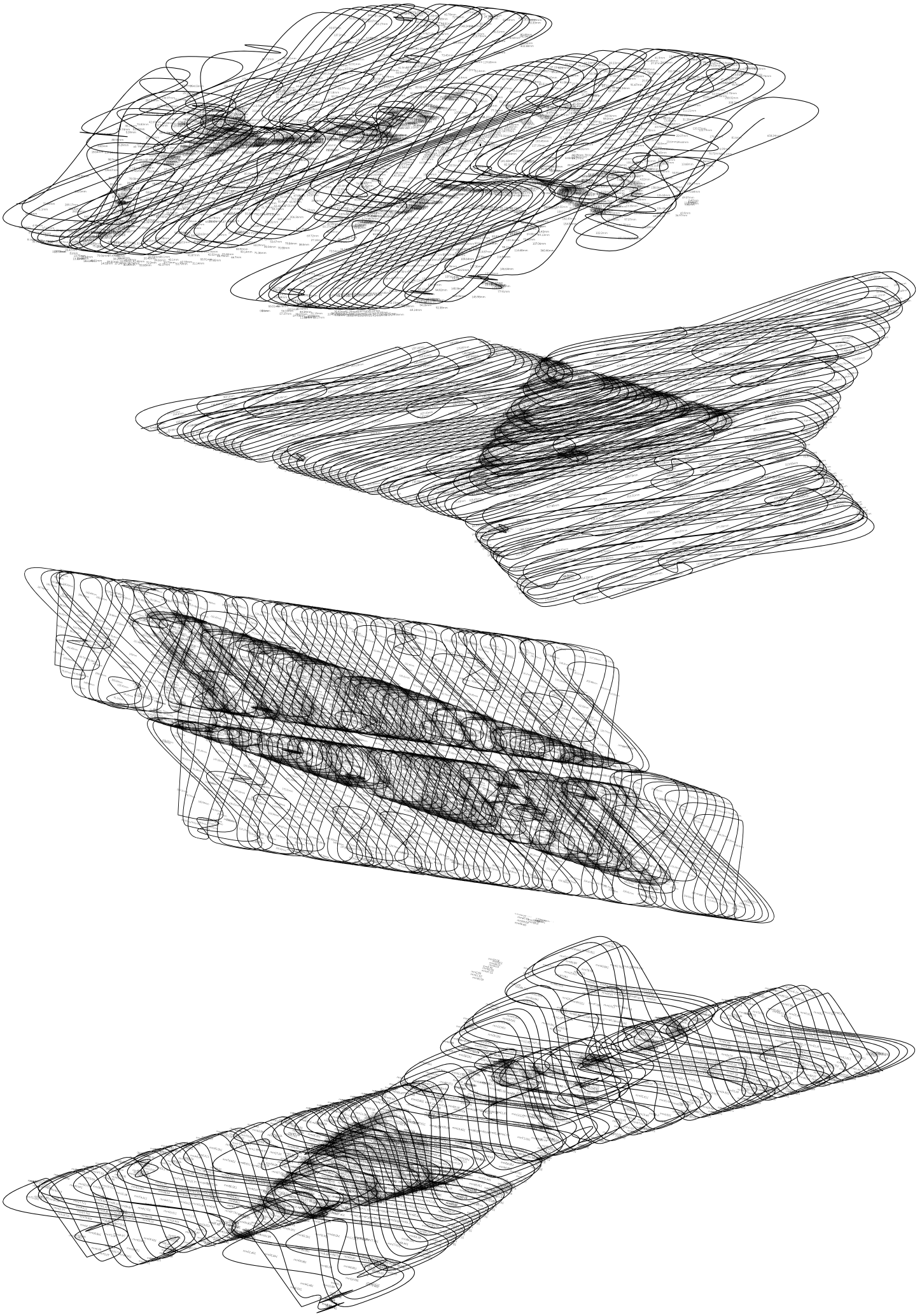
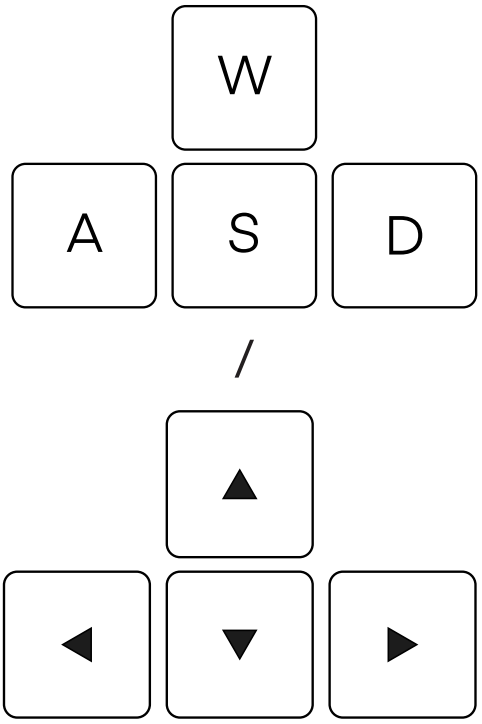
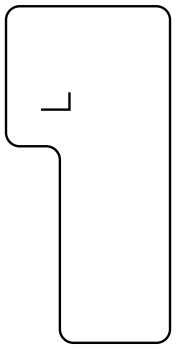
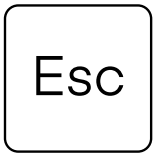


Use 

to move around.

Use to look around and control direction.

Use  to jump into the scene

Use 

to exit the game

(I)

The legend of SYNX –s-y-n-x– emerged, somehow irresistibly, at the beginning of 2021 or the end of 2020; it is actually impossible to know now. We only know when the smart office, the smartest office in the world if I may say, was deserted, gradually at first, and suddenly empty, and forever, by its employees, the cleaning and maintenance staff, the management, all of them, haunted, disoriented, exhilarated, perplex, helpless. They all left because, everyone said, it was impossible to work there–I mean it was impossible to speak on the phone, go to the bathroom, write one email, or have a meeting–without feeling that SYNX was creating dysfunction, or perhaps playing, with them, in any case it was unbearable.

First it was the temperature–what came to be known as *room fever* or *ambient fever*. You would enter a room and feel it, the heat had pumped up and the chairs and tables felt swollen and sweaty–but it was just a feeling, all this was invisible and undocumented–it felt hot and yet you would start shivering slightly, then a

tremendous chill crossed your back from top to bottom. So you and whoever you'd be with would just look at each other and say let's go somewhere else, *there's a fever here*. Or you'd be looking for a place to have a meeting and you'd see a sheet of paper on the door that said: "temperature readjustment in progress, sorry for the inconvenience" and you'd know there had been fever in that room and it would remain locked indefinitely onward.

We lost a good number of meeting rooms that way, while a few others remained operational but it was impossible to do anything productive there in the end. Like online meetings: you'd enter a call and hear someone speaking with your voice, then it moved to another person and someone else would start talking and it wasn't her voice either! Provided of course that you'd have heard their real voices previously. We laughed at the beginning but then we'd end up not making more calls. It was even worse with VR meeting rooms, with avatars and everything. We got scared because we instantly knew no one was seeing the same thing and potentially we were not even talking to each oth-

er. We couldn't know we were each other, and when we checked recordings it was all scattered like spirit media—you know, like those videos where you see incongruous apparitions and hear voices from dead relatives. That was the feeling. At first we spoke of "projections" or "interferences" but then everybody was simply referring to it as the SYNX.

(II)

The word SYNX stands for something like "synching systems disfunction" and it is directly related to the fact that we were using the smartest office in the world, as I said, where during a brief period everything was perfectly orchestrated, all our operations and actions and emotions about it. We really believed there could be real harmony and we accepted all the sensing and personal data milking and web crawling to be performed on us because we believed. The idea was that the greatest amount of data we could give away from our every move and impression and intention, from our every thought, would make the office execute the plan to perfection. We though the algo-

rithms were perfect, and they could even improve themselves with further and better data of us, and make us better. And it was happening.

In fact, temperature was a thing, or to be more specific: there was a real investment in those spatialized heat maps that we could navigate with perfect awareness of the moral climate in each area, and we'd be naturally drawn toward pink or orange or green spots for excitement or optimism or comfort and then have the best ideas there. But inevitably other parts of the office were colored gray or purple or brown and one would know not to go there, and that was perhaps the root of the problem or one of the roots—or tentacles of the problem, as engineers started tweaking and entering more and more data so the space would learn how to improve itself or propose solutions to its color issues. Then one day a problem area would start fluctuating, throbbing as if it was in the middle of some sort of metamorphosis and when it finally turned, let's say, light blue and you'd be attracted to it as though it was a locus for mild meditation you would be for a few seconds

trapped in vertigo and you'd see black lines within your eyesight. As if your smart lenses were failing but we had not been using smart lenses for a while already. You'd exit that troubled area and you'd be color blind for other parts of the heat map too, for a few days, and you became suspicious. So even if your desk had the right color every day it wouldn't work anymore, you started being paranoid about it. Is my desk depressing? Am I toxic? We'd discuss these things quietly by the coffee machine. I remember some speculations about "psychothermia", which was but another name for that specific symptomatology of SYNX.

(|||)

As a group, we had accepted another meaning to what "participatory design processes" could be. That is, when users contribute their hormones and brainwaves and emotional and breathing data; they participate in the constant redesign by performing in the pre- obsolete setting, the one that will be adjusted immediately for better performance, more wellbeing, more creativity. It was great to feel that the

new wasn't really new but just pre-obsolete, and we'd live with the anticipation of the next adjustment and so on. "The future of the city could be profoundly modified by information made available by new technologies" wrote an author named Patricia Toscano, and we were content by simply knowing that the modification would be profound, without needing an idea about the nature of that transformation or our identities in it. The point was that the profound itself would be relocated, externalized. The profound was our surrounding space, our depth had been turned outwards. The air conditioning system would know more about us than ourselves, much more, and we were totally okay about that. We were confident.

The basis for transforming workspaces into ecosystems (instead of inert machines of chain production) is their manageability through data. The deeper the data retrieved –emotional, neurological, physiological, linguistic–the more realistically an environment is depicted as a whole that can be fine-tuned and improved. To describe data sets means that they can be operationalized for the common good. Know-

ing is using. The new convention on data usage is based on the principle that information can only be understood operationally. No cognitive operation is separate from a set of functions, a performance scheme. Understanding behavior is carried out through its modification, the former can only occur via the latter, and the latter can only exist within a framework of expected action. Here is, then, another paradox: constant transformation appears as the declared goal of predictive analytics. So, rather than a plain physical space, the office would be the set of ambient conditions for employees to do things and feel great doing them, and perhaps feel bad when they need to feel bad or maybe never ever feel bad about anything. Always creative, always inspired. The effort of the office eco-system to eliminate negative aspects of our activity finally brought the first symptoms, what some called the awakening of SYNX.

(IV)

One of the most aggravating anomalies was related to textures–the engineers called it “texturitis” but it wasn’t accurate enough. Dur-

ing the interval in which the smart office was functional we still remember how smooth and clean everything was. This also affected the sounds of things. Just the perfect feel, literally you would not hear one single keyboard being pressed, every voice was perfectly modulated, directed through space toward the right ear so that the real time combination of office sounds was the expression of its harmony. That kind of sound perfection made all surfaces feel amazing, like super thinly cushioned and protected. Texturitis happened like a crack that grows and grows through the air making every object go out of tune. So one afternoon you surprise yourself listening to the rub of your fingers or looking at your own face deep inside a tea cup that tastes like hydrogen peroxide. The word texturitis was abandoned because it missed the complexity of what was really being affected, something common to surfaces and sounds, their vibrational medium.

Walking through the office, which was huge, became a challenge especially for those who had been there since the beginning or best knew its original floor plan. The better your

thought you knew it, the more chances you had to get lost. For instance, it was disconcerting one day to realize there was a fifth elevator. We had always seen and used four elevators, now suddenly we had five of them! And it was impossible to know which one had been added, for they were perfectly reorganized—was it the one on the right side or at the center or the one next to it or… Same thing with some corridors and stairs which grew extra segments overnight, in some cases they were just a few inches longer. We started speaking about “tentacles”, like are we in an actual room or area or is this a tentacle. One day someone wrote “welcome to the Kraken” in an email and that made sense. We felt the office was one of those fantasy animals that are also geographies and gods, impenetrable beings dubbed “cryptids” by some authors. The Kraken for instance is at the same time a creature and a place, an island being, as I think Erik Pontoppidan said or someone said he said he said. We mentally referred to the office as the Kraken but we hardly used that word because it scared us. Even the mental utterance of the name made the office react with something that you may describe as a slight sense of

pressure or a brief gravity pull. It was better not to think about it but it was impossible to forget. Another email said: “Your thoughts are the Kraken’s memories. When you think, that’s the Kraken remembering”.

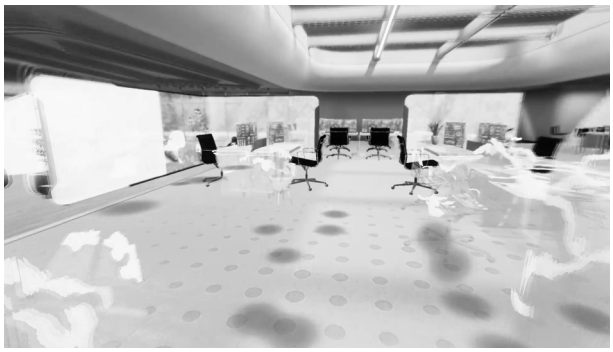
(V)

Some tentacles were embedded in time, not space. In fact, the last thing I would like to mention is what happened to our sense of time, or rather body movement. This may have been the most amazing one among the various SYNX phenomena, and the most determining for everyone to leave the Kraken. As you know, moving is aging and that’s normal in life. The smart office had made us feel really good about that. Being efficient meant moving just enough to get the best out of it, and therefore aging just the right amount with each action. Our bodies are not only bodies but they’re also timers, measuring the durations of their own movements. Feeling you are the right age is a key component of well-being. You know when it feels right and you know when it doesn’t, like, you stretch your arm and it is yours because it

has grown with you and it's been always you and so it reaches the point you want it to reach when you expect it to, not before or after. You take a step and then another one and you get passed a certain point and that's the way it should be, and you don't get pissed off because you are not twenty-five anymore and all that. And some of us were actually twenty-five or less. One of the first oddities to occur was the sensation of asymmetry, like your right step being repeatedly longer than the left. You'd try to readjust and start losing your coordination, suddenly you understood the way automata would feel if they were self-aware. Looking at colleagues at odds with their speeds was hilarious, like that guy who wasn't able to open a drawer anymore. Some of us forgot how to ride our bikes and only recovered that sense when we were several miles away from the Kraken. The age-related SYNX were a pure form of disorientation in time. By the unreliability of our internal measuring systems we got stranded amid our own becoming. But somehow in the middle of that confusion we felt lightness and an inspiration to un-age, which gave us the power to migrate out of our personalities.

Some people say SYNX is a deep simulation but that is not correct. It is an exo-emotional entity operating by itself, always inspired and always creative. Some have spoken about SYNX as an artist, producing abstract compositions with the full palette of our sensorial capacity, and contemplating them as they shift and fluctuate, altering real time in real time.

(LEGEND OF SYNX)



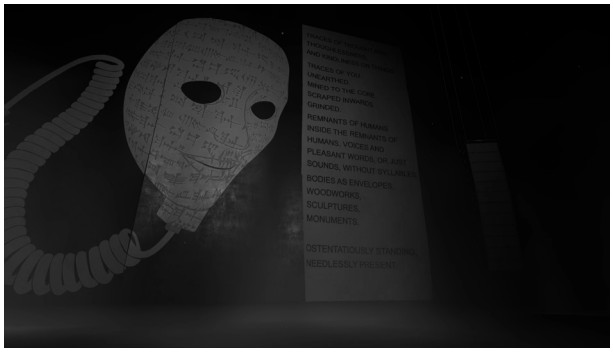
DESTINATION: EMBEDDED HEADSET
Zaha Hadid Architects, *Workplaces.AI*

Accessed through a meta-fictional gate, ZHA's dynamic office design offers a promenade through the smart workspace of the near future—in other words, a flashback peek into the City Kraken's recent past. The interior architecture of the office appears as a sensitive, technical ecosystem, displaying a stunning capacity to self-adjust and redesign based on user data.

DESTINATION: FLOOR 2
Emanuel Gollob, *Zoom Out*

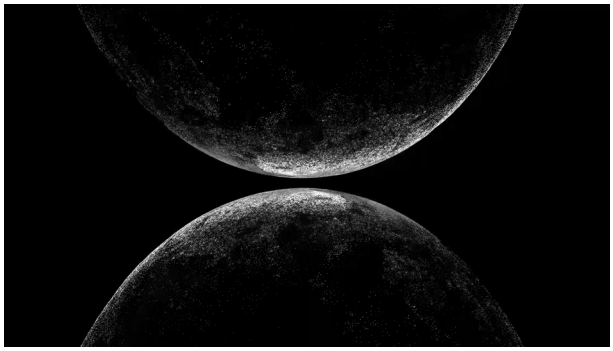
A process of speculative design unfolds as the artist reflects on his own home confinement

and the initial resistance of the private space to creative transformation. The close observation of the interior by digital means of animated reproduction leads to a series of mutations in the scene, forcing the domestic setting into a continuous, organic and soft form of becoming.



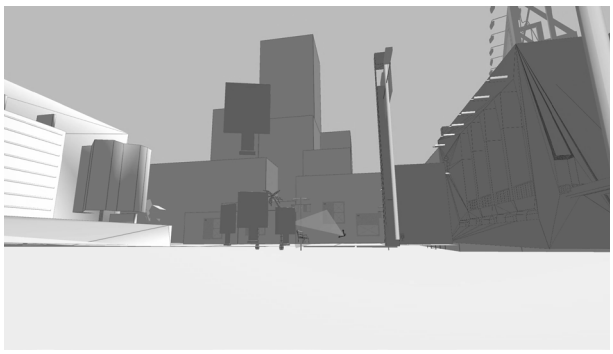
DESTINATION: FLOOR -2
Sarah Derat x The Radicant x ExperiensS,
Gymnopaedia

A cryptic iconography is presented inside a crypt: ancient Neo-Babylonian scripts, processed and augmented by an artificial intelligence, monumentally hang in the air like a post-apocalyptic prophecy. Under a haunting audible atmosphere, cuneiform signs crowd the carpeting on the floor while a gigantic photograph reimagines—and reenacts—the modern primitivism of the Bauhaus and the uncanny mutations of modernist design in contemporary digital, post-human culture.



DESTINATION: FLOOR 3
João Martinho Moura, *out < there*

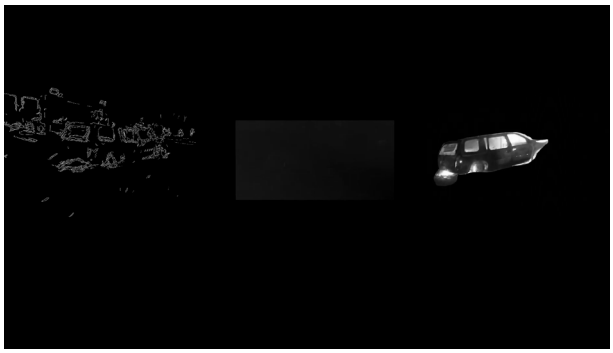
Gradual progress into the city's infinity of data points manifests as an almost solid, suspended luminescence. Moura's extreme visualization of urban space offers a virtual flight from macro to micro, challenging the integrity of the user's physical body and defying sight.



DESTINATION: FLOOR 6
Michael Sedbon, *Generative City*

Set inside a rough simulation of Barcelona's downtown core, this critical sketch of algorithm-based urban design highlights the thin line separating generative and degenerative development. The proliferation of amenities and street furniture follows automated, real-time

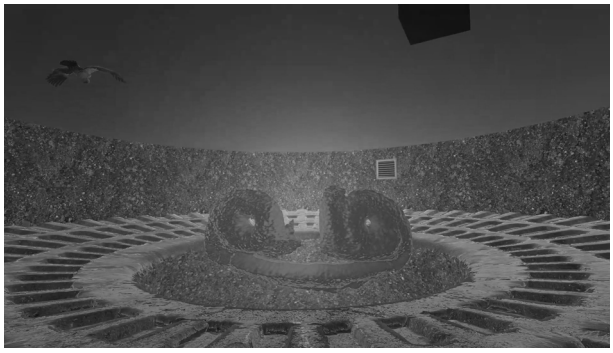
recognition of market potential on vertical, horizontal, and aerial levels. Advertisement space grows exponentially as the visibility of different surfaces becomes exploitable and their performance is sensed and assessed by the environment itself. Our brief inspection, or tourist ride, through this quarter unfolds while the typical cycle of gentrification and standardization of popular neighborhoods reveals its modes of self-organization based on permanent structural incompleteness.



DESTINATION: FLOOR -1
Emmanuel Van der Auwera, *(not yet titled)*

Three screens present machine-generated variations of police footage on demonstrating crowds. Various configurations of the collective body appear under a non-human gaze, while the visualization of individuals emphasizes features such as gesture, location shift, or facial identity. These social portraits remain purposely enigmatic, for there is no explicit account of what is seen or who is the seer—we are some-

what alien witnesses in the face of the public records of our era. Disturbingly and accidentally pictorial, these images also appear to be radically ambiguous, since their aesthetic qualities underly a primarily non-human address.



DESTINATION: ATTIC
Haseeb Ahmed x Heavy Color, *Ruach not Rauch*

Upon entering Ahmed's scene, the viewer mutates into a particle traveling through the building's creepy air conditioning conducts. What could be a playful metamorphosis of the player's avatar turns out to be a last voyage, for the uncannily long vent leads into a Tower of Silence located in the middle of a desert. The symmetry of two words, ruach / rauch, the breath of divine animation versus the volatilization of the destroyed body, welcomes us into this liminal space of existence. Virtually dead, but not dead, we see the ominous vulture hovering about in circles—an animal operating its own form of visual recognition on whatever lies there, awaiting its burial in the sky.

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