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# Generating a Whole New World? What the Generative AI Era Really Means for Designers, Brands, and Creativity

Bringing Exquisite Designs to Life Faster Than Ever.



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Learn how designers are incorporating AI into their toolkit, including AI's role in Pantone's 2023 Color of the Year campaign, and what's next.

While Beverly Hills Cop II topped box office sales and “Walk Like an Egyptian” dominated the airwaves in 1987, photographers were busy scrambling to learn about a new innovation called Photoshop. Artists around the world wondered if the

software's ability to edit and manipulate digital images put human photographers out of business.

As we've seen in the years since, software is a tool photographers can use, but it certainly hasn't replaced their unique ability to capture magnificent moments in time.

Today, designers are having the same conversation. Will AI tools like DALL-E be the end of human design?

Absolutely not, says Odes Roberts, a design industry veteran who's the founder of AlmostStudios and Pantone's Creative Director. Instead, Odes says, AI is merely one tool creatives have at their disposal to achieve even more, but it will never replace humans because great design is so innately emotional — something even the smartest robot can't mimic.

## **How Today's Design AI Works**

Instead of sitting down and spitballing ideas, sketching on a notepad, or tapping into a deep familiarity with a brand's personality — processes that are so innately human and creative — today's AI typically starts with a text-based input from the designer that's a brief description of what they want the finished product to look like. From there, the AI searches for existing designs and combines them into a hodgepodge that it thinks matches what the designer is looking for. It's far from perfect, but that hasn't stopped the surge in conversations about how it could be an end-all-be-all design solution.

“There are some bad faith actors out there who are literally just saying, ‘I'm just going to type in a prompt and sell this stuff on the internet and call it a day,’” says Odes. But he points out that the quality falls flat. “I don't think AI is good enough for designers to solely get by just using AI.”

## **How AI Can Be Valuable for Human Designers**

As Odes points out, AI is nothing new in design; some tools have been around for years. The newest generative AI that's dominating headlines produces new tactics, methods, and functionalities to work more efficiently. The key word here is “work.” When used properly, it can be a valuable tool for designers to get more work done.

In fact, one of the biggest advantages of AI is speed. For example, designers can describe something to AI that isn't available or isn't easy to find in a traditional stock

photo library. The image AI generates can then be edited to fit a designer's exact vision, and the finished product is completed far faster than it would have been a few years ago.



## AI's Role in Pantone's 2023 Color of the Year

To showcase the true spirit of Viva Magenta, Pantone asked Odes for creative and brand direction for the first-ever Color of the Year microsite. With such an intense color, a big part of that spirit is the emotions associated with living your boldest and best life. Add that to the fact that so many people now have vivid experiences in the metaverse and virtual reality – the microsite's goal was clear: Completely immerse visitors in the Magentaverse. Pantone's team instantly knew AI-inspired images were the perfect way to embody this blend of bold and future-forward.

That's when Odes and his team turned to AI as a brainstorming partner. They created some sketches of what great images might look like, imported them into an AI tool, and then used the AI-generated images as a starting point that they could manipulate and perfect in Photoshop.

"I think it is a rapid brainstorming tool more than anything else," Odes explained. "You can describe something and then say, 'Oh I didn't think of it like that,' or 'That isn't quite right. Let me try it like this.' I think that's what AI is really good at."

Thanks to AI's ability to create new realities — like a face that doesn't belong to an actual person, but looks like it does — Odes' team used it as inspiration for the Magentaverse.

The Pantone team was excited to try something new, and so was Odes. And while AI imagery won't be used in every Pantone campaign, it will be incorporated into future projects where it makes sense.

As Odes put it, "We want to think outside the box of what's expected from a company like Pantone."



Odes always starts with a rough sketch to generate his images before handing it to ai to rapidly develop a concept.

**“You’re Not Putting the Genie Back in the Bottle on This One.”**

- Odes Roberts

Odes believes it's vital to have deeper conversations like these about AI because he has watched people in and out of the industry make rash judgments based on headlines, snippets, and hearsay without ever having seen how design AI technology works, what its strengths are, and what its limitations are. Pantone's 2023 Color of



the Year microsite is a perfect example of what can arise from a blend of expert human innovation and cutting-edge technological optimization.

For those getting swept up in the AI buzz, Odes has a calming reminder for both today and tomorrow.

“It’s just another tool in the toolkit. The best thing any designer or any creative can do is to have their own skillset outside of a tool. The human element is everything in design.”

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