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Still (fire extinguisher, propane burner, alcoholic must), exhibition view, Villa Arson, Nice (France), 2011

"I speak into the emptiness and in the dark; however, even if it is only for me, I will continue to insult the insulters."
Jean Genet, *The Criminal Child*, 1949

"A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us."
Franz Kafka, *Letter to Oskar Pollak*, 1904

He breaks in. If there was only one sentence to say about Thomas Teurlai's work, it would be this one. Even then it would be important to insist on the duration value of the present tense here: "he is breaking in, he can't stop breaking in". The English are more particular and say it the other way around: breaking and entering. But French (for a change) is more accurate and puts the effect and consequence first.

When walking around one of his spaces – and sometimes even beforehand, when the visitor has not entered the presentation space yet but is already seized by an unusual smell or by the depth of a sound – it is this sensation that people will experience physically and immediately. Just as is if we ourselves were, spectators firmly stood behind the double glazing of our aesthetic conscience, the "private property" suddenly exposed: attacked from the outside.

It is pretty obvious that, in one form or another, the Atelier Teurlai runs on illegality. It is the (modified) engine of his invention. Whether it is turning into graffiti middlemen, along with Ugo Schiavi, rolled up in a warehouse like stolen rugs, or reinventing himself as a solitary gold washer of technological waste, or setting up a clandestine bar by hijacking radiators. And this permanent cinema of delinquency says first of all what a generation of artists thinks of the rules of the art market as defined by today's neo-liberalism. But it is also the fact that at the imaginary heart of all these infractions, a law is indeed being infringed: the required distance between the work of art and its spectator. When facing a sculpture by Thomas Teurlai, I am robbed of my critical perspective. The piece hits me before I have time to prepare myself.

Seen from that angle, the work exhibited this spring at the Palais de Tokyo is quite central. This Grand Verre Sécurit (Big Safety Glass), vibrating every two minutes and increasingly exposing its fracture, is *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors*, Even, right at the moment when it breaks, in 1926, in a road traffic accident. But where transparency was decisive with Duchamp (= in charge of shifting the work of art/spectator relationship) and the accident was secondary, unforeseen and a posteriori rectified in the orb of significance, with Teurlai the order is reversed. The glass is only of interest to him because it can be broken – like the window of a luxury shop during a demonstration. And it is this very crack that then redefines the singular attachment between the work of art and its bachelors.

By blending into its own sabotage and its timed vandalism, the piece avoids the cycle of artistic merchandise (what Teurlai calls: "the ornament"). Or at least, it challenges its usual evidence. It sets the usual contemplation-possession dynamics against a link of a different nature, a more complex and paradoxical one. Here I am affected differently – both by the object and its destruction. Indeed, the sound that triggers the shaking of the plate is that of a Tibetan bowl usually used to free chakras. It is of course difficult to take this reference literally. But this mingling of Buddhist ritual and bar block vandalism really indicates the work's ambition which is to recreate the (antinomic) terms of a relationship. If there is such a thing as the art of breaking in, then the crack-as-link is its utopian horizon.

Of course, the convulsive beauty, or "explodingfixed" is an old trick of the history of avant-gardes. But something has changed recently in the way we understand this type of project. Digital imaging has indeed shown since *The Matrix* that it was really possible (against all expectations) to inhabit the moment of an explosion. That it was possible when a bullet was blasting through space, to bend one's body and look in order to calmly watch the deafening grace of the projectile. And, more than video makers, it is young sculptors like Thomas Teurlai that have benefitted from such a deep visual experience by now conceiving their constructions like mobile images frozen in a circular timeframe. Visitors move around their work, sucked up in the invisible siphon of a bullet-time effect.

Indeed, before the *Grand Verre* (Big Glass) in the Palais de Tokyo, there had already been a *Petit Verre* (Small Glass) at the Villa Arson. It was then a simple wine glass that was spinning on a micro-tray. The artist, then still a student, would put a sort of plastic finger on its saliva moistened brim, like the tonearm of a turn table that would make it vibrate and resonate in space. It was only after having had left the room for a good while that the distinctive noise of the smashed glass could be heard, indicating from a distance that the centrifugal force had had the better of the unstable balance of the whole installation. By moving from the Small to the Big Glass, Thomas Teurlai has not just changed the scale of his work. Most importantly, he has managed to freeze – in a rotary slow motion – the crystalline air and the explosion, the beauty and its attack.

Patrice Blouin



Short circuit (beer bottle, micro-drip system, contact microphone, neon lights, sound system), Lisboa, 2014



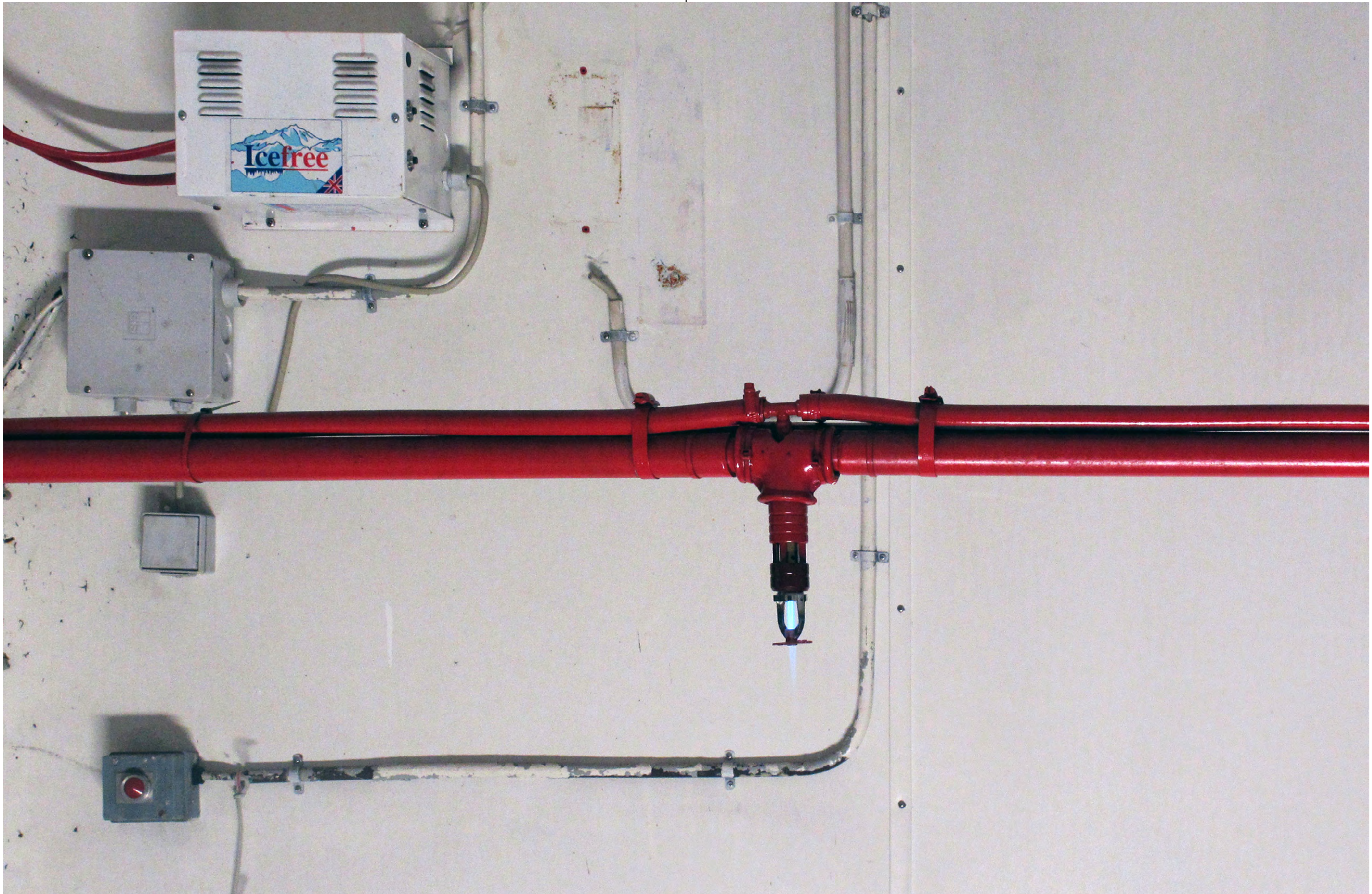
Short Circuit, detail, 2014

A beer bottle hangs upside-down from the ceiling's lights. Every drop spilled on their naked wires make the lights shatter until the liquid evaporates. A contact microphone amplify the sound of electric signal.
Curated by Francois Piron



Chopper desk (ceiling fan, office furniture, microphone, sound system)

Exhibition view, Reykjavik (Iceland), 2012



Sprinklers (modified fire sprinklers, propane torch, self-ignition system, timer)

Exhibition view, Reykjavik (Iceland), 2012



Black light (used frying oil, pump, ceiling lights)



Black light, detail, 2012

Chopper desk — The ceiling fan in the factory manager's office is lowered to brush against a microphone on his desk. The wind produced by the blades is amplified and the vibration is transmitted to the entire warehouse like the sound of an helicopter taking off.

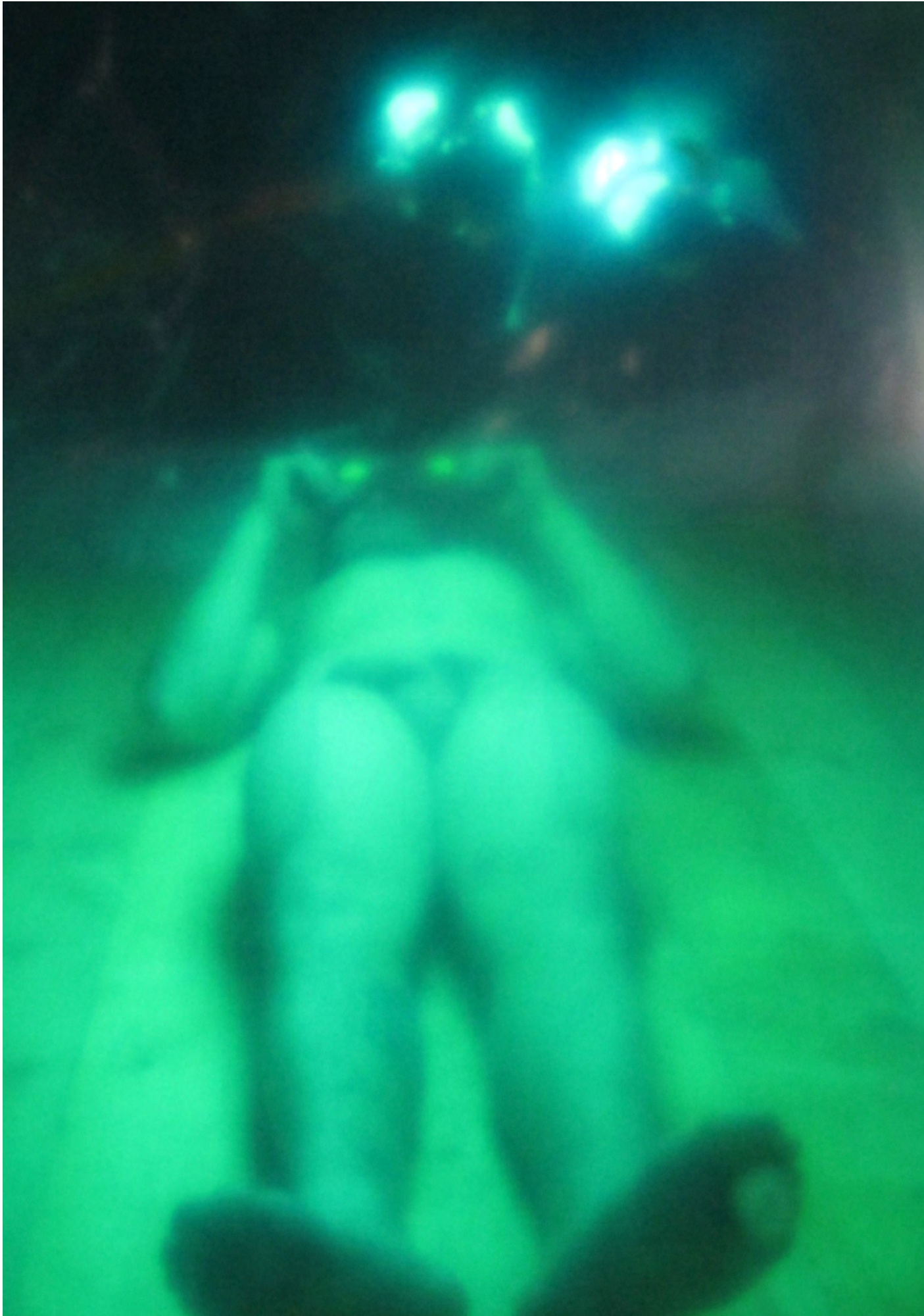
Sprinklers — The nozzles of the fire-fighting system are modified and light up alternately, spitting small blue flames close to the heads of the audience.

Black light — Used cooking oil trickles down the ceiling lights, spreading a pungent odor and varying the lighting of the space.



Hammam Amicus (car engine, chlorine tablets, uv lights, pneumatic arms, électronique timmer)

Exhibition view, squat *La Toxic*, Lyon (France), 2015



Hammam Amicus, detail, 2015



Hammam Amicus, detail, 2015

A well-being center is opened for a weekend in a Lyon squat. Sewer drains and freezers are turned into Jacuzzi. Heat and bubbles are generated by the engine of a car running in neutral.

Collaboration with Vincent Guillermin



Camping sauvage (liquid clay, fabrics, wood fire)

Dakar (Senegal), 2013



Camping sauvage, detail, 2013



Camping sauvage, detail, 2013

A camping tent is dipped in liquid clay from a nearby salted lake. It is then lit like local traditional adobe construction.

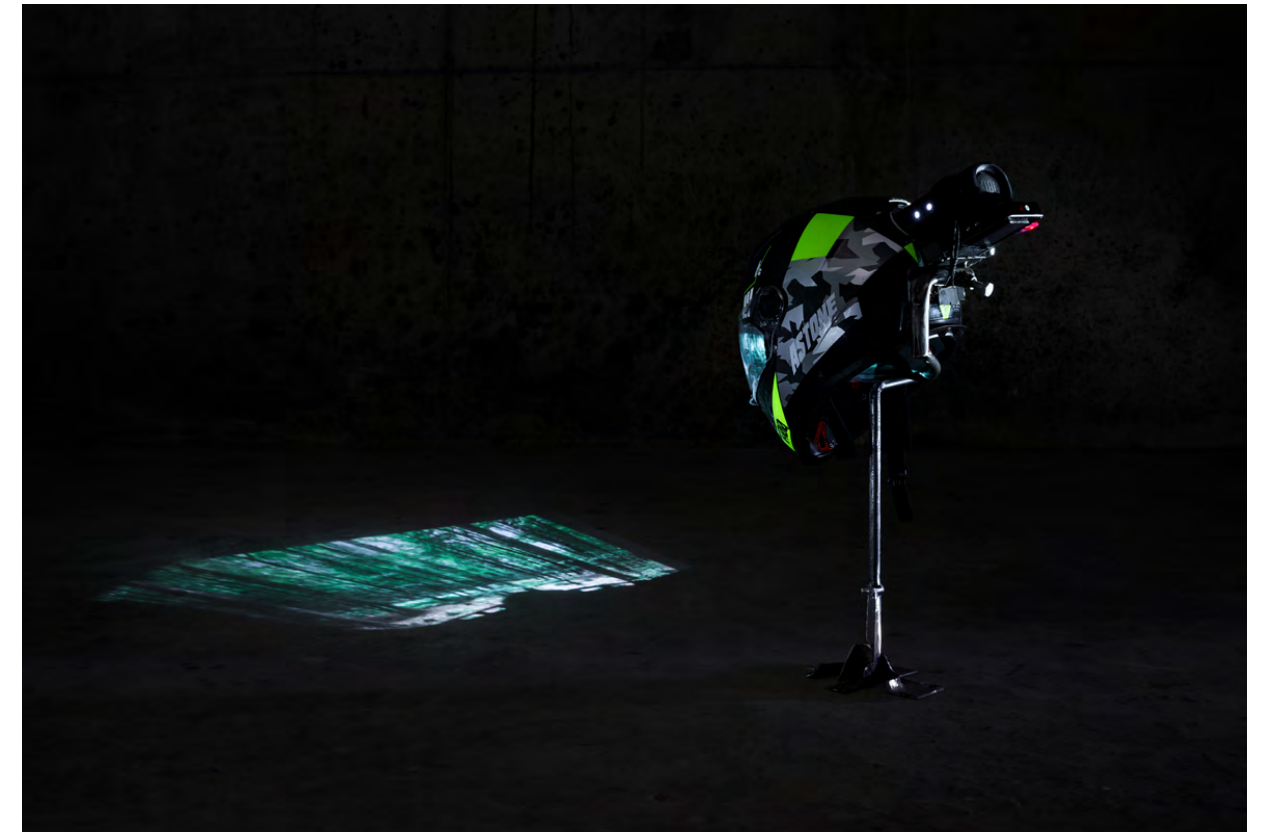


Providenzad (motorcycle helmet, pico-projector, bluetooth speaker)

Pieve (France), 2021. Photo: © Salim Santa Lucia



Providenzad, detail, 2021. Photo: © Salim Santa Lucia



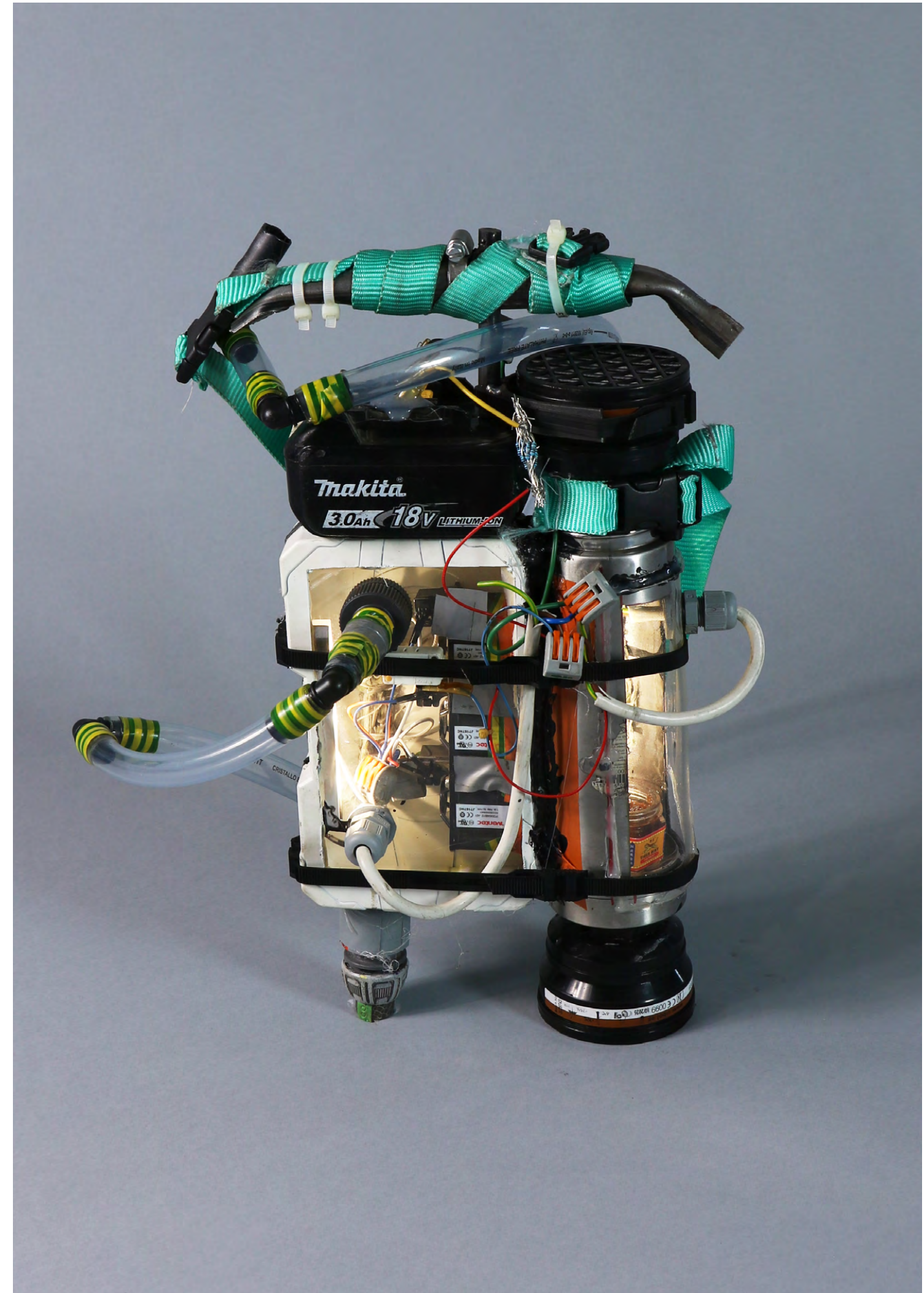
Providenzad, detail, 2021. Photo: © Salim Santa Lucia

A patched-up motorcycle helmet is displayed on the ground, like a ritual mask. At regular intervals snow and crackling signal the start of a message that we guess comes from another time. Scratches and roughness of the visor reveal then the images of a nocturnal road movie.

Collaboration with Alain Damasio



Plague stick (propane torch, cast aluminum finger)

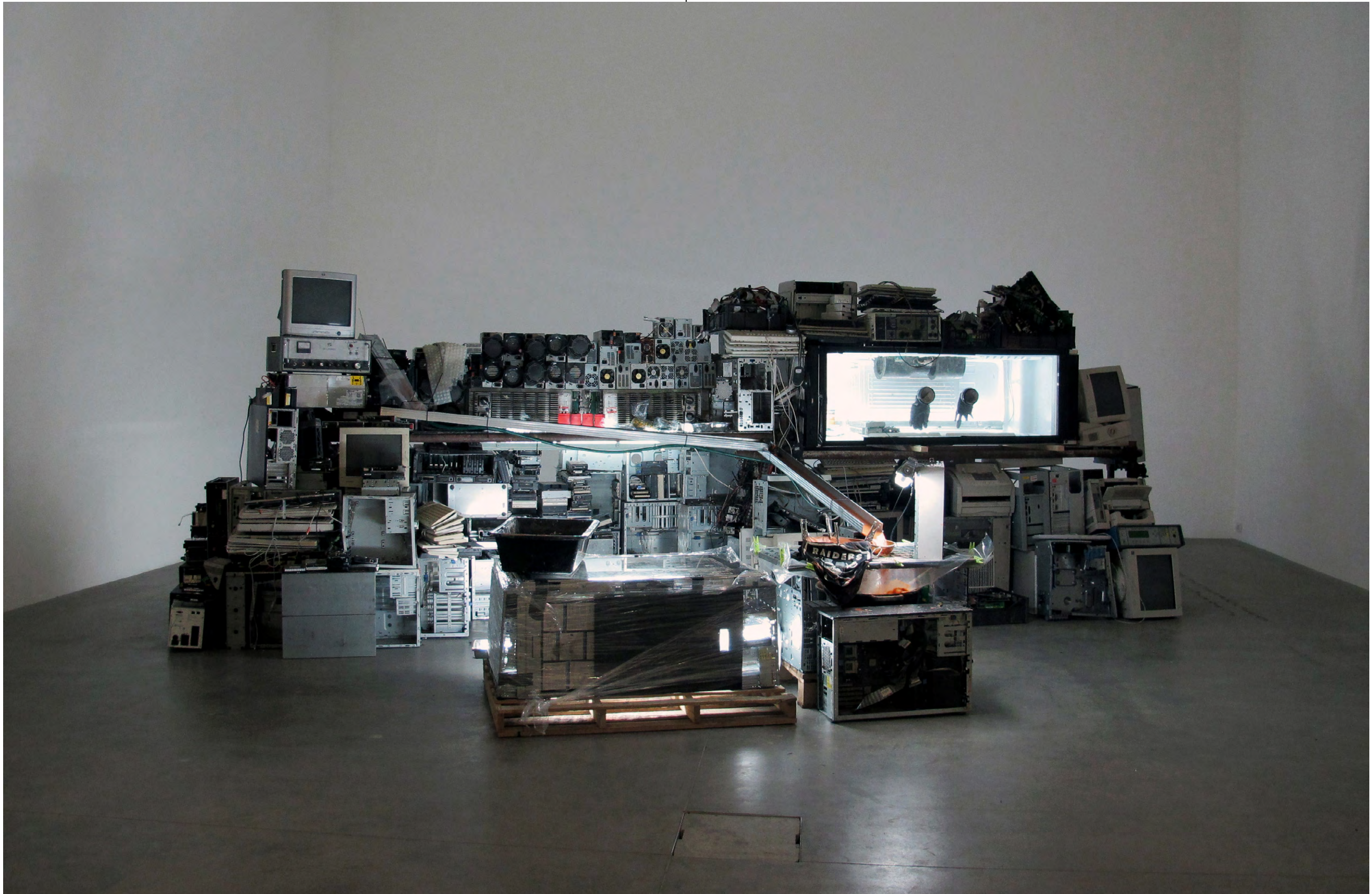


Baise-en-ville (cartridges, thermos, 12 volts ventilators, lithium battery, electronic components, Tiger Balm, salvia)



Googles (rubber mask, bandana, fast clips, clocksmith glasses, cast aluminum dog jaws)

P.A.P.R. is a set of objects made during the first confinement. Inspired by the medieval plague doctor, these barrier-objects were more intended to counter boredom than murderous germs. Turn the contents of a trash can into escape scenario.



Europium (electronic waists, scaffolding, various acid preparations, liquid clay)

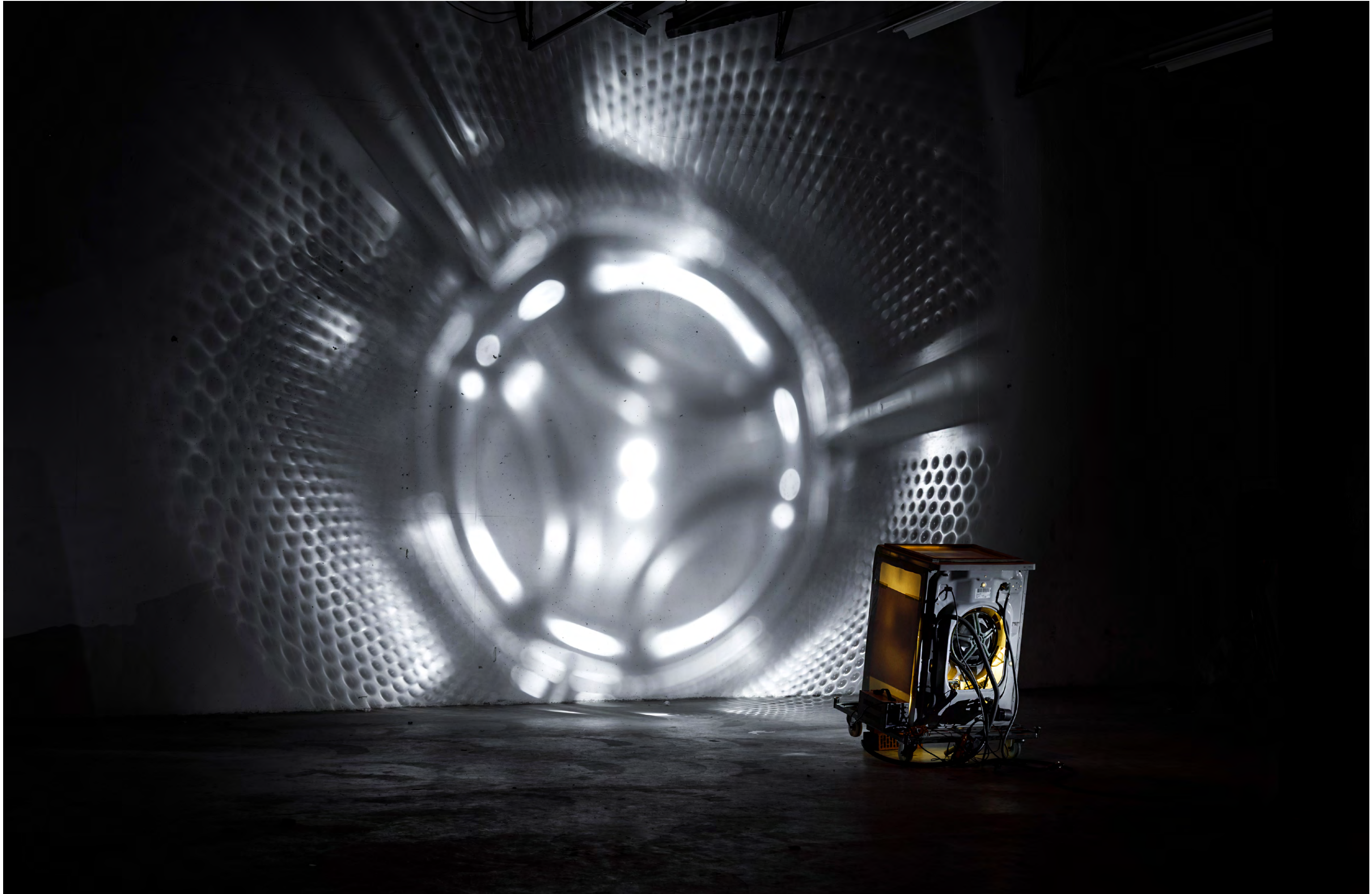
Exhibition view, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Torino (Italy), 2014



Europium, detail, 2014



Europium, detail, 2014



Washing Skope (washing machine, High power LED, strobing device, 1.7 focal lens)

Photo: © Salim Santa Lucia



Washing Skope, detail, 2021. Photo: © Salim Santa Lucia



Washing Skope, detail, 2021. Photo: © Salim Santa Lucia

A washing machine is turned into a camera obscura. Depending on the cycle chosen, delicate, heavily soiled, etc. The inverted image of the drum is projected onto the wall for the duration of the wash. Contact and magnetic microphones positioned on its various parts make the mechanical noise of its entrails resonate in a progressive mix.



Foot Locker (liquid clay, silicone molds, propane burners)

Exhibition view, Copycat Building, Baltimore (United States), 2015



Foot Locker, detail, 2015



Foot Locker, detail, 2015



Foot Locker, detail, 2015

In an abandoned factory, mud escapes from drain pipes. This mud flows into molds of baseball caps and sneakers. The prints thus drawn are fired over in a makeshift oven and placed on displays like in the famous store.

Curated by Joseph Shakevitz



Mash-up (modified italian shower, strobe light, peristaltic water pump, turntable, sound system)

Dancing ghosts, exhibition view, Centre d'Art Bastille, Grenoble (France), 2019



Mash-up, detail, 2019



Mash-up, detail, 2019

An Italian shower cabin sits in the center of the room. A motion detector triggers the machinery. Pump, amplifier, strobe light up: laboriously the water flows from the knob and activates the reverse rotation of a Trance music vinyl. Drums and voices sound backwards. Depending on the strength of the stream and the micro scratches, the sound varies and an improvised mix is deployed. The strobe light synchronizes with the water flow, it seems that time stretches

and compresses. After a few minutes of operation, a mist forms on the glass doors and we can less and less distinguish this hanging body which groans. The macaron fidgets like in an anemic cinema, diffuses subliminal messages. We think of too long a night, too short a sleep. An inverted baptism. The postulate that by plunging the head long enough under hot water you can listen to your hair grow.



Bootlegg (train parts foundry molds, propane torch, melted plastic chairs, motor, vinyl playhead)

Curated by Éric Mangion, exhibition view, Villa Arson, Nice, 2015



Bootlegg, exhibition view, Villa Arson, Nice, 2015



Bootlegg, exhibition view, Villa Arson, Nice, 2015



Bootlegg, creation process, 2015



Bootlegg, creation process, 2015

500 garden chairs are melted down with a makeshift flame thrower. The toxic chewing gum thus obtained is poured into train parts casts. The assembled prints are displayed like some fossil space debris. The central sculpture turns on itself, and a vinyl playhead plays its roughness, echoing a distant bombing sound in the museum.

*Collaboration with Diane Blondeau
and Vivien Roubaud*



Loots (stolen graffitis, steel crates, LED lights)

Exhibition view, Centre d'Art Bastille, Grenoble (France), 2019



Loots, detail, 2011



Loots, detail, 2011



Loots, detail, 2011



Loots, detail, 2011

Since 2011, graffiti has been regularly poached, their skin torn from the walls with steam and kitchen knives. The stolen paintings are then rolled up like rugs and stored in crates like an archive of post-apocalyptic street art.

Collaboration with Ugo Schiavi



Score for bodies and machines (copy machines, magnetic microphones, sound system, A3 paper reams)

Curated by Ange Leccia and Fabien Danesi, exhibition view, Documenta 14, Athens (Greece), 2017



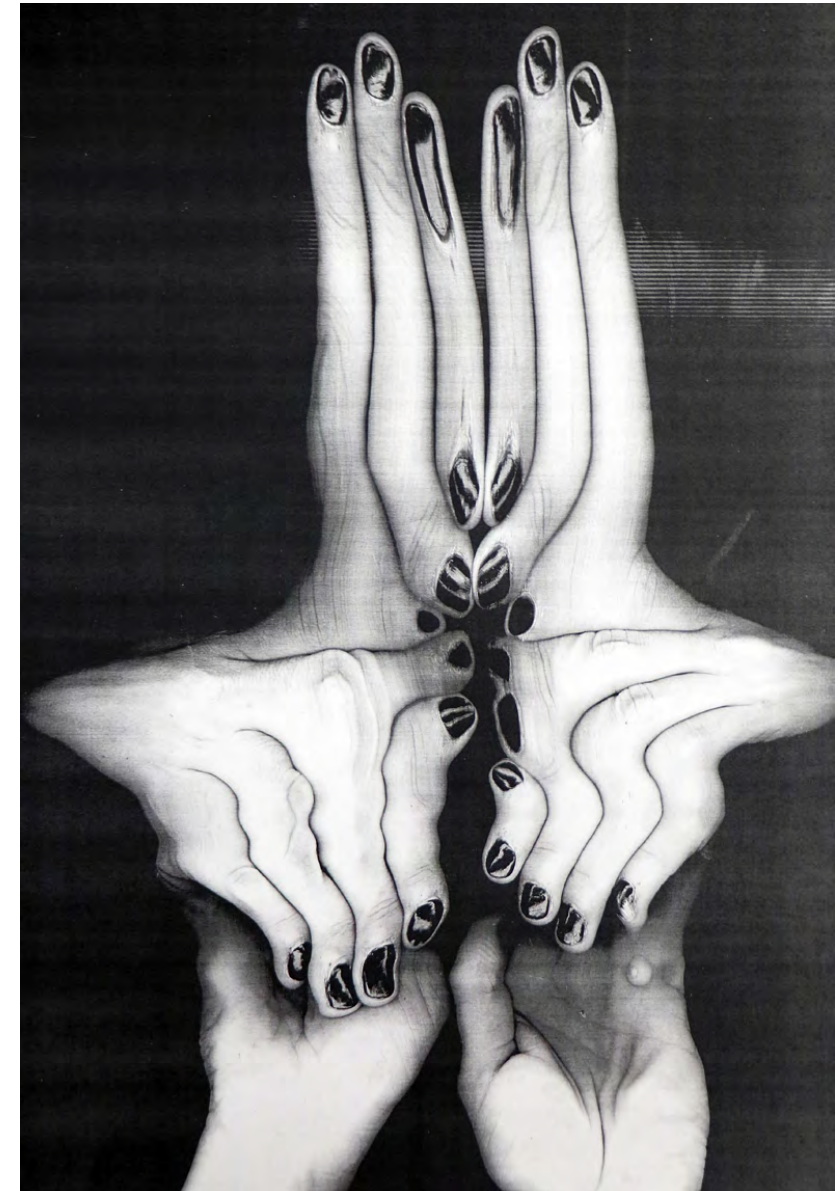
Score for bodies and machines, creation process, 2017



Score for bodies and machines, detail, exhibition view, Documenta 14, Athens (Greece), 2017



Score for bodies and machines, creation process, 2017



Score for bodies and machines, detail, 2017

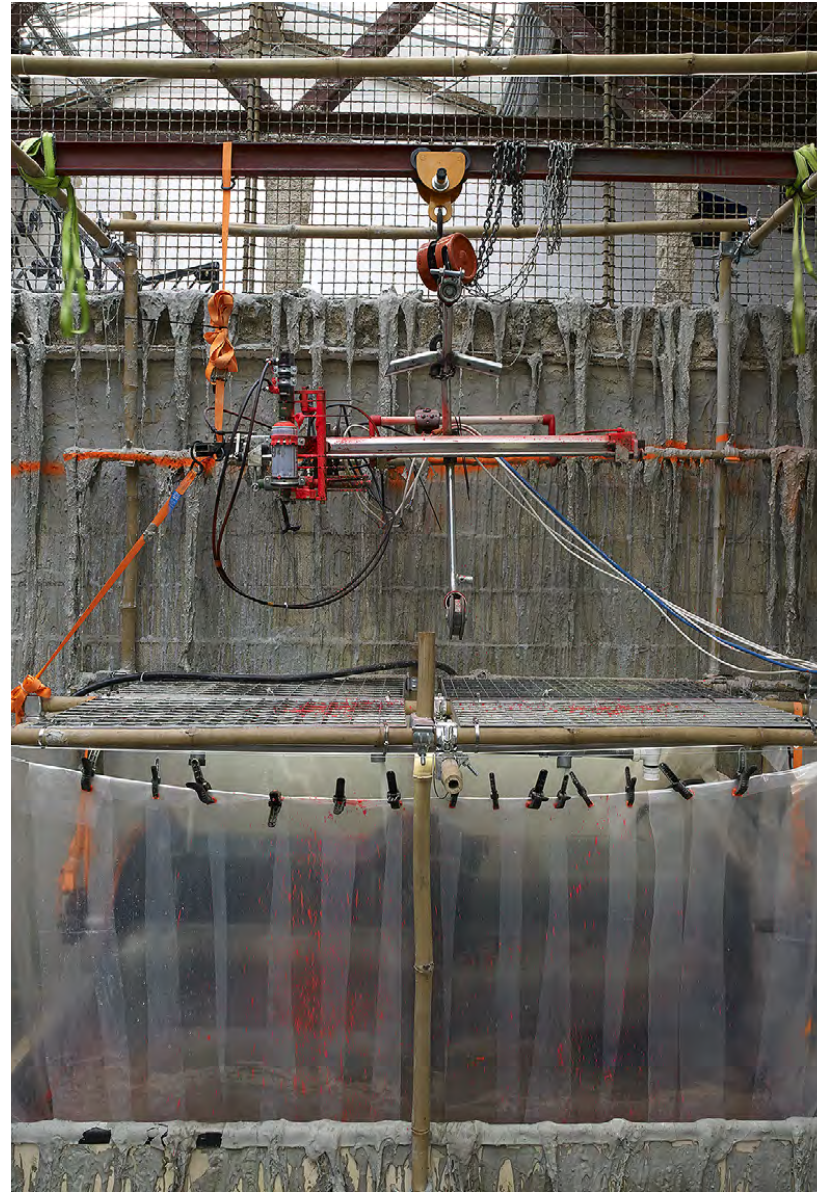
Some magnetic microphones are plugged on some copy machines. Every time the dancers activate the machine, they execute a move following the machine sensor making weird surrealistic images of their body. The score thus created is hung on the walls like in a photo laboratory.

Choreography by Stelios Tsatsos and Ioulia Zachari



Sarkos-Phagos (old fridges, concrete, bamboo scaffoldings, robot arm, spray paint, water pump)

Exhibition view, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (France), 2018



Sarkos-Phagos, detail, 2018



Sarkos-Phagos, detail, 2018

A rickety factory molds the inside of old refrigerators with concrete. The negatives obtained are as much sarkosphagus stacked like an amphitheater. A robot-arm spray the air with fluo paint at regular intervals. The concrete runoff forms stalactites, eventually trapping the entire structure like a petrifying river.
Curated by Jean de Loisy



Laser Cart (street vendor cart, diy laser-cutter, hydraulic press, motorcycle helmets)

Exhibition view, Shenshya Gallery, Wuhan (China), 2019



Laser Cart, detail, 2019



Laser Cart, detail, 2019



Laser Cart, detail of the hydraulic press, 2019



Laser Cart, detail of the hydraulic press, 2019

A walking trolley deploys a miniature production line. Motocross helmets flattened by a hydraulic press pass under a laser cutter made of recovered components. The machine chars the plastic by drawing traditional ornamental patterns. The helmets are turned into masks. They are installed on displays halfway between traditional relics and a shoe store.

Curated by Wu Zenhua



Gong (bus windshield, bass shaker, media player), exhibition view, Les Tanneries, Amilly (France), 2018

A crashed bus windshield hangs from the ceiling. Intermittently, a bass shaker activates causing it to vibrate and turn on itself. Resurgence of the initial shock, the cracks gradually enlarge and the shock wave spreads to the surrounding walls and bodies. Like a Tibetan laminated glass bowl, the gong reflects a liquid image of the surrounding space.

Curated by Stéphanie Cherpin and Laurent Faulon



Bootlegg / Hydroponics (LED full spectrum lights, 15 gallon plastic barells, water sprinklers, nutrient solution)

Photo: © Salim Santa Lucia



Bootlegg / Hydroponics, detail, 2021



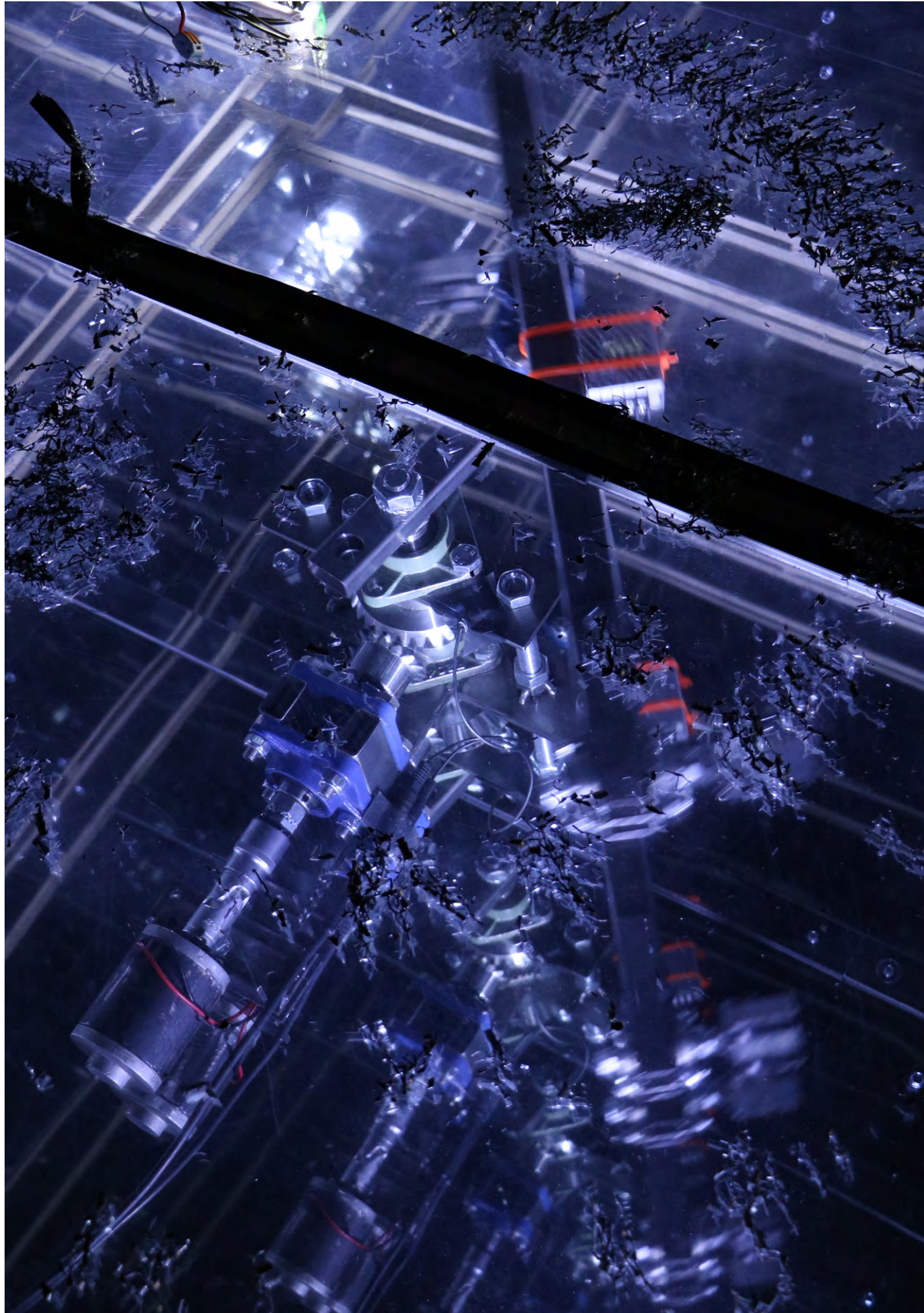
Bootlegg / Hydroponics, detail, 2021

The *Bootlegg / Hydroponics* project aims to concretize several years of experiments carried out between France, Senegal, and the United States around different hybridized soil-less cultivation techniques to produce a living and mobile archive of the pharmacopoeia of urban wastelands. Suspended biotope, modular architecture, *Bootlegg / Hydroponics* is at the same time a garden, a laboratory and a cathedral. A giant organ where the latest technical developments of “indoor” agronomy rub shoulders with “do it yourself” culture and where gardening becomes an extended field of sculpture.



TV Set (mechanical arm, neodymium magnets, stainless steel filings, spy mirror, contact microphone)

The time is out of joint, exhibition view, Paris (France), 2021. Photo: © Salim Santa Lucia



TV Set, detail, 2021

A wooden Pandora's box illuminates the dark space of the exhibition with a strobe light. Dazzling shades pass through the walls like ghostly silhouettes flashing in the cave - vestiges of an ancient camera obscura. Inside the "box", a mobile and mechatronic arm is reflected and multiplied by an endless mirror. On its surface, iron filings are agitated by magnetism like the hair of a purring cat or some shadow cocaine dancing on the epileptic gearing's sound.

Curated by Simona Dvorakova



Moonshine (fermented palm sap, micro-drip system, magnetic microphone, ceiling lights)

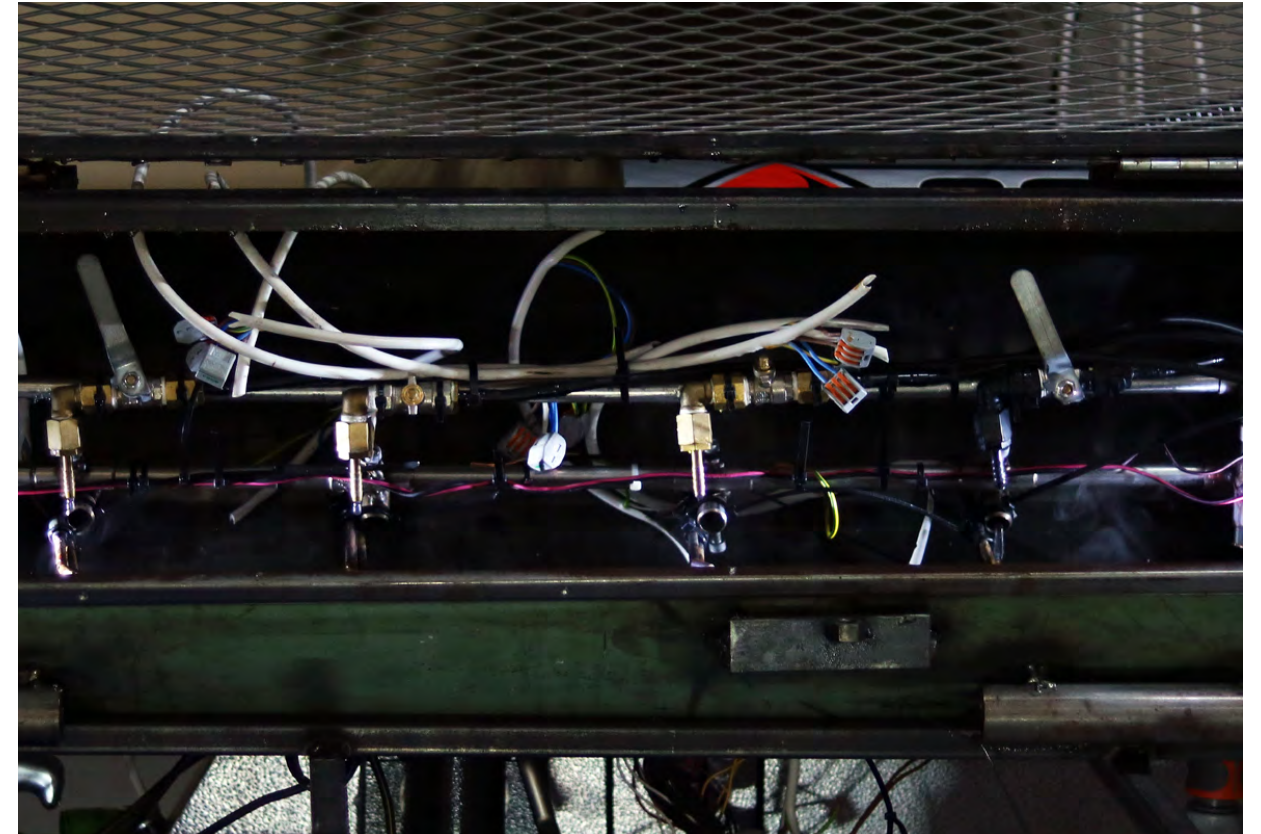
Exhibition view, *Incorporated! 5th Rennes biennale*, Rennes (France), 2016



Exhibition view, *Incorporated!* 5th Rennes biennale, Rennes (France), 2016



Moonshine, detail, 2016



Moonshine, detail, 2016

Palm trees are crushed in order to extract the sap. Once fermented, the viscous liquid flows over the bare electrical wires of the space lights, making them shatter until the liquid evaporates. A contact microphone amplifies the sound of the electric signal.

Curated by Francois Piron

