

portfolio of artworks
arshad hakim

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arshad hakim draws and makes film. he thinks in fragments, ellipses and interludes. his work engages in abstracting narrative and narrativising abstraction, which is grounded in histories of art, film, sufi cosmologies, music and poetry. alongside this, he maintains a curatorial practice rooted in institution building and creating infrastructures of knowledge, having worked across museums, foundations, and independent art organisations.

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adrift: graphic notations for watermusic ii

2025

pigment, ink, graphite, and vinyl on paper
20.32 x 25.40 cm (series of 12)

link to PDF of drawings [here](#)

link to artist book distributed by [Press Works \(India\)](#) and [Printed Matter \(USA\)](#)

i started making these drawings while i felt adrift in my life. at the same time, i kept listening to watermusic ii, which in many ways provided an atmosphere to what i was feeling. the drawings are the residue of that drift. at the same time, i was reading various texts, whatever held my attention—another kind of drifting.

i had a day job at a museum where, as part of curatorial work, we would write alt text and image descriptions. my colleague, and later friend, passed her obsession with alt text and image descriptions to me and she kept saying, isn't this like poetry? the text are descriptions of various sensations and sensoriums i had and want to share with you, my reader. these texts were written while listening, drawing, and drifting.

watermusic ii is an hour-long, one-track album by William Basinski, released in 2003. this work is imagined as a triad: to be heard, read, and seen together.

i want to thank Vaishnavi for sharing her obsession with me. to Sarasija, Shveta, and Vrishali for their comments which helped me see the work anew, and for being patient with me when i was not. to Nihaal, for guiding me through the business of book making. to William Basinski, for their music and for this album. thank you William for making music that is deep within us, like melody cut in a disk of flesh.



to see the sun at midnight/ loving against time

2023

digital film with sound, 28 mins 34 secs

this film was made possible through the support of the Generator Cooperative Art Production Fund, 2021-22.

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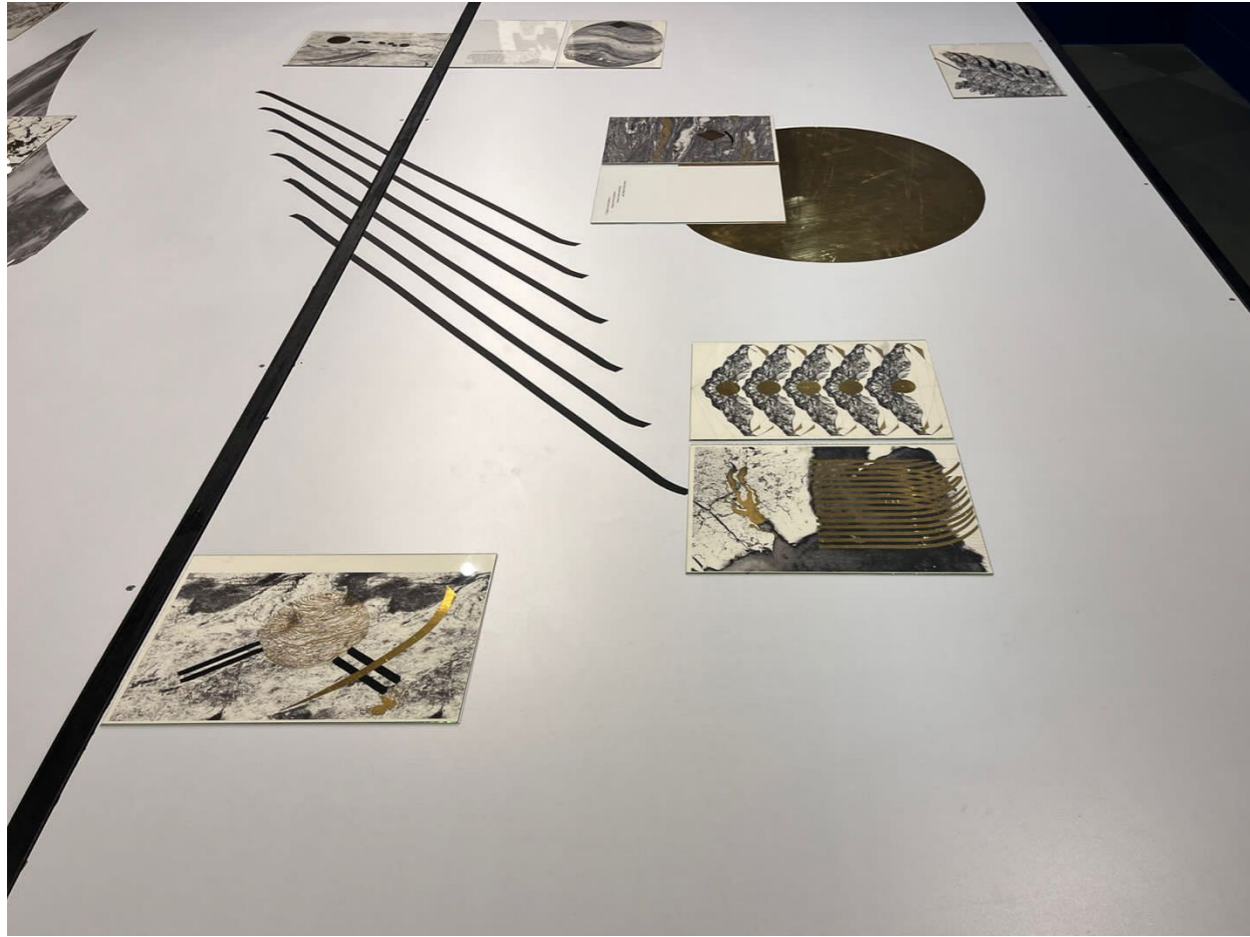
this is the story of the changing of the light. of what transformations are and what they do. this is the story of an eclipse, or many eclipses—the change in and of light making us believe in the magnificent and the insignificant.

the film takes its cue from *The Stellar Rays of the Stars* by Al-Kindi and a re-reading of Iblis's narrative by Husayn Ibn Mansur al- Hallaj—foregrounding the image and the phenomena of the eclipse. *The Stellar Rays of the Stars* is an astronomical and astrological treatise by Al-Kindi, who was a philosopher during the Abbasid period. he proposed that rays from the stars travel in straight lines and when those rays reach an object they carried some part of the star within them; in turn affecting the object that the light has touched. working with Al-Kindi's framework, i speculate on how he would frame shadows—light being blocked by an object and the effect light being blocked can have on us.

three Sufi saints re-read the story of Iblis and propose that he is a lover par-excellence. the narrative of Iblis mimics the narrative of the fall of Lucifer within Judo-Christian theology. the Sufis defend Iblis by stating that he does not prostrate to Adam as per God's command, because he is so much in love with God that he couldn't take his eyes off him. within Sufi iconography, Iblis is known as the Peacock Angel, Black Light and the Tresses of a Lover.

framed within a dialogue, the film speculates the effects of light changing and marks them on the registers of the ethereal, the emotional and the theological.





ghost rhythms

2022

digital print, gouache, gold ink, and gold vinyl on paper
21 x 29.7 cm (series of 15)

link to PDF [here](#)

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this is the rhythm of the night

2019

lecture performance

approximately 50 min

performance document [here](#)

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this lecture is about how a body moves while one is dancing, what sensations are generated during this event through these movements and the zones of inflicted autonomy they lead to. taking this as its premise, the lecture describes various conditions that occur within this temporal frame and how the body and communality become vectors—a *Temporary Autonomous Zone* that operate within the frame of a night.

the lecture takes two digressions in order to illustrate vectors of movements that may not rest within the body but are rooted in the body—taking instances from cosmology and Islamic theology. it also has components of electronic music—techno, jungle, amongst others, which provide an *mise-en-scene* to this thought.



at the overturn

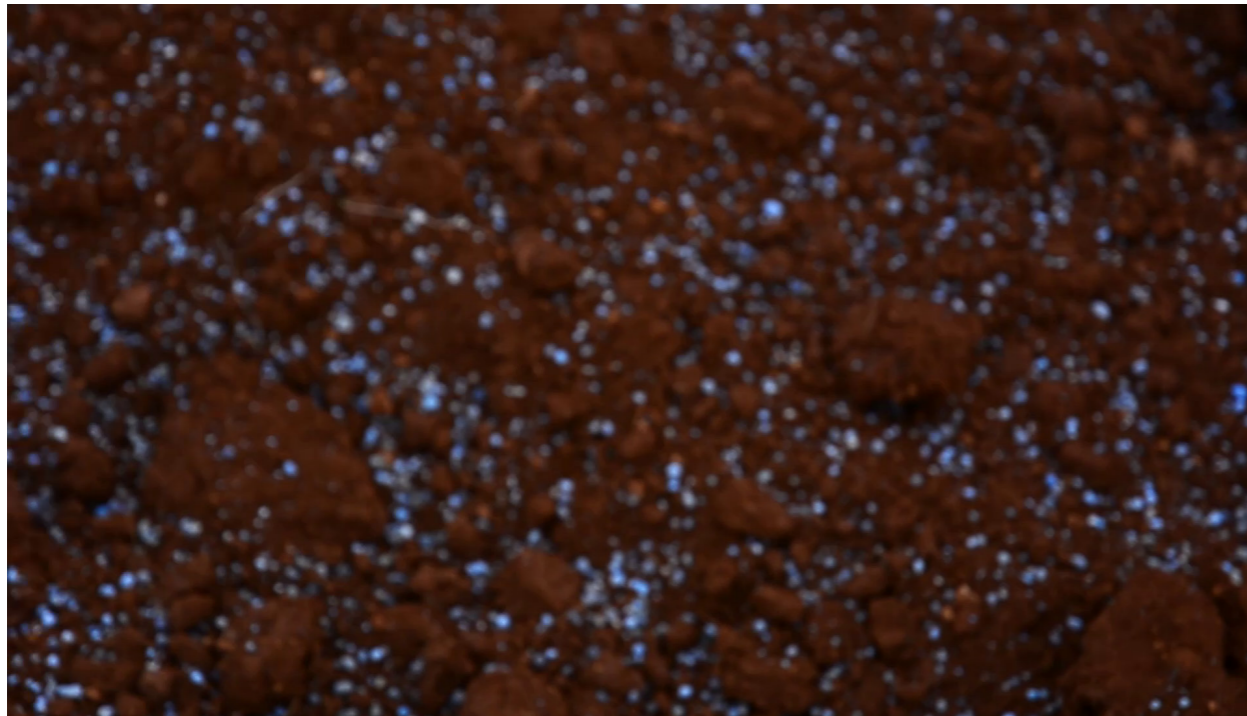
2018

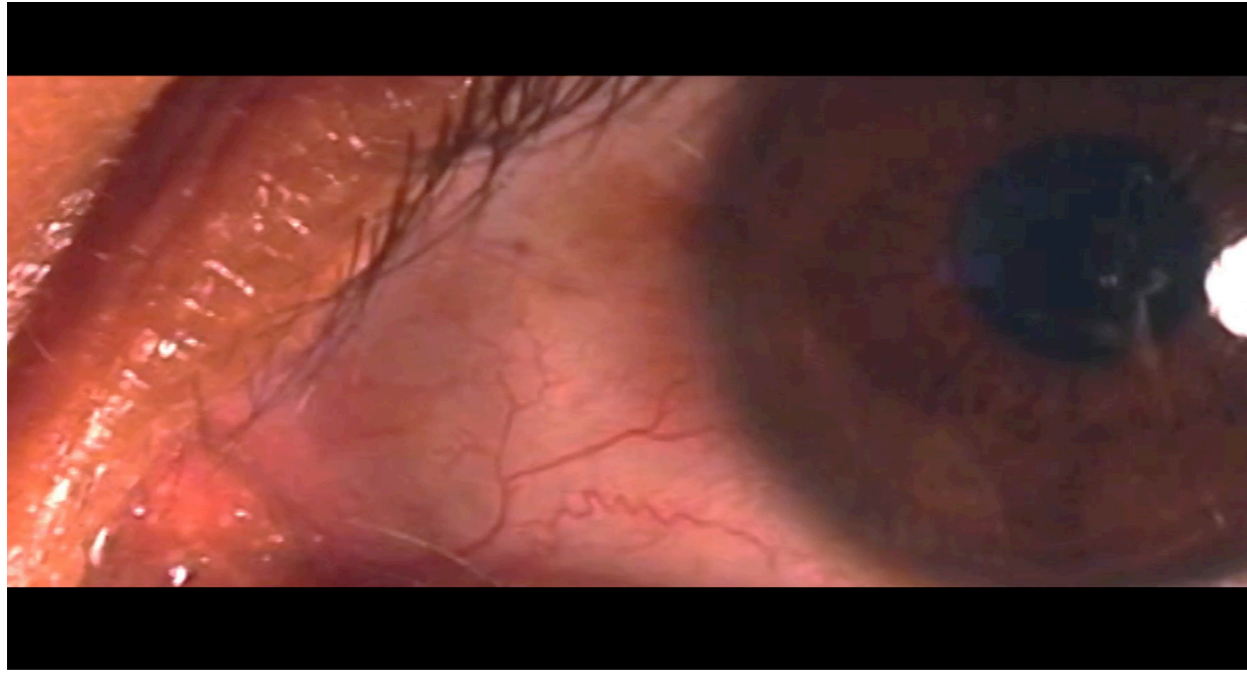
digital video and sound, 17min 55sec

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the film's central pivot rests on the idea of a dislodged and a fragmented sense of consciousness, where boundaries—between what one is and what is not—are hazy. as a result, this consciousness lacks a centre, and is constantly looking for one. in doing so, it acts as a parasite looking for a host, to attach itself to and consume. linked with the idea of the parasite, is the idea of nihilist subjectivity; where points of not knowing and points of meaninglessness become generative sites for forging ideas around this dislodged consciousness.

taking this as a base, the film explores these ideas of parasitic time in relation to a lover; notions of heat, self-immolation and how they are intrinsically tied to notions of nihilism. the film is sourced from a range of ideas and sequences, which include: a confrontation scene from *Solaris*, 1972 (By Andrei Tarkovsky), *Self Immolation* by *Qung Duc*, 1963 in Saigon, Vietnam and *the Promethean myth*.





it was high noon and i slept with the sun
(after Blade Runner, 1982)

2017

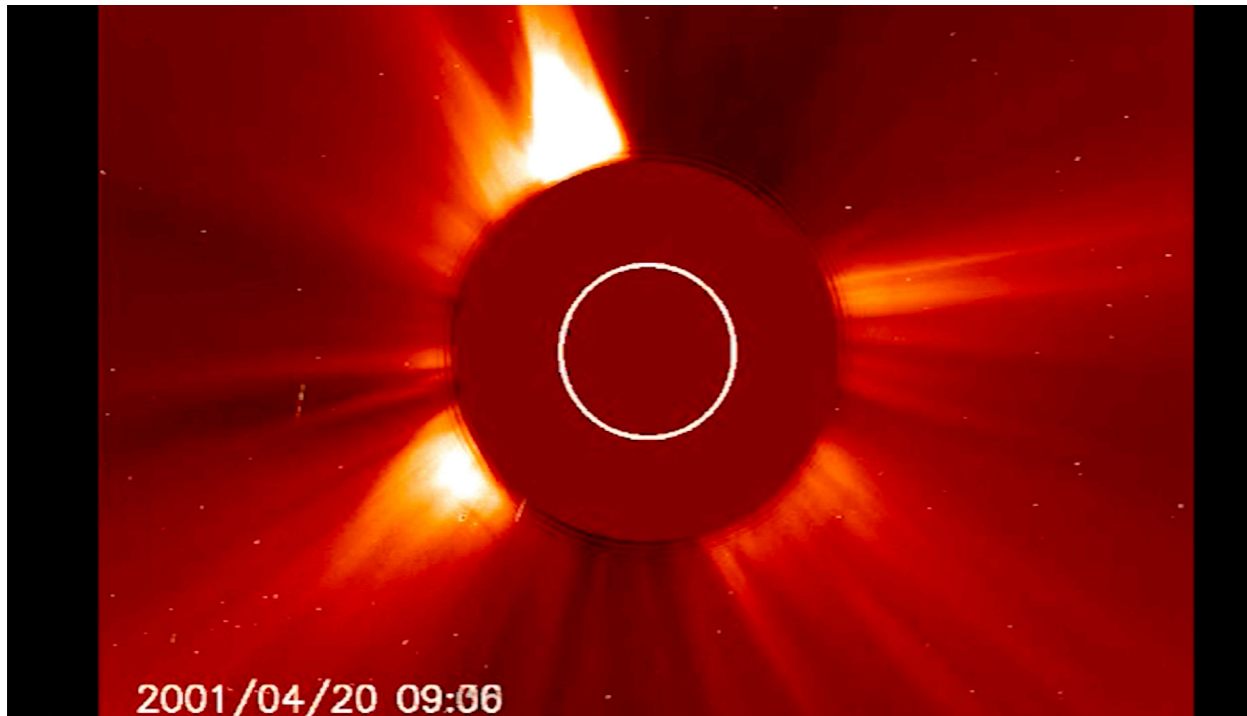
digital video and sound, 3minutes 40sec and 1 minute; loop time: 13min 06sec

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a dual screen video installation that began with a question. in *Blade Runner*, 1982 by Ridley Scott, the climatic scene ends by Roy (the replicant) confronting Dr. Tyrell (Head of the company who manufactures these replicants), asking the doctor to extend his life (according to the plot the replicants are super human and their life is cut short to 4 years, in order to prevent any revolt from them). the doctor refuses and says that all bio-mechanical combinations have failed, and then he says: *the light that burns twice burns half as long, and you have burned so very, very brightly Roy. look at you. you are the prodigal son. you're quite the prize.* Roy repents of all his misdoings, and he kisses him, and while kissing he kills him. Roy gouges Dr. Tyrell's eyes with his bare hands.

my question: who and when can one ask for more life? and what is more life?

on one screen is a close up image of an iris cut with meat getting roasted. on the other is a found footage taken from the NASA archives. it captures solar flares and magnetic waves emitted from the sun for a period of a month, which has been compressed to a minute.





stages in return that i did not want

2016

digital print, rust transfer, tea stain and gouache on paper

27.94 X 38.1 cms (series of 09)

link to PDF [here](#)

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these set of drawings are of an internal monologue of a cyborg in love. the cyborg couldn't recollect what the monologue was, it only remembered how it felt, and "feeling" was alien to it. it thought of its body, what responses the body had to its condition and how memory shaped what it felt. in this case, feeling something was to disintegrate.

images within these drawings are sourced from an open-source cellular archive.



ouroboros

2016

12 X 1.5X1 feet, LED Scrolling Board

link to video [here](#)

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this work was conceived while these few words kept going around in my mind:refrain/resist/hesitate/wait/agitate/dance/red/inertia/speculate/rush/revolt.

additionally, i had recently seen Sergei Parajanov's, *Colour of Pomegranates*, in which a line says: *you are fire, your dress is made out of fire*. i changed the line to: i am fire, my dress is made out of fire, and it was running with the words on the LED board.



Flubber, 2002 (after Flubber, 1997)

2016

digital video and sound, 9min 14 sec, on loop

link to video [here](#)

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Flubber is a 1997 rom-com movie, a remake of *The Absent-Minded Professor* (1961), directed by Les Mayfield and starring Robin Williams. The section that I have used from the movie is when Robin Williams is making Flubber at his basement cum lab. This section becomes ironic as a scientist is producing a material, which he does not have much control over and has human-like qualities—Williams gives a strand of his hair into the solution that makes Flubber. The movie becomes relevant for me as I had seen this during the 2002, Godhra pogrom, and I was living in Ahmedabad, a city which became the centre of the pogrom. This memory resurfaced during the Dadri lynching episode (2015), where the university where I was studying in was a few miles away from Dadri and I used to go there almost every second day.

9 snapshots accompany the video from the same clip, where Flubber being green in color has changed to red and on the 10th sheet is a dua (prayer) for “*ghar ki hifazat*” (*ayatul kursi*)—the sheets being displayed on a light table.





static photographs

2016

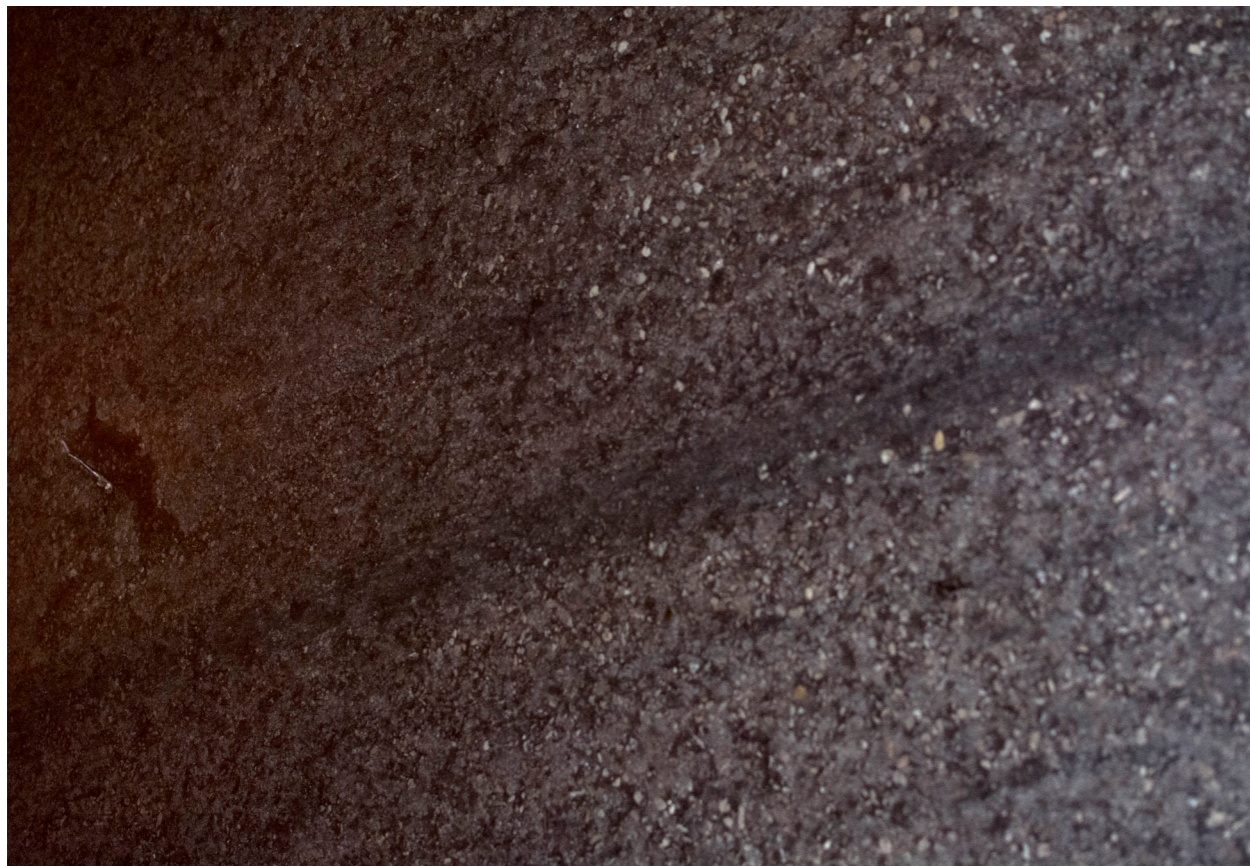
archival ink on paper and sound

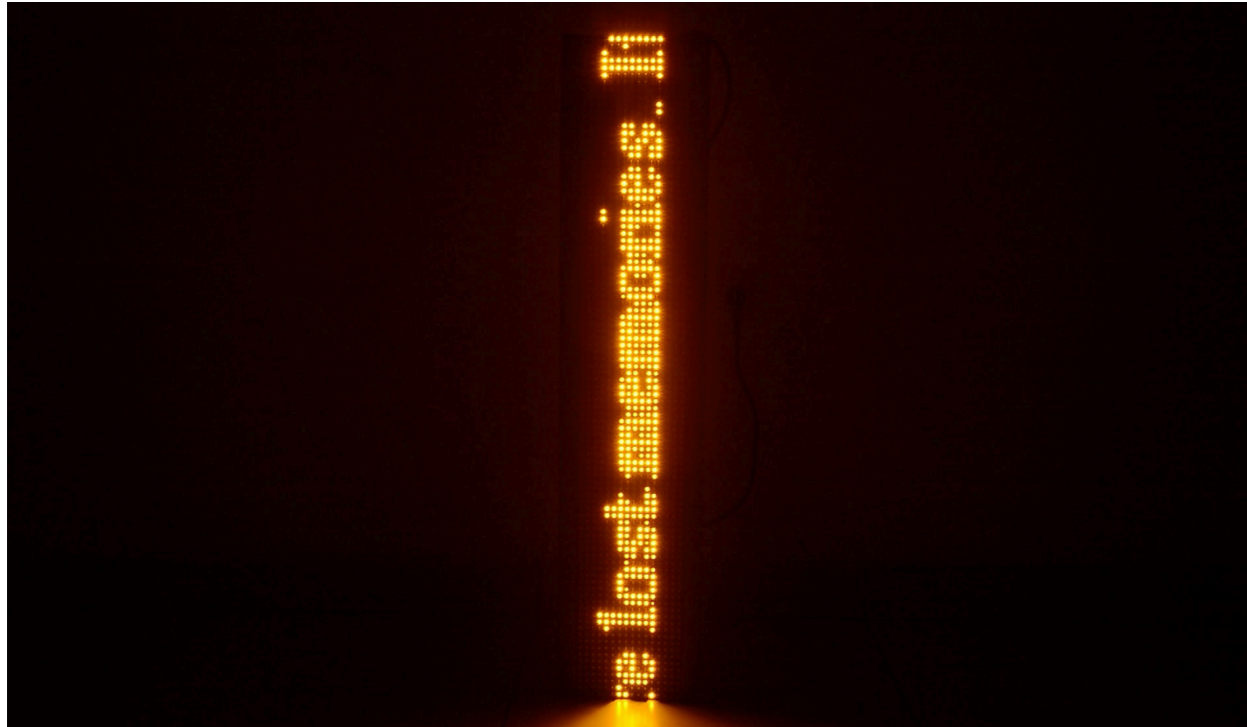
20.32 X 30.48 cms (series of 12)

link to video [here](#)

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the photographs were shot during a storm, later edited and synced with white noise.





nobody really knows (after 2046, 2004)

2015

LED scrolling board

dimensions variable

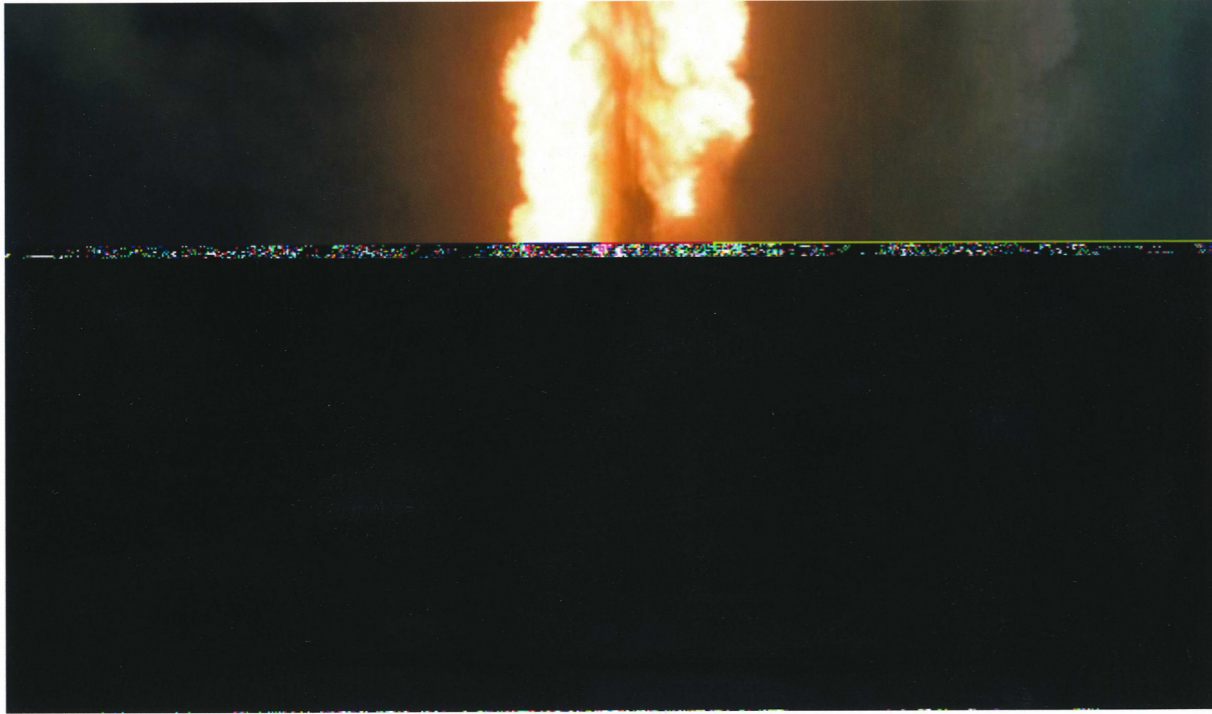
(screenshot from the documentation video)

link to video [here](#)

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the LED strip came as a response to living in a homogenised space and the sense of alienation that it creates. i kept going back to the opening sequence in *2046* by Wong Kar Wai, where the year 2046 is seen as a time warp and where memories are held still. in a sense, the homogenised space where i was living became *2046*, where everything was held very still and i could move in and out of it. taking this idea as a prompt, and from what I had written, a new text was written in order to intensify the sense of alienation.

Are you going to rekindle the blaze?
Is life without fire unbearable for you?
(After Lessons of Darkness, Herzog)
Nov 2015



are you going to rekindle the blaze? is life without fire unbearable for you?
(after, *Lessons of Darkness*, 1992, Werner Herzog)

2015

archival pigment print (edition of 3)

21.08 X 17.95 cms

an index card made after watching *Lessons of Darkness*, a Sci-Fi/War film by Herzog. the film documents the retreat after the first Gulf War. the film is largely shot from a helicopter and has biblical narrations as audio. as an aftermath of the war, there are huge oil spills, documented from a helicopter, seen from above. one does not know if it is water or oil. in order to fix the underground oil pipelines, the workers burn the oil in order to exhaust it. what results is a column of fire.

the entire film is divided into chapters, the image that is used is taken from the chapter titled, *Life without Fire* (Trans. Leben ohne feuer)

the spoken audio is as follows:

leben ohne feuer (live without fire)

Trans: *two figures are approaching an oil well.*

One of them is holding a lighted torch.

What are they up to?

Are they going to rekindle the blaze?

Is life without fire become impossible for them?

i took a screenshot of the coloum of fire and messed with its code to make this image.

fin.