Federico Pérez Villoro

PEANA

Federico Pérez Villoro (b. 1987, Guadalajara) lives and works in Mexico City. He is an artist and researcher that through installations, essays, software and videos, explores the ways in which power is exercised through computational technologies. His recent projects address the history of the domestication of rivers and other bodies of water and the imposition of technical operativity upon living ecosystems.

His work has been exhibited internationally and published by ADOCS, DELUS, The Seving Library, Printed Matter, Source Type, C Magazine, Gato Negro Ediciones, diSONARE and The Gradient at the Walker Art Center. His research has appeared in journalistic media such as Quinto Elemento Lab, The New York Times, Aristegui Noticias, among others. He has taught at Rhode Island School of Design; US and California College of the Arts, US; and lectured at universities such as New York University, US; ETH Zurich, CH; Rutgers University, US; CalArts, US; The New School, US; UNAM, MX; Escuela de Artes Jalisco, MX; and Hongik University, Seoul, KR. In 2023 he received the Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo Sponsorship Grant and was awarded the C/Change grant by the Goethe-Institut and Grey Area in San Francisco, US. That same year he was a resident at Pivô Pesquisa in São Paulo, BR. In 2019 he founded Materia Abierta, a summer school on theory, art and technology in Mexico City that has been developed with the support of the Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC), Museo Tamayo, Casa del Lago UNAM, Mexico City, MX; KADIST, US; among other organizations. In 2013 he received an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design, US.

LIVES AND WORKS

CDMX, MX.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2024 Aguas verdaderas, AYER AYER, Guadalajara, MX
Unseen Garden, Centre A; Vancouver, CA.

2023 This is Life, Palm Springs Art Museum; Palm Springs, US.
Unseen Garden, Centre A (online); Vancouver, CA.
Text to Image (Unrealized Archive 7), whatreallymatters; Seoul, KR.
Campo Aberto, Pivô; São Paulo, BR.

2022 Cartografías Ocultas: Circuitos del Arte Correo en México, Casa del Lago
UNAM, Mexico City, Mexico
El ensamble del ocaso, Museo MARCO; Monterrey, MX.

2021 Special Projects at Printed Matter's Art Book Fair, NADA Miami, Miami, FL
Cartografías Ocultas: Circuitos del Arte Correo en México, Museo de
Filatelia de Oaxaca, Oaxaca, Mexico
Pensar paisajes: más allá de un marco, Festival Internacional de Cultura
Digital +CODE, Buenos Aires, Argentina

2020 La permanencia de las piedras, Casa del Lago UNAM; CDMX, MX.

2019 Fun Palace, C2 Space OCT-LOFT; Shenzhen, CN
2019 Fugitive Images, OCAT; Shenzhen CN
Más allá del mundo, hay letras; PEANA, Monterrey, MX.
Double Negative, ChaSaMa; New York, US.

2018 2030 Seoul–Pyongyang, Dongdaemun Design Plaza; Seoul, KR.
All Possible Futures: Unrealized Archive, Institute of Advanced Uncertainty;
San Francisco, US.
Almost Solid Light, Paul Kasmin Gallery; New York, US.
True Forms (beta), IF/THEN, Berkeley; US.
Mage, Radiator Arts; Long Island City, US.

2017 You are here, PEANA; Monterrey, MX.

2016 An Image, ArtCenter; South Florida, US.

RECIDENCIES

2023   Pivô ; São Paulo, BR.

2019 OCAT Shenzhen Residency; Shenzhen, CN.

PUBLICATIONS

2023 The Trap of Time: Prototyping a Summer School: DELUS ETH; Zurich , CH.
Estado de fuga: Aprendizaje "desprofesionalizado", LA ESCUELA
An Optical Decoy for the Machine: Automatic policing of trademarks online,
ADOCS

2022 A Self-Avoiding River, Meander, The Serving Library
Transductive Learning: Improbable Futures and Self-Imposed Traps,
Publicaciones y Fomento Editorial UNAM

2020   Vigilancia biométrica: el tortuoso camino de Coahuila hacia el
reconocimiento facial, Quinto Elemento Lab.
Otra imagen del pasado, diSONARE 08.

2019 Latent Space: Notes on Seeing Letters Like a Machine; Gato Negro
Ediciones.
The Blackbox Trick: Magic in the Age of Techno-governance and Corporate
Secrecy; C Magazine.
Library of Imagined Symbols; All Possible Futures: Unrealized Archive 02.

2018 Subversive Guidelines: On the Evolving Landscape of Visual Identity Design;
Walker Art Center, The Gradient.

2017 Post-Identity Design: Brands, Politics, and Technological Instability; Walker
Art Center, The Gradient.
Printed Prosthetic: Futura; Printed Matter.

EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS

2019-Present Materia Abierta, Founder and Director; CDMX, MX.

2016-Present (human) learning, Co-founder; Florida, US. & CDMX, MX.

2015-2016   Second Thoughts, Director & Curator, with Fundación Alumnos &
Museo Tamayo; CDMX, MX.

RECOGNITIONS

2023 C/Change Fellowship, Goethe Institut + Gray Area; San Francisco, US.
Jumex Grant Program, Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo; CDMX, MX.
Pivô Pesquisa Residency, Pivô; São Paulo, BR.
Guest Scholar, LA ESCUELA, Online.

Selected Projects

Aguas verdaderas
AYER AYER; Guadalajara, MX. 2023

La permanencia de las piedras
Casa Del Lago UNAM; CDMX, MX. 2020

Más allá del mundo, hay letras
PEANA; Monterrey, MX. 2019

Towards Fugitive Images
In collaboration with Chris Hamamoto, OCAT. Shenzhen, CN. 2019

Materia Abierta
Educational Program, CDMX, MX, 2019 - Present

Agua verdaderas

AYER AYER, Guadalajara, MX. 2023

La razón instrumental asociada a la producción del paisaje ha dominado al medio ambiente y ha reforzado la falsa dicotomía entre cultura y naturaleza. A principios del siglo XX, el río Tieté —también llamado Añembý, que significa río verdadero en tupí-guaraní, y conocido por atravesar la ciudad brasileña de San Pablo— fue rectificado y revertido con fines económicos por la industria hidroeléctrica, causando la degradación ambiental que ahora parece irreparable. La exposición del artista Federico Pérez Villoro deriva del trabajo realizado durante la residencia Pivô Pesquisa (2023), y estudia formas de despojo y explotación que ha sufrido ese cuerpo hídrico.

Pérez Villoro trabaja desde la investigación periodística y la producción de imágenes, revelando información normalmente resguardada por estructuras de poder. En la serie Río ausente se muestran dibujos técnicos extraídos del libro Comportamento Hidráulico do Rio Tietê, producido por el gobierno del estado de San Pablo en 1982. Los diagramas registran a detalle la manipulación de este sitio bajo principios antropocéntricos que lo ponen al servicio del globalitarismo y la modernidad urbana.

La pieza central de la exposición cuenta la historia del río como máquina. El video se reorienta constantemente siguiendo la geomorfología del cauce, desde su nacimiento hasta su desembocadura. El artista transforma las tecnologías con las que trabaja para obtener resultados distintos de aquellos para los que fueron creadas. En este caso, las imágenes satelitales, herramientas cartográficas históricamente usadas para organizar y controlar el espacio, buscan desorientar la mirada. El punto de referencia no está en función de quien lo observa, es más bien la geometría del río lo que determina la perspectiva. En la serie fotográfica se utilizan también vistas satelitales, y contrario a las imágenes nítidas esperadas, la tecnología fue modificada para identificar capturas con distintas opacidades. Las nubes, que hacen parte del mismo ecosistema, funcionan como un mecanismo atmosférico de contravigilancia y los límites de las fotografías hacen evidente su digitalización.

Desde la filosofía de la tecnología, en Aguas verdaderas Pérez Villoro estudia los instrumentos de navegación, explora sus posibilidades y se rebela contra ellos. Su producción artística va más allá de lo simbólico o de lo formal: su práctica denuncia las tecnologías dominantes y las convierte en herramientas desobedientes para la reflexión.

Quedó el tiempo capturado en una imagen.

La permanencia de las piedras

Casa Del Lago UNAM; CDMX, MX. 2020

Federico Pérez Villoro recently presented La permanencia de las piedras, a work commissioned by Casa del Lago, consisting of a series of actions carried out to add to Google Maps a monument that does not exist. In an interactive 3D space, fictional instructions are narrated to intervene in this platform while visual explorations —erratic fragments— developed by the artist Julieta Gil from the monuments of the Calzada de los Poetas in Chapultepec Forest are displayed.

In the form of an illustrated story, the project tells the story of a man who is losing his memory and returns to Mexico City to pursue a childhood remembrance: the image of a monument to Rosa Espino, an imaginary poet used as a pseudonym by the Porfirian general Vicente Riva Palacio to write love poems. As he travels through the city and its digital maps in search of this image, the character reflects on the institutional mechanisms through which history is constructed and discovers that his own identity is conditioned by the limits of contemporary platforms.
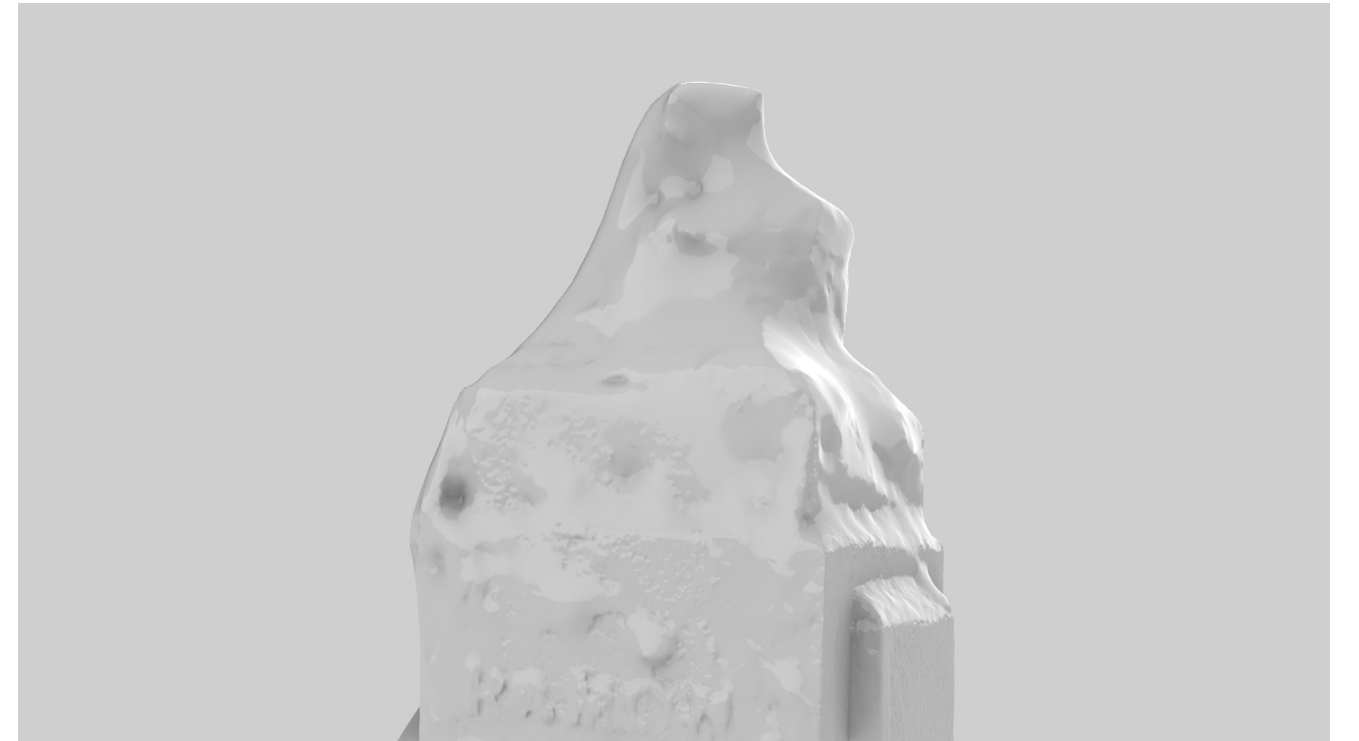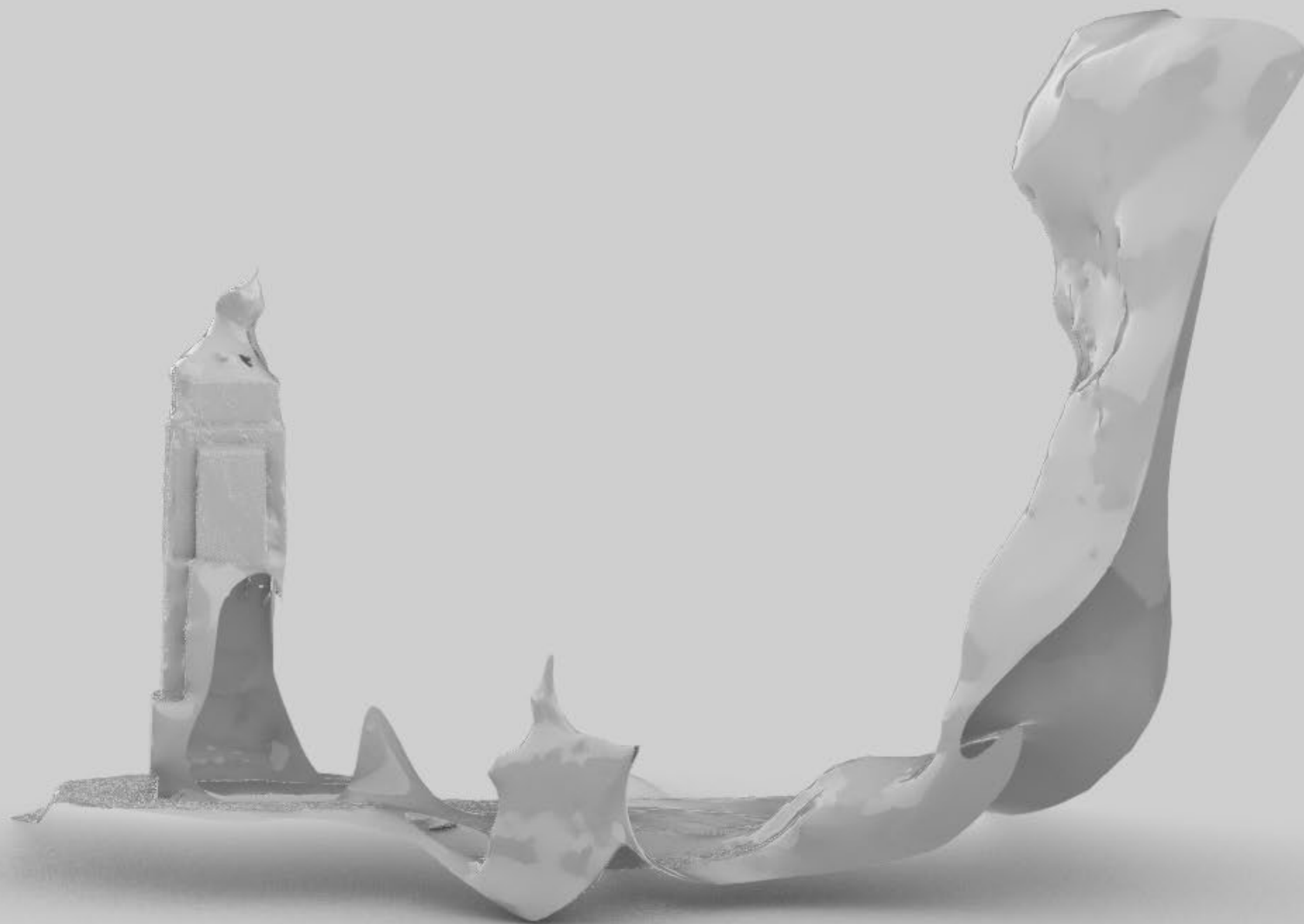
Project
https://lapermanenciadelaspiedras.com/
Selected Press:
The Wind Keeps Blowing On: La permanencia de las piedras by Federico Pérez Villoro by Bruno Enciso
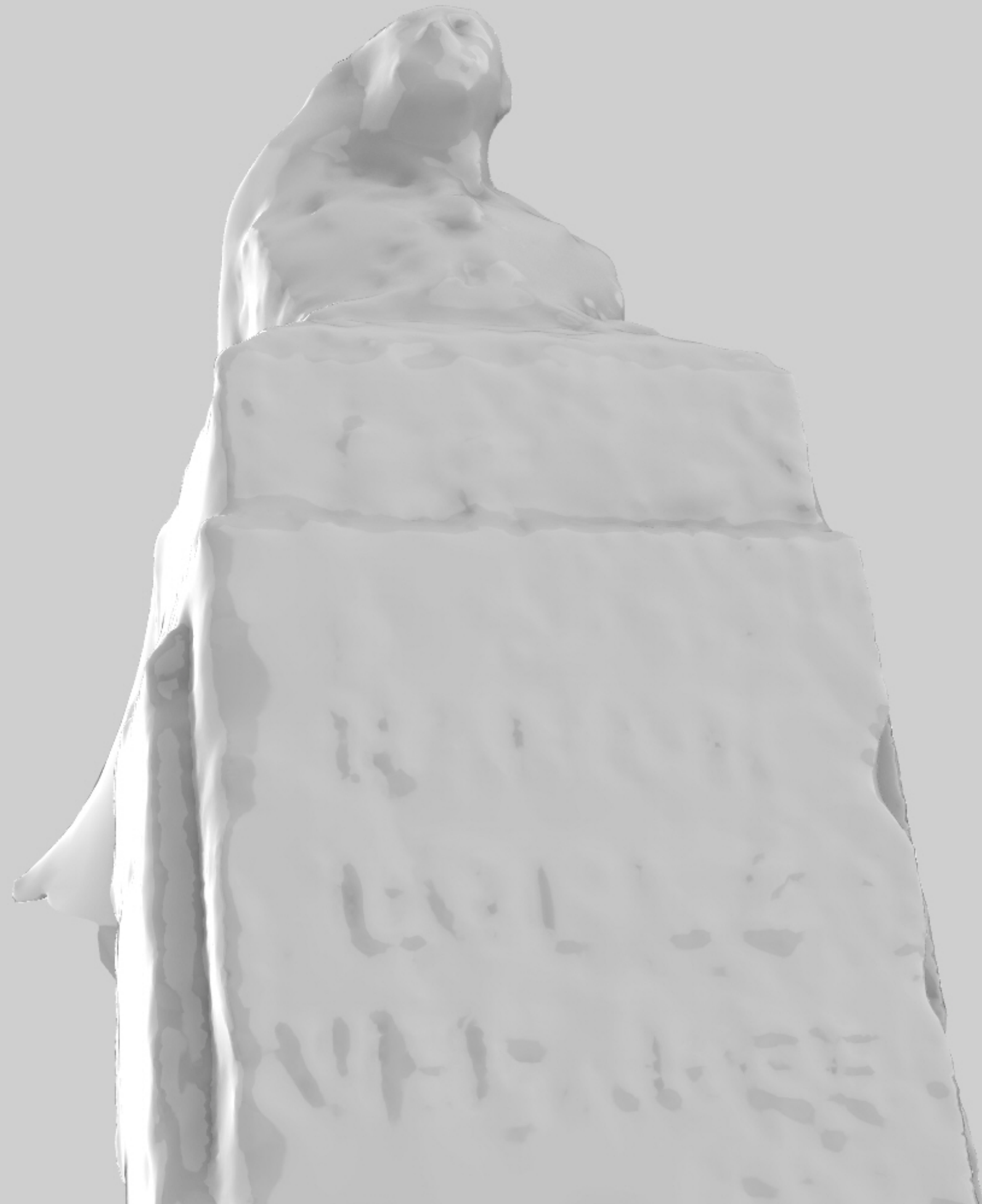
Still
La permanencia de las piedras
Casa Del Lago UNAM; CDMX, MX. 2020.

Más allá del mundo, hay letras

PEANA, Monterrey, MX. 2019.

Ours is a time of hybrids: of organism and machine, limb and tool, thought and code, intelligence and processor. Those relationships that were alarming dichotomies that troubled our predecessors are now intrinsic ways of our operating. However, even when understanding and closely interacting with technological artifacts, a feeling of numbness is present in the back of our heads. It might not be fear per se, but the sensation is very similar.

Más allá del mundo, hay letras is the first solo exhibition by artist Federico Pérez Villoro (Guadalajara, 1987) in Monterrey, Mexico. Interested in investigating the possibilities of technology approaching the materiality of language, Pérez Villoro — in collaboration with computer engineer Nick Schumann — developed an artificial intelligence that recognizes the formal patterns of the alphabet and imagines new letters from that knowledge. The results are typographic characters transformed into ethereal mutant entities that leave vaporous traces of that which came before with each variation. Although this process is the foundation of his research, this exhibition is not limited to a mere typographical work. It is, rather, the origin of an exploration of the language of chimeras formed by humans and machines.

The exhibition can be understood as a living organism whose parts are possible to distinguish, but are also strange and mysterious. The remains of mining a space with letters that do not exist rest at the center of the room. They are sections that can combine into larger volumes. We perceive the exposed entrails of an undefined beast, which moves, throbs, and breathes. Its skin burns red and his moist breath becomes visible when condensed. Its voice says nothing, just imitates, with algorithms, the phonetic structure of human speech. The dragon that illustrated unknown territories in ancient cartography is now protecting us... or maybe it is surrounding us to hunt. The creature is a device, but also an animal — a chimera that points to the close relationship between vitality and mechanics. Cables are veins and thoughts are connections between circuits.

Once our heartbeats synchronize in harmony with those of the beast, we can recognize ourselves in it, with it, and as part of it. Pérez Villoro's work achieves what seemed incredible: we can communicate with monsters through a new and specific language, though it is one that is not too far away from the one we already know. The hallucinated characters generate a space for exchange. Our letters are subjected to neural networks manufactured to allow communication between different types of intelligences and sensibilities, both artificial and natural — hallucinations that form words, that form verses, that form poems. And since machines can also be muses, Pérez Villoro uses this unusual language to make poetry for chimeras.

Paulina Ascencio

Installation view
Más allá del mundo, hay letras
PEANA, Monterrey, MX. 2019.

Towards Fugitive Images

In collaboration with Chris Hamamoto, OCAT; Shenzhen, CN. 2019.

Towards Fugitive Images was developed during Chris Hamamoto's and Federico Pérez Villoro's two-month residency at OCAT in Shenzhen, China and presented as a small exhibition.

They explore the impact of machine vision models used to identify people, and the datasets with which they are trained. Putting into question the very act of organizing images based on conceptual classes, they address both the in-transferability of meaning between images and concepts and the amplification of social biases always present in such process. Under an ongoing search for what they understand as "fugitive images," the artists present artifacts at the margins of algorithmic vision and speculate on the possibility to escape the logics of computational representation.

In January 2019, ImageNet — a massive dataset of annotated images for training machine vision models — started disabling its functionality in response to public scrutiny and exposed biases within its libraries. Concepts would often be mis-represented with sets of images, and images would be mis-categorized conceptually. As part of a larger attempt to evaluate their own data, ImageNet ranked nearly 3000 concepts included in the "person" class in their capacity to be represented as images. For doing so, they hired Mechanical Turk workers to rate on a 1-5 scale on how easy it is to form a

Adversarial Noise
three-channel video installation, 30 seconds
variable dimensions

This video installation is composed of algorithmically generated noise designed to cause a facial recognition model to make mistakes. When added to images the noise is almost imperceptible to humans, but prevents machine vision from parsing them — it de-identifies and misclassifies the presence of people within them. Trained on YOLO-v3, a real-time object detection system, the examples on display were generated for stills from the 1968 film 2001: A Space Odyssey. The scene depicts passengers on the Discovery One attempting a private conversation which is thwarted by HAL, the onboard computer to the spaceship, who is lip-reading what they say. This example from popular science fiction predicted today's machine vision software, which enables computers to segment the contents of images.

This project is developed in collaboration with computer engineer Nic Schumann.
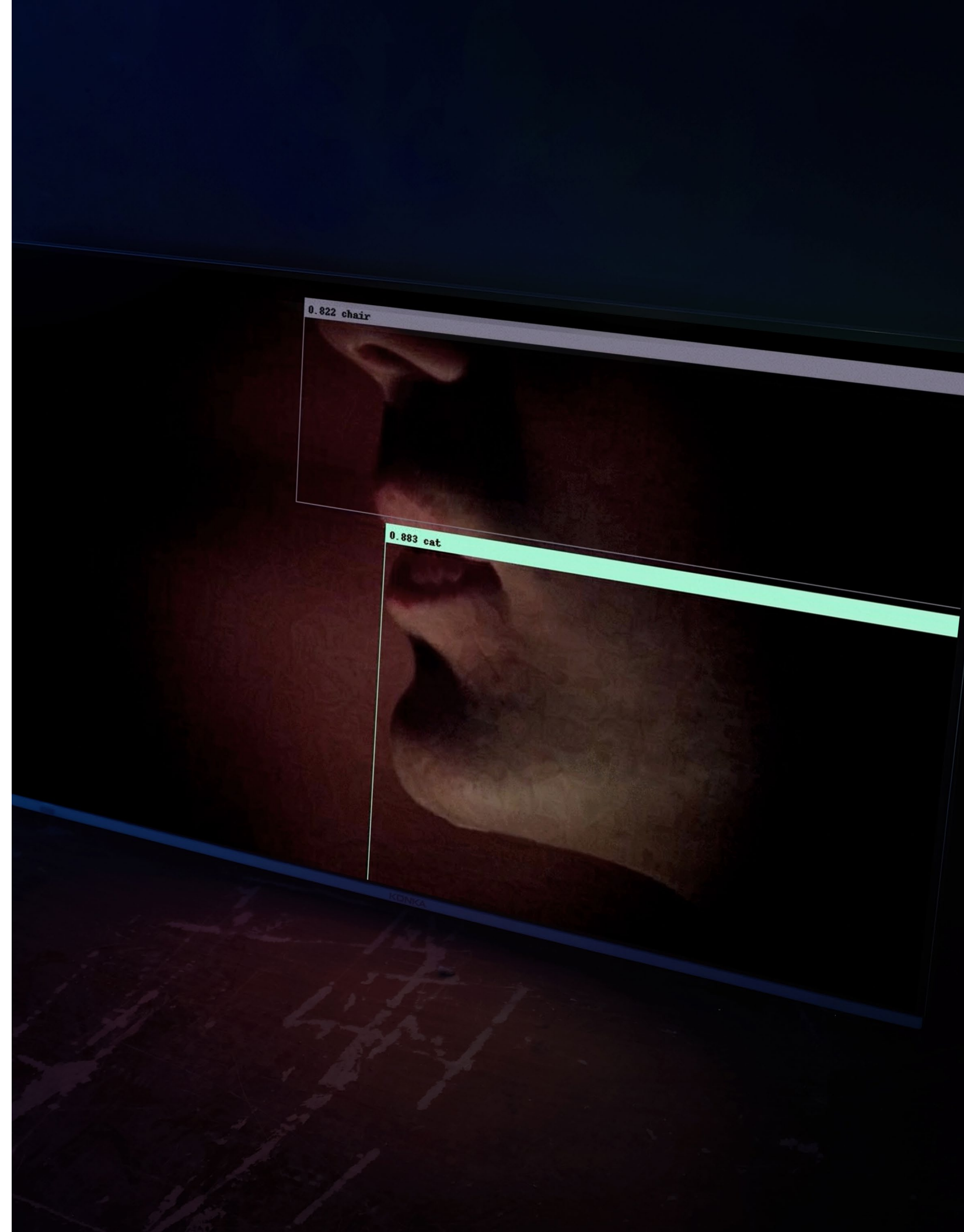
Non-Faces Faces
broadsheet, 16 pages, 390×540mm

This publication features images that were accidentally included within MegaFace — a dataset with 1,000,000 images of faces developed to evaluate the performance of facial recognition algorithms. MegaFace was built with a combination of imprecise computational and human processes resulting in images being added that are not actual photos of people— including depictions of faces as paintings, illustrations, and statues as well as images of nature and various objects. These errors make up about 7% of the dataset or about 70,000 non-faces. Pointing to the fragile threshold of how machines perceive people, this publication organizes a selection of the non-faces images into new categories. It illustrates the many ways that the human face is abstracted and the tendency of both humans and machines to mistakenly perceive patterns between unrelated things.
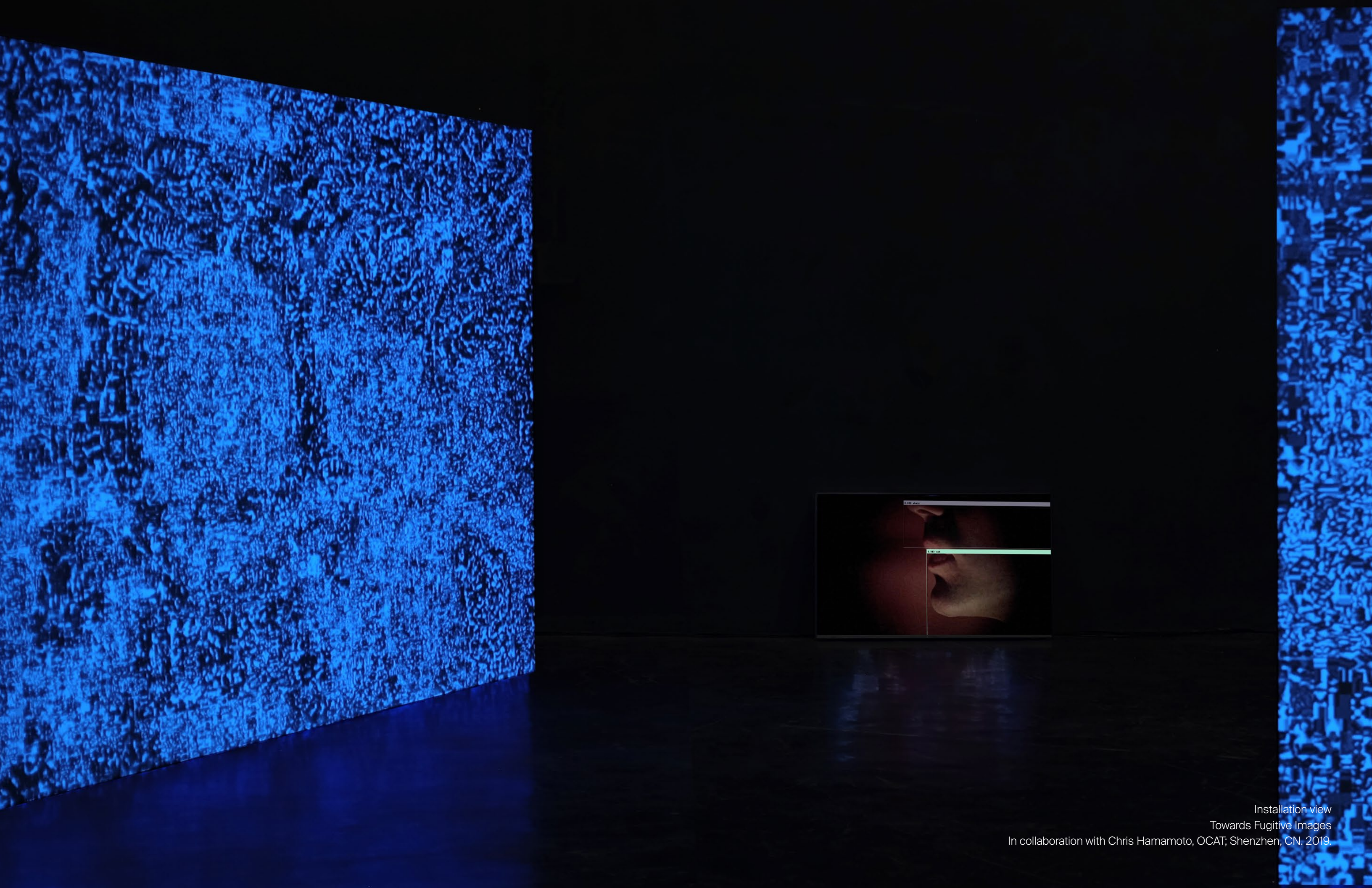
Installation view
Towards Fugitive Images
In collaboration with Chris Hamamoto, OCAT; Shenzhen, CN. 2019.

Materia Abierta

Educational Program, Mexico City, MX. 2019 - Present.

In 2019, Federico founded Materia Abierta, a summer school on theory, art, and technology based in Mexico City. Conceived as a space to reflect on the ethics of the present and future, its program aims to address the political, economic, and ideological forces that condition cultural production and to favor other forms of action and knowledge. Its inaugural edition, Novo Pan Klub, took place from August 5 to 26, 2019. It was curated by Natalia Zuluaga and developed with the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in coordination with Cultura UNAM, the Programa de Arte, Ciencia y Tecnologías (ACT), Casa del Lago UNAM, Casa Universitaria del Libro (CASUL) and Cátedra Max Aub en arte y tecnología. The faculty included Yásnaya Elena Aguilar Gil, Ramon Amaro, Vaginal Davis, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Bethany Johns, Gean Moreno & Ernesto Oroza, Reza Negarestani and Susana Vargas Cervantes.

Website
https://2019.materiaabierta.com/

Selected Press
ENTREVISTA | FEDERICO PÉREZ VILLORO: MATERIA ABIERTA

https://terremoto.mx/en/online/ni-apocalipsis-ni-paraiso-una-conversacion-entre-florencia-carrizo-monica-hoff-y-eva-posas/

https://www.e-flux.com/education/features/495433/from-these-dark-mirrors-of-the-world-the-rise-of-the-coyote-materia-abierta-summer-school

PEANA