



Powering Creativity

Artificial Intelligence

Published by
South Coast Arts
16 March 2026

director@southcoastarts.org.au
southcoastarts.org.au



Above: AI generated collage
Prompt: A wide landscape-oriented modern editorial collage. The composition illustrates the relationship between human creativity and AI. On the left, imagery representative of computers and various human artistic outputs are arranged in radiating wedges. In the center, a profile of a person's head acts as the focal point, with a complex crown made of associated elements. A bold, horizontal aqua/blue stripe cuts through the image. The style is strictly 20th-century paper collage, using black and white vintage photography and high-contrast blue geometric accents. Flat lighting, realistic paper textures, and no 3D rendering.

South Coast Arts stands at a critical juncture in the cultural sector's relationship with artificial intelligence. As a regional arts organisation committed to supporting creative communities, we must thoughtfully navigate the opportunities and challenges AI presents.

This paper outlines our position on AI use, acknowledging both the serious concerns around its development and the genuine creative possibilities it offers.

The Copyright Challenge

We cannot discuss AI without first addressing a fundamental issue: the way many AI systems have been trained represents a significant violation of artists' rights. Large-scale AI models have ingested millions of copyrighted images, texts, and creative works without permission or compensation to their creators. This isn't an abstract legal matter; it directly affects the creatives we exist to support.

The creative community has been clear: this appropriation of work undermines the basic principle that creators should control how their art is used and receive fair compensation for it.

As an organisation built on respect for creative practice, we recognise this as a serious ethical concern that cannot be dismissed in the rush to adopt new technologies.

We advocate for:

- Stronger legal protections for creative copyright in AI contexts
- Transparent disclosure of training data sources
- Opt-in rather than opt-out systems for creatives
- Fair compensation models when creative works are used in AI training
- Support for creatives pursuing legal action against unauthorised use of their work



Image:
Bonnie Porter Greene, *No Plan*, 2025. 115 x 92cm

First Nations Art and Cultural Sovereignty

First Nations art and creativity occupy a fundamentally different position to all other forms of creative practice, as they cross cultural boundaries that extend far beyond individual copyright. Indigenous art is inseparable from cultural knowledge, spiritual connection, and protocols that have been maintained for tens of thousands of years. The copying or creation of Indigenous artworks by AI is not simply a copyright infringement - it is cultural vandalism.

When AI systems are trained on First Nations art, they strip away the cultural context, spiritual significance, and community-based knowledge systems that give these works meaning. An AI-generated imitation of Aboriginal art may superficially resemble traditional designs, but it fundamentally misrepresents and devalues the deep cultural knowledge embedded in authentic Indigenous creative practice.

This poses particular risks for First Nations artists who are already navigating complex challenges around cultural appropriation, market exploitation, and the commodification of their cultural heritage.

AI systems that generate 'Aboriginal-style' art threaten to:

- Flood markets with culturally inappropriate imitations, undermining authentic artists' livelihoods
- Violate sacred or restricted cultural knowledge that should never be reproduced outside specific protocols
- Enable non-Indigenous people to profit from First Nations cultural expression without relationship or accountability
- Further disconnect First Nations art from the cultural knowledge systems that give it meaning
- Perpetuate harmful stereotypes and misrepresentations of Indigenous cultures

South Coast Arts unequivocally opposes the use of AI to replicate, imitate, or generate First Nations art. We recognise that Indigenous cultural and intellectual property requires protections that go beyond conventional copyright law. We commit to advocating for First Nations communities right to control how their cultural expression is used, shared, and represented, and we will actively work against the use of AI in ways that violate First Nations cultural sovereignty.

Right: Gunai author Kirli Saunders with her book *Bindi*.
Photo: Sarah Moss

Saunders's book was one of thirty-seven First Nations titles used by Meta from Indigenous publishing house Magabala Books.



Impact on Creative Employment

The potential disruption to creative livelihoods is real and requires honest acknowledgement. Illustration, graphic design, copywriting, and other creative fields are already seeing AI tools marketed as cheaper alternatives to human practitioners.

For regional communities where creative work is often already precarious, this poses particular risks.

However, we also observe that throughout history, new technologies have consistently transformed rather than eliminated creative work. Photography didn't end painting; digital tools didn't end traditional craftsmanship. The pattern is one of adaptation and evolution, not replacement.

Our position is one of clear-eyed vigilance combined with practical support:

- We commit to prioritising human creative practitioners in our programming and commissions
- We will advocate for fair work standards that recognise AI-assisted work as still requiring human creative skill and judgement
- We support professional development that helps our creative community understand and adapt to changing tools
- We recognise that some creative roles will shift, and we'll work to help practitioners navigate these changes

Creative Potential and Experimentation

Despite legitimate concerns about how AI has been developed, we cannot ignore its genuine creative possibilities. Artists in our region are already exploring AI as a tool for:

- Generating initial concepts and visual inspiration
- Exploring variations on creative ideas rapidly
- Accessing capabilities they might not have (such as music composition for visual artists)
- Creating new forms of interactive and generative art
- Reducing time spent on repetitive technical tasks to focus on conceptual work
- Enabling experimentation with unfamiliar media or techniques

The key distinction is between AI as a replacement for human creativity and AI as a tool within a creative practice. When an artist uses AI to explore possibilities, then applies their judgment, skill, and vision to shape the output into finished work, they're using it as they might use any other tool.

Exciting work is emerging from this approach: interactive installations that respond to participants, generative poetry that plays with language in unexpected ways, and visual works that blend AI-generated elements with traditional techniques. This is fundamentally different from simply generating content to avoid paying a creative practitioner.

Benefits to Regional Communities

As a regional arts organisation, we see specific opportunities for AI to address challenges our communities face:

Access to Creative Resources

Regional artists often lack access to expensive software, large studios, or specialist equipment. AI tools can democratise access to certain creative capabilities, allowing artists to experiment with animation, complex visual effects, or music composition without prohibitive costs.

Community Engagement

AI can enable new forms of participatory art projects, allowing community members with varying skill levels to contribute to creative works. This can be particularly powerful for intergenerational projects or inclusive arts programs.

Preservation and Innovation

AI offers possibilities for preserving and reinterpreting local cultural heritage, from restoring historical photographs to creating new works inspired by local history and stories.

Economic Development

Regional areas that thoughtfully embrace creative technology can position themselves as innovative rather than simply following metropolitan trends. This can attract visitors, residencies, and opportunities.



The emergence of AI presents genuine ethical challenges, particularly around copyright and creative employment. We will not minimise these concerns. At the same time, we recognise that AI offers real creative possibilities when used thoughtfully and ethically.

Our position is neither uncritical embrace nor outright rejection, but rather careful engagement guided by our core values: respect for creative practice, support for creative practitioners, commitment to our regional community, and openness to innovation that serves rather than exploits.

The conversation around AI and creativity is far from settled. South Coast Arts will remain engaged, adaptive, and firmly centred on the needs and voices of the creative community we serve.

Our Commitments

South Coast Arts commits to:

Ethical Use: We will prioritise AI tools developed with ethical training practices and will be transparent when AI is used in our work or programs.

Human-Centred Practice: We will not use AI to replace creative practitioners or diminish the value of human creative work.

Education and Support: We will offer programs that help our creative community understand AI's capabilities and limitations, empowering them to make informed choices about if and how to use these tools.

Advocacy: We will continue to advocate for stronger copyright protections, fair compensation for training data, and policies that support creative workers.

Experimentation with Integrity: We will support artistic experimentation with AI while maintaining clear ethical boundaries around its use.

Community Voice: We will ensure our creative community guides our approach to AI, rather than having technology determine our direction.



ABN 85 730 422 167

director@southcoastarts.org.au

PO Box 84, Kiama

New South Wales, 2533

southcoastarts.org.au