art have to be digital and virtual in order to keep up with the current development of the times, such as conducting exhibitions in online media, participating in selling works in the form of NFTs, and creating artworks by using the latest technology, then do you still need traditional art mediums to be used? What is the technicality of traditional media being studied for? If only the savior of the art world existed in the virtual-digitized world. Has the two-year pandemic become endemic today really changed our fundamental way of thinking and behavior? Or are we actually still the same, in the pursuit of being dragged along by the impulse of desire to catch up by forcing ourselves to follow what is hype and trending in the globe? Is it true that with research then art becomes equivalent to science?

2. Method

2.1. Disclosure of the Presence of Digital Art

Prior digital art has not yet gained much attention it deserves at large, among the conventional fine art world, which still tends to maintain and perpetuate the traditional format of media in the form of physical works, certificates of authenticity, physical exhibitions in galleries or museums, hotel rooms and cafes or hospital decorators. The output of computer-generated artworks such as digital illustration, digital painting, three-dimensional modeling, or graphic design, all of which are done with the help of software, within the field of aesthetic appreciation only occupy at secondary place in the conversation of the art world. Until, at least according to Massimo Cremagnani noted that a digital manifesto was once nourished by Lorenzo Paolini in 1997 and signed by many artists, such as Laurence Gartel (Fig 1) and Mark Jenkins. Whilst as early as in 1995, Lello Masucci has published a Digital Art Manifesto through the internet, and gaining international attention but unfortunately it had fallen into oblivion (Cremagnani 2009). It is only because of the restricted situation of the pandemic regulation that the art activities were forced to look back at its digitization of art, and tame with everything in flavor of digital and virtual things. Re-entering the internet and surfs the online world more than just casual communication on social media applications, doing things other than just sending emails or sending works data filing.

Due to the former global pandemic, people were forced to held exhibitions and art activities virtually which caused all artworks to be converted into digital format. Indeed, digital art is not really having a conversation into itself, but only as an effort to save the existence of works and exhibition activities that have been financially blocked due to this global pandemic. Afterwards, entering the endemic period people returned to their old habits and longed for a return to the atmosphere of physical exhibitions on the spot, longing for real eye and physical contact,

because all of it was saturated within virtualization. The digitization of art has become a place for social media speculation in an effort to cash out and finding an alternate commercial income.

Fig 1. Laurence Gratel (2014). The official artwork for the 57th Annual Grammy Awards

Generally speaking, digital art is a work created by using a digital technology or presented in digital technology. Includes images that are entirely the result of computer editing or images created using software applications such as Adobe Illustrator, Corel Draw, and so on. Digital art also includes creating animations, 3D renderings, video image manipulation as well as projects that incorporate multiple tools and equipment's. There are also people explores their artistic creativity using digital camera and computer technology. The definition of art that uses this technology is called digital art.

2.2. From pixel return back to pixel and vice versa again.

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) reunite the two poles of computer art and digital art. One is writing programmable codes to create an output machine which can resemblance or imitate the work of art, the other one is how to create an artwork from a software which already programmed to be used as tool for artist and designer alike. The earlier computer work of art was first presented by Joan Shogren (1932 – 2020) of San Jose State University, Fig 2, who wrote the program based on the principles of the arts.

Fig 2. Joan Shogren: San Jose show 1963

Cybernation broke through into the world of artistic revelation with flying colors, based on Mrs. Shogren's outlining 'laws' of art, and Dr. Fessenden with Larson translating them into computer linguistics. Their work was later rendered as the first computer art at the San Jose State Spartan Book Store on May 6, 1963. The other early experiments of artwork with computers appeared on following years around 1965. As a mathematician, German artist Frieder Nake, Fig 3, writes a computer algorithm that allows perform instructions that tell the computer what to do, in which it gives order to draw a series of shapes to create typical basic works of art.

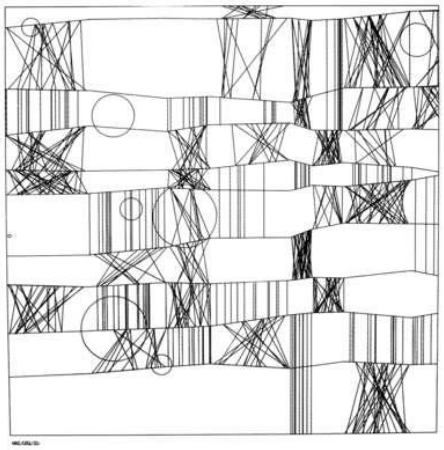

Fig 3. Frieder Nake (1965), 13/9/65 Nr. 2,"Hommage à Paul Klee"

This computer-generated pictorial was some of the earliest examples of art done on computers. Later on, also still at the earlier stage a computer program took a photograph of an object then turned it into an image consisting of pixels. Pixel is the smallest elements of an image in computer; if some pixels are combined, it will be able to display a greater and comprehensive image. The other exhibition by Georg Nees: Computergrafik, Fig 4, eventually became the title of his doctoral dissertation, was the first exhibition world-wide of graphic works algorithmically generated by a digital computer at the Siemens company, Erlangen (Germany). The show took place in rooms of the "Studiengalerie der TH Stuttgart" (later University of Stuttgart), under the auspices of the Ästhetisches Colloquium, a seminar permanently offered by Max Bense and his Institut für Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie (Nees n.d.).

Fig 4. Georg Nees (1965). Computergrafik

Traditionally, the origins of 'Digital' taken from the 15th century Latin word *digitus* which meant a finger or a toe. Digital means the use of numbers, yet, the word 'digital' historically was a relatively lost term until it underwent exploitative usage during early mid-twentieth century. It begun when some scientists invented a kind of computing machine different from former analogue machines, which based on data represented as discrete digits e.g. B = 01100010. Being composed of such digits, this data was hence called digital (Verma, 2017). The term 'digital art' first used around the 1980s relates to drawing using a computer which later evolved into a software application. Drawing through the computer programmed application is a method of making an artwork that is suitable for multimedia formats because it can be viewed in various ways, including on television, movies and of course on a personal device such as computer. From this combination work of art and technology eventually emerged the term digital art which allowed many new ways to create art works. Artwork is created using a computer and relates to images, sounds, animations, videos, games and the web. Many older disciplines have now used digital and computer technology so the boundary between traditional work of art and computer-processed artworks has become blurry.

Fig 5. Paul Klee (1929), Hauptwege und Nebenwege, This work inspired Frieder Nake to his "Homage à Paul Klee".

2.3. Computer Works of Art.

Nowadays digital art is a digital artwork that is widely performed to the public, actually, digital art took many forms, from a basic digital photo manipulation to an advance virtual simulation, all of it have one primary key feature that in fact the data are digital (Badry and Lubis 2017). Forms such as cartoon animation, movie special effects, 2D and 3D model rendering, electronic games, hypertext poetry, visual designs, web designs, multimedia presentations, virtual simulation and so on are made of computer-generated machine by using digital data. This year in September 2022, the global artworld was shocked by the winner Jason M. Allen of Pueblo West, Colorado, United States (Fig 6), who made digital work of art with Midjourney, an artificial intelligence system. This AI program allows its user to input few lines of various words and phrases prompts then turn it into custom images. However, it took dozens of hours to get the desired results from the imagery processed option provided by those artificial programs alike, which Allen further fine tuned into images of a hyper-surrealistic painting. One of the entries titled: "Théâtre D'opéra Spatial" brought him as the winner of the Colorado State Art Fair's competition in the category of "emerging digital artists". The competition category refers digital arts as artistic work that use digital technology as part of the creative or presentation process.

Fig 6. Jason M. Allen of Pueblo West, Colorado, United States, September 2022, "Théâtre D'opéra Spatial".

The output of AI program is truly impressive, whereabout built upon the works of human being as real creators. They are trained on thousand and millions works of human-made images, *it did not create thing out of nothing*. An open-source AI image generator works as a "generative search engine" with the capability of machine learning and deep learning program learns from a compressed file of thousand and millions of images scraped from the internet, which people and artists alike shares on the 'cloud'. This does not mean to against the tool such as AI program in art, but it should be the artist alike to have control over how their works are used, that was used by AI image systems to be rewarded and appreciated fairly. In spite of the ethical debate on how artist works being used as databases in order to train an AI program, this creative experimentation on technological and artistic creativity side bring the conversation on how artists can use the tools to creative ends. Most obviously illustrators, photographers, designers of all kind and concept artists who often shares their work online to be display widely as their portfolio in the internet (Fig 7).

Fig 7. Polar Engine.com (2020). King Arthur Battle, Smite God

Today, digital is synonymous with computer. Digital means every single piece of copy are likely the Original one. The 0s and 1s of digital data means beyond than just on and off which mean any perfect copying. When everything converts into data algorithm, such as images, audio, video and any other information are turned into binary digits file, it can be transferred electronically, preserved, regenerated and also manipulated perfectly. Each and every copy of those file is an exact copy of the original. Starting from once upon a time someone created programming with a computer that gave commands to the hardware to create a pictorial image, then increased the tension to the production of software that helps artists and designers to work from editing and or painting digitally, adding visual effects, and so on. Now with artificial intelligence system, the computer programs do the process of choosing and providing choices which is done by its data search engines capabilities.

Afterwards, the artists or designers can continue their creativity in processing selected datas or re-adjusted the form of desired image to the expected ideas or concepts. This workflow is similar to adjusting words in the process of translating from one language to another until the arrangement of words and sentences is achieved until the paragraph is felt to be perfect. On the other side, there is another type of language programming that can be learn by artist or designer to create work of art or designing by using computer, such as Processing. Processing is an open source programming language and development environment for programming images, animations and interactions. It was initiated in 2001 by Casey Reas and Ben Fry, both formerly of the Aesthetics and Computation Group at the MIT Media Lab. Currently used widely by students, artists, designers, researchers, and hobbyists to learn, prototype, and production. It is a free graphical library and integrated development environment (IDE) built for the electronic arts, new media art, and visual design communities with the purpose of teaching non-programmers the fundamentals of computer programming in a visual context.

3. Results and Discussion

If the only savior of art is to be converted digitally and displayed through virtualization of an art exhibition by using the latest technology, why bother with keep saving the traditional art mediums to be taught? What is so important to learn the techniques of traditional medium for? People already embraced the method of living by working at home remotely. Every single works sent through the internet, everybody goes online every day. Nevertheless, people are bounded to the connection of information and communication technology. According to F. Budi Hardiman, in this digital age the question of authenticity comes to the fore when the image of man as *Digi-sein*, a term for the existence of human omnipresence in digital realm, which can be reproduced infinitely and gets a mixed response from any location in various parts of the world (Hardiman 2021). Technological mediation in this digital age reduces the sensibility very deeply in consideration of the relationship between the human body and technology, which this human body according to Vgotsky is a mediating artifact or cultural tool of humanity thought and action (Jones, 2019, p. 312).

The threat of losing the role of humans – which is slowly disappearing along with the decreasing sensibility due to the mediation of digital technology that we are experiencing today –that is perhaps make many parties worry about excessive efforts to incorporate the sophistication of artificial intelligence into the process of art making so that it becomes too domineering. This kind of worrisome in our opinion is not due to the insignificance of the output of digital computing production, but rather how to deal with the forgotten sense of the existence of aesthetic experiences that people usually feel when dealing with or enjoying artworks in common sense. The computer cannot proceed alone, nevertheless, it still requires human handy works to interact with in order to generate the artworks. There is no such thing creating something out of nothing. But then, when the computer shows the capability of generating a work of art which is actually a compilation of hundreds of thousands artwork created formerly by artist, illustrator, photographer or designer alike which was probably shares in internet for the sake of self-existence through displaying their portfolios to the net

public – all of sudden their existence oblivious and fell into ignorance. It is a kind of the end of aesthetic experience, from now on people had to uplift their sense into the being of digital world. They think what they see are the works of a smart machine that could resemblance the works of human-being, set against on how a robot could have a sense of artistic creating an output of a work of art from scrapping numerous datas in the cloud.

In this case, we offer to rethink what once Bolter and Grusin (1999) called remediation, in the meaning of change the shape or re-formed the old media where the new media borrows and remediates the former media. There are two main concepts of them related to the mediation of the old media to the new media, namely *immediacy*, which related to the visual representation style that aims to make the audience forget the presence of the previous medium and believe that what is in front of them is the object of representation; and *hypermediacy*, the idea that people can experience new media while still being aware of improvements from previous media (Nugroho, 2020, pp. 73-75). Now and then are we really changed our fundamental way of thinking and behavior? Or are we actually fall in the pursuit of being force to follow what is hype and trending in the globe? Is it true with the research onto the sophisticated technological issues then art becomes equivalent to science? In order to respond to such questions, it is necessary to take a step back to question the truthful intention in pursuing the temporality of this mercilessly dynamic world of science and technology. Perhaps, we have to remediate the thinking about art itself. After previously we were shaken by Comedian, a piece of work which featured a banana duct tape on the wall in the year 2019, created by Maurizio Cattelan, Italian conceptual artist. Now, with the onslaught of digital technology and a variety of artificial intelligence that is constantly being improved algorithms, it will be easy to think that one day the skills of handling brushes and sculpting equipment will be substituted with the skill of composing text-lines command prompts on a computer. Two proponent writers can give us a relaxation on how to deal with overrated internet of things and computer digitation, such as textbook by Hubert L. Dreyfus (1992) 'What Computer Still Can't Do', and Robert J. Marks II (2022) 'Non-Computable You'. In accordance to J. Marks II, that artificial intelligence will never be creative or understand something, as a machine it may be able to mimic certain human traits but can never duplicate the emotional experience because of the computer does not feel anything, we should not confuse *a robot that imitates* with the real thing. It is because computers can only deal with facts, but human being the source of facts is not a fact or set of facts but a 'being' who creates himself and the world of facts in the process of living in the world (Dreyfus, 1992, pp. 290-291).

4. Conclusion

What will human being be if the work of art is made of texting on the phone and electronically transferred it to be manufactured with two-dimensional or three-dimensional printing machine? We, human being becoming a human by acted like human being. Moreover, whatever the sophisticated technological confronting us, human being always returns to their basic purposes of the meaningful life of living in the world, even if it means to live in a virtual-world. The human artist will still work with their crafted skills on handling brushes and paint, while computer artist will also work with their crafted skills on composing text-lines. In between them, there are people whom like to produce artistic works based on the traditional media which presented into the digital or virtual media and vice versa. The human intelligence composes the computer intelligence to reworks for shaping the future of humanity. The artistic part of humanity can contribute as sparing partner to sciences which is not just a matter of mimicry of an aesthetic feeling, but the truthfulness of being a living human. There is an urgency to re-search, to search again into the realm of the art itself and to questioning back the purposes an artist of being artistic, or designer alike do the designing, if not to surrender their creativity to the textual capabilities of machine intelligence. The aesthetic sense of artistic designing that goes beyond the sophisticated artificial learning by machine is supposed not to be forgotten.

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