A long night
of dreaming about

sense making

Ecological

Artificial

Social

The Future
of Intelligence

Our image of intelligence has become a feverish dream lately

With the rise of generative AI platforms, a wondrous world of images has opened up on our screens. We are astonished, amused or disturbed by these images, by their dreamlike appearance, and by their noisy promise of a radically different future. Just like dreams, they emerge from structures that are not aware to the dreamer. And just like dreams, they fan the search for meaning and context. Less noisy, but not less consequential, our image of intelligence has become a fever dream in another sense. Ecological critiques are challenging what was long considered intelligent behaviour. In the light of the climate crisis, we are wondering: Have we overestimated human intelligence when it comes to living sustainably? Might forests or fungi display intelligent behaviours that we have neglected for too long? And might our long-held cool images of intelligence be feverish dreams we urgently need to wake up from?

On August 9th 2023, we gathered for a long night of dreaming about the future of intelligence at the Locarno Film Festival. We were an assembly of researchers, cinephiles, designers, passers-by and the people of Base-Camp – 200 emerging artists from all over the world. From sunset to sunrise, we came together at BaseCamp PopUp at the Istituto Sant'Eugenio in Locarno. Our shared intention was to explore intelligence today: its manifestations, its hallucinations and its possible futures. Inspired by cinema's deep relation to dreams, we wanted to make sense of the changing images of intelligence via the process of dreaming.

Our approach was simple, but not trivial: let's experience through theory and theorize through experience. In this spirit, the night unfolded into a series of talks, conversations, performances and situations, each guided by a speaker or collective. Hosted by Devika Girish and the interdimensional being *SOFF*, our space was designed to allow for different forms of attention. You were invited to listen closely or to doze off, to share your dreams in conversation or to dream for yourself in silence. There is a saying that the greatest compliment you can make to a host is to fall asleep at their party. We were honouring this notion.

These pages in your hands can act as a portal, a map, and a document of what emerged during our conversations. You can also use them as a dream machine: as a channel to project desires or to confuse categories about the future of intelligence. During the night, one looks differently at the affairs of the day. Here, categories evaporate and re-assemble. Rather than solutions, we hope that you will find contemplation. We consciously choose to define intelligence broadly during the night. The term has some beautiful etymologies. One that guided us comes from the Latin word inter-legere:

[01] BaseCamp PopUp at Locarno

[02] Rafael Dernbach

[03] Shane Denson & Devika Girish

[04] Devika Girish & SOFF

[05] Dreaming together

[06] Listening closely

[07] Gala Hernández López

[08] Paying attention

[09] Capturing a moment

[10] SOFF

to read between or read between the lines. If intelligence is characterized by reading between the lines, there is always a layer of hallucination. Something that is not yet obvious appears, a hidden aspect that might or might not be real. Something that could be called cinematic intelligence. So, we invite you to read between the lines. Why are we fascinated with the feverish dream of artificial intelligence? What does it render visible? What does it occult?

The long night of dreaming about the future of intelligence occurred at a pivotal moment for the world of cinema. Our gathering took place during the 2023 strike of screenwriters and actors in Hollywood. One of the reasons why writers and actors were protesting, was the fear that production companies could replace them with generative AI. The protests point to the fact that technologies and dreams about technologies are part of our social fabric. They raise the question: Who is profiting from generative AI and its promises, and whose work and data is used to train it. They also show that cinema is already deeply moved by the feverish dreams of intelligence. Can it also point beyond the obvious and help us see the antagonisms that made them? We believe so.

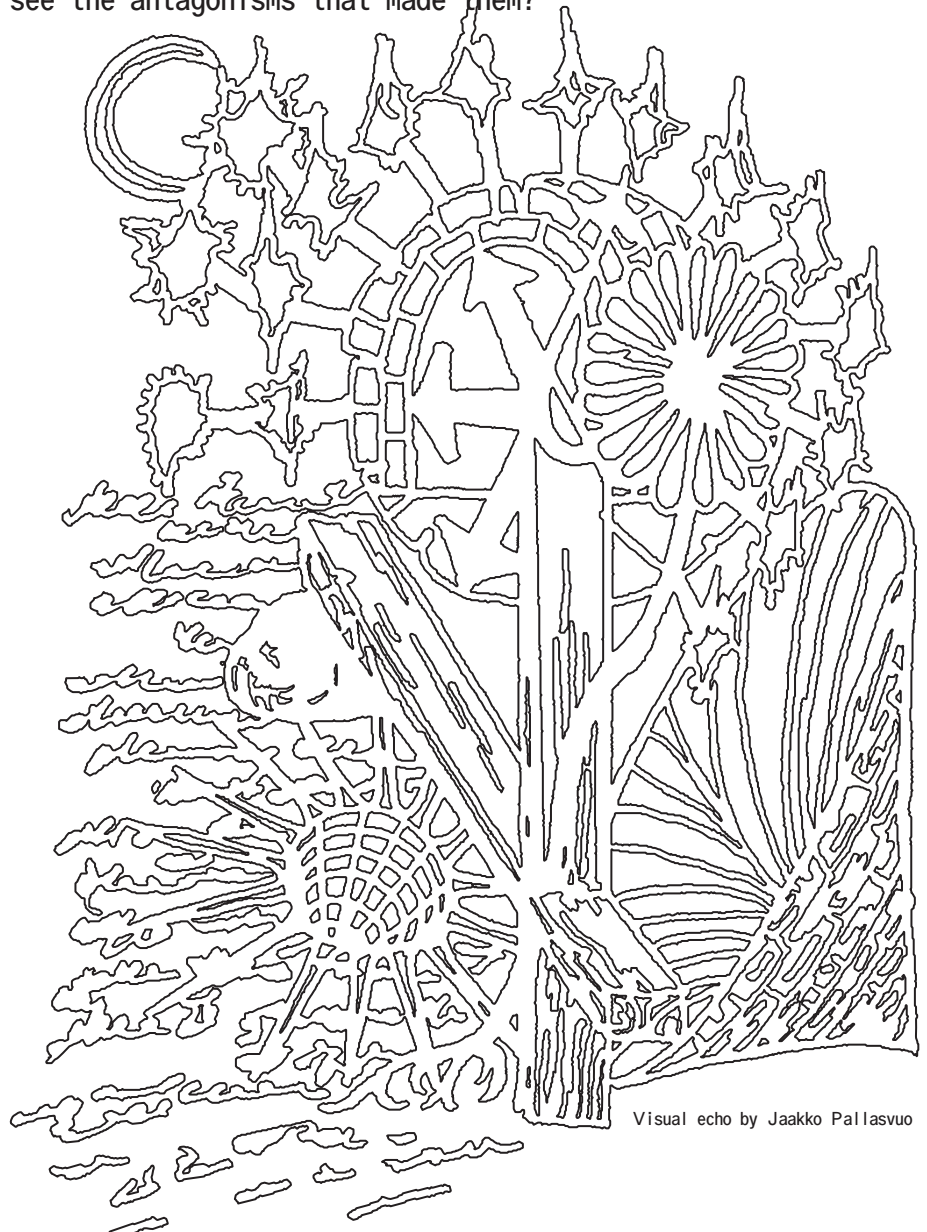Rafael Dernbach

[11] Shane Denson
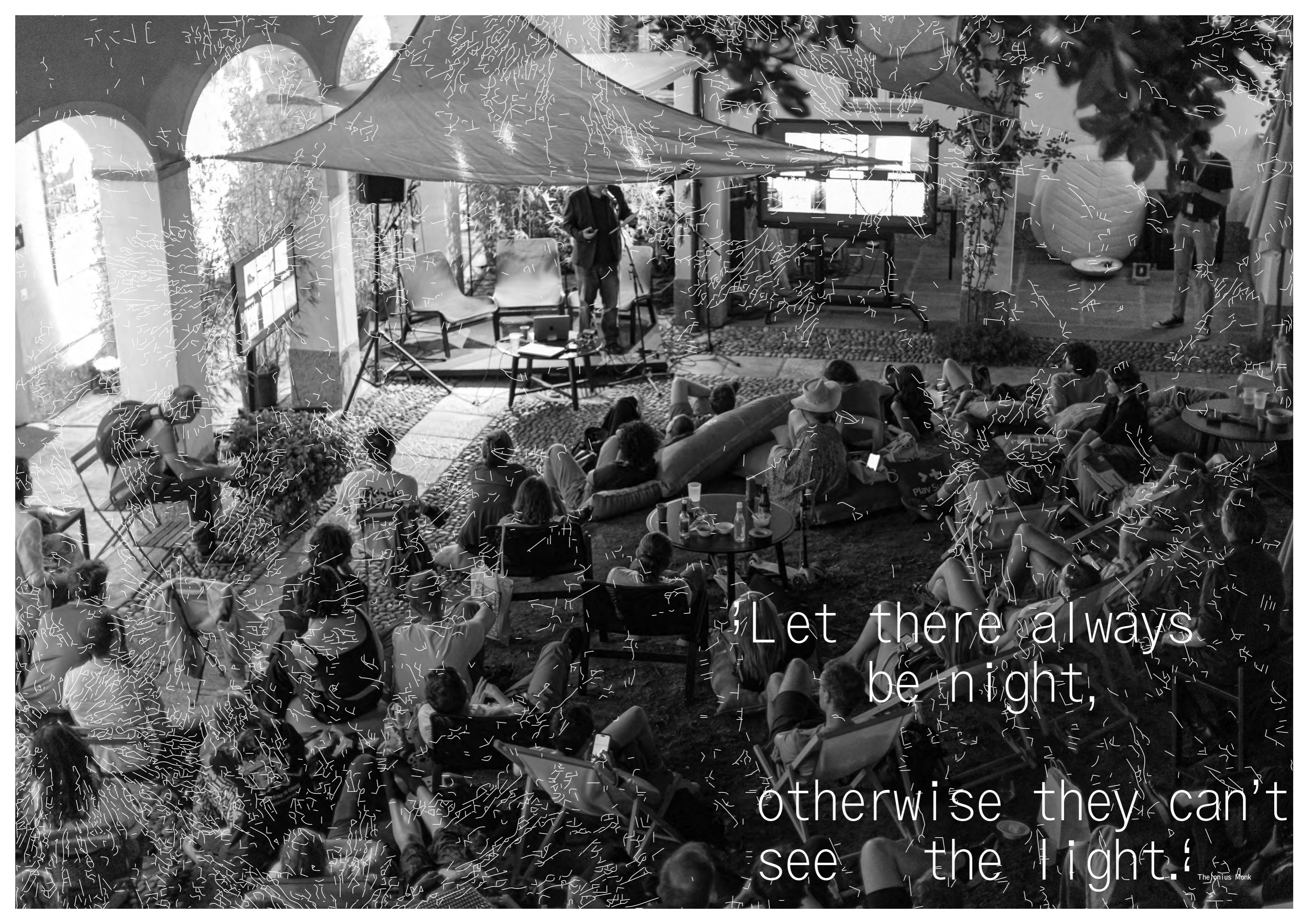

[12] All forms of attention

[13] Rafael Dernbach, Devika Girish & Shane Denson

[14] SOFF

Visual echo by Jaakko Pallasvuo

'Let there always
be night,

otherwise they can't
see   the light.'

Thelonius Monk

[20:44] Sunset

The Long Night began as the Sun set in Locarno.

[20:44] Our image of intelligence has become a feverish dream lately.

Rafael Dernbach is a researcher and curator of experimental conversations. He is interested in unexpected encounters between people and ideas in a world that is increasingly formatted. Currently, he is a CIRCE Fellow. In 2022, he curated a 24-hour long conversation on The Future of Attention at the Locarno Film Festival. Previously, he was a post-doctoral researcher at Universitá della Svizzera italiana and helped to open Futurium in Berlin as a researcher and strategist. He holds a PhD on aesthetics of anticipation from University of Cambridge.

[21:03] The future of intelligence depends crucially on the survival of unintelligibility.

Shane Denson is Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies and, by courtesy, of German Studies and of Communication at Stanford University, where he also serves as Director of the PhD Program in Modern Thought & Literature. His research interests span a variety of media and historical periods, including phenomenological and media-philosophical approaches to film, digital media, and serialized popular forms. He is the author of *Post-Cinematic Bodies* (2023), *Discorrelated Images* (2020), and *Postnaturalism: Frankenstein, Film, and the Anthropotechnical Interface* (2014).

[22:11] The future of intelligence implies acknowledging the depth of our vulnerability, the magnitude of our stupidity.

Gala Hernández López is an artist-researcher and filmmaker. Her work articulates interdisciplinary research with the production of essay films, video installations and performances on the new modes of subjectivation specifically produced by computational digital capitalism. She examines from a feminist and critical lens the discourses and imaginaries circulating in virtual communities as symptomatic fictions of a state of the world. Her work has been shown at DOK Leipzig, Cinéma du Réel, IndieLisboa, the Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival and the Salon de Montrouge, among others. At the University Paris 8, she is currently developing a research-creation project on screen capture. She co-directs the research and creation collective.

[23:09] In Dreams Begin Responsibilities.

Kevin B. Lee is the Locarno Film Festival Professor for the Future of Cinema and the Audiovisual Arts at USI Università della Svizzera italiana, supported by Swisscom. Combining filmmaking, media research and criticism, he has produced 400 video essays exploring film and media. His award-winning *Transformers: The Premake* introduced the *desktop documentary* format and was named one of the best documentaries of 2014 by Sight & Sound. His video essays *Reading // Binging // Benning and Once Upon a Screen: Explosive Paradox* received the most mentions respectively in the 2017 and 2020 Sight & Sound video essay polls. His current feature documentary project *Afterlives* is supported by the Sundance Institute Art of Nonfiction Grant, the Eurimages Lab Project Award, the German Federal Ministry for Culture and Media, and Field of Vision.

[23:09] Will the coevolution of man and machine evolve intelligence?

Andrea E. Rizzoli is director of the Swiss AI Lab IDSIA and Professor at the University of Applied Sciences of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI). He holds a M.Sc. in control engineering (1989) and a Ph.D. in control engineering and computer science (1993). Andrea Rizzoli is interested in the sustainability of a tired planet. His research focuses on the modelling and simulation of dynamic systems, the development of environmental decision support systems for natural resource management, and the application of artificial intelligence and operations research techniques to environmental problems.

[00:00] Dreaming has a share in history. [They] have started wars, and wars, from the very earliest times, have determined the propriety and impropriety — indeed, the range — of dreams.

Christopher Small (quoting Walter Benjamin from ¡Dream Kitsch¡, 1925) is a writer and curator. He is the editor of Outskirts Film Magazine and the head of the Locarno Critics Academy. He also regularly programs films online, at DAFilms.com, and at Kino Petrohradská, in Prague.

[01:01] We start to perceive and think as slow as pine forests.

Andreas Bütler & Fabian Frey are designers and researchers based in Zürich. Besides their individual practice, they work together as the Dialoguing with Ecologies Group on speculative forms of dialogue with other species and ecologies. This research leads them from biochemical experiments, over embodied experiences to discussions between humans and non-humans. The work questions the relationships between different forms of intelligence and envisions practices for mutual understanding.

[02:02] Molding meanings, molten boundaries, a multitude: mystery.

Anna De Mezzo is a Zurich-based visual designer with extensive experience in design research, futures studies and art direction. She holds a M.Sc. in Design & Engineering from Politecnico di Milano, Italy, and works at the intersection between design and futures research. In her work, Anna focuses on various design practices as means to tackle the relationship between humans and uncertainty, particularly the one related to the perception of the future. She is also a creative fellow at the Creative Impact Research Centre Europe (CIRCE) where she is conducting research on the topic of privilege in local settings.

[02:20] A kaleidoscope, colorful reflections: To actively be arranged, time and time again.

Wailea Zülch has a multifaceted political science, futures and strategic foresight background. Working for the foreign policy grassroots think tank *foraus* has made her a specialist in participatory processes. Her studies in Political Science M.Sc., Law, Management, Cultural Studies, and Languages have led her to the universities of Versailles and Amsterdam, as well as the Zurich University of Applied Science. Based in Zurich, she enjoys experimenting with methodologies, knowledge practices, and communication forms to challenge disciplinary paradigms and build bridges. Nowadays, she works in varied constellations to deepen and share her understanding of futures thinking, creation and appreciation of value, as well as regenerative innovation. Exploring the landscape of knowledge-transmission possibilities.

[03:33] For us, robotic arms, robotic dogs, and other automation technologies are a performative medium.

AATB is the collaborative practice of Andrea Anner and Thibault Brevet, both graduates from ECAL. Having previously worked on interactive objects and installations, they encountered an industrial robotic arm five years ago. This crystallized an ongoing research around human/machine interactions and led them to investigate the potential of robotics and industrial automation to exist outside the realm of factory floors. Their practice involves a tight connection and understanding of manufacturing processes, ranging from software programming, electronics to mechanical engineering and precision machining. Reflecting on the dissemination and assimilation of robotics into mundane activities, their work critically explores novel situations arising from these shifts. Since 2020, the studio operates a Motion Control service for the film industry: Superposition. The studio is based between Zurich and Marseille.

[03:33] Only loving, only knowing matters. Not the fact of having loved, or having known.

Justine Knuchel (quoting Pasolini) is an independent multimedia artist. After having studied two years of photography at the École Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne (ECAL) and two years at the Haute école d'art et de design (HEAD) in Geneva as film editor, she is a primarily self-taught multimedia artist and curator. In 2019 she founded her art direction studio FONDAMENTA. She is art curator & coordinator of the BaseCamp at the Locarno Film Festival.

[03:33] We fail to see ourselves in the machines we create, and thus we fail to see that their powers are ours as well — for we are the very Gods which we fear.

Anthony Bekirov is a journalist for arts magazines and editor of *ciné-feuilles.ch*. His work is driven by a long-standing passion for cinema and Japan. Through translation, journalism and ambassadorship, he aims to contribute to the deepening of relations between Japan and the West.

[04:32] I am ardently interested in the present. I gain insights into the future of thinking and writing through successively more precise glimpses of the past, hashtag: the postmodern premodern. (Which came before?)

Thomas Meinecke is a writer, musician and radio DJ. Since 1980 he has been playing with his band F.S.K., whose albums have been released on Daniel Richter's Buback label. He participated in joint electronic projects with Move D. and worked as a radio DJ at Bayerischer Rundfunk (1983 - 2021) and as a DJ in clubs such as Berghain, Robert Johnson, Pudel Club. He runs the dialogue-based event series ¡Plattenspieler¡ (2007 — 2020) at Berlin's Theater Hebbel am Ufer, since 2022 at Berlin's Volksbühne.

[05:32] Technology will be an ally on our inner journey, empowering us to rediscover the knowledge of our bodies.

Laura Papke is an interdisciplinary designer and artistic researcher, currently living and working in the Netherlands. With a keen interest in the intersection of ecology, culture, and mental health, her work investigates new perspectives on healing processes and care practices in a technology-driven world. She brings together science and spirituality, drawing inspiration from queer ecologies, techno-feminism, and shamanic practices.
Her graduation project in Social Design from Design Academy Eindhoven *Sonic Driving* was nominated for the Planetree Design Award 2022 and presented at various events, including Dutch Design Week 2022 and New Now Festival 2023. Laura is recently continuing her research on interoception — the perception of inner-body activities — and the process of synchronization, which she further incorporates in her embodied sound experiences.

[06:17] Sunrise

The Long Night ended as the Sun rose in Locarno

[Visual Echoes] The future of intelligence cannot be thought.

Jaakko Pallasvuo (born 1333) is an artist living and working in Helsinki. Pallasvuo's work has been exhibited at Documenta 15, CCA Derry~Londonderry, American Medium, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and New York Film Festival, among other places. Pallasvuo's comics for the instagram account avocado_ibuprofen, followed by more than 100k, were recently collected into a book by Chicago-based publisher Perfectly Acceptable Press. Jaakko recorded the Long Night of Dreaming about The Future of Intelligence in the form of visual echoes you can find on the flipside.

A Long Night of Dreaming about the Future of Intelligence

Locarno Critics Academy [00:00]

Deep Learning

The Locarno Critics Academy is an extensive workshop in film criticism that gives young writers a crucial entry point into the world of film festivals. During the ten festival days, participants report on films and festivities for a variety of international outlets, and participate in workshops with writers, critics, curators, festival directors, and filmmakers. This year's cohort included ten emerging talents from as far afield as Iran, Mexico, and Argentina. Three of which – Maja Korbecka, Savina Petkova, and Oykü Sofuoglu – joined Academy project manager Christopher Small on the Long Night discussion stage.

Shane Denson [21:03]

The Fleshy Bits

In this 2023 book *Post-Cinematic Bodies*, film and media scholar Shane Denson posits that our corporeality remains at the forefront of the coming technological era...

Recursive Loops

Creative Intelligence

'The human artist – a creative machine, after all...'
— Locarno Critics Academy fellow, on the limits of automation

'Al may very well have a future in trade writing and even film reviews. But it can never replace the human critic, who is able to draw from embodied personal experience and heaps of emotional baggage.'
— Locarno Critics Academy fellow

'The cinema is the only place where we can all dream the *same* dream. And that is wonderful!'
— Locarno Critics Academy fellow, on films as a collective experience

'Association strikes me as another form of intelligence. As film critics, we always look for image associations, for clues and connections to other films. These links are *very* personal and, perhaps, unique to every critic!'
— Locarno Critics Academy fellow

'The Nobel-Prize-winning Belarussian writer Svetlana Alexievich once said that the history of human feelings is worth recording, too. I always thought about film criticism in that way. Critics write the history of *watching* films, of how they resonate with us emotionally and, in some cases, have changed our lives.'
— Locarno Critics Academy's Christopher Small

The Original Chatbot

Intelligence Litmus Test

First introduced in his 1950 landmark paper 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence', Alan Turing's imitation game – now commonly known as the Turing test...

The Gray Goo

In the face of increasingly pervasive – and increasingly intelligent – Al...

Gaia Hernández López [22:11]

Feral Robots

During the 2023 NEW NOW Festival summer...

Motion Control

For their new piece at 78th Locarno Film Festival, artist duo AATB tapped deep into their own practice...

AATB [03:33]

Black Boxes

It's the future from Philip K. Dick's 1955 short story *Autofac*, but set in complete darkness...

Al Friends with Benefits

Catching Feelings

In a contemplative co-creation exercise that dream philosopher...

Anna De Mezzo & Wallea Zürich [02:02]

Sonic Conflations

In their 2021 two-chapter radioplay *Amorbach, California*, longtime musical collaborators Thomas Meinecke and David Moufang (aka Move D) take listeners on a sound journey through two of Theodor W. Adorno's (1903-1969) dream protocols. Recorded in 1941 and 1945, when the German philosopher was in American exile, they tell the story of inner wartime trauma and a person longing to go home. In his dreams, Adorno returns to his dear Amorbach, a town near Frankfurt, but, alas, the heat and features of Southern California keep cutting in. Meinecke and Moufang manage to capture that confusion, layering text fragments and musical arrangements into a hypnotic, almost psychedelic trip.

Gender Troubles

In his 2000 novel *Tomboy*, German author and musician Thomas Meinecke lets an illustrious clique of students grapple with preconceived notions about sexuality, societal norms, and how the world really works. There's a bisexual star tennis player and obsessive reader of Michel Foucault's and Judith Butler's theories of sexuality; a lesbian doctoral student writing her dissertation about Christ's foreskin; a Bible-reading Italian Catholic who considers himself a lesbian; and a self-described male feminist who believes that men suffer from 'reproduction envy'. Our protagonist – a half-German, half-American exchange student – is plunged into this group while working on her master's thesis. It's her incisive questions that drive the story forward.

The Dreamer

German philosopher Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969) once noted that four dreams are not simply connected to one another by virtue of being 'ours' but also because they form a continuum, and belong to a consistent world.' Adorno recorded – and published – more than one hundred of his own dreams between 1934 and 1969.
'The dream protocols chosen from the greater whole are authentic,' he insisted. 'I wrote immediately down each awakening and corrected only minor linguistic mistakes prior to publication.'

Thomas Meinecke [04:32]

Body Double

Mind melt or body horror? When his scheduled (and much anticipated) on-stage encounter with Academy Award-winning British actor and rapper Rizwan (Riz) Ahmed fell through because of the American writers strike, US filmmaker, critic, and Locarno Film Festival Professor Kevin B. Lee turned to AI to hallucinate the situation. After feeding OpenAI's DALL-E with the respective prompt (the two talking on stage, Kevin B. Lee and Riz Ahmed at 2pm in the Forum Spazio outdoor cinema in the Locarno Film Festival), the generative AI platform fused features of both personalities into a Lee-Ahmed hybrid instead.

'AI can create something new and beautiful from past data. But it can't explain why. Impressionist painters, for example, had a clear idea of what they wanted to achieve with their new technique. That requires intent—which AI doesn't have.'
— Andrea E. Rizzoli, on the creative limitations of AI

!Stop Generating!!

On May 2nd, 2023, 11,500 screenwriters walked out on the American studio system in protest. The cause: A dispute over stagnating streaming royalties and a growing concern about the impacts of generative AI. The Writers Guild of America (WGA) argued that recent advances in automated content creation play right into the hands of studio bosses, further tipping the scale of power and threatening artists and creative labourers' already perilous bottom line. On September 27, after 148 days, WGA leaders and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) announced a deal that ended the second-longest strike in America's entertainment industry. It put up guardrails against AI replacing script writers outright and – more likely – screenwriters having to adapt or edit AI-generated scripts for less.

Kevin B. Lee & Andrea E. Rizzoli [23:09]

Desirable Futures

'The more these iconic images and aesthetics—those of Van Gogh or Picasso—can be replicated, the more they enter the language of banality. I find myself desiring images that *can't* be generated through algorithms.'
— Kevin B. Lee, on the disgruntling returns of inflationary AI aesthetics

Laura Papke [05:32]

Collective Symphony

An exercise in transcendence and connectedness, Laura Papke's participatory performance *Sonic-Driving* [2022] synchronizes the heartbeats of up to nine people...

Cosmic Vibes

Andreas Bütler & Fabian Frey [01:01]

The (Original) Summer of AI

In 1955, a young Dartmouth College mathematics professor named John McCarthy posits that 'every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence can in principle be so precisely described that a machine can be made to simulate it.' He proposes a now historic gathering that would bring together some of the brightest minds in computing and cognitive science at the time. A year later, in 1956, an illustrious cast of twenty luminaries including Marvin Minsky (Harvard), Nathaniel Rochester (IBM), and Claude Shannon (Bell Labs) joins McCarthy's Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence. They work across neural networks, natural language processing, randomness, and creativity and thus, AI as a research field was born.

The Electronic Brain

The first hardware implementation of a machine learning algorithm and the ancestor of all computer vision systems, the Mark I Perceptron was a room-sized machine for image recognition. Built by American psychologist Frank Rosenblatt at the Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory in 1957, the device comprised a three-layered perception network, chaining sensory units – photocells capable of registering a 400-pixel image – to associative and response counterparts. A 1958 *New York Times* article, echoing Rosenblatt's own enthusiasm, hailed Mark I as the embryo of an electronic computer that will be able to walk, talk, see, write, reproduce itself and be conscious of its existence.' Instead, its training capacity proved underwhelming, causing neural network research to stagnate for many years.

Dialogue Trees

Culinary Topographies

'Is intelligence and consciousness an emergent property of complex structures, be it our mind or a machine? For the moment, I don't think we know. We may know in the future— with more processing power and embodied AIs interacting with the real world.'
— Andrea E. Rizzoli, on why AI doesn't quite cut it—yet

'The circadian rhythm of many plants
is a form of embodied intelligence—

Lavender (Lavandula angustifolia), a plant indigenous to the Mediterranean, is celebrated not only for its
aromatic purple blossoms but also for its remarkable properties
regarding sleep. Many forums on the internet praise its use for
dreamwork, in particular for inducing lucid dreaming.
Bouquets of dried lavender were present throughout the long
night of dreaming about the future of intelligence.

the way flowers follow
the Sun's movement across the sky,
for example.

This intelligence
can become a gateway
to interface with non-human beings
and establish contact.'

Andreas Bütler & Fabian Frey
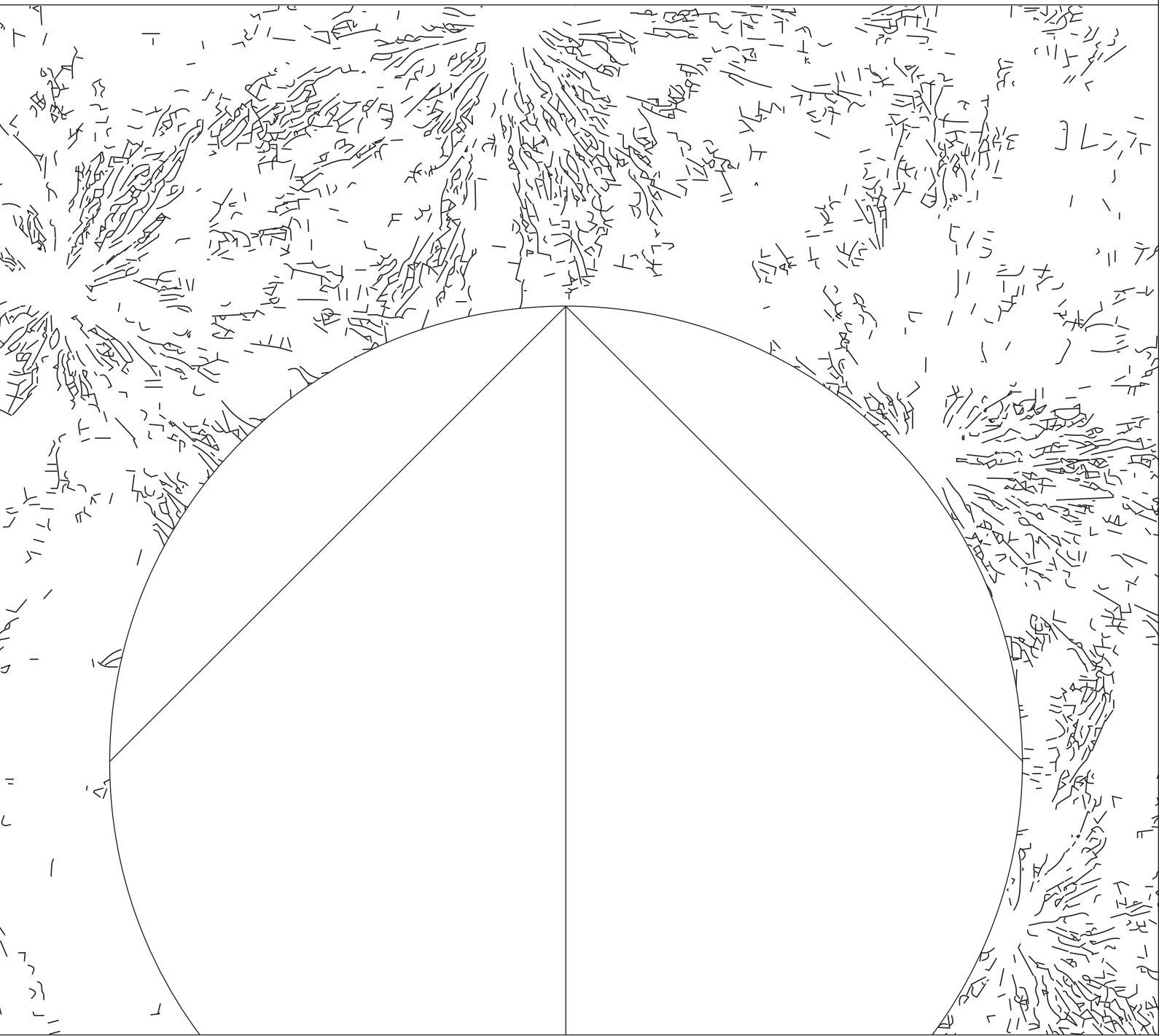
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[15]	Mattia Martegani
[16]	Norbert Landsteiner's ELIZA JavaScript implimentation ElizaBot (showing a sample chat transcript of Joseph Weizenbaum's 1966 journal article)
[17]	Theodore W. Adorno, 1963, by Stefan Moses, Stiftung Exil Museum Berlin
[18]	Long Night Dream Catcher, Anna De Mezzo & Wailea Zülch
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