

MACHINE

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INTERDISCIPLINARY CREATION COMPANY

MONTREAL

PERFORMANCE · SCENOGRAPHY · INSTALLATION

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MISSION

Machine du Ciel is a Montreal-based non-profit interdisciplinary creation company producing scenographic works at the intersection of theatre, installation, and hybrid forms. Its research practice expands dramaturgical thinking across disciplines, infusing theatrical temporality and dynamics into installation, while embedding the perceptual logic of installation within theatrical creation.

The company positions space and time as primary dramaturgical materials, articulated through staged compositions in which scenography, matter, bodies, machines, light, sound, media, and language operate as equal agents. Projects are developed through cross-disciplinary collaboration, broadening artists' formal vocabularies.

Machine du Ciel prioritizes embodied perception, approaching meaning as something that emerges first through sensory experience.



A Distant Wave from a Darkened Shore

Scenographic Installation

Anticipated World Premiere: Prague Quadrennial 2027

In Development

DESCRIPTION

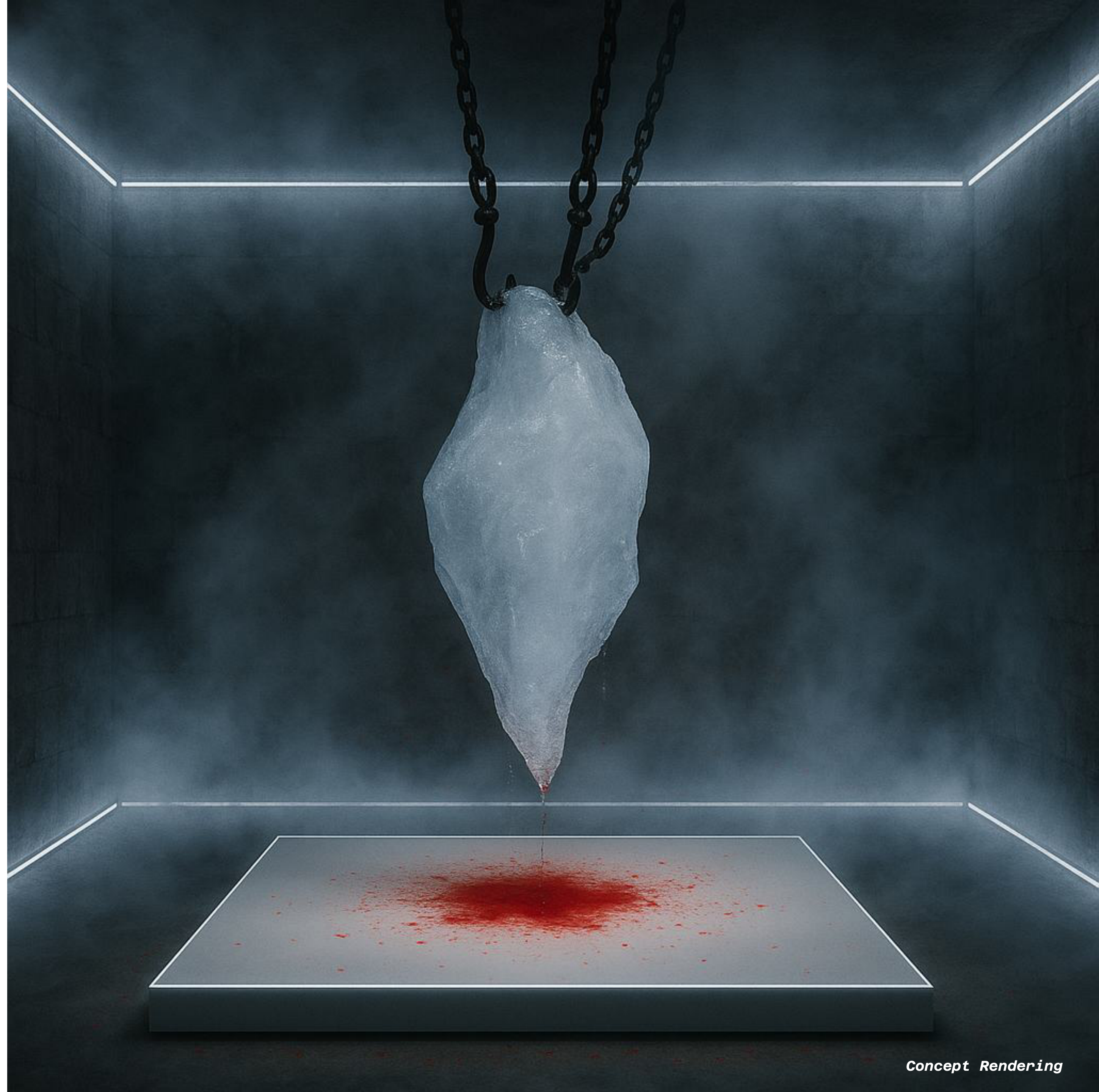
A Distant Wave from a Darkened Shore is a diptych of two scenographic installations that integrate real and artificial ice, sculpture, immersive design, video, and responsive sound to explore themes related to climate collapse and the tensions inherent in attempting to stage nature as an art object. The central image is a large block of ice falling from industrial meat hooks. Yet this moment is never seen.

Each installation presents the same elements in different states, generating two distinct yet interconnected experiences. When presented together, they outline the before and after of this absent event through a structural gap across space and time. The dramaturgy emerges through this temporal separation and the viewer's embodied perception. Drawing from post-dramatic theatre practices, the work leans into complexity and multiplicity, inviting audiences to construct and embody meaning from the tensions between material, light, time, and space.

(SUSPENDED)

The first installation stages a large block of real ice, carved at the scale of an animal carcass, hanging from three metallic meat hooks inside a cube. The ice carcass is suspended above a square platform marked by a blood-red stain. The audience observes from outside the frontal open face of the cube. Linear LED strips along the cube's edges define the space with clinical precision.

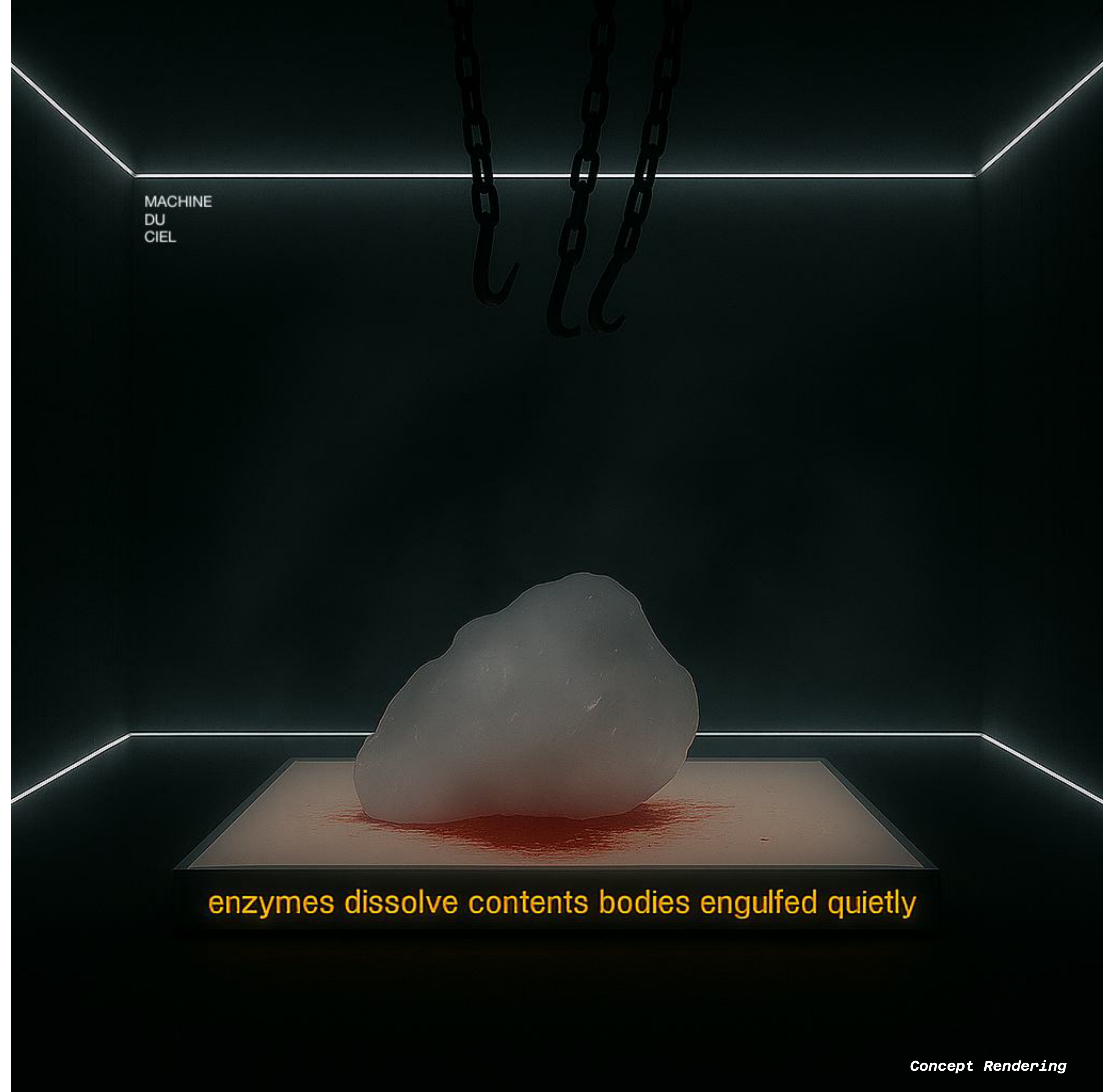
Throughout the viewing period, the ice slowly melts. The timing is calibrated so that the block does not collapse during public viewing. A contact microphone beneath the platform captures the vibrations of the melting droplets, which are digitally transduced into a live, dynamic sound environment. The audio is driven directly by the material transformation of the ice into water. Programmed lighting states shift focus, atmosphere, and rhythm, shaping gradual movements in visual composition.



(COLLAPSED)

The second installation presents an identical cube, but the suspended ice mass has already fallen. While *Suspended* uses real ice, *Collapsed* presents its artificial counterpart. The hooks hang empty above a sculpted artificial ice carcass resting on the platform. The collapse itself remains unseen. The viewer encounters only its aftermath. This installation is designed to be viewed from a greater distance than *Suspended*, reinforcing its ontology as a constructed image rather than a living elemental process.

A wall of air-conditioning units positioned behind the audience emits a steady flow of cold air towards the viewer's backs as they stand facing the cube. A narrow band of screens embedded along the front edge of the platform displays scrolling text fragments describing apoptosis (the process of cellular death) in clinical detail. An illuminated MACHINE DU CIEL sign is present on the back wall of the cube.



CURATORIAL STATEMENT

A Distant Wave from a Darkened Shore employs absence as its central dramaturgical force. The two installations act as ghostly parentheses around an event the audience never witnesses: the collapse of the suspended ice. The fall is central to the work, yet it is never seen. Instead, across the diptych, the viewer encounters its anticipation in one space and its aftermath in another. The image that is withheld becomes the motor of perception, generating tension that shapes and orients the viewer's experience.

This missing collapse points toward a broader ecological context. Many of the most consequential ruptures of climate collapse unfold outside human perception. Glaciers calve without witness. Species disappear quietly. Atmospheric and oceanic shifts occur unseen. The processes that lead to environmental loss begin long before they surface in human awareness or circulate through the screens and media that shape our realities.

In *Distant Wave*, the absent event becomes a metaphor for the ecological catastrophes we intuit but rarely see. In this sense, it functions as a perceptual analogue for ecological collapse itself. It is perceived affectively without witness, contributing to a distributed condition of ambient grief rather than a single legible tragedy.

Catastrophe is now most often encountered through digital media. Images of disaster circulate and rapidly lose their force, consumed as aesthetic content rather than encountered as consequential planetary realities.

What does it mean to find a glacier beautiful and make it the wallpaper for a phone screen while remaining disconnected from its eventual collapse? In this context, the refusal to show the fall becomes a critical gesture. The diptych withholds the moment of rupture, directing attention instead toward the quieter temporal processes that precede and follow it. By removing resolution, the work asks the viewer to inhabit the discomfort of knowledge without agency. The viewer's body carries the gravitational weight and potential energy of a looming collapse that is never physically perceived—a key expression of the work's somatic dramaturgy.

Standing before the suspended ice, the body senses gravitational pull, the edge of collapse, the presence of potential danger. There is an embodied awareness of verticality and descent that is inscribed in space but never resolved, leaving its impression within the nervous system. The viewer is positioned at the threshold of an unfolding disaster without the ability to intervene.

CURATORIAL STATEMENT (CONTINUED)

This unresolved suspension becomes a form of haunting: a desire for completion that remains unmet. In *Collapsed*, the inverse occurs. The audience encounters the fall only through its aftermath, forced to imagine the trace of the collapse in the empty space above the fallen ice.

This spatial distinction deepens the work's articulation of absence on a bodily level. In *Suspended*, the viewer is drawn close to the threshold of the cube, where the elemental micro-process of melting can be seen in close detail. In *Collapsed*, the audience is held further back as they confront a constructed artificial image. There is an impulse to move closer, to confirm whether the ice is real, but this approach is denied. The image does not permit proximity. It pushes back. Its artificiality and enforced distance produce a subtle resistance that projects outward from the cube.

Meanwhile, behind the audience, the wall of air-conditioning units sends a steady current of cold air toward their backs, generating a continuous proprioceptive pressure. The body is caught between opposing forces: the resistive pressure projected from the image, and the push toward it from the refrigerated air. These unseen vectors compress the audience into a state of spatial suspension, shaping how the body inhabits the space. The contrasting spatial conditions of *Suspended* and *Collapsed* become embodied expressions of the tensions between the real and the reproduced.

These tensions are further expressed through the work's articulation of conflicting temporalities. The slow melt of real ice unfolds according to elemental and planetary rhythms. The scrolling apoptosis text on the screen operates at the pace of media devices, while its content points toward biological time. The sound design responds to the micro-vibrations generated by melting water droplets, transforming materiality into sound at computational speed. These temporal strata coexist without aligning, producing a condition of temporal instability across the diptych.

The viewer's body is caught between incompatible temporal logics. In *Suspended*, time stretches toward a collapse that never arrives. In *Collapsed*, the event is already over, accessible only through its residue and museum-like reconstruction. The result is a sustained temporal tension in which the body senses both anticipation and aftermath, natural rhythm and technological mediation, without ever encountering the event itself.

The installations also engage with the tensions inherent in staging nature as an art object. In *Suspended*, real ice within a theatrical frame destabilizes its own 'naturalness,' oscillating between matter and image. In *Collapsed*, the artificial ice, unsettlingly inert, intensifies this instability. Its artificiality prompts the memory of the natural matter it refers to. The elemental and the plastic haunt one another.

CURATORIAL STATEMENT (CONTINUED)

The scrolling apoptosis text introduces the biological body into the work. It describes the process of cellular death without narrating or explaining the image, linking organic dissolution to planetary collapse while leaving their relationship abstract and unresolved.

The illuminated MACHINE DU CIEL sign introduces a meta-critical dimension to the work. MACHINE DU CIEL is the producing company, and its presence within the installation functions explicitly as a form of branding, positioning the work as a fabricated, marketed cultural object.

By introducing this sign into the scenography, the work draws attention to its own production and the commodification of nature, rather than remaining blind to the ecological implications of creating a resource-heavy artwork engaging with themes of climate collapse.

Its inclusion acknowledges the environmental cost of producing art about climate change and brings the piece into conversation with its own material and carbon footprint.

By intentionally injecting the artwork with a sense of capitalistic contamination, its authorship, labor, infrastructure and ecological costs are made visible, inviting the viewer to ask whether a work that consumes resources in order to address ecological crisis should exist at all.

This gesture situates the diptych within a broader discourse around representation, sustainability, and complicity, while further emphasizing the artificiality and constructedness of *Collapsed*.

By staging absence as a material and affective force, *A Distant Wave from a Darkened Shore* proposes a scenography grounded in temporal processes, perception, somatic state-making, digital intervention, and the agency of materials.

The ghost in this work is not a figure but a structural presence: the unresolved image, the unseen collapse, the invisible vectors acting on the body, and the self-referential exposure of the piece's own materiality. Absence becomes the organizing principle of the experience, shaping how the viewer perceives and inhabits the space.

The diptych constructs a spatial and temporal architecture haunted by invisible events and forces, positioning the body as the medium through which absence is made perceptible.

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Saël Simard

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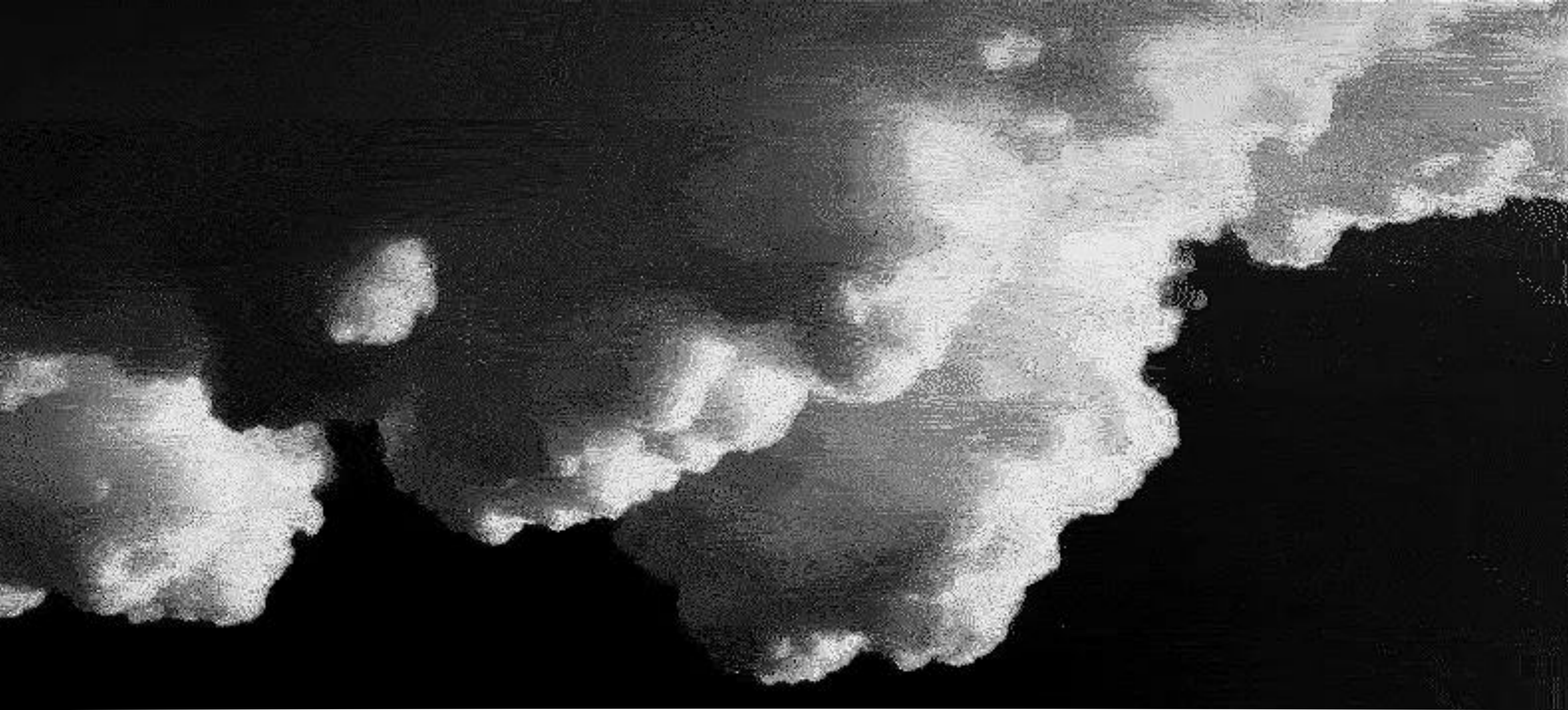
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