

project proposal
Adèle Grégoire
#1004849

rare earths

stories about (digital) landscapes,
and the sweat of their makers



Angel is sleeping on my laps, her hand under my shirt, the view from the train window, motion blur

2021

0005.png

rendered in Cycles with the 3D software blender

world building

It is a bit difficult to tell you exactly what is going to come out of this.

I have several elements in mind that would add themselves to each other and create a symbiotic piece¹, some kind of dramatic scene.

- The first one would be drawings, little messages I want to throw in the sea of wasted and tired images with the hope of triggering its² cybernetic³ power.

- The second one is an island made of earth. This island is a collaboration with worms and microorganisms. It represents a safe and rare ground, an interspecies' utopia to escape or to bury treasures.

- The third one is an oma-bike-power-generator. This generator activates or deactivates sound and light.

- The fourth is the sound of ventilation, of fans used to cool down a cryptocurrency mine complex making ears vibrate, silencing thoughts.

The sound links the elements together. Once the Oma-bike is powered by human pedaling forces, the fans fade and stop.

It will also change the lighting in the room, going from overall light to spotlights aiming at specific elements. The light would act as a separator or an activator.

This leaves the viewer in a strange position, not able to access parts of the piece by themselves. One has to give of their own energy for others to see and spend time with a specific point of view.

With all of this, I will try to compose the audio visual play of a travelling thought. Each of the elements become characters inhabiting the piece, building up tension as they confront and question each other's existence. The making process will inspire my thesis' writing process, creating an experimental scenario/script out of their encounters, a story questioning the relationship I have with images from the way they are born to the way they are used and eaten. Maybe the desire for a film will come out of this.

1. The French word *pièce* can designate an object and a place. It's at the same time a part taken out of a whole, and the whole where the separate parts happen. (think of a theater play)

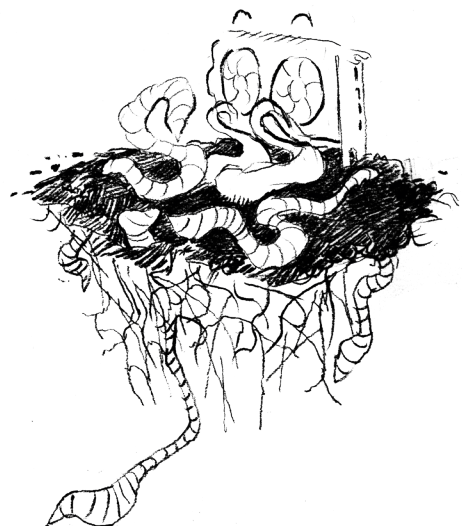


Island of lost and desperate messages in the sea.

<https://saveourshores.org/event/plastic-bottle-ban-volunteer-canvasser-training-4/>

3. Using here the sea of wasted and tired images as a metaphor for social media and the internet in general, as a seemingly infinite dump of data where images meet each other in an «antidisciplinary» manner regarding regulatory and purposive systems

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cybernetics>



occupation of time and matter, not by means of learning, making or understanding, just in order to spend the time, give the attention, connect and find escape routes

I was raised by pixelated images. I feel instinctively more connected to the depth of a screen than to living beings. As a kid of the internet¹, I'm realising that one of my parents is in fact the cyber-libertarian dream... The utopia of a matterless freedom with infinite possibilities has shaped my relationship to the world. By the time I'm learning about the physical, economical, and political implications of a perpetual transition into a "*third industrial revolution*", I feel fooled and stuck... I decided to start a process of deconstruction and emancipation from this magically efficient land of confusion.

Last year I encountered words, sounds, images and thoughts that affected deeply the way I observe, make sense of and try to connect with my surroundings. Here are a few:

Anna L. Tsing, with the book «*The Mushroom at the End of the World*» she put together, makes me pay more attention to the importance of intimate interbeing collaborations and contamination as a result of migration from one ecosystem to another. She also calmed my fears about the word *disturbance*.

Octavia Butler reminded me of the importance of creating inspiring and complex possibilities for a desired future, enhancing my understanding of the possible meanings of the words *knowledge* and *technology* with her fiction «*Lilith Brood*».

I cried looking at an archival video posted on youtube³ where the activist Julia Butterfly talks about her experience of a violent storm at the top of Lula, a 2000 year old redwood tree. She climbed Lula and stayed there for 2 years in order to save her from the chainsaws of a logging company. The American way of depicting activists or social rights activists' victories have a tendency of tickling my heart and my eyes.

It also reminded me of a film I saw a few years ago: «*Arbres*»⁴ written and directed by Sophie Bruneau. Trees are becoming more than images to me, I feel curious and ready to allow myself to engage with them.

In April, New Scenario released an online exhibition called *Chernobyl papers*⁵. The collective went for five days to the wasteland of Chernobyl to place drawings previously harvested from 39 international artists, carefully in the radioactive landscape. The act of contextualizing these drawings of a particular value in this human generated apocalyptic landscape brings the two imaginaries⁶ to a similar ground. On one hand, online the journey seems fake, the landscape transforms itself in a scenery, greeting the drawings in its quiet realm. On the other hand, the drawings become real as they are abandoned inside of the deserted nuclear complex.

These pieces gave me the confidence of observing the complexity of a landscape I often take for granted, in fear of being overwhelmed by it perhaps. They change the way I observe my concrete and digital surroundings as a result.

1. Georgiana Barcan
Kid of the internet
self published
2021

2. using Jeremy Rifkin's
words for the great and
smart green transition.

3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tsvJ1XaXvo>

4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IaYmsTmkiUI>

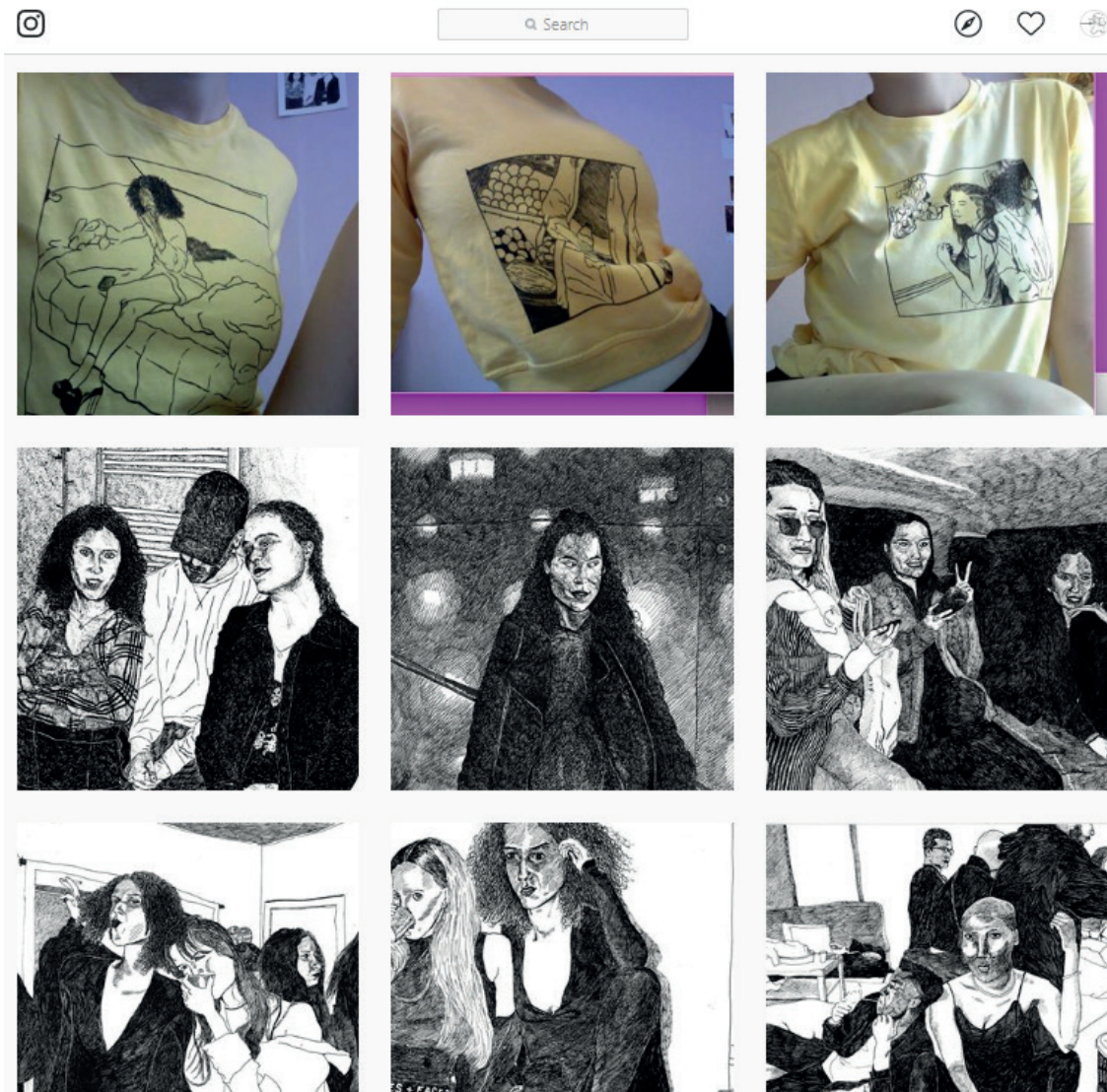
5. <http://newsscenario.net/chernobyl-papers/>

6. one imaginary being the physical ground as the result of a man made catastrophe... The other being the imagery representing it, the only one you and I would actually love to visit.



Drawing by Maren Karlsen

My practice starts around the seemingly simple and intuitive act of drawing from observation. I've drawn people, places, and spaces. I've made fictional drawings made by fictional characters and hung them inside of invented appartements. With the project «*Fake people showing fake love to me*»- Drake, I've questioned the act of drawing in regards to representation, its value, and the attention that would be paid to the intimate gesture of observing and transcribing slowly a picture with a few likes on Instagram, as a strange *fangirl*. At the very moment it enters the realm of fast existing and fascinating images, a drawing can procure many emotions. One can be happy, glad, flattered, to be represented as one can be creeped out and even angry or scared. These drawings were very performative, I sometimes didn't feel at ease with the behaviors of the character I embodied. I also got to meet the people I had drawn, and ask how they felt about it. As a result of this experience, I created a fictional physical room. The room reflected the feeling I had as the obsessed stalker I had been, all the objects were clues or witnesses of our fleeting connections.

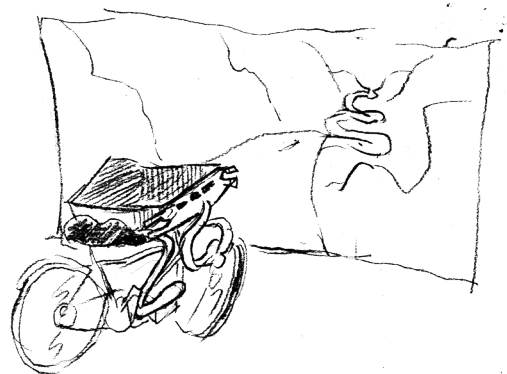


«*Fake people showing fake love to me*»- Drake
2017

During the covid-19 lockdown in 2020, I started a self-learning process of the 3D modeling software Blender. My interest in 3D came gradually throughout the three years I spent training myself technically about image making for the cinema industry. During the lockdown, I started replacing virtually the places I couldn't inhabit and making textures from intimate materials, opening my curiosity to infinite possibilities of shapes and matter. What drove and structured me through this exploration was the online twitch channel we set up with our close group of friends. The cultural sector had completely shut down, but we had concerts, performances, and poetry every day there, we built our own little ecosystem. It made me realize the importance and the privilege of having a safe sharing space, a context in which to share stories together and take care of our mental health. This one was only possible with a nice internet connection and a generous GPU. Thanks GPU.

After being locked inside for three months, together with my friend Angel Adhera, we decided to fix our bikes and leave. We biked for 6 weeks in the landscapes of Belgium, Germany, Austria and back. We made one collaborative drawing each day for the 41 days we were on the road. Biking after researching open source render engines, I had this strange feeling, as if I was rendering the landscapes unfolding in front of me. Not solving math equations and translating lines of code, more like : $\text{food} + \text{water} + \text{coffee} + \text{sleep} = \text{the unfolding of unknown lands and pouring of sweat}$.

All of these intuitive and reflexive experiences participate in my interest in the physicalities and materiality of digital landscapes, as well as the complex labour needed to gain awareness of their implications.

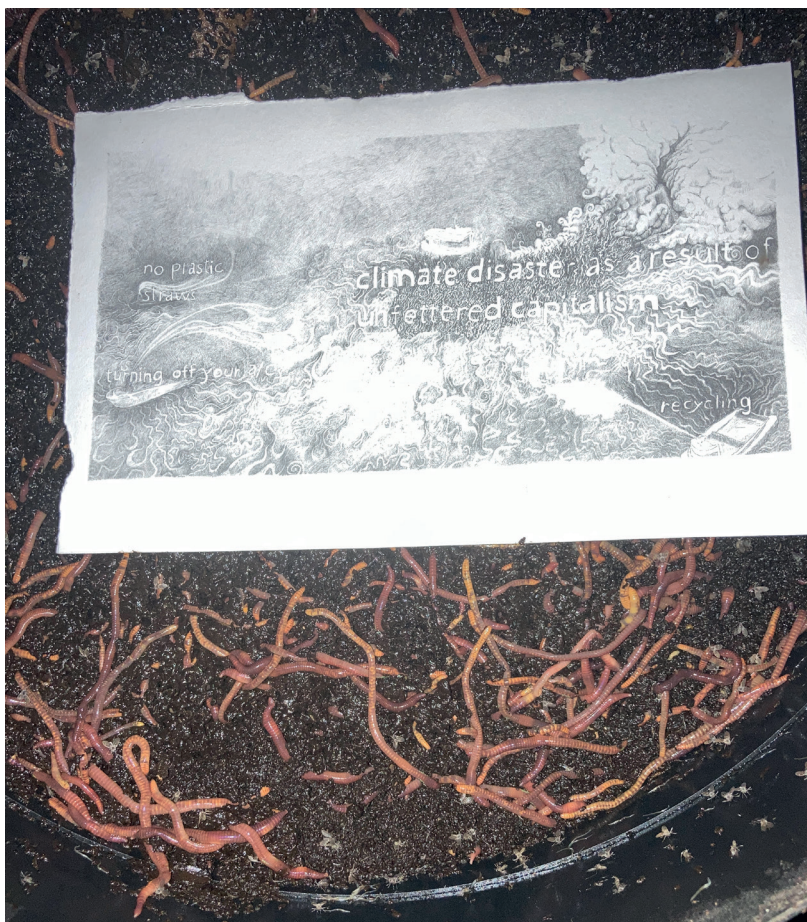


travelling lines and trails of thoughts

a study of digital landscapes

Here I'm starting a chain reaction of drawings made from observation. Looking at my surroundings, landscapes trigger me. The online overwhelmingly mixes itself with the offline and becomes what I think I see or even what I want to see.

The first one is called "unfettered capitalism". It was drawn after a digital landscape disguised as a meme, a fast spreading journalistic photograph dating from the 3rd of July 2021, representing a gas leak in the gulf of Mexico.



Eating is as much of a labour as searching for food

I'm walking and wandering around the city, looking for welcoming composts in Rotterdam to give my organic leftover food previously harvested from the leftovers of Rotterdam's open market. I want to collaborate with Tiger Worms (also called red worms, *Eisenia fetida*), ants, beetles, centipedes, flies, millipedes, slugs, snails, spiders, woodlice and fungi to transform the organic matter I want to get rid of into a safe piece of land, a Rare Earth. A welcoming, and rich ground made of digested leftover material.

I'm also curious to know if their inhabitants like my drawings.

As I bury my drawings, I want to talk about the possible meanings of this gesture establishing the connection to electronic waste and the work of recycling matter.

“how to make free electricity ?” or “How to reclaim power?”

Inspired by Oma-bikes from Rotterdam. I would need one with a pretty big gear, that should not be too difficult to find.

Youtube communities build themselves on challenges. What a better challenge than trying to emancipate oneself from one's electricity bill ?

Here is an example:

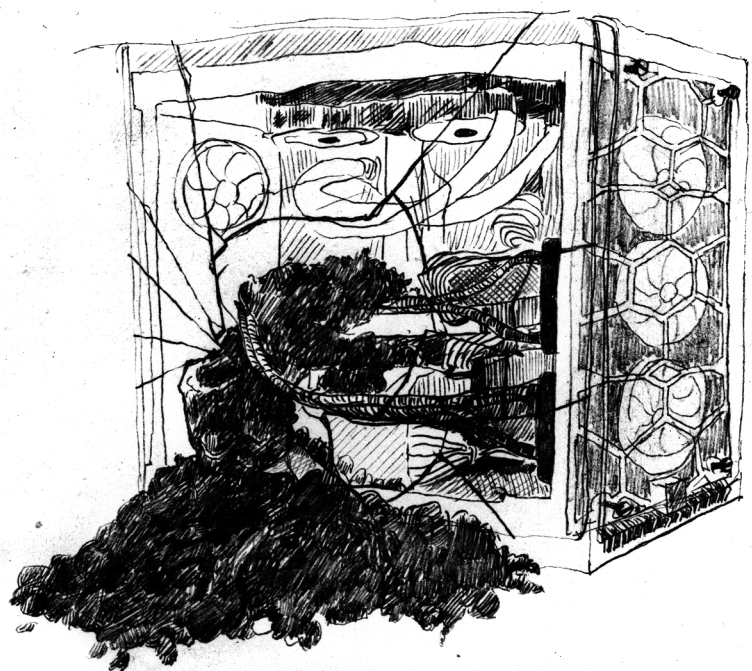
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wo9d3Ug_Cw8

I need to build a dynamo system using an alternator motor linked to a capacitor and a battery to store the electricity. I also need an arduino and a sensor, to program the turning on and off of sounds and light once someone activates the Oma-bike.

The sound of work and working for silence

Listening and paying attention requires more energy than we think. The sound would hopefully be a field recording of the fans of a crypto currency mine.

This piece/space will be made entirely of waste material. Reclaimed mediums, reused identities, recycled histories, reworked fictions. And will find its way back to the trash eventually, or into the compost as worm food !



time-structure

From the beginning of September onwards:

- chain of drawings
- Ask people in what digital landscape they feel safe, comfortable, at peace, inspired ?
- Ask cryptocurrency speculators what kind of land they would buy with their cryptocurrency?
- collecting small and bigger trash that resonates with the drawings.

By mid-November:

- having established connections with gardens around Rotterdam.

By April:

- Having build the oma-bike-generator
- Quest to find sound recordings of the cryptocurrency mines.

Disclaimer:

As on a bike trip. One cannot predict which road will be the best to take. (well this is not entirely true with the technologies and datas at our disposal today...)

Still, hazardous trails will tire us until our last efforts make us find an amazing field or old lady's garden to spend the night.

I feel ambitious, and I don't want expectations. It's a road I'm taking as a starting point. I'll probably arrive half-way, having drifted too many times, to a destination that feels right for a moment.

Helpers, contaminators and collaborators

- The tutors for advice and help to structure my rabbit hole way of thinking into a comprehensible story.
- Surroundings and friends for their inputs and experiences on digital landscapes.
- Essenburg park, Het munt garden, Rob's compost, Guillem Arquer, and other "gentle-earth-generators".
- Doe het zelf werkplaats, Martin Ozowsky, and the interaction station to build the "Oma-bike-electricity-generator".
- I'm looking on marktplaats for cryptocurrency mines for sale in the hope to find some mining complexes in the Netherlands.
- Rafael Romero, the holy driver with the holy car.

Bibliography

Anna L. Tsing - The Mushroom at the End of the World (2021)

Octavia Butler - Lilith Brood (1987-89)

Julie Michelle Klinger - Rare Earth Frontiers (2017)

Hito steyerl - a picture like you and me (2010)

Tim Ingold - Lines: A Brief History (2007)

Donna Harraway - Staying with the trouble (2016)

Joëlle Zask - Quand la forêt brûle : penser la nouvelle catastrophe écologique (2020)

Baptiste Monsaingeon - Homo Detritus (2017)

Daniel Ploeger - Abject Digital Performance, engaging the politics of electronic waste (2017)

