

KATJA NOVITSKOVA

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EDITOR(S): Katja Novitskova

AUTHOR(S): Katja Novitskova, Peter Hossli

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A VISUAL TOUR DE FORCE

Berlin-based Estonian artist Katja Novitskova (b. Tallinn, 1984) is searching for areas where humans, machines, and the environment intersect. Her work focuses on technology, evolutionary processes, digital imagery, and corporate aesthetics. She scans our chaotic reality for meaningful patterns as if she were a biological search engine. Playful and determined, she explores different concepts of artificial intelligence (AI) and considers the nonhuman intelligence of animals as a model for AI. “For me, watching an animal, whether it’s a fly or a mouse, an ape or an octopus, is more exciting than watching a movie,” Novitskova says.

She has looked at countless animal images for this artist’s book, a special edition of the Ringier Annual Report 2017. Since 1998, Ringier annual reports have been created by artists whose work is featured in the Ringier Collection. Publisher Michael Ringier and curator Beatrix Ruf initiated the series as a means of firming links between art and the activities of the Swiss-based, global media company Ringier.

Novitskova closely collaborated with PWR, a cloud-based design studio with a physical presence in Berlin and Amsterdam. The result is a visual tour de force, that Novitskova calls a “mutant child,” with PWR’s Hanna Nilsson and Rasmus Svensson as algorithm parents and the artist as content parent. What ended up on the pages was not a

conscious choice, but the result of artistry and artificial intelligence. The artist thus opens her on-going archive of digital images making clear the ways she is experimenting with images. “I need to manipulate images to be allowed to use them. I fictionalize everything. It’s not fake news, but an interpretation. The images I use stand for themselves—and they are a product of our time. The image itself is already an artifact that needs attention. I try to encapsulate its reality.”

The publication also includes a wide-ranging interview conducted by Peter Hossli in which Novitskova talks about the artistic power of a blue dog in India; in what way artificial or machine intelligence relates to her artistic vision; how she works with scientific representations as well as algorithms; her Russian-Estonian heritage, and a Soviet childhood.

Graduated in semiotics, cultural studies, science in digital media, Katja Novitskova’s work has recently been exhibited at the K11 Foundation, Shanghai (2017), the ZKM in Karlsruhe (2017), the Kunstverein Hamburg (2016), the Kunsthalle Lissabon in Lisbon (2015), and has been part of the New York City Public Art Fund program (2017). She was in residency at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam in 2013–2014, and she represented Estonia at the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017.

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