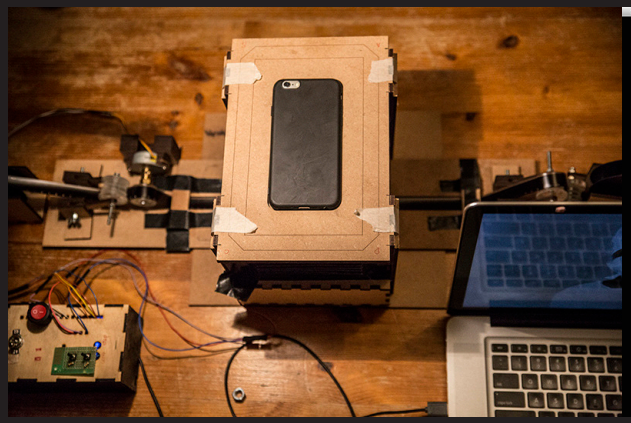
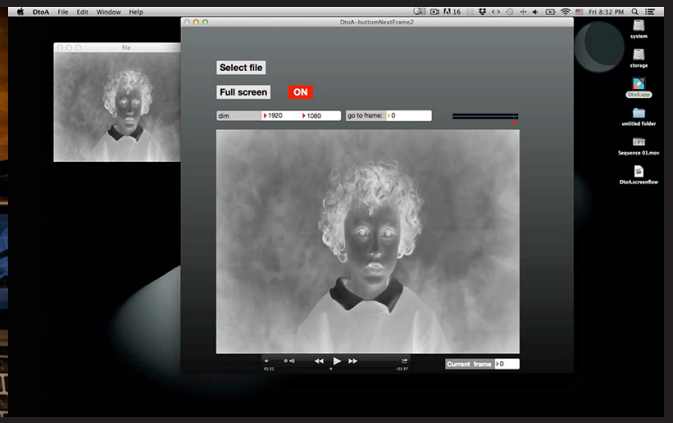


Selected Projects from 2013-2023

Nan Wang







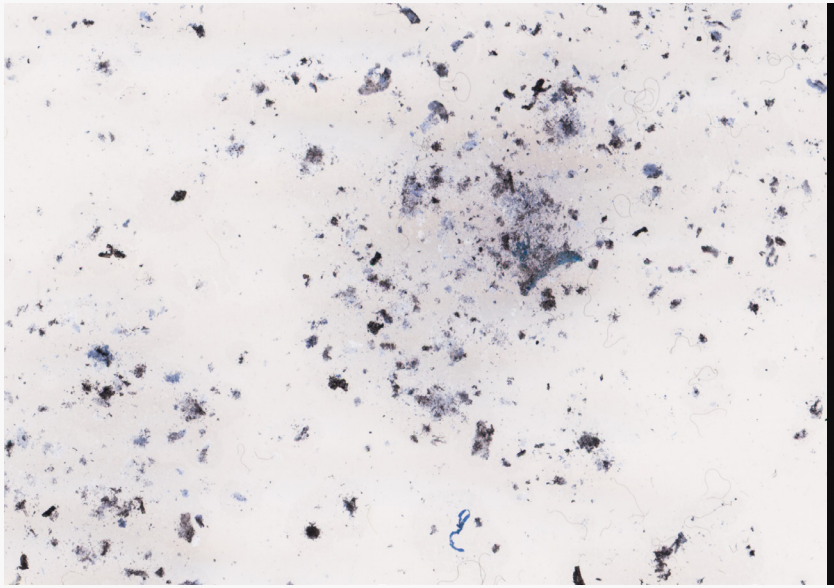


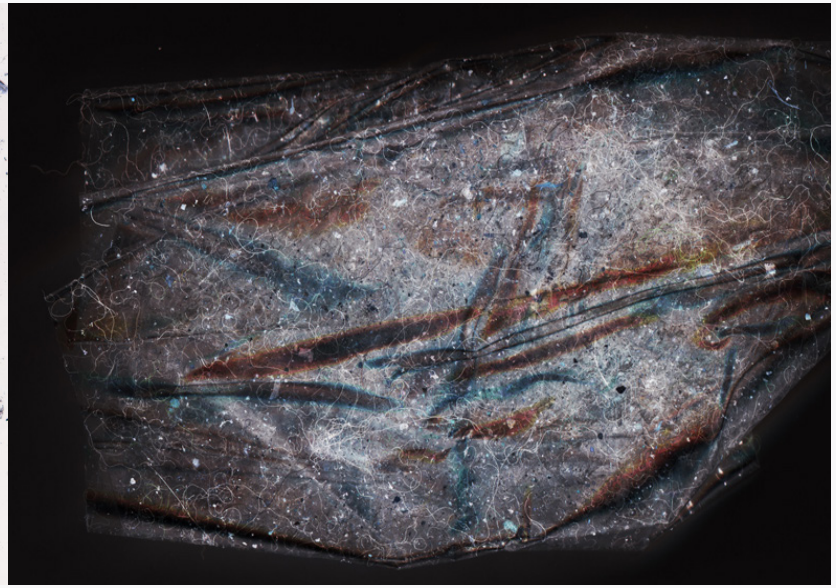




As a practice-oriented artist, hands-on experience and knowledge sharing within artist communities play vital roles in my process. This approach can give me more artistic freedom and control over the production process. Over the course of a few years, I made several DIY tools and shared them with artist communities through workshops and presentations.

In my practice, I use existing open-source digital tools and technology to reinforce the do-it-yourself film culture by reinventing “obsolete “ techniques, reclaiming artistic freedom, and nurturing diverse aesthetics.





Dust Poetry

short film 2013

During my first year of master's studies at the Piet Zwart Institute, I chose "noise" as my self-directed research subject. Initially, I experimented with digitally simulated noise on the computer. Still, I found the results unsatisfactory in terms of their artistic potential. One day, while cleaning my coat with a lint roller, I was stuck in my creative process. I accidentally found my perfect "noise"—the tangible manifestation of dust. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, dust harbors traces of our daily lives, comprised of shed skin cells, hair, and other residues of our activities—a silent witness to my material identity and existence, a self-portrait in an abstract form. During 2012-2013, Influenced and inspired by Structural filmmakers Stan Brakhage and Tony Conrad, "Dust Poetry" was made. The visual elements of these films are composed of dust collected from my room. I collected, archived, and scanned the dust digitally and exposed the dust material directly on 16mm film.



link: https://vimeo.com/77846476/3ab709e646

Presented at : 2014 International Film Festival Rotterdam, 2015 Stuttgarter Filmwinter, 2015 Antimatter media art festival, Canada

The Dust Room

projection installation 2013

As my exploration of dust as a material witness of existence deepened, I started to explore the possibilities of presenting dust in my work in its original physical form. This journey led me to experiment with “obsolete” devices such as overhead and slide projectors.

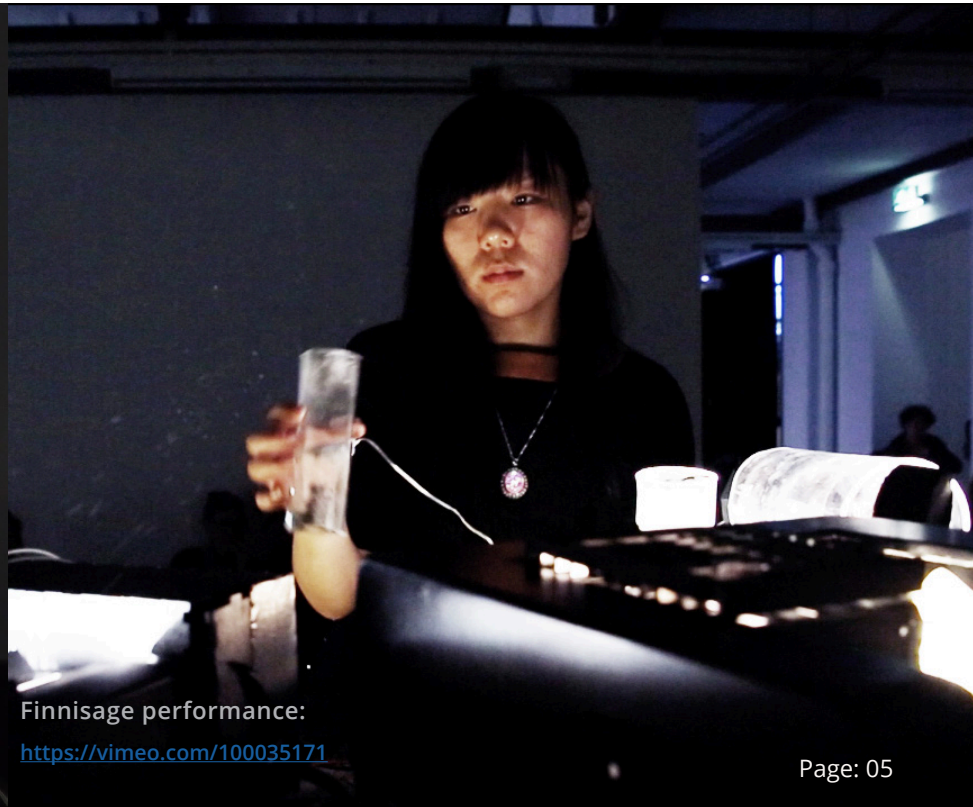
In 2015, my projection installation, ‘The Dust Room,’ was first showcased at Tent, Rotterdam. This installation comprises six modified slide projectors projecting dust materials collected from my room as moving images. Electric motors and fans stirred the dust particles, creating a dynamic landscape resembling a storm when magnified.

The installation was designed to foster an interactive experience, allowing airborne dust to escape and facilitating a micro-physical material exchange. Visitors to ‘The Dust Room’ inadvertently inhaled particles of ‘me,’ despite my physical absence from the room. This unique interaction with the artwork adds a layer of depth to the viewer’s understanding of the concept.

During the Finnisage of the exhibition, I presented a performance piece. I released all the dust from the projectors into the exhibition piece.



video documentation:
https://vimeo.com/277819827



Finnisage performance:
https://vimeo.com/100035171







The Liquid-Self

Interactive projection installation 2018, 2022

After gaining experience modifying slide projectors and steadily enhancing my technical skills in hardware hacking, electronics, and fabrication, I started creating my own DIY projectors and implementing new technologies to address contemporary issues in my art practices. In the interactive projection installation “The Liquid Self,” “my dust” is contained and housed in glass bottles filled with hand sanitizer gel. Motors stir the dust materials within the bottles at a pace synchronized with my real-time heart rate. Additional heart rate sensors are available to viewers, inviting them to interrupt and overwrite my pulse rhythm by introducing their pulse rates into the movement of the images. When I showed this work towards the end of the COVID pandemic, it became a poignant reflection of that time. I wore a smartwatch and streamed my pulse data in real time over the three-month exhibition period. This served as a stark reminder of how our humanity and identity are continuously monitored and slowly dissolved in a sanitized environment, where human interaction is transformed into a telepresent experience through technology.



video documentation:
https://vimeo.com/767268830

Performance

Since 2016, I have been delving into audiovisual performance and crafting do-it-yourself (DIY) tools as an integral part of my artistic practice. Drawing inspiration from pre-film projection devices, I created my own tools using DIY electronics. These tools enable me to explore systems and methods that translate music or sound directly into visual forms through mechanical instruments. As I continued to develop and expand this series of performances, I engaged in iterative processes to enhance their quality and impact. Collaboration with various musicians and sound artists has significantly refined these performances and explored new creative avenues.



video documentations: https://vimeo.com/242551889 https://vimeo.com/441203133



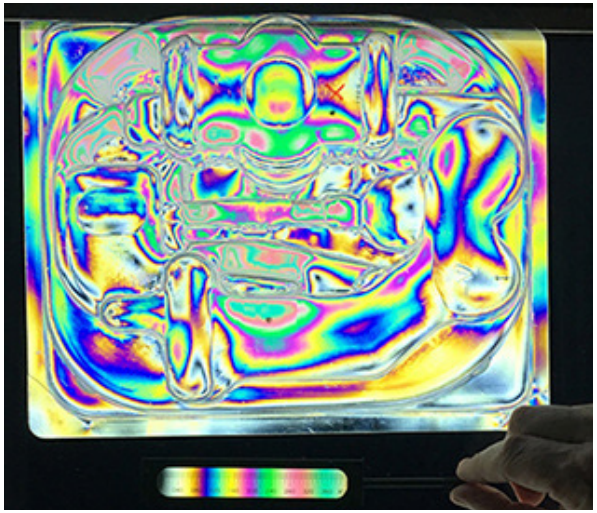
https://nanwang.org/Hue-Shift

RefractionScope / Chroma Stretch

installation

And in my installations “RefractionScope” and “ChromaStretch,” I am inspired by the photoelastic phenomenon that used to pick out defeated products. In combination with algorithmic structures from I Ching, I made audiovisual installation pieces that reveal the beauty of scars and deformities of the material and emphasize the beauty of vulnerabilities and our resilience in the face of pressure.

Inspired by the photoelastic phenomenon discovered by Scottish physicist David Brewster in 1830. This phenomenon was used as a technique in industrial applications to control the quality of the manufacturing process: when observing a material between two polarising filters, the deformed and fractured areas of that material are revealed in a range of colors.
The movements and visual intervals of the optical discs in RefractionScope are not arbitrary, but are structured by temporal elements from an ancient binary system known as IChing. This system, used to indicate states of changes in life and nature, is composed of 64 readings that are present in each phase of the changes within a cycle.

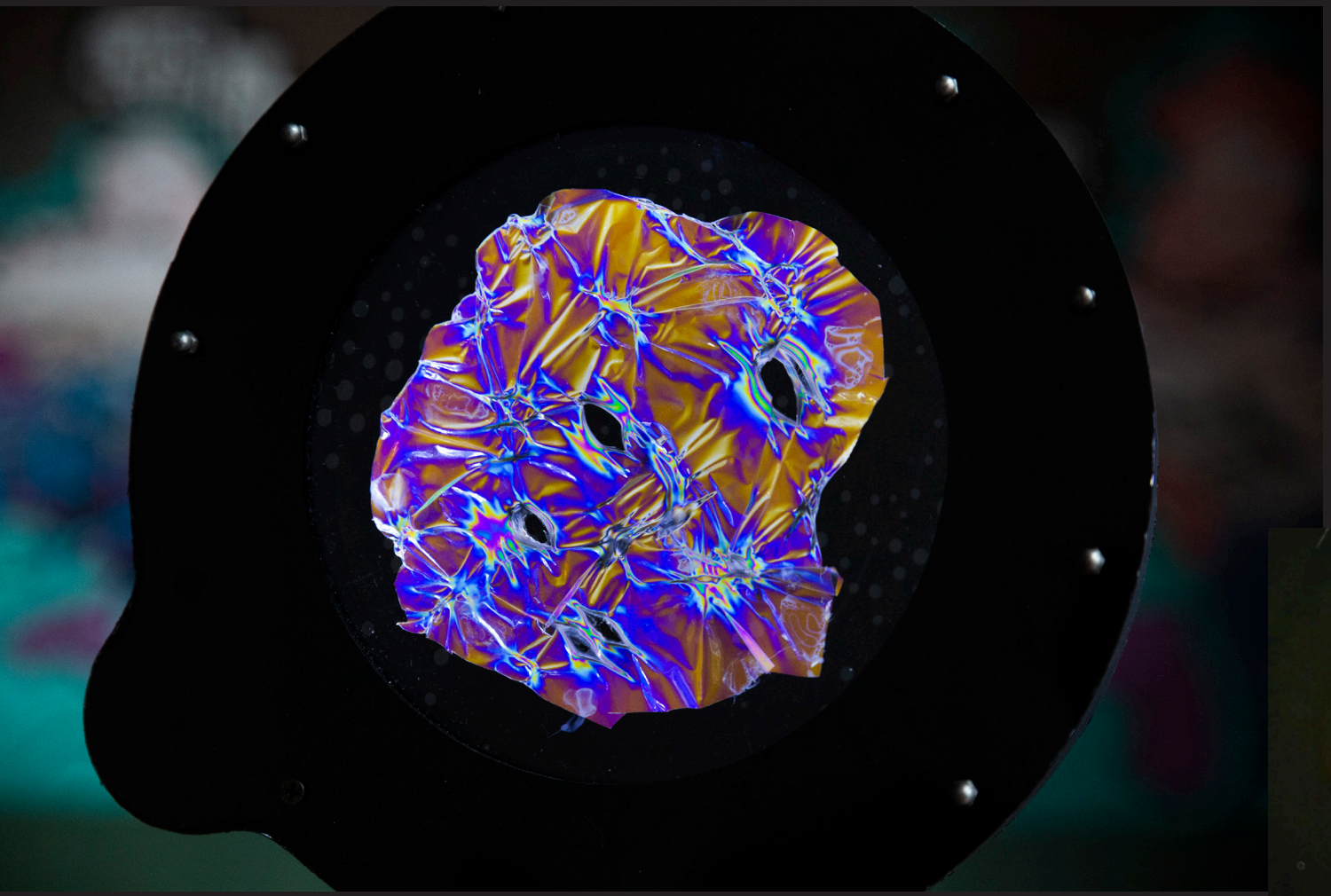


Example image of photoelastic phenomenon)

source: https://www.strainoptics.com/training/



The basic binary elements represented as 0 (--) and 1(–). As it continued, this system landed on a 6 number based system (looks like䷀) that consists of 64 combinations.



RefractionScope (2020)

Chroma Stretch (2023)



In my short film, “Liquid Landscape” and “Pareidolia,” I repurpose expired and exposed 16mm film stocks that are deemed unusable for standard production. By embracing the unintended artifacts inherent in film production—such as water stains, uneven development, and decay patterns on the film emulsion—I transform these supposed flaws and mistakes into the main elements of my work.

Liquid landscape (2018)

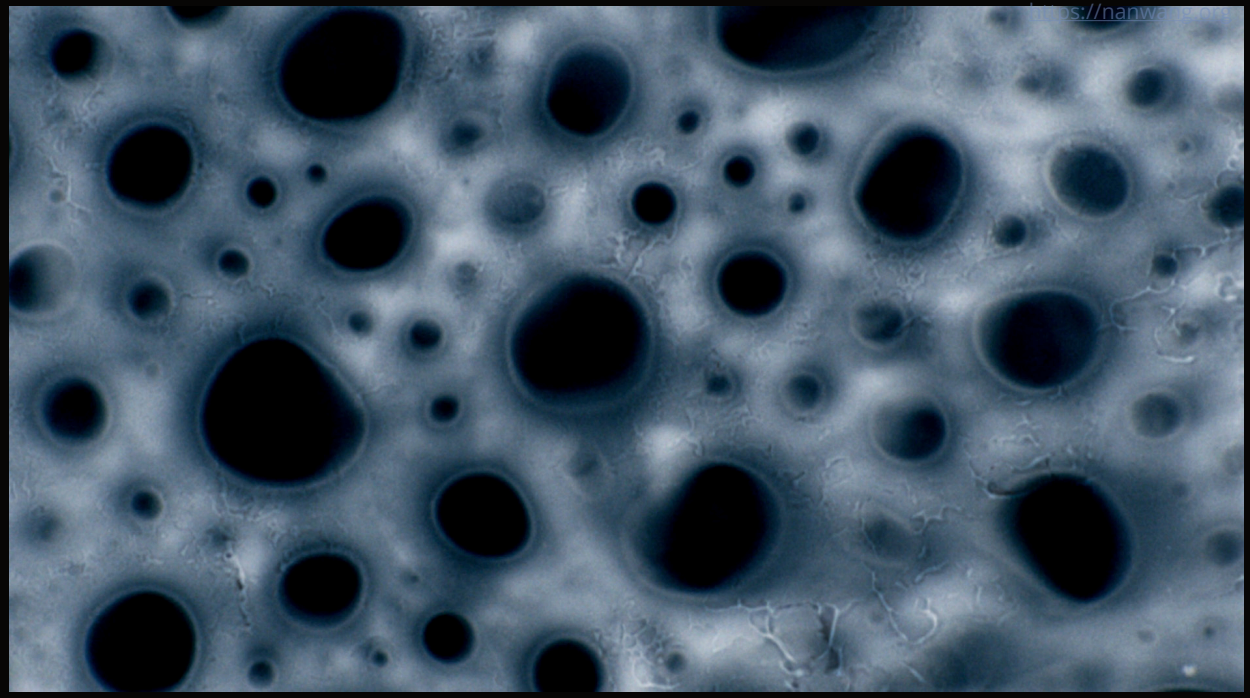
Microscopic worlds and macroscopic landscapes emerge from the liquid patterns. Together with a pulsating soundtrack, this film creates a sensory and psychedelic experience: a visual journey through mysterious landscapes.

link: https://vimeo.com/249812994/68ccf048ed

Presented at

2018 International Film Festival Rotterdam

2018 Hamburg International Short Film Festivals



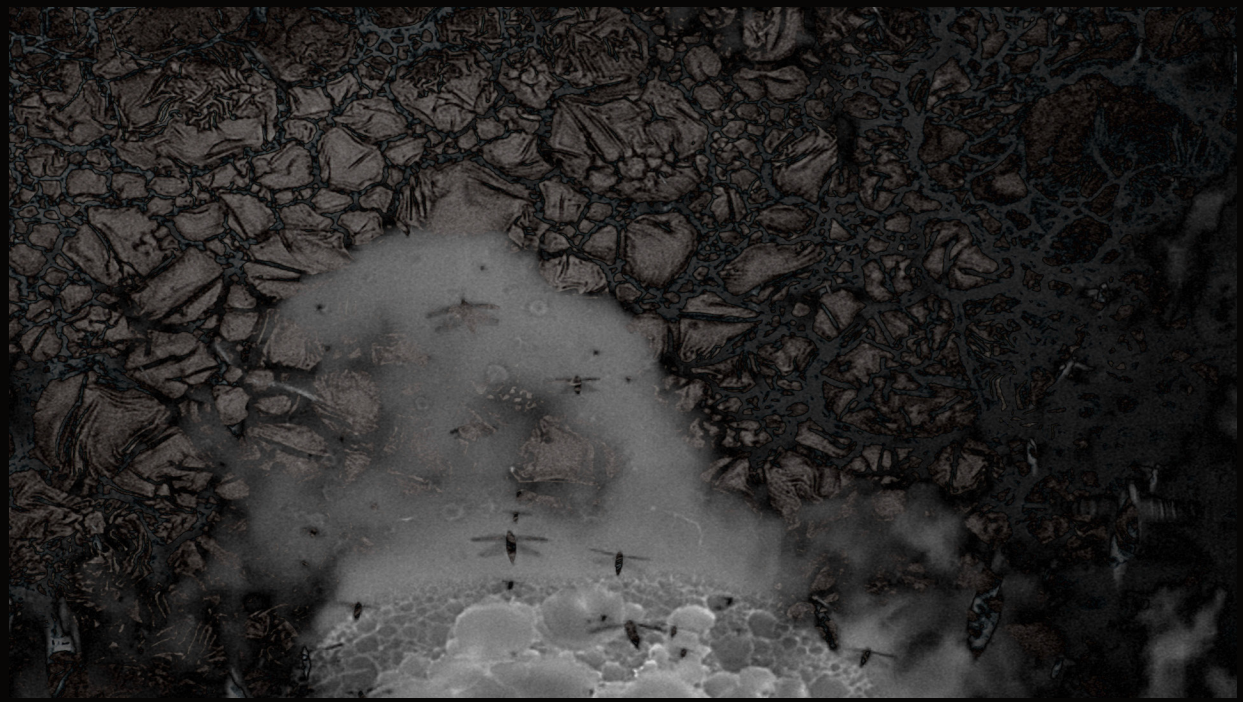
Pareidolia (2019)

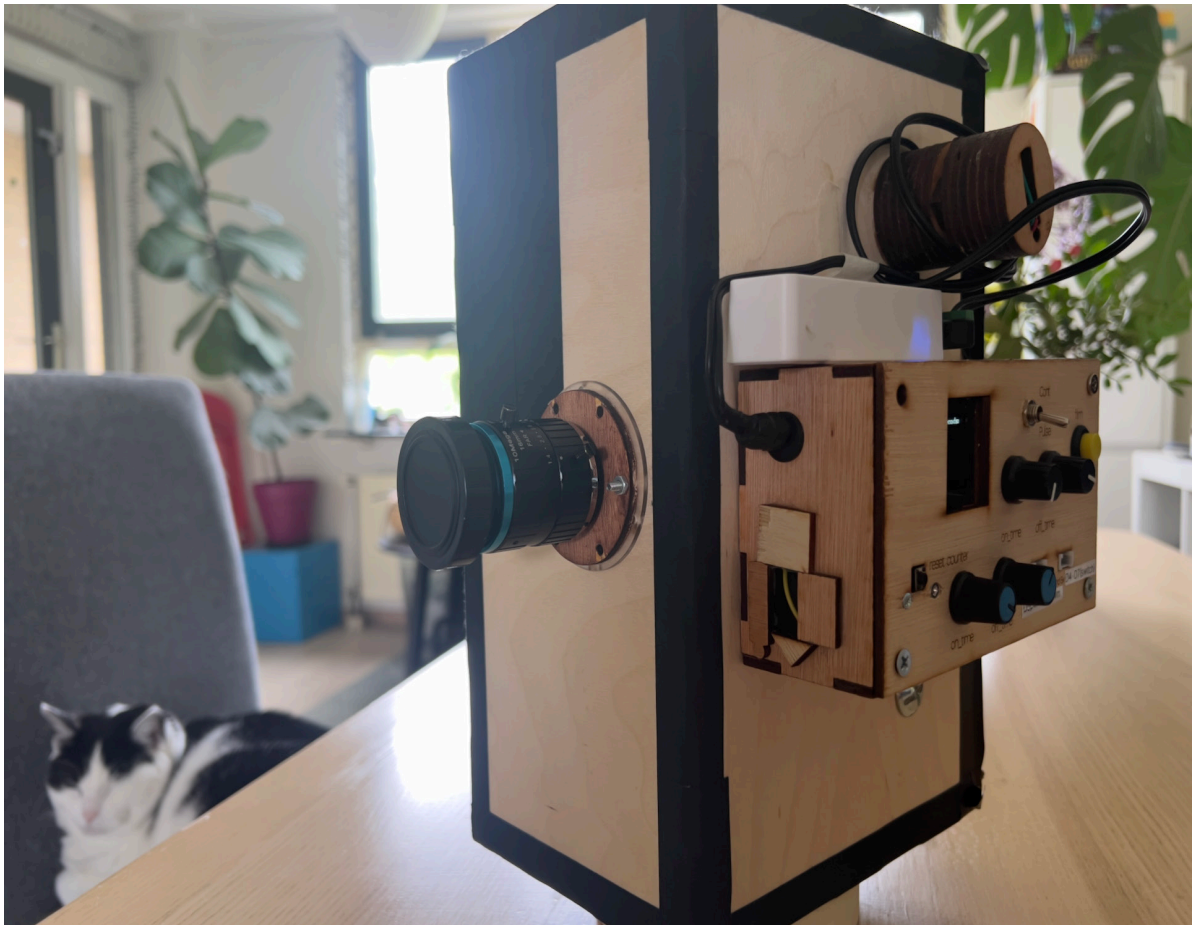
In Pareidolia, analog abstract patterns made on 16mm film are used as source material for finding similar figurative images, interpreted by an online search engine. Hundreds of these matching images were edited into abstract film clips, resulting in an exciting visual and psychological cinematic experience.

link: https://vimeo.com/303464676/f3cc6e8994

2019 International Film Festival Rotterdam

International Short Film Festival Oberhausen 2020





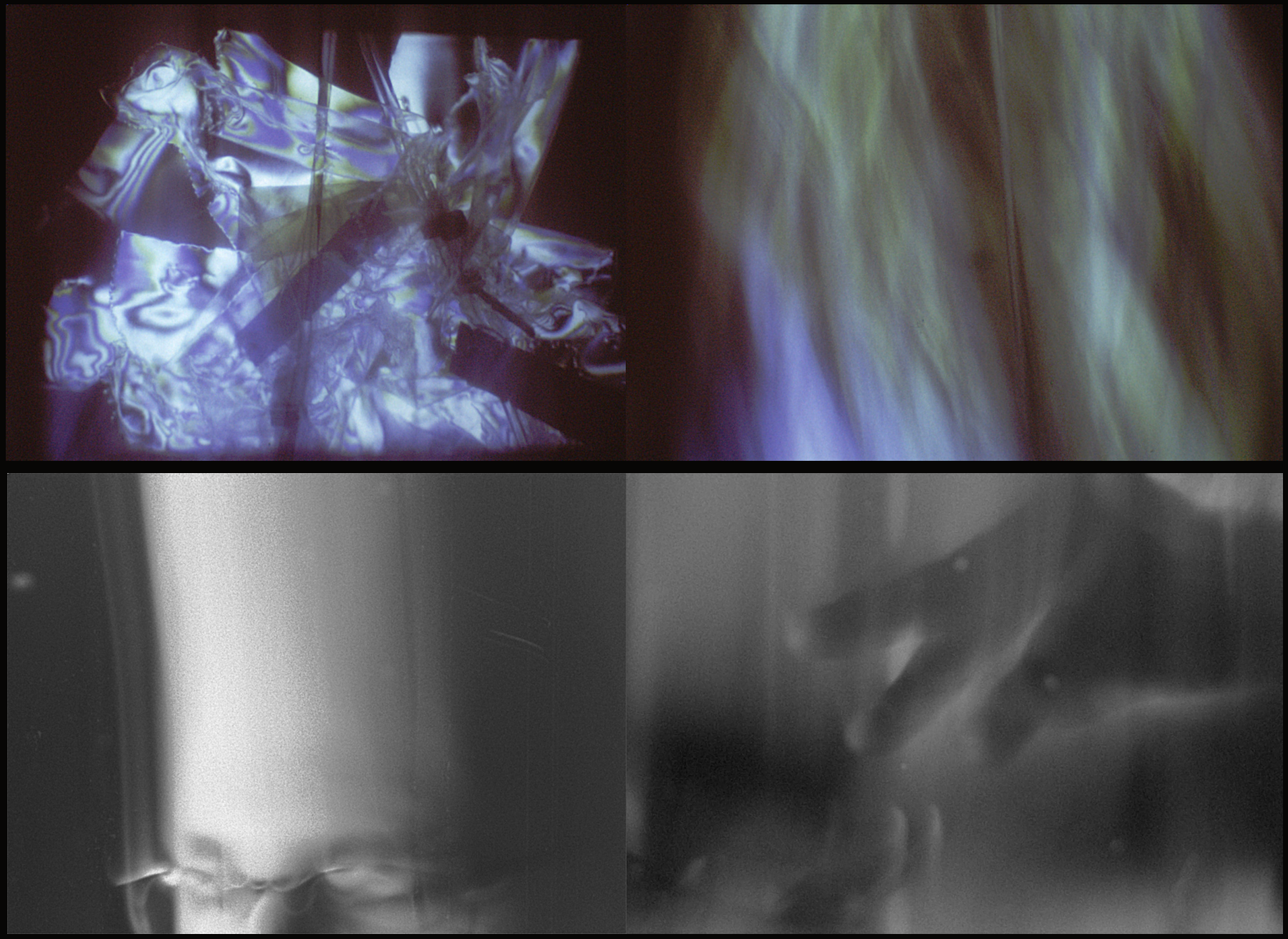


In 2023, I taught a workshop at the Baltic Analog Lab in Riga on building a 16mm hand-cranked movie camera. Workshop participants had the opportunity to construct their versions of the camera and experiment with filming, exploring the creative possibilities of this alternative technology.



DIY 16mm motion picture camera

As a member of Filmwerkplaats, an artist-run film lab community dedicated to salvaging and reinventing analog film technologies for artistic practices, my art practice has been profoundly influenced by the idea of reimagining marginalized “obsolete” technology from an industry that is no longer dominant. Film was originally invented to record reality, but when the industry collapsed, it ceased to be the primary technology for capturing realistic images. By stripping away commercial values and restrictions, I have uncovered the potential for alternative aesthetics that commercial industries have overlooked. In 2022, I embarked on a journey to create a series of slit-scan cameras capable of recording 16mm moving images without restrictions such as frame size, gate, speed, and shutters. This camera aims to serve as an alternative to the Bolex camera, which is no longer in production. Built with widely available parts and electronics, this camera empowers artists and filmmakers to explore alternative aesthetics and new avenues of artistic exploration without the limitations imposed by commercial industries.



images captured with the DIY 16mm camera

link: https://vimeo.com/898167532



RefractionScope (2020)

video documentation:

https://vimeo.com/441198617