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[Github](#) / [ResearchGate](#)

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Maria Orciuoli is a research-based artist and cultural publicist living and working between Berlin and Linz.

With a background in economics and electronic arts, Maria's practice involves working with collections of information, data, software and hardware systems to engage with themes of consumer culture, nature's phenomena and technology's influence on human subjectivity.

CV

- ▶ 2023 - MA Interface Cultures, University of Art & Design Linz (AT)
- ▶ 2013 - Dual MA International Management, SRH Hochschule Berlin (DE) & INSEEC Paris (FR)
- ▶ 2011 - BSc Economics, Luiss Guido Carli, Rome (IT)

Residencies & Grants

2023

- ▶ Energie AG Traumstipendium, Linz (AT)
- ▶ Research Fellowship, Yoichi Ochiai's Digital Nature Group & Lab, Tsukuba University (JP)
- ▶ Kunstudiversität, Abroad Grant, Linz (AT)
- ▶ Internationalisierungsprogramm für Studierende - Land Oberösterreich (AT)

2022

- ▶ Digital Fellowship, Das Weisse Haus' dwhX Space, Vienna (AT)

Exhibitions

2023

- ▶ Speculum Artium, Trbovlje (SI)
- ▶ Ars Electronica Festival, Linz (AT)
- ▶ Computational Creativity Hub, Luxembourg (LU)

2022

- ▶ Ars Electronica Festival, Linz (AT)
- ▶ Kunsthalle, Linz (AT)
- ▶ WHA Gallerie, Linz (AT)

Media Features

- ▶ 2022 - CLOT Magazine (UK), words by Juliette Wallace
- ▶ 2021 - Movement Radio (GR), 'Utopian Advert' - Sonic Utopias by Daphne X

Work

Since 2017, founder & cultural publicist at KO-HUM.

Ongoing collaborations:

- ▶ Studio Carsten Nicolai / PR & communications at NOTON, album campaigns for Alva Noto, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Ryoji Ikeda
- ▶ Subtext Recordings / Multiverse Music Publishing, Music PR & Communications
- ▶ Humboldt Forum's Durchlüften Concerts & Exhibition, Berlin (2022 and 2023), PR & Media Partnerships

Projects portfolio: <https://www.ko-hum.com/>

planets_and_moons
(empathy is a form of
intensity)

clay, iron wire,
magnet, silicon, 10
cm high, 5 cm
diameter

Data sculpture based
on the StyleGAN2 ADA
interpolation trained
on a dataset of 1639
images from 3D
representations of
eight confirmed
planets, two dwarf
planets, and one
terrestrial moon



**planets_and_moons
(empathy is a form of intensity)**
video, 2022-2023

4:30 min, digital video (3840 × 2160, 4K), color,
sound (stereo / no dialogues)

[Link to video](#)

Keywords: synthetic data storytelling, computer vision, cosmology, generative adversarial networks (GANs), shamanism of the machine, digital materialism, viscosity

planets_and_moons (empathy is a form of intensity) is a five-minute experimental audio-visual short bringing together the language of the moving image, machine learning, and ideas around cosmology.

The film reflects on the visual abstraction of natural phenomena such as gravity and the viscosity of matter, mediated by the subjectivities of the human mind and artificial intelligence. Accompanied by a soundtrack featuring audio recordings captured by NASA's Perseverance Mars rover in 2021, the film combines the language of films with the visual computation mechanisms of neural networks to voice reflections on the human limit in understanding the phenomena that shape the universe.

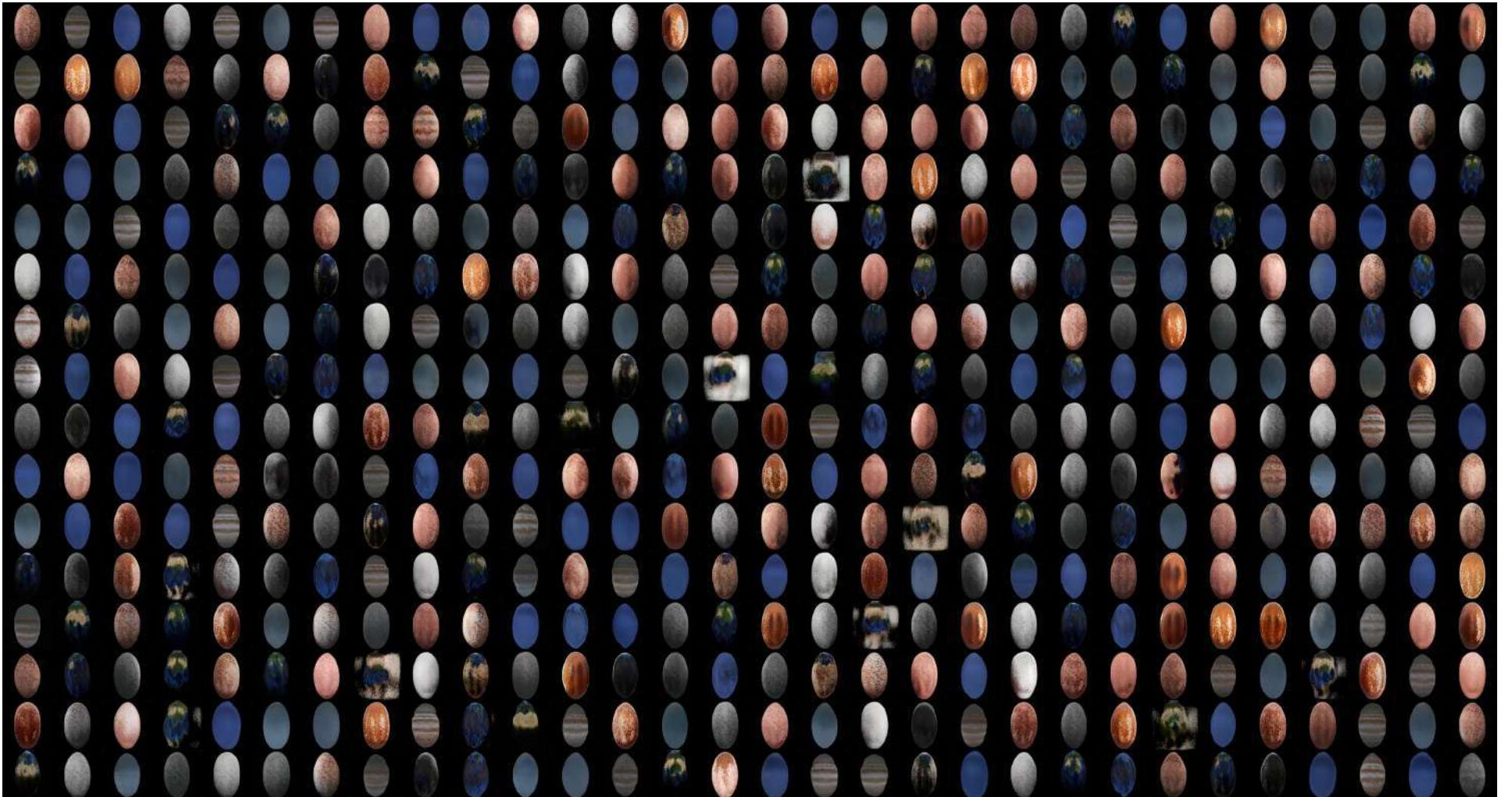
The video alternates between camera footage and images of planets and moons created and interpolated by the unsupervised generative model StyleGAN2 ADA, trained on a dataset of 1639 images from 3D representations of eight confirmed planets, two dwarf planets, and one terrestrial moon. The visual output is merged and absorbed into the animation - a loop of copies of copies of synthetic matter decaying and decomposing, mutable and uncontrollable, orchestrated by the creative and selective computation of the artificial neural network. It is a vision reminiscent of a liquid surface because of the fluidity of the merging forms and the colors that blend as if spurred by invisible brushes with infinite coordinates. And it is here that the relationship between physics and digital viscosity emerges.

From the perspective of organic evolution, viscosity can be considered an essential property of life, allowing organisms to mix. It is a state that facilitates cooperation and coexistence. In a world where solid and fluid states would remain separate in time and space, life could not emerge or survive. The film makes this relationship between viscosity and digital materialism palpable, transforming the images into a continuous, mellow flow in which audio-visual experimentation is mixed with questions about technology, cosmology, and the mutually dependent relationships between them.

The images of the player testing the physical qualities of a ball propose a situated manifestation of gravity - the constant sensory signal that acts inadvertently on the brain and in space. With the interplay of camera footage and computer vision, synthetic and human subjectivities converge: the prosthetic *umwelt* of the machine overlaps with the human *umwelt*. In this superposition we encounter the unseen, in which computation becomes a shamanism of the machine that creates on latent structures that we lack either the capacity or the sensorium to interrogate. At the same time, it reminds us of the human limit in comprehending the forces that shape our universe, transporting us to the ever-transitioning world of waves and particles.

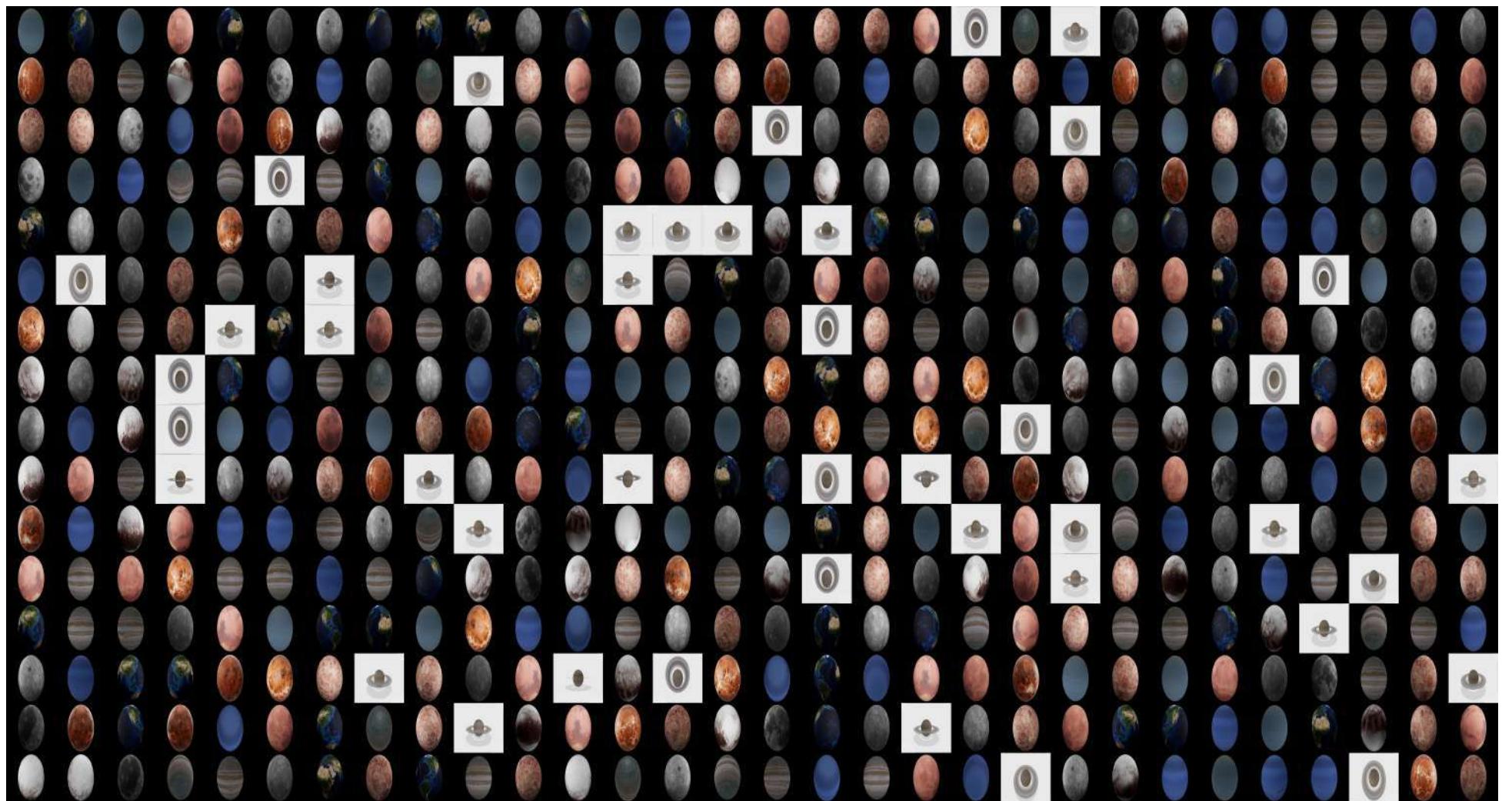
planets_and_moons (empathy is a form of intensity)
video stills





planets_and_moons (empathy is a form of intensity)

fakes000096 - output of StyleGAN2 ADA's Generator Network



planets_and_moons (empathy is a form of intensity)

reals_planets_and_moons - output of StyleGAN2 ADA's Discriminator Network

The music was processed in Max/MSP via Granular Synthesis and features audio recordings captured on Feb. 19, 2021 by the SuperCam instrument on NASA's

Perseverance Mars rover,
8 hours after landing on Mars

"First Audio Recording of Sounds on Mars" NASA, March 10. 2021: <https://mars.nasa.gov/mars2020/multimedia/audio/>

(Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/LANL/CNES/CNRS/ISAE-Supaero)

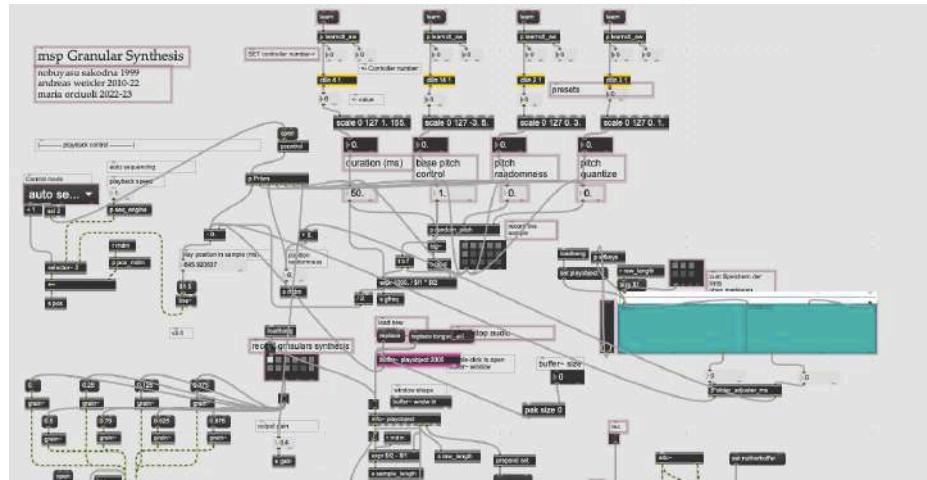
Original sound: [download](#)
Accessed May 1st, 2022

I executed the StyleGAN2 ADA training in May 2022 within the context of the ‘AI4Artists’ workshop held by Thomas Hoch on image generation experiments at the Interface Cultures department of the University of Art & Design in Linz.

Research report published in September 2022:
ResearchGate

GitHub repository: <https://github.com/hochthom/stylegan2-ada-pytorch#readme>

The neural network was trained via Google Colab using an adapted version of the “Planets and Moons - AI in Space” dataset by Emirhan Bulut and available on Kaggle under the CC BY-NC 4.0 license.



Granular Synthesis Patch - Max/MSP





Tomato Propaganda
Pierre Dimitry Meka & Maria Orciuoli
installation view
2022-2023

Tomato Propaganda

- The Self-Destructing Contract

board game, sculpture, 2023

materials:
metal manual press, tomato can hacked
with propaganda sticker label,
130 x recycled cork tokens, scenario
cards print on recycled paper,
PE-LD bags, metal 12-sided dice,
table, chairs, monitors and
documentation videos

2 min video [trailer link](#)

keywords: caporalato system, southern italy tomato supply chain, price bidding game, labor, human rights, migration, social and environmental sustainability

Tomato Propaganda - The Self-destructing Contract is somewhere between an investigation and a PR strategy whose results are presented in the form of installation, board game, public workshopology, participatory performance, and documentary videos.

It operates as a win-win / lose-lose price bidding match for three to ten players (one Seller and more than two Consumers), in which the goal is to agree/reach a price balance to assure that a tin of tomatoes does not get crushed under a manual press. The tomato can's price balance is one that all the consumers-players can afford and that includes a profit for the seller-player. If a price balance is reached, all the players can cook the tomato can.

The installation uses 21st-century's *PR strategy tools (screen, app, smartphone, branding and social media)* to address human rights abuse in the Italian processed tomato's supply chain (locally and globally, from the farmers' fields to the supermarket shelves) and to advocate for responsible sourcing and fair purchase price.

TOMATO PROPAGANDA



The Self-destructing Contract

I am a **tomato can!** One made in southern Italy and exported all over the world. Despite my uniqueness, I am in danger of disappearing, being expelled by production system in which the **Farmers' Organizations** fail to organize themselves to counterbalance the **Large-scale Retailers**, thus leaving the latter with the power to impose low prices. Through **online reverse auctions** using the **double-drop price mechanism**, Large-scale Retailers force the Tomato Processing Industry and the Farmers to compress costs. This system effectively **crushes the supply chain**, making it **environmentally** and **socially unsustainable**

and favoring the persistence of the phenomenon of **Caporalato**—illegal intermediation and exploitation of migrant and Italian workers in the tomato fields. Politically neglected for decades, the Caporalato was made illegal by the Italian government in 2016 (Law of October 29, 2016, n. 199). On November 4, 2021, the Italian Council of Ministers approved the Legislative Decree EU (**DL No. 198**) implementing the European Directive on unfair B2B commercial practices, which includes a **ban on** the purchase of agricultural products through **electronic reverse**

auctions at a discount price. The issues reported by farmers, field laborers and activists persist. However, as the DL No. 198 came into force on December 15, 2021, it is still early to know if it has brought fairness along the supply chain. Consumers' purchasing power can make a difference. However, how can consumers recognize a fair price of a tomato can on supermarkets' shelves? One which reflects the work of the field laborers, the farmers, and the processing industry?



Board game kit: manual press, recycled cork tokens,
tomato can with 'tomato propaganda' paper label, 12-sided metal dice



Scenario card printed
on recycled paper and sealed in PE-LD bags

The scenario cards are inspired from the last two years' news headlines about commodities markets which affects their price volatility and fluctuations.

They are sealed in PE-LD (low-density polyethylene) bags. Half of the plastic collected in EU for recycling is exported to be treated in countries outside the EU; reasons for export include the lack of capacity, technology or financial resources to treat the waste locally; [EU exports of waste to non-EU countries](#) reached 32.7 million tonnes in 2020; the majority of waste goes to Asian and North-African countries ([source](#), Eurostat, 2022 accessed Jan 25. 2023);

According to ISTAT 14.9 thousand immigrants who reached Italy in 2021 came from Tunisia; 7.3 thousand migrants were from Egypt, whereas seven thousand people originated from Bangladesh ([source](#), Statista, 2022 accessed Jan 25. 2023).



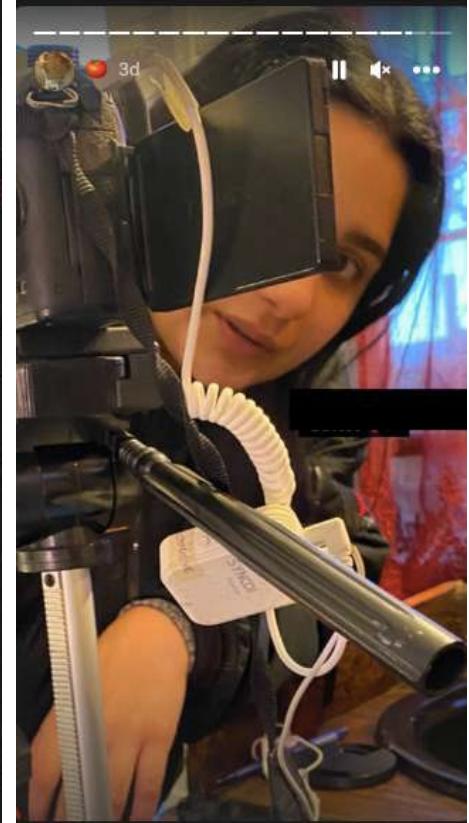
video still

Interview with Pierre Dimitri Meka, a friend, activist and cultural mediator within the program **Su.Pr.Eme Italy** funded by the Emergency Funds (AP2019) of the European Commission - DG Migration and Home Affairs, to combat labor exploitation in agriculture and the Caporalato; Dimitry arrived in Italy via boat 7 years ago and currently works as cultural mediator at the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) of the cities of Salerno and Avellino.



Video still 1. Interview with Assunta Longanella, director of the supermarket CONAD in Montoro (IT) on January 4. 2023

Video stills 2.3.4.5. Board game participatory performance with supermarket clients and staff



Tomato Propaganda's 'making-off' photos and clips and social media dissemination

Debris After Memory (An Old Argument)

video, 2022-2023

4:12 min, digital video (1920 × 1080, HD), color,
sound (stereo / no dialogues)

[Link to video](#)

Keywords: agential realism, human development, scale, post-phenomenology, built environment

Drifting between post-phenomenology studies and artistic research, this audio-visual short uses agential realism to approach thinking with, through, and about the built environment. Following Karen Barad's dedication to diffraction as a form of critique, it superposes various camera choreographies in the longing that their consonances and dissonances can stimulate novel ways of engaging with and perceiving the built environment as a cultural and material agent. It takes from the intertwined physical and metaphysical curiosities that characterize Barad's work, proposing an engagement with the temporal and spatial (dis)continuities that matter helps to understand.

Enormous amounts of materials and energy are embedded in the built environment. As our technological systems scale up, can they bring configurations that are regenerative by design? What if we understood our reality to be much more bound up and reactive to our perceptions and intentions - shifting at levels and in ways that were not entirely predictable? How can this build up our confidence in making a change?

Filmed using the handheld camera technique, the audio-visual narrative explore possibilities of shifts in perspectives through the reconfiguration of relations of scale, exteriority, and connectivity. In a post-phenomenological sense, what is produced by the video camera is an immediate and live 'taking in' of the world shaped by the technical/perceptual apparatus of the camera – just as the human nervous system shapes the visions that seem to 'hit' the eye.

Shot on a family-run workshop in Southern Italy, this piece is a commentary on the idea of scale and human development within the context of the global energy crisis amid supply chain shortages and the rising costs of raw materials.

Debris After Memory (An Old Argument)
video stills



“This audio-visual short evokes a poetic of the elements that make visible some of the mechanics of reality and the symbolism in the built environment.

Debris becomes a storytelling entity. Perhaps, it's violence and how all things are shaped at will or turn to dust. All of these and none of them - and what's the difference anyway, what is matter, what is truth? This is, indeed, an old argument.

Something about this video feels a lot like thought. The mind spends a lifetime thinking, zooming in and out and nothing of reality's essence is broken. So who knows what lies beyond the frame, what is left after memory. The music manifests and hides. This may be the way how thoughts work. In sliding scales. At tempo. In panicked drones. There are no breakthroughs here. It's a work that harbors secrets and emotions between striking notes of tension and release. Like music.”

Debris After Memory (An Old Argument)

site-specific installation,
construction dump in solofra (italy)
2023

oxidized-iron scaffolding frame (2 meters high, 4 meters long connected to Innocenti Tubes through orthogonal joints), copper electrical wires, electronics, steel pipes of varying length, plumbing systems' tubes in zinc-plated iron of varying length, black polyethylene pipes for aqueducts and distribution of water for human consumption, rainwater harvested in a plastic bucket, glass screen, cement bricks, structural clay tile blocks, industrial fencing mesh in polypropylene, paper-print energy bills, standard wooden pallet, electricity

I often hear questions about assessing the environmental impact of A versus B answered with a standard metric (usually in the quantity of carbon released). My father has been working in the construction sector for over four decades. I asked him if there is an environmental impact index out there that encompasses multiple metrics at once, what are the steps to take during an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and if it's possible to trace the footprint of a construction work. While EIA procedures are established in many countries, there is considerable soul-searching about how effective it is and whether EIA is achieving its purposes (especially if EIA stakeholders aren't reading from the same script).

This is an intervention I did in my father's workshop area, while thinking about these things. The sculpture attempts to take in materials and resources that are used in the built environment. These materials are tied to "human development concepts", including land ownership, security, and entrepreneurship among others. It consists of a metallic scaffold with a tube-and-joint system, introduced and patented in 1935 by Italian inventor and entrepreneur Ferdinando Innocenti (1891 - 1966), and widely used today. The iron pipes have been rusting outdoor for nearly twenty years and re-assembled to form the type of temporary scaffolding used to support a work crew and materials in the construction, demolishing, and maintenance of human-made structures in the built environment. This temporary entity attempts to count its components' environmental impact (an abstract concept, potentially unmeasurable) by looping a video memory of its components' debris and the surrounding area.



Debris After Memory (An Old Argument)
installation view on 03.01.2023

RZ Piscium is an Insatiable Eater of Worlds

2019-2022
interactive video installation

One-channel video (7 min, digital, color, sound, no dialogues), gelatin-free gummy candies, recycled metal chair and side-table, microcontroller, car seat's safety belt sensor

Interaction [video](#)

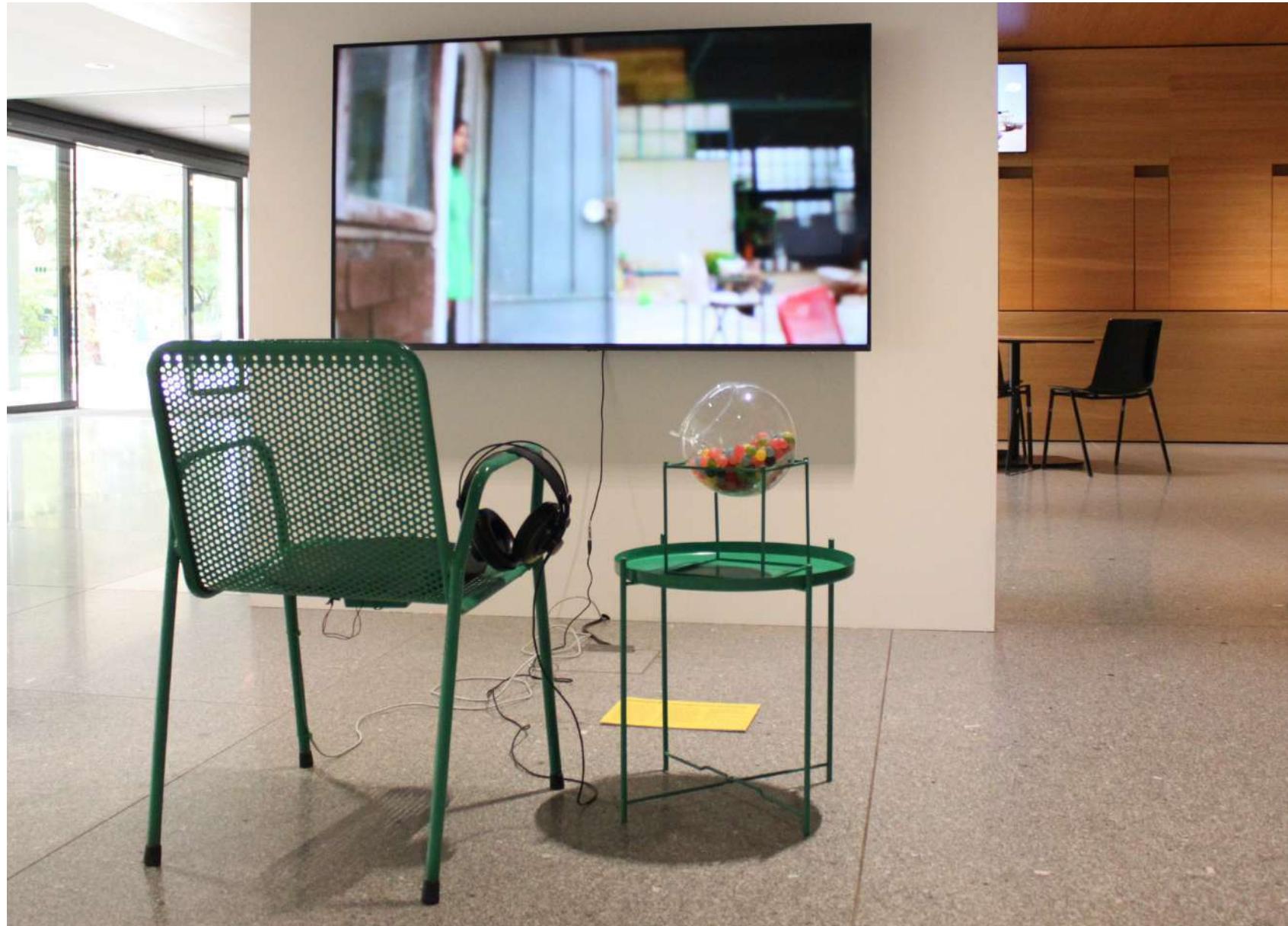
Keywords: consumer culture, saturated self, accelerationism, catharsis

Maria Orciuoli's first video work discusses consumer culture and accelerationism from the point of view of the mind and the body.

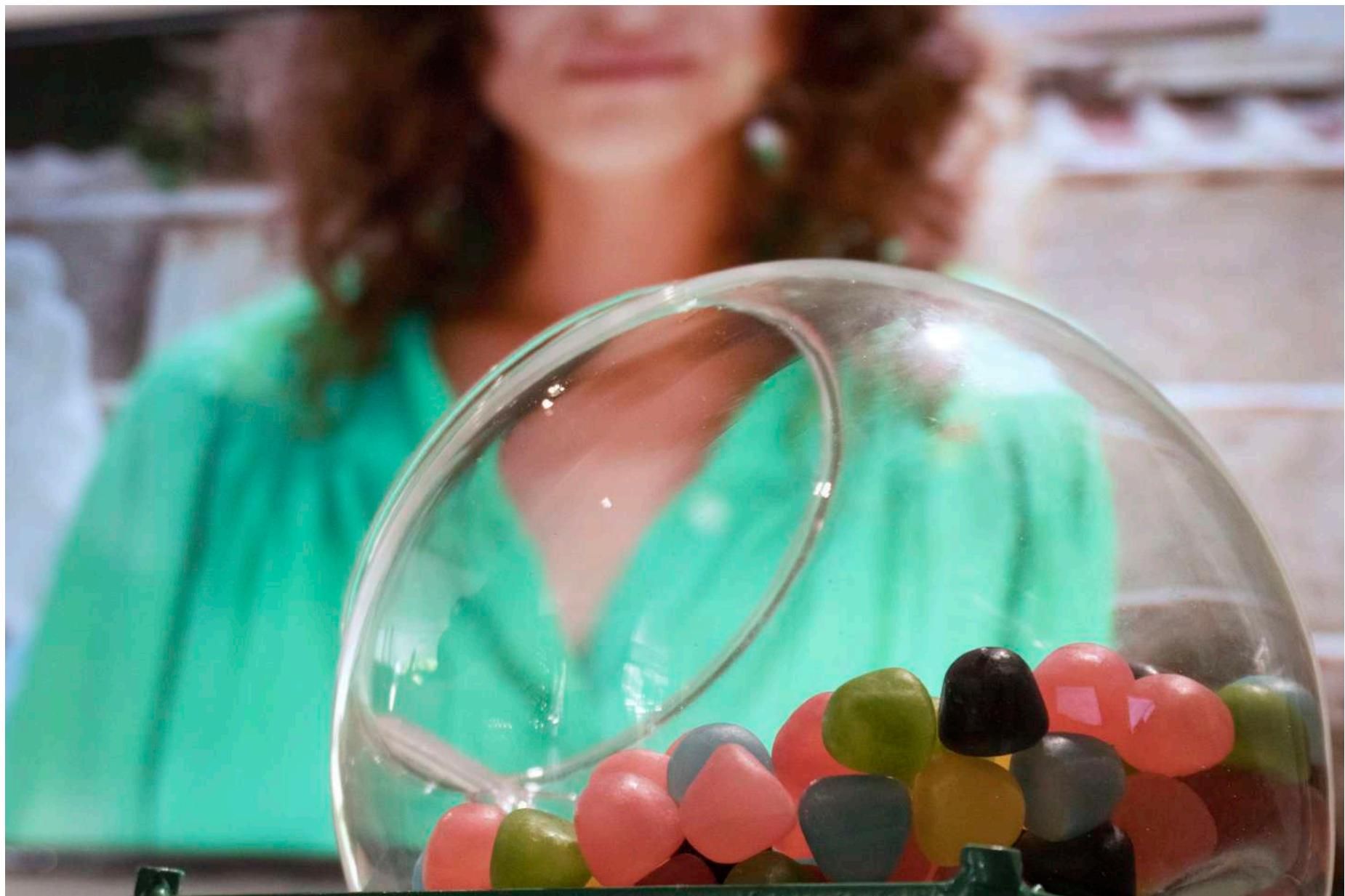
The installation consists of a video projection, gummy candies and a custom sensor seat. In the video, the artist is shown ravenously eating a pile of waste: a binge eating ritual until the closing purging ceremony. Filtered through the artist's experience recovering from an eating disorder, the video questions society's mainstream values as the protagonist finds herself over-saturated by conflicting impulses.

Borrowing the title from the 2017 Astronomical Journal report on the RZ Piscium star dubbed 'Eater of Worlds' for being surrounded by the wreckage of planets it has consumed, the installation is a commentary on the current 'capitalism hangover.'

RZ Piscium is an Insatiable Eater of Worlds
Interactive video installation, 2022



Installation view at Ars Electronica Festival
- Linz, 2022



RZ Piscium is an Insatiable Eater of Worlds installation view at [Ars Electronica Festival](#)
- photo by Indiara di Benedetto Linz, 2022



"A response to the promises of the globalized world, whose ideology of growth, prosperity and progress is based on value extraction and exploiting the many, it asks: can certain developments in society be put on hold, or is it everything already in pieces?

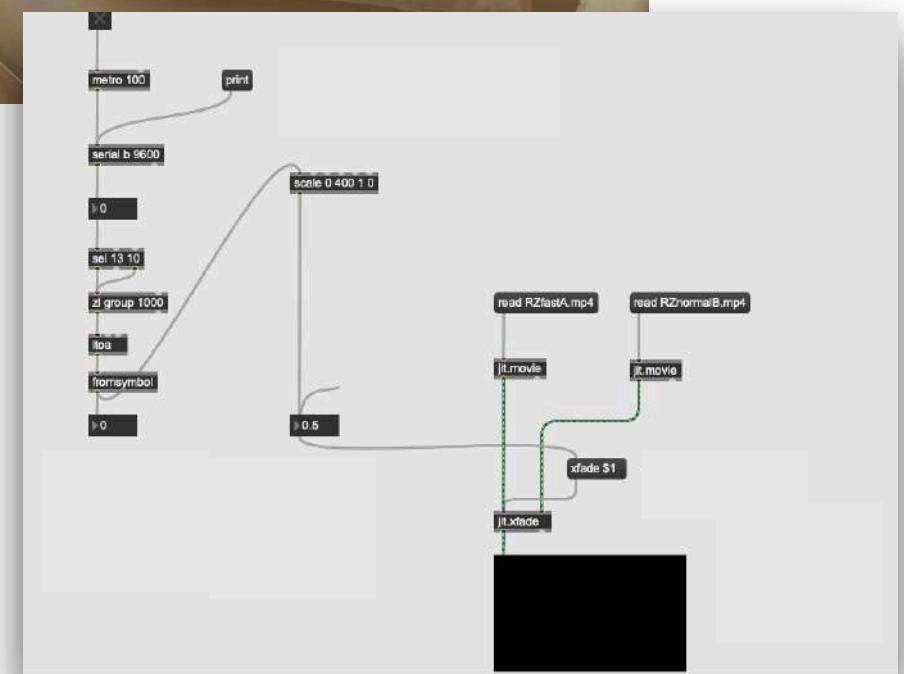
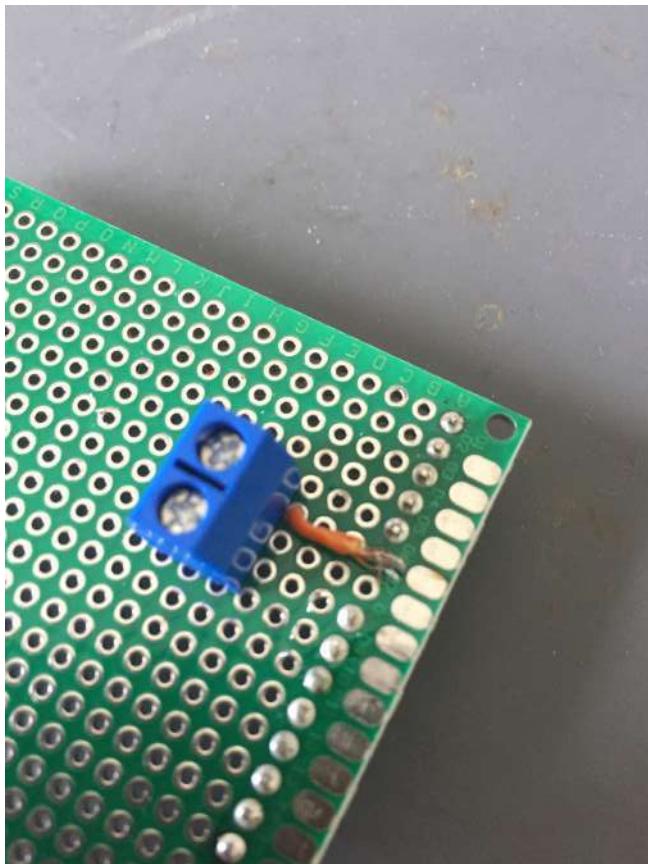
Consumer culture finds expression in offers whose pleasurable and comforting components can't be denied. At the same time, it's evident that the expansion inherent in this consumerist logic not only exploits the natural resources and different ways of living but in fact also dooms those who participates or benefit from it.

The video's narrative affronts society's mainstream values by pairing a parody of grace with the life reality of the protagonist staging the symptoms of an eating disorder.

The installation plays an accelerated sequence of a performance footage captured in 2019 on a construction dump in Southern of Italy. By means of computation, two custom algorithms interfaced by the seat occupancy sensor allow viewing the video at its intended speed. By sitting and watching, the audience becomes complicit in how the film reproduces consumer culture's paradoxical nature. The gummies are an invitation to ruminate on the issues of overconsumption while making edible a part of the installation."

Software: Max/MSP, Arduino IDE

Hardware: Arduino microcontroller, laptop, TV monitor, car seat's safety belt warning sensor



RZ Piscium is an Insatiable Eater of Worlds

video, 2019

7 min, digital video (1920 × 1080, HD), color, sound
(stereo, no dialogue)

Video [link](#)

A person caught in a parody of grace ravenously eats a pile of waste unsettling through a candid exploration of a binge-eating ritual until the closing purging ceremony. This character takes on the role of the trickster figure, playing at the edge of self-destructive tendencies - an allusion to the 'accelerationist' ideas increasingly common across the current technological and political landscape.

A commentary on the current 'capitalist hangover,' the video stages the symptoms of a disease, pointing to the emotional dimensions of this exhaustion.

The soundtrack of the video features recordings of Sun Drum experiments kindly provided by Terredaria - an Italian association promoting the research, and early childhood education in sonic art.

RZ Piscium is an Insatiable Eater of Worlds
video stills



Scream Support System

wearable, cultural prosthetic,
2022-ongoing

force sensor, microcontroller,
peltier module, cotton fabric pillow (30x40 cm), wires

Research:

<https://mariaorciuoli.xyz/energyharvesting.html>

“The apparatus serves to bridge the person’s internal state and the outside. Participants access sensorial energy that has been implicitly or explicitly put to sleep by societal norms. The project was developed in a DIY setting, and in parallel to readings on energy harvesting from the human body’s heat and environmental noise.”

Keywords: scream, thermodynamics, post-phenomenology, cultural prosthetic, energy harvesting, speculative design

Scream Support System is a cultural prosthetic that allows its user to scream, release and transform uncomfortable feelings.

The user’s scream is absorbed by a pillow so that the surrounding environment and people won’t be affected by the loud sound. Below the pillow’s surface, a force sensor detects the user’s face when in contact with it. By pressing the face against the pillow to release the scream, electricity is sent to a Peltier module placed on the user’s chest. By lowering its temperature, the module’s cold side in contact with the user’s skin gives a refreshing sensation. This procedure reproduces the haptic feeling of the emotions released and cooled as they travel from the user’s diaphragm, chest, and throat.

This piece explores the importance of human emotions in a society living under the myth of self-control and autonomy driven by technological symbiosis with machines. We are supposed to be “all things nice” and learn to “behave” from a young age. This project reminds me and whoever can relate to it that all emotions are valid, and repressing them is detrimental to our physical and mental health.

Machines affect how we conceptualize and express ourselves, social perception, the feeling of agency, and action. Social awareness is brought out by accessing and imagining different interplays of humans and machines through custom interaction design and breathing techniques, and individuals are encouraged to reinvent their existence. Scream Support System is visible play-use equipment that offers context-sensitive functionality to its wearer. Simultaneously it announces the need for existence by being used in public without being hidden.

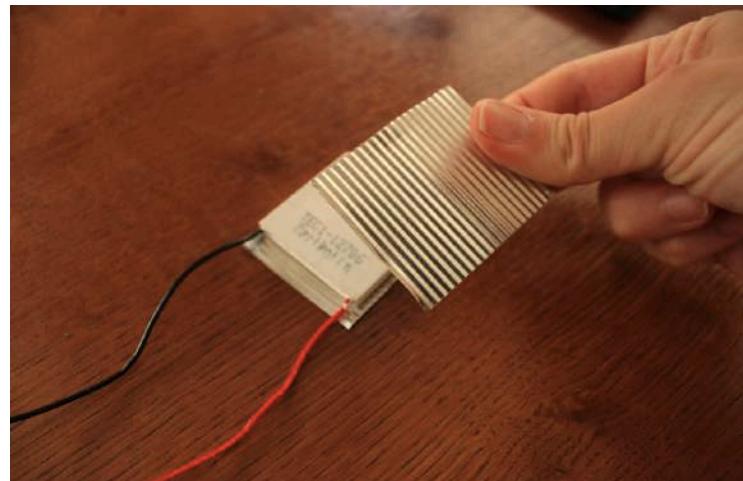


Scream Support System
prototype

Scream Support System
prototype



Scream Support System
prototype



The Perfect Day in a Drop

installation, 2022

glass vessel (variable), glass dropper (7cm long),
rain sample (variable), cotton fabric (variable)

documentation:

<https://mariaorciuoli.xyz/theperfectdayinadrop.html>

video:

5:17 min (loop), digital (1920 × 1080, HD), color, sound
(stereo / dialogues / english subtitles)

<https://vimeo.com/705875754>

What forms of wet poetics and practices emerge from encounters with rain? How can memory and my perception of time be (re-)imagined through the lenses of rain as a contingency?

I spent most of my childhood in Southern Italy where sunny days are the norm. I used to dislike rain and only made peace with it after years of living in Germany and Austria.

In April 2022, I started collecting raindrops falling in Linz. This project explores my relationship to rain, as the water-based phenomena that makes me company for nearly half of my yearly life time.

Accompanied by a documentation video, the artifact consists of a rain sample preserved in a glass vessel, a glass dropper and a cotton cloth. The vessel is a materialization of time: it encapsulates the memory of the raindrops collection while providing the audience a space for intention and contemplation.



The Perfect Day In A Drop
WHA Gallery, Linz 2022



The Perfect Day in a Drop
documentation

The Politics of Picking a Pope

interactive sculpture, 2021

Keywords: human-computer interaction, lock-in effect, economics of the QWERTY, path-dependence, speculative design

materials:
modified QWERTY keyboard, metal key installed on the Return switch, computer, monitor (variable dimensions), desk (variable dimensions)

documentation (30 secs):
<https://vimeo.com/699468448/4bd90e7ee1>

This artistic provocation, departs from the archetypal allegation of the QWERTY keyboard configuration as industry standard as well as from the economic theory's concepts of 'path dependence' and 'lock-in effect' by historical events.

Path dependence occurs when a feature of the economy (institution, technical standard, pattern of economic development) is not based on current conditions but has been formed by past actions. Past development decisions can influence and constrain future choices, leading to a 'lock-in' to a particular development path preventing newer alternatives from taking hold.

The QWERTY layout transferred seamlessly from the 70's mechanical typewriters to computers and touch screens and is ubiquitous wherever the Latin alphabet is standard. In cultures overdetermined by concepts from economics, we are left without discursive instruments to comprehend how free market-driven standardization systems worked and will continue to empower innovators to revolutionize the way we work, learn, communicate and play. This project explores an alternative design of the computer keyboard that is not driven nor thoroughly integrated in capitalist production - or culture. The function of these inquiries is to reflect on past, current and future trajectories of technology influences on human behavior.

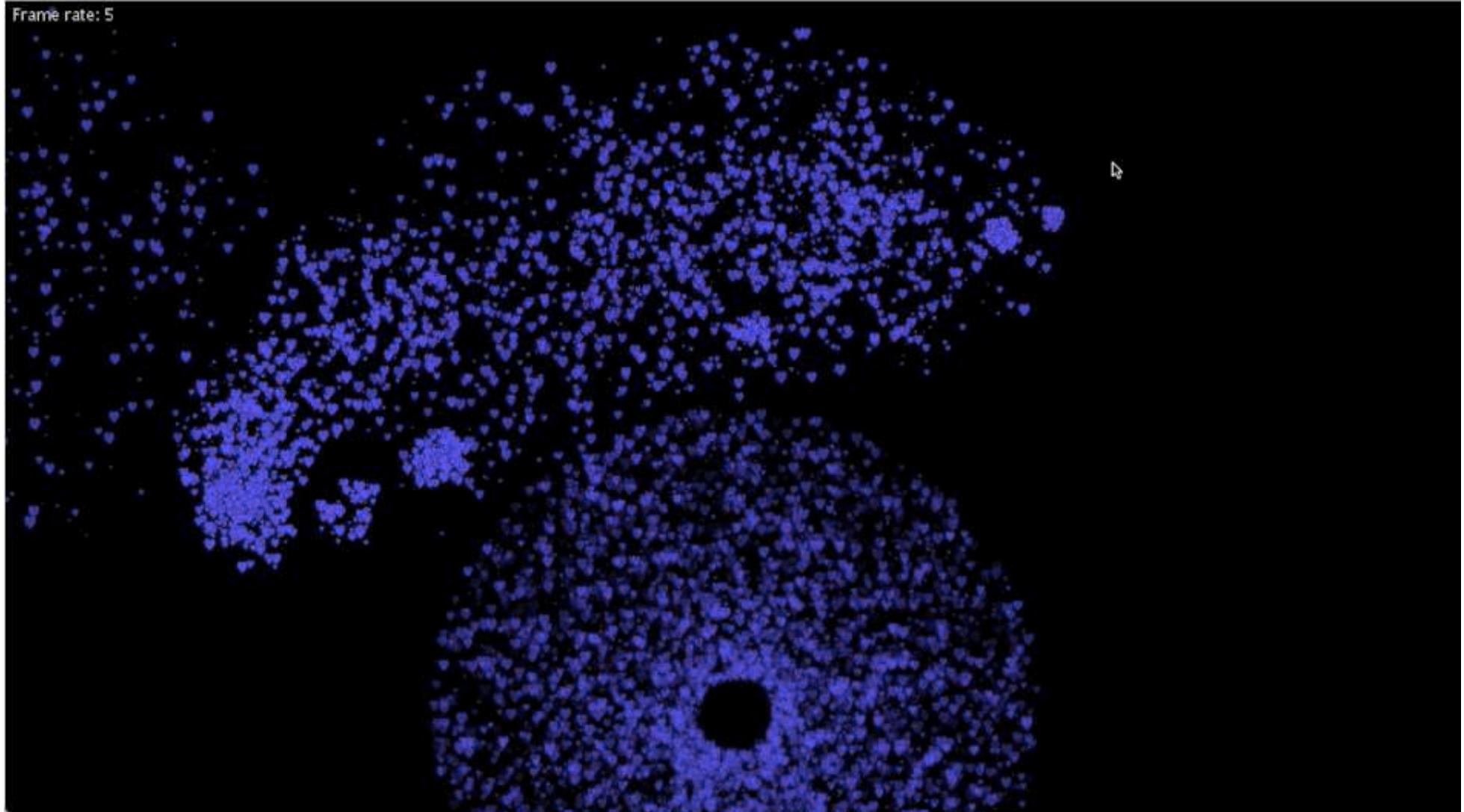
The experiment consists of a blank QWERTY keyboard with a key installed on the Return switch (the installed key captures the notion of 'lock in' effect). The interface challenges the user to rely on 'touch-typing' to enter a sentence in a text file appearing on the computer monitor. This procedure seeks to make perceptible to the user the persistence of the QWERTY arrangement at the cognitive level and provides a speculative reference to the 'spectre of the universal.'

The Politics of Picking a Pope, 2021



Installation view at the Interface Cultures department, Linz 2021

Frame rate: 5



emo_rendering
video still of mouse-computer interaction of
'Heart_Particle' sketch in
Processing.py

emo_rendering
documentary film & algorithm, 2021

'Heart_Particles' code available on [Github](#)

Documentation video (3 min, colors, dialogues, English subtitles): [link](#)

Video interviews
(7 min, colors, dialogues, English subtitles): [link](#)

keywords: human-computer interaction, unconditional love, infinity, affective computing

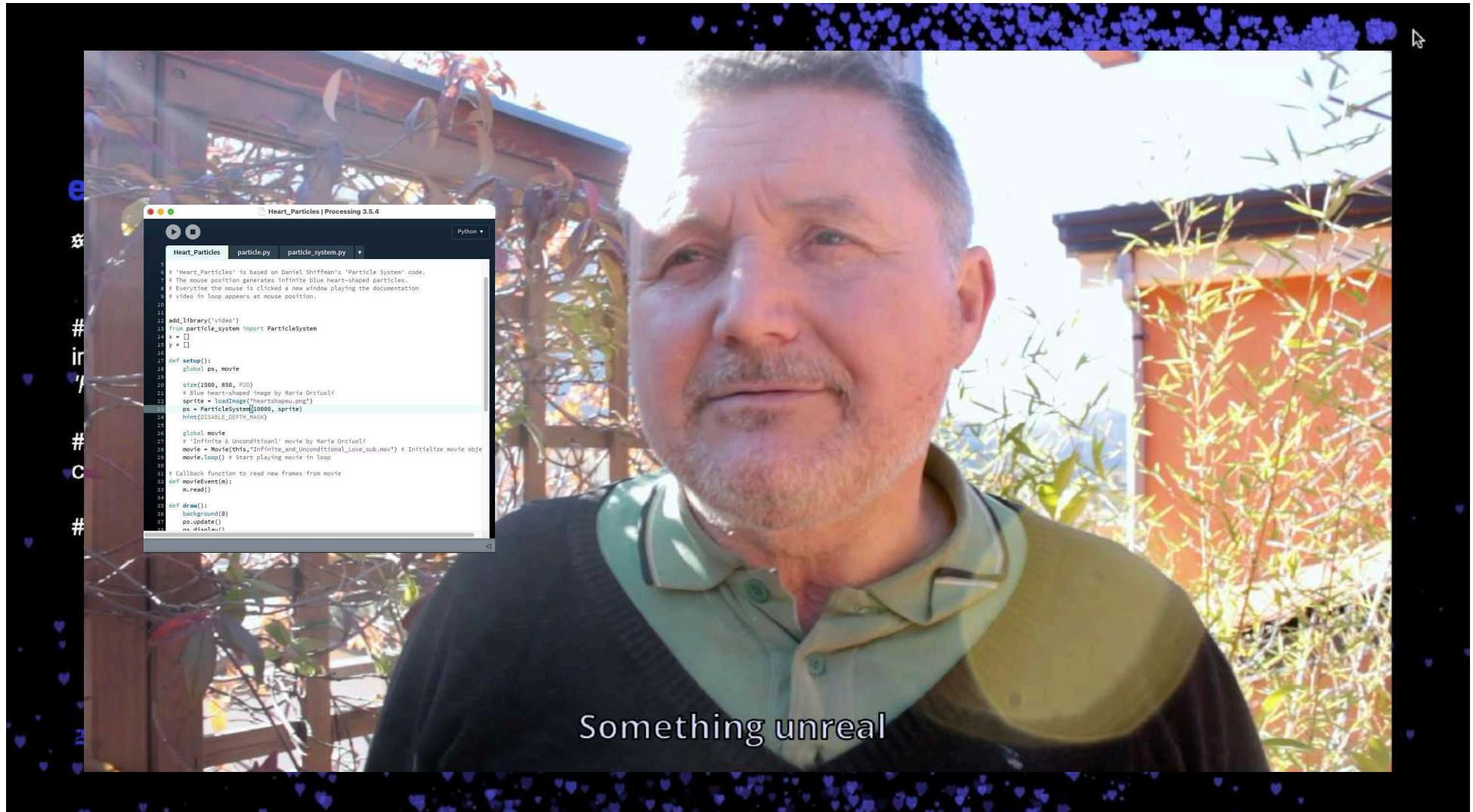
'emo_rendering' came up in response to the increasing impact of technology in my social interactions. It combines documentary, performance, and creative coding to explore our cultural relationship to concepts tied to our desire for care and interconnectedness.

Humans are made to be in relationships. We have an innate longing to share our lives with family, friends, and partners. This type of social interaction is essential and complex. A person sends and receives information in many ways when communicating with someone physically in front of her. For instance, a conversation is not just about the words; instead, the message includes tone of voice, body language, facial expressions, context, and sometimes touch.

While in-person interaction is the most genuine form of social interaction, many of today's digital devices extend our abilities to connect with each other while being far apart. At the same time, the disability of our digital devices can be seen through the loss of tangible human interaction.

This piece was made to reflect on the importance of human interdependency in a society living under the myth of autonomy driven by technological symbiosis between humans and computers.

emo_rendering
documentary film & algorithm, 2021

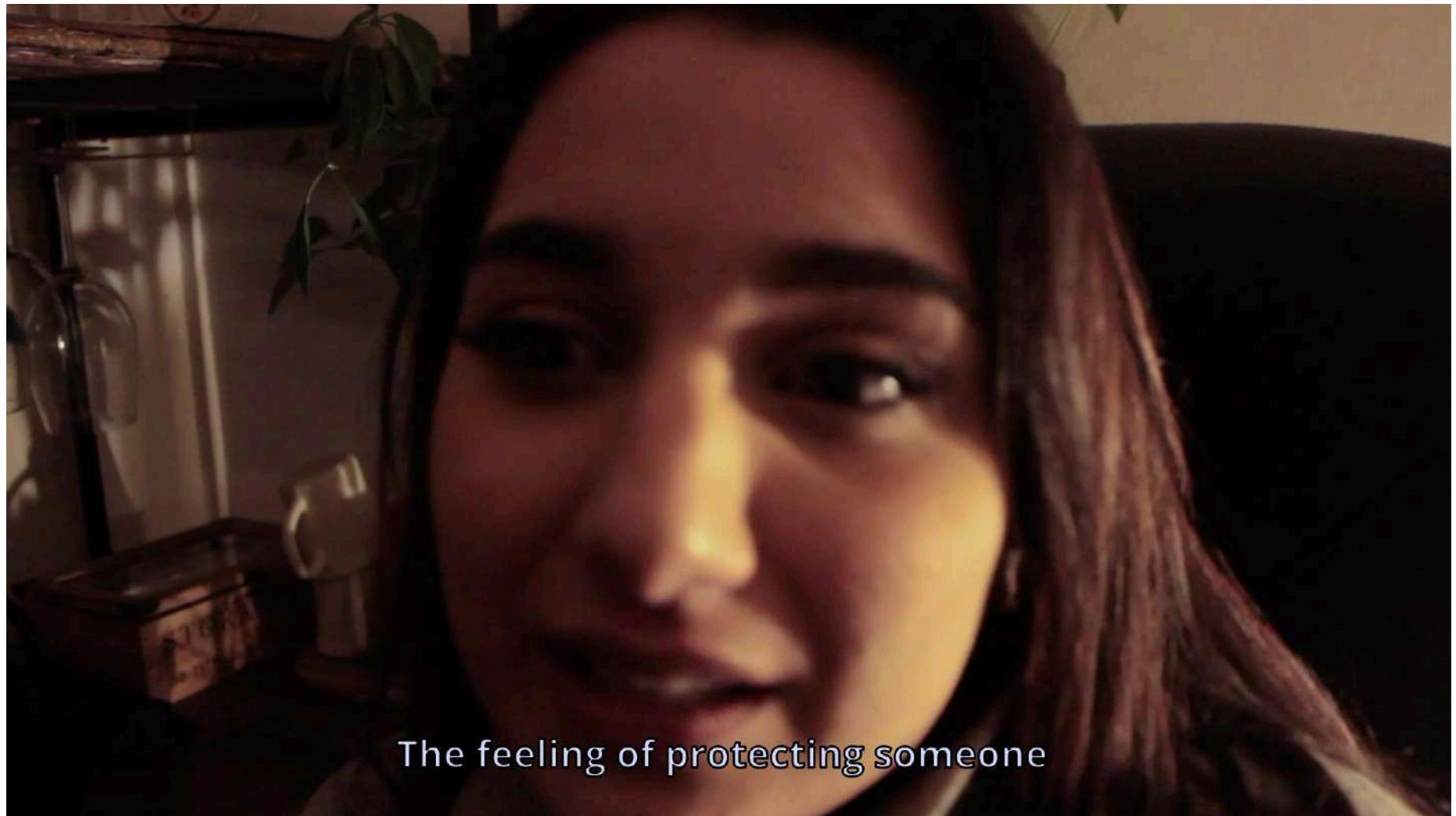


documentary video still + processing.py code screenshot



It's a very big word

emo_rendering
documentary video still



The feeling of protecting someone

emo_rendering
documentary video still



anatomy of a gossip

anatomy of a gossip

performance & documentation video, 2020

one-channel video: 5 min, loop, digital (3840 × 2160, 4K), color, sound (stereo / no dialogues), monitor or projector, loud speakers or headphones

video [link](#)

keywords: bias, tribalism, human error, noise

“ Wherever there is judgement, there is noise - and more of it than you think.” - Daniel Kahneman, *Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgement* (2021)

'Anatomy of a Gossip' is a five-minute audio-video work with footage from a performance and social experiment I held in August 2021 in Solofra, Italy.

The project's audio-visual semantic explores the tension between ideology, humanity and how we communicate within our means and communities. It asks: how do we experience, organize and agree on the reality we perceive in the overflow of data, placed as both the recipients and the creators of a multiplicity of interpretations?

For this experiment, a group of friends (people who share beliefs and a language code) was asked to sit in a closed circle and pass a message into each other's ears without revealing aloud. The experiment took place in the form of the popular children's game 'Chinese Whispers' ('Telephone' in English, or 'Il gioco del telefono senza fili' in Italian), and concluded with the participants being unable to remember correctly the first version of the message.

In my view, the experiment's result suggests that the participants' attention was more focused on the message's propagation process - its social function - than its significance. I wished to crystallize this human moment and use it to reflect on how individual and collective world-views emerge, dissolve, and adapt - with our biology and communication technology adding layers of complexity to the processes.

Sonically, the project traces a parallel between the subjective nature of noise (what is noise to some - perceived as intrusive, unwanted, or inadequate - can be meaningful to others), and the transmission of information conveyed in an evaluative manner (the activity of gossiping is one of the oldest and most popular examples).

The music was produced by French sound artist Colin Tobelem using modular synthesizers. The project's sonic interpretation recalls the propagation of carrier waves and their relationship to noise. Noise challenges what human perception considers agreeable and pleasurable. The use of noise music in the video aims at leaving up to the audience the decision to find meaning in it, or reject it - this aspect points to the ambiguity and the junctures at which a multiplicity of subjective interpretations of reality are presented but where no unifying perspective endures. The use of 'power electronics music' symbolically traces a parallel with the infrastructure supporting today's digital communications - the basics of transmission of information via electrical carrier, where information is often incomplete, or precarious.

The project also takes a critical look at how stories bring together people who have a shared perception of the world and how this often establishes a line between insiders and outsiders. The installation of the video places the viewers as witnesses of the transmission of the message between the experiment participants, without the possibility to take part in it. The documentation exercise leaves open a doorway to the viewers to feel intimately connected to the real event.



video stills



video stills



Anatomy of a Gossip
documentary / performance video (2021)

Experiment participants: Pierre Dimitri Meka, Ilenia Orciuoli, Arnelle Nonon, Donato David D'Alessio, Francesca Penna, Gerardo D'Arco

Music: Colin Tobelem

Camera & video: Maria Orciuoli

Literary reference

Kahneman, D., Sibony, O., & Sunstein, C. R. (2021). Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgement



performance-experiment photos at Oracma Studio in the city of Solofra (Italy), 2021