

**FELIPE DE ÁVILA FRANCO**

PORTFOLIO 2021

## **PRACTICE DESCRIPTION**

Felipe de Ávila Franco is a Brazilian artist based in Helsinki-FI, since 2013. The artist holds an MFA diploma (2017) from the Helsinki University of the Arts. His work is developed through the combination of traditional and experimental sculpture techniques, expanding this knowledge to operate through other mediums such as installations, electro-mechanic objects, photography, and video.

Through the lens of environmental aesthetics, his research investigates materialities that can translate the social-environmental dystopia of our current times. For such, he incorporates to his works materials such as industrial residues, fossil fuel derivatives, and contaminated soil collected from environmental disaster areas.

The artist argues the artistic process as a means to awake new perspectives of knowledge, and to establish interdisciplinary links between arts, social and natural sciences. By throwing a critical look over the environmental emergency, his work evokes art as a mechanism to activate a deeper discussion on the misguided idea of 'nature' and the human as separate entities.

Besides expanding the boundaries of materials for the artistic practice, incorporating contaminated residues can activate sculpture as a practice that can materialize temporalities and dimensions that reflect on the encounter between the scales of the human, the nonhuman, and the geophysics of the planet.

Among his most recent contributions, it is worth mentioning the selected work of the exhibition 'Coexistence: Human, Animal, and Nature in Kiasma's Collections', at Kiasma Museum, (Finland, 2019); selected research project at Labverde International Residency in Amazon Rainforest (Brazil, 2019); artist researcher at KAI International Residency (Tallinn, ES - 2019); selected work for the exhibition 'Da Humanidade: 100 artists from the collection' at Museum of Brazilian Art of São Paulo (Brazil, 2020); and selected work for the exhibition 'Fragile Times' at the Galeria im Körnerpark (Berlin, GE - 2020). Currently based in Helsinki-FI, his work is developed between Europe and South America and integrates collections such as the Museum of Brazilian Art (MAB-SP) and the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, in Helsinki, Finland.

More information can be found at the artists' website: [www.felipedeavila.com](http://www.felipedeavila.com)

## Features in display

*Prosaic' objects become signs of history, which have to be deciphered. So the poet becomes not only a naturalist or an archaeologist, excavating the fossils and unpacking their poetic potential, he also becomes a kind of symptomatologist, delving into the dark underside or the unconscious of a society to decipher the messages engraved in the very flesh of ordinary things. (The Aesthetic Revolution and its Outcomes - Jacques Ranciere)*

The works are composed of residual materials gathered and produced between 2016 and 2021 in different regions of South America and Northern Europe at areas reported as contaminated by large-scale industrial activity areas or affected by misguided disposal of constructive debris.



## Features in display

Series of objects, 2017-2021

Residues collected from contaminated areas, driftwood, ceramics, bones, asbestos, iron, concrete cast, plaster, and glass.

16x11x5cm



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## **The last man on Earth**

The work is inspired by the book *Last and First Men*, a scientific novel written in 1930 by the British writer Olaf Stapledon. The book describes the Earth two billion years ahead of us when a future race of humans is on the verge of extinction. Almost all that remains in the world are solitary and surreal concrete monuments, transmitting their message to the desert, witnessing the collision between notions of time, history, and oblivion.

### **The last man on Earth**

Sculpture/object, 2019

Concrete and dust collected from urban sites.

32x38x45cm





**The last man on Earth**

Sculpture/object, 2019

Concrete and dust collected from urban sites.

32x38x45cm



**Provoked Archaeologies #2**

Installation, 2019

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

Photo documentation 180x90cm

Object 50x50x50cm



## Provoked Archaeologies #2

The work is part of a series of searches carried out on the Amazon rainforest investigating, through principles existing in an archaeological excavation, the soil as artistic materiality. Excavating the soil in the search for the constitution of the past and its extra-material connection with the present suggests a series of confrontations between human and geological temporality, besides a clash of material and immaterial notions revolved by human and non-human agencies, which evoke a gentle, thorough and analytical gesture, but also crude, indifferent and dispersed.

The act of excavating, investigating in order to reveal, protect and preserve what unites present and past, supplying history with evidence, exposes the dichotomy of an invasive action which at the same time creates a rupture with the integrity of time and space, aggressively affecting that hidden reality and manifesting an antithesis of the principles of preservation and protection.

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 an improvised staircase made with branches and sisal rope emerging from the hole, suggests an absent presence, subverting the narrative of an excavation made from outside in or inside out, hiding the subject of the search, leaving unclear it was dug out or will be buried, and whether who made it, arrived or escaped through it.

## Provoked Archaeologies #2

Sculpture/Object, 2019

Excavated soil in the Amazonia rainforest

Object 50x50x50cm

Video documentation



## Favela Offshore, 2019

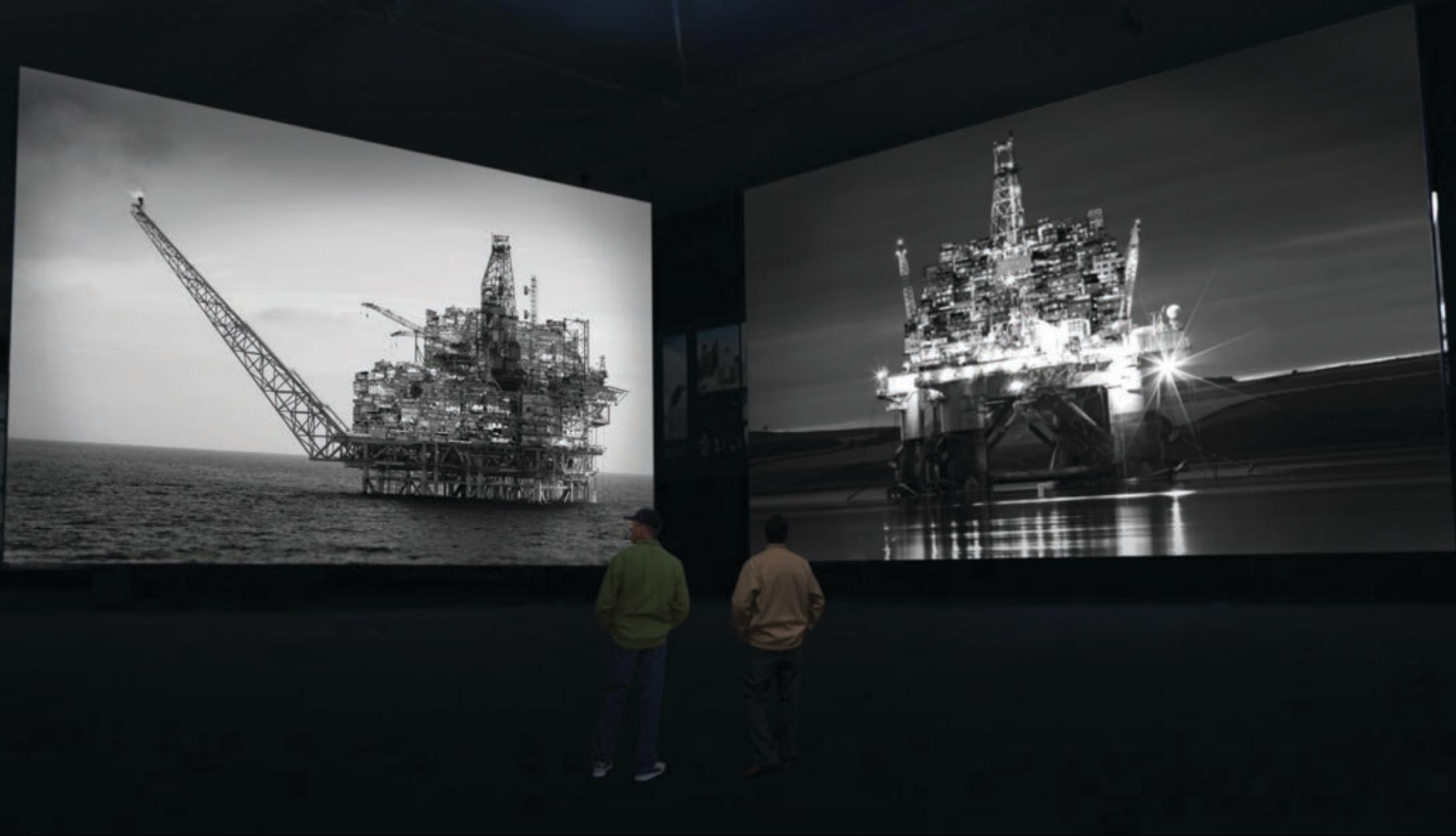
The video work recreates an originally steady landscape picture of an offshore oil platform with the superposition of a favela image. Through the video edition process, the elements in the landscape will gain motion.

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

## Stratigraphies, 2019

The work *Stratigraphies* reflects on the beginnings of the sculptural intention in primitive human thought based on functional needs and The action of stacking rocks has the most diverse purposes, such as the demarcation of territory, indication signs, ritual sites of tombs, and is still present to this day in different cultures.

The columns of the black and white stacked rocks over the transparent surface translate impressions of fragility by imposing an unadjusted organization in order to avoid the almost imminent collapse. The black pieces are made of carbon shaped sugar rocks sold as sweets during traditional festivities and the white ones are salt ricks, used as farm animal nutrition supplement.

### **Stratigraphies**

Sculptures, 2019  
Sugar carbons and  
animal feed salt rocks  
Varied measures





**Stratigraphies**

Sculptures, 2019  
Sugar carbons and  
animal feed salt rocks  
Varied measures  
*Exhibition view*



**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 Brazilain 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 Remains 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

Length: 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.

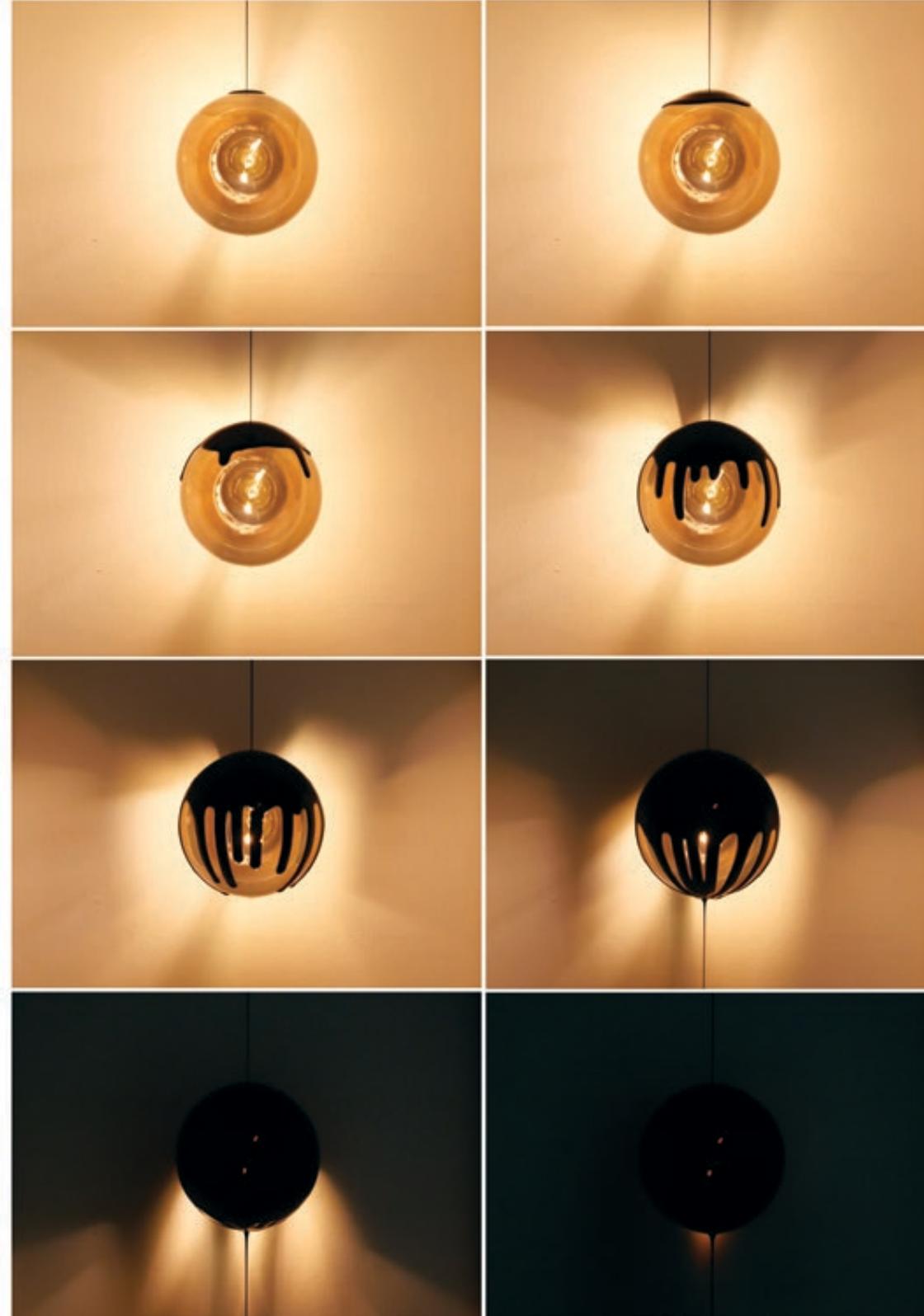
Solar eclipses have caused fear, inspired curiosity, and have been associated with myths, legends, and superstitions throughout history. Even today, an eclipse of the Sun is considered a bad omen in many cultures. This piece recreates the astronomic event through the contrast of light and oil. The two 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>

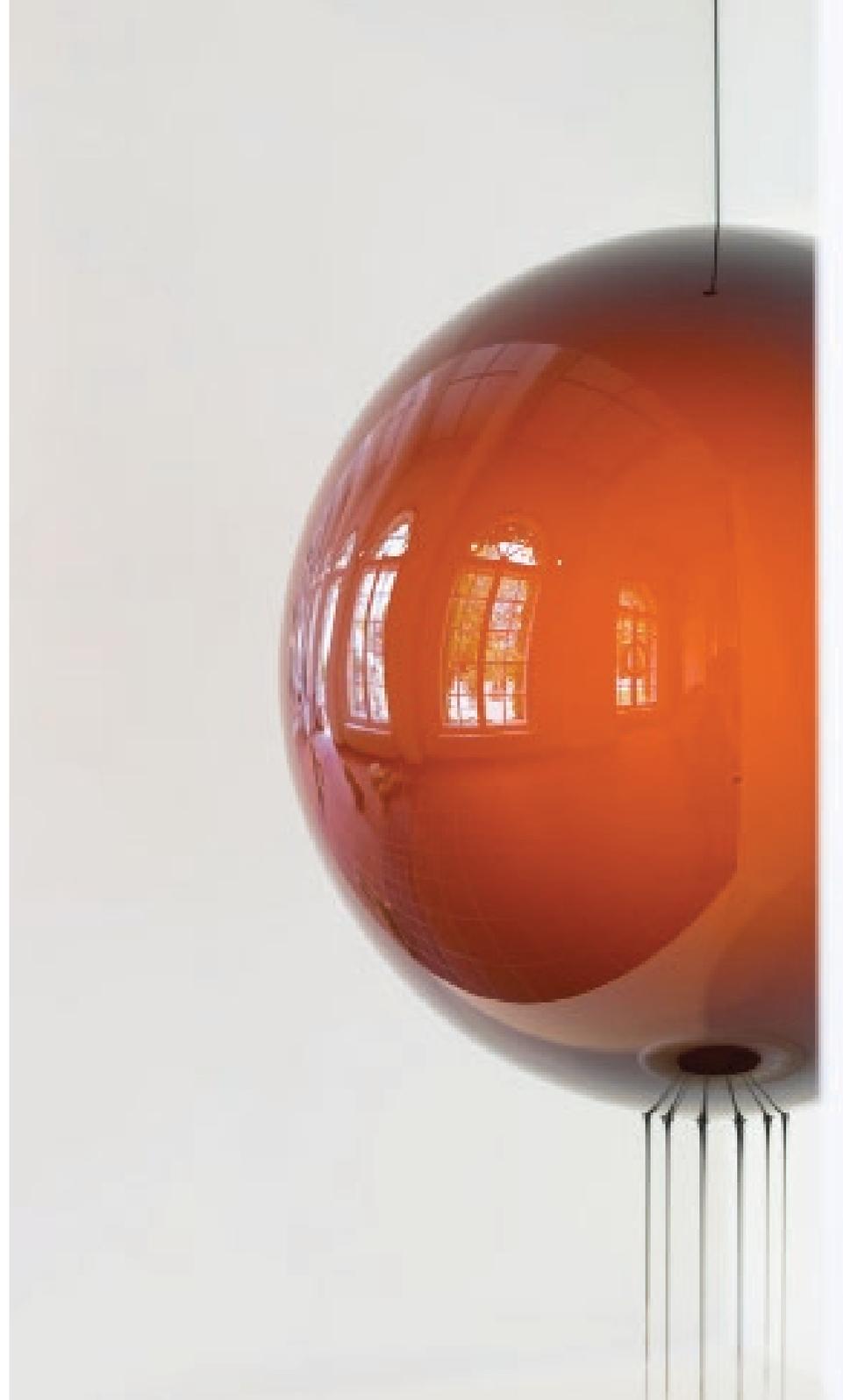
### Eclipse (Detail)

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.

The materiality of a structure where light and material overlap to shape an image, turns reality and virtuality into interdependent and interconnected elements, cause and consequence occupying the same instant and space. The wood stumps are chosen due to its inert state of being, once an 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

## Joen Laulu (River Song)

Resting on the rocks that have been dragged, washed, and slowly carved through the ages in the bed of the river, traces of the past announce to be still among us. Those are primal sculptures in a constant process of transformation, relocation, resignification. The work discusses the abyss between the geological and the human time scale perception while looking for hidden pieces of the distant past which transport the action of the ages around itself. When the rocks are lifted over the water surface the work interrupts their journey and reveals their current shape and position, allowing considerations about the rock as a time capsule, a body-container of ancient fragments shaped through time and immersed in an uncertain destiny.



### Joen Laulu (River Song)

Installation, 2014  
River stones and  
aluminum pipes  
Dimensions variable



**Joel Lauu (River Song)**  
Installation, 2014  
River stones and  
aluminum pipes  
Dimensions variable

## Lost Finds

This photography series was developed during one year travelling through different parts of Europe in 2012. It comprises moments and impressions that together express nuances of the different temporalities, hidden places and unperceivable instants present in the reality of the old continent everyday life.

### Injury

Digital Photography, 2012  
100x70cm





**Riders**

Digital Photography, 2012  
100x70cm



**Peace**

Digital Photography, 2012  
100x70cm

## Glimpses

During 6 months travelling through Brazil and Colombia this photographic series was developed by capturing ephemeral instants of the everyday life of small villages and large capital cities in both countries. From passants to night dancers, traditional celebrations and working spots, eardlerly and youngsters; the final series contrasts the most intimate and similar aspects of what turns each society unique and bright: its people.



**Glimpses**  
Digital Photography, 2009  
100x70cm



**Glimpses**  
Digital Photography, 2009  
100x70cm

**PORTFOLIO**  
**2020**

Felipe de Ávila Franco - 1982  
Brazil/Finland