Attractive names of paint colors as delivered by a neural network

May 22 2017, by Nancy Owano

Clardic Fug 112 113 84
Snowbonk 201 199 165
Catbabel 97 93 68
Bunflow 190 174 155
Ronching Blue 121 114 125
Bank Butt 221 196 199
Caring Tan 171 166 170
Stargoon 233 191 141
Sink 176 138 110
Stummy Beige 216 200 185
Dorkwood 61 63 66
Flower 178 184 196
Sand Dan 201 172 143
Grade Bat 48 94 83
Light Of Blast 175 150 147
Grass Bat 176 99 108
Sindis Poop 204 205 194
Dope 219 209 179
Testing 156 101 106
Stoner Blue 152 165 159
Burble Simp 226 181 132
Stanky Bean 197 162 171
Turdly 190 164 116

Credit: lewisandquark.tumblr.com

x(Tech Xplore)—Many people walking through the paint department of a store will be thinking of just that, picking up some paint with names like Comfy Cabbage or Sand Dune and getting out. If you are Janelle Shane, though, you are a research scientist who can't see what's being presented as paint names without also wondering how artificial intelligence can turn up the volume.

Janelle Shane? *TechCrunch* described her as "a researcher and flautist who occasionally 'plays with neural networks.'"

More specifically, she is a research scientist in industry, working on laser beam steering.

Let Shane explain her question which started her off: "So if you've ever picked out paint, you know that every infinitesimally different shade of blue, beige, and gray has its own descriptive, attractive name. ...But given that the human eye can see millions of distinct colors, sooner or later we're going to run out of good names. Can AI help?"

She decided to explore a neural network approach to find out. "Could the neural network learn to invent new paint colors and give them attractive names?" (Make even names like Tuscan sunrise and blushing pear look Periwinkle Pale?)

Neural network attempts are often reported as impressive. Her results were described as hilarious. Bank Butt. Grass Bat. Hurky White. And *TechCrunch* sat up and took notice of other names, Horble Gray. Burf Pink, or "How would you like to paint your house in a nice 'dorkwood' or 'stanky bean'?"

Soreer Gray 121 121 110
Sane Green 121 125 190
Reree Gray 213 220 122
Canter Green 140 120 120
Rererte Green 223 116 120
Conk Green 185 212 221
Sole Gray 181 112 121

Credit: lewisandquark.tumblr.com

Her neutral network attempt to name colors in a paint-naming project may have caused some laughs but turned into an interesting post on her site, "Postcards from the frontiers of science."

In her Frequently Asked Questions section, one question posted to her was What neural network framework are you using?

She said she is using a neural network framework, which is open source, char-rnn. Actually there are others, she said, but she recommended char-rnn as a starting point "if you have a Linux or Mac OS system and want to start playing as quickly as possible.")

Her path to the names? Devin Coldewey in *TechCrunch* described the path: "The network was given a list of 7,700 paint names and their corresponding RGB values, and set to work trying to suss out the hidden connections that govern these interesting yet occasionally obscure appellations."

She herself told her site visitors that "For this experiment, I gave the neural network a list of about 7,700 Sherwin-Williams paint colors along with their RGB values. (RGB = red, green, and blue color values) Could

the neural network learn to invent new paint colors and give them attractive names?"

At first, said Coldewey, the system "seemed to be putting together a rudimentary logic."

■	Sticks Red 171 37 34
■	Coral Gray 129 102 100
■	Rover White 222 222 213
■	Corcaunitiol Orange 239 212 202
■	Ghasty Pink 231 137 165
■	Power Gray 151 124 112
■	Navel Tan 199 173 140
■	Bock Coe White 221 215 236
■	Horble Gray 178 181 196
■	Homestar Brown 133 104 85
■	Snader Brown 144 106 74
■	Golder Craam 237 217 177
■	Hurky White 232 223 215
■	Burf Pink 223 173 179
■	Rose Hork 230 215 198

Credit: lewisandquark.tumblr.com

Shane in her own account of what happened said that by the second checkpoint, the neural network could properly spell green and gray but did not seem to know what color they were.

Later in the training process, the neural network was able to figure out some of the basic colors but not reliably.

Her own report card:

"In fact, looking at the neural network's output as a whole, it is evident that: The neural network really likes brown, beige, and grey. The neural [network](#) has really really bad ideas for paint names."

Coldewey's report card was graceful enough, as he said, "perhaps this particular intelligence needs a little more gestation time."

Annalee Newitz at *Ars Technica* wrote, "I cannot wait to live in a world [painted](#) by robots. Thanks to Shane's work, we are one step closer to knowing what that will be like."

 More information: [lewisandquark.tumblr.com/post/ … ed-by-neural-network](#)

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