

THEMATIC: A FOCAL CAMERA

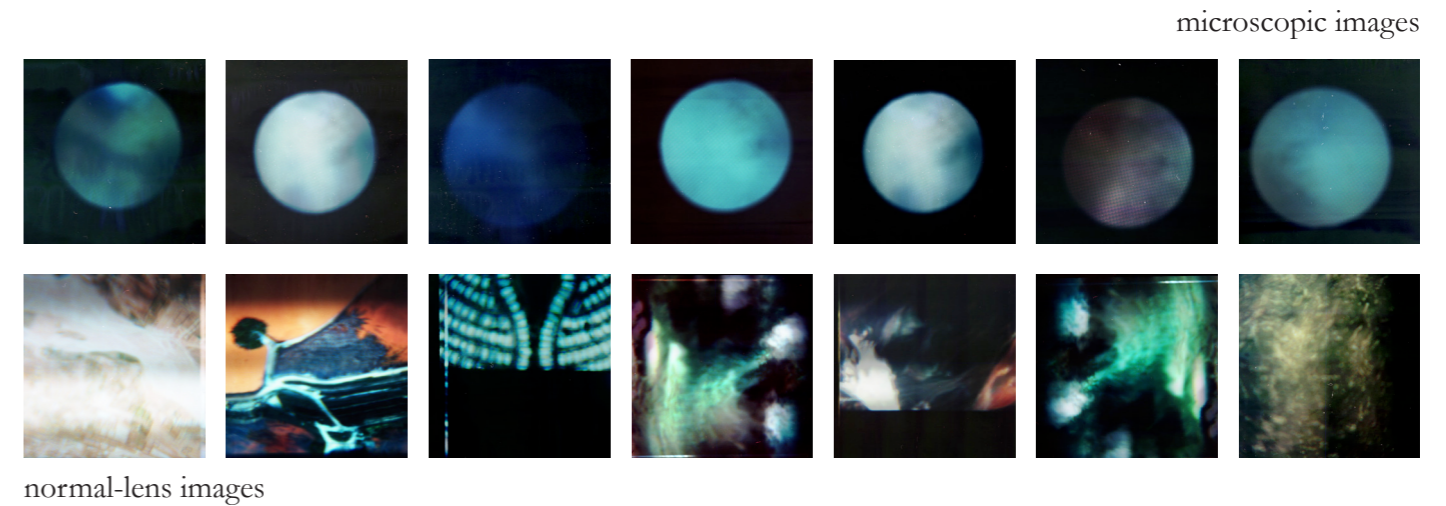
For the DIY Photo Camera thematic, I built two cameras: a microscopic and a normal-lens camera. The cameras were built in order to capture a very specific subject: the smartphone screen. For this purpose, the microscopic camera's intention was to capture pixels. The normal lens camera captured the screen at a focus distance of 1 feet, the recommended distance for viewing one's smartphone. The images displayed on the smartphone screen are composite images taken from Google Earth's satellite database.

The process was different for both cameras. The microscopic camera demanded constant reiteration and readjustment. Eventually, the method was simple. Slide a phone under the camera facing the lens, like using an actual microscope. The phone is then turned on in order to expose the film. The normal camera required a shutter to control exposure. Initially, I did not use composite images which resulted in the first trials. The pixels on the microscopic images were not sharp and the images from the normal lens also looked jagged. Compositing satellite images led to a better "zoom" and better screen.

I was interested in this project as an inquiry into the following:

- The act of zooming in and out of a lens by using a microscopic and a normal lens. Adding the elements of a phone displaying satellite imagery created a hyper-narrative. The images are of a DIY camera looking through a micro display (phone screen) at a macro image (the earth via satellite).
- Fluidity of image-language in the use of something captured by a satellite, then rendered into a smartphone photo after extensive compositing, to be captured by a DIY Camera under different conditions of micro and macro image-making. With the DIY camera as a rugged device submitted to manipulation once more, it is controlled to "display" something intentional (pixel and led screen). This suggests the mutability of the device (camera) and the image (micro, macro, composite, appropriated).

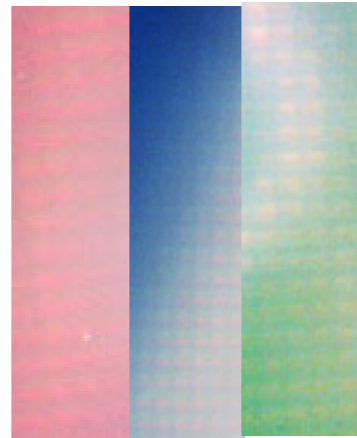
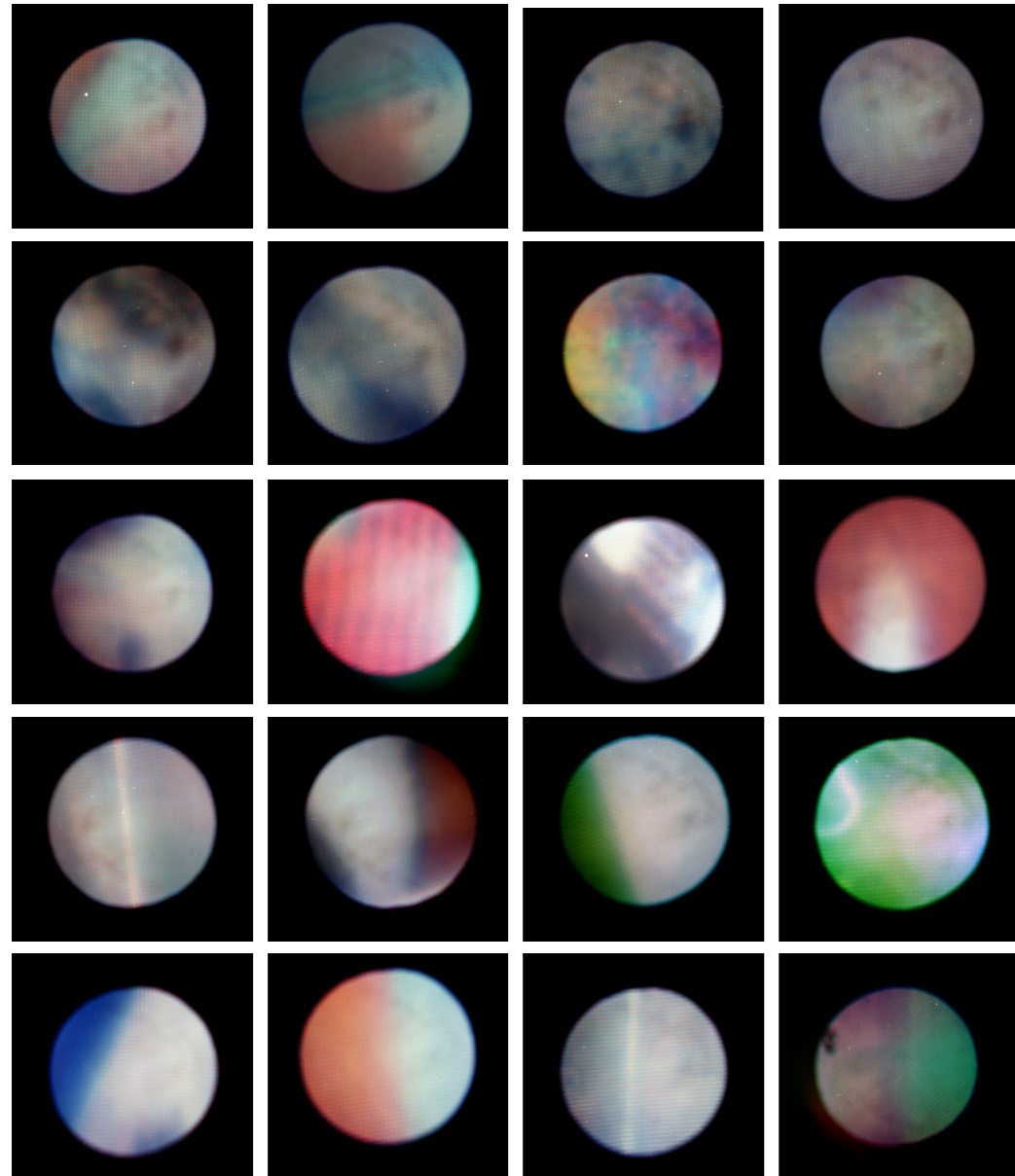
Initial trial images without composited images, strict exposure time and stabilization



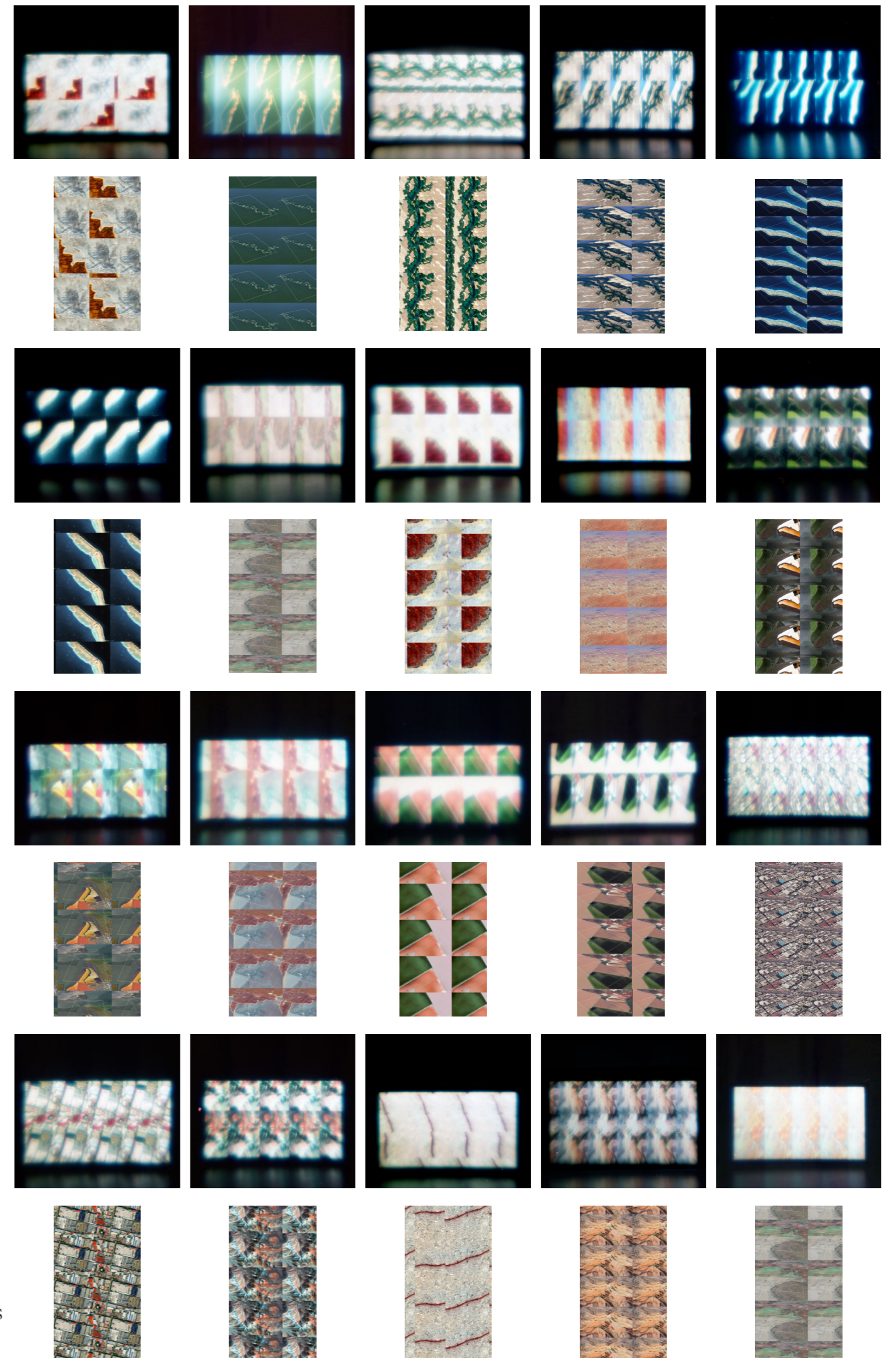
Sample of satellite image used vs Composite

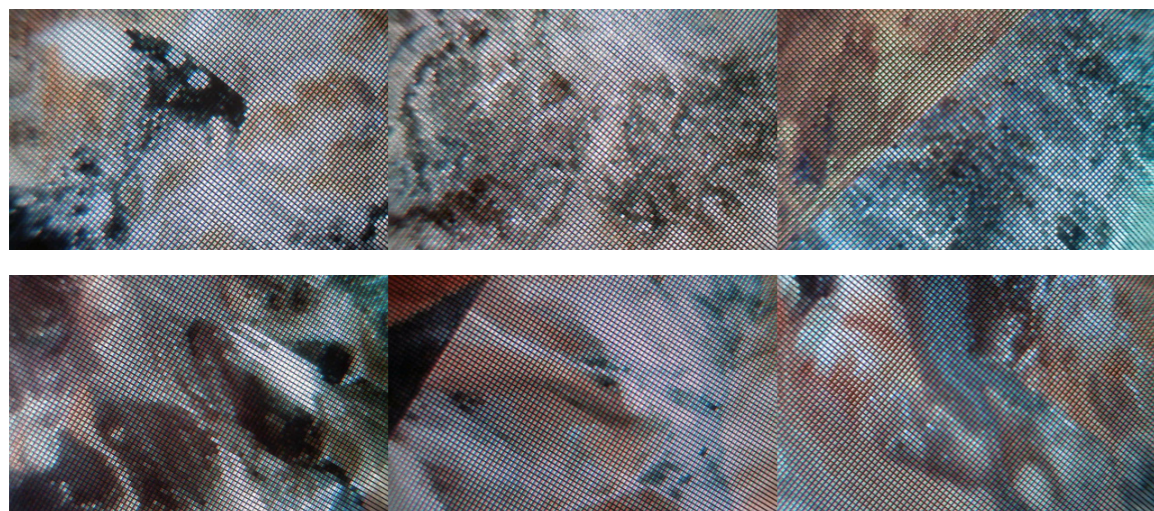


Finals Microscopic Images vs Close-Up Zoom of Pixels



Final Normal-Lens Images with their pre-composites

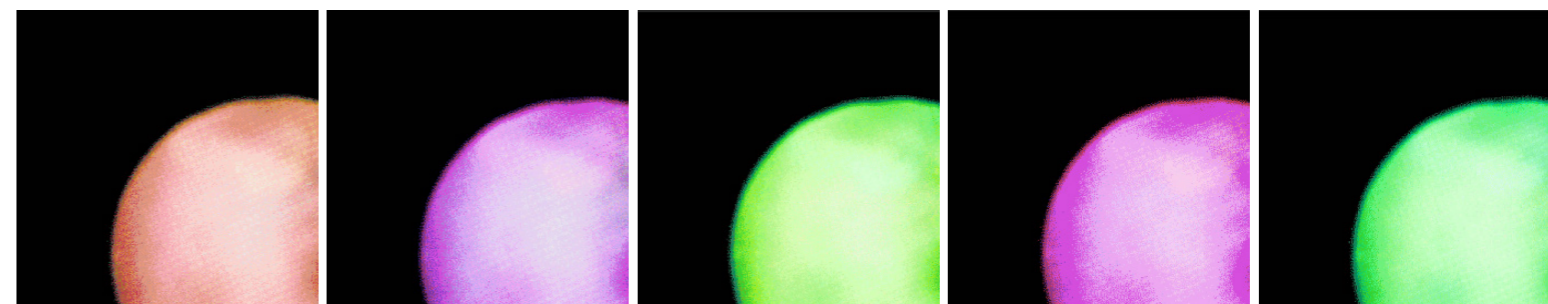
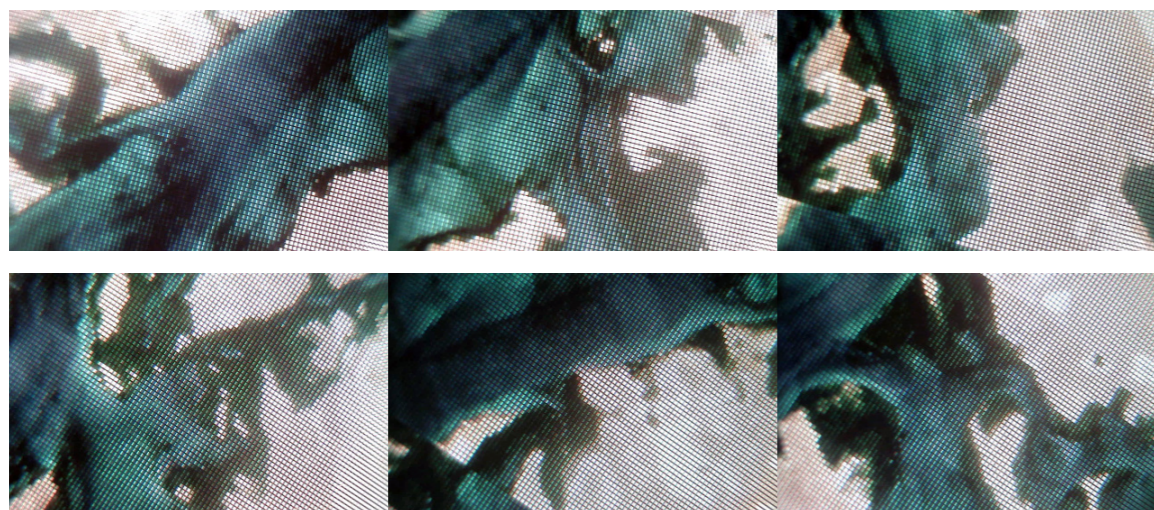




Digital Microscope

Research

I used a digital microscope, used for repairing digital devices, in the same process. I captured satellite images without having much control, submitting to the built-in software-hardware components of the digital microscope. The resulting images show pixels and image in a more unitary form. The medium and the subject lose their elusiveness in this process. I decided to conclude the iterations of the DIY Thematic with using a pre-built microscoping camera as a testament to the initial inquiry on the general fluidity of images under varying gazes(micro,macro,DIY and, now, digital).



Final Rendition of Microscopic Analog Into Digital Gifs

Continuing on my research into the transmissive nature of images, I derived GIFs from the initial analog images done on my DIY microscopic camera. I varied the hue of the images to generate frames that could produce an element of visual transformation within the GIFs.

THEMATIC PHOTOBOOK

For the photobook project, I made a flipbook that played with two concepts: the item girl and Game of Life.

The Item Girl:

Motion Pictures. Images chosen for effect, for visual consumption, chronologically held together by codes of cause and effect.

Bollywood motion pictures, or popular hindi cinema is caricatured and referred to by its song-and-dance sequences.

A trope within such sequences is the item girl number.

Item girls are female performers in dance numbers known as “item numbers” that bear no relation to the narrative. They are inserted purely as spectacular attractions. The item number is presented like a music video, as stand-alone attraction featuring bodies, spaces, and movement vocabularies.

Within the narratives of popular Indian cinema, the item girl is a purely visual entity. As both screen and story are charged with masculine energy, the item girl enters with her vocabulary of movement. She doesn't speak. She sings and gyrates, satiating the libidinal outburst of the male gaze. And soon enough, as abrupt as her entrance, she fades away.

Game of Life:

The Game of Life is a ‘cellular automaton’, and was invented by Cambridge mathematician John Conway. It consists of a collection of cells which, based on a few mathematical rules, can live, die or multiply. Depending on the initial conditions, the cells form various patterns throughout the course of the game.

A flipbook is a photobook that follows a movement narrative. Both the item girl and the game of life are dictated by rules of movement. To make the relationship between the item girl and the square cell of the game, I had to engage in a conceptual leap of sorts. Collected images of item girl was dithered and glitched, the square cell of the game became a pixel. As the pages move back and forth, the item girl is static pixel and the game of life represented a form of moving inanimate pixel. Since this project was given somewhat last minute, I chose to focus on the formal elements of situating the item girl images with the game of life sequence. I also tried to make the flipbook interactive from the front and from the back. Conceptually, I found very little to push in this project beyond questions of a moving woman, rendered silent by cinematic style, that is then made permanently transmissible as dithered blocks of a glitched image. The game of life too became an interactive element. I did add some QR codes in the opening pages of the photobook project but came to an impasse when I realized I was rendering the item girl into yet another mode of visual media. I was initially interesting in playing with the idea of creating dichotomies: alive-static and moving-silent. In the end, I build a small flipbook that felt tangible and playful.

Establishing



Close-Up
Face

Close-Up
Curves



Mid

Low-Angle



Tilt



Pan



Dolly



THE ITEM GIRL

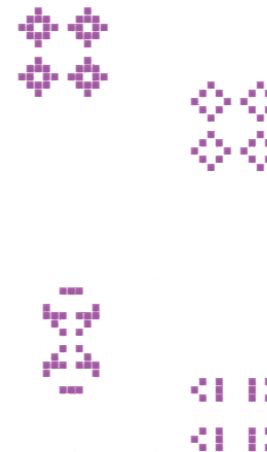
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[film,narrative,musical]device
indian popular cinema
her-story
max time: 5-6 mins
is [object, icon, mythology, libido,
evolving]
for [transmission of media,
libidinal release in 3 hr long
movie,
male gaze,
my first dance
teacher]
I have [wanted to be her;
been confused by what she repre-
sents;
(herein)thought about whether she
is flesh or just media;]
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the game of life

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each pixel is a cell
then we make it come alive
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Rule:

- Any live cell with fewer than two live neighbours dies, as if by underpopulation.
- Any live cell with two or three live neighbours lives on to the next generation.
- Any live cell with more than three live neighbours dies, as if by overpopulation.
- Any dead cell with exactly three live neighbours becomes a live cell, as if by reproduction.



The project came about from the inability to go back to India. Initially, the plan had been to reunite with my father and document our talks. My father is a former coal miner from an indigenous tribe. He converted to christianity at a young age and sacrificed himself to the church. On the one hand it was a way out of poverty. On the other, it was a pledge to become a church minister for his entire life. There were a lot of things I wanted to talk about: his proclivity for music, the scars he has from mining as well as his view on religion, fatherhood and sexuality. He was willing to commit to this co-introspection and I was excited to go back home. However, December proved to be a strange time.

A bill was passed in India, the Citizenship Bill, determined to assess who was and was not an Indian citizen. For the indigenous people of my region, this raised doubts on state control with the cities already being heavily militarized. For the rest of India, communal riots and clashes occurred. My dad decided it was best not to continue with the trip, thereby ending the prospect of the project as well. By this point, it had been 5 years since I had seen my parents' faces. So it ended up being a strange and dreary bit of cold winter. And I had to choose a different project.

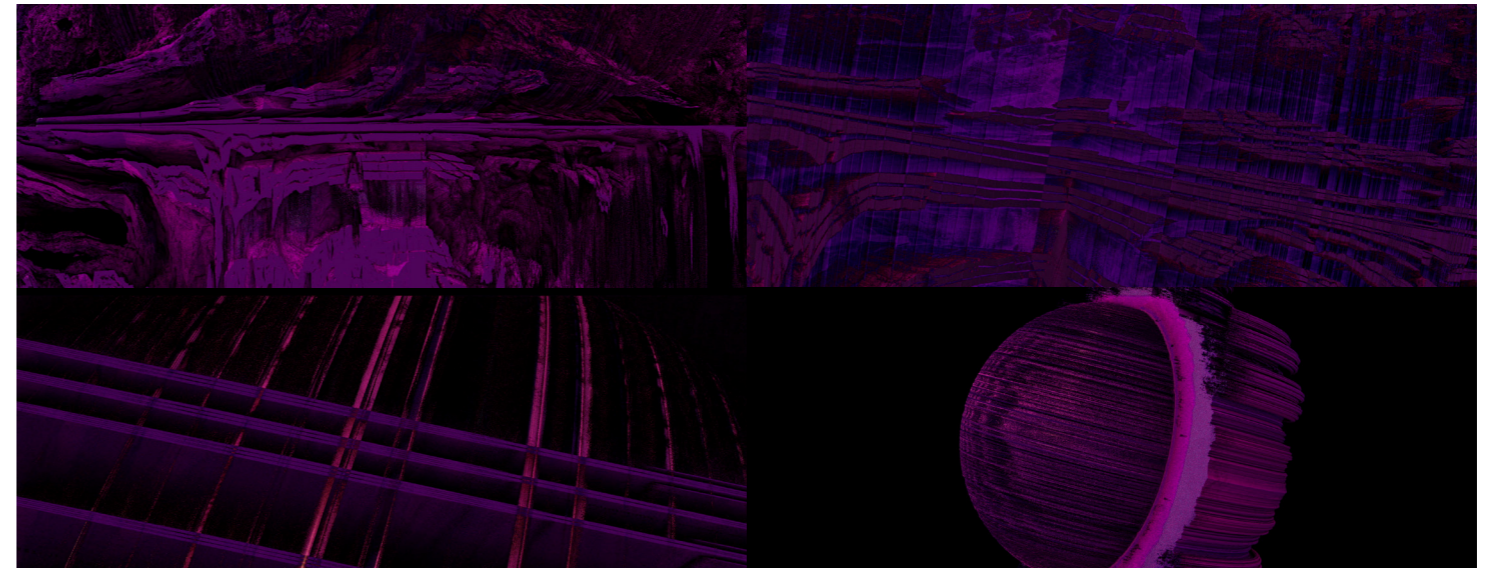
I had spent the first trimester engaging in practices of outsourcing personal introspection(my two video works on identity and labour). Again, this new incident compelled a deliberate distancing from the actual work that had to be done. So I had to seek help from the machine, the electronic equivalent of building a new work or meaning. I came across the Mandelbulb equation from a scene in the movie, Annihilation (Alex Garland, 2018). That an alien could be a fractal equation, a math formula, interested me. So I looked into easier ways of reproducing the effect myself. This led to Mandelbulb 3D and messing around with fractal formulations. In a way, distancing myself from personal introspection about missing out on home, I began a more abstract outsourcing of mood onto these strange fractal worlds that were beyond my own sight (4D vision).

So I decided on building a synthetic world as a moving image. Drawing from the Barnsley fern formula, a formula for fractals based on the structure of a fern leaf, I added another formula for Quaternions, a fourth-dimensional extension of a real number. The math did not at all make complete sense to me, but I understood the visual construction in front of me. I was able to “mess about” and generate images that seemed to morph into certain familiar structures: a mountain, trees, a planet/sphere. These structures emulate a certain indigenous world (“of nature, non-modern, earthy”). This finalized a certain imagery about what the shapes would become. As I used the virtual camera to zoom in and out of fractals, I could also do away with the strict fractal-like deep-dream look. The zoom in and out was a success. The 3D fractals were then layered with composited textures. Then I tried to emulate a familiar methodology, zooming-in and zooming-out, during editing. For the sound, I worked with Fiete Stoll (a Berlin-based sound engineer), to compose binaural meditation sounds from recorded ambient wind.

Dissociating as far away as I could from this “reality” of home, I decided to build a different world altogether. This was my way of engaging with the volatility of the world while engaging more directly with an unknown(4D space) The title “a planet is not a sphere” is a play on a quote by Benoit Mandelbrot, the father of fractal geometry. He initially said “clouds are not spheres, mountains are not cones” as an assertion that classical geometry was not entirely tied to nature. For me, “a planet is not a sphere” dealt more with the inability to fully comprehend a situation(political chaos) directly affecting my life.

Eye ResearchLabs

function(chaos)//a planet is not a sphere



Practice Based Research Session 1

I am primarily interested in making work that's auto-archival.

Auto here denotes “self” as well as the mechanical “auto” prefix of technological dependency (automotive and automatic).

This leads to two preliminary formal restrictions:

auto: making things relating to my self, my introspection
and *automatic* outsourcing: using technology to automatically displace myself from the image or using technology (analog or digital) to situate myself outside my work.

The two main works I ended up producing during Trimester 1 engaged with my identity (places where I've lived) as well as my past labour practice (ghostwriting, copy-editing). The “Displacement Mandala” configures satellite composite moving-images of places where I've been brought up. I have never lived in a single location for more than 5 years and I feel this adds to a constant feeling of listless displacement. The second video “I work too Damn Much” uses ideogram footage as a reference point for my labor practice as a ghostwriter. In both, I engage with the internet as an external device of memory recording. I am, as maybe everyone is, a hyper-subjective person. Most things make no sense beyond my subjective understanding. Hence, the metaphorical application of “the archive of the self” is of interest to me. Yet, I find it challenging to be in any work, I've heard people call this dysphoria of sorts. Regardless, I find it simpler to be using technology as a means to remediate something anecdotal. This is to me a form of outsourcing. I have entered a some sort of contract with the machines of my time to introspect something micro (myself) and project it outwards (macro). I am interested in many queries that arise from this auto-archival mechanism.

These include:

The Silent Subject Archive: Are we all individuals silently auto archiving ourselves?

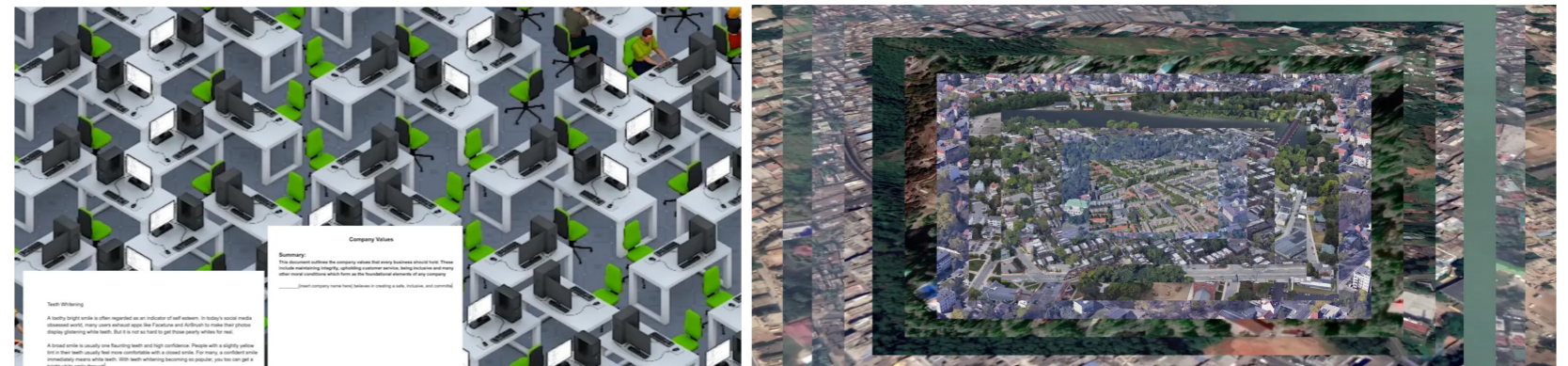
Archiving as a verb in the present tense. How to depict/play with this visually?

I am interested in the archive as a tool of constant collecting and also as a testimony of history. In fact, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, most of contemporary existence is collected and then archived. This is evident in our social media timelines and the repository of random digital matter in our devices. I would like to explore the concept of the archive philosophically and academically. Using this concept, I want to expose themes that are invisible or rendered invisible. I specifically mean: hidden off-shore accounts of cash reserves, invisible labor (ghostwriters), and lost indigenous history. I want to produce a conceptual digital archive, in the form of a website or wiki, highlighting these invisible themes. Taking these as tangents, I am interested in exploring who lays claim to this cluster of hidden “archiving.” I am also interested in questioning whether the archive has always been some form of database structure. Can anecdotes, passed on from generation to generation within a family, be an invisible archive? In rendering invisible things into an archive, but also asking whether an archive can be something invisible... I want to posit an archive/archeology for the future... since the future itself renders methods/practices of current digital archiving obsolete.

The personal and professional choice of using the archive as an artistic practice comes from the urgency of being indigenous. This idea of being “indigenous” is rooted in a mindset of preservation (nature), but this preservation is also one of invisibility (from modernity, capitalism). I have always been interested in the hypocrisies of visibility. Additionally, I am interested in the actual invisible functions within capitalist history (all those offshore accounts of billionaires that resist to be accounted/archived).

KEYWORDS

new technical standards, remediation, shifting between macro and micro scales; providing an ‘overview’; the presentation of abstract images as evidence (as the byproduct of a technical apparatus). Machines in conversation with humans through image making machines.



16 mm

For this thematic, I collaborated with Thy and Lea. We were limited by both the length of the film as well as the bitter cold of Rotterdam. Nevertheless, we persisted and captured the streets of Rotterdam in as much random footage as we could. The feeling of finally editing and watching our movie, however, felt quite rewarding.



Practice-Based Research Session 2

By the Stream: Assemblages of Short Treatments

I intend to use these stories as narratives from which to start visualizing my final thesis. I am interested in storytelling as myths, especially “old-wives’ tales.” I view superstitious tales, as a collective memory that is sub-consciously representative of something more mythical and ideological. The superstition represents the will of collective memory to build a world from past lessons or horrors. Following along the lines of my research in world-building from anecdotal archives, I also view superstitious myth as a method of oral archiving. Superstitions are loaded with manipulations of reality passed on as oral testaments.

ABSTRACT-- Drawing from scattered stories I’ve grown up with, I situate these plots within forests near streams. In the pre-modern context, these isolated locations started village settlements where social order, myth making and the archive of world-understanding and world-building emerges.

Key Inspiration for Imagery and Context: Gabriel García Márquez’s *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, Apichatpong Weeraseethakul’s *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*

Possible Format: Multi-channel Projection

Actual Visual Content: Unsure (mostly likely to use the treatment for some sort of abstract imagery with some talking-heads to speak on the incidents) [currently focused on abstract flat moving images]

The Man Who Disappeared for a Month

A young father, 25, leaves his three children and their mother for his work at the coal mines. He leaves at the break of dawn, as he always does. He begrudgingly waits for the mining corporation bus with others from his village, two are his drinking friends. Today, they begin work on a new mine, one newly paved for their 2 feet high crawl and squad, deep underneath the same mountain where his own father hunted deer. He feels nothing about this, beyond the fact that time decimates and morphs all space. His own home was a wild forest not too long ago.

The day passes and a late afternoon lunch means an end to the work. He decides to walk to the nearest village to buy something for his children and just to feel the crowded rush of the closing marketplace. This hike would mean returning home late and he would have to take the night bus that goes from village market to village market. He chooses the hike, although he regrets not being able to tell his children’s mother about the late return. The village market is closing when he reaches, but he knows the rice beer stall will stay open till the night bus arrives. So, he buys some hard candy and tea for home. He then has some rice beer, chats with the people and leaves.

The walk to the night bus is about a mile long, so he takes a shortcut through the forest along the stream. He walks and spots a translucent being, feminine-like with thick black hair. This being is walking towards him. The myth goes, if you see a fairy pull her by the hair till she grants you a wish. He doesn’t think much beyond grabbing her hair and holding on. But the being takes him on a different journey. No wishes have been granted. He “awakens” standing upright in the big town, deep in the market and its back-and-forth crowd. He’s right next to the man toasting and selling peanuts on a huge wok. Last time he was in the big town was before his firstborn. Bewildered, he walks to the truck stop where he finds a truck driver from his village. The driver, shocked at first, laughs and tells him the other villagers thought he was lost in the mines or mauled by a bear or gone for good. But the newly awoken man has no idea how to explain his journey. He returns home on the truck to find his woman in mourning. He cannot explain what happened, but apparently a month had passed. He still has the candy and tea in his sack. It is all hard to explain. He tells her about the spirit that took him, as if around the world, atop cliffs and oceans, across time and space. She listens, afraid but also sure that this is to be a breakthrough, that this is a blessing, an opening of fortune.

[intending to build dialogue based on this recollection]

The Man Who Stopped Moving

Atop a bamboo scaffolding, a man in his 50s is mending the sidewall of his home. He is known for his temper, he yells at all his 7 daughters whenever he gets the chance. One giggles too much, one sometimes has fat cheeks and chomps too loudly, one sings like a cow, one does too much of the cleaning, and so on. All of them have moments where they infuriate him, but he is also moved by their kindness, their teasing, their beauty. Today, in the bright summer heat, he can see his entire family, all of his 8 women-daughters and wife drying the rice grain. He, the man of the house, is mending the home. Nothing to it but some putty and concrete. But he is neurologically breaking apart and his neighbors and friends will soon see his life as a curse.

The man goes on to develop a condition where he is unable to move as he wants, or speak as he wants. The only healer in the forest concludes that the man is suffering from a curse. His daughters take him to the neighboring big city where doctors say his brain cannot make him move. The village shares stories and superstitions, locating the cause of his motor-inability in strange anecdotes of his childhood or his father's infidelity or his mother's lack of ritual. We, the audience, of course know this man has ALS. But within this particular universe, he is a cursed man... some residue of things done wrong, some avenging spirit.

The Forest We Left Behind(Recollection in First Person)

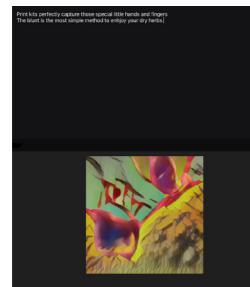
The forest by the stream is a forest where the ashes of the dead are left behind: your grandmother's mother, her mother, her mother, from the beginning of time. It is our sacred forest. It is where you will also go. We cannot pluck fruit from it. We cannot collect wood from it. We cannot plant on it. We cannot leave anything in it that is from the living world. We cannot take from the forest or give to the forest. This all remains while we remain.

I walked into the forest once, to see how it was taking the hottest and brightest summer day. It felt like another world, colder, mistier, wetter and darker. I walked into it and at some point lost a hair-tie. It wasn't until I was deep in the path when I realized my hair was sticking to my face. My ponytail had been undone. Would dropping a hair tie be considered sacrilege? Yes. Was I committing a sin? Maybe.

Tracing my steps, I could find nothing. Fuck. It dawned on me that I had ruined generations of ritual purity. Generations of veneration undone by some stupid cheap storebrand hairtie. But I was half-joking. I decided to apologize to the forest. I bent down and touched her soil and muttered something to be forgiven. This wasn't entirely serious but it also felt weird to be disrespectful. What was I doing again? Yeah, feeling bad because I still thought I would get cursed. What curse? Not sure, but part of me half-believed it.

I walked back to the entrance of the forest. A few steps away from the stones that marked the entrance. There it was, my stupid black hairtie. A scrunchie would have made a better story. I picked it up and walked away.

Projects discontinued
GAN using ghostwriting text



archiving as metaphor
do people take photos to remember?



coronalockdown photojournal



ON CHAOS: (with respect to physicists Mandelbrot and James Gleick, direct/indirect quotations)

Chaos is a science of process than state... becoming rather than being
It is the science of the infinite nature of systems. Chaos theorists, first, had an eye for pattern.
As we all experience, the chaos scientist, also has a taste for randomness, jagged edges and sudden leaps. And to think it all began with finding the geometry of a cloud and the question: "What is the shape of a cloud?"

Clouds are not spheres. Mountains are not cones. Lightning does not travel in a straight line. The new geometry mirrors a universe that is rough, not rounded, scabrous, not smooth. It is a geometry of the pitted, pocked, and broken up, the twisted, tangled, and intertwined.
Chaos is a spiritual geometry. Nature and life has a flavor that could never be expressed in averages.

In science, it is well known that a chain of events can have a point of crisis that could magnify small changes. But chaos theory shows that these points echo everywhere. They are pervasive dancing points of crisis, energy and change.

For understanding this complexity, we as humans have the wrong tools of abstraction. For example, when we are recollecting experience in visions/dreams all we have is the tool of simple verbal speak. The understanding of nature's complexity requires a faith that the interesting feature of a lightning bolt's path, for example, was not its direction, but rather the distribution of zigs and zags.

I do want to know how to describe clouds. But to say there's a piece over here with that much density, and next to it a piece with this much density—to accumulate that much detailed information, is not my trade. It's certainly not how I perceive those things, and it's not how an artist perceives them. Somewhere the business of writing down partial differential equations is not to have done the work on the problem.

"Somehow the wondrous promise of the earth is that there are things beautiful in it, things wondrous and alluring, and by virtue of your trade you want to understand them."