

Designing tools that act as creative collaborators



Meet the team



Elijah

Symbolic Systems '26



Luiza

Design + Computer Science
'28



Claire

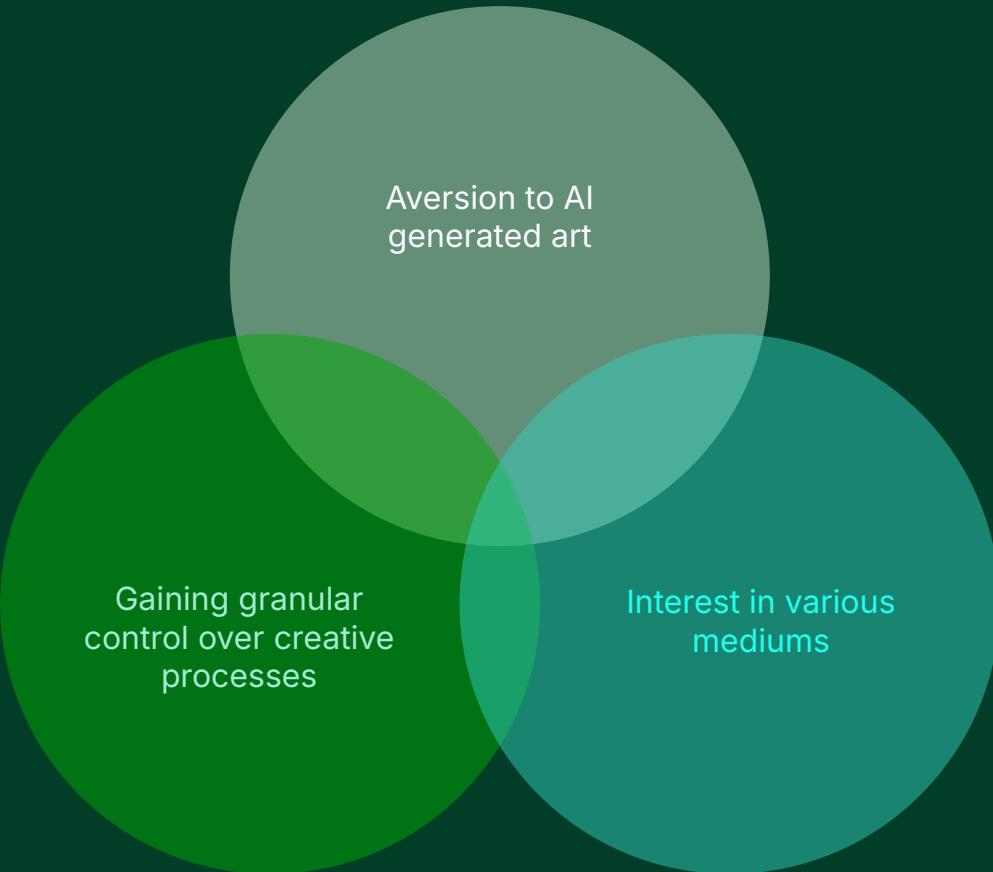
Computer Science '27



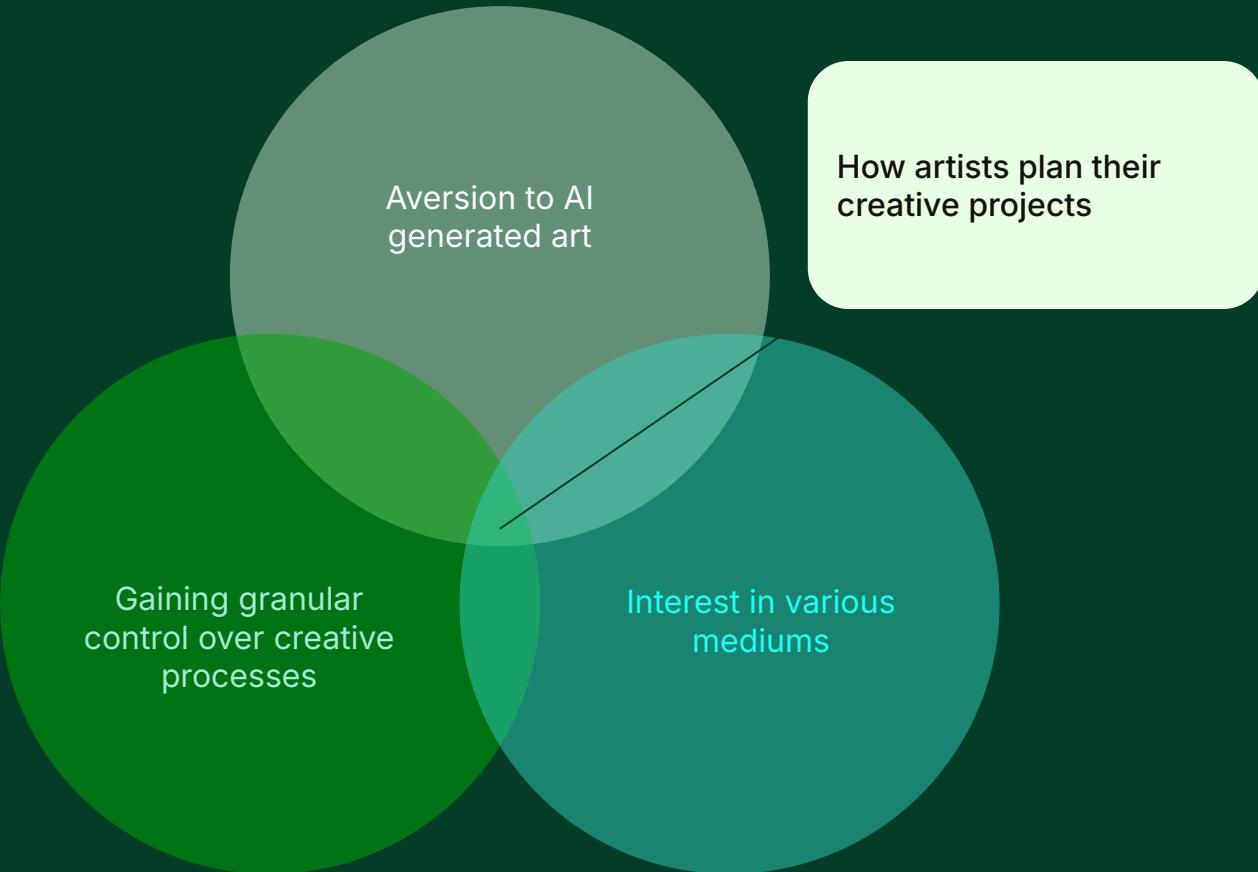
Mikela

Symbolic Systems '27

Domain selection



Domain selection



Finding participants

1

2

3

4

Experience

- Years of experience
- Profession
- Freelance vs. Industry

Context

- How'd we meet
- Where'd we meet
- Compensation

Demographics

- Age
- Gender
- Race

Art Medium

- Analog vs Digital
- Multimedia?

Finding participants

- Random sampling in downtown Palo Alto
- Mutual connections
- Art focused spaces (galleries/studios)



Participants

**Vanessa**

Product Design @ Adobe AI
Digital Art Hobbyist

**Stephanie**

Senior UX Designer @ Oracle
Analog Art Hobbyist (Print +
Painting)

**Keith**

25+ Years in Digital Art
industry (VR/Animation/Film)

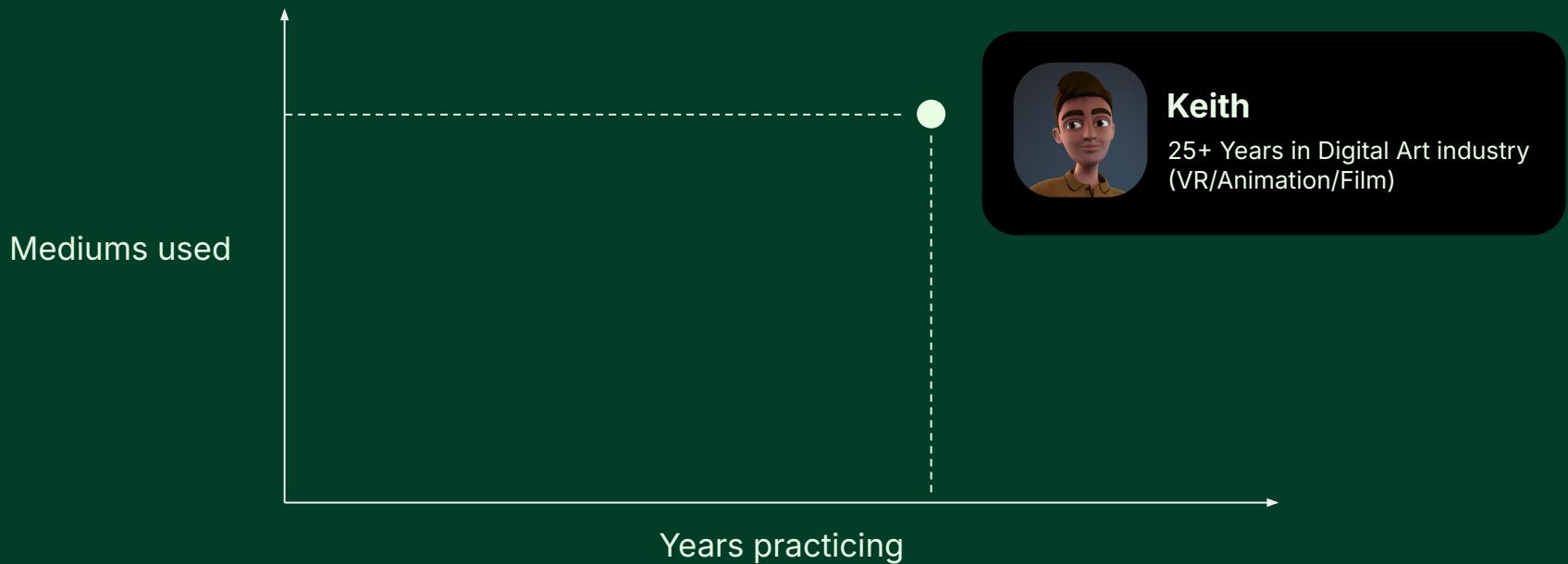
**Willow**

Film Student

**Chloe**

20+ years of art hobbies

Extreme user



Guiding questions

"What inspires your art?"

"How do you plan your creative work?"

"Do you use AI to help in any step of the process?"

"How do you organize your art and ideas?"

"How has your process in making art changed over time?"

Interview Results

Keith

Commercial + Freelance artist → VR/Animation/Filmmaking/Digital



Team members role

Luiza — Interviewer/Recorder
Mikela — Note taker

"I canceled my Adobe subscription because they're not going in a direction I like... It feels like I'm losing **creative agency**"



Some of his artwork!

Vanessa

Product designer + Art hobbyist → Painting and vector art



“If I’m creating something **natural**, then I just get ideas from my **environment**, like a storefront with cool branding”



Some of her art!

Team members role

Elijah — Interviewer/Recorder
Mikela — Note taker

Stephanie

Product designer + Art hobbyist → Explores multimedia art and ethics of AI art



"I get the most inspired and
motivated when I'm
surrounded by **other people**"

Team members role

Claire — Interviewer/Recorder
Mikela — Note taker

Chloe

Longtime art hobbyist → Printmaking, photography, painting



Team members role

Luiza — Interviewer/Recorder
Claire — Note taker

“The best pieces just come out, especially with **strong emotions and music.**”



Some of her artwork!

Willow

Film student
(non-user)



Team members role

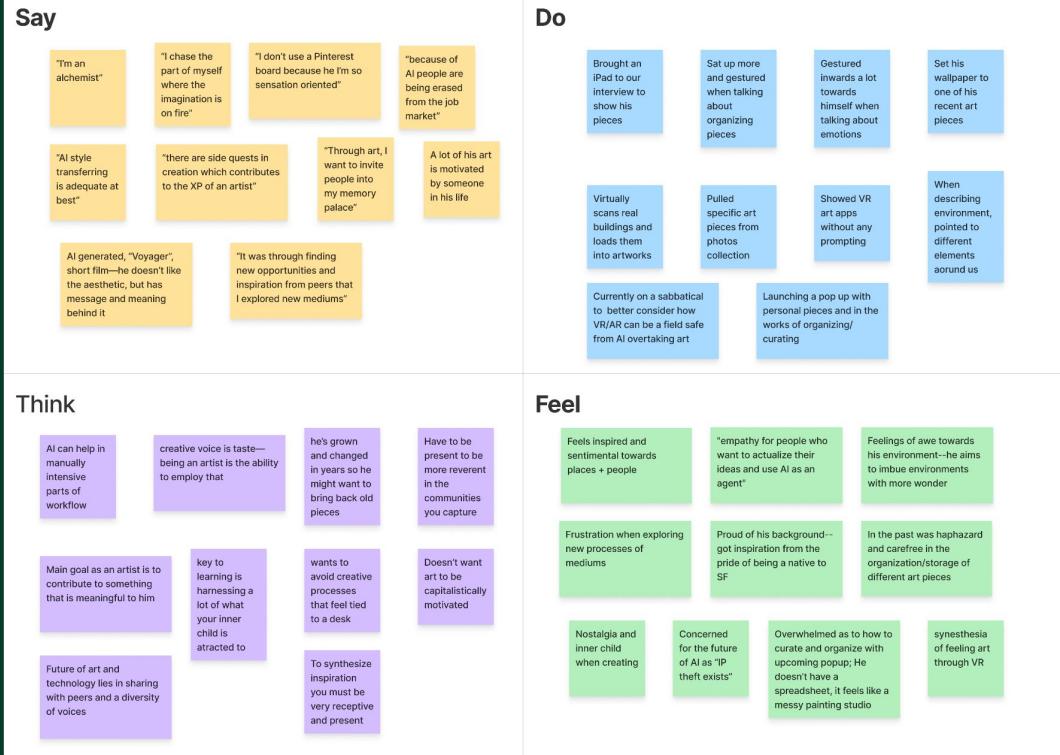
Claire — Interviewer

"Art is my **safe space**."
"Of course AI can make a simple animation, but there's no **personal feeling** to it. There's no connection to it."



Analysis

Empathy map 1: Keith



"I don't use a Pinterest board because I'm so sensation oriented"

Proud of his background-- gets inspiration from the pride of being a SF native

For the upcoming pop up, he doesn't have a spreadsheet, it feels like a messy painting studio

He prefers to avoid creative processes that feel tied to a desk

Empathy map 2: Vanessa

Say

All AI should need to be used very wisely to be used by professionals in art because it's so smart.
Art should begin with a human foundation.
"I'm a great scientist."
"If AI was creating my art, it would have to hold me for anyone."

There are patterns that she uses when she creates something.
"All art creation is not necessarily art because AI lacks emotional intelligence."
"Kids books that I see now are not good and don't like the other human art."
"getting inspiration from human art is best!"

I don't know if using AI is appropriate to right or wrong.
"I don't want to give AI tools power over what I create."
"We have more in the initial steps to look at the starting and research process."
"Maybe AI can take my design and help make it for different kind responses."

Do

Loves art in that specific places that she might have trouble finding them.
Has a folder of saved posts on Instagram for inspiration.
Creates what she sees outside.
Creates art to cheer others up or make of work.

Uses AI to create art for her hobbies.
Creates art in home with AI intention.
Uses a variety of mediums to create art.
Has some work in painting and drawing as well as AI as Add-on.

Uses AI to help choose what tool to use when creating.
Uses AI to mimic art for inspiration and to see new ideas.
Uses AI to research new ideas.
Dances as a hobby.

Think

Art makes us AI doesn't have much value.
Something created by a human holds more value than something created by AI.
I shouldn't use AI for something that is being for fun.
AI creates content is very different to me.

She likes to use AI as long as it's work.
I like to take inspiration from different things but not copy exactly.
AI can make good art because it's abstract anyway.
What can I get away with using AI for and it still be my own?

Her job in tech has made her biased against AI.
AI can help for technical support during the creative process.
AI can be used for accessibility.
Creates don't use AI to actually make their art.

Wonder where AI gets creative? how's what it trained on?
A normalized tool might be a good tool.

Feel

She feels inspired by nature and takes she sees in nature and turns it into a piece of art.
She feels guilty when she uses AI to create a piece of art.
Conflicted about whether she should use AI.
She feels biased against AI since it makes so much better than her.

She feels powerless when nothing of last time on her portfolio.
Evidently connected when she looks at art created by a human.
Skeptical about how well AI could create given its lack of emotional intelligence.
She feels proud of all that she creates herself.

She feels nervous when trying out AI to start the line.
She feels negatively about how AI is trained.
She feels like crying at while at work.
She feels excited about AI's potential projects if they plan to use AI to make work easier.

Relieved when AI helps her figure out what tool to use.
at ease when AI helps her find a painting that needs

Doesn't use AI to create actual project outside of work

ea2187

Skeptical about how well AI could create given its lack of emotional intelligence

ea2187

She feels guilty when she uses AI to create a piece of art

ea2187

"I don't want to give AI tools power over what I create"

ea2187

Contradictions

Vanessa:

- “Fundamentals of art are **inherently human**”
- Yet, uses ChatGPT to help ideate projects and planning

Stephanie:

- “I do not use AI in any art-making processes”
- Uses it to generate user cases for product design

Tensions

Personal vs. Professional workflow

- Personal workflows are more natural and **grounded in senses**
- Professional workflows are **highly iterative** and tend to incorporate more AI as a means to expedite processes

Recognizing value vs. ethics of Gen AI art

- Many **realize the potential time savings** of AI but say a lot of the “frustration” or “effort” is what **delivers value** to the art

Surprises

- Vanessa found it ok to help design AI products for Firefly but feels guilty using it outside of work
- All the artists seemed accepting of using AI to help with planning and organization
- AI was seen as a way to figure out what tool to use next

Insights and Needs #1

Finding

Artists find inspiration for their work in the world around them, working creatively across a variety of mediums.

Insight

Artists prefer to make work that they feel an emotional connection to, which helps them feel more creative. These sources of inspiration can include lived experiences, music, and nature.

Need

Artists need a way to capture and revisit these spur of the moment sources of inspiration to support their creative processes.

Insights and Needs #2

Finding

Artists store their ideas and work across multiple systems, which can be difficult to keep track of.

Insight

Artists who don't have a reliable way to store their ideas and past projects struggle to remember needed details, even if they are documented.

Need

Artists need to easily and intuitively organize their work and ideas all in one place, that allows them to quickly come back to.

Insights and Needs #3

Finding

Artists believe that the foundation of art should be human. It is for them to connect and build relationships with other people.

Insight

There is a very human aspect to making art. Humans can be a source of inspiration, with art often being a means of connecting with others and even conveying the human experience.

Need

Artists need to feel connected with human experiences and relationships — both to find inspiration and create work that resonates with others.

Summary

- We talked to **5 people** about their process in making art and how they engage with different tools and mediums
- We found that most artists **find inspiration from a variety of different sources** — music, movies, locations, people, and feelings.
- Most artists **don't have a very organized way of saving and storing their pieces** or sources of inspiration
- A lot of them believe that **art should be fundamentally human** and if AI were to play a role in it, it should be for more automatic and mundane steps

What's Next

- Gain a better understanding of specific use cases with existing tools (crucial to understand HMW)
 - Current frictions in workflow
 - Most valuable tool in tech stack
- Explore the idea of community and how it manifests online and in planning
 - Pinterest
 - Online art challenges
- Interview more beginner artists with less established workflows

Thank you!



Appendix

Willow Empathy Map



Chloe Empathy Map

