

KARLOS GIL

THE CENTRE

CANNOT

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07.03—31.05.2026

**Contemporary  
life is an act  
of necromancy.**

RADIUS presents a solo exhibition by Karlos Gil revolving around the premiere of his latest film, *The Centre Cannot Hold*. A journey through the geological and cosmic deep time of oil, *The Centre Cannot Hold* is a captivating cinematographic journey whereby the planet is a surface relentlessly perforated for the extraction of fossil fuels. The film travels to different locations defined by extractivism: from Los Angeles to the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait to Oman, it transports us to otherworldly landscapes where geopolitical power is accumulated, concocted, and enacted. A hybrid between theoretical treatise, a documentary, a sci-fi film, geopolitical demonology, and esoteric archeology, *The Centre Cannot Hold* is a meditation on the necrological worlding of modernity: extracting dead organic matter to transform it into an energetic and material commodity whilst bringing about the destruction of ecosystems, displacement of indigenous peoples, privatisation of natural resources, illness-bearing pollution, and rising planetary temperatures.

Despite the millions of years that it took for oil and gas to form, and in spite of the negative ecological consequences, they are being extracted at breakneck speed to power economic growth and double down on a fossil fuel economy. This tension between deep time and acceleration defines a relationship with the planet based on non-reciprocal, damning, and megalomaniac enactments of dispossession, depletion, accumulation, and degradation. Fossil fuels exemplify a relationship with the Earth that succeeds centuries of privatisation of natural resources, subjugation of both human and nonhuman life, and never-ending new frontiers of wealth production.

Oil is the narrator of planetary ecological breakdown. It lubricates the flow of power whilst decaying every thing it materially constitutes. Oil, in its manifold transformations and applications—fuel, military technology, clothing, pharmaceuticals, plastics, fertilisers, cosmetics, asphalt, solar panels, and so on—permeates in every nook and cranny of our sense of the world, the self, and collectivity. Fluid, opaque, and flammable: both shell and flesh of our materials and metaphors, oil is the substrate of capitalism's own ecology of degradation and death.

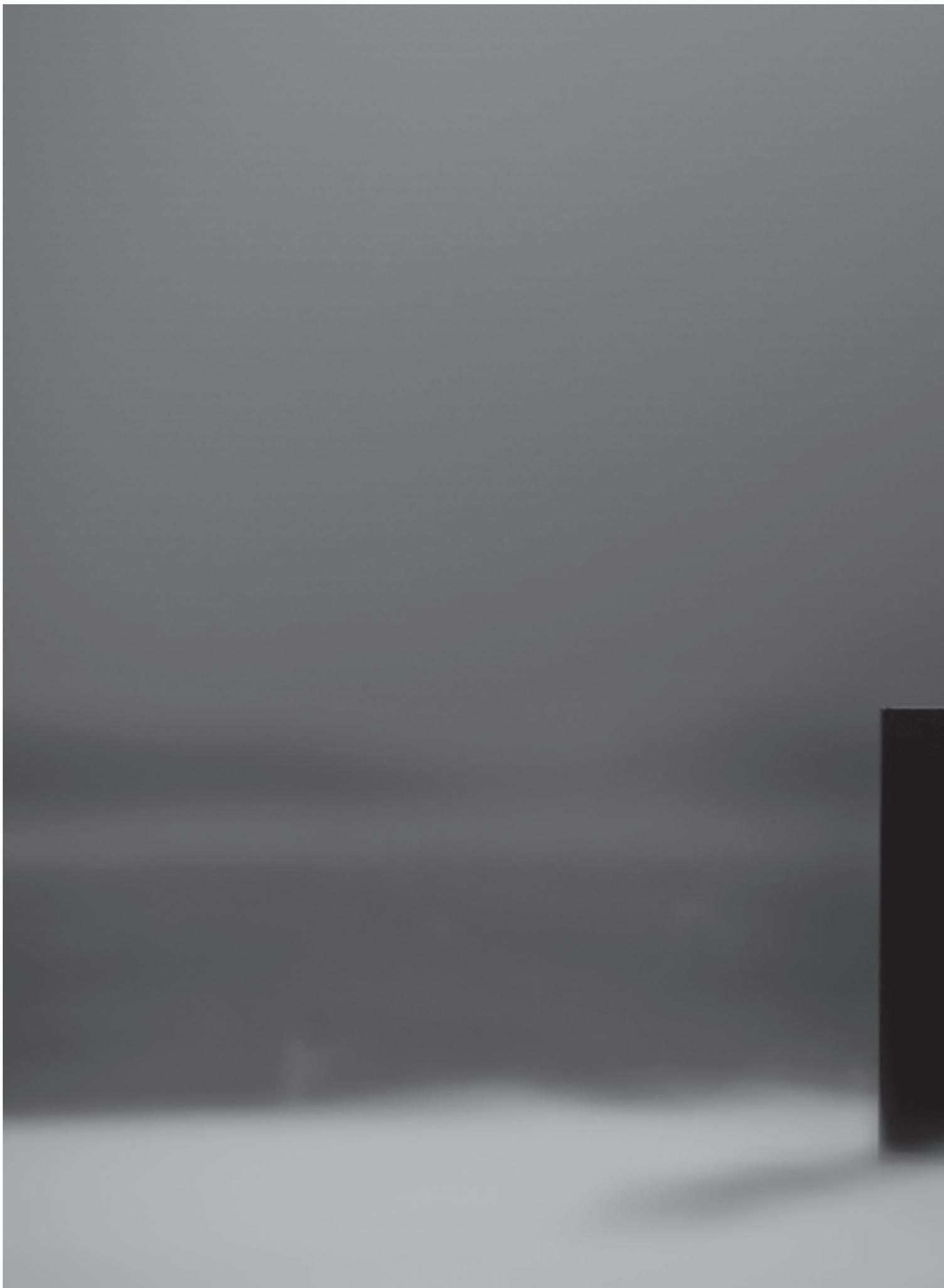
*The Centre Cannot Hold* is a telluric meditation on what Reza Negarestani—whose book *Cyclonopedia: complicity with anonymous materials* (2008) has greatly inspired the film—calls *ungrounding*: the process of degenerating a solid body—the Earth—by corrupting the coherency of its surfaces—oil drilling. From the esotericism of the desert to the constant puncture of the surface of Los Angeles; from the towering oil-fuelled skyscrapers of Abu Dhabi to the eclipsed sun over the Mauritanian desert, oil strings planetary narrations of collapse. Crude, slippery, and acrid: oil is the nonhuman enabler of the Anthropocene.

Furthering the journey to deep time and millenary geology, Gil also presents a series of heliographs belonging to the series *Vortex* (2025—ongoing). They consist of images of the interior of Icelandic hydrothermal volcanoes captured by means of heliography: an early photographic technique that uses sunlight exposure to capture images on a metallic sheet coated with bitumen (a byproduct of oil). Deep in the Eyjafjörður fjord, Iceland, submarine volcanoes emit steam in a seascape hidden from human perception. Often located near tectonic plates, submarine volcanoes are geological witnesses that harbour extreme, dark ecosystems powered by chemosynthesis. Rising from the abyssal plains, the volcanoes are deep time formations from the roaring Earth crust. Despite the difficulty in approaching them, they are increasingly targeted for the exploitation of mineral resources, renewable geothermal energy, and scientific research. New frontiers for the energy sector and capitalism's new commodities are being speculated on one of the oldest geological features on Earth.

Treated with thermochromic patinas and printed on steel and copper plates, the heliographs are an alchemical feat: by means of sunlight, they imprint that which sunlight does not reach. *Vortex* captures the billowing smoke clusters from the volcanoes mixed with colours produced by the lightwave differences in the Icelandic sky. Arresting and cryptic, *Vortex* approximates us to an aesthetic of deep time.

In his practice, Karlos Gil explores ideas of nature and its transformation over deep geological time to explore the “otherness” of our surrounding world. His practice examines the complex and often contradictory ways in which human beings relate with the natural world, layering his artworks with encrypted stories from science fiction, occultism, underground culture, nihilism, mythology and industrial evolution. Reflecting on a manifest impression of the “fall of time”, decadence, ruin, and obsolescence, Gil proposes viewpoints from which to affectively apprehend the progressive decadence that is exacerbating ecological collapse for the sake of capitalism's continuity.

Travelling through landscapes of energy production, desertification, cosmic genesis, and ecological exhaustion, this exhibition beckons a sentient geological relationship to the world and an emotional contestation to the irreversible planetary configurations that extractivism is spearheading.







Deep within the Earth's crust, millions of years of nonhuman life are sealed in sedimented burial. In the absence of oxygen and under precise heat and pressure, a geological miracle takes place: first kerogen, then hydrocarbons, finally oil and gas. Slowly, they rise to porous rocks, where they deposit in millenary slumber, eventually to be awakened by the fracture of the drill. Each perforation is a viscous beat of liberation. Liquified and gasified dead matter is reanimated in the mechanical CPR of the pumpjack. Sixty million years of prehistoric marine life are poured into a single oil barrel within seconds. Transformation is bound. Refined, separated, distilled: oil is transmogrified into endless materialities pervading into all planetary corners. Look around. Feel your clothes. Unwrap your food. Swallow that pill. Contemporary life is an act of necromancy.

The necromantic alchemy of enlivening dead matter into the energetic and material substrate of life on Earth cannot escape its morbid finitude. As soon as oil and gas are pulled to the surface, the clock of death starts ticking: the land is poisoned, the air corrupted, life is displaced. It spills, it leaks, it is disposed of: the ghost of nonhuman prehistory curses all it touches, like a revenant's revenge. All the while, the raging torches of gas flaring signal the mortuary double bind: both exhumation and funeral take place in paradoxical simultaneousness. The future is cancelled in every oil well. No oil field can be restituted to its former ecological state. Oil spills cannot be fully cleaned up, ever. Oil soaks it all, permeating every layer, casting its volatile, lethal crudeness.

Oil extraction perfectly exemplifies capitalism, where the production of life is always based on the creation of death.<sup>1</sup> Oil fields are landscapes of privatisation, enclosure, opacity, and intoxication. Set in enclaves far removed from our daily life, be it on fields or in offshore rigs, these monumental sites of extraction require the fencing of vast areas of land and water. The displacement of human and non-human lives and the intoxication of common resources upon which they depend is unavoidable. Petroextractivism is a logical result of centuries of ecological simplification, land usurpation, and the insertion of human and nonhuman life into chains of production.<sup>2</sup> An animistic consideration of the Earth has long been squandered by capitalism's materialist ecology, which is defined by accumulation of capital, the pursuit of power, and the production of nature as external, controllable, and a reducible commodity.<sup>3</sup> Oil pipelines carry it through like a necrophilic rhizome.

Omnipresent and omnipotent, oil narrates the anthropogenic change on Earth. As Reza Negarestani puts it, "oil is a lubricant upon which everything moves forward, and its flow configures geopolitical struggles to such an extent that the progression and emergence of events may be more influenced by oil than it is by time."<sup>4</sup> The pumpjack is a greased up metronome that unleashes an acceleration of oil time, a time of material splendour and inevitable decay. Every oil barrel is a vessel of eschatology.

Every drilled hole corrupts the wholeness of the earth. Oil drilling opens up portals to the necropolises of fossil fuels as much as it interrupts the smoothness of the surface. The hollowing of the Earth is justified to quench the growing thirst for energy to supply technological acceleration. Yet the gouging of the surface inevitably concludes in decay, which "builds a world where power can only contribute to the degeneration of the formation into never ending waste."<sup>5</sup> In the fourteenth century, scholastic philosopher and mathematician Henry of Langenstein speculated whether there was a possibility that one species would arise from the putrefying corpse of another.<sup>6</sup> Though refuted by evolutionary theory, it poses a pertinent metaphysical reflection on oil: hasn't the extraction of fossil fuels been so totalising and impactful that, arguably, humanity has reached a distinctively enough sense of self as a petrological species born out of the perforated carcass of planetary ecology?

The act of *ungrounding* turns the earth into an exhumation site where the emergence of oil allows for an uprising against the Sun. By means of photosynthesis, solar energy is stored in the nonhuman organisms that end up becoming oil. Aeons of solar power are entrapped by means of sedimentation and stratification deep within the Earth, only to be liberated by the injection of the drill. In its burning, just like the Sun, oil heats and fuels whilst foreboding its exhaustion. By hollowing out the planet from ancient solar power, the energetic hegemony of the star is contested by its terrestrial remnants. Oil is the dark corpse of the Sun.<sup>7</sup> It too can warm up the Earth into oblivion, yet much faster than the Sun will engulf it in the course of five billion years. Once again, the deep time of geology and astronomy is accelerated in an ultimate act of anthropocentrism: the end of the planet will not be dictated by the star that vitalised it, but by its offspring. Every solar eclipse previews the fantasy of upcoming patricide.

The preponderance of oil as the narrator of the planet pushes us to a stark case of *unhappy consciousness*, as described by Hegel. As the energetic hegemon, oil has sedimented the material standards and pleasures of contemporary life in exchange for ecological ruination and violence. We are aware of the contradiction. We enjoy what it can bestow to us while feeling its deep discomfort. Yet, we are unsure about how to overcome it: we can hardly imagine a world without oil.

No more can be put together than is being torn apart. The thermodynamic predicament exposes the fundamental entropy of the universe: from order to disorder, in irreversible motion. Every ungrounded hole is an unredeemable act of terrestrial profanation and cosmic entropy. Struck by a cosmic nihilism and a decaying acceleration of terrestrial undercurrents, neoreactionary hallucinations have started to assume form across politics worldwide. "Before a decomposing and dying cosmos, the patriarchal Man-God claims his last insane and delirious privilege, building hierarchies and hallucinations of greatness in a frantic attempt to hold together his routing and monstrous body. If nothing is of any importance, if everything degenerates and crumbles, Man stands as an emperor of dust, because he knows no way of existence other than dominion."<sup>8</sup>

Oil, Axis Mundi: our universal, symbolic, and physical focal point where heaven, earth, and the underworld meet.<sup>9</sup> The dark blood that pumps into the heart of our material assemblages. The lube to the mechanistic worlding of capitalism. It greases as much as it rusts, for entropy is unavoidable. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. However, this is not necessarily a nihilistic declamation. In our unhappy consciousness there is a call for agency. Can we reconcile ourselves with the darkness of oil? Can we afford not to? As much as oil is the site of hegemonic power, it can also undermine it in its deformation of the surface, its interruption of smoothness, and its underground nature. Turning the Earth from Whole to Unground, oil brings forth different considerations of terrestriality. Who gets to enact them? Such is the plight. What is inevitable, howbeit, is an embrace of darkness, for

“[...] mystery and manifestations  
arise from the same source.  
This source is called darkness.  
Darkness within darkness.  
The gateway to all understanding.”<sup>10</sup>

Text by Sergi Pera Rusca

<sup>1</sup> Silvia Federici, 'Ecologies of Care: A Conversation', *e-flux journal*, issue #157, October 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Fábio Zuker, 'Ashes to Ashes: On Combustion and Tyranny', *e-flux journal*, issue #137, June 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life. Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (Verso, 2015), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (re.press, 2018), 26.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, 182.

<sup>6</sup> Reza Negarestani, 'Undercover Softness: An Introduction to the Architecture and Politics of Decay', in *Collapse Volume VI*, ed. Robin Mackay (Urbanomic, December 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia*, 130.

<sup>8</sup> Gruppo di Nu, *Revolutionary Demonology* (Urbanomic, 2022), 25.

<sup>9</sup> Mircea Eliade introduced the concept of *axis mundi* within comparative mythology in the 1950s.

<sup>10</sup> Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, 4th-3th century BCE.

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This exhibition has been made possible with the support of the Mondriaan Fund, the Municipality of Delft, the Embassy of Spain in the Netherlands and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), and Acción Cultural Española (AC/E).

# YEAR-PROGRAMME 2026

## YOU AND I ARE EARTH— TOWARDS AN EARTHLY POLITICS

How can this Earth continue to rotate? Seemingly so, the world continues to accelerate tirelessly, and the Earth lumbers on, exhausted and wholly indifferent to human actions. Although the latter does not seem entirely immune and unresponsive to the way fossil-fuel-burning-man continues to disrupt its metabolism, the biosphere. So far, Earth is the only planet known to harbour life, and whether we like it or not, for the time being, Earth is where we take our stand, as dwellers in the critical zone we call the biosphere—the ever-narrowing bandwidth in which life can persist. In short, we are Earth-bound but unable to find a position, as the late philosopher of science Bruno Latour would have said.

Against this backdrop, RADIUS presents the programme YOU AND I ARE EARTH in 2026, focusing on the central question 'Where can we land?' Through five exhibitions and an extensive public and educational programme, we will collaborate with artists and other stakeholders to explore new compositions and possibilities for life in the critical zone—the thin, dynamic layer on Earth's surface where all life is connected to rock, soil, water, and air. Beyond a purely scientific definition, this year-programme—following philosopher Bruno Latour—emphasises the critical zone as an ecological and political concept, emphasising both the vulnerability and interconnectedness of life in the face of climate change.

### REKINDLING LIFE

The journey of humanity, a relative latecomer in the history of the living, is indescribable, yet can be summarised in a single sentence: making life livable and the world habitable. Recently, ecological thinking has realised, as other peoples already practice daily in their relationships with living things, that life is only livable for humans if it is also livable for the fabric of the living as a whole. That the world can only be livable for us if it is also livable for other living species, for we are nothing more than a nexus of relationships interwoven with other life forms.

With this in mind, we are developing the year-programme YOU AND I ARE EARTH, to continue the conversation about shared ground and the importance of an open society in times of geopolitical tensions and increasing social polarisation. Just when political attention seems

to be drifting away from climate change and thus from defending our diverse environment, we want to collectively lift the world with this programme, setting it back on its axis—call it an ecological lever to rekindle the flames of life. But a sense of powerlessness and despair prevails, despite civil society's strong sense of urgency to take back control. The problem lies in the intermediary between our hands and the world. We need ideas and hands, especially ideas that fit the available hands.

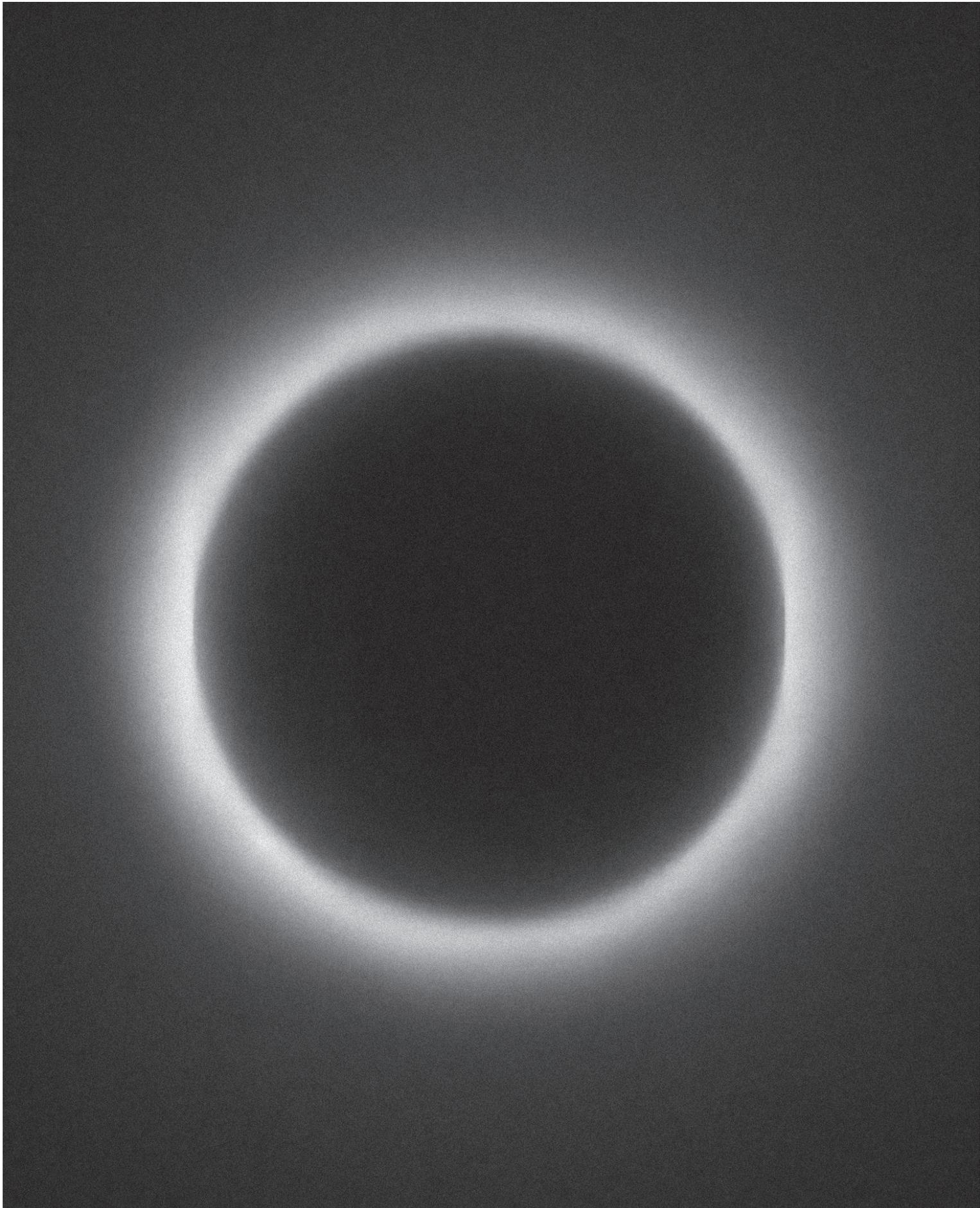
### ON THE ROLE OF ART AS VEHICLE

In our cultural landscape, the idea that we are interdependent and related to the rest of the living world is now commonplace. But why, then, isn't the living world central to our collective attention, to the political arena of what preoccupies us as a society above all else, and sometimes even to contemporary ecological thinking? Because, in our cultural self-image, we do not see ourselves as living beings.

With the year-programme YOU AND I ARE EARTH, we aim to reconsider this lack of human connection with the environment, specifically by transcending the false opposition between humanity and 'nature.' We do this through the work of artists who—following Gabrielle Hecht's definition—use their practice and work as an 'interscalar vehicle' to create new connections between humanity and the Earth, viewed from the perspective of interdependence. The story of climate change is all-encompassing and is generally considered too vast and abstract. In this sense, art can serve as a vehicle, on the one hand, by moving between timescales, making complex systems accessible, and making events beyond our capabilities tangible and palpable. On the other hand, art enables us to move from imagination to action—without imagination, there is no vision of a desirable future.

With the programme YOU AND I ARE EARTH, RADIUS develops a counterpoint to the centripetal force of the dominant narrative of the Anthropocene—which centers on the exceptionality of a particular, detached human type—by telling centrifugal stories that acknowledge the enormous inequalities generated by the various forces changing our planet.





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