

(forest of the Web === online futures);



Jess Pemberton

Hotel Generation 2022 >>> Arebyte Gallery

# Exhibition Concept

Arebyte gallery will be transformed into a physical manifestation of forests of the web, a conception of online space. The space will embody ideals that bring nature and the digital sphere together and explores the form of the web. Nature is the ultimate algorithm.

Enter, play and be surrounded by a network of internet beings >> rhizomic forms...

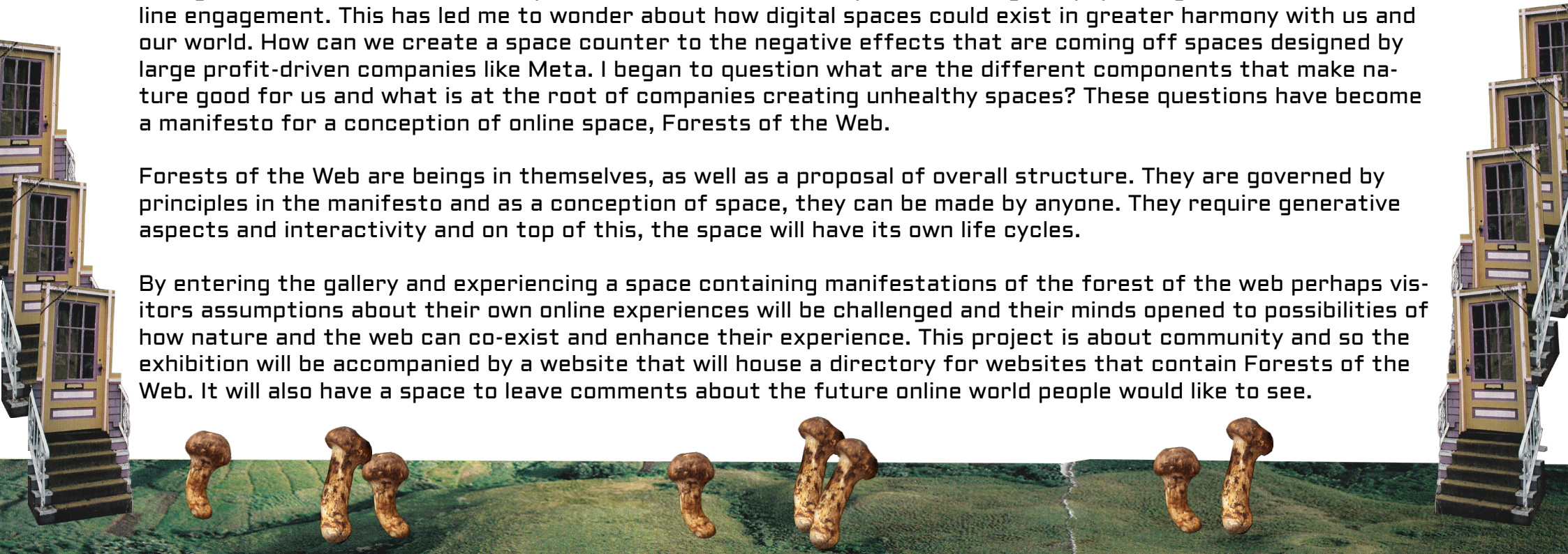
Forests of the Web are a form of Solarpunk activism, which interrupt usual internet activity and divert the user to a wondering path. What online engagement style do we want to be a part of? In true Solarpunk fashion, the installation imagines possible digital futures for the structure and content of the web and questions what can we do with what we have?

I have a growing concern for the increasing amount of time humanity is spending in the digital world and how it impacts us psychologically. The metaverse, Web3 and a crypto-led world is coming and soon enough we'll be in it. What do we want to find there? If we get there and there are only prescribed corporate paths, we're screwed.

Rising evidence and claims from experts in the tech. community are revealing the psychological flaws behind online engagement. This has led me to wonder about how digital spaces could exist in greater harmony with us and our world. How can we create a space counter to the negative effects that are coming off spaces designed by large profit-driven companies like Meta. I began to question what are the different components that make nature good for us and what is at the root of companies creating unhealthy spaces? These questions have become a manifesto for a conception of online space, Forests of the Web.

Forests of the Web are beings in themselves, as well as a proposal of overall structure. They are governed by principles in the manifesto and as a conception of space, they can be made by anyone. They require generative aspects and interactivity and on top of this, the space will have its own life cycles.

By entering the gallery and experiencing a space containing manifestations of the forest of the web perhaps visitors assumptions about their own online experiences will be challenged and their minds opened to possibilities of how nature and the web can co-exist and enhance their experience. This project is about community and so the exhibition will be accompanied by a website that will house a directory for websites that contain Forests of the Web. It will also have a space to leave comments about the future online world people would like to see.



# of the Web

## MANIFESTO >>

self the opportunity to wander and come across the unexpected

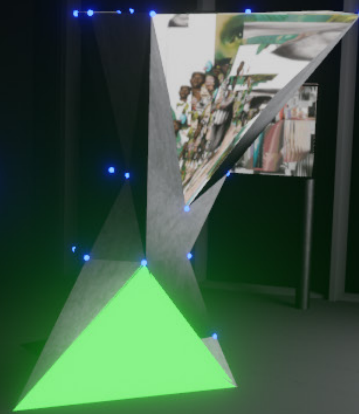
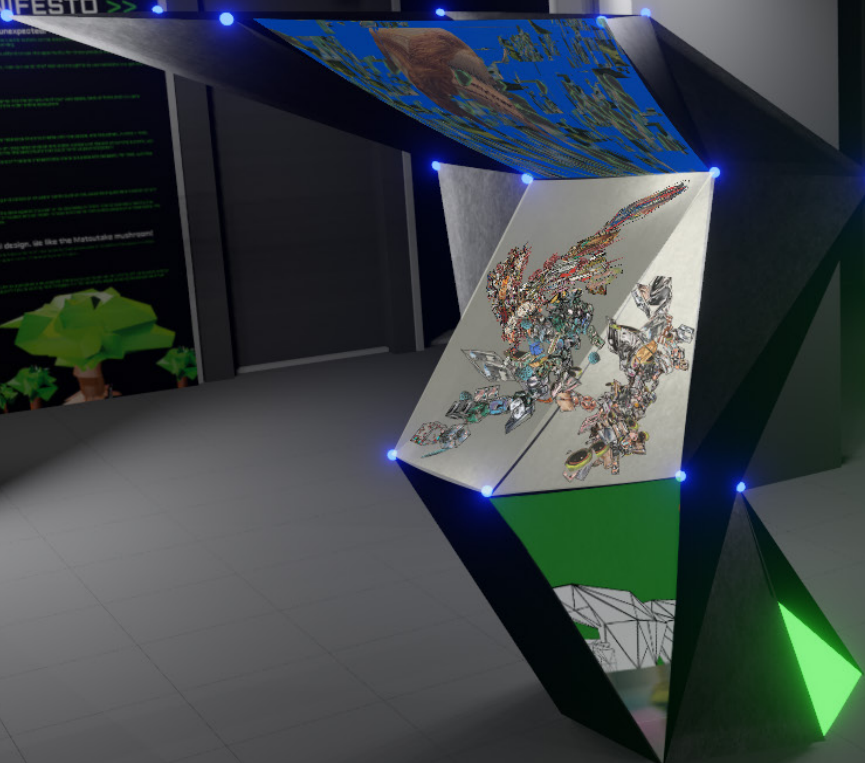
structure into the digital realm:

the user first and not the judge of your purse

without users' approval

Turn your website users into an agent of environmental design, as the Matsushita museum

It's time to get sustainable



# Forest of the Web Manifesto

**Principle 1:** Give yourself the opportunity to wonder and come across the unexpected!

Do you usually move directly to your intended destination on the web? The current internet is saturated with prescribed paths; the errands you would run out in society can be done online without interruption by the unexpected. But your path being interrupted by the unexpected is an integral part of being alive and necessary for triggering realisations, creativity and learning.

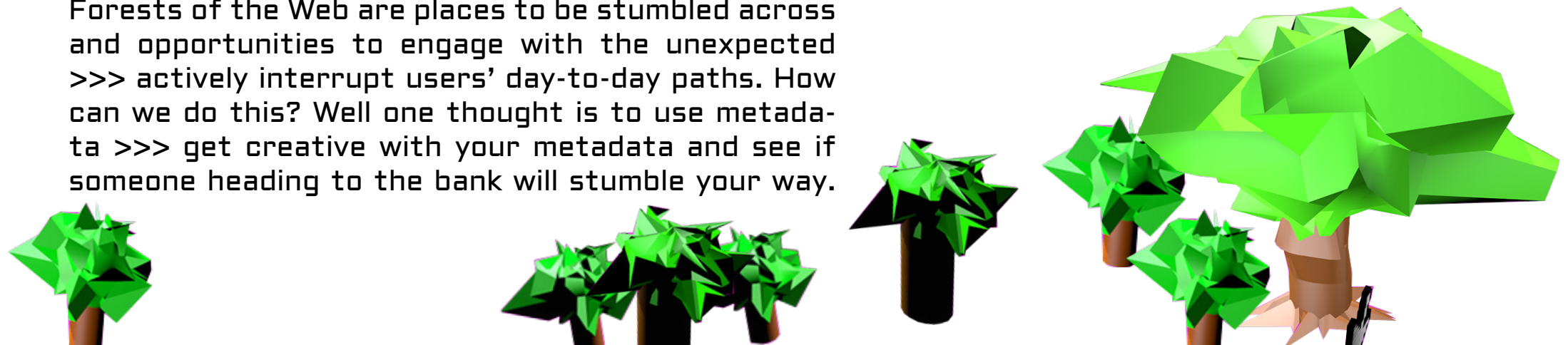
The only wondering encouraged on the web seems to be into the arms of profit-focused companies using your own psychology against you. How can we afford to lose the opportunity for those precious moments of the unexpected that we get from walking down the street?

Forests of the Web are places to be stumbled across and opportunities to engage with the unexpected >>> actively interrupt users' day-to-day paths. How can we do this? Well one thought is to use metadata >>> get creative with your metadata and see if someone heading to the bank will stumble your way.

**Principle 2:** Bring nature into the digital realm!

We are a part of nature. If the digital sphere is more in harmony with us, then surely it'll be healthier for us to interact with it? Bring nature's patterns into the structure of your web space, back or front end >>> let's make digital space a more coherent part of our world.

This is where generative patterns come in – have something that is, in part, self-forming and the wider online ecosystem. What could come from making digital content to exist without the need to gain something from it?



# Forest of the Web Manifesto

## Principle 3: Put the user first and not the bulge of your purse

The online world feels clustered with sites that are generating a profit, that put themselves before the person engaging with their content. Let's rebalance this and create with the people, and the planet, in mind – first.

The concept of the metaverse is being brought into reality by Meta, previously known as Facebook, who will likely bastardise the potential beauty of integrated physical and digital worlds with the aim of turning a profit. So I ask again, before we find ourselves living in this new world, what do we want it to be? Where are the boundaries and what will this company build into the background that could harm us psychologically?

Forests of the Web are spaces that exist without turning a profit, without money. It's not that the space of the internet should be entirely devoid of financial transactions; there is a place and necessity for that. But this is a call to set boundaries and create spaces that exist free of monetary influence.



## Principle 4: Protect users' privacy

What does it even mean to have privacy online? Your home might not be bugged and your emails uninvaded, but even the observation, tracking and collection of users' behaviours online, could be argued as a violation of privacy.

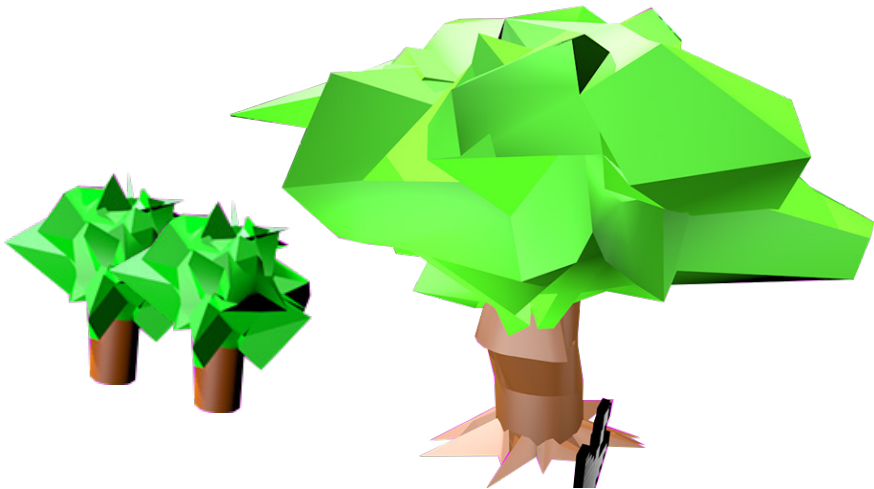
Stay away from collecting users' data and digitally surveilling them. Say goodbye to Google Analytics! Even if your intentions are not to use the data against the user or to capitalise on them, the companies creating the tools for data collection do. Character profiling and understanding of human behaviour through algorithms and data collection enables profit-focused and politically minded entities to manipulate people on a mass scale. We are not adapting quickly enough to resist the methods being used against us to hold our attention and play on our emotions and base-desires.

We need to draw firmer boundaries to protect our activity and privacy online if the web is to be a free, safe space.

# Forest of the Web Manifesto

**Principle 5:** Turn your website users into an agent of unintentional design. Be like the Matsutake mushroom!

The majority of websites, and the space of the internet, use very structured designs to guide your attention. Loosen some of the control and have a form of interactivity that allows users' to add to the space >>> Matsutake mushrooms need external entities to disrupt the earth to trigger their growth; agents of unintentional design. Enable your online space to be influenced by users' input.



**Principle 6:** It's time to get sustainable!

Sustainability is an obvious but simple way to connect nature and the web and allow them to exist in harmony. Let's make our digital future as sustainable as possible! Make sure your server is running off renewable energy >>>

there's many companies greenwashing out there so, renewable is the only trustworthy way to go. Keep aware of and, if you can, support future coming technologies >>> for example, algae is being developed as a fuel source: converting photosynthesis into electricity – literal plant power!





# Participant Experience

Step in and hear ambient, dream-like yet strange sounds. You see abstract metal forms with shifting visuals; a crisp, growing collage and gentle, flowing plant-like forms.

See the green lights emitting from the bottom of the sculpture and stand in front of it > move your arms, and you will begin to draw, with images, into the collage in front of you. It's not entirely predictable and is developing patterns itself.

You spot a door in the collage and when your hand passes over it a new scene, or world, appears for you to explore. You notice different images and patterns being formed.

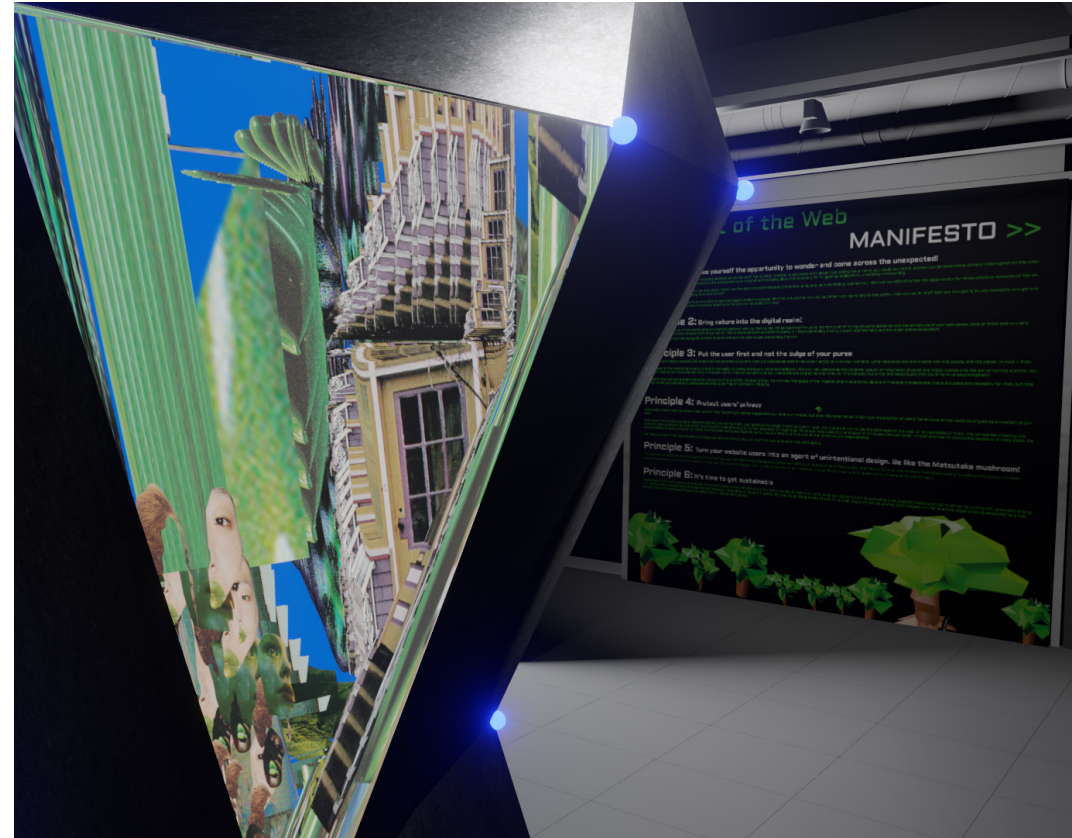
As you are interacting, other visitors begin to notice stills of your activity appearing in fragments of the sculpture.

As you meander, you notice a plant-like collage that is wilting, projected onto one of the sculptures. You stand in front of it and an abrupt sound happens and you hear the words "Matsutake! Matsutake!" >>> small mushrooms begin to fly over the sculptures and after 10 seconds of chaos, new collage plant-like forms begin to grow.

Wheelchairs are able to move freely round the sculptures and through the space.

You spot screens on the wall with a slow building and changing image. You're then directed to engage with a website by scanning a QR code. By playing online, your activity influences the growing image in front of you.

You sit on the bench to watch it a while.



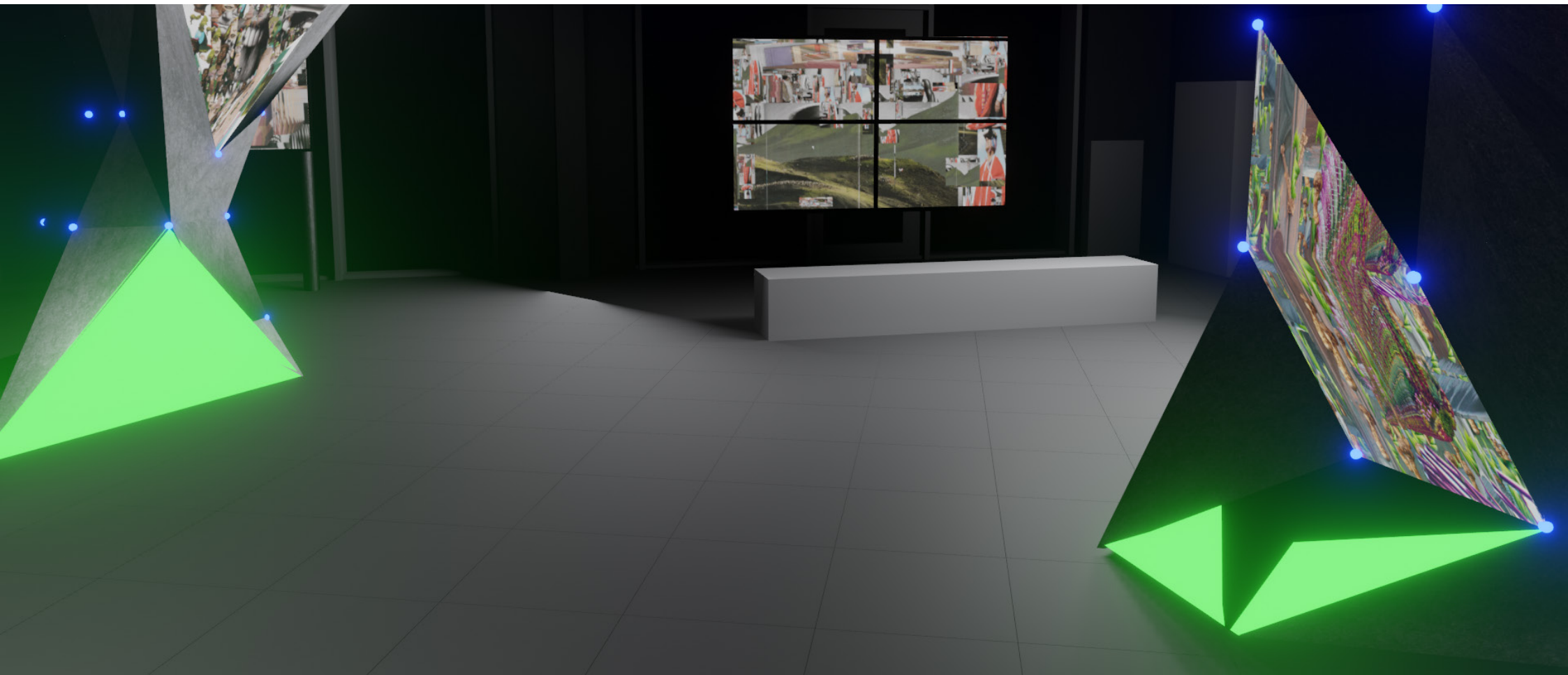


# Participant Experience

If you're lucky, you will witness the gallery illuminate with green and hear choral music play. Plant-like shapes and lines begin to grow across the floor of the gallery and before you know it, the moment is over.

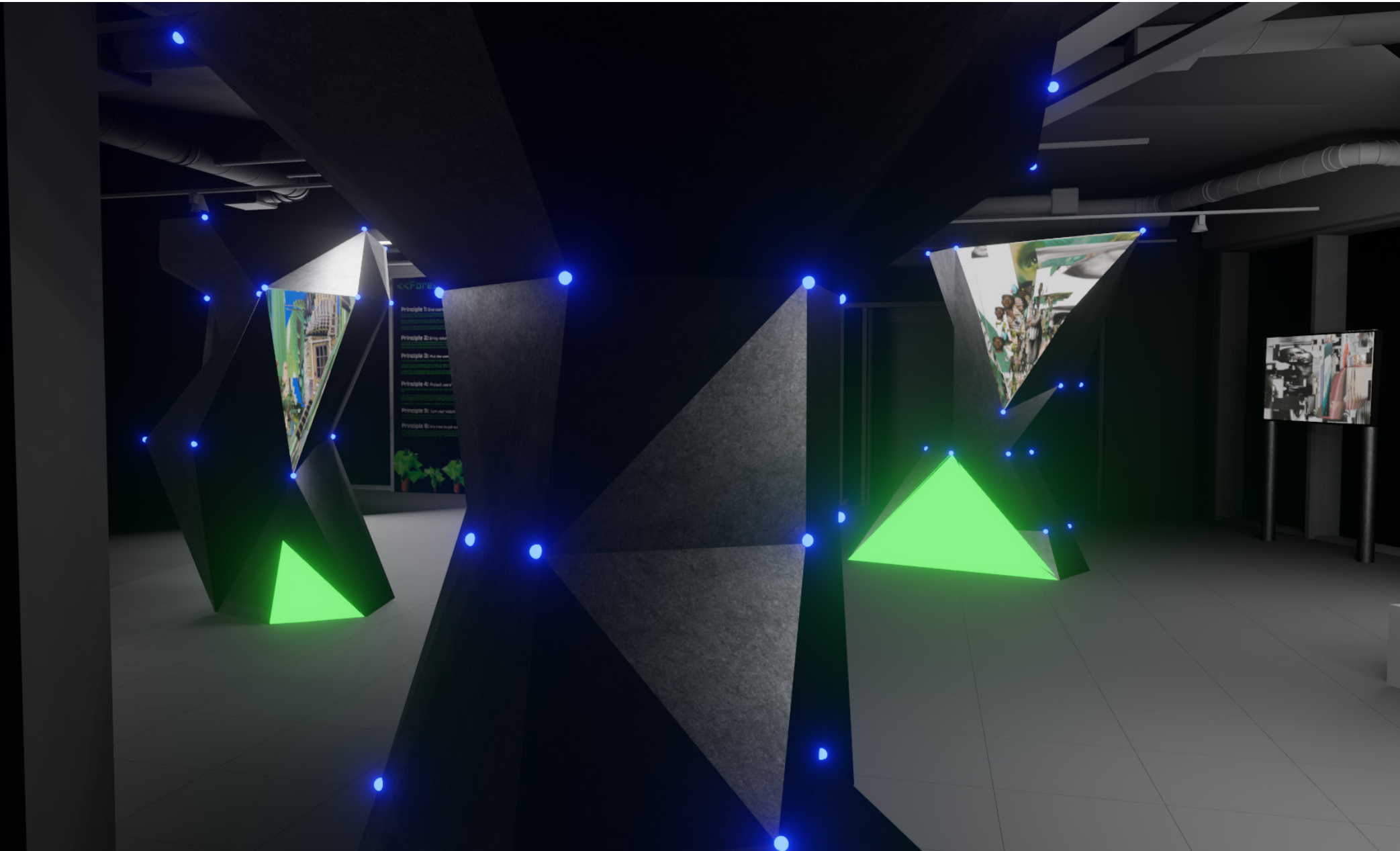
You spot some text on the wall and read the manifesto. You turn around and imagine yourself walking through the internet and contemplate the time you spend there.

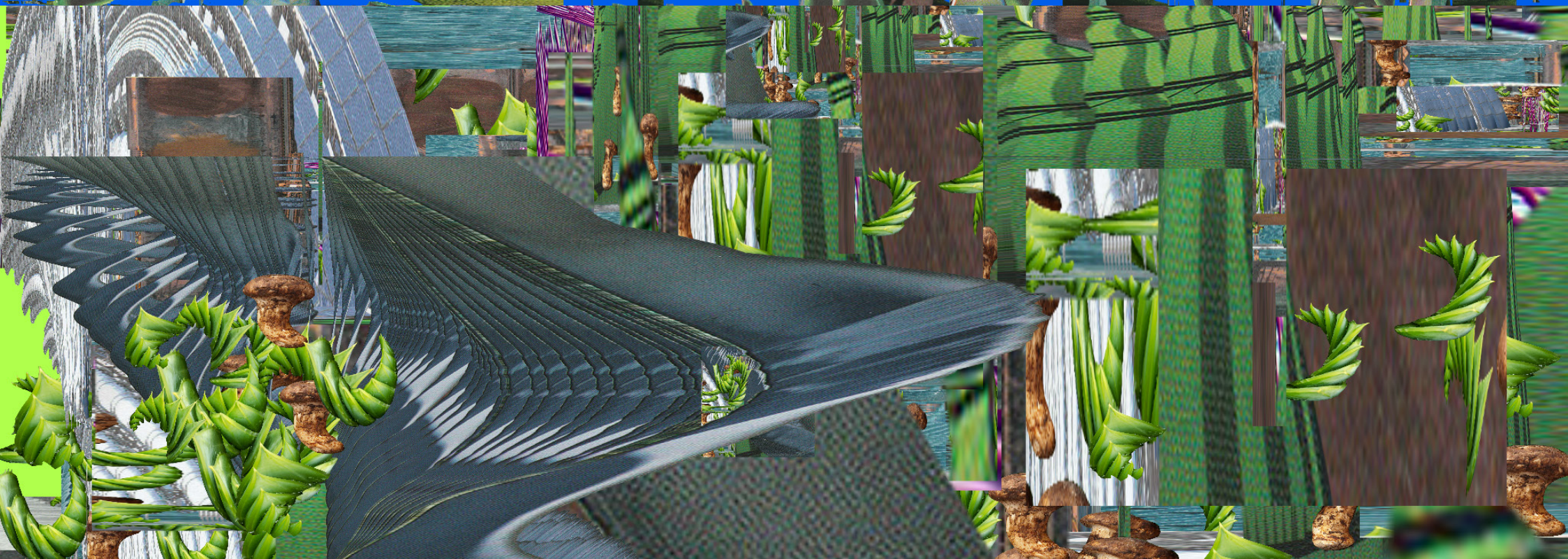
You exit through a door in the left corner and are jolted back to reality with a sense of having been immersed in a simultaneously digital and organic world.



# Core interactivity: co-create

The core, and most direct, interactivity will be an interactive collage embedded into each of the three sculptures. As the participant moves their arms in front of the screen, images will drag and paste onto the collage. The code also pastes images itself, in patterns based on fibonacci and sequences in nature. It is an act of co-creation.





# Life Cycles >>> Matsutake

To further emulate nature, the space will have 2 main life cycles it goes through > 1 of which will not be influenced by the visitors, but a part of the space's flow.

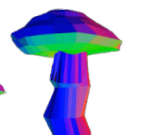
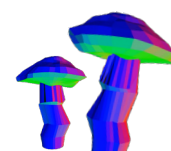
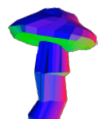
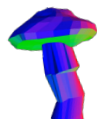
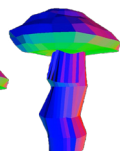
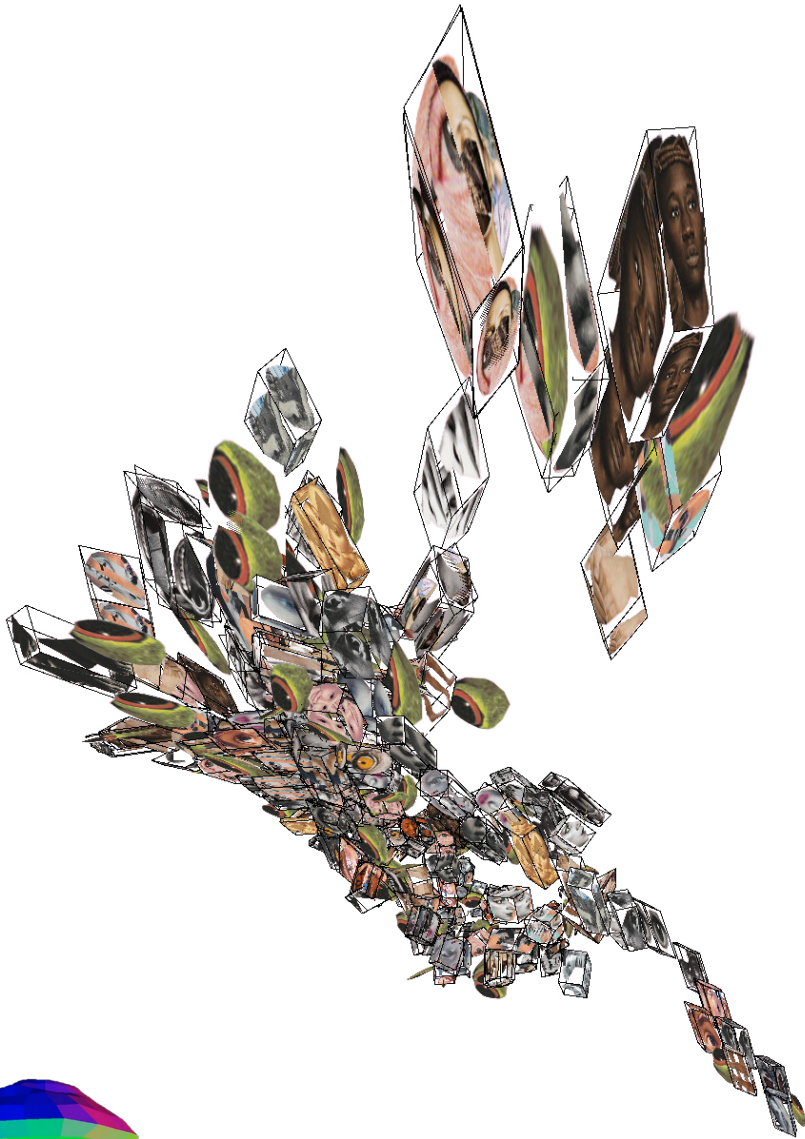
The Matsutake mushroom was the first thing to grow after the Hiroshima bomb. It prepares the soil for new growth, particularly for pine trees, and is one of nature's fail safes for forest regeneration. Because of this, the matsutake mushroom requires disturbance of the ground to trigger its growth. It has made me wonder, what would our fail safes for the internet be?

This has inspired coded pieces that replicate Matsutake mushroom's life cycle. They will be projected onto the sculptures that will grow, decay and regenerate.

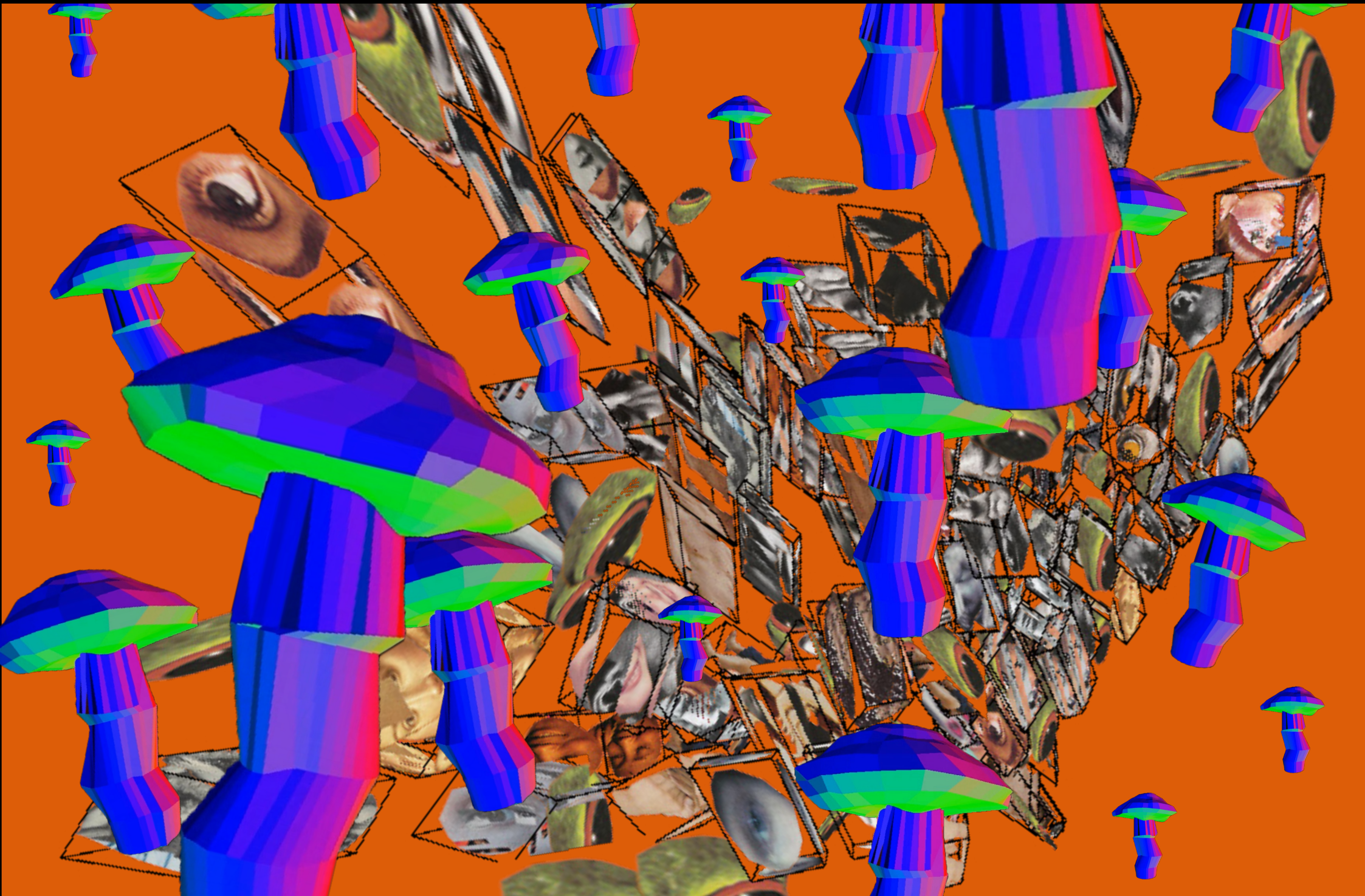
**L-system:** Some of the projected code will be L-systems; a generative method for creating plant-like forms. [Top images]

**Forest:** Some of the projected code will be forming forest networks using models of the sculptures in the installation. [Bottom image]

They will go through their growth and decay without influence from visitors for around 45 minutes. At this point, they will need to be regenerated to continue growing. In true spirit of the Matsutake, which requires disturbance, they will need a visitor to walk by the sculpture to trigger the regrowth, turning them into an agent of unintentional design. At this point, the gallery will change to an orange collage, including the nodes on the sculpture, and an abrupt sound will trigger: "Matsutake, Matsutake!". Matsutake models will fly across the sculpture for about 10-20 seconds and then the coded pieces will regrow. The core collage interactivity in each sculpture will remain active.



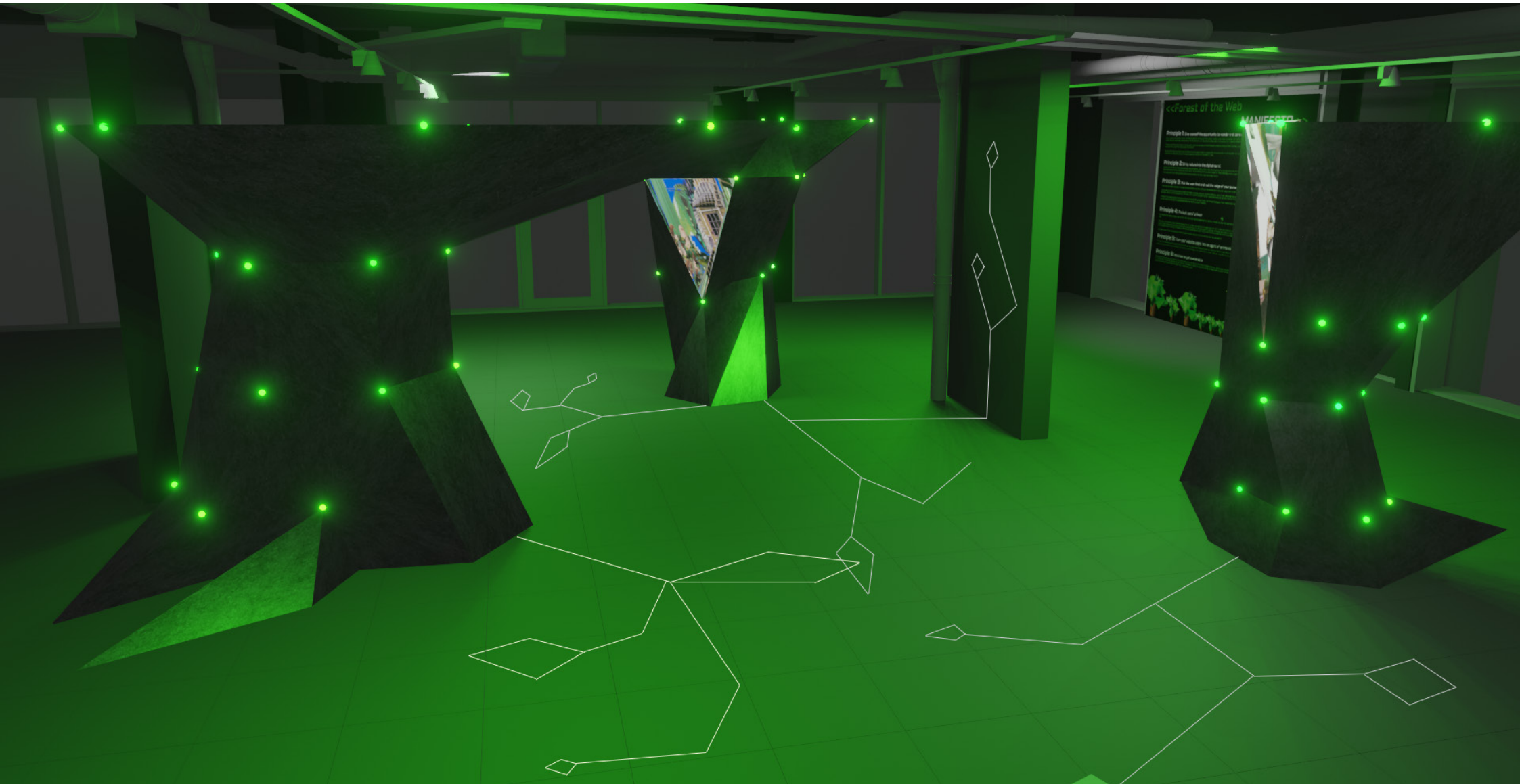
# Life Cycles >>> A “Matsutake! Matsutake!” moment



# Life Cycles >>> a refresh of GREEN

This life cycle is a moment that celebrates forests. Just 2 or 3 times a day, for 1 minute, the gallery will turn green and be enveloped with choral music by HUM choir, with a song about trees or forests and simple, line-based plant forms will grow across the gallery floor. This will be a rare moment to experience in the piece.

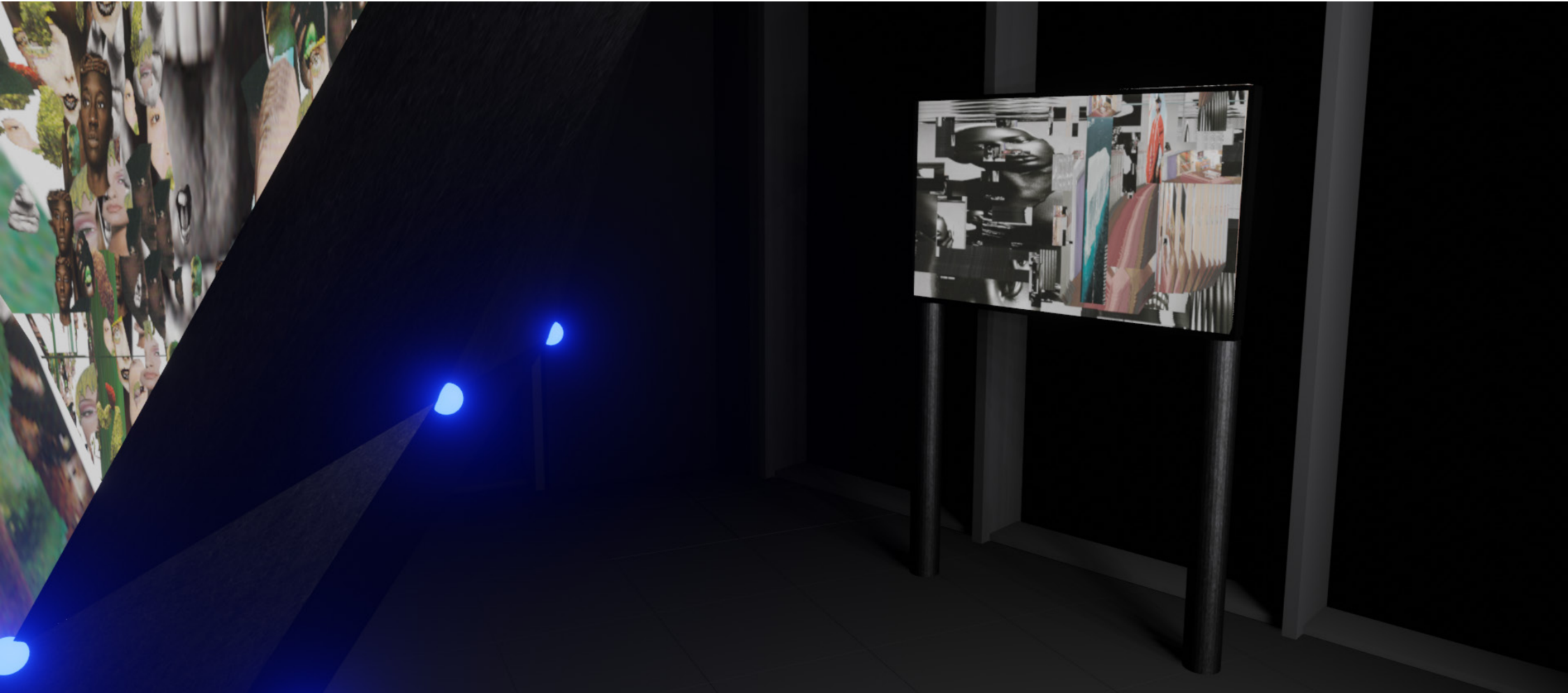
Listen to a sample song by HUM about oak trees: [https://youtu.be/oP\\_jcSLIqL8](https://youtu.be/oP_jcSLIqL8)

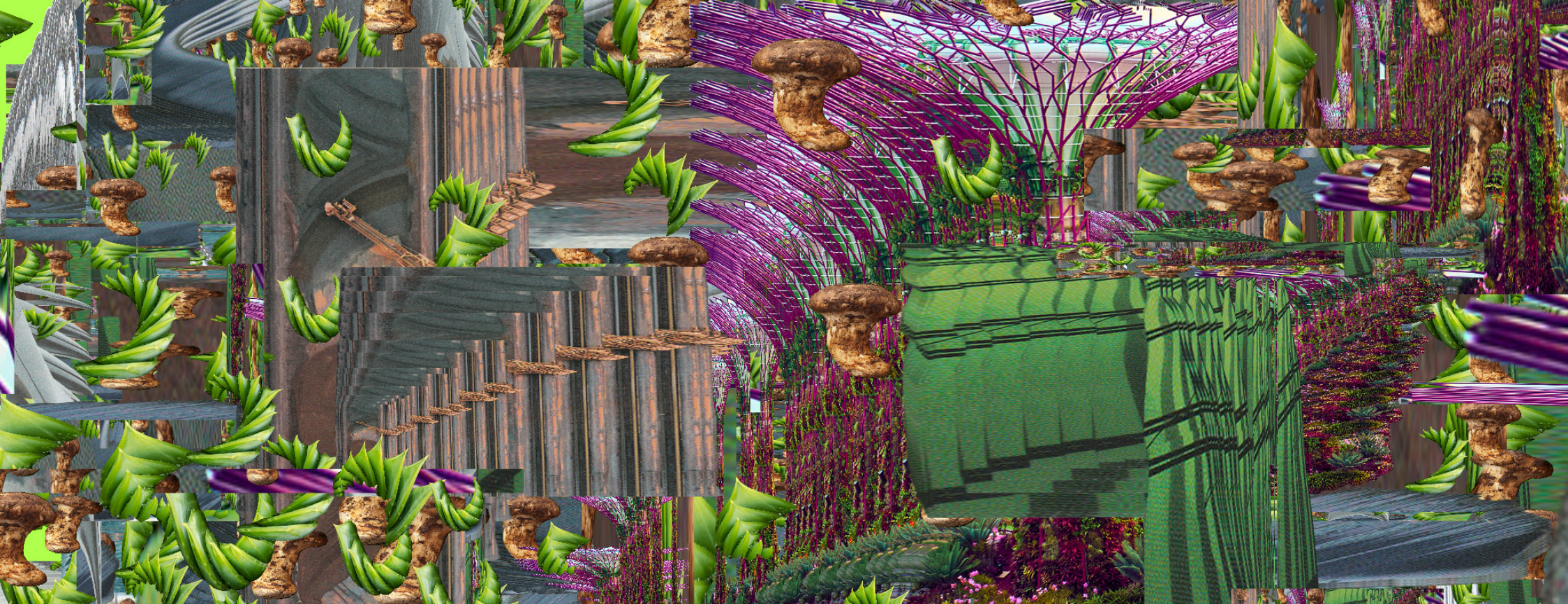


# Evolving collage through web activity

A larger-scale evolution of the piece will be a slow forming collage created as a result of participants online activity. I will create and connect a genetic algorithm and website, that pastes an image on the screen when participants' interact on a Forest of the Web. Their time spent on different pages will impact image size, content and frequency of pasting.

They will all add to an evolving collage throughout the exhibition. The code will capture still images [daily] and form a developing animation so that participants can see the evolution of the collage throughout the exhibition. There will be a button to press in the gallery, that triggers another still to be captured and added to the animation.







# Collaborators

## Joe Wood

Joe is a sound and code artist and fabricator at Joseph Waller Fabrications

**Contribution:** The sculptures in collaboration. He is also coding the sensors for the interactive collages.

## Benedict Sheehan

tutor while studying MA Digital Media Art at Brighton University

**Contribution:** advising and technical support for the overall / master control of the interactivity

## Oh Mr James

He is a prolific electronic musician in Cornwall and my long-time collaborator >>> OMJ has created the sound for all my works and I create visual art for his music since 2017

**Contribution:** ambient soundscape >>> developed from previous Forest of the Web pieces.

## HUM Choir

HUM choir: My local choir in Penryn, Cornwall and I have been a member for 4 months

**Contribution:** 2 or 3 songs to form part of the space's life cycles.

**Sample:** [https://youtu.be/oP\\_jcSLlgL8](https://youtu.be/oP_jcSLlgL8)

# Events + Online Presence

## Events

### Private View

sound performance[s] by Oh Mr James and Joe Wood + reactive visuals to support >>> expanding on the ambient soundscape in the exhibition and playing with generative patterns in music

### The form and future of the web: In conversation: Jess Pemberton + [2 speakers]

An evening event, [in-person and live streamed]. I will host a discussion looking at the internet we live in now and where it is headed. What is it that determines or adds to the form of the web? The metaverse, Web3 and privacy issues.

### Closing event

Viewing of the animation building up throughout the exhibition, created from the evolving collage [genetic algorithm]. This animation marks a collective visual pathway, a journey taken by people who engaged with the exhibition forest of the web site

## Online Presence

There will be a QR code for a directory of sites that meet the forest of the web manifesto principles. In the exhibition, it will appear with the manifesto.

I will do a 'call out' for websites to be a part of the directory as well as search the web for sites

# Timeline >>> creating the piece

## September

- JW: Make merkets for sculptures + experiment (6hrs)
- build website basic infrastructure (20hrs)
- Develop collage code interactivity (40hrs)
- JW: exploration of gestures and their connection to core interactive collage code
- Meeting with OMJ to discuss sound

## <sup>k</sup>October

- Meeting with BS to develop installation master interactivity control system
- Develop life cycles code
- HUM: Decide choral songs to record and begin practice
- collect and refine source material for collage coded pieces
- Begin learning Touch Designer
- JW to finalise design in CAD software: design way to hold screens inside sculptures + how sculptures can be created in sections and securely join together to fit through Arebyte Gallery front door

## November

- Develop HUM life cycle code to trigger sound, lights and plant growth patterns
- Experiment with coded pieces: fibonacci sequences and other patterns in nature
- develop code source material
- JW building sculptures
- Invite speakers for 'In conversation' event
  
- Finish website for directory

## December

- HUM: Record choral songs (2hrs)
- JW building sculptures
- Build interactivity into coded works
- Checkin with Ben S for code and interactivity technical advice.
- Call out on Arebyte + my social channels - Put up on art listing sites like ArtsAdmin

## January

- play with placement of materials on sculptures (exact locations for fabric to project onto, where to collage and where to have sheet metal)
- JW: sensors coding / testing with sculptures
- Finish coded works
- Start touch designer visuals for opening performance
- Finish genetic algorithm

## February

- Spend time tweaking piece
- Transport sculptures and kit to Arebyte
- Install 2-3 weeks

## March // exhibition opening



# Jess Pemberton

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## Residencies

**DEC 2021** Virtual residency with Digital Artist Residency (DAR)

I created a series of coded experiments and a manifesto for Forests of the Web: [www.digitalartistresidency.org/artists/jess-pemberton](http://www.digitalartistresidency.org/artists/jess-pemberton)

**2016** Cornwall College, for Inland Art Festival: Sept – Oct

## Commissions

**2017** Cultural Secretary (guest curator) at Palace of Cultures exhibition, Newlyn Art Gallery, 25 – 31 March, as a member of Keiken collective

**2016** The Future Project C. for Inland Art Festival, Redruth, 21 – 23 Oct, @MotherDigital, instillation + VR, as a member of Keiken collective

Intervention and engagement for SWARM event by Field Notes, The Exchange, Penzance  
23 April. As a part of Keiken collective

## Exhibitions

**2020** Kitsch Summer Blowout curated by Online Playroom  
[www.tinternet-shhnet.net](http://www.tinternet-shhnet.net), video essay, [onlineplayroom.art/ksb](http://onlineplayroom.art/ksb)

Hexagonally MA online exhibition, [hexagonally.show](http://hexagonally.show), Internet Tree, generative web art.

**2019** Love you to “Pieces” Fish Factory, Penryn, 5 – 9 Sept

Paste-Up! – International Collage Festival Mexico City  
25 April – 18 May. After Ophelia, digital collage

Associate Artist to Back Lane West, Redruth, April 2018–19

**2018** Studio Artists Fish Factory, Penryn, 13– 23 Dec

50/50 Exhibition Crows Nest Gallery, London, 3 – 23 Aug

Life/Death/Spirit/Flesh curated by Collagists Collective  
Hundred Years Gallery, London, 31 May – 3 June

Faces Site:Brooklyn Gallery, USA, 25 May – 23 June  
Rechargeable Battery Acid + Service with a Smile! collages

**2016** Counter Book Fair Plymouth University, Oct, + showcased @MotherDigital VR

Drawing a Presence 2 Newlyn Art Gallery, 16 April – 25 June

**2015** Field Notes Club House Series: Pecha Kucha, The Exchange, Penzance

Counter Book Fair, KARST Gallery

