



PORTFOLIO
studio
ANTIMUNDO:

OSCAR SANTILLÁN

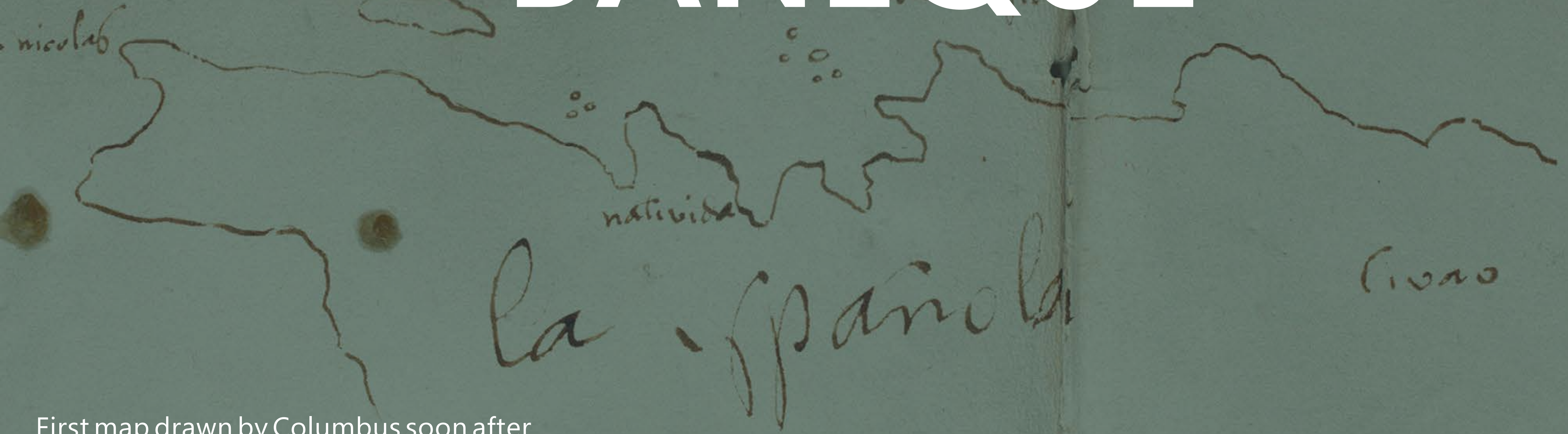
ANTIMUNDO

Science, fiction, and **non-human** cognition together articulate a matrix that I call 'Antimundo', which can be sensed as a way of identifying and generating realities that do not fit in the normative configurations of the world.

The 'Antimundo' is not only a critical set of tools for spotting the edges of reality, rather it actively compels us to act sensually, to contaminate narratives, to exceed ruling conventions, to participate within intricate ecologies of selves.

By searching into lost episodes in the history of science, into indigenous forms of knowing, into non-Western scifi, the 'Antimundo' breathes through my artistic practice.

BANEQUE



First map drawn by Columbus soon after his arrival on the coast of what he called 'La Española' island in 1492. Nowadays the island hosts two countries; the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

BANEQUE

{PROCESS DOCUMENTATION}

Upon landing, the Taíno natives told Columbus of an island called 'Baneque', which had all the richness he was searching for. Based on their indications, the sailor devoted the following two months searching for an island that does not exist.

Could it be possible to find the place never found by the so-called 'discoverer'? In the area corresponding to the Atlantic Ocean there is a hole in the map drawn by the European sailor. This hole, which has the shape of an island, is the only missing part of the map.



For the artist, this tiny missing area of the map inevitably meant a hint of the missing island. If charted, the hole in Columbus map is located 4.2 miles into the ocean. Santillán traveled to the location where he gathered over 100 liters of sea water. In the following days this water was left to naturally evaporate from where crystals and minerals began appearing. At last the lost island has revealed itself.



BANEQUE

A crystallized phantom island.

Salt water crystals 10x6x7cm displayed on a glass sheet 200x200x1cm.

2016



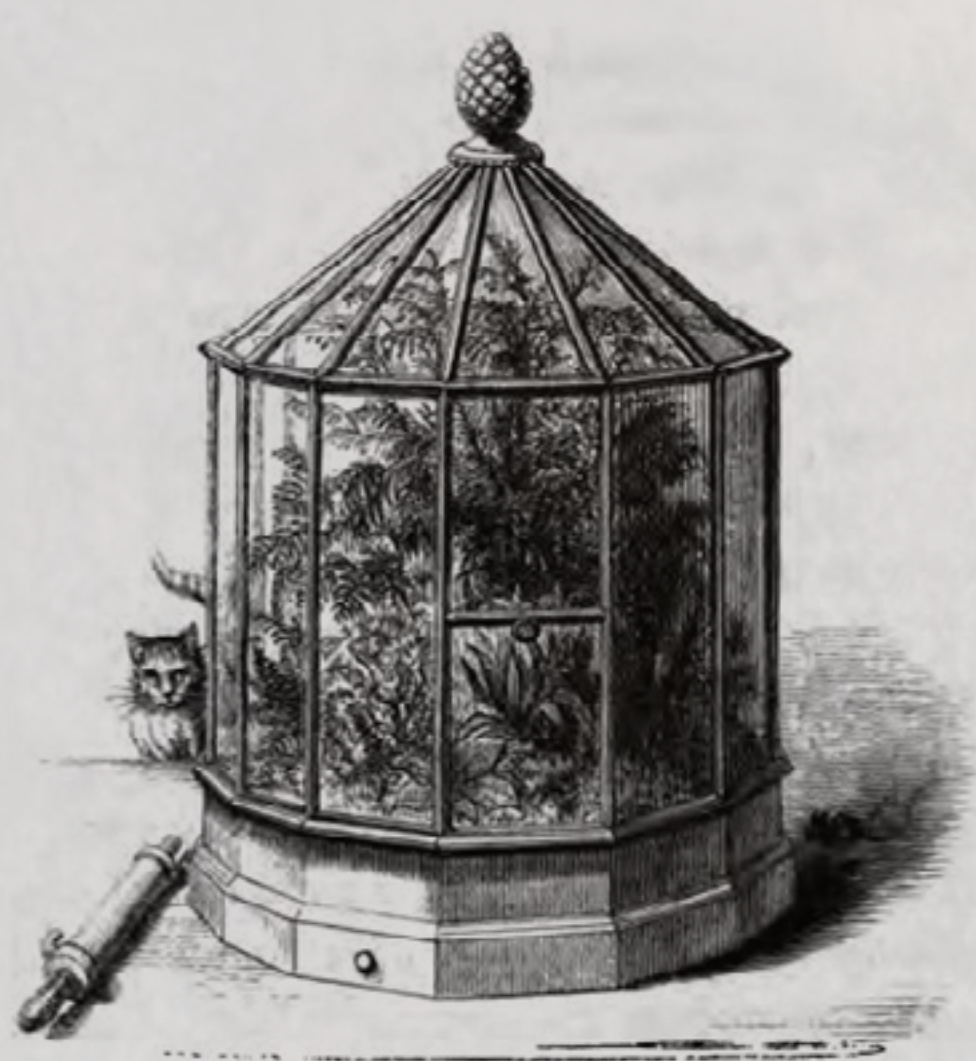
A black, dome-shaped structure, possibly a weather instrument or a decorative element, is positioned on a light-colored, cracked stone floor. The structure has a circular opening at the top. The word "FORECAST" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the dome. The scene is lit from the side, creating shadows on the stone floor.

FORECAST



Forecast

Device with colonial plants and Apocalyptic movies.
75x75x150cm (aprox.). 2021



ON THE IMITATION OF THE NATURAL CONDITIONS OF PLANTS IN CLOSELY GLAZED CASES.

Plant containers, called 'wardian cases', were commonly used by 19th century botanists in order to transport 'exotic' plants from European colonies into the continent.

'Forecast' shows us a continuity between colonial botany and the contemporary destruction of our planet. This device consists of a metal structure holding 6 monitors, and a small garden placed in the space formed by the screens. The top part of the device, which resembles the aesthetics of colonial structures such as wardian cases or green houses, prevents any sunlight from entering into the inner space. The garden could be called a 'colonial garden' as it comprises several plants extracted, in previous centuries, from European colonies and introduced into the continent by explorers and botanists. The screens, which play a long collection of apocalyptic films, have the important role of keeping the garden alive with their tragic light.





The device is sealed to the viewer's eyes, except for a small lens on top which allows people to look inside of this ecosystem, which is lit by the tv screens facing to the inside.



A THOUSAND YEARS OF NONLINEAR HISTORY



Chimú weaving (nowadays Peru).
Aprox. 1,000 years old.



A THOUSAND YEARS OF NONLINEAR HISTORY

Weaving made of yarn from each century of the past millennia.

240x240x350cm. 2021

For this piece, ten old weavings—each dating back to each century of the last millennia, each coming from distant places in the world, have been unknitted and consequently reassembled into a new weaving.

The oldest weaving taken apart to be integrated into the piece is from the Chimú culture (nowadays Peru), about 1000 years old.

'A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History' embodies a historical sedimentation of hypothetical kinships, it embodies the coming together of unrelated material cultures, it is an unknown version of the world in which colonialism has been replaced by non-linear narratives.





THE ANDEAN INFORMATION AGE

PUBLICATION, 2020



For thousands of years, knotted ropes called 'quipus' were used in the Andes to encode numeral and textual information.

Back in 2018 artist Oscar Santillán and curator Alessandra Troncone began a collaborative research on quipus, which explored some of the endless histories behind this material code. The resulting publication 'The Andean Information Age' (Bom Dia Publications, 2020) adds up another layer to the historical account, it envisions connections between this form of indigenous knowledge and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality.

25

... a subtle analogy for ac-
... linguistic gulpus re-
... Harvard's database Pro-
... hundreds of
... analytical power that
... the near future. This
... further nuances of
... The traits
... lack sufficient
... Because
... still in-
... vast and diverse
... themselves.

26

In order to read a linguistic gulpu, an AI system
may need to be informed about the quiverings of
the Andean wind, the position of every leaf of grass
along the mountain range, and the blood-pressure
fluctuations of each ring living in the paramos.



THE ANDEAN INFORMATION AGE

HACKED SLIDE PROJECTION, 2021



Fragments of the publication later became the script for an audiovisual piece, with its own autonomy.

Departing from the same notion, the alignment of technological pasts and futures, Santillán used a microcomputer in order to hack an old slide projector.

This allowed him to control the duration of every slide and to synchronize it with a soundtrack created for this piece.

‘The Andean Information Age’ becomes a near cinematographic work.

Complementary, the images in the analog slides were produced by means of a 3D software. These images, with a sci-fi energy, took inspiration from another Andean concept, animistic entities called ‘huacas’, who are sacred and exist in endless forms, ranging from mountains to handmade miniatures.

The result is a large vertical projection, made from a sequence of 80 slides, synced to an audio piece (28 minutes long).





THE ANDEAN INFORMATION AGE

Audiovisual installation.

Slide projector controlled by microcomputer, 80 analog slides (35mm), and audio stereo.

2021

[click here to
WATCH EXCERPT
\[on vimeo\]](#)

ANTIBEING 0A

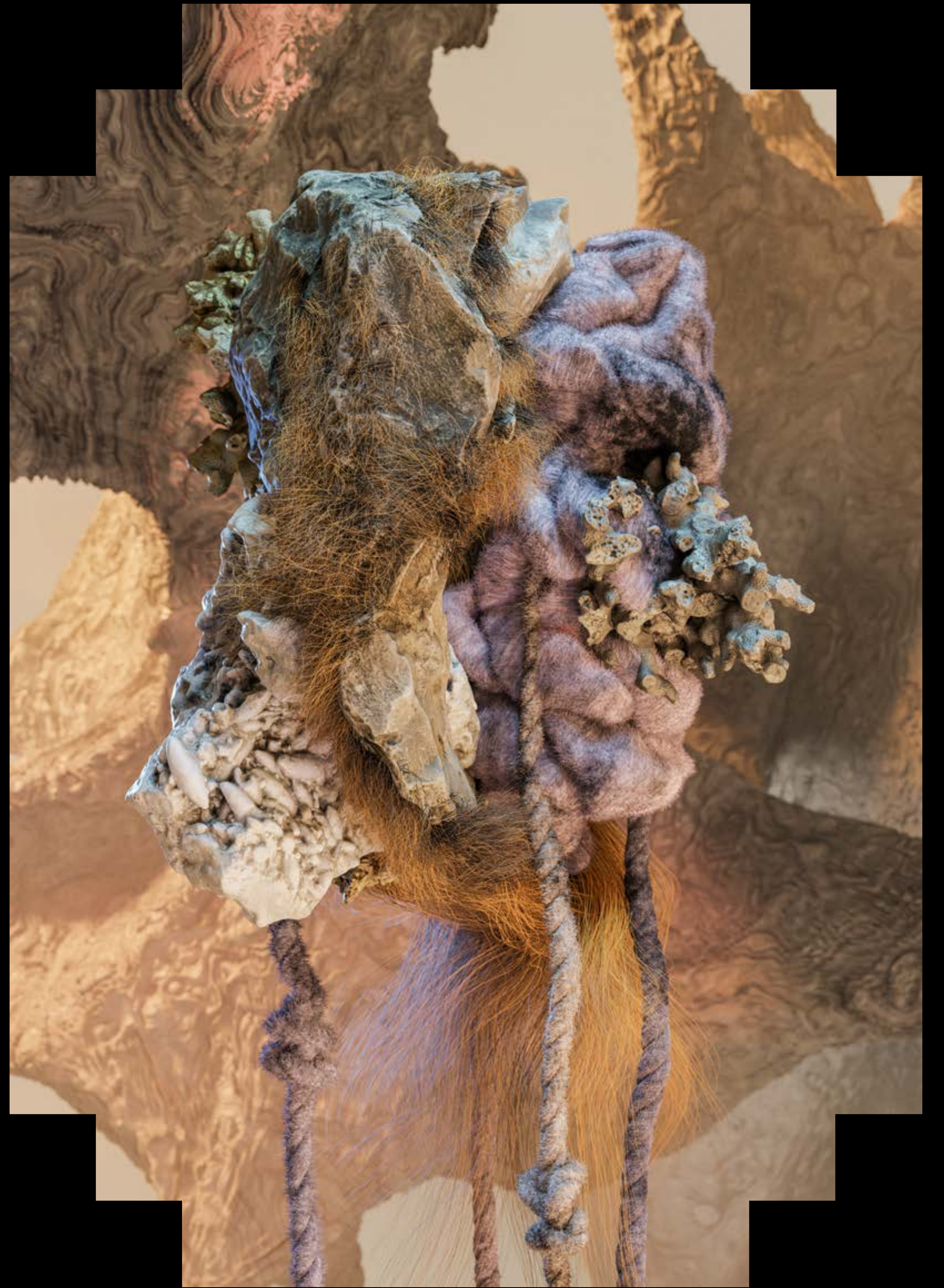




Actual lightbox with a print of an image generated on 3D software that draws inspiration from the indigenous notion of *huaca*, which can manifest its sacred and even cognitive attributes through anything on Earth (from mountains to human-made objects).

The particular lightbox's outline, which derives its shape from ancient patterns found in weavings from the Andes, emphasizes the physicality of the piece.

While all these references are vital to the work, the images in this (and the following lightbox), more broadly speaking, envision a prominent contemporary concern: the ecology of our planet is vastly more complex than any Western model and its categories. This complexity is only increasing once our artificial technologies intertwine with the biological realities around us. These images are daughters and sons of that emerging reality.







1'111,111

1'111,111 shows us that time traveling can be factually achieved, it can be materially experienced.

In this work, several shoes have been chemically aged by a factor of 10; meaning that the shoe on the right is new, the one to its left is 10 years old, and so on and forth until reaching (the remnants all the way to the extreme left) 1 million years.

In this way we can witness at once the whole timeline in which an industrially manufactured mundane object is radically reshaped by Earth's deep time into a geological remnant.



1'111,111
Sneaker shoes structurally aged to a million years. 2023



stant use for thousands of years, finally Santillán turned to a different scientific method in order to achieve this goal. With the support of a team of chemists from the Amsterdam-based startup *Spark904*, by taking inspiration from the weather accelerators, an array of chemical mixes were developed in order to faithfully expose the shoes to their respective time-traveling age, in accordance to the estimated degradation of the different materials composing each shoe.

The initial trigger for this work came from the artist being introduced to actual “time machines” (weather and UV light accelerators) at the Technical University of Delft. These machines are often used to test materials used in industries such as aeronautics in order to simulate the passing of time by exposing the tested materials to unusually high amounts of UV light and other weather-related conditions. Because aging-acceleration of an object, to turn it one million years old, by means of these specific machines would have demanded their con-





CHEWING GUM CODEX

A photograph of astronaut Neil Armstrong in a red jacket, smiling and holding a long wooden spear. The background is a dense, green rainforest. The text 'CHEWING GUM CODEX' is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image.

Astronaut Neil Armstrong holding
a (Shuar) spear in the Amazon rainforest. 1976.

CHEWING GUM CODEX

{PROCESS DOCUMENTATION}

In 1976 astronaut Neil Armstrong joined a scientific expedition to the Amazon; the main goal was to explore a large cave called "Tayos" in the Ecuadorian side of the rainforest. Seven years prior he had become the first human to step on the moon. Along with many scientists, Ecuadorian soldiers in charge of the logistics, and a few members of the Shuar community (natives to that area of the rainforest), Armstrong ventured into this cave which encompasses hundreds of kilometers.

One of the Ecuadorian soldiers, Francisco Guamán, was closely following the steps of Armstrong. His only interest was to collect anything that would be discarded by the astronaut, "whatever I could get –he said– would become a valuable memorabilia" taken from one of the most famous people on Earth. It is not clear what type of items he expected, the truth is that a mundane piece of gum, which had been chewed by the astronaut, was all that he managed to gather.

After hearing rumours about this story, in 2018 the artist tracked down the family of Mr. Guamán –who had already passed away– to ask about it. The soldier's granddaughter confirmed the story and proceeded to retrieve the little old gum from a box. She entrusted the artist with it.

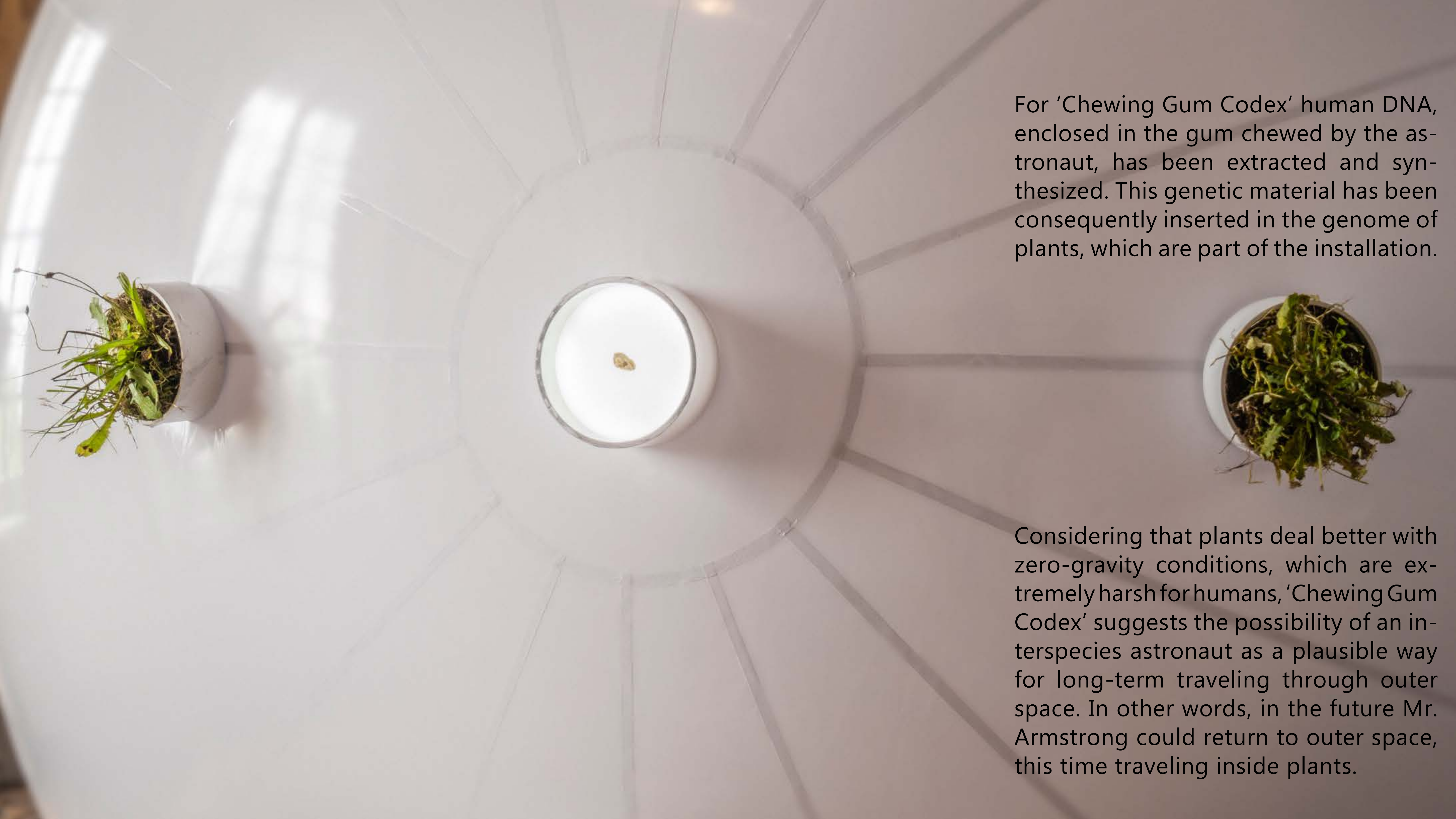


CHEWING GUM CODEX

Installation (inflatable, astronaut's DNA hosted in plants, and the process documentation presented as texts displayed on two screens).

2018-2020





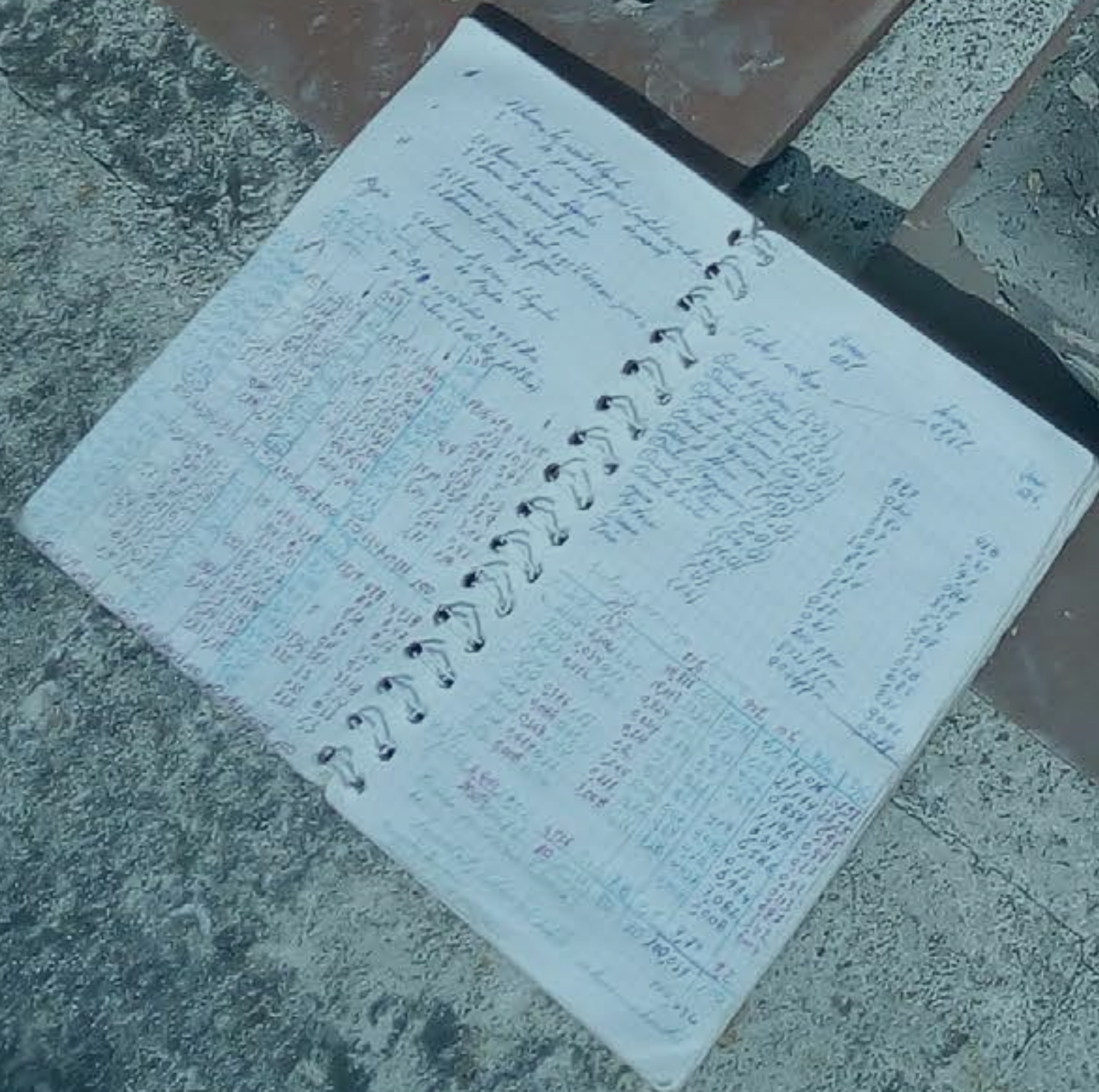
For 'Chewing Gum Codex' human DNA, enclosed in the gum chewed by the astronaut, has been extracted and synthesized. This genetic material has been consequently inserted in the genome of plants, which are part of the installation.

Considering that plants deal better with zero-gravity conditions, which are extremely harsh for humans, 'Chewing Gum Codex' suggests the possibility of an interspecies astronaut as a plausible way for long-term traveling through outer space. In other words, in the future Mr. Armstrong could return to outer space, this time traveling inside plants.





SPACECRAFTS (VENUS)



SPACECRAFTS (VENUS)

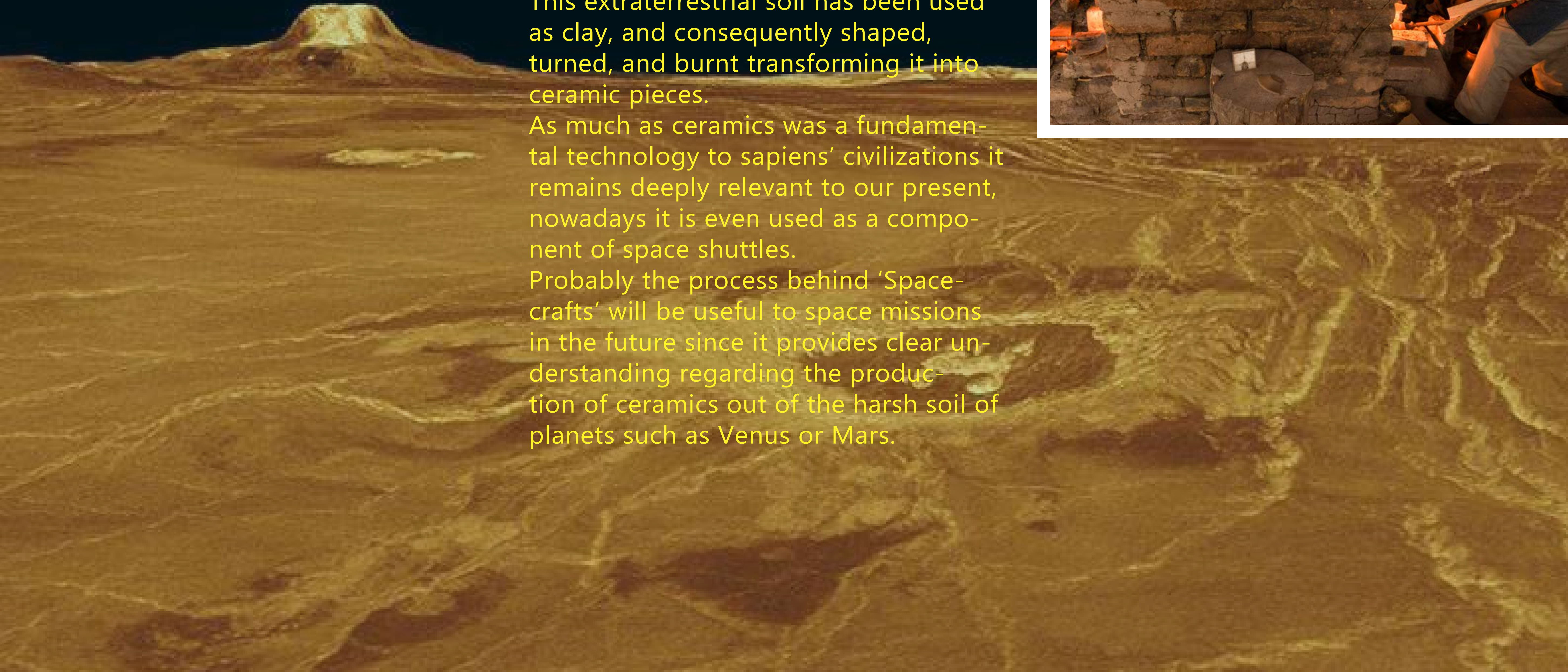
{PROCESS DOCUMENTATION}

Departing from data gathered since 1972 by Soviet, American and Japanese probes it has been possible for this project to faithfully recreate the chemical composition of the surface soil of planet Venus.

This extraterrestrial soil has been used as clay, and consequently shaped, turned, and burnt transforming it into ceramic pieces.

As much as ceramics was a fundamental technology to sapiens' civilizations it remains deeply relevant to our present, nowadays it is even used as a component of space shuttles.

Probably the process behind 'Spacecrafts' will be useful to space missions in the future since it provides clear understanding regarding the production of ceramics out of the harsh soil of planets such as Venus or Mars.



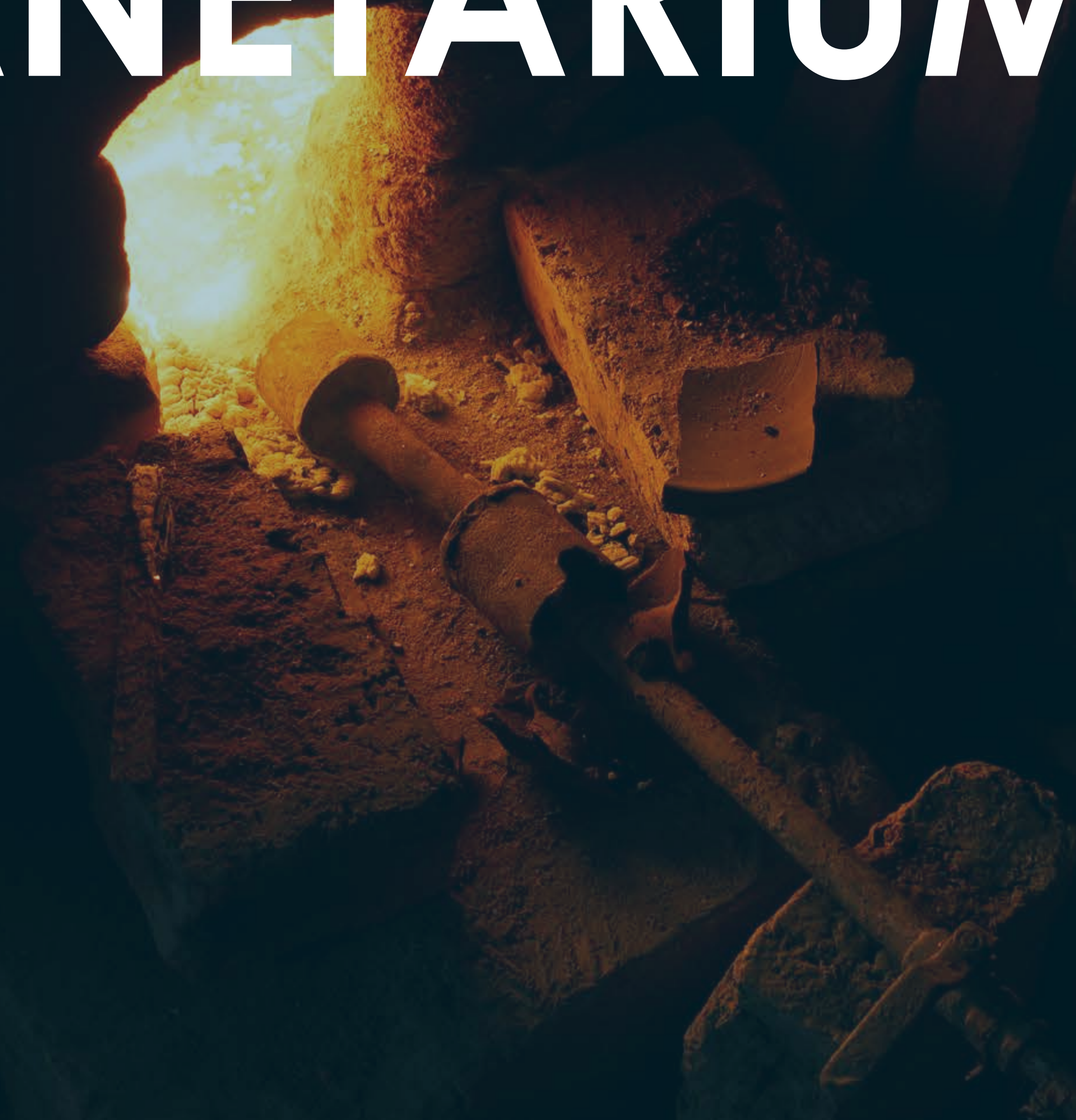


SPACECRAFTS (VENUS)

Ceramics made from clay which chemical composition perfectly replicates the surface soil of planet Venus. 2018



PLANETARIUM



PLANETARIUM

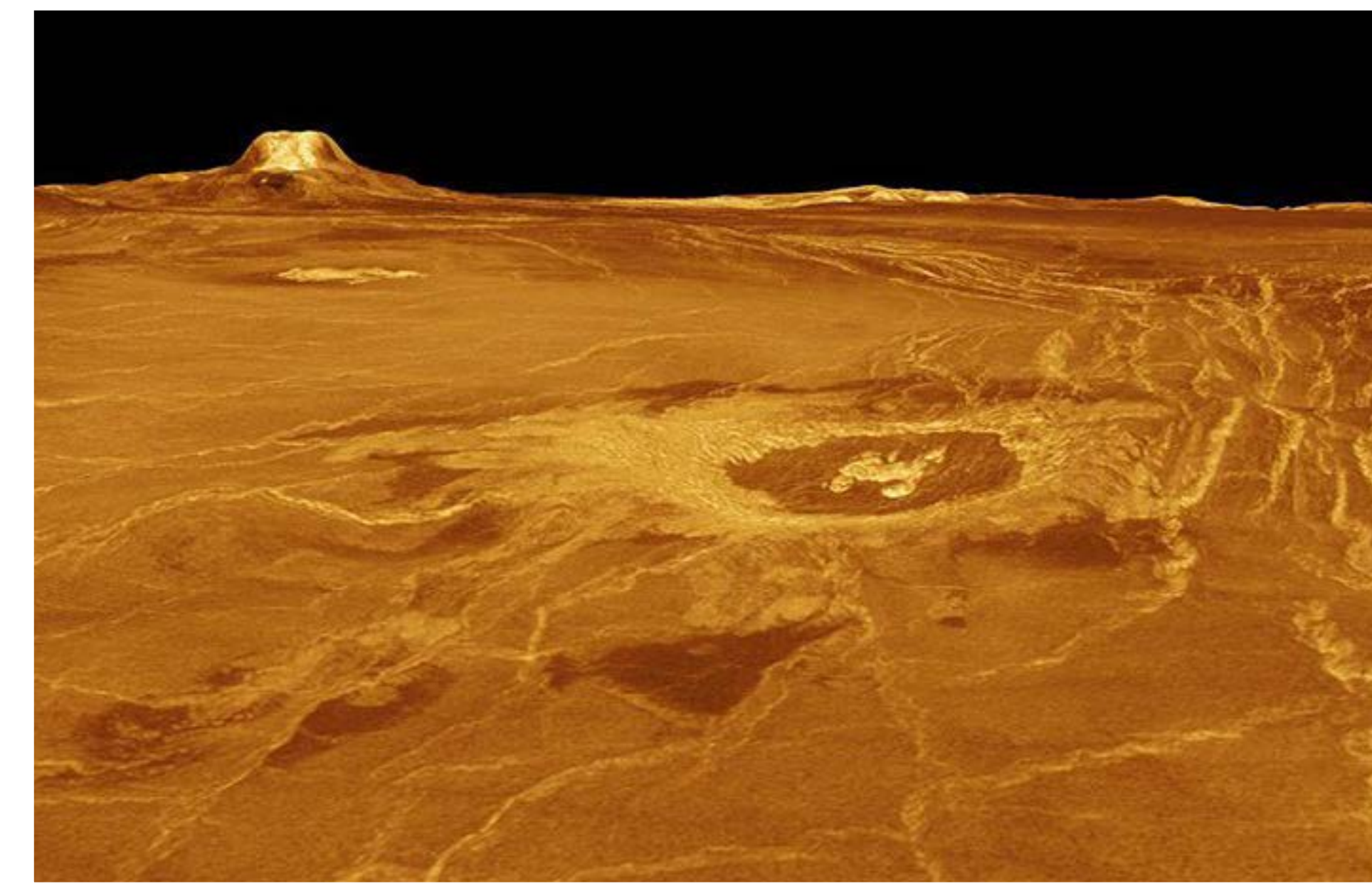
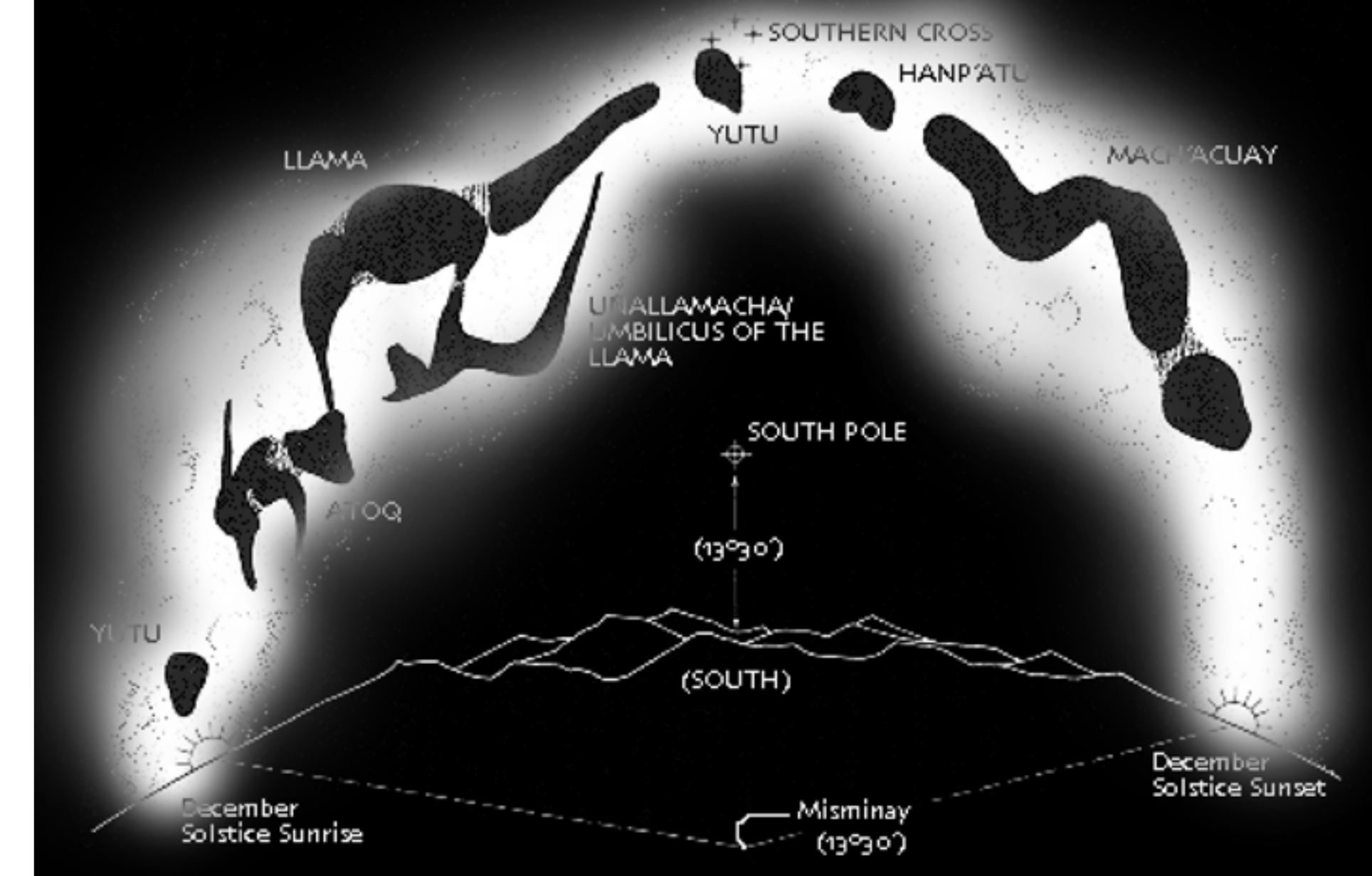
{PROCESS DOCUMENTATION}

Following the same process as 'Spacecrafts (Venus)', the ceramic material of 'Planetarium' has been obtained by accurately recreating the composition of planet Venus' soil.

The image on the lower right shows the surface of planet Venus as taken by a NASA probe.

The image on the upper right portrays the ancient 'dark constellations' conceived in the Andes mountains of South America. Being the case that the center of the Milky Way can be better observed from the Southern Hemisphere, indigenous peoples of the Andes invented a notion of constellations that is not made by drawing imaginary lines between shining stars, theirs rather are formed by the interstellar dust floating in the center of our galaxy, which casts shadow forms.

This material astronomical conception is at the foundation of these series of works.





PLANETARIUM

Ceramics made from clay which chemical composition replicates the surface soil of planet Venus, displayed on an astronomical mount continuously pointing to the same planet.

2018

The resulting vessel is then displayed on an astronomical mount, which is programmed to endlessly follow planet Venus. In this way, this extraterrestrial material is constantly aligning to its original source in outer space.



A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a dark, irregularly shaped meteorite. The hand is positioned in the center-left of the frame, with the palm facing upwards. The meteorite is held between the thumb and index finger. The background is a blurred, light-colored surface, possibly a concrete or stone floor. The overall lighting is soft and natural, suggesting an outdoor setting. The word "VOYAGER" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image.

VOYAGER

An abandoned shirt, which is missing its buttons, is found by the artist during a walk in a forest. In order to repair it, new buttons are made by melting meteorites and casting them into button shapes. Consequently, they are sewn onto the shirt. This action unites two wandering entities that were not otherwise intended to meet: a shirt on planet Earth, and meteorites from outer space, which now belong together.





VOYAGER

Shirt found in a rainforest, and meteorite buttons.

2016. Sculpture





ANTIMUNDO SERIES

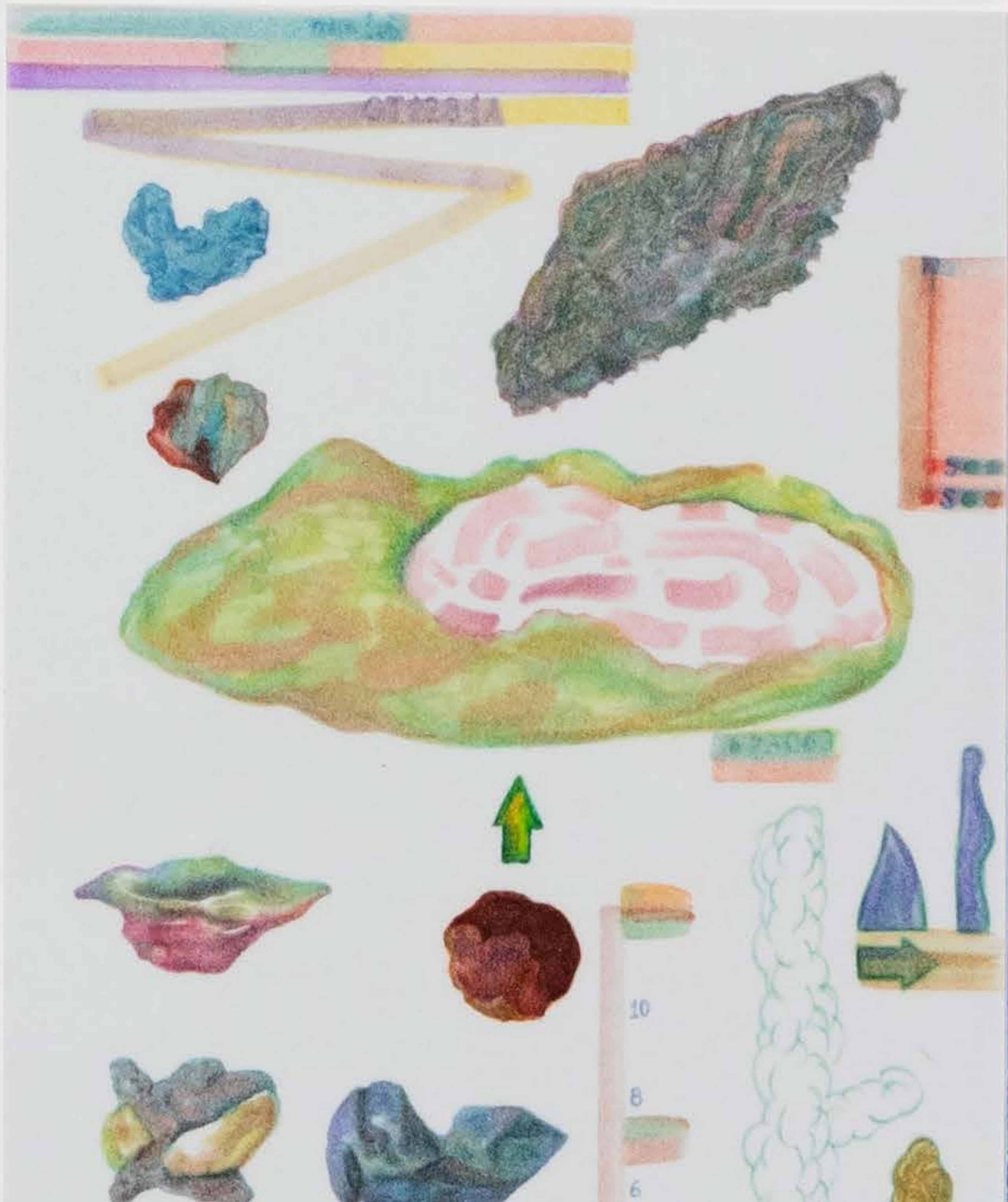
<DRAWINGS / PAINTINGS>

MODULE FOR THE REDISCOVERY OF LIFE (0A)

Ink on synthetic rubber, minerals, collage, pencil on paper,
and unspecified materials. 90 × 75 cm

2021





The images in the Antimundo series are in tension with normative categories and normative representations of the 'natural', a notion that we have inherited from Western scientists and explorers, and more specially from Linnaeus who in the 18th century set forth, in his *Systema Naturae*, an all encompassing classification for everything on Earth. Hence, ever since, modern taxonomy (the primacy of *units* over *systemic interdependancy*) has heavily shaped mainstream assumptions of 'nature'.

The elements in the Antimundo ecologies are partly recognizable but, together ultimately they defy categorisation within any existing Western framework. In order to 'hack the old normative code', these works depart from alternative histories, such as Andean cosmologies, being more specific from the notion of 'Earth Beings' (*tirakunas*), which recognizes that *cognitive springs* can emerge not only from mammal brains but from endless configurations, such as a mountain.

MODULE FOR THE REDISCOVERY OF LIFE (00A)

Ink on synthetic rubber, minerals, collage, pencil on paper, and unspecified materials. 90 × 75 cm

2021







Partial view of the 2023 exhibition 'A Heavy Halo', a solo by Oscar Santillan at RADIUS Art Center (The Netherlands).

Paintings in the Antimundo series emerge from images generated by a combination of the artist hand-drawings, neural networks specifically trained from an image archive that the artist has been gathering for many years, and digital 3D rendering.

In order to generate further friction with the tradition of how 'nature' has been represented by normative Western worldviews, Santillán translates the resulting digital imagery into the very medium most often used for such representations, oil painting. By doing so, the Antimundo images become inscribed within those traditions but as a disruptive narrative, which aims at opening up space for new cosmologies.

ANTIMUNDO 00T

Oil painting on canvas. 120 × 85 cm
2023



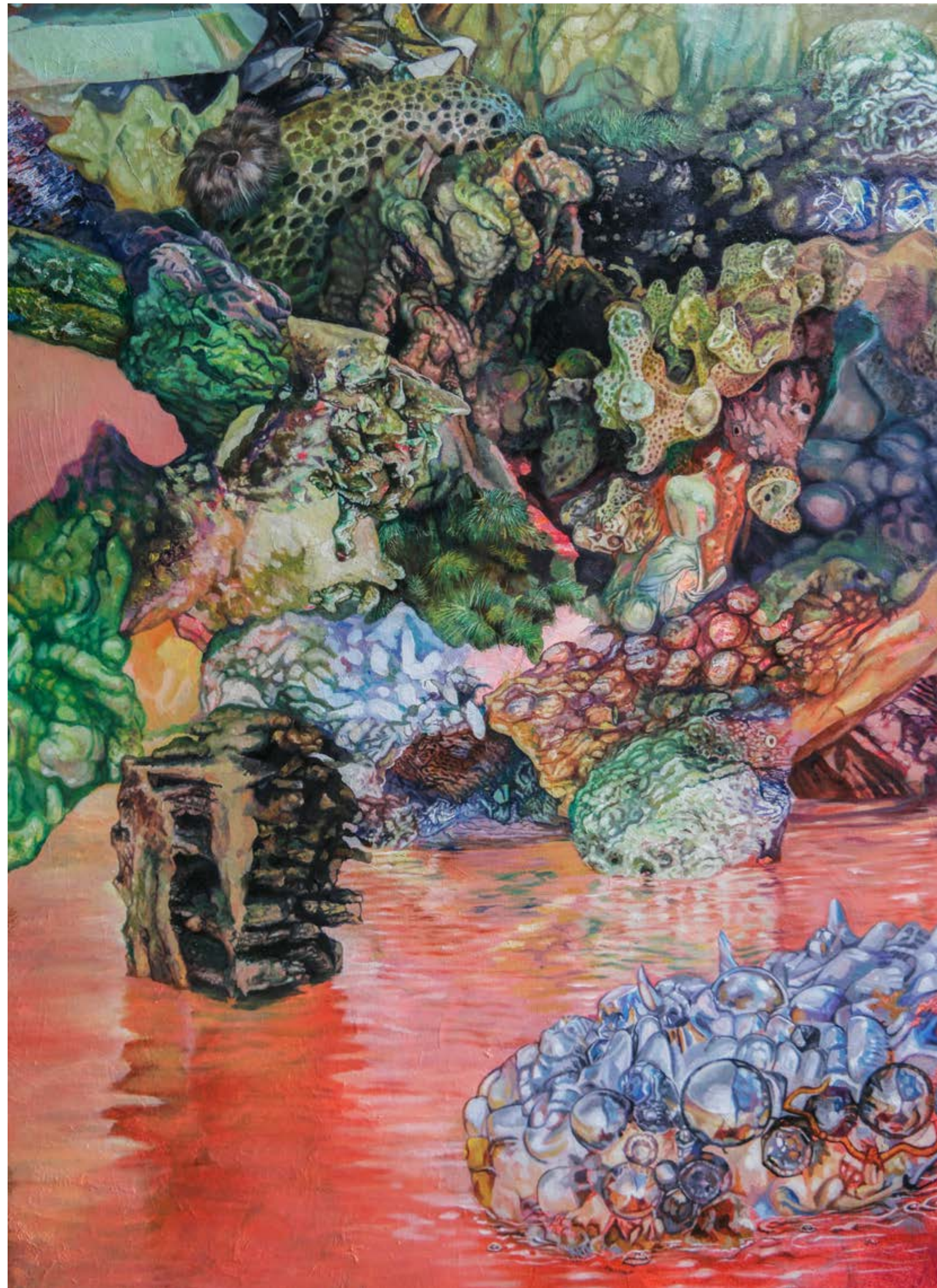
ANTIMUNDO 00S

Oil painting on canvas. 120 × 85 cm
2023



ANTIMUNDO 00E

Oil painting on canvas. 120 × 85 cm
2022



ANTIMUNDO 00H

Oil painting on canvas. 190 X 120 cm
2022





HOW RIVERS THINK





HOW RIVERS THINK

{PROCESS DOCUMENTATION}

While canoeing down a river in the Amazon rainforest (called 'Kushuimi' by the native Shuars) Santillán took actual samples of the water and floating little fragments of the rainforest.

These many river samples, taken along the way, were then poured inside customized slides. Consequently, they have been sealed, preserving each of them as living ecosystems.

This rare viewpoint enables us to see the river in a new way, not as images representing it, but rather by showing us the river itself from within, as a body containing endless worlds.

The title of this piece refers to the groundbreaking 'How Forests Think' written by anthropologist Eduardo Kohn, based on his field research in the Ecuadorian Amazon.



One of the slides encapsulating an actual sample of water and matter taken from a river in the Amazon basin. Hence, each of these customized containers hosts a living ecosystem.



HOW RIVERS THINK

Water and plants from the Amazon gathered and sealed within 80 customized slides.

2018

HOW RIVERS THINK

{1 OF THE 80 IMAGES PRODUCED BY THE RIVER}

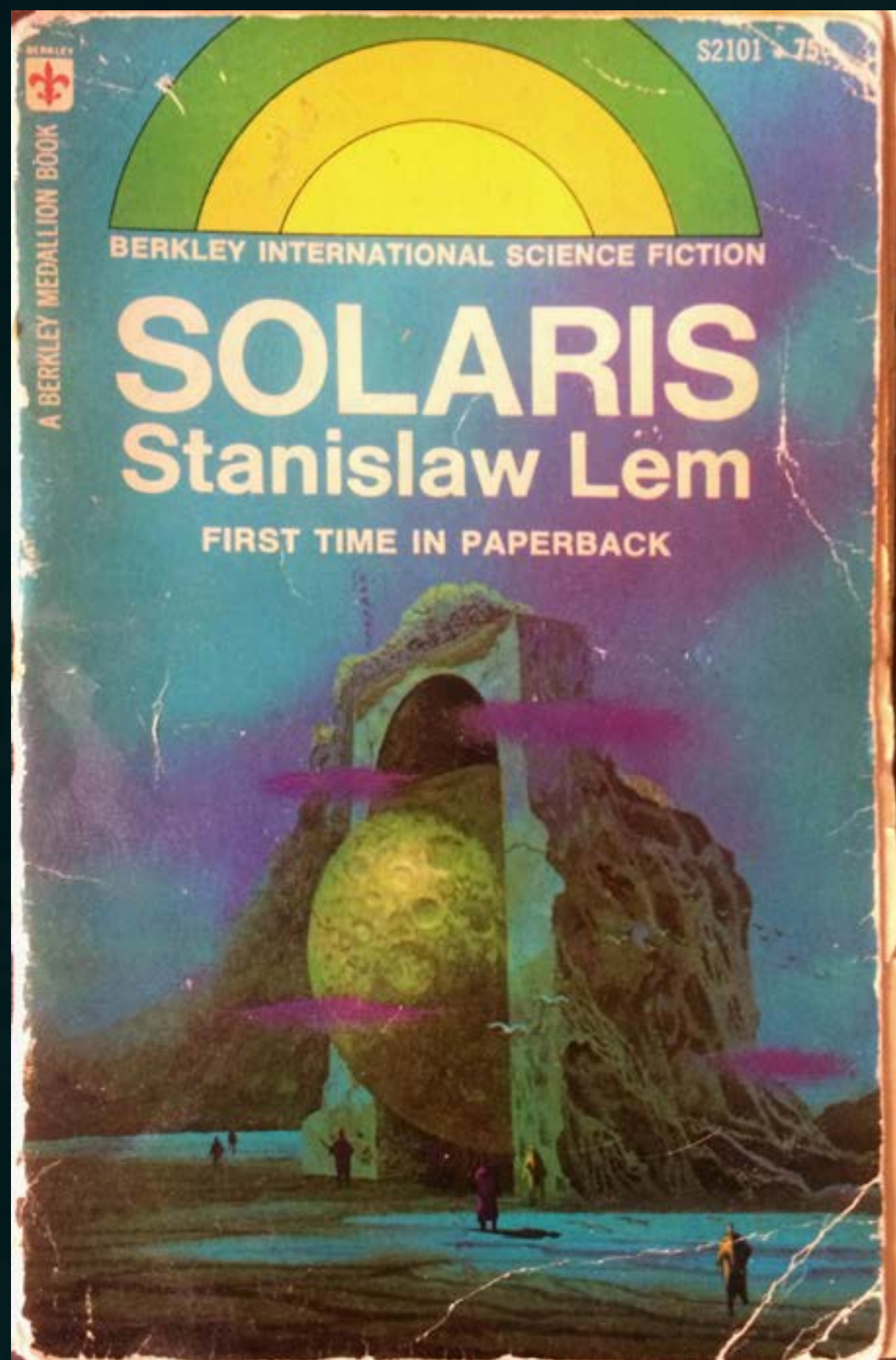


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[on vimeo]

SOLARIS

The background of the entire page is a dark, monochromatic photograph of the Atacama Desert. The landscape is characterized by jagged, dark rock formations and ridges that stretch across the horizon. The sky is a uniform, dark greyish-blue, suggesting a hazy or overcast day. The overall tone is somber and atmospheric, providing a stark backdrop for the white text.

The Atacama Desert, in Chile, is the most arid place on Earth; its atmospheric conditions make it the perfect site for astronomical observations. Over time this immense territory has hosted many different human populations, including the Incas, and nowadays impressive telescopes are installed there.

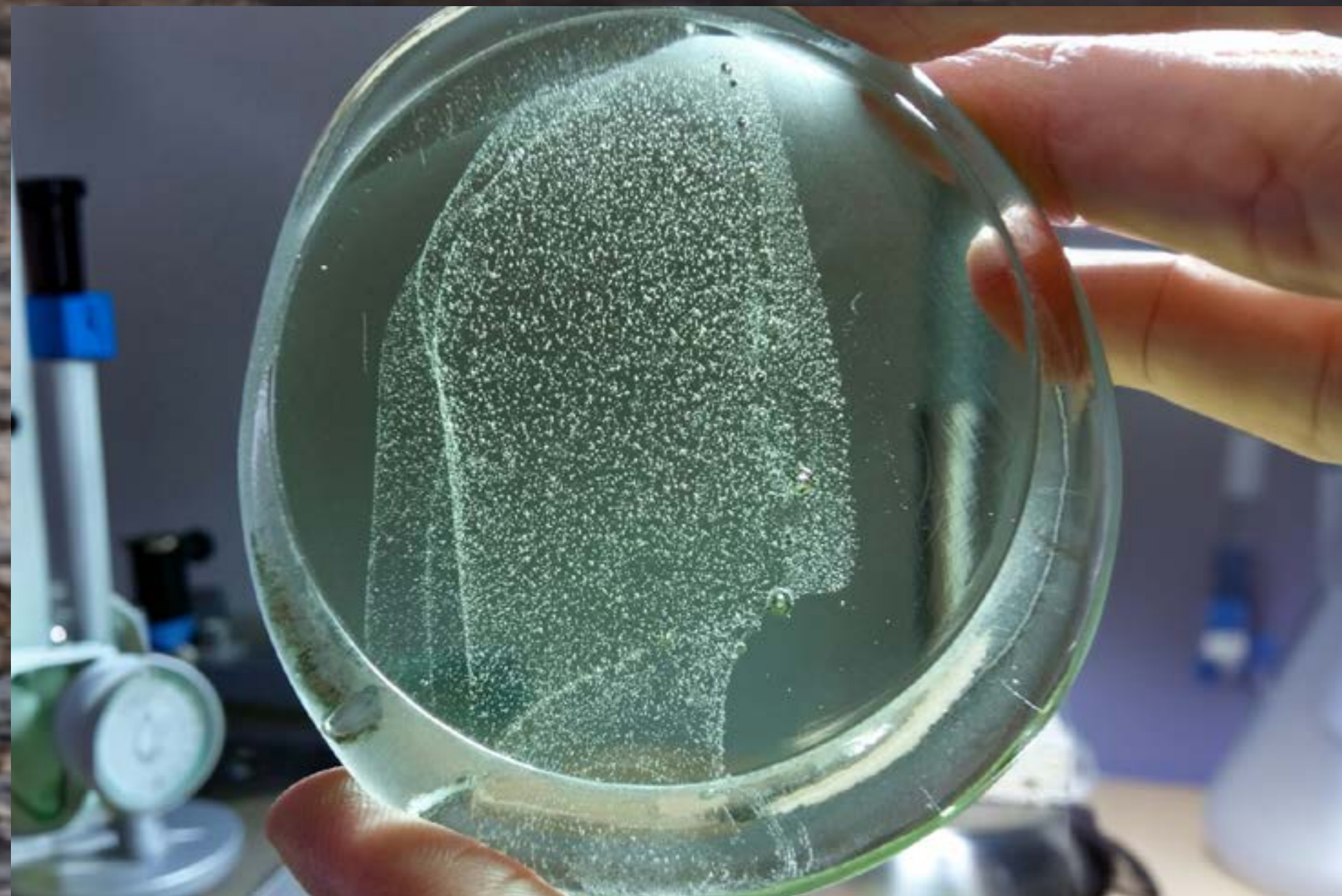


{PROCESS DOCUMENTATION}

For 'Solaris', sand gathered at the Atacama Desert was first melted becoming glass. This glass was then turned into photographic lenses. These 'desert eyes' were brought back to the Atacama desert and used to photograph its landscape.

The captured images go beyond representing the landscape; in 'Solaris', the desert is an observing subject rather than a passive object to be looked at.

'Solaris' takes its inspiration from the sci-fi classic of the same title, by Polish writer Stanislaw Lem, which explored a potential type of intelligence that does not derive from a brain, but, rather, from the sea of a distant planet called 'Solaris'.



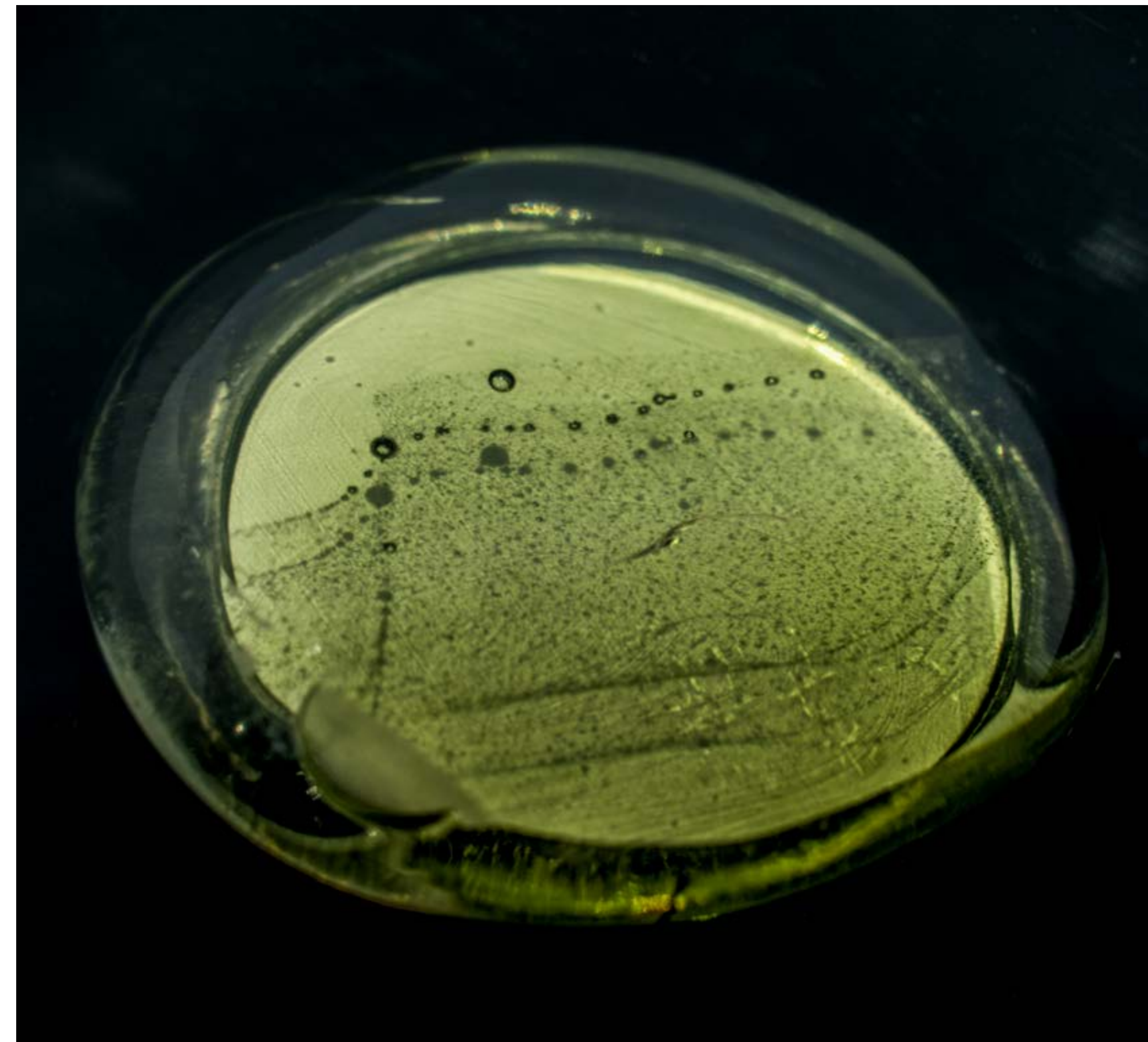


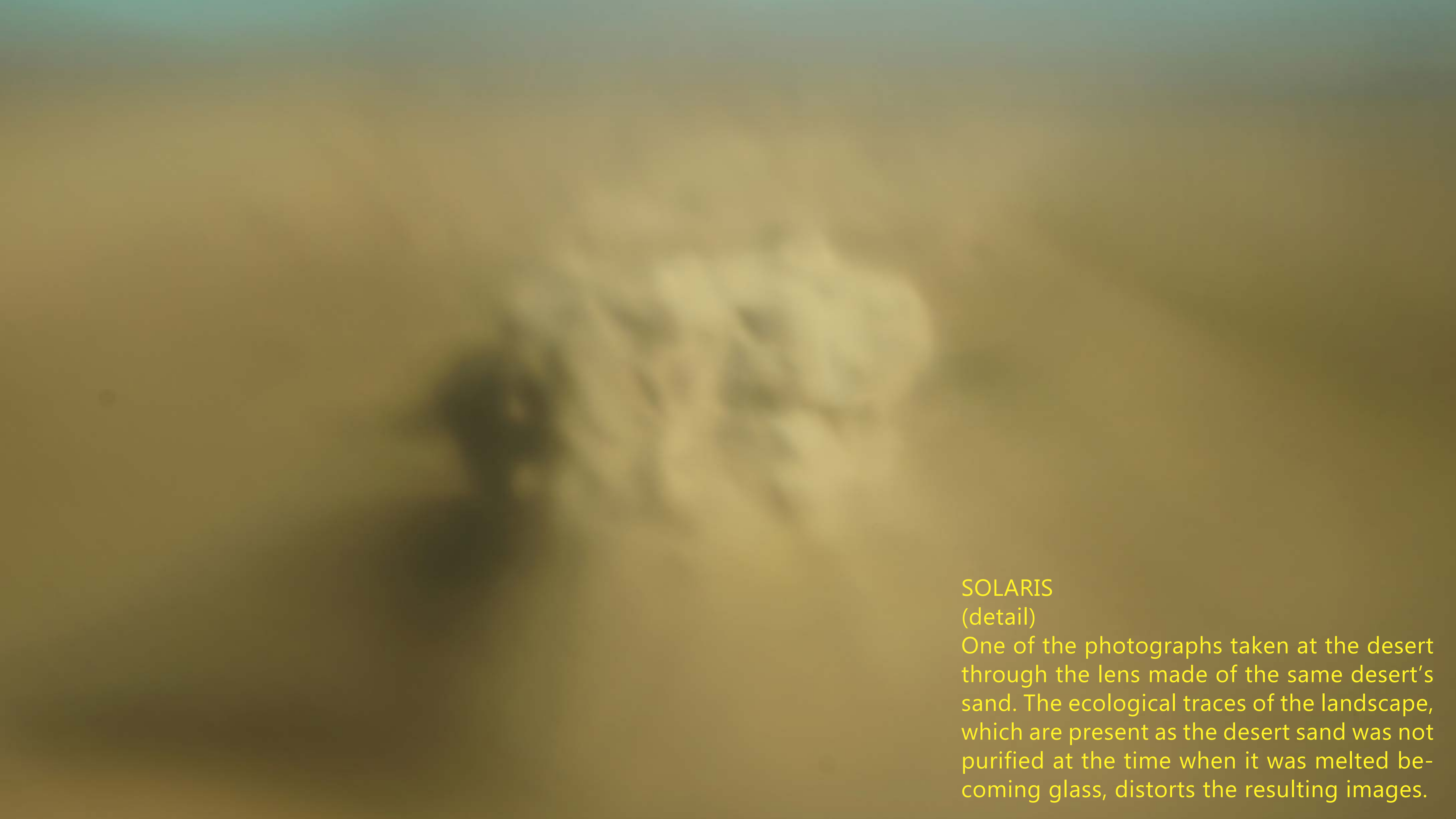
SOLARIS

Installation

A photographic lens made from sand of the Atacama Desert; and, an analog slide projection showing the 24 photographs produced by means of that lens when photographing the same desert.

2017





SOLARIS

(detail)

One of the photographs taken at the desert through the lens made of the same desert's sand. The ecological traces of the landscape, which are present as the desert sand was not purified at the time when it was melted becoming glass, distorts the resulting images.

PHANTOM CAST



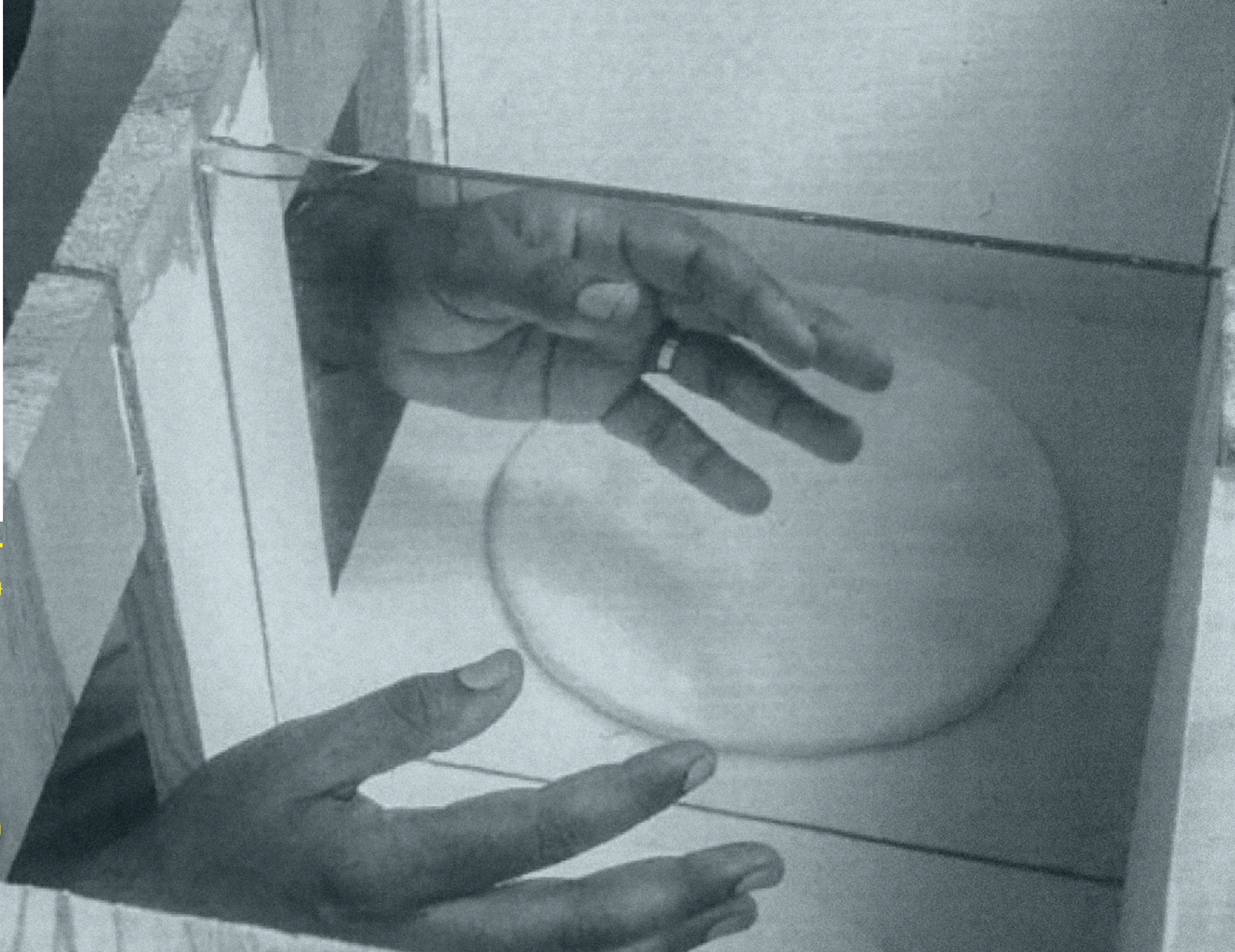


PHANTOM CAST

{RESEARCH IMAGES}

Above, 'Saints Cosmas and Damian Performing a Miraculous Cure by Transplantation of a Leg'. 1495.

Background image, 'Mirror Box', a therapy for people who experience 'phantom pain' after the amputation of a limb. This neuroscientific experiment was developed by V.S. Ramachandran in 1992.







PHANTOM CAST

{PROCESS DESCRIPTION}

A person who experiences “phantom sensations” gets the shape of her leg cast by the many hands of a group of performers. As she feels them approaching her absent limb, she instructs the performers on where to position their hands and fingertips so that the phantom form is revealed. The invisible leg is then carefully removed and captured inside a wooden chest.

[click here to
WATCH VIDEO
\[on vimeo\]](#)



PHANTOM CAST

Video (4'31", full HD, color, audio stereo) and phantom leg captured in a wooden box.
2017



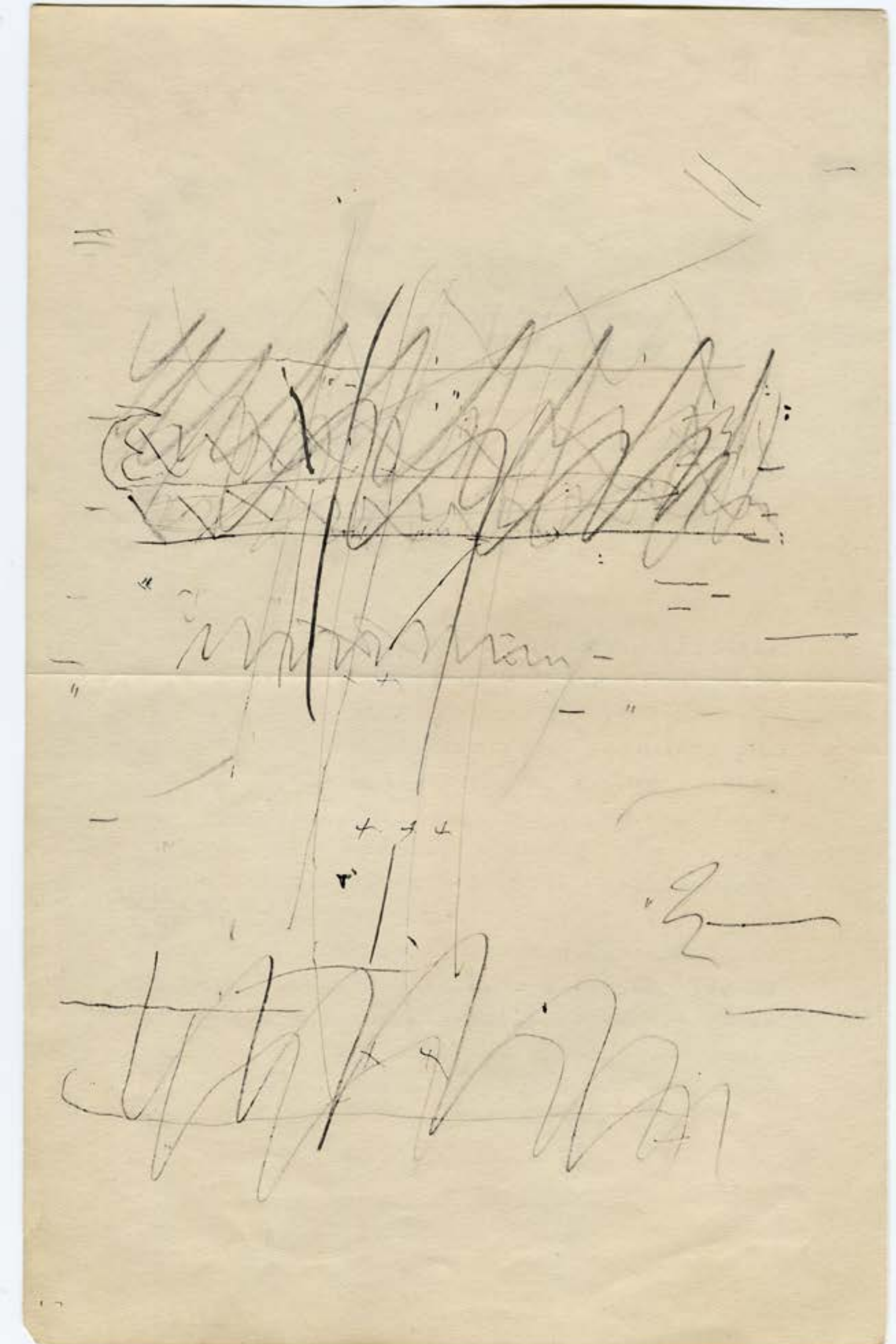
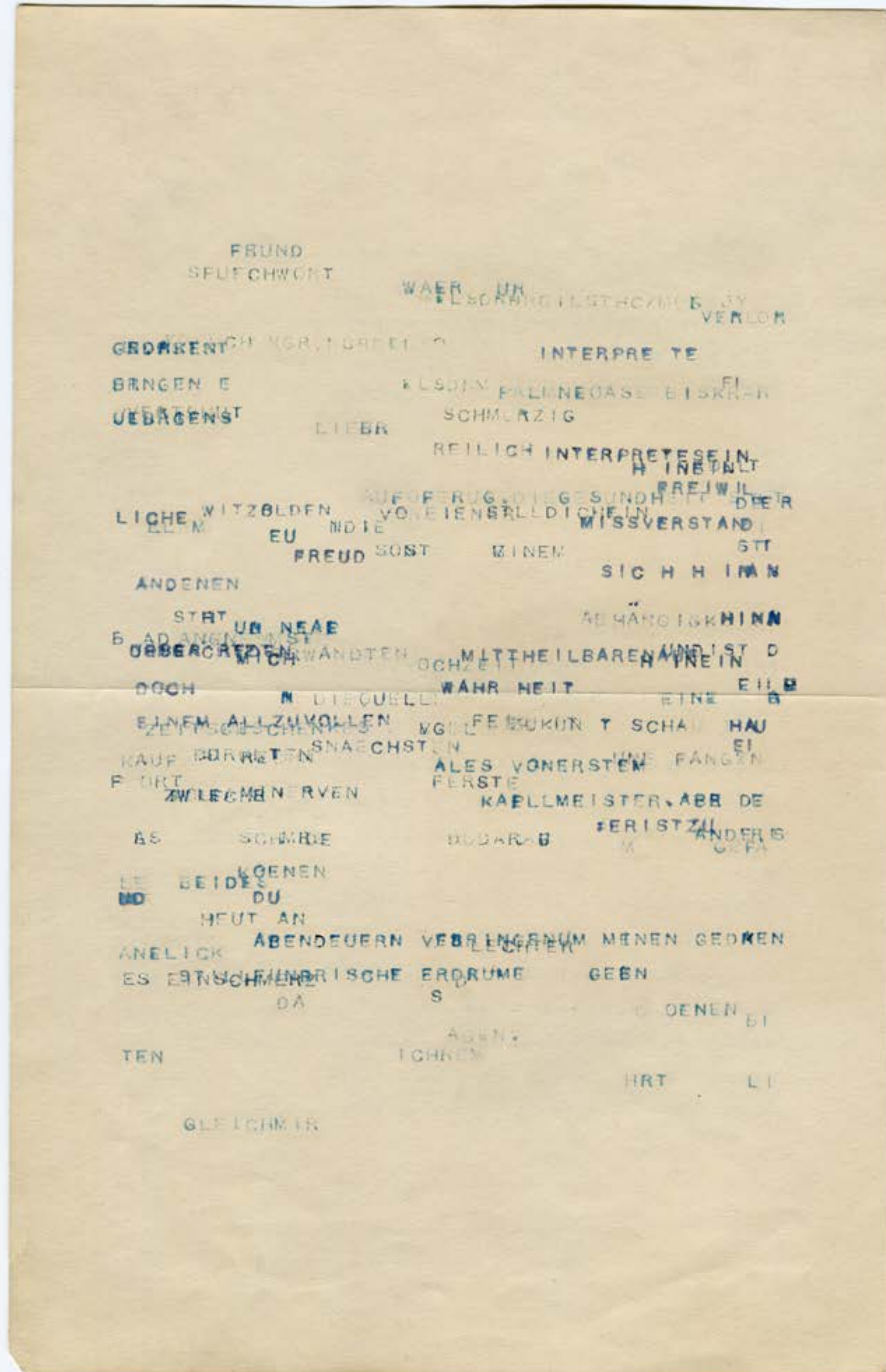
AFTERWORD

Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote by hand until the last years of his productive life when he decided to acquire a typewriter. This is an image of the 'Malling Hansen' typewriter that he owned. Due to some internal damage the device produced typing mistakes. Santillán was given access to the original documents mistyped by the philosopher.

AFTERWORD

{PROCESS DESCRIPTION}

From the dozens of mistyped documents, which the artist scanned at the archive, he selected all the misspelled words (image on the left) and all the pencil crossings and scratches that Nietzsche made over these failed writings (image on the right).





AFTERWORD

Installation

Analog slide projection (13 slides), piece of paper taken from an original Nietzsche's typed script, 14 inkjet prints (14 x 21.5 cm), and HD video (color, stereo, 4:3, 2'56").

2014-2015



AFTERWORD

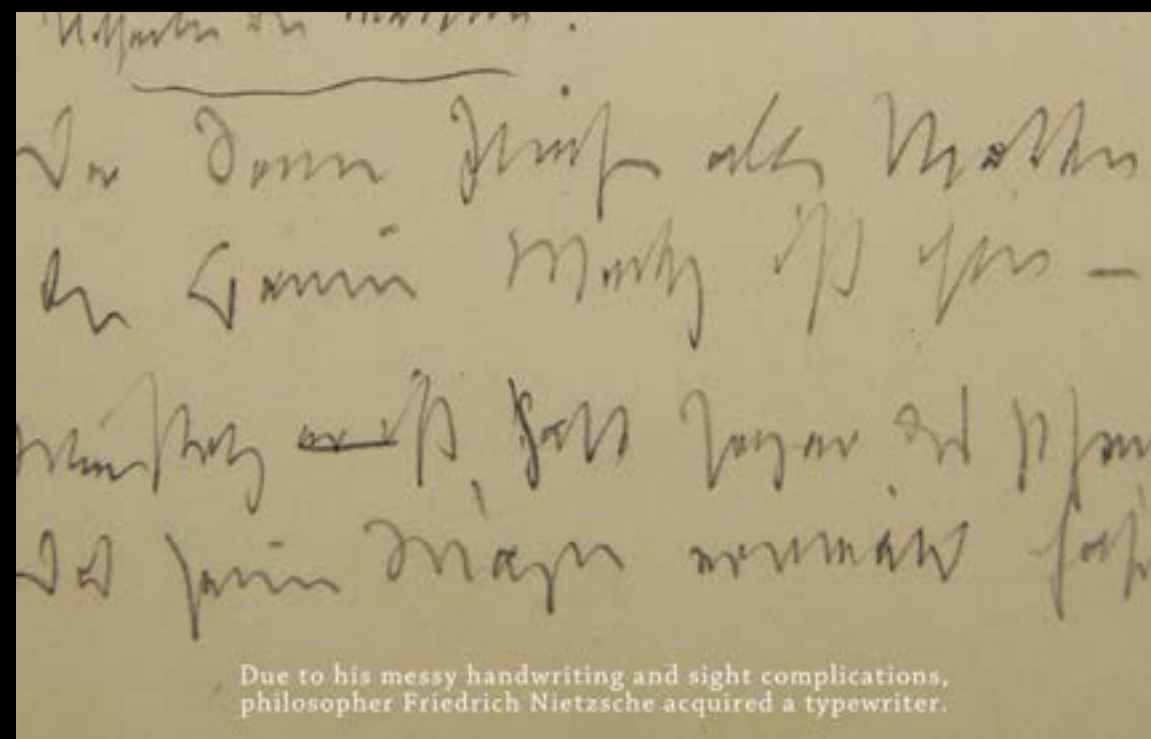
{PROCESS DESCRIPTION}

This work combines two forking paths that emerged from the same documents; an approximation to the philosopher's mistyped writings –already described– and a dance, which was motivated by Nietzsche's own remark about spending hours teaching his fingers "to dance with the Malling-Hansen" typewriter.

Faithful to the spirit of the research, for this second path the artist decided that it was Nietzsche himself the only one with full legitimacy to show his dance. Hence, from one of the philosopher's original documents, Santillán tore off a tiny fragment that was about to fall off and gave it to a psychic medium in order to use it as a 'psychic bridge' to reach the philosopher in the afterlife and inquire about this matter. The piece of paper is displayed on a pedestal as part of the installation.

AFTERWORD

{ANALOG SLIDE PROJECTION}



Due to his messy handwriting and sight complications, philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche acquired a typewriter.

Due to his messy handwriting and sight complications, philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche acquired a typewriter.



It was a Malling-Hansen "Writing Ball".

It was a Malling-Hansen "Writing Ball".



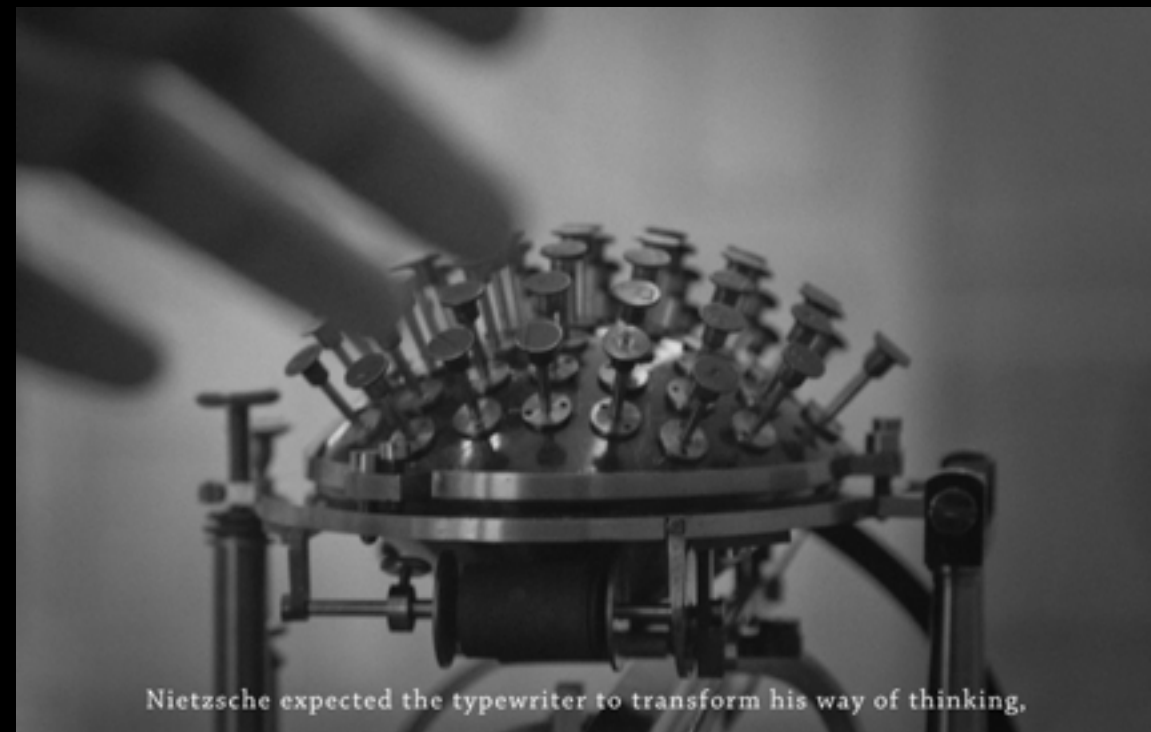
Danish inventor Rasmus Malling-Hansen's family was immersed in the spiritual world.

None of these models have survived.



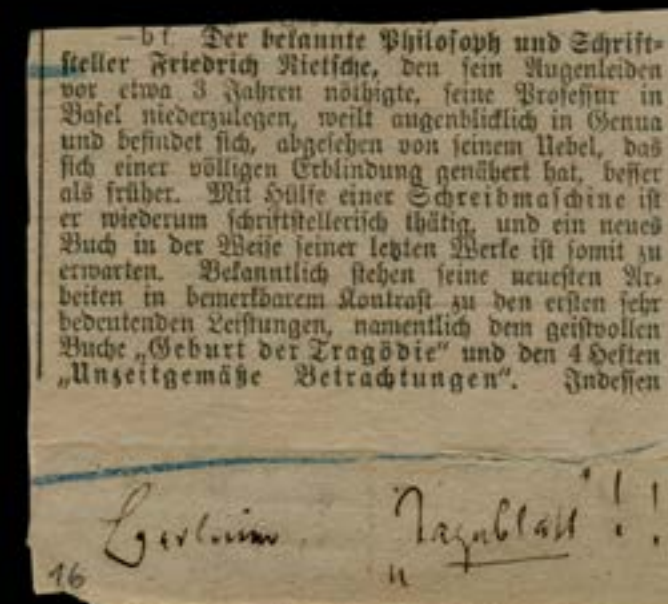
Johanne, one of Rasmus' daughters, even became a psychic medium.

Johanne, one of Rasmus' daughters, even became a psychic medium.



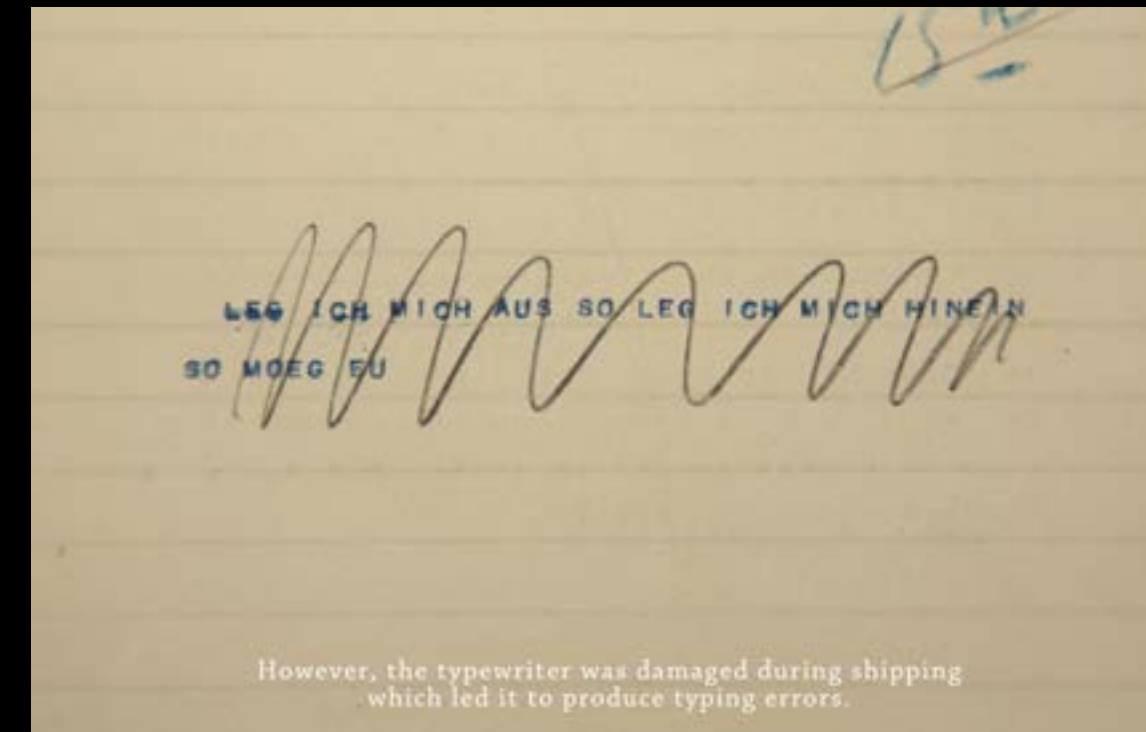
Nietzsche expected the typewriter to transform his way of thinking.

Nietzsche expected the typewriter to transform his way of thinking.



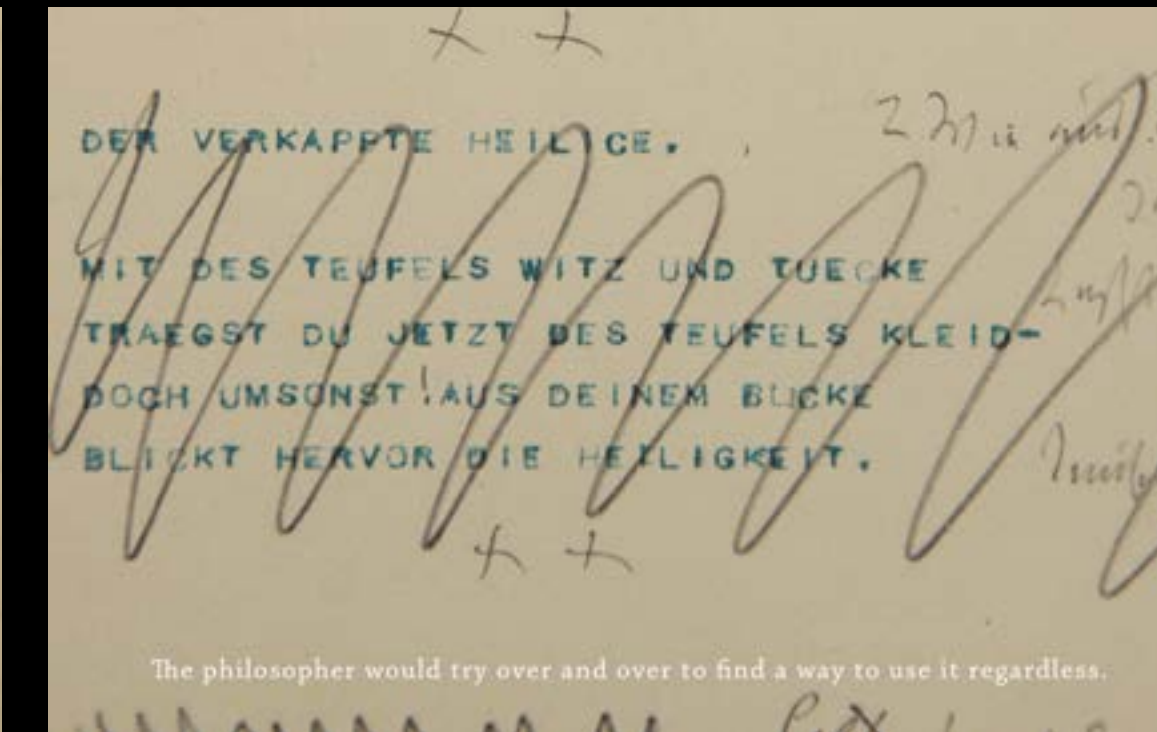
"It will enable me to write books that are the opposite of those I have written," he predicted.

"It will enable me to write books that are the opposite of those I have written," he predicted.



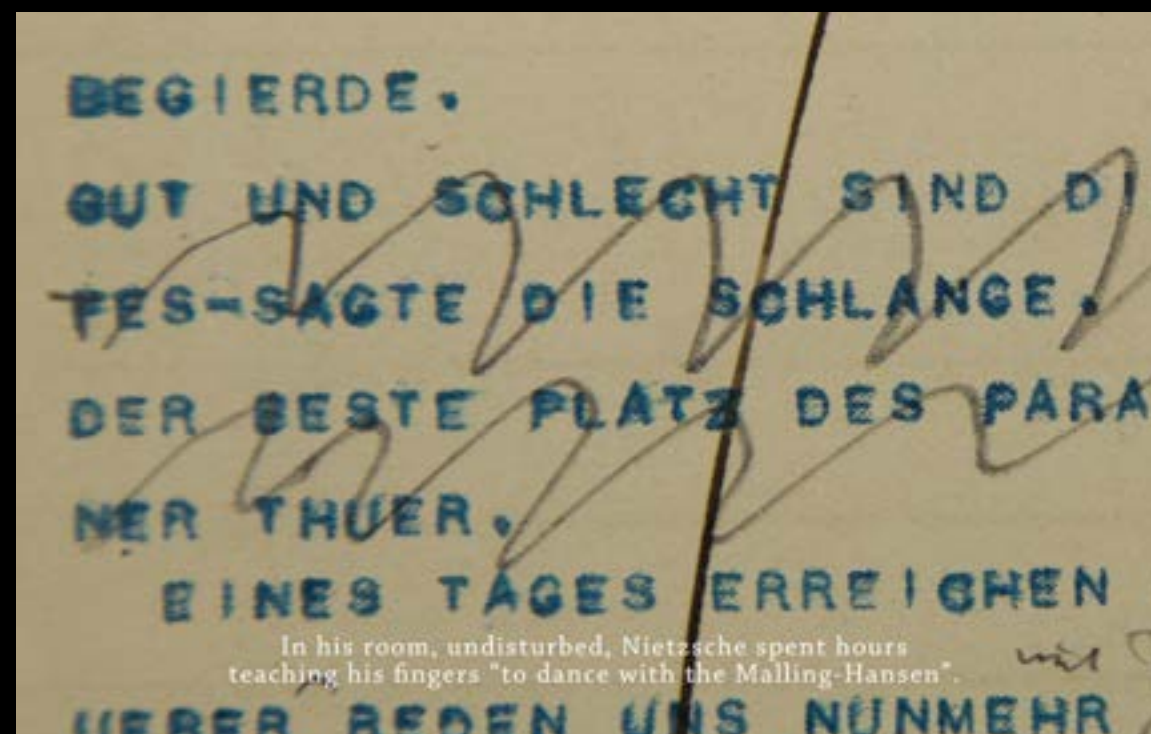
However, the typewriter was damaged during shipping which led it to produce typing errors.

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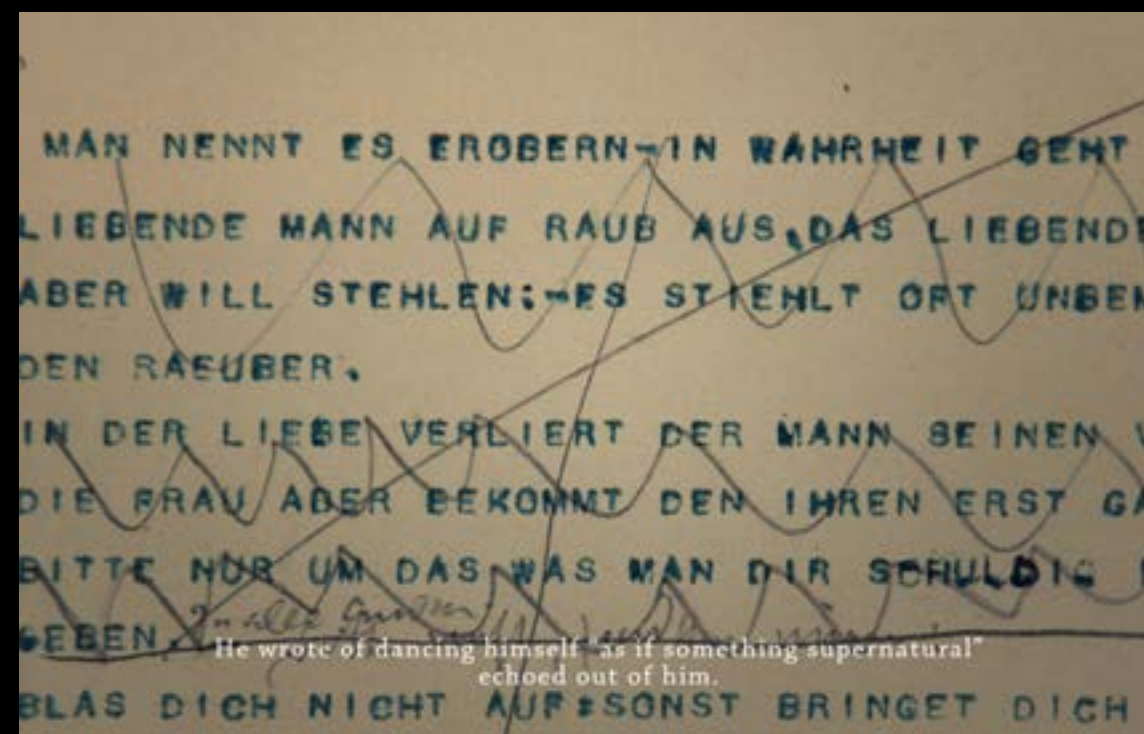
The philosopher would try over and over to find a way to use it regardless.

The philosopher would try over and over to find a way to use it regardless.



In his room, undisturbed, Nietzsche spent hours teaching his fingers "to dance with the Malling-Hansen".

In his room, undisturbed, Nietzsche spent hours teaching his fingers "to dance with the Malling-Hansen".



He wrote of dancing himself "as if something supernatural" echoed out of him.

He wrote of dancing himself "as if something supernatural" echoed out of him.



Long after his death, a tiny piece of paper was torn from one of Nietzsche's typed manuscripts.

Long after his death, a tiny piece of paper was torn from one of Nietzsche's typed manuscripts.



Consequently a psychic medium used it to contact him

Consequently a psychic medium used it to contact him and ask one question: What was your dance like?

AFTERWORD

{VIDEO STILLS}

NIETZSCHE DANCING THROUGH
THE BODY OF A PSYCHIC MEDIUM





_BIO

OSCAR SANTILLÁN

Artist and cybernetician.
Lives in The Netherlands
and Ecuador.

Founder of studio ANTIMUNDO, Oscar is an artist whose work brings together a diverse ecology of knowledge producers, ranging from scientists to non-human beings.

Initially, Oscar was a self-taught artist in his native Ecuador where he often worked within collective environments. At a later point he received an MFA from the Sculpture Department at VCU — Virginia Commonwealth University (US). He has been a senior researcher at the Davis Center for AI, and the Lunder Institute (US), and is currently an advisor at De Ateliers (NL).

Oscar has been a resident at institutions such as Jan van Eyck (NL), Fondazione Ratti (IT), Del-fina Foundation (UK), The Astronomical Observatory of Leiden (NL), and Skowhegan (US). His solo exhibitions include institutions such as MUAC (MX), Kunstinstituut Melly (NL), Radius CCA (NL), Spazio Calderara (IT), among others.

His group exhibitions include LACMA (US), Yokohama Triennial (JP), NRW FORUM Düsseldorf (DE), SongEun Art Space (KR), FRAC Île-de-france (FR), IMMA—Irish Museum of Modern Art (IE); Ballroom Marfa (US), Rochechouart Musée d'art contemporain (FR), Kroller-Muller Museum (NL), Centraal Museum Utrecht (NL), among others.

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