

DECEMBER 2025

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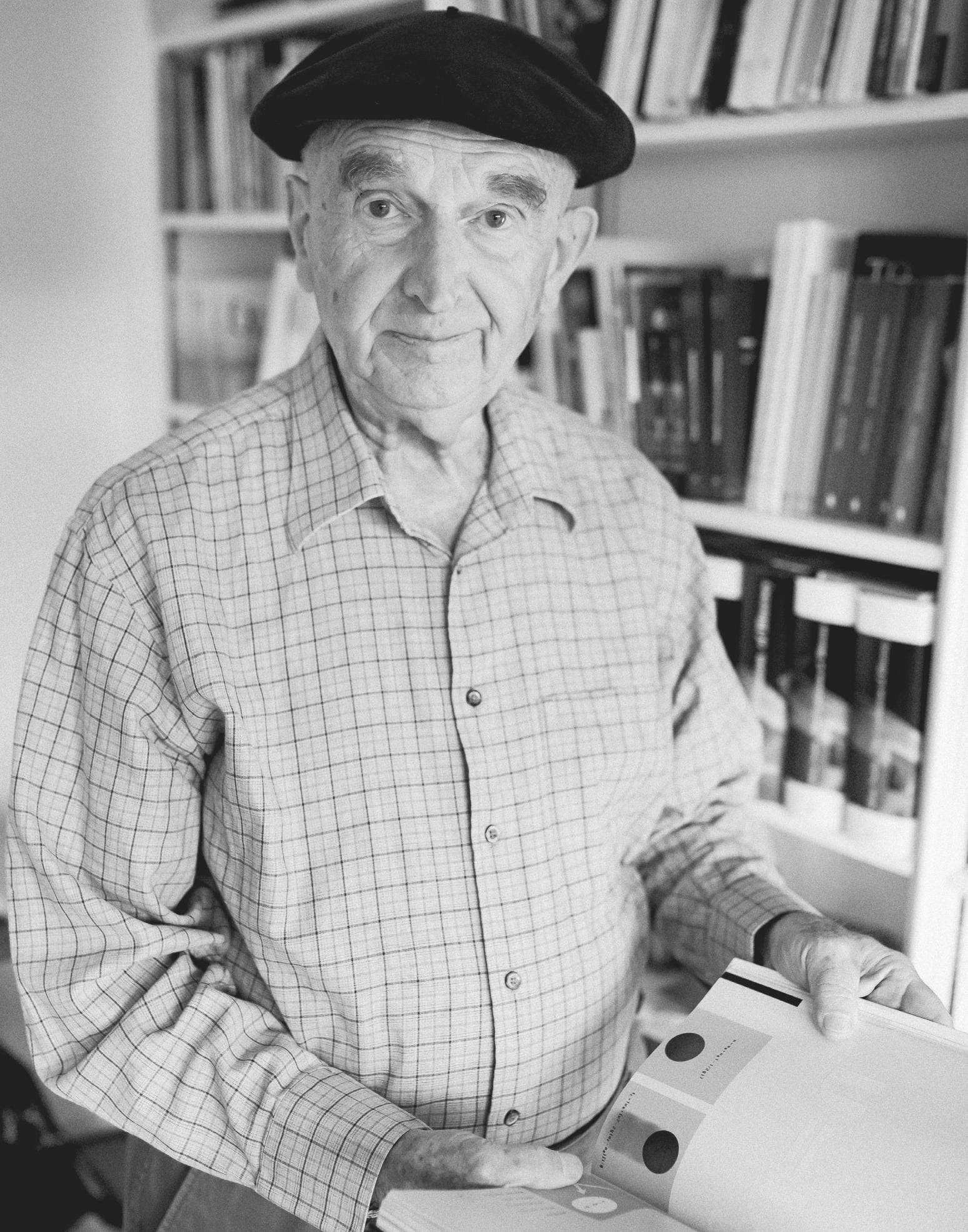
MIHAINADIN

PROFESSOR EMERITUS AND PIONEER

POWERED BY



Photo by
Marlena Marika
Photography



MIHAI NADIN

AHEAD OF HIS TIME

He's been described as a "New Millennium Renaissance person," a description that may be too limiting for Professor Mihai Nadin's range of interests and expertise as he continues to expand them into the future—beyond his 87th year.

Nadin has an exuberance for life and learning and a playful demeanor that can draw you into his world. It might happen, as in when he recently needed a proofreader for a new book. "I worked on some of my artificial intelligence developments and decided to test my abilities—and got my own program to do the proofreading ...I then used some of the now-famous ChatGPT offerings—and decided mine was better!" He realized he "must sound like a teenager reporting to the world that he can add two and two." It's easy to hear the glee and excitement even in his written words.

His scope of study and his career encompass electrical engineering, computer science, computational design, aesthetics and human-computer interaction. Since 2002, his focus has been on anticipatory systems, a field he cofounded in the 60s and that is now increasingly relevant and related to artificial intelligence (AI).

Nadin, born in 1938 in Brasov, Romania, was raised and educated under communism but overcame the obstacles it imposed. He studied at the Polytechnic University of Bucharest, received a PhD from the University of Bucharest, and holds a post-doctoral degree in Philosophy, Logic, and the Theory of Science from the

Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich. He is also a Distinguished Fellow of the Hanse Institute for Advanced Studies in Germany. Nadin generated "computer" images as "art" as far back as 1964, at the beginning without having access to a computer. "I started programming and debugging on paper. The huge advantage was that I was not limited by a piece of hardware," he says. "Only by my mind." Which, in his case, was—and still is—unlimited.

In 1971, he met Elvira Palcsey, a New Yorker visiting Romania. In 1975, more than four years after asking for permission from the Romanian president to marry a foreigner, they got married. The US ambassador's limousine took them home. Nadin escaped from Romania on a Humboldt grant and taught in Germany until his wife and children were allowed to leave. In 1980 he began teaching at the Rhode Island School of Design, "the Harvard of the arts."

The two have been together nearly 55 years. They share a love of good movies and good food and set aside daily time for listening to good music together, from classical and contemporary to Gregorian chants, Hebrew liturgical music and Yiddish folk songs. They also enjoy swimming (preferably in the ocean), biking and hiking. In 1999, they discovered Carmel during Nadin's Visiting Professorship at Stanford. After exploring the world for a retreat for almost 20 years, they came back to Carmel as their "final destination" in 2023. "Good for work, good for the soul, with exciting people."

In 2004, Nadin joined the faculty of the University of Texas in Dallas, as Professor in Computer Science and Interactive Media (emeritus 2023). He founded and directed the university's Institute for Research in Anticipatory Systems (antÉ). "Anticipation is expressed in action: choices we make for preventing breakdowns, instead of reacting to them."

Nadin has been at the forefront in human-computer interaction for 60 years and started working in AI over 40 years ago. For him AI is an extension and not a substitute for the human mind. His extensive knowledge has brought him to favoring a science that empowers human beings rather than pushing humanity more into machine dependency.

AI is now an integral part of daily life whether we realize we're using it or not—from online searches and voice assistants to medical diagnoses and cybersecurity. It's in our email filters and our vehicle navigation systems. Because of its pervasiveness, Nadin says that in order for our coexistence with it to be beneficial, we need to understand it and be prepared mentally and emotionally for its unfolding impact. As we learn more about how AI is being used, we need more than ever to ask WHY, so that we're investing in actions that justify the effort and energy. Nadin's latest book, *Disrupt Science: The Future Matters*, provides insight into the limitations of AI, machines and automation in contrast to the robust, versatile intelligence of humans and all other life forms.

Professor Nadin's presentations on AI and his latest insights range from scientific communications at international conferences to

easily understandable interactions for all audiences. "I do NOT give standard lectures," he says. "I have given close to 200 in my life—and I never repeat one!" He has also served as consultant to universities in the US, Europe, Israel and North Africa for the integration of computer technology into their courses.

Since moving to Carmel, giving lectures locally allows the Nadins to introduce themselves, share ideas and become part of the community. He is dedicated to community-supported initiatives: "Giving is not an obligation but an honor—an expression of respect for those accepting help and who, in turn, become able to help others."

Nadin has two heroes, one being his "better half" Elvira. "She accepted to live under a dictatorship, raised three children and knows as much as I do about the science in which I'm involved." She was also the Director of the antÉ laboratory. His other hero is his mother. "She was the most intelligent person I've met—and I've been in the company of Nobel Prize winners."

For inspiration, he credits Leonardo da Vinci and the 17th-century polymath Gottfried Leibniz, "the last universal genius," and probably the first to address computation as an extension of thinking.

Throughout his education and career, Nadin's underlying focus has been on creativity. "It extends from science to art to life and is a process...we are continuously re-created. Creation means to make possible something that did not exist before." Such as, perhaps, a "New Millennium Renaissance person."