

ETH-TECH ART CONTEST • EDITION II • 2nd HONOURABLE MENTION

A More Perfect Nature

Francesca Balestro

University of Padova

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Anchoring Ethical Technology (AI and Data) Usage in the Education Practice

A More Perfect Nature



Short summary of the postdigital positionality

Please provide a brief narrative (200-500 words) introducing the concept of postdigital positionality your work reflects or represents.

A More Perfect Nature reflects my position within the postdigital world: I do not reject digital technology, but I reject the illusion that it is immaterial.

The work begins with a paradox. We are becoming increasingly capable of creating perfect representations of the natural world while consuming the physical resources that allow both technology and nature itself to exist. Artificial intelligence can generate endless forests, rivers that never run dry, and animals preserved forever in ideal landscapes. Yet these apparently

weightless images depend on a material infrastructure of water, energy, minerals, land, and machines.

In the image, this contradiction becomes physical. On one side of a wall, a deer searches for the little water remaining in a depleted landscape. Water is extracted from this world and disappears into technological infrastructure. On the other side, people contemplate screens showing an abundant, perfected version of nature: the same animal surrounded by clear water, vegetation, and life.

The wall is fundamental. The spectators are not choosing to ignore the real animal. They cannot see it. They experience nature exclusively through its representation, while the material consequences that sustain that representation remain hidden behind the interface.

This is where I locate my postdigital positionality. My concern is not simply that technology consumes resources, nor that artificial images might replace real ones. It is that digital systems can simultaneously expand what we are able to see and reduce our ability to perceive the conditions that make those experiences possible.

The work therefore asks what kind of technological future we want to inhabit. I do not imagine a future without artificial intelligence. I imagine one in which technological progress cannot be separated from responsibility for its physical consequences.

We should not become better at representing the world than at preserving the conditions that allow the original to exist.

Short summary of the creative process

Please describe your creative process (200-500 words). If applicable, explain how AI tools (e.g., Midjourney, DALL-E) were used, including the prompts. If the work is entirely handcrafted, describe the materials and ideas that informed its creation.

The creative process began with a sentence: “We destroy the original in order to produce a perfect representation of it.”

I initially explored this idea through generative AI by depicting a physical object being destroyed while an immaculate digital copy emerged from it. The result communicated the idea, but too literally. I wanted the image to create a contradiction that the viewer would discover rather than simply illustrate a statement.

This led me to the material infrastructure behind digital technologies. Water became the central element: both a real resource required by technological infrastructure and a symbol of life. The concept evolved into a disturbing exchange: water disappears from the physical world while abundance reappears inside its digital representation.

I used ChatGPT's image-generation tool iteratively, treating each generation as a sketch to critique and revise. Key prompts and directions included:

"Create an image for an art contest expressing this idea about the digital world: we destroy the original in order to produce a perfect representation of it."

I then shifted the concept:

"Create an image exploring why we take water away from nature in order to represent nature through artificial intelligence."

Later iterations introduced a drought-stricken landscape, a deer searching for water, technological infrastructure extracting that water, and screens presenting an idealised version of the same animal in abundant nature.

The most important change concerned the human spectators. Initially, they could see both the real suffering animal and its digital representation. I rejected this because it implied deliberate indifference. My final direction was:

"The people must not be able to see the real animal. Place a solid wall between the two worlds so that they can only see the screens."

I also refined the visual mechanism so that the pipes clearly siphon water from the real landscape toward the technological system, without arrows, labels, or explanatory text.

AI was therefore not used as a one-step production shortcut, but as an iterative visual reasoning tool. Each unsuccessful generation revealed an unintended meaning and led to a conceptual correction.

There is a deliberate contradiction in using generative AI to create a work questioning the hidden material consequences of AI. I chose not to resolve this contradiction. Instead, it became part of the work itself: I am participating in the system I am questioning.