

SIMULATING SOFTNESS

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ABSTRACT

The sense of touch might be the firmest and “most real” thing. Stepping on a spongy, mossy field right after the rain, putting hands into a cold lake and feeling the wind move the water, feeling a piece of silk that slips smoothly against the skin... When we touch soft objects, we temporarily participate in their shape-morphing with our movement and physical existence. Touching softness gives us a pleasant and calming feeling, and we become easily comforted and convinced. This feeling is so prevalent and addicting that it is not surprising when we become drawn to simulated softness. In reality, randomness can be organic and unintentional. This easily achieved chain of anatomical reactions becomes overwhelmingly intricate and complex in simulations. To render softness virtual, the process starts to feel like coercion.

In talking about softness, this research and writing process tries to abandon hard logic and reasoning while adopting a more rhizomatic way of thinking, mutating, and expanding into different topics.

Topics that are covered in the research tentatively include:

- Slime
- Computer Graphics, soft body simulation
- Perception of softness
- Softness as a weapon in politics: borders, surveillance, soft power

BIO

I am a Chinese artist, technologist, and music producer currently based in Berlin. I am a master's student at Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg studying Digital Graphics under professors Konrad Renner and Christoph Knoth. I also work part-time as a residency coordinator for China Residencies, a New York-based arts non-profit organization. The proposed presentation "Simulating Softness" is a part of my ongoing thesis research. The research will accumulate into a thesis paper as well as a video piece.

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