



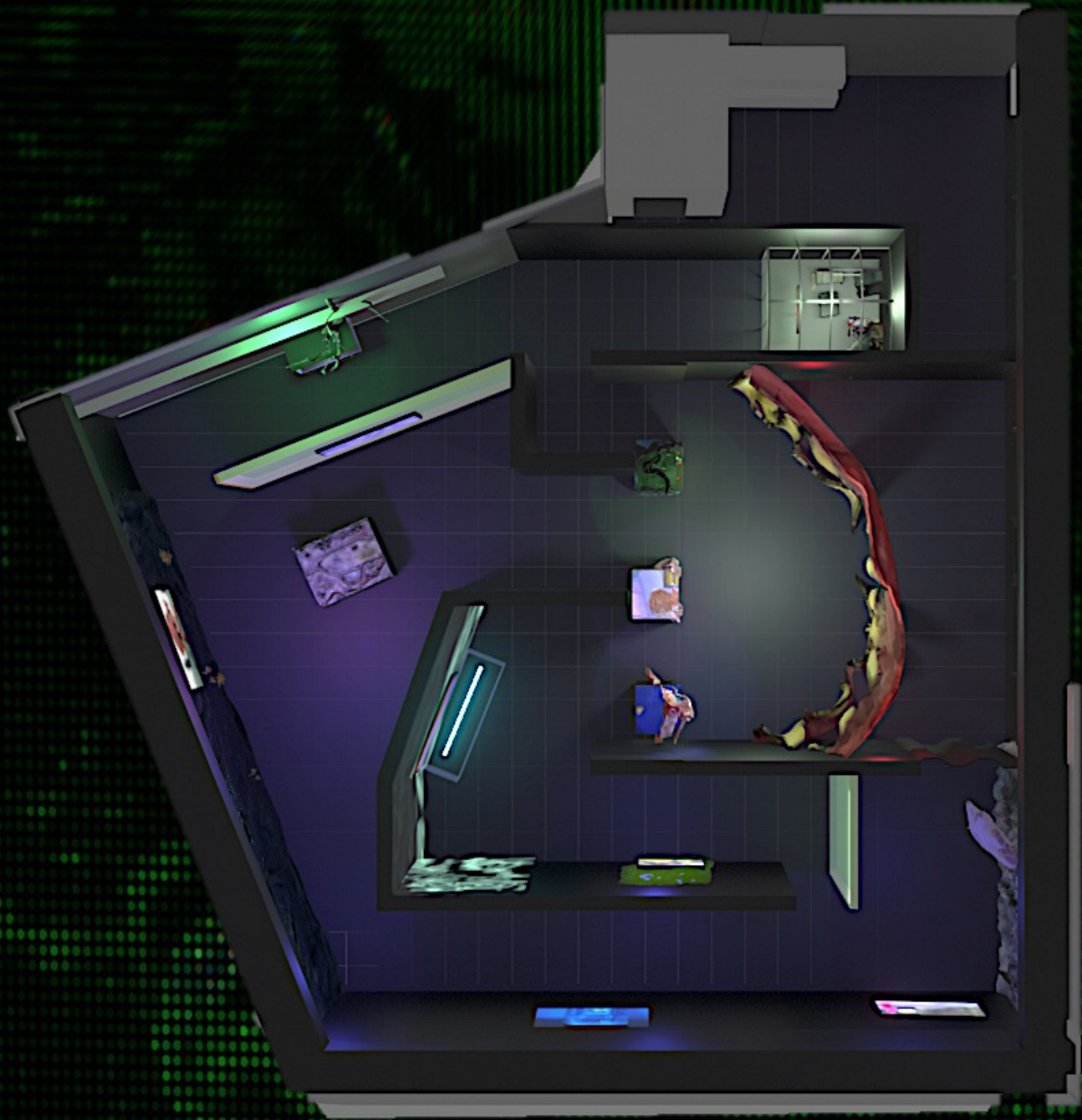
ROCKBOTTOM

Abe Sugarman

RockBottom constructs a genealogy and dialogue that examines how non-linear life cycles, queer time and queer survival can be used to reimagine sci-fi futures.

RockBottom is a game set in a bottomless aphotic zone inside a cryptic deep-sea trench. Where upon entering this murky multiverse, you become an agent within the game. You have fallen off the cliff, into the twilight zone, you have hit Rock Bottom- Decide your own fate through storytelling. The player is caught in a loop, of repeating and circulating, your aim is to leave this cycle . You will meet many characters along your journey: monsters, Gordon Riggs, and jellyfish polyps . Using seemingly-non compatible sites of discussion: eutrophicated sea's triggering blooms in jellyfish, SpongeBob's journey to queer time, the depths of the Calder valleys flood system , RockBottom questions how to live at death's door. The game often mirrors the SpongeBob universe with mutated characters such as the frogfish monster and Bikini Bottom. The game is a web of survival drawing from garden centers and your ex's house. Multiple locations feel familiar, and some seem otherworldly. The aim is to break through the life-cycle by surviving or, befriending the monsters, and completing each zone in the game and escaping?

The installation be an immersive physical game experiences. The gallery is divided into three pathways, decided by which character you choose. Each pathway has distinct zones within it. Each zone is a playable game for a location with the RockBottom game. The games each have special characters and quests. The focus is to expand the gameplay of RockBottom into a physical space, creating physical gameplay choices and navigation within the gallery. The gameplay space becomes a place of performance, with live streams and individual storylines being created through the choices the player makes in the game.



The Exhibition

The RockBottom game is broken down and has been split up into three physical pathways in the gallery space. There are 3 characters to choose from, each follow individual paths both in the gallery and in the game. This creates a different experience for each player. In each pathway there are zones where to play the game. Zones are locations in the game and the gallery, where you play the game and interact with the installation.

These pathways and timelines sometimes converge and mix at several points the player's path. The flow of the experience is tentacular web of storytelling— a web of lies and lifecycles: forming a non-linear biological lifecycle. It is the expanding of the flow chart; you follow the arrows creating an individual experience for each player.

When playing the game, you choose one of three characters; each character send you down a separate path:

- Lungfish: You enter the zones: Gordon riggs, river Calder, then you enter Rock bottom Central and converge with the Jellyfish path.
- Jellyfish: You enter the zones: Rock Bottom Central, and Rock Bottom Outskirts.
- Sea monkey: You enter the zones: your exe's house, then, Jellyfish fields and, converging paths with the rest of the characters at the zone - end of the line.

The aim for the exhibition is to have the visitor-player-agent within the game to play multiple times, revealing new paths and information about the game. However, it also functions on a level where you can play just once by just following the character pathway. The game can repeat in cycles akin to a a lifecycle of a jellyfish.

Jellyfish Temporality:

I have created a political proposal and model - 'Jellyfish temporality: non-linear lifecycles as a model of queer time and survival within the Anthropocene'.

Rock Bottom constructs a genealogy that examines the discursive formation of jellyfish temporality that can be used to examine its possible productive power and discourse through different sites and stages: queer ecology, the body, queer survival, queer temporality, geological time and reproductive futurism. Jellyfish temporality is an embodied framework of constructing and reading art and politics in the modern climate. Linking earth systems through the life-cycle of jellyfish leads to new ways of thinking through time. The mortality of the jellyfish is complicated - as a medusa it is not immortal in the way we understand death and survival. The jellyfish exists in different states transitioning and de-transitioning, materialising and then de-materialising. The jellyfish life-cycle questions the different boundaries between past and present, in that it shifts between physical states. It can exist in itself, and also hold the potential energy to transition forwards. It can also return to the past and can overtake the present.

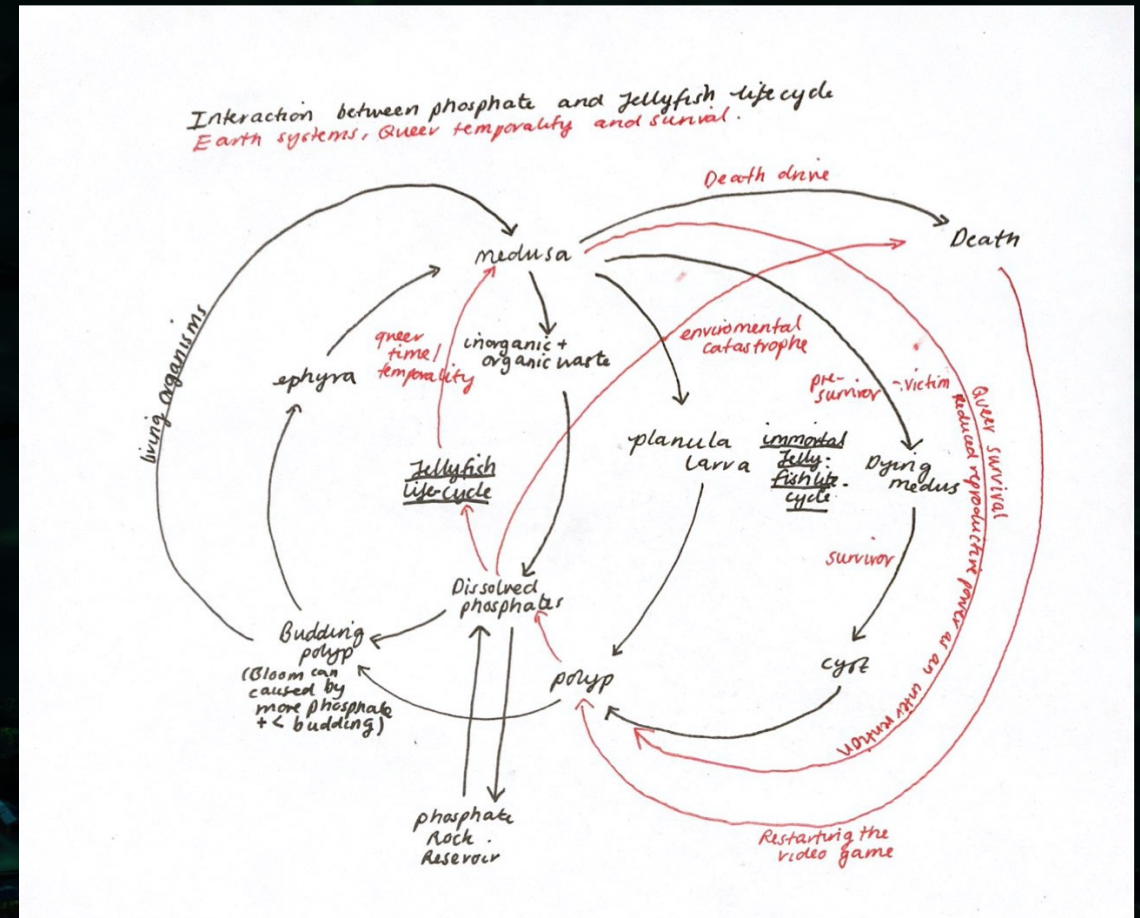
The Jellyfish life-cycle:

Jellyfish and eternal life. The cycle of the jellyfish is the biological alchemy of webs and material intimacy with permeable osmotic exchange. The jellyfish life-cycle acts in response to the environment and outside factors; it is not isolated from the complex entities of the hydrosphere or from itself and the different stages of being from other jellyfish.

The jellyfish life-cycle is made up of four main stages: firstly, eggs and sperm; secondly, the planula larvae; next, the polyp and polyp colony; and finally, Ephyra and Medusa stage. The medusa stage is the one we widely recognise as the jellyfish that exists, yet it frequently spends larger points of its life in different stages. The medusa buds from the polyp which is the transitory, benign, belying, sessile stage. The polyp can activate to produce many jellyfish or survive seemingly for ever in this potential holding node that can leak life. The polyp which resembles coral or anemones waits for the perfect environmental conditions, which can be for years, seemingly forever, before reproducing asexually by cloning, spawning and elongating into many independent ephyra; a process known as strobilation. It then matures into the more readily seen free-swimming medusa, where it reproduces sexually, though hermaphroditism can exist as a part of survival. Certain jellyfish species such as *Turritopsis dohrnii* can even revert back to the polyp stage if threatened or in stressed environmental conditions.

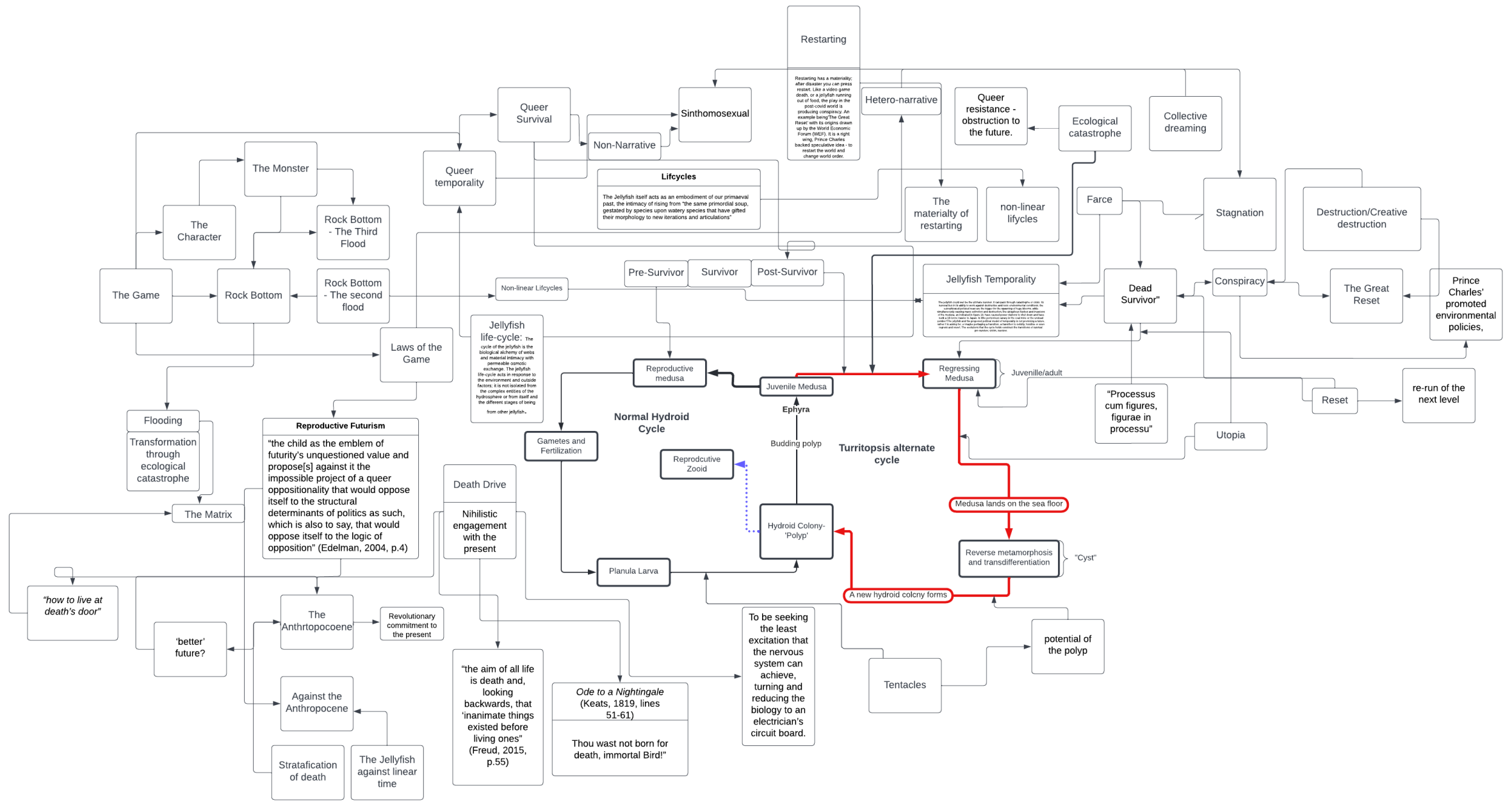
The jellyfish bloom and retreat, weaving in and out, forwards and backwards at each point of the cycle. The 'jellyfish' embodiment is neither before itself or beyond itself; it can be present in its state at the time, and yet it can transition and eddy into each of its different states in its being. Being undead. It can cheat - it can be a prophylactic against the idea of linear ways of understanding bodies, defying supposed definitions of nature, animals and our understandings of survival under ecological stresses, death and reproduction; through the new lens of jellyfish time.

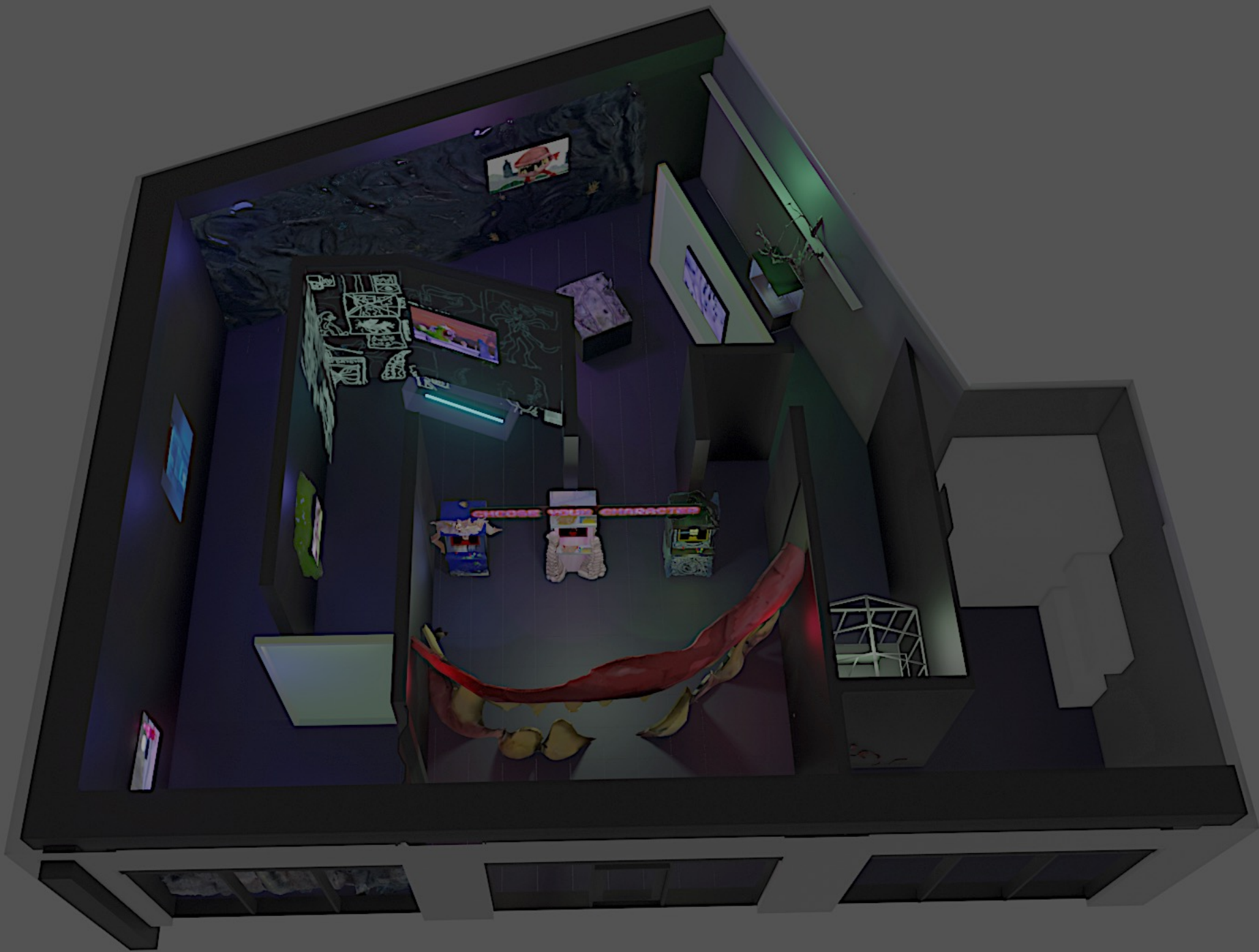
"Jellyfish bloom and thrive in warmer, acidic water that simultaneously degrades the habitats of most other marine animals" (Jones, 2019, p. 484)

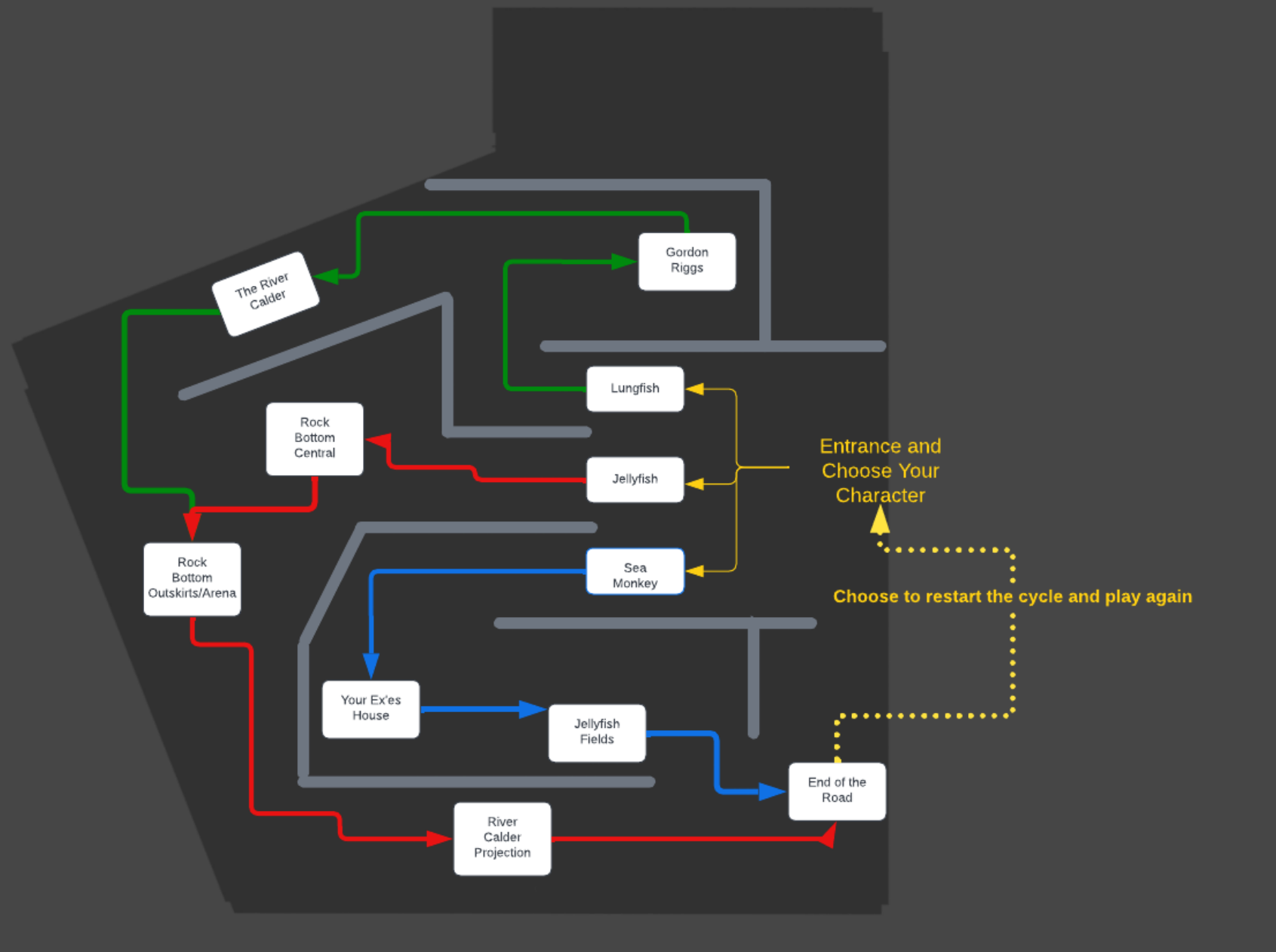


Jellyfish Temporality; A diagram showing the relationship that can exist between earth systems, and life cycles within the framework of the loop of the jellyfish, aiming to show not only the relationship that they hold together but also the intersections and junctions that exist - survival and reproduction in the model of jellyfish temporality. The diagram shows how other biological cycles for example: The Phosphorus cycle can intersect and fit into the biological framework of rethinking linear time.

Flow chart: The interactions of the themes of the games and the Jellyfish life-cycle



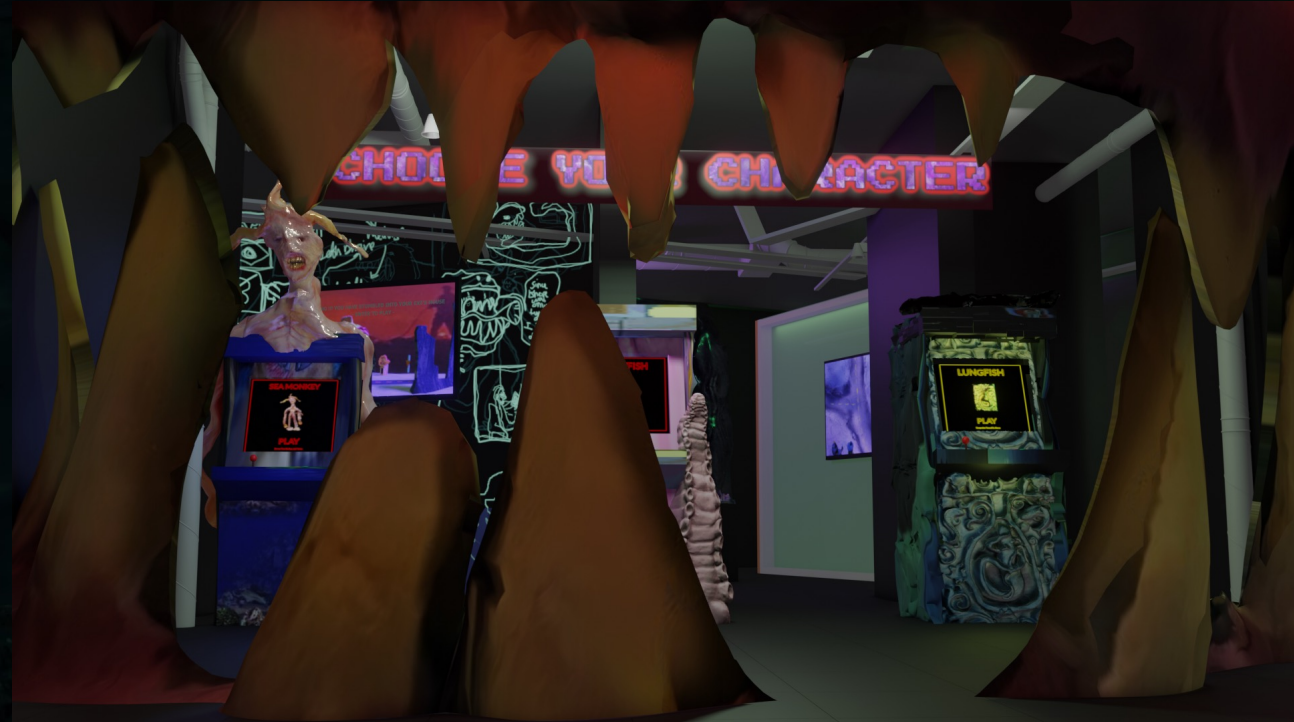




Entry through the Monster Mouth and Arcade Games

Upon entering through the mouth of the monster and entering the performative game space, the visitor/player must choose their character. The player is confronted with a choice presented by three different arcade machines, the characters to choose from are: Lungfish, Jellyfish and Sea monkey. This choice determines your experience and path through the game.

The Arcade/character choice determines which pathway you go down, and therefore your game/visit experience. The screens on the arcade machines have information on the character and instructions on how to play. Once you start playing you will be assigned the specific character controller for the rest of the games you play. The character selection being brought to life is merging the physicality of the game experience.





100 YEARS OF CHARACTER

100 YEARS OF CHARACTER

SALAD

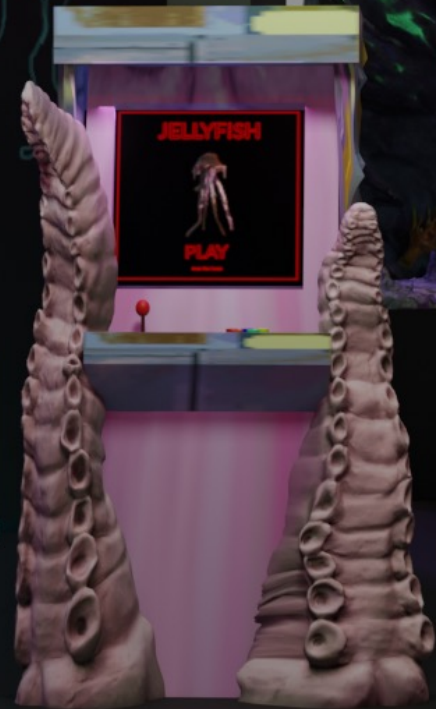
CHOOSE YOUR CHARACTER



IF YOU HAVE STUMBLED INTO YOUR DAD'S HOUSE
WANT TO PLAY?

SEA MONKEY
PLAY

A selection station for the 'Sea Monkey' character. It features a large, detailed figure of a pink, muscular, horned creature with a wide, toothy grin. Below the figure is a control panel with a screen displaying the character's name and a 'PLAY' button. The station is set against a background of a dark, underwater scene with a blue light strip at the bottom.



JELLYFISH
PLAY

A selection station for the 'Jellyfish' character. It features a large, detailed figure of a pink, segmented, tentacle-like creature. Below the figure is a control panel with a screen displaying the character's name and a 'PLAY' button. The station is set against a background of a dark, underwater scene with a blue light strip at the bottom.



LUNGFISH
PLAY

A selection station for the 'Lungfish' character. It features a large, detailed figure of a pink, segmented, tentacle-like creature. Below the figure is a control panel with a screen displaying the character's name and a 'PLAY' button. The station is set against a background of a dark, underwater scene with a blue light strip at the bottom.

The Controllers:

Each character has a specific controller, which you receive upon making your decision. The controllers are unique in what they do - having different buttons, controls and textures; making the gameplay physically different. An invigilator will hand you the specific controller once you choose your player. Each game zone within the gallery has a USB port, where you can plug in your controller to start playing the game. This creates a performative element of entering through your character and having individual controllers forms you individual path.

The controllers are a silicone sleeve over different styles of gaming controllers.



The Sea Monkey Controller: made in the form of a Triop, this controller has R1 and L1 and an analog stick.



The Jellyfish controller: A tentacular structure over an old Nintendo controller.

The Character choice:



Sea Monkey

Instant Life novelty aquarium pet - encapsulated for thousands of years, waiting for the perfect environment.

The sea monkey is born from commodity and capitalism; its anthropomorphized into a humanoid monster.



Lungfish

Secrete a layer of mucus that dries into a cocoon to survive the drought. Persist with little oxygen through its diving reflex having both lungs and gills.

The ancient lungfish defies the binary of vertebrae and has the power to escape disaster through its thick storytelling slime.



Jellyfish

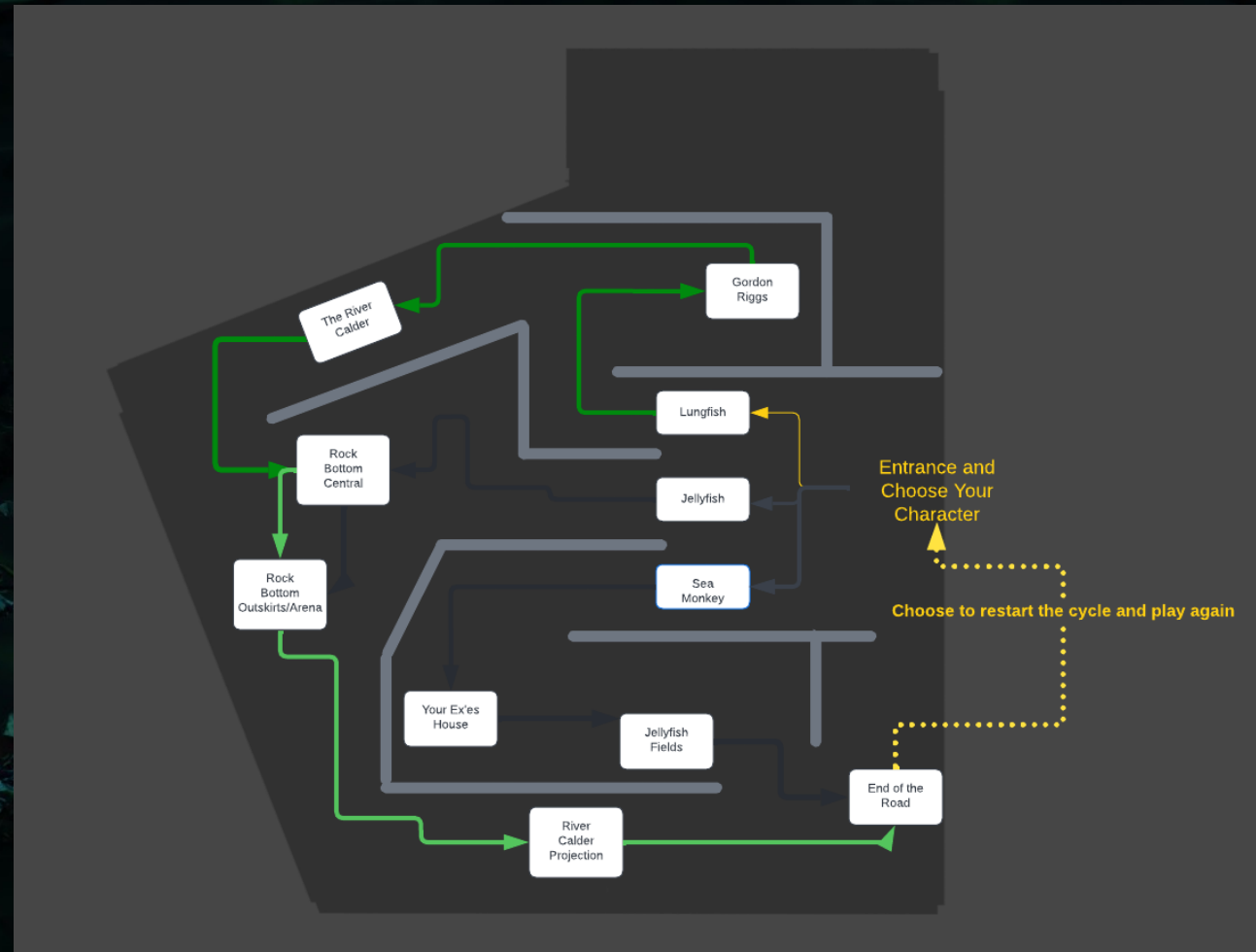
The ultimate survivor, transgress and revert to infantile polyp stages in ecological catastrophe and bloom in crisis.

The Jellyfish sits in opposition to heteronormative time, creating a path of hope against geological time.

Walk Through of The Lungfish Pathway:

Walk through of the journey which you would take if you chose the Lungfish Pathway:

Zones: Gordon Riggs, The River Calder, Rock Bottom Central, Rock Bottom Outskirts, and the end of the line.



Zone 1 - Gordon Riggs:

Gordon Riggs is the first zone you enter, a garden centre in Walsden, West Yorkshire. It was set up in the 60s by Gordon Riggs himself. the garden centre is a hyper-world of UV light, immense in structure, the perfect conditions for hyper-growth. The environment is perfect, like your boyfriends weed grow. Inside

The game:

Gordon Riggs is a Calderdale industrialist and labour trade unionist, who is immortalised through a glass cased hyper world grow. You can see through into the UV world...he wants you come in.

An old man, he only exists through statues of himself within his glasshouse, the emblem of west Yorkshires patriotic past sits in a garden centre café. The aim of this game is finding all the items for Gordon to escape his wrath.



The Gallery:

The zone has a recreated display from Gordon Riggs garden centre summer 2022 (which I will borrow from Gordon Riggs) their specialised impregnated fertilised soil and the screen where you can play the game. It is encased within a greenhouse frame, it is separated in its own environment, the player can only look in.





GORDON RIGG
GARDEN CENTRES

DO YOU WANT TO COME IN ?

..... 'YOU MAKE ME SICK!....

..... 'PLS'.....

Zone 2 - The River Calder:

Gordon Riggs and the river Calder games are specifically looking at identity through working class and post-industrial landscapes in West Yorkshire and how ecological disasters can form new bodily relationships with futures and survival.

The Game:

This game is set in the River Calder which is the river that passes through Mytholmroyd, which upon flooding, the Calder Valley transforms into a hyper-world-matrix. The player within the game decides their own fate upon meeting the Squid man, a monster who can provide information on how or why you need to escape. You are also confronted with the moldy frogfish monster, a tamer cousin of the Mrs. Whiskers the ultimate enemy/final boss. The game is formed around the concept of reconfiguring queer geological time.



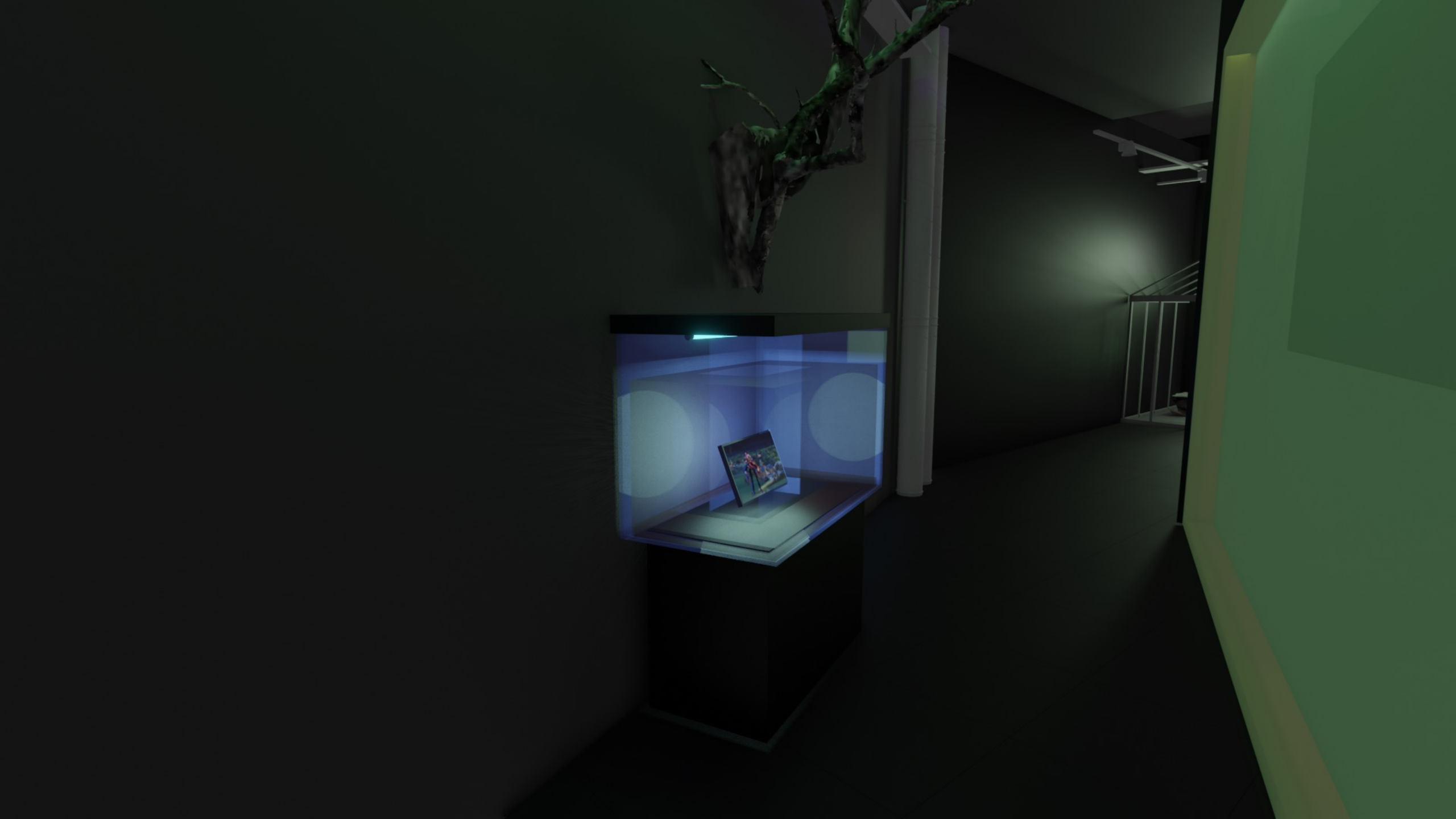
The Gallery:

The river Calder game is played in a tank. The fish tank filled with water from the river Calder and live sea monkeys. There is a Perspex tank submerged where the screen with the game is located. You must play through the water. Unbeknownst to the viewer there is also a camera inside the tank, this live records the player. The live recording is projected later in the gallery. The player of the river Calder will not ever see this live stream or be aware of it until later in the pathway. This forms communication through different parts of the exhibition and the looping of interaction and non-linear links of the game.

There are branches from the banks of the Calder river, the branches collect detritus from when the river floods and then subsides.



Two set ups of how this will operate and look within the space



Zone 3 - Rock Bottom Central:

This zone is located within the town of Rock Bottom, this zone is hub and a web of information, you are provided with links to the website.

The Game:

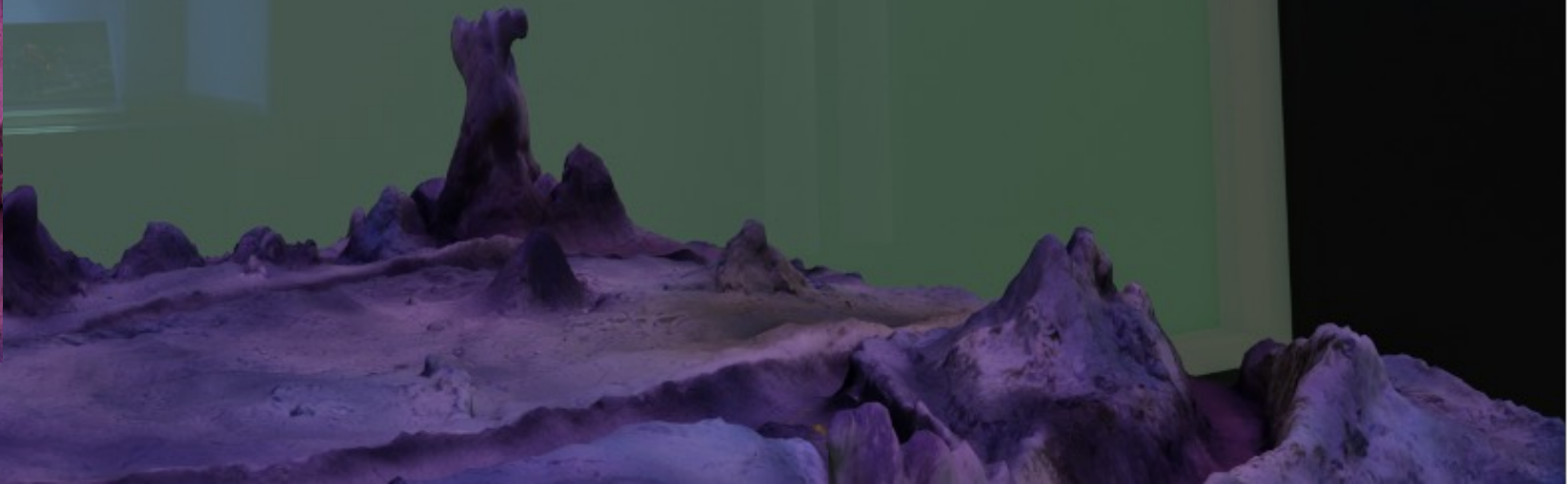
The game is set in the Rock bottom town, you meet and interact with multiple characters from other locations and zones within the game. Each player enters their own stories through answering the questions from each character you meet. The stories you share will return to other players along their journey, changed in the telling as they've made their way around the game system. As you meet the characters again on your voyage through the game, they will share their true selves with you. The aim of this game is to play in the shadows of someone else's game - creating a collection of stories: factual and fictional. Gathering up hundreds of these throughout the length of the exhibition; constantly adding memories and stories and making each player's experience through the game completely different and individual.



The gallery:

There is a 3D map of the entire game, showing locations of each zone on the game map. A screen where gameplay of walking through rock bottom, meeting characters. Alongside these, the zone acts as an information hub with links to websites and brochures.

There is a semi-transparent wall between Rock Bottom central and the lungfish pathway, creating shadows and movement between the two pathways, yet the player is unable to go into that space.





Zone 4 - Rock Bottom Outskirts:

This zone houses the game where you are in an arena just outside of Rock bottom town, where the Frogfish monster Mrs. Whickers is chasing you and your aim is to survive. This game is based on the SpongeBob movie scene where the frogfish is chasing him and Patrick.

The Game:

The monster you enter through is Mrs Whickers, the ultimate enemy in the game and must fight in this arena. Mrs Whickers is a frogfish monster dweller whose bioluminescent uvula that attracts fish is an ice-cream shop. This monster appears in multiple game zones, ultimately ending up in a arena with him in the outskirts of rock bottom, a chase for survival. Mrs Whickers is play on the monster you SpongeBob meets in the SpongeBob movie, where he is tempted despite his newfound manhood from a kelp moustache to believe the lure of ice-cream and get attacked and chased by this monster.

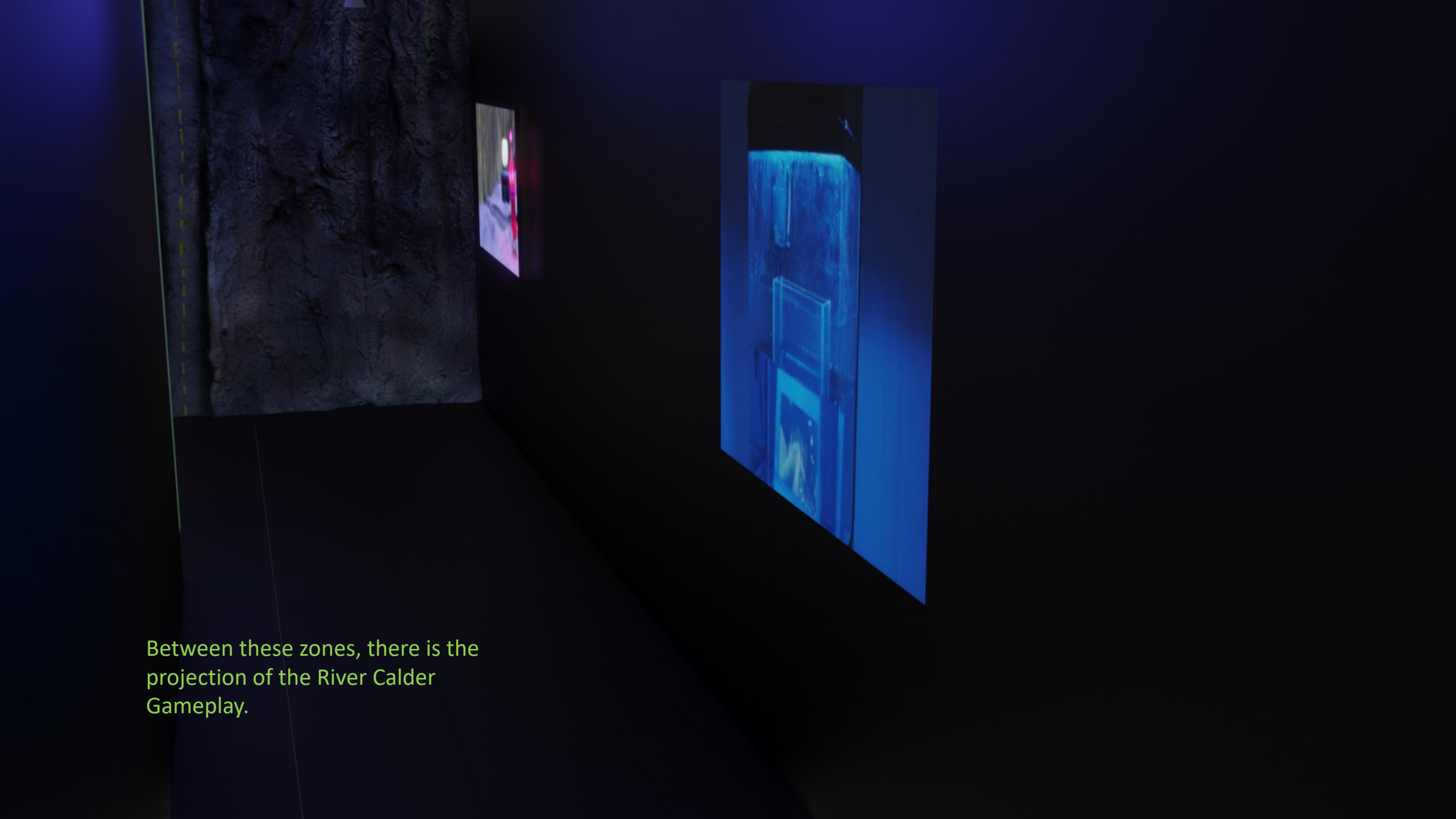




The Gallery:

There is a wall of polyps and coral (physical sculptures from within the game) which embeds this screen. This wall is made of bioluminescent material, mimicking that of a cephalopods skin, covering in slime and silicone.

The flowchart explaining the key themes of the game and RockBottom on the adjacent wall. The arrows expand out the flowchart converging with the arrows on the floor - merging the the flowchart with the physical game play.



Between these zones, there is the projection of the River Calder Gameplay.

Zone 5 - End of the line:

This is the final zone, before leaving back into the entrance, with the choice to replay or exit the loop. The way to escape is by accepting the balloon from the untrustworthy anglerfish. The zone has a vertical road (the only way to leave the trench) on the wall and a balloon sculpture. The final film shows the transaction of the seemingly impossible escape, it asks you at the end whether to try again and drop the balloon or leave forever, this is the players choice, do they re-enter the cycle ?





The Gallery:

End of the line zone has a final wall, made from clay and mod rock of the vertical road out of the trench, a sculpture of the balloon in the film, which is needed to escape, there is a black stage curtain between the the final zone and the entrance.

Other Possible Pathways:

There are two the pathways a visitor/ player could take by either choosing the Sea Monkey of the Jellyfish Character:

Zone – Jellyfish Fields:

This zone is a film, the film is centred around the lifecycle of the Jellyfish, focusing on the polyps and how the transition and re-transition into different stages of their lifecycles, set in the cliffs of jellyfish felids the story follows the jellyfish through the tentacle dildo polyps into their medusa phase.





Gallery view of Jellyfish Fields - The screen is encased in slime, the slime is a pollutant extending from jellyfish fields.

Zone - Your exes house:

You find yourself confronted with your ex's house. The walls are painted, airbrushed and screen printed with images, text and diagrams, these only become illuminated upon playing the game as they are painted with UV reactive paint, and when you start playing the game the walls are light up by UV lights held within a fish tank . This is directly referencing darkrooms/underground laser quest, Kit Kat and the Berghain at the club in the cubicle

The Game:

Your ex is in the form of the hagfish- or more commonly known as the mad hagfish- a monster lurking in rocks behind you, this monster is your ex, it is your choice whether to resist the urge to fight back as it is chasing you, you have the opportunity to meet other characters while playing the game – if you choose?.



An mockup of how the UV room will work and look when the lights are on and off



Gallery View of zone –
Your Exe's house



The Website

The Calder Valley



- The Calder Valley is a secret area that can only be accessed by players that choose to play as the Lungfish character.
 - It is located just before Gordan Riggs and the only way to enter is through a hidden path along the river bed
 - Many characters can be found here such as Crabs, The Squid Man, Coral Menace, Mad Les, Podly, Halflung, Old Sue and Dr Spots.
 - The Valley Shop can be accessed after the small monsters have all been eliminated, talk to Old Sue or Podly to find ways to go about this.
 - The Stolen Bread Quest has to be completed to leave the valley.
 - Talk to Mad Les to find out about the spooky things going on after dark.
- Upon completing all Quests in The Calder Valley, the player will have access to Deep Cragg.
- Once the player leaves the Valley, they can't return.

The Mad Hagfish



- The Mad Hagfish can be located in Jelly Fish Fields and Your Ex's House.
- To start The Mad Hagfish's questline you must agree to help them find 'Crabs'.
- If the player disagrees to help Hagfish then they spit poison in the player's face before disappearing.
- The Mad Hagfish appears as a Boss enemy at the end of the game. The battle takes place at Your Ex's House.
- If the Player decides to spare Hagfish at the end of the fight, Hagfish slithers back into the river and the Player receives an award depending on the chosen character.
- Eats the player during 'The Garthplant Escape' minigame.
- Will offer to give the player some 'skenky' in return for capturing Crabs' wife.
- On Death drops 'The Krakos Key' which the player can keep to enter the first locked door in Crabs' house.
- Immune to poison.

I have created a website, this will act as a game wiki, where more information on the game, locations, characters, cheat codes, hidden artifacts, as well as contextual history to the game will be located. The website will also offer mini games to play and have live streamed events on it. The website will also have information on how to get into the ROBLOX game and join in on the server.

AR Filters:

I have created a filter of the Frogfish monster. I will create multiple of all the playable characters- sharable over social media.



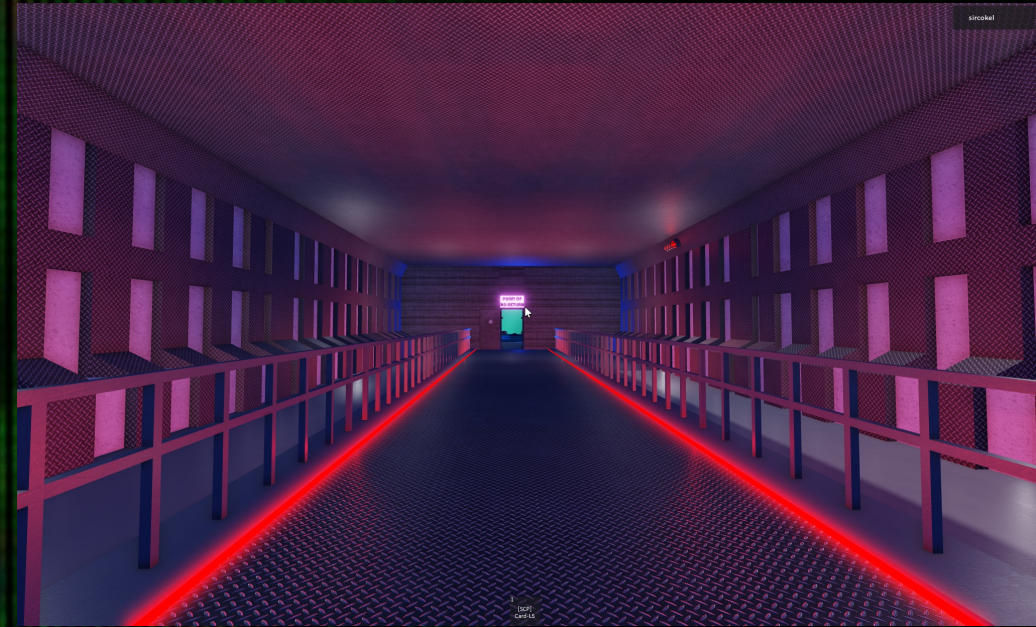
'octlantis' – Event and Installation – Mytholmroyd West Yorkshire:

There will be a separate exhibition located in Mytholmroyd, West Yorkshire, this will run alongside the arebyte location, across two weekends.

This is a beta version of a larger event series using ROBLOX as a meeting place and forum for art. The event is used as a testing ground for community building and online cooperation. Bridging between west Yorkshire and London initially.

It will be set up as a hub the old butcher's shop. And will be the location of the online play event. This space will have the ROBLOX game 'octlantis' a live multiplayer game on ROBLOX. This game play will be live streamed to arebyte gallery, alongside a live workshop of playing the ROBLOX game in the gallery. The aim is to form connections between these two geographical locations, to create geographical participation - streaming information. It is an extremely important aspect of the show as it strives to reduce the imbalance of the accessibility of art outside of London and create new streams of discourse and information.

The game centres around the online multiplayer interactions that exist in ROBLOX, recording the chat over a server and interactions that occur in this hybrid space. The game is set in octlantis, a discovery of what seems to be small cities – or co-habitations made of shells by octopus, you enter through the prison then escape into octlantis. Its in ruins, you must work together as a team in order to unlock the treasures of the rubbles and relics.





Events:

There will be an event series, which investigate the narrative of non-linear lifecycles used to explore, the relationships with queer survival and queer temporality. These will hold alongside and for the exhibition period:

- The will be online twitch game play through, to talk through the games story lines and hold game play sessions in locations where the game is set such as west Yorkshire to create geographical participation - streaming information geographically.
- There will be a separate exhibition located in Mytholmroyd west Yorkshire, this will run alongside the arebyte location, across two weekends. This will involve live streaming sessions of the ROBLOX game over a server, playing and creating streams of information between the two spaces.
- Alternative artist talk – with a Live action role play of the characters in the game and in SpongeBob the Movies, and a viewing party of related SpongeBob episodes, these will utilize the mouth entrance as a stage for performance and workshops
- Workshop with 'hacking the Anthropocene' and Linda Stupart. This will center around queer environmental and temporal ecologies.

Timeline:

Task:	Duration:	Notes and assigned to:
September		
Game development and final film creation for zones 5,6,7	17 th – 8 th	Made in unity, and blender, assets and world already partially built, need to finalize and finish off., assigned to Abe.
October		
Game development for Zones 1,2,3,4:	1 -31 st	Made in unity - character controllers put on place.
November		
Arcade game machine construction	1 -15 th	Made in my studio
Mouth Teeth	16 th – 27 th	Made in my studio, the teeth will be made at my home, then the full mouth constructed in-situ
December		
Wall decals- stickers and banners	1 st -10 th	Finalize designs and order from Pixart
Gordon riggs props- collecting them	12 th	Pick up props from Gordon Riggs Garden center
Branches	14 th	Cut down and dry branches – store in my studio
January		
Have A/V equipment delivered – directional speakers	20 th	And testing of the directional speakers.
Baloon sculpture	23th to 29 th	Fabricated in my studio.
February:		
Hatching sea monkey eggs	1 st	In preparation for them to be put in the tank and hatched in time
Drive down in van(s) to London	7 th	With all the fabricated material 1 or two depending on size of vans.
Install	8 th – 24 th	Arebyte and Abe
Monster mouth	8 th – 12 th	Arebyte and Abe
Transparent wall making	8 th – 9 th	Builder
Coral back wall	13 th – 17 th	Arebyte – Rebecca and Abe
Uv room creation – painting	18 th	Arebyte and Abe
Putting in equipment	15 th to 24 th	Some equipment can be put in and installed earlier, while other parts of the installation dry/ are created.

Abe Sugarman is a multimedia artist based in West Yorkshire, who operates as an agent within a game. Abe uses their political proposal 'Jellyfish temporality': as a non-linear model of queer time and survival against geological time. Abe combines the circular and entwined web of bodies and systems that exist in the bio-membrane, where a diagrammatic tissue of lies and life-cycles emerge through reverberation, compulsion, and restarting. In this newly formed 'Anthrobussy', the rehearsal assembles. Abe enjoys SpongeBob SquarePants, cuttlefish, Gordon Riggs Garden Centre, and their ex-boyfriend.'

Selected Exhibitions:

2022: Five fold, Hackney Wick studios

2021: Ruskin School of Art, Oxford, Ruskin School of Art BFA Degree Show

2021: Unit 1 Gallery Workshop, London, 'Final, not Over' , Session 2

2020:, The Wardens Barn, Oxford, 'An Exhibition of New Work' Exhibition

2019: Ruskin School of Art, Oxford, 'Lower Ground'

2019: Ruskin Project Space, Oxford, 'Gone Fishing'

Education:

BFA – Ruskin School of Art

Foundation Diploma: Leeds College of Art.