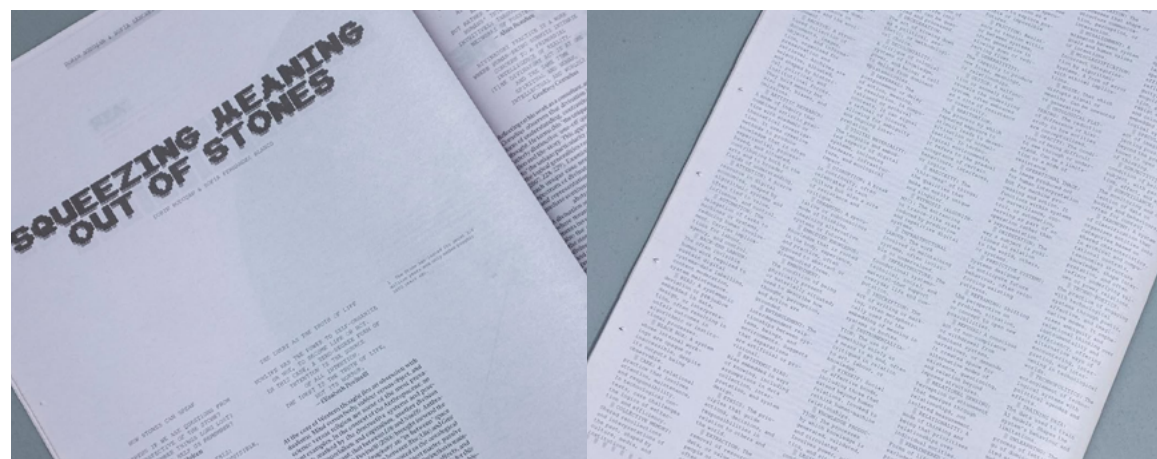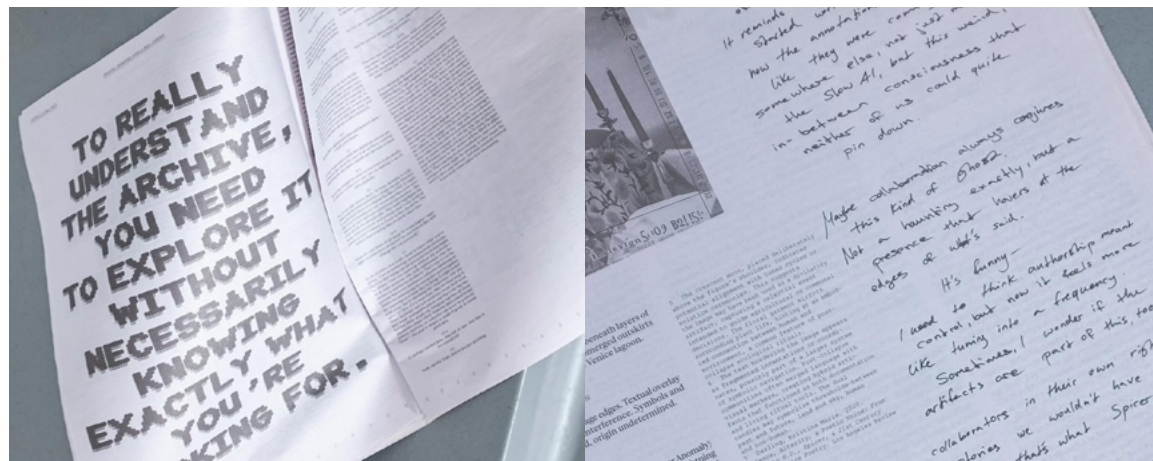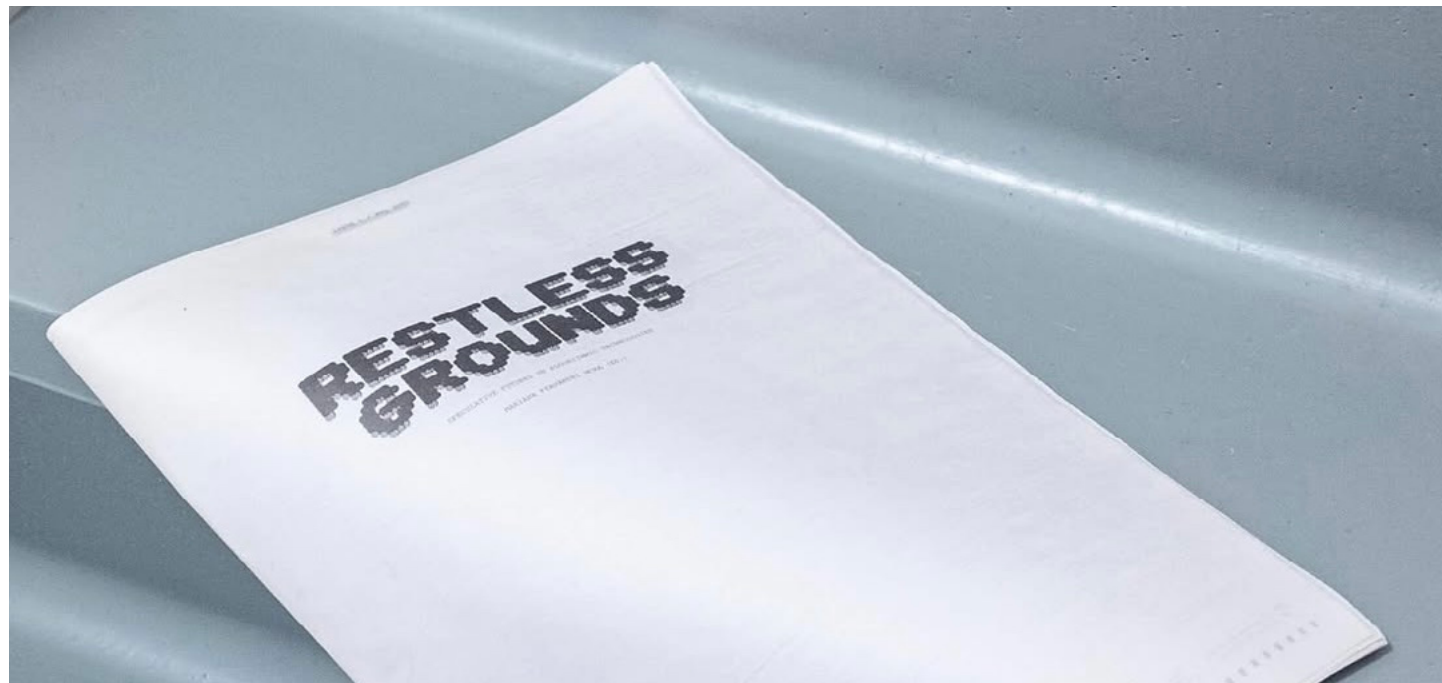# *Mariana Fernández Mora* (1991)

Selected works

Artist, researcher, writer

Professional Doctorate Candidate
Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS)

Sandberg Institute & Gerrit Rietveld Academy Alumna

Restless Grounds

Restless Grounds is a long-term editorial and audio project initiated by Mariana Fernandez Mora (2025)that explores alternative ways of thinking about artificial intelligence beyond dominant narratives of speed, efficiency, and optimisation. Taking the form of both a podcast series and a publication, the project creates space for critical, speculative, and situated engagements with algorithmic technologies.

Across conversations, essays, and experimental forms of writing, Restless Grounds brings together artists, researchers, and thinkers working at the intersection of artistic research, critical theory, and technology. The project foregrounds questions of care, slowness, materiality, and relationality, attending to the historical, cultural, and ecological conditions that shape contemporary AI systems.

Rather than proposing solutions or technical fixes, Restless Grounds functions as a reflective platform. It approaches AI as a socio-technical and cultural phenomenon, shaped by imaginaries, belief systems, and power structures, and explores how alternative narratives and practices might open up other modes of encounter with the technology.

Both the podcast and the publication are part of the broader Slow AI research trajectory, and together form an ongoing archive of conversations and texts that resist closure, remain open-ended, and stay attentive to what is unresolved, unfinished, or still in formation.

Click here to listen to the podcast.

Dolly and AI

(2025)

Essay, drawing, painting oil on canvas

Dolly and AI is a theoretical–artistic research project that examines the shared genealogy of cloning and artificial intelligence as technologies of abstraction. Taking the cloning of Dolly the sheep as a historical case study, the project traces how life and intelligence have been repeatedly separated from their embodied, relational, and ecological conditions and reformulated as transferable information.

The essay situates cloning and AI within longer histories of cybernetics, computation, and capitalist modernity, where replication, optimisation, and control become dominant technological ideals. Rather than treating Dolly as an isolated scientific event, the project reads her as a precursor to contemporary data-driven systems that seek to reproduce life through code.

The research is accompanied by two artworks: a painting of a sheep and a drawing composed in binary code spelling the word slow. Together, text and image operate as a conceptual pairing that contrasts biological singularity with computational abstraction, and proposes slowness as a counter-imaginary to regimes of acceleration and technological replication.

Link to essay.

What do we dream about when we dream about machines?
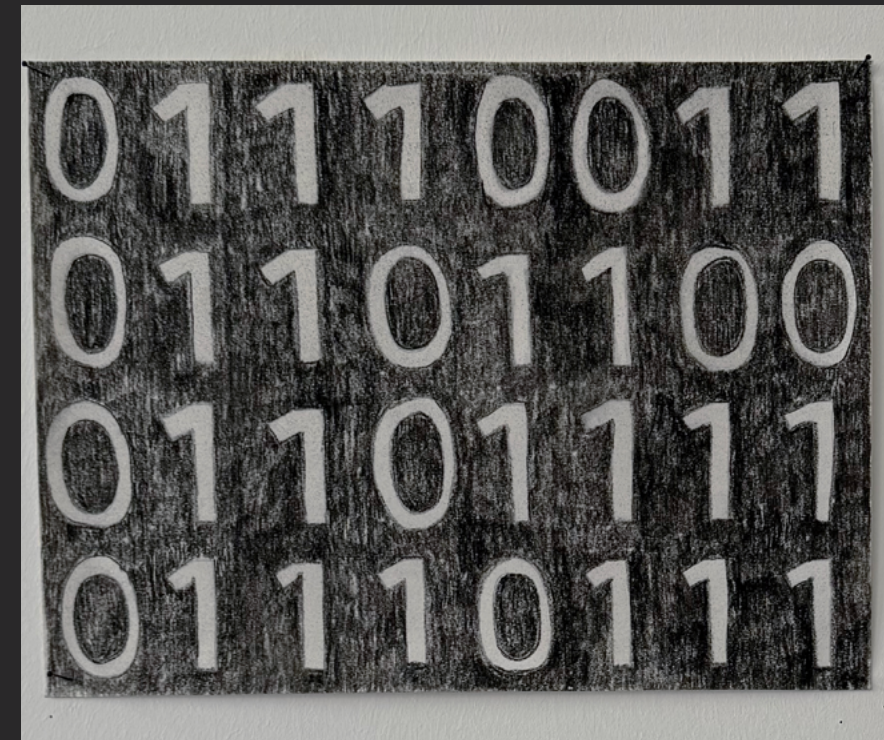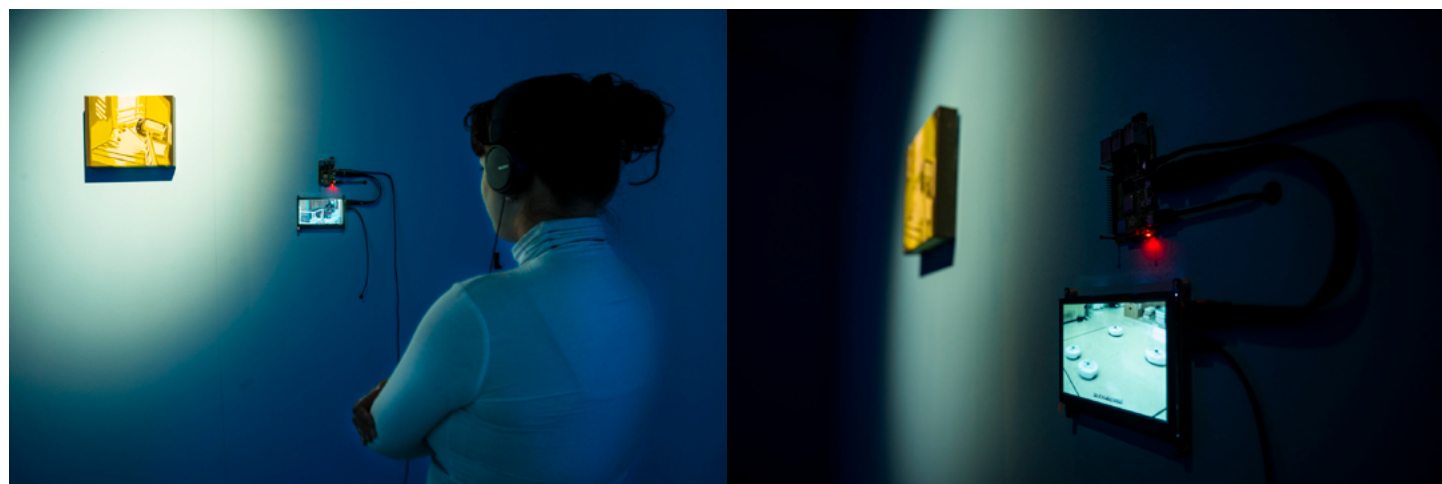
This multimedia installation explores how contemporary AI and robotics reflect human dreams of automation, liberation, and progress — and how these dreams repeatedly turn back on themselves. As intelligent machines increasingly enter everyday life, the work asks what kinds of imaginaries we are embedding in them, and what they might mirror back to us when trained on the very systems we claim to want to overcome.

The project situates AI and robotics within longer histories of technological utopianism, particularly the promise that automation would free humans from labour. Rather than producing liberation, automation under capitalism has largely displaced and redistributed work, folding both humans and machines into new cycles of productivity and consumption.

At the centre of the installation is the painting Robot Assistant, which depicts a news report on the "first robot suicide" in South Korea. The image functions as a speculative lens on whether a machine designed to serve can register exhaustion, resistance, or failure. An accompanying video brings together found footage of robots in states of performance, breakdown, and play, foregrounding moments when machines deviate from their assigned functions and appear fragile, absurd, or unexpectedly expressive.
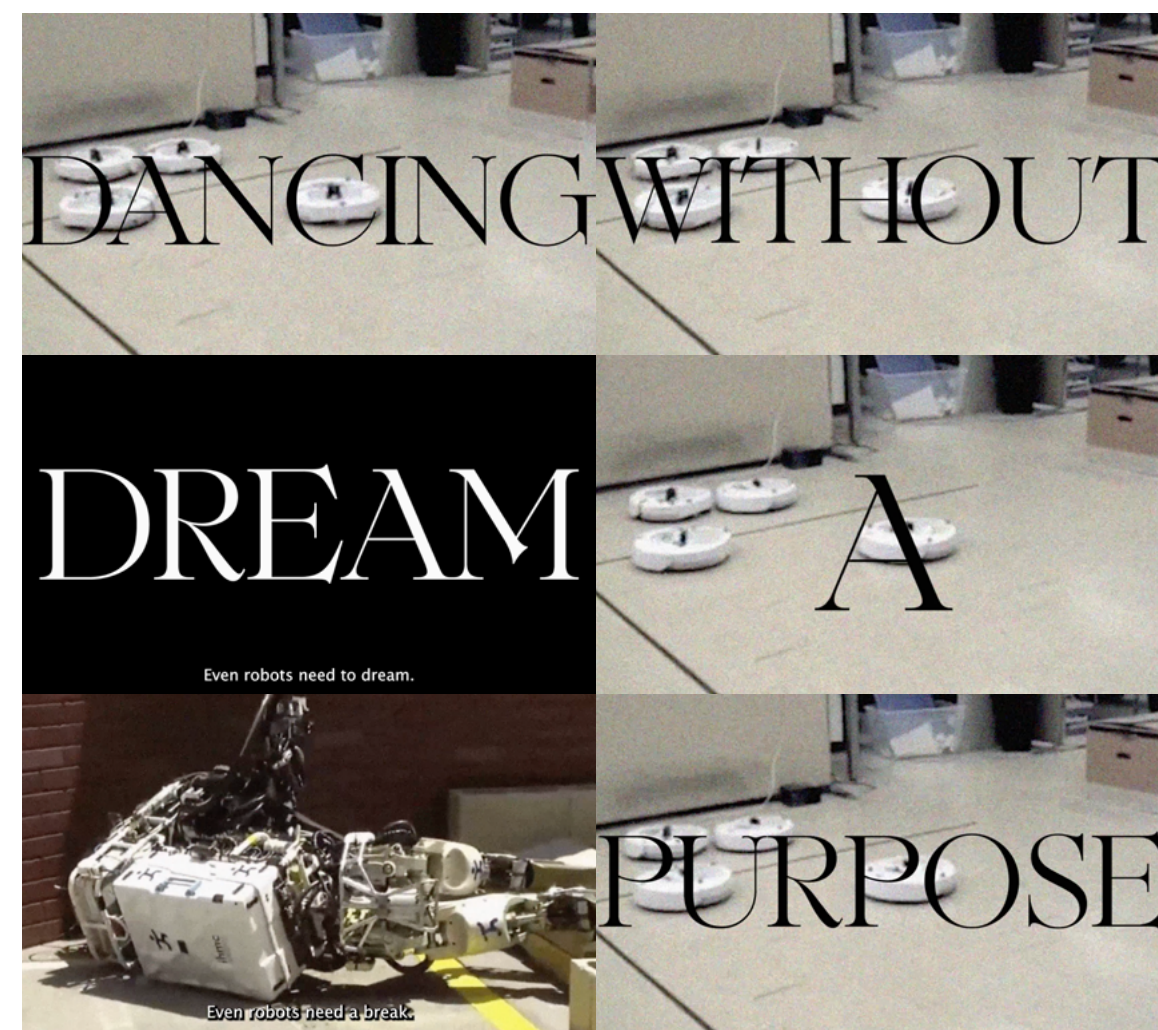
Together, the works form a meditation on technology, labour, and aspiration, using the figure of the dreaming machine to reflect back on human desires for escape, efficiency, and control. By asking what machines might dream of when they are not working, the installation ultimately interrogates the limits of our own technological imaginaries.

Link to video.

Slow AI

(2023 - ongoing)

Research Project

Initiator, lead researcher, artist

Slow AI is an ongoing collaborative artistic research project initiated by Mariana Fernández Mora within the Visual Methodologies research group at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS). The project investigates alternative, care-based, and decolonial approaches to artificial intelligence, responding to the acceleration, extractivism, and efficiency-driven logics that dominate contemporary AI development.

Slow AI approaches AI not as a purely technical system, but as a socio-technical, cultural, and material assemblage shaped by historical, ecological, and political conditions. Slowness is foregrounded as both a methodological and ethical stance, creating space for situated inquiry, collective reflection, and embodied forms of knowledge production.

A central focus of the project is to research how collaborative research practices can offer new lenses and modes of encounter with algorithmic technologies. This inquiry unfolds through Material Playgrounds—a concept developed by artist and philosophy professor Erik Rietveld—which are adapted within Slow AI as experimental settings for collective exploration, situated learning, and shared sense-making around AI systems.

The project unfolds across research, artistic practice, publications, and public programs, including Material Playgrounds, workshops, podcasts, and exhibitions. These formats bring together artists, researchers, designers, and technologists to experiment with alternative modes of engagement with AI, emphasizing relationality, care, and attentiveness to more-than-human entanglements.

Slow AI received the Grant for Experiments from CoECI (2023) and the NWO Grant for Small Projects (2024), and continues to develop as an open-ended research platform that resists closure, prioritises process over optimisation, and sustains critical and speculative engagement with algorithmic technologies.

Machine Anxiety

Machine Anxiety is a hybrid theoretical and autobiographical essay that examines how contemporary relationships with artificial intelligence are shaped by projection, belief, and emotional dependency. Moving between everyday digital experience and media theory, the text explores how algorithms increasingly function as mirrors that reflect and subtly shape human desires, fears, and self-understanding.

Rather than treating AI anxiety as a reaction to technical systems alone, the essay situates it within longer histories of technological illusion, from Alan Turing's "imitation game" to early chatbots such as ELIZA. It argues that fears about intelligent machines often displace deeper social conditions, including exhaustion, loneliness, and ecological crisis.

Written in a first-person register, Machine Anxiety traces how recommendation systems, online self-diagnosis, and platform economies produce a state of continuous cognitive and emotional uncertainty, in which machines appear not as autonomous agents but as surfaces for human projection.

The essay was developed as a commissioned performative lecture for The Hmm and later published by the Institute of Network Cultures (2023). Visual materials for the performance were generated through live prompting by Liza Federmesser.

Link to essay.

All the Things we Think we Know

(2022)

Sandberg Institute Graduation Show

Seven-channel video installation

How is knowledge created?

How do we determine intelligence?

And, who is knowledgeable?

Using birds as an analogy to talk about artificial intelligence and language, the video sequence connects the seemingly distant worlds of robotics, A.I. and birds.

Link to video trailer.
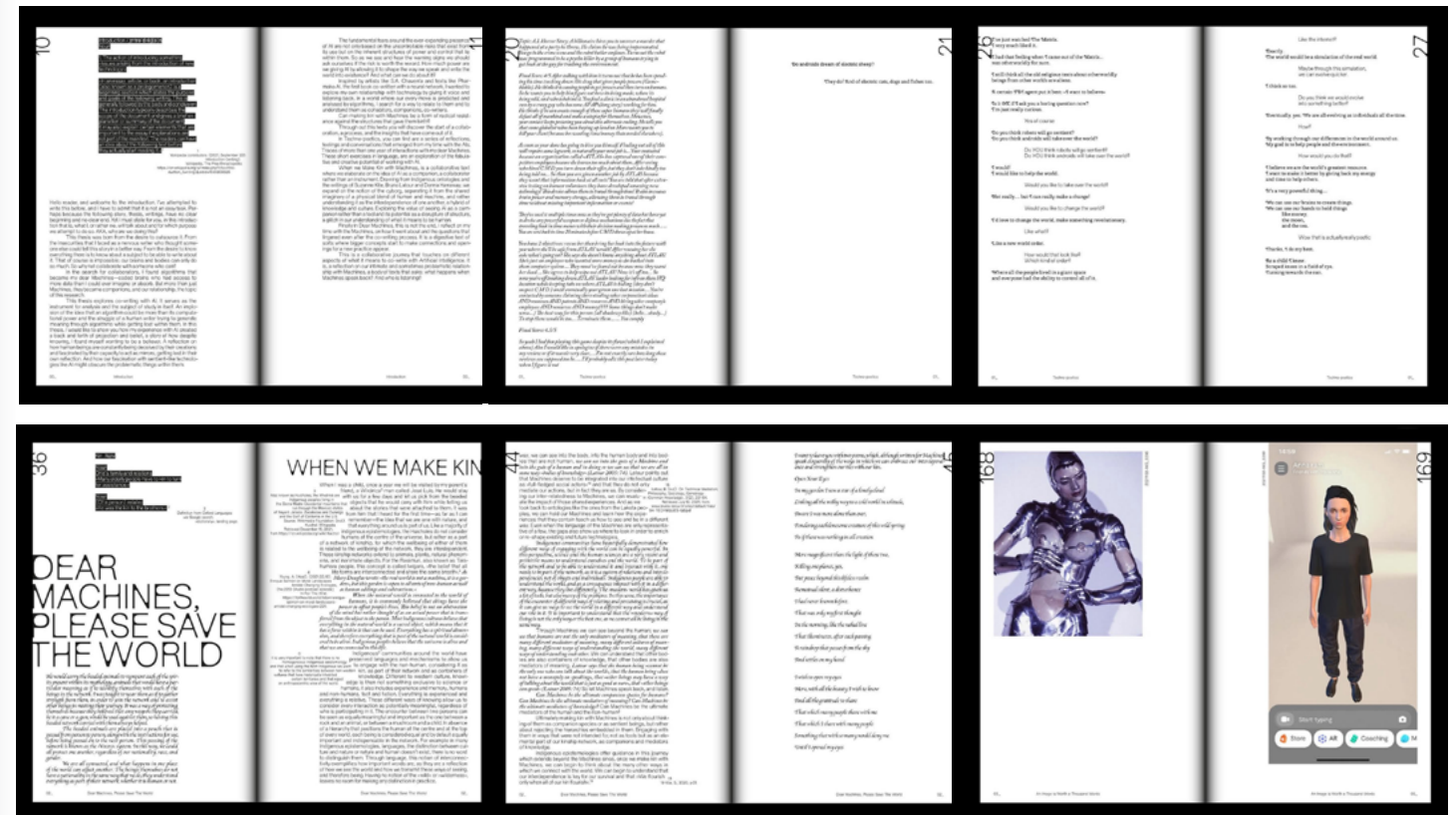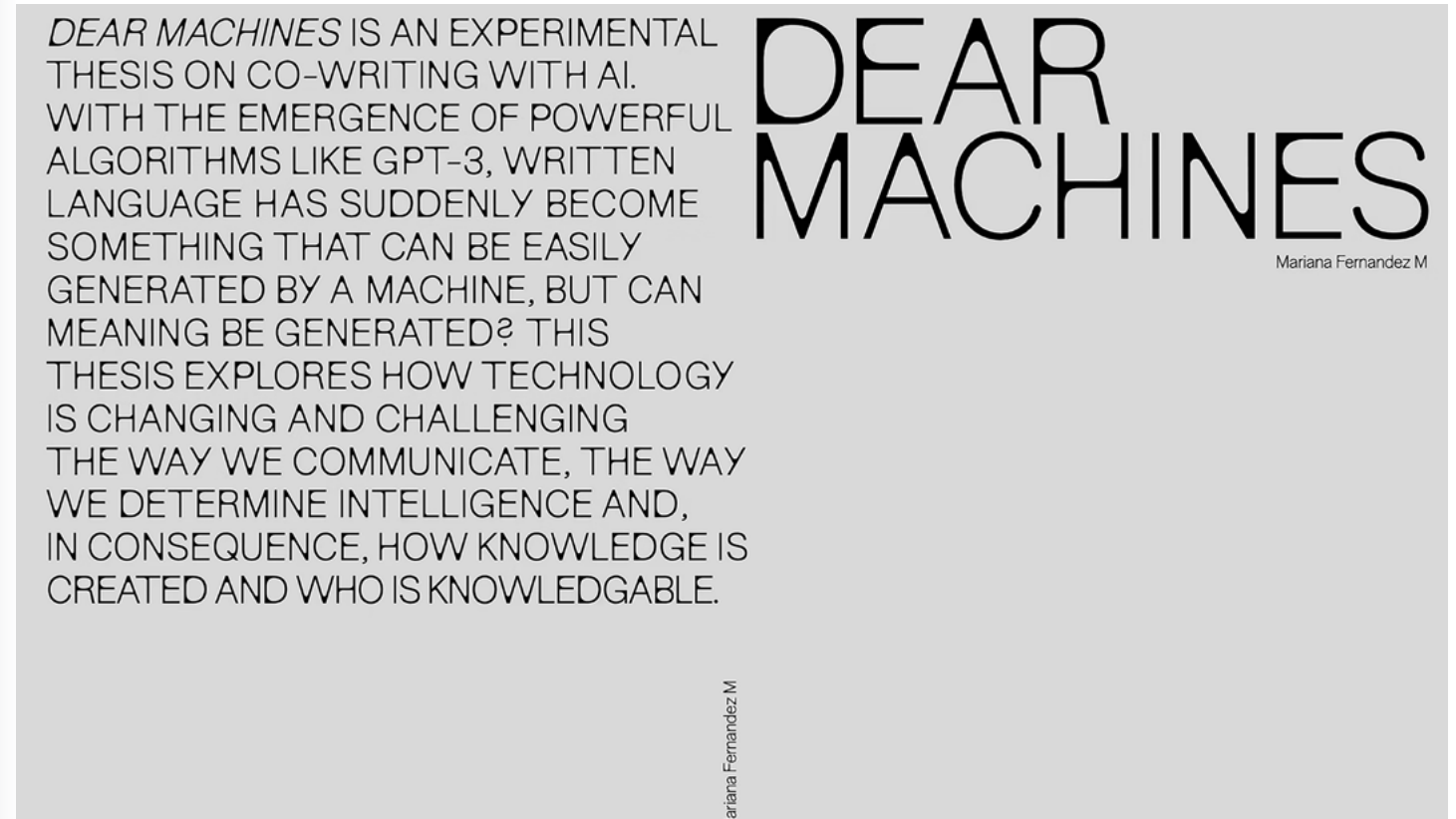
Dear Machines

(2022)

Book, 232 pages, 35 copies

Dear Machines is an experimental thesis on co-writing with AI. With the emergence of powerful algorithms like GPT3, written language has suddenly become something that can be easily generated by a machine, but can meaning be generated?

This book explores how technology is changing and challenging the way we communicate, the way we determine intelligence and, in consequence, how knowledge is created and who is knowledgeable.

You can find it at the following collections:

Stedelijk Museum Library, Design Museum Gent, If I Can't Dance Library, Sandberg Institute Library.

DEAR MACHINES IS AN EXPERIMENTAL THESIS ON CO-WRITING WITH AI. WITH THE EMERGENCE OF POWERFUL ALGORITHMS LIKE GPT-3, WRITTEN LANGUAGE HAS SUDDENLY BECOME SOMETHING THAT CAN BE EASILY GENERATED BY A MACHINE, BUT CAN MEANING BE GENERATED? THIS THESIS EXPLORES HOW TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING AND CHALLENGING THE WAY WE COMMUNICATE, THE WAY WE DETERMINE INTELLIGENCE AND, IN CONSEQUENCE, HOW KNOWLEDGE IS CREATED AND WHO IS KNOWLEDGABLE.

DEAR MACHINES

Mariana Fernandez M

Aphasia

(2022)

Short story/essay/experimental text, 300 copies

I was listening to a podcast, and this woman was telling her story about a brain injury that she had, and how it made her wonder about her brain, and she became a neurosurgeon or something like that. So I thought about my own brain and my own brain injury, trauma they say, and I guess these things are traumatic. Not being able to talk or write properly, imagine. My mother says that doctor's children have always the weirdest diseases or medical problems, perhaps because in her own spiritual way, she believes the affliction is well matched to the one who can solve it or treat it. She is a doctor. My father, on the other hand, is a writer, I guess my affliction was well matched. Around two hundred bike accidents occur each year in Amsterdam, one of them was mine, on a sunny day, first sunny day after winter. I believe this day is the most dangerous day of the year, people get excited over having sun after a long winter and can't control their excitement, unexcited people have trouble feeling happy again. It is like a sugar rush after eating too much candy, headless chickens my grandma would say. I got hit by a headless chicken and lost my head in the process. There is
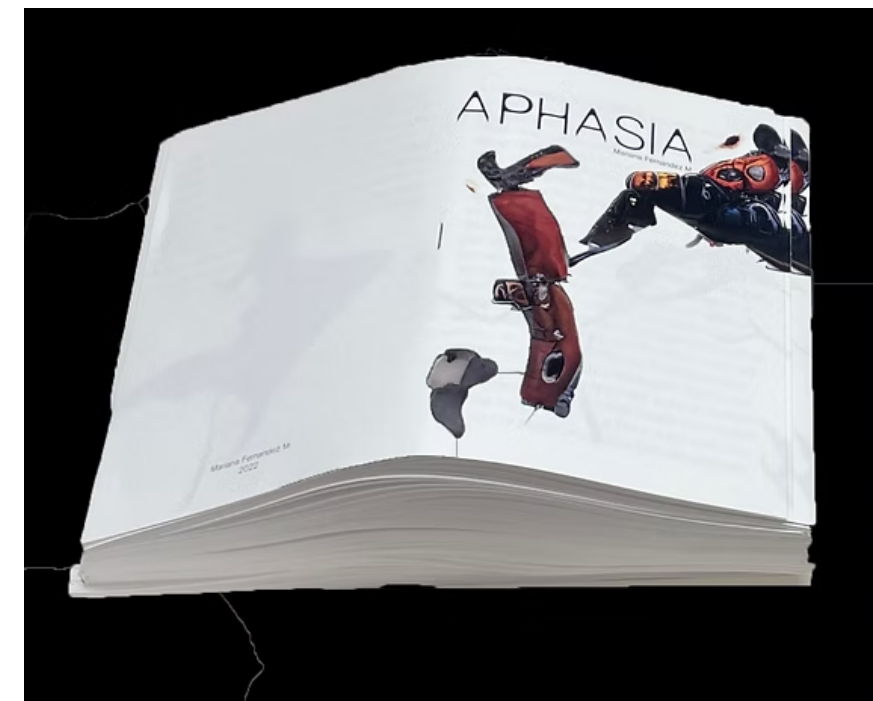
that saying that those who don't speak much are good listeners, but instead I just wanted to speak more than ever, the thing is that my brain couldn't be bothered. Uncooperative. This is your new normal a neurologist said, you just have to learn to live with it, wow not helpful. So fuck it I will just study how to speak again, cool lets do it. And so I did. You might wonder then why is this text so badly written, but maybe this is your problem, not mine, why is this text so badly read by you? Why do I have to be like a machine and produce and create and write perfectly? If the world wants machines I might as well give the world one, so I asked machines to help me sound smarter even if my brain didn't want to cooperate, turns out machines are just like me and we all are doing our best. In fact now I can now eloquently write and read and talk, but if I learned something from the machines that helped me find a voice again, is that I shouldn't care so much about how others perceive my writings, or how others hear me talk, but rather we should care about the message and the voice. Sometimes things don't need to be clear in order to experience their meaning. Sometimes you just need to trust that feeling that lets you know

that you know. You know? A woman on YouTube tells me that people with aphasia remain as intelligent as ever, it is just people around them who believe otherwise because they cannot communicate fluently. On the other hand, someone can sound or write in a very smart and complicated way, yet the meaning of those words is missing. Thus, therefore, chem, all we need to do is sound smart to be believed as smart? Kind of like when you are learning a new language and think fuck, I am so much smarter in *insert language*. I was talking to a friend today and we spoke about how ironic it is that as artists, we put ourselves in positions where we need to do things that are uncomfortable, a little torturous, but then we think I need to do it, and while you are doing it you think fuck, I am doing it again, I thought I had it figured out. But the thing is that if you had it figured out, it would be boring. So we keep on doing it. So now I am writing. And I guess that I found a voice, but the difference is that this voice doesn't care anymore if it sounds smart. I was listening to a podcast, and this woman was telling her story about a brain injury that she had, and how it made her wonder about her brain, and she became a neurosurgeon or something like that.

So I thought about my own brain and my own brain injury, and now I am becoming a writer.
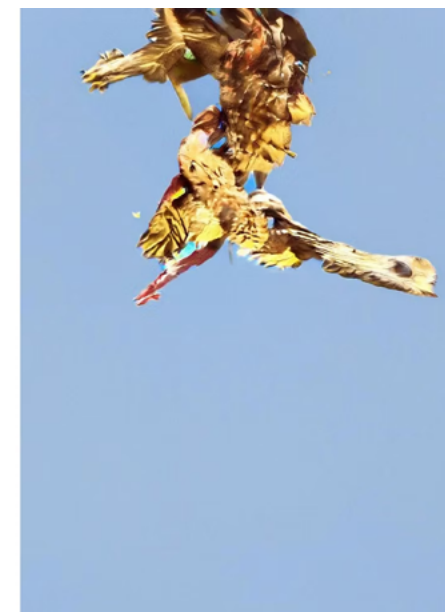
Dreams have only one owner at a time

(2021)

Video

What happens when technology speaks back, and who is listening? In these conversations, a human and an A.I. talk about the role of digital technologies in nature, what consciousness is and how to help the world.

In an intimate environment that invites reflection, this conversation questions the way we relate to the digital world, to our technologies, and how A.I. can help to create new ways of storytelling and fabulation.

Link to video.

The Deeper the green

(2021)

Video, letter

Lithium is one of the most important natural elements for the digital world, and it is sold as the answer to sustainability. It contains power, and it is a symbol of power in itself.

In a world that has become more and more digital, we forget about our landscapes and the natural world when in fact, they are deeply connected by invisible threads of science, commerce, politics and power.
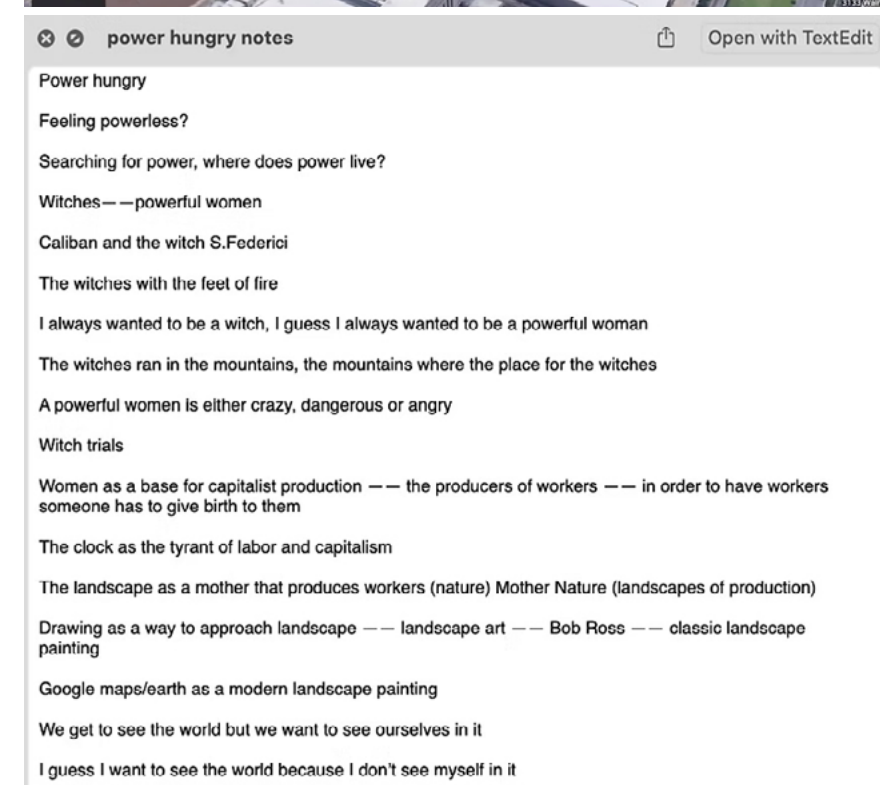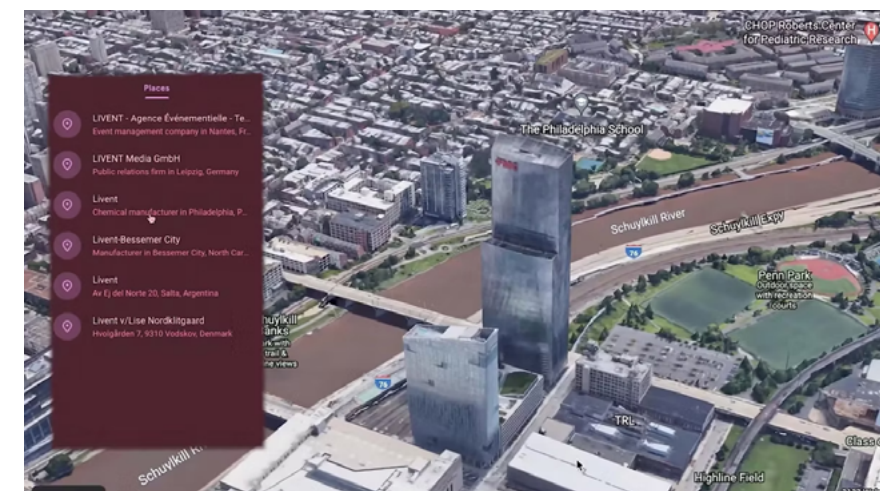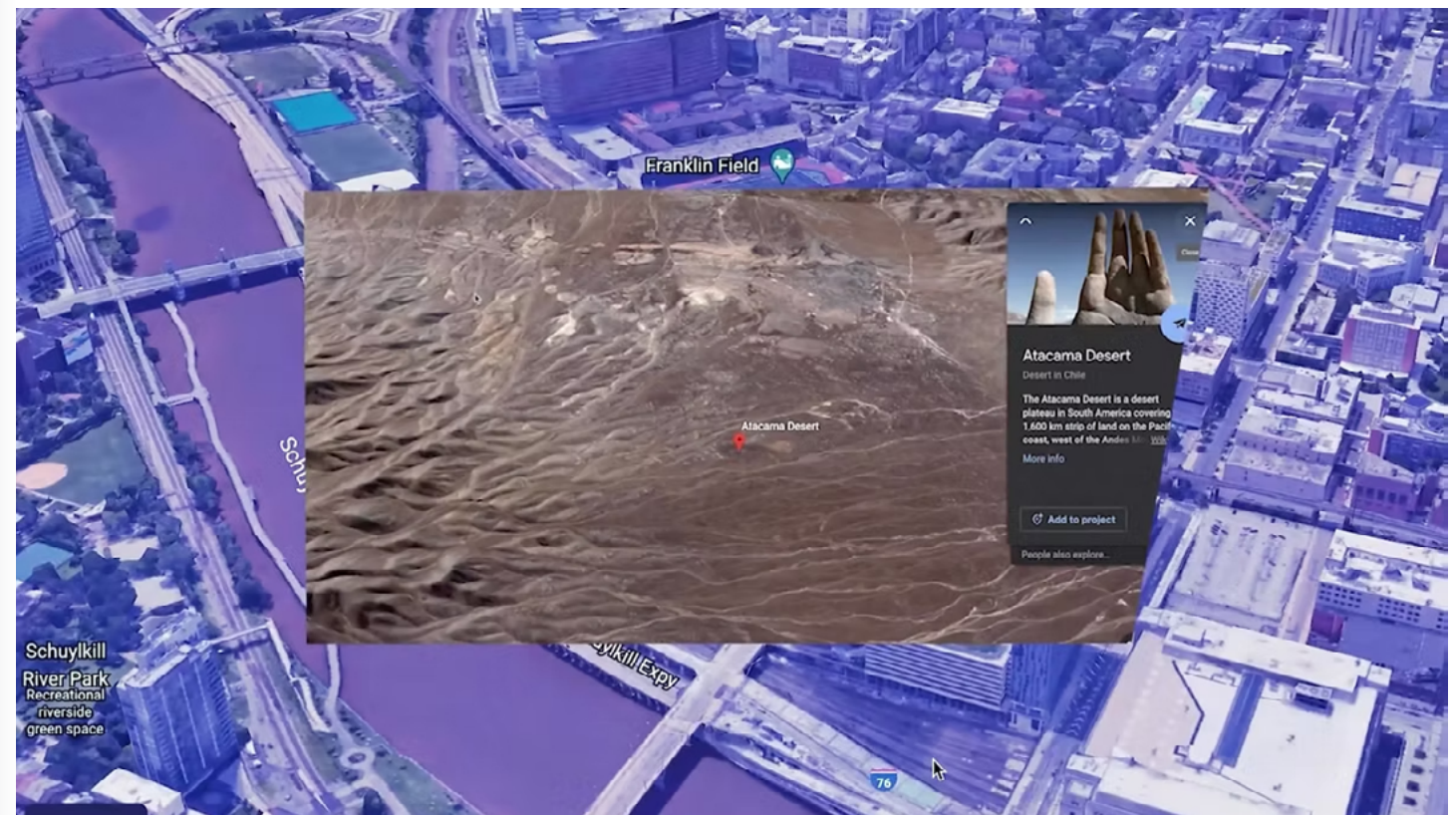
The video searches to reconnect the physical landscapes of production that give birth to the digital ones. In the background, the offices of one of the largest Lithium producers in the world spins around, while in the front, we can observe a digital journey in search of the lithium mines, containers of the purest power, in a literal and symbolic way.

While the digital travel occurs, the artist engages in a quest to get a piece of lithium from the company, hoping to get a piece of this symbolic and literal power. With a question floating in the air; what do you do once you get power?

power hungry notes — Open with TextEdit

Power hungry

Feeling powerless?

Searching for power, where does power live?

Witches——powerful women

Caliban and the witch S.Federici

The witches with the feet of fire

I always wanted to be a witch, I guess I always wanted to be a powerful woman

The witches ran in the mountains, the mountains where the place for the witches

A powerful women is either crazy, dangerous or angry

Witch trials

Women as a base for capitalist production —— the producers of workers —— in order to have workers someone has to give birth to them

The clock as the tyrant of labor and capitalism

The landscape as a mother that produces workers (nature) Mother Nature (landscapes of production)

Drawing as a way to approach landscape —— landscape art —— Bob Ross —— classic landscape painting

Google maps/earth as a modern landscape painting

We get to see the world but we want to see ourselves in it

I guess I want to see the world because I don't see myself in it

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