

gender<ed> thoughts

New Perspectives in
Gender Research

Working Paper Series
2026, Volume 1

MELT

(Ren Loren Britton and Iz Paehr)

Archiving the Unstable.



GÖTTINGER CENTRUM FÜR
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New Perspectives in Gender Research
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Archiving the Unstable

MELT 2022

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Archiving the Unstable is a video work and image series that experiments with the difficulties of digital volumetric scanning softwares to capture phase transitions between ice, water, and vapor. Water's transformations are formational in times of climate chaos as it freezes, melts, vaporizes, condensates, sublimates, and makes depositions within a temperature range of zero to one hundred degrees Celsius. Properties such as transparency and flow, however, "confuse" 3D scanning apps and photogrammetry software such as 3DF Zephyr and Scandy, resulting in glitch-like images and unfamiliar textures.

Photogrammetry is a digital capturing technique in which one takes a series of photographs of an object from multiple angles which a software then analyzes to compile a 3D model. Because the technology requires stable outlines in order to determine photographically captured positions within 3D space, objects that shift their outlines, such as melting ice blocks, trouble these seemingly simple translations between virtual-real spaces. Instead, the software scanned what was visible through the transparent ice cube such as the cloth that the ice blocks were sitting on. Our experiments left us with distorted 3D landscapes of white-ish irregular structures that only remotely resembled ice.

Working with and in the Vilém Flusser Archive at UDK Berlin during the Vilém Flusser residency 2021, we developed a series of exper-

iments in the space with which we researched the limits of capturability. The images presented here figure instability through the scanning, projection, and remixing of H₂O in various states of matter within the archive. Working with the archive as an unstable entity itself which has traveled and exists in various mirrorings, editions, and digital folds, we followed keywords and pathways into Flusser's published, unpublished, and correspondence work. Our experiments resulted in a video work and image series in which filmed footage from the archive meets 3D artifacts as well as poetical text snippets developed in conversation with the texts we were surrounded by in the archive.

Archiving the Unstable puts forward questions around the assumed stability and visibility of objects. What kinds of visual aesthetics can account for the disappearing, the transitional, the ongoing, that which expands categories, that which is not vocal or perceivable by human senses, that which cannot be recorded in a single human life? In present day conditions of hyper surveillance, what can we learn from the ways melting structures evade capture by staying in between categories, thereby enfolding queer potential?

To see stills from the video *Archiving the Unstable*, please visit

<https://meltionary.com/meltionary/u.html>



Fig. 1: Archiving the Unstable. Image description: On a crumpled dark green background an ice block floats in the middle of the image. Closed captions read: Melting processes fall out of - slide out of - fragment and glitch - traditional images.



Fig. 2: Archiving the Unstable. Image description: Cloudy smoke passes in front of layers of fabric. Closed captions read: transforms polygons into smoke bleeds.



Fig. 3: Archiving the Unstable. Image description: Uneven edges converge upon rectangular hard edges in the middle of the image, smoke shifts the edge of a bulbous projection.

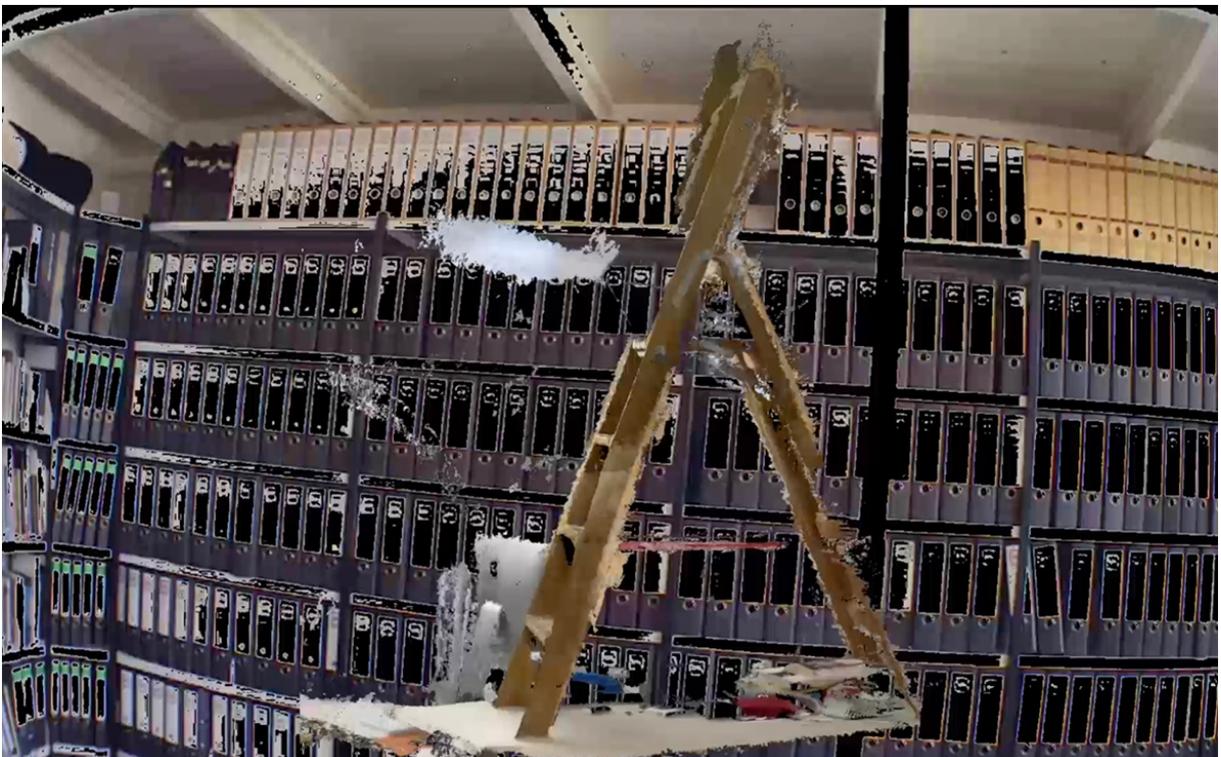


Fig. 4: Archiving the Unstable. Image description: A cut-out ladder hovers in front of a wall full of binders in the archive.

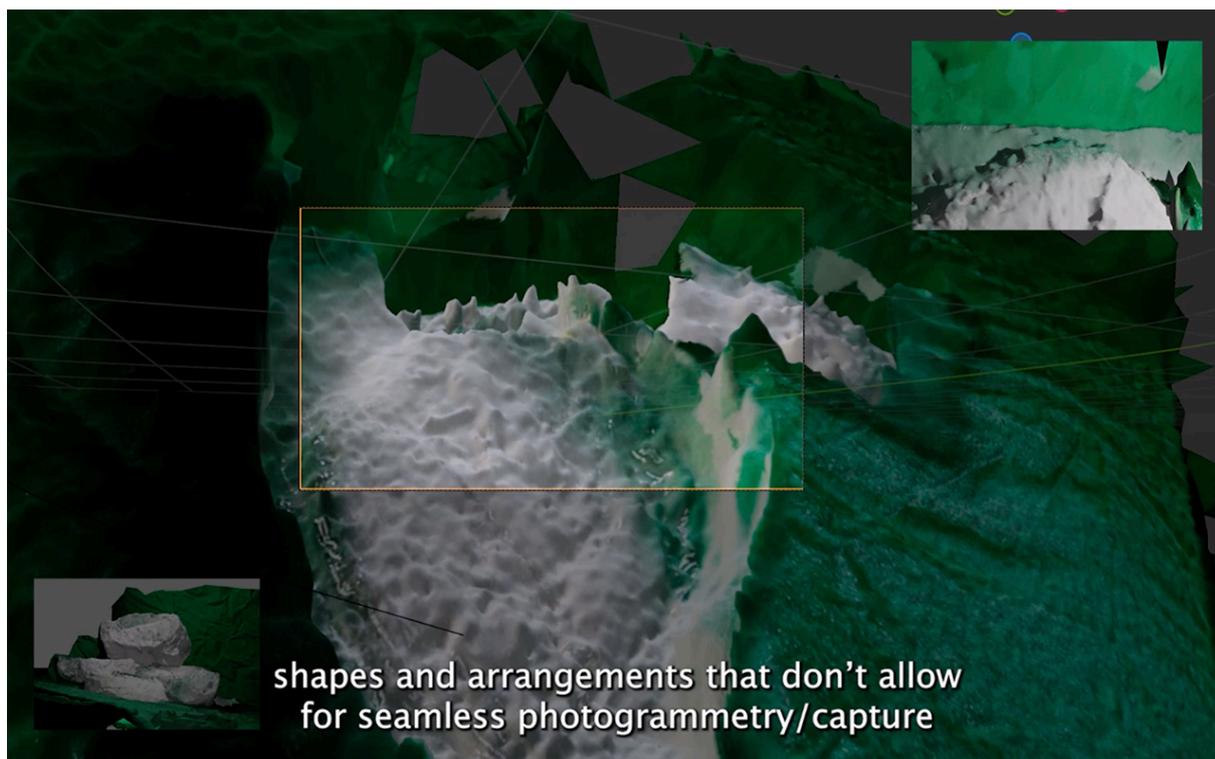


Fig. 5: Archiving the Unstable. Image description: A digitally processed image shows green rolling waves of a green screen with melting ice blocks sitting on it. In the middle a rectangle is drawn over one melting block, resembling a mountain range. Closed captions read: shapes and arrangements that don't allow for seamless photogrammetry/capture.



Fig. 6: Archiving the Unstable. Image description: A digitally composed image of white clay is smushed into forms that evade clear edges. Closed captions read: the bendy-ness of this more sculptural plastic material (clay).