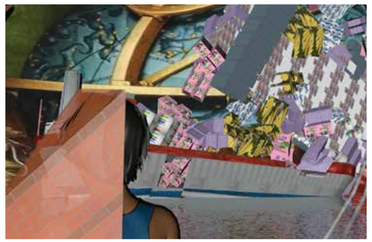
A long while

Elshan Azadi Victor Artiga Rodriguez Sound Design Shahin Peymani	



A long while is an experimental video work that employs an editing methodology based on the idea of reclaiming leap seconds established by our institutionalized regulation of time. The precision of modern time calculation has led to a discrepancy in measured values. Hence, a leap second needs to be periodically added, functioning as a suspended moment, while we wait for the earth to catch up. As a reflection of this, the composition, decomposition, and re-composition of the video's narrative is performed by a metronome that follows a 37 degree/second subtractive structure.

A decolonial re-narration unfolds as the artists appropriate the two characters from Hans Holbein painting "The Ambassadors". They impersonate a journey through an atemporal ocean, subjected to the monotony of sea travel and a heavy feeling of boredom. The work ponders on the weight placed by western society on the precision of timekeeping to sustain efficiency and productivity.

Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve ('The Ambassadors')
Hans Holbein the Younger
Oil on oak - 1533
207 x 209.5 cm
The National Gallery, London

The painting incorporates an anamorphic image in its bottom section. When seen from a specific angle a perfectly rendered skull appears clear. However, when viewed from a frontal perspective the image appears to be artificially stretched as if displaced from a position A towards a position B.

This phenomenon raises a paradox between time and perspective. One can either choose to view only the skull in its deformed shape or shift the viewpoint by moving in time and space to observe it clearly, thus deforming all the other objects in question.

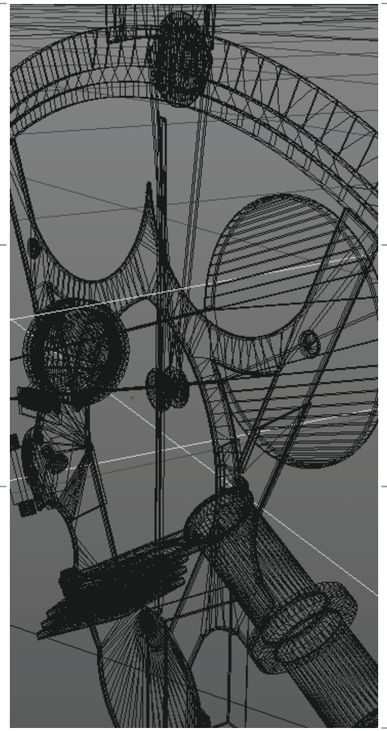
If an observer moves from a frontal perspective towards an angular perspective, this person will generate a vector (which has a time component). Similarly to the metronome in the video, which also lays on top of the image, redefining the perspective of time.

One key aspect in the research process was examining in detail the objects that appear in the painting. It is important to note that many scholars have agreed that the objects that Holbein painted are not entirely precise. They seem to be quasi-scientific measurement devices, but they all have small irregularities that only become visible with close inspection. The consensus is that these imprecisions are intentional, as a metaphor to the religious and political situation of Europe at that time. It became a remarkable moment of precision and imprecision gracefully coexisting.

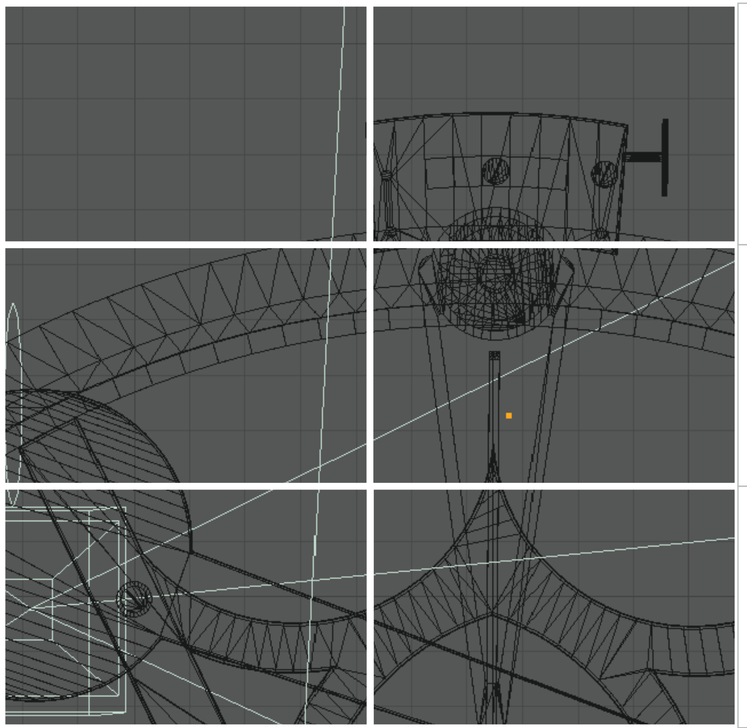
In the conclusion section of the research paper "The Scientific Instruments in Holbein's Ambassadors: A Re-Examination", by Elly Dekker and Kristen Lippincot, they remark:

"First, strictly speaking, none of the dials in the painting depicts a scientific instrument 'displaying' time. It could be argued that Holbein has created a series of references in the painting to indicate some specific 'iconographically significant' time." [1]

In the height of maritime travel, during the expansion of colonial powers, there was a crucial need to precisely determine geographical position at sea. A Sextant is a navigation instrument that measures the angular distance between two visible objects. The primary use of a sextant is to measure the angle between astronomical objects and to determine Greenwich Mean Time.



“Shooting the object” is one of the ways to refer to the action of calculating an angle, and therefore a position line. This also requires the possibility to track time between measured positions and to compare them in an astronomical chart. Evidently there are parallels between the action of framing an object inside the perspective of a camera and “shooting an object” with the sextant.

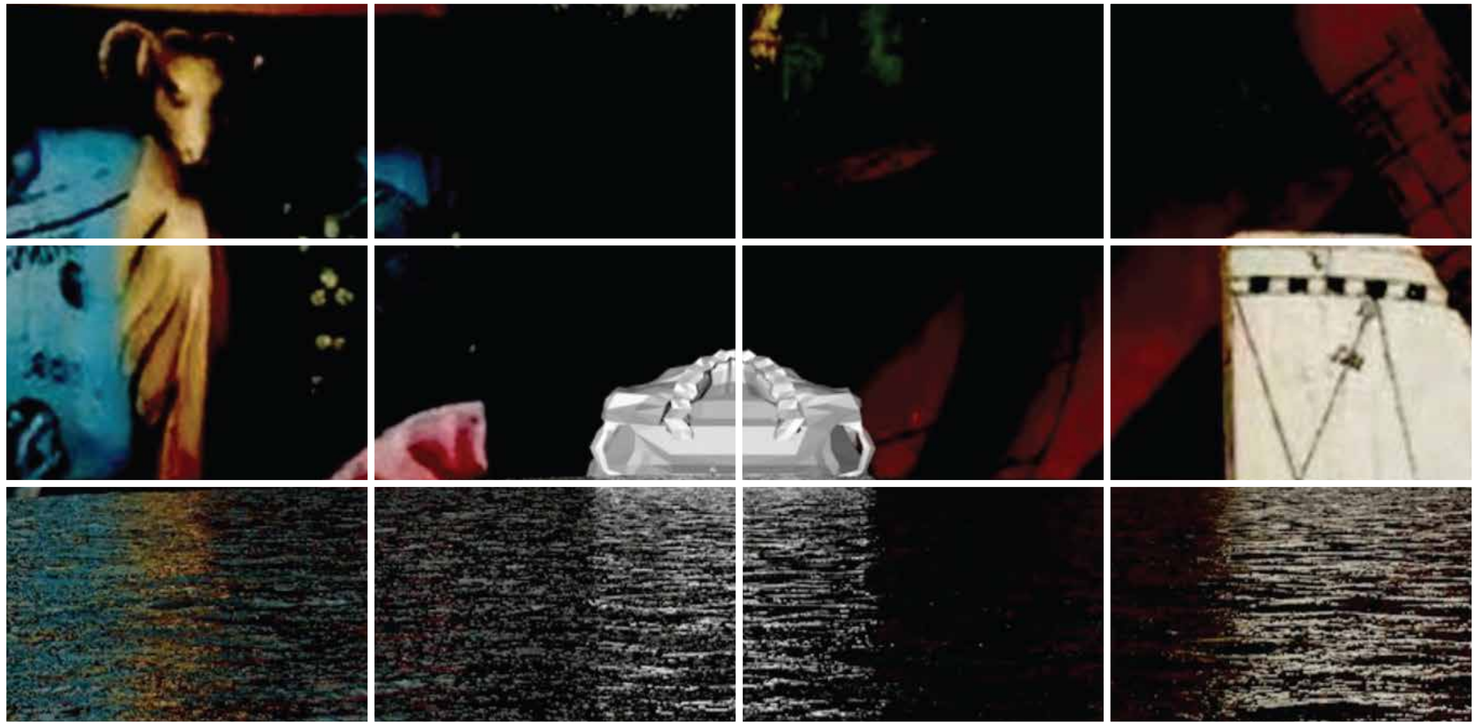


In *A long while* the sextant acts as a Metronome to construct a composition tempo to measure time with degrees. Dividing narrative time into 37 degrees. Each degree is equal to 10 seconds. 37 degrees last for 3,7 seconds with a frame rate of 10fps.

The fictional instrument defines the rhythm of the video and trims it into variations of 37 seconds.

The relation of time and degree is : **1 second = 0.1 degree**
37 seconds = 3,7 de grees.
The metronome **divides the duration of 37 to 10** , so at intervals of 3,7 degrees the transition scene occur.

Sailing without time	In her text “The Racial Event or That Which Happens Without Time”, Denise Ferreira da Silva argues for a raw materialist perspective which takes episodes of racial violence episodes as matter that should be thought in a non-linear time flow. “Thinking at this level of entanglement demands that we abandon (or decenter) time (Einstein’s fourth dimension) conceived as the arrow of time, which accounts so much for the prevailing sequential thinking. Borrowing from Walter Benjamin, I move to figure the moment of occurrence (distinguished from the location of occurrence) always already as a composition, and necessarily (because composed of the same particles) similar to other possible compositions (what has happened and is yet to happen). When attending to the similar one necessarily looks symmetry, that is, for **correspondences**, which necessarily images the context under observation as a fractal figure, in the sense of expecting to find repetitive patterns at different scales.” [2]



A long while

About 1

Two ambassadors have set sail in a 17century vessel, traversing a vast 3d rendered ocean. Both of them are appropriations from a portrait of two real ambassadors of France to the United Kingdom. In the time Hans Holbein painted this life size portrait, a few colonial powers had control of vast regions of land across the oceans. America had been “discovered” by Columbus some time before, and in the height of colonial expansion, timekeeping and precision were crucial to secure the domination of one empire over others.

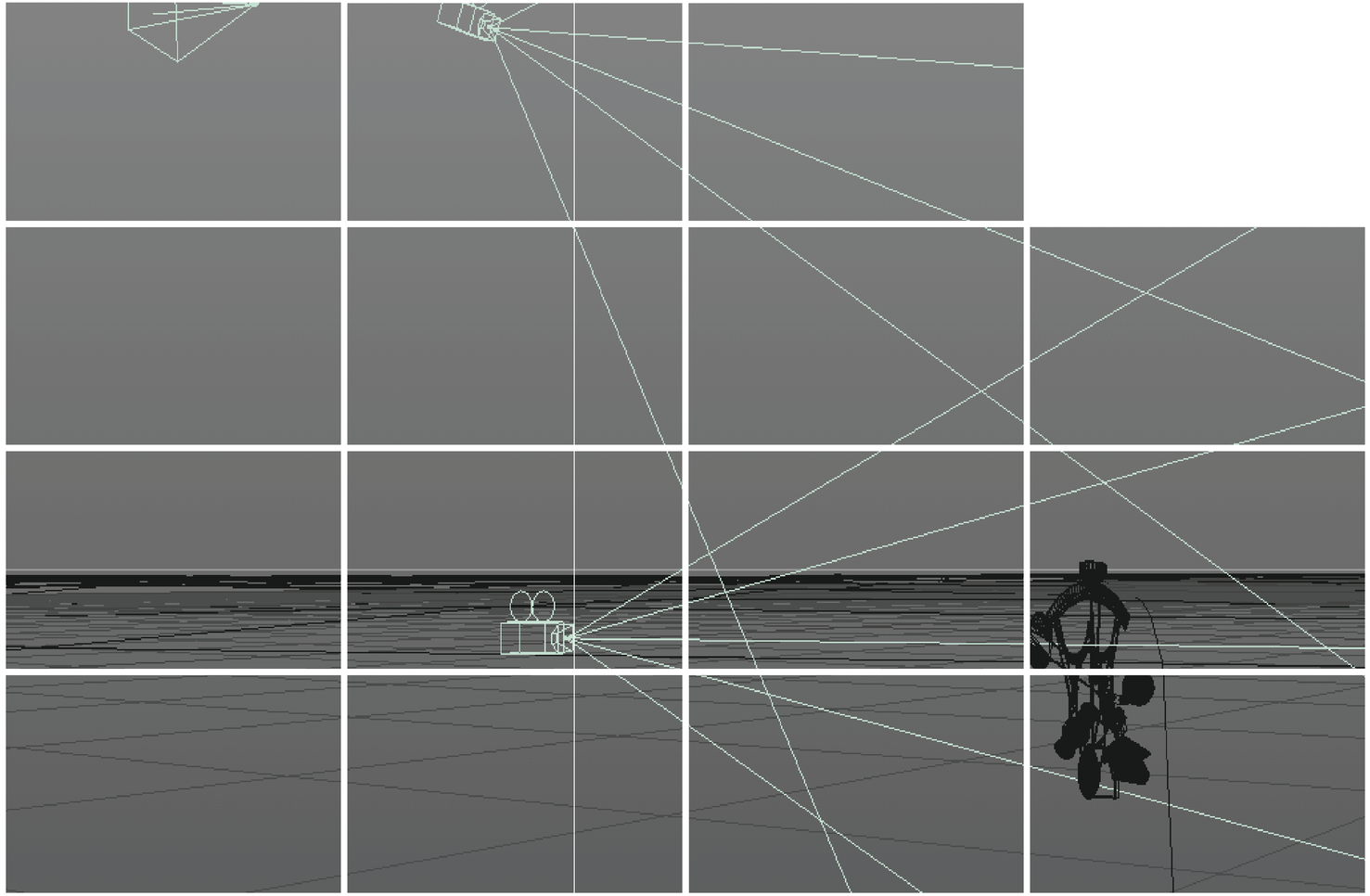
The history of the world has been for centuries narrated through a European centered perspective. Even in Latin America in middle school children are still taught that Columbus “discovered” America, and the previous history of the native population is quickly glanced through or simply omitted. With this invisibility of history, also comes the invisibility of the history of time. Although time as an abstraction can be understood as a subjective phenomena, that varies from person to person, there is in fact a collective understanding of time (1minute=60seconds, 60 minutes=1hours, 7 days= 1 week, 365 days=1year, we are in the year 2020 etc).

2 A long while

About

This current collective awareness, far from being the issue of an agreement or negotiation, was for many societies rather an imposition and it was through the expansion of colonialism that many other systems of timekeeping became subjugated, lost and invisibilized.

Although one can find ways to retreat into our own interpretations of time, we are always subject to a life regulated by this imposed time system, the Universal Coordinated Time (UTC), which we also use and know as civil time. A system that proves vital in a globalized world, where we find it necessary to coordinate flight schedules, online meetings, train arrivals, working hours, stock trade etc. and which also allows for global trade to happen in a orderly and efficient manner. Even during the current Covid19- pandemic crisis, precise recording of time proved to be relevant when deciphering the spread of the infection rate, and simultaneously it is the system of timing that fostered the technologies which we use to move around the globe and that allowed the disease to spread so fast.

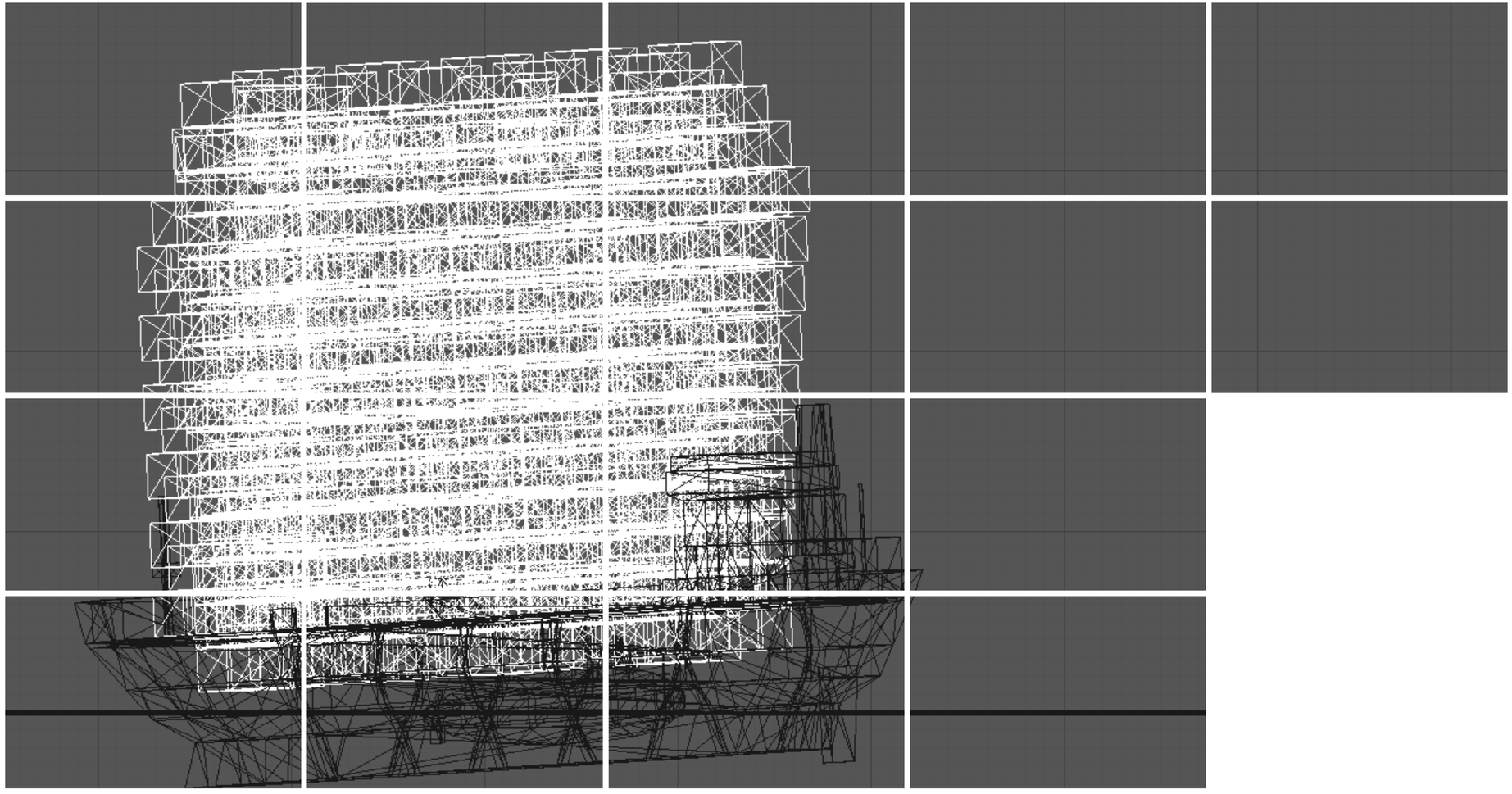


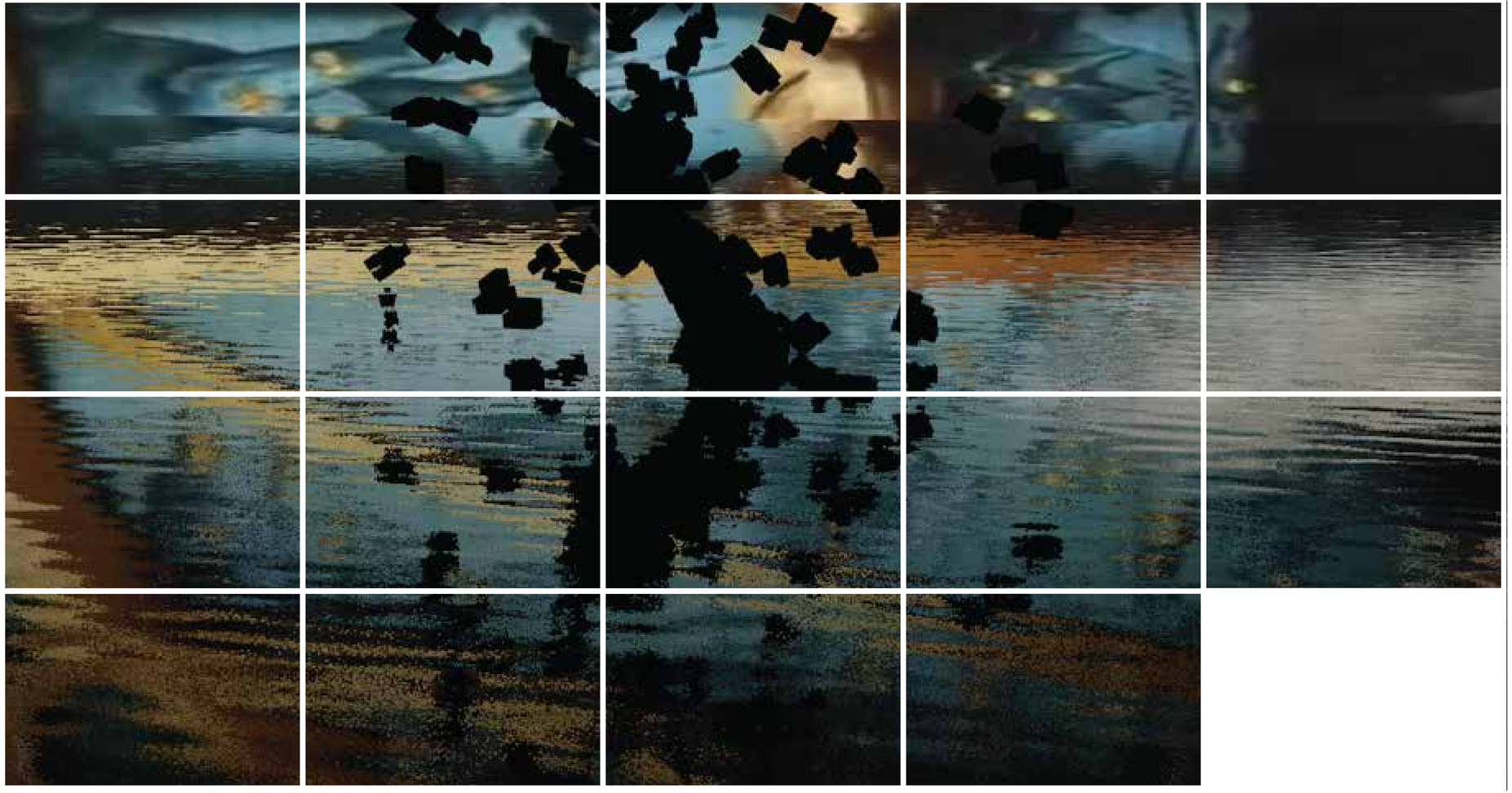
As the virus circulated around the earth, one human activity that experienced an anomaly in its regular time schedule was maritime trade, some sectors slowing down and coming almost completely to halt. For example, oil tankers had to drift for long periods of time at sea, without having a clear direction or place to dock, since the demand for oil consumption had experienced massive drops. On the other hand, companies like Amazon, increased their volume of sales and evidenced that the gears of the global market system have not stopped, but rather just accelerated its speed . Drawing on Denise Ferreria da Silva's interpretation of time not seen as a sequential arrow, [3] but rather as events which happen in an entanglement of time, a product travelling in this precise moment as part of an Amazon Prime order possesses a raw material connection to the objects stolen during the times of colonialist expansion.

One can still order a pair of xxxx through Amazon, the multiple steps in the chain of production and distribution of goods is sometimes overlooked, the simplicity of ordering something by a click does not necessarily reveal the cluster of time zones, time schedules and labour involved in this action. Labour is invisibilized and time perception is reduced to only delivery time, the latter becomes the dominant, important time value. As in the film, the event of destruction and reconstruction of a cargo-container ship occur endlessly over and over again, without anyone having a clear awareness of the time viewpoint of others.

This invisibilization of time also takes place when discussing or thinking about boredom. In a productive capitalist society boredom is as a rule of thumb, interpreted as a negative feeling, and comes with a heavy historical baggage of erosion. Boredom is relegated to those who are depressed, tired or quite simply not an active part of society. However, boredom can also become emancipatory, a rebellious act to those who oppose an extractivist agenda and who can find moments of creativity in moments of nothingness.

It is within the tension that comes from experiencing time through different lenses, that the characters of the film live and relive the scenes over and over again, as if the non-stop rhythm of the global market would also spread into their perception of time. A never-ending repetition happens in this sea commanded by a ticking metronome, which possesses its own precise methodology (following 37 seconds, -3.7degree subtractive method). Moreover, this editing methodology comes from an emancipatory aspiration. The two sailors wish to go back in time and retake all the leap seconds that have been artificially added, as if stating that it is okay for us to live in this imprecise world. The earth rotation naturally slows down or maybe our measurement values are not correct. Nevertheless, the characters do not advocate for imprecision, rather they embrace slowness, which is incompatible with the accelerated rhythm of capitalism.





A bored mind can sail through an ocean of thoughts with no agenda, no destiny and no clear sense of time.

A bored mind can drift eternally, and return empty handed.

Time can unfold as a distant land, as a foggy image in the horizon.

Friends can render words and spill them to winds of other eras.

A bored mind repeatedly comes and goes in a glance.

b or ed o m

In the video two sailors are subject to a monotonous editing methodology, living and reliving their experience back in time. The metronome, sextant cuts the experiences of the protagonists who are in probably one of the most boring possible situations, sailing at open sea.

International Atomic Time
TAI

calculated by the average of circa 400 atomic clocks, outputs extremely precise time.

Universal time
UT1

(Astronomical time) calculated by measuring Earth Rotation around its own axis.

UTC
Coordinated Universal Time
basis for civil time

ONE leap second is added to UTC once the difference between UTC and UT1 reaches 0.9 seconds

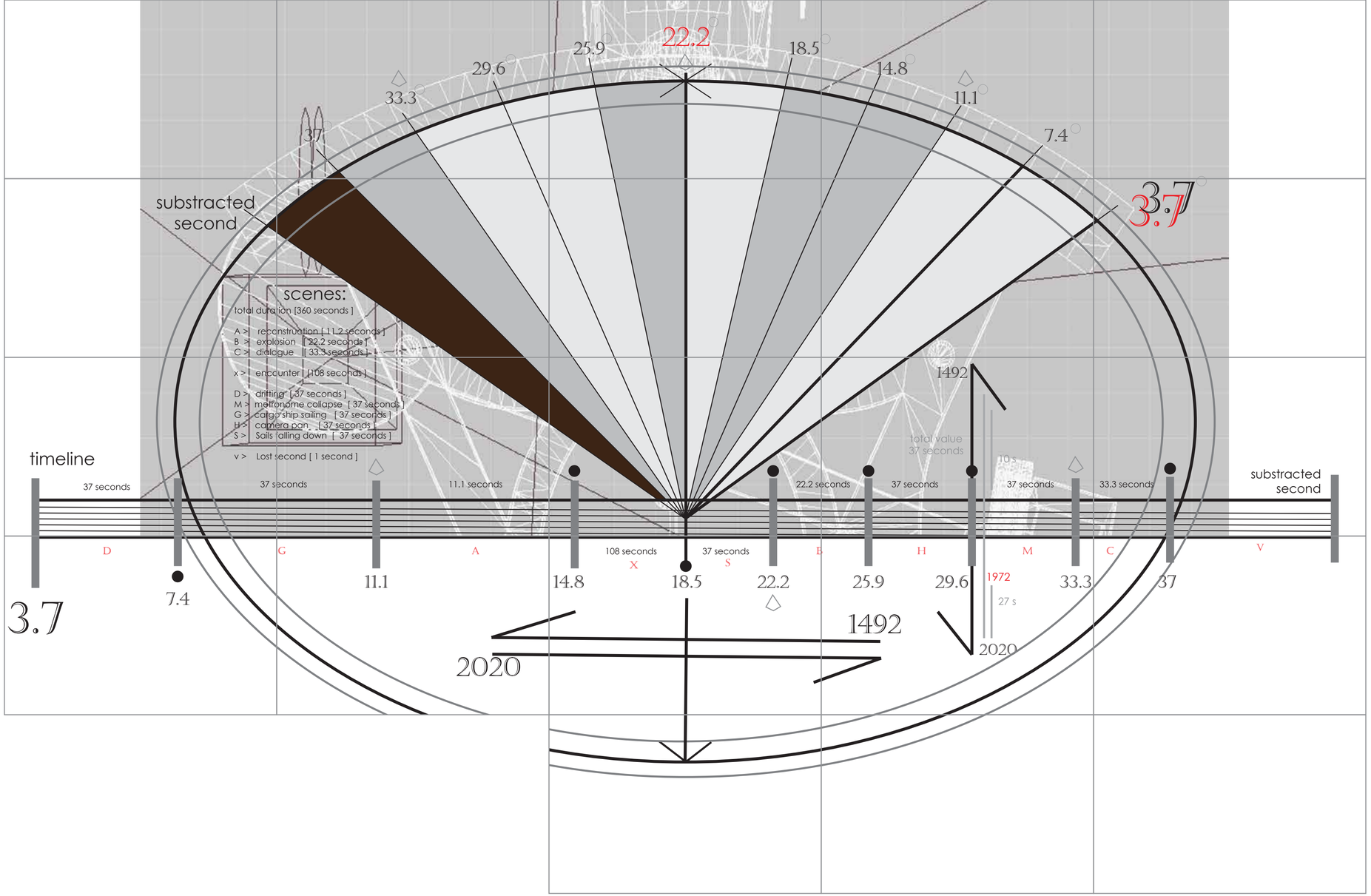
37

number of seconds TAI is currently ahead of UTC

Metronome/Sextant Methodology

video timeline - total time= 8:26 seconds

1.video is 10 frames per second	2. 10fps references all those seconds before the 27 ones added since 1972.	3. The timeline is also divided into 10 scenes.	4. 10 scenes are divded into 5 - 3 - 1 -1 scenes	5. Metronome /sextant regulates the editing of the video
6. Object starts counting from 3.7 degrees, increments of 3.7	7.Object reaches a total of 37 degrees	8. Editing occurs when the object ticks	9. Constructing numbers are 37-10	10. PDF follows the logic sequence of rendering software
			12. Last scene, last second is the substracted second	11. total duration without transitions is 360 seconds


22.2
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scenes:
total duration [360 seconds]
A > reconstruction [11.2 seconds]
B > explosion [22.2 seconds]
C > dialogue [33.3 seconds]
x > encounter [108 seconds]
D > drifting [37 seconds]
M > metronome collapse [37 seconds]
G > cargo ship sailing [37 seconds]
H > camera pan [37 seconds]
S > Sails falling down [37 seconds]
v > Lost second [1 second]
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2020

Scene timeline construction /
total duration [360 seconds]

A > reconstruction [11.2 seconds]

B > explosion [22.2 seconds]

C > dialogue [33.3 seconds]

x > encounter [108 seconds]

D > drifting [37 seconds]

M > metronome collapse [37 seconds]

G > cargo ship sailing [37 seconds]

H > camera pan [37 seconds]

S > Sails falling down [37 seconds]

v > Lost second [1 second]

Scenes that correspondede with a recurrent decimals last their own duration in seconds

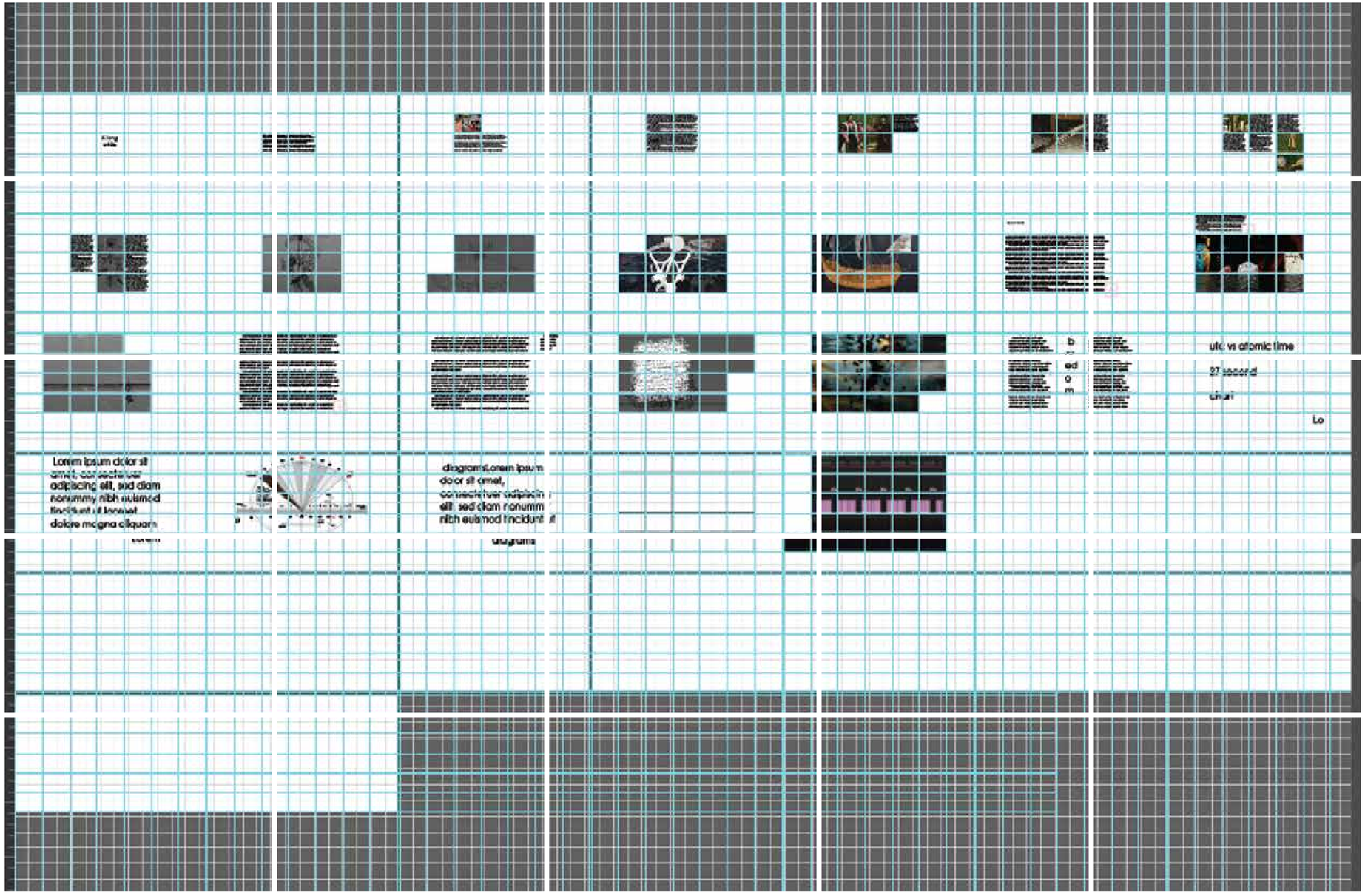
Encounter of present/past happens at degree 14.8, a decimal point is moved.
Scene lasts 1.48 minutes or 108

Five scenes last 37 seconds each, these scenes do not have a editing methodology within themselves.

FInal scene is a one second title
This is the substracted second not added June 30th 2020.

Narrative takes place the 30th of June 2020, dates reserved for adding a leap second are either June or December. This year **we** substracted this missing second.

A methodology within a methodology was followed for scenes A, B and X
37 frames where placed in a 10 fps timeline.
Each iteration one frame is removed after a clicking from the metronome, which is also going through a 37 degree cycle in increments of 3.7, starting at angle 3.7 until 37
Scenes A and B are compressed to their duration of 11.1 seconds and 22.2 seconds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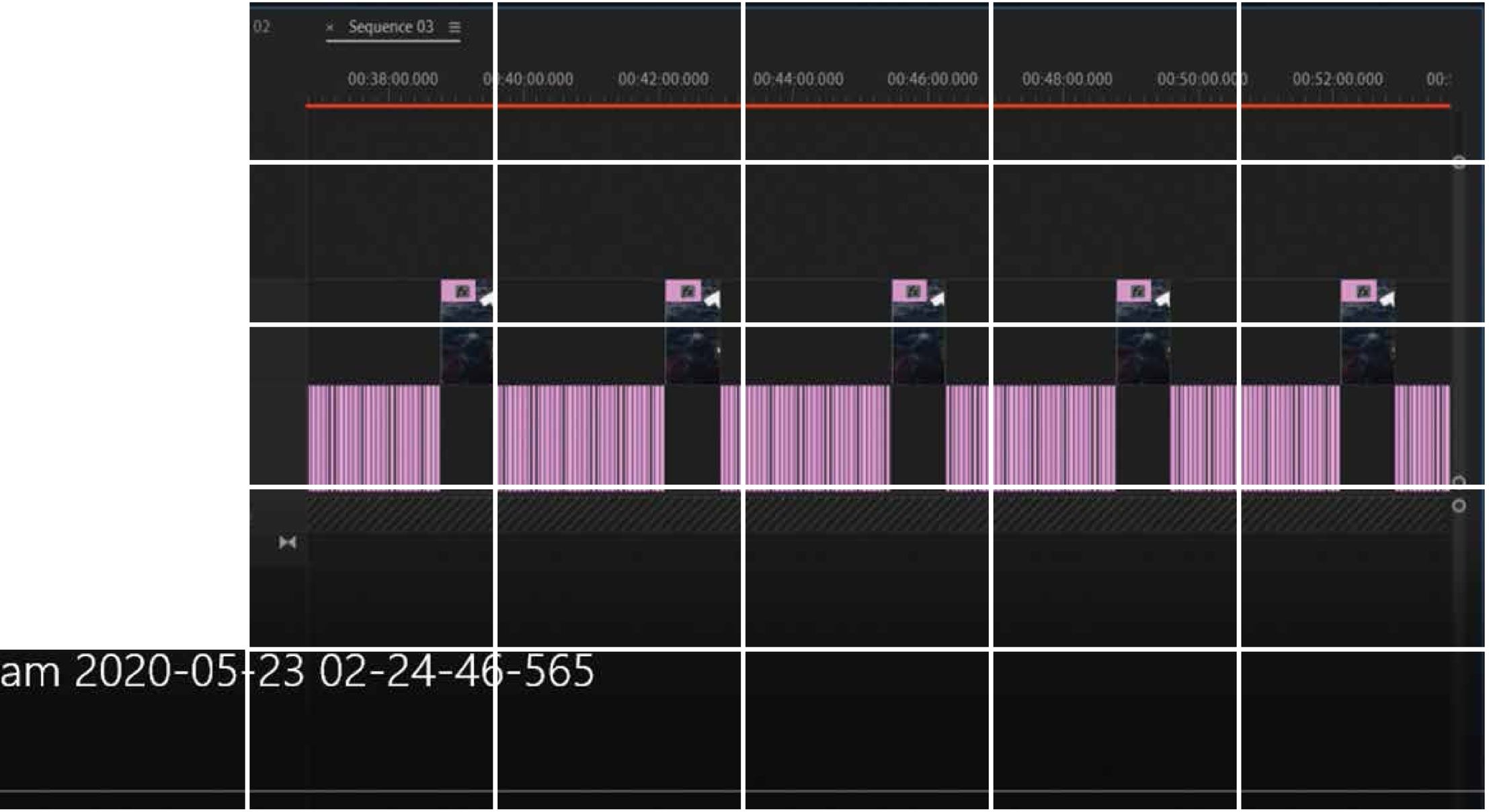
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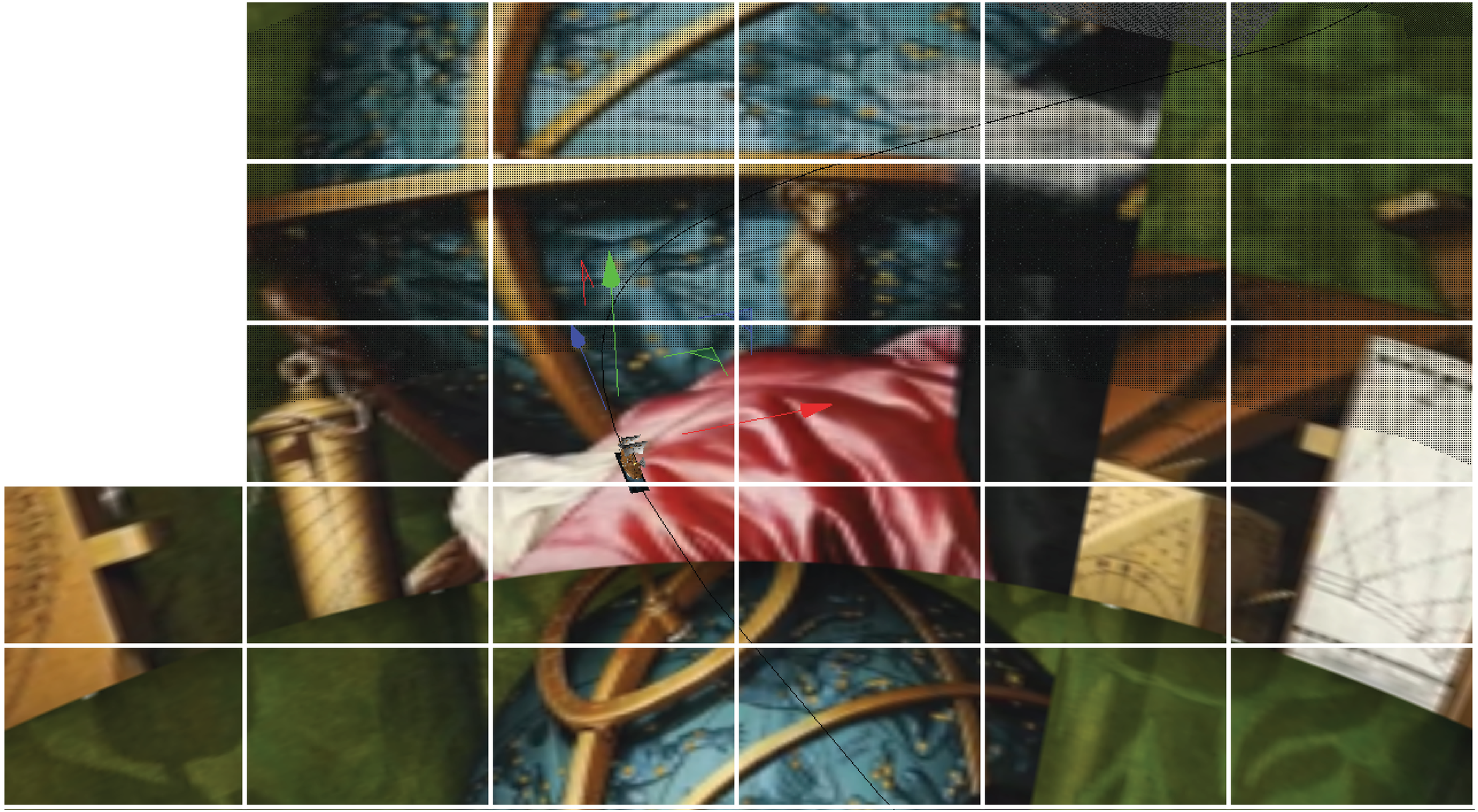

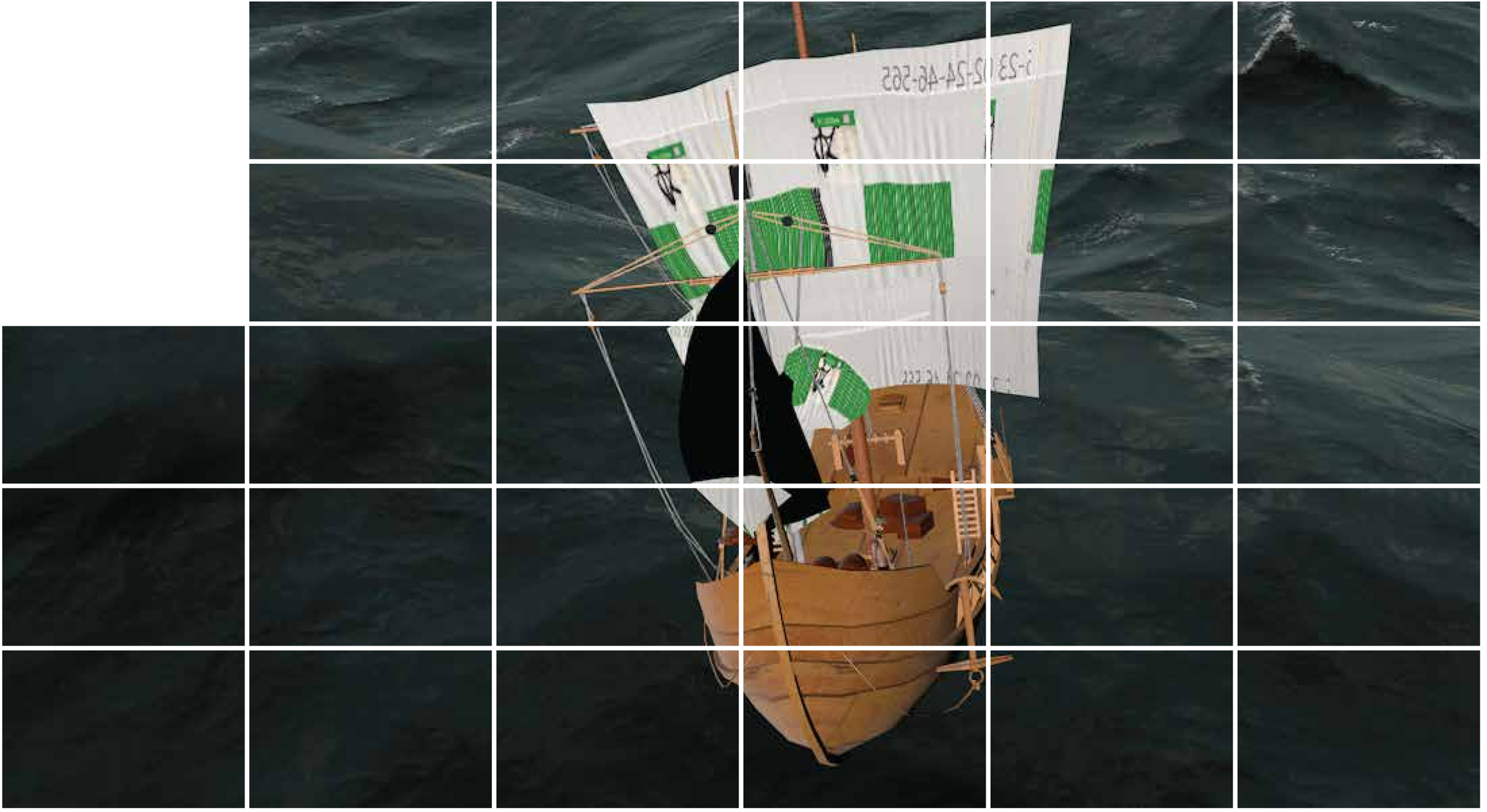

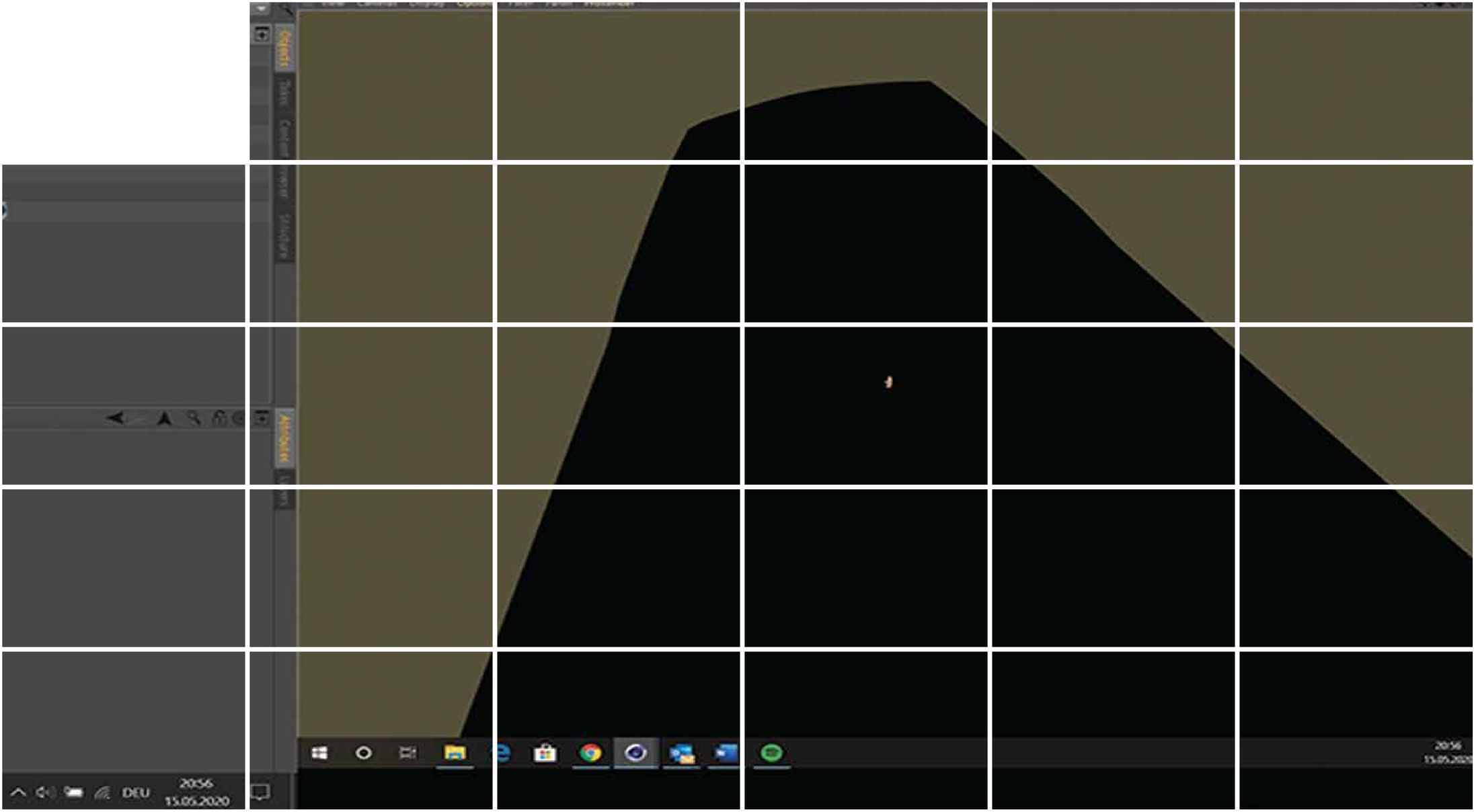
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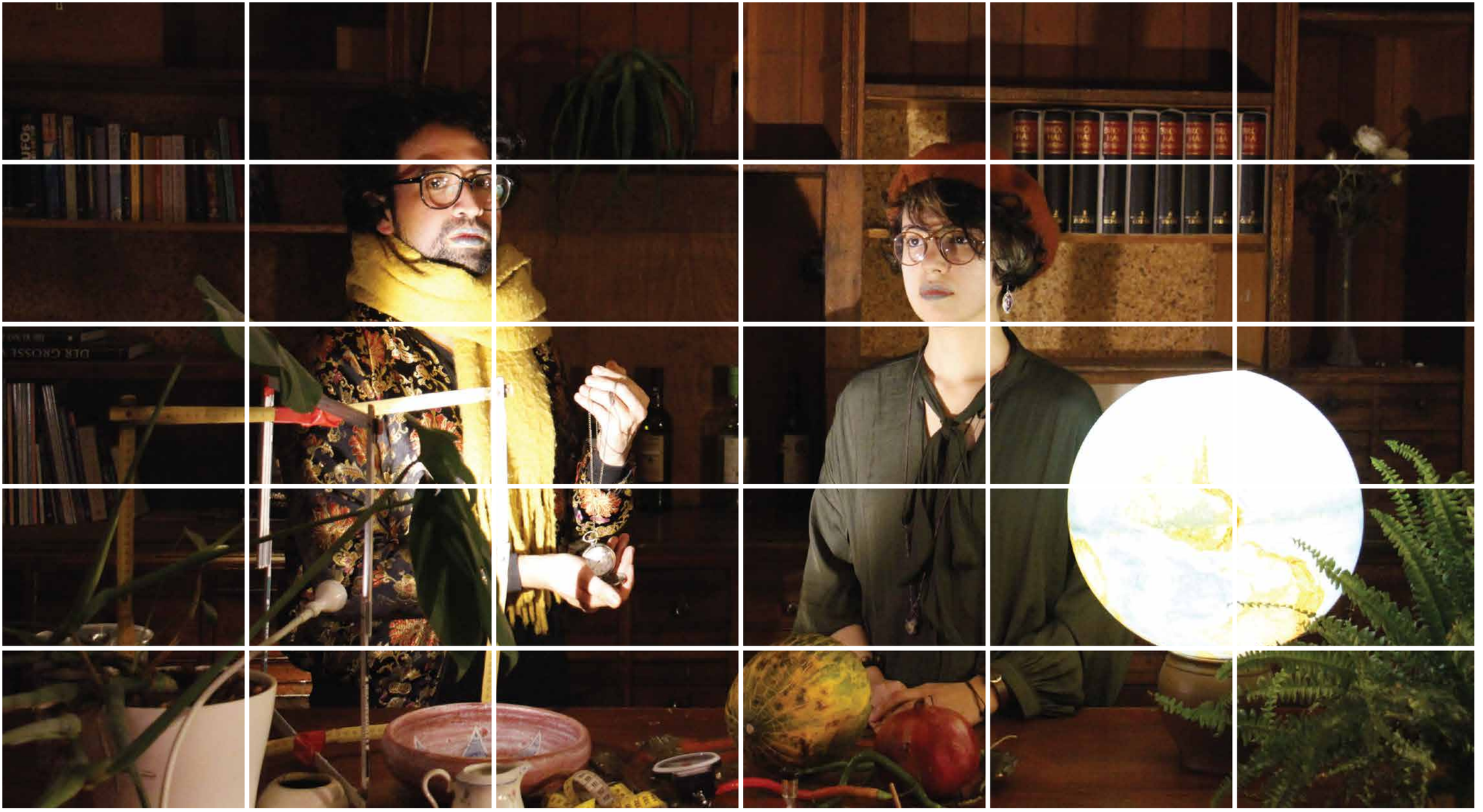


precision and imprecisions

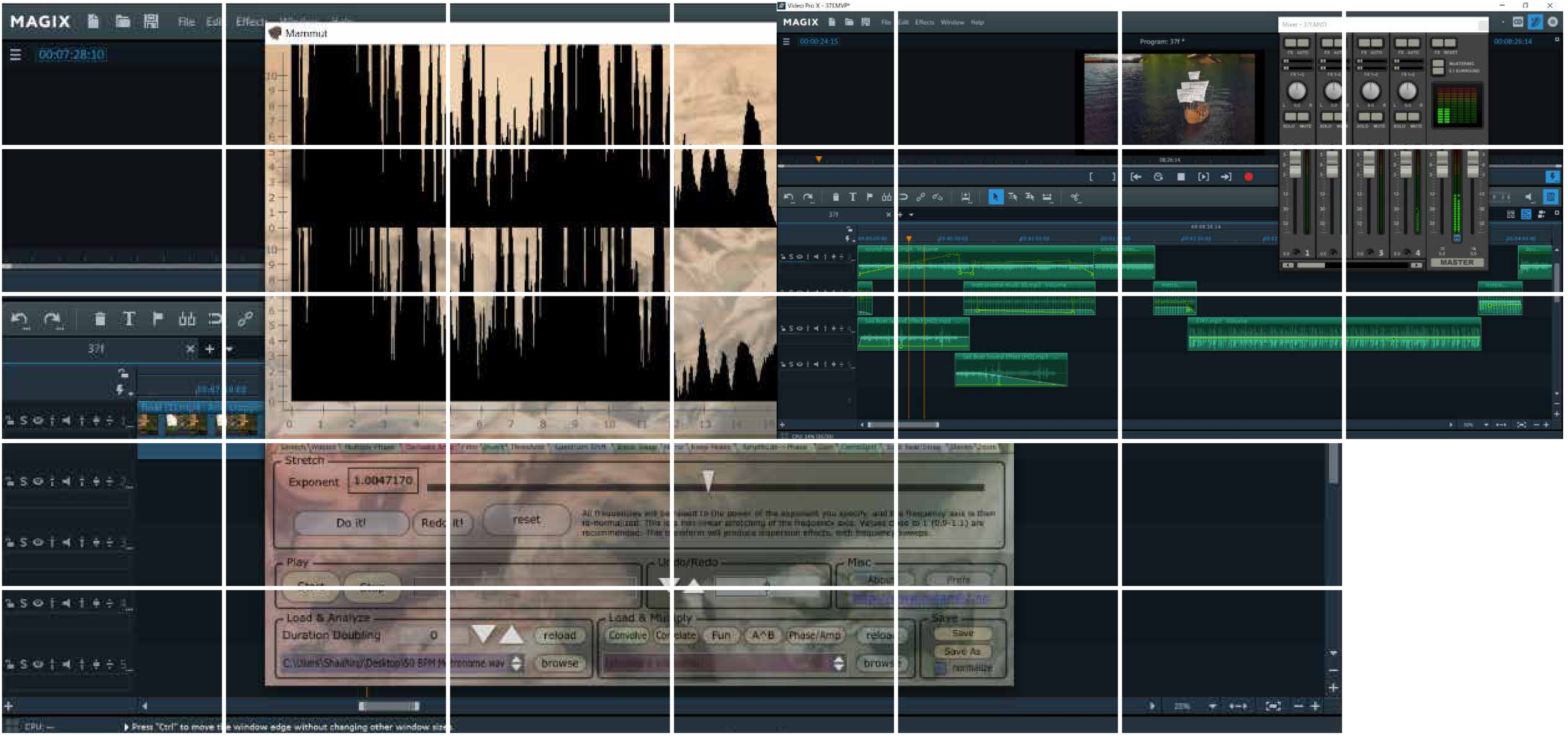
~~the work is full of moments~~

when seconds do not quite fit and gaps had to be accepted. This also happens in our perception of time, when boredom stretches the parameters of what seems familiar, time becomes a long while.

sound

As the metronome appears during the scene transitions, the sound remains in a constant 60 bpm tempo and only perceives changes in its frequency domain.

For the rest of the scenes sound layers have been generated by the manipulation of exclusively the time domain.


MAGIX
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Video Pro X - 37f.MVP*
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Do it!
reset
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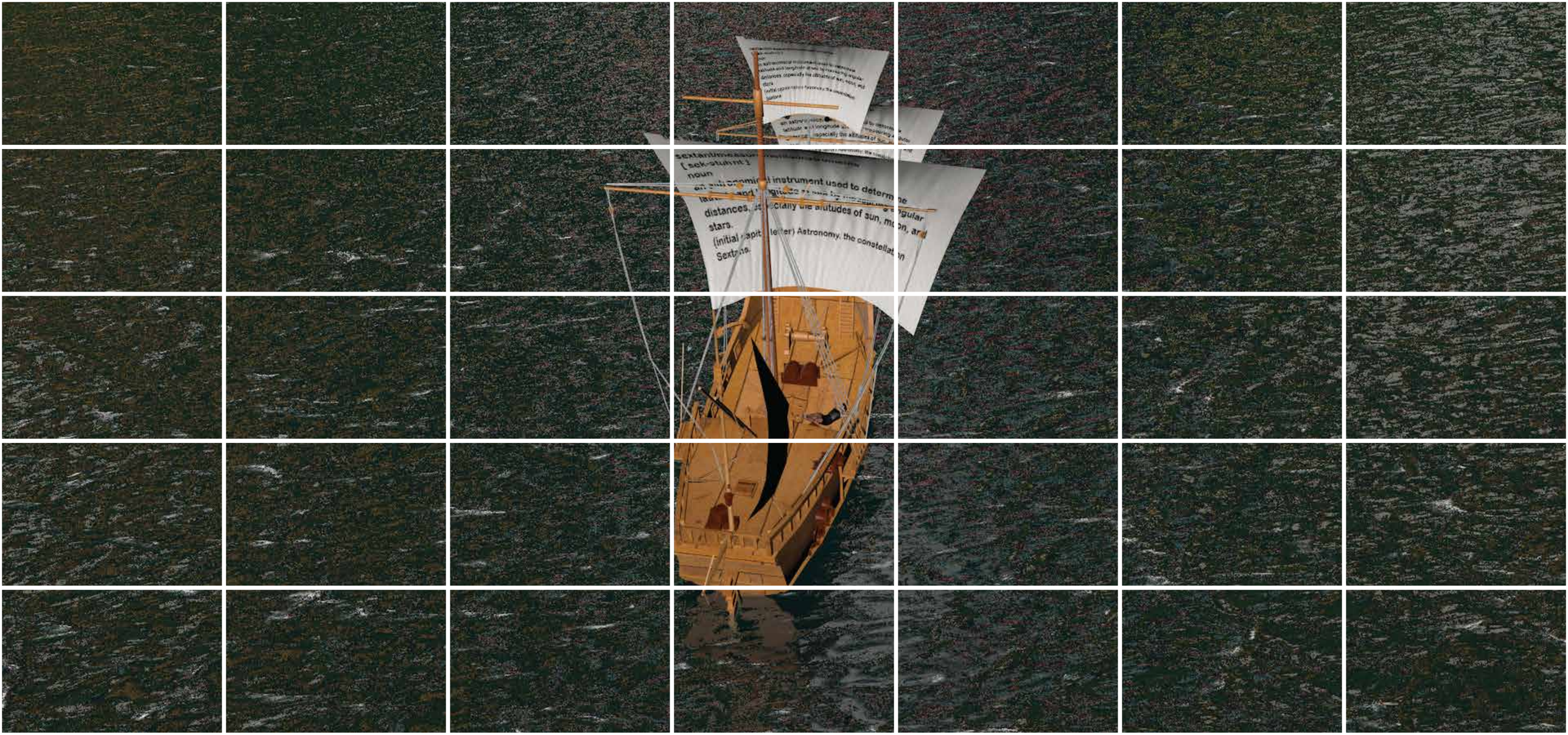
sextant
[sek-stuhnt]
noun
distances,
stars.
Sextans.

References

1. Dekker, Elly, and Kristen Lippincott. “The Scientific Instruments in Holbein's Ambassadors: A Re-Examination.” Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, vol. 1999 ,62, pp. 125–93. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/751384.

2. Ferreira da Silva, D (2016) “The Racial Event or That Which Happens Without Time.” Rosie Cooper, Sandeep Parmar, and Dominic Willsdom (Eds.) The Two-Sided Lake: Scenarios, Storyboards and Sets from Liverpool Biennial 2016. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, pp. 263-256

3. Ferreira da Silva, D (2016) “The Racial Event or That Which Happens Without Time.” Rosie Cooper, Sandeep Parmar, and Dominic Willsdom (Eds.) The Two-Sided Lake: Scenarios, Storyboards and Sets from Liverpool Biennial 2016. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, pp. 263-256

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