

CIVITAS VERI

**Justice and Desire
in a Post-Truth-World**

**Starring Bill Murray
About a Cenotaph
Playing in Istanbul**

**A Project by Che Facchin
Meteora Season 7 “Reasons“
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ETH Zürich**

TALE OF THE

SACRED OLIVE

A short distance from the mainland of Istanbul
In the middle of the Bosphorus
Between idle tides and tireless streams
There is an island
Governed by Athena and Aphrodite
In equilibrium
Almost as if they were dancing
It was so very long ago [1]

Their people lived in full bliss
As they were civilized, but free
As they were cultured, but humble
As they were emotional, but truthful
As they were reasonable, but passionate

Until one day,
Aphrodite herself laid claim to the piece of land
From then on, the people of the island acted under her decree
They gave up purity, for lust
They gave up reason, in turn for instinct
Their demise finally arrived
When they gave up cultivation for intoxication
When they gave up knowledge for ignorance
Soon, not a single skipper remembered how to set sail
And embark to the shores of Istanbul
Their fertile fields,
Neglected by farmers partaking in the bar

Famine and poverty
Led to war and savagery

Their only rescue was the return of Athena,
holding a spear in one hand and an olive branch in the other [2]
She came forth and planted a single olive tree
On the most fruitful place of the harsh bedrock

Its roots spread across the whole island
Guiding the people back to lost knowledge and wisdom

The people swore to Athena to lay off desire and emotion
In turn for fact and reason
And to ensure the peace of the island

Before Aphrodite was banished for her actions,
She laid a curse onto the young tree
Making its immature fruit the ultimate object of seduction
An aphrodisiac stronger than
Everything known to human and beyond
From then on, the olives of the sacred tree could only be handled when
they are ripe

They were only to be harvested when they are mature
The citizens swore to not succumb
to the allurements of the cursed fruit
For eating the young olives would bring back
the savagery of past times
And destroy the peace of the island
The Sacred Olive,
the ultimate test for the people of the island
To withstand their desire
And to act reasonably

Any infringement of the island's peace was to be severely punished

1) Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities
2) Wohl Wohl Montanari, Giovan Pietro Bellori





*In loving memory of
the Sacred Olive Tree*

I
II
III
IV
Interlude
V
VI
VII

TEMPTATIONS
The City of Truth
A Figurative Reception
The Court
Ascent To Purity
The Carcass
Appropriation
THE VERDICT



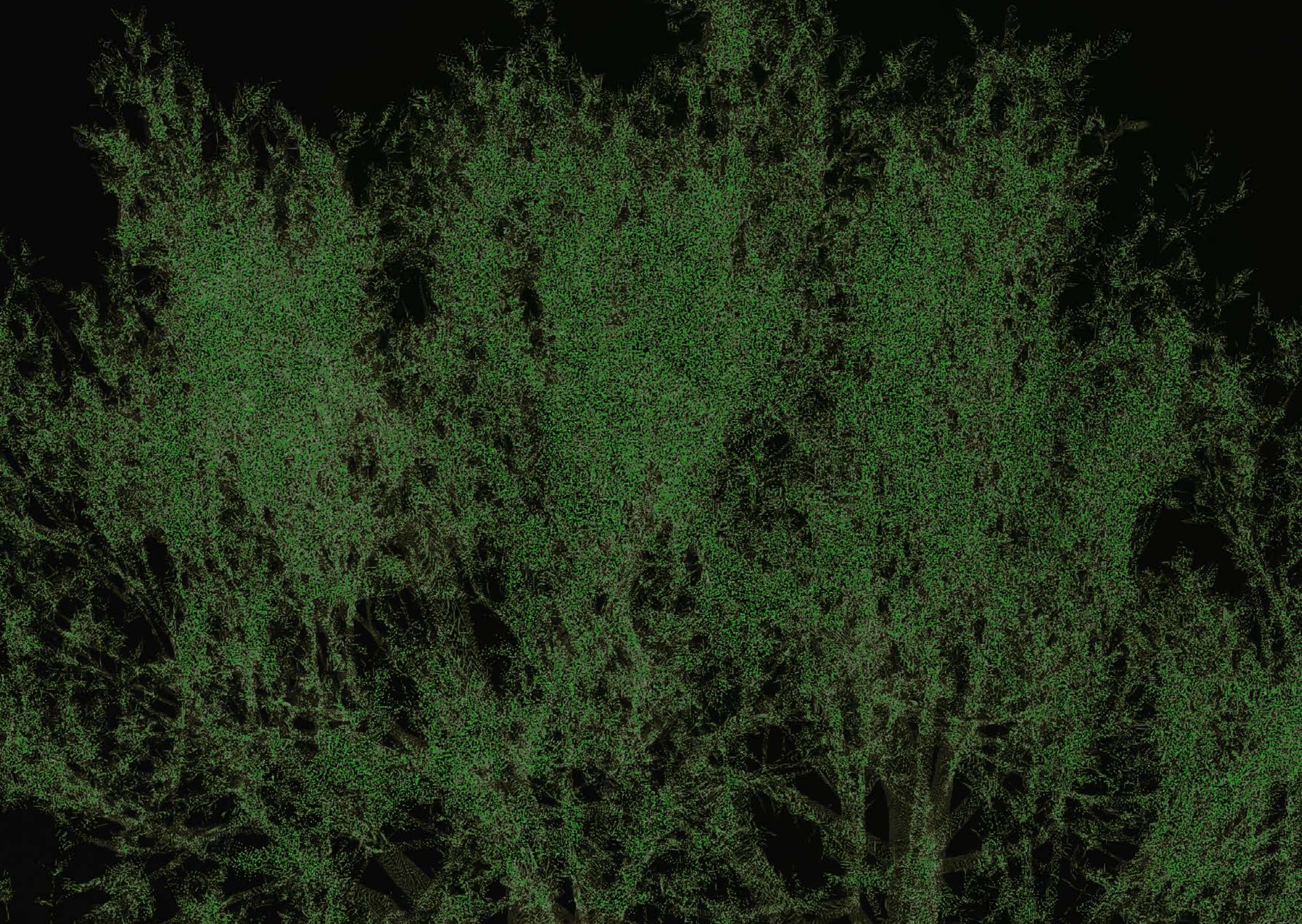
*The minister of truth does not tyrannise over my reason,
he enlightens it.*

Rousseau, Collected Works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau



(temptations)

(temptations)





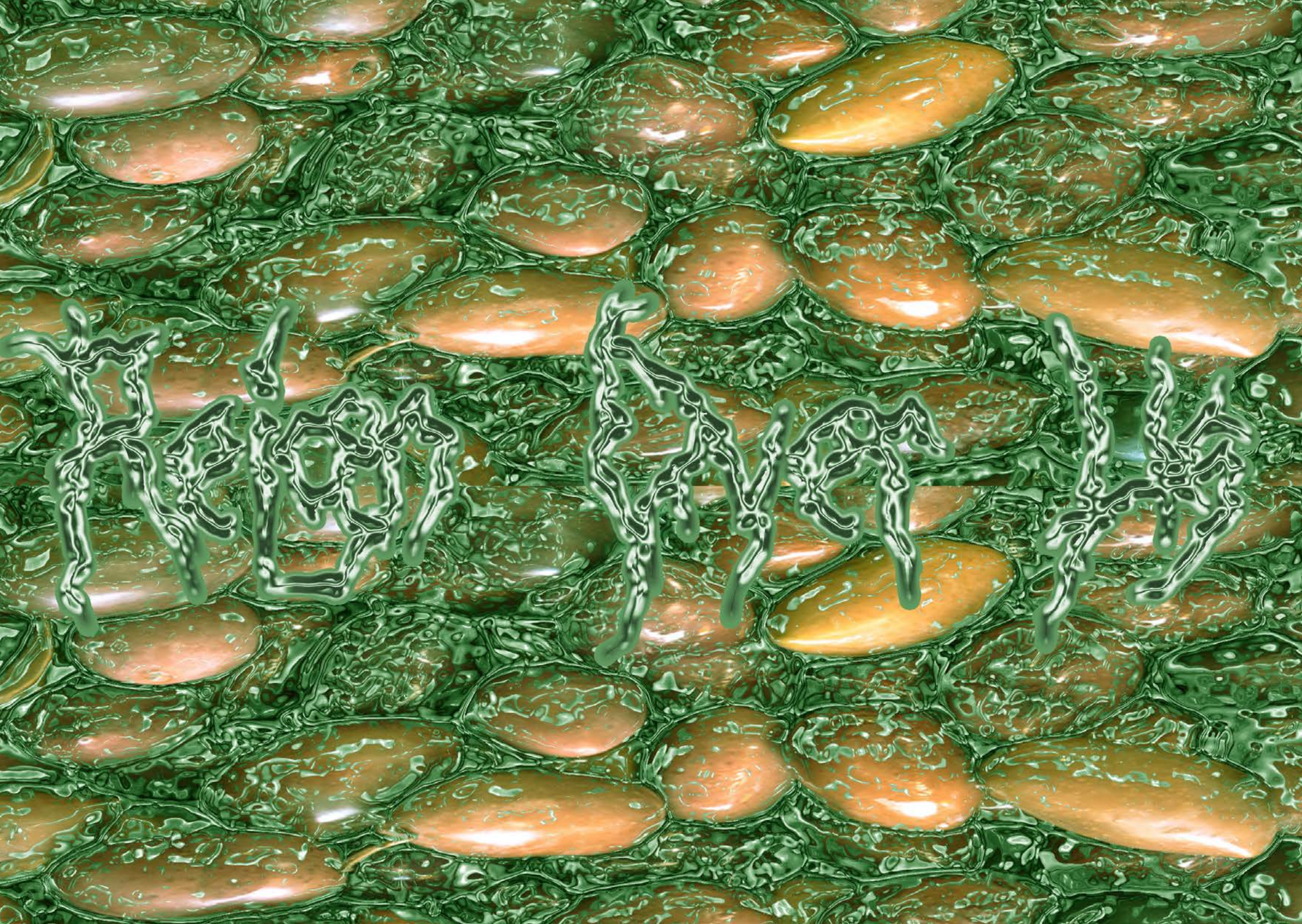
(Bill Murray):

There is an island
A short distance from the mainland of Istanbul
In the middle of the Bosphorus
Between restless currents and quiet waters
Whose people are governed under a strict order of logic,
fact, and reason
They claim to have found absolute truth
By that, they call everyone else a liar
They pay a tremendous price for it
Their lives, drained of emotion,
The peace on the island, merely a matter of oppression

Through tales,
I've heard of the olive tree
Whose fruit is so precious
That the Gemlik and Ayvalik olives pale in comparison
Its young fruit so enticing
That even the Sirens of Sirenum scopuli
Were envious of its effect
And they said to the olive tree: „Reign over us.“ [1]
The people of the island disdain the olive's
most desirable quality, however
They only begin the harvest when the olives are ripe enough
When the effect of the aphrodisiac is long gone

I must go to the island
To show them the ways of passion
And free the people of their dictatorship
The olive, the last resort
To satisfy my intimate desires

Any infringement of the island's peace was to be severely punished.





(the city of truth)

(the city of truth)



(Bill Murray):

It was a transparent and breathless night. [2]

I had arrived in Istanbul the day before and taken a boat to cross the river
The Bosphorus was bathed in silence

Watching from the shoreline,

The island has a mysterious air

At its base, the Court of Justice

The columns reflecting the image of the garden surrounding it

The idea of layering, intensification, completion are alien to it: it has no layers [3]

A monument for a truth

That the people claim has vanished

in the rest of the world

The island,

Their last resort for reason

Topping the tower is a lantern

Overpoweringly bright,

Exaggerating the size of the islet

Its ecstasically pink, life size replica of the long since vanished Lighthouse of Alexandria is visible for miles [4]

I could see my object of desire from afar

Guiding the boat and my senses alike

The little twig on the tree [...] in the evening

light became an experience sunk deep [...], an experience that could scarcely be expressed in words. [5]

Meandering through the gardens that never quite allowed one to grasp its reality

To tell you the truth, this [...] capital of the Continent has for the moment the effect of a desert on me. [6]

I inspected the garden,

The flower garden, kept with utmost precision

Grand axes slicing the island

Into geometric units of delegation

It could be emitting a beauty far greater than the gardens of Hagia Sophia

Somehow, it seems perfect

But it will never attract any bees

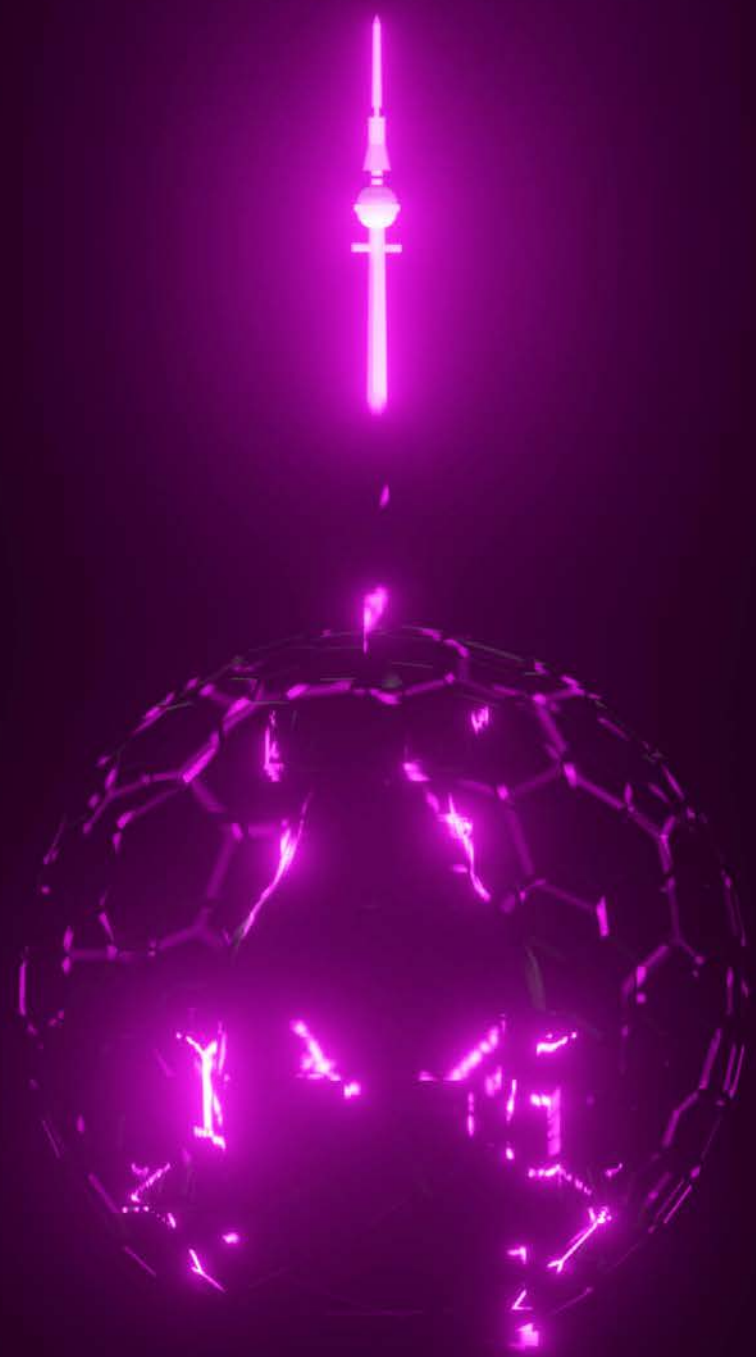
Against this background, at once near and limitless, a man stands out in full length silhouette; he is seen in profile [7]

Caught in his endeavors, he gets startled,
Disappearing into the void

All he leaves behind are

Damaged soil and

Tools for repotting





(Bill Murray):

Probing the stems of

Roses, saffron and tulips

I noticed the pathetic extent of their size

6-8cm of flower bodies

Enveloped by their miniature neighbors

This garden wasn't made for serious conversation [8]

As I stand before the Sacred Tree,

I notice the same delusion

that already cursed the flowers

The honored bearer of peace and truth

Diminished to a shrub

Dwelling in a plastic flower pot

This garden [...] does not whet your appetite; it quenches it.[9]

A French Baroque Garden 1:5

Nonetheless, before the portals of the Court it stood

Its archaic branches waving lightly in the wind

As if the tree was joyful of my advent

Finally, the moment of truth

My hand reached for the cursed fruit

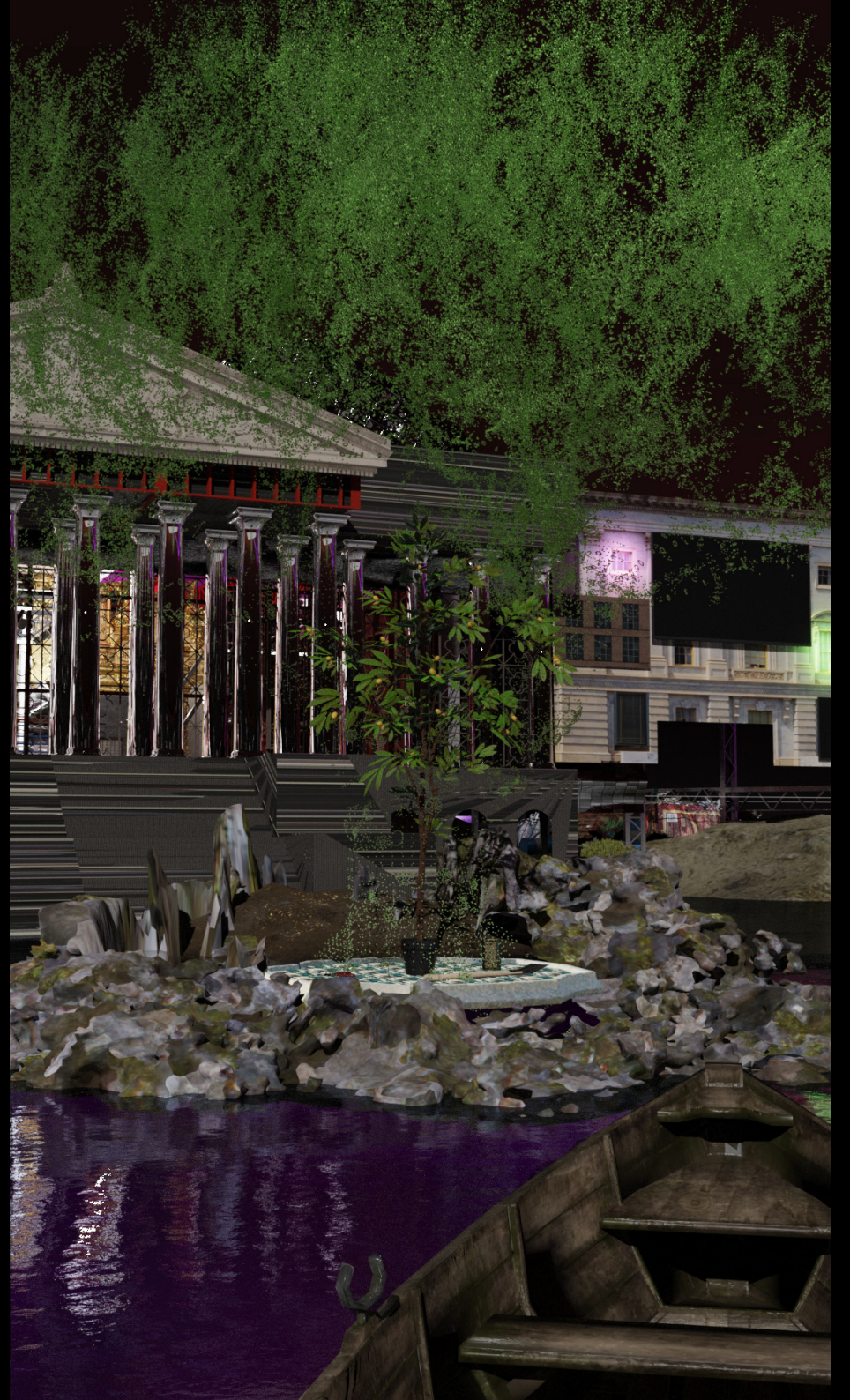
I couldn't resist the temptation

The guards are already alerted

The people are shouting:

“Justice for Bill Murray”

Whatever that could mean





(a figurative reception)

(a figurative reception)



(Bill Murray):

I was guided by the guards to the back of the grand court , *its approach [...] by water from an oval shaped harbour* [10]

The massive walls and the grand entrance creating a coating suitable for an institution of this caliber

Any visitor was immediately being led to the statue of Athena

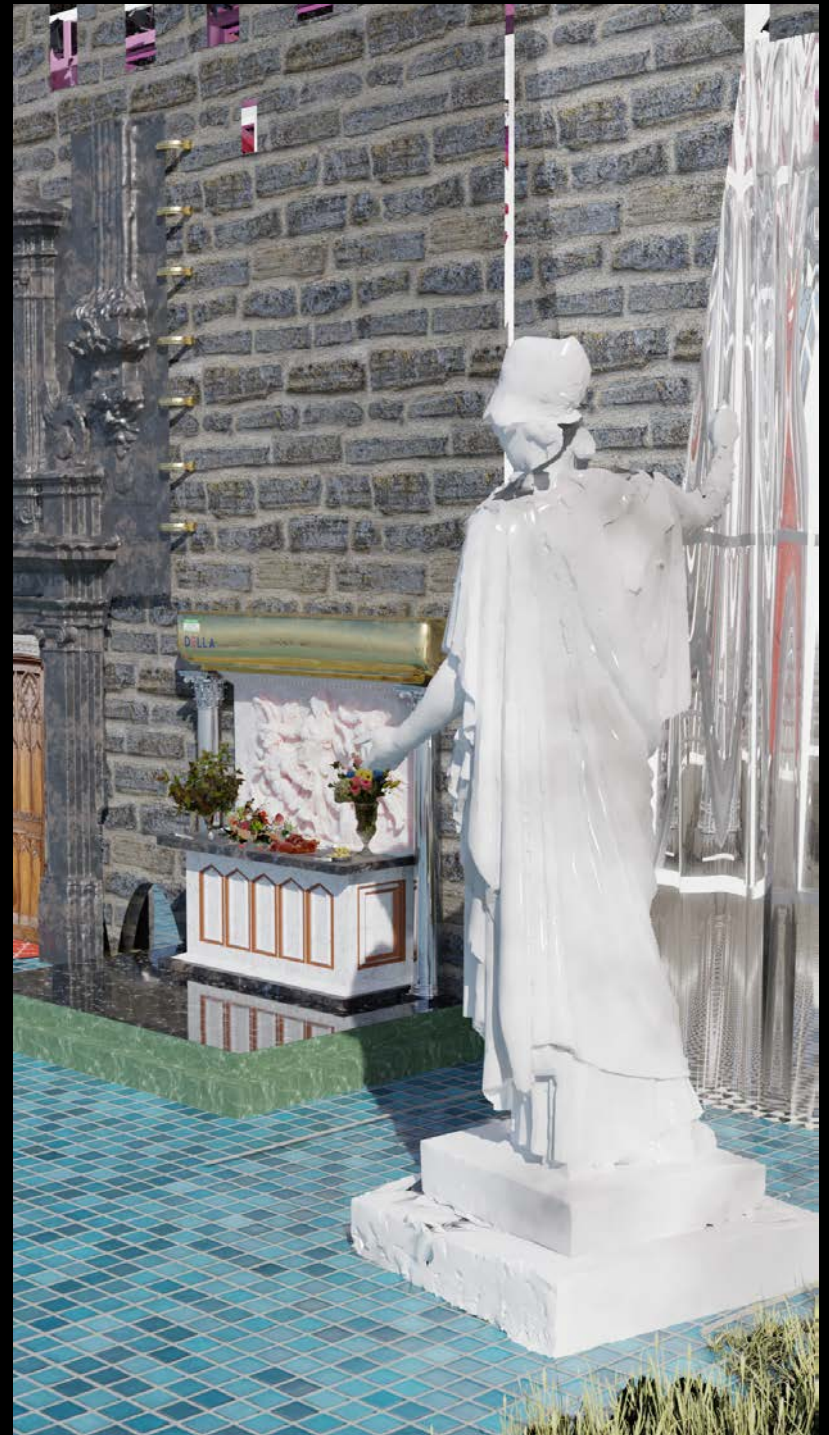
She was enveloped by a vicious backdrop Suggesting another force in play A force in need of control

The people anticipated what offering I would present to their goddess

What was I supposed to contribute to the peace of the island, to truth?

Reluctantly, I tossed one of my pill organizers at the foot of the altar

In honor of two rituals as artificial as they are absurd



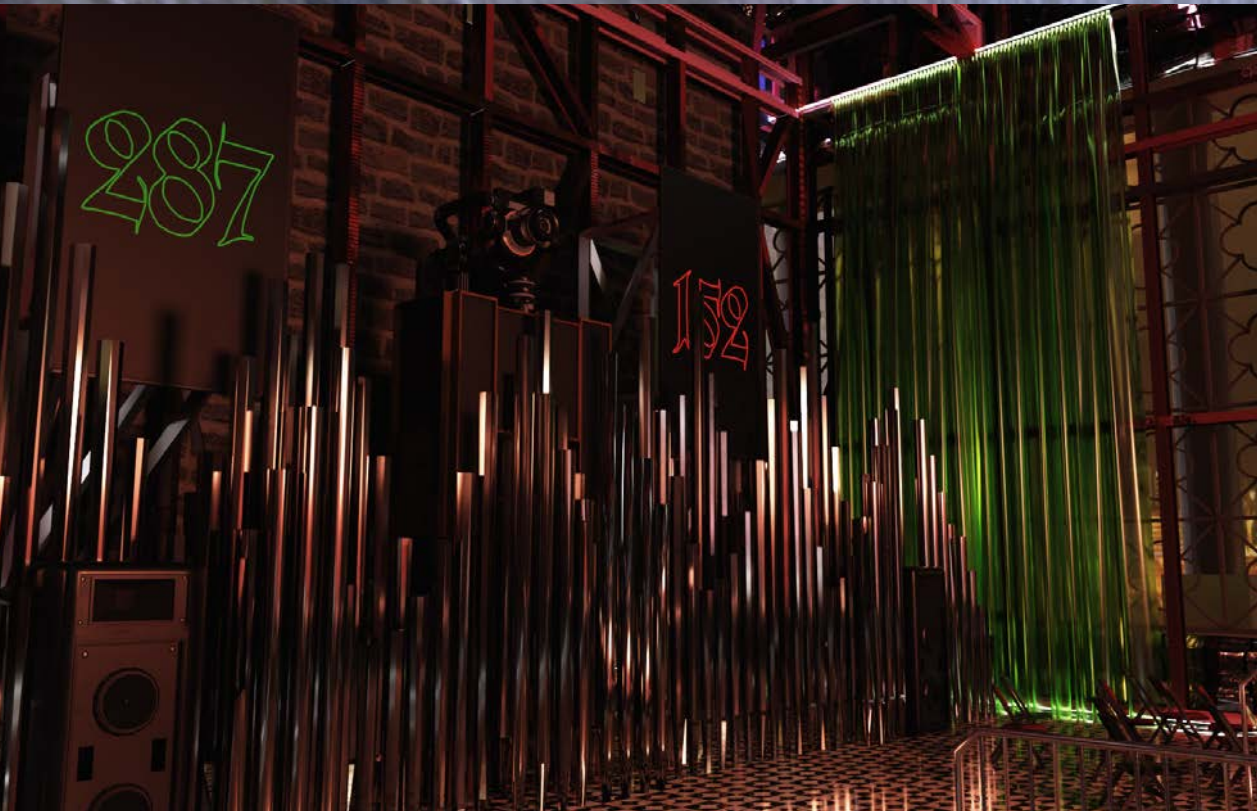




(the court)

(the court)







The curtains are open
 Istanbul is watching
 The citizens of the island gathered by the
 cenotaph,
 Around its empty heart
 Where Bill Murray was to be placed
 The Jurisdiction sat on high thrones,
 Looking down on the Accused
 The imbalance was apparent
 Different concentrations of truth
 Made the hall sink
 Towards the side of the judge
 The throne had to get higher and higher
 To still enjoy the vista

Behind the gracious framework,
 More and more clutter to hold up
 the graceful seat
*Soon, the throne will have no other support than
 a heap of corpses and ruins.[11]*
 A flood of citizens forced themselves
 Onto the chairs
 That were of significantly lower quality
 Than the one of the Jury
 A Hall of Asymmetrical Densities
 A game of

Medium-Density Fiberboard (680 kg/m³)
 vs.
 African Blackwood (1,270 kg/m³)

Their views fixated on the ornate backdrop
 Of the high powers
*Nobility [as] a graceful ornament to the civil
 order [12]*

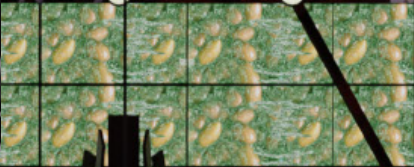
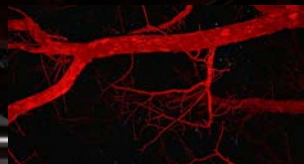
One by one,
 The witnesses would present their assessment
 Regarding the state of the olive tree
 An arena for a symposium

(The Gardener):

Along with his ruinous physical interventions,
 [the Accused] *scrutinized the garden with that
 attentive gaze which studies
 rather than looks [13].* Robbing the Sacred Tree
 of its young fruit has pushed it into deep, incur-
 rable illness. Its eternal trunk is splintering. Its
 everlasting leaves are wilting. The seed of future
 peace has been sown into toxic soil

And, after a pause, he added:

Anarchy is entering this garden. [14]





A 3D-rendered scene of a dilapidated room. The floor is covered in a black and white checkered pattern. In the foreground, there is a dark wooden desk with a small lamp and a bottle. To the left, a window with a wooden frame looks out onto a dark exterior. The walls are heavily damaged, with peeling paint and exposed concrete. A doorway in the background leads to another room with a checkered floor. The overall atmosphere is one of decay and ruin.

Soon, the throne will have
no other support than
a heap of corpses and ruins.

interlude

ascent

to

ascendancy

(ascent to purity)

(ascent to purity)



Looking for a space suitable for the consumption
of the stolen olives
He finds a peculiar entrée
Veiled in an abundance of olive oil
Flowing down its walls
The view on the city crystal clear
For now
Before it, subtle experiments
on organic substance

Fine Marble stairs guiding him upwards
It had to be the judge's domicile

(Bill Murray):
The olive
My last resort
I have tried Viagra, Levitra, Staxyn,
Even Oyster



One floor up, he takes shots of olive oil straight
from the bottle

Himself resembling more
the pouring stream of oil

Than the moment of sophistication
the tower provides

Feeling as he was betraying
the olives in his pocket

Knowing that it wouldn't provide
the same sensation

But this cannot be a space for Sacred Olives
An aura of intoxication forces him to sit down,

Looking out of the window opposite the bar
The sun had already set

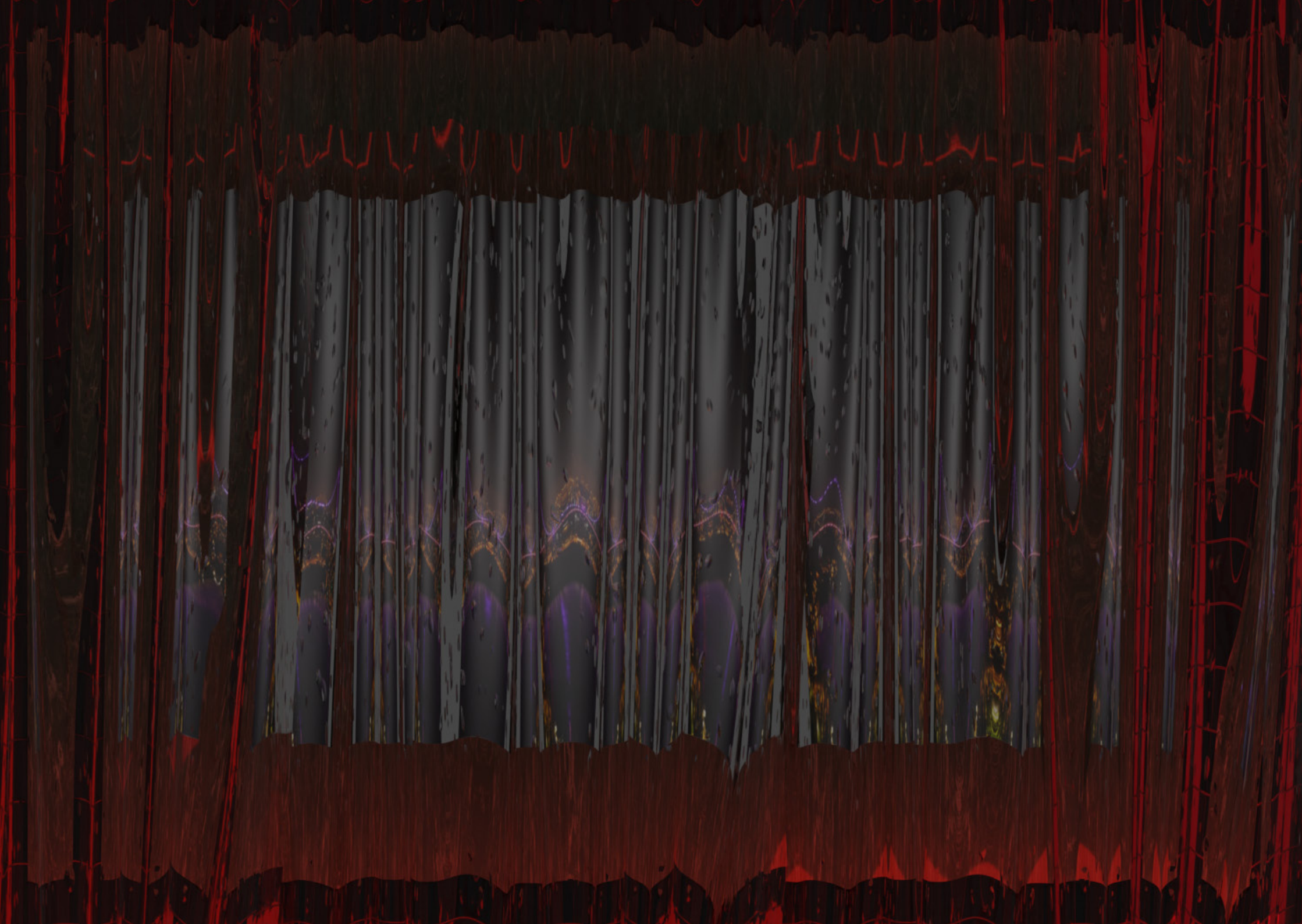
The skyline of Istanbul in purple lights
Maybe in honor of truth

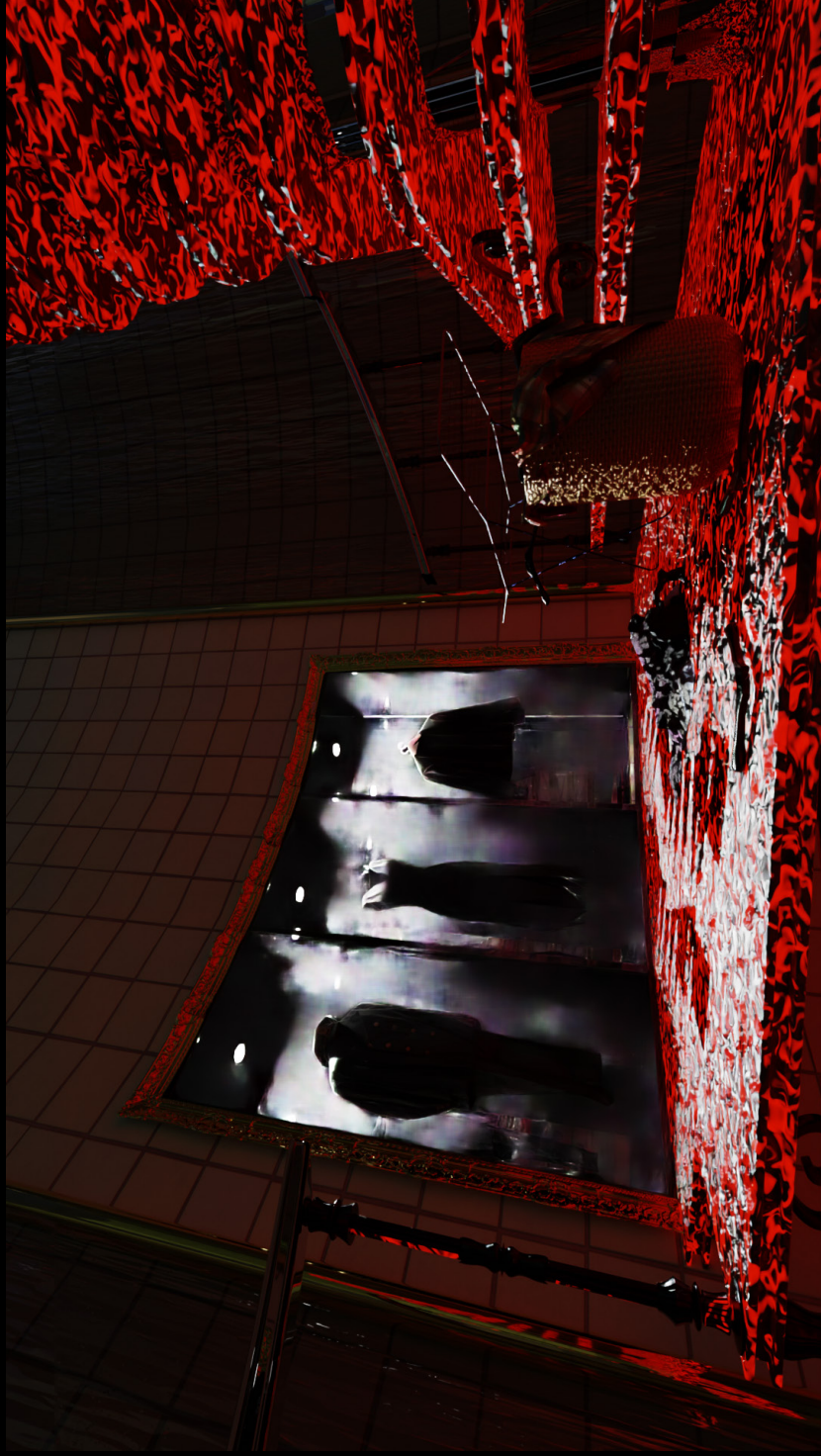
Bill climbs higher and higher
The steps seem to be getting larger
with each stride

He is getting exhausted

(Bill Murray):

I have tried Amphetamine, Cialis,
Stendra, Even Ginseng





Tight entries spiked with coat hangers
Slowly undress Bill on his way to the top
In a state of mania, he soaks his broken fabrics
On the lubricated wall

The Judge's closet
A treasured space for something
as mundane as textile
Almost demanding one to get naked
before entering his domicile
Mere artefacts of who would actually be able to
give true justice in this day and age
Hiding behind garments
cannot be enough anymore

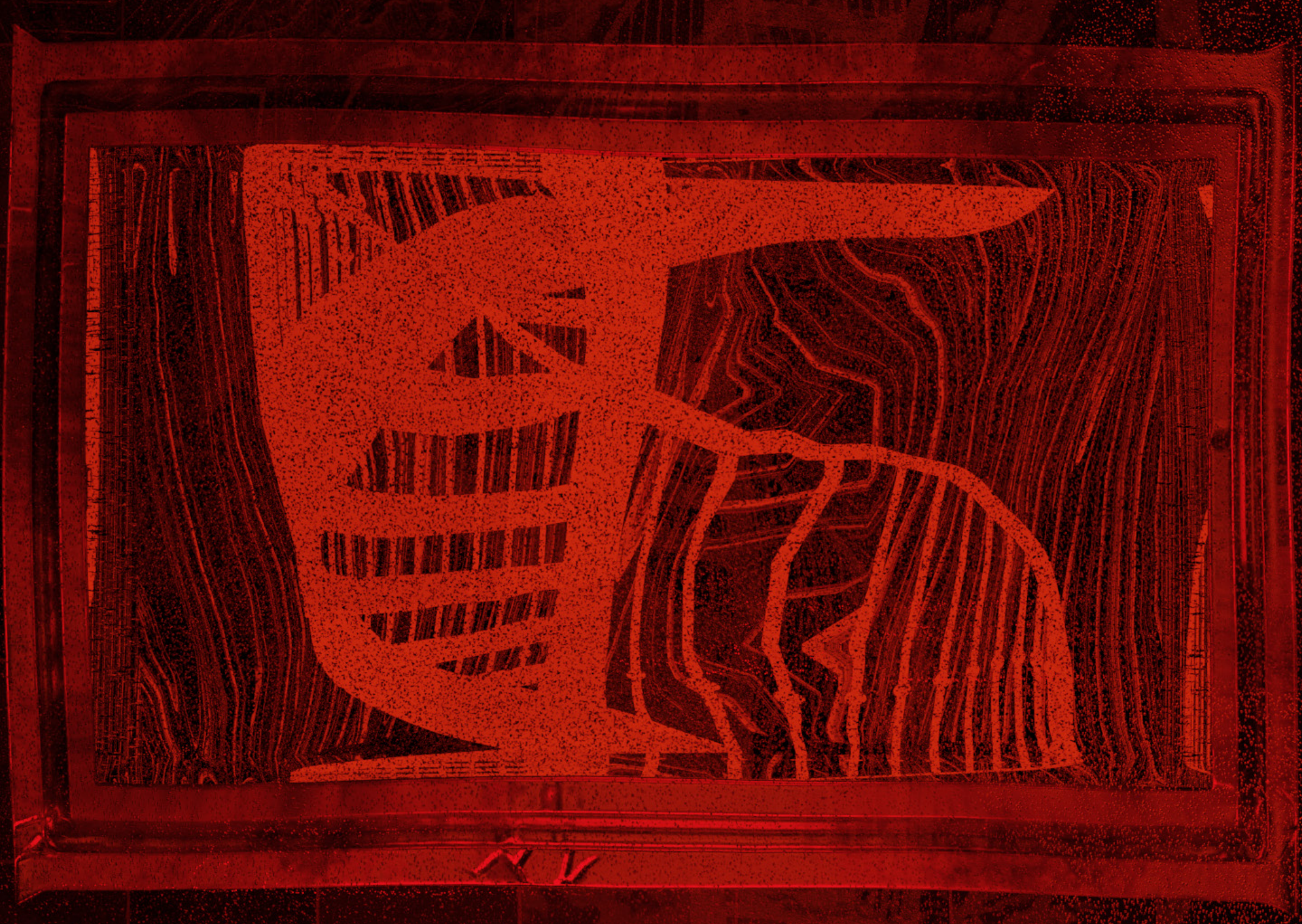
Opposite the wardrobe
No more views
Simply a mirror
Bill looks back at his naked, frustrated self
The blinding glow of the marble
only allowing a distorted gaze

(Bill Murray):

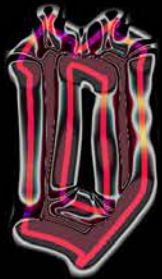
*Five staircases with five entrances [15]; No, six,
seven, eight, nine, ten. Ten spiral staircases*

*round a tower and one is not visible to another
and when anyone is in one he cannot go into another;
and it is a good system for those who are
maintained there, in that it prevents them
from mingling with each other [16]*

The higher he climbs,
the more he tries to reach the top,
The more removed he seems to get
from his desire
His skin is wearing down from cold ceramic of
the walls, attempting to wash his clothes
After some time,
The fatigue consumes him,
And he collapses on the stairs

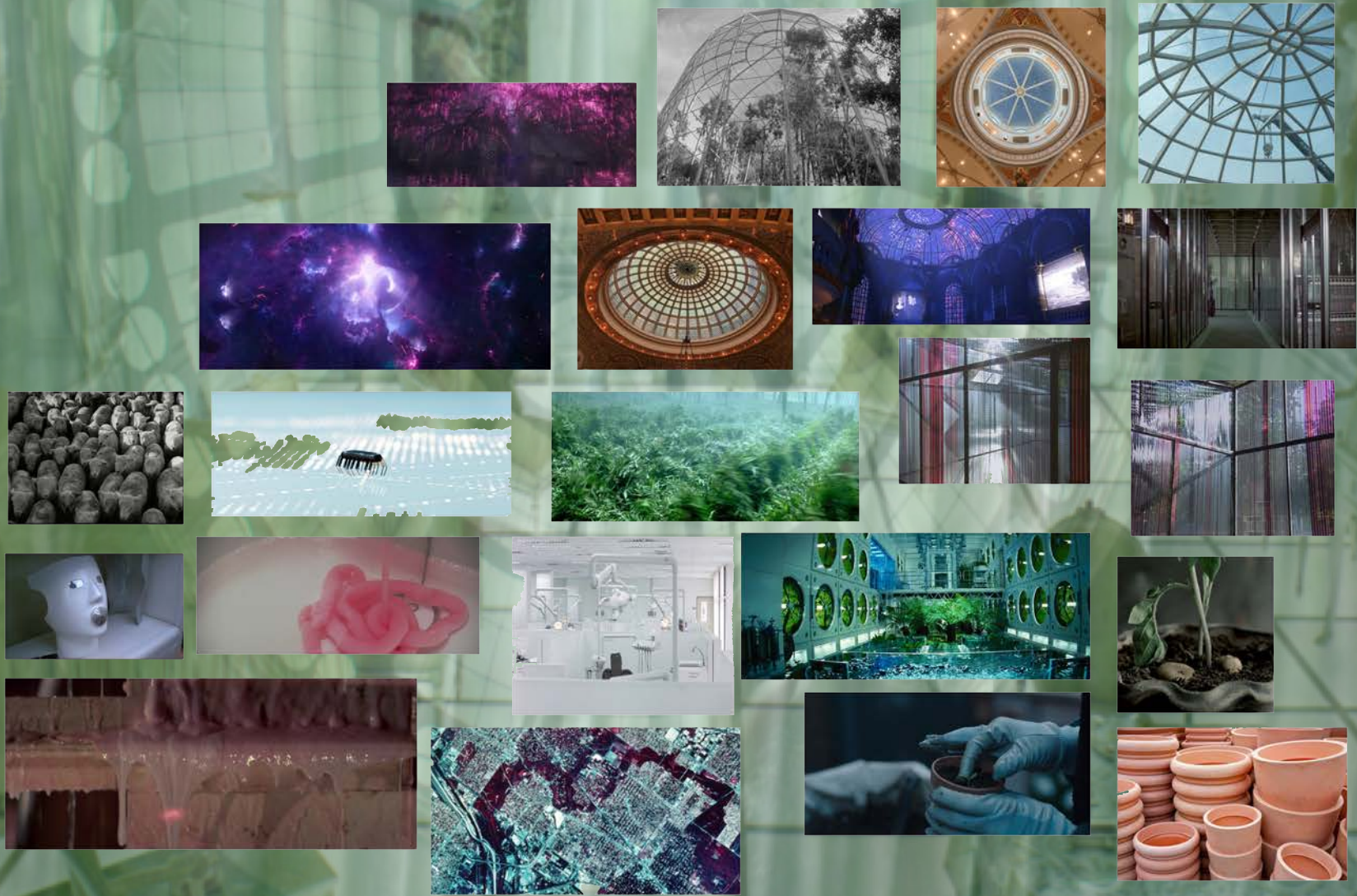


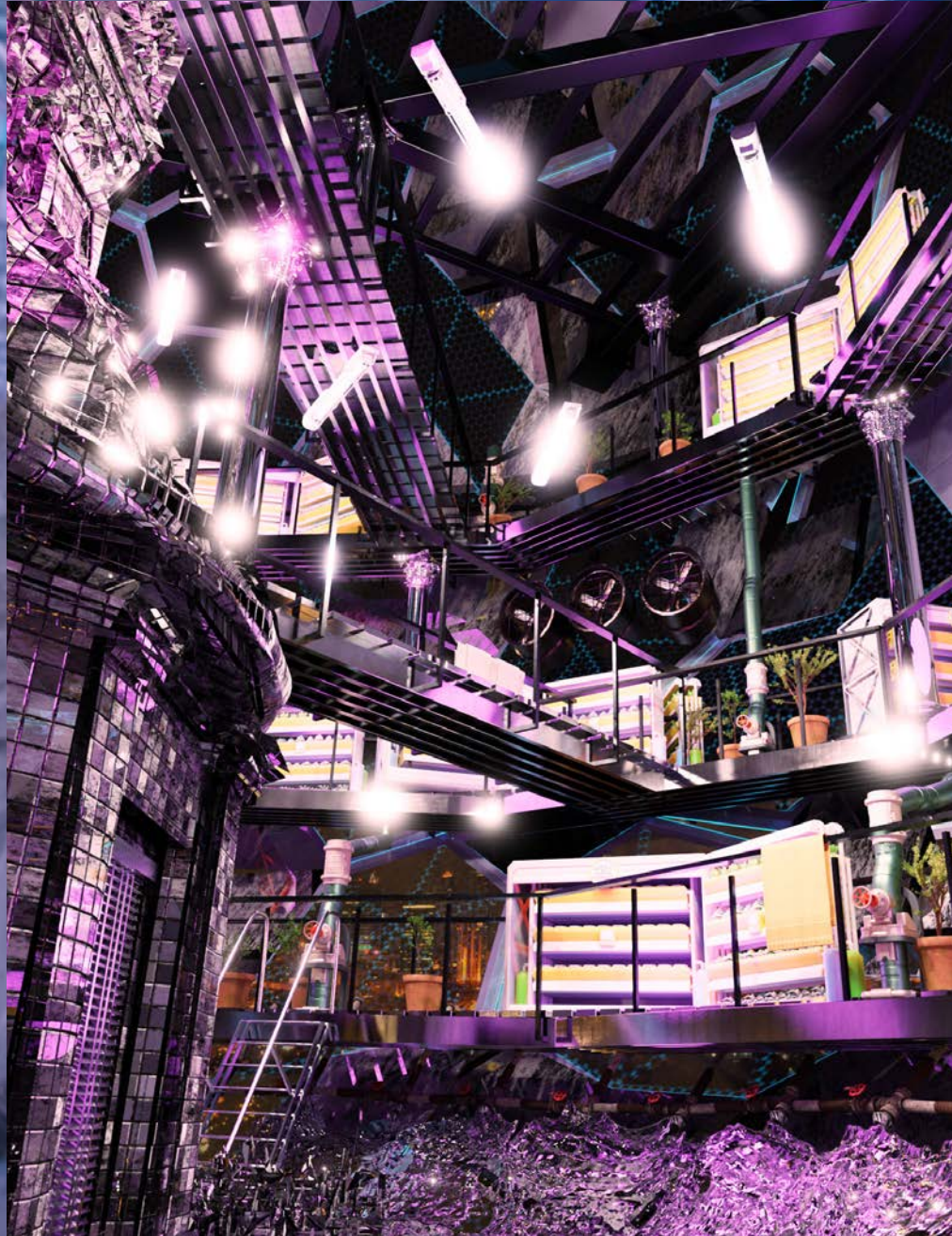




(the carcass)

(the carcass)





(Bill Murray):

It had been a dense and hysterical night
The Judge took me by the hand, guiding me
Through the cursed system of the tower
The place of my frustration
Before we enter his chamber, he tells me:

(The Judge):

First, I will show you the truth

(Bill Murray):

Upon entering the top of the tower
I was blinded by the purple luminescence of a million lamps
Hanging off a steel frame construction
Flooding white shelves
Ordering a million seedlings to grow
Light is the centre, its source is the artificial [17]
It was a manufactory for the sacred olive tree, a laboratory for truth
The holy aphrodisiac spewing down the bottom of its shell
The composition would almost be too artificial were it not broken by
[18] slight hints of the natural

All that remains of the 15th century cupola was its silhouette
Mimicking the lantern that it once used to be
Guiding boats on the Bosphorus

As if its function had never changed in 300 years

(Bill Murray): I stared at the olive that was in my pillbox

Having lost all meaning
Then at the arrangement of steel tubes, olive saplings and hydroponics
Although it was filled to the brim, all that really remained was an empty
shell of a truth long vanished



(appropriation)

(appropriation)





Bill drags the judge into the chamber in the middle of the dome
To finish his mission and free the Civitas Veri
A chamber, where all the items accumulated
That had to make space
for the production of truth
Sofas, lamps, treasures, ornaments of authority
The abundance of tastelessness
seemed to swallow
The extremely tight space

(Bill Murray):

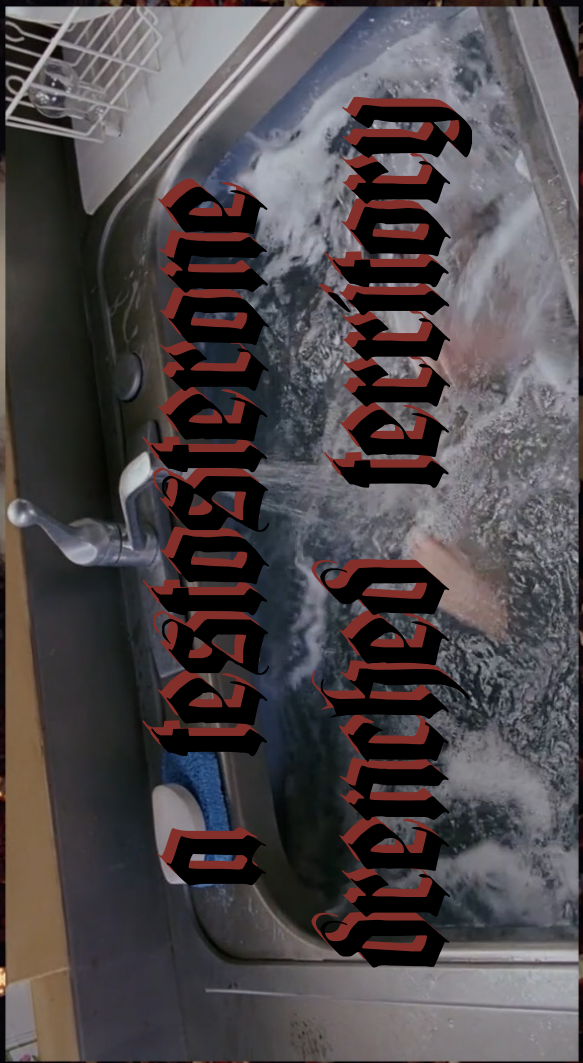
It is perfect. The smoothness of the walls will enforce the effect of the oil.
The leather of the furnishing will provide enough friction to enjoy control. The stained windows ensure intimacy but introduce enough light to not lose the visual feast of the act.

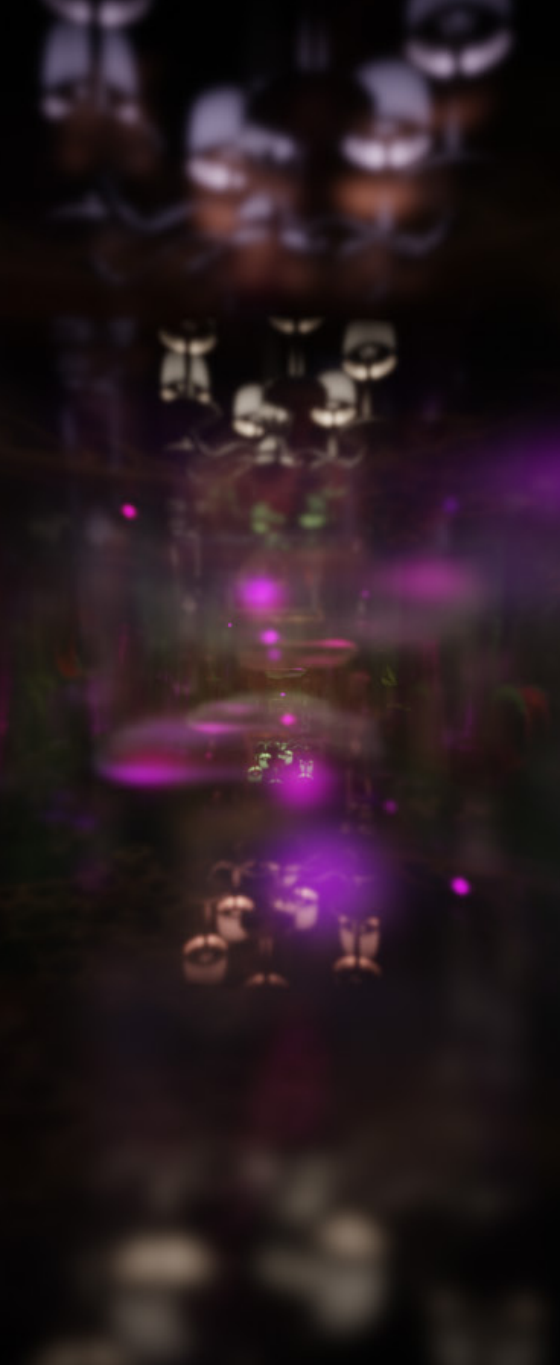
*The corner was the apex of erotic feeling [19]
A testosterone drenched territory [20],
A slave to Bill's desires*

They fold their hands, the olive getting crushed

Between four palms and twenty fingers,
When the oil finally leaks
It displays its full power
As an aphrodisiac
As a lubricant
Staining the relics of a window frame
Enwrapping the space in steam
When Bill reaches his state of desire,
None of the oil is left

He is satisfied
But The Judge is begging Bill,
On his knees
To give up the second olive,
For he himself had merely been used
Without benefit
But Bill chose reason
And kept the olive









(the verdict)

(the verdict)



The people of the island were in disagreement
 About the right means of justice
 Some believed the stranger freed them from their ball and chain
 Others believed that he brought disorder onto the peaceful island

It had to be a tomb, as some believed,
 Death was the fitting sentence
 But it had to be honorable, as others believed,
 That he brought another truth on the island
 It had to be
 A grave for lust, and of absolute truth
 But a celebration of desire, and of reason

This opened up a big cleft in the Court
 Some brought shovels, jackhammers, pickaxes
 Hacking onto the lithic floor
 Of the empty heart
 Others brought their most valuable items
 Olives, Athenic memoria, Crystalline Silicon
 To fill the hole dug by their foes
 Turning the spartan grave
 Into a sarcophagus

(The Manic):
*We must scent out the truth;
 dig in the earth for it, and seize it.*[21]

All parties
 Assisting each other
 In the relentless sculpting
 Of a cenotaph for their scapegoat

**Athena and Aphrodite
Looked upon the verdict with great amusement
As they saw the people
awkwardly stumble,**

**Trying to replicate the dance
of long-lost times**

**That they themselves had
Unlearned**



- 1) *Bible, Judges 9 :8*
- 2) *Proust, In Search of Lost Time Vol VI Time Regained*
- 3) *Koolhaas, SMLXL*
- 4) *Lindsay, Aerotropolis The Way Well Live Next*
- 5) *Musil, The Man Without Qualities*
- 6) *Bell, Men of Mathematics*
- 7) *Foucault, The Order of Thing*
- 8) *Asimov, Complete Robot Anthology*
- 9) *Seneca, Complete Works*
- 10) *Gothein, A History of Garden Art*
- 11) *Michelet, Women of the French Revolution*
- 12) *Wollstonecraft, Complete Works*
- 13) *Hugo, Les Miserables*
- 14) *Hugo, Les Miserables*
- 15) *da Vinci, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*
- 16) *da Vinci, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*
- 18) *Ruskin, The Stones of Venice*
- 19) *Anzaldua, This Bridge We Call Home*
- 20) *Anzaldua, This Bridge We Call Home*
- 21) *Hugo, Les Miserables*

