

Does AI Art have a Place in the Board Game Space?

(↪ /thread/3070695/does-ai-art-have-place-board-game-space)

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(\*\*\* This BGG forum post was composed as a course requirement for an undergraduate Data Ethics course at The University of Chicago, SP23). Participation in the survey (3 min) and discussion in the forum is encouraged and welcome from everyone. Although data will be collected and shared in a final presentation, all references will be made anonymous. Passion (whether for or against) the subject matter is appreciated!

Preface

In recent years with the advancement of AI and growing image databases, Artificially Generated Art (AI Art) has become a popular way of “creating” by simply inputting a description of a desired image. With the rise of this new technology, however, emerges the issue of ethics and plagiarism. AI art necessarily needs to draw on a database of word-associated images to create an image matching the input description. Some stand on the side that due to the variety of images used, AI art could be considered as inspired the same way a human artist might be inspired by images they have seen in their lives. Those on the other side condemn AI art as completely unoriginal and a blatant act of plagiarism. While the line between the two remains legally hazy I want to inquire, does AI art have a place in the board game industry?

Mysterium: A potential AI art candidate?

Setting aside the question of ethicality (for now), something I’d like to know is whether or not AI art truly removes something from the core gameplay of a game. In many forum posts on the subject and in the comments of crowdfunding projects (ie. [https://gamefound.com/projects/archangelisgames/archangelis?...\)](https://gamefound.com/projects/archangelisgames/archangelis?...) I found many arguments against the usage of AI art because it gives a game less artistic depth or simply detracts from the gaming experience in some way. In order to collect some more feedback on the issue I’ve designed a simple survey focused around the game Mysterium (2015, <https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/181304/mysterium>). I chose this game due to its popular reception (ranked 343 on BGG overall) and the art being an integral part of how the game actually plays. Using the free AI art generator, Dream by Wombo (<https://dream.ai/create>), I created some of the images below from image prompts that I felt might fit into the dream-like theme of the vision cards in Mysterium. As a disclaimer I do not claim any of these images as my own intellectual property but I do include them here in order to help explore this topic more. It would be a great help if you could answer the survey questions below:



5.



6.



7.



8.



9.



10.



1. Do you believe that the art of **Mysterium** has a common theme?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. Which (if any) of these images look like they could be effectively used as vision cards in a game of **Mysterium**?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4

- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10

Vote

Clear

Results

25 Voters

Created by: [Ja123yu](#)

Costs and Benefits

Having never designed a board game myself, I would like to ask the community (especially game designers, producers, and artists) about how they think AI art affects the process of hiring artists for a game.

1. Have you participated in or genuinely thought of creating a board game in the last 2 years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. How important do you consider art to be in a board game?

- ☐ 1 - irrelevant
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10 - the most important attribute

3. How important do you consider the artists involved in your board game creation?

- ☐ 1 - irrelevant
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10 - MVP

4. Did you consider using AI art in your game?

- ☐ Yes - for a lot of the art
- ☐ Yes - for miscellaneous things (ie. meeples, minor symbols)
- ☐ No

5. Do you think AI art is a cheaper (in terms of finance, time and manpower) alternative to hiring live artists?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe

☐ No

6. Do you think using AI art would negatively affect the reception of your game?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

7. Would you hire an artist who used AI art in their art creation process?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

Vote

Clear

Results

30 Voters

Created by: [Ja123yu](#)

Ethics

Finally, I want to get a better grasp of the community’s view of the ethics of AI art. You might ask, why put this last, it ought to be the first and most important part of the conversation. In part I agree, because if the entirety of AI art is hit with the ‘plagiarism’ tag then this entire discussion is mute and we should put it on the backburner, never to look back. Nevertheless, convenience always seems to have a way of loosening moral standards in commercial society. Thus, I thought the earlier discussions might be interesting and of some relevance. I know the question below can be a little more nuanced than the options given, so please feel free to elaborate on your answer in the comment. Without any further rambling:

1. Do you believe the usage of AI art in board game production is/can be ethical?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

Vote

Clear

Results

37 Voters

Created by: [Ja123yu](#)


Final Note

This post isn’t meant to bias anyone in one direction or another, just to encourage more discussion on a topic that I find very interesting. I love board games and while I have my favorites and my ‘mehs,’ I can appreciate that each creation is the product of people coming together to create something for others to enjoy. It’s my hope that this discussion adds to the myriad of ideas in this space; that anyone focused on the costs can also recognize the benefits, and vice versa. Ultimately, AI art is a tool and its alignment is dependent on how it’s used.

**Cameron Smith**  [@cssmith623](#) [Apr 22](#)

As a casual player of board games, and personally having really "meh" thoughts on AI art itself, this post opened up a lot of moral questions around AI art that I never really asked myself before. I want to say thanks for bringing this up in such a way for me to grasp the potential severity of AI art.

With that aside, as for the voting of the Mysterium vision cards, I do want to say I've never played the game myself but for the sake of accuracy I looked at a list of vision cards from the game and compared them to the art. I just wanted to point out that the theme of the vision cards gives me really strong "childhood books" vibes. A lot of your art came really close to that in terms of what was in the picture, but the shading or HOW it looked felt so off from the cards themselves, that it wouldn't fit right in Mysterium at all. Closest one for me would be the bears in that regard, and almost the tree and zig-zagy house again if it weren't for the fact that it looks a little more realistic.

**Mark W**  [Designer](#) [@mawilson4](#) [Apr 23 \(edited\)](#)

It could be used for board game art, yes, and far beyond games like Mysterium. That much seems obvious to me. The technology is already quite sophisticated and capable of producing plenty that would be usable in this sense, not just for more abstract artistic games like Dixit/Mysterium. We're well past that stage. So like, even if not all of your examples would pass inspection by Mysterium's publisher, another 1,000 generated by the same tool would produce enough viable cards for them.

But so long as the generators used rely on plagiarized work, which we know they do, I don't believe it *should* be used for monetized purposes. If someone wants to use it for prototyping or personal use or something, sure, whatever, but I have yet to hear an ethical argument I can endorse