


[< Back](#) | [Lifestyle](#) | [People](#)

Kenny Schachter on AI, art, and staying self-taught

The American artist and curator reflects on risk, robots, and redefining value in the art world.

**Crystal Tai**

Senior Managing Editor

[○ Lifestyle](#) [◇ People](#)Share 

On this page

[Recommended](#)[* Dig Deeper](#)**Published May 10, 2025**

Kenny Schachter is not your typical art world professional — and he doesn't claim to be.

A self-taught curator, artist, and writer based in New York, Schachter has spent over three decades challenging the boundaries between art, technology, and commerce with a blend of intellect and grit. Armed with a background in philosophy and law, Schachter came to art with a relentless drive to find meaning on his own terms.

Whether collaborating with an 82-year-old collector on an NFT or creating robot-made oil paintings, Schachter treats art not as a product but as a form of emotional survival.

Now preparing for new projects that bridge cultures and communities, Schachter spoke with *Jing Daily* about his creative journey — one defined by risk, passion, and human connection.

Kenny Schachter: [We are living in] an AI universe.

Jing Daily: Indeed. For better or worse?

KS: For better. There's no worse. People are for worse. Technology is for better. AI and robots aren't going to hurt civilization — people will. It's not the machines that are flawed; it's the people behind them. That's my take. I use tech in almost everything I do except for my writing and teaching.

For me, art reflects our social, political, and especially technological environment. What's shocking is the art world pays lip service to innovation but recoils from it.





Fool (Putin) by Kenny Schachter. Image: Courtesy

JD: What does it mean to “make” something in 2025?

KS: It’s about living creatively — whether through art, music, or cutting hair. It all comes down to curiosity, passion, love, and an open mind. You could be six or 106 years old.

I recently collaborated on an NFT with an 82-year-old Greek collector. Art is about expressing and communicating, not just making. A masterpiece in the forest means nothing without someone there to engage with it. You need the human element.

I don’t distinguish between digital and physical. Whether it’s a fork or a painting, it’s about the personal meaning I assign to it — not its price. I’m not interested in value based on monetary worth. I’m more excited by an \$8,000 car with beautiful engineering than a flashy Ferrari.

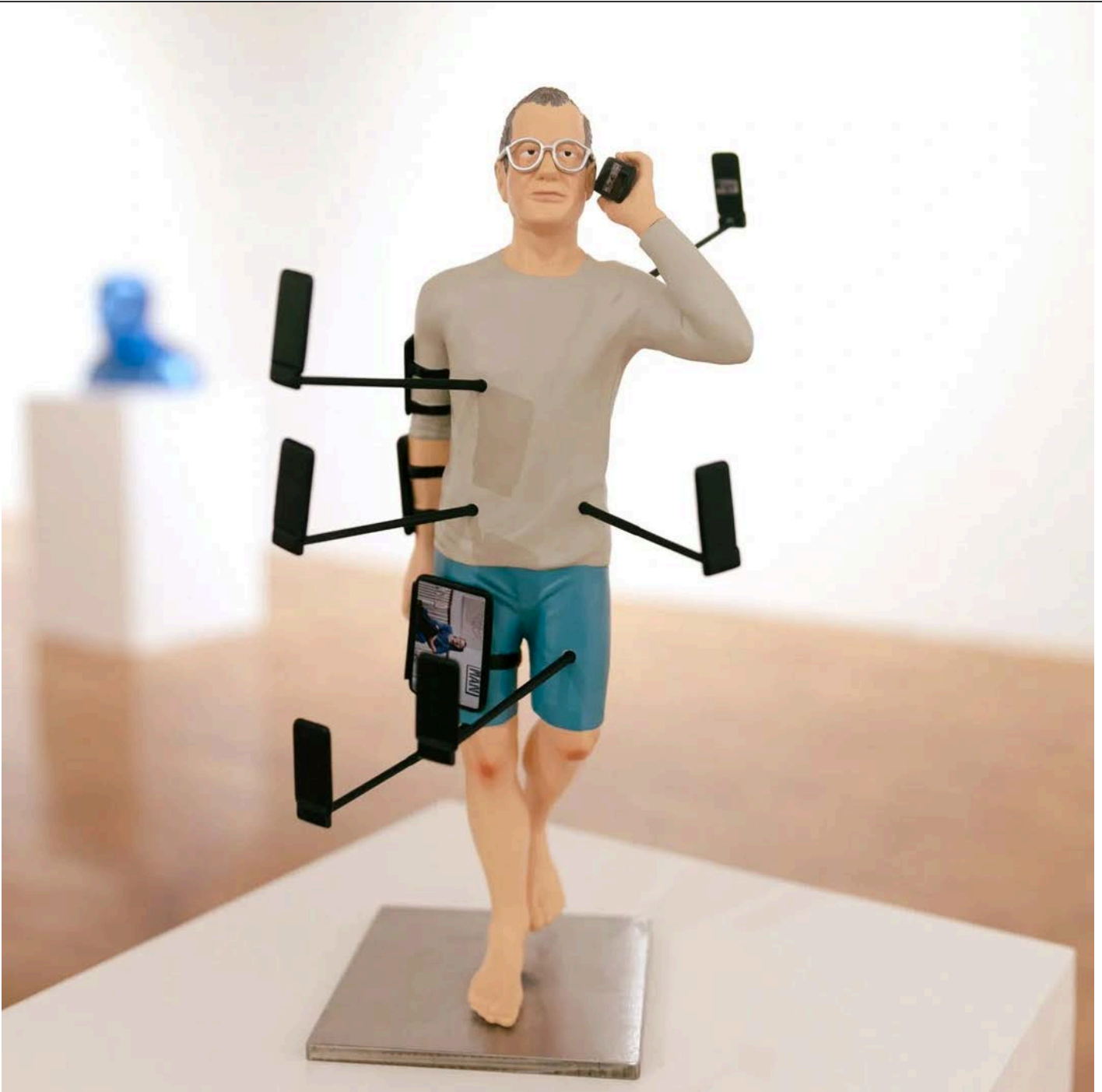
JD: What’s your take on Walter Benjamin’s concept of aura?

KS: Benjamin wrote in 1935 that mechanical reproduction — film, photography — erodes art’s aura. I disagree. He was saying a painting has to be experienced in person at a certain time to hold meaning. But to me, that’s too narrow.

Art doesn’t lose its power through reproduction. My art takes many forms — paintings, sculptures, videos, installations or anything — wherever the idea takes me, it is not dictated by any preexisting notion of form.

But I love working with tech — creating digital files to make sculptures. My [last] show [*Art in the Age of Robotic Reproduction*, “held at Jupiter Gallery between March 13 to April 26, 2025”] about robots making traditional oil paintings. Some use brushes, some inkjet rigs. They’re indistinguishable from human-made works.

What Benjamin was striving for — the hand of the artist — is still a cliché today. But it’s also still relevant. To me, anything made with passion and depth is art. Art should be timeless and nuanced, not didactic or overly conceptual.



Selfie-man mini by Kenny Schachter. Image: Courtesy

JD: Is there anything you don't consider art?

KS: Yes. Anything made purely for money. That's bad intent. When artists churn out endless versions of the same thing to satisfy demand, that's not art — it's product. I don't name names, but I speak the truth. That gets me into trouble.

I've been doing this for 35 years. I'm self-taught. People assume I have power, but everything I've achieved came from struggle. I love that. It's the process that matters,

not the outcome.

When art becomes formulaic or decorative, it bores me. I love artists who inspire me — whose work is honest.

JD: What opportunities does AI offer artists?

KS: Social media and blockchain were seismic shifts. Artists used to rely on proximity — being near galleries or collectors. Now you can reach anyone. But I've also been hacked. I lost hundreds of NFTs to a bot. Still, I keep using tech to fuel my work.

My advice? Don't wait for perfect conditions. Do whatever it takes to support your art. Sell things, take part-time jobs — but preserve your energy. Don't burn out. You need clarity and strength to create. I had substance issues. When I quit, my productivity and focus tripled.

Being an artist means risking humiliation. My robot sculpture fell over and broke. I almost removed it from the show, but decided to keep it. AI helped me title it "System Failure." Life is full of accidents. Art reflects that.



kennyscha...
54.8K followers

[View profile](#)



[View more on Instagram](#)

349 likes

Add a comment...

JD: How has your background in philosophy shaped your journey?

KS: It's the only consistent thread. I failed in school, had no friends, no direction. Then I took a philosophy class and found a mentor who changed my life. Everything I do stems from that. I even went to law school just to avoid the job market.

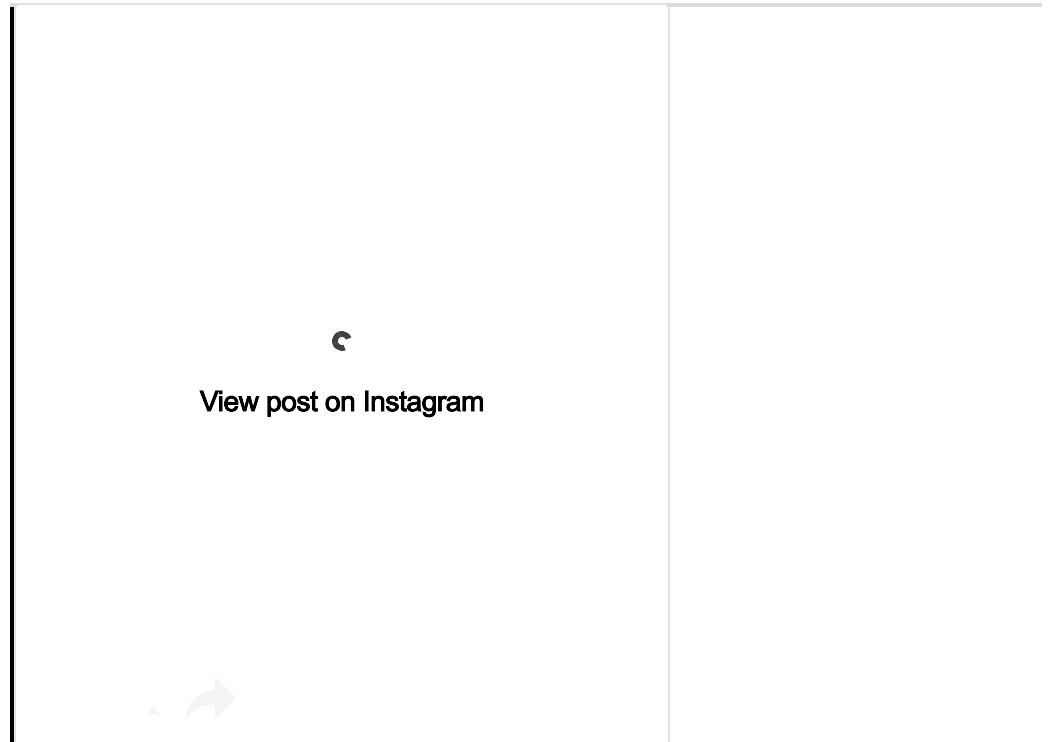
One of my closest friends was Zaha Hadid. I curated her shows and traveled with her. I wasn't obsessed with architecture, but I admired how she lived. She didn't just break the glass ceiling — she exploded it. I've seen people run across traffic just to thank her for inspiring them.

If not for art and my children, I don't know what I'd do. My career is my life. There's no distinction. Art is therapy. Studies show it lowers blood pressure and anxiety — it certainly does that for me. Art soothes me.

Whether I'm writing, making something, or spending time with my kids — who are also artists — it's all deeply emotional. I'm not religious. I believe we make our own destiny through action. And how you treat people, especially those who can do nothing for you, is the true measure of character.

Takashi Murakami on collabs, consumer culture and art

May 15, 2024 ○ Lifestyle ◇ People



JD: How has your work been received in East Asia?

KS: I love diverse cultures. I've shown in Shanghai, collaborated with my kids, and written about the scenes in Beijing and Hong Kong. I don't believe art should speak only to one group. If it connects, it connects — regardless of geography.

I'm currently curating a show in London for an American artist who died of AIDS in 1988, Paul Thek.

The exhibit will be comprised of the little seen visceral paintings Thek relentlessly made throughout his life, recasting his lived experiences through an ethics of diligent work. The sculptures he is better known for, capture something universal: if you cut

someone open, no matter where they're from, we're the same inside. Thek's art exposed the fragility of life; and, at the same time, our shared physical vulnerabilities

I'd love to do more in Asia. I've lectured at Yonsei University in Seoul and visited China with Zaha Hadid. I want to keep connecting with people worldwide. That's the whole point.

*Jing Daily presents **Jing Masterminds** — a fortnightly, exclusive interview series profiling today's most iconic names in art, fashion, commerce and culture. Delving deep into their personal journeys, creative processes, business strategies and societal impacts, the series offers readers an intimate look at the lives and minds shaping our industries.*

* Dig Deeper

Sectors ▼

Insights ▼

Profiles



Kenny Schachter



Get more news based on your interests

Personalize

Content



Sectors



Insights



Trends



Company



Account



©2025 Herlar, LLC. All rights reserved. Jing Daily® is a registered U.S. trademark of Herlar, LLC.