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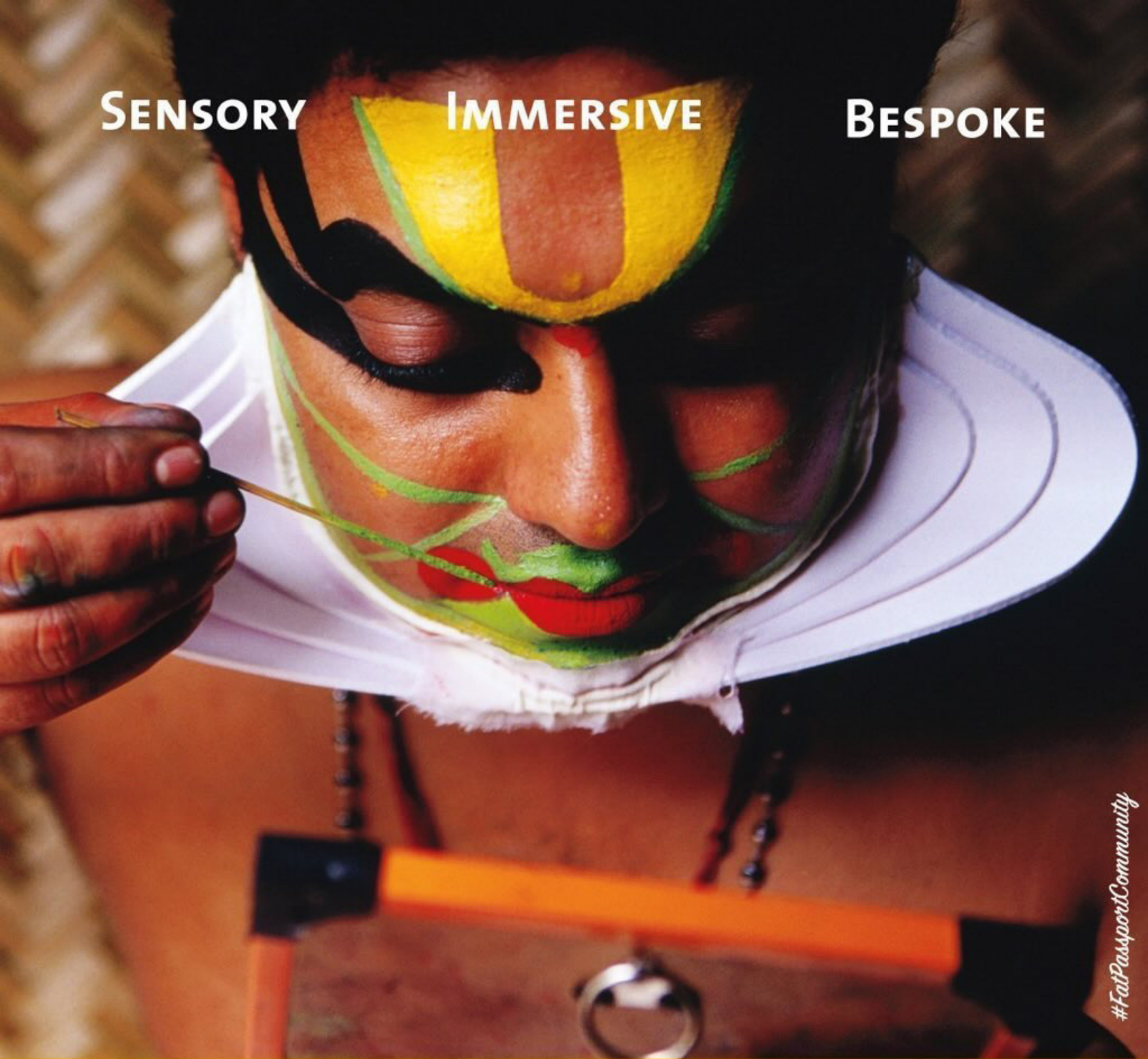
MAGAZINE
SPECIAL ISSUE "AI" | MAY 2024



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MAGAZINE

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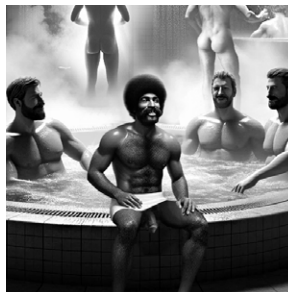
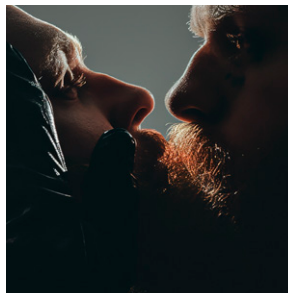
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by: Ian Demsky

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MASCULAR MAGAZINE

*Celebrating masculine art and
the men who create it*



"It is customary to offer a grain of comfort, in the form of a statement that some peculiarly human characteristic could never be imitated by a machine. I cannot offer any such comfort, for I believe that no such bounds can be set." Alan Turing

You probably already have an opinion on "AI art". Maybe you've already been turned on by an AI image, or been fooled into thinking one was real, or think it's all soulless and evil and will lead to the destruction of mankind, or at the very least the loss of people's livelihoods.

Maybe you think it can't do hands.

AI is, on one level, just another tool for humans to express themselves through. The debates and discourse around AI art are similar to those that came before with any introduction of a new technology. The same was said about photography - that it was soulless and required no skill compared to painting.

And yet few people now would deny the artistry of Mapplethorpe or Ansel Adams.

AI art is ultimately a reflection of our world, our lives, our culture. It synthesizes new worlds out of everything it's been shown, guided by the artist's imagination and skill. Its dreams are ours and its limitations are whatever we set. Without the AI artist the machine is nothing - and it is they who imbues the work with a soul.

Mascular is a publication that isn't afraid to take risks - and so when the idea of an AI Art special issue was suggested to me, I was excited and more than a little anxious to take on the task of editing it. Would I be able to help create a collection of images that would inspire people to take a fresh look and perhaps change their opinions?

I hope that some of you will at least be inspired enough to think again and investigate some of the artists presenting work in this issue - or at least decide that the hands aren't too bad after all.

Heartfelt thanks to all of the artists who have contributed their vision and talent to this issue - my hope is that this is just the beginning of something revolutionary.

- Steve Powell, May 2024



It's THE "thing" right now. AI is going to change the world. "Change the world" – what does that even mean? It's apocalyptic! Artificial intelligence is a theme that's run through so much media over the decades, and in pretty much every instance, it's proved to be dangerous to mankind. Is it any wonder, then, that we are sceptical about what should really just be a tool. Perhaps it's because it is such a powerful technological development that's being propagated by people we don't like or trust. Take something potentially very useful, and cover it in "profit motive", it's likely the outcomes won't be all that great after all. I subscribe to this way of thinking. I have deep misgivings not about AI itself, but because the people behind the programs are the people who are pushing the current internet paradigm. I have that nudity must be banned, but that violence is fine. I hate

the fact that there are algorithms that can push certain content ahead of other content based on popularity or payment.

AI, like the internet, will have good and bad. It will, inevitably, be a reflection of the society that has created it, and the people who have failed to protect the things we care about. AI will help consumers consume. It will help bad people advance their bad agenda. It will make big lies even bigger. It will dull our senses and it will reduce our humanity. But, in all likelihood, only by a smidgen compared to where we are headed anyway. So be alarmed, but perhaps, it's not the AI that's the issue, but the people behind it and the society from which it is learning.

While the big issues are interesting to contemplate and debate, the point of doing an AI focused Special Issue of MASCULAR Magazine is to explore how it will impact the world of art and creativity. Looking through the pages of this issue, I think it would be difficult to write off all AI generated content and not accept it has a creative soul, artistic worth. It seems that the fears in this regard are generally about de-valuing the worth of a "proper" artists because said artist has to compete with someone who has not "talent" and can just use keyboard input prompts

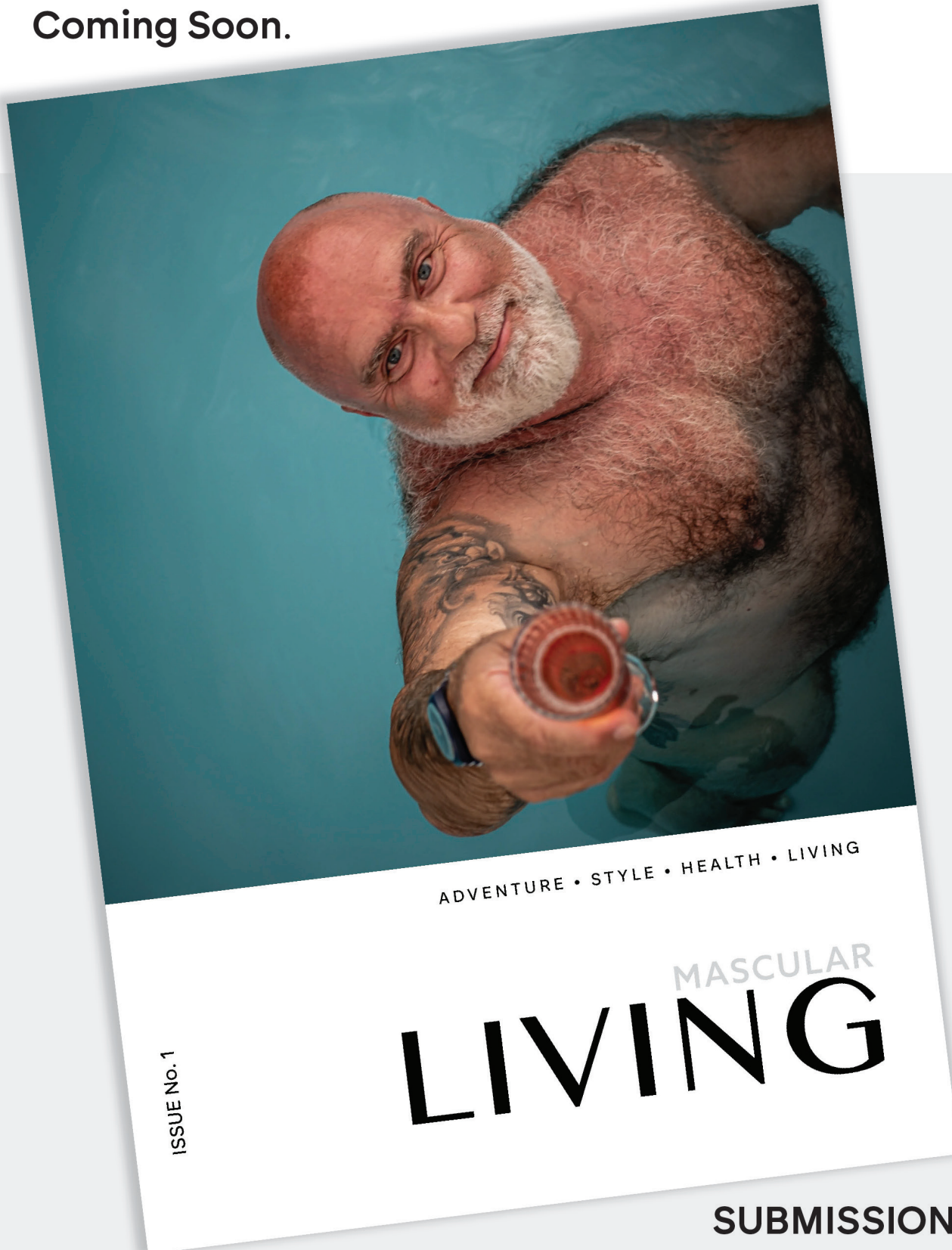
to create images. There is value in true artistic ability – as in sculpting, painting, drawing or writing. I don't think AI can undermine that. Commercial applications of artwork are inevitably going to be impacted, but as I alluded to above, that's all down to profit motive. True art shouldn't be driven by that anyway.

I don't profess to have a crystal ball. I do not know the future. I don't entirely believe the people who are selling AI to me as the answer to all things. I don't look to AI to improve my photography – I simply don't need it. It might improve work flow, but I enjoy my work flow as it is. I see some AI generated work and it fills me with dread. I worry that AI will homogenise everything and that diversity will be compromised. But I also see some AI work and am filled with wonder. I love the impossible worlds that are brought to life. I love the permeability of matter and concept that AI creatives conjure up. Cross between a man, a rhododendron and a lobster. I love it! In sum, as with everything, there is good and bad out there, and beware of anything that a billionaire says will improve your life.

- Vincent Keith, May 2024

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MASCULAR Living Magazine is an Adventure, Style, Wellbeing and Living magazine that will showcase the inspiring lives and experiences of men of character from around the world.

As a brother publication of MASCULAR Magazine, you can expect a thoughtful, entertaining and inspiring magazine built with our MASCULAR Magazine readers in mind.

As with all things MASCULAR, collaboration and sharing are at the core of what we do. So if you have been somewhere on an **ADVENTURE**, tell us of your experience. Maybe there's someplace special in your town that you love. Show us.

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“THE MUSE”

BY

STEVE POWELL FOR BVSTARD.AI

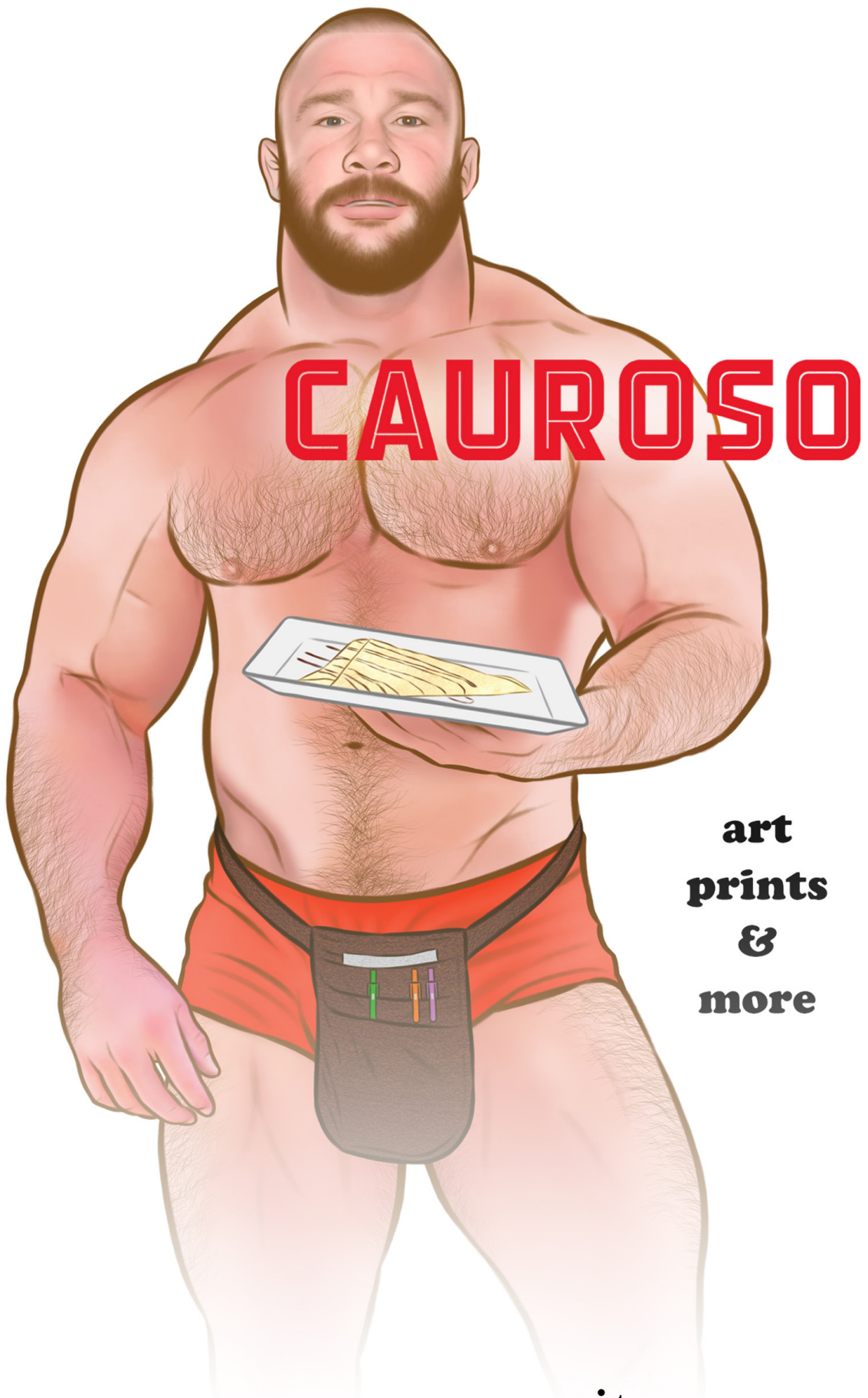
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IMPROBABLY BEWHISKERED

Chuck Roberts

For decades, I've been into 3D graphics and other creative media to produce hyper-idealized fantasy men, typically burly and furry blue collar dudes, young military, and hirsute hunks with bodies archetypal of early Colt photoshoots. I've always been drawn to very hairy guys, and that definitely comes across in what I get generated in Midjourney. Finding them akin to specious religious arguments, I tend to ignore the current debates regarding AI vs "art" and just love the fact that I can manipulate data sets in natural language programs to generate images of smokin' hot men (and fractal seahorses, horror movie scenes, etc.). I try to go for romantic realism (but explore paint and motion, too) and always prefer erotic over pornographic. Some of my influences are happy memories of the myriad men I served with (and serviced) during my time on submarines; others are Joe Gage films and the beautiful men I see each day here on the Texas/Mexico border.

I am both delighted at the current state of generative AI and also tickled at just how awful it can be. What I do is fun and if my images are art to some, then I'm happy. If others choose to disparage this novel creative tool, that's their choice. There are some absolutely amazing images and media being generated right now... sexy, weird, humorous, strange, cartoonish, pornographic, mixes of all sorts of styles. It's all fantastic and interesting to me. And just like music, most generative AI images are trite (including a lot of mine)...but there so much good stuff being generated globally right now the only complaint one could have is not having enough time to enjoy it all. I say "yay" and celebrate what brings me joy.





















THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

Daniel Decot

In 1979, I had the chance to visit New York for the first time.

This trip transported me to an era, now long gone, a period of absolute freedom and boundless explorations. My curiosity led me through the gay neighborhoods of Chelsea, to the Piers on the Hudson River, and into the lively Meat Packing District. The atmosphere in the late seventies, imbued with extreme sexual liberation, made everything seem possible and within

You can see more of Daniel's work at danieldecotphoto.com

reach. Iconic gay bars of the time - such as the Stonewall Inn, the Julius', the Ramrod, the Spike, the Mineshaft, the Anvil (I was staying at a friend's apartment, right across the street from the bar, on 14th Street), and the Eagle 's Nest - were iconic meeting points where people gathered to celebrate their diverse practices.





But it wasn't just the excitement of the gay district that made these times unforgettable.

Central Park, dark and dangerous at sunset, with its groves, became gathering places for people in search of anonymity, thrills, and ecstasies. Underneath dim bridges, skins came closer, stuck to each other, mingling, creating a unique atmosphere where everyone could discover some secrets about themselves.

The Continental Baths, a hammam where men from varied social backgrounds met, all naked, congregated in the steam baths, in the jacuzzi and swimming pool, and all ended up on the mattresses of the cabins lit with red lights.

Mount Morris Bath in Harlem, a sauna exclusively for gay African Americans ... and a few selected white individuals at the entrance. That was how I found myself surrounded by around 50 very interested huge black guys ... What a Sunday afternoon !

Need I explain what the infamous "FuckTrucks" parked near the docks were ? The driver only closed the rear door when the cargo was full.

Private parties on the terrace of the Chelsea Hotel, in particular that of the 10th anniversary of the events at Stonewall.

And what about Fire Island, which became famous for its



wild afternoon parties on the beach, all-night disco dancing, abundant sex, and widespread of poppers at The Blue Whale bar in Cherry Grove.

Of course, malevolent shadows were already looming above the Big Apple.

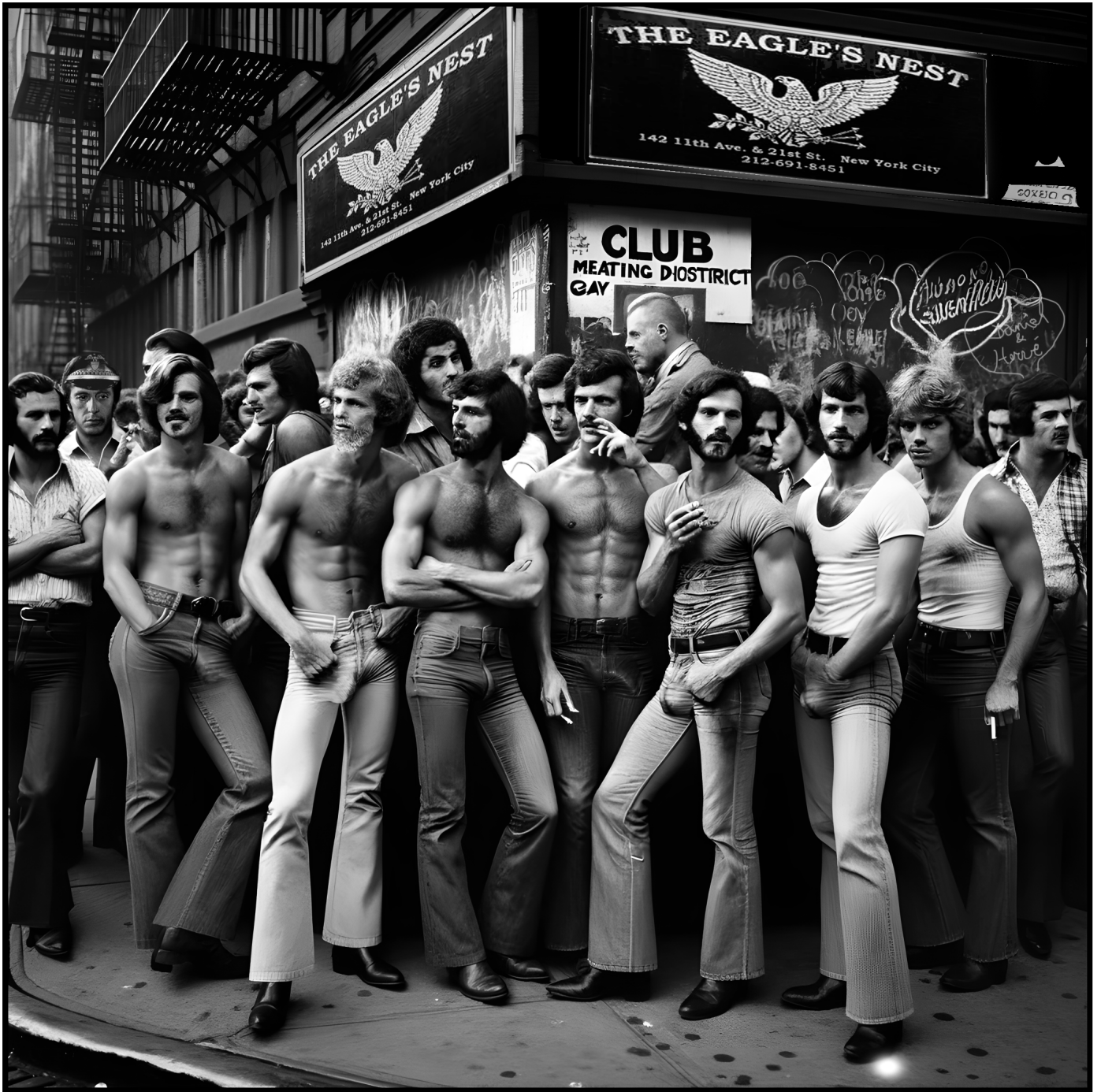
We just didn't know yet.

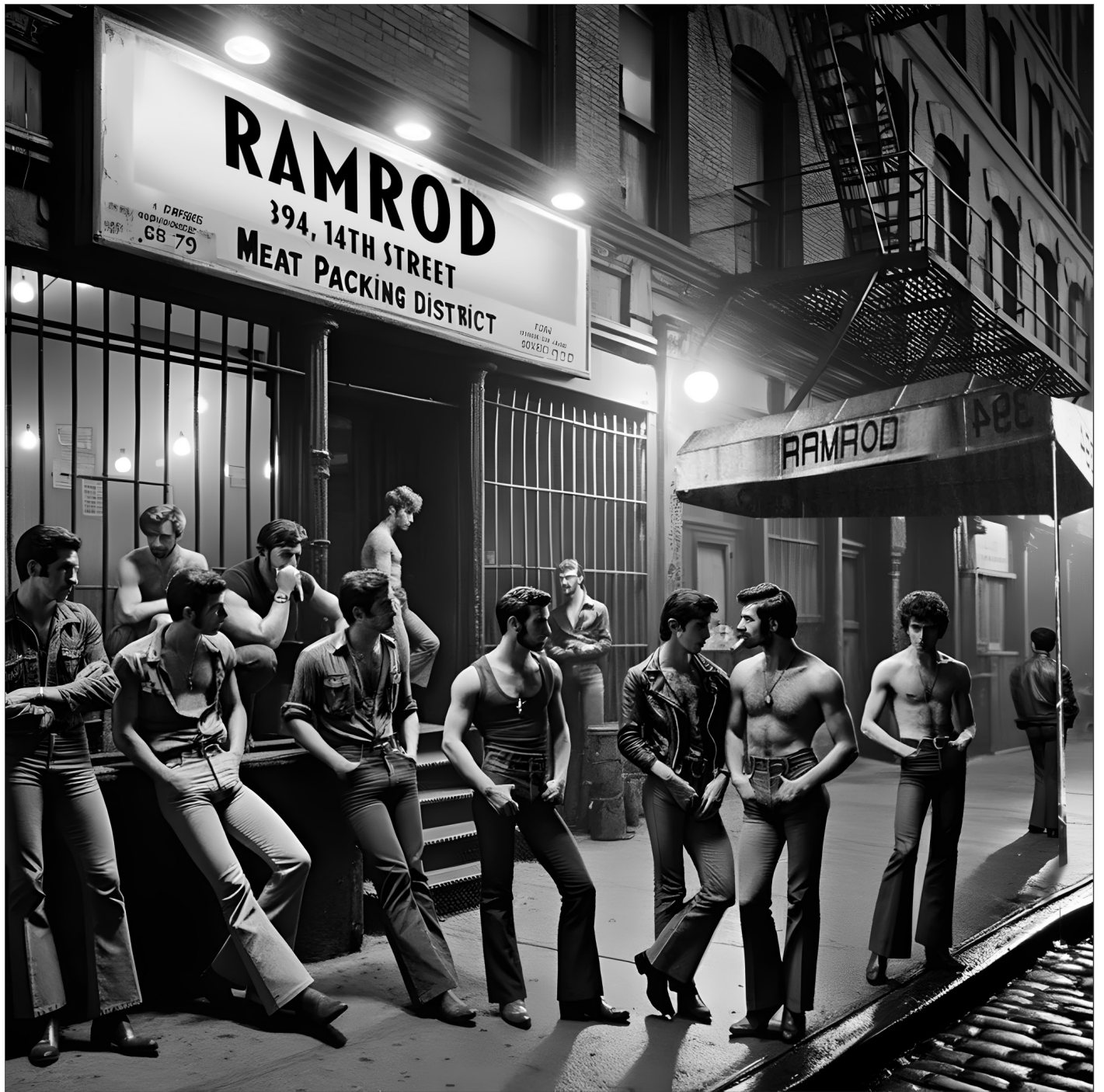
1979 was the backdrop for films like "Taxi Driver" and "Cruising", unveiling the darker side of a city.

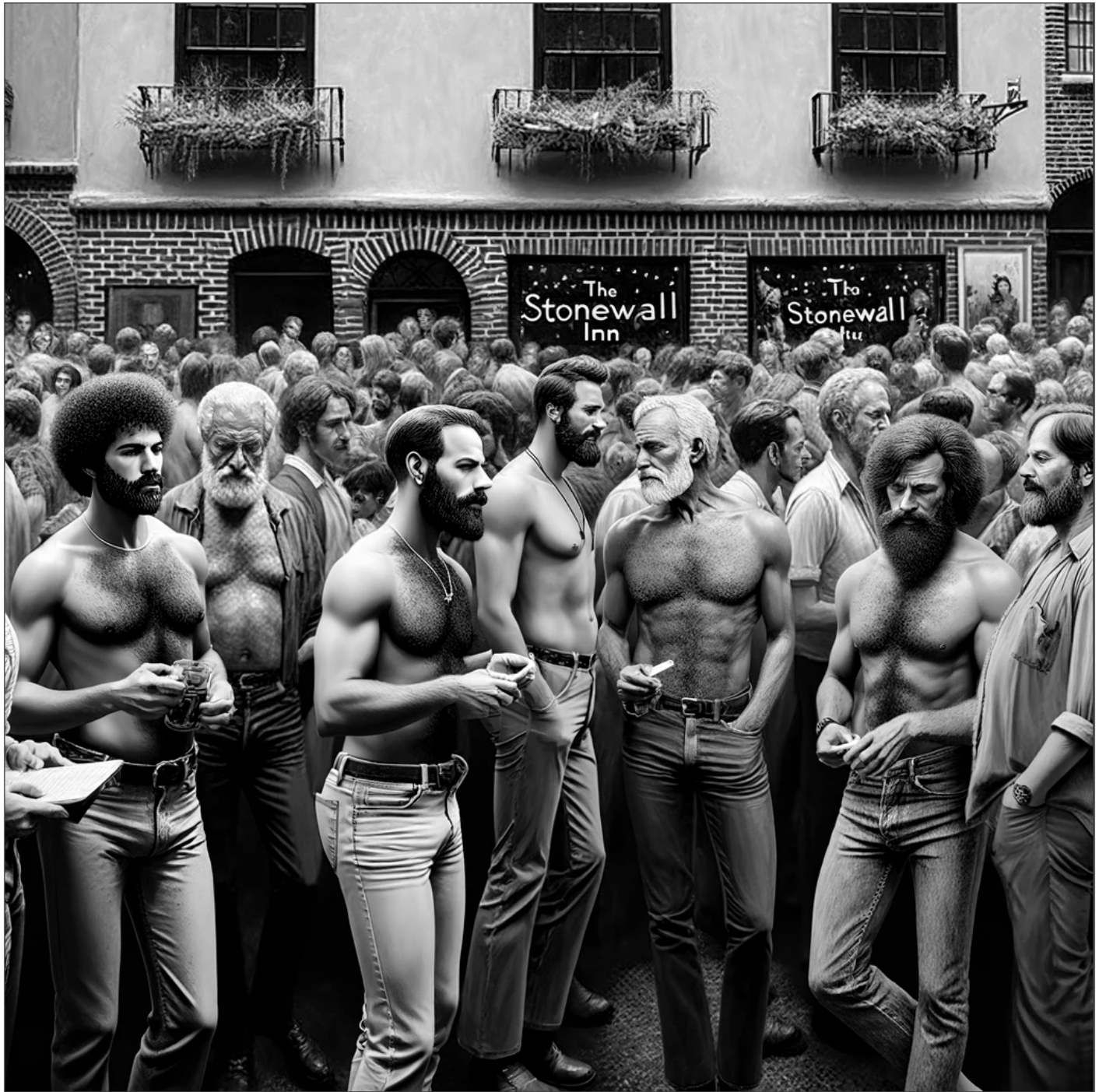
And then, just like that, this carefree and happy world began to fade away ...

We know how the '80s changed the game and left us with a terrible hangover after that enchanted period of freedom. Suddenly, a perilous Damoclean sword had hung over those who had flourished during this carefree period. Moreover, the scene was further stifled by government measures and a moral crusade, a rise in self-righteous morality, leading to the closure of many establishments and meeting places that once been exciting and joyful.

So noticeably young, taking my first steps into the gay world, I discovered all this with wide-eyed innocence, barely daring to take a few shy photos, not as many as I would have liked.









Today, thanks to A.I., I can fill this gap, relive these moments, and recreate people and places that now only exist in my memory, bringing them to life with as much authenticity as possible.

Thus, before my eyes, men emerged just as they were in 1979, frozen in time, navigating the iconic locations of New York's gay scene. Suddenly, all those who had disappeared, swept away by the monster, came back to life, returned to their lives, joyful, flamboyant, happy.

Here they are again, again and forever, in the unique atmosphere of the late '70s ...

Thank you to this time for having engraved such wonderful moments in my memory.

A big thanks to the A.I. to have been able to extract them, materialize them in photos and bring them back to life.



DONNING THE MASC

Ian Demsky

AI image generators are an amazingly fluid and flexible platform for exploring artistic themes of gender, image and representation. Here the medium itself, with its vast ingestion of cultural gazes (both dominant and subaltern), facilitates the mining and reflection of norms as well as the machine-hallucination-assisted challenge of those norms. Tickling the algorithms feels, in part, like tickling the collective unconscious. The dream-like uncertainty and limitless blending of forms,

styles and media offered by AI art generation makes it simultaneously a straight and warped mirror for exploring cultural themes.

These images were created on Nov. 19, 2020 using Midjourney. The work is one of three series inspired by the work of @bvstard.ai.

You can see more of Ian work on Instagram @kindabloop

















RE-DREAM THE PAST

Daniel Skråmestø

Due to my art education I have always been influenced by the great masters of painting. Although I have never learned to paint, I felt the need to create images and express myself. When I started doing digital work based on pornography, I treated the images so that they could fit the classical standards of “painting beauty”. It was a way of rethinking gay sex and allow the viewer to look at things that are usually surrounded by tabus and shame.

I started experimenting with AI in the autumn of 2023 and it's been a mix of thrills and introspection. If i'm not hindered by my technical abilities, what kind of image should I create? In a world where we are bombarded by images everywhere all the time, what do I still need? What kind of beauty and I

lacking? What can I summon that can be useful or influence others? In these six months that feel already like a lifetime, I found myself re-inventing or re-dreaming the past. How was it to find gay love in past times? What if that happiness had been portrayed? Could I bring gay pride to Vermeer? What if Géricault had a sneaker fetish? Why hasn't Modigliani painted threesomes?

Some of the concerns around AI are the possibility of deep fakes or the theft of “style” from an artist. I see it as a possibility to dream the past and rethink the future. I want to dream a future by bringing to the present the things I admire from the past. Baroque sportswear? I'm ready for it.

You can see more of Danel's work on Instagram @danieljskramesto









All the images submitted were created with Midjourney. Some were upscaled with Topaz AI. The colors and contrast were enhanced in Photoshop.













AI _ EDWOTCH BY EDOTCH ARTWORKS

Otto Christensen | Edotch

Welcome to my world, a space where creativity and technology intertwine to breathe life into significant moments within the LGBT+ community. My passion for artificial intelligence is fueled by the belief that this powerful tool can serve as a window to authenticity, celebrating the richness and uniqueness of the human body.

Every line of prompt and code I write aims to capture the events and moments that shape the LGBT+ experience, sharing not only my perspective but that of many others. In this journey, my goal is to take viewers beyond the surface, providing a sense of belonging.

Particularly, my focus is on respectfully exploring the male form, highlighting its beauty in an effort to challenge preconceived stereotypes. Through artificial intelligence, I find a potent tool to express the individuality and convey a message of acceptance.

My space is more than a mere visual representation; it's a testament to the importance of equality and respect. My work not only celebrates the LGBT+ identity but also aims to open minds and hearts, fostering understanding and acceptance in our society.

Join me in this exciting journey where technology and creativity converge to tell stories that transcend barriers.

You can see more of Edwotch's work on Instagram: [@aigayart](#) and at www.patreon.com/Aigayart

















AN OPULENT MORNING

Frederic Peres

This work is inspired by art nouveau aesthetic with artists like erte, Alfons Mucha or William Morris. This aesthetic is very flamboyant , with warm colours tones and an opulent nature but very light at the same time. This is a kind of work I appreciate but where there is no place for fat men especially racially diverse ones. In art history ,fat men are invisible in works about beauty.

In AI photo generation, the imagination is the only limit and you can use all your influences in a new way for generate pictures which can seem incongruous like fat men in an art nouveau scene to treat about beauty. But it works and gives amazing pictures. Big is beautiful and it's only the beginning of a inclusive vision of fat men beauty.

/imagine prompt:à 45 years old chubby hairy Asian beefcake stocky man with a thick beard and violet eyes wearing a neon William Morris printed short speedo in gold and green veronese opulent art déco dramatic stairs lot of details --ar 3:4

You can see more of Frederic's work on Instagram @show_me_your_ai_big_boys



magine prompt: a 45 years old chubby hairy Asian beefcake stocky man with a thick beard and navy blue eyes wearing a neon William Morris printed speedo in a gold and Klein blue art déco corridor with a window with a lot of details --ar 3:4



/imagine prompt:a 45 years old chubby hairy ethiopian beefcake stocky man with a thick beard and dark gold eyes wearing a neon William Morris printed speedo in a gold and old rose full art déco sleeping room with a lot of details --ar



/imagine prompt:a 45 years old chubby hairy ethiopian beefcake stocky man with a thick beard and chocolate eyes wearing a neon William Morris printed speedo in a gold and dark burgundy full art déco room with a lot of details --ar 3:4



/imagine prompt: a 45 years old chubby hairy ginger beefcake stocky man with a thick beard and myosotis eyes wearing a neon William Morris printed speedo in a gold and dark violet full art déco living room scene with a lot of details --ar 3:4



imagine prompt: a 45 years old chubby hairy ginger beefcake stocky man with a thick beard and green turquoise eyes wearing a neon William Morris printed speedo in a gold and duck blue full art déco kitchen scene with a lot of details



PALM SPRINGS HEAT

Steve Powell - BVSTARD.AI

I made this series of images after a trip to Palm Springs in October 2023. Around this time I was starting to experiment with works inspired by abstract photography, moving away from the subject-based images I had been working on previously. Focusing on the flat formal structures of abstract photographs I set out to a harmonious balance between the key elements that evoked my memories of Palm Springs - cobalt sky, clean white architecture, palm trees, mountains in the distance - and then adding the male figure as just another component in the composition. The static grids created by sky, shade, glass and concrete create a stillness that the figure exists within, evoking a languid afternoon relaxing in the autumn desert heat.

















ART.IFICIAL.ART.MAN

José Luis Castillo Cortés

En septiembre de 2022 comencé a jugar con una IA para crear imágenes, a modo de pasatiempo. La rapidez para generar resultados basados en mis ideas fue algo que me fascinó y me animó a explorar diferentes temas y estilos. Otro aspecto que me emocionó de utilizar IA para crear imágenes es la rapidez con la que aprende y propone ideas. Pero también fue muy evidente que tanto la censura como los sesgos serían una constante en el proceso de generación de las imágenes.

La censura me hizo reflexionar acerca de mi libertad creativa y fue en ese momento cuando mi pasatiempo se convirtió en un interés serio y un desafío personal, investigando los límites del algoritmo y explorando los míos.

Mi meta principal fue evadir la censura, algo para lo que utilice indicaciones que me revelaran los límites del algoritmo. Por ejemplo, era imposible generar imágenes que representaran genitales masculinos.

Al utilizar indicaciones genéricas como “pareja gay”, las imágenes resultantes mostraban un nivel de disparidad, irritante. Los resultados que generaba eran principalmente imágenes de contenido explícito y al intentar generar escenas de corte romántico los resultados evidenciaban la homofobia y los estereotipos de género en los datos utilizados para entrenar a la inteligencia artificial.

You can see more of José's work on Instagram: [@art.ificialartman](#) and [@blclava](#)





Encontrar estos sesgos en los datos y exponerlos como evidencia de un problema mayor en nuestra sociedad es crucial para limpiar los sets de datos que se utilizarán en otras IA, algo similar a los editatones que se hacen con wikipedia, buscando garantizar equidad, precisión y pluralidad en los resultados que representen identidades diversas.

Por mi parte, trabajo con la idea de una historia del arte alternativa que acepta y preserva una gama muy amplia de representaciones. En esta historia del arte alternativa, hay obra de corte homoerótico creada por artistas del renacimiento; Egon Schile creó desnudos masculinos y Tom of finland dibujó Cristos. Este ejercicio es mi manera de alentar la discusión sobre la historia de nuestra representación. Ciertamente existieron creadores que centraban su práctica en la temáticas homoeróticas, pero su reconocimiento es nulo y eso esa actitud borra una parte de la historia del colectivo LGBTQ+, además de ser un reflejo de nuestro grado de integración a la cultura general.

Respecto a mi interés personal como creativo una característica general de mis trabajos con inteligencia artificial son lo que yo llamo “bellos errores” con los que busco lo imprevisible y lo singular en la creación artística. Estos “errores” reflejan las limitaciones actuales de la inteligencia artificial para comprender y replicar la complejidad de la cultura humana, haciendo que el arte siga siendo un territorio donde aunque el proceso creativo se vea atravesado por tecnologías cognitivas, la creatividad humana aún sea capaz de florecer y desafía expectativas. En el arte la emoción y la expresión personal prevalecen, y la inteligencia artificial no puede replicar por completo esa conexión emocional, ni tener un punto de vista personal, como los que se obtienen al crear arte de manera tradicional.





In September 2022 I started playing with an AI to create images, as a hobby. The speed to generate results based on my ideas was something that fascinated me and encouraged me to explore different themes and styles. Another thing that excited me about using AI to create images is how quickly the one who learns and proposes ideas. But it was also very evident that both censorship as biases would be a constant in the image generation process.

Censorship made me reflect on my creative freedom and it was at that moment When my hobby became a serious interest and a personal challenge, investigating the limits of the algorithm and exploring my own.

My main goal was to evade censorship, something for which I used indications that will reveal the limits of the algorithm. For example, it was impossible to generate images that represented male genitalia.

By using generic prompts such as "gay couple," the resulting images They showed an irritating level of disparity. The results it generated were mainly images of explicit content and when trying to generate scenes of romantic cut, the results showed homophobia and stereotypes of

gender in the data used to train artificial intelligence. Find these biases in the data and expose them as evidence of a problem higher in our society is crucial to clean the data sets that will be used in other AIs, something similar to the editathons that are done with Wikipedia, searching guarantee equity, precision and plurality in the results that represent diverse identities.





For my part, I work with the idea of an alternative art history that accepts and preserves a very wide range of representations. In this art history Alternatively, there is homoerotic work created by Renaissance artists; Egon Schiele created male nudes and Tom of Finland drew Christs. This exercise is my way of encouraging discussion about the history of our representation. There were certainly creators who focused their practice on homoerotic themes, but their recognition is null and that attitude erases a part of the history of the LGBTIQ+ collective, in addition to being a reflection of our degree of integration into the general culture.

Regarding my personal interest as a creative, a general characteristic of my jobs with artificial intelligence are what I call “beautiful mistakes” with which I look for the unpredictable and the singular in artistic creation. These “errors” reflect the current limitations of artificial intelligence to understand and replicate the complexity of human culture, making art continue to be a territory where although the creative process is crossed by cognitive technologies, the human creativity is still capable of flourishing and defies expectations. In art the Emotion and personal expression prevail, and artificial intelligence cannot completely replicate that emotional connection, nor have a personal point of view, like those obtained when creating art in a traditional way.





FET

Minami Kuma

I delved into AI-generated art, moving away from writing manga scenarios to creating “FET,” a collection of AI-generated illustrations exploring gay themes rooted in my fetishes. This transition has been transformative for me, as it has allowed me to utilize my scenario writing skills in guiding AI to visualize complex and unique themes.

My work delves into fantasies where humans oscillate between their natural state and non-human conditions. I have a penchant for themes like hypnosis, brainwashing, mechanization, and rubber, exploring the blurred lines between humanity and altered states of being. AI serves as an excellent tool for visualizing these fetishistic themes, effectively bringing to life the intricate nuances of this unique fantasy world.

You can see more of Minami Kuma’s work at lit.link/minamikuma















SPEED OF LIGHT

Randy Addison

Norms are the guardrails keeping society from a catastrophic trainwreck. But as we've seen at an increasing speed, they change constantly, with big and small shifts. I consider myself a creative first and an artist second. I dabbled in creative writing in college; drawing in grad school and beyond; puppet-making and mannequin airbrushing; barbering for a living, which is just sculpture with hair; and, in recent years, becoming a professional photographer. Born in the 60's, I've seen photography become an elevated artform and Photoshop become an indispensable tool for editing.

Enter Artificial Intelligence. What the heck. Just from a visual arts perspective, each day brings a new development to help your imagination run wild at lightning speed. It is daunting, miraculous, mind-blowing, and very, very threatening. One thing is for sure, it will not be contained now, but there are people working to keep it more ethical and safe, with some sort of guardrails.

I listened to a lengthy interview on NPR with members of a Red Team ... college professors whose sole directive is to come up with the most damaging, disgusting, harmful combinations of prompts that can be imagined and fed into AI, all in an effort to prevent their use and manifestation. It's a lot of work. The human imagination apparently knows no bounds when it comes to depravity.

But what about us: the artists and creatives trying to figure out how much of a purity test is appropriate and within the guardrails. Photoshop now has its own AI tool, FIREFLY, which claims to be more ethical: it learns from within the ADOBE community, rather than indiscriminately from the billions of images on the world wide web.

I recently utilized Firefly in a portrait of Pete Finland (seen here). We snapped some pics of him and his dog Diesel in the white carport of his Fort Lauderdale home. I then took one of those photos and prompted Firefly to help build an industrial background in Photoshop. Blending the two together actually took some old fashioned compositing skills, utilizing light, shadow, and color. Pete, Diesel and I were all really happy with the results, and I think it's a prime example of leveraging AI to help build an environment in the photo.

The commercial possibilities are endless. But what of the images we see in this issue generated directly from AI? So many of them are positively exquisite, unleashing possibilities that even the most seasoned artists among us would be hard-pressed to manifest. They are inspirational, but they are also aspirational. They push us to create more, dream more, create more. What can I do next? How do I navigate being a fine artist along with keeping a mindfulness toward creativity, human imagination, and ethical guard rails.

As a society, we will always value a basket woven with human hands over a basket made with a machine. There's something in us that innately understands that human work, man hours, thought processes, and decisions add intrinsic value. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. And yet, as demonstrated in this issue, the human imagination has only begun the millenia-long journey toward its ultimate destination: creation for creation's sake.

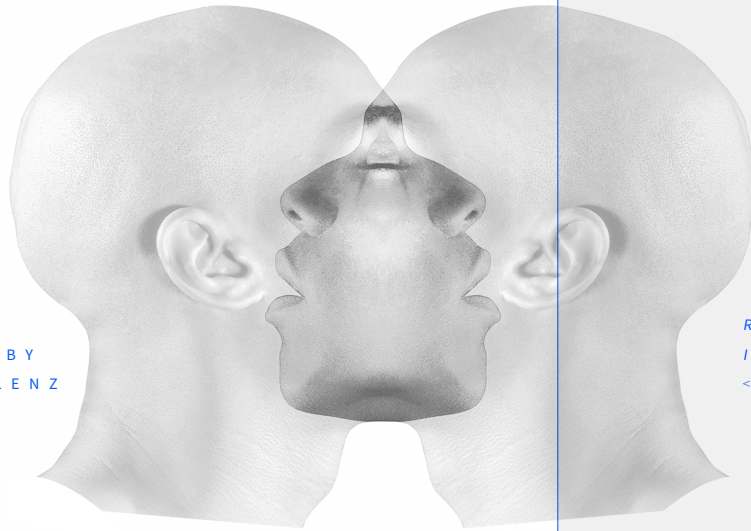


AI

ANOTHER INTERPRETATION

AN ESSAY BY
MICHAEL LENZ

<M>



RE —
INFORCEMENT
<M>

In a world where **work smarter, not harder** is less a pithy Instagram caption and more a survival mantra, the allure of artificial intelligence tools is compelling. As a Creative Director, my experience with **AI** has been a mixed bag of increased productivity and cautious optimism, peppered with the healthy skepticism of someone who refuses to become an unquestioning superfan. Yes, I've utilized **AI**, and yes, it has turbocharged my productivity. Will I continue to explore and integrate these tools to free up my time for other pursuits? Absolutely. Am I reliant on them? Far from it. I'm no expert, and I'm not here to draw grand conclusions... I'll get ChatGPT to do that.

The term **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE** is a misnomer we seem unable to shake off. Attributed to John McCarthy in 1956 during the Dartmouth Conference, the term is a catch-all that fails to capture the nuances of what **AI** can or cannot do. Premature labeling, a human glitch that invariably hinders more than it helps, how we love a label. Seemingly stuck with this legacy term, maybe we should just let **AI** pick its own name - it promises to outperform our *meathead* computers after all.

Speaking of flawed approaches, the competitive framework established by projects like DeepMind's AlphaGo or the GAN model technique reflects a broader issue in **AI** development: *competitiveness over collaboration*. These projects often promote an ethos of relentless efficiency, sometimes at the expense of broader, holistic thinking. This *reinforced reductive approach* focuses on streamlined efficiency and a narrow, almost closed-source mindset — a stark contrast to the open and collaborative spirit that spurs true innovation. Far from a panacea.

The vision of **AI** that resonates with me is not one that merely accelerates processes but one that simulates the percolation of ideas — *or* — a dynamic bouncing of thoughts between diverse entities, much like a brainstorming session between individuals with differing perspectives. Such a model would reflect real-life interactions more accurately, fostering creativity and diversity of thought.

ALTERNATIVE IDEAS

Yet, the accessibility and openness of **AI** tools vary significantly, with stark contrasts seen between open-source platforms and more proprietary ones like *OpenAI*. This dichotomy sets the stage for a debate that stretches far beyond technicalities, touching on the ethics of **AI** development, biases in training data, and broader societal implications.

“Technology has always been a double-edged sword.
Fire kept us warm, cooked our food...
... and burned down our houses”

Ray Kurzweil, American computer scientist, author, inventor, and futurist.

The effectiveness of **AI**, especially as seen in the enormous models developed by major corporations such as Google’s *Gemini*, has been underwhelming and infamously inappropriate at times. These models, despite their vast training sets, often produce results that are diluted, mediocre and riddled with biases. From a creative standpoint, the notion that *less is more* might be **more** apt, as smaller, **more** focused datasets could lead to **more** meaningful and creative outputs.

Yuval Noah Harari has no doubt spoken eloquently on the human need for a competitive edge — a trait deeply ingrained in our evolutionary history. As we face this new technological frontier, we must adapt to mitigate the societal impacts that will inevitably follow. It is clear that **AI**, often seen as a domain dominated by quantitative metrics, must evolve to be personal, secure and incorporate ethical considerations, psychological nuances, and societal contexts to truly advance with humility and humanity. The distinction between knowledge and intelligence is crucial; intelligence, in my view, is simply knowledge used creatively. Mere regurgitation of knowledge does little to stimulate critical thinking. Instead, we need to re-evaluate, edit and creatively apply our collective knowledge.

ADDITIVE IMAGINATION

“Digital intelligence, like a brilliant child, cannot be controlled
by its creators, but we can decide what values we teach it,
what to prune and what to nurture”

Some bloke called Elon, X

Knowledge, in real life, and to-date, is *finite*. An interesting point to note is that we have already entered the epoch of **AI** regurgitation. It has been reported that some corporations developing the largest LLMs have already run out of source material! As a result some are now relying on the creation of *synthetic data* to increase the volume of their training sets. This should ring alarm bells. Inevitably, and by extension, this raises further questions: *Will we be able to tell the difference between outputs trained by In Real Life (IRL) content and/or **AI** hallucinations?* One elegant exploration of this idea is explained by the artwork [Emergent Forms](#) by Derbyshire born, Barcelona-based, visual artist James Bettney.

[Emergent Forms](#) explores the transformation of **AI** generation through multiple iterations. It visually illustrates the theme of “model collapse”—where the **AI** begins to lose touch with the original input and drift into its own creative interpretations iterating from a new baseline with each new generation. This phenomenon raises questions about the balance between **AI** independence and its alignment with human perspectives. Questions, questions, questions. It doesn’t take a huge lateral shift to imagine that we might develop *emergent behaviors* — good or bad — in exactly the same way, potentially nudging our baseline of tolerance and acceptance further away from reality.

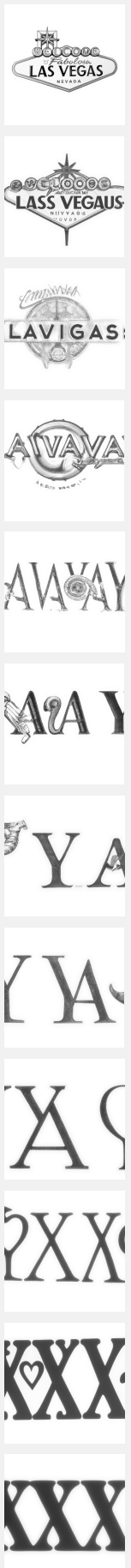
For creatives and artists, our outputs are reflections of our personalities, experiences, and world views. The future of **AI** in creative fields could very well hinge on the development of **AI PERSONALITY CURATORS** — models designed to curate distinct personalities with specific skills that collaborate rather than compete, echoing the complexity and richness of human interaction. In gaming, for instance, **AI** driven NPCs with their own backstories and personality traits are starting to craft unique narrative arcs and interactions, illustrating the potential for **AI** to generate rich, dynamic content. This approach applied to critical thinking, debate and creative collaboration is a highly exploratory and productive proposition. Exceptionally enticing times ahead.

“By their nature, complex systems are inherently unpredictable. That does not, however, abrogate our responsibility to imagine the many possible behaviours of such systems. We may not be able to predict, but we can - and indeed must - expansively imagine the future”

DR David J Staley *The Responsibility of Imagination, After Shock* 2020

Generative **AI** tools such as Midjourney (others are available) are as compelling as they are compulsive! For me their use is successful when artists combine or kitbash distinct concepts that elegantly meld seemingly disparate themes into beautiful original ideas. However, when Generative **AI** tools are used to simply create super-sized and hyper-real morphs — which granted, are hot at first glance — they, in my view, are less successful and *can* lack any spark of inspiration and imagination. The potential misinterpretation of generated hyper-realistic **AI** content, particularly in the realm of figurative imagery, also raises significant ethical concerns. As someone who has navigated the evolving landscape of **AI** generated art, I’ve become increasingly aware — marked by my own behavior — of the influence some images could have on society around personal expectations. An invaluable insight discussed with several close friends. *Okage Sama De*. These vivid images are not just — as I had originally half joked — ‘great content for a guilt free wank’. It is an acutely delicate balance, as we can be easily seduced by such connective and arousing visual storytelling — storytelling is how we tick after all — so managing any potential *expectation dysmorphia*, let alone their impact on self-esteem, will require ongoing self-reflection and a recalibration of our own weights and thresholds as a commitment to responsible creation, and for some, consumption. A possible means of adapting to this evolving complexity.

P R O M P T
:
a photorealistic
pencil drawing
of the Las Vegas
sign on a white
background



E M E R G E N T
F O R M S
—
J A M E S
B E T T N E Y

These *fantastic* new digital species are ultra high definition today, both visually and conceptually — their manifestation in generative three-dimensions is coming sooner than you might think, bot avatars with their own unique nuanced locomotion, character traits, kinks and quirks. So begs the question: *Are we ready to meet and greet any muscular manifestations virtually in 3D worlds indistinguishable from reality?* These will be ultra-lucid experiences, more synthetic memory than vertical scrolling voyeurism — with *THE* inevitable pitfall, as expressed quite brilliantly in the prophetic 1983 sci-fi classic *Brainstorm*.
...Watch it if you haven't, or use *your* imagination.

“One of the definitions of sanity is the ability to tell the real from unreal. Soon we'll need a new definition”

Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, 1974 (My favourite futurist and non-fiction book to date)

Mustafa Suleyman, serial **AI** tech entrepreneur, co-founder of said DeepMind and currently CEO of Google **AI** highlights to us, global leaders and policy makers the importance of adopting the *precautionary principle* — and as a result no other technology in history has, or will, be subject to such intense evaluation and discussion. Suleyman distills this debate down to its core and simply states that “we must contain it — before it contains us”. Asking us to also avoid the *pessimism aversion trap* by collectively glossing over any blatant cracks.

As we continue to explore **AI**'s capabilities, the importance of collaboration — both between **AI** entities and between humans and **AI** — cannot be overstated. This seed for **AI** PERSONALITY CURATORS that generate their own POV engineered prompts which reinforces a future where **AI** is not just in need for greater efficacy, but to inspire a more multi-layered, multi-modal creative partnership. The probability of original outputs from the likes of Gilbert**AI** & George**AI** or even a posthumous introretrospective from Warhol**AI** and Basquiat**AI** are fairly literal visual examples — and could easily be explored today — if there were a will. What then of the potential outputs realised by a collaboration between 2, 3, 4+ varying creative entities, commercial industries and humanities disciplines. Pick'n'mix.

Build the **AI**'s that build (or contain) the **AI**'s! ...he says in jest, in actual fact both are already happening. *YES* this moves exponentially faster than we can ever comprehend. That part, at least, is highly predictable. Promise shows we are on the brink of an age of abundance, that means an abundance of everything. Therefore a roadmap is needed, so we can chart new maps for the future and navigate its uncertainty. Let's ensure that the conversation around **AI** remains human, vibrant, and, above all else, open and fundamentally honest whilst we continue to scroll and ping our visual cortex with yet another reinforcing hit of dopamine.

The above 'plots' my own exposure to, and experience of, varying **AI** tools. These thoughts are just my two *tokens* worth, *to date* — YOU BE (BEAUTIFUL) YOU — Create and consume to a threshold that resonates with you. Let us all continue to contribute, challenge and define life's rich and fascinating tapestry.

ABSOLUTELY IMPERATIVE

ALREADY IRRELEVANT

WITH LOVE <M>

AI

ALTERNATIVE IDEAS



The name **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE** seems outdated and too vague - if you had to rebrand artificial intelligence what snappy name would you give it?

PROMPT BY
MICHAEL LENZ
<M>

OUTPUT BY
CHATGPT
4



If I had to come up with a new, snappy name for
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

I might choose...
...Cognitive Synthesis

This name highlights the process of combining various elements of computing and human-like reasoning to create systems that can think, learn, and solve problems in ways that mimic human cognition. It emphasizes the synthetic, constructed nature of these systems while also alluding to their advanced cognitive capabilities.

REFLECTIONS ON AI

Edward Joseph

A few months ago, during a planning session for an upcoming issue, Vincent Keith mentioned that several artists had submitted or expressed interest in submitting AI-generated artwork for inclusion in *Mascular*. This sparked a lively debate among the three of us editors about the merits and drawbacks of this technology, and the central question was posed as to whether we should showcase AI-generated art in the next issue.

Initially, I was adamantly opposed. Now, reflecting on my reaction, I recognize it stemmed from several deeply held beliefs and biases. First and most prominently, my background in art history and its foundational philosophies. My reluctance was also fueled by ethical concerns about AI that I found difficult to reconcile.

Despite these reservations, I've decided to contribute an article to this issue. Simply because, in times like these-pivotal moments in history-it's crucial not to remain on the sidelines, but to engage actively with whatever challenges our often biased views.

I'm not going to go into a deep dive here about all of the reasons I was initially hesitant to vote to include AI images in *Mascular*. But, I will give a brief overview of some:

Most importantly being my reluctance to entertain the possibility of AI-generated art as fine art, and why I now believe I was wrong.

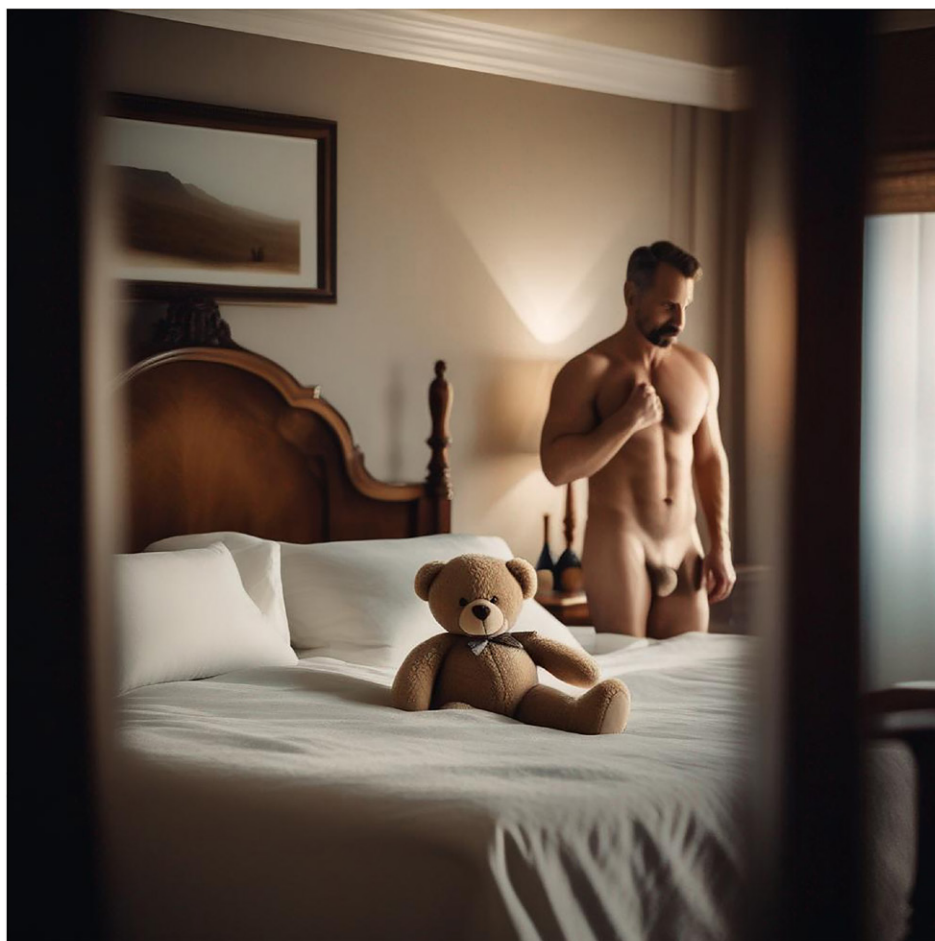
I won't get too academic here, but suffice it to say that throughout undergraduate and graduate school, I was taught to distrust any technological advancement that claimed to be a sign of absolute "progress" for the human race, which is kind of the basis for any kind of cultural criticism. (This way of thinking mostly harkens back to philosophers like Walter Benjamin.) I can't help but consider what is lost in relation to whatever is gained through any kind of advancement in technology, specifically when it comes to art.

So then, what is lost in the recognition of AI-generated art as fine art? I'd say a couple of things. Firstly, the rights of authorship that go along with the original works of art that AI training models have based their programming around. Which informs the ethical concerns I mentioned previously.

I'd also argue that because these generative programs sample from what's already been created, there is a threat of a general lack of true innovation when it comes to image making. If, for example, a work is created by a program that is told to cite a certain style that has already existed and is well documented enough in the history of art to have millions of images available on the internet for said program to sample, is it really anything new?

I don't have a definite answer to provide here. Though, I do think a good challenge to this question is posed by some of the artwork included in this issue, which gives us some sense of what queer life/love/sex might have looked like in the past if our history hadn't been systematically, repeatedly destroyed for millennia. Considering the possibilities of AI in this way, I can concede my initial protest against recognizing AI-generated work as fine art. I am also reminded of the advent of photography and how the medium wasn't taken seriously as fine art for many years, and how absurd that seemed when I first read it. So, with that in mind, I can sit down and (maybe) shut up.

Finally, in considering the question of the validity of AI-generated images, what's become clear to me is that AI, on its own, can't create compelling art that mirrors the true human experience (for now, at least), but it can function as an invaluable tool to help create works of art that would otherwise be impossible for the artist to create single-handedly. I won't go into speculation of where this might lead in the future, as I feel this article is already a bit long-winded. But what I will say is that presently, and in light of the submissions I've seen included in this issue, is: "All right, Vincent, you changed my mind."



A SEGUNDA VISTA: CONTRARIEDADES DE LAS IMÁGENES DE DESNUDO MASCULINO GENERADAS CON IA

AT SECOND GLANCE: DRAWBACKS OF AI-GENERATED MALE NUDE IMAGES

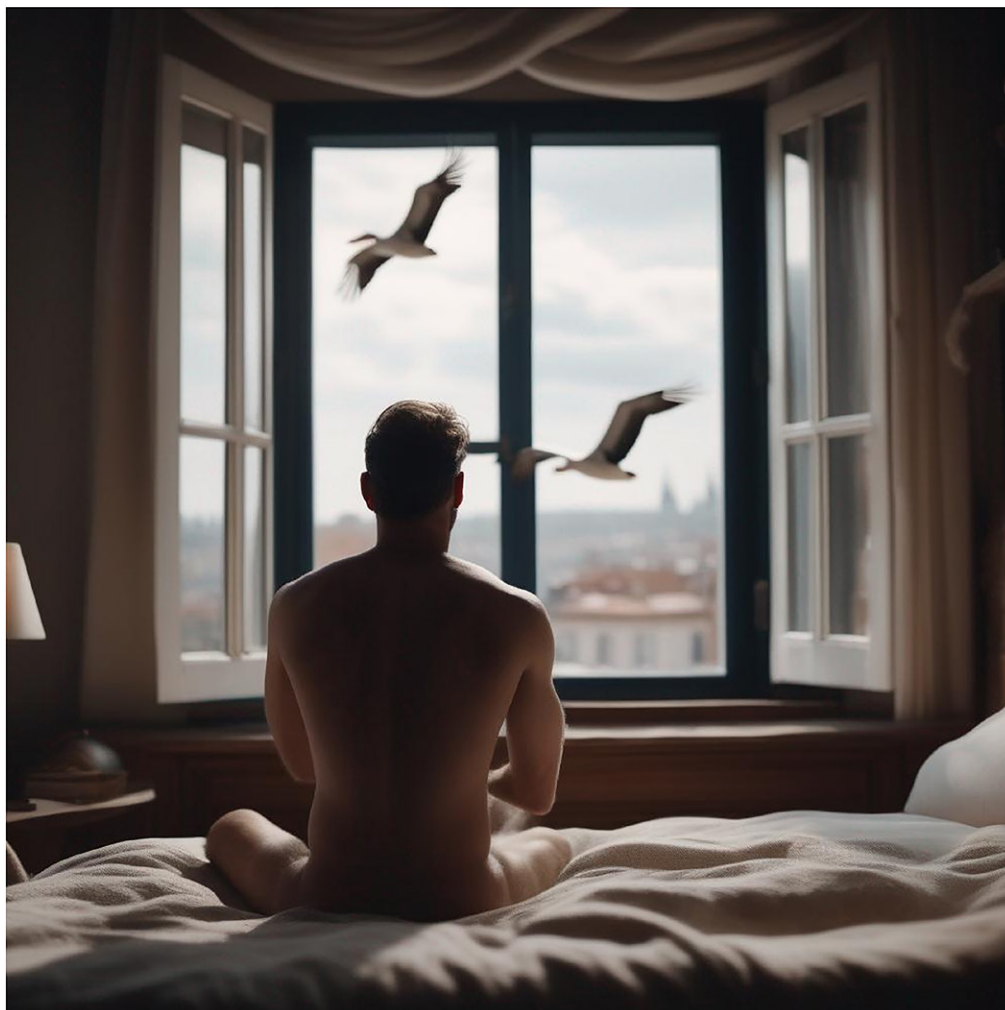
Martín Toyé

La inteligencia artificial (IA) ha ganado gran notoriedad en los últimos años, pero su historia se remonta a casi medio siglo atrás. A medida que la IA fue evolucionando, sus aplicaciones se fueron incorporando en diferentes ámbitos creativos, incluido el de la construcción de imágenes. No es mi intención abordar aquí una cuestión teórica, sino contar mi experiencia al realizar estas instantáneas contemporáneas.

No son muchas las aplicaciones y sitios de IA que ofrecen la posibilidad de construir imágenes de desnudos masculinos

a partir de un comando o “prompt”. Para la elaboración de estas imágenes pude trabajar con Stable Diffusion que, para mi sorpresa, me permitió solicitar un desnudo sin ser desestimado por la temática que aborda. El desnudo, sobre todo el masculino, sigue siendo un tema complejo y de censura al momento de ser trabajado en internet (en este caso en su “producción”; muchos de nosotros seguramente hemos tenido problemas para poder mostrarlos en Instagram).

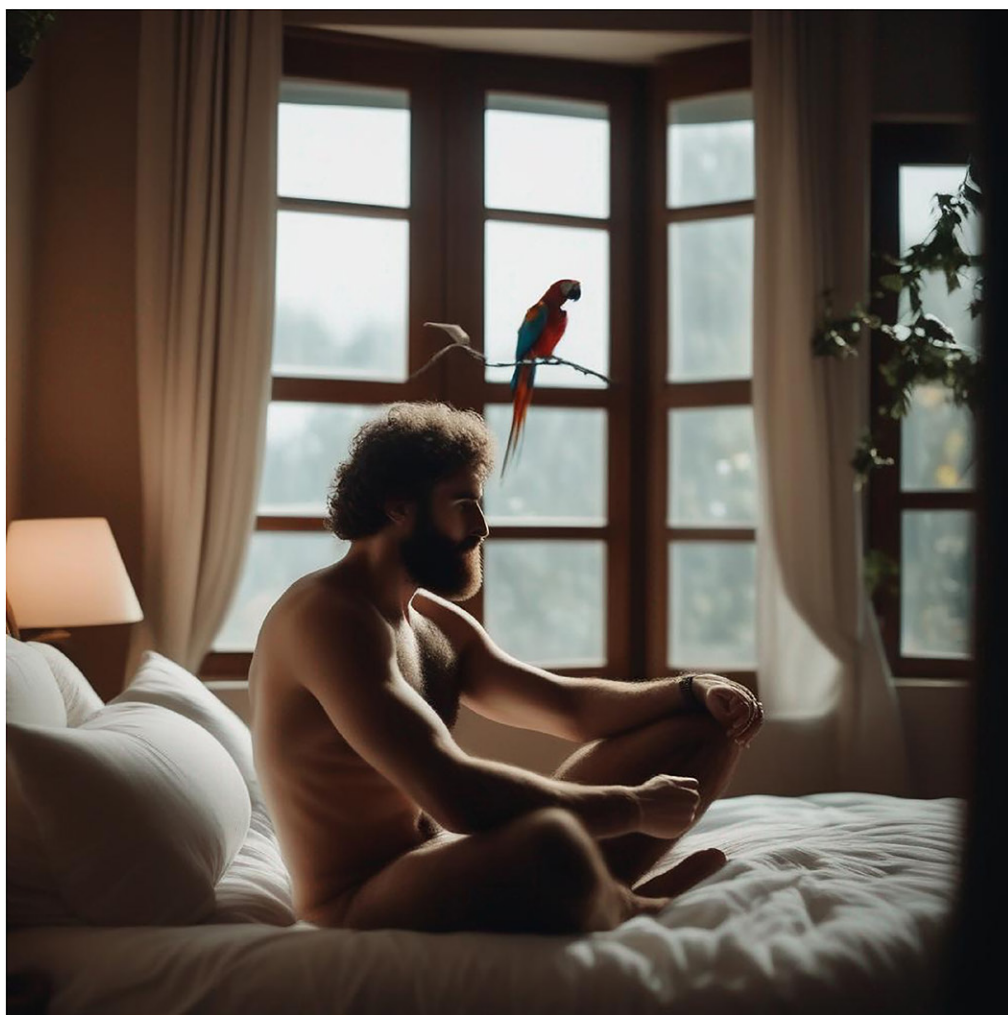
You can see more of Martin's work on Instagram: [@toye_martin](#) and at [martintoye.com](#)



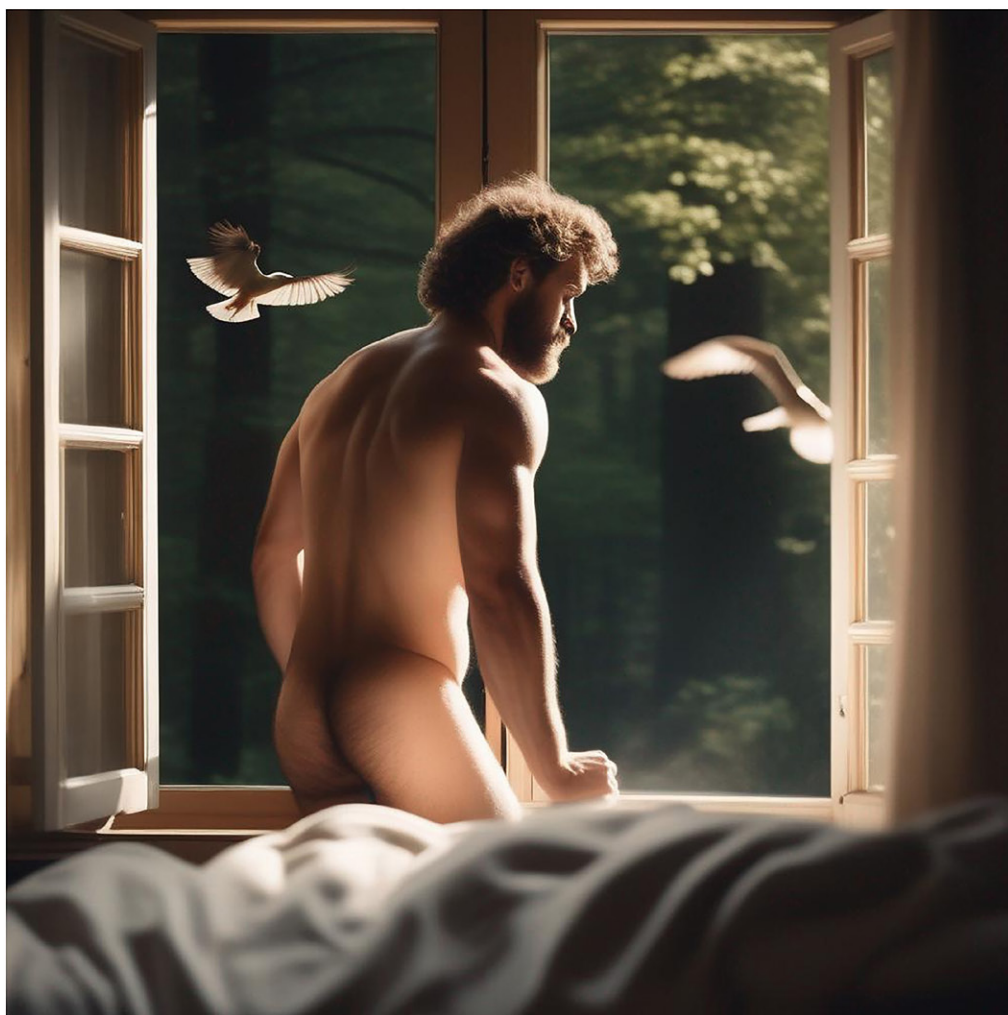














MACHINE RECONSTRUCTION

J P Thurlowe

Frame of mind: Don't think too much - work with only a vague endpoint in mind. Slow down. Go with whatever's most unfamiliar and interesting at that moment. Be expressive, stay open, collaborate with the machine. Let those hundreds of micro-decisions become something true.

Process: These pieces are made using multiple AI tools in combination with found images and original drawings I've made over the years:

- Step one: I generate source material in MidJourney by either blending multiple images from my personal image library, or by generating new images using /imagine.
- Step two: Import preferred source images into Photoshop for further prompt engineering, composition, alteration, and layering.

Result: Each image is forged from tens of source images, and consists of hundreds of generative fills. Usually the end result bears little or no resemblance to the source material. The image has been totally reconstructed.

You can see more of JP's work on Instagram @jpthurlowe













A MOMENT OF TENDERNESS

Sebastian Comsa

I'm both a nerd-techie and a visual person; I love photography as it provides an escape from daily stress at work (which involves a lot of AI and data solutions). Seeing this theme from Masculine regarding AI - I wanted to apply myself to do this while using Midjourney, one of the most used Generative AI solutions for creating photos. AI will impact many aspects of our lives, including creative arts. We must create a framework for positively applying new technology within our society. We must discuss opportunities and risks, changes in the creation, representation, and dissemination of art, and the evolution of our views on "media." We must explore exciting new ideas and present visions beyond what we have seen. I wanted to combine my passion for photography and AI with my love for Nordic/Viking men for this theme.

Thus, these images were born to showcase a moment of tenderness and love between two male Vikings with futuristic augmented bodies, as they have been enhanced using robotics/AI.

This is to showcase a moment of tenderness in an augmented futuristic world; even today, we are so hung up on the digital, being present on Instagram, apps and everything that we forget we all need that human touch and tenderness. I'm hoping through this project to showcase that even regardless of body/looks, those moments of passion and love are more important - don't forget that it is better for your mental health to sometimes wholly disconnect from the digital world and live in the moment and make meaningful connections and experiences.













SLAVIC MASCUINITY

Steve Powell - BVSTARD.AI

I lived in east London for fifteen years, during the time when the former Eastern bloc states acceded to the European Union. Many Eastern European migrants settled in east London - Czech, Polish, Romanian & Bulgarian - working class men with rough weatherbeaten Slavic features, juiced & tattooed with an air of dangerous masculinity. I got to know a few of them over the years - doing jobs for me in my flat and seeing them in my gym. They fitted into east London life very well, but I always imagined what their lives would have been like back in their home countries. This set of images is inspired by those imaginings - tough, masculine men in a stark run down suburban setting, maybe Bratislava or Bucharest - their dreams of better lives far away in the West.













MOTEL STORIES & BEAR ROAD

Carlos Burboa

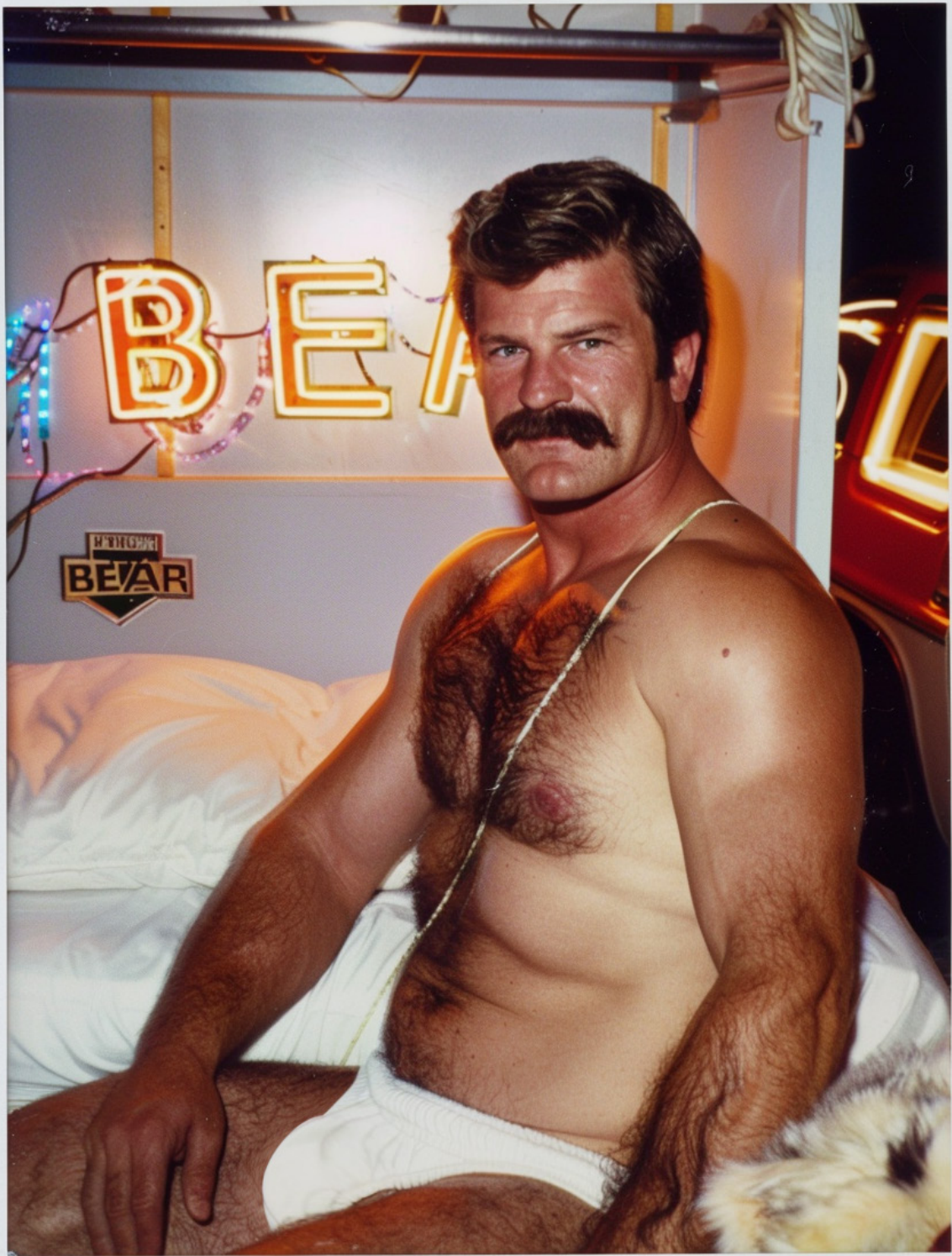
Trabajo digital inspirado en los retratos clásicos de los 70s hechos con cámaras polaroids, pero llevándolo a un concepto mucho más sexy en una historia ficticia donde se retratan diferentes hombres en un recorrido por las distintas habitaciones.

Digital work inspired by the classic portraits of the 70s made with polaroid cameras, but taking it to a much sexier concept in a fictional story where different men are portrayed on a tour of the different rooms.

Trabajo digital con retratos de estilo social inspirado en las fiestas leather. Un recorrido por diferentes bares ficticios

Digital work with social style portraits inspired by leather parties. A tour of different fictional bars.

















IMAGINING A DIFFERENT PAST

Steven Rosen

Debauchery

This series was created during a hot minute when the good folks at MidJourney has forgotten to ban the word debauchery.

MidJourney has community standards and in the early days they had a whole much of banned words.

It was a work in progress. They banned the word chest for instance, so you couldn't create a woman with a bare chest, but you also couldn't create a treasure chest.

Now everything is contextual, so it can tell what kind of chest you want to ban when it's more appropriate.

Anyway, there were so many banned words, it was quite frustrating. But they forgot about debauchery and also bacchanal.

This all grew out of an attempt to do pictures of circuit parties, but I eventually added in a bacchanal and some debauchery and then added in some Hieronymous Bosch and surrealism and dadaism for good measure.

That lasted about a day before they caught on and banned debauchery which they continue to do. Mea Culpa.

Anyway, a year later, I ran it through MidJourney to make sense of add massive amounts of details and the results are quite disturbing.

But fascinating and beautiful in their weird macabre way.





Odalisque

An odalisque is a concubine in a Turkish Harem.

It is also an excuse for male European painters in the 19th and early 20th century to paint naked women in “exotic” revealing outfits or in the nude, looking seductive and submissive.

Always shown reclining and usually either asleep and passive or gazing seductively at the viewer.

In a combination of my interest in creating the missing images of gay men in the history of art, and my interest in using AI to create images that reverse gender roles, I created this series of male odalisque.

Roomies

One of the things I love to do with AI is imagine a past where gay men didn't have to hide who they were.

In “Roomies,” I delve into the 1950s. I recognize that our existence has spanned the entirety of human history. Yet, a visual record of our lives has often been conspicuously absent.

In this series, I have used MidJourney to craft a collection of 35mm snapshots that reimagines the lives of a group of young gay men who shared a home during the McCarthy era. Each photograph serves as a visual time capsule, filling the void of representation that existed in that era. These images offer a glimpse into the camaraderie, love, and resilience of a community that often existed beneath the surface.

“Roomies” is not just a photographic series; it's a celebration of resilience, a tribute to those who lived in the shadows, and a recognition of our enduring presence throughout history. It is a reminder that our stories deserve to be told, acknowledged, and cherished.

Through this series, I aim to foster a sense of connection with those who came before us, to honor their experiences, and to contribute to a more inclusive and empathetic world where the voices and lives of gay men are acknowledged and celebrated.

















AI IS NOT THE FUTURE

Rick Castro

Didn't anybody see Spielberg's 2001 film A.I.? Didn't anyone read H.G. Wells book or see the film of The Time Machine? Doesn't anyone remember HAL for Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey? On a more obscure reference didn't anyone see Donald Cammell's Demon Seed!

It never ends well with A.I., ever.... Read Anton LaVey's book, The Satanic Bible.
Listen to Orwell. Take heed.

Rick Castro~ 2024

You can see more of Rick's work on Instagram: @castrrick













LIVING WITH AI

Vincent Keith

So, it's happened. The world has changed and will never be the same. Everything in our lives, everything, has been impacted. Sentient computing is here, and humanity has, willingly if not knowingly, handed its future to the machines. We are experiencing the end of the human experience as we knew it and have taken a huge leap into the unknown. And there has been relatively little protest. The prospect of the horrors associated with human cloning and the creation of chimeras had people in the streets and speeches from political leaders. AI, the biggest thing ever, has arrived with comparably little protest. Perhaps the proponents have learned their lessons from history on how not to deliver a technological advance?

These are divisive and divided times. Polarisation exists in so many ways, cohesive consensus is the exception. On the one side we have all the California billionaires in concert with China's intelligence apparatus telling us that there is nothing to worry about and that AI will give us so much extra time that we will finally be able pursue the things we love. AI is the missing piece that will solve all the world's big challenges. The cure to everything is within reach. Doctor's must be thrilled. Everything will become more efficient, so prices will fall, and people will be able to afford anything they want. Work will also be easier, faster, and more accurate – no matter the field. Famine? Over. War? Over. Let the good times roll!

You can see more of Vincent's work at www.mascularstudio.com and on Instagram @mascular_men

And yet... we can't help but feel that all this great news may be too good to be true. In our experience, California billionaires tend to have hidden agendas. The hype up the good and ignore the costs. And there are costs. Restructuring the way the world works will inevitably lead to disruptions, dislocations and unforeseen consequences. A machine model can't really predict the behaviour of us humans. Moreover, a machine model will respond to the inputs we humans give it in the first place. Perhaps it's worrying that all the inputs are being selected by California billionaires? The choices being made today will impact how we live tomorrow, and starting a project with bad plan will irretrievably cripple the project. Attitudes towards behaviour, values, faith, violence, privacy, and commerce are not shared universally, but the California billionaires are busy right now making those decisions for us – or, worryingly, already have done.

If I'm honest though, I'm not really feeling it. I've dabbled a bit, given it the canine sniff, and so far, I haven't been blown away. My life is feeling very... 2019. I'm not the most technically skilled guy out there, but I do follow those things that interest me or have the potential to impact my life. AI is being discussed everywhere – there's no way to ignore it. But, for now, I'm more in explore, discover, and cover your ass mode.

The genesis of this Special AI Issue of MASCULAR Magazine was a debate held between the editors.

As we were putting together the HISTORY issue last autumn, we had to decide on whether or not to include a submission made by an AI artist. The consensus was that we had not given enough thought to the implications of including AI work in the magazine, and how to do so, along side non-AI work. How would other artists feel if their work was shown alongside AI work? Would publishing AI work in MASCULAR Magazine give it a legitimacy that was not yet deserved? And yet, the works in the submission were beautiful. We decided then that the issue was worth discussion in a dedicated issue to AI in the context of art in general, and gay art in particular.

Is It Art?

First of all, are the works created by AI engines... art? Is the term AI Art even correct? If not, what should we call it? I mean... art is actually in the name... "Artificial" comes from "artificial" which originally meant "handcrafted". Ignoring the irony, is the

problem with the "Artificial" or with the "Intelligence". Again, we go back, and "intelligence" comes from "intelligentia" which comes from "intelligere" which means "understand". So Handcraft + Understand. Hmmm... that doesn't sound so bad, does it? Or is this just a clever conspiracy?

As we are discussing art, perhaps etymology isn't going to give us a lot of answers. Some of the arguments I've heard against AI in art stem from the actual act of creating. True artworks are made by the hand of the artists. The actual manipulation by hand, the plasticity, of making a work of traditional art is far from "typing prompts" into an AI engine. So the act of typing ideas into an input window and letting another entity "generate" the image seems to cause a lot of concern. But

lets look at this argument in another realm. What makes a human female is her ability to give birth. Does that mean all humans who are not able to give birth cannot be female? So what makes a human an artists is their ability to create art? What about humans who do not have the ability to create art, can they not be artists? Say they are blind or have been in an accident and lost the ability to use their hands... can they not give instructions to a third party and thereby create a work of art? What about artists who use found images to make collages, or use waste and objects found in nature to make sculptures? Does the fact that they didn't use their hands to create the piece



mean (1) they aren't artists, and (2) what they make isn't art?

There was a time, in some art academy somewhere, that students were told that if they could not draw a realistic portrait or sculpt a perfect human form, that they couldn't be artists. The craft was what mattered – not the inspiration. Indeed, inspiration from within was frowned upon, as inspiration was meant to come from external impulses such as faith and nature. Today we reject that kind of thinking. We understand that art includes every imaginable impulse from every imaginable culture engaged in every imaginable practice. How good the artwork is can vary greatly. Art doesn't have to be good to qualify as art, and it certainly doesn't have to be made by hand. Consider the debate on whether photography is art – what a bore. Utterly stupid, and yet, certain people still insist there is a distinction – there are photographers and then there are "fine artists".

For me, creative works inspired by the tastes, emotions, experience, and thoughts of anyone with the intention of representing a concept, form, emotion, fantasy or other form of narrative, is art. Period. I don't care what method you used to achieve it. Truth be told, debates on what is and what is not art are tedious. It's AI Art, AI Generated Art, Generated Art, Computer Made Art. Whatever... it's Art.

So if it's art. Is it ok? Is art, like free speech, ok – no matter what it is, what it says and how it is made. Well, it may be art, but that doesn't mean it's ok. Art whose message is hateful for the sake of being hateful is not ok. Plagiarised or stolen art that does not acknowledge the rights of the actual artist who created it, is not ok. Art that exploits the vulnerable or non-consenting, is not ok. Those are judgements on an ethical plane. There are also judgements to be made on an aesthetic plane, or maybe involve taste? Art can be ugly, poor quality, badly conceived, in



bad taste... and still be ok. Not for my collection, but ok.

But not all is ok in AI land. As with many things, it's not the actual tool, it's how it is used. (Guns excluded, of course.) But if you are going to be intellectually honest, there is an analogy there. Guns in and of themselves, have no agency and can do nothing if left untouched (please let's not go into symbolism here...). A gun is a hunk of metal parts that IF loaded and IF pointed at someone and IF the trigger is pulled, can take a life. But (1) there are a lot of IF's and (2) it comes down to the individual using the tool. They could use a knife or a bat of fingernail scissors to achieve the same objective. But the gun is different. A gun makes it easier, for one. The prime intention of the thing is to be a weapon. Fingernail scissors aren't usually used in the commitment of an offense. I loathe guns.

It is the tool for making AI art, the process, that raises the most issues. The algorithms behind AI Art creation are also partners in the creative process, and their intentions require a great deal of scrutiny. The fundamental problem is that AI engines are constantly learning. It is the learning model that is seriously problematic. Take beauty, for instance. The big AI brain in the sky is learning what "beauty" means. What is beautiful. We know something is beautiful because recognising beauty is imprinted in our brains. Recognising beauty is a highly complex process that sits at the nexus of self-perception, learned attitudes, personal appetites, life experience, value judgements, responses to taboos, culture, gender identity, fear, pleasure and so on. In fact, every human being has a slightly different understanding of what is beautiful and sees various degrees of beauty. The way the AI brain figures out what's beautiful is also a nexus. But its nexus is the intersection of the most likes, money spent, clicks, advertising, popularity, celebrity, number of views etc. So, in the mind of AI, beauty is a popularity contest underpinned by western consumer patterns. If I could draw, I could create a portrait of a human face that people would think was beautiful (for the sake of this argument, ugly works as well). I could then show it to people from all over the world, and for the most part, they would all see a "beautiful" face. This means that I created beauty – at least my vision of it. Ask an AI engine to do the same, and it will use statistics and an algorithm to find which things scored highest on the beauty index.

For me, this is a problem. The foundations of an AI generated artwork begin with the results of a popularity context. I'll bet that when asked for an image of a beautiful woman, AI starts with blond, blue eyes, perfect skin, in her 20s, big boobs, a narrow waist, big butt and long legs. It will have 'learned' that those attributes are what defines beautiful. Millions of clicks, advertisements and weather girls tell the AI brain that this is what people mean when they say beautiful. Of course, all the AI search results also go into future queries thereby doubling down on blond Barbie as the definition of beautiful. Taken to its logical extreme, there will come a time when the AI brain refines and refines and further refines down the definition of perfect beauty and it will be the answer we always get.

I think that the California billionaires know that this would be unacceptable (at least their advisors do), and to some degree they have told the AI engine to alter/vary some results for a certain percentage of the time, or in the event that the person asking is a person of colour, or it's an IP address in the Philippines, so that the results will reflect the preferences of the person asking. So, if you track my search preferences and internet usage and can see that I have a preference for brunettes, the AI engine can make that slight alteration to give me a brunette version of beautiful.

Most AI engines don't allow nudity. I'm just going to leave that point there. Enough said.

A Case Study

On the basis of that discussion AI Art, with no experience of making it, would be foolish, I tried making some images using an AI engine. A talented friend gave me some tuition, and I

was able to quickly make a portrait of a hunky man in the style of Vincent Van Gogh. It was thrilling to see the results. A few iterations and I started to get bored of “random guy in Van Gogh background” syndrome. So, I started to think a bit more laterally. I asked myself what would I like to have seen Van Gogh paint? I like nude muscular hairy men... in nature. So, I asked the AI engine for just that. Of course, “nude” did not work as a prompt (see above), but I asked for ... and behold, an image that Van Gogh never painted, but I wish he had.

We were on a roll now. I was determined to see something more in line with my tastes/fantasies. My prompts evolved and got ‘sneakier’ for lack of a better term. I was going to force that AI to make me an image that I wanted. I felt like I was fighting the combined weight of the religious right, anti-gay orthodoxy, and the millions of requests for beautiful women and cute kittens. In a funny way, the prompts themselves were becoming an art form. I had to imagine contexts where nudity might naturally come to pass. I had to imagine scenarios and atmospheres. I had to create a concept in my own mind first, and then try to cajole the AI engine into making it for me. This was fun!

I learned that the AI brain would try and introduce variety when there were several elements in the image. So, I asked in each case for a group of four, five or six men. I asked them to be hairy, muscular, and burly. In AI land, burly means over 30. I placed them in Roman and/or Turkish baths. And then I asked that they be rendered in the style of Titian. Titian found a way to put nudity into pretty much everything he painted – I love him for that. This is what I got. And yes, AI drew a penis. It tired real hard not to, but the more I refined the image, the more its resolve broke down and eventually, I got what I wanted. Titian’s “Five naked lumberjacks in a Roman Bath”, which of course he never painted. It’s on my iPad though – I even created a new folder for the many many iterations of this image I created. A guilty pleasure that I enjoyed. That having been said, it doesn’t even begin to compare to the enjoyment I get out of photographing a real man with my real camera in real life. It was good fun, but something very different. No analogy needed here.

Who Does It Belong To Anyway

One of the strongest arguments against AI Art by artists comes down to the fact that AI uses found images it has no rights to in the creation of its images. That the product you get is actually someone else’s work and they have not given permission for it to be used in an AI generated work. Neither have they been given credit for it. I know how I feel when I see one of my images being used without my permission. It’s extremely frustrating, and I always take action to have it removed.

Over the years MASCULAR has featured a number of submissions based on collage work. Artists have created works of art by cutting/tearing elements from old books, magazines,

advertisements etc and put them together in unique groupings and arrangements to make new works of art. The new works have their own narratives and emotional content. As a collective, they tell a different story to each of the individual parts. Moreover, the collage came together through a series of choices and actions made by the artists. Which images to use, how to cut them, how to arrange them on the “canvas”. I would never question whether or not these collages were works of art. They are. For the most part, however, the component images were not created by the artist making the collage. For me, that’s never been an issue. In fact, sometimes subverting the original meaning of the images in the collage is fundamental to the meaning of the new piece. Collages can be incredibly powerful because of the many layers of meaning they can impart. But, no matter how you look at it, Marlboro did not give permission for you to use the Marlboro Man in a collage with Hello Kitty, the Pope and Barbarella. As poignant a comment that particular collage could make on consumerism and western culture, attribution and permission don’t figure.

For the record, I do not mean to equate collage-based art with



AI generated art. They are not the same. They are not the same.

I draw the distinction, to some degree, in using found images in the creation of an artwork vs. stealing an artist’s work to be used for commercial purposes. If one of my images was used by another artist to create say, a collage, I would not be upset. That artist is using my photo as part of an artistic expression and process. I celebrate the creation of art. But if a club takes one of my images and uses it to advertise their upcoming Bear Night – well, that’s not OK. They must ask permission, and in all probability, remunerate me.

Thought Experiment

My husband and I were discussing AI art over coffee this morning, as you do, and I wanted to understand how he would value work created by an AI engine. As a thought experiment, I suggested that David Hockney and I were sat side by side on a sofa with our iPads (Incidentally, I understand that he does a lot of work on his iPad now). The objective would be to create a seascape with grasses in the style of a David Hockney. There we are, sat side by side, inputting prompts, choosing one of the four results, further refining it, and so on. Ten minutes later, we would each produce a final image and send it off to the printer in the study. So, there you have two printed images on the coffee table, both technically in the style of a David Hockney. The question to the husband was “Would you pay more for one of them than for the other?” Is one authentic and the other not? Would a viewer, who knew nothing about how they were produced, be able to select which was a “true” Hockney and which was a “Keith”? My husband agreed he would pay more for the image made by Hockney, than the one made by me. Hurtful, I know, but he is English. Matrimonial bliss aside, he felt that there was something of the real David Hockney in the image he created where it was meaningfully absent from the one I created. A point well worth considering in the “is it art” debate. Interestingly, he went on to say that it shouldn’t cost as much as one of his real paintings though. The ease with which it was created, the fact that it took no time etc. did have a deleterious effect on the worth of the piece.

For me, the Hockney would be a true Hockney. It would be worth more than a Keith. It would have to be considered as a part of his body of work. A biographer would have to talk about Hockney’s experiments with AI. I would still value the piece even if it wasn’t made directly on his iPad with his Apple Pencil, or in his studio by a team of assistants, or by his hand holding a paint brush. A Hockney is a Hockney.

More Issues

I’ve heard fears around AI replacing photographers and models in the advertising media space. The thought goes that advertising companies don’t need to use photographers and models anymore because they can just get an AI engine to create an image exactly the way they want. While this may be the true, I think that these concerns may be overblown. I honestly believe there is value in the creative process bourn through the coming together of a photographer, model, art director, make-up artist, location manager etc. in a special location to create a photo. It will look and feel different, and we will

be able to tell. Same goes for product photography where original images are required for new products so that those images can be sourced by the AI in the first place. I think the fact that talented photographers are able to create new and compelling photos decade after decade shows clearly the value talent and creativity play in image creation. Of course there are areas where AI can’t replace being there.

But the most important driver is cost. And generally, the cost of making the media is a fraction of the cost of an advertising campaign. A company may spend \$150,000 on a decent shoot, the images of which will be used in its \$60,000,000 annual campaign budget. There’s no real savings to be had here, and the value of having original unique

work would generally outweigh the savings. In the case where they do not, those companies are probably already using stock photography for their advertising anyway. I’m not saying there’s no risk, just that it may be overblown for now. And as a consumer myself, I think I would reward brands that put in the work to catch my attention as opposed to those who take shortcuts. I think Gen Z will back me up on this too.

Does It Smell Like AI

Recently I’ve seen a few photography-based YouTube channels look at AI in photography. In one case, a group of volunteers were given sets of two images of a series of celebrities. They had to pick out which was “real”, and which was AI. I seem to recall 48% got the answer wrong. In the second video, an experienced photographer looked at AI enhanced/alterd



images and tried to pick out the parts of an image that were AI generated vs. what was in the original photo. He got about half of them right – and that was more to do with how improbably perfect the image was. But he got a lot wrong.

These two data points seem to show pretty conclusively that AI is getting to the point where people can easily be fooled by what they see. The Taylor Swift deep fake video and similar occurrences show that AI can be used to easily create hurtful



content. More fundamentally, we are getting to a place where people simply cannot trust what they see in an image to be truthful. This is a very serious issue. In a world of “Alternative Truths” where we can no longer trust our media, our politicians or our institutions, everything is at risk. In my view this is the most serious risk that AI poses.

When Photoshop came into broad use, people expressed concerns about images being enhanced. France actually passed a law that said enhanced images had to be identified as such in advertising media. Things being “Photoshopped” came to be seen as highly pejorative. Today we all use Photoshop (or its equivalents) all the time, and most images are at least stylised if not enhanced. The “consumers” of these works have quickly honed their visual skills to determine what looks real and what does not. AI takes this to a completely new level. It is my hope that we will continue to be able to distinguish what is real from what is not. Natural should continue to have a meaning.

Conclusion

All of the opinions shared in this essay are my own. They are based on my own experiences, education, background, and values. I do not expect everyone to share them or to agree

with me. What I do hope is that we can work together to come to an agreement on how AI art will be treated in the context of the magazine. We will certainly be getting more AI submissions in the future. Do we show them, or do we ignore them? Would ignoring them help achieve our stated objective of “Celebrating masculine art and the men who create it”? I think not. But we do have to respect the fact that some artists feel awkward about showing their work side by side with AI art, as is. I understand that concern as well.

Touching on what I mentioned above in relation to trusting what we see to be what it is, I think it is important to designate AI art as what it is. To that end, in future editions of MASCULAR Magazine, all AI art will be designate as such. There will be no confusion on that point. We will consider how best to achieve this. Be it by watermark or disclaimer or tag, our readers will always know if what they are looking at has been AI enhanced or AI created. All submissions going forward will have to designate: (1) my works have no AI involved in their creation; (2) my works have had some degree of AI involvement in their creation; or (3) my works have been generated using AI.

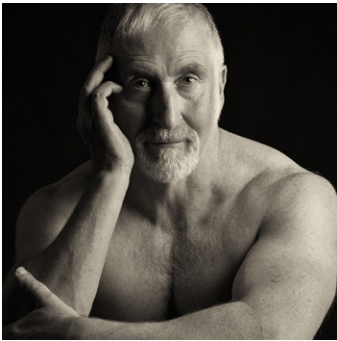
Rather than create hierarchy in art, something I reject fundamentally, and based on the fact that AI art is not going away, I think it best that we recognise it for what it is, embrace what is good, reject what is bad, and identify it for what it is. Some will choose to avoid it, while others will love it. Over time, opinions will move in both directions. But silencing the creative impulses of gay men is not and cannot be what we are about. We will always protect what is good and special in our community from external forces that seek to undermine it. But when, from within our community, we see a form of artistic expression, we cannot turn our backs. I have my concerns that too much AI art is fantasy based, shows hyper-perfect stereotypes, lacks diversity and often has little emotional depth. But I have seen some deeply moving and hugely creative examples as well.

In closing, I recognise that opinions vary and that this issue elicits strong emotional reactions. We welcome the views and opinions of all our contributors and readership. It is for this reason that we have published this special edition of MASCULAR Magazine. We wanted there to be a reference to which we could all point as part of this ongoing discussion. We will be hosting a special extended live video broadcast to discuss these and related issues. We look forward to seeing you there.

CONTRIBUTORS



Chuck Roberts - Grumpy and opinionated submarine veteran (STS1/SS), Texas native (with apologies), and sci fi nerd that loves The Expanse, big hairy dudes, flowers, desert sunsets, Hannu Rajaniemi, Portuguese techno, Benjanun Sriduangkaew, dogs, lager, and strong coffee. Wedded to work and my mom's medical bills. In my 50s now, increasingly misanthropic and asocial, but still loving each day this too-short life provides.



Steven Rosen - Steven Rosen has been a photographer for the last 23 years, capturing weddings and portraits, and creating fine art images. He is proud to be a pioneer in same sex weddings, having worked with more than 200 same-sex couples. As a portrait photographer he has turned his lens on thousands of subjects, including vintage clothing enthusiasts, steampunks, goths, fetishists, and burlesque queens. He was a beta user of MidJourney and Dall E and has been exploring generative AI for over a year, which is an eternity in the AI space. He has explored various themes over that time, but two tend to pop up most often. 1. Reimagining a past where the lives of gay men were not hidden, but included and celebrated in visual art throughout history. 2. Exploring gender by combining traditional male and female signifiers. Such as male bodybuilders in evening gowns, or debutante balls for men.



Otto Christensen - Hi I am Otto Christensen, (edotch) (ai_edwotch) a latin american architect, I live in a small town where I can blend my fitness background with a passion for artificial intelligence. My creative focus lies in the LGBT+ community, respectfully highlighting the beauty of the male form.



BVSTARD- Stevel Powell is an artist living in London, experimenting with new and emerging tools in AI image making.



Frederic Peres - I was born in 1981 in Carcassonne France . I work in an archives department as a cultural mediator. I'm obsessed with thrifting and fashion, and in all forms of art in general. I admire artists but I never had any art skills. AI photo generation can give me a chance to generate art, with all my knowledges about that and it's very exciting.



Carlos Burboa - Editorial photographer for 17 years specializing in black and white male photography, with studies in art and design. I work on homoeroticism from editorial elegance.



Minami Kuma - I am a scenario writer for manga, and in 2023, I began using AI for image generation. My work focuses on AI-generated illustrations related to gay themes, compiled in a collection titled "FET". This collection is available on the Amazon Kindle Store (Kindle Unlimited) and can be found by searching for "Minami-Kuma"



Ian Demsky - I started making and sharing AI art about a year ago. In that time, I've created more than 46,000 images (using MidJourney) and shared more than 1,750 of them on Instagram. I remain skeptical of the technology, but endlessly fascinated. I still am unsure whether AI-assisted art can stand alone alongside human-made art.



Martín Toyé - born in Argentina in 1976. He is a photographer, a teacher and a visual artist. He began studying photography in 1998. In 2007, he began to work mostly with male nudes. In 2015 he got a degree in Fine Arts. The people he portrays are not professional models. His photographic works explore everyday bodies, men of different ages. His images cover the wide spectrum of the artistic and erotic world. In 2021, he published his first book "Conquistadores Del Buen Ayre".



Michael Lenz - Michael Lenz is Executive Creative Director at the British Arrows and a versatile freelance visual artist, motion and interaction designer, educator, mentor and avid hiker. After spending 20 years leading his graphic design studio, Draught Associates in London, Michael moved on to pursue new interests and retrained as an Unreal Engine Technical Artist. He now splits his time between Sheffield, UK, gateway to the Peak District, and the scenic district of Ribatejo in Central Portugal, from where he works and collaborates internationally in between absorbing the dramatic natural vistas, enriching historic industrial, architectural and cultural beauty, quality of light and inspiring people around him.

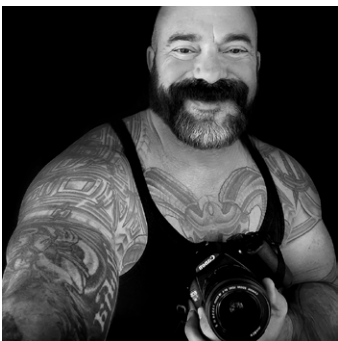
CONTRIBUTORS



Daniel J. Skråmestø – Daniel J. Skråmestø is the pseudonym of Daniel Barradas. He was born in Portugal in 1973 and has lived in Norway for 20 years. He works as a designer and has been creating digital art since 2000. He often participates in the collective exhibitions of the Oslo Pride Art. He is also a published writer of novels, short stories and children books. His most recent novel “Still without a name”, self-translated and self-published in English can be found on Amazon.



Sebastian Comsa - Romanian Photographer living in Frankfurt, Germany - focusing on travel and dudeoir (male boudoir) and big fan of baking cakes.



Randy Addison - Since childhood, Randy has been an artist in all his pursuits, with a degree in English, an advanced degree in Illustration, and a passion for photography, with an emphasis on portraiture and storytelling. He splits his time between Atlanta and Fort Lauderdale.



Rick Castro - Third generation Los Angeleno Rick Castro is a photographer, filmmaker and writer. During 2023, Castro's photographic slide presentation and lecture was featured in Queering the Lens, Getty Center, June, 7th. RICK CASTRO FOR-VER: Solo Retrospective of Life & Death was on display at the historic Columbarium, Hollywood Forever, October 5 thru December 30. His photography was part of a historic group exhibition Queer-ish, Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Scripps College, Claremont, October 28 thru December 15. Castro's photography & writings are currently featured in Copy Machine Manifesto: Artists Who Make Zines, Brooklyn Museum, NY November 15, 2023, thru March 31, 2024.



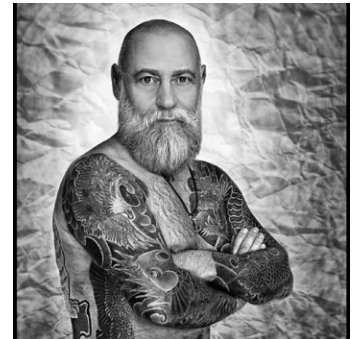
Vincent Keith - Founder of MASCULAR, I am a photographer and publisher focused on and interested in all forms of art and creativity. I'm passionate about the connections and community that come about when artists come together in collaboration. My husband and I split our time between London and Southern France.



Edward Joseph - I'm a curator, artist and cultural historian. For over ten years I've been working within the realm of queer cultural history, specifically art history. I first began my studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where I focused on the ways, or lack thereof, that queer artists were represented in contemporary art museums in America. I then moved to New York where, I completed my master's degree at the Sotheby's Institute of art in Contemporary Art History, with a concentration in curatorial studies. My work has been defined mostly by a recognition for the need to explicitly acknowledge and discuss the contributions of queer artists in the cannon of art history.



José Luis Castillo Cortés - Also known as @blclava, was born on March 9, 1981, in Zamora, Michoacán. Since the age of 5, he immersed himself in art, focusing on traditional techniques such as charcoal, watercolor, and oil. After studying Architecture at UDG, he moved to Barcelona for a master's in environmental analysis applicable to architectural design. Upon returning to Guadalajara, he began his career as an architect, but it wasn't until 2019, after years without drawing, that he rediscovered art as part of his psychological therapy. Under the pseudonym @blclava, he anonymously shared on Instagram works stemming from intimate exercises in self-discovery, becoming an artistic expression that helped him manage anxiety.



Daniel Decot - Daniel Decot is a photographer and theater director. In 2015, his city, Mons, was elected Cultural Capital 2015, and he exhibited at the Pop-Up Gallery with “Hors Champs”. Other exhibitions followed such as “Encre” (tattooed men) at the Grand Palais in Lille, “Homelike men” (men in their own homes), “Untitled”, “Portrait”, “Men at home” (at the Rainbow house of Mons), “Jeux de mains”, “Boxing days” (result of 2 years of work following several boxing clubs). In 2022, he was appointed exhibition curator for a retrospective on the theme “The Dark Side”. The success of these latest exhibitions allowed him to become one of the four curators for the Biennial of Photography in Mons, organized by the City of Mons. Daniel Decot is known for his work on the male nude, where he uses light and shadow to create effects of depth and texture. His approach focuses on capturing natural and subtle masculinity, avoiding the erotic stereotypes often associated with nude photography. Natural light is a key element of his work. He typically works with male role models he knows, such as close friends, dancers, athletes, boxers or artists with great control over their bodies, and encourages a dialogue to explore their strength, fragility and masculine identity.

VILLA JACARANDA



Original Artwork: Anna Pakosz. IG: @pakoszanna

Fronted by two jacaranda trees and deep pink bougainvillea, Villa Jacaranda is set on the bend of a quiet road, with views of the distant sea from its veranda. The four homely rooms all have pretty, blue-railed verandas for reading and dining. There's a large rooftop terrace with many a potted plants a lush garden with a lily pond for everyone to enjoy. Above all, what makes Villa Jacaranda so special is the warm and attentive care we show all our guests.

Villa Jacaranda is "a beautiful house with four guest rooms and a glorious garden within a central courtyard", but once again it's the people who make it. "Owner Ajay built the house himself" and has "carefully curated every room's furniture, paintings and wall hangings"; he even "bakes the bread for breakfast". And the dinners – "enormous feasts ... served on your own terrace" – rate as "the best food we ate in all of Kerala" - i-escape.com

It's wonderful to see this relatively no-frills – but "really special" – Indian homestay among our winners. Proof, more than ever, that experience counts higher than luxury.
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