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Artificial Intelligence:

The Blossoming or
Withering of Art?

CHRISTIAN HAVE

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Withering of Art?

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Foreword

By the time you read this book, it will already belong in the past.

A new reality – yes, a whole new world, in fact – is currently being created by mankind. Not in collaboration with nature, gods, religions, philosophies, or particular political ideologies. Rather, it is being created in collaboration with a technological and digital power structure, whose biggest players are known under names such as Google, Apple, Microsoft, and Meta.

The technological sphere in which this new world is being created encompasses an infinite number of companies, programmers, researchers, scientists, and universities, which can rightly be called the new rulers of the world. They are the ones who have created this world and continuously set the premises for how the rest of us can live in it.

Does this mean that politicians, media representatives, artists, and the cultural elite, who have believed in and cultivated democracy, freedom of speech, diversity, and formation as inherent structures in our societal model, must acknowledge that their days are numbered? Or does this new reality also provide new opportunities for these actors?

Since the mid-20th century, research has been conducted on artificial intelligence – or simply AI, which is the term I will use throughout the rest of this book.

In November 2022, the most impressive of all publicly available AI

services to date was launched by OpenAI – a startup company that Microsoft had originally invested a billion dollars in, back in 2019.

ChatGPT, as the service is called, reached one million users in five days, and in January 2023, it reached 100 million users. No service had ever had such rapid growth in user numbers, and it was a clear sign of the coming of the new world.

We had gotten used to everyday life in the company of algorithms and the many specific services and products – often with a degree of AI built-in – that made our lives easier, faster, funnier, and smarter. This includes everything from Siri and other assistants on our smartphones and tablets to Google’s individualized search results and streaming services’ ability to serve content we are likely interested in.

We had also gotten used to the idea that social media on the one hand could strengthen our communities, creativity, and communication potentials, but on the other hand also create stress, anxiety, violence and put pressure on societal structures. We had slowly begun to grasp that the Metaverse was becoming a reality.

But the digital meteor strike that the world experienced on November 30, 2022, when ChatGPT was launched, was tectonic in its size. Without warning, preparation, or planning of any kind, we could witness how ChatGPT kickstarted the AI revolution, which will affect every single human being – and the whole world. Whether it will go well and actually support human development – well, only time will tell.

Throughout my life and career, I have dealt with the culture that has arisen based on human actions and endeavors on this planet,

and the artistic creations that humans have made to communicate their identity, values, and feelings – and often also their sense of power and position in the world.

The fascination of what communication can achieve – whether it is the written word in literature, the spoken word in theater, or music, film, TV, visual art, architecture, design, or various and cross-media expressions – has always deeply impressed me. Therefore, cultural communication as a field became my path.

With this starting point, I have decided to describe the meteor strike – with a focus on the world of arts and culture. I fear that the debate and discussion about AI will be about everything else *but* arts and culture. It would be a serious loss of value for society if that becomes the case.

The decision to involve AI in the development of the book is quite obvious. Given the speed of technological development, it should preferably go quickly – and how can one better demonstrate AI’s impact and potential than by letting the book itself become a hybrid product?

But it also raises a number of central questions: Has the collaboration with AI made the book better, more or less relevant, credible, and inspiring? Would it have been better if AI had written the book itself? Or is it precisely the partnership between AI and man that truly creates an extra dimension? The answers to these questions are often *Blowin’ in the Wind*, as Bob Dylan sang.

The dilemmas and challenges that AI will create for the world of arts and culture and individual artists are enormous – as are the potentials and possibilities to evolve. Therefore, with this book, I try to

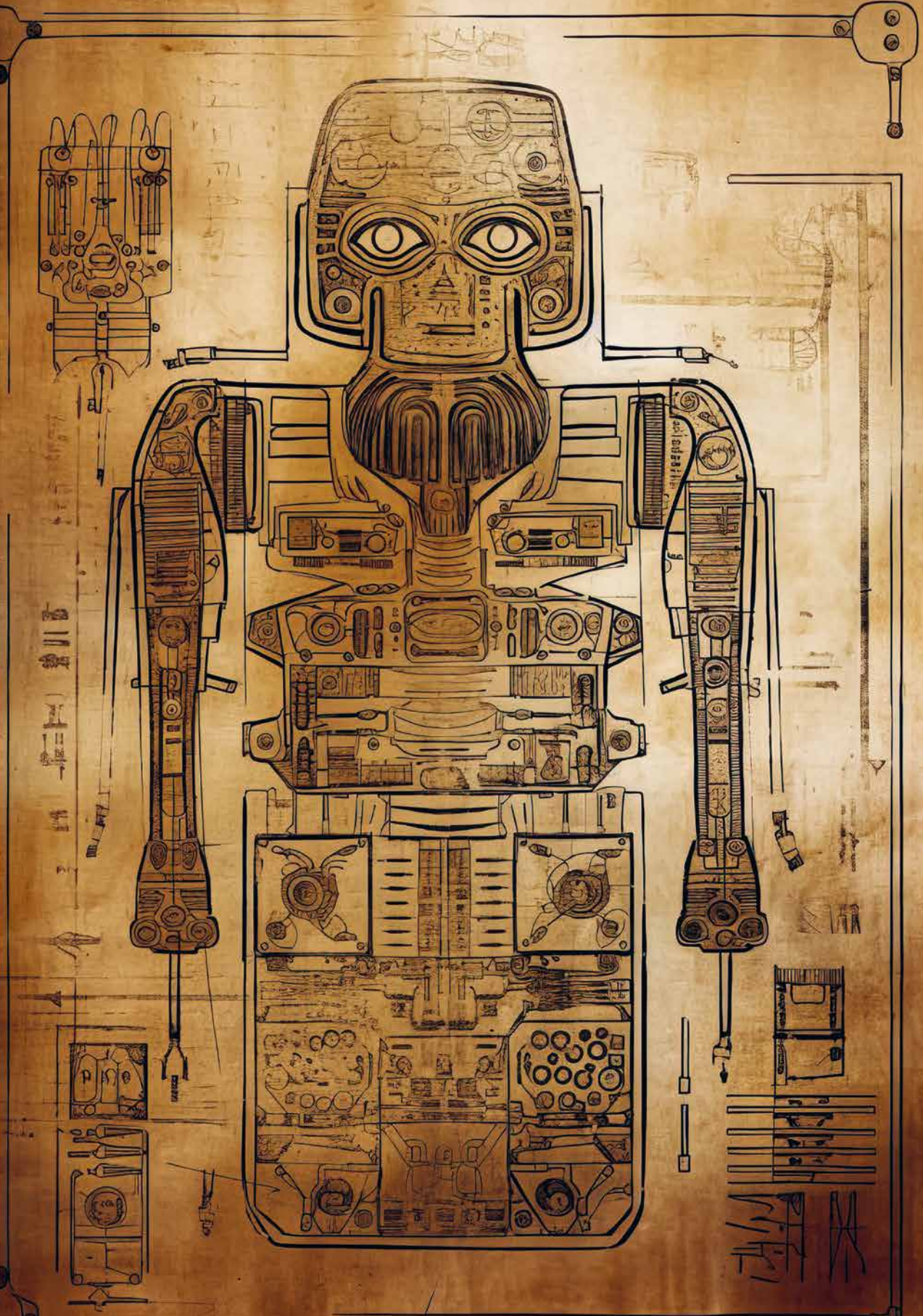
describe both sides of the debate and provide practical and usable solutions that can inspire new perspectives on AI.

It is very certain that our relationship with and consumption of arts and culture will be transformed in the coming years. Our definition of what an artist really is and should be able to do will change, and so will our actions and behaviors as an audience. Similarly, the way we convey arts and culture will drastically change – that is, if it doesn't simply start conveying itself.

It can be a bit scary to think about. But there is no doubt that it is deeply interesting. Regardless, it is crucial that we do what we can to understand the ways in which AI will affect us.

Happy reading!

Christian Have



Introduction:

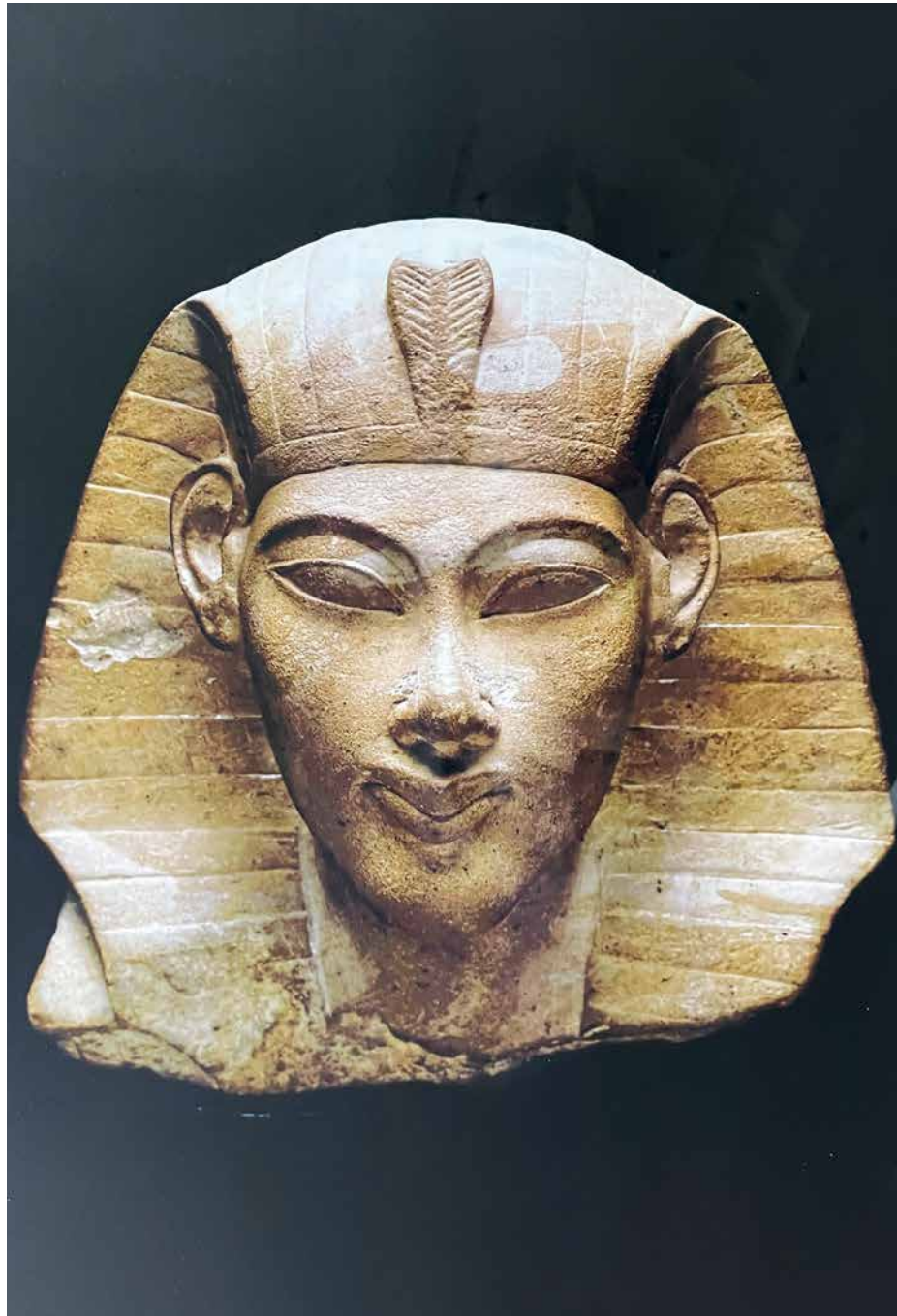
From hieroglyphics to AI

Humans have always communicated using the tools at their disposal – from hieroglyphics and smoke signals to telephones and chat services – and communicating has been a prerequisite for all human development and the rise and fall of civilizations.

Over 3,000 years ago, something dramatic happened, constituting a breakthrough in the way humans communicate and understand themselves. This breakthrough represents the beginning of humans' eternal quest for fame. Adoration. The love of the masses. Phenomena that have been pursued ever since, and today they manifest themselves as sufficient reasons to compromise hard-earned moral values.

Thus, there is good reason to place these concepts in a historical perspective. How did this fascination with fame arise? What has enabled it, and which tools have caused it to accelerate so dramatically in recent years?

The story begins in the 14th century BC. With Akhenaton and Nefertiti, the Egyptian pharaoh and his wife. Until then, the Egyptians had a polytheistic system, but Akhenaton – otherwise known as Amenhotep IV – reduced the pantheon to only one, namely Aton.



At the same time, he changed his name to that which means “the one who is beneficial to Aton”.

The name signaled a significant shift: Instead of worshiping the gods, as they had done before, people were now to worship Akhnaton and Nefertiti, as they were now the only ones who could worship Aton directly. Simultaneously, Akhnaton had himself extensively depicted, not as a divine being, but as he actually appeared. Thus, he created numerous visual representations of the myth he had constructed about himself. God’s deputy, famous, and adored by his people.

Akhnaton is history’s first example of conscious and effective personal storytelling. The myth of Akhnaton – his self-iconization – is perfect branding. A model communication strategy. It’s this experience that many have since drawn inspiration from. Therefore, we have seen similar mechanisms repeated throughout history, particularly in Rome and Greece, where commanders and emperors were convincingly staged as great mythical figures.

From this perspective, Christianity can also be seen as a representation of an extremely successful storytelling about Jesus, who – if we accept the thesis that he is a historical person who had a physical manifestation on this planet – more than anyone has been staged as a divine icon.

With Gutenberg and the art of printing, the foundation was laid in the 15th century for the spread of knowledge and ideas, which led to the enlightenment and the foundation of democratic values that we know today, and which was manifested by the French Revolution. The seeds of mass media were simultaneously sown: The common citizen’s opportunity to orient themselves in all kinds of

events. Events that, notably, could often only be created through the help of mass media. At first, it was about the book, then the newspaper, radio and TV, the internet, digital and social media – and now AI.

No one understood the potential of mass media better than propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels – the spin doctor of all spin doctors. The man behind the world's first political star, Adolf Hitler. By having the Führer appear in many different places on the same



day, Goebbels managed to create the illusion that the Führer was omnipresent. At the same time, he had the cheap radio – “die Goebbels-schnauze” – produced, which allowed Hitler and Nazism to deliver their message directly to all German homes.

Goebbels understood the value of the arts, culture, and communications – and the potential of these three phenomena as tools to control an entire population. As tools to awaken the enthusiasm that neither religion nor day-to-day politics managed to achieve then – and still doesn't. Thus, it was Goebbels' storytelling about Hitler as a figure who perfectly corresponded with all the desires of the German people that laid the groundwork for the acceptance that allowed Hitler to come to power.

World War II followed, and regardless of how many transnational political initiatives followed in its wake, mass media has remained a crucial power factor in democratic society. It is precisely the paradox of mass media – and now digital and social media – that, in their wide-ranging democratic potential, harbor an equally great potential for the breakdown of democracy and its foundational values.

Digital mass media replaced the analogue ones at the beginning of the millennium and thus largely took on the role of providing “good drama” to humanity: As in, stories that can sell and capture the attention of individuals. Stories that can deliver exciting, conflict-filled dramas that reduce everything to two poles, because dualistic setups are always easier to understand.

It is through this perspective that we can view digital and social media and the opportunity they provide to transform each person's life into a successful reality show.

The same conflict-ridden dramaturgy from the billions of accounts on social media are seen over and over in the general flow of information that we encounter in everyday life. The interesting thing is not the ethical perspectives in the stories we are served and share. The interesting thing is, rather, whether the given “content” can captivate us, enchant us, and make us hungry to hear more and more. The path to enchantment almost always goes through the personified, through the non-substantial conveying of an individual’s actions, and only rarely via the broad perspective that encompasses essential societal problems.

The seed for this development lies in what one might call the implicit imperative of fame: “Act so that you, or what you have created, will be rewarded with fame – whatever it takes”.

It is in this imperative that the anti-democratic tendencies grow intrusive and at times overwhelming. As soon as we acknowledge our own need for fame, there is an automatic acceptance of everyone else’s craving for the same. The need becomes so important to us that we feel the loss of value within us, and it leaves us busy fighting to establish our personal brands. On Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, allowing our 100 trillion cells to connect with 100 trillion others, which in turn connect with another 100 trillion. Without us having a deeper purpose with what we are actually doing.

Thus, for some years, we have moved towards a society where values are under pressure. Where “the good story” reigns, whether it is true or ethically defensible. Where we fight relentlessly to establish a storytelling and branding about ourselves – a personal myth – that others will find interesting, so we can soothe our feeling of existential emptiness and loneliness. With increasing speed, we have

used the communicational and technological advancements to create a platform for our own personal positioning – rather than contemplating how these advancements could help fulfill democratic potentials, solve the climate crisis, or address inequality issues.

Now we have taken the first timid steps into a world where AI will constitute a revolution at least as transformative as the one that digital and social media brought about. That’s why it’s crucial that we are extra careful not to let the technological advances trip up the democratic project.

Now more than ever, there is a need for the true artist, the magnificent philosopher, and the visionary politician and wise scientist to step forward and put our society and present time into a broader perspective. A perspective that dares to accommodate ambitious visions, dreams, and objectives that can refine our consciousness.

We need perspectives where neither the market nor AI is God, and where politicians and businesspeople are not visionless. Where one bravely talks about spirit and soul – because it’s important, and not just because it can be an advantageous business parameter.

In relation to our personal positioning, AI poses a risk on a grand scale. It’s a risk associated with the apparently universal human need to appear as a person who leads an exciting, rich, and enviable life.

If we thought social media presented a distorted image of people’s actual lives because they often only show snapshots from (literal and metaphorical) sunny days – or because one can easily put a filter on oneself, as to appear more beautiful – then this will be insignificant compared to the deception that AI is making possible.

With AI, all people can indeed produce what could appear like great art and clever thoughts, regardless of how great artists or especially talented people they actually are. A host of services can produce the content you post, while ChatGPT writes the accompanying text.

I predict that authenticity in personal communication will become an extreme scarcity, because with AI it becomes too easy to fall for the temptation to portray oneself as at least slightly smarter, funnier, prettier, or more talented than one actually is. It becomes far easier than it already is and has been in the past decade.

As described at the beginning of this chapter, communication has been a prerequisite for both all human development and the rise and fall of civilizations. AI has a great potential to support human development, and perhaps it will actually show us that our civilization has not yet reached its peak of greatness. But AI also poses a serious risk of accelerating our civilization's decline.

The most important thing we can do – on a grand scale – is to insist that we preserve the qualities that define us as philosophical and humanistic beings. In other words, we must learn from Socrates – the father of Western philosophy – and his timeless wisdom, and we should incorporate his thoughts and values into the programming and training of AI.

If we succeed at this, humans can still be altruistic, empathic, creative, and present beings. Beings that, through arts and culture, must balance, challenge, and secure what I, in this book, have chosen to call mankind's *creative mandate*.



Chapter 1:

AI will transform arts and culture

Imagine that you're standing in your kitchen. You've been asked to bake a cake, and in front of you is a pile of ingredients, as well as a cake recipe.

You now have two options. The obvious choice is to follow the recipe precisely and thus – hopefully – achieve the expected result.

The other option is to put the recipe aside and instead scrutinize the ingredients closely to figure out how they can be assembled and prepared in a way that provides the best possible outcome.

Most people would choose the recipe. Only experienced bakers and people with a uniquely adventurous culinary spirit would dare to bake the cake without any instructions whatsoever. Other than minor variations, those who chose to follow the recipe would produce roughly the same result.

Those who chose to ignore the recipe, on the other hand, would achieve a wide range of results. Some cakes might fail. However, other cakes would be even better and more gastronomically innovative than the ones produced by following the recipe.

About the author

Christian Have is a communications expert, author, TV host, and owner of Scandinavia's largest communications and PR agency within arts and culture, HAVE Communications & PR.

Have is a culture and media advisor, a regular opinion contributor to the newspaper Avisen Danmark, and a sought-after moderator and speaker, both nationally and internationally.

Throughout his career, Christian has published ten books on media development and the societal position and significance of arts and culture, and he has defined communicating culture as a unique discipline.

In recent years, he has had a strong focus on the digital world and the impact of new technologies on societal and organizational structures – and on individual consciousness.



"Christian Have's book on artificial intelligence outlines key dilemmas, questions, and challenges that we are compelled to consider and respond to – especially within the world of arts and culture."

– Astrid la Cour, director, The National Gallery of Denmark

"This is an important book for a new era that will revolutionize the world we know. Have gives us knowledge, wisdom, and visions for tackling AI – situated between the excitement and fear of all that is new. The book is highly recommended for anyone who wants a true insight into the advent of AI."

– Thure Lindhardt, actor and director

"The book emphasizes how incredibly important it is that we learn how to understand and regulate AI – also within the world of arts and culture, so that, rather than being an existential threat that at worst takes over our work and removes our creativity, it can become a tool that supports and promotes it."

– Rane Willerslev, director, The National Museum of Denmark

"In this book, Christian Have poses a number of central questions about AI: What happens if AI gains power over creative processes, because it is smarter, cheaper, and faster? And what happens if speed and infallibility become the new mantra in the artistic creation process?"

– Trine Nielsen, development consultant and strategist

