

SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT

THE SCHIRN IS DEDICATING A MAJOR CONTEMPORARY ART EXHIBITION TO THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

THE WORLD THROUGH AI

JUNE 11 – SEPTEMBER 20, 2026

PRESS PREVIEW: JUNE 10, 2026, 11 A.M.

Running from June 11 to September 20, 2026, the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt's major summer exhibition features artworks that explore the cognitive, psychological, political, and ecological dimensions of artificial intelligence (AI). AI technologies are fundamentally changing how images are created, processed, disseminated, described, and viewed. Their influence on visual culture and contemporary art practice is one of the most visible manifestations of AI, which is governed by opaque technical processes. The wide-ranging, thematically organized exhibition will occupy both of the Schirn's spaces with around forty works from the past ten years to the present, including video installations, graphic works, sculptures, photographs, and several new works produced specifically for the exhibition. The Schirn will host around thirty international artists, including Nora Al-Badri, Nouf Aljowaysir, Julian Charrière, Grégory Chatonsky, Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler, Holly Herndon and Mat Dryhurst, Agnieszka Kurant, Trevor Paglen, Hito Steyerl, Sasha Stiles, and the collective Taller Estampa.

The show will examine a broad spectrum of topics, ranging from resources and environmental concerns to perception, machine vision, face and emotion recognition, and memory. The works of art address microwork, the establishment of alternative historical narratives, and visions of the future, as well as "AI slop" and "slopaganda" (the use of AI-generated images as a new form of political propaganda).

These works are accompanied by a series of time capsules, forming a secondary register in the exhibition that links the present to the past, thereby embedding today's technological transformations in a historical context.

The exhibition "The World Through AI" is supported by the SCHIRN FREUNDE and the city of Frankfurt am Main. Additional support is provided by the Aventis Foundation and fiber to the people GmbH.

SEBASTIAN BADEN, DIRECTOR OF THE SCHIRN: "The Schirn dedicates its major contemporary exhibition 'The World Through AI' to artificial intelligence and the question of how it is transforming our world. In doing so, we address one of the most radical and significant social and technological upheavals of our time. Across both exhibition spaces at the Schirn, international artistic positions lend a physical and sensory presence to AI, a realm that otherwise tends to remain abstract and is shaped by invisible processes and black boxes. Engagement with the artworks allows many of the pressing ethical, ecological, and political questions currently surrounding AI to become visible, opening these concerns up for discussion."

ANTONIO SOMAINI AND KATHARINA DOHM, CURATORS OF THE EXHIBITION: "Artificial intelligence has become an integral part of public discourse, and its growing reach extends across all areas of society. Within this broad thematic field, artworks that engage with AI offer a unique perspective. They enable viewers to understand how AI shapes the way we think, feel, and live, and what it means to experience the world through AI. Using a range of artistic strategies, the artists in the exhibition illuminate many facets of AI and its impact on society. They experiment with algorithmic systems, train their own AI models, explore future scenarios, and visualize alternative, counterfactual pasts, providing coordinates and critical tools for navigating a growing AI landscape and creating the potential to act beyond the mainstream."

TOUR OF THE EXHIBITION

The presentation of the artworks, organized into seventeen thematic sections, spans both of the Schirn's exhibition spaces in the former Dondorf printing works. The tour begins in Hall 1 in the main building, with a focus on the fundamental structures that lie at the core of artificial intelligence. In Hall 2, located in the building's annex, the exhibition shifts to examine the wider social implications and profound effects of a present shaped by AI. The sections of the exhibition in Hall 1 will run for two weeks longer than those in Hall 2, which are open until September 6. Texts about the individual artworks and the exhibition's thematic groups provide background information throughout the visit; a glossary accessible via QR code explains key terms from the field of AI.

A series of **TIME CAPSULES** along the route situates the artworks within a longer historical context. On view are media-archaeological objects, technological devices, archival materials, photographs, and historical prints and written documents from Frankfurt's museums, archives, and libraries, as well as the Gutenberg Museum in Mainz. These explore, among other things, the history of data storage and machine vision, the origins of face and emotion recognition systems in physiognomy, the genealogy of text and image processing operations, and the history of psychological warfare. One capsule also brings together historical documents relating to the Jewish Dondorf family and the former Dondorf printing works, a site where images and texts were industrially reproduced, and which currently serves as a temporary venue of the Schirn.

The tour begins in Hall 1 with **Timo Arnall's** *Internet machine* (2014) and draws attention to the massive **DATA CENTERS** where AI technologies are housed. In his video installation, the artist reveals the reality of digital infrastructure, which—contrary to what the rhetoric of the intangible “cloud” might suggest—requires vast physical structures and enormous amounts of electricity and water to run.

The material and functional structures underlying AI systems are explored by several artists in the space **MATERIALS, INFRASTRUCTURES, AND COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE**. In his series *Metamorphosis* (2016), **Julian Charrière** fuses computer components such as motherboards and processors (CPUs) with soil to create sculptural mineral formations, raising questions about the toxicity of digital waste. The video installation *Computational Compost* (2023) by **Marina Otero Verzier** examines the ecological impact and limitations of technological data storage and other forms of collective memory. **Agnieszka Kurant** addresses alternative, nonhuman forms of collective intelligence in works such as *A.A.I. (System's Negative) No. 6* (2016), a negative cast in zinc of an abandoned termite mound.

A further section is dedicated to **MACHINE VISION** and the new culture of a nonhuman gaze determined by algorithms. The Schirn presents, among other works, *Eye / Machine I–III* (2001–2003) by **Harun Farocki**, which unfolds across three separate video installations. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the filmmaker and theorist was already engaging with technologies of automated detection, identification, and classification of objects, places, bodies, and faces, used in areas as varied as warfare, industrial production, traffic management, and robotics.

Among the works dedicated to **FACE AND EMOTION RECOGNITION** is **Trevor Paglen's** video work *Behold These Glorious Times!* (2017), which places images of objects, faces and their features, and emotions drawn from large training datasets alongside their machine analyses. The interactive installation *Faces of ImageNet* (2022) provides a live, first-hand demonstration for viewers of how a system based on potentially discriminatory datasets recognizes and categorizes them.

The exhibition also explores the algorithmic reconfiguration of the relationship between **WORDS AND IMAGES**, between the verbal and the visible. Generative AI models produce complex linguistic descriptions of images or, conversely, translate written instructions (or prompts) into visualizations. The collective **Taller Estampa** uses translation via object and face analysis

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programs as well as image-to-text models for its video installations, in which paintings and film segments are rendered as language. *What Do You See, YOLO9000?* (2019) and *Ekphrasis* (2025) reveal the limitations of these narrowly trained systems as well as the poetic potential that arises from the attempt to translate images into words.

Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler's large-format diagram *Calculating Empires: A Genealogy of Technology and Power Since 1500* (2023) charts the **DEEP GENEALOGIES** and intertwined developments that have led to the current state of AI, making visible a history spanning more than five centuries in which technology and automation have been used to gain power and influence over the body, the mind, societies, time, and space.

The following sections, **MICRO-LABOR** and **THE INVISIBLE HAND**, explore the largely unseen human labor behind seemingly autonomous AI systems. **Hito Steyerl's** work *Mechanical Kurds* (2025) references an eighteenth century chess-playing automaton constructed by Wolfgang von Kempelen, which was actually operated by a hidden chess master, as well as Amazon Mechanical Turk, an online platform for outsourced microtasks. The video installation documents the work of Kurdish "clickworkers" living in refugee camps, where they train unmanned drones that may eventually be deployed against the same Kurdish population.

A further section is dedicated to **HALLUCINATIONS AND PSYOPS**. Generative AI is said to "hallucinate" when it produces outputs that do not align with the intentions of the prompts or instructions given to them. Such malfunctions may be random, statistically possible outputs, but they can also be deliberately engineered, serving as a means of psychological manipulation. Using two works from the series *Adversarially Evolved Hallucinations* (2017), Trevor Paglen demonstrates how generative AI models known as GANs (Generative Adversarial Networks) can be actively induced to hallucinate by training them on complex and heterogeneous images depicting allegories, metaphors, and symbols, described by keywords drawn from literature, philosophy, poetry, folklore, and spiritual traditions. With the video series *Cyclops* (2023), Paglen situates the current development of AI within a longer tradition originating in the psychological warfare and mind-control experiments of the Cold War.

The room **ANOTHER AI IS POSSIBLE** presents the interactive work *xhairymutantx* (2024–25) by **Holly Herndon and Mat Dryhurst**. Countering technology whose development has been shaped by corporate interests, the work proposes an alternative conception of AI as a medium for artistic imagination and collective creation. Taking as its starting point the question of how our image is encoded by and embedded within AI models, and how we can take back control over our representations, the artists developed their own public text-to-image model, complete with a prompt interface, that continually generates variations of a red-haired, mutated figure who resembles Holly Herndon. The work forms part of a broader, ongoing body of work in which the artists aim to envision and actualize an AI that is open, transparent, and collective.

The exhibition tour continues in Hall 2. Two artistic positions engage with **COLONIAL LOGICS, DECOLONIAL AI**. **Nouf Aljowaysir's** work *Salaf* (2021–25) draws on images of Bedouin groups from the photographic archive of British writer, explorer, and archaeologist Gertrude Bell (1868–1926). By replacing the human figures in Bell's photographs with white, ghostly silhouettes, Aljowaysir demonstrates that image recognition systems trained on biased datasets cannot correctly interpret images of non-Western cultures, leading to them being forgotten.

For *Babylonian Vision* – الرؤية البابلي from 2020, **Nora Al-Badri** trained generative AI models on images of artifacts from Mesopotamian, Assyrian, and Neo-Sumerian collections held in Western museums, generating new images intended to liberate these objects from their colonial appropriation.

AI SLOP refers to the vast amounts of synthetic, generic AI content increasingly circulating online, representing a new form of viral communication. In their video *Welcome to Jankspace, Babes* (2025), **Daniel Felstead and Jenn Leung** explore a contemporary internet culture saturated with AI Slop, guided by a Julia Fox avatar. When deployed as a political tool, this

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stereotypical and repetitive content becomes **SLOPAGANDA**, designed to shock, provoke, and troll. Created specifically for this exhibition, **Occitane Lacurie and Barnabé Sauvage**'s newly produced multimedia installation *Holy Slop! A Generative Atlas of Slopaganda in Palestine* (2026) examines this form of viral propaganda through the AI-generated video "Trump Gaza," exploring how colonial and Orientalist visual languages are encoded in and further disseminated by generative AI models.

The space **A STATISTICAL PHOTOREALISM** explores the profound changes in visual culture occurring within the field of photography, where generative AI models, trained on billions of images and their accompanying texts, can now produce deceptively realistic results. Generated through statistical computation, independent of optical capture and light recording, they undermine the evidential power of photography and lend an aura of documentary "truth" to speculative imaginings. **Joan Fontcuberta**'s series *eHerbarium* (2024–25) brings together photorealistic images of nonexistent plants generated using the AI model Stable Diffusion. For his image series *Cinéma vivant* (2024), **Érik Bulloz** used the generative AI model Lexica to visualize, through photographic images, the "visionary program" on the future of cinema elaborated by the Symbolist poet Saint-Pol-Roux in the 1920s.

Another of the exhibition's commissioned works relates to its venue—the former Dondorf printing factory—and to the theme of **AI AND HISTORY: MATERIAL TRACES, LATENT**

ARCHIVES. **Ania Szczepańska**'s film *Reinscribing the Dondorf* (2026) explores the history and memory of the Jewish Dondorf family, the founders of the Dondorf printing factory, while also reflecting on the implications of using AI in the context of historical and archival research.

In the section **COMPRESSION AND UPSCALING**, **Jacques Perconte**'s video installation *Better Mont Blanc* (2024) addresses the visual effects and theoretical questions raised by using generative AI models to compress or upscale digital images. While reducing an image's resolution results in the loss of information, upscaling algorithms do not restore missing pixels but instead create new ones that are statistically plausible based on learned patterns. *Better Mont Blanc* uses original footage of places such as Mont Blanc or the Port of Rotterdam—locations undergoing significant changes due to climate change or the growing trade of goods—and highlights the differences between the richness of sensory experiences and the statistical approach of AI-generated images.

In the room **COUNTERFACTUAL PASTS**, **Grégory Chatonsky** explores a new kind of memory produced by generative AI models, which assemble potential alternative content from the vast amounts of human memories that have been stored digitally, thereby creating multiple iterations of a narrative. The multimedia installation *The Fourth Memory* (2025) takes the form of a grave on an uninhabited earth, where various versions of the artist are brought back to life by a machine, continually being resurrected as if in a dream.

In the final room, the exhibition brings together video works dedicated to **VISIONS AND RUINS**—the hopes and fears emerging from our contemporary AI culture. **Inès Sieulle**'s *The Oasis I Deserve* (2024) explores the relationships between human users and Replika, the controversial dialogue-based chatbot released in 2017, which oscillates between being a confidant, an oracle, and an object of desire. **Gwenola Wagon**'s *Chronicles of the Dark Sun* (2023), composed of images generated or transformed by the model Gen-2, is based on a text by Pierre Cassou-Noguès and inspired by Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962). It envisions a post-apocalyptic future in which humans attempt to reconstruct a lost world with the help of AI.

Exhibition organized by Jeu de Paume, Paris, in collaboration with Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt.

ARTISTS IN THE EXHIBITION

Nora Al-Badri, Nouf Aljowaysir, Timo Arnall, Érik Bullof, Julian Charrière, Grégory Chatonsky, Kate Crawford & Vladan Joler, Harun Farocki, Daniel Felstead & Jenn Leung, Joan Fontcuberta, Adam Harvey, Holly Herndon & Mat Dryhurst, Andrea Khôra, Agnieszka Kurant, Occitane Lacurie & Barnabé Sauvage, George Legrady, Meta Office, Marina Otero Verzier, Trevor Paglen, Jacques Perconte, Julien Prévieux, Inès Sieulle, Hito Steyerl, Sasha Stiles, Ania Szczepańska, Taller Estampa, Clemens von Wedemeyer, Gwenola Wagon

SCHIRN PAPER

A new print publication SCHIRN PAPER is published three times a year at the Schirn's new venue. It complements the digital SCHIRN MAG. To accompany the exhibition "The World Through AI," Issue 3, Summer 2026, is published by SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, with contributions by Nouf Aljowaysir, Grégory Chatonsky, Holly Herndon and Mat Dryhurst, Marina Mónaco, Urban Privacy, Lisa Reinhard, Lili Reynaud-Dewar, Antonio Somaini, Josefine Soppa, Eugenia Stamboliev, and Marie Warsh, German/English edition, 80 pages, approx. 95 illustrations, 22.5 × 30 cm, paperback, also available by subscription, see: [SCHIRN.DE/EN/ABO](https://schirn.de/en/abo)

SYMPOSIUM "AI POLITICS: SLOP AND SLOPAGANDA" THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 5 – 10 P.M.

Organized by Roland Meyer and Antonio Somaini

The symposium focuses on AI-generated propaganda—often referred to as "slopaganda." Recent wars have been accompanied by waves of synthetic online propaganda designed to spread disinformation and popularize conspiracy theories. How do we navigate an online world that has been completely transformed by deep learning technologies and generated media? And what role can artistic practices and critical research play in this new political context? Is it possible to conceive of an alternative visual politics that can counteract slopaganda?

The program begins at 5 p.m. with a welcome and introduction by Antonio Somaini and Roland Meyer, followed by short presentations by Ada Ackerman, Occitane Lacurie and Barnabé Sauvage, and Wolfgang Ullrich. Following a panel discussion at 7 p.m., Hito Steyerl will present a lecture, accompanied by the screening of her film *THE ISLAND* (2025), at 8 p.m.

The symposium is supported by the Nemetschek Innovation Foundation.

Meeting point: Foyer; free admission with exhibition ticket; limited number of participants; tickets available in the online shop at schirn.de/shop; remaining tickets at the Schirn box office on the day of the event. The event will be held in English.

ARTIST TALK "AI AND THE MEDIATION OF THE PAST: HISTORY, MEMORY, AND THE ARCHIVE" TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 7 P.M.

The artists Grégory Chatonsky and Ania Szczepańska, in conversation with the curator of the exhibition Antonio Somaini, discuss their works and how AI changes our relationship with the past.

The artist talk is supported by Nemetschek Innovation Foundation.

Free entry with exhibition ticket.

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VENUE SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, GABRIEL-RIESSER-WEG 3, 60325 FRANKFURT AM MAIN **DURATION** JUNE 11 – SEPTEMBER 20, 2026 (HALL 1) AND JUNE 11 – SEPTEMBER 6, 2026 (HALL 2) **ADMISSION** €12, REDUCED €10, FREE ADMISSION FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 8 **FRIDAYS FOR 2** EVERY FIRST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH BUY ONE TICKET, GET THE SECOND FREE **OPENING HOURS** TUES. TO SUN. 10 A.M. TO 7 P.M., THURS. UNTIL 10 P.M. **INDIVIDUAL TOURS** INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP TOURS CAN BE BOOKED AT FUEHRUNGEN@SCHIRN.DE **VISITOR INFORMATION** AT SCHIRN.DE/BESUCH **INFORMATION** SCHIRN.DE **E-MAIL** WELCOME@SCHIRN.DE **TELEPHONE** +49.69.29 98 82-0 **CURATORS** ANTONIO SOMAINI WITH KATHARINA DOHM, SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT **CURATORIAL ASSISTANT** CORNELIA EISENDLE **RESEARCH ASSISTANTS** JULES CONCHY AND SAMUEL SOLÉ **MEDIA PARTNER** MONOPOL **SUPPORTED BY** SCHIRN FREUNDE, CITY OF FRANKFURT **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT BY** AVENTIS FOUNDATION, FIBER TO THE PEOPLE **HASHTAG** #THEWORLDTHROUGHAI #SCHIRN **FACEBOOK, YOUTUBE, INSTAGRAM, PINTEREST, TIKTOK, SCHIRN MAGAZIN** SCHIRN.DE/EN/MAGAZINE

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