

ALICE BUCKNELL

20.3.—27.4.
2025

STARING AT THE SUN

Staring at the Sun is a “sci-fi documentary” that explores the dark side of solar geoengineering – the deliberate, large-scale modification of Earth’s climate systems by manipulating the influence of the sun. Set globally across diverse locations, from the Louisiana Bayou to the Arctic Circle, Wyoming to Gstaad, and from Australia’s Great Barrier Reef to the palm oil plantations of Indonesia, this work examines geoengineering proposals currently undergoing research and development in the United States and Europe. It also delves into advancements in climate modeling and digital twin technology. At EPFL Pavilions, *Staring at the Sun* is presented as a two-channel installation that expands the relationship between the speculative and the real, the scientific and the fictional.

As an artist and writer, Bucknell works with world building and emerging media, using video games as interfaces for understanding complex systems, relations, forms of knowledge, and the urgent ecological and systemic issues of our world. By combining field research and ethnographic approaches with a semi-fictional narrative, they construct worlds that feel familiar yet eerily beyond recognition.

For *Staring at the Sun*, Bucknell researched alternative solar futures developed by Global Majority researchers, scientists, and policymakers while collaborating with CLIMACT scientists to better understand how such data is visualized. The project explores alternative protocols for atmospheric governance, drawing on the work of prominent scientists, scholars, and theorists, including Lynn Margulis, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Karen Yusoff, Donna Haraway, and Anna Tsing, alongside organizations such as the Solar Geoengineering Non-Use Agreement and the Indigenous Environmental Network. Narrated by multiple protagonists including NASA remote-sensing scientists, geoengineering startup CEOs, dilettante documentarians, and a super-computer named Derecho – all based on real-world interviews conducted by the artist – the film also investigates how novel technologies continue to shape and redefine our relationship with the planet we call home.

ENTER THE HYPER-SCIENTIFIC

Initiated by the EPFL College of Humanities (CDH), amplified by EPFL Pavilions, and in partnership with the City of Lausanne, the EPFL – CDH Artist-in-Residence (AIR) Program *Enter the Hyper-Scientific* reflects the CDH mission of fostering transdisciplinary encounters and collaborations between artists and EPFL’s scientific community. The program invites professional Swiss and international artists for three-month residencies to realize innovative and visionary projects at the intersection of art, science, and advanced technologies.

Curator & Head of Program: Giulia Bini

Program Administrative Assistant: Christine Farget

Program Assistant – Communication and Production: Alison Carré

ENTER THE HYPER- SCIENTIFIC

FROM SOLAR TO NOCTURNAL

STARING AT THE SUN

Beyond the real-world implications of solar geoengineering, *Staring at the Sun* probes the emerging lore around Earth virtualization engines—digital doubles or twins of the Earth used in long-range climate forecasting. These models help simulate extreme weather events such as hurricanes and tornadoes while engaging with the more speculative aspects of solar geoengineering. Companies like the US multinational NVIDIA are leveraging digital-twin technology to create their own virtual Earth models. Bucknell is interested in how such simulations reflect an attempt to control the planet and environment as a system, primarily through future forecasting.

Ultimately, the film considers what is at stake in solar geoengineering protocols, and the many blind spots produced by trying to render the atmosphere mappable, modifiable, and wholly knowable. By embracing the parafictional and paradoxical nature of the sci-fi documentary format, *Staring at the Sun* examines the slippery border between the future fictive and the already real, as humanity stands on the precipice of a new era of climate engineering.

Staring at the Sun, 2024

Two-channel video (4K, 40 min), mixed-media installation.

Commissioned and coproduced by the EPFL CDH AIR Program 2024: *Enter the Hyper-Scientific*, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne EPFL and mudac, Musée cantonal du design et d'art appliquée contemporain, Lausanne with additional support from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.

Credits

Score and sound editing: Ken Yama
Character design: Wei Ding and Jason Leo
Voices: Vittoria de Franchis, Klara Kofen, Dan Johnson, Camran Hussain, Kai Simone, Thai Lu
Metal sculpture fabrication: HS Design Studio Ltd
Curator: Giulia Bini
Graphic design and Identity: Lamm & Kirch

Website: alicebucknell.com

Alice Bucknell is an artist and writer based in Los Angeles. Their recent work creates cinematic universes within game worlds, exploring the affective dimensions of video games as interfaces for understanding complex systems, relations, and forms of knowledge. Their work has appeared at Ars Electronica with transmediale, Arcade Seoul, the 18th Venice Architecture Biennale, Gray Area in San Francisco, Singapore Art Museum, and the Serpentine Galleries in London, among other spaces. Their writing has appeared in publications including ArtReview, e-flux architecture, frieze, Flash Art, the Harvard Design Magazine, and Mousse. In 2025, they are a Creative Capital awardee and Y11 member of NEW INC. Bucknell received an MA in contemporary art practice from the Royal College of Art and a BA in anthropology from the University of Chicago. They are currently faculty at SCI-Arc in Los Angeles where they teach courses on worlding, gaming, and philosophies of technology.

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■ College of Humanities



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mudac 10

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Solar Biennale 2