

ETH-TECH ART CONTEST • EDITION II • 4th HONOURABLE MENTION

A Ripple in Your Gaze

Camilla Saccon

University of Padova

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Anchoring Ethical Technology (AI and Data) Usage in the Education Practice

A Ripple in Your Gaze



Video 13”: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LxsUfucyffiCs5ZDNJJ_iKG-yL7K9RF/view?usp=sharing

Short summary of the postdigital positionality

Please provide a brief narrative (200-500 words) introducing the concept of postdigital positionality your work reflects or represents.

Some of the most personal stories we tell today are written in a chat with someone who does not exist. We tell AI what frightens us, what we desire, what we cannot understand about ourselves. Perhaps, behind all this technology, there is something profoundly human: our need to be listened to, to be understood, to be truly seen.

AI can help us look inward. It can give words to emotions we struggle to name and help us understand our own story slightly better. But stories are not made of monologues. A story needs other characters: people who enter it, cross it, sometimes disturb it, and inevitably leave something behind. Knowing ourselves is not enough; we need to encounter one another.

In my video, three figures meet by the sea. Their faces have become eyes. They look at each other, because looking is where an encounter begins. In a world where we spend so much time looking through screens, I wanted to explore the difference between being looked at and allowing ourselves to be truly seen.

This is also why they wear second-hand clothes. I choose garments that have already touched another body and crossed another life, because our story is never written alone: it is constantly intertwined with other lives. What we wear can make this visible. It can bring to the surface

something we usually keep inside: a memory, a fear, a vulnerability, something that makes us different. To wear what makes us unique is also to accept the risk of being seen for who we are.

The artwork painted on the jacket carries this idea further. An eye meets the sea and allows the waves to ripple its gaze. It does not try to remain untouched. For me, this is a reminder that we cannot always protect ourselves from what we feel. Sometimes we need to let go, to let emotions move us, even disturb us, because this vulnerability is part of what makes us human. To let someone look deeply into our eyes is to give them access to a part of our story. And sometimes we need to talk about what they find there — with another person, or even with AI. What matters is not where the conversation begins, but that it does not end there.

From that eye grows a tree. It represents what can happen when we allow what is inside us to meet something outside us, the growth of something new.

This is the technological future I want to inhabit. Not one without AI, and not one where technology replaces human connection, but one where the two can coexist. AI can help us look inside ourselves; human relationships give us the courage to let someone else look inside too.

We should not be afraid to let the waves ripple our gaze. Sometimes we need to get wet to remember that we are human. And only when the water reaches our roots can we grow something together.

Short summary of the creative process

Please describe your creative process (200-500 words). If applicable, explain how AI tools (e.g., Midjourney, DALL-E) were used, including the prompts. If the work is entirely handcrafted, describe the materials and ideas that informed its creation.

The creative process began far away from a screen.

I started with a second-hand jacket, a garment that already had a life before reaching me. I did not want to erase that history, but to add another layer to it by painting directly onto the fabric. On its back, I created an eye touched by the movement of the sea, with a tree growing from it. Every part was painted by hand. The imperfections of the fabric, the brushstrokes and the traces of its previous life were important to me because they made the object unmistakably human.

Only after creating the physical artwork did I bring artificial intelligence into the process.

I used Google Gemini to imagine a world in which this real, personal object could exist inside a synthetic environment. I uploaded my own photographs of the jacket as visual references, so that AI would not invent the artwork but integrate something that already existed physically and had been created by hand.

I then described the image I wanted to create, giving Gemini instructions about the setting, composition, characters and camera point of view. One of the main prompts was:

“Create a photorealistic image of three young people meeting on a beach by the sea. Replace their heads with large, realistic human eyes. Place the central figure with their back to the camera, wearing the white jacket from the reference images. Preserve the original hand-painted eye and tree on the back of the jacket. Place the other two figures in front of them, looking towards each other. Use natural light and realistic sea, sand, clothes and human proportions, while keeping the scene slightly surreal.”

I progressively refined the image through further prompts, adjusting the distance and position of the three figures, their gazes, the camera angle and the visibility of the painted jacket.

Once the final image was created, I animated it by describing how I wanted the encounter to unfold:

“Animate the scene with subtle and realistic movements. The three young people slowly move towards and react to one another, while their eyes shift naturally as if exchanging glances. Keep the central figure mainly turned away from the camera so that the painted jacket remains visible. Let the clothes move gently in the sea breeze and add natural movement to the water. Keep the movements slow, intimate and cinematic, preserving the original artwork on the jacket.”

I deliberately did not want AI to replace the handmade part of the work. Instead, I wanted to see what would happen if something physical, imperfect and personal could be placed inside a world that could only exist through technology.

The process therefore mirrors the question behind the artwork itself. I painted something with my hands, gave it to AI to expand its possible world, and then used that new world to speak again about something human.

For me, this is what postdigital creation can become: not choosing between the handmade and the artificial, but allowing each one to reveal possibilities in the other.