



Co-funded by
the European Union

ETH-TECH

ETH-TECH ART CONTEST • EDITION II • **FIRST PRIZE**

Welcome to the Future

Gabriela Moreno

Texas State University

European Project ETH-TECH 2024-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000255527

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

Welcome to the Future



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.

Welcome to the Future reflects a postdigital positionality that understands technology as inseparable from contemporary life rather than as something distinct from nature or human experience. The project examines a moment of transition between eras, where traditional boundaries between the natural world, digital systems, and human agency have become increasingly unstable.

The work explores how technologies originally developed to observe and manage nature now mediate our understanding of it. Trail and hunting cameras, designed to monitor wildlife for human benefit, become symbols of a broader culture of surveillance and control. By focusing on images in which no animals appear, the project highlights absence rather than presence, suggesting a growing disconnection between humans and the environments they seek to control.

The project also questions assumptions about technological mastery. While digital systems are often associated with precision, efficiency, and control, the work reveals their fragility. Through intentional corruption of image files, the photographs become fragmented and partially unreadable, exposing the unpredictability that exists beneath seemingly stable technological structures. This process mirrors humanity's ongoing attempts to reshape ecological systems,

consciousness, and social realities through technological intervention, often without fully understanding the consequences.

Rather than presenting technology as inherently positive or negative, *Welcome to the Future* considers a postdigital condition in which nature, machines, data, and human perception are deeply entangled. The resulting images occupy a space between documentation and collapse, functioning as visual evidence of a world transforming without a clear beginning or endpoint.

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.

Welcome to the Future is a digital image-based project that begins with photographs captured using trail and hunting cameras. These devices are typically used to monitor wildlife and collect visual data for human purposes. For this project, images were selected specifically for the absence of animals, emphasizing empty landscapes and moments where surveillance continues despite the disappearance of its intended subject.

After collecting the photographs, the image files were manipulated at the level of their hexadecimal code rather than through conventional editing software. Hexadecimal code is part of the underlying data structure that computers use to interpret and display digital images. Within each file, instances of the words “end,” “of,” and “era” were replaced with the phrase “welcome to the future.” This intervention altered the structure of the file itself, often causing corruption, fragmentation, or unexpected visual distortions.

The outcome of each modification could not be fully predicted. While the process was carefully controlled, the resulting images emerged through a collaboration between human intention and computational behavior. Some files remained partially legible, while others became heavily damaged or unreadable. This unpredictability became an essential part of the work, reflecting the project's broader themes of technological intervention, ecological transformation, and the limits of human control.