

Since the artist does not know until the end what the image created by the artificial intelligence will look like, he is surprised and ready to intervene, he had to rework and edit figures. His work can therefore be defined as a visualization of communication in a triangle between "machine" and "human" perception of the "conceptual", which, like interpersonal communication, is never perfect, as it always contains a noise between sender and receiver that depends on various parameters and always needs to be "corrected". However, it leaves open the interpretation of relationships between humans and between humans and machines, as well as the processes of artificial intelligence and machine learning in the construction of images, with all the anomalies that arise from "misunderstandings".

The stylized, reduced and typified human figure, which is the central motif, functions in the indeterminable environment as primary, primitive and abstracted, as if the author wanted to say that communication takes place when at least two poles are attuned to the same level and the lower this level is, the easier it is to establish it. This not only touches on the fact of our coexistence and cooperation, but also emphasizes the same relationship with the machine when he shows through the process of creation that machine communication is also better with less information, as more data brings more opportunities for noise, which then needs to be fixed to avoid interpersonal misunderstandings and machine errors.

But when the figures connect, combine and embrace, they are born into a community and like dancing, build the elementary relationships of contact and touch, a real closeness that comes when they give up their individuality and image, their ego. When they become the same and turn into a mass that transforms the formal composition into a choreographed visual language of impersonal images and visually ritualized bodies. Celebrate with us and join the masses. Be the humane individual imprint in a technologically standardized landscape, aware of the fact that technology is once the later legacy.

– Peter Tomaž Dobrila

BIOGRAPHY



Marko Šajn (1990) enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana in 2011 to study painting and printmaking. He has presented his work in several solo exhibitions, including at the House of Culture in Pivka (2019), the DobraVaga Gallery (2019) and the International Centre of Graphic Arts (MGLC) in Ljubljana (2023), as well as in group exhibitions, the most important of which is Prints and Imprints 2 at the MGLC in Ljubljana (2022). He works in the House of Culture in Pivka and in the Riso Paradiso risographic collective in Ljubljana. He lives and works in the countryside near Pivka.

Marko Šajn
FREE HUGS
1–30 March 2024

MMC KIBLA/KiBela, Ulica kneza Koclja 9, Maribor
Opening hours: Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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Carriers and transmitters

There have always been connections between creativity and (contemporary) technologies. How one conceives of this depends on the information we know and on us who receive and consider it. Simply put, technologies have been different in the past and have changed over the years, millennia, tens and hundreds of thousands of years, but in each of these periods they have been contemporaneous. The development of primitive stone tools, which began in the Paleolithic, covers about 95 percent of human technological prehistory. It extends from the earliest known use of stone tools, probably by humanoids such as Australopithecus about 2.6 million years ago, to the end of the Pleistocene about 11,700 years ago.

In the Paleolithic or Old Stone Age, people lived in caves, hunted and gathered. The division between the sexes began to emerge – the men were involved in hunting, while the women took care of the foraging, the fire and the children. As women had the more important role in society, matriarchy prevailed. Simple stone tools (hand ax) were used, sharp stone flakes and bone tools were developed as well as painting tools with which they left traces of their vision and perception of the world in the many caves and elsewhere, considering that remains of the paintings have also been found under overhanging walls and rocks and in other places in the open. Most of these paintings have not survived as they were exposed to the elements, whereas the cave paintings were protected from large fluctuations in humidity and temperature and have therefore been preserved.

340 caves with prehistoric art have been discovered so far, mainly in France and Spain. The oldest known cave painting is in the cave of El Castillo in northern Spain and dates back at least 40,800 years. Due to its age, some scientists suspect that the paintings were made by Neanderthals. Even older is art from Slovenia, albeit not visual, but musical: a 50 to 60 thousand year old bone flute with pierced holes was found in the Divje babe cave near Cerklje, which could be the oldest musical instrument in the world. This is of course disputed by paleontologists from major countries because they do not want to lose the "primacy" (for themselves), because the oldest flute is also the oldest artifact on the planet, which means that Slovenia is the cradle of world culture.

The Paleolithic ended with the end of the Ice Age (the end of the Pleistocene), when the Earth's atmosphere became warmer. This could have been the cause of the extinction of the Pleistocene megafauna, although other factors such as disease or human impact (overkill) could also have played a role. Scientists suspect that climate change at the end of the Pleistocene reduced the habitat of the mammoths, which were then hunted to extinction by Paleolithic humans. Global warming at the end of the Pleistocene and the beginning of the Holocene made it easier for humans to access mammoth habitats that were previously frozen and inaccessible. New research

has shown that the extinction of the woolly mammoth could be due to a combination of climate change and human hunting.

The Divje babe flute, more precisely the Mousterian “bone flute” from the Divje babe I cave site, also called tidldibab and made from the femur bone of a juvenile cave bear, is attributed to Neanderthals; the assumption that it was made by a Cro-magnon (the so-called modern human) has been refuted. The bone flute has a wide tonal range and allows a variety of melodic movements. It is the only bone known to have been used as a flute by a Neanderthal. Since part of the bone was ground down, reconstructions could be made and acoustically tested. On the one side of our history and archaeology is the visual (preserved wall paintings), on the other the performative (the preserved artefact without content), or in other words, the dichotomy of material (painting) and immaterial (music) heritage.

Let’s skip tens of thousands of years and take a look at the oldest surviving wheel with axle in the world, the Ljubljana Marsh Wheel, found near Verd. Official dating methods have revealed that it is 5,150 years old. This makes it the oldest wooden wheel ever discovered (at the time the wheel was built, the tree was 80 years old). It consists of two wooden planks held together by four cross braces. The cross braces are fitted into mortise and tenon slots carved into the two main parts of the wheel. Although similar wheels have also been found in the hilly regions of Switzerland and south-western Germany, the wheel from the Ljubljana Marshes, which once belonged to a prehistoric two-wheeled cart, is larger and older. Wooden wheels have also been discovered in Mesopotamia, although the finds in Mesopotamia are significantly later in date.

The invention changed history and is considered one of the most important in the history of mankind. It made mobility and transportation possible, it shortened distances, made it easier to get around, brought forth chariots, trains and automobiles, made races possible, but also supported wars. Whereas in the past, what we invented or discovered for civilian use could also be used for military purposes, today the opposite is the case: inventions are first used by the military and only then by the population. Over the past millennia, the culture of death has prevailed over the culture of harmony, coexistence and cooperation, with killing, destruction and division taking center stage. Aggression is preferred to peacefulness, war has replaced peace as a value, the joy of living has been overshadowed by mourning for the dead.

If we take a leap into the recent past, we can remember Nikola Tesla (born on July 10, 1856 in Smiljan near Gospić, died on January 7, 1943 in New York), an electrical engineer, inventor, physicist, chemist, mathematician, but above all a man who illuminated the world. Unfortunately, he did not enlighten it. He lived in Maribor for almost a year, from 1878 to 1879, after studying at the Polytechnic School in Graz, Austria. Due to financial difficulties, he left Graz in the fall of 1878 and found his first job here, in Maribor: a well-paid position as a draftsman or assistant engineer with a salary above the standard wage. As before in Graz, he spent his spare time in pubs and cafés. But not because of the drinks or the female company. What brought him there was his passion for playing cards and billiards, at which he excelled and with which he also earned some money, although he was known for not always keeping the money he won, but giving it back to his opponents. On March 8, 1879, he was arrested by the police because he did not have a residence permit. The authorities sent him back to Gospić, which meant the end of his stay in Maribor.

In 1884, he moved to the USA and became an American citizen. He was active in many fields and patented over 700 inventions, most of them in the field of electricity and magnetism, which form the basis for the modern use of electrical energy.

The best-known invention is the induction motor he developed in 1882, which is based on the principle of alternating currents. It enabled simpler and more efficient transmission of electricity over greater distances and formed the basis for the multi-phase system used worldwide today. He also designed the first hydroelectric power station at Niagara Falls. His other famous inventions are the Tesla coil (Tesla transformer) and a bladeless turbine.

He conducted a series of experiments with mechanical oscillators/generators, electrical discharge tubes and early X-ray imaging. He built one of the first wireless remote-controlled boats and in the 1890s pursued his ideas for wireless remote lighting and worldwide wireless remote power distribution in his high-voltage and high-frequency power experiments in New York and Colorado Springs. In 1893, he commented on the possibility of wireless communication with his devices. Tesla attempted to realize some of his ideas in his Wardencllyffe Tower project, which was apparently intended for both wireless communication and power transmission between continents, but it was destroyed before he could complete it.

Although Nikola Tesla was an American citizen, Tesla's possessions were confiscated by the American Office of Alien Property Custodian after his death. Some things were later returned to his relatives, others are now kept in the Tesla Museum in Belgrade. But some of his writings and devices are still secret and hidden from the public, which is why it remains a mystery whether he made any new inventions before his death, perhaps a device that would lead the world into a new era of free energy. Without Nikola Tesla, there would be no radio, no television, no cell phones or computers, the Internet and wireless signal transmission, media and new media art.

With the development of human expression, the definition of creativity has also expanded and upgraded, and at some point it was called “art”. From antiquity through the Gothic and Renaissance periods, the Baroque and Classicism to the invention of photography, it has been defined as “beautiful” or “fine” art. In recent decades, it has absorbed almost all audiovisual media, photography, video, computer, analog and digital image, and has become a “visual”, “multimedia”, “intermedia” and “interdisciplinary” art, encompassing all kinds of digital realities: Augmented Reality – AR, Virtual Reality – VR, Immersive Reality – IR, Mixed Reality – MR, Extended Reality – XR and, of course, Artificial Intelligence – AI, or rather, Machine Learning – ML, because memorizing large amounts of data is not intelligence.

But we are always dealing with the same game that humans play, namely the transmission of information and this or that type of communication made possible by the available technologies, be it bones or paints, a wheel or an electric motor, an abacus or a computer. The basis are signals that have a frequency and an amplitude, their range is practically infinite. They are mostly analog, in quantum physics also discrete, audible and visible, inaudible and invisible. Although information and communication technologies (ICT) can be understood to mean the Internet and the computer as a multimedia medium, this applies to our entire history and to all inventions, to every type of communication and access to information, which must become faster and simpler and at the same time more complex. A user-friendly, efficient and accessible system that ensures the transmission of the most sophisticated information in a short time. Computer memory is cheap, while computing power and graphic elements are expensive.

Marko Štrajn is active in various fields of art. In the current exhibition, which opens in spring, he combines analog painting and sculpture with contemporary digital interfaces. To create his paintings and sculptures, he used a free online website that generates images with the help of artificial intelligence. The passwords he entered often contained the words “hug”, “group hug”, “embrace”, etc. Based on this and other online data, he obtained images according to which he modeled his paintings, which also contain various machine-generated deformations.