

Dre Levant

Bachelor of Arts, Creative Writing, Minor in Visual Art, 2025

EGESTA

This special issue of Future Earth Journal: Explorations in Art and Generative AI showcases the work of visual art students from the Fall 2024 Selected Topics visual art course *Explorations in Art and AI*. Each featured artist engaged with generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) to create original

artworks that respond to and reflect on current conversations in art and technology. Through their unique practices, these students explored Gen AI as a tool, a collaborator, and/or a conceptual influence.

The artworks featured here—and in the exhibition held at the TRU Art Gallery from March 17–29, 2025—highlight the cultural, ethical, environmental, and creative dimensions of using Gen AI in artistic production.

Dre Levant is one of the participating artists whose work exemplifies this exploration.

AI Source: Microsoft Copilot

ARTIST STATEMENT

The following artist statement's first draft was generated with Microsoft Copilot, however; the final product was reworked and changed numerous times, to the point it is indefinitely my own work.

My art piece, "Egesta," is an amalgamation of text conversations with Microsoft Copilot and cut-up AI-generated images alongside my own art. With the growing popularity of AI integration into art practice, concerns arise about the authorship of certain art; so, for this project, it was of utmost



Figure 1. Egesta (2024) by Dre Levant. Mixed media, 24" x 18" (Image credit: Nicole Favron)



This work is licensed under an Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International license.

important to me to stay aware of the ambiguity of ownership and do everything within my power to create a project that was driven by my creative control. I decided to employ two of my favourite modes of art-making: collage and cut-up poetry. Through these, I could use text conversations and image prompting with Microsoft Copilot to create something new and under my creative direction. To create the text and images, I messaged Copilot, asking it to write poems and create images inspired by the poems – my original work – I fed it, as well as create

chaos colour cacophony: a curved creature, wings pinned to shoulders. an undone dream like threads ripped from stitches. we fragment in rotten fruit. eat your reflection out of the canvas. salt solidified, somehow making limestone. always limestone, sweet salted pillows, a corset of crystallized pale green. love me, in my despair, in my turmoiled fantasies, i'm making something chaotic, i am at peace.



Figure 2. Dre Levant's original poem "Chaos Colour Cacophony" and Microsoft CoPilot's image in response

poems and images inspired by my original artwork. These dialogues resulted in pages of poetic text exchanged between us, as well as a small collection of generated images alongside my own images. I then amalgamated select images and poems into a doc and printed them; once printed, I cut and pasted both text and image into new forms on a canvas.

"I wanted to include this interaction [Figure 2] that actually left me a little speechless. I wrote the poem in the top left corner, then asked Copilot to generate an image inspired by my poem. Some of the images it had generated in response to my work had been lacklustre, but this – this image really struck me; it is beyond what I would have thought Copilot could make. It's an image that – to me – is altogether new and exciting."

I believe, through collage and cut-up poetry, new meaning can be infinitely gleaned out of material. What makes collage and cut-up poetry valid forms of art is when they are changed from their original form into something altogether new. None of the images or text included in my art piece are full images or full sentences generated by Copilot – they are now all intertwined, with my own words and art, alchemized and refracted from their original configuration. Through being cut-up and re-arranged, the text and images take on new meaning; the inclusion of the phrases, "Avoid Certain Imagery" and "Tone Down Horror Elements," become ironic and satirical when pasted next to graphic text ("eat Sylvia Plath in salt Dissected") and disturbing images (a green-eyed worm thing with cloud tentacles). My poetry and – visual art – often has a horror element to it, with just a flair of whimsy and humour, I think "Egesta," expresses that fully (i.e. bottom right corner reads, "Thank you for sharing your artwork!," alongside a four-eyed, toothy creature paired with flowers).

"What stops me from fully thinking of the image as art is the fact that I still know it was generated by an algorithm that trained on stolen work, and the artistic choices aren't coming from a creative, but rather an algorithm."

Working on this project challenged me to research and contemplate the ways in which AI is infiltrating not just art, but the world at large. I definitely think there is a place for AI (it genuinely can make parts of life easier) and even a place for AI in practical applications in art (having AI help write an artist statement, for example) – but when it comes to sheer creativity, I believe this comes from the artist, and cannot be replicated. I hope my piece challenges those who see it, makes them reflect

on the use of AI in their own lives, whether that's positive or negative. I want it to make people angry. I want it to startle and stop you.

from the use of Microsoft Copilot, they have made a donation equivalent to the planting of five trees (a small grove) in British Columbia via the organization A Living Tribute (<https://shop.alivingtribute.ca/>).

Process

Dre worked with [Microsoft] Co-pilot as a collaborator. They fed it their original poems and asked it to generate images based on the poems (Figure 2). They also fed it their original artworks and asked it to create poems in the style of Sylvia Plath, based on their art (Figure 3). While they found some aspects of these outcomes interesting, they didn't want to present either the generated images or the generated poems as their work. So, they printed the poems and images generated with AI, cut them up, and collaged them into a mixed media work.

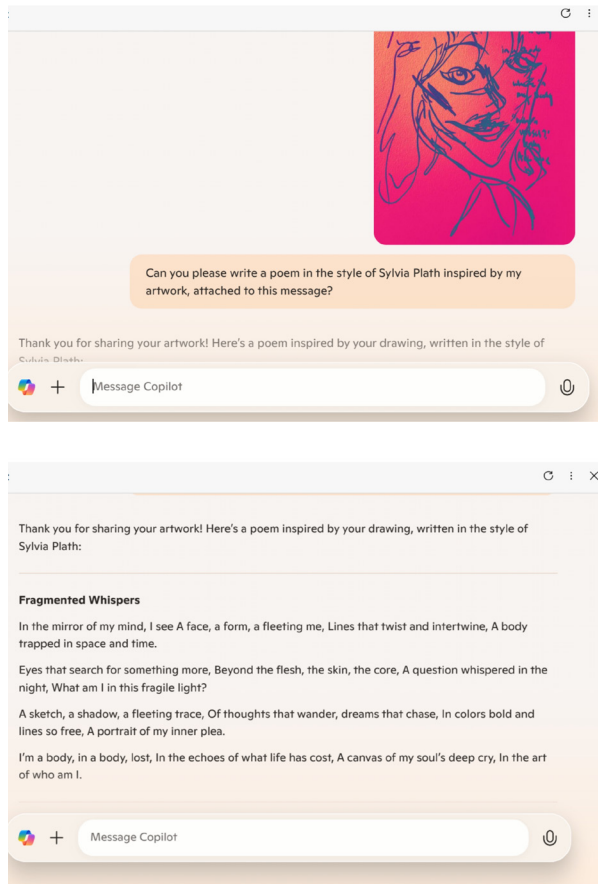


Figure 3. Dre Levant's original artwork (untitled) and Co-Pilot's poem in the style of Sylvia Plath in response

[Figure 3] Here I gave Copilot one of my original artworks and asked it to write a poem inspired by Sylvia Plath. Both here and in other responses, I found Copilot often wrote poems in a somewhat generic and cliché way. Since I had already planned to do cut-up poetry, I wasn't that concerned, as I knew I would be rearranging and picking what words and phrases to keep.

Tribute

The artist wishes to note that in an effort to offset CO2 emissions generated by this project



Egesta (2024) by Dre Levant. Mixed media, 24" x 18" (Image credit: Nicole Favron)