Dreams of Vermi - computing & Other Monsters

((Φ)) // Phi:

((Φ)) // Phi: Dreams of Vermi-computing and Other Monsters

((Φ)) is an experimental video-installation imagining a future brain-machine-interface that enables users to document and archive the subconscious space through archetypes, wormholes and strange encounters. From a series of vivid and often bewildering visions, dreams, and dialogues with figures from the artist's unconscious, ((Φ)) explores themes of death, rebirth and the soul. Machine Memoirs drawn from personal and collective memories and mythologies through channels of experimental interfaces and multimedia works.

Inspired by ventures like OpenWorm and Neuralink, it probes the morphology of our our existential entanglements with the non-human, the (in/)organic, and the digital under the shadow of late-capitalism on Terra; questioning privacy, autonomy, and identity through imagined landscapes and corroded [OS- <operating systems>]. The work aims to reflect on how these technoscientific practices shape our inner and outer living worlds.

A s the post-human era approaches - we are becoming alienated from our bodies, from each other, and from nature. As an artist-researcher, within my practice; and particularly for this project, I'm interested in exploring the impact of technological advancements on the human psyche and consequently our broader ecosystems.

Having faced significant loss in childhood, I found a lot of solace and expression in the dreamworld, a realm where imagination bridges the gap between life and death, offering a space for authentic, non-verbal communication. This early connection to the dreamworld laid the foundation for a lifelong exploration of inner worlds, informed by conversations with shamans, Jungian psychologists, and fellow artists and writers.

The narrative is imbued with a sense of curiosity and play, emphasising the importance of experimentation, failure, and discovery in the creative process. Transcending traditional narrative structures, the project favours a fluid, dream-like quality that mirrors the nonlinear nature of these realms and experiences. Through a combination of digital and physical mediums, including text, sound, video, 3-D scans/renders, and projection mapping, the work seeks to create immersive experiences that connect viewers to their own unconscious minds, offering insights into the transformative power of engaging with the unseen aspects of the self and natural world around us.

Excerpt illustrations from Carl Jung's The Red Book: Liber Novus. A large source of inspiration for the project.
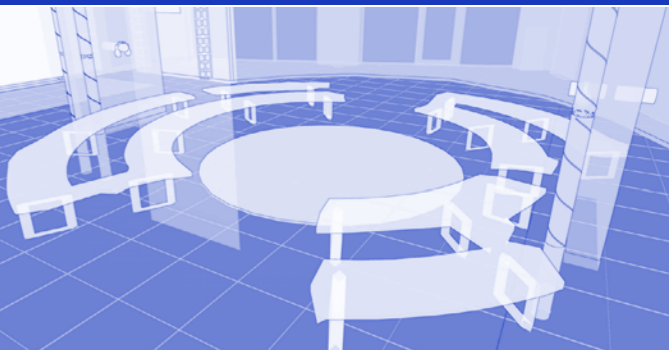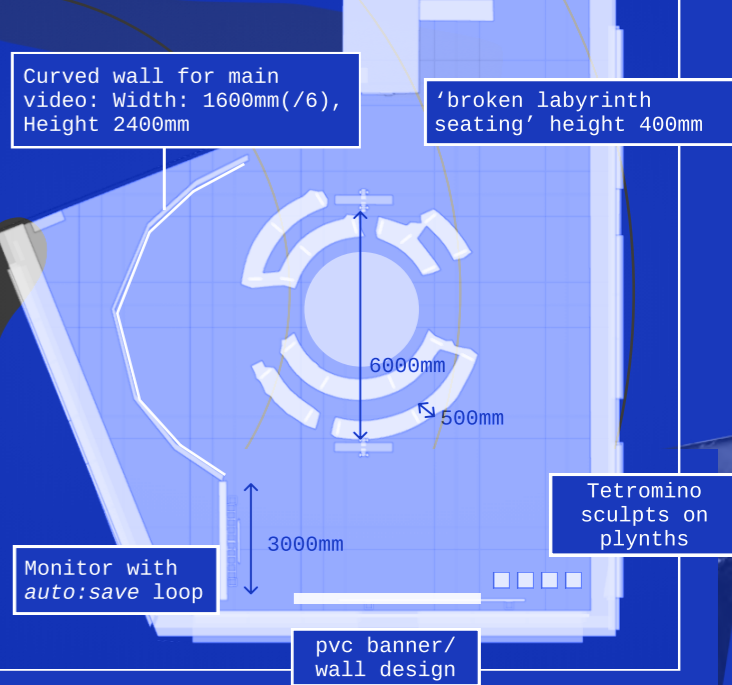
: THE LABYRINTH :

In the tales of old, heroes entered labyrinths to confront monsters, to find treasure, or to prove their worth.

The work takes form through inviting the viewer to navigate the Broken Labyrinth Seating within the gallery -a passage through- where the Serpentine Worm awaits.

The journey through a labyrinth can represent the inner journey of navigating one's own psyche, confronting fears, and overcoming challenges to achieve a deeper understanding of oneself.

APPROX. MEASUREMENTS

Curved wall for main video: Width: 1600mm(/6), Height 2400mm

'broken labyrinth seating' height 400mm

6000mm

500mm

3000mm

Tetromino sculpts on plynths

Monitor with *auto:save* loop

pvc banner/ wall design

Projections onto the Broken Labyrinth seating offers viewers a physical interaction to the work. Within the centre, there are plans to play with text, experimental moving image, instructions and portal openings.

: UNCONSCIOUS INTERFACE / [ON-GOING] :

I am in the process of mapping out visions, dreams, and dialogues; creatively reinterpreting the Jungian map of the unconscious, to serve as inspiration for the various acts/portal openings within the text/film/installation and broader interface.

okay

...*:·°✧*:·°✧*:·°✧*:·°
✧Welcome to Φ Interface. …
:·°✧:·°✧*:·°✧*:·°✧*:·

:Outer World:

:smiling
at strangers:

persona

:physical
making:

time.txt

the_forest
.obj

the
waterfall

the_history_
of_everything_
that_is_was_and
_to come.pdf

the_radio.fm

:mirror:
:ɿoɿɿim:

ego

:standing
stones:

menu.png

shadow

you are here

storytelling within an
information age;

:Personal Unconscious:

beach.mp4

tetromino

the_lover(s)
.png

boundary crosser

likes: riddles+games
dislikes: riddles+games

:Cultural Unconscious:

Puer Aeternus

the_fool.png

:AIR:

The Trickster

technology

:FOLKLORE:

:ANCESTRAL
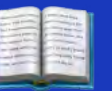WISDOM:

:EARTH:

venus_of_
willendorf
.png

the_hermit.png

animus

self

anima

Waterfall
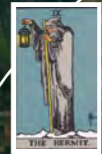
Queen_of_
Cups.png

Senex

Forest
interaction

The Great Mother

all_love_
letters.mail

"To light a candle is to cast a shadow..."
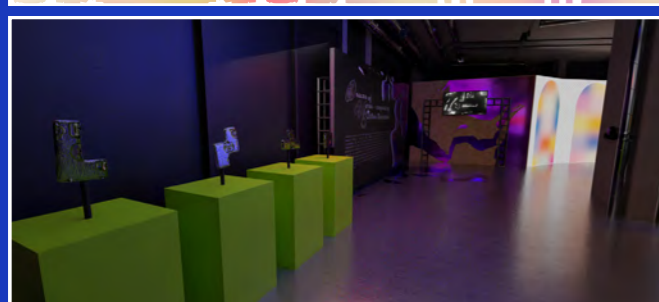— Ursula K. Le Guin, A Wizard of Earthsea
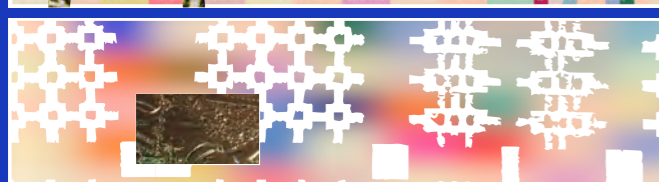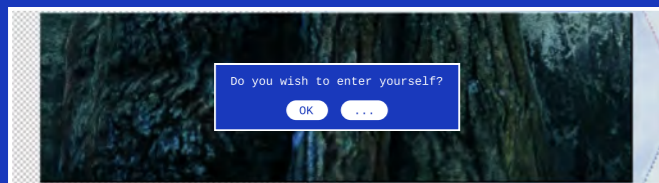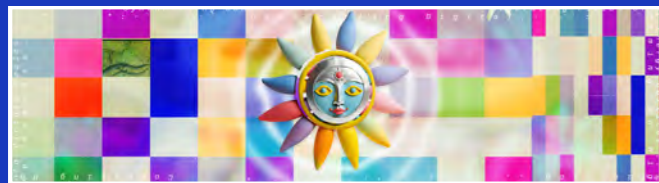
storytelling

:Collective Unconscious:

: CARL JUNG :

"The primordial image, or archetype, is a figure — be it a daemon, a human being, or a process — that constantly recurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed. Essentially, therefore, it is a mythological figure. . . . In each of these images there is a little piece of human psychology and human fate, a remnant of the joys and sorrows that have been repeated countless times in our ancestral history..."

other.ent

04

:Psychic World:

:WATER:

((Φ)) - :Research & Themes:

Do you wish to enter yourself?
OK   ...
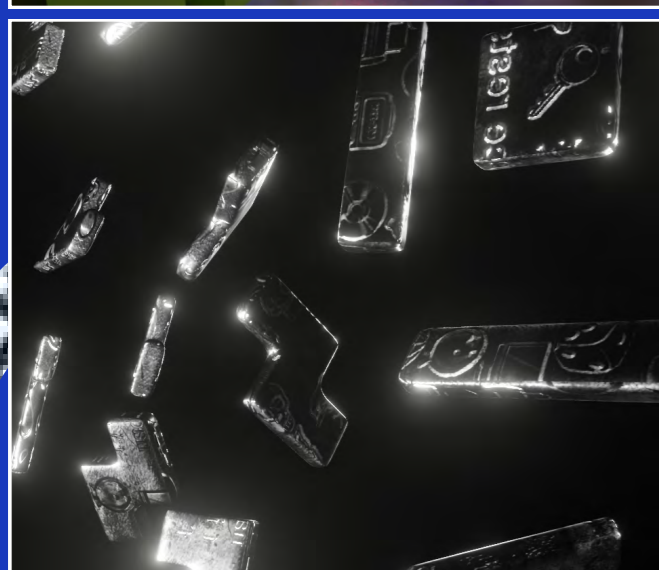
WIP stills from ((Φ)) video experiments, I'm focusing on light, sound, colour and rhythm within the compositions, and will be adding more 3D world segments/mixed media UI scenes throughout as the work develops. - Watch here. Bottom: Stainless steel Tetromino sculptures with laser cut details, approx.30cm.

: THE WORM :

The worm stands as a modern echo of the labyrinth's guardian (akin to the Minotaur in Greek mythology, or a deeper shadow), a bridge between ancient mythology and modern science. This theme extends through historical, mythical, and modern interpretations, from the Ouroboros to the modern-day digital recreation of the C. elegans in the OpenWorm project, and further into the realm of technology as malware.

C. elegans is a nematode that has become one of the most widely used model organisms for nearly every aspect of biology.

The user must confront and solve The Worm's puzzle to exit this plane. To unlock the :portal home:. The Nature of the Worm will depend on the user's Shadow Calibrations.

3D render animation of Serpentine Worm

What is the metaphorical significance of monsters in cultural and scientific contexts? Haraway uses the concept of the "monster" to challenge traditional boundaries and categories within Western thought, particularly those related to gender, race, and species. The monster becomes a figure that defies easy classification, embodying the complex interplay of biology, technology, and culture.

Monsters symbolise the fear of the unknown and the violation of natural and social orders, but they also promise possibilities for transformation and innovation. By embracing the monster's ambiguity and hybridity, Haraway suggests we can challenge oppressive structures and imagine alternative ways of being and knowing.

ACT 01 - The mind-body problem - (Thinking organically)

The spirit is androgynous, a machine of meaning.

From the chip,
To the stretched and sliced.

Centrefold.

// emerging….

a marriage of silicon, cell, cunt and worms.
…

Desire is the presence of absence.

Perhaps it is more instinctual.

Tendrils of thought;
 entanglements of holey realms.

…

Embrace the pull,

it is neither here nor there.

Not superstition nor romance.

Could it be a shadow ?

- No, the ghost of a machine,

archetypes or intra:bytes.

 Back-end thinking
and front-end action.

- - - - - - -
step into me — step into my labyrinth,
step into it fully, and be, if just for a
moment - in another world. •
 **
In the tales of old,

heroes entered labyrinths to confront monsters, to find treasure, or to prove their worth...

These mazes were simply reflections -

Echoes of connection,

Reverberating something known within the deepest parts of ourselves.

You turn left. - and follow the wall,

it's safe this way.

Wrong turns after all continue to move you forwards,

even if that forward is around...

//

:·°◇:·°◇Initializing Synapse Protocol... Please stand by...*:·°◇*:·°◇*:·°◇*:

: WIP WRITING :

Find full wip text here. Plans to convert these writings into the interface/ dialogues in the film/print. I am developing a fragmented 'gameplay' approach to the narrative/ UI:UX.

06

: auto:save :

auto:save is an evolving collaborative digital platform, now in its fourth iteration. For this edition, I am excited to collaborate with four artists for the 'Collective Feed'— a series of portal openings, inviting new perspectives on the conceptual 'monster'; this can be inspired by personal, natural:technological or mythological retellings. I am seeking diverse contributions, including 3D sculptures, short-form video experiments, written pieces and tangible creations that can be 3D scanned. Each participating artist's work will be featured in a short segment of the film and included in the ((Φ)) Instruction Manual' zine.

Above: Previous collaborative auto:save world-building stills; Rhizodome 2021, UNITe 2022. Top Right: Gallery floor projection experiments.

I'm looking to further develop the *user experience* of viewing my installation work. How to build out a world in time-space; for the viewer to exist as { part-of } it.

I'm working on how the film on the main curved surface, monitor and the central floor projections can respond to each other as the narrative develops. Alongside this, I'm hoping to collaborate with an audio designer to map the space with textural sounds, dialogues and natural soundscapes. They specialise in spatial audio and how people perceive sound in virtual environments- we will be exploring this within a gallery setting for the work's sonics.

I'd like to develop an "Instruction Manual" zine / publication that will act as a world-building tool about the fictive ((Φ)) device . This will include works from the four collaborating auto:save artists, inspired by old-school game manual booklets.(x50 print) 12 page/foldable. The design will be based on current design lockup of this application.
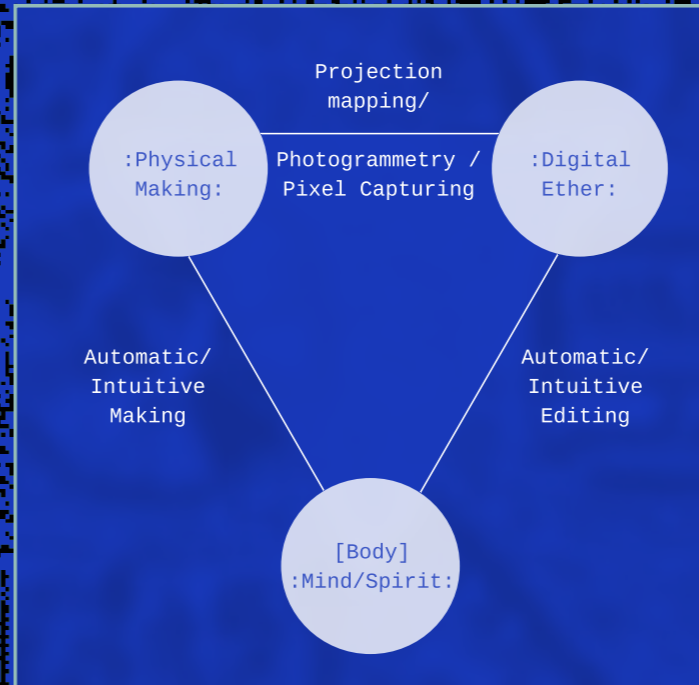
: TIMELINE :

: APRIL - MAY :	• Continue working on text, video projection experiments and 3D world-building. • Contact auto:save collaborators with brief/commission • Visit locations for photogrammetry scans/footage
: JUNE :	• Auto:save submissions in • Design zine 'Instruction Manual'
: JULY :	• FabLab Cardiff sculpture cutting
: AUGUST :	• Digital works can still be worked on, but having a solid sense of visuals/timings will be helpful for sound design. • Work alongside sound designer - to experiment with ambient soundscape, dialogues/interactions can be heard in different parts of the gallery.)
: SEPT - OCT :	• Exhibition design refinement (marketing/vinyl shapes) • Print zine
: NOV :	• Develop Labyrinth seating and curved screen installation for gallery space. On-site build.

GWENBA (b.1997) is an emerging multidisciplinary artist, producer and UI designer based in Cardiff. Their work is inspired by convergences between inner-and-outer worlds; new technologies and ecological care. Using new media, video, sound, performance, text and sculptural interfaces, they craft cyber-folkloric installation scenes and experiences. :::

Inspired by an array of organisms, the fine lines between scientific learnings and mysticism: — GWENBA's work searches for new slimy connections between time and other on a decaying Terra. — ₓ°. ▫ ˚○○˚.

Projection mapping/

:Physical Making:

Photogrammetry / Pixel Capturing

:Digital Ether:

Automatic/ Intuitive Making

Automatic/ Intuitive Editing

[Body] :Mind/Spirit:

[EVENT]

Embodied Editing: Embedding organic processes (in)to experimental Moving Image // An After Effects Workshop.

- Working with pixels, mirrors/ overlays
- Automatic editing
- Distort features in AE
- Aim to create lots of beautiful stills from <chaos>
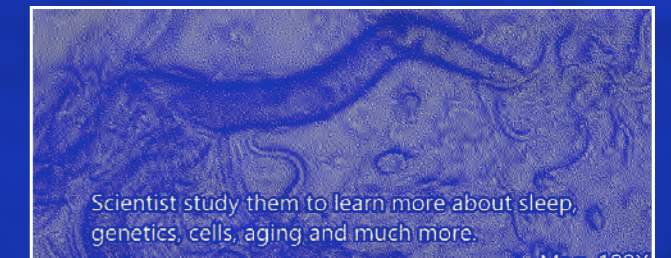
Scientist study them to learn more about sleep, genetics, cells, aging and much more.

: LITERARY REFERENCES :

Davis, E. (2004) TechGnosis: Myth, magic and mysticism in the age of information. London: Serpent's Tail.

Jung, C.G. and Shamdasani, S. (2009) The Red Book = Liber Novus: A reader's edition. New York: W.W. Norton.

Haraway, D. (2020) 'The promises of monsters':, The Monster Theory Reader, pp. 459–521. doi:10.5749/j.ctvtv937f.27.

Meldrum, D. (2023) 'Chris Miller: Chip war: The fight for the world's most critical technology', Business Economics [Preprint]. doi:10.1057/s11369-023-00336-0.

Serpentine Worm.obj modeled after C.elegans - fully rigged + ready for further animation experiments...

CV gwenba.com
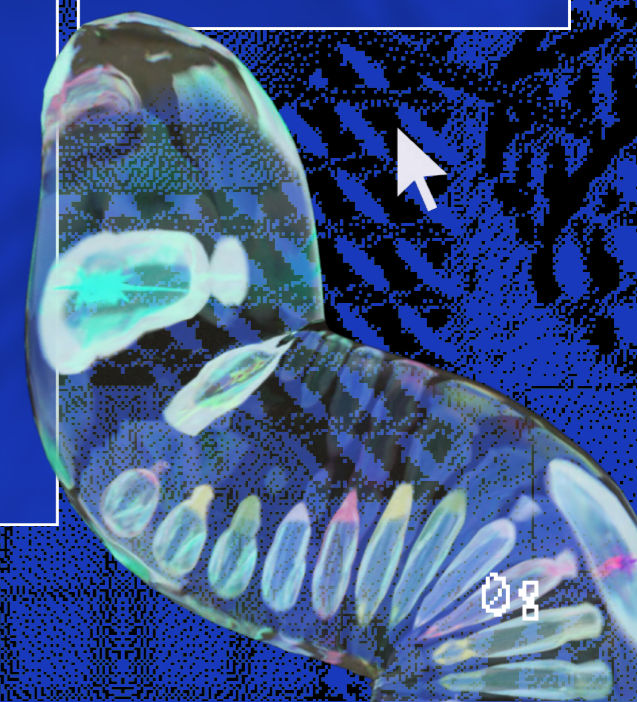
Exhibitions & Screenings

:2023/4:

*O'HYD[RA] - Pontio, Bangor, Wales; alongside International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art Symposium

*O'HYD[RA] - CWYR Zine Launch, Bankley Studios & Gallery, Manchester

:2022:

*MyCelium Systems - Carbon Borders Voices

*MyCelium Systems - London Short Film Festival

*MyCelium Systems - TO SPAWN A DOOR IN THE LAND OF BROKEN MIRRORS -New Art City [online]

*MyCelium Systems, Mock Jungle[Bologna, Italy].

*auto:save x UNITe 2022 [online]

:2021:

*Manuka Glass Collective, International Collaboration

* auto:save Presents RHIZODOME

*MyCelium Systems - g39 Jerwood UNITe Open Studio

*MyCelium Systems - VAEFE Project Space Tilburg, Netherlands

*MyCelium Systems - Projektion/ Projection Darmstadt, Germany

*MyCelium Systems - Caraboo Projects,The Island, Bristol

*TheWrong Biennale with Manuka Glass

*MyCelium Systems - Runner Up Bury Art Museum The Next Thing Moving Image Award 2021

:Residencies:

*TATE St Ives - Emerging Artist Residency (2019)

*LAWAYAKACURRENT - SanPedro de Atacama, Chile (2019)

* arcadecampfa - Digital Artist in Residence, (2020)

*Five Years Archway Residency (Online)

* g39 Jerwood UNITe Residency, (2021)

*HessenLAB B3 Biennial of the Moving Image 2021 - Talent Forum

*Shakes VR (BeConwy) - VR Digital Artist Intern

*Intern @ g39, Cardiff (2022)

:Publications & Workshops:

*ELLIPSES_ZINE VOL01 + Interview/ (2020)

*Feed My Quarantein vol.II digital_zine (2020)

*MAES B -Merched Mewn Miwsig Zine 01 (2020)

*ORANJ x ARTRABBIT - April Submission [Runner Up] *ORANJ 'Fire Starters' June Edition

*Amgueddfa Cymru Habitat Issue - Cerrig Yfori / Tomorrow Stones

* Intro to Blender Workshops (Online) 2023

* Video + New:Media Mentoring Sessions 2023

:Education:

* Falmouth University '19 - 1st Honors Degree in BA Fine Art

*Code First Girls - Intro to Web Dev '21

*Interaction Design for Usability, Interaction Design Foundation 2023

: DREAMING OF INTERFACES - ARTIST NOTE:

As this is a new piece of work in development, the text & unconscious map will act as a loose storyboard for some of the experimental visuals in production - [I'm currently using node-based physics animations, touch designer and 2D/3D software to generate them]. I hope to continue to collect, cut, edit, create and refine the fragments of digital works over the next few months with continued curatorial guidance.

Thank you.
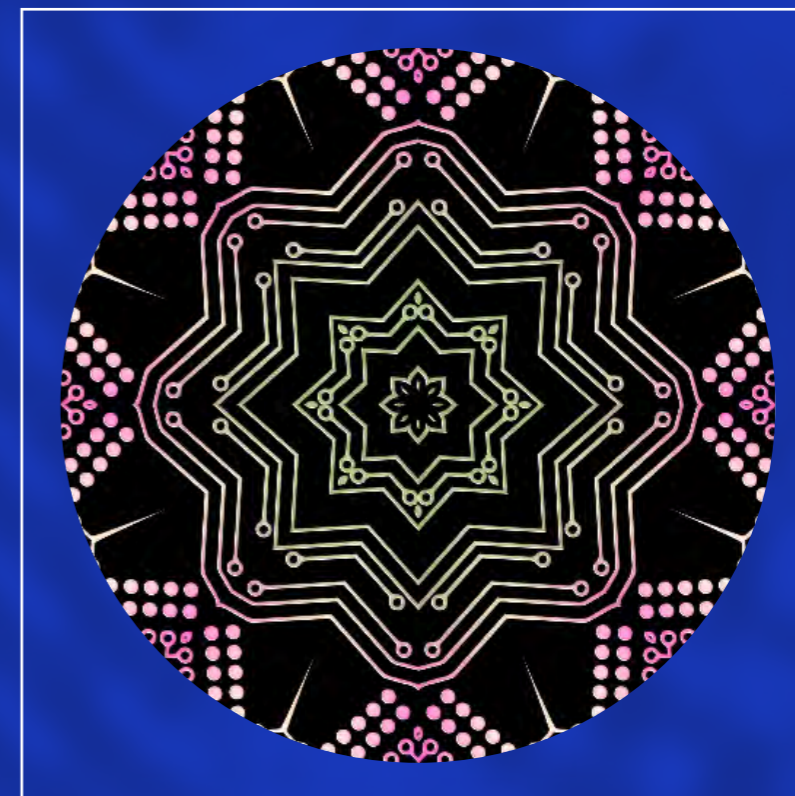
Still from Unconscious Circuitry video for Broken Labyrinth projections.