

Artificial intelligence

## Art in the Age of the Fifth Industrial Revolution

There is something playful about dealing with AI-inspired works. At first glance, they often look like ordinary paintings or photographic works. Only an app or background knowledge helps to understand their meaning. The current group show at Priska Pasquer provides examples.

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February 13, 2024 - 09:30 am

Banz & Bowinkel's installation "Bot 02" (2021) is only complete when you scan the pattern with the help of an app installed on your mobile phone, causing a group of silvery figures to walk in circles across the carpet. Photo: Priska Pasquer Gallery

**Cologne.** Transitional states are a challenge. Especially when they don't offer much that's new at first glance, but end up turning things upside down. Examples include the patterned carpets and floor objects by the artist couple Banz & Bowinkel, Elena Bajo's decorative tapestries, or the abstract canvas paintings by Johanna Reich, which are enhanced with brief LED scrolling text.

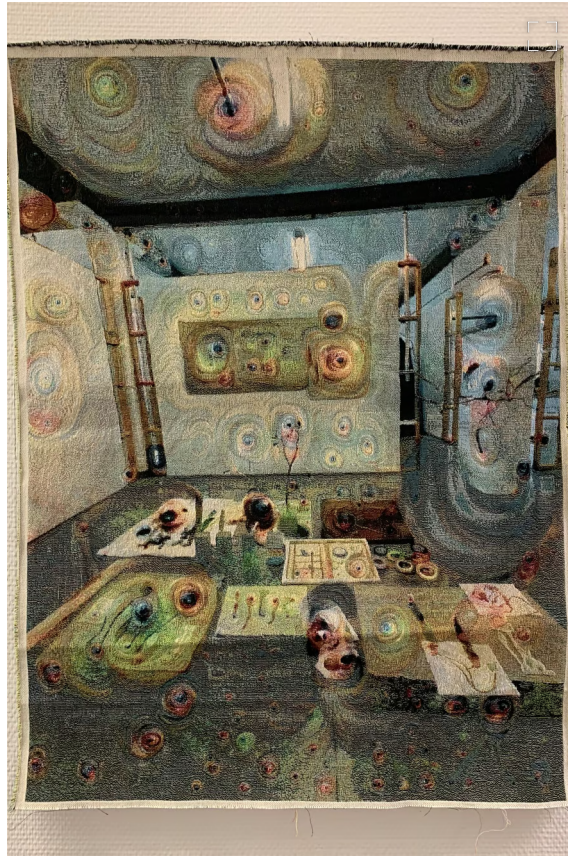
Viewed in this way - in a nutshell - none of these works is capable of causing serious concern. The audience of a hundred people in an office building on the banks of the Rhine in Cologne did not seem to expect this. The invitation was sent by the Cologne gallery owner Priska Pasquer and the consulting firm Neuland.ai, which specializes in AI solutions.

How good would the round black and white patterned carpet by Banz & Bowinkel look in your own four walls? What a wow effect when guests come! "Bot 02" from 2021 is only complete when you scan the pattern with the help of an app installed on your cell phone and let a group of silvery figures walk in a circle across the carpet. Cost for a set of three: 24,990 euros including VAT.

Much cheaper but no less spectacular are the enlarged QR codes lying on the floor from the "Primitive" series by Banz & Bowinkel. Here, the app generates a kinetic sculpture that reacts when

feedback

Of course, the "Bodypaint" series hanging on the wall in color prints cannot be missed. This abstract work may be familiar to some readers of this newspaper since the Handelsblatt edition in 2016.



AI has generated a composition from a studio arrangement by Elena Bajo in connection with the keyword of the hallucinogenic drug "Datura". It was the template for a fine jacquard weaving (detail).Photo: Priska Pasquer Gallery

An entertaining event with entertaining lectures, a vernissage with wine and food was to be expected on this long Saturday evening at the beginning of February. The topic was nothing less than the fifth industrial revolution in the spirit of artificial intelligence, its effects on the world of work, and how to deal with it, including in art

"What is happening here is massively disruptive," said Pasquer's husband and Neuland founder Karl-Heinz Land, summarizing the upheavals. The first four stages of the industrial revolution took over 250 years, starting with the invention of the steam engine in 1750. The last stage only took ten to 20 years.

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Most of those present are not dizzy at this development, especially since Karl-Heinz Land strongly suspects that AI at this stage - like the steam engine, electrification, automation and the Internet before it - will "probably be the main driver of prosperity". His guests are customers of Neuland.ai and have thus already set out on the path through digital transformation.

Some of them are also customers of the Galerie Pasquer. For over ten years now, the gallery's program has been showing what the digital transformation in art is all about, including at its Paris location since last year.



No need to water: Jane Benson's houseplants amaze with angular leaves in pseudo-vases made of light-catching Plexiglas. Photo: Priska Pasquer Gallery

Elena Bajo's tapestry, made with the help of AI software, looks just as good on the wall as the "body paint" works by Banz & Bowinkel. On closer inspection, you can see a group of bizarre shapes in countless color gradients that are difficult for the eye to distinguish. A photographed arrangement of objects in Bajo's studio formed the starting point. From this, an AI, in conjunction with the keyword of the hallucinogenic drug "Datura", generated a composition that ultimately formed the template for the fine jacquard weaving. The small format is estimated at 8,000 euros including VAT.

Johanna Reich's natural canvases, painted with a few abstract traces of color, have a media-critical background. An LED scrolling text creates a second level. It takes time to decipher a haiku from the fragments. The significance of the work only becomes clear when the poem's creation is explained. We learn that Reich created her own AI, a so-called "Small Language Model," which - unlike the "Large Language Models" that ChatGPT works with, for example - was fed exclusively with female sources.



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Priska Pasquer called her group show "Liminal," a term that describes a transitional or suspended state. Ten other artists are involved, including Aljoscha with numerous small and large sculptures, Warren Neidich with impressive, meaningful wall objects, and Mischa Kuball with black-and-white photographic works.

All the works are casually distributed across all the rooms in which work is otherwise carried out. There are also houseplants. "You don't need to water them and they might increase in value," laughs Pasquer. Jane Benson is the creator of the artificial artifacts that attract attention with their angularly cut leaves in pseudo-vases made of light-catching Plexiglas. This gallery appearance in the middle of Neuland.ai's offices is far from a "white cube."

For this text, the focus was on AI-inspired examples. They show that states of suspension can be interesting. At least when you have solid ground under your feet and can look at the art from a distance.

*"Liminal", Priska Pasquer Gallery, Konrad-Adenauer-Ufer 83, 50668 Cologne, until April 30, 2024*

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