

PILOT CLASSROOM STUDY

Generative AI Tools in the Classroom: Beyond Talks

How art & design students describe their experience using GenAI image-generation tools

Ryan Pratama Sutanto^{1, 2}

¹ International Program in Digital Media, Petra Christian University, Surabaya, Indonesia

² Graduate Student in Dept. of Visual Contents, Dongseo University, Busan, South Korea

AI Is Already in the Studio



Text-to-image, everywhere

LLMs like ChatGPT, Meta AI, Grok, and DALL-E now turn a text prompt into an image. A feature already sitting inside everyday creative workflows.



Educators see the upside

Adobe's 2025 Creativity with AI in Education report: 91% of educators believe creative AI fosters deeper learning across disciplines.



But it's not one-sided

Art & design education uses AI for creative production, not just analysis — raising open questions about students' own experience of it.

Two Sides, Talking Past Each Other



Educators

Want GenAI tools woven into the curriculum as an essential and learnable skill.



Students

Remain reluctant to use GenAI for genuinely creative work.

Research Question

How do art & design students describe their experience using GenAI image-generation tools?

“Playing with AI Image Generation”



1. Generate ≥ 3 prompts per tool

Using free tools — Meta AI, Grok (X), DALL-E — optionally MidJourney, Stable Diffusion, or Leonardo AI.



2. Record the process

Using a shared template provided by the researcher.



3. Evaluate the outputs

Against a 6-dimension rubric (scores analysed separately from this paper).



4. Write a reflection

A personal, open-ended account of the experience.

6 shared prompts per student — 3 specific/representational + 3 abstract — so outputs stay comparable across tools.

Research Design



Qualitative-dominant pilot classroom study

Primary data: students' open-ended written reflections after the activity.

Analysed with inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
— themes built from the data, not a preset coding frame.

Same design logic as comparable AI-in-arts-education studies (Lin & Chen, 2024; Hiçyılmaz, 2025).



Participants

7

STUDENTS

20–22

YEARS OLD

5F/2M

GENDER SPLIT

Undergraduates in Visual Communication Design, Indonesia. This research framed as an authentic classroom activity, not a lab study.

Participant ID	Age	Sex
01CA	20	F
02MN	21	M
03LN	20	F
04ML	20	F
05HT	20	F
06NV	22	M
07YT	21	F

The First Reaction: Surprise



6 of 7

students reported a positive surprise at
unexpectedly high output quality



*“...how AI can adapt to what is in my imagination,
and also can provide emotions in an image.”*

— Participant 01CA



*“AI has significantly improved... some tools now
show real progress in stylized visual output.”*

— Participant 03LN

The one dissenting voice: “How badly Grok’s performance was.” — Participant 06NV



AI's Value Sits Early in the Process

6 of 7 students

- Most useful for ideation & brainstorming
- Effective for gathering references
- Generates concept images, not final art
- Saves time in early-stage production



“AI can facilitate the exploration of initial ideas and also make my work time more efficient... it can provide new information and ideas, shorten my working time, and help me when I experience artblock.”

— Participant 01CA



Prompting Is a Skill

3 of 7 students

- Vague prompts → poor image results
- Detailed, explicit prompts → stronger results
- Small wording changes shift the whole output
- Seen as a skill designers must develop



“I will make it pay closer attention to the details of the input to increase its accuracy.” ... “When making a prompt I also have to make it in detail... so that there is no misunderstanding or wrong results.”

— Participants 05HT & 01CA



Assistant, Not Replacement

2 of 7 students

- AI can't convey genuine feeling in an image
- Positioned as a helper, not a substitute
- Still misses “the fundamentals of art”
- Framed as the most important theme found



“The differentiation between designer and AI is that AI cannot express the feelings of their art. So it can be summarized that AI is not for taking over a designer's job, but it is about helping a designer's job.”

— Participant 02MN



Ethical Unease

2 of 7 students

- Concerns over ownership & artistic labor
- Regulation seen as unclear or absent
- Referenced the “Ghibli-style” AI controversy
- Ethics weighed against usefulness



“Until now, I have never used AI in my work... due to both lack of quality and ethical reasons. I believe using it currently violates key ethical principles since it also does not have a clear regulation yet.”

— Participant 03LN

Reading the Themes Through TAM

Technology Acceptance Model — perceived usefulness & perceived ease of use



Perceived usefulness

Theme 1's early-process value maps directly onto TAM's usefulness construct — the majority (6/7) confirm it.



Ease & engagement

The chatbot-like, interactive nature of prompting encourages hands-on learning and active participation.



Surprise, replicated

Positive surprise at output quality echoes Hwang et al. (2024)'s findings of high happiness/surprise scores.



Fear, replicated

Ethical unease mirrors Hwang et al.'s 'sadness/fear' — worry over overreliance and eroding human artistry.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Students' responses to GenAI are multidimensional — not simple acceptance or rejection.

Usefulness

Skill

Role clarity

Ethics

Four dimensions ran through the reflections: where AI's usefulness sits, prompting as a skill to build, AI's role relative to the designer, and the ethics of using it at all.

Limitations & What's Next



Limitations

- Small sample — 7 students
- Single institution, single location
- Pilot scope, not generalizable



Future Work

- Larger, more diverse samples
- Newer / additional AI tools
- Teachers' & lecturers' perspective
- Different / mixed methodologies



Thank You

Questions & discussion welcome.

Ryan Pratama Sutanto · ryan@petra.ac.id