



CAHDD™ Stage Indicator Usage Guide

How It Works

CAHDD™ (Computer Aided Human Designed & Developed) is a voluntary transparency framework for communicating the human and technological process behind creative and technical work.

The system has two simple parts:

The “Creator’s Mark” answers: Who stands behind this work?

The CAHDD Stage answers: How was this work created?

Together, they provide a visible, human-readable first impression of authorship and process. They can work alongside detailed transparency statements, embedded metadata, C2PA Content Credentials, invisible watermarking, and other provenance systems.

CAHDD does not require creators to abandon their identities or adopt CAHDD branding. A personal signature, studio logo, company mark, byline, project credit, or other established identity can remain the primary mark of authorship. The CAHDD Stage simply adds information about the process behind the work.

CAHDD is a deliberately low-tech system for visually communicating the balance between human contribution and technological participation.

Human contribution, or “Human Sweat Equity,” includes more than physical labor or hours worked. It includes human ideas, knowledge, direction, experimentation, selection, composition, storytelling, refinement, restraint, experience, and final judgment.

The useful question is no longer simply whether technology was involved.

The more informative questions are:

What did the people contribute?

What did the technology contribute?

Who accepts responsibility for the result?



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The CAHDD Stage System

The CAHDD Stage System provides a shared language for describing creative processes ranging from traditional human craft, through digitally assisted and AI-assisted creation, to fully autonomous AI output.

The Stages are not rankings of artistic quality, professional value, morality, or technical advancement. Moving toward greater technological participation does not represent “leveling up,” and a lower Stage is not automatically more virtuous.

Each Stage describes a different creative process.

Five Ways to Indicate a CAHDD Stage

The CAHDD Stage remains the same regardless of how it is displayed. Creators may select the method or combination of methods that best fits their work, audience, and intended use.

1. “Creator’s Mark” + Stage

Pair the Stage with a signature, logo, studio mark, company identity, byline, or project credit.

The identity indicates who stands behind the work. The Stage indicates how the work was created.

Examples:

Russell Thomas ③

3DAllusions ③

Russell Thomas ③





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Examples shown in this guide are applications created by 3DAllusions LLC and its affiliated brands. They demonstrate possible uses of the system, not a required CAHDD visual style.

2. Circled Stage Character

Use the corresponding circled character as a simple, standalone Stage indicator:

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ Unicode Examples, Provided graphics below:



A circled Stage character may appear in the corner of an image, beside a signature, within project credits, following a studio name, or as a subtle screened element that does not compete with the work.

The circled character is intentionally simple. Until the CAHDD Stages become more widely recognized, the character alone may not tell the complete story to every viewer. Creators who want greater immediate clarity may pair it with CAHDD Stage text, an official icon or watermark, a caption, a transparency statement, or a link explaining the Stage System.

The creator determines how much visibility and explanation are appropriate for the work and its audience.

3. CAHDD Stage Text or Shorthand

State the Stage directly in text.

Examples:

CAHDD Stage 3

CAHDD-3

CAHDD3

CAHDD③



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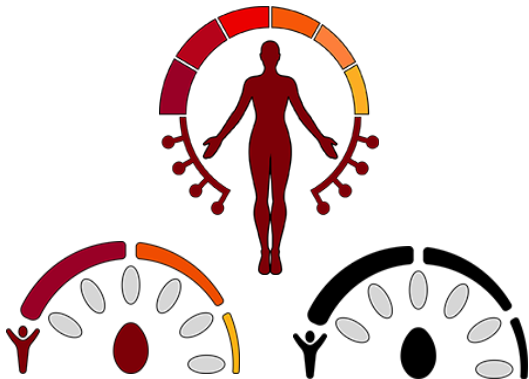
Written designations work well in project descriptions, portfolios, presentation notes, captions, contracts, credits, transparency statements, and situations in which the Stage should be understood without requiring prior familiarity with the symbols.

4. Official CAHDD Icons and Watermarks

Use the official CAHDD Stage icons or watermark graphics provided as a courtesy by CAHDD.

These ready-to-use graphics give creators and organizations a consistent, recognizable way to display their selected Stage without having to develop their own indicator.

The official icons and watermarks remain an important visual expression of the CAHDD system. They are available for creators who want a more visible or immediately identifiable Stage declaration, but their use is optional.



5. Combined Stage Display

Use two or more of the preceding methods when greater visibility, context, or flexibility is useful.

For example, an image displayed on a website may carry a complete CAHDD watermark, while the studio logo placed on an outgoing image incorporates ③. The accompanying project description may also state **CAHDD Stage 3**.

A circled character may similarly be paired with CAHDD text, an official Stage icon, a signature, a logo, a byline, or a project credit.

Combined uses do not create a different Stage. They communicate the same declared Stage in more than one way.



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All five approaches communicate the same underlying CAHDD Stage. The first four provide individual display methods. The fifth allows those methods to work together.

The Stage is the shared language. The “Creator’s Mark” makes it yours.

Creating a “Creator’s Mark”

Makers have marked their work for centuries.

Craftspeople used maker’s marks. Artists signed paintings. Architects placed their names on drawings. Photographers added credits and watermarks. Manufacturers used foundry stamps, seals, and identifying symbols. Studios and companies developed logos that connected their work to identity and reputation.

Those marks said:

I made this.

We made this.

We stand behind it.

CAHDD carries that time-honored tradition into the digital and AI age.

A “Creator’s Mark” connects an identifiable person, team, studio, collective, or organization with a CAHDD Stage declaration.

The mark says who. The Stage says how.

The Stage may be placed beside the creator’s identity or incorporated directly into it. An artist may add ② to the end of a signature. A studio may integrate the Stage into its logo. A photographer may screen it into an existing watermark. A project team may place it beside its shared project credit.

CAHDD does not ask creators to replace their signatures or logos with ours. We want to encourage the return of visible authorship, not replace individual identities with a standardized badge.

The CAHDD Stage provides a consistent process language. The creator determines how that language relates to their identity.

Who Can Apply a “Creator’s Mark”?

A “Creator’s Mark” may represent an individual, a group of people, a studio, a team, a collective, or an organization.



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In every case, identifiable people must stand behind the declaration.

Software may physically place a Stage indicator, just as software may apply a signature, logo, watermark, or professional seal. The authority behind the mark, however, comes from the person or people accepting responsibility for it.

A machine cannot independently claim a “Creator’s Mark” because it cannot accept personal or professional responsibility. It has no reputation, judgment, pride, or accountability to attach to the declaration.

Technology may help make the work, document the process, and render the mark.

It cannot be the creator who claims the mark.

That responsibility remains human.

Using the Circled Stage Characters

The circled Stage characters may be copied directly from this guide or entered as Unicode characters in compatible software. In Microsoft Word and other Windows applications that support Unicode conversion, type the hexadecimal code, **highlight the complete code**, and then press **Alt+X**:

Stage 0: ①

Type **24EA**, highlight **24EA**, and then press **Alt+X**

Stage 1: ②

Type **2460**, highlight **2460**, and then press **Alt+X**

Stage 2: ③

Type **2461**, highlight **2461**, and then press **Alt+X**

Stage 3: ④

Type **2462**, highlight **2462**, and then press **Alt+X**

Stage 4: ⑤

Type **2463**, highlight **2463**, and then press **Alt+X**

Stage 5: ⑥

Type **2464**, highlight **2464**, and then press **Alt+X**

Stage X: ⑦

Type **24E7**, highlight **24E7**, and then press **Alt+X**



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The appearance of Unicode characters may vary depending on the font, operating system, and software being used. The **Alt+X** conversion method is not supported by every application.

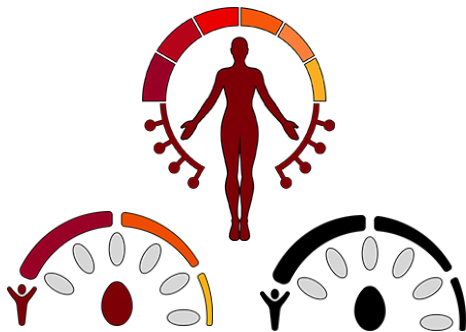
The downloadable circled Stage graphic files provide a consistent alternative when Unicode characters are unsupported or when precise control of line weight, color, scale, and placement is required. Graphic files are generally preferable when incorporating a Stage into a signature, logo, illustration, or other visual identity.



CAHDD™ Stages - TechRatio™

The CAHDD Stages describe the relationship between human creative contribution and technological participation.

Stage 0: Traditional Human Craft

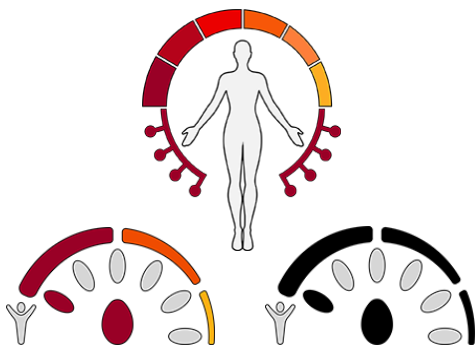


Work is created entirely by people using physical or analog methods. No digital tools, automation, or artificial intelligence are involved.

Examples may include drawing, painting, sculpture, physical model-making, manual drafting, film photography, traditional printmaking, and an unedited acoustic performance recorded through analog methods.

Summary: Human expression is created entirely through physical or analog processes. Stage 0 establishes the fully human-created end of the Human-Tech Balance Index™.

Stage 1: Digitally Assisted Creation



Work is created using digital tools under direct human control. The software functions as a tool and does not generate creative content or make substantive creative decisions.

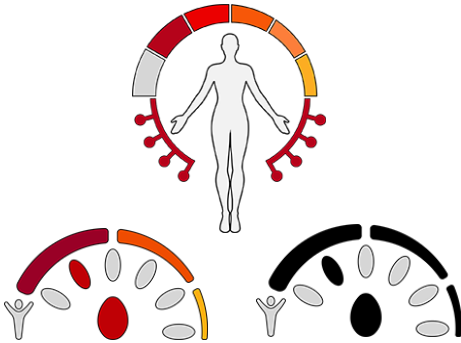
Examples may include manually produced CAD drawings, digital painting, digital sculpting, photography using standard digital processing, manually edited Photoshop compositions, digital illustration, and human-composed music recorded, edited, mixed, or mastered using digital software.

Summary: Human creativity and execution lead the process. Digital tools extend the creator's capabilities without independently generating content.



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Stage 2: Algorithmic or Procedural Assistance

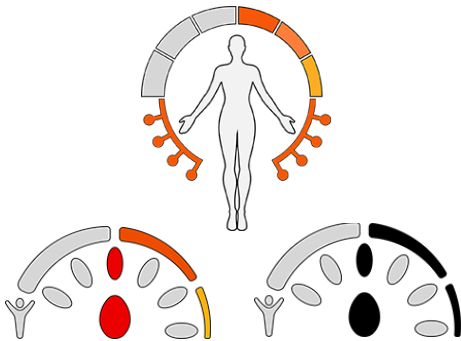


Work uses algorithmic, procedural, or task-level automation under human direction, but no generative AI is used to create new visual, written, musical, or other expressive content.

Examples may include scripts, filters, physics simulations, parametric modeling, procedural systems, photogrammetry, rule-based automation, adaptive mastering, automated technical corrections, and other tools that assist execution without originating the creative work.

Summary: Human authorship and direction remain central while algorithms and automated tools provide structured assistance. Technology supports execution but does not generate the primary expressive content.

Stage 3: Human-AI Hybrid Creation



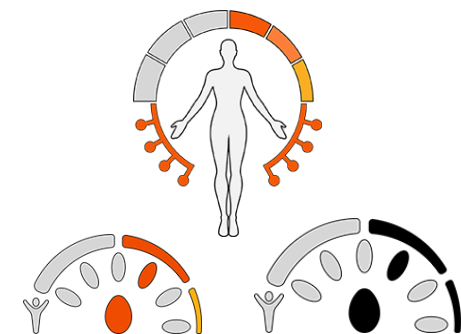
Generative AI participates in the creative process, but people retain meaningful creative direction and responsibility for the finished work.

The human contribution may include concepts, sketches, models, photography, writing, composition, art direction, prompting, selection, editing, compositing, restructuring, refinement, and final judgment.

A person may provide a concept, sketch, photograph, written passage, or 3D model that AI helps develop or enhance. Alternatively, AI may generate starting material that a person substantially directs, edits, combines, or transforms into the completed work.

Summary: Human and AI contributions are both meaningful and identifiable. AI acts as a creative or production amplifier, while human intent, direction, and judgment remain central to the result.

Stage 4: AI-Generated, Human-Curated



Most of the expressive content is generated by AI. The human role primarily consists of prompting, selecting outputs, curating results, and making limited edits or adjustments.

The person may define a general objective or aesthetic and choose among generated alternatives, but the system produces most of the composition, imagery, writing, music, or other expressive content.

Summary: Creative production leans heavily toward AI generation. The human primarily acts as a director, selector, curator, or light editor rather than personally developing most of the finished content.



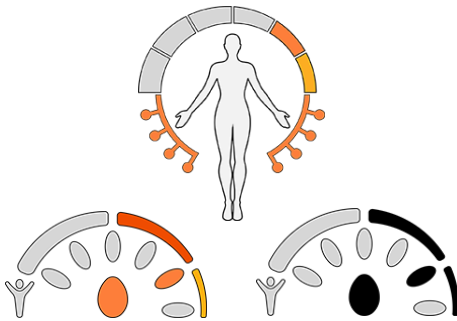
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Stage 5: Fully Autonomous AI Creation

The work is produced entirely or almost entirely by an AI system, with little or no meaningful human creative contribution beyond configuration, initiation, or triggering.

The AI autonomously generates the composition, structure, imagery, writing, music, or other expressive content. A person may initiate the process or review the result but does not meaningfully direct, edit, or develop the finished work.

Summary: The output is machine-originated. Human participation is limited to initiating, configuring, observing, or distributing the result. Stage 5 represents the fully technological end of the Human-Tech Balance Index™.



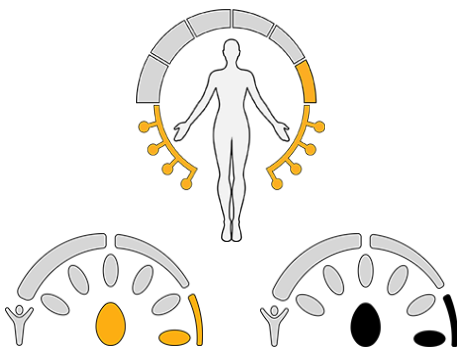
Stage X: Hybrid or Multi-Phase Workflow

Stage X applies to complex, experimental, or multi-phase workflows that cross several CAHDD Stages and cannot be accurately described by a single Stage.

Examples may include a project beginning with Stage 2 procedural modeling, moving through Stage 4 AI generation, and concluding with substantial Stage 3 human post-production. Stage X may also apply to live, iterative, or simultaneous interaction in which people and AI repeatedly exchange creative control.

When practical, a Stage X declaration should be accompanied by a short transparency statement describing the major phases of the process.

Summary: Stage X recognizes workflows that combine multiple distinct Stages or involve ongoing human-AI interplay. Stage X does not mean undisclosed, unknown, or more AI-generated than Stage 5.



Understanding the Official CAHDD Graphics

The official CAHDD icons and watermarks provide a recognizable visual representation of the Stage System.

The graphics are available as a courtesy for creators and organizations that want a complete, ready-to-use treatment. They are an important part of the CAHDD family, but they are not mandatory.

Flexible and Unobtrusive

CAHDD Stage indicators are intended to communicate, not distract.

The artwork, design, document, product, or other creative work should remain the primary visual focus. The Stage indicator should be visible and legible without overwhelming the composition or the creator’s identity.

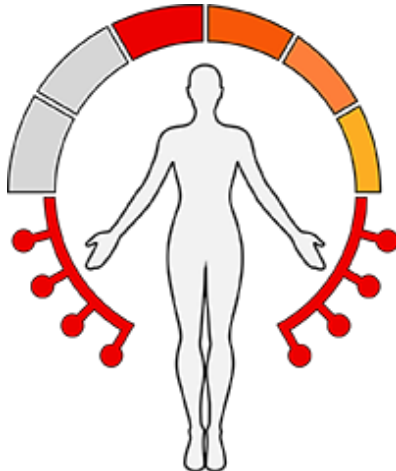


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The CAHDD icon is a clear, standalone graphic representing the selected Stage.

Icons work well in portfolios, websites, online stores, product pages, project literature, presentation materials, contest entries, directories, and other locations where a visible Stage declaration is useful.

An icon may appear beside a signature, company logo, byline, project credit, or written Stage designation.

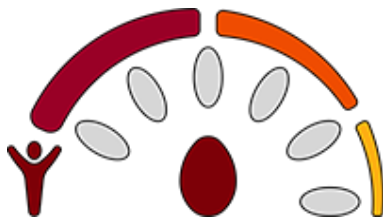


ICON

STAGE INDICATOR PROGRESS BAR
(STAGE 3 INDICATED)

FUTURE/ADAPTABLE INDICATORS

HUMANCENTRIC - HUMAN IN THE LOOP
METAPHOR



INNER STAGE INDICATORS (STAGE 0 INDICATED)

OUTER INDICATOR PROGRESS BAR
INDICATES STRENGTH OF HUMAN
AUTHORSHIP (STAGE 0 - 'NO AI' INDICATED)



INNER STAGE INDICATORS (STAGE 0 INDICATED)

OUTER INDICATOR PROGRESS BAR
INDICATES STRENGTH OF HUMAN
AUTHORSHIP (STAGE X - 'HYBRID AI' INDICATED)

WATERMARK – COLORED



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Size Guidelines

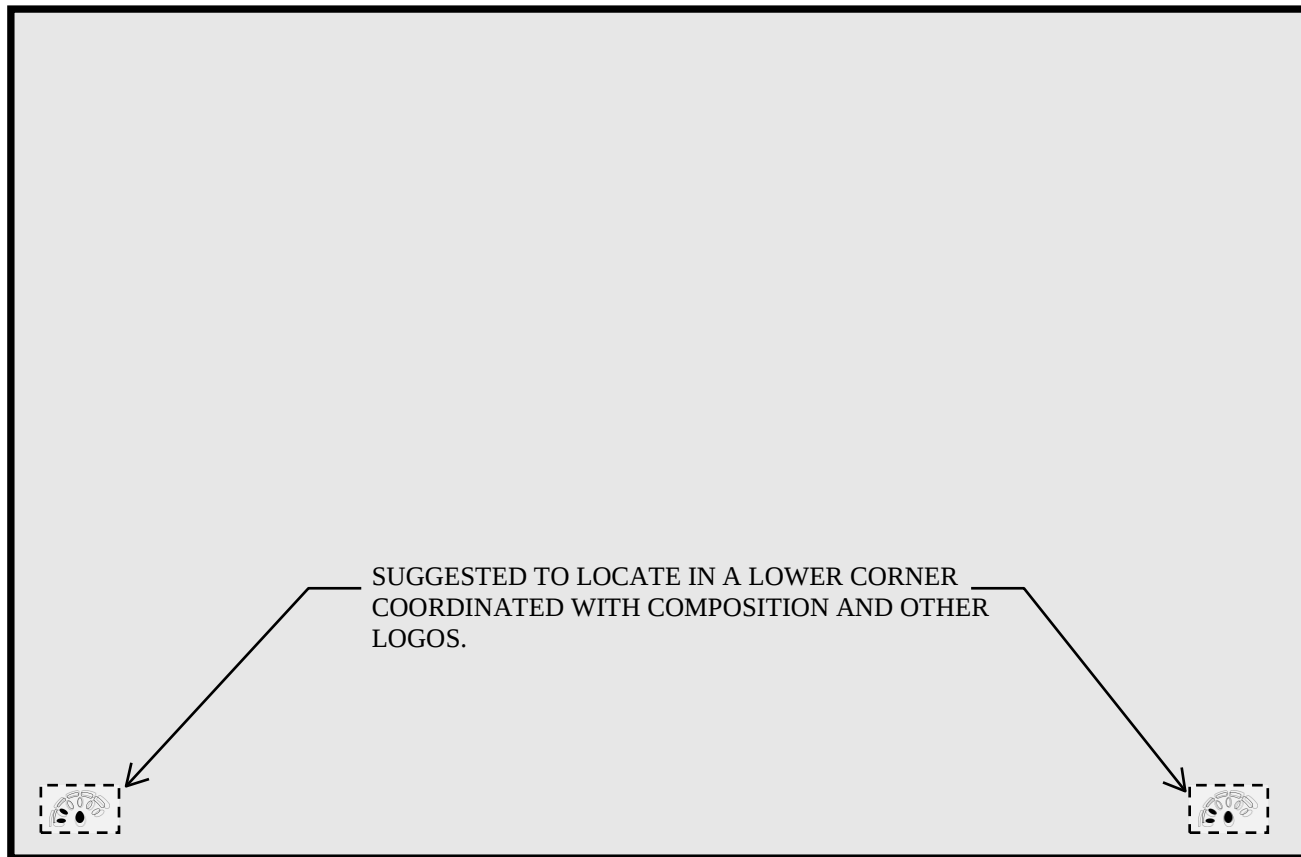
As a general starting point, watermarks and circled Stage graphics should be approximately **5% of the image width**.

For example, a 1,200-pixel-wide image would use an indicator approximately 60 pixels wide.

This is a guideline rather than an absolute requirement. The appropriate size depends on the complexity, resolution, intended viewing distance, and final use of the work. Indicators may need to be larger when an image will appear as a small social-media preview or thumbnail.

For high-resolution print applications, Stage indicators should remain proportionally small but recognizable. A general range of **0.25 to 0.5 inches**, or approximately **6 to 12 millimeters**, will work for many applications.

The indicator should never be reduced to a size at which the Stage number or X becomes difficult to identify.





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WATERMARKS FLEXIBLE, FOR LINE WORK YOU MAY CHOOSE TO USE A BLACK AND WHITE WATERMARK, OR A COLORED MONOTONE, IT IS UP TO YOUR DISCRESSION.

Placement

A lower corner will work well for many images, but placement should respond to the composition, existing credits, signatures, logos, and important visual content.

The indicator may be placed:

- In a lower corner
- Beside a signature
- Beside or within a studio logo
- Within a title block
- In a project credit
- In a caption or description
- In a website footer
- On a product page
- Within a complete CAHDD transparency statement

Maintain sufficient contrast between the Stage indicator and its background. Opacity may be reduced when a screened treatment is desired, provided the Stage remains legible.

Choosing the Appropriate Display Method

A circled character offers the most subtle treatment.

CAHDD Stage text provides the clearest explanation for viewers who are unfamiliar with the system.

An official icon or watermark offers a more distinctive and recognizable visual statement.

A “Creator’s Mark” connects the Stage directly to the person or organization standing behind the work.

A combined display provides the greatest flexibility. For example, a creator may use an official watermark on a website image, incorporate a circled Stage into an outgoing studio logo, and include the complete written Stage in the accompanying project description.



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There is no requirement to use the same display method in every context. The declared Stage should remain consistent, but its visual presentation may adapt to the work and audience.

Visible Transparency and Digital Provenance

CAHDD is designed to work alongside automated and embedded provenance systems, not replace them.

Digital watermarks, metadata, C2PA Content Credentials, and related technologies can provide machine-readable information about a file’s origin, history, edits, or use of particular technologies.

CAHDD provides the human-readable side of that conversation: a visible declaration from the person or organization standing behind the work.

Digital provenance can document what happened to a file. CAHDD lets creators tell their side of the story.

The two approaches are complementary. Embedded records may provide detailed technical information. A visible CAHDD Stage provides an immediate first impression of the human-technology balance behind the work.

An Honor System, Supported by Process

CAHDD operates on an honor system. Stages are self-declared, and a Stage character, icon, watermark, or written designation is not a certificate or independent legal proof of how a work was created.

Creators are encouraged to retain reasonable documentation of their processes, including work-in-progress files, drafts, layered source files, prompt logs, timestamps, metadata, project records, and process videos.

If a client, contest, partner, or legal proceeding requires evidence, this supporting material can help substantiate the creator’s Stage declaration and human contribution.

Where CAHDD contests, directories, or other programs request supporting documentation, CAHDD may issue a **Statement of Effort & Transparency** acknowledging that documentation was provided. This acknowledgement is not certification or independent verification.

Responsibility for an honest Stage declaration remains with the creator.

CAHDD is not just about transparency. It is about protecting your creative legacy.

Not Enforcement - Encouragement



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CAHDD is a framework for transparency, not a policing, enforcement, or certification system. We do not dictate how people create, and we do not claim that a Stage indicator independently verifies a creator’s process.

CAHDD provides a shared language. Creators decide whether and how to use it.

Use of the Official Graphics

The official CAHDD icons, watermarks, and circled Stage graphics are the intellectual property of 3DAllusions LLC and are provided for use as CAHDD Stage indicators.

They may be used in personal, professional, educational, and commercial work to communicate an honest CAHDD Stage declaration.

The official graphics may not be:

- Sold as standalone graphic assets
- Redistributed under false claims of authorship
- Presented as another organization’s original indicator system
- Altered in a way that misrepresents the meaning of a CAHDD Stage
- Used to imply certification, verification, endorsement, or approval by CAHDD

Use beyond these purposes requires written permission from 3DAllusions LLC.

Creator Choice Comes First

CAHDD is voluntary and self-elected. No agency forces participation. No platform owns the definition. No algorithm decides what a creator’s work “counts as.”

Creators may use an official CAHDD watermark or icon. They may use ③. They may write **CAHDD Stage 3**. They may place ③ beside a signature or incorporate it into a studio logo. They may also combine these methods.

The format is flexible because creators and their work are different.

The Stage is the shared language. The “Creator’s Mark” makes it yours.

Creator choice, before platforms decide for you.

What’s embedded is inevitable. What’s visible is your choice.





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CAHDD.org

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