

ETH-TECH ART CONTEST · EDITION II · **SECOND PRIZE**

Embodiment and Failure

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

Embodiment and Failure



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.

In my work, I have represented my childhood self, untouched by the digital contagion, who recognizes within her grown-up self a creativity that is no longer her own, depicted as a cluster of colors turning into gray.

This drawing represents the clash with myself. On one side is my childhood self, full of ideas and imagination, possessing a creativity that I chose to render with strong chromatic power. On the other side, inside my house and illuminated by a cold light, is Giorgia as an adult: a victim of post-digital comfort, with ideas in her mind that have turned from being mine to belonging to no one, or to everyone. I look at my grown self from behind the windowpane of my house; in my hands is my plush toy, an unchosen gift from the outside world that, monochromatic itself, seems to expect something different from me. The apartment building, symbolically a place and a situation shared by many, is gray, and the lights illuminating it are white. Only a small yellow light stands out, framing the scene. It is proof that out there, creativity is not dead, but shifting from being the substance of a subject to becoming the substance of an object. I am now hunched over my easel in shame, my gaze deliberately avoiding that of my childhood self. In front of me is not a canvas, but a computer, to which I give totalitarian orders to churn out artworks; yet these works now appear transparent, devoid of that color which, in this drawing, is the emblem of personal creativity. On my arm, a tattoo of my plush toy reminds me that creativity still belongs to me, and will belong to me forever, because it belonged to me in the past. The product of my mind and my palette annihilates itself. My creative ideas overlap, much like the colors, but instead of white, they produce a gray that grows deeper and deeper.

New artworks are displayed in my house alongside those ones furthest from who I am today. They are gray, but do they deserve the same value and respectability? One stands out in the center, bearing the signature that represents honor, and recognized honor, of both the human being and the artificial intelligence. It is the emblem of a fruitful collaboration, standing halfway between abstract traditionalism and concrete progress.

The little girl wonders if supporting these mechanisms is irrational, her gaze turned toward a future she does not know if she will love, and which she imagines as devoid of the colors and creativity she treasures so much.

My childhood self is helpless against the annihilation of her adult self, whose ideas merge with those of others and vanish into a nameless monochrome that genuinely clashes within the image, which hosts ugliness.

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.

My initial desire was to represent that feeling of helplessness that inhabits me when, now rarely, I manage to meet myself and spend hours upon hours searching for ideas, only to find none, and feeling without identity.

What I obtained instead was an embodiment and a failure: that's why I chose this title.

I admit I decided to accept the proposal to ask artificial intelligence for help because I had no ideas and did not know where to start. When I described my state of mind to him, the Reverend proposed an image of a bound woman, surrounded by demoralizing devices whose screens literally displayed discouraging words like "you have no ideas," "you don't know how to do anything on your own anymore." Representing the "hands tied" literally felt insufficiently descriptive to me. So, I replaced it with the similar concept of imprisonment, which for me had to be outside the house, the place where one usually clashes with oneself and one's habits. For me, creative ideas had to be vibrant, and therefore colorful, because when I create something I feel alive and I see colors wherever I rest my eyes. I also decided to represent my childhood self with bright colors, because when I was little, I felt inhabited by ideas and willpower from head to toe. Paradoxically, my childhood plush toy had to be that element reflecting external will, acting as a gift that attempts to strip one away from their childhood state. The post-digital house and the paintings closest to my adult self had to be contaminated by a different, monochromatic creativity. Among the paintings, a central one had to stand out, sealing the collaboration between human and artificial intelligence. The gazes of the two figures were not supposed to cross: out of shame, my adult self had to choose to avoid the gaze of her pure version. For me, this embarrassment is embodied by the posture too.

I wanted an element to connect the two figures: I thought of the tattoo, meant to be a reminder of a creativity that once was and a hope for its return.

Having reached this point, I realized that my emotions were speaking without control and that I had birthed perhaps enough ideas and concepts, the pencil flowing smoothly across the paper.

I decided to use markers, colored pencils, and pens because I wanted my work to be a deliberate, adapted mixture—much like the works produced by AI, to which I decided to affix the signature, as the credits.

I accept my artwork, even if, like many recent works, I do not like it. I believe this is due to the fact that I feel my works are less and less mine nowadays. I also find it highly concrete, but I do not blame it, because I believe it is so because the reason behind the feeling it embodies is concrete. This is why I define my artwork as both a failure and an embodiment.