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Prima Materia

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Procedural Animation; Shader; Data-driven Art;
Internet-based Art; Anthropocene; Electronics.



Prima Materia is a digital artwork that depicts an animated, generative texture that mimics marble-like patterns that change over time following the price fluctuations in real time of columbite and tantalite. These are the two main minerals that can be found in coltan, a material that is key in the production of electronic components that are used on a daily basis worldwide and whose extraction and trade is a source of global yet widely unknown conflicts.

1. ARTIST STATEMENT

My work reflects about technology and how it mediates in the relations we establish with each other and ultimately with ourselves through politics hidden under the technologic progress paradigm. Unmasking the imperfection marks of technology, its inner mechanisms, unveils a philosophy of contingency as a way to accept a post-foundational world, without certainties, where there's not a single solid reality but versions and visions of liquid and complex ones.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ARTWORK

The paradigm of scientific and technical progress leads us to an ideal in which our relation with technology is completely transparent, without any kind of friction, as if it wasn't even there in the first place. However, there are no neutral or transparent technologies, they all have their own and defining imperfection marks in which we appreciate their inherent politics.

Technology by itself has the power to define new social contracts that we assume blindly without being aware of the politic and social consequences it carries. This is a phenomenon that we can spot since the industrial revolution and that has been accelerating since then due to the ever growing complexity of new technologies whose inner mechanisms we can no longer fully understand.

The work shows a computer generated marble-like stone texture, an usually noble material in art. However, when watching closely we can see that the texture changes subtly. These changes are determined by the quotation of the components of coltan, columbite and tantalite, key in the manufacture of electronic components and whose extraction and trade is a source of global conflicts.

Fig. 1. Installation scheme.

