

Elizabeth Sigalet

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Thompson Rivers University, 2019

PINK COWS AND AI TO EXPLORE BLIND SPOTS AND SOCIAL POLARIZATION

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

2025—highlight the cultural, ethical, environmental, and creative dimensions of using Gen AI in artistic production.

Elizabeth Sigalet is one of the participating artists whose work exemplifies this exploration.

AI Source: Midjourney



Figure 1. Pink Cow AI Collaboration Iterations, by Elizabeth Sigalet (2024). Screenprint on Masa paper, 18" x 18" [each]. (Image credit: Elizabeth Sigalet).

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,

ARTIST STATEMENT

This project explores themes of juxtaposition, blind spots, and contradictions using printmaking techniques and AI-generated images. The primary



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medium is screenprint, with variations of incorporating digital and hand-drawn elements. Midjourney was used to generate unique images by blending my own paintings and intaglio prints. These were used as reference for manipulation in Adobe Photoshop



Figure 2. Pink Cow AI Collaboration Iteration by Elizabeth Sigalet. Laser cut MDF and acrylic paint. (Image credit: Elizabeth Sigalet).

to create digital positives or files for laser printing. ChatGPT was used to refine my concept and artist statement considering my objectives and the visual outcome.

My art practice often revolves around the recurring subject of cows. I use these animals as an analogy for complex subjects or blind spots, and sometimes simply because I enjoy depicting them—particularly in pink. Through these images, I invite viewers to explore themes of connection, communication, and perspective between seemingly disparate worlds. I chose two images that I felt were representative of my work and gave Midjourney the prompt to blend them using the personalization I developed. I repeated this with slight variations to the prompt generating over a hundred images that I considered before choosing one image as reference and for further manipulation.

Growing up with family members involved in agriculture, forestry, and resource extraction, I have witnessed firsthand the polarized divide between

urban and rural communities. I am increasingly concerned about this divide, especially regarding resource extraction and climate adaptation. I notice that both communities have blind spots—sometimes willful, sometimes well-intentioned—that can hinder effective communication and collaborative problem-solving. My art seeks to reflect this complexity and promote curiosity and dialogue.

As a printmaker, I work primarily in intaglio and screenprint, blending digital and hand-drawn elements. The layered nature of printmaking allows me to explore depth and texture, both in terms of ink and meaning. With the assistance of AI, I can generate numerous ideas and, perhaps, uncover my own

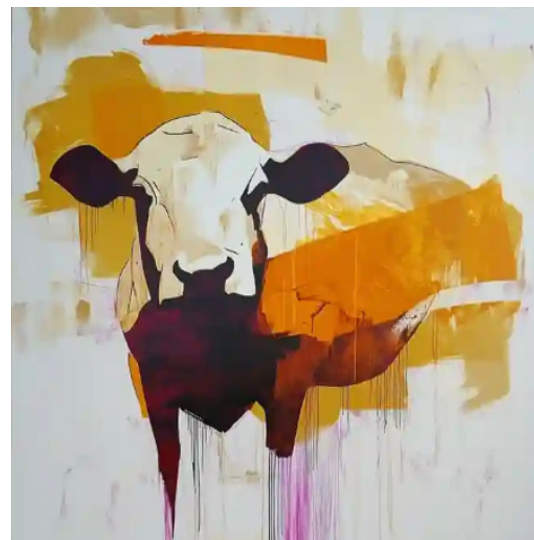


Figure 3. two of the artists original artworks which she asked Midjourney to blend. (Image credit: Elizabeth Sigalet).



Figure 4. Midjourney AI images generated from a blend of the Artist's original artwork (prompt and original artwork images shown in Figure 5)

biases or blind spots. The reproducibility inherent in printmaking mirrors the iterative process of AI, highlighting the themes of repetition and variation that underpin my work.

Through my art, I hope viewers will question the seemingly whimsical choice of subject matter and consider the broader implications. I want them to reflect on their own perceptions, to see the cow not only as a rural emblem but as a symbol of perspectives they might not fully understand. By engaging with the unexpected and

playful, I hope they'll feel encouraged to explore other viewpoints and perhaps recognize their own blind spots.

My journey has been shaped by my family background, my upbringing on a ranch in British Columbia, and my academic and professional life. I am a wife, a mother of three, and a graduate of UBC in Applied Science and Thompson Rivers University in Fine Arts. With a career spanning engineering and health protection, I am now a regional advocate for professional artists. My experiences have taught me the value of adaptability and resilience, and I am acutely aware of the challenges faced by an older female artist in a small, resource-based community.

Studying AI has broadened my perspective, pushing me to challenge my own assumptions and

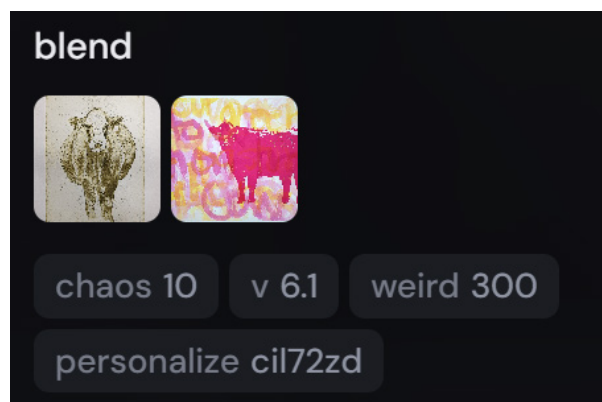


Figure 5. Command using the artist's original artworks in Midjourney AI to generate images (Image credit: Elizabeth Sigalet)

inviting others to do the same. I am curious about how AI might help us confront our biases and promote nuanced discussions around pressing social and climate issues. Over time, I have become more mindful of creating art that fosters difficult but necessary conversations. I believe that, through respectful dialogue, we can find solutions that are equitable and ethical, even when addressing contentious topics.

Experimentation is central to my process, especially when merging art with AI. The unpredictability of AI often generates unanticipated results, sparking new paths of expression and helping me to delve deeper into difficult ideas. My art is a space where curiosity, caution, and boldness intersect a space that encourages us all to see the world a little differently.



Figure 5. Exhibit Installation of multiple Pink Cow AI Collaboration Iterations. (Photo credit: Twyla Exner)

Process

Elizabeth used MidJourney's "blend" function to generate new artworks using her original art as references. In Figure 3, there are two of her original artworks which she asked MidJourney to blend. Figure 4 are MidJourney's blends of the two works. She chose to focus on the orange cow to create screen prints. She printed multiple iterations of her screen prints. Iterations produced in the screen prints are intended to reference iterations produced by AI. No two prints are exactly the same.

Upcoming Presentation

Elizabeth will present this project at the IMPACT International Conference Series, hosted by the Centre for Print Research in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, in October 2025.



Exhibit Installation of multiple Pink Cow AI Collaboration Iterations. by Elizabeth Sigalet (Image credit: Twyla Exner)