

Designing tools that act as creative collaborators



Meet the team



Elijah

Symbolic Systems '26



Luiza

Design + Computer Science
'28



Claire

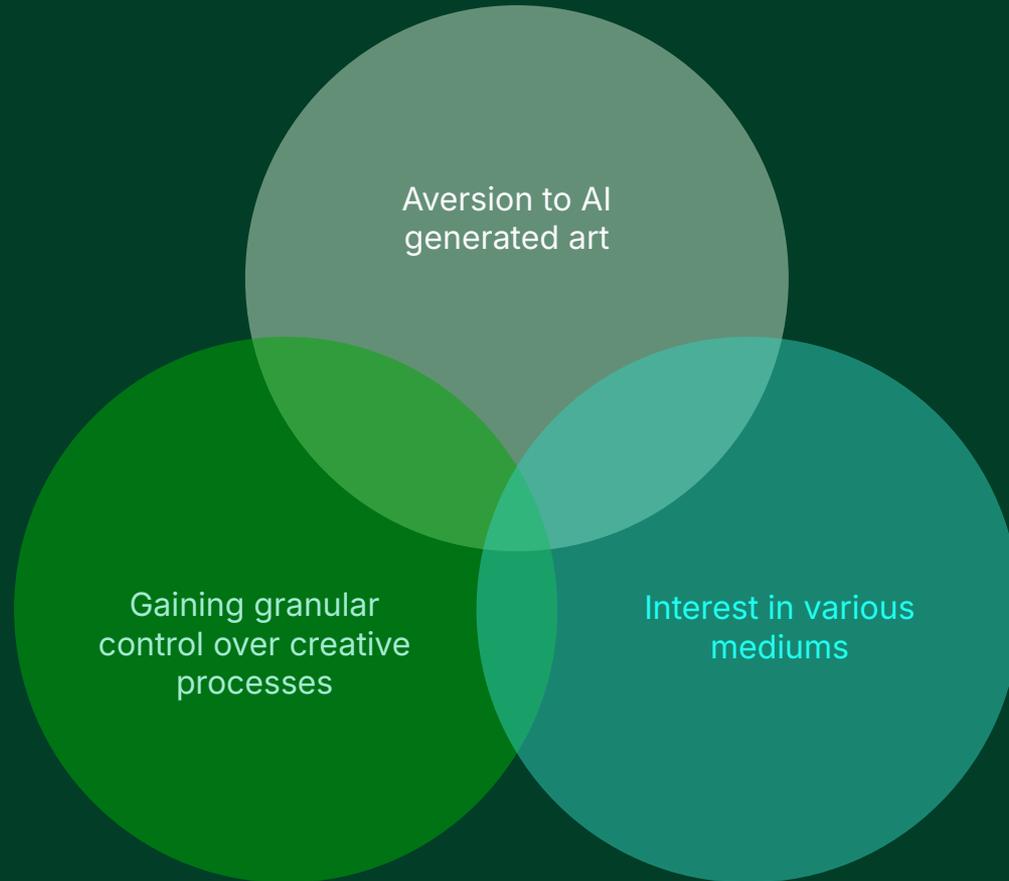
Computer Science '27



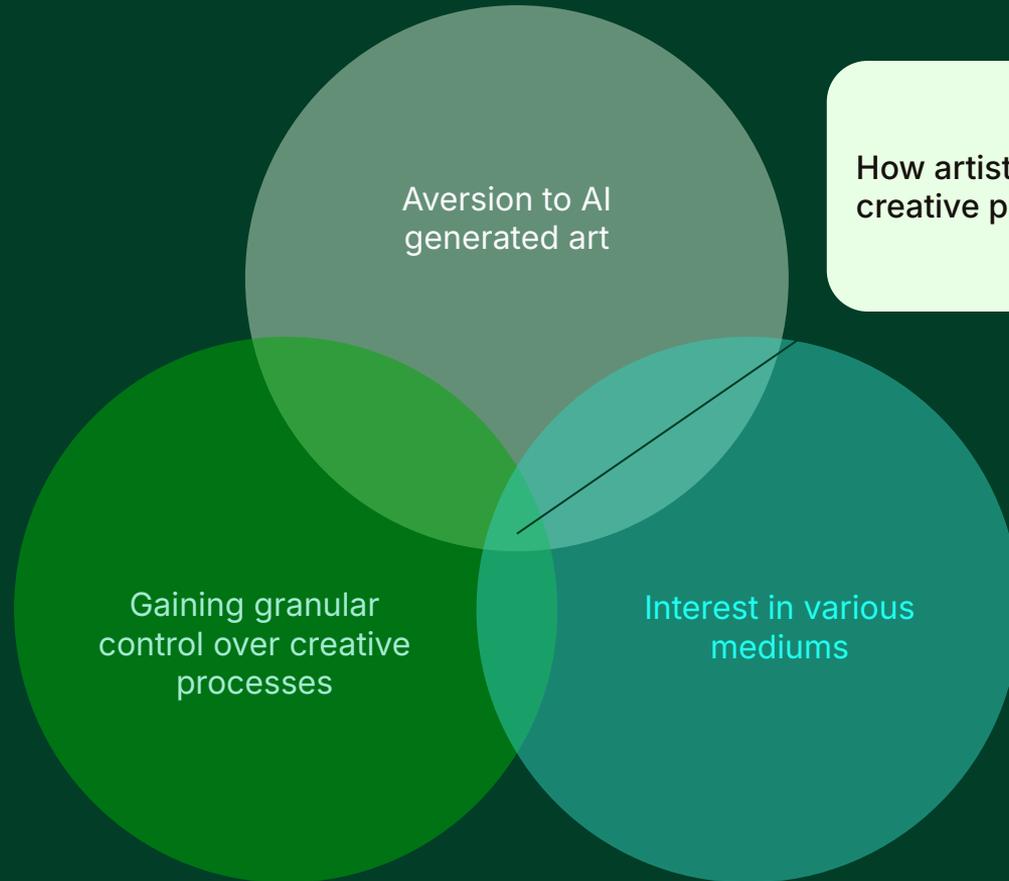
Mikela

Symbolic Systems '27

Domain selection



Domain selection



How artists plan their
creative projects

Finding participants

1

Experience

- Years of experience
- Profession
- Freelance vs. Industry

2

Context

- How'd we meet
- Where'd we meet
- Compensation

3

Demographics

- Age
- Gender
- Race

4

Art Medium

- Analog vs Digital
- Multimedia?

Finding participants

- Random sampling in downtown Palo Alto
- Mutual connections
- Art focused spaces (galleries/studios)



Participants



Vanessa

Product Design @ Adobe AI
Digital Art Hobbyist



Stephanie

Senior UX Designer @ Oracle
Analog Art Hobbyist (Print +
Painting)



Keith

25+ Years in Digital Art
industry (VR/Animation/Film)



Willow

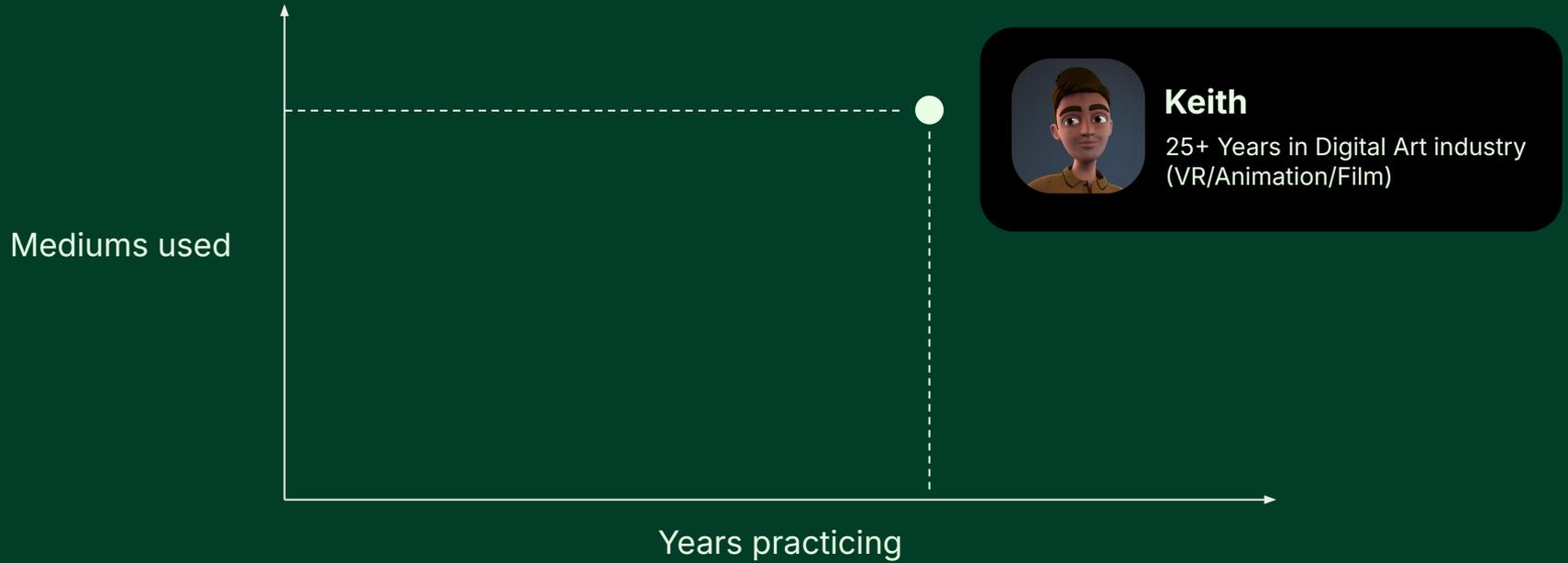
Film Student



Chloe

20+ years of art hobbies

Extreme user



Guiding questions

"What inspires your art?"

"How do you plan your creative work?"

"Do you use AI to help in any step of the process?"

"How do you organize your art and ideas?"

"How has your process in making art changed over time?"

Interview Results

Keith

Commercial + Freelance artist → VR/Animation/Filmmaking/Digital



Team members role

Luiza — Interviewer/Recorder
Mikela — Note taker

“I canceled my Adobe subscription because they’re not going in a direction I like... It feels like I’m losing **creative agency**”



Some of his artwork!

Vanessa

Product designer + Art hobbyist → Painting and vector art



"If I'm creating something **natural**, then I just get ideas from my **environment**, like a storefront with cool branding"



Some of her art!

Team members role

Elijah — Interviewer/Recorder

Mikela — Note taker

Stephanie

Product designer + Art hobbyist → Explores multimedia art and ethics of AI art



"I get the most inspired and motivated when I'm surrounded by **other people**"

Team members role

Claire — Interviewer/Recorder

Mikela — Note taker

Chloe

Longtime art hobbyist → Printmaking, photography, painting



"The best pieces just come out, especially with **strong emotions and music.**"



Team members role

Luiza — Interviewer/Recorder
Claire — Note taker

Some of her artwork!

Willow

Film student
(non-user)



"Art is my **safe space.**"
"Of course AI can make a simple animation, but there's no **personal feeling** to it. There's no connection to it."

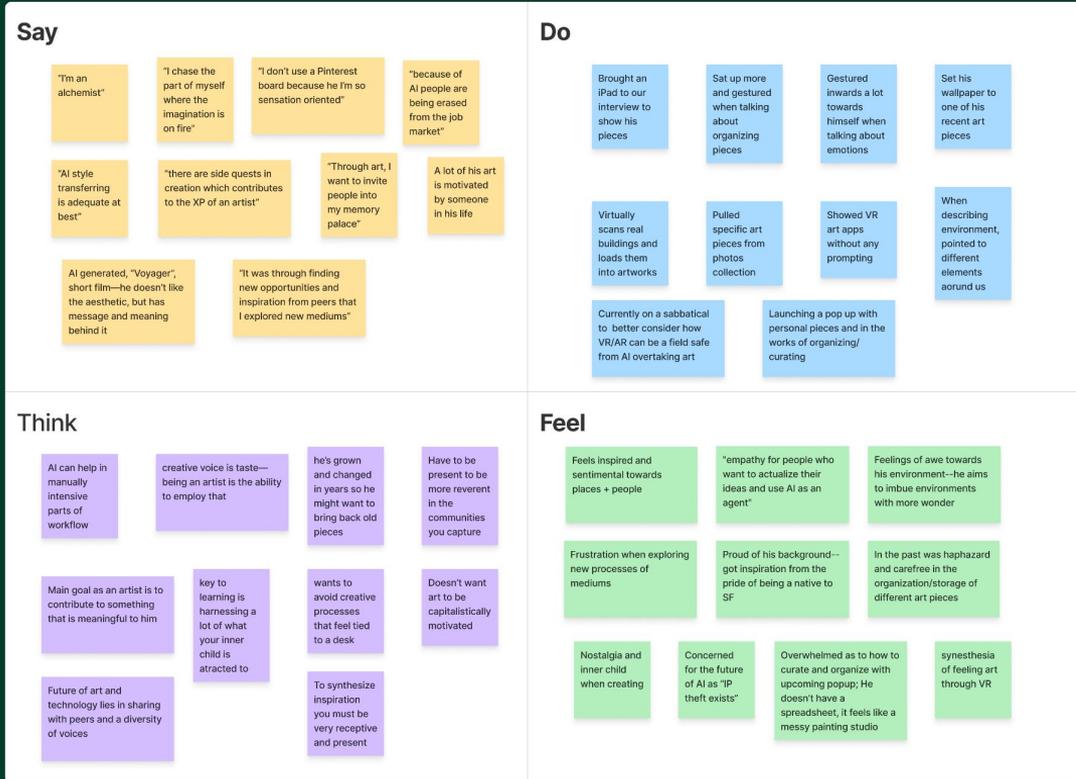


Team members role

Claire — Interviewer

Analysis

Empathy map 1: Keith



"I don't use a Pinterest board because I'm so sensation oriented"

Proud of his background-- gets inspiration from the pride of being a SF native

For the upcoming pop up, he doesn't have a spreadsheet, it feels like a messy painting studio

He prefers to avoid creative processes that feel tied to a desk

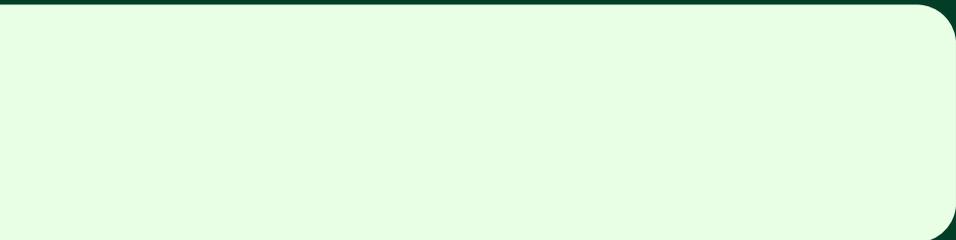
Contradictions

Vanessa:

- “Fundamentals of art are **inherently human**”
- Yet, uses ChatGPT to help ideate projects and planning

Stephanie:

- “I do not use AI in any art-making processes”
- Uses it to generate user cases for product design



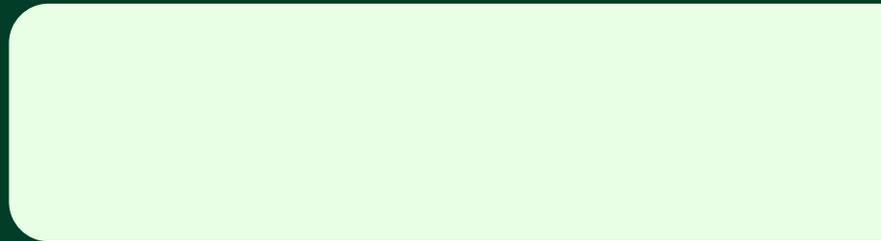
Tensions

Personal vs. Professional workflow

- Personal workflows are more natural and **grounded in senses**
- Professional workflows are **highly iterative** and tend to incorporate more AI as a means to expedite processes

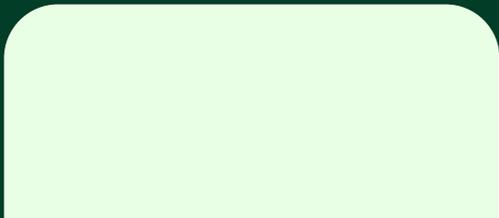
Recognizing value vs. ethics of Gen AI art

- Many realize the **potential time savings** of AI but say a lot of the "frustration" or "effort" is what delivers **value** to the art



Surprises

- Vanessa found it ok to help design AI products for Firefly but feels guilty using it outside of work
- All the artists seemed accepting of using AI to help with planning and organization
- AI was seen as a way to figure out what tool to use next



Insights and Needs #1

Finding

Artists find inspiration for their work in the world around them, working creatively across a variety of mediums.

Insight

Artists prefer to make work that they feel an emotional connection to, which helps them feel more creative. These sources of inspiration can include lived experiences, music, and nature.

Need

Artists need a way to capture and revisit these spur of the moment sources of inspiration to support their creative processes.

Insights and Needs #2

Finding

Artists store their ideas and work across multiple systems, which can be difficult to keep track of.

Insight

Artists who don't have a reliable way to store their ideas and past projects struggle to remember needed details, even if they are documented.

Need

Artists need to easily and intuitively organize their work and ideas all in one place, that allows them to quickly come back to.

Insights and Needs #3

Finding

Artists believe that the foundation of art should be human. It is for them to connect and build relationships with other people.

Insight

There is a very human aspect to making art. Humans can be a source of inspiration, with art often being a means of connecting with others and even conveying the human experience.

Need

Artists need to feel connected with human experiences and relationships — both to find inspiration and create work that resonates with others.

Summary

- We talked to **5 people** about their process in making art and how they engage with different tools and mediums
- We found that most artists **find inspiration from a variety of different sources** — music, movies, locations, people, and feelings.
- Most artists **don't have a very organized way of saving and storing their pieces** or sources of inspiration
- A lot of them believe that **art should be fundamentally human** and if AI were to play a role in it, it should be for more automatic and mundane steps

What's Next

- Gain a better understanding of specific use cases with existing tools (crucial to understand HMW)
 - Current frictions in workflow
 - Most valuable tool in tech stack
- Explore the idea of community and how it manifests online and in planning
 - Pinterest
 - Online art challenges
- Interview more beginner artists with less established workflows

Thank you!



Appendix

Willow Empathy Map



Chloe Empathy Map

Say

"You constantly see something that is maybe worth photographing"

Luiza Ribeiro

"Maybe it isn't about what the consumer thinks but how the artist feels"

Luiza Ribeiro

"Don't be so connected to an end piece"

Luiza Ribeiro

"The best pieces just come out, especially with strong emotions and music"

Luiza Ribeiro

"Be like a kid, be interested"

Luiza Ribeiro

"I'm just like throwing it on there and like seeing what happens"

Luiza Ribeiro

"People buy an artist's work, not their specific work"

Luiza Ribeiro

"Art is like a release, you can't feel like it needs to be perfect, it is flowy."

Luiza Ribeiro

"I do keep them all. I don't have them organized though, I used to have like individual booklets."

Luiza Ribeiro

"I have been having this issue where I have this photo on my phone that I just can't find it"

Luiza Ribeiro

Do

Organizes her more relevant work in folders (Google Drive).

Luiza Ribeiro

Takes a Kodak camera around, and is always seeing things to take a picture.

Luiza Ribeiro

She is spontaneous – quit her job to pursue art.

Luiza Ribeiro

Enjoys engaging with her art physically.

Luiza Ribeiro

Goes on walks and when she finds something inspiring, she takes a picture.

Luiza Ribeiro

She buys materials and starts making things, often without much thought.

Luiza Ribeiro

She has the entirety of her work in a hard drive that she looks at 3 times a year.

Luiza Ribeiro

Tends to watch YouTube video when she wants to learn how to do something specific.

Luiza Ribeiro

A lot of her work is stored in different files without a lot of organization, so there are a lot of duplicates.

Luiza Ribeiro

She spent a lot of time painting a sunflower but it turned out bad because she focused on every little detail.

Luiza Ribeiro

Think

People tend to want handmade art vs generated art.

Luiza Ribeiro

Self-portraits can be good inspiration and reference.

Luiza Ribeiro

She thinks the best way to learn art is by just doing it, without fear.

Luiza Ribeiro

Thinks her google drive filing system is easy to use.

Luiza Ribeiro

Art should not be so meticulously planned out, it should be a freeing process.

Luiza Ribeiro

Thinks it's difficult sometimes to find one specific piece.

Luiza Ribeiro

Inspiration isn't something you are actively thinking about. It just hits you.

Luiza Ribeiro

Thinks that all of the best pieces she has ever done comes without planning.

Luiza Ribeiro

Thinks that AI could be helpful for generating ideas, but even that takes away from creativity.

Luiza Ribeiro

Thinks that AI should not be celebrated in art.

Luiza Ribeiro

Feel

Feels free regarding art.

Luiza Ribeiro

She doesn't feel pressure to get everything just right.

Luiza Ribeiro

Feels deeply connected with her art – it comes from an emotional and personal place.

Luiza Ribeiro

AI makes her feel worried that it will put creatives out of work.

Luiza Ribeiro

Feels negatively about her art in college because she was trying too hard.

Luiza Ribeiro

Feels more satisfied when I she knows that she has made every part of her work.

Luiza Ribeiro

If she feels stuck she plays Incurious, a band she used to listen to in High School.

Luiza Ribeiro

Feels more comfortable when she is allowed to be fully creative.

Luiza Ribeiro

Feels frustrated when she can't find a specific image she is thinking of.

Luiza Ribeiro

Finds it comfortable to navigate her messy/ unorganized portfolio.

Luiza Ribeiro