

DARIA SYVAKOS
SELECTED WORKS 2020-25



Infrastructures are often perceived as neutral technical systems, yet they are essential to the maintenance of power relations. Daria Syvakos analyzes hidden infrastructural networks that permeate bodies, space, and collective memory, combining artistic practice with critical theory. Her work reflects on how state and economic power structures regulate the conditions of life and death through infrastructural orders – not solely by means of direct violence, but primarily through the constitution of controlled scenarios of exclusion. In her interactive digital simulations, she creates experimental spaces in which these mechanisms of power can be made visible, deconstructed, and critically negotiated. Through this, her practice opens discursive and performative perspectives on resilience and on alternative infrastructures of care that challenge prevailing systems of violence and imagine emancipatory futures.

Lina Louisa Krämer,
Curator, Program Director at Schinkel Pavillon

Daria Syvakos (b. 1988, Donetsk, Ukraine) is an artist and researcher. Daria graduated as Meisterschuelerin from the Berlin University of the Arts, new media and experimental film class led by Prof. Dr. Hito Steyerl and Prof. Mykola Ridnyi, and holds a master's degree in economics. Her works were shown at Ars Electronica, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Kyiv Biennial, Kunsthalle Baden Baden, and Documenta 15 among others. Syvakos received the DAAD, Rosa Luxemburg and the President's of Ukraine Academic Scholarships and is a nominee of UdK Berlin Art Award. She was a research associate at the Institute of Artificial Intelligence Problems, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. After Russian occupation of her hometown in 2014 Daria lived and worked across shifting geographies. Currently, she is based in Berlin. Daria Syvakos holds an artistic fellowship at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center. She works as a guest lecturer at the Berlin University of the Arts.

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"I'm interested in systems hidden from sight – underwater pipelines, energy dependencies, secret prisons. How do such systems shape bodies, memory and land? How does space mediate access, movement and visibility? What can be learnt from other species to change it? My focus lies in spatial transformations and technologies associated with necropolitical governance.

Reinterpreting displaced, fragmented, or forgotten (hi)stories I aim to deconstruct dominant narratives and their imprint on space and collective imaginaries. Since the occupation of my hometown a decade ago I have been exploring the birth, life and death of infrastructures. I analyse how they reflect imperial and neoliberal logic. During this period I adopted diverse strategies for speculations about the possible futures of built environments and the new life forms they create.

I built alternative spaces to those violently transformed or ruined. However I do it with my own means – through modelling, animating, and rendering as three-dimensional simulations. I use gaming engines to open these environments for the audience. Many of my works require interaction, active navigation of digital terrain and decision-making.

My research-based work takes the form of installations, videos and software. For my recent project I worked with my family archive to tell the story of resistance to erasure. I show how the brutal domination over communities and more-than-human worlds triggers the uncontrolled transformation of all forms of life."



WHAT WE LOST IN THE WATER

Video installation. 2022-2025

Stills from What We Lost in the Water video



WHAT WE LOST IN THE WATER

Video installation. 2022-2025

What We Lost in the Water explores the so-called Plan for the Great Transformation of Nature, one of the largest-scale attempts to permanently change the climate for human benefit. The erection of hydrological infrastructure was followed by flooding of 2155 km² of fertile soil, villages and forests, dam destruction under Nazi occupation, and the ecocide of late capitalism.

The plan for the reengineering of nature forever altered the land, rivers, and thousands of lives across Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. *What We Lost in the Water* emerges from my family archive – fading photographs, letters, fragments of fabric passed down from my grandmother. These remnants of domestic life expose how systems of power reorganise space through forced labour, memory, and ritual. The work follows the need to inhabit absence – to engage with what has been rendered ghostlike.

The video installation is set within a silver survival dome. It draws from the speculative biotechnospheres of Ukrainian artist and technofuturist Fedir Tetyanych, also known as Fripulia. Already in 70s Tetyanych envisioned self-sustaining capsules for life after collapse. The prototype of this structure is shaped by imaginaries of destroyed infrastructure and toxic survival. As a manifestation of partisan autonomy, the biotechnosphere seeks to rewire the connection between body, landscape, and technology.

The video follows the spirit of a protagonist who drowned during the flooding of the Great Meadow (Ukr. *Velykyi Luh*) – a once-thriving wetland ecosystem sacrificed to totalitarian hydropower. The ghost is doomed to wander through ruined landscapes, haunted by the threat of nuclear catastrophe.

To cultivate cotton – a strategic raw material for gunpowder and the military – the Soviet regime forcibly relocated over 20,000 families from Uzbekistan to Ukraine, climatically unsuitable for this crop. Massive irrigation canals transformed the Dnipro and Amu Darya into engines of extraction, with catastrophic consequences. In Central Asia, this initiative culminated in the disappearance of the Aral Sea. In Ukraine, the unique natural area of *Velykyi Luh* was annihilated.

During World War II, German occupational authorities exploited Ukrainian cotton fields, and both Soviet and Nazi armies destroyed the Dnipro dam in retreat – twice weaponizing the river to flood the land, kill civilians, and obliterate infrastructure.



WHAT WE LOST IN THE WATER

Video installation. 2022-2025

In 2023, just a month after this work's video-essay was released, Russian forces blew up the Kakhovka HPP dam, committing a massive act of ecocide. Meanwhile, in a new imperial cycle, migrant workers from Central Asia in Russia are being conscripted into Moscow's army.

What We Lost in the Water traces the transformations of the Kherson Cotton Mill – a flagship Soviet factory inaugurated in 1953, just weeks after the death of Joseph Stalin. Built as a monument to postwar industrial supremacy, the mill later became a shopping mall, an entertainment complex, a bomb shelter, and finally a military base. Attacked repeatedly during the full-scale Russian invasion, it now lies in ruins.

As the project developed, more and more people got involved – artists, engineers, researchers who brought their own experiences and skills. The work turned into a collective endeavour, shaped by shared conversations, ideas, and time spent together. One of the most valuable parts of the process has been exactly that: working together, learning from each other, and making new friendships that outlived this journey. After all, the real treasure is the friends we make along the way.

<https://vimeo.com/1088946375?share=copy>

Password: water!

Director, producer, script, camera, 3D animation & environment

CGI supervision, 3D animation & environment

3D animation & environment

Characters design

Editing, 3D animation & environment

Voice

Script and story consultant

Daria Syvakos

Oleksii Voitikh

Daria Maiier

Annkatrin Kluss

Arvina Afsharnejad

Lucy Zorya

Wren Bisley

Video mixed media, 3D animation, filmed footage, sound

Installation 550 x 550 cm, fabric, rubber, polyvinyl, debris of destroyed infrastructures, water bottles, electricity generator, wooden box; sound, video loop, 17 min

Installation view, 2025





WAITING FOR WHAT?

Video installation. 2025 (ongoing)

Installation view



WAITING FOR WHAT?

Video installation. 2025 (ongoing)

In a collaboration with Mika Ebbing

The library of zines has been kindly provided by the Sickness Affinity Group

How are health, sickness, chronic illness, and disability produced through social inequality? How are care relations outsourced, deferred, or rendered invisible?

Waiting for What? considers waiting as a suspended temporal condition and examines how waiting rooms operate as spaces shaped by solidarity, negotiation, and resistance. Waiting is approached as a condition structured by endurance, collective presence, and uncertainty.

The work was developed during a residency at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center as a collaborative project by Daria Syvakos and Mika Ebbing. It unfolds as an ongoing inquiry into waiting, care, and the administrative conditions through which access to support and treatment is organised.

Drawing on empirical research, the project reflects on how knowledge circulates across institutional and disciplinary contexts. Visitors encounter the work as part of an open research process that continues beyond the exhibition setting.

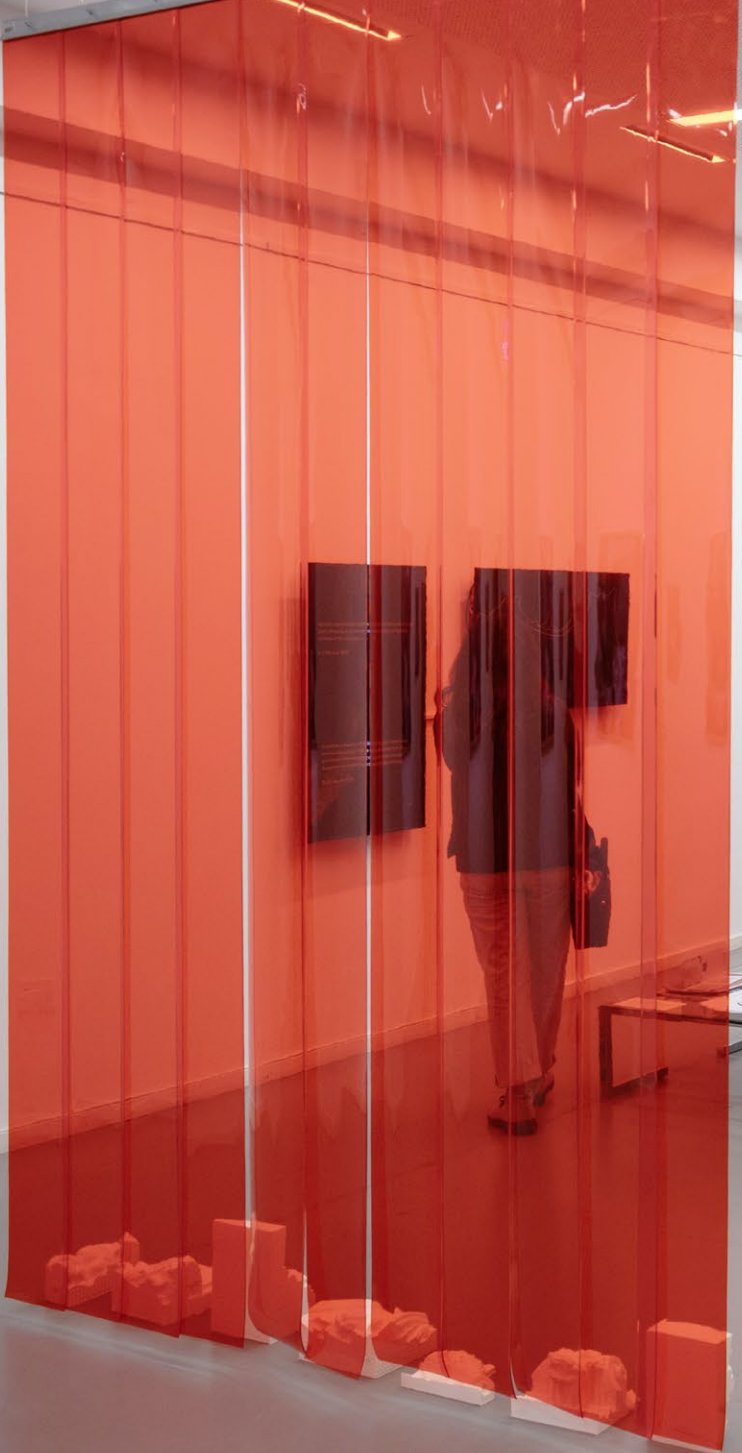
The video installation engages with the history of the modern welfare state and the social sciences. Its visual material references a heritage report on the building, constructed in 1894 for the Reichsversicherungsamt (Imperial Insurance Office), the central institution responsible for administering early systems of social insurance within the German Empire. The building now houses the WZB Berlin Social Science Center.

Interior architectural details of the building are reproduced as 3D-printed elements within the installation. Detached from their original function, these forms register the persistence of institutional structures across time. *Waiting for What?* directs attention to the spatial, temporal, and administrative conditions that structure access to treatment, recognition, and support.

Video mixed media, 3D animation, 9 min

Installation 350 x 500 cm, questionnaires, zines, 3D-printed elements, polyvinyl curtains, chairs, tables, video loop, 9 min

Installation view, 2025



FREE



IZOLYATSIA

Simulated environment, beta v.0.7 available for Mac OS and Windows. 2020 (ongoing)

Stills from Izolyatsia environment



IZOLYATSIA

Simulated environment, beta v.0.7 available for Mac OS and Windows.
2020 (ongoing)

In a collaboration with Arvin Arta

The digital environment simulates Izolyatsia – a former factory and art centre turned into a prison in the artist's hometown Donetsk, Ukraine. After the city's capture in 2014, Russian paramilitary troops seized Izolyatsia, looted and destroyed the artworks. Now its building is used as a military base, training facility for the soldiers and concentration camp with a secret status. Detainees who were convicted without investigation are imprisoned there. Men and women have been tortured, raped and murdered in Izolyatsia for almost a decade.

The Torture Camp on Paradise Street, a book written by Stanislav Aseyev incarcerated in secret prison for his journalistic work in Eastern Ukraine, became one of the first informational sources for creating a programmed model of the place. Izolyatsia before 2014 was modelled based on archival material and artist's recollections about the place. Izolyatsia under occupation was reconstructed through analysis of survivors' testimonies and memoirs. The virtual post-war Izolyatsia is the space for remembrance, an exploration of future imaginaries while bombs still fall.

Illegal (and often secret) detention is a tool widely used by Russia to oppress and control residents in the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories. Researcher and author Laleh Khalili argues that containment is envisioned as an opportunity for social engineering of the people and places that are conquered. The hidden violence generated by ever-expanding empire is embodied in mechanisms of incarceration.

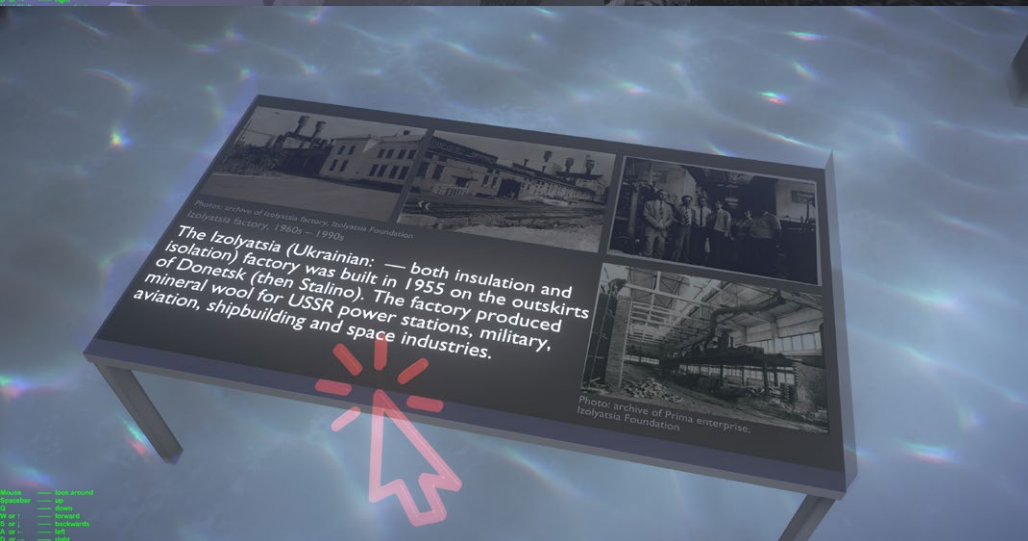
Navigating an incorporeal avatar the user can experience multiple dimensions of Russian occupation and necropolitics by revealing insights about its nature and underlying causes, time travelling and crossing the borders in the so far unreachable parts of the Ukrainian east.

<https://vimeo.com/1045838579?share=copy>

Password: prison

Stills from Izolyatsia environment

Simulated environment. Navigation in 3D space, digitalised archival materials and research findings, video, 3D animation, sound. Average experience time 25 mins



Stills from Izolyatsia environment

Simulated environment. Navigation in 3D space, digitalised archival materials and research findings, video, 3D animation, sound. Average experience time 25 mins



Solve error: 0.42 px

Track

Track

R G B B/W

Weight 1.000

Stab Weight 1.000

Average Error: 0.33 px

Custom Color Presets

Objects

Plane Track

Tracking Settings

Motion Model Location

Match Keyframe

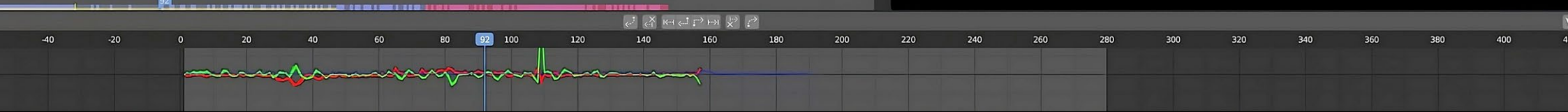
Prepass

Normalize

Tracking Settings Extras

Camera

Marker

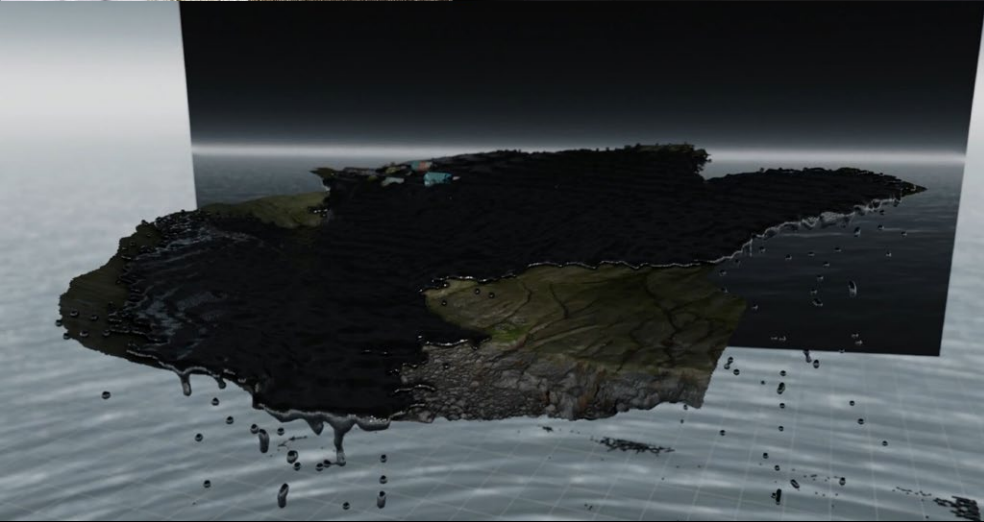




YELLOW PRINCE THAT CASTED LONG SHADOWS

Video, 7 min, loop. 2021 (ongoing)

Yellow Prince is based on research into the intersection of imperial ideologies, hunger politics, and the economy of violence in non-linear time. The title references the novel by Ukrainian author Vasyl Barka, which depicts the figure of death. The work traces the spiral course of history across its tragic chapters – the genocide of Crimean Tatars and Holodomor, extermination by hunger. These struggles are echoing today louder than ever before, while fascist ideologies and scale of terror are again rapidly reaching their zenith. The work picks up the pieces of fractured and scattered narratives from the past, put them together and see the pattern perfectly matching with politics pursued by imperialist aggressors today.



Mixed media video, 3D animation, sound, 7 min, loop

Image above: installation view in Museum of Photography Berlin, 2023

Image below: stills from Yellow Prince That Casted Long Shadows

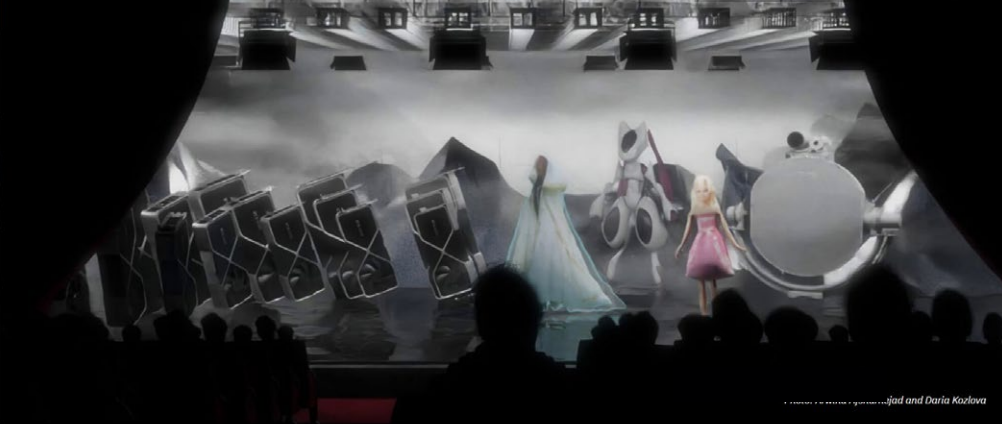




MACHINE MOURNING

Computer game, beta v.1.1 for Mac OS and Windows, average playtime 17 mins. 2023 (ongoing)

Stills from Machine Mourning's gameplay



MACHINE MOURNING

Computer game, beta v.1.1 for Mac OS and Windows, average playtime 17 mins. 2023 (ongoing)

In a collaboration with Arvin Arta


In *Machine Mourning*, an interactive sonic-focused experience, based on sound datasets trained with the artists' own voices, Arvina Afsharnejad and Daria Syvakos critically examine the entanglement between internet culture, pop music, digital media, military technologies, surveillance apparatus and audio data extractivism. The sci-fi plot of *Machine Mourning* unfolds at the opera premiere staged in the immersive digital environment simulating a melting glacier. Investigating the silent violence of extractive listening, Arvin and Daria attempt to raise concerns about the shift from comprehension to operation and explore its implications for the subjectivity of human and non-human agents.

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MANUFACTURING AUDIBLE TRUTH

Machine Mourning: Beyond the Void of Extractive Listening

Daria Kozlova (RU) & Arvina Afsharnejad (DE)

Anton Bruckner Private University
Sa 9. Sep 2023 16:10 - 16:30
Share Event


Lecture-Performance

Under the scorching sun on the top of the melting AI iceberg, Grimes peacefully reads *The Communist Manifesto* to David Guetta deepfaking Eminem's vocals. Google guru Ray Kurzweil floats by on a drifting ice floe. Kurzweil is waving hello and continuing a lively conversation with the AI-reincarnated double of his deceased father. Only distant twitter of stochastic parrots *haphazardly stitching together sequences of linguistic forms* interferes with the sonic idyll. But what lies beneath this pastoral landscape? What secrets hide in the murky waters of machine listening? And most important—whose voice will be heard and who is overwhelmed by the deep sea of data?

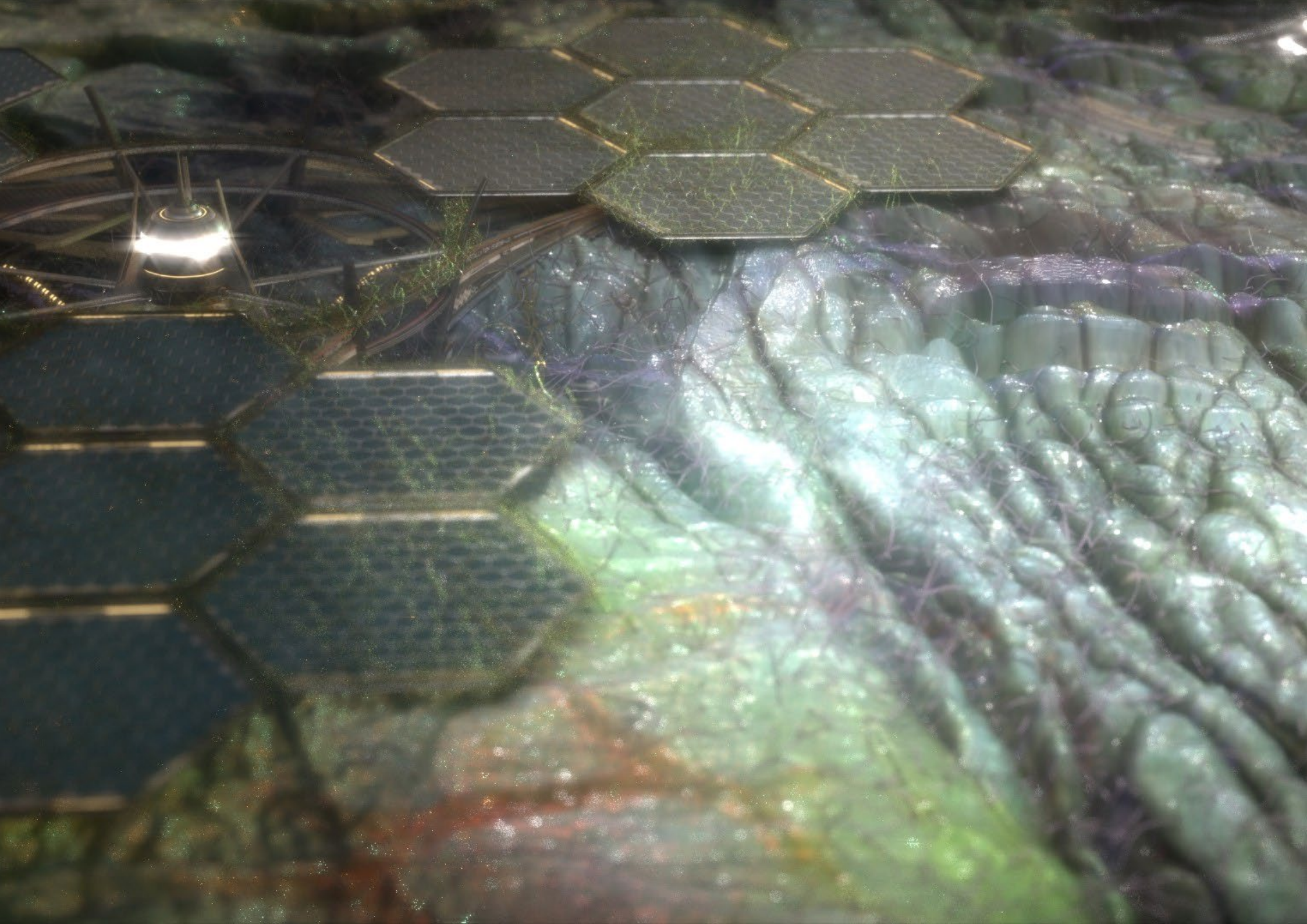
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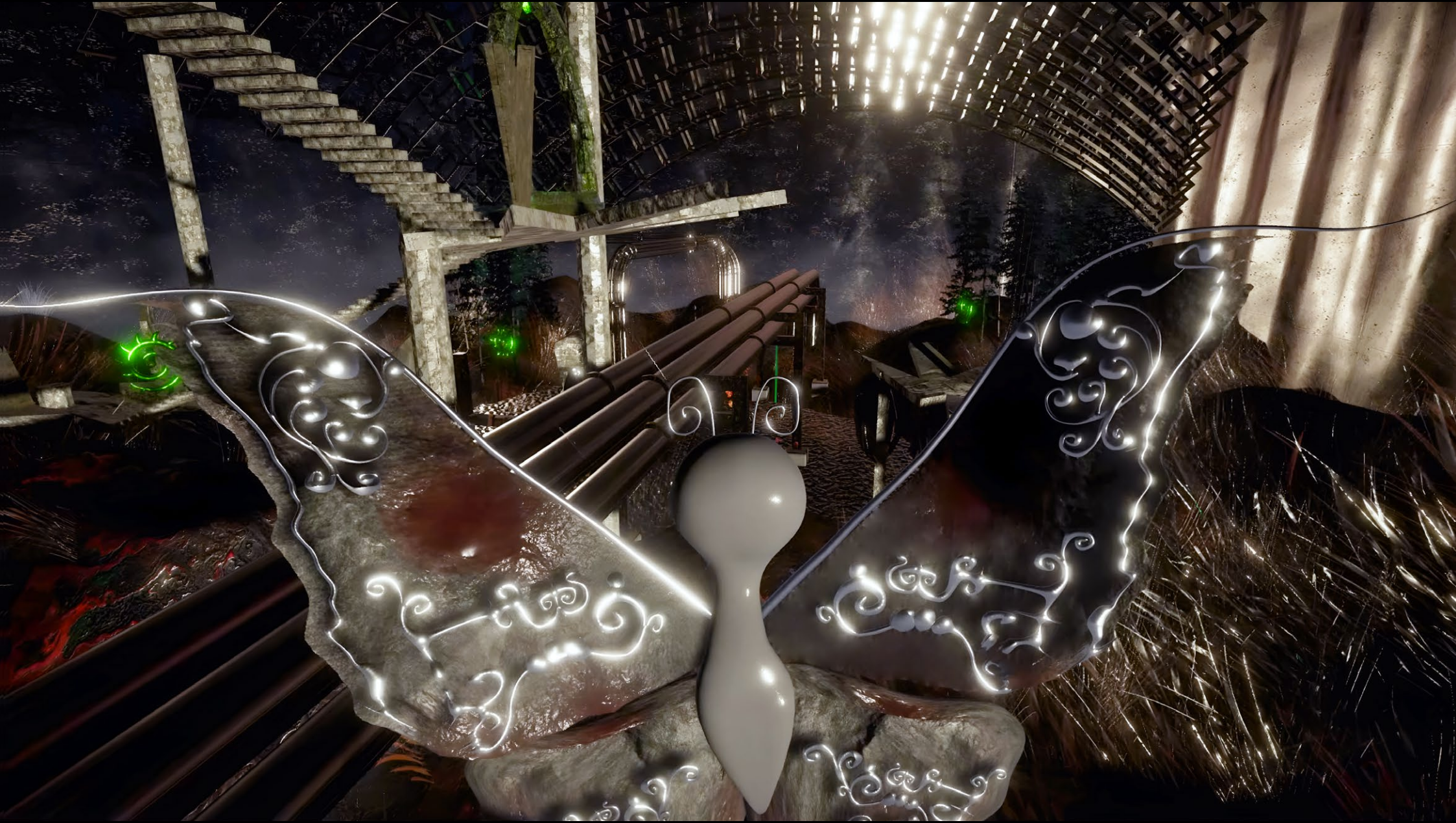


Simulated environment. Navigation in 3D space, gaming mechanics, 3D animation, sound. Average playtime 17 mins

Image above: announcement of lecture performance on extractive listening

Image below: stills from Machine Mourning's gameplay

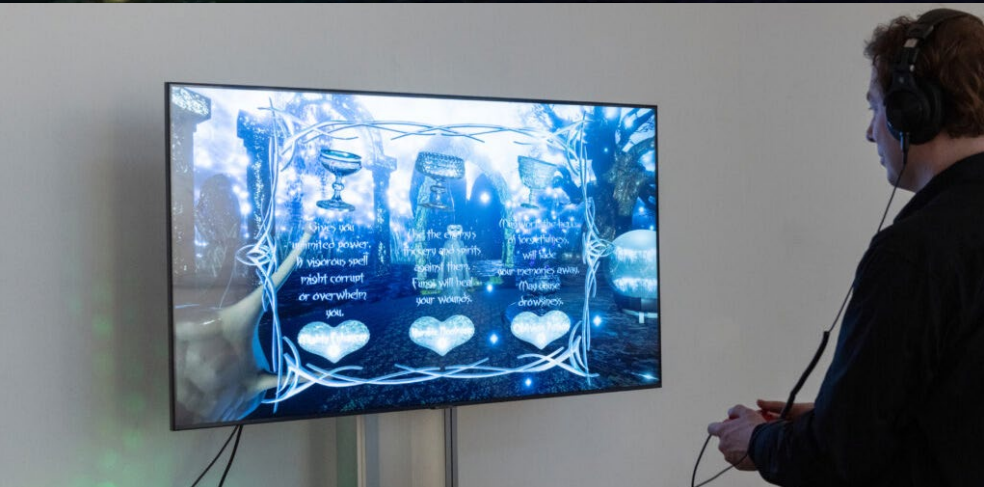




PIPE DREAM

Computer game, beta v.0.6 for Mac OS and Windows, average playtime 23 mins. 2020 (ongoing)

Stills from Pipe Dream gameplay



PIPE DREAM

Computer game, beta v.0.6 for Mac OS and Windows, average playtime 23 mins. 2020 (ongoing)

Pipe Dream is an imaginary journey across offshore pipelines spurred by disastrous Nord Stream 2 project built under the Baltic Sea for transportation of Russian gas to Germany. It addresses power abuse, natural resource exploitation and revolts against oppression sparked by brutal violence.

Through interactive digital environments, action-loaded mechanics and witchery, Pipe Dream addresses neoliberal energy trade politics, its role in the imperialistic wars and raises the necessity of the embargo on fossils exported by the aggressors-extractivists.

Simulated environment. Navigation in 3D space, gaming mechanics, 3D animation, digitalised research findings, video, sound. Average playtime 23 mins

Images above: stills from Pipe Dream's gameplay

Image below: installation view in KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, 2024

dariasyvagos.net