

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 is exploring one of the most important subjects of the coming decades, one that has significant consequences for all areas of our lives: artificial intelligence (AI). In order to understand, help shape, and sensibly implement the potentials of artificial intelligence and the associated technologies, we need a new cultural sensibility, and this exhibition seeks to stimulate that. Installations in various media by 18 international artists and designers spread out in a generous parcours enhanced by examples and scenarios from current applications of AI.

It is exactly 100 years ago that Sigmund Freud wrote "The Uncanny." The Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori coined the term "uncanny valley" for machines that are so humanoid that we shudder. It is therefore unsurprising that machines that can learn, think, and act seem uncanny. AIs are increasingly part of our lives, our social connections, our political and economic activity. This raises the question what sort of a living creature the omnipresent AI already is and will become and on the basis of which values this will occur.

Is an AI democratic? Can it ever understand what it means to coexist as human beings? AI exploits our political and economic interests: what we read, post, vote, purchase and 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 responsible: programmers or intelligent systems?

In society, politics, business, ecology—in short, as a civilization—we have to develop new values together with our machines. *UNCANNY VALUES: Artificial Intelligence & You* opens up a number of perspectives on an area that is developing rapidly but is, at the same time, increasingly difficult to understand. The exhibition centers on questions of culture and technology, being human, power, control, and orientation in the uncanny valley of artificial intelligence.

29.5. – 6.10.2019

Against this backdrop, the exhibition relates AI and its viewers with examples from various thematic clusters and historical strands. One essential level of orientation is provided by technologies that already work with AI: virtual assistants and translators (“natural language processing”), image recognition and production (“machine vision”), and anticipating our shopping behavior (“prediction”), where AI learns from our data (e.g., “deep learning”).

Just how these techniques interact with our world is illuminated in an information design that spans the entire exhibition hall: AI and business, health politics, emotions, culture, thinking, future, security, ecology, sex, and intimacy—we need to set the course for future scenarios wisely. *UNCANNY VALUES* seeks to approach stances and values that enable us to jointly design an ecologically, socially, culturally, and economically just, sustainable, and forward-looking society.

The works shown include the spectacular new production *Asunder* (2019) by the artists Tega Brain, Julian Oliver, and Bengt Sjölén (Berlin/New York): visitors can watch live on several screens what AI would change about our planet to ensure a balance of resources, social justice, protection of endangered species, and sustainable production. With unpredictable consequences.

The subject of surveillance is addressed, for example, in the video installation *Behold These Glorious Times!* (2017) by Trevor Paglen. It confronts visitors with hundreds of thousands of images, with which neural networks are trained to recognize and analyze emotions, gestures, and facial expressions.

In the spacious installation *Probably Chelsea* (2017), the artist Heather Dewey-Hagborg shows thirty possible portraits of the American whistleblower Chelsea E. Manning, produced by an algorithm that analyzes her DNA. This volatile linking of genetic data and highly advanced technology provides an uncanny wealth of information about who and what we are.

The Chair Project (Four Classics, 2019) by the designers Philipp Schmitt and Steffen Weiss reveals a look ahead at co-design by human and artificially intelligent designers. When a physical body is absent, technology conceives entirely new forms of classical seating furniture, presented as full-scale prototypes in Vienna for the first time.

UNCANNY VALUES: Artificial Intelligence & You presents seven original productions and eleven recent works by international artists and designers Rachel Ara, automato.farm, Mladen Bizumic, Tega Brain, James Bridle, Giulia Bruno and Armin Linke in collaboration with Luc Steels, Simon Denny, Heather Dewey-Hagborg and Chelsea E. Manning, Constant

Dullaart, Lynn Hershman Leeson, David Link, Jonas Lund, Julian Oliver, Trevor Paglen, Philipp Schmitt and Steffen Weiss, Bengt Sjöln, Superflux, and Jorinde Voigt.

Almojis and Neural Networks

The exhibition's setting also makes use of AI: the core of the communication design are Almojis: AI-generated emojis. The Vienna graphic and interactive design firm Process Studio (Martin Grödl and Moritz Resl) trained a neural network to learn from a database of thousands of common emojis how to create its own variations of these digital faces. Every Almoji shows still unfamiliar "artificial" emotions.

The exhibition display developed by Bika Rebek and Daniel Prost (Some Place Studio, Vienna/New York) addresses spatially as well—much like a neural network—the multilayered networking of the themes. A mediating level that works with AI technologies and was developed as a collaboration between Process Studio and Christoph Engemann, delves more deeply into the content of the exhibition and of the exhibition website (online catalog) uncannyvalues.org.

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

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

Visual material for the exhibition is available at <http://mak.at/en/press> and viennabiennale.org

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