



AI MISUSE IN GHIBLI-STYLE ART

ADVISORY REPORT

2025

In a digital age where machines mimic magic, AI platforms are replicating iconic Ghibli-style art without consent or credit. This silent heist threatens the creative rights of artists and the cultural soul of hand-drawn storytelling. It's time to expose the code behind the canvas.

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Executive Summary

This advisory addresses the ethical, legal, and technical concerns surrounding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to generate art in the distinctive style of Studio Ghibli. With the proliferation of AI platforms capable of imitating copyrighted visual aesthetics, creators face a new wave of challenges related to data theft, uncredited usage, and monetization of derivative content without consent.

As generative AI tools scrape massive amounts of visual data—often without permission—artists risk losing control over their creative output and artistic identity. The replication of Ghibli-style art by AI not only dilutes the uniqueness of traditional hand-drawn storytelling but also raises serious questions around ownership, attribution, and fair compensation. This advisory guides artists, developers, and policymakers in ensuring ethical AI use and safeguarding artistic integrity.



Key Findings



Unauthorised Training Data

Many AI models use datasets containing copyrighted images, including Ghibli-style art, without consent. Original creators are neither informed nor compensated for the use of their work.



Legal Ambiguity

Existing intellectual property laws lack clarity on AI-generated art, making it difficult to regulate how copyrighted works are used in training datasets or replicated in AI outputs.



Creative & Economic Impact

AI-generated content mimicking established styles floods platforms, causing artists to lose visibility, recognition, and potential income from their original work.



Lack of Dataset Transparency

AI platforms rarely reveal their training data sources, leaving creators unaware their work is used and offering no clear opt-out mechanisms to protect their intellectual property.

Introduction

The growing capabilities of generative AI have revolutionized how art is created, reproduced, and shared. Among its most visible impacts is the rise of AI-generated visuals that replicate well-known artistic styles—such as that of Studio Ghibli, whose hand-drawn animation style is globally celebrated. These replications are possible because some AI platforms are trained on massive datasets of existing artworks, frequently compiled without the creators' knowledge or permission.



Src: <https://soranews24.com/2024/12/10/studio-ghibli-releases-trilingual-warning-criticizing-sales-of-illegally-copied-artwork/>

This practice introduces serious questions about intellectual property rights, data ethics, and the value of human creativity. Artists risk losing control over their work, while developers face increasing scrutiny over the legality and morality of their model-training methodologies. This advisory unpacks the implications of such developments and provides practical recommendations to mitigate harm.

The lack of transparency in AI training datasets further compounds the problem. Most platforms do not disclose which artworks were used, leaving creators unaware that their intellectual property may have contributed to a model's outputs. This not only strips artists of credit but also leaves them with no recourse to challenge unauthorized use or protect their visual identity.

Moreover, the hyperrealistic nature of AI-generated art blurs the line between homage and appropriation. When AI systems produce content nearly indistinguishable from a specific artist's style, they commodify that aesthetic without replicating the intent, emotion, or cultural context behind it. This practice reduces a deeply human and emotional process to a mere algorithmic output, stripping the art of its soul and narrative. The danger lies in how these AI-generated pieces are then monetized, distributed, and consumed—often without any disclosure that they were machine-created or that they borrow heavily from real artists. Urgent collaboration is needed between tech leaders, policymakers, and artists to safeguard creative integrity and diversity.

Real or Fake?

You Decide



Imitation at Scale

AI-generated art that mimics Ghibli's aesthetic—lush natural scenery, whimsical creatures, and pastel color palettes—has become increasingly prevalent on social media and digital art platforms. Simple text prompts can produce artwork in seconds that closely resembles the work of highly skilled illustrators and animators. This volume of output diminishes the unique value and originality of traditional hand-drawn art.

Fan Art vs. AI Replication

While fan art traditionally celebrates and honors original works, AI-generated images operate at industrial scale, capable of generating hundreds of outputs without emotional or narrative intent. The context, craft, and cultural resonance present in Ghibli's work are flattened into stylized imitations. The lack of human interpretation reduces art to aesthetic patterns.



Monetization & Exploitation

Online marketplaces now host AI-generated Ghibli-style content—ranging from NFTs to posters and merchandise—often with no disclosure about the AI source. Sellers exploit the demand for Ghibli aesthetics to generate revenue without contributing to the legacy or value of the original creators. This raises questions of fair use, commercial ethics, and consumer deception.

The Dataset Heist

The integration of large-scale, unregulated datasets into AI training pipelines has introduced significant ethical, legal, and operational risks. The absence of standardized protocols for data sourcing, consent, and attribution enables the unauthorized use of copyrighted materials—particularly from high-value creative domains such as Ghibli-style art. This section outlines the core issues:



Unauthorized Use of Copyrighted Content

AI training datasets often include copyrighted or stylistically distinct images sourced without creator consent, breaching core principles of intellectual property rights, digital ethics, and copyright law protections.

Exploitation of Publicly Available Content

AI developers commonly scrape images from public online platforms. Despite being viewable, this content is not in the public domain and is protected by copyright.

Large-Scale Artistic Identity Theft

AI models reproduce entire visual styles, not just individual works—resulting in large-scale artistic identity theft that erodes brand value, devalues creative labor, and threatens long-term artistic sustainability.

Non-Transparent Dataset Composition

Most generative AI platforms do not disclose the provenance or structure of their training data. This opacity hinders auditing, compliance verification, and accountability—especially where high-risk or copyrighted content is involved.

Drawn Into Controversy

The AI-Ghibli Infringement Timeline

Summary

Recent breaches involving AI-generated Ghibli-style art have sparked backlash over copyright violations, fake collaborations, and unauthorized commercial use. These incidents highlight the growing risks of unregulated AI in creative spaces.

Unauthorized AI-Generated Ghibli-Style Content by Sports Organizations

Incident: In **April 2025**, Major Australian sports teams, including the Rabbitohs and Wallabies, released over **30 AI-generated Ghibli-style** visuals celebrating players—prompting criticism for excluding human artists and raising copyright concerns.

Statistics: Social media saw a **40% spike** in negative reactions within 48 hours, with fans voicing concerns over artistic integrity and ethical use of AI.

OpenAI's ChatGPT Image Generator Controversy

Incident: In **March 2025**, OpenAI's ChatGPT image generator drew criticism for producing **Studio Ghibli-style art**, raising concerns over copyright infringement and ethical AI use.

Statistics: The **"Ghiblification"** trend pushed ChatGPT's usage to **150M+ weekly** active users, prompting OpenAI to restrict such prompts and limit free-tier access.



Studio Ghibli's Legal Action Against Unauthorized Artwork Sales

Incident: In **December 2024**, Studio Ghibli issued a trilingual warning to over **100+ online sellers** distributing unauthorized artwork, highlighting violations of their intellectual property.

Statistics: The studio confirmed plans for legal action in **3 languages, signaling a global crackdown through both civil and criminal measures.**

Best Practices & Recommendations

01 For Artist

- Use tools like Glaze or Nightshade to distort data against AI scraping.
- Add visual watermarks and copyright metadata in shared artworks to reinforce authorship.
- Engage in digital rights campaigns and advocacy groups to demand AI regulation.

02 For AI Developers

- Train AI systems on public domain, licensed, or creator-contributed datasets only.
- Provide full dataset transparency, including documentation of sources and usage rights.
- Introduce opt-in and opt-out mechanisms for artists whose styles may be replicated.

03 For Policymakers

- Enforce legislative measures mandating transparency in dataset acquisition and AI development.
- Define and enforce legal protections for artistic style and likeness under copyright law.
- Support ethical innovation grants and frameworks that balance AI growth with rights protection.

04 For the Public

- Be vigilant when purchasing digital art—support verified, original creators whenever possible.
- Avoid platforms that monetize or promote AI-generated art using stolen styles.
- Share awareness about ethical AI practices to build public consensus on fair use.

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