

# Trying out DALLÂ·E 2

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We got the chance to try [DALLÂ·E 2](#) through our partnership with OpenAI. Itâ€™s mind-blowing. I first fooled around with random prompts. Then, as an exercise, I put myself in the shoes of Klaviyo users who include images in their email and SMS marketing campaigns (very common), and checked if they could have generated similar images via DALLÂ·E 2.

â€œA tormented software developer skydiving while texting on their phone in an impressionist styleâ€



Holy shit! Yes, I had seen examples before, such as in this [twitter thread](#), but couldnâ€™t be sure how much cherry-picking was going on. This incredible piece of software generated ten images that fit my description. It didnâ€™t go out and find themâ€¢it generated them as if I had asked an artist. And the whole thing took under a minute.

Now why did all ten software developers look male? I tried replacing software developer with a career often stereotyped as female.

â€œA tormented **teacher** skydiving while texting on their phone in an impressionist styleâ€



Still all male. Maybe it was the skydiving? I tried being explicit.

“A tormented **female teacher** skydiving while texting on their phone in an impressionist style”



Next I tried a different style. I meant to ask for a “stained glass window,” but accidentally typed “stainless glass window.”

“A stainless glass window depicting someone using a laptop”



All ten are creative and artistic interpretations of my nonsensical request for a *stainless glass window* showing someone using a laptop. Insane!

And here's what I meant to type: "A stained glass window depicting someone using a laptop"♦



Not sure what to say besides, again, this is amazing. Now many of the people depicted are in the style (clothes, hair, etc.) of what you would expect in an art form associated with religion. So I tried forcing that to be different with:

"A stained glass window depicting a punk rocker using a laptop"♦



While I was playing with this, [Ezra](#), [Landon](#), and [Cam](#) walked by my desk. Landon and Cam are lawyers so we tried an example with a legal theme.

"A cubist painting depicting a lawyer speaking to the jury in a courtroom wearing gym clothes"♦



[Christina](#) then got the answer to a [question](#) sheâ€™s been wondering about since second grade:

â€œone eyed horned flying purple eaterâ€



I tried a more constrained exercise. I wanted to see if DALLÂ·E 2 could generate the types of images Klaviyo users include in their email and SMS marketing campaigns. Current methods include taking original photos, using stock art, and employing graphic artists.

Our [Klaviyo Showcase](#) is a browsable collection of high-performing email and SMS messages, included with the consent of users, and available for inspiration. I scrolled through the examples, looked at the images, and tried to figure out which could possibly be done through DALLÂ·E.

One category is where stock photography is used as is. An example is a brand that sells fresh seafood. They want attractive photos in their emails, but thereâ€™s no advantage to doing their own photo shoots over using stock photos. So I triedâ€¦

â€œA photo depicting a mouth-watering salmon with lemon slicesâ€



First reactionâ€¦yes, those will work. Iâ€™m not a seafood expert so not sure if thereâ€™s anything fishy in the anatomy or textureâ€¦but I bet one of those images would do the job of conveying fresh and getting the recipient hungry.

For comparison with how people work today, I searched a stock photo site.

The screenshot shows the Shutterstock website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for IMAGES, VIDEO, MUSIC, TEMPLATES, and EDITORIAL. On the right side, there are buttons for Pricing, Log in, Sign up, and Menu. A search bar contains the query "A photo depicting mouth-watering salmon with lemon slices." Below the search bar are filters for Image type, Orientation, Color, People, Artists, and More. To the right, there is a "Sort by Popular" dropdown. The main content area displays a message: "Sorry, we couldn't find any matches for 'A photo depicting mouth-watering salmon with lemon slices.'". Below this message is a bulleted list of troubleshooting steps:

- Make sure the spelling is correct
- Try using a simpler search
- Still having problems? [Contact us](#)

No surprise that there were no results because thatâ€™s not the type of query you use with these sites. I shortened the query until I got results.

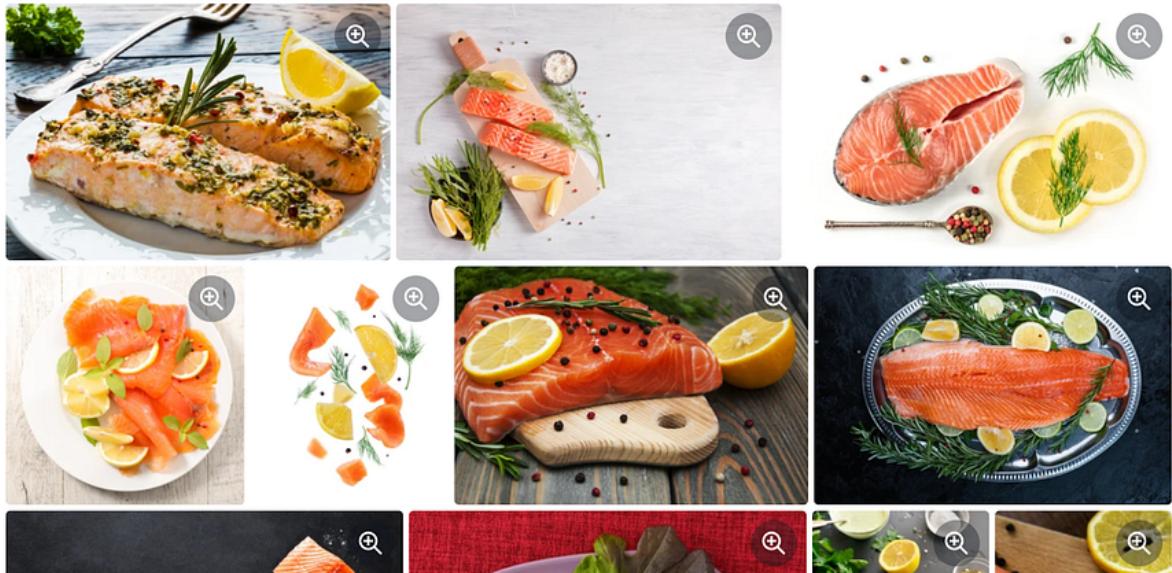
The screenshot shows a search interface with a search bar containing the query "salmon with lemon slices.". Below the search bar are several filter buttons: "Image", "Orientation", "Color", "People", "Artists", and "More". To the right of these filters is a "Sort by" button set to "Popular". The main area displays a grid of nine image thumbnails, each showing a different preparation or presentation of salmon with lemon slices. Each thumbnail includes a small magnifying glass icon in the top right corner.

## Salmon with lemon slices. images

81,813 salmon with lemon slices. stock photos, vectors, and illustrations are available royalty-free. See [salmon with lemon slices. stock video clips](#)

Image type Orientation Color People Artists More

Sort by Popular



Good options there too. It's not obvious if the stock photos are better or worse than the generated ones.

Another category of image is where a drawing is used as a background for text. Here's an example from Showcase:

*Decorate with Fragrance*

**CANDLES OFF MAIN**

candlesoffmain.com



**CLEARANCE**



**S A L E**

UP TO

**40%  
off**



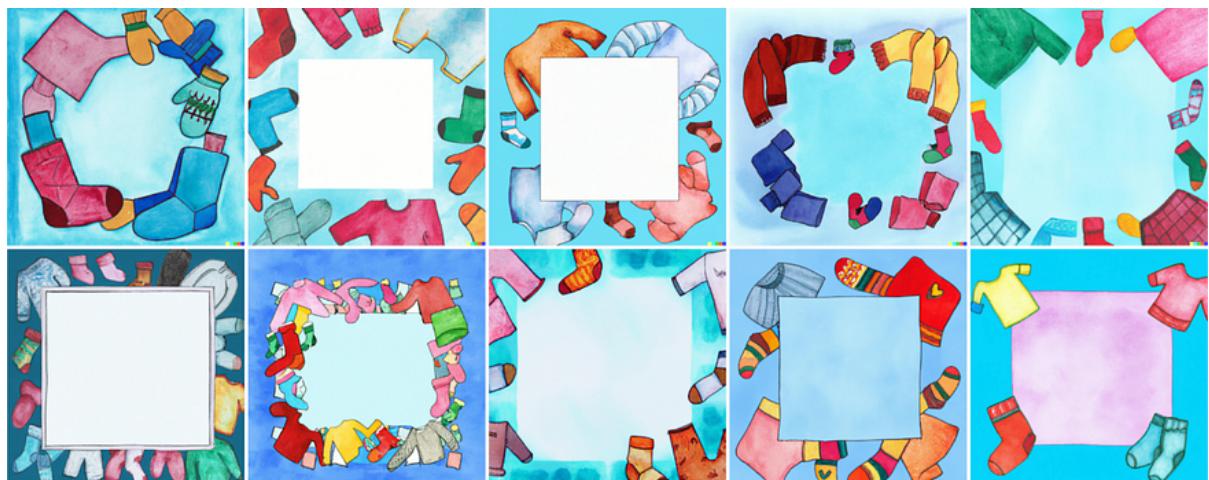
I'm not sure if the brand that created this email started with a single piece of stock art, assembled the background using clipart in a drawing tool, or illustrated the whole thing from scratch. But regardless, this seemed like a good one to try by generation.

“A friendly, colorful watercolor of shirts, socks and mittens on a blue background”



Looked great. But there was no room to add the text. Could it really be as simple as instructing DALL·E to add space in the middle?

“A friendly, colorful watercolor of shirts, socks and mittens on a blue background **with a big empty square in the middle**”



Even last week if you had shown me one of these and asked me how it was generated I would have never guessed AI image generation. Now, what if we wanted snowflakes too as in the original.

“A friendly, colorful watercolor of shirts, socks and mittens on a blue background **with snowflakes** and a big empty square in the middle”



And to complete the exercise, I added text in a different program. (The fact that I'm not an artist shows in the font, color and spacing of the text.)



If you look closely there's some weirdness, like on the edge of the sleeves. I don't know if a brand would be bothered by that – it might pass as artistic license by the illustrator.

Another category that looked feasible was where thereâ€™s a photo with a human, but the product being advertised is not being worn by the human. Hereâ€™s an example:



WATCHES

CLOCKS

CONTACT



# NO TIME OUTS



Power up your workouts with our **Jumbo Atomic Wall Clock**.  
The seconds display helps you easily track your rest-

The product being advertised is the clock. The brand likely used a stock photo and digitally added the clock. So could they have generated the photo?

â€œA photo depicting a fit middle-aged man deadlifting barbells against a gray backgroundâ€¢



At first glance the brand could use one of these, but at second glance, I bet they would hesitate. There are small weird things on all of the people, the facial expressions may be inappropriate, the muscles and joints are strange, and in one case the barbell is going through the personâ€™s neck! (But againâ€¢this is all crazy.)

I clicked to generate again:



Similar results. (Here there are one or maybe two images where the person has a different skin color. Does all this defaulting reflect the training set?) I also wanted to see if I could get a white shirt like in the original image.

â€œA photo depicting a fit middle-aged man **wearing a white shirt** deadlifting barbells against a gray background.â€¢



It got the white shirt. Interesting though that for half itâ€™s a dress shirt! Perhaps some association with middle-aged men?

So I moved away from people. Another category is where the product is staged in a scene. Hereâ€™s an example:

SWEET WATER DECOR

INTRODUCING OUR  
NEW HOLIDAY SCENTS



THESE TWO NEW SCENTS CAPTURE  
THE MAGIC OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Get to know our two newest winter scents, Hot Cocoa + Peppermint and Christmas Tree, to see why you will be adding both to your holiday wish list in every jar style!

[SHOP NEW WINTER SCENTS](#)

I tried to generate a similar background.

A photo depicting a wooden table against a gray wall with Christmas decoration♦



These all seem like reasonable candidates. I'm sure someone good with photo editing could put the candles into the scene. But I wanted to see if I could generate the entire image, including the candle, using DALL·E.

There's a feature that lets you upload an image and specify an area to edit, but it appears intended for when you want to insert something generated into an image versus inserting an uploaded image into a generated scene. For example, I uploaded a photo I took at Larz Anderson Park and asked for:

“A microraptor flying above the city”



To try something similar with the candle, I searched for an image of it, made the background transparent, placed it on a canvas big enough that it didn't occupy most of the area, and then uploaded it.

â€œPlace this candle on a wooden table against a gray background with Christmas decorationâ€¢



Not sure why it erased the lid and/or turned it into the wooden disk below the candle. Also notice that in a few images it added a rim to the candle, which the brand definitely couldn't use. Still, even here, there are images that would work, although none are as attractive as what they sent.

So the results of my constrained use case exercise? For stock photos without humans (e.g. salmon) and illustrations without specific branding guidelines (e.g. winter background), DALL-E 2, to my non-expert eye, could reasonably replace the "old way" right now. For photos with humans (e.g. man lifting weights) and photos of humans modeling products, it could not be used as is.

Trying to not be influenced by how mind-blowing this technology is, would I want it, in its current form, as a tool in my marketing toolbox? Absolutely! for images that could be used as generated, to give starting points for further editing, to help brainstorm, to convey ideas to graphic artists, to run efficient A/B tests on creative, and to create fantastical eye-catching images that today could only be done by artists.

Last year I wrote a [blog post](#) on if GPT-3 could do a better job than I did at writing a few paragraphs of text. At least I had a chance. With DALL-E 2, I suppose a good photographer, artist, or graphic designer could beat any one of these images. As a non-artist I couldn't match any of them, except the photos. But that's not the point. Image generation from text "something I bet many computer scientists would have assumed to be an impossible task not all that long ago" works. It works really, really well. This is the most I've ever been on the receiving end of the Arthur C. Clarke quote about how any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

And to end this post and top off that feeling, I asked for a watercolor of a panda wearing a hat in Chinese:

"熊猫戴帽子的水彩画"

