

# TOOL, OR THREAT?

AI AND THE FUTURE OF HUMAN ART

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THE DEBATE

No. 06 / 09

✓ BOTH SIDES, STEEL-MANNED. YOU DECIDE.

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UNDATED

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STUDIO OF ONE

CS-PRESS

## THE QUESTION

# The argument moved.

For years the question was whether a machine could make art at all. By 2026 that is no longer where the heat is. The argument is now narrower and more practical.

Did the people whose work trained these models agree to it, and do they get paid when the output competes with them? That shift matters because it is answerable. "Is it art?" is a question for critics. "Was there consent, and is there payment?" is a question for courts, contracts and licences — and all three started moving in 2025 and 2026.

This issue puts the strongest version of each side, names every source, then shows where the line is actually being drawn.

**The fight is no longer machine versus human. It is whether the human gets a say and a share.**

## BOTH SIDES · 1

# The case against.

## THREAT TO HUMAN ART

UNESCO's 2026 monitoring report, across 120+ countries, projects generative AI could cut music-creator revenues by about 24% and audiovisual income by about 21% by 2028.

— *UN News, reporting UNESCO, Feb 2026*

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A Jan 2026 survey found roughly one in ten Japanese manga artists and illustrators reported income falls tied to AI; 2.7% said they lost more than half.

— *The Japan Times, Jan 2026*

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Brian Merchant reports well over half of surveyed artists say they have lost income to image generators, and 36% of illustrators see fewer commission inquiries.

— *Brian Merchant, Blood in the Machine*

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A court found training on books can be fair use, but holding pirated copies is not; Anthropic settled with authors for about \$1.5bn. Turow and two publishers later sued Meta.

— *NPR / Authors Guild, 2025–2026*

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## BOTH SIDES · 2

# The case for.

**COLLABORATOR, NOT THREAT**

The US Copyright Office found that using AI as a tool does not by itself remove copyright — a human's creative contribution stays protectable, judged case by case. Prompts alone are not enough.

— *US Copyright Office, Report Part 2, Jan 2025*

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Stanford HAI scholars are building open tools so artists can direct models the way they sketch then refine. Their framing: the gap is control, not capability.

— *Stanford Report, Mar 2026*

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An Artist creator survey found 87% of creators now use AI — 37% for ideation, 26% for faster editing — and most describe it as a co-pilot for the dull parts.

— *Artist survey, via TechCrunch, 2026*

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Some artists set their own terms rather than refuse the tool: Grimes licenses her voice model opt-in, expanded in 2026 with tiered payment for different uses.

— *Soundverse, 2026 list of pro-AI artists*

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## THE BRIDGE

# Consent and a cut.

Both sides circle the same answer from different directions: artists need a say in whether their work trains a model, and a share when it does.

The clearest test so far comes from music.

In Oct 2025 Universal Music settled with the AI startup Udio on an opt-in licence — the artist chooses in, rather than chasing the model to opt out. The two are building a joint platform for 2026 where people remix licensed catalogue inside a "walled garden". Warner struck a deal with Suno; Suno raised \$250m, NVIDIA's venture arm among the backers.

It is not finished. Reports say Universal's talks with Suno later stalled. But the shape is visible: consent by default, payment by licence, control over what the tool may produce.

## **Opt-in beats opt-out. A licence beats a lawsuit. The question is who that model leaves out.**

Worth naming the gap: label deals protect catalogue owners and signed artists. They do less for the freelance illustrator or unsigned musician already scraped. A licence between large companies is not the same as a wage for a working artist.

## THE LINE

# Where it is drawn.

Three places, right now, are deciding what the practical answer looks like.

## THE COURTS

US rulings split the difference: training on lawfully obtained work has been treated as potentially fair use; using pirated copies has not. The Anthropic settlement and the Turow–Meta suit test where that sits.

## THE LICENCE DESK

The music deals are the first attempt to price consent rather than litigate it. If they hold, expect the same opt-in, pay-per-use shape to spread to image and text.

## THE STUDIO

The Copyright Office and the Stanford researchers point the same way: the more a person shapes, directs and edits the output, the more it is theirs. Under a human hand, AI looks less like a threat and more like the camera did to painting — unsettling, then absorbed.

**No one knows the final figure. We can only follow the claims, name their authors, and watch the line move.**

## SOURCES

# Sources.

## CITE OR QUOTE

- UN News — Artists face steep income decline due to AI, UNESCO finds (Feb 2026).
- The Japan Times — One in 10 Japanese creatives see income fall due to AI (Jan 2026).
- Brian Merchant, Blood in the Machine — Artists are losing work, wages, and hope.
- The Hollywood Reporter — The Hollywood jobs most at risk from AI.
- NPR — Anthropic settles with authors in first-of-its-kind AI copyright lawsuit (Sep 2025).
- The Authors Guild — What authors need to know about the Anthropic settlement.
- NPR — Scott Turow, Macmillan, McGraw Hill sue Meta for AI copyright infringement (May 2026).
- US Copyright Office — Copyright and Artificial Intelligence, Part 2: Copyrightability (Jan 2025).
- Stanford Report — Stanford scholars train AI to better augment human creativity (Mar 2026).
- TechCrunch / Artist — 87% of creators now use AI (2026).
- Soundverse — Which artists are pro-AI music (2026 list).
- Music Business Worldwide — Universal settles Udio; Warner settles Suno; Suno label talks in limbo.
- Billboard — What the Suno and Udio licensing deals mean for the future of AI music.

# READ BOTH. THEN CALL IT.

A short deep dive that steel-mans both sides of one argument and traces every claim to a named source. The live question is not “is it art” — it is consent, control and a cut.

✓ **BOTH SIDES, STEEL-MANNED**

## THE OTHER EIGHT

AI as a force for good · AI in work · AI in education · AI and young people · AI and ethics  
· AI and truth · AI and the environment · AI and power.

