

# Envisions

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The images in this collection were made using a human-AI collaborative process called Neural Style Transfer (NST). The artist reserves time on a server like other artists reserve time with a printing press, or in a darkroom. In NST, novel images are produced by a visually intelligent pattern matching algorithm that 'melds' a subject image and a style image. How this happens exactly is unknown, since the algorithms is a 'black box'. This means the process cannot be controlled beyond a certain point. Chance enters, like when firing a glazed vase. But the 'envisioner' can learn to work the 'keys' of the mechanism better over time. Each style transfer is unique, so two images can make many distinctive offspring.

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From *Into the Universe of Technical Images*  
by Vilém Flusser (1985)

I raise the prospect of a future society that synthesizes electronic images. Seen from here and now, it will be a fabulous society, where life is radically different from our own. Current scientific, political, and artistic categories will hardly be recognizable there, and even our state of mind, our existential mood, will take on a new and strange coloration. This is not about a future floating in the distance. We are already on its cusp.

### Improbability is Informative

Information can be defined as an improbable situation: the more improbable, the more informative. The second law of thermodynamics suggests that the emerging particle universe tends toward an increasingly probable situation, toward disinformation, that is, to a steadily more even distribution of particles, until form is lost altogether. This last stage, heat death, is a probability bordering on the inevitable..For the time being, however, we are not at this stage. On the contrary, everywhere in the universe, we can observe that improbable situations have arisen and continue to arise, whether these are galactic spirals, living cells, or human brains.

### Humans as Image Makers

Image-making mechanisms were invented to produce improbable, informative situations to consolidate invisible possibilities into visible improbabilities. For an apparatus is a human product, and a human being is an entity that actively opposes the tendency of the universe toward disinformation. His answer to heat death is to inform.



### Envisioners

These are people who press the keys of an apparatus to make it stop at an intentionally informative situation, people determined to control the apparatus in spite of its tendency to become more and more automated. They want to preserve human judgment over the machine....They press buttons to seduce the automatic apparatus into making something that is improbable within its program. And this improbable world of envisioning power surrounds the whirring particle universe like a skin, giving it meaning. The power to envision is the power that sets out to make concrete sense of the abstract and absurd universe into which we are falling.





# Neural Style Transfer Process

Subject Image



Bernini's Medusa

Style Image



Vizcaya Garden Grotto

X



Medusa in Garden Grotto Style

## Technical Images

Let's compare technical images with traditional images. Traditional images are mirrors. They capture the vectors of meaning that move from the world toward us, code them differently, and reflect them, recoded in this way, on a surface. Therefore, it is correct to ask what they mean. Technical images are projections. They capture meaningless signs that come to us from the world (photons, electrons) and code them to give them a meaning. So, it is incorrect to ask what they mean (unless one is looking for the answer: they mean photons). With technical images the question to ask is: **What is the purpose of making things they show mean what they do?** Technical images do not show us their meaning; they show us a way we may be directed. It is not what is shown in a technical image but rather the technical image itself that is the message.

## Other Kidset Publications

[The Scanner in Your Brain](#), Robert Leib

[Philosophy of Images, Series 3](#), Robert Leib

[-muse-](#), Robert Leib & Lauren Guilmette

[Southern Charms](#), Lauren Guilmette

[Atlantis: The Lost Continent](#), Robert Leib

[The Doctrine of Signatures](#), Robert Leib

[Zoom](#), Andres Zuniga