

THE EXPERIENCE OF AI-DOMINATED ART MARKET AND ITS CHALLENGE TO CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN PAINTER

By

Uzor Chidi

Fine and Applied Art Department, Ignatius Ajuru University of
Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State

PHONE: 07038318516

EMAIL: chidi_u@yahoo.com

&

Ani Izuchukwu Valentine

School of Fine and Applied Arts, Education, Federal College of Education
(Technical) Umunze, Anambra State.

PHONE: 08061308138

EMAIL: izuchukwuvalentine6@gmail.com

Abstract

In a world of seemingly increasing science and technological advancement, it is imperative for modern Nigerian artists (painters) to proactively engage painting styles and techniques that can stand the test of time and outlive the competitive AI era. In the Nigeria art market, painters are in intense competition with Artificial Intelligence (AI), it is a public knowledge that AI has indirectly engulfed core creativity as most Nigeria painters depend solely on AI generated ideas for their painting concept/ exercises, and some art commissions meant for real painters are given to AI in most cases just by a click of computer command. As a result of this problem, strategies are needed to checkmate AI and enable painters to stay relevant in the art of now and that of tomorrow. However, this paper aims not to condemn AI in its totality but to point out its side effects on today's Nigerian painters and offer strategies that can enable them to stay relevant in their art career now and in the future. A survey design plan was adopted for this study. The population was massive. Thus, a randomly selected studio of practising painters in Nigeria was used. In conclusion, findings revealed that the science

of AI is indirectly contending relevance with painters. Therefore, recommendations for Nigerian painters to stay relevant in this era include: personalising their style of painting, frequently engaging in painting exploration activities, developing a brand for their artworks, mixed media painting is an edge over AI, creating masterpieces /being original, and creating a personalised art website.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence (AI), Contemporary Nigerian painters, art market.

Introduction

The introduction of the science of artificial intelligence (AI) has brought about significant advancements in various areas of human endeavours, including the Visual arts, most especially two-dimensional art like painting and graphics. Indeed, AI-generated paintings have gained popularity in recent times, but their negative impacts on Nigerian painters have been a matter of concern. The ability of AI technology to create intricate and fascinating art images is gradually becoming a challenging factor to human artists, and the windows of opportunity are closing rapidly for painting commissions. The ease and efficiency with which AI can create art has lowered the value of traditional artistic skills which is professionally rendered by gifted hands of an artist, thus, triggering a significant decline of commission opportunities for human artists. The disruptive potential of AI on most studio painters is a case study for a discourse. AI presents unprecedented and extensive opportunities for virtually every sector, including the creative sector, yet findings proved that AI poses great challenges on modern day Nigeria painters, which weighs beyond its positive impacts on average contemporary Nigeria painter. However, the concept of Art of painting, the concept of AI and its shortcomings towards painters needs to be identified, understood and mitigated.

Concept of Painting

Painting is a branch of Fine Art which deals with the expression of ideas and emotions, skilfully stimulated to achieve certain degree of aesthetic qualities, in a two-dimensional visual format. In Painting, elements of design such as shapes, lines, colours, tones, and textures are pivotal in producing sensations of volume, space, movement, and light on a flat

surface. According to Carpenter and Graham (1971:87), these elements are skilfully combined into expressive patterns in order to represent real or supernatural phenomena, to interpret a narrative theme, or to create wholly abstract visual relationships. Paintings can be expressed in diverse mediums such oil, acrylic, watercolour, gouache, fresco, mixed media and other exploration possibilities.

The history of painting, according to Mbelu (2005), is said to be traced back in time to artefacts and artwork created by prehistoric artists and cave painters who used natural pigments obtained from plants and nearby deposits of minerals and clays. It represents a continuous, though periodically disrupted, tradition from Antiquity. Across cultures, continents, and millennia, the history of painting consists of an ongoing river of creativity that continues into recent times.

Concept of Ai Art (PAINTING)

AI is an acronym which stands for Artificial Intelligence. AI painting, also known as Artificial Intelligence art, is any form of digitally created paintings that are entirely enhanced with AI tools. AI not only generates painting images alone but also performs diverse tasks in other creative fields, such as videography, photography, and music.

Ever since the inception of painting, from the early cave painters to the present AI era, human creative endeavours have been inspired and achieved through human efforts, primarily with the use of conventional, tangible art tools like paints, brushes, Canvas, and colour pigments. Skilled artists handled these to generate a wide range of painting pieces throughout the ages.

However, the AI innovations uttered this narrative. The use of AI in the creation of paintings can be impressive from a technical perspective, which can also be applied to some organisational tasks. Nevertheless, we must consider its adverse impacts on human artists and the contemporary art market.

Challenges of Ai on Nigerian Painters

AI art challenges the traditional definition of art and its long-standing requirement that humans be the sole creators of art. Its introduction raises

questions about the genesis of creativity and ethical concerns. However, the use of AI in the creative domain has a profound effect on artists, their works, and the art market. AI has developed new possibilities of creative outputs based on technological involvement in making AI images. Still, it also raises concerns regarding its integration alongside human artists, the differentiation between real paintings and AI-generated artworks, thus painting as a branch of art is significantly affected by AI in the following areas:

1. Devaluation of skills: AI-generated art can be produced quickly and efficiently, devaluing the skills and expertise of human artists. From the gradual unfolding of events, it is obvious that Artists and AI battles for relevance, as AI tools which depends on networks, datasets and algorithm of already existing Artworks, pictures, and other sources blur the lines among art, artist, and machine. This raises controversy on who owns the creative rights of an AI generated images, in other words defying the original definition of art and creativity. The question is, should machine-generated content be considered as pure art and be featured in galleries and juried art shows? However, one could argue that the command input into these AI systems is a form of creative expression by humans, but the output, such as AI-generated painting images, requires zero technical skill or training for humans to achieve.

2. Decrease of painting commissions: AI-generated art is widely used for commercial purposes, reducing the demand for human artists and leading to a significant decrease in commissions. Unfortunately, the use of AI takes away opportunities from professional painters who have spent their life acquiring art skills and they rely on commissions and contracts for their livelihood, as a laymen can easily assess painted images from AI just by issuing a command to a computer system, most companies may consider the use of AI-generated art to be a cost-saving measure, and this could potentially lead to a decrease in demand for skilled painters and original artworks

3. Oversaturation of AI paintings in the art market: The ease of producing AI-generated art can lead to an oversaturation of the art market, making it difficult for human artists to stand out. However, when touring different cities in Nigeria, one would agree with me that vendors of art now engage

in massive printing and selling of AI images in place of pure art on the roadside of Nigeria at a cheap rate. However, this development could have larger implications, as it devalues the skills, knowledge, and education of human artists in favour of AI. Moreover, the accessibility and affordability of AI technology further heightens the challenges faced by painters. With AI software readily available to anyone with a computer, the barrier to entry into the art world is significantly lowered. As a result, the market becomes flooded with an abundance of AI-generated art, making it harder for artists to earn a living solely from their artistic endeavours.

Conclusion

It is undeniable that the world is changing and advancing tremendously in science and technology full of innovations. Despite the exciting possibilities and innovations that AI offers, it also presents challenges to Nigeria's traditional painters. The ease of creating AI-generated paintings makes art too familiar, as it can be generated by anyone who can operate a computer system. Its negative impact on artistic recognition makes it difficult for art lovers to differentiate between real paintings and AI-generated paintings. The oversaturation of the art market with AI paintings contributes to a significant decline in demand for human artists. Therefore, it is imperative for painters to step up their approach to art and the art market to remain relevant as artists of this century. Furthermore, striking a balance between AI and promoting the value of human artistry is crucial to ensuring a palatable artistic landscape.

Recommendations

The course of this paper identifies some remedial approaches, an overview of the different solutions an artist might use to continue a sustainable income in an uncertain future, and to coexist efficiently in this challenging AI-dominated art market. However, for this paper to present realistic approaches to this effect, ideas from multiple practising painters were adopted. In my view, these strategies, if adopted, may enable painters to be more competitive as artists in a world of AI that can generate cheap, high-quality imagery in seconds. These strategies include:

1). Be Original as a painter

For an artist's work to stand out and be in high demand, the artist should invest more in personal development instead of copying and depending

on AI-generated images and ideas from other artists. Concentrate on achieving your art through core self-expression and exploration. By doing so, the artist will become something that AI will never be able to imitate. Now is the time to dive into your unique version.

2). Develop a distinct and remarkable Painting style

In the words of Christopher (2023), developing a style in art isn't so much about finding some obscure trick that clicks with your tastes, or about learning from the right sources, or purposefully doing something a little bit unorthodox in your work to make it stand out. It's more about removing all of the expectations about what a painting should be like and unfolding what you are like to present as your painting style. However, amidst your style, it's expected that you will still be seen as an artist with some degree of aesthetic stimulation.

3). Exploration of Ideas, concepts and mediums is an edge over AI

Research has proven that AI generates its images from a large number of variations of images in a computer database. Still, AI can't come up with truly original concepts and creative ideas. Hitherto, painters have the great advantage of focusing on creating new, unique pieces of art that push the boundaries and introduce new ideas through exploration. Explorations create avenues for trying out different mediums and techniques, completely studying unrelated disciplines and incorporating their findings into your art. These are things that AI will struggle to imitate.

4). Build a strong personal brand

Developing your personal brand is very crucial for painters, especially in this AI era, for it helps establish the painter's reputation and attracts potential art lovers and collectors. In this regard, painters are expected to leverage social media platforms, a personal website, and other online platforms to showcase their paintings, connect with their larger audience irrespective of distance and build a community around their art. However, it is equally advisable for painters to incorporate their bio and artist statement on their website, which will provide people with full knowledge of them, their art, and what motivates their paintings. Moreover, having a personal brand involves creating a strong and publicly broadcast narrative around the process behind your paintings, including blog posts and YouTube videos that share your thoughts about your art.

5). Mixed media painting is a great advantage over AI

Uzor et al (2022) opined that artists of today should explore mixed media painting while utilising found objects as a support in their paintings. However, for painters to stand out above AI in the contemporary competitive Art market, they should adopt mixed media as a means of expressing their artistic concepts. Mixed media is an indelible proof that a painting is done by a human artist, not a computer, thus establishing a significant margin for art lovers to easily spot differences between AI-generated paintings and real paintings, thereby competing against AI by showcasing their humanity in their work. The advantages of human-made art cannot be overstated; the unique personal touch it has, being made by an extraordinary individual filled with experiences and understanding. Furthermore, paintings like mixed media, collage, mosaic and installations are currently impossible to replicate with artificial intelligence. Thus, AI will ever struggle to imitate the uniqueness of mixed media.

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