



Discerning Digital from Canvas: Investigating Visual Distinction between AI-Generated Art and Actual Art among Far Eastern University's Institute of Architecture and Fine Arts (IARFA) and Non-IARFA Students

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ABSTRACT: Artificial Intelligence is one of the current generation's inventions that has been widely used. It has helped make lives easier, especially regarding appliances and business, and it has also altered various industries, including the arts. However, this development has sparked different perspectives among artists and non-artists. This study aims to evaluate how students, both artists, and non-artists, perceive the differences between real art and artificial intelligence-generated art. For this study, a total of fifty (50) students will be gathered, consisting of twenty-five (25) non-artist students from different courses and twenty-five (25) artist students from the IARFA Institute of Far Eastern University. The participants will receive the questionnaire via Messenger. The results of this study showed that the participants could differentiate actual art from AI-generated art based on their knowledge when evaluating artworks. Additionally, it demonstrates that artist students showed more confidence in determining actual artworks from AI-generated artworks due to their knowledge. While non-artists remain skeptical in determining artworks as they base their perception on how they see art.

KEYWORDS: artificial intelligence, art, artistic perceptions, art industry, college students.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence is one of the current generation's inventions that has been widely used. Due to this, the newest gadgets and even appliances have Artificial Intelligence in their systems to make consumers' lives easier. (Aelbrecht B., Mojsilovic J., 2023). Though helpful, artificial intelligence still has its pros and cons. Seeing that many companies, businesses, or even individuals have been relying on artificial intelligence creates multiple perspectives on its use—especially artists, who are the most affected by this issue.

The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has revolutionized various fields, including the arts, by enabling machines to create stunning artworks using generative algorithms. This has sparked divergent opinions among artists and non-artists. However, some see AI as a disruption to human creativity. One of AI's recurring concerns is that it reproduces certain artworks without alteration or credit, which might be construed as plagiarism. Another is that since they do not need the labor of artists, they can be created faster and more cheaply than traditional art forms (Roller, 2023). Others, on the other hand, see it as a new wave of innovation and artistic expression and can be an innovative tool to enhance creativity. AI also simplifies project conceptualization, reducing time and allowing artists to focus on their craft.

When shown an AI image, the lack of perspective of non-artist students is one of the gaps the researchers expect to have. Assuming they need a more artistic understanding of artistic skills than artist students. Thus, they might be unable to inspect in detail if an artwork is shown, which can only confuse them about whether the artwork is man-made or not. With this, the researchers have limited the target respondents from Non-Artist and Artist Students from Far Eastern University to this study.

Research Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the demographic profile of the respondents.
2. To determine the level of art knowledge perceived by respondents about artwork.
3. To determine whether respondents can distinguish between AI-generated art and actual art visually.
4. To determine how the respondents assess and differentiate between AI-generated and Actual art.



5. To determine the significant differences between IARFA and non-IARFA students in terms of:
 - a. Level of art knowledge perceived by respondents about artwork;
 - b. Visual understanding scores in distinguishing between AI-generated art and Actual Art;
 - c. How do the respondents assess and differentiate between AI-generated art and actual art?

METHODS

The researchers have chosen to approach and view the study as quantitative research, descriptive, and inferential since they would be gathering and analyzing numerical data from the respondents. A Google Forms questionnaire will be used as the data collection tool. Fifty (50) respondents were obtained using the purposive sampling method; they were then grouped based on the course information, regardless of whether they were artists or non-artists. The respondents for this research consisted of fifty (50) college students from the IARFA Institute and other Institutes of Far Eastern University. The questionnaire consists of close-ended questions and three (3) sets of prompts with two (2) different AI images generated and the other artist-made work, which will be distributed through Facebook Messenger.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, it aims to examine how non-artists and artists view AI art and its relationship with traditional art forms. Our findings showed that the artistic value of human-created and AI-generated artworks was not considered equal. Furthermore, the respondents' assessments in determining the artworks were based on how they see AI-generated art from actual art.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Institutes	No. of Respondents	Percentage
IARFA	25	50%
Non-IARFA		
IAS	11	22%
IHSN	10	20%
IABF	3	6%
IE	1	2%
TOTAL	50	100.00%

The number of participants in this study is shown in Table 1. The researchers obtained the needed number of respondents for this survey. A total of fifty (50) respondents—twenty-five (25) Far Eastern University artists and twenty-five (25) non-artists—will be gathered based on the study. Participants in the study included 50% of the IARFA institution's student body, 22% of IAS students, 20% of IHSN students, 6% of IABF students, and 2% of IE students from different courses.

Table 2.1. Basic Knowledge and Understanding of the Art of the Respondents

Indicators	IARFA Students			Non-IARFA Students		
	M	SD	I	M	SD	I
Are you able to empathize with an artwork just by interpreting it through your imagination as an object itself?	4.12	0.66	Agree	3.36	1.08	Neutral
Are you confident in understanding the correct emotional response to an artwork?	3.68	1.62	Agree	3.12	1.07	Neutral
Will you be able to determine art details such as the brush strokes, styles, and techniques?	3.92	2.14	Agree	2.84	2.23	Neutral
Do you have a keen eye when it comes with visual elements such as color, compositions, and forms?	4.04	0.87	Agree	3.08	1.33	Neutral
OVERALL MEAN	3.94	1.32	AGREE	3.10	1.43	NEUTRAL

Legend: 4.21 to 5.00 - Strongly Agree; 3.41 to 4.20 - Agree; 2.61 to 3.40 - Neutral; 1.81 to 2.60 - Disagree; 1.00 to 1.80 - Strongly Disagree



Table 2.1 compares the basic knowledge and understanding of art between students from the IARFA (Institute of Arts and Fine Arts) and non-IARFA backgrounds. Across all indicators, IARFA students consistently demonstrate higher weighted mean scores compared to non-IARFA students, indicating a more positive perception of their understanding of art. For the indicator, "Can you empathize with an artwork just by interpreting it through your imagination as an object?" IARFA students show a significantly higher weighted mean of 4.12, indicating agreement. In contrast, non-IARFA students have a lower mean of 3.36, indicating neutrality.

Similarly, for the indicator "Are you confident in understanding the correct emotional response to an artwork?" IARFA students exhibit a higher weighted mean of 3.68 (agree). In comparison, non-IARFA students have a lower mean of 3.12 (neutral).

In terms of the ability to determine art details such as brush strokes, styles, and techniques ("Will you be able to determine art details such as the brush strokes, styles, and techniques?"), IARFA students again show a significantly higher weighted mean of 3.92 (agree) compared to non-IARFA students' mean of 2.84 (neutral).

Lastly, regarding having a keen eye for visual elements such as color, compositions, and forms ("Do you have a keen eye when it comes with visual elements such as color, compositions, and forms?"), IARFA students score higher with a mean of 4.04 (agree) than non-IARFA students' mean of 3.08 (neutral).

Overall, the total rating for IARFA students is 3.94 (agree), indicating a generally positive perception of their basic knowledge and understanding of art. In contrast, non-IARFA students have a total rating of 3.1 (neutral), suggesting a more mixed perception.

According to down (2024), an Art interpretation can be subjective and influenced by the viewer's cultural background, personal experiences, and level of artistic knowledge. IARFA students have a unique perspective and appreciation for art. It also shows that they have specific knowledge of how objects, colors, and different features appear, which improves their ability to focus on details in the visual field. According to Palette (2022), Artists view the world differently, focusing on the visual field rather than individual objects. This allows them to see shadows and contours that non-artists would miss. With enough training, anyone can develop this ability.

Compared to non-artists, it implies that they approach these understandings from a beginner's perspective. Individuals' viewpoints and interpretations of art vary depending on their specific backgrounds when they try to appreciate or understand it (Libretexts, 2020).

Table 3.1 Actual Art vs. AI Art Answers of the Respondents

Actual Art	No. of IARFA Students		No. of Non-IARFA Students	
	Image A	Image B	Image A	Image B
Item 1	24 (96%)	1 (4%)	22 (88%)	3 (12%)
Item 2	21 (84%)	4 (16%)	20 (80%)	5 (20%)
Item 3	24 (96%)	1 (4%)	19 (76%)	6 (24%)
OVERALL MEAN	23 (92%)	2 (8%)	20.33 (81.33%)	5 (18.66%)

Table 3.1 compares the responses of IARFA (Institute of Arts and Fine Arts) and non-IARFA students regarding their analysis of actual and AI-generated art.

For Item 1, which involves choosing between images (Image A and Image B), 96% of IARFA students answered Image A, while only 4% answered Image B. Among non-IARFA students, 88% answered Image A, and 12% answered Image B.

In Item 2, a similar trend is observed, with 84% of IARFA students answering Image A and 16% answering Image B. Among non-IARFA students, 80% answered Image A, while 20% answered Image B.

For Item 3, most IARFA students (96%) answered Image A, with only 4% answering Image B. In contrast, among non-IARFA students, 76% answered Image A, and 24% answered Image B.



Table 3.2 The scores of the Actual Art vs. AI Art Answers of the Respondents

Scores	IARFA Students	Non-IARFA Students
0 points	1 (4%)	3 (12%)
1 point	-	1 (4%)
2 points	3 (12%)	3 (12%)
3 points	21 (84%)	18 (72%)

Table 3.2 presents the scores of IARFA (Institute of Arts and Fine Arts) and non-IARFA students based on their answers regarding actual art versus AI-generated art.

Among IARFA students, 4% received 0 points, indicating that they chose the AI art over the actual art for all items. No IARFA students received 1 point. 12% of IARFA students scored 2 points, suggesting that they selected AI art for one item and actual art for the other two. Most IARFA students, accounting for 84%, scored 3 points, indicating that they consistently chose actual art over AI-generated art for all items.

Among non-IARFA students, 12% received 0 points, showing a preference for AI art over actual art for all items. Similarly, 4% of non-IARFA students received 1 point. 12% of non-IARFA students scored 2 points, indicating a mixed preference for AI and actual art. The highest percentage of non-IARFA students, representing 72%, received 3 points, indicating a consistent preference for actual art over AI-generated art for all items.

This suggests that IARFA students generally showed a stronger preference for actual art, while non-IARFA students exhibited a more varied response pattern.

Table 4.1 Ways on How the Respondents Analyzed the Actual Art vs. AI Art

Statements	IARFA Students			Non-IARFA Students		
	M	SD	I	M	SD	I
Did you base your observation on the art styles (surrealism, abstract, realism, etc.) that are used in the artwork?	4.32	1.28	Strongly Agree	3.72	2.03	Agree
Did you base your observation on what medium was used in the artwork?	4.48	1.25	Strongly Agree	3.96	2.37	Agree
Did you pick an image according to the emotion expressed through the artwork?	3.56	1.99	Agree	3.04	1.37	Neutral
Did you determine the images by comparing the crispiness and textured techniques of their work?	4.68	1.47	Strongly Agree	4.36	1.37	Strongly Agree
Were you able to tell which is which by how the artwork was made (through details, color palette choices, and overall aesthetic)?	4.56	1.32	Strongly Agree	4.08	1.14	Agree
OVERALL	4.32		STRONGLY AGREE	3.83		AGREE

Legend: 4.21 to 5.00 - Strongly Agree; 3.41 to 4.20 - Agree; 2.61 to 3.40 - Neutral; 1.81 to 2.60 - Disagree; 1.00 to 1.80 - Strongly Disagree

Table 4.1 displays how respondents analyzed actual art versus AI art, categorized by whether they were students from the Institute of Artistic Research and Fine Arts (IARFA) or non-IARFA students.

The weighted mean scores for IARFA students indicate a strong level of agreement across all indicators. They strongly agreed (4.32) that they based their observations on art styles and mediums used, compared techniques, and determined the artwork based on details and aesthetics. This suggests that IARFA students utilized a comprehensive approach, considering various artistic elements in their analysis.



On the other hand, non-IARFA students generally showed agreement (3.83) across the indicators. While they agreed on considering art styles and mediums, they were neutral or less decisive regarding emotional expression and technique comparison. Despite this, their overall rating still falls under agreement, indicating a general tendency to employ some level of analysis when assessing the artwork.

Art's primary is believed to be the sensory side of human experience. (Plato, 1992) The study supports that by stating that the IARA students greatly agreed that they based their analysis on their knowledge of art styles, mediums used, techniques, details, and the aesthetics of the artwork. They are firm in their instincts and abilities to understand the emotion of art. This is what we call a natural high wherein the artists' sensory responses to the way the colors are composed, in visual art or even in another form of art; how the sound is arranged, in music, how the ways of the movement of the body are executed, in dance. It excites the artists in a particular way in their sensory side of human experience. (Eisner, 2007)

It also pertains to non-IARFA students needing more clarification about emotional expression and comparison of techniques. Though arts are large forms that generate emotion (Eisner, 2007), this study has revealed that non-artists are cynical in their own perspectives about art. This may be because they value and appreciate art differently, as they see it as something beautiful (Esurubelle, 2014). This firmly positions them as someone who see art as an object rather than an expression of emotion.

Table 5.1 Difference in Level of Art Knowledge Perceived by the Respondents about Artwork.

Students	N	M	SD	F	t	df	p-value	Remarks
IARFA	25	3.94	0.63	4.009	3.739	48	<0.001	Significant
Non-IARFA	25	3.10	0.93					

Table 5.1 illustrates the disparity in the perceived level of art knowledge among respondents concerning artwork, stratified by their status as IARFA (Institute of Art and Artistic Research) and non-IARFA students.

The mean perceived level of art knowledge for IARFA students is 3.94, with a standard deviation of 0.63. In contrast, non-IARFA students report a lower mean perceived level of art knowledge at 3.10, with a higher standard deviation of 0.93.

The statistical analysis reveals a significant difference between these groups, as indicated by an F-value of 4.009 and a corresponding t-value of 3.739, with 48 degrees of freedom.

The p-value, which is less than 0.001, confirms the significance of this difference. In essence, this suggests a statistically significant distinction in the perceived level of art knowledge between IARFA students and non-IARFA students. Specifically, IARFA students perceive themselves as having higher art knowledge than their non-IARFA counterparts.

Between the non-IARFA students and IARFA students, the latter discern themselves as more knowledgeable than the non-artists. This proves that the IARFA students are confident about understanding and appreciating art. Though art is a beauty, it is believed that they comprehend art in a more discerning way. They tread through various arts, observe through their senses, see the physical aspect of art, describe and connect with the piece, and analyze the work deeper into the details by knowing its forms, symbols, ideas, and meaning (Framework, 2021). They take in and recognize the meaning of the creativity of the art showcased to them. This is because they think that art is something to be appreciated, whether it appears to be controversial or disturbing; they know that there will always be a hidden meaning behind it. (Carole, 2022)

On the other hand, non-IARFA students are then below their level of knowledge because art is a form of communication. Therefore, this may be why non-artists need to comprehend it better (Mehta, 2021). Communication through art forms is likely ineffective for them due to their lack of knowledge of art. In a research done by Esurubelle in 2014, they garnered interviewees with basic art knowledge from various demographics. They have collected a unanimous answer: "Art is the attraction." The participants could tell what attracts them to art and only see its aesthetic form. They cannot tell or discuss art critically and generalize it (Esurubelle, 2014). This validates that non-IARFA students see art as an aesthetic rather than a form of expression. This then differentiates IARFA students from non-IARFA students.



Table 5.2 Visual understanding scores in distinguishing between AI-generated art and Actual Art.

Students	N	M	SD	F	t	df	p-value	Remarks
IARFA	25	2.76	0.663	5.948	1.294	48	0.202	Not Significant
Non-IARFA	25	2.44	1.044					

Table 5.2 displays the difference in scores between IARFA (Institute of Arts and Fine Arts) students and non-IARFA students concerning their responses to actual art versus AI-generated art.

The mean score for IARFA students was 2.76, with a standard deviation of 0.663. Among non-IARFA students, the mean score was 2.44, and the standard deviation was 1.044.

The associated p-value is 0.202, suggesting no statistically significant difference between the scores of the two groups. In other words, based on this analysis, there is no distinction in how respondents scored their answers between actual art and AI art. This suggests the respondents' perceptions or evaluations of actual and AI-generated art are similar.

Though there is no significant difference in how both group respondents differentiate AI-generated art from actual art, their reasons for picking a certain choice might differ. Through the questions given prior to and after the image, it is safe to say that non-IARFA students picked the picture because of its aesthetics and how it attracts them (Esurubelle, 2014). This exhibits how the non-artist students view art on a shallow level. In contrast to IARFA students, their background and experience in art enable them to analyze, interpret effectively and appreciate various art forms (Van Weyenbergh, 2023). Additionally, they see art as a form of expression to let out their power to evoke emotions (Talley, 2023). Both have various ways of differentiating which is which from the table.

Table 5.3 Difference in How the Respondents Assess and Differentiate between AI-generated Art and Actual Art

Students	N	M	SD	F	t	df	p-value	Remarks
IARFA	25	4.32	0.57	0.084	2.564	48	0.014	Significant
Non-IARFA	25	3.83	0.77					

Table 5.3 outlines how respondents, categorized as either IARFA (Institute of Art and Artistic Research) or non-IARFA students, evaluate and differentiate between AI-generated art and actual art.

The mean assessment score among IARFA students is 4.32, with a standard deviation of 0.57. Conversely, non-IARFA students provide a lower mean assessment score of 3.83, with a higher standard deviation of 0.77.

Statistical analysis demonstrates a significant difference between these groups, evidenced by an F-value of 0.084 and a corresponding t-value of 2.564, with 48 degrees of freedom.

The p-value, which is 0.014, confirms the statistical significance of this difference. In essence, this implies a notable divergence in how IARFA students and non-IARFA students assess and distinguish between AI-generated art and actual art. Specifically, IARFA students tend to provide higher assessment scores, suggesting a more nuanced understanding or appreciation of the differences between AI-generated art and actual art compared to their non-IARFA counterparts.

The findings highlight that the IARFA students show a more refined understanding and appreciation of the differences between these two art forms. One quality in evaluating art is having a keen eye, as well as a deep and comprehensive understanding of art movements and various art forms, which is essential. (Van Weyenbergh, 2023). This divergence may be attributed to the specialized training and exposure that IARFA students receive in art. According to Edwards (2023), AI lacks a sense of fore-middle-background, which makes everything appear flat. With the artist, students' learnings and studio practices likely equip them with a deeper knowledge of artistic techniques and the aesthetic context of art. This enables them to critically engage with AI-generated art, recognize its unique characteristics, and appreciate its potential and limitations.

In contrast, non-IARFA students' ability to differentiate art may rely primarily on their personal preferences in evaluating AI-generated art, as they have more limited practice and understanding of art (Palette, 2022).



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study reached the consensus that IARFA students can better distinguish AI art from Actual art than non-IARFA students. This study also demonstrates the diversity of the students' perspectives on art and how they evaluate the artwork.

In this study, it appears that there is a significant correlation between students' ability to distinguish AI-generated art from actual art. Compared to non-IARFA students, the responders from the IARFA students expressed greater confidence in their ability to trust their own artistic backgrounds. On the other hand, non-IARFA students remained skeptical in determining artworks as they based their perception on how they see art. Regarding visual comprehension, the respondents' assessments of real art and artificial intelligence-generated art are comparable. Finally, data suggests a significant difference between the evaluation and differentiation of AI-generated art and real art between IARFA and non-IARFA students. In particular, compared to non-IARFA students, IARFA students provide higher assessment results, indicating that they genuinely understand the distinctions between AI-generated art and real art.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study can be utilized as a reference for future research and studies that aim to comprehend the varied opinions of art students and non-art students about AI-generated art and traditional art. The outcomes can also be used as a basis for collecting more perspectives and examining different viewpoints on how students, whether artists or non-artists, perceive art and AI-generated art.

For future studies, you may use the questionnaire found in this link: (https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-IvSY9wZ9NGn_3ybNcKul-Kc6LteotOogrXK_Wcf-UZNiRVtz8gKy_apBYgeIEwxhTg/pub).

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers would like to express their deepest gratitude to Prof. Mc Rollyn Vallespin for his guidance and improvement of the manuscript, to our statistician Bora for her remarkable insights on the findings, and to all the respondents who participated in this study. This study wouldn't have been possible without everyone who played a vital role.

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Cite this Article: Jazmine Kelly R. Ayuman, Marianne C. Lacorte, Mc Rollyn D. Vallespin (2024). Discerning Digital from Canvas: Investigating Visual Distinction between AI-Generated Art and Actual Art among Far Eastern University's Institute of Architecture and Fine Arts (IARFA) and Non-IARFA Students. International Journal of Current Science Research and Review, 7(5), 2793-2800