

ETH-TECH ART CONTEST • EDITION II • 5th HONOURABLE MENTION

Shaping the Unseen

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European Project ETH-TECH 2024-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000255527
Anchoring Ethical Technology (AI and Data) Usage in the Education Practice

Shaping the Unseen



Video 2'59:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1f2HVqPvEKw0aqGlvE11_4YBnD0vDPych/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.

With "SHAPING THE UNSEEN" I wanted to explore my postdigital position by reflecting on the contrast between the concreteness of artisanal work and the extractive nature of generative AI.

I chose to frame the entire video within the frame of an old CRT TV. It's a reference to the book "Fahrenheit 451," in which writer Ray Bradbury calls television an "idiot box" that alienates people. In my work, however, I've repurposed this passive medium as a tool for reflection and criticism.

The narrative unfolds through constant channel-hopping: a rapid change of channel that visually recalls the way we consume content today, between frenetic scrolling and rapid social media browsing. Putting the hand-carved tuff of Matera and the 3D-generated interface on the same screen helped me demonstrate how modern media have changed our perception of time and effort.

My position isn't one of total rejection of digital or technology. In the fake news report, I included references to Canaletto (and his darkroom), Isaac Asimov, and Radiohead. I deliberately chose these real but decontextualized examples to parody how blind we often believe ourselves to what we see on TV or online: these cases show how technology has always amplified the human gesture, a reality that doesn't fully fit with the extractive nature of today's generative AI.

I also applied this principle to the creation of the video, using AI tools only as technical support.

For me, however, there's a fundamental difference between amplifying and replacing. Many generative models work by exploiting the work and effort of countless artists without any consensus. Giving a software a prompt isn't creating: it's more like placing a commercial order for a synthetic product. When an algorithm generates an image in a few seconds, it ends up erasing everything behind it: the body, the time, and the creator's intention.

Turning off the TV at the end of the video is my way of unplugging from this constant stream of synthetic content. The final silence serves as a reminder that technology can speed up processes, but true art will always require human presence, effort, and intention.

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.

To create "SHAPING THE UNSEEN" I tried to combine field research with a conscious use of digital tools. I chose to develop the narrative and texts in English also to challenge myself with a personal exercise suitable for an international context.

I recorded the footage with a camera, choosing three specific locations to give weight and history to the story:

Matera (in the Sassi): I went directly into the artisans' workshops to film the manual processing of the tuff, trying to capture the sound and real effort of that work.

Rome (interior of the Colosseum) and Padua (Prato della Valle): I recorded shots related to the historical space, monumental architecture and the flow of water, to use as a visual counterweight to the world of virtual interfaces.

In keeping with my belief that technology should help creators and not replace them, I used AI only for technical and editing aspects (and for the short final video):

Audio Cleaning (BandLab Splitter): The lab recordings had background noise. I used the software to separate the tracks and isolate the distinct sound of the chisel on the tuff, highlighting the acoustics of the manual work against the digital sounds.

Synthetic media (Pippit): For the TV news scene ("Breaking News"), I generated the faces and voices of the female journalists using artificial avatars. This helped me create a parody of traditional media, demonstrating how TV tends to package complex ethical issues into quick-to-consume bite-sized chunks.

Finally, I assembled the various sequences on Canva inside the outline of a vintage CRT TV, using the "snow" effect and the typical interference of the cathode ray tube to simulate the channel change between one scene and the next.