

AI - Algorithms of Illusions

There is no single "artificial intelligence." This term encompasses a variety of algorithm-based systems, such as machine learning, natural language processing, expert systems, and computer vision, which automate data detection, recognition, classification, prediction, analysis, and generation.

A breakthrough in collective consciousness, and another chapter in the rich history of AI, was the launch of the generative chatbot GPT-3.5 in 2022, which gained over a million users in five days.

However, the history of artificial intelligence is much longer than that of great language models, and its patrons include Ada Lovelace and Alan Turing, whose stories are recalled in the exhibition. Today, artificial intelligence is the subject of numerous social, scientific, and artistic debates, amplifying extreme narratives in which optimistic visions confront the power of pessimistic notions.

Although AI systems are now widely available and widely used, this is not always accompanied by an understanding of how they work, how they are created, and what they actually are. In this sense, artificial intelligence seems to function in the collective imagination like a magician's hat. We drop a few ingredients—commands, prompts—into an impenetrable black cylinder—an application or program—only to glimpse a very real "white rabbit" or an answer to a question hidden even from loved ones. This is why we speak of the "black box of technology"—opaque to human sight and cognition. Meanwhile, behind the illusion that seduces our senses, more or less complex instructions—algorithms—are hidden.

In the exhibition "AI - Algorithms of Illusion," we want to peer inside this box and expose the illusions of the digital world through contemporary art. We want to encourage us to consider the social, political, economic, and environmental contexts of introducing AI into various areas of our lives: education, business, work, and ultimately, art itself. We understand the illusions of the title as the more or less hidden workings of technology and the narratives surrounding it, produced by industry and overseen by the authorities. The exhibition isn't interested in artificial intelligence as a technology in itself, which astonishes and seduces. It is dedicated to a critical reflection on AI as a cultural phenomenon and part of a larger social order.

A careful look into the depths of the "black box" reveals a chaotic tangle of cables, wires, and chips installed by humans and serving specific purposes. This allows us to present AI not only as dematerialized technology but also as a material infrastructure comprised of undersea cables, minerals extracted from the Earth, transmission systems, and data centers. As Kate Crawford writes in "Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence", AI is neither artificial nor intelligent, neither abstract nor autonomous. "Rather, it is embodied and material, produced from natural resources, fuel, human labor, infrastructure, logistics, history, classification." It is also part of the socio-political order in which we operate.

But what does it mean to be human in a world of evolving artificial intelligence? What are the environmental costs of its development? What and how do algorithms see, and can they be trusted? After all, how does AI influence art and its reception?

In this exhibition, we seek answers to these questions, drawing on the perspectives of engaged, critical artists, often also media researchers and theorists. Together, we expose technological illusions and demythologize artificial intelligence. As Joanna Żylińska argues, the concept of artificial intelligence is based precisely on artifice, whose Latin origin (*artificium*) means more than trickery and deception. It refers to art, craft, and dexterity. It is precisely these that we will focus on throughout the exhibition.

We hope that entering the world of illusion algorithms will spark curiosity and open the desire for your own exploration and confrontation with a technologically dominated future. The works presented in the exhibition lead us through tropes that dominate the current discussion on AI, which are organized by terms such as "power," "effort," "knowledge," "bonds," and "imaginings." The accompanying "time capsules" gather materials that demonstrate the strong connections between the past and the present, placing current processes in a broader historical perspective. In this way, we identify the exhibition's main themes, which center on questions not only about technology but also about ourselves, our human condition in a world of complex ecologies.

Come with us on a journey from artifice to the art of AI in its many guises. Since we have long been globally and technologically connected, let's try to learn something about the very nature of these connections.