

The First Biennale of Experi—men—tal Micro—nations

**The First
Biennale of
Experimental
Micro
nations**

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Land

Sea

Micronations

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Introduction

In *Atlas of Countries that Don't Exist: A Compendium of Fifty Unrecognized and Largely Unnoticed States*, geographer Nick Middleton suggests that countries as we know them are not the only legitimate basis for ordering the planet. *Atlantium* for example is a non-territorial community of globally distributed citizens, and *The Kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland* (KREV), consists of all territories including geographical, mental (e.g., dream states), and digital, making it the largest realm on *Earth*. And then there's *Antarctica*, a landmass used only by scientists, tourists, and penguins.

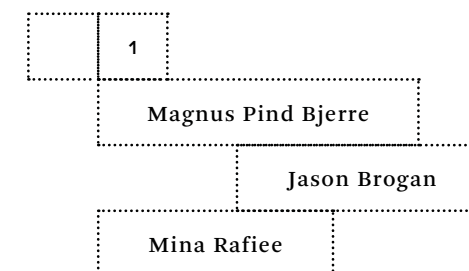
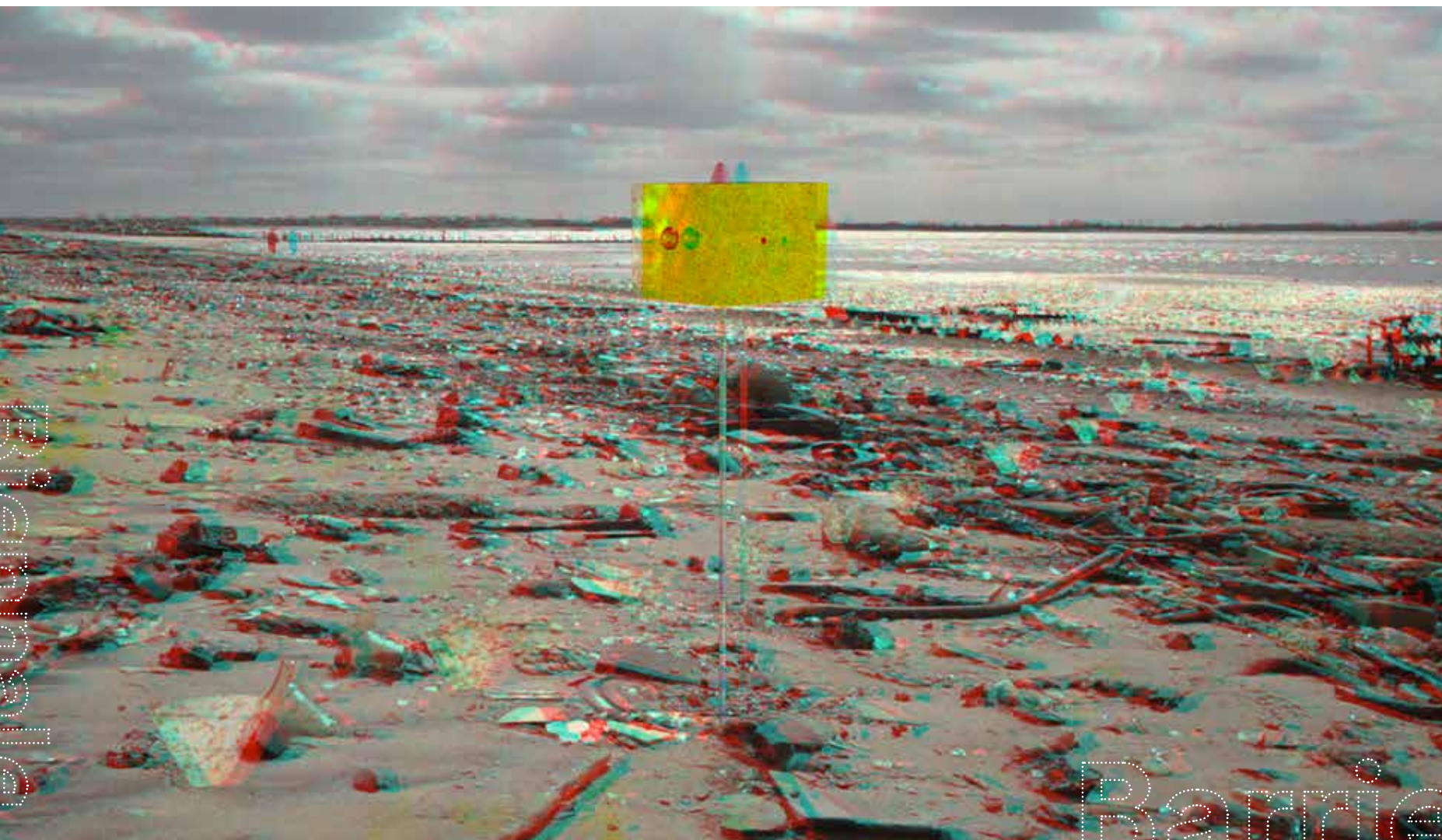
In this class, students from a range of programs across The New School including Design & Technology, Anthropology, and Design Studies, at BFA, MFA, MA, and PhD levels, developed design responses to the idea of a micronation as a platform for exploring new perspectives on citizenship, nationality, the sovereign state, and territory. Their designs are not concrete proposals, but glimpses into imagined worlds which

hint at alternative modes of being, new forms of social relations, de-centering human interests, and uses of emerging technology informed by alternative beliefs, values, hopes, fears, and dreams to those driving its current development. Most are neither dystopian nor utopian but instead, embody dilemmas and highlight possible tradeoffs.

Whole new worlds are imagined by writers, film makers, and artists. Could we borrow this approach to develop projects which provoke thought and further imagining about the kind of world(s) we wish to live in rather than communicating a vision of how things will or should be?

This booklet is a kind of catalogue for a fictional First Design Biennale of Experimental Micronations where design is used not to promote new technologies or attract new clients, roles familiar to visitors of many contemporary design festivals, but instead, to suggest a multiplicity of alternative worldviews.

— Anthony Dunne & Fiona Raby



Barrierland

> Apr 1 2019 06:33:21-18:33:21

Rule of cultural institutions in the techno-social domain: generating an archive. But there is a risk of fossilization.

A nation at the forefront of technologically-driven innovation and automated governance, Barrierland is cooperatively owned and operated by its 650 human inhabitants. Its combination of cutting-edge data science and artificial intelligence (known as BrAIIn) affords its citizens a unique post-work lifestyle both centered on and driven by a leisure activity: Data Fishing.

Along daily tidal cycles, Barrierlanders traverse the Tidelander environment in order to position and retrieve data fishing devices that employ various sensor and networking technologies. In addition, conoidal data monuments are constructed and serve as physical archives of life in Tideland.

An observation from the Gerridae Drone.
A Conoid Monument is visible.

> Apr 2 2019 06:33:21-18:33:21
Big data is the new whole.



> Apr 3 2019 20:43:21-06:43:21

Our BrAIn collects patterns that are not evident to human agents. Its automated cognition sifts through vast quantities of information.



Gerridae Drone

> Apr 4 2019 20:43:21-06:43:21

Our BrAIIn collects evidence and intelligence on the interactions between Tidelanders and their relationships to their institutions and microorganisms.



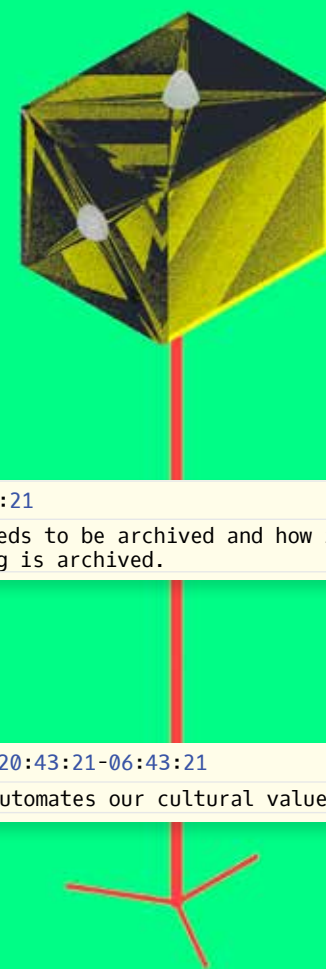
Panoptic Surveyor

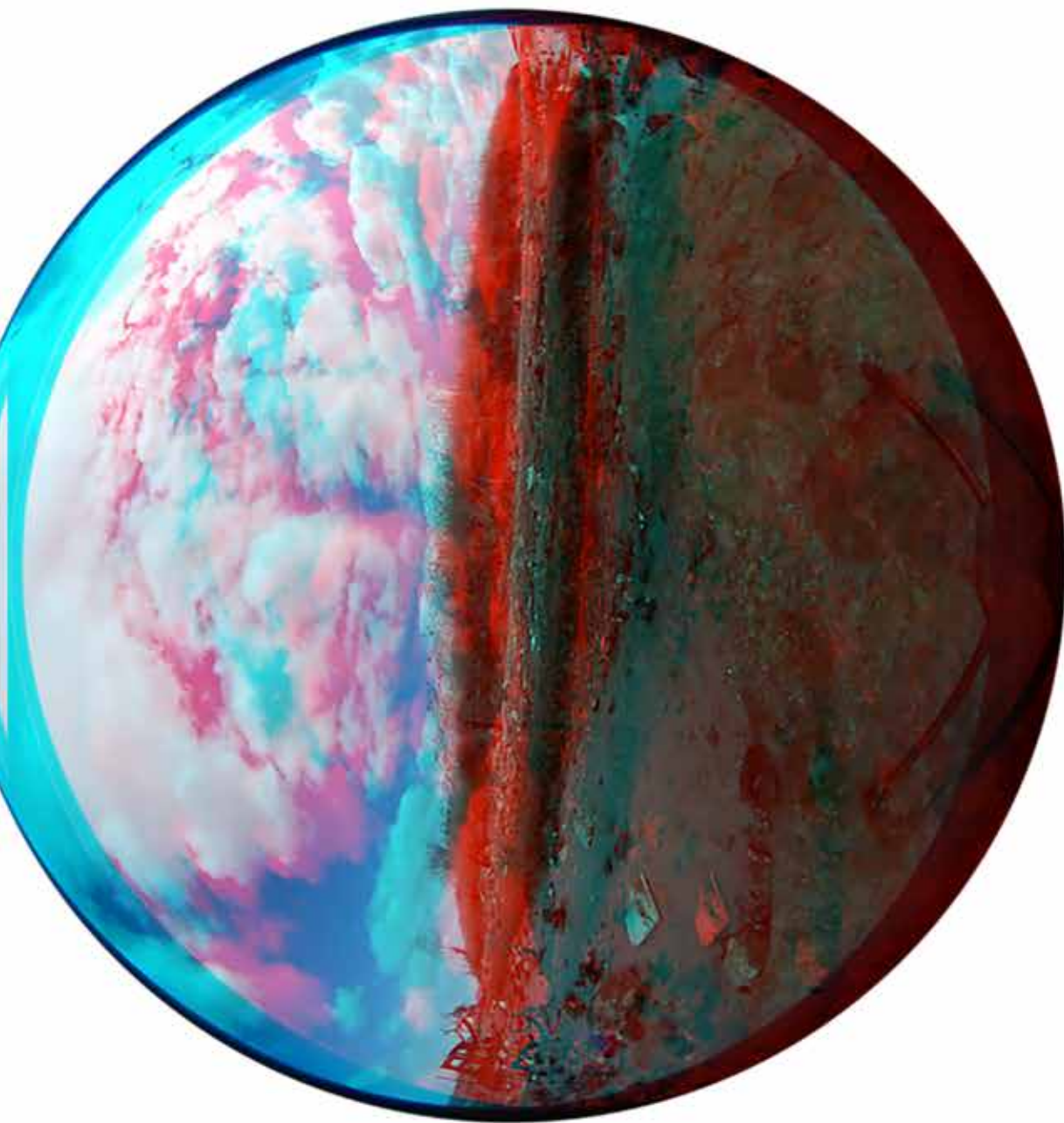
> Apr 5 2019 20:43:21-06:43:21

Our BrAIIn defines what needs to be archived and how it needs to be remembered. Yet everything is archived.

> Apr 6 2019 20:43:21-06:43:21

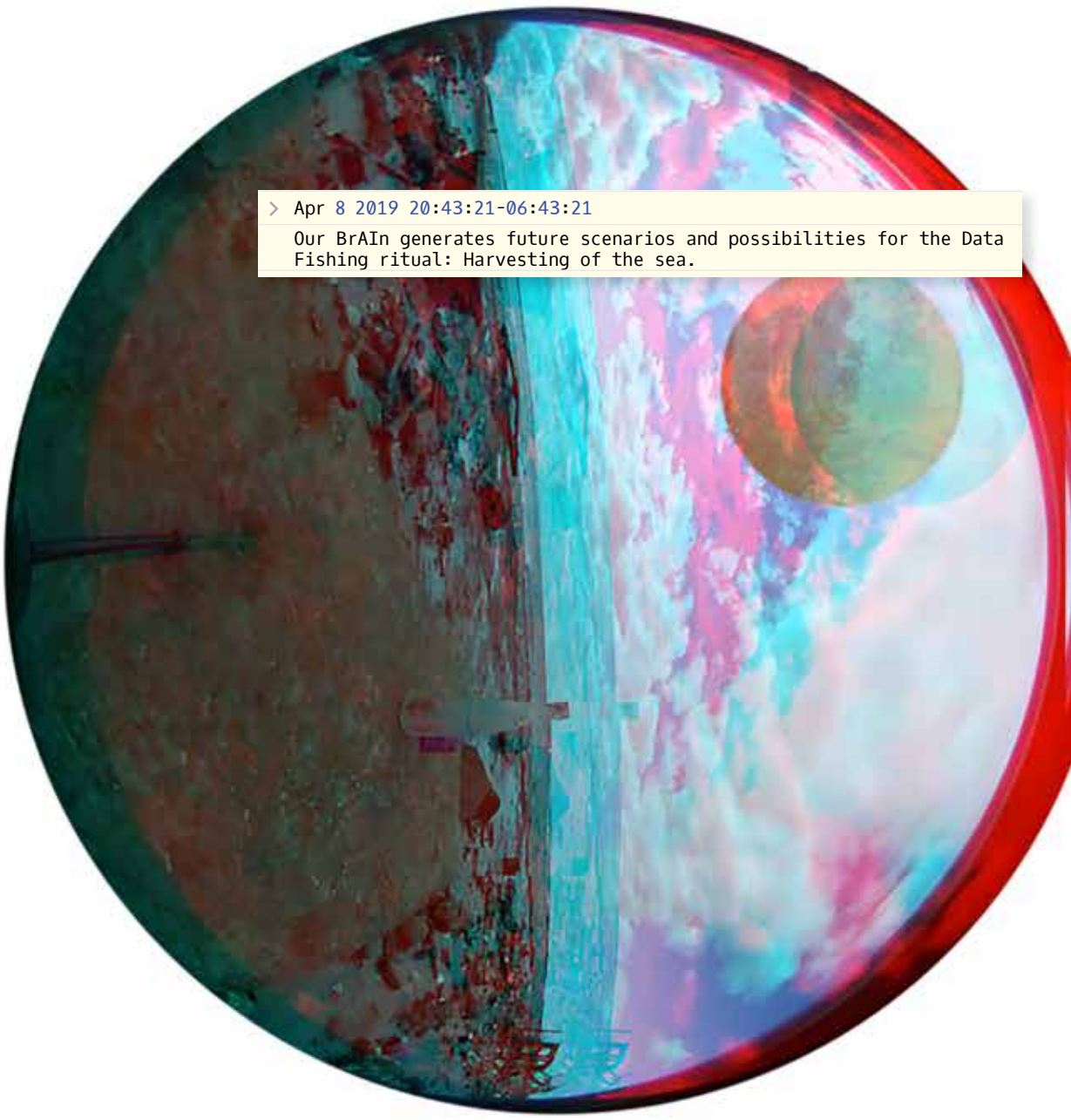
Our BrAIIn automates our cultural values.





> Apr 7 2019 20:43:21-06:43:21

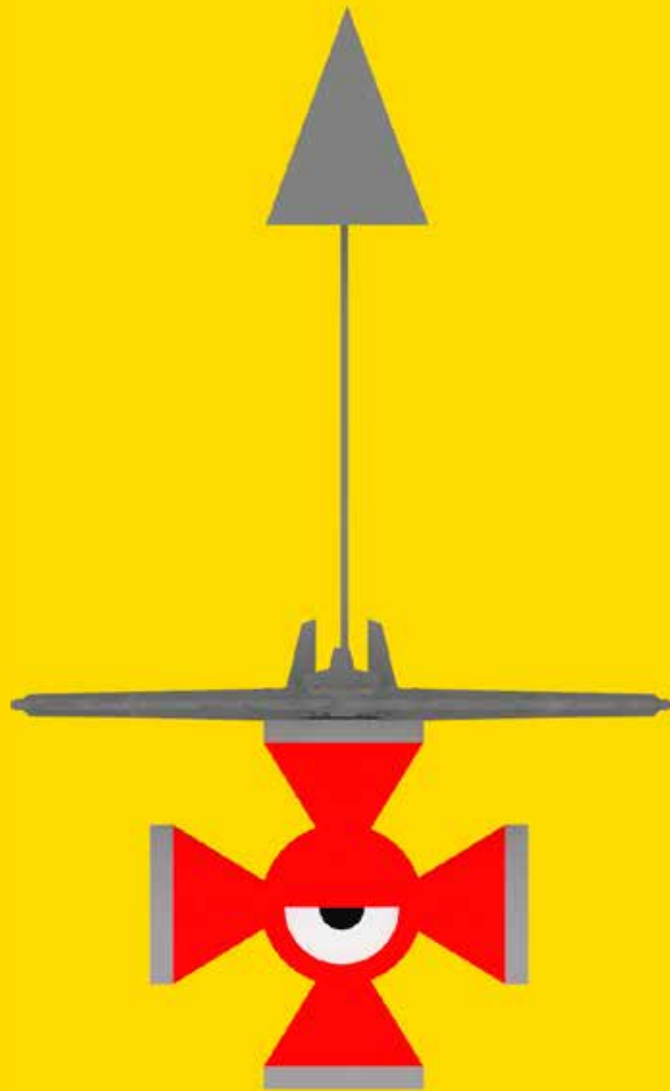
Our BrAIn encodes Tideland data at various temporal resolutions, so that current and future Tidelanders, Barrierlanders, or alien visitors can learn from it.



> Apr 8 2019 20:43:21-06:43:21

Our BrAIn generates future scenarios and possibilities for the Data Fishing ritual: Harvesting of the sea.

Panasonic Surveyor

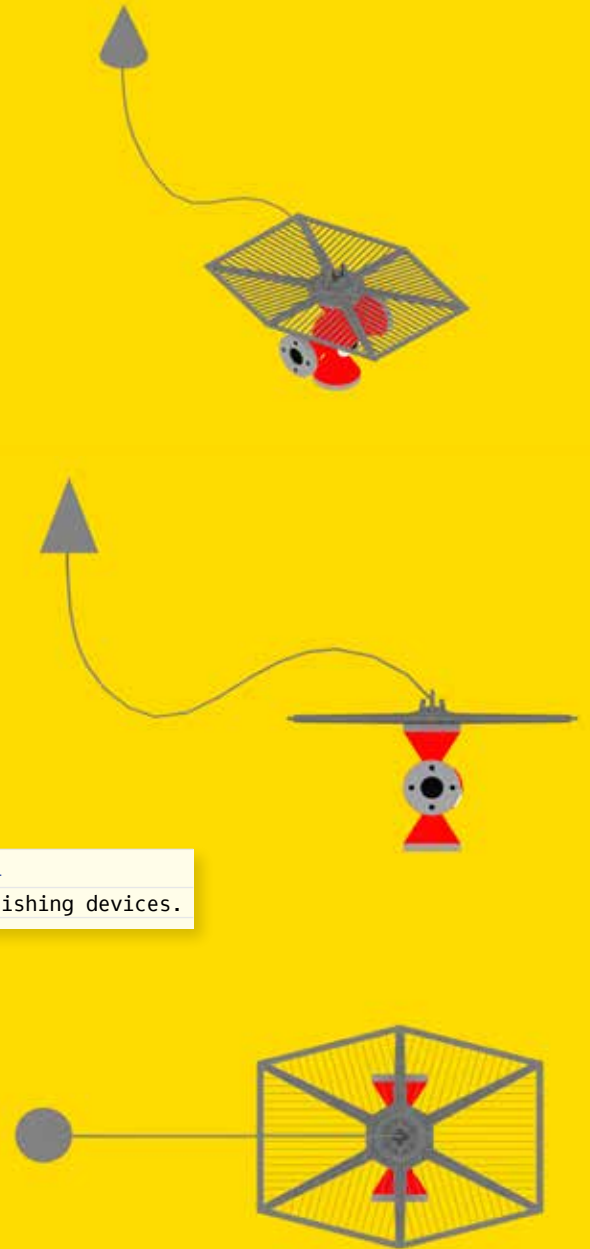


Left:
FRONT VIEW

Top:
PERSPECTIVE
VIEW

Middle:
SIDE VIEW

Bottom:
TOP VIEW



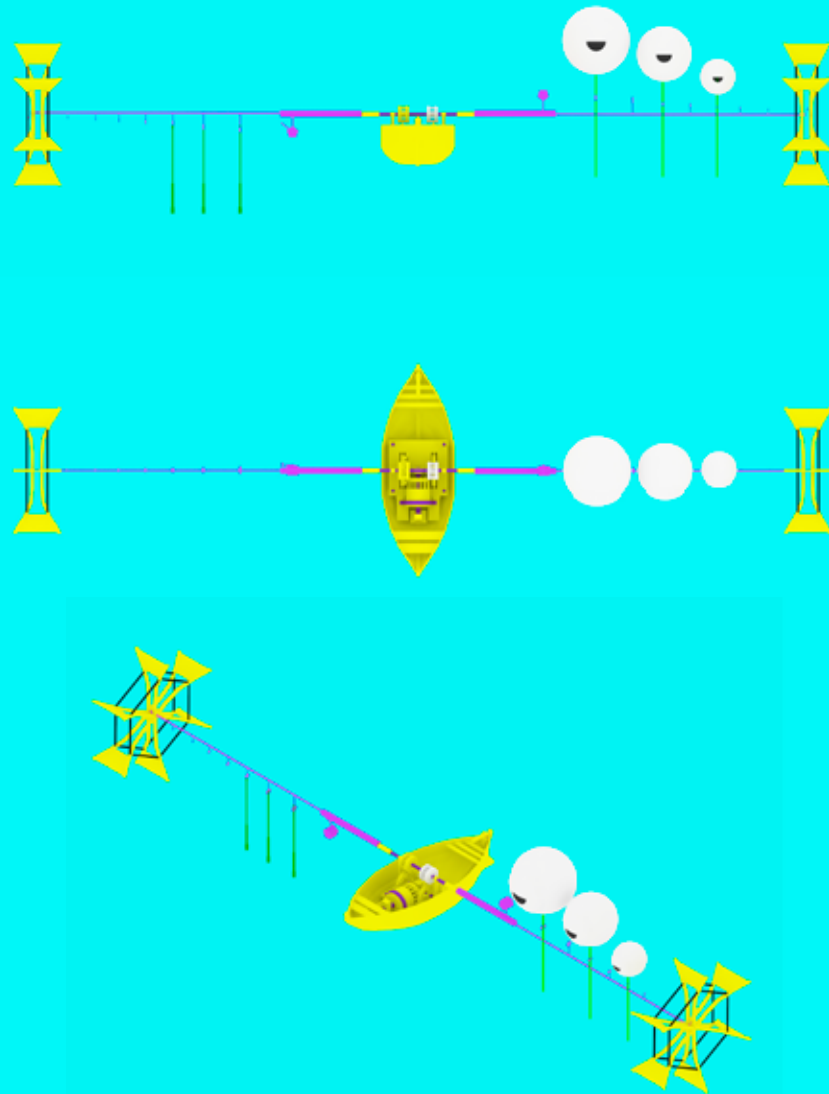
> Apr 9 2019 20:43:21-06:43:21
Our BrAIIn creates new Data Fishing devices.



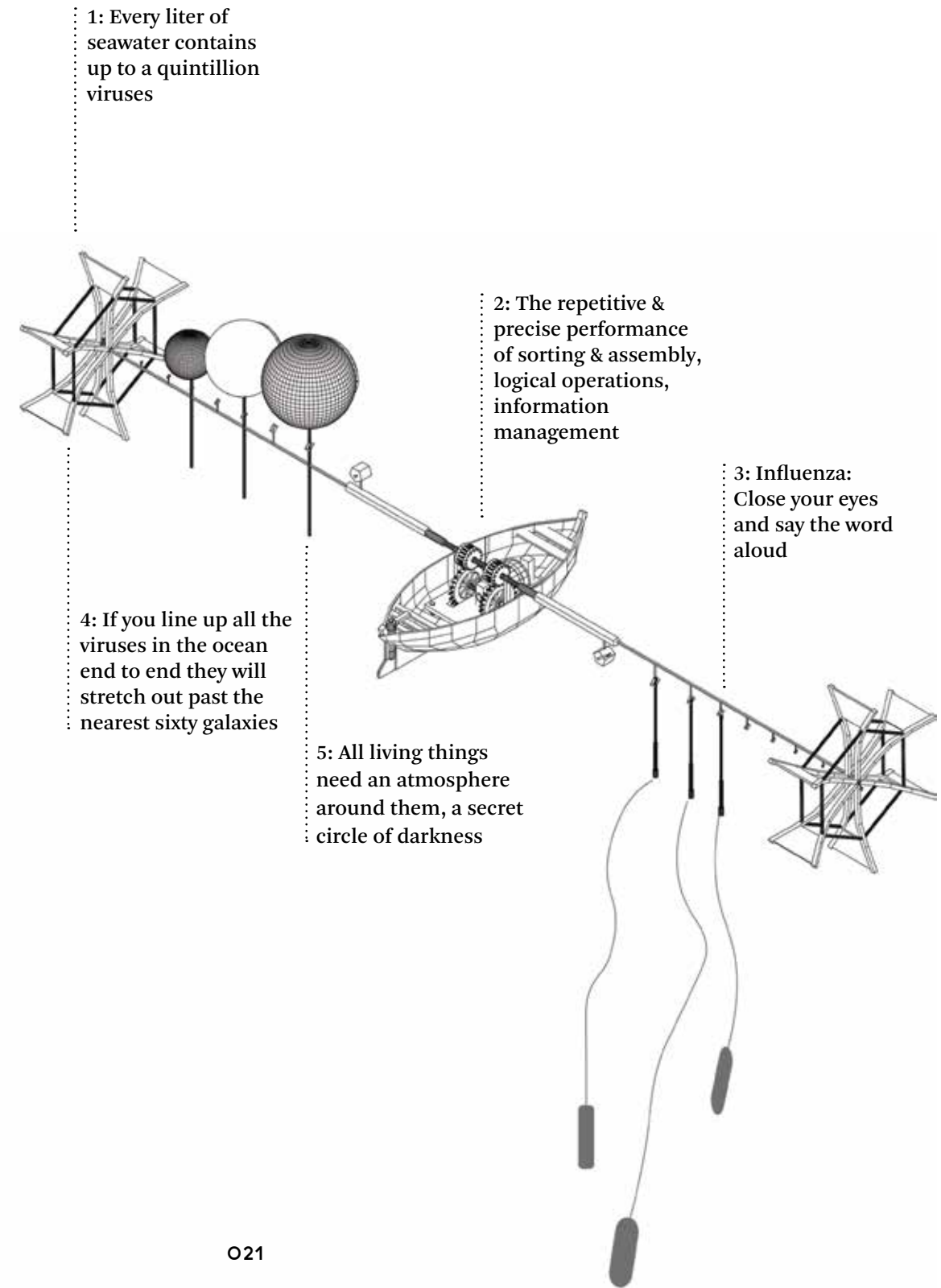
> Apr 10 2019 20:43:21-06:43:21
Our BrAIIn defines what needs to be public and private. The decision-making process is transparent.

> Apr 11 2019 20:43:21-06:43:21
Our BrAIIn is not an agent of automation.

Tidal Cycle Rig



Tidal Cycle Rig Device



2

Carlota Aoun

Corey Chao

Yumeng Wang

Tidelands

MICROBES INVENTED

THE HUMAN

The Tidelands are a micronation of nearly four quadrillion residents located in the coastal territory between high and low tides. Here, humans are the utter minority—generally left to their own devices to parse the political arrangements of its nonhuman citizens. Communities of post-Capitalocene microbes rapidly populate, consume, and reinvent their habitat with the rising and falling of the water; humans wander the shore, attempt to learn from alternate forms of governance, and even offer their own bodies as vessels for the evolving metabiome of the Tidelands.

POST-CAPITALOCENE

The setting might seem familiar—built atop human waste and reclaimed by the sea—but the Tidelands are a nation humans are only starting to understand. The Tidelands has its own unfamiliar politics and economy, hierarchies, and will. Some humans frequent the shore, others are perpetually there—physically in the flesh, and essentially in the signatures of their own microbiomes left behind, immigrated and inducted into the ebbs and flows of the Tidelands.

CREATIVE

DESTRUCTION

Tidelanders value the connections among their citizenry, the sorts of symbioses, dependencies, and competitions that ultimately power rapid coevolution. The creatures here are addicted to a collaborative, creative digestion: a cycle, like the tide itself, that lubricates their habitat, leaves nothing static, circulates citizens across a territory of massive and ever-changing genetic diversity—toward new microbial innovations.

This emphasis on microbial relationships manifests in the genetics of Tidelanders, and is made visible atop the bodies of local human residents. These humans consider themselves both passive carriers and active collaborators in the tidal creations. Their wearables provide an interface to communicate with the microbes, though the language itself is still primitive. For example, the wrinkles on human cuffs, rich with nutrients, accumulate microspecies and facilitate new creative collaborations.

NONHUMAN

AGENCY

Are these humans considered citizens? Arguments have gone both ways. They have certainly sought ways to expand their role as hosts, as body-vessels and mediators of the rapid tidal evolution. Other humans have come here to study the politics of the Tidelands—if only to grasp their rules, to find the transferrable and the profitable elements of a nonhuman-centric model of governance.

In one case, a human society called Barrierland has fed its entire governing apparatus through the ritualistic surveillance of Tidelanders. Yet their presence provides access to new human-microbial communities, and their waste streams offer new canvasses for Tideland colonization.

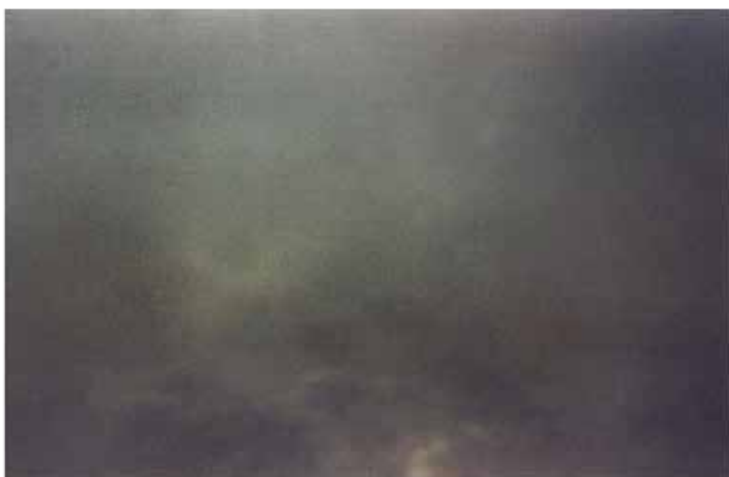
At other points throughout the year, an unpredictable cadre of human legal scholars appear on the banks of the Tidelands for what the most skeptical call a thought experiment, the most desperate a revolution, and the most cynical a fleeting moment of hope.

PROPERTY

REGIMES

Most recently, a band of copyright lawyers came to assist in the distribution of royalties from Barrierland. They left confident they had discovered the bio-legal framework of intellectual property on the shore: because the Tideland creations are washed away with the rising and falling of their waters, recognition for creative work must be attributed to a relationship among species (and their ancestors) rather than any single or group of individuals.

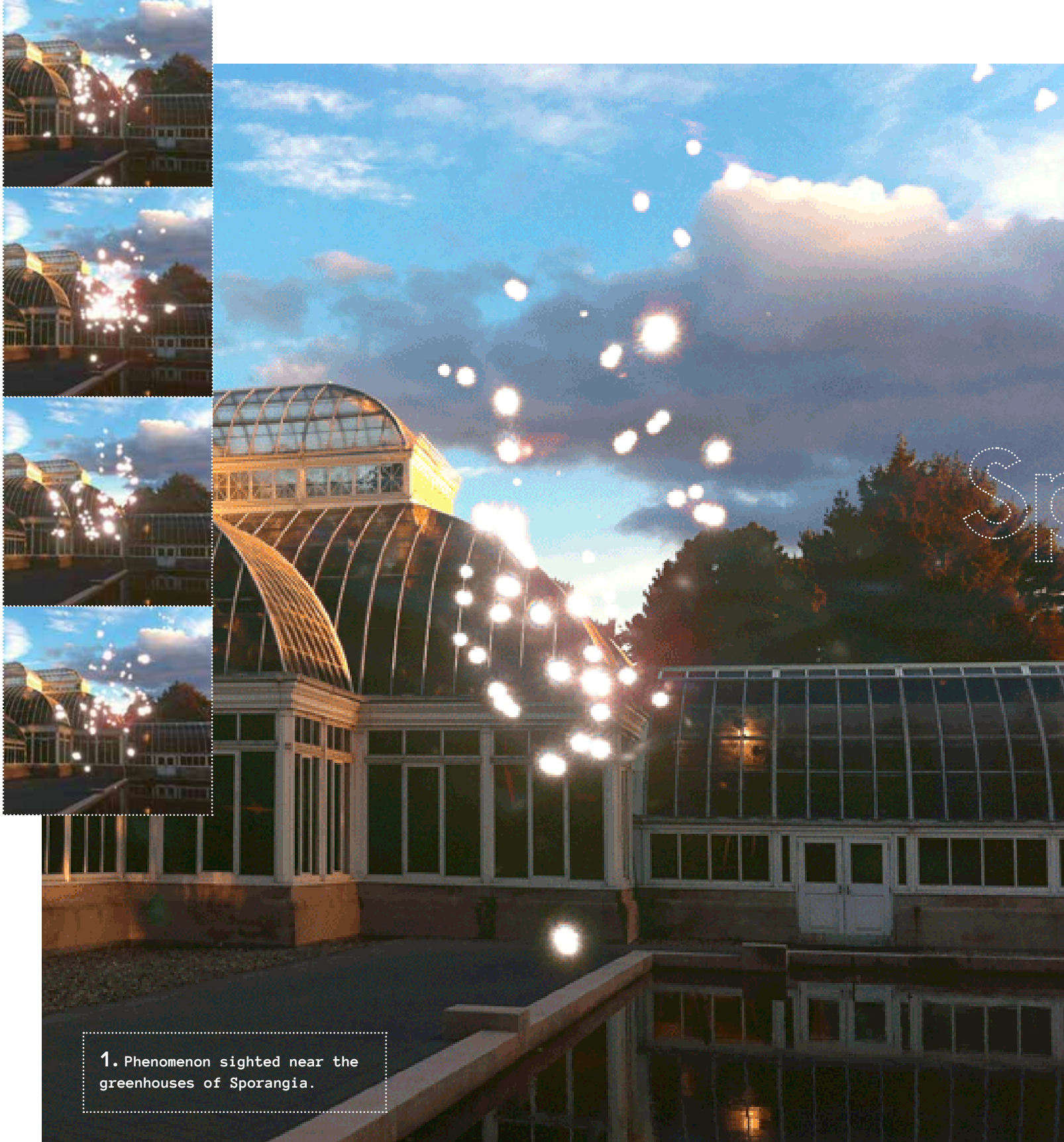
In these moments, many visitors have described the bluntness of human law and language, and have felt its primitiveness: “The limits of our perception, like our fingers, make us stumble through these encounters—just barely aware, able to touch—but unable to lift.”





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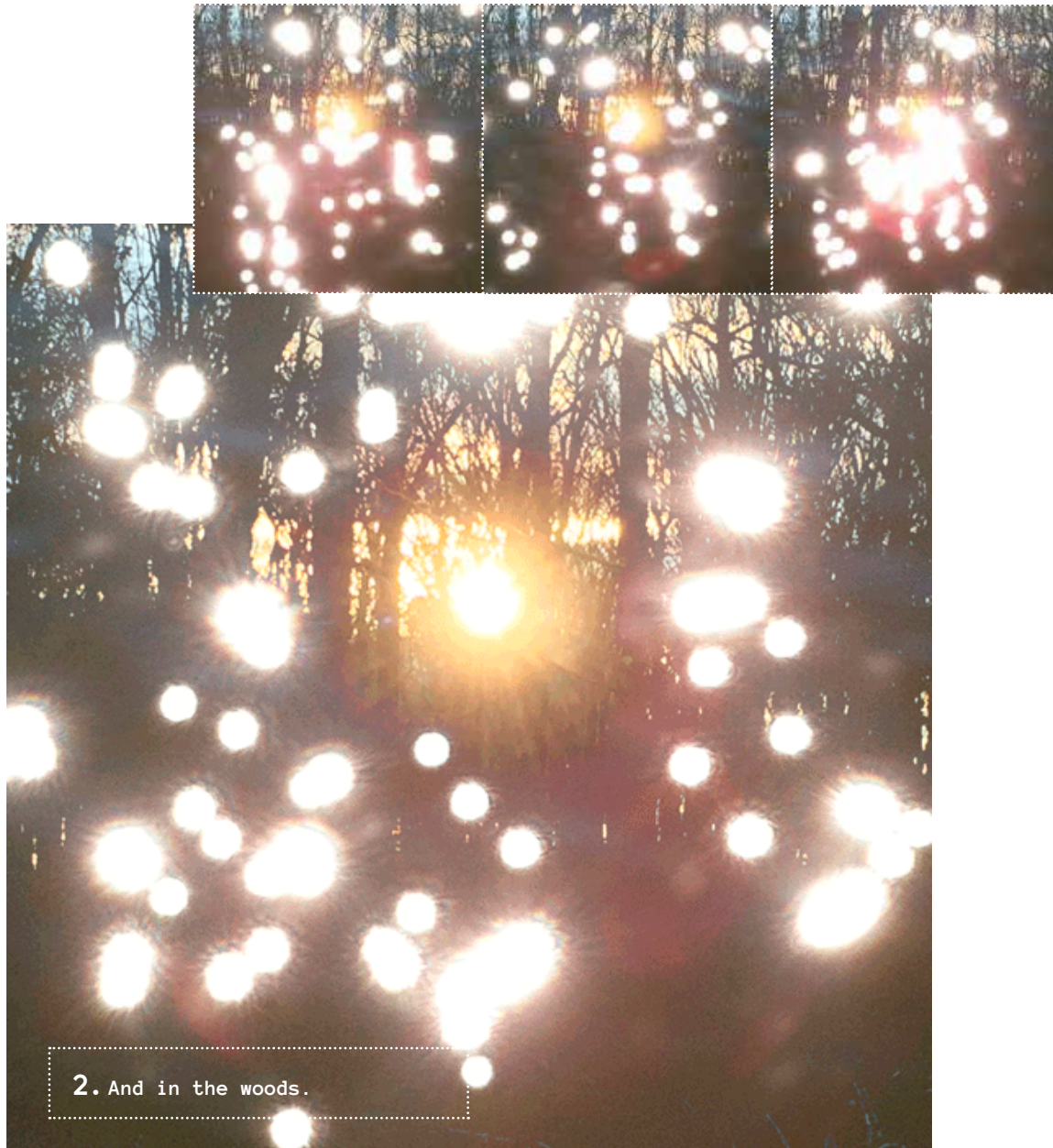


	3
William Scarlett	

Sporangia

Sporangia /spəˈranjēə/ *n.* [from Greek *spora* “spore” + *angeion* “vessel”] **1:** (in plants) inner spaces where spores form **2:** islands off the Atlantic coast of North America

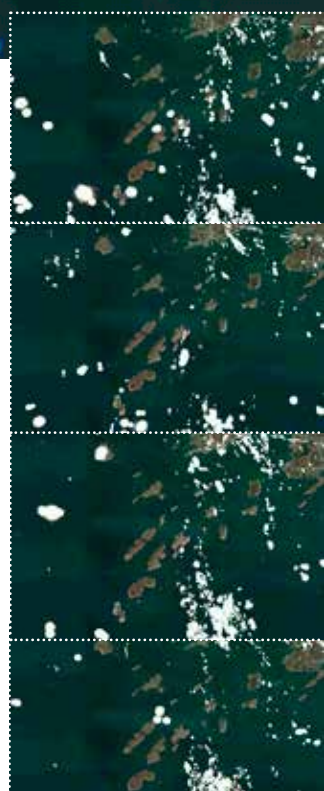
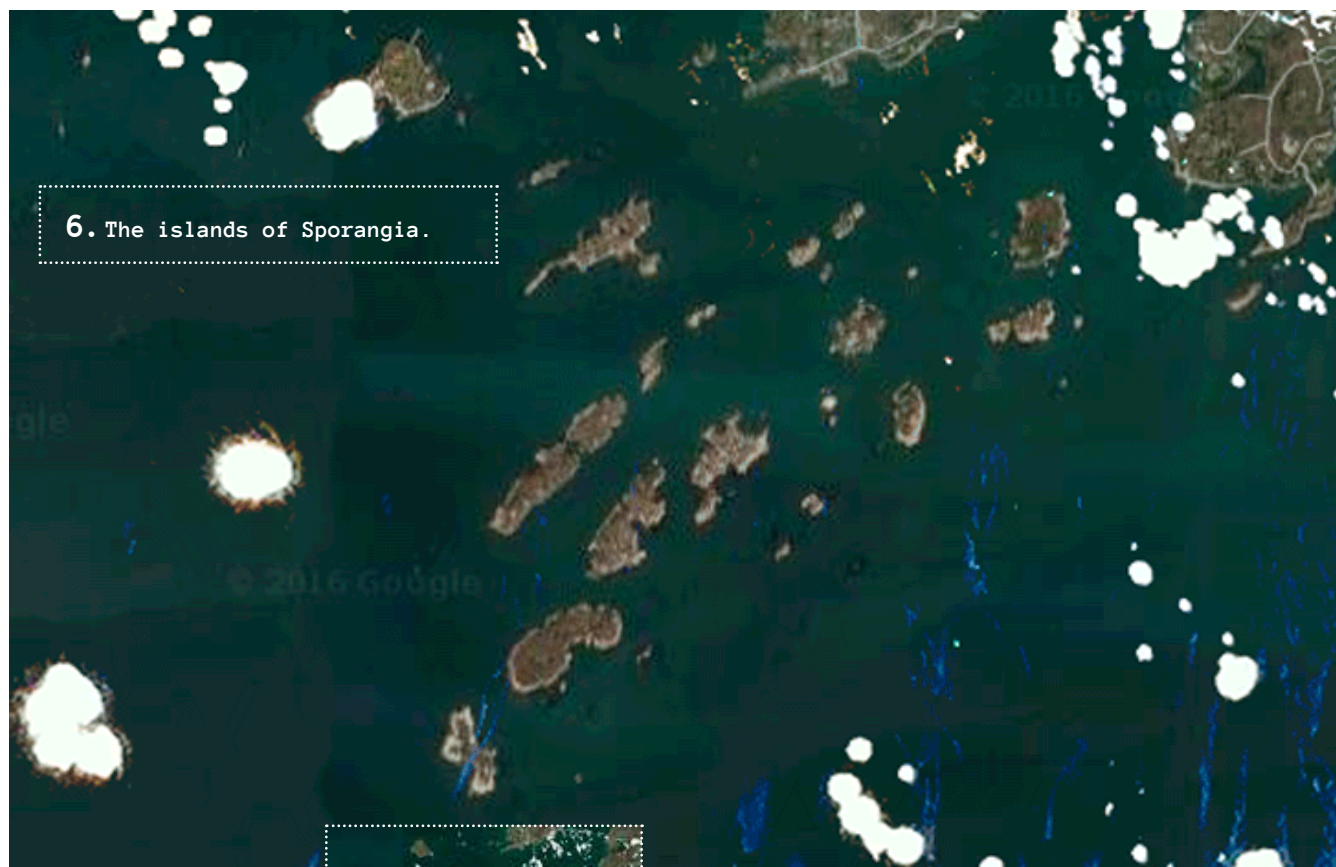
URL sporangia.neocities.org
Thanks to J.S., D.L., and F.H.



4. Specimens collected by
the botanist.

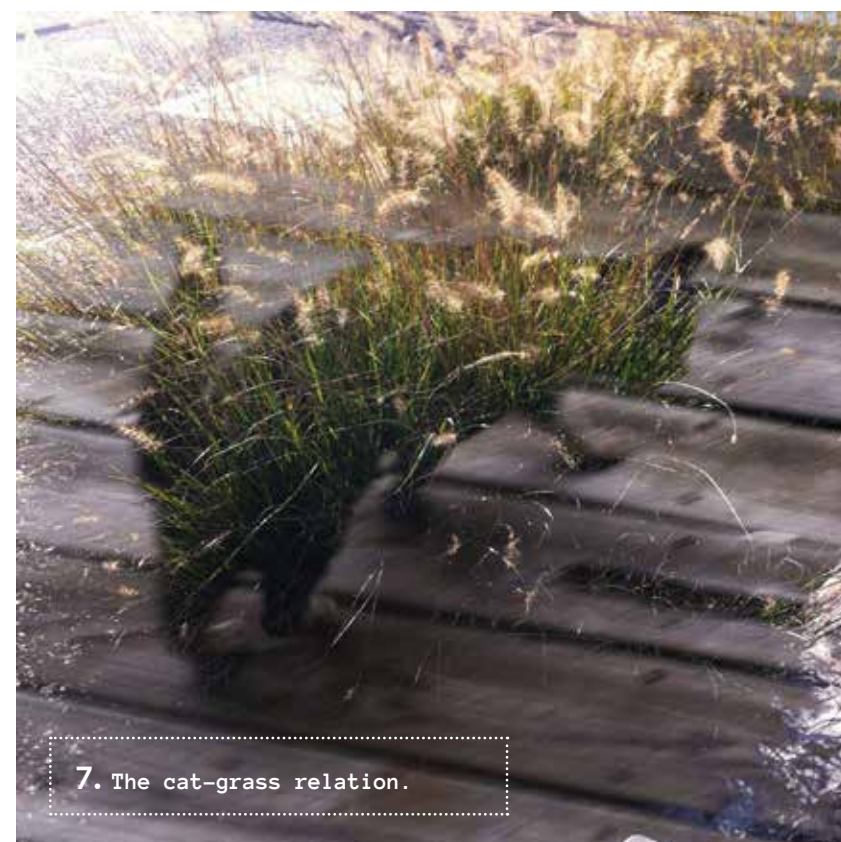


5. New organisms form in the
shared space of this prior
limit. Perceptions germinate
and grow, becoming sensory
life forms that inhabit the
human-plant relation.



O38

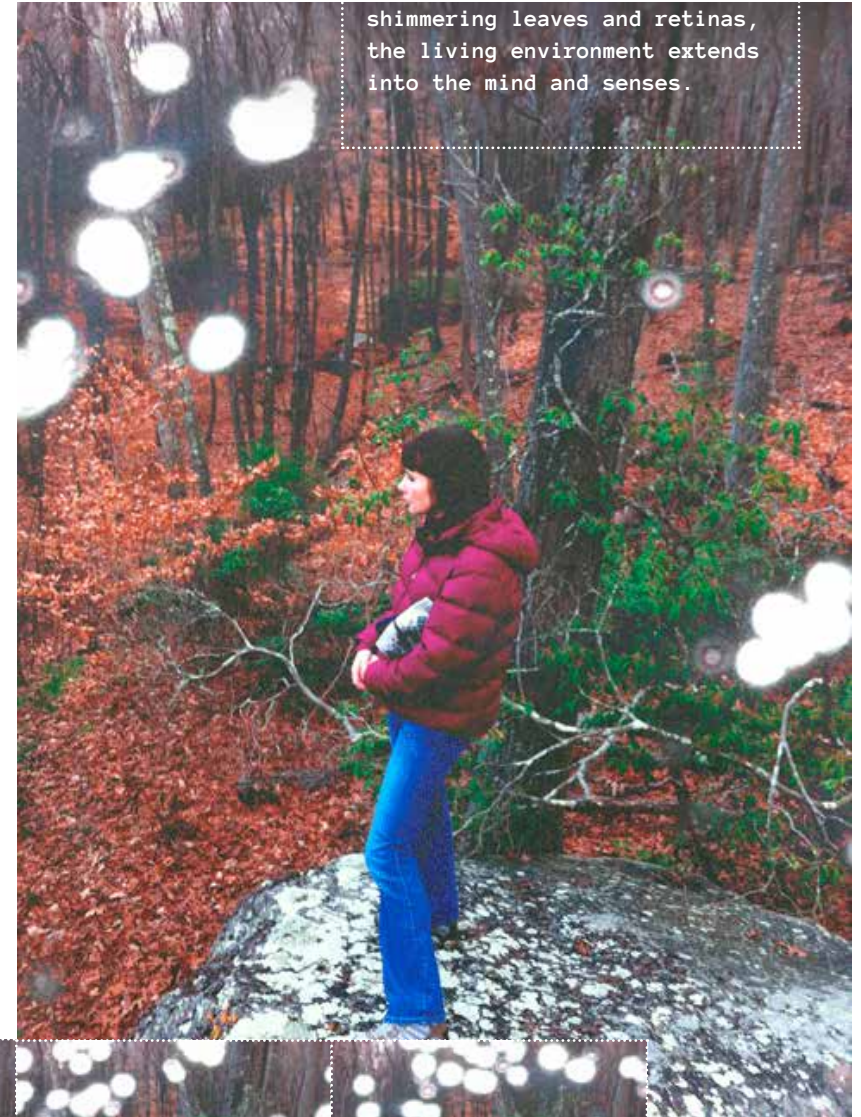
Sporangia



O39

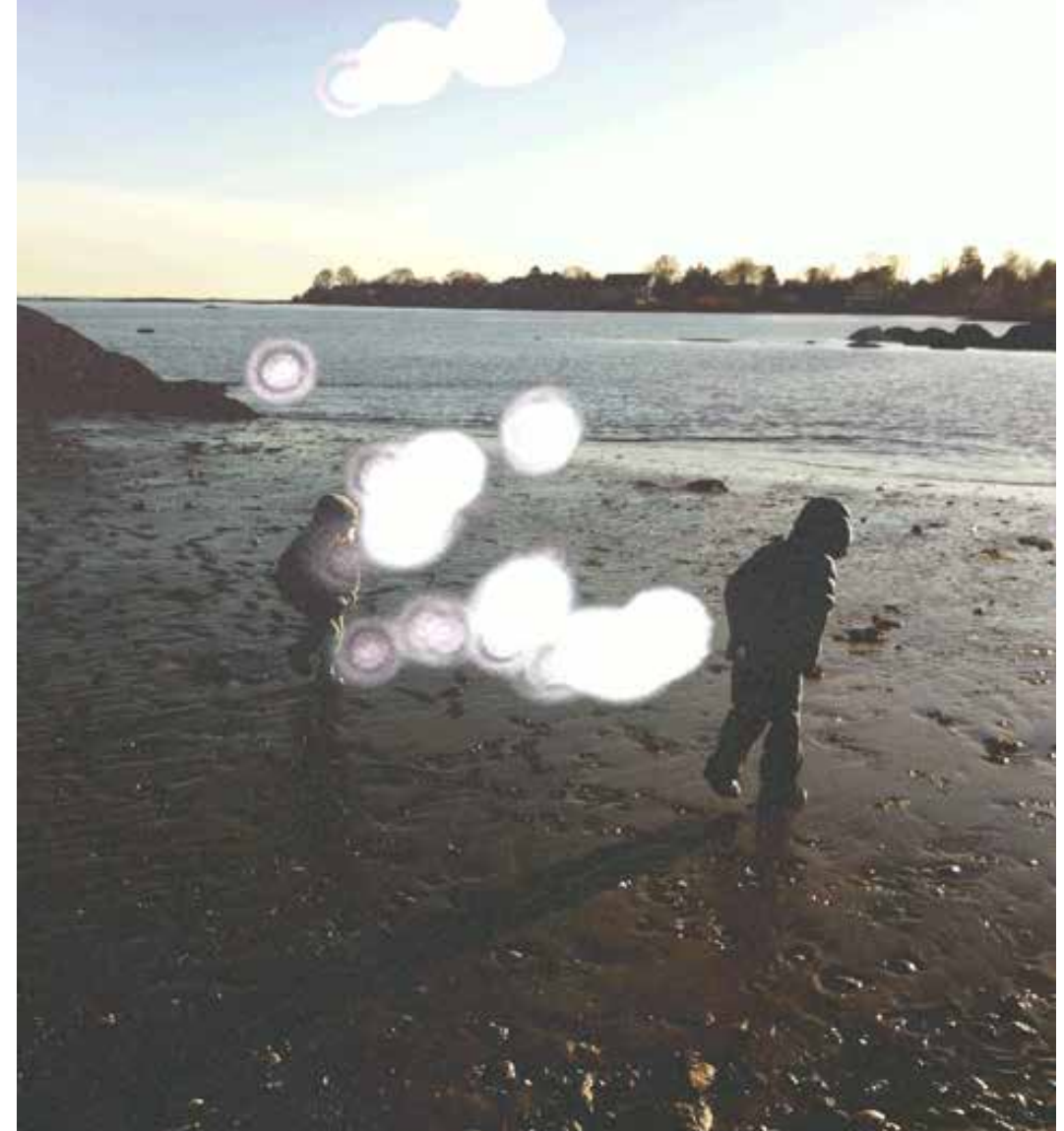


9. Venturing into the woods brings one closer to the phenomenon's origins. Among shimmering leaves and retinas, the living environment extends into the mind and senses.





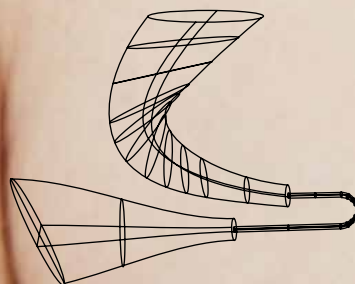
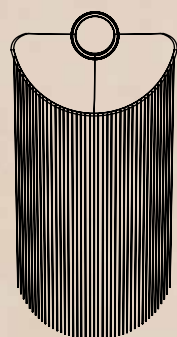
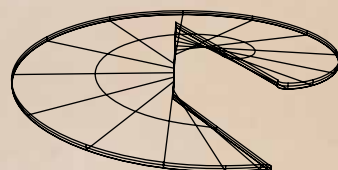
10. Nervous systems become trellises for plant-infused experience. Perceptual species grow and wither, hybridize and diverge. Inhabitants of the islands value their unique biodiversity.



11. The humans' slowness manifests their shift to the temporal scale of plants. Often they move so slowly as to appear inanimate. They intuitively recognize and respond to plant gestures, communicating through a form of mutual cultivation.

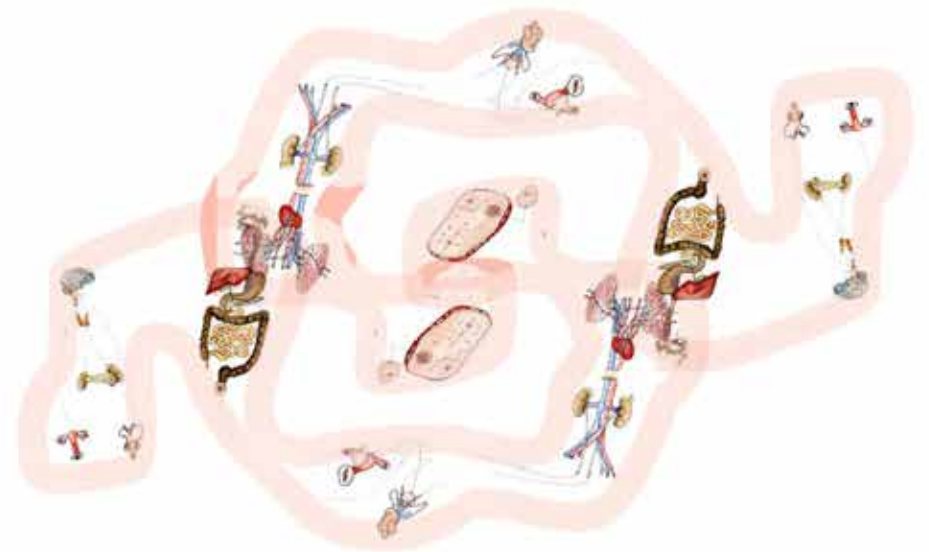
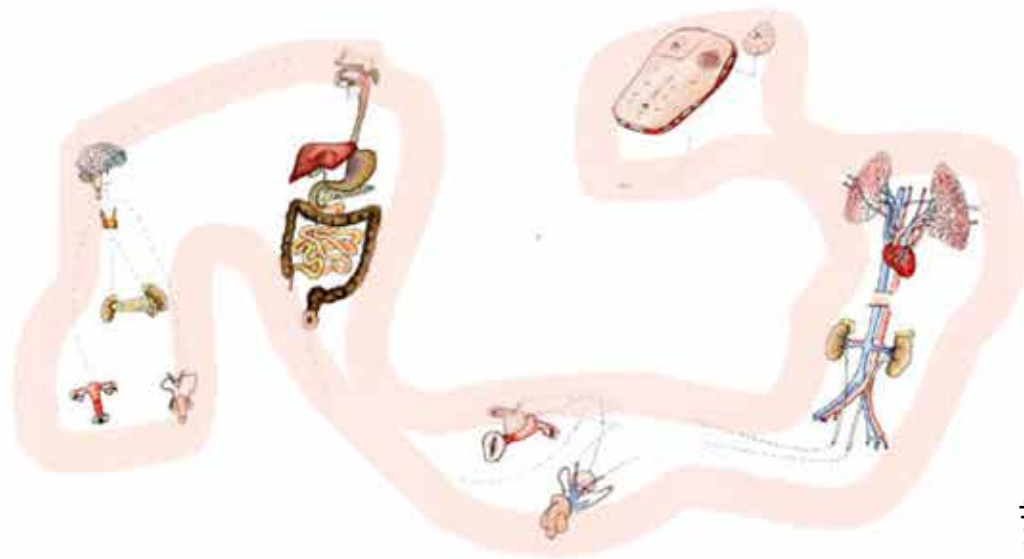
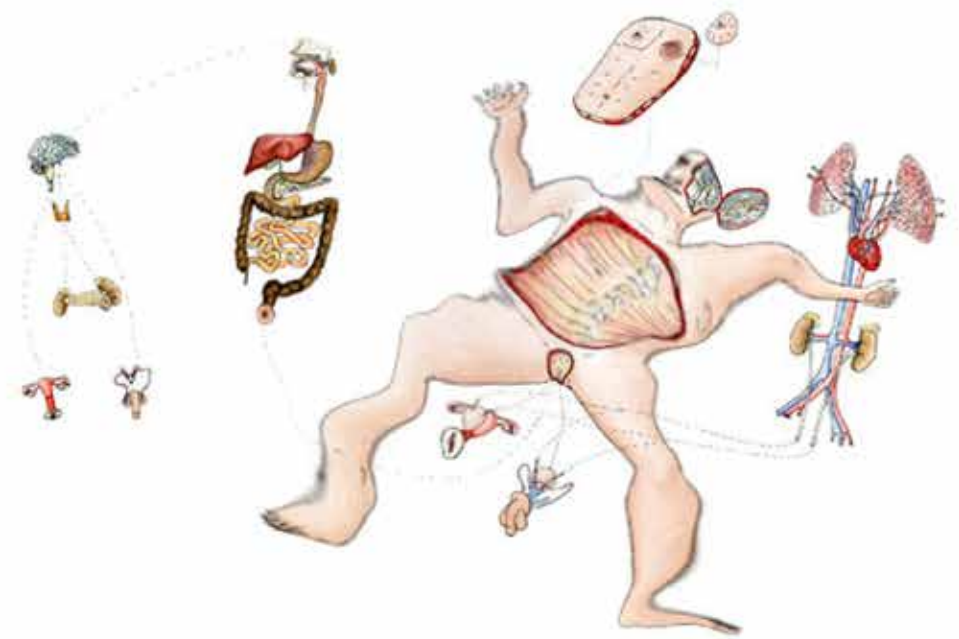
<u>Chronology</u>	
No. Years Ago (in millions)	Event
< 1	plants appear in nervous systems
50	the cerebral cortex expands
100	grass
200	flowers
	islands of Sporangia form
300	fruit, seeds
400	forests rise via wood and leaves
	nervous systems come ashore
500	land plants emerge (moss)
	roots, stems, spores
	the first eyes
1000	acid rain mixes with eroded rock to create soil
	nerves form
2000	cells combine into greater complexity (algae)
> 2000	photosynthesis begins in tidal pools

<u>More Specimens</u>		
Author	Title	Year
Richard Barnes	"Murmur"	2006
Algernon Blackwood	"The Man Whom the Trees Loved"	1912
Karl Blossfeldt	Urformen der Kunst: Photographische Pflanzenbilder	1928
Richard Doyle	"Finding Animals with Plant Intelligence: Attention, Doctores, Mysteries"	2014
Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby	"United Micro Kingdoms"	2012
Institute of Critical Zoologists	"The Great Pretenders"	2009
Ray Metzker	Landscapes	2000
Natasha Myers	"Conversations on Plant Sensing: Notes from the Field"	2014
Jeff VanderMeer	Southern Reach Trilogy	2014



	4
Ariane Elefterin	
Gregory Beson	

The Nation of Tactile Empathy



INTRODUCTION

When efficiency, automation, and progress are valued above all else in a culture, understanding and awareness recede.

Over time as the mind becomes the primary means by which people engage with their environment and others, the role of the body and its senses is diminished and eventually lost.

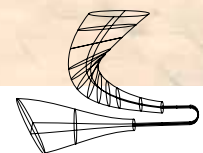
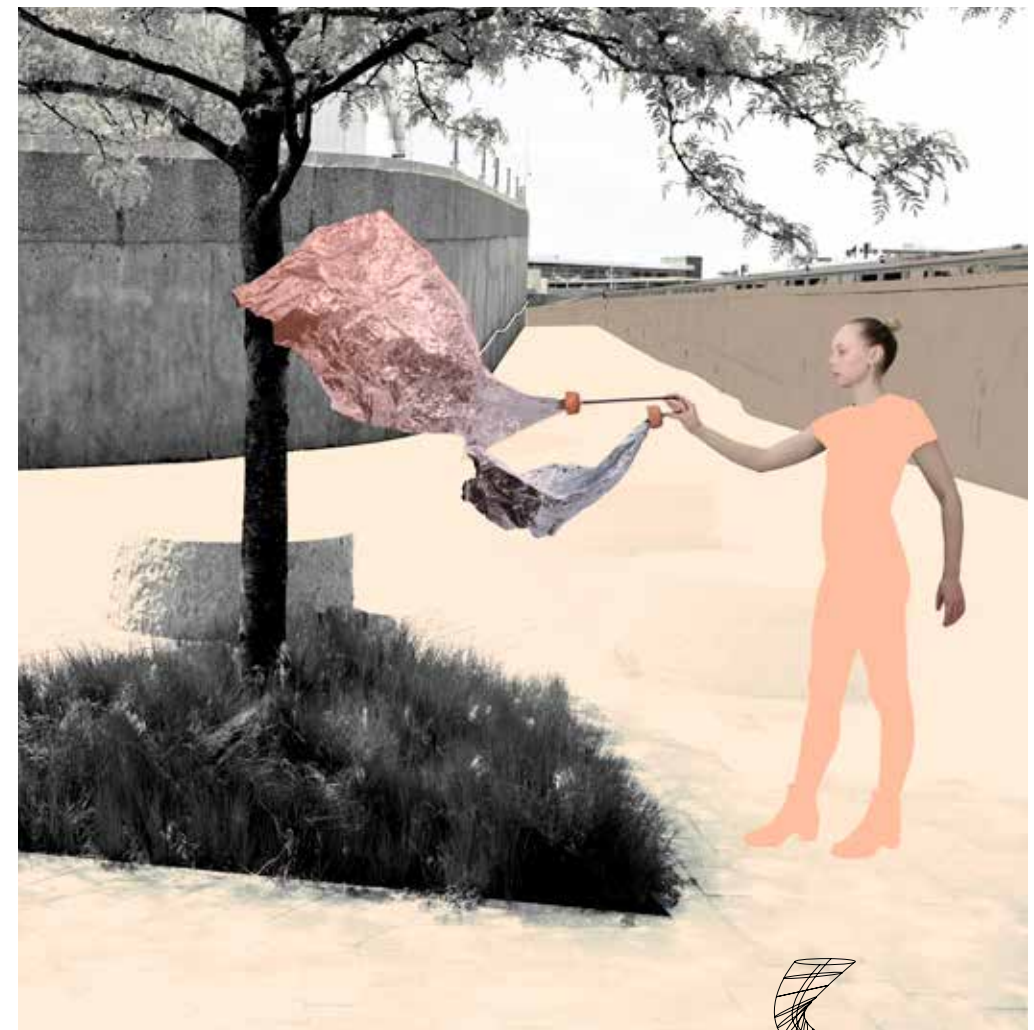
Amputated.

Yet, the possibility of rediscovery lies in the physiology of you and me.

And as the scales weigh heavily on one side, as this extreme envelops the world, a counterweight will release and reveal itself With force equal or greater to that of its opposite.

We, our generation, are a nation within this country. We want to touch. To feel.

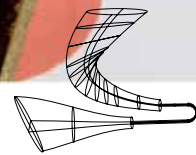
Through our prosthetics we are beginning to understand touch for the first time.



TOUCHING TEMPERATURE

Thermo Clasp

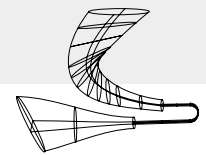
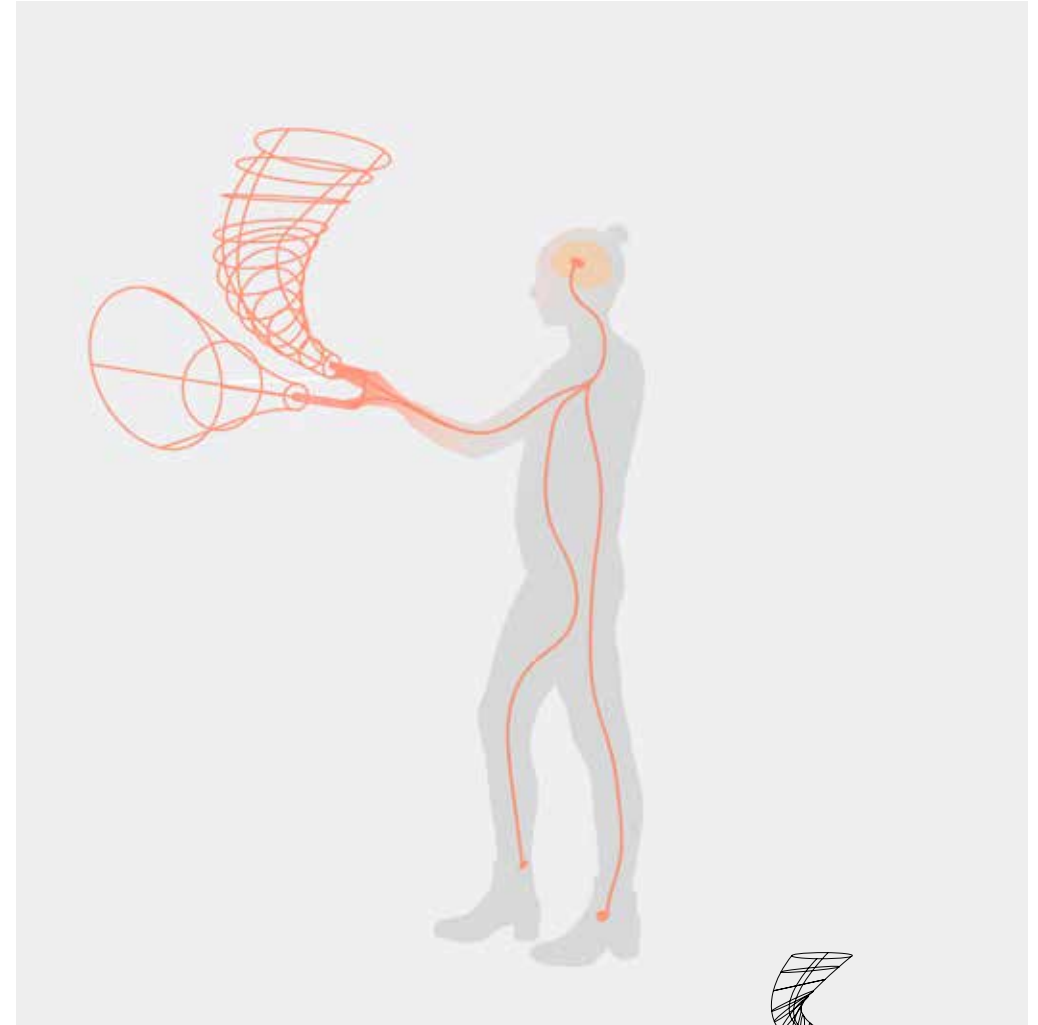
Focusing gathered senses from the environment to the fulcrum of the hand as a means of touching and holding thermal phenomena.



Thermo Clasp

Focusing gathered senses from the environment to the fulcrum of the hand as a means of touching and holding thermal phenomena.

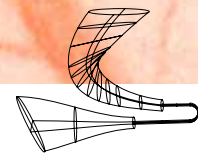
CONNECTION POINT



Thermo Clasp

Focusing gathered senses from the environment to the fulcrum of the hand as a means of touching and holding thermal phenomena.

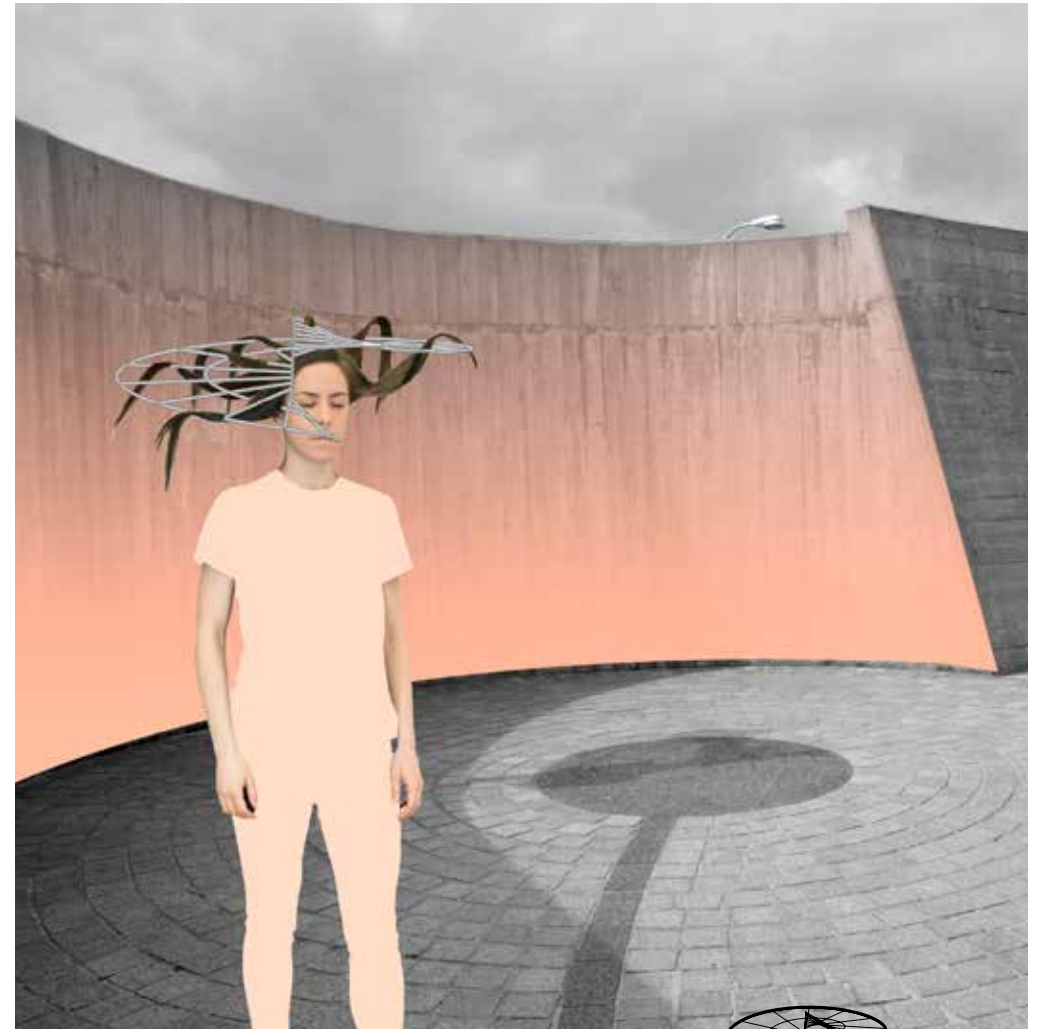
THE NETWORK OF FEELING



Thermo Clasp

Focusing gathered senses from the environment to the fulcrum of the hand as a means of touching and holding thermal phenomena.

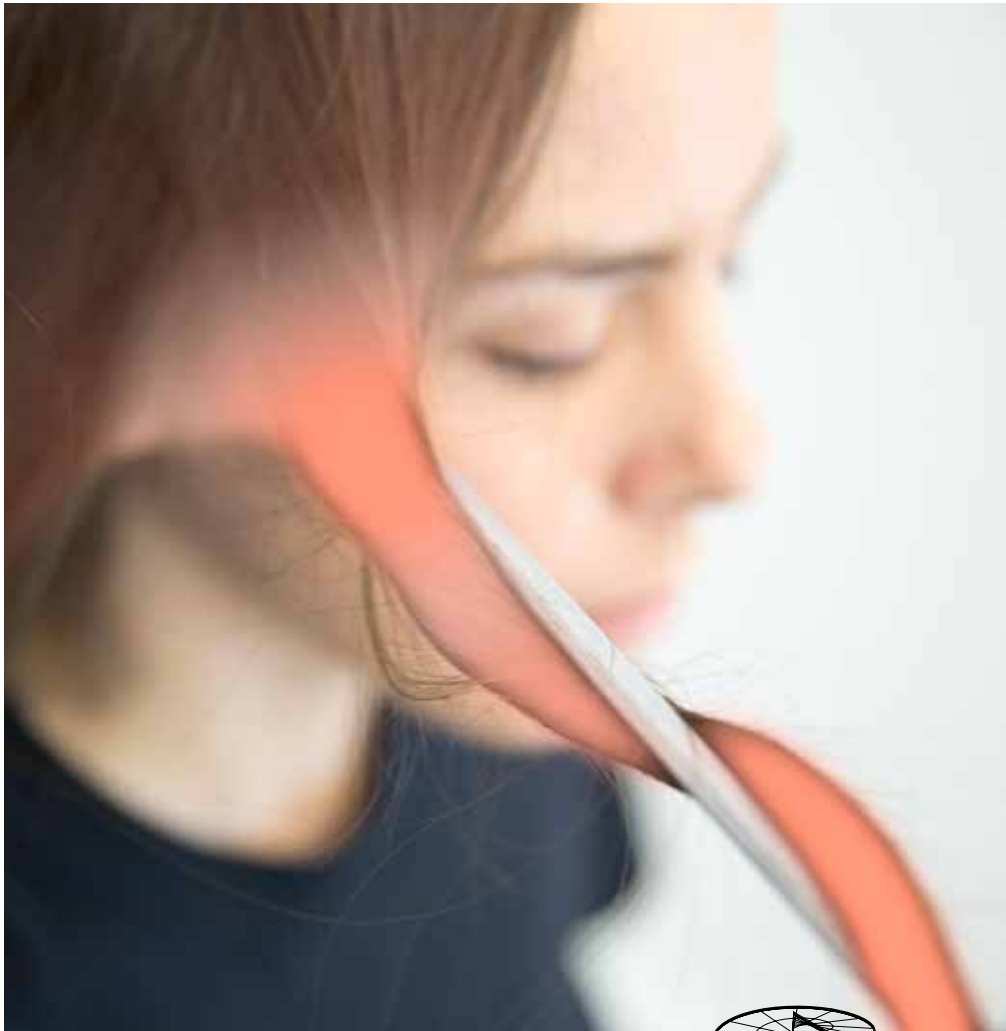
WHAT IS UNDERSTOOD



Atmos Armature

Enhancing the sensing capabilities of the body's hair to touch through perception of physical matter and spaces, disrupting air around it.

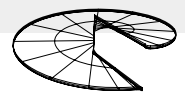
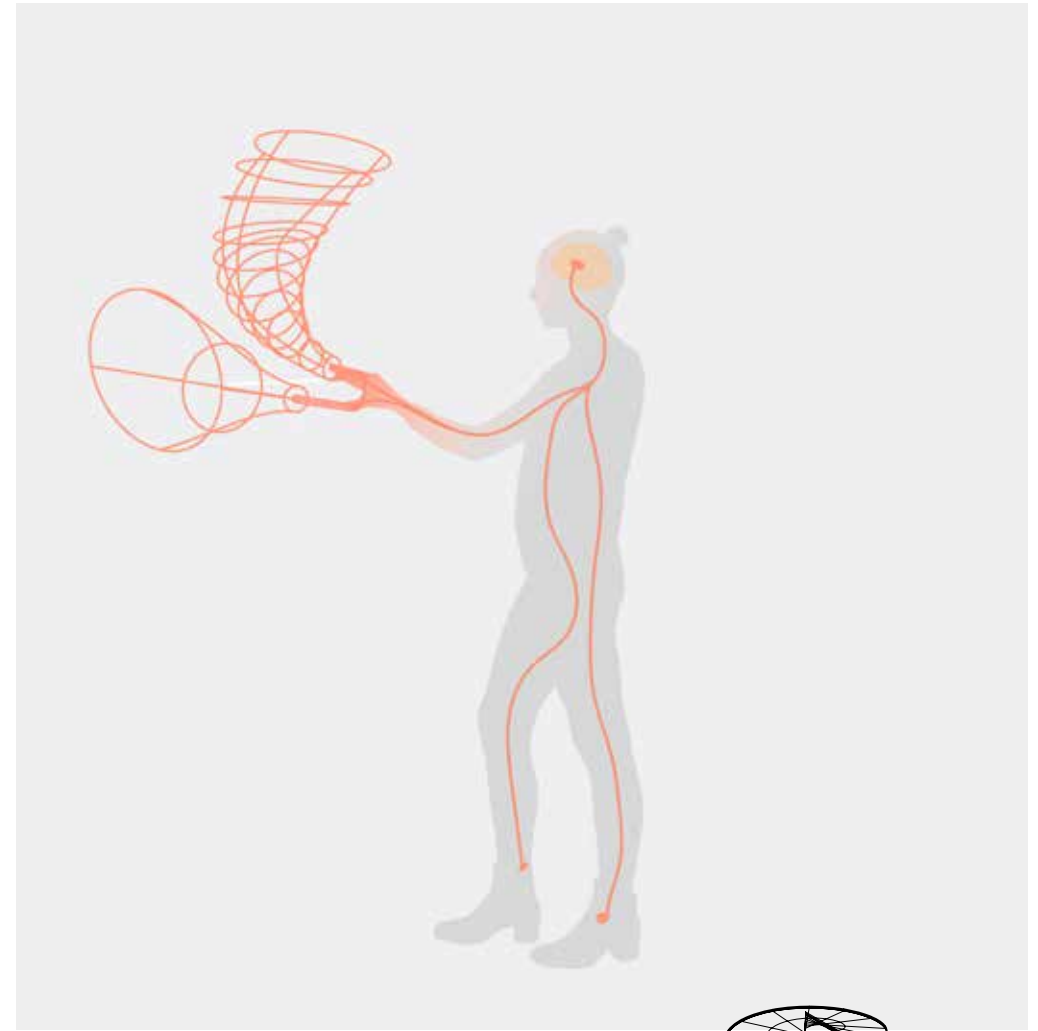
REGISTERING THE ENVIRONMENT



Atmos Armature

Enhancing the sensing capabilities of the body's hair to touch through perception of physical matter and spaces, disrupting air around it.

CONNECTION POINT



Atmos Armature

Enhancing the sensing capabilities of the body's hair to touch through perception of physical matter and spaces, disrupting air around it.

THE NETWORK OF FEELING



Atmos Armature

Enhancing the sensing capabilities of the body's hair to touch through perception of physical matter and spaces, disrupting air around it.

WHAT IS UNDERSTOOD

THE OUTSIDE WORLD AND THE NATION WITHIN

Societies have moved away from tactile physical engagement and interaction with the tangible world, opting instead to utilize digital technologies to produce and furnish their reality. The body and its sense of touch has been forgotten, in favor of a purely cerebral process of creating.

These methods are efficient and alleviate discrepancy and variation, thus increasing monetary gain and eliminating physical stress on the human body. Whatever can be dreamed up can be brought into physical being. As a result, world markets are consistently growing and prosperity is great.

And while this movement away from touch and the body has been agreeable for most, studies are finding that a younger generation, those under the age of 27, have begun to experience what they describe as "phantom feelings, skin hunger or 'pulsations'."

The pulsations and hunger the younger generation are experiencing are akin to historical scholarship done concerning phantom limbs. While this classification generally referred to arms, legs, hands, and feet, it is now being observed in other parts of the body. Phantom sensations of seeing and tasting are being reported.

The confusion caused by the emergence of this re-mapping is amplifying the mind/body gap that is perpetuated by the endless replacement of the human hand by machine. The younger generation has reached a tipping point where the pulsations have become chronic and nearly impossible to ignore.

This sense of disillusionment and deterioration of health has led groups of individuals to develop tools to help them reorient and map stray sensory understanding. These prosthetic devices are meant to serve as sensory amplifiers hardwired directly to the sensory organs. They are meant as both devices of discovery and tools of therapy.

The prosthetics navigate the tensions between the innate genealogical mapping of the human body and the plasticity of the ever evolving individual mind. They help both to connect to the innate abilities of the historical human body and to uncover the unseen potential that deeper tactile understanding can hold.

Leticia Oxley

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Obscurum

Obscurum is located at the inhabitable extreme. Living organisms in this territory have been devastated by climatic catastrophe. As a result, they have lost access to light and their habitat has become intolerably hostile. To survive, the inhabitants—living organisms from human to plant life and beyond—have found ways of inciting biological modifications to their bodies through both natural and synthetic means. In this world, humans linger in the shadows and plants radiate in bioluminescence. This project captures a glimpse of how this nation has adapted to their new artificial condition.

It had been dark, pitch black, so long that we no longer knew if we could see. And just as the world went dark, so did our minds. Then, at some point, we awoke to colors. Flashes of light. I couldn't tell where I was, how much time had passed, or even where my body was. I was immersed in a new type of gooey dark existence. There is a difference between darkness and blackness. Black is a flat dimension, but in darkness there is depth. There are different types of light—each dependent on climatic location. But as climates changed, it seemed the world was leading us to the cusp of blackness: a new zone, where normal to us is more akin to what extremophiles know.

Darkness can be very loud. It seemed that other forms understood this too. You could almost hear the light vibrating off other life forms. What emerged was a beauty that rendered other life forms physically untouchable, yet communal in sharing light.

We live under a new paradigm in which the things we produce come from living things. Everything, living and no-longer-living, is derived from modified proteins. Ever since the energetic catastrophe, people had to modify their belongings in creative ways to be able to use them in the dark. A shock to most at first, many of the survivors found ways of coping through beauty. People believed that in darkness the light within the objects made themselves most apparent. They found the ways in which all of their possessions had a different glow at different parts of the day inspirational and made modifications to everything to expose the glow. They often remembered the days when mornings greeted them with shocking fluorescent bursts, where everything was illuminated without shadows.

Now, it seems that everything has moved into the shadows, as a way of restoring balance. Power is precious, everything went to functional pieces that most people required. Daytime was maximized for the growing potential to sustain food and electric systems. Every piece of solar energy was harvested tediously. The use of electronics became a necessity rather than a luxury, changing the culture to localized craftsmen. The day began when light began. Time elapsed as sunlight began its trajectory towards darkness. The sun rarely let Kerala rest, especially in sun-season.



Obscurum



Obscurum



Obscurum

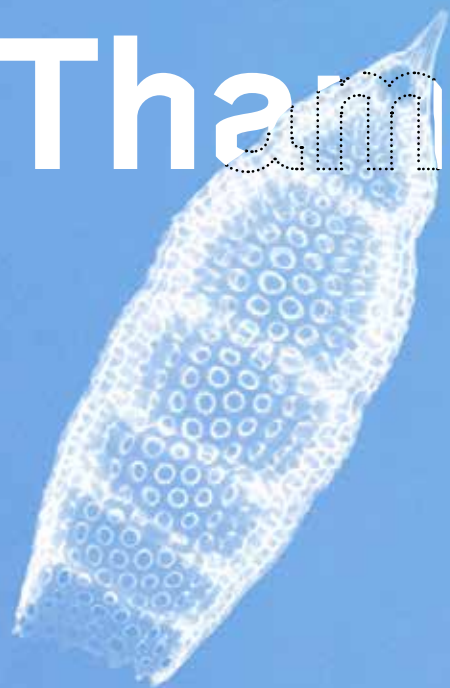
Obscurum

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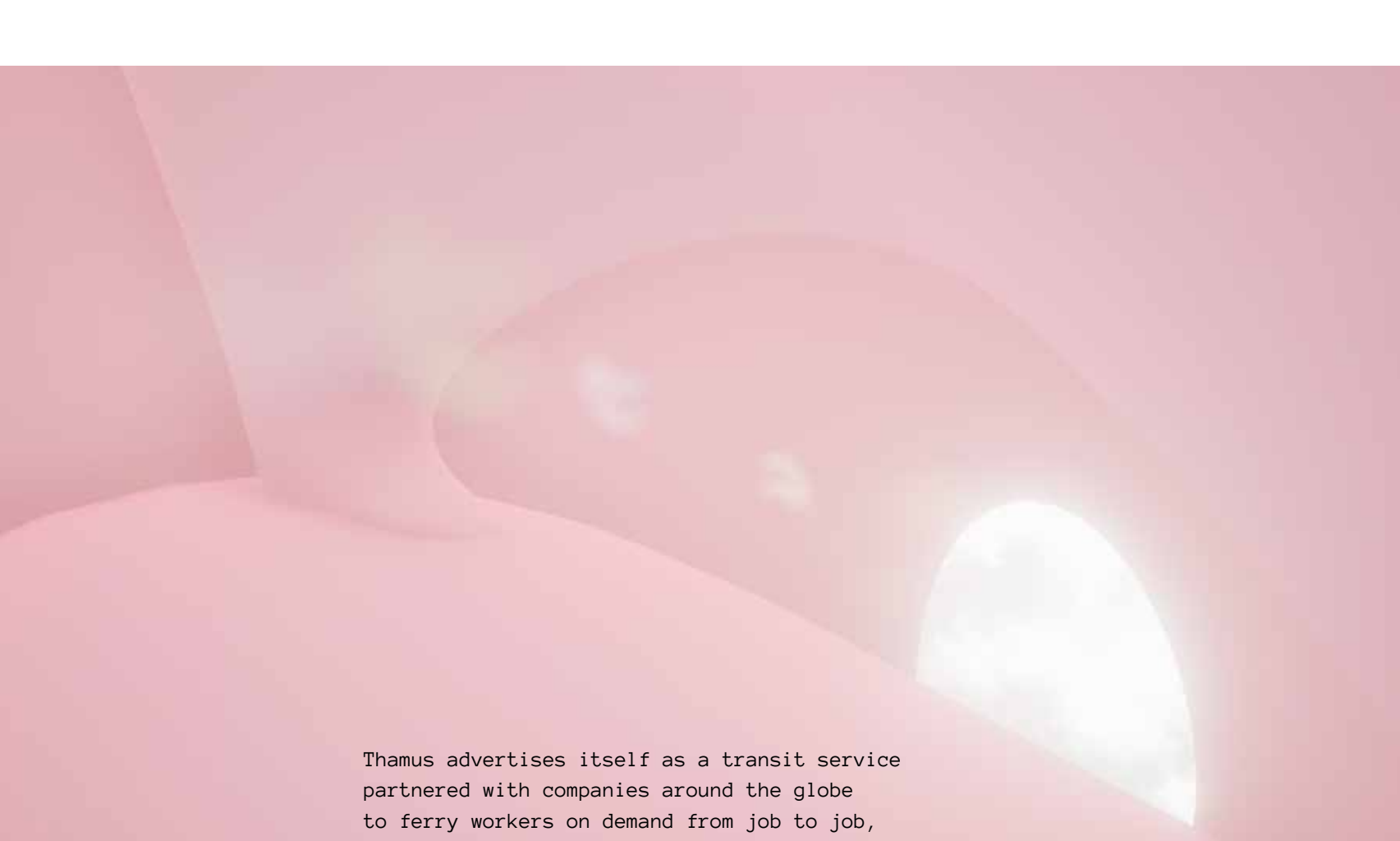
Jonathan Beilin

Yining Fei

Thamus




When I close my eyes I sometimes see my old home in New York. I traveled every day – short trips back and forth from my apartment and work. Sometimes before I headed underground, I'd look up. The skies were clear. Those days, I spent the entire year in one city. I was employed and the work was consistent. Then employment was replaced by gigs. And then the jobs started scattering all over the world. So I hopped on board with Thamus.



Thamus advertises itself as a transit service partnered with companies around the globe to ferry workers on demand from job to job, as seasons and needs changed. It's like using Uber to get to TaskRabbit gigs but ... bigger, and integrated. Thamus' fleet consists of a series of 500 meter by 500 meter vessels, each able to contain approximately 4000 passengers and their cargo.

The vessels are ethereal, modeled after a protozoa, calmly floating like airborne shipping containers.





I'm used to it. I've been on Thamus for five years. That's what my calendar tells me. But if it weren't for that, I couldn't tell you how long it's been. I thought I'd ride with Thamus for a season, then figure something else out.

Now I'm a nomad. I follow Thamus' work algorithms from gig to gig.

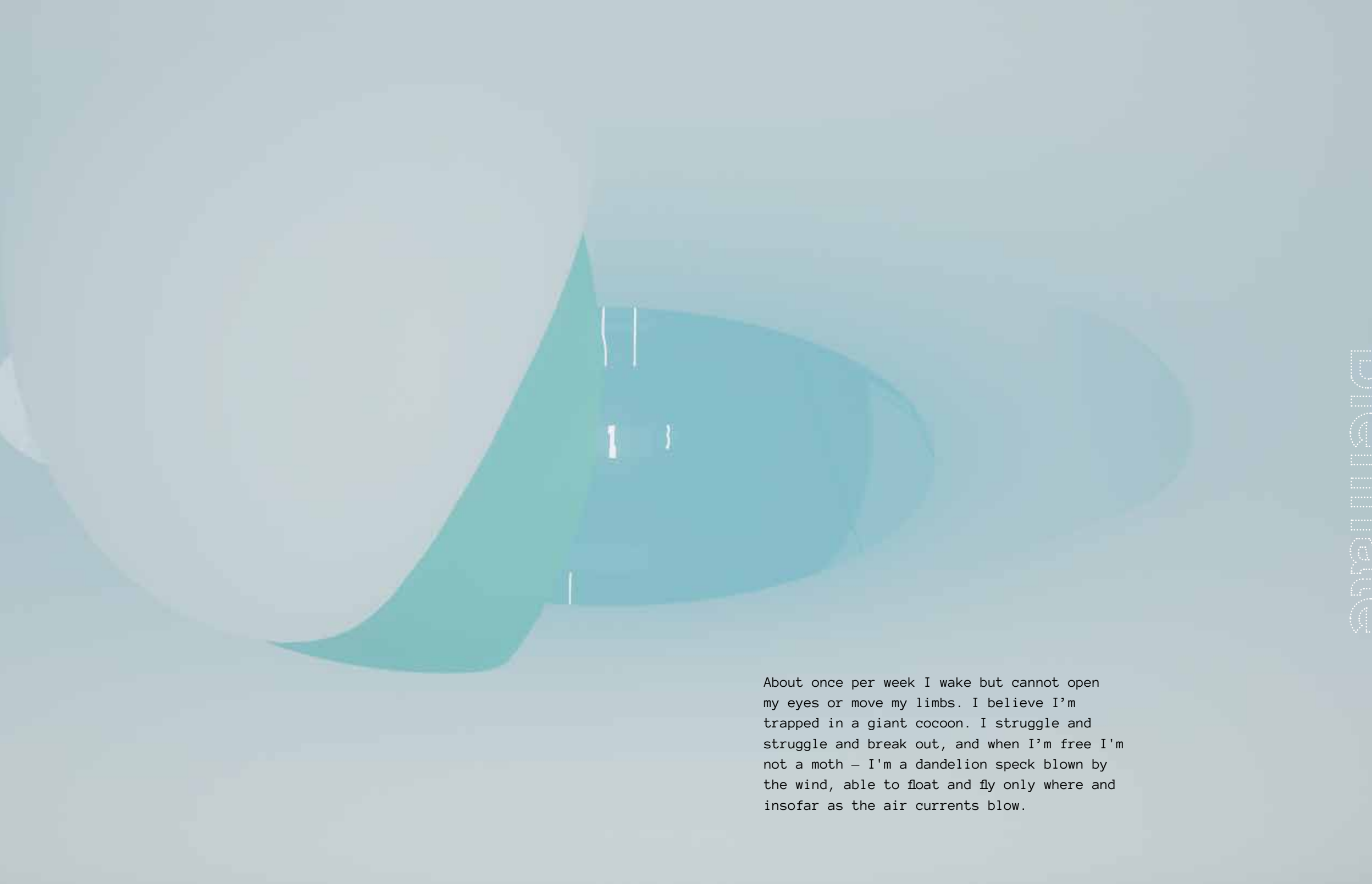
I've been on the shirting route. One stop is in Clarksdale, MS, to pick cotton. I guess I like that stop because that is the only one where I'm close to my old friends and family.



We stay there for a month. Once I've picked the cotton and loaded it on board Thamus, I take it to Jakarta for spinning. There were twelve days in the air then, in transit, and those are the days that turn me inward and sometimes inside out. It's a liminal space. It is nearly devoid of time and place, inviting introspection.

I can lose track of time, between the moments working on the ground and the days floating in the air. All the material I work with eventually gets sold off somewhere. Floating back to Clarksdale, nothing in the hold, empty handed, feels like my days are falling through my fingers.





About once per week I wake but cannot open my eyes or move my limbs. I believe I'm trapped in a giant cocoon. I struggle and struggle and break out, and when I'm free I'm not a moth – I'm a dandelion speck blown by the wind, able to float and fly only where and insofar as the air currents blow.

Thamius



Termina

The Last(ing) Constitution

The nations of this Earth responded to these challenges differently. Some pursued a hedonistic agenda and did not alter their consumption. Scarce resources in these nations led to internal and external conflict. Others turned to technology in the hope an answer lay there. This quickened the degradation of their environments. In contrast, Termina implemented a regime of strict government control over resources. Rationing and state ownership were scaled up. During this period Termina's ideology was akin to early communism.

As neighboring nations destroyed themselves, each other, and their environments, Termina survived but did not thrive. It became a destination for refugees who, whilst fleeing for their lives, did not necessarily abandon their nations' ideologies. This period of migration is recorded in Termina history as "The Ending March".

When we encounter Termina, it is the last nation on Earth. It continues to strictly control its resources and now implements a policy of nil population growth.

Despite these policies, the nation’s best scientists estimate that Termina will no longer be habitable in a century. Two major ideological positions dominate Termina’s politics: Anti-Humanism and Extreme Pacifism. The Anti-Humanists (Anhum) prioritize the environment. They believe that the time of humans has inevitably passed and that the environment should be preserved. The Extreme Pacifists (Expac) prioritize peace and are fearful that Termina will follow the violent destruction of neighboring nations. They too believe that the end of humanity is inevitable and advocate control of that end and preservation of the memory of humanity. Representatives of these two groups form an unlikely coalition in Termina’s legislature—the Droit.

Constitution:

Since the motion signals a new yet final era in Termina, lawmakers decide that a new constitution must be drafted to organize society around this commitment to preserving the environment and peace through phasing out humanity. This constitution will bind those who oppose the phase-out in the present, and those who will be most affected by it in the future.

With a supermajority composed of the Anhum and Expac, the Droit passes a motion for the controlled phase-out of human life. There is strong opposition to this motion by independents who represent a range of ideological positions. Some of these positions are inherited from or influenced by the descendants of those who came to Termina during The Endling March. Others, like the Anhum and Expac, are indigenous to Termina. However this opposition is not organized and cannot compete with the supermajority.

Though extreme, Termina throws into relief issues of intergenerational legitimacy and consent that plague all constitutional texts. My project asks: What might we learn from a constitution that privileges some generations yet burdens others, that repudiates narratives of progress and redemption, that preserves ecology and peace through individual constraint, and that outlasts the very “People” to which it refers?

PREAMBLE

We, the people who inhabit the territory depicted on ancient maps as Tasmania, in order to ensure environmental justice and secure domestic peace, do establish this Constitution for the new nation of Termina.

With this Constitution we inaugurate the end of human life on this planet. In light of the irreversible depletion of natural resources and growing civil unrest, we commit to end our nation in three generational cycles after this Constitution comes into force. We wish to promote harmony, dignity, security, and certainty in the years remaining to humans.

Let this Constitution be our *last* political compact and our *lasting* monument.

Chapter I — The People

ARTICLE 1. *Constituent power*

The power to create this Constitution is vested in the people of Termina. It is through a decision of the people via referendum that this Constitution comes into force.

ARTICLE 2. *Citizenship*

Those persons physically located within the territory of Termina when this Constitution comes into force are deemed citizens of Termina.

Citizenship is non-renounceable once conferred. A citizen may not leave the territory of Termina after this Constitution comes into force.

In the event foreign persons enter Termina's territory, they will be deemed citizens and subject to the rights and duties of citizens.

ARTICLE 3. *Rights and duties of citizens*

The government shall ensure that citizens are granted the rights enumerated in this Constitution, subject to the variation based on generational designation outlined in Article 4.

All shall respect this Constitution as well as the laws and duties derived therefrom.

ARTICLE 4. *Generational designation*

Those persons who are at the age of maturity when this Constitution comes into force are members of the Founding Generation.

Those persons younger than the age of maturity or born after this Constitution comes into force are members of the Ending Generation.

ARTICLE 5. *Population*

In accordance with the commitments set out in the Preamble of this Constitution, all male-sexed members of the Ending Generation shall be sterilized at birth.

Chapter II — Rights and Duties

ARTICLE 6. *Rights of the natural environment*

Termina's natural environment constitutes the basis for life in the nation. It is granted legal personhood, with all the corresponding rights, duties and liabilities.

All shall respect and protect the environment. Natural diversity and heritage must be maintained and prioritized. Earlier damages shall be repaired as possible. The use of natural resources shall be such that their further depletion will be minimized.

ARTICLE 7. *Rights to the natural environment*

All have the right to travel within the territory of Termina for the enjoyment of the natural environment, subject to the limitations expressed in Article 6.

In the use of natural resources, sustainable development and public interest shall be used for guidance.

Termina's natural resources are not private property. They shall be the joint and perpetual property of the nation until the nation ceases. No person may acquire the natural resources, or rights connected thereto, as property or for permanent use, and they may not be sold or pledged.

ARTICLE 8. *Equality*

Citizens of Termina shall enjoy the rights enumerated in this Constitution without discrimination, except on the basis of generational designation.

ARTICLE 9. *Right to life*

All shall inherit the right to life at birth. All shall be guaranteed a life of dignity and security against any kind of violence.

ARTICLE 10. *Right to death*

All have the right to death with dignity. Public authorities must make available humane measures by which legally competent persons may hasten their natural death.

ARTICLE 11. *No right to children*

It is prohibited for members of the Ending Generation to have children.

Chapter III – Legislature**ARTICLE 30. *Legislative Power***

Legislative power is vested in the Parliament of Termina, which shall consist of a House of Representatives and a Council of Elders.

The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of Termina.

ARTICLE 31. *The Council of Elders*

The Council is the house of review. Members are mandated to review legislation according to the principles disclosed by this Constitution.

ARTICLE 32. *Terms and Succession*

The Council of Elders shall have two terms of 50 years each.

In its first term, the Council shall be composed of 10 members drawn from the Constitutional Convention.

In its second term, the Council shall be composed of 5 members drawn from Original Members' pupils.

ARTICLE 33. *Constitutional jurisdiction*

Interpretation of this Constitution falls for determination by the Council of Elders.

Decisions of the Council are final and non-reviewable.

Chapter VI – Phased End**ARTICLE 65. *New infrastructure prohibited***

It shall be unlawful for any person to build permanent infrastructure for any function or purpose.

ARTICLE 66. *Disused infrastructure*

There shall be no human intervention to ameliorate damage or disrepair to infrastructure that falls into disuse.

ARTICLE 75. *Cessation of Constitution*

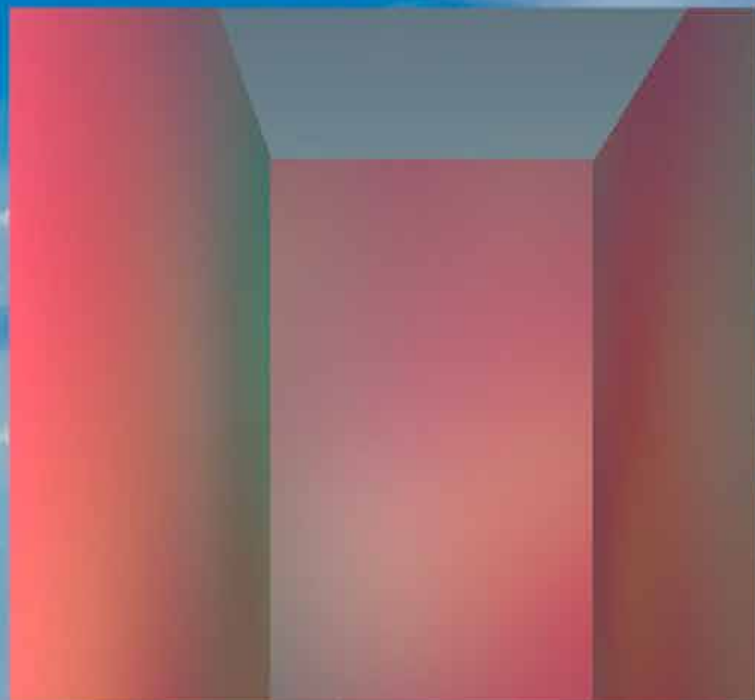
This Constitution will cease to have effect when the average age of Termina's population reaches 80 years.

ARTICLE 78. *No amendment*

No part of this Constitution is subject to amendment.

Mars Embassy





(April 25, 2020, New York) It has been eight months since Mars X, a privately funded space immigration program, was launched. Targeting a planet that is 33.9 million miles away from us, the program wants to avoid the high cost of traveling: it selects candidates who do not require a return-ticket. Unlike on the Earth, where one can occasionally return to his/her family and original homeland, this immigration cuts off one's ties to the past.

This program is open to the public and has received 500,000 applications. Applicants need to submit their interests on the Mars X website, handing in documents including personal health reports, background check files, and a personal statement explaining one's motivation of living on Mars. People find the most strange requirement is that the program requires applicants who pass the first round to visit Mars Embassy. They have to stay for "a period of time." It was unclear how long this "period" would be, and as Mars X's website states, *"it depends on each applicant's case and will finish when the applicant has made progress."* Once they enter the Embassy, applicants will have no human contact. In short, they will be alone.

The mysterious process in Mars Embassy has not been revealed until recently. Several applicants finished their residency and agreed to share their experience. One 27-year-old woman from Arizona recalled:
"At the beginning, I wasn't quite sure what's going on there. I thought it might be some surviving tests or physical training. On Jun 16, I went to Uyuni in Bolivia. Of course, I wouldn't expect a government building there. But it was quite bizarre to see the Embassy's door. I walked in, led by lights on the floor. Yeah, that's the room where I lived for 182 days. I saw no human since then."



Other applicants who recently finished their session report similar experiences. They remained in a room without interacting with any creature, let alone other human beings. Some estimate the size of their rooms as “about 400 sq ft” or “48 steps if walking along the wall,” but none of the interviewees could tell if it has square or circular shape: *“they sometimes change.”* The place offered basic needs of nutrition (the application asks food allergy and preferences), a sleeping bag and a working area, even though they might have nothing to work on. The instructions downloaded from Mars X says *“a pivotal part of life is developing your own routines,”* the routines could be either a daily workout or a ritual movement.

The longer one is isolated in the room, the less likely one is able to maintain the routines, as they said. The woman from Arizona was the only one who managed to count the days. She remembered that roughly from day 115, she went through much psychological impact including loneliness, depression, and desperation. She consoled herself with memories of friends and family: *“I convinced myself that there will be a reunion with people after this.”* This image was her placebo of the extremely lonely life for months and also a decisive factor in her answer to the final question: “It came out of nowhere. No early notification or warning. A voice asked me a question, after a hundred and eighty days of no sound except me whispering, I could hardly realize it was talking to me. It asked me: *why do you want to go to Mars?*”

She did not share her answer with us. Her decision to stay on Earth might have given a hint. According to Mars X’s report to the federal government, 58 people entered the Embassy, seven came out of their rooms and canceled their applications. One might question if it’s worth the effort for Mars X to ask its candidates to reconsider their motivations. Yet we see a grateful attitude in our interview. The woman who spent 181 days in an isolated environment without any earthly concern about debt, kids, and work claims that the experience was life-altering: “There is no other chance I can face my escapism about the life.”

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Institute for Flexible Ethics

In times of conflict, we are your service economy. Come to us with an international incident, and we will fix it with you. The Institute for Flexible Ethics is an emergent model of international mediation. Founded by multinationals disillusioned with borders and problematic systems they create, such as the prison industrial complex, jurisdiction, and local justice systems, the IFE foregoes these cumbersome hindrances to unity. Give us your troublesome individuals or groups. Even better, we specialize in cases you share with sovereign entities. Let your envoys sit with us. Enjoy our gardens tended by long-staying guests. Benefit from the counsel of our Ethics Committee. Marvel at our revolutionary bioprocessing plants. Every case we implement sustains our renewable energy, powering our flotilla. We shun landlocked stagnation in favor of true mobility. We come to you, and bring peace of mind. As long as you subscribe to our ideology, you are a citizen. You are flexible.

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?
WE'RE NEVER TOO GOOD.



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TROUBLE ABROAD
FROM ONE OF YOUR OWN?

PUNISH ONE,
REWARD ALL.

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WHAT DO WE DO?

PUT THE "YOU" IN
"UTOPIA"

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ETHICS
CRISIS AVERTED

The Martian Coalition for Theoretical Life Origins

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Jack Wilkinson

Panspermic Looper

Believe that life has been going back and forth between Earth and Mars since the beginning of time. Humans destroy one planet but just in time they figure out how to move to the other planet. It has been this giant loop.

Westheimerian

Prompted by the theories of Steven Benner of the Westheimer Institute of Science and Technology, the Westheimerian's believe in Panspermia: the theory that life on Earth began on Mars. They say that this can be proved by microfossils found in meteors which have landed on Earth from Mars.

After a period of failed colonization, Mars is littered with scraps from unsuccessful landings, stalled rovers, and exploded habitats. As a result of this damage, a group of scientists have joined together as *The Martian Coalition for Theoretical Life Origins*, instead living in floating habitats for fear of further harming Mars. Each team has its own ship and its own theory of life origins. They have two goals: discover life and clean up the past destruction. The ships are all outfitted with trollers and magnets which collect scraps from the surface. As the scraps from the surface are cleaned up they are then upcycled as new sections of the ships. Scrap, energy and water are traded amongst the various ships, although it is mostly done auto-nomously through an artificial intelligence which governs a lot of the mundane decisions.

SpaceX14

These are the assholes of the bunch who don't believe there is anything on Mars. They think the only reason to be there is to mine it and/or recreate Earth. They are just waiting until the scientist finally give up and then they are going back down to the surface to terraform the planet.

Bradenburger

One of the fringe groups, often labeled as being darkly pessimistic, the Bradenburger crew follows the theories of Dr. John Bradenburger who believes that there used to be a complex society living on Mars but thermo nuclear explosions wiped them out. This is what some of the giant craters are and they say all they need to prove it is the presence of nuclear isotopes.

Giant Impact

Believe that the Earth and Mars have collided in the past and that is how the Moon was made. Searching for life is somewhat secondary to proving that this happened. This is the most fringe group of scientists in fact almost everyone else believes they are simply wasting resources.

Progress Makes Waste

Westheimerian: Mars is where we began. And that is why we are here. To find our past, so that we know how to move forward.

SpaceX14: Progress makes waste.. alright.. Humans make waste! Everything makes waste. So yeah maybe we are just polluting Mars but guess what, that's going to happen wherever we go.

Westheimerian: We have an opportunity to clean up what we've dropped, what we've discarded. To give this planet time and space.

Bradenburger: Maybe it's too late. Maybe we've already infected it so much.

AI:
Surface debris detected.
Lowering trolley.
Contact established.
Debris identified as heat shield of curiosity rover.
Capture successful.
Remediation complete
Capture successful.
Remediation complete.

Fingerprints of the Moon

Giant Impact: Well, that is why you must find if there is any moon rocks, moon samples, on this specimen.

Westheimerian: I'm not going to do your work. Dr. Rosen, I do not have a large enough sample and even if I did I would not use what precious time and resources I have to look for something that will never be there. We would have found fingerprints of the moon way before this moment. This is a moment to look for life, not another kind of rock.

**Panspermic
Looper:** I just don't understand why it's important to figure out where the moon came from.

Brandenburger: I agree, the moon was a chip of the earth and then lives in its gravity.

Giant-Impact: It's because everything is connected!

AI:
Lowering spectrometer
Begin 100 meter scan
Negative. No Life.

Dreams of Rock

SpaceX14: I have dreams of it, I dream of it. Dream of having a big Mars rock in my hand. I feel like... I feel the earth's pioneers were, you know, holding a, holding a chunk of iron ore in their hands knowing they can turn it into something useful.

Westheimerian: God, you don't even think of a flower?

SpaceX14: In my dreams?! No!

AI:
Surface debris detected.
Lowering trolley.
Contact established.
Debris identified as titanium screw.
Capture successful.



A Negative Outlook

Brandenburger: To think millions of years ago this was covered in vast nuclear war, people dying, mother and children screaming.

Giant-Impact: John, I'm gonna have to stop you right there. I don't understand why you have such a negative outlook on this.

Brandenburger: It's not a negative outlook, it's true.

Giant-Impact: It's 100% negative! Life...

Brandenburger: I wish it weren't true! And the, what I will guarantee, nuclear isotopes on that surface will prove...

SpaceX14: Brandenburg you're a broken record. Nuclear this, war that...

Brandenburger: My theory will be correct no matter how depressing it might be....

AI: Hydrogen transfer request from Brandenburg2
Transfer granted
Next exchange estimated in six days.

History is a Loop

**Panspermic
Looper:** You just have to have patience, the loop comes around.

SpaceX14: Fuck this new agey spiritual bullshit you loopers espouse is insane.

**Panspermic
Looper:** It's not insane! It's the most logical! History is a loop. We look back and forth! We've gone from Mars to Earth back to Mars to Earth. Millions of years!

SpaceX14: We came out of the water to live on land, did we go back and live in the water? Mars is a dead planet. We should mine it for the resources.

AI: Lowering spectrometer.
Begin 100 meter scan.
Negative. No Life.

You're Officially a Virus

Westheimerian: You're looking for confirmation bias.

SpaceX14: I'm looking to save earth is what I'm looking to do.

Westheimerian: If you were looking to save earth you wouldn't have your eyes on the sky you would have your eyes on the planet.

Brandenburger: Yeah, if you were looking to save earth, you'd be there!

Westheimerian: We have one planet we can live on right now!

SpaceX14: We could have two!

Brandenburger: So if you're saying we should apply the same principles to this place then you're officially a virus.



We Have to Work Together

**Panspermic
Looper:** I've just read your levels. You need some of our oxygen. So you can't land, you need us.

Westheimerian: We may not have to like each other, but we have to work together.

SpaceX14: I just don't understand it guys, how long are we just going to just float above this planet before we can set down and make something happen?

Westheimerian: Until we can find our origins.

AI: Data exchange from Brandenburg2.
35 days since last exchange.
Nickel, Iron, no radioactivity.

Let's Make an Amendment

**Panspermic
Looper:** The contamination, the pollution. These factors we've all... this is why we signed the treaty. We cannot touch down yet.

Westheimerian: Yes and we do not know how we will influence what life actually does exist on mars. We don't know how it will respond to us.

SpaceX14: Guys let's make an amendment to the treaty. There's a reason why we make amendments to the bill of rights! Because things change! The only thing preventing us from touching a rock is ourselves.

Westheimerian: Your footsteps could be stepping on the origin of human life!

AI: Confirming match with ExoMars core samples.
Comparing with Alan Hills 84001
Negative. No Life.

A Sunnier Spot

Brandenburger: To be able to take the information that we can learn and pass them on as truths. That's an honor, a gift that I am bestowed.

SpaceX14: You know what I want to pass on? Actual tangible evolution. An actual tangible colony.

Westheimerian: How are you going to evolve the human race?

SpaceX14: By changing our location? Changing our home world.

Westheimerian: You believe that education is just picking up and moving to a sunnier spot?

SpaceX14: That's ninety percent of it.

Westheimerian: I gotta tell you, there are more people who are hopeful about life on this planet than their are entrepreneurs waiting to rip it to shreds and we will outlast you and we will wait.

False Positive

AI: Checking for contaminants.
Contamination confirmed.
False positive 213.

SpaceX14: Just another false positive guys. Just another in the long long line of false positives. It's a dead planet.

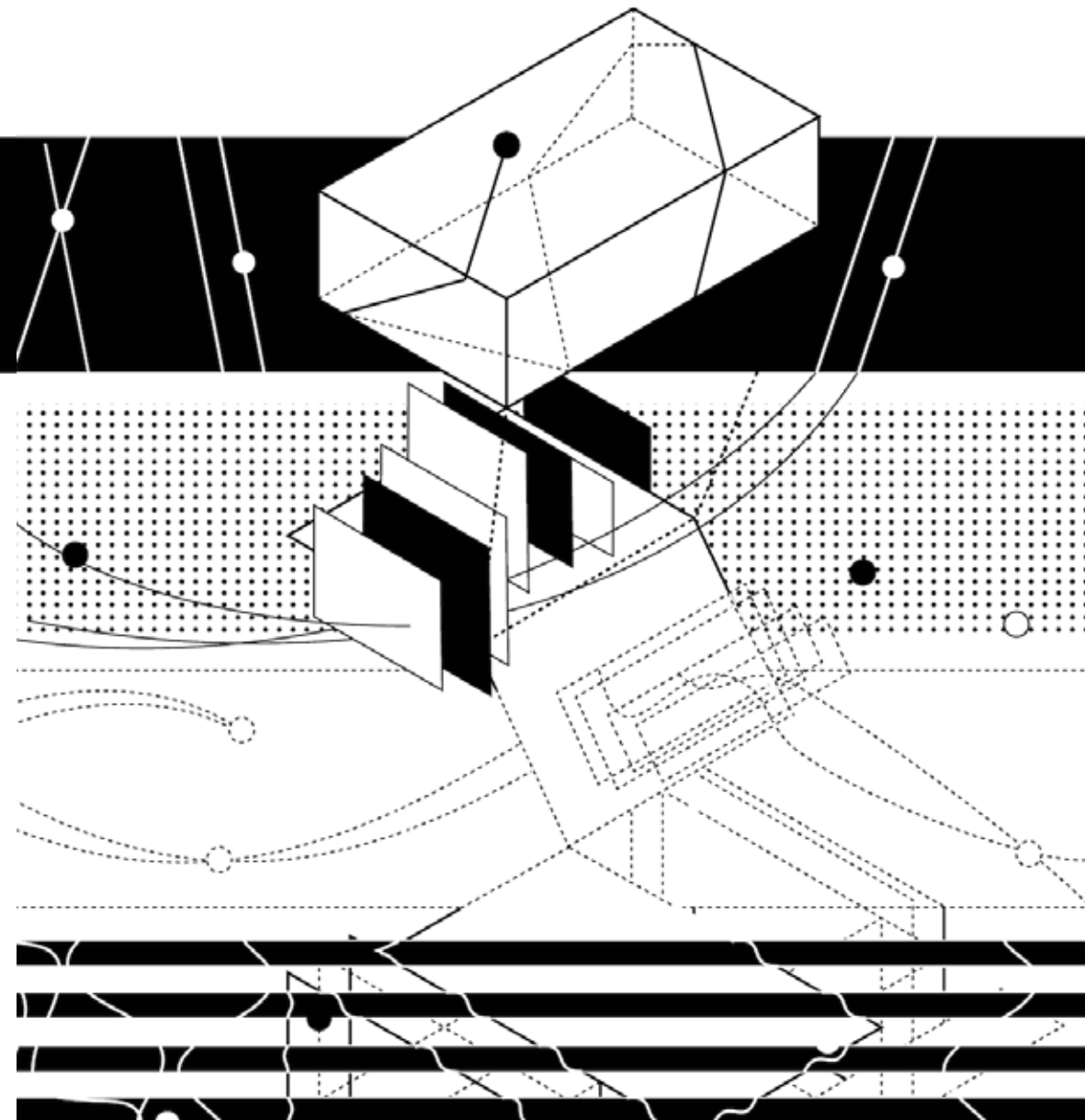
**Panspermic
Looper:** I'm crushed. I don't know if I can take another false positive.

Westheimerian: I think what we are looking for is so small, is so basic that it's just going to take more adjustments on our part and if its not today, maybe it's not for a hundred years.

Who Knows Where

ABSTRACT

Much of what we know about the world comes to us from physics, where measurements of space, time, and light govern our understanding about the universe. We extend this framework by introducing the possibility of a fourth measure, thought, in order to broaden understanding of our interactions with objects and events throughout nature. Thought is useful because it has certain properties that allow us to grasp features of reality inaccessible to perception and deal with situations where our perception may fail us. When we consider thought itself to be fundamental to reality, we're able to ask deeper questions about the limits of knowledge built through scientific thinking. We propose a fiction to capture our insights in ways that demonstrate specific conceptual shifts needed to carry out this research. Through this work, we conclude that building knowledge in the future will require us to embrace overlapping, yet contradictory sets of ideas at once.

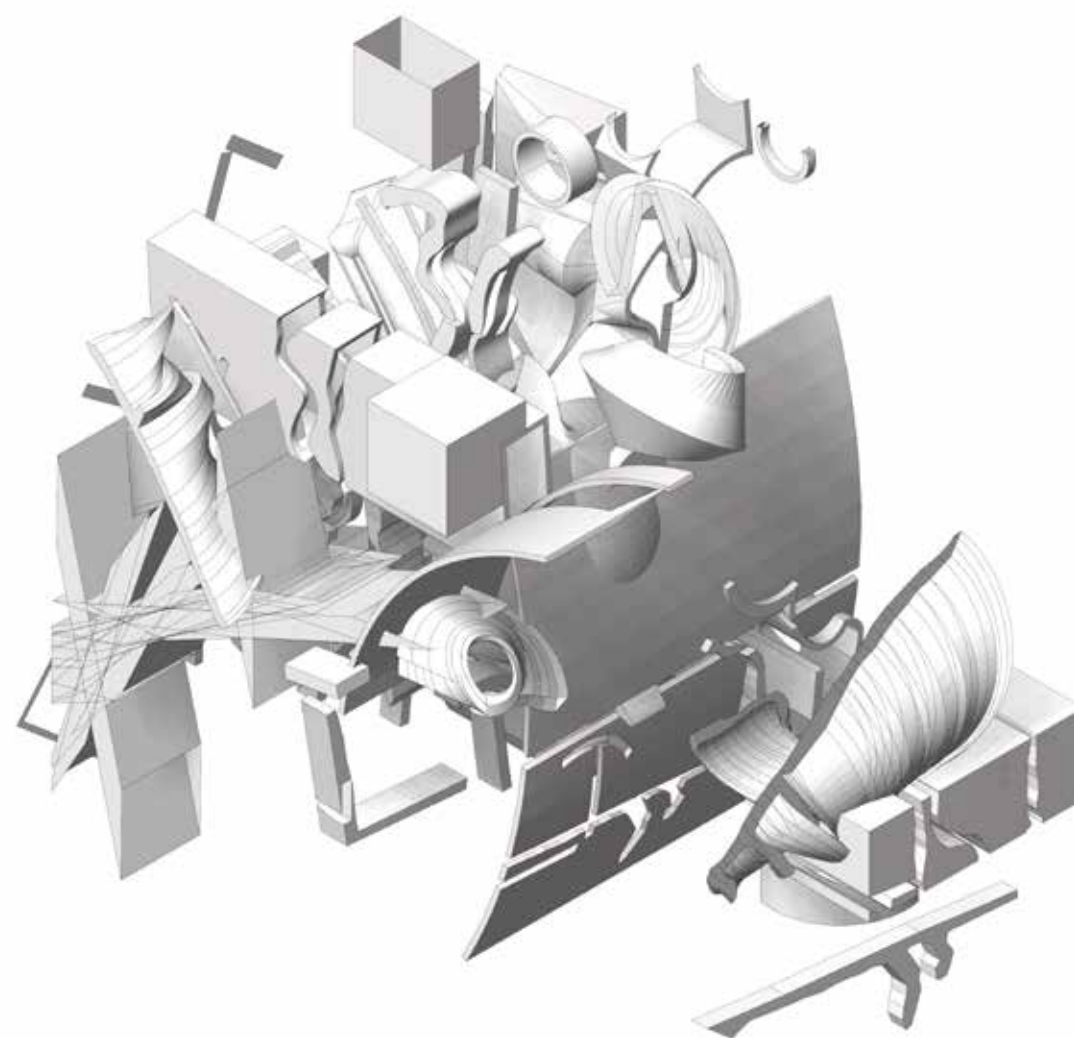


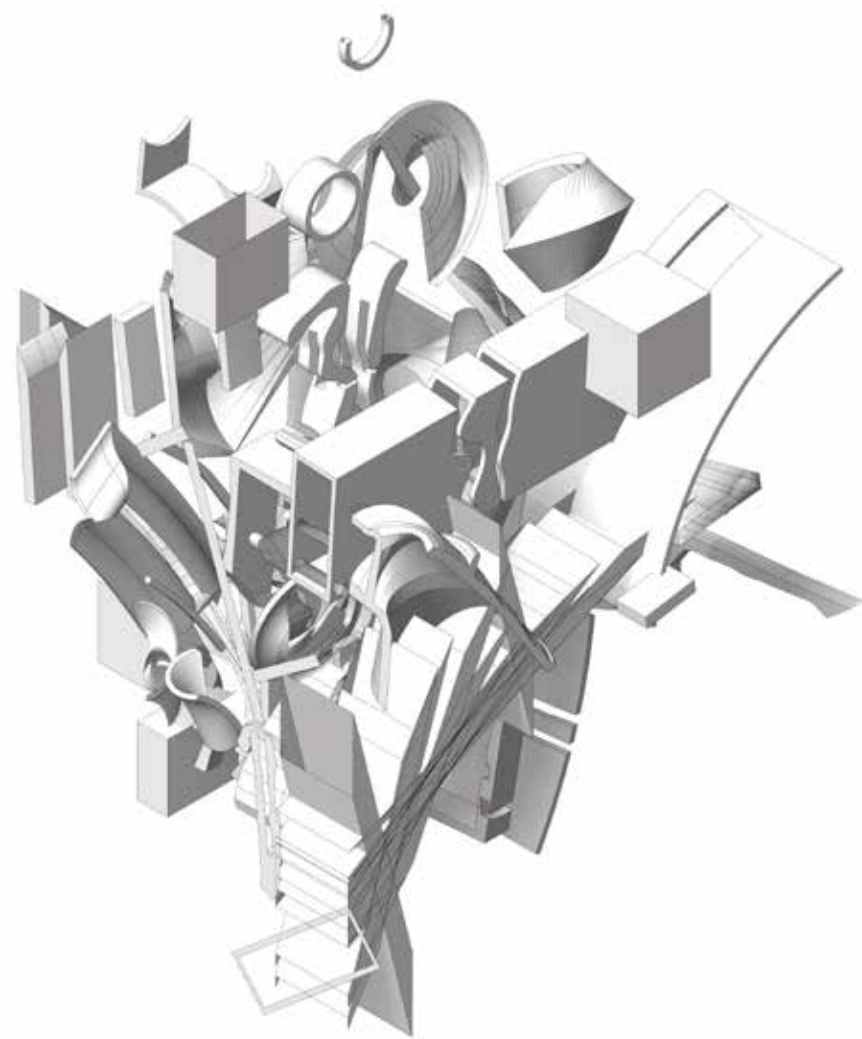
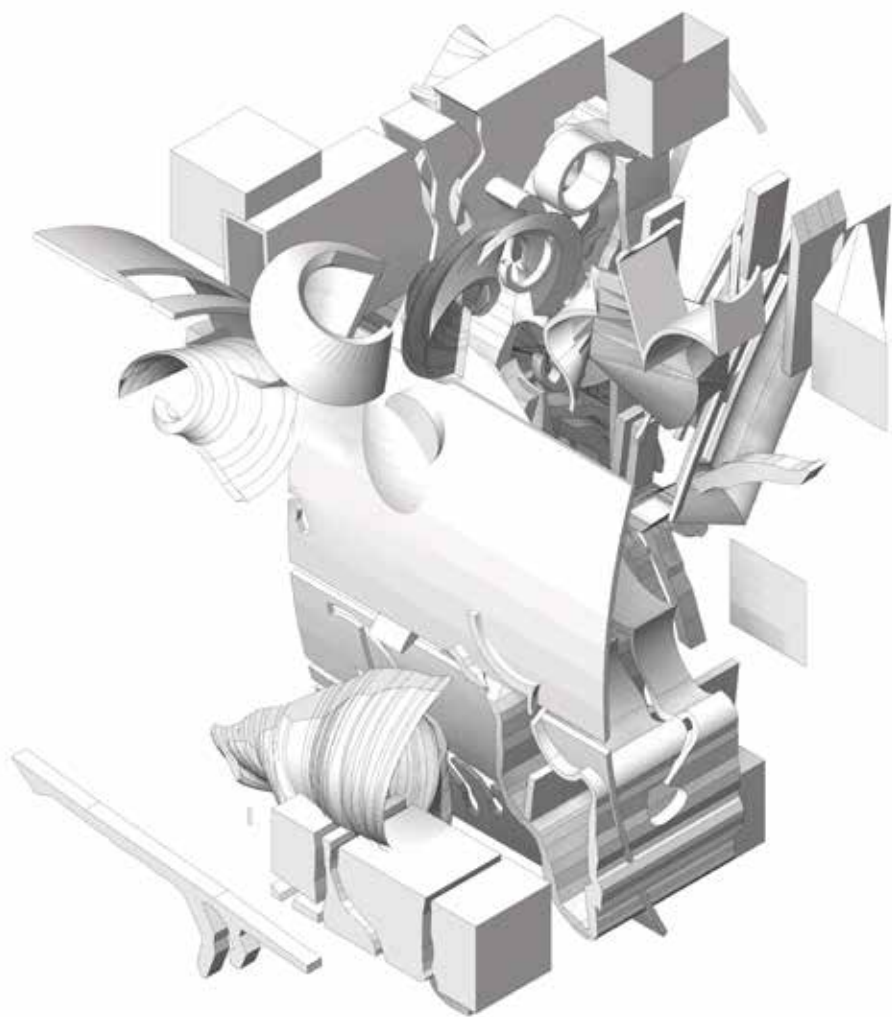
FICTION

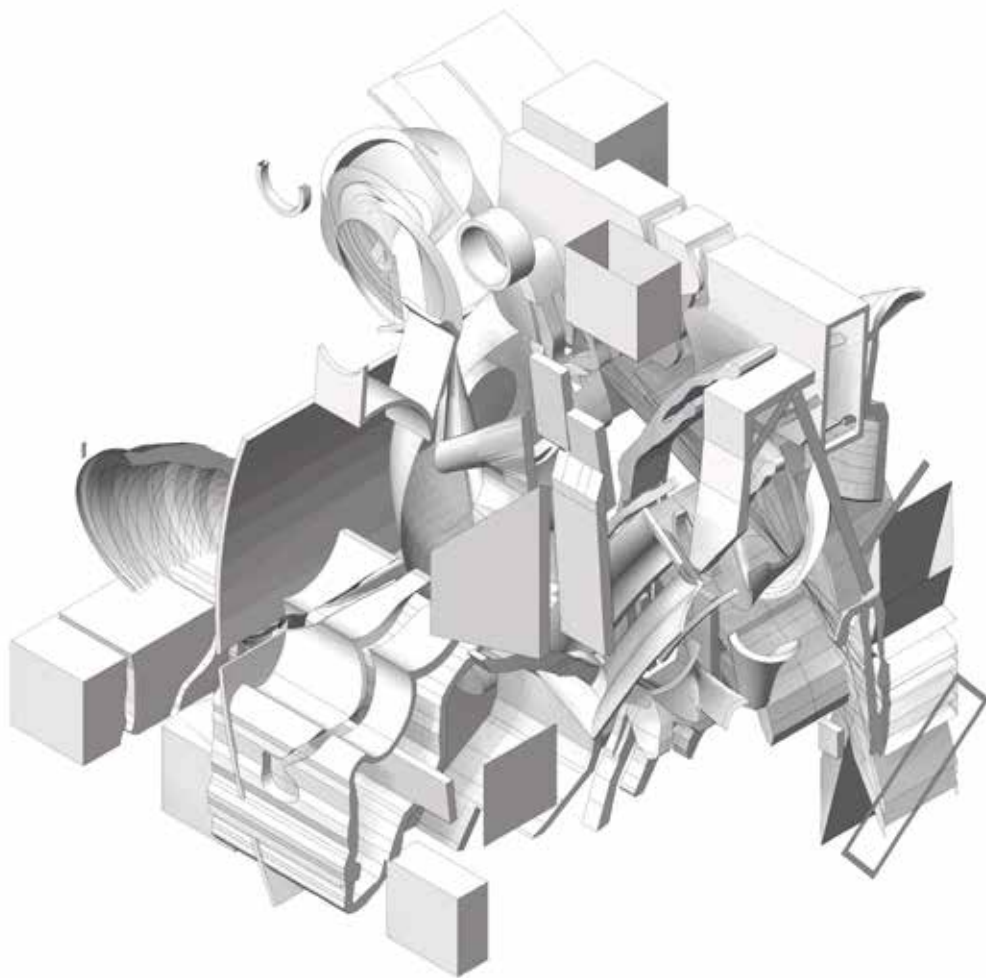
Who Knows Where is a fictional nation exploring the limits of knowledge by running small-scale, long-term experiments on thought. Hoping to arrive at a fundamental breakthrough in thinking first, the nation recently funded the world's first spacetime mission. In need of the appropriate expertise, the nation elected to send its most promising citizens, a team of philosophers, far away from us. Trained to think deeply about multiple perspectives at once, these travelers use methods that question what we choose to pay attention to and how we make sense of a world we don't understand. The farther they drift, the more incomprehensible their understanding of reality seems to us. When dealing with situations unknown to them, these citizens reveal more than one way of looking at a world where different interpretations and different understandings allow them to arrive at different conclusions not unlike ours.

KNOWLEDGE

This project began as a response to the question: what should be done when nothing can be done? Action in the face of uncertainty requires knowledge of the problems at hand. Let us identify the nature of problems we face — of which there can be said to be at least three kinds: those that can be solved, those that we can do something about, but can't solve, and those that are impossible to solve. Impossibility, however, is a relative condition dependent on knowledge. In this way, the world that exists for us is a product of our knowledge of that world — as our knowledge changes, our world changes. What happens when the world around us challenges the ways we think about knowledge? Are we facing problems we cannot think ourselves through? This may be dependent on what we think those problems are, and more generally, how we choose to think. When we cannot agree on the nature of problems we face, how will we arrive at a path forward?







THOUGHT

Thought has several important properties worth considering: First, thought allows us to grasp features of reality inaccessible to perception. For example, we can pay attention to certain properties of objects we cannot directly observe and consider specific events that have already, have yet to, or could never happen. In this way, a capacity for thought becomes essential when dealing with situations where our perceptions may fail us. Second, we already know we can observe, experiment, and construct models about thought. The formal study of thought began with philosophers, the first experts among us to develop principles for thinking. Over time, linguists, psychologists, economists, computer scientists, and neuroscientists have all, often separately and in their own ways, contributed to our broader understanding of what thought is and can be. If we want to arrive at a coherent understanding, it is likely these and more disciplines will need to coordinate—making the study of thought a transdisciplinary project. Dealing with thoughts can be tricky—they can be both slippery and sticky, deep and shallow, obvious and elusive, insignificant and important, dependent and independent, individual and collective, particular and general. Indeed, the behavior of thought seems just as contradictory as everything else physics tells us happens at the fundamental level of reality. How can this be? What don't we understand about thought that makes it harder for us to know what's going on around us?

SPACETIME

Spacetime is a concept designed by physicists to explain why some observations break down in certain situations. The idea is simple: when we combine the known dimensions of space with time, we are able to

draw conclusions about objects and events that are mathematically sound. While these conclusions scale in experiments, they also scaffold into other ideas—some of which have very intriguing philosophical implications. In particular, how we track the journey of things through spacetime allows us to not only make certain claims about the existence of those things in relation to an observer, but also perform particular conceptual operations. For example, interactions between objects or events across regions in spacetime can be described as (a) time-like separated, (b) light-like separated, and (c) space-like separated. The notations demonstrate a view of the world limited to measurements of space, time, and light. Could there be other measures of the world? How can we arrive at an alternative framework that opens up a dialogue between physicists and philosophers?

METHODS

We learn about the world through constructing and manipulating models. In fact, history of science reveals just how many of our beliefs about reality have been shaped by the models built by physicists. What makes scientific models useful also happens to make them philosophically intriguing. Methods used to form these models—namely, abstraction and distortion—not only enable experts to deal with situations too complicated to tackle, but also make present the broader assumptions used to make these situations more tractable. Abstraction allows us to isolate particular features of the world by stripping away properties that don't seem relevant to the problem at hand, whereas distortion involves deliberately simplifying a system by making explicit constraints. It seems these tactics are foundational to our knowledge of the world around us—so, what can we learn about their limits? How can we model a world where abstraction and distortion break down?

DRIFT

We already know we have trouble thinking concretely about objects and events far away from us—the more distant they are, the more abstractly we tend to think of them. Social psychology suggests this applies to multiple dimensions of distance—temporal, spatial, social, and hypothetical—and in many cases, at once. In physics, distance is a measure of the interval between two things. If how we interpret and comprehend the world around us relies on these intervals, what happens when concrete things we're dealing with begin to drift away from us? Would they start to seem more abstract to us? At what point, would the gap between us and those things outpace our ability to understand them?

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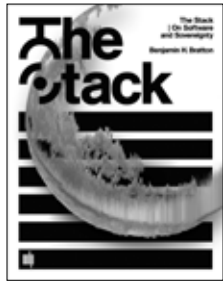
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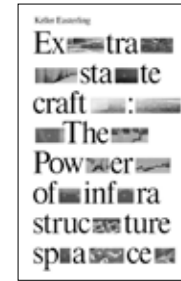
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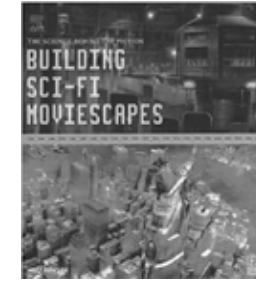
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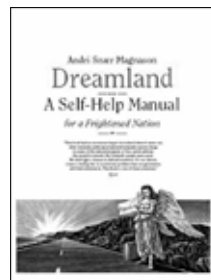
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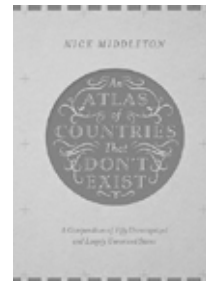


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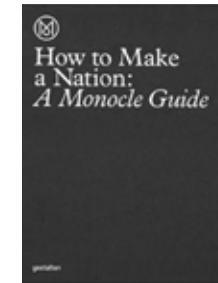
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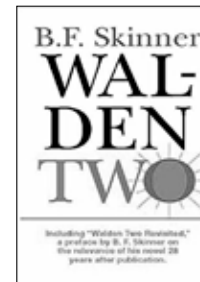
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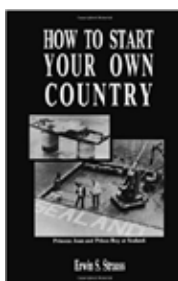
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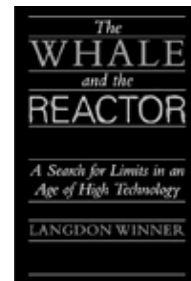
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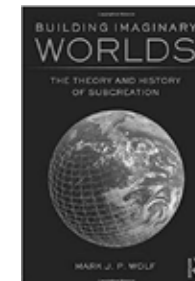
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