

AZUCENA SANCHEZ

www.azucena-sanchez.art





ARTIST STATEMENT

<http://azucena-sanchez.art/about/>

My artistic practice focuses on the intersection of life, science and technology. My works include bio media, tech-sculpture, multimedia and site-specific installations that have been featured in international group exhibitions at Transmediale, Shillerpalais and TopLab in Berlin as well as STWSTT as part of Ars Electronica in Linz, Austria and MUCA CU in Mexico City.

I constantly draw inspiration from the natural processes of Earth, its chaos, infrastructure and resilience but my practice goes beyond mere observation. For me, it is a collaborative effort that involves working alongside living and non-living organisms to explore their potential as interconnected entities. I often work in the field or in what I call an 'open studio' environment, where such interconnectedness of all things is more visible, and change is a constant. I also enjoy the controlled environment of a laboratory setting, where I can conduct specific experiments and collaborate with organisms like mycelium physarum polycephalum or soil.

My creative process is rooted in spontaneity and the flow of creation. I believe in allowing things to develop naturally, embracing the fast and spontaneous moments of life itself. Even in the controlled environment of a laboratory ('in vitro'), life happens, reclaiming its agency and its very own temporality. This dynamic interplay between control and spontaneity is the basis of my work, resulting in art that creates new forms of infrastructure and resilience in the face of social and ecological crises.

TLALLI • CONVERSATIONS WITH SOIL

(ONGOING PROJECT)

2023, soil chromatogram and (eco)poem, eighteen frames, print on paper, 23 x 23 cm each

'Tlalli' is an ecocentric project utilizing soil chromatograms and experimental poetry to redefine the narrative around permaculture, specifically sustainable agriculture. This ongoing initiative involves engaging with urban gardeners in Italy, Germany, and Mexico, fostering a dialogue that highlights the subjective connection, labor, and reciprocity between gardeners and their soil. By visiting self-sustainable gardens, sharing meals, and collecting soil samples, the project unfolds unique narratives.

The soil chromatograms, created through a photographic process, unveil a visual story of the soil's chemical and biological state. The accompanying (eco)poems, crafted from meticulous analysis and interviews with gardeners, capture the profound bond between the gardeners and their land. This exploration delves into the intricate relationship between humans and their environment, providing a platform for (eco)poetics and imagery to intersect.

At its core, Tlalli aims to address and transition towards more sustainable practices, merging scientific and societal narratives to pave the way for a harmonious coexistence with the earth.

With each garden visited, every meal shared and each conversation held, the project is an invitation to create a network of individuals who are actively shaping a new and more equitable future, a tangible Utopia, not only for their community but also for the environment. Through science and poetics, 'Tlalli' opens a dialogue for change and envisions a future that does not have to be chaotic or apocalyptic but just simpler and full of hope.

<http://azucena-sanchez.art/2023/11/02/tlalli-conversations-with-soil/>



Exhibition at ESSAY Project Space in Berlin, Germany. Photo: Jimena Centurion



Exhibition at Kulturhaus Neuperlach. Munich, Germany.

RESTORATION

2021, print on paper, 148.5 x 210 mm

Restoration is a piece exploring themes of identity, inhabitation, and inner ecosystems. It involved repairing my skin's microbiome using bacteria and yeast from a sourdough cultivated at home. The sourdough, applied as a 'beauty mask,' was left to dry on my face. After removal, it was reintegrated into the rest of the sourdough and allowed to grow. This process continued for a week, culminating in the final day when it was used to bake bread that I consumed, creating a synergy between the different organisms I identified as.

A collage was created from photographs documenting the entire process, subsequently published in Spoonzine's 'Bread and Revolution' issue and later featured in an online exhibition at Habitar la Imagen.

<http://azucena-sanchez.art/2022/11/29/restoration/>



Spoonzine first issue: Bread & Revolution. Photo: Azucena Sanchez

ITINERANTE SILENTE

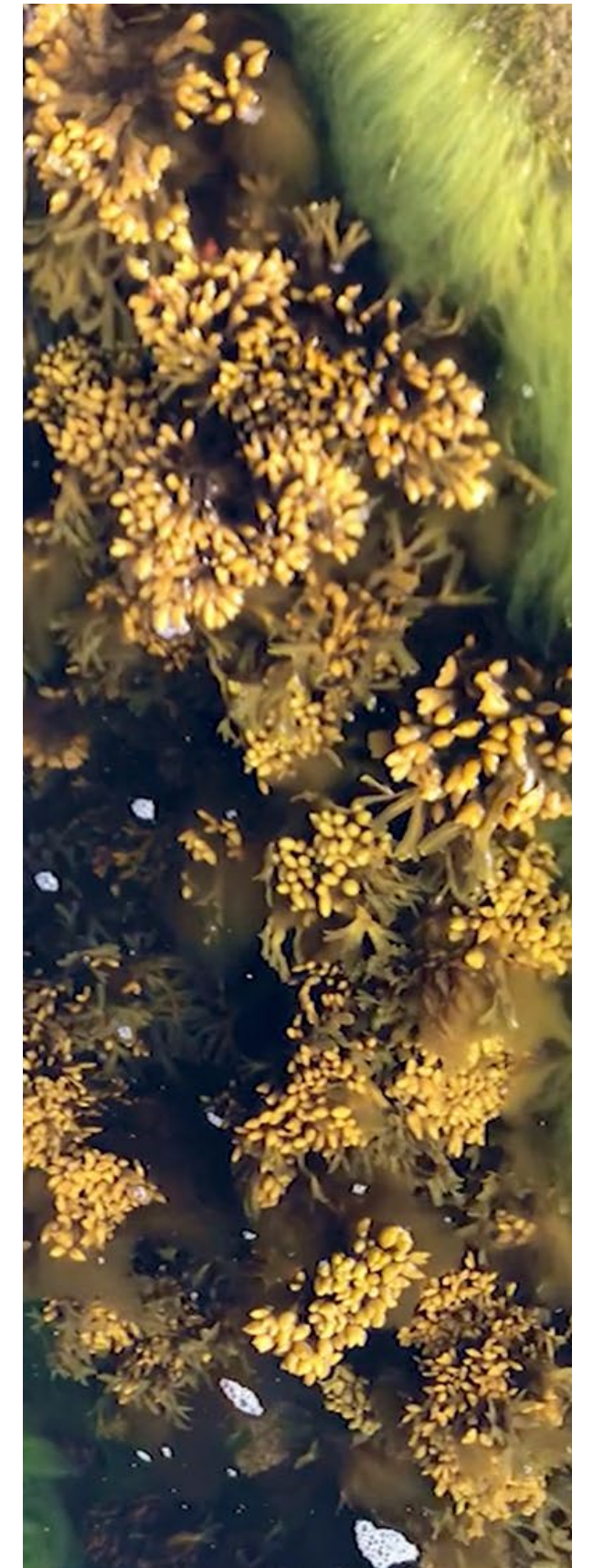
2019, multimedia video, 1'57", 1280x720px

Itinerante Silente is a site-specific piece about slow violence, time, permanence and nature embodiment. The piece is inspired by Jussi Parikka's essay "A Slow, Contemporary Violence: Damaged Environments of Technological Culture".

Every natural event, be it a fire, rainfall, or the completion of a wave's journey, now carries an intrinsic trace of mankind, transforming the very micro-chemical composition of each Umwelt. The piece, shot in Bengtskär lighthouse, Finland—an area marked by a historical battle in 1941—captures the enduring violence shaped by both human intervention and nature. The scars of war linger in both the architecture and the surrounding landscape.

The editing and aesthetics of the piece showcase a manipulation of nature's timing, achieved through the deformation and alteration of sound and image using media techniques. In its essence, the work reflects on the essential violence of a place formed by the intertwined forces of man and nature. We, as both creators and destroyers, possess a duality—beautiful and catastrophic, violent and forgiving—manifested on both macro and micro scales. Slowly, we've taken more than needed, tarnishing the health, essence, space, and time of the very entity that sustains us. Nature's violence is no longer solely hers; it has become a discordant rhythm lost in time.

<https://vimeo.com/347180585>



Stills from the clip exhibited at TopLab Berlin, Germany and then Gimnasio de Arte y Cultura in Mexico City, Mexico.

BYNDELLE HYBRIDA

2017, mycelium and metals live installation,
three aquariums and three surgery bags, 20 x 20 x 20 cm.

Byndelle Hybrida focuses on the search of creating a hybrid through the fusion of metals and mycelium. Drawing inspiration from the works of Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda and Donna Haraway, the project explores themes of nature, technology, and cyborgs. It contemplates a future era transcending gender distinctions, envisioning a society of evolved hybrids where humans embody both natural and technological aspects. In this exploration, mycelium serves as a metaphor for human nature, given our shared characteristics with the fungal kingdom.

The project involves experiments in mycoremediation, specifically the mycelium's digestion of heavy metals, and explores the symbiosis of nature and technology, aiming to create hybrids. The outcome is a visual representation of men and women through geometrical shapes, with a subtle and organic aesthetic derived from mycelium. This aesthetic reminds us of the historical notions of femininity within the political and masculine structures of our past, guiding us through a hybrid continuum that bridges our origins with our present state.

<http://azucena-sanchez.art/2022/11/29/byndelle-hybrida/>



Installation at STWSTx48 as part of Ars Electronica. Linz, Austria. Photo: Azucena Sanchez



Installation at STWSTx48 as part of Ars Electronica. Linz, Austria. Photo: Azucena Sanchez



Installation at STWSTx48 as part of Ars Electronica. Linz, Austria. Photo: Azucena Sanchez

ALLUVIONE

2017, dry cactus leaves dyed in pink prickly pear, five lines of 200cm each.

Alluvione is a site-specific piece exploring themes of memory, tragedy, hope, and nostalgia, vividly portraying the transformation of a marginalised town through one of its endured natural disasters—an overwhelming flood. The artwork utilises carefully selected and naturally dyed dried cactus leaves, symbolising the beautiful decadence inherent in their ageing process. Dyed with pigments extracted from the fruit of the same plant, known as tuna, these leaves are meticulously joined to form a line that symbolises tears. Placed in a specific site within the castle, shaken by air, Alluvione serves as a poignant reminder of the unstoppable force and lasting impact of nature.

This piece was conceived during the Trasformatario 2017 residency program in Scaletta Zanclea, a small village in Sicily, Italy. The residency, featuring around 30 international artists, spanned 10 days and involved engaging with the village, its people, and undertaking interventions within Castello Rufo Ruffo. The primary focus was to create a site-specific artwork within the castle, resulting in the development of Alluvione.

<http://azucena-sanchez.art/2022/11/29/alluvione/>



Installation at Castello Ruffo Rufo in Scaletta Zanclea, Italy. Photo: Azucena Sanchez



Installation at Castello Ruffo Rufo in Scaletta Zanclea, Italy. Photo: Azucena Sanchez

NARCO CULTIVOS

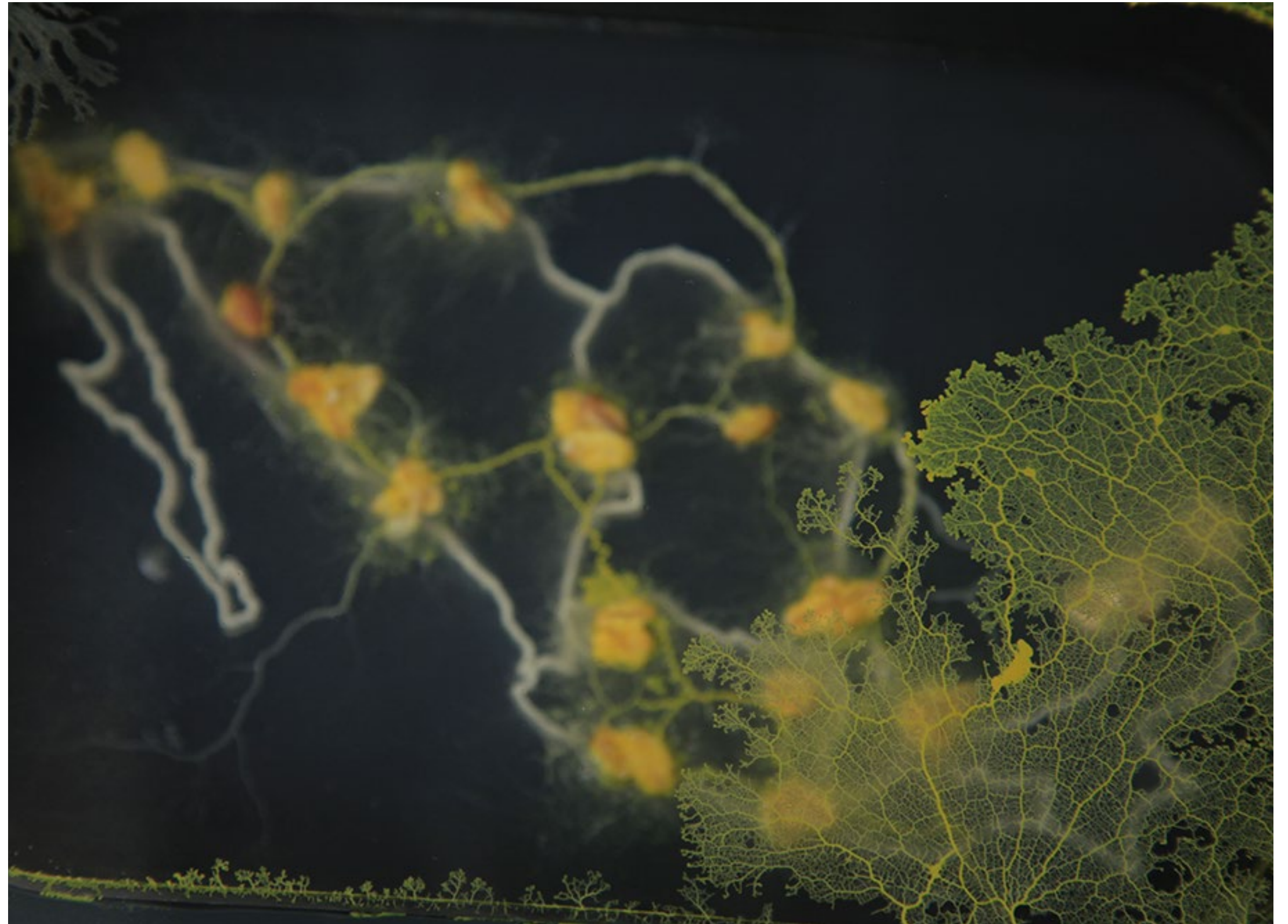
2016, in collaboration with Maria Degand,
Time-lapse video, 8' 12", 1280x720px

Drug trafficking stands out as a significant global issue, with Mexico being a major player in the violence and trade associated with it. According to a 2015 Congressional Research Service report, an estimated 80,000 people lost their lives in Mexico due to organised crime-related incidents from 2006 onwards, with drug trafficking being a primary driver.

While the core of drug trafficking revolves around money and power, it encompasses a web of connections, employment structures, the scale of involvement, and territorial control. In this scenario, power for drug dealers is analogous to sustenance for *Physarum polycephalum*.

The project 'Narco Cultivos' serves as both a metaphor and an analytical lens to explore the primitive nature of this business, drawing a comparison with *Physarum polycephalum*. I label it as primitive because, like the organism, drug cartels exhibit a form of 'thinking' coupled with instinctual actions. The artwork portrays a 3D-printed version of Mexico where *Physarum polycephalum* is placed, gradually attacking key cities. Observing how this organism reacts to varying amounts of food provides insights into potential outcomes if drug cartels were confronted—shedding light on issues of power, control, drug movement, and the impact on people.

<https://vimeo.com/162486614>



Still from the time-lapse video.



Physarum polycephalum alive and dried samples. Installation at Schiller Palais in Berlin, Germany. Photo: Azucena Sanchez



Physarum alive and dried samples. Installation at Schiller Palais in Berlin, Germany. Photo: Azucena Sanchez

TRESOR I

IN COLLABORATION WITH ALFREDO ARDIA

2017, electronics and rice,
different sizes.

A sound installation was developed for the 'Klanginstallation' class at Bauhaus Universität, hosted in The Notenbank—a building with a rich history, formerly a bank, now repurposed with new significance.

The Notenbank carries historical weight, with many areas evolving over the years. The vault, our designated space, remained nearly unchanged. Comprising four interconnected rooms separated by grid cell doors, each room contains lockers of various sizes that were originally used to store documents, papers, and food items such as rice, flour, sugar, and corn.

In collaboration with Alfredo Ardia, we created a sound installation centred on the concepts of storage, lock, and the appropriation of sound. Each room held a unique characteristic related to the concepts of nothingness, savings, and expectation, achieved through the use of sound and elements that were once stored in the lockers.

Three out of the five rooms in the Tresor were utilised, each dedicated to a specific theme:

_stored sound

_drops

_inside - outside

_enclosed

These sub-projects explored diverse aspects of sound, creating a multi-sensory experience within the historical confines of The Notenbank.



Detail on installation at Notenbank in Weimar, Germany. Photo: Azucena Sanchez



Detail on installation at Notenbank in Weimar, Germany. Photo: Azucena Sanchez

Y/A GLOVES

2016, in collaboration with Yvonne Götzl,
electronics and metal, two pair of gloves.

We emerge from a natural world with aspirations of the artificial. Originating from the earth, our purpose extends to crafting fiction, envisioning the future, perceiving our present, and determining our past. To connect with the world, we touch things, yet even a simple device like gloves can swiftly alter our perception.

Dissatisfied with our current reality, we perpetually seek ways to heighten our senses. Fiction seamlessly morphs into reality, technology assumes a natural guise, and we inadvertently lose sight of the unexpected nature surrounding us.

Endowed with will and freedom, we face a choice between technology and nature. Regardless of our decision, we find ourselves entangled in our beliefs and our self-created narratives.

This project was conceived for The Mess with Tech, Sense, and Thinking at transmediale '16. Two sets of gloves were developed: the first set consisted of a speaker on the palm of the hand and photosensitive cells on the fingertips, paired with a glove completely made of metal with LEDs on the fingertips. The second set was a glove with a speaker on the palm of the hand, paired with another glove made of metal with piezos on the fingertips to sense, listen, and create feedback with the world.

<http://azucena-sanchez.art/2022/11/29/y-a-gloves/>



Installation @Transmediale '16 in Berlin, Germany. Photo: Azucena Sanchez



Installation @Transmediale '16 in Berlin, Germany. Photo: Klaus Fritze



Installation @Transmediale '16 in Berlin, Germany. Photo: Klaus Fritze

INFRAESTRUCTURA DE UNA CATÁSTROFE

2012, generative video and sound,
7' 12", 1280x720px

Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert.”

-Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*

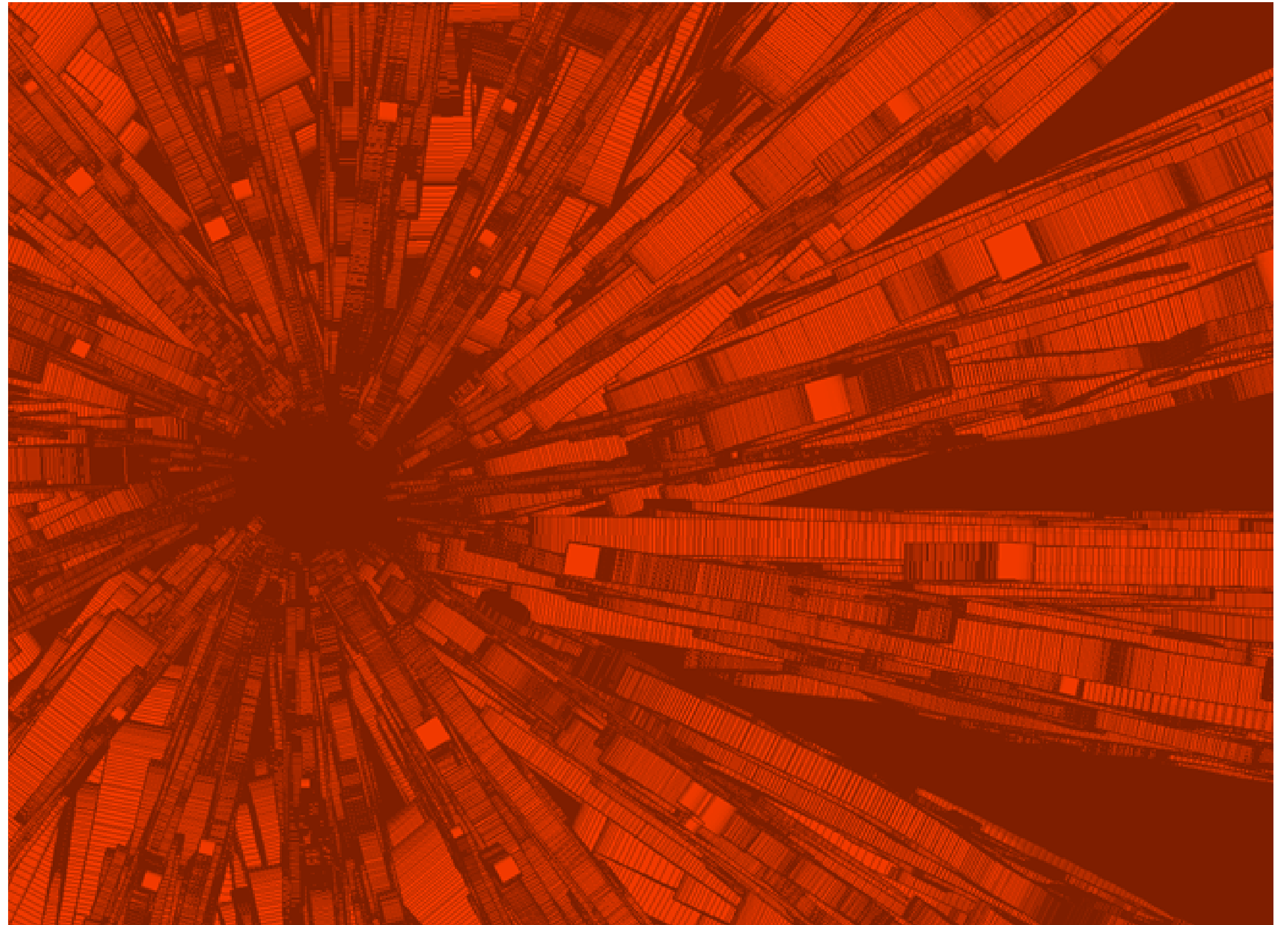
‘The Infrastructure of a Catastrophe’ delves into our increasing static existence. We are becoming automatons, akin to robots rather than fully human.

This shift toward automation poses not only a natural catastrophe but also a material and technological one. Through each sketch, we glimpse our own infrastructure, a path leading us toward both human and technological automatism until the line between human and machine blurs.

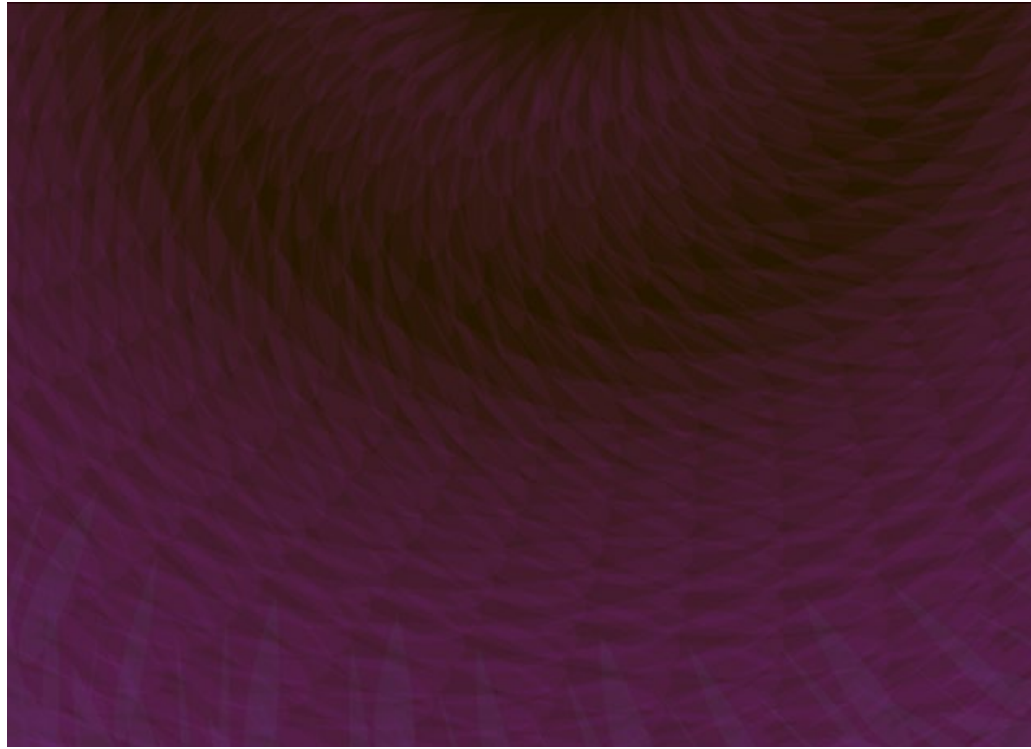
The narrative unfolds through the lens of history and technological evolution, aiming for a delicate equilibrium where we harness technology as a tool without allowing it to dominate our lives entirely.

As we dream of a future for our machines, can we also dream of human automatism?

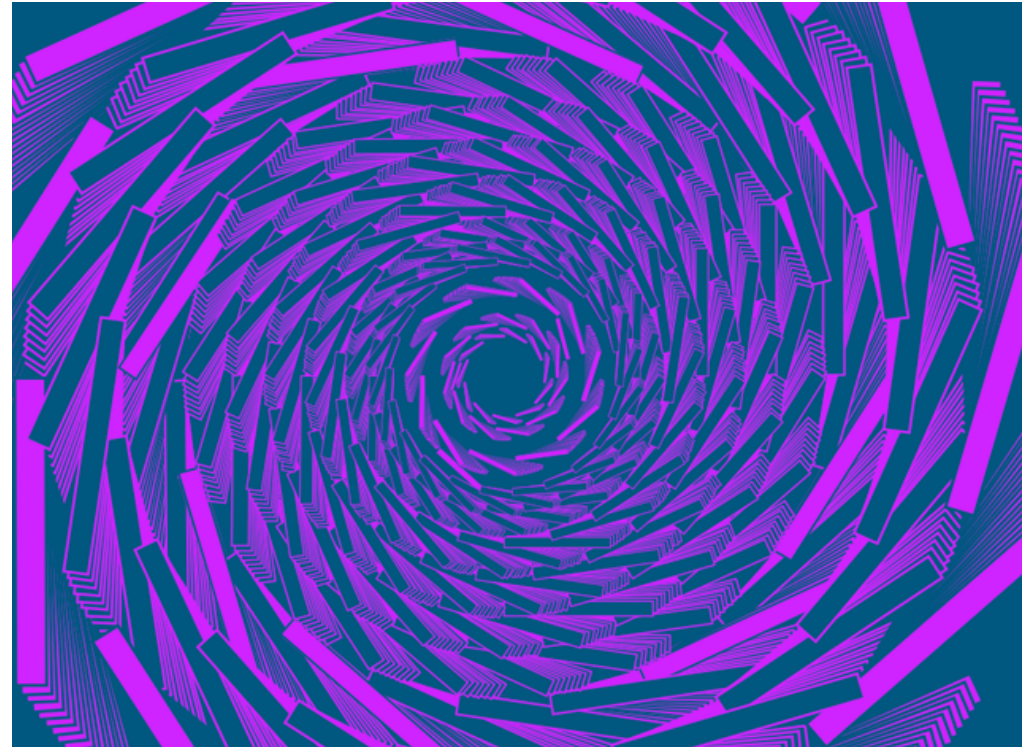
<https://vimeo.com/69019524>



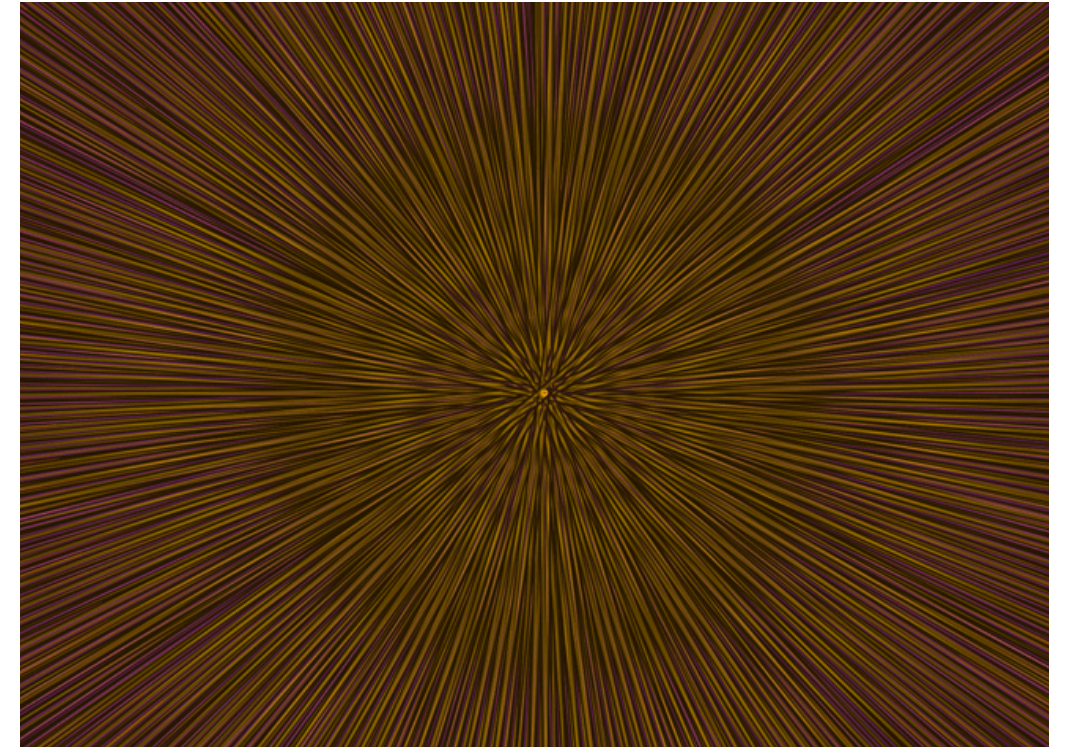
Still from multimedia video exhibited in MUCA, Mexico City.



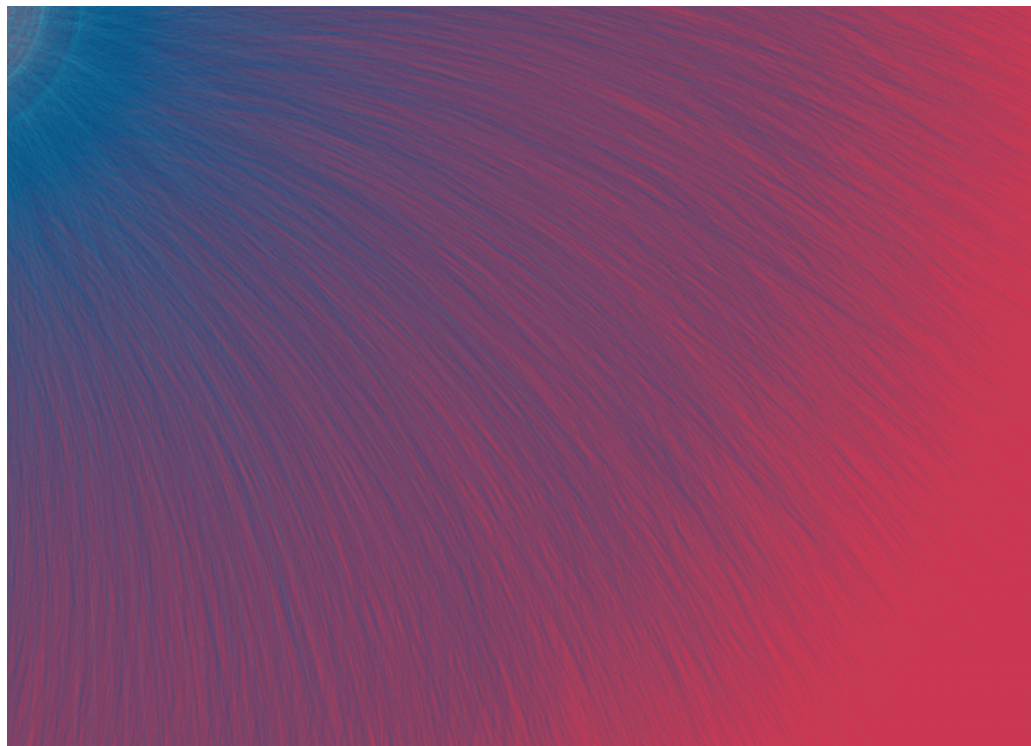
plant_



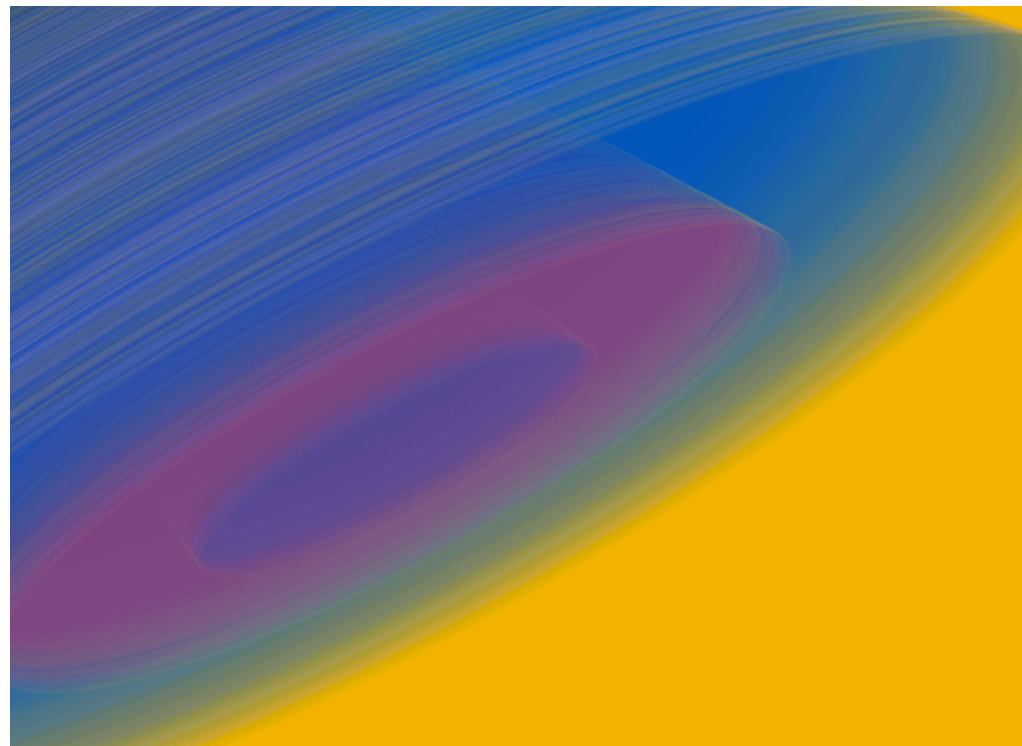
wheel_



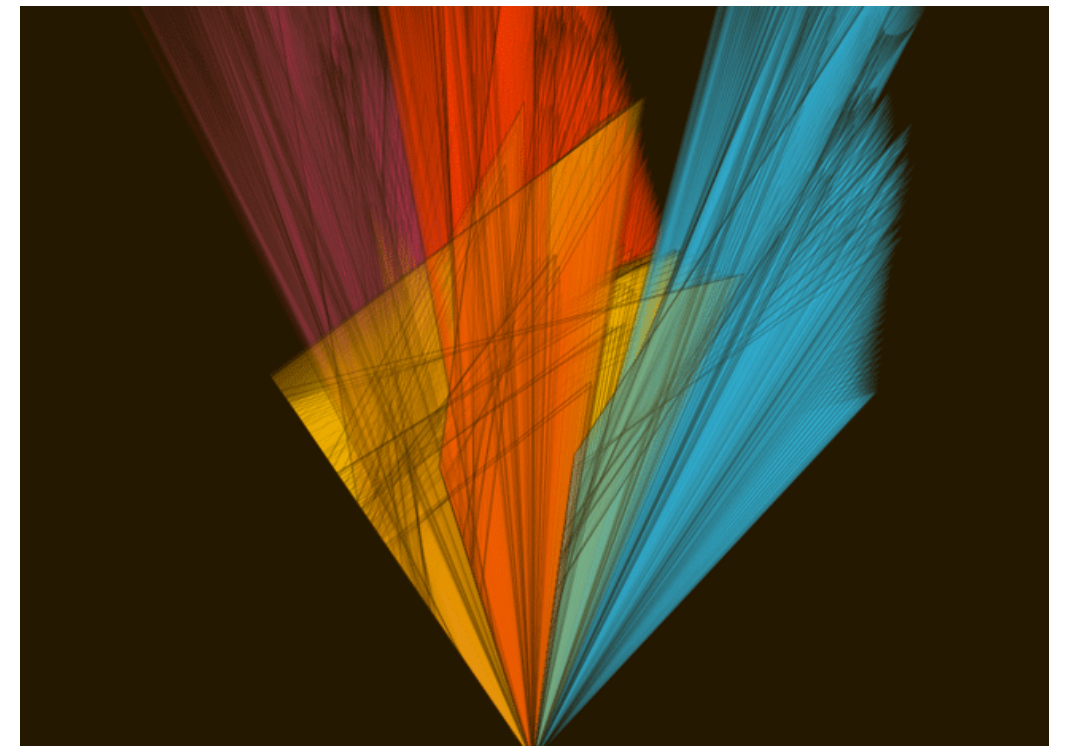
light_



sky_



vacuum_



nuclear_

Stills from the video