

*FLIGHT  
MODE*



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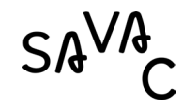
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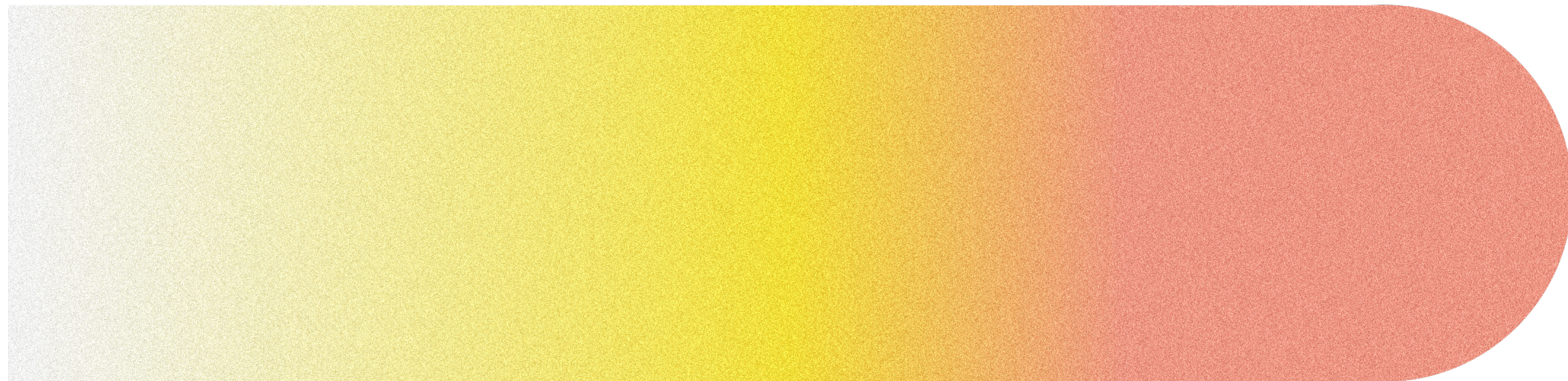
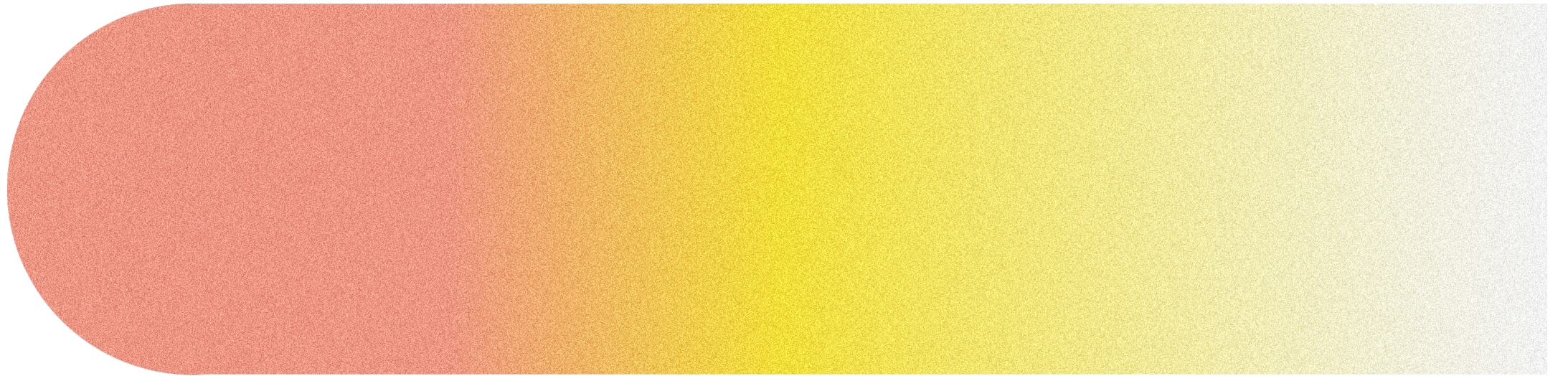
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*INTRODUCTION :*

*CURATOR'S NOTE*



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*FLIGHT MODE* Exhibition  
Sept 21 - Oct 8, 2019

# CURATOR'S NOTE

Staying connected – a virtue so inextricably linked with progress that it seems absurd to question it. We willingly hand over time and attention to the seductive comforts of connective technologies. They, in turn, have carved out a special, intimate place in our lives – on the bedside table at night, at the sink as we brush our teeth, or simply pressed up against us as we move through the day.

About three years ago, I began to notice the subtle side-effects of pervasive connectivity, particularly how solitude had been crowded out of my life. I was alarmed to discover that I spent practically no time alone. My precious focus was almost always directed outward. Waiting at a restaurant was the perfect moment to answer texts and e-mails. My morning commute had been dedicated to catching up on current affairs. I found myself succumbing to these distractions even in the midst of conversation. All day, bits of information came trickling in and settled into the interstices of free time, until an entire area previously dedicated to unstructured thinking was annexed by the pleasures of being online.

I belong to a generation that witnessed the advent of the Internet – a time of immense optimism and hope. This has placed me on a fortuitous cusp, with a nuanced vantage point that I share with several million peers across the globe. Our perspective is fleeting yet significant, for we will be the last to recall a time when connective technologies were tethered to outlets.

Those weary of constant connectivity tend to romanticize the past, believing this to be the only alternative within reach. It seems we can only imagine a calibrated relationship with technology in some distant past, because we can't quite pinpoint when that past unfurled into our current technerosis.

Before connectivity found its way into our pockets, boredom, discomfort, and yearning were familiar territories that everyone had to commute across. The sea of solitude was vast. We swam upstream. Sometimes discovering sunken treasures and other times getting washed up on shore, defeated by an overpowering sense of loneliness.

Finding oneself alone was somehow natural back then. Our schedules were peppered with alone time, during which we retreated and daydreamt in small doses. Our wandering thoughts had ample space to morph into other forms: creativity, reflections, opinions.

The exhibition *Flight Mode* was born out of my curiosity about the erosion of solitude. What could it mean for the individual and society? Countless scientists, creatives, and scholars name solitude as the quiet force that fuels their imagination [Storr, 1988]. In my research, I discovered that spending time alone is tied to the quality of our personal narratives. [Harris, 2017] Surprisingly, it improves our relationships with others as well. [Harris, 2017] Being in solitude is essential - essential in that it is a core human experience and essential because it is necessary. Yet somehow, our social scripts have evolved to orient us away from solitude. We have come to believe that there is no reason to spend any time alone and that the pain of loneliness can simply be done away with - as long as we have the right apps, ample friends, and the ability to remain online.

What's worse, even if we do find ourselves alone by accident, it is immediately perceived as a failure. We become forlorn in our own company. The place to be is often somewhere else, in the company of others, or in the know. We are so preoccupied with the fear of missing out or performing our best selves, we certainly aren't paying much attention to being by ourselves.

In a span of two decades, it has become second nature to override our need for solitude in order to participate in an increasingly connected world. But our minds, adaptive as they are, haven't forgotten their predilection for it. I suspect that because of this we carry within us an imperceptible grief, a plea for a connection inward. This is at the heart of the paradoxical epidemic of loneliness at a time when we have ever-more avenues to keep in touch.

*Flight Mode* deals with the premise of "The Uncomfortable Now". Three words emblematic of the feeling of unease as we bear witness to an uncharted shift in social norms due to connective technologies. The phrase also represents our inability to be in the moment due to the ever-present call of connection.

This project imagines a future in which solitude is salient once again, as a teacher and essential trait of the human condition. It seeks to re-calibrate the utopia of staying connected, to reflect our analog bodies and our imperfect relationships in the tools that are built to serve us.

In 2018, the Economist featured an article, "All the Lonely People", claiming that loneliness is now a serious public-health problem. Around the same time, many developed countries started tracking the epidemic of loneliness in their populations. In the United States, researchers have identified through surveys that for the first time in history the younger cohorts (aged 18-22) report feeling lonelier than aged Americans. This is possibly due to the nature of the modern workplace, abundant use of social media, and reduced social interactions.

In Britain, Theresa May launched a loneliness strategy in October 2018. It includes protocols for the National Institute of Health to deal with this crisis, including the ability for GPs to prescribe community activities to patients who report experiencing loneliness. Tracey Crouch, is now Britain's first 'Minister for Loneliness', she will be in charge of implementing this strategy by 2023.

## THE UNCOMFORTABLE NOW

The premise laid out above was presented in the form of a sixteen-day exhibition called *Flight Mode*. The exhibition's design was based on the idea of layering, in space, subtle reminders about solitude. This conceptual thread ran through the

nested spaces of experience: the site, the module, and the installations. Together, the spaces of experience and reminders allowed visitors to notice their subjective responses and ultimately, practice being in solitude.

## THE SITE

*Flight Mode* was presented against a backdrop of towering grain silos. The silos, located on the Parliament Slip of the Eastern Toronto Waterfront, were built in 1944 to support the activities of Canadian Breweries. In 1954, they were acquired by Procter & Gamble and renamed to Victory Soya Mills Silos. They changed hands once again in 1980 when Central Soy Incorporated bought and renamed them to Central Soya Mills.

Throughout their lifecycle, these silos and their adjacent lot remained destined for industrial use because of their proximity to the lake. Incoming cargo ships could easily access these storage facilities through existing waterways. They floated grain packed in shipping containers from agricultural sites and deposited it at processing plants in cities.

The silos operated for over 50 years before falling into disuse. The sorting silos, headhouse tower, and other structures were demolished in 1996, leaving behind just the storage silos. They remain abandoned even today, situated on a dusty field that was once a large industrial complex, now relegated to the function of a parking lot.

By bringing public engagement to this post-industrial landscape, *Flight Mode* alludes to the potential of reclamation. Just as disused urban sites can be restored to fully-functioning ecologies with proper investment and care, so can a dialogue with our inner selves.

This piece of Toronto's heritage has been largely ignored in a city that is otherwise under pressure from unbridled growth. Recently, activity has returned to this neighbourhood as new developments spring up in the vicinity of this disused site. Most notably, Sidewalk Labs, an Alphabet company has set up offices across the street. This sister-company to Google is designing an entire district that responds to current issues in urban growth. The company seeks urban innovation modeled on insights from data collected in its smart neighbourhoods

The juxtaposition of a disused site and a neighbourhood of unparalleled connectivity is analogous to the tension between our interior dialogue and our online presence. Therefore, the site provides a perfect setting to contemplate our current circumstances and perhaps question where we are headed.



Grain silos at 333 Lakeshore Blvd. East



*FLIGHT MODE* with open containers

## THE MODULE

*Flight Mode* featured two immersive installations to engage visitors with the question of solitude. The artworks were presented inside two standard shipping containers. This particular module was chosen to house the works because it speaks to solitude on three levels.

First, a shipping container can be added to any site or context – an open field, a street corner, or even a parking lot – and it immediately introduces a condition of interiority. This interiority functions as a symbol for the inner self and also demonstrates the quiet and focussed state needed to access it.

Second, containers are a tangible manifestation of globalization. We are now connected in unprecedented ways. Just as the internet connects us by sending data from one corner of the earth to another, containers facilitate a consistent flow of goods across the globe. These two revolutions have effectively shown us new ways to attain physical and virtual proximity.

Finally, shipping containers have seen a resurgence in contemporary culture because of pop-up events and temporary site activations. Brands recognize that the online and print media landscape is saturated. Consumers, in response, show signs of attention fatigue – an inability to assimilate this information overload. So, agile marketers have identified a new pathway to attract consumers : experiences. It is not uncommon to stumble across an example of such a branded experience. They occupy public spaces and engage audiences with products and services through *in real life* interactions. In the context of *Flight Mode*, the intention is to co-opt this recent trend and draw attention to the disappearance of solitude.

Containers then, quite naturally, touch on some core themes of the premise: interiority, connectivity, and presence.

## THE INSTALLATIONS



Installation view of *Ecolocation*

“The Uncomfortable Now” was the starting point for the two installations featured in *Flight Mode*. Artists Hagop Ohannessian and Lily Jeon were invited to occupy a separate container and respond to the premise in their own way. Each delivered an immersive response that elaborated on an aspect of solitude: Hagop tackled the theme of *Solitude and Nature* and Lily spoke about *Solitude and the Self*. They added to the exhibition their unique perspectives, delivering art experiences that one could walk into.

*Ecolocation*, by Hagop Ohannessian, suggested that solitude is indispensable when it comes to forming an integrated understanding of nature. He considers our fractured relationship with it at present, pointing to the ongoing devastation of our oceans. His installation presented the multi-sensorial perspective of whales – intelligent beings who play a vital role in marine ecosystems. Whales are forced to navigate a habitat strewn with noise and plastic pollution, by-products of the global shipping industry. By creating a contemplative environment, Hagop generated empathy for their threatened existence and further, made a sobering connection between the state of our marine ecosystems and that of our own habitat. Both fragile and yet, neglected.

While Hagop’s installation contained a statement about the aggregate effect of our actions, Lily Jeon addressed the premise on a personal scale. She explored the interplay between solitude and self in *Antiprism* by providing a visible interface for movement based-meditation. Lily comments on the sensory overload caused by constant connectivity and suggests that being bombarded by stimulation paralyzes our minds, making them go blank. She explores how mindfulness can help us recognize ourselves by slowing down, developing patience, and fostering deeply personal experiences.

It was important for both installations to spur curiosity. They stood as experimental actions awaiting interaction with a primed audience – visitors who were open to being in the present and re-discover the value of solitude. Inside each container, they encountered an installation with the right settings to reflect on solitude.

The installations had two common attributes: they were immersive and minimal. Immersive in the sense that they engaged multiple senses at once. They grounded visitors in the present and shielded them from the distractions that have become part of life.

Minimal in that they adopted a less-is-more approach. The installations offered unfinished products, with gaps that visitors could fill in with their own subjectivity. These attributes were designed to foster an active art experience, to transform the containers into productive spaces within which spontaneous thoughts and interpretations could occur.

## THE EXPERIENCE

The above-mentioned aspects of the curatorial framework function in tandem to foreground solitude, which is otherwise disappearing. They provided the right parameters to bring the exhibition's audience into a state of awareness, so that visitors could take note of solitude's potential and understand what is required to safeguard it.

Solitude is a deeply personal experience. In planning this exhibition, I grew interested in the possibility of multiple subjective experiences in response to the installations on display. At the same time, I felt that the project should leave behind actionable strategies to re-introduce solitude into our busy schedules. These two lines of enquiry came to inform the writing workshop that accompanied this exhibition.

The workshop allowed visitors to write about their reflections on solitude after experiencing the installations on display. It blended mindfulness techniques with writing exercises. The generated writings are collected and published in this catalogue as reviews.

— PRACHI  
KHANDEKAR  
Curator, *Flight Mode*



Installation View of *Antiprism*

# PUBLIC SPACE

As the public advocate and steward of the waterfront revitalization, Waterfront Toronto has been tasked with creating well-designed and vibrant cultural, recreational, civic and public spaces. We believe that a dynamic public art program is an integral component of a successful public realm, helping to integrate pieces like Jill Anholt's Light Showers into the infrastructure of Sherbourne Common and LIGHT KEEPER by Caitlind Brown, Wayne Garrett and Studio North into the brand-new Aitken Place Park in East Bayfront.

Beyond Waterfront Toronto's program for permanent art, temporary arts and culture programming has the potential to activate public spaces along the water's edge, bringing people to the shoreline time and again. The rapidly changing landscape of our waterfront creates a backdrop of contrast, transition, and growth for art projects to foster healthy public dialogue on timely issues.

We were thrilled to support SAVAC by providing a site for *Flight Mode*. In its current transitional use as a car park, 333 Lakeshore Boulevard East is an open space that stretches from the Gardiner Expressway to Lake Ontario. On the west side, the round grain "elevators" of the gigantic decommissioned Victory Soya Mills Silos create a connection to the post-industrial lands in the midst of the burgeoning East Bayfront district. The exhibition's shipping containers, while being versatile receptacles for the two installations, were a perfect fit for the site.

It was a pleasure to collaborate with Prachi Khandekar on this project. Hagop Ohannessian and Lily Jeon's creativity and hard work were inspiring. Their installations *Ecolocation* and *Antiprism* were contrasting and complimentary, thoughtful and thought-provoking.

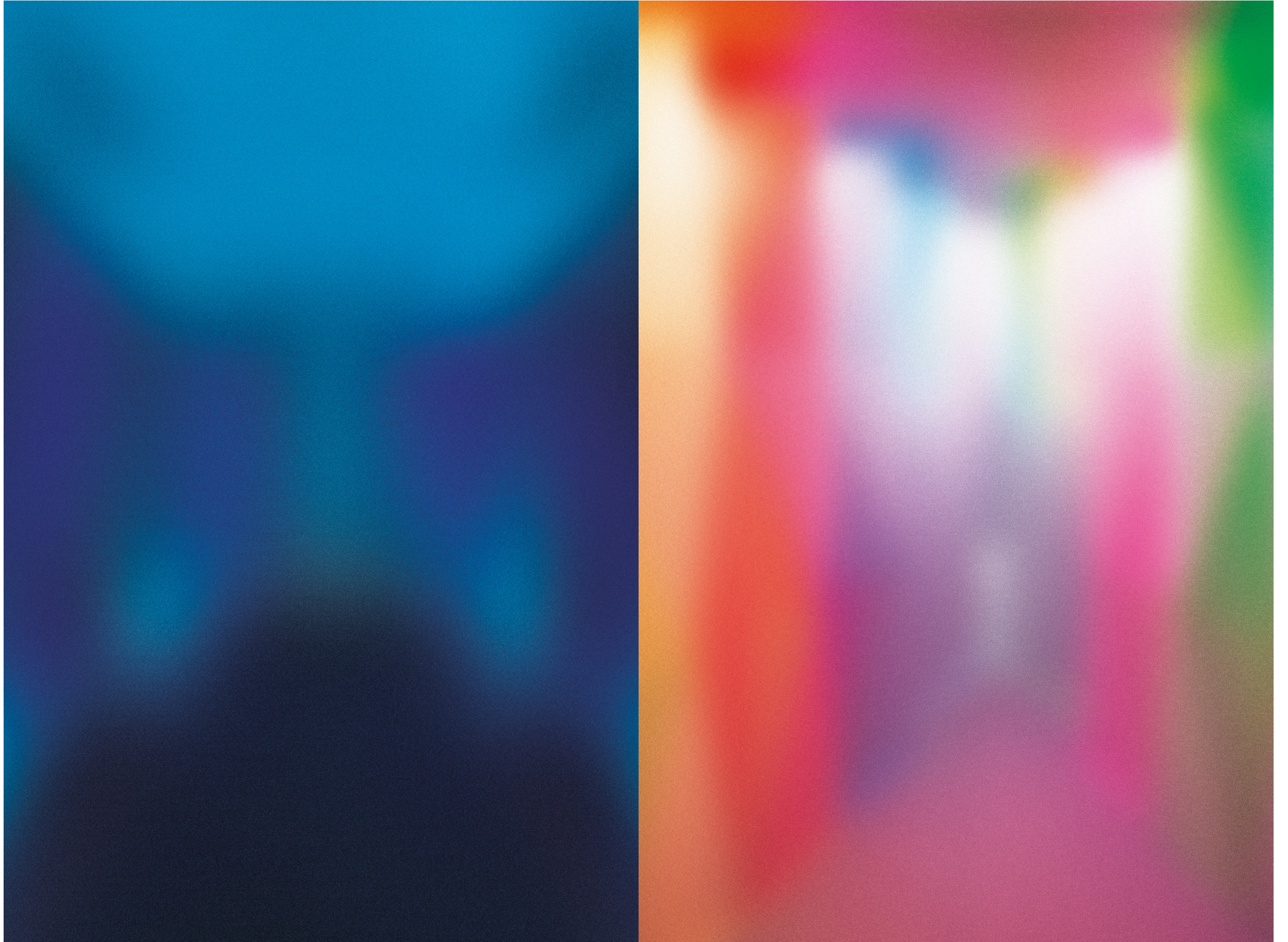
— CHLOË CATÁN,  
Public Art Program Manager,  
Waterfront Toronto



Grain silos and parking lot at Waterfront Toronto's revitalization area

*ARTISTS*

*AND*



*INSTALLATIONS*



The underwater environment of *Ecolocation*

# *ECO- LOCATION*

UPON ENTERING, KEEP TO THE MIDDLE OF THE CONTAINER.

THE PANELS, LINED ALONG THE LENGTH OF THE CONTAINER SHOW SPECTOGRAMS, IMAGES OF SOUND PATTERNS FROM SELECT WHALE AND CETACEANS SPECIES.

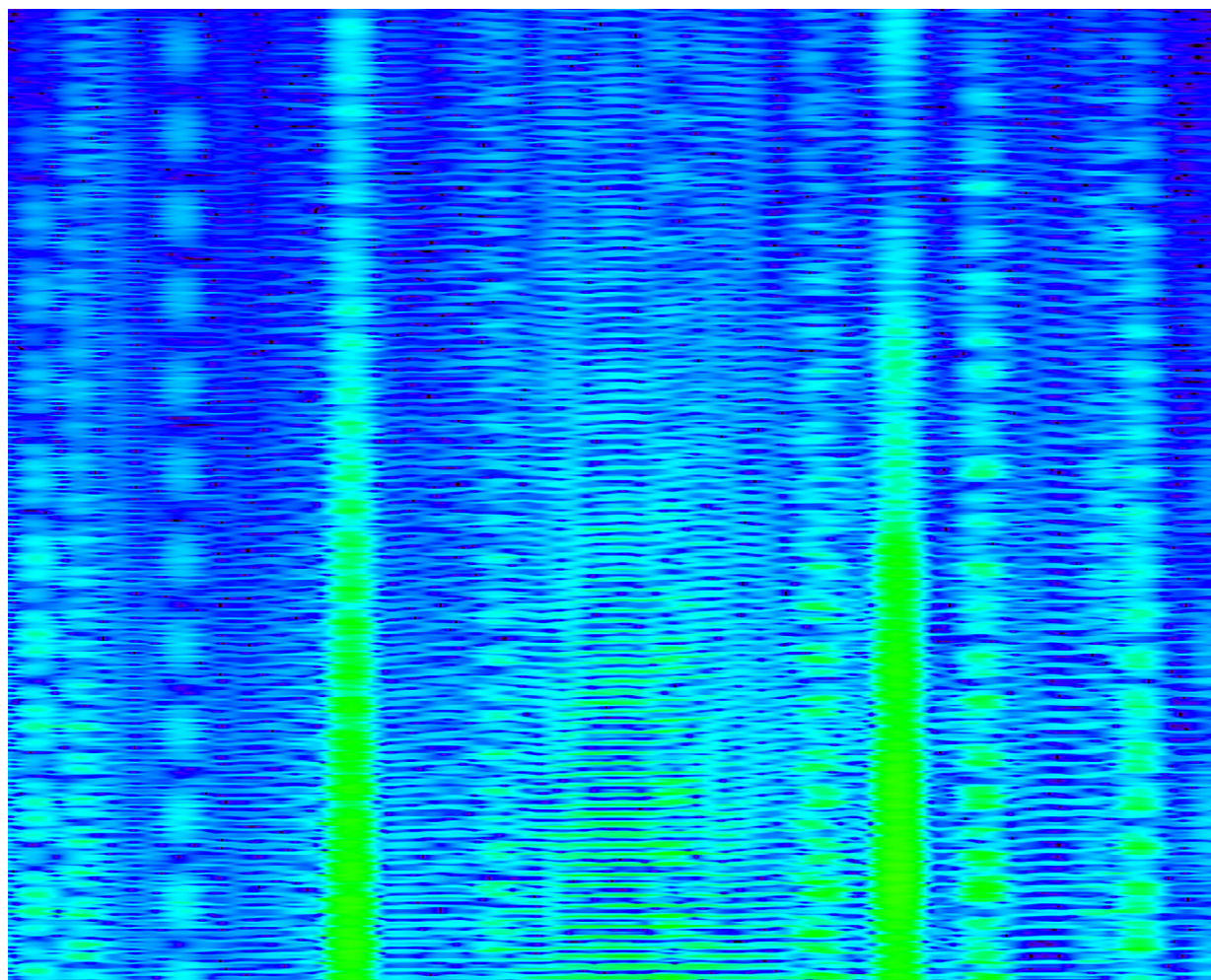
LISTEN AS THEY COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER WITH CALLS AND CLICKS.

THE 20 MINUTE SOUNDTRACK ENDS WITH AN UNSETTLING CRESCENDO, BRINGING INTO THIS CALM SONIC REALITY STRANGE AND LOUD INTERFERENCES FROM SEISMIC TESTING. YOU ARE INVITED TO EMPHATHIZE WITH THE WHALES, SIT THROUGH THE DISTRESS CAUSED BY THESE INTERFERENCES, FOR AS LONG AS YOU ARE COMFORTABLE.

A SPACE OF MINDFUL CONTEMPLATION  
THAT INVITES THE VIEWER INTO  
THE WHALE'S WORLD AND AIMS TO  
CULTIVATE A FEELING OF EMPATHY  
FOR WHALES AND THEIR VITAL ROLE  
WITHIN THE OCEAN ECOSYSTEM.

In today's world, our conscious attention is absorbed and mediated by devices that promise to make us more connected, fulfilled, and have better lives. Yet, they also contribute to greater disconnection and alienation from ourselves, from others, and from the natural world. These devices are produced, purchased, and disposed of in an accelerating cycle of overconsumption and waste, driven by an economic system that values investment and growth over ecological and human well-being.

Ecosystems are on the verge of collapse: from the climate crisis to the acidification of the oceans, plastic pollution, overfishing, mass extinction. At the same time, we jump from one app to another, mindlessly trying to fill a void that's elusive. We consume junk information and products to self-actualize and belong, but only serve to distract ourselves and conceal the impacts of our consumption from our core environment.



Spectrogram of Atlantic Right Whale

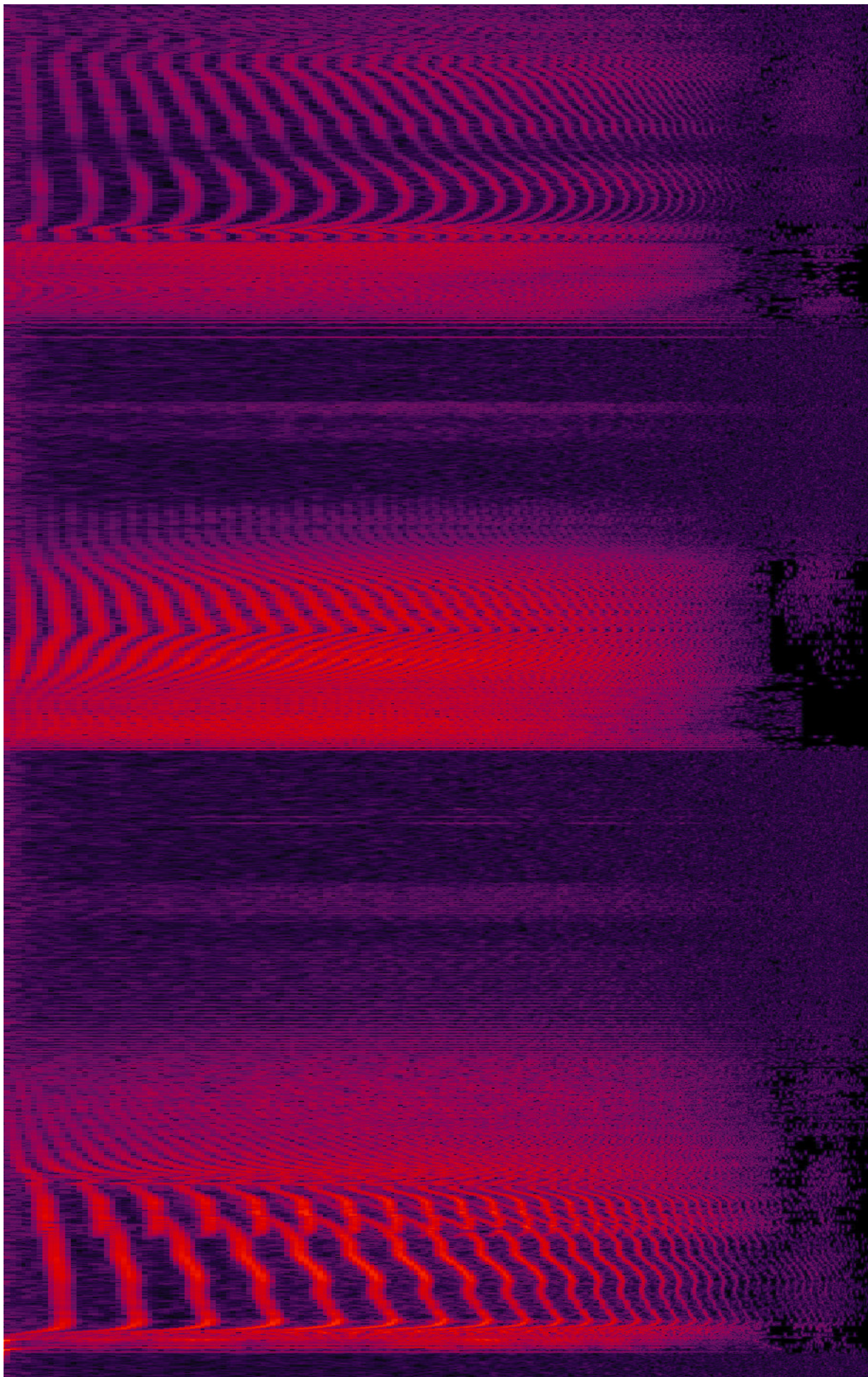


Wave patterns thrown off by vibrating plastic screens

When Prachi first shared her idea for *Flight Mode*, an exhibition that reclaims the shipping container as a space of solitude and contemplation, I immediately understood the powerful connection between global shipping, the experience of attentional fragmentation, and the devastation of marine ecosystems around the world. My installation *Ecolocation* occupies the shipping container not just as a space, but also as an artefact of the global economic system and consumer culture, which relies on shipping to transport the majority of the goods we use.

*Ecolocation* appropriates the shipping container to create a space of mindful contemplation. It invites the visitor to see things from a whale's perspective, to cultivate a feeling of empathy for whales and understands their vital role within the ocean ecosystem. It seeks to do this not by directly representing whales, but by creating an intersubjective experience that brings the visitor into the whale's internal, multisensory experience of its environment.

Whales perceive their world in an advanced manner. They have eyes like us, but they also use echolocation to perceive and communicate with other whales that are hundreds of kilometers away. They use a wide range of songs, clicks, and hisses, ranging from short repetitive calls to cyclical songs with complex structures and harmonies.



Spectrogram of Vaquita

The installation consisted of six acoustic panels, depicting spectrograms of vocalizations from six cetacean species: the Right Whale, Vaquita, Orca, Dolphin, Pilot Whale, and Rissos's Dolphin. The panels, and spectrograms, were enclosed in reclaimed plastic sheets. Each panel had a loudspeaker inducer attached to the back, through which the underwater soundscape was brought to life. A 20 minute, 6-channel soundtrack was played on loop through these panels, incorporating vocalizations from the natural world as well as noise pollution from the shipping industry. The soundtrack ended with an uncomfortably loud crescendo - explosions from nearby dredging operations. The arrangement of panels all around the interior circumference, throwing out sound vibrations and visible wave patterns, created an overall effect that transported visitors into the world of whales.

These gentle giants sustain the nutrient cycle in oceans by eating and diving, which in turn makes our oceans bloom with life. Whales play an instrumental role in the oceanic carbon cycle. They help absorb more carbon than rainforests and produce half of the planet's oxygen supply. Their survival is critical for the health of oceans and indeed, our own survival. Despite this, species are disappearing without much effort to protect their populations. Current species on the brink of extinction include the North Atlantic Right Whale, Southern Resident Orcas, and the Vaquita - a tiny porpoise that lives only in the Baja coast, of which only 30 remain.

With 7.8 billion humans and counting, even seemingly small behaviours have a major impact. Our modus operandi is becoming homogenized globally; the trend of online shopping, take-out lunches, luxury consumption and mass tourism now spans the world. This in turn creates massive amounts of garbage, places demands on our depleting resources, and sends more carbon cycling through the atmosphere.

*Ecolocation* subverts the shipping container as a vessel for global trade by using it to contemplate how our culture and economy of overconsumption affects whales - intelligent, social, and vital inhabitants of our marine ecosystems. It also makes a direct link between disruptions in the whale's environment and disruptions caused by connective technologies in our mental space. My aim with this installation was to invite visitors to have an empathic connection with whales by creating an immersive environment. I wish to transport visitors to that state through sound and deep listening.



Spectrogram panels transformed into speakers

— HAGOP  
OHANNESSIAN  
MULTIMEDIA ARTIST



Stark white entrance to *Antiprism*

YOU WILL START IN A STARK WHITE ENTRYWAY. BEFORE PROCEEDING, PLEASE PUT AWAY YOUR PHONES.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH.

WATCH YOUR HEAD AS YOU GO PAST THE THRESHOLD AND TRANSITION INTO A SENSORY SPACE.

INSIDE, YOU WILL BE GIVEN PROMPTS ON HOW TO ENGAGE WITH THE SPACE THROUGH MOVEMENT.

TAKE YOUR TIME, BE CURIOUS, WANDER SLOWLY.

INTERACT WITH THE SPACE AND OBSERVE AS YOUR GESTURES ACTIVATE YOUR SENSES.

# ANTI- PRISM



Past the threshold, a soft space with pressure sensors

*THIS PROJECT WAS AN ODE TO  
THE SENSES, BECAUSE YOU CANNOT  
CONTROL THE WORLD AROUND YOU,  
BUT YOU CAN CONTROL HOW IT  
EXISTS THROUGH YOUR PERCEPTION.*

There are ceaseless suppliers of fear, anxiety, guilt, insecurity all around us - our culture, our hyper-technological society, our absorption about our ego, our superego, constantly overwhelm and threaten our wellbeing, whispering sour nothings into our ears.

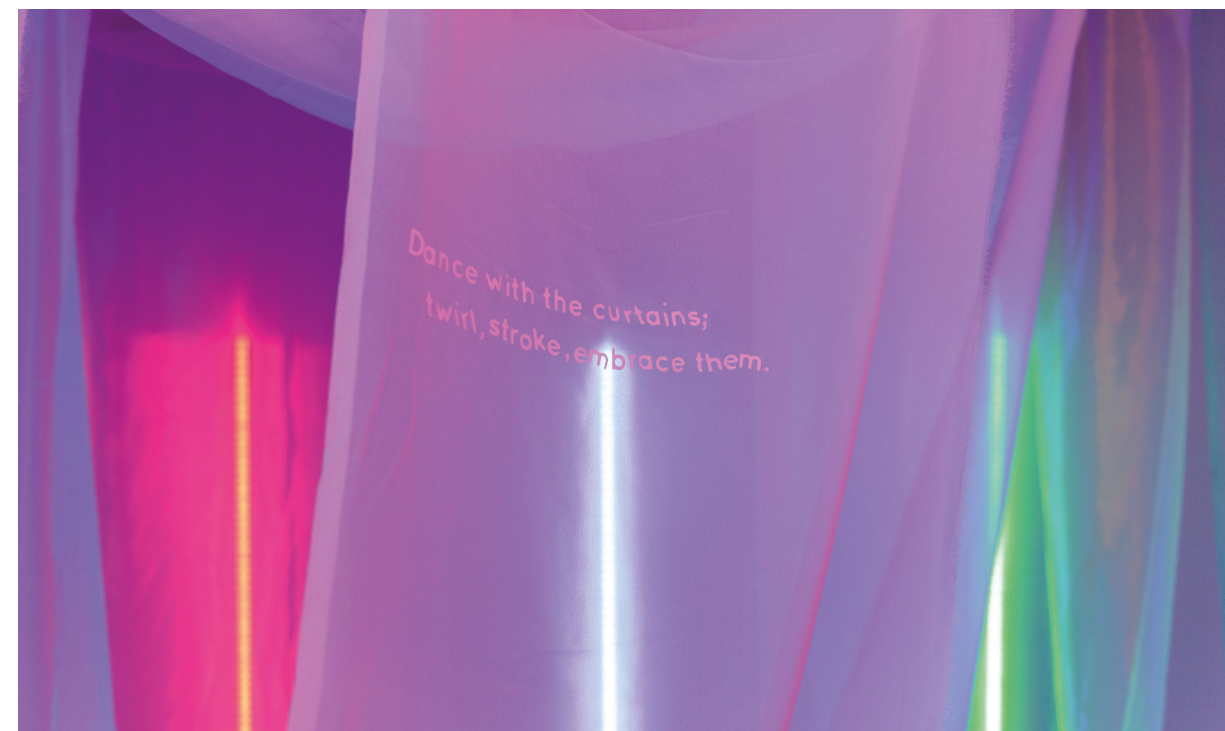
There was a time of trauma when I suffered from feeling a vast, distressing disparity between how I perceived myself through the world's lens and how I actually felt. It was detrimental. It felt impossible to turn off thoughts of scrutiny that originated from the outside world. Sitting in silence with my own thoughts, trying to meditate them away, eyes closed, sitting still, was simply overwhelming and impossible.

I found solace in logic - the logic that nothing is logical. There is no right or wrong, just your choice to perceive things in a certain way. Perception is a two-way conversation. Once you lead the conversation with an open, non-judgemental, warm, curious mind, what will follow will harmonize...

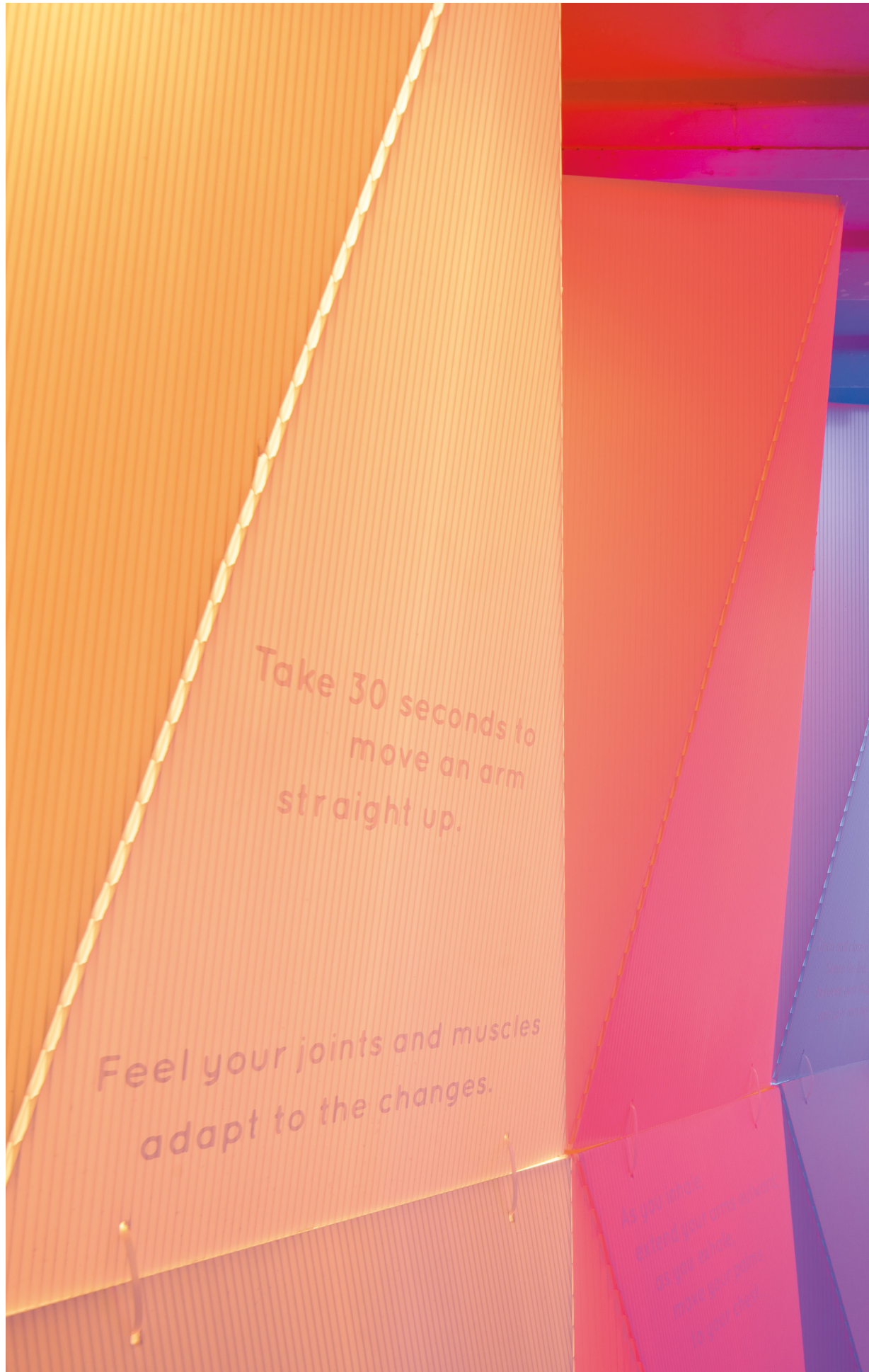
I wanted to touch on these ideas in an accessible way, and light/color seemed to be the perfect medium for this. Light seems stagnant but it is actually a moving, malleable energy. White light when guided through a prism splits into multiple colors.

An "antiprism" is a triangular prism that is twisted upon itself. Its dynamic movement and ability to manipulate light embodies the idea that things are relative, unstable. And whereas a prism disperses light, an antiprism disperses then refocuses it.

The space consisted of two mirror image spaces. Visitors began in a white stark entry space, that shocked the retina and represented the overwhelming clutter of inputs that causes the mind to go blank. They were prompted to take off their shoes. The room funneled them in through a low curtained threshold. It forced them to duck and be humbled, signalling entry into a ritualistic space.



Fabrics with cues for mindful movement



More cues for mindful movement

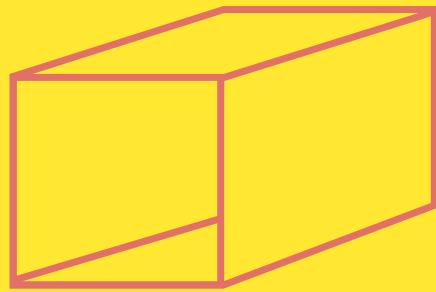


Infrared motion sensors react to visitors movements

On the other side, visitors were funnelled into a mirror-image of the space they had left. One that was warm, with plush textiles under their feet, with soft hanging textiles gently blowing in the wind, dynamic and rich with colour. This space represented the dispersion of apprehensions and inputs from their environment, all apparent and exposed. My work encouraged visitors to address, dance with, and control these apprehensions we carry, in a sensory environment that they activated through movement. Visitors were encouraged to have a conversation with themselves, their physical body as the medium, the visible and tactile space as its conversation partner.

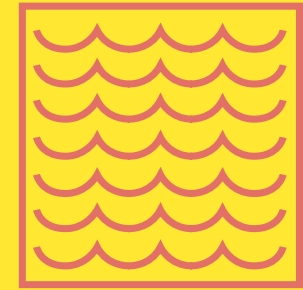
With so little time in our busy schedules and so much screen-oriented culture to pay attention to, we forget to tend to our physical bodies and mental needs. This installation was a reminder of the palpable impacts that we can have on the world, and also the effects our small actions have on us.

— *LILY JEON*  
Artist, Designer and Maker

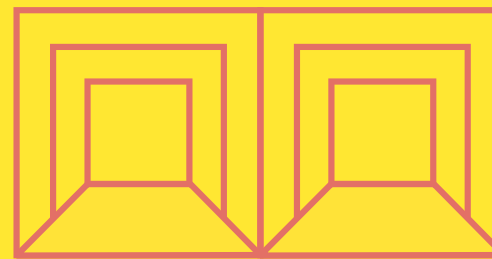


*ANNIE  
WONG*

*KARINA  
ISKANDARSJAH*

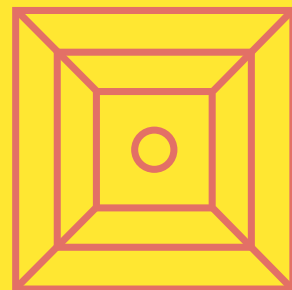


*CHLOE  
QIN*

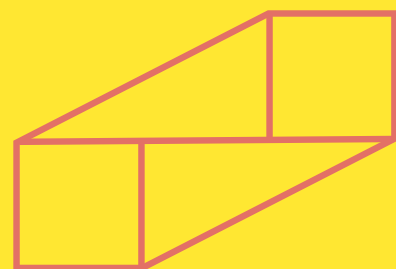


*LUCIE  
GENDRON*

*JASMINE  
GREWAL*



*MARSYA  
MAHARANI*



*JES  
SACHSE*



*SABRINA  
KIKOT*

IS SOLITUDE INHERENTLY SOOTHING OR UNCOMFORTABLE, STRANGE OR BLISSFUL? WHY? PERHAPS YOU WANT TO REFLECT ON THE QUALITY OF YOUR EMOTIONS WHILE IN SOLITUDE AND NOT THE REASONS. OR, YOU MAY WISH TO EXPLORE WHAT YOUR EXPERIENCE MEANS WITHIN THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF TODAY.

YOU MAY USE THE WRITING PROMPTS SHOWN IN THIS PRESENTATION OR YOU MAY INVENT AN ORIGINAL APPROACH. THE IDEA IS TO EXPRESS YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS ABOUT SOLITUDE AFTER VISITING THE EXHIBITION.

THIS WORKSHOP AIMS TO KICKSTART YOUR CURIOSITY ABOUT SOLITUDE. AT THE END, I INVITE YOU TO SUBMIT YOUR WRITTEN WORKS FOR THE EXHIBITION CATALOGUE, WHICH INTENDS TO BE A LEGACY OF THE PROJECT, OFFERING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON THESE EPHEMERAL INSTALLATIONS.

# WORKSHOP DESIGN

The workshop accompanying this exhibition was designed to guide participants through the process of documenting their art experience. The two installations on display were minimal and immersive, providing the right conditions for active viewership. Rather than entertain, each installation presented an unfinished product, with gaps that visitors could fill in with their own subjectivity. In doing this, the containers became productive spaces within which spontaneous thoughts and interpretations could be made.

These attributes helped the installations achieve the status of environments. By definition, an environment is “a setting or conditions that support a specific activity.” Their function was not only to engage the senses, but to capture attention and divert it towards reflection. Environments however, are notoriously hard to describe. They cannot be pinned-down or re-created without losing some of the aura of the original. In *Flight Mode*, visitors used their nuanced reality to make sense of the whole. So documentation posed an inherent challenge: a selfie of such an experience would fall flat in comparison to the rich experience of being within.

The solution was to collect multiple records of the subjective experience inside the containers. The workshop dealt with this challenge by combining writing and mindfulness techniques – two effective tools for the re-integration of solitude in our lives.

Ernest Hemingway has famously said, “Writing at its best, is a lonely life. (A writer) does his work alone, and if he is a good enough writer, he must face eternity, or the lack of it, each day.” This ability to look reality in the eye, to take in the complexities of life with humility and acceptance, is founded on being present. And as it turns out, being present is a prerequisite for both writing and mindfulness. These practices enable us to carve out a quiet space, and in some ways, defend ourselves from the constant draw to be elsewhere.

The workshop was delivered in three phases: Preparation, Discovery and Creation.

In the preparation phase participants were given tools to explore the concept of solitude on their own. They were led through four distinct approaches to writing, each with examples that employ this approach, ending with tailored questions that served as writing prompts. The four approaches were:

- A) Lens on Society
- B) The Blind Spot
- C) Elevating the Everyday
- D) Restrictive Writing

A) LENS ON SOCIETY:  
ANALYZING ARTWORKS TO UNDERSTAND  
OUR CONTEXT

The first approach is borrowed from critics and art historians. They tend to situate an artwork in relation to art that came before it, or connect it to the economic, cultural and societal conditions when it was created.

An example of a writer who uses this approach would be John Berger, author of *Ways of Seeing*. His essays raise questions about hidden ideologies in our visual culture. His texts are interspersed with photos, paintings, and advertisements from different eras, as supplements to his observations on their inherent message.

B) THE BLIND SPOT:  
WHAT'S IGNORED BECAUSE OF OUR BIAS?

The second approach is to uncover what's missing from our current cultural discourse. It requires a keen eye and a questioning mind to make simple observations about trends around us. Essentially, this approach deals with the idea that we go with the flow that culture dictates, never stopping to question who makes key decisions or who puts us on this course. How did things come be the way they are?

An example of an author who uses the blind spot approach is Linda Nochlin. Her influential 1971 essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* gave a simple reason for the title question. Male artists are recognized not because they're better, but because institutional structures have prevented women from accessing the same resources and stature. Nochlin suggests that for centuries "good art" has merely been sanctioned by white men. She calls for change through her writing.

C) ELEVATING THE EVERYDAY:  
LOOKING CLOSELY AT THE INFRAORDINARY

Some writers create beautiful works recounting mundane details that touch us all. Writing in this way has the capacity to elicit a strong emotional reaction. It taps into the universality of common, personal experiences, while doing away with sensational or complicated concepts. It adjusts our focus, so we can take in quieter happenings that are familiar and comforting.

Georges Perec wrote *Exhausting a Space in Paris* in which he concentrates on what he terms the infraordinary: "the markings and manifestations of the everyday that seem to escape our attention. Strung together, they compose the essence of our lives... what happens when nothing happens." His writing highlights everyday sounds, colours, and textures, giving us an intimate portrait of what fleeting moments are composed of.

D) RESTRICTIVE WRITING: ADDING RULES  
TO ENCOURAGE AUTOMATIC WRITING

Sometimes limitations, by defining specific parameters, can give us the freedom to adopt a new voice, or allow a more fluid writing process. This happens because the writer's attention is held on maintaining a rule, the writing itself becomes spontaneous. Architects and designers often claim that they thrive within constraints.

Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* is an example of restrictive writing. In this novel, styled like a collection of tales, are descriptions of fictitious cities narrated by Marco Polo, a merchant returning from his world travels. Although the cities in the book are invented, we see in them recognizable traits of his home city, Venice. Calvino had the freedom to imagine any sort of city, but he remained faithful to the rule of modelling each invisible city on his own experience. This adds an everlasting appeal to the novel, layering in recognizable traits of kinship, language, memory and death that we can all relate to.

In the discovery phase, participants were led through a 20 minute mindfulness-based meditation session. The journey was based on open awareness techniques. It situated them in the present and asked them to notice the quality of ambient sounds, tastes, textures. Immediately after this, they visited the containers, and experienced the installations one-at-a-time.

In the creation phase, participants were given ample time to synthesize, and finally, to express their solo experience of the artworks, and exhibition as a whole, in the form of a review.

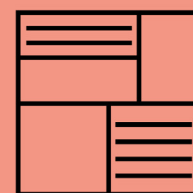
The set of audience-generated reviews that follow were composed in this workshop setting and later refined. Each is an act of interpretation. It is not a judgement on the quality of the art itself, rather an account of what it was able to inspire in visitors. The reviews have been edited for concision and clarity.

— PRACHI  
KHANDEKAR  
Curator, *Flight Mode*

# WRITING WORKSHOPS

FLIGHT  
MODE

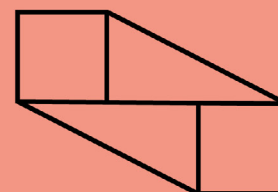
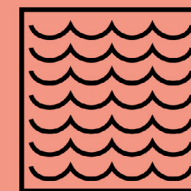
DOCUMENT YOUR ART EXPERIENCE



WORKSHOP 1:  
SEPTEMBER 22, 2019

WORKSHOP 2:  
SEPTEMBER 28, 2019

307 LAKESHORE  
BLVD E, TORONTO



11 AM - 4 PM

SUPPORTED BY:



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO  
an Ontario government agency  
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

# ANNIE WONG

In a room in a building owned by Google, in a city at its limits, we try to breathe. I can hear Saj, who invited me to participate in this writing and meditation workshop, exhale a sigh. The trained mindfulness instructor tells us to be aware of certain sensations of our body and I imagine that my blood is ancient, connected to a universal mycelium as much as to Prachi, who is connected via Skype in another city also in the rain. We are invited to experience a couple of installations in shipping containers near the building. Trekking across the eight-lane highway under the Gardiner avoiding puddles formed in mud and uneven concrete, I share a flimsy umbrella with Jes, who is linked around my arm limping from a post-performance foot injury. I become mindful, more than usual, of the hostility of the environment and the fragility of our bodies.

We enter a fenced gravel lot where two inconspicuous shipping containers promise new experiences. I take off my muddied boots and enter one. The deceiving small space is filled by a crisp white light softened by drapes of translucent synthetic fabric. On loop is a soundtrack that makes you feel like you're waiting for a Fido rep to get the manager and you try to stay calm, but you are still on the line and always will be. Three-dimensional triangles with acute edges protrude from the wall but do not feel threatening. They slowly pulse in cycles of pastel light, illuminating printed mindfulness exercises not unlike the ones we just did back in the room. Because I am a good public audience, I do what I am instructed: "slowly open and close your fist." I turn around and white drapes with the text "dance with me" printed on them billow from some secret wind source. I stroke their frayed edges and am touched by their imperfection. Like some Huxleyan soma, the lights, soundtrack, and mindful exercises do the chemical trick of making me forget that I am in a lot, by a highway, and that my phone, back in the building, has surrendered all my info to Google. The space emotionally designed to, if not make me happy, at least to feel at peace, succeeds, and I am slightly perturbed by this success. My body does not want to leave nor stay.

When I exit and enter back into the city, an equally constructed space, the rain has stopped but the greyness persists. Back in the room, we expect Prachi to be awaiting on a mounted monitor. But when we return the connection has cut off. I check my phone just to physically hold it. No one has texted or called but I keep the line perpetually open. I imagine that soundtrack from the installation playing on loop until the end of the world. When Prachi returns, we are instructed to write about the installations. We have about 20 minutes, but what I really want to do is talk to Jes about their injured foot.

# MARSYA MAHARANI

I stood inside a dark shipping container, surrounded by the sounds of whales. Echoing, reverberating, menacing. In fact I had been surrounded by the sounds of water. In the past few days, I heard a conch shell sextet, a symphony of boat horns, Inuit throat singing, and a haunting question:

How do you protect something you don't know?

The question came from Billy Gauthier, an Inuit and Métis artist and activist, after he carefully described Lake Melville for the benefit of his audience at a conference in Toronto. Lake Melville is the site of his home, of the primary food source for his community, and of potential methylmercury pollution resulting from a nearby hydroelectric dam.

So how *do* you protect something you don't know?  
Something you can't possibly know?

The sounds of whales register as overwhelming, loud, indecipherable. We are trained to protect ourselves from such sounds. We can fight. Perhaps if we intervene, contain, study and apprehend them, we will feel safe. Or choose flight. Not to abandon, but to get out of the way. Perhaps if we leave them alone, we will all be safe.

I hear that in de-escalating a crisis, one is supposed to understand their own body's reflex to stressful situations and harness it towards a useful response. Experts would ask: do you go on *flight mode* or *fight mode*? They say, the trick is determining what is useful in the long-term, as opposed to what is convenient right now. You can try to shut down a situation, quickly and neatly, by fleeing or fighting. The problem will be out of sight, out of mind. But often what is required is to talk it down by first opening up yourself and the person in crisis to understand the source.

I can't begin to understand these unrecognizable rhythms, notes, compositions, languages that come from the waters. In the time of elevator pitches, reading while scrolling, autoplay algorithms, where do we make space for the unknowable?

There is a third reflex: to freeze, which can mean to take the time to reflect on the situation before determining a course of action. In the context of a climate crisis, how much time do we take to consider where we are? The length of one loop of ocean waves in our mindfulness app?

I hear that practicing mindfulness can help us gain agency in choosing where we place our attention during a time of innumerable options. In practicing solitude, we learn to know what our body already knows. We try to find a stable ground in midst of so much noise. In de-escalating a crisis, we try to become the stable ground for those who are trying to find it within themselves.

# JASMINE GREWAL

What does solitude mean to you?

Does it mean being alone?

Does it mean spending time with yourself?

Does solitude make you a hermit?

Does choosing solitude mean you are anti-social?

Solitude can be,

A way to gain perspective

A way to process trauma

A way to reconnect with yourself

Dig deeper and get to know yourself better

How much do we really know ourselves?

How well can we understand other people,

If we cannot understand ourselves.

Moments of solitudes can be a time for reflection,

A time for looking inwards

Solitude can be choosing yourself

Choosing to be with yourself

Choosing to spend time with yourself

Asking yourself how you are doing

Solitude can be the process of peeling an onion,

Slowly, layer by layer

It can make your eyes sting

It can unleash waterfalls

It can shake the very ground we have always stood upon

Shake the reality we have depended on

Solitude can be a process for healing

Accepting past hurts

Accepting our vulnerabilities

Being kind to ourselves

Solitude can be a time for forgiveness

Forgiving ourselves for our ignorance

Forgiving others for theirs

Solitude can be a time to reconnect

Reconnecting with ourselves

Reconnecting with our past

Reconnecting with the earth

Reconnecting with the forgotten me

Solitude can be slowing down

Allowing ourselves to feel

To really feel

Reminding ourselves that it is ok to feel

Ignoring feelings doesn't make them go away

Solitude can be a time to reflect

To review

To process

To clear the noise

Solitude can be

learning to love ourselves again

# KARINA ISKANDARSJAH

Solitude is an

Solitude is a luxury packaged in a \$200 yoga retreat

Solitude is a great idea I don't have time for

Solitude is the crushing weight of past present and future

Solitude is an involuntary pain caused by illusions of connectivity and intimacy

Solitude is the acceptance of existing for no reason or purpose

Solitude can guide you to reason and purpose

mine/mind      my mind is full

mindful          constantly brimming

mindfulness     but that's not what mindfulness means

Carrying the legacy of my mother's hard work

Carrying the legacy of childhood anxiety

So! Prompt: what are the current trends?

Immersive Art

Art that takes you, for a moment, to a different dimension

It's the same dimension, but artists are full of tricks,

and they want you to believe otherwise

They want you to believe that the life you are trapped in is escapable

This escape can offer perspective

M-I-N-D-F-U-L-N-E-S-S

Mindfulness

But you must come back to your life, to the earth

we've inhabited and ~~slowly~~ quickly destroying

because the gallery hours are 12-6

What did you gain from the escape? From being immersed,

From being dimensionally transported?

Can you hold on to it long enough to actively change or improve

the trap of your day-to-day?

Is your self-worth increased or diminished?

Do you feel self righteous or guilty?

It's OK, I don't know either

# CHLOE QIN

I was born in a city with numerous towering skyscrapers. I could remember that at night, the traffic lights were always dazzling, and the traffic never slowed down. I guess this is the case for every metropolis where one cannot distinguish between day and night. Being an immigrant to a country that is across the Pacific Ocean forces me to embrace a new environment that has only dim lights at night. In the evening, when all the lights are out, I often think about a profound question: should I readily welcome the embrace of solitude?

When I saw Lily's work of *Antiprism*, I gained new insights about the expression of solitude. I walked past the world of white, the sensors above my head reflecting the powerlessness I feel when I have to face myself. Down the narrow corridor, I can see beautiful curtains swaying in the wind, which creates a comfortable place for meditation. An unlikely space for meditation. I was sitting entirely by myself in a logistics container – a symbol of the hustle and bustle of cities like Toronto.

Hagop potently narrates the power of solitude in *Ecolocation*. In that logistics box, he plays a 20-minute soundtrack of marine animals along with visualizations of whale speech. He creates an imaginative environment for humans to interact with marine animals. Everyone has his or her interpretation of the sounds of animals, some regard them to be delightful and some find them melancholic. I appreciate the wonder of being alone, and rejoice sitting in a dark environment, trying to focus on the beauty of nature.

When I am alone in both containers, I think of myself, a minority in terms of opinions and thoughts. I could not find a space in my own home country to express my opinions. I had to conform to the imposed orthodox view. As a believer of free will, I assert that each person is responsible for his or her opinions and omissions, which constitutes the essence of intellectual freedom. Here I am, in a bizarre metal box, relishing the new rights that I have gained. Rights that should be inherent to every human being. The right to find a safe space to express one's opinions without being harassed or belittled for personal traits, as elaborated by Brandeis and Warren in their famous essay: *The Right to Privacy*.

It is unfortunate that today, it is harder to guard solitude and that people no longer regard it as a sacred right. It is ironic that I carried my cell phone, which can locate me precisely and share it with everyone else, to the logistics box that stands as a symbol of privacy. Back home, I am accustomed to surveillance cameras. I do not even question whether the state infringes on people's rights by not reminding its citizens that there are cameras at traffic crossings and public facilities. People naturally think that the cameras which collect big data represent efficiency, modernity and cutting-edge technology. Aren't the facial-recognition machines at each high-speed train station cool, wonderful, and cost-efficient? Why should people bother to think about their delicate inner feelings?

Companies collect data for their own profit and most customers give unconditional consent to access to their devices and personal information. When installing an application, users get tired of reading the exhaustive list of terms and conditions. They simply cede exclusive access to their personal data to get to the next step. This can be costly when you think of how Cambridge Analytica interfered with the 2016 American presidential election. When companies undermine one's privacy to change the rules of institutions, it should be beyond the pale for everyone.

Solitude is not an outdated idea that should be deserted. It means the right to exclusively enjoy your own space. It is interchangeable with privacy. It is interchangeable with sobriety. It is interchangeable with individuality. When everyone fails to pause, neglects to manage intimate issues, blindly abandon their right to feel alone, the world could turn into what Margaret Atwood cautions against: a gradually heating bathtub, you'd be boiled to death before you know it.

This exhibition is profound in that it expresses the magnificence of loneliness. It facilitates people to rethink seemingly mundane events and portrays a world in which everyone has a chance to know his or her own self.

# SABRINA KIKOT

We live in a time when society is being bombarded with information. This can easily cause us to feel overwhelmed, or lead to sensory overload. With the advent of the internet and social media, the fast pace of technology has led many to feel disconnected from their peers and the world. Causing anxious thoughts and feelings or thoughts of lack. Social media has led many to feel pressured to use apps, like Instagram or Twitter, to remain connected or "in the know", yet it has also made it common for individuals to share only the good of their lives with their followers; the so-called "perfect life". At a time when more people are experiencing mental health issues, it is important to step back from time-to-time from societal pressures/constructs and focus on inner healing through acts of solitude.

As someone who has personally dealt with both depression and anxiety, I know how debilitating they can be. Not only do you close yourself off from loved ones and the world around you, but you also feel a sense of hopelessness, worthlessness, and a dread of the future – it's both physically and mentally exhausting. Solitude, although sometimes lonely, has led me to spirituality. This means that I do not feel constantly pressured to succumb to societal ways, or compare myself to my peers or celebrities. For some, solitude may cause an increase in mental health struggles. However, if you practice solitude in a way that is beneficial to your health and well-being, you will reconnect with yourself, discover who you truly are and what you want in life. You can imagine what you would like your future to look like.

Over the last few decades we have become more accepting of others, especially those who have different cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, and religions. We have learned to rejoice in our similarities and our differences, across culture, and time. At the same time, many have forgotten that in order to fully embrace others and life in general, we must first love and accept ourselves fully.

It sounds cliché, but self love and acceptance are two of the most rewarding things a person can achieve. It is by no means an easy journey, yet it is important. That is why this past year I have made it a mission to love myself. I have integrated yoga, guided meditation, journaling, spending time in nature or near large bodies of water, and just taking the time to sit with my thoughts and reflect on my place in this world and my role in it. By bringing this practice into my day-to-day life, I can proudly say that my feelings of depression or thoughts of suicide have dissipated. I have found that introducing these activities has brought back positivity to my relationships with others. Having taken a step back on social media, I have more time to focus on elevating myself and thus I am happier than ever before. I'm not saying social media is all bad – there are many positive aspects to it, however if you are someone who feels as though you are being overwhelmed with only the "good" and feeling lost my advice to you would be to stay off the apps for a while. Take time to focus on your own thoughts, energy, and dedicate time into growing a life you would be happy to live.

# JES SACHSE

I don't know if the words will come right now. The two rooms are full of slowness and rain. I am recalling Keller Easterling's extrastatecraft and thinking about smart cities hidden and not hidden, like homeless bodies in the GTA.

It doesn't surprise me that it is raining on the new moon.

I don't wear my heart. Is it in my body today?  
I farted in each container. I wanted to say by accident but bodies are smarter than cities, and I think mine relaxed.

I lay on the floor each time.  
I fell in and out of sleep  
or maybe rest  
or maybe stillness...

The choreography of security. An unsurprising curator,  
guardian of movement and warmth and safety.  
Guardians against.

If I was wearing a yellow marathon shirt I might have been kicked out.  
Regina kicked me out. Mayworks kicked me out.

The truth about love is power and impatience. I don't know where I live. Violence?  
We protect art and buildings but not bodies.

I wonder about stillness on the land. I wonder a lot.

# LUCIE GENDRON

L'exposition permet à chacune des personnes qui se prêtent à l'expérience de prendre conscience à partir de leur intériorité de deux vérités interdépendantes. Par *Antiprism*, j'ai pris conscience combien je me sens étrangère à mon propre corps; par *Ecolocation*, j'ai pris conscience combien l'être humain peut détruire l'environnement par ignorance.

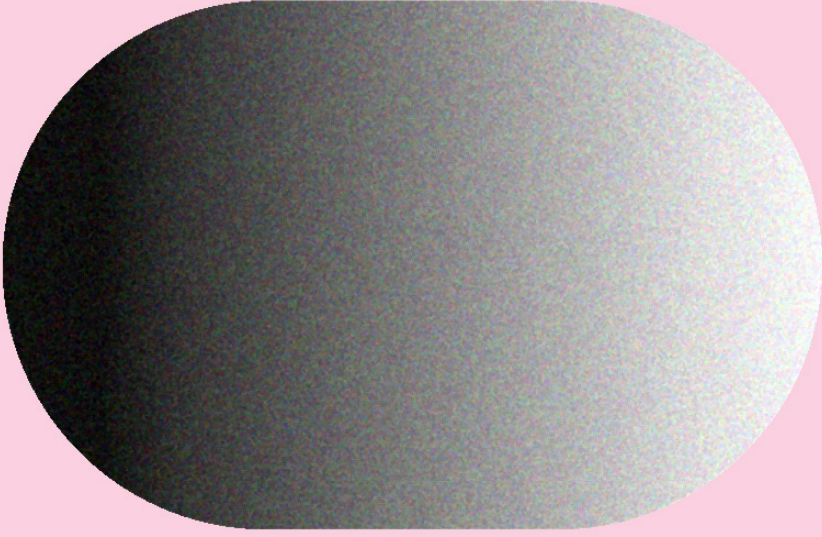
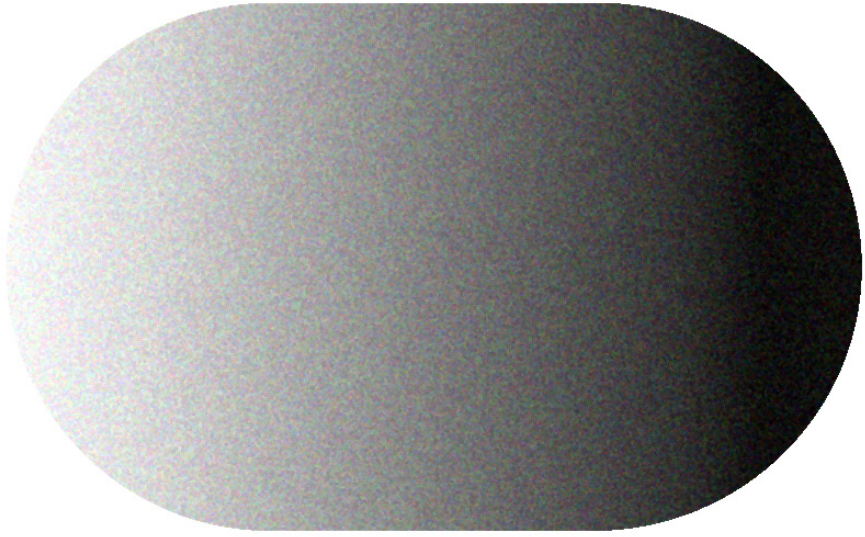
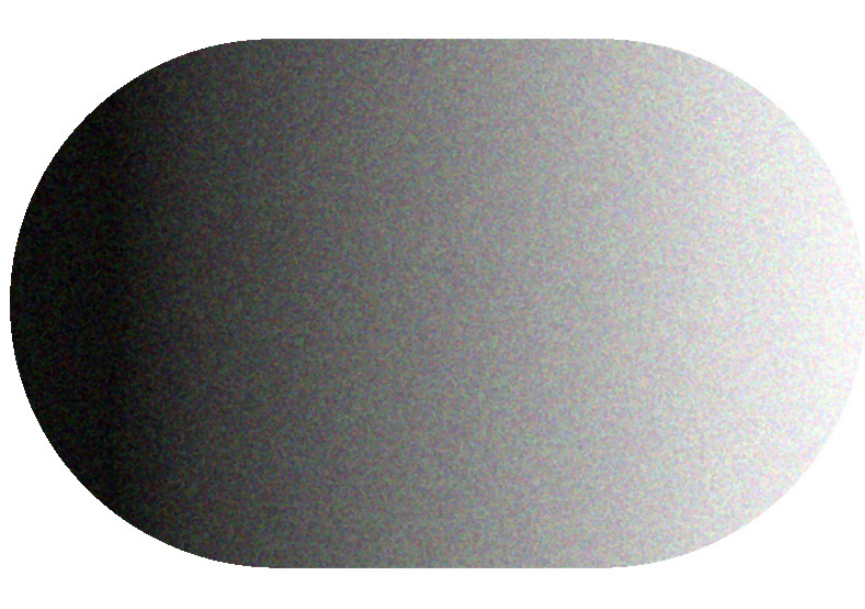
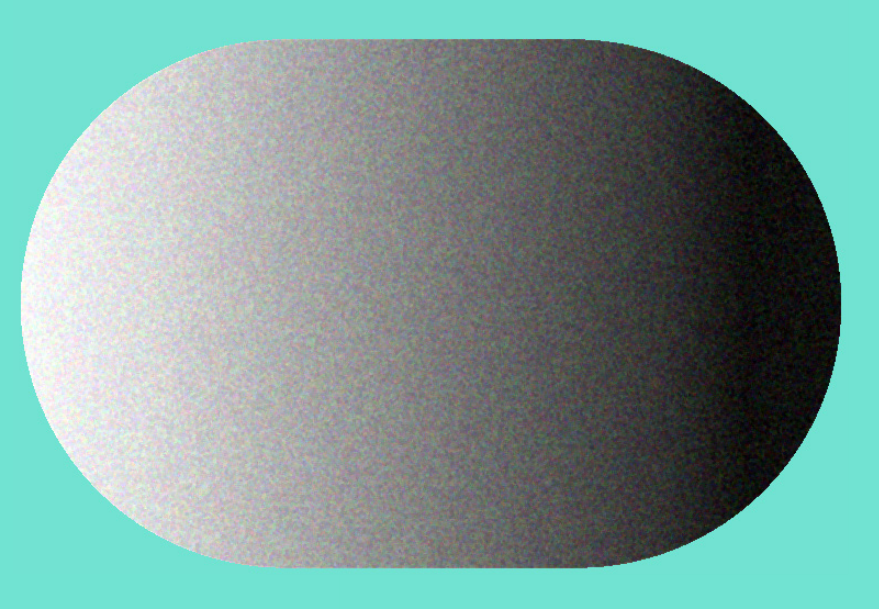
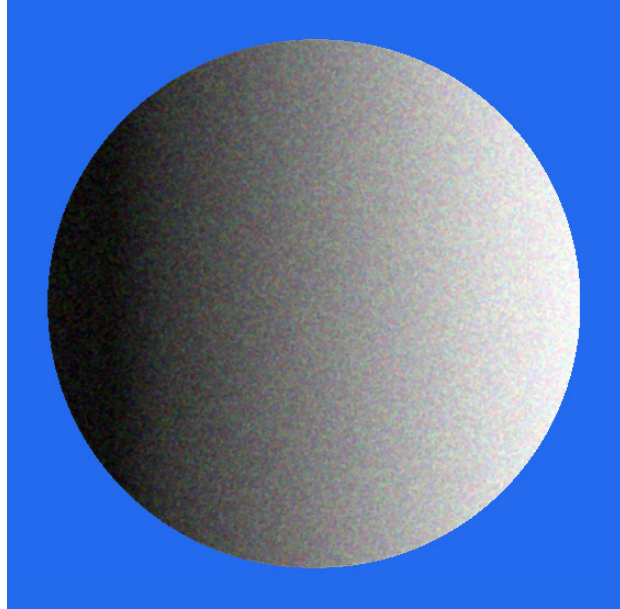
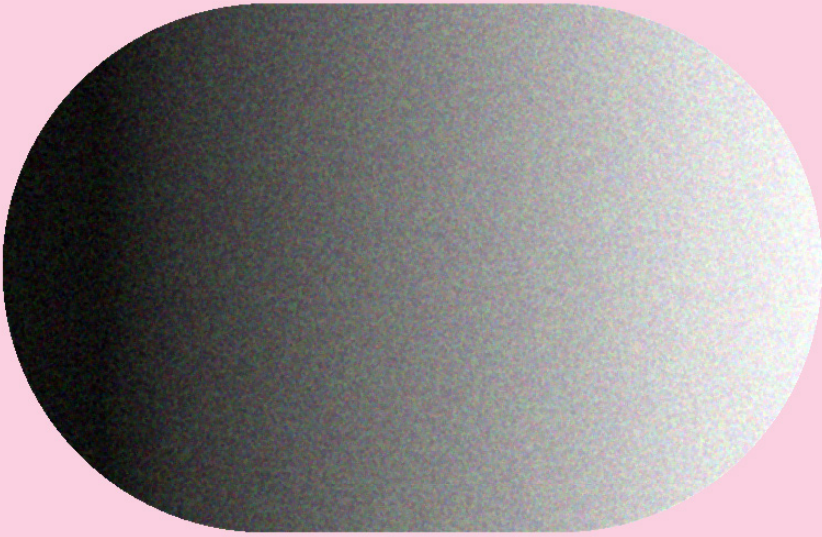
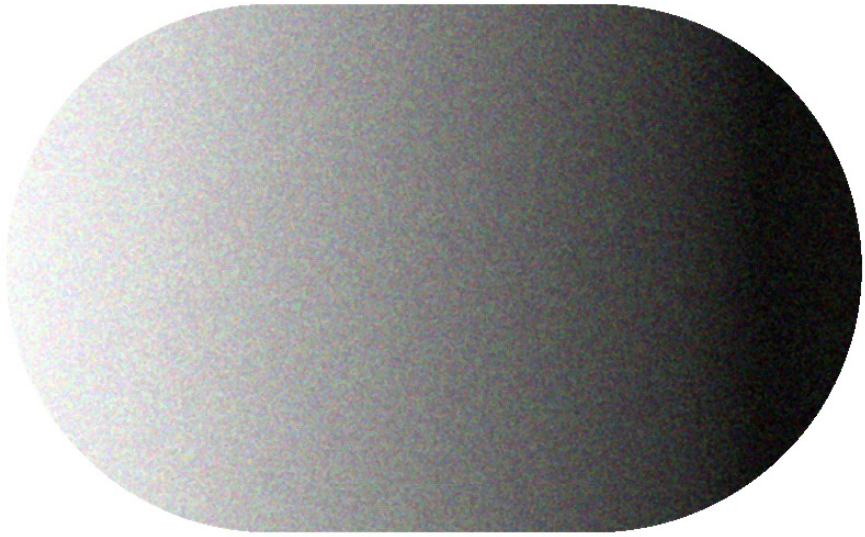
J'ai pleuré, car je me demandais s'il était vraiment nécessaire de détruire la vie autour de nous pour vivre. Je crois que si l'être humain était plus conscient de la vie qu'il porte en lui, il choisirait des méthodes qui ne détruisent plus l'environnement.

La force de cette exposition est qu'elle permet aux visiteurs de réfléchir par eux-mêmes à ces enjeux. Lorsque l'on découvre quelque chose par soi-même cela nous apporte beaucoup plus que lorsqu'on lit une information ou qu'une autre personne nous en informe.

Lorsque nous découvrons quelque chose par nous-même, cela nous apporte beaucoup plus que lorsqu'une information nous est donnée par autrui.

*MINDFUL BRANDING:*

*HEATHER LYNN*



*AND*

*BILLYCLUB*

# MINDFUL BRANDING

Prachi approached us to create the visual identity for this intriguing exhibition she has curated. In joining the project, we took time to reflect on the theme of solitude and disconnection from devices - the goal was to create a world of mindfulness, an open space where people are encouraged to engage with the art. Creating eye-catching design was an extension of Prachi's vision for the exhibition design.

Our challenge was to create a visual identity for a broad and abstract concept, such as solitude. With Heather's previous experience in exhibition design, our direction for the design  $\delta$  logo frames the artwork, balancing the poetic theme of the exhibition with dreamy type, a weightless logo and airy layouts, with hints to the exhibition's industrial location. The identity reflects the abstraction, emotion and the expression of the project, with visuals that speak to the audience, grabbing their attention with mysterious blurred visuals, so as not to reveal the artwork before opening.

Located in an industrial neighbourhood with pedestrians biking and running by frequently, the visual language had to be instinctive, welcoming and inclusive. The design signature is bright, airy and rich with colours, textures and line-work iconography. In the end, the process was as important as the final result. It made us reflect on an abstract subject and challenged us to position ourselves around it. This project was full of exchange and collaboration.

— HEATHER LYNN  
+ BILLYCLUB,  
Graphic Designers  
for *Flight Mode*

**SAVE THE DATE**

09/20/2019 OPENING NIGHT + ARTIST TALKS  
307 LAKESHORE BLVD E, TORONTO

09/21/2019 - 10/8/2019 ART EXHIBITION  
333 LAKESHORE BLVD E, TORONTO

09/22/2019 WORKSHOP 1:  
307 LAKESHORE BLVD E, TORONTO

09/28/2019 WORKSHOP 2:  
307 LAKESHORE BLVD E, TORONTO

FLIGHT MODE

SAVA C

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

OPENING NIGHT  
+ ARTIST TALKS

307 LAKESHORE  
BLVD E, TORONTO  
SEPTEMBER 20, 2019

FLIGHT MODE

MODE 11 AM - 4 PM

WRITING WORK SHOPS (2)

OPENING NIGHT + ARTIST TALKS  
307 LAKESHORE BLVD E, TORONTO  
SEPTEMBER 20, 2019

ARTIST TALKS

PRACHI KHANDEKAR

LILY JEON

HAGOP OHANNESSIAN

ART EXHIBITION  
333 LAKESHORE BLVD E, TORONTO  
SEPTEMBER 21 TO OCTOBER 8, 2019

FLIGHT MODE

ANTI-PRISM

ECO-LOCATION

WORKSHOP 1:  
SEPTEMBER 22, 2019

WORKSHOP 2:  
SEPTEMBER 28, 2019  
11 AM - 4 PM

WRITING WORK SHOPS (2)



FLIGHT MODE with closed containers

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# APPENDIX

## LENS ON SOCIETY

- How do you feel in the containers and what does the artwork say about the spirit of our times?
- How does the pace and pervasiveness of technology shape society at present?
- What messages do we receive and how do they intervene with the desires of the individual and communities?
- Is solitude valuable in our times?

## THE BLIND SPOT

- After experiencing the artwork and reflecting on the themes of the exhibition, what blind spots can you identify?
- What fictions does the culture of connectivity propagate?
- Does solitude enable blind spots or work as an antidote to blind spots?

## ELEVATING THE EVERYDAY

- How does solitude elevate the everyday and the personal?
- What strategies can you suggest to reintroduce an appreciation of solitude to our everyday experiences?
- What in our culture has sparked our interest for immersive, in-real-life, art experiences?

## RESTRICTIVE WRITING

- Make up a rule and describe your experience within the containers while sticking to it.
- If your emotions could pour out on paper and describe sensations from the moment you entered the container to the moment you left, what would the text look like?
- How does solitude itself introduce a constraint and what might it mean for creativity?

# THE UNCOMFORTABLE NOW

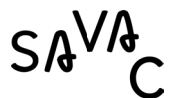
Much of life is spent waiting for wishes to materialize. Constant connection has alleviated some of the pain of waiting, filling up the interstices of our days with colourful memes, news, GIFs, e-mails, and posts. The seductive comforts of technology are manifold and they've entered our relational vocabulary with a natural ease. Just a few decades ago, it was almost impossible to fill up all the idle moments within a 24-hour cycle. Solitude was a daily ritual; it punctuated our lives with equal parts of daydreams and boredom.

*Flight Mode* examines the effects of the departure of solitude from our schedules. It presents environments to snap us out of our intricate web of connections. Vying for intention and not merely attention, this project seeks to generate engagement for a seemingly unproductive end: unplugging and reveling in the solitary experience.

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[www.prachikhandekar.com](http://www.prachikhandekar.com)

[www.savac.net/flight-mode](http://www.savac.net/flight-mode)  
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