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# New York Times Union Urges Management to Reconsider 9 Art Department Cuts as Paper Ramps Up AI Tools | Exclusive

The Times denies that the reductions are in any way related to the newspaper's AI initiatives

[Natalie Korach](#) June 12, 2024 @ 11:41 AM

“Last month, The Times’s newsroom made the difficult decision to reduce the size of its art production team with workflow changes to make photo toning and color correction work more efficient,” Charlie Stadlander (Managing Director, External Communications, Newsroom and Opinion) told TheWrap. “On May 30th, we offered generous voluntary buyouts for 9 employees to accept. These changes involve the adoption of new workflows and the expanded use of industry-standard tools that have been in use for years – they are not related to The Times’s AI efforts.”

The guild also noted that masthead editor Steve Duenes called **Claro (Pixometry)** – the technology the union claims is being used to “replace” the department’s staffers impacted by reductions – **the current “industry standard” in art automation**. The Times did not deny that the latest art department cuts are related to the use of Claro.

Claro “has developed highly professional server based automatic image enhancement, image workflow and image management solutions,” according to the company’s website. The About Us tab of the website adds that Claro technology uses “Applied AI image intelligence,” within its software.



New York Times (Pexels)

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**The full article follows**

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New York Times (Pexels)

The New York Times Guild is urging management to reconsider cutting 9 of the 16 positions from its art-production department, expressing concerns over what the union says amounts to an AI-based replacement, according to an internal memo obtained by TheWrap.

Last month, the Times announced the 9-staffer reduction in the art production department as it ramps up the use of AI technology. The cuts would mark one of the more significant AI-driven staff reductions for the company, though management denies a direct connection between the cuts and the Times's AI initiatives.

"We are saddened by these cuts, and urge the company to reconsider its rush to sacrifice quality for profits," the union writes. "These cost-cutting moves reflect a broader mindset that puts cost savings over people and the quality of our work"

The Times' Guild argues that much of the work in the art department can't simply be replicated by existing AI tech. "They work on every editorial image that appears in the print newspaper, which earns more than 30 percent of this company's revenue," the union writes in the memo. "Cutting nine human roles and expecting that work to be done by software is a troubling instance of our members being replaced by technology, at a moment when the company's dabbling in A.I. threatens the security of other essential jobs."

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A spokesman for the Times said the affected employees are being offered a buyout, and have nothing to do with the use of AI.

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The guild also noted that masthead editor Steve Duenes called Claro (Pixometry) - the technology the union claims is being used to "replace" the department's staffers impacted by reductions — the current "industry standard" in art automation. The Times did not deny that the latest art department cuts are related to the use of Claro.

Claro "has developed highly professional server based automatic image enhancement, image workflow and image management solutions," according to the company's website. The About Us tab of the website adds that Claro technology uses "Applied AI image intelligence," within its software.

However, the guild pushed back saying "Just because something is the industry standard doesn't mean it's good." And while the union acknowledges that the art production team already uses this software to aid their work, it is "optional" and "a human oversees the final product."

The union also noted that the Times recently won nine gold medals from the Society for News Design, three of which were for the newspaper's photo series, speaking to the impact of the art department's work.

"The Times has staked its reputation on being a standard bearer for honest visual and print journalism," staff editor Chris Kahley — who has worked in the art department for 25 years - said in a statement. "The trained professionals in our department have played a vital role in these efforts, and Claro is not up to the task."

"Discarding dedicated staff who constantly help make the New York Times the visual showcase it is, is cruel," Art director for Print Hub Audrey Razgaitis added. "I thought we were better than this."

The cuts come as the media industry is reckoning with advanced AI technology integration in the journalism space, with many companies making deals with AI firms to license their content or supercharge digital products with new features.

The New York Times has also notably launched an ambitious lawsuit against both Microsoft and OpenAI for scraping copyrighted content without permission to train LLMs. As the newspaper seeks damages for content used without knowledge, the paper is already spending \$1 million on fees related to the lawsuit against OpenAI and Microsoft, the company said during its first-quarter earnings.