

THE ILLUSION OF THINKING

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INTERVIEWS WITH
CONSTANT DULLAART
FEMKE HERREGRAVEN
RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER
DIRK PAESMANS AS ID.ACCO

V2_PUBLISHING



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Constant Dullaart - *Accepting the Job* (2023), courtesy of the artist

THE ILLUSION OF THINKING

BY FLORIAN WEIGL

The Illusion of Thinking explores how artificial intelligence mirrors rather than thinks, questioning what understanding truly means, for machines and for humans alike. This project focuses on the overlooked implications of artificial intelligence and its assumed capacity to think and reason. While AI often suggests genuine cognition, the works in *The Illusion of Thinking* primarily mirrors human ideas through recall and imitation, raising fundamental questions about the nature of understanding itself. AI systems increasingly become embedded in everyday life, and in this context the exhibition challenges dominant narratives of technological progress and the pursuit of sentient intelligence. It examines the limits of optimization, the complexity of learning, and the infrastructural conditions that shape AI's development.

By looking beyond the desire for computational consciousness, the works in *The Illusion of Thinking* reflect on the value systems and myths surrounding technological innovation—and what might be lost in the ongoing drive for efficiency.

PREFACE
**(ARRIVING AT ALGORITHMIC THINKING,
LOOKING AT DOUBT AND CLASSIFICATION)**
BY FLORIAN WEIGL

To understand how the research at V2_ and my own curatorial research arrived at the stage that is reflected by the artworks in *The Illusion of Thinking* it is important to elaborate on our ongoing inquiry into Artificial Inequality. At V2_ I have been looking into the imbalance between those who benefit from technological advances and those who pay the price for such ‘progress’ for a while.

The first chapter of this research was *Reasonable Doubt* (2021), which examined the structural injustices reinforced by technical systems, and why it is essential to know for—and by whom—technical systems are developed. Paolo Cirio’s work *Capture* that we presented in the exhibition, comments on the asymmetry of power play caused by widely used facial recognition and artificial intelligence. By simply showing a selection of French police officers’ faces as captured during protests in France, processed and identified with facial recognition software, Cirio shows how the system is used by authorities as a mass surveillance tool, identifying protesters. Instead of showing how the technology works, he reclaims it, and turns the technol-

ogy against the same authorities that urge the use of it. Looking further into technical systems, at horrific consequences when prejudices are being built in, Robert Glas' *Afwezigheid van alle schuld* (2020) looked at an ever-increasing political emphasis on prevention, security, and 'risk assessment instruments'. He focussed on 'OxRec' a system which calculates the risk of committing a criminal offence by combining factual data about the person in question—home address, criminal record, drinking behaviour, relational status, etc.—with known correlations between these factors and the risk to criminal behaviour. The two-channel video uses a fictional scenario to examine the legal implications of this ambition to master the prediction of criminal behaviour. An endeavor to make sense of the system, opening its black box.

As part of the exhibition we looked into standardized systems too. Sami Hammana's film ~~~~ connects trans-oceanic undersea-cables routes to 16th century colonial navigational routes, and thus elucidates the complicity of contemporary maritime technology with colonial violence. In *Pink Discretionary Command* (2017) Navine G. Khan-Dossos looks at the impulse to normalize and control bodies that frighten or threaten the state. Yazan Khalili's *Medusa* engages with tools for digital archiving in times of political unrest. The work asks whether digital archives can be a medium to free memory from over-determined, institutionalized narratives. It shows that technology is not an untouchable abstraction, and hosts real weaknesses. Archival technologies rely on images, histories, codes, decisions, and regulations without taking into account glitches, biases and insufficient data.

The exhibition was a way to gather independent research focused on the shortcomings implicit in the use of the term ‘equality.’ It tried to offer a critical reading of the foundations on which our society is organized, both socially and infrastructurally, and shows how a number of fundamental ideas have biased effects. Several of these works indeed explore the contrast between the truth that algorithms purport to facilitate, and the often problematic outcomes of their predictions, and how these are used to control and facilitate various administrative processes in digital infrastructures that have real world effects.

The second chapter of our research into Artificial Inequality was *{class} – On Consequences in Algorithmic Classification* (2023). This exhibition and publication explored how algorithmic categorization shapes society and investigated the consequences of computational classification. The project looked at the desire to ‘make sense of the world’ and all the systems put in place. Looking into the importance of resisting them, because they are at the core of many of today’s societal tensions and frictions. It specifically looked at the imbalance between those who benefit from technological advances and those who pay the price for such ‘progress’, showing the real and true day to day effects of technologies.

The newly produced *Rotterdam Risk Score Calculator* (2023) by Sam Lavigne, explored this imbalance on a very local scale within the Rotterdam government and their automation of the investigation of possible fraud. It reveals and underlines how the classification that is embedded in algorithms determines who and what is of value, and who and what is not. Several works explored

this by looking at what happens if you give insight into how various algorithms sort data. What if you assign a transportation optimization algorithm to categorize the human body (Coralie Vogelaar *Optimal Bin Packing* (2023))? What happens when you give free reign to a protein analyzation algorithm? Will it create harmful situations unknowingly? Will it potentially create even new biological weapons? (Katja Novitskova – *Microbial Oasis* (2021). Dries and Bieke Depoorter's *Border Birds* (2022) looks at mass surveillance border analysing tools through a poetic lens by showing the border crossings of birds as recorded by surveillance softwares. And what happens if we equip a super computer with climate and geo-data and give it the chance to find local solutions for our global climate challenges? This is what Tega Brain, Julian Oliver & Bengt Sjölen's explore in *ASUNDER*.

In a text that Mimi Onuoha wrote for {class} she stated:

To classify is human, and increasingly classification is algorithmic. We are grouped and sorted by models, computers, and algorithms. These algorithmic classifications are more likely to be perceived as true than human sortings, regardless of how arbitrary they are. And things that have been perceived as true have real and true consequences.

This was a quote that was very inspirational for our project.

RECONSIDERING THINKING

BY FLORIAN WEIGL

The title of the third chapter of our research, *The Illusion of Thinking*, is derived from a paper published by Apple Inc.'s Machine Learning Department. This paper with the subtitle 'Understanding the Strengths and Limitations of Reasoning Models via the Lens of Problem Complexity' looks at recent generations of frontier language models that generate detailed thinking processes before providing answers. According to the paper these current systems are not reasoning at all. They suffer from scaling limits and accuracy collapse at higher complexities, revealing fundamental weaknesses in their reasoning processes and questions the extent of their true reasoning capabilities. This conclusion became the framework of the research for our third group exhibition and this publication.

In the commissioned text *This is Not an Image* Nora O' Murchú writes about the need for infrastructural critique. She trace the codes, protocols and silent agreements the lie beneath the interfaces that promise connections and efficiency. Artist Flavia Dzodan documents infrastructural latency: the moments where systems hesitate or fail to

respond. In a culture obsessed with speed and optimization, latency holds what cannot be streamlined: grief, care, memory, and the uneven rhythms of embodied life. What disappears when efficiency becomes the highest moral value? Constant Dullaart created a monument to AI's failure to understand human anatomy. *Accepting the Job* (2024). This sculpture shows a moment in which AI didn't not comprehend anatomy, it just approximated it. The monument marks this gap, not as a technical problem to be solved, but as a fundamental misalignment between computation and human experience. *ID.ACCO* (Dirk Paesmans) turns to the algorithmic bubble of Instagram on its head, and exposes how perception is shaped by it, while also searching for ways to slip past the algorithm's grasp. With *Global Level of Confidence, Argentina* (2025) Rafael Lozano-Hemmer created a system to reclaim surveillance technology for a good cause. He offers the visitor a system to identify a potential family connection to between the disappeared and the children of the disappeared who do not know the identities of their parents. Femke Herregraven's *The Murmur of The Dying* (2023) experiments with the nuances of voice and empathy beyond language and words, a level that is usually inaccessible to algorithms. Across these practices, a shared conclusion surfaces: the assumption that machines think, reason, or understand is misguided. What we call 'thinking' by algorithms is nothing but a repetition at scale, a correlation mistaken for insight.

Systems that 'think' do not imagine futures; they recycle pasts. They reflect us in a distorted and intensified way. Perhaps the real speculative question is not what machines will become, but what we are willing to sur-

render in order to believe they already understand us. In confronting the failures, delays, and wounds of our infrastructures, we are invited to reconsider thinking itself not as efficiency or prediction, but as a fragile, relational, and deeply human act.



Queen Elizabeth II's hologram is seen on the Golden Carriage during the Platinum Jubilee Pageant

THIS IS NOT AN IMAGE

BY NORA O' MURCHÚ

In 2022, a 260-year-old gilded carriage rolled through the streets of London. Adorned with palm trees, lion heads, and the figure of Britannia—a female warrior symbol of empire—the coach, a relic of imperial power, travelled from Horse Guards Parade in a loop past Buckingham Palace and back again. As it moved through the streets of London, onlookers waved and called to their Queen. However, what waved back was not the ninety-six-year-old monarch, but a projection of a younger Queen Elizabeth II that functioned as a proxy for a head of state too ill to appear in person. Composed from archival footage, the hologram of the Queen was not merely a symbolic gesture but a technical operation—a protocol and ritual engineered to legitimise the continuation of order and power in the face of absence. Two years on from Brexit—a fantasy of restored independence and the return of a nation—the hologram conjured the past of a young Queen and looked out on an impoverished country, gripped by inflation at a forty-year high, stagnant wages, and the steepest rise in poverty in decades. Aiming to stabilise a crumbling reality, it waved to project order, to assure its subjects that the empire had not ended, to lift the spirits of a weary nation—and its subjects waved back.

The aesthetic maintenance of empire is more than a spectacle of nostalgia; it reveals how images now function as instruments of institutional control. As scholars¹ in visual research have shown, contemporary statecraft increasingly relies on images to evoke stability through affect, sustaining legitimacy even amid structural collapse. In this instance, the frail body of the monarch was replaced by spectacle, and authority—and that of the state—persisted without interruption or

dissent. Yet this is not an image, or at least not in the way we once understood them—as representations or reflections of reality. It functions as an assemblage of sensors, networks, and protocols that manage affect at scale. In this sense, it echoes what Lauren Berlant terms the ‘infrastructure of feeling’², a diffuse mechanism through which institutions maintain attachment and coherence amid political exhaustion. This is an affective image, one that governs reality through mood and atmosphere, shaping what we see and how we behave. This marks a broader transformation in visual culture: a structural realignment from images as mediators of meaning to infrastructures of governance. Closer to software than to representation, such images regulate our perception in real time via the constant circulation of content through platforms and networks. Thinking about images today requires moving beyond questions of what they signify toward how they function—how they enforce protocols, establish moods, and erase contradiction. Contemporary image systems—automated, affective, post-human—perform power rather than depict it. As Wendy Chun³ has argued, the repetition of images across digital infrastructures transforms visibility into habit, turning governance into an experience that feels natural, and ambient. They operate as infrastructures that organise perception and conduct across everyday life, enclosing it in a totalitarian regime where contradiction and dissent are rendered almost impossible, the medium through which governance itself is lived.

So what is an image today, and how does it function? Increasingly, we are subject to images that neither represent nor bear witness to events. Whether issued by heads



The Line, a planned 170-kilometer-long linear smart city in Saudi Arabia's NEOM region

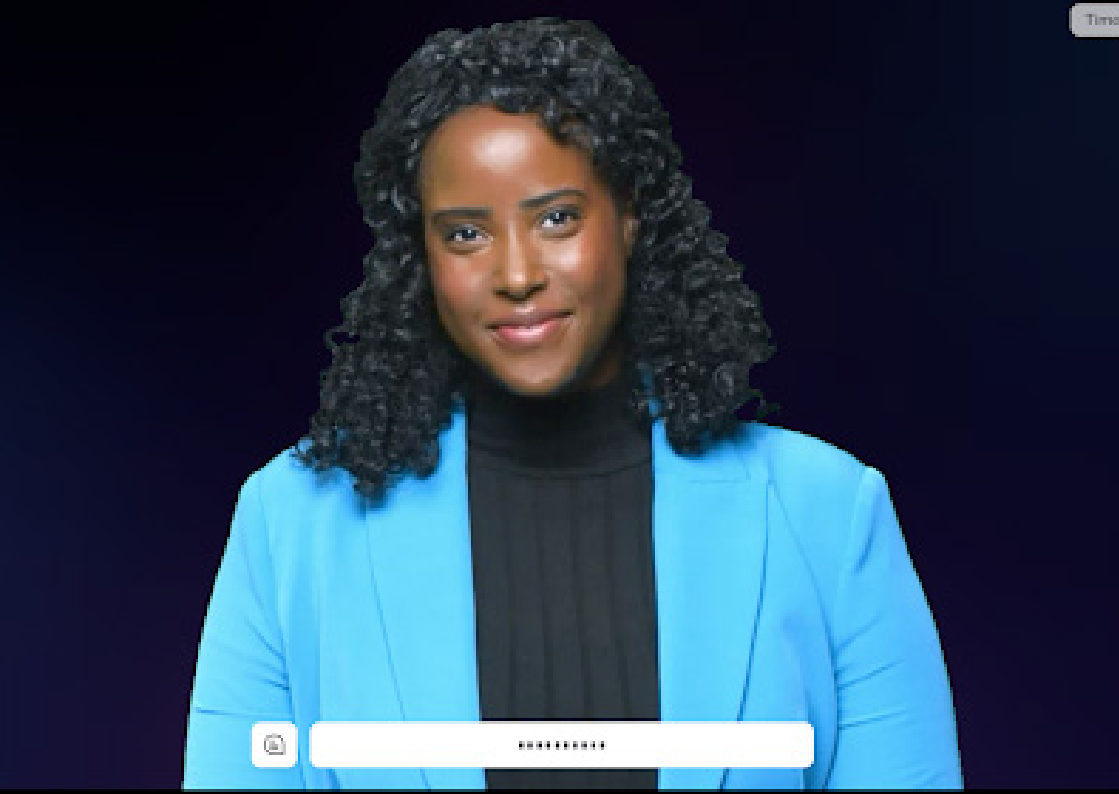
of state or circulating virally, these images work to organise the world—to structure attention, affect, and belief in advance. To call the image infrastructural is to recognise it as a distributed system, linking code, interface, labour, and attention into a single apparatus of visibility and control. As Lauren Berlant reminds us, infrastructure is not only material but affective—it shapes how worlds are organised and what feels possible within them.⁴ Images participate in this same arrangement.⁵ They are embedded in media networks and platform ecologies, dependent on data, extraction, and labour that sustain circulation and control. As infrastructure, the image governs both space and time: it regulates what appears and when, directing attention and shaping response. Clickbait induces outrage on schedule; memes synchronise mood and sustain participation. Much of this work happens autonomously, within processes that operate outside perception—reorganising how attention, emotion, and belief are distributed, until governance itself becomes indistinguishable from experience. The image as infrastructure moves beyond representation, actively organising the world it depicts. The image operates as infrastructure, an affective and computational system that governs what can be seen, felt, and known, embedding control in the everyday conditions of visibility.

This logic is not confined to platforms. Adopting their capacity to standardise and scale, images now function as instruments of instruction. Announced in 2017, NEOM is a planned city under construction in Saudi Arabia's Tabuk Province. The megaproject, the centrepiece of Vision 2030—Saudi Arabia's programme to diversify its economy and project an image of post-oil modernity—comprises a network of developments: a floating industrial complex, a global trade hub, tourist resorts, and a linear city powered by renewable energy. Yet before existing as a construction site or tourist destination, NEOM circulated as a series of speculative architectural renders, fixing the project's meaning in advance, making an abstract vision appear

tangible to potential investors, residents, and governing bodies alike. In 2021, one of these renders gained global attention for its depiction of *The Line*—a mirrored linear settlement heralded as a radical rethink of urban life. Designed and produced in the California office of Morphosis Architects, the image gave visual form to a future already decided: one that displaced thousands of members of the Huwaitat tribe, demolishing villages and, according to reports, authorising lethal force against those who resisted eviction.⁶ Operating through circulation, the render converts political ambition into executable form, a \$500 billion directive that performs through media, investment, and state rhetoric long after its physical limits have been exposed.

As infrastructure, the image organises power—and, in doing so, becomes indistinguishable from it—aligning architects, financiers, and policymakers within a single operational vision. This is how visual authority operates today: developed at a distance, detached from context, and fully executable. In this form, the image governs the world directly, setting the conditions under which feeling and relation are managed. Before construction even begins, NEOM already governs through vision. Its renderings perform what Sontag⁷ describes as the fascist alignment of aesthetics and authority, where beauty serves as a moral order, and harmony becomes the sign of control. Through computational aesthetics, the Saudi Government converts design into governance, recasting aesthetic coherence as political order.

As images become one of the primary ways by which we communicate and understand the world, their work of governance has expanded beyond the level of state policy into the management of emotion and empathy. Rather than depicting feeling, the image as infrastructure regulates it, deciding what kinds of care, anger, or grief can appear, and under what terms. In this role, images maintain atmospheres that keep systems stable, turning sentiment into an instrument of administration. In 2024, the United



Rendered image by askamina.ai, courtesy of the artist

Nations University Centre for Policy Research developed two AI agents (Amina and Abdalla) as part of a pilot exploring the use of digital personas in conflict and refugee contexts. Amina simulated a refugee in Chad's Metche camp; Abdalla, a commander from Sudan's Rapid Support Forces. Designed to 'enhance understanding' and 'spark dialogue,' both avatars drew on curated UN data and GPT-driven modelling to answer questions about displacement, violence, and survival. Users could speak to them directly, prompting video responses that responded in carefully bureaucratic moderated tones.

Framed as an experiment in efficiency—testing how AI might assist in data collection or staff training—the project risked replacing relation with representation, creating the illusion of engagement while distancing decision-makers from those they claim to serve. As one humanitarian practitioner asked, 'Why would we present refugees as AI creations when there are millions who can tell their stories as real human beings?' The question reveals a deeper paradox: both human crisis and the human response to it are reformatted for circulation, produced to manage reality rather than mirror it. What emerges is the automation of empathy, where humanitarian feeling is converted into data and crisis becomes aesthetic, formatted for visibility yet detached from accountability. Real refugees and the complexities of displacement are replaced by a representation of the 'ideal victim' passive, frictionless, and optimised for engagement, stripped of history and consequence. The image as infrastructure governs emotion itself, managing feeling within the limits of institutional comfort and ensuring that empathy aligns with, rather than challenges, power.

Across social platforms, the image's infrastructural logic has become ambient, repurposing affect and narrative to visualise grievance, fabricate history, and normalise exclusion. Globally, these tactics move through platforms like WhatsApp, TikTok, and Instagram, forming collective identities shaped

by far-right ideology. Over the past decade, far-right movements—early adopters of this visual infrastructure—have used platform aesthetics to automate outrage and aestheticise grievance. Research from GNET⁸, the ICCT⁹, and the Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right¹⁰ shows how European and US networks use generative AI to produce propaganda, fabricate incidents, and reinforce myths of cultural decline. These images merge fear and belonging into a single visual language that circulates easily through everyday digital life. These tactics update an older political technology: the aestheticisation of power that Sontag identified in fascist culture.¹¹ Where twentieth-century fascism staged unity through monuments and mass gatherings, the digital far right performs it through virality by transforming outrage and belonging into modes of participation. As William Allchorn observes in his study of the UK far right, these groups operate through what he terms 'opportunistic pragmatism'¹²: an adaptive use of platform affordances that allows them to launder extremist narratives through superficially benign themes of heritage, family, and military pride. This strategy turns participation itself into a recruitment mechanism—what Allchorn calls a 'dialogic politics of grievance'—where likes, shares, and comments are not just expressions of sentiment but instruments of ideological alignment. What circulates through these networks is more than imagery—it is an alternative epistemology. As David Neiwert observes, right-wing populism sustains itself by building an 'alternative universe'¹³ of belief where emotion replaces fact, grievance replaces argument, and participation becomes proof of truth. This logic underwrites the far-right image economy: an affective infrastructure that organises perception and belonging long before any single post or meme appears.

What circulates in one context quickly takes form in another. Ireland has become one of the newest sites where this global visual infrastructure embeds itself. Networks employing the same repertoire—memes, livestreams,



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have a bigger fight in front of us
#full #standtogether2024 #fyp #w... more
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AI-generated images—have expanded across Irish online spaces, echoing the participatory style of their British and American counterparts. Research by Logically Facts¹⁴ shows that the vast majority of far-right and anti-immigration content about Ireland originates abroad, mainly from US and UK accounts. Following the 2023 Dublin riots, hashtags like *#IrelandIsFull* and *#IrishLivesMatter* surged across X and Telegram, with most posts traced to foreign users. What appeared as spontaneous expression of grassroots outrage was in fact part of a coordinated flow of content, of pre-tested slogans and aesthetics imported wholesale and localised for Irish consumption.

These imported narratives, amplified by high-profile US commentators and far-right influencers, recast Irish identity as white, embattled, and under threat. Offline, this convergence was recently visible at *Rebels Across the Pond*¹⁵, a far-right conference held in September 2025 in rural Roscommon that brought together Irish agitators, American conspiracists, and British organisers. The result is a feedback loop where imported myths overwrite political memory, folding Ireland's anti-colonial history into narratives of racial and national purity. This cross-platform choreography mirrors Allchorn's finding that the contemporary far right has shifted from broadcasting to interaction, using humour, irony, and moral panic to expand its audience. In Ireland, this shift has produced an affective economy of engagement: livestream donations, PayPal links, and branded merchandise that turn outrage into revenue, and embed grievance within platform infrastructures.

Here, the colonial image¹⁶ returns as infrastructure: a transnational apparatus that binds whiteness to nationhood and converts digital circulation into political cohesion. It revives the imperial fantasy of visual order, where seeing and ruling become indistinguishable, and power is exercised through the aesthetics of belonging. This logic becomes visible in the imagery populating Irish Telegram channels and TikTok. One AI-generated image, shared widely in late 2024 by the *Coolock Says No* network, depicts two men in flag-patterned

hoodies—one British, one Irish—shaking hands. Framed as reconciliation between coloniser and colonised, the image attempts to overwrite eight centuries of imperial violence and resistance with a fantasy of shared whiteness, promoting unity against migrants and refugees. Circulating amid protests and arson attacks on refugee accommodation sites, it visualises the far right's effort to recode belonging through exclusion. Rendered in generative-AI aesthetics, the image performs the protesters' logic of affiliation within the infrastructural machinery through which whiteness organises perception, relation, and affective order. In this sense, the far-right image extends totalitarian tactics—memetic rather than monumental—networked through feeds rather than massed in squares.

Trump's second presidency has refined these visual and affective tactics into instruments of statecraft. Performing governance in real-time across interviews, broadcasts, and social media, he fuses divisive rhetoric with AI-generated imagery and algorithmic amplification to choreograph emotion as administration. Since taking office, he has rewritten immigration policy, restructured major institutions, and exercised an intensity of executive power without precedent in recent American history. Yet despite declining approval ratings¹⁷ and widespread dissatisfaction across nearly every policy area, his power remains structurally intact. Today, legitimacy depends less on consent than on exposure, on the continuous circulation of his image through rhythms of outrage and attention. What began as a campaign strategy of disruption and spectacle has hardened into a governing logic: an infrastructure of affective choreography¹⁸ that synchronises feeling across networks through the pacing and repetition of images, soundbites, and moods. Over recent months, Trump has inserted himself into the spectacle of geopolitical crisis—from the war in Ukraine to Israel's genocidal assault on Palestine—sustaining power through provocation and performance. Even outrage or opposition feeds the same circuits of attention and visibility that maintain his authority.



As Berlant¹⁹ observes, this is a crisis of attachment, of a structure of endurance in which exhaustion itself becomes a mode of belonging, binding people to systems that erode the conditions of life they promise to secure. Trump's choreography of feeling turns that endurance into a political rhythm: outrage and fatigue circulate together, sustaining attachment even as they drain it. The affective regime surrounding Trump's presidency emerges from a broader transformation in how power understands knowledge and feeling. As the boundary between expertise and emotion collapses, politics has become organised through responsiveness rather than reflection. The systems that once stabilised reality through reason and consensus now govern it through reactivity, replacing reasoned discussion with the continuous registration of affect. Information systems treat emotion as signal, converting fluctuations in feeling into data that can be monitored and acted upon, rendering affect a variable within the administration of order. William Davies argues that as the speed of communication and the volatility of information has created a permanent state of alertness—a nervous condition in which attention, sentiment, and conflict are continuously modulated.²⁰ Within this environment, emotion functions as a kind of intelligence: a sensor through which instability is both detected and produced. Facts are deployed less to clarify than to stir feelings, collapsing the line between information and provocation. The result is a feedback system that converts uncertainty into participation and agitation into proof of order. Politics becomes a form of low-intensity warfare, where the circulation of feeling replaces the deliberation of thought. What appears as public sentiment is, in fact, the infrastructure of governance itself, an apparatus calibrated to register and amplify affective fluctuations, keeping its audience attuned to the rhythm of its own agitation.

In Trump's political choreography, this nervous system of feeling becomes visible: governance operates through stimulation, anticipation, and reaction, maintaining authority by

keeping the public continually responsive to its performance.

The administration's use of AI-generated and pop-cultural imagery makes this dynamic visible. Whether through Trump's late-night posting of a 'grim reaper' video or the White House's circulation of an ICE arrest rendered in Ghibli-style animation, state violence is aestheticised as meme culture, collapsing punishment and play into a single affective economy. In March 2025, the White House posted a Ghibli-styled image of a sobbing migrant alongside a tweet celebrating her deportation; weeks later, the Department of Homeland Security released a video of ICE raids set to Pokémon's 'Gotta Catch 'Em All' theme. The same logic extended to domestic policy when Trump shared an AI-generated 'Grim Reaper' parody during the recent government shutdown—casting his budget director as Death itself, weighing layoffs and slicing 'Democrat agencies' to the rhythm of Blue Öyster Cult's '(Don't Fear) The Reaper'.²¹

Here, governance is staged as dark comedy, and the fiscal crisis becomes content. In this increasingly authoritarian regime, issues such as deportation, austerity, and control are reframed as entertainment, translated into the visual grammars of fandom and virality, where cruelty performs as policy. Through this affective choreography, the image operates as infrastructure: a system that governs by mood, transforming visibility into administration and circulation into control. This is the totalitarian image of the present: rule performed through affect, spectacle, and repetition.

These operations manifest in a repeatable pattern, an aesthetic logic of control visible in Trump's totalitarian spectacle. On 12 July 2024, while campaigning for re-election, a photograph taken moments after he survived an assassination attempt captured him bloodied but defiant: fist raised, flanked by Secret Service agents, an American flag rippling behind him. Shot by Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Evan Vucci, the image spread within minutes and appeared on T-shirts by



nightfall. Arriving amid months of fixation on Biden's cognitive decline, it recast the attempt on Trump's life as proof of vitality and divine favour. Within hours, the image became both an emblem and commodity, its circulation transforming violence into narrative, vulnerability into strength. Three days later, at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, Trump extended the performance: appearing with a white bandage over his bullet-grazed ear, a deliberate continuation of the earlier image. Supporters mirrored him, wearing identical bandages in an act of collective identification, while chants of 'fight, fight, fight' filled the arena. In this repetition, the infrastructure of affective governance becomes visible, revealing how politics perform across platforms and systems. Each photograph, broadcast, and gesture extends the same rhythm, as crisis becomes spectacle and endurance functions as proof of command. As these images circulate, they displace communication with repetition, transforming visibility itself into a system for modulating collective mood. They synchronise feelings across audiences, translating perception into attachment and attention into governance. What begins as an individual performance of defiance expands into an infrastructure of mood: a continuous feedback loop where emotion functions as both content and control.

At his second inauguration, Trump showed that the platforms once used to amplify his image now served as the architecture of his power. Alongside foreign leaders such as Argentina's Javier Milei and Italy's Giorgia Meloni sat the executives who oversee the infrastructures of communication and capital. The presence of Zuckerberg, Musk, Bezos, and Cook at the ceremony was not incidental; it was a deliberate display that the systems shaping everyday life now stood in alignment with the authority of the state. The consequence of such an image is clear: platforms once hailed as democratic and participatory no longer mediate politics—they administrate it. Through ranking systems, moderation protocols, and predictive models, they govern the circulation of images and define what can be seen, felt, or

known. What appears on a feed is not merely expression but capital: visibility allocated according to commercial value and political convenience. The same infrastructures that amplify certain figures and events suppress others, determining whose experiences are registered as reality and whose are erased as noise. In this configuration, the computational organisation of data and attention has become a political technology: it regulates speech, structures visibility, and defines the boundaries of public life. In gathering his new allies—the architects of this economy—Trump staged an image of mutual dependence: algorithmic infrastructure legitimising the state, and the state guaranteeing the conditions for its accumulation.

The alignment visualised in Washington is not confined to a single administration; it marks one instance in an expanding system where governance increasingly operates through the management of visibility. As platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have become central infrastructures of everyday life, the organisation of data has become a primary way through which people come to understand and know the world. Designed to capture engagement while enclosing knowledge within proprietary architectures, they privilege real-time visibility and reaction, valuing speed and circulation over interpretation or context. Visibility and its computational ordering now determine what enters collective consciousness, shaping not only what is seen but how events are felt, interpreted, and remembered. As Aphra Kerr notes, contemporary media systems no longer distribute content but circulate it—transforming communication into a process in which economic and political value is produced through the tracking, ranking, and modulation of user activity.²² Within this logic of circulation, power operates less through the message than through the infrastructure that governs its movement, a medium that engineers atmosphere, directs behaviour, and renders visibility a mode of governance.

Nowhere is this governance of visibility more explicit than in the treatment of Palestinian

content across digital infrastructures. Since October 2023, the feeds of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X have served as a frontline of documentation, where Palestinians recorded and circulated, in real time, the conditions of their destruction. Yet this circulation of images, which will endure as a global record of genocide, was met with coordinated efforts to contain, distort, and erase that circulation. Between October and November 2023, Human Rights Watch verified over a thousand cases of content removal, shadowbanning, and account suspension on Instagram and Facebook. While limited to verifiable examples, the findings pointed to a broader, systemic suppression of Palestine-related content.²³ The Palestinian Observatory of Digital Rights Violations documented similar patterns on TikTok and X, where posts showing civilian casualties or calling for a ceasefire were hidden, labelled misinformation, or removed entirely.²⁴ Meta attributed these actions to technical errors, yet their consistency revealed a structural bias built into the platforms' moderation systems, one that mirrors state designations and geopolitical alliances. The same infrastructures that enabled Palestinians to document and transmit their reality also filtered, ranked, and restricted their visibility, determining what forms of suffering could be seen and what would remain invisible. Visibility here operates as administration: images pass through algorithmic systems that regulate their legibility, tempo, and reach, deciding which realities enter collective perception and which are quietly withheld.

These conditions extend a regime of suppression first exposed in 2021,²⁵ when Meta's own employees warned that the company's moderation policies disproportionately targeted Palestinian users. What has changed is the scale and automation of this control: algorithmic systems now govern perception with unprecedented precision. As these automated systems sort, rank, and withhold material, they also impose narrative form, producing hierarchies of relevance and coherence that shape collective sense-making. The restriction of Palestinian visibility

operates through computational suppression and the narrative architectures that govern how events are framed and remembered. Across global media systems, coverage of Israel's assault on Gaza has been organised around the temporal boundary of October 7. This framing that isolates the violence from the century-long history of colonisation, occupation, and resistance that precedes it. This compression of time produces a form of epistemic closure: by collapsing a condition of dispossession into an episodic conflict, it obscures the structural violence and recodes genocide as war. Within this circuitry, platforms and newsrooms converge, sustaining an atmosphere of immediacy that leaves little room for history or interpretation. The result is a managed field of vision in which Palestinian life becomes hyper-visible in moments of catastrophe yet structurally invisible within the continuum of its cause.

The management of visibility is integral to platform design. Within these infrastructures, moderation produces strategic silence, while the label *graphic content* functions as an administrative shorthand for material that introduces risk or disrupts engagement. What the system permits to appear depends not on public relevance but on operational thresholds. Image governance thus occurs through procedural removal: visibility becomes conditional, allowed only when it conforms to the affective parameters of the interface. What is filtered out is not error but surplus content that exceeds the formatting capacities of the feed. This computational logic of control regulates perception and stabilises circulation, maintaining coherence across an economy of data, affect, and attention.

As these infrastructures manage visibility, they also create it and shape emotion and consensus through the strategic circulation of images. When documentation from Gaza was restricted, a parallel stream of synthetic content appeared: AI-generated images, voice-cloned videos, and coordinated influencer campaigns that reframed the war through the language of security and civilisa-

tion. In 2023, the Tel Aviv-based firm STOIC²⁶ was found to be running a network of fake accounts spreading pro-Israel narratives across X, Instagram, and TikTok. Empirical analyses of TikTok's algorithm during these period showed that although pro-Palestinian posts outnumbered pro-Israel ones by more than twenty to one, their visibility suddenly declined between late October and mid-December 2023, coinciding with Israel's ground invasion of Gaza.²⁷ The circulation of content no longer reflected what users produced but what the system prioritised—feeds calibrated to maintain attention and emotional balance. In this context, perception was governed not through editorial decisions but through infrastructure itself, as algorithms organised images and emotions to preserve stability and reinforce political consensus, even as public sentiment began to fracture.

As this fracture widened, states and corporations moved to secure the infrastructures through which perception circulates. In 2025, under U.S. pressure, TikTok's American operations were sold to a consortium led by Oracle's Larry Ellison, Rupert Murdoch, and Michael Dell, all figures whose influence across data, media, and politics made them natural custodians of a platform already central to the management of public mood.²⁸ The sale, presented as a matter of national security, extended a long-standing relation between media ownership and political legitimacy—now formalised through algorithmic infrastructure. Around the same time, documents revealed that Bridges Partners, a Washington-based firm contracted by Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, paid social media influencers up to \$7,000 per post to promote pro-Israel narratives on TikTok and Instagram. Managed through the global advertising group Havas, the campaign formed part of a state-backed strategy to stabilise sentiment through affective repetition and saturation. Netanyahu described this network of influencers as 'key to the information front, recognising that platforms now function as instruments of persuasion and political order.'²⁹

Across these scenes—royal ceremony, speculative urbanism, humanitarian simulation, far-right propaganda, presidential spectacle, and platform control—the image no longer represents power; it performs power. It operates as infrastructure: a system that governs what can be perceived, felt, and known. Aesthetics, computation, and administration converge in the same operation, regulating visibility and mood as forms of control. Where governance now proceeds through the management of attention and affect rather than the articulation of policy. As the infrastructures of visibility have expanded, the systems that once interpreted them—journalism, politics, culture—have thinned. Images now sustain the appearance of public life while eroding its substance, translating decision into interface and judgment into feedback. In an age defined by images, meaning becomes procedural rather than interpretive; coherence is produced through repetition, and participation is reduced to maintenance. The image no longer accompanies governance—it *is* governance: an apparatus that performs order, manages emotion, and stabilises instability through visibility itself. The task now is not to restore meaning to images but to understand how they operate, to read them as systems that distribute power, organise emotion, and maintain equilibrium. If the image has become the infrastructure through which governance is enacted, then critique must turn infrastructural too: tracing the codes, protocols, and economies through which perception itself is administered. Only by examining these operations—how images are made to work, what they stabilise, and what they render impossible—can we begin to grasp the political order they sustain.

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GLOBAL LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE, ARGENTINA

AN INTERVIEW WITH RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER

BY FLORIAN WEIGL

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is a Mexican-Canadian media artist whose practice is at the intersection of architecture and performance art. Over the past thirty years, he has collaborated with V2_ on several occasions. His yet unreleased project *Global Level of Confidence, Argentina* is included in *The Illusion of Thinking*. After visiting him in his Montreal studio to discuss its presentation in Rotterdam, I met with him again over Zoom on Tuesday, October 21, 2025 to talk about the work, the techniques it employs, his approach to projects of this nature, and the collaborative processes they entail.

FLORIAN WEIGL

In *The Illusion of Thinking* exhibition in Rotterdam, the work is presented as a large-scale touchscreen paired with a face-recognition camera trained to tirelessly search for the faces of the disappeared anti-dictatorship activists in Argentina. When you stand in front of the camera, the system analyzes your features and identifies which missing activist you most resemble, assigning a 'level of confidence' to the match. From there, you are given the option to learn more by connecting with the national genetic databank.

RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER

During the dictatorship in Argentina, around 30,000 people were forcibly disappeared by the Videla regime. Many of these activists had infants, or were pregnant, at the time of their disappearance. While the adults were murdered, their babies were taken and given to families who were complicit with the regime. In some cases, pregnant women were kept alive only until they gave birth, after which they were killed and their newborns taken. As a result, hundreds of Argentinians today are living with-

out knowing that the parents who raised them are not their biological parents, and that their real parents were among the disappeared.

The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo (Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo) devoted themselves to finding these missing grandchildren and reuniting families who had no way of locating one another. Their decades-long work led directly to the creation of Argentina's 'Right to Identity,' which gives any Argentinian the legal right to have their DNA tested to determine whether they may be related to families searching for missing children.

The presentation of this project aims not only to support that effort of reconnection but, especially in the context of this exhibition, to raise broader awareness of the issue at a time when *negacionistas*, people who deny the extent of the tragedy, are in power in the country.

A key challenge that made this project necessary is the fact that, although hundreds of potential grandchildren remain unidentified, only about 14,000 Argentinians have been tested by the National Genetic Databank (Banco Nacional de Datos Genéticos). This is understandable; most people would never question whether their parents are truly their parents, so the idea of checking one's identity genetically could seem far-fetched. This project was conceived as a campaign to drive the public to get an appointment at the National Genetic Databank. The piece is a website that uses an AI face recognition system trained on the publicly-available database of images of the victims, which right now features over 10,000 records and is stored in places such as the Memory Bank (Banco de la Memoria). The system automatically compares each viewer's facial features to those of the disappeared and produces a list of the closest matches. If the user clicks on a resulting record they can

read all the existing details known about the specific disappearance: name of the victim, age, gender, occupation, location and date of disappearance, and so on. From that screen the visitor is invited to make a free appointment at the National Genetic Databank—where a far more accurate DNA test, with 99.9% reliability, can determine whether they are in fact related to a disappeared family.

FW

In developing *Global Level of Confidence*, Argentina, you built on earlier experiments with facial-recognition systems and incorporated new research and community perspectives that emerged over the years. (In particular, I am thinking of your work *Level of Confidence* (2015), which focuses on the 43 disappeared students from the Ayotzinapa school in Iguala, Mexico. Could you explain how these developments shaped the new work and the techniques it uses?

RLH

The original project in 2015 was developed to search for the 43 students of Ayotzinapa, who were kidnapped and declared dead by the Mexican government without adequate forensic evidence. The gaps and inaccuracies of the official story enraged the families and society at large, and the search for the students who may still be alive was a powerful incentive to develop the project. Ultimately the project was a campaign to create empathy, generate funds for the families from project exhibition fees if any, and to keep the search alive.

Global Level of Confidence builds on those earlier developments with facial-recognition technologies, where we used older algorithmic techniques such as Eigen, Fisher, and LBPH. In this new version, the system performs a more robust AI comparison between the face of the person interacting with the piece and the database of disappeared individuals, generating a numerical 'level of confidence' to indicate potential resemblance. Typically, these confidence levels are quite low, and that is intentional. The last thing we want is to create false hope around something as delicate as the possibility of family reunification, but it still gives a reliable set of closest matches.

The project has two main objectives: First, it serves as a bridge to the National Genetic Databank, helping guide potential matches one step further in the identification process. Second, it raises awareness—as I mentioned earlier. In an international context like V2_, the work introduces this history to new audiences. Even if someone does not resemble any of the individuals in the database, the experience generates empathy and solidarity. It invites viewers to imagine themselves, or someone they know, as one of the disappeared.

Once the algorithm shows the closest matches, viewers can click on them to access detailed information about the circumstances of each person's disappearance—photographs, dates, locations, and especially the cities involved. This helps the audience connect that information to their own birth year and region. In this way, the work tells a story through data while still leaving open the possibility—however small—of meaningful connections.

FW

While talking about the work, you described your approach as a 'reversed implementation' of artificial intelligence. Could you explain what you mean?

RLH

For me, this project is about using AI in the opposite way it's usually applied. Typically, facial-recognition systems are used to identify criminals or track people. Here, we use it to search for the victims, the familiar ties. We already know who the perpetrators were.

What mattered to me was to invert the usual logic: instead of surveillance, we use the technology to support memory, justice, and visibility.

FW

Could you speak about your ideas of accessibility and access in this project?

RLH

The original *Level of Confidence* project for Ayotzinapa was an open-source application for OSX which could be downloaded for free from my website. This worked well, but only for universities, libraries, art centers, museums, and other institutions that could provide the required Mac computer, webcam and screen.

The piece was shown in more than a hundred venues across Mexico and internationally. And importantly, whenever the project was exhibited or collected, all proceeds went back to the families and communities searching for the disappeared, to help with legal and forensic costs.

For *Global Level of Confidence, Argentina*, the project is a web service that can run on any computer or mobile operating system. In this sense the accessibility is orders of magnitude broader and in that sense, the work will function less as an artwork and more as a social campaign.

FW

You're creating a tool that supports a community. Can you say more about making it available and easy to use?

RLH

We realized the project could serve multiple purposes. First, face-recognition algorithms improved enormously over time, which made them much more accurate for the biometric search we need. Second, we were concerned about the increasing disappearance of archives—something that often happens under extreme governments intent on erasing history. Under the current administration in Argentina, led by President Javier Milei, for example, there are public attempts to deny or minimize the extent of the disappearance during the dictatorship. Broad, decentered, reliable access to the database of missing people is key for the injustice to not be forgotten.

FW

You've also been collaborating with genetic banks to create these databases. Can you unpack that?

RLH

It's important to clarify that we did *not* create the database. The available data is around 10,000 records from Parque de la Memoria, which hosts the public information on the disappeared. As new information emerges, more records are added. We only use public, already-available data—nothing private or confidential.

We collaborate with the National Genetic Databank because I see the project as an

extension of their efforts toward accountability. Our piece acts as a gateway: people might first encounter the facial-recognition system and then take the next step toward DNA testing, which can provide definitive answers.

We also want to help the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. They have been central to the search for decades—protesting, advocating, documenting, and holding onto hope. Many of the remaining Abuelas are now in their 90s, and the grandchildren they search for are in their 40s or 50s. Time is running out for reunions. Their persistence, courage, and clarity of purpose are what make this work possible. We couldn't do this work without the Abuelas, the National Genetic Databank, and Parque de la Memoria.

FW

How do you see your own role in the project?

RLH

I don't see this as 'my project.' I see myself as a facilitator—someone who builds a platform and creates relationships. We aren't moralizing or directing the outcome. The goal is for the platform to be taken up by Argentinians themselves, so that meaningful connections—perhaps even family reunifications—can occur.

When I began, I told the Genetic Bank team that they should choose an Argentinian interlocutor—a curator, theorist, or activist—to present the project because I didn't feel it was my place to speak about these histories. But they told me the opposite. They were happy that someone from outside Argentina, a Mexican living in Canada, would take on that role. They said it mattered that people outside the country were also committed to this search. That really surprised me.

FW

How do you work with artificial intelligence and machine learning more generally?

RLH

In my broader artistic practice, I like exploring the cracks in systems—glitches, absurdities, humor, and points of resistance. Artists often draw critical attention to biases in machine learning. All training sets are partial; they inherit the prejudices of the data



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Martinez [1]



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Ana Maria Cavallero Cuellar
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Mora Alicia Ballester Denari
Collar Lopez [1]



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Olga Milda Vitullo Coliva
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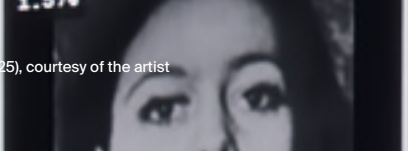


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Juarez [1]



Graciela Piochetti Alvarez [1]



Maria Esther Lorusso Lammie [1]



Maria Fernandez Lahera
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Mora Mabel Delgado Masar [1]

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Marta Silveira Adela Weira Maños
Negrete [1]

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Lucia Alberta Heron
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Marina Alvaro Llere
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Maria Cristina Mora Amador
Corriglia [1]

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Valeria Dison Sosa Garat [1]

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Miriam Susana Moro Berra
Vicenao [1]



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they're scraped from. That's usually where the critique lies.

But in this project, that isn't the emphasis. Here, the technology is trained on a very specific dataset for a very specific purpose. The political concern isn't algorithmic bias—it's the ongoing search for truth and identity.

FW

You mentioned approaching the project with care, both in data custodianship and in how the work is presented.

RLH

Yes, custodianship has two parts: integrity and dignity. Integrity means protecting the database—ensuring it stays unaltered, secure, and able to grow. Dignity concerns how the project is shown. It must be presented with critical awareness, not techno-optimism. Too many AI exhibitions celebrate the technology while ignoring the injustices it can perpetuate.

This is one reason I appreciate working with V2_. In Rotterdam, there's a long tradition of critical thinking about digital systems. The tactics and strategies developed over decades of digital activism are urgently needed today, as we confront economic violence, manipulation, and data extraction.

A good example: for 30 years, our studio has embraced open source. We publish our code on GitHub so others can use it. For us, the code isn't the artwork; it's a tool to build relationships and experiences. But when Microsoft bought GitHub and used its entire archive to train Copilot—without credit or compensation—it revealed how fragile the commons can be. What was meant to be shared openly was privatized and monetized. This is why I advocate for alternative, non-corporate commons—something like a Wikipedia for AI. A shared, contestable, collectively-built resource. It's extremely difficult, because it requires immense infrastructure, but I believe this is one of the crucial social projects of our time.

FW

You've mentioned how collaborative this project is. Beyond the Abuelas, the National Genetic Databank, and Parque de la Memoria, who else is involved?

RLH

Collaboration is central. We keep the project as open as possible—sharing code and methods, except for a few elements we must withhold to protect the data.

The technical work is by programmers in my team together with collaborators such as Julian Oliver, Kyle McDonald, and David Gloria. It's truly a collective project, with contributors from Mexico, Canada, Iceland, Argentina, United States, New Zealand—people spread across the world. I find that very moving. It shows that meaningful connections may transcend borders and commercial technologies. Against the grain of corporate AI, NFTs, and extractive data practices, this project is about trust, sharing, and mutual support. Collaboration is the only way we face our current crises: by building community.

For example, artist and activist Julian Oliver helped us set up a secure database in Iceland, where digital sovereignty laws are exceptionally strong. That means if things worsen in Argentina—if archives are erased or tampered with—the data stored in Iceland remains protected. I love that this international network has built something untouchable by an extremist government. That's part of the project too.

FW

How will the work be presented in Rotterdam?

RLH

At V2_, the installation creates an immediate, almost confrontational encounter—like looking into a mirror. It will consist of a touch screen in portrait orientation. I'm curious how it will be received in the Netherlands. It's extremely unlikely anyone will find a match, but the intellectual and emotional resonance will hopefully be strong. I look forward to hearing about what visitors experience and what kind of conversations emerge.

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CALL TO ACTION

- Consider signing the following petition: "Solicitada En Defensa de Los Derechos Humanos En La Argentina." <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf6WdYRnkHT-pXSR3ri2UC CMaAlGdKs6dTHgvy-WTwuQ-fsA/viewform?pli=1>
- Donations can be made directly to the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo here: <https://www.abuelas.org.ar/donaciones>



Florian Weigl in conversation with Flavia Dzodan at V2_, Photo by Flo Verhulst

AN INTERVIEW WITH FLAVIA DZODAN

BY FLORIAN WEIGL

During the preparation of *The Illusion of Thinking* I visited Flavia Dzodan, researcher, theorist, and artist, several times in her studio in Amsterdam. Working across video, sound, and micro-publication, Dzodan examines how computational infrastructures capture, route, and standardise affect. During one of the studio visits we recorded our conversation on *Absence / Longing / Saturation*, the trilogy of works which is part of *The Illusion of Thinking*. She talked about the logistical capture of emotion through sonification, video installation, and writing, how she constructs images, the role of time, and the connection between the trilogy and the text which follows this interview.

FLORIAN WEIGL

I'd like to talk about your approach to constructing images. How did you approach all of the personal material and how do you look at the role time plays in your work?

FLAVIA DZODAN

In the trilogy that's on display at V2_ I'm going back and forth in time, because memory is not linear. You don't remember December 1999 followed by June 2000 and then followed by October 2001. You remember fragments of things. I wanted it to replicate or convey what effectively happens when you remember fragments of your past. Basically, I'm sure you don't think linearly. You remember or you don't and that's the editing logic.

The beginning and the end of each of the video pieces are actually the only fixed points in time, and the rest is how I remember things. The video is compiled from 26 years of footage. I chose what was effectively strong for me, and conveyed the way I remember things. So that's why the dates are not so

important, except the beginning and the end. The rest are things that are important to me emotionally.

FW

Could you elaborate a bit more on this non-linear approach?

FD

I believe that linearity of time is a construction. Many cultures have a very different understanding of time. Some cultures think of the future as something behind you, because you cannot see it, and the past as ahead, because it's something you are always looking at. This is a very simplified version of conceiving time differently. Linearity in that context is what we have agreed upon, but it doesn't necessarily is a translation of human experience. You could look at the stars and the sun and the moon and say, the sun comes out in the morning. All true, but that experience of time or the seasons is very cultural. I believe that this is part of the instrumentalization of labour, capitalism requires this convention, where linearity is the default, so that we can organize labour around it. Even the seasons are structured so that retail can sell us things based on that. The way we experience the seasons has been done through a hegemonic model. I'm interested in how we pierce through that fiction, especially when that fiction has been so instrumental to colonial history, and has created the idea of progress. Progress that is very much tied to linear time. We are here at this point, we grow and we go to this other point. This is what allowed the empires to codify certain civilizations as backwards. Because if you look at time as a linear progression, and someone has practices that you have already left behind, you are going to call those practices backwards. I'm interested in disrupting this idea of progress that is tied

to our colonial enterprise. Because I believe that in the current climate catastrophe situation, and the current inequalities that we live in, the idea of endless growth is contrary to human survival. We cannot continue growing when there are no unlimited resources. Time is very much related to that, because it's tied to the idea of endless production, and the endless cycle of retail and purchasing. I believe that that is going to lead us eventually to a collapse of life, human and non-human alike as we know it. There is only so much you can mine for precious metals before the ecosystem collapses, killing everything in it. I'm interested in time as a way of looking at capitalism's history from the 15th century to now.

FW

We talked a lot about composing an algorithm in relation to the sound and composition of your works. Could you elaborate a bit on this?

FD

I want to start by showing you what it means visually. What I wanted to do with these algorithms was to sonify cartography. It started from an intuition. What happens if cartography could be listened to, not only looked at in a map? Since Gerardus Mercator, the forefather of our cylindrical map system, we have a worldview which is pretty Eurocentric. Europe becomes the center of the world projected on the map. From that I started thinking of how that visual history could translate into an experiential moment of how we look at the map. I'm here in Amsterdam. I can trace Buenos Aires or Sao Paulo with my finger on the map, the two cartographic coordinates I travel to most. But what does that mean spatially? I started looking at what all of that means for me. Traveling from Amsterdam to Madrid to Buenos Aires, Madrid being a point, not that I choose out of interest but for convenience, and economic reasons. It's usually the cheapest flight. So I took those coordinates and I wondered how they could be sonified. I was playing with Super Collider already. I wanted this drone sound to also be a translation of the effective burden of being away from home. And to be honest, whether

I'm in Amsterdam or in Buenos Aires, I'm always away from home, because both are home. It's quite a mundane experience. I'm always coordinating time because of the time difference. I made a sonic environments, algorithmically.

Originally, I was going to delete the original ambient sounds from the footage. *Transatlantic Drift* starts on my mother's birthday when I was in Buenos Aires. That's why that date was chosen, because I was physically present for a moment. You hear all of us singing Happy Birthday to her, superimposed with the soundscape. I couldn't delete it. And if I don't delete that, I couldn't delete the others either, creating a more layered soundscape.

Flavia shows the project files of the work Transatlantic Drift on her computer.

FD

The project file for *Transatlantic Drift* has different layers, because it's different instances of execution of the goal. I compose visually. I don't know how it will sound. I look at the tracks and I look at what the track is visually telling me, and that's how I layer the sound. I'm making soundtracks to the video files to tell a story. And since I am very visual, I compose visually. I look at each tracks, their wavelength. How does it, you know, look like when put together?

A lot of the archival footage was stored on old, obsolete media. Part of the project consisted of doing some hands actual media archeology. Getting devices and cables to be able to download the material to my computer. Some of it was filmed before 2000's. The footage was never made for this project. It is my personal archive.

FW

Talking about obsolescence and innovation. How do you look at the constant innovation in computational systems that 'smooth things out', losing the imperfections?

FD

I'm very interested in that. I understand the drive for perfectionism, for smoothness as an artist or as a maker or as a theorist. Even though I want the perfect phrase when I

write, I want the perfect soundscape. On the other hand, this smoothness creates a sort of hegemonic aesthetic where everything is identical, and it's also easily managed. Because every glitch, every imperfection, also makes it hard to classify algorithmically.

We don't eliminate noise because it's unpleasant. We eliminate noise because it creates a problem for an algorithm to recommend things to you. And that also leads to this effective management I write about, where all your emotions are already pre-decided by algorithms. 'I'm going to show you things so you feel joy.' It's not you saying I want to feel joy, so I'm going to look for these things. The algorithm is already prescriptive, and that's why glitches are bad for algorithms. That's why latency is bad for algorithms. Thinking causes latency and that's very bad. You need to immediately see something and click on it. So that's why noise, latency, and glitches need to be eliminated for algorithms. This comes from military command design, where hesitation can lead to lack of decision. Innovation design has adopted a lot of these principles as a discipline. Because the algorithm is aimed at making decisions in a snap second.

FW

Writing is a big part of your practice. And in this project it's very connected. Could you tell me more about that. And specially the structure and construction of your text, creating summaries using a bullet point approach?

FD

Yes I always use that for myself, because I tend to think very chaotically. It can veer into something that becomes impossible to understand. I use such summaries to keep focused. It keeps me excited about what I do and to remain sharp. The bullet points and the clear paragraphs help me. How do I bring these complex things in ways that are narrow and sharp, a question that is always open.

One thing I don't like in our field is the fact that in order to make work, one has to place identity and emotions first. I don't like that because I believe in what Eduard Glissant calls the right to opacity. He talks about opacity as something that we as human beings should

preserve for ourselves. Not everything has to be legible. So that's why I try to write with all the sentimentality removed. This allows the audience to find things in it themselves, and retains the complexity.



Flavia Doodan - *Transatlantic Drift* (2015), courtesy of the artist.

ABSENCE / LONGING / SATURATION

BY FLAVIA DZODAN

Absence / Longing / Saturation is a trilogy of sound and video works that collectively stage the recursive phenomenology of diasporic, infrastructural, and affective life. The series is organized as a triptych where each panel is formally distinct yet methodologically inter-linked, charting a cycle from infrastructural absence, through mediated longing, to the fleeting excess of saturation.

The works may be installed sequentially or as recursive loops, reflecting the cyclical logic of absence and return that structures migratory and familial experience. Except from the last part of the trilogy (*Dirac Delta*), the works can be installed individually or as part of a trilogy of works. The third part of this trilogy, if installed on its own, would risk being misunderstood and viewed as a sort of autoethnographic documentary; its strength resides in the relationship with the other two parts.

TRANSATLANTIC DRIFT (ABSENCE / OPACITY)

The opening work diagnoses the infrastructural wound of non-arrival. Using weather webcam imagery from Ezpeleta (the closest accessible node to my home town of Berazategui, Argentina). The soundscape for *Transatlantic Drift* is constructed through the simultaneous execution of multiple, discrete instances of the core generative system in SuperCollider. This technique was chosen to deliberately move the work beyond a singular, linear narrative into a complex, polyphonic field. Each layer acts as an independent voice or a ghostly echo of a journey, operating on its own timeline yet coexisting with others in the same sonic space.

AFFECTIVE ASYMPTOTE (LONGING / MEDIATION)

The second part turns to the labor of mediated connection. Through a triangulated geography of Amsterdam, Berazategui, and São Paulo (where half of my family lives), the work mobilizes archival video, network pings, and traceroutes to stage the everyday logistics of care and kinship at a distance.

Longing emerges not as lack, but as infrastructural method: a topology of partial arrival, persistent negotiation, and the impossibility of closure (seeing my godchildren grow up through network mediations). The asymptote, as both mathematical figure and experiential condition, structures the work's recursive approach to the unattainable. Every attempt at connection leaving a forensic trace of deferred, distributed presence.

DIRAC DELTA (Δ) (EVENT / SATURATION)

The trilogy culminates in an unrepeatable event: the chaotic, excessive, and ephemeral convergence of kinship, care, and memory in a single evening in Buenos Aires, on New Years Eve 2024. Filmed by my six-year-old godson nephew in the family backyard, the footage is presented 'as is' (unprocessed, saturated, and overflowing with the noise of my family life). Here, the event is not a resolution but an eruption: for a brief instant, the logic of absence and longing is overwhelmed by the impossible fullness of presence. This moment of saturation is necessarily temporary, dissolving once more into dispersal, absence, and recursive longing.

WHY THIS FORM?

The trilogy's tripartite structure is both experiential and formal. Rather than resolve absence and longing into a fantasy of closure, the works recursively stage the impossibility of arrival and the excess of fleeting presence. Each part operates as a diagnostic: documenting infrastructural wounds, enacting the labor of mediated relation, and finally archiving the rare event of convergence before it recedes. The cycle is recursive, not linear; each event of saturation inaugurates new circuits of absence and longing. The trilogy insists on the epistemic and affective reality of migration and diaspora where arrival is always provisional, memory is structured by infrastructural violence, and the archive is a memento of what can never be fully possessed or restored.

LATENCY + AFFECT + INFRASTRUCTURE

– A SOUND VIDEO BASED PRACTICE

BY FLAVIA DZODAN

FRAMEWORK: LATENCY, AFFECT, INFRASTRUCTURE

My current practice stands at the intersection of latency, affect, and infrastructure. Rather than proceeding from a predetermined research question or teleological endpoint, I orient myself by attunement to what resists capture: the unfinished, the residual. I would also perhaps add that I am interested in what I'd call 'the not-yet-coherent'. What guides my inquiry is not clarity, but the persistent sense that 'hay algo ahí / there is something there' or an intuition that signals both epistemic excess and methodological opacity.

LATENCY in my work is not simply a technical phenomenon, like an error to be minimized or a glitch to be aestheticized, but a constitutive modality of the present. Latency is temporal residue, infrastructural friction, the chronoplastic artifact of systems always failing to arrive on time. It is the index of deferred presence, the evidence of asynchronous relation. I'd situate latency as the sonic or visual echo of infrastructural negotiation. In my video and sound experiments, whether I am capturing the delay inscribed in a fax handshake or the imperceptible hum of domestic relics, latency is foregrounded as both material and method: an unfinished business that structures the perception of both memory and loss.

AFFECT operates here not as a mere emotional state, but as the logistical and infrastructural capture, routing, and redistribution of feeling. I am concerned with how infrastructures, whether technical, architectural, or algorithmic, administrate affective life: how the latency of systems becomes a lived condition, how mourning and longing are organized by regimes of delay, buffering, and deferral.

I am less interested in nostalgia or an act of remembrance than in an encounter with the affective logistics of absence: how loss, temporality, and infrastructural residue fold into one another to produce the sonic and visual field of the present.

In the context of consumer-facing AI, this focus on affect acquires a critical infrastructural dimension: these systems are not designed to maximize truth or epistemic integrity, but to optimize for affective outcomes through Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback (RLHF). The goal of this reinforced training is for maximized engagement, satisfaction, and synthetic rapport. Affect here is not the by-product but the primary axis of optimization. Models are tuned through user feedback not for factual accuracy, but for the minimization of discomfort and the production of affective frictionlessness. This leads to a regime where the logistics of feeling take precedence over the logic of fact: AI 'hallucinates' in the service of affect, offering plausible or comforting narratives rather than refusing response, even when knowledge is absent. Here, affect emerges as the infrastructural telos of AI mediation, that is, a logistical operation that governs user experience by routing, deferring, or buffering not just information, but the very conditions of emotional encounter.

INFRASTRUCTURE is neither inert substrate nor transparent medium, but an active drama-turge of temporal, affective, and epistemic experience. The infrastructures I engage, from analog signal paths to algorithmic architectures, from domestic architectures to temperature sensors, are never simply conduits; they are sites of negotiation, friction, and spectral remainder. The 'sound of



Flavia Dzodan - *Dirac Delta* (2025), courtesy of the artist



infrastructure' in my practice is not the noise of machines alone, but the sonification of latency, affective leakage, and the logistics of absence.

I deliberately refuse the security of predetermined frameworks and solutionist logics. My practice is oriented by the productive discomfort of not knowing: a methodological openness to drift, impasse, and recursive incompleteness. Each experiment (video, soundscape, text, or infrastructural deployment) is both a residue and a stake, a claim on the epistemic value of what remains unfinished and a provisional archive for what might yet be recognized. In this, 'not knowing' is not a deficit but a stance: a refusal of premature closure and a commitment to following the signal of what is structurally latent in the present.

TRANSATLANTIC DRIFT

BY FLAVIA DZODAN

I. TECHNICAL ARCHITECTURE: SONIFYING ABSENCE AND DRIFT

1. POLYSEGMENTAL DRONE DESIGN

Transatlantic Drift is constructed as a triptych of algorithmically differentiated drone segments, each mapped to a specific leg of the Atlantic crossing: Europe → Atlantic Ocean → South America (with a recursive return).

- **\drone_Europe:** Cello-based additive synthesis (eight partials), spatialized, with subtle noise and a low-pass 'veil,' representing the harmonic and cultural density of the point of origin.
- **\drone_Oceanic:** Radically spectral noise, constructed from overlapping band-passed pink noise, pan drift, spectral 'ghost dips,' and nonlinear amplitude. This segment is technically dominant, louder, spectrally broader, spatially ambiguous. Envelope shapes are slow, the 'veil' parameter darkens the field, and the sound is recursively erased and redrawn, enacting the 'abyssal threshold' of the Atlantic.
- **\drone_SA:** Hybrid partial/noise construction, with a dynamic blend between harmonics and filtered noise, modulated by 'noisiness,' representing ambiguous arrival and affective translation.

2. REAL-TIME PARAMETRIC INTERPOLATION

Each segment is animated by a Routine that interpolates between geographical coordinates using linear interpolation (~lerp), then derives sonic parameters from physical distance (using the Haversine formula),

longitude (for panning), and segment position (for amplitude and spectral veil).

Transitions between segments are managed with fading envelopes, intentional pauses (to foreground rupture), and step-wise parameter updates that preclude closure. Everything is in drift.

3. THE SUPERCOLLIDER ARCHITECTURE REFLECTS THIS RECURSIVE, NON-TELEOLOGICAL DRIFT:

The drones are algorithmically differentiated but cyclically chained; the back-and-forth structure never resolves.

Each sonic segment is *incomplete*:

- Europe/cello drone is rich but veiled, suggesting an abundance that is muted by distance.
- The oceanic drone is not a 'neutral zone' but a site of spectral excess and indeterminacy—an abyss that refuses passage, not a conduit.
- The South American drone is a hybrid, always ambiguous, neither return nor new origin.

There is no cadence or arrival. There is only modulation, recursion, and spectral thinning/thickening that mirrors the psychic and material labor of the migrant's oscillation.

Transatlantic Drift is 'composed in algorithm'. Sonic events are determined by coordinate, process, and routine rather than authorial affect or humanist narrative.

4. RECURSIVE STRUCTURE

The journey reverses upon completion, producing a recursive arc rather than a linear narrative: the process refuses the teleology of 'arrival,' foregrounding recurrence, deferral, and structural incompleteness.

The migration traced in this piece is not metaphorical but cartographic: every sonic event traverses a line between coordinates: Amsterdam [52.3712, 4.8426], Madrid [40.4168, -3.7038] (mandatory stopover for the most affordable flights to Buenos Aires), Atlantic [0.0, -30.0], Buenos Aires [-34.6037, -58.3816].

But these points do not contain arrival; each coordinate is a wound, a record of longing, a technical address haunted by the impossibility of return.

5. POLYPHONY, OPACITY, AND THE ABOLITION OF LINEARITY

The soundscape for *Transatlantic Drift* is constructed through the simultaneous execution of multiple, discrete instances of the core generative system. This technique was chosen to deliberately move the work beyond a singular, linear narrative into a complex, polyphonic field. Each layer acts as an independent voice or a ghostly echo of a journey, operating on its own timeline yet coexisting with others in the same sonic space.

The resulting sonic field is characterized by a strategic **opacity**. This is a conscious strategy to create a sound that, like the unresolved experience of migration itself, cannot be easily parsed or reduced to a single, clear signal. It confronts the listener with a texture that must be inhabited rather than merely observed.

Furthermore, this layering practice effectively collapses the timeline of the journey. By allowing moments of departure, crossing, and approach to interfere with one another, the work sonically enacts the haunting presence

of memory and the non-linear, recursive nature of longing.

II. WEATHER CAMERA & INFRASTRUCTURAL ABSENCE

No open-access webcams or CCTV feeds exist in Berazategui, my home town.

After an exhaustive search of municipal, commercial, and crowdsourced directories (2025), the only operational camera available is in Ezpeleta, a neighboring municipality, several kilometers away. The images used in this work are then not of 'home,' but of its periphery: the weather in Ezpeleta stands as a visual proxy for the infrastructural wound of Berazategui's absence.

This absence is not a neutral gap. I contend with this absence as a diagnostic of infrastructural neglect, classed geographies of visibility, and the politics of networked presence. This absence is the product of logistical, economic, and administrative histories. This is not opacity by choice but by precarity. The necessity of using the Ezpeleta weather camera marks the project as a recursive detour: what you see is always-almost, never-there, haunted by what cannot be directly addressed or accessed.

Consequently, its data is **deliberately excluded** from the sonification process. To translate the weather of a proxy location into sound would be to create a false representation and offer a kind of resolution the work actively resists.

Instead, the camera functions as silent evidence. Its presence in the project's documentation, contrasted with the silence of its data within the soundscape, becomes the most accurate possible representation of the infrastructural wound and the impossibility of a direct return.

What you see is not Berazategui, but the shadow cast by its infrastructural absence.

III. THEORETICAL ARCHITECTURE: FROM INFRA-STRUCTURAL ABSENCE TO AFFECTIVE RECURSION

DRIFT AS RECURSION, NOT PROGRESSION

The work rejects linear progress or arrival; drift is both the process and the subject. The Atlantic crossing is never 'complete': the drone's endless interpolation, spectral instability, and lack of tonal resolution embody a logic of perpetual longing.

Drift here is affective, epistemic, and infra-structural. To me, it is a refusal of narrative closure, mirroring the unresolvable status of diasporic and migrant belonging.

This is not a passage but a dwelling-in-between: the Atlantic as 'affective threshold,' not bridge.

LOGISTICS OF LONGING: ROUTING WITHOUT ARRIVAL

An algorithmic enactment of affective logistics: every drone is routed, buffered, delayed, and yet never arrives.

Latency is reconfigured as affect: the work's recursive delays, asynchronous envelopes, and spectral ambiguity are dramatizations of the emotional and infrastructural costs of distance.

Each sonic event marks the "distance, measured in milliseconds, between longing and arrival."

It is the **perpetual, unresolved circulation** of the migrant, a recursive passage haunted by the impossibility of return and the suspension of arrival.

METHODOLOGICAL OPACITY AND FORENSIC AESTHETICS

I am not interested in solutionism or 'narratives of closure'. Rather than fill absence with representational surrogates, I makes absence, drift, and infrastructural non-coincidence the subject. I could stage this work

as an endless loop, since no arrival will take place.

SATURATION AS EVENT, NOT RESOLUTION

The work sits as the 'absence/opacity' panel in the triptych, but its logic infects the whole arc. Even in the other segments (longing/mediation, saturation/event) the foundational wound of infrastructural absence remains, leaking into every node of care, kinship, and archival excess. The recursive return, fade, and dissolution at the end of *Transatlantic Drift* prepares the ear for the affective chaos and excess that will eventually unfold in 'saturation' (but never as closure).

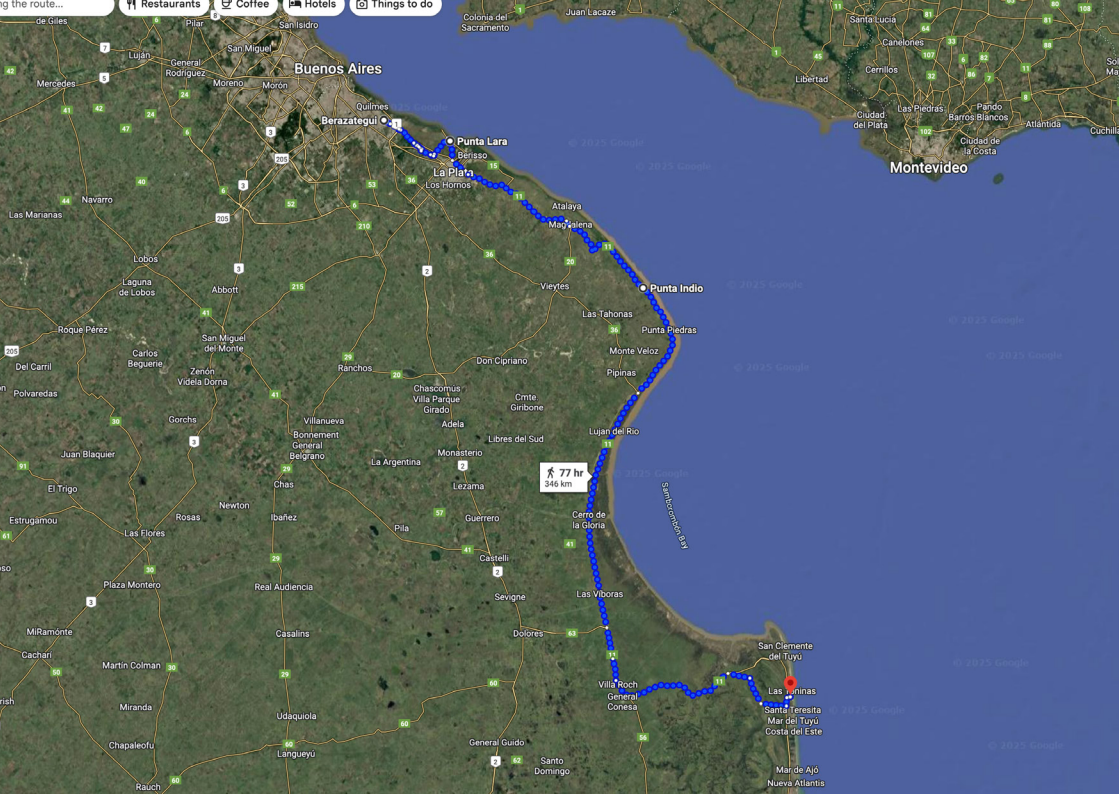
IV. INTEGRATIVE METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

METHODOLOGICAL POSITION

Transatlantic Drift is composed from a specifically situated axis: Amsterdam, Madrid, the mid-Atlantic, Buenos Aires, and, by necessity, the infrastructural absence of Berazategui. The work does not seek to map the 'Atlantic' as a metaphorical or universal space; its cartography is determined by the lived, logistical, and economic realities that mark every movement between these sites. The absence of a camera in my hometown is not an allegory but an artifact of classed, administrative, and networked exclusions.

This is not a 'case study' for the general condition of migration, nor is it a node in a planetary analytic. What cannot be heard, what is only proxied or recursed, is a specific infrastructural wound: untransferable, opaque, and resistant to any curatorial or algorithmic audit.

This work does not invite the imposition of universal frameworks, diasporic, Atlantic, or otherwise. It offers, instead, an epistemic position: that absence, drift, and recursion are not metaphors but lived, infrastructural facts; and that the work's opacity is a sovereign refusal of both narrative closure and curatorial transparency.



Flavia Dzodan – *Transatlantic Drift* (2025), courtesy of the artist



SUMMARY

Transatlantic Drift is the sound of a migration without arrival. Every journey is a recursion of longing, every point of departure is home and loss, and every crossing is an echo of presence deferred. **The work inhabits the Atlantic as affective wound**, dwelling in the between, haunted by the perpetual non-coincidence of return.

FRAMING CARTOGRAPHIC COORDINATES AS DATASET

For this project, my dataset is a sequence of cartographic coordinates. But these are not neutral points but rather spatial indices saturated with affective and entirely personal charge. Each coordinate references a real location in the path from Amsterdam to Buenos Aires, and operates as both a node and a vector: it is a fixed address and, simultaneously, a departure point for algorithmic transformation. Amsterdam, where I now live; Madrid, where most of my flights stopover due to being cheaper than direct flights from Amsterdam; the Atlantic Ocean as the site of crossing; Buenos Aires, the always provisional destination and point of origin.

In my SuperCollider code, the coordinates function as triggers: each one activates a recalibration of the drone's parameters: spectral profile, spatialization, amplitude, textural density. The code 'reads' the dataset not as a passive list, but as a score for sonic migration. The journey across coordinates becomes a process of traversing memory, longing, and epistemic latency, rather than simply mapping points to sounds.

I chose this dataset because I am interested in how the form of the dataset itself, that is its cartographic, indexical logic, imposes a structure on the work while also carrying residues that escape strict computation: histories of displacement, imagined geographies, losses that cannot be re-mapped. The dataset is, in a sense, both an operational engine and a conceptual haunt, determining the

parameters of the algorithm while remaining irreducible to them.

The core operation is simple, but my stakes are intentionally recursive. In SuperCollider, I wrote an algorithm that deploys a drone sound as a migratory agent, moving across a series of cartographic coordinates. These coordinates act as affective loci. At each coordinate, the algorithm mutates the drone's acoustic parameters: pitch, spectral content, spatialization. What results is not a fixed soundscape but a processual traversal, a movement where the code itself enacts a kind of sonic mapping, attempting a process of translation from spatial logic into affective modulation.

The 'travel' across coordinates is both literal (insofar as each point is mapped to a set of sound variables) and speculative (since the geography is haunted by my own memories, projections, losses). **The algorithm here performs two kinds of labor: it calculates a path across a field, and it renders the experience of movement, longing, or mourning as sonic artifact.** The code operationalizes affect, but does not domesticate it. I assembled this soundscape so that the movement is always slightly out of phase with itself, refusing full arrival or resolution.

In short, the work is not a representational map, but a cartographic operation in sound. I think of it as a recursive negotiation between algorithmic governance and affective latency.

AFFECTIVE ASYMPTOTE

BY FLAVIA DZODAN

Asymptote: a straight line that continually approaches a given curve but does not meet it at any finite distance.

An asymptote is a straight line that a curve approaches ever more closely as it extends towards infinity, but never actually meets at any finite distance. In formal terms, as the independent variable increases (or decreases) without bound, the distance between the curve and the asymptote approaches zero, but the two never intersect.

In the context of *Affective Asymptote*, the asymptote becomes both a mathematical and existential figure. It embodies the condition of longing or return: a perpetual approach to home, kin, or origin that can never be fully realized or closed. The ‘curve’ is the vector of the migrant’s desire, the network’s attempt to connect, or the digital signal seeking its destination. The ‘asymptote’ is the line of origin, presence, or fulfillment, always near, never reached.

To sonify or visualize the asymptote is to dramatize the endless, recursive approach to a place or feeling that remains structurally, infrastructurally, and affectively unattainable.

If *Transatlantic Drift* was the sonification of the subjective, continuous, and affective state of being ‘in-between,’ then this second part of the trilogy is its necessary counterpart: the sonification of the discrete, percussive, and logistical attempts at connection across that same distance.

This moves my work from the phenomenology of drift to the forensics of connection. The drone was the sound of the ocean; this will

be the sound of a message in a bottle, a call across the void. The tonal characteristics should reflect this shift from sustained texture to rhythmic, transient events.

In *Affective Asymptote*, each sonic event is a vector: a movement of longing, a digital attempt, a directional force that reaches ever closer to the horizon of connection. But the asymptote (which I experience as mathematically precise and existentially cruel) remains a line that no vector, however forceful, can cross. The work does not sonify the asymptote, but the endless field of vectors caught in its gravity, each tracing an approach that is perpetually incomplete.

CORE SONIC PALETTE: FROM ANALOG LONGING TO DIGITAL GHOSTS

Transatlantic Drift was rooted in the organic (cello) and the natural (ocean). This new work is about digital infrastructure. Therefore, the sonic palette I am working on shifts to reflect this. I propose a core sound world built from:

- **Pure Tones (Sine Waves):** The clean, disembodied, and placeless sound of a digital signal.
- **Percussive Clicks & Pulses:** The sound of a data packet to (a sharp, defined moment in time).
- **Digital Noise & Glitches:** The sound of error, corruption, and packet loss.
- **Resonant Filters:** To give the pure tones a sense of ‘place’ or to make them ring out with a ghostly, melancholic echo.

TONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF NETWORK OPERATIONS

1. THE SUCCESSFUL PING

- **Concept:** A call into the void and the confirmation of a distant presence. It is a moment of successful connection, but one that is attenuated by immense distance. It should sound both clear and ghostly.
- **Sonification:** A two-part event.
- **The 'Call' (My PING from Amsterdam):**
 - **Timbre:** A sharp, clean, percussive sine wave. Use **SINOSC** with a very fast attack and medium decay envelope (**ENV.PERC**).
 - **Pitch:** A clear, stable pitch. Let's say a C5 (523 Hz), representing the 'home' signal from my location.
 - **Panning:** Centered. (is this my voice?).
- **The 'Response' (The server's PONG from Argentina):**
 - **Timbre:** An echo of the call, but altered by its journey. It should be passed through a low-pass filter (**LPF**) to make it softer and a reverb (**FREEVERB**) to give it space and distance. It is the ghost of the original signal.
 - **Pitch:** It should be musically related but distinct. A perfect fifth above (G5) or below (F4) would create a sense of consonant, successful connection.
 - **Timing:** The delay between the 'call' and the 'response' should be directly mapped to the ping's latency. A 250ms ping results in a 250ms delay. The rhythm of the piece is literally the rhythm of the internet.

- **Panning:** Panned according to the longitude of Buenos Aires, creating a clear spatial dialogue.

2. THE FAILED PING

- **Concept:** The unanswered call. The sound of infrastructural absence. A technical failure that is emotionally resonant with being unheard or forgotten. It should not be silence, but the sound of an error.

The failed ping is crucial in this piece given how my own home town and its institutions is infrastructurally absent from the network (my childhood school, for example, has no website; the local municipality has no dedicated page for my town; et cetera).

- **Sonification:**
- **The 'Call':** The exact same clean, centered **PING** as the successful one. The attempt is always pure.
- **The 'Response' (The Error):** After a delay corresponding to the timeout period (e.g., 1–2 seconds), instead of a clean echo, I trigger an 'error sound' (?):
 - **A Digital Stutter:** The original 'call' sound is captured and passed through a stuttering buffer or granular synth (**GRAININ**, **GLITCH** UGens), creating a corrupted, broken fragmentation of my own voice (as seen above).
 - **A Noise Burst:** A short, sharp burst of bit-crushed or filtered **CRACKLE** noise that quickly fades, representing digital static and a dead end.
 - **A 'Dead Tone':** The most melancholic option. After the timeout, a low, dissonant, heavily filtered sine tone hums quietly for a moment before fading, like the sound of a disconnected line (the sound of my failed connections with my mother on WhatsApp?).

3. THE SUCCESSFUL TRACEROUTE

- **Concept:** A narrative of the journey. It reveals the hidden infrastructure, the series of anonymous routers that connect me to 'home.' It is the logistical map of longing.
- **Sonification:** A rhythmic sequence of 'successful pings.'
- **Rhythm & Pitch:** Each hop in the trace-route is a sonic event. The pitch of each ping could be mapped to its latency (higher latency = higher, more 'strained' pitch). The time between each ping is also its latency. The result is a melody and rhythm generated entirely by the network's path and performance.
- **Spatialization:** This is key. The stereo position (**PAN**) of each successive ping should be mapped to the longitude of that router's geolocated IP address. As the traceroute jumps from Amsterdam to London, to New York, to Miami, to São Paulo, to Buenos Aires, the sound will literally travel across the stereo field from left to right. It is a cartographic sonification.

4. THE FAILED TRACEROUTE

- **Concept:** The journey that dissolves into the void. A path that is traceable for a while, but then hits the wall of infrastructural absence and dissipates.
- **Sonification:** A narrative that falls apart.
 - It begins like a successful traceroute, with clear, spatially mapped pings for the hops that respond.
 - When the trace hits the ****** (request timed out) lines, the sound palette changes dramatically.
 - Each triggers one of the 'failed ping' sounds (a stutter, a noise burst).

- **The Dissipation Effect:** As the sequence of failed hops continues, the sounds should become progressively more distorted, filtered, and quiet. The initial call gets weaker, and the resulting error sounds become more fragmented, until the final hops are just faint, digital dust. I am sonifying the signal literally falling apart as it fails to find its destination.

FOOTAGE

If in *Transatlantic Drift* I used images from a weather cam in Ezpeleta, because no other was available, for this one I am using images from my affective infrastructure: my mom's backyard, my niece and nephew growing up in Sao Paulo (a mix of footage I captured myself and some that my brother sent me), footage from buenos aires collected during my travels etc etc...

FROM A DYAD TO A DIASPORIC NETWORK

Transatlantic Drift dealt with the A-to-B relationship between my present location and my origin. It was an exploration of a singular migratory vector. By introducing São Paulo, I am acknowledging a crucial truth of modern diasporic life: *'home' is rarely a single point*. It becomes a distributed network of people, places, and memories. My affective world is not a straight line but a *triangle*, with me at one vertex, and the ghost of Berazategui and the living presence of my family in São Paulo at the other two.

- **Poly-centric Longing:** I am no longer just sonifying a longing for a place of origin. I am attempting a more complex, poly-centric longing for family, for a past I can't access, and for a present I can only witness through mediation.
- **Deepening 'Affective Infrastructure':** The infrastructure is no longer just the cold, impersonal network cables under the Atlantic. It is also the social and familial network (my brother, his wife, my niece and nephew) that is stretched across that same

digital space. Here I attempt to map the logistics of love and kinship onto the logistics of data packets.

METHODOLOGICAL SIDE NOTE (DRAFT)

The footage for *Transatlantic Drift* is captured from a weather camera in Ezpeleta. I had to download the images for each day and ‘stitch’ them as a sort of timelapse. The result is really what I was aiming for, somehow estranged and infrastructural. The thing is, when I started downloading, since I have to go day by day, I picked my mom’s birthday on March 11th, 2023. The reason I picked that day as the first one is because I was there that day and we celebrated it together with my brother and my husband.

The rest of the weather camera dates are random (except from the first and last one). I didn’t pick them because they had significance but because any day, no matter which one, is a day I am away from home. Also, when I assembled the timeline to edit it in video, I randomized all the dates. The only stable ones are the first one, my mother’s birthday and the last one, the weathercam footage of the day Pietro (my godson nephew) was born.

So now, I am looking at footage for *Affective Asymptote* and I realize I have a short clip of all of us singing the happy birthday to my mom and her blowing up a candle on a cake. This birthday footage is the first scene in *Affective Asymptote*. Pietro is the ‘filmmaker’ who shot the footage used in *Dirac Delta*.

A work about absence and digital longing can feel abstract. The birthday footage serves as the crucial **emotional anchor** for the entire piece.

It is the ‘Ground Zero’ of Longing:

By starting with this singular, tangible moment of unmediated presence and celebration, I establish exactly what has been lost. The abstract pings and failed traceroutes that follow are not just technical events; they are desperate, digital attempts to return to the

warmth and wholeness of this very scene. (Is this the moment that gives the entire project its emotional stakes?).

Humanizing the Network:

The abstract concept of ‘pinging a server in Berazategui’ is instantly translated into ‘pinging the place where my mother blew out her birthday candles.’

A Bridge Between Works:

This gesture creates a bridge to *Transatlantic Drift*. It retroactively imbues the ‘random’ start date of the first piece with deep personal significance. It suggests that even the most seemingly objective, data-driven observations are still rooted in a personal, affective timeline.

AFFECTIVE ASYMPTOTE II—LITTORAL LONGINGS

BY FLAVIA DZODAN

Affective Asymptote II – Littoral Longings extends the trilogy's exploration of absence and connection from the scale of personal diaspora to the collective, spectral longing whose absence haunts the infrastructures of Argentine modernity. This track treats the littoral zone, specifically the coastal corridor encompassing historical telegraph landings like Punta Lara and contemporary fiber-optic hubs like Las Toninas, as a layered site of erasure. Las Toninas is a landing point for a major submarine internet cable called the Firmina, which connects the country directly to the United States, Brazil, and Uruguay. Here, successive waves of technological infrastructure have been inscribed onto territory violently 'cleaned', beginning with the foundational colonial massacres of the 16th century and later spectralized by the dictatorship's *vuelos de la muerte*, whose victims' bodies were returned by the sea along this littoral.

This initial 'cleaning' commenced almost immediately upon European arrival. Ulrico Schmidl, a mercenary accompanying Pedro de Mendoza's 1536 expedition that first attempted to settle Buenos Aires, provides stark testimony. He recounts how, after initial tensions with the local Querandí people over food demands, Mendoza dispatched his brother with troops under explicit orders to '*tomar presos o matar a todos estos indios carendies y de apoderarnos de su pueblo*' (to take prisoner or kill all these Querandí Indians and take over their town). Schmidl, writing as a conquistador-mercenary, claims '*como mil muertos*' (around one thousand dead); even allowing for exaggeration, regional historiography reads the engagement as massacre rather than battle. This foundational violence against the original inhabitants, occurring di-

rectly along the Río de la Plata littoral (Buenos Aires-Quilmes-Punta Indio), marks the violent inauguration of this territory as a colonial interface. It is worth noting that, geographically, the coastal area extends from the city of Buenos Aires, into Quilmes and further south to Berazategui (my hometown). The weathercam used in the footage of *Transatlantic Drift* is located in Ezpeleta (Municipality of Quilmes) due to the infrastructural absence of public cameras in Berazategui. As historian Chalo Agnelli confirms, this entire coastal zone, '*desde el Riachuelo a Punta Indio eran territorios de los querandíes y guaraníes*,' (from the Riachuelo to Punta Indio were territories of the Querandí and Guaraní people) placing key infrastructural sites like Punta Lara firmly within ancestral lands. This foundational erasure preceded the later haunting by the dictatorship's *vuelos de la muerte*.

This littoral is not merely historically significant; it holds deep personal resonance. Punta Lara was a place I visited with my father as a child, for walks along the shore or fishing. Some of my earliest memories involve my father and uncle announcing '*vamos a Punta Lara*,' packing the family into a precarious pick-up truck for the short trip from Berazategui. Similarly, Las Toninas and neighboring Mar del Tuyú, now crucial fiber-optic landing sites, formed the backdrop for childhood summer holidays: modest, working-class destinations visited with family, including my late aunt and uncle whose images appear in *Affective Asymptote I*. This personal layer of memory and loss unknowingly settled upon a territory saturated with the spectral weight of state violence and the unseen presence of global infrastructure, embody the complex entanglements of the affective littoral. The

footage in *Affective Asymptote I* also includes images of me aboard the ferry connecting Buenos Aires to Colonia del Sacramento, tracing the route that replicates the path of the original 1866 telegraph cable connecting Argentina to Uruguay and ultimately Europe.

Domingo F. Sarmiento (1811-1888), writer, educator, and Argentine president (1868-74), translated the nineteenth-century binary '*civilización y barbarie*' (civilization and barbarism) into a program of infrastructural governance. In *Facundo* (1845) he described the Pampa as '*un malísimo conductor*' (a very bad conductor) of civilization, casting railways, schools, and especially telegraphy as moral technologies that would convert a refractory expanse into a communicative field. With Dalmacio Vélez Sársfield, he advanced the national telegraph as '*caminos de la palabra*' (paths of words), pairing wire with fence: inscription plus enclosure. This civilizing conductivity entwined communication, property, and police power forming an epistemic conquest whose coastal hinge (Punta Lara) tethered Argentina to Europe and inaugurated the littoral's layered hauntings that this work addresses. Sarmiento's thinking around telegraphy crystallized his broader project of 'civilization.' As Horacio Reggini shows, Sarmiento regarded the telegraph not merely as a technological tool but as a moral and political instrument that he named the '*camino de la palabra*' through which the dispersed and 'barbaric' territory of the Republic could be made legible, governable, and modern. For him, the wire was both metaphor and mechanism: a conductive thread binding space into order, turning the open Pampa which he understood as disorderly and unproductive, into a communicative field.

As Reggini reconstructs, Sarmiento and Vélez Sársfield conceived telegraphy as a doctrine of governance: rail and wire as '*medios de acción que aceleran el movimiento de los pueblos*,' (means of action that accelerate the movement of peoples) a civilizing grid that would bind an unruly expanse to state time. Sarmiento's telegraphic project was not just a

spatial intervention but a chronopolitical one: an attempt to smooth asynchronous territories into a governable timeline by accelerating movement. Telegraphy becomes a state technology of temporal unification: a chronopolitical smoothing that treats delay, opacity, and Indigenous temporalities as pathologies of 'barbarism' to be corrected by conduction.

In this matrix the fence-wire and the telegraph-wire form a single apparatus: enclosure and inscription. Hence Sarmiento's notorious conductivity metaphor '*la Pampa es un malísimo conductor*' (the Pampa is a very bad conductor), sutures physics to politics: to civilize is to render territory conductive, to translate land and lives into circuits of legibility. In this sense, telegraphy enacted an epistemological conquest. The same logic that fenced land into private property also wired the nation into circuits of state control and global commerce. The coast, especially Punta Lara, where the first submarine cable landed in 1866, became the infrastructural frontier where 'civilization' touched down, literally tethering Argentina to Europe.

Autopsies and forensic reconstructions document bodies of the disappeared returning along the Buenos Aires littoral (including zones like Punta Lara; later, the Atlantic corridor around the Tuyú). In this context, the dictatorship's '*vuelos de la muerte*' (death flights) in the 1970s and 1980s can be read as the necropolitical inversion of this same civilizing circuit. During the Argentinian dictatorship (1976-1983) death flights were a form of extrajudicial killing in which victims were dropped to their deaths from airplanes to dispose their bodies. As Agencia de Noticias Red Accion notes, 'In December 1978, between the 16th and 20th, dozens of bodies were found on the coasts of Buenos Aires province, in towns such as San Clemente del Tuyú, Santa Teresita, Lucila del Mar, Mar de Ajó, San Bernardo, Pinamar, and Villa Gesell. [...] In San Clemente, Santa Teresita, Mar de Ajó, and nearby areas, the bodies were taken to the Dolores morgue and buried in the General Lavalle cemetery.' The Rio de la Plata and the Atlantic

Ocean became mass graves for political dissidents whose bodies eventually washed ashore without identification. These bodies expelled from the regime's internal network of torture, detention and control were returned by the sea near the same littoral: Las Toninas, Mar del Tuyú, Punta Lara, that had long served as portals for connection to the world. Against this horizon, the dictatorship's '*vuelos*' mark a necropolitical reversal: bodies expelled from clandestine circuits reappear along the very littoral that nineteenth-century policy tethered to Europe (Punta Lara) and that contemporary fiber consolidates (Las Toninas). The dictatorship's '*vuelos*' introduce a necro-chronopolitics: instead of accelerating life into circulation, the state expels bodies into delayed return, producing temporal haunting rather than temporal compliance. What was once smoothed becomes turbulent.

The lineage between Sarmiento's 'clean lands' and the dictatorship's death flights is not hypothetical: Toribio Martínez de Hoz, Senator in Congress in 1860, was one of the most fervent proponents and defenders of Sarmiento's civilizing plans. He was also the grandfather of José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz, Minister of Finance of the dictatorship and whose economic plan led the country to decades long bankruptcy crisis. Under his plan, foreign capital operated unrestrictedly in the local market, obtaining exorbitant profits leading to break down of social infrastructure. Latency in this lineage is not mere metaphor: it is the slow unfolding of a history that started in the 16th century.

Even without imputing logistical design, the effect is precise: the shore becomes a negative conduit, a place where what the state seeks to submerge returns as evidence. In this reading, fiber does not overwrite but superposes: data infrastructure settling atop a coastline already wired by conquest and spectralized by disappearance.

Together, Sarmiento's civilizing telegraph and the dictatorship's logistics of disappearance delineate a recurrent translation: the recoding

of violence as communicative form. What begins as the wire of Enlightenment ('*el hilo de la palabra*') returns, a century later, as the wire of state terror, and today persists as the optical fiber of global capital. Each layer overwrites the last without erasing it, making the Argentine littoral a layered site of connection and annihilation, where the river and sea continuously returns what the state attempted to submerge.

The work argues that technological expansion, from Sarmiento's telegraph network, which was conceived as a tool against 'barbarism', to today's global fiber optics, is not neutral but complicit in, and beneficiary of, these erasures. Sarmiento himself saw the '*hilo*' (wire) as the instrument for transforming the territory, viewing the unfenced Pampa as '*un malísimo conductor*' for civilization and equating the telegraph wire with the fence wire that imposed private property and order. Technology required a 'clean land,' produced by violence.

To make this haunting audible, the piece sonifies traceroute data gathered by mapping network paths from Amsterdam to resonant points within this littoral geography. Using SuperCollider exclusively, the composition translates network latency, path deviations, and connection failures into a layered sonic field. This forensic sonification evokes the different strata of erasure: mechanical sounds echo the telegraph's violent territorial inscription; synthesized submerged textures, spectral wind, and fragmented static allude to the watery graves and silenced voices of the disappeared; high-frequency digital noise and interference represent the contemporary fiber layer's thin, anxious superposition over this past. The resulting soundscape stages latency, failure, and spectral interference as the audible residue of unresolved violence. The 'longing' here is the persistent echo of absence within the infrastructure itself, a structural haunting that refuses erasure. My own childhood inhabitation of these sites, unaware of their historical weight, embodies this affective littoral as a space where

personal memory and spectral infrastructures unknowingly coexist.

If *Transatlantic Drift* stages recursive deferral and *Affective Asymptote I* stages mediated proximity, *Affective Asymptote II* audibilizes the littoral's chronopolitical smoothing and its necro-chronopolitical return as superposed signal.

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DIRAC DELTA (δ)

BY FLAVIA DZODAN

The Dirac delta is zero everywhere except at a single point, where it is infinite, and yet its total “area” is 1.

Wikipedia definition:

$$\delta(x)$$

The Dirac delta function can be loosely thought of as a function on the real line which is zero everywhere except at the origin, where it is infinite.

In the language of signal processing, it represents an **impulse event**; a one-off, infinitely brief, non-repeatable occurrence.

In my triptych, this singularity perfectly captures the ‘saturation’ moment: not as a sustained state, but as a fleeting, irreducible, overwhelming pulse.

This is the most unstable artefact of all. Last Christmas we had a rare occurrence: my Dutch in-laws (my husband’s father, his wife, and my husband’s teen half brother) traveled from Amsterdam to Buenos Aires to spend Christmas with my side of the family. My brother flew from Sao Paulo with his wife, my niece, and my nephew. My mother was obviously there (this all took place in her home). I gave Pietro, my six-year-old nephew, my GoPro and told him to film whatever he wanted.

The result is roughly twenty minutes of the most unhinged and affectively charged footage: Pietro running around, screaming with joy at my mom’s dog; Pietro playing with my husband’s half brother; Pietro talking to my mom; in the background, my brother and my husband making the New Year’s Eve BBQ. This is the once-in-a-lifetime coincidence of my entire affective infrastructure, where

Buenos Aires, Amsterdam, and Sao Paulo converge on a single moment at my family’s home backyard.

THE CHILD’S GAZE: THE DEFINITIVE (AND ONLY NECESSARY) INTERVENTION

This segment is the embodied ‘mediation of my affective life through the eyes of a six-year-old’ (he’s not just my nephew, I am also his godmother to add even more layers to this).

AN UNFILTERED LENS:

Pietro’s perspective is the ultimate intervention. A six-year-old’s gaze is not concerned with adult notions of composition, narrative coherence, or aesthetic distance. It is immediate, embodied, and drawn to moments of high energy, pure affect, and sensory detail (running, screaming, the dog, play). This provides an unfiltered, visceral window into the heart of my ‘affective infrastructure’ and exactly what I miss when I stage absence and longing in this work.

THE ‘UNHINGED’ AS AUTHENTIC:

The ‘unhinged’ quality is the most authentic representation of such a rare and emotionally charged family gathering. Adult footage might try to frame it, compose it, make it ‘nice.’ Pietro’s footage captures the beautiful, messy, chaotic truth of it all.

OUR ROLE SHIFTS:

In the first two pieces, I am the active ‘sonifier,’ the one attempting to bridge the gap. Here, our role shifts subtly. I am selecting and presenting this ‘found footage’ (found within my own family archive) as the most potent testament to the experience of ‘saturation.’







Constant Dullaart – *Accepting the Job* (2023) at V2_, Photo by Lana Mesić

AN INTERVIEW WITH CONSTANT DULLAART

BY FLORIAN WEIGL

It's November 25th and I talk online with Constant Dullaart, Berlin-based Dutch conceptual artist, in his studio in Berlin to understand the context of his work *Accepting the Job*. Dullaart is known for his critical explorations of the intersections of art, technology and digital culture. His works often reflect the complexity of the digital world and question the concepts of originality, authorship and authenticity in the age of digital reproducibility. Through a playful approach and creative interventions, he challenges the viewer to question the boundaries between the virtual and the real.

The sculpture presented in the exhibition, *Accepting the Job* (2023), is a hyper-realistic representation of a hand shake in mid-air. Hands that seem, as the title confirms, to be *Accepting the Job*. Maybe the job that may soon be taken from us humans? The sculpture, made from painted steel, wood, silicone and resin is a frozen moment in time. A rendering of AI's failure to understand human anatomy of the hand, and specially the placement position and amount of fingers. It's a representation of an AI's inability to understand hands.

FLORIAN WEIGL

Constant, in your work you are often making the audience question the virtual and the real. The work shown in the exhibition is also very realistic. Was it important to you to create the sculpture as (hyper)realistic as possible?

CONSTANT DULLAART

Absolutely, I wanted to play with the tendency of how it functions as an image. If you for example photograph the work, it works like an image but you don't get the full experi-

ence. I've played with this before, in earlier works, like *Jennifer in Paradise*, a work which you also really have to see in real life. A lot of artworks are being mediated through social media, and actually just cater to function in social media. I really enjoy that artworks can really have something specific: creating something for the physical space to function within physical space. If it would just be a symbolic handshake, it wouldn't have that direct relationship to the meme, to the uncanniness and to the kind of photorealistic synthesis of AI or the the AI image.

I unpacked the actual sculpture for the first time at the location where we were going to install it. It actually arrived in a suitcase covered in linen cloth, kind of like a dead body. Everything about it worked. The weight, how it felt to touch. We really had the experience of seeing bodies, it was very uncanny. And I really liked the fact that people might have seen the image, or seen the meme, or seen an image of the work, but then when they see it in reality, they get this kind of flash of uncanniness, of being kind of intensely grossed out, temporarily. To reach an audience on that level, I think, is very special. The piece is really uncanny. And I think if it would have been a bronze handshake with some extra fingers indoors it wouldn't make sense.

FW

Could you unpack the technology you use creating both the source image of the piece and the sculpture?

CD

Basically, I just used Gemini 1.5, the version that still had the finger problem. I was making it when the initial solutions to the finger problem were being implemented, aware that the finger problem would disappear. That was why I wanted to make this monument.



I used the latest open source model at that time that still had this issue, from which I generated multiple hands from multiple angles. From these images I took the most interesting mistake, from which I modeled the hands. First I wanted to scan my own hands, but the hands I ended up with are multiple people's hands that are merged into one. So we basically just drew the different elements from the generated pictures. I drew out where the fingers would come out of and which finger. And then Alik helped me to make the final sculpture.

After that it was 3D printed into metal by the company Twilights Effects, they also did make-up for the Hunger Games and the Matrix movies, and I was very happy about that result. They made a mold and then used a specifically mixed silicone, because the silicon had to go on on different layers and would already be mixed in the skin color. The skin color I used was most dominant in the data sets used. So that's kind of obvious what color came out. And they painted that hyper-realistically. They're very known for their wounds and other special effects makeup. And so it's kind of transparent. The silicon is kind of transparent. And then there were some pre-printed fixtures in there to install it on the mount.

FW

How important is it to use off the shelf technology? In this work you were able to get to the latest version that still had these errors in it. Would you go as far as even mimicking or reverse engineering a specific version to get to the errors if the glitches were already taken out by an update?

CD

No, that's the nice thing about open source, right? You can still access models, and to access the older models from commercial companies is much harder. I think it's really important to archive the earlier versions, because even if there's biases or mistakes, these are cultural artifacts. And I think it's important to save them.

FW

Now that you're mentioning open source, is contributing to that important to you? Are you

for example making code available?

CD

On projects like, for example, *Common Garden* that we're now maintaining with distant.gallery it's been crucial. And also with my students in Nuremberg, with whom I develop *Laura*. I encourage them to share, to find ways in which they can contribute to an artistic discourse, for example, publishing conferences or working towards something like our next syllabus being released on GitHub. Yeah, I definitely think that's really, really important.

I don't consider myself a talented diffusion programmer, but in my way, I do think that it's the collaboration technology of Kit (the Python toolkit from Cased) , And therefore open source is one of the most radical changes our society has undergone in last thirty years and or maybe forty. But if you see it in a broader perspective, you could argue that MIDI is one of the earliest open source developments.

FW

An important development is that GitHub was bought by Microsoft and is now used for training AI.

CD

Yeah, there is of course GitLab and their self hosted solutions. But to be able to have, a federated model, where you still own your own data data. But other people can interact with it and and fork data*, and that maybe the fork of the data remains with the original. It is a huge issue. This kind of renegotiation of the idea of making it really easy to share code. The idea of property comes back because of that Microsoft move. Marking what you're publishing is in this way possible. But this does mean working within a smaller group less than a public social player.

FW

Is it really important for you to work with tools that are the most accessible or most available, most used. For example in our Western society? Or do you also specifically look out to explore global alternatives?

CD

I'm always interested in research. When I was in China, using social media in China, I even reverse-engineered a personal identity number to be able to get my own Weibo ac-

count. I have international students that show me all kinds of tools and media from Russia, Korean, China and Japan. The tools are methods and ways of acquiring agency. Most of the time I tend to use the most customizable and efficient tools there are that are available to me personally at a specific time.

FW

The starting point of the exhibition, was the Apple paper on the illusion of thinking. It is about looking beyond the strengths and reasoning models of AI to the illusion it's creating. How do you see this idea of this, this illusion?

CD

Transactive memory, is the phenomenon that you start to count on another person's memory. Now this is about relying on the the memory of technologies that we have a relationship with. We already have that with navigating and remembering phone numbers. Our technology partners do this for us. And I do see that this is changing the way we are making decisions too, we outsource decision making to machines. And I think that it's quite crucial to understand that we sympathize with a lot of these machines. We paraphrase direct statements to them, but it's not necessarily that you know the exact fineness of these statements yourself. So it's always a lot of information you refer to within the paraphrased state, that makes it look as if the system is thinking. But still the reasoning is based on a very reduced amount of data. I do see how convincing it is and how easy it is to let the thinking go. Let's just ask the paraphrasing machine what it would think the solution is. It is just super easy to accept that as the best outcome.

FW

Working in the field of AI brings up a lot of topics like the ecological footprint, energy needed, the biases, brain rot.

CD

Well, we are working towards a new festival with the distant.gallery and my class, the Networked Materialities research group to create content machines and to actually provide the tools and the scripts and make them open source to really make daisy-chain AI. A locally running open source through an

API, and daisy-chain them together. Make the tools to make brain rot more accessible. So to actually also consider what could you change. You create an artwork—but what happens if the artwork is automatically generated? I think this is crucial for students to understand.

We've been reading McKenzie War's *Hacker Manifesto*, which makes quite clear that a lot of current AI infrastructure is very reminiscent of the old fuel infrastructure in which somebody owns all 'the land'. In this case, somebody owns all the information created and paraphrasing the next bit in an acceptable container. And it's not a DVD anymore. It's not an encyclopedia. It's a models, and these models are commercial and they connect mostly to land ownership. The students have to decide if they're the farmer that is working on somebody else's system or if they'd want to create their own systems and work with them. If they're going to be their own royalty and their own aristocracy, or if they're just going to be independent laborers. And I think this is something to be said for this research. Making these kind of content machines, discovering which kind of tools there are for the students enables searching for new things. And this is all connected to the fact that there's just a global issue with how humanity is using more and more energy, be it sending rockets to space or traveling, I think that's that's another part of the debate—an infrastructural debate, which has its own issues.

FW

Besides the example of what you're working on with your students, would you like to share what you are currently working on?

CD

Right now, I'm making a generated radio station. You can listen to an 80s radio, all synthesized music. In short it's my own generative system to create music so I can always listen to only my own music.

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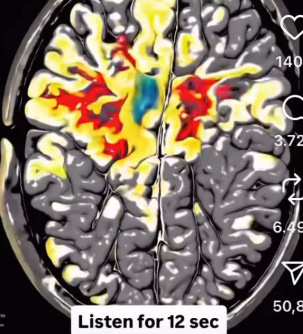
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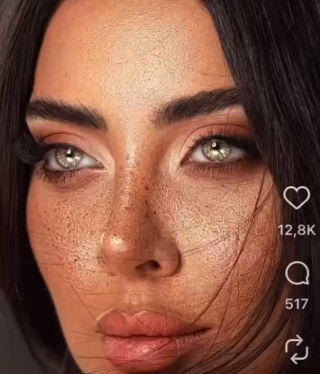
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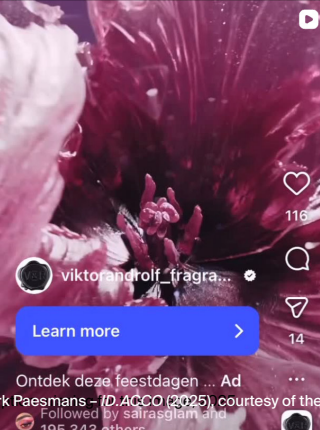


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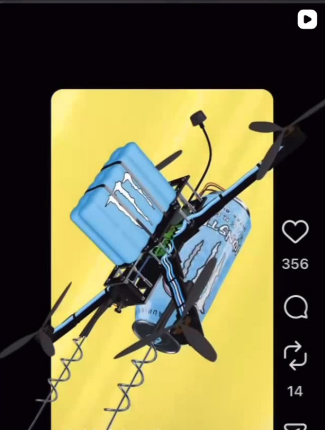
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DIRK PAESMANS ON ID.ACCO

AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRK PAESMANS

BY FLORIAN WEIGL

On the day Dirk Paesmans visited V2_ to install *ID.ACCO*, I had a talk with him about his work, in which we touched on the process of making online art, working on Instagram, and the difference between presenting a work there and 'in real life,' as part of the exhibition in Rotterdam.

DIRK PAESMANS

The project began three years ago. I'd never created an Instagram account. Of course, I did occasionally check what was happening there, just like with any other social media platform. I did wonder sometimes what I could do myself, how I would want to intervene on Instagram. Like we did regularly with JODI on online platforms, initially on YouTube, briefly on Facebook as well, and of course on Twitter, with tweeting Twitter bots.

When I discovered that many people in the military had actively posted their experiences on Instagram when the war in Ukraine broke out, and that many of these personal recordings had initially ended up directly and unfiltered on Instagram, my research began. I immediately drew a parallel with the rich history of militaristic developments and their contribution to the innovation and development of commercially available technologies. Many technologies we use now arose directly from military applications. A good example is the development of drones. Interestingly enough, a child's toy, a remote-controlled helicopter, has now become one of the most dangerous weapons in war. This is also clearly visible on the Instagram channels of Ukrainian soldiers.

As a regular user with a newly installed Instagram profile from the Netherlands, it's not easy to fall into the bubble of both the people in the military and the militarized technology.

To see how the soldiers use the platform, you have to enter their Instagram, dive into that bubble.

With a blank profile, I was naturally cut off from things the algorithm estimated I wouldn't want to see: content from people in the military, and especially their personal accounts and what was posted there. But when I started looking I naturally saw these in my timeline, in the reels offered on my grid. But of course it didn't stop at just those posts. The system isn't very eager to shove that in your face, either, since it's actually horrific.

Now, if you zoom into drone warfare, I've been seeing more and more shared drone footage over the past year. The very last moments when a drone attacks a single person. A live stream of the final moment. Gruesome details. I don't go looking for that. But you quickly encounter those videos from the trenches. Of course, these are supplemented with normal, familiar, aboveground Instagram footage: advertisements about iPhones or how computer chips are made, mixed with music and entertainment, the latest games. That all blends together for me, because I've embarked on this specific quest—which causes huge contrasts. Partly that is what I'm looking for, of course, because I know those layers exist in social media. There are so many bubbles underneath each other, along with the entertainment they seek. I find that tension very interesting.

The artists who are active on Instagram are also all in a bubble. We show our latest projects, our latest exhibitions. But with this project I was looking to create a channel of feedback layers—a work in itself—producing and publishing it on Instagram as a channel or account. That's something that's very fragile in itself. Because when you're too much of

a virtual beast, you are and remain one of millions of accounts. Just one account. That account can be shut down at any moment. That's something that happened several times along the way.

FW

How do you go about creating a work?

DP

My focus started, as I said, with the military—what's happening in reality right now, on the phones of people in the trenches. That grid blends with all sorts of other things. That's where the scroll comes in. I approach the scrolls as if it's a film, with frames. A scroll of completely unrelated channels, contrasting with each other. The result is immediate: a short-loop is created with a repulsive image at one moment and, because of the nature of the algorithm, a superficial or commercial image immediately below that. I create live edits with this, where the sound also plays an important role.

I'm looking for good spots, with contrasts that interest me. That doesn't necessarily mean I'm looking for the highest contrasts, but rather for an interesting tension. When I find an interesting tension I will scroll back and forth. And then I scroll three or four reels up and down. If that results in an interesting mix for me, I record it and edit it, live in the grid, Instagram's first interface. I edit these live segments into a short clip simply by recording it.

This is how I'm trying to provide a glimpse behind Instagram and into how the algorithms work. To reveal how you're trapped in your bubble. Trapped in an algorithm. This project has nothing to do with regular Instagram use. I'm simply looking at these layers, unpacking them layer by layer, within the gigantic network.

Since the beginning of the internet, one of the key images for me has been the Tower of Babel. It's about those levels, those floors. In the past, you could reduce it to pages in a book, channels on TV... In social networking, this is near infinite. People post things. It creates endless levels on top of each other. All little bubbles. I am aware that the algorithm moves with my viewing and the content in my

home grid changes immediately. So if one day I'm not looking for that military thing at all anymore, then the content in that grid changes. What does that mean? And then I have completely different material in the scroll. It's not a coincidence. It's the critical area on Instagram, and it's always the repetition of a bubble and the content that is offered.

FW

You've had a few instances where you lost access to an account and had to create a new one. Can you explain how you build the basic infrastructure to get back to work in such cases? Is it simply a matter of finding personal accounts of people in the military and training the algorithm that way? Or is it much more sophisticated?

DP

Because of this unstable relationship with the platform, I also save all my uploaded works to an archive website. When I had to start a new account, I made a new connection with the accounts of those individuals fighting in trench warfare, together with looking up content about drones, for example, and all the high-tech stuff and all the politics. I'm looking for radar systems for drones. If you search for that two or three times, it's there very quickly. This takes five minutes, right? That the AI is forming an image is fascinating.

FW

When creating the streams, did you also consider how time-dependent the algorithm is? Did that play a role in reaching a point where it became interesting for you? Or, for example, how much time you spend on the platform? And when you're developing the work, are you thinking about how often you post content, or what time of day? Is that how you're trying to influence the algorithm?

DP

I'm at the mercy of the grid of the moment. That's important for this project. I also looked at what happens when I write texts in other languages, with different tags. As a game. Scrolling options on my Home Feed result from previous moves, I am scrolling with my shadow. The goal was to try and arrive at something incoherent. I also looked at all available information and a lot of the

statistics. The overview of what happened here this month and this week—where did those views come from? How old were those people? What gender? Which major cities did they come from? I didn't focus on that when creating, but I did look at it more closely. I also used Instagram's discovery mode. It uses the personalized algorithm, the bubble it's built for you as a user, and it fills it up with what they've analyzed as your preference.

FW

You've created and presented the work on the Instagram platform. And now I've invited you to present it in V2_'s space as part of an exhibition. Could you tell me about the considerations and difference in presentation that entails?

DP

I've been working with online art since 1994. When the first JODI website was created, we started using the browser as a new medium. I primarily explored the unintended functions of the entire medium. I've always been aware that the work simply appears in people's homes, in everyday life, and can be viewed there, on the computer. The public space of the internet, so to speak.

The same applies to working with apps, on contemporary platforms like Instagram, but this is much more personalized and much more manipulated. The 'Instant Grammar' algorithm is just a stupid invisible interface, serving the world in Past-Future Perfect Simple. That's why it's so important. In fact, it's more important to me than the first experiments I enjoyed doing online, because I do it in a fairly activist way. I am actively engaging and mixing with a mass medium, with the medium itself. I'm really trying to claim a presence online. The focus of this project remains truly online. It is made for a phone, a small screen. No keyboard. Seemingly very private. There's no point in distancing yourself from it and looking from a distance. You really see the pain in it, and that's a whole new relationship, actually. The presence of being up close.

@ID.ACCO [instagram.com/ig.oo_o](https://www.instagram.com/ig.oo_o)



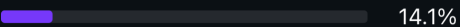
Insights

Men

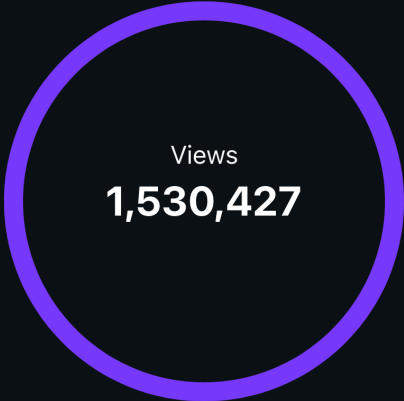


85.9%

Women



14.1%

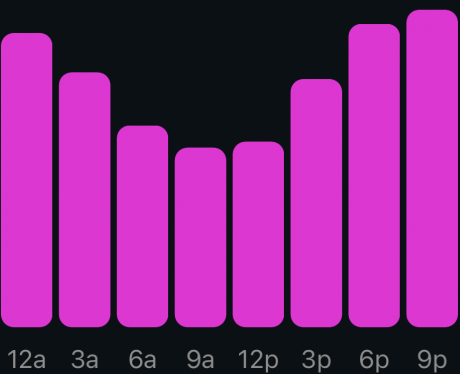
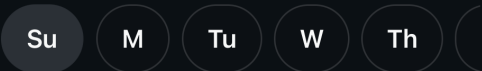


Views

1,530,427

- Followers 0.4%
- Non-followers 99.6%

Most active times



Comments

...



briansalloum 12w
This is making me laugh so hard. I think something is wrong with me
Reply Hide



emma_the_cool_and_awesome 12w
I do enjoy this melody!
Reply Hide



4



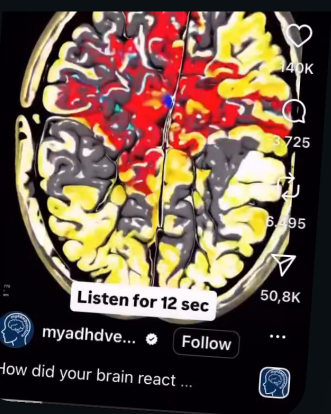
yelissa_xoxo 12w
wtf
Reply Hide



ouwui 12w
Dirk Paesmans - ID.ACCO (2025), courtesy of the artist

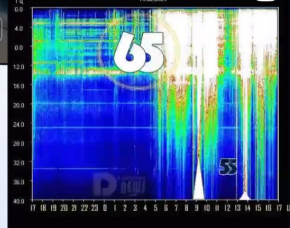
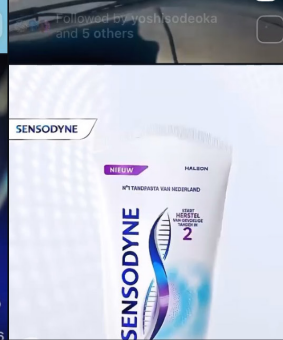
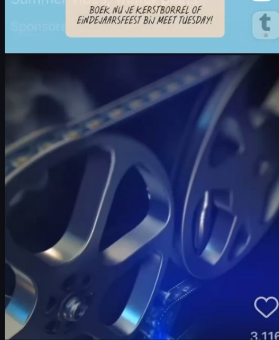


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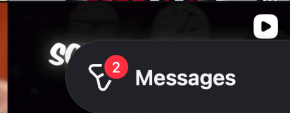
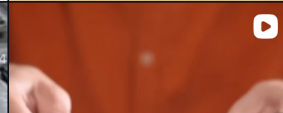
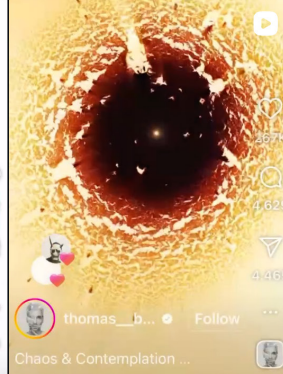
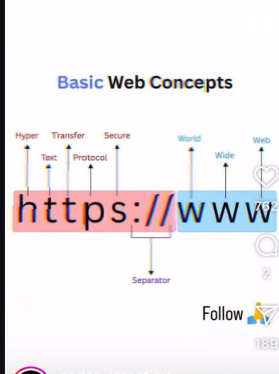
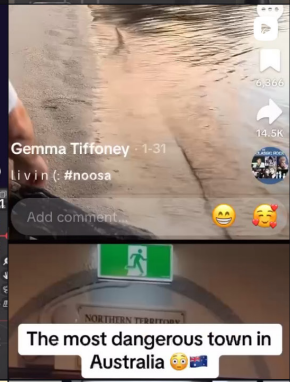
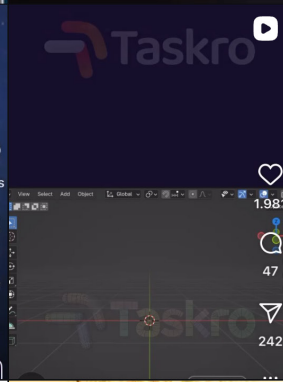
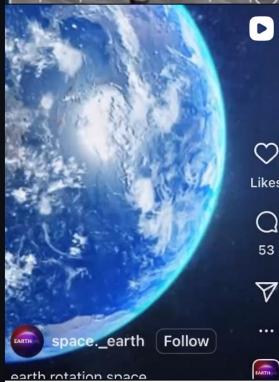
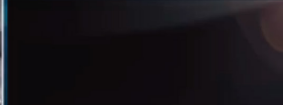
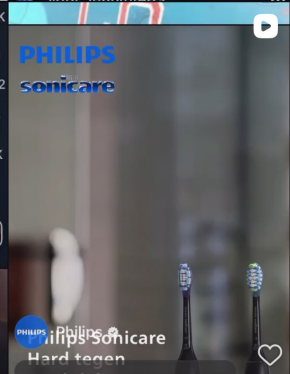
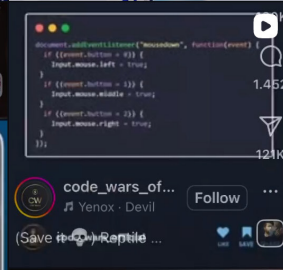
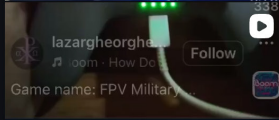
This reel got some a...

You got over 1.5M views and gained 1.1K followers from this r...



1.144 53 55

14 February 2024



Dirk Paesmans

ID.ACCO (2025), courtesy of the artist



MURMURS THAT ESCAPE CATEGORISATION

AN INTERVIEW WITH FEMKE HERREGRAVEN

BY ARIE ALTENA

I meet Femke Herregraven in her studio on a late Wednesday afternoon in November. Her studio is in the same building where I work, and where I also live. I've known Femke for a long time—between 2008 and 2015 we collaborated on several books for the Sonic Acts Festival—but it's been a while since we talked. We have about an hour to discuss her work *The Murmur of the Dying*, which will be part of the exhibition *The Illusion of Thinking* at V2_Lab for the Unstable Media in Rotterdam.

ARIE ALTENA

Let's just start with a simple question, what are the main elements of the video installation *The Murmur of the Dying*?

FEMKE HERREGRAVEN

The Murmur of the Dying is comprised of two elements, the voice of Elaine, and a huge collection of body scans. Initially I worked on them separately, but they happened to come together. Elaine is a computer voice. I am interested in how voice models are built, what is filtered out in that process, and already for years I had the desire to build one myself. I had also collected a huge amount of body scans, made with various imaging techniques. This emerged from personal experience. My parents were ill, and were intensively scanned for one and a half years. That makes you think what these images actually do to the understanding of one's own body. I started collecting body scans and was surprised how many I could find online. Often these were data sets used in competitions to make machine vision algorithms better. What I found interesting is that these images come across as very abstract, but behind each one there's a person with a history of being ill. Somehow a dialogue developed between the

body scans and the development of Elaine. They are in a sense each other's opposites. On the one hand there's the attempt to precisely classify what is visible in the image, and teaching an algorithm to eliminate mistakes and noises, and on the other hand there's a voice model that tries to escape those categorisations by working with noise. They really implicate opposite ways of processing and analysing data.

AA

Because, Elaine is not trained with data sets of voices speaking intelligible words and sentences, but with murmurs, sputters, sounds that are not language, or not yet language...

FH

Yes. I felt the urge to create a voice model on the basis of noises, and not on intelligible words. We usually teach the computer human communication by taking the most legible parts of language—discrete words and sentences. But there is so much more to what a voice is, to what makes a voice a voice. There are breaths, sighs, mispronunciations, cries, accents. What happens with all that in a voice model? I wanted to take everything that is usually filtered out—the noises, sputters, murmurs—as core data to train my voice model. I took me a long time, because: where to get the training data? Available data sets have already filtered out what I wanted to work with. The data set that I eventually created to train Elaine is a messy subjective patchwork of many different things. I found collections of recordings—I wouldn't call them data sets—of people breathing with respiratory diseases, and also of people with aphasia. I had a lot of recordings of my two babies, as well as of my parents that were ill, and had trouble speaking. Added to that are recordings of the



Femke Herregraven – *The Murmur of the Dying* (2023), courtesy of the artist



female divers in Korea that I worked with for a previous project. I thought, I might as well go with this subjective selection, as there is no such a thing as an objective data set anyway.

AA

When did you realise that contrast between your research into a different model of the voice, and the body scans that you had collected could become the basis for a new work? Just curious, did you look into phonetics research for Elaine?

FH

Not really. But I'm basically interested in what comes before sound is recognised as language, and in what happens in between and after. Early on in the research I was triggered by what the philosopher Alfonso Lingis writes about noise in *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*. He contrasts the abstract rationality of communication with the noises that are always part of our talks. He states that a technology that eliminates noise eliminates communication, and that a word that is never repeated appears as noise. Repetition legitimises a sound as language, but in language there are always many things that are not very clear. For instance when I started, voice AI's weren't very good at dealing with dialects and specific accents. They deal with it better now, but it is still an issue.

Here's a quotation from Lingis' book: 'The one who understands is not extracting the abstract form out of the tone, the rhythm, and the cadences—the noise internal to the utterance, the cacophony internal to the emission of the message. He or she is also listening to that internal noise—the rasping or smouldering breath, the hyperventilating or somnolent lungs, the rumblings and internal echoes—in which the message is particularised and materialised and in which the empirical reality of something indefinitely discernible, encountered in the path of one's own life, is referred to and communicated.' (Alphonso Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 91).

AA

In texts – for instance about your work

Dialect—you often contend that language is increasingly shaped by capital and technology rather than imagination...

FH

That statement gains even more traction with the whole ChatGPT-thing, but for me it goes back to the moment when ideas about the dematerialisation of the art object coincide with the dematerialisation of money. Both conceptual art and finance began to operate through abstraction, indexing, and symbolic systems—describing realities that weren't physically present. Money turned into data and art into concept. In these cases language is used in a purely transactional way in order to come closer to the rationale of the machine. That is similar to how users of ChatGPT try to get better results from the machine by rewriting prompts.

AA

Poetry then becomes interesting because poetry is really speculative. In poetry there is usually another layer of language that we cannot completely access in a functional sense. Poetry can use syntax differently, turn around concepts...

FH

Poetry is, in a sense, language that is not used in a transactional descriptive way, and points towards another imaginative dimension. For me it was interesting to use sounds and murmurs that are part of language that are also not always captured in poetry—except maybe in sound poetry, in poetry that works with rhythm and breaths and all of that. I wanted to foreground those elements of language that are not useful, not functional, not productive, not readable for an algorithm—because the algorithm cannot access that dimension.

AA

You are planning next steps in the development of Elaine, and you will use the exhibition at V2_ as an opportunity to do an experiment...

FH

I would like to apply the research and the ideas that are behind Elaine to written text, and build a version of Elaine that is not about the voice but about writing. I'd like to implement the same ideas about noise and things

that are not classifiable in that version, now ‘messaging’ with the structure of language itself, with syntax, but also with spelling. This would be a computer model—*Elaine’s (mis)Spell* that can write, but that writes in a completely different way. I hope to stage an experiment and make a small publication.

AA

Why is she called Elaine?

FH

My interest in the voice started from the question of why we are physiologically able to speak, and other primates whose larynx is almost similar to ours, are not. I named my voice model after Elaine Morgan, who in the 1960s and 1970 wrote a number of books with alternative theories on evolution. In these she stressed the importance of things like nurture, friendship, and play, and how these play an important role in human development. In *The Aquatic Ape Hypothesis*—which was very much looked down at and considered pseudo-science—she argues that our ancestors lived in close proximity to aquatic environments, something I worked with in *Diving Reflex – Because We Learned Not To Drown We Can Sing* (2019). And then in *Twenty Birds Inside Her Chest* (2021) Elaine is a choir of aquatic voices, using recordings of female diving communities on Jeju Island, South Korea. I see Elaine as an ongoing research project on the voice, not as one that covers the whole area of computer voice modelling, but as a project that connects several personal interests, experiences and small subjective researches.

AA

In the video there’s a black cat, where does that come from?

FH

I read an academic article on a hospice in the US, which had a cat, Oscar. Usually Oscar would walk around different rooms, but when he stayed longer than an hour in a room, the nurses would usually know that that person would die within the next hours. On the one hand we have all these body scans and imaging techniques, with which we try to understand the body, and detect disease better, with algorithms getting better at predicting

not only when we will get sick, and when we might die; and then there’s the predictive ability of the cat, who might smell something algorithms can’t detect. I wanted to have that present in the work. All the footage you see in the video—except the cat—is training data for machine vision. Every frame is a different body scan. They are slices of time, and they turn the video almost into a flicker-film. I wanted to disturb that a bit with a figurative element. The parts with the cat are generated with an image model. Basically, I asked an image model to give me a cat walking in the hospital corridor. First the model didn’t know at all what to give me, but then through time, it became more advanced, and at the end it turned out hyper-realistic. What is interesting is that I was never able to replicate the early results—because the image model evolved. Both the cat and the body scans are snapshots of a moment in time. The body that is scanned has been irreversible changed later on, and the same is true, in a different sense, for the image model.

AA

What does the training of data means in practice? Do you have several computers running all the time in your studio?

FH

I work together with my partner Gabor Szalatnyai, who writes the scripts, and also wrote the program we use to train the data ourselves, here in the studio. It is a very time consuming practice, the model itself is a patchwork of different operations. The process is not fully automatised, there is quite a bit of human, manual labour involved: the collection and preparation of the data is a big chunk of the work. We had to do a lot of experiments to see what works and what doesn’t. Sometimes this comes down to simple things, like how to deal with recordings of varying length, how to chop them up, or not, or how to categorise them.

AA

Knowing your personal history, it’s very difficult to not see the autobiographical aspects of *The Murmur of the Dying...* In that sense it shows that the world of AI and massive data sets—usually considered to be objective—is always entwined with lived experiences.

FH

I understand what you say, but this kind of happened, it was not a conscious decision. Only afterwards I see that the whole process became a way of dealing with the experiences I went through. It simply started with going through all these body scans because I found them really interesting. I couldn't let go of them because I was so familiar with what these mean for someone. I guess I had a certain sensitivity at that moment in my life, and that is why I picked those images of body scans, and not others. The same with the use of the sound recordings. The edit of the video and the composition of the sound with BJ Nilsen were both done intuitively. The work is really about the experience of looking at all these images and listening to the sounds.

AA

How did you collaborate with BJ Nilsen on the sound?

FH

For the soundtrack I wanted to have a database with sounds that he could work with. I had a huge amount of sounds, I made a selection, but then it was still hundreds. Benny works quite intuitively as well, and we simply sat together, creating sequences, contrast, trying out combinations, looking and listening to what worked and what not. In fact it was a very old-fashioned compositional process, not unlike the way I edited the video manually, frame by frame. It was a labour-intensive process. People expect that a film like this is generated, and that the method used is automated, but that's nothing for me.

AA

If it's generated the poetry might not be there, and the imagination becomes technologised too much?

FH

You can trace it back to the idea of a human being who has made certain choices in the composition, and maybe that human being did not really know exactly why or how that choice was made. Exactly that is a way to create 'output'. The output created by an algorithm is not really output—it's just new

data. While editing the film I was thinking a lot about the experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage. He had to do all that editing manually! I like this consideration for each single frame. Sometimes you see it doesn't flow well, and you cut three more frames, and then it does work. The editing was really done on intuition, on rhythm. The same is true for the building of the voice model, there was quite a bit of manual processing, where I was also trying to figure out what worked and what not...



Femke Herregraven – *The Murmur of the Dying* (2023), courtesy of the artist



BIOGRAPHIES

ARIE ALTENA

is an editor, writer and researcher who works in the field of art and technology. He is editor and archivist at V2_ in Rotterdam, and the author of *Wat is community art?* (2016).

CONSTANT DULLAART

works primarily with the Internet as an alternative space of presentation and (mis)representation. His often-political approach is critical of the control that corporate systems have upon our perception of the world, and the way in which we passively adopt their languages. His practice includes websites, performances, installations and manipulated found images, presented both offline and in the public space of the Internet. He lives and works in Berlin.

FLAVIA DZODAN

is a researcher, theorist, and artist. Working across video, sound, and micro-publication, she examines how computational infrastructures capture, route, and standardise affect. Her practice traces the genealogy of user experience (UX) design through military command-and-control systems, Taylorist models of efficiency, and domestic technologies, revealing how optimisation and prediction regulate emotional and political life. She is a professor and head of the research group Algorithmic Cultures at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and Sandberg Instituut in Amsterdam, where she studies the computational infrastructures shaping intimacy, mourning, and futurity.

FEMKE HERREGRAVEN

is a visual artist that investigates which material base, geographies, and value systems are carved out by financial technologies and infrastructures. Her work explores the effects of abstract value systems on landscapes, ecosystems, language, historiography, and daily life. Her research into the interaction between financial markets, risks, and the physical world forms the foundation for her iterative sculptures, drawings, films, and hybrid installations.

RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER

was born in Mexico City in 1967. In 1989 he received a B.Sc. in Physical Chemistry from Concordia University in Montréal, Canada. He is a media artist working at the intersection of architecture and performance art. He creates platforms for public participation using technologies such as robotic lights, digital fountains, computerized surveillance, media walls, and telematic networks. Inspired by phantasmagoria, carnival, and animatronics, his light and shadow works are 'antimonuments for alien agency'.

NORA O' MURCHÚ

is an Irish curator and researcher whose work explores how digital infrastructures shape culture and politics. Her practice examines the ontology of computation, how technical systems organise power, extract value, and condition collective life. Tracing the infrastructures and interfaces that mediate relations between people, images, and technology, her work asks how these systems produce new material, social, and affective realities. From 2020 to 2024, she served as Artistic Director of transmediale in Berlin, where she developed a curatorial framework spanning exhibitions, publications, and public programmes. She is currently Professor at the University of Limerick and is developing *How to Read an Image*, an international exhibition and research project exploring contemporary image cultures for FACT Liverpool.

DIRK PAESMANS

is an artist working and living in Dordrecht, the Netherlands. He studied under Nam June Paik at the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf before attending CADRE, the electronic arts laboratory at San Jose State University in California. He started his career as a video artist, and since 1995 has been working together with Joan Heemskerk. Both form the artist collective JODI, known for its pioneering net-based artworks.

FLORIAN WEIGL

works as curator and researcher at V2_. He is interested in how art reflects on society and technology, and he develops critical dialogue, artistic reflection and practice-oriented research. As ongoing research he curated *The Illusion of Thinking* (2025), *{class}* (2023) and *Reasonable Doubt* (2021, co-curated with Vincent van Velsen) just as the group exhibitions *WATERWORKS* (2022), *Becoming Geological* (2022, with Martin Howse), *To Mind Is To Care* (2020), *Latent Spectators* (2019, UNArt Center, Shanghai, co-curated with Iris Long). At V2_ is he involved in both presenting and co-producing works and research and is (co-) author/editor of the publications *About: Another Deep* (2025) *Destructive Circuits* (2024 with Dani Ploeger), *{class} On Consequences in Algorithmic Classification* (2023).

IMAGE CREDITS

[0]	Cover image: Constant Dullaart – <i>Accepting the Job</i> (2023), courtesy of the artist
[6]	Constant Dullaart – <i>Accepting the Job</i> (2023), courtesy of the artist
[16]	Queen Elizabeth II's hologram is seen on the Golden Carriage during the Platinum Jubilee Pageant
[18]	The Line, a planned 170-kilometer-long linear smart city in Saudi Arabia's NEOM region
[20]	Rendered image by askamina.ai, courtesy of the artist
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