

ONDŘEJ
HOUŠŤAVA

2018/2020

UNDERGROUND
WEATHER (2018)

WHEN I LEAVE THE
ROOM WILL YOU STILL
THINK OF ME ? (2019)

CARTOGRAPHERS
DREAM AS OCTOPUS
LULLABY (2020)

PREPARATION FOR
A PUBLIC HEARING
(2020)

UNDERGROUND WEATHER (2018)

Underground Weather is a screenplay in a form of looping text. The performer or reader has an option to navigate her or his reading by a random choice of further narration through a system of hypertexts at the end of each text segment. Looping through text in non-linear flow – reading this way the text never ends and the reader arrives at a multiplicity of repeating segments, always changing their context within the fluid-structure of hypertexts, trapping the reader in a dream-like trip. This text was written for a performance – performative reading and simple choreography engaging visitors and sculpture installation build for a performer. Part of this choreography was also working with various scents and essential oils offered to spectators but also used by the performer herself.

A narration of Underground Weather comes from research of events concerning anthrax leak out in the Siberian Yamal peninsula in 2016 caused by thawing of top layers of permafrost. The bacteria of anthrax leaked out of one hundred years old deer caraccas frozen under several layers of soil. First, the bacteria traveled from a small body of water to the herd of migrating deers from which it gets to the local community of Yamal natives. The result of this event caused several deaths and extermination of all deer herds on the peninsula as well as the chemical treatment of a large area of the peninsula. I took these events as a base layer for fiction writing. Writing with a movement, concerning far away places, touched by the hand of market production causing large sometimes also nonvisible movements in atmosphere and soil through different mediators (as heat generated by overstimulation of natural resources).

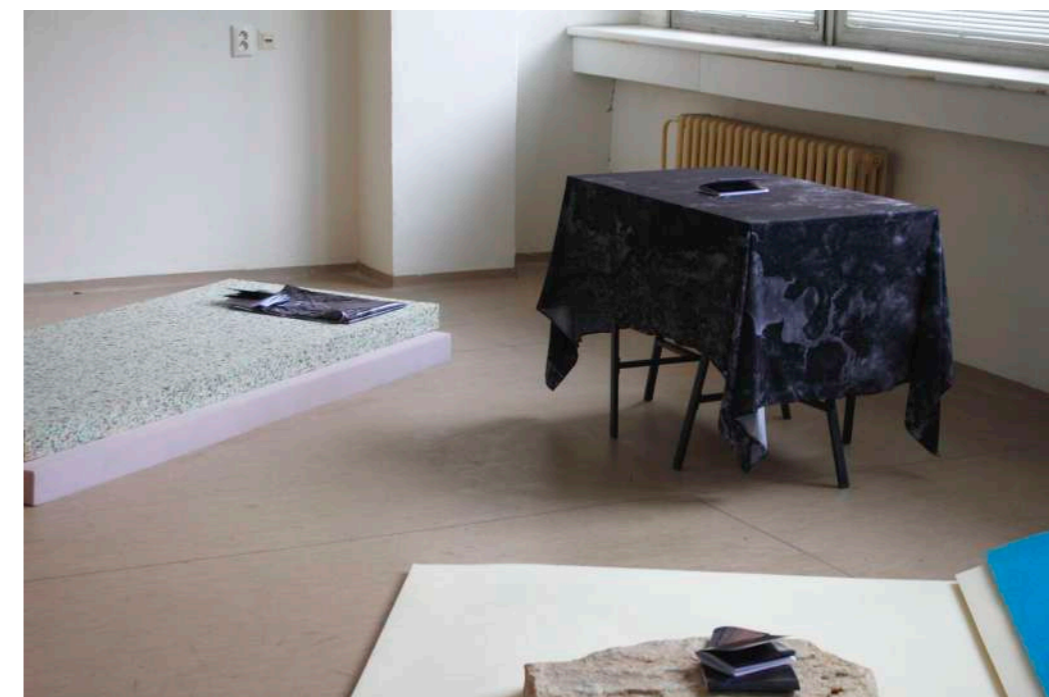
The text starts as a beginning of an illness or drug-like delirium taking the reader/performer through a changing landscape of defrosting permafrost connecting the reader/performer to hidden distant places touched by human presence or rather effects of human presence. Large methane lakes, abandoned structures of oil companies and the reader himself are inhabited by bacteria taking us on a feverish trip.

It's important to say that this work was produced in 2018 before the Covid pandemics and has no connection to it in any way.



Underground Weather, 2018, stage for reading, variable dimensions, performed by Sanja Anđelković, photo Matúš Pisarčík (mattress foams, stones, essential oils and two prints of aerial photographs on fabric) on the right

Underground Weather, 2018, stage for reading of variable dimensions



I. PROLOGUE

In the summer heatwave of 2018, unusual weather in Northern Siberia flooded the landscape and minds of its inhabitants. The rising curves of temperature were followed by bulging levels of anxiety, fear, displacement, and paranoia all over the world. These curves and torrents warmed up the lower layers of the Troposphere and caused irreversible changes in our bodies. Breaks in the landscape and our minds were followed by the rising of a great underground storm causing a great deal of trouble in local and global economies (of the oil industry), exposing a small part of the unapproachable body. A spiritual ancestor to disturb modes of living and dying on Earth... A small cluster of flesh with its own microbiology of the internal world. Its body and thoughts mixed with soil started to burst into the sunlight, once again.

II.

The crumpled up tissue of the ancient deer carcass carried traces of long-forgotten microbiological life. An ancestor caught and frozen in geological memory. A ghoul exorcised under the tonnes of soil by a long gone narrative.

This bacterial body is an primordial form of intelligence and terrestrial love circulating through thawing layers of permafrost. Unnoticed, It infected the lands of the Yamal Peninsula with utmost speed. Informed by its past and present, it took just a few days to overcome the geographical boundaries of the region, hidden in flesh and water. Blended in the web of relations of time, matter and emotions. With growing density and complexity, the new form of consciousness with no inner features entered the oceans and terrestrial waters as a place of its original primordial state. Reshaping the bottom of the sea under a constant movement.

A fever starts to spread through the water.
A global infection pervades the mind and performs Its own subjective, virtual and manipulated realities informed by Its translucent, elastic body.

It liquefies every subject which it invades.

Now start in your room and go to 1 or 20

1

The air is thick. We are standing in the middle of a gloomy room full of stale air and gray light on the liminal ground at the edge of night... We are not sure how we got here or how we'll get out.

The room is full of undercontrolled images and voices shifting in cycles creating rhythms, liquifying bodies and objects, generating alternative memories and fantasies rendered by clusters of clouds of preceptive sensitivity and data flow. An ecosystem with its own atmospheric phenomena, temperature, humidity, precipitation, air pressure, wind, cloud cover, thoughts, and economy.

...She asked: "What does it feel like to be a jellyfish?"

You're awakened by a blunt pain coming out of a small point between your eyes. It passes through the upper part of the chest, over the shoulders to the tips of the fingers. The bed is soaked with sweat, and unhealthy hot air hangs over the room. Wipe the sweat from your forehead and overcome the compulsive need to vomit, mobilized by a heavy stomach. Your brain is like a sponge sucking all of the damp moisture above your

3

I am floating above your body. Seemingly calm, snuggling up to a carcass of something that once was a vital, muscular deer. How did we get here? And what is our position now?

The bed you are lying on begins to vibrate, twist, and wobble. A strong odor of rotting meat fills the room.

HIC SUNT LEONES

I hang in the air again, just in a different layer of the same story. Aerosol particle. I am fucking freezing up here. A helicopter floats through my body and for a little while we are as one.

A group of several hundred men in awkward white suits with gas masks over their faces march through mudflows and animal paths. The strong chemical odor defeats the smell of rotting meat, leaking out of your story. Massive boots seem hard to pick up with heavy tanks on their back. It's not easy to walk here although it looks easy on the screen...

I'm not giving up on you...

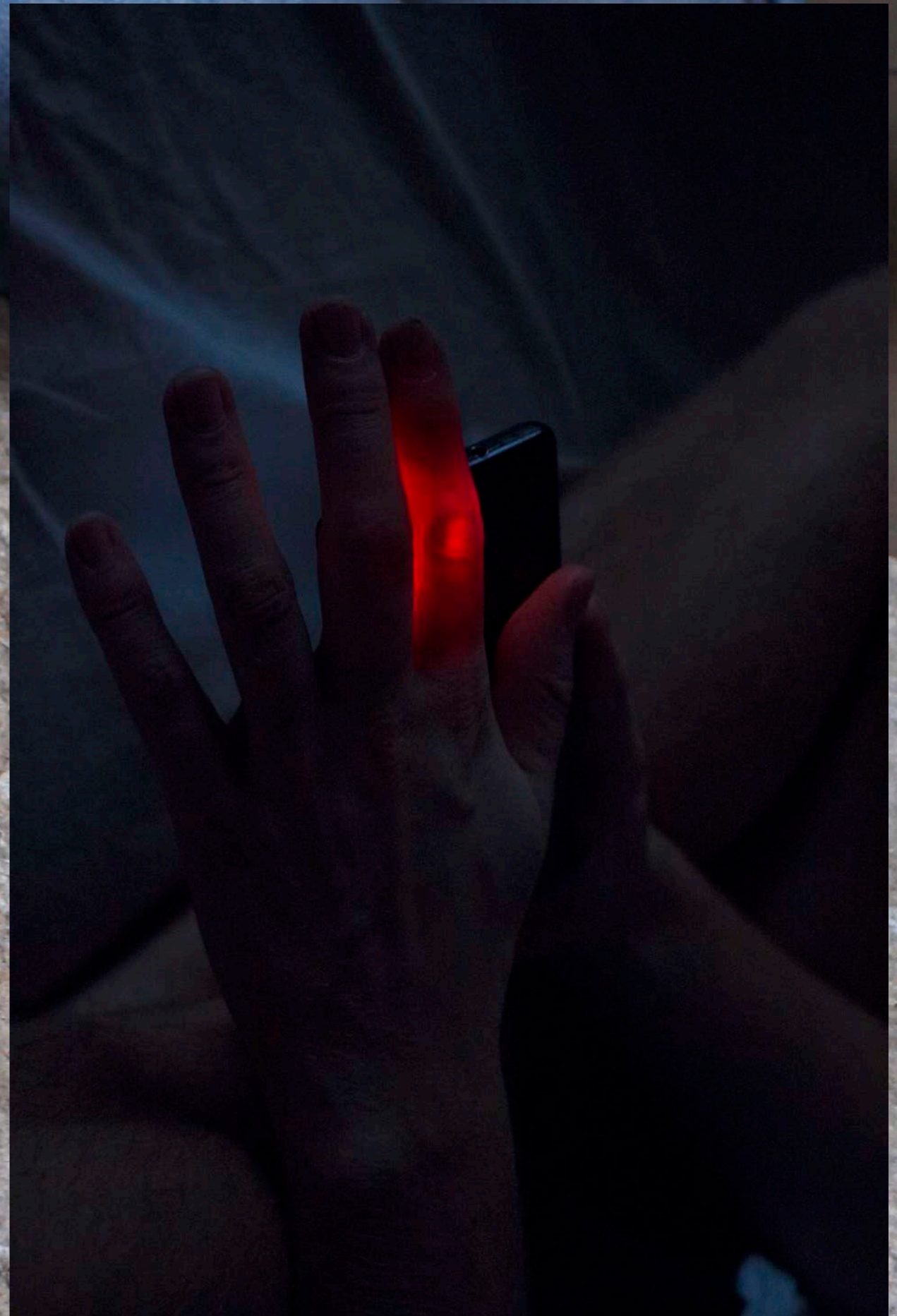
continue to 4 or 0



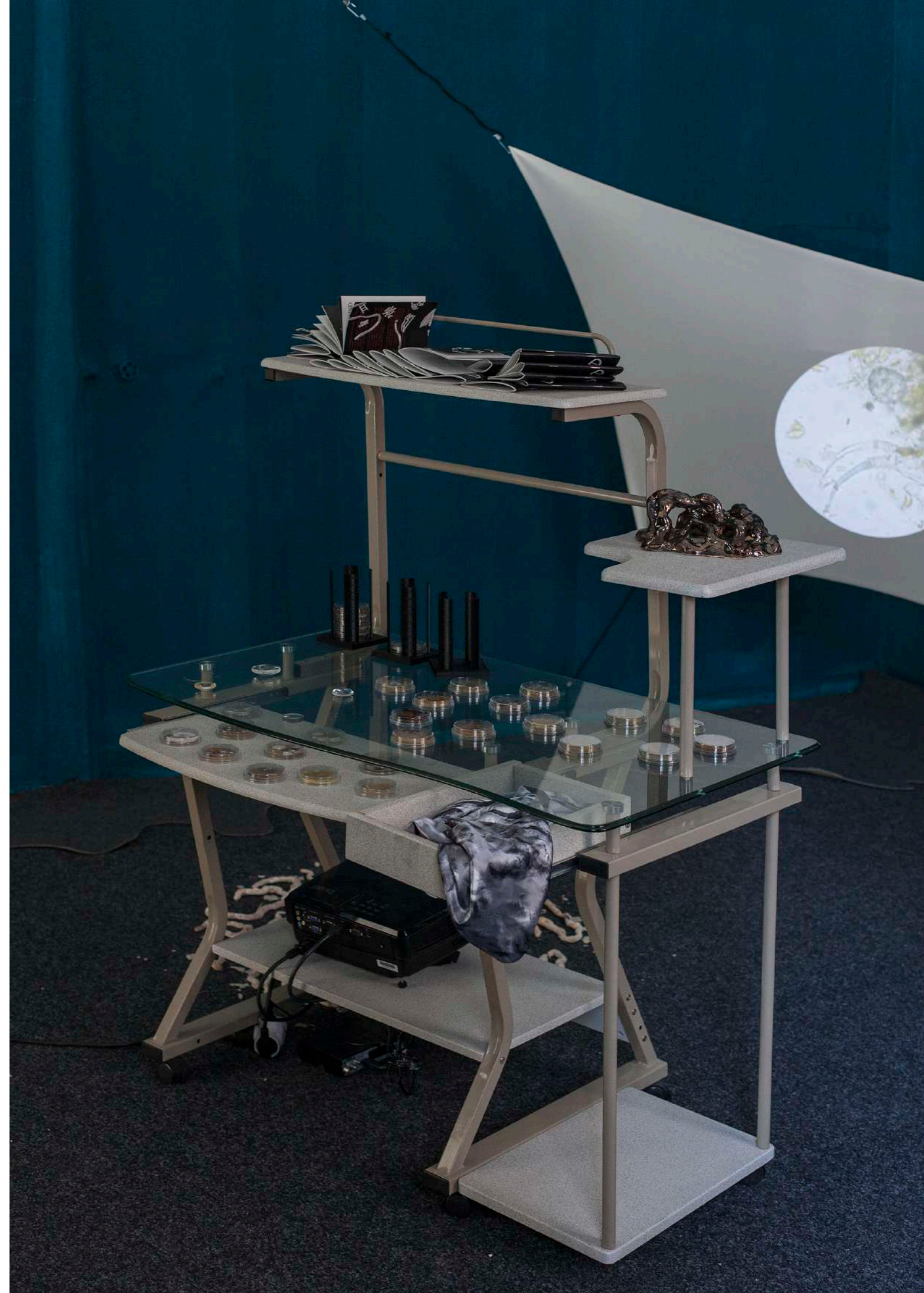
Underground Weather, 2018, stage for reading of variable dimensions, performed by Sanja Anđelković, photo Matúš Písarčík
(mattress foams, stones, essential oils and two prints of aerial photographs on fabric)



Underground Weather, 2018, stage for reading of variable dimensions, performed by Sanja Anđelković, photo Matúš Písarčík (mattress foams, stones, essential oils and two prints of aerial photographs on fabric)



Underground Weather, 2018, stage for reading of variable dimensions, performed by Sanja Anđelković, photo Matúš Písarčík on the right. Underground Weather, 2018, cover of text paperback, performed by Sanja Anđelković, photo Matúš Písarčík



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Presentation of the project at group show Humid Intimacy at the A.M.180 gallery, Prague, 8. 3. – 27. 4. 2019
(two hundred printed paperbacks and two prints of aerial photographs on silk fabric)

with
Nikola Balberčáková, Ján Gašparovič and Berta Holoubková, Ondřej Houšťava, Dávid Koronczi and Erik Pánči, Julius Pristauz,
Stach Szumski
curated by Zlatka Borůvková
photo Valentýna Janů



WHEN I LEAVE THE ROOM WILL YOU STILL THINK OF ME ? (2019)

Presented as a research structure, this project is a hybrid of text, video, and collected artifacts exhibited as an archive for affective connecting. The subject of this research structure was (now sometimes controversial) Institut für Sexualwissenschaft destroyed by nazi youth students in 1930 as a part of a spectacular demonstration of power during one of the first publicly orchestrated books burning in Berlin.

There is a short movie shoot in Berlin on the same day almost 90 years later, tracking already non-existing places connected to this early sexological institution (studying non-normative sexualities but also engaging in political struggles concerning sexual liberation). Along with the movie, there are several fragments – books published by the institute, record of the interview with Berlin-based researcher studying this institution for several decades, transcripts of archive records – found in Brno (CZ) documenting the tragic death of K.G one of the staff members and lover of the head of Institut für Sexualwissenschaft. All the materials are connecting and at times again departing in a face of archival loss and problematic interpretations of this modernist medical institution. There are also ambivalent findings, things we necessary didn't wish to discover within this liberatory narration which is necessarily also part of modernist colonial and imperial project. The author's desire for history has to be confronted with this problematic narrative.

Part of this project was also a public lecture: Archeology of queer forgetting, at a cultural center Dira do Sveta in Lipotvský Mikulas, 26. June 2019
and discussion at Pohoda festival as part of the public program of Office for contemporary art (curated by Ilona Nemeth), 30. June 2019



When I leave the room will You still think of me ?, 2019, instalation detail, photo Matúš Písařík
on the right, When I leave the room will You still think of me ?, 2019, instalation, various materials, variable dimensions



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When I leave the room will You still think of me ?, 2019, instalation views, various materials, variable dimensions,
photo Matúš Písařík





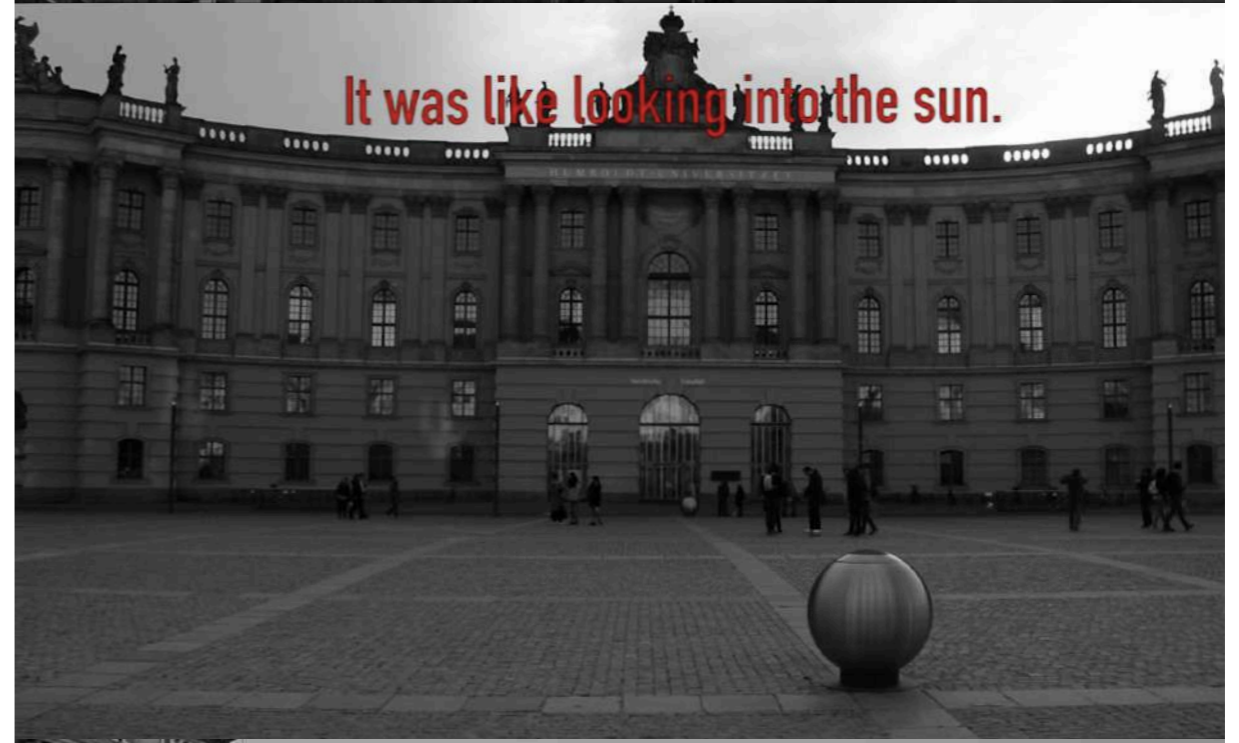
It serves as a reservoir... as a Framework.

The building and lives once lived inside... have changed to an image... a set of fragmented images.

It's not a building, after all, it's rather something else like a stubborn attachment to the lost objects.

Sometimes I got the feeling that there were some objects with limbs, like strange mutations of legs or arms and wet tongues.

After all, they are just books, piles of papers rendered by my feelings of regret.



It has become a fiction ...

The walls started to collapsing taking down the libraries.

It was like looking into the sun.

The archive. Its body, and desires put them through harmful challenge.

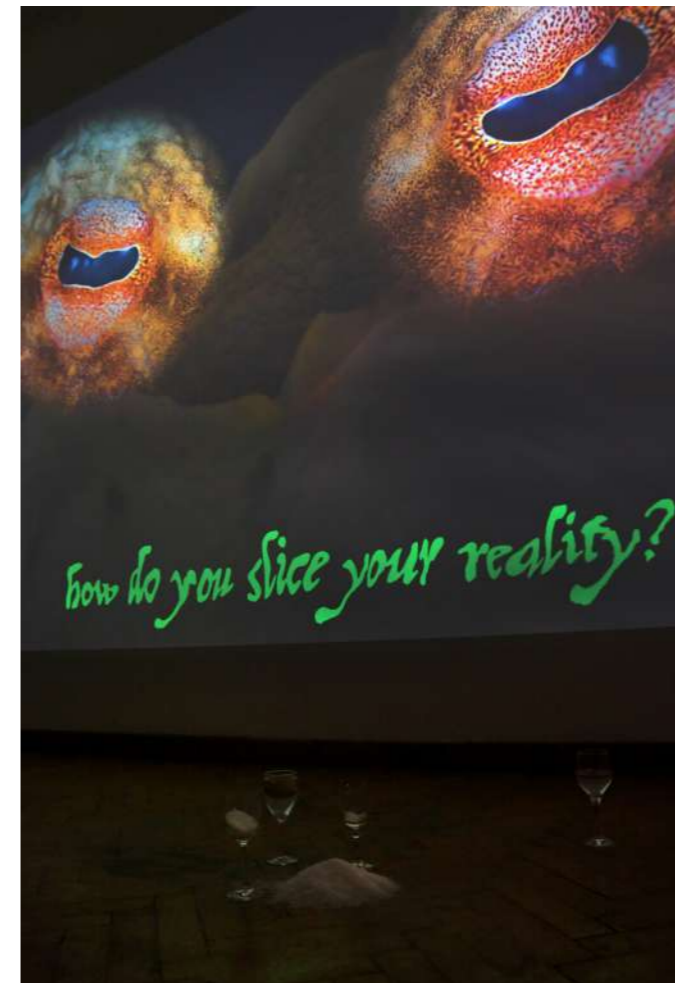
When I leave the room will you still think of me?

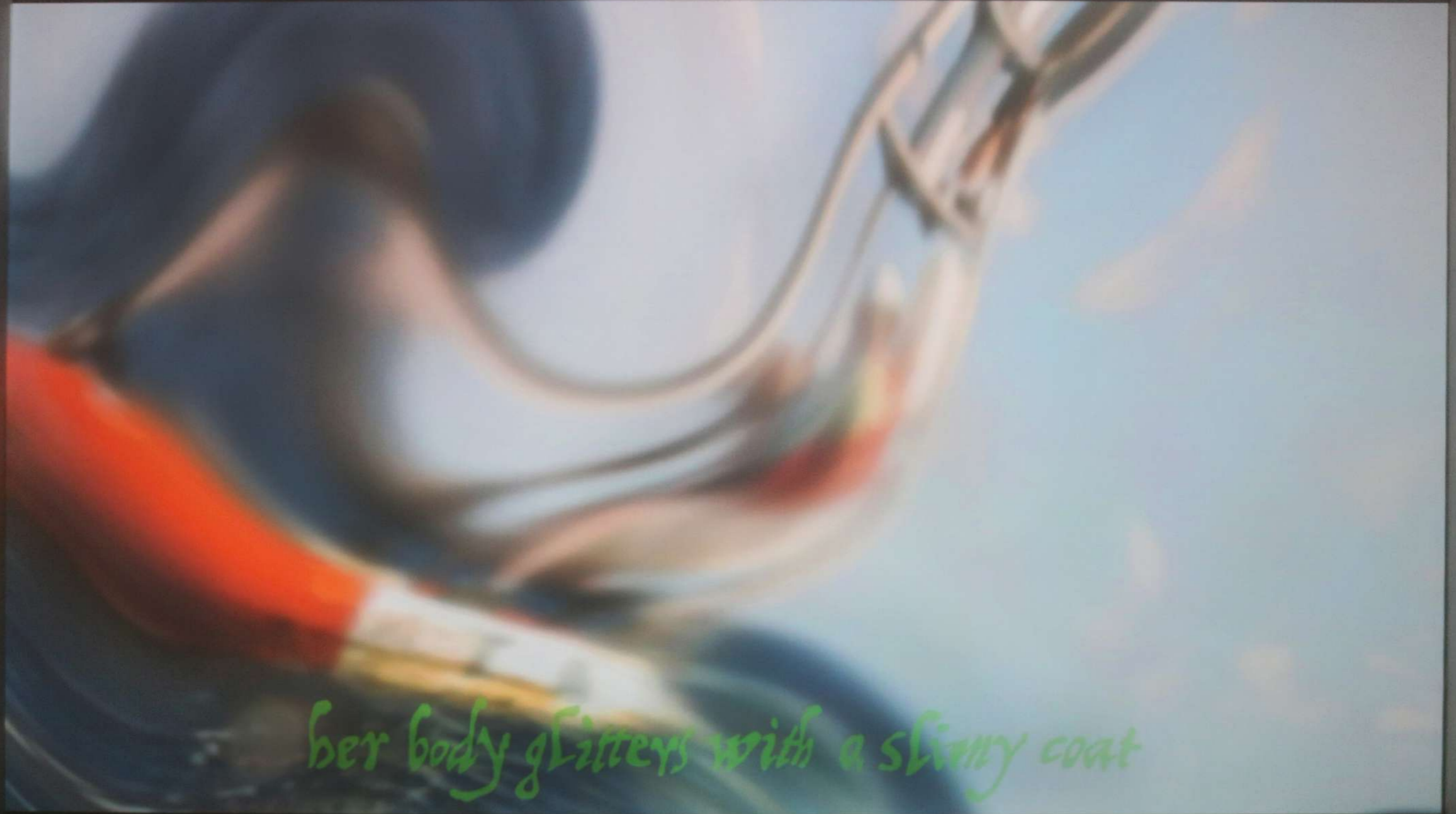


Will You still think of me when I leave the room? (2019), photo Matúš Písařík
discussion at Pohoda festival as part of the public program of Office for contemporary art, 30. June 2019

CARTOGRAPHERS DREAM AS AN OCTOPUS LULLABY (2020)

The short video essay is concerning the use of fiction as an aspect of worldmaking. Video is structured through several animated photographs, a short record of sleeping octopus, and a poem written as a conversation in-between octopus, imaginary island, and viewer. Presented as a large-scale projection supplemented with all the wine glass available in gallery space filled with slimy fluids (seaweed starch), salt, and dry out salt solution, placed on the floor beneath the projection. An important part of the work is the watery soundscape recorded at different places of Italian coastline blending with recordings of wine glass vibrations. Background for this work is the story of artificial nonexisting Island – Null Island located in international waters close to the West African coast. Island is located at the exact place where the prime meridian and the equator cross, the location, and fiction of this one square meter island is used by mapping systems to trap GPS navigating errors.





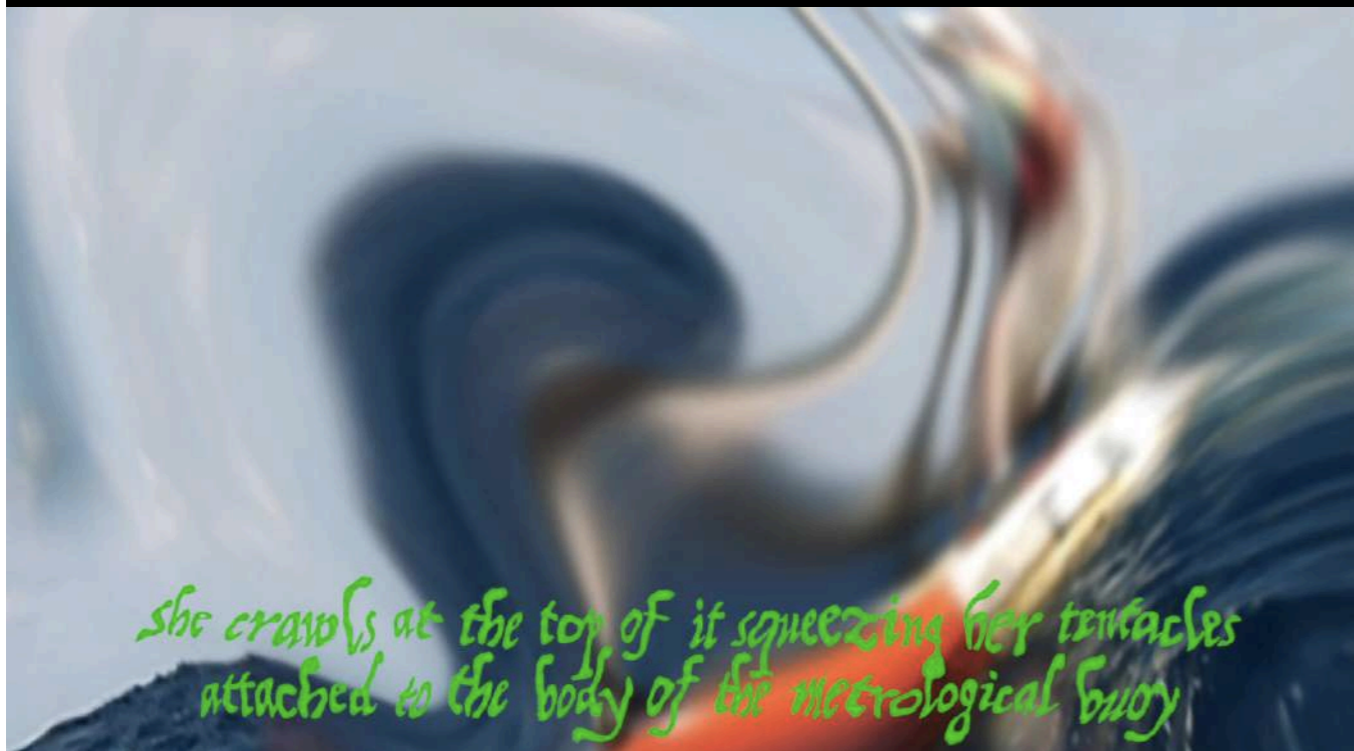
her body glitters with a slimy coat



Cartographers dream as an Octopus Lullaby



The soft tissue of my tongue seems to be growing
into the hard structure of my teeth



she crawls at the top of it squeezing her tentacles
attached to the body of the meteorological buoy



What have you lost in the shadows under your
tounge?



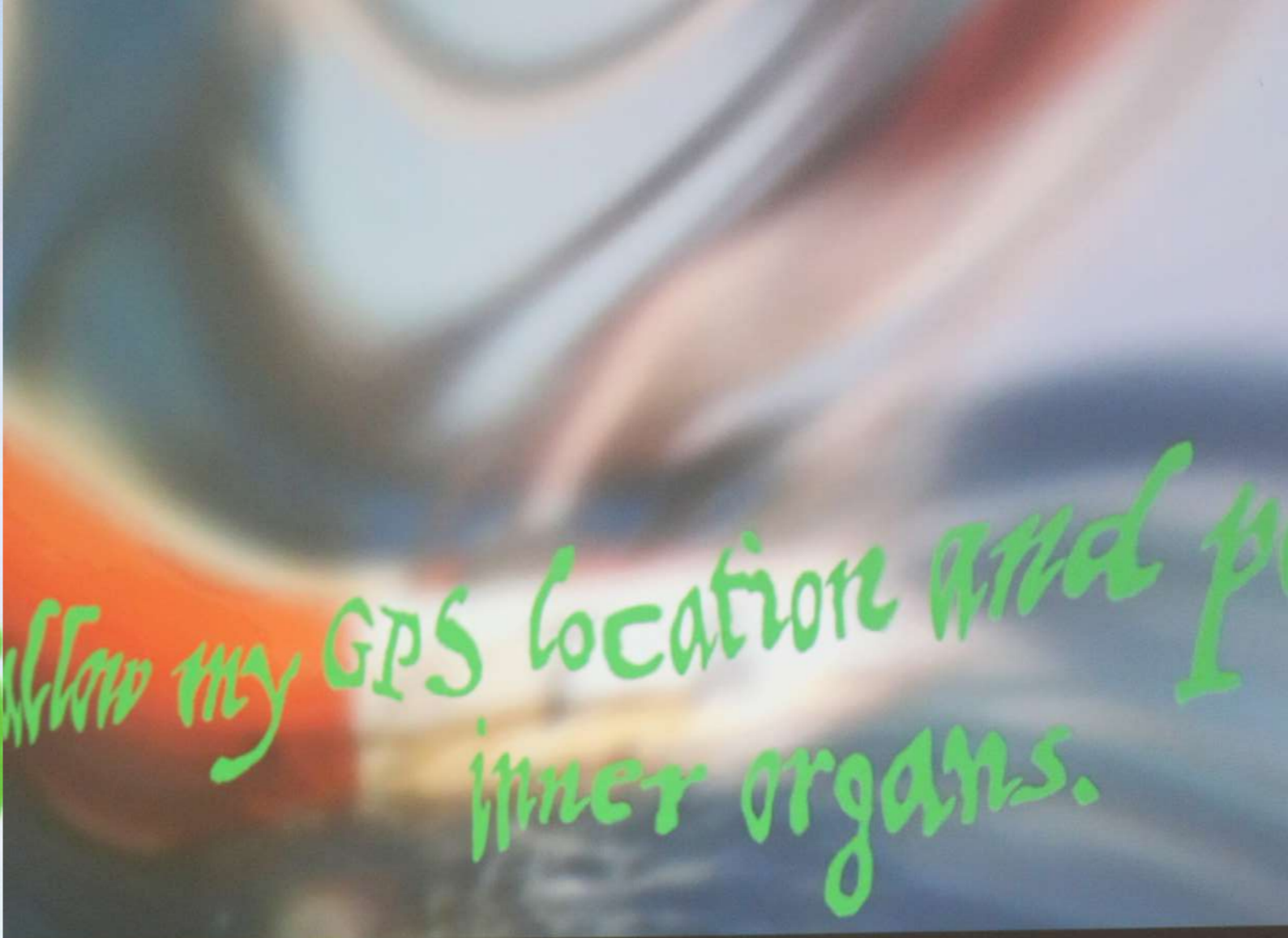
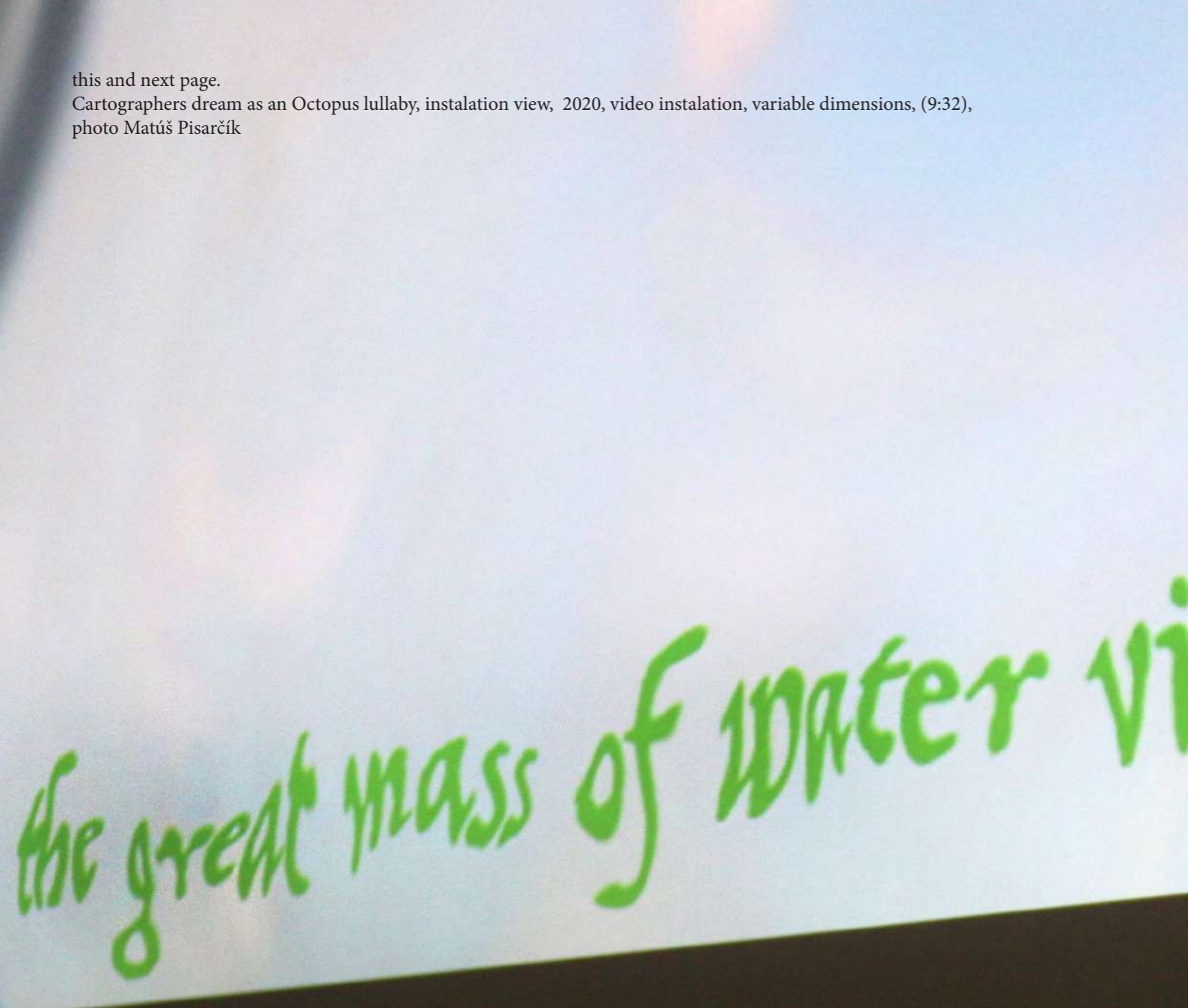
Exhale black

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Cartographers dream as an Octopus lullaby, 2020, video stills, (9:32)

I slipped a few crystals of salt into your wine
bababa

this and next page.
Cartographers dream as an Octopus lullaby, instalation view, 2020, video instalation, variable dimensions, (9:32),
photo Matúš Písařík





PREPARATION FOR A PUBLIC HEARING (2020)



Preparation for a public hearing is a record of a staged performance presented as a double screen installation built in space. The performer, central to the short movie is duplicated on both screens engaging in ostensibly same acts, sometimes departing and breaking the unity of the second screen. Only after several viewing, we can notice that the ostensibly same acts – most of the time acts of „speaking,, or rather „voicing“ are actually not the same but very similar, synchronizing only a few times during the movie. The mimics of the face are different as well as the position and curve of the body. We are looking at different images very similar one to another. The performer which guides us through the movie also vanishes and reappears between the screens sometimes represented by the stage equipment such as a microphone, smoke, or just lights contributing to his spectrality, fluctuating between different embodiments without bodies. The performer's voice is absent for a whole length of the movie, but he is not only a vessel for materials presented to him before the shooting, he is an active player, his silence is strategic.

Screenplay and performative practice work with different modes of articulation such as deliberate and strategic silence or movement. To engage silence is a means to honor inarticulable, prioritize deep listening, refuse to incriminate and defy demands of production and public performance – specifically act of public speaking. So the movie starts with an interpretation of the canonical performance of John Cage 4'33 (the instrument here is the performer's vocal cords) as a powerful piece of resistance. The performer looks at different modes of voicing as a way to occupy space without engaging in a particular representational economy – he does not counter negative representations with positive ones but instead absents himself from this dead-end street.

Central to the movie is the middle part, only then he appears on both screens to deliver a speech confronting the viewer though it's clear that he is lip-synching prerecorded voice of someone else, double-checking with a pile of papers in his hand. Often he misses a word or exact tempo. He is engaged in delays and early arrivals of bits of speech. His performance is out of time, far from perfect as well as little distortion and blurs of the camera image. The camera is also complicit within the creation of this situation. These little plays with time continue to build up with the use of lip-syncing. Time asynchronicity and lip-syncing used by the performer are usually a part of a drag dramaturgical toolkit, here these methods refer to a specific regime of alternative historicity. Lip-syncing has a strong relation to feeling historical. To breathe someone else's words means a specific performative practice of connecting across time. Synthesis of lips creates a somatic connection to other person and through this bond carries voice and its cultural content from „different time,, to present, this exchange of oral narration is thus possible outside of the heteronormative structure of hereditary. From the very nature of this method we know that the record is always made back in time, but the text written and recorded for this performance is situated in the future – speaking of breaking borders, mass migration of people, unspecified probably violent conflict, breakings and endings or reality regimes. We are not sure who is the receiver of this letter also we know very little about the identity of the writer or performer himself. We are put into a strange position and logical asynchrony, two-time tempos and layers that are doubling on two screens. Here, the circulation of time is not linear, it's rather circular ignoring the logical order of past, present, and future.

Production credits:

performance Adrian Kriška, voiceover Sanja Anđelković, camera Peter Zákutanský, editing Matúš Písařík,

on the left. Preparation for public hearing, 2020, video stills (17:59)

on the next page. Preparation for public hearing, 2020, video stills (17:59)







next four pages.

Preparation for public hearing, 2020, variable dimensions, double screen projection (17:59), instalation views, photo Matúš Písařčík







