

Dr. Amy Cutler // GeoHumanities

AUDIOVISUAL FIELDTRIPS - creative/critical geographies, climates, and natures, via film, curating, music, and writing.

- SPECIES PIRACY

SPECIES PIRACY - LIVE CINEMA ENSEMBLE

This live project is now available for performance for festivals and venues. We are also seeking further support or partnership to bring it to 16mm in colour. Please contact amycutler1985@gmail.com to discuss gigs or commissioning.

"While de-extinction is often widely understood to be an act of replication, it is actually largely the work of re-adaptation: splicing, editing, and reassembling the genetic material of extinct species." - Sarah Bezan

SPECIES PIRACY is an ongoing ensemble live cinema project inspired by the dark arts of de-extinction which premiered on 14th December 2023 at IKLECTIK, London. Supported by the Leverhulme Centre of Anthropocene Biodiversity (LCAB), it draws on histories of moving image projection as a form of both life and afterlife, from biological experimentation to dream palaces, seances, phantasmagoria and other cinematic manifestations. A new pioneering machine learning process was used to translate these histories into an exploration of the contemporary rhetoric, aesthetics, and strategies of de-extinction science, which is currently in an analogous stage of experimentation.

The original black and white material from which this work is "cloned" is compiled from a mix of loops from public domain early films, including the first ever moving media depiction of Frankenstein, as well as an Encyclopaedia Britannica documentary on biology, hand contact-printed onto the last reel of extinct 150-yr old ORWO film stock by Amy Cutler and James Holcombe in the EREWHON dark room laboratory in Frome in July 2023. The machine learning processes then strive towards reworking this footage according to priority vocabularies from current de-extinction science (as well as its own

bias towards the decorative). However, the AI is neither free to purely copy the original nor to create its own pure new thing; its resurrections are constrained by the extant forms of the archive, which themselves flicker in and out of existence based on exposure and development time. What emerges, although the result of machine co-production, resembles the speculative colour fantasies of bespoke early hand-tinted and painted cinema far more than the slick, homogenous realism of contemporary AI 'de-aging' or 'colourisation' tools often applied to old footage, such as the Tasmanian tiger. It is much more gelatinous, gaudy, Gothic, science-fictional, and extremely driven by the visual bias of our genetic imaginaries and the cultural contexts of extinction.



SPECIES PIRACY is an ongoing initiative to explore such 'biased' temporal slips and the ways a biological medium can disobey basic concepts of irreversibility in digital bio-images, ghosts, clones, dreams, progeny, and ushers of the uncanny, as humans continue to create new scientific fantasies for dying, splicing, grafting, mourning, reviving, and surviving.

The ensemble consists of Robin the Fog aka HOWLROUND (tape loops), James Holcombe (16mm development and projection), lead artist Amy Cutler (designer/filmmaker/producer), and researcher Sarah Bezan. The live cinema investigation parallels Bezan's development of the concept 'Thylacinema', as well as other work on the potential overlaps between the paradoxical de-extinction industries and the 'dream palace' of cinema; for instance, David Jaclin has written on de-extinction as itself a collective dreaming or multi-species fictioning of the future via 'cinematic chimera'. Jaclin asks, 'What kind of dream is de-extinction? (...) The result will be, not a woolly mammoth, but rather the waking dream of a fictionalized animal...'

The world premiere of this ongoing collaborative work was celebrated in Dec 2023 with "an Anthropocene concert of resurrected species, robot ventriloquists and other ushers of the uncanny", including live performances by Sarah Angliss and her robot carillon, AV and AI experimentation by the Murmur Collective Intelligence Ensemble, 16mm projections of nature morte by Jim Hobbs and OJON, and a panel discussion between artists and researchers, including guest Peter Sands. (Images of live event below; a short time-lapse sample from Species Piracy itself is available **online here**, with thanks to @jamesalechardy.)



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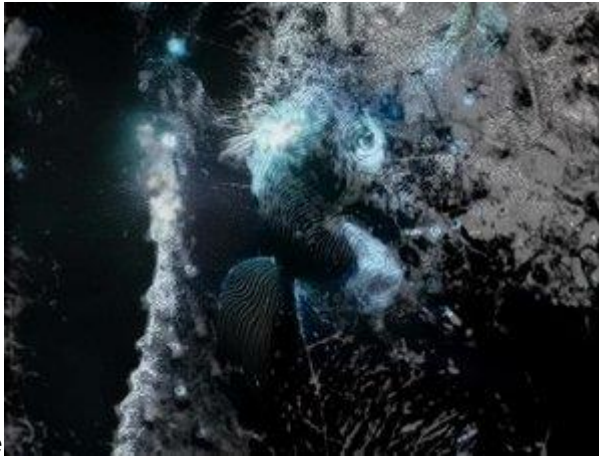
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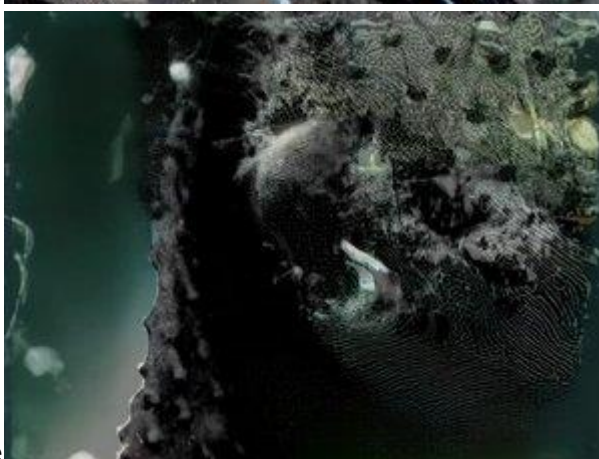
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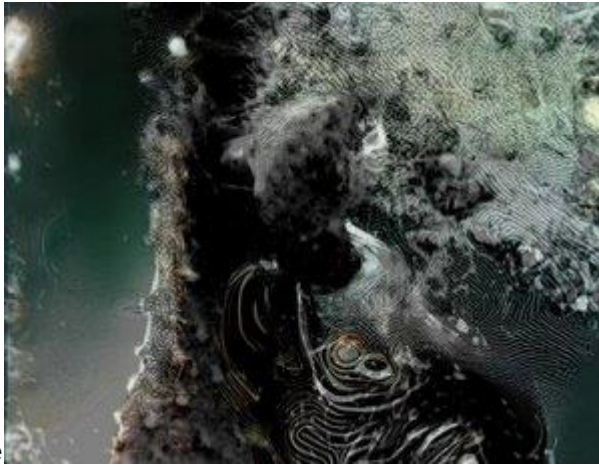
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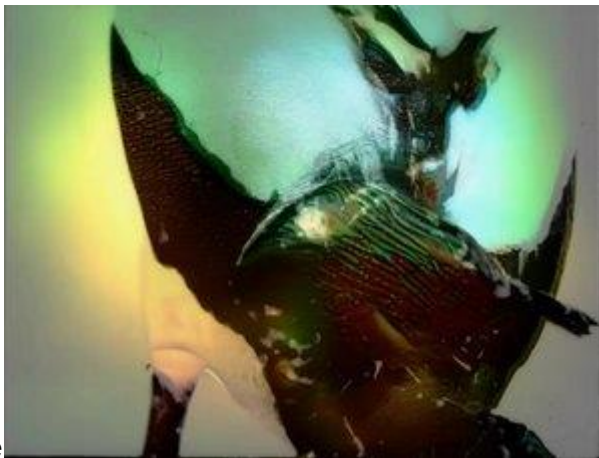
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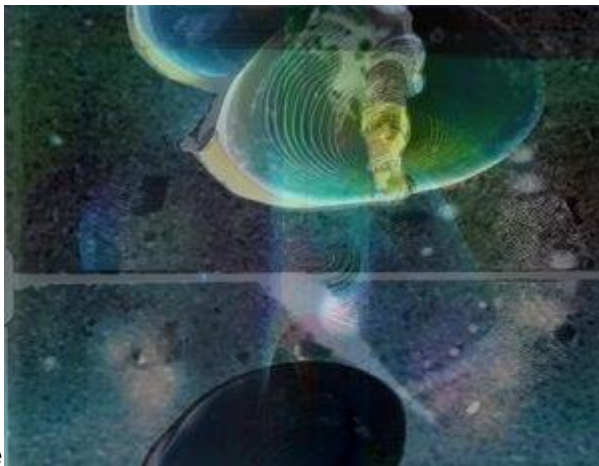
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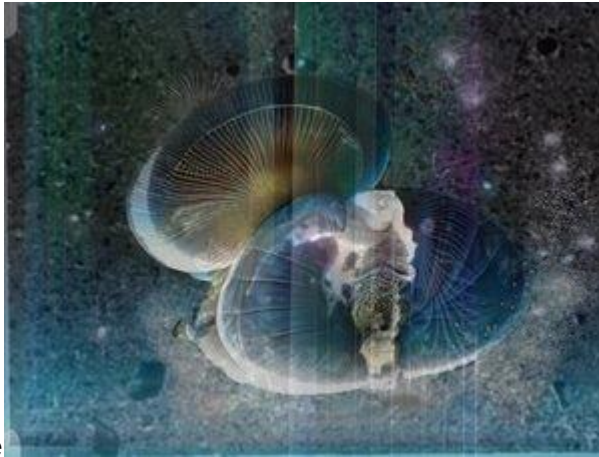
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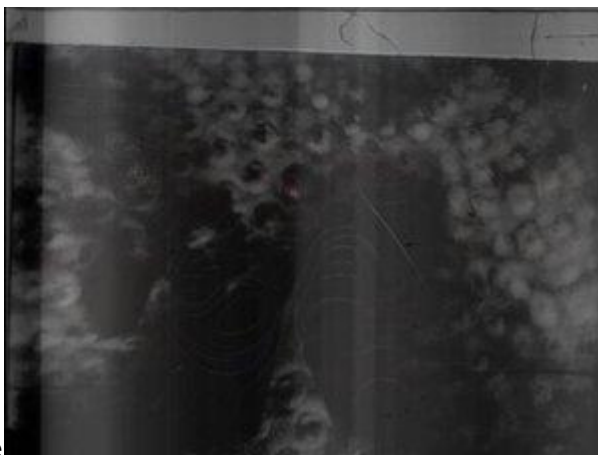
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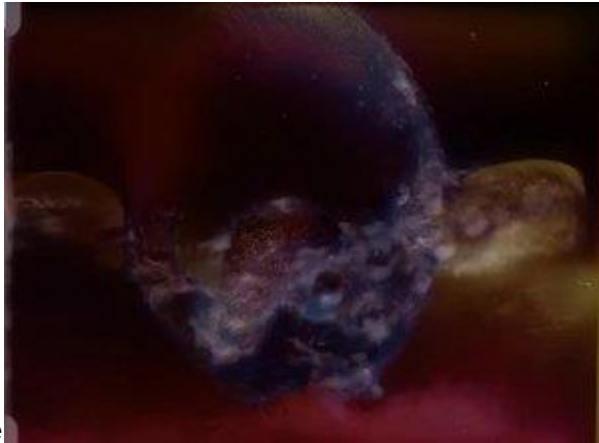
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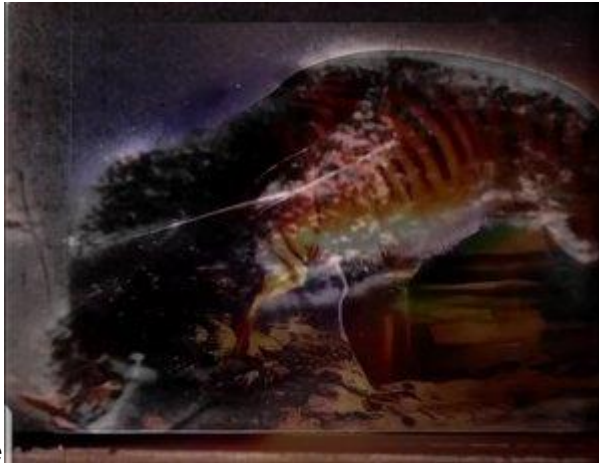
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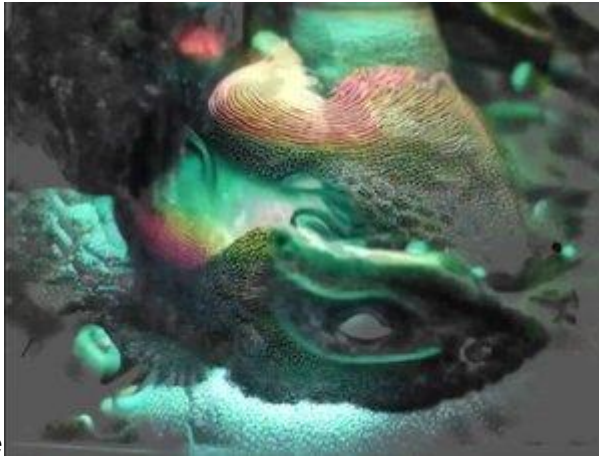
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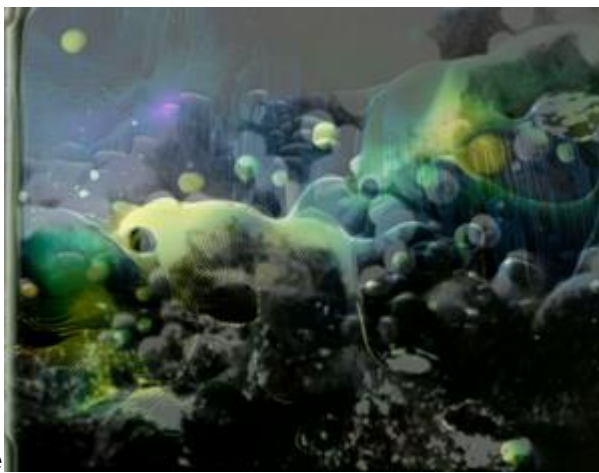
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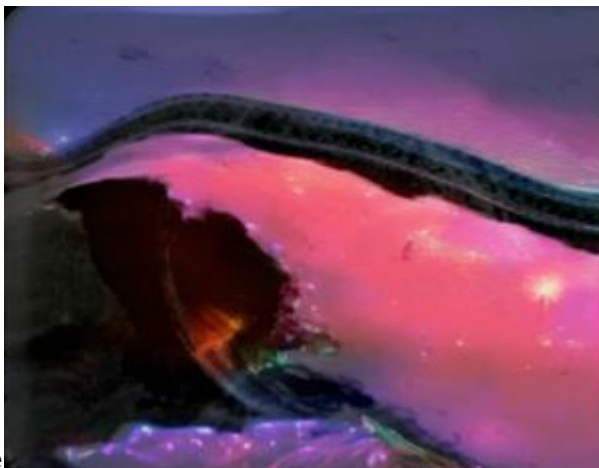
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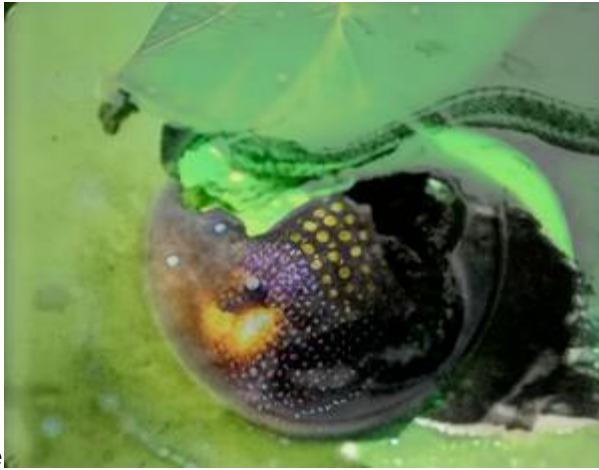
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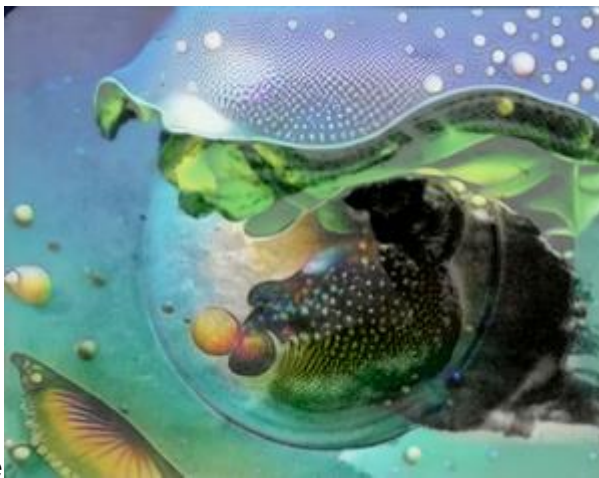
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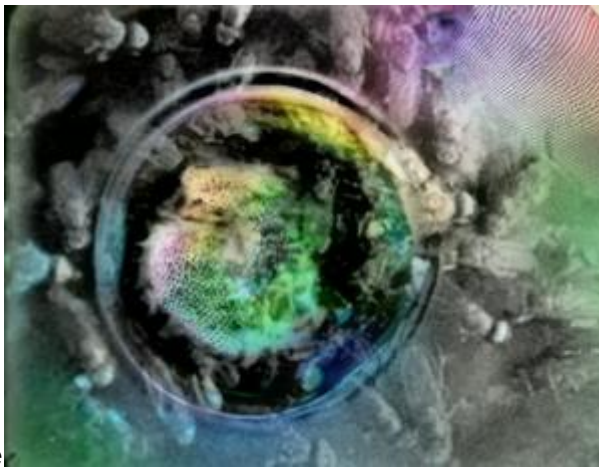
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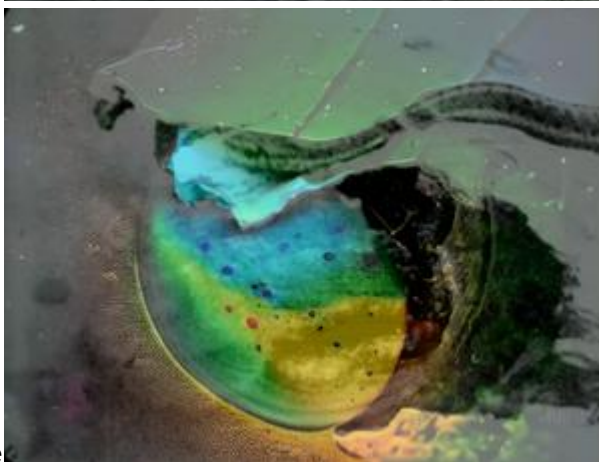
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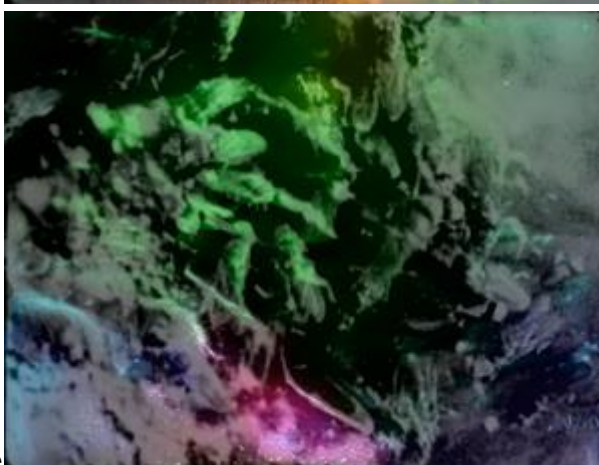
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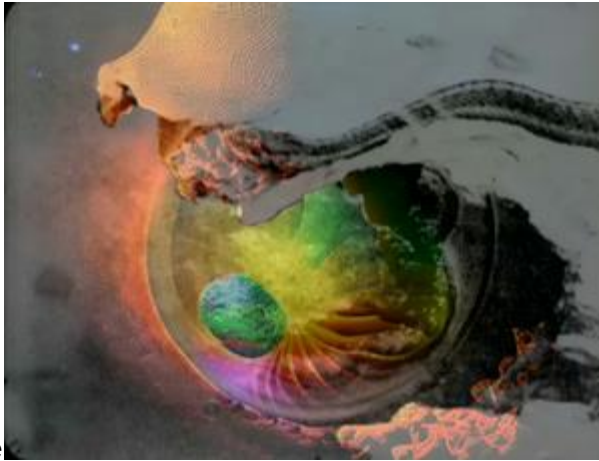
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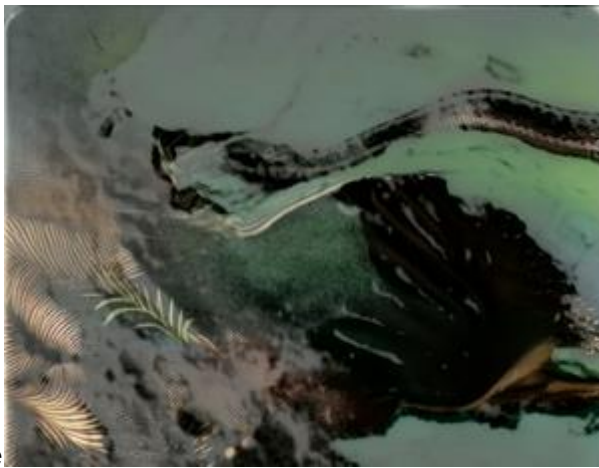
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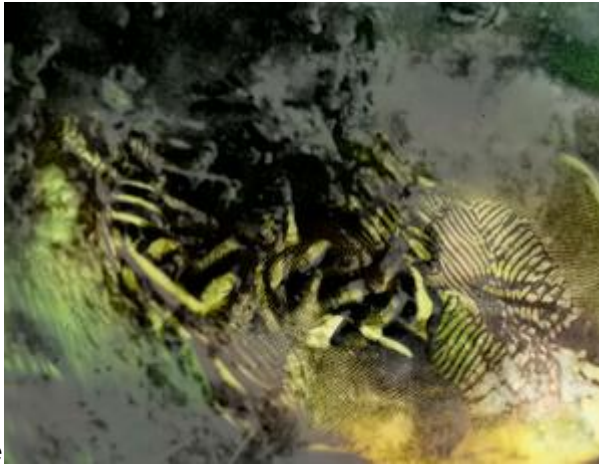
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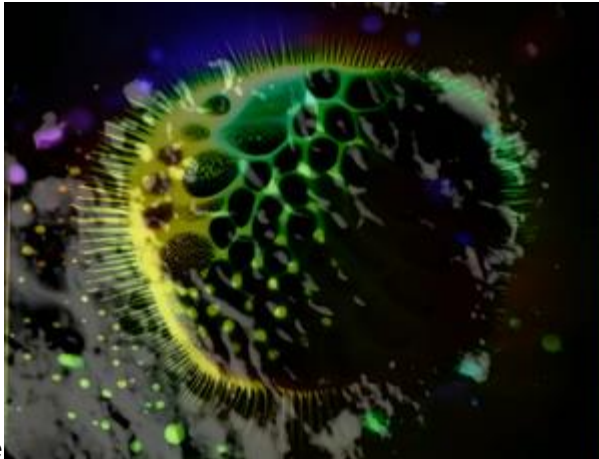
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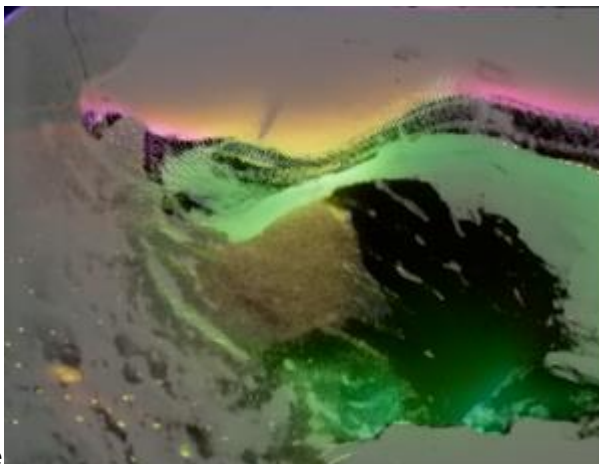
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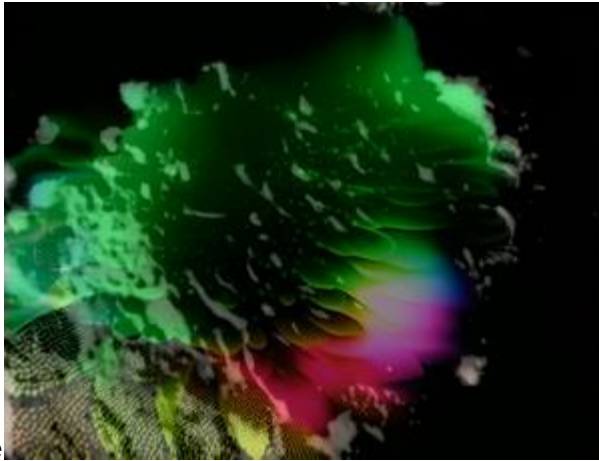
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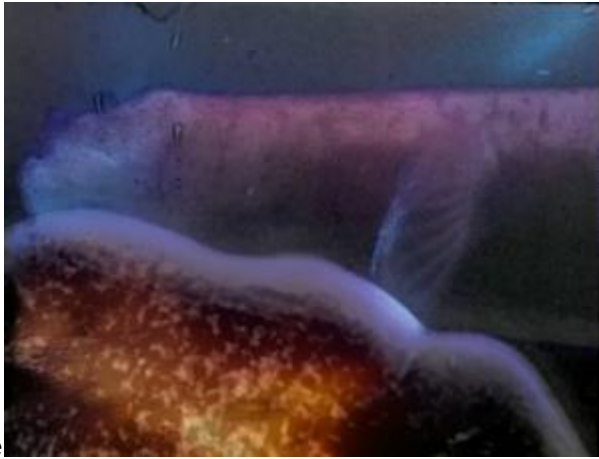
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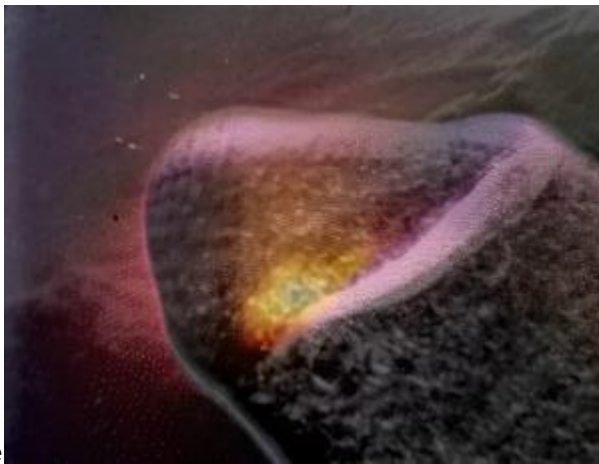
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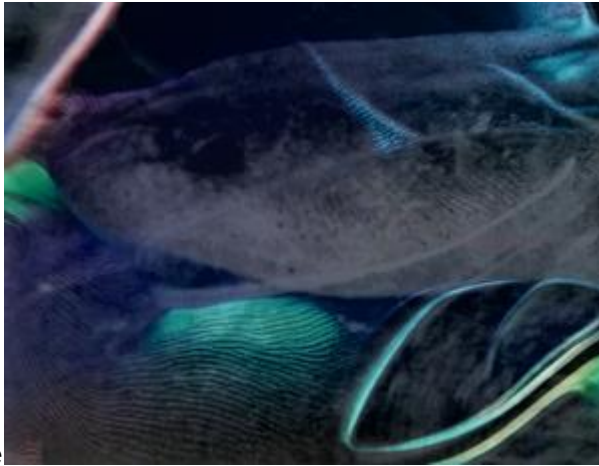
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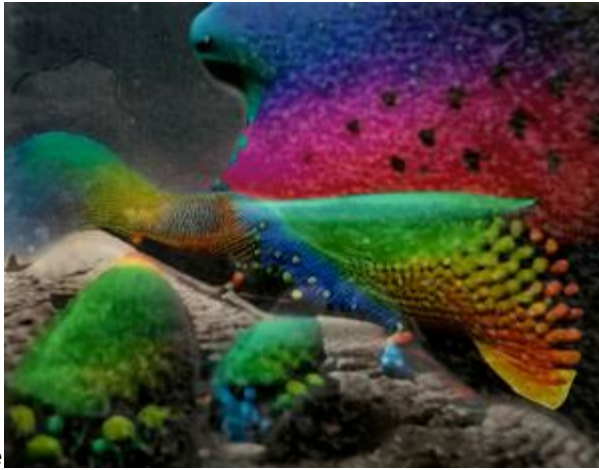
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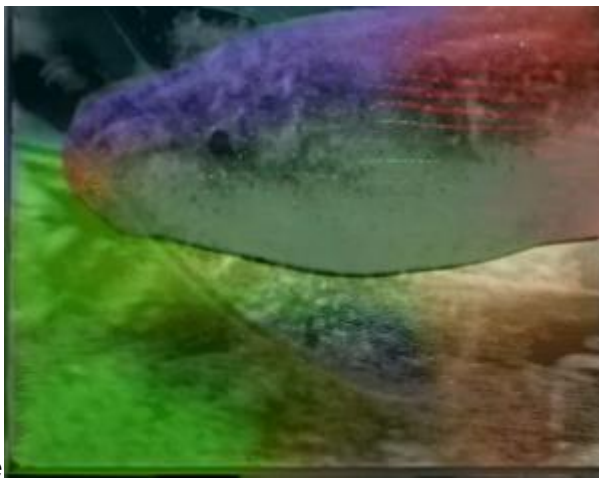
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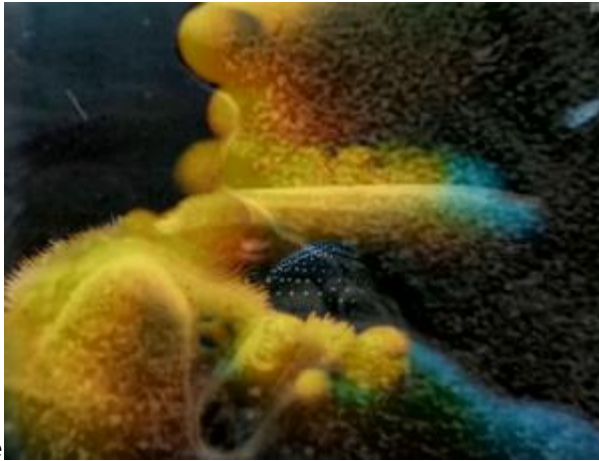
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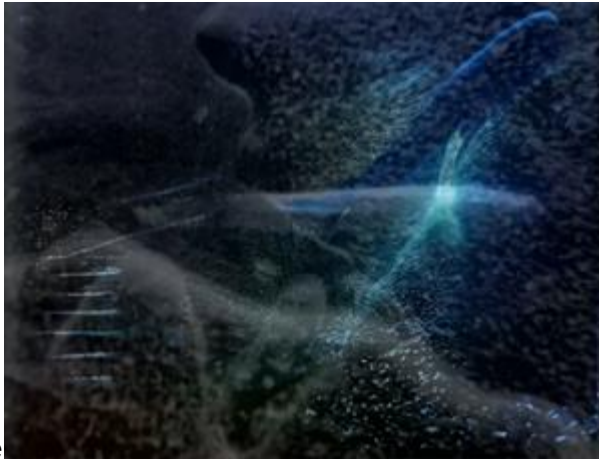
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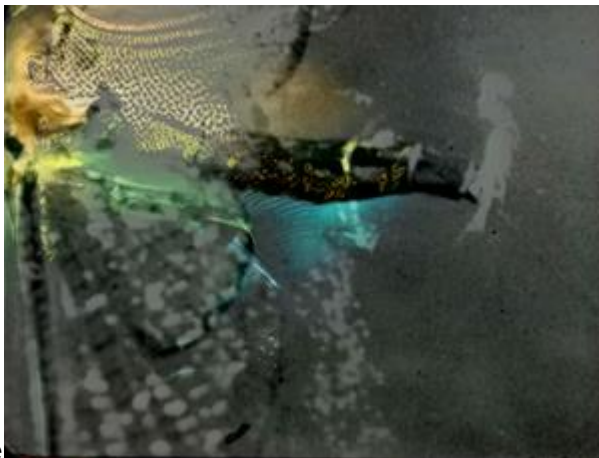
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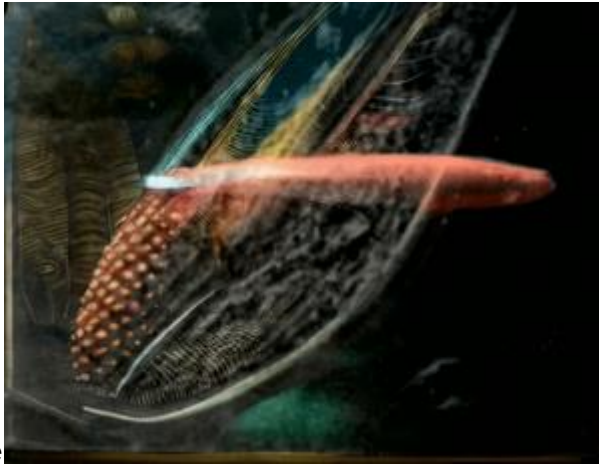
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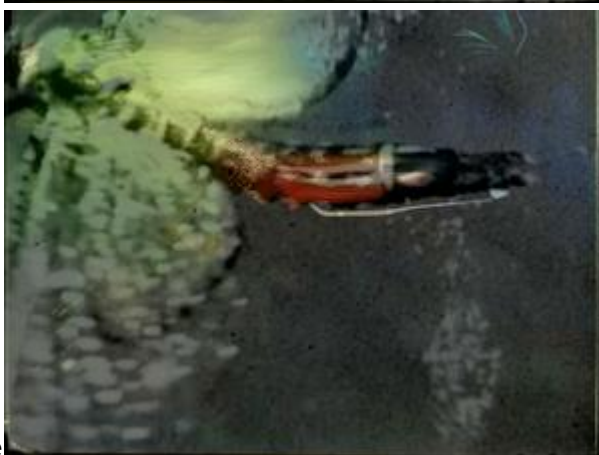
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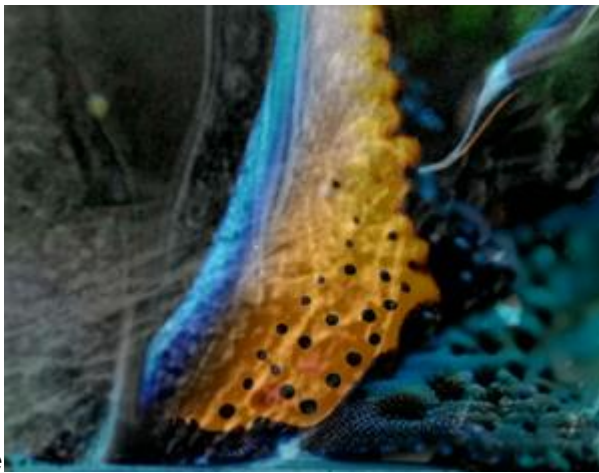
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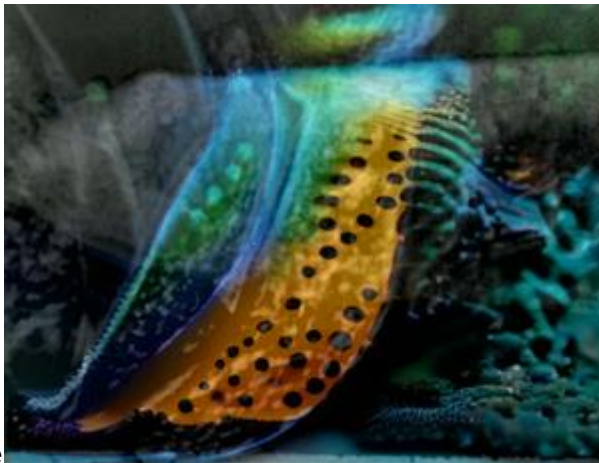
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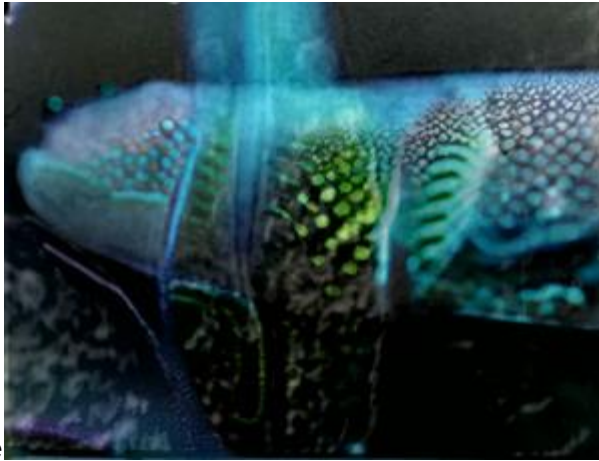
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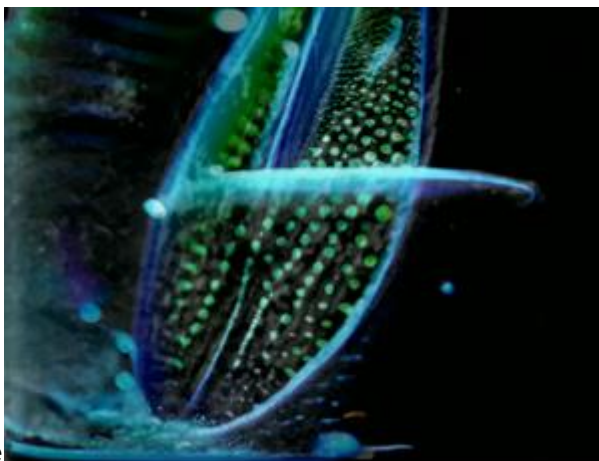
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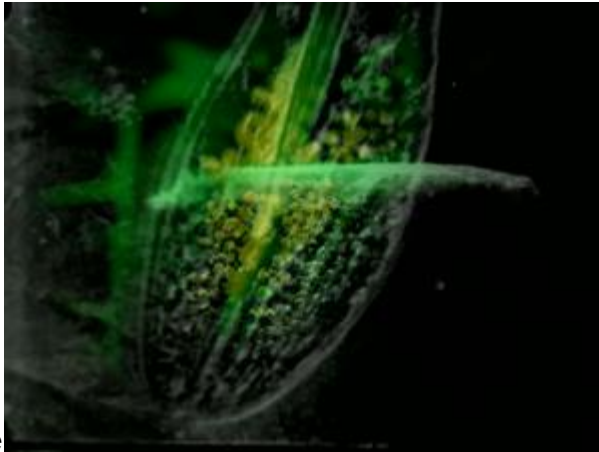
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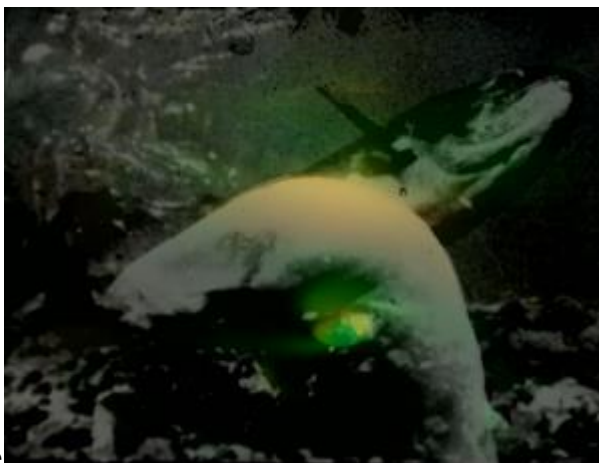
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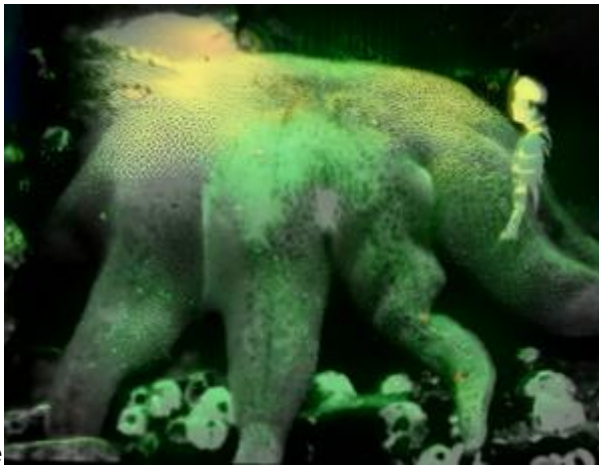
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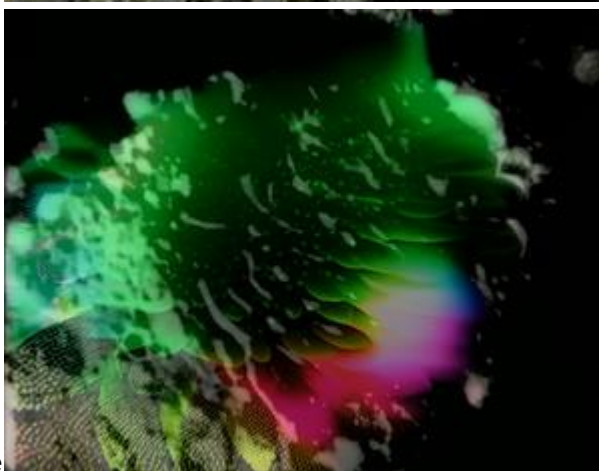
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