

Raluchukwu Ojah

Bachelor of Fine Arts, 2025

LANAYA MEETS AI



Figure 1. Lanaya Meets AI (2024) by Raluchukwu Ojah. Mixed Media, 36" x 48" (Image credit: Nicole Favron)

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.

Raluchukwu Ojah is one of the participating artists whose work exemplifies this exploration.

AI Tool: Copilot & Chat GPT

ARTIST STATEMENT

As a Nigerian artist studying art in Canada, I draw inspirations from the dualities of my Nigerian heritage in combination with the experiences I have accumulated in the rich culture of Canada, using AI as a collaborator to explore themes of my Nigerian



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cultural identity and contemporary storytelling. With the help of ChatGPT, I was able to generate an image of an African woman wearing a replica of the Dutch style fabric. These fabrics are merged with collages of different images and art materials which ranges from my Nigerian culture, personal interests to exciting images from magazines. This merge represents the near future of AI collaborating fully with artists and shows the process in which data is fed into the AI platforms. AI also serves as a companion in ideation and design techniques, helping me refine the visual narratives in areas of the headwrap and fabric-collage merge.

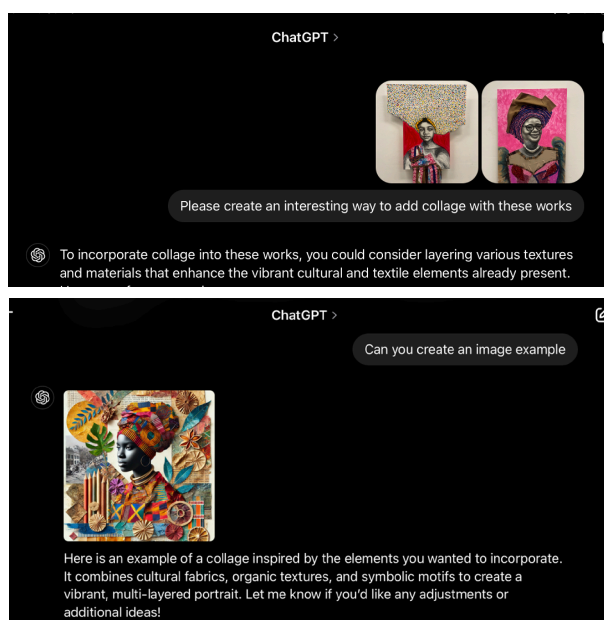


Figure 2. Prompts to ChatGPT to generate ideas for a collage. The top right images are Ral's original artwork. The bottom image is ChatGPT's response, influenced by Ral's original artworks.

After the image was generated on ChatGPT, I began sourcing out textures and symbols that carry cultural significance. I then blended AI-generated designs with organic elements, hereby inviting a dialogue between technology and tradition. I have used bright colors and intricate patterns to evoke the vibrancy of African aesthetics, while the tactile assembly of the collage offers depth and contrast, the aim is to encourage reflection on the roles of Art, Fashion and how they relate to my African identity.

Theme: The juxtaposition of African historical references in relation to Canadian culture and norms.

My work centers around African and Canadian contemporary fashion themes, by blending the portrait of the African woman with elements like African Dutch wax fabrics and some Canadian store inspired fabrics, I aim to show modern ways in which Africans have begun to style their dressing after the westerners. The historical references, Comic references, magazines and contemporary symbols such as pencils which show my personal relation as an artist and fake leaves to give an African vibe aim to create dialogue in my work. I invite viewers to reflect on the everchanging dynamic of cultural legacies and the way they resonate in today's contemporary world. By incorporating these elements, I have created this collage that celebrates African contemporary fashion and reflects on my views on how AI can impact on my works positively.

[I chose] two contemporary AI artists to get inspiration from and to also incorporate interesting ways these artists express their ideas. They are:

- Refik Anadol
- Memo Akten

I began by asking ChatGPT to generate an image of African woman wearing African fabric, the first image it generated was perfect for me. The next stage was to purchase different African fabrics that matched the image generated. While working I added elements off my personal intuition, I used the image as a guideline for where to start and stop each artistic design.

I aim for it to resonate personally with viewers, by sparking conversations about human relationships, cultural intersections and how they affect both parties, and the evolving role of AI in art. Ultimately, my journey with AI is both a personal exploration and a way to show pride in the beauty of my cultural heritage in a world of technological possibilities.

I seek inspiration from * Pencil artist Kelvin Okafor; I got my sense of charcoal application from Kelvin Okafor; I always go back to watch his videos once I feel stuck.* CBE Yinka Shonibare; I got my Fashion sense from Yinka, he uses the Dutch wax fabric in his works, and I find it interesting on how he found a way to relate the colonial period with the

contemporary world through Dutch wax fabrics. * Refik Anadol; I chose Refik because of his bright use of colors. I also find his way of collecting data like the collage depiction which shows different images all as one. *Memo Akten; I like Memo abstraction, I aimed to achieve that level of distortion in the fabric-collage area which would give the viewers different opinions.

Process

Ral fed two images of his artworks to CHAT-GPT and asked it for suggestions for incorporating further collage elements. He then asked DALL-E to produce an image that incorporated the suggestions provided into his original artworks, but DALL-E was unable to accommodate that request. It did, however, make its own example. Ral decided to use that example as a reference to make a hand-made version of the work, using materials available to him for the collage elements and adapting it to his own style.

I interacted with Copilot while drafting out the plans for this project, I had the idea to create a collage of mixed media, but I didn't know exactly how to go about it. Then I asked AI (Copilot) of interesting ways to produce contemporary portraits in collage.

Copilot gave me some useful ideas to begin work with such as using a different surface to work on, using cultural and historical references and implementing cutout pictures. However, I still desired a visual representation of these examples. I tried to upload my artwork unto Copilots platform but to no avail. So I switched to ChatGPT.



Figure 3. DALL-E generated image used as a reference for Ral's original artwork.



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