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Wolf-Gordon Introduces Conceptual Project: Human-Generated vs. AI-Generated Design

Wolf-Gordon has introduced its latest concept-driven collection of digitally printed PVC-free wallcoverings, "Project: HI > AI," a timely snapshot of human intelligence and artificial intelligence meeting. Curator and chief creative officer Marybeth Shaw invited seven creatives to develop original patterns and submitted verbal descriptions of their work to input into AI imaging software. Shaw and Michael Loughlin, Wolf-Gordon design director, edited them to achieve relevant approximations or contrasts with the original art.

Ranging from printmakers to conceptual artists, art jewelers to sign painters, the artists represent diverse media, cultural backgrounds and geographies: Hilary Lorenz, print media artist, Abiquiu, NM; Raylene Marasco, textile artist and founder, Dyanamix, NYC; Jen Mussari, calligrapher and sign painter, Brooklyn; Pat Pruitt, metalsmith, Ada, OK; Christine Tarkowski, artist and professor, SAIC, Chicago; Frank Tjepkema, designer and founder, Tjep, Amsterdam; Ghislaine Vinas, interior designer, NYC.

Shaw took the song "Human Behavior" by Bjork (written from the perspective of an animal observing humans) and suggested to the participants that with "Project: HI > AI", humans might be replacing the animal with a machine. Artists explored themes like the process of making, the uniqueness of human-generated art and anxiety over impinging technology, as well as surveillance and control in our lives. Although the AI software could not match the human creations, the results are remarkable.

Patterns

Large Square, a pattern by Christine Tarkowski, artist and professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, was generated by folding water-soaked butcher paper repeatedly into a square and then drizzling 2000-degree Fahrenheit molten glass onto the folded paper. The glass burned through several layers, revealing a pattern when it was extinguished and unfolded. While Tarkowski's juxtaposition of geometry to entropic action—a persistent theme in her work—was impossible for the AI to match, the image of folded paper aflame in the AI version is relatable.

Pattern 2, designed by calligrapher and sign painter Jen Mussari, explored the foundational shapes of her art. When Wolf-Gordon Design Studio input Mussari's prompt—a linear pattern of calligraphy brush strokes reminiscent of the building blocks of hand-drawn typographic forms—the super-graphic output from the AI software was so compelling that they kept it as a large non-repeating mural.

Famossa, an abstracted, pointillist floral motif by designer Frank Tjepkema, was created on CAD software with a lengthy list of words that yielded a better result when edited down. "Magnetic field, organic, floral, parametric," output a fantastical, alien flower that one might encounter on Naboo (Queen Amidala's planet).

Furrows, designed and hand-painted by textile artist Raylene Marasco, required rearranging of the original prompt and additional cues like "brick-like layout" and "soft grey color." While less nuanced than Marasco's

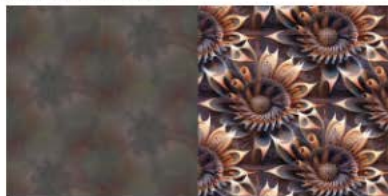
painting, which she executed by dragging pigment down an unevenly hand-dyed fabric with a vintage metal graining comb, its AI counterpart is a complex light-infused pattern that resembles a high-tech ikat.

Thunder & Lightning, a pattern by Native American metalsmith Pat Pruitt, proved too geometrically abstract for the AI software to replicate. In Pueblo art, lightning symbolizes the water serpent, Avanyu, and the importance of rainfall to desert agriculture. Pruitt's particular pattern for lightning, also seen on his much sought-after wrist cuffs, was interpreted by AI as a more cartoon-like zig zag.

Designed by print media artist Hilary Lorenz, **Migration** demonstrates the uniqueness of each living being and of each work of art. Lorenz has created awe-inspiring installations of individually printed and cut-out hawk moths, most recently at the Denver Botanic Garden that celebrates these winged insects as pollinators and metaphors for exchanging ideas. AI was able to generate a pattern of the moths in flight that could be considered a distant cousin of Lorenz's concept, at a significantly lower degree of resolution and, notably, in a very cloned, serialized repeat.

Playful Toile, by designer Ghislaine Viñas, explores a tableau of human-inflicted adversities existing in a developing or, controversially, collapsing world. The pattern is a mash-up of misfortunes with surveillance as a key theme, under the guise of a perfectly pleasing pattern. The traditional wallpaper pattern output by AI couldn't match the degree of threat designed by Viñas.

"Project: HI > AI" will be on display in Wolf-Gordon's headquarters, 333 Seventh Ave., New York through December 2023. All seven human-generated patterns will be available through Wolf-Gordon's Curated Collection.



Designer Frank Tjepkema's Famossa design, left, versus the AI-generated flowers, right. Courtesy of Wolf-Gordon.