

Original Article

Ethics, Values, and Integrity

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Abstract

The sudden influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in applied arts has redefined the boundaries of creativity, authorship, and ownership. In India, this intersection has intensified debates surrounding ethics and copyright, echoing earlier artistic transformations initiated by Andy Warhol during the Pop Art movement. Warhol's use of screen printing blurred the distinction between artistic intention and mechanical reproduction, a dilemma now magnified by AI. This paper explores three contemporary Indian case studies: **Abhay Sehgal's** alleged plagiarism using AI, the viral Studio **Ghibli-style** AI trend and **Ankit Sahni's** collaborative project with an AI system named RAGHAV. By analyzing these cases through the lens of Pop Art's philosophy of reproduction and appropriation, this study situates AI art within a historical continuum of artistic disruption. It concludes that while AI presents opportunities for innovation, it simultaneously challenges notions of authenticity, moral rights, and artistic integrity within the Indian applied arts ecosystem. The paper argues for clear ethical frameworks and adaptive copyright laws to protect artists while embracing technological evolution.



Figure 1 Abhay Sehgal's alleged plagiarism

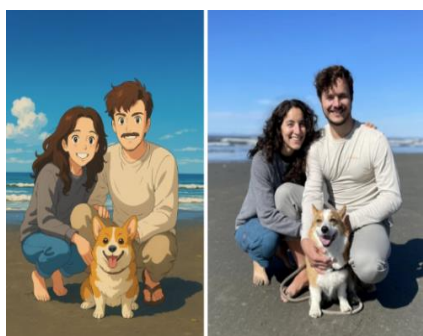


Figure 2 Ghibli-style AI trend



Figure 3 Ankit Sahni's collaborative project



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Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has taken the field of Applied arts in India by storm. It is the most challenging of the revolutions human kind has seen till now. A Technological revolution that is hard to detect by common people brought some serious issues about ethical values. Artists and designers are regularly using Midjourney, DALL-E 3, Sora AI and Runway, Adobe Firefly, Stable Diffusion, Google Veo, and Canva which are AI platforms for creating artworks and videos to generate visual concepts that would traditionally require long hours of manual labor. While these tools help in creativity, they also brought complex legal questions. Who owns an AI-generated artwork? There are millions of images available on the internet without any copyrights; AI uses everything which is available in Google, so who gets the credit of an image for an AI generated artwork? How can originality be measured when algorithms synthesize millions of pre-existing works? These questions parallel the artistic upheaval caused by the Pop Art movement in the 1960s. Andy Warhol's use of screen printing, redefined authorship and authenticity, transforming ordinary mass-produced images into high art. Warhol's process was mechanical, repetitive, and commercial and it challenged the notion that the artist's hand was essential to creative expression. Similarly, AI challenges the role of human agency in digital creation today.

Pop Art and the debate of Reproduction

Pop Art emerged in post-war America at a time when mass culture, advertising, and industrial printing had already reshaped the Art and Design industry and the way people pursue it. Andy Warhol's work, particularly the Marilyn Diptych (1962) and Campbell's Soup Cans (1962) adopted commercial printing methods to challenge the idea of authenticity in art. Walter Benjamin's (1968) argument that mechanical reproduction diminishes the "aura" of the artwork is central here. Warhol turned repetition itself into a conceptual gesture, collapsing the distance between fine art and the assembly line. AI-generated imagery extends this concept. Like Pop Art, it relies on replication, but without human intention or contextual authorship. The system draws on existing datasets and outputs recombined imagery at scale. Warhol once said, "I want to be a machine." AI makes those metaphor literal, raising questions about agency, originality, and artistic accountability.

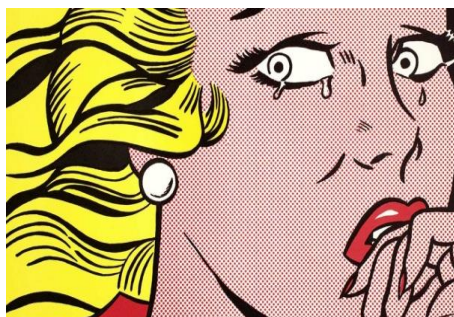


Figure 4 Pop Art

Case Study 1: Abhay Sehgal: Plagiarism and Opacity

The controversy surrounding Abhay Sehgal in 2025 illustrates the risks of concealed AI use. Sehgal's works allegedly replicated other artists' compositions while being presented as original hand-drawn art. While Warhol's appropriation was openly acknowledged as method and critique, Sehgal's concealment disrupted public trust. He used works of many illustrators in his collage without the original artists' consent. Many artists share their work on the internet, it does give them publicity and the work is reached to many people too but there is a downside to this practice. Anyone can use that work without consent. Sometimes when Artists like Abhay Sehgal get a lot of publicity and fame, such questions become ethical. Abhay Sehgal's work has been used by Prada, Coca-Cola, and Tata Cliq under India's Copyright Act (1957), infringement and violation of moral rights are relevant concerns, but AI authorship remains legally ambiguous due to the absence of disclosure norms.

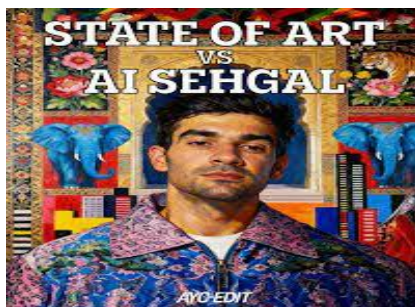


Figure 5 Abhay Sehgal

Case Study 2: Studio Ghibli AI Trend: Style as Commodity

The viral “Studio Ghibli AI” trend transformed private photographs into Ghibli-style illustrations, raising questions about cultural authorship and stylistic appropriation. In spite of the fact that copyright law does not protect “style,” the ethical issue concerns the detachment of an aesthetic tradition from the labor and philosophy that shaped it. In Pop Art terms, this resembles Warhol’s mechanical repetition, but accelerated to near-infinite scale by automation. Any artist develops his style in his lifetime with great hard work; he has his study of art, philosophy, cultural background, and his own aesthetic capabilities to come up with an original style. Studio Ghibli is famous for its hand drawn Japanese Anime style. It is unique in many ways. Just by blindly copying the style with the help of AI, the style loses its authenticity and meaningfulness. Moreover the trend did not have the organic quality and the emotions of original Studio Ghibli animation because of its mass-productive nature and no story behind the picture.

Case Study 3: Ankit Sahni and RAGHAV: Transparent Co-authorship

Mr. Ankit Sahni by profession is an artist and lawyer, whose collaboration along with the AI system RAGHAV (‘Robust Artificially Intelligent Graphics and Art Visualizer’) offers a contrasting model grounded in disclosure and co-authorship. The artwork he was produced by inserting a digital picks shot by Sahni onto RAGHAV together with an image of Van Gogh’s, ‘The Starry Night as the ‘style’ input.’ According to Mr. Sahni’s clarification of the functioning of RAGHAV, he might control the extent of ‘technique transfer’ from the style input in the software. The Ai modified image was a version of the original photograph modified to the technique from Van Gogh’s painting.

Recorded in India as a jointly authored work, Sahni’s Suryast (2020) demonstrates how Indian copyright law particularly Section 2(d) (VI) can accommodate AI when a human clearly directs the creative process. Unlike the previous cases, transparency here sustains both authorship and ethical legitimacy.

Discussion

Artificial Intelligence art revisits the same philosophical problem once faced by Pop Art, What remains of originality when production is mechanized? However, AI blurs the boundaries of authorship further by introducing non-human agency. The stakes are particularly significant in India, where applied arts intersect with cultural heritage and artisanal practice. The primary issue is not the tool itself but whether ethical moral responsibility of Art is preserved. Also, it is impossible to keep a tap on original images as everyone posts on all possible media for publicity and greater reach.

Ethical and Legal Implications

- Ethically, disclosure of original sources is crucial to preserve trust and acknowledge creative sources.
- Legally, Indian copyright still presumes a human author.
- Policy gaps persist in dataset accountability, cultural consent, and attribution.

Conclusion

AI does not erase the history of reproduction inaugurated by Pop Art; it intensifies it. Where Warhol exposed the mechanics of replication as critique, AI risks obscuring authorship unless artists adopt transparency. Human agency remains the anchor of meaning in this evolving landscape. Responsible AI practice requires disclosure, respect for provenance, and a continued recognition of creative labor even when mediated through machines.

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