

FLUVIAL EXTENTS | TAURUS FOUNDATION FOR ARTS AND SCIENCES | PROPOSAL
by *Emilija Škarnulyte*



FLUVIAL EXTENTS | THE RHÔNE RIVER

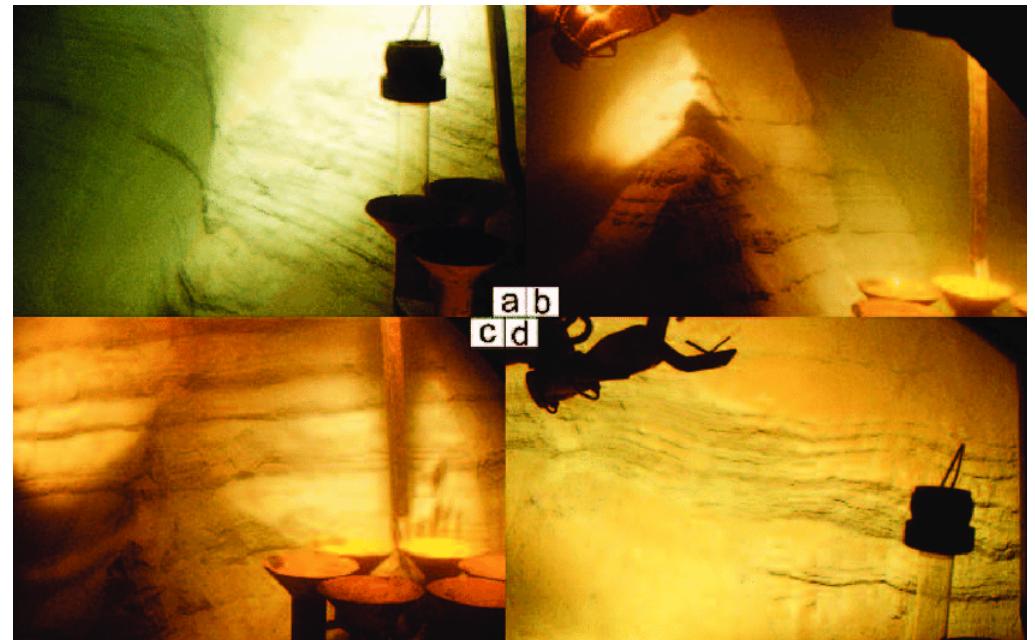
My films consist of a series of politically active visions, in which I investigate human activity and invisible structures of larger systems of power. I explore questions of the beginning of the universe in relation to the geological ungrounding processes, invisible structures, geo-traumas and deep time. The film *Aldona* focused on the life of a blind person amid the post-Soviet legacy. *Hollow Earth*, filmed at a depth of 1km in one of the world's largest iron ore mines, focused on secret Cold War architecture and industrial infrastructures.

Water has been a recurring theme in my previous works: sunk into the sea and into underworlds, exploring spaces like queer undergrounds and Cold War ruins, I have dived into deep time, from the cosmic and geologic to the ecological and political, showing secret places and the otherwise invisible structures hidden deep down under. A majority of my works portray one of mankind's oldest mythic creatures - the mermaid - trying to reclaim the waters in a non-violent way or rather show a dimension of the waters that cannot be appropriated by humankind. My latest project *Eternal Return* meditates on the contemporary scientific conditions and technologies related to deep-sea mining and ocean mapping from a future-archeologist perspective. For this project, I filmed in Baia, where I dived 20 meters deep in apnea, trying to measure the lost civilization's ruins in relation to the scale of my own body; also had been working with Temple University (Philadelphia, PA) trying to find a super coral species in 4 km depth in order to reforest and fight ocean acidity. In November 2021, I will be collaborating with CalTech in LA as a part of my MAK Schindler residency, where I will continue deepening these issues while working with kelp forests and algaes.

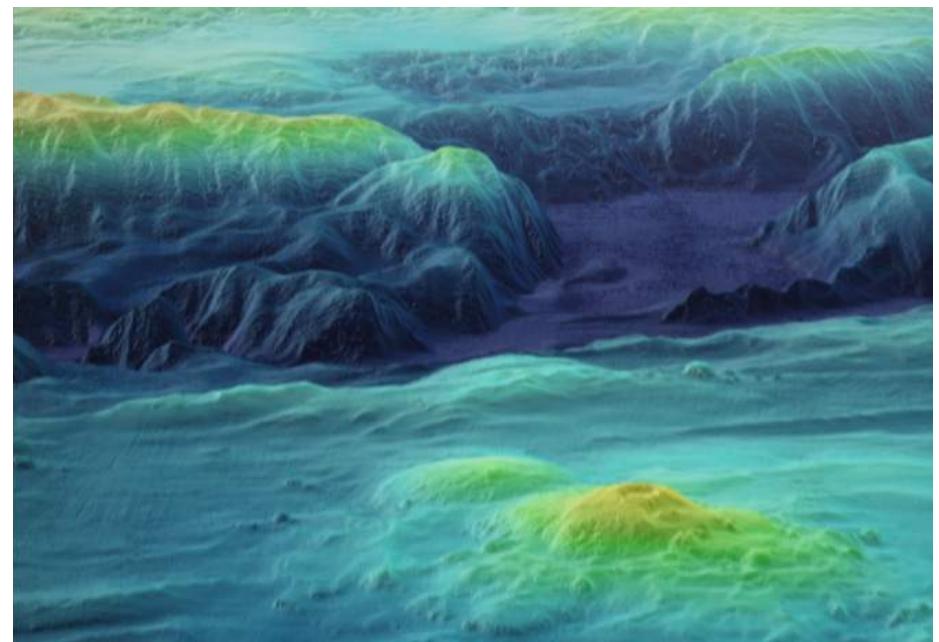
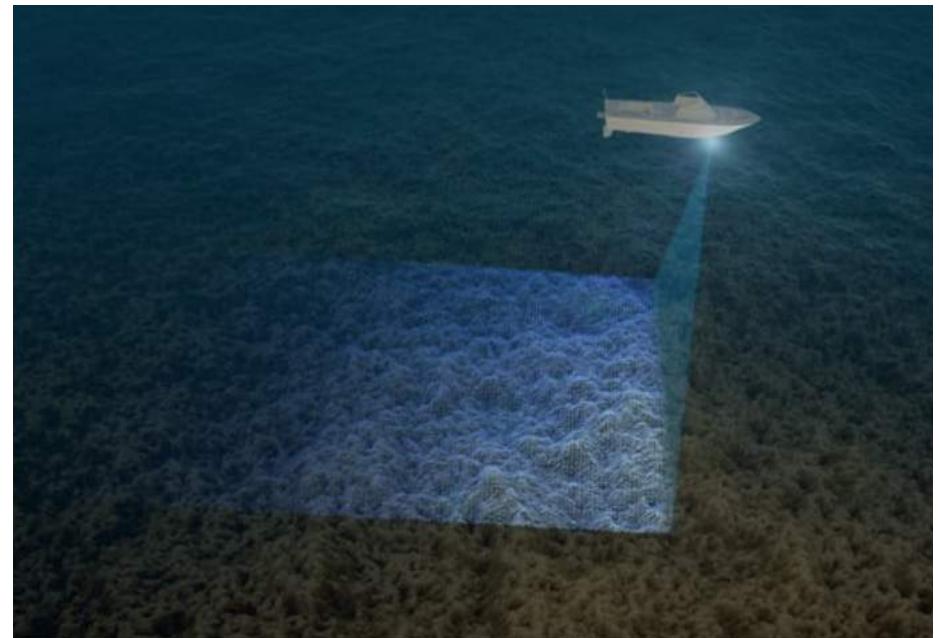
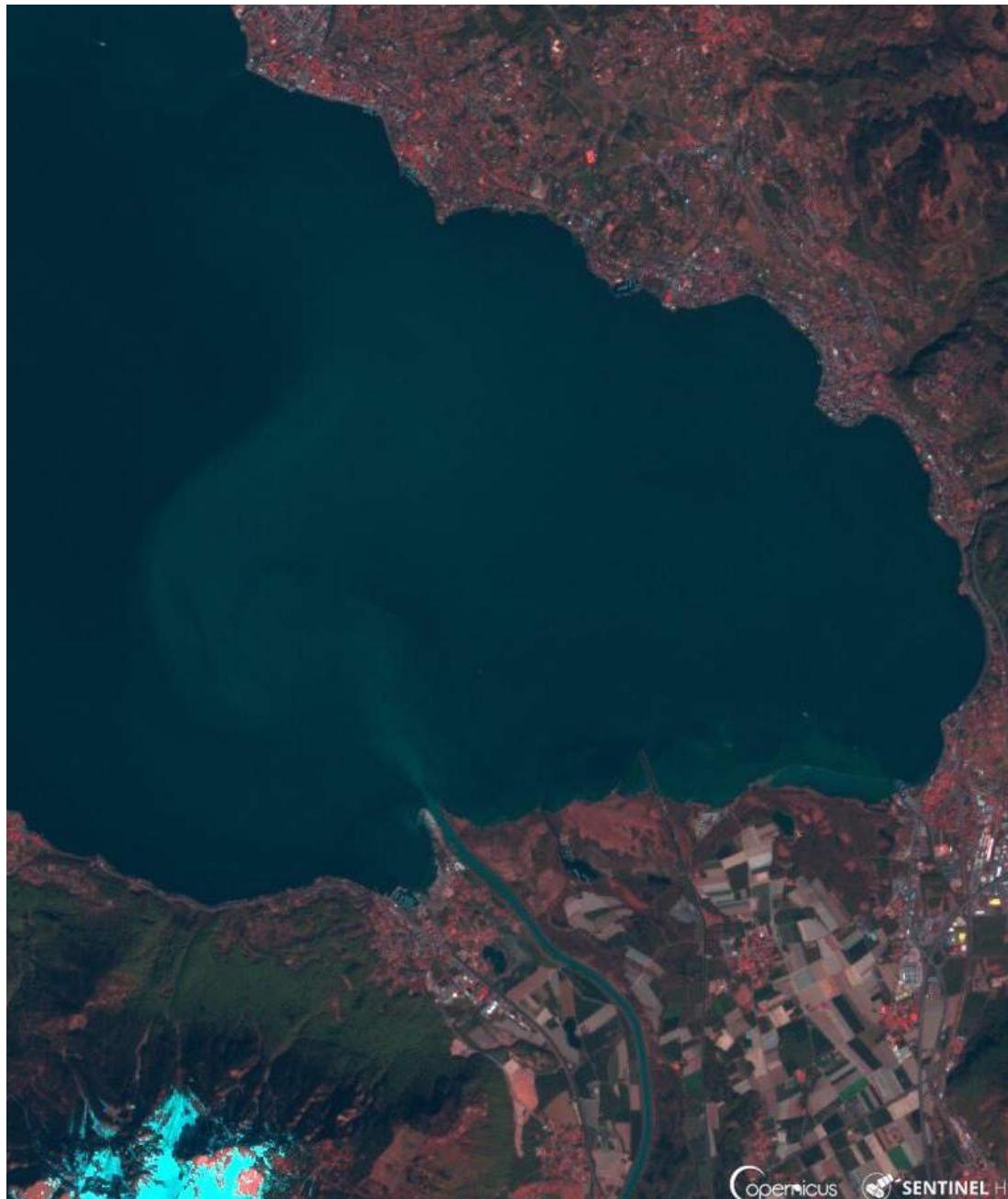
After working in oceans and seas, I see the Rhône river as a great challenge and a perfect exploration site: a densely populated and industrialised area, and yet the Rhône basin still has the highest conservation value, especially with the current focus of its renaturation. I would like to investigate the Rhône river's crossing through transboundary lake Geneva (or lac Léman in French, shared by both Switzerland and France), focusing on the river's delta area and how its inflow affects the lakebed. It is known that the underflow currents carry suspension-laden waters from the river mouth all the way to the deep basin. Anything that is at the bottom is coated in a film of sediment. By using photogrammetry and underwater lidar remote scanning technology, recording with hydrophones and filming with Deep Vision, I plan to map the bottom of the Rhône river's delta and lake Geneva; observe the effects of erosional and depositional processes; explore the changing ecosystem and document the hidden evidences of human activity before it is covered by thick layers of sediment: shipwrecks (*Rhône*, *Hirondelle*), remains of a crashed plane, other possible sunken artefacts. The river has a relatively high gradient leading to a deep delta, thus making it difficult to predict what dreams and myths, the scars and damage lay there.

I am interested in having a dialogue about the conceptual and technological methods used for truth-seeking-voyages and the abstract mythological surplus of poetic language they produce. By exploring and "exploiting" these concepts as a poetic narration, I try to connect the scientific abstraction with daily practice and political, ecological questions. To develop this project, I would like to work with *LéXPLORÉ*, a floating laboratory on lake Geneva; and/or seek other possible collaborations to continue conversation about the changing image of both riverbed and lake bottom.

PRELIMINARY VIEWS



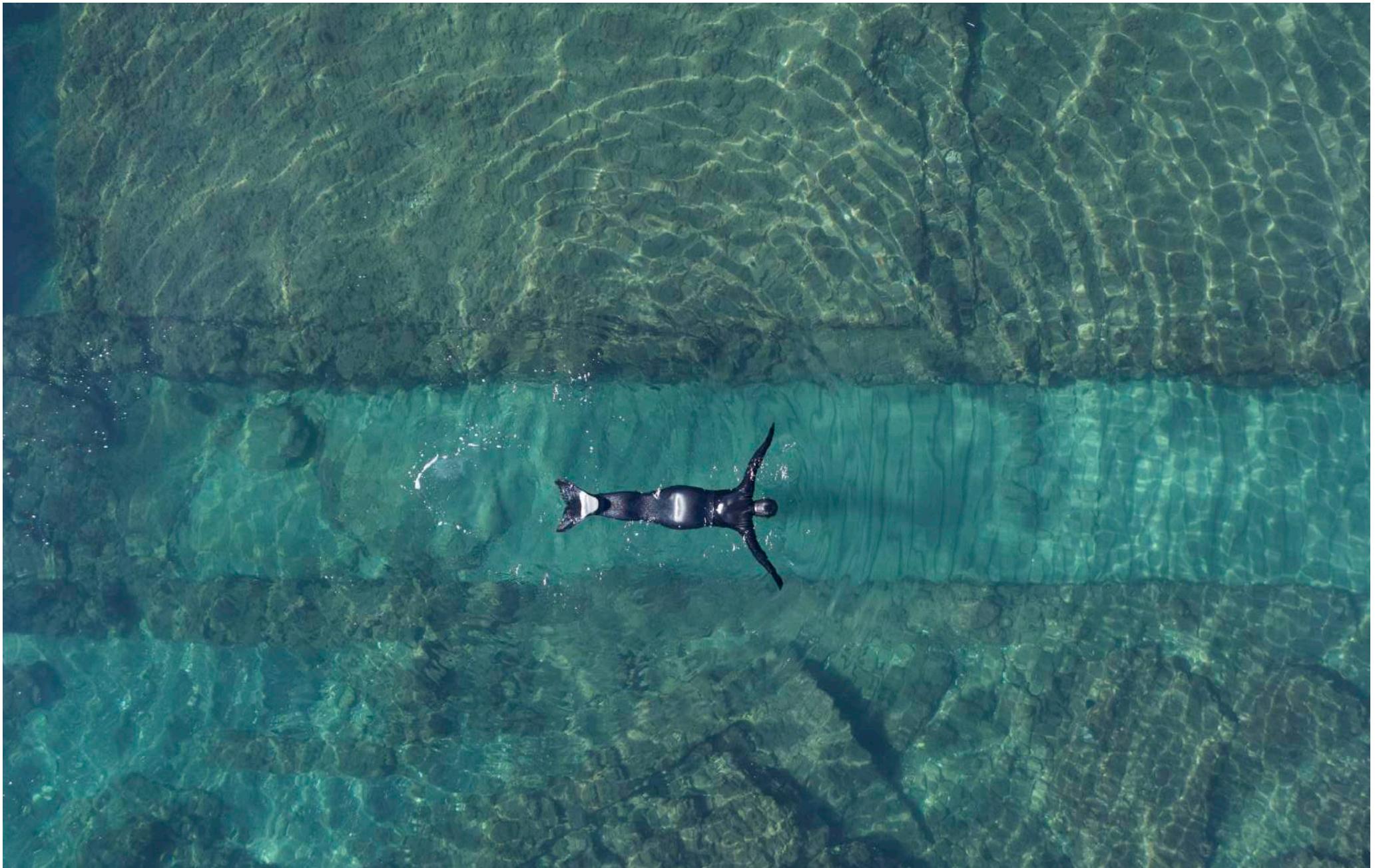
PRELIMINARY VIEWS



PRELIMINARY VIEWS



PREVIOUS WORKS





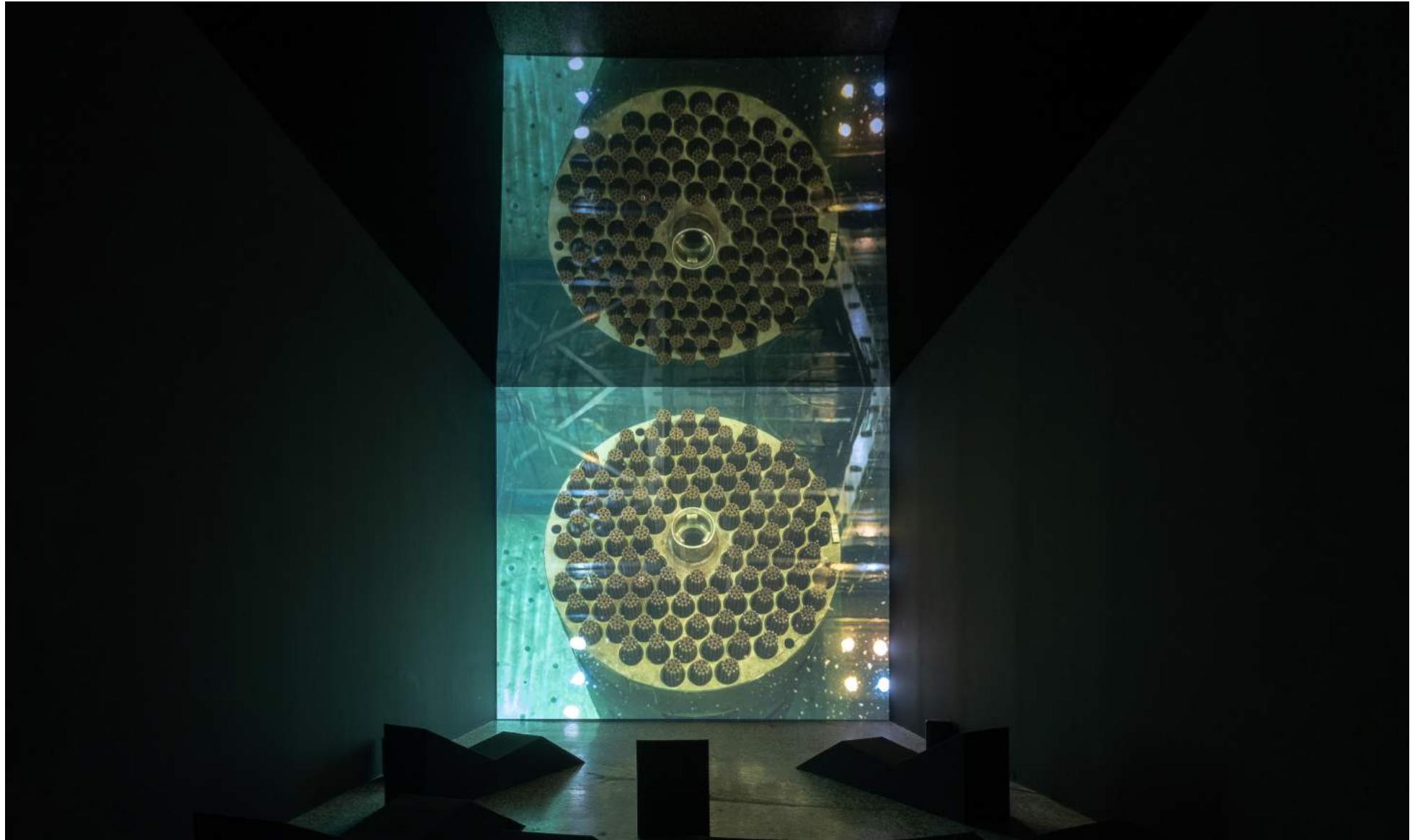
ETERNAL RETURN

Film / 15 min, looped / 2021

Eternal Return meditates on the ruins and possibilities of humanity as seen across the infinite expanse of time. Set 10,000 years in the future, looking into the past (our present), the artist dives into deep time, from the cosmic and geological, to the ecological and political. The artist based the work on mapping technologies, such as sonar, remote sensing and seafloor scanning, and set out to explore structures in the depths of the sea. Dressed as a mermaid, the artist freedives in an attempt to measure space and time, using her own body as a scale.

Installation in the Tate Modern's South Tank.





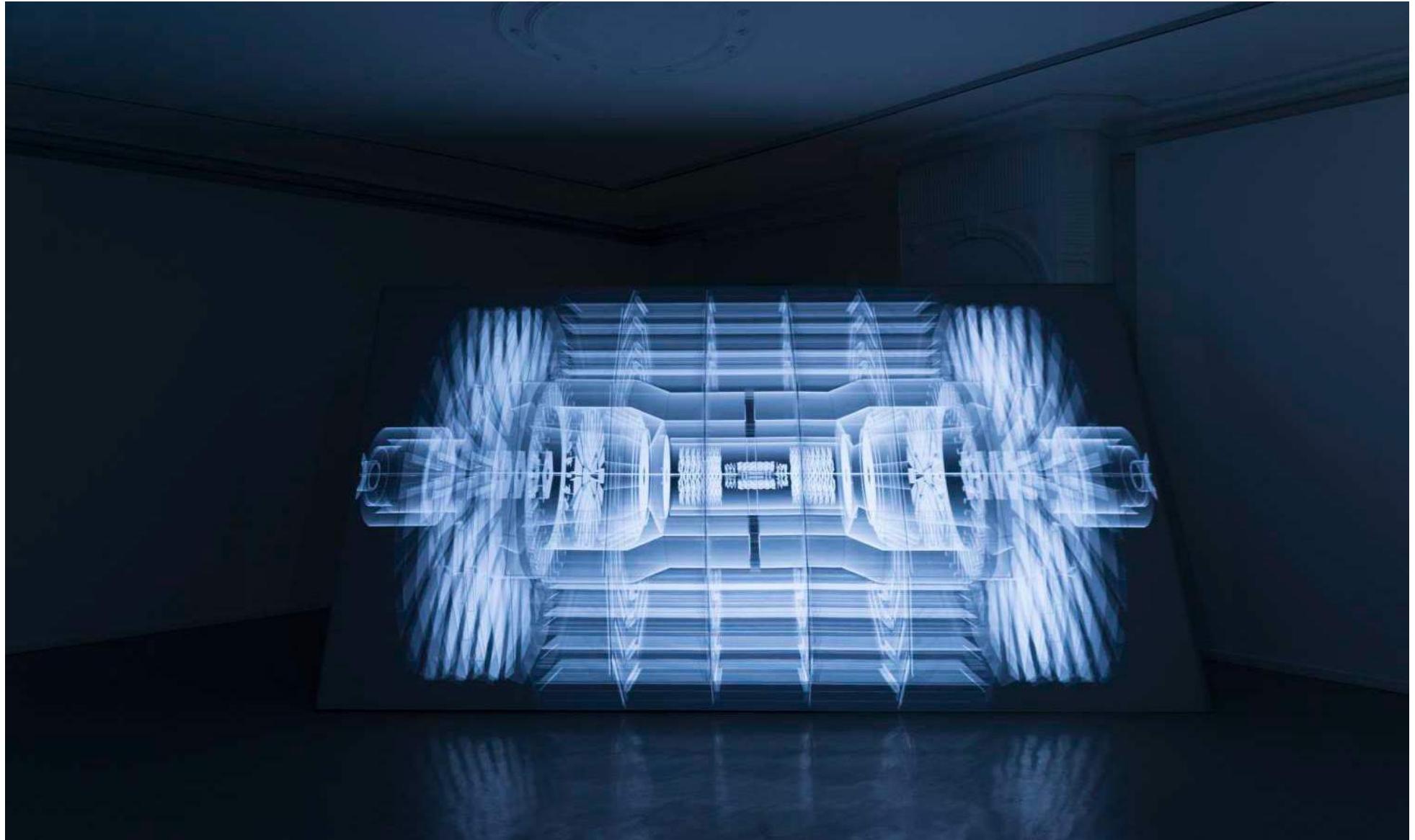
t 1/2

Film / 19 min / HD / 2019

Future Generation Art Prize Award 2019

<https://vimeo.com/314926137> password: deeptime

t 1/2 continues the topic of post-human mythology and fictional visual meditation about contemporary science from future archaeology perspective. *t 1/2* is the symbol of the term ‘half-life’, commonly used in nuclear physics to describe how quickly unstable atoms undergo radioactive decay, or how long stable atoms survive. *t 1/2*, shown as a large-scale video installation that consists of architecture envisioned by the artist through remote sensing 3D scans and the mirrored ceiling, traverse an epic landscape of geography.



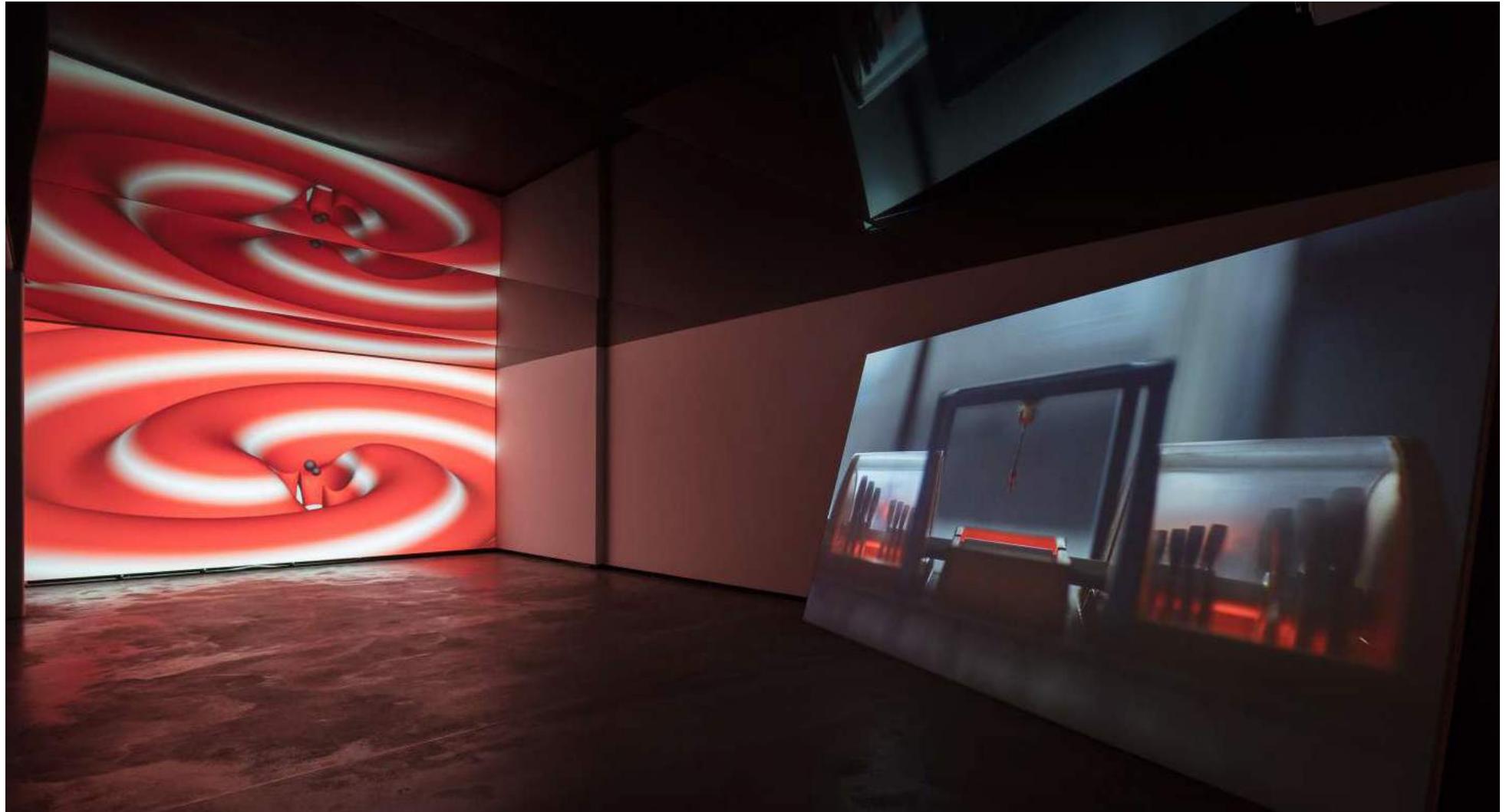
SIRENOMELIA

Film / 11 min / HD / 2018

This work is in the ifa art collection.

<https://vimeo.com/246712507> password: neutrino

Set in far-northern territories where cold, Arctic waters meet rocky escarpments on which radio telescopes record fast-traveling quasar waves, *Sirenomelia* links man, nature and machine and posits possible post-human mythologies. It is shot in an abandoned Cold-War submarine base in Olavsvern, Norway, and is a cosmic portrait of one of mankind's oldest mythic creatures - the mermaid. The artist, performing as a siren, swims through the decrepit NATO facility while cosmic signals and white noise traverse the entirety of space, reaching its farthest corners, beyond human impact.



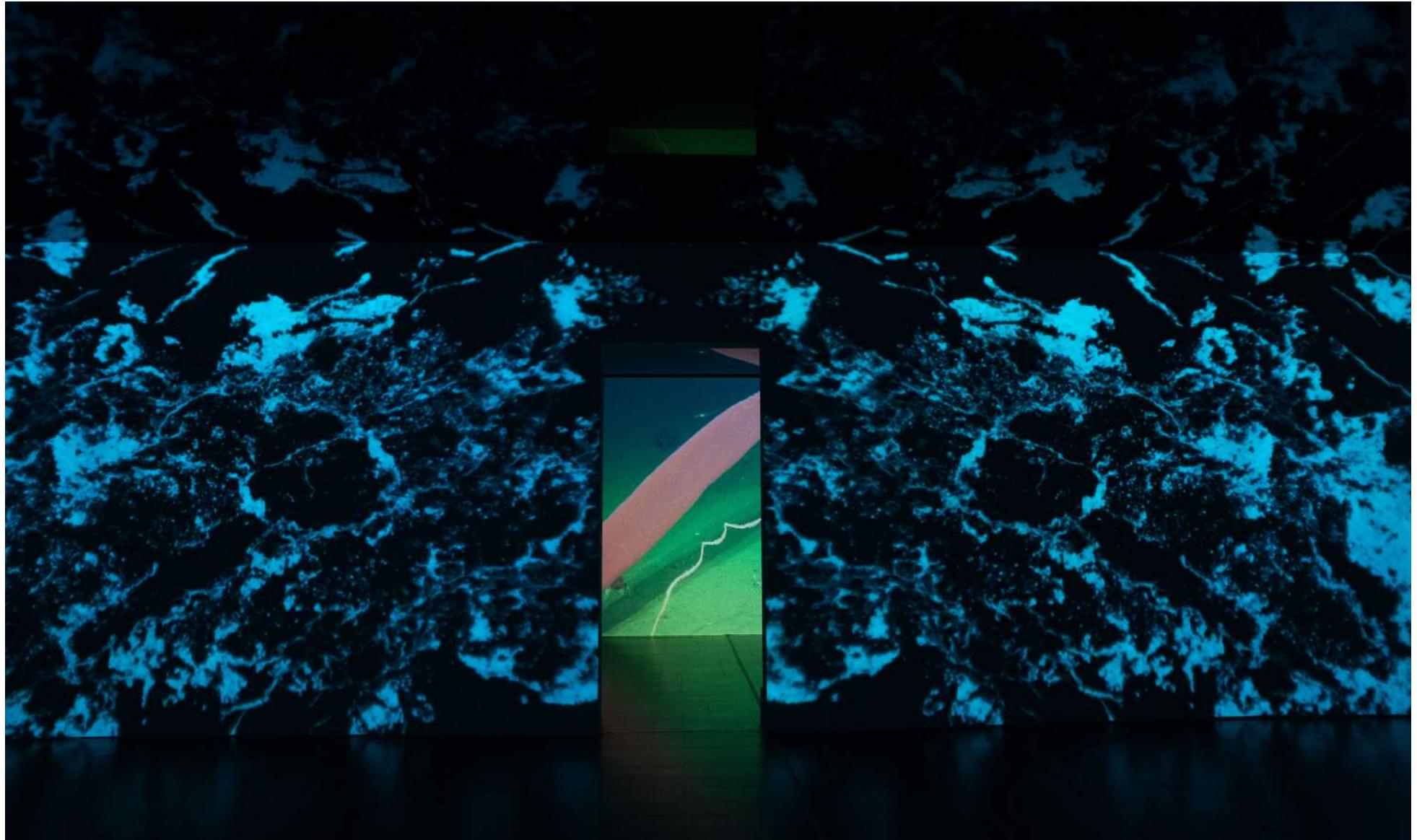
MIRROR MATTER

Film, 16 mm / 12 min / HD / 2018

Kino der Kunst Project Award, 2017

<https://vimeo.com/240838691/c226c3af28>

Film consists of a fictional visual meditation about contemporary science from a retro-futurist perspective. The film begins with a digital rendering of the Super-Kamiokande neutrino observatory in Japan, which depicts water pools inside a cylindrical tube filled with mirrors, through which reflections of neutrinos are produced to achieve the speed of light. The slow panning movement gives a sense of the immensity of the nearly 13,000 photo-multipliers that inhabit this strange vessel. Another frame depicts the Hadron Collider at CERN, which is the largest particle accelerator and also the biggest scientific facility on the planet. Its architecture envisioned by the artist through LIDAR scans, produces a dynamic, transparent imprint in three dimensions. The work also documents and at times imagines the processes at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC).



SUNKEN CITIES

Audiovisual installation / 2021 / at Kunsthaus Centre d'art Pasquart

<https://vimeo.com/588228110> password: ocean

With *Sunken Cities*, E. Skarnulyte produces the effect of total immersion in a multi-dimensional landscape in which our gaze is duplicated by the mirrored ceiling and we simultaneously become witnesses of a future, contemporary and past world. Within this algid landscape, devoid of humans, appears the ancient, mythological figure of the siren. She takes many guises: is human and simultaneously fish, a cyborg, a machine. Skarnulyte confronts these disused technological structures, shrouded in myths, and abandoned places marked by decay with this deeply symbolic figure as a counter-myth.



DEEP POINT CLOUD

Film, 4K vertical / 2019

Commissioned by Screen City Biennial.

<https://vimeo.com/377081897>

Deep Point Cloud is a visual meditation and examination of the contemporary science conditions related to deep sea mining and ocean mapping. While everyone else is pointing towards the future, *Deep Point Cloud* is set 10,000 years from now but looking back from the future into the past, to uncover our present moment. The underwater Ocean Basin is examined from an ‘alien archeology perspective’ to reconstruct the mythologies and beliefs of the past. As humans will be already extinct, the landscape will be only occupied by the leftovers of the human production, populated by the ruins of impressive architectures such as oil rigs and mines. These ruins will stand as evidence as *Deep Point Cloud*’s mythologizes our present moment. *Deep Point Cloud* is not based on verbal narration or conventional documentary language. Instead, it articulates the content through light effects, sound, absence, and movements by using an evocative approach. The film is shot in different places in the Arctic Basin, using different 3D laser scanner data and a Deep Vision camera.



SENSORY REMOTE SEABED

Performance / 2021 / at Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art

Bathed in darkness, drowned in deep water songs. The immersive multi-sensory experience of light and sound brings to mind early cave paintings as well as techno dancing.

EMILIJA ŠKARNULYTE | CV

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Education

2012-2013 MA in Tromsø Academy of Contemporary Art, Tromsø, Norway

2007-2010 BA in Sculpture in The Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan, Italy

Filmography

Eternal Return, 2021, 9.40 min, 4K

Burial, 2021, 60 min, 4K

Circular Time. For Aleksandra Kasuba, 2021, 18 min, 4K

Chambers of Radiance, 2020, loop, 4K

T ½, 2019, 19 min, HD

Deep Point Cloud, 2019, 7 min, 4K

Mirror Matter, 2018, 12 min, HD

Sirenomelia, 2018, 12 min, HD

Point Cloud Therapy, 2017, 30 min, HD

No Place Rising, 2015, 12 min, HD

Energy Island, 2017, 24 min, HD

Twin Qso, 2015, 10 min, HD

Qso Lens, 2015, 6 min, HD

The Footstones in Night Writing, 2015, 5 min, 16mm

Hollow Earth, 2013, 22:30 min, HD

Aldona, 2013, 13 min, HD

Song-do Prophecy, 2013, 11 min, super 8mm, HD

Jubilee, 2014, 5 min, HD

Latent River, 2015, 5 min, HD

Fossils from the Future, 2015, 5 min, 16mm,

The Geology of Morals, 2013, 10 min, HD

The Valley of a Missing City, 2011, 6:20 min, HD

Limbic system, 2011, 6:20 min, HD

The 38th Parallel North, 2010, 4:30 min, HD

Solo Exhibitions

- 2021 *Eternal Return*, Tate Modern, London, UK
2021 *t 1/2*, Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, DK
2021 *Sunken Cities*, Kunsthaus Pasquart, Biel, CH
2021 *Circular Time. For Aleksandra Kasuba*, National Gallery of Art, Vilnius, LT
2020 *Chambers of Radiance*, PinchukArtCentre in Kiev, UA
2020 *Future Fossils*, Public art video installation Hollywood, Sunset Blvd, lateral programme Frieze art fair, Los Angeles, US

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2021 Beijing Media Art Biennale, Beijing, CN
2021 *System Down? Part. 2*, Klemm's, Berlin, DE
2021 *Intimitet og nærlhet*, Kunstnerforbundet, Oslo, NO
2021 Baltic Triennial 14th, Vilnius, LT
2021 Asia Digital Art Exhibition, CN
2021 Macao Art Biennale, CN
2021 *It is not the End of the World*, Fundaziun Nairs, Scuol, CH
2021 *Generation Now*, Galerie Eigenheim, DE
2021 EKO 8, International Triennial of Art and Environment, SI
2021 The Guangzhou Image Triennial, CN
2020 *When Above*, Downs & Ross, New York, US
2020 *From Matter to Data: Ecology of Infrastructures*, MoMA, New York, US
2020 Riga Photography Biennial, LV
2020 *Splitting the Atom*, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, LT
2020 *Presence in the Absence*, Alexander Levy Gallery Berlin, DE
2020 *To Dream Effectively*, Focal Point Gallery, UK
2020 Kiruna Forever exhibition, ArkDes Stockholm, SE
2020 Kiruna Forever exhibition, Konstmuseet i Norr, SE

Festivals and Screenings

- 2021 *Modern Mondays*, MoMA, NY, US
2021 Fotograf Festival, Prague, CZ
2021 *Ecologies of Industry*, Pleasure Dome, CA
2021 *Writing Letters to Extraterrestrials*, ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Berlin, DE
2020 Kino Der Kunst, Munich, DE

Publications

- 2021 *Sirenomelia*, published by Sternberg Press
2020 ‘Radiating Exposure’ by Alison Sperling, in *Weathering. Ecologies of Exposure*, ed. by Christoph F. E. Holzhey and Arnd Wedemeyer. Ici Berlin Press
2020 Cura Magazine, text by Patrick James Reed, Italy

Residencies

- 2022 Kuenstlerhaus Schloss Balmoral
2021 OVEREXPOSED - Sonic Acts Home-Based Residency
2021 MAK Center for Art and Architecture at the Schindler House, Los Angeles, California
2021 The Bogliasco Foundation, Italy
2020 Super Otium, in collaboration with Lithuania Embassy, Napoli

Workshops/ Pitching projects:

- 2021 Anthropocene Campus Venice
2020 Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, KVIFF Eastern Promises
2020 East Doc Forum 2020, Prague
2020 The Writers Retreat workshop

Artist talks, concerts and sound performances

- 2020 Elemental Geography and Geo-Filmmaking, NYU, Shanghai, China
2020 Artist talk at Städelschule, DE
2020 Discussion “Energy: Ideology, Capital and Data, Moma, New York, USA
2020 New Mineral Collective at NXNorth artist talk, Anchorage Museum, Alaska, USA
2020 Future Fossils, Drive-by-Art (Public Art in This Moment of Social Distancing), Los Angeles

FLUVIAL EXTENTS (EXTENSIONS FLUVIALES)

Mes films développent une perspective commune : j'y étudie l'activité humaine et les structures invisibles qu'elle laissent derrière elle. Je m'intéresse particulièrement aux origines de l'univers et aux processus géologiques, aux géotraumatismes et au concept du deep time (temps profond).

Dans mon film *Aldona* (2012), je réalisais le portrait d'une personne aveugle (ma grand-mère, lituanienne) dans le contexte post-soviétique. Avec *Hollow Earth* (2013), une vidéo réalisée à 1 km de profondeur dans l'une des plus grandes mines de fer du monde, je m'intéressais à l'architecture secrète de la guerre froide. L'eau est par ailleurs un thème récurrent : je plonge en mer et explore les mondes souterrains et des ruines de la guerre froide. J'ai ainsi arpentré les replis du temps cosmique, intéressée par la géologie, l'écologie et la politique, révélant des lieux secrets et des structures autrement invisibles, cachées dans les profondeurs marines. La plupart de mes œuvres mettent en scène l'une des plus anciennes créatures mythiques – la sirène – qui, dans mes vidéos et performances, tente de reconquérir les eaux, sans violence, ou encore de mesurer par son corps l'immensité des eaux, une étendue si vaste que l'humanité ne peut entièrement la saisir.

Mon dernier projet, *Eternal Return*, présenté à la Tate de Londres, est une étude des processus scientifiques et des technologies contemporaines liées à l'exploration des fonds marins. Je m'y attache aux mécanismes de cartographie des océans, imaginant quelle serait la perspective d'un archéologue du futur. Pour ce projet, j'ai filmé à Baïa, où j'ai pu plonger en apnée à 20 mètres de profondeur, essayant de mesurer les ruines d'une civilisation perdue avec mon corps (de sirène). J'ai aussi travaillé avec l'université Temple de Philadelphie à la recherche d'une espèce de corail (dit super corail) qui vit à 4 km de profondeur, et participe à reboiser les fonds marins, limitant l'acidité des océans. En novembre 2021, je collaborerai avec l'université CalTech à Los Angeles, dans le cadre de la résidence MAK Schindler. J'espère continuer à approfondir ces questions ; cette fois en travaillant autour des forêts de varech et d'algues.

Après avoir évolué si longtemps en mer (et dans les océans), le Rhône me semble être un défi et un site d'exploration parfait : une zone densément peuplée, industrialisée, mais aussi, en son bassin, un site de conservation, et un lieu particulièrement intéressant à étudier, en ce moment où avec l'accent mis sur sa révégetalisation. J'aimerais proposer une 'traversée' visuelle du Rhône via le lac Léman (entre Suisse et France), me concentrant sur la zone du delta du fleuve et sur la façon dont son débit affecte le lac. On sait que les courants de fond transportent les eaux chargées jusqu'aux zones les plus profondes du lac. Tout ce qui se trouve au fond est recouvert d'une couche de sédiments. L'utilisation de la photogrammétrie et la technologie de lidar sous-marin, ainsi que des enregistrements hydrophones et des optiques dites de 'Deep Vision' me permettront de révéler ces mécanismes. Je prévois ainsi de cartographier le fond du delta du Rhône et du lac Léman, afin d'observer les effets des processus d'érosion et de dépôt de ces sédiments. J'aimerais ainsi mettre en lumière l'évolution de l'écosystème rhodanien du Léman, et documenter les traces cachées de l'activité humaine, avant que celles-ci ne soient recouvertes par d'épaisses couches de sédiments. Je pense particulièrement aux lieux de rêve et de mythes : les épaves de navires et de bateaux (comme le Rhône, l'Hirondelle), les restes d'avion, et d'autres artefacts coulés. Le fleuve a une pente relativement élevée. Il est donc difficile de prédire quels mythes, quelles cicatrices et quels passés, s'y trouveront enfouis.

Je l'évoquais, je travaille souvent en dialogue avec des scientifiques, discutant ensemble des méthodes conceptuelles et technologiques utilisées pour leurs recherches, et réfléchis au 'surplus' mythologique, à l'abstraction, et à la poésie, que ces méthodes peuvent produire. En explorant et en "exploitant" ces concepts, j'essaie de relier l'abstraction scientifique à une pratique quotidienne de plongée, et aux questions sociétales, politiques et écologiques. Dans le cadre de ce projet pour la Fondation Taurus, j'aimerais travailler en priorité avec le laboratoire LEXPLORE (laboratoire flottant basé sur le Léman) et éventuellement d'autres collaborateurs locaux, pour poursuivre cette conversation, et révéler un peu de ce mystère que constitue le fond du lac.