

**Felipe de Ávila Franco**

PORTFOLIO 2020

## ARTIST BIO

Felipe de Ávila Franco (b.1982) is a Brazilian artist and researcher based in Helsinki and holds an MFA Diploma from the University of the Arts Helsinki (2017).

Through meticulous observation of materials, his artistic process follows non-linear methods to examine objects, spaces, and events, assessing the tensions and meanings they embody once taken through the artistic process. Through the combination of traditional and experimental sculpture techniques, his work approaches materialities that can translate the industrial dystopia of our current times. In order to explore the boundaries between mediums, his process transfers this knowledge to operate through installations, electro-mechanic objects, photography, and video, besides other interventions.

The artist approaches sculpture as a practice that can materialize temporalities and dimensions and reflect on the encounter between the scales of the human, the nonhuman, and the planet. His work addresses art as a tool to awake new perspectives of knowledge, establishing interdisciplinary links between arts, social and natural sciences. Throwing a critical look over the environmental emergency, his work evokes art as a mechanism to activate a deeper discussion regarding human society's conflicting relationship with itself and over the idea of 'nature' as something external or separate from the human.

Currently, the artist lives in Helsinki and works between Finland and Brazil. His works integrate collections such as the MAB - Museum of Brazilian Art, in São Paulo, and the KIASMA Finnish National Gallery, in Helsinki.

More information can be found at **[www.felipedeavila.com](http://www.felipedeavila.com)**



**The last man on Earth**

Sculpture, 2019

Concrete and dirt from the city roads

32x38x45cm



**Provoked Archaeologies #2**

Installation, 2019

Excavated soil in the Amazonia rainforest,  
wood sticks and sisal rope

(Photo documentation 70x40cm)

## Provoked Archaeologies #2

The work consists of an excavation, replicating the meticulous act of an archaeological approach. What was found, is the clash among geological and human temporalities, confronted in the dichotomy of this invasive action of investigation. The process exposes that digging is needed in order to find, to know, to survive. At the same time, it reveals the dug soil in a search for the past, supplying history with evidence, but affecting the integrity of the land and manifesting an antithesis of the principles of preservation and destruction.

The contrast between the geometrically shaped proportions of the precisely made excavation confronts the misshapen pile of soil exposed in a careless and urgent way. In addition, the presence of a staircase improvised with branches and sisal rope emerging from the hole, suggests an absent presence, subverting the narrative of an excavation done from outside to inside or inside out, hiding what was searched, what was dug out or will be buried, and leaving it unclear whether who made it, arrived or escaped through it.

The rainforest is being deeply altered due to high amounts of contaminantation from agribusiness and mining activities, mostly illegal ones. The soil is an essential part of the rainforests biome and its contamination is not different than the containment of the waters or the atmosphere.

## Provoked Archaeologies #2

Installation, 2019

Excavated soil in the Amazonia rainforest,  
wood sticks and sisal rope

Object 30x30x30cm

Video documentation





**Provoked Archaeologies #2**

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Object 30x30x30cm

Video documentation

## **Favela Offshore, 2019**

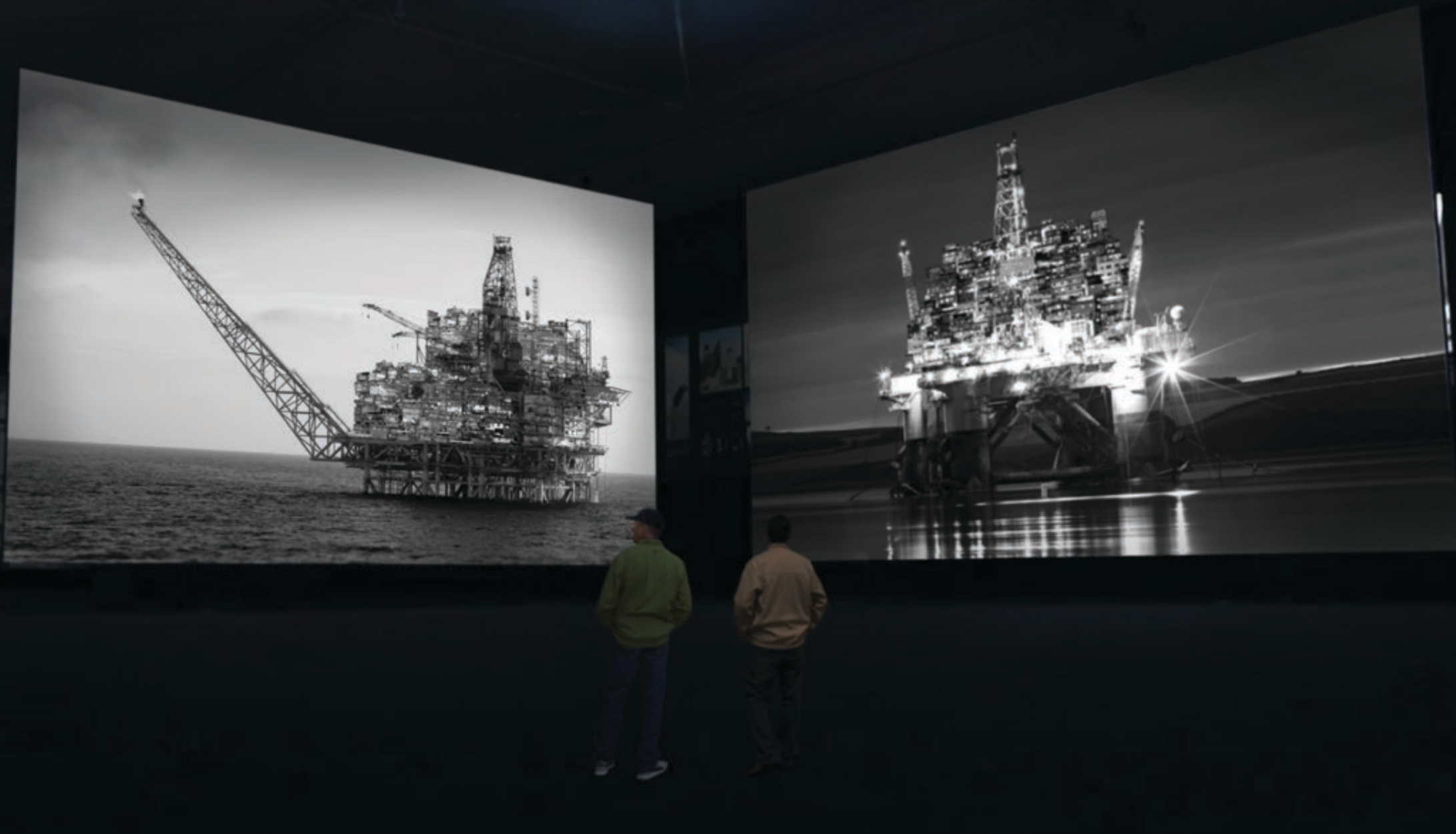
The video work recreates an originally steady landscape picture of an offshore oil platform with the superposition of a favela image. Through the video edition process, the elements in the landscape will gain motion.

The visual clash of the two architectural structures shed light on the contradictions carried by the industrial society's large scale production systems, which resonates in the physical and conceptual manifestations of the economic and human structure of the globalized market that create enormous social gaps. The result is an immersive high definition "picture-in-motion" video installation.

### **Favela Offshore**

Video-projection, 2019  
10 minutes duration (loop)  
Stereo





**Favela Offshore** (Documentation)  
Video-projection, 2019  
10 minutes duration (loop)  
Stereo

## Residue Resides, 2017

Residue Resides is a sculpture-material research started in 2017 through an approach made to the biggest environmental disaster in Brazilian history. In the occasion I could collect the material leaked from the to incorporate it to my work. A series of ceramic works were produced through the research, besides other interventions.

In November 2015 an iron ore tailings dam suffered a catastrophic failure, spilling 60 million cubic meters of ore tailings in the environment, destroying 700 Km of river waters before it reached the Atlantic Ocean 17 days later. These residue has been incorporated in my work since.

The ceramic works were entirely made from the residue collected from the disaster combined with clay. They present a rough surface and the characteristic reddish tones of the soil from regions where ore mining activities are carried out. The pieces have a unique and fragile aspect and are in constant oxidation process due to the high concentration of iron in the contaminated soil present in their composition.

### Strongholds

Sculpture / ceramic, 2017  
Contaminated soil from environmental  
disaster and terra-cotta  
30x50x70cm





**Depletions**

Sculpture / ceramic, 2017  
Contaminated soil from environmental  
disaster and terra-cotta  
10x25x45cm  
(MAB-SP collection)

## Dimantles, 2018

The work Dismantles consists of two kinetic portrait frames-like objects filled with fluid substances and with its movement controlled by automation.

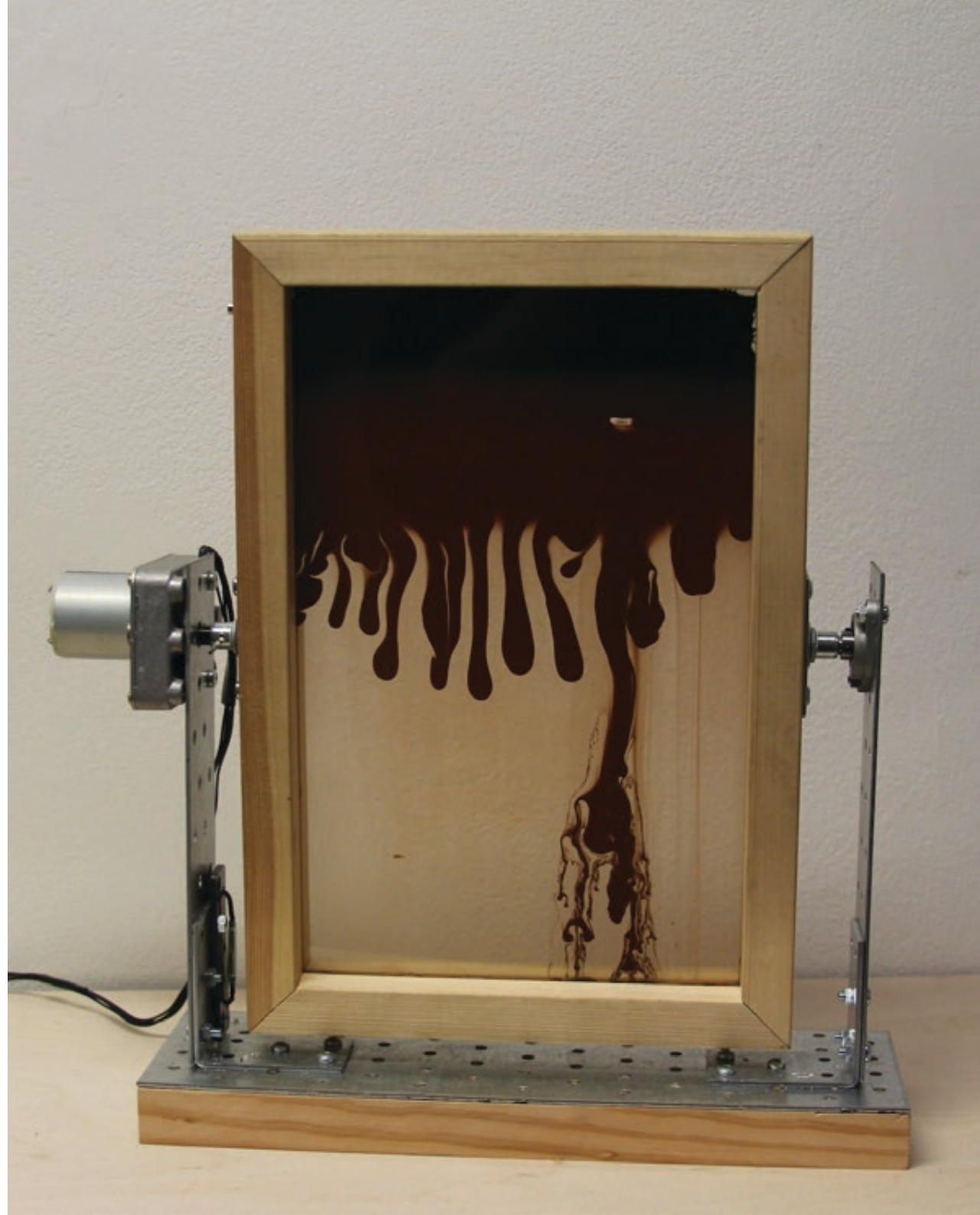
The work is part of the research Residue Resides and was made of two parallel clear glass sheets, the sealed frames are recipients contain very thin portions of soil contaminated from mining residue, collected from the largest environmental disaster of Brazilian history. It happened in November 2015 when an iron ore tailings dam suffered a catastrophic failure leaking 60 million cubic meters of iron waste mud into nature, destroying 700 Km of river waters. The work refers to the moment that the river waters were invaded by the mudflows, which produced a curtain between the surface and the bottom of the river, blocking the light and altering the river ecosystem permanently.

The piece is inspired by a piece of traditional handcraft usually sold as a souvenir at touristic regions of the Brazilian coast, also affected by the disaster.

### Dismantles

Kinetic object, 2017

Contaminated soil from  
environmental disaster, glass,  
glycerin, and wood frame  
20x30x5cm





**Dismantles**

Kinetic object, 2017  
Contaminated soil from  
environmental disaster, glass,  
glycerin, and wood frame  
20x30x5cm



## Tropical Delusion, 2018

Tropical Delusion is a digital photography series made during the research Residue Resides over the biggest environmental disaster ever registered in Brazilian history. In November 2015 an iron ore tailings dam suffered a catastrophic failure in a Brazilian countryside area, leaking 60 million cubic meters of iron waste mud into nature. The mudflows vanished Bento Rodrigues community leaving 600 people homeless, destroying 700 Km of rivers, and compromising the water supplies of thirty larger cities, before reaching the Atlantic Ocean 17 days later.

The work consists of seven digitally processed images of what is left of the houses after the disaster. The images present an intriguing color palette which provokes perception by confronting the senses of real and fictional. The aestheticization of destroyed houses alludes to the mediatization made by mass media over topics related to the environmental crisis and the industrial dystopia of our times.

The work grounds on the structure of the ruin to question the concept of 'nature as something separated and disconnected from human society'.

### Tropical Delusion

Digital photography series, 2017  
Metallic paper photoprint  
100x70cm





**Tropical Delusion**

Digital photography series, 2017

Metallic paper photoprint

100x70cm



## **Plagues, 2017**

The Earth is hidden under layers of concrete. This material has become so prevalent in construction that more than half of all the concrete ever used was produced in the past 20 years. Humans have produced enough concrete to thinly pave the entire surface of the Earth.

The work is made from original molds taken from real indigenous individuals back in 1971 when a group of anthropologists made an expedition to Brazilian Amazonia to investigate the physiological particularities of this genetically isolated society.

More than 50 years ago, the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss observed that the apparent technological simplicity of indigenous societies implies, in reality, worlds that are “a life worth living.” This simplicity, in reality, is an effect of modern myopia, whose idea of development leads us ever more into the abyss. “The supposed conquest of development,” said Levi-Strauss, “exists only because of the destruction of indigenous societies, the looting of their land and resources.”

The teeth are the primal basic tool for surviving, responsible for the first stage of ‘breaking’ natural substrate into the energy that sustains the body. More than a forensic tool to archaeology, there are spiritual levels in the signification of the teeth, related to the connection between interior and exterior, as the mechanism to crush the elements that nourish the body, and therefore, also nourishes the soul.

The work calls our attention for the process of squeezing, compression, constriction, and marginalization of indigenous societies, the only link with the ancient past when human society actually intertwined with the ‘natural’ environment. Currently, the usual relations between urban and indigenous societies are mostly based on oppression and destruction of their land and culture for the exploitation of resources, usually treating them as plagues that should be exterminated.

### **Plagues**

Sculpture, 2017  
Mixed media  
8x10x15cm



**Plagues**  
Sculpture, 2017  
Mixed media  
8x10x15cm (each)

## Ode to Anthropocene, 2016

This work produces a system with a continuous feedback loop of dense and reflexive dark fluid over a structure that resembles a large-size hourglass. The external, fine, static-looking layer, which is actually in constant motion around the structure, creates a solid-fluid object.

The oil layer streaming over the structure alludes to the depository stratigraphical layers that science had as the grounds to cast the concept of Anthropocene, which beyond the new geological paradigm invites us to reflect on what it means to 'be born in an already contaminated world'. The concept was cast in the same year in which Zygmunt Bauman cast the concept of liquid-modernity, metaphorically referring to the transition from a solid to a fluid-structure of the structures that are pillars of modern society.

According to the author, solids have clear spatial dimensions while fluids do not possess any specific form and cannot hold their shape. Solids cancel time while for liquids, by contrast, it is the flow of time that matters, not the space they happen to occupy, once they take this space 'only for a moment'.

Video documentation:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zPF9wDFsM4&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zPF9wDFsM4&feature=emb_logo)

### Ode to Anthropocene

Sculpture, 2016

Oil, steel and electro-mechanics

200x100cm diam



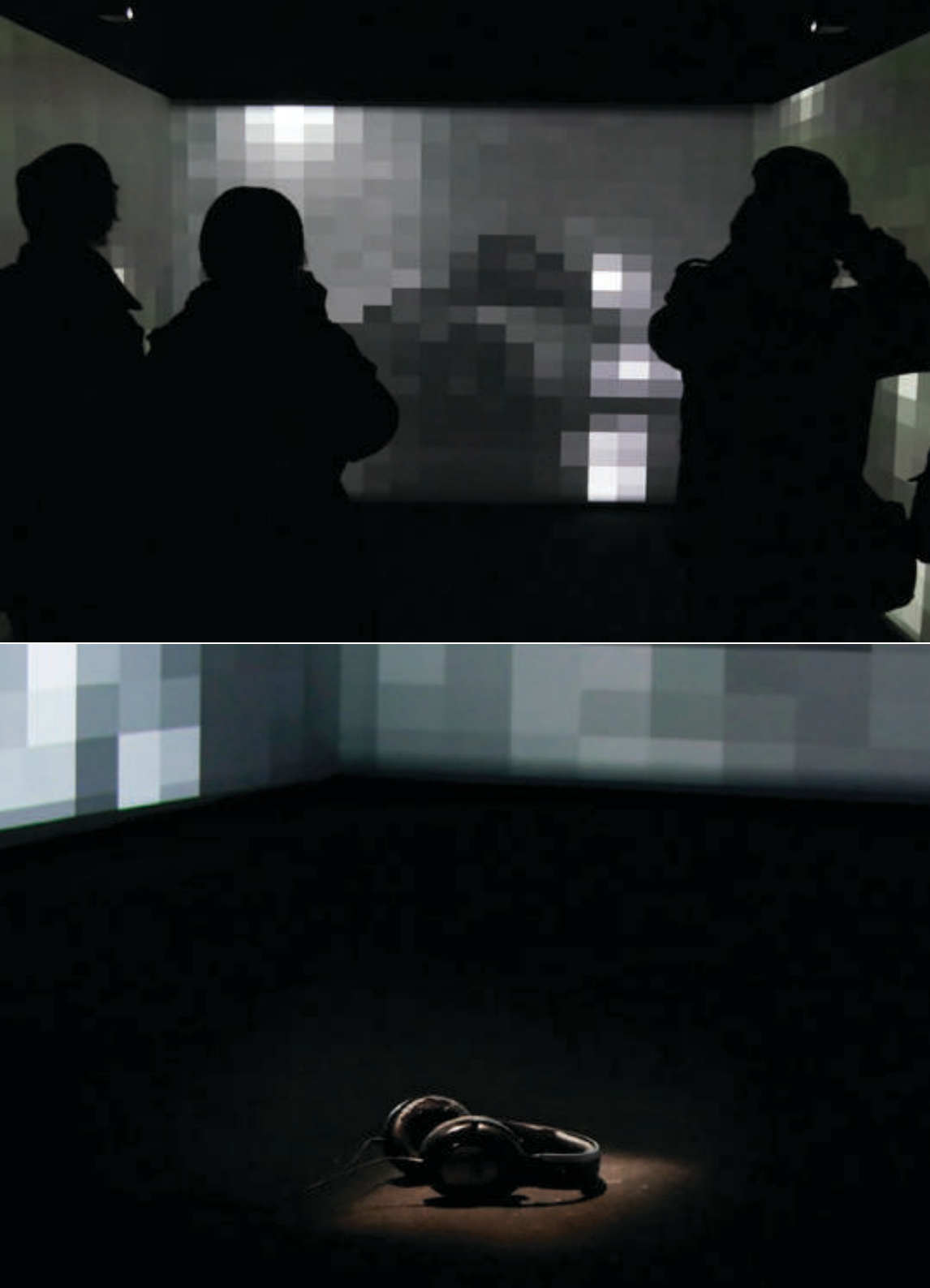


**Ode to Anthropocene**

Sculpture, 2016

Oil, steel and electro-mechanics

200cm x 100cm diameter



## Deconstruction, 2017

This immersive video-installation consists of a digitally processed image of a storm projected over three-walls of a room.

The image manipulation creates a pixelated image, making the storm visually unrecognizable but at the same time preserving the characteristic movement of the raindrops falling over a clear transparent window. The rectangular elements in the image descends constantly, creating a system in perpetual collapse, which alludes to the current stage of informational disruption of the digital age society's.

In the middle of the room under a subtle light spot, a pair of headphones lies on the floor. Once put on, the sound of the rain can be heard, which reveals the phenomena and brings back the sense of 'real' to the digitalized system.

Deconstruction by its very nature defies institutionalization in an authoritative definition. It is a name commonly associated with the philosopher Jacques Derrida's critical outlook over the relationship between language and the construction of meaning.

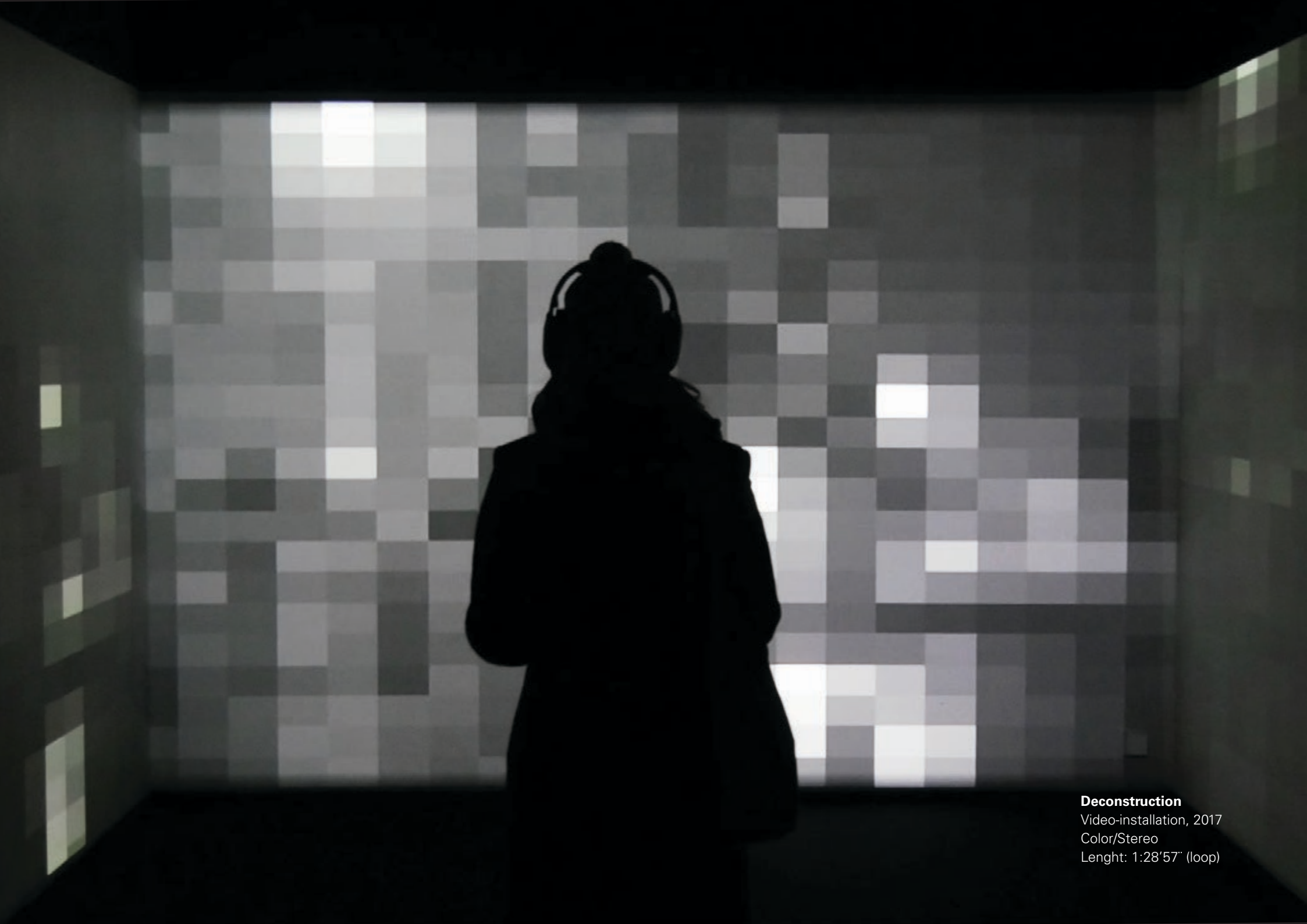
Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/209496487>

### Deconstruction

Video-installation, 2017

Color/Stereo

Lenght: 1:28'57" (loop)



**Deconstruction**  
Video-installation, 2017  
Color/Stereo  
Length: 1:28'57" (loop)

## Eclipse, 2017

An eclipse is an astronomical event that occurs when an astronomical object is temporarily obscured, either by passing into the shadow of another body or by having another body pass between it and the viewer. An eclipse occurs during a syzygy, which is a straight-line configuration of three celestial bodies in a gravitational system.

Solar eclipses have caused fear, inspired curiosity, and have been associated with myths, legends, and superstitions throughout history. Even today, an eclipse of the Sun is considered a bad omen in many cultures. This piece recreates the astronomic event through the contrast of light and oil. The two elements are very present in contemporary life, opposite forces dividing the horizon for the development of society. A constant confront between belief and knowledge which drives men out from light to darkness and back.

The work was part of the research *Archaeology of the Anthropocene*, exhibited in 2017 in a show with the same title and now integrates Kiasma collection in Helsinki-FI.

Video documentation: <https://vimeo.com/204401809>

### Eclipse (Detail)

Sculpture, 2017  
Wood, lamp bulb, oil  
and electro-mechanics  
63 x 22 x 63cm  
(Kiasma collection)



**Eclipse**

Sculpture, 2020  
Wood, lamp bulb, oil  
and electro-mechanics  
100 x 100 x 40cm





**Eclipse**

Sculpture, 2017/2020  
Wood, lamp bulb, oil  
and electro-mechanics  
100 x 100 x 40cm



## All Well, 2017

The well one of the earliest man-made structures dating from the Neolithic. This kind of construction seems to date from the times of adoption of a series of behaviors common to the people of a given region, including the widespread of farming, animal keeping and the use of metal tools. Thus, the well can be considered one of the technological innovations responsible for the development of human society as we know it today.

On the other hand, the intentions within the development of new tools, materials, technologies, or even laws or regulations do not correspond exactly with its real reflexes and further consequences. This work explores among other things, ambiguities existent with the improvement of any technology.

The idea behind a well, 'contaminated' with oil instead of containing pure water, creates a tension between structure and function. It studies the authentic use and exploitation of resources for human needs that can become sources of destruction, poisoning, and sorrow.

Beyond its historic, social, and constructive aspects, a well brings within itself both strong sculptural and conceptual meaning. Its building techniques used at the same time two very traditional sculpture related techniques: extraction (of the ground) and adding (of bricks and cement).

The work was the central piece of the research and exhibition *Archaeology of the Anthropocene*, presentend in 2017.

### All Well

Installation, 2017

Bricks, steel and petroleum

125 x 125 x 100cm



**All Well**  
Sculpture, 2017  
Bricks, steel and  
petroleum  
80 x 106 x 106 cm

## **Allegory of the Stumps, 2014**

Reality is often contrasted with what is imaginary, illusory, delusional, fictional, abstract. But what is virtual is still part of a reality that, as the result of a series of assignments given through data and information, when overlapped can create another sense and restructure its original meaning.

The work consists of separated projections made over the object's source of information for the projected images. Two sets of wooden stumps installed in the exhibition space were filmed from the same distance and angle that the video projectors are located. The image is then projected over the logs, turning them in the source and in the recipient of information, at the same time.

The one minute video is projected in a constant loop while the hue color palette constantly fades from a cold to a warm contrast, alternating warm to cold colors between the two sets of logs every minute. The dimmed ambient lights emphasize the idea of distance and emptiness between the elements in the space, taking away any other material references and giving to the work an impression of one tridimensional digital object, like a hologram.

When the work brings materiality and light overlapped, reality and virtuality became interdependent, interconnected, cause and consequence occupying the same moment and space. The wood stumps are chosen due to its inert state of being, once alive organic element, but by the time only inert matter unable to respond to real stimulation no more.

### **The allegory of the stumps**

Installation 2014

Video projection over wood stumps

Dimensions variable





**The allegory of the stumps**  
Installation 2014  
Video projection over wood stumps  
Dimensions variable

**PORTFOLIO**  
**2020**

Felipe de Ávila Franco - 1982  
Brazil/Finland