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THINKTANK GAJAH

KI IN THE GRAPHIC UNIVERSE

The author reflects on his career in the graphic design industry and critically examines the technological evolution – from lead typesetting to artificial intelligence (AI). He explores how work processes have changed, warns of the shift in value creation toward large corporations, and highlights the potential social consequences of widespread automation. While acknowledging the efficiency and potential of AI, he calls for its conscious and responsible use – so that humans remain essential, not obsolete.

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FOREWORD

I began my career shortly after computers were introduced to the graphic design industry. While the older typesetters struggled with the transition, I – part of a new generation – saw the creative potential of digital tools as an opportunity. A brief conversation with an experienced typesetter left a lasting impression on me. For him, typesetting was more than just a craft; it was a meditative process. At the time, I couldn't fully grasp what he meant – but now I do.

The increased speed brought by computers also introduced new pressures. In the end, we may spend the same amount of time working, but under vastly different conditions.

Today, I find myself in a position similar to his back then – critical of the apparent simplification brought about by artificial intelligence.

WHERE AND HOW IS AI USED TODAY?

AI already supports many individual steps in the design process: from brainstorming and layout to image editing and text generation. However, AI rarely manages the entire creative process. Strategic and conceptual decisions typically still require human judgment.

Common Areas of Application

Image editing: color correction, cropping, retouching

Photography: AI-generated images, image analysis

Design: logo creation, templates, mockups

Text: slogans, instructions, product descriptions

Processes: automated PDF workflows, ad management

Examples of tools: Adobe Sensei, Canva, VistaCreate, Designs.ai, Fotor, Lumen5, Runway ML

VISION FOR THE FUTURE IN 2030

In the future, AI platforms like “Advert” could manage the entire marketing process – from strategy to execution. A customer simply states their goals, and the AI immediately analyzes the market, creates a concept, and implements it: branding, website, apps, social media campaigns, and more. AI systems communicate with one another, optimizing cross-channel campaigns by exchanging data in real time. Advertising, content creation, and performance analysis become fully automated.

RISKS OF AN AI TAKEOVER

1. Shift in value creation

Small businesses are losing ground while AI-driven processes empower monopolies like Adobe. What was once direct control over tools (e.g., buying software) has been replaced by subscriptions and increasing data dependency.

2. Replacement of human labor:

In the near future, most computer-based work could be done by AI. Manual labor might be spared temporarily – but AI is learning from us daily, even in creative and intuitive domains. By using AI, we are training it to eventually replace us.

3. Social consequences

If human labor declines dramatically, mass unemployment could follow. An unconditional basic income (UBI) would become unavoidable. Initially, the cost would fall on skilled workers – until those professions, too, are automated.

Eventually, humanity could become entirely dependent on AI systems and the corporations behind them. And then? What will be left for us to offer?

CONCLUSION

AI represents the next stage in human evolution – following agriculture, industrialization, and digitization. But with it come massive disruptions that may fundamentally reshape society.

We must ask ourselves:

How much convenience are we willing to accept if it risks our autonomy and existence?

I, too, use AI – consciously and professionally – while remaining aware of the risks. I know that the graphic design profession, as we know it, is disappearing.

My future lies in areas that AI cannot (yet) replace: emotion, character, creativity, and spirituality.