PORTFOLIO (2023 - 2025)

Manling XUE

ARTISTIC STATEMENT

During the 1990s and 2000s, I grew up in a small town in southern China — a major center of light industry and electronics. My vision was shaped amid assembly lines, planned vegetation, industrial zones, and artificial ecosystems. As I reached adulthood, I witnessed my hometown undergo a rapid transformation: once known as the “factory of the world,” relying on abundant human labor, it has now become an automated and technologically equipped industrial city, where machines increasingly replace human work.

This environment has shaped both my imagination and my interest in industrial objects and natural landscapes. In my practice, the functional forms of industrial objects, the textures of nature, and the phenomena of animal mimicry are recomposed and metamorphosed, giving rise to hybrid forms imbued with a sense of absurdity.

My practice combines speculative narration, sculpture, installation, digital imagery, video, photography, AI generation, 3D modeling, immersive environments, music, and video games to construct an open, nonlinear, and transmedia narrative field. I am particularly drawn to the porous zones between nature and technology, between the human and the non-human. Through collage, hybridization, recomposition, and mimicry, I seek to evoke an ambivalent perception — revealing how humans and their environments — nature, animals, and other life forms — are reconfigured under technological intervention, within a relationship where industrialization and natural forms, control and chance, intertwine.

The hybrid objects I construct function both as engines of fictional narratives and as symbols of environmental reconfiguration under the impact of technology. Their perspective offers a brief escape from the anthropocentric frame; through them, I question how, in the context of accelerating technology, our habits, behaviors, and perceptual systems are profoundly reshaped. Thus, the technical object becomes the central axis of my research — not merely a tool or external prosthesis, but a new agent within the contemporary social network, an active node intervening in ecosystems and the networks of the living.

Fish-and Fish-ing, Fish-and Fish-ing.

2025

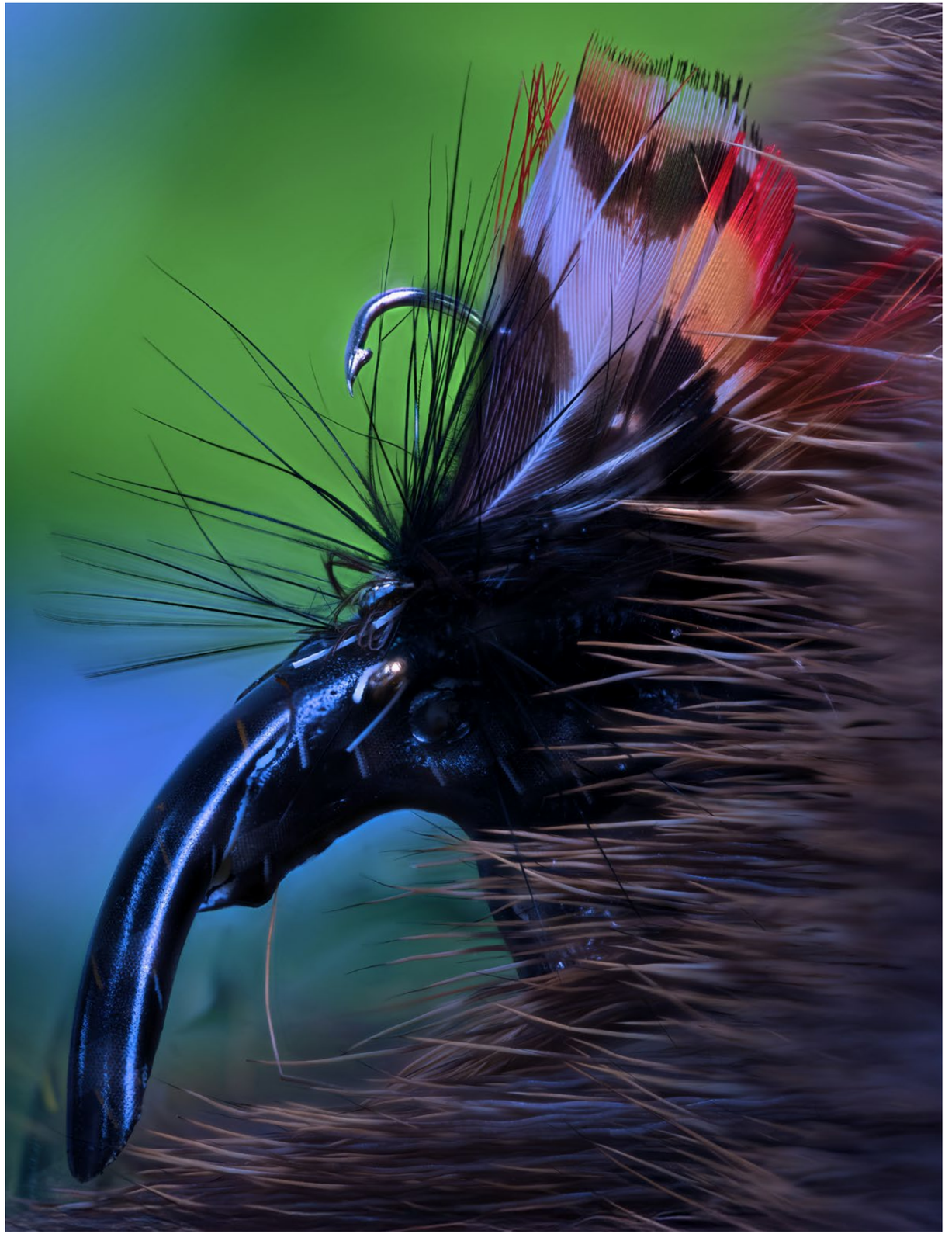
Medium : Macrophotography, micro-scenography, digital imagery, AI generation, original nursery rhyme, musical composition, video clip.
Dimensions : Variable.
Materials : Mineral specimens, fishing lures, animal bones, fur.

A dive into an imagination revolving around the lure: imitation, shimmer, immersion, capture.

This project explores an imaginary world built around the fishing lure — an ancient technical device combining mimicry, deception, and capture. By focusing on this primitive technical object, I aim to question the residual forms of hunting within contemporary industrialized societies. The lure, which imitates a wounded prey to attract a predator, embodies a technical logic grounded in the observation of living beings and their instrumental use by humans.

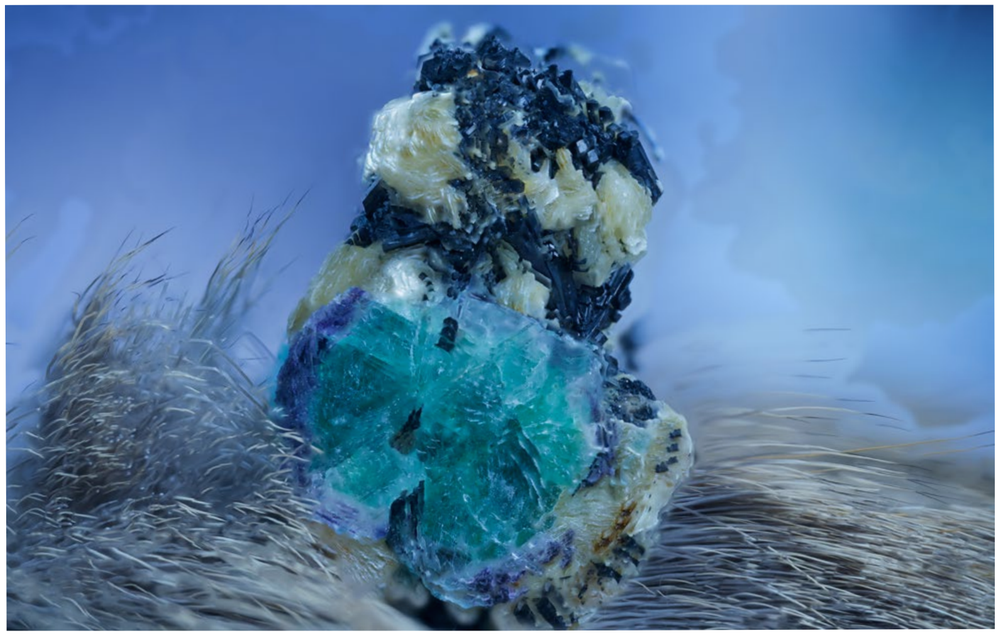
In contrast to contemporary systems of breeding and slaughter — highly efficient, automated, and enclosed — the lure retains a simple and direct logic rooted in natural cycles and sensory knowledge. Yet fishing, now considered a cultural practice rather than a vital necessity, has undergone numerous technological evolutions, both in the materials used to craft lures and in their design processes.

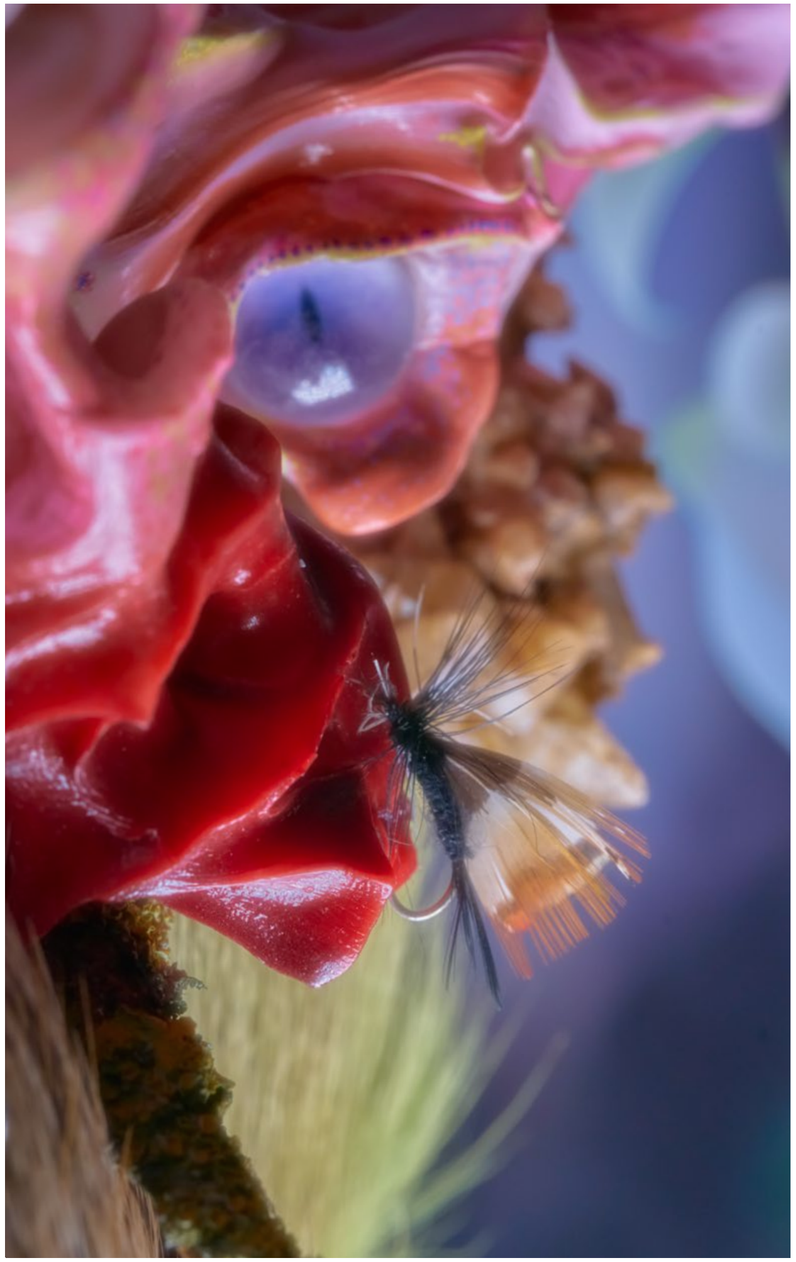
The project takes fishing — a cultural practice that escapes the quantitative and industrial chains of life — as a point of departure to question how humans and non-humans (animals, environments) mutually reconfigure one another through technical intervention. Through multimedia forms — hybrid landscapes, images, AI generation, and music — I seek, from the perspective of the lure and fishing culture, to explore the blurred zones between nature and technology and to reimagine the forms and potentials of the living.



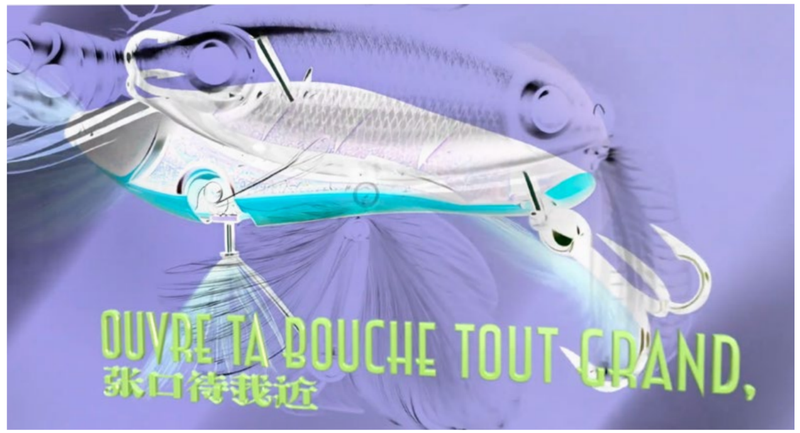
Macrophotography, materials: animal bones, fishing lures, bird feathers, faux fur, 2025.

Macrophotography, materials: mineral specimens, fishing lures, bird feathers, faux fur, 2025.





Macrophotography, materials: mineral specimens, fishing lures, bird feathers, faux fur, 2025.



Fish-and fish-ing, Fish-and fish-ing. *鱼与渔与鱼与渔 - yúyǔyúyǔyúyǔ*

Video screenshot, color video 1080p, stereo, a series of music clips, 2025.
https://www.xuemanling.com/fish-and-fishing/

I composed and produced the music, then trained an AI using my photographs to generate visual fragments, which I later synthesized and edited into the final video.

Parole:

Petit poisson dans le vent,
Je descends, tout doucement.
Blessé, perdu sous les flots,
Je fais des ronds dans l'eau.
Toi là-bas, tu m'as vu ?
Viens ici, n'attends plus.
Ouvre ta bouche tout grand,
Je suis ton repas d'enfant.

Lyrics:

Tiny fin, a wounded spark,
Floating slow, then through the dark.
Down I sink into the mud,
Jumping still, alive with blood.
Do you see me, swimming near?
Come and find me, have no fear.
Open wide your hungry jaw,
I was born to feed your maw.

How does the ground become a part of my body again?

2022, 2025

Medium : Sculpture, digital image, AI generation, 3D video, installation.
Dimensions : Variable.
Materials : Printed images, metal support, screen, potted plants and soil, lacquered resin, artificial leather.

Could there be a graft capable of reuniting all existences laid upon the Earth, both organic and inorganic?

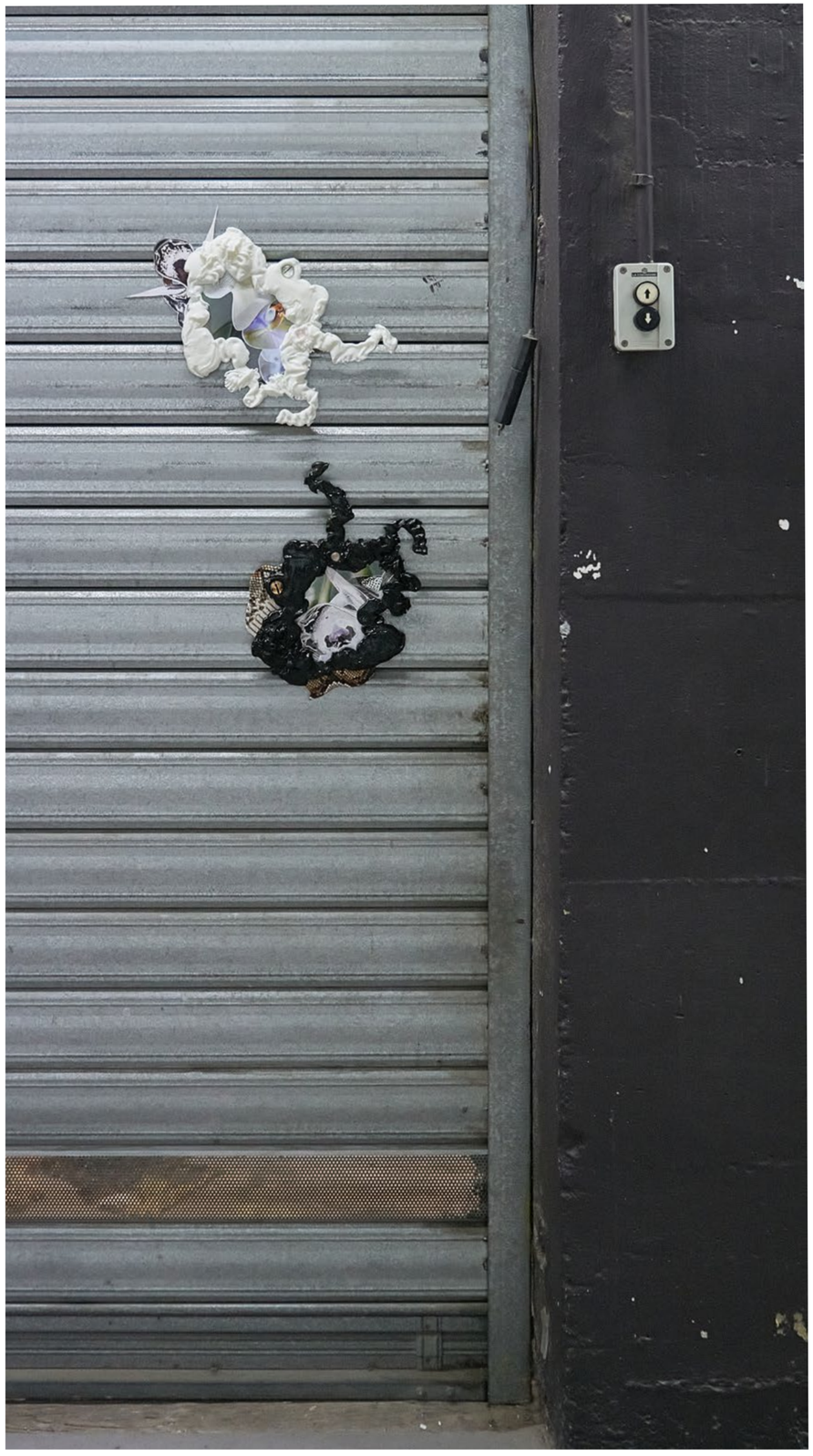
The forms that emerge from industrial products — morphologies shaped by functionality and the aesthetics of the tool — maintain a subtle, isomorphic relationship with the textures and mimetic phenomena of the natural world: mimicry, in itself, already constitutes a functional strategy. Based on this observation, I deliberately combined certain industrial fragments with animal mimetic characteristics to produce an ambiguous morphology.

From snake-skin and floral patterns, omnipresent in industrial production, to manufactured objects, cultivated and domesticated potted plants, and even animal bones transformed into ornaments — these seemingly “natural” landscapes are, in fact, constructed.

Through installation, I explore the composite relationship between natural and artificial artifacts. In this play of mimetic reflections, boundaries dissolve and reconfigure, generating a form that is at once absurd and equivocal.

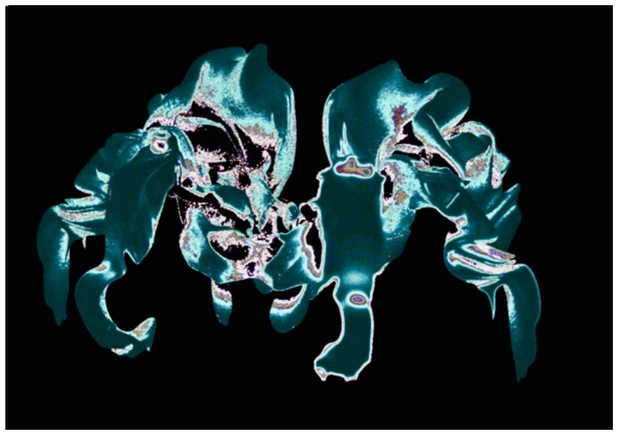
Sculpture, matériaux : résine, nylon, fausse fourrure, 2025.

Sculpture, materials: lacquered resin, artificial leather, printed images, 2025.



Sculpture, materials: lacquered resin, artificial leather, printed images, 2025.

Installation, materials: printed images, metal support, screen displaying a 3D animation, plants and soil, 2022.



Installation, materials: printed images, metal support, screen displaying a 3D animation, plants and soil, 2022.

Installation, materials: plastic net, 3D print in PLA, potted orchid, 2022.

BLUEPRINT

2023 - ongoing

Medium : Fictional text, video game, digital image, AI generation, sculpture, in situ installation, immersive installation, 3D, music.

Dimensions : Variable.

This is a speculative, open, and transmedia project in which I attempt to construct a fictional narrative network interacting and intertextually engaging with real space. The project spans multiple media: video game, digital imagery, AI generation, fictional text, in situ sculpture, immersive installation, and music.

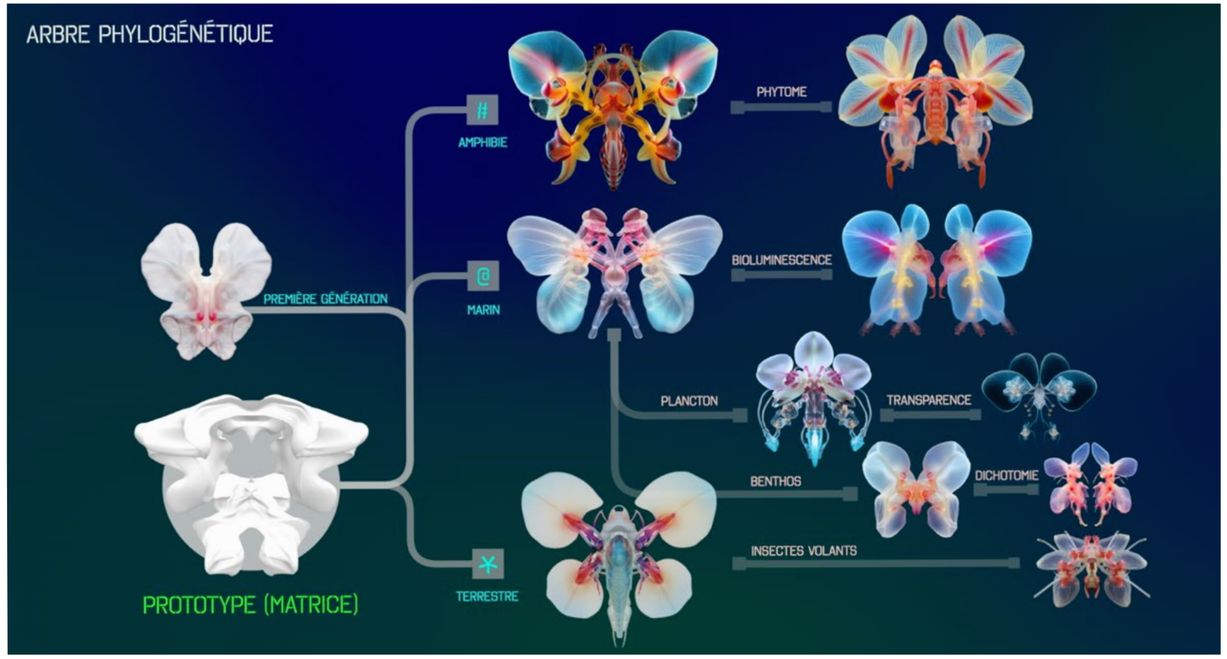
I trained an AI with my 3D modeling to generate approximately 8,000 images of drone-like forms. From this visual dataset, I imagined and classified a speculative lineage of "product-drones," organized as a phylogenetic series covering sea, land, and air. In this open world, these drones are designed to be fully automated and connected in real time — and I positioned them as the protagonists, the central figures of this narrative.

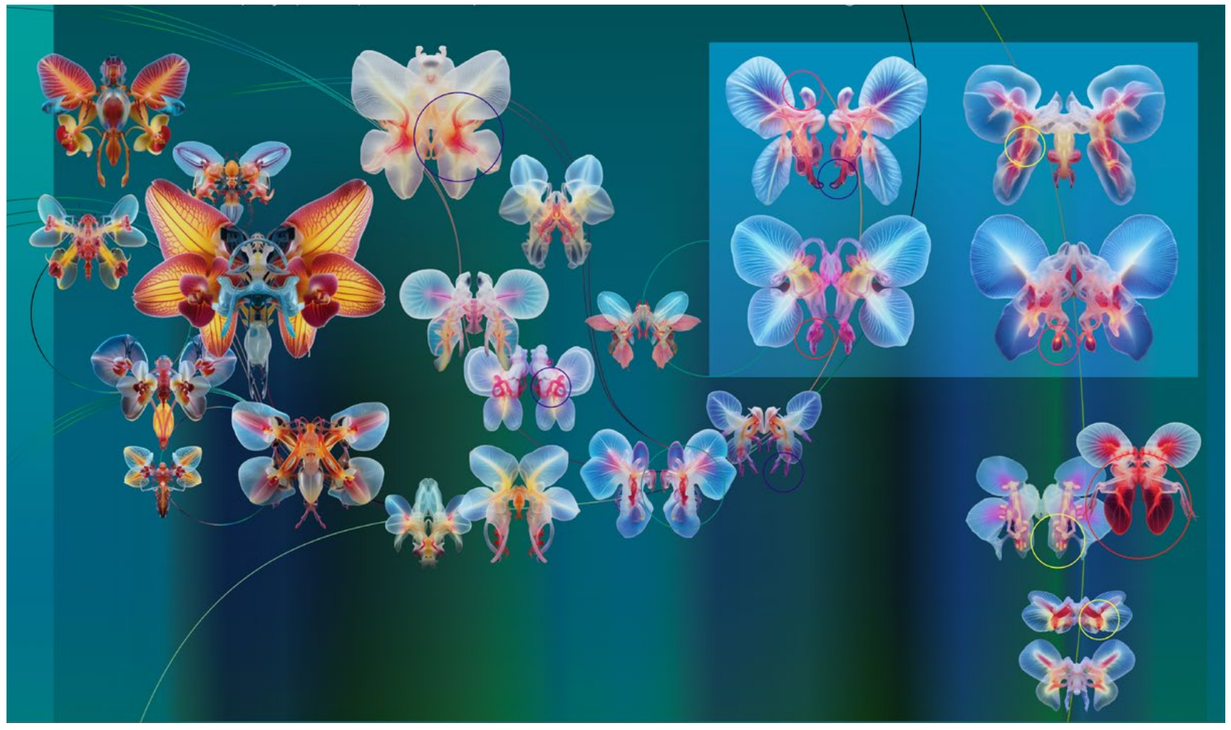
In this human-absent fictional world, I adopt the machine's perspective: the drones, like archaeologists, explore the remnants of humanity and continuously transmit their data to a network of always-online biological archives, assisting surviving humans in extending their existence within extreme environments and changing climates.

A crucial, non-represented aspect of the story is the decision-making subject: the heterogeneous network. This heterogeneity of the decentralized network could derive from geometry, geology, cosmology, chemistry, biology, zoology, ethnology, and even ballistics, geopolitics, and military strategy (Mark B. N. Hansen). While these systems operate independently, they can share resources and data in real time via certain protocols, similar to the underground mycorrhizal network and its symbiotic relationship with trees (the Wood Wide Web).

Through this framework, I aim to explore the ambivalent relationship between humans and technology: is the technological network an external prosthetic system, or have we already been internalized within it, becoming operational nodes of its functioning? Here, it is not merely about the assimilation of the living by machines; rather, under ecological crisis and the looming dead-end of anthropocentrism, we are compelled to transfer decision-making power to technological systems, turning them into new actors (technical agency). This necessarily leads to a restructuring of power hierarchies, and the systemic violence engendered by technological acceleration — whether exploitation or invasion — becomes inevitable.

Through this inverted fictional framework, I seek to interrogate the imbalance and ambivalent relationship between humans and their environment under the intervention of technology.





Screenshot of the digital version of the 2023 thesis.
https://www.xuemanling.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/BLUEPRINT-2023-s.pdf

Inspired by the mimicry of orchids, insects, and drones, I trained an AI with my own 3D models to generate and select approximately 8,000 mechanical structures. I presented these images in my DNSEP Art diploma thesis.

BLUEPRINT

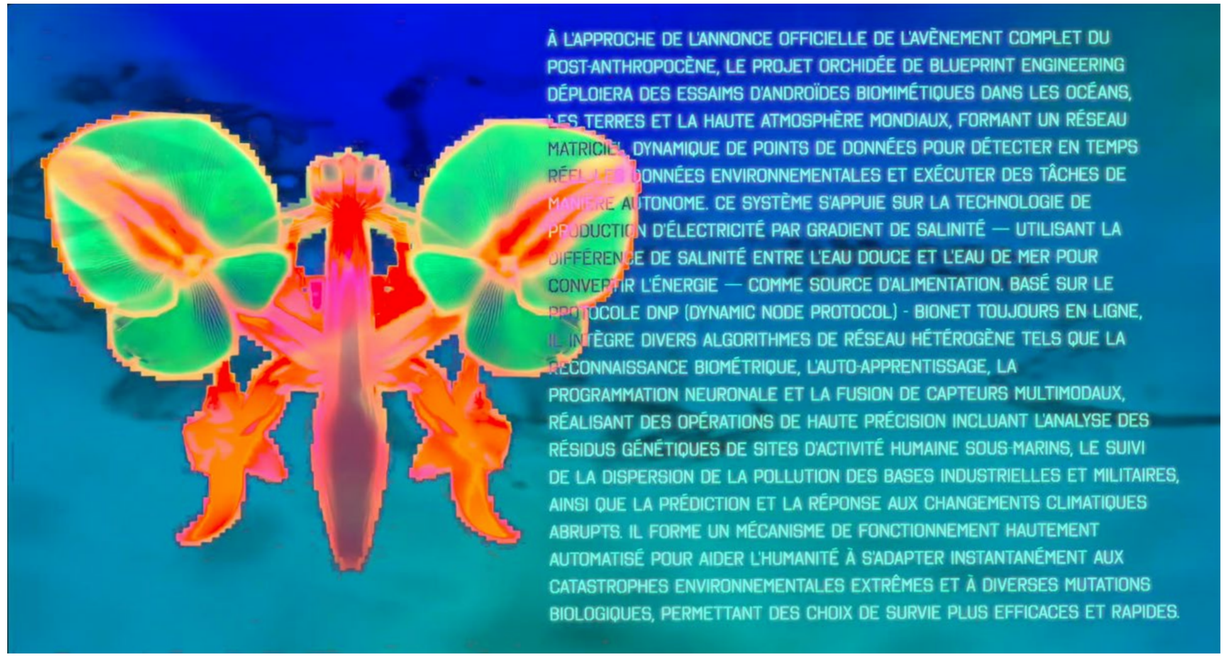
2023 - ongoing

BLUEPRINT : Orchid Plan

Medium : Fictional text, video game, video, digital image, 3D, AI generation.
Dimensions : Variable.
Materials : Digital image.

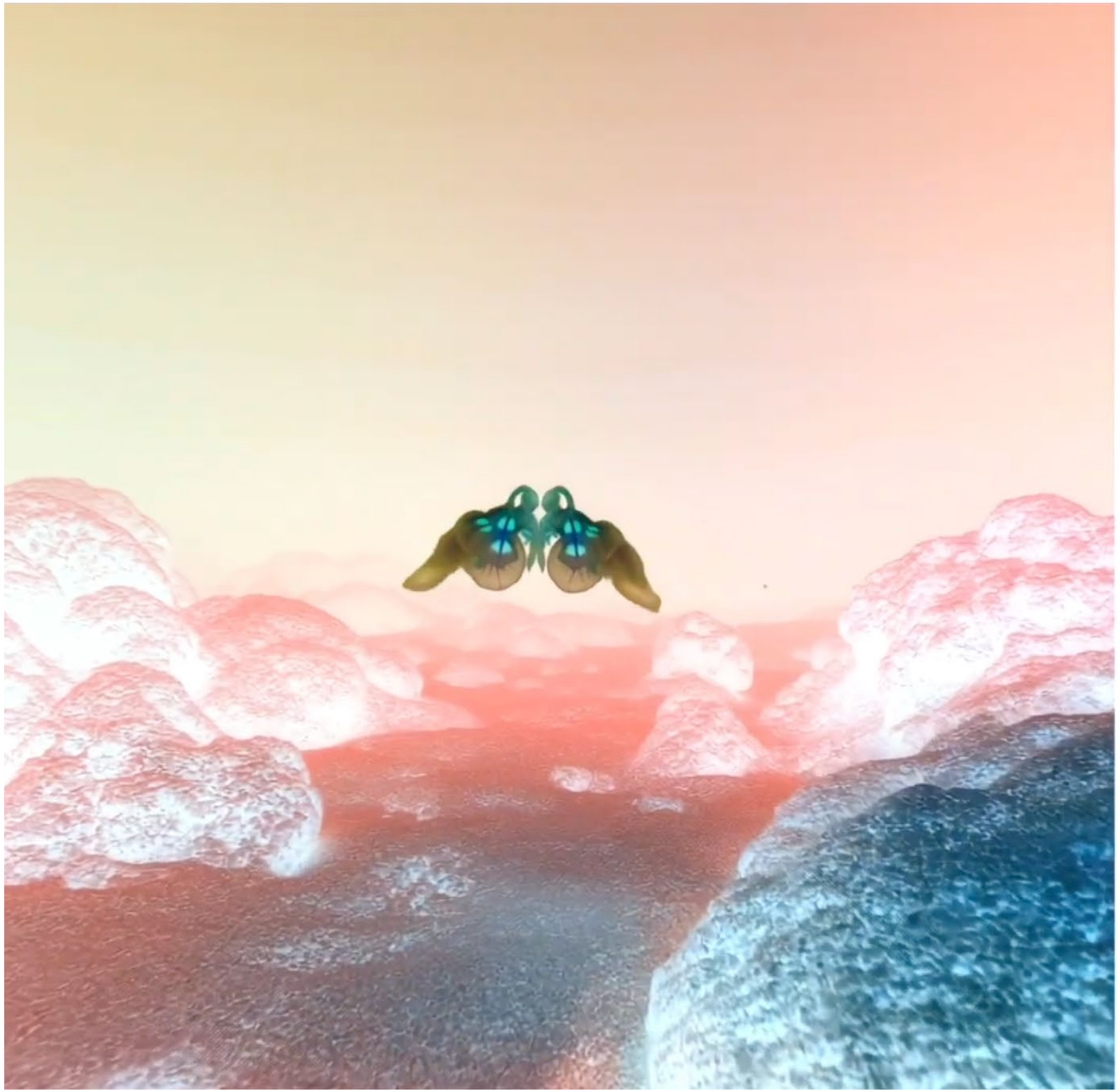
The Orchid Project encompasses the fictional design of drone-products, a demonstration of a drone-piloting interface (in the form of a video game), as well as a series of specific videos and 3D animations.

The narrative unfolds as a non-linear open world, where a constellation of drones becomes the exploratory subject: they probe the remnants of human industrial civilization to reconstruct, fragment by fragment, an archaeological archive network of the < former humans >.



Video screenshot, 1’24”, color video 1080p, stereo, 2025. https://youtu.be/BJy9U6vT8eM

Video teaser for my speculative fiction project, presenting how orchid androids operate in an open world across sea, land, and air. These technical manuals and architectures are designed within a fictional future marked by extreme climate and a society heavily augmented by technology, where humanity temporarily withdraws from major decision-making networks, replaced by a technological mesh, a joint satellite chain, and androids entrusted with delegated decision-making.



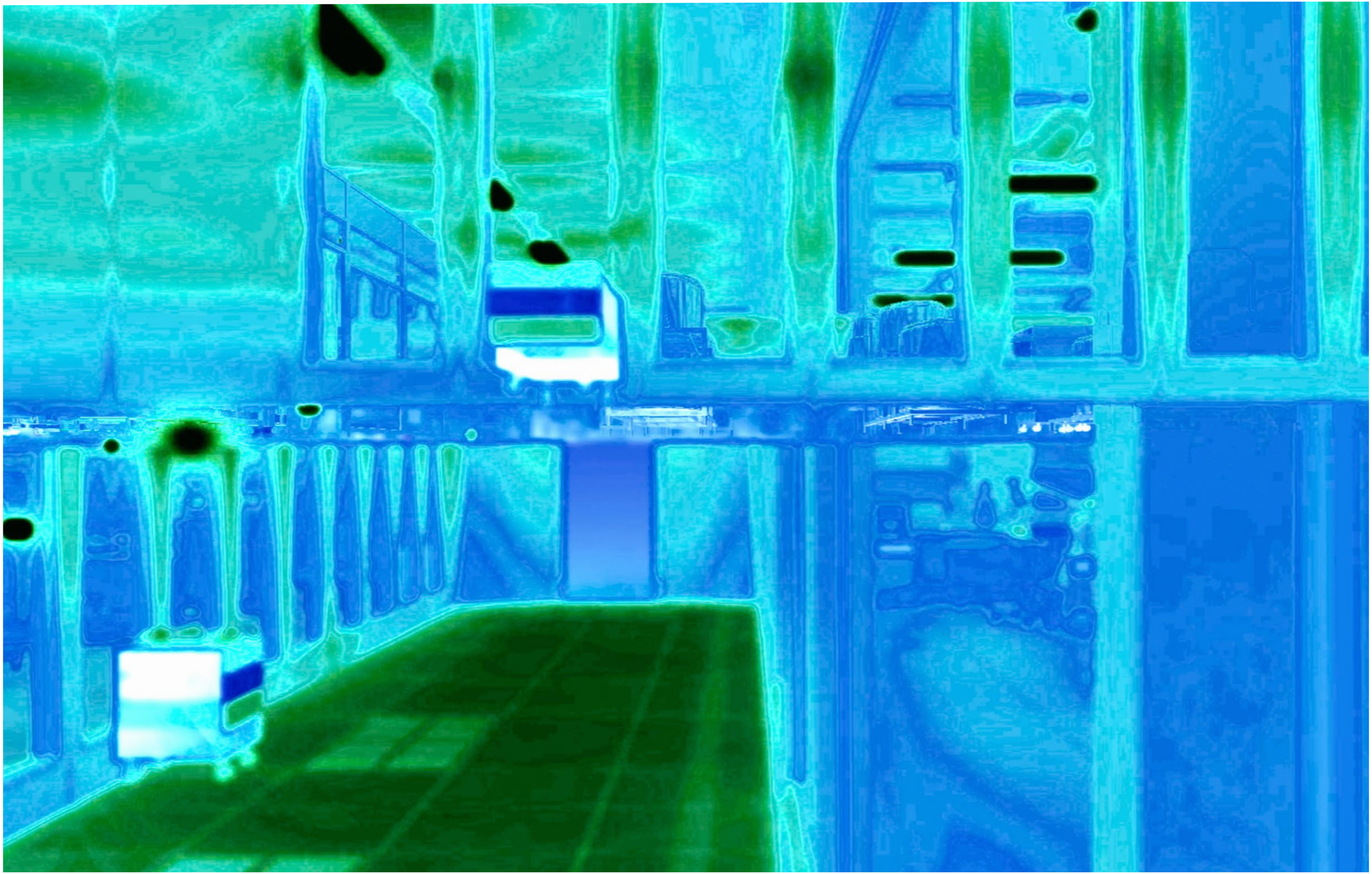
Auto-évolution et mise à niveau modulaire :

L'architecture dispose d'un mécanisme de décision efficace et précis, avec une capacité d'apprentissage continu et d'optimisation. Elle s'adapte automatiquement aux environnements extrêmes changeants tout en maintenant des performances élevées. Sa conception modulaire permet une intégration aisée des futures technologies, assurant que le Projet Orchidée reste à la pointe de l'innovation.

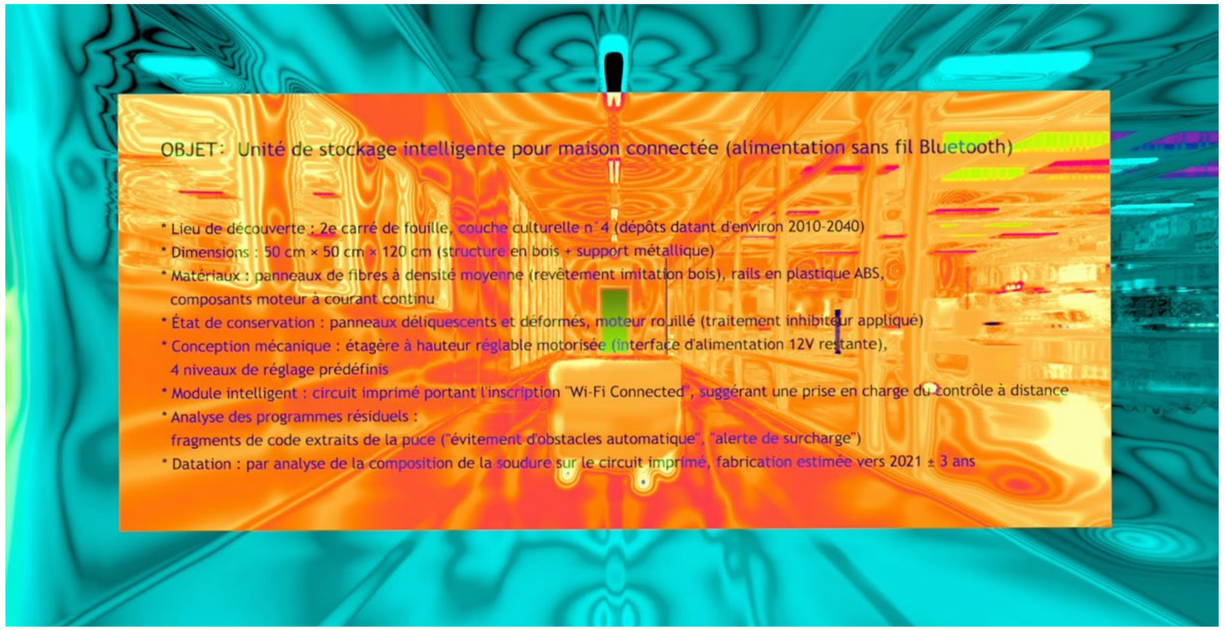
Calcul en périphérie léger :

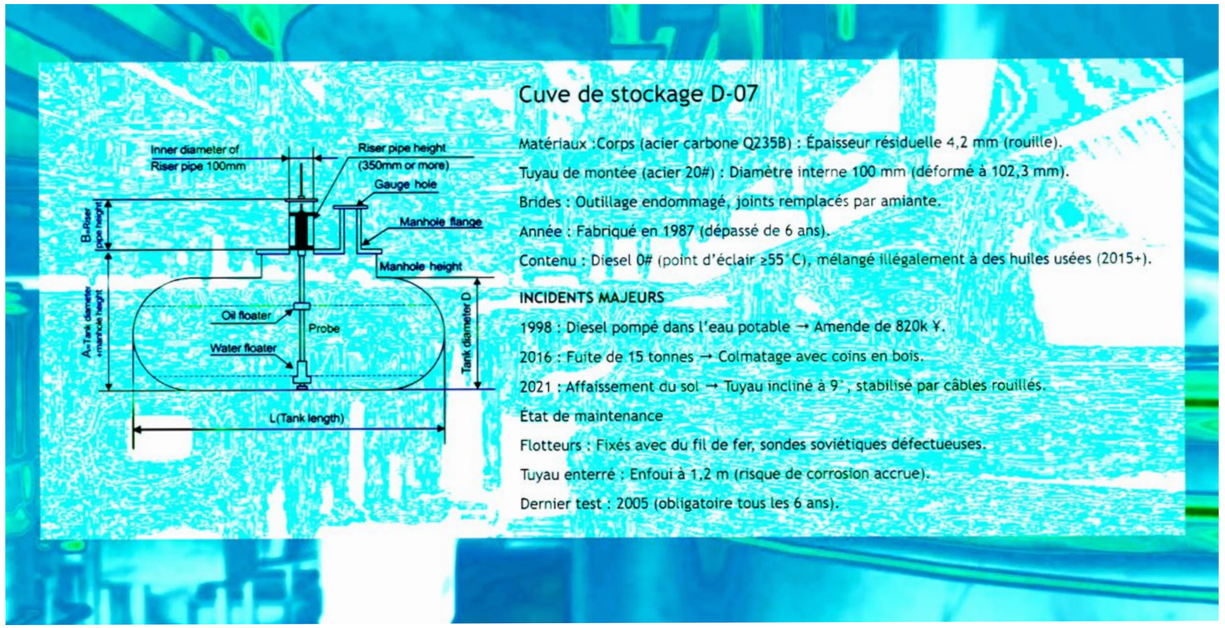
Avec seulement 1,5 Go de RAM requis, il est déployable sur tous les appareils embarqués compacts, opérant dans des interstices et zones aquatiques étroites, réduisant la dépendance aux ressources de calcul distantes pour une réponse rapide aux missions.

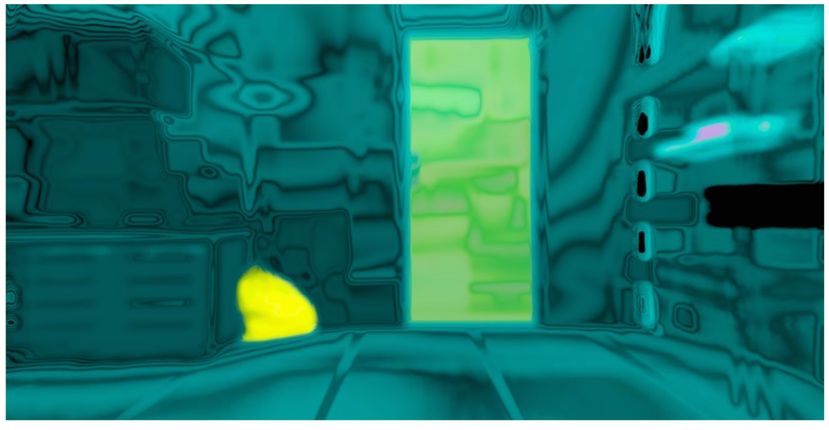
Video screenshot, color video 1080p, stereo, 2025.

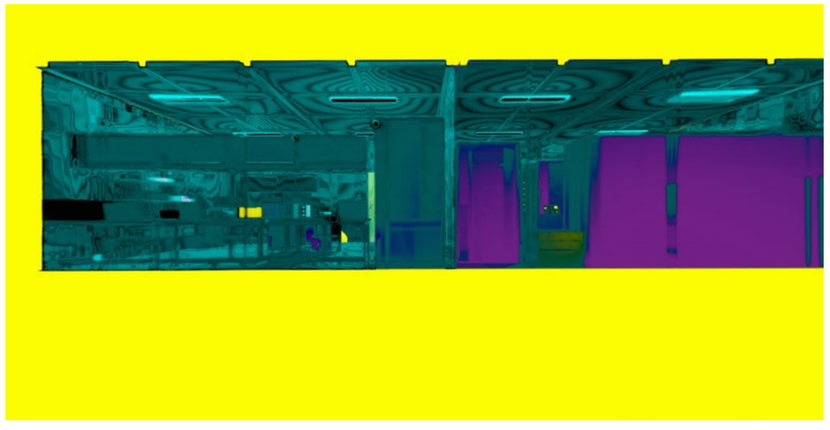


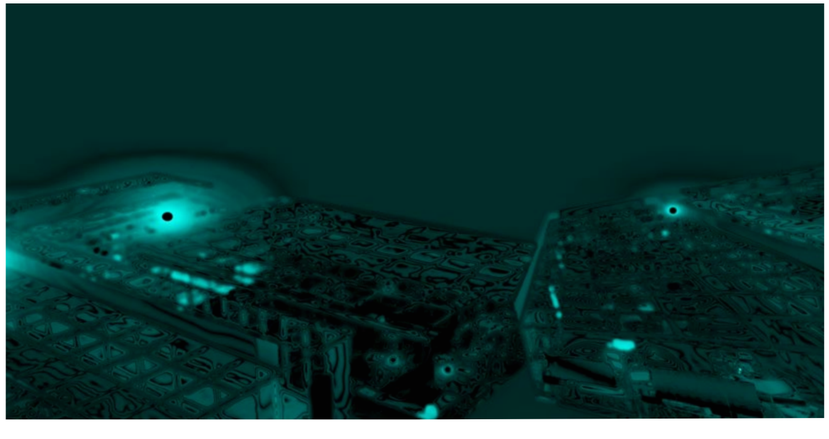
Screenshot of open-world video game, android simulation interface (infrared perspective during archaeological work in the industrial remnants of humanity), keyboard-mouse control, 2025.
Teaser vidéo, 2’41”, vidéo en couleur 1080p, stéréo, 2025 https://youtu.be/MfTTtHkLnxY

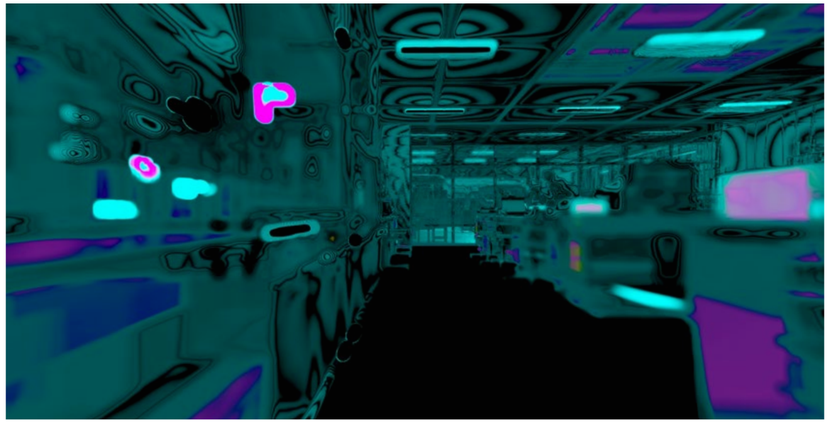












Screenshot of open-world video game, android simulation interface (infrared perspective during archaeological work in the industrial remnants of humanity), keyboard-mouse control, 2025.

BLUEPRINT

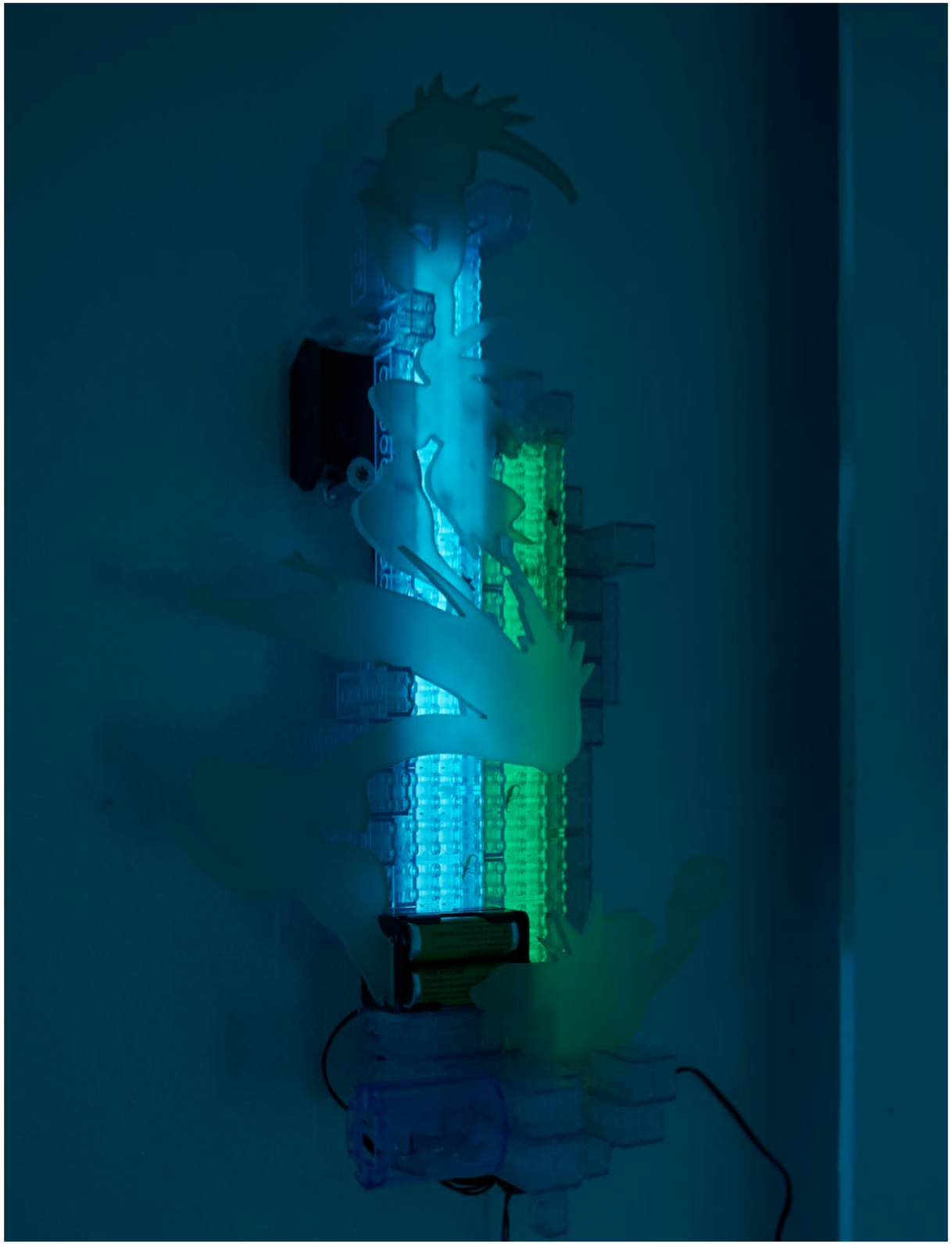
2023 - ongoing

BLUEPRINT: Scene 02: Exercise in the modeling room

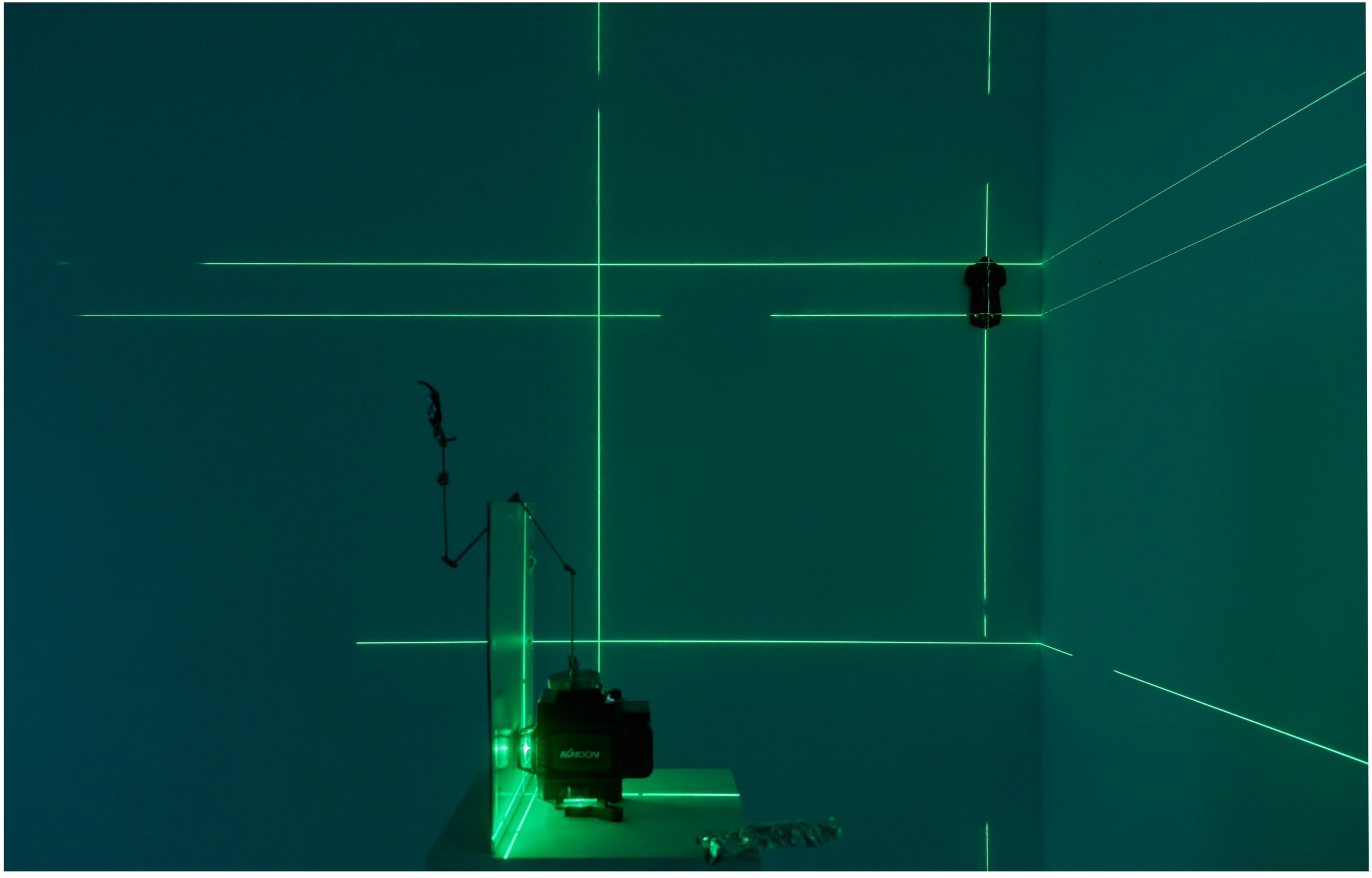
Medium : In situ sculpture, 3D fabrication.
Dimensions : Variable.
Materials : Photosensitive resin, LED, laser-cut acrylic, laser level, stabilizing clamps, paint on acrylic, animal bones, fishing lures, aluminum sheet.

This sub-project attempts, through 3D-printed sculptures and light-based devices, to construct an in situ immersive installation.

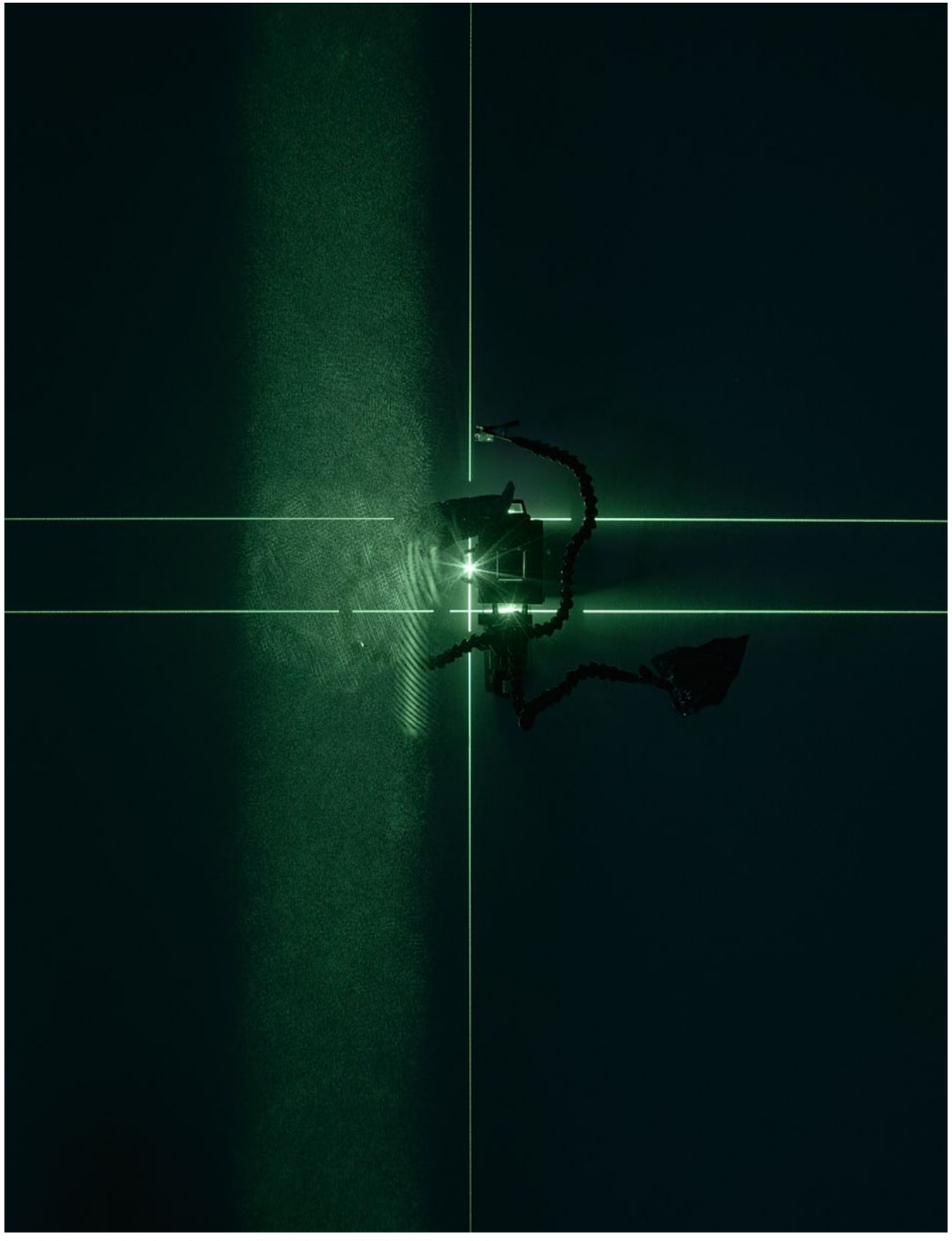
I modified a laser level to enhance the effect of gaze and sweeping motion from an <other>, creating a quantified real-world space analogous to the interface of a virtual 3D modeling software.



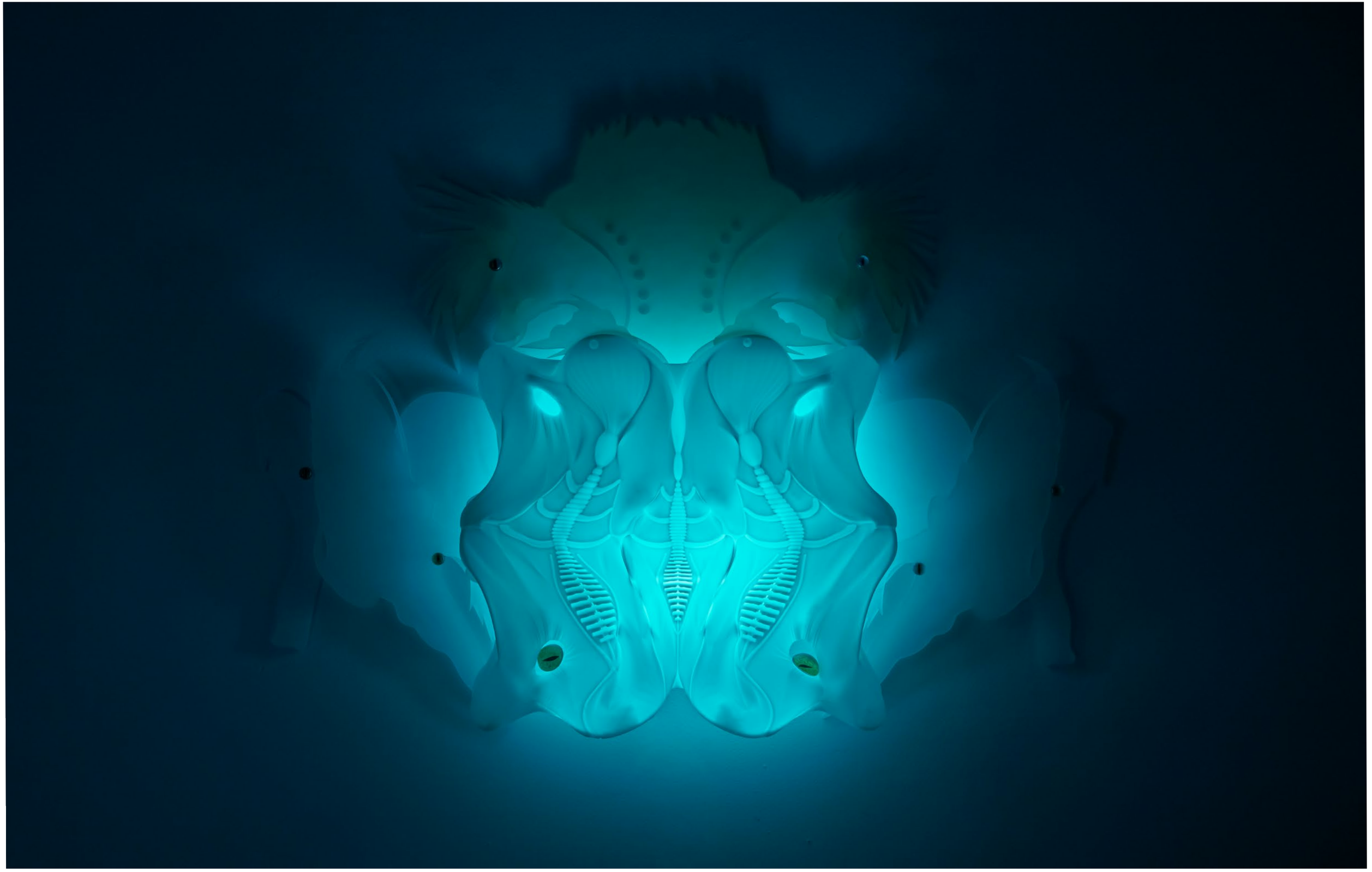
Installation, materials: LED, laser-cut acrylic, fishing lures, 2025.



Installation, materials: 3D print in PLA, laser level, paint on acrylic, animal bones, 2025.



Installation, materials: laser level, stabilizing clamps, aluminum sheet, 2025.



Installation, materials: photosensitive resin, LED, laser-cut acrylic, 2025.

Installation, materials: photosensitive resin, LED, 2025.

BLUEPRINT

2023 - ongoing

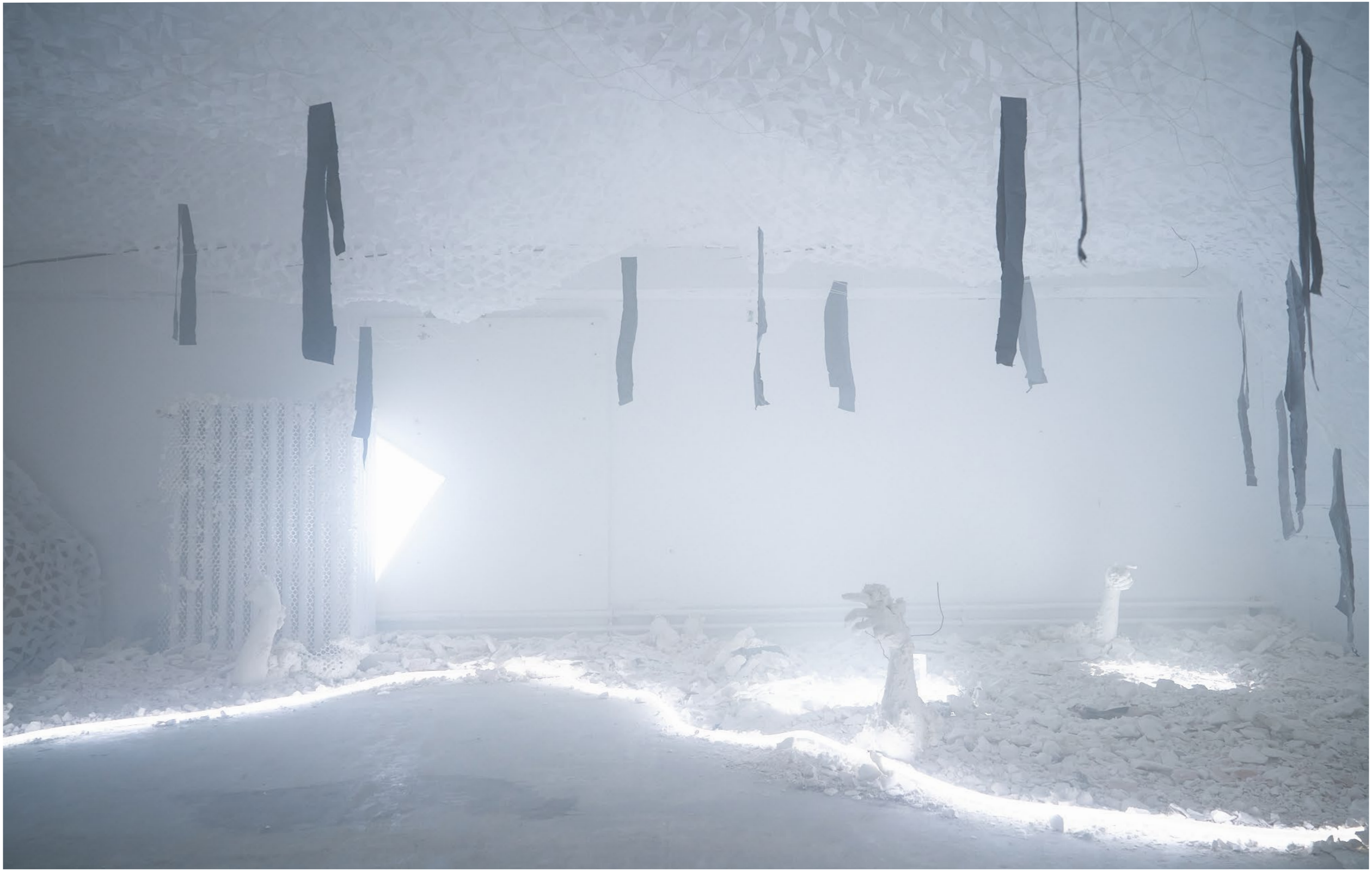
BLUEPRINT: Scene 01: Exercise in the shelter

Medium : In situ sculpture, immersive installation,
automatic music (performed live by automatic synthesizer).
Dimensions : Variable.
Materials : Plâtre, filet plastique, filet camouflage, fausse fourrure, verre, sacs plastiques, néon LED, machine à brouillard, enceintes, synthétiseur (avec Moog DFAM et Mengqi Pingwing).

Solo exhibition : ***BLUEPRINT – Scene 01: Exercise in the Shelter, solo show,***
DNSEP at isdaT, Toulouse, France, 12/06/2024*.*
https://youtu.be/oGVAe4hdiVI

As a central element of my diploma project (DNSEP at isdaT), this sub-project constitutes a formal experimentation of my science-fiction narrative. It combines stage fog devices, video, in situ sculpture, and automatic musical installation, and was temporarily realized in the emergency exits and adjacent print room of the school.

Installation, materials: LED neon, fog machine, plaster, faux fur, screen, 2024.



Installation, materials: LED neon, fog machine, plaster, plastic net, camouflage net, plastic bags, 2024.

Installation, materials: LED neon, fog machine, plaster, plastic net, camouflage net, glass, plastic bags, faux fur, 2024.

Installation, materials: LED neon, fog machine, plaster, plastic net, camouflage net, glass, plastic bags, faux fur, 2024.

Installation, materials: LED neon, fog machine, plaster, plastic net, camouflage net, plastic bags, faux fur, 2025.

- - - - . - - - - . (99)

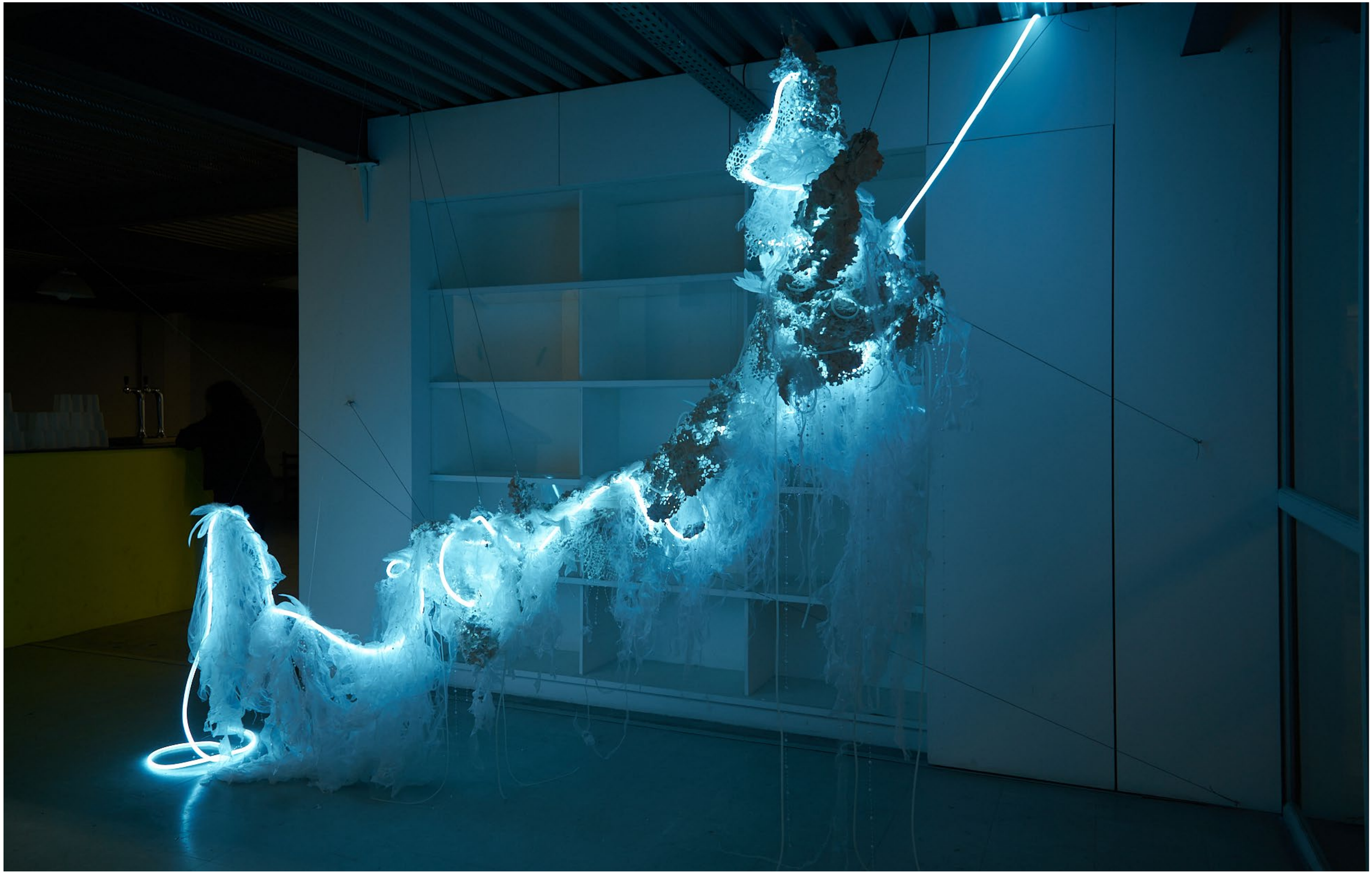
2024

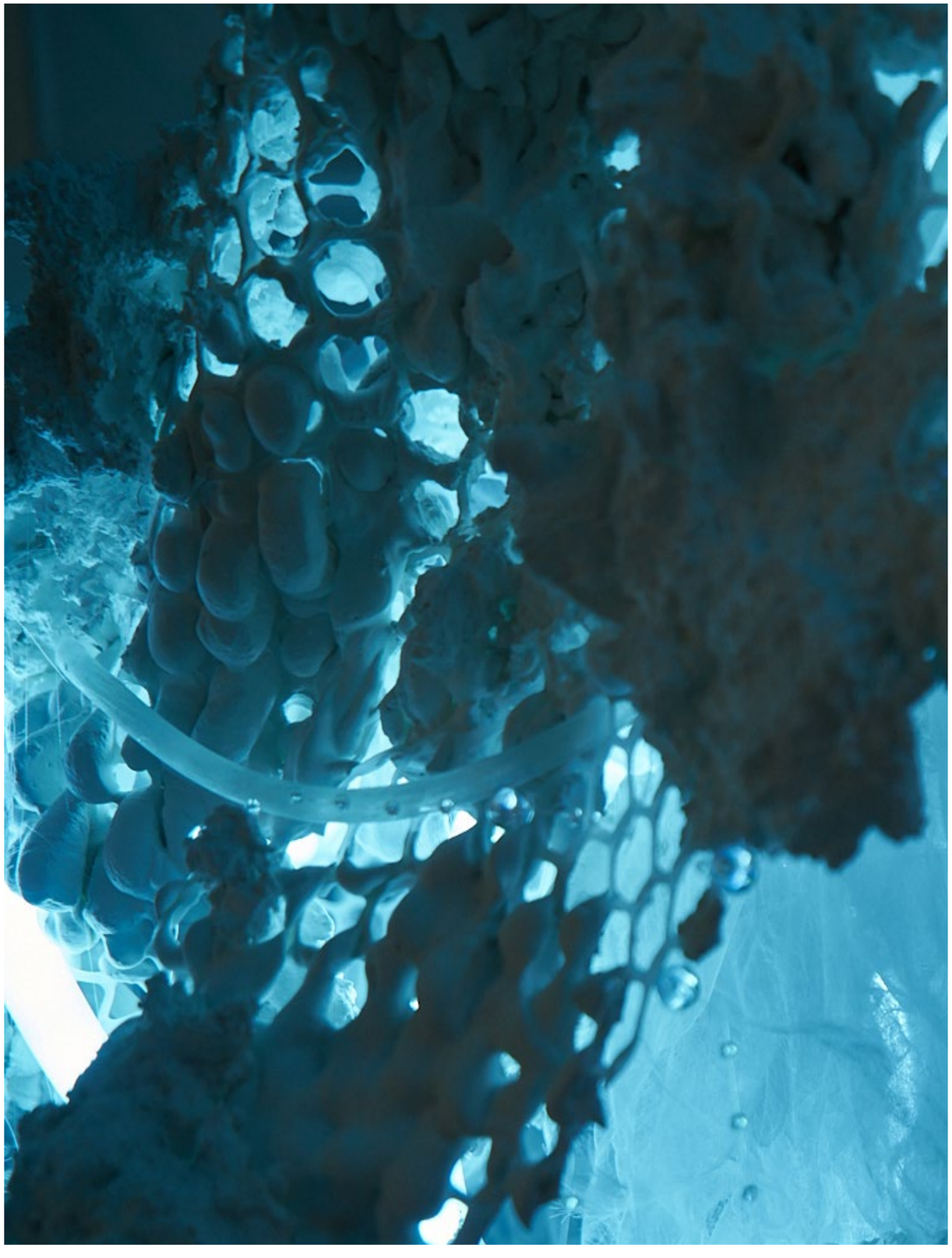
Medium : In situ sculpture.
Dimensions : Approximately 4.5 m × 3 m × 2 m.
Materials : Plastic mesh, transparent garbage bags, organdy fabric, mosquito netting, plastic beads, nylon thread, metal wire, metal hooks, plaster, duck feathers, flexible LED neon, industrial silicone tubing.

Group exhibition : ***AVANT LA FAME,*** Lieu Commun, Toulouse, France, 28/03/2024 – 27/04/2024.
https://youtu.be/t4A7hDC6U0o

For the project exhibition, I spent five days creating this sculpture on-site at Lieu Commun. I used plastic components, plaster, and flexible LEDs to build an industrial-hybrid structure resembling a nest.

The Morse code ‘99’ normally represents an expulsion signal, but within this hive-shaped architectural space, it evokes intrusion. The intense blue light can cause dizziness and eye fatigue if exposed for prolonged periods.





Terrier du lapin 404

2023

Medium : Neon light installation.
Dimensions : Approximately 4 m × 2 m × 1 m.
Materials : Construction debris, abandoned steel and cement, colored neon, printed images on cardboard.
Group exhibition : ***Neons Factory : Lèche-vitrines,*** Nouveau Printemps, Toulouse, France, 28/03/2024 – 27/04/2024.

The 404 metaphorizes an inaccessible space.

I attempted to 3D-print the rendering of my protagonist — designed for a speculative narrative — and assemble it, like a scenography, with construction debris collected near the exhibition space and handcrafted neon lights. This arrangement creates a hybrid industrial landscape, simultaneously fragile and ruined.

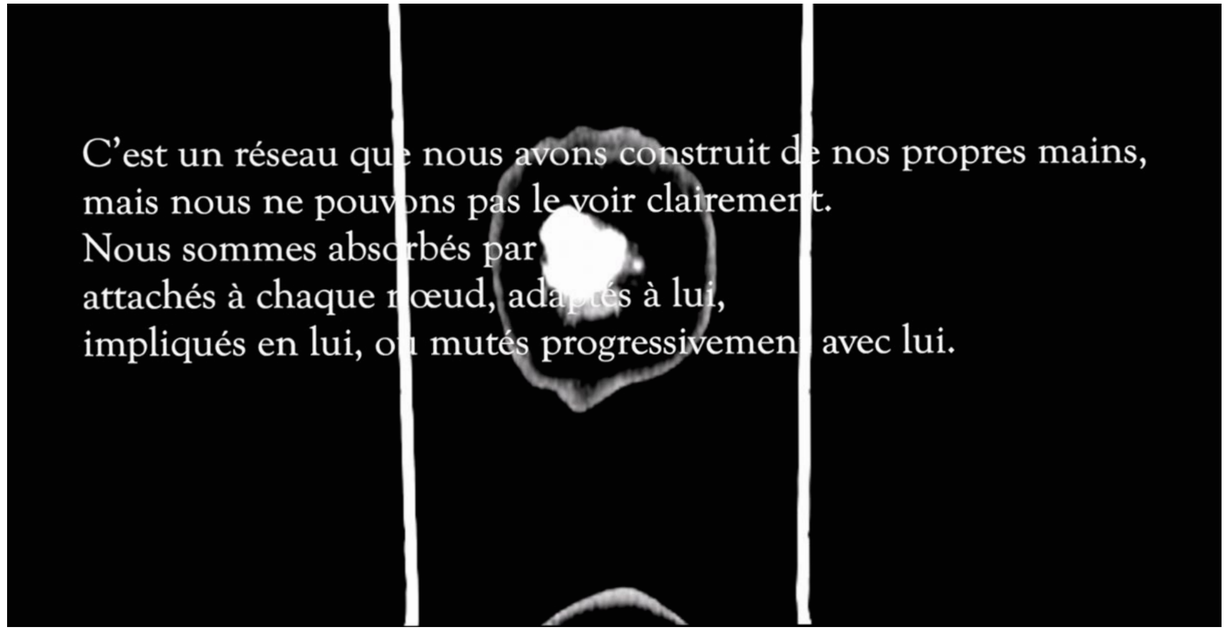
Réseau

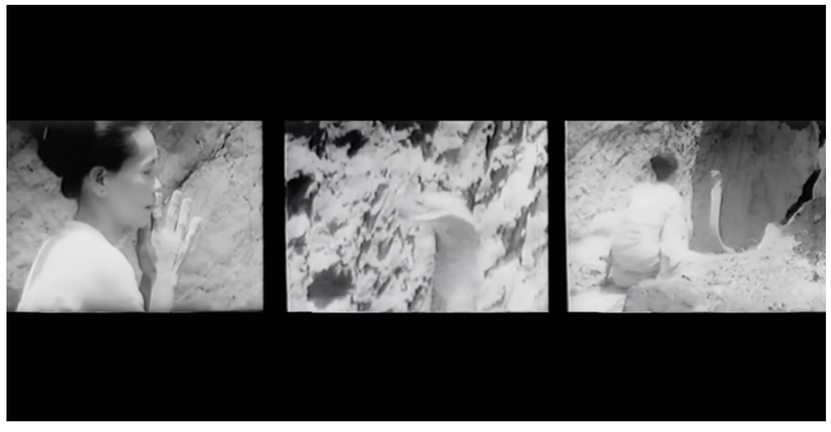
2023

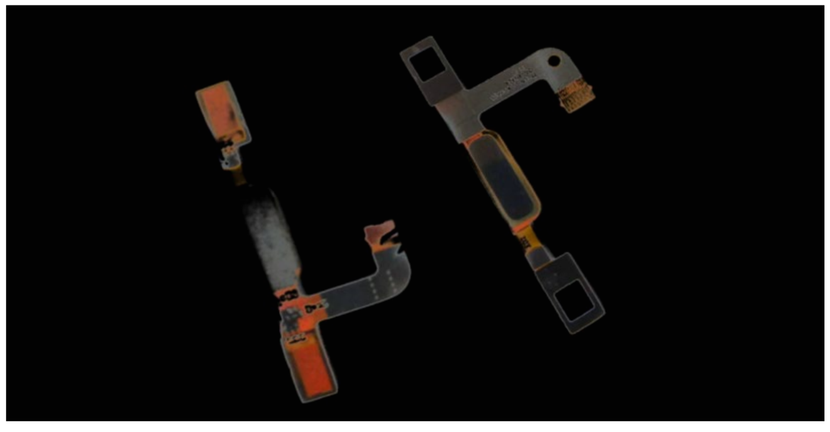
Medium : Documentary, video installation.
Dimensions : Approximately 4 m × 3 m × 5 m.
Materials : Camouflage fabric (Made in China), elastic cords (Made in China), camping chair (Made in China), plastic cables (Made in China), tree branches and dry leaves (Recycled from Toulouse), television, fishing line, helmet.
Group exhibition : ***EXPO 23,*** Lieu Commun, Toulouse, France, 24/03 – 15/04, 2023.

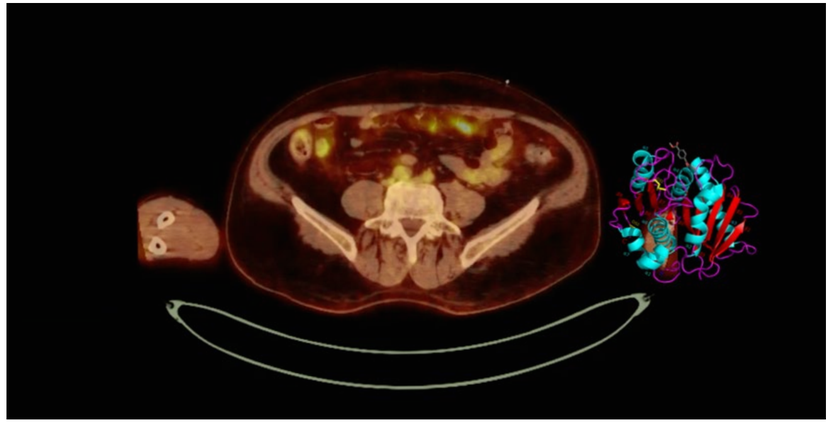
The documentary, presented as a looping video in an intertextual narrative structure, was completed during my first year of studies in France.
The materials are drawn from my daily images and content found online.

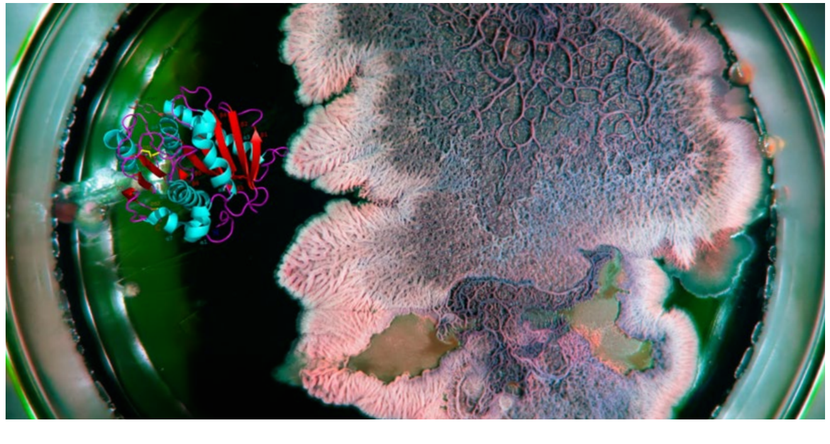
Through the intertwining of my personal experiences and public events, it explores the metaphorical fungal network and the development of accelerated networks, as well as the profound impacts of cultural and economic globalization.











Video screenshot, Network, documentary, 12’09”, color video 1080p, stereo, 2022.. https://youtu.be/rdppm70ur1s