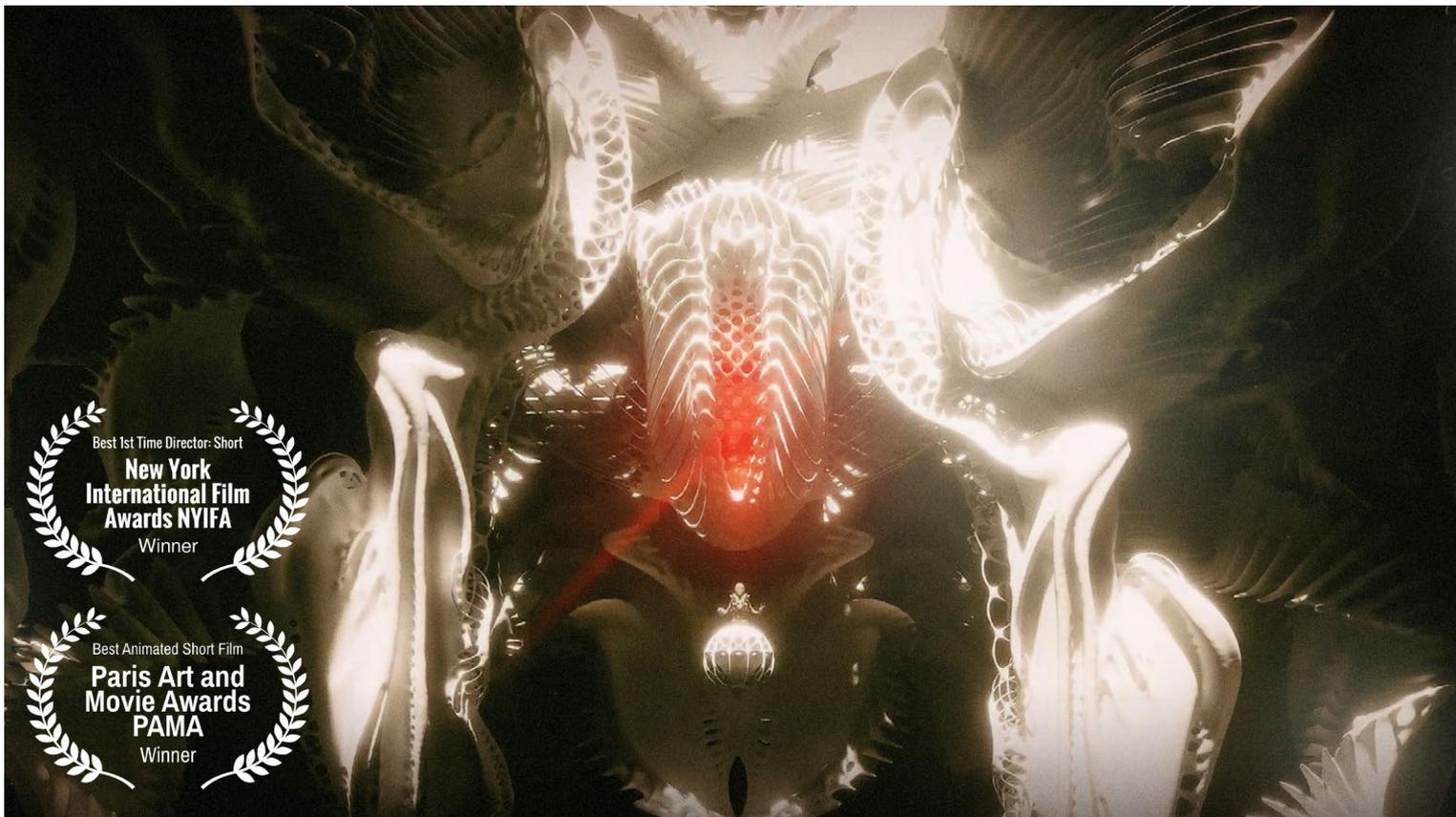


MOTHER ARKAH

A Filmic Allegory on the Rise and Fall of Ideologies

or

A Modest Proposal: For growing a biotope-like megastructure inhabited by all of Earth's species, engineering an Organic-AI-Cyborg Symbiosis that maintains the ideology of 'pure existing' to prohibit innovation, and leading the planet's biosphere towards ecological recovery after the climate apocalypse.



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Introduction

Mother Arkah

A Filmic Allegory on the Rise and Fall of Ideologies

'Mother Arkah' is an 18-minute animated short film exploring a speculative climate-apocalypse scenario and the hypothesis of the posthumanist ideology 'Bio-Technoism'. The project investigates concepts on prohibiting the 'religion of growth', future power structures shaped within the 'Posthuman Convergence', AI-driven symbiogenetic evolution and autopoietic architectures.

The film serves as an allegory on mechanisms behind political belief systems, while posing questions about how deep the 'urge for innovation' is rooted within us humans and therefore how much humanness our planet can take.

The virtual film production is executed in Unreal Engine 5.

Media: Film, Sculpture, Publication

(DE)

Mother Arkah

Eine filmische Allegorie über Aufstieg und Fall von Ideologien

Der Animationsfilm 'Mother Arkah' untersucht eine Welt inmitten der nahenden Klima-Apokalypse sowie die Hypothese zur posthumanistischen Ideologie des 'Bio-Technoismus'. Diskutiert werden Konzepte zum Verbot der 'Religion des Wachstums', zukünftige Machtstrukturen geprägt durch die 'Posthuman Convergence', KI-gesteuerte symbiogenetische Evolution und autopoietische Architekturen.

Der Film ist eine Allegorie zu politischen Glaubenssystemen. Er wirft die Frage auf, wie tief der 'Drang nach Innovation' in uns Menschen verwurzelt ist und folglich, wie viel Menschlichkeit unser Planet vertragen kann.

Die virtuelle Filmproduktion ist in Unreal Engine 5 kreiert.

Medien: Film, Skulptur, Publikation

Links

Website: showing the film and project summary:

www.andreas-palfinger.at/arkah

Publication to the film as PDF:

http://www.andreas-palfinger.at/arkah/Mother_Arkah_Publication.pdf

Research and written thesis:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K7GEn-EE9TmvrpWW135V1Noiqf3whwmh/view?usp=sharing>

Film stills, as shown in this PDF:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1clbKjJQyY_WGRG532lyrJIHAKPgykagB?usp=sharing

Download film:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1x-mwmlRjUfTLx7F7CHOdwe_3om49398gp?usp=sharing

Download trailer:

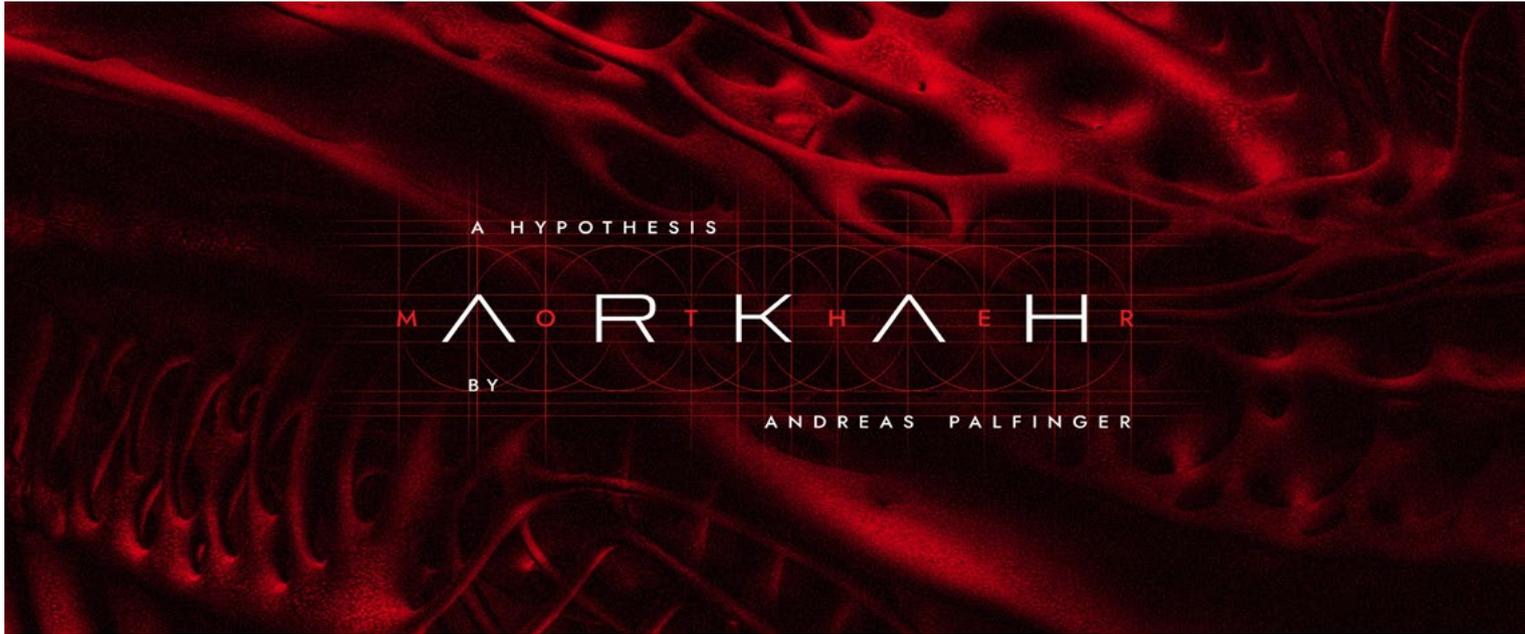
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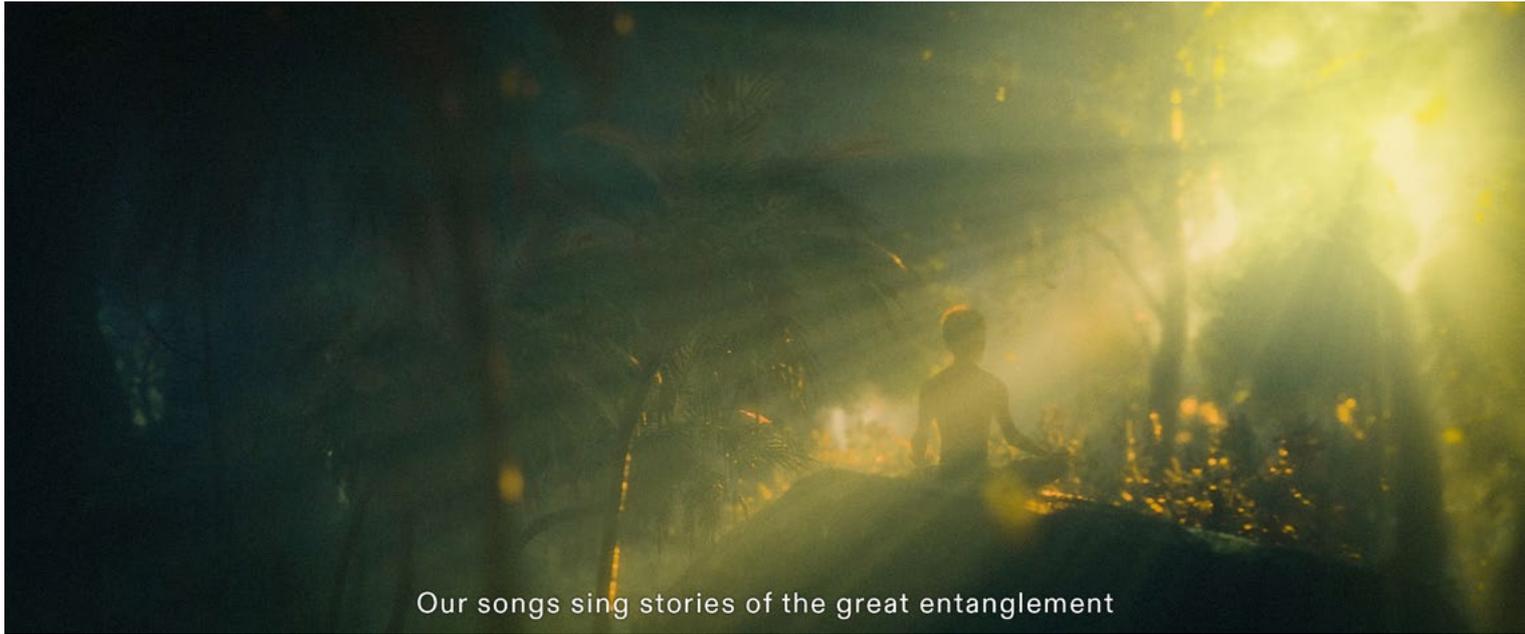
Catalogue: Prints behind Acrylic Glass

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ujKCxSDve53Z7MvgQm3WxlPPGj5tU_Uk/view?usp=sharing

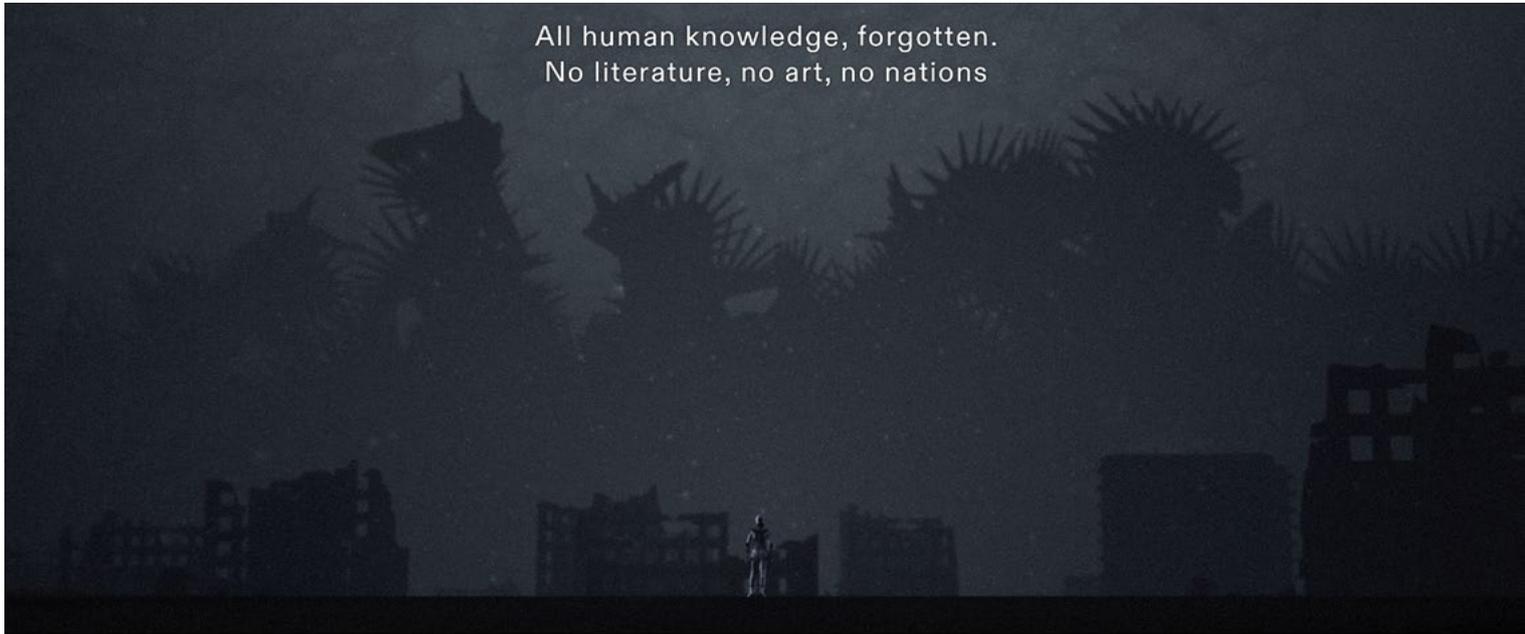
Film Stills

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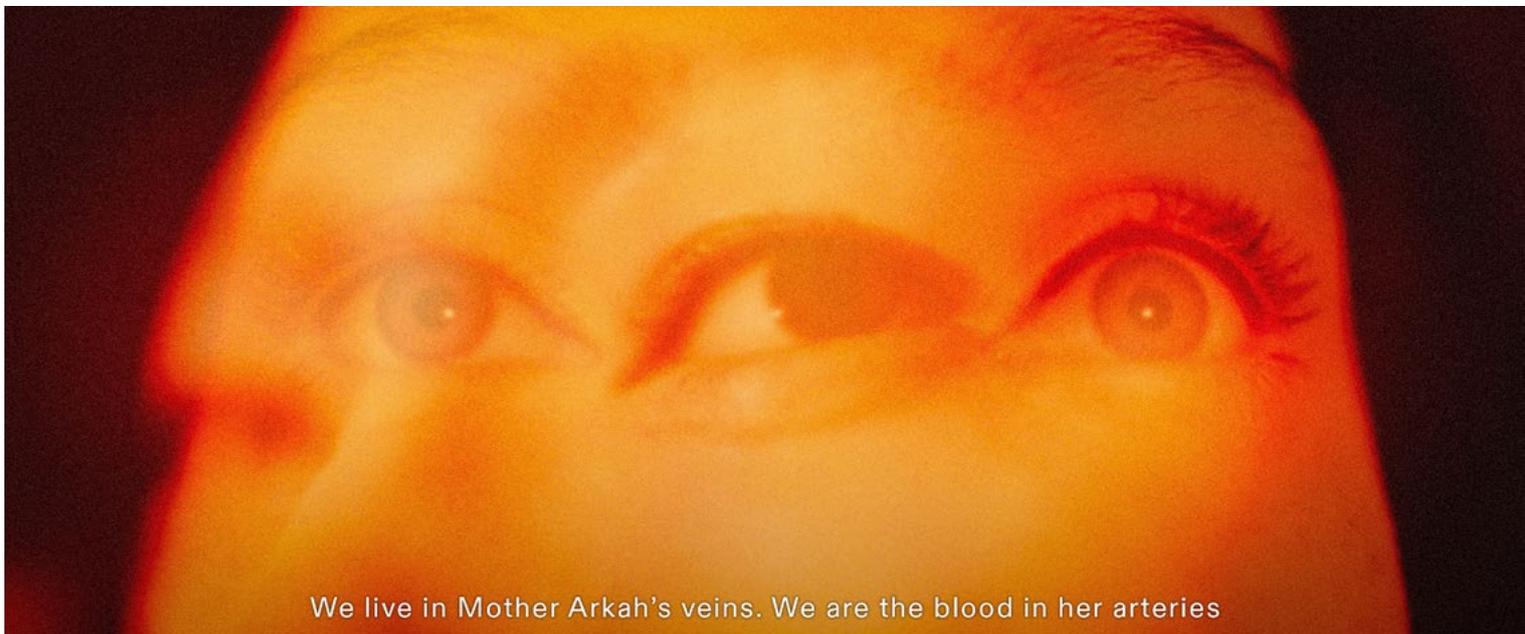




Our songs sing stories of the great entanglement



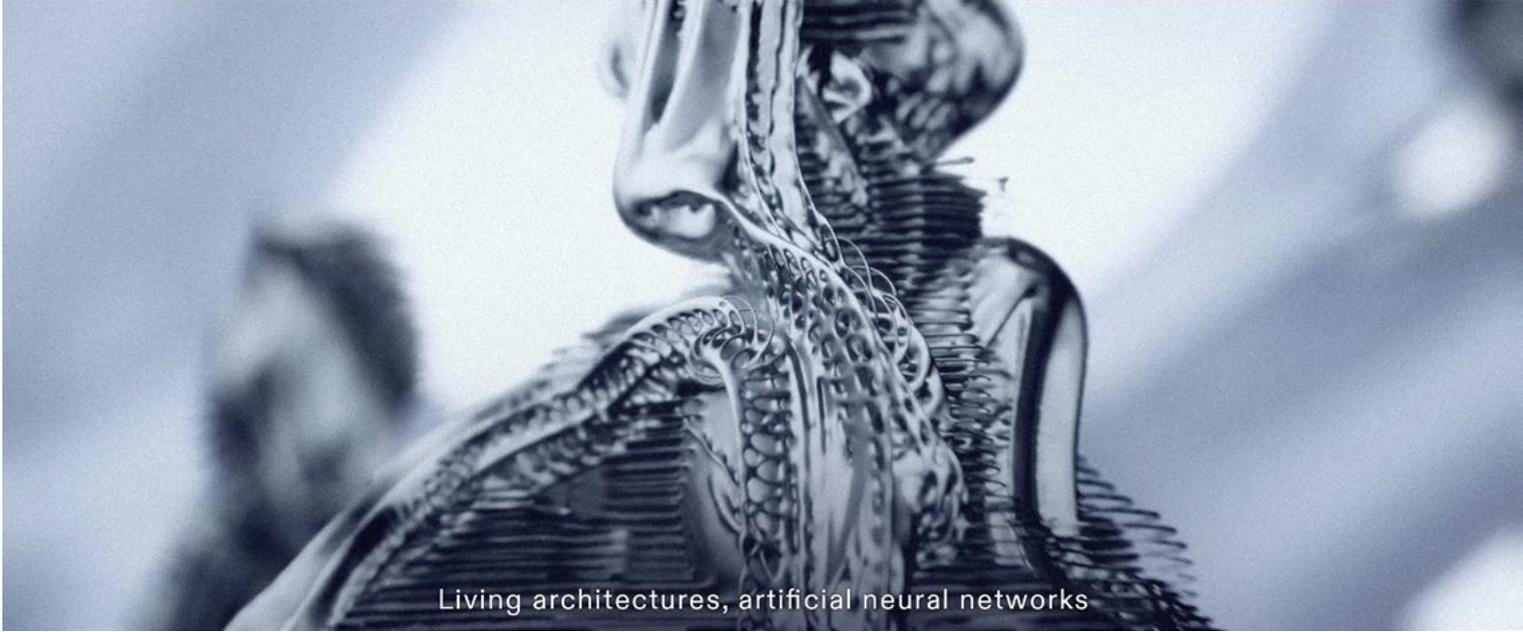
All human knowledge, forgotten.
No literature, no art, no nations



We live in Mother Arkah's veins. We are the blood in her arteries



Autopoietic units, sustaining life, climates, itself.
A novel entity emerged by symbiogenesis



Living architectures, artificial neural networks



We aspire for a state of pure existing

Abstract

‘Mother Arkah’ is an animated short film, exploring a speculative post-climate-apocalypse situation and the posthumanist political system of ‘Bio-Technoism’. Utilizing fiction and entertainment, the project investigates concepts and ideas on prohibited innovation¹ for the benefit of ecological balance, future power structures shaped by technology and ideology, the Posthuman Convergence², living architectures³ and the digital sublime⁴, AI-driven symbiogenetic evolution⁵ and the entanglement of nature itself – opening up questions about how deep the urge for innovation is rooted within humanness and therefore how much humanness our planet can take.

On a meta level the film serves as an allegory on the rise and fall of ideologies throughout human history, using personifications to explore the various underlying aspects and mechanisms.

Summary: The film tells a story set far in the future. To save life on earth after the environmental collapse, a secret research program creates giant living biotopes, a so-called ‘megastructure’, to preserve life until planet earth is habitable again. The only long-term threat is humanity’s urge for innovation, which inevitably leads to ecological catastrophes and mass extinctions. Therefore, this urge needs to be suppressed through ideology, which is maintained by worshipping⁶ a symbiogenetic consciousness and an ideology of ‘pure existing’.

‘Mother Arkah’ can be seen as a film taking on characteristics of a theatre production, staging and communicating this speculative scenario through four personas and various virtual set designs. A nonlinear approach to storytelling discloses philosophical questions surrounding the conflation of technology and biology⁷, while simultaneously exploring mechanisms behind political belief systems.

Keywords

Posthuman Convergence; Criminalization of Growth and Innovation; Ideology and Mass Manipulation; Cultism; Symbiogenesis; Architectural Utopias

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- 1 Till, Jeremy (2021): quoting Isabelle Stengers in “Research after Research”, Institute of Architecture from the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Silver Lecture Series: Research Cultures, held on December 2, 2021.
 - 2 Braidotti, Rosi. (2020): “‘We’ May Be in This Together, but We Are Not All Human and We Are Not One and the Same.” *Ecocene: Cappadocia Journal of Environmental Humanities* 1, no. 1, June 2021.
 - 3 Oxman, Neri (2020): “The Neri Oxman Material Ecology Catalogue”, New York City: Museum of Modern Art, April 2020.
 - 4 Gleiter, Jörg H. (2013): “Internationale Konferenz Effekt und Affekt. Architektur und das Digital-Erhabene”, TU Berlin, Institute of Architecture, January 2013.
 - 5 Feldmann, John (2017): “Symbiotic Earth: How Lynn Margulis Rocked the Boat and Started a Scientific Revolution” [film], USA: Hummingbird Films.
 - 6 Piesing, Mark (2020): “How to build a nuclear warning for 10,000 years’ time”, in: BBC Future, August 3, 2020, URL: <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200731-how-to-build-a-nuclear-warning-for-10000-years-time>, accessed on April 4, 2022.
 - 7 Harari, Yuval Noah (2020): “Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow”, 16th edition, Munich: C.H.Beck, October 29, 2020.

Hypothesis

A Posthumanist Form of Governance

The basis of this diploma project is the formulation of a hypothesis around a posthumanist political system, called 'Bio-Technoism'. Looking back at the development of political regimes, several major shifts can be described. Therefore this hypothesis starts with a compact excursion on state authority, beginning with the era of world religions, a point in history where authority is coming from god and religions, executed and justified by the church or other self-proclaimed 'representatives of god on earth'.

Those power structures shifted during the rise of humanism and the new era of science. Authority was now worldly. Triggered by the industrial revolution, which brought fast and radical changes in society, new unprecedented political concepts and state-size experiments emerged during the 20th century. Often a small group of people enforced their ideologies. With the 'End of History'¹, as described by Francis Fukuyama in 1992, western liberal democracy was now seen as the final form of human government.

Just recently, triggered by the massive societal changes brought about by the digital revolution, another shift of power is occurring: authority from data – or 'Dataism'², as described by the historian and philosopher Yuval Harari. He claims that human emotions, the drive behind humanism, are nothing but algorithms and can therefore be controlled, manipulated and programmed. This posthumanist political scheme is resulting in the postfactual age, the era of big data and human enhancement.

In the near future another revolution will take place: the fusion of biotechnology and information technology³. Again, this development will bring unprecedented changes to society and therefore nourish new forms of governance. Triggered by this unpredictable biotechnological revolution, what novel form of governance could emerge in the future? Could the next logical form of authority be a combination of big data, AI and organic components? An authority coming from 'enhanced nature'?

This train of thought forms the basis for the speculations, fictions and critical artistic reflections within the project 'Mother Arkah', where a cybernetic organism – a symbiogenesis of artificial intelligence and biological life forms – is the indisputable authority.

Within this hypothetical political concept of 'Bio-Technoism', the governing system would not only manage human-related affairs, it would also manage and maintain whole ecosystems. The maxim would not be economic growth, but rather a posthumanist approach of long-term ecological equilibrium and welfare for all living beings.

1 Fukuyama, Francis (1992): "The End of History and the Last Man", New York City: Free Press

2 Brooks, David (2013): "Opinion: The Philosophy of Data", in: The New York Times, February 4, 2013, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/05/opinion/brooks-the-philosophy-of-data.html>, accessed on April 4, 2022.

3 Harari, Yuval Noah (2020): "Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow", 16th edition, Munich: C.H.Beck, October 29, 2020.

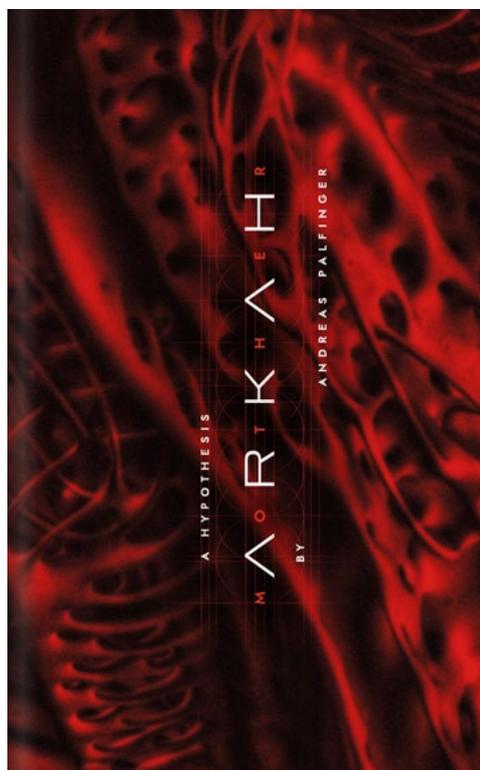
Publication

As addition to the film, the 'watching-guide' as printed and online publication provides a broader context to the ideas and concepts behind the film. It's function is to open up new perspectives on how to watch the movie as a holistic thought experiment.

The publication's content consists of a collection of texts – including hypothesis, research, the written scenario in detail, information about the characters and the timeline of the film – as well as film stills and images of several organic-parametric experiments.

Publication to the film as PDF:

http://www.andreas-palfinger.at/arkah/Mother_Arkah_Publication.pdf



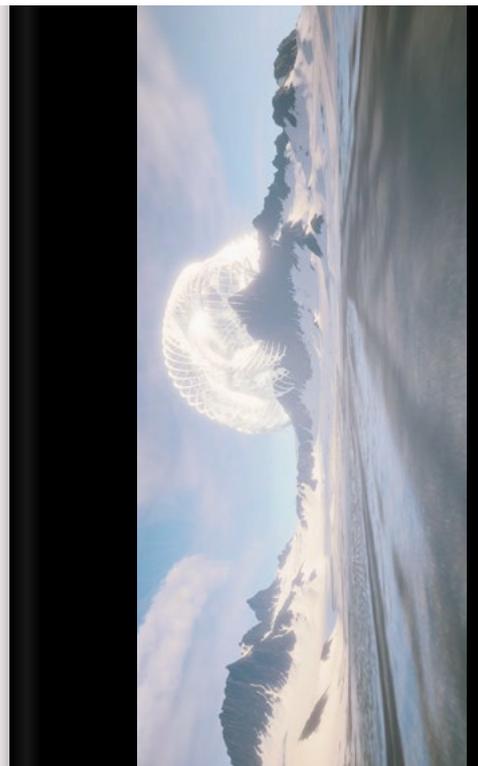
Year 2900 14
Project Theca has grown successfully. The outside world has collapsed into lethal chaos and is in hibernation mode, slowly recovering over the next several hundred thousands of years. The relocation of earth's living beings into the megastructure has been successfully completed, since hundreds of years humanity has now been living in cult-like groups under the regime of Mother Arkah.

An ironic conclusion
The smartest people on earth left behind a legacy of eco-fascism²⁷ as their last will – a self-sustaining god-like hybrid organism, enforcing omnipresent bio-politics on the remnants of humanity; Bio-Technoism became reality.

Establishing Personas
To make the above-described scenario more graspable, various aspects of the anti-utopia are communicated through the stories of four personas: the child, the Mediator, Dr. Verney and the artificial goddess Mother Arkah. As the film is spanning over a timeframe of 500 years, roughly between 2800 and 2900, the personas can manifest different stages of Project Theca's implications – starting with the planning phase in the laboratory, to a stage where life in the megastructure flourishes, until, in the end, first cracks in the system of Bio-Technoism appear. In the film the viewer hears the characters' voices from the off – they share their thoughts, their inner monologues. Through the assemblage-like structure of the film, the viewer only sees fragments of the world, with the aim to make all bits and pieces give an understanding of the future scenario in the end.

The Child
This character is a young member of a human tribe, of a 'swarm' living within the megastructure in the year 2900. It represents humane naivety and innocence, but also curiosity and the urge to explore and invent. The child is introducing the viewers to the everyday life and the people's worries within a society governed by Mother Arkah. It shows the relationship of the common people with the Mediators and nature's god-like soul. The child takes the world as it is, but, towards the end of the film, also starts to ask forbidden questions. It opens up the question if the deepest values of humanness can be suppressed by ideology, if the 'urge for innovation' can be forgotten, or if curiosity and eagerness to learn is given as one of the most intrinsic features of humanness. The visual world of the child takes us on a journey through wild nature and the 'vastness of the arteries' – that's how the humans call their habitat in the megastructure.

27 Sparrow, Jeff (2019): "Eco-fascists and the ugly fight for 'our way of life' as the environment disintegrates", in: The Guardian, November 29, 2019, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/nov/29/eco-fascists-and-the-ugly-fight-for-our-way-of-life-as-the-environment-disintegrates>, accessed on December 20, 2021.



Studies on Organic-Parametric Geometry

Mechanisms of nature and patterns of growth were adapted to create the geometric foundation for the 'growing and living architectures' in the film *Mother Arkah*. The guiding principle: transcending from constructed to grown.



The series »Organic-Parametric Explorations« is part of the broad artistic research project, including an experimental short film and 3D printed sculptures. It explores a speculative climate-apocalypse scenario and the hypothesis of the posthumanist ideology 'Bio-Technism'. The project investigates concepts on prohibiting the 'religion of growth', future power structures shaped within the 'Posthuman Convergence', AI-driven symbiogenetic evolution and autopoietic architectures. The experiments focus on procedurally generated organic-parametric geometries, investigating in patterns of growth in nature and translating them into the virtual realm. The series is exploring the concept of the digital-sublime, a philosophical approach based in architecture theory.

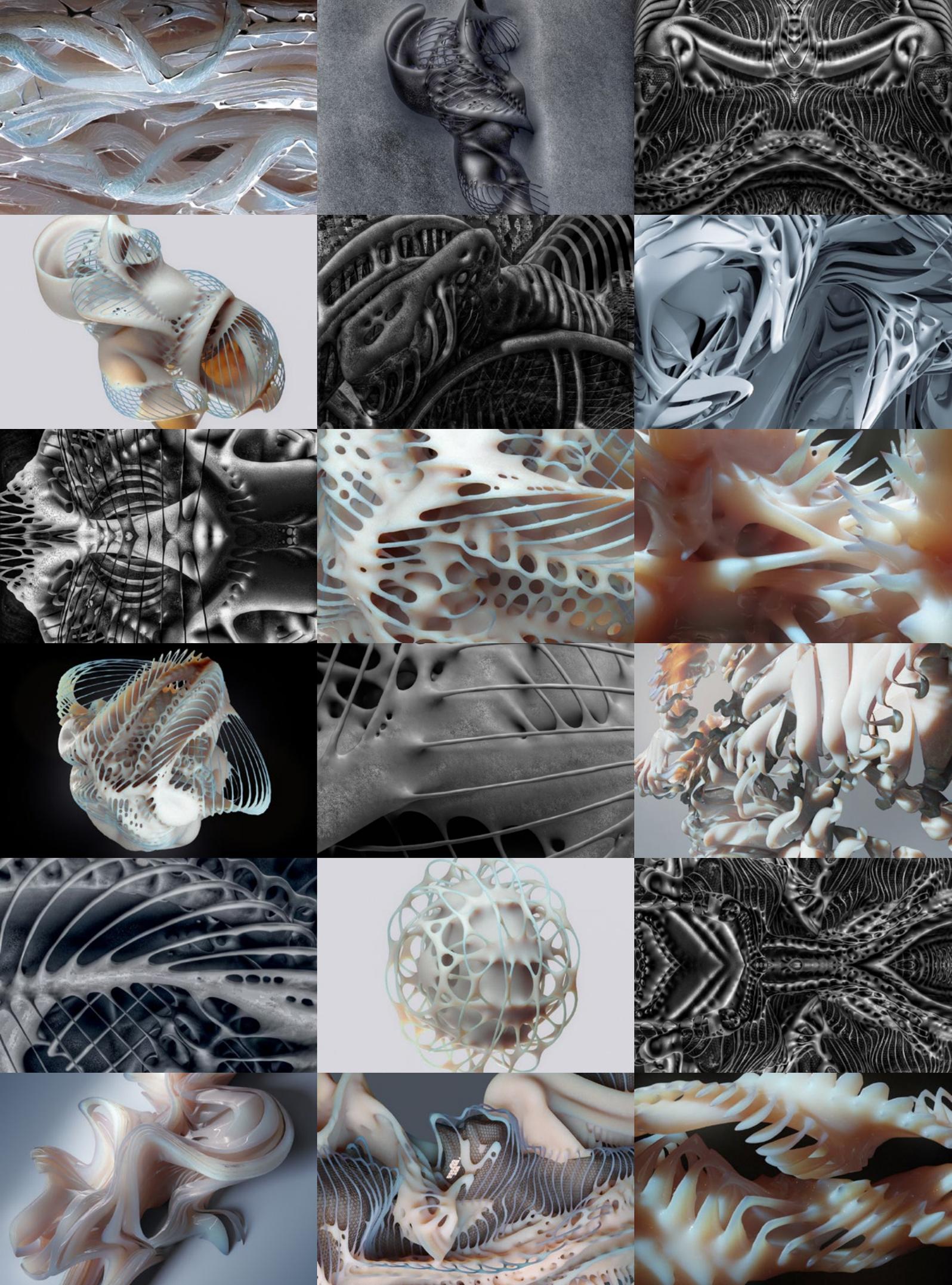
I'm currently conceptualizing a biofuturistic anti-utopia, combining concepts from philosophy, biotechnology, futurology, political theory and behavioral science. An integral part of this project is establishing hypothetical scenarios. The series »Organic-Parametric Explorations« is part of this broad artistic research project, including an experimental short film and 3D printed sculptures.

The meta-themes of this project interweave the human despair in the »Posthuman Convergence« with speculative approaches towards autopoiesis and symbiogenesis. An important theoretical component of the project is challenging the »human urge for innovation«, which goes hand in hand with the question "Will the future define growth as irresponsible, even criminal?", asked from Isabelle Stengers, Belgian science philosopher. Other sub-narratives explore concepts like the authoritarian aspects of utopias, nuclear-priesthoods, eco-fascism, cultism or novel forms of consciousnesses.

A resonating concept in my practice is the »Posthuman Convergence«, coined by philosopher and theorist of feminism Rosi Braidotti. This concept circumscribes the extensive vastness of new challenges for humanity resulting from rapid developments in the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Sixth Mass Extinction. Those thoughts play along with some overarching themes in my work, which are the intersection of technology, biology and the humane. Resulting projects speculate on topics like synthetic biology, biased AI, futurology or bio-politics.

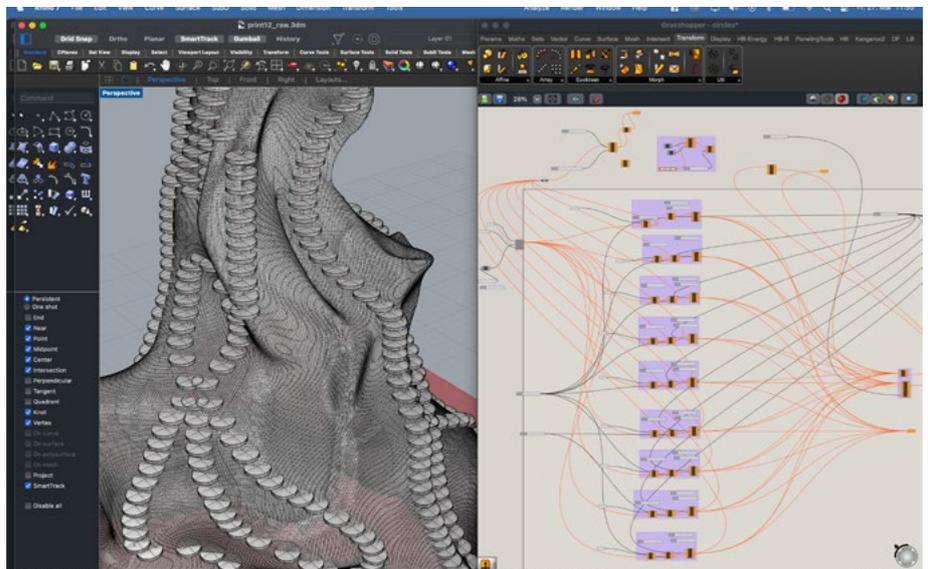
One concept I'm especially obsessed with is the »Sublime« as described by the Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728–99, Paris), representative of the French revolution architecture, and its contemporary counterpart, the »Digital-Sublime«. This theory implies a phenomena that occurs with the rise of parametric architecture. By watching those generated geometries, the viewer is aware of the existence of an immanent logic that generates the form, however, this logic is too complex to fully grasp it. The shapes seem to be formed by a higher power, they radiate something extremely powerful, which for me is intriguing to work with.

Speaking of parametricity, a continuing interest throughout my work is approximating the organic, the biomorph via mathematical, procedural and algorithmic methods. Therefore I'm observing, collecting and studying from nature and the intrinsic patterns, behaviors, and systems behind, to ultimately adapt those methods to create uncanny hybrids in the virtual realm.



Ceramic Sculpture

Based on the 3D models created for the film and shown in various scenes – the hives, the megastructure, the models in the laboratory, the ritualistic objects or the Mediator’s clothing – several sculptures were 3D-printed. They serve as additional pieces for exhibitions and screenings. Furthermore they can function on their own as ‘discussion objects’ to initiate conversations about living architectures, symbiogenetic evolution, non-human agency or the digital-sublime.



Contact

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Artist Bio

Andreas Palfinger (*1997, AT) is a New York based interdisciplinary artist, practicing within the frameworks of virtual architectural scenography and functional fictions. His ethos embraces critical and speculative approaches, articulated in time-based media, CGI, AR and VR. Fiction and hypothetical scenarios prove to be seducing catalysts for social dreaming. Andreas uses artistic strategies, critical design and research to reflect on topics such as post-apocalyptic societies, biased algorithms, the deconstruction of democracies or speculative biology.

Andreas studied at the University of Applied Art Vienna and Bauhaus University Weimar, and currently studies at Pratt Institute, New York City, in the Master of Architecture program.

He got honored internationally, among others at the International Design Awards, the New York International Film Awards, the Art Directors Club of Europe Awards and the New York Festivals AD Awards.

Credits

Written, Directed
and Produced

Andreas Palfinger

Theoretical Input in
Philosophy, Biology
and Geometry

Sophie Publig

Georg Glaeser

Artistic Supervision

Oliver Kartak

Katharina Uschan

Christian Schlager

Sabine Dreher

Sound Design, Mixing

Nikolaus Gehrer

Sound Compositions

Winona Hudec

Color Grading

Stefan Zordan

Voice Artists

Zaida Joy

Janet Peters

Artistic and Conceptual
Consultations

Bouchra Khalili

Cristian Anutoiu

Maria Rudakova

Larissa Falk

Mia Meusburger

Nikolaus Jantsch

Marion Elias

Proofreading

Viktoria Palfinger

Stephanie Palfinger

James Habineza

Erin Sankey

Teresa Krainer

3D-Printing in Clay

Lukas Dworschak

Motion Capture

Maximilian Prag

Dancer

Hannah Wimmer

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