But They Are Not Real

Takura Suzuki
takura@wustl.edu

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But They Are Not Real

by

Takura Suzuki

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Chair of the Master of Fine Arts in Visual Art Program
Lisa Bulawsky

Thesis Advisor
Monika Weiss

Primary Advisors
Jamie Adams | Patricia Olynyk |

Graduate Committee
Jonathan Hanahan
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Introduction

As an artist, my goal is to learn how to perceive the historical moment I find myself living in. I believe that if I understand the relationship between contemporary digital technology and humans, I can witness the “historical moment” of our time. I first became interested in this field when I realized the extent to which I use digital technology in my daily life. I spend more than a third of my day on my laptop or smartphone, according to Apple’s Screen Time. Digital 2019 revealed that Internet users between the ages of 16 and 64 in the United States spend 6 hours and 31 minutes on electric screens such as laptops and smartphones.¹ Today, most people living in the developed world are constantly communicating using digital technology, mainly on their cell phones and laptops. This integration of digital devices into people’s lives has now become an indispensable element of normal life in developed countries. However, in order to fully understand this historical moment, we must also recognize the potentially disturbing aspects of the rapid development of digital devices. The more ubiquitous digital devices are in our “normal” lives, the more dependent we become on them. It may be that a future where humans and digital devices literally merge is not far away. In fact, Neuralink—a company run by Elon Musk, the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX—is in the process of developing electronic chips that can be implanted in the human brain to keep humans and digital systems in constant communication.² I am interested in observing this growing over-integration of humans and machines and expressing it through digital media and painting.

In the first chapter of this text, I talk about how my art explores the relationship between the data supremacy prevalent in today’s society and the development of artificial intelligence (AI). In a data-driven society, the collection and distribution of data are essential. This data serves as a key ingredient in creating better-performing machines and online services. AI is one of the best examples of data-based technology. Having developed along
with the collected data, AI is now becoming involved in the decision-making process in a number of domains, primarily to facilitate human decision-making. The areas in which AI is active seem to be expanding every year. Systems are being built to allow AI to make decisions on behalf of humans to complete products and services. For instance, in 2018, a news story reported the experience of a mother who loved Iron Maiden and was born in August; she saw an advertisement for a t-shirt that said “Never underestimate a MOTHER who listens to IRON MAIDEN and was born in AUGUST” and bought it. Thus, AI is using online data to enter the decision-making process that was done solely by humans until recently.

In the second chapter of this text, I discuss how human agency and machine automation in the process of making art can affect the content of the work. I am interested in how the relationship between humans and contemporary digital devices shapes today’s society and how this relationship can be reflected in the art-making process. For my work *Daisies* (2020), I actually used AI to generate the images. I, as a human, create an image data set, and AI, as a machine, generates new images based on that data. I was interested in how the automated machine could “create” the images in a process that combined the elements of agency and automation. The machine’s influence can make the work appear more attractive in some cases and less attractive in others. I am interested in using this work to express the irregularity (or creativity) produced by the machine. Furthermore, by reflecting on the current relationship between humans and machines in the production process, I will discuss with examples how automated technology, especially AI, is being adopted in various industrial fields.

In the third chapter, I discuss my work *Stolen Memories* (2020). This piece is a fictionalized representation of the unfathomable surveillance capabilities and data collection methods of major technological companies. These days, data collected from digital devices is
used to recommend personalized content and advertisements to Internet users. Such lucrative features are made possible by collecting data about users’ online activities. So, is this data collection just a convenient and desirable feature? Big Tech companies, such as Google and Facebook, aim to enhance and improve these features to facilitate a more “convenient” life. However, these features also allow these companies to easily access users’ personal information. As the phrase goes, “if you’re not paying for the product, you’re the product.” Users are giving away their own private information in exchange for using Big Tech services for free.

In the final chapter, I discuss my work Do You Know Where You Are? (2020), in which I have metaphorically described a world that reflects our contemporary society with a mixture of digital and physical elements. In today’s world, people use social media and Internet services constantly. They attend school and even hold funerals digitally. OneRoom, a funeral livestream company, has reported a 60% increase in weekly views since the coronavirus outbreak. Often, I wonder whether I live in the digital world or the physical one. This sense of living in a world where two opposing elements (digital and physical) are intermixed has become more powerful since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. I tried to interpret the world where machines and humans are mixed together by replacing the world with cyborgs—a fusion of human and machine. Through this work, I am trying to show how today’s world is becoming more cyborg-like with the interaction of humans and machines.

The development of the AI industry, which is driving people’s transformation into cyborgs, is an area that is currently attracting considerable attention. The data-driven technologies created by this industry are deepening the integration between machines and humans. At the time of writing this, in 2021, it seems that no serious problems have yet been detected with AI. However, prominent figures in the scientific community, such as Elon Musk and Stephen Hawking, have stated that intelligent technologies will be dangerous to
humanity in the future. Elon Musk has stated that “the rate of improvement is really dramatic. We have to figure out some way to ensure that the advent of digital super intelligence is one which is symbiotic with humanity.” He also said, “mark my words, AI is far more dangerous than nukes.” Stephen Hawking, an English theoretical physicist, said in 2014 that “[AI] would take off on its own, and re-design itself at an ever increasing rate.” As AI is developing at an accelerated rate, I think we also need to develop our concerns and security measures for the future.

In my work, I try to take a neutral stance, using a lot of metaphorical descriptions to avoid expressing personal claims. This is because the field surrounding AI is still in the process of rapid evolution; thus, many uncertainties remain, making it difficult to have a critical opinion. However, I believe it is true that data-driven technologies do not seem to have a bright future because of the many risks involved. To help viewers understand my concerns, I am trying to reveal how the relationship between digital technology and human beings is shaping contemporary society through a multilayered process. The use of human agency and machine automation in the production process of Daisies is one instance of this. Another instance is the use of the concept of the cyborg, which reflects contemporary society. A common element in my work is the coexistence of complex situations, which are created in the layered art-making processes. This is because I believe that one of the elements that represent contemporary society is layered complexity—various objects with two different meanings and elements with different essences coexist. By creating works depicting the complex existences of different elements, I create ambiguity regarding the meaning of the work. At the same time, the combinations of these complexities hint at how the viewers can grasp the core of my work, i.e., my concern about the future of data-driven technologies. By providing a maze and a path toward understanding my work, I help the viewers understand it in their own way.
Dataism

The transition of power from humans to machines
Over the past two years, I have been making art on the subjects of censorship, surveillance, and online personalization. While censorship is an outlier, there are similarities in the themes I have covered. Both surveillance technology and personalization develop and become more complex as more and more data is collected. For example, the data collected can be used to improve facial recognition technology and increase the arrest rate of criminals. Similarly, data can be used to prioritize content and advertisements most likely to appeal to users in social media and other online services. I am aware that developed and enhanced surveillance technologies and personalization have brought many benefits to contemporary society. However, I also think it is very important to recognize that there is a negative side to this—computer algorithms, armed with data, may threaten human authority.

One of the tools used to enhance surveillance technology and personalization is AI, which has developed using the culture of Data-ism. The term Dataism was coined by David Brooks in the “The Philosophy of Data.” Dataism describes a mindset in which the further collection and distribution of data is a top priority in contemporary society, with the development of big data as the ultimate goal. Yuval Noah Harari says that “In its extreme form, proponents of the Dataist worldview perceive the entire universe as a flow of data.” This mindset is particularly evident in Big Tech companies, which are constantly trying to understand their users’ hobbies and lifestyle patterns by monitoring their online behavior and collecting their data. By doing so, they promote the marketing of specific information and products to each user, creating an environment where people cannot live without the services of Big Tech companies. In this manner, the AI developed in this data-driven society is deeply integrated into human life.

The best example of how integral AI has become is that machines are gradually becoming part of the human decision-making process. Until recently, humans were the only ones with authority in this process, whether in areas such as medicine, social relationships, or
artistic creation. However, in contemporary society, the first stage of the transfer of authority from humans to machines is underway. For example, in medicine, the results of medical examinations derived from data are being used to save more lives. The most important medical decisions in our lives are increasingly based on the calculations of computers that know us better than we know ourselves. A new study conducted by Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology proved that AI can now help doctors predict aneurysm rupture. The team “turned the AI system loose on microfluidic devices, microchips. And The chips provided training data for the AI system, which enabled the system to then make predictions about pressures and stresses that the blood flow produces on the walls of the device.” Thus, algorithms are taking over the process of medical examinations, which used to be carried out by humans, and providing humans with appropriate options derived from data. This transition from human to machine is also noticeable in various aspects of our daily lives, such as building human relationships. For instance, the dating scene is changing. Recently, it has become more normal than ever before for individuals who meet on a dating app to become a couple. Hinge—one of the most widely used dating apps in United States—uses machine learning to help users match. Ashley Carman, a writer for The Verge, explains the method: “[Hinge’s] technology breaks people down based on who has liked them. It then tries to find patterns in those likes. If people like one person, then they might like another based on who other users also liked once they liked this specific person.” In these dating apps, algorithms analyze each user’s hobbies and interests and then introduce compatible individuals.

The process of artistic creation is surprisingly similar. Lev Manovich states that “AI now plays an equally important role in our cultural lives and behaviors, increasingly automating the processes of aesthetic creation and aesthetic choices.” These AI-driven functions are now embedded into the phones and apps that we use daily. For example, in the
world of digital photography, photo apps adjust the color balance, angle of view, and other settings based on a set standard of “good photos.” When you take selfies or portraits, the app will “beautify” the model’s face by whitening, applying makeup, and removing acne. Huawei’s cameras also use AI to recognize what the camera is looking at and automatically switch to the appropriate shooting setting for that subject. These are only examples of the use of AI-driven tools by common users, but professional creators also commonly use AI.

I have also been using AI-driven tools in art-making processes. When I work on Photoshop, I often let the software create some part of the images or edit almost the whole image. For example, I let Photoshop replace the entire sky background of my photos, turning a cloudy sky into a beautiful sunset. Other times, I let Photoshop change the light source so that I can place the human figure in any sort of lighting. For my work, *Tricked Eyes* (2020) (Fig. 1 & 2), I even let Photoshop color monochromatic images that I painted. It is hard for audiences to realize this, but, surprisingly, there are a lot of instances in which I let AI participate in my art-making processes. In this manner, computer algorithms—especially AI—are increasingly taking over the decision-making process from humans in many areas. As AI takes on the decision-making role, the burden on humans will reduce. However, this data-driven AI is taking away the human authority to see, think, and make decisions. Currently, human authority has not been entirely surrendered to machines. In fact, humans still hold most of the authority. However, it is unknown what kind of impact machines with even a minor part in decision-making will have on society. I like to express the unknown influence of these machines as much as possible in my work.
Figure 1: Takura Suzuki, *Tricked Eyes 1*, 2020, oil on canvas (left), inkjet print on canvas (right), 24”x20” (each)

Figure 2: Takura Suzuki, *Tricked Eyes 2*, 2020, oil on canvas (left), inkjet print on canvas (right), 24”x20” (each)
Daisies

The Implications of using AI in the art-making processes
When I hear the word AI, the first image that comes to my mind is that of a Terminator-like machine that can do everything by itself. Such an AI is called artificial general intelligence (AGI), also known as Strong AI. However, as is becoming common knowledge these days, we will not see such Strong AI until at least a few decades into the future. According to Ray Kurzweil, a US inventor and futurist, Strong AI will be born around 2045. What we are seeing and using now is Weak AI—also known as Narrow AI—which is digital technology that is limited to a specific area. Weak AI has one primary function: based on data analysis, it provides the right answer for a given situation specified by a human.

The moment I became interested in AI was when I saw a major news article about an AI-generated portrait image sold at Christie’s auction in 2018 (Fig. 3). I did not react to this with criticism, such as “the evolution speed of AI is threatening to humanity” or “humans will no longer need to create art.” Rather, I had a simple question: “How does artificial intelligence generate images?” From that moment onward, I have been interested in learning more about AI. Moreover, I have had the urge to use AI in my own work.

I would like to start with the aforementioned question. At this point in time, there is no need to write your own code and program AI. Platforms such as RunwayML and Platform.ai allow people to easily use AI. I used the platform RunwayML to generate images for my work, Daisies (2020). As the first step, humans must create a dataset of images for the AI to reference and analyze. For example, if we want to generate images of TV towers, we first need to create a dataset consisting of at least 500–1000 unique images of TV towers. The next step is very simple: give the dataset to the AI. The AI then analyzes the features of the images in the dataset to figure out the patterns. Based on that analysis, it generates similar images.
My work *Daisies* (Fig. 4) aims to visualize the implications of using AI to work by using both human agency and mechanical automation in the creative process. The goal of making this work was to let AI generate the mutated-looking daisies. For this purpose, I used RunwayML, a machine learning tool, using the method stated above. I let the AI generate images of mutated-looking daisies because I wanted the subject matter to be actually mutable in nature. Flowers visibly mutate occasionally, a process known as fasciation (Fig. 5). The result of fasciation is thick, often flattened, stems and large flowers or flower heads with more than the usual number of flowers. The extent of the fasciation of flowers depends on where the damage occurs. It does not spread to other plants or other parts of the same plant. During this process, the flower’s central part spreads like a band and takes on a strange appearance. There are many reasons for this mutation; fasciation may be caused by random genetic mutation or disruption, viral infection, or damage to the plants by frost, animals (including insects), and chemical or mechanical injury—even hoeing or forking around the
plant may cause fasciation. Thus, we can say that these mutations are glitches that occur unintentionally. I chose this natural but unintentional phenomenon as my subject matter because I wanted to express that it is possible to influence the outcome of an event artificially.

Figure 4: Takura Suzuki, *Daisies*, 2020, print on paper, 8”x8” (each)

I am interested in the process of automation using AI, especially when mutations of images become visible. There are two main types of mutations that can happen: one is the mutation that was intended, and the other is the mutation that was unintended. Tim Barker said that “the artworks in which the artist’s role is to set up situations in which errors manifest, and to exploit these errors in the art-making process is ‘The Art of the Machine / The Art of the Error’.” The intended mutation becomes visible by setting a limit on the machine after better understanding the machine’s structure. Therefore, human agency is emphasized more in the intended mutation, i.e., one gives specific parameters to the machine
and sets it so that a mutation occurs. This setting allows the machine to mutate the image. Therefore, the results are predictable. This concept can also be seen in the work of artists who use this error, such as the Italian artist Bruno Munari. Munari made an artwork called *Useless Machine* (1968) (Fig. 6). He used the wind as a creative tool. The machines have no internal power source to move them; instead, they rely on external power, such as the wind, to facilitate a gentle undulating motion. *Useless Machine*’s movements are not programmed by Munari, which means the artist does not define the machines’ movement—“Instead, he designs them with only one purpose in mind: to allow them to find their own creative force.”

Figure 5: A normal daisy on the left, and a daisy with fasciation on the right

The unintended mutation is caused by the possibility that a machine has from the moment it is designed. Therefore, for unintended mutations, the artist exerts no agency; therefore, automation is emphasized. However, the lack of the artist’s agency does not mean the mutation is not an artwork. As the potential for mutation marks a new and unforeseen potential, we can see that a mutation in itself may be creative. In the condition where mechanical systems seek the unforeseen and the emergent, the unforeseen mutation also can
A contemporary artist, Trevor Paglen, exhibited photos of flowers in vivid colors in his 2020 exhibition, Bloom (Fig. 7). In fact, all these photos were originally in black and white. He used AI to color the black-and-white photos. He experimented with the intention of seeing how AI, which has not been taught the concept of beauty, would color the flowers. It resulted in mesmerizing images, even though the machine was not trying to create beauty. This is an instance in which AI unintentionally made creative mutations because human agency did not intervene at the coloring stage. Thus, by letting AI participate in the process of creating a work of art without knowing the outcome, unexpected results can be created.

Figure 6: Bruno Munari, *Useless Machine*, 1968, aluminum silk screen printing

I am interested in creating an unexpected mutation akin to one in an AI-automated production process because I intend to describe the impact of AI’s encroachment on the authority of humans in the decision-making process, which has become the norm in contemporary society. In *Daisies*, I let the AI take part in the important production process of creating the image. I, as the creator, chose the creative images that the machine unexpectedly produced in the process. The aforementioned automatic photo correction and filtering by
Photoshop and phone apps are other examples of this. By automatically providing beautiful filters and corrections, the AI makes me feel as if I created the photo or image. The ability to simply choose my favorite from the options presented is very convenient and attractive. However, this simplified process of creating an image requires the creator to abandon thinking. Through this work, I hope to reveal the reality of contemporary society by showing the viewer an image in which thinking has been abandoned.

Figure 7: Trevor Paglen, *Bloom (#7f595e)*, 2020, dye sublimation print, 54”x40.5”
Stolen Memories

Visualizing the fear of Internet surveillance
When I started graduate school, I began to think about the definition of contemporary art. I thought that in order to evolve my own work, I needed to reconsider my definition of art. Up until that point, I had believed that all works created by artists living in the present were contemporary art. While there is nothing wrong with that, I gradually came to believe that contemporary art is an interpretation of the elements that shape the time in which I live and an embodiment of that interpretation in the form of art.

My earlier projects were about information censorship in the media and on the Internet. I became interested in this subject because I realized there are differences between Japanese media and Western media with regard to the information about the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident. Japanese media are still promoting food products from Fukushima Prefecture despite the fact that more than 28,505 people are still displaced by the nuclear accident. They are characterized by their cautious reporting style, intended not to arouse anxiety among the Japanese people. However, Western media are characteristically more skeptical about the safety of Fukushima nuclear power plants than Japanese media. It is possible to see the differences in the information transmitted by these different national media by using Internet search engines. I used the image search function of Google and Bing to search for “Fukushima Flower” in multiple languages (Japanese and English) (Fig. 8 & 9) and visually compare the differences in the results. The differences were clear at a glance—the English version showed images of deformed flowers all over the screen.
The Japanese version, on the other hand, showed only a handful of deformed flowers, instead showing many pictures of a flower garden in Fukushima. I took a screenshot of the search results and juxtaposed them next to each other to directly illustrate the censorship that...
seems to be going on in Japan. Then I wondered if I could expand on the subject of
censorship. The purpose of censorship is to control the thoughts of the general public by
deliberately regulating information. There are still things on the Internet that can restrict the
thoughts, words, and actions of Internet users.

The best example of this restriction is the surveillance system hidden under the data
collection performed on the Internet. A writer at Harvard Magazine, Jonathan Shaw, says
that “The effectiveness of surveillance at preventing crime or terrorism can be debated, but 'if
your goal is to control a population,' [then] 'mass surveillance is awesome’.” Surveillance is
not just meant to literally surveil people’s behavior for security reasons. It can eventually lead
to self-censorship and inhibition. According to the French philosopher Michel Foucault,
constant surveillance acts as a control mechanism; a consciousness of constant surveillance
will be internalized.

Internet surveillance systems are not as clearly recognizable as the surveillance
cameras we see on the street, but they are very good at constantly monitoring and analyzing
the activities of Internet users. The first time I became clearly aware of the existence of
online surveillance systems was when I was asked if I wanted to collect cookies on almost
every website. Every site asked me for cookies, and the next thing I knew, an advertisement
for a product I was looking for showed up on a completely unrelated site. Nowadays, this
tracking system, like cookie collection, is taken for granted and recognized as convenient.
However, this convenient system is only a part of a larger system: Big Tech companies are
collecting large amounts of data from users every second, with the goal of more convenient
and prosperous services. Internet users, including myself, will not stop providing personal
data as long as we continue to be attracted to the convenience offered by the growing e-
commerce. Dataism is facilitating the development of such online monitoring systems.
My work *Stolen Memories* (2020) (Fig. 10) is a project for visualizing online data collection and tracking technologies, which are products of a contemporary society where a mindset of Dataism has become the norm. To represent these two elements, I used the technologies represented by them during the art-making process. One is AI technology for generating an image, which is enhancing personalization and surveillance systems. The other is Google Map’s Street View, which has strengths in tracking and data collection. I like how easy and convenient it is to use online services because of their data collection. However, at the same time, I do not like the feeling of being checked on, seen, and heard by them. I have realized that I do not really know what kind of personal information I am providing to online services on a daily basis or what they can do with them. It is all quite opaque. Therefore, I decided to make a fictional work that shows how personal information can be used and how far Internet surveillance systems can go.

In *Stolen Memories*, I combined an old family photo of mine that is not available on the Internet, an image from Google’s Street View, and an AI-generated image to create a composite piece that mimics the Google Map’s Street View display screen. An old family photo that has not been uploaded online is one that remains only in our family’s memory. I was interested in expressing the wider societal fear that such a completely private piece of information could be stolen and appear in the search results. By placing an AI-generated LOVE sculpture, I try to emphasize the notion that the image is not real but is created by AI with the benefit of data collection. By creating these improbable combinations of images that do not appear in the actual search results, I am interested in showing the opaqueness of companies, such as Google, that collect data on a large scale. We cannot use Google Map’s Street View in this manner yet, but it does raise the question of how our personal information should be handled. In this fictional project, I hope to make it easier for people to understand what it is like to live in the Dataism society. For example, some people may not want others
to see information about their bathrooms. I do not truly believe that it will be possible to access private property, such as pictures of someone's bathroom, by looking it up on the Internet, but I would like to see how people react to this notion and have them think about what we are giving up in exchange for free, convenient products.

Figure 10: Takura Suzuki, *Stolen Memories*, 2020, inkjet print on paper, 23.3”x14.5”
Do You Know Where You Are?

Understanding what it is like to live in the Data-ism society
In the works I have made so far (such as *Stolen Memories* and *Daisies*), I have been expressing the influence of surveillance systems and AI decision-making. These works represent a subset of contemporary society. However, I began to think that my interpretation of contemporary society would be better communicated to society if I had a larger theme that encompassed the partial elements. Nevertheless, I would ask myself, “Do I have to paint the whole picture of today’s society in detail?” I was troubled for a long time because I thought the answer was “yes.” Soon, however, I realized that I could not accurately portray social reality in detail. Max Rieser\(^28\) informs us,

> The problem of the artistic reflection of reality is important since artistic semblance is not reality, but a special form of the reflection of reality which is accepted by us as reality. […] The truth of the work of art consists in the truth of the whole, not in that of any details detached arbitrarily from reality and then rearranged in a sort of montage whose particulars do not flow from the logic of the work as a whole.\(^29\)

To portray a reflection of contemporary society, it is essential to portray what I think is reality. If I depict a narrative or phenomenon in detail, it becomes too specific and loses its artistic quality. However, by painting the whole picture metaphorically, I give the viewer space to enter and get lost in the painting.

In one interview, Neo Rauch\(^30\) said, “I can place a trace that will lead to the core of the painting, but when you get there, you will see that it diffuses and goes into different branches.”\(^31\) He is not interested in discussing his work in depth. He deliberately makes the narratives of his paintings opaque, not giving the viewer any clues. One of the characteristics of Rauch’s paintings is the presence of inexplicable objects—creatures that look like animal-human hybrids, inorganic floating objects, and giants projected in the sky. I do not believe even he grasps the meaning of these strange objects. However, it is hard to ignore their peculiar presence. I think that these objects keep the viewer away from the center of his painting. I do not place such abnormal substances in my works, but I do dare to interfere with
the viewer’s thoughts by irregularly placing ordinary objects. Through this approach, I am also trying to express the complexity of contemporary society.

In my work *Do You Know Where You Are?* (2020) (Fig. 11), I metaphorically depict a world that reflects contemporary society, where the digital aspects and physical aspects are mixed. The line between humans and machines is blurring, and the increasing use of AI tools complicates the interaction between the two. I combine several opposing elements to complicate the image as a representation of this contemporary society—for example, mixing interior and exterior spaces, digital and physical aspects, and natural and artificial objects.

These ideas are based on Donna Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto”. Haraway discusses the importance of deconstructing boundaries, such as “male/female.” She believes that deconstruction would open up the possibility of a world where the gender roles of dominant male and oppressed female do not exist. However, in this text, I focus only on how Haraway defines a cyborg: “A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism [and the physical and the non-physical], a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction.” I was intrigued by her definition of a cyborg as “a hybrid of machine and organism” or “a hybrid of the physical and the non-physical.” I started thinking that this definition represents contemporary society. By placing opposing elements as the contents of my paintings, as in the definition of a cyborg, I metaphorically represent today’s society, with its increasing integration of human and machine.
These two conflicting elements can generate numerous combinations. Therefore, I decided to focus on finding these conflicting elements by paying attention to human beings’ main living environment—the house. I focused on integrating elements present in the interior with elements from other environments. For example, the weeds growing on the house’s flooring, the digital grid visible through the translucent walls, and the mix of natural and AI-generated nature. I was particularly interested in the placement of AI-generated objects in the painting. In my works *Do You Know Where You Are?* and *But They Are Not Real* (2021) (Fig. 12), a noticeable mix of AI-generated and non-AI-generated objects can be seen. The
AI-generated objects present in this picture are daisies, trees, and birds. I have arranged these objects in such a way that they appear to be natural objects. By doing this, I am trying to represent contemporary society, where the influence of cutting-edge digital technology such as AI is hard to see.

Figure 12: Takura Suzuki, *But They Are Not Real*, 2021, inkjet print and oil on canvas, 45”x38”
Conclusion

The complexity of the relationship between humans and machines is expressed in my work through the use of seemingly unrelated objects, which creates ambiguity about the purpose of the work, making it difficult for the viewer to immediately understand it. This ambiguity and complexity are characteristics of a society where many different elements, such as humans and machines, are intertwined, and this is what I want to express. I have taken many steps to add complexity to my work. In Daisies, I gave the machine the power to change the appearance of the work by letting it carry out some of the processes that an artist would normally do. I thus tried to show how, even in the public sphere, letting a machine be part of the decision-making process can lead to unexpected changes. In Stolen Memories, I expressed how data-driven machines are spreading throughout the world as surveillance technology and how this is impacting ordinary citizens. Furthermore, I emphasized how deeply and invisibly data-driven machines are connected to the lives of ordinary citizens. In Do You Know Where You Are? I used the elements of the above two works to express the image of the contemporary society created by the complex relationship between machines and humans. Therefore, Do You Know Where You Are? and other recent works of mine (Fig. 13 & 14) are comprehensive works, more complex in content and process than the other works. By creating a work with complexity, I am trying to portray a society that is intertwined with the various elements I have interpreted.

Through my work, I try not to take a particularly critical stance especially when describing the contemporary society formed by the relationship between humans and machines. This is because there are so many uncertainties in digital technologies such as AI that it is difficult to assert a clear opinion. However, AI technology is developing at an alarming rate. It is undoubtedly one of the factors driving major changes in society, and these changes will become accelerated in the future. The main topic of discussion in this AI-
centered subject is the hopes and fears that AI presents for the future. I am very excited about the potential of AI. However, the fact is that I have more concerns than hopes. Although many prominent scientists and business leaders are also concerned about AI technology today, the reality is that many companies are investing heavily in the AI industry and it is evolving at a very fast pace. This is inevitable because humans still hold the majority of authority in the decision-making process. However, I am concerned about the belief that humans are smarter than machines and that we can handle the problems that machines cause. What will happen when AI completely overtakes our ability to think? I think we have to face this question seriously. I think we should even start taking into account the possibility of problems caused by AI, just like environmental problems, nuclear problems, and inequality problems. We cannot predict what will happen in the future, and the best we can do is to assume the worst and plan for it. Therefore, in the future, I recognize that it is very important to learn how to look at the historical moment in which I am living, as well as to learn about the historical moment in the future in which I will be living. I believe that by creating works that depict these elements, I can provide viewers with opportunities to think about the present and the future in their own way.
Figure 13: Takura Suzuki, installation view of recent works, 2021

Figure 14: Takura Suzuki, installation view of recent works, 2021
Notes


6. Ibid.


10. Yuval Noah Harari: Israel historian, Professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem


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