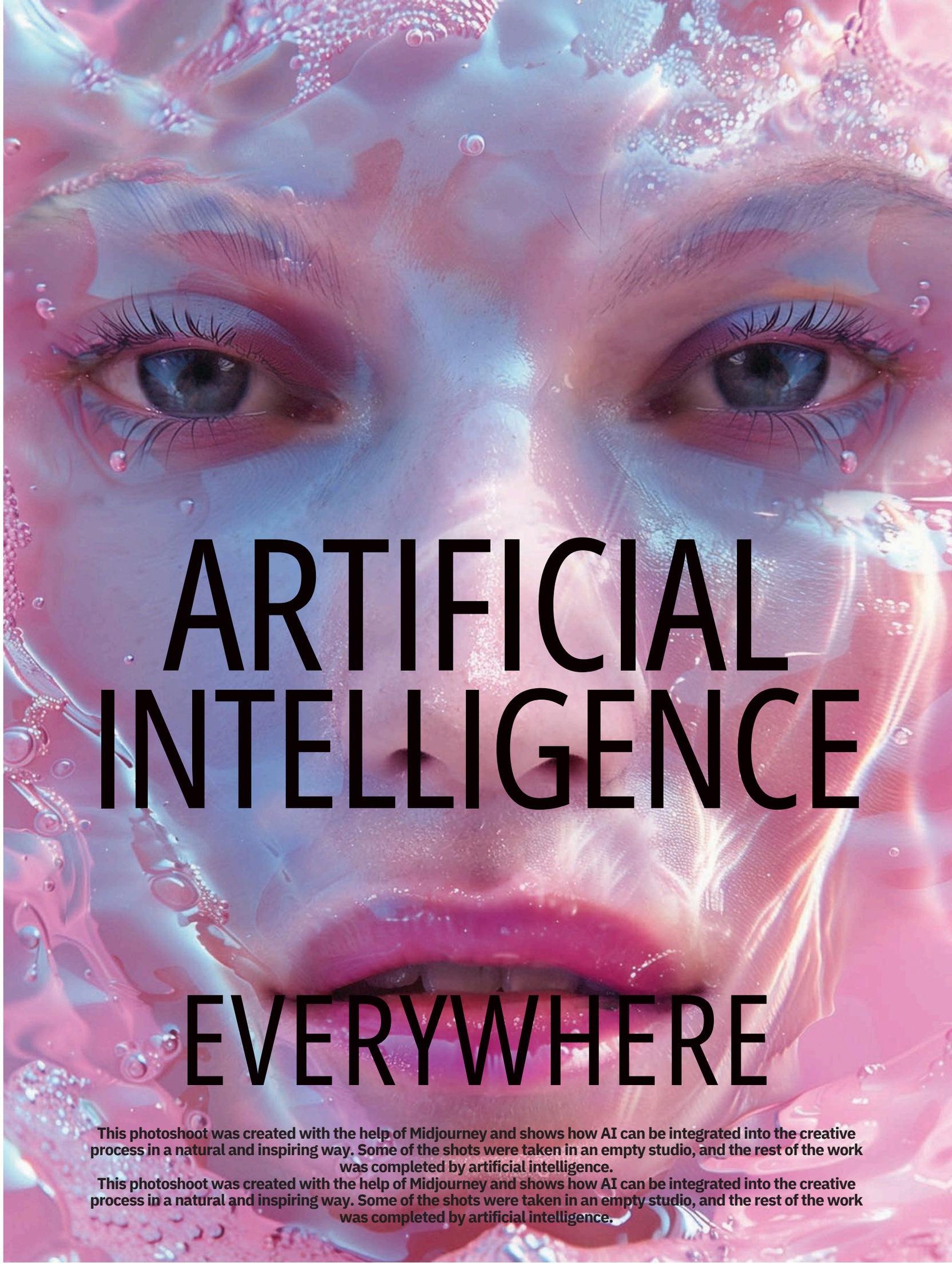

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

EVERYWHERE

This photoshoot was created with the help of Midjourney and shows how AI can be integrated into the creative process in a natural and inspiring way. Some of the shots were taken in an empty studio, and the rest of the work was completed by artificial intelligence.

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Fashion is always in step with the new, and every technological leap – from the Industrial Revolution to the Digital Age – leaves a mark on the way we create, perceive, and use clothing.
Today, AI is already a reality with access to our screens, wardrobes, and even our imagination, and the fashion industry is once again at the forefront of innovation.
But what is AI in fashion – a tool for inspiration or a threat to authenticity? Does it save resources or create new traps?
Three perspectives – from a visual artist, an entrepreneur, and a sustainability expert – respond to the question: **how is AI changing the fashion scene?**

Text: Tereza Voskanian - Photography: Alena Nikiforova - Styling: Ekaterina Dmitrieva - Makeup & Hair: Olga Glazunova - Model: Anastasia

While some experimenters embrace the creative process, others question the authenticity of products made without human intuition.
This sparks a deep discussion that struggles to find common ground and raises important questions about aesthetics, creativity, and ethics in the fashion world.

AI AS AN ARTIST'S TOOL

"Generative AI makes art more accessible.
It used to depend on geography, resources, and free time. Now anyone can create," says **Lebanese artist Roy Berbary**, a pioneer in merging generative artificial intelligence with traditional media.

Roy doesn't believe that AI replaces the artist. Is AI-generated work a legitimate form of art? Can it be compared to traditional art?
"**In my opinion — no**. Art has many forms, and comparing all mediums to one another is pointless. Writing, acting, painting — these are all art forms. Prompting for AI-generated art is also an art — an engineered one. People admire breathtaking architectural structures and call them art, but no one compares them to works by Picasso or Salvador Dalí," says Roy.
The interest in AI use goes beyond just creating new designs. It includes fun and sometimes provocative ways of processing personal images: animating photos or creating virtual fashion visuals.
However, this process raises serious copyright concerns — especially when AI generates visuals inspired by existing works, such as those by well-known animation studios like Studio Ghibli.

What happens when the machine starts to "steal" styles or use others' creations as the foundation for its own?
A new understanding of copyright is needed, along with new laws to cover digital creativity.

According to Berbary, the U.S. and China lack such protective mechanisms — in the U.S., restrictions exist mainly around censorship, such as not being able to generate images of children, nudity, or violence. But there are no limits on copying the styles of famous artists, unlike in Japan.

"Personally, I'm always careful not to work on projects in the style of any specific artist — as someone with a traditional art background, I respect true creators," shares the multidisciplinary media expert about his experience. He adds:
"We don't need to wait for regulations to act ethically. Just because we can do something wrong without consequences doesn't mean we should."

DEMOCRATIZATION — BUT AT WHAT COST?

Automation in the fashion industry is nothing new, but with the rise of generative artificial intelligence, there has been a significant leap in the scale and speed of this transformation.

Platforms like Lalaland.ai and Deep Agency offer brands the ability to replace entire teams of models, photographers, and retouchers with a single algorithm that

generates flawless images in just minutes. This saves time and costs — but what happens to the people?

"Some say generative AI is replacing designers and artists, but I disagree — it's not AI replacing people, it's the people who know how to work with AI who are replacing those who don't," says Roy Berbary.

Still, many traditional professions are on the verge of becoming obsolete.

Will generative AI create more opportunities?

"I see AI as a tool that breaks down old barriers and builds new bridges between artists, audiences, and cultures," Roy continues.

"True accessibility means people with special needs, who couldn't sculpt or paint before, can now express themselves through AI. Inclusivity is also real — there's no longer a need to graduate from art school, have connections, or access elite galleries. Today, anyone can reach a global audience. Look at the NFT wave — many people became millionaires thanks to digital art."

Automation and AI offer new ways to reduce costs and save time, but they also reinforce a growing trend toward overconsumption.

In a world where clothes are no longer only created in the physical space but can be generated in limitless quantities by algorithms, the options grow — seemingly without end.

This not only creates a sense of unlimited access to new collections, but also devalues the meaning and worth of fashion itself.

The question is not just what we wear, but what's the purpose behind what we wear — when clothing can now be created by its own consumer, with minimal effort.

Roy Berbary reassures us:

"With my experience in AI, I could design an entire collection in a day. But would I do it? No — that's not my craft."

Generative AI, he says, is a tool to support those truly dedicated to fashion:

"Designers can bring their sketches to life, see them in 360 degrees, refine them, and place them on models."

SLOWING DOWN FAST FASHION? IT DEPENDS

In that case, can AI play a key role in optimizing production processes? Will it help reduce overconsumption, or will it accelerate the fast fashion cycle?

We ask Darina Elencheva, founder of *The Sustainable Link & Co.* and a strategist for sustainable business transformations.

"On one hand, yes — artificial intelligence can play a major role in optimization. We're already seeing how it improves demand forecasting, enables digital design, offers accurate sizing recommendations, and more. This leads to less resource waste and more efficient production.

On the other hand, slowing down the fast fashion cycle and reducing consumption are cultural and business challenges that technology alone can't solve. AI can support these efforts — for example, by helping us better understand real consumer needs and preferences, offering improved personalization, and generating sustainable recommendations.

But the solution also requires a willingness to change — in strategy, communication, and consumer mindset," Elencheva notes. The sustainability expert gives an example from a McKinsey report, which emphasizes that using AI for demand planning and micro-trend forecasting can help brands move away from reactive overproduction and shift toward agile, demand-driven manufacturing.

"AI is a powerful tool, but it's not a magic wand," she adds.

"To truly slow down fast fashion, we need to optimize not only how we produce, but also why, how much, and for whom."

The carbon footprint of AI is minimal compared to the environmental costs of traditional ways of doing business.

Owen Kembay

One of the most promising advantages of digital fashion and AI is sustainability — fewer physical samples, less waste, reduced transportation. The idea sounds almost utopian: collections that exist solely online, avatars "wearing" our clothes before we even decide to manufacture them. But the reality is more complex.

"For many people, the physical fitting room is already a thing of the past — not because they don't like it, but because they simply don't have access to it," says Owen Kembay, founder of Swan, a Dublin-based startup developing a virtual fitting platform powered by AI.

Swan allows users to see how clothes would look on their real bodies — without physical presence, without returns, and with minimal textile waste.

Dress by PRESENT AND SIMPLE, shoes by SAINT LAURENT

Dress
by MURASHK
A ATELIER

"We use AI to analyze the customer's anatomy, preferences, even the way they move — and based on that, we create a virtual fitting experience that responds in real time," explains Owen.

The goal isn't just convenience — it's sustainability.

"Overconsumption often stems from a broken system — people buy more simply because they're unsure what will actually fit. We aim to change that," he adds.

Darina echoes the caution:

"As with any technology, the potential of AI depends on who controls it and for what purpose. To realize its benefits, it must be implemented thoughtfully and strategically.

If AI is applied without a clear strategy or human oversight, there's a real risk of overproduction caused by inaccurate forecasting or reliance on poor-quality data."

AI AND SUSTAINABILITY: POTENTIAL OR PARADOX?

Darina also draws attention to the "energy cost" of AI — the massive volumes of data required to train AI models generate a carbon footprint of their own.

Generating images, designs, and virtual environments using large language and visual models demands tremendous amounts of energy. These data are processed in high-powered data centers that consume significant electricity,

and often, with an unclear carbon footprint.

In other words, even when fashion becomes dematerialized, it doesn't automatically become more eco-friendly.

What's the point of a "sustainable" digital garment if it relies on an unsustainable amount of resources just to exist in pixel form?

Sustainable artificial intelligence is not a myth, but a direction. And I strongly believe that more and more companies will follow this path.

Darina Elencheva

When asked about the significant computational power consumed by AI — and whether this might contradict the fashion industry's sustainability goals — Owen dismisses the assumption.

"The real environmental cost isn't the energy AI uses, but the massive waste caused by overproduction, over-shipping, and unsold inventory," he argues.

"By improving sizing accuracy and discovery, we reduce the number of garments being produced, shipped, returned — and ultimately, destroyed."

The founder of Swan emphasizes a staggering reality:

Today, around 50% of returned fashion items are never resold. Instead, they are burned, dumped, or donated — leaving a massive carbon footprint from manufacturing, transportation, and disposal.

"We work with cloud service providers and private servers that prioritize renewable energy. So even the energy we consume is greener than that of traditional supply chains—which we are helping to make more efficient," says Owen in relation to whether their practices are truly sustainable.

"Using energy to make shopping smarter, delivery lighter, and consumption more conscious is not a problem. It's part of the solution. The carbon footprint of AI is negligible compared to the environmental costs of the traditional way of doing business," he summarizes.

Darina also agrees that artificial intelligence helps in creating more sustainable and ethical materials.

"By simulating textures and materials in a digital environment, designers can explore how different fabrics will look and behave without needing to produce them physically. This significantly reduces the use of water, energy, and textiles."

The ethical challenges don't stop there, however. These innovations raise questions about the future of physical stores and the role of human contact in shopping.

Owen Kembeigh's vision for the future of fashion is that in-store experiences will become increasingly experimental—less about necessity, and more about the brand and its events.

"For everyday shopping, people will choose online," he says.

THE DOUBLE LIFE: REALITY VS. DIGITAL IDENTITY

AI isn't just changing how fashion looks—it's also changing how *we* look. Simulations of "perfect" bodies, poreless skin, gravity-defying hair, and lips with ideal proportions are creating new beauty standards—unattainable ones, because they aren't real at all. Social media is already flooded with images of people "tuned" by AI—and we're not just talking about -

Not just filters, but full reconstruction of face and body. This phenomenon raises serious questions about self-esteem, especially among adolescents. If everyone can look like a supermodel on their Instagram profile, what does that say about real bodies? Studies already link the use of AI filters and digitally generated avatars with increased anxiety, body dysmorphia, and chronic dissatisfaction with appearance.

In the fashion industry, this leads to visual homogenization and, even worse, the risk of culturally erasing diversity — bodily, ethnic, and age-related. Instead of being a form of expression, beauty turns into a simulation.

"A telling example is the story of the virtual model Shudu Gram," comments Darina. "In 2017, Shudu began appearing on social media, in ads for major brands, and even on magazine covers. But she is not a real person — Shudu is a digital avatar created by a white British photographer named Cameron-James Wilson.

As futurist Sinead Bovell, creator of the technological educational platform WAYE, explains, generating Black female images by white men — as in Shudu's case — can reinforce external, colonial ideas about how 'Black beauty' *should* look. This raises important questions about power, representation, and ownership of images in digital spaces."

In other words, this type of aesthetic homogenization risks cultural erasure.

"It undermines authenticity and social responsibility, which are key to the ethics of sustainability in fashion," adds Darina.

Beauty, instead of expressing identity and diversity, becomes a simulated ideal generated by algorithms.

Fashion has always been a language of identity, but in the AI era, this language becomes increasingly dual. On one hand, there is the physical body, which is The physical body lives, ages, and changes. On the other hand — the digital self: perfectly edited, eternally young, dressed in virtual clothes by Balenciaga and Rick Owens, purchased as NFTs or tried on in the metaverse.

> **We don't need to wait for regulations to act ethically.**
>
> **Roy Berbari**

This digital identity often creates a sense of control — in it, we can be whoever we want. But it also demands constant upkeep, curation, and simulation.

The line between the "real me" and the "online me" blurs, and the sense of true physicality starts to diverge from the visual reflection.

For the fashion industry, this means new forms of representation, but also new responsibilities.

What is the meaning of clothes when they are "worn" only online? And where is the pleasure of fabric moving on the skin when the experience happens only in pixels?

At the same time, a new market is emerging — that of virtual fashion. Brands like The Fabricant, DressX, and major players such as Nike and Gucci are already developing collections that **do not exist in the physical world**.

These pieces are worn only in the metaverse or are added onto photos through AR technology.

Clothing becomes entirely a symbol — of status, belonging, digital culture. The body that "wears" it is often also AI-generated. And so, fashion begins to exist in a parallel reality — one where there are no sizes, genders, racial markers, or ages. At least on the surface.

But even in the digital space, apparent freedom does not mean equality. When algorithms are trained on the same beauty templates, they don't create diversity — they erase it. Sustainable transformation in fashion requires digital responsibility too — not allowing new technologies to repackage old prejudices into even more subtly coded forms.

The clash between the real and digital creates new business models, but also new personal dilemmas. In a world where increasingly our avatar represents us to the world, the real body stays behind — with its wrinkles, scars, and changes. The question is no longer just "how do I look," but "who sees me" and "in which reality do I recognize myself."

Fashion has always responded to the spirit of the times — sometimes with rebellion, sometimes with submission.

AI is already in the sketches, in campaigns, in online shopping, in forecasting new trends. How we use it — as a tool for more innovation, accessibility, and sustainability, or as a way to accelerate the problems we already have — depends on us.

And as Roy Berbari says:

"Yes, AI breaks down walls, but it also builds bridges. The question is what we choose to build with it."

Blouse by INSTINELLE, trousers by TOM FORD, shoes by BALENCIAGA.