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FRAGILE CONNECTIONS

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.

Susan Miller is one of the participating artists whose work exemplifies this exploration.

AI Tool: Dalle-E, Midjourney, & ChatGPT4

ARTIST STATEMENT

"Fragile Connections" is inspired by the concept of "place" – in most cases marked by a physical location in time and space invites you to consider the broader connections and meaning in a world that is on a precipice of expedient change and

reorder. This work invites the viewer to reflect on this moment in time in an era of environmental,



Figure 1. Fragile Connections (2024) by Susan Miller.
Mixed media. (Image credit: Twyla Exner)



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technological and political change. The installation – an open, suspended sphere of painted strips interacting between light and shadow mirrors the fragile nature of our connections to ourselves, the world and those we love.

Creating this work was a blend of digital exploration and hands-on craftsmanship. The idea and form, originating from a previous edition was an artwork that I was wanting to render in a larger format. I started with AI tools like DALL-E, Midjourney, to help spark ideas for shape and structure of the piece. While I maintained my original iteration of the structure, AI tools offered instructions for a working timeline, construction, and assistance in troubleshooting stability and transportation issues.

Central to Fragile Connections is the question to the viewer, what, where and who is, “Place” in the expanse and consideration of the long view, whether that be in our relationships to each other, the world and ourselves. The sphere’s shape represents our interconnectedness, the painted strips of green and blue suggests the jewel that is earth and the ever-present sky. The open structure invites the viewer to consider their place and story in this moment in time.

Working with AI on this project was enlightening from multiple perspectives. From a practical perspective the computational expediency of AI was remarkably impressive. Its ability to generate a wealth of ideas and offer diverse alterations to a structure and imagery is endless. However, co-creating with AI for masterful results requires a solid understanding of prompt engineering language. Despite the benefits, I am deeply concerned about AI usage about the ethical and moral implications inherent at this juncture. The lack of policy and procedural transparency in AI processes is troubling. I see the issue of uncredited contributions to images

and information, and the proliferation of deceptive narratives a deterrent not only to creative practice but in the general use of AI. My experience of the handcrafted soothes a soul as nothing technologically can compare.

My hope is for anyone to take a quiet reflective moment to consider what may be their relationship to, Place. from all aspects of one’s relational understanding, whether that be a physical location, deeply personal, or a broader perspective. With the addition of lighting and sound the atmospheric nature of this piece, I would most want the audience to elicit interpretations that are their own.

This piece came out of a writing exercise where I reflected on the meaning of, Place.

*Place Considered
configured through a location on
earth, in sky, and space
refined by our passions, identities,
proclivities, and memories
boundless within the spiritual, mental,
emotional bodies of our psyche
Place demarcated through our con-
nections to those that live within the
landscape of our heart.*

Process

Susan wanted to create a spherical shape referencing the earth and connection as a metaphor. Some of the prompts she used are below and the images generated by DALL-E are in figure . She then asked Chat-GPT to instruct her on how to make the artwork. It provided materials and techniques as well as steps to follow. Susan followed those plans to produce the work.

suspended 3-D depicting earth metaphor, connection to all things green and gold with thin golden wire laces through, paper structure

Large-Scale Installation: Create a larger, immersive installation with multiple suspended spheres or shapes, allowing viewers to walk around and through them.

Figure 2. Text prompts provided to DALL-E.



Figure 3. AI generated image results from ChatGPT and DALL-E from prompts given from artist.



Figure 4. 25'x4' strips of paper painted on both sides to be cut in strips for project.



Figure 5. Original test artwork by Susan Miller that was fed to DALL-E, Chat-GPT, and Midjourney as a reference image in addition to the text prompts provided. (Image credit: Susan Miller)



Figure 6. Installation work in progress [in studio].
(Image credit: Susan Miller)



Figure 7. Fragile Connections (2024) [installation] by Susan Miller. Mixed media (Image credit: Twyla Exner)



Fragile Connections (2024) [installation] by Susan Miller. Mixed media (Image credit: Twyla Exner)