

WITCH RING

by Peter Burr

# Aria Engine

A room-sized video game  
about maintaining systems  
designed to fail.

Watch documentation of the March 2025 prototype at <https://vimeo.com/1090106876>

# The Concept

*In this world, there's no distinction between maintenance and decay. They're points in the same process viewed from opposite ends. We build systems designed to fail, then task ourselves with their upkeep. The slots keep spinning. We keep pulling the lever.*



# The Experience



ARIA ENGINE: Maintenance Vessels is a collection of two new media artworks that combines into a single immersive installation. Each work has its own character and can be presented individually, but together they embody a single machine with its own unique logic and atmosphere.


# Artist Statement

*I make art because it metabolizes uncertainty in ways journalism, therapy, and design cannot. My work processes specific anxieties we internalize daily: the dread of algorithmic surveillance, the manipulation of our attention, and the feeling of being trapped within vast systems whose operations remain deliberately opaque. ARIA ENGINE gives form to this collective unease when we realize our choices within these environments aren't truly our own.*

*Play is supposed to be fun, but whose fun? How does it feel to live in systems we cannot fully control, yet bear responsibility for influencing?*

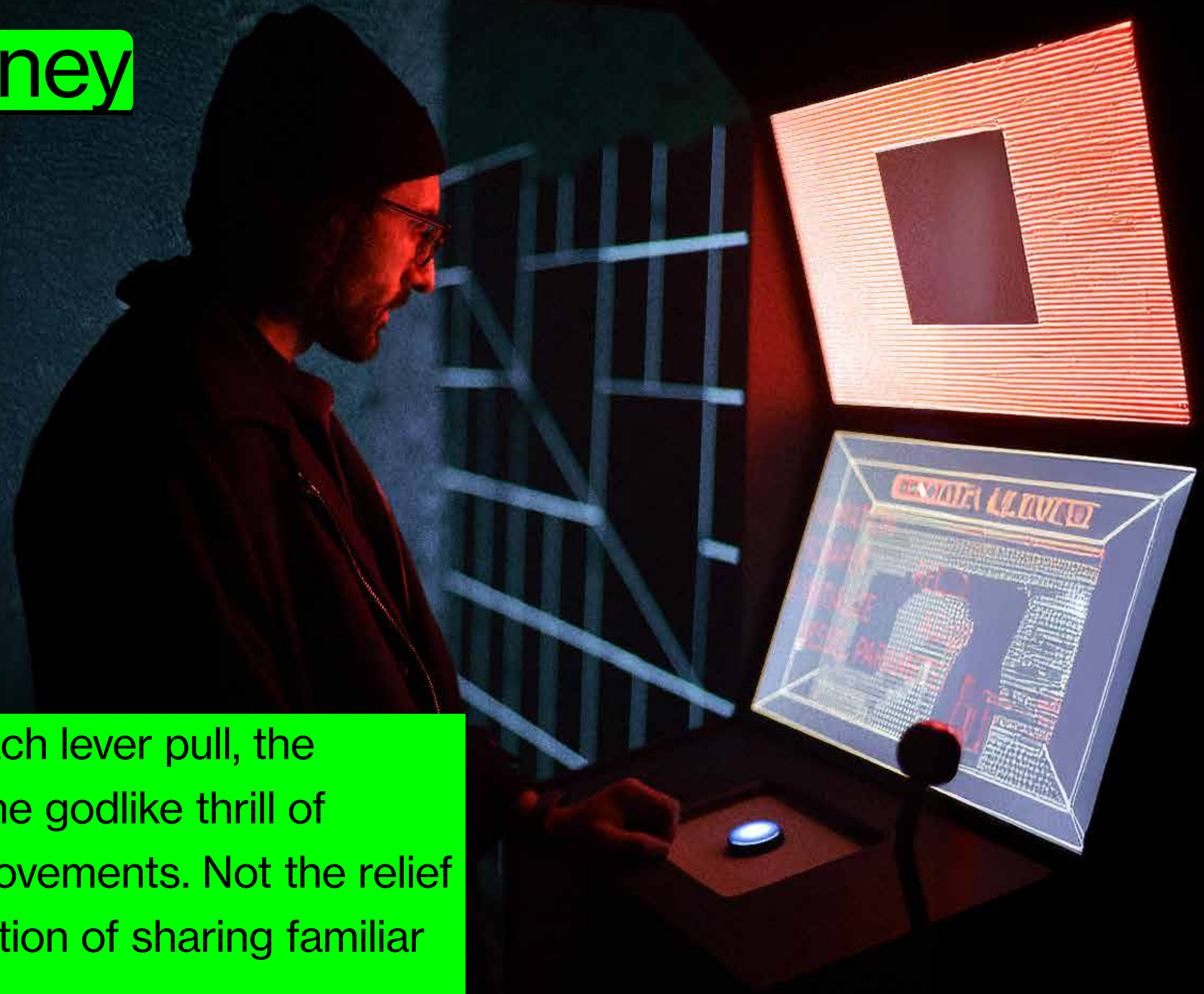


# Emotional Connection



*In this world, the  
opposite of survival is  
not death. It is change.*

# Audience Journey



There's visceral release in each lever pull, the dopamine rush of creation, the godlike thrill of triggering chaos with your movements. Not the relief of resolution, but the recognition of sharing familiar holding patterns.

artwork

# Vessels

Each pull of the slot machine lever spins coded fates through its circuitry. Players try to chase the perfect combination of character traits. The machine hums with anticipation, awaiting the next user.

VIBE: divination machine  
MECHANISM: chance operations  
SYMBOLISM: digital eugenics, manufactured destiny  
TECHNOLOGIES: custom electronics, unity game engine, networked database

artwork

# Vessels

*What kind of person volunteers to be buried alive?*

*What kind of person must bury themselves alive?*



artwork

# The Maintenance Game

Anomalies ripple through the system, disrupting routines and destabilizing order. The walls pulse with data streams harvested from each vessel's synthetic nervous system. Trauma transforms into spectacle as maintenance efforts give way to cascading failures.

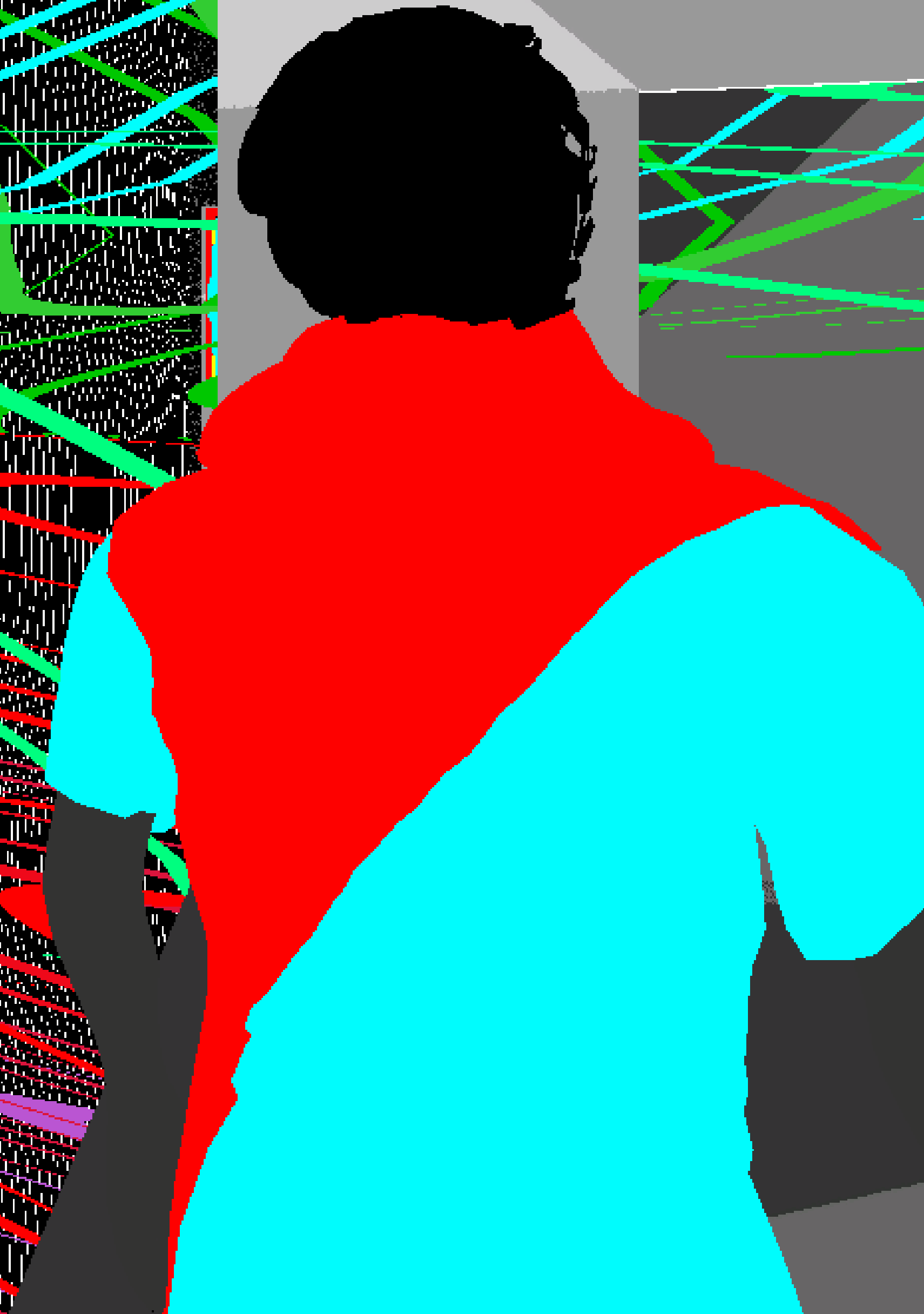
VIBE: melancholic labyrinth  
MECHANISM: programmed behavioral patterns  
SYMBOLISM: collective consequence, Lennie Smallism  
TECHNOLOGIES: unity game engine, networked database

artwork

# The Maintenance Game

*The still center of a storm is a rare and precious thing.*

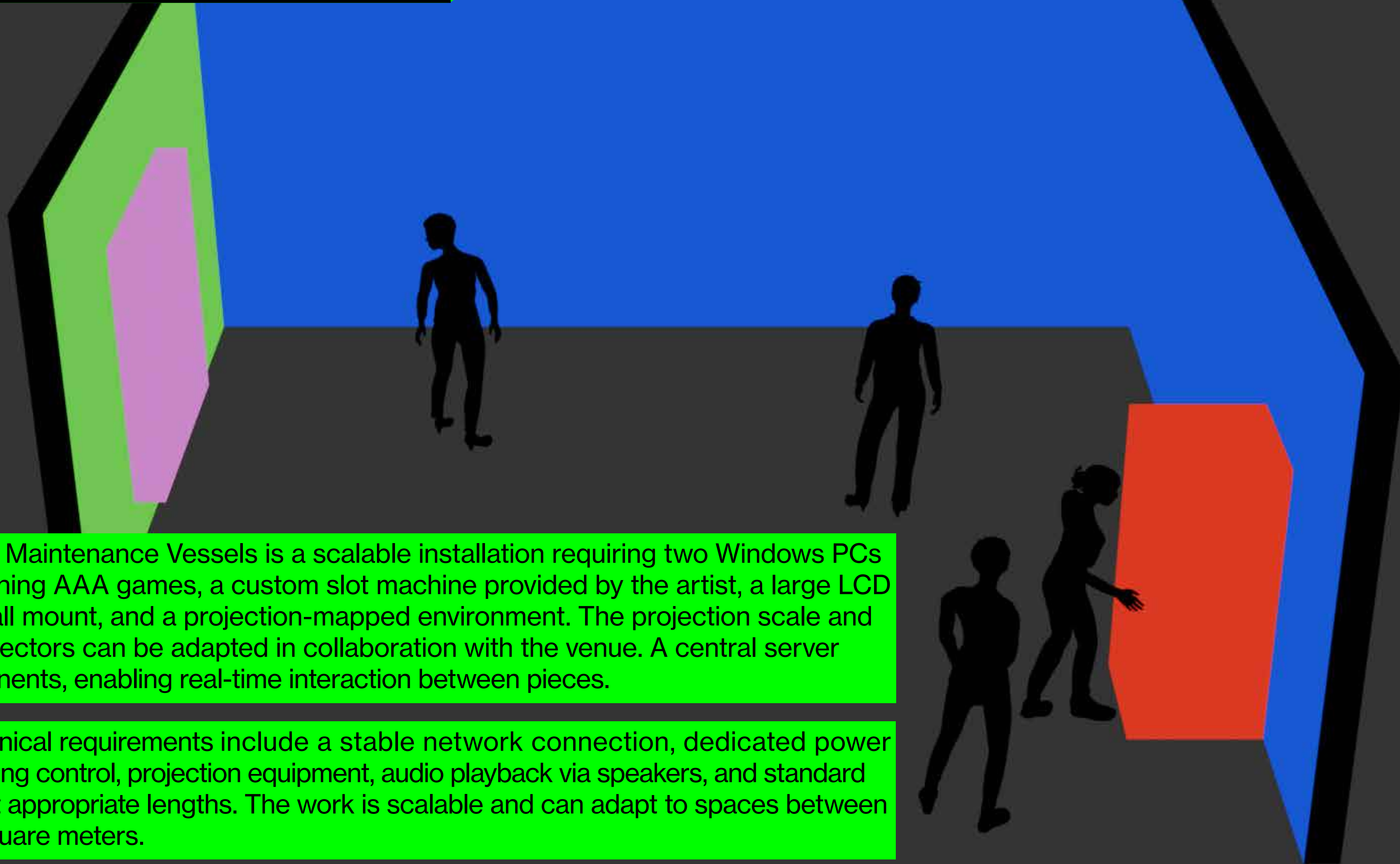
*The still center of a maze is a trap.*



# Technical Outline

ARIA ENGINE: Maintenance Vessels is a scalable installation requiring two Windows PCs capable of running AAA games, a custom slot machine provided by the artist, a large LCD screen with wall mount, and a projection-mapped environment. The projection scale and number of projectors can be adapted in collaboration with the venue. A central server links all components, enabling real-time interaction between pieces.

Additional technical requirements include a stable network connection, dedicated power supply, full lighting control, projection equipment, audio playback via speakers, and standard HDMI cables at appropriate lengths. The work is scalable and can adapt to spaces between 50 and 200 square meters.



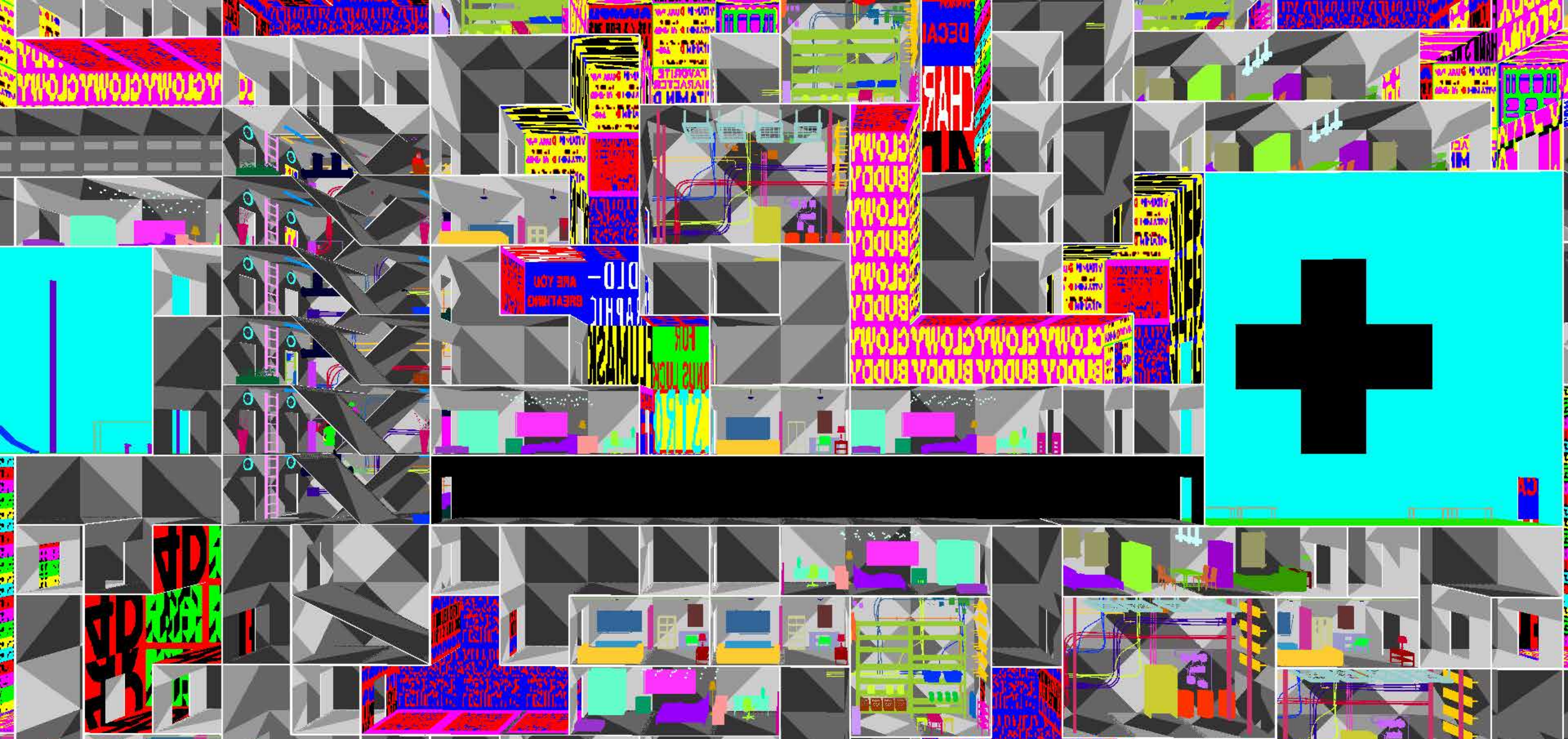
# Bio



Peter Burr is an artist from Brooklyn, NY who transforms complex computational systems into emotional, sensory experiences through large-scale immersive environments. Drawing from early experiments with computational graphics in the mid-nineties, Burr's practice has evolved to incorporate techniques that merge fundamental computing operations with modern real-time rendering systems. His work frequently explores the relationship between human-machine interfaces and the underlying systems that drive them.

Previously Burr worked under the alias Hooliganship and founded the video label Cartune Xprez through which he produced hundreds of live multimedia exhibitions and touring programs showcasing a multi-generational group of artists at the forefront of experimental animation. His practice has been recognized through grants and awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Creative Capital Grant, and a Sundance New Frontier Fellowship. His work has been presented at major cultural institutions including the Museum of Modern Art, The Barbican Centre, Documenta 14, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Centre Pompidou.

Throughout his career, Burr has maintained an active presence in the computational arts field, with exhibitions in over 25 countries. He regularly presents his research at institutions including past keynotes at Yale University and Ars Electronica. He is a current PhD candidate in Critical Game Design at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.



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