
Antennas Dreaming: Machine-Generated Post-Industrial Dystopias and Algorithmic Interpretations

Susanna Hertrich^{*†1} and Selena Savic²

¹Susanna Hertrich – independent artist – Germany

²University of Amsterdam [Amsterdam] = Universiteit van Amsterdam – Netherlands

Abstract

This artwork consists of a poster featuring GAN-generated images that portray post-industrial dystopian landscapes, each dominated by a central antenna-like structure. The training dataset comprised images of friendly blue-skied environments with a standard TV antenna at their center, which is in stark contrast with gloomy output of the models—perhaps akin to a machine’s dream of antennas.

To explore the nature of this ‘dream,’ I enlisted other algorithms to interpret the images: One GenAI responded with poetic interpretations reminiscent of Haiku, while an image classification model provided a clinical breakdown of the visual elements. This juxtaposition of algorithmic responses probes the boundaries of machine creativity and cognition, questioning the coherence of AI-generated narratives.

My collaborator Selena Savic prompted an AI to compose a text reflecting on this project, simultaneously shaping the AI’s response to unveil its “character.” The outcome—both a collaboration and a critique—invites reflection on the role of “confabulation” in AI outputs and the notion of “irreproducible science” in creative practices. This work thus interrogates the interplay between human and machine interpretation, challenging us to reconsider what it means for machines to ‘dream’ and ‘understand.’ The poster is intended to be published and distributed as PDF under a Creative Commons license.

Keywords: confabulation, prompt, engineering, GenAI, GAN

*Speaker

†Corresponding author: mail@susannahertrich.com