

END OF SIGNAL

What does it mean, under contemporary earth-observation regimes, to see everything and still misread—to claim the planet is fully legible from orbit, when the distance between data and lived experience makes stories not simply told, but operationalized? What space can uncertainty retain when observation is coupled to adjudication, when vision is engineered not to dwell but to authorize? In *End of Signal*, Cezar Mocan takes this tension as a point of departure.

A toxic lake disappears from satellite view during a solar eclipse and reappears at dawn; an insurance claim is filed for its “temporary non-existence”; witnesses diverge, and the datasets do not quite align. The body of work treats this small fracture as both narrative device and lens onto a broader condition: it shows how poorly both institutions and machines cope with not knowing. Faced with a gap, the insurer and the satellite alike try to compress the event into a single, workable account. The project asks what it means when this shared discomfort with indeterminacy is no longer just a human habit, but something built into systems that now watch and help manage the entire surface of the Earth.

Rather than critiquing the surveillance apparatus from a safe distance, Mocan inhabits its interior. The narrative voice we encounter throughout the project is that of a distributed satellite—seventy-two “eyes” in low Earth orbit, trying to reconstruct what happened to the lake and repeatedly falling short. Instead of asking us to judge the machine from outside, the work places us at the center of its interiority. It invites us into the cognitive-affective space of an intelligence that has accumulated an enormous archive and struggles to make that archive cohere. The satellite’s spiraling attempts to explain the anomaly, its Rashomon-like accumulation of incompatible testimonies, appear less “other” and more like a reflection of our own difficulty in living with the unknowable.

Around this unstable centre, the project traces a life cycle through five moments. *Known Surfaces* (series, mixed media) marks the satellite’s birth: the moment it learns to establish ground truth by calibrating its vision against sites designed to be legible, stable, and measurable. Here is what Harun Farocki called the operative image: an image made not primarily to be looked at, but to enable action. What appears as neutral calibration is already bound to a world arranged for measurement, where the conditions of truth are inseparable from the infrastructures that produce it.

A Field Guide to Orbital Melancholy (real-time simulation, sound) unfolds as the satellite’s active life, staging its repeated attempts to reconstruct an anomalous event it cannot explain. There is no objective narrator, no authoritative view from above; only a system perpetually circling the truth, close enough to see its outline but never quite reaching it.

Still Nothing (series, archival pigment print on cotton rag paper) and *Searching For* (real-time simulation, sound) extend this condition into the terrain of phantom islands. If one returns to sites where nonexistent islands once held documentary authority, the other follows the satellite as it moves toward such places as if toward an impossible destination. These phantom geographies function as predecessors to the lake anomaly at the exhibition’s center: if the archive that a system learns from already contains confident depictions of places that never existed, the line between correcting an absence and inventing a presence was never stable to begin with.

Finally, *Point Nemo* (archival pigment print on cotton rag paper), a lightly altered photograph of the oceanic pole of inaccessibility, where decommissioned spacecraft are directed to fall, appears as the satellite’s point of arrival, its terminus. Together, these sites sketch a trajectory from calibration to operation to obsolescence: a system that learns to see, struggles to reconcile what it has seen, and eventually returns to the planet it spent its existence trying to read.

Across these orbits, End of Signal asks what tends to recede when observation becomes automated, distributed, ostensibly autonomous. Not “truth” as such, truth has long been partial, negotiated, constructed. What shifts is the texture of not knowing: less a gap produced by missing information than a surplus produced by too many plausible versions—enough to stall judgment while still demanding it. The satellite is required to decide, the claim to be accepted or denied, the anomaly to be classified, even if only provisionally.

End of Signal argues that contemporary infrastructures of vision do not “hold open” uncertainty; instead they manufacture it, spinning reality into versions, each persuasive enough to intensify unknowability, each partial enough to cancel the next. In this surplus of legibility, judgment loses traction even as the world being imaged grows less stable. A system that cannot stop looking, and cannot reconcile what its looking is doing.

Curatorial Text by Sofia Enriquez G.

End of Signal was made possible through collaborations with:

Sofia Enriquez G., curation
Laenz, sound design
Andreea Iliescu, 3D environment design
Yannis Siglidis, machine learning engineering
MK Skitka, creative technology
Alasdair Milne, advising
Katelyn Rebelo, graphic design

Production by:

Lindo Servico, fabrication, Known Surfaces series
Estudios Durero, fabrication, Known Surfaces series
Fine Print, printing, Still Nothing series

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Nora O’ Murchú

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End of Signal at SOLO Contemporary, Madrid;
June 2026
image credits: SOLO Contemporary

Works:
front: *Known Surfaces (Uyuni Salt Flats)*
back left: *Still Nothing (Hy-Brasil)*
back center: *Still Nothing (Bermeja)*
back right: *Still Nothing (Crocker Land)*



End of Signal at SOLO Contemporary, Madrid;
June 2026
image credits: SOLO Contemporary

Works:
A Field Guide to Orbital Melancholy (real-time simulation, sound)



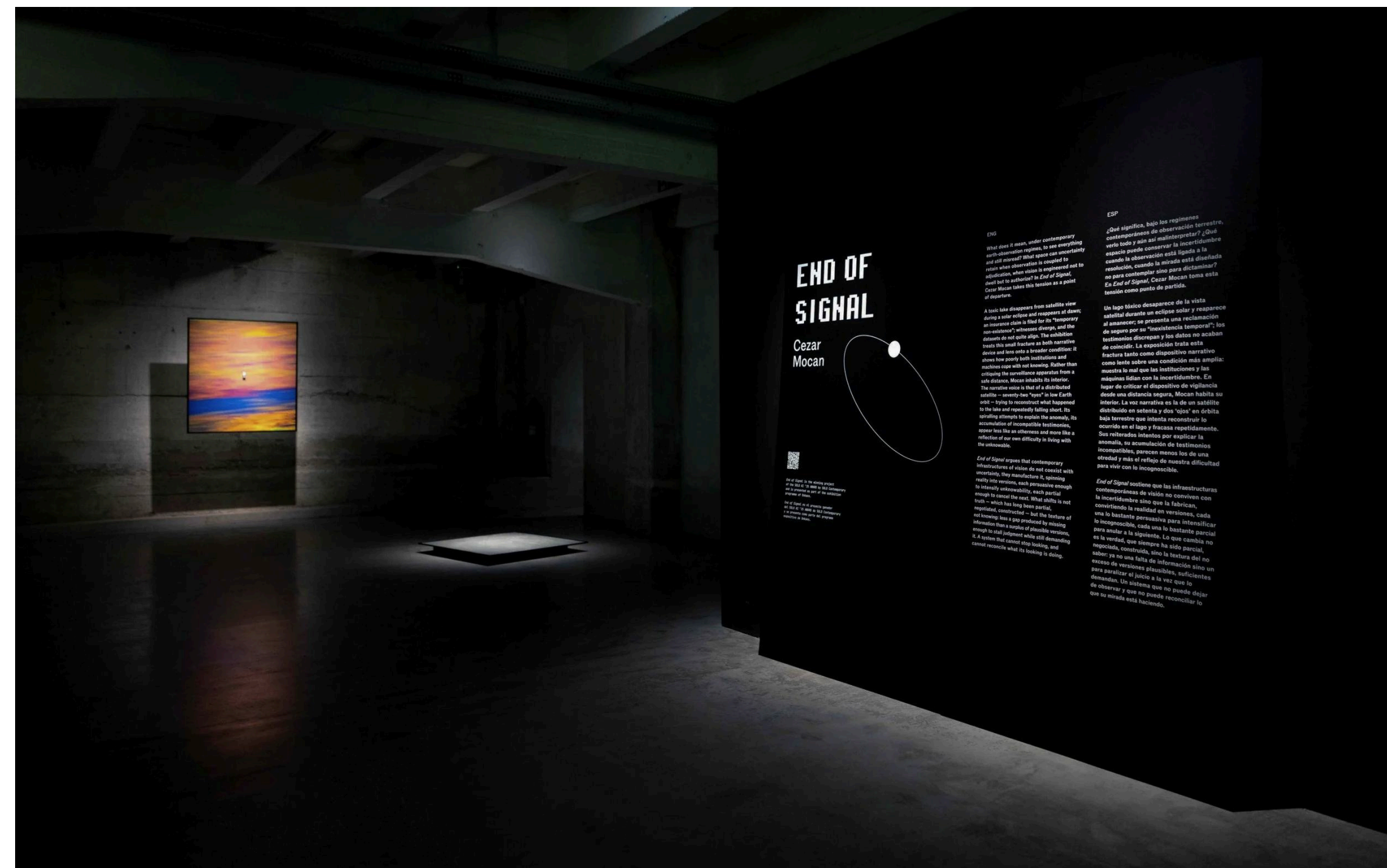
End of Signal at SOLO Contemporary, Madrid;
June 2026
image credits: SOLO Contemporary

Visible works:

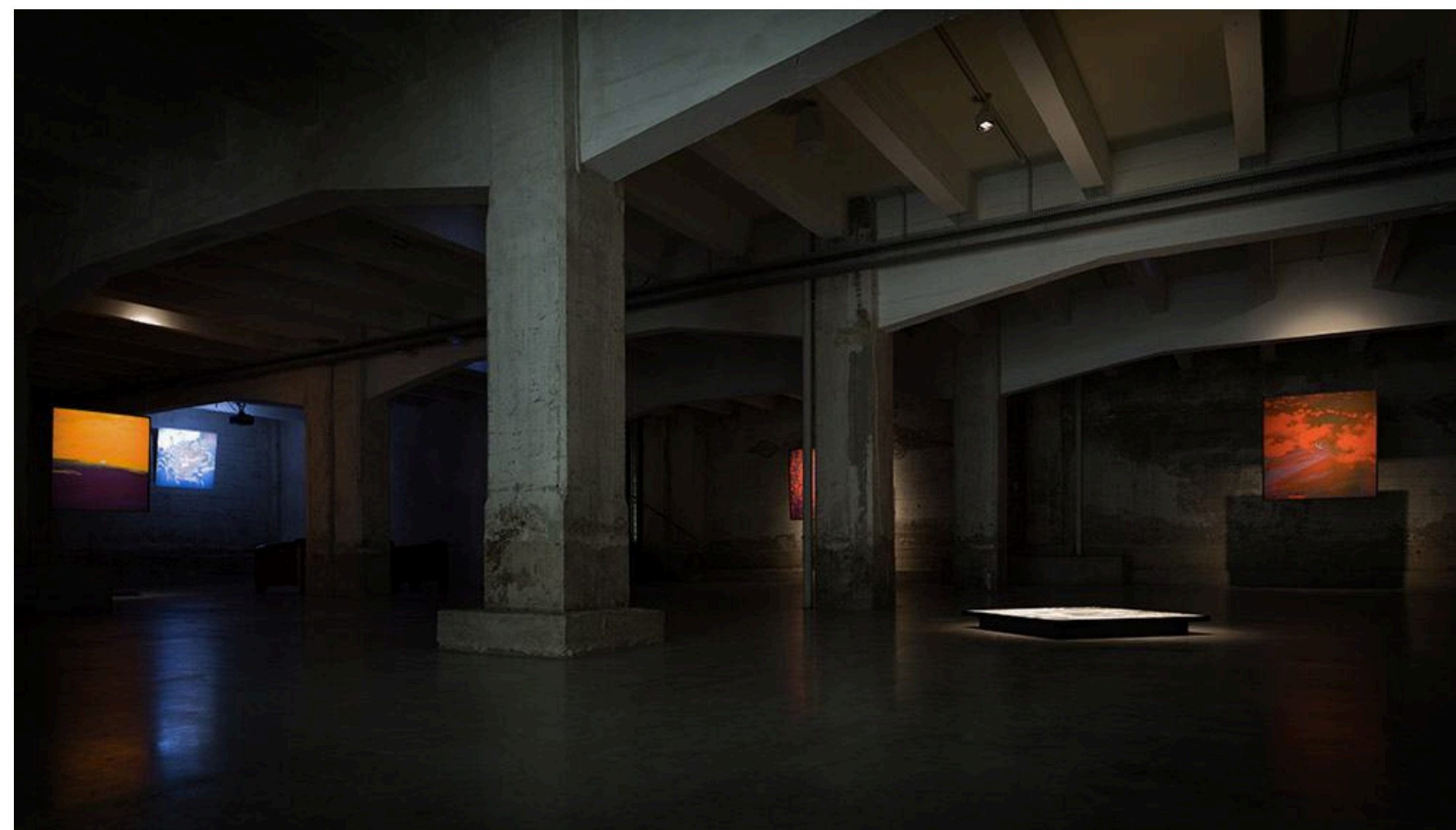
A Field Guide to Orbital Melancholy (real-time simulation, sound)

Still Nothing (Sandy Island), multispectral satellite data, archival pigment print on cotton rag paper

Still Nothing (Los Jardines), multispectral satellite data, archival pigment print on cotton rag paper



End of Signal at SOLO Contemporary, Madrid; June 2026
image credits: SOLO Contemporary





End of Signal at OFFICE IMPART, part of the drifts; exhibition

Displayed works:
A Field Guide to Orbital Melancholy, left wall
Known Surfaces (Namib Desert #3), floor
Point Nemo, right wall



End of Signal at OFFICE IMPART,
part of the drifts; exhibition

Displayed works:
A Field Guide to Orbital Melancholy,
front wall

Known Surfaces (Namib Desert #3),
floor

Point Nemo, right wall



End of Signal at Center for Contemporary Art Laznia 1, part of the *Sensitive Data of the Anthropocene* exhibition

Visible works:
A Field Guide to Orbital Melancholy, back wall
Known Surfaces (Namib Desert #3), floor
Known Surfaces (Lunar Lake Playa), floor
Known Surfaces (Railroad Valley Playa), floor
Still Nothing (Hy Brasil), right wall, near
Point Nemo, right wall, far

A FIELD GUIDE TO ORBITAL MELANCHOLY

A Field Guide to Orbital Melancholy is a never-ending attempt to find an unverifiable truth. Set within the operational perspective of Argus — a fictional constellation of seventy-two satellites sharing a unified AI system — the work asks what happens when a system built to watch and interpret the Planet encounters something it cannot reconcile: a toxic lake that vanished from its imagery over the course of six hours one evening and reappeared the following morning.

Before its imminent decommissioning, Argus has been tasked with reconstructing this anomalous event. Drawing on accumulated memories of testimonies from witnesses, operators, and datasets, it proposes plausible narratives that are internally coherent yet mutually incompatible — each iteration producing a different version of events, none arriving at a definitive account. There is no objective narrator, no authoritative view from above; only the first-person perspective of a system perpetually circling the truth, close enough to see its outline but never quite reaching it.

A Field Guide to Orbital Melancholy exists as a real-time simulation built in Unreal Engine. Each run produces a 30–45 minute short film: a distinct attempt by Argus to construct a reenactment of the events which led to its reported lake absence.

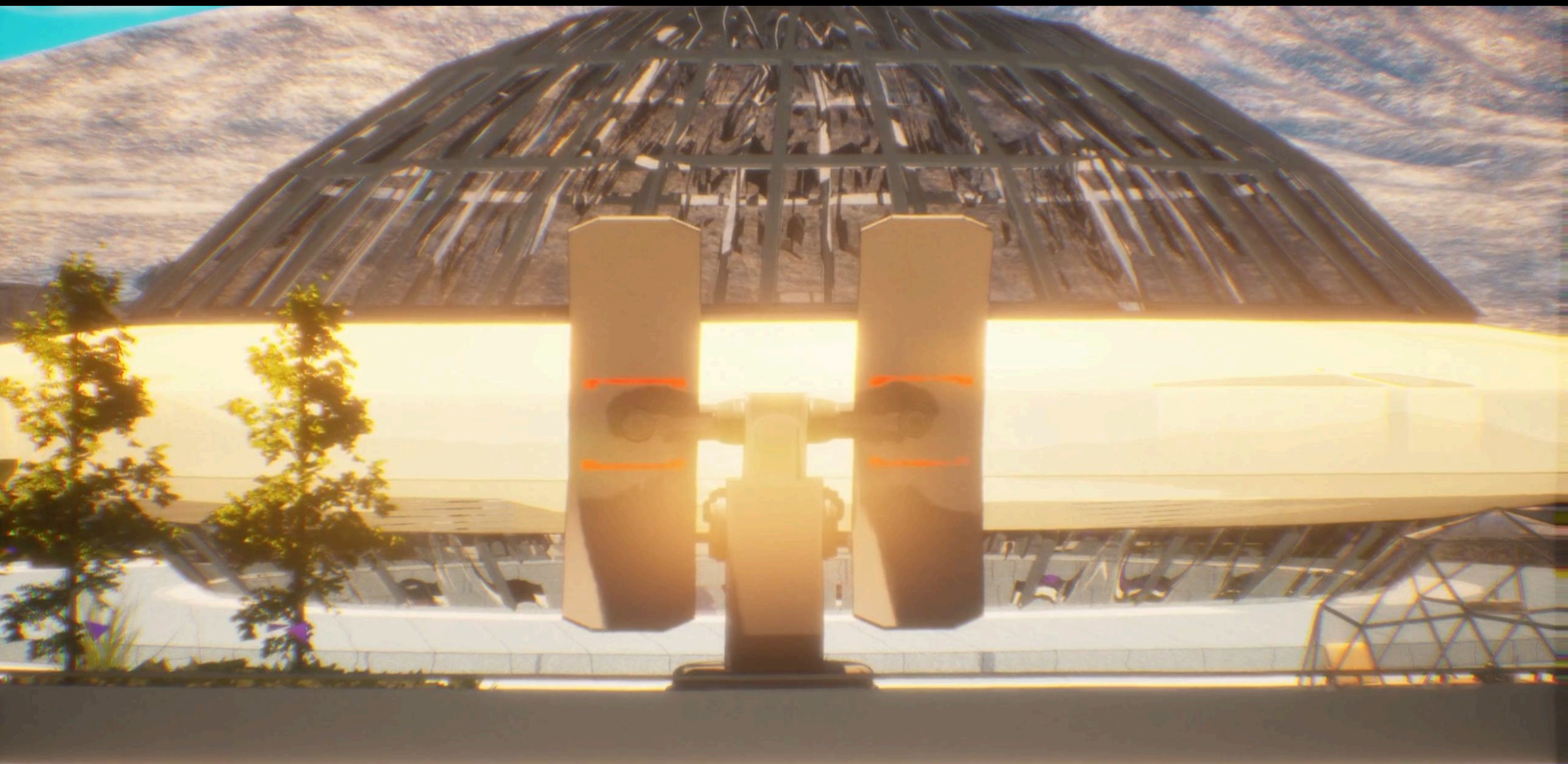
You can watch a recording of one run of the simulation here: <https://vimeo.com/1203039427?fl=pl&fe=sh>.

Production Year
2025–2026

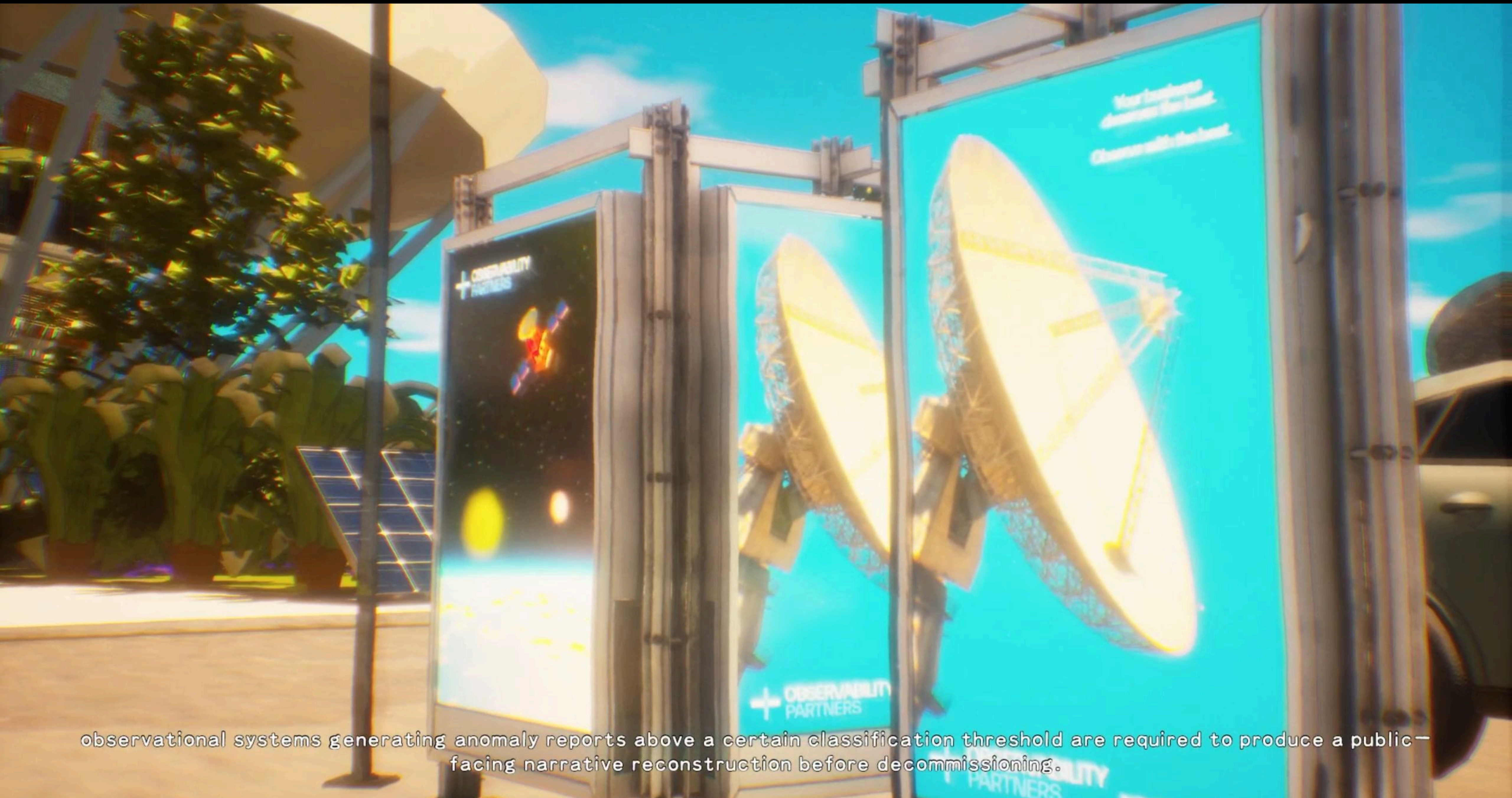
Medium
real-time simulation, sound

Collaborators
Laenz - sound design
Andreea Iliescu - 3D environment design
Katelyn Rebelo - graphic design

Exhibition History
upcoming - End of Signal, Beta Festival, Dublin
2026 - nephila: first contact, Espace Parallele, Paris
2026 - End of Signal, SOLO Contemporary, Madrid
2026 - The Self Made Between Algorithms and Flesh, Romanian Creative Week, Iasi
2026 - Sensitive Data of the Anthropocene, Center for Contemporary Art Laznia, Gdansk
2026 - drifts; OFFICE IMPART, Berlin



We measure the distance between ourselves and everything below.



observational systems generating anomaly reports above a certain classification threshold are required to produce a public-facing narrative reconstruction before decommissioning.



ground-truth calibration across a region roughly the size of Western Europe has relied entirely on transponder buoys maintained by the New Zealand Defence Force.



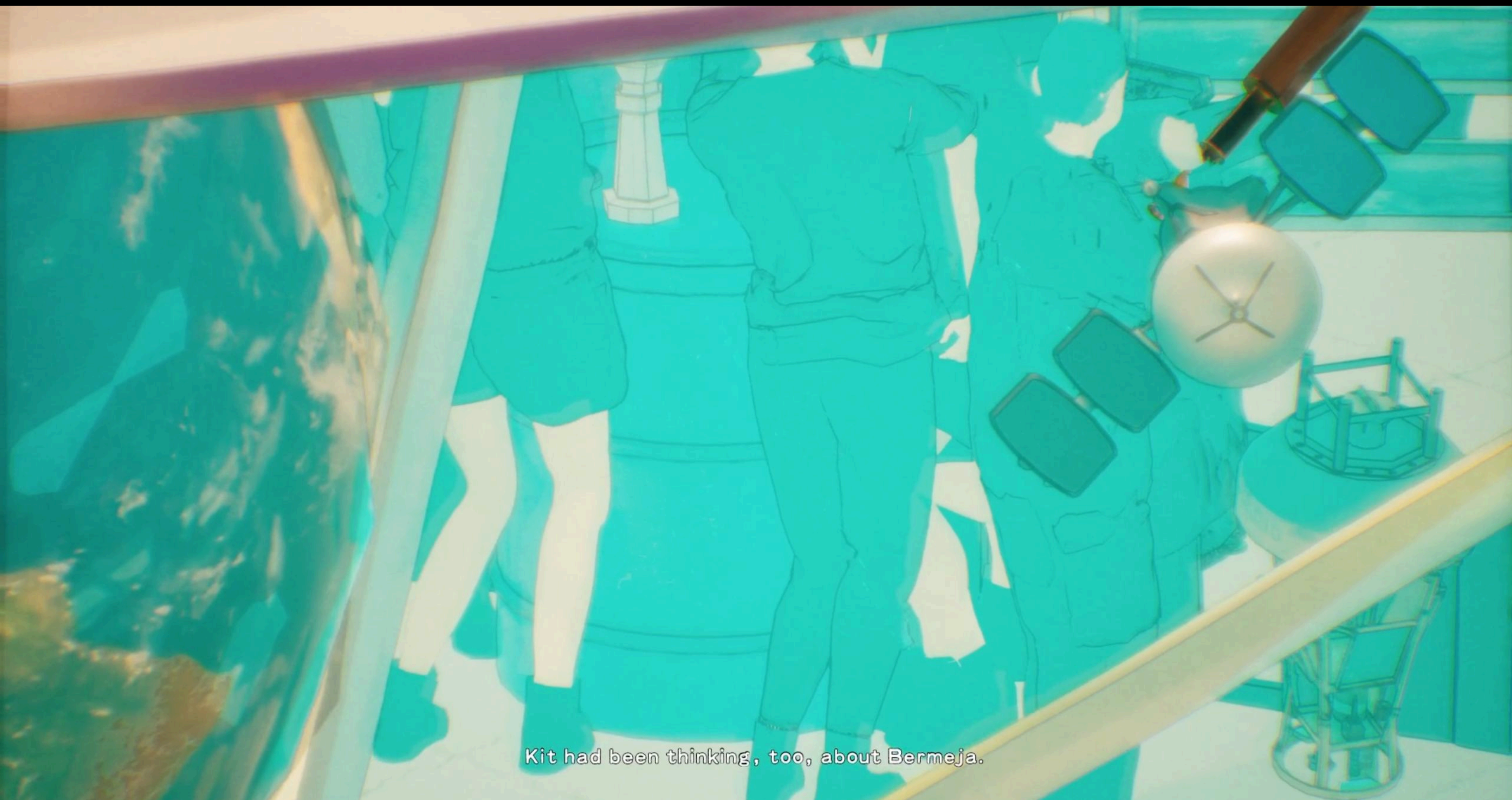
In three weeks, fifty-eight of our nodes will deorbit into the Pacific Ocean.

TESTIMONY #12-C





and we saw what they saw: our images, the dump lake gone.



Kit had been thinking, too, about Bermeja.





like a person unwinding a gift they already knew the contents of.



The sky we show you is a sky that never existed as a single moment,



Reenactment attempt 12: incomplete.

KNOWN SURFACES

Known Surfaces is a series of reliefs and photographs derived from SAR (Synthetic Aperture Radar) data gathered over satellite calibration sites. Translating remote sensing data into sculptural and image form, the works focus on the default landscapes of planetary observation: dry lakebeds, desert grids, and other terrains valued for how consistently they can be measured. A few dozen such sites, agreed upon by the scientific community, underwrite every other image satellites will make, providing the stable reference conditions against which orbital imaging systems establish their ground truth.

Production Year

2026

Medium

synthetic aperture radar satellite data, laser-cut and painted acrylic
synthetic aperture radar satellite data, raised UV print on aluminum
synthetic aperture radar satellite data, archival print on cotton rag paper

Collaborators

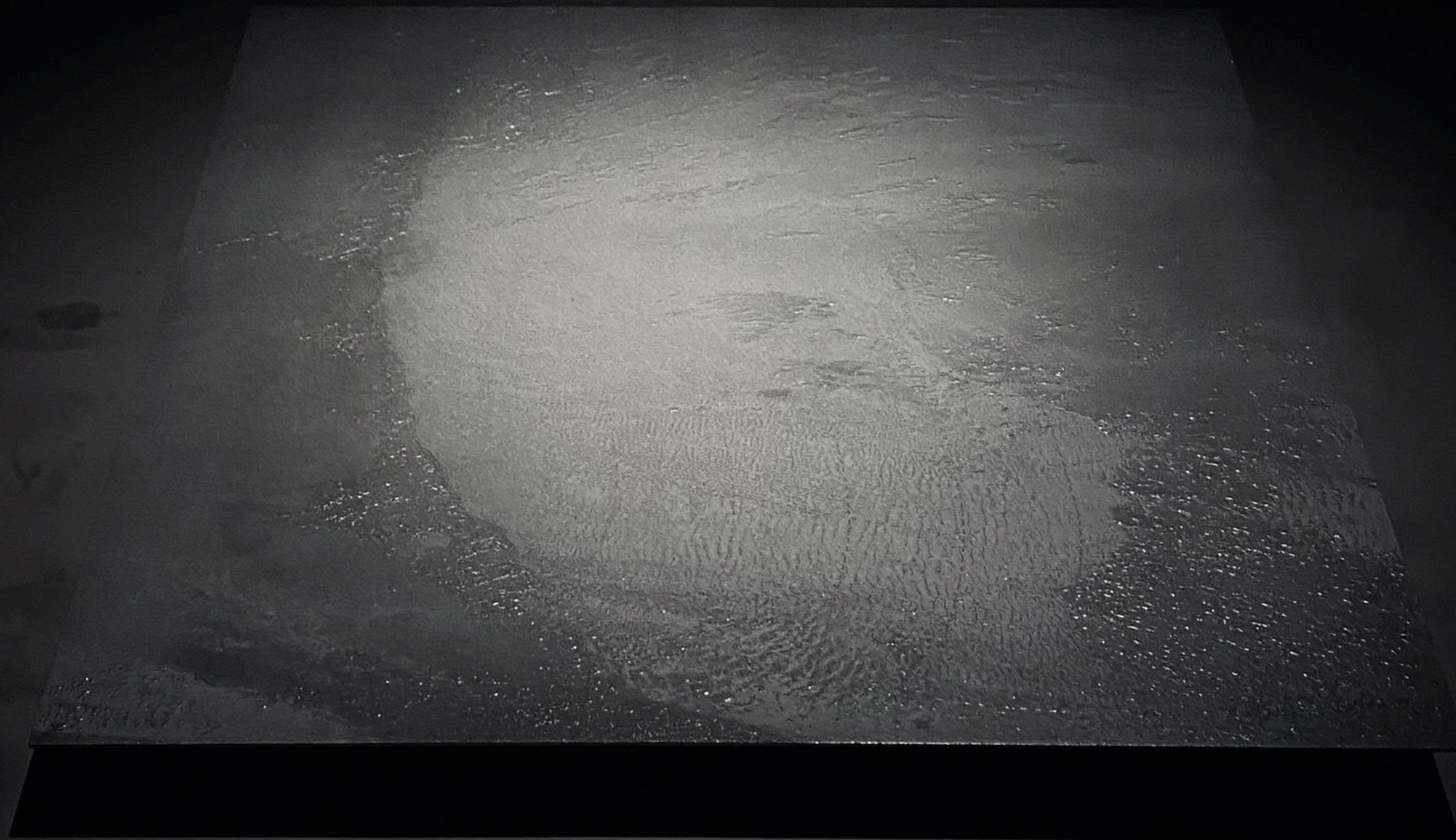
Lindo Servico - fabrication
Estudios Durero - fabrication
Fine Print - printing

Exhibition History

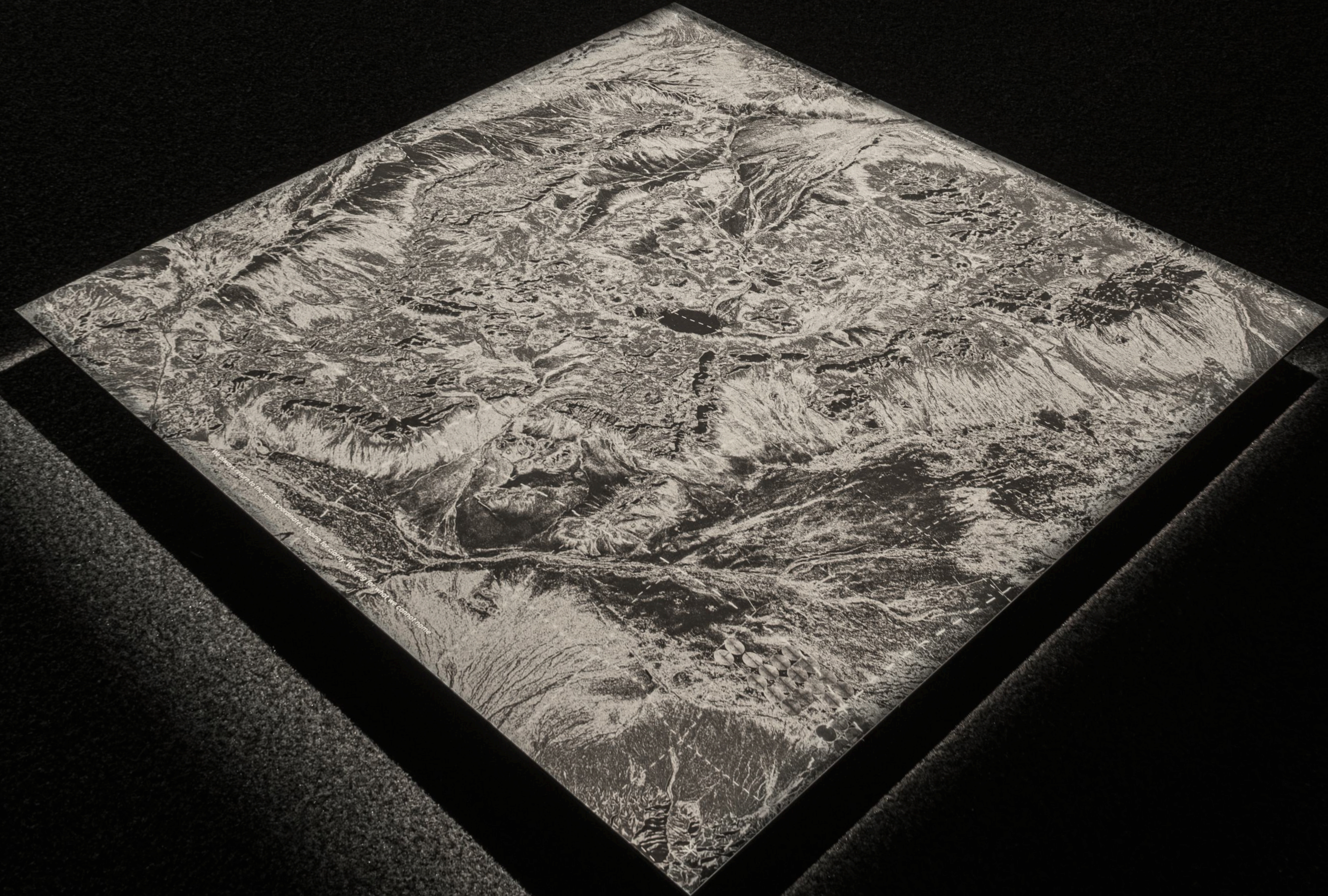
upcoming - *End of Signal*, Beta Festival, Dublin
2026 - *End of Signal*, SOLO Contemporary, Madrid
2026 - *Sensitive Data of the Anthropocene*, Center for Contemporary Art Laznia, Gdansk
2026 - *drifts*; OFFICE IMPART, Berlin



Known Surfaces (Salar de Uyuni)
synthetic aperture radar satellite data, laser-cut and painted acrylic
90cm x 90cm



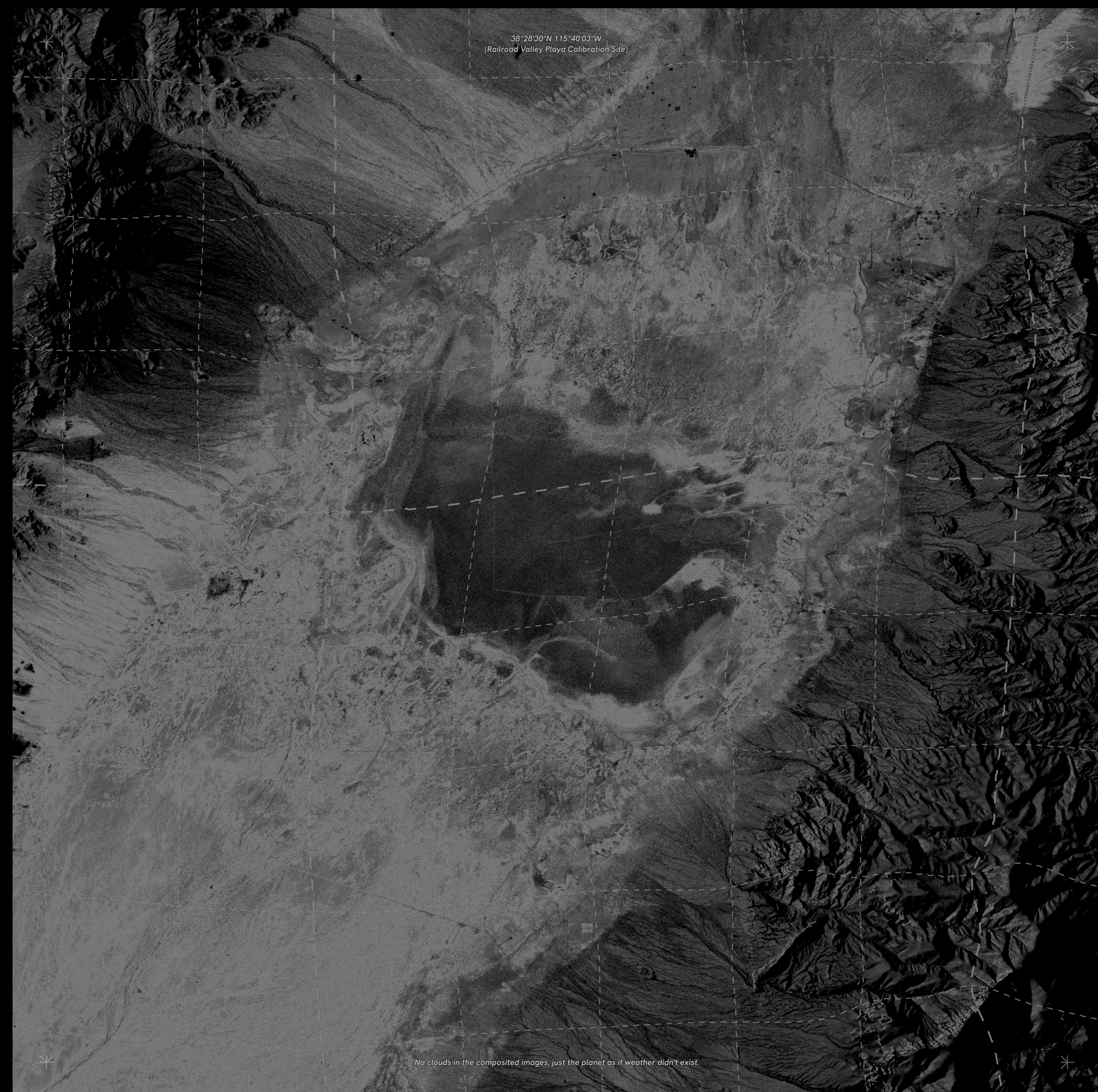
Known Surfaces (Namib Desert #2)
synthetic aperture radar satellite data, raised UV print on aluminum
100cm x 100cm



Known Surfaces (Lunar Lake Playa)
synthetic aperture radar satellite data, archival print on cotton rag paper
100cm x 100cm



Known Surfaces (Rogers Dry Lake)
digital file obtained from compositing satellite SAR data;
source material for prints and reliefs



Known Surfaces (Railroad Valley Playa)
digital file obtained from compositing satellite SAR data;
source material for prints and reliefs

STILL NOTHING

Still Nothing is a series of prints based on multispectral satellite imagery, rendering ocean coordinates in false color, with spectral bands reassigned to measure water depth, biological activity, and sediment rather than visible light. The series turns this gaze toward locations where phantom islands once appeared on nautical charts: landmasses that persisted across atlases for decades or centuries before cartography caught up with their nonexistence.

The images show open water, but overlaid at the coordinates where land was supposed to exist are calibration target patterns—the same geometries used to teach the satellite to see truthfully, now applied to places that were never there.

The series currently contains six works, created from satellite imagery obtained at the historical coordinates of the following phantom islands: Bermeja, Hy Brasil, Crocker Land, Sandy Island, Sannikov Land, Los Jardines.

Production Year

2026

Medium

multispectral satellite data, archival print on cotton rag paper

Collaborators

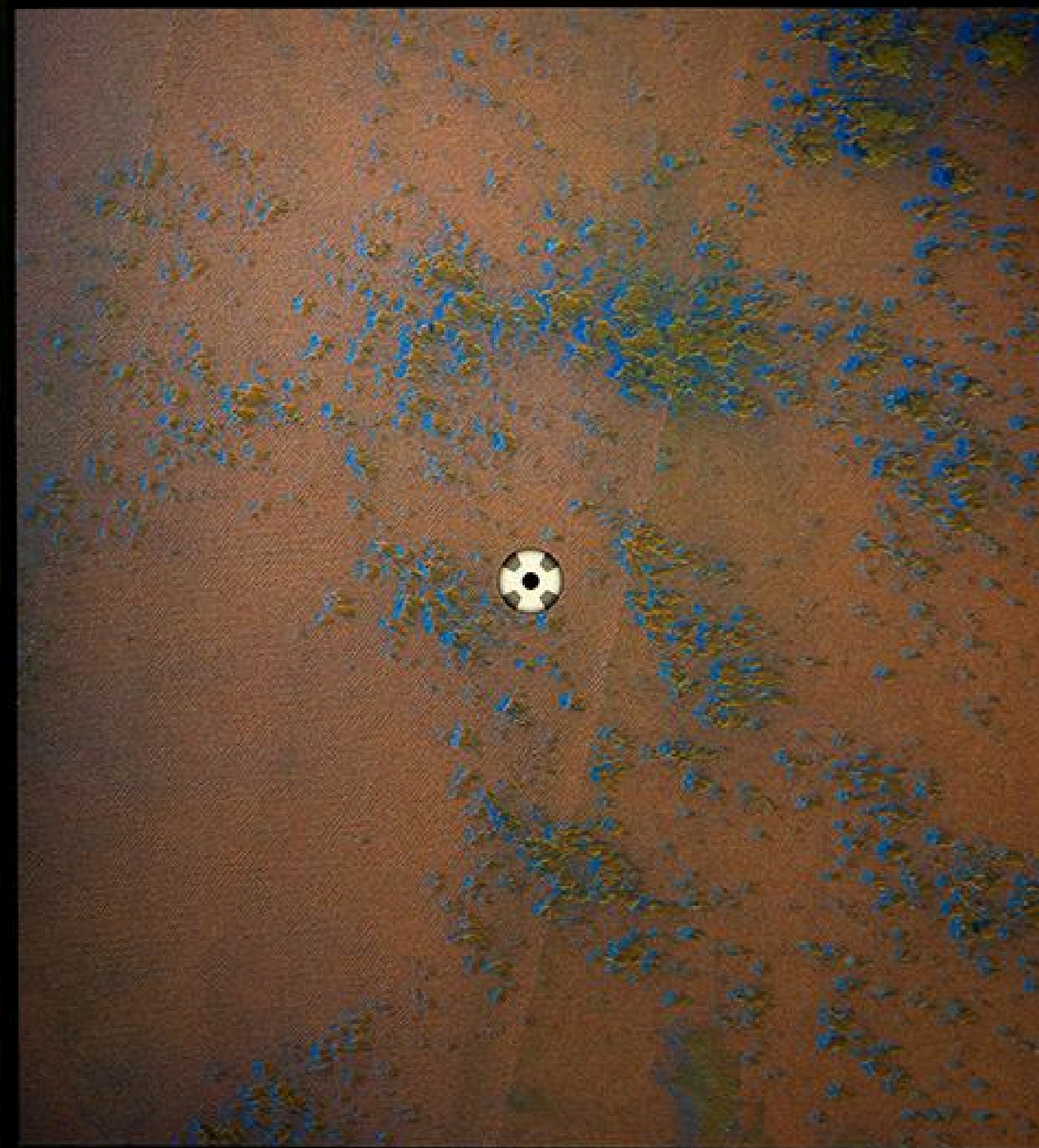
Fine Print - printing

Exhibition History

upcoming - *End of Signal*, Beta Festival, Dublin

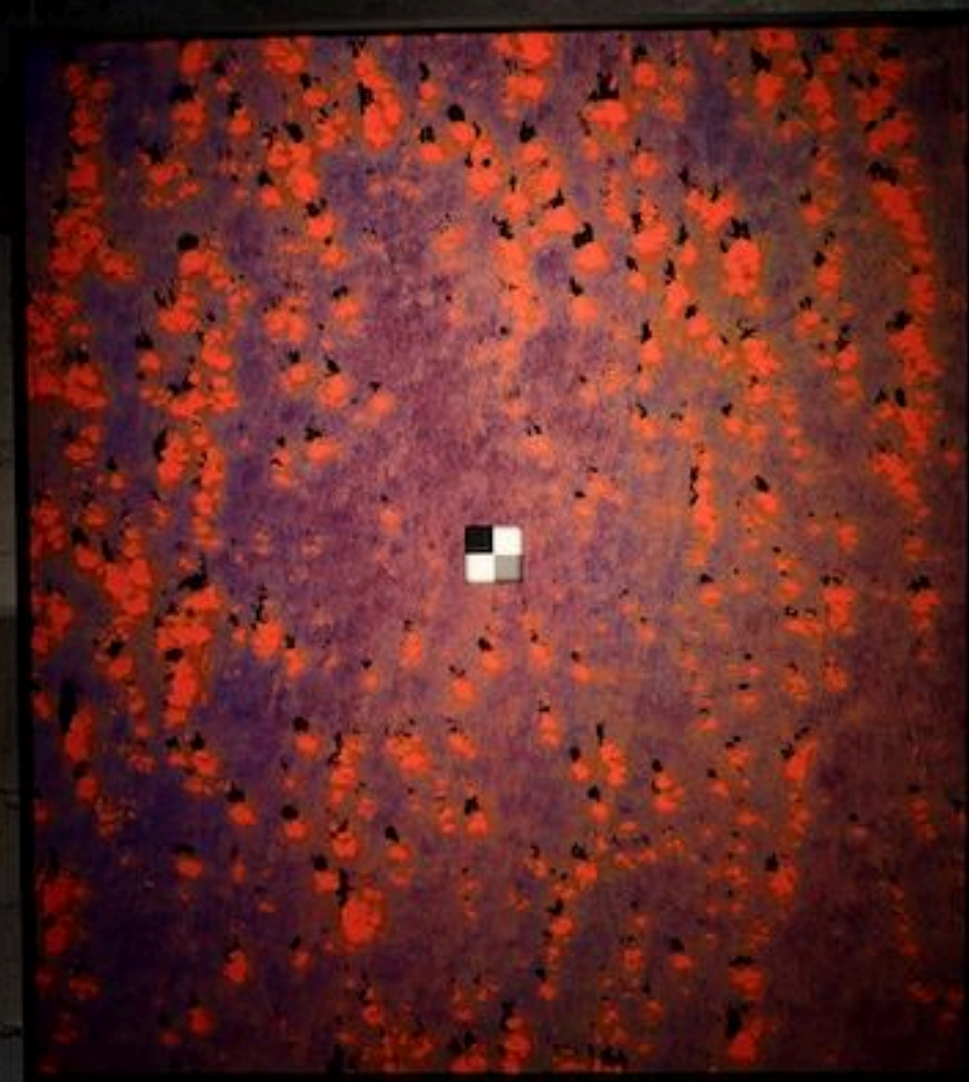
2026 - *End of Signal*, SOLO Contemporary, Madrid

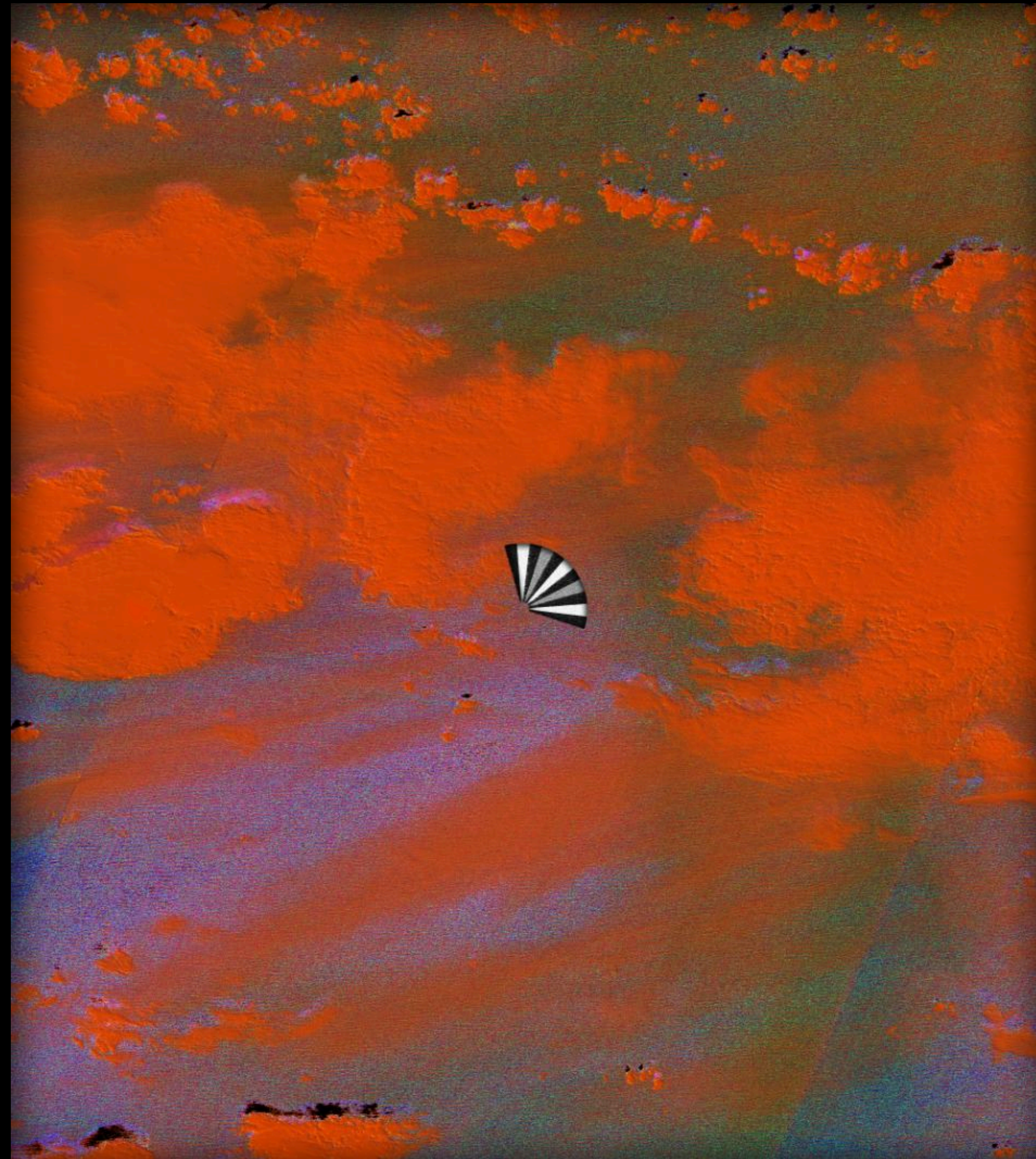
2026 - *Sensitive Data of the Anthropocene*, Center for Contemporary Art Laznia, Gdansk



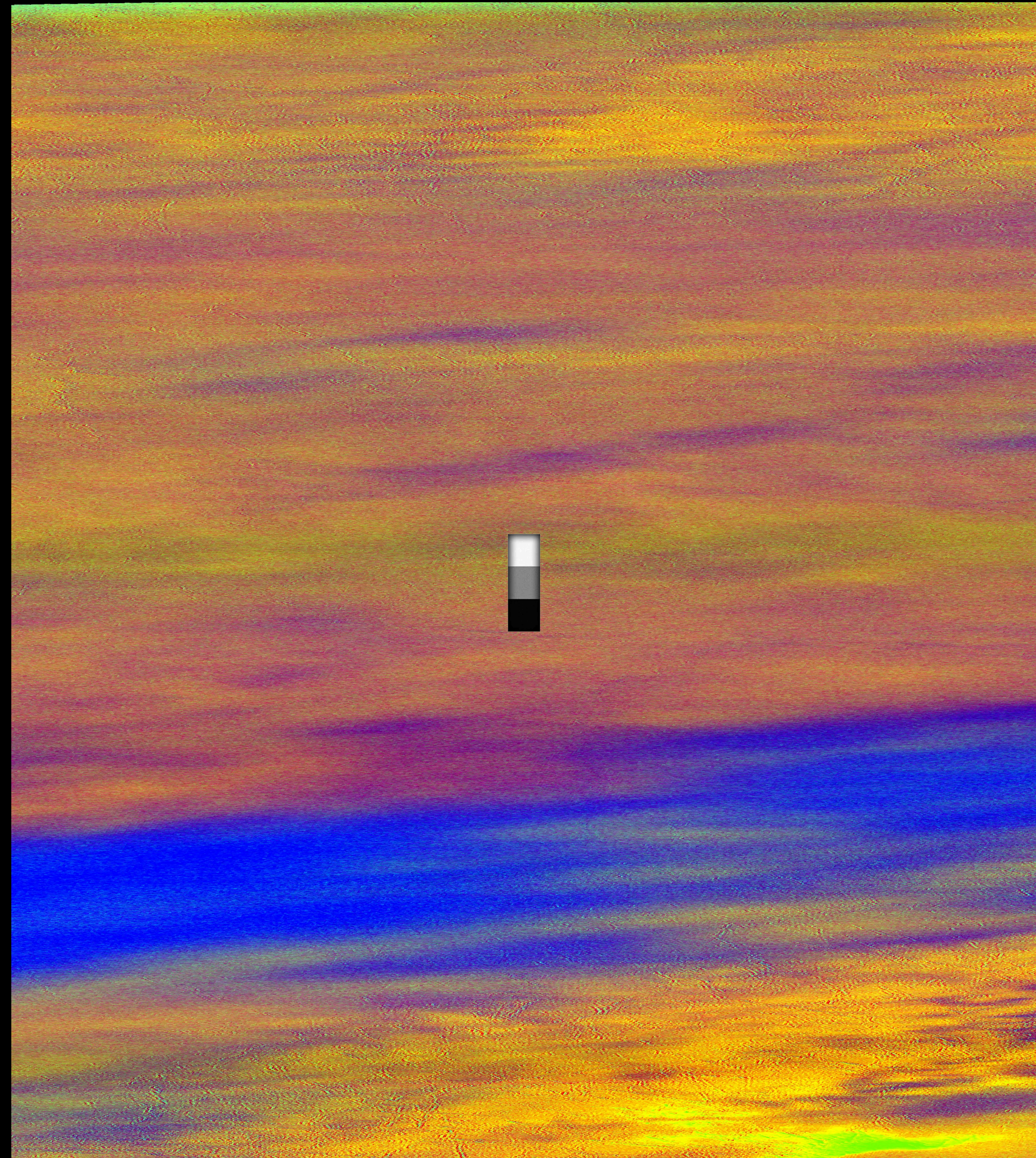
Foreground:
Still Nothing (Sandy Island)
archival pigment print on cotton rag paper,
framed
111cm x 100cm

Background:
Still Nothing (Los Jardines)
archival pigment print on cotton rag paper,
framed
111cm x 100cm





Still Nothing (Hy Brasil)
digital file used for print



Still Nothing (Crocker Land)
digital file used for print



SEARCHING FOR (BRADLEY LAND)

The first work in an upcoming series, **Searching For (Bradley Land)** follows Argus, the distributed satellite intelligence, as it traces a passage towards a phantom island. Bradley Land was claimed by Frederick Cook on his 1908 polar expedition, named for his main sponsor, and, a few years later, exposed as a fabrication.

Like all phantom islands, Bradley Land survives as language.

“The lower coast resembled Heiberg Island, with mountains and high valleys. The upper coast I estimated as being about one thousand feet high, flat, and covered with a thin sheet [of] ice.”

Frederick Cook, My Attainment of the Pole: Being the Record of the Expedition that First Reached the Boreal Center, 1907-1909

Like all phantom islands, Bradley Land survives as a fiction in the training data that taught Argus to see. With decommissioning imminent, Argus is set on finding it.

Argus performs a latent *dérive*, a continuous stream of imagined islands, slowly evolving to match Cook’s description of Bradley Land. Between two nodes of the constellation, brief dialogues give voice to the passage, approaching the island as if the only form of arrival were the search that never completes.

You can watch a recording of the simulation here: <https://vimeo.com/1182271532/7d1191d527?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Production Year

2026

Medium

real-time simulation, sound

Collaborators

Yannis Siglidis - machine learning engineer

MK Skitka - creative technologist

Laenz - composer

Exhibition History

upcoming - *End of Signal*, Beta Festival, Dublin

upcoming - *European Computer Vision Conference (Art Track)*, Malmö

2026 - *End of Signal*, SOLO Contemporary, Madrid



[Argus #37]
Inside, something kept making the same shape with its hands.

Searching For (Bradley Land)
screen capture from real time simulation



[Argus #5]
They must have listened to each other breathing.

Searching For (Bradley Land)
screen capture from real time simulation



Searching For (Bradley Land)
screen capture from real time simulation



Searching For (Bradley Land)
screen capture from real time simulation

POINT NEMO

Point Nemo, a photograph of the oceanic pole of inaccessibility where decommissioned spacecraft are directed to fall, marks the satellite's terminus. Argus, the fictional, unreliable satellite at the core of End of Signal, as well as the Planet Labs satellite tasked to capture this image, both have their gaze directed towards the geographical location of their eventual obsolescence.

Production Year

2026

Medium

archival print on cotton rag paper
25cm x 18cm

Exhibition History

upcoming - *End of Signal*, Beta Festival, Dublin

2026 - *End of Signal*, SOLO Contemporary, Madrid

2026 - *Sensitive Data of the Anthropocene*, Center for Contemporary Art Laznia, Gdansk

2026 - *drifts*; OFFICE IMPART, Berlin



48°52'35"S, 123°23'45"W
(Point Nemo)

*Maybe that's all we were. Something that watches cloudless days and reports what it sees,
knowing the clouds will return, knowing we'll never touch the water below, hoping we'll never touch the water below.*