Altamont's Lillis Taylor on AI's Effects on Art

By Will McLain



AI is something you hear about almost every day. Seemingly everyone is talking about it. It's hard to escape the constant loop of news stories and buzz. The uncertainty and novelty of AI cause some people to fearmonger, particularly in the media, where big-picture stories about AI using up all our water or even potentially leading to human extinction often drown out reports about the "smaller" effects. Those include impacts on the art scene, where fake images and videos are increasingly popular and harder to spot. Film studios are using AI to generate movie scenes, game creators are using it to code and develop games, and even musicians' livelihoods are being threatened by artificial music that has millions of plays on sites like Spotify.

So how does AI affect local artists in the Altamont and Birmingham community? Altamont teacher and well-known textile artist Lillis Taylor shared her thoughts with *The Acta Diurna*.

One of Taylor's major concerns about AI is its effect on the younger generation of artists, the ones growing up with what could be a technological crutch. "What worries me is the young people who haven't had the opportunity to build their creative muscle would subvert that whole process and use AI without knowing how to really *engage* with art," she says.

Artists' employment is also an issue for Taylor. "You have people who went to school and trained to be designers, for example, and a person who doesn't value paying for that work using AI, then you're taking a job away from someone who's really trained." She sees this type of use in Birmingham now: "People [are] utilizing AI to do graphic design on their behalf."

Taylor also worries about how AI is trained to make images. "I find it very problematic that AI kind of mines content out there on the internet; how do we regulate that? A lot of artists put work out to get exposure and get commissioned, and it feels very dirty to let AI train on that content."

But, for Taylor, it's not just about art. "The environmental implications of AI are the thing that freaks me out the most."

Perhaps surprisingly, Taylor isn't *entirely* opposed to this new technology's use in the art world. "It could be beneficial if we can even understand AI. Sometimes I wonder if geniuses have created this thing they don't understand, and that makes me nervous. But if we can utilize it as a tool that is still allowing the artist to be where the content is created, it could be great in [handling] the busy work."

Taylor is just one of countless artists who are always adapting to the ever-changing art scene, and AI is only increasing that pressure. But, by understanding and learning about its impacts on local communities, she thinks we might be able to mitigate the most harmful effects.