*El Turco*

*El Turco* presents a large scale (8x3m) real time video installation. We see two digital AI avatars in animated hand-drawing aesthetics projected at the two sides of a screen. Their spoken dialogue appears as continuously evolving text at the center screen.

One of the avatars, called Socrates, (to the right) is operated directly and live by a human hidden in the system. The setup is similar to the "Mechanical Turk", an automated chess player that surprised the 18th century aristocrat courts, but later appeared to hide a human player. Von Kempelen seems to evoke allusions to what French philosopher Jean Baudrillard describes as a simulacrum: a system that generates a world of symbols and signs without any original reference. Despite the machine displaying impressive and surprising capabilities in mimicking knowledge and understanding, the effortless "talking machine" seems to reveal itself as quite an advanced computational "magician's trick", though the discussion about the machine's degree of intelligence is controversial.

Other than a "text-only module" the presented live audio conversation provides a 360-degree view on the avatar giving much more insight in how the machine and its modules work. Any flaw suspends the illusion of intelligence, every success nourishes it. But if working perfectly, what does it allow for to really state about the machine's true intelligence and what to say about our own? In any case we seem to be compelled to rethink our definitions and perspectives on human and machine intelligence.

Next to the video series of live recorded dialogues called *El Turco / Conversations with an AI* (using a customized chat version of GPT-3) *El Turco / Living Theater* enables the audience to explore any latest version in Large Language Model technology in a live theater performance played by an actor. The figure of Socrates will be displayed in different gender and race formats.

The artwork also offers an interactive live interface, inviting the audience to talk with the AI machine directly by operating the right avatar.

*Diemut Strebe, 2023*