Syracuse University

SURFACE at Syracuse University

Theses - ALL

5-12-2024

Beyond the Brush: How Women Artists Navigate Communication and Creativity Amidst the Rise of AI

Carrie Welch
Syracuse University

Follow this and additional works at: https://surface.syr.edu/thesis

Part of the Communication Commons

Recommended Citation

Welch, Carrie, "Beyond the Brush: How Women Artists Navigate Communication and Creativity Amidst the Rise of AI" (2024). *Theses - ALL*. 832.
https://surface.syr.edu/thesis/832

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by SURFACE at Syracuse University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses - ALL by an authorized administrator of SURFACE at Syracuse University. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

Abstract

Women artists who use physical paints, canvases, charcoal, and pencils to create their work represent a marginalized group in the art world who may be perceived as distanced or removed from artificial intelligence (AI). While AI, art, feminist aesthetics, and media representation are each areas of rich research, they have not yet been brought together. As art itself is reconsidered alongside the rise of AI, this study conducted 20 in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews with women artists to understand the implications of choosing to incorporate AI into their work, changes to their artistic processes, adjustments to their communications about their work, as well as the reasons why they may not interact with technology. The interviews captured five themes analyzed using diffusion of innovations as a theoretical framework. These themes paint a more nuanced, and at times surprising, picture of how AI impacts the artistic process and communications of women artists.

Keywords: *women artists, AI, feminism, diffusion of innovations, art, communication, qualitative interviews*

BEYOND THE BRUSH: HOW WOMEN ARTISTS NAVIGATE COMMUNICATION AND CREATIVITY AMIDST THE RISE OF AI

By

Carrie Welch

B.S. New York University, 2000

Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Media Studies

Syracuse University
May 2024

Copyright © Carrie Welch 2024
All Rights Reserved

Acknowledgements

Dr. Gina Luttrell, I feel very lucky to have been able to learn from you in research, teaching and so much more over the past two years. Your unending support and belief in me will remain a gift for which I will always be grateful. You are what I came back to school for. Thank you for everything, and I look forward to continuing to find exciting ways to work together.

Dr. Anne Osborne, you have guided me from day one through the graduate school process, and I am grateful for your patience and mentorship. I have been honored to serve in your classroom to experience a master at work. Dr. Kyla Wagner, I thank you for your support, and the way you stay true to yourself and bring everything you have to your work is unmatched. Dr. Rebecca Ortiz, thank you for serving as my thesis chair and for giving me a B on a paper in my first semester, the feedback from which set me on a course for a life-changing ADHD diagnosis.

I must thank my extremely patient and talented wife, Jannie Huang, who hustled to pay the bills while I attended school, who is the most incredible mom, and who is the only person I want to live this creative life with. I thank my kids, Taylor and Evelyn, for patiently listening to Mommy's school stuff and for believing I could achieve this goal. To my parents, Betty and Bill, thank you for moving across the country and supporting me at every moment of my life. To my sister, Kaity, thank you for always listening and for truly knowing me. Thank you to my grad school bestie, John Stewart, The Bread Guy, forever. Thank you to the women artists who shared their time and innermost thoughts with me.

And last but not least, I would like to thank this Carrie and all of the previous Carries who have walked with me. Thank you for allowing yourself to fully realize that in life, much like art, the beauty is in the process, not the destination.

Table of Contents

1. Chapter 1: Introduction…………………………………………………………………..1
2. Chapter 2: Literature Review…...……………………………………………………..7
    a. Women's Art Is Not A Luxury……………………………………………..7
        i. "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"..............................10
        ii. The Feminist Lens…………………………………………………13
        iii. Feminist Aesthetics: Evolving Definitions of Art, and Who Decides….16
    b. Defining and Understanding Artificial Intelligence…………………………….20
    c. AI + Art: Collaborations, Concerns and Communications……………………...24
    d. Theoretical Framework: Diffusion of Innovations………………………………27
3. Chapter 3: Methodology...…………………………………………………………….30
    a. Research Design…………………………………………………………………30
        i. Qualitative Interviews……………………………………………………32
        ii. Participants and Sampling Procedure……………………………………33
        iii. Data Collection and Analysis……………………………………………34
4. Chapter 4: Results……………………………………………………………………….37
5. Chapter 5: Discussion…………………………………………………………………..64
    a. Limitations…………………………………………………………………………68
    b. Future Research……………………………………………………………………69
    c. Summary……………………………………………………………………………70
6. Appendix A: Interview Questions……………………………………………………….71
7. Appendix B: Interview Protocol…………………………………………………………72
8. Appendix C: NVivo Codes………………………………………………………………74

9. Appendix D: Field Notes: Sample Entry……………………………………………..75

10. References…………………………………………………………………………77

11. Vitae……………………………………………………………………………..90

Chapter 1: Introduction

“Art is dead, dude. It’s over. AI won. Humans lost.” (Roose, 2022, para. 29). As this quote from *The New York Times* during the 2022 frenzied adoption period of new artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as Chat GPT and Midjourney illustrates, art and AI meet in a complicated place; a tricky intersection where the definition of artistic meaning meets one of the most powerful technologies created by humans (Zheng, 2022). Art is often viewed as embodying the beautiful, sublime parts of being human - the metaphysical, the unknowable - and this meaning can change when AI assists in the creation of art, or creates art itself (Kant, 1987; Sontag, 1966; Nochlin, 2021; Doherty, 2019). Exploring what defines art, one of the most human of expressions, can lead to a deeper understanding of the collective human consciousness and what differentiates humans from the powerful artificial brains that are quickly flooding software, healthcare, work, and home environments (Kant, 1987; Langer, 1953; Rubin, 2023). As modern society could be witnessing the birth of a new artistic medium or be taking part in the redefining, and potentially relinquishing, of an integral part of the human communication experience, examining how women artists choose to communicate with, through and around AI can illuminate a piece of what the future might hold (Marche, 2022). Artists who grasp paintbrushes, charcoal, clay and other physical forms of creation are seemingly a group farthest away from AI’s influence; however, even they feel its presence.

As art itself is reconsidered alongside the rise of AI, the purpose of this study is to conduct qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with women artists to understand the implications of choosing to incorporate AI into their work, including changes to their artistic process, adjustments to their communications about their work, as well as the reasons why they may choose not to interact with the technology. Increased clarity regarding how the introduction of this new technology impacts their digital communications about their creative process and promotion of the art itself via social media, websites and online platforms is necessary as this is an understudied area of research. Women artists who use physical media to create their work are the focus of this study as they represent an already marginalized and oppressed group in the art world, who may be perceived as distanced or removed from AI (Esposito, 2023; Battersby, 1989; Sontag, 1966). As feminist aesthetics and media scholarship document, women in art experience systemic obstacles and erasure in the advancement of their careers (Berkers et al., 2016; Battersby, 1989; Pollock, 1983). Examples include less opportunity to show their work, limited legacy-media press coverage (Halperin, 2017; Berkers et al., 2016), and increased challenges in all of these factors amongst women artists of color (Tesfagiorgis, 1993). As such, it is vital to document and analyze the experiences of this group as they navigate and communicate about art within the present AI-influenced context.

As art and AI can be characterized in varying ways, it is important to clarify how they are conceptualized in this research. This study examines art as a creative expression and a historical mode of communication for women. Given the many centuries of communication oppression experienced by women, at times art was the only mode of communication available (Hessel, 2023). AI is investigated as a technological innovation as well as an emerging form of communication. Scholars in interdisciplinary communication are increasingly incorporating AI into communication frameworks. As AI's agency and autonomy grow, it serves both as a communicator and a medium of communication in its own right (Gil de Zúñiga, et al, 2024). Considering these distinctions, the intersection of art as communication and AI as communication emerges as an important area to explore, particularly regarding its future impact on women artists. These artists, already facing systemic marginalization as women in the art industry, find themselves in a complex relationship with AI—a partner that has the potential both to enhance and to undermine their opportunities for gallery representation, media coverage, and overall visibility.

This study employed diffusion of innovations as its theoretical framework while also applying an additional feminist lens. Diffusion of innovations theory explains how an idea or product (innovation) gains momentum and spreads through a specific population or social system over time. Rogers outlines factors and patterns by which innovations may be accepted or rejected by individuals within their social system and communication environment (2003). This provides an important framework for the research design of this study in thinking through the macro- and micro-level implications of AI and how the adoption or rejection of the technologies filters down to the individual artists, their communications and process. It also provides context for key generational insights that emerged from the data. The specific areas of diffusion of innovations used in data analysis were the five attributes of innovations: Relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability (Rogers, 2003). These elements were chosen because they offer a well-defined framework to examine how AI's innovation and communication have permeated the communication environment and social systems of women artists. This approach aligns with the four core components of diffusion of innovations theory: the innovation itself, communication channels, the role of time, and the encompassing social system (Rogers, 2003).

A feminist lens is applied throughout as the thinking, specifically Black feminist thought, requires questioning why things are the way they are as women's historic and systemic oppression in areas such as art is considered (Lorde, 2007; hooks, 2015). Women's roles in art continue to expand and contract, and the ability to set the stage beginning with art history, and carry the research through the cutting-edge ways AI is currently collaborating with women artists, provides for a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the changes afoot (Tesfagiorgis, 1993; Shaw, 2019).

To accomplish these objectives, a qualitative research design was employed. Twenty semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted via Zoom with women artists from around the United States. Interviews included questions covering perceptions of AI, how art is defined, and how AI may or may not influence the artists' digital communications about their art. Interview questions are included in Appendix A. The resulting data were coded using Nvivo and open, descriptive coding, with key themes then analyzed and expounded upon through the application of the study's theoretical framework. The goal was to process the resulting themes to identify any shifts in artistic communication and creative practices due to AI. A secondary goal was to foreground any poignant findings specific to women artists, through the feminist lens, that may propel them forward in their art, or hold them back.

To this end, this study asks the following research questions:

RQ1: How are women artists choosing to incorporate AI in their work?

RQ1a: Why are women artists choosing not to incorporate AI in their work?

RQ1b: What are the implications of the choice to include AI or not in women artists' work?

RQ2: How is AI impacting how women artists communicate through their art?

RQ2a: How is AI influencing the artistic process of women artists?

RQ3: How is AI changing how women artists communicate and react online - through legacy and social media - about their art?

The idea that art is the most human form of communication has been accepted and debated through the fields of art aesthetics and philosophy for centuries (Kant, 1987; Beardsley, 1958; Langer, 1953). But art faces a turning point with the introduction of AI. AI is a set of technologies that, while in development for decades, have skyrocketed in adoption, ethical debate, potential regulation, and borderline moral panic in recent years (Roose, 2023; Zhang & Dafoe, 2019). AI encompasses innovations such as machine learning, where computers are fed large datasets and trained on decision-making and how to think like a human; natural language processing, where through algorithmic learning the AI can generate and understand language contextually, and Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) and Stable Diffusion which are machine learning models that use datasets to generate images (Kaplan, 2021; Bentley, 2023; Chowdhary, 2020).

The discourse around the impact of AI on art is active, controversial and diverse (e.g., Jing et al., 2023; Magni, et al., 2023; Wingström, et al., 2022). The literature covers much ground including art, computer science and even psychology scholarship. Jiang et al. (2023) argue that image-based generative AI systems do not qualify as artists and by leveraging philosophies of art and aesthetics (such as those discussed in this study) they assert that art is a uniquely human endeavor. Their paper critiques the tendency to anthropomorphize image generators as detrimental and highlights the danger in attributing agency to these AI systems. In their view, this practice oversimplifies human creativity, potentially deprives artists of recognition and financial compensation, and shifts responsibility away from the creators of these technologies.

Conversely, Wingström, et al. (2022) advance the concept of co-creation between AI and artists, in a study examining the perspectives of computer scientists and new media artists on the role of AI in creative processes. The analysis posits that AI has upended traditional definitions of creativity and with scientists and artists alike using the technology, a redefinition of co-creativity may be in order regarding art created with AI assistance. Finally, Magni, et al. (2023) investigated whether humans hold bias toward AI as art producers given predispositions to what constitutes a creator. They further the concept of humans as gatekeepers of art with an experimental design that found people assigned less creativity and effort to artwork created by AI (Magni, et al., 2023). These studies, as well as the larger cultural discussion, highlight the complexity of the introduction of AI as an innovation and emphasize the significance of this study in navigating and enriching that conversation.

This is not the first time the art world has been tested. Innovations such as photography and the internet have shifted artists' perspectives in the past (Hessel, 2023; Marche, 2022). However, most technologies are introduced at a pace that is somewhat manageable for humans to process and learn (Sider, 2023). AI's adoption and evolution since the debut of open access tools in late 2022 is now measured in months not years (Sider, 2023). While AI, art, and women's representation are each three areas of rich research, they have not yet been brought together. The confluence of events described highlights an area of inquiry that contributes to both academic and industry discussions in a meaningful way.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will focus on the current literature regarding women artists' evolving role as creators, communicators, and changemakers in the art world. This will be accomplished by reviewing relevant research via a feminist lens and feminist aesthetics, a review of artificial intelligence definitions and how the technologies are reshaping communications, as well as AI's growing influence and applications in art. This section will conclude with a discussion of the theoretical framework for this study, diffusion of innovations. This theory provides an important framework for the research design of this study in thinking through macro to micro level implications of AI and how the adoption or rejection of the technologies filters down to the individual women artists, their communications and decision-making process.

Women's Art Is Not A Luxury

In the realm of art and creativity, the historical, societal, and creative barriers that women artists have faced are complex and enduring (Hessel, 2023). Drawing inspiration from Audre Lorde's seminal essay, *Poetry is Not a Luxury* - that art for women is far from a mere luxury - this section will discuss the myriad challenges that have historically restricted women's artistic expressions and communications, as well as their efforts to surmount these obstacles (1984).

Historically, the domain of art has been predominantly male, with women artists often relegated to the margins (Hessel, 2023; Nochlin, 2021; Pollock, 1983; Sontag, 1966). This exclusion was not merely a matter of oversight but a reflection of deeply entrenched societal norms that viewed artistic creation as an extension of the male intellect, which rendered women's contributions invisible or secondary (Battersby, 1989). The perception of art as a luxury for women belies a grim reality of systemic barriers that have stifled women's creative expression and communication. These barriers were not only physical, in terms of access to artistic education and patronage, but also ideological, manifesting in the pervasive undervaluation of women's art and the questioning of their capabilities as artists. For centuries, women who aspired to be artists faced formidable challenges. Access to formal art education was severely limited, with prestigious institutions often barring their entry. Those who managed to navigate these hurdles then encountered the art market's gender biases, where their work was systematically undervalued and overlooked (Hessel, 2023). This historical lack of access and recognition forced many women artists into the shadows and hampered the use of their art to communicate and express their life experiences in a time when there were few alternative methods to do so.

In addition, the act of communication about art, whether through critique, exhibition, or sale, came at a premium for women. The cost was not just financial but also emotional and social, as women artists often faced ridicule, ostracization, and dismissal for daring to step into the public sphere. The advent of women's ability to freely express themselves and communicate about their art is a relatively recent phenomenon, hard-won by the relentless efforts of those who came before— from the suffragettes to the feminist political art movements of the 1960s (Hessel, 2023; Nochlin, 2021). More recently, with the advent of the internet and its widespread use for both private and commercial purposes, women’s art has found a seemingly more egalitarian frontier in the digital realm, evolving from websites created by individuals and cultural institutions in the late 1990s to social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter/X, Facebook, and Pinterest from 2010 onwards. These digital platforms challenge traditional power structures and gatekeeping mechanisms by enabling direct access to a global audience. The rise of digital exhibitions and the proliferation of art on social media have democratized art distribution, allowing women artists an avenue with which to bypass traditional intermediaries such as galleries and art dealers (Gerlieb, 2021).

However, this shift also necessitates a critical examination of how digital spaces may replicate or even exacerbate existing exclusionary practices within the art market (Kosmala, 2008). The digital art market, buoyed by the ease of transmitting visual content and the mass circulation enabled by platforms like Instagram, has expanded beyond the confines of physical galleries and museums, embracing a more inclusive model that fosters a global art community. Instagram and TikTok in particular have been embraced, offering women artists the opportunity to showcase their work, redefining the concept of curation online (Gerlieb, 2021).

With this progression in mind, and how women's art has persisted despite the sheer volume of untold stories—of artists who were silenced, of queer artists and artists of color who fought for visibility in an even more exclusionary landscape—speaks to the resilience and tenacity of women in the arts (Tesfagiorgis, 1993; Lorde, 1984). Yet, the journey towards equality is far from complete. Recent years have witnessed a resurgence of political and social challenges that threaten to undermine the hard-fought gains of women artists. The loss of crucial rights, such as those highlighted by the overturning of Roe vs. Wade, and an increasingly incendiary political climate pose new questions about the motivations and imperatives behind women's art (Waddoups, 2022). In the face of such adversity, why do women continue to create? What role does art play in communicating women’s human experience, as they navigate the intersection of gender, identity, and creativity amidst widespread societal upheaval?

Art, for many women, remains a vital mode of expression, communication, resistance, and healing. It is a means to confront and articulate the complexities of their experiences, to claim space in a world that has historically denied them recognition (Esposito, 2023, Halperin, 2017). The act of creating - be it through painting, sculpture, or digital media - serves not only as personal catharsis but as a form of communication with the world, offering insights into the nuanced realities of women's lives. The emergence of AI in the artistic landscape introduces a new dimension to these ongoing conversations. While AI presents unprecedented possibilities for innovation and creativity, it also raises critical questions about authorship, authenticity, and the future of art itself (Roose, 2022; Egon, et al., 2023; Doherty, 2019). For women artists, AI can be both a threat and an enabler, offering tools that can expand artistic expression but also potentially exacerbating existing inequalities. How women artists navigate this new terrain may be an indicator of the future of art's intersection with technology, and its continued struggle on behalf of a world where art is accessible and valued, not as a luxury, but as a fundamental aspect of women's experience.

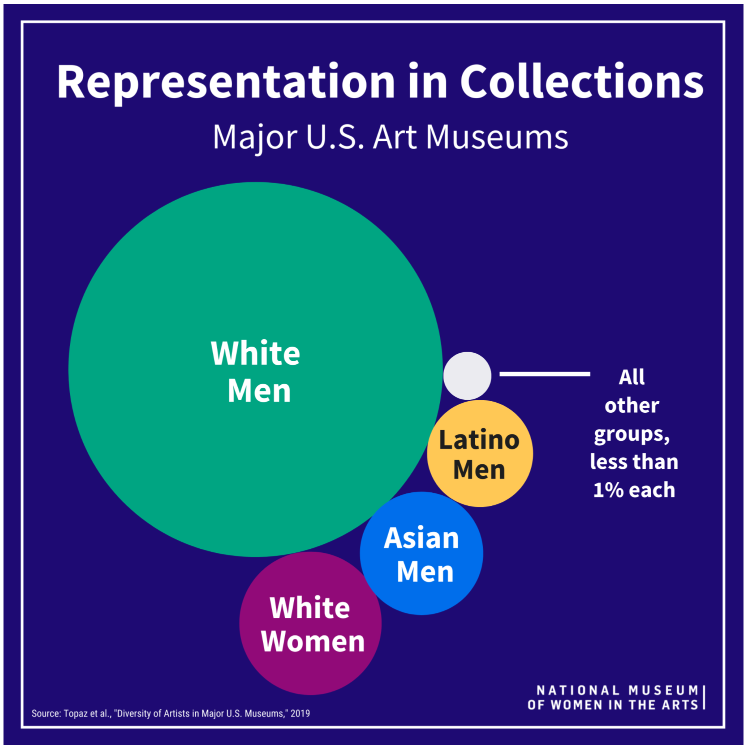
"Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"

Linda Nochlin's provocative and foundational 1971 essay, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" has served as a feminist catalyst for reevaluating the narratives surrounding women in the art world for decades. Her inquiry unpacks the institutional and societal frameworks that have historically marginalized women artists. This question dovetails with Christine Battersby's examination of the concept of genius within a feminist aesthetic, challenging the assumption that genius is inherently male (1989). Battersby's critique illuminates the pervasive influence of the male gaze, a concept that has fundamentally influenced not only the creation but also the reception of art.

The male gaze, as theorized by Laura Mulvey and later expanded upon by bell hooks, reveals a cultural landscape where women are perpetually positioned as objects for male consumption (Mulvey, 1999; hooks, 2006). This gaze is not just voyeuristic but structural, deeply embedded in the art world's fabric, influencing both the creation of art and its reception. It dictates a binary where men are deemed powerful creators, while women are relegated to the role of passive muses or subjects of beauty (Green, 2011). Battersby underscores the dilemma women artists face, as they are inculcated with a patriarchal narrative that skews their self-perception and limits their historical models for emulation, “Women focus differently on the conventions which have been used to render them objects, since they stand in a different relationship with the history of those conventions than do men” (Battersby, 1994, p. 93). Women artists, particularly those of color, navigate a complex terrain where their self-knowledge and artistic identity are filtered through a predominantly white, male-dominated culture, preventing them from not only imagining themselves within their art but in questioning and transcending traditional norms.

The implications of the male gaze extend beyond individual self-perception to the systemic "othering" of women (hooks, 2006). This process of othering, where women are continually defined as the "other" in opposition to the male "norm," has profound implications for the art world (hooks, 2006). It not only shapes the themes and methods women may choose or feel compelled to explore but also affects their visibility and the valuation of their work. The historical othering of women is intricately linked to their limited representation in art history and the broader cultural narrative, reinforcing the notion that women's contributions, especially those of women of color, are rarely centered, and always secondary or peripheral (D’Souza, 2024).

An example from the art industry that demonstrates this marginalization is the disparity of gallery representation and art exhibitions between men and women artists, a problem that persists despite increased representation of women artists through 1980s to the 2000s, “...10% of galleries have no women on their books at all, while only eight percent represent more women than men. Almost half (48%) represent 25% or fewer women" (Shaw, 2019; Hessel, 2023). In addition, a study of 820,000 art exhibitions in 2018 revealed that only one third were by women artists (Shaw, 2019). Economist Clare McAndrew commented on the sociological underpinnings of this systemic marginalization and undervaluation, identifying "gatekeepers" such as museums, galleries, curators, media, and collectors who perpetuate this discrimination, noting that even when men and women produce comparable work, women artists are often paid less (Shaw, 2019). McAndrew also suggested the influence of socially constructed differences between male and female artworks could affect the valuation of art, skewed by a preference for traditionally male attributes.



Source: Topaz et al., "Diversity of Artists in Major U.S. Museums," 2019

Figure 1. Representation in Collections: Major U.S. Art Museums from Topaz, et al., “Diversity of Artists in Major U.S. Museums,” 2019.

This systemic othering of women, perpetuated by the male gaze, has tangible consequences for women artists' ability to create, be recognized, and remembered. It raises questions regarding who defines artistic genius and who is granted the opportunity to participate in the creation of art. As Nochlin, Battersby, Mulvey, and hooks collectively argue, challenging the male gaze and its resultant othering of women is not only about providing women artists with the same opportunities as their male counterparts. It is about fundamentally rethinking the criteria for greatness in art, recognizing the diverse perspectives and experiences that women bring to the canvas, and dismantling the patriarchal structures that have historically constrained their creativity and visibility.

The Feminist Lens

In discussing issues such as women's agency, adoption of AI, and women's gender roles and expectations, applying the lens of feminism and feminist aesthetics aids in this process by requiring a deeper reconsideration of why things are the way they are in terms of gender constructs (Butler, 1999). Creswell & Creswell (2018) also recommend utilizing a feminist lens to guide the overall qualitative research process to support the building of knowledge and meaning-making in this type of inquiry. This framework includes feminist thinkers as far back as Simone de Beauvoir, included in this research for her connection to philosophy and women's identity formation, to bell hooks and her seminal works outlining essential Black feminist thought (hooks, 2015).

Beginning with de Beauvoir's landmark work *The Second Sex*, this text holds significance as she critically examines the societal construction of womanhood and explores the role of culture in shaping women's identities (2011). de Beauvoir argues women have historically been defined and oppressed by a male-dominated world, causing purposeful marginalization and denying them a true sense of selfhood. In striving to transcend these limitations, she asserts, women must reject imposed roles and embrace their agency. Throughout her work, de Beauvoir advocates for a shift towards genuine autonomy and self-discovery as essential components of a woman's experience (de Beauvoir, 2011).

Fast forward to the prolific works of bell hooks, who defined significant scholarship in the intersectional feminist movement and Black feminist thought. hooks provided an important voice regarding the necessary changes within feminism to encourage the broader rethinking of women's sense of self in terms of identity, race and sexuality (2015). In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* she discusses the application of feminist thinking to work, which aligns with the examination of how AI changes women artists' process and professional opportunities, specifically ”women's economic exploitation” (hooks, 2015, p. 101). She advocates for “attributing value to all work women do” (hooks, 2015, p. 103), and “rethinking the nature of work” (hooks, 2015, p. 106). She also addresses the challenges unique to women of color, providing a foundation for this study's analysis of this group's experiences through the in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

Further exploring how the feminist lens can advance integral analysis of the marginalization and underrepresentation of women artists, various feminist studies present relevant implications including Berkers et al. (2019), who investigated the marginalization of women artists in newspaper coverage from 1955-2005. Through a quantitative analysis of 24 editions of newspaper titles and the use of constructed weeks to extrapolate coverage in their defined sample years, the authors found coverage of female artists was generally 20-25 percent and increased little over the fifty years (Berkers et al., 2016). This was attributed to dominant masculinity in journalism and the possibility of less successful women artists receiving newspaper coverage. The intention to quantify gender inequality in artistic media coverage supports the assertion of this study that there is a lack of female representation in art media. There are additional underlying reasons, one of which is advanced by Gear, 2001.

Gear states, “The relationship between women and machines, and the problematics of identity, technology, and the body is a complex terrain" (Gear, 2001, p. 321). She describes the concept of the "monstrous-feminine" or woman as monster, which is referenced in Greek philosophy to horror films (Gear, 2001, p. 321-322). The idea that a woman is a mistake, abnormal, and "other," connects to Battersby's (1989) work in feminist aesthetics. Gear's foregrounding of this othering provides support for why women are marginalized in the art community - in opportunities from sales to media coverage. It also requires a moment of thought on women's identity: how art informs who she is, and how who she is informs her art. Gear (2001) viscerally demonstrates through many examples, photos of the art, and analysis how women choosing to represent the monstrous-feminine in their art commit the greatest transgression, making the subconscious, conscious.

In examining the marginalization of women artists, Tesfagiorgis (1993) presents compelling arguments and advocacy calling for a discourse on Black women artists, to combat the historical and ongoing negation and marginalization of this group. While written in the 1990s, Tesfagiorgis' explication draws on hooks' thinking on the power of discourse and still rings true today. Black women are exoticized and objectified, their work is rejected and "othered," and generalizations are made based on race and gender stereotypes (Tesfagiorgis, 1993, p. 232-233). She encourages and chronicles acts of self-determination of Black women artists against the "Euro-patriarchy," urging the art world to take both high and low forms of art into account and think through how systemic, internalized racism can affect what is taught about art and what is thought about art (Tesfagiorgis, 1993, p. 238). This is essential to understanding and supporting the perspectives of the women of color included in the qualitative interviews of this thesis.

These examples, each employing the feminist lens in distinct yet interconnected ways, collectively lay the foundation for the exploration of feminist aesthetics, a topic that is further elaborated upon in the following section.

Feminist Aesthetics: Evolving Definitions of Art, and Who Decides

In thinking through the historical definitions of and communications about art, it is important to revisit how those distinctions were made. Who defines what art is becomes an increasingly important question as it is redefined by AI. Tracing these definitions of art leads as far back as Plato and Socrates (Haskins, 1989). This section begins with Kant, as a defining philosopher who is credited with standard-setting definitions of art, beauty and the sublime (Haskins, 1989). These conclusions were reached from a white male perspective, which will be compared with Langer and subsequent female voices to demonstrate how art definition and the role of women in art changed over time (Kant, 1987; Langer, 1953).

Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* (1987) is employed in an effort to start at the beginning of who defined the answer to “what is art?” Regarded as one of the main philosophers who laid the foundation for art philosophy and aesthetics, Kant’s thinking regarding the definition of art and what makes a work of art beautiful or sublime became the standard, and to many still is, in art and art philosophy (Kant, 1987; Haskins, 1989). His definition of art lies in the creative exercise of skill and imagination in the production of an object that is aesthetically pleasing and finely crafted. Unlike nature, which operates according to predetermined laws and purposes, art is differentiated by its ability to evoke aesthetic pleasure through the harmony of its form and the free play of the faculties of understanding and imagination (Kant, 1987). Kant's definition of art emphasizes its capacity to engage the viewer's reflective judgment and transcend utility, making it an essential component of human experience and aesthetic appreciation (Kant, 1987).

Kant introduced the concept of 'disinterested pleasure' as the foundational principle of aesthetic judgment (1987). This idea posits that true aesthetic appreciation arises from a viewer's ability to engage with art without any desire for possession or utilitarian purpose, allowing for a pure, subjective response that is universal yet personal. Kant further distinguishes between the beautiful and the sublime, the former being the harmony of form that pleases the senses, and the latter an overwhelming greatness that transcends beauty, evoking a mix of pleasure and fear. Kant's notions challenge us to reconsider how aesthetic judgments are formed in the digital age, where the lines between the creator, the medium, and the viewer are increasingly blurred. His emphasis on the subjective universality of beauty and the sublime offers a lens through which we can explore how AI-generated art is received and critiqued, suggesting that the essence of aesthetic experience remains constant, even as the methods and media of art evolve. However, his work on creative genius and the role of the artist firmly centers men as the only option in both, as Kant actively questioned whether women were capable of thinking rationally (Kant, 1987; Battersby, 1989).

Kant, in his writings, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* and the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, expressed views that reflect the gender biases of his time, often relegating women to roles of lesser morality, rationality and capability compared to men (Mikkola, 2011). These perspectives, problematic by today's standards, contrast sharply with the ideals of universal subjectivity and the disinterested pleasure in art that he champions. This juxtaposition invites a critical examination of how Kant's aesthetics might be applied or reconsidered in a modern setting that increasingly acknowledges and celebrates the contributions of women in art and technology. The endeavor to reconcile Kant's aesthetic theories with his negative views toward women demonstrates the systemic obstacles women artists have faced through the centuries, which are essential considerations in any contemporary discourse on gender, creativity, and the evolving landscape of art produced in the time of AI.

When juxtaposed with women art philosophers such as Langer, the different perspectives of how the evolution, production, and communication around art becomes more apparent. Langer's *Feeling and Form* (1953) is a stepping stone toward feminist aesthetics. Langer is regarded as the first female art philosopher, and this text provides a window into a woman's thinking on defining art and art philosophy in 1953. She grounds her discussion of art in a holistic approach that integrates philosophy, psychology, and art theory, focusing on the human elements of feeling and emotion. Philosophers before her focused on the intellectual and formal structures of art. In this difference, it is worthwhile to look at how a woman brought emotion (a human trait) into art definition and analysis. If art is communication, Langer aids in understanding more about its evolving past definitions, who was defining it, and what that may mean for present/future definitions alongside AI (Langer, 1953).

As the 1950s gave way to the radical thought of the 1960s, with the women's liberation movement and feminism taking center stage, the field of feminist aesthetics emerged. The role of who decides what art is began to shift with female art philosophers and critics entering the field, which changed the meaning of both art and artist (Battersby, 1989; Sontag, 1966). This led the women of feminist aesthetics to fully question who and why art was defined the way it was. They also unearthed key factors in the art world that perpetuated the underrepresentation still seen among contemporary women artists today, many still in question and possibly compounded by the advent of AI (Battersby, 1989; Sontag, 1966).

Battersby (1989) describes the concept of feminist aesthetic thinking and advocates for rethinking beauty and the sublime given these ideas were defined without the inclusion of female voices. Her work provides a through line from the foundationalist thinking around the definition of art to a feminist lens. Referencing *The Second Sex* (2011) and de Beauvoir's philosophies on the female experience, Battersby applies them to art in her work *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (1989). She explores the intersections of gender and creativity, challenging conventional notions of genius that have often excluded or marginalized women (Battersby, 1989). By highlighting the unique experiences and contributions of women artists, Battersby sought to redefine the concept of genius and promote a feminist approach to aesthetics that acknowledges the rich and varied artistic achievements of women throughout history (Battersby, 1989). Her work aligns with this research in its aim to reshape the discourse around art, creativity, and gender, clearing a path for a more equitable and comprehensive appreciation of artistic talent and achievement (Battersby, 1989).

Sontag (1966) operates in the same vein, although from a more critical perspective, asserting, "Art is the army by which human sensibility advances implacably into the future, with the aid of ever newer and more formidable techniques" (Sontag, 1966, p. 100). Sontag's laser sharp observations on art - history, definition, philosophy and ultimately meaning - are prescient and radical. Boldly questioning the status quo, she offers an honest woman-centered perspective on the role of art in society, its strengths and weaknesses, as well as unabashed critiques of those who deigned to didactically or hermeneutically dissect and interpret art to the point where meaning is lost (Sontag, 1966). The 1960s saw much technological change in art as well as the rise of avant gardism, a boundary-pushing form of art much like the art created with AI under current debate, which Sontag critiques (1966). Although centered in a white woman's perspective, Sontag's perspective on the role of art in society amidst social upheaval offers an unexpected place for connecting art to AI; a bridge between philosophical art and adoption of new art forms. Keeping the perspectives of feminist aesthetics in mind, this research turns to AI itself - its history and relevant innovations - in the next section.

Defining and Understanding Artificial Intelligence

The field of artificial intelligence may seem new but it has been present since 1956 when Dartmouth College professor John McCarthy first coined the term (Kaplan, 2021). Early AI research focused on rule-based systems and symbolic reasoning, yielding successes like ELIZA in 1966, an early natural language processing computer program that could converse (Kaplan, 2021). The 1980s and 1990s saw AI vacillate between optimism and skepticism, driven by systems mimicking human expertise but facing limitations (Kaplan, 2021). The late 1990s brought a revival through machine learning and milestones such as IBM's Deep Blue defeating a human chess champion in 1997 (Kaplan, 2021). The 2010s saw breakthroughs in neural networks for language processing, exemplified by Google's AlphaGo defeating a human champion at the game Go in 2015, reinvigorating global interest in artificial intelligence as an evolving and impactful tool (Kaplan, 2021). Finally, the introduction of ChatGPT to the general public in late 2022 set off a firestorm of interest and adoption, the likes of which have not been seen in technology disruption in decades (Sider, 2023; Roose, 2023).

This brief history illustrates how AI is not one thing, but many. Kaplan (2021) summarizes and discusses the many definitions of AI and the interconnected technologies it encompasses. The consensus of the definitions lies in how well a system can understand external information, learn from it, and then use what it has learned to achieve certain goals and tasks by adapting in a flexible way (Kaplan, 2021). The types of AI that are relevant to this thesis are machine learning, natural language processing, and image generators such as Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), and diffusion models such as Midjourney and Stable Diffusion.

ChatGPT will also be examined due to the quick adoption of the tool as an industry standard in text generation (Sider, 2023).

Machine learning (ML) is an AI technology that powers software applications with the ability to refine their predictive capacities without explicit programming directives from humans (Brown, 2021). Unlike conventional modes of programming which necessitate the definition of rules to address specific problems, ML allows computers and data processing to learn from algorithms, enhancing their proficiency in predicting outcomes (Brown, 2021). Current applications of ML include image and speech recognition, recommendation systems, and financial modeling. Along the same line, natural language processing (NLP) is a subset of AI that facilitates seamless human-computer interaction using language (Chowdhary, 2020). Virtual assistants like Siri and Alexa are examples of NLPs that understand speech, process queries, and perform tasks (Chowdhary, 2020). An adjacent advancement is the surge of language models and chatbots, exemplified by ChatGPT, which underpin various language tasks. ChatGPT, created by OpenAI, comprehends and generates human-like text, aiding in research, task completion, and offering information based on the prompt given (Chow, 2023). These AI-driven technologies, rooted in machine learning, harness massive textual data to create efficient human-like language interactions (Chow, 2023).

Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) are image generators that operate through a dynamic interplay between two neural networks, the generator and the discriminator. The generator generates synthetic data, such as images, while the discriminator evaluates the authenticity of both real and generated data. Through a competitive process, the generator refines its output to deceive the discriminator, aiming to produce data that is increasingly difficult to distinguish from real examples. Simultaneously, the discriminator hones its ability to differentiate between real and generated data. This iterative adversarial training leads to the generator producing remarkably realistic data that can exhibit complex patterns and structures, making GANs a powerful tool for tasks such as image synthesis, style transfer, and data augmentation (Bentley, 2023; Mazzone & Elgammal, 2019).

As Mazzone and Elgammal (2019) describe, GANs have been adapted as a tool for artistic output. Written by the researchers who created the AICAN GANs system, one of the first successful AI art technologies, their article serves as a reminder that AI is created by humans - these are scientists and artists who created AICAN, which humanizes an innovation that intimidates with its skill and speed. The authors provide a strong history of graphic AI development over the last 50 years and utilize two illuminating historical examples that aid in understanding the introduction of a new technology and how it changes the communication around art forms: photography and the computer’s ability to replicate photos (Mazzone & Elgammal, 2019). Both were met with consternation and both revolutionized thinking around art, which fits with this thesis’ theoretical framework of diffusion of innovations theory (Mazzone & Elgammal, 2019; Rogers, 2003). The authors’ conceptualization of AI as a medium is also helpful in thinking about the technology as a communication tool in itself, which provides support for the creative, graphic-driven ways in which women artists may choose to use AI (Mazzone & Elgammal, 2019).

Diffusion models have taken center stage in image generation. Diffusion models are a type of generative AI that learn to generate images, text, or audio through a process of gradually adding and then removing noise from an initial random input (Kulkarni, et al., 2023). This can be envisioned as trying to unscramble a noisy TV screen to reveal a clear picture underneath. These models start with a random scatter of digital "noise" — a chaotic, meaningless pattern. Over several steps, this noise is gradually shaped into a structured image, akin to slowly tuning the TV until the picture becomes clear and sharp. The forward leap lies in the model's ability to learn from examples of how images can degrade and then apply that knowledge in reverse to clean up the noise and reveal detailed, high-quality images. This offers a new way to create and enhance images, with potential applications that span from art creation to improving the quality of medical imaging .

This area of AI has been significantly enriched by the advent of Large-scale Text-to-Image Generative Models (LTGMs), which are designed to create images from textual descriptions. This technology has rapidly evolved, with tools like DALL-E, MidJourney, and Stable Diffusion emerging as frontrunners across various fields, including art (Martinez, et al., 2023; Turchi, et al., 2023). While these tools are currently being used by many artists and open up new avenues for creativity, their impact on user creativity and control over the outcomes remains in question. Particularly, the open-source model Stable Diffusion, introduced by Stability AI in collaboration with CompVis and LAION, has been a game-changer by enhancing image controllability. This breakthrough, evidenced by its substantial financing and valuation, alongside MidJourney's ability to produce hyper-realistic images from simple text prompts, demonstrates the unfolding potential of LTGMs in AI-generated content, from anime-style transformations to vividly reimagined urban landscapes (Martinez, et al., 2023; Turchi, et al., 2023). These developments point to a new era in digital creativity but also raise intriguing questions about the future interaction between humans and AI in the collaborative creative process.

AI + Art: Collaborations, Concerns and Communications

The story of art and AI collaboration is a complex narrative that begins in the nascent stages of computational creativity to the current era of deep learning and neural networks, revealing a sometimes helpful, sometimes fraught relationship between human and machine.

Generative art started in the mid-20th century, with artists and computer scientists using primitive computers to create art, setting the stage for the more advanced and autonomous systems like Harold Cohen's AARON in the subsequent decades (Egon, et al., 2023). Over the years, AI transitioned from a tool for creating simple patterns to a sophisticated collaborator capable of generating intricate artworks, music compositions, literary works, and film-related content. Categorizations of AI in the creative process into generative, assistive, analytical, and hybrid models highlight the diverse ways in which AI engages with and enhances human creativity, offering new opportunities for artistic expression that challenge traditional notions of authorship and creativity (Egon, 2023).

The advent of neural style transfer (NST) marked a pivotal moment in the integration of AI technologies within the art world. NST leveraged Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) to dissect and recombine the content and style of images, pioneering a new form of artistic expression. Although this technique opened up novel avenues for image manipulation, it also prompted discussions on the nature of these elements in art, highlighting a distinction between aesthetic alterations and genuine creativity. The technology's ease of use spurred widespread application in photo manipulation for entertainment, yet it raised concerns regarding the superficiality of considering all modified outputs as art, emphasizing the challenge in creating truly meaningful and original works through NST (Cetinic & She, 2022).

Simultaneously, the development of GANs introduced a revolutionary method for generating new visual content, propelling the AI art movement forward. The dynamic between the generator and discriminator in GANs facilitated the production of highly realistic images, fostering advancements and specialization within the field, such as CycleGAN, StyleGAN, and BigGAN (Doherty, 2019; Cetinic & She, 2022; Mazzone & Elgammal, 2019). Further innovation came with AICAN, as previously described, to generate creative art by diverging from established styles, thereby addressing the critique that GANs merely replicate existing art forms. The introduction of transformer-based architectures and models like DALL·E and CLIP further expanded the possibilities for AI in art, allowing for the generation of images from textual descriptions and contributing to the growing trend of cross-modal artistic creation. These technological strides have significantly influenced the contemporary AI art scene, sparking debates around authorship, ethics, and the essence of originality and novelty in art, particularly in the wake of high-profile sales and the increasing visibility of AI-generated art (Cetinic & She, 2022).

The application of AI across various artistic domains - ranging from visual arts and music to literature, film, and Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) - illustrates the transformative impact of AI on the creative industries. AI algorithms can autonomously generate paintings and illustrations, augmenting and influencing creative processes. The rise of AI-generated artworks in the NFT market further highlights the economic implications and new opportunities presented by the intersection of AI, art, and blockchain technology (Egon, 2023).

Despite the promising advancements, the integration of AI into art is filled with challenges and ethical dilemmas, including copyright disputes, questions of authorship, and the preservation of the human element in creativity. The potential for AI to perpetuate biases present in training data and to diminish the value of human creativity through over-reliance on technology are significant concerns (Egon, 2023). By analyzing the interaction between AI and art, insights are gained into the evolving world of women artists, shedding light on the potential shifts and complexities introduced by AI in the artistic domain. The question becomes: how does art change when influenced by AI, and what does this mean for women artists and the creative process? With AI-generated art gaining recognition, winning art competitions, auctions, and increasing in value, it is essential to keep women artists, and their potential for re-marginalization, in mind (Roose, 2022; Doherty, 2019).

By examining how AI's logical approach contributes to artistic creation, much research focuses on the redefinition of art and the creative process (Audry & Ippolito, 2019; Doherty, 2019). Doherty (2019) presents concepts around the history and use of GANs, laying out the advantages and disadvantages of this technology and discusses the larger implications of using AI in the art world. This research brings up important questions within art and science in terms of how AI is programmed to produce art, as different languages are used between the disciplines which lead to different results when science is involved in creating art. This paper also discusses AI’s influence on the artistic process, sale and promotion of art, all factors that affect the women artists explored in this thesis (Doherty, 2019).

Audry and Ippolito (2019) pose the question as to whether machines can really produce art, while presenting a comprehensive summary of the artists who first worked with computers and early AI. They explore what makes an artist and how that role compares to the emerging artist function of a machine (Audry & Ippolito, 2019). Especially notable is their discussion of the “meta-artist” and its presence or removal which helps give an updated context to traditional understandings of an artist (Audry & Ippolito, 2019). They assert that whether one is able to see the construction of the art or not makes a difference, and with AI, one does not, so it is then relegated to a different type of art (Audry & Ippolito, 2019). In a similar vein, Zheng, et al. (2022) connect the philosophical ideas around computing and science to AI and art. The authors make a poignant observation regarding how the creativity of AI is based on logic. They connect philosopher John Searle who opined on strong and weak AI based on “the cognitive abilities of computers and their psychological and philosophical meanings” (Zheng et al., 2022), and McLuhan who ventured that any medium extends the human sensory experience. A detailed example is given regarding the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics as a large-scale art project representing a comprehensive use of AI (Zheng et al., 2022). The process of AI artistic creation is described through its advantages like large scale digital art, however limitations such as access to AI and the amount of training required to achieve these feats were also present.

Theoretical Framework: Diffusion of Innovations

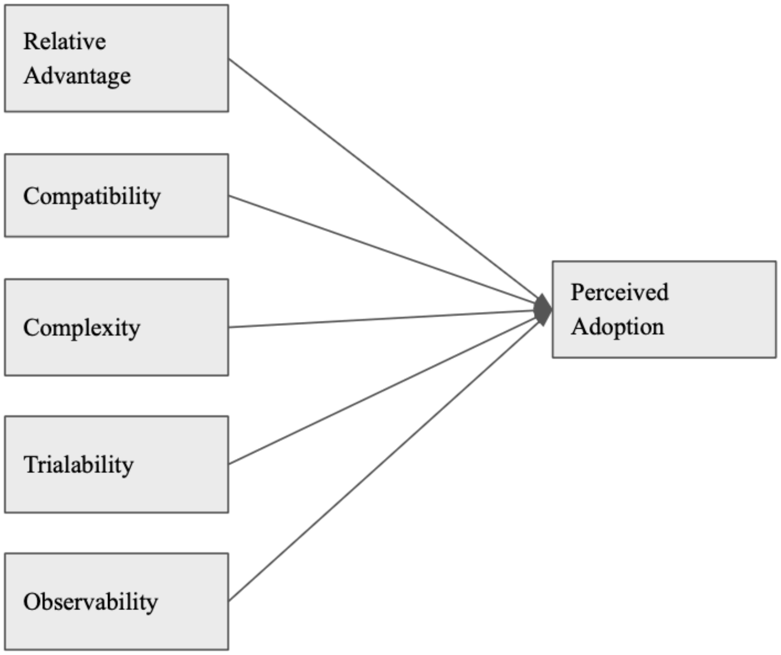
AI continues to be broadly defined and generally misunderstood (Kaplan, 2021). Diffusion of innovations provides a clear communications theoretical framework for this thesis with which to process how innovations such as AI are adopted in society and in an area of expertise like art, specifically by women. The discussion of values, beliefs, and experiences that Rogers (2003) includes as factors by which people will choose to adopt or not aids in thinking through what the implications are of AI adoption by women artists. It also provides a window into the possible reasons why women may not adopt AI and how the decision-making process can lead to either increased opportunity or add to continued marginalization.

Diffusion of innovations is a well-established theory that clearly defines concepts like the innovation-decision process, diffusion and its relationship to communication, and the role of all of these factors in social change (Rogers, 2003). As women artists experience upheaval in their discipline, these elements are employed to organize and refine data analysis and aid in presenting a holistic view of their experience. Rogers’ four main elements of diffusion of innovations - innovation, communication channel, time, and social system — will serve to structure analysis around the adoption of this technology by women in art.

This thesis utilizes Rogers' five attributes of innovation - relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability - in evaluating key themes and findings (Rogers, 2003). Given its many years of implementation and analysis, this theory will serve as a strong foundation for AI-driven research that continues to unfold at a breakneck pace. Figure 2 illustrates the elements of diffusion of innovations that will be utilized.

Figure 2

Attributes of Innovations



Note. Diffusion of innovations. Attributes of Innovations (Rogers, 2003).

A recent diffusion of innovations study illustrates how its usage can enhance this study. "How one identifies also plays an important role in the adoption of innovations," posited Holman and Perreault (2022) in a recent study using diffusion of innovations in journalists' adoption of technology along gender lines. Women journalists lagged behind men in technology adoption and were questioned more often about use and knowledge of the technology, illustrating the complexity around the issue of technology for many women artists and the potential adoption of AI. Through 68 qualitative interviews with digital journalists, the authors found women in digital journalism are adopting technology at a similar rate as men. However, the study also revealed the women felt they lacked personal agency and experienced challenges like lack of childcare, as compared to the men (Holman & Perreault, 2022). Ultimately, the overall purpose of this framework is to act as a bridge, linking the realm of women artists to the AI technology they are considering.

In conclusion, women artists navigate a complex world, marked by systemic marginalization and the potential impact of AI on their creative processes and modes of communication. This review of the literature highlights key changes in how art has traditionally been understood, how feminist thinking reshaped that understanding, and the controversial role of AI in driving societal transformation and disruption within the art realm. These shifts are massive: the present role of AI can be compared to the emergence of the internet in the early 1990s, leading to similar substantial societal changes that affect how women artists convey their artistic expressions, all of which will be explored through this study's qualitative research design (Economic Times, 2023). In the following methods section, details of the in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 women artists will be explained along with key findings.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This methodology section will outline how this research was conducted. It describes the study's research design and participant recruitment. It concludes with the study's methods regarding data collection and data analysis.

Research Design

This thesis employed a qualitative approach, situated in a constructivist perspective, utilizing grounded theory for analysis. The constructivist philosophical perspective was selected because "Social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" and "The more open-ended the questioning, the better…" which fit the objectives of this thesis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). Along the same line, as grounded theory is "a design of inquiry from sociology in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action or interaction grounded in the views of the participants," this design matched the knowledge-building this study sought (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13). Because the grounded theory approach involves several phases of gathering data to hone and establish links among related information it was an effective method to use in this research.

Qualitative interviews were chosen for two reasons. First, they allow researchers to explore and understand the subjective realities and varied interpretations of participants, "Interviews net useful, detailed information and are a hallmark of good qualitative research" and secondly, due to the personal nature of the topic which necessitates a nuanced understanding of individuals' experiences, perspectives, and emotions (Creswell, 2018; Creswell, 2020, p. 133; Sutton, 1993). Qualitative interviews provided a private, focused setting for this research that prioritized the participants and facilitated the discussion of sensitive, personal topics (Creswell, 2018; Hancock, et al., 2001; Lindlof & Taylor, 2017; Jankowski & Jensen, 2002; Jensen, 2013).

Qualitative interviews are recognized as a valuable methodology in feminist social science research as feminism's second wave exposed the male domination and gendering of the practice (Oakley, 2015). Given the insights gained from the data are specific to women, this method is best suited to examining this inquiry's research questions. Further, interviews capture rich data that better reflect the complexity of the issues surrounding women artists' experiences with AI and its influence on their communications about their creative process and art (Kasperiuniene, 2021). An example of the women's communications around AI include whether they have increased or decreased social media promotions of their art due to the presence of AI, or if they have used AI to produce such content. The interviews collected rich data which "enables us to present a complex portrait of a project and present the many different perspectives individuals might have on the topic" (Creswell, 2020, p. 108). Examples of the topics discussed in this case would include the creative process of women artists and their lived experiences regarding media representation, emotional labor, and career opportunities in the art industry and its associated media.

The qualitative research practice allows the researcher to gather multiple forms of data including interviews, observations, notes, and audio/video recordings, which, in this study, aided in providing a comprehensive view into the advantages and disadvantages of AI's introduction into the world of women artists (Creswell, 2018). The sample was purposive in order to gain understanding of how AI technology may be propelling women artists forward, or how it might be holding them back. While there is a substantial body of research regarding the intersection of art and AI in the existing literature, the application of qualitative interviews targeting a particular population to explore their perspectives on AI and its implications remains limited (Audry & Ippolito, 2019; Doherty, 2019; Mazzone & Elgammal, 2019). Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews in a cross sectional, narrative approach, this study investigated the experiences, beliefs and motivations of women artist participants with the objective of providing an increased understanding of this group's perspective as they choose whether to adopt or reject AI in their work (Creswell, 2018).

Role of the Researcher

In keeping with Creswell & Creswell's (2018) recommendation to include the role of the researcher within the research design of the study, the following is a reflexive statement that has been used throughout the project: I am a woman and artist who comes from a family of artists. This drives my interest in the human connection around art amidst technological advances. I understand my personal biases and have practiced reflexivity throughout the study. I am a white, queer woman and I acknowledge how the privilege of my race, background and socioeconomic status may influence my research and worldview.

Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative interviews as a method came with strengths and weaknesses. A first strength was the ability to delve deeply into the subject matter with participants to gain a deeper understanding of the problem at hand (Creswell, 2018). This allows the participants to have a voice in the research, which prioritizes their perspectives as the researcher stays focused on the meanings interviewees present about the issue (rather than the researcher's own views) (Creswell, 2018). A second advantage was that the study is adaptable and flexible. Based on the answers received, the researcher may update research and interview questions along the way to reflect what the inquiry needs at different points in time, which was important in this research due to the evolving nature of AI. Probes and clarifications during the interviews also allow for flexibility as a tool the interviewer can use to clarify complex ideas of the interview and ensure the understanding of the information given is correct (Creswell, 2018). A final strength is the holistic, contextual data captured in qualitative interviews. Developing a nuanced, multifaceted view into the problem studied, this method provided context not captured by other techniques that can enhance the overall understanding of a complex topic such as the one at hand (Creswell, 2018).

A main weakness of qualitative interviews is the potential for subjectivity or bias on the part of the researcher (Carr, 1994; Ratner, 2002; Bedos, et al., 2009). The interviewer must refrain from influencing the interview questions, data collection and analysis by reflexively identifying biases throughout the study (Creswell, 2018).

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The timeframe for data collection in this study was January 2023 through January 2024. Once Syracuse University IRB approval was confirmed in the exempt category, a recruitment list of potential participants was curated (see Appendix A). This study secured 20 interviews using the following sampling criteria: participants identifying as women (this includes trans and all members of the LGBTQ+ community), active visual fine artists (painting, illustration, or similar), who are on social media. Exclusion criteria included: artistic disciplines outside of those defined, identities other than women, and those located outside the U.S.

To amass a diverse sample, including women artists of color from various backgrounds, locations and age cohorts, participants were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive and snowball sampling allow for the selection of participants from specific groups and were utilized in order to facilitate the recruitment of the most diverse sample possible. Snowball sampling was important to this research in particular as it affords researchers the opportunity to use their contacts to explore potential participants through networking and referrals, continuing until a target size is reached (Parker, et al., 2019; Salendab & Laguda, 2023). This was employed in this research with networks of the researcher activated through social media such as Instagram and Facebook with communications through direct message, as well as networking via email introductions. Special attention was given to recruiting racially diverse participants to provide an intersectional representation of all women artist experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). Direct messages via email and social media platforms were employed, as well as research of gallery listings and outreach to local artists of color community groups.

The resulting sample included: 17 white women, three women of color, and six participants who identified as LGBTQ+. Geographic locations and age cohorts varied with Gen Z, Millennial, Gen X, and Baby Boomers represented. Figure 1 provides an overview of participant demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Demographic	*n*	%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	17	85
Asian	2	10
Black	1	5
Age Cohort		
Baby Boomer	3	15
Gen X	12	60
Millennial	4	20
Gen Z	1	5
Sexuality		
Straight	14	70
Queer	2	10
Bisexual	2	10
Pansexual	1	5
Location (State)		
New York	5	25
Oregon	9	45
Massachusetts	2	10
California	1	5

Virginia	1	5
New Mexico	1	5
New Jersey	1	5

Note. *N* = 20. Age cohorts were defined using Pew Research Center (Dimock, 2019).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected using Zoom video calls. A request was made that participants ideally conduct the interview from their artist's studio for increased context in the site location and many did. An interview protocol was set and followed through each interview (Appendix B). Interviewees were read Syracuse University's IRB-approved informed consent document, they provided verbal consent and were emailed a copy of the form. All interviews were recorded. Participants were asked to give basic demographic information and participate in 20-30 minute in-depth, semi-structured interviews of approximately 14 questions each. The data obtained included videos, transcripts, observational notes and field notes. Descriptive and reflective notes were written post-interview to record initial thoughts and emotional reactions. Examples of interview questions follow to show the range of inquiry (see Appendix A for full list of questions):

- What types of social media or websites do you use to communicate about your art?
- Have you had to shift or update your approach to promoting your work in social and digital media because of AI?
- Women have historically received less opportunities for showing their art, and have received less media coverage/promotional opportunities than men. From your perspective is this changing and does AI affect any shifts?

Moving into data analysis, all interviews were transcribed using Otter AI. After transcript cleaning, recorded interviews were rewatched and, per the grounded theory analysis process, a round of open, descriptive coding was conducted. Descriptive coding allows the researcher to assign initial descriptions and codes to emerging themes in the data, “The construction of meaning from collected data is the result of the progressive data coding process” (Williams & Moser, 2019, p. 46; Saldana, 2021; Holton, 2007). After another round of interview viewing, a second round of axial coding was completed. Axial coding requires filtering out redundant codes, forming connections between themes, and constructing a hierarchical organization in the analysis (Saldana, 2021). Key themes were entered into NVivo software for further analysis. NVivo is a software that assists in organizing and analyzing insights in data such as these interviews, providing streamlined aggregation of artist insights (Tang, 2023). All transcripts were uploaded, detailed codes and subcodes were created, and NVivo queries were run to visually analyze results and key findings. Once key findings were identified, this study’s theoretical framework, diffusion of innovations, was applied to provide structure to the results, as demonstrated by the following results section.

Chapter 4: Results

This section will review the findings from this study. It will begin with an overview of how the findings were analyzed using diffusion of innovations theory, alongside key themes. The feminist lens will be referenced where applicable. The findings are organized into five distinct themes. Each theme will be examined individually, incorporating participant responses and linking these observations to the theoretical framework. These findings will explore the study's three main research questions:

RQ1: How are women artists choosing to incorporate AI in their work?

RQ1a: Why are women artists choosing not to incorporate AI in their work?

RQ1b: What are the implications of the choice to include AI or not in women artists' work?

RQ2: How is AI impacting how women artists communicate through their art?

RQ2a: How is AI influencing the artistic process of women artists?

RQ3: How is AI changing how women artists communicate and react online - through legacy and social media - about their art?

Insights gained from this study will contribute to the existing research by highlighting AI's dual role as both a communication tool and artistic medium, specifically focusing on its applications, opportunities, and challenges for women artists of differing age groups and backgrounds. Regarding age groups specifically, generational cohorts emerged organically from the research, with many individuals self-identifying with groups such as Millennials or Gen X. This identification often surfaced as participants reflected on their life and artistic experiences, even at times commenting about how their age cohort may influence their perspective on AI and its potential adoption. To provide an additional foundation for this area of the research, age cohort definitions from the Pew Research Center were applied (Dimock, 2019). As demonstrated further in the key findings, the emergence of this element allowed further understanding of the varied insights and opinions across different generations.

In attending to the research questions of this study, Table 2 provides a summary of the reported adoption or rejection of AI in the women artists' creative process and communications. "Open" is included as several artists reported being open to AI and curious about it, where they might integrate it into their work in the future, but had not yet taken action. Overall the participants demonstrated a high awareness and foundational knowledge of AI. All had a basic idea of what AI is and how it works, whether they were adopting it or not. The upcoming theme analysis section will provide further detail and insights into the perspectives of both adopters and rejectors regarding AI and its role in art.

Table 2

Summary of Participant AI Adoption or Rejection

Participant	*n*	%
Adopted, Open	9	45
Rejected	11	55

Analysis of the 20 interviews initially produced 17 coding nodes in NVivo, which were then distilled into five main themes. These themes were then compared with the five attributes of innovations via the diffusion of innovations theory. This theory also provides four elements with which to consider how innovations are diffused: the innovation itself, the communication channels, time, and the social system. Each of these elements are relevant on a macro level to the themes explored in the interviews with AI as the innovation being introduced to the women artists, within their communication channels and social system, for example. Table 3 provides a summary of this study's main findings.

Table 3

Summary of Key Findings

Theme	Finding
AI as an Unexpected Tool, Partner	Use of ChatGPT for administrative, writing tasks; incorporating Midjourney or DALL-E into the creative process.
The Creative Process is the Most Human Communication	Belief there are still artistic intangibles AI cannot touch; the artistic process is human at its core.
AI Generational Differences	Baby Boomers and Gen X showed increased trepidation, caution in approaching AI; Millennials and Gen Z already incorporated, using AI with less fear.
Women Artists Face Specific Obstacles and Benefits	Due to the historic marginalization of women artists, they face specific obstacles in garnering media coverage, gallery exhibits, representation and sales. AI is a new tool and a new competitor.
The Fearless and Curious Artist	Rather than pull back on social media posts and communication about their art, participants showed bravery and an increased inclination to promote more in the face of AI.

The results of the synthesis of the interview data themes and the diffusion of innovations theoretical framework are the following five themes which reflect the most impactful findings. Themes include key findings coupled with one of the five attributes of innovations to provide theoretical context to AI’s adoption or rejection within the social system and communication channels of the women artists. Each finding will be described in-depth with exemplar quotes from the in-depth, semi-structured interviews to further illustrate the perspective of the interviewees. Participants are numbered at random to preserve anonymity (i.e. Participant 3, or P3), with age cohort and artistic medium included in descriptors.

Relative Advantage: AI as an Unexpected Tool, Partner

A first key finding was the sheer level of awareness of AI, coupled with a majority perception and of AI as a potential partner and tool. All 20 interviewees had a foundational awareness and understanding of AI and were able to describe it when asked the question, “When I say the words artificial intelligence, what are the first things that come to mind?” Nine of the 20 women artists were positive about using AI as a supportive tool in their communications and creative process. Conversely, eleven participants felt negatively or outright rejected integrating the new technology into their work and communications. All sides of this issue demonstrate the utility of diffusion of innovations as a framework in this research, specifically the concept of relative advantage in the adoption of innovations. Relative advantage refers to how much an innovation is seen as an improvement over what it replaces, often measured in terms of prestige and perceived benefits, including the potential for enhanced social status (Rogers, 2003). This concept is a key factor in predicting how quickly an innovation is adopted. Understanding this provides insight into the motivations behind whether or not women artists choose to incorporate AI into their work.

Positive Incorporation of AI

A Millenial participant who shared a positive view on using AI was P1, a painter who felt strongly AI afforded her advantages not provided by prior technologies:

> And I welcome our AI overlords completely. I actually use Open AI ChatGPT to… it's kind of like a brainstorm partner for me. So I've used it to help write internet copy, write captions, write emails, write Facebook ads, but I've even used it to help name paintings…. I call it Charlie.

A key finding in this research is that, as P1 expressed, women artists are using AI in unexpected and innovative ways, not only in their art but also as a valuable tool for tasks they may find less enjoyable. They are using text generators such as ChatGPT to draft business documents such as artist statements, social media posts, and grant proposals. This approach demonstrates how AI has begun to serve as a partner, with P1 going so far as to call anything short of that ableist, allowing for the possibility of women artists to dedicate more time to their creative work. Several expressed that if they are not in the studio, they are not creating, and any time spent on the business/promotional side of the work takes them away from producing art. Applying this study's feminist lens, this connects back to hooks' feminist thinking regarding women and work. As P2, a Gen X painter said:

> ...we're always being asked to explain our work. And it's the most painstaking practice because you're making these visual things that you're kind of not really spending a lot of time writing about or putting into words. And then all of a sudden, they're like, great, write three paragraphs about this, we need to introduce words about your practice. I've created this out of my surreal mindscape and now I have to put it in practical terms that a boardroom would understand and want to give money to. And so there's something very seductive about the idea of, Oh, I could just put these sorts of things in ChatGPT. And boom, I'd have a grant.

Artists who go a step further, incorporating AI into their creative process are navigating new territory and face several important considerations. They described thinking through the extent to which they should rely on generative AI tools in creating art, wondering at what point the use of AI might overshadow their personal artistic identity, and where the boundary lies between collaboration and over-reliance on AI. Those employing AI maintain a cautious approach, treating it as a tool that must be used very carefully to ensure it complements rather than dominates their creative expression. P9, a Gen Z painter expressed this:

> There's still got to be some level of human interference in the AI art making process, which I actually think is really cool. And I think what I'm hoping for and what we're

> gonna see is people that are AI specialists, that are like, I love the process of tweaking. I guess it's gotten to the media coverage, I've seen a few scary fear mongering, like art is dead, but mostly I've seen people on Tik Tok and Instagram that are like, I spent four hours getting this output on AI and then editing it and making it look really good. They'll show kind of a comparison of everything that they put in to get the output and then all the edits that they made. And I don't know to me that's still in line with what I view as art and that's why it's a tool.

Several participants felt AI can significantly enhance artistic creativity for those willing to embrace it. For instance, one artist shared how she planned on using AI to update the way she approached her large community mural work. She described how using AI to convert the mural design into what was effectively a paint-by-numbers guide that could be projected onto the wall, the process would become much faster and more efficient. While she acknowledged the possibility of completing the project without AI, the technology could prove helpful in managing the project's large scale and coordinating the involvement of numerous community participants. This would make a particularly challenging aspect of the artwork creation process that she is currently executing by hand in Procreate (a digital art technology) much easier.

Participant 12, a Millenial a visual artist who works in both physical paint and digital media, is fully embracing AI and creating art with it on a regular basis through Midjourney. She felt the diffusion model allowed her creativity to flow in new and different ways she had not experienced with other media. This artist expressed a freedom in the AI technology, experienced alongside a community of like-minded individuals on Discord where the art-making process takes place. In this way, AI added to her process and communications about art simultaneously as they became part of the same process:

> So you're in a Discord server and everyone else who's in that chat room with you is also using the bot to make art, so while you're making your art, you're watching everyone else make their art. And it's wild because it's all public. So if I see something that someone has made, and I'm like, I like that I can actually take over and say I want to see very little of this, I want to see upsizing of this. So nothing is owned by you. Which is so cool and freeing in a way because someone who works in photography you have to deal with ownership and licensing and copyright constantly and you guys sort of just gave me a free for all right now. Which is kind of what's fun about it.

This participant (P12) was one of the most active of the 20 artists in utilizing AI in her artwork. She captured the creative feelings using AI in art can elicit further:

> It's so wild, you feel drunk with power in a weird way. You're like I can make anything. Anything I want to see I can make. You get in there and you just go nuts. I think initially when I got in there I was really excited to make this in the style of this, and then you start evolving your own style, but then it's like, my own style. This is my own style. This is millions of conglomerated styles.

Negative Perceptions of Incorporating AI

Of the eleven participants who reported negative feelings toward incorporating AI into their art, process and communications, a few provided strong reactions toward the technology. Ranging from “haven’t thought that much about it,” (P3, Baby Boomer, painter) to “the AI world is is new and foreign to me” (P5, Millennial, digital visual artist), this demonstrates the other side of relative advantage, where the individual does not see a perceived gain in adopting the innovation, as P16, a Gen X painter, expressed:

> I'm not interested in using it for any kind of art making. I use it in my profession, or helping me finesse copywriting but that's about it. As a creative I already feel like I have the skills to create whatever art I want to create. I don't have to rely on something else to help me with that.

Several participants agreed with this sentiment, though some went even further conveying negative and fearful feelings about AI's encroachment on the art world, as seen in this statement from P18, a Baby Boomer painter:

> In general, I have this resistance. That's not a pang. I don't know what you call it, but it's some sort of resistance. It's some sort of like, hold on now. Let's not get too crazy because I get cautious and can't find the exact word I'm looking for. But just that wary, where who knows? Like, oh, like we need to monitor this because I see it, like yeah, I can look at it in a small way of creating art, creating music, but globally or when you hear these rants, some things like where they have someone's voice, so your daughter is kidnapped and it's scary.

In the same vein P15 (Baby Boomer, sculptor) conveys that there can be feelings of ambivalence and avoidance regarding AI for some artists:

> I have simply not been drawn. I'm not curious about it. Maybe it's because of my ignorance of it, you know, a lack of curiosity. It's almost like, what's the chicken and egg here? Is it ignorance that causes a lack of curiosity, or is it a lack of curiosity that causes ignorance? I don't know.

Compatibility: The Creative Process is the Most Human Communication

Compatibility, defined as the degree to which an innovation aligns with the adopters' existing values, past experiences, and needs, emerged as a critical lens through which the women artists evaluated the role of AI in their creative practices. This study’s findings regarding compatibility of adoption of AI showed a palpable skepticism among participants towards the integration of AI in art creation. The deep-seated belief among participants was that the artistic process is an inherently human act of communication, one that cannot be replicated or replaced by artificial intelligence. This perspective led to detailed discussions about the essence of art and what fundamentally constitutes artistic creation, expression and communication through art, as detailed in the feminist aesthetics discussion in the literature review.

The concept of compatibility suggests that innovations are more readily adopted when they resonate with the personal and cultural values of the individual, fitting into their existing worldviews and meeting a tangible need, which was not the case for the majority of these artists with AI (Rogers, 2003). As Rogers states, “The rate of adoption of a new idea is affected by the old idea that it supersedes” (Rogers, 2003, p. 224). Findings in this theme reveal a striking consensus among women artists regarding the role of AI in their work: it was largely deemed unnecessary, if not incompatible, with their artistic process and identity as creators. While there were instances of curiosity about the potential efficiencies AI might offer, such interest was fleeting and did not translate into a perceived need or desire to integrate AI into their creative practices.

This resistance can be attributed to a broader conceptualization of compatibility, encompassing not only the practical fit of the innovation with existing practices but also its alignment with deeper sociocultural values, beliefs, and the intrinsic definition of art itself. To the participants, the artistic process is not just a method of creation, but as a fundamental mode of human communication, embodying values and expressions that they felt were not commensurate with the capabilities of AI.

The Artistic, Creative Process as a Defining Mode of Expression and Communication

Participant 19, a Gen Z painter, captures a sentiment echoed by many participants: the artistic process is extremely personal and not easily shared with AI. They noted, “I'm a painter. I want to spend every day painting. That's my goal, to get to a place where a lot of these other parts of the process can be more systematic.” A few indicated a willingness to involve AI only for the more tedious or time-consuming tasks to streamline their workflow. However, even considering this limited engagement proved challenging for the majority. Among the participants, only one who frequently engages with digital imagery embraced the potential of integrating AI into their creative process. Three others expressed openness to the idea but have yet to actively implement AI in their art-making. An example of this potential for limited engagement comes from P10 (Baby Boomer, painter):

> And I think it's another tool. I mean, one of the things I do use in my art practice is digital experimentation. So I'll take a photo of a work in progress and experiment on it digitally and say, What if I put a big red circle right here? Or what if I make a turquoise line or those sorts of things?

The human touch is something almost intangible that the artists felt they played an active role in making more tangible for those who interact with their art. AI cannot replicate the sensory experience, as P16 said, “I want to see the brushstrokes. I want to see the mess, that's more interesting to me because a lot of the AI that I have seen is super polished.” She also discussed the homogeneity of AI-produced art, “...the quality of work that AI spits out to me. It's all kind of looking the same.” The idea of there being a distinct difference between a woman creating a work of art and AI was a clear line for P20, a Gen X painter, as well:

> I think there's such a human quality to painting itself, at least the way I'm painting it's very much about the brush mark. Even if I'm using tape to make a crisp line. It's still a person making a thing, you're still seeing imperfections. So I think the more people rely on computers and, you know, AI imagery and things like that, that the human nature of painting becomes almost more important.

With so much of daily life moving online, several participants voiced the need to express and communicate without a screen, as P17 (Gen X painter, collage) states:

> Part of what I'll say about that is that art is one of the few things I get to do that doesn't have to have anything to do with a screen even though I do watch a lot of online art classes. I don't have to, I could just go into the studio, and you know, take paint and my paintbrush and make something and have no screen be involved and never recorded and never share it and I think there's something you know, really beautiful about that since screens are just, they're so prevalent and, and I know I just need time away from screens sometimes. So it really hasn't occurred to me, you know, to use AI for anything to do with my art.

Is AI Art Real Art?

Participants grappled with the notion of whether AI-generated art constituted what is traditionally considered art. The consensus leaned towards a recognition of AI's capacity to produce art-like works, yet with a clear distinction drawn between these creations and human-generated art. Emphasizing the emotional essence of art, Participant 12 highlighted that art, with a capital "A," necessitates a human element, suggesting that while AI can mimic emotional responses, its creations lack the depth and authenticity of human experience. Examples of art therapy and children's uninhibited art explorations were used to describe AI art as valid in its own right but fundamentally different from art born of human emotion and cognition. This perspective underscores the belief in the irreplaceable value of human creativity and the nuanced expressions that arise from it.

Participant 15 articulated a viewpoint that sees AI art as a legitimate form of art, albeit one that challenges traditional definitions and boundaries. Drawing parallels with the reception of post-war abstract art, they pointed out that the questioning of what constitutes "real" art is an age-old debate, suggesting that AI-generated art is simply the latest iteration of this ongoing discourse. However, they also posed critical questions regarding the quality, significance, and enduring value of AI art, distinguishing between the act of creation and the depth of meaning behind the work. This discussion reflects a broader contemplation on the nature of art itself, suggesting that while AI can produce aesthetically pleasing or conceptually interesting pieces, the lack of autonomous thought and emotional depth places it in a category distinct from human-made art. The term "illustration" was suggested as a more apt description for AI-generated pieces, emphasizing the difference between AI's ability to execute tasks and the inherently expressive nature of art as a form of human communication and reflection (P16).

Participant 14, a Gen X painter, characterized their feelings, “I think it's always going to come down to a human asking a question. I don't think we're in the position of saying, Is it art? It's art. But is it good? Or is it lasting? Is it meaningful? Those are really difficult questions to answer.” Similarly, P18 added, “I feel like what constitutes art is making the art not just having the idea…it could be kind of cool and interesting, but I'm like, oh, is that art?” Finally, harkening back to this study’s exploration of the original definitions of art and who is defining them (i.e. Kant, Langer, Sontag), Participant 13 offered:

> If we look at artists, if we look at painters, it's the human story. It's the story that the human is telling us that we are looking for. I think ultimately the question is really what are we looking for in the artwork, and that is a decision that we really have to make, each and every one of us. I can imagine that some people might prefer AI artwork. And that is also fair enough, but ultimately, it's there. I believe this is what distinguishes artwork made by humans, made by AI. And that this is something that humans can sense. And even feel in a way that it just touches a deeper chord in us.

Complexity: AI Generational Differences

Complexity, as defined in diffusion of innovations theory, refers to the perceived difficulty of understanding and using a new innovation, which in turn can significantly impact its rate of adoption (Rogers, 2003). Regarding the relationship of art and AI, this concept drew stark distinctions across different generations of women artists. Overall, older artists exhibited a higher degree of skepticism towards AI, which aligned with them not incorporating AI into their communications and creative process. This skepticism is not just resistance to new technology but a reflection of a more long-term apprehension about integrating a suite of technologies that operate on logic and algorithms into a process valued for its emotional depth and human unpredictability. The complexity of AI itself, with its layers of data-driven processes, stood as a formidable barrier to its acceptance among these artists, reflecting a generational divide in approaching this type of integration in artistic creation.

Conversely, younger artists, while still navigating their relationship with AI in art, appeared more open to exploring its possibilities. This openness can be partly attributed to their growing up in a more digitally integrated world, where the boundary between technology and daily life is increasingly blurred (Zeng & Abidin, 2021). For them, the complexity of AI might still present a challenge, but it is a challenge they are more prepared to engage with, seeing potential in AI as a tool that, while not replacing the human element in art, can augment or streamline certain aspects of the creative process. This generational perspective shift highlights the differing attitudes toward AI technology but also a broader perspective regarding what tools are considered legitimate and valuable in the pursuit of artistic expression.

The Feeling of Making Art by Hand

The interviews reveal a complex mix of attitudes towards art, AI, and technology across generations, highlighting significant themes of adaptability, skepticism, and the evolving nature of artistic creation. Older generations exhibit a cautious, even precious attitude towards sharing and the unfinished nature of art, reflecting a deeper apprehension towards the rapid digitization and the perceived threats posed by AI to traditional art forms. This skepticism is often rooted in concerns over the authenticity of AI-generated art, fearing it may act as a virtual cheat sheet that bypasses the skill development historically associated with art.

As a new innovation is introduced, fear of adoption can be a factor in its integration or rejection. Participant 3, a Baby Boomer painter, sums up the general apprehension of AI that was prevalent in the Gen X and Baby Boomer age cohorts' rejection of AI:

> I think I probably should have started looking into it earlier, because I resisted at first because I saw it as like this kind of evil monster. That it was gonna make me completely irrelevant. I wouldn't have work anymore. And I think I should have been a little more curious about it instead of demonizing it so much at first.

Or as P15 (Baby Boomer, painter) put it, there can be an almost purposeful ignorance to avoid adoption:

> I have simply not been drawn. I'm not curious about it. Maybe it's because of my ignorance of it, because I do think that, a lack of curiosity. It's almost like, what's the chicken and egg here? Is it ignorance that causes a lack of curiosity or is it a lack of curiosity that causes ignorance?

Lastly, Participant 18 illustrated the influence of generational perspective:

> The older I get, the more scared I get just how rapidly things are changing. And it's just, we're of a generation that didn't, we grew up both ways, we had the total analog existence. And we had our little boxy computers and our first email address and it was just so different than now. So sometimes I can't make sense of that and I just feel like we’re moving too fast.

High Times: A Trip into Midjourney

On the flip side, younger artists and individuals closely connected to technology display a more open and experimental approach, viewing AI not as a threat but as an exciting frontier to explore. Their willingness to integrate AI into the creative process speaks to the generational shift towards embracing digital innovation, coupled with an awareness of its potential to disrupt established norms.

The younger generations, Millennials and Gen Z, exhibited a frank openness toward integrating AI into art and its surrounding communications. These cohorts’ engagement ranges from utilizing AI tools for enhancing personal creativity to leveraging them for more empathetic and effective communication. For example, AI platforms like ChatGPT and Midjourney have been creatively used by individuals for various purposes, ranging from writing empathetic customer service responses to crafting art that vividly translates one's vision into a tangible form. This generation views AI as an impactful tool that empowers them to achieve feats in art that were previously out of reach, transforming their creative processes and output. In addition, they appreciate AI's role in democratizing art, making it accessible to a wider audience regardless of formal education or skills in traditional art techniques.

Despite acknowledging potential challenges, such as the impact of AI on professional artists' careers and the fear of art commodification, there is a strong belief in the necessity of human-AI collaboration. This collaboration is seen not as a replacement for human creativity but as a tool that complements and enhances it. Gen Z's perspective is rooted in an understanding of AI's capabilities and limitations, emphasizing that while AI can mimic certain aspects of art, it cannot replicate the unique human touch, emotion, and interaction involved in the artistic process. Their approach reflects an optimistic outlook on the coexistence and integration of AI in the art world, balancing innovation with a respect for traditional artistic values. Participant 12 (Millennial, painter and digital artist) was particularly excited about the use of Midjourney, and its communal feel, “Let's smoke weed and go into Midjourney… It really is like an acid trip. You're in this chat room with all these people and you're just looking at what you're making and what they're making and it's wild to talk to each other while you're in the chat room.”

Participant 9 (Gen Z, painter, multimedia artist) had a similar perspective, detailing the artistic process on TikTok:

> …mostly I've seen people on Tik Tok and Instagram that spent four hours getting this output on AI and then editing it and making it look really good. And they’ll show kind of a comparison of, show everything that they put in to get the output and then all the edits that they made. And to me that's still in line with what I view as art and that's why I like it as a tool.

This participant also described a positive experience they had using DALL-E, which was a defining factor in participants feeling more comfortable with AI - they had actually used it:

> My friend [anonymized] and I, [anonymized] makes rugs and is also a really cool artist. We got together and we were sitting at this coffee shop. They brought a bunch of origami paper and we just cut a bunch of shapes of this colorful origami paper… and then took pictures of that. Tori ran it through DALL-E a few times. And we got a bunch of different variations on this illustration that we had made together. And then they made a rug out of one of those iterations that DALL-E output so in that way my relationship to AI has been like this is a really cool tool to aid in collaboration.

As demonstrated, the dichotomy presented in these AI generational differences is further complicated by the individual's personal experiences and level of technological engagement. Those with closer ties to tech approached AI with a more open perspective, recognizing its potential to enhance artistic expression while also acknowledging the importance of maintaining a human element within the creative process. The idea that technology, and AI in particular, can serve as both a tool and a collaborator in art-making surfaced often, challenging artists to redefine their relationship with creativity. However, there was a shared cautionary stance across generations regarding the importance of ensuring that art retains its soul, prompting artists to continually ask existential questions about their work.

Trialability: Women Artists Face Specific Obstacles and Benefits

A key finding from this research is that women artists face distinct gender-specific obstacles as well as some emerging benefits in incorporating AI into their artistic process and communications. This section will utilize trialability from diffusion of innovations which refers to how easily an innovation can be tested on a limited scale before making a full commitment. In the context of AI's integration into the art world, the participants were clear that while many of them are open to exploring AI, they are doing so cautiously. Nine of 20 are experimenting with AI tools in various areas of their work with some not yet fully committing to integrating these technologies into their practice. Instead of diving in headfirst, they are taking a more measured approach, trying out AI to see its potential benefits and impact. Only three women from this study expressed embracing AI in a substantial way. This cautious trialability reflects a strategy to gauge AI's overall success and acceptance in the art community before participants decide to invest more significant resources and effort into it.

AI and Art Obstacles

One factor expressed by P20, a Gen X painter, is that the systemic inequities such as those presented in the feminist lens and feminist aesthetics discussions in this thesis' literature review are still harshly prevalent in women's experiences in the art world today:

> Because if you look at gallery rosters everywhere, it's so uneven still in 2024 and I work in the art world. I'm a studio manager for a major blue chip artist. And it's still talked about, oh, this gallery, they, you know, needed a few women on the roster, so they've added so and so, and, oh, it can be easier to be a woman painter because everybody needs a woman what we'd still in the people still talk about it like that, like oh, we need a few more.

In these artists' minds, AI is not poised to correct or even alleviate these pressures. With male artists submitting AI-generated works to art competitions, the playing field is even more skewed, as women now have to compete with not only their male counterparts, but men with a supercharged tool (Roose, 2022). Granted, the same tool women also have access to, but when the overall inequities of representation and pay are still so blatant, and women's starting lines still so much farther back, many women artists felt that until women command more leadership roles in galleries, and in media and artist representation, the technology affords no new opportunities on the industry-wide level. P20 continued along this line:

> But honestly, when you look at auction results and museum collections, it's still really unbalanced and the fact of the matter is when you still have museum board members that are largely older white men, this is what's going to happen. That's not going to change unless it's changed at a more foundational level where the leadership and the board members of these places are representative of the people that are making the work.

Engaging with the media and male gaze side of this issue, P2 (Gen X, painter) concurs, explaining the “wild child” and “crone” tropes that are perpetrated in the traditional and social media of the art industry:

> The art world discriminates against women who fall between 30 and basically 70. And the people in front and behind are the ‘wild child,’ which is this personality type that they love to celebrate, the wild child as a young woman, you know, 20 to 30. That's very celebrated and packaged in a very sexual way… then you've got the crone, the crone is somebody who's like 80 and up, they've not yet had any attention. They've been ignored for 40 years. And all of a sudden, it's like, oh, we're gonna celebrate this person, the crone is allowed to be displayed in the studio, usually, with short hair, gray hair, paint spot, or close, the crone is allowed to be this sort of intellectual embodiment of the artist at last. But in between that, the wild child and the crone, is just the desert.

Additionally, as P19 (Baby Boomer, painter) explains, women artists navigate complex internal and external debates that impact their self-esteem and self-worth. These factors play a role in determining whether they feel confident enough to create and promote their work amidst the challenges and opportunities presented by AI:

> It's really about, what do I have to say, and how much I'm able to see the possibilities… and allowing ourselves to do that. Especially in the realm of women... we were suppressed and oppressed for such a long time and then to allow ourselves to go out there and kind of like, step in the spotlight, that same experience. And then it's mostly painful to do that in front of fellow women that are like, wait, what is she doing? Opening up to these new things, new challenges come in. And they are very individual. And they are not so much based on what a society might think of us or if the society does not really have a grip on us. It's really like the inner personal grip that we have on ourselves that we have to kind of struggle, and then just go for it.

P12 strongly concurs regarding advantages for men making art and obstacles for women, but who also sees an opportunity in the obstacle:

> Men's art gets elevated for no reason other than they're men with connections and stuff. When you see that stuff in the museum, you're kind of like, I've seen some mediocre shit and I know a lot of contemporary artists that could do that. I think I have a shirt somewhere that I wear to sleep that says, "Men have made a lot of bad art." Men have made a lot of bad art just because they're noticed and so I think that women in general are a little more disciplined. Even hesitating to call themself an artist, which I think is really hard because they feel like they have to measure up to a certain level of output or visibility or something to be considered an artist or to consider themselves an artist. And so I think that the more digital art that's available, and the more worldwide connectivity that we have with other artists, it helps us realize like, oh, we don't have to bend the knee

> to these, like mediocre male artists, to be able to be recognized. We don't have to do that, we can actually just kind of do whatever we fuckin' want. And I do think that the nice thing about AI is that there's a learning curve for everybody.

As demonstrated, while AI may reshape artistic creation and distribution, its adoption reveals the persistent challenges rooted in representation and systemic biases. A final example lies in questions which arose from a few participants concerning the inclusivity of AI technology itself, with some highlighting concerns about inherent sexist and racist biases. For example, in contemplating if the AI technology itself is sexist and racist, P9 expressed a feeling of inevitability about the potential for bias:

> I think at this point, I feel like it would be impossible for there not to be barriers, because I'm sure that AI is created and programmed heavily with, I don't know, I've heard a lot about how technology is racist and sexist and like I can't imagine AI is any different.

Another concern along this line is the idea that women artists are being pushed into using certain platforms by technology companies, and the ubiquity and necessity of using the technology in promoting oneself online, as related by P4 (Gen X, painter and digital visual artist):

> I think in terms of self promotion, technology is moving fast. And it's forcing artists. It's having to learn technology. So I think if you want to promote yourself, you need to learn AI. And technologies. And they're being dictated to us by the social media companies, like how we can promote ourselves, we're at their mercy.

AI Potential Benefits

On the flip side, the benefits of integrating AI into artistic practices and communications offer women some advantages, particularly in addressing the emotional labor associated with art creation and promotion. By automating certain tasks, AI can alleviate the burden of non-creative work, freeing up precious studio time for women artists, with those that are mothers highlighting the importance of any alleviation of tasks, as P8 (Gen X, painter) said, "...the hard part for me is emails and maintaining a calendar, which is something that theoretically we have all this technology to do for us but it doesn't actually work when you have two little kids and it's really hard for me to remember." In addition, there is a drive among women artists to learn and master AI technology, providing a window into the inherent curiosity of an artist, which is also evocative of some artists' aim to remain relevant and competitive.

There is a perceived benefit amongst many participants in increased women's agency and how they either accept or reject the traditional norms of the art industry. From a feminist perspective, AI is catalyzing this discussion amongst women artists as a group, as well as how they think about their role individually. For some there is a stronger feeling this agency and redefinition alongside AI could be a positive, as P1 puts it:

> Forever, women will carry more of a burden of life. And so any tool that makes things more efficient, any tool that increases our ability to communicate directly with people is going to make women more prevalent in the art space. I also think that more women are rejecting the concept of the art space in general, and are going away from the concept of the traditional gallery world, and are taking sales into their own hands. And to that end, a lot of that is social media. A lot of that is SEO, a lot of that is things like digital education, which a lot of which revolves around things like automated emails, and automated all of that is artificial intelligence to right, it's not just this concept of generating an image or like, hey, write me a blog post, the concept of an email automation… that's AI.

These potential benefits were not without their detractors. A few participants voiced opposing or views of frustration, as did P19:

> I think about being frustrated that I don't really know how to best use AI for my art, but that I want to. I think about ChatGPT which I've used a lot and the limitations of it. I'm kind of at an impasse with it. One of the things I think about is I'm definitely not afraid of it at all. But I see it as a force to be used for good or evil like all technology.

And P13 (Gen X, painter) agrees, though draws a line at creative use:

> AI can help us look for things, it can help us summarize things. But then ultimately, I think, I would never ask for creative advice. Because that's the line where I'm like, I guess on one point, it's gonna be sentient, and it might be even creative in itself. But then it would be, to me, it feels like handing over something essentially human to a place where it doesn't belong.

Observability: The Fearless and Curious Artist

Applying the concept of observability from diffusion of innovations, defined as the extent to which the outcomes of an innovation are visible to others, further illuminates the context of women artists engaging with social media and online platforms about their art in the face of AI (Rogers, 2003). Observability gives insight into how innovations spread within social systems, as visible successes can accelerate the adoption rate of new technologies (Rogers, 2003). This study’s findings in this area reveal that many women artists initially did not perceive AI as a significant factor in the art creation process. However, at the same time, faced with the realities of the digital age, they recognized that online platforms were necessary for promoting and selling their art (Carrigan, 2018). This has pushed them to be more visible and fearless in communicating about their art online, despite potential challenges such as questions of ownership and plagiarism which were particularly highlighted by older participants. Older artists voiced experiencing similar disruptions before with the advent of the internet, yet they continue to adapt to changing digital environments.

Observability, in this context, has a dual influence on the adoption of online platforms and AI tools among women artists. On one hand, the ability to visibly share, promote, and communicate about their art online has empowered these artists to reach wider audiences and explore new artistic media. On the other hand, the visibility of AI innovations foregrounds concerns around originality, the inclusion of art in datasets, and if AI is pushing art in directions that are still productive for human creation and ownership. Despite these concerns, the majority of the artists reported a fearless approach to online communication about their art. This demonstrates a broader theme which aligns with this study's feminist lens: as women artists navigate the complexities of visibility and technology adoption, they not only assert their presence in digital domains but also contribute to shaping the discourse around art and innovation. Through their actions, these artists showcase the dynamic interplay between observability and the adoption of new technologies, affirming their role as influencers in the diffusion of digital innovations within the art community.

"I'm me. No one is ever going to be able to do exactly what I do."

One of the most standout, unexpected findings of this thesis runs contrary to reports that artists are hesitant to share their work online due to fears of exploitation by AI (Hill, 2023). The interviews and analysis conducted reveals the opposite mindset among the women artists who participated. These artists adopt a rebellious stance that instead drives them to communicate, promote, and share their art and thoughts online even more. There was not a single participant that reported pulling back their online communications, whether through social media or legacy, due to the influence of AI. Far from being deterred, they are motivated to increase their online presence as they feel there is no alternate path for sales and promotion, and several expressed viewing AI as just another competitor, as explained by P11, “I'm me. No one is ever going to be able to do exactly what I do. And, I don't know, I'm not gonna put my worry into that.” P6 concurred, “So competing with AI, I'm already competing with millions of very creative, talented people. I have this whole other skill set that I've had to build that has much more to do with business and relationships.” P1 agreed even more strongly, “But as far as the fear of my art being stolen, I outright reject it, and instead go overly generous and post very high quality, because when you're selling art on the internet, quality of your images matters more than anything else.”

Artists from the Gen X and Baby Boomer generations in particular felt they had been through this exercise before, recalling the internet's rise in the 1990s and the questions of copyright and plagiarism that arose, as P15 (Baby Boomer, sculptor) put it,

> You know, it's almost like any computer function, to what extent do we credit any aid that we get from the internet searches, being careful not to plagiarize. In a sense, AI is like a conglomeration of plagiarizing because it's taking bits and pieces from everything else that existed and putting them together in a new way.

The women expressed drawing strength from their identity as artists and individuals, with a deep perseverance reminiscent of the women who came before them who used art as a form of communication and expression when societal norms tried to silence them. This also echoes the radical feminist art of the 1960s, when women artists defied the odds to make their voices heard. Today's women artists continue this tradition, with an air of AI be damned.

The Human Element Becomes Even More Important… And Rare

As AI is increasingly integrated into daily life, the interviews with the artists regarding the use of these technologies in their communication and creative processes illuminated a deep reverence for the human element in art. There was a clear consensus among participants: as AI becomes a more common tool in art, the uniquely human aspects of art - its creation, inspiration, and communication - grow in value and distinction. They articulated a strong belief that there are intangible qualities inherent to their work. These are elements that emerge from the very core of human experience, channeled through the body and the soul.

This conviction positions their art as a response to quintessentially human inquiries, a domain where AI's reach, they feel, falls short. For them, art serves as a conduit for truly human expressions, untouched and undiminished by digital advancements. In their view, the essence of art, rooted in human emotion and experience, remains beyond the capabilities of AI to replicate or diminish. This perspective signals a juncture where artists can see themselves working alongside AI tools only if they do not lose sight of the human nature of their work. As P8 (Gen X, painter) expressed:

> I'm kind of making work from the subtext of being a woman in my body. I've been alive for 40 years and just in the last seven years have realized that probably 80% of my experiences I'm supposed to suppress because they don't relate to the more patriarchal world that I've been raised in. And so stuff like overtouched, that's not something that I think AI would understand, because that's an expression that yes, might exist in blogs, where people talk about the experience of being a mother might exist in books about motherhood, the idea of being overtouched, but it's something that people who've had babies talk about people who are caregivers who have small children experience. But it's part of an unspoken language like coded information that exists within a subculture that there's so much about, like having a period and being someone who you have to hide a fourth of your month, like a fourth of your existence for every month of your life, after certain age is just, it's like a lot of what we've experienced isn't even written down.

Participant 10 (Baby Boomer, painter) illustrated it this way:

> I think the more people rely on computers and AI imagery and things like that, that the human nature of painting becomes almost more important. We're gonna see so much of AI it'll be kind of a bomb to look at something that's made by a person on paper.

Finally, in discussing self expression P1 (Millennial, painter) had strong words:

> I'm not a commodity, I'm not something that you can just create duplications of. If you know if somebody makes a buck on that, it doesn't impact me in the slightest. It doesn't. I'm not over here trying to corner the market on a style or a color or a medium. I'm me. And the people who buy my art, find my art because of the full package. And it wouldn't it wouldn't threaten me in the slightest.

In conclusion, these findings demonstrate the remarkable resilience of women artists working within the contemporary digital landscape. Far from being intimidated by the advent of AI, they convey an indomitable spirit, viewing AI as either a collaborator or competitor that only serves to reinforce their belief in their own unique artistic identities and capabilities. There is a deep sense of bravery among these women, one that is not new but as outlined in this study’s literature review, rooted in a historical context of women overcoming barriers to artistic expression and communication. As AI’s role continues to unfold in the art world, it is clear in speaking to these women that they firmly believe the true essence of creativity remains human. They demonstrate a steadfast commitment to their craft, but have also done their research and are keeping their eye on AI. Each participant is a powerful testament to the importance of personal expression, the imperative of communication, and the intrinsic confidence of women artists as they navigate and help redefine this new frontier.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will conclude the thesis by highlighting key findings and their implications for the incorporation of AI into women artists' communications and artistic processes. In addition, this section will discuss the limitations of this study and opportunities for future research. This thesis sought to demonstrate the importance of examining how women artists adopt or reject AI in their artistic process and communications. Twenty in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with women artists from around the U.S. who were asked 14 open ended questions. Five key themes emerged from data analysis which provided significant findings for this study's three main research questions: *How are women artists choosing to incorporate AI in their work?, How is AI impacting how women artists communicate through their art?,* and *How is AI changing how women artists communicate and react online - through legacy and social media - about their art?*

Despite an interest in gaining a deeper understanding of AI, its presence did not significantly influence the communications or creative process of the majority of women artists interviewed. However, larger questions such as the interviewees' view of the art world and future opportunities and obstacles were significantly influenced by AI. Diffusion of innovations provided a cohesive theoretical framework with which to analyze implications of the five main themes resulting from the in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The feminist lens was engaged throughout the study to provide deeper context regarding current and historic experiences of women artists.

As this study unfolded, it became clear the discussion of AI would not be measured in amounts of posts or tools adopted, for these artists, it was more existential - what are the implications of AI on the meaning of art? How will their role as women artists change and shift as a result? These macro level considerations were of the utmost importance to the majority of participants. As recorded in this study, participants specifically aligned on using AI as a tool and partner and on the idea that it is most likely here to stay so learning it should be a priority. They differed on whether AI art constitutes "real art" and generationally women had conflicting views about whether AI will help or hurt them in their art creation and communications in the long run. Their belief in themselves as artists ran counter to fear-based reports of artists pulling back on communications about art, and the majority believe the creative process must remain human-led. As the findings demonstrate, the participants' use of AI technology, or rejection of it, has provided a unique window into an understudied and marginalized group that can illuminate challenges facing artists beyond these women and potentially beyond visual arts.

Thinking along the line of macro level considerations, this study brought forth an intriguing idea that requires additional research: rethinking diffusion of innovations from a feminist perspective. Traditionally, diffusion of innovations has been applied across various sectors, including agriculture, technology, policy, sports, and education, with researchers like He & Berry (2022) adapting it to fit policy and management contexts. However, this theory as it currently stands may not fully encapsulate the dynamics present in fields heavily influenced by gender identity, expectations, and norms.

The conventional framework of diffusion of innovations categorizes adopters into five distinct types, based on their readiness and speed of adoption. This segmentation, while useful, might oversimplify the diverse motivations and constraints faced by specific groups, such as women artists. The integration of a feminist lens could reveal whether the innovation attributes identified by Rogers - relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability - adequately reflect the decision-making processes of women. This research suggests that women might experience each of these categories differently, applying definitions more unique to their experiences and offering a glimpse into how a reimagined diffusion model could better address their specific needs.

One initial aspect to consider is that as AI brings about significant shifts in media and technology, the platforms it supports and impacts are notably different from those of the past. So much of the media consumed today is tailored and customized to individual tastes and preferences using algorithms. This fluidity challenges the notion of more universal adoption paths outlined by the original diffusion of innovations theory, and as Rogers points out, "Compared to other aspects of diffusion research… there have been relatively few studies of how the social or communication structure affects the diffusion and adoption of the innovation in a system" (Rogers, 2003, p. 25). This foregrounds the need for more research regarding the communication structures of women and how they intersect with more powerful, tailored, echo-chamber-inducing media and communication systems. More practically, the women artists in this study illustrate that the adoption or rejection of an innovation is not always straightforward or predictable. Their decisions are influenced by a complex interplay of personal, cultural, and social factors that the current model may not fully capture. As feminism prompts a reevaluation of existing structures and norms, it necessitates further exploration into the parameters that dictate the adoption and rejection of innovations (Held, 1993; hooks, 2015). There may be combinations or new categories that could more accurately represent the experiences of women. Additionally, as the communication structures of women differ, and much like in the redefinition of creative genius, it is important to identify and redefine who sets these standards.

Speaking of standards, further examination reveals that the overall conceptualization of the social and communication structures within diffusion of innovations could benefit significantly from feminist insights. As evidenced throughout this thesis, women move through the world differently than men; there are multilayered, patriarchal systems that restrict and oppress them. Examples range from bodily autonomy and access to reproductive healthcare, to the standards by which women may be incarcerated (Waddups, 2022; Ryan, 2022). Many of these restrictions or absences of rights have become embedded in social structures for decades, even centuries. For example, the healthcare sector has seen a slow but steady recognition of gender biases in everything from ADHD testing in women and girls, to sanitary pads traditionally tested with saline not blood, to the reconsideration of the design of medical devices like the speculum (Hopkins, 2022; Thompson, 2023; Blei, 2018). These revelations highlight systemic oversights where feminist thought has prompted a rethinking of norms, routines, and procedures. Questions such as why neurodivergence tests specific to women are absent and why a device like the speculum, which is both widely viewed as uncomfortable and retaining a racist history born out of violence toward women, have not been redesigned reflect a broader societal need for women to have a voice in the structures that define their care and, attending to this study, their communications (Blei, 2018). These communication structures are ever important as they influence womens' livelihood with much of their commerce and promotion taking place online. The gaps that exist in understanding how innovations diffuse through social and communication structures accessed by women, point to a powerful area for continued research of this theoretical framework in forging a new relationship with feminist theory.

In addition, as conveyed by participants, it would be beneficial to look deeper into the ideas raised around AI alleviating scheduling and administrative work in particular, allowing women increased time for family, community, and art. Women continue to take on more caregiving and household work, even in egalitarian marriages where such work is divided more equally and in those where the woman is the breadwinner (Fry, et al., 2023). Revisiting hooks' definition of work pertaining to women (2015), and according to a 2023 Pew Research Center report, even today, "Women pick up a heavier load when it comes to household chores and caregiving responsibilities, while men spend more time on work and leisure" (Fry, et al., 2023). Coupling these enduring inequities with the systemic marginalization of women in industries like art, the idea of developing a diffusion of innovations model that takes these lived experiences into account and foregrounds gender-specific utilization strategies could illuminate more of the how and why around how women experience innovations.

Given the factors outlined in this discussion, there is a compelling case for an update to the diffusion of innovations framework that infuses the feminist lens and accommodates more diverse pathways. A revised or completely new model could more effectively capture the factors and experiences described, offering a more accurate and relevant framework for understanding how women across various professions and community groups - artists, doctors, politicians, marketers, and activists - adopt innovations.

Limitations

Limitations of this research include the recruitment of racially diverse participants. The recruitment process illuminated how women of color face a dual challenge within the art world, being both underrepresented and often overburdened with an excessive array of responsibilities and expectations. Multiple attempts were made to combat this by reaching to Facebook groups of artists of color, community groups, art teachers in local school districts and at universities. While the sample was not as diverse racially, it was diverse in age cohort, location and sexuality.

Further exploration of this topic with racial diversity as a focus would be productive in continuing to add to the growing body of research.

A second limitation was conducting the interviews over Zoom which led to video call fatigue for some participants. A final limitation is the rapid and constant evolution of AI. Just as one begins to grasp its nuances, the technology undergoes transformations, making it difficult to comprehensively capture its dynamics at a specific moment.

Future Research

In addition to the points outlined in the discussion section, future research could greatly benefit from a deeper exploration of the human-AI artist collaboration, focusing on the dynamics, processes, and outcomes of these partnerships. One intriguing avenue of study is the creative workflow between human artists and AI, examining how artists integrate AI into their creative process and how this integration affects the artistic outcome. This includes understanding the decision-making processes artists use when collaborating with AI, such as selection of inputs and interpretation of AI-generated outputs. Additionally, investigating the emotional and cognitive impacts on artists working with AI could offer valuable insights. Researchers could explore questions around perceived creativity and authorship. This could extend to examining how audiences value the art created by human-AI collaborations compared to traditional artworks. Such studies would not only deepen the understanding of the artistic potential and limitations of AI but also contribute to the ongoing discourse on who or what defines creativity and the role of technology in art.

Incorporating women artists into more studies, more often is another important area that warrants further investigation. Many of the artists expressed that it was a positive experience for them to be able to have their thoughts and feelings heard, and to be able to convey their opinions on this issue as they are rarely asked. This could involve exploring the unique perspectives and experiences of women artists working with AI in various art forms and contexts beyond those examined in this study. Art forms traditionally associated with women such as weaving, embroidery and thread work could be insightful. Exploring further into digital art, which is already more immediately impacted by AI, could also be fruitful.

Summary

The primary objective of this thesis was to ascertain the implications of AI on the creative process and communications of women artists, and whether the artists were adopting or rejecting the technology. Through the resulting five themes identified and analyzed with the application of diffusion of innovations theory, this thesis finds that AI is influencing all of the artists who participated to varying degrees, and at times, in unexpected ways. All artists were aware of AI and had knowledge of how it worked. Younger generations closer to technology were more open to incorporating it into both their artistic work and their communications or promotional work adjacent to their art. Older generations remained skeptical about adoption, with some more open to the technology than others. Many recounted using AI as a tool and a partner, all held the human creativity of art dear and remained steadfast protectors of what they see as an art and life-defining gift.

These findings are significant in that a group that may be perceived to be far away from AI, is not. These women continue the tradition of brave, curious artists, unafraid to communicate online about their art, while staring down issues of dataset sweeps and ownership, much like the women who came before them who historically fought for this - to them - the most important mode of expression and communication. As these women show us, art, as both expression and communication, is worth fighting for.

Appendix A

Research Instrument: Interview Questions

1. What types of social media or websites do you use to communicate about your art?

2. When I say the words artificial intelligence, what are the first things that come to mind?
    a. In relation to art?

3. Do you feel AI pertains to you and your art, process yet? Why or why not?

4. Is the art that AI creates "real" art?

5. How does art communicate?

6. Has the rise of AI changed how you communicate online about your art work?
    a. Do you post less photos of your work?

7. On Instagram specifically, has AI influenced what you post?
    a. Are you more or less careful with your images than 1-2 years ago?

8. Have you had your art used or reproduced via AI?
    a. What are your thoughts about how art is used in AI datasets?

9. Have you had to shift or update your approach to promoting your work in social and digital media because of AI?
    a. What new strategies have you developed?

10. Women have historically received less opportunities for showing their art, and have received less media coverage/promotional opportunities than men. From your perspective is this changing and does AI affect any shifts?

11. Do you feel AI is advancing or stymying media opportunities for your art? For female artists in general?
    a. Are there effects on the overall industry, from your perspective?

12. If you could go back, what do you wish you had known about the introduction of this technology?

13. What do you recommend for up-and-coming artists creating art and communicating alongside AI?

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Basic Interview Information

Interviewee Name:
Interview Date:
Interview Time:
Location Zooming To:

Introduction

Hello, I'm Carrie Welch and I'm a graduate student at Syracuse University in the Newhouse Communications school. I'm interested in learning about the influence of AI on the digital communications of women artists, like yourself.

I'm going to read an informed consent document to you and ask you a couple of required questions at the end.

Required Questions

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Do you agree to be video recorded during this interview?
- Do you wish to participate in this research study?

*I will email you a copy of this consent document for your records.

Interview Structure: Overview

I have about 14 questions here and this should take about 20-30 minutes. The questions are semi-structured so we can delve deeper into topics that come up as we go.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Opening Question Options

- What is the last piece of artwork you made that felt really good and satisfying? It can be any subject.
- How did you get into art? Have you always done it? When did it become a career?
- What does your online life look like? What platforms are you engaging on: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok?

Interview Questions

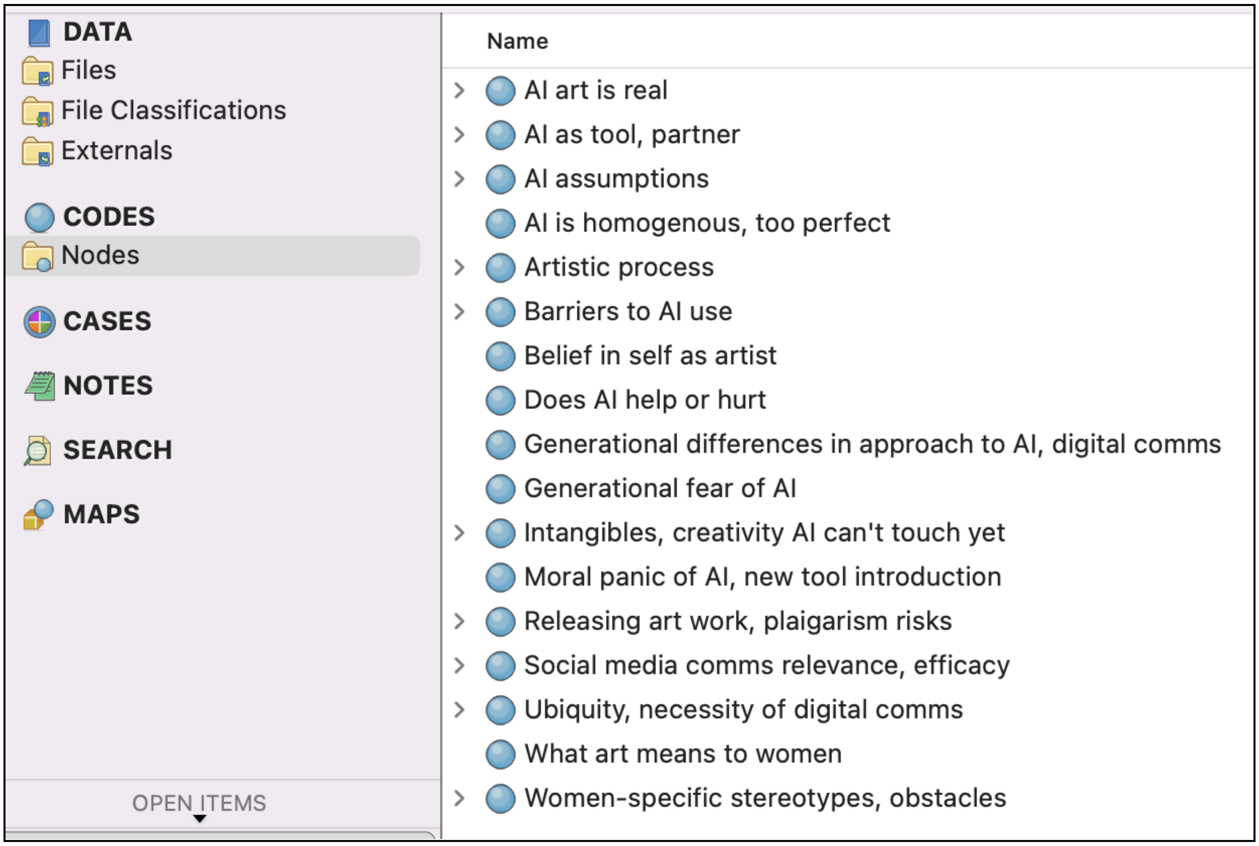
1. What types of social media or websites do you use to communicate about your art?
2. When I say the words artificial intelligence, what are the first things that come to mind?
    a. In relation to art?
3. Do you feel AI pertains to you and your art, process yet? Why or why not?
4. Is the art that AI creates “real” art?
5. How does art communicate?
6. Has the rise of AI changed how you communicate online about your art work?
    a. Do you post less photos of your work?
7. On Instagram specifically, has AI influenced what you post?
    a. Are you more or less careful with your images than 1-2 years ago?
8. Have you had your art used or reproduced via AI?
    a. What are your thoughts about how art is used in AI datasets?
9. Have you had to shift or update your approach to promoting your work in social and digital media because of AI?
    a. What new strategies have you developed?
10. Women have historically received less opportunities for showing their art, and have received less media coverage/promotional opportunities than men. From your perspective is this changing and does AI affect any shifts?
11. Do you feel AI is advancing or stymying media opportunities for your art? For female artists in general?
    a. Are there effects on the overall industry, from your perspective?
12. If you could go back, what do you wish you had known about the introduction of this technology?
13. What do you recommend for up-and-coming artists creating art and communicating alongside AI?

Closing Instructions

Thank you so much for your time and for participating in this study. Again, the recording of this interview will remain confidential. If needed, may I reach back out to you for follow up questions via email or an additional interview?

Appendix C

NVivo Codes



DATA
Files
File Classifications
Externals
CODES
Nodes
CASES
NOTES
SEARCH
MAPS
OPEN ITEMS

Name

- AI art is real
- AI as tool, partner
- AI assumptions
- AI is homogenous, too perfect
- Artistic process
- Barriers to AI use
- Belief in self as artist
- Does AI help or hurt
- Generational differences in approach to AI, digital comms
- Generational fear of AI
- Intangibles, creativity AI can't touch yet
- Moral panic of AI, new tool introduction
- Releasing art work, plaigarism risks
- Social media comms relevance, efficacy
- Ubiquity, necessity of digital comms
- What art means to women
- Women-specific stereotypes, obstacles

Appendix D

Field Notes: Sample Entry

Participant 6

Overall notes:
P6 was deeply knowledgeable about her industry and had strong thoughts, opinions and ideas on AI. She is an illustrator hired by brands often and comes with corporate business knowledge that is different from other artists. She has a strong sense of self and her thoughts on bringing her identity into her art as a differentiator from AI was very intriguing. As an LGBTQ participant, she had a unique perspective on the art world that was inside/outside.

Demographic Questions:

- Gender - Female
- Age - 40
- Race/Ethnicity - White
- Sexuality - Bisexual
- Location - Portland, OR

Notes Taken During Interview:
Instagram, newsletter through Clovio.
I struggle a lot with feeling at all like social media is effective.
Repeat customers.
AI: Idea that it's copying.
Who's allowed to use what? Any creative medium.
Cultural appropriation - describe an identity.
Am I the right person to solve certain problems or not?
It's a tool - photography would replace painting.
Nott self generating, humans have to create.
Change it a little bit, concept of copying, you can't avoid it.
Create a style of work that's yours.
Advantage? Tools relieve emotional labor about work - clients.
"Not what is art but who is an artist"
It's because I am this and I do itt. It's not about proof.
Art is an acceptable way of making a living. Before, a few years ago, different. Accessible to me, and everyone else.
Trust in relationships is a differentiator in work as an artist.
Already competing with other talented people, AI is just another competitor.
I view my job as a problem solver. Unique skill set. Trust, I will do it better than you can. And more when it's not your skill set.

Men’s work vs. women’s work - art school. Decor/decorative - pejorative.
Identity is relevant to work I make. In the business of creating/reflective identity.
Lived/memories - interpret the world, specific to me. Color - interpret through my lens.
Treat each object as a symbol, a recipe. Overlaying. Things that feel a certain way.
Portraits on social first time considered AI. Ethical convo.
Art is a mirror.
Submissions for illustrations - say can tell the difference, when will they not be able to?
Is the process of creating art important to you? Moral/valuation.
Secure - investing in self as a service. Is the service complex and valuable. Bigger than a response to an algorithm.
Artist for a living broad category - defined in some ways by the marketplace.

References

Audry, S., & Ippolito, J. (2019, March). Can artificial intelligence make art without artists? Ask the viewer. In *Arts*(Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 35). MDPI. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/arts8010035

Battersby, C. (1989). *Gender and genius: towards a feminist aesthetics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press

Battersby, C. (1994). Gender and the picturesque: Recording ruins in the landscape of patriarchy, in *Public Bodies/Private States: New Views on Photography, Representation, and Gender*, Jane Brettle & Sally Rice, Eds. Manchester University Press. https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=NGO7AAAAIAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA78&dq=info:m9P01ZW2XkgJ:scholar.google.com&ots=sbEN_N4RkV&sig=Mum0FRN7hbJq82BS6RLT7GfZrjk#v=onepage&q&f=false

Bedos, C., Pluye, P., Loignon, C., & Levine, A. (2009). Qualitative research. Statistical and methodological aspects of oral health research, 113-130

Bellaiche, L., et al. (2023, December). Humans vs AI: Whether and why we prefer human-created compared to AI-created artwork. *Principles and Implications*; London Vol. 8, Iss. 1, 42. DOI:10.1186/s41235-023-00499-6

Bentley, D. P. (2023, July 12). How do machine learning GANs work? *BBC Science Focus*. Retrieved from https://www.sciencefocus.com/future-technology/how-do-machine-learning-gans-work/

Benzine, V. (2022, November 13). In Pictures: DALL-E Makes Its Gallery Debut in a Show Where All the Works Were Created With an Assist From A.I. *ArtNet*. Retrieved from https://news.artnet.com/art-world/in-pictures-dall-e-makes-its-gallery-debut-in-a-show-where-all-the-works-were-created-with-an-assist-from-a-i-2208441

Berkers, P., Verbood, M., Weij, F. (2016, June). “These critics (still) don’t write enough about women artists": Gender inequality in the newspaper coverage of arts and culture in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States, 1955-2005. *Gender and Society*. Vol. 30, No. 3, 515-539. DOI: https://www.jstor.org/stable/24756184

Blei, D. (2018, March 8). Women Are Reinventing the Long-Despised Speculum. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/03/women-redesigning-speculum/555167/

Brown, S. (2021, April 21). Machine learning, explained. *MIT Sloan*. Retrieved from https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/machine-learning-explained

Butler, J. (1999). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge. pp. 3-44; 101-180

Cameron, J. (2016). *The Artist's Way*. Tarcher Perigee.

Carr, L. T. (1994). The strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research: what method for nursing?. *Journal of advanced nursing, 20*(4), 716-721.

Carrigan, M. (2018, April 5). How women are using digital platforms to find parity in the arts. *Observer*. Retrieved from https://observer.com/2018/04/digital-platforms-ugallery-feminist-institute-bring-parity-to-arts/

Cetinic, E., & She, J. (2022). Understanding and creating art with AI: Review and outlook. *ACM Transactions on Multimedia Computing, Communications, and Applications (TOMM)*, *18*(2), 1-22. https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/3475799?casa_token=k1Fn9ch3GWgAAAAA:4VswT

NH0Hb74qhf1zkoypkdtNPNWGIylePMqeSLc_zFt3hPWIPQiLWfgBtKizuIHx4vxiSV1Ku0Lzw

Chen, M. (2023, December 20). ‘A Collaborator Who Understood My Vision’: Laurie Simmons, Casey Reas, and Mario Klingemann on How A.I. Is Fueling Creativity. *ArtNet*. Retrieved from https://news.artnet.com/art-world/artists-ai-creativity-2340982

Chen, M. (2023, January 24). Artists and Illustrators Are Suing Three A.I. Art Generators for Scraping and ‘Collaging’ Their Work Without Consent. *ArtNet*. Retrieved from https://news.artnet.com/art-world/class-action-lawsuit-ai-generators-deviantart-midjourney-stable-diffusion-2246770

Chow, A. R. (2023, February 8). Why ChatGPT is the fastest growing web platform ever. *Time*. Retrieved from https://time.com/6253615/chatgpt-fastest-growing/

Chowdhary, K. R., (2020). *Fundamentals of Artificial Intelligence*. pp 603–649. Springer, New Delhi. 2020. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-81-322-3972-7_19

Crenshaw, K., (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *The Chicago Legal Forum.* https://philpapers.org/archive/CREDTI.pdf?ncid=txtlnkusaolp00000603

Creswell, J. & Creswell, J. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications. pp. 179-211

Dafoe, T. (2023, February 28). After Sending ‘Girl With a Pearl Earring’ Out on Loan, the Mauritshuis Has Hung an A.I. Facsimile in Its Place. Fans Are Not Happy. *ArtNet.* Retrieved from https://news.artnet.com/art-world/mauritshuis-museum-girl-with-a-pearl-earring-ai-fasci mile-2263100

Davis, B. (2023, April 27). Is Crafting ‘Super Prompts’ for A.I. Generators the Art of the Future? Probably Not. *ArtNet*. Retrieved from https://news.artnet.com/art-world-archives/ai-prompt-engineer-2288620

de Beauvoir, S. (2011). *The Second Sex*. New York, NY: Vintage Books

Dimock, M. (2019, January 17). Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/

Doherty, S.J. (2019). Art in the age of artificial intelligence. *Esse*. 97. pp. 30-41. DOI:https://libezproxy.syr.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/art-age-artificial-intelligence/docview/2394546784/se-2

D’Souza, A. (2024, February 18). With ‘Gems From Black Collections, the Harlem Renaissance Reappears.” The New York Times. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/18/arts/design/harlem-renaissance-metropolitan-museum-art.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare&sgrp=c-cb

Egon, K., Russell, J., & Julia, R. (2023). AI in Art and Creativity: Exploring the Boundaries of Human-Machine Collaboration. *OSF Preprints*, *20*. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kaledio-Potter/publication/374945291_AI_in_Art_and_Creativity_Exploring_the_Boundaries_of_Human-Machine_Collaboration/links/65382f4c1d6e8a70704c8c59/AI-in-Art-and-Creativity-Exploring-the-Boundaries-of-Human-Machine-Collaboration.pdf

Esposito, V. (2023, January 5). The future is female: US exhibitions bring women to the forefront in 2023. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/jan/05/women-artists-us-exhibitions-future-is-female

Fry, R., et al. (2023, April 13). In a Growing Share of U.S. Marriages, Husbands and Wives Earn About the Same. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/04/13/in-a-growing-share-of-u-s-marriages-husbands-and-wives-earn-about-the-same/

Gangadharbatla, H. (2022). The Role of AI Attribution Knowledge in the Evaluation of Artwork. *Empirical Studies of the Arts. 40*(2), 125–142. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0276237421994697

Gerlieb, A. (2021). TikTok as a New Player in the Contemporary Arts Market: A Study with Special Consideration of Feminist Artists and a New Generation of Art Collectors. *Arts*. *10*, 52. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/arts10030052

Gil de Zúñiga, H., Goyanes, M. & Durotoye, T. (2024). A Scholarly Definition of Artificial Intelligence (AI): Advancing AI as a Conceptual Framework in Communication Research. *Political Communication, 41*:2, 317-334, DOI: 10.1080/10584609.2023.2290497

Green, L. (2011). A 'Fleshy Metaphysics': Irigaray and Battersby on Female Subjectivity, *Women: A Cultural Review. 22*:2-3, 143-154, DOI: 10.1080/09574042.2011.561115

Guzman, A.L. (2018). What is human-machine communication, anyway? In A.L. Guzman (Ed.)., *Human-machine communication: Rethinking communication, technology, and ourselves* (pp. 1 – 28). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Hancock, B., Ockleford, E., & Windridge, K. (2001). *An introduction to qualitative research.* London: Trent focus group.

Haskins, C. (1989). Kant and the autonomy of art. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *47*(1), 43–54. https://doi.org/10.2307/431992

Halperin, J. (2017, December 20). The four glass ceilings: How women artists get stiffed at every stage of their careers. *Artnet News*. Retrieved from https://news.artnet.com/market/art-market-study-1179317

He, J., Berry, F. (2022). Crossing the boundaries: reimagining innovation and diffusion. *GPPG* 2, 129–153. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s43508-022-00042-1

Held, V. (1993). *Feminist morality: Transforming culture, society, and politics*. University of Chicago Press.

Hessel, K. (2023). *The Story of Art Without Men.* WW Norton & Company

Hill, K. (2023, February 13). This Tool Could Protect Artists From A.I.-Generated Art That Steals Their Style. *The New York Times.* Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/13/technology/ai-art-generator-lensa-stable-diffusion.html

Holman, L. & Perreault, G. P. (2023). Diffusion of innovations in digital journalism: Technology, roles, and gender in modern newsrooms. *Journalism*, *24*(5), 938–957. https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211073441

Holton, J. A. (2007). *The coding process and its challenges.* The Sage handbook of grounded theory, 3, 265-289.

hooks, b. (2006). Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance in Media and Cultural Studies: Keyworks; Eds Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas M. Kellner. Wiley.

https://sites.evergreen.edu/comalt/wp-content/uploads/sites/253/2016/11/eating-the-other.pdf

hooks, b. (2015). *Feminist theory: from margin to center*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge

Hopkins, C. (2022, December 17). ADHD in women: Symptoms develop in childhood, but the signs are often missed. *NBC News*. Retrieved from https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/adhd-women-symptoms-overlooked-rcna60240

Jankowski, N. W., & Jensen, K. B. (Eds.). (2002). *A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research*. Routledge

Jensen, K. B. (2013). The qualitative research process. A handbook of media and communication research: Qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Routledge. pp. 247-265

Jiang, H. H., Brown, L., Cheng, J., Khan, M., Gupta, A., Workman, D., ... & Gebru, T. (2023, August). AI Art and its Impact on Artists. In *Proceedings of the 2023 AAAI/ACM Conference on AI, Ethics, and Society* (pp. 363-374). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1145/3600211.3604681

Kant, I. (1987). *Critique of Judgement.* Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company

Kaplan, A. (2021). Artificial intelligence (AI): When humans and machines might have to coexist. In: P. Verdegem (Ed.) *AI for everyone? Critical perspectives*. London: University of Westminster Press. pp. 21–32

Kasperiuniene, J. (2021). The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Social Research: Multidisciplinary Challenges. In Computer Supported Qualitative Research: New Trends in Qualitative Research (WCQR2021) 5 (pp. 312-324). Springer International Publishing.

Kosmala, K. (2008). Women on work, women at work: visual artists on labour exploitation. *British Journal of Management*, *19*, S85-S98. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2008.00574.x

Kulkarni, A., Shivananda, A., Kulkarni, A., & Gudivada, D. (2023). Diffusion Model and Generative AI for Images. In *Applied Generative AI for Beginners: Practical Knowledge on Diffusion Models, ChatGPT, and Other LLMs* (pp. 155-177). Berkeley, CA: Apress. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-4842-9994-4_8

Langer, S. (1953). *Feeling and Form*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons

Leeuwis, C., & Aarts, N. (2011). Rethinking Communication in Innovation Processes: Creating Space for Change in Complex Systems. *The Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension* 17, no. 1: 21–36. DOI:10.1080/1389224X.2011.536344

Lin, Y. (2020). Research on application and breakthrough of artificial intelligence in art design in the new era. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*. Volume 1648, Information Technology. DOI: 10.1088/1742-6596/1648/3/032187

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2017). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Sage publications.

Lorde, A. (2007). *Sister Outsider*. Crossing Press.

Magni, F., Park, J., & Chao, M. M. (2023). Humans as Creativity Gatekeepers: Are We Biased Against AI Creativity?. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 1-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-023-09910-x

Marche, S. (2022, September 27). We're witnessing the birth of a new artistic medium. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2022/09/ai-art-generators-future/671568/

Martinez, C., Garcia, J., Miller, A., Wilson, N., & Moore, R. Revolutionizing AI Art: Exploring Stable Diffusion's Breakthroughs in Image Generation. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Joshua-Garcia-44/publication/376483569_Revolutionizing_AI_Art_Exploring_Stable_Diffusion's_Breakthroughs_in_Image_Generation/links/657a5ee5cbd2c535ea22a595/Revolutionizing-AI-Art-Exploring-Stable-Diffusions-Breakthroughs-in-Image-Generation.pdf

Mazzone M. & Elgammal A. (2019). Art, creativity, and the potential of artificial intelligence. Arts. 8(26), 2-9. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/arts8010026

Mikkola, M. (2011). Kant On Moral Agency and Women's Nature. *Kantian Review.* I, *(16,* 1) pp. 89–111. DOI: 10.1017/S1369415410000014

Mulvey, L. (1999). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader.* Sue Thornham, Ed.. Edinburgh University Press

Nochlin, L. (2021). *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* Thames & Hudson

Nordström, P., Lundman, R., & Hautala, J. (2023). Evolving Coagency between Artists and AI in the Spatial Cocreative Process of Artmaking. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers. 113*(9), 2203-2218. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2023.2210647

Oakley, A. (2016). Interviewing Women Again: Power, Time and the Gift. *Sociology*, *50*(1), 195-213. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038515580253

Parker, C., Scott, S., & Geddes, A. (2019). Snowball sampling. SAGE research methods foundations.

Paschen, U., Pitt, C., Kietzmann, J. (2020). Artificial intelligence: Building blocks and an innovation typology, *Business Horizons*, *63*(2), 147-155. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2019.10.004

Pollock, G. (1983). Women, art and ideology: Questions for feminist art historians. *Woman's Art Journal*, *4*(1), 39–47. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/1358100

Rahel Demmer, T., Kühnapfel, C., Fingerhut, J., Pelowski, M. (2023). Does an emotional connection to art really require a human artist? Emotion and intentionality responses to AI- versus human-created art and impact on aesthetic experience. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 107875. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2023.107875

Ratner, C. (2002, September). Subjectivity and objectivity in qualitative methodology. In Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: *Qualitative Social Research*. Vol. 3, No. 3.

Rogers, E. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York, NY: Free Press

Roose, K. (2023, May 30). 'A.I. poses risk of extinction,' industry leaders warn. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/30/technology/ai-threat-warning.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare

Roose, K. (2022, September 2). An A.I.-generated picture won an art prize. Artists aren't happy. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/02/technology/ai-artificial-intelligence-artists.html

Rubin, R. (2023). *The Creative Act: A Way of Being*. Penguin Press

Russell, S. (2021). *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*. Pearson

Ryan H. (2022). *The Women's House of Detention: A Queer History of a Forgotten Prison.* Hachett: Bold Type Books.

Saldana, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications

Salendab, F. A., & Laguda, J. L. (2023). Learning purposive communication: A personal narrative experience of non-teacher education students. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research, 4*(5), 1682-1696.

Shaw, A. (2019, January, 25). Gallery representation dwindles for 'established' female artists, new research finds. *The Art Newspaper*. Retrieved from https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2019/01/25/gallery-representation-dwindles-for-established-female-artists-new-research-finds

Sider, C. (2023, April 5). Suddenly AI: The fastest adopted business technology in history. *Forbes*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2023/04/05/suddenly-ai-the-fastest-adopted-business-technology-in-history/?sh=6ebc1873b5c2

Sontag, S. (1966). *Against Interpretation*. Farrar, Straus, Giroux

Sutton, B. (1993). The rationale for qualitative research: A review of principles and theoretical foundations. *The Library Quarterly, 63*(4), 411-430

Tang, R. (2023). Harnessing Insights with NVivo. In: Okoko, J.M., Tunison, S., Walker, K.D. (Eds) *Varieties of Qualitative Research Methods*. Springer Texts in Education. Springer, Cham. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-04394-9_34

Tesfagiorgis, F. (1993). In search of a discourse and critique/s that center the art of Black women artists. In A. Busia, J. Cole, S. James (Eds.), *Theorizing Black Feminisms*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Topaz, et al. (2019). Diversity of Artists in Major U.S. Museums. Graph image. National Museum of Women in the Arts. Retrieved from https://nmwa.org/support/advocacy/5womenartists/shareable-content/

The Economic Times, (2023, March 19). How AI could upend the world even more than electricity or the internet. *The Economic Times.* Retrieved from https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/technology/how-ai-could-upend-the-world-even-more-than-electricity-or-the-internet/articleshow/98767621.cms?from=mdr

Thompson, J. (2023, August 22). No One Studied Menstrual Product Absorbency Realistically Until Now. *Scientific American*. Retrieved from https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/no-one-studied-menstrual-product-absorbency-realistically-until-now/

Turchi, T., Carta, S., Ambrosini, L., & Malizia, A. (2023, May). Human-AI Co-creation: Evaluating the Impact of Large-Scale Text-to-Image Generative Models on the Creative Process. In *International Symposium on End User Development* (pp. 35-51). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-34433-6_3

Waddoups, R. (2022, June 24). How Women Artists Are Responding to the Overturning of Roe v. Wade. *Surface Magazine.* Retrieved from https://www.surfacemag.com/articles/roe-v-wade-overturned-artists-respond/

Whiddington, R. (2022, November 15). DeviantArt's New A.I. Generator Angers Artists for Promising—But Failing—to Protect Creator's Rights. *ArtNet*. Retrieved from https://news.artnet.com/art-world/deviantart-dreamup-ai-generator-creators-rights-ip-controversy-2210607

Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The art of coding and thematic exploration in qualitative research. *International management review, 15*(1), 45-55.

Wingström, R., Hautala, J., & Lundman, R. (2022). Redefining Creativity in the Era of AI? Perspectives of Computer Scientists and New Media Artists, Creativity Research Journal, DOI: 10.1080/10400419.2022.2107850

Zeng, J., & Abidin, C. (2021). '#OkBoomer, time to meet the zoomers': Studying the memefication of intergenerational politics on TikTok. *Information, Communication & Society, 24*(16), 2459-2481. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.1961007

Zheng, X., Bassir, D., Yang, Y., & Zheng, Z. (2022). Intelligent art: the fusion growth of artificial intelligence in art and design. *International Journal For Simulation and Multidisciplinary Design Optimization.* Volume 13, Article Number 24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1051/smdo/2022015

Carrie Welch

carrie@bluesaltair.com | (917) 846-3599 | Camillus, NY

EDUCATION

Master of Arts, Media Studies May 2024
Syracuse University
Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse, NY

Bachelor of Science, Communications 1996-2000
New York University; Cum Laude, Dean's List
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development, New York, NY

AREAS OF ACADEMIC INTEREST

Public relations and communications; gender and sexual identity; intersectional feminism.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Professor, Public Relations Cases and Campaigns Class Spring 2024
Syracuse University, Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse, NY

- Lead instructor for PR campaigns class, including development, preparation and instruction.
- Provide mentorship and guidance for students.

Teaching Assistant, Dr. Regina Luttrell, Dr. Anne Osborne Spring 2024
Syracuse University, Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse, NY

- Guest lecture, assist with course materials, weekly readings, assignments and student assistance.

Teaching Assistant, Dr. Regina Luttrell Fall 2023
Syracuse University, Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse, NY

- Guest lectured, assisted with lesson plans and lectures, grade assignments, counseled students.

Guest Lecturer 2023-2024
Syracuse University, Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse, NY
Communications & Society class, Communications department.

- Pop Culture's Power Women, Communications department.
- PR Cases and Campaigns class, Public Relations department.
- Content Optimization class, Public Relations department.

Adjunct Professor 2021-2022
Washington State University, Vancouver, OR

- In-person class development, preparation and instruction for Principles of PR (fall 2021), Public Relations Campaigns (spring 2022) and Consumer Insights & Branding (spring 2022).

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant, DARPA Grant Research Team 2023-Present
Syracuse University, Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse, NY

- Support Dr. Regina Luttrell and the Semantic Forensics program in researching, editing and preparing papers for submission regarding artificial intelligence detection of mis- and disinformation.

Research Assistant, Dr. Charisse L'Pree 2022-2023
Syracuse University, Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse, NY

- Prepared research materials supporting NSF grant regarding scientists in media; proofreading and editing.

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

Luttrell, R., & Welch, C. (2023). Everything Barbie All At Once: “A Marketing Campaign For The Ages.” Case Studies in Strategic Management. Volume 8.
Luttrell, R., & Welch, C. (2024, March). PRSA Strategies & Tactics.
Luttrell, R., Davis, J., Smith, P., Welch, C. Authenticity in Synthetic Media: A Validation of the Theory of Content Consistency. (Accepted to International Social Media & Society Conference, July 2024)
Davis, J., Luttrell, R., Smith, P., Johnson, M., Welch, C. The Right to Attribution in News: Truth and Transparency in AI and Journalism. (Accepted to ICA Conference, June 2024)
International Communications Association, 2024. Served as a peer reviewer in AI and Feminism categories.
Luttrell, R., Wallace, A., McCollough, C., Welch, C. Improving Authentic and Equitable Outcomes: Using Feminist Frameworks to Enhance Curricula in the Experiential Communications Classroom. Teaching Journalism & Mass Communication. (Under review)
Luttrell, R., Davis, Welch, C. Social Media Semantics: Enhancing Manipulated Media Detection Through An AI Weakness. (Manuscript in progress)
Luttrell, R., Osborne, A., Welch, C., Johnson, T. The Power of Pop Culture Narratives in Teaching Intersectional Feminism: A Pedagogical Study. (Manuscript in progress)

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

Newhouse Impact Symposium Paper Presentation 2023
“Everything Barbie All At Once: “A Marketing Campaign for the Ages”
Co-Authored with Dr. Regina Luttrell
Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY

Pop Culture Association Conference Presentation 2023

"Bravery, Already in Progress: Exploring Inherent Female Bravery
in Disney's Princess Films"
Pop Culture Association Conference, San Antonio, TX

Newhouse Impact Symposium Poster Presentation 2023
"Bravery, Already in Progress: Exploring Inherent Female Bravery
in Disney's Princess Films"
Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY

Speaker, Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) 2023
Northeast District Conference
Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY

Panelist and Speaker: Communications and Marketing Events
Assemblage Symposium, McMinnville, OR 2020
University of Portland, Portland, OR; George Fox University, Newberg, OR 2019
University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 2017
Travel Portland Marketing Seminar, Portland, OR 2015
Beaverton Rotary Club, Beaverton, OR 2015
Portland Business Alliance, State of Tourism Industry, Portland, OR 2013
Foodportunity Conference, Portland, OR 2011
Share Our Strength Conference of Leaders, Washington, DC 2009

MEDIA AND APPEARANCES

Conducted numerous media appearances over a 20 year career.

- KATU-TV, Portland, OR, 2019: Festival Preview
- KGW-TV, Portland, OR, 2016: Festival Overview
- Huffington Post series:
  - "Lesbian Power Couple Behind Portland's Killer Food Festival,"
  - "How One Lesbian Power Couple Is Raising Up A Baby Boy And A Killer Festival,"
  - "One Lesbian Couple, One Toddler, One Food Festival, And One Wish For A New Addition

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Blue Salt Air Creative Studio Present
Co-Owner
Syracuse, NY

- An emerging creative studio for food, art and everything in between.
- Brand consulting and promotional strategy.

Little Green Pickle Public Relations 2011-2022

Co-Owner
Portland, OR

- Innovated and inspired creative work in food and beverage public relations for 30+ clients.
- Created compelling PR campaigns and events that brought client brands to life.
- Mentored a team of eight, led new business, client relations and crisis communications.

Feast Portland Food and Drink Festival 2011-2021
Co-Founder, Marketing, PR, Charitable Program Lead
Portland, OR

- At the festival's height: 20,000 attendees, 100 chefs, 40 events over four days.
- Led a team of nine, collaborated with agencies to create fresh and unexpected campaigns.
- Created festival charity partnership plans, concepted and coordinated media partner activations.

Food Network 2000-2010
Vice President, Public Relations
New York, NY

- Directed all internal and external communications: planning and implementing high-profile publicity campaigns for network talent including Rachael Ray, Ina Garten, and Bobby Flay.
- Led network crisis communications: set strategy, prepared executives and talent.
- Co-created “Good Food Gardens” program to fund and plant gardens in schools and community centers.
- Launched Food Network New York City Wine & Food Festival, raises over $1 million for charity annually.

SERVICE

NCA Conference Newhouse Social Media Campaign 2023
Create innovative social media content.
NCA 2023 Conference, National Harbor, Maryland

AEJMC Conference Newhouse Social Media Campaign 2023
Develop and deploy Newhouse social media content.
AEJMC 2023 Conference, Washington, DC

DEIA Service

Out Syracuse, Syracuse, NY	2023
Our House, Portland, OR	2020
Basic Rights Oregon, Portland, OR	2013

HONORS AND AWARDS

Portland Business Journal, “40 Under 40”	2015
The Daily Meal, “60 (Plus) Coolest People in Food and Drink”	2015
Travel Portland, Portland Award	2013
Portland Monthly, “50 Most Influential Portlanders”	2012

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING & TECHNICAL SKILLS

Google Workspace; Microsoft Office; Major social media platforms; Public relations: Cision, PR Newswire, Coveragebook; Project management: Slack, Asana; Research: NVivo.
Google Analytics: Analyze basic Audience, Acquisition, and Behavior reports, set up goals and campaign tracking.
Google AdWords: Place keyword digital advertising and optimize based on analytics.
Social media advertising: Instagram, Facebook, X/Twitter, YouTube; create campaigns, monitor performance, report analytics, modify/optimize as campaign progresses.