

REAL MAGIC

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The Annunaki are a group of mysterious deities in ancient Mesopotamian mythology believed to have descended from the heavens 450,000 years ago in order to engineer the first human beings. Often depicted as imposing godlike creatures with elongated limbs and cone shaped skulls, they are believed to have possessed divine powers and incredible abilities, assisting a pantheon of deities in controlling natural phenomena such as thunder, lightning and the Sun. Since the beginning of civilisation, they have been seen as gods and angels. Now, in our modern age, many see them as extra-terrestrials visiting earth to bring us great knowledge and wisdom.

Towards the end of 2021 Coca-Cola unveils a new campaign to reinvigorate its global brand philosophy previously known as *Taste the Feeling*. The updated slogan aims to drive sales by confronting humanity's post-pandemic listlessness with a sense of the extraordinary. It invites us to come together and share unexpected moments of joyful wonder in a time filled with painful uncertainty. It beckons us into an experience untethered to the laws of this world. This new marketing strategy is known as *Real Magic*.

First to be released is Coca-Cola *Intergalactic*, a limited-edition, space-themed flavour that invites us to experience "what space could taste like". *Intergalactic* promises to offer a truly cosmic experience through, not only the graphics that boast an array of celestial colours and patterns, but with the reddish-purple tinted liquid itself. Described as being reminiscent of galaxies far away, *Intergalactic* is inspired by the NASA approved mission of 1985 in which astronauts test a new zero-gravity drink dispensing unit that successfully allows Coca-Cola to be consumed in space.

With *Intergalactic* cans suddenly appearing in supermarket aisles around the world, word soon spreads of its release as YouTube vloggers begin posting taste test videos of the mystifying new product. With its undefinable flavour palette ranging from liquid candy floss and marshmallows to biscuits and popcorn, Coca-Cola *Intergalactic* divides the opinion of consumers. Furthermore, while drinking this latest iteration of the world's most beloved soft drink, customers are encouraged to scan a QR code on the side of each can for the opportunity to attend an Augmented Reality concert. Watching the performance in full 3D through their smartphones, they are serenaded by American songwriter, Ava Max, singing on top of the very can they hold in their hands.

The following year sees the launch of a web-based image-making tool known as Dall.E. Described as a deep learning algorithm, this program can generate a

wide range of highly accurate images based solely on text-based descriptions. From photorealistic portraits to dreamlike landscapes, it can accurately produce detailed images of objects imitating a broad spectrum of traditional art materials such as paint, textiles or ceramics. Ominously difficult to distinguish from photographs, this technology activates a striking evolution in the definition of creativity, sparking an online movement of moral outrage over the fear of *real* artists being replaced by machines.

The era of post-truth is an ambiguous landscape of uncertainty and confusion. Algorithms gatekeep the next trending bubble of bespoke headlines, blurring the distinction between ad-driven clickbait and meaningful discourse. Once an ancient empire of gods providing wisdom and knowledge, now a stagnant echo chamber of misinformation and intolerance. What do we really desire when we commodify the immaterial into liquid form? Or when we outsource our imaginations to the coded ghosts? Perhaps the only path to true fulfilment is not by consuming corporate visions of the future, but by twisting the magic tilt wand ourselves and opening the blinds to our own intergalactic bliss.