Technology, AI and The Arts His Experience as a Software Engineer, Filmmaker, and Artist

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Abstract

This paper is based on Hisham's Zreiq'own long experience as a Software Engineer, digital visual artist, filmmaker, animator, and digital musician. Zreiq has been working as a Software Engineer since 1988, and since 1990, He has been creating his art using the computer and, in the last years, AI tools. In the paper,he explored his experience and discuss the experience using computers, social media, and AI tools and the effect of technology and AI on the field of work. The discussion also involved the good, bad, and the ugly things of the application of computer technology involving animations as well as AI within the context of his won identity as a Palestinian Christian living in Germany.

Keywords: AI;Art;Filmmmaking;Software;Technology.

A. Introduction

This paper is based on Hisham Zreiq who was born in 1968 in Nazareth the his hometown of Jesus Christ. His own experience as a Palestinian Christian who lives in what now called as Nazareth which is now under Israeli occupation makes him different from what many people think about Palestine. Palestinian Christians have been Christians since the time of Jesus and parts of the ancient and small Christian community even before the west British or Germanic people become Christians. His education was completed as a Software Engineer since 1988, an Animator since 1990, a digital visual artist since 1994, a filmmaker since 2006, and a digital musician since 2023, under the name Goddess Asherah Project.

Based on Zreiq's own experience, he has been doing his interest in computer his school, even younger. Since 1983, that he was 15 years old at the time he taught himself software programming in 1983, and he bought his first BBC Master computer in 1984. During his studies, which he started in 1986, he worked with very advanced computers for him and he was exposed to technology the average person did not know existed. He had access to the internet and email; it was text-

based back then of courts. As part of his bachelor study, he worked with Silicon Graphics computers and developed 3D graphics projects, AI (Neural network) pattern recognition.

During his adult life, he observed computers and software technologies from both sides, the development side, and the user side, and this gave him a strong perspective.

B. Research Method

This paper is a self- report based on experience which is accepted in humanities and social studies In history department, it is called as oral history. The oral history report is a method that can be conducted by collecting, preserving, and analyzing historical information and personal experience that can be done through recorded interviews, paying attention on personal writing, and also other thing like recording.

The subjectivity is well known that can be critically discussed after finding other materials to confront or support it.

C. Results and Discussion

Zreiq starts to tell his experience as a software engineer or an artist technology influenced his life and creation, He goes through these stages he makes his conclusions using his own experience and observations:

During his studies, that he started in 1986, he worked with very advanced computers, and he was exposed to technologies that the average person did not know of its existence. As a kid, he started learning programming in 1983, he owned his first computer in 1984 and he had Internet and Email access. He worked with Computer Graphics and 3D Graphics. As part of an AI course, the programmer makes simple AI (as a student) basic Pattern Recognition. His first computer BBC Master had a text to speech software. During his study, he saw how the military influenced the research in the university and what computer equipment the university used to acquire. In 1990, he started a company with friends, and produced 3D Computer Animations for commercials for local businesses.

Because of equipment costs, he had to terminate the company. In this stage, part of software and computers became relatively affordable, but high-end equipment to create high-end animations, the equipment needed was very expensive about 200,000 USD back then (about 500,000 today). When Zreiq and friends investigated the possibility of purchasing Silicon Graphics computers, they were surprised to know that one needs to apply for an FBI permanent, again government control.

In 1994, Zreiq used the animation software to create his Digital Art. That enabled him to create Digital Art; his techniques in drawing were not good enough to exhibit his work, but the computer allowed him to create art that was printed for exhibitions, and in 1995 he had his first exhibition. The Software were relatively expensive, and computers started to become more affordable, but still, the companies developing the 3D software were holding the market tight.

In 2006, he filmed his first document "The Sons of Eilaboun", followed by two short films. he used equipment to film his films, as before professional equipment was unaffordable.

In 2018, he started creating animations for the long version of his document film "The Sons of Eilaboun", followed by an award-winning short animated film by the name Don't Cry. Zreiq used software and a motion capture device. He was not able to use render farms because of the costs, therefore it took him 2 years to finish the film. He was to create high-quality animations, but the resources became more expensive than before, and render farms are very expensive.

In 2022, he decided to compose music for one of his old short films, to solve a copyright problem. After that, he just started composing music, it was possible because the software in this field became better. He has no music background, and he does not play any instrument but he is an intensive music lister. The software made it possible. Later he bought an AI-based

software and provided him with the ability to create incredibly life-like singing voices. It is so good that no one noticed it is not a real singer.

In 2023, he started using AI tools for upscaling and improving photos and videos and software capable of generating incredibly life-like singing voices. He used other AI-based software to upscale his old films and offer them in HD. He used Text-TO-Image services as well to create images to be used in a music video. AI is not a new technology, but it is easily available because computers (including smartphones) have become more powerful, but it is not as developed as the media and companies claim.

Internet and Social Media: In late 1990s, He started promoting his art in the internet, and around 2008 he started using social media was very helpful in reaching more people to introduce his Digital Art, and reaching art shows outside his country. It was free, including hosting his website. Fewer people use the internet and social media

Around 2010, free services started to disappear, so he had to pay

for his website hosting and other costs started to come. The search machines became better. Still very helpful reaching more people to introduce his Digital Art and films. More people used it.

Around 2019, the free recourses almost disappeared, as well as many services. Social media and search engines became manipulated, it became expensive to host a website and use the internet as Artist/Filmmaker. Still very helpful in reaching more people to introduce his Digital Art and films. More people used it. Internet services started costing more money, and almost no free resources to be found. He could reach fewer people due to search engine and social media manipulation.

Being a Palestinian artist and filmmaker gives him a unique perspective, it exposes him more to how the AI algorithms are used by social media providers to block out content. He will start with his conclusions as a Palestinian and the use of AI and other technologies to block us, in short, the negative side of AI and computer technology.

His art was blocked by AI algorithms many times on social media. He noticed that fewer people see his posts on social media. Articles about him and his films in Wikipedia were deleted several times His music about Palestine does not get added to playlists as the rest of his music. In YouTube the same story, it does not get promoted like other videos. He noticed that on google search one finds fewer search results about him than before. He is getting massive phishing attacks after October 7th, something like 5-7 attacks a month. After October 7th 2023 some of his online accounts (Meta, Netflix, and others) were hacked, and in one case it cost him about 350$. Shortly after October 7th, He noticed that each email he got about Palestine was sent to the spam folder, He found in one day about 20 emails he received from people he knows. This stopped after a while. These things are done using AI algorithms, so this is a very negative side of AI, most people won't notice, but it is happening to them as well.

Social media providers use AI algorithms to manipulate what people see and who they interact with, He noticed he see the posts of a small part of his Facebook friends, AI algorithms choose for him who to see and who not to see. It is the same with Google search, he once got a warning from Google search that a website is harmful to his computer, and when he checked what was it, it was the official website of the Syrian Ministry of Culture.

D. Conclusion

Technology is a double-edged sword. It has both good and bad, but the worst is the use of governments and big corporations to manipulate people!

Technology enables many things. For him, it was great, it enabled him to create digital art, animation, music, and films. It allowed him to share his creations with people around the world and to reach galleries and film festivals around the world. It made it easy to communicate with his family, friends and people that Zreiq never met.

AI and computer technology have a dark and negative side that affects society badly. It made it easier for corporations and governments to

manipulate us. AI is used massively in wars. People lose jobs with each technological advancement; with AI it will be much worse! I already met people who are afraid to lose their jobs to AI.

The corporates with the help of mainstream media promote technologies, and they offer at the beginning for free to make us hocked it, after that it becomes a service people have to pay for, or have massive advertisements.

And people lose jobs with each technological advancement, with AI it will be much worse! That is his observation from his own experience, and it was well portrayed in the film Mr. Harrigan's Phone, he will use some of what Mr. Harrigan said in a dialog in that film, "I'm reading sohimthing for free that people pay good money for.", "I think it's a gateway drug.", "No more freebies.", "All of us need to be very frightened by this gizmo."

Although AI is not a new technology, is still not developed enough, at least what is provided to the public, probably the militaries have more advanced algorithms that people have no access to. AI is hyped, but it is not as developed as the media and companies claim. When he used AI to create images using a Text-To-Image service, the results were not good, and it took him about 50 tries to get one good or acceptable image. The some image and video with AI upscaling algorithms, it was difficult to reach good results. An exceptional software that provided him with the ability to create incredibly life-like singing voices, the software has very good results.

References

Husham Zreiq's experience as Software Engineer, Digital Artist, Filmmaker, and Musician.