

“TRAINING HUMANS SYMPOSIUM”, AN EVENT RELATED TO THE EXHIBITION BY KATE CRAWFORD AND TREVOR PAGLEN AT OSSERVATORIO FONDAZIONE PRADA IN MILAN ON 26 OCTOBER 2019

Milan, 18 October 2019 – Fondazione Prada will present a symposium engaging with the “Training Humans” exhibition at its Osservatorio venue on 26 October 2019 from 2.30 to 6 pm. The speakers will include Prof. Stephanie Dick (University of Pennsylvania), Prof. Eden Medina (MIT), Prof. Jacob Gaboury (University of California, Berkeley), along with the exhibition curators Kate Crawford, AI researcher and professor, and Trevor Paglen, artist and researcher. The symposium is an event open to the public upon booking via email (traininghumans@fondazioneprada.org) and will be live streamed on Fondazione Prada’s Instagram account.

On view until 24 February, “Training Humans” is the first major photography show devoted to training images, collections of photos used by scientists to train artificial intelligence (AI) systems in how to “see” and categorize the world. The project explores how humans are represented, interpreted and codified through training datasets, and how technological systems harvest, label and use this material. As the classifications of humans by AI systems becomes more invasive and complex, their biases and politics become apparent. Within computer vision and AI systems, forms of measurement easily – but surreptitiously – turn into moral judgments.

“Training Humans Symposium” will feature for the first time a dynamic collective of researchers and artists, putting the ideas in the exhibit in conversation with their path-breaking work to examine questions such as: where are the boundaries between science, history, politics, prejudice and ideology in artificial intelligence? And who has the power to build and benefit from these systems?

Over the course of the afternoon, Prof. Stephanie Dick will situate the development of facial recognition in its historical context, highlighting the problematic development of biased standards and subsequent use in early policing database systems in New York State. Prof. Eden Medina will engage with how the creation, collection, and analysis of data shapes the decisions that computer systems make, the truths they produce, and the harms that can result, through a study of the use of computer-based forensics to identify the remains of those killed by the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. Prof. Jacob Gaboury will consider the implications of the use of training data as a standardizing object, using the speech recognition text Please Call Stella. Finally, the event will close with a keynote by Kate Crawford and Trevor Paglen that explicates how training images intervene in the work of AI systems, and what is at stake in how they harvest, label, and use images.

Press contacts

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Information for the public

The symposium will take place on Saturday 26 October 2019 from 2.30 to 6 pm at Osservatorio in Milan. Entrance is free upon booking. The number of available seats is limited.

To request one seat, send an email with your name and surname to: traininghumans@fondazioneprada.org.
The registration will be accepted upon seats availability.

Biographical notes

Stephanie Dick joined the faculty of the Department of History and Sociology of Science at the University of Pennsylvania in the Fall of 2017. Prior to that she was a Junior Fellow at the Harvard Society of Fellows, and she completed her PhD in History of Science at Harvard University in 2015. She is a historian of computing and mathematics, primarily in the twentieth century United States. Her first book project explores early attempts to automate proof and new formulations of mathematical reasoning and knowledge that were developed in tandem with them. This book offers a historical answer to the question – ‘what is thinking if a computer?’. By way of answer, she recovers and reconstructs how different communities theorized human cognitive faculties with automation in mind. She is also working on the history of NYSIIS, the New York State Identification and Intelligence System, which was one of the first efforts to introduce computing to American law enforcement and to mobilize automated recognition systems for faces, license plates, and finger prints for policing. She has also published on the history of Microsoft Windows, in particular one of its most infamous failures as a window into the experience of modern computing, and she is also working on a book length study of how computer science became an academic discipline.

Eden Medina is Associate Professor of Science, Technology, and Society at MIT. Her work uses technology as a means to understand historical processes and she combines history, science and technology studies, and Latin American studies in her writings. Her current book project, *Bones and Lives: Making and Unmaking Truth After Dictatorship* (Duke University Press, under contract), studies how nations use science and technology to address histories

of dictatorship and state violence and how science and technology intertwine with processes of truth, justice, and repair. More broadly her research studies the history of science and technology in Latin America and the ways that political projects shape, and are shaped by, technologies such as computers. Medina is the author of *Cybernetic Revolutionaries: Technology and Politics in Allende's Chile* (MIT Press, 2011), which won the Edelstein Prize for outstanding book in the history of technology, the Computer History Museum Prize for outstanding book in the history of computing, and the Book Prize of the Recent History and Memory Section (honorable mention) of the Latin American Studies Association. She holds an undergraduate degree in electrical engineering from Princeton University, a Master in Studies of Law from Yale Law School, and a Ph.D. in the history and social study of science and technology from the MIT HASTS Program.

Jacob Gaboury is an Assistant Professor of Film & Media at the University of California, Berkeley. His work engages the history and theory of digital media, with a focus on digital image technologies alongside queer and feminist approaches to the study of science and technology. He has held numerous fellowships from institutions across the humanities, sciences, and the arts, including the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, the Charles Babbage Institute, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, the Association of Computing Machinery, the Smithsonian Institute, and the Social Science Research Council; and his work has appeared in a range of popular and academic publications, including *Grey Room*, *Women & Performance*, the *Journal of Visual Culture*, *Rhizome*, *Art Papers*, and *Camera Obscura*. His first book - titled *Image Objects: An Archaeology of Computer Graphics* - is forthcoming from MIT Press.

Kate Crawford is a widely published researcher and professor who has spent 15 years studying the social and political implications of artificial intelligence. Her work resituates the understanding of artificial intelligence in a wider context of history, politics, labor, and the environment. Kate Crawford is a Distinguished Research Professor at New York University, where she co-founded and co-directs the AI Now Institute – the world's first institute dedicated to the broader impacts of AI. She is also a Principal Researcher at Microsoft Research, and is the inaugural Visiting Chair in AI and Justice at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris. Her research has appeared in *Nature*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, and *Harper's Magazine*. She has advised policy makers in the United Nations, the European Union, and the White House, and she has participated in AI policy processes for the French and German governments. In 2018, Kate was awarded the Richard von Weizsäcker Fellowship in Germany, and she currently serves on France's 3IA scientific advisory jury. Her installation work *Anatomy of an AI System*, with Vladan Joler, is part of this year's La Triennale di Milano. She has a new book called *Atlas of AI*, forthcoming with Yale University Press (2020).

Trevor Paglen is an artist whose work spans image-making, sculpture, investigative journalism, writing, engineering, and numerous other disciplines. Among his chief concerns

are learning how to see the historical moment we live in and developing the means to imagine alternative futures. Trevor Paglen's work is included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Smithsonian American Art Museum; the Whitney Museum of American Art; Berkeley Art Museum; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; Victoria and Albert Museum; and the Nevada Museum of Art. He has launched an artwork into distant orbit around Earth in collaboration with Creative Time and MIT, contributed research and cinematography to the Academy Award-winning film *Citizenfour*, and created a radioactive public sculpture for the exclusion zone in Fukushima, Japan. He is the author of several books and numerous articles on subjects including experimental geography, state secrecy, military symbology, photography, and visuality. Paglen's work has been profiled in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Economist* and *Artforum*. He has received numerous awards, including the 2018 Nam June Paik Art Center Prize and the 2017 MacArthur Fellowship, among others. Paglen holds a B.A. from U.C. Berkeley, an MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago, and a Ph.D. in Geography from U.C. Berkeley.