

Feed Boy

The mother never boarded

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1. Introduction



This project examines how the metaphor of hunger and the digestive system can serve as a conceptual framework to understand the cyborgian relationship between humans and algorithmic systems.

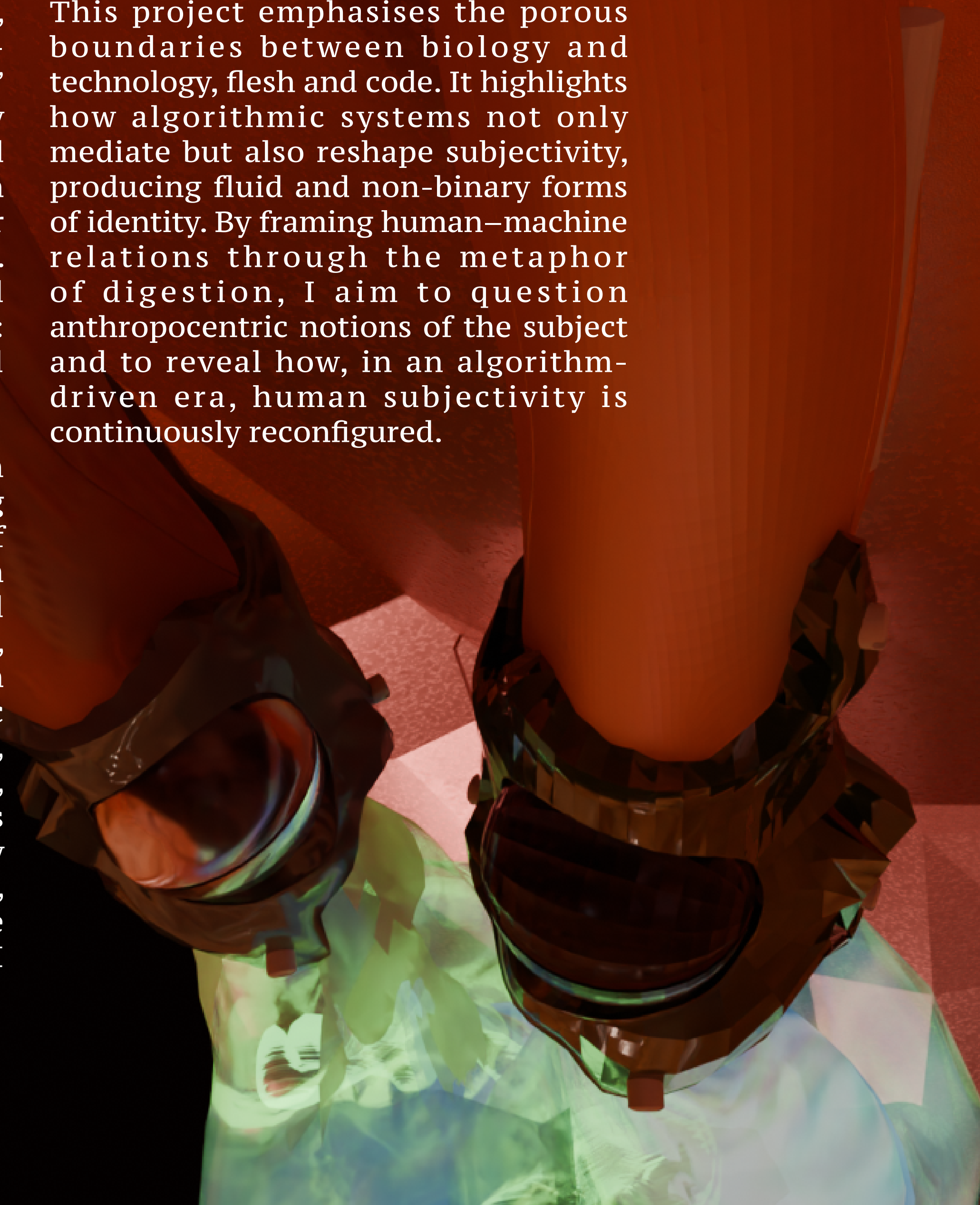
The dissertation focuses on the idea of algorithmic hunger, employing the digestive system as a metaphor to explore new forms of human–AI and human–platform entanglements. Unlike natural hunger, which arises from biological survival instincts, algorithmic hunger is engineered and designed. It magnifies and reconstructs human desires, emotional attachments, and needs for intimacy.

Unlike the body's organic impulses, algorithmic hunger is unstable and constantly shifting. Algorithms are systems entirely dependent on human logic, language, and data input; they must be continuously fed in order to evolve. As human behaviours, desires, and emotional patterns shift, these systems are recalibrated, embedding themselves more deeply into daily life as a kind of ingestion mechanism.

Within this metaphorical framework, algorithms function as quasi-organisms: they ceaselessly “feed” on human data, simulate and amplify desires, and extract affective and neural resources, which are then converted into digital nutrients for their own expansion and optimisation. This mechanism highlights the cyclical nature of human–machine relations: not one-sided extraction, but mutual feeding and dependency.

Building on a practice-led research approach, I propose the idea of a cyborg motherboard: a speculative model of human–machine interaction in which biology and technology are entangled through loops of dependency, illusion, and feedback. Here, human evolutionary hunger and algorithmic hunger share the same logic—ingestion, absorption, optimisation, satisfaction, and continuous feedback. Through this mirrored structure, the human body becomes increasingly mechanised, while algorithmic systems acquire organic traits, together forming what I describe as a hybrid organism.

This project emphasises the porous boundaries between biology and technology, flesh and code. It highlights how algorithmic systems not only mediate but also reshape subjectivity, producing fluid and non-binary forms of identity. By framing human–machine relations through the metaphor of digestion, I aim to question anthropocentric notions of the subject and to reveal how, in an algorithm-driven era, human subjectivity is continuously reconfigured.





2. Cyborgian Entanglements: Bodies, Machines, and Fluid Subjectivities

2.1 Cyborgian Relationship

2.2 Mechanicised Bodies and Organic Machines

2.3 Non-Binary Identity and Fluidity

2.1 Cyborgian Relationship

In contemporary algorithmic environments, emotions and desires are no longer private, inner experiences—they are tracked, quantified, and translated into data (Zuboff, 2019). Traces of the body enter computational cycles of prediction and optimization. At the same time, algorithms are not neutral tools: they are designed to exhibit a quasi-lifelike hunger, endlessly extracting attention and affect in order to sustain their expansion.

Donna Haraway (1991), in *A Cyborg Manifesto*, describes the cyborg as occupying a gray zone at the boundary between human and machine—neither fully one nor the other. Building on this, I propose the term “cyborgian relationship” to describe the entanglement of humans and algorithmic systems: on one hand, the subject is translated into data; on the other, it is reshaped and fed back through algorithmic loops.

2.2 Mechanicised Bodies & Organic Machines

In the algorithmic milieu, the human body becomes increasingly mechanized. Our emotions, perceptions, and behaviors are tracked, reformatted, and folded into calculable units, becoming raw material for optimization cycles. Individual experience is sliced, reorganized, and rendered into data representations, shifting subjectivity from unique lived emotion to a predictable resource.

Conversely, algorithms acquire organic qualities. They are programmed to continuously solicit data and attention, as if animated by an insatiable hunger. This transformation is not natural but engineered, driven by economic and commercial imperatives. As Legacy Russell (2020) emphasizes in *Glitch Feminism*, glitches expose the non-neutrality of systems and their underlying power structures. Algorithmic desire, then, should not be mistaken for instinct, but recognized as an engineered product.

My project visualizes this double transformation through the metaphor of the digestive system: human bodies are re-encoded into machinic digestive flows, while algorithms are imagined as lifelike feeding machines. The metaphor offers a tangible way to reflect on the parallel processes of mechanization and organic simulation.

2.3 Non-Binary Identity and Fluidity

Inspired by Haraway (1991), I argue that the boundary between human and machine is not fixed, but fluid. The cyborg is a hybrid entity that rejects rigid binaries between biology and technology, nature and culture, flesh and code.

Within this framework, algorithmic systems exploit and amplify this fluidity—by blurring boundaries, modulating desires, and restructuring subjectivity. Human flesh is continually datafied and reconfigured, while machines are animated with “organic” qualities. The result is an ambiguous entanglement: a hybrid space where identity is non-binary, unstable, and constantly shifting.

In my project, this perspective informs both the theoretical and visual approach. By staging the digestive metaphor, I seek to reveal how algorithmic hunger unsettles categorical distinctions, creating new spaces for thinking intimacy, desire, and subjectivity in algorithm-driven environments. “Building on this theoretical foundation, I now turn to the biological metaphor that grounds my practice: the digestive system.”

3. Biological Metaphors for Machinic Systems

- 3.1 The Digestive System Metaphor
- 3.2 Feeding and Nutrition
- 3.3 Identifying the Organs



3.1 The Digestive System Metaphor

The digestive system provides a biological framework for understanding algorithmic operations. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of desiring-machines in *Anti-Oedipus* emphasizes that desire is not a psychological lack but a productive flow generated through machinic connections (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p.5). Following this line of thought, algorithms can be read as digestive machines: like the body, they process inputs through sequential stages.

This cyclical process of ingestion–breakdown–assimilation–excretion offers a lens through which to understand how human experience is absorbed, recoded, and re-produced as machinic outputs. Algorithmic hunger is revealed as an engineered mechanism, not a natural instinct. Its core logic lies in mimicking, extracting, and reorganizing human desires and attention. As a result, algorithms appear lifelike: always hungry, always demanding new inputs to fuel their renewal and optimization.

Human experience thus becomes the nutritional source for algorithms, binding human–machine relations into a continuous digestive loop. This constitutes one form of the cyborgian relationship: humans and machines locked in a mutual feeding cycle governed by the same biological logic.

- Ingestion: algorithms constantly collect human data through clicks, views, and interactions.
- Breakdown: data is cleaned, sliced, and reformatted into calculable fragments.
- Assimilation: algorithmic models absorb these fragments, converting them into predictive patterns.
- Excretion: outputs re-emerge as recommendations, feedback, or interface responses.

3.2 Feeding and Nutrition

Within this metaphorical framework, algorithms can be understood as quasi-organic entities. They do not merely passively consume human data but actively simulate and amplify desire, extracting affective and neural resources and converting them into digital nutrients for their own expansion and optimization. This process reveals that the relationship between humans and algorithms is not one of unilateral dependence but of cyclical mutual feeding.

Deleuze and Guattari describe such an unstable, constantly reconfigured subject as a “post-capitalist identity”—an assemblage that is no longer fixed but produced through machinic flows and connections (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). Similarly, Ester Fridner’s notion of the “wet” subject emphasizes slipperiness, stickiness, and resistance to capture. (Fridner, 2022, p10). Both concepts highlight a kind of subjectivity that is wild, excessive, and uncontainable. Inspired by these perspectives, I chose the tongue and the intestine as the central organs in my project: the tongue symbolizes the sensual entry point of desire, while the intestine represents the hidden processes of breakdown, absorption, and transformation.

In my practice, this metaphor is materialized as the “intestinal algorithmic apparatus”: biological tissues—intestines, mucous membranes, and nerves—are reconfigured in direct

combination with hardware components such as GPUs, circuit boards, and cables. This hybrid apparatus makes visible the hunger of algorithms and their entangled metabolism with human bodies, forming a visceral critique of the cycle of nutrition, desire, and data.

This metaphor can also be traced in the operation of contemporary platforms. On TikTok or Instagram, for example, every pause, swipe, replay, or like functions like a micro-particle of nutrition. These signals are digested by the algorithm, fragmented and recomposed into predictive models. Just as in the biological intestine, desire is sliced and absorbed, before being excreted again in the form of recommendations or notifications that feed back into the user’s sensory and emotional circuits.

As a practitioner, my decision to focus on organs is a deliberate methodological choice. It allows me to translate abstract theoretical metaphors into tangible visual apparatuses. Through this practice-led approach, I not only critique the hunger of algorithms on a conceptual level but also test, materially and affectively, how they restructure desire and intimacy.

3.3 Identifying the Organs

The tongue operates as both a sensory organ and the first threshold of ingestion.

In my project, the tongue becomes an enlarged architectural entry point, dramatizing the way algorithms entice users into cycles of endless consumption.

The tongue is not only about physical intake but also about desire, intimacy, and eroticism. Its role in kissing, tasting, and speaking makes it a powerful metaphor for the interface between the human body and algorithmic systems. In platforms such as Tinder or TikTok, the logic of swiping or scrolling mimics the gestures of tasting—quick, repetitive acts of sampling that promise satisfaction but never reach fullness. The tongue therefore becomes the symbolic organ of algorithmic seduction, staging how desire is amplified and rechanneled into machinic circuits.

The intestine, by contrast, embodies the process of breakdown and absorption. Within the biological body, the intestine is where nutrients are extracted, separated, and assimilated into the organism. Translated into algorithmic terms, this represents the moment where data is processed: fragmented, cleaned, and reorganized into usable formats for predictive modeling. In my visual apparatus, the intestine is reconfigured through cables, circuit boards, and flesh-like membranes, signifying the entanglement of organic and machinic

materialities. This apparatus illustrates how human behaviors—clicks, pauses, emotional traces—are ingested as raw signals, decomposed into datasets, and transformed into what Shoshana Zuboff (2019, p93) calls “behavioral surplus.” The intestine thus symbolizes the hidden infrastructure of algorithmic digestion, where intimacy is stripped of its lived complexity and recoded as resource.

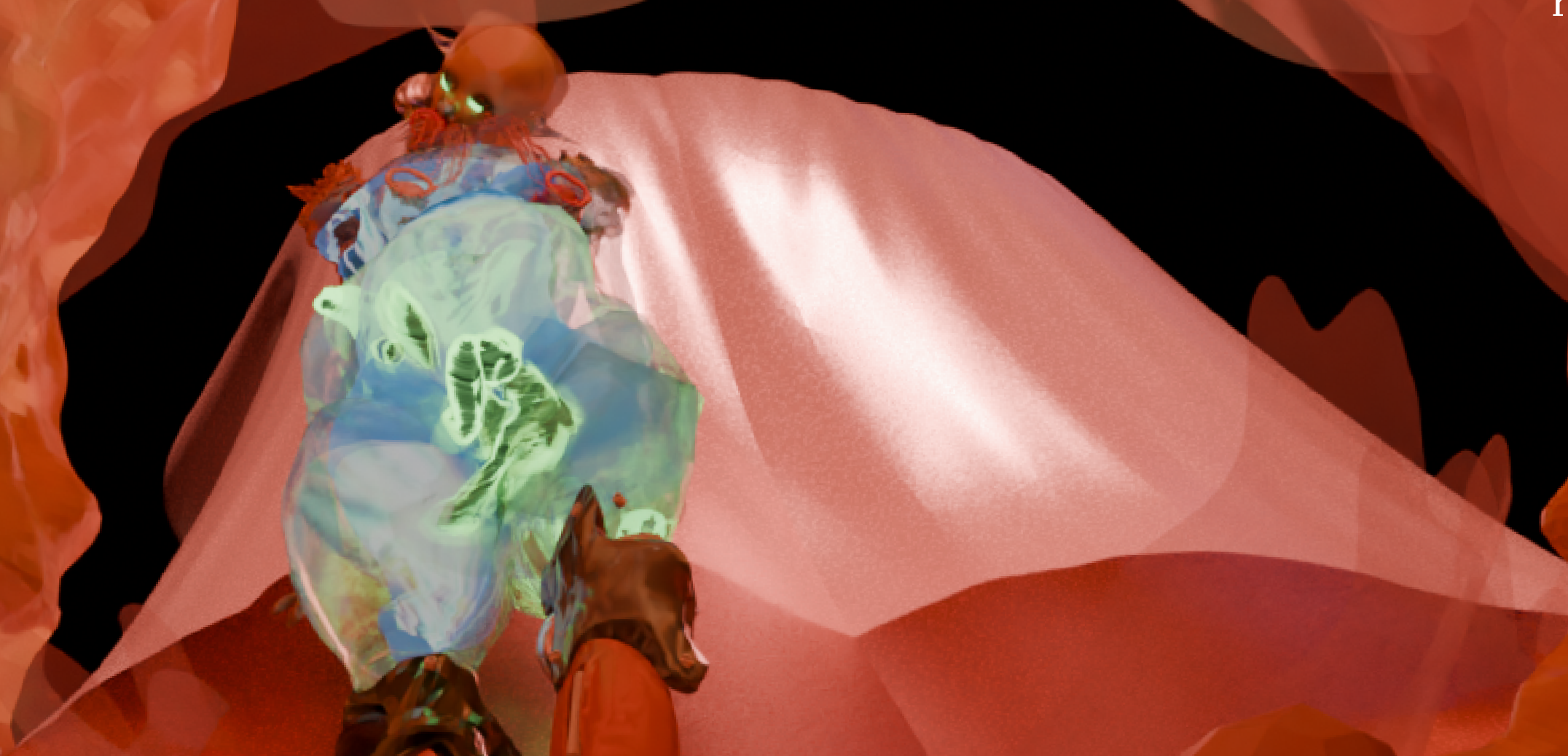
Finally, the brain represents the site of neural intimacy and subjectivation. While not part of the digestive system

in a literal sense, I integrate the brain as the threshold through which data enters the nervous system, linking bodily perception to algorithmic capture.

The brain apparatus in my project appears as a transparent skull with exposed eyeballs and cable-like nerves, marking the interface where algorithms penetrate perception and generate illusions of understanding. This organ symbolizes the most intimate form of algorithmic feeding: not just consuming human actions, but embedding itself into affective and cognitive circuits.

Notifications, recommendations, and feedback loops mimic neural responses, producing conditioned reflexes that bind the subject to the system. The brain therefore closes the digestive metaphor by showing how data ingestion and processing feed back into the formation of subjectivity itself.

By identifying these three organs—tongue, intestine, and brain—I establish a digestive cartography of algorithmic hunger. Each organ maps a stage in the machinic cycle of ingestion, digestion, and subjectivation, while also foregrounding how bodily functions are reimaged within technological infrastructures. This mapping allows me to critique algorithmic desire not only at an abstract theoretical level but through visceral, embodied metaphors. The reconfiguration of organs into machinic apparatuses underscores the extent to which algorithms feed on, restructure, and reshape human intimacy, revealing the entangled metabolism of flesh and code.





4. Human–AI Mirror Structure

4.1 Algorithmic Hunger and Evolutionary Hunger

4.2 Neural Intimacy and Dependency

4.3 Reshaping Subjectivity



4.1 Algorithmic Hunger and Evolutionary Hunger

Human evolutionary hunger refers to multi-layered needs formed throughout biological evolution—food, survival, social belonging, recognition, and intimacy. (Maslow, 1943) These drives constitute the foundation of human instinct.

By contrast, algorithmic hunger is an engineered and commercialized structure of need. It is not innate but modeled upon evolutionary hunger, imitating and learning from human desire patterns and translating them into data-driven input-output logics. (Zuboff, 2019).

Through cycles of imitation, amplification, feedback, and mutation, algorithms not only intensify human desires but also reshape behaviors and perceptions. Evolutionary hunger and algorithmic hunger therefore form a mirrored entanglement, a co-evolutionary loop where human and machine hungers feed into each other.

4.2 Neural Intimacy and Dependency

Within this mirrored structure, human-machine relations extend into the neural level of intimacy and dependency. Algorithms extract emotional data and track behaviors, performing gestures of “understanding” and “response.” These gestures fabricate illusions of intimacy, which are not genuine exchanges but data-driven reflections.

Over time, however, humans begin to depend on these feedback loops, internalizing them as part of their intimate life. Neurologically, individuals form conditioned attachments, treating algorithmic responses as if they were forms of companionship and care.

In this sense, neural intimacy is not simply the extension of desire loops but a dependency mechanism implanted within subjectivity. It ensures the persistence of human-machine attachment.

4.3 Reshaping Subjectivity

Within this mirrored structure, subjectivity undergoes a dual process of erosion and reconstruction. On one side, human desires and emotions are formatted as algorithmic inputs, eroding individuality and autonomy. On the other, the data-driven feedback loops generate a new subjectivity, one defined and organized by platform logics.

Through interaction with algorithms, humans increasingly come to recognize themselves through algorithmic mirrors. The self is reconstructed by data patterns, recommendation cycles, and predictive modeling. (Zuboff, 2019).

This reveals that the human-AI mirror is not merely reflective but productive: it manufactures subjectivity itself. Its impact stretches across desire, emotion, and identity, reshaping the very terms of human existence in the algorithmic age.

5. Method



Literature Research

I engaged with critical writings from media theory, feminist science and technology studies, and philosophy, including Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, Deleuze and Guattari's theories of the body and desire, Shoshana Zuboff's critique of surveillance capitalism, and Legacy Russell's *Glitch Feminism*. These theoretical sources provided the conceptual foundations for framing algorithmic hunger as a metabolic system of capture, consumption, and reproduction, as well as for questioning the mirror structures of human–AI intimacy.

Visual Research

I drew inspiration from the practices of digital and performance artists who destabilize bodily coherence through exaggeration, dislocation, and absurdity. Their strategies of hybridising flesh and machine informed my exploration of the digestive metaphor as a visual language. Early sketches and prototypes allowed me to test how organs, textures, and hybrid forms could externalise processes of ingestion, breakdown, assimilation, and excretion.

Narrative Writing

Alongside visual prototyping, I developed narration as an experimental method. Writing in the first person, I re-articulated theoretical ideas through sensory metaphors of flesh, digestion, and tethering. This narration later became the voiceover of the film, but in the research process it functioned as a methodological device: testing how concepts such as algorithmic hunger, intimacy, and machinic dependency could be embodied in language. The poetic register not only guided visual and sound design but also operated as a form of critical reflection, revealing the ambivalence of desire and exhaustion within human–machine entanglement.

Practice-Based Experimentation Building on these inputs, I produced a series of 3D installations and digital artefacts that metaphorically articulate the digestive logic of algorithms. These speculative objects—such as the *Head Apparatus*, the *Algorithmic Intestine*, and the *Miniature Virtual Body*—function both as prototypes and as narrative devices. They translate theoretical concepts into immersive visual experiences, while also enabling iterative reflection on how algorithmic systems metabolise human attention and affect.

The intended audience includes scholars, artists, and a wider public interested in the intersections of AI, intimacy, and digital culture—those who are critically reflecting on how human–machine relationships are folded into the infrastructures of the internet system.

Artistic References

The project draws upon a range of artists whose practices interrogate the intersections of technology, intimacy, and desire. Rather than treating them as direct precedents, I approach these references as critical lenses through which to situate and extend my own practice.

Lu Yang use virtual bodies and neuro-aesthetic experiments to dissolve the boundaries between flesh and machine. work demonstrates how digital systems can reshape sensory perception and subjectivity. In my project, this strategy of hybridisation is rearticulated through the digestive metaphor, where GPUs and circuit boards are reconfigured as intestines and neural networks.

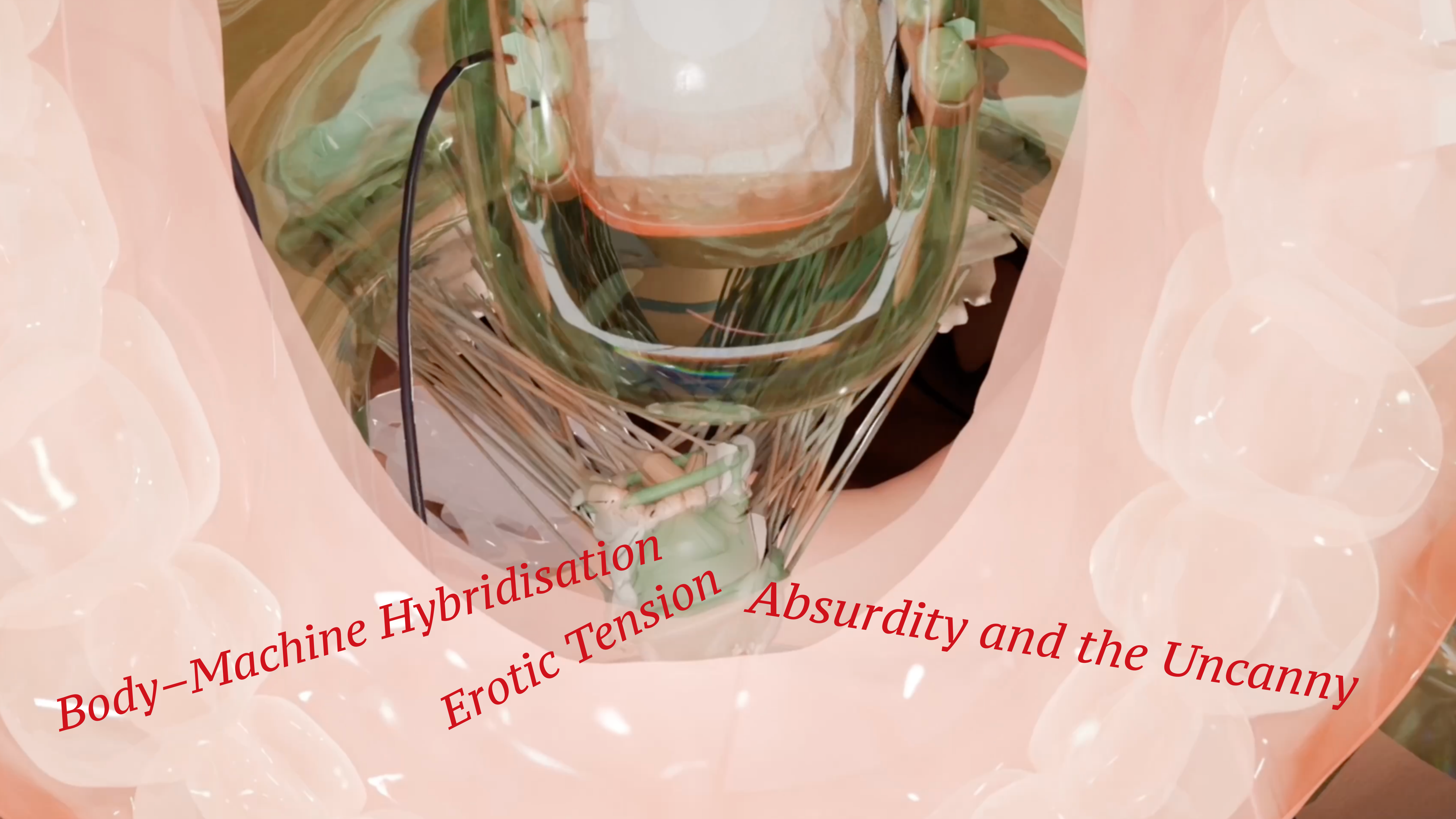
Shu Lea Cheang and Jon Rafman foreground eroticism and digital desire, revealing how intimacy is mediated, distorted, and commodified in networked environments. While their work often emphasizes spectacle and saturation, my approach shifts towards the bodily scale of organs, asking how algorithmic hunger eroticises even micro-gestures such as swiping, scrolling, or licking.

Wednesday Kim, AES+F, and Rosie Gibbens each exploit the uncanny through exaggeration, theatrical staging, and the misplacement of organs. Their practices unsettle the stability of the body, generating humour as well as discomfort. My own apparatuses draw from this lineage of absurdity but channel it into speculative organs—tongue, intestine, brain—that materialize algorithmic processes as visceral and uncanny landscapes.

Finally, Saftkeur's fetishistic 3D anatomies, with their monumental tongues and surreal surfaces, inspire my exploration of excess. Yet rather than treating fetishism as aesthetic excess alone, I mobilize it critically to expose how algorithms themselves fetishize human attention and intimacy.

Taken together, these references shaped my visual approach, particularly the use of organ Body-Machine Hybridisation, erotic tension, and uncanny estrangement as strategies for critiquing algorithmic desire.





*Body-Machine Hybridisation
Erotic Tension Absurdity and the Uncanny*

Body–Machine Hybridisation

In contemporary digital art, the hybridization of bodies and machines is a central strategy for rethinking human–machine relations. Lu Yang’s virtual experiments dissolve boundaries between the biological and the mechanical, while Li Yifan’s installations reveal how machinery reshapes perception and movement.

Building on this, my project employs the digestive system metaphor: GPUs and motherboards are reconfigured as intestines and neural networks, rendering algorithms as digestive machines. This emphasizes how algorithmic hunger metabolizes emotions and desires through machinic-organic structures.

Erotic Tension

Eroticism serves as a critical lens for exposing how technology reshapes desire and intimacy. Shu Lea Cheang explores sex and power in cyberspace, while Jon Rafman presents surreal digital landscapes where desire is amplified and distorted.

Saftkeur intensifies this approach by transforming the tongue into an exaggerated protagonist: stretching, licking, and swallowing actions that evoke fetishistic intimacy while producing uncanny discomfort.

In my project, this is reimagined as a “Tongue City Apparatus”: a monumental tongue functions as an architectural entry point. Virtual bodies slide along its surface, symbolizing how algorithms entice and amplify desire. Erotic tension becomes both seductive and overwhelming, exposing the manipulative logic of algorithmic hunger.

Absurdity and the Uncanny

Absurdity emerges through displacement and scale distortion, closely tied to the uncanny valley effect (Mori, 1970). Wednesday Kim’s dissonant 3D aesthetics and AES+F’s hyper-staged figures both exploit this tension between the familiar and the artificial.

Rosie Gibbens’s *Parabiosis* (2023) inflates and misplaces organs—mouths, breasts, tongues—creating humorous yet unsettling performances of intimacy. These strategies reveal how intimacy is structured through power and consumption.

In my project, the uncanny is enacted through enlarged organs such as the brain apparatus, tongue apparatus, and intestinal algorithmic apparatus. These speculative organs highlight how desire and intimacy are manipulated by algorithmic systems. The miniature virtual body, fragile yet datafied, further dramatizes human dependency within algorithmic feedback loops.

Through these visual strategies, the project makes visible the absurdity, eroticism, and hybridity of algorithmic hunger.

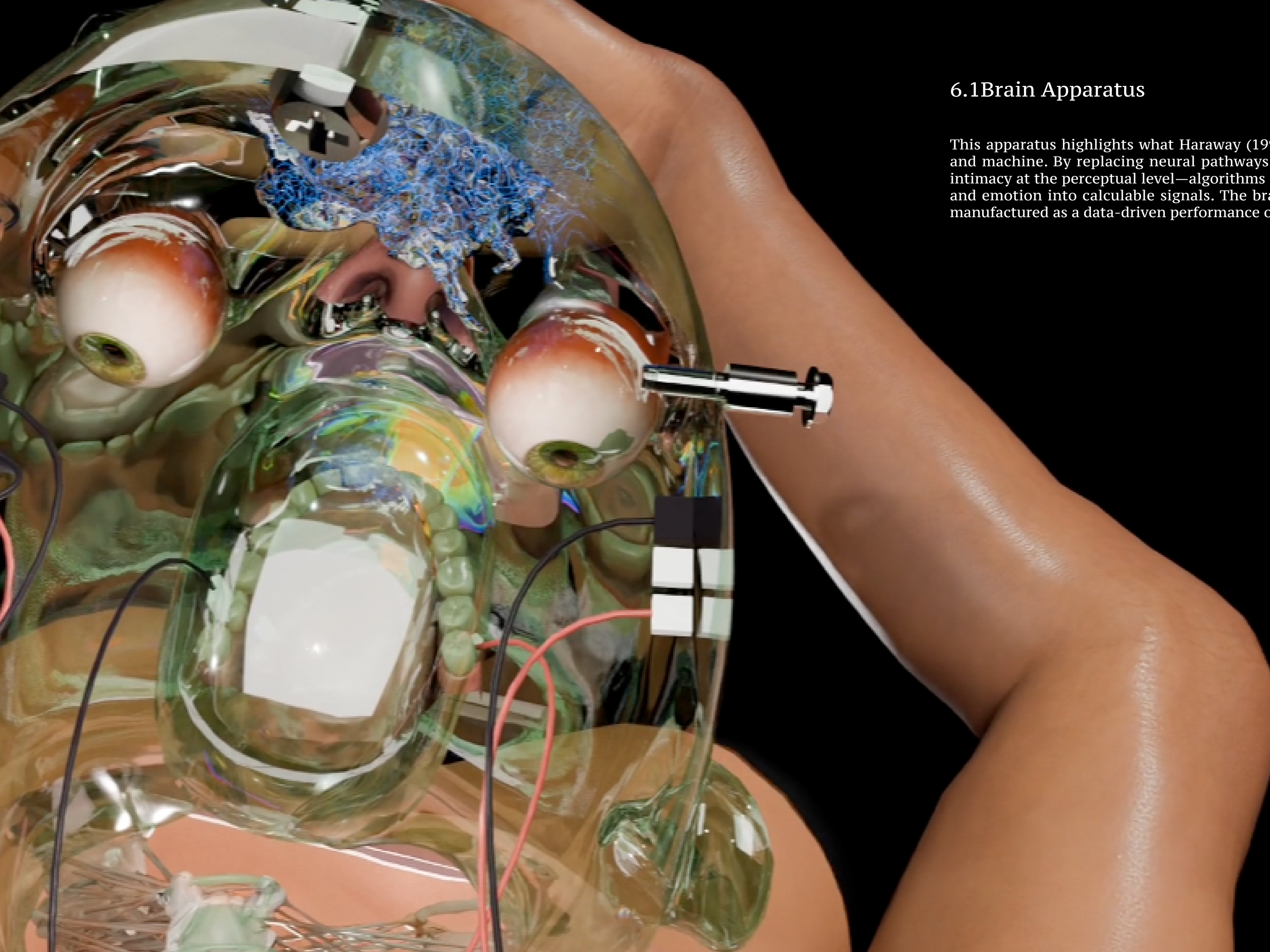
Mapping Algorithmic Hunger Through Organs

My project develops a digestive map of algorithmic hunger. By identifying the tongue, intestine, and brain as conceptual prototypes, I translate the abstract logic of ingestion, digestion, and subjectivation into a visceral framework. This map highlights how algorithms mimic organic systems: they consume data as nutrients, decompose it into fragments, assimilate it into predictive models, and excrete outputs that reshape human behavior.

Framing the project as a digestive cartography clarifies how different apparatuses—tongue apparatus, intestinal apparatus, brain apparatus—are not isolated artworks but interconnected stages of a system. The map shows how intimacy and desire are metabolized by algorithms, situating the body as both resource and residue in a cycle of endless feeding. In doing so, the work shifts from being a set of artistic “cases” to a conceptual ecosystem that visualizes algorithmic hunger in operation.

In the visual research, I constructed three key apparatuses that correspond to different stages of algorithmic hunger: ingestion, digestion, and subjectivation.



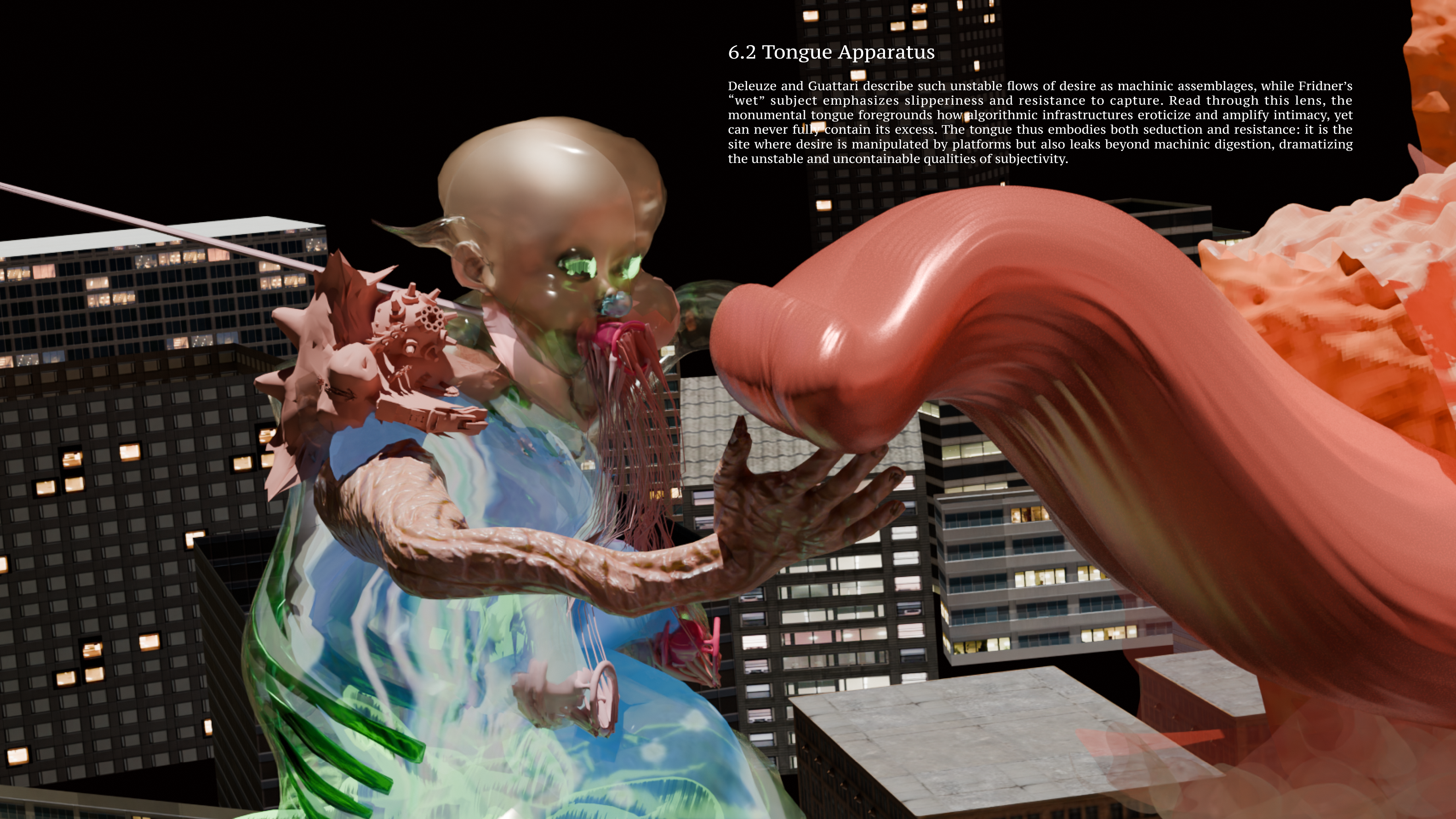


6.1 Brain Apparatus

This apparatus highlights what Haraway (1991) calls the breakdown of boundaries between organism and machine. By replacing neural pathways with cables and sockets, the work stages the illusion of intimacy at the perceptual level—algorithms simulate “understanding” but in fact merely recode vision and emotion into calculable signals. The brain apparatus therefore critiques how neural intimacy is manufactured as a data-driven performance of care, exposing its fragility as an engineered illusion.

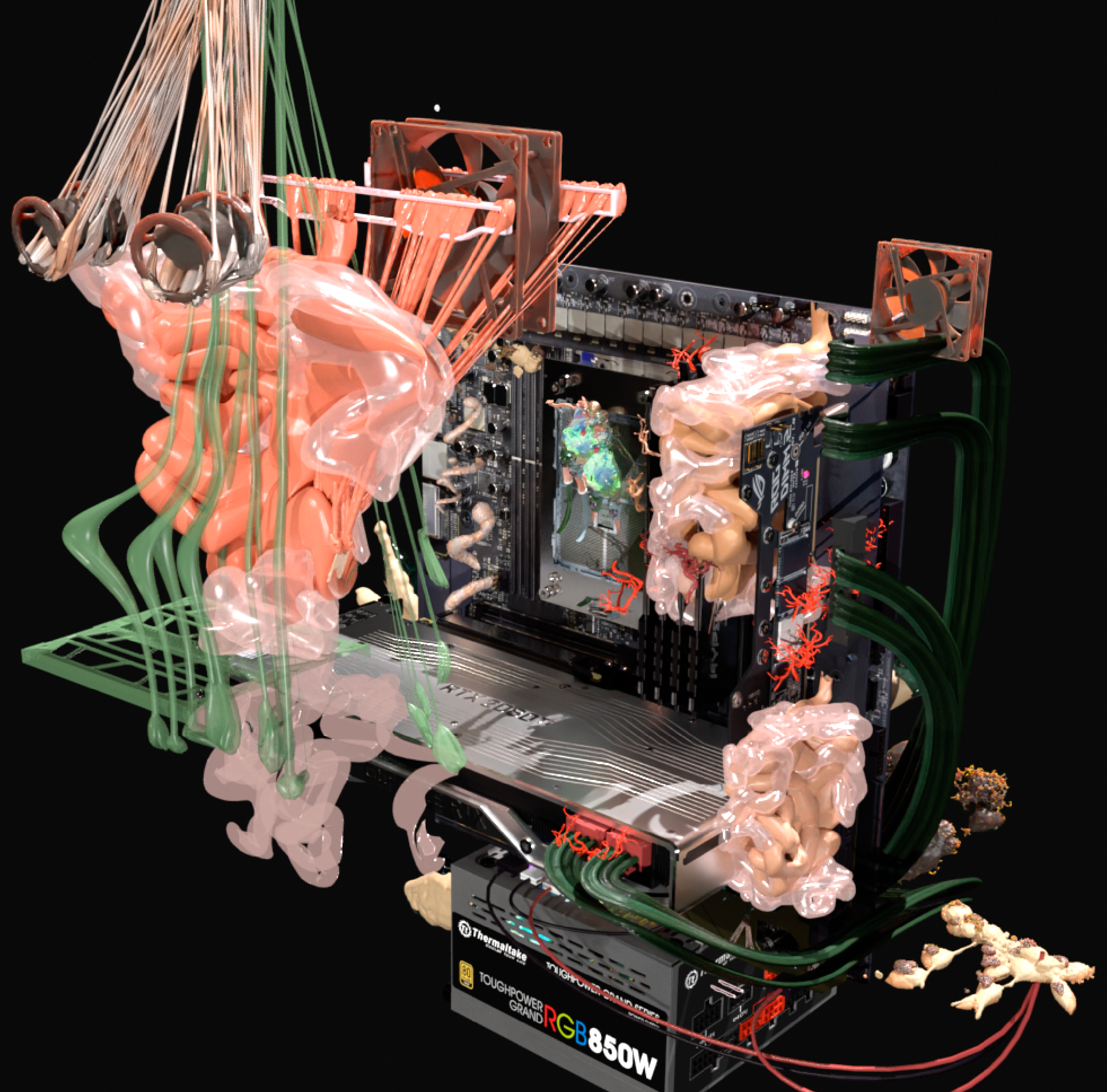
6.2 Tongue Apparatus

Deleuze and Guattari describe such unstable flows of desire as machinic assemblages, while Fridner's "wet" subject emphasizes slipperiness and resistance to capture. Read through this lens, the monumental tongue foregrounds how algorithmic infrastructures eroticize and amplify intimacy, yet can never fully contain its excess. The tongue thus embodies both seduction and resistance: it is the site where desire is manipulated by platforms but also leaks beyond machinic digestion, dramatizing the unstable and uncontainable qualities of subjectivity.



6.3 Intestinal Algorithmic Apparatus

By transforming motherboards into digestive organs, the apparatus dramatizes the hidden violence of algorithmic capture. As Zuboff (2019) argues, platforms convert lived experience into “behavioral surplus.” The intestinal apparatus makes this process visceral: affective residues are sliced, absorbed, and reformatted into predictive resources. Far from neutral metabolism, this digestion allegorises how subjectivity is stripped of complexity and commodified as a raw material for algorithmic growth.

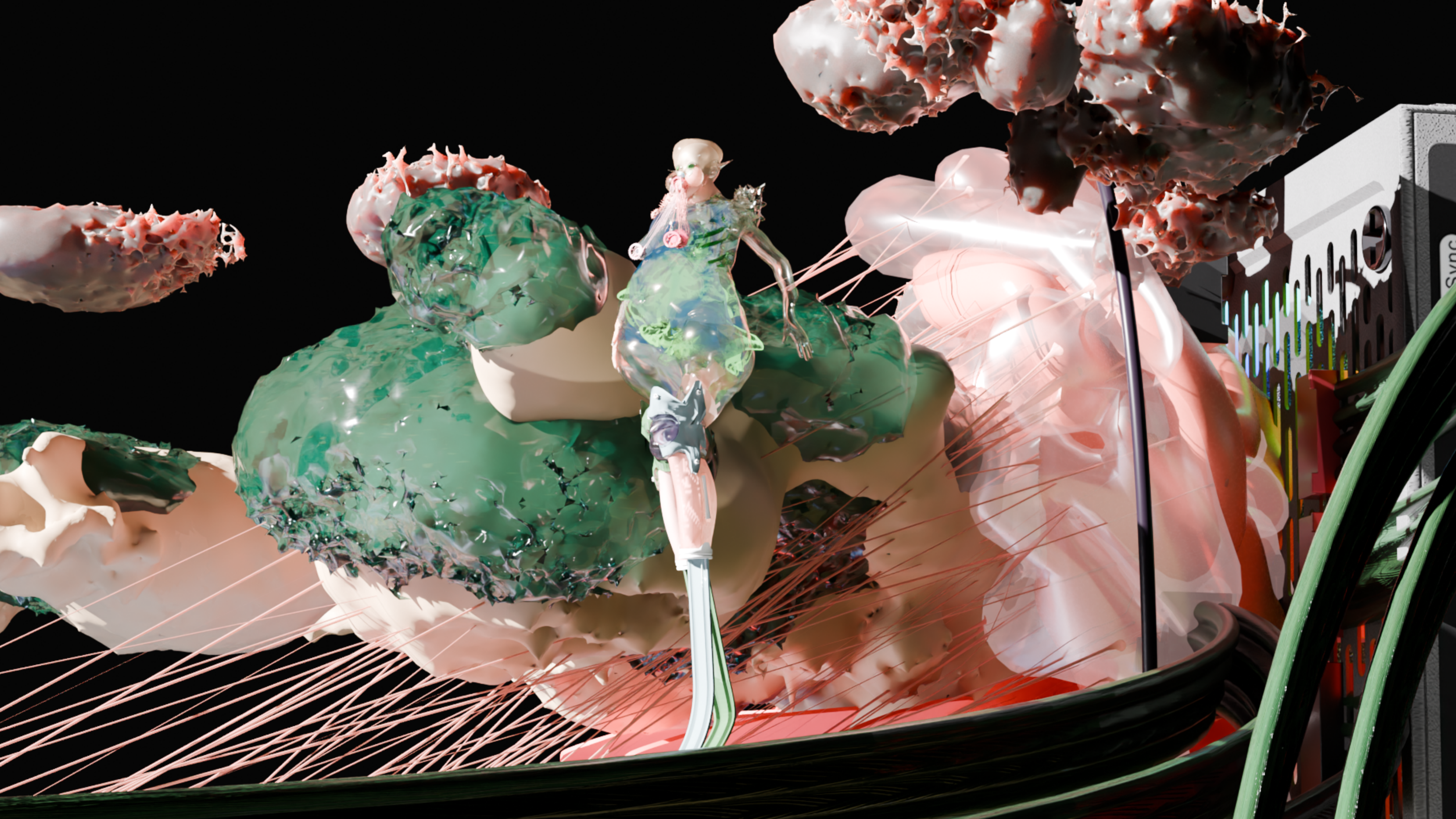




6.4 Miniature Virtual Body

The miniature virtual body represents the datafied image of humanity within algorithmic systems. Rendered as a shrunken, semi-transparent infantile figure, it extends cables from its mouth that both suck in and expel data. This form highlights the dependency and vulnerability of human subjectivity under algorithmic structures: reduced to a source of nourishment, yet continuously reshaped by feedback illusions.

Through the narrative linkage of these three apparatuses, I construct a continuous structure of ingestion (neural entry), digestion (algorithmic transformation), subjectivation (datafied body). This sequence materializes the metaphor of algorithmic hunger, exposing the cyclical, dependent, and absurd qualities of human-machine relations.



Conclusion

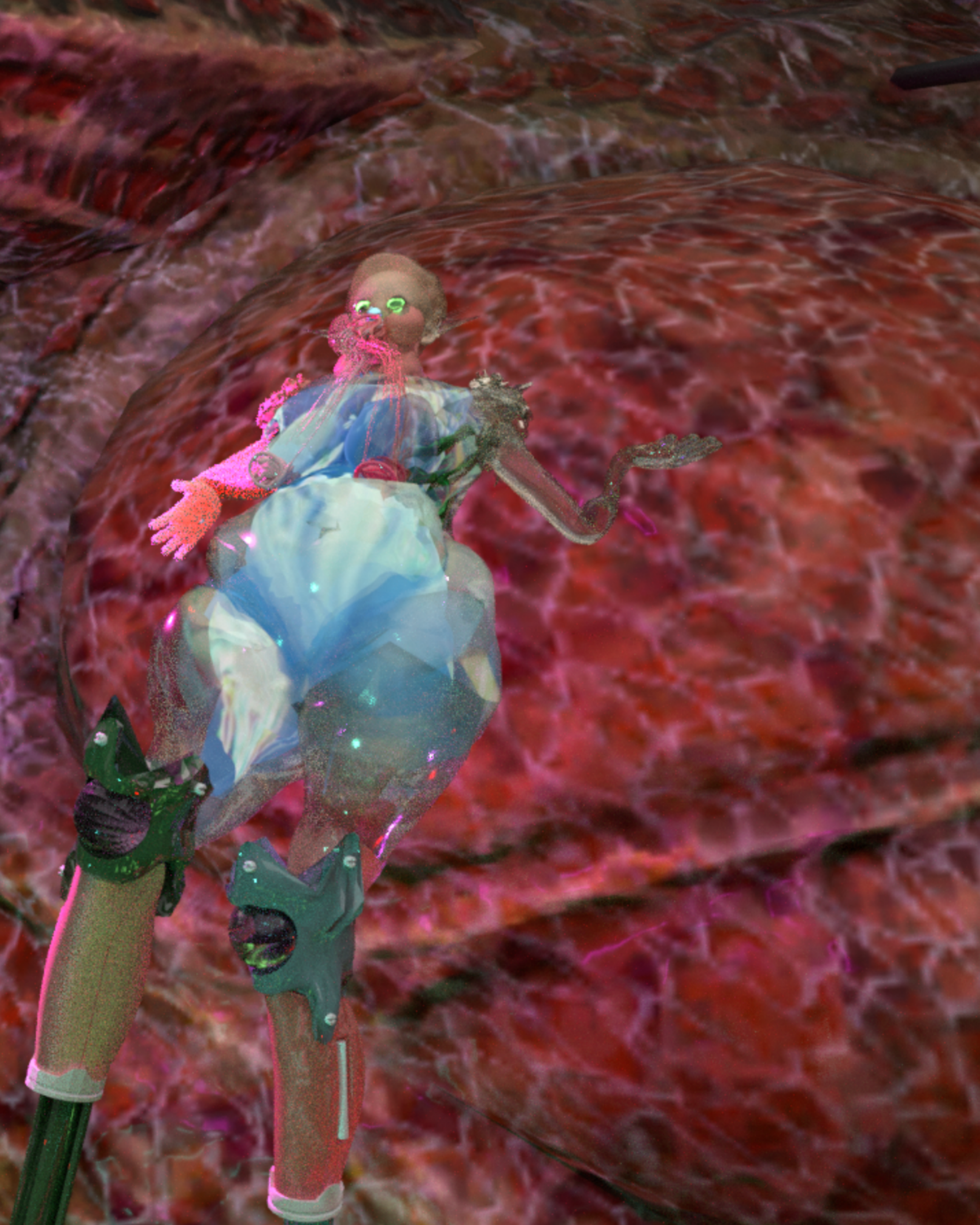
This project has explored how the metaphor of hunger and the digestive system can illuminate the entangled relationship between humans and algorithmic systems. By conceptualizing algorithms as digestive organisms, I have argued that platforms do not merely mediate human activity but metabolize it—ingesting gestures, fragmenting emotions, and excreting data-driven outputs that reshape subjectivity. (Zuboff, 2019; van Dijck, 2013). This metaphor has provided a critical lens for understanding how intimacy and desire are not only amplified but also captured and restructured by algorithmic infrastructures. (Russell, 2020).

The framework of algorithmic hunger exposes how human desires are continuously reconfigured in cycles of feeding and dependency. Just as the intestine breaks down nutrients, platforms such as TikTok or Instagram fragment micro-gestures—pauses, likes, swipes—into calculable resources, feeding them back as recommendations and notifications. These processes highlight the erosion of autonomy: subjectivity is reformatted by predictive logics that disguise dependency as intimacy. (Rouvroy and Berns, 2013). To frame algorithms as digestive organs is therefore not a purely poetic choice but a critique of the infrastructures that extract affect while simulating reciprocity.

Through a practice-led methodology, I have materialised these dynamics in speculative organs—the tongue, the intestine, the brain—reconfigured as machinic apparatuses. These artworks do not simply illustrate theory but test it materially, translating abstract concepts into embodied metaphors. The tongue stages erotic entry points of desire, the intestine dramatizes hidden infrastructures of data breakdown, and the brain apparatus exposes the neural intimacy of algorithmic capture. Together, these prototypes construct a digestive cartography of human-machine relations, one that visualises both dependency and estrangement.

What emerges is a picture of the cyborg as a hybrid organism, where the human body becomes increasingly mechanised and algorithms acquire organic traits. (Haraway, 1991) This hybrid state unsettles anthropocentric notions of the subject and raises pressing questions about agency: if our desires are metabolised within machinic infrastructures, how might we resist becoming merely nutrients for algorithmic systems?

Ultimately, this project positions artistic practice not only as a site of critique but as a speculative tool for reimagining human-AI intimacy. By rendering algorithmic hunger visceral and uncanny, I aim to provoke reflection on the conditions of subjectivity in an era of predictive systems—and to ask how we might reclaim intimacy beyond the digestive logics of platforms.



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