

Power of AI art in Mama Ruth kiosk

Ethical use of AI art can therefore open opportunities for great graphics that enhance communication...

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ness of the pile of rubbish on which the signpost reading "Mama Ruth Kiosk" was placed and in vantage position for a photographer to capture it in sync with the truck is inconsistent with the melee that would typically surround such an exercise.

Regardless, the image was powerful and effectively delivered what its creator had intended it to achieve; show the pains associated with eviction of petty traders from the roadsides.

That aside, what this photo introduced to us is AI Art that goes beyond the traditional computer aided drawing or painting already in use by many artists. Jenna Rainey in her article, "The Pros and Cons of AI Art" shares why AI art is important today and what to love or fear about it. You can read full story at www.jennarainey.com.

Some of the positives of AI, she notes, are that: "AI can generate ideas quickly, it opens doors for non-artists to create visually appealing work, and that AI can be a useful tool for brainstorming and experimenting with ideas. It can generate different compositions, suggest unexpected colour palettes"

Of course, "AI art lacks personal touch and

originality. It simply pulls from existing images, rearranges pixels, and produces something visually appealing—but without the heart that makes art art," she notes.

Anyhow, ethical use of AI art can therefore open opportunities for great graphics that enhance communication, the risks of misinformation notwithstanding.

Confession: I am a "failed artist" who has for years been unable to draw one of the things that frustrates me (and indeed many drivers) about Ugandans' driving mentality; namely creating multiple lanes, crowding at junctions, turning off as soon as a driver sees the junction, rather than driving up to reach the T-junction then make a right angle turn or a wide angle turn.

I term this as "rat-mentality" because this is what can be seen on *panya* (rat) routes in the bush or stores. Rats follow no rules as they run/move! They take the shortest and most convenient routes and angle turns. They also don't understand that crowding at a door (junction) works against them i.e. it means none (or very few) get through quickly.

Thanks to AI, I finally "drew" it! How? I asked OpenArt AI to draw for me a rat driving a car! What an amazing image it gave me, a rat driven car positioned in the road as you would see anywhere in Uganda!

So like the Mama Ruth Kiosk image, nothing could have represented the Uganda driving scene better! The image communicates our driving habits than a thousand words would do!

That's the power of AI in art.

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In one of my recent columns, I wrote about how artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to add value to journalism (see, "How journalists can use Artificial Intelligence"—*Daily Monitor*, March 27).

I have been prompted to return to this subject by a recent photo that went viral on Uganda's social media scene. It is the photo of a one Mama Ruth, holding her breast feeding baby and wailing in despair as a "breakdown" truck takes away her treasured kiosk with her merchandise inside.

The image also featured a signpost to her business with the inscription "Mama Ruth Kiosk" listing her offering—i.e. "sim cards, airtime, cold drinks, snacks" placed on a heap of garbage next to her. Very emotive image!

The photo was purportedly taken in Hoima, Uganda during the recent countrywide demolition of illegal structure along road reserves and in urban areas under the new Building Control (Amendment) Act, 2025 that was signed off by President Museveni in February. The demolitions have left thousands in tears and billions lost in items.

As expected, this perfect picture elicited a lot of comments and shares on social media; it captured the exercise and emotions in a way no other picture did. But as it turned out on careful analysis, this was not a naturally taken picture. It was an AI generated image. One could tell this by picking out a few things.

For example, the truck affixed with Kenyan registration plates while operating in a demolition exercise in Uganda was odd. The bottles of mineral water and other merchandise inside the kiosk remained neatly standing on the shelves even after a crane lifted the kiosk from the ground and placed in on the truck. Nothing shook! The neat-

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