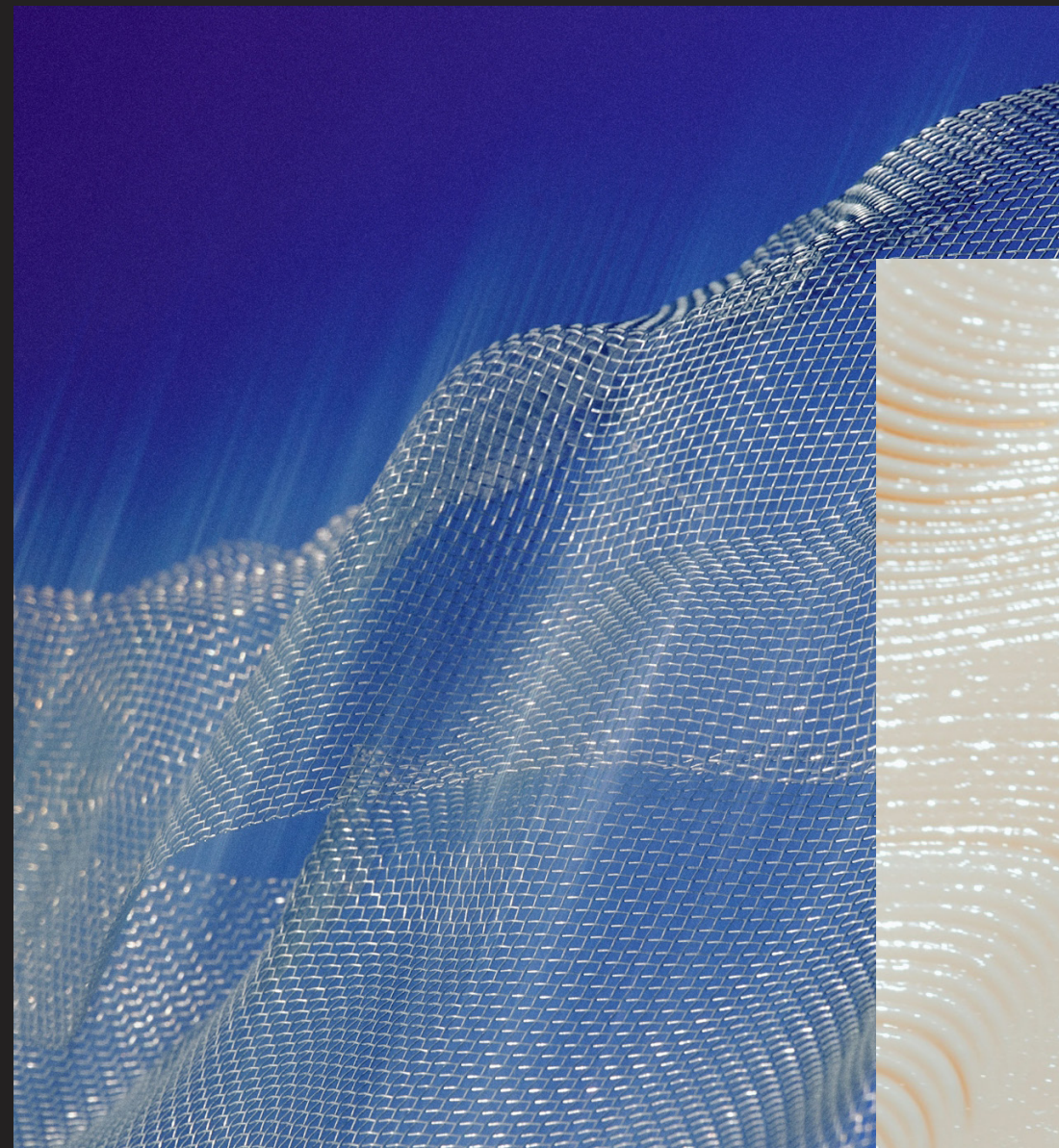


Creativity in an AI world



Intro

The branding world is currently full of two things: experimentation into generative AI and conversations about the impact of generative AI. In December, we partnered with Adweek to create a report about the changing face of creativity in today's marketing landscape. Unsurprisingly, many responses mentioned generative AI as a driving factor behind the growing need for creativity.

So we asked six creatives, and one creative team, from across a spectrum of industries for their thoughts on the generative AI (GenAI) topic. Given that this topic impacts so many roles and operations, it's no surprise that our experts came back with a wide variety of thoughts and impressions about this new technology.

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Meet the experts

“ Learning how to utilize and incorporate AI tools in our practices is one thing, but even more importantly, we must examine our innate value as humans.



Cam Brandow
Brand Strategist and Founder

farfar

“ AI will free up our brain space for deep thinking, digesting other creative work that’s out in the world, and developing ideas, which is why we get into creative work in the first place.



Natalie Schwartz
Head of Global Brand Marketing and Partnerships

Canva

Meet the experts

“ AI is like a buddy in the creative process. We should respect the new technology and come up with ideas to integrate it into our work.



Erik Wankerl

Managing Director of Creation and Innovation

red pepper



Nicole Adelt

Head of Digital Branding

red pepper

Meet the experts

“ AI is really shaking things up in the creative world, but it’s not about taking over jobs or replacing any creative roles. Instead, it’s like having this awesome sidekick that amplifies what humans can do.



Gwen Lafage
VP Marketing, Global Brand and Content



“ AI presents a valuable opportunity to elevate artists’ intent on making a meaningful impact by designing datasets based on their work.



Kalle Hellzén
Artist and Creative



Meet the experts

“ Armed with more time to focus on the idea and powered by richer consumer insights, our creatives will be free to push the boundaries again and remember why they joined the industry in the first place.



Alex Peacock
Head of Technology Strategy and Transformation



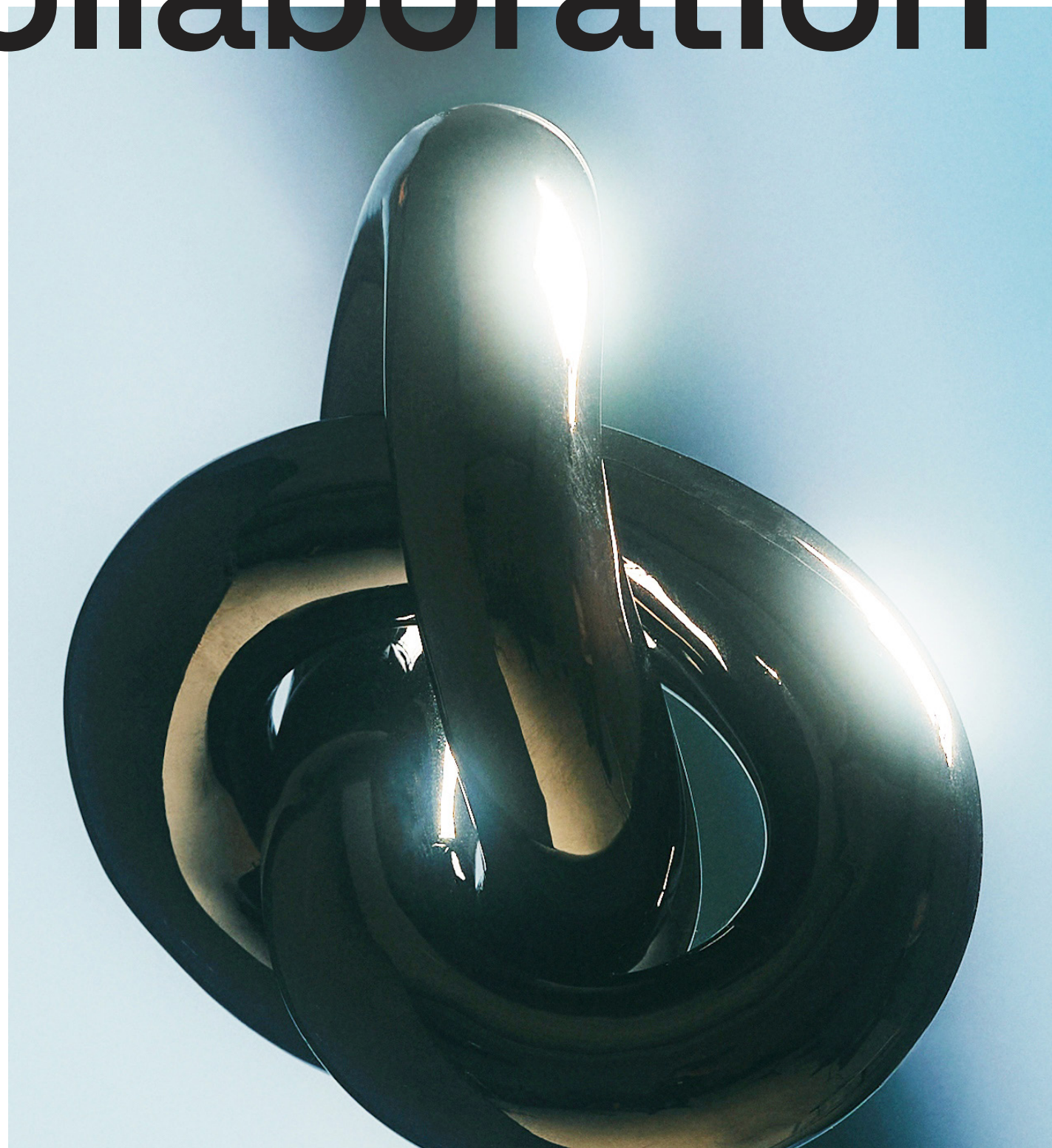
“ By leveraging AI in the creative process, we can now focus less on technical specifics during the concept phase. This allows generalists to utilize tools to bring ideas to life at an earlier stage in the project and spend more time on creative ideas and less on execution.



Paul Woodvine
Executive Creative Director



A new generation of collaboration



Technological innovation turned GenAI from a science fiction concept into reality, and a lot of creatives (me included!) weren't sure how to approach it at first. Such a game-changing technological advancement makes for a lot of uncertainty around job security and the future of a creative's role. In the Radar report by Contagious, almost half of all creatives surveyed (49.5%) said they didn't know what the greatest opportunity that GenAI created was yet.

It can be difficult to know how to view GenAI — ignore it and remain a purist, or fully embrace it and become an AI interpreter. Well, neither according to our experts.

“[AI is] like a new colleague that you have to ‘get to know’ and integrate into your workflow. The team member is here to stay, so it’s a good idea to get over your fears and start working together — respectfully.”



Nicole Adelt

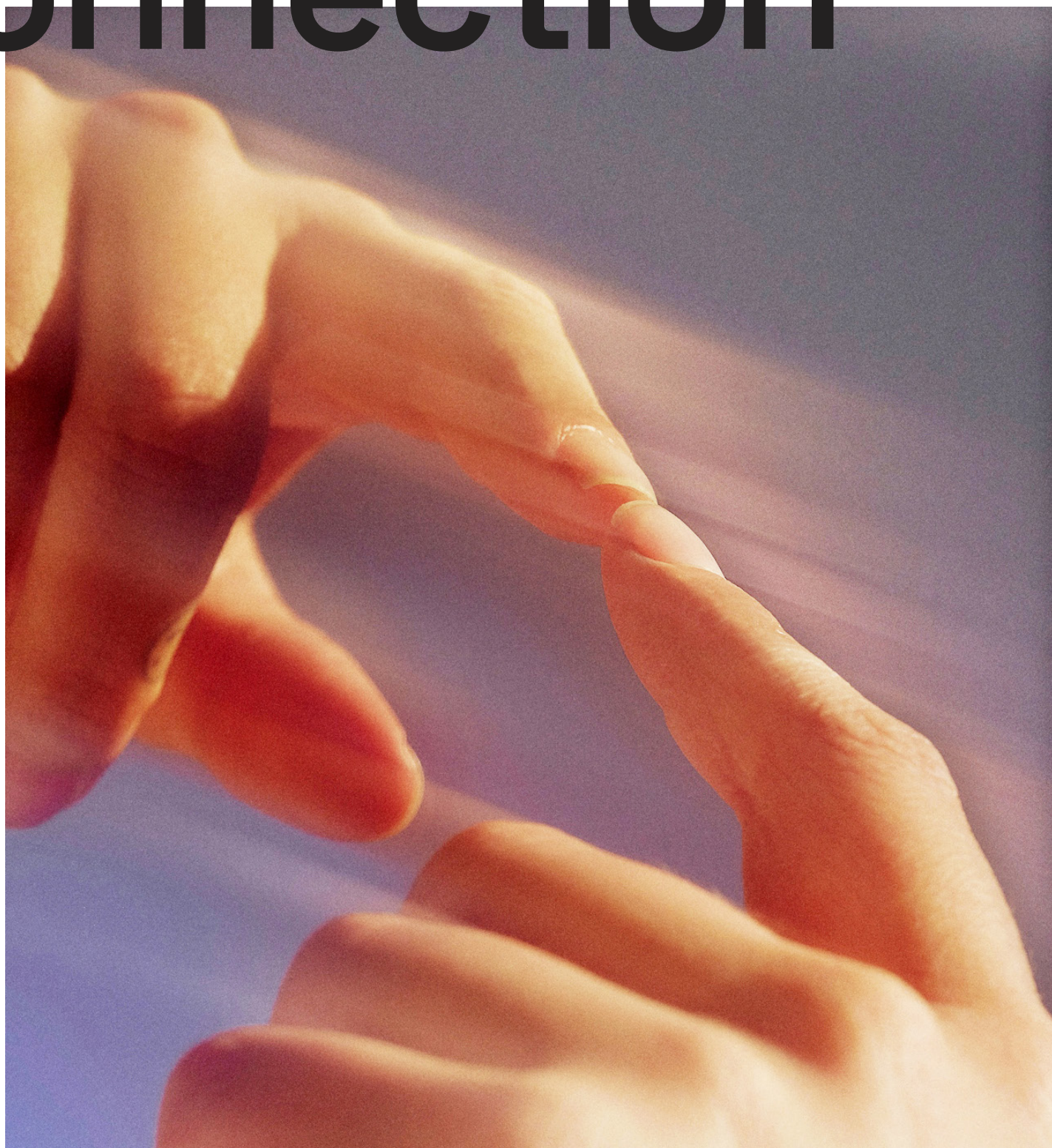
“I think of it as a helper, as a boost for all creatives — writers, designers, videographers, musicians. But the creativity, the authenticity, the originality of the creative work cannot be done without the creative human brain.”



Gwen Lafage

The advice to view GenAI as a colleague or workmate is especially helpful for freelancers and solo practitioners, currently the smallest demographic of creative GenAI users. A recent report from It's Nice That found that 38% of solo artists have yet to use GenAI in their work. Trends are emerging amongst creatives, and our experts, about using GenAI in this way as a sounding board to kickstart their ideas. Rather than relying on GenAI for creativity, we can use it to “yes and” our way to great ideas.

No substitute for human connection



Obviously, the strength of GenAI is the sheer volume of work it can produce in a short space of time. Ask a question, and the answer is there in seconds. Enter a visual prompt, and you'll have 50 images in less than a minute. However, a very common theme with our experts is the opinion that this mass-production model should only augment creativity, not replace it. In the wake of machine-learned generation, the power of human connection is becoming more important than ever.

“Many feel a sense of disempowerment in the frantic AI discussions — it’s too big, too complex, too fast, and too far away from our control to grasp or comprehend. I always encourage people to get back to the basics. To acknowledge the immense intelligence in your own beautiful supercomputer, to seek eye contact, put your feet in the soil, tap into your breath, pay attention to the information being fed to you in human interactions, to reconnect to where we came from and ask what future we want to envision.”



Cam Brandow

On the surface, this seems like a juxtaposition: Treat GenAI like a colleague, but don't rely on it for creative ideas. But the challenge is to treat GenAI as a developer of ideas rather than a source. That source comes from humans' creative spark in collaboration and cooperation.

The worst feature that an AI tool can have is an “Inspire me!” button — a way to simulate creativity from a bank of prompts. This saccharine approximation of creativity discourages the very spark that's necessary for genuine ideation and, perhaps even more dangerously, is a tempting feature for brands that want to remove their creative team from the equation.

Collaboration and conversation are the cornerstones of creativity, and entering a prompt into ChatGPT or DALL-E will never be a substitute for connecting with one another to make something great.

GenAI delivers, but sometimes more is less



Creatives are facing a very unique problem with GenAI: too many ideas. A staple of creativity is grappling with ideas, worrying away at a concept or a thought like a wobbly tooth until you can fully form it and start to work on something incredible. Every award-winning campaign started with such an idea — often the brainchild of a creative team bouncing off each other.

“Every day, you get into the ring and wrestle until you have a hold of what wants to be said in a clear grip. The next day, you show up again. And the more difficult your opponent is (the brief, subject, or idea), the harder you must work. Day after day. So, no wonder when an AI tool shows up and can do the job for us, we are tempted to hand it all over.”



Cam Brandow

“The emergence of generative AI has simplified certain aspects of productivity and innovation, allowing for a more accessible exploration of new concepts. [...] It’s crucial to acknowledge that creativity’s core value and opportunity lies in its inherent reward—the personal fulfillment and joy experienced by the creator.”



Kalle Hellzén

But with GenAI, any prompt you enter can spawn a whole handful of suggestions. This glut of apparent creativity is very attractive to brands and agencies. But it’s the nature of the struggle for creativity that makes the great ideas truly great. The challenge for creatives is to stay true to that creative endeavor and not dilute their offerings with sheer quantity.

AI regulation will enhance creativity, not stifle it



All game-changing new technologies come with a period of experimentation, both in terms of capabilities and in terms of governance. This is especially prevalent with GenAI. But without regulation, those same new technologies are in danger of exploitation and unethical use, which can lead to distrust. A good example of this is the [NY Times lawsuit against OpenAI](#) for using the news outlet's stories to train ChatGPT.

The general consensus amongst creatives is that the regulation of AI is very necessary, both to steer learning in the right direction but also to police the rise of deep fakes and fake content. These insidious methods of misinformation are not only hazardous to brand consistency, but they can ruin the lives of those they victimize. Regulation is critical to ensure people trust GenAI, and help them see the technology without suspicion and fear.

“The challenge, as with all disruptive technologies, is our current legal systems, often designed more than a hundred years ago, aren't fit for purpose to keep pace with the speed of evolution.”



Alex Peacock

So where does creativity come into the question of AI regulation? Well, with robust governance of the datasets that feed these language and visual models, designers, writers, and marketers will be able to produce a tighter spread of results that actively support their ideas rather than diffusing or diluting them.

“Providing a safe and relevant AI experience continues to be a complex challenge. Brands are looking for assurances that the materials they're creating with AI are okay to use externally. Establishing more clarity on this at the policy level and across industries will allow more brands to confidently embrace AI.”



Natalie Schwartz

So, is it easier to be creative today?



The question that drives not only us but many other creative minds is whether GenAI opens up an easier path to creativity or the exact opposite. Do we feel overwhelmed and shut down by the multitude of options available or empowered to experiment?

It all boils down to how you view creativity — and perhaps how you utilize it. For those at the “coal face” of creativity — writers, designers, and artists — for whom creative expression is an output of their daily work, expanding and developing ideas has become easier with GenAI.

“[Being creative] involves self-awareness, imagination, and consciousness, which generative AI does not possess. Therefore, being creative does not become any easier with the help of AI. However, AI can certainly assist in generating solutions.”



Paul Woodvine

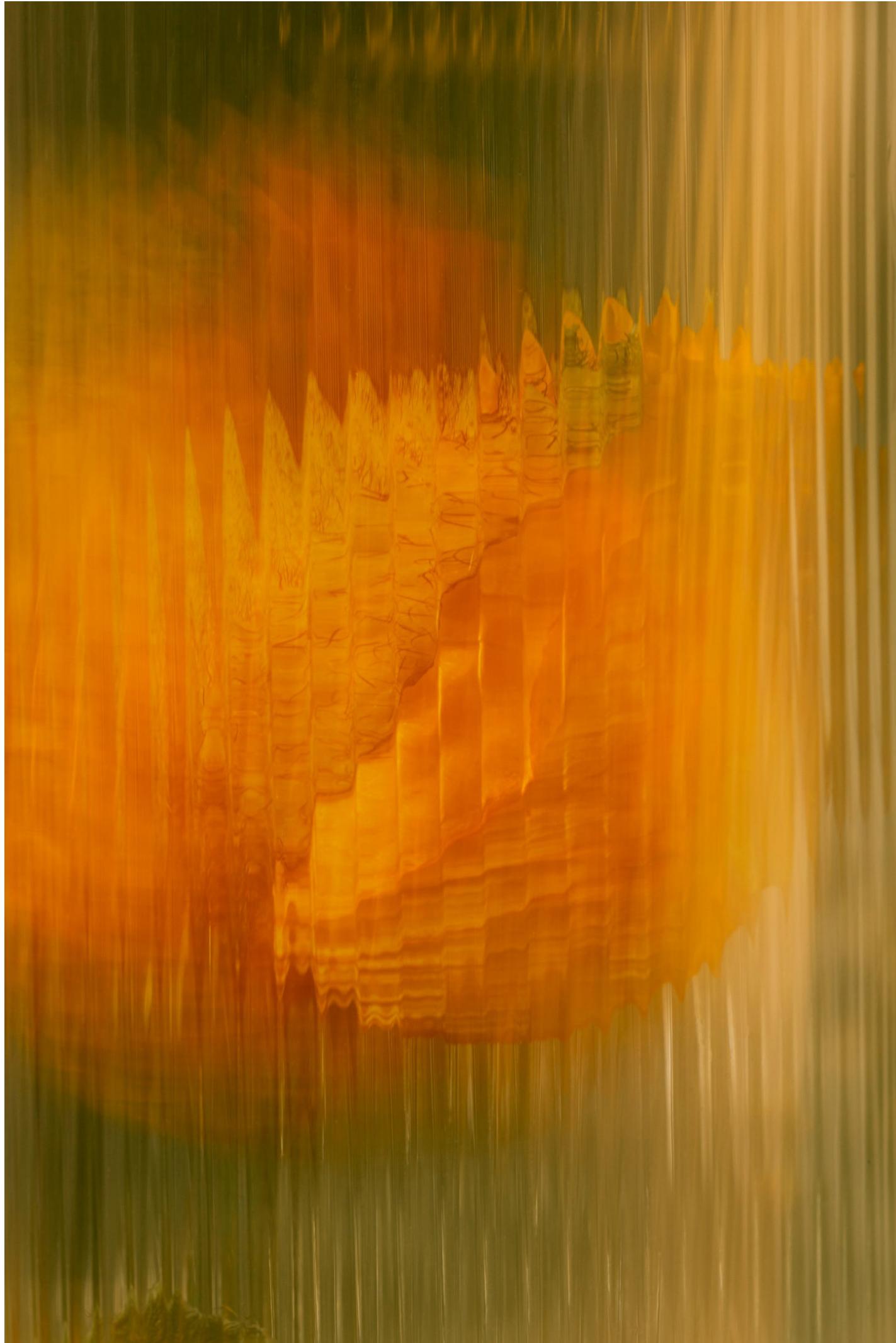
GenAI has also undeniably allowed for more accessibility to creative expression. People with limited technical skills can now create essays, art pieces, and music much more easily, and the journey from idea to execution is definitely easier.

“I see many images looking just the same — while a few years back everyone was using the same stock images, in a few months, will everyone use the same AI-generated images? It raises a question about what it means to be truly creative and how we value originality. The implementation might be getting easier, but nothing will replace the human essence of creativity and personal expression.”



Gwen Lafage

However, for marketers and managers, the glut of apparently creative ideas represents a swamp that must be navigated in order to find the big creative ideas. Leaning too heavily on AI to provide those ideas can lead to stagnant, safe executions — not to mention the danger of same-ness that arises when brands blindly follow trends.



The process of creative approval is headed for a total overhaul, as explored in [this article from It's Nice That](#). It's harder to pick out the good from the bad, making showcasing creativity in a tangible form more challenging. In order to stand out in today's crowded landscape, you need to generate — and identify — the big, risk-taking ideas. Those take time, investment, and experience, not just a quick trot through ChatGPT.

So, as all our experts say, the answer to the question of whether it's easier to be creative with GenAI remains “sort of.”

Although the use cases for GenAI are growing exponentially, the technology is still new, and the conversations around it continue. But just like the printing press, the telegraph, and the internet, technology can always augment creativity if you're flexible to change.

This guide to the world of AI was
written by a human. (For now ...)



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