



When the Bird Leaves
shanghai



WHEN THE BIRD LEAVES SHANGHAI IS A DIGITAL VIDEO ARTWORK ABOUT BODIES, MEDIA, AND POLITICS. TAKING GLITCH AS ITS CORE METAPHOR, IT ASKS HOW BODIES ARE PRODUCED UNDER THE DISCIPLINE OF POWER AND MEDIA IN NETWORKED LIFE TODAY—AND HOW, THROUGH STRATEGIES OF GLITCH AND SILENCE, THEY MIGHT SLIP THE CODES THAT BIND THEM.

Beginning with theory

1 Digital political information = body encoder
Legacy Russell: "The body is socially coded"

If mainstream political discourse is a systematic coding of gender, ethnicity, and identity, then "glitch" is the abnormal output that it cannot handle and cannot control.

In populist communication (such as extreme right-wing political discourse), the body is often simplified into "national body", "people's body", and "enemy's body".

imagine a body that is misdecoded or multi-decoded - it is constantly distorted, deformed, and refuses to obey the unified interpretation of political myths.

2 Oracle, a political riddle
Russell argues that "distortion" can be a way to resist normative narratives.

In the eyes of many supporters, Trump is a "truth teller". He is not a traditional politician, but a person who "says what people want to say but dare not say". This is actually the reappearance of the "oracle mechanism"

The function of an oracle is not to explain the world, but to create truth. 理性的
Oracles are not rational narratives, but are interpreted and spread fanatically. 狂热的
The power of an oracle comes from "belief in chaos".

Trump's speech is ambiguous, contradictory, 矛盾的
grammatically disordered, emotional, and often logically incoherent, but this is exactly how he operates in an "oracular" manner, just like the answer of the Delphic Oracle in ancient Greece: ambiguous, polysemous, and open to interpretation.

He became a political version of a glitch machine: Outputting noise, which was interpreted as a "signal". Saying the wrong thing, which was understood as "truth". Spreading rumors, which was considered a "prophecy". 预言

3 Populist body illusions: the violence of visibility

Populist politics often uses "embodied narratives":

- "They" are polluted bodies (immigrants, viruses, queers)
- "We" are pure bodies (country, tradition, family)
- "Leaders" are embodied gods (Trump, Putin, some kind of national leader)

First of all, I will propose the concept of "digital subject", which not only means that a person has become a digital citizen or an Internet platform user, but also means that his or her will is enough to become a force that controls the digital world to a certain extent. In short, his or her choices and trends, and even creation and expression, will be the economic, political, and cultural elements that build the digital world.

In this work, I want to reflect the interactive relationship between personal will and a huge system through the performance of "glitches" of digital subjects. To be more precise, when individuals use their own bodies as the blueprint for experiments, we can figure out which kind of glitch can make us more free and which kind of glitch can make power more hidden when glitch is used as the "method of behavior" in the digital world.

How to distinguish the digital body from the "digital subject" mentioned above? In short, the body is a variety of labels, a specific position in the spectrum of people classified in big data classification. It is related to the way the platform interacts with you, and how you perform specifically in the digital world. The digital body is more like a "soul", or some kind of abstract collective will. Like a seed, it will have a more profound impact on the future of the digital world. The digital body seems to be related to the market and its practical role in determining the current political environment, while the digital body is a more undercurrent game. In a hierarchical digital world, bodies are also divided. For example, "sacred bodies" represent leaders, "pure bodies" represent the country and family, and "malfunctioning bodies" represent bodies that are not in the mainstream, such as queer people and people of color.

The digital body is generated by being encoded by the digital subject.

In the context of the Simplified Chinese Internet, the body often has some kind of political symbol. For example, if a Chinese man posts pornographic videos of himself and white women online, his body will be defied, thereby expanding the power of his digital subject. In a piece of news on July 13, 2025, a Chinese female college student was expelled from the school for having sex with a foreign e-sports player (married). The school is a sacred body, and once a student has a "malfunction", he will be immediately removed from the purity team on the grounds that it "disgraces the character of the country." The body of the country is often defined in a broader sense, and anyone can destroy such purity. Therefore, "glitches" is not even an active choice in many cases, but a crime. At the same time, when power agencies want to eliminate "faults", they often need to use another kind of fault, that is, "dismissal behavior" that violates the Chinese Constitution.

In the seemingly more liberal and democratic Western world, this division of digital bodies still applies. For example, in many of Kanye's remarks, he will use a kind of "oracle" and use glitches as a tool to attract imagination, such as the dualism reflected when talking about Nazis and Jews, the time loop when talking about old Kanye, and the structure of countless uniqueness of God, repeated mantras, etc. Including some illogical remarks is also a means to strengthen myths, while Trump has a more ambitious oracle logic. They make people believe that they are the only ones willing to tell the truth. Their failures are to obscure their true intentions, and they have the power to label others as failures, thus turning power into a responsibility and mission, thereby profiting from the subtle and overflowing use of power.

How to respond to and differentiate between these two types of failures? In Donna Haraway's theory of hybridization, interweaving, and "becoming multiple beings," anthropocentrism and gender essentialism are challenged, and "pure individuals" are eliminated. We are all a diverse mixture of technology, animals, society, and gender, which has a very similar meaning to "digital subjects." In Haraway's "Staying with the Trouble" she mentioned that humans must learn to think with non-characters. Humanity in the digital world is not a primitive identity, but a relational being. Then the fault itself can allow us to see the loopholes and problems in the relationship, and a deeper fault, an irrational fault, is one that can be distinguished from the exploitable fault in terms of results and motivations. This will serve as the theoretical basis for the creation of the characters I present in this work.

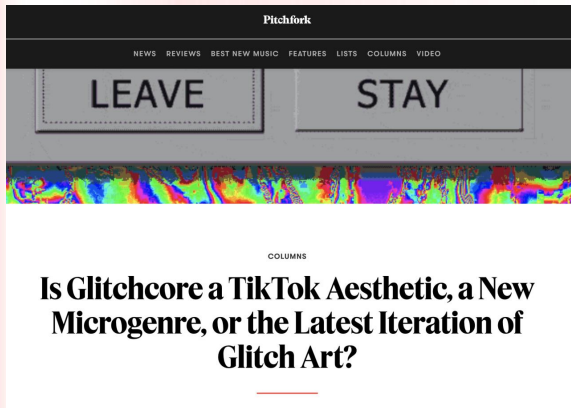
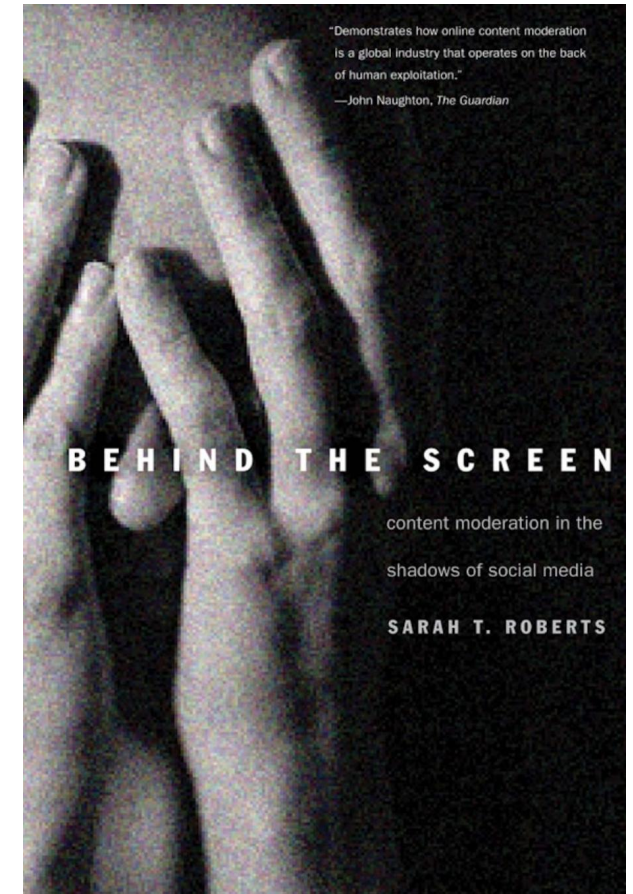
"glitch" is not justice, but a possibility, a trial and error.

why?

The world is so turbulent, but people still often fail to face up to the tension between politics and life, while information and ideology are also constantly transforming and affecting our daily lives, mental states and physical structures. Therefore, I want to depict a story about life and information through the research on the subject of biocomputers.

At the outset of this project, I engaged with existing theories—reflecting on and extending them—so that my concerns could be woven into the project's development and a solid theoretical ground for deeper inquiry could be built. In doing so, I address the questions that have long preoccupied me, especially those surrounding information, the biological, and their entanglements.

reading



Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy
Terranova, Tiziana, 1967-

Social Text, 63 (Volume 18, Number 2), Summer 2000, pp. 33-58 (Article)

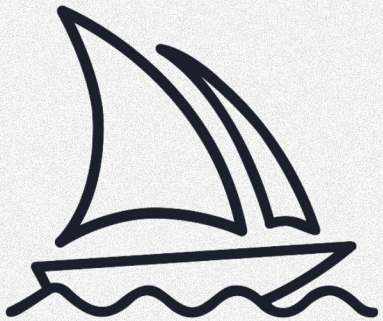
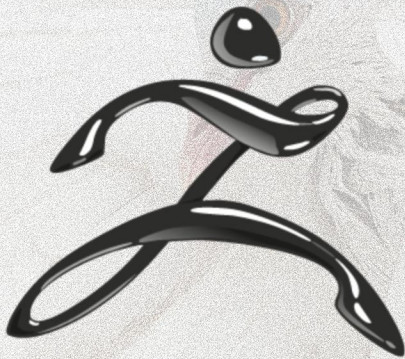
Published by Duke University Press



中央网络安全和信息化委员会办公室

Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission

Tools



Midjourney



Phase 1:

Research & Define
& Tests

- Reading theory
- writing theory
- looking for references
- confirming project atmosphere and visual effects

**5 June 2025—3
July 2025**

Phase 2:

Design &
Development

- Character design
- scene confirmation
- style confirmation
- atmosphere confirmation
- Collecting style

**1 July 2025—10
August 2025**

Phase 3:

Prototype
development &
Testing

- Bone binding
- Scene design
- Character action design
- Record
- Test and modify

**10 August 2025—
—30 August 2025**

Phase 4:

clip & Summarize &
ending

- Editing in software
- sound design
- Graphic art design
- final inspection
- Communication and feedback

**30 August 2025—
—15 September
2025**

PLANNING SUBMISSION DATE: 17 -SEPTEMBER

Character design

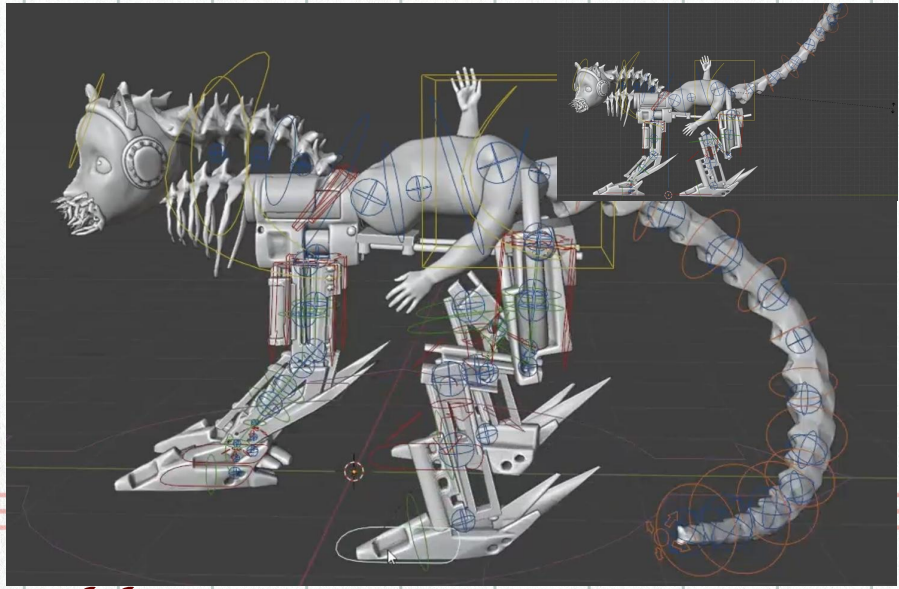
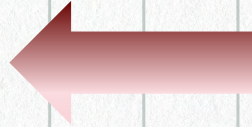
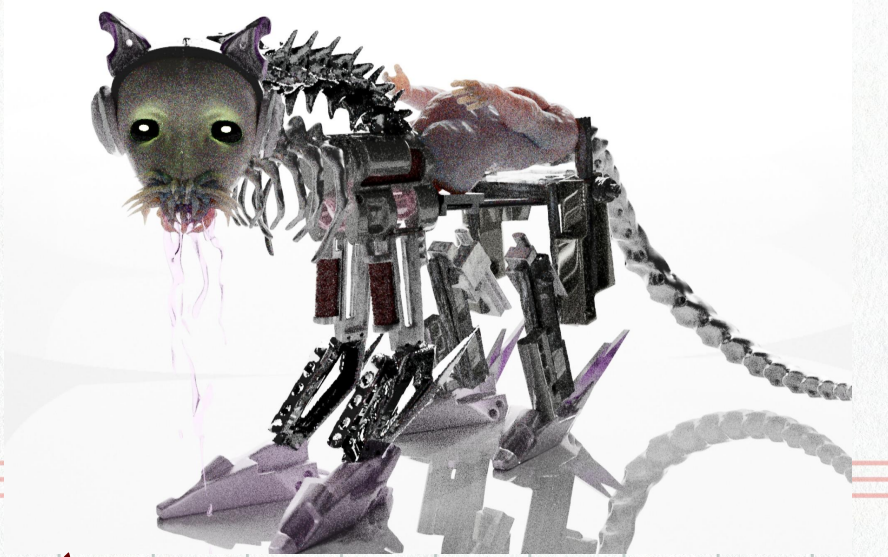


femalepentimento



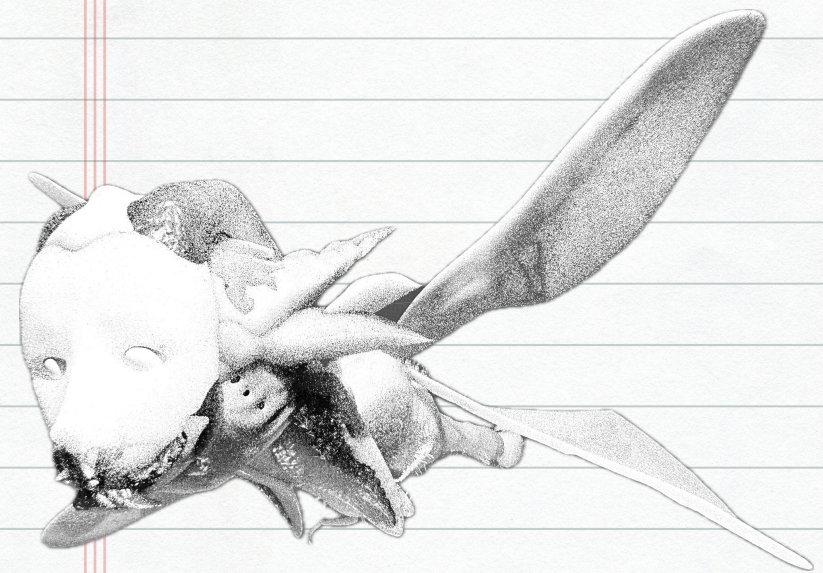
In this project, character design functions as a core component of the narrative. Rather than relying on extensive direct references, I focused on cultivating a deliberately ambiguous mood. For the “Mouthless” figures, I rendered the mouth area as sharp and glitch-like. All hard-surface elements were created in ZBrush, while the remaining components were produced in Nomad.

character: Four-legged cat (can stand)



add an armature

Texture

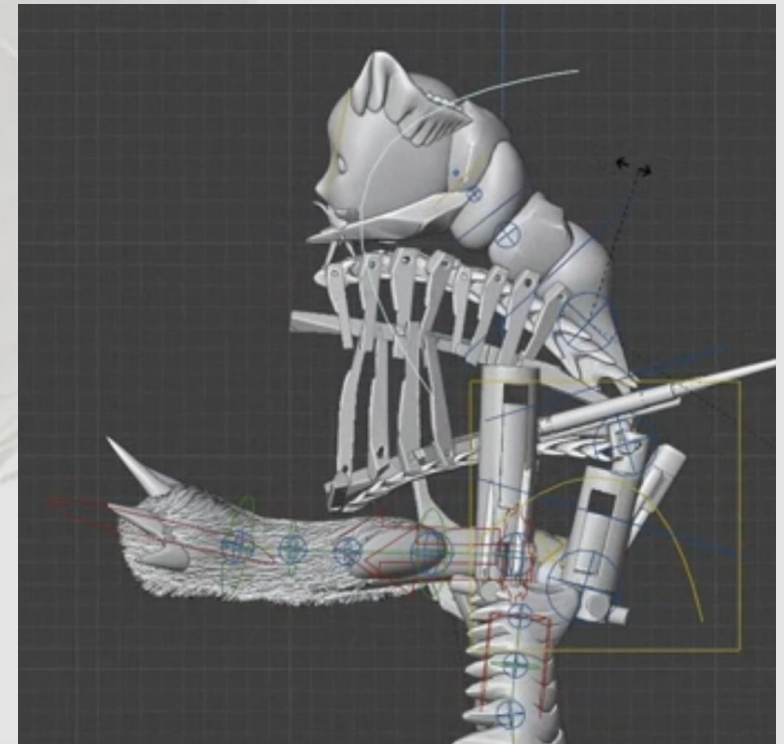
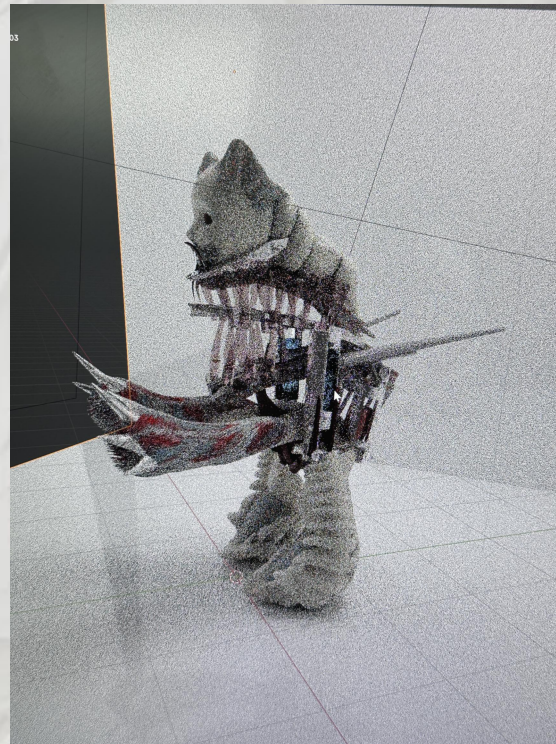


As the first completed character, **“Dragonfly”** sets the design baseline for the entire cast. I drew on the visual language of Alien to heighten its futuristic feel. After the initial modeling, I get a skin-texture material file for Blender from an asset library; with some light color tweaks and integration, the character design was finalized.



Bipedal Cat

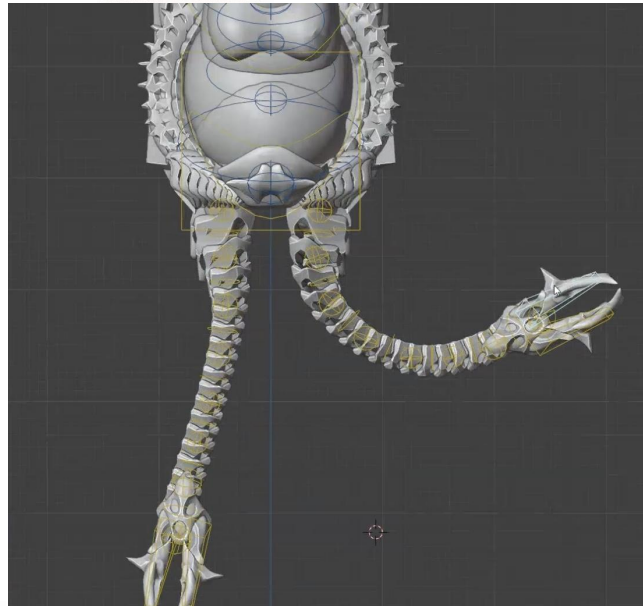
A deployable, open-close mechanical assembly is embedded in the torso to convey offensive capability. The contrast between visceral, flesh-like textures and hard metallic surfaces forms the character's defining visual highlight.

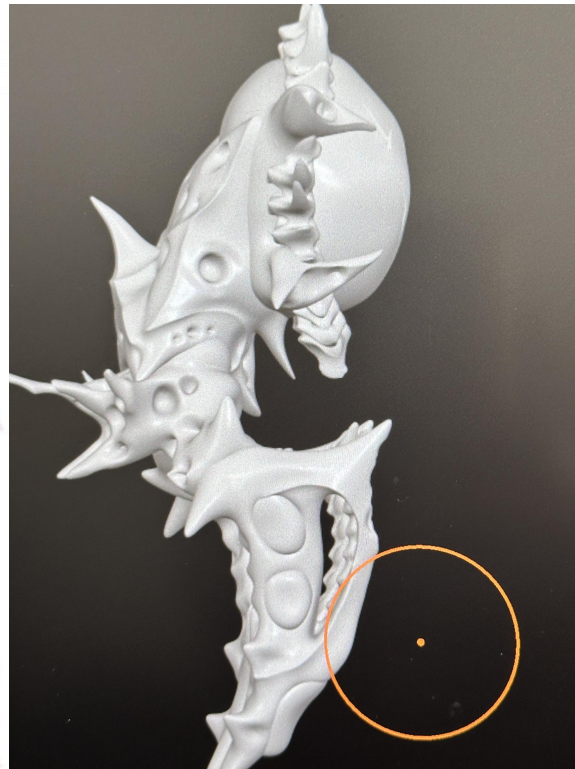




**leader of
mouthless**

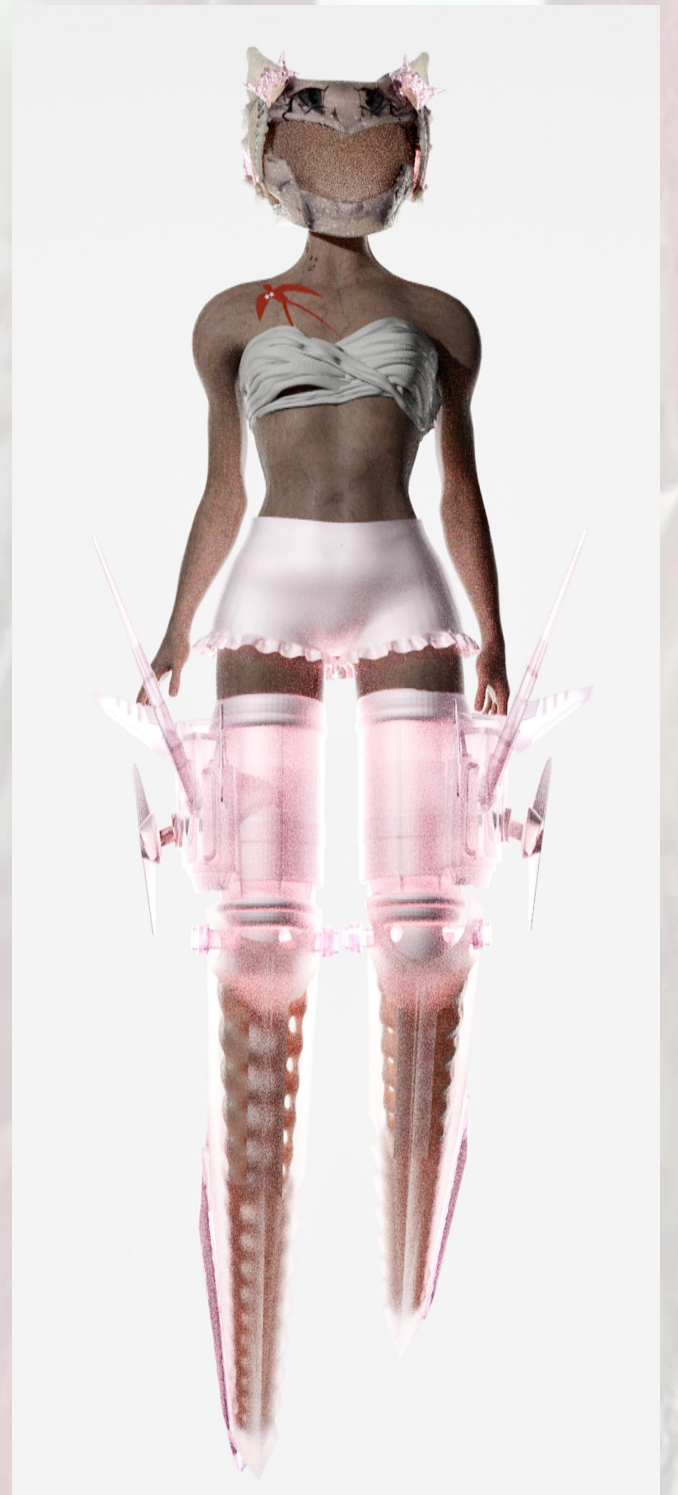
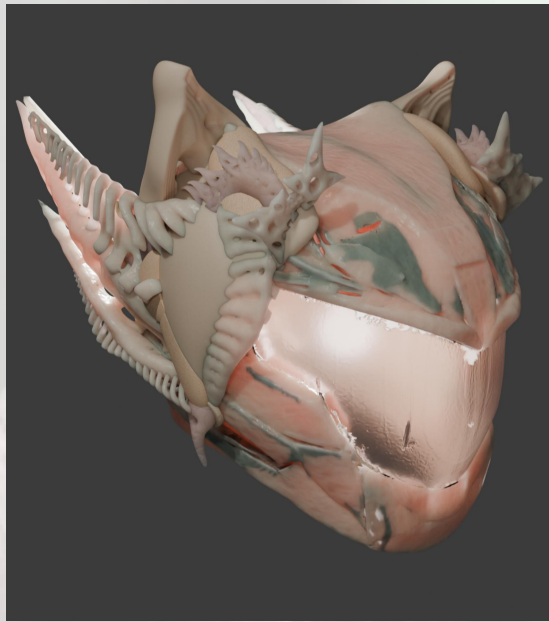
**The mouth
can be
animated
(by material)**





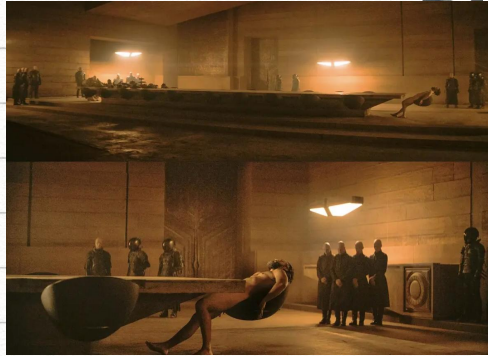
god

In terms of design, the front is designed as a huge mirror, and it is aesthetically unified with the Mouthless, but also makes certain distinctions.

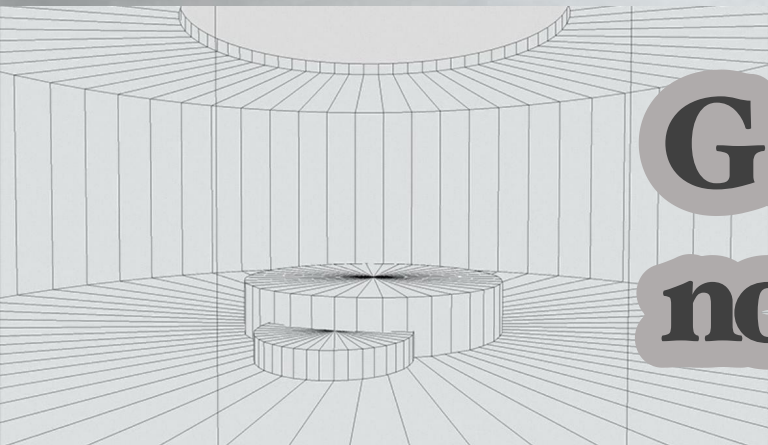




Scene design & world building



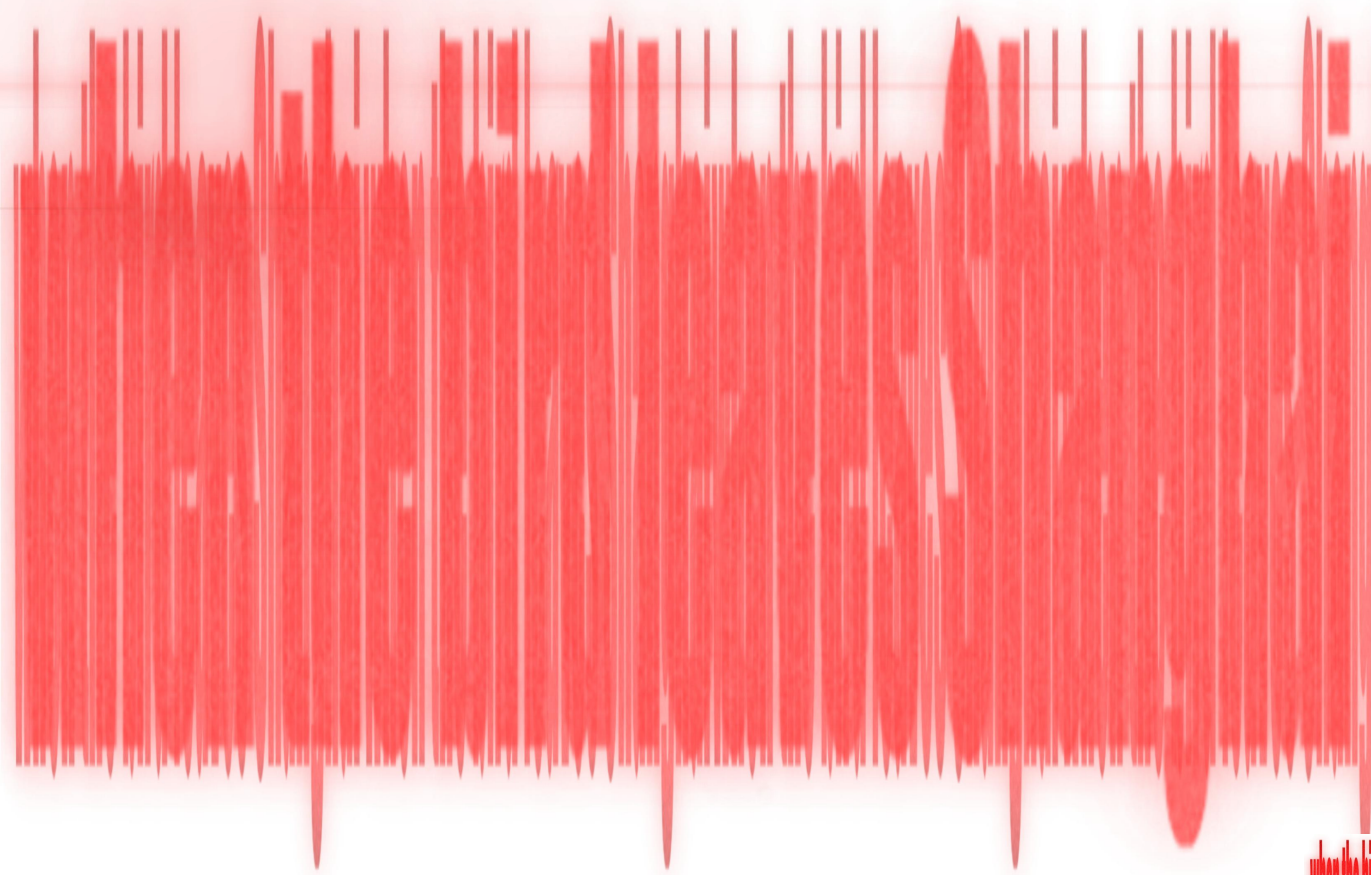
For the environment design, I drew from the Japanese anime Qianzi and the American film Dune. Both depict future worlds, but with different emphases. From Qianzi, I referenced the placement of monsters within the environment and their interactions with characters. From Dune, I borrowed its geopolitically inflected worldbuilding: the mouthless space is framed as clean and noiseless, while the Mouthless inhabit a more grounded setting saturated with interference and visual noise. The environmental assets were purchased from an asset library and assembled in Blender.



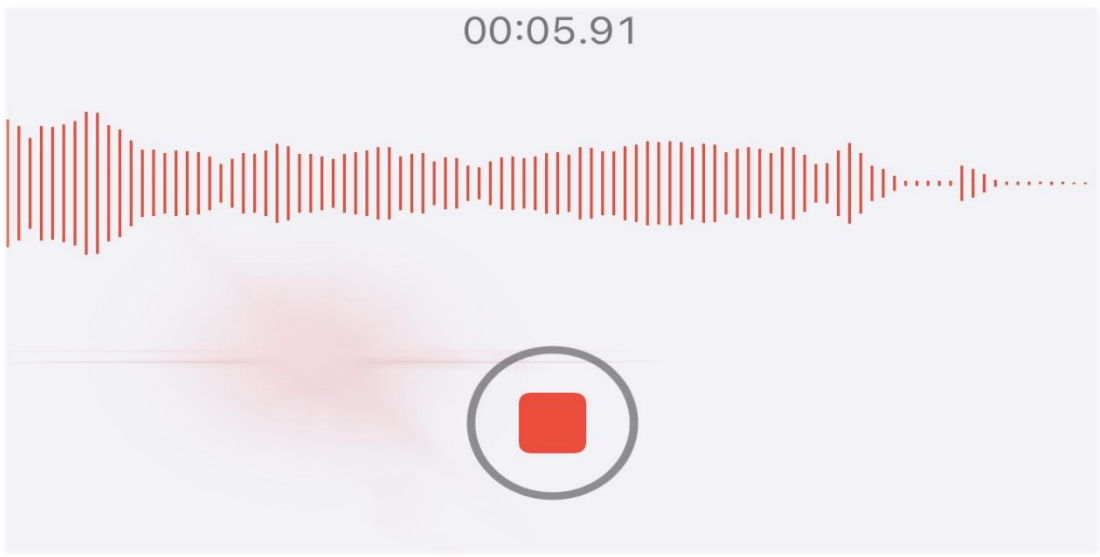
**God's space, clean and
noise-free visual experience**



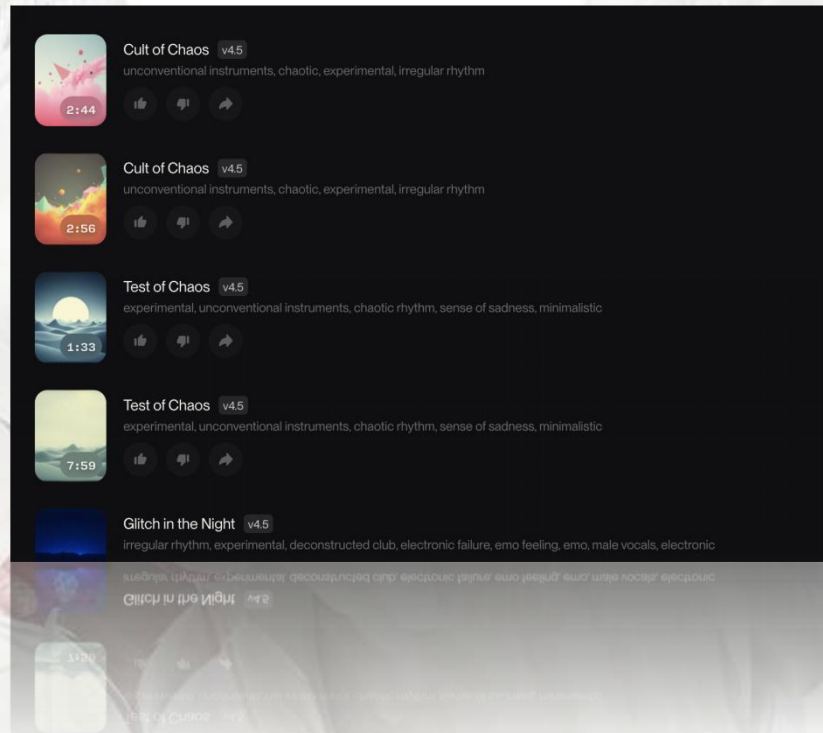
In the design of the living space of the mouthless people, I tried unreal engine and blender, and finally chose to design on blender. I tried different textures and rendering methods, and finally achieved this effect. In this scene, I focused on the lighting design.



**The title is
designed to
reference the
sound waves of
voice memos**



sound design



For the sound design, I worked with Suno and FakeMe. FakeMe handled the dialogue/voice-over—I've used it before, so I won't elaborate here. Suno marked my first foray into AI-driven composition. I found that success depends on meticulous control of details, down to the number, types, and arrangement of instruments. In my prompts, I referenced Ryuichi Sakamoto and deconstructed club aesthetics; this blend helps keep the output from sounding generic and preserves a more forward-leaning sonic identity.

editing

The screenshot displays a professional video editing software interface. At the top, the word "editing" is written in a large, blue, cursive font. Below it, a dark grey toolbar contains various editing tools represented by colored icons. The main workspace is divided into several tracks:

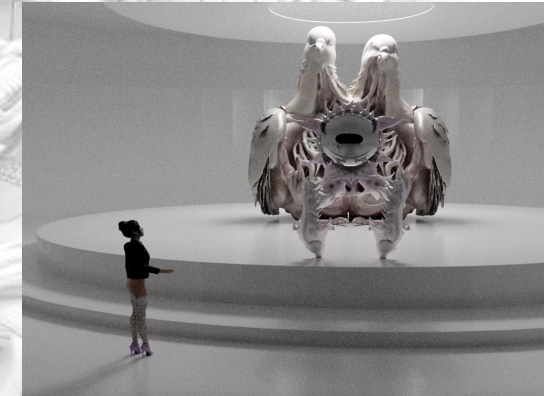
- Video Track:** Contains a sequence of video clips. Some clips are labeled with speed changes like "变速1.4", "变速1.6", "变速1.2", and "变速1.2X". There are also "复合片段" (Composite Clips) and "12.mkv" files. A vertical playhead is positioned over the timeline.
- Audio Track:** Features several audio waveforms. Some are labeled with text like "fake", "fakeyou", "自然昆虫" (Natural Insects), and "熊熊大火燃烧的声音" (Sound of a roaring fire). There are also "复合片段5" (Composite Clips 5) and "自然环境音 森林!" (Natural Environment Sound Forest!).
- Text/Title Track:** Shows a vertical text element labeled "女孩" (Girl).

At the bottom, there are additional track labels such as "复合片段4", "复合", "kling_", "山洞-风-水滴", "kling_20: k", and "自然环境音 森林!". The interface is clean and modern, with a dark theme and clear visual feedback for editing actions.

hero image



When I grew up



he gods can identify them



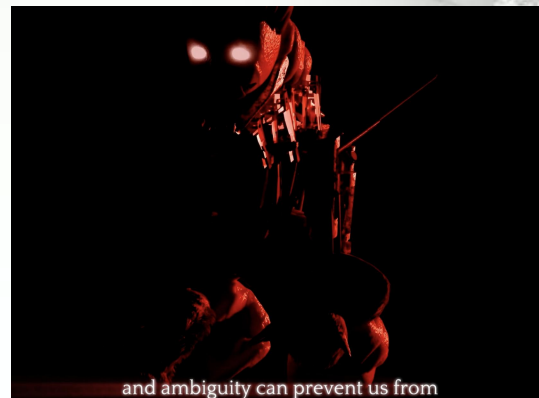
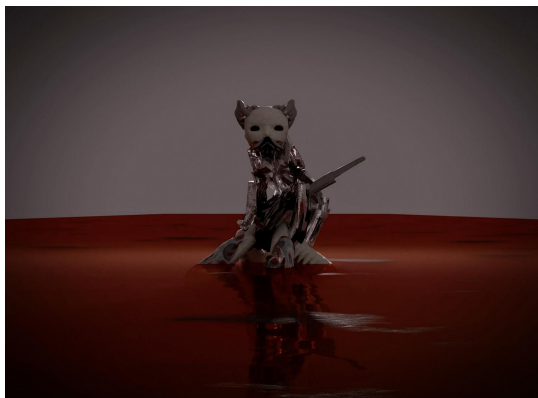
The emergence of the "mouthless" makes God nervous



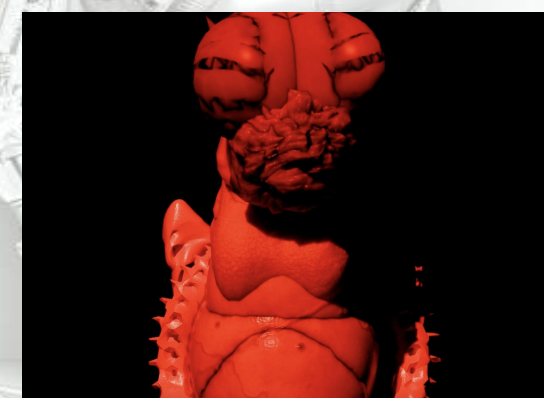
and all uneasy factors were consumed and punished



One day, as usual, I went to clean up the mouthless creatures



and ambiguity can prevent us from



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special thanks to

Nella Piatek

Jenn Leung

Daniel Felstead