

What Is Perverse Is Liquid (NS 0000), 2023

3-channel HD video installation (color, 5.1 audio); 35.54 mins.

Two projection screens, free-standing projection wall, plexiglass, sandbags, sand, rubber pool liner, and pennies

Courtesy of the artist, commissioned by the Wexner Center for the Arts at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

***Most of the film does not include dialogue; ambient sounds play throughout. Where dialogue does occur, we have transcribed it with brief scene descriptions.**

THROUGHOUT

[Two Swamp Sisters wade through a bog, making vocalizations to mimic the sounds of their environment. Over time, their sounds evolve into the repeated phrase, “unsoothable thirst is one type of haunting,” quoted from Natalie Diaz’s poem “The First Water is the Body.”]

13:44

[The Pregnant Backpacker sits by a rocky streambed and quotes an excerpt from Natalie Diaz’s poem “exhibits from The American Water Museum,” from her collection Postcolonial Love Poem (2020).]

Pregnant Backpacker: There are more than 60,000 miles of waterways in our bodies – veins, arteries – the red lines of our own lives. We are topographies of sustainable greed – *dragons be here now*, in our bellies, in the cracked bowl bottoms of lakebeds, bloodshot eyes frayed like red speaker wires scorched in the sun. We thirst. Our thirst is a caravan – pilgrims of scarcity. As we die of drought, we splay in the shifting sand like old maps to follow, ones that led us here to begin with, brought us to the masterpiece of thirst, as architects and social practice artists. The curators ask us to collapse as naturally as possible, in a heap – so those who come behind us might be immersed in this exhibit of thirst, as if it was their own.

29:44

[Muck Studies Dept. plays a piano on a platform inside of a partially flooded defunct limestone mine]

Muck Studies Dept. [singing]:

Ooooh, oooh

Are you gonna flood me, baby?

Or are you gonna touch me nice?

Your rushing rapids coming towards me, cold as ice

And soft as gas

Ooooh, oooh

Are you gonna fill me, baby?

*Or are you gonna leave me parched and dry?
Your rushing rivers, rising upwards, become the sky
You're soft as gas*

*You're coming for my ass
Falling down like rain
Touch my body
Til I dissolve
Wash me clean
And boil my blood in your hot acid steam*

*You're coming down like rain
Come in tears
Come in sheets of ice
Move me to the other side*

*Coming down like rain
You're falling down like rain
Falling down like rain
Touch my body
Ooooooh*

CREDITS

ACTING AGENTS

THE HAUNTING

The Owl: Buddha

The Skeleton: Will Rawls

OFFICE APOCALYPSE (bottled water)

Makemake (Insecurity Desk): Winter Collins

Eris (Smelter): Mia Cenholt-Haulun

Pluto (Conductivity Collector): Elias Delate

EXTRACTION DISTRACTION (piano tuning)

Muck Studies Department: Geo Wyex (performers own character)

PHOTOSYNTHESIS BATHE

Pregnant Backpacker: Savannah Knoop

ÉTANT DONNES

Pregnant Backpacker: Savannah Knoop

LIQUID ROMANCE CAVERN (ballad for water)

Muck Studies Department: Geo Wyex (performs own character)

SWAMP SISTERS

“Unsoothable thirst is another kind of haunting”

Cister: Will Rawls

Syster: Lee Relvas

SITUATION SITES

VOID

41°50'28.6"N, 74°05'52.5"W, Widow Jane Mine, Rosendale, NY

BODY

41°58'14.6"N, 74°00'01.6"W, IBM Campus, 101 Enterprise Drive,
Kingston, NY

WATER

41°53'31.5"N, 74°12'14.6"W, The Vly, Stone Ridge, NY
42°07'19.8"N, 74°04'00.4"W, Plattekill Creek, Saugerties, NY

PRODUCTION

A.K. Burns

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Celia Nicolson

ASSISTANTS

Oga Lee
Sarah Matthews
Bennett Wood

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

A.K. Burns

ADDITIONAL CAMERAS

Katherine Hubbard
Emir West

AUDIO ENGINEER

Shae Strehl

WARDROBE, PROPS, AND SET DESIGN

A.K. Burns

JACKET WORN BY GEO WYEX

Vava Dudu

VINTAGE IBM COMPUTERS

Alex Bialy

LOCATION: IBM CAMPUS

Ulster County Department of Economic Development

LOCATION: WIDOW JANE MINE

The Century House Historical Society

LIGHTING AND AUDIO EQUIPMENT

Atomburst Production Services, llc

PIANO RENTAL

Vincitore's Hudson Valley Piano Center

ANIMAL HANDLING

Brian Bailey, All Creatures Great and Small

EDITOR

A.K. Burns

SCORE

Geo Wyex

"BOIL MY BLOOD," WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY

Geo Wyex

AUDIO MIX AND MASTERING

Quentin Chiappetta

CHROMA KEY

Alexander Bliss

COLOR GRADING

Alex Bijan Zandi

SCRIPT

Excerpts from Natalie Diaz, “The First Water Is the Body”

Excerpts from Natalie Diaz, “exhibits from The American Water Museum”

REFERENCES

Marcel Duchamp, *Étant Donnés* (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas), 1946–1966)

Death (XIII), 13th Major Arcana from the tarot deck

SPECIAL THANKS

Fia Backström

Dean Daderko

Katherine Hubbard

Jamie Hubbard

Karen Kelly

Kelly Kivland

Sophie Mörner

Celia Nicolson

Michel Rein Gallery

Barbara Schroeder

Immanuel Williams

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COMMISSIONED BY

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