# David Salle explores the intersection of art and artificial intelligence in new series



David Salle, an influential figure in the art world since the 1980s, has integrated the capabilities of artificial intelligence into his latest series of paintings, New Pastorals, unveiled at Thaddaeus Ropac gallery in London. These works, completed in 2023, illustrate a significant turn in Salle’s artistic process, where the partnership between human and machine provokes questions about originality and creativity in the digital age.

The artist's collaboration with AI comes from a long-standing scepticism regarding digital painting tools, which he previously described in a 2015 commentary as opposite to the concentration needed for traditional painting. However, the evolution of his ideas led him to develop a virtual game in 2021 that allowed users to manipulate the elements of his paintings. Although that particular project did not materialise, it paved the way for Salle to connect with software engineer Danika Laszuk and Grant Davis, the creator of the AI-powered sketchpad app Wand. Together, they trained an AI image generator using the works of various foundational artists, including Andy Warhol and Edward Hopper.

Speaking about this process, Salle remarked, “What I did was send the machine to art school.” Initially, the AI produced figures that were cartoonish and lacked the depth he was seeking. However, by feeding the machine scans of his gouaches and paintings, Salle tuned its output to mirror aspects of his own physical brush strokes. He noted, “It could read the physicality of the brush stroke,” which adjusted the machine’s understanding of painting.

Born in Oklahoma and raised in Wichita, Kansas, Salle became a prominent figure on the New York art scene by the age of 34, making headlines as the youngest artist to hold a mid-career survey at the Whitney Museum of American Art. His previous works include the Pastorals series created between 1999 and 2000, which served as a foundation for the AI's training. The New Pastorals reflect a shift in Salle's technique, with broader strokes and a more abstract expressionist approach. The paintings feature vibrant scenes layered with chaotic imagery, a trend towards movement that distinguishes them from their predecessors.

Initial critiques of Salle’s earlier Pastorals revealed a perception of emotional distance in his work. However, the New Pastorals embrace a renewed dynamism. The artwork's details, which appear hand-painted at first glance, reveal that some details could only have been applied mechanistically. Critics have noted the abstraction and energetic stroke work that breathe new life into his visual narratives.

Through his AI partnership, Salle was able to influence how the tool abstracted the original paintings while maintaining essential compositional elements such as horizon lines and colour palettes. Grant Davis commented on the significance of this collaboration, labelling it a breakthrough moment for AI in the context of artistic expression.

Ultimately, Salle views AI as a complement to his creative process rather than a replacement. He remarked that the machine had not instructed him on pictorial space or composition, but rather provided him with new perspectives based on parameters he set. This integration of AI into the artistic process reflects a turbulent evolution in the landscape of contemporary art, where the boundaries of creation are continuously being redefined.

As regulations on proprietary data and the usage of generated images emerge, the role of AI in art continues to provoke discourse about its potential influence on future artistic endeavours. While Salle’s work now exists in a complex dialogue between human creativity and machine efficiency, the implications for originality and authorship linger, suggesting that the relationship between artists and AI may evolve in unexpected ways as technology advances.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2025/04/10/artist-david-salle-on-using-ai-model-enhance-his-painting-practice> - This article provides insights into David Salle's process of integrating AI into his artwork and discusses how he trained a custom AI model to generate backgrounds for his paintings, corroborating the claim about his collaboration with software engineers.
* <https://www.gladstonegallery.com/exhibition/13214/new-pastorals/info> - The Gladstone Gallery's exhibition page discusses Salle's pivot to using AI in his 'New Pastorals' series and highlights the significance of his earlier 'Pastorals' series as a basis for AI training, validating the claims about his artistic evolution.
* <https://ropac.net/exhibitions/741-david-salle-some-versions-of-pastoral/> - This exhibition information details how Salle's new paintings utilize his past works as raw material fed into an AI model, supporting the assertion about the use of previous work in creating the 'New Pastorals'.
* <https://www.instagram.com/gladstone.gallery/p/DAovR_sRu3G/> - This Instagram post from the Gladstone Gallery announces Salle's exhibition of 'New Pastorals', confirming the timeline and context of the paintings' unveiling as stated in the article.
* <https://ropac.net/artists/78-david-salle/> - This page on the Thaddaeus Ropac website offers a biography of David Salle, highlighting his career trajectory and previous works, which supports the claims about his rise in the New York art scene and his evolution as an artist.