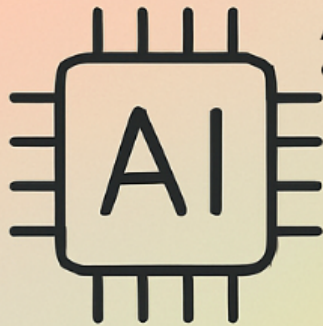# EVERYONE
IS AN ARTIST?

A Curatorial Experiment on AI & Authorship

AI

Edinburgh College of Art

—"When a prompt becomes a brush, who signs the canvas?"

—Art school meets algorithm — and the labels fall away.

—See the picture. Guess the maker. Rethink the rules.

Everyone is an Artist?

——A curatorial experiment in generative image-making

1 Everyone is an Artist?

"Everyone is an Artist?" is an experimental art exhibition that explores authorship in the age of generative artificial intelligence. The title draws inspiration from artist Joseph Beuys' iconic declaration: *"Everyone is an artist."* Beuys defined art as a form of "social sculpture," suggesting that society itself is a collective artwork shaped by the creative contributions of all individuals.

This exhibition juxtaposes artworks created by art school students with AI-generated images made by public participants, intentionally omitting the identity of each creator. Paintings, prints, and digital images are presented anonymously, inviting the audience to encounter each work on its own terms—without any preconceptions about authorship. This curatorial strategy draws from Hans Ulrich Obrist's concept of the open exhibition, in which anyone can make a work by following an artist's instructions. In this case, the "instruction" is a text prompt, interpreted by an AI model into visual form.

The exhibition also echoes Okwui Enwezor's call to expand the scope of curatorial practice—to treat the public not as mere viewers, but as creators alongside professionally trained artists. As Kate Crawford notes, we are now at a crucial tipping point of a "generative turn," which is rapidly reshaping how creativity operates. By displaying the work of formally trained student artists alongside self-taught "prompt artists" using generative tools, this exhibition raises a provocative question: When technology lowers the threshold for image-making, what does traditional art training still mean?

The aim is not to determine which works are "better," but to critically examine how the notion of authorship is evolving in the contemporary context. Echoing Trevor Paglen's belief—that artists possess a critical visual literacy that engineers do not—the exhibition becomes a dialogical space: how do human intention, cultural context, and algorithmic systems come together to shape an artwork?

The audience is invited to step into this dialogue: to explore, to question, and ultimately to reflect—in an age shaped by generative AI, is everyone (still) an artist?

2 Artists & Collective Creation

This project brings together **20 emerging art students and public contributors,** foregrounding how generative AI operates across formal education and everyday creativity.

- **10 students from Edinburgh College of Art (ECA)** – trained in painting, moving image, and digital media; creating on site or in campus studios.
- **10 students from China Academy of Art (CAA)** – working remotely; crafting text prompts and refining visuals before submitting digital works.
- **Public participants** – visitors interact with a mobile prompt station to generate and contribute new images during the exhibition run.

This **geographical, cultural and participatory diversity** underpins the exhibition's dialogic and experimental framework.

Each of the 20 student artists has produced a unique image using tools such as **Midjourney** or **Stable Diffusion,** based on a self-authored prompt. These are joined by a growing body of **audience-generated images,** created live and printed onsite. The resulting visual spectrum ranges from abstract landscapes and speculative architecture to surreal portraits and poetic symbology—reflecting both personal style and algorithmic signature.

To uphold curatorial neutrality, no names or institutional affiliations are displayed; all works are presented anonymously. Creators may choose to disclose their identity only at the final discussion event. All contributors have signed informed consent forms, acknowledging the ethical and intellectual property implications of AI collaboration.

This co-creation model blurs boundaries between formal and informal practices, between artists and publics, and between human authorship and algorithmic generation.

3 Exhibition Format & Visitor Experience

The show combines a **static display, live generation and audience participation.** A free-standing island wall presents 20 anonymous AI images; a side wall becomes an **Audience Wall,** updated daily with prints produced on site; and a roaming **Prompt Station** invites anyone to generate and immediately exhibit new work, so space, time and authorship remain in flux throughout the run.
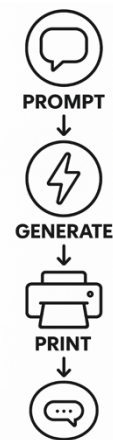
Module	Visitor Experience	Curatorial Purpose
Core Display	4 × 5 grid of A2 images on a free-standing island wall; no artist labels; one "blind-viewing" info card nearby.	Forces visitors to judge value solely by the image, testing the boundary between trained art practice and algorithmic output.
Audience Wall	Daily-updated A5 dye-sub prints of on-site generative works; sticky notes let visitors leave guesses or reflections.	Places non-professional creations in direct dialogue with student work, physically enacting the "social sculpture" ideal.
Prompt Station	Laptop + printer on a wheeled cart; type a prompt → 30 s generate → instant print; facilitator on hand.	Empowers visitors to experience the full "text-to-image" cycle, activating participation and word-of-mouth spread.
Data Nook	27″ touchscreen looping the same prompt across three models; info cards reveal training-set biases.	Educates audiences on the algorithms and biases underpinning AI visual production.

Lighting sits at 4000 K neutral white, walls in mid-grey to avoid colour cast; interactive gear runs on secured campus Wi-Fi with voltage regulation; overall sound kept below 55 dB to balance contemplation and conversation.

4 Space & Layout

Space

The show inhabits a ground-floor white-cube gallery at ECA. The layout foregrounds *openness, circulation and participation*: a double-sided island wall carries the 20 anonymous prints, while the periphery hosts an Audience Wall, a roaming Prompt Station and a curtained Data Nook. Exact measurements will be finalised on site; the scheme below indicates functional relationships only.
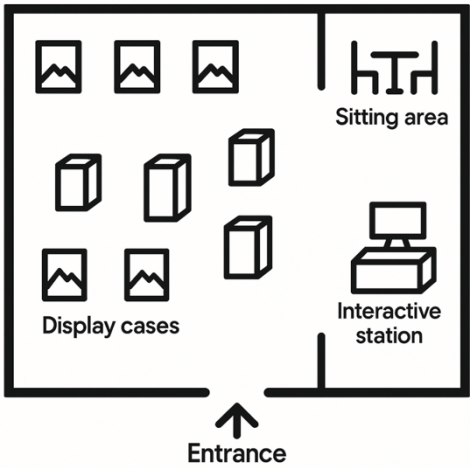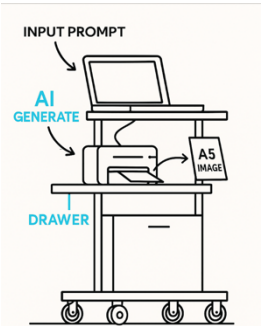

Visitor Flow

Entry → pick up blind-viewing card → circle the island wall → check Audience Wall → create a piece at the Prompt Station and pin it → step into Data Nook for algorithm insights → pause at Discussion Bench → loop back anywhere. An open, non-linear route lets visitors forge their own trajectories and re-enter zones at will.

Zone	Function
Central Island Wall	Double-sided grid of 20 A2 prints, anchor of both sight-line and circulation; visitors can walk around freely.
Audience Wall	Full-length magnetic wall; updated daily with on-site A5 prints, sticky notes invite comments.
Prompt Station	Mobile cart with laptop + printer; operates in-gallery or outdoors, instant outputs join the show.
Data Nook	L-shaped drape alcove; 27″ touchscreen loops model-comparison video, bias info cards adjacent.
Discussion Bench	Modular benches in semicircle for rest, sketching or mini-talks; doubles as seating for events.
Welcome Desk	Beside entrance: blind-viewing cards, accessibility aids, cloak drop.

5 Audience Strategy & Promotion

Concept Intro

Aiming to bridge trained art circles and the wider public, the show positions generative AI as a shared lingua franca. The audience plan addresses **three concentric rings**—the on-campus art community, cross-disciplinary students & staff, and city-wide tech-and-culture enthusiasts. Promotion follows a three-tier logic: *campus engagement → social-media seeding → press amplification*, balancing foot-traffic and online discourse.

Target Segment	Motivation & Need	Outreach Channel	Key Message / CTA
ECA Art Students & Societies	Professional interest; comparing trained and untrained work; experiencing AI tools	— Workshop Visits + Mentor Emails — Student Union Community Poster	'Blind Assessment of AI Images — Are Your Eyes Accurate?' Book a place on the workshop
Cross-discipline Students & Staff	Curious about AI, creative writing, STEAM education	— Campus Digital Screens / Curriculum News Team — WeChat & Instagram Preview Video	'Enter a sentence, take away a painting' Lunchtime flash mob joins in the creation
City-wide Tech & Culture Enthusiasts	New media experience; participation in open dialogue	— Meetup / Eventbrite 列表 — Local Art Tech Blog Contributions — Community Hackerspace Collaboration	Free Talk + Live Webcast Link #EveryoneArtist Topic Participation

6 Public Programme

Intro

To push the question "Everyone Is an Artist?" beyond the walls and into action, the show offers two free public events—a roaming AI Prompt Booth, a hands-on Prompt Art Lab. Spanning the warm-up week and the exhibition peak, they invite visitors to produce images themselves and debate algorithms and authorship, turning spectators into co-creators and critics.

Activity	Format & Schedule	Capacity	Output & Goal
Prompt Booth	Mobile cart; 3 days before opening + first 2 exhibition days, 12:00 – 14:00 at campus plaza / library steps	Floating, ≈ 40 visitors per day	Passers-by type a prompt → 30 s AI generation → A5 dye-sub print; participants pin prints to the Audience Wall; hashtag #EveryoneArtist drives social ripple
Prompt Art Lab	In-gallery discussion area; day after opening, 14:00 – 16:00	20 seats (pre-registration)	15 min prompt-writing demo → 60 min group creation → 30 min critique; each participant keeps a print and uploads it to the online gallery; builds public confidence in AI creation

Promotion & Registration

Booth on-site photo shoot for instant posting on Reels/TikTok;

Workshops are open for registration one week in advance using Eventbrite / WeChat app;

7 Equality · Diversity · Inclusion & Ethics

General principle
The show operationalises "Everyone Is an Artist" as curatorial ethics: regardless of culture, skill or ability, every contributor and visitor enjoys equal rights to create and to experience.

1 Anonymous display
All 20 student works and on-site prints are shown without names, schools or titles, neutralising hierarchy and cultural bias while inviting blind viewing.

2 Bilingual access
Wall texts, guides, promo and events are delivered in English & Chinese; the panel offers live captioning / interpretation.

3 Physical accessibility
Doorways & paths ≥ 1.5 m; interactive surfaces wheelchair-friendly; portable induction loop and large-print materials available.

4 Inclusive programming
Booth and workshop require zero prior skill; panel brings voices from art, tech and ethics to ensure diversity of perspectives.

5 Algorithmic bias disclosure
The Data Nook contrasts one prompt across three models and explains dataset bias, fostering critical literacy.

6 Informed consent & IP
Creators sign release forms; visitor prints shown only anonymously and voluntarily; Midjourney / SD TOS and UK IP law observed.

7 Privacy safeguards
No sensitive data collected; prints labelled "Visitor #" only; sign-up data encrypted and deleted after the show.

8 Environmental care
FSC-certified recyclable paper; demountable walls reused; leftover materials donated to campus studios.

Governance & oversight
An EDI & Ethics officer audits the project against university policy and the Children in Scotland guidelines; escalates to the School Ethics Committee when required.

8 Project Timeline

Phase	Week(s)	Key Tasks
Preparation	Weeks 1–4	• Confirm 20 creators & sign consent forms • Remote onboarding: AI tools & prompt writing • Draft space layout & budget sheet • File funding applications; design promo visuals
Production	Weeks 5–8	• Iteration of student & visitor AI works • Order framing / print stock; test Prompt Station • Campus poster drop #1 + teaser video • Finalise Gantt chart; confirm panel speakers

Delivery	Weeks 9–12	• Week 9: 3-day install & lighting focus
		• Weeks 10–11: Exhibition open
		  • Prompt Booth (first 2 days)
		  • Prompt Art Lab (day 2)
		  • Live-streamed panel (weekend)
		• Week 12: 2-day de-install; compile digital archive & visitor feedback; publish online catalogue

Milestones

- **W1** — Funding application submitted
- **W4** — Final prompts locked
- **W8** — Promo round #2 (social + press)
- **W9** — Installation complete ✓
- **W10** — Opening night & Booth launch
- **W12** — Catalogue online release

9 Budget & Funding

1. Project Expenditure

Item	Amount (GBP)	Description
Venue & lighting *(in-kind)*	£1,000	Space and lighting support from ECA, costed at market rate; excluded from cash flow
Production & framing	£800	A2-size unified printing and mounting for 20 AI-generated artworks
Printing & graphics	£300	Bilingual posters, wall texts, and QR visual signage
Interactive station	£400	Dye-sublimation printer and laptop rental
Public programme & access	£500	Workshop materials, accessibility seating, live captions
Insurance & security	£200	Temporary exhibition insurance and volunteer supervision
Contingency (10%)	£300	Backup for equipment failure, repair, or emergency
Artist Honorarium (£50 × 20)	£1,000	Fixed creative contribution fee for each student artist
Total	£4,500	Balanced against income plan

2. Income Sources

Source	Amount (GBP)	Description
Creative Scotland Open Fund	£2,000	Applied funding for emerging curatorial projects
Tech sponsor (Midjourney or similar)	£500	Hardware and credit support, converted into cash value
NFT Sales (limited edition)	£300	Pilot sales of selected works online (conservative estimate)
ECA In-Kind Support (venue & lighting)	£700	Covers part of venue budget, not counted as cash

Source	Amount (GBP)	Description
Total Cash Income	£3,500	+ in-kind value of £700 = fully balanced with expenditure

3. NFT Sales Model & Artist Revenue

Selected AI-generated works will be minted as **limited-edition NFTs** via eco-friendly blockchain platforms (Polygon or Arbitrum).
Each piece will be priced at **£20**, with 3–5 editions per artwork.

Revenue Split

- **50%** of primary sales goes to the contributing artist
- **50%** supports the project's public programme and sustainability
- **5–10% resale royalties** are embedded where platforms support it

All NFTs are minted **with explicit artist consent.** Participation is voluntary and formalised via signed agreements.

4. Financial Integrity & Governance

- All expenditures are receipted and transparently reported post-exhibition
- If grants fall short, revenue will be supplemented via expanded NFT sales and micro-crowdfunding
- Project fully adheres to UK copyright/IP regulations
- Contributors sign informed consent agreements for both exhibition and NFT release

☐ ECA In-Kind Contribution

Venue and lighting support are provided in-kind by ECA. Valued at £1,000, of which £700 offsets the "Venue & lighting" line in the expenditure. This is not counted as part of the cash budget.

10 Publishing & Legacy

Exhibition Publication: Digital Catalogue
Post-show, a **bilingual open-access e-catalogue** will be published.
It will include the curatorial essay, thumbnails of the 20 student
works with prompts, highlights from audience-generated images,
descriptions of NFT releases, and summaries of public programmes and
data responses. It will be hosted on Edinburgh Research Explorer or
a dedicated microsite.

Community Legacy: Online Audience Archive
All audience-generated images and written responses will be
preserved in an open-access digital "Audience Wall" archive. This
space invites remixing and reuse, aiming to expand collective
dialogue on AI and participatory creativity.

Research Value: Curating as Pedagogical Practice
Project outcomes will inform future teaching case studies and be
submitted to the ECA Teaching Repository. The curator also plans to
revise key reflections into a publishable article for platforms such
as *The White Pube* or *Curator: The Museum Journal*.

NFT On-Chain Legacy
NFT platforms will permanently host the limited-edition works with
timestamped transparency. Secondary sale royalties ensure a lasting
artist revenue stream.

Archiving & Licensing
All material is published with consent. The digital catalogue and
archives are released under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license for sharing
and citation.

11 Additional Practical Elements

Informed Consent: All participating artists and audience members sign an authorisation agreement to ensure that the exhibition, online display, NFT, etc. are used legally and transparently.

Backup of digital exhibition: Generated images and audience wall are synchronised and archived to Google Drive / OneDrive; ensuring backup files can be retrieved in the event of internet outage or equipment failure.

Accessible version of materials: All guide cards / catalogues are provided in large print + digital version (screen readable), with clear accessibility to entrances and interactive devices.

Anti-failure solutions: Prompt Station has 2 sets of switching devices (laptop + printer); Data Nook uses looping local video clips to avoid network dependency.

Emergency Response Mechanisms: Public events have a safety liaison (curator/volunteer) with an emergency kit, list of emergency contacts, and are in compliance with school event regulations.