

Title
*Artificial Design:
Creation Versus
Machine Learning*

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***Artificial Design* by Anthony Masure will be available in bookstores in May 2023. This book, published by HEAD-Publishing of the Geneva University of Art and Design, examines the challenges of artificial intelligences in the field of design.**

“The fantasy of the omnipotence of a machine controlled by a human goes back to older logics of domination and slavery that urgently need to be deconstructed. We must rethink our relationships with technologies, shifting from a binary (domination/execution) comprehension of machines to the apprehension of complexity and vulnerabilities.”
p. 99-100

The general public has recently discovered machine learning programs such as DALL·E, MidJourney or Disco Diffusion that can generate images from text commands. These authorless images, of impressive quality, are causing as much wonder as debate within the international creative community, which is frightened by the threat that these processes pose to the survival of the professions of illustrator or photographer.

A keen observer of these technologies for several years, Anthony Masure (professor at the Geneva University of Art and Design) broadens this question in his new essay *Artificial Design: Creation Versus Machine Learning*. His text aims to evaluate the implications for design of the democratization of these programs, both positive and negative. By allowing us to better understand how they work and by illustrating his point with numerous examples of non-conforming uses, the author seeks to encourage their critical appropriation.

Productivist vision of design

The title of the book underlines one of the little-discussed dimensions of machine learning programs, namely their capacity to mask the technicality of the operations they perform. The artifice would be to give the impression of an absence of effort, which is part of a cult of performance and a maximization of output. However, if there is a risk that this productivist approach prevails in design, the author reminds us that this field is a ground for the expression of a series of other issues such as lack, failure or ambiguity.

The main modality of artificial intelligence today is that of machine learning, i.e. the capacity of programs to recognize and index existing data that are submitted to it, and then to generate meaningful content on command. The opacity in which systems like ChatGPT evolve is conducive to the emergence of significant social risks, for example in terms of profiling individuals or reinforcing existing biases. Economically, such programs require financial resources that only large companies like GAFAM can invest, which leads to a worrying concentration of data and power in their hands.

Revealing the flaws of these devices

If the technical complexity of these programs makes it almost impossible to intervene within the computational device, Anthony Masure shows that designers can mobilize these technologies in a critical way by acting at other levels. The last part of his essay focuses on a series of recent experiments that look for the limits of these programs, by questioning their statistical models, by subverting the datasets with which the algorithms are raised, or by producing discrepancy with the expected result. Text recognition system seen through augmented reality glasses,

valorization of the graphic accident, combination of styles and cultural codes: the palette of blurring of the utilitarian determinism of these tools is wide. It emerges that far from being replaced, the designer can take support on these formatted devices to make appear the faults and the aberrations, while questioning the borders between the human and the machine.



The author

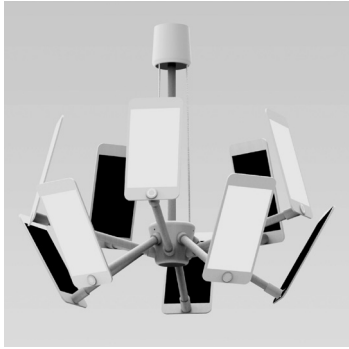
Anthony Masure is an Associate Professor and Dean of Research at the Geneva University of Art and Design (HEAD–Genève, HES-SO). His research is currently focused on the impact that artificial intelligence and blockchain technologies have on design. He is a co-founder of the research journals *Back Office* and *Réel-Virtuel*. He is also the author of the essay *Design et humanités* ('Design and the Digital Humanities', B42 Editions, 2017). He is a founding member of Hint3rland (2022), a creative studio for the decentralized world.

The collection

The editorial unit HEAD–Publishing, founded in 2021 by HEAD–Genève, publishes the Manifestes collection, which highlights opinions, reflections and actions developed by art and design actors to address contemporary issues. HEAD–Publishing promotes a wide dissemination of knowledge by offering its publications in digital formats in free access (ePub, screen reading, PDF) or in print-on-demand on its website: head-publishing.ch, and through publications in paperback format sold at affordable prices in bookstores. The first four titles in

the Manifestes series have been published: *Manifesto of Interiors: Thinking in the Expanded Media* by Javier Fernández Contreras, *Investigation/Design* by Nicolas Nova, *Ways to Leave Earth* by Christophe Kihm, Jill Gasparina and Anne-Lyse Renon, *MRIQIR MIOIRR* by Carla Demierre. These books are available in French and English. They are distributed in the French-speaking world by Paon Diffusion and in a network of international bookstores by Antenne Books.

Double page spread

<p>[Fig. 11] Simone Rebaudengo, Sami Niemelä, <i>Made in Machina/e</i>, 2018</p>  <p>82 Artificial Design</p>	<p>the market? Who (or what) decides what functionalities are a priority, which ones are necessary or even desirable? Does this merchandise exist solely because it is possible to produce it? (Rebaudengo & Niemelä, madeinmachina.com, 2018).</p> <p>Since the predictive powers of AIs are not always exact, their results can be extremely humorous when some aspect of meaning is manifested clumsily (because it was taken too literally). The success of the Twitter account @weirddalle (<i>Weird DALL-E Mini Generations</i>, 2022) can thus be explained by the production of images that are both too exact and too bizarre when compared to the prompt (caption) visually attributed to them. Their organisation into nine squares and their themes are all part of the serial logic of memes intrinsic to internet pop culture, which involve variations on patterns shared by a given community. By questioning notions of authoriality and 'strictly human' culture, deep learning technologies reveal how formal logic produces illogical results, and how all calculations require a share of incalculable (as was the case with Turing's Machine), because it is only when the flow ceases that meaning can surface (Nova & Vacheron, 2018).</p> <p>One example that does not make use of machine learning shows how the simple fact of shifting the parameters can reveal their underlying technical mechanics. As part of an exhibition (<i>Deus ex Machina</i>, curated by Sophie Fétro, 2015) at the Centre Saint-Charles, (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University), graphic designers Kévin Donnot and Élise Gay (E+K) created a system to generate</p> <p>Creative Potentialities 83</p>
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