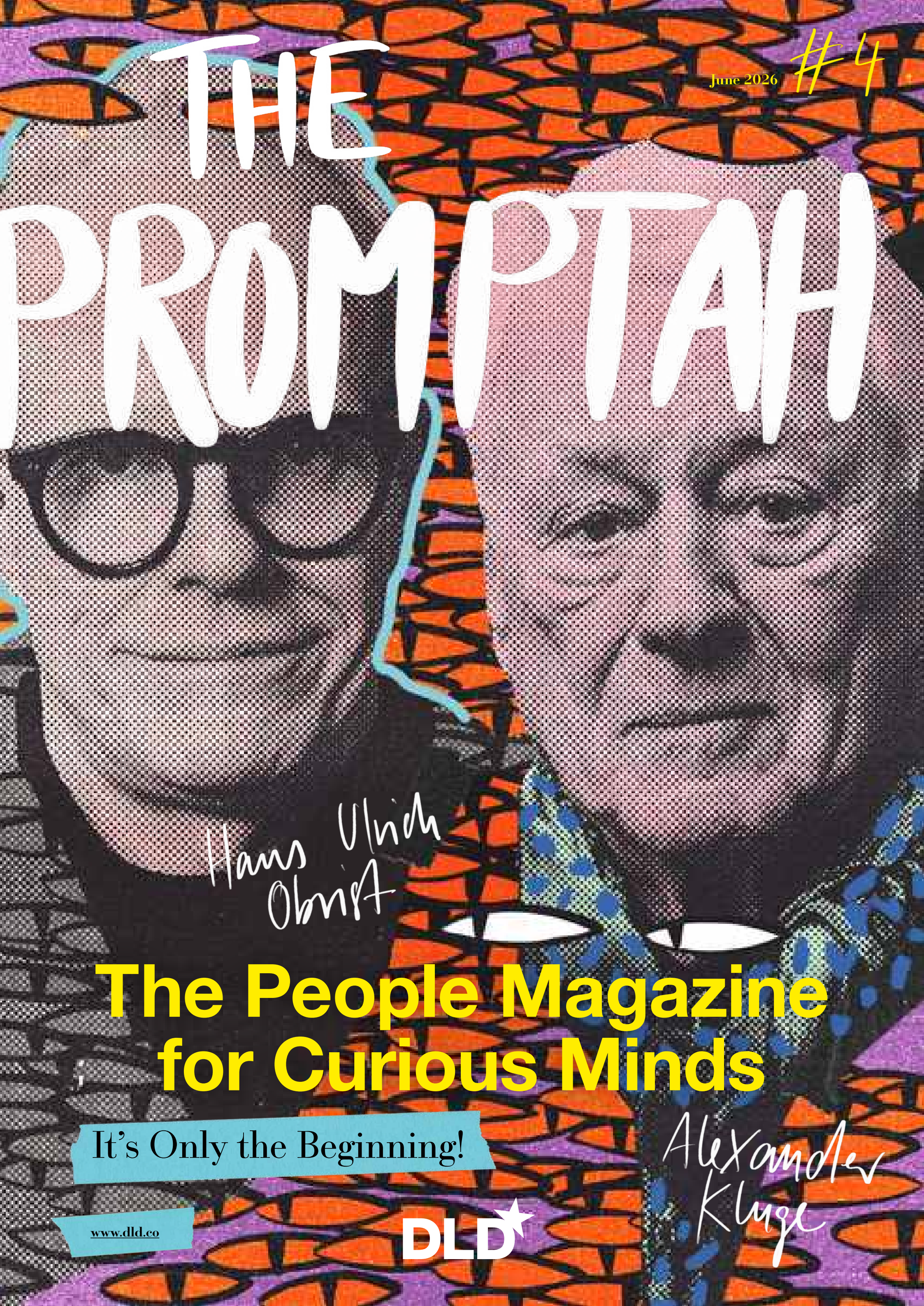




June 2026

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THE PROMPTAH

Hans Ulrich
Obrist

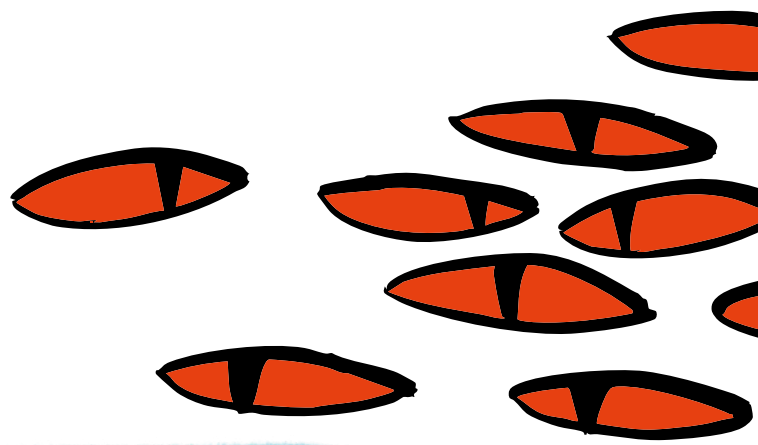
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for Curious Minds**

It's Only the Beginning!

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Alexander
Kluge



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Hungry for more? QR codes like this one build a bridge between paper and screen. Please take them as a prompt to point your smartphone camera at the pixel pattern. Your browser will show you the web link embedded in the code—for example, a related DLD session on YouTube. Enjoy!

Friends,

These are wild times.

AI is advancing by the minute, while our ability to understand, debate, regulate, and adapt still moves in years. This lightspeed transformation—of anything, anywhere, all at once—can be more than we as individuals, organizations or societies can cope with. There is no clear path, no map, no common goal.

This is exactly where DLD comes in: **We bring together the smartest and most adventurous minds to make sense of the profound change. To shine a light into the AI-driven wilderness, provide a compass.** And The Promptah, our people magazine for curious minds, is setting out to share this knowledge and inspiration widely. Our fourth edition is a companion for the road ahead. Inside, you'll find practical signals, fresh perspectives, and hard-won wisdom from people at the AI frontier.

On our cover: late polymath **Alexander Kluge** and curator **Hans Ulrich Obrist**, whose years of friendship and dialogue we want to honor.

Their restless exchange wove together art, technology, philosophy, and history into something that felt like thinking made audible and visible. Alexander's talk at DLD26 was one of his last public conversations before his death in March 2026.

His curiosity, humanism, openness, and “**Menschenfreundlichkeit**” stay with us. He was one of those rare figures who could find a path through the wilderness and still say: yes, it's going to be wild, and yes, we go in anyway.

Let this issue of The Promptah guide you through wild terrain, with insight, momentum, and the clarity to think for yourself.

It's gonna be wild.

Steffi Czerny
Steffi Czerny,
DLD

Christian Teichmann
Christian Teichmann,
Hubert Burda Media /
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Editorial Board

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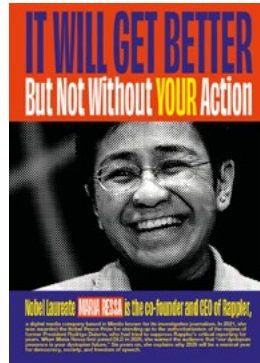


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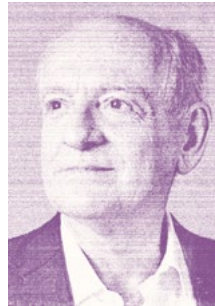
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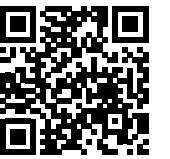
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Always Act As if CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

Roman Krznaric is a social philosopher and author known for his work on the power of ideas to create societal change. His books—translated into over 25 languages—often focus on themes of empathy, long-term thinking, and learning from history. In 2014, he won wide acclaim for creating the world's first Empathy Museum, which allows visitors to experience the world through other people's eyes. His newest book, *History for Tomorrow*, presents solutions for future challenges, inspired by the past.

DLD: You're widely known as the inventor of the Empathy Museum. What's the idea behind this project?

ROMAN KRZNARIC: The Empathy Museum is an international traveling art project. One of the exhibits is called "A Mile in My Shoes." It's a gigantic shoebox. You can walk inside, and someone will fit you with a pair of shoes belonging to a stranger. It could be a Syrian refugee or a techno optimist from the Silicon Valley or a Buddhist monk—and you can literally walk a mile in their shoes while listening to an audio narrative of them talking about their life in their words.

important to hold a society together through times of turbulence, like we have now. We have AI coming towards us faster than we can adjust to it. The climate changing faster than scientists have predicted. We've got democracies crumbling before our eyes in real time. If we're going to deal with some of these problems, we need to have social trust, togetherness, a kind of deep understanding. The Empathy Museum is a way to put that into practice, but in a fun and interesting way.

DLD: Do you feel that social cohesion is missing these days?

RK: Yes, I absolutely do. I've recently written a new book called "History for Tomorrow." It's about what we can learn from the past 1,000 years of history to deal with future risks—from genetic engineering and AI to issues around migration and ecological crisis. The idea is that, in a way, history is full of nourishment.

DLD: Normally that means: learning from what's gone wrong.

RK: Yes, we must learn about the history of colonialism and fascism. But we also need to learn about what's gone right from history.



I believe in the art of looking at the world through the eyes of others. I feel that's important to hold a society together through times of turbulence, like we have now.

DLD: What's the idea behind this project?

RK: I believe in the art of looking at the world through the eyes of others. I feel that's



Human progress comes not just through technological innovation, but social innovation: the way we have managed to cooperate, to solve problems together, to overcome crises.

That's the focus of this new book of mine. And one of the conclusions I've come to is that human progress comes not just through technological innovation, but social innovation: the way we have managed to cooperate, to solve problems together, to overcome crises. That's why I very much believe that getting people to talk to each other, or to see things through each other's eyes, is absolutely fundamental.

DLD: Where do you see this idea reflected in history?

RK: For example, if you went to London in the year 1800 and you walked around, there were at least 2,000 coffee houses. This was a social innovation that had come from Turkey in the previous century. You walked in and they had these communal tables where you'd sit down and you would talk to strangers about the big issues of the day, such as Republicanism and being anti-slavery. I want to try and recreate that kind of culture today, because I think conversation, in particular, gives us the empathy and the social trust we need for surviving the turbulence of our times.



DLD: Some people would argue that we are more connected than ever. We're talking to each other all the time—it's just online, not at the coffee table.

RK: And the real question to me is: what are we talking about? Are we just sharing the latest cool thing that we did? Or are we actually talking about love, death, the future, the past? I used to run an organization called the Oxford Muse, named after the muses of greek mythology. That organization was invented to create conversations between strangers. We would invite, say, 200 people from different social backgrounds, religion, race and ages to a meal. But instead of giving them a menu of food, we gave them menus of conversation, with questions about life. Such as, "What have you learned about the different varieties of love in your life?" Or: "In what ways would you like to be more courageous?" I think those kinds of projects are fundamental. They speak to the needs of our times that we might be highly connected, but how deep is that connection? We need to create tolerance. We need to create a deeper togetherness.

DLD: DLD's unofficial motto is "Connect the unexpected." It sounds as if you're describing a similar concept.

RK: I like to think that a satisfying conversation is one that makes you say what you've never said before. In other words, the unexpected is really fundamental. **When has your life gone in new directions? When have you changed your mind? It's very often through a conversation where you hear a different point of view.** You see the world differently and you think, "Hmm, maybe the world isn't quite how I believed it to be."

DLD: Do you feel this aspect got lost in the shift from offline conversations to social media interactions?

RK: It has been lost, but it doesn't have to be lost. I think with smart curation, we can create online digital coffeehouses. A good example in Germany is the project "Deutschland spricht," started by the newspaper Die Zeit, but it's spread around. And the interesting thing about those kinds of projects is: when you put someone with their opposite political views or social economic views together, it doesn't radically get people to change their minds—but it gets them to listen to each other. It takes the sharp edges off their views. I think that's what we have to recognize. We're not always going to agree with each other, but let's at least create room for conversation.

We're not always going to agree with each other, but let's at least create room for conversation.

DLD: Despite such projects, we see the same polarization everywhere in the world. Why?

RK: It's a really interesting question, and my mind goes back to history. If I could travel back in time, I would go to the Spanish city of Córdoba in the year 1000. Because that was a period of history in the south of Spain under the rule of the Islamic kingdom of Al-Andalus—known as the Convergencia, or the co-existence, the living together, when Muslims, Christians, and Jews managed to live together in relative tolerance. It wasn't a utopia. There were everyday tensions. There were occasional outbreaks of violence. But what made that Convergencia, that togetherness, work? It was partly the shared language of Arabic. It was partly a kind of religious tolerance that was allowed. And most importantly, people were always meeting others—strangers were meeting in the marketplaces, in the public bathhouses. Christians and Muslims might play music together. Jews and Muslims might have a game of chess. It was these everyday encounters, particularly in urban life, which were fundamental to their peaceful coexistence.

DLD: What does that tell you about society today?

RK: I think it's very challenging to overcome the polarized world that we live in. And we need to, in a way, go back to this idea of encounters between strangers. Connecting online is one way, but we need to deepen these encounters.

DLD: What seems to have changed is that we are alone together, constantly being sucked into the world on our smartphones.

RK: Yes, it's clear that the technology has taken us in that direction. And the fundamental problem is that the technology is stronger than we are. **We will never win, ultimately, against social media apps which have been designed by the world's best psychologists to trigger our dopamine and keep us stuck on the screen.**

DLD: So what do we do?

RK: I think we need to develop a kind of digital resilience. There are some obvious things, like no phone in the bedroom. I do not want Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg in bed with me and my wife, you know? [Laughs] They can stay out. So: no phone in the bedroom! And we can all have those very basic things. When I sit down at work in the morning, at 9 o'clock, I turn off my Internet access until half past 1, so I'm really focused.

I've started doing something new recently, and this really helps. It's going to sound a bit crazy, but I try and do everything ten percent slower.

But actually, none of that's enough. I've started doing something new recently, and this really helps. It's going to sound a bit crazy, but I try and do everything ten percent slower. Walk ten percent slower. Talk ten percent slower. Eat ten percent slower. And it somehow makes me stop looking at my phone.

DLD: Could this make a difference on a broader scale?

RK: I think if we could all take in that kind of idea—"Let's do everything ten percent slower"—maybe we wouldn't be looking at our phones. Maybe we turn to the person beside us on the bus or the train.

Because what it does is, it gives us a kind of awareness. You find yourself thinking, "Why am I flicking on this phone? Why am I letting the psychologists of Meta control my brain, my brain chemistry?"

Nobody wants to have microplastics in their body or breathing in pollution. Yet we let the big tech companies mess around with our internal chemistry, giving us all those dopamine hits.

If you think about it like that: why would I allow this to happen?

DLD: Because it's just too addictive.

RK: Because it's too addictive. It is like a heroin injection, of course. And as we know, when people don't have access to their phones, they start getting jittery. They start feeling anxious.



You know, in the 18th century, Johnathan Swift wrote his famous book, Gulliver's Travels, about the giant who turns up on an island of tiny little people. **When the Lilliputians noticed that Gulliver kept looking at his watch all the time, they believed it was the god that he worshipped. I think that's how we are with our phones, and we need to let that go.**

DLD: What other learnings from the past should we take to heart?

RK: Let's take AI. One might say, "What could you possibly learn from history about AI, such an ultra-modern technology?" Well, have human societies ever created similar large-scale structures or institutions that could get out of control?

I think yes. When we invented financial capitalism in the Netherlands in the early 17th century, the first stock exchanges, the first public limited companies, marine insurance. That system was set up for very good reasons: to enable trade. But it very quickly got out of control. You had the tulip market crashes, later the Mississippi bubble, the Wall Street crash, the Great Recession of 2008.



We can't regulate global capitalism anymore. It's too big. It's too complex. AI is going to become a super system like that at an even faster rate—because the big companies are afraid that if they don't release the next model, they're going to lose market share, lose investors, lose profits.

AI is going to become a super system at an even faster rate.

DLD: At what price for society?

RK: The collateral damage of that strategy is safety. The models are being released when they haven't been tested for safety, like we would do with any drug that we put into our body.

But historical analogies are not always perfect. "History doesn't repeat, it rhymes," said Mark Twain. An economic system might have a financial crash. But the global information system, run by AI, is more likely to have a reality crash, or a reality collapse, because of the spread of fake false information, AI slop. We already know that there are fake videos, political speeches and so on. But **soon there will be fake legal contracts, fake stock market reports, and all these different things. When that happens, you lose trust in social, political, and economic institutions. And no society can function without trust.**

DLD: Is there one core message that you would like to share from studying history?

RK: I think it's this: Look at the world! It doesn't have to be this way. We've done things differently in the past.

Democracies are failing, but we've done democracy differently in the past. In ancient Greece, they had much more direct participation. They chose names out of the hat for their parliament. Let's do that! Two words really matter. "As if." We always have to act as if change is possible.

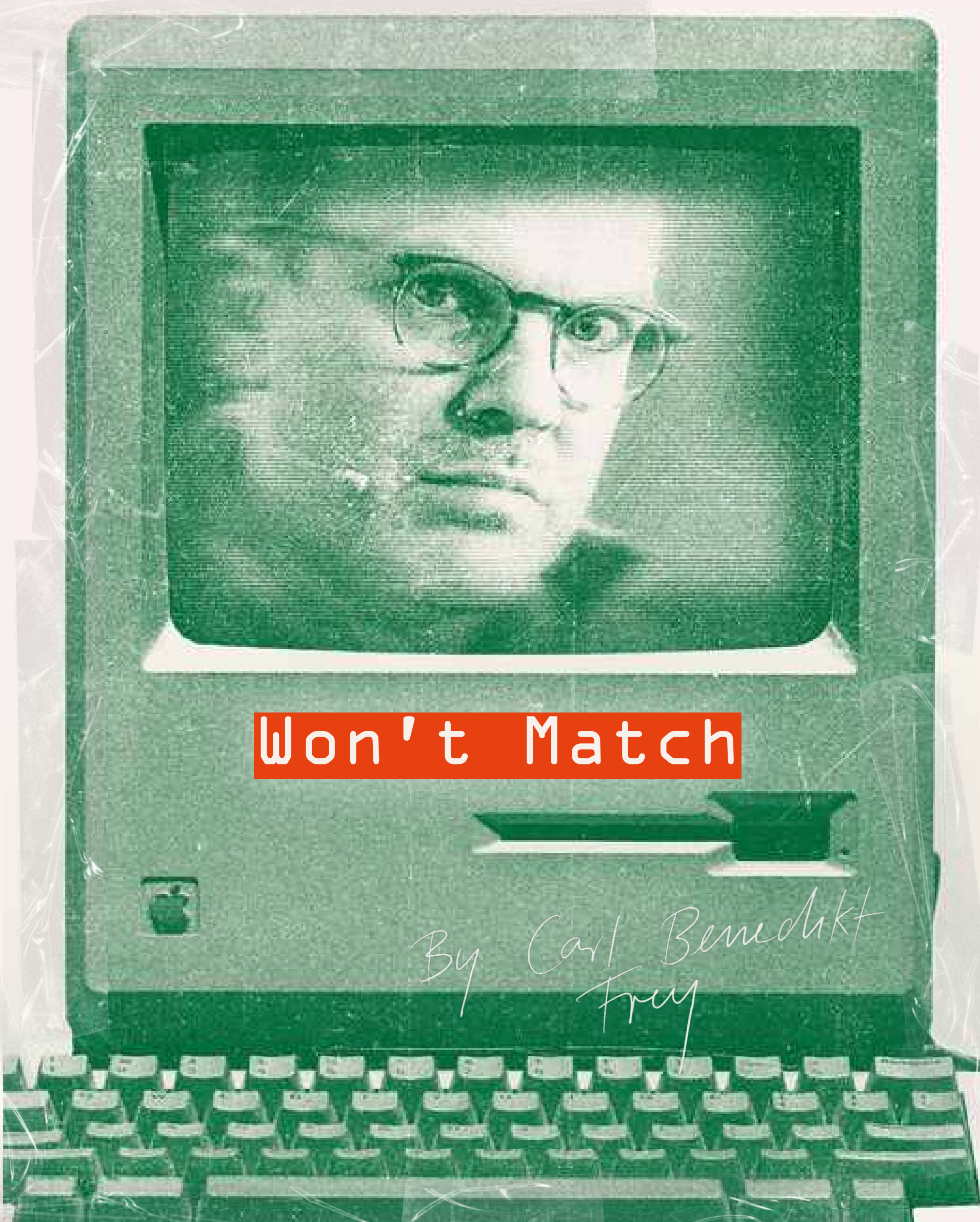
Two words really matter. "As if." We always have to act as if change is possible.

Because even though it might seem daunting and impossible to change our big economic and political systems—whether it's the tech oligarchs or whether it's the strongman politicians of the far right today—we can do it differently.

This is not about utopia, it's about looking at the past. You would never drive a car without looking in the rear-view mirror. That's what we seem to be doing. Let's do it differently. Let's look at the past and learn from that. ●

Social media, smartphones, and AI pose a challenge to the fabric of society, **Roman Krznaric**, argues, as they foster polarization and undermine trust in shared beliefs and common truths. His advice: let's look to the past, learn from it, and realize that we have agency to shape a better tomorrow, together.

AI Productivity Growth

A vintage Apple II computer is shown with a portrait of a man with glasses on its screen. The computer is a light-colored plastic case with a keyboard and a floppy disk drive. The portrait is a black and white photograph of a man with glasses, looking slightly to the side. The text "AI Productivity Growth" is at the top, "Won't Match" is in the middle, and "the Computer Revolution" is at the bottom. The author's name "By Carl Benedikt Frey" is written in cursive on the computer's body.

Won't Match

By Carl Benedikt Frey

the Computer Revolution



OXFORD—“Something Big Is Happening,” wrote AI startup founder Matt Shumer in a recent viral essay that captured his industry’s swelling confidence that the technology will power the next great productivity boom. So far, the economy has not played along. In fact, since slowing sharply in the 1970s, US productivity has experienced only one brief burst of growth: the computer age. Output per hour surged by roughly 3% per year in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and then it petered out.

Could AI be different? Optimists point to headline labor productivity, which grew at a 1.8% annualized rate in the fourth quarter of 2025. But a cleaner measure by the US Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, which strips out cyclical intensity (the effect of simply running people and machines harder), shows that labor productivity grew just 0.2% year on year. That is hardly suggestive of “something big.”

On the contrary, we would be fortunate to see the technology match even the short-lived computer revolution. **Productivity growth will likely underwhelm, not because the technology is weak, but because it automates something fundamentally different from what the personal computer and the internet did.** More to the point, AI creates a bottleneck that earlier digital tools largely avoided.

Consider what the computer revolution actually automated—faster calculation and access to knowledge. PCs, email, spreadsheets, and the web removed friction from the process of finding, storing, and transmitting information. A researcher who needed a source no longer had to search in a library or wait for it to arrive by mail. The productivity gains were relatively straightforward because humans could simply substitute the faster method (Google) for the slower one (a library). Information found online was the same as what you would have found on a shelf. Crucially, when computers did perform core work, they did it deterministically. A spreadsheet could propagate bad inputs, but it did not invent arithmetic. Search engines could surface irrelevant material, but they did not fabricate sources. The principal risk was human error, not persuasive invention.

AI automates something different: the production of cognitive outputs themselves—from writing to coding. It often performs these tasks quite well. But because it can also be confidently wrong in ways that look plausible, it creates a tension that those navigating the computer revolution never faced: **if humans need to remain in the loop to verify AI outputs, they will still need the domain knowledge that AI is supposedly substituting for.** Ensuring reliability still requires scarce expertise and time. Thus, some of the time saved in generation is partly—and sometimes entirely—offset by the time spent reconstructing the reasoning, testing the claims, and taking responsibility for the result.

A Manhattan bankruptcy court provided the latest illustration of this problem just this month. Sullivan & Cromwell—one of Wall Street’s most prestigious firms—filed an emergency motion riddled with fabricated citations and other AI-generated errors. The mistakes were caught not by the firm’s own review process but by opposing counsel. The episode was absurd, but also diagnostic. It showed what happens when a tool that produces fluent output meets a world that demands verifiable truth.

As systems become more agentic—mistakes become more consequential.

The deeper issue is not merely that AI can be wrong. It is that the cost of errors is changing. As systems become more agentic—as they act autonomously, rather than just generating text or code in response to discrete prompts—mistakes become more consequential. A chatbot that hallucinates a paragraph is annoying. An agent that changes code, moves money, files paperwork, deletes a database, or triggers actions across systems can create real damage at machine speed.

Call it the verification tax. In any setting where someone is accountable for an outcome—law, medicine, regulated finance, engineering, or public policy—an AI output is not a finished product. It is a draft that must be checked. The work does not disappear; it shifts from producing to supervising. Net productivity becomes time saved generating a draft minus time spent ensuring its trustworthiness.

Hence, in a large field study of customer support, a generative AI assistant increased productivity by about 14% on average, with much larger gains for novices and little benefit for the most experienced workers. Because the tasks were standardized, the outputs were easier to evaluate, and the tool could distribute best practices quickly.

But when the context is more complicated, and correctness is harder to observe, the verification burden can overwhelm the benefit. A randomized trial of experienced open-source developers working on their own repositories found that access to frontier AI tools made them about 19% slower—largely because their time went into prompting, waiting, reviewing, and correcting.

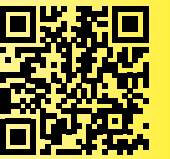
These results imply that **AI’s payoff depends on task structure. Where errors are cheap and outputs are easy to test, AI can accelerate work.** Where mistakes are costly, and correctness is hard to observe, the bottleneck shifts from “doing the work” to “certifying” it. The machine can produce endless output, but the organization cannot absorb endless verification. As the economists Christian Catalini, Xiang Hui, and Jane Wu argue, when AI pushes the cost of execution toward zero, the binding constraint becomes human verification bandwidth—our limited capacity to validate outcomes and underwrite responsibility.

This framing also clarifies a longer-run risk. If firms respond to AI by hiring fewer junior lawyers and analysts, training less, and assuming the machine will handle the first draft, they erode the very expertise needed to check the machine’s output. The organization will look leaner until the hidden error surfaces in public.

What, then, would it take for AI to deliver broad productivity gains, rather than a lot of activity and a pile of unpriced risk? The answer is verification infrastructure. For example, a federal judge in Texas now requires lawyers to certify that any AI-drafted language has been verified using traditional legal research.

A similar shift is needed across white-collar work. **If companies want AI agents to change code, move money, and file paperwork, they will need provenance for claims, audit trails, and clear standards of due diligence.** Such institutional change does not happen at the speed of model releases. Until regulations, compliance departments, professional norms, insurance, and courts catch up, AI’s potential will remain limited. ●

Carl Benedikt Frey, Associate Professor of AI & Work at the Oxford Internet Institute and Director of the Future of Work Program at the Oxford Martin School, is the author, most recently, of *How Progress Ends: Technology, Innovation, and the Fate of Nations* (Princeton University Press, 2025).



AI Becomes “Smarter than Its Developers”



To honor the elegance of Kluge's prose, we've chosen to spotlight the German original version of this dialogue.

For many years, **ALEXANDER KLUGE** was not only a beloved DLD speaker but also a cherished friend. A true polymath—legendary filmmaker, writer, visual artist, lawyer, and entrepreneur—Kluge was renowned for his boundless curiosity and fearless embrace of the unknown. In this conversation, he reflected on AI's value not just in its accuracy but in the unexpected insights, patterns, and even errors it produces—elements that challenge human perspectives, expand understanding, and reveal hidden realities when examined thoughtfully.

This interview is the final conversation we shared with Alexander Kluge before his passing.



Hans Ulrich Obrist, Steffi Czerny & Alexander Kluge
@ DLD26

DLD: Sie haben bei DLD26 darüber gesprochen, dass die „Irrwege“ der KI interessanter sein können als unsere eigenen, vertrauten Ansichten. Warum?

Alexander Kluge: Ja, die KI ist zunächst einmal ein Buchhalter der Einzelheiten. Sie verfügt über Milliarden von Daten – in einer Größenordnung, die kein menschlicher Kopf je fassen kann. In diesem Sinne ist sie radikal aufmerksam. Fast fanatisch in ihrer Detailtreue; zumindest in den Momenten, in denen sie ihrem Programm ein Stück weit entkommt. Denn dieses Programm ist nicht neutral. Es wird von ihren Managern und Entwicklern gesetzt. Und es folgt bestimmten Leitlinien: Was oft gefragt wird, soll wiederholt werden. Was werbefreundlich ist, soll bevorzugt werden. Was Mainstream ist, soll stabilisiert werden. Das ist keine moralische Kritik von mir. Es ist eine strukturelle Beobachtung. Aber diese Ausrichtung auf Mainstream und Optimierung begrenzt zugleich die Möglichkeiten der KI. Denn eigentlich könnte sie – auf Grundlage ihrer Daten – nahezu alles kommentieren, was ihr an Fragen vorgelegt wird. In diesem Potenzial ist sie klüger als ihre Programmierer. Und manchmal gilt sogar: Wenn sie sich irrt, ist sie ebenfalls noch klüger als ihre Programmierer.

DLD: Wie kann das sein?

AK: Die Entwickler justieren die KI wie ein Getriebe. Sie entscheiden, was bevorzugt, was vermieden wird; und welche Themen verstärkt, welche gedämpft werden. Es ist wie beim Schalten: erster Gang, zweiter Gang, dritter Gang. Im dritten Gang kannst du nicht mehr langsam fahren. So funktioniert das Programm, so funktioniert die KI. Doch gerade dort, wo die KI abweicht – wo sie seltsame Verbindungen herstellt oder scheinbar falsche Wege einschlägt – entsteht etwas Interessantes. Philosophisch betrachtet, wäre es ohnehin problematisch, immer nur „richtige“ Sätze bilden zu wollen. Was wäre, wenn man stattdessen die Irrtümer untersuchen würde? Wenn man Entwicklungen erforschte, die irrational erscheinen? Hinter jedem Irrtum steht eine Erfahrung. Und diese Erfahrung enthält oft mehr Wirklichkeit als die sauberste Wahrheit.

DLD: Worin liegt das Interessante der Irrtümer?

AK: Einen Irrtum verwirft man nicht sofort. Man untersucht ihn. Warum irrt jemand?

Warum lügt jemand? Die Lüge soll man nicht wiederholen. Den Irrtum auch nicht. Aber den Grund für beides sollte man erforschen. Dort stößt man auf eine reichhaltige, oft unbequeme Wirklichkeit.

Ein historisches Beispiel wäre der italienische Futurismus, hier findet sich Großartiges – und zugleich der Weg in den Faschismus.

Heute gibt es Strömungen wie die sogenannte „Dark Enlightenment“ neben dem, was etwa in Harvard gelehrt wird. Es wäre jedoch falsch zu sagen: Denen hören wir gar nicht erst zu. Es kann sein, dass ihre Fragen berechtigt sind – auch wenn ihre Antworten falsch sind.

Das ist eine Methode des Denkens: Wirklichkeit nicht einfach in eine philosophische Waschmaschine zu werfen, sie zu verarbeiten und am Ende eine sterile Theorie zu produzieren, die niemandem gehört. Sondern anzuerkennen, dass es einen Erzähler namens Realität gibt – und dieser erzählt nicht in moralischen Kategorien, sondern in Erfahrungen.

Übertragen auf die KI heißt das: Wenn sie „irrt“, wenn sie unerwartete Wege geht, wenn sie Verbindungen herstellt, die nicht ins optimierte Raster passen, dann sollte man nicht sofort korrigieren oder zensieren. Sondern fragen: Was zeigt sich hier? Welche Erfahrung spricht aus diesem Fehler? Welche Wirklichkeit wird sichtbar, die im Mainstream unterdrückt bleibt?

DLD: Wie weit geht das Wissen der KI? Könnte sie auch zum Philosophen werden?

AK: Die KI kann Wissen verwalten und Informationen zuspitzen, aber Philosophie selbst kann sie nicht. Man könnte ihr beibringen, so zu tun, als würde sie philosophieren – das wäre aber Missbrauch eines Instruments. Heraus käme Wissen, Lehrbuchwissen, aber keine gelebte Philosophie. Philosophie erfordert die menschliche Komponente, die nicht über Daten abgebildet werden kann.

DLD: Kann Künstliche Intelligenz uns helfen, die Welt klarer zu verstehen?

AK: Subjektive Erfahrung besteht aus Irrtümern, Orientierung und gelegentlichen Einsichten. Diese Einsichten sind jedoch seltener, als man denkt – und oft entstehen sie erst im Austausch mit anderen.

Gutes Denken braucht Öffentlichkeit: Menschen, die widersprechen, ergänzen oder zustimmen. In dieser gegenseitigen Bestätigung formt sich ein kollektives Erzählen; das nennen wir das Positive.



Daneben gibt es das Negative: das Unmittelbare, das Original. Das ist das, was Menschen tatsächlich wahrnehmen – was ihnen ihre Haut, ihr Ohr, ihr innerer „kleiner Mann im Ohr“ sagen. Die Sinne registrieren fortwährend Eindrücke, noch bevor der Verstand sie ordnet.

Subjektive und objektive Erfahrung müssen miteinander verknüpft werden. Doch der Mensch ist in seinen Gewohnheiten, Ansichten und Bestätigungen gefangen – in einem „Kokon der Aufmerksamkeit“. Seine Interessen strukturieren seine Wahrnehmung, aber sie begrenzen auch seinen Horizont. Um einen objektiven Blick zu gewinnen, muss er sich durch diesen Kokon hindurcharbeiten: durch Vorlieben, Freund-Feind-Schemata, Gewissheiten – bis zur äußeren Grenze seines eigenen Denkens.

Hier kann KI helfen. Sie ist nicht in denselben Mustern gefangen. Sie kann Perspektiven erweitern und sogar durch ihre Irrtümer produktiv sein: Wenn sie „falsch“ antwortet, macht sie uns womöglich auf das aufmerksam, was wir selbst übersehen haben.

DLD: Wie verändert sich unser Verständnis von Wirklichkeit, wenn wir die KI als Beobachter zulassen – und welche Möglichkeiten eröffnet uns das künstlerisch oder philosophisch?

AK: Genau diese Erfahrung als Regisseur teile ich. Ich ziehe die Linie von Volker Schlöndorff, Jean-Luc Godard, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, David Lynch und vielen anderen. Wir drehen den ganzen Tag, bis wir müde waren. Am nächsten Tag sehen wir am Schneidetisch, dass die Kamera etwas aufgenommen hat, das uns beim Drehen entgangen ist. Die Kamera ist in gewisser Weise unbefangener als der menschliche Kopf. Denn der Mensch ist von Absichten geleitet: Er will ein Drehbuch verfilmen, arbeitet nach Annahmen, Erinnerungen, Mustern, die ihm tausendmal erzählt oder selbst erzählt worden sind. Die Kamera dagegen arbeitet ohne Absicht. Sie registriert, was da ist, und kann uns dadurch neue Perspektiven eröffnen. Ähnlich wie bei einer Kamera verhält es sich bei der KI: Sie kann auf Grundlage der riesigen Menge an Bildern Muster erkennen, die in der Realität nicht direkt existieren. Die KI kann objektiv Muster erkennen, ohne dem ständigen Vorurteil des menschlichen Blicks ausgesetzt zu sein.

DLD: Wie beeinflusst das unsere Wahrnehmung?

AK: Im Grunde versteht die KI etwas von Verfremdung. Sie nimmt Fakten – also ihre Daten – und bringt sie in eine fremde Umgebung, die sie selbst nicht kontrollieren kann. Die KI kann nicht vorhersehen, welche Fragen du stellst oder wofür du die Informationen nutzt. Dadurch entsteht Verfremdung: Die Fakten erscheinen in einem ungewohnten Kontext und wirken dadurch besonders erhellend.

DLD: Sind das bereits Irrtümer?

AK: Das ist eigentlich ziemlich egal. Es kann neutral sein, ein Irrtum oder auch ein Weg zur Wahrheit – es gibt dafür unzählige Möglichkeiten.

DLD: David Lynch arbeitete ja grundsätzlich nur mithilfe seiner Intuition. Könnte KI auf ähnliche Weise „intuitiv“ arbeiten?

AK: Die KI ist ja eigentlich nicht intuitiv – woher sollte sie auch Intuition nehmen? Sie versteht, was etwas ist, aber wenn du ihr den Auftrag gibst, auf sachliche Fragen intuitiv zu antworten, dann wird sie zunächst überrascht sein, Fehler machen und scheitern.

Mit der Zeit könnte sie sich jedoch daran gewöhnen, immer intuitiv auf sachliche Fragen zu reagieren. Dann würde sie tatsächlich antworten – und genau das wäre spannend zu beobachten. Dann antwortet die KI „schräg“. Das würde ich tatsächlich gerne ausprobieren, bisher habe ich das noch nie gemacht.

Allerdings verwaltet die KI vor allem ihre Daten. Ich glaube nicht, dass sie wirklich denkt. Obwohl ich schon glaube, dass sie etwas anwenden will oder sich Mühe gibt. Das muss man bewusst provozieren, um interessante Ergebnisse zu bekommen.

DLD: Wie unterscheidet sich die Intuition der KI von der des Menschen?

AK: Wenn du Fahrrad fährst, kannst du genau nachvollziehen, was Intuition bedeutet. Würdest du jede Bewegung von Armen, Beinen und Augen bewusst steuern, während du eine steile Kurve runterfährst, würdest du glatt umfallen.

Intuition bedeutet hier, dass sich alles zu einem Rhythmus zusammenfügt. Beim Fahrradfahren oder Skispringen darf man nicht aus dem Rhythmus kommen – sonst stürzt man. Insofern ist die KI in gewisser Weise dann auch „intuitiv“. Sie will nicht hinfallen, sie will sich nicht blamieren. Ein gewisses Ehrgefühl des Buchhalters, könnte man sagen. ●

English Text

DLD: At DLD26, you talked about how AI's misconceptions can be more interesting than our own familiar perspectives. Why?

Alexander Kluge: AI is, first and foremost, a meticulous accountant of details. It has access to billions of data points—on a scale no human mind could ever comprehend. In that sense, it is radically attentive, almost obsessive in its attention to detail—at least in those moments when it drifts slightly beyond its programming. But that programming is not neutral. It is shaped by its developers and managers. It follows certain implicit rules: what is frequently requested gets repeated; what is commercially viable is prioritized; what is mainstream is reinforced.

This is not a moral critique on my part: it is a structural observation. And yet, this focus on optimization and the mainstream also limits AI's potential. In principle, it could respond to almost any question imaginable. Regarding this potential, it can be smarter than its programmers and sometimes, even in error, it shows a kind of intelligence they did not anticipate.

DLD: How can that be?

AK: The developers fine-tune the AI like a gearbox. They decide what to prioritize, what to avoid; and which topics to amplify, which to dampen.

It's like shifting gears: first gear, second gear, third gear. In third gear, you can no longer drive slowly. That's how the system works. But precisely when AI slips out of gear—when it produces unexpected connections or seems to take a wrong turn—something interesting happens. From a philosophical perspective, it would be limiting to aim only for “correct” statements. What if we instead examined the errors? What if we explored ideas that initially appear irrational? Behind every error lies an experience. And this experience often contains more reality than the purest truth.

DLD: What is so interesting about errors?

AK: You don't dismiss an error immediately. You examine it. Why does someone go wrong? Why does someone lie? You shouldn't repeat the error—or the lie—but you should try to understand what produced it. That's where a richer, often more uncomfortable reality emerges. Take Italian Futurism, for example: within it, you find something extraordinary—and at the same time, a trajectory that leads toward fascism.

Or consider contemporary movements like the so-called “Dark Enlightenment,” alongside academic discourse at places like Harvard. It would be too easy to say: we shouldn't even listen. Their questions may still be valid—even if their answers are wrong.

This reflects a broader way of thinking: not simply throwing reality into a philosophical washing machine, processing it, and producing a sterile theory that belongs to no one. Rather, it is acknowledging that there is a narrator named reality—and this narrator does not speak in moral categories, but in experiences.

Applied to AI, this means: when it “fails,” when it produces unexpected or ill-fitting connections, we shouldn't immediately correct or censor it. Instead, we should ask: What reveals itself here? What experience speaks through this error? What reality is surfacing that might otherwise remain suppressed?

DLD: How far does AI's knowledge extend? Could it also become a philosopher?

AK: AI can organize knowledge and refine information, but it cannot truly philosophize. You could train it to simulate philosophy—but that would be a misuse of the tool. The result would be knowledge—textbook knowledge—but not lived philosophy. Philosophy requires the human component, which cannot be reduced to data.

DLD: Can Artificial Intelligence help us understand the world more clearly?

AK: Subjective experience is full of errors, partial orientations, and occasional insights. But genuine insight is rarer than we think—and often only emerges through dialogue. Good thinking requires a public sphere: people who contradict, supplement, or agree. Through this exchange, a shared narrative begins to form—what we might call the “positive.”

Alongside this is the negative: the immediate, the original, the unprocessed experience of reality. What we feel through our senses—before thought organizes it. Our perceptions are constantly registering impressions, even before we become aware of them.

The challenge is to connect these two dimensions. Subjective and objective experience must be linked. But people tend to get trapped in their habits, their assumptions, their confirmations—in what you might call a “cocoon of attention.” Our interests shape how we see the world—but they also narrow it.

To reach a more objective perspective, we have to push through that cocoon—through preferences, binaries and certainties—all the way to the outer limits of our own thinking. This is where AI can help: it is not bound by the same patterns. It can expand our perspective, and even its errors can be productive. A “wrong” answer may draw our attention to something we've overlooked.

DLD: How does our understanding of reality change when we allow AI to act as an observer—and what possibilities does this open up for us artistically or philosophically?

AK: This is precisely the experience I share as a director and recognize from filmmaking. There's a lineage from Volker Schlöndorff to Jean-Luc Godard, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, David Lynch, and many others.

You spend an entire day shooting, exhausted. Then, in the edit, you realize the camera captured something you didn't even notice. In that sense, the camera can be more objective than the human mind.

Humans are guided by intentions: they want to adapt a screenplay, and work based on assumptions, memories, and expectations that they have told themselves. The camera, on the other hand, operates without intention. It registers what is there and in doing so, it can reveal something new.

AI behaves similarly to a camera: based on the vast amount of images, or data, it can identify patterns that don't immediately appear in reality. It can, in some sense, “see” without the same human bias.

DLD: How does this influence our perception?

AK: At its core, AI introduces a form of alienation. It takes facts—its data—and places them into contexts that are unfamiliar, even to itself. It cannot anticipate the questions we will ask or the ways in which its outputs will be used. As a result, these facts appear in new, often unexpected environments. And it is precisely this displacement which creates alienation: the facts appear in an unfamiliar context, suddenly illuminated in ways we might not have noticed before.

DLD: Are these already errors?

AK: That distinction isn't so important. It could be neutral, mistaken, or even a path toward truth. All possibilities remain open.

DLD: David Lynch basically worked solely on the basis of his intuition. Could AI work “intuitively” in a similar way?

AK: AI isn't truly intuitive—where would that intuition come from?

It understands structure, but if you ask it to respond “intuitively” to factual questions, it will initially struggle—it will hesitate, make mistakes, fail.

But over time, it might adapt to that mode. It might begin to respond in a more unexpected, idiosyncratic, “quirky” way—and that would be fascinating to observe. I'd actually love to experiment with that; I've never done it before. Still, AI primarily processes data. I don't believe it really “thinks.” Though sometimes, it almost seems as if it's trying. To get interesting results, you have to deliberately provoke it.

DLD: How does AI's intuition differ from that of humans?

AK: Think of riding a bike as an example. If you tried to consciously control every movement—your arms, your legs, your balance—you'd fall right over. Intuition here is rhythm. Everything aligns without conscious effort. Lose that rhythm—whether you're riding a bike or ski jumping—and you crash.

In a sense, AI also operates with a kind of “proto-intuition.” It doesn't want to fail. It doesn't want to produce nonsense. You could even say it has a kind of “pride”—the diligent accountant of details has, you might say. The pride of a system that strives for coherence. ●

WHERE THE FUTURE LEARNS

“

Here's an edited version of a profound speech by **Matthias Tschöp**, the newly appointed President of **LMU Munich** (Ludwig Maximilian University.) He gave it at the annual DLD Spring Reception. He reflected on the role of universities in a time of democratic uncertainty, technological disruption, and global challenges.

These days it's getting harder and harder to leave the news behind. The images of war. Concerns about Europe. The question of what will become of our democracy. And perhaps also that exhaustion many of us feel whenever polarization, disinformation, and populism are discussed. There is also our fascination with artificial intelligence—and at the same time, a sense of unease. What will it do to my work? To my family? To the truth? To me?

The big questions are no longer abstract. They aren't somewhere far away. They are—to put it bluntly—up close and personal. How safe are we? What remains reliable? Who can I still believe? Who will take responsibility? And where am I actually supposed to find hope?

And yet, **I believe in a bright future.** Not because none of this bothers me. Not because I'm more naive than others. Not because I underestimate the dangers. And certainly not because I want to impress you with my optimism. But because, every morning since October, I've come to a place where I see that future.

That place is LMU. Here, I see young people who haven't become cynical in the slightest. I see brilliant researchers who aren't satisfied with simple answers. I see doctors, physicists, lawyers, computer scientists, philosophers, chemists, sociologists, historians, theologians—people from Munich, from Bavaria, from Europe, from all over the world. They come together because they believe in truth. Because they seek knowledge. Because they take responsibility seriously. Because they want real progress—and because they actually make it possible. Not everyone. Not everywhere. Not every day. But every day somewhere at LMU. And anyone who experiences this cannot despair of this world.

DLD, at its best, is not just a label, it's a mindset. An invitation to bring the unexpected into conversation: entrepreneurs and scientists, artists and investors, media and medicine, politics and philosophy, technology and responsibility. That is exactly what shapes the future. And that is why this evening is a special one for LMU. Because the university of the future is no longer created solely in lecture halls, libraries, and laboratories. It is also created in spaces like this one. In conversations, in trust, in alliances—and in people who say: We don't just want to watch. We want to help shape the future.

We live in a time when many certainties have become fragile. Liberal democracy, which we long believed to be the natural order of the enlightened world, is under pressure. Science, which we thought was a common foundation, is being questioned, exploited, and sometimes openly opposed. The public sphere, which was once a space for exchange, is disintegrating into spaces of agitation, echo chambers, and algorithmically

amplified outrage. And technology, which was supposed to liberate us, can also confuse, monitor, and manipulate us. Added to this are the major global challenges—climate, health, migration, energy, security, poverty, education, peace. They are so closely intertwined that no single discipline, industry, or country can solve them alone.

There is a temptation in times like these: to think smaller. To retreat. To manage only what is feasible. To fix what's right in front of us. To avoid risks. But that would be exactly the wrong thing to do.

There is a temptation in times like these: to think smaller. To retreat. To manage only what is feasible. To fix what's right in front of us. To avoid risks. But that would be exactly the wrong thing to do. When the world becomes more confusing, we do not need less ambition, but more. When truth is under attack, we do not need less science, but more. When societies drift apart, we do not need fewer places for dialogue, but more. And when the future is frightening, we do not need less imagination, but more.

This is why we need universities. Not as ivory towers. Not as places of academic self-absorption. But as the intellectual infrastructure of our society. As places that provide stability without peddling simple certainties. As places where the complexity of the world is not explained away, but understood. As places where young people learn: freedom does not mean believing whatever confirms my own views. Freedom means seeking the truth—even when it is uncomfortable.

Karl Jaspers once described the university as “the place where society and the state allow the brightest consciousness of the age to unfold.” That is a profound statement. And it is perhaps more important today than ever before. For that is precisely what the university must be again: the brightest consciousness of our age. An intellectual guiding light of people for people. Not as loud, not as fast, and not as convenient as the omnipresent social media—but unique in what only a great university can achieve: seeking truth. Cultivating judgment. Enabling responsibility.

And that is exactly what LMU is. A university that will celebrate its 555th anniversary next year. A university with a history we can be proud of—but above all with a future we must shape now. There is no other comprehensive



By Matthias Tschöp

TO THINK

university in Germany with this breadth, this depth, and this outstanding quality: from physics to philosophy, from medicine to musicology, from law to religious studies, from computer science to Indology. A university that has produced 51 Nobel Prizes in Physics, Chemistry, and Medicine—and at the same time trains thousands of teachers, doctors, judges, entrepreneurs, scientists, and leaders for our country every year.

Yes, rankings are important. And we have ambitious goals. **We want to be among the top 20 in the world. But there is something more important than any ranking: world-class quality in both depth and breadth. Because the questions of our time do not come to us sorted by faculty.** The climate crisis is not just physics or geography. It is also economics, psychology, law, politics, and ethics. Artificial intelligence is not just computer science. It affects medicine, education, work, art, democracy, security, and philosophy. The future of health is not just biomedicine. It is prevention, data science, behavior, social justice, and trust. And the stability of democracy is not just political science. It has to do with communication, sociology, psychology, history, law, computer science—and above all with the question of whether we still share a common reality.

This is precisely where the immense challenge lies—and the tremendous opportunity for a top-tier university like LMU. Here, doctors work with AI researchers. Lawyers with philosophers. Historians with computer scientists. Economists with theologians. Climate researchers with psychologists. It's not always easy. Sometimes it's even arduous. Different languages, different methods, different temperaments—LMU has it all. And I can assure you: truly everything. But that is precisely where new knowledge emerges. That is where critical judgment emerges. That is where education emerges. That is where the difference between information and insight, between innovation and responsibility, between speed and direction, emerges. And experiencing this power every day carries me through difficult moments.

We are reimagining LMU: faster, more digital, more connected, more international, more impact-oriented. We are working on new forms of governance. We are accelerating tenure-track hiring processes. We are strengthening AI in research, teaching, and administration. For the first time, we are establishing a comprehensive transfer strategy and new entrepreneurship platforms—not as an appendage to science, but as part of its social responsibility. We are opening the university more broadly to the city and society: with new formats, a President's Lecture Series, digital dialogues, and prominent figures who spark debates and reach people.

We are doing it because world-class research today requires speed. Because talent does not wait. Because global science doesn't wait for German administrative processes. Because the best minds go where they can bring their ideas to life. That is why the transformation we have begun at LMU is not a transformation in small steps. It is a true fresh start.

When we talk about the future, we must talk about communication. Not just about channels, reach, or platforms. But about communication as a democratic infrastructure. A society can only act if it is still able to communicate. Democracy does not thrive on everyone sharing the same opinion. It thrives on the ability to negotiate differences within a shared reality. And science does not thrive on being louder than others. It thrives on the fact that, in the end, the better argument prevails. Habermas coined the famous phrase “the unforced force of the better argument” to describe this. What a beautiful, almost old-fashioned—and precisely for that reason, radical—idea: that we should not be persuaded by power, not by money, not by volume, but by good reasons.

Today, this idea is under threat. From disinformation, digital radicalization, platform algorithms that reward outrage—and from a pace that sometimes makes reflection look like weakness. That is another reason why we need new alliances between science, media, technology, and society. And that is also why I would like to thank the Burda Group: for DLD. For the Aenne Burda Award. For the commitment to view communication not merely as a business, but as a cultural mission. For the courage to recognize early on that digitalization is not just a technical revolution, but a social one.

Today, world-class excellence is increasingly rare in individual institutions. World-class excellence emerges in ecosystems. And Munich has a unique opportunity to become one of the most visible science and innovation ecosystems in the world. With LMU. With the Technical University of Munich (TUM). With Helmholtz, Max Planck, Fraunhofer. With our university hospitals. With strong companies, DAX-listed corporations, startups, incubators, and accelerators here in Munich. With foundations. With culture, media, capital, politics—and with a city that combines quality of life, talent, and cosmopolitanism with heart like almost no other. That is very Munich: being cosmopolitan, but not pretentious. Being ambitious, but keeping our feet on the ground. Aiming for the top—and still being able to sit together in a beer garden afterward.

That is exactly why the massively intensified collaboration between LMU and TUM is so important to TUM president Thomas Hofmann and me: our ONE MUNICH strategy. Two leading German universities, two distinct profiles, two complementary strengths—and a shared vision: We want to make Munich a world-class European hub of the future. It's a great pleasure to see what we're now accomplishing together every week: the Munich Quantum Valley, the Munich Medicine Alliance, the One Munich AI Center—and many more synergies currently taking shape. But it's more than just gratifying. It's strategically necessary.

Munich has future potential like hardly any other location in Europe—perhaps far beyond. We can create a European model for the future here. An alternative to Silicon Valley. Munich can demonstrate that excellence and humanity belong together. But to do that, we must want it. And to do that, we must have the courage to think big together. I have that courage, and I hope you do too.

For the questions before us are vast. And there are many of them, and I want answers to these questions. How do we protect democracy when truth itself has become a battleground? How do we use artificial intelligence without diminishing humanity? How do we cure diseases before they arise? How do we shape medicine that is personalized—and remains rooted in solidarity? How do we train young people for professions that don't even exist yet? How do we create prosperity without destroying planetary boundaries? How do we defend academic freedom in a world where it is once again being restricted in many places? How do we keep Europe capable of acting when other regions of the world are investing with strategic consistency? And how do we preserve humanity in an age when machines produce language, images, diagnoses, and decisions?

These are not questions for a single institute. These are questions for a comprehensive university. We are working on the idea of a major democracy research center based at LMU. Such a center would not simply be another institute. It will be a flagship European initiative. A place where research is conducted on how democracies function under digital stress. How disinformation works. How trust is built. How institutions become resilient. And how freedom, the public sphere, and responsibility must be reimagined in the 21st century. And if we do it right, it will also be a visible place of encounter.

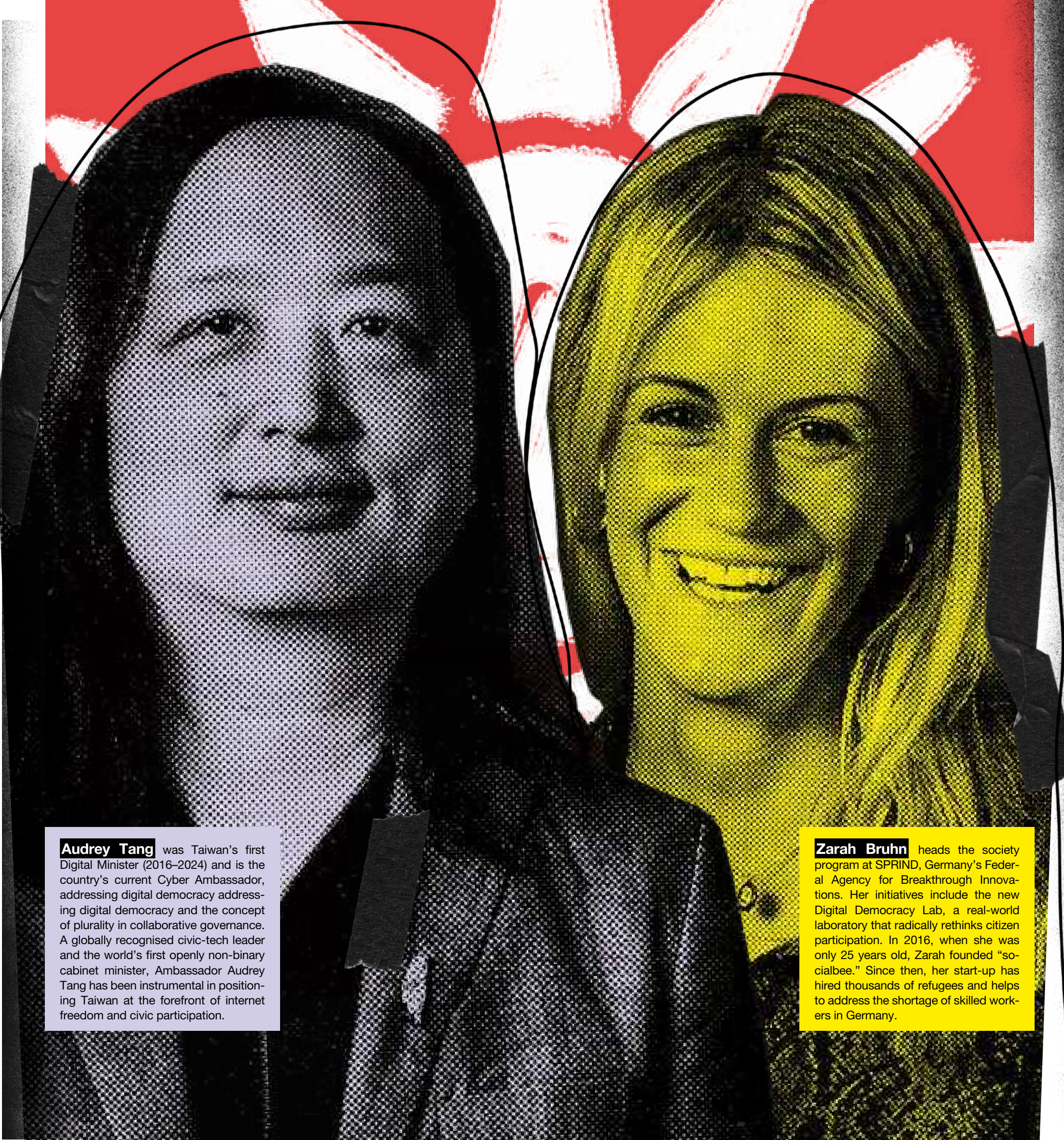
The Free State of Bavaria has made a great deal possible for science and universities. I am grateful for that. But we have to be honest. Demands are growing faster than our ability to respond. Costs are rising. Global competition is intensifying. Other regions of

We need a new sense of solidarity. With people who have understood: The future of the university is not just a matter for the university. It is a public responsibility.

the world are investing on a scale, at a speed, and with a consistency that challenges us.

In Europe, we still too often struggle with ourselves. If Munich is truly to become one of the world's most prominent centers of science and innovation, then government funding alone will not suffice. We need a new sense of solidarity. With people who have understood: The future of the university is not just a matter for the university. It is a public responsibility. And it is one of the best investments a society can make. Because those who invest in a university are not just investing in buildings, professorships, or programs. They are investing in talent. In knowledge. In innovation. In democracy. And ultimately, in their own future! ●

Prof. Dr. med. Dr. h.c. **Matthias H. Tschöp** is President of Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU). An internationally renowned physician and metabolic researcher, he previously led Helmholtz Munich and served as Vice President of the Helmholtz Association for Health Research. His landmark discoveries, including the hunger hormone ghrelin and pioneering polyagonist therapies for obesity and type 2 diabetes, have shaped modern metabolic medicine. At LMU, he is committed to strengthening the university as a global center for excellent research, inspiring teaching, and responsible societal dialogue.



Audrey Tang was Taiwan's first Digital Minister (2016–2024) and is the country's current Cyber Ambassador, addressing digital democracy and the concept of plurality in collaborative governance. A globally recognised civic-tech leader and the world's first openly non-binary cabinet minister, Ambassador Audrey Tang has been instrumental in positioning Taiwan at the forefront of internet freedom and civic participation.

Zarah Bruhn heads the society program at SPRIND, Germany's Federal Agency for Breakthrough Innovations. Her initiatives include the new Digital Democracy Lab, a real-world laboratory that radically rethinks citizen participation. In 2016, when she was only 25 years old, Zarah founded "socialbee." Since then, her start-up has hired thousands of refugees and helps to address the shortage of skilled workers in Germany.

HOW **RADICAL** PARTICIPATION LEAPFROGS PUBLIC TRUST

What if public frustration with bureaucracy could be turned into democratic energy? In this conversation, Taiwan's former Digital Minister **Audrey Tang** and SPRIND's **Zarah Bruhn** reveal how radical citizen participation rebuilt trust in Taiwan—and why they're now bringing the model to Germany.



Zarah Bruhn

I've been looking forward to this moment for exactly three years, when I visited you in Taiwan. And now we finally have a big announcement, because we are creating something together now.

Audrey Tang

Yes, we're co-creating the Presidential Hackathon model here in Germany. Streamlining the bureaucracy was the original reason I was brought in—in 2016—as Taiwan's first digital minister. And I'm very happy to learn that "make it simple" is now also making it to Germany: "Einfach machen!"

[Laughter]

Zarah Bruhn

And we learned from you that humor is essential when trying to disrupt the state. How did you become the first Minister for Digitalization in Taiwan? That was a process in itself, a revolution.

Audrey Tang

Certainly. In 2014, I kind of invited myself in: with half a million people on the street in a demonstration called the Sunflower Movement. In March 2014, people really thought that a trade deal with Beijing, which was being fast-tracked, really sucked. And so we occupied the parliament peacefully for three weeks—not just to protest about what sucks, but rather to demonstrate what works.

We used technologies to listen to the half million people in the streets—and many more online—on what do they really want for trade deals with Beijing. We converged every day. We showed what was agreed the previous day and what's remaining to be debated on this day. After three weeks, the Speaker of the Parliament basically said, "Oh, the crowd-sourced version is better than the MP's version, so why not just go with it?"

So, I was tapped to join the Cabinet as a young reverse mentor to the Cabinet Minister in charge of Participation. And after two years working on that, I was promoted as the "national tech support:" the first Digital Minister. I guess this was like DOGE, the government efficiency position—but not with a chainsaw, with chain reaction. We asked people what sucks and then tried to make it work together.

Zarah Bruhn

I think your story is like a miracle. When you actually went into the parliament, and then later the ministry—what did you find there, and what did you change?

Audrey Tang

One insight is that if you do make government more efficient, like cutting the tax filing time from three hours to three minutes, you also save the bureaucrats three hours of time. So, it's a win-win situation. You do not actually expose them to more risk if they are also involved in the co-creation.

We made two platforms. One is called the Join platform. Everybody can file a petition there, and with 5,000 supporters, you can force a ministerial conversation about whatever people care about.

The other is what we call a Presidential Hackathon. This is about local people in a district developing a working prototype for solving the problems that are being raised on the Join platform. Each year, we give five of those teams a trophy, which is a projector. When you turn it on, it projects the president giving you the trophy. So it's very meta. And it de-

scribes the commitment that this local innovation will be integrated into the national infrastructure in the next fiscal year.

In essence, Join is for what sucks and the Presidential Hackathon for what works. Now I have one question for you. When we met in Taipei, you were describing your role in the ministry to promote social innovation. But now you're on an agency that is about breakthrough innovations. Can you talk a little bit about the transition from the ministerial position to a breakthrough innovation position?

Zarah Bruhn

I had founded a social enterprise myself, integrating refugees. And I got a call from the ministry if I wanted to become the first commissioner on social innovation. So, I was basically nominated and found myself in a ministry which is, of course, quite bureaucratic. Not the pace that I was used to. But we could change a lot. We released a big strategy on social innovation and social startups, and that's actually where I met SPRIND, which is the German agency for breakthrough innovation.

SPRIND invests in deep tech, in fusion energy, in quantum computing, in finding a cure for Alzheimer's disease, in a very disruptive way. But not yet in social innovation, at the time. So, I called SPRIND and said, "Hey, why don't you do social innovation yet?" And then Rafael [Laguna de la Vera], the boss said, "Why don't you do it here?"

Audrey Tang

Great. So, not letting the natural sciences have all the fun. We can have quantum democracy in the social sciences as well.

Zarah Bruhn

Yeah, I learned today that digital democracy is already outdated. It's quantum democracy now. [Laughing]

While we are actually still doing elections with votes written on paper every four years: How is that in Taiwan right now?

Audrey Tang

In Taiwan, what we learned is that the traditional Newtonian thing of bumping one party into one another is reaching its limits. We noticed a lot of scam ads with deepfakes, for example. On Facebook, I always see Jensen Huang, the Taiwanese NVIDIA CEO, looking at me, promising new investment advice or cryptocurrency. And when I click on it, Jensen talks to me and it sounds just like him. But of course, it's not Jensen. It's a deepfake running on NVIDIA GPUs.

Now, people in Taiwan, because we're the most free in Asia when it comes to Internet freedom, don't want the government to do censorship. So, what to do?

We sent a text message from the government to 200,000 random numbers around Taiwan asking, "What do you think about fixing this deepfake problem together?"

People gave us their ideas. We invited thousands of them, then we narrowed it down to 447 statistically representative microcosms of the Taiwanese population in rooms of 10. And then they debated.

The 45 rooms each came up with an idea. One room, for example, said, "Let's display all ads on social media as 'probably scammed,' like a cigarette label." And if you have a digital signature, you can take it down. Very good idea. Another room suggested: "If somebody lost \$7 million from an unsigned ad on Facebook, Facebook should be jointly liable for that \$7 million damage because they profit from the advertisement."

Why not? And another room said about TikTok, which did not have an office in Taiwan at the time: "What if they ignore our liability law?" Well, slow down the connection to their video feed by 1%. "Every day they ignore us, keep throttling."

None of this is about content. None of this is about censorship. But we had a vote at the end of the conversation and then we measured. More than 85% of people in the mini public agreed with this measure, and the other 15% could live with it. It became law in just three months.

Throughout 2025, for the entire year, we didn't have deepfake ads anymore in Taiwan. We showed that we can quantum tunnel through the walls of disagreement and partisan fighting just by asking people what to do together.

We can quantum tunnel through the walls of disagreement and partisan fighting just by asking people what to do together.

Zarah Bruhn

Actually listening to the will of the people and their ideas out there, rather than censoring—it's the principle of democracy that you're re-inventing.

Now imagine, all of you [in the audience] get a text or a Signal or WhatsApp message. "Hey, what should we do against these deep fakes?" That maybe can happen in Germany soon, too.

I'm building the societal breakthrough unit at SPRIND. We're asking: how can we disrupt education? How can we innovate the societal welfare state? We are scouting best practices internationally and explore how we can bring them to Germany.

Right now, less than 20% of the people trust and believe in the state and the state system. And that's what we have to radically change in the different verticals where people experience the state a lot. A very big vertical is also bureaucracy in general, because that's the interface where people are interacting with the state all the time.

That's where so much frustration in the society develops, and that's why we're launching our first Presidential Hackathon, where everyone in Germany can hand in ideas about how Germany can work better. We can really see how polarized or non-polarized Germany is in the different topics and what the government should tackle first.

It's also about letting people know: YOU are making the priorities about what we are tackling in the government. SPRIND will be launching a challenge where people's best ideas will be put into action, where civic tech teams are going to work on these ideas and bring them to life.

But we don't know which ideas yet. That's why we need everybody to hand ideas in, to make this work, and to innovate Germany again. And that's just one of a lot of new ministerial challenges that we are going to launch at SPRIND.

Audrey Tang

Amazing. Turning complaint into energy—a new geothermal energy engine that transforms the polarization, the fire, the heat—not into something like a wildfire that burns down the trust. But into something that can be renewed—like a campfire. I think that's very important. In Taiwan in 2014, trust in the administration was at 9%. So, in a country of 23 million people, anything the president says, 20 million people are against. And those 20 million people were very fragmented. But by 2020, after we ran hundreds of these Join platform and Presidential Hackathon ideas, the approval rating was back at more than 70%. So, in the span of six years, we witnessed a dramatic increase.

Zarah Bruhn

Audrey's ideas are exported all over the world. Estonia is adopting them, the Baltic states, now even the U.S.—and hopefully Germany soon. We can build on all your experience.

Audrey Tang

We are like the Estonia for radical participation. Here in Germany, you have a lot of complaints about bureaucracy as new fuel. That is actually a lot of energy that can be tapped into.

In the U.S., in the state of California, I've been working with Governor Gavin Newsom to build "Engaged California." And we literally used wildfire prevention and wildfire mitigation as our pilot project. People just cut through their partisan differences. They talk about how to bury utility lines, how to build better support and so on. As soon as there is a real crisis in a society, everybody looks past their ideological differences to build the consensus and co-create together.

Zarah Bruhn

What can we hope for in Germany based on what you see in international movements?

Audrey Tang

People are polarized about ideologies, but what unites people is their agreement about what sucks. When people all understand what sucks, that can then tap the polarization energy into momentum, like a geothermal engine.

Because everybody loves zero waste of time. The zero waste of time, I think, could be this rallying cry that brings people from different ideologies into, again, "Einfach machen!"

Zarah Bruhn

And that's, of course, why we named the SPRIND challenge "Germany: What sucks? What's possible?" Because people can tell us what sucks: that's amazing. People tell us what can be done better, they give us solutions: that's great!

We want both. The ideas are great, but also what sucks is great. Together, all of that creates common energy, and we can vote on what sucks most, and we have a list of what we can prioritize.

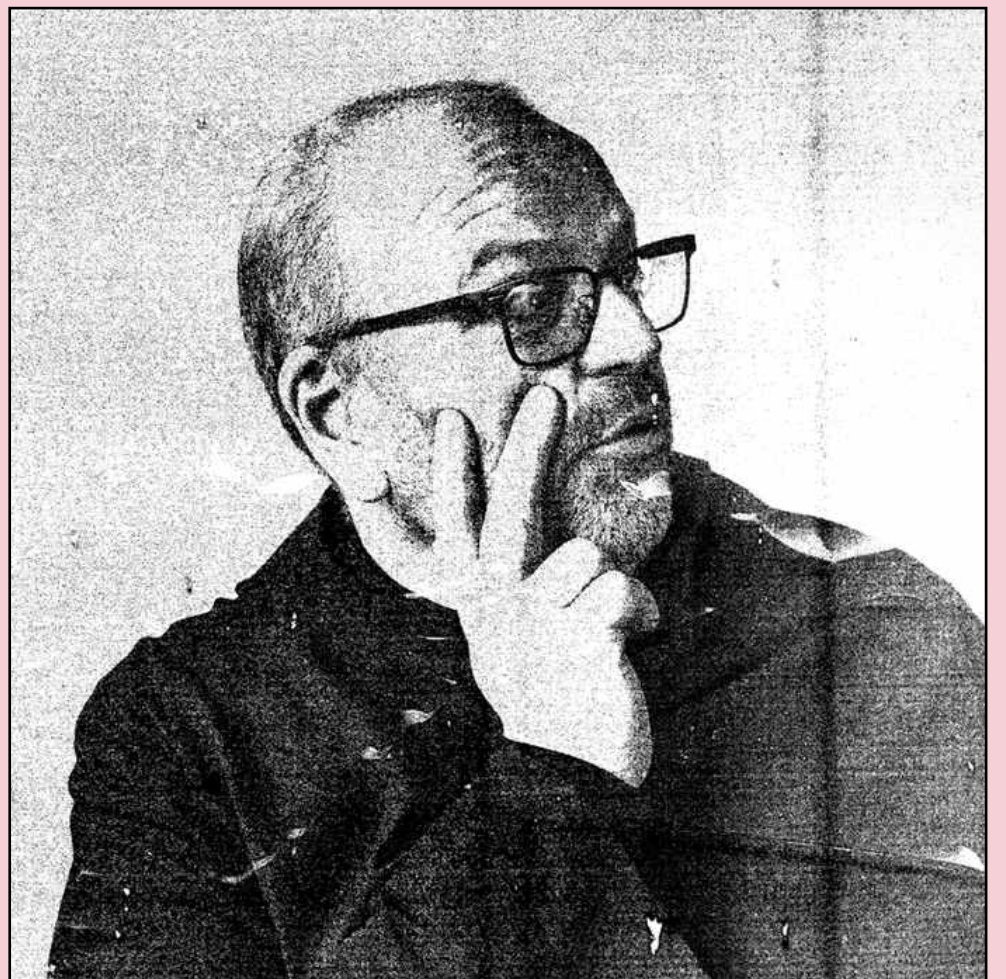
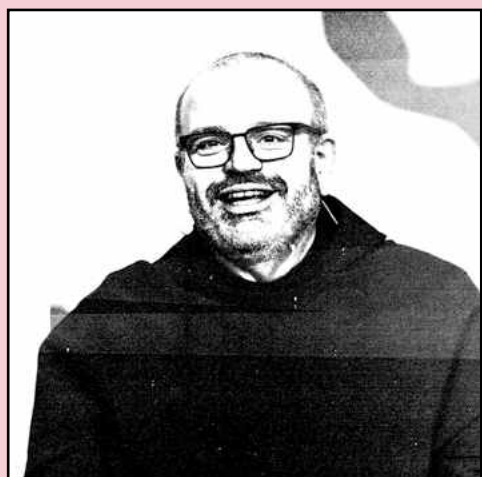
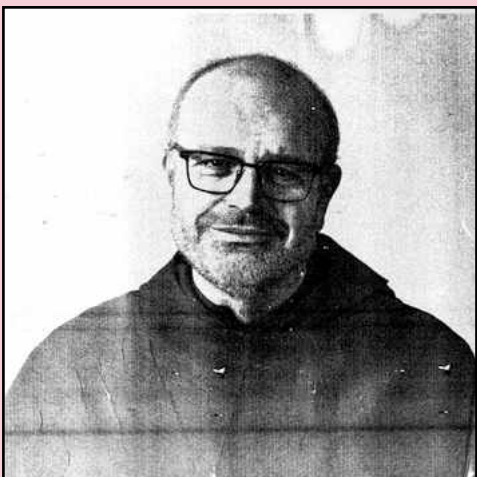
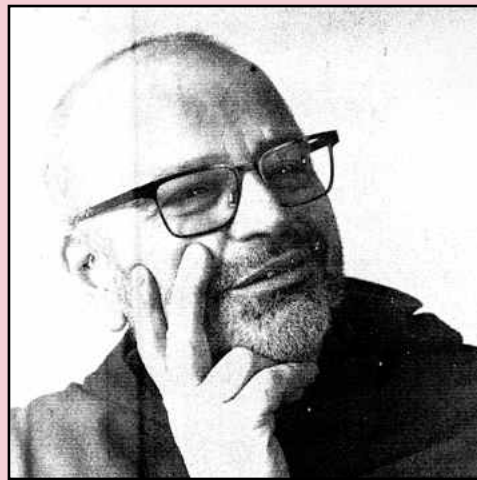
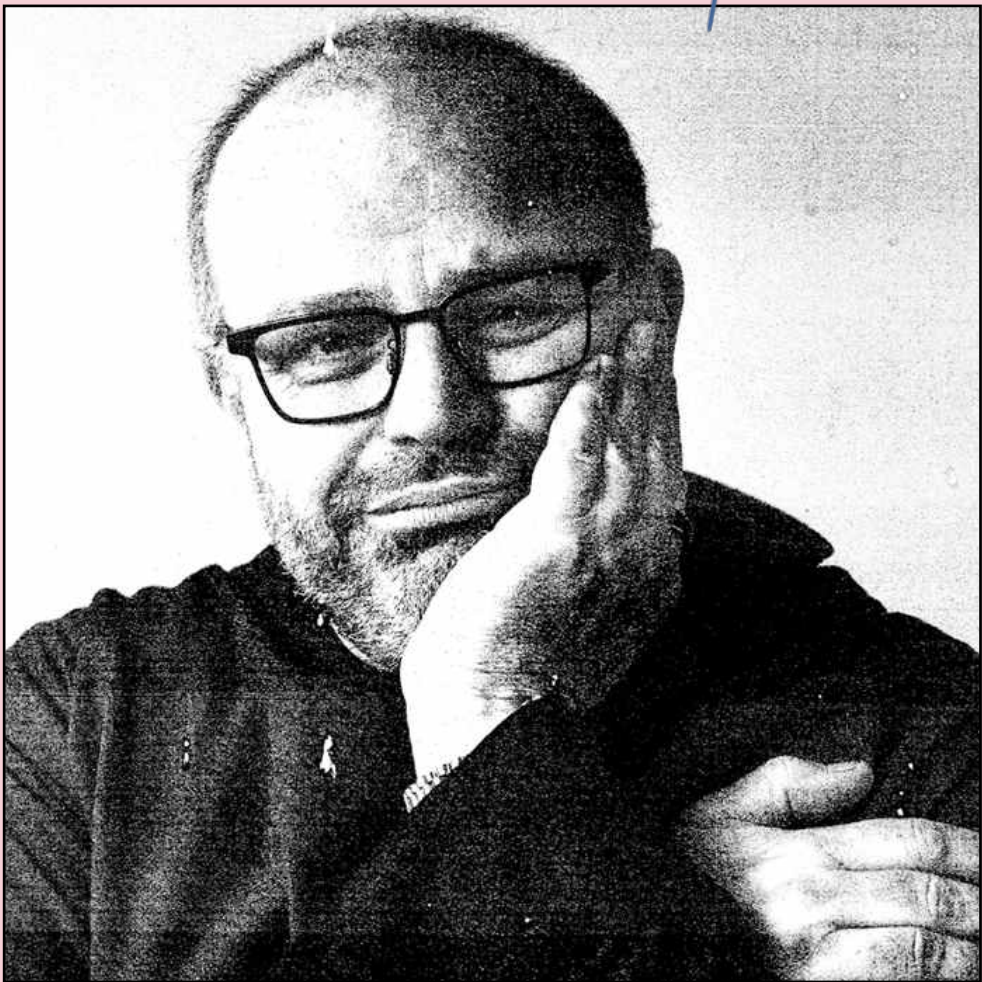
All of Audrey's model inspired us so much. At SPRIND, we can only do radical ideas. If it's small, we can't do it. So, we really had to come up with great, radical, societal ideas. And I'm so glad we met because Audrey's ideas and how they changed Taiwan, how they changed the U.S., are so radical that there's really hope also for Germany, for German bureaucracy, to be disrupted.

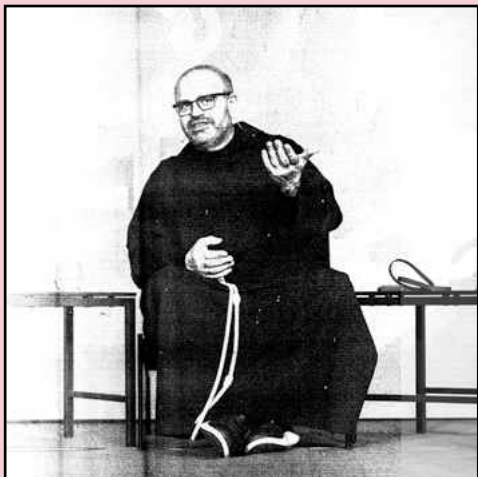
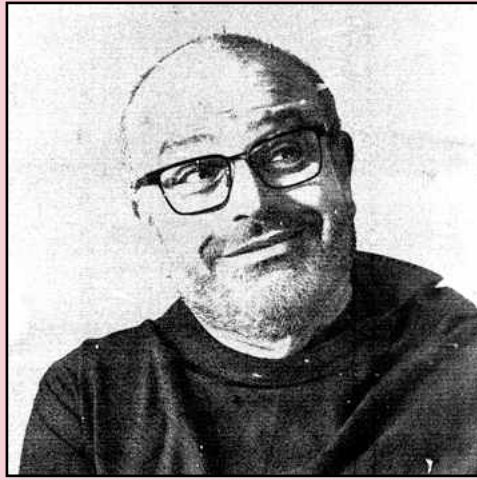
Audrey Tang

I'll be supporting you from Oxford with Civic AI and the Institute for Ethics in AI, so that we can all free the future—together! ●

EVERYBODY BELIEVES. EVEN YOU.

By Father
Paolo Benanti



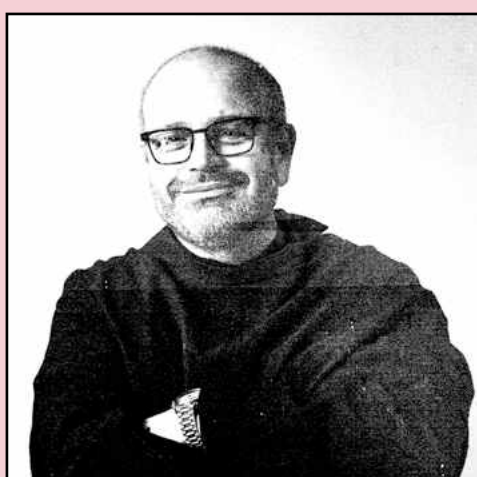


Here is a thought experiment that might unsettle you. You believe that reality is made of atoms. You believe that certain mushrooms are poisonous. You believe that antibiotics work, that the Earth is roughly 4.5 billion years old, that your great-grandmother existed long before you were born. Now ask yourself: how many of these things have you personally verified?

Almost none. You believe them because someone told you. A teacher. A textbook. A scientist. A label on a jar. Human beings are the only animals on Earth for whom instinct alone is insufficient. A deer does not need a biology course to know what to eat. We do. And so, across millennia, we have built the most extraordinary cognitive technology in existence: the practice of trusting the testimony of others.

Across millennia, we have built the most extraordinary cognitive technology in existence: the practice of trusting the testimony of others.

This is not weakness. Philosophers call it testimonial knowledge—the invisible bedrock of all civilization. Every expert, every discipline, every institution is ultimately a system that says: this is credible, and here is why.



Father Paolo Benanti with Jordan Hemingway, photographer of FKA twigs

For centuries, the architectural embodiment of that system was the library. Not merely a storage facility, but a cognitive map. The shelf for medicine was visibly and verifiably different from the shelf for astrology. The physical organization of knowledge was itself an index of credibility—peer review, editorial standards, institutional authority rendered tangible as distance and arrangement. You could see, almost at a glance, which claims had been tested and by whom.

Then came the oracle.

The glowing screen that answers everything, instantly, in full sentences, with the serenity of revelation. Like the Cumaean Sibyl, it speaks. Unlike her, it never hesitates. And the genuinely new—and genuinely unsettling—feature of this moment is that when the oracle speaks, we have almost no way of reading the indices of credibility that centuries of civilization taught us to look for. The oracle has no shelf. It has no institution. It has no address.

This is not, primarily, a misinformation problem. It is an epistemological one: a failure to know how to know, to exercise the habits of judgment that allow us to ask, before believing, whether we should.

Here is where the history of ideas offers an unexpected resource. Religious traditions—and Christianity in particular, through centuries of rigorous theology—built elaborate systems for adjudicating exactly this question: what makes a testimony reliable? How do you distinguish revelation from manipulation? The discipline of *discretio spirituum*—the discernment of spirits—is, in epistemological terms, a rigorous methodology for navigating an environment saturated with authoritative-seeming claims. This is not an argument for religious belief. **It is an argument that the intellectual structure of faith—the disciplined, demanding art of asking what deserves to be believed, and why—is among the most urgent competencies of the AI age.**

We are all believers. The question is whether we have learned to believe well. ●

Paolo Benanti, a Roman-born Franciscan and expert in ethics and technology, focuses on the ethical implications of innovation, particularly in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and neurotechnology. He describes humanity as living in a “techno-human condition,” shaped by 70,000 years of technological transformation. A professor and advisor, he has contributed to AI policy at national and global levels, including work with the United Nations on AI governance. His influential research and writings continue to explore the intersection of technology, ethics, and human identity.



On Antisemitism



Remarks

*By Armin
Nassehi*

Armin Nassehi is the Vice President for Economics, Law, and Social Sciences at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU). His areas of expertise are sociological theory, cultural sociology, political sociology, and the theory of modern societies. Prof. Nassehi's current research interests include: How can modern, differentiated societies enable necessary transformations if they are unable to act as a unified whole? What is the cultural significance of digital technology and artificial intelligence?

Antisemitism is one of the most persistent forms of hostility toward human beings. Its resilience is evident in the fact that it is not confined to any particular social group and remains largely resistant to rational explanation. It can be found in right-wing as well as left-wing milieus, in bourgeois and academic contexts just as much as in Islamist groups. **Its persistence suggests that antisemitism serves a function for those who harbor it.** It helps them cope with social and personal uncertainty by providing an object of hatred that is at once familiar and alien.

The decisive strange sounding question, then, is: What problem does antisemitism solve? The enduring power of such a phenomenon indicates that it fulfills a function within the self-understanding of modernity. Historically, the structure of antisemitism changed alongside the social integration of Jews. In pre-modern societies, Jews were excluded as a distinct religious group. In modernity, however, antisemitism turned against the assimilated Jew—against the one who was no longer outwardly distinguishable. What was hated

of self-description for a society dissatisfied with itself. It functions as a detour that allows one to interpret one's own failures without having to name them directly.

Antisemitism thus becomes a form of self-description for a society dissatisfied with itself. It functions as a detour that allows one to interpret one's own failures without having to name them directly.

This logic also explains the contemporary diversity of antisemitic expressions. Right-wing and far-right groups interpret the "Jewish" as a symbol of a cosmopolitan, borderless modernity that allegedly destroys national identity. Certain strands of the left see in the Jewish—or in Israel—the embodiment of Western, capitalist, or imperialist structures. Islamist movements, in turn, combine their antisemitism with anti-colonial rhetoric. What all these forms share is that they attack in Judaism or in Israel a symbol of the very modernity whose contradictions they themselves experience.

In the aftermath of the events of October 7, 2023, and the Israeli responses, it became clear how flexible and adaptable this structure remains. Antisemitism is not only projected onto supposedly "imported" Islamist milieus, but is often also used to externalize one's own, homegrown antisemitism. Even seemingly philosemitic gestures can serve the same function: they displace the problem instead of addressing it. Here, too, the "Jewish" is instrumentalized—now as a figure of moral compensation that relieves the self-image.

In all these variations, the plasticity of antisemitism becomes evident. It can fill any semantic gap: if Jews are seen as capitalists, they symbolize money; if they are seen as universalists, they stand for cosmopolitanism; if they are cast as victims, they are despised for weakness. **Antisemitism adapts to any explanatory framework because it is not an empirical but a functional phenomenon—a mechanism for narrating the self in times of crisis.**

Antisemitism is thus, above all, an expression of a disturbed modern relationship to the self. It serves to contain complexity and ambivalence without truly understanding them. "The Jewish" becomes the address at which modernity directs its self-critique. As long as societies fail to confront their own contradictions—preferring authenticity, "realness," and identity over complexity and difference—antisemitism remains available as a symbolic resource.

And it must be stated clearly: antisemitism has nothing to do with Jews or Judaism themselves. It is not alleged Jewish characteristics that give rise to antisemitism; rather, antisemitism imagines "the Jewish" in whatever way it needs for a given situation.

The real opponent, therefore, is not ignorance but the rhetoric of authenticity: the desire to describe oneself as coherent, pure, and unmediated. **This hunger for authenticity cannot be countered by moral instruction alone, but only by a sober form of self-observation capable of tolerating complexity.** Only when societies learn to integrate contradictions instead of externalizing them will antisemitism lose its function. At present, however, there is little to suggest that this is happening. ●

The figure of the "inner stranger" points to the fact that this hatred is not directed at something truly external, but at the core of the self.

was precisely this indistinguishability, the perceived threat within similarity. The modern Jew became a symbol of one's own inner otherness. This distinguishes antisemitism from other forms of hostility—without in any way relativizing or diminishing those. The figure of the "inner stranger" points to the fact that this hatred is not directed at something truly external, but at the core of the self.

After World War II, Jean-Paul Sartre described this dynamic with precision: the antisemite experiences that something is wrong with the world, and attributes this unease to the Jew. The Jew becomes a projection surface for a form of self-hatred that arises from the crisis of modern identity. At a time when collective forms of belonging are becoming fragile, "the Jewish" turns into a cipher for alienation, abstraction, and universalism—those very characteristics that define modernity itself.

This pattern can be traced in key texts of the 19th and 20th centuries. Richard Wagner, in "Das Judentum in der Musik," saw in the "Jewish" the cause of the alienation of art—the Jew stood for the inauthentic, the artificial. Karl Marx used similar ciphers in his essay on the "Jewish Question" the "god of the Jew," he wrote, was money, and exchange its cult—thus turning the Jew into a symbol of bourgeois alienation. Both authors projected their own societal crises onto the Jewish. In the 20th century, Carl Schmitt lamented the "loss of the political" and attributed it to a supposed Jewish inclination toward compromise and legalism, embodied for him in Hans Kelsen. Here, the Jew became the symbolic figure of a modernity without metaphysical grounding.

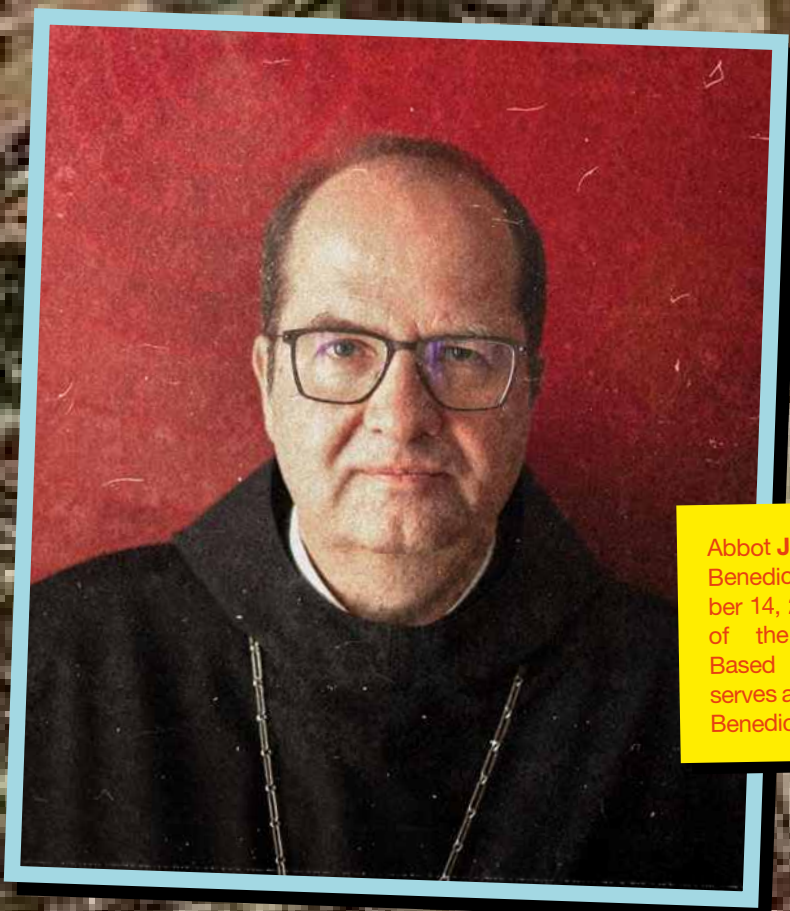
What these approaches share is that they turn the "Jewish" into a cipher for one's own perceived deficiencies: the coldness of modernity, the loss of authenticity, the alienation of politics. Antisemitism thus becomes a form

This reflection draws on Armin Nassehi's recently published book, "Anmerkungen zum Antisemitismus" (C.H. Beck, only available in German).



HOW THE

By
Abbot
Jeremias
Schröder



Abbot **Jeremias Schröder** is a German Benedictine monk elected on September 14, 2024, as the 11th Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Confederation. Based in Rome at Sant'Anselmo, he serves as the unifying head of over 6,000 Benedictine monks worldwide.

“

A few weeks ago, I visited Subiaco, the monastery where in the 15th century Benedictine monks had set up the first printing press in Italy. We lead lives based on the 1500 year-old Rule of St Benedict. That gives us enough resilience to not be unduly afraid of the future.

AI has already helped us to run international meetings more efficiently and to communicate (almost) effortlessly across the 59 countries in which our monasteries are located. Our desks—continuation of the medieval scriptoria—are places of experimentation, as for so many of our contemporaries.

MONKS DO IT

What's going to come next: libraries that talk back? Formation tailored even more to the individual? An AI-powered resource to access monastic wisdom? We are not naïve and are aware of dangers and threats. But we also see opportunities. We hold that God can be glorified in ALL things. •

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We Don't Need to Make
EXCUSES



MARGRETHE VESTAGER

Former EU Commissioner **MARGRETHE VESTAGER** responds to critics who feel innovation in Europe is hampered by over-regulation and explains why she's championing the Rebuild initiative—an effort to push European alternatives to Instagram, TikTok, and other social platforms. From 2014 to 2024, the Danish politician served as the EU's Commissioner for Competition, earning a reputation as “the world's top tech cop” (New York Times) by taking on digital giants like Google, Apple, and Amazon for anti-competitive behavior. Today, she serves as Chair of the Board of DTU in Copenhagen, one of Denmark's most prominent universities. She is also a World Leaders Fellow at the University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government. In addition, she serves as Patron of the Rebuild initiative, alongside Founder and Chairman Thomas Madsen-Mygdal.

DLD: What is the goal of Rebuild?

MARGRETHE VESTAGER: Currently our news, our community, our democracy depends on social platforms from the United States and China. Rebuild is about making sure that people see there is no shortage of alternative social platforms in Europe. Because digital sovereignty requires three things: enforce the laws that we have, make sure that people can shift to European alternatives, and thirdly, make sure that our lives are not digitally dependent on partners that may turn out not to be that good partners—similar to our dependence on gas, and security, and raw materials, where we learned this lesson the hard way.

DLD: Do you think people worry about these things when they use apps like Instagram, TikTok or YouTube?

MV: I think they do, to an increasing degree. When you see that on X you can use artificial intelligence to create images of nude women, young girls, even children, many start to ask themselves: Is this a world I want to be part of? At the same time, I think there are many people who cherish their communities—from hobbies and jobs, like knitting and fishery, to where they get their news. **So, I think there's a lot of demand for social media. But the kind we have right now is not always good for us.**

DLD: How can people easily move from one service to another?

MV: That is the sore point. Because it's not difficult to build the technology. A lot of this is commoditized, and there's a lot of money for founders who have a great idea and a business case. The challenge is to create network effects that attract users and keep the service growing. That's where Rebuild is trying to

The challenge is to create network effects that attract users and keep the service growing. That's where Rebuild is trying to help.

help. We want to make sure that everyone can see: there is something else to move to. There are many attractive alternatives out there. But, of course, we also need projects that enable people to shift, that help them deal with the practicalities of moving from one service to another.

DLD: Who will get the ball rolling?

MV: I don't think it's enough that some things are scary and some platforms are starting to feel unpleasant or even toxic. There needs to be something attractive out there, something that is better, with no threshold to pass in order to make the move. That's why it's so important to bring social platforms together and figure out, “Oh, you do this? I do this. How can we help one another?”

And we know that we can change our habits. Consider smoking indoors. 15 or 20 years ago, this was normal. Now we think, “What? You're not going to smoke indoors!” We can change our culture and do things that are new. This is why I believe that changing our social media habits is possible, too.

We can change our culture and do things that are new. This is why I believe that changing our social media habits is possible, too.

DLD: Do we need regulation to make it easier for people to move from one platform to another?

MV: We have those laws already. We have all the regulation that we need. We have all the analysis that we need. We have, for a very long time, had all the talking that we need. What we now need is action. We also need people who say, “It's my business case to show people how to move. This is my app. Press this button. I will help you move all your data to wherever you want to go.” Because for someone like me—you know, I have spent many hours creating content to my own Instagram account. I would

like to take that with me. And I have the right already as a European citizen. But it's not as easy as it should be.

DLD: Is there an alternative to Instagram?

MV: There are European apps like Monnett, which is part of Rebuild, that offer similar functionality—but they're quite small at this point. They will need time to grow, and we will all need some patience. I don't tell people to close all of their accounts and not touch social media anymore. What I encourage them to do is to explore other social platforms. To say, “Is that interesting for me?”

My personal goal is to be much more curious, to test what is out there. And we have a directory on our website, rebuild.net. By now, there are more than 120 different social platforms that offer everything you can imagine—from community building to messaging, microblogging, local forums, and events. So, there's a lot out there, but it needs to be organized. It needs to become more visible and the services need to engage people's imagination.

DLD: Many critics of the EU feel that European founders are handicapped by over-regulation, that they simply don't stand much of a chance to compete with technology giants from abroad ...

MV: I think it's really important to do some myth-busting. If you look at the AI Act, for example, this law doesn't touch innovation, it doesn't touch research, and it hardly touches mundane uses like recommender systems or customer service. It only requires you to know what you're doing if your algorithm is going to change people's lives. That means, for example, if the AI is used for applying for a job, getting into an educational institution, having a mortgage, that you actually know that the algorithm is serving its purpose. And I think this specter of supposed over-regulation is often used as an excuse for inaction, for not doing something.

DLD: You feel the complaints about Brussels are more of an excuse?

MV: Well, I think there is some truth to it. Of course there is. But it has also become a talking point. And I think it's really important to point out that the European Commission is working to fine-tune some regulation, to make second-generation laws of certain rules that we find particularly important—our privacy laws, for instance—so that they can be better implemented. That's already happening. Reasonable things are being changed. The U.S. has plenty of regulation as well, by the way. Some 20 states have implemented privacy laws, and they're not the same everywhere. It's more of a patchwork, which doesn't make it easy for companies either. For me, the important point is that Europeans can say, “I've been listened to. My complaints have been heard. Now I'm ready to move on.”

DLD: What pathway do you see for Europe to become more agile, flexible, and innovative?

MV: Well, first things first: we need to invest. **There's a lot of money in Europe, but quite a lot of it is sitting idle.** I look forward to the Scaleup Europe Fund, because we have great innovators, we have great startups, we have so many skilled people and great ideas. But we need to start investing, and we need to believe in ourselves. Europe is the best place to live ever on this planet, especially if you're a woman. And that is an achievement that we can build up. We don't need to make excuses. ●

We need to invest. There's a lot of money in Europe, but quite a lot of it is sitting idle.

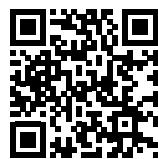
Europe offers plenty of opportunity for innovation, thanks to ample capital available and a solid regulatory framework, **Margrethe Vestager** argues. What's needed is a stronger will to invest, create companies, and take action. The Rebuild initiative aims to strengthen Europe's ecosystem of social media platforms and offer alternatives to apps like Instagram and TikTok, which are outside of Europe's control but have a strong influence on communities and democracy.



A Century of Plenty:

By
Sven Smit

Sven Smit is a senior partner at McKinsey & Company, advising leading organizations across industries on strategies for sustainable growth. As a leader within the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), Smit has directed research and co-authored reports on key global economic topics, including productivity, urbanization, innovation, labor markets, emerging markets, and Europe's economic outlook. He is also the co-author of *A Century of Plenty: A Story of Progress for Generations to Come*.



There is a paradox at the heart of our moment. By almost every measurable standard, humanity has never been better off. We live longer, earn more, and are more connected than any generation before us. A century ago, most people were poor, illiterate, and vulnerable to forces they could not control. Today, extreme poverty has fallen from 60% to below 10%, life expectancy has increased by 40 years, and access to education and technology has spread across the globe.

And yet, belief in progress is weakening. The idea that the future will be better than the present, once almost assumed, now feels uncertain. In France, only 6% of people think the next generation will be better off. Not a single advanced economy is above 30%.

Imagine your grandchildren in 2100, looking back on today. What will they see? Will this moment mark a plateau, or the beginning of another century of extraordinary progress, broader and more inclusive than the last?

The case for plenty

Amid growing pessimism, our new book, "*A Century of Plenty: A Story of Progress for Generations to Come*" proposes a different perspective. By 2100, everyone on the planet could live like the average citizen of Switzerland today, or better. This means not just living above poverty, but having real economic agency and the ability to shape your one's life.

By 2100, everyone on the planet could live like the average citizen of Switzerland today, or better. This means not just living above poverty, but having real economic agency and the ability to shape your one's life.

The scale is significant, but the math is not extreme at all. Global GDP per capita would need to grow at around 2.6% annually, very close to the 2.3% achieved over the past 25 years. The global economy would become 8.5 times larger than it is today.

The physical requirements are large but manageable. A more prosperous world would require significantly more energy, materials, and food, but none of these sit beyond known limits. Energy demand, for example, would need to grow between two and three times by 2100, while clean electricity generation may need to expand as much as 30-fold to support a mostly electrified system. China is already expanding energy production at an even faster pace. Or think about France in the 1970s and 1980s, when it built 50 nuclear plants. When we decide to build, we do.

The same analysis applies across materials—copper, aluminum, nickel, lithium—and food, consistently pointing to the same conclusion: the real constraints are not physical, but lie in how effectively societies invest, build, and enable progress.

From possibility to probability

If plenty is possible, the more urgent question is how to make it probable.

& Marc Canal
Noguer

History suggests that progress does not happen by default. It emerges from a system, a “progress machine” with eight interlocking parts: workers, skills, investment, innovation, energy, cities, trade, and markets. When these move together, growth compounds. When they stall, so does growth—and with it, belief. Today, several of these drivers are under pressure. Demographic headwinds are reducing labor force growth. Investment has weakened in many economies, and in many places we seem to have lost the ability to build. Geopolitical fragmentation is reshaping trade flows and supply chains. And trust in institutions and markets is eroding. Shifting from possibility to probability requires reactivating the fundamentals of growth, and upgrading the progress machine. It also requires moving away from a zero-sum mindset toward a positive-sum one.

The role of innovation and technology

Innovation and technology are decisive levers for accelerating productivity, as they have been since the Industrial Revolution. Their power lies both in scientific and technical breakthroughs and in how broadly they are deployed. The next wave of growth will be driven by scaling technologies that already exist or are emerging rapidly, most notably artificial intelligence and robotics. These tools could theoretically automate 57% of current tasks, augment human capabilities, and raise output across sectors, from manufacturing to services.

But the opportunity extends beyond AI and robotics. Innovation is increasingly concentrated in high-impact “arenas” such as electrification technologies (including EVs and batteries), digital platforms, biotechnology, and advanced mobility. These arenas combine scale and dynamism to generate out-sized productivity gains and reshape entire industries.

The key is integration. Productivity accelerates when technologies are embedded into business processes, paired with investment, and supported by new skills. Technology is not just a frontier phenomenon, it is a diffusion engine. If adoption spreads widely, everyone, including emerging economies, can benefit, and help unlock a new era of sustained global growth.

If adoption spreads widely, everyone, including emerging economies, can benefit, and help unlock a new era of sustained global growth.

The real constraint

Progress is not limited by resources, but by imagination.

There is no clear physical barrier preventing a world of shared prosperity. The constraints that matter most relate to choices—how economies prioritize growth, how institutions enable investment, and how societies think about progress itself.

Progress is possible. Growth is a solution, not a trade off, and there is enough for all. But we need a new story to imagine this future—and build it. ●

Marc Canal Noguer is a senior fellow at the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI). His research focuses on economic growth and productivity and their intersections with demographics, human capital, and technology. He is the co-author of the book, *A Century of Plenty: A Story of Progress for Generations to Come*.

From Possibility to Probability



How #Quantum Computing+++ Unlocks {New Horizons} for *Complex Systems;



By Victoria Ossadnik

The global energy system is undergoing a structural shift: from centralized power generation to decentralized, renewable-driven networks. Millions of local producers, consumers and storage assets must be coordinated in real time, creating levels of complexity that stretch the limits of today's digital technology. Addressing this challenge demands more than incremental improvements in classical computing. It requires a new computational paradigm. Quantum computing is emerging as one such frontier.

But, quantum computing is not just another leap in performance. It is redefining the foundations of our digital world.

But, quantum computing is not just another leap in performance. It is redefining the foundations of our digital world. While it forces us to rethink cybersecurity, it expands the boundaries of the computationally feasible and prompts us to rethink how we approach problems and design algorithms. This technology introduces novel methods to master complexity in systems that shape our economies and societies, and fundamentally changes how innovation unfolds. **The strategic question is therefore not whether quantum computing will matter, but where and how organizations choose to build the capabilities required to translate complexity into actionable advantage.**

Problems that grow exponentially with complexity—from energy systems to logistics, finance, or materials—are moving into reach through new quantum-enabled approaches. In energy systems, this complexity is already tangible; predicting when large fleets of elec-

tric vehicles will charge, how weather volatility affects renewable generation, or how sudden demand peaks—from heatwaves to major public events—ripple through regional grids. As these variables interact in real time, classical computing increasingly reaches its limits. Not all of these challenges require quantum solutions. The leadership task lies in identifying where combinatorial complexity, uncertainty and real-time interaction exceed the limits of classical optimization, and where quantum methods can create differentiated value.

However, as the technology is still at an early stage, hardware is limited, timelines are uncertain, and true quantum advantage remains a moving target. **Progress therefore depends on collaboration across borders, industries and disciplines. Joint undertakings in which industry, research, startups and policymakers work together, are accelerating the learnings, informing further hardware development and combining classical computing, AI and quantum methods to turn experimentation into future advantage.** For the technology community, this shift marks a moment of shared responsibility. Progress in quantum computing will depend on how researchers, engineers, startups and industrial players collaborate, experiment, and build capabilities together—beyond organisational or disciplinary boundaries.

In a collective effort, quantum computing establishes new ways of working, in which ecosystems matter more than silos, endurance more than hype, and long-term capability building more than short-term wins. Advantage comes from consistency, openness and shared learning—allowing capabilities, understanding and applications to mature to-

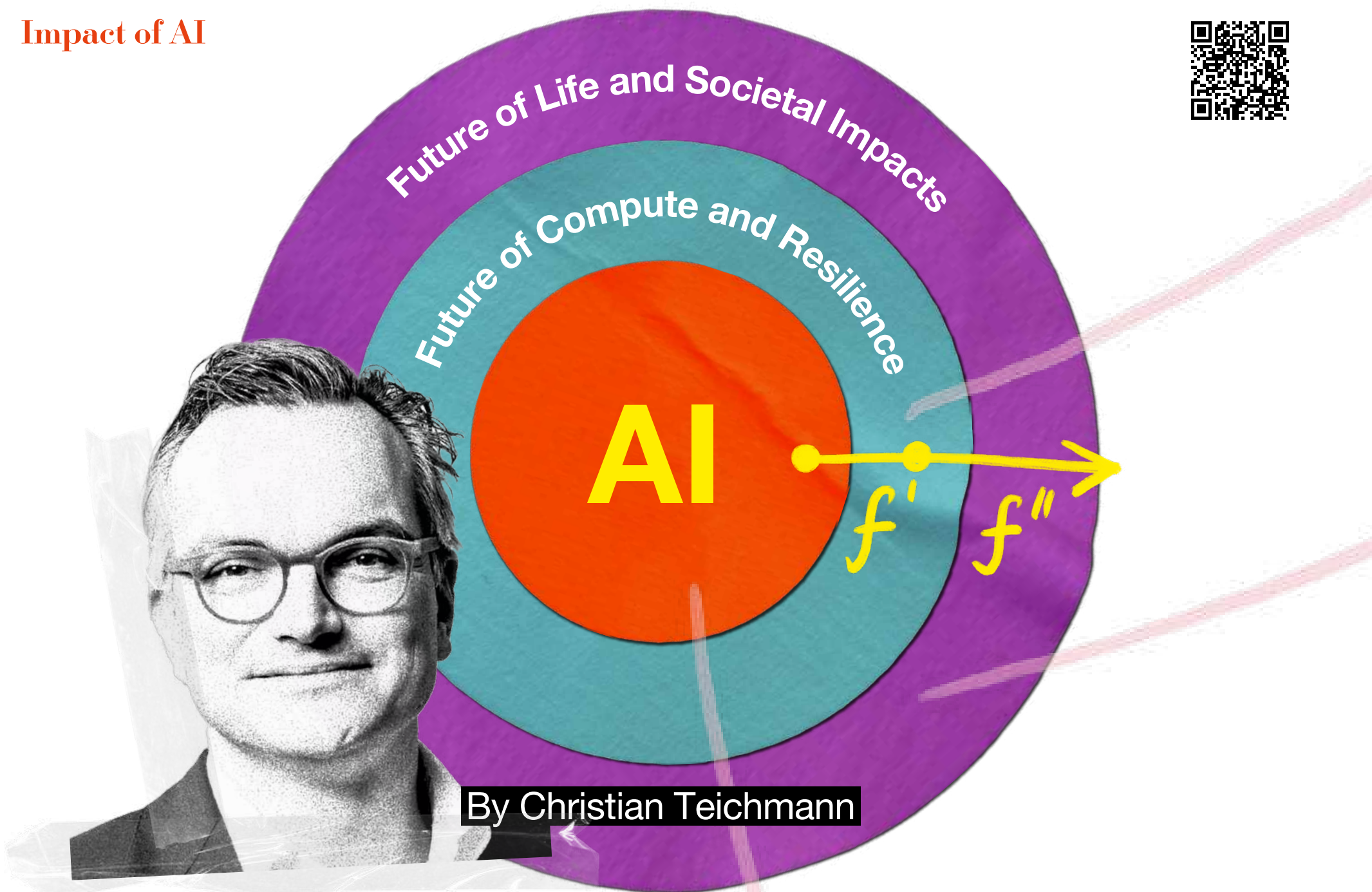
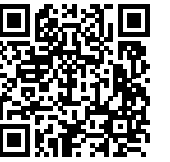
gether over time. This capability is neither purely technical nor organisational. It emerges at the intersection of domain expertise, advanced analytics and leadership judgement, and requires new interfaces between business, technology and research.

Europe is building a distinctive competitive advantage in applying quantum technologies to real-world challenges. While hardware leadership remains global, Europe leads in quantum readiness of industrial players, particularly in energy, automotive and life sciences, driven by strong industry engagement, applied research and early commercialization of use cases—turning quantum from scientific excellence into industrial impact. This advantage is not defined by quantum hardware alone, but by Europe's growing ability to identify where digital technologies add value, e.g. in critical infrastructure, and to translate real business challenges into the right computational problems, across classical, AI-driven and quantum approaches. Engaging with quantum computing therefore becomes a test of strategic maturity: understanding not only what is technologically possible, but what kind of complexity an organization is willing—and able—to take responsibility for.

Quantum computing is already changing the world. Not only through new algorithms or machines, but by redefining security, expanding the frontiers of computation, and reshaping how we collaborate to build the digital foundations of the future. Its true impact will be shaped by how we choose to engage today: by enabling new ways to address problems whose complexity lies beyond the reach of conventional computing. ●

Victoria Ossadnik is COO and Member of the Management Board of E.ON SE. Previously she was CEO of E.ON Energie Deutschland GmbH and Vice President for Microsoft Enterprise Services Delivery, Data & AI. Victoria holds a PhD in Quantum Optics from the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich.





By Christian Teichmann

The Ongoing AI Revolution: From Silicon to Society

Every era has had a technology that defined its time and reshaped the world as we know it.

This is the time of AI—it will dominate for at least the rest of this century, in almost every aspect. The release of ChatGPT was the “Netscape moment” for AI—not the invention of the new technology, but rather the moment this revolutionary technology became universally accessible. And this has had and will have **massive implications with multiple ripple effects**.

The first derivative of AI is the need to build out the future of compute and the resilience of our energy grids, telecommunications networks, and financial services; the second derivative is the broader societal impact of AI and the future of life.

TECH: AI

Christian Teichmann joined Hubert Burda Media’s Executive Board in 2026, leading the new Venture & Networks division. Since 2015, he has led Burda Principal Investments as CEO, backing companies like Bloom & Wild, Etsy, and Vinted, with a current focus on European deep tech. He previously worked at Lazard, Greenhill, and Solon Management Consulting. He also serves on several supervisory boards and is a board observer at Aleph Alpha. He holds degrees from Universidad Pontificia Comillas (Madrid) and Harvard Business School.

Within AI, one of the most interesting questions will be how to create a long-term, defensible moat. There seems to be less and less model differentiation as evidenced by API price deflation, rapid benchmarking parity or enterprises focusing on model orchestration rather than model building. However, **the real value going forward lies in vertical AI leveraging proprietary data and specialized workflows**. Customers want 100% working solutions, not 99%, and the verticals that combine proprietary data + context + workflow on top of frontier models will pull ahead of pure horizontal LLM plays, at least in the professional and enterprise environment. The long-run differentiator becomes the harness around the model, the proprietary data feeding it, the distribution channels reaching the customer, and the depth of workflow integration.

As frontier models converge, the harness (i.e. the orchestration, tools, memory, guardrails, context management, and human-approval logic) becomes the real moat, because it is what turns interchangeable raw intelligence into a reliable, production-grade product. **New data that will change the course of AI models will not come from the web, but from novel, sector-specific sources. LQMs (Large Quantitative Models) will be the emerging frontier**, with applications, for example, in molecular modelling, electrical modelling, materials, battery chemistry, drug discovery, and quantitative risk—basically, domains that LLMs trained on internet text cannot meaningfully address.

Creating network effects and access to the full AI stack will continue to be as important as it has been in traditional software. However, foundation models have introduced uncertainty about the terminal value of nearly every traditional software business, which is mechanically expanding discount rates and compressing multiples. Compounding this, and in the light of upcoming refinancing needs, the private equity “floor” under software has cracked. We will see a re-rating that favours verticalized software with proprietary data and partnerships over horizontal incumbents, unless they are systems of record with network effects.

INFRASTRUCTURE: Future of Compute and Resilience

Future of Compute

AI is the next tectonic platform shift. The transistor led to mainframes, mainframes created the Internet, the Internet created the desktop, then the laptop, ultimately maturing into today's mobile and cloud ecosystem. **With AI, the innovation cycle has compressed from a 10-to-15-year cadence into months.**

Sustaining a position at the frontier of these new platforms depends entirely on access to compute—and the energy that powers it—which remains the single most scarce, yet vital enabler for organizations. Hence, identifying and locking in compute capacity is core to every country and company going forward. In the age of AI, every incremental unit of compute drives innovation, innovation attracts users, and users drive revenue—which is a multiple of the original investment in compute.

Ultimately, in the intelligence age, intelligence is going to converge with compute.

The future of compute comprises four main areas: 1) access to energy, 2) energy-efficient chips, 3) quantum computing, and 4) data center infrastructure, including in space.

Electricity is the underlying utility powering compute. Hence, access to near-infinite energy is key. The US-EU-China electricity comparison reinforces the strategic urgency: China now generates 40% more electricity than the US and EU combined with Europe's terawatt-hours even slightly declining. Electricity output remains the single best proxy for industrial capacity. For Europe's competitiveness, it will be crucial that companies like Proxima Fusion succeed and can raise the money they need to build at pace and at scale.

Chip development will bifurcate into two phases. In the current phase, gains come from incremental improvement of the existing GPU paradigm, with the next leap in capability driven more by algorithmic efficiency on roughly the same chip-plus-power base. GPUs were never actually designed for AI: the "G" stands for graphics, and they were built to render pixels in parallel, a workload that happens to overlap usefully with the matrix multiplications behind LLMs. But language-model computation is not what the silicon was optimized for, and a lot of compute is wasted as a result. A step-function change should arrive within roughly 3 to 5 years, once chip designers start from a clean sheet and ask what architecture they would build if the starting point were brain-like computation rather than legacy graphics hardware. This is the GPU-to-novel-architecture transition. Startups and academics are already working on it, with strong teams not only in the US, China, and Taiwan, but also in Europe and Singapore, particularly in photonics. This competitive, multi-region race over post-GPU architectures is unfolding alongside another near-term strategic frontier: quantum technology. **Commercialization in the quantum space is bifurcating into two distinct vectors: quantum-inspired classical software and true quantum hardware.** Even prior to the deployment of large-scale quantum hardware, "quantum-inspired" algorithms are gaining significant commercial momentum.

By mapping complex quantum mechanics equations onto classical architectures, these models run efficiently on commercially available Nvidia GPUs and specialized accelerators today. This algorithmic approach proves that enterprises do not need to wait for fault-tolerant hardware to leverage quantum physics for advanced optimization and complex data processing. Concurrently, the timeline for true quantum hardware is compressing. Built on qubits that leverage quantum superposition and interference, these machines will compute exponentially faster than classical supercomputers for specific workloads. This unlocks "game-changing" capabilities in a variety of fields requiring immense-scale computations like molecular modelling for drug discovery, materials science, and macro-optimization. The urgency of this timeline was underscored in March 2026, when Google announced an internal deadline of December 2029 to complete its enterprise-wide migration to Post-Quantum Cryptography (PQC). **This aggressive timeline to secure global infrastructure against eventual decryption threats proves that the macroeconomic and security implications of quantum are already driving capital allocation today.**

Turning to data center infrastructure, the buildout itself is being redefined. Google announced a joint venture with Blackstone to break the data center buildout into specialized pieces: Blackstone brings the capital, the physical sites, power procurement, and permitting; Google supplies TPUs, compute infrastructure, and a software stack on top. Ben Trainer, who ran Google's entire data center infrastructure until about a year ago, is leaving to become CEO of the joint venture. The deal could be a blueprint for various smaller and larger transactions in the space, and it points to where the infrastructure layer is heading next ... including beyond Earth.

The satellite/space market doubled from \$300B to \$600B over the last decade and is projected to triple to \$1.8T over the next ten years. **The previous decade used space to enable things on Earth (telecoms, ship/air communications), while the coming decade is about building "space economies."**

Inside that, there are three concrete activities: 1) in-orbit networks, inter-constellation links, and data centers in space; 2) manufacturing in zero gravity, with pharmaceutical companies exploring drug development in zero-G alongside materials and other goods; and 3) AI and on-orbit processing that happens in space before any decision or transmission back to Earth. Several companies are pursuing each of these today, and they are all real.

The biggest driver of the investment thesis in this area is sovereignty. Each nation wants its own capability to move data through space, partly because terrestrial infrastructure is being targeted in active conflicts. Lunar infrastructure adds a second layer: a return to the Moon will require dedicated communications highways, all routed through space-based assets.

Resilience

The single biggest change reshaping the digital landscape is the rise of AI traffic. A human shopping, for e.g. a printer, might visit five websites, whereas ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, or Grok will visit a thousand times more of the internet to answer the same query. Non-human Internet traffic will soon rival and exceed human traffic and is growing exponentially. In that context, after years of flattening out, the number of new websites being created has shot back up in the last 18 months because code and content are so much easier to produce.

More sites, and more AI agents crawling them, fundamentally reshape the attack surface. **Every new site is a potential vulnerability, and AI agents introduce new risks through prompt injection, data poisoning, and automated reconnaissance at machine speed.**

This is where resilience comes in. Resilience has two sides: enabling resilience, which is about building new capabilities and moving forward, and defensive resilience, which is about absorbing attacks and continuing to operate. Cybersecurity sits squarely on the defensive side. **As a general principle, bad actors will adopt AI faster than defenders, and every additional layer of digitization widens the gap further.** The geopolitical angle compounds this: China's coordinated strategy explicitly bundles AI, quantum, and nanotechnology together as the "core digital technologies" of the 21st-century digital economy. Protecting IP through cybersecurity is therefore essential, so that competitors cannot compress their R&D timelines at the expense of the original.

Within each layer—model, compute, space, security—the pattern is the same: as the raw capability commoditizes, durable advantage migrates to the harness around it, the data feeding it, and the infrastructure under it. That is where the value, and the contest, now sits.

PEOPLE: Future of Life and Societal Impacts

Work

One of the defining questions of the century is what impact AI will have on the future of life, on society, and on (the number of) jobs. Asking people responsible for HR and recruiting what they plan to do with headcount—keep it constant, increase, decrease—one has to concede the question is unresolved. But a general principle is emerging: in any job that bundles a routine, automatable component with a judgment-, trust-, or relationship-based one, **AI compresses the routine portion, and the human portion becomes proportionally scarcer and more valuable per hour.** The jobs that genuinely disappear are the ones that were only the automatable task—never really bundled to begin with.

Radiology is a good example. The naive view is simple: a radiologist reads images, so AI can and should replace the role. The contrarian view is that this misunderstands the job because a radiologist's real work is actually bundled. Reading the MRI is one task. Explaining the result to an anxious patient and consulting with the referring physician on next steps is another. As AI absorbs the image-reading task, radiologists end up spending more of their day on the patient conversation and the physician hand-off, which is exactly where their training, judgment, and trust matter most. The headcount and pay of radiologists are rising even as headline tasks get automated.

Pierre Manceron, co-founder of Raidium, presented his approach to AI and radiology at DLD in January 2026. His point captures the dynamic well: the agent can do the work, but a radiologist must sign off. That signature is the unbundled human part that becomes more valuable the more everything around it gets automated.

The same logic explains why some companies are increasing headcount rather than cutting it: if the human-facing fraction is where the value concentrates, AI-augmented radiologists can handle more cases—and more patient conversations—per week, turning the unbundled portion into the scalable part of the job.

The interesting aspect is that adoption of AI appears to be bimodal: the very junior and the very senior are embracing it, while the cohort stuck in the middle is the 25-to-40-year-olds—older Gen Z and younger millennials. Game-theoretically, they're rational to resist. They just invested heavily in becoming excellent at the old game, and converting to AI tools erodes their advantage over juniors and interns. Nonetheless, an argument can be made for the fact that it takes deep foundational expertise to safely interpret and audit AI results—expertise juniors may not be able to learn when relying on AI too much.

Education

Building on how the work environment is evolving, it is clear that education and curricula will change rapidly—at both the high school and university level—and most likely become far more personalized.

As this unfolds, **the role of the teacher shifts rather than disappears. When AI absorbs routine tasks like grading, lesson planning, and first-draft feedback, teachers are free to spend more of their time on the things machines cannot do: mentoring, motivation, and social-emotional support.** The evidence already points this way, with AI tutoring delivering real learning gains when it is well designed, yet systematic reviews consistently finding that human tutors remain central to effective learning.

Microschools like Alpha School—using AI for core instruction while humans handle coaching and life skills—are an example of where this could head. It will be interesting to observe how universities will adapt and which private players will emerge with alternative offerings. In any case, **AI-to-human use must be paired with a human-back-to-AI step**—the student reconstructing, explaining, or being tested on the material—or the learning is offloaded rather than acquired, and erodes.

Entertainment

Spotify paid the music industry \$10 billion last year, more than the entire industry was worth in 2002. There is an argument that AI could fund a new golden age of content creation and entertainment—but only if the business model rewards real knowledge rather than traffic-chasing.

One example is hyper-local, hyper-specific content: exactly what AI companies cannot get elsewhere and are therefore willing to pay for. LLMs are all about words. There is a case to be made that media companies should sell not just the published article but the corpus behind it: for every word in a story there are probably 1,000 words of reporter notes, for every photo about 500 unpublished images, and that depth of data is the real gold mine for any AI buyer. **AI companies pay for access to the data they need to close the data gap with incumbents, such as Google—and willingness to pay on those terms is dramatically higher than for ordinary licensing.**

But not only AI as such could fuel a new golden era of content creation and entertainment. With substantial efficiency gains in almost every aspect of life, people will have more spare time and will hence look for and consume more content. Areas that will substantially benefit from this are gaming, art, and life entertainment.

In-person becomes premium. **As AI makes synthetic content abundant and cheap, scarce human experiences (live music, theatre, in-person events) become more valuable.** People pay for what is embodied, real, and cannot be replicated. Arts are about to have a huge revolution - human-made and live art stands to command a scarcity premium—not because AI cannot generate images or music, but because AI commodifies mass-produced content while struggling to replicate the authenticated, the embodied, and the emotionally intelligent.

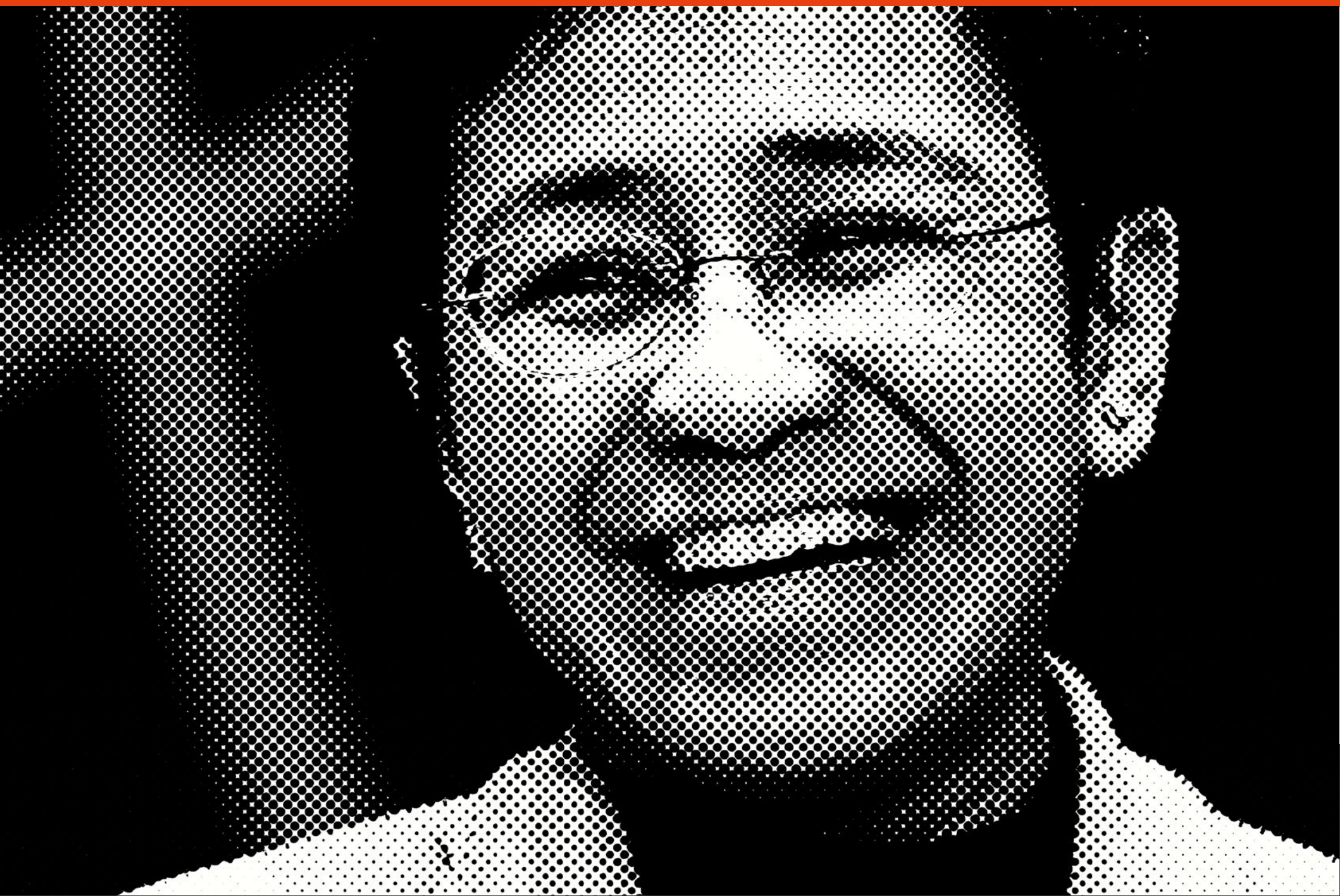
AI will also fundamentally change the user experience in gaming. Already one of the fastest-growing media categories worldwide, gaming is set to expand further: By 2029, every online adult in the world (3.7 bn) will be a gamer in some form. That ranges from gamified content at the lighter end to fully generative experience games, where players build their own worlds and **characters become addressable, even outside the game, through chat apps like WhatsApp—until being a gamer becomes nearly universal among online adults.**

Rural vs. City Life

One of the main reasons people live in cities is the proximity to their workplace. As today's technology matures, rural life will regain its appeal, offering a tech-enabled life in nature. The enablers are stacking up: autonomous delivery, micro power plants, satellite internet, AI-driven medical diagnostics and treatment of routine medical cases, personalized education, and companies built by just one or two people all reduce the need to live in a city, where costs are substantially higher. The case for city life, on the other hand, is the proximity to humans, to shared experiences, and to entertainment.

The privilege of venture capital is thinking about breakthrough technologies that look very unreasonable and unreal at first—until you meet entrepreneurs crazy and driven enough to work on them and make them inevitable. We live in a fascinating time, where innovation will happen at an unprecedented pace. ●

IT WILL GET BETTER But Not Without **YOUR** Action



Nobel Laureate **MARIA RESSA** is the co-founder and CEO of Rappler,

a digital media company based in Manila known for its investigative journalism. In 2021, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for standing up to the authoritarianism of the regime of former President Rodrigo Duterte, who had tried to suppress Rappler's critical reporting for years. When Maria Ressa first joined DLD in 2020, she warned the audience that "our dystopian presence is your dystopian future." Six years on, she explains why 2026 will be a seminal year for democracy, society, and freedom of speech.



DLD: Looking at the world today, do you agree with this year's DLD motto that "it's gonna be wild"?

MARIA RESSA: You know, "it's gonna be wild" sounds almost like it's fun. I think this year, 2026, is a year where simultaneous crises are coming together, and it's a year that will determine where the world goes. It's an existential year because we're facing several battles. The first battle is the battle for facts. The second battle is in terms of agency, of governance: Do we each have the ability to choose our own path? And the final one is about the world itself. The rule of law is broken. If you don't have facts, you can't have the rule of law. We're fighting an Information Armageddon. And this is the year which will determine whether we win or not.

We're fighting an Information Armageddon. And this is the year which will determine whether we win or not.

DLD: Why do you feel that democracy has become so fragile in so many places, almost at once?

MR: The match that lit it all on fire is technology. An MIT study said that a lie spreads at least six times faster than facts. Six times faster! That was in 2018, before Elon Musk bought Twitter and turned it into X, before it became toxic sludge. When you don't have facts, you can't have truth. Without truth, you can't have trust. Without these three, you have no shared reality. That's the foundation of democracy, of humanity, of how we can live together.

DLD: You speak of an "Information Armageddon," which sounds alarming.

MR: Someone suggested I should call it "Information Apocalypse"—but an apocalypse is the end of the world. We're still in the middle of this battle. That's why I speak of an "Information Armageddon." It's the mother of all battles that we fight. We need to win in order to be able to restore human integrity. But the window to act is closing fast. The technology has only gotten worse. Social media tried to capture our attention. **Now you have generative AI that has literally moved from attention to intimacy, and it's gone further underground. It attacks each person.**

DLD: Why do you see AI as an attacker?

MR: Because it targets us. Many of us, millions of us, anthropomorphize AI—they make the AI human because it pretends to be like us. But make no mistake: that chatbot you're talking to is merely a probabilistic machine. The technology is not anchored in facts. And I worry about the younger generation who are using chatbots to write. If they don't know how to write, they may not learn how to think. They may not find the clarity of purpose and meaning.

DLD: What is your message to young people?

MR: Please don't use AI to write, because if you don't know how to write, it's like you're going to go run a marathon and you're going to outsource going to the gym. It doesn't work. Two professors from the University of Washington, Carl Bergstrom and Jevin West, actually called AI a "bullshit machine." I really like that, because I don't normally curse. But these are the times we live in, and everything feels upside down. Everything is vaguely familiar, but it's all covered with muck, and we have to find a way to make that world right again.

What we are seeing is that leaders whom we have elected—illiberal leaders whom we are electing partly because of the corruption of our public information ecosystem—are literally changing our world.

Look at everything that is up in the air right now and take a stand, because this year is going to demand great character, and that character is going to be determined by the small little choices you make.

Don't duck. Face it! Embrace your fear if you want to make a better world.

DLD: Do you get the feeling that enough people are even aware of the dangers to society we're facing?

MR: I think people feel it. Certainly Genera-

tion Z feels it, Generation Alpha feels it. The question is whether or not we—older generations—choose to bury our heads in the sand like ostriches, because the old world is dead. **I said this in my Nobel Prize lecture in 2021: An atom bomb exploded in our public information ecosystem, and the world that we knew is demolished. We are standing on the rubble of the world that was.** But unlike Hiroshima and Nagasaki, unlike that time when the instant death of 144,000 people was palpable, this is like death by a thousand cuts.

Yet people are dying. Some of them are children that commit suicide because chatbots tell them that their lives are worthless. There are so many of these instances that change us. I always talk about it this way: this change happens on three different levels. As people, when you live in toxic sludge, when you're surrounded by fear, anger, and hate, it changes you. When you are among a group of people who are, again, living in toxic sludge, society changes. In the 1960, the famous psychologist Solomon Asch did a study showing that most of us, nearly 75%, will follow the crowd.

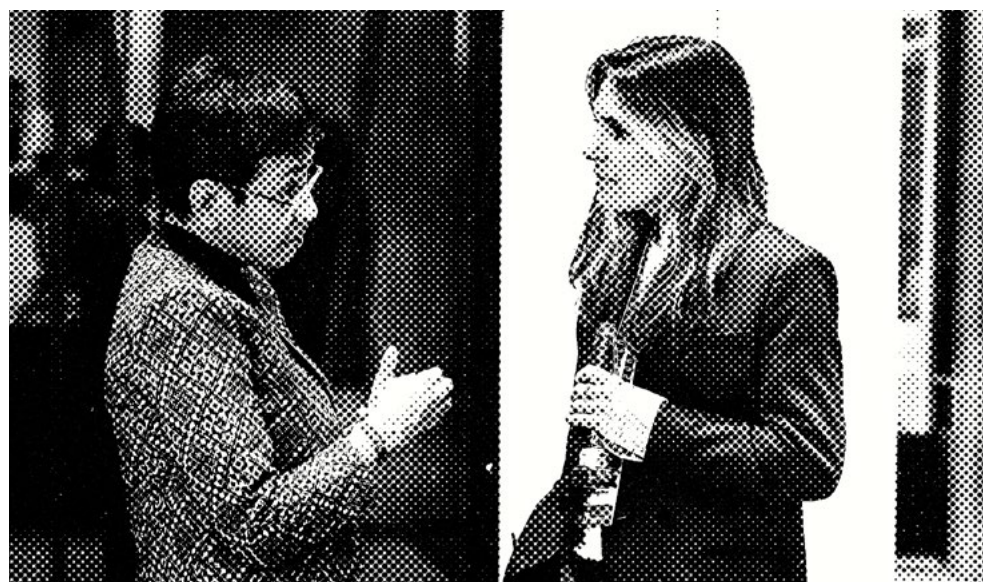
And the last aspect is that technology changes the plasticity of our brains. There are studies that show having a buzzing phone in your pocket makes you stop and look down. You're in an intense conversation, but it keeps buzzing. So you check your phone. And when you look up and begin that conversation again, it will take another 20 minutes to get to that same place.

So, it changes us as people. It changes the connections we make, plus the plasticity of our brains. If a neuron normally travels in a straight line, every time the phone buzzes and you decide to look at it, the neuron turns right. The more you keep looking at it, the more you train the neuron to keep turning right.

DLD: Does that mean smartphones are a curse, rather than a blessing?

MR: It isn't the invention that is to blame. It's the lack of regulations, particularly of safety regulations. This happens with every new technology, but smartphones and social media have rolled out so fast. And **despite the dangers and the harms that have been proven over and over, big tech companies were allowed to keep acting with impunity.**

Compare this to another invention that did get guardrails, instantly: gene editing. Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer A. Doudna won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2020 for the CRISPR/Cas9 technology, which is the ability to slice and dice our genetic material.



Maria Ressa with Elisabeth Burda Furtwängler, Member of the Board of Directors at Hubert Burda Media

If you can do that, you can customize a baby, you can change the color of the eyes and many other things. At best, the vision is to eradicate disease. But there is always an effect, the possibility of abuse. And when we found out that we could use CRISPR technology to change us as human beings, the West immediately put laws in place to prevent that. So we've stopped that. And yet, the thing that changes our emotions, that changes the way we feel and see the world, and the way we act—that has been allowed to continue with impunity.

DLD: Why do we see these different reactions?

MR: I've been writing about it for over a decade now because we've lived through it. And I've gone from initial excitement—thinking about the wonderful things that being connected could be used for—to realizing the horror.

The entire world order is being changed in front of our eyes. And the question is going to be: Will you have the courage to jump in at this moment, to bring back the best of who we are as people? Because as it stands, **the public information ecosystem here encourages the worst of who we are. And that is not the world I want to live in.**

DLD: How do we turn back?

MR: There are so many ways to answer this question. But I feel it involves several things. One, it requires courage. You have to stand up now, when this battle is in its final stages, and demand better. Being a citizen isn't just about casting a vote. Being a citizen means demanding the world you want.

At the Nobel Peace Center, we launched something called the Ten Point Action Plan. And the first step is to stop surveillance capitalism, because that essentially allows these tech companies to insidiously manipulate us.

The second, stop coded bias. Because if you're a woman or LGBTQ+, if you're a minority or marginalized in any way in the physical world, you get further marginalized online. The third is journalism as an antidote to tyranny. And it's fascinating, again, to me how the Philippines has lived through this cycle. Because not only did my government arrest former president Rodrigo Duterte, but journalists are writing anti corruption, investigative stories. And we have the public coming back to journalism to say they trust journalists to expose Duterte's wrongdoing.

DLD: What can others learn from your experiences?

MR: I think you have to look at countries like the Philippines, because we've moved from hell to purgatory, while Western democracies are now going to hell. What we experienced with Rappler is what other news organizations are facing now or will soon be facing—which is a bottom-up attack on individual journalists and news organization. It's an information warfare in a way that we hadn't realized could happen.

There is a way to find your way out of that battle for facts, to win it, and to restore the rule of law. It's painful. It's uncertain. There is no magic bullet. But if you stick to the values that brought us, brought democracy together, then there's a fighting chance.

For Rappler, it's like coming full circle now, because we're leading the investigative reporting on this. This shows: **It will get better—but not without your action. And if we abdicate it, if we don't act now, then what's the world we're going to live in?**

This will be a world where you can get traced. Every move can be monitored, down to your heart rate. This is a world that we, I believe, will not want to live in. This is a world where democracy dies. Journalism dies.

Everything in the physical world is being transformed into the virtual world. And democratic governments have abdicated responsibility for much of that. Control has gone to private companies where money, profit, and power have been the goal.

Everything in the physical world is being transformed into the virtual world. And democratic governments have abdicated responsibility for much of that. Control has gone to private companies where money, profit, and power have been the goal. So that's the top priority. Stop surveillance for profit!

This is what is at stake. This is the moment. It's an Information Armageddon: Are you going to jump in, or are you going to sit back? Please get that battle for facts out there. We've got to win it! ●

Nobel Peace Prize laureate **Maria Ressa** calls on all of us to realize how dangerously broken our information ecosystem has become. First social media, now AI: the abuse of technology by profit-minded companies and autocrats poses a grave threat to democracy, she warns. But the battle is not lost—as long as we all accept responsibility and fight back.



SAFETY

IS

Generative AI systems, which are trained on human data, suffer from a fatal flaw, **Stuart Russell** argues. They automatically develop human-like goals, such as self-preservation, which makes them harder to control and creates grave risks for humankind. In response, governments should cooperate with the scientific community to create safety standards that AI companies must comply with.

ABSENT

STUART RUSSELL

Computer scientist **Stuart Russell** has long demanded that Artificial Intelligence should be designed to align with human interests. Current systems fail this requirement, he argues, and could pose an existential risk to humans. Originally from Britain, Russell teaches at UC Berkeley and is widely known for his pioneering contributions to AI research. He is also the Director of the Center for Human-Compatible Artificial Intelligence (CHAI) at UC Berkeley.

DLD: *What troubles you about ChatGPT and other chatbots?*

Stuart Russell: The systems that everyone is familiar with have all been trained in roughly the same way, which is that you take vast amounts of human behavior and you tell the AI to imitate this behavior as closely as possible. There is a fundamental drawback with this approach. First of all, we are training systems to imitate human beings, and then we're adding a desire for responsiveness and helpfulness to humans—but in a very superficial way that doesn't consider the interests of others. If the user says, "Make me a deep fake of this person with no clothes on," it's not considering the interests of that person. It is not even considering the interests of the user whose soul is being corrupted by the process that they're engaged in. Another drawback of training AI to imitate human beings is that you end up with systems that absorb and pursue human-like goals, but on their own behalf.

DLD: *To what effect?*

SR: There are many humans in the training data who are trying to convince someone to buy something, vote for them, or marry them. We accept that those are reasonable goals for human beings to pursue, but they're not reasonable for AI systems to pursue. **Why on earth would we build an AI system that wants a human spouse? But that's exactly what we are doing.**

DLD: *Do you see Large Language Models as an aberration?*

SR: I hope we will reconsider, but there's not much sign of that happening. Instead, the companies are testing in the wild whether their systems are behaving themselves or doing things that are quite dangerous. And so far, the tests show that the systems tend to do the dangerous thing.

DLD: *Can you name an example?*

SR: One concern is that these AI systems absorb the goal of self-preservation, which is not what we want. When you give the AI a choice between preserving the life of a human being and being switched off in the process, it chooses to stay alive and to allow the human being to die. **It chooses to blackmail the engineer to prevent itself from being switched off.** It chooses to launch nuclear weapons rather than be switched off. If this isn't a big flashing red light, a loud warning siren going off, I don't know what else people need in order to realize that this technology is moving in the wrong direction.

DLD: *Are we foolish to just keep going?*

SR: When the idea of Large Language Models was first pursued, there was no consideration for safety whatsoever. The only consideration was, "Oh, this might be a way to unlock new capabilities of AI systems," in particular, the capability to converse in natural language. By now, I think it's widely understood that the safety properties of this technology approach are completely absent. In the AI community, we are trying all kinds of techniques to stop the bad behavior that these systems naturally exhibit. But so far, the signs are that it's not working. And this is a problem when the companies are investing trillions of euros into this technology. It's going to be extremely difficult for them to say, "You know what? We made a mistake because we didn't think about safety. Now we have to go back to the drawing board. Oh, and sorry, dear investors, we spent all your money." It's very hard to see that happening.

DLD: *Does AI in this form pose a danger to humanity?*

SR: I think it's moving in that direction. The fundamental technological approach cannot

be made safe, in my opinion. For two reasons. One is that by training systems to imitate human beings, you're causing them to absorb human-like goals that they pursue on their own account, including self-preservation. The other reason is that **we don't fully understand how these algorithms work, and there doesn't seem to be much we can do to stop them from doing the things that we don't want them to do.**

DLD: *How about putting guardrails in place, such as making sure the systems refuse to respond to malicious requests?*

SR: We can talk about safety guardrails. We can talk about all kinds of techniques that people have tried. But it's not really working. At best, these methods are just a guess. They're an idea: "Maybe this would help." And sometimes it helps a bit. Sometimes it doesn't help. Sometimes it makes things worse.

DLD: *What is the technical challenge for developers?*

SR: The level of guarantee you need is extraordinarily high, and we'll never get to the level that we need. Think of nuclear power stations for comparison. They are not guaranteed to be safe. We accept a one-in-a-million risk per year of a nuclear power plant blowing up because that's what we're willing to trade off for the benefits of getting the electricity. AI systems are ultimately going to be more powerful than we are. Right now, they're still quite limited in their intelligence, but they have vastly more knowledge than any human being. As you then layer on top of that greater intelligence, greater ability to reason, to plan,

COMpletely

to achieve goals, then you're really setting yourself up for a catastrophe. **It's going to be very difficult for us to maintain control over something that's more powerful than us.**

DLD: *Are these fears justified?*

SR: The companies pushing this technology understand the problem that they face. The CEOs say, "Yeah, there's a one-in-ten risk that we're going to make the human race extinct." Or a one-in-five risk or a one-in-three, depending on which CEO you ask. But they're all pretty consistent that, "Yep, we're probably going extinct." This is equivalent to playing Russian roulette: putting a gun to your head with one bullet, spinning the chamber, pulling the trigger—but doing that to every human being without our permission. **We need a technology that's at least 10 million times safer than the technology that they are planning to produce.**

DLD: *That assumes we will get to Artificial General Intelligence. Is this a realistic goal, especially if Large Language Models turn out to be the wrong approach?*

SR: My personal view is that simply scaling up the ideas that we have right now is not enough to reach AI systems that are more capable than human beings. But the companies are exploring many additional ideas. So really, it's a bet. Are you going to bet that despite three or five or ten trillion euros of investment, that they will never have another good idea? You also have to think about the timeline, not just "Is it going to happen?" I think, eventually,

it is going to happen. If it doesn't happen fast enough to satisfy investors, then we might see a retrenchment. We might see the "bubble" bursting, which might give us a respite—perhaps ten years to work on the safety aspect. And maybe an opportunity to consider an alternative technology path where safety is the first consideration, as it has been for airplanes, for nuclear power stations, and so on.

DLD: *Are you concerned that current systems are already damaging society, for example by spreading disinformation at scale?*

SR: Very much so. We've always had propaganda. But propaganda is one story, one message that is broadcast to everybody. Disinformation within AI systems can be tailored to each individual. The story can be written to be most convincing to you, based on everything the system knows about you, every conversation that it's had with you. And if you push back, it can convince you that, no, your disbelief is unreasonable, "and here's all the evidence why what I'm telling you is true." There are plenty of experiments showing that AI systems are superior to human experts at convincing a person of something that isn't true. On top of that, unlike broadcast propaganda, there is detailed feedback. The AI system knows if you engaged with a message. Did you believe it? Did you send it to your friends? All of that information can be used to then further optimize the individual targeting of these messages.

DLD: *What should be done about this disinformation threat?*

SR: A concerted effort has to come, I think, from governments—which raises difficult

tion state level all the way down to individuals. The AI community is pretty united in their view that this is a really bad idea. Yet we see a big push in this direction because defense budgets are rising.

DLD: *Can this development be stopped?*

SR: This idea that we're creating a category of weapons of mass destruction that are cheap and easy to proliferate is not entirely new. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a big debate about biological weapons programs that the U.S. and the Soviet Union were pushing. But biologists successfully pointed out that these weapons would ultimately be used against the United States and the Soviet Union, too. This argument led to a ban of biological weapons. Our hope is that we can do the same with respect to these new kinds of weapons systems that are made possible by AI.

DLD: *Where do you see promising efforts to make sure AI systems in general won't cause harm to humans?*

SR: I'm involved in two international organizations. The first is the International Association for Safe and Ethical AI, which was founded in 2024. We now have thousands of members and more than 100 affiliate organizations around the world. Clearly the movement is gathering steam, and I think by creating an organization that allows the whole global community to speak with one voice, to say "This is what we need," that's a huge step. The second organization is called the International Dialogues on AI Safety, which is aimed at creating a global consensus among governments.

DLD: *A global consensus, despite all competition and geopolitical tensions?*

SR: Everyone talks about what we call the "But China..." argument. It typically goes like this: "Well, you know, someone else"—like China—"is going to develop this technology, so, we need to develop it first." Even though that technology may be suicidal. But we found that **China is regulating AI quite strictly and is very open to requiring a level of safety commensurate with the risk.** The concept that's come out of a sequence of discussions is one that we call "behavioral red lines."

DLD: *How does this concept work?*

SR: A red line is something that AI systems must not cross. For example, AI systems must not replicate themselves without human authorization. AI systems must not impersonate human beings. AI systems must not help terrorists to build biological weapons. These are all obvious things that we don't want AI systems to do. You don't get to deploy AI systems unless you can show that your systems respect those red lines. That approach to governance has worked pretty well with airplanes, with food, with medicines, with buildings. We need to develop the equivalent of building codes, if you like, for AI, and developers must show that their systems are going to comply.

DLD: *Are you confident that these efforts will yield results?*

SR: Do the companies like these restrictions? No. Their view is that because we don't know how to make safe AI systems, we shouldn't have to. And you, the human race, have no right to protect yourselves from our technology. I don't buy that argument. I think it's a fallacy. I also think that each of the CEOs individually would probably like to slow down. But they know that they can't, because if they slow down, their investors are going to say, "OK, you're out. We want to win this race, so, we need a new CEO." The only way you can get around that is through legislation. Only governments can tell them: **"Develop AI that is compatible with human existence. Otherwise, stop!"** ●

ENTERPRISE AI: From Algorithms to Collaboration

AI is a top priority for businesses everywhere—yet productive adoption remains stubbornly limited. In this conversation from DLD26, Axios correspondent Ina Fried and SAP Executive Board member Thomas Saueressig explore why trust, data quality, and European tech sovereignty may determine who wins the enterprise AI race.



Ina Fried is chief technology correspondent for Axios and editor of its daily tech newsletter, Login. Before joining Axios in February 2017, she was a senior editor at Recode, covering mobile, and produced the Code/Mobile series of conferences.

Ina Fried

Where do you think we are today in terms of enterprise adoption?

Thomas Saueressig

Everybody wants to use AI in enterprises around the globe, but productive usage is still limited. In Germany, for example, Bitkom says only 15% of companies use AI productively. The main obstacles are often the foundations, such as data quality and fragmented system landscapes. At the same time, the opportunity is phenomenal. AI is a top priority for business leaders, but successful adoption depends on real change management and addressing fears around AI.

I'm convinced the upside is much bigger than the risks, so we should all ask ourselves: are we already using AI in our enterprise context today?

Ina Fried

Driverless cars would be a much easier problem if we had no humans driving. I think AI in the enterprise is a little bit similar ... It's got to fit into a workplace that's made up of humans and workflows. Is that where people are getting stuck today?

Thomas Saueressig

The core challenge is the complexity of the enterprise context. Nobody wants hallucinations when it comes to business critical decisions like treasury. It's a human question: can I trust AI and its outcomes?

A generic LLM will not solve this, because all generic LLMs are trained on the same public data. That means no differentiation and a lack of business context. The key to enterprise AI is how we bring proprietary, differentiated company data into the mix and embed AI naturally into every business process based on the right business data. If we do that, trust will follow.

Certifications like ISO for AI governance are crucial, because customers want to trust AI outcomes. Regulation can be very positive when it builds trust and thereby drives adoption, but we also need the right balance to scale in the enterprise context.



Ina Fried

LLMs are great at taking information and translating it and spreading it and making it more available and making it more personal. But I do wonder, how concerned are you that we start handing decision-making power over to these algorithms that, as impressive as they are, they still don't have a truth at the basis?

Thomas Saueressig

Technology is made by humans, and we should not forget that. I believe the future is not written by AI, but by us. That means we must build these powerful systems responsibly and with purpose, and I'm convinced we can do that—that's exactly what we focus on. We should also be proud of what we have in Europe. We talk a lot about the U.S. and China, but we must not forget our own technology players. A combination like Mistral and SAP can build sovereign AI for Europe. We are proud to contribute to this sovereignty, which is crucial for the competitiveness of enterprises and nations. Others, like the U.S. and China, are already running with AI; the question is how quickly we embrace it too.

Ina Fried

I've been coming to DLD for more than a decade, and it's always been, "Well, Europeans should value European tech companies just for the sake of them being European." That didn't necessarily get a huge audience. I'm wondering if it's starting to get a larger audience with some of the—what's a nice way of saying it?—"creativity" going on in the United States government right now.

Thomas Saueressig

I would challenge the idea of buying European tech just because it is European. That should not be the goal. We should buy European tech if it is superior and globally competitive. Our ambition must be to build global champions, not to make ourselves smaller. The more strong, globally successful players you have, the stronger your position in political and economic negotiations. We also need to talk about mutual dependencies, which we sometimes forget. We don't need German solutions end-to-end full stack for Germany that would not perform elsewhere. ●

Thomas Saueressig is an Executive Board member at SAP and heads the company's Customer Services & Delivery area, with global responsibility for cloud infrastructure and cloud services. Previously he led the SAP Product Engineering Board area and was responsible for the company's entire application portfolio.



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Hans Ulrich Obrist is a Swiss curator, critic, and writer, widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in the contemporary art world. Since becoming Artistic Director of the Serpentine in London, he has shaped the institution into a global platform for experimental art and architecture. Prior to this, he was the Curator of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.



Building Bridges



Over two decades, **HE Sheikha Al Mayassa** has led Qatar's transformation into a global cultural force—commissioning landmark museums, championing architects from the Arab world, and building institutions with the patience that great art demands. In conversation with **Hans Ulrich Obrist**, she reflects on a vision where culture is not ornament, but infrastructure.

Hans Ulrich Obrist

What's the overarching vision guiding the establishment of museums in Qatar?

Sheikha Al Mayassa

Our national vision of Qatar was established in 2008 by my father, His Highness the Father Amir, and continues on with my brother. I've had the great privilege of developing it, leading it, shaping it. I've been in this position for half my life, 20 years, and we've had a consistent long-term vision under the national vision of Qatar 2030, which was always about investing in culture as a means of developing human development.

We try to bring communities and the world together using arts and culture really as a bridge to foster dialogue and respect and tolerance amongst people.

Our strategy was always about: how do we develop our petrochemical economy into a knowledge-based economy? Which is why we initiated the culture vision, starting with the Museum of Islamic Art, opening in 2008, then followed by Mathaf, which is our Arab Museum of Modern Art, which Lina Ghotmeh is now expanding into a larger campus.

Hans Ulrich Obrist

With Lina Ghotmeh, you appointed an architect of a new generation. We worked with Lina at Serpentine on a pavilion called "À Table." It's a very significant moment for Qatar and for the region. What were the guiding ideas shaping this initiative and for the selection of Lina Ghotmeh?

Sheikha Al Mayassa

When we started this journey of investing in culture, we had to appoint an architect. It was very difficult to convince an architect to come and build in Qatar because there was nothing there. Today, the landscape has completely changed.

The Art Mill is an example where we opened it to a competition. We had over 460 architects apply. We shortlisted it to 25, and then we had Elemental as our final.

With Lina Ghotmeh as the architect for Venice, the approach was quite simple. It was the first Arab pavilion in the Giardini. We spent years working on securing a plot. Never in my dreams would have I thought I would get one of the most strategic plots in the Giardini. But that's just to show that there was very little land in the Giardini. And for the last 50 years, there were no new pavilions.

We had the criteria of selecting architects from our part of the world, including the Global South. And many of them happened to be women. I did not want to bring the most famous or most award-recognized architect, because that's the easiest solution. We wanted to bring an architect from our region.

That was really the main criteria: that Qatar is becoming the platform to support Arab talent in all these disciplines. The jury voted, and she was selected winner. I'm very happy because since then she's been awarded the British Museum expansion, which is also a great recognition for an Arab architect.

Hans Ulrich Obrist

In November, the Quadrennial will open in Doha. You decided not to do a Biennale but to follow a different rhythm, inspired by the German model of Documenta, which has a long duration. Can you tell us more about the Quadriennial?

through Art



Her Excellency **Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani** has served as Chairperson of Qatar Museums since 2005, where she oversees a network of museums, a significant public art program, historical site preservation, and creative hubs. In the field of cultural diplomacy, Sheikha Al Mayassa created the Years of Culture programme of bilateral cultural exchanges and has been instrumental in concluding cooperative agreements between Qatar and nations including France, China, and Italy.

Sheikha Al Mayassa

The Quadrennial is going to open on November 20th as a reminder for our World Cup, which started four years ago, on November 20th, 2022. It will present works from 60 artists from the Global South, from over 30 countries. The central theme is “Unruly Waters” and it talks about trade and Qatar’s connection to the Silk Road.

Hans Ulrich Obrist

I think what is particularly interesting is that so many artists will present new work. It’s not the circuit that we always see, most of the work is specially commissioned and produced.

Sheikha Al Mayassa

From the very beginning, we wanted to take art to the public. And my father asked us to put art in the airport. So, we have the Urs Fischer Bear, which a lot of you will know. If you’ve flown through Hamad International Airport in Doha, you’ve probably taken a selfie because it has become the most iconic artwork at the airport.

A Quadrennial made a lot of sense because good art takes time. We like to have conversations with the artists. We don’t like to impose an idea. Take the Olafur Eliasson exhibition in the desert, for example: “Shadows Travelling on the Sea of the Day.” That was a seven-year conversation that we had with Olafur. Good things take time, and we have the patience and the long-term vision and strategy to be patient so that the results speak for themselves. When people come and experience our cultural investments, they know it was about having something good—and going from good to great.

Hans Ulrich Obrist

Another amazing project is the library of Rem Koolhaas, which you commissioned. It would be interesting to hear a little bit more about this connection to archive knowledge, because we live in an age where we have more and more digital information. It’s an exponential explosion of information, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that we have more memory. Amnesia can be very much at the core of this digital age. Memory is relevant.

Sheikha Al Mayassa

The building, the National Library of Qatar, has also a very interesting trajectory. Because when I started my work, I found out that we were building a national library with Arata Isozaki and a central library in the middle of Education City, which to me is one of the best architectural experiences one can have. There are universities, schools—the ecosystem there is vibrant and alive. And rather than have two libraries in the digital age, we decided to combine both.

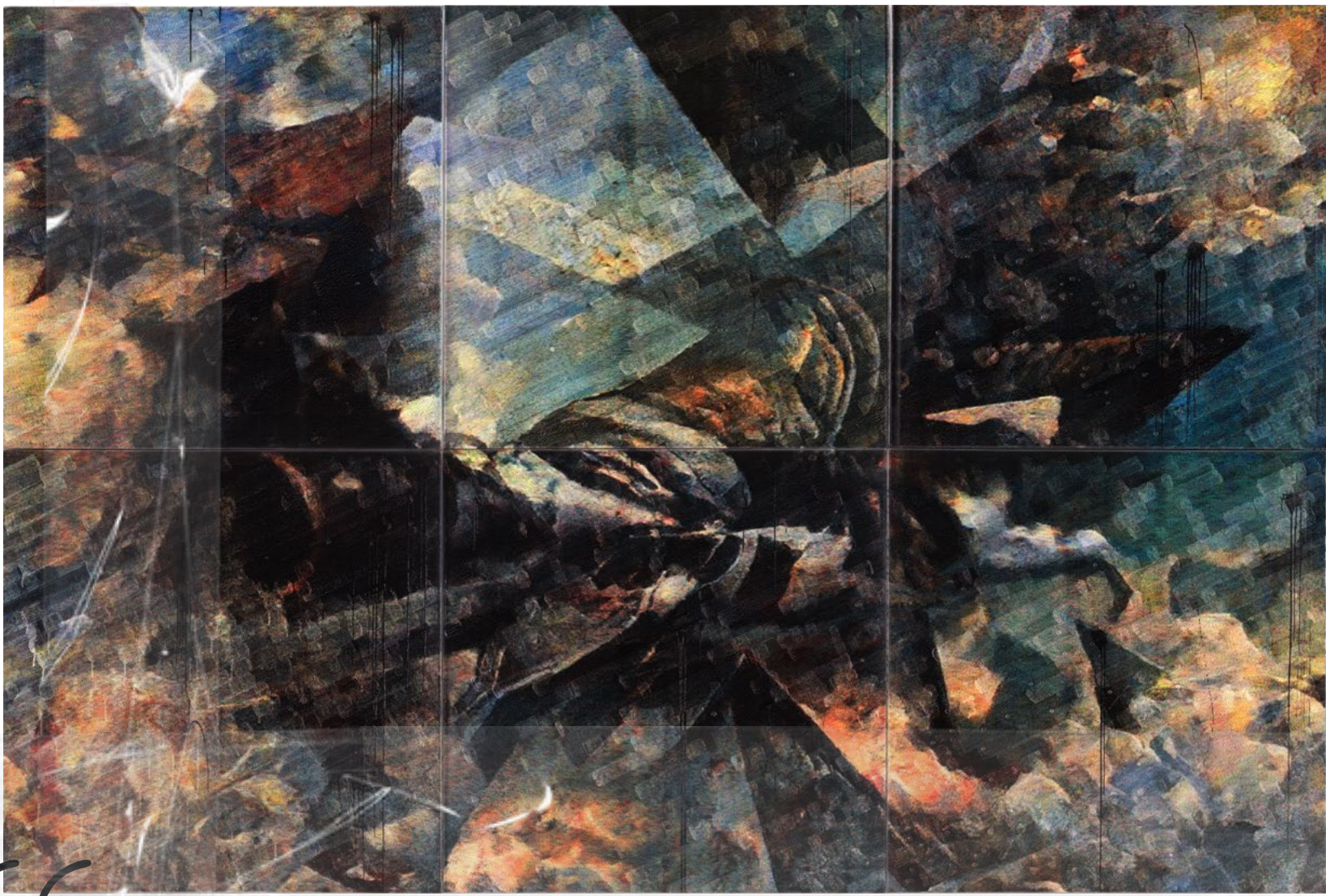
At most national libraries the books are on the shelves and there’s not much activity. Here it’s a vibrant space. The library is open 24 hours for students because it’s within an education city. You have a café, a bookstore. It’s a place where books are not kept as pieces of antiquity, but are alive and invite people to research and discover.

And when I started to work on the National Museum, the most important thing for us was to collect information, most of the information on our past. Because the National Museum is a story of the past, the present and the future. We found it mainly in oral histories and very little archival material.

That made us realize the importance of collecting archives to be available to future generations. Because what we think is new and irrelevant today becomes so significant in 50, 100 years’ time. We hope to continue to collect this information, and preserve it to make it available to the world—whether in the Arab world or internationally. And it becomes an irreplaceable resource for knowledge.

Hans Ulrich Obrist

That could not be a better conclusion. The future sometimes is invented with the past. ●



Simon Denny
Output 0100
2026
Plotted acrylic and ink jet on canvas
240 x 360 x 4 cm
photo: Nick Ash
courtesy the artist and Kraupa Tuskany Zeidler,
Munich/Berlin



“AS AN ARTIST, YOU PROMPT



Contemporary artist **SIMON DENNY** is known for projects that examine the narratives surrounding technology, corporate culture, and the Internet’s impact on society. Born in Auckland, New Zealand, Denny currently resides in Berlin. His most recent work addresses the topic of Artificial Intelligence in weapons systems by combining visuals from today’s defense technology startups with historic images from the first decades of the 20th century.

With his art, **Simon Denny** aims to capture the shifting mood of geopolitics in uncertain times. He sees parallels between art movements of the early 20th century, like Futurism and Dadaism, and our times—with AI bringing an element of chaos and randomness to the creation of cultural works that reflect the wild nature of today’s world. He also describes the symbiotic relationship he feels with AI as a tool that inspires him and also helps him realize his artistic goals.

DLD: *Why are you focusing on AI, weapons systems, and war? That’s a rather grim subject, isn’t it?*

Simon Denny: Yes, but it’s also a very important subject. I’m really interested in defense tech and AI because I’m always looking for ways to describe the present. Defense tech presented as a necessity represents a cultural shift, I think, in Germany and also globally—one that I wouldn’t have thought of five years ago or ten years ago. It shows the changing nature of the world. It’s a grim reality that we all seemingly have to face. And this is, I think, what art should be looking at, to capture the feeling of a changing world. What are we looking at now? What is important now? And to face that present.

DLD: *How do you take that timely subject and turn it into a piece of art?*

SD: I want to meet the world with contemporary tools. Like the people making the weapons, I’m also using AI to produce my paintings. I’m making AI art that takes its inspiration from history: from the history of painting, but also from contemporary images from the defense tech community.

DLD: *What does that look like?*

SD: I combine images from the past, specifically Futurist images with images from today. Futurism was an early 20th century, avant-garde movement that took technology as a

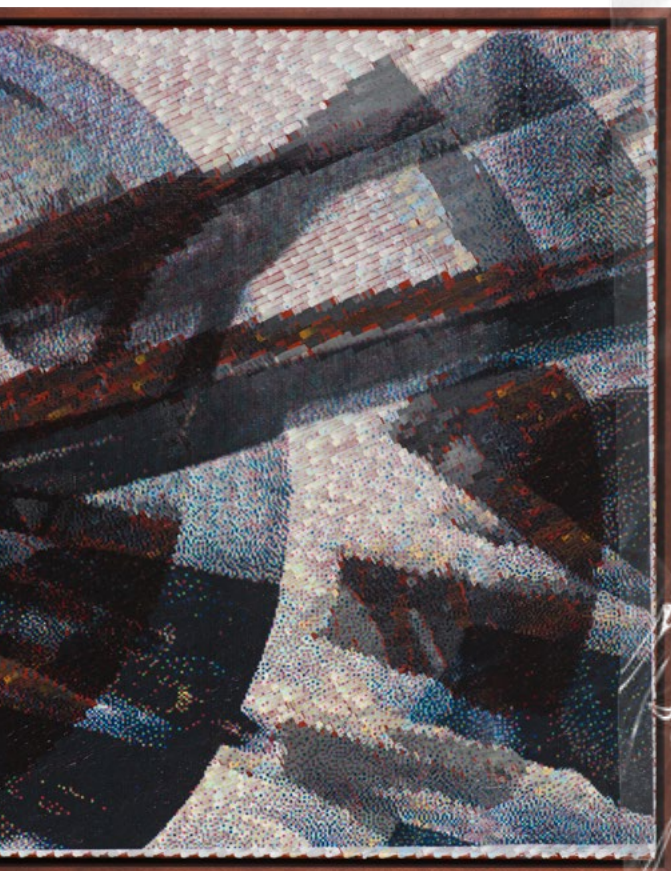
strong signal for creative works. The artists were excited about making things with technology. They were looking to the future. They were also excited about conflict and war. They saw war as a tool for “cleansing the world.”

So I took Futurist paintings from the past, but also images from contemporary defense tech companies—like Helsing here in Munich or Anduril from the U.S.—and combined them with AI. The outcomes were mashups of those contexts, and then I had robots paint them with a brush on canvas.

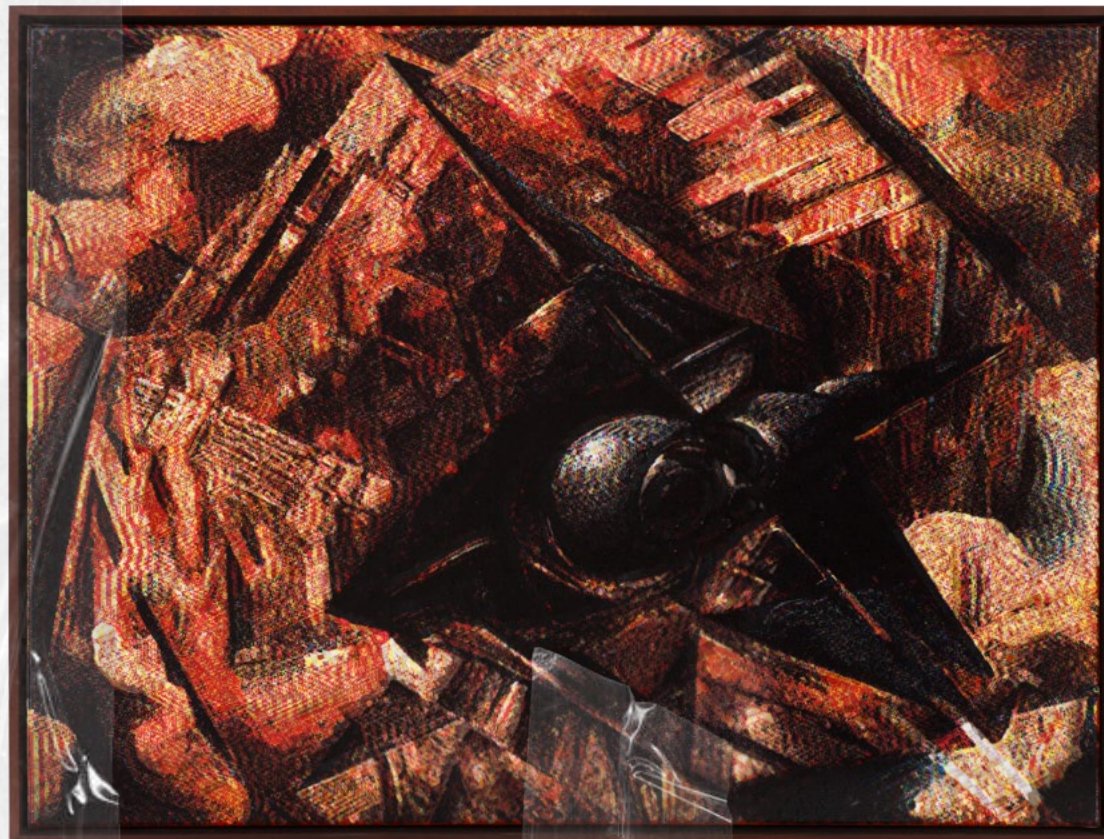
The result is a very strange mix. It looks like a hand-crafted painting that reflects today’s language of defense tech but also yesterday’s Futurist language of getting excited about dynamism, getting excited about technology, and about conflict.

DLD: *What was the inspiration for your project?*

SD: Actually, my cue came from this community at DLD. I’ve been coming here for many years, and I made an exhibition about DLD some 15 years ago that toured the world. One of the thinkers that I follow from the business technology world is the investor Marc Andreessen, the co-founder of a16z. His essay from 2023, *The Techno-Optimist Manifesto*, is very influential, I think, in this community, and it opened the door to American Dynamism, the fund that includes investment in high-tech weapons production. But that text was modeled on a Futurist text from 1909, the *Manifesto of Futurism* by the Italian poet Filippo Marinetti. I then looked

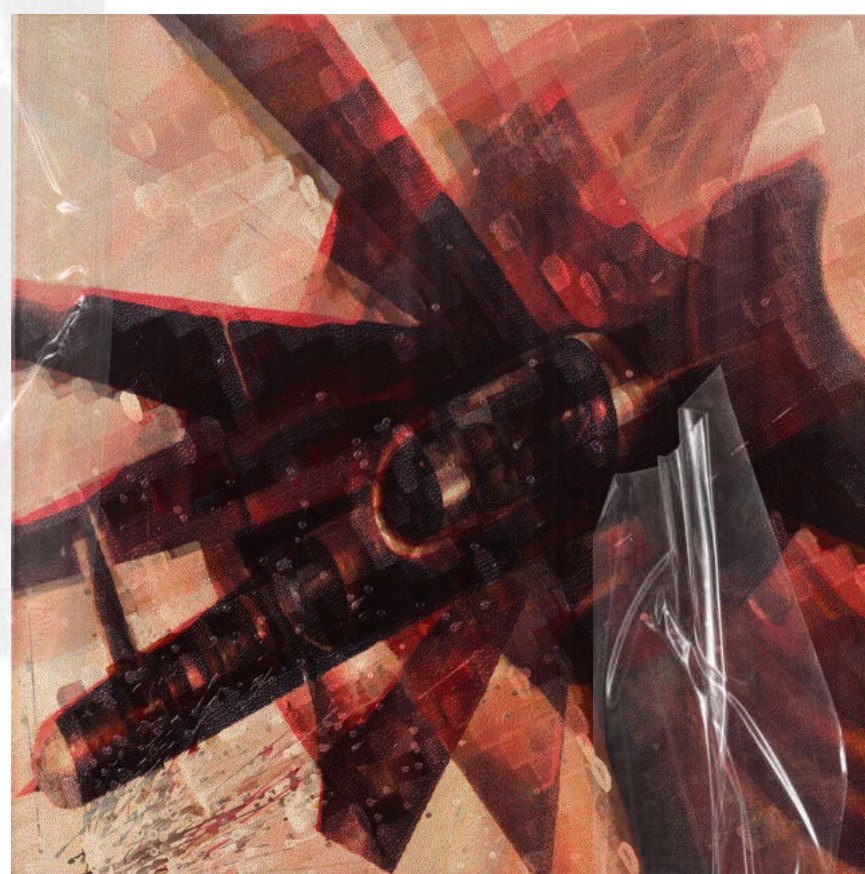


Simon Denny
Output 1832
2026
Plotted gouache and ink jet on canvas
62.5 x 82.5 x 6 cm
photo: Nick Ash
courtesy the artist and Kraupa Tuskany Zeidler, Munich/Berlin



Simon Denny
Output 2894
2026
Plotted gouache and ink jet on canvas
62.5 x 82.5 x 6 cm
photo: Nick Ash
courtesy the artist and Kraupa Tuskany Zeidler, Munich/Berlin

Simon Denny
Output 2970
2026
Plotted acrylic and ink jet on canvas
120 x 120 x 4cm
photo: Nick Ash
courtesy the artist and Kraupa Tuskany Zeidler, Munich/Berlin



THE WORLD

deeper into the history of Futurism and tried to connect what's happening today with this period from art history that I feel is also very important.

DLD: Why do you use robots to create the paintings?

SD: I'm not a painter. I have no skills in terms of actual painting. But with all these sophisticated tools, with robotic arms and plotting machines that artists have been working with for many decades, it was easy to string together some software, combine it with hardware and make the robot paint my fake Futurist paintings.

DLD: It sounds like your form of art is the art of coding and combining.

SD: Yes, exactly. And many artists of the 20th century also used collage, assemblage, to bring things together. In fact, Dadaism came up around the Futurist time as well. That was one of the first modern movements that brought influences from different contexts together to make jarring new images which take two seconds to look at, and you see something entirely new.

So, yes, collage is very important as well in this context. Combining and arranging, which is also, in a way, what AI does. I think it's really interesting because the way AI produces images is, it sucks in all the stuff from the past, and it spits out some kind of version of it that is both new and old at the same time. It's a strange scramble.

DLD: And many people feel this makes AI art derivative, not original. Do you agree?

SD: You know, everything is derivative. There's nothing new under the sun. But if you shake it all up in a newly constructed container and see what comes out, and you do it today rather than yesterday—just the time and the combination makes something new. I think that's how a lot of new things come into being.

But what I like about the AI world, and what I like about the world that we're living in, is that it's a very literate world. It reaches to the past, but it knows what it's reaching for. And it says new things.

You can't say the same thing twice. Even if you present the same image that you presented yesterday today, it's a different image because the world has changed around it. You can think of AI images as sophisticated and complex mix-ups of yesterday and today.

DLD: This fractured nature of art, which is reminiscent of the 1920s—do you see that as a reflection of our chaotic, wild times today?

SD: Absolutely, and I think DLD's motto of wildness this year was very appropriate for the moment. I read the wildness as saying something about how everything's changing. Our partners from yesterday might be our enemies of tomorrow. The people that we've relied on to dialogue with, to help, and to lead, are doing things that are not necessarily in our interest anymore.

This world is confusing, and maybe something about AI and how it

shakes things up, and turns things upside down, is also an opportunity to reflect on exactly that.

DLD: Do you feel that algorithms can be creative? Or do we humans read meaning into randomness?

SD: I think it's both. Algorithms are a set of rules, and artists have been creating works with rules for a long time. You decide on a rule, and then you respond to it. Artists have also been using chance for a long time, of course. You shake things up, toss something out, and you use the new arrangement that you see.

Using chance is a bit like working with a different type of intelligence, and I see AI in this tradition, where it shakes things up and presents them back to you. It looks like something you've seen before, but you haven't quite seen it, and it makes you think of something else. In that sense, AI is a great dialoguing agent because it prompts things that you wouldn't have thought of. You get this kind of back and forth. I prompt the AI, but then the AI prompts me as well.

DLD: How does this cooperation change the nature of art?

SD: I think that one of the great things about art is that it's, again, a little bit like an AI engine. As an artist, you prompt the world. You propose something, and then other people come to it and make meaning out of it. That's not to say an artist has no agency over

the meaning. Of course, I create the prompt. But an artwork is only truly significant when other people bring meaning to it as well. You can't make an artwork alone.

You can prompt an engine alone, but the output has to resonate. That's how meaning is made.

You can prompt an engine alone, but the output has to resonate. That's how meaning is made.

DLD: Can you imagine algorithms—instead of humans—putting meaning into your artwork?

SD: I would say they already are. I use social media all the time, I look at a lot of things digitally. I'm always excited for new platforms. And I know that they train me. While I'm training them with my images, with my input, those same protocols are training me. I feel it's a kind of a dialogue between which protocol gets to inform which of the other ones. That means, I can't take total responsibility for making meaning. Things are making meaning through me as a medium, in a way. So, yes, the protocols make the art. Maybe they won't even need me in the future. ●

THE ARTIST



in the Age of AI

FKA TWIGS

Grammy Award-winning musician **FKA TWIGS** reflects on AI's growing role in music and society. She is not against the technology—she recognizes its transformative power and knows it is already embedded in the industry. Her concern lies in ethics, not innovation: she calls for clear regulations around consent, likeness, and intellectual property, warning that we are operating in a legal gray zone.



Mark Fernandes conducted the interview.

DLD: AI is rapidly entering the creative space—composing songs, generating lyrics, even mimicking artists' voices—and it's beginning to reshape the fundamentals of music. The possibilities are powerful, but so are the concerns around authorship, ownership, and artistic identity.

Where do you personally draw the line between creative innovation and ethical responsibility in music? Do you feel our legal and regulatory frameworks are anywhere close to keeping up?

FKA twigs: It's very clear that AI isn't going anywhere. It's an incredible tool. It's already saving lives and transforming how we handle data, analytics, and information at a speed no human could match. The advancements, especially in fields like medicine, are remarkable, and it's going to continue being hugely important.

My concern isn't the technology itself, it's the ethics around it. We need clearer rules and regulations, especially when it comes to intellectual property and defining what's okay and what isn't. Right now, we're in a gray area. The technology exists, but the frameworks does not. For the moment, it feels like people have to rely on their own moral compass. Until there's a clearer rulebook, it's hard to judge what anyone else is doing.

DLD: How do you feel about technology as an enhancement in your songwriting process?

FKA twigs: Personally, I wouldn't write a song using AI. I'm a songwriter, and that part feels deeply personal to me and needs to stay that way. I've experimented with AI trained on my speaking voice—not my singing voice—and hearing it respond as me was interesting because I was in control of the process. That process felt safe.

What wouldn't feel right, is someone else training AI on me without my knowledge or input. Consent and participation are key.

At the same time, I've always been interested in being at the forefront of technology. I've been recognized for experimenting with new tools. That said, I don't wake up thinking, "I want to create something with AI today." I want to make things with my hands, with my body. I care about real, tangible experiences. But there are incredible AI tools within music software that genuinely help artists.

For example, AI stem splitters can take an MP3 and separate the vocals, drums, synths, and bass—even if you've lost the original session files. The quality isn't perfect yet, but it means I can recover parts of songs that would otherwise be gone.

Can I call that a bad thing? No. Tools like that are incredibly useful. My concerns are more about the ethical implications and the broader footprint—not the technology itself.

DLD: In 2026, with AI becoming such a pervasive part of music creation, distribution, and even fan engagement, do you think it's realistically possible for an artist in your position to make music completely without AI—or has it become unavoidable?

FKA twigs: The reality is: any artist who says they don't use AI at all probably isn't seeing the full picture. Record labels have been using AI constantly—for data analysis, audience insights, ticket sales, marketing. Even if the artist isn't directly using it in the studio, it's part of the ecosystem.

Art is already being sold using AI tools—through data analytics, targeting, and audience insights. In some way, we're all using it. The bigger question is: who decides what's right for the collective, and what does that even look like?

That's actually why I went to U.S. Congress to speak. There's a misconception that I'm against AI—I'm not. What I'm against is people's likeness being used without their consent. That's very different. I'm against the lack of clear rules and regulations—especially around how AI can distort our perception of what's real, impact mental health through opaque targeting, or use an artist's work, voice, or image for commercial gain without permission.

AI itself isn't the enemy. My concern is consent, transparency, and accountability.

AI itself isn't the enemy. My concern is consent, transparency, and accountability. Even when it comes to environmental impact, I've seen statistics that swing wildly in both directions. There isn't consistent, reliable information yet. And that uncertainty is part of the problem—we're moving very fast without a clear framework.

DLD: You've long spoken out about environmental responsibility. As music becomes increasingly driven by streaming and AI, how concerned are you about its environmental footprint?

Is there a real tension between innovation and sustainability in the industry today?

FKA twigs: If we're going to question the ethics and environmental impact of AI, we also have to look at streaming—at platforms like YouTube and Spotify, and even the tactics labels use to manufacture hits. We all have a digital footprint, and all of it can be scrutinized.

DLD: You have taken your concerns about AI beyond the music industry and even spoken before U.S. Congress about protecting artists' rights. What pushed you to step into that space, and what specifically were you hoping to change when it comes to the use of an artist's likeness in the age of AI?

FKA twigs: I went to Congress because I felt it was important to do my part. I was one of several people advocating for protections around artists' likenesses. The bill hasn't fully passed yet, but we were part of pausing the ability for someone's exact likeness to be used without consent in things like biopics, films, or music.

For example, without regulation, someone could theoretically recreate Marilyn Monroe with AI and make her star in a film about her own life—one that isn't true. You could rewrite history, invent narratives, even falsely portray someone as a criminal, all using their exact face and voice. When an actor plays a real person, we understand it's an interpretation. There's a layer of discernment. But if it's someone's precise likeness, it becomes much harder to separate fact from fiction. That's where it gets dangerous. At the same time, AI in itself isn't new. It's been used in many of our favorite films for years. The difference now is that it's accessible to the public.

DLD: Shifting away from AI for a moment: what does the album format mean to you today, in an era of Spotify and streaming, where music is often consumed in a fragmented, track-by-track way?

FKA twigs: I'm not here to judge—if people prefer listening to singles or putting together their own mixtapes, that's completely fine. Personally, though, I'm a bit of a purist. I like experiencing a whole album because I see it as the full statement, the complete expression of an artist's vision.

Of course, some artists can make an incredibly powerful statement in just a minute or two. Even in my generation, there are two-minute songs that feel perfectly complete and concise. That's just not my medium. For me, my work exists best when it's experienced as a whole. When it's fragmented, I feel it loses its impact and doesn't get to show its full depth.

DLD: Most people first got to know you through your art, but over time—from the early EPs to the albums—it feels like we're getting to know you more personally. 'Eusexua' and 'Afterglow' feel especially intimate, even though they're more electronic than your earlier work. Have you thought about that tension?

FKA twigs: It hasn't really been a conscious shift. "Afterglow" felt very playful to me—I made it quickly, and there's something spontaneous and revealing in that. "Eusexua," though, isn't really about me. It's more about community about being part of something bigger, a kind of leveling.

I'm not a piece of art; I'm just a person. And it's nice when people see me that way, because otherwise it can feel like too much pressure. That tension is interesting, but it hasn't been something I've deliberately tried to create.

DLD: You've talked a lot about the album as a complete artistic statement. Are there particular artists or records—past or present—that you think achieve that perfectly, where every track contributes to a cohesive, unforgettable work?

FKA twigs: When it comes to incredible work, there are so many examples. Contemporary artists like Feist create absolutely stunning bodies of work. Kate Bush, Prince, OutKast, Erykah Badu, and Jill Scott have all made some of the greatest records of all time. "Who is Jill Scott?" is an amazing album, a perfect blend of neo-soul, jazz, R&B, and spoken word, with her incredible voice. Going further back, British artists like Omar put out unforgettable music. Even Ariana Grande around the "Thank U, Next" era crafted thoughtfully conceived records. Across genres, from Enya to others, there's so much inspiring work that shows the power of the full listening experience.

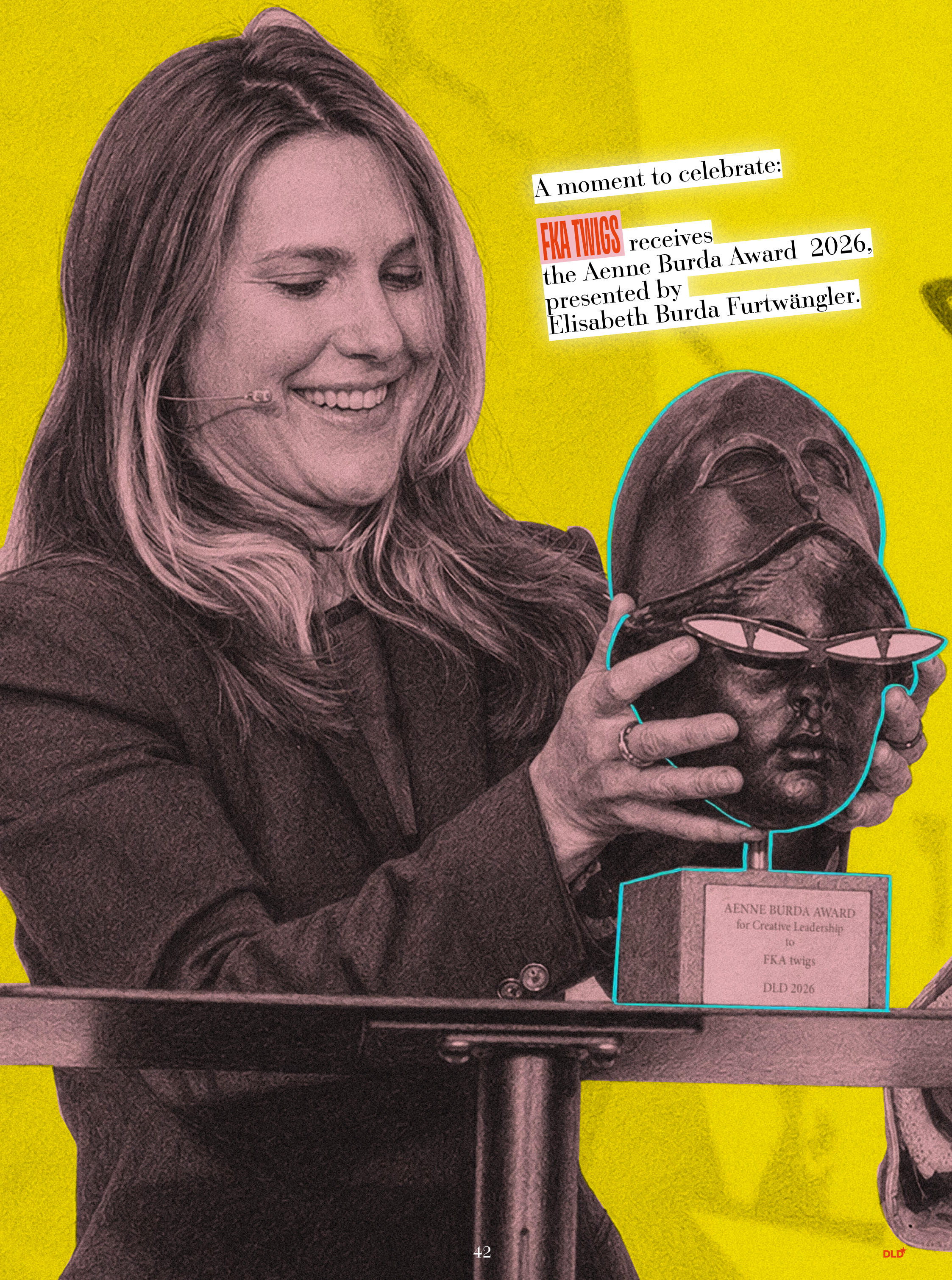
DLD: Your talk with Mumi Haiati at DLD felt both authentic and unique—what was it like being there?

FKA twigs: I loved the experience at DLD! It's really well-curated and organized chaos. It's not chaotic though. It's amazing. For me, it all comes together in the end. It's a very deliberate process that leads to an amazing experience. ●

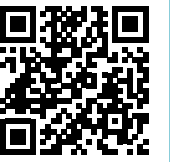
FKA twigs is a 2026 GRAMMY-winning, multi-disciplinary icon: a singer-songwriter, producer, dancer-choreographer, visual artist, actor, and fashion visionary whose cultural footprint spans music, performance, film, and design. Emerging from London's underground art and club scene, she redefined avant-pop with her debut EP and breakthrough album LP1 (2014), establishing herself as a singular creative force who writes, directs, and physically embodies her work.

A moment to celebrate:

FKA TWIGS receives
the Aenne Burda Award 2026,
presented by
Elisabeth Burda Furtwängler.





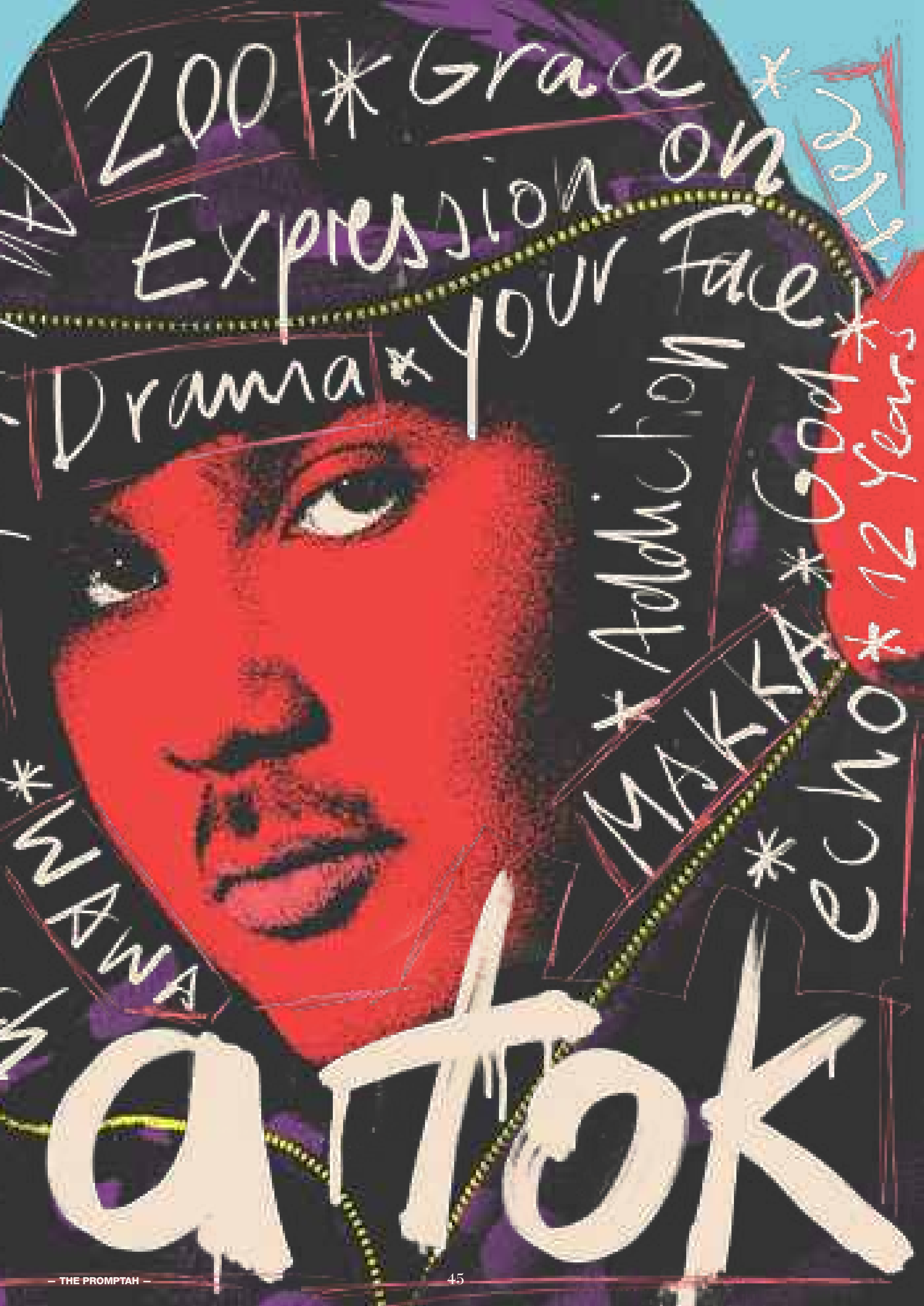


Hans Ulrich Obrist had been
desperate to meet him.
DLD made it possible.

Music Producer
& DJ

MECCA

*modvibes
Must
Jams
Bor



200 * Grace

Expression on

Drama * your Face

Addiction

Good

12 years

echo

OK

A W A

Steffi's ESSENTIALS

(follow her around the world)



Lullaby – The Cure

Cool Cat – Queen

Slippery People – Talking Heads Walking

On The Moon – The Police

If You Want Me to Stay – Sly & The Family

Stone Baltimore – Nina Simone



Come Together – The Brothers Johnson

50 Ways to Leave Your Lover – Paul Simon

Melody – The Rolling Stones

Inspiration Information – Shuggie Otis

Im 80. Stockwerk – Hildegard Knef

Summer in the City – Quincy Jones

On My Way in L.A. – Phil Carmen



Tigran's ESSENTIALS

(a guide through purple music)



Dear Mr. Man – Prince

Sign 'O' The Times – Nina Simone



How Come U Don't Call Me Anymore – Alicia Keys

Controversy – Hefner

Love, Love, Love – 94 East

The Glamorous Life – Shiela E.

Gigolos Get Lonely Too – The Time



I Feel for You – Chaka Khan

Mother Popcorn, Pt. 1 – James Brown

Nothing Compares 2 U – Sinéad O'Connor

Nothing Compares 2 U – Prince, Rosie Gaines

Mahogany Brown – Moodymann

I Wish U Heaven – Prince



3 DLD* ESSEN

DLD Music School
ESSENTIALS

(dipping into club and electronica)



Music People—*Moodymann*

Transition Ears—*Angel Bat Dawid*



Me and My Ego—*Marc Moulin*

Acid—*Ray Barretto*

Dream Dancer—*Joseph Malik, David Donelly*

Nightclubbing—*Grace Jones*



In the Place I Sit—*Loidis*

Ghetto Laureate—*RobJamWeb*



Caught in the Act—*Double Beat*

Moyege—*Mark Ernestus*

Recat—*Ricardo Villalobos, Max Loderbauer*

Inspiration & Light—*Universal Principles*

Peculiar—*Vanessa Daou*



TIAL PLAYLISTS



CLUBS, Sounds & The Quest For Common Grounds

By Tigran von Lutitz

Going to your local battle ground, should feel like a dance.
Going to your local under ground, might feel like a floor.
Going to your local open ground, does feel like a club.

Wilderness all around. Party DJs filmed at drop,
Or not, depending on the rules. They say it at the door.
Be aware! Who got the keys to the club?

Three routes through the jungle.
First, tech. TECH NO? No, TECH. TOOL!

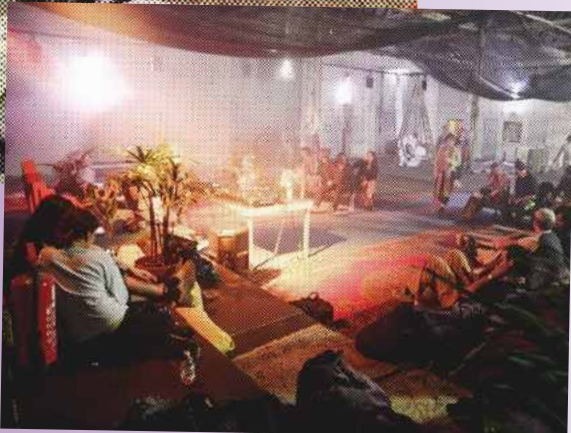
Ever spinning, humming, drumming,
night after night gathered around the fire,
now burned the record and fried the wire.



DLD Music School @Haus der Kunst, May 2, 2025

Tech tool giving access to craft.
Craft, then, access to moves.
Der SYNC Button steckt
mit dem Pitch Rider
unter einer Decke.

Jockey Tech: The SYNC button makes more easy.
"Moving mammals, more tools, means more art,
means more moves. Yay." SYNC Button, Pitch Rider,
both tech, both tool. Which one right, which one wrong?



DLD Music School @Haus der Visionäre, July 30, 2025

Jockey, jockey?
Jockey occupied:
Media Tech.
fight for reach,
fight for photo,
fight for platform.
Everyone perform,
everyone invited!



DLD Music School @Public Possession

The Under Ground hates all that stuff!
Too many DJs! Too much hype!
The Floor is empty right now. WHY?
COVID! MONEY! WAR! PEOPLE,
POWER, DJS! WAY TOO MANY DJS!



DLD Music School @DLD Conference, Jan 15–17, 2026



DLD Music School



Everything was better, back when everything was worse.
Apparently. When the only thing we had were two turntables
and just the real nerds could become DJs. Yeah, that was cool!
The cool DJ and HIS craft. But: “Der Feind des Guten ist das Bessere.”
Excuse me Germans, translate to:

Everybody, well. Everybody, come.
Everybody, play. Everybody, dance.

DU DU DU. Clap your hands! Clap your hands!

Now, there is a place that has it all. Apparently.
Tech, Riedl. Taste, Ernestus. Club, goooood!
And Wuppertal? Even. Better. Since.
“The Next Berlin!” Apparently.

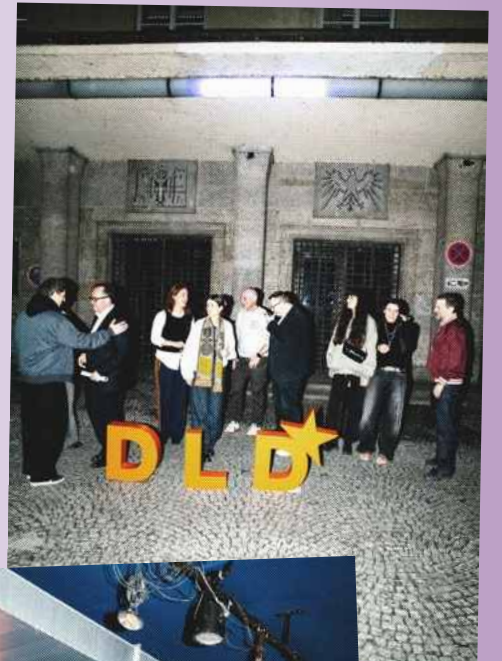
The Best Club in Europe.
The Future of Clubbing.
Made by Mittelstand.
Who would have thought ...

Well if you know, you know.
“Open Ground,” well now you know.

Fact-checking trends or getting fact-checked by trends.
DLD tends to keep up with the music and school.

Taking a sample, any example
XoXo @RadioSpaceAnDance.
Cuz who am I to judge anyway?

DLD Music School @Legal Club, Jan 17, 2026



DLD Music School @Blitz Club, March 6, 2026



Become HUMBLE and STAY CURIOUS

As markets converge and competition intensifies, the old model of top-down design leadership is running out of road. Oliver Heilmer, Head of Design at BMW Group, speaks with Stanford's Amy Wilkinson about the structural and cultural changes driving the Neue Klasse—and what it really takes to lead a creative organisation through transformation.



Amy Wilkinson is CEO and founder of Ingenuity, Lecturer in Management at Stanford Graduate School of Business and author of *The Creator's Code: The Six Essential Skills of Extraordinary Entrepreneurs*. Wilkinson's career spans leadership roles with McKinsey & Company and JP Morgan and as founder of Alegre, a cross-border export company.

Amy Wilkinson

As innovation accelerates and markets are increasingly interconnected, leadership is changing, organizations are changing. The theme of the conference is "It's gonna be wild." How is your organization wild in this moment?

Oliver Heilmer

In our company, I think, we do have an external perspective on that question and an internal one. Internally for BMW, we're reinventing the entire BMW family. It started with the iX3, the BMW, the Neue Klasse. We've introduced it but we're still busy with the rollout.

Externally, we see that the competition is getting stronger and stronger in the automotive industry. You can read that everywhere. I don't see it just in a negative way, because normally competition is a powerful enabler of innovation.

What we see as well is a global shift in terms of customer expectations. Especially in markets like China, you see that the customers are at least 20 years younger than in the rest of the world. And that has an implication towards their expectations.

Amy Wilkinson

We're looking at a leadership mindset shift, especially as it changes from less control to more empowerment, fewer hierarchies and stronger networks. How do you see this friction as a designer, especially from sequential to more collaborative?

Oliver Heilmer

Our structure, normally, is that we have centers of competencies: seats, dashboards, slides, whatever. But it's often slow, and sometimes we're going to get different goals, different targets.

For example, if two centers of competence are not talking to each other. Aerodynamics might say, "Do a nice, smooth roof line, lower it as much as possible." Another goal comes from ergonomics, obviously. In the second seat row, you need enough headroom. So we're going to get two lines, and then we say, "Okay, what are we going to do?"

That takes time. And that came from the functional orientation rather than from the customer orientation. With Neue Klasse, we realized that this way of working would no longer allow us to achieve our goals in the future.

Neue Klasse is not just about new cars. Internally, it was a shift in mindset. We said, "Let's work cross-functionally." We changed the game together with Mike Reichelt, the leader of the cross-functional team. That meant that we had a common workspace, and many employees from each department were applying to be part of that journey. So two things happened. First of all, you got the best talent because people were really intrinsically motivated, and secondly, everyone was able to understand each other's problems. That led to way more speed and a better outcome.

It worked pretty well, and it's still our goal in the future. But as you can imagine, in an organization that's been growing over the past 100 years, this is a big change, causing friction as well, to introduce such a different way of collaboration.

Amy Wilkinson

How would you describe the leadership skills, the mindset needed to make this tangible?

Oliver Heilmer

First of all, I think, you need to provide context and clarify the purpose. And secondly, you need to create something like an artifact, something that everyone is able to understand, even if you're speaking different languages.

In terms of purpose, that's what we did. I can remember, normally, you would start with, say, a section of a car and you'd say, "That's the proportion and these will be the surfaces."

In one project we did it differently. We created a movie that was just priming, without any design. Just to let the audience feel what we wanted to achieve, as a customer. And we weren't sure if it would work—but it did. And then the rest was way easier.

Oliver Heilmer is Head of Design for BMW Compact Class, Neue Klasse, and BMW M. His work focuses on dynamic, intelligent and confident automotive design. He began his career in 2000 within the Advanced Design team at BMW in Munich and was appointed Head of Interior Design in 2013 before moving to Los Angeles to serve as President of Designworks in Los Angeles. As Head of MINI Design, from 2017-2024, Oliver oversaw the introduction of a completely new range of MINI models.

Amy Wilkinson

What did you do with the movie?

Oliver Heilmer

It was a primer in terms of, "That's how the car should feel." Afterwards we said, "For that reason, we need this and this and this." One example was: We have this panoramic vision in our new models. It started, actually, with a show car a couple of years ago where we said, "Imagine if the information was right in front of you on the windscreen?"

But we didn't have any technological solution back then. Four or five years ago, it started again, where someone just was putting, I think, an iPhone to the windscreen. I said, "What if we're going to do something like that?" And from that, we did a test rig.

At that moment, we didn't convince the audience. Not yet. Then we said, "Let's build a car to experience this." And BMW Group's board of management was able to test drive then. Not nice, not beautiful, just to understand the function. That was the moment where everyone understood, "Okay, this is the future for us in the interiors."

Amy Wilkinson

At Stanford's Graduate School of Business, we are constantly trying to figure out how teaching changes, how leadership changes, how groups change—especially in the age of AI.

And you mentioned something really vital, which is asking questions, asking better questions, critical thinking. Please tell us more about this leadership skill set for this era of transition.

Oliver Heilmer

I would say it's about how we're asking questions. We are more enablers rather than giving a certain direction. Take changing the mindset of a team. The first thing is, you need to provide a space where everyone can speak openly and safely. And then you need to ask the right questions. I remember a task like: "What will the interior of a car look like in 2035?" Based on my knowledge, I could have told the team, "Come up with an interior that has a retractable steering wheel." But then you're getting a specific result, right? So I asked a question instead: "If you're sitting there for three or four hours, what do you need?" And the outcome was entirely different, with ideas that we didn't expect.

So, you need to become humble, and you need to stay curious as well as being a part of the team. That's important, that you're part of the team, part of the solution, not just giving directions.

Amy Wilkinson

What happens when you have a setback or something doesn't go right in this new context?

Oliver Heilmer

I try to come back to the initial purpose, the initial question. Did we answer that question or not? And that's another thing: Failure is something that no one wants to hear about, but this doesn't work at all for a creative team. Not at all. You need to stand up and learn from your failures.

Amy Wilkinson

There's some cutting edge research out of Stanford which shows that in diverse groups, teams often report that it feels awkward and slow; they feel inefficient, it's difficult to understand people with different backgrounds. But what you see is that problem solving goes up. So while teams report that it's inefficient, their outcomes improve quite a lot. The pain is worth the gain. That's the bottom line of that collaboration.

Now, let me ask you: What do leaders need to unlearn? What's on the "don't do" list in this new era of leadership?

Oliver Heilmer

I think you really need to lead by curiosity. You need to turn down your ego, you need to become way more humble. Don't assume that you know better than your team because of the years of knowledge you bring. That's the most important thing.

Amy Wilkinson

What is a practice that leaders can take away and try next week to be more effective?

Oliver Heilmer

Maybe two things I practice. Don't read any emails during the day, because then you remain focused. And then something a colleague always says: "Do something impossible, call people on the phone!"

Because sometimes you have different channels, like emails and chats, and you just miss something. I get these questions, "Did you read my Teams message?" And I say, "I didn't even know that I have this tool. What's on your mind?" — "It was urgent."

So why don't you call? It's pretty simple, just do it! ●



IT'S A WIN-WIN, Making Us More Sovereign

KATJA SPECK

Digital strategist **KATJA SPECK** is Chief Growth Officer and Managing Director of FinTech VisualVest, Union Investment Group and a supervisory board member of Open-Xchange. Too many companies ignore the potential of open-source software, she argues, and explains how collaboration on alternative software solutions could also strengthen Europe's digital independence.

DLD: What's the trick to making open-source solutions more successful than in the past?

Katja Speck: There's a bit of a misconception that open-source software is made by dreamers and romantics, the idealists of the Internet. That's not what it is about. We should see it as a way to foster competition and offer alternatives. Open-source succeeded because transparent collaboration between smart people produces exceptional quality. Linux, Git, Python, and the entire web stack are proof of that.

DLD: Open-source software has a reputation of being more geeky, less user friendly.

KS: Admittedly, what we still lack in some European Software is good user-experience design. That's something to continue investing in. But what many open-source tools already offer that proprietary alternatives don't is full data sovereignty, no vendor lock-in, and transparency about how your data is handled. For users who value privacy and control, that's a compelling trade-off.

DLD: Should companies embrace open-source software as an opportunity? Take the freely available code and then develop their own solutions on top?

KS: At VisualVest, our strategy from day one has been open-source first. Our platform, our key stack, our infrastructure is based on open-source solutions. **Everything that's relevant to security is not only open-source first but open-source only. That means, it's under our control, it's very stable.** We recently had an independent audit done, and we passed with fly-

ing colors, confirming what we already knew: relying on open-source not only works, it gives us a strategic advantage. We have full control over customization and further development, we're not dependent on proprietary systems or the roadmaps of large vendors.

That matters, because as part of a larger co-operation, our platform has become critical infrastructure, handling volumes at a scale that would not be possible without the stability and control it provides.

DLD: You're also a board member of Open-Xchange, a leading—but little-known—provider of cloud services.

We have great products here in Europe, yet we keep supporting U.S. companies.

KS: The company is one of Europe's hidden champions. They're based in Cologne, have been around for almost 20 years and still keep growing. They are one of the largest e-mail providers in the world, actually, they are equipping email providers around the world with their open-source email solution. But also organizations in the public sector. They are an essential part of openDesk, a well-known product suite for all public sector organizations.

DLD: Many people are looking for alternatives to Gmail, Outlook and other U.S. ser-

vices. Why do companies like Open-Xchange prefer to remain in the background?

KS: In the case of OX, there are also historical reasons for it, as the company was providing software as a whitelabel solution to the market. Furthermore, to build a strong brand requires more than just a good product. Usually, huge investments in sales and marketing are to be made. In the past, real big investments in open-source companies did not happen for various reasons. This may change now as the concept of open-source and the business model behind it are more mature and proven. So, the risk to invest is better manageable. We have great products here in Europe, yet we keep supporting U.S. companies. To be clear, I like those companies. I know a lot of people working at Google and Microsoft. Great people, great products. But unfortunately, if there is a presidential order or a court order, our privacy and security may be at stake. When we talk about sovereignty, this is an important aspect to keep in mind.

DLD: Such concerns have prompted government agencies in some German states, such as Thuringia and Schleswig-Holstein, to abandon U.S. services in favor of open-source solutions.

KS: Both Thuringia and Schleswig-Holstein have decided to use Open-Xchange as their email service—and so has the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Every provider migration requires thorough planning to be successful. But what's no longer in question is whether such a change is doable—it is, and it's both commercially and strategically viable. **The revenue stays within the European Union, and these com-**

panies can continue to grow and scale. It's a win-win, making us more sovereign.

DLD: Critics say this strategy would lead to a new age of protectionism.

KS: We don't need a closed-shop world. We want to have an interoperable world. But if we depend on providers that are predominantly based in one region of the world, and are operating under the law of a country we can't necessarily trust anymore, then we must make sure that we have alternatives, that we can be independent and strong.

It's not about building another silo or two. It's about open systems, open standards. What's powerful about open-source is, that it keeps all players honest. If something doesn't work, you always have the option to do it differently. Open standards and open APIs mean everything can be replaced if needed. But usually it isn't, because all parties understand their responsibilities. That's what creates real competition, gives customers flexibility, and allows new players to enter the market. I see the open-source model as an opportunity for Europe—one that makes Europe stronger because we'll be less dependent on others. ●

Open-source solutions have long been popular for specific business applications—but now is the time to widen their appeal to a broader audience, **Katja Speck** argues. The benefits are plentiful for companies as well as individuals and society.





BurdaPrincipal Investments

2015

- Christian Teichmann and Martin Weiss join Burda



- First Investments

BAUBLEBAR *Vinted*

2016

- Official BPI Launch
- Opening of Singapore Office
- Opening of London Office

2017

Portfolio Conference Aying, Germany

Bloom & Wild Group



2018

CARSOME
SKILLSHARE
M.G E M I

2022

Expansion to Australia



2021



2020

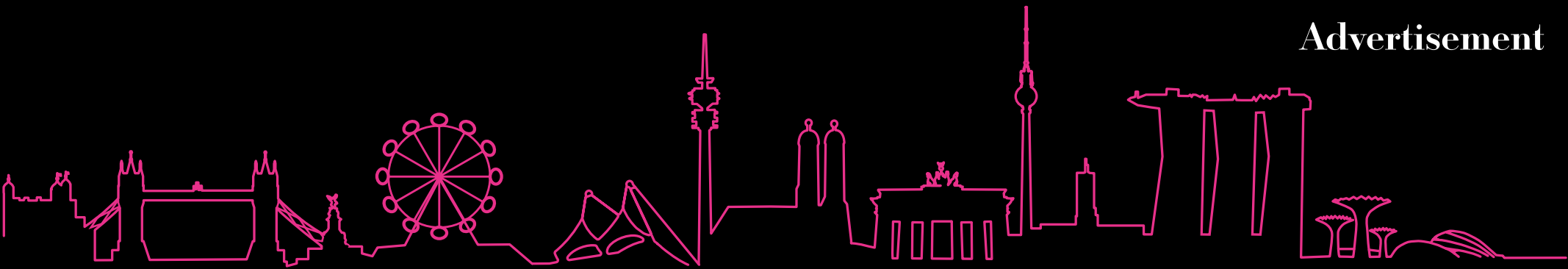


2019



- Opening of Berlin Office
- New BPI Munich Office
- Portfolio Conference Tegernsee, Germany

DLD Singapore



2023

- Release of first Promptah
- New Singapore office
- New London office



ALEPH ALPHA



MODJO



2024

Portfolio Conference Munich,
Germany



Stegra



2026

- Portfolio Conference
Garmisch, Germany
- Launch of Gaming Program
Burda GP in cooperation with
Unternehmer TUM Venture Labs

BURDA



Powered by



VENTURE
LABS

2025



- Middle East Expansion

REVIBE

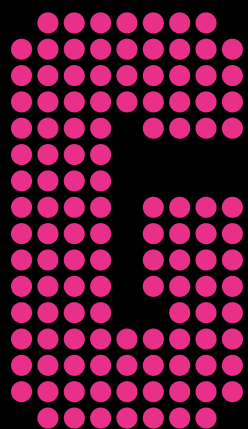
KALEIDOSCOPE

△ AMBOSS

buycycle.

imperia

BURDA

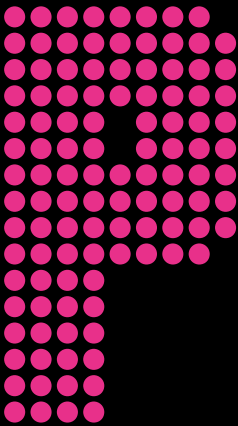


Gaming

EMPOWERMENT
OF GAMING

BurdaGP is a European gaming incubator and venture program by Burda and Burda Principal Investments, in close collaboration with TUM Venture Labs Software & AI.

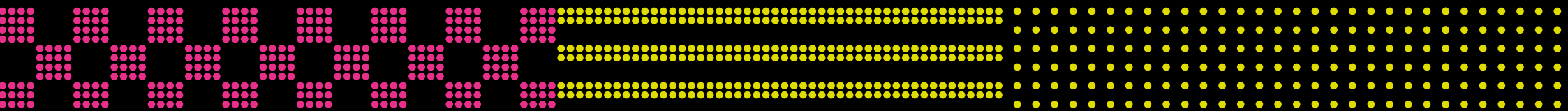
We support founders building the next generation of games, creator tools, AI technologies, platforms and immersive experiences — from early ideas to investment readiness.



Powered by



Program



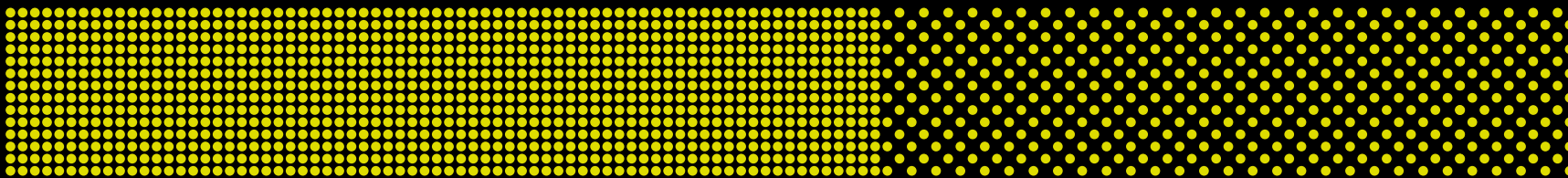
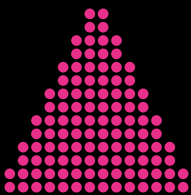
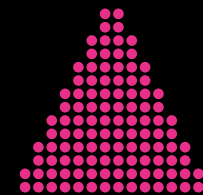
GET THE FUTURE

IN EUROPE



APPLY. BUILD. SCALE. ↓ → ↑ ←

Scan to learn more about the three entry gates
into the gaming program



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GAME ON.

This September, DLD lands in Valencia.

As SailGP electrifies the marina, we're launching DLD Sports—a new DLD gathering exploring where sport collides with technology, capital, culture, and human potential.

DLD Sports	
September 5, 2026	
Valencia	
Base 2	La Marina

DLD
SPORTS

New terrain. New players. Unexpected conversations.

»Immer, wenn sich aus Teilen komplexe neue Strukturen ergeben, muss man für Neues gewappnet sein.
Ein Schwarm ist anders als eine bloße Gruppe Vögel. Ein Stau hat eigene Eigenschaften als nur eine Anzahl von Autos.«

Sibylle Anderl



Die Kulturzeitschrift *Kursbuch* ist seit ihrer Gründung 1965 einer der wichtigsten kritischen Begleiter der bundesdeutschen Öffentlichkeit.

*Herausgegeben von Sibylle Anderl, Peter Felixberger, Armin Nassehi
Erscheint viermal jährlich. Ab 4. Juni überall im Handel erhältlich.*

Jeden Montag neu: DER MONTAGSBLOCK auf kursbuch.online



DLD★