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Self Reflection

Due to my own background in visual arts, I will primarily explain my understanding of image-based generation. My initial idea of generative artificial intelligence came largely from popular tools such as Midjourney and various Telegram bots which I experimented with early on due to their interesting non-human visuals. The work of Mohreshin Allahyari reflects what I found personally interesting in this early stage¹. However, these always platforms framed generative AI primarily as a prompt-based image generator. Thus, before taking this class, I interacted with generative AI mostly as a user rather than as someone critically aware or interested in how these systems operate beneath the interface.

In this class, my understanding is expanding significantly. I now have a clearer sense of how generative models are trained, how datasets and pattern recognition shape outputs, and how technical constraints influence what appears to be creative “choice.” Despite this deeper understanding, I remain somewhat sceptical of the current mainstream use of generative AI in creative fields. Much of what is produced feels sloppy, repetitive, or aesthetically flattened due to the want to create more human-like and photographic images and the aesthetic adherence to certain art styles. I find this is especially prominent when the technology is treated as a shortcut rather than a medium.

The abundance of generated imagery often prioritizes speed and novelty over intention, resulting in work that lacks conceptual depth or unique touches. That said, I do believe there are genuinely compelling uses of generative AI when it is approached thoughtfully and ethically. One project that inspires me is Mohammad Rasoulipour’s work, 1001 Shahs of Iran², on ancient face reconstruction which uses AI in the preliminary stages. Rather than generating speculative or sensational imagery, this project leverages AI’s strength in pattern recognition and generation (image-to-image) while foregrounding ethical responsibility like accurately showcasing ethnic features. The work allows for a form of self-determination by engaging communities in how historical identities are represented, rather than imposing a singular, authoritative reconstruction. In this sense, AI becomes a tool for collaboration and restoration rather than replacement.

I remain uncertain about the environmental impact of generative AI, particularly in large-scale image generation. As these tools become more embedded in creative practice, questions around energy consumption and sustainability feel increasingly urgent and unresolved.

¹ <https://morehshin.com/moon-faced>

² <https://www.eranshahr.com/shahs>