Bygone Times in Real Time
Artificial intelligence uses social media content to unveil two centuries of world heritage

Credit: Daniela & Tonatiuh/EPFL+ECAL Lab

On the occasion of the Fête des Vignerons, the EPFL+ECAL Lab, the EPFL's Design Research Centre, joins forces with the Swiss Camera Museum in Vevey, the Archives of the RTS Swiss broadcasting corporation, the dedicated serie by notreHistoire.ch and the Confrérie des Vignerons to offer an unparalleled exploration of the world of images. Thanks to artificial intelligence, today's images, posted on social networks, awaken two centuries of world heritage. The public can discover and test this experimental installation at the Museum during the Fête.

As soon as you enter, the installation challenges certainties: the images found on social networks have become actual cards. They take on a material dimension in the visitor's hand. Placed on a lit plate, they trigger the display of a collection of old images on an immersive screen, taking viewers back to the 18th century. Good old photos witnessing bygone times have become digital. Visitors can watch them, scroll through them. A physical present, a digital past: the set-up questions our relationship to time, credibility and materiality.

The combination of these documents of very different origins is based on artificial intelligence – so-called deep learning techniques. But rather than restricting the results to users' expectations or targeted marketing purposes, as Internet recommendation algorithms usually do, the device aims to foster discovery to build bridges between past times and real time. To counter the obscurantism of algorithms, it reveals what the machine recognises in the images and therefore how it associates them. The user can actually understand how the installation allows us to go back to the origins of the Fête in 1797.

This work continues the exploration conducted by the EPFL+ECAL Lab for a decade on the enhancement of heritage: millions of documents are now digitised and saved, but how do you bring them back to life? How can they elicit interest beyond specialist circles? This endeavour is receiving worldwide attention at the start of this summer, as four EPFL+ECAL Lab projects are operating in prestigious venues: *Nina*, the vehicle travelling through the audiovisual heritage of the Montreux Jazz Festival, has taken centre stage at the Festival itself; *Archives in Motion* reveals the spectrum of the work of Roger Tallon, designer of the TGV among others, at the Musée des Arts décoratifs in Paris; *Chronogram* expresses 265 years of Swiss watchmaking in New York and, as of 18 July, *Bygone Times in Real Time* is unveiled at the Camera Museum in Vevey. This series of installations open to the general public has made it possible to develop scientific and practical knowledge thanks to the new design principles established by the EPFL+ECAL Lab. These findings have now reached international recognition, as they have been also published by the magazine Leonardo-MIT Press.

As with its other projects, the EPFL+ECAL Lab will turn to experts in interface psychology to observe the impact of *Bygone Times in Real Time*. The objective is to find out how this proposal may go beyond the attraction of fun and technical performance to generate new and sustainable practices. The resulting knowledge will help to determine how to enhance the cultural and social wealth tucked away in huge man-made databases.

EPFL+ECAL Lab

The EPFL+ECAL Lab is the design research centre of the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), founded in 2007 in collaboration with ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne. It aims to explore the potential of emerging technologies through design and addresses related challenges by combining artistic creativity, scientific knowledge and the ability to measure user perception. Working on concrete projects, the EPFL+ECAL Lab collaborates with numerous companies, museums and institutes. By harnessing skills in design, engineering, architecture and psychology, it creates disruptive concepts and turns them into functional prototypes.

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Swiss Camera Museum – Vevey

Located on the shores of Lake Geneva at the heart of "Vevey, the city of images", the Museum invites visitors to discover the history of photographers and photography, its inventors and its techniques through an exceptional collection of images and instruments.

Today we take scores of photographs using technological performances that we would not have even dreamed of at the end of the 20th century. But who remembers the heavy equipment of the pioneers who photographed the world on glass negatives?

With the invention of film, photography became the most effective and popular means of producing images which turned into a universal language. Without it, we would know neither cinema nor television, and science would often be blind without its help.

In a bold setting, where old architecture blends with the contemporary, displaying many audiovisual and interactive installations, this focal point dedicated to the image is an essential stop for every lover of photography.

Luc Debraine, Director
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Useful Information
Bygone Times in Real Time
18 July to 11 August 2019, from 11 am to 8 pm
Musée suisse de l'appareil photographique
Grande Place 99, Vevey

Free entrance

Press previews
Wednesday 17 July, from 11 am to 12 am
Thursday 18 July, from of 3 pm to 8 pm
Please confirm your presence at:
geraldine.morand@epfl.ch

**Public opening in the presence
of the EPFL+ECAL Lab's team**
Wednesday 17 July, from 5 pm to 8 pm
Thursday 18 July, from 5 pm to 8 pm

MUSEE SUISSE DE L'APPAREIL PHOTOGRAPHIQUE VEVEY

les archives de la RTS

notreHistoire.ch

ORA ET LABORA

CONFRÉRIE DES VIGNERONS DE VEVEY