



Received: 25 May 2026

Revised: 5 June 2026

Accepted: 8 June 2026

GENERATIVE AI IN ASIAN ARTS: NAVIGATING INDUSTRIAL DISRUPTION, ARTISTIC RESISTANCE, AND CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION

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(This article belongs to Theme 1: Artistic Innovation in the Digital Age)

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Abstract

This study examines the profound integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within Asian creative industries from 2016 to 2025. As an active vanguard in generative AI adoption, Asia is experiencing distinct transformations across visual arts, music, film, and traditional cultural practices. Through qualitative documentary research and systematic literature synthesis, this article reveals severe industry disruptions, most notably a 90% reduction in animation production costs. Concurrently, artists face significant creative identity crises and the imminent threat of cultural hollowing within traditional arts. In response to these challenges, Asian creators are increasingly employing hybrid workflows, utilizing protective technologies, and cultivating irreplaceable human brand identities. Furthermore, the research identifies critical structural vulnerabilities, including lagging intellectual property jurisprudence, the absence of consent mechanisms, and pervasive Western-centric biases within AI training datasets. To analyze these complex dynamics, this paper introduces the "Triadic Tension Model," emphasizing the techno-artistic, global-local, and structural-individual axes. Ultimately, the study forecasts a polarized future market divided between automated commodity art and premium human-signature art. Urgent policy interventions, including explicit intellectual property reforms and sovereign investments in diverse Asian cultural datasets, are strongly advocated.

Keywords: Generative Artificial Intelligence, Asian Creative Industries, Cultural Heritage Preservation, Intellectual Property Law, Artistic Identity

Citation Information: Dawabsheh, M., & Gupta, S. (2025). Generative AI in Asian Arts: Navigating Industrial Disruption, Artistic Resistance, and Cultural Heritage Preservation. *Thai Arts and Culture Review*, 1(2), Article 5. <https://doi.org/10.14456/tacr.2025.10>

Introduction

Over the past decade, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transcended its origins in computational laboratories and industrial manufacturing to infiltrate a domain once considered the exclusive sanctuary of human intellect: the arts and creative expression. The emergence of Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), Diffusion Models, and Large Language Models (LLMs) has empowered AI to render visual art, compose music, draft scripts, and generate sophisticated animations with an uncanny ability to mimic human stylistic nuances (Duester & Zhang, 2025; Meng et al., 2025). This phenomenon represents more than a mere technical evolution; it fundamentally destabilizes the ontological inquiries that have persisted throughout human history: "What is art?" and "Who qualifies as an artist?"

These inquiries carry heightened urgency and complexity in the Asian context—a region defined by its profound cultural diversity, venerable artistic traditions, and distinctive creative economies. Empirical evidence suggests that Asia is not merely a passive recipient of AI's impact but is increasingly emerging as a vanguard of this transition. According to a Deloitte (2024) report, the adoption rate of Generative AI among users in developing Asian nations is 30% higher than in developed economies. Notably, 32% of survey respondents in India and 19% in Southeast Asia report daily AI usage. In China, Duester and Zhang (2025) observed that 87% of surveyed visual artists integrate AI into their workflows, regardless of age or creative medium.

However, this exponential growth within the creative sector is accompanied by profound crises and systemic tensions. UNCTAD (2024) records that since 2022, AI has increasingly displaced human labor across various creative industries, with graphic design, illustration, and game design being particularly vulnerable. The World Economic Forum's (2026) *Four Future of Jobs in the New Economy* report forecasts that while 92 million jobs may be displaced by 2030, 170 million new roles will emerge. Nevertheless, critical questions remain: Where do Asian artists stand within this shifting equation? What is the precise nature of the impact they face? Moreover, through what mechanisms are they resisting or adapting?

Consequently, this research article pursues three primary objectives: 1) to synthesize the impact of AI technologies across various artistic disciplines in Asia between 2016 and 2025; 2) to synthesize the strategic resistance and adaptation of artists and the broader Asian art community in response to these impacts during the specified period; and 3) to analyze future trajectories of the Asian art scene in an era of continuous and rapid AI development.

Geographically, this study focuses on Asia, with particular emphasis on case studies from China, Japan, South Korea, India, and Southeast Asia. The scope encompasses major artistic disciplines, including visual and digital arts, music, film and animation, and traditional art forms, covering the period from 2016 to 2025.

The methodology employs a qualitative documentary research approach combined with a systematic literature synthesis. Primary data sources are categorized into three areas: (1) peer-reviewed articles from international journals indexed in scholarly databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and TCI; (2) reports from intergovernmental organizations, including UNCTAD, UNESCO, WEF, and UNDP; and (3) empirical case studies from Asian creative industries between 2016 and 2025. The findings are presented through descriptive analysis, utilizing cross-national and cross-disciplinary comparisons to provide a comprehensive and systematic synthesis of the current landscape.

The Unstoppable Revolution: The Impact of AI on Artistic Disciplines in Asia (2016-2025)

Artificial Intelligence does not impact all artistic disciplines uniformly; rather, it manifests through distinct dynamics shaped by the specificities of each field. In some sectors, the impact is most evident at the industrial and structural levels, while in others, profound crises of creative

identity are evident. This section synthesizes and analyzes these dynamics across four pivotal domains.

Visual and Digital Arts: Redefining the Pixel

No nation in Asia illustrates the rapid and profound impact of AI on the visual arts as vividly as China. Duester and Zhang (2025), through a survey of 110 visual artists and 30 in-depth interviews, found that the Chinese government began integrating digital technology into the art industry as early as 2016. This momentum accelerated in 2021 and culminated in the official issuance of AI-supportive regulations in 2023. Consequently, 87% of surveyed artists now use AI in their workflows, regardless of their artistic medium or age, with 76% affirming its utility and expressing intent to continue using it (Duester, 2025).

A significant longitudinal study by Meng et al. (2025), which tracked 17 Chinese digital painters over five years (2021-2025), identified a three-stage evolution in artistic attitudes: "Skepticism and Resistance" (2021-2022), "Pragmatic Acceptance" (2022-2024), and "Identity Reconfiguration" (2025). Notably, during the initial phase, artists dismissed AI-generated works as "soulless" and lacking "authentic aesthetics." By the second phase, AI was recontextualized as a "creative springboard" and a "commercial assistant." Currently, in the third phase, artists have begun to critically interrogate both the inherent value of AI and their own evolving roles in the creative process.

Regarding resistance, Tang and Liu (2025) examined anti-AI protests on Lofter, China's largest fan art platform. They found that creators face multidimensional challenges, including platform-driven content exploitation, the mimicry of creative "signatures," and violations of community norms that sustain artistic identity. Concurrently, Bernaschina (2025) argues that AI has fundamentally deconstructed "visual language" and restructured the conceptual foundations of identity, authenticity, and authorship in the digital age.

Music: From Vocaloid to the Era of Generative Music

Asia possesses a distinguished history as a pioneer of the "non-human artist" concept, predating the current generative AI era. The most prominent case is Japan's "Hatsune Miku," a virtual singer powered by Crypton Future Media's Vocaloid software since 2007. Designed as a "futuristic robot singer in a world where songs are lost," Miku became a global phenomenon with over 100,000 fan-composed songs in multiple languages (Anderson, 2021). The Miku phenomenon serves as powerful evidence that Asia has been exploring the human-AI frontier in music for over a decade longer than other regions.

In the era of generative AI, the virtual artist phenomenon has scaled significantly. Chen (2024) notes that Vocaloid democratized the industry, allowing amateur musicians to bypass traditional label systems and creating new networks of creation and consumption. In South Korea, HYBE launched "Syndi8" in June 2024—a virtual pop group utilizing Supertone AI technology for all vocal production. The group is capable of performing in six languages simultaneously: Korean, English, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese (The Nation, 2026), signaling a tangible dissolution of linguistic and cultural barriers in the Asian music industry.

However, a critical concern is the "cultural bias" embedded in AI data structures. Music filtering algorithms on Western-centric platforms risk marginalizing non-mainstream Asian sounds. Because AI training datasets are heavily skewed toward Western musical traditions, genres such as Gamelan, Sape, or Thai-Lao folk music remain unfairly underrepresented (Bryan-Kinns & Li, 2024).

Film and Animation: Mass Production at Low Cost

In terms of structural industrial transformation, film and animation have experienced the most radical shifts. Ruizhi (2026) reports that China's AI-generated animation market surged from under 3 billion RMB in early 2024 to 20 billion RMB by late 2025—a sevenfold increase within a single year. This figure is staggering when compared to the 2024 total Chinese box

office revenue of approximately 42.5 billion RMB, indicating that the AI animation market grew to nearly half the size of the entire film industry in just twelve months.

The primary driver of this growth is the precipitous reduction in production costs. Animation production costs plummeted by over 90%, from 20,000-30,000 RMB per minute to less than 2,000 RMB, while production timelines were compressed from several months to just 15 days (Ruizhi, 2026). Furthermore, 80% of the large-scale AI tools used in this industry are developed indigenously in China, suggesting the emergence of a creative technology supply chain independent of Western influence. In the broader film sector, AI enables Hengdian—China's largest film production hub—to offer production costs that are 60% lower than those of competing international projects (AI Films Studio, 2025).

Traditional Arts: Between Preservation and Cultural Hollowing

AI enters the world of traditional Asian arts as a "double-edged sword," offering tools for preservation while simultaneously threatening the survival of traditional practices. In the realm of preservation, artist Takashi Murakami utilized AI to restore 17th-century folding screens designated as Japanese National Treasures. Using high-resolution scans from the Tokyo National Museum, AI assisted in reconstructing approximately 20% of the damaged sections, though 9 studio assistants were still required for manual finishing (Tibajia, 2025). Similarly, Hong Kong Polytechnic University developed the "Beauty of Cantonese Porcelain" platform, utilizing generative AI to archive and transmit traditional porcelain painting techniques to younger generations (Duh, 2025).

Conversely, traditional arts that rely on oral tradition, physical presence, and community connection face risks that technology alone cannot mitigate. Taher and Susanto (2025) found that while AI can assist in documenting Javanese traditions, it cannot preserve the "meaning" embedded in the performance of ancient rituals. The unresolved question is: if traditional art is "learned" and "replicated" by AI but stripped of its context, community, and spiritual dimension, does what remains still constitute "traditional art"?

Table 1 Synthesis of AI's Impact on Various Artistic Disciplines in Asia (2016-2025)

Artistic Discipline	Primary Impact	Notable Empirical Examples	Level of Structural Change
Visual / Digital Arts	Automated creation; identity crisis	87% of Chinese artists use AI	Very High
Music	Virtual artists; AI-generated composition/vocals	Hatsune Miku (2007-Present); Syndi8/Hybe (2024)	High
Film / Animation	90%+ cost reduction; mass production	China's AI animation market: 3 → 20 billion RMB in 1 year	Very High (Structural)
Traditional Arts	Dualistic: Preservation vs. Displacement/Cultural Hollowing	Murakami's Edo restoration; AI Batik/Wayang	Moderate - Complex

Resist, Relinquish, or Reconcile: Strategic Responses and Adaptations of the Asian Art World to the AI Wave

If the impact of AI is conceptualized as a "wave," the immediate corollary is how Asian artists and institutions navigate its crest. Empirical evidence suggests that these responses are far from linear; instead, they are multifaceted, heterogeneous, and characterized by internal dialectics.

A Typology of Resilience: Categorizing Artist Responses to AI

Research across the region consistently identifies at least three primary taxonomies of artistic response to AI. A comparative study conducted in Manila, Philippines (Cajulis et al., 2025) delineates these as: (1) Traditional Artists, who fundamentally reject AI integration; (2) Hybrid Artists, who synthesize AI tools with analog or traditional methodologies; and (3) AI-first Artists, who utilize AI as their primary creative engine. Notably, the "Hybrid" group commands the highest market valuation and client satisfaction. This aligns with Duester's (2025) findings, which suggest that the most resilient artists in China are those employing hybrid strategies to forge a creative identity that remains beyond the reach of algorithmic replication.

This tripartite classification is crucial for policy framework design, as each group necessitates distinct support mechanisms. Traditionalists require legal protections and niche market preservation; Hybridists need cross-disciplinary upskilling; and AI-first creators require robust ethical frameworks for attribution and intellectual property.

Individual Adaptation Strategies

By 2025—the third phase of AI integration—Meng et al. (2025) observe that most digital artists eschew the binary choice of "fighting" or "surrendering" in favor of developing sophisticated Hybrid Workflows. A typical iteration involves: "Manual Sketching $\rightarrow$ AI-assisted Colorization $\rightarrow$ Manual Refinement $\rightarrow$ Final Aesthetic Grading." This process preserves human authorship while leveraging AI efficiency. Research highlights three successful strategic pathways:

- 1) Cultivating Irreplaceable Brand Identity: Duester (2025) notes that successful Chinese artists leverage their "humanity" as a core Value Proposition. This is achieved through radical transparency in the creative process, personal storytelling, and the development of idiosyncratic styles that cannot be reduced to a "prompt."
- 2) Deployment of Protective Technologies: Shan et al. (2023) introduced Glaze, a tool that applies an imperceptible "digital cloak" to artworks, preventing AI models from learning or mimicking an artist's style. With a success rate exceeding 92% in standard conditions, this represents a significant "AI against AI" countermeasure for protecting intellectual property.
- 3) AI as a Creative Partner, not a Production Tool: Chinese creators interviewed by Duester (2024) report repositioning AI as an "interlocutor," "critic," or "source of inspiration." This shifts the paradigm from AI as a tool to AI as a "co-creator," fundamentally expanding the definition of collaborative art.

Institutional and Policy-Level Strategies

China presents the most advanced state-level adaptation model in Asia, characterized by a dual-track approach of Promotion and Regulation. While the government issued supportive regulations for AI in creative industries in 2023, academia has simultaneously restructured curricula to blend creative prowess with AI expertise (Duester & Zhang, 2025). Regionally, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University has pioneered AI platforms for cultural heritage preservation. On the international stage, the 5th Creativity 2030 forum hosted by UNESCO and ICCSD in Beijing (March 2026) under the theme "AI and Culture: Empowering Sustainable Development" signals that Asia's policy discourse has now ascended to a global leadership position (UNESCO, 2026).

Erickson (2024) analyzed AI's impact on the labor market through six commercial product case studies, finding that AI-driven projects often require more human labor than anticipated to bridge the gap between traditional production and new computational skills. However, AI's capacity to displace human effort in the "Ideation" phase and to outcompete traditional methods—such as replacing stock photography with synthetic imagery—remains a critical concern.

Preservation through Technology: A Productive Tension

In the context of traditional arts, the response to AI is more nuanced. Tibajia (2025) found that many Asian creatives view technology as a partner in "safeguarding" cultural heritage rather than as a threat. The aforementioned work of Murakami and practitioners who use AI to evolve "Modern Ink Landscapes" operates on a single principle: using AI to augment, not supplant, ancestral wisdom.

Table 2 Adaptation Strategies of the Asian Art Scene Toward AI

Level	Strategy	Examples	Effectiveness
Individual	Developing Hybrid Workflows	Chinese digital painters	High
Individual	Using Protective Tech (e.g., Glaze)	92%+ Success rate	Moderate - High
Individual	Human-Centric Brand Identity	Chinese DIY solutions	High
Institutional	AI + Arts Curricular Reform	China (2023-Present)	In Progress
Policy	AI Regulations for Creative Sectors	UNESCO Creativity 2030; China 2023	Evolving

Lagging Jurisprudence: Legal, Ethical, and Structural Challenges in the Age of AI

If the impacts and adaptations discussed previously represent the "visible tip of the iceberg," then the legal, ethical, and structural challenges constitute the far more substantial submerged mass. These factors will ultimately dictate whether the Asian art world can progress in a manner that is both equitable and sustainable.

The Jurisprudential Void: Intellectual Property Law in the Wake of AI

Across Asia, intellectual property (IP) frameworks are grappling with a profound "structural gap" (Kwok & Brenner, 2024). A survey of patent and copyright laws in the Asia-Pacific region reveals that most jurisdictions lack explicit provisions regarding AI-generated output. While South Korea established a precedent in December 2023 by recognizing an AI-produced film as a "Compilation Work," the fundamental requirement for "human authorship" remains a prerequisite for full copyright protection.

Thailand serves as a poignant case study. WE Intellectual Property (2024) notes that the Thai Copyright Act, B.E. 2537 (1994), contains no direct reference to AI-generated works. The Department of Intellectual Property (DIP) has maintained a firm stance, refusing to grant copyright protection to AI output because the law reserves authorship exclusively for human creators. Furthermore, Taweepon (2025) argues that the absence of a robust "Fair Use Exception" for AI training exposes Thai developers to significant legal risk when using copyrighted datasets. This is echoed by Hinchiranan and Anuchitolarn (2023), who warn that under current statutes, AI developers in Thailand could be prosecuted as "contributory infringers."

Yu (2023) argued at the 2023 Conference of the Asian Pacific Copyright Association that IP laws in the region are currently "divergent" rather than "convergent," creating significant uncertainty for artists and developers operating across borders. Meanwhile, Thongmeensuk (2022) suggests that this is not merely a legal technicality but a societal choice regarding how we value "human creativity" in an increasingly automated era.

Ethical Dimensions: Consent, Bias, and Economic Precarity

The most pressing ethical concerns in the Asian context manifest in three distinct yet interconnected dimensions:

1) Consent by Design: Tang and Liu (2025) argue that the primary impetus behind the Lofter protests was not merely copyright, but the lack of "Consent by Design." Platforms harvested

artist data for AI training without notification, permission, or profit-sharing. This research posits that future AI infrastructure must integrate consent mechanisms as a foundational element rather than as a post hoc addition.

2) Cultural and Algorithmic Bias: Leong (2025) and UNCTAD (2024) identify a high degree of Western-centric bias in AI training datasets. This bias limits the capacity of AI models to comprehend or produce non-Western aesthetics, posing a long-term threat to cultural diversity and leading to a form of "digital colonialism" where Asian artistic nuances are marginalized.

3) Job Displacement and Labor Vulnerability: UNCTAD (2024) reports significant displacement of graphic designers, illustrators, and game artists since 2022. The United Nations (2025) highlights that women and youth in Asia face the highest risk, particularly in regions with less technological agency. In Southeast Asia, where much of the creative workforce operates as freelancers without union protection, the impact of AI-driven displacement is especially acute.

The Creative Identity Crisis: Authenticity and Invisibilization

Beyond legal and economic metrics, AI has precipitated an ontological crisis for artists, centralizing the question: "Who am I?" Bernaschina (2025) contends that AI has fundamentally deconstructed visual language and challenged the concepts of identity and authorship. Meng et al. (2025) observed that by 2025, many artists were experiencing "Aesthetic Fatigue" (Aesthetic Fatigue) due to the "hyper-perfection" and homogeneity of AI-generated content. Leong (2025) asserts that what AI fundamentally lacks is "Intention"—the true foundation of artistic meaning. Conversely, Erickson (2024) identifies a disturbing trend toward the "Invisibilization of Human Labor," where human effort is concealed behind AI-branded products to enhance commercial appeal. This raises the most provocative question of the era: If artists "hide" behind the algorithm to maintain market value, who truly holds the mantle of "artist" in the age of AI?

The Ever-Receding Horizon: Conclusion, Discussion, and Future Directions for the Asian Art Scene in the AI Era

Summary of Findings: AI as a Contested Space

The synthesis of literature and empirical evidence over the past decade (2016-2025) yields four definitive conclusions. First, AI cannot be reductively categorized as either a "replacement for the artist" or an "augmentative tool"; rather, it functions as both simultaneously, contingent on the specific artistic discipline, economic context, and the adaptive capacity of the individual creator. Second, Asia exhibits a unique and compelling dynamic that diverges from Western narratives. The fact that 87% of Chinese artists use AI, with 76% perceiving it as beneficial (Duester, 2025), reflects a model of "Proactive Integration" that contrasts with the resistance discourses prevalent in the West. Third, the persistent legal void remains a formidable structural barrier. Fourth, traditional arts face a risk far more profound than mere displacement: the threat of "Cultural Hollowing," where the form is preserved but the ontological substance is lost.

Discussion: An Integrative Analytical Framework

To systematically analyze the complex relationship between artificial intelligence and the arts within the region, this article proposes the "Triadic Tension Model" (illustrated in Figure 1). This theoretical framework posits that the current AI-Art nexus in Asia is not characterized by a singular conflict, but rather by three dynamic, intersecting axes of tension that require simultaneous management:

1) The Techno-Artistic Axis: The conflict between the logic of algorithmic efficiency and the logic of human meaning. This highlights the ontological struggle of artists to preserve the "soul" of their work against hyper-perfect, automated outputs.

- 2) The Global-Local Axis: The tension between Western-centric AI algorithmic biases and the urgent imperative to safeguard Asian cultural identities, specifically focusing on the ethical preservation of local cultural heritage against the threat of digital colonialism.
- 3) The Structural-Individual Axis: The friction between macro-level state-driven AI mandates—such as those observed in East and Southeast Asian digital governance policies—and the subjective intellectual property rights of the individual artist.



Figure 1 The Triadic Tension Model of AI in Asian Arts here

As Figure 1 demonstrates, these three axes are intrinsically interconnected. The model strongly argues that effective policy interventions, particularly those emerging from academic and governmental institutions, must address all three poles holistically. Attempting to resolve the intellectual property crisis (Structural) without mitigating algorithmic bias (Global) or recognizing the artist's identity (Techno) will only result in fragmented and unsustainable governance within the creative economy.

Future Trajectories and Recommendations

Looking toward the 2026-2030 horizon, at least three critical trends emerge. First, the creative labor market will undergo a profound Polarization between "Commodity Art," dominated by AI-driven automation, and "Signature Art," which will command a premium due to its irreproducible human essence. Second, new creative genealogies will materialize, giving rise to professions such as AI Art Directors, Human-AI Choreographers, and Cultural AI Ethics Curators. Third, as forecasted by the World Economic Forum (2026) and the United Nations (2025), without concrete policy interventions, the gap between AI-enabled nations and those lacking infrastructure will widen into a new, irreversible form of cultural inequality.

To address these challenges, this study offers four key policy recommendations:

- 1) Accelerate IP Reform through Public Policy Innovation: Modernize intellectual property laws across Asian jurisdictions by implementing proactive public policy innovations. This involves establishing robust digital governance frameworks that explicitly define and regulate AI-generated works, ensuring legal certainty for both local communities and tech developers.
- 2) Sovereign Data Investment: Invest in the creation of "Asian Cultural Heritage AI Datasets" to ensure traditional arts from all sub-regions are represented accurately and ethically.
- 3) Mandate Consent by Design: Enforce "Consent by Design" as the minimum standard for all creative AI platforms operating within the region.

- 4) Quantifying Cultural Value: Support interdisciplinary research to develop metrics for "Cultural Value"—those intangible elements of art that AI cannot replicate—to serve as a basis for fair pricing and the protection of artist rights.
- 5) Promote Digital Governance in Local Communities: Establish decentralized digital governance models that empower local artists and indigenous communities to control how their traditional arts and cultural motifs are utilized in AI training datasets, ensuring equitable profit-sharing and ethical attribution.

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Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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