SEA SOMA

By Dora Đurkesac

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The sea squirt swims freely in the sea until permanently attached to a rock. It digests the nervous system, now useless in static life. This creature provoked a theory that the brain evolved among species following the complexity of bodily movement.

Intelligence is usually associated with the brain, and in the realm of computing belongs to math and logic. The embodied cognition is still too complex to translate into an artificial one. Meanwhile, the collaboration between the mind and algorithm is evolving, and *soma* acquires the anatomy of sitting, hunched back, *tech neck*, or *text claws*.

Humans are developing flat encounters that belong to the infosphere and data cycles. The experience of the world is filtered through touchscreens and designed content. Smartphones are both objects of liberation and tools of domination. Acquired habits, such as compulsive information seeking or 2617 touches a day, are now part of the product. The wish to connect or the mere fact of being bored or lonely are usable internal triggers for hook models developed by UX design. The emotion and attention are navigated by the brain that is rewarded with a dose of dopamine.

How do we return to the idea of touch as vision, known to be our earliest mode of interaction and feeling of the world? How does dance intertwine the inner and outer stimuli, and how does skin become the interface between them? How do we find peace with a lack of in-

put or nourish digital relationships to repair neurons? One could embrace the hybrid world's contradictions, merge with the screens and fully embody the static creature. Or rehearse haptic communication and extend algorithmic intelligence – perhaps through liquidity and somatic encounters.

The seawater and a touchscreen bring together two experiential and conceptual opposites. One is the feeling of interconnectedness in the seawater through the body. The other is the fragmentation of senses through data, screens, and algorithmic content. The sea is an environment to exercise the feeling of immersion and encounters. It evokes the embodied knowledge unknown to the screen surfaces. The porosity and dissolution of the boundaries oppose the perceptive habit of self-containment.

Intelligent transformations happen in the challenges of these encounters. The dancer as a researcher explores embodied cognition. As a static body attached to the infosphere, she experiences the world only through sight and sound. She is rediscovering skin as an interface and vision as touch, static and floating movements. Dance practice highlights the ever-changing collaborations and adaptations through movements.

Every organism is a different intelligent infrastructure bound to its body, movement rules, or sensorial interaction. Embodied cognition brings us closer to other species. It provokes thinking and acting through complex

systems of an animal, human, or even algorithmic or machine soma. Algorithms and mobile apps could be our collaborators, and their media transformations as the nature of digital cycles. Perhaps, those are the tools contributing to the potential development of future forms of imagination, a somatic extension? Digital objects that, through their translations, follow communication, create physical sensations, or even experiential spaces?

"Sea Soma" proposes intelligence as digital immersion, floating, screen architecture, algorithmic fiction, phone creatures, tactile encounters, and dance explorations.
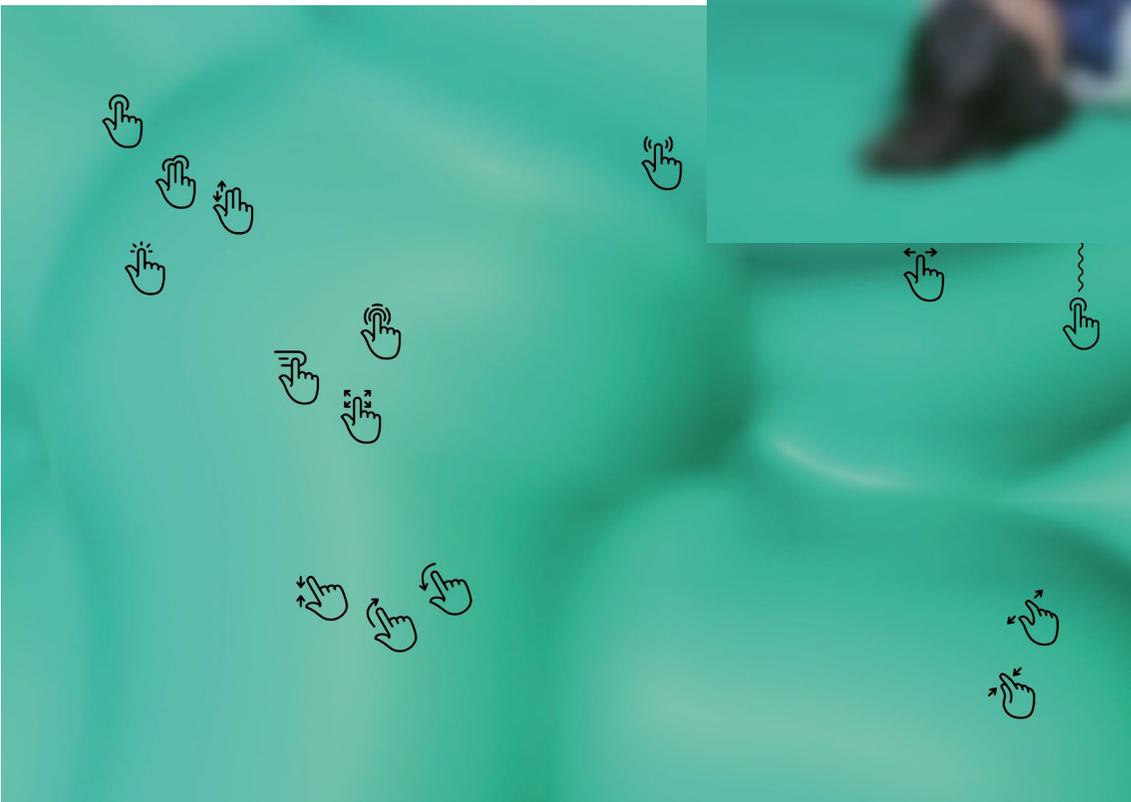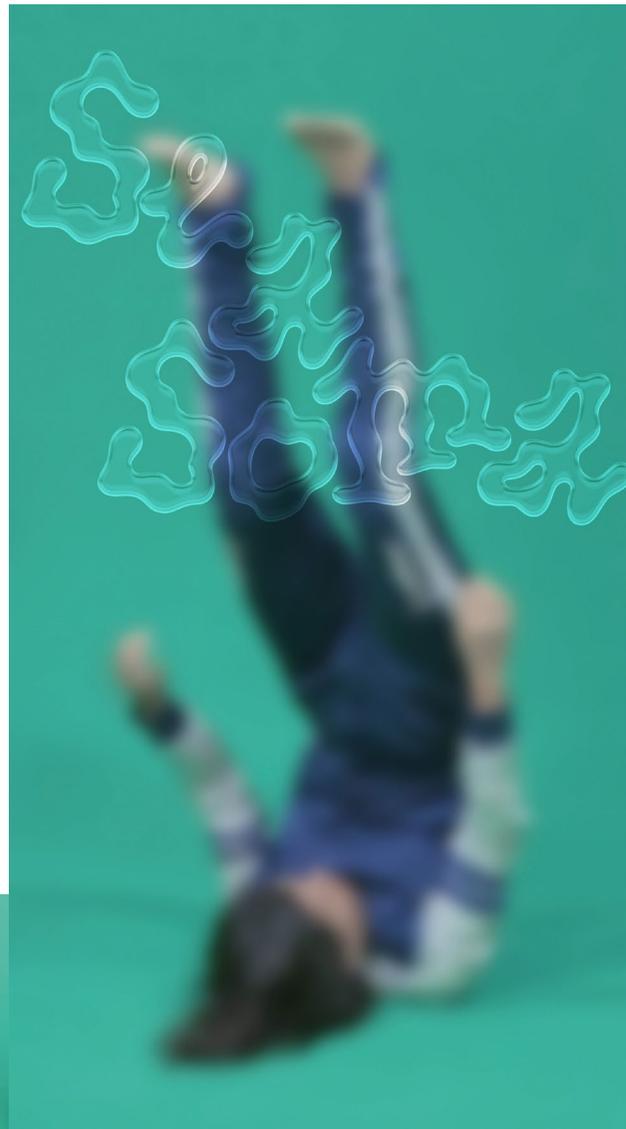
"Sea Soma" is a fictional ecosystem exploring water and digital objects as healers of somatic senses. It focuses on embodied cognition and opposes the mind-oriented perception of intelligence. It observes the static screen-based life and contemplates the digital as a sufficient experiential substitute. Its elements are a sea squirt, algorithmic sounds and images, dancer researcher, transparent screens, and mobile phones on neck holders. In collaboration with algorithms and a dancer, explorations of the sea and soma materialize through text-to-image-to-sound models. With the help of mobile apps, a video maker, and a UX designer, vision as touch is explored through the process of 3d scanning, filtering, and designin touchscreens and interfaces. Sea Soma encompasses these multimedia explorations as a sensorial installation for practicing vision as touch.

The visuals are a diagrammatic narration of the described ideas. They consist of diverse elements, e.g.:

- touchscreen icons used in interface design
- 3D models made by 3D scanning of a dancer with the Polycam app
- text-to-image models made with the Wombo Dream app
- the generated text made with Rytre.me
- 3D model/trace of touch made with Putty 3D
- found images and drawings

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