

ARTIFICIAL+
IMAGINATION



GREGORY
CHATONSKY

A murky zone between human beings and technology, where flux, memory, latent space, extinction and resurrection build fictions without narration, within a body of work that recomposes itself from one exhibition to the next.

Grégory Chatonsky is a Franco-Canadian artist and researcher who lives and works in Paris. After studying philosophy at the Sorbonne and multimedia at the Beaux-Arts de Paris, he founded the net art platform Incident.net in 1994. In the 2000s, he explored digital materiality through ruins and flows. From 2009 onwards, he experimented with AI and made it a critical tool. In 2016, he defended a doctoral thesis at UQAM. From 2017 to 2019, he organised a seminar at the ENS on the impact of artificial imagination on art, that is, the capacity of machines to produce images, sounds and texts that do not exist.

Among his works, *Capture* (2009), conceived with Olivier Alary, stages a fictional rock band whose neural networks endlessly produce songs, music videos and merchandise beyond what the public can absorb. At the Palais de Tokyo, *Second Earth* (2019) imagined a replacement planet generated by AI from millions of data points: a modular structure welcomed new organic sculptures every day, somewhere between monument and machine hallucination. With *The City That Didn't Exist* (2023–2026), an in situ project realised as part of *Un été au Havre*, he rewrites the history of Le Havre from the municipal archives, imagining everything the city could have become, from frescoes to post-cards, from sculptures to films.

He has also exhibited at AIUla, Berkeley, Biennale de l'image possible, Centre Pompidou, Collection Lambert, Hubei Wuhan Museum, Jeu de Paume, MACVAL, Modern Art Museum Shanghai, MOCA Taipei, Moody Center, Musée

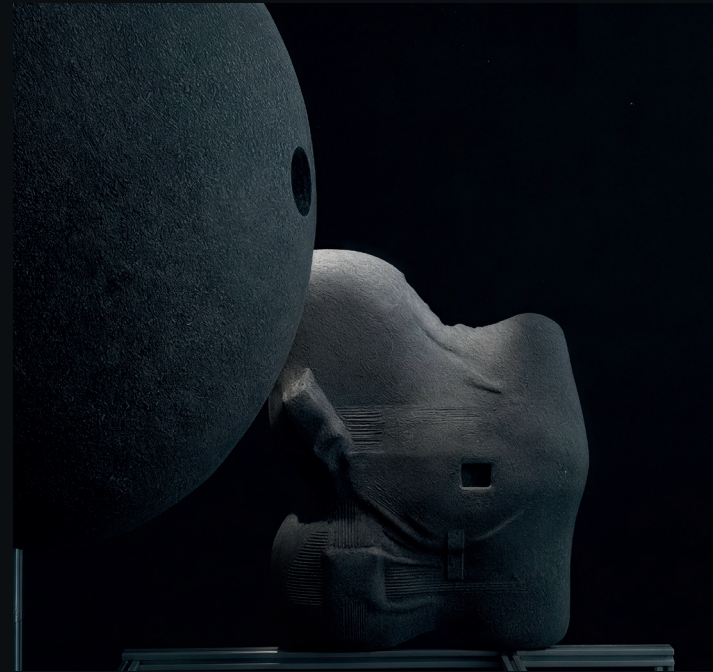
d'art contemporain de Montréal, Museum of the Moving Image, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt and *Un Été au Havre*, as well as at many other venues.

His works are held in private and public collections, including those of the BnF, CNAP, CNES, FAC, FRAC Île-de-France, FRAC Occitanie, the City of Le Havre, the Hubei Museum and the Musée Granet.

He has taught at Le Fresnoy, UQAM, EUR-Artec and Musashino Art University (Tokyo), and co-directs the Institut du Féral. He has served on the expert committees of the AI Act and the AI Summit, and in 2017 wrote a report for the French Ministry of Culture on the impact of AI on the cultural industries and the creative professions.

After the Dataset 2026

We are gone. On an orbiting station, an art centre watches over a dataset of the world as it was, while a system tirelessly invents its counterfactual. This last witness does not merely keep; it awakens, recombines, and produces exhibitions that never took place. The archive ceases to be a dead repository and becomes a reserve of possibilities, an anticipatory memory, an endlessly deferred promise of what might have been. One question remains, which the fiction sends into orbit without resolving: whom does a museum address when it holds openings for an absent public and comments on collections no one will ever see?



Read Only Memories 2003–2026

Vertigo, once again. For decades Chatonsky has been reworking the 1958 film; this time he has created an agent capable of producing alternative versions of it. The axis of each shot is automatically altered, then an AI analyses each regenerated image to “predict” the following five seconds. These textual predictions become the prompts for new videos, in an endless cycle of transformation. A second film is born, issued from a regenerated and degenerated memory of the original: the characters wander, change faces, in search of an event that eludes them. Vertigo appears as the matrix of cinema, a narrative that endlessly replays its own obsessions.



The Fourth Memory

2025

A tomb built in his lifetime: such is the funerary prototype the artist intends to outlive our species. Where photography fixed indexical traces, AI vectorises our archives and draws from them infinite versions of the possible. Photographs of funerary monuments resembling data centres, hybrid sculptures, bodily fragments around a vitrified brain from Pompeii: the ensemble converses with a film in which Chatonsky's synthesised voice tries to reconstruct a speculative biography. Between memory, data and immortality, Fourth Memory explores an existence without finitude, and the unlive lives that AI can now materialise.



The City That Didn't Exist 2023–2026

What if Le Havre had taken other paths? As part of “Un été au Havre”, an AI system fed on the municipal archives generates alternative versions of the city, not to resurrect the past but to unfold all its possibilities. Frescoes, sculptures, postcards, films and exhibitions seep into the real city, and its inhabitants take part in writing this parallel memory. Four episodes, “The Latent Space 1895–1970”, “Logistics of Memories 1971–2024”, “The Truce 2025–2050” and “The House of Dreams 2612”, make the archive the raw material of a collective imaginary.



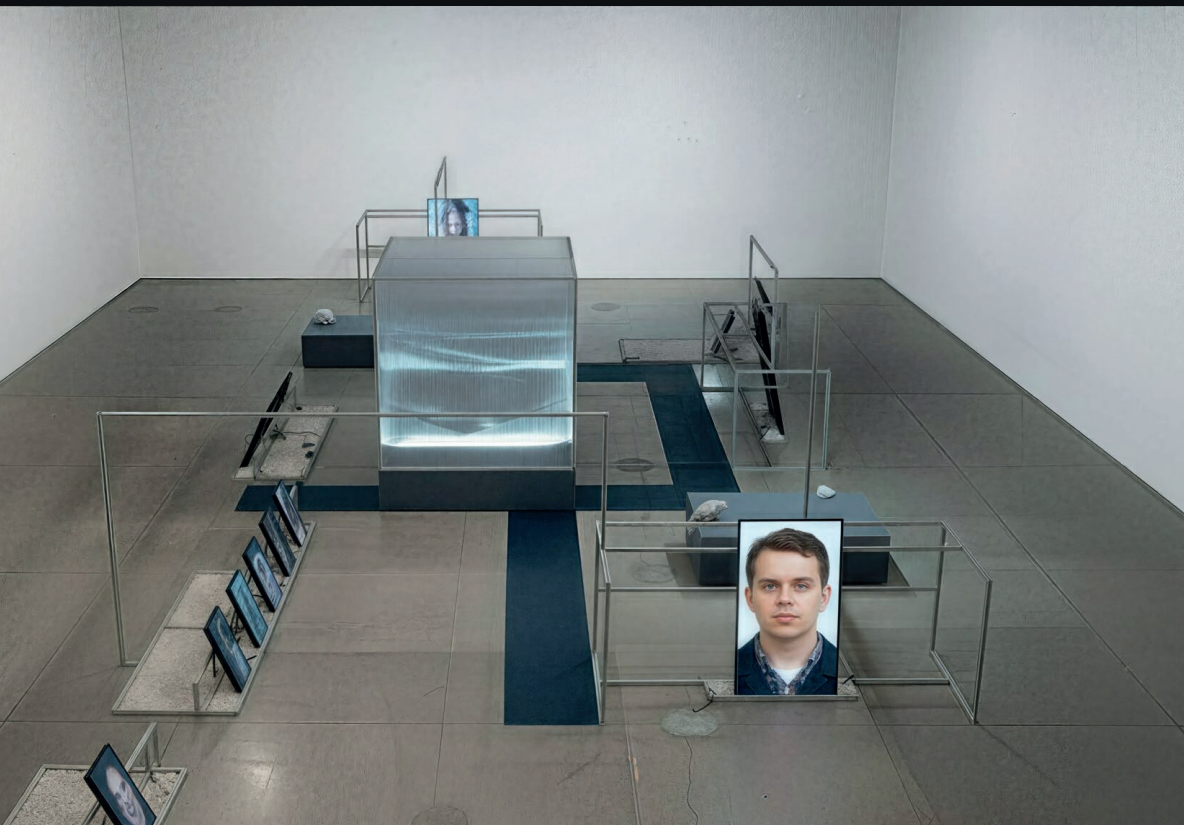
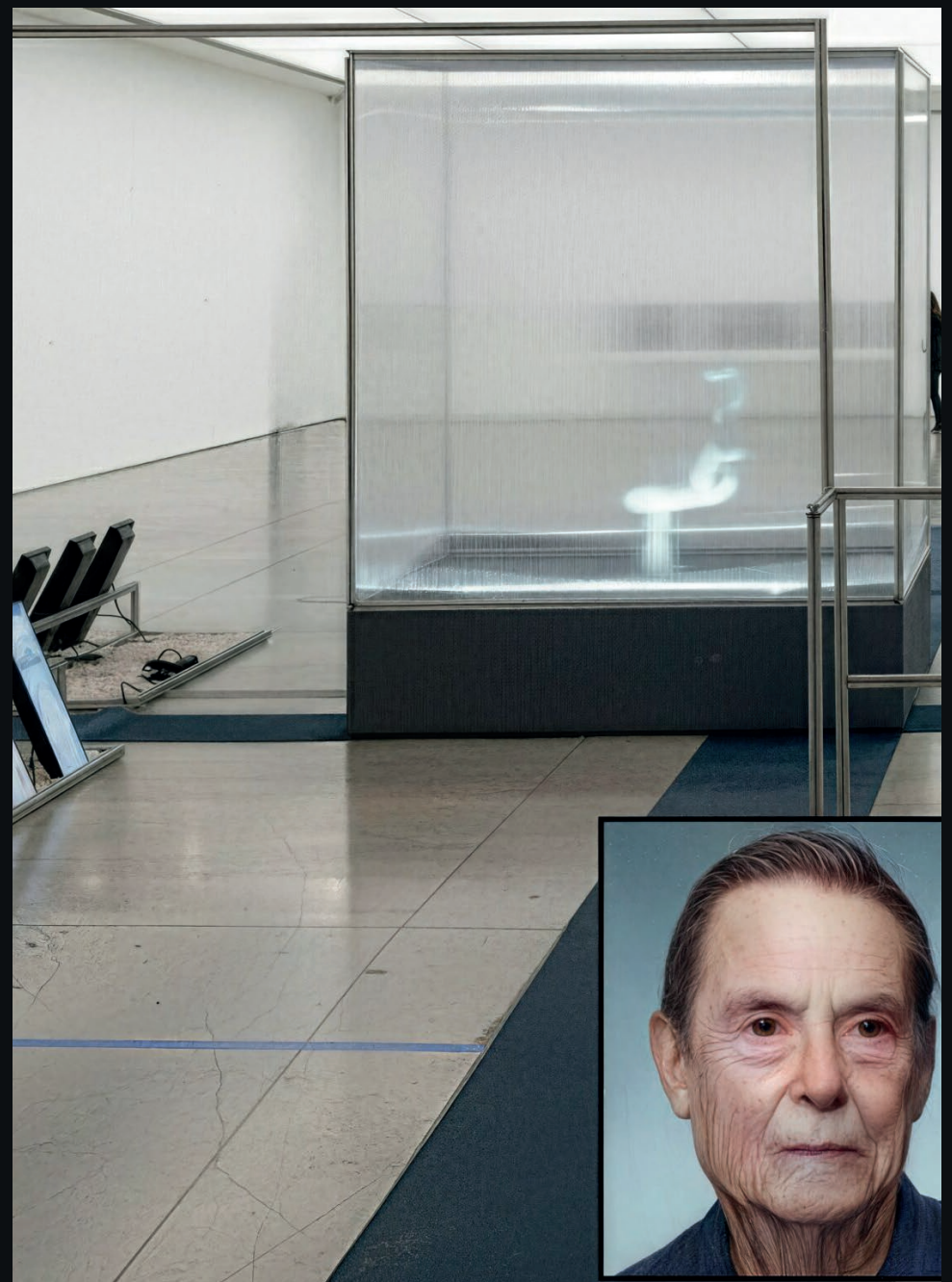
The White Cube in the Ideology of the Black Box 2023

Two figures of opacity face each other: the white cube, which claims the neutrality of the exhibition, and the black box, whose secret artificial intelligence keeps. Between them, a generative system endlessly fabricates images of exhibition rooms and artworks, accompanied by commentaries that imitate the voice of an aesthete. Fed on billions of documents from the web, the machine fills its galleries with an audience in contemplation before invisible, or counterfactual, works that recycle the clichés of the art world. Not a faithful copy of the past but an alternative collective memory, and behind it a question addressed to institutions and their discourses.



Disnovation 2022

In this future, no one speaks of innovation any more. All that remains is an avatar of the artist, modelled in real-time 3D by a video game engine, the last representative of an outdated rhetoric. It superimposes three ages of life, adolescence, adulthood, old age, and delivers without pause a monologue produced by a neural network, in which innovation, artificial intelligence, personal development and meditation blend in the standardised language of start-ups. By turning a dominant discourse into a performance, the work reveals its expiry date: that of technocratic languages, destined for obsolescence.



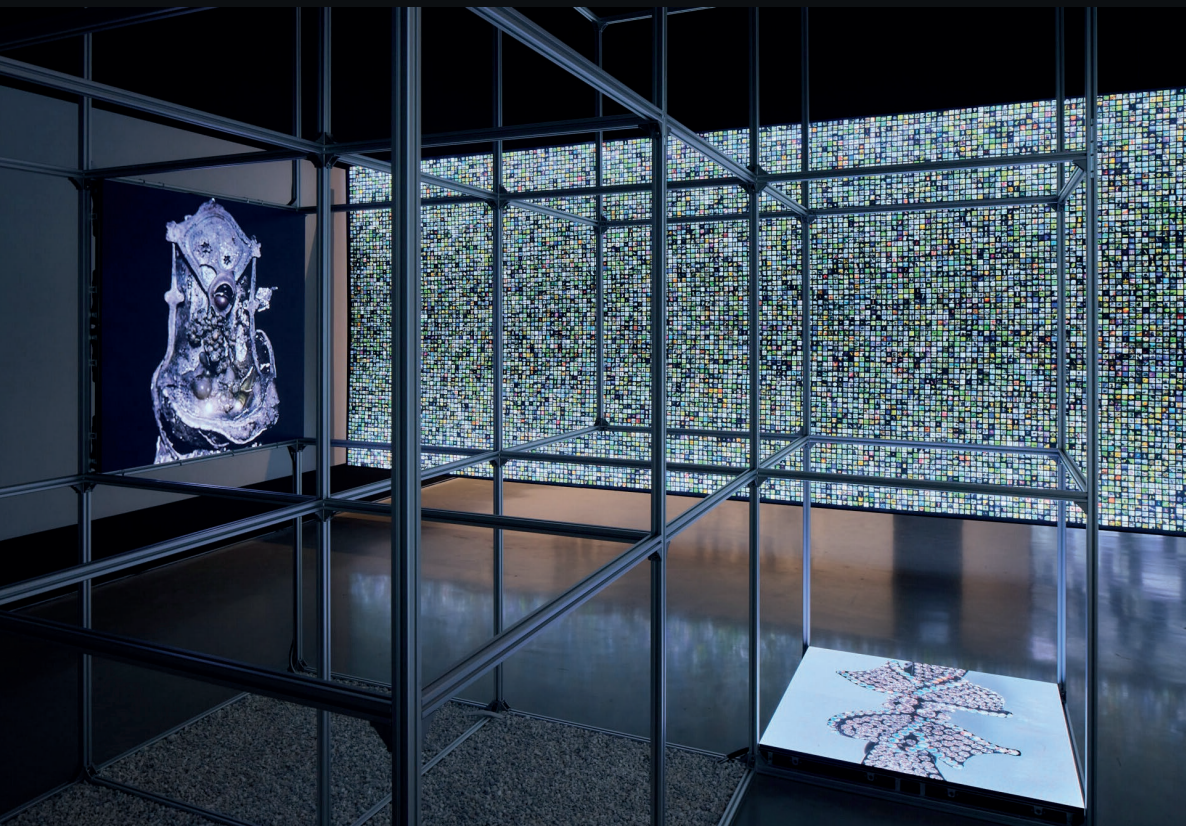
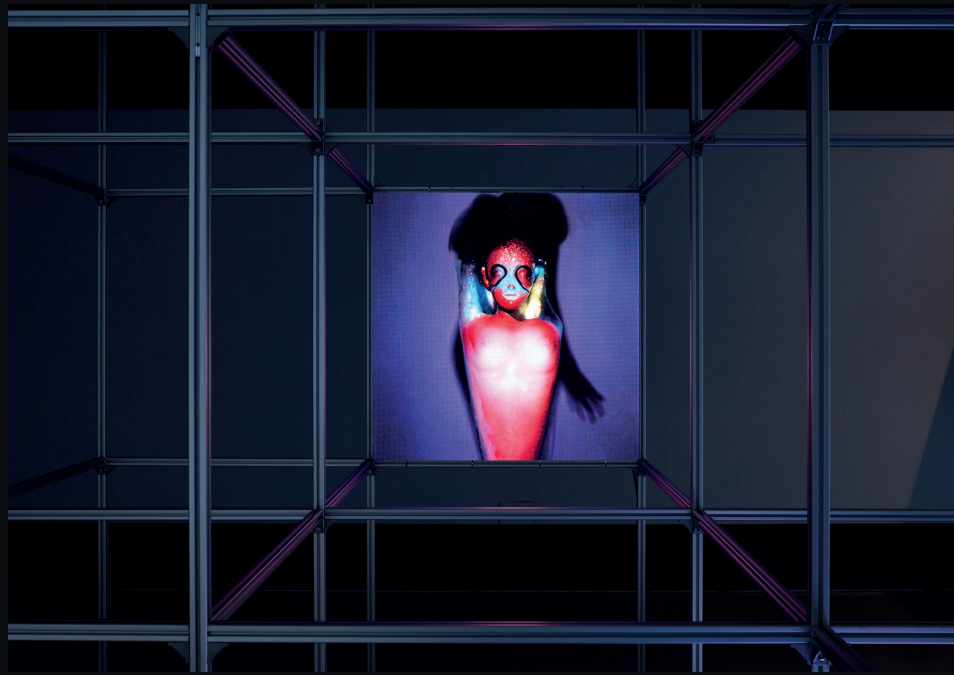
Externs: An Artificial History of Natural History 2021

Dead stumps, insects, fungi, mosses: Externs plugs the semi-living into an artificial intelligence so that it tells the story of life on Earth differently. Three chapters blur the boundaries between living and dead, technical and natural. "Capture": sensors placed on the stumps, enclosed in cases evoking natural history displays, feed the AI in real time. "Completion": an infinite generative film, built on nineteenth-century scientific documents, invents believable but unreal forms of life. "Simulation": sculptures tested in digitised spaces are 3D-printed, then reinstalled on site.



Completion 2021

Seven years: the time a screen on the floor takes to scroll through ImageNet and its fourteen million images, a duration that rules out taking it in at a glance. Facing it, in a modular aluminium structure, a second screen shows images produced by recurrent neural networks from the statistical overlaps of this dataset: plants, animals, technologies and minerals slide into one another, realistic yet unreal. A synthetic voice describes them like an art critic, a narration that derails, mocks wall texts and invents an imaginary off-screen space. Completion 1.0 thus composes an infinite, counterfactual history of photography, in which the image is the residual memory of past photographs, and the word, that of the aesthetic discourse of the last century.



Second Earth 2019

Every day, a modular structure welcomes new sculptures: mineral, vegetal, organic, they evoke our world without ever reproducing it. A recurrent neural network generates them from millions of images, texts and sounds collected on the internet, and the forms metamorphose into one another within a perpetually mutating environment. Between speculative space and monument to a humanity that may have vanished, Second Earth questions the status of artificial imagination and the ambiguity of an alternative planet fabricated by the machine.



Extinct Memories

2016

We are no more. In an indeterminate future, a mysterious entity roams the ruins of a former data centre and tries to decipher what remains of us: our digital archives, the sole witnesses of what we were. At the heart of the setup, the memory of Urs Hölzle, the engineer behind Google's infrastructure, preserved on a hard drive, becomes the prism through which Chatonsky scrutinises the hold of digital giants over our relationships, our emotions, our gestures, to the point of supplanting the State. The work questions the accumulation of our dematerialised memories, their survival of our extinction, and the responsibility we bear for the informational legacy left to the intelligences that will outlive us.



The Dreaming Machine

2014

Twenty thousand dreams, compiled at the University of California by Adam Schneider and G. William Domhoff, make up DreamBank, on which a recurrent neural network feeds. The AI draws new dream sequences from it, analyses them, then goes searching the internet for images matching the extracted keywords. Around it, a server rack half caught in stone, flashing lights, a vibrating hard drive: an archaeology of the future in which machines would outlive their creators. The work asks what becomes of the dream, the most intimate human experience, when autonomous systems archive, analyse and interpret it.



Telofossils

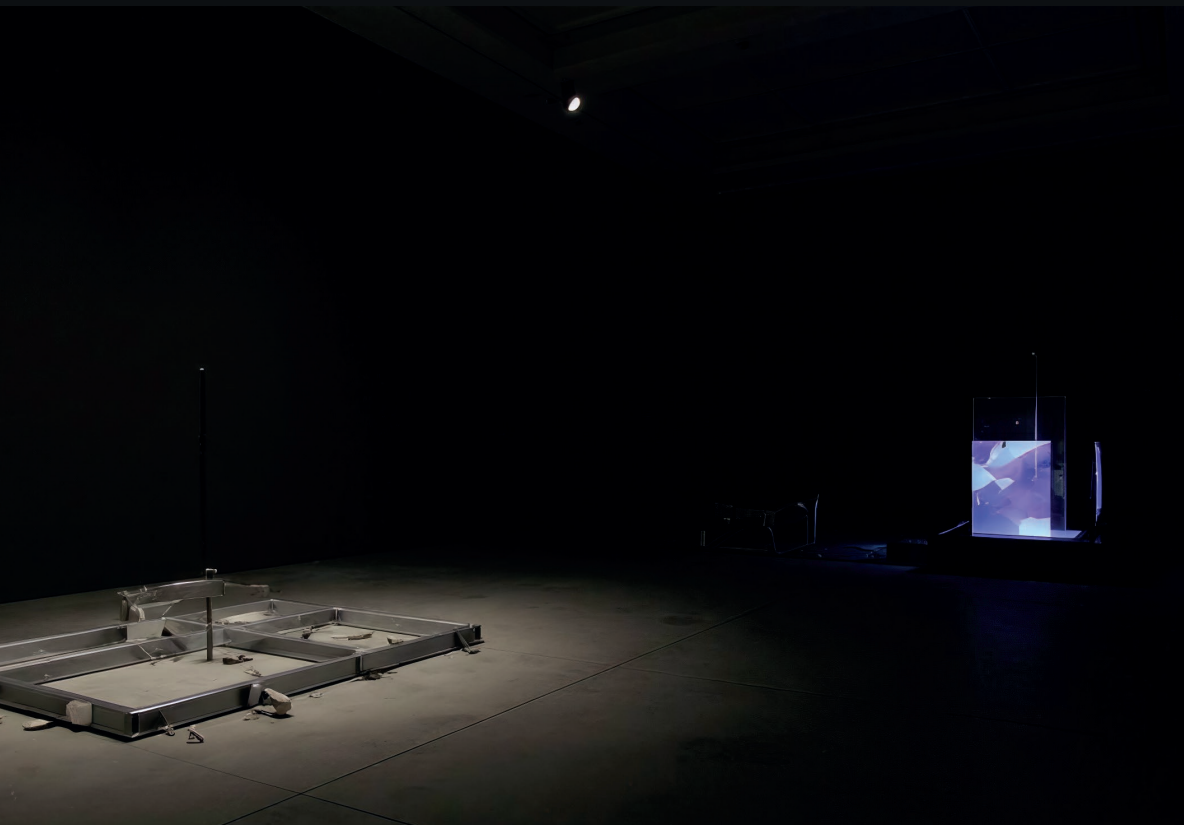
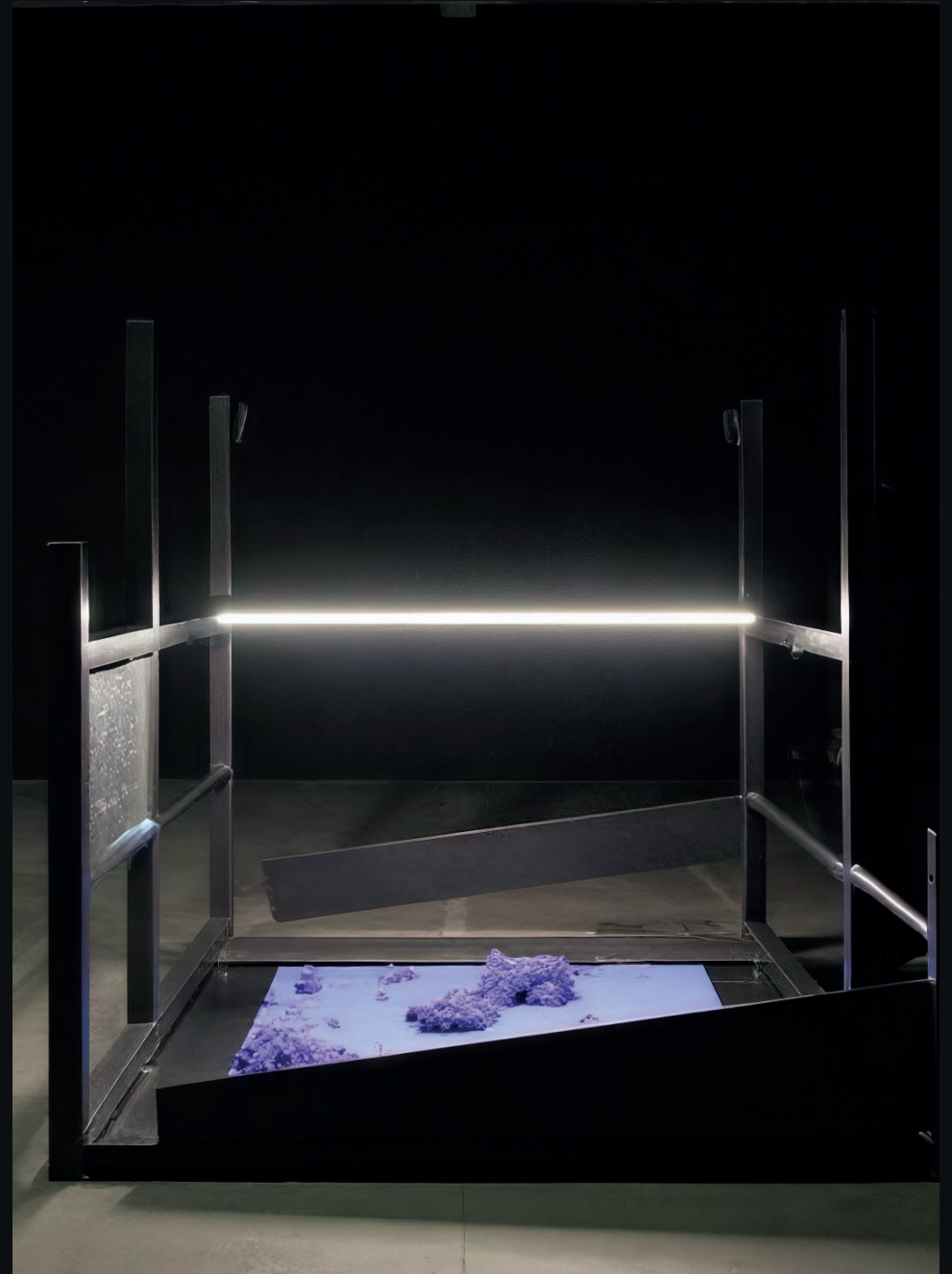
2013

An unknown species visits the museum of extinct humanity. In this hybrid, technical and organic environment, everything keeps working with no one present, and our industrial objects and waste are displayed like fossils. Viewers confront their own disappearance, and our mania for memorising, photographing and archiving everything, a compulsive accumulation that would ward off the anguish of our finitude. Telofossils meditates on the legacy humanity will leave in the geological layers of tomorrow.



Capture 2009

One creation per hour, relentlessly: songs, lyrics, visuals, music videos and merchandise from a rock band that does not exist, "Capture", kept running by neural networks. An intersemiotic translation system adapts each element into as many media versions, while a distribution protocol erases from the server any file that has been downloaded: the user becomes the sole custodian of what they choose to keep. The overproduction deliberately exceeds what the public can absorb, and abundance replaces scarcity. The work thus puts into play intellectual property, distribution circuits, and the tension between market value and use value in the cultural industries.



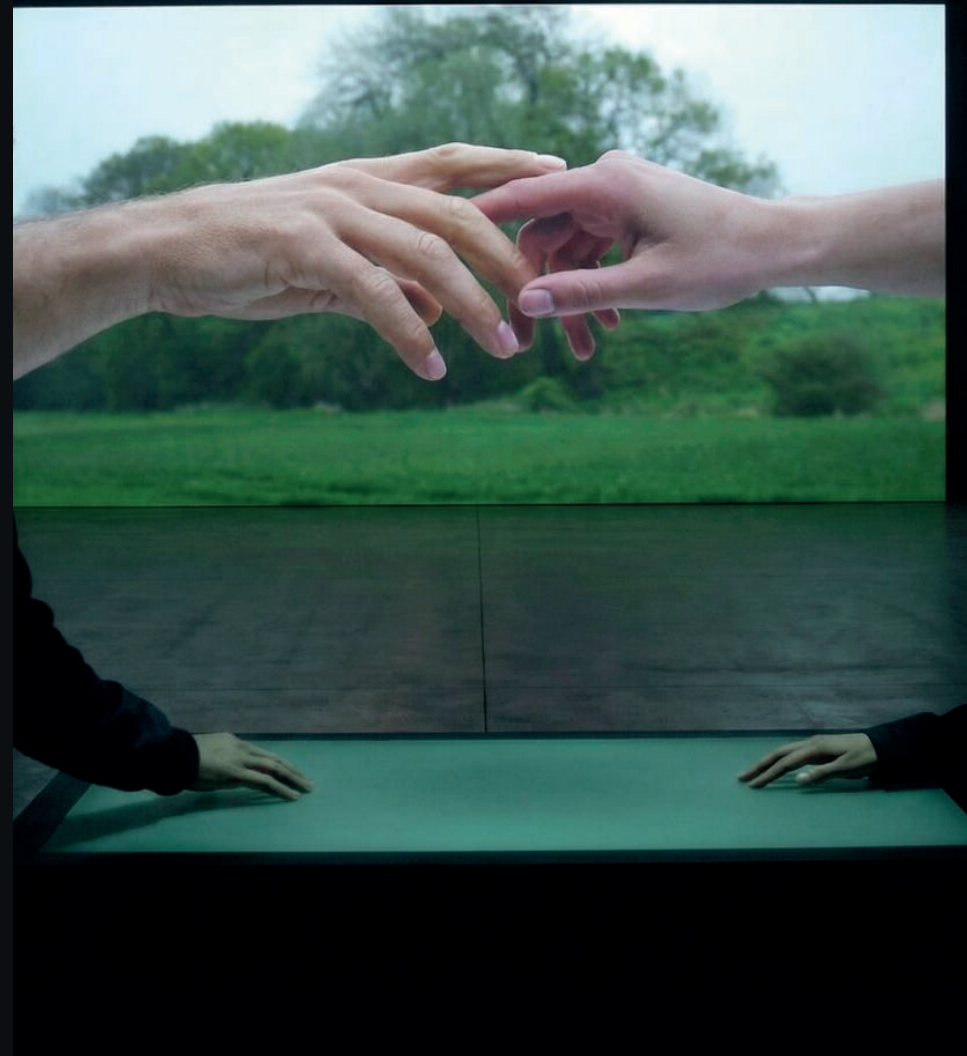
I Just Don't Know What To Do With Myself 2007

Everyone carries on themselves a unique image: their fingerprint. The series diverts its identifying use to make it the starting point of an autonomous visual transformation. Visitors scan their fingerprint; it appears on screen, metamorphoses, fragments, like icebergs drifting across an ocean bounded by the frame. In the face of contemporary biometric identification systems, the work proposes a poetic reappropriation of these identity signs.



Se toucher toi 2004

On a glass surface, two hands in video images, one male, one female, which the visitor guides at a distance with a gesture, brings together or pulls apart. Sensors pick up the movement of the visitor's hand, but this control is only apparent: little by little the images break free, because the device is linked to other installations and to an online presence where other participants act at the same moment. Every gesture is archived in a database and can be replayed. A tactile experience mediated by the interface, questioning presence, intimacy at a distance and the memory of gestures in digital space.



SOLO

2022 – Externes, Ostabat, France
2022 – The Dream of Plants / Rares / Disnovation, Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, Paris
2019 – I will resemble what you have been, Les Tanneries, Amilly
2018 – Perfect Skin, Diagonale, Montréal
2017 – Alt.City, Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi
2017 – The Day of Our Death, Bellegarde, Toulouse
2015 – Memories Center, Centre Clark, Montréal
2015 – Extinct Memories I & II, IMAL, Brussels / La Chambre Blanche, Québec
2015 – Telofoossils II, Museum of History, Wuhan / Unicorn Art Center, Beijing
2014 – I'll be your mirror, CDA, Enghien-les-Bains
2013 – Telofoossils I, MOCA Taipei, Taiwan, cur. S. Parent & S. Cheng
2013 – The Survival of Objects, Art Taipei, Xpo Gallery
2012 – After Cinema, Galleries, Brussels, cur. Julie Miguirditchian
2010 – The Invention of Identity 1 & 2, Toulouse
2009 – Flußgeist, Oboro, Montréal
2008 – The Invention of Destruction I–III, Galerie Poller, New York & Frankfurt / Galerie Numeris Causa, Paris
2004 – Readonlymemories, MEP, Paris

SELECTED GROUP

2026 – Hidden Layers, Berkeley, USA, cur. Antonio Somaini
2026 – Imaging after Photography, Moody Center for the Arts, USA, cur. Alison Weaver & Noor Alé
2026 – Mundos Latentes, MAAT, Lisbon, cur. Antonio Somaini
2026 – The World According to AI, Frankfurt / Museu de Arte de São Paulo
2025 – The World According to AI, Jeu de Paume, Paris, cur. Antonio Somaini
2025 – Machina Sapiens, Conciergerie, Paris, cur. Franck Bauchard
2025 – Imaging After Photography, Rice University, USA
2025 – Speculative Archives – AI films, Harvard University, cur. Antonio Somaini
2024 – Master, New Media Gallery, New Westminster, Canada
2024 – Black Box in White Cube Ideology, Zhi Museum, Chengdu, cur. Yvannoé Krueger
2024 – Coming Back from the Present, Collection Lambert, Avignon, cur. Yvannoé Krueger
2023–2026 – The City That Didn't Exist, Un été au Havre, cur. Gaël Charbau
2023 – The Machine Studio, Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence, cur. Delphine Ract Madoux
2022 – Disnovation, Centre Pompidou, Paris, cur. Géraldine Gomez
2021 – Life Itself, Centre international d'art et du paysage, Île de Vassivière, cur. Flora Katz
2020 – Manifesta 13, Marseille
2020 – Time Machine, Palazzo del Governatore, Parma, cur. A. Somaini, E. Grignard, M. Rebecchi
2019 – Alt+R Alternative Reality, Second Earth, Palais de Tokyo, Paris
2018 – Simulacrum II, Fries Museum, Leeuwarden, cur. Wim Melis
2018 – Lost in the Net Dream, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei
2017 – Printing the World, Centre Pompidou, Paris, cur. Marie-Ange Brayer
2015 – Walkers: Hollywood Afterlives in Art & Artifact, Museum of the Moving Image,

New York, cur. Robert M. Rubin
2013 – Print Error, Jeu de Paume, Paris
2012 – Photon+, Taipei, cur. J. Tseng & S. Cheng
2011 – Augmented Senses, Shanghai, cur. A. Yan & C. Carcopino
2009 – In the Night of Images, Grand Palais, Paris, cur. Alain Fleischer
2008 – Holy Fire: Art of the Digital Age, IMAL, Brussels, cur. Yves Bernard & Domenico Quaranta
2008 – Japan Media Arts Festival, National Art Center, Tokyo

PUBLIC ART

2026 – The City That Didn't Exist 4: The House of Dreams (3612), Le Havre
2024 – The City That Didn't Exist 2: Logistics of Memories (1995–2024), Le Havre, 6 concrete prints installed in the city
2023 – The City That Didn't Exist 1: The Latent Space (1895–1944), Le Havre, 25 monumental AI-generated frescoes on Alcéane building facades
2023 – The Dream of Stones, AIUla, Saudi Arabia
2022 – Externes, Ostabat, 3D prints installed in a rural setting

COLLECTIONS

Centre National des Arts Plastiques (CNAP), France
FRAC Île-de-France, France
Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), France
City of Paris Collection, France
Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence, France
Fonds d'Art Contemporain (FAC), France
Museum of History, Wuhan, China

SELECTED WRITINGS

2027 – “Artificial Imagination, Alienated Intelligences”, co-written with Yves Citton, Les presses du réel
2026 – “Ce qui (me) permet d'écrire est ce qui (vous) empêche de lire”, AOC
2026 – “Vectofascism – Part I: Vecto aesthetics / Vectofascism – Part II: Vectopolitics”, Carrier Bag
2025 – “Trumpism and Vectofascism”, Multitudes 99
2025 – “The Fourth Memory”, with Yves Citton, Multitudes 99
2024 – “Exploring the Artificial Imagination”, States no. 3, Villa Albertine
2024 – “Leaving the Copy Paradigm”, with Antonio Somaini, AOC
2024 – “Technophany”, in Computational Creativity, ed. Anna Longo
2024 – “The Extinction Image”, Cultural Politics
2023 – “Inspiration/Expiration (Completion)”, SubStance, 50th Anniversary Issue
2023 – “Disrealisms”, Transbordeur
2023 – “Black Box, White Cube and Gray Fiction of Artificial Imagination”, Pavillon Bosio
2020 – “Book of Machines”, in Time Machine: Cinematic Temporalities, ed. A. Somaini et al., Skira
2020 – “Discorrelated Images”, in Discorrelated Images, ed. Shane Denson, Duke University Press
2019 – “Learning – Extinction – Resurrection”, with Ariel Kyrrou, Multitudes 75
2017 – “Deep Dream: The Network's Dream”, Neuroscience & Fiction, Muse 45
2016 – “Deep Dream: The Network's Dream”, SubStance 45/2, University of Wisconsin Press

2011 – “Aesthetics and Fiction of Flux”, Proteus 39/1
2007 – “Aesthetics of Flows”, Rue Descartes 55, Collège International de Philosophie

MONOGRAPHS

2025 – The World According to AI: Exploring Latent Spaces, JBE Books (exhibition catalogue)
2023 – The City That Didn't Exist 1, Partouche éditions
2023 – The Dream of Stones, Sigg Foundation
2022 – Internals, Rose
2019 – Machines Upon Every Flower, Anteism
2014 – Capture: Generative Netrock, CDA
2013 – Telofossils, MOCA Taipei
2011 – Capture: Grégory Chatonsky, HX

RESIDENCIES

2024 – Le Havre, France
2023 – AlUla, Saudi Arabia / Le Havre, France
2022 – Ostabat / Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, Paris
2020 – Manifesta, Marseille / Les Tanneries, Amilly / National Museum of Art, Taichung, Taiwan
2019 – Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris
2018 – MOCA Taipei, Taiwan
2017 – Abu Dhabi, UAE / Taluen, French Guiana
2016 – Colab, Auckland / Hangar, Barcelona
2015 – IMAL, Brussels / Unicorn Art Center, Beijing
2014 – Villa Kujoyama, Kyoto, Japan
2013 – CdA Enghien-les-Bains / Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei / 3331 Arts Chiyoda, Tokyo
2012 – Xiyitang, Shanghai
2004 – Le Fresnoy, Studio National des Arts Contemporains, Tourcoing
2003 – Villa Médicis hors les murs, Montréal
1999 – C3, Budapest

AWARDS & GRANTS

2025 – Canada Council for the Arts, production grant (The Fourth Memory)
2021 – Photography 3.0, CNAP
2020 – MAIF Prize for Sculpture / Dicream writing grant
2018 – Audi Talents (Second Earth) / FRQSC grant
2017 – CALQ (Perfect Skin)
2015 – CALQ / Dicream (Extinct Memories)
2011 – CRSH research-creation grant (Capture)
2010 – Cap Digital / Arcadi / Dicream prototype grant (Capture)
2004 – SCAM Prize / Dicream
2003 – Videoformes Multimedia Prize
2002 – Viper Prize / Winner, Inclassables, Montréal
2001 – Sound Space Prize / Computer Space Prize / FilmWinter Prize
1999 – Moebius Prize (Memories of Deportation)

EDUCATION

2017–2019 – Post-doctorate in Artificial Imagination, École Normale Supérieure, Paris
2016 – PhD in Arts Studies and Practice (Aesthetics of Flux: After the Digital), UQAM,

Montréal, Excellent with honours, supervised by L. Poissant

1999 – Master's in Multimedia/Hypermedia, ENSBA Paris (très bien, top of class)
1996 – DEA in Aesthetics, Paris I (très bien, top of class), supervised by Anne-Marie Duguet & Marc Jimenez
1995 – Master's in Aesthetics, Paris I (très bien, top of class), supervised by Anne-Marie Duguet

TEACHING AND EXPERTISE

2025 – Co-director, École du Féral
2024 – Expert for the French Presidency (AI Summit), the European Commission (AI) and the French Ministry of Culture (AI and contemporary art)
2024 – Teacher, Artificial Imagination, Musashino Art University, Tokyo
2019–2023 – Research-creation teacher, EUR-Artéc DIU, Saint-Denis
2017–2020 – Invited artist-researcher, École normale supérieure, Paris
2015 – International Research Chair H2H, Paris VIII
2007–2008 – Invited artist-professor, EAVM, UQAM, Montréal
2004–2005 – Invited artist-professor, Le Fresnoy, Tourcoing
2001–2003 – Digital culture teacher, CELSA, Paris IV

RESEARCH

2020–2023 – Artistic direction, Imago research project, ENS & University of Geneva
2019–2021 – Associate researcher, AI-Ship: The New States of Being, Harvard University
2017–2020 – Artificial imagination research programme, ENS Paris
2011–2015 – CRSH, Capture: digital overproduction, Canada
2009–2013 – FQRSC, Mapping Fictions, with Alain Paiement, Canada

SELECTED PRESS

ActulA, AOC, Art Press, ArtReview, Beaux Arts Magazine, Cultural Politics, Digitalarti Mag, Domus, e-flux journal, Fisheye Immersive, Frieze Magazine, Interfaces : Jeux de Formats, L'Œil, La Croix, Le Monde, Le Parisien, Les Inrocks, Libération, MIT Press, N-ICON Studies in Environmental Images, Téléràma, The Art Newspaper, The Creators Project, thing.net, Transbordeur, Usbek & Rica