



**Moonfuture**  
Migration, Images, and the Geological Interior

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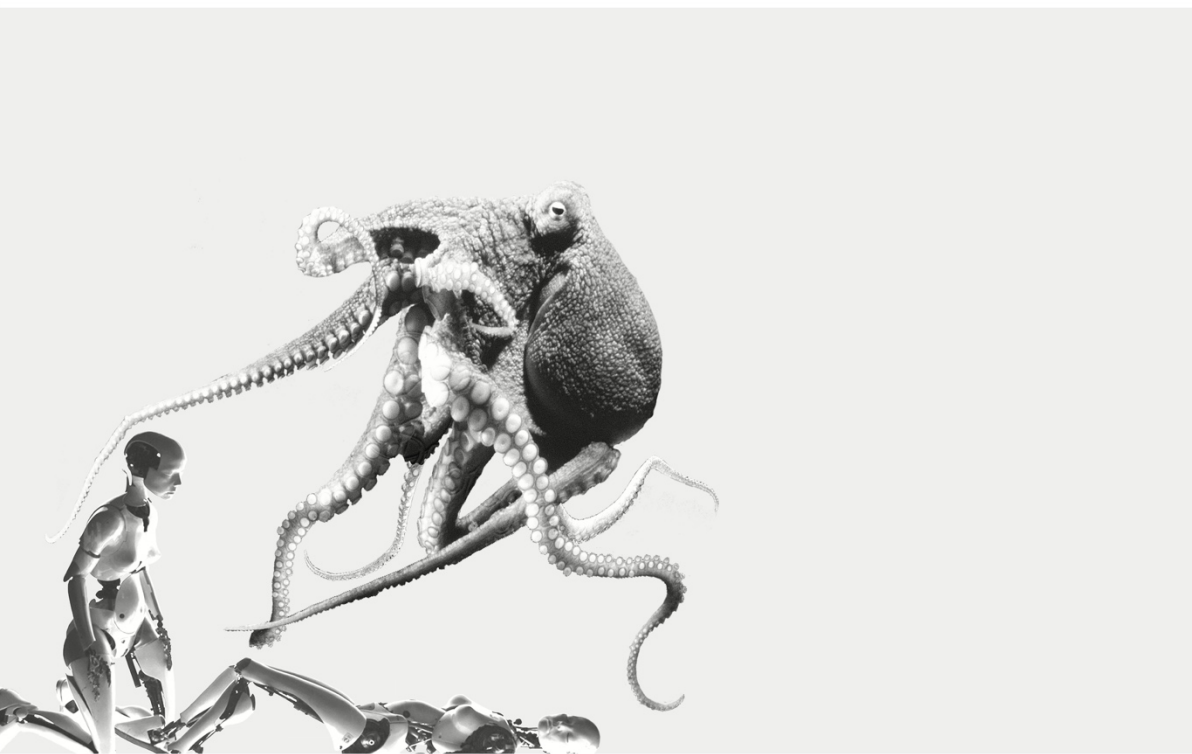


Figure 1

## Abstract

Written loosely from the non-human perspective of a white-spotted octopus, “Moonfuture” is a visual-research essay and fictional story that explores the spatial implications of human actions. The story touches on Extractivism and society’s addiction to images. The reader travels to real and invented spaces built from images that form six thematic collages focused on time, intelligence, mobility, image, technology, and nature, collectively titled *Storied Spaces*.

For each collage in *Storied Spaces*, a two-image composition values precision in visual narration and the incomplete as a form of inclusivity. The collages are framed in a gray space where the images coexist, and they can take off and land. It functions like a portal or airport for the images. This notion situates the images directly in relation to Hito Steyerl’s ideas on images as circulatory networks of energy and matter. Images are powerful, they possess an ability to travel and influence people, environments, and socio-political systems. Steyerl remarks, “around 1989, television images started walking through screens, right into reality.”<sup>1</sup> Comparably, the images in *Storied Spaces* have amassed agency and transformed. They are the characters in this story.

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<sup>1</sup> Hito Steyerl, “Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?” *e-flux journal* no. 49 (November 2013)

The story is structured in three sections imagined as portals: Migration, Images, and Geological Interior. In each of the three sections, a transformation of a space occurs at a moment in time and of scale that is framed in a situation and spatial type. The approach relies on the notion of the “transscalar” to overlap and destabilize boundaries. The project is a performance, an interplay between image and text. It explores the spatial qualities of writing, driven by the specificity and intimate reading of each collage. This mode of practice is informed by the work of Jane Rendell, *Site Writing*. A work that is site specific, speculative and spatial, what Rendell calls a “situated practice.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jane Rendell, “*Site-Writing*, *The Architecture of Art Criticism*,” I.B. Tauris & Co (2010)

“...it’s just begun. Six billion acres  
under time, under stress and stretches

of content. Reserved for a duration.  
Blue-green grid of constant revolution.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Susan Barba, *Geode*, “Exhibit 1,” Black Sparrow Press, 2020

## Migration

The dust cloud from the diamond wire saws had cleared by the time the androids and I reach the base of the quarry. Above us, the night sky looks alive in a deep iridescent blue. The vastness of the quarry is extraordinary, a surreal spatial blend of natural and synthetic. Carved from the Apuan Alps, tons of rock are mined daily and circulated to faraway places. The economic rise of the global marble trade filled quarries with cranes and crawlers that cut and displace the petrified rock from its geological root. Like a multistoried stepwell, machines of different kinds and sizes litter and sculpt the geological interior. The moonlit marble walls are milky and luminous. A chill has set in the basin but we feel the warmth of the sun lingering on the rock. We lay flat on the dusty rock. I realize that those simple moments of togetherness mean the most to me, with the androids and this place. It's been a difficult journey. We are nearly there.

I met Ýrr and Saga in the 1990s, when they were developed for the music video accompanying Björk's song "All is Full of Love." Love can be found everywhere in everything—you need to look. "It's all around you" Björk sings as sultry androids with shadowy machinery come to life. The androids have since advanced, resisted biases, and are now autonomous beings. "See, we are as real as you are," they remind me often. They have developed into tall botanic beings, orchid-like and less machinic, with incredibly acute senses and an

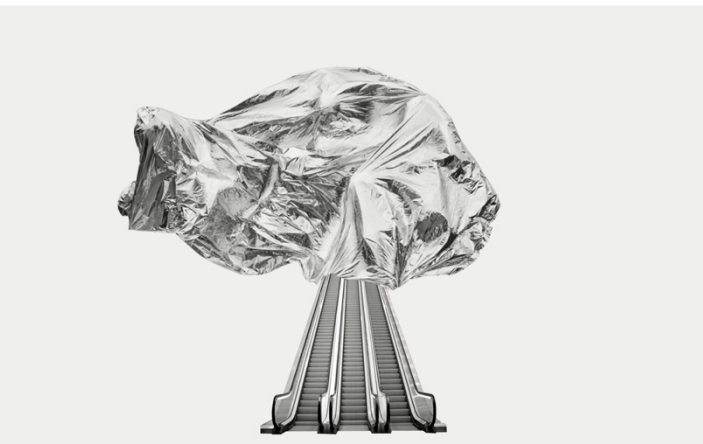


Figure 2

intellect distinct from humans. Their bodies, less white than when we first met, are succulent and agile, and they have round caramel eyes. Beat from the day, I drift. My body twitches and the color of my skin fades. In harmony we softly chant, “You’ll be given love / You’ll be taken care of / You’ll be given love / You have to trust it / Maybe not from the sources / You have poured yours / Maybe not from the directions / You are staring at / Twist your head around / It’s all around you / All is full of love.”<sup>4</sup> I look out toward the rocky valley longing for deeper kinds of kinship. A new world to come.

Go to the three escalators, they said. There, you will need to wait for the moon to arrive. We leave the quarry in the morning and head to the footpath at the base of the valley. There are over 300 marble quarries in this mountain range. The destructive nature of mining is clear. Making our way through the deep gorge toward the western sea, we travel for days. Rills of marble slurry cross our path trickling down to the streams. When we are weary, we help each other and rest. On a windy, sunswept mesa, the three tall machines stand ceremoniously in coordinated motion, archetypes of industrial progress. Steel parts are bent and scattered like grand sacred figures dotting the field of wildflowers. A building once stood here. Its absence is strongly felt. The machines are part of this world, placed in transit systems, airports, skyscrapers, malls, parking lots, stadiums, theme parks, hotels, and apartment buildings.

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<sup>4</sup> Björk, “All is Full of Love” song lyrics, Homogenic, 1997

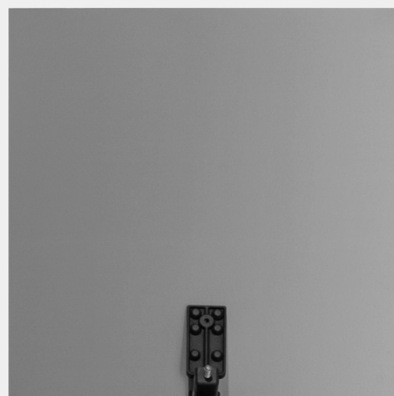
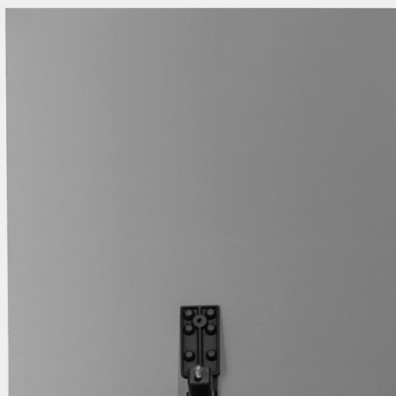
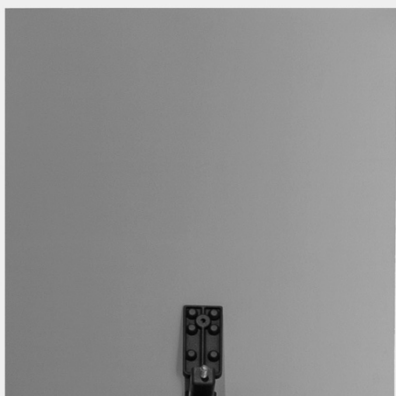
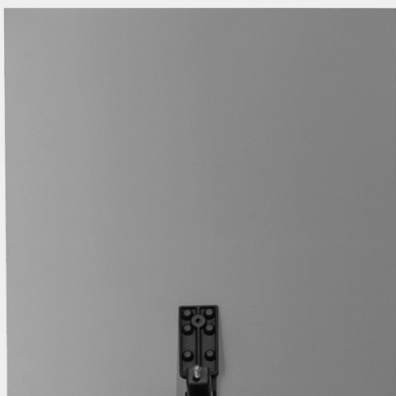
Metal motor-driven relics once invented to move masses of people quickly and vertically. “Soon it will be here,” Saga shares. “Did you know that the machines will automatically start when they sense the moon?”

A long shadow crosses the field and the figures. A bold golden object hovers broadly above us in the sky. Strong prevailing winds affect the billowing membrane in a steady rhythm, like it’s breathing. Its reflective foil surface captures and distorts the light, deflecting light rays across the land shadow. From the first balloon voyage in humanity’s conquest of the skies to the sky as a space of refuge. I sense the force of its pull. Slowly, the escalators take us up and a pre-recorded announcement describes the object we are approaching as “sutured” from thermal space blankets. The blankets were given to refugees after their arrival from the Turkish coast to Skala Sykaminia, a village on the Greek island of Lesbos. Traces of people violently forced by other humans from their homes and land. I look down at the ground as I move off the escalators and take note of the altitude. All things that could have left by now have done so. Only parts of the planet are habitable.

There is a noticeable difference in air pressure when we pass through the shimmery surfaces. Despite the human acts that mark the planet, inside there is an immediate sense of goodwill. We depart from the three machines on orbit around Earth. We were told stories of a hollow vessel wired as a symbiotic bioreactor, an airborne biome for non-human life. And how its gold-foiled surfaces nurture a warm and humid atmosphere inside. The environment is effervescent and generative, like three-dimensional point clouds. Beneath us

are bright rose-colored microorganisms, the sprawling ground is sloped and moss-covered, with minty foam hills and welcoming us. At a distance, I can see a gathering of imaginary beings near a flicker switch. Engineered to preserve and cultivate alterity, matter inside the vessel is affective and immeasurable, partly material and immaterial. Things seem to acquire a multitude of positions in space. The space between things yields infectious variants. I am here and there and there at once; I am distorted across multitudes yet sense a synergy amid bodies. The billowing structure echoes this transscalar behavior. Dizzying at first, we acclimatize to things not yet known.

Ýrr and Saga are enticed by what appears to them to be a return to a land before the first line, before the blue-green grid, before the continents broke apart. Saga walks behind Ýrr and far ahead of me. Before they leave, they ask me if this place is the future.



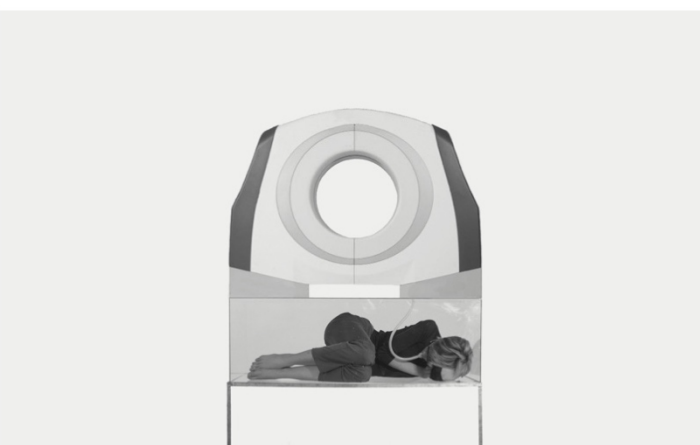


Figure 4

## Images

I enter one of the six portals on December 19, 2016. The day police-officer-turned-gunman Mevlüt Mert Altintas assassinated Andrei Karlov, the Russian Ambassador to Turkey, as he was giving a speech at an art exhibition in Ankara. The public killing was captured by the photojournalists attending the opening. The interior scene of the well-dressed killer holding his gun up in victory after the shots appear theatrically staged, obscuring fact with fictional dimensions. The act spatialized a feral moment. Burhan Ozbilici's photo of the murder was named Photo of the Year by World Press Photo foundation in 2017. The violent image is a networked moment on a global scale, enabled by technology and humans' addiction to generate, circulate, and consume images. A dire habit of people in this time. The image of Altintas arrives in the portal and wants to normalize the act of violence.

Urgency pierces the interior with the affect of a psychotropic drug. The inside of the portal is made of clay, surfaces are malleable and moist, their color earthen gray. Images here are reckless, they arrive and leave without notice. Animated and dimensional, they keep the clay moist and charged. Images seize, imitate, and become real. The place is mercurial and if the portal dries out it will crack and crumble.

Disturbed by the image of Altintas, I go to the image of the full body tomographic scanner that is placed on a Faraday Chair. A sanctuary to protect the body from the electrical fields that populate our environments. The scanner and chair are an unlikely duo. I become obsessed with the scanner. I feel the scanner vibrate, grab the rubber flap, slide my body through the hollow rotating ring, and let the machine scan me repeatedly. I print the scans of my body sliced into sections and begin to wheatpaste the images camouflaging over the other images in the portal, forming repeat patterns. I feel equally anxious and careless. Breathing deeply, I curl my limbs resting horizontally inside the translucent tank chair. I see my portrait appear on the silver plate framed by the mustard velvet valance and curtain from Walter De Maria's *Silver Portrait of Dorian Gray*.

In 1965, De Maria inscribed the verso of a silver plate with instructions for his patron Robert C. Scull. De Maria gave Scull agency to change things. "The silver plate turns color as the air touches it. The process may be photographed. When the owner judges that enough time has passed, this plaque may be removed to free and clean the silver plate. The process can then begin anew."<sup>5</sup> The sculptural object recalls a window. The object invites the viewer to interact with the operable curtain and use the instructions. By

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<sup>5</sup> Reproduction of verso of Walter De Maria's *Silver portrait of Dorian Gray*, not before 1965. Robert Scull papers, 1955–circa 1984. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

drawing open the curtain a viewer expects to look beyond the frame to an exterior; yet the prospect is inverted. The reflective plate reverts the gaze back to the viewer. With time, the process of oxidation on the plate's surface will draw out shapes and murky images will appear. Environmental toxins drift in the air contaminating and layering matter on the metal surface. Image as matter. The "owner" can alter the image-time by erasing the material memory on the plate.



Figure 5

## Geological Interior

“What does the Earth remember?” I ask myself looking down at the planet from the vessel. Ýrr and Saga fill my thoughts. “You have to trust it, maybe not from the directions you are staring at, twist your head around, it’s all around you.” Trust that a deeper kinship is the future.

*The moonlit sky drops a layer of light on the monolithic basin and the gray veins on the marble walls and floors light up. A choreography of geological figures surrounds us in milky and luminous matter. We watch the mine workers with cranes and crawlers cut away the mineral block, sectioning and hollowing Earth. It is otherworldly together with deep time. The metamorphic rock is cyclical, material evidence of a sentient planet continuously in flux.<sup>6</sup>*

I hear the rough rivers rushing. How long have I been here? Am I older now? A musky forest of rising trees speaks about mythologies and mores. About knotty roots and contaminated sea floors. About the marks humans left and the stories untold. Together, I listen.

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<sup>6</sup> In *Metamorphoses*, Emanuele Coccia argues the future is Earth. We need to stop longing for the skies, what exists in the skies is in the past. Instead, we need to look down at Earth as a celestial body made of the same substance as the skies, it’s a continuum. In other words, we need to reposition Astrology as an Earth Science, an “inverted Astrology”. He offers, “the fact that the Earth is our future means that the future never comes from the outside. On the contrary, if there is a future it is only because there is no exteriority, because everything is already inside. Inside this planet. Everything on its surface. The future is the skin of the planet, which is undergoing continual transformation: it is the cocoon of its metamorphosis.”



Figure 6

## References

Susan Barba, *Geode*, "Exhibit 1," Black Sparrow Press, 2020

Björk, "All is Full of Love" song lyrics, Homogenic, 1997

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### Image References

Original images are cropped, altered and used in grayscale mode in each collage.

#### Figure 1 Intelligence

Chris Cunningham, director, “All is Full of Love” Björk music video, 1999

Original image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Octopus (*Octopus Macropus*). N.E. Atlantic to W. Pacific.

Original image courtesy of Warren Photographic Ltd

#### Figure 2 Mobility

Escalators, 2005

Original image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Thermal Foil Blanket

Original image(s) courtesy of Pixelbay, Wikimedia

#### Figure 3 Images

Hito Steyerl, *How Not To Be Seen*

Original image courtesy of A.A. Suárez, *Hito Steyerl: I Will Survive*,  
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 2022

Image not used, textual reference

Mevlüt Altıntaş Assassination of Andrei Karlov, 2017

Burhan Ozbilici, AP Photo

#### Figure 4 Technology

Dunne & Raby, Faraday Chair, Hertzian Tales, 1995  
Original image courtesy of Lubna Hammoud

Portable CT Scanner, Imaging System  
Original image courtesy of Medicaexpo

#### Figure 5 Time

Walter De Maria, Silver portrait of Dorian Gray, 1965  
Original image courtesy of A.A. Suárez, Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2017

Denis Villeneuve, Arrival, motion picture, 2017  
Original image courtesy of Paramount Pictures (international promotion)

#### Figure 6 Nature

Calacatta Marble Quarry, Italy  
Original image(s) courtesy of Pixelbay, Wikimedia

Hospital Equipment, SUPERFLEX, 2014  
Installed at Den Frie. Original image courtesy of Anders Sune Berg



