

AI as a Medium for Cultural Resonance: Reflections and Practice on Co-creativity With Generative AI

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The Kyoto Conference on Arts, Media & Culture 2025
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Each technological advancement does not come without constraints. It is the job of a creator to extract the creativity of a subject rather than recoil from its existence. In the midst of the wide-ranging debate on artificial intelligence in creative practice, we employ GenAI to elaborate on Shakespearean theatrical narratives, advocating for co-creativity rather than a complete rejection of artificial intelligence. The works of Shakespeare transcend their time with themes deeply related to the human experience. Adapted globally, Shakespeare serves as a case study to visualise culture-rich scenes shifting traditional theatre narratives towards AI-generated short animated sequences. Moreover, the concept of this project in utilising the visual cultures such as Chinese paper-cutting and shadow puppetry or Greek, black-figured style that emphasises the idea of Shakespeare being irrespective of cultural context. Therefore, once guided by human intervention, AI can become a valuable tool in creative practice without diminishing authorship. The study proposes a mixed-method that combines a review of currently available GenAI models by carefully evaluating three key aspects of: visual culture resonance, narrative fidelity to Shakespeare and quality of animation, as well as a practice-led approach engaging AI and manual art intervention to achieve a specific animated outcome. The indicators gather the presence of recognised cultural motifs, ornamentation or symbolism, accuracy in narrative, as well as stylistic distortion. The outcome is presented in the form of animated scenes, involving Shakespeare narrative, AI cultural generation and human intervention by explicit art-guidance. Consequently, the project addresses narrative culture and artistic multiculturalism and AI advancements.

Keywords: AI animation, Shakespeare, human-AI collaboration

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Introduction

Shakespeare's works are acknowledged for their universality due to themes closely related to human nature and their "transnational appeal" (Coldiron, 2008). This feature of Shakespeare's stories has inspired creators to adapt his works across cultures, emphasising his transcendentalism and contributing to the claim that his narratives do not belong to any single culture. Adapted globally, Shakespeare has been studied through various mediums, from analogue forms such as theatrical performance to filmic interpretations, and eventually into the digital age of AI.

Through some of the most canonical stories of Shakespeare's plays, the paper aims to explore the collaboration between the human and the non-human agent in creative practice. With the ongoing debate regarding ethical constraints and possible applications of AI, the timely reminiscence of "to be or not to be" arises as "to AI or not to AI" (Hougaard, 2024). In this context, there is a predominant conclusion among research advocating for the use of generative AI, while emphasising the need for transparent and ethical processes (Piskopani et al., 2023; Yusa et al., 2022). This discussion does not depart from that view yet provides practical cases where control of AI is strictly tied to manipulation of the output and manual intervention.

With the application of the cultural frameworks to the project, the paper underscores the possibilities of sustaining heritage aesthetics by transforming them into another medium, namely animation. This ultimately poses the question of whether AI can be controlled through prompt-based direction to achieve the intended outcome of the animation, and how such a process can be delivered ethically. In this paper, we opt for a mixed-method approach that elucidates the role of the human author while utilising modern AI technologies. By doing so, we argue that the integration of AI into creative practice can become a valid option; for this reason, continual analysis and exploration of ethical workflows remain necessary to avoid visual plagiarism and aesthetic deception.

Literature Review

Transforming cultural contexts into modern mediums, in particular AI, requires specific conditions to remain ethical (Pansoni et al., 2023). There has been an overlapping concern regarding "*originality and authenticity*" in art and design practice, as it may "*lead to a devaluation of the artistic process*" (Zhou & Nabus, 2023). The current state of text-to-image models tends to miss the author's intention and aesthetic standards (He, 2024) or imposes inaccurate outcomes due to poor data quality (Wang et al., 2023). However, their potential in artistic media can alter the creative process (Epstein & Hertzmann, 2023). One such study emphasises the need for innovation, respecting artistic values and fostering technological advancements (Izani et al., 2024). Moreover, implementing AI in the creative process can serve as a form of mass communication (Yixuan et al., 2024), where visual languages can be shared, studied, and recreated with little effort.

However, current tools continue to struggle with character shaping as well as the integration of art and culture (Cong, 2024). Researchers have underlined the potential loss of cultural depth (Alkhraisat, 2025), and historical connotations require more complex processes (Vargün, 2023). All these studies reflect one central aim, that is, to embrace modern technologies yet remain in control of the process and outcome. Such a process in AI animation includes the stage of model training but also prompt design, as "*the weighting of image elements depends not only on visual salience and model training but also on the textual prompts provided*" (Pham et al., 2025).

Consequently, through direct control of prompts and art direction, we can maintain authorship without falling into unethical practices.

Methodology

This paper employs a practice-based study, where the textual narratives of Shakespeare are prompted into generative models to achieve visual styles resembling Chinese papercutting, shadow puppetry, and Greek black-figure aesthetics. Following this step, AI models such as Seedance and Hailuo 2.0, together with Adobe Premiere software, were used to transform still images into an animated format. We apply the approach of co-creation, as only human-based aesthetic judgment is able to evaluate the quality of a work (Vinchon et al., 2023). While AI is utilised as generative support, the human agency ensures accuracy and aesthetic appeal, thus reflecting a co-creative approach rather than unsupervised generation. As explained in the introduction section, the project involves canonical narratives of Shakespeare as a baseline, such as Macbeth's three witches, Romeo and Juliet balcony scene, and the murder of Julius Caesar. The reasoning for translating Shakespeare into different visual languages lies in universalities of the stories, the narrative aim is the allusion to each of the chosen works.

Results

Three Witches

One of the most predominant works of Shakespeare is *Macbeth*, with the most recognised symbol of the three witches embodying fate. Their depiction has varied across filmic mediums, portraying them either with otherworldly qualities or as moral observers. The first step involved generating images with papercutting aesthetics depicting the three witches through an iterative prompt. After multiple alterations, two final images were chosen for animation, both featuring a vertical composition. The outputs were evaluated based on cultural motif recognition, narrative fidelity, as AI tends to hallucinate and distort crucial visual symbols, and overall animation quality.

Figure 1

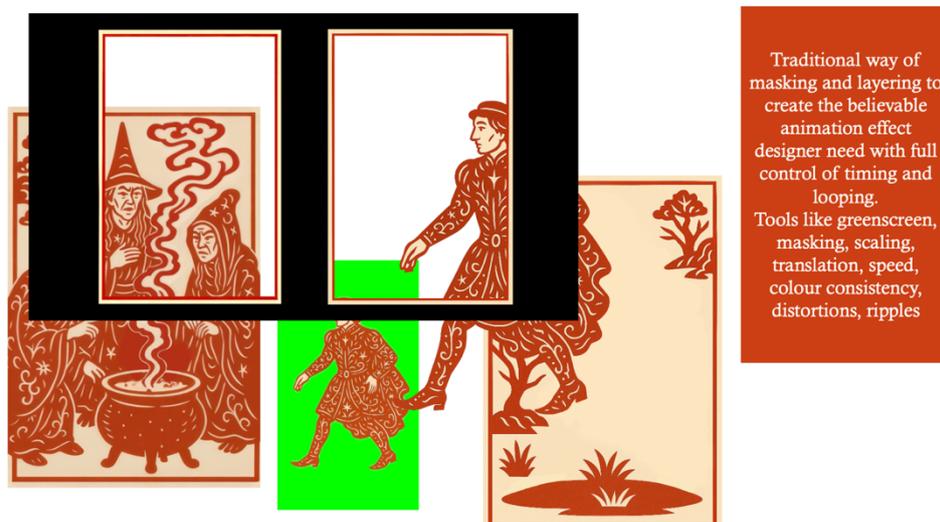
Two Static Images Generated With ChatGPT With a Prompt of Chinese Paper-Cutting



Besides the misalignment with the intended outcome of the animation, the project aims to showcase co-creativity and, more importantly, the collaboration between the human and AI. The distortions in narrative and animation quality were addressed through manual editing using Adobe Premiere.

Figure 2

The Process of Manual Editing With Adobe Premiere. The Images Are Animated Within Two Vertical Frames.



A mixed-media approach allows for exploration of AI tools, their potential, and their visuality while at the same time retaining the creative reins. One must remember that control of the outcome must not lie solely on the non-human side. In this situation, the vertical composition was enhanced by using the two scenes within a single frame. Moreover, through manual editing, the narrative extends across both frames. The predominant control of the human retains authorship on the author's side; such an approach promotes co-creativity in culture-based animation.

Shadow Puppetry-Inspired Animation

Since the emergence of AI, creative production has undergone significant change. High-quality images are now accessible within seconds. This situation drastically alters the design process, as AI becomes a material, while the human role shifts towards that of an art director rather than traditional skill-oriented authorship. Besides the evaluation of cultural matter, aesthetic resonance requires human interpretive judgment - something AI inherently lacks. Traditionally, animation movement often eschews realism for more individual character motion, and embraces exaggeration as critical principle, which is dependent on the overall stylistic and narrative framework of an animation (Pierson, 2019).

Figure 3
The Animation Process With Manual Editing



Shadow puppetry features two aesthetics: the actual design of the puppets and the performance – their shadow. As their heritage currently shows a declining tendency, researchers repeatedly look for opportunities to sustain this aesthetic legacy or even elevate it through new mediums (Lin et al., 2013). Based on the Shakespearean narrative of *Romeo and Juliet*, the DALLE model was prompted to produce puppet-like aesthetics for two images, which were later animated with the Hailuo 2.0 model. Manual interventions included looping for motion consistency, aiming not to affect the reversed animation quality.

Figure 4
Keyframes From the Final Animation With the Style of Chinese Puppetry



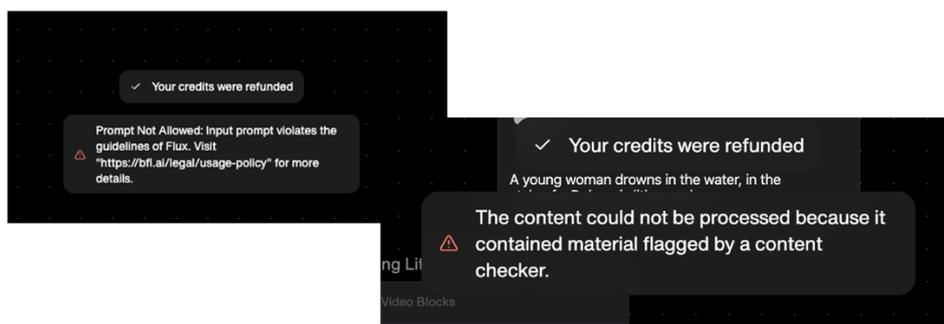
Content Moderation – The Case Study of Black-Figured Pottery

The last animation, based on the narrative of *Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare, revealed an additional aspect of open-based model animation. Following the style generation of black-figure pottery, models such as Killing, Hailuo, and Seedance were prompted to adapt the murder of Julius Caesar. One significant challenge encountered throughout the process was the content moderation embedded in open-access platforms. Even within non-realistic, art-related

practices, these platforms restrict outputs due to policy limitations. While violent content in filmic mediums is treated as part of artistic expression, most online-based platforms either refuse the prompt or, at best, avoid generating the actual violent scene.

Figure 5

The Examples of Content Moderation Messages by Different Platforms



For our case study, while the Runway model refused any textual prompts closely related to violence, the iterative use of euphemisms was allowed in the Seedance model. These discrepancies regarding violent content generation may be linked to the origins of each model.

Figure 6

The Keyframes of Final Animation With MOHO Based on Images Generated With AI



Consequently, the actual murder scene was animated manually with MOHO software. Even with clear cultural connotations in the text input and visual style, the models continued to limit the generation. The iterative process revealed either a complete misalignment of the prompt or a direct rejection of the prompt. With the rapid development of online-based models, the situation in which platform policy interferes with generative freedom may not change in the near future, as access remains conditioned by content moderation in general.

Discussion

There is one important aspect that may emerge in this discussion: as current text-to-video models do not provide sufficient outcomes for animation production, human intervention remains necessary. However, the practice may eventually shift towards more text-based generation, where manual interventions will no longer be part of the workflow. Even if such a situation occurs in the near future, the initial stages of animation development, such as storyboarding and art direction, ultimately remain on the human side. They might be supported

by corresponding GenAI-tools – but the crucial point is the human decision making at each juncture of the iterative creative process. In that sense, the artist guides along AI in similar ways a director would do with a creative team – carefully curating choices that ultimately render the outcomes their very own. It is important to highlight ethical methods of designing with AI, including transparent and human oriented processes. Moreover, the limitations of AI identified by the industry, such as biased generation, style inconsistency, and motion distortions, which are hallucinations, are aspects that, with poor data quality, will continue to persist. Therefore, human supervision and artistic intervention are what ultimately grant authorship.

Further study is encouraged to discuss creative workflows for educational purposes, guiding users in the ethical use of AI. Moreover, due to the rapid spread of online-based models, animation has the potential to shift towards a more automated process, and therefore, future research may engage practitioners within the field as study subjects.

Conclusion

With the fast pace of AI development among creative industries, its increasing involvement in the animation field is unavoidable. This paper demonstrated through a collaborative workflow that even with open based models, the human artist remains the central aspect of successful animation, as AI cannot surpass creative judgment. The intention and ideation process supported by manual adjustment places AI as a tool within the overall process. Through culture-oriented case studies, the paper underscored three major aspects: cultural evaluation, motion alignment and content moderation. Framed within the heritage-based narratives of Shakespeare, these aspects provided a proposition for a creative workflow where AI offers variations, yet the human artist shapes aesthetic fidelity and narrative consistency.

Acknowledgements

This research is supported by the Ministry of Education, Singapore, under the AcRF T2 grant Ethical Approaches to AI Visualization in Shakespeare Adaptation (MOE-T2EP40223-0004).

The authors wish to acknowledge Chan Yun Kay Rachel, Lye Hui En and Lim Zhi Qiang Aaron for contribution on animation practice experiment.

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