For Change

Press Release

UNCANNY VALUES
Artificial Intelligence & You

An exhibition of the MAK

Exhibition Venue	MAK Exhibition Hall
	MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	29 May – 6 October 2019
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

In the exhibition *UNCANNY VALUES: Artificial Intelligence & You*, the MAK explores one of the most important topics of coming decades, one that has a momentous effect on all aspects of our lives: Artificial Intelligence (AI). In order to understand, shape, and make meaningful use of AI's and related technologies' full potential, we need to develop the kind of new cultural sensibility that this exhibition aims to cultivate. In a generously designed parcours, installations in various media by 18 international artists and designers enter into dialog with examples and scenarios from current AI applications.

Exactly 100 years ago, Sigmund Freud wrote *The Uncanny*. The Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori coined the term "uncanny valley" for machines that are so humanoid that they send shivers down our spine. It is therefore not surprising that machines that can learn, think, and act seem uncanny. AI is increasingly part of our lives, our social relationships, our political and economic activity. The question arises as to what kind of creature this omnipresent AI has already become and how it will develop further—and on what ideological basis it will do so.

Is AI democratic? Can it ever understand what it means to live together as social beings? AI evaluates our political and economic interests: what we read, post, vote, purchase, with whom we have contact, and so on. And its algorithms affect our decision-making processes. What role does a tech company play when its algorithms are flawed or manipulated? Who is more intelligent or more responsible: programmers or intelligent systems?

In society, politics, the economy, and the environment—in short, as a civilization—we must develop new sets of values in collaboration with our machines. *UNCANNY VALUES: Artificial Intelligence & You* reveals a multitude of perspectives onto a field that is developing so rapidly that it is increasingly difficult to comprehend. The exhibition focuses on questions relating to culture and technology, to what it means to be human, to power and control, and to finding our bearings in the uncanny valley of AI.

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29.5. – 6.10.2019

For Change

One essential level of orientation is provided by technologies that already work with AI—speech recognition and translation programs (natural language processing), image recognition and generating programs (machine vision), or programs that learn from our data (deep learning).

An information design that takes up the whole of the exhibition hall demonstrates how AI technologies interact with our world, embracing AI and business, health, politics, emotions, culture, thinking, the future, security, ecology, sex, and intimacy. *UNCANNY VALUES* explores positions and values that enable us to create an ecologically, socially, culturally, and economically just, and sustainable society for the future.

UNCANNY VALUES: Artificial Intelligence & You presents a total of seven new productions and thirteen current works:

The spectacular new production *Asunder* (2019) by **Tega Brain**, **Julian Oliver**, and **Bengt Sjölén** sketches a scenario involving an omnipotent AI. An AI environment manager analyzes satellite, climate, geology, biodiversity, topography, population, and social media data and generates a series of environment management plans: the planet is entirely transformed by AI.

With her spatial installation *Probably Chelsea* (2017), artist **Heather Dewey-Hagborg** shows thirty possible portraits of the famous American whistleblower **Chelsea E. Manning**, which have been algorithmically generated from analysis of her DNA. Opposed to this uncanny plethora of personal information is the subjectivity with which DNA data can be interpreted.

In *Significant Other* (2018) by **Jonas Lund**, networked screens in the MAK and the Kunsthalle Wien measure visitors' emotional parameters and contrast them with each other. The relationships between art, emotion, locality, and technology are experienced actively and passively.

The Chair Project (Four Classics) (2019) by designers **Philipp Schmitt** and **Steffen Weiss** lets human and AI designers work together to create completely new types of classical seating. The joint designs are presented as prototypes in 1:1 scale.

Mladen Bizumic is interested in AI's capacity to recognize images and in *MoMA's Baby* (2019) gives us an insight into his preoccupation with the American engineer Russell A. Kirsch, who in 1957 invented the first digital image scanner.

In **Constant Dullaart's** ongoing project *DullDream* (2018)—in contrast to the widely known Deep Dream algorithms that hallucinatorily create and amplify image characteristics—images of exhibition visitors are neuronally taken apart.

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29.5. – 6.10.2019

For Change

Trevor Paglen's video installation *Behold These Glorious Times!* (2017) shows hundreds of thousands of images with which neural networks are trained to analyze emotions, gestures, and facial expressions. The photo series *Adversarially Evolved Hallucination* has two AI systems interact: one generating and one recognizing images.

For *UNCANNY VALUES*, **Jorinde Voigt** created the large-scale eight-part oeuvre *Immersive Integral Turn I—VIII* (2019), that explores mental and artistic interaction between the human mind and media-technical contexts. Formalisms and matrices generate techno-organic thinking and behavior.

Based on her film *Teknolust* (2002, with Tilda Swinton) **Lynn Hershman Leeson** developed AI characters *Agent Ruby* and *DiNA*, who learn via voice and face recognition and interact with visitors. *Emotional Barometer* (2008) uses RSS feeds, blog tags, and mobile communication statistics to present oracle-like reactions to various topics.

In *Talk to me* (2017) by **Jonas Lund** we meet a chatbot modelled on the artist. The voice reproduces that of the artist and may be downloaded for use in voice assistants.

Chatbot *ELIZA* is a computer program developed by IT expert Joseph Weizenbaum in the 1960s. It can conduct a simulated psychotherapeutic dialog with a partner.

PoetryMachine 1.0 (2001/2002/2019) by **David Link** was the first fully automatic poetry generator. The installation writes original texts as if by magic until a visitor comes close enough to be invited to join in the writing.

The new film *Se ti sabir* (2019) by British artist **James Bridle** reflects on language, (artificial) intelligence, and our relationship with new technologies. "Sabir," a word from Lingua Franca, means "to know" but is also a greeting. *Se ti sabir* tries to imagine new ways in which we might understand the beings that surround us and the ones we are creating.

The video installation *Sprachagenten / Language Agents* (2018) by **Armin Linke** and **Giulia Bruno** (coproduced with the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin) deals—in conversation with the Belgian researcher and artist Luc Steels—with experiments with robots who teach each other and develop their own artificial language. Ethical questions concerning technological developments are foregrounded.

New Zealand-born artist **Simon Denny** works and researches intensively i.a. in the field of crypto currencies and blockchains. Two installations from the series *Centralization vs Decentralization* (2018) show devices

29.5. – 6.10.2019

For Change

mutating between highly technologized capitalism (bitcoin mining), cargo cult, blockchain, and board game.

This Much I'm Worth (The self evaluating artwork) (2017) by British artist **Rachel Ara** determines the value of an (artistic) work on a meta level: algorithms permanently calculate its sales value based on social media, art market websites, and financial market analyses, adapting this value in relation to the artist's gender and provenance.

Our Friends Electric, a short film by the Anglo-Indian design collective **Superflux** (Anab Jain, Jon Ardern), explores our relationship with voice-activated AI assistants. Three fictitious devices evolve from simple voice control systems to a behavior more finely tuned to our own.

automato.farm (Simone Rebaudengo, Matthieu Cherubini, Saurabh Datta, and Lorenzo Romagnoli) developed for this exhibition a new installation entitled *BIY Believe it Yourself* (2019). The series lets visitors construct their own experiments on the theme of "superstition," thereby exploring three AI technologies: object recognition, natural language processing, and context/location awareness.

Theseus (**Claude Shannon**, 1952), a mechanical mouse capable of finding its way out of labyrinths, and remembering the correct route, is considered one of the first examples of machine learning.

Anatomy of an AI (2018) by **Kate Crawford** and **Vladan Joler**, an artistic research project, creates an in-depth anatomy of Amazon Echo that presents all aspects of its material and human labor resources, as well as of the data it generates and processes.

AImojis and neural networks
The heart of the exhibition's communication design are the *AImojis*—AI-generated emojis. Using input from a databank of several thousand frequently used emojis, the graphic and interactive design studio Process Studio (Martin Grödl and Moritz Resl) trained a neural network to create its own completely new variations of these tiny digital faces. Each *AImoji* presents hitherto unknown "artificial" emotions.

The exhibition display developed by Some Place Studio (Bika Rebek and Daniel Prost) spatially represents the multifarious interconnectedness of the exhibition's topics. Five "AI Pods" distributed over the exhibition allow visitors to experience concrete applications of AI, generating new *AImojis*, fonts, faces of fictive individuals, and secrets in AI language on site. The contents of the exhibition may also be accessed at uncannyvalues.org

Curators: Paul Feigelfeld, Media Theorist, and Marlies Wirth, Curator, Digital Culture and MAK Design Collection

viennabiennale.org

29. 5. – 6. 10. 2019

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Exhibition design: Some Place Studio, Vienna/New York (Bika Rebek, Daniel Prost)
Graphic and interactive design: Process Studio (Martin Grödl, Moritz Resl)
Scientific consultant: Christoph Engemann

Photo material on the exhibition available at MAK.at/presse and viennabiennale.org

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29.5. – 6.10.2019