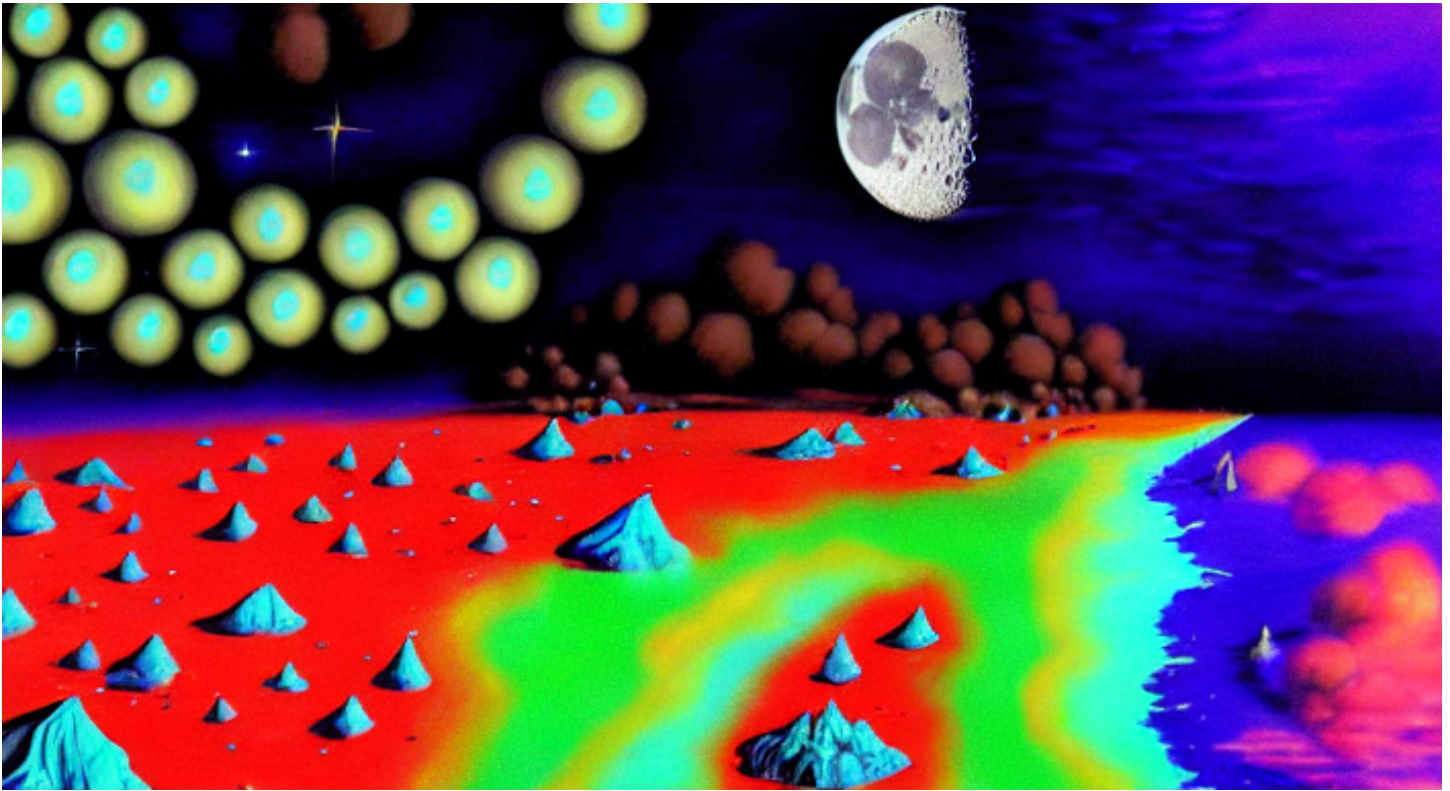# EMILY GREENBERG
NEURAL NET DREAMS

March 13-17, 2023

Main Gallery
Visual Arts Facility
9500 Gilman Drive
La Jolla, CA 92093

Gallery hours: M-F 10 am - 5 pm and by appointment
Closing reception: 3/17 @ 5-7 pm

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NEURAL NET DREAM OF JULY 23-24, 1895

In the summer of 1895, Freud had a dream about a former patient, now known as "Irma's Injection," that helped him understand the role of the unconscious in dreaming. According to Freud, our unconscious constructs dreams to express our deepest wishes and then distorts those expressions to protect us. By this logic, a dream is therefore a form of wish fulfillment and suppression.

Although Freud's theories have long since been rejected, they provide a useful framework for thinking about why dreams and the unconscious are so frequently invoked to describe artificial neural networks and their psychedelic visualizations. In the same way that one never fully understands a dream's latent content, artificial neural network architects do not fully fully understand the mechanisms of deep learning. Does this lack of understanding act as a form of dream distortion, shielding us from our deepest wishes? When we build technologies that "dream," what wishes are we trying to fulfill, and why must we protect ourselves from fully expressing them? Artificial neural networks are modeled after our own and trained on the internet of images we have produced. Given that these models "see" with the same biases of mainstream culture, what are so-called "neural net dreams" telling us about our own dreams and unconscious desires?

Created using Stable Diffusion Deforum, *NEURAL NET DREAM OF JULY 23-24, 1895* illustrates "Irma's Injection" by reflecting our own vibrant yet nightmarish images back at us.
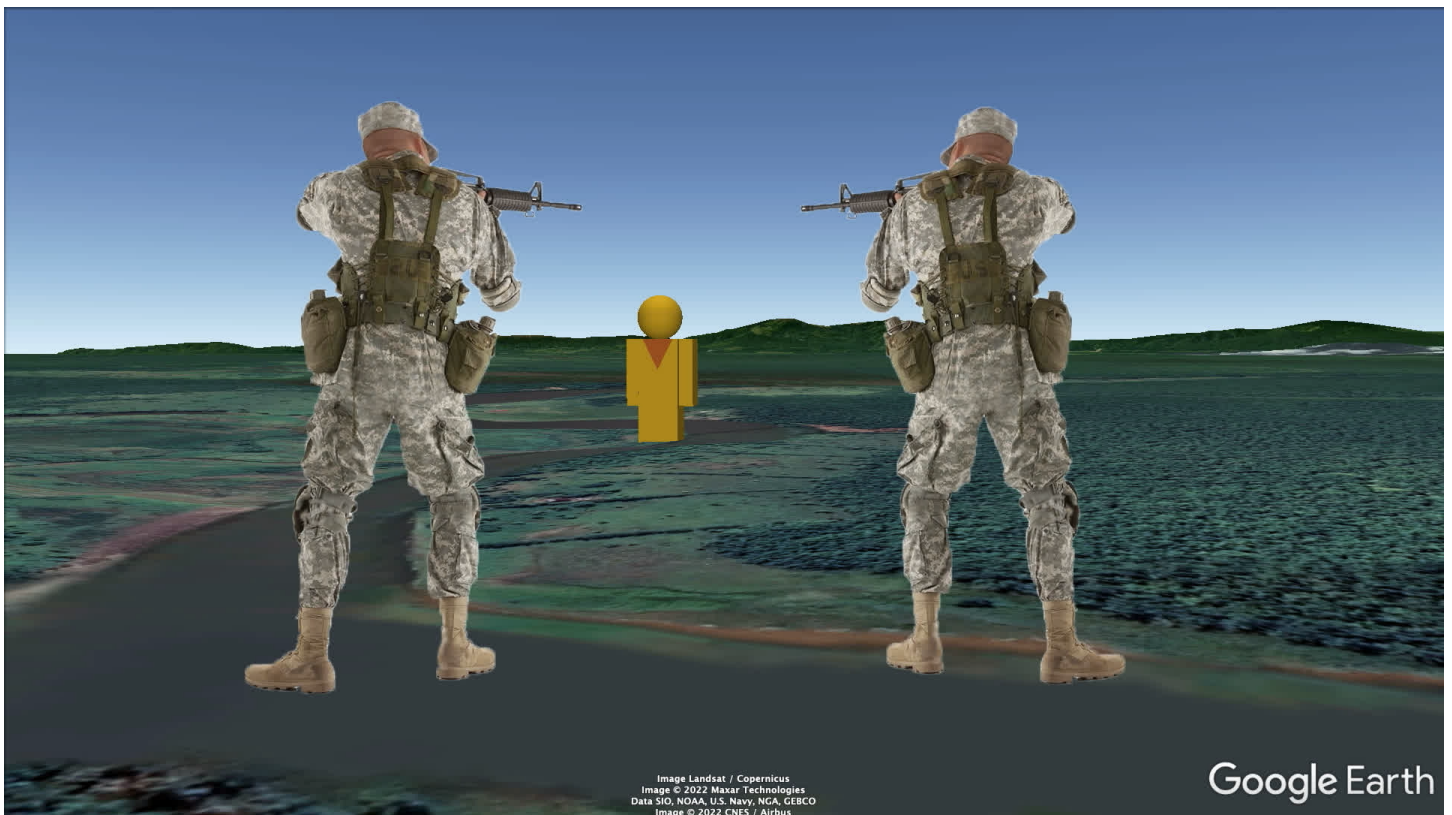
ON EXACTITUDE IN SCIENCE (GRID)

Filmed almost entirely in Google Earth, *ON EXACTITUDE IN SCIENCE* is a three-part video work melding fact and fiction, archive and allegory into a speculative documentary about the rise of digital mapmaking among technology companies.

The series is named after Jorge Luis Borges's famed short story about an empire's failed attempt to build a perfect 1:1 map and picks up where the story ended. A new, tech-savvy generation stumbles upon the map's ruins and begins piecing them back together, confident they can rebuild and even improve upon the perfect map without also recreating the empire. Narrated by an AI speech synthesizer whose style and tone match that of Borges's fictional chronicler, the video revives the classic map-territory fable for the digital age.

Newly arranged as a single video split across four screens, this latest iteration of the work invites viewers to contemplate the arbitrary borders and grids depicted in the film.
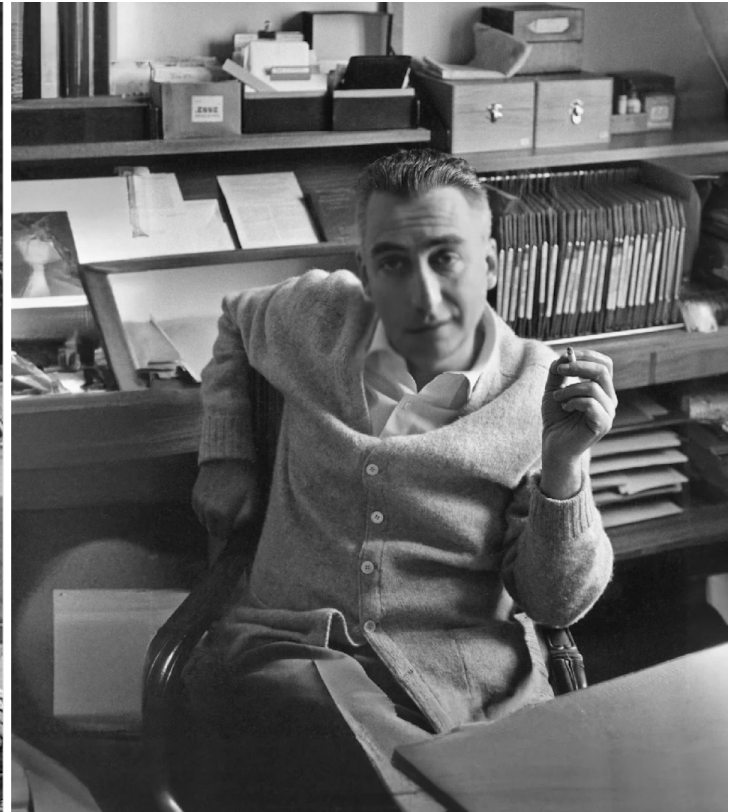
THE SECOND DEATH OF THE AUTHOR

In 1967, the literary critic Roland Barthes famously declared that the author was dead ("The Death of the Author"). For Barthes and other critics like William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, the author's biography and intentions were irrelevant to textual interpretation, especially because the author might not even know his or her intent or could have changing or multiple intents ("The Intentional Fallacy," 1946). The reader or the broader culture were the real writers while the author was just a channel, cipher, or collection point. Later criticism has also recognized the idea of text as remix and that authorship can be multiple and collaborative.

Over the last few years, as large language models have grown more sophisticated and accessible, new questions have arisen about authorship in the age of artificial intelligence. When a large language model composes a text, who is the author? The person prompting the model, the architects of the model, the model itself, or the authors of the training texts? How do we understand personal style when a large language model can so easily mimic different voices? What does it mean to co-write with a non-living entity? If Roland Barthes were alive today, what would he have to say about all this?

THE SECOND DEATH OF THE AUTHOR explores these questions and many more in a video essay combining animated photographs of Barthes with a text collaboratively composed by the artist, GPT-3, and ChatGPT with altered excerpts from Barthes's original essay and *Camera Lucida* (1980).

THANKS!

Memo Akten
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Brett Stalbaum
Justin Tuerk
Paolo Zuniga

Checklist

1

Neural Net Dream of July 23-24, 1895
8 minutes, 35 seconds
Single channel projection, color, sound

2

On Exactitude in Science (grid),
14 minutes, 58 seconds
Four channel video wall, color, sound

3

The Second Death of the Author
20 minutes, 4 seconds
Two channel video on framed TVs,
black and white, sound