

A.rtfificial I.ntrospection O.

May 20 – September 6, 2026

Press talk: May 19, 2026, 11 am

Opening: May 19, 2026, 6 pm

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Oswald Wiener, Jenna Bliss, Günter Brus, VALIE EXPORT,
Tishan Hsu, Morag Keil, Josh Kline, Michael Krebber, Maria Lassnig,
Ken Okiishi, Walter Pichler, Rudolf Polanszky, Dieter Roth,
Agnes Scherer, Tiffany Sia, Franz West, Ingrid Wiener, among others

Curators:

Sandro Droschl with Franca Zitta

Curatorial consultation, Estate of Oswald Wiener:

Thomas Eder, Thomas Raab

Cooperation: Franz Nabl Institute for Literary Research, University of Graz / Literaturhaus Graz:

Klaus Kastberger, Daniela Bartens

The exhibition *A.rtfificial I.ntrospection O. (A.I.O.)* examines thinking, perception, and subjectivity within the tension between introspection, cybernetics, and artificial intelligence. Its point of departure is the work of the Austrian writer, cognitive psychologist, and cyberneticist Oswald Wiener (1935–2021), whose genuine thinking since the 1950s critically navigated between these fields while systematically resisting institutional appropriation.

At the center of Wiener's investigations lies human thought and consciousness, which he approached throughout his life—outside the scientific establishment—with an unorthodox and inspiring methodology. His works formulate early key questions of artificial intelligence and of the problems inherent in its theoretical and conceptual foundations. For Wiener, consciousness is not organized by language and therefore cannot be simulated with the current state of technology.

Central to the exhibition is Wiener's concept of introspection as a practice of cognitive psychology, which he repeatedly adapted and reoriented over the course of his life, first emphasizing it in literary form and later in scientific terms. His book *die verbesserung von mitteleuropa, roman* (the improvement of Central Europe, a novel) (1969) and subsequent texts form a theoretical and experimental point of reference for the exhibition. Engaging with Alan Turing's theory of automata, Ludwig Wittgenstein's critique of language, and cybernetic concepts, Wiener develops a radical critique of the humanistic conception of the subject. In the appendix of the work—the partly ironic *bio-adapter*—the human being appears not as an autonomous conscious entity, but as an automaton that dissolves into its environment in the form of a technical suit of gratification.

From cybernetics comes the Turing Test, formulated in 1950 by the British mathematician Alan Turing, which examines the distinguishability of machine and human through the evaluation of verbal expression. If an interrogator cannot determine which interlocutor is human and which is a

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machine, the two must be understood as equivalent. What is evaluated in this process is human-like behavior in terms of linguistic ability and plausible responses, not intelligence itself. According to Wiener, the problem of the Turing Test lies in its behaviorist approach, which is based on the observation of events and the statistics derived from them, while ignoring subjective consciousness. What Turing failed to take into account were the unobservable qualities of human thought, such as imagination, emotion, perception, and an understanding of the world.

Wiener confronted these fundamental questions of humanity and worked toward a theory of thinking by complementing automata theory—grounded in formalization—with introspection, in order to arrive at robust definitions through which human thought and consciousness might become explicable.

The exhibition

Artificial Introspection O. relates Wiener's theoretical positions to contemporary artistic practices that engage with introspection and cybernetics. Art is not understood as a counter-model to technology, but rather as a field in which similar processes of translation are at work as in cybernetics: visual, linguistic, and affective information is encoded, decoded, and transferred into circulating systems. Against the backdrop of a present situation in which algorithmic systems increasingly support decision-making in administration, law, communication, and the military, and in which AI-based language models simulate human communication, Wiener's skeptical thinking gains renewed urgency. The indistinguishability of human and machine language production, paradigmatically embedded in the Turing Test, shifts the question away from intelligence toward issues of observability, control, and self-description.

The figure of the dandy, which fascinated Wiener, combines a hoped-for distancing from the mechanical with an inwardly oriented self-conception. In this way, it forms a hinge between solipsistic self-reflection and the subject's social embeddedness. Today, this appears considerably more difficult. *A.I.O.* understands the introspection of human thinking not only as artistic research, but as a political and epistemic practice: as a way of critically reflecting on the increasingly intimate relationship between body, language, and automated systems. The exhibition opens the historical horizon of Wiener's thinking toward artists close to him and a younger generation that does not continue his questions directly, but reconfigures them under contemporary conditions. Progress or innovation is not at the center; rather, the focus lies on the question of how subjectivity can remain representable under cybernetic conditions—and whether introspection and self-optimization, as Wiener proposed, constitute a final form of agency.

What effects cybernetic intelligence will have on our everyday lives, our bodies, and our language remains partially open and can so far only be anticipated; they are and will certainly be considerable. The experimental exhibition *A.I.O.* seeks to make Oswald Wiener's ideas artistically productive and to go beyond them. It engages with the relationship between cybernetics and introspection—and in doing so, interrogates the interaction between human and machine.

The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive public program, which begins at Literaturhaus Graz on May 28 with a staged reading of the collective *Planetenparty Prinzip* and a panel discussion with prominent participants. In the performed text *Purim*, language is radicalized as a system of disturbance through inversions, masquerades, and the dissolution of boundaries, thereby facilitating productive introspection.

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