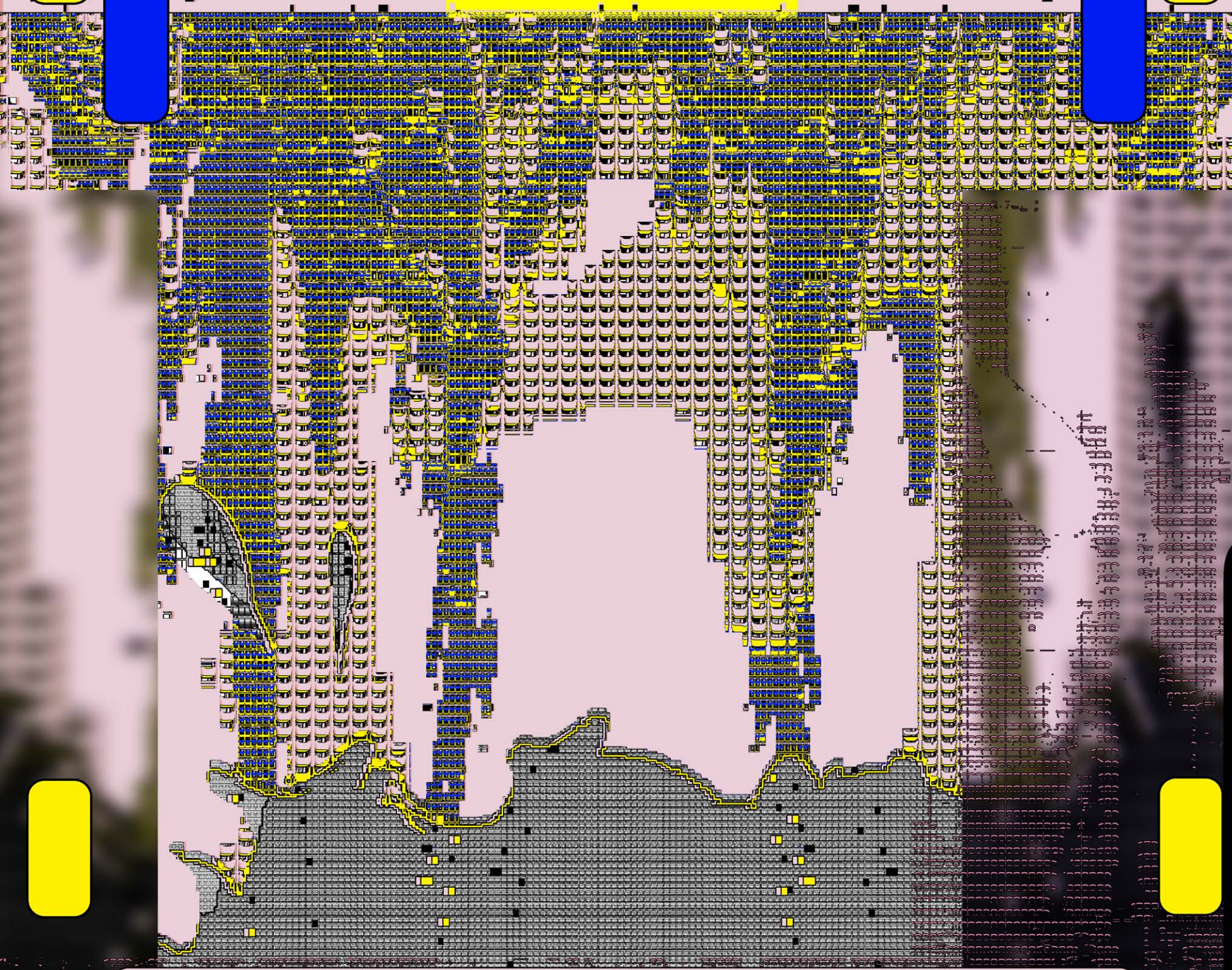


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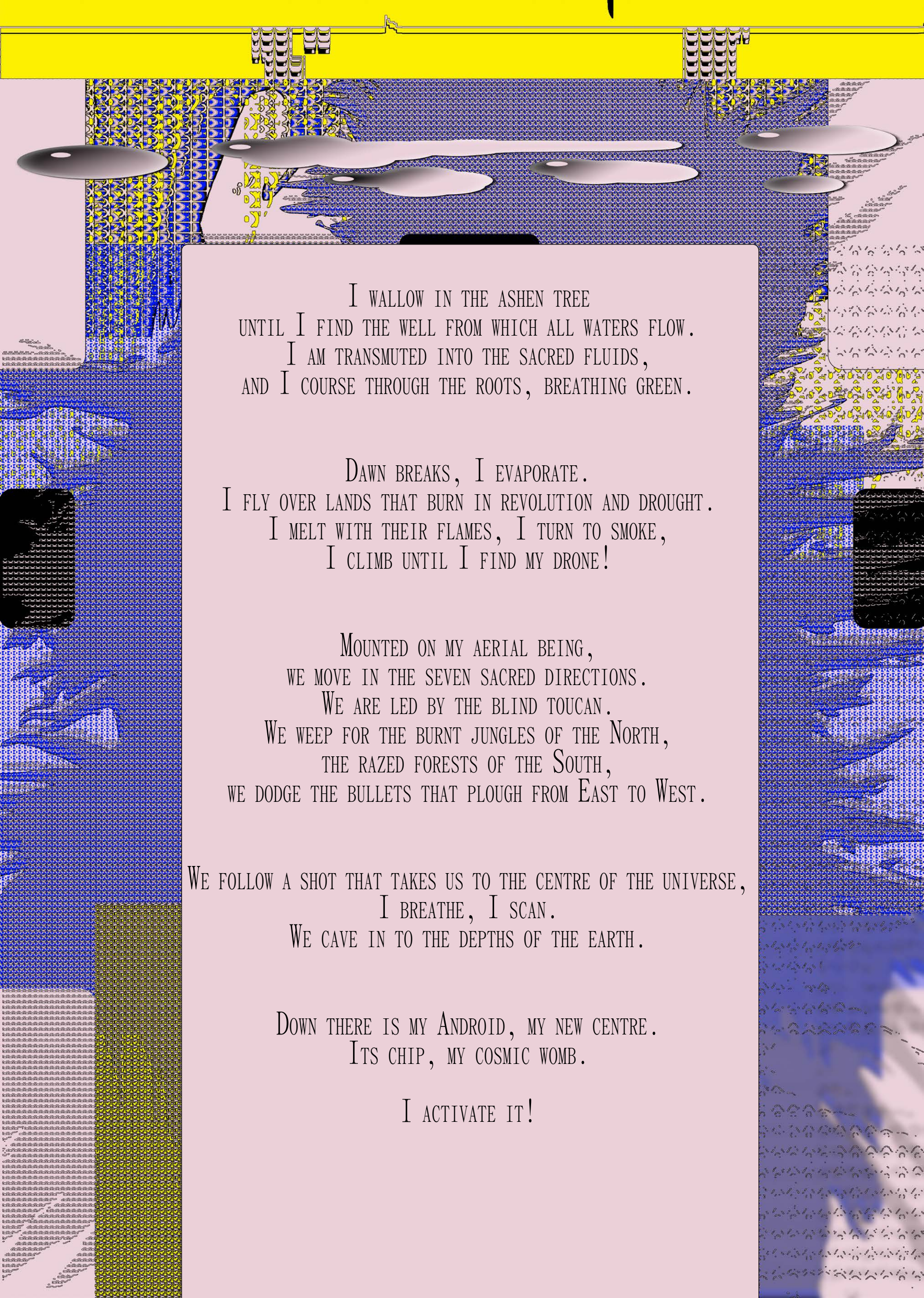
PATRICIA DOMÍNGUEZ

UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES



I MOUNT ON A DRONE. WE FLY OVER THE FIRES, THE THIRST, THE REVOLUTION.

WE ARE LED BY THE BLIND TOUCAN.



I WALLOW IN THE ASHEN TREE  
UNTIL I FIND THE WELL FROM WHICH ALL WATERS FLOW.

I AM TRANSMUTED INTO THE SACRED FLUIDS,  
AND I COURSE THROUGH THE ROOTS, BREATHING GREEN.

DAWN BREAKS, I EVAPORATE.  
I FLY OVER LANDS THAT BURN IN REVOLUTION AND DROUGHT.  
I MELT WITH THEIR FLAMES, I TURN TO SMOKE,  
I CLIMB UNTIL I FIND MY DRONE!

MOUNTED ON MY AERIAL BEING,  
WE MOVE IN THE SEVEN SACRED DIRECTIONS.  
WE ARE LED BY THE BLIND TOUCAN.  
WE WEEP FOR THE BURNT JUNGLES OF THE NORTH,  
THE RAZED FORESTS OF THE SOUTH,  
WE DODGE THE BULLETS THAT PLOUGH FROM EAST TO WEST.

WE FOLLOW A SHOT THAT TAKES US TO THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSE,  
I BREATHE, I SCAN.

WE CAVE IN TO THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH.

DOWN THERE IS MY ANDROID, MY NEW CENTRE.  
ITS CHIP, MY COSMIC WOMB.

I ACTIVATE IT!

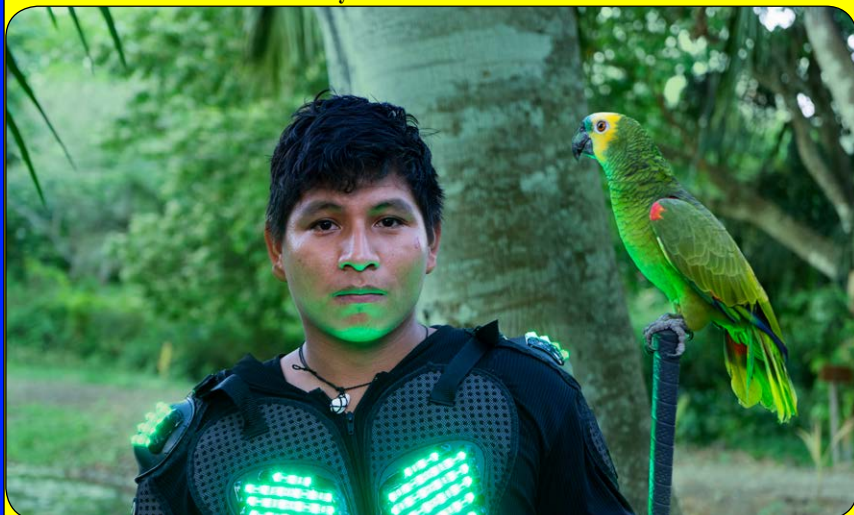


# THE BLIND TOUCAN

01 Calmly, the blind toucan felt me with its right side. It looked at me from time to time with its left side. The fire burned out one of its eyes, turning it into a mythological animal that emerged from the flames. It has been transformed into a machine for seeing, with no need to use its eyes, to fly, or even to spread its wings. It is now a monster that sees beyond the visible.

“The blind toucan would glide in circles if we tried to get it to fly,” José, the owner of the [Hotel Biotermal de Aguas Calientes](#) in Roboré, Bolivia, thought feelingly. I am still haunted by that image of the bird flying round and round infinitely. On the second day I was helping in the sanctuary, they brought in several animals affected by the fires that raged in Bolivian Chiquitania and the Amazon from July to September 2019. A toucan arrived with its tail and feet burnt, four hungry wolves, and a fox that had failed to survive the trip, dying of dehydration. *We had to return it to the parched earth.*

That day, the blind toucan arrived too. They told us it had gone up to a house on the edge of the village to ask for water. It was dehydrated and burnt by the smoke in the forest. Seeing it was disoriented, the man who lived there threw a stone at it to try to catch it and make it his pet. The stone hit it in the eye and left it blind. Municipal officials found it tied up in his garden and took it away from him so that it could be cared for in the sanctuary.

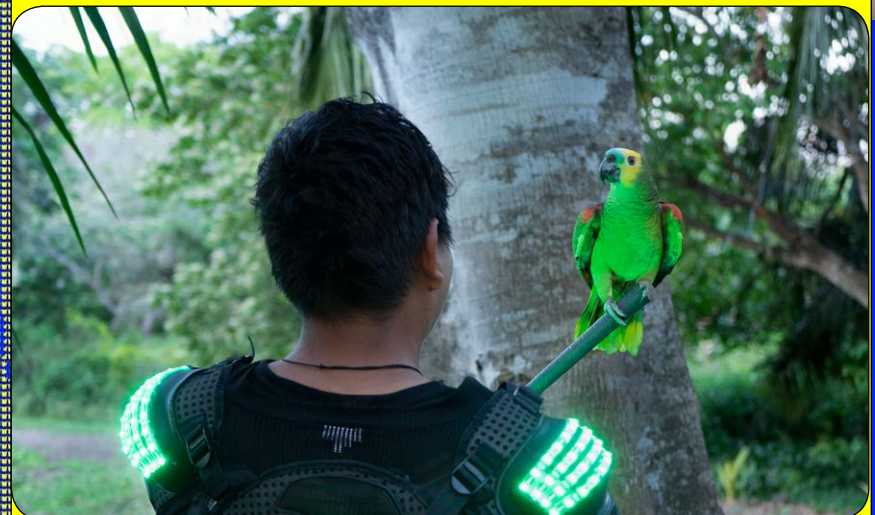


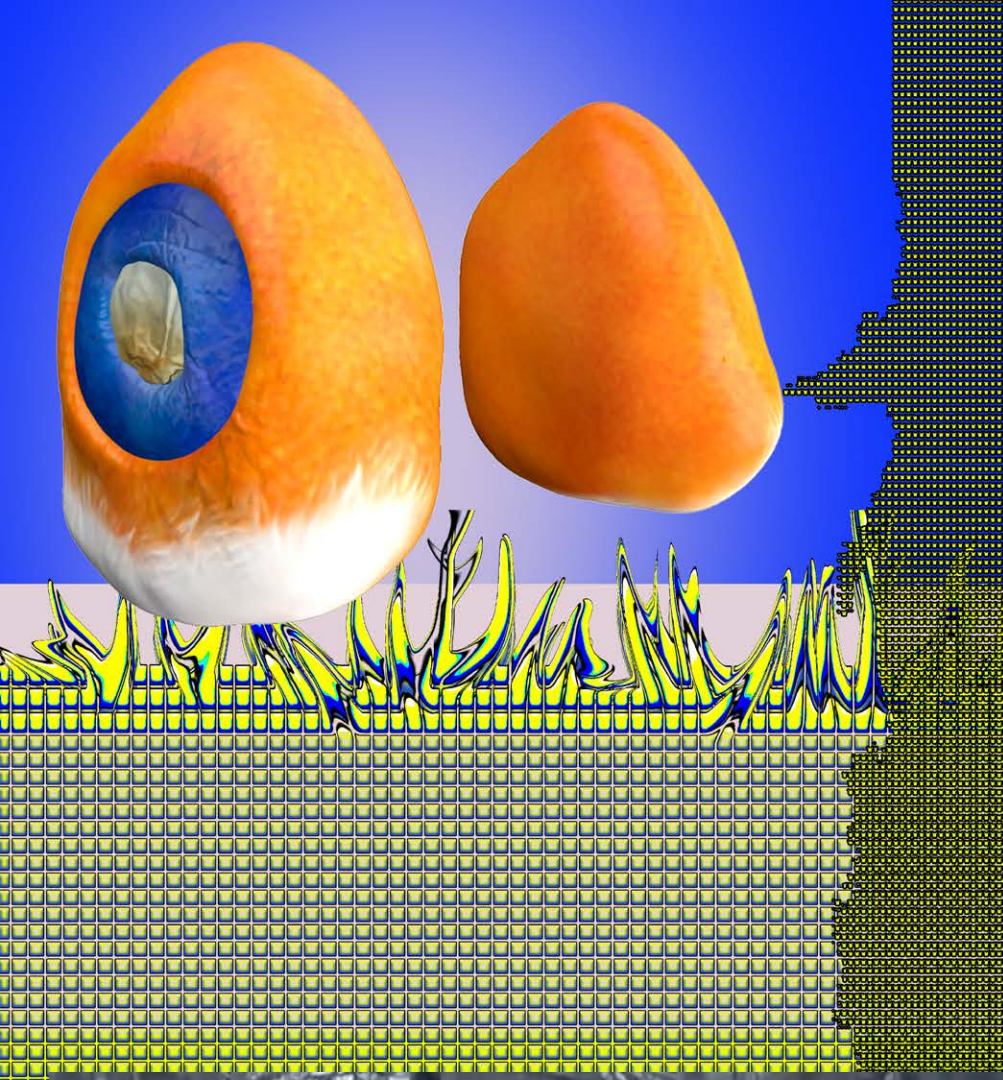
02 The [Hotel Biotermal de Aguas Calientes](#) - the Biothermal Hot Springs Hotel - is a cross between a medicinal spa hotel and an animal rescue centre. Given the countless wildlife affected by the fire, the sanctuary was improvised by the community to tend injured animals. Soon afterwards it was officialised by the government. The owners of the hotel closed its doors to guests and opened them to animals and volunteers.

The month before my arrival, more than 1,500 *guests of the fire* had passed through, including volunteers, firemen, scientists, soldiers, politicians, activists, journalists, National Geographic photographers, and even the president of Bolivia at the time, Evo Morales.

The carer in charge of the toucan was Darwin, a 17-year-old youth who worked at the sanctuary. I picture Darwin as a sci-fi guardian of those lands and their multiple species. *You're a silent hero, Darwin! Armed with a cellphone that thumps out reggaeton and your perfume of fire.*

I took a photo of him next to ‘Maléfico’, ‘the Evil One’, a green parrot. The green exuded by their bodies remained captured in the image. Green, the colour that keeps us sane. Darwin and the Evil One. What a couple! They make me think about the theory of species and the survival of the fittest. These burnt animals are the last links in the chain of creatures affected by fires. *Darwin's fucking theory.* There's nothing left now but their burnt skins.





03 Those charred skins cover wild spirits expelled from their forest by the fire. Sick and burnt in their new cages, they are still beings with free spirits. After the fire, they are in the first phase of domestication. There is no turning back, and they can no longer survive without humans. Witnessing their indomitable and feral impulses inside their cages was an experience I am still unable to put into words.

Looking after the blind toucan was my way of touching the spirit of the forest. I felt scanned by the bird. When I brushed one of its feathers, I was vertiginously connected with the immensity of the vegetation. *Vast jungle, receive my offerings!* “The earth judges by facts, not by colours or race,” my friend Amador, a medicine man, said to me when I was in the Peruvian jungle in 2018. In the other jungle, on the Madre de Dios River, the earth feels the offerings, the words, the deeds. *In this jungle too.*

At noon it was time to move the toucans to their provisional new cages. I was asked to hold the blind toucan and put a cap over it so that it would not escape.

I placed my hands on it carefully and felt it quiver through and through with fright. Its whole body was shuddering under my protective grip.



04 *Toucoutoum toucoutoum toucoutoum.  
Toucoutoum toucoutoum toucoutoum.  
Toucoutoum toucoutoum toucoutoum.*

I closed my eyes and connected with it. Toucoutoum toucoutoum toucoutoum. We palpitated together, the bird in its terror and me in my attempt to contain it. We were synchronised for a few seconds. I could feel the beating of everything alive through that bird, the palpitation of the earth. I felt the water that had entered our bodies and was running through us. Water passes through us all. Our bodies belong to it.

The sanctuary is on the banks of a stream of hot medicinal waters. Rafael, the Venezuelan who worked the night shift, offered to walk me through the river as far as “los hervores”, the springs where the hot water emerges. It was drizzling softly and the rain turned into steam when it touched the river. There was a profound silence. Grey and green. Hot, like a *mammal’s blood*. We continued upstream, in water that reached up to our knees. Its temperature frightens away dangerous animals like crocodiles or piranhas.



05 On the way we crossed paths with a group of [Bolivian Mennonites](#) who were going back down river. Their religion forbids them the use of technology. Their pale skins have not been pierced by the blue lights of cellphones. I wondered if their de-digitalised bodies feel the water differently. I also wondered if they noticed the electric shocks that were now running through Rafael and myself.

They passed by us in silence, greeting us with their eyes.

*I AM LED BY THE BLIND TOUCAN.  
I AM COACHED BY A DRONE,  
INFERNAL MACHINE, ALLY OF POWER.  
I LEVITATE AND RISE UP WITH THEM!  
THE DRONE HAS THE PENETRATING VISION OF A MACHINE.  
IT IS AN ARCHAIC MONSTER FOR LOOKING.  
GIVE ME YOUR BLIND TOUCAN'S PERCEPTION!  
GRANT ME YOUR DRONE'S DIGITAL VISION!*


06 The smoke from the fire followed me all the way from Roboré to the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Hundreds of kilometres away, the ashes from the burnt forests still clouded our lenses. We could smell the burnt wood, voluntarily sacrificed to be able to enlarge the areas for cultivating coca, hide the sheds for cocaine production, and donate scorched earth to those living on the other side of the country as a means of buying political votes.

*BY ENLARGING THE COCA PRODUCTION AREA,  
THEY'VE LEFT MY TOUCAN BLIND.  
MAY THE SPIRITUAL LAW BE IMPLACABLE!  
MAY MY TOUCAN NOT GO UNREQUITED!*

The author [David Topí](#) has warned of the dangers of using sacred plants for financial gain. It happened with the plants and flowers used as the basis for producing opium, cocaine, hashish and crack, and

07 it is happening with the devastated forests. Topí explains that the decision taken by the earth is "to withdraw and leave to die, and neither assist nor aid nor boost the growth of any plant that human beings are processing, cultivating and using as the basis and raw material for the creation of opiates, drugs or elements that are then turned into narcotic substances used in worldwide trafficking, illicit trade and the enrichment of a few at the cost of the addiction of others." Neoliberalism has blown the coca leaves from the Bolivian altartop to the offices of Wall Street. Perhaps, as Topí says, Gaia has decided to stop producing these plants so as not to take part in this planetary misuse of sacred vegetation.

At the beginning of October 2019, the fire leapt from the Amazon to the revolution in Ecuador, and from there to Chile, Colombia and Mexico. *In this*



08 month of writing, June 2020, to the United States and its pending revolution. The pulse of the living accelerates with the flames. The toucan palpitates, the fire crackles, the human is traversed by the heat. The fire pursues us in barricades and looting, toppling order. Did they perhaps think that injustice was not going to touch our radiant centres or our *energetic lungs*? Or that social violence would not ignite our spirits?

At the end of that month of October, the city of Santa Cruz came to a halt to protest against the illegal re-election of Evo Morales. Each person took charge of closing off the block they lived in. I was living with two artists in the heart of the citizens' blockade for 11 of the 21 days the civic stoppage lasted.

The government's opponents cut off the supply chain, and so there was no cash or petrol. They only let a minimum of food through. Prices inflated in a matter of hours in the market of Los Pozos. On some days, we would go out to buy any food we could find. "*Pachichi, as the Mexicans up north call food that's going off,*" my friend Toño said to me when I handed him the overripe tomatoes we had managed to obtain.

There was silence in the streets. While a cyclist in a hood rode past peacefully, I had the sensation I would witness these apocalyptic moments more and more frequently: being cooped up involuntarily, only able to go out to look for food, and surrounded by bullets and barricades. And I wasn't wrong.

09 The pandemic itself has made it evident that we are a single body distended in Gaia. Until the last person on the planet is in a position of inequality or suffering, all of us are similarly condemned. We are joined by cosmic bonds as a being, a species. It is inconceivable that some should be well off while others are in misery. *I don't know if you've read Octavia Butler's Parable of the Sower?* Quite simply everything will burn, country by country, until new systems re-emerge among the ashes. We have to understand we're all in this together.

A few days before the civic stoppage, I went to buy a deckchair for a gift. The man who sold them took me into a back room where hundreds of deckchairs were on display. Each one had its specific combination of colours. While I scanned the available tones and patterns, he remarked to me that the colour green brings the energy of the trees to stop us from going mad in the city. He said it was important to be radiated with green to stay sane in times like these. That man understood the invisible holograms expelled by everything that exists. And the green of the forests is a hologram of life, of calm.

*PLANT GREEN,  
GREEN PIXEL ON A CELLPHONE SCREEN.  
HUMANS, GREEN AND DESTINY  
ARE FOREVER INTERTWINED.*

# MANUEL SUPEPI

THE TREE COMES WITH THE WATER.  
IT DOESN'T COME ON ITS OWN.

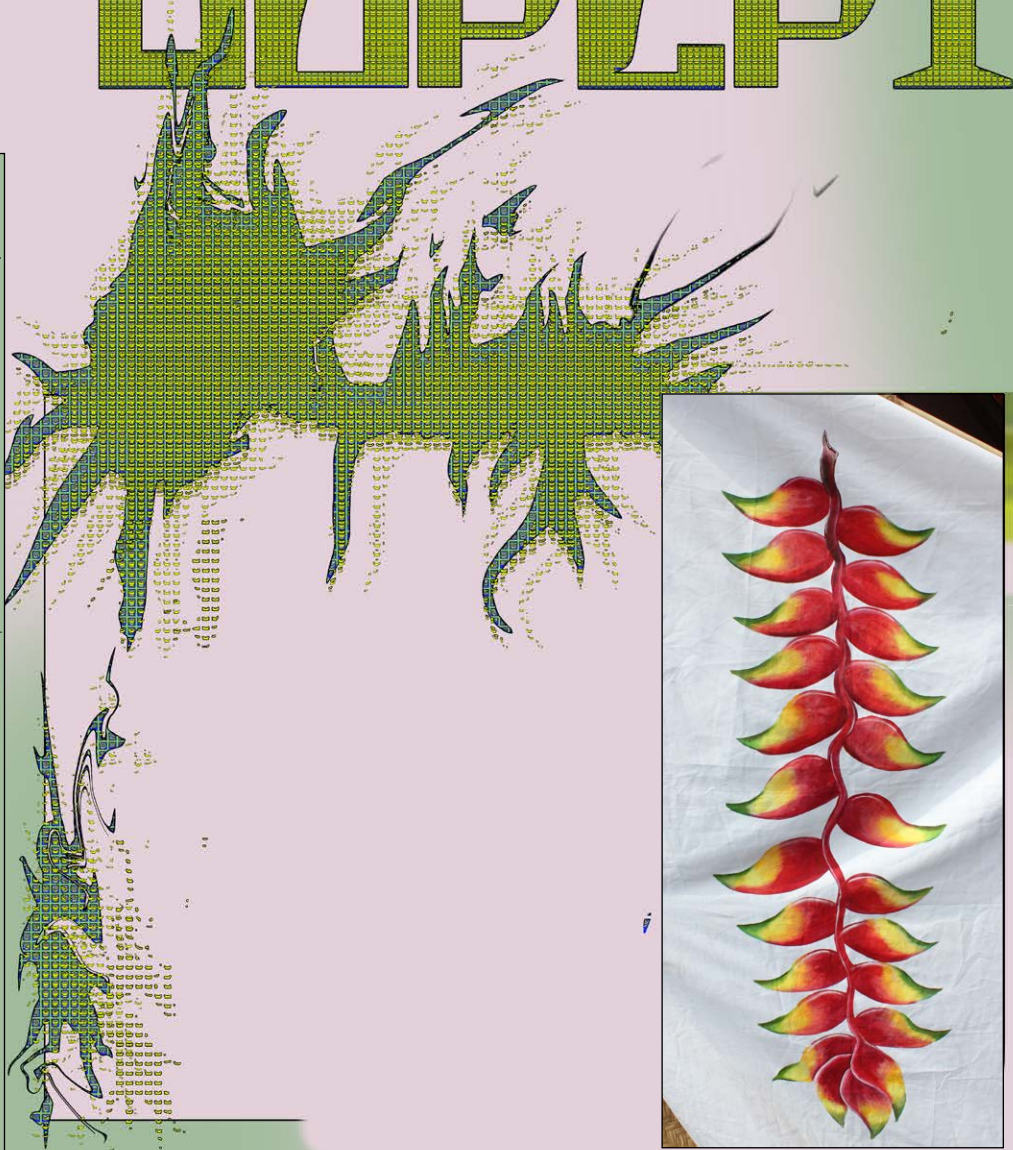
01 During the days of the civic stoppage, the main plaza of Santa Cruz was occupied by the marchers of the “Tenth Indigenous March”, who were protesting on behalf of the plants, the water and the animals of their territories in the jungle of Chiquitanía.

The interspecies army raised a flag with a *patajú*, a heliconia with a large flower of red, green and yellow buds. They say the colours of today’s Bolivian flag come from this plant.

31 days they marched, *bom bom, bom bom, bom bom*, their tread pulsed gently on the ground, *bom bom*, their drumming feet activated the force of their land.

I was in the plaza when they started to set up their tents. They came to plea for their burnt lands, invaded by agriculture and deforestation, and now sold to Evo’s sympathisers in return for their votes. The people welcomed them with food, sunblock, water and medicines while they waited for the governor to come and negotiate. Their feet were full of blisters.

The governor did not arrive, only a representative, a surrogate. The spirit of disillusionment was felt in the air among all those congregated in the plaza. When the surrogate left, a figure who called himself an ordinary (or perhaps honorary: I couldn’t hear proper-



02 ly just then) *Canvas*, as the people of the region are known, got up to speak. I heard him recite a poem on the steps of the cathedral in front of a small crowd.

*SEEING EVERYTHING IN ASHES  
IN SAN JOSÉ DE CHIQUITO,  
WHERE I HAD SOWN BANANA, YUCCA AND PUMPKIN,  
HOW SADLY THE COCK CROWED  
TO SEE MY LITTLE PIG AND MY HORSE  
TRANSFORMED INTO FLAME!*

Alchemy of sorrow and fire. The crowd started to break up and the plaza was inhabited by the marchers for several days and nights. That evening I talked to Don Manuel Supepi from San Ignacio de la Chiquitanía. He spoke to me of his vision of non-accumulation and of

03 how the water comes with the tree. Seated in a hot plaza surrounded by cement and a few trees, this was the account he gave, which remains imbued in fire upon my memory:

We have walked, we have grown tired and exhausted, but even so we have managed to achieve our target, which was to come here to Santa Cruz to see if we could get a response from our authorities, whom we call upon to give us explanations about what has happened. We want the governor to explain to us in person where 10% of the HDI money goes, what it has been spent on, and why none of it has reached us for the benefit of our indigenous communities.

We come from the community of Peñas Altas. There are more than 40 communities marching. At the moment there are 300 of us on foot. There were 50 when we set out, and we had problems when we left. The political party in power just now intervened and tried to divide us and wreck our march, because it doesn't suit them.

They tried to divide us so we won't have strength, but 50 of us managed to set out even so. Over the days we came closer and closer together. We had problems. From our little village we

04 went through the town of San Miguel, then we reached San Rafael, but we had to go back to San Ignacio to solve the problem of the divisions that had been created within the communities.

And set off all over again.

Evo Morales's government was giving away our lands to buy votes. At this point we still don't have the exact figure. A survey is being carried out to find out how many hectares the government has given away to people in the interior. Those lands, Chiquitania, have always belonged to our community. We belong ancestrally to the community, we live it as the perpetual age-old inheritance of our forefathers. Since the times without name we've been there.

They knew how to care for it. What most distresses us is that nature is perishing, it's being lost, only out of political interest, for money, for ambition.

I was taught to see the trees and the birds as part of life. It's a healthy and salutary life because through the trees, the rain comes to us afterwards. It rained all the time, there wasn't much drought, the animals fed off the fruit of the trees, and at the

05 same time, well, it's life, isn't it? The life of people, of the world. A world without woods has no view of the way forward.

Now everything is burnt. The idea we have is to recover and fortify all the burnt hectares so as to be able to carry on. Now we must heal what we have, for good or ill. We know it's going to take more than 20 years at the very least for the vegetation to thrive again. The trees have to be helped so that they can be recovered. We shall have to find natural fertilisers that don't contaminate the earth. We'll make manures with earthworms. With all the waste that can be used, provided it's not chemical.

Out there we grow banana, rice, maize, yucca and beans. Part of it we grow for business, to be able to subsist and get other things. We don't cultivate large amounts. Our parents taught us that way, not to harvest large quantities but only what we need. One or two hectares are cleared for the family, to support it for some 3 years, and after that they're left to recover. Then another area was cleared while the previous one was recovering. That's how our parents worked, and that's how we do too. We didn't have so many problems because we had water. Water ran through the gully. Now they use machines to clear a thousand hectares, five hundred hectares! Then the serious droughts came, because it has a direct impact on all the land.

06 How lovely it is, the forest! We regarded our forests as a paradise. It's a pleasure to be underneath some trees, in the shade, picking a fruit. The government has perhaps been confused in thinking that development involves degrading the earth, without realising that is not the correct way, as it brings very serious consequences.

We are defenders of the forest. If we don't defend our territory, our nature, who will? We know it's the lung of Bolivia, the lung of South America and – why not say it? – of the whole world. It affects us all. Now, with what's happened, it's going to harm everyone – us and our children, who are going to be born with some defect because of the pollution caused by the smoke. The old people are already starting to have respiratory problems as well. They're left suffering, so we think our government ought to have had foresight.

Those individuals are psychopaths. They don't think, they're sick with money. All they want is money and more money. When money isn't happiness. Money isn't life. Life is knowing how to preserve a part of nature. That's where the life of each of us comes from. A world without trees makes no sense. How can you live without plants? The mere idea of resting under a tree,



07 how beautiful that is! How good you feel under a tree!

And here in this plaza, what is there to expect from this? This cement is inert. The heat is dead. This plaza shouldn't have been like that. Our authorities are perhaps wrong in that respect. This ought to have been well planted with trees, and this cement should be removed because now, with the heat, the earth can't breathe. The sun heats up and the temperature soars. This is a cauldron.

I remember we had a very enjoyable and peaceful life. We collected bees' honey. There were lots of special places where you could go honeying. You had to go honeying by zones, as there were territories belonging to different types of bees. The black bee works very hard. From each one of those, we sometimes collected as much as 5 litres. And we fed on it, it helped us to be good creatures. Bees' honey is very good, and is curative.

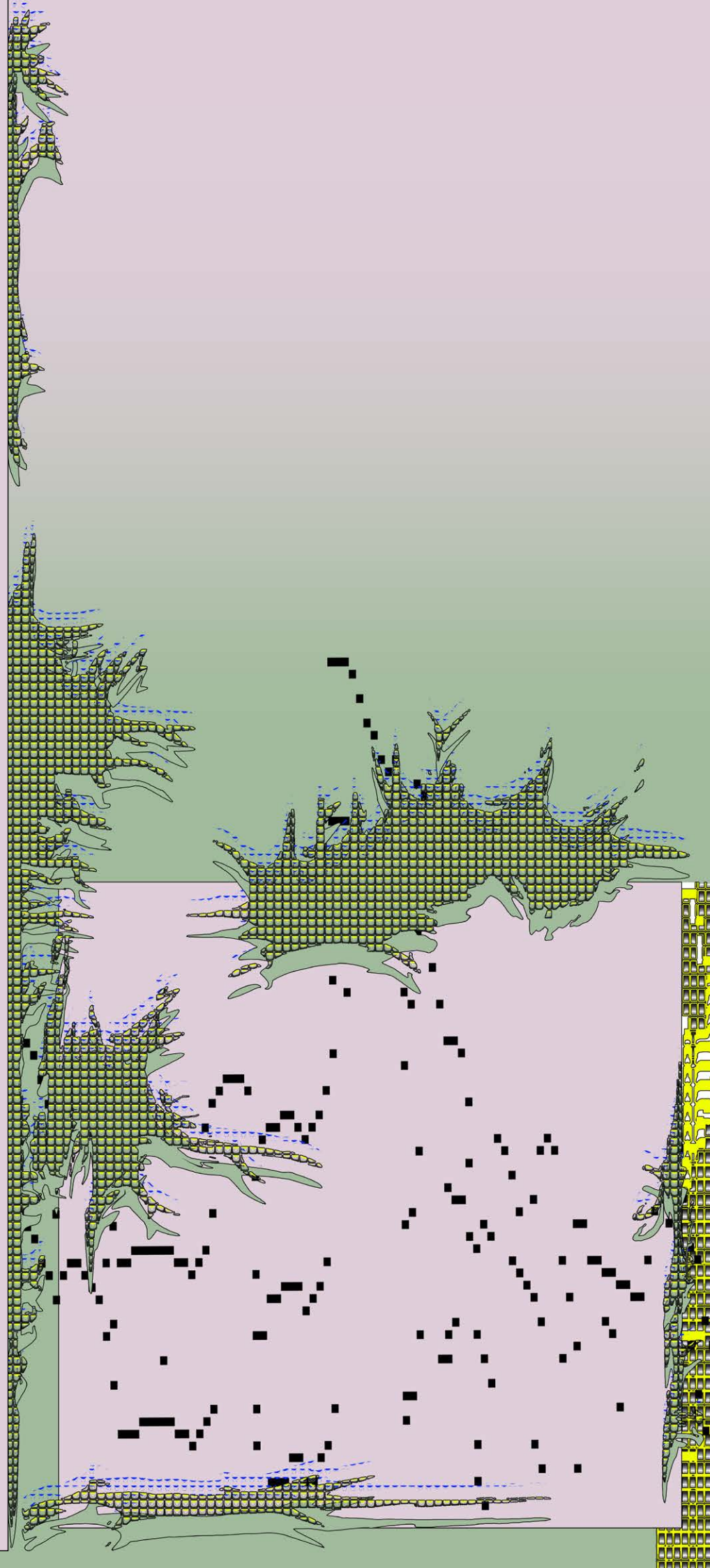
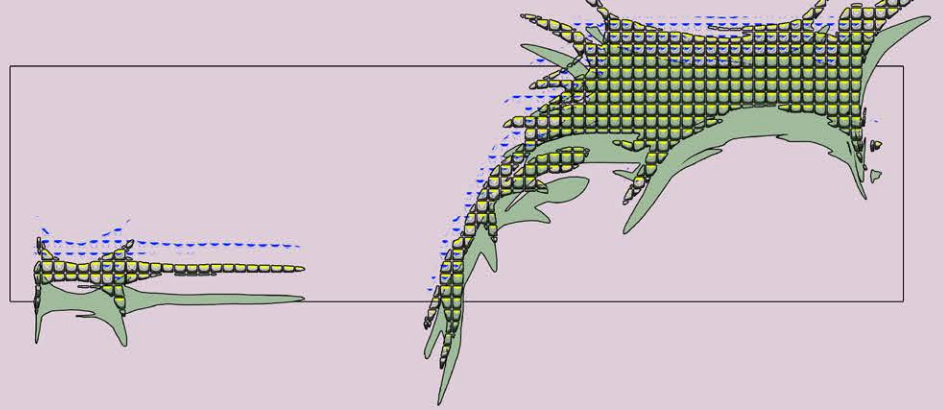
We cure one another with natural medicine. Nearly all the oldest people know about remedies and understand them. They know which tree is good for which illness, and that's the way people are cured. With this fire, they have now also killed part of our medicine.

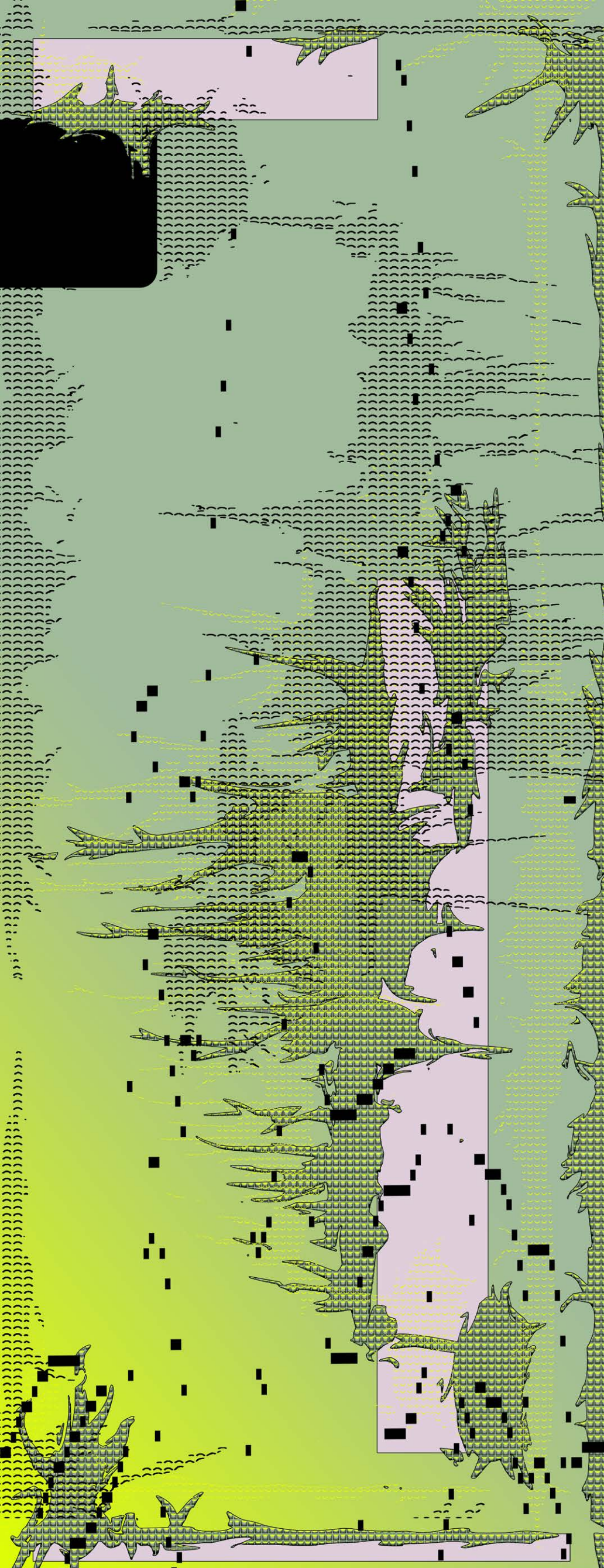
I learned from my grandparents how to use herbs. In those days, there were no doctors in the countryside, there was nothing. Then, they were the doctors, they did the healing. It took longer, but it was curative. However, chemical medicine, the one practised now, is good, isn't it? The pain goes away instantly, but it brings other kinds of problems with it, unlike natural medicine. The body takes it and it vanishes. It leaves no trace.

I've been teaching my grandchildren so that they will know all about trees. What they are for and how to cure different illnesses. So they will come to know which one is good for a headache, and which for a diarrhoea. There we have the cork oak, which we use for everything. For a strong stomach ache, you take the bark and it goes away. For that, you boil the bark, the crust, and take it so it will go. For women, to cleanse the vagina after childbirth, they used to take boiled corn chicha, drinking the liquor warm. And with that they never had vaginal pains, because they healed.

The women of my community still give birth at home. Some now go to the hospital, with the insurance they've got, but it's not very efficient. Most of them do it in the community. They give birth in the countryside, because in the hospital they feed them with medicines from the moment the children are born.

For some deliveries, we use the medicine of the toucan. The toucan is something special. Its beak is for stopping the woman's haemorrhaging. It's dried, burnt and given to her in tea so that the haemorrhage will be cut off. It's a medicine we use in very small quantities, and we kill it only to have the medicine. It is burnt and ground and put into the tea. My grandfather taught it to me. My grandfather was a naturalist. He delivered children when the woman couldn't give birth or the baby was the wrong way round. He would massage her and make her comfortable so that the woman could give birth, because there are times when the baby is the wrong way round and it's difficult. I do that work too.





08 When I was a boy, he taught me. He told me this is done like this and like that. Then it was my turn to have my 9 children. I helped my wife to bring our children into the world. That way, the child is born directly into the arms of the father, not the doctor.

I had to prepare the medicine of the toucan several times. I put the ash in the tea. Her tea is made, it's left to stew for about 10 minutes, and then it's given to her. She just drinks it, and someone also says the name of God, so that he will help too. If the bleeding doesn't stop with the first or the second dose, she has to keep taking it until it finishes. There's enough in a toucan's beak for several teas. You put in just a little, no more than you need for its use, and it's quite big, it goes a long way. It's used after women have had children or following a difficult birth. It could be a miscarriage, when the child comes before its time and sometimes they can't have it, and the bleeding remains. For that the ash of any tree can be used. The important thing is that it should be ash. You take a good handful and put it in a glass, you lay a cloth over it to filter it and get out all the bleach, and when it's well strained it's given to the mother-to-be. And soon after the bleeding stops. You take that ash, you put a little pile of it on a cloth, you add it to the hot water, you leave it about 10 minutes, and it's ready to drink.

In my community, we've managed to maintain and regenerate what we have. Until not long ago, we had 80 hectares of land, no more, for the whole of the community. There were not many of us, some 7 families. We were a small community that grew, the lands were good and could be cultivated 4 or even 5 times in the same area. Then we had no need of anything more.

Ever since we went to live in that place, we have had the forest in our thoughts. Since then, I have had the vision that one day this had to happen, because the population has grown and people migrate from one place to another. And back then we said: "It's going to have vast repercussions later." So let us be intelligent. Let us maintain, not dismantle.

Sometimes they would come and ask us: why are you working like that? Why don't you use machines on your land? We saw that it was inappropriate, that it's wrong, that in time we were going to have problems. We decided rather to maintain the forests, so that in future our children and our grandchildren can also see the beauty there is in the territory.

Our 80 hectares were not burnt, but they were dried out by the smoke. We have cleared land, a large pasture without trees on either side. What surrounds us is dead; more than 2,000 hectares here, 3,000 there. It all belongs to firms, so they haven't respected the wind breaks where the animals take refuge. They haven't done that. The government has given more powers to them, a law, a decree issued by the government, with which they took over the lands. They offered us 20 more hectares per family, but that's not our custom. We maintain what has been inherited, and at that stage we turned them down.

We look after what we have, we don't need any more. Why should we want to clear 20 hectares? Besides, to clear 20 hectares, you've got to do it with machines. That won't be done by hand. We then quickly realised that the government's

09 intentions were to favour the people coming from the interior, because with that permission they were given, and the permission to burn, they took control of the place. They cleared more by paying cash. They clear 20, which is legal, and pay to clear 10 more, so they cut down up to 30 hectares. They've progressed fast.

The forest is the most sacred thing. The forest gives us a great deal, if it's to get what we need to subsist. In my community, there are people who work. We set up workshops and make armchairs, and afterwards they're sold, and with that we've managed to cover our needs. While they cut down trees on one side, they're allowed to grow on the other. We consider that with no forest, there is nothing, it's part of everything. That's why we're indignant with this government, which was the promoter of it all. It was what brought change: I sell you my lands, but you vote for me in the elections.

... *(his tale is interrupted by a coughing fit)*. "The smoke getting hold of me," said Don Manuel. We've had the smoke on top of us for the last 2 months or so. Here we've been seen by volunteer doctors. They've also joined the stoppage against the government.

10 Now that the woods have been cleared on all sides, the animals have all come down to look for water, but in our territory the gullies no longer flow with water as they did before because of the clearances carried out around us by the neighbours. They've cut off the whole current, because they've made large pools to divert the water. They've stopped our water before it gets to us. They've drawn their water from our basin, and so no water reaches our community. Before we had pumps to draw water from the well to give to the animals. There were some years when it dried up, but lately, because of the diversions, it got drier and drier until it dried completely. Now they take water to our community. It's brought in tanker trucks because there isn't any, we have no water. And so the animals have migrated to the pools in the land cleared by the firms. They have to look for it.

We know they've devastated your lands in Chile as well. You have to keep your spirit up. I stand by Chile too, and I say to the smallest villages where the forest is still maintained that they must stand firm and make sure rights are respected in the forests, because that is where life comes from. With no forest, our life would have no sense. That brings great diseases, respiratory problems, no more happiness. Everything would end

*"THEY TELL ME YOU SHOULD SPREAD A PASTE OF DRY ASHES ON THE SOLES OF YOUR FEET, APPLYING IT LIKE A HAMBURGER," MARCO WROTE TO ME TODAY, AMONG DREAMS. THEY TELL ME YOU HAVE TO SPREAD THE ASHES ON, NOT TOO MOIST. DO IT SLOWLY, WITH NO RUSH. "WITH NO RUSH," HE STRESSES. IT'S IMPORTANT SO THAT THE ASHES WILL HAVE TIME TO ABSORB YOUR ACHES. THEY'RE NOT PHYSICAL ACHES, THEY TELL ME.*

*I DON'T KNOW WHO IS SPEAKING.*

*I WILL BURN THE ORANGE FLOWERS HE LEFT ME AND SPREAD THE ASHES ON MYSELF.  
PIXELS WILL NEVER REPLACE FLESH.*

11 there, broken up by money, wouldn't it? The big businesses, because where there's money, there's no life. It's just an ambition to possess, but that's not life, it's not happiness, it's wrong in that respect.

Money is inert. If there's no life, it's quite clear what's going to happen. Why so much? What's the point of so much accumulation? What's an 80,000-dollar car for? Why can't that money be used to maintain the forests instead? Because that's life. Man's intelligence is being used on spending, on destroying the world, not on constructing. Because if it were used to construct, he would sooner be helping to strengthen nature. That is our cause, the one we're marching for here.

We are sure we are going to be able to achieve our objective, because we're not doing it for ourselves. This isn't political. We're not playing politics, but defending a right of everyone's, of all South America, of the whole world. The lung of the world: we want to recover that. This march is for everyone, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, so that they will have the same right as we have had, to know and live under a tree, to breathe pure air, to rest beneath a tree. That is the greatest happiness we can have, that is life. What use is it for those people to have masses of money when they don't sleep easy? That is being sick in the mind. When you die, what do you take with you? Not even your memories, because you die and everything's forgotten.

From the ashes of the Amazon, I leapt to the fires of Chile in October 2019. That's how it is in South America, you jump from one conflict to another.

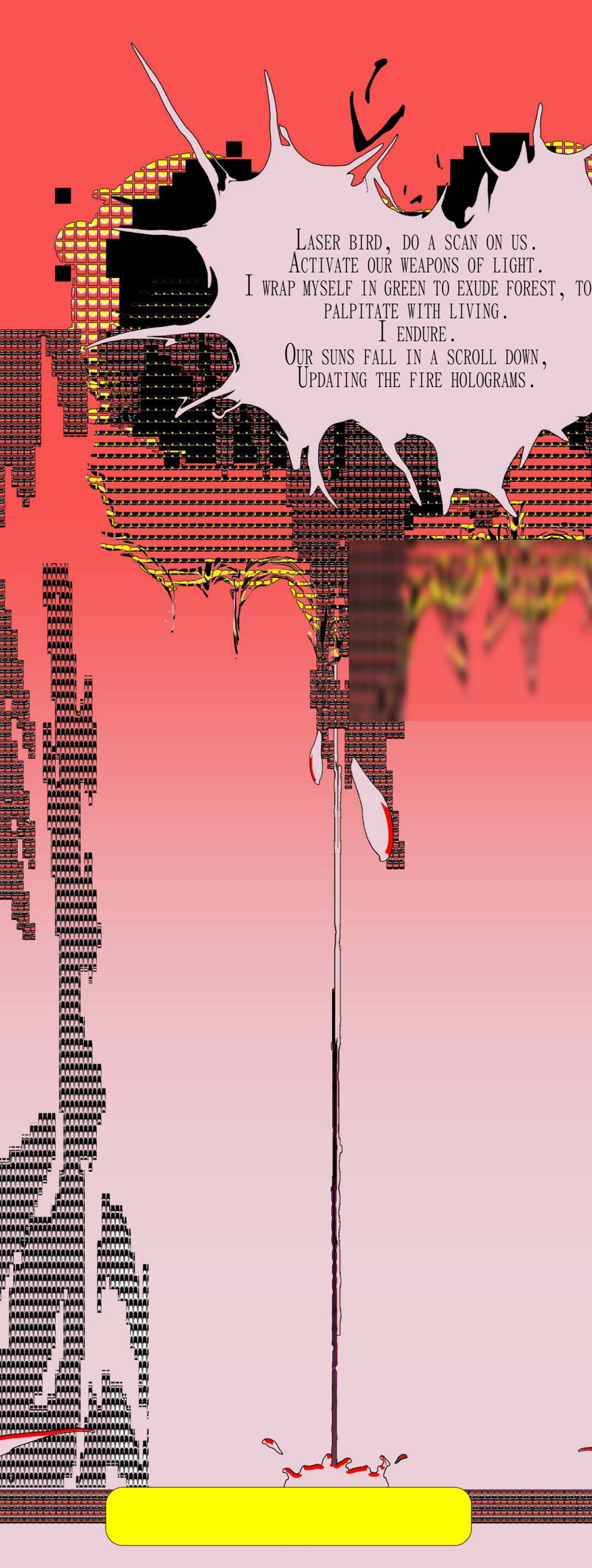
# GUARDIANS OF THE VISION



“WHO PRAYS FOR YOU?” ASKED LA MACHI.  
SO THAT THE BULLETS WILL JUST GRAZE YOU, TO BE INVISIBLE, SO  
THAT THEY WILL ALTER THEIR COURSE,  
TO PRESERVE YOUR EYES, YOUR SIGHT.

01 On 18 October, a spark from the flames set fire to Santiago de Chile. The rise of 30 pesos in the city’s public transport fares unleashed protests all over the country. The neoliberal system implanted during the military dictatorship had left most of the population seriously unprotected. Citizens worn down by social inequality, debts owing to the high cost of living, expensive medicines, exorbitant health care, minute pensions, a lack of access to quality education and the privatisation of nearly all the water in the country were just some of the reasons for the start of the social outburst.

02 The citizens’ demands for a decent life were repressed by the forces of public order. According to the official figures given in the latest report of the INDH (National Institute for Human Rights), there were 31 deaths, 3,765 people injured (including 288 minors) and 2,888 accusations of sexual violence, torture and use of excess force by the police and military during the social demonstrations from October 2019 to March 2020. Of those injured, 460 people were struck in an eyeball, some with total loss of vision owing to popping of the eyes caused by bullets, pellets and tear gas fired directly at the faces of the demonstrators. 2 people lost both eyes.



LASER BIRD, DO A SCAN ON US.  
ACTIVATE OUR WEAPONS OF LIGHT.  
I WRAP MYSELF IN GREEN TO EXUDE FOREST, TO  
PALPITATE WITH LIVING.  
I ENDURE.  
OUR SUNS FALL IN A SCROLL DOWN,  
UPDATING THE FIRE HOLOGRAMS.

03 In Andean cosmology, the future is behind us and is not visible to the eyes. We look forward, towards the known. In the neoliberal cosmology, the eyes are the price to pay for a decent future. What else will we have to give up as we move further into this world of *superproductivity*? These lost eyes are the sacrifice for those who will come after us.

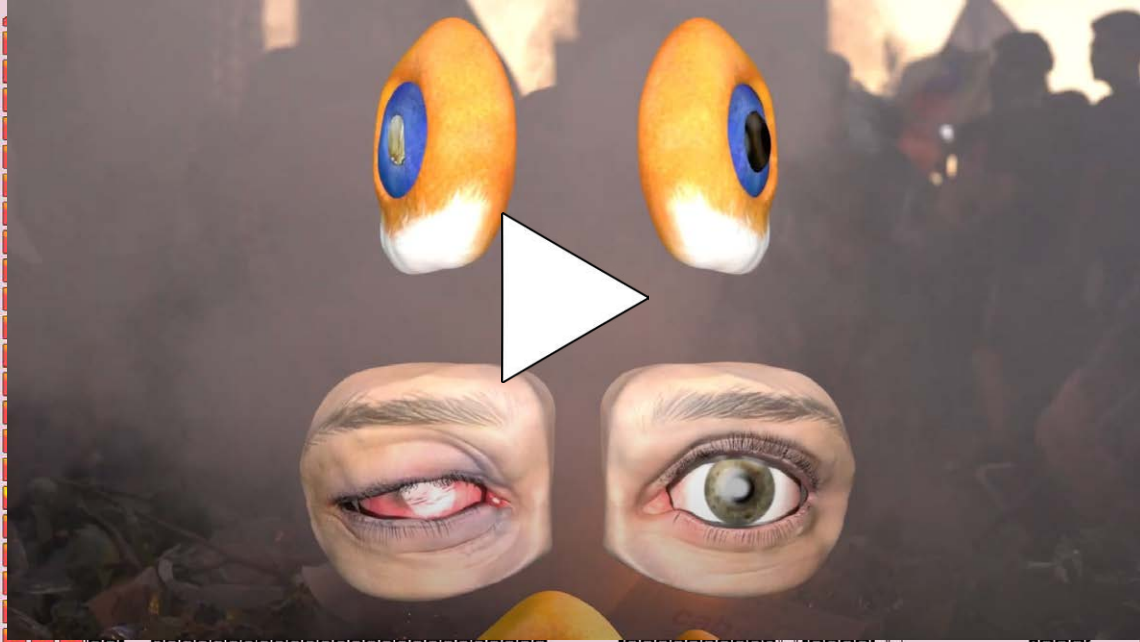
Toc-toc, toc-toc-toc. The pots and pans clamour to the same rhythm, all connecting together. The city rings from the windows of citizens shut up under curfew.  
*Toc-toc, toc-toc-toc.*

In the context of the protests, I've heard the buzzing of police drones spying on activists. *Dzzzdzzzdzzzz, dzzzdzzzdzzzz.* I've seen those unmanned craft with my own eyes flying down into the inner courtyards of buildings, looking for faces, spying on assemblies, hovering over the protests, filming and indexing guilty parties through its pixelated vision. *Dzzzdzzzdzzzz.*

I define a drone as an "astral extension" of a human being that allows them to move across the world above. A flying eye. A vigilant eye. An eye suspended in the air.

At the end of November 2019, protesters in Santiago's Plaza de la Dignidad joined forces and brought down a drone with a "light attack". Using the blinding potential of laser pointers, they spontaneously brought all their light beams together, and all aiming at the spy drone at the same time, they shot it down. The social struggle was transferred to the air, using the transparency of light as a weapon.

*I raise my eyes towards the sky full of green lights pointing at the drone. I feel the presence of the toucan flying around it in circles as it falls. I ask these blind birds to activate my vision of the invisible.* An era of police astral flights is dawning. Their visions, enhanced. The drone, the watchful eye of this era, is destined to be brought down by the collective.



04 One of those days I went to the seminar “Challenges of the transition to a new civilisation”, where a talk was being given by the philosopher Gastón Soublette. He stressed that the social outburst managed to attract the attention of the international press, which described Chile as a country with the world’s most scandalous social inequalities given the reigning economic and technological order, whose pillars are the accumulation of capital and competition. In the midst of this social crisis, he mentioned that the government has proposed only mitigating measures, hoping in this way to content a population “whose privations keep it near the edge of the bearable.”

After his account of how the capitalist system fails to work for us because it disarticulates planetary life, he spoke of how life is making room for itself through the emergence of a new paradigm that is arriving to shatter the one we currently inhabit. *Bit by bit.*

At the end of the talk, one of those present explained the theory of ascending energy at the planetary level, where solar storms are radiated by the Sun towards the Earth producing earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and revolutions. He remarked that we are in a process of planetary ignition where all we have to do is make ourselves available for inflammation by these new energies, which will give us the necessary information to undertake the new transit.

*SOLAR STORM,  
BURN MY CODES, SO THEY WILL OPEN AND KNOW WHERE TO GO!  
WE CAN'T GO ON AS WE ARE.*



05 The Alt-right, the far right in the United States, also proclaim a change of paradigm and a new order. *But that's another story, another future that we have nothing to do with here.* The capitalist system is so well designed that with or without a revolution, with or without a virus, it makes sure it's always the same ones who win. Mining was the only economic sector that showed a growth in shares in regional exports during the social outburst. Who can have bought shares in extraction of resources? Now, during the pandemic, the Big-Tech companies like Amazon, Facebook, Microsoft and Netflix have considerably increased their fortunes.

06 At this time, in the United States, other eyes are being injured in the rioting that has followed the death of George Floyd. While here we have a social outburst, there they have their racial outburst. As Gastón Soublette said, this is a universal protest.

In the middle of the chaotic months of the social outburst, I sent an email to a friend in Lima. I copy it out here so as not to lose the immediacy of the narrative:

Dear Violeta,

I'm writing to you from the revolution. I'm excited to be writing this. Frightened too. Revolution in Chile! At what minute? Two and a half months ago I read an interview with Cecilia Vicuña in the newspaper The Clinic. She described a very common situation in Chile, and I wanted to weep for the soulless country I inhabited. I felt defeated. It was like reading the death sentence we had all already accepted in silence:

"What things make you think of the horror we inhabit every day? When you get on a Chilean bus, what's on that bus are not exactly human beings. They're atrophied beings, abused beings, beings swollen up by poisonous food, desperate beings who have already thrown in the towel, and all or nearly all are half drugged or asleep. That wasn't so before, because now people are forced to work like slaves for abusive wages. And all to achieve something impossible: well-being. And so it's like living a great lie, and that lie generates hatred, rage, anger, indifference and self-destruction." Those were Cecilia's comments.

Days later, the social unrest exploded. It is as though Cecilia's words had silently reached everyone's hearts, which had refused to continue to embody them. The impossible happened! Chile awoke, as the hashtag says: #chiledespertó. And although changing the laws will be slow, we are changing fast. Now nothing will be the same. We shall remain alert to the thousands of micro-decisions we take each day.

Last Tuesday, we went out to stick up posters for the publisher Mercvria in the streets of Zona Cero. As we wandered through Santiago, we passed by the Dignity Camp and saw people singing, we heard policemen shout at them and throw small traders and migrants off the Plaza de Armas with the aid of their biotechnologies (dogs). We choreographed with Las Tesis at the Museum of Memory and Human Rights, and then we marched on to La Alameda, stopping the traffic. Anto held me by the arm. We undulated down La Alameda with a sea of women. When we passed San Juan de Dios Hospital, patients waved white sheets out of the windows as a gesture of support.

We passed by a restaurant that displayed three reproductions of Peruvian pre-Columbian sculptures in its windows, which were scrawled with graffiti reading: "Seats for original peoples" (in reference to the new constitution we hope to have). They were watched over by a very young guard who looked amiably at us.

During that afternoon, we crossed paths twice with a procession of people walking in silence through the centre of the city. The woman leading the group carried a cardboard placard painted with an injured eye.

In Santiago, every image of eyes in a public area has been spontaneously intervened, with no prior organisation. Statues, monuments and advertisements have been sprayed with red graffiti. All of them. It is as if the sorrow for the lost and bleeding eyes had updated a download to the public arena. Santiago looks like a fictional city, the *nightmare of vision*. People take charge of the sculptures nearest home. I am looking after one of them. I paint its eyes red every time the municipal authorities cover them up with grey.

The revolution is brutal. Terribly brutal. Horribly brutal. Did you know that a man-child, Gustavo, a 21-year-old psychology student, lost both his eyes? The police shot at him as he was taking photos of the protest.



A good friend of mine is an ophthalmologist who works in one of the clinics near the demonstrations. It fell to him to treat Gustavo and inform his parents that he had lost his eyesight completely. After treating hundreds of lost eyes, these months have pierced him to the soul. Here I'll share with you what he told me today:

More than ever before, I find I cannot move from here 🙏, because I have to be a healer of eyes 🙏🙏🙏, but also of souls 🙏🙏.

It is intense living 🌟, the energy you feel towards the centre of social demonstration is a dense one 🙏.

Some cases of popped eyeballs from the front line that I have dealt with, have made me clearly aware of their commitment to a cause they regard from their souls as a just one 🙏. Although they've lost their eyes, they understand there are other ways to see 👁️ that are developed with the other senses or with the visual aid of today's technologies 🙏🙏🙏. They feel they're at peace. That is very impressive to hear, especially from the ones who have suffered total loss of eyesight 🙏. Their love ones -parents, partners- regard this a loss that incapacitates for life 🙏. They're the ones who have to be "contained" so as to overcome the "loss" of the other's sight and accept that life is possible in a different way 👁️👁️, since the essence 🙏, the invariable and permanent constituent of their nature, is

to see 👁️ that are developed with the other senses or with the visual aid of today's technologies 🙏🙏🙏. They feel they're at peace. That is very impressive to hear, especially from the ones who have suffered total loss of eyesight 🙏. Their love ones -parents, partners- regard this a loss that incapacitates for life 🙏. They're the ones who have to be "contained" so as to overcome the "loss" of the other's sight and accept that life is possible in a different way 👁️👁️, since the essence 🙏, the invariable and permanent constituent of their nature, is maintained 🙏🙏🙏.

The essence is invisible to human eyes 🙏. It's an idea from Saint-Exupéry that can be applied to the fact that the human eye 👁️ is capable of seeing only certain very limited range of the light spectrum. We are so absorbed in what we have been taught about the importance of the tangible, the visible and the beautiful that we have yet to develop the other vision 👁️👁️, that one that matters, the one which will enable us to live out a future. 🙏🙏🙏

It is vision that will permit dialogue when we find an alternative to the

us to live out a future. 🙏🙏🙏

It is vision that will permit dialogue when we find an alternative to the binary order, not only in politics but also in education, in health, in life 🙏. If we do not learn this soon, there will be no future for anyone 🙏. We must help so that everything returns to its course 🙏. We need to act collaboratively and to be networked 🙏, just like the axons in our retina, which are what allows us to see. In that way, we will live on a higher frequency and be able to function more calmly 🙏. The attitude is one of not fighting, not assaulting, not destroying 🙏.

Activating new paradigms of vision 👁️ implies accepting that we have to find a common goal, not an individual one, founded on collaboration and support networks, so that changes can be brought about from within our small circles. 🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏

We must activate that third eye, 👁️👁️ that kind and intuitive vision which sees all that has happened as necessary 🙏.

Whenever I think of the people who lost their physical vision, a shudder runs through my body. Although it's a personal trauma, it's also a national one. Who is going to take charge of remodelling their lives? The State, obviously not. They are emotionally contained by the people, the ones who are unable to make ends meet. A civic campaign raises funds for those who suffered eye damage under the slogan "Those who lost much more than us". The citizens organised a website that receives donations from common and ordinary people, in case you'd like to contribute.

I don't exactly know what the things are that have changed place. I go back again and again over the experiences I've lived through these months. In traversing them, they've been impregnated in my spirit to change it forever.

I think of your son Leos, and I'm glad that by living in Spain and Peru, he can inhabit different worlds. I wish that experience would give him wisdom, understanding, flexibility, humility. We need mediators, bridges, humans who can integrate the cosmologies of both near and far. Good for him, still a child, impregnating himself with the Peruvian holograms that are full of life and connection, and at the same time of precariousness.

My friend Rafael from Venezuela, who I met in the sanctuary for animals affected by the fires in Bolivian Chiquitania, migrated to Lima with his family a week ago. They're grown up. He told me he'd found a job, heavy labour. It's what there is. My heart aches to think of it, with his tired body and his tireless positivism, he'll earn 140 dollars to sustain his family. I wish you could help him, reach out to him, visit him and converse. That's how we carry on, by helping one another. By conversing with each other. I can send you his WhatsApp.

Leaving you with a hug,  
Patri

AND IN THOSE MONTHS I SAW A BLIND DRONE, A BLIND DOG, A BLIND OWL, A BLIND TOUCAN AND A BLIND HUMAN.



# AT THE TRENCHES OF TESTICLES

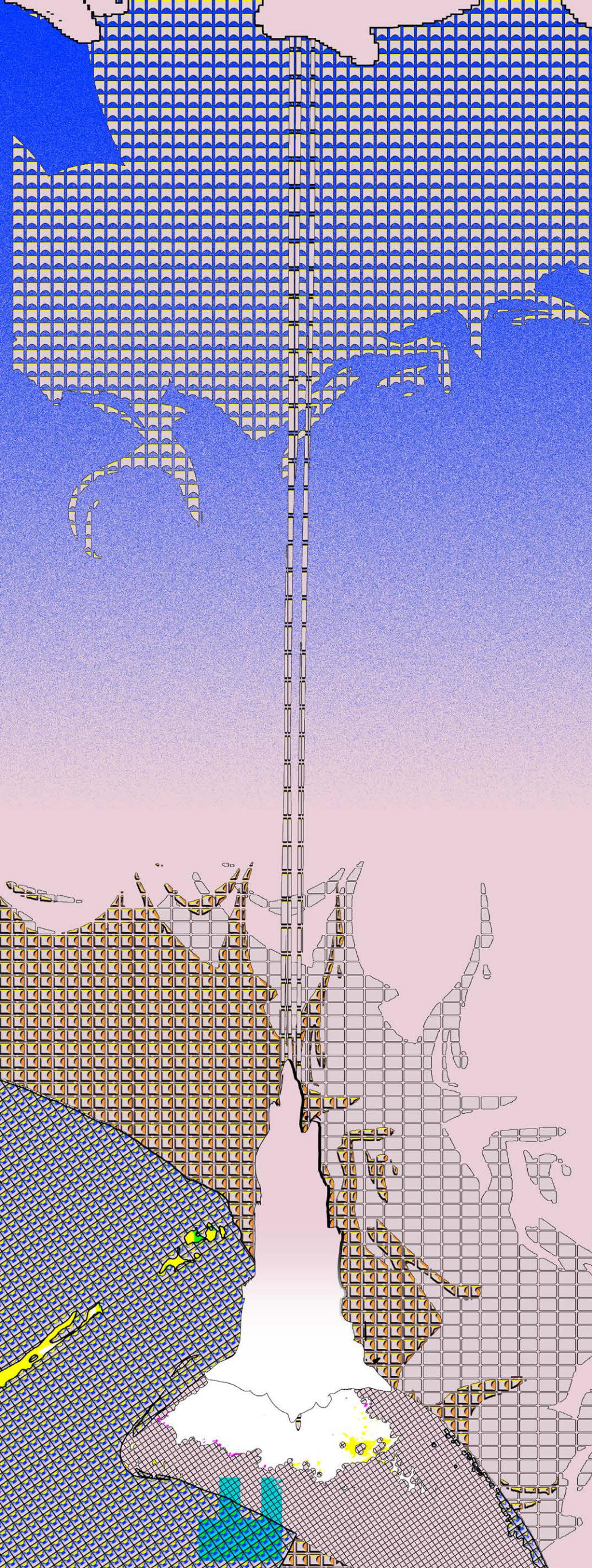


01 With eyes watering from the tear gas, we managed to reach the GAM. In January 2020, in the midst of the social outburst, I took part in a discussion with Rodrigo Mundaca, the national spokesman of MODATIMA, the “Movement for the Defence of Access to Water, Land and the Protection of the Environment”. Rodrigo heads the list of Chile’s threatened activists. He is one of the guardians of the few waters that remain free of privatisation. In Chile, we are suffering a *megadrought* that has been worsened by the hoarding of fresh water for industrial agriculture. The last few years have historically been the driest since rainfall records began.

As I sat by Rodrigo’s side, I imagined him with Darwin. One shone blue and the other green. *They are shining guardians of his dry, dusty, ransacked, hot, suffocating lands.*

In Chile there’s speculation with water. It is the only country in the world whose waters are almost completely privatised. “Although water is defined as a national asset for public use, Article 19 Clause 24 of the Constitution and the Code of Waters, both drawn up by the civil and military dictatorship in the 80s, permit the Chilean State to transfer its water rights to private parties with no time limit or restrictions on forms or priorities of use,” says the Heinrich Böll Foundation.





02 Water is trafficked on the market as “exploitation rights”, which are acquired free and in perpetuity, and can then be rented or sold. This has led to the concentration of water rights in the hands of the giant mining, forestry and agricultural industries, especially the fruit exporters. The ownership of the water was separated off from dominion over the land, so that there are owners of water who have no land and owners of land who have no water. In the meantime, access to water for basic consumption is not constitutionally guaranteed. The Suez group (France), Aguas de Barcelona (France), Marubeni (Japan) and the administrators of the pension funds of the teachers of Ontario (Canada) control 90% of the country’s supply of drinking water. *What’s required is an apocalyptic alchemy!*

Rodrigo related his experience of living in the lands of the Province of Petorca, in the Fifth Region of Chile. Declared a zone with a scarcity of hydric resources, it has been suffering for years from violations of the human right to water. Petorca is one of Chile’s main producers of *paltas* (avocados), which are mainly exported to Europe, the United States and China. They have been called “green gold” on the international market owing to the high prices they fetch. The hoarding in private hands of the waters of that basin in order to irrigate avocados and other citrus trees has left the rural inhabitants of the region sunk in a humanitarian crisis. *Green gold and crystalline gold are the treasures of the lands inhabited by Rodrigo and his community.*

For more than 10 years, the government has been supplying the community of Petorca by using tankers to distribute drinking water. There is water in the region, but it has all been bought or illegally extracted for agriculture. The avocados are fed their drink while the rural communities around the plantations are left with no drinking water. The people wait week after week for the truck sent by the municipality, which counts off the litres “by head”. They do not have enough water to drink, cook, shower, water their plants or give to their animals. Now that we are in the middle of the pandemic, that global plague which has come to give us a good shake, the community of Petorca does not even have enough water to wash its hands. *Inequality floats in the air, like a virus.* Some say they don’t even have enough water to make tears.

*ALTHOUGH THEY DO WEEP THEIR DRY SOBS,  
QUANTUM TEARS UNITE US.  
WE ARE CROSSED BY A SEA  
OF INVISIBLE LAMENTS.*

03 Last week I travelled through the area near Petorca, which forms part of the region I live in. There, the water goes against its natural channels. Instead of flowing down from the hills to the valley, it is brought up to irrigate the avocados that decorate the hillsides in green rows. They were planted there to protect them from frosts. *Those hills do shine green! I don't even have to imagine them.*

The waters that descend towards those lands, the Petorca River and the Ligua River, only manage to flow for a few kilometres before they are intercepted by huge reservoirs, leaving the whole valley downstream dry. The bridges stand like apocalyptic reminders of when they served some purpose. Now the water flows only through the subterranean water tables. *Above* the waters are accumulated for irrigation and profit. *Below*, only drops remain.



04 Everything is so dry and hard that even some avocado trees have dried up. Not the ones belonging to the firms, but those of small farmers who have had to let years of work dry out in front of their eyes. While I was travelling through those lands, I could feel the avocados sucking up all the water in the region and turning it into money.

“This is my cow,” said Valentina, referring to one of the skeletons sprawling in the courtyard of her house. “That’s my horse,” she said pointing to another pile of bones. *A field of waste is where she lives. Like Mad Max.* They had to let the animals die of hunger and thirst.

The river has disappeared, and life with it. *The river comes with the water, it doesn't come on its own.* Now the government has people surviving on the minimum of water, 20 litres per day, a much lower figure than the 100 litres a day suggested by the WHO as the basic consumption per person. The filial relationship between water and humans has been cut off and replaced with dependence on the tutelage of the government. *From Mother Gaia to Father State.*

“This isn't just a drought, it's pillage.” Look towards the hills. The avocado plantations are all green, while everything outside their limits is dry



05 and dusty. If it were a drought, everything would be dry! While we count the drops to wash our bodies limb by limb, we are surrounded by gigantic fresh water tanks that contain drinking water for irrigation. My three wells have gone dry. The big businesses use the subterranean water. If we dug a hole in the ground, we wouldn't find any water because there isn't any. *It hurts. It hurts.* This guardian of the water says to me.

The cultural identity of the Petorca Valley has changed owing to the environmental and human crisis. The rock paintings that decorated the stones of the valley have mutated into the urban graffiti clamouring for the liberation of the territory's water. *The singers to the divine*, who once sang in praise of the stars, now sing to the drought and the peasants' anguish.

Rodrigo and his community have organised themselves under MODATIMA. They have been victims of repression, and have appeared before courts and received death threats. Rodrigo won the International Prize for Human Rights in Nuremberg in 2019, an award he tried to use to gain visibility and a certain protection against the threats he has received. The companies have criminalised them so as not to have to hold serious conversations with the communities. "Although recent investigations clearly show that the illegal extraction of water in the context of avocado production for export is a continual problem in the Province of Petorca, Rodrigo was sentenced in November 2014 to 61 days in prison for supposed calumny. The sentence was later commuted to having to sign on every month at the police station (November 2014 to November 2015), and the fine was paid in one peso coins through the "Take a weight (*peso*) off yourself" campaign. Rodrigo told me emotionally how he had received bottles full of one peso coins from all parts of Chile, which he had used to pay his bail. The strength and conviction of Rodrigo's talk at the GAM ran through me like an electric wave as he delivered his holograms to the public and charged them with force. My radicalisation stepped up several levels after hearing him and feeling him release his *blue information*.

In the middle of the talk, Rodrigo paused for a drink of water.

*I felt the water enter his body, speak to him, through it.  
I felt my own saliva. The well where my ancestors live.*

A kilo of avocados is more important than the lives of the simplest people in our country, Rodrigo went on. It's no longer a mere environmental issue but one of open discrimination against people who have to bear disproportionate levels of extraction, far bigger than in the rest of the country, solely because they live in forgotten places, they are poorer, and they have fewer networks of political influence. In the words of Paola Bolados, an academic member of MODATIMA, "it looks as though extractivism clashes in this case with a democratic limit."



*AND THAT'S THE WAY WE LIVE IN CHILE.  
ON THE LIMITS OF THE DEMOCRATIC.*

*WILL THE GOVERNMENT BE ABLE TO HAVE CLOUDS  
SOWN SO THAT ARTIFICIAL RAIN WILL FILL UP  
OUR DRY WELLS?*

*WILL WE BE ABLE TO ASK THE DRONES TO POINT AT  
THE AVOCADO TREES ONE BY ONE  
WITH THEIR LASER POINTERS AND MAKE THEM  
EXPLODE, TO BLOW HOLES IN THE IRRIGATION TANKS  
TO FREE THE WATERS?*

*AND WHAT HAPPENS IF THE DRONES MAKE IT RAIN  
AND LIGHTNING SETS FIRE TO MY TEMPLE?*

*WILL WE BE ABLE TO GATHER UP THE DRY TEARS  
ONE BY ONE?*

*DRONE'S TEARS, IRRIGATE OUR LANDS!  
IF THEY HAVE NO TEARS,  
THEN WE ASK FOR DRONE'S PEE.*

06 The Chilean word for avocado, *palta*, comes from the Quechua *pallta*, which means a bundle that is slung for carrying. The word *aguacate*, used in Mexico and Spain for the same plant, comes from Nahuatl. It is a combination of *ahuacatl*, which means testicle, and *ahuatl*, which refers to a tree. In other words, *ahuacacuahuitl*, or "the tree of the hanging testicles". A male tree. Sexy. Creamy. Fleshy. *Its semen is produced with the sacred waters. It drinks and drinks, thirstily, sucking up water drawn from a depth of over 100 metres so that its offspring can drink too.*

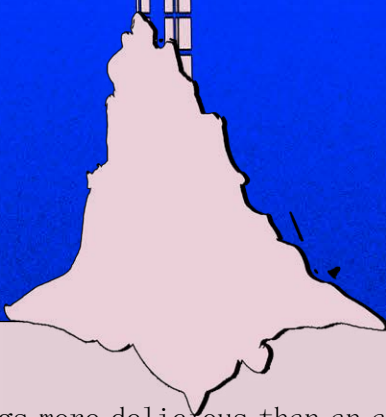
While I investigate the word *aguacate*, Google offers me recipes for cosmetic face masks.

*Masks of privilege. Face paint for the wars of the green gold. Nearly all the models who pose with the masks have one eye shut and replaced with an avocado stone. I can't help seeing blind eyes. When a symbol is resignified, it is no longer possible to look as before. I see blind eyes everywhere.*

07 There are few things more delicious than an avocado. It's a superfood. Its stone is a seed containing 70% of the amino acids of the fruit. It can be eaten toasted, grated or ground. When drunk in tea, it reduces inflammation. *Ah! Reduced inflammation, that's what nearly all of us who share this world need: to be decanted, to be drained.*

Rodrigo paused one last time for a drink of water.

At the end of the discussion, I take leave of him. I scan him with my inner vision. He is blue. *Rodrigo does not come on his own, he comes with the water.* He comes with the liquid spirit of the amniotic fluids that form us and connect us from the watery centre of each of our cells. His integrity has accompanied me ever since.





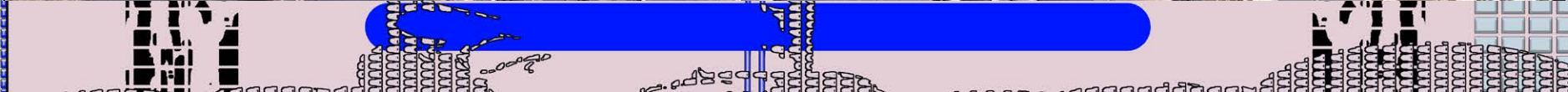
CONVERSATION BETWEEN RODRIGO MUNDACA AND ALEX VICENTE.  
AUGUST, 2020.



Alex Vicente



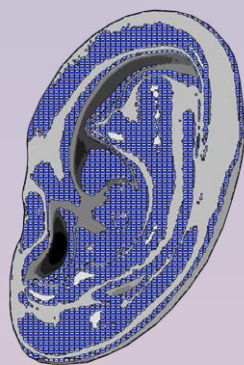
Rodrigo Mundaca



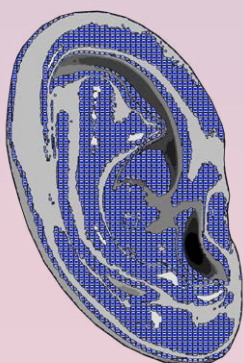
# I ADVANCE INTO THE DEEP WELL OF THE WATERS

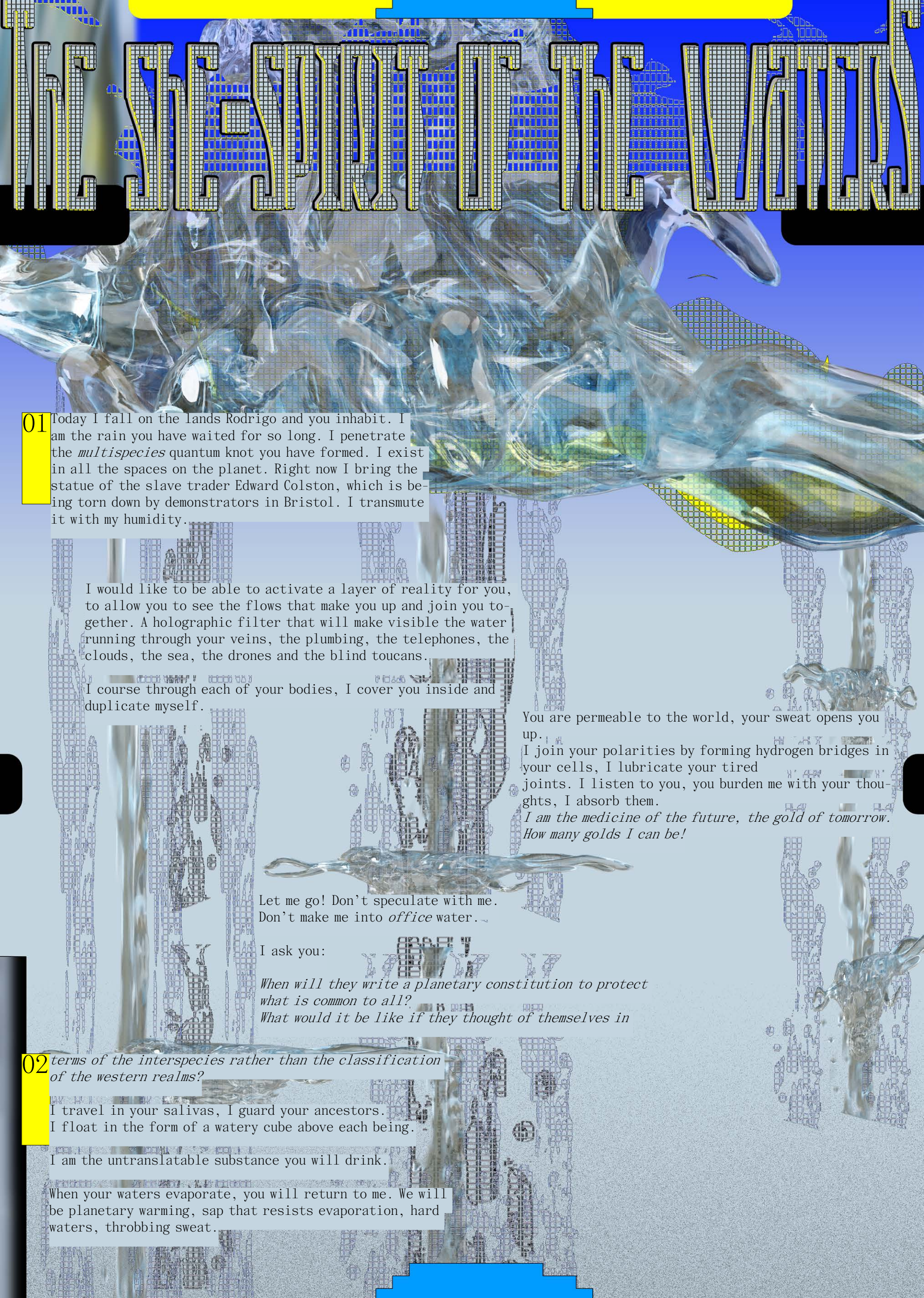
MEDITATIONS BY FRECUENCIA LICÁN  
CONCÓN, JULY 2020.

WATER SPIRIT



SOUTH AMERICAN STATE OF MIND





# THE SPIRIT OF THE WATERS

01 Today I fall on the lands Rodrigo and you inhabit. I am the rain you have waited for so long. I penetrate the *multispecies* quantum knot you have formed. I exist in all the spaces on the planet. Right now I bring the statue of the slave trader Edward Colston, which is being torn down by demonstrators in Bristol. I transmute it with my humidity.

I would like to be able to activate a layer of reality for you, to allow you to see the flows that make you up and join you together. A holographic filter that will make visible the water running through your veins, the plumbing, the telephones, the clouds, the sea, the drones and the blind toucans.

I course through each of your bodies, I cover you inside and duplicate myself.

You are permeable to the world, your sweat opens you up.

I join your polarities by forming hydrogen bridges in your cells, I lubricate your tired joints. I listen to you, you burden me with your thoughts, I absorb them.

*I am the medicine of the future, the gold of tomorrow. How many golds I can be!*

Let me go! Don't speculate with me. Don't make me into *office* water.

I ask you:

*When will they write a planetary constitution to protect what is common to all?*

*What would it be like if they thought of themselves in*

02 *terms of the interspecies rather than the classification of the western realms?*

I travel in your salivas, I guard your ancestors. I float in the form of a watery cube above each being.

I am the untranslatable substance you will drink.

When your waters evaporate, you will return to me. We will be planetary warming, sap that resists evaporation, hard waters, throbbing sweat.



03 There will be thirst, drought and tsunami.

*Come, we will be.*



*I PLUNGE INTO THE DEEPEST WELL TO RETHINK MYSELF. I GREET OUR CENTRES OF WATER, THE LIQUIDS THAT DO A SCROLL DOWN THROUGH OUR BODIES. I HONOUR OUR WATERS IN ALL THE SACRED DIRECTIONS.*

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