

Generative Artificial Intelligence as a Co-Creative Medium in Contemporary Advertising Aesthetics.

Anjali¹, Mr. Manoj Dhiman², Mr Mayank Saini³

MFA, Applied Arts

Dean, Fine Arts Department²

Assistant Prof., Fine Arts Department³

Shri Ram College, Muzaffarnagar

Abstract: *This research examines the role of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in contemporary advertising and argues that AI should be understood not merely as a tool for automation but as a collaborative creative partner. Through an analysis of advertising campaigns by Coca-Cola, Under Armour, and Dove, the study explores how artists and designers can integrate AI into the creative process while preserving human originality, intuition, and emotional expression. The findings indicate that the role of the contemporary designer is shifting from that of a manual creator to a curator of creative intent, guiding AI-generated outputs through critical decision-making, artistic vision, and strategic direction.*

Keywords: Generative Artificial Intelligence; Applied Art; Advertising Aesthetics; Latent Space; Human-AI Co-creation; Digital Authorship.

I. INTRODUCTION

The New Frontier of Creative Storytelling

Advertising has always been driven by the art of storytelling. Throughout history, technological innovations—from the printing press and photography to digital computing—have continually reshaped how stories are conceived, produced, and communicated. Today, Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) represents the latest transformation in this evolving creative landscape. Once confined to research laboratories, AI has become an integral part of contemporary creative practice, capable of generating sophisticated images, videos, and textual content within seconds. This technological advancement raises an important question for artists, designers, and advertisers: What does creativity mean in the age of intelligent machines?

This study examines Generative AI not as a replacement for human creativity but as a collaborative medium that expands artistic possibilities. Rather than reinforcing concerns about automation replacing creative professionals, the research explores how AI functions as a co-creative partner that enhances conceptual development, visual experimentation, and storytelling. By reducing technical and financial barriers to content production, Generative AI enables independent creators and small studios to achieve visual outcomes that were once accessible only to large advertising agencies with extensive production resources.

Despite these advantages, the increasing reliance on AI also presents significant creative challenges. Since generative models are trained on existing datasets, they often reproduce established visual conventions and stylistic patterns, increasing the risk of homogenized advertising aesthetics. Consequently, originality can be compromised if AI-generated outputs are accepted without critical human intervention. The creative value of advertising therefore depends not on the technology itself but on the designer's ability to guide, evaluate, and refine AI-generated content through imagination, cultural understanding, and emotional intelligence.

This transformation signals a broader shift in professional practice. The role of the designer is evolving from that of a manual image-maker to that of a curator of creative intent. Rather than focusing solely on technical execution, contemporary designers increasingly shape ideas, formulate prompts, evaluate outputs, and make aesthetic and ethical



decisions throughout the creative process. Human creativity remains indispensable because empathy, cultural awareness, intuition, and emotional expression continue to distinguish meaningful communication from automated content generation.

Accordingly, this research investigates how Generative AI tools such as Midjourney, DALL·E, Adobe Firefly, and GPT-based language models are redefining advertising aesthetics and creative workflows. It argues that AI should be understood not as the end of artistic practice but as the beginning of a new paradigm of human–AI collaboration, where technological capability and human imagination together produce more innovative and engaging forms of visual storytelling.

Key Concepts

- **Creative Transformation:** Advertising is shifting from manual content production toward creative direction and conceptual leadership.
- **Democratization of Creativity:** Generative AI enables creators with limited resources to produce high-quality visual content comparable to that of established agencies.
- **Human-Centered Creativity:** Emotional intelligence, cultural sensitivity, ethical judgment, and artistic vision remain uniquely human contributions that AI cannot replicate.

Historical and Theoretical Perspectives: Is Artificial Intelligence the "New Camera"?

Understanding the contemporary significance of Generative AI requires examining earlier technological disruptions that fundamentally transformed artistic practice. One of the most influential examples is the invention of photography during the nineteenth century.

Photography and the Transformation of Artistic Practice

When photography emerged, many painters feared that mechanical image-making would render traditional painting obsolete. Since cameras could reproduce visual reality with unprecedented accuracy, artists questioned the future relevance of painting. History, however, demonstrated the opposite. Photography liberated painters from the obligation to imitate reality, encouraging experimentation with emotion, abstraction, symbolism, and subjective interpretation. This transformation ultimately gave rise to influential artistic movements such as Impressionism, Expressionism, and Cubism.

Generative AI occupies a comparable position in contemporary visual culture. Instead of replacing artists, it automates aspects of image production, allowing designers to devote greater attention to conceptual thinking, narrative development, and creative innovation. The value of the artist therefore shifts from technical execution toward imaginative vision and critical interpretation.

Authenticity and the Question of the "Aura"

The cultural theorist Walter Benjamin introduced the concept of the "aura" to describe the unique presence and authenticity of an original artwork. He argued that mechanical reproduction diminished this aura by enabling unlimited copies detached from their original context.

Generative AI revives this philosophical debate in a digital environment. AI-generated images can be produced rapidly and infinitely, prompting questions concerning originality, authorship, and artistic authenticity. This research argues that the aesthetic value of AI-generated imagery does not originate solely from the algorithm but from the human intentions, conceptual direction, and interpretive choices that guide the creative process. In this sense, the "aura" of AI-assisted artwork emerges through meaningful human involvement rather than through autonomous machine generation.



The history of technological innovation demonstrates a recurring pattern in creative industries. New technologies initially provoke anxiety and resistance, followed by experimentation, and eventually become integrated into professional practice.

This progression can be understood through three stages:

- Fear: The technology is perceived as a threat capable of replacing human creativity.
- Experimentation: Artists explore the possibilities and limitations of the new medium.
- Creative Integration: The technology becomes an accepted artistic instrument that expands creative expression.

The advertising industry is currently entering this third stage. Generative AI is increasingly recognized not merely as a production tool but as a creative collaborator capable of visualizing ideas that were previously difficult, expensive, or impossible to realize. Like photography in the nineteenth century, AI requires artistic direction, critical judgment, and aesthetic expertise. The effectiveness of AI-generated advertising therefore depends less on computational power than on the designer's ability to communicate compelling ideas, formulate meaningful prompts, and transform machine-generated outputs into culturally relevant visual narratives.

Rather than replacing the artist, Generative AI redefines artistic practice. The contemporary designer's role is increasingly centered on imagination, strategy, ethical responsibility, and creative leadership, positioning human intelligence and artificial intelligence as complementary partners in the future of advertising aesthetics.

Research Methodology

How the Study Evaluated Artificial Intelligence in Advertising Design

The methodology of this research combines theoretical analysis, industry case studies, and practice-led experimentation to evaluate the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in contemporary advertising design. Rather than relying solely on secondary literature, the study adopts a hands-on approach by engaging directly with AI image-generation tools and analyzing their creative capabilities. The research was conducted using the following three methods.

1. Visual Semiotic Analysis

The first stage of the research involved a visual semiotic analysis of AI-generated images. This method examines how visual elements such as colour, texture, lighting, composition, and symbolism communicate meaning and evoke emotional responses.

The objective was to determine whether AI-generated visuals can create emotional engagement comparable to traditional photography and digital illustration. Images generated through AI were examined to understand how effectively they convey atmosphere, realism, mood, and brand identity. This analysis helped evaluate whether AI-generated imagery can function as meaningful visual communication rather than merely producing aesthetically pleasing outputs.

2. Case Study Analysis

The second stage consisted of analysing leading advertising campaigns from 2024–2025 that successfully incorporated—or deliberately rejected—AI technologies. Three significant campaigns were selected to represent different approaches to AI in advertising:

Coca-Cola: Demonstrated how AI can encourage audience participation and collaborative creativity.

Under Armour: Showcased AI as a production tool for creating cinematic, high-quality visual content.

Dove: Presented an alternative perspective by limiting the use of AI to reinforce authenticity and celebrate real human beauty.

These case studies provided valuable insights into how global brands strategically integrate AI according to their communication objectives and brand values.



3. Practice-Led Studio Research

The most significant component of this research involved practical experimentation with AI image-generation platforms, including Midjourney and Adobe Firefly. Through extensive studio practice, the research explored how artists communicate creative ideas to AI systems through written prompts.

A systematic record of prompt development was maintained throughout the project. Initial prompts were repeatedly revised—often requiring dozens of iterations—to obtain images that closely matched the intended artistic vision. This process highlighted the importance of prompt engineering as a creative skill.

The experiments also identified several "friction points," where AI struggled to understand complex artistic intentions or produced repetitive, generic, and visually predictable imagery. These limitations demonstrated that successful AI-assisted design depends not only on technological capability but also on the user's creative direction and critical judgment.

Significance of the Methodology

By combining visual analysis, case study research, and studio-based experimentation, this methodology provides a comprehensive understanding of AI's role in advertising design. The findings demonstrate that AI is not a simple automated solution but a creative tool that requires technical knowledge, artistic sensibility, and continuous experimentation. Consequently, the conclusions presented in this study are grounded in practical evidence as well as theoretical investigation.

AI as a Creative Multiplier: Expanding Creative Possibilities

Artificial Intelligence functions as a creative multiplier by enabling designers to produce professional-quality visual content with greater efficiency and flexibility. Rather than replacing creativity, AI enhances human capabilities by accelerating idea generation, improving accessibility to advanced production techniques, and enabling personalized communication.

1. Accelerating the Ideation Process

Traditionally, developing mood boards and visual concepts for advertising campaigns required extensive research, sketching, and image collection, often taking several days or weeks.

AI significantly shortens this process through rapid prototyping. Designers can generate multiple visual interpretations of a single concept within minutes. For example, a prompt such as *"a futuristic city constructed from recycled glass"* can produce numerous design alternatives almost instantly.

This compression of the creative process allows designers to experiment freely, discard unsuccessful concepts quickly, and identify stronger visual solutions at a much earlier stage. As a result, more time can be devoted to conceptual thinking and storytelling rather than technical production.

2. Democratizing High-End Visual Production

Historically, producing luxury-quality advertising visuals required substantial financial investment, professional photography, elaborate sets, and specialised production teams.

AI has dramatically reduced these barriers. Contemporary tools such as Midjourney and Runway enable independent designers, students, and small businesses to create visuals with cinematic lighting, sophisticated compositions, and premium production quality.

Consequently, access to professional visual communication is no longer determined solely by financial resources. Creativity, imagination, and effective prompt design have become equally important factors in producing impactful advertising imagery.

3. Enabling Hyper-Personalization

One of AI's most transformative capabilities is its ability to generate personalized advertising content at scale.



Instead of producing a single advertisement for a broad audience, brands can generate multiple visual variations tailored to individual viewers. Advertisements may adapt according to geographical location, weather conditions, language, cultural preferences, or customer interests.

Such personalization creates a stronger emotional connection with audiences because the content appears more relevant to their individual experiences.

4. Redefining the Role of the Designer

As AI increasingly automates repetitive production tasks, the role of the designer is evolving.

Rather than focusing primarily on technical execution, designers are assuming the role of creative directors who guide conceptual development, narrative construction, ethical decision-making, and emotional communication.

While AI can efficiently generate images, it cannot fully understand cultural context, humour, empathy, symbolism, or complex human emotions. These uniquely human qualities remain essential for meaningful advertising design.

Case Study 1: Coca-Cola's "Real Magic" Campaign

Coca-Cola provides an important example of how Artificial Intelligence can be integrated into advertising to enhance audience engagement rather than simply reduce production costs. The company's "Real Magic" initiative demonstrates how AI can encourage collaborative creativity while maintaining strong brand identity.

1. "Masterpiece": Blending Art History with Brand Storytelling

In the *Masterpiece* campaign, Coca-Cola employed AI-assisted visual techniques to animate iconic works of art, including paintings inspired by masters such as Vincent van Gogh, allowing artistic characters and objects to interact with a Coca-Cola bottle.

The campaign utilized style transfer technology, enabling AI to reproduce distinctive artistic characteristics such as brushstrokes, colour palettes, and textures. However, the campaign's success lay not merely in the technology but in its narrative strategy.

By integrating the Coca-Cola bottle into celebrated works of art, the campaign positioned the brand as timeless, culturally significant, and emotionally meaningful. AI served as a storytelling medium rather than the central attraction.

2. "Create Real Magic": Audience Co-Creation

The *Create Real Magic* initiative extended creative participation to consumers by providing an AI-powered platform where users could generate their own Coca-Cola-inspired artwork using iconic brand elements such as the signature red colour, Santa Claus, and the polar bears.

Unlike conventional branding practices that tightly control visual assets, Coca-Cola developed a carefully designed creative environment in which AI ensured that all generated artwork remained consistent with the company's visual identity.

This approach transformed consumers from passive viewers into active participants, increasing engagement and strengthening emotional attachment to the brand.

3. Key Learning: AI as a Collaborative Bridge

This case study demonstrates that AI can function as a bridge between brands and audiences by encouraging collaboration and shared creativity.

Importantly, Coca-Cola did not attempt to replace human artists. Instead, professional creatives contributed to developing and guiding the AI systems, ensuring that human creativity remained at the centre of the process.

The campaign illustrates the effectiveness of a hybrid creative model in which human imagination establishes artistic direction while AI enhances production, accessibility, and audience participation. Such a collaborative approach represents one of the most promising applications of AI in contemporary advertising design.



Case Study 2: Dove's "The Code" Campaign and the Ethics of Rejecting AI

While many global brands embraced Artificial Intelligence in their advertising campaigns during 2024, Dove adopted a contrasting strategy by publicly committing not to use AI-generated images to represent real women. This decision forms an important part of the present research because it demonstrates that responsible creativity sometimes involves choosing not to rely on AI. Rather than celebrating technological innovation alone, Dove emphasized authenticity, inclusivity, and ethical representation.

1. AI as a Reflection of Existing Bias

Dove's *The Code* campaign illustrated how generative AI systems often reproduce existing social biases. When AI image-generation models are prompted to create a "beautiful woman," the resulting images frequently depict young, extremely thin, fair-skinned, and highly idealized individuals. These outputs reflect the biases present in the datasets on which AI systems have been trained rather than representing the diversity of real people.

Through this campaign, Dove demonstrated that AI does not invent new standards of beauty; instead, it reinforces stereotypes already embedded within digital media. For designers and visual communication professionals, this finding highlights the importance of critically evaluating AI-generated content rather than accepting it as objective or neutral. Without human intervention, AI risks continuously reproducing unrealistic and exclusionary representations.

2. Re-Coding AI through Inclusive Prompt Design

Rather than rejecting AI entirely, Dove also explored methods for improving its outputs. The campaign demonstrated that carefully designed prompts can encourage AI systems to generate more inclusive and representative imagery. To support this objective, Dove introduced a prompt guide that encouraged users to specify diverse ages, body types, skin tones, abilities, and cultural backgrounds when generating images.

This approach represents an example of aesthetic activism, where designers actively shape technology to promote social inclusion and ethical representation. The value of AI therefore lies not only in image generation but also in the designer's ability to guide, question, and refine the creative process until the outcomes align with human values.

3. The Growing Value of Authenticity

As AI-generated imagery becomes increasingly realistic and widespread, authentic human representation is becoming more valuable.

By committing to the use of real models instead of AI-generated faces, Dove positioned authenticity as a defining characteristic of its brand identity. This strategy established consumer trust by reinforcing the company's long-standing commitment to celebrating real beauty.

From an MFA perspective, this campaign demonstrates that human imperfections, genuine emotions, and naturally captured photographs possess qualities that artificial systems cannot fully replicate. As AI-generated perfection becomes commonplace, authenticity itself becomes a powerful creative and commercial advantage.

Technical Analysis: Prompt Engineering as Visual Poetry

The emergence of generative AI has transformed the nature of artistic practice. Traditionally, artistic skill was measured through manual craftsmanship, including drawing, painting, photography, or digital illustration. Today, an equally important creative skill involves communicating effectively with AI through language.

Although commonly referred to as *prompt engineering*, this process may also be understood as a form of visual poetry, where carefully selected words shape the visual imagination of an intelligent system.

1. Understanding the Latent Space

Effective collaboration with AI requires an understanding of the concept known as the *latent space*. This may be imagined as a vast multidimensional network containing visual patterns learned from billions of training images.

AI does not understand objects in the same way humans do. Instead, it recognizes statistical relationships between colours, forms, textures, and visual concepts. Consequently, broad prompts such as "*coffee*" generally produce predictable and generic results because they correspond to the most common visual associations.



More descriptive and imaginative prompts encourage AI to explore less conventional regions of its learned visual space, resulting in richer, more distinctive, and artistically meaningful imagery.

2. From Image Maker to Creative Director

The practical experiments conducted during this research revealed that successful prompts resemble detailed production instructions rather than simple descriptions.

Professional-quality AI-generated imagery often requires guidance similar to directing a film production. Prompts may specify camera lenses, aperture settings, lighting conditions, colour grading, historical art movements, textures, materials, or cinematic styles.

For example, prompts may include instructions such as:

Use a 35 mm lens with shallow depth of field.

Illuminate the scene with golden-hour lighting and atmospheric volumetric fog.

Apply the visual texture of 1970s analogue film combined with Bauhaus-inspired design principles.

These detailed instructions demonstrate that designers increasingly function as creative directors who orchestrate visual production rather than manually constructing every element themselves.

3. The Recursive Creative Process

One of the most common misconceptions surrounding AI is that high-quality images are produced instantly.

The studio experiments conducted for this research demonstrated that professional results generally require numerous rounds of experimentation and refinement. Designers continuously modify prompts, evaluate generated outputs, and respond creatively to each iteration.

This recursive dialogue between the designer and the AI illustrates that creative judgment remains fundamentally human. AI rapidly generates possibilities, but designers evaluate quality, interpret meaning, and determine whether an image effectively communicates the intended message.

The true value of AI therefore lies not in replacing human creativity but in accelerating visual experimentation and enabling designers to refine ideas more efficiently.

The Broader Impact of AI: Employment, Ethics, and Sustainability

The integration of Artificial Intelligence into advertising and visual communication extends beyond technical innovation. It raises important questions regarding employment, ethical responsibility, environmental sustainability, and public trust.

1. Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Creative Employment

One of the most frequently discussed concerns surrounding AI is its potential impact on employment within the creative industries.

Although AI has automated several routine production tasks, technological history suggests that innovation typically transforms professional roles rather than eliminating them entirely. Similar transitions occurred with the introduction of digital photography, desktop publishing, and image-editing software.

In the contemporary creative industry, designers are increasingly expected to function as creative technologists who combine artistic vision with technological expertise.

While AI can generate thousands of visual alternatives within minutes, it cannot independently determine which concept best represents a brand's identity, emotional message, or cultural relevance. Strategic thinking, conceptual development, and creative judgment therefore remain essential human responsibilities.

2. Environmental Responsibility and Sustainable AI Practices

Although AI is often perceived as existing entirely within the digital cloud, its operation depends upon energy-intensive computing infrastructure.

Generating large volumes of high-resolution AI imagery consumes considerable computational power and electricity through data centres. Consequently, excessive image generation contributes to increased environmental impact.



Designers therefore have a responsibility to adopt sustainable creative practices by using AI thoughtfully and efficiently. Developing precise prompts and minimizing unnecessary image generation reduces computational waste while encouraging more deliberate and responsible creative workflows.

3. Trust, Deepfakes, and Ethical Communication

Trust remains one of the most valuable assets in advertising.

The increasing realism of AI-generated imagery creates opportunities for misinformation, manipulated visuals, and deceptive advertising practices. If audiences believe that brands are misleading them through fabricated content, consumer confidence may decline significantly.

As a result, designers increasingly serve as guardians of visual integrity. Ethical AI use requires transparency regarding the creation of digital content and adherence to emerging industry standards for disclosure.

Digital watermarking, AI content labels, and responsible communication practices are becoming important mechanisms for maintaining public trust. Ultimately, the most effective use of AI is not to deceive audiences but to enhance creativity while preserving honesty, authenticity, and ethical responsibility.

II. CONCLUSION

The Future is Hybrid: The Synthesis of Human Creativity and Artificial Intelligence

This research has demonstrated that Generative Artificial Intelligence does not signify the decline of applied art; rather, it represents one of the most significant technological transformations since the invention of photography. Through the examination of contemporary advertising campaigns by The Coca-Cola Company, Under Armour, and Dove, the study reveals a broad spectrum of AI applications, ranging from audience participation and cinematic visual production to ethical resistance and the preservation of authenticity.

The findings indicate that the role of the artist has fundamentally evolved. In the era of generative AI, creative professionals are no longer valued solely for their technical ability to illustrate, render, or manipulate images. Instead, their greatest contribution lies in conceptual thinking, visual storytelling, critical judgment, and ethical decision-making.

As AI increasingly democratizes access to high-quality visual production, technical perfection becomes widely available. Consequently, the qualities that distinguish exceptional creative work are those that machines cannot easily replicate—cultural understanding, emotional intelligence, originality, humour, empathy, symbolism, and meaningful human experience.

The practical experiments conducted during this research further demonstrate that AI is not an autonomous creative system capable of replacing artists. Instead, it functions as a collaborative design tool whose effectiveness depends upon the knowledge, imagination, and direction provided by human creators. Prompt engineering, iterative experimentation, and critical evaluation remain essential components of the creative process.

Furthermore, the research highlights the ethical responsibilities associated with AI-assisted design. Issues such as algorithmic bias, misinformation, authorship, environmental sustainability, and transparency require careful consideration. Designers must therefore balance technological innovation with professional ethics to ensure that AI contributes positively to visual communication and society.

Overall, this study concludes that Artificial Intelligence should be understood as a creative collaborator rather than a substitute for human imagination. The future of applied art and advertising lies not in choosing between humans and machines but in developing effective partnerships that combine computational efficiency with human creativity.

Final Outlook

The emergence of AI marks the beginning of a new creative paradigm in which designers increasingly assume the role of creative directors, strategists, and ethical decision-makers. Rather than competing with intelligent systems, future artists must learn to collaborate with them by understanding their capabilities, limitations, and cultural implications.



Mastery of prompt engineering, visual language, and AI-assisted workflows will become essential professional skills alongside traditional artistic practice. At the same time, preserving originality, authenticity, and social responsibility will remain central to successful design.

The future of advertising aesthetics is therefore hybrid—a collaborative environment where the computational speed and adaptability of Artificial Intelligence complement the intentional vision, emotional depth, and cultural awareness of human creativity.

The most influential creative works of the future will not simply be AI-generated or human-made. Instead, they will be human-directed, employing Artificial Intelligence as an advanced creative partner to realise ideas that were previously impossible to visualize or produce.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1]. Walter Benjamin (1935). *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Penguin Books (Reprint Edition).
- [2]. Lev Manovich (2023). *Artificial Aesthetics: A Critical Guide to AI in Art and Design*. Aesthetics & Computing Press.
- [3]. Malcolm McCullough (1996). *Abstracting Craft: The Practiced Digital Hand*. MIT Press.
- [4]. Arthur I. Miller (2019). *The Artist in the Machine: The World of AI-Powered Creativity*. MIT Press.
- [5]. Industry Reports and Case Studies
- [6]. The Coca-Cola Company (2024). *Real Magic: How AI is Redefining Brand Engagement*. Annual Marketing Review.
- [7]. Unilever / Dove (2024). *The Real Beauty Pledge in the Age of Synthetic Media*. Campaign White Paper.
- [8]. Adobe (2025). *Adobe Firefly: Generative Fill and Ethical Training Models*. Available at: [Adobe Firefly](#)

