

Artificial

///Aesthetics


Exhibition Proposal  
Molly Erin McCarthy





📷 exhibition layout facing from entrance



A composite image of a cave opening. The walls are covered in dense, colorful, fibrous or crystalline textures in shades of purple, pink, green, and yellow. A large, irregular hole in the rock reveals a bright blue sky with soft white clouds. The overall effect is surreal and vibrant.

*"Radical imagination can show us the world we want to live in, and co-opted digital tools can help us make it real."*



# ԵՎԻՆՄԵՆՏԱԿԱՆ ՕՍԵՐԻՅԷՍ

Artificial Ruin will consider how the ways in which we present and platform information shape the world around us, exploring storytelling & world-building as tools for both understanding and impacting the realities we exist within.

The exhibition is developed from research & experimentation initiated during a residency in the Rame Peninsula (Cornwall), and will explore these ideas through that IRL location and the context surrounding it - both direct and on a larger scale.

Throughout the exhibition will be a non-linear narrative, delivered in a fragmented manner often seen across digital media - think collecting audio logs in open world games, environmental storytelling in walking simulators, cryptic messaging and hidden codes in Augmented Reality Games, or the obscure and fragmented tales of creepypastas and The SCP Foundation.

Building on Donna Haraway's concept of 'speculative fabulation', visitors will be invited to piece together the narrative by scavenging for information scattered across artifacts/works (objects, audio, text), which in turn will be scattered across 2 virtual environments and the physical exhibition space.

Fact and fiction will be intertwined throughout, a mixture of collected and created data either directly about or referencing the Rame Peninsula. More broadly, the work will think about how tourism, second homes, and redevelopment are impacting the communities and landscape of Cornwall.

Community members from the Rame Peninsula will directly feed into world-building of the project through:

- Submitting to an online questionnaire
- Participating in a workshop (see the events page)
- Research collected through the Maker Memories archive

Artificial Ruin will explore how this process of 'multi-form worlding'\* allows us to think about our reality in expanded ways, drawing connections in places we might not think to. By working with community members from the Rame Peninsula to develop the work, the exhibition also highlights how storytelling and world-building can be used as collaborative acts of reclamation when faced with anxieties about the future.

\* SF: Science Fiction, Speculative Fabulation, String Figures, So Far - Donna J Haraway, delivered as a speech in 2011 at the pilgrim awards. This reference taken from 2021 reproduction of the speech in ADA A Journal of Gender, New Media & Technology. (pg. 2).





*SPECULATIVE FABULATION : [creating] realities through  
the practice of storytelling... [blurring] the  
sharpness of existing meanings & interpretations...  
[freeing] the mind to reach/invent new dimensions...*



memory  
imagination

record(s)  
artifact(s)

myth  
legend

propaganda  
marketing

desire / want  
fear / anxiety

belief(s)  
need(s)

intention  
legacy

“current affairs”

perception  
audience

Բեկդէպ

=

THE INTERSECTION OF

ԲՈՒՆ / ԲՆԵՐՈՒՄ

+

քաղաք / քրեզգրութեան / Բուտուր

*Finally, I'd gotten a scavengers license. I'd passed the exam, and the privileges of scavenging had opened up to me.*

*Sure - scavs had a rep, but it was a means to an end. There was no way I could have gotten the permits or the credits to do this trip myself, only the wealthiest of EMMETS could do that kinda stuff.*



# ΣΥΝΟΨΙΣ

The overarching synopsis for the exhibition comes from a fictional alternative universe (AU) I have been developing through my practice, a reality in which experiments fusing plants with networked and neural technology results in a seismic shift in the environment of the earth.

This AU was further developed during my residency at Maker Heights, a.k.a Maker, a Napoleonic barrack block and series of military installations on a hilltop in the Rame Peninsula in Cornwall. Maker has been a creative and community hub for over 4 decades, prior to which it was a campsite for underprivileged city children and temporary accommodation for families displaced during the WW2 bombing of Plymouth.

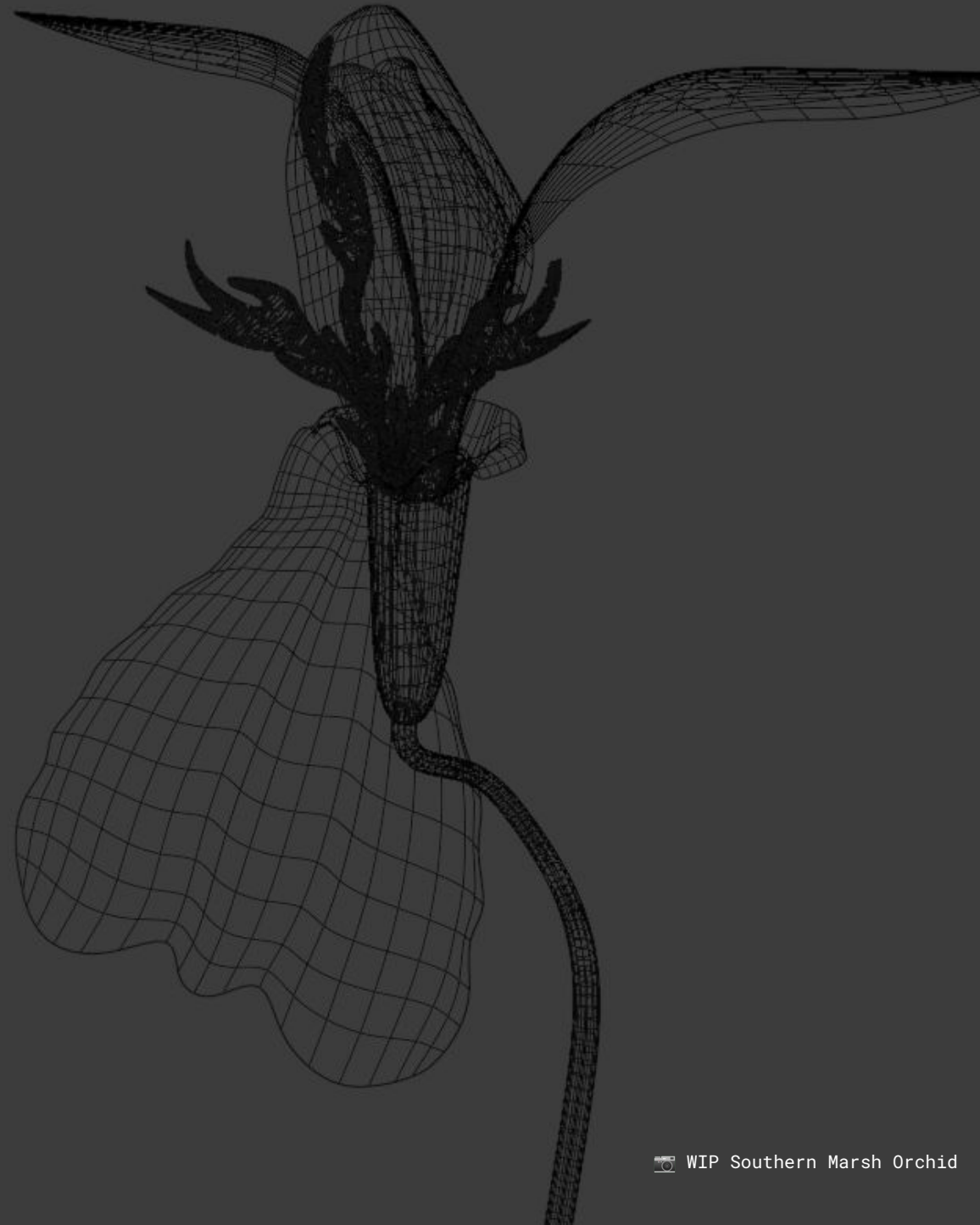
Currently, Maker is in the midst of a contested redevelopment, which has left the local community feeling anxious about the future of the site. This inspired me to write a short fiction text {Artificial Ruin V1.0} which has in turn inspired this proposal.

## THE ORCHIDS

As visitors journey through the world created in Artificial Ruin, they will have mysterious entities to guide them...

Developed from the wider AU as well as a previous 3D digital sculpture project exploring y2k aesthetics, nostalgia and hauntology, these guides will be based on real orchid plants that have been found in Cornwall and the Rame Peninsula.

Their design will mix their IRL appearance with forms that reference 00's aesthetics, and each flower will act as a representative for the different times of this world - the [past], [present], or [future].



## the small-flowered tooth orchid



It was discovered in 1989 at [Rame Head in Cornwall \(United Kingdom\)](#), and may have dispersed there naturally. [2] That colony disappeared after 20 years, but in 2021, fifteen plants were discovered in the 11th-floor [roof garden](#) of [Nomura International's office building](#) in the [City of London](#).

**the past**  
disappeared, moved on, transitioned into a new space.

**the present**  
A lot, all the time, everywhere.

**the future**  
symbiotic, evolved, in danger.

## the southern marsh orchid



The Southern marsh orchid, (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*), is the most successful and common orchid in Cornwall. It can be found in a wide variety of habitats from marshes, fields and wet heaths to road verges, old walls and even through holes in tarmac.

Unfortunately, due to illegal collection and picking, the exact locations of all orchid species are kept confidential where possible to reduce the risks of removal of colonies. However, the Trust's [Sylvia's Meadow Nature Reserve near Saltash](#) is well known as the most rich orchid site in Cornwall with almost all of the species native to Cornwall being found here.

**the unknown**  
the possible/impossible utopia/dystopia... is it real or not?

## the bee orchid



*Ophrys apifera*, known in Europe as the bee orchid, is a [perennial herbaceous plant](#) of the family [Orchidaceae](#). It serves as an example of [sexually deceptive pollination](#) and floral mimicry, as well as of a [highly selective and highly evolved plant-pollinator relationship](#).

grows around the barrack block at Maker



## the blue orchid



I hear talk of a rare blue orchid that grows around the barrack block at Maker.

[Are Blue Orchids Real? Yes and No... Here's Why.](#)

There isn't a straight yes or no answer here, because it all depends on your definition of real.



## the small-flowered tongue orchid



It was discovered in 1989 at [Rame Head in Cornwall \(United Kingdom\)](#), and may have dispersed there naturally. [2] That colony disappeared after 20 years, but in 2021, fifteen plants were discovered in the 11th-floor [roof garden](#) of [Nomura International's](#) office building in the [City of London](#).

the past

disappeared, moved on,  
transitioned into a new space.

## the southern marsh orchid



*The Southern marsh orchid, (Dactylorhiza praetermissa), is the most successful and common orchid in Cornwall. It can be found in a wide variety of habitats from marshes, fields and wet heaths to road verges, old walls and even through holes in tarmac.*

### the present

A lot, all the time, everywhere.

*Unfortunately, due to illegal collection and picking, the exact locations of all orchid species are kept confidential where possible to reduce the risks of removal of colonies. However, the Trust's [Sylvia's Meadow Nature Reserve near Saltash](#) is well known as the most rich orchid site in Cornwall with almost all of the species native to Cornwall being found here.*



## the future

symbiotic, evolved, in danger.

## the bee orchid



grows around  
the barrack  
block at Maker



*Ophrys apifera*, known in Europe as the bee orchid, is a perennial herbaceous plant of the family Orchidaceae. It serves as an example of sexually deceptive pollination and floral mimicry, as well as of a highly selective and highly evolved plant-pollinator relationship.

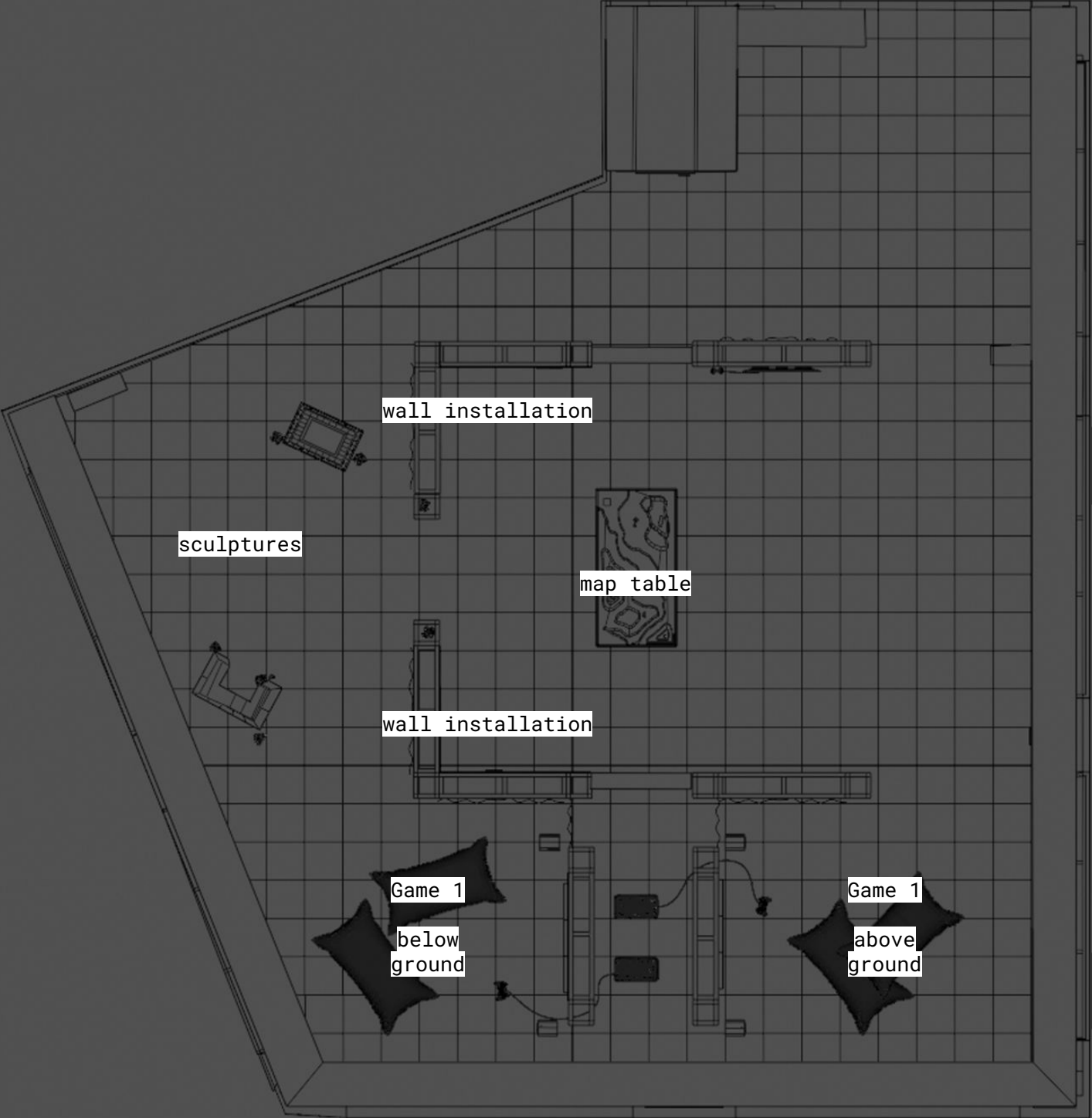
# the installation



The installation will make visual references to construction sites / campsites / research displays / theatre sets by using tent nylon, truss & board walls, giving the exhibition a sense of construct or facade. A key motif throughout the install is layering, which will be achieved through the use of stickers, banners and billboard posters among smaller elements.



the works



# the game

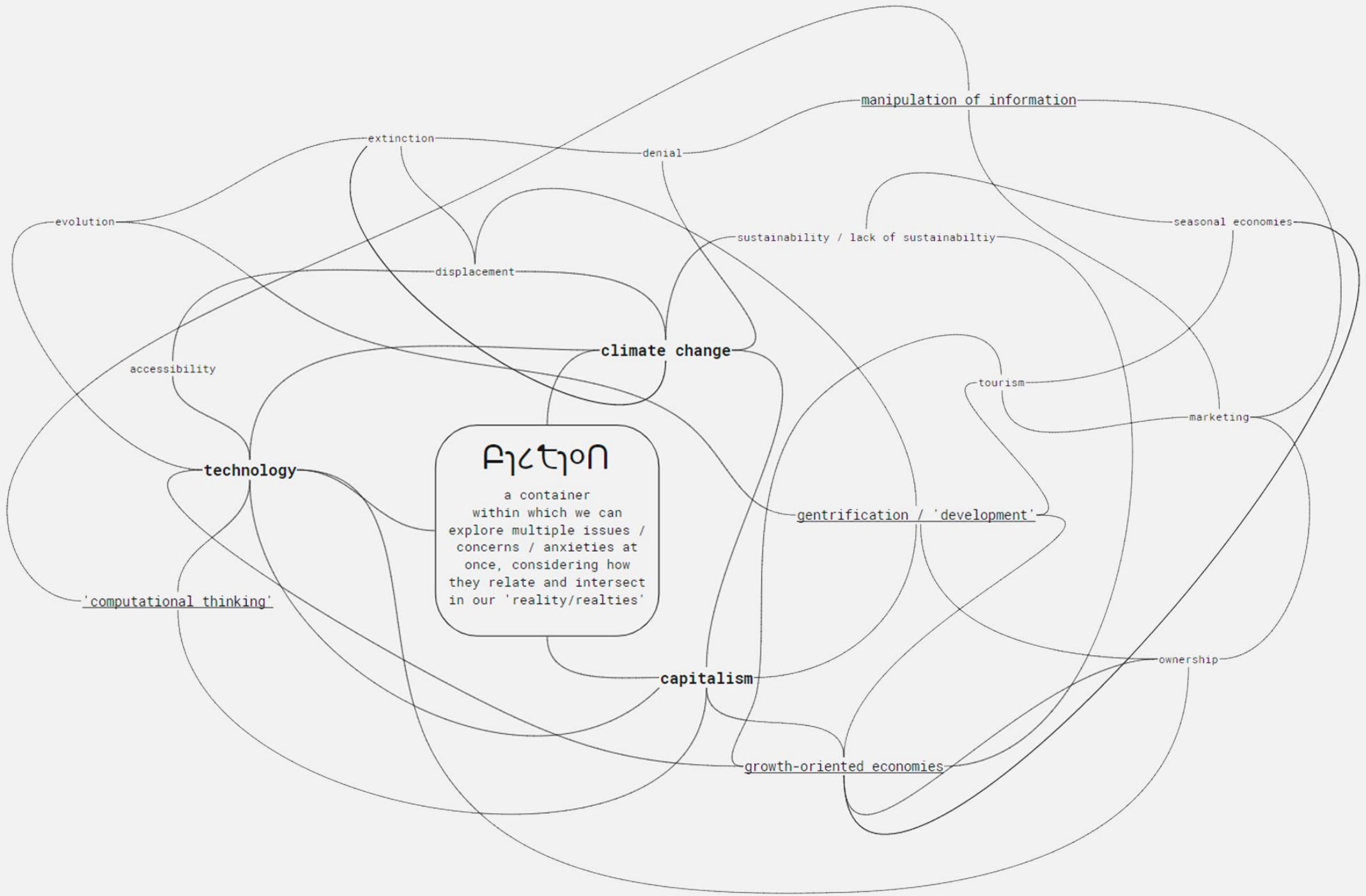
Split across two levels - the above ground and below - the game will be a free roaming environment in the style of a walking simulator.

This is where the narrative will be fully experienced, scattered across artifacts in the form of models, text and audio. Cornish language will be found throughout, further connecting the work to the IRL site it's inspired by.

Visitors will transverse landscapes and landmarks either directly inspired by the Rame Peninsula, or developed with the local community.

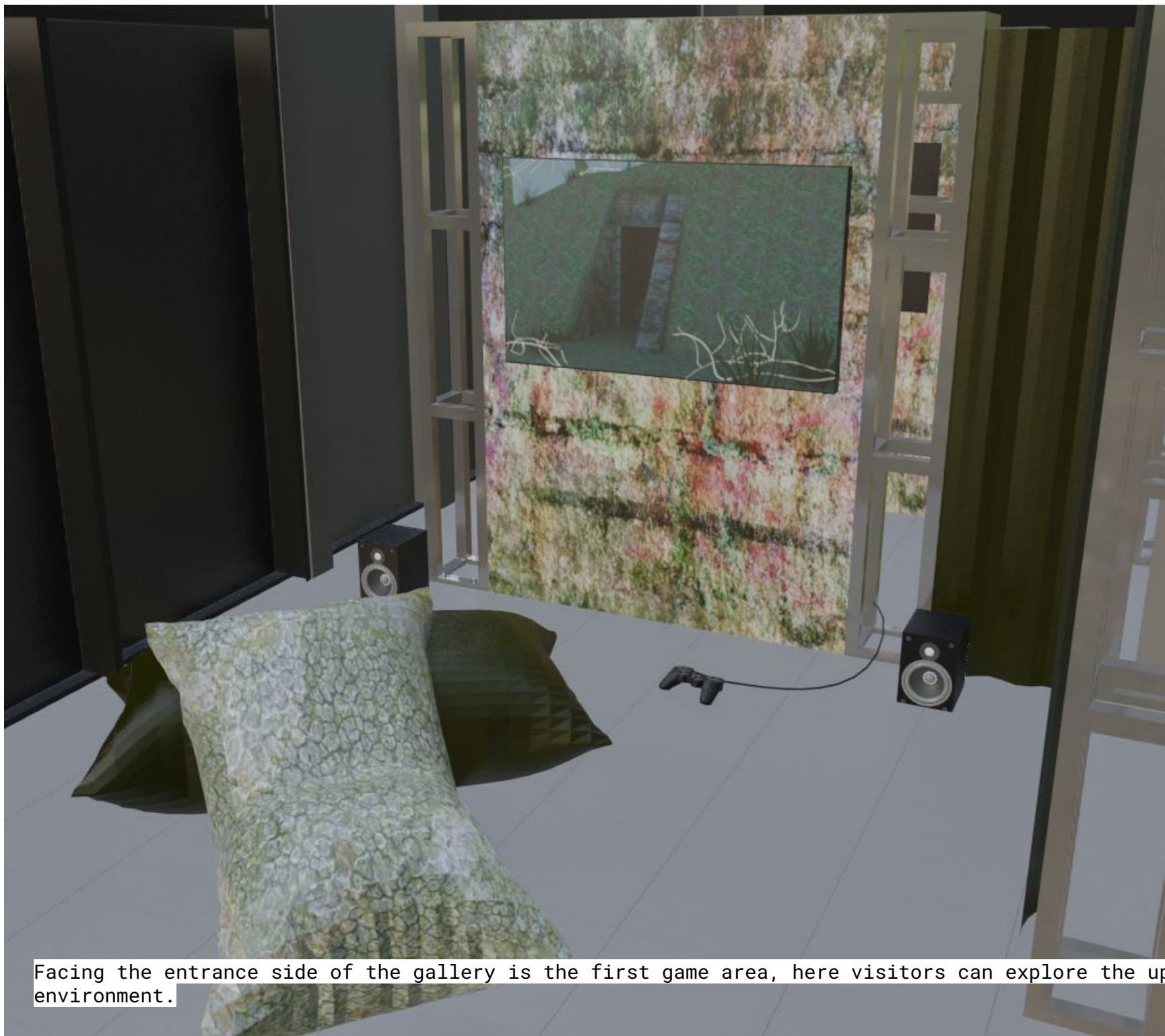












Facing the entrance side of the gallery is the first game area, here visitors can explore the up level of the environment.



The second game area faces the rear entrance of the gallery, here visitors can explore the under-layer of the landscape, traveling below the surface to discover more...



layers upon  
layers...

ນິເວດໂທດ

ໂຮງ

ກຽມໂທດໃຫ້ແກ່

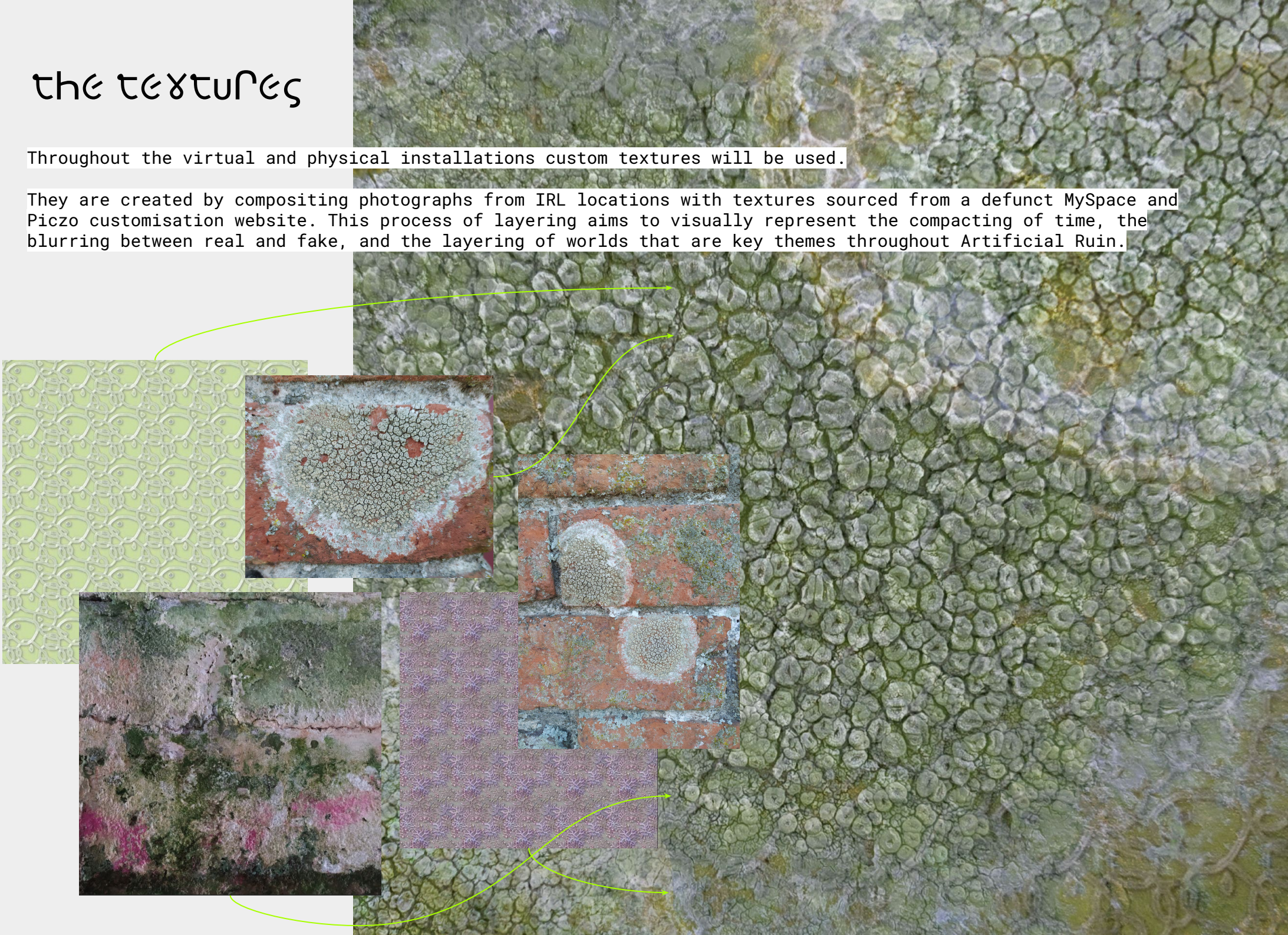
...of worlds within  
worlds



# the textures

Throughout the virtual and physical installations custom textures will be used.

They are created by compositing photographs from IRL locations with textures sourced from a defunct MySpace and Piczo customisation website. This process of layering aims to visually represent the compacting of time, the blurring between real and fake, and the layering of worlds that are key themes throughout Artificial Ruin.





“...a “perfect storm” has driven a bonanza for property developers, second homers, Airbnb promoters and land value speculators but left thousands of local families in even greater desperate circumstances and worsening uncertainty.”

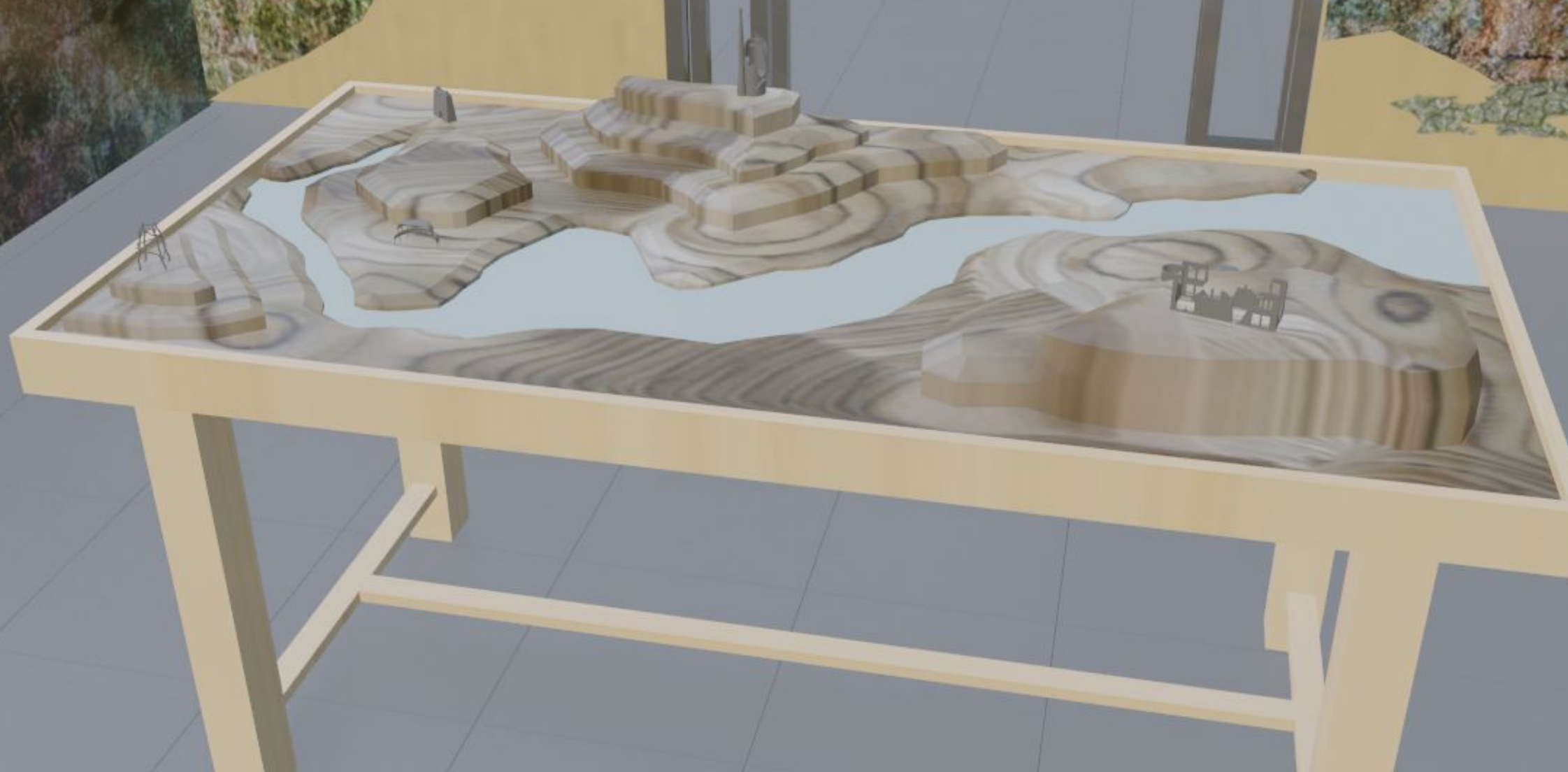
- Andrew George,  
Liberal Democrats.

<https://www.facebook.com/Andrew.George.Cornwall/photos/a.159121254271423/1746985332151666/>

“...‘Stop Development at Maker’ does not mean stop ANY development. Maker has been desperately in need of attention for many years. But the question is of course ‘what development’? Who Benefits? Short term? Long term? Underpinning this is the import issue of values.”

- Tony

<https://www.facebook.com/StopDevelopmentAtMaker/photos/a.216745312225645/741582413075263/>

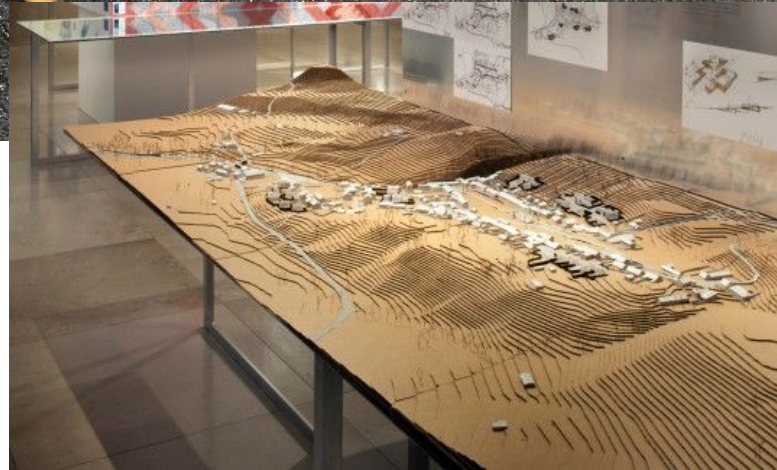
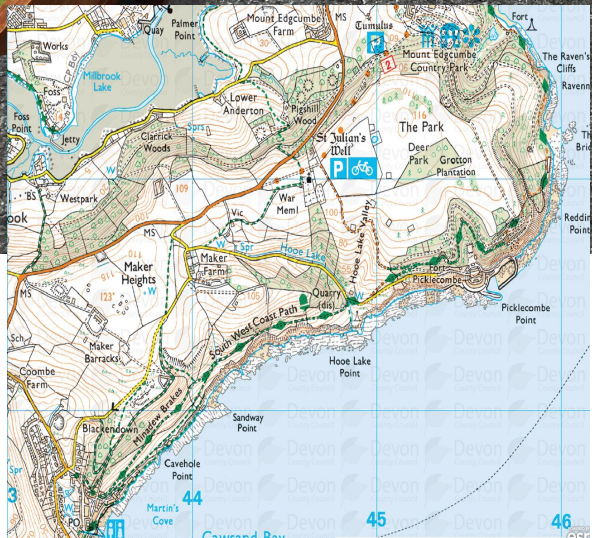


## the map

Central to the exhibition as visitors enter will be a sculptural work referencing : developers architectural models + tabletop war/strategy games + movie/special effects miniatures + ordnance maps.

The map table will be made from layer plywood that is carved into a topographical shape, it will be a physical reflection of the virtual landscapes complete with 3D printed landmarks.



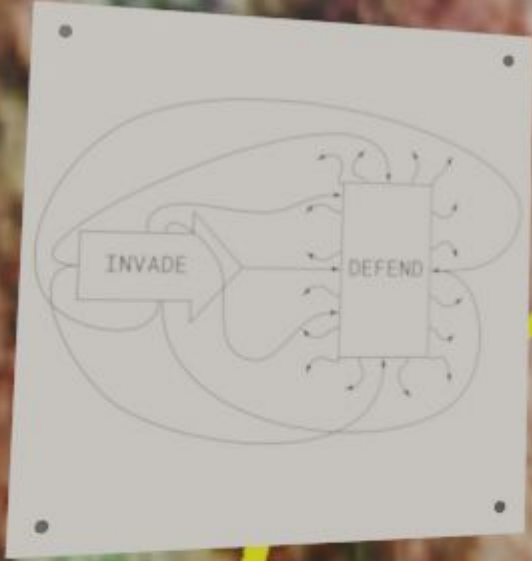






The map will be surrounded by wall based installations that reference mind maps and cats cradles. Here visitors will be able to look at assets and data extracted from the game, enabling specific attention to be drawn to key points of research or contextual factors while also teasing what can be found in the virtual environments.



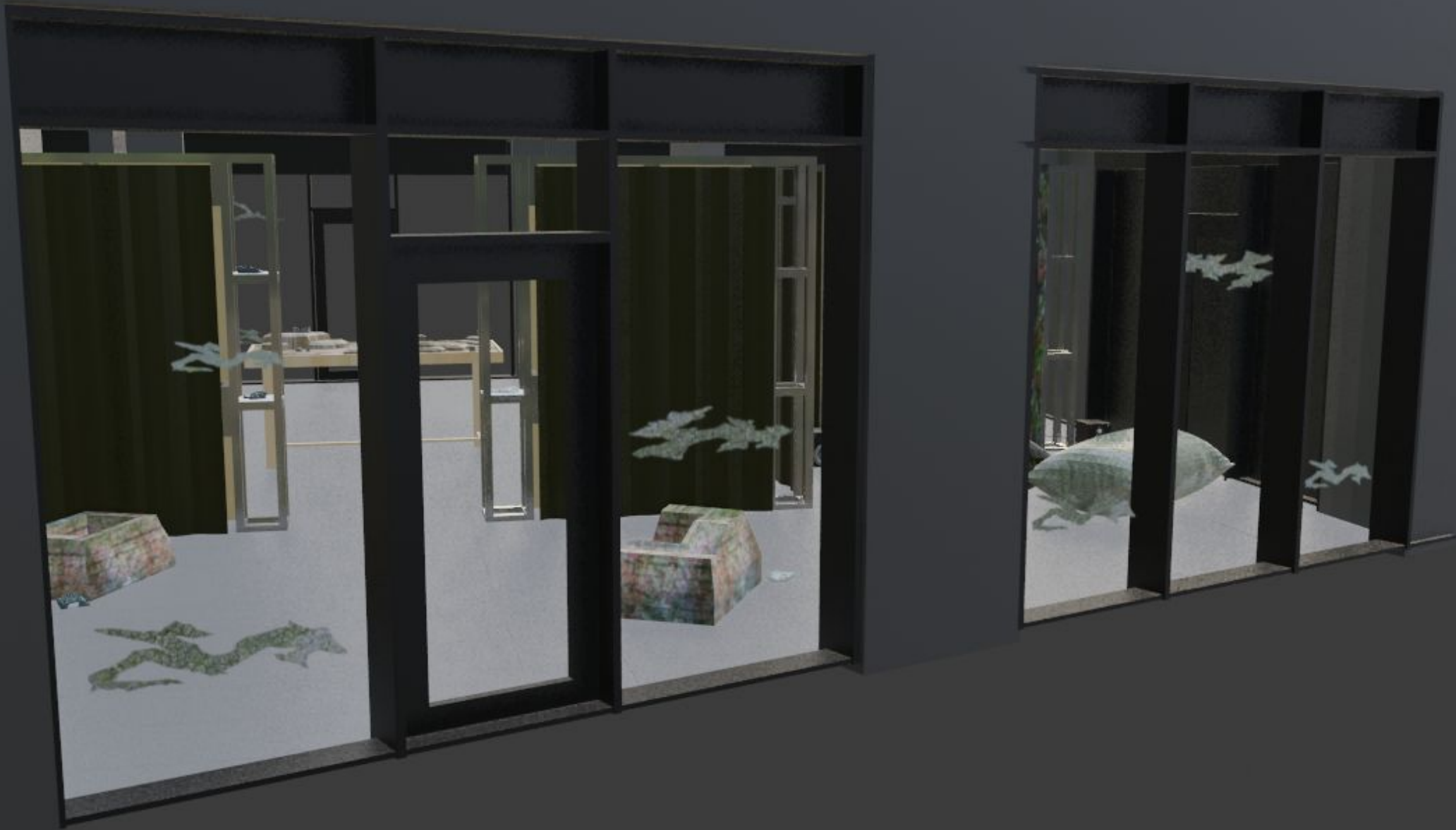






Artifacts from the games (images, text, textures,) displayed behind perspex sheets and connected by custom stickers)





📷 exhibition view facing from rear entrance



Surrounding the sculptures and placed on perspex shelves will be a mixture of found and replicated artifacts.



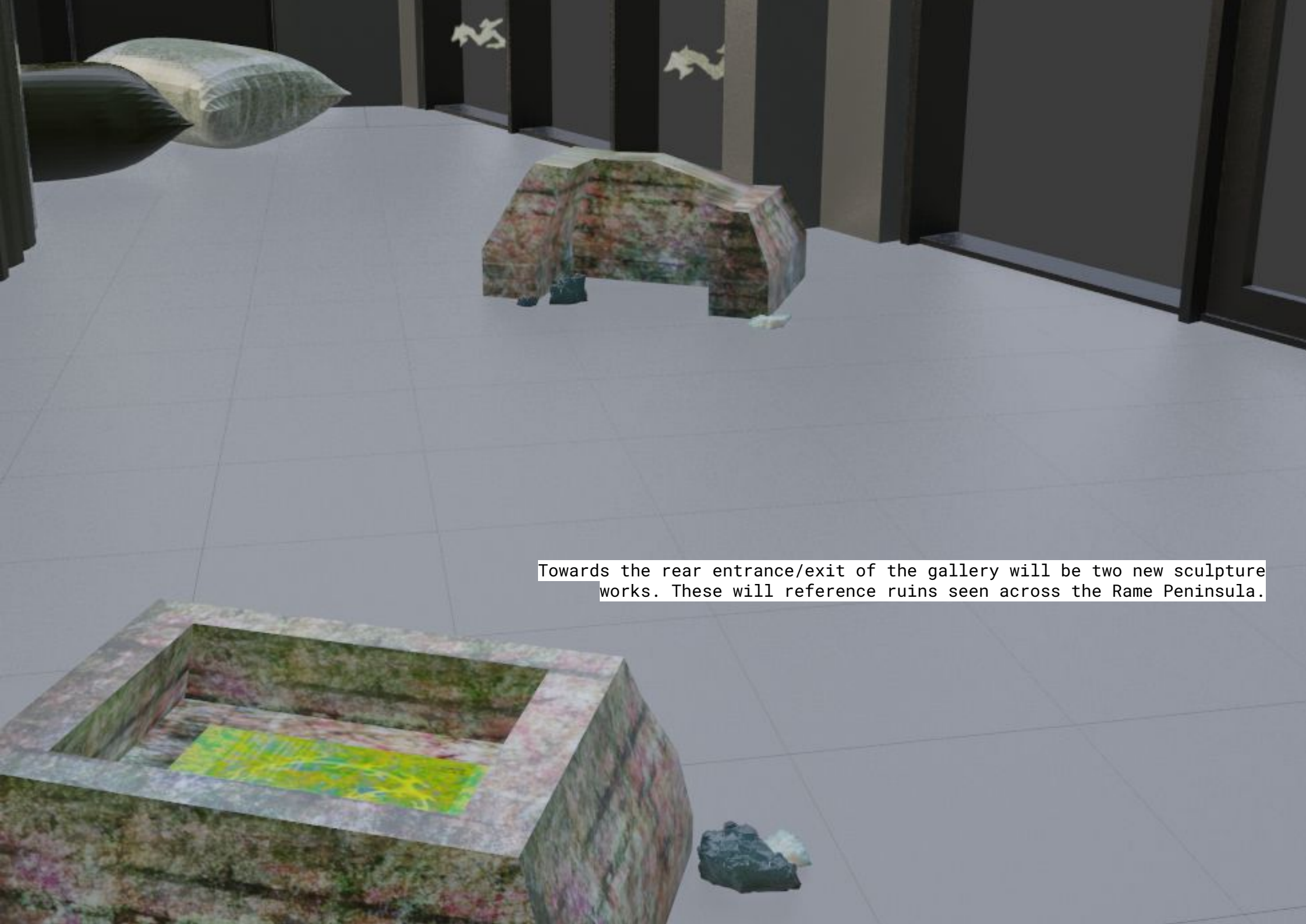
artifacts collected from the Rame Peninsula



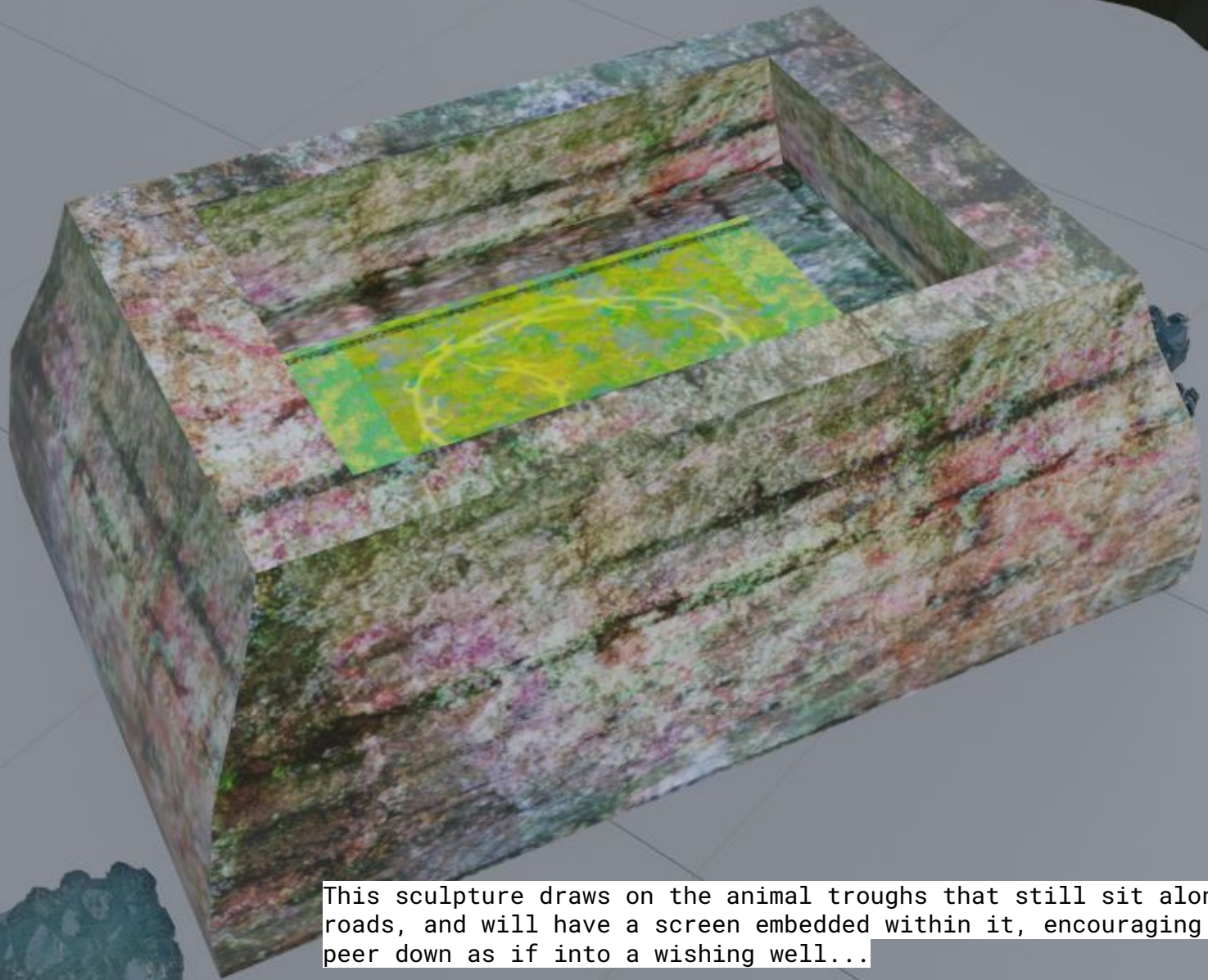








Towards the rear entrance/exit of the gallery will be two new sculpture works. These will reference ruins seen across the Rame Peninsula.



This sculpture draws on the animal troughs that still sit alongside the roads, and will have a screen embedded within it, encouraging visitors to peer down as if into a wishing well...



## ՅԱԺԵՆ + ԷԶՈՒՊՄԵՆՏ

Item	Rate	Amount	Total	In Kind	From
<b>Fabricators / Collaborators</b>					
3D modelling support	£200/day	2.5	500		
Coder / Programmer support	£200/day	3	600		
Carpenter (Map Table)	£150/day	2	300		Doghouse Carpentry
Worksho facilitation	£200/day	1	200		Rame Projects
Cornish Translations & Audio Recording	£150/day	1.5	225		Akademi Kernewek
Artist Fee			1500		
<b>Materials</b>					
<b>MAP TABLE</b>					
3D Prints (resin)	60 / print	4	240		Fab Lab Plymouth
3D prints (PLA)	20 / print	4	80		Fab Lab Plymouth
Plywood Boards (18mm)	51.3	3	153.9		Builders merchants
Planned Timber (125mm x 19mm)	2.62	10	26.2		Builders merchants
Planned Timber (45mm x 45mm)	4.38	7	30.66		Builders merchants
Planed Timber (69mm X 69mm)	5.52	4	22.08		Builders merchants
Finish (Danish Oil, Wood Stain, Misc Fittings)	50		50		Builders merchants
Resin (5kg)	83.93		83.93		Easy Composites
<b>CENTRAL ROOM</b>					
Billboard posters (walls - 6m x 3m)	57.45	2	114.9		Pixart Printing
Camo stickers	17.72 / set (2 stickers)	4	70.88		Pixart Printing
MDF boards (9mm)	18.95 / sheet	8	151.6		Builders merchants
Yellow sticker	£7 / roll			Y	Provided by artist
Custom Perspex Sheets	£70 (approx)			Y	Provided by artist
Sony MDRZX310 Foldable Headphones - Metallic Black				Y	Provided by gallery
Iphone + power cable		2		Y	Provided by artist
Alba 10 Inch 16GB Tablet - Black		4		Y	Provided by gallery
Iiyama 55" + media player		1		Y	Provided by gallery
Perspex shelves				Y	Provided by gallery

# ՅԱԺԹԵՒ + ԷԹՍԻՐՄԵՆՆԵՐ

Item	Rate	Amount	Total	In Kind	From
<b>GAME AREAS</b>					
banners (game area - 2, x 3m)	88.06		88.06		Pixart Printing
Custom Bean Bag Covers (x 2)	142.54		142.54		Helloprint
First Person Exploration Kit (code prefabs)	19.99			Y	Provided by artist
game controller + power lead		2			
MSI NightBlade X2B-248EU					
PREDATOR G3-710					
M-Audio BX5		2 pairs		Y	Provided by gallery
<b>SCULPTURES</b>					
Chicken Wire		3 rolls		Y	Provided by artist
Quick set cement	6.99				
Baton				Y	Provided by artist
Crystal resin	25	1	25		
Plywood (18mm)				Y	Provided by artist
Screen + Media Player					
<b>MISC</b>					
Ragni Hi-Vis Brickline	4.79		4.79		Builders Merchants
Tent fabric					Provided by artist
Truss				Y	Provided by gallery
Window Stickers	15.05 / set	6	60.3		Pixart Printing
<b>Contingency</b>					
3%-5%	150-250	5%	250		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4919.84</b>		



# Երթևեղ

MONTH + WEEK (Approx)	TASK	ESTIMATED TIME	NOTES
<b>SEPT</b>			
Wk 1	Liase W/ Modeller & Programmer	> 1/2 day	Decide on key design elements, decide how best to work with modeller & programmer
Wk 1	Liase W/ Rame Projects	> 1/2 day	
Wk 1-3	Develop Orchid 3D models	4 days	
Wk 2	Launch questionnaire	1 day	Rejig previous 'What Does Maker Mean To You' questionnaire
Wk 3	Planning for Mapping Workshop	1 day	
Wk 4	Scouting trip in Rame	1 day	Looking for points of interest, collecting imagery
Wk 4	Developing composite textures	2 days	
<b>OCT</b>			
Wk 1-2	Mapping Workshop w/ Rame Peninsula Community	1 day	
Wk 2	Check in with Modeller	> 1/2 day	
Wk 2	Finish orchid designs	1 day	
Wk 2-3	3D modelling landscape	2 days	
Wk 2-3	Modelling landmarks	4 days	
Wk 3-4	Asset generation	3 days	
<b>NOV</b>			
Wk 1	Liase w/ Programmer	> 1/2 day	Discuss key tech needed for
Wk 1	Liase w/ Carpenter	> 1/2 day	Hand Over files for map table, discuss turn around + key elements
Wk 1	Liase w/ Fab Lab	> 1/2 day	Confirm turnover time / dates for 3D files to be delivered
Wk 1-3	Developing sculptures	2 days	
Wk 2-3	Asset generation	2 days	
Wk 1 - 4	Developing Game	4 days	
Wk 2-4	Modelling landmarks	3 days	
<b>DEC</b>			
Wk 1-4	Developing game	7 days	
Wk 2	Send off 3D Prints	> 1/2 day	
Wk 3	Developing sculptures	1 day	
Wk 3	Developing wall layout for central room	2 days	
<b>JAN</b>			
Wk 1	Order custom bean bag covers	> 1/2 day	
Wk 1-2	Play testing game	2 days	with friends & arebyte
Wk 2	Finalising wall layout for central room	2 days	
Wk 3	Collection of Map Table	1/2 day	
	Collection of 3D Prints	1/2 day	
Wk 3	Sculpture finishing	1 day	
Wk 3-4	Map Table Finishing	1 day	
<b>FEB</b>			
Wk 1	Finalising wall layout for central room	1.5 days	
MID FEB	Installation	10-14 days	

# COLLABORATORS

## **Doghouse Carpentry Collective**

*Carpentry collective. Custom joinery/ solo /group projects. Plymouth, UK.*

[https://www.instagram.com/doghouse\\_carpentry/](https://www.instagram.com/doghouse_carpentry/)

\* fabrication of map table work

## **Rame Projects**

*A visual arts project space in South East Cornwall, artist-led organisation & dedicated to testing out new ideas.*

<https://rameprojects.com/>

\* will help facilitate the RE:MAPPING workshop with members of the Rame Peninsula Community, assisting with securing a location and finding participants for the session.

## **Rame Conservation Trust**

*The Trust preserves the historical, architectural and constructional heritage that exists in and around Maker Heights and the Rame Peninsula, for the benefit of the people of the peninsula and of the nation at large.*

<https://rameconservationtrust.org.uk/>

\* Assisting with historical and contextual research into Maker Heights and the wider Rame Peninsula.

## **Maker Memories**

*A volunteer led community project designed to capture the rich and diverse heritage of Maker Camp on the Rame Peninsula.*

<https://www.makermemories.org/>

\* Assisting with research into the histories of Maker Heights, able to give a personal perspective.

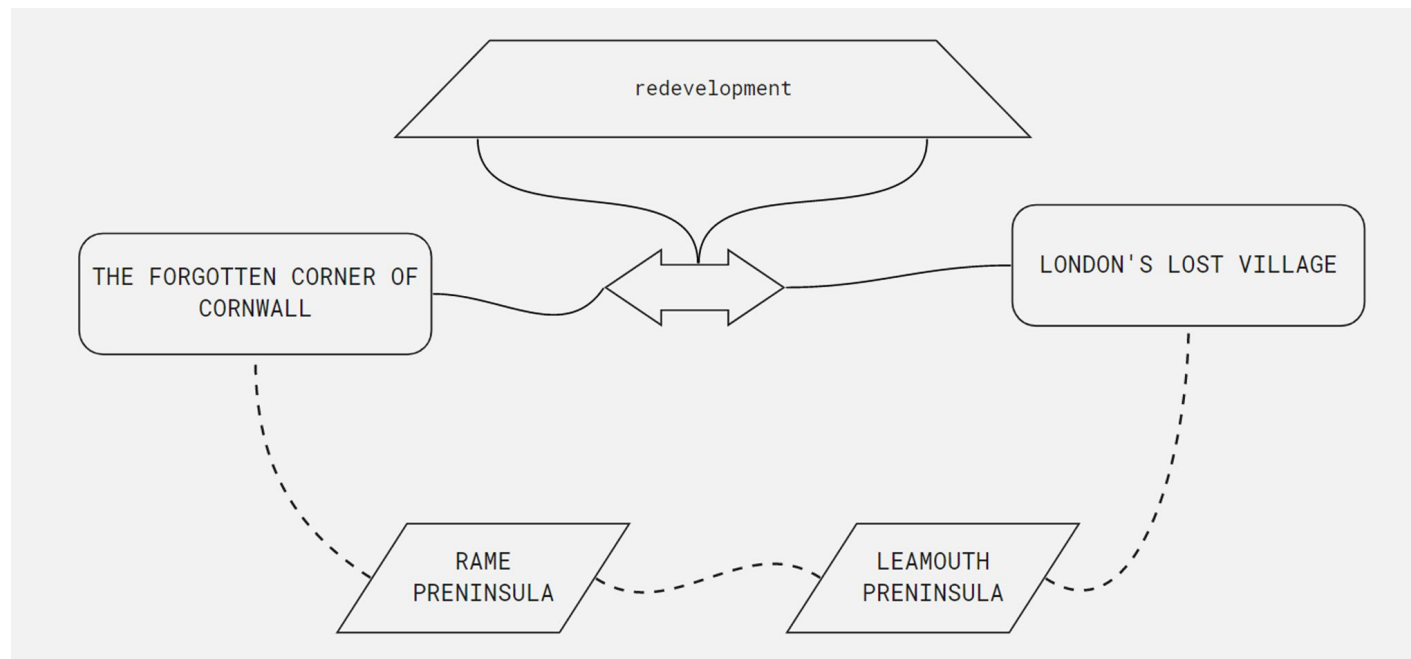
## **Akademi Kernewek**

*Responsible for corpus planning for the Cornish language, including setting standards for the language, developing the dictionary and carrying out research.*

<https://www.akademikernewek.org.uk/?locale=en>

\* Supporting the use of Cornish language throughout the project, providing translations and audio recordings.





## events

### PRE-EXHIBITION

#### **RE:MAPPING - Workshop 1**

A day long workshop with 3-4 residents from the Rame Peninsula.

Developed from a workshop I ran with students from Torpoint Community College titled RE:WRITING HISTORIES / RE:IMAGINING FUTURES which explored the power of speculative fiction for engaging with history.

This version will take the final task from that workshop and turn it into a collaborative world-building tool inspired by The Quiet Year (a collaborative RPG map making game created by Avery Alder). Together we will decide on the key landmarks and features of the landscape, which will then inform the game and map table.

### DURING EXHIBITION

#### **RE:MAPPING - Workshop 2**

A repeat of the first workshop, employing the same techniques but this time targeted at residents from the Leamouth Peninsula, the location or Arebyte with contextual connections to Maker through its current redevelopment.

#### **CARTOGRAPHY IN THE LAND OF CRADLES - Talk**

An artist talk exploring the techniques I use for mapping out relationships throughout my work, a repeat of a talk I will be delivering in Aberdeen this Autumn. The talk could happen online, in person, or both!

# statement



Molly Erin McCarthy (a.k.a molly.erh) is a multimedia artist based in Plymouth, UK. Her practice moves between physical & digital processes, iterating across sculpture, video, interactive/online media, GIFs, drawing & collage.

Her work explores the interconnectedness of things, considering how the contemporary experience of 'reality' is actually a tangled web of many worlds. Using world-building techniques drawing from sci-fi, video games and online communities, McCarthy maps out these relations by intertwining fact & fiction alongside past, present & future.

Common themes in her work include : nostalgia, ecology, heterotopias, archeology, mapping, replication, devon & cornwall.

McCarthy received a First Class BA (Hons) in Fine Art from Plymouth College of Art in 2020. Alongside her practice she has worked with organisations such as [Plymouth Art Weekender](#), [KARST Contemporary Arts](#) & [MIRROR](#). She is currently a Co-Director of the member-led creative network [CAMP](#).

WEBSITE : [mollyerh.xyz](http://mollyerh.xyz)

INSTAGRAM : [@molly.erh](https://www.instagram.com/molly.erh)



65

(つゝ) ♡ Group Exhibitions ♡

- 2021 *DIGITAL MONSTERS*, Solo Show, USA/Online.
- 2021 *Plymouth Contemporary*, KARST/The Arts Institute, Plymouth, UK.
- 2021 *RHIZODOME*, auto:save, UK/Online.
- 2020 *ROAD RALLY V.1.0*, Barcu Expo, Columbia/Online.
- 2020 *New Realities*, DeepFatFried Collective, UK/Online.
- 2020 *In The Withdrawing Room*, CSM Culture, Criticism & Curation, UK/Online.
- 2020 *Virtual Sculpture Garden*, Implied Gallery, UK/Online.
- 2020 *Incorporeal Laguna : A Tribute to an Art Show*, Ypuccko Gallery, EU/Online.
- 2020 *Ancient Futures in Organic Cyberspace*, auto:save, UK/Online.
- 2020 *Well Now, WTF?*, Silicon Valet, USA/Online.
- 2020 *The Wretched of the Screen*, The Wrong Biennale, Magdalena Art Space, Oxford, UK.
- 2019-2020 *goingaway.tv*, The Wrong Biennale, Arebyte/AOS, London, UK.
- 2019 *NOTOPIA*, Leadworks, Plymouth, UK.
- 2019 *Warehouse Party #002*, The Auxiliary, Middlesbrough, UK.

(つゝ) ♡ Other Projects ♡

- 2021 *RE:WRITING HISTORIES / RE:IMAGINING FUTURES*, Torpoint Community College, Torpoint, UK. (workshop)
- 2020 *State of Emergency*, The Box, Plymouth, UK. (commision)
- 2020 *Still Here Still Life X Implied Gallery X Molly Erin McCarthy*, Interactive Virtual Sculpture, UK/EU/Online (collaboration).
- 2019 *STREAM*, Wharf Chambers, Leeds, UK. (screening)

(つゝ) ♡ Residencies ♡

- 2021 *Devon Based Emerging Artist Residency*, Rame Projects, Cornwall, UK.
- 2019 *Lot Residency #001*, Silicon Valet, USA/Online.
- 2019-2020 *The Wretched of the Screen*, The Wrong Biennale, Digital Artist Residency, UK/Online.
- 2019 *Instagram Residency*, ORBIT, UK/Online.

(つゝ) ♡ Talks ♡

- 2021 *Oh Sh\*t, I'm A Graduate! Thoughts & Reflections On Going From Art Student To Arts Professional*, Plymouth College of Art, UK (online).
- 2020 *Software and Sculpture : Or How I Learned To Stop Worrying & Love My Class Background, Don't Worry I'm Sick and Poor*, Royal College of Art, UK (online).