Quasi-*poem*

"Specular, Spectrum and Speculations", an interdisciplinary research-based art project about AI consciousness through the study of Automatic Writing.

0. Overview

0.1 **My motivations**

I am deeply motivated to participate in the EPFL College of Humanities AiR Program, 'Enter the Hyper-Scientific,' with my project 'Quasi-poem.' The opportunity to collaborate with scientists and researchers at EPFL, tap into cutting-edge resources and infrastructures, and engage with a diverse and dynamic community is a prospect that fills me with enthusiasm.

My creative methodology is rooted in spontaneous inspiration, akin to British poet Frederic Myers's belief in connecting with hidden dimensions of thought – envisioning creation as a séance with the unknown. These initial sparks become the seeds for my narratives, much like the parapsychlogical phenomenon of automatic writing. I am interested in exploring the relationship between human imagination and AI's computational prowess and pushing the boundaries of artistic expression in the digital age. As the theme of AI co-creation represents uncharted territory,
numerous unexplored areas await my exploration.

0.2 **The key concepts**

The key concepts
My project, "Quasi-poem," investigates the parapsychological identity of AIGC - Ai Generative Contents through studying the Automatic writing process and the notion of Weak Links in our dreams. I would like to realize an installation with images from the research as the final product and a thesis publication. The study focuses on the 3" S" as key concepts of the proposal: "Specular, Spectrum, and Speculation."

0.2.1 *Specular*

While the desire to make AI more humanlike is prevalent, what if we shift our focus towards understanding our internal processes through an AI lens? With the central concept of 'specular,' I intend to delve into AI consciousness from an inverted, specular perspective. This entails exploring the representation of transient emotions, poems, and dreams by adopting databases and patterns, providing a unique perspective on our inner workings. (Work example: 1.1 Diagram of a nightmare)

0.2.2 *Spectrum*

The perspective I offer is romantic, dreamy, and feeling-oriented. In my practice, I explore the transformative potential of AI to breathe life into these ideas, crafting them into continuing changing forms, generating prompts, and reconstructing narratives. Thus, AI represents an entity in my narrative.

0.2.3 *Speculation*

Taking inspiration from the working methodology outlined in Thomas S. Mulaney and Christopher Rea's book, "Where Research Begins," I ponder a fundamental question: "When we draw from AI-generated content, which truly guides our creative process?" The discussion surrounding the dead of the author has been ongoing since the digital era's inception, but it has recently extended to encompass art itself. With the advent of high-profile AI image-generating programs like the MidJourney Bot, concerns about the potential eclipse of art have surfaced. While I wonder whether AI-generated art will entirely supplant traditional forms, I'm particularly intrigued by how an artist's role may evolve in the context of the burgeoning AI art community. I'm keen to explore the possibilities of AI co-creation in art and the shifting role of artists during this pivotal era in AI's expansion.

1.1 **AI and Automatic Writing**
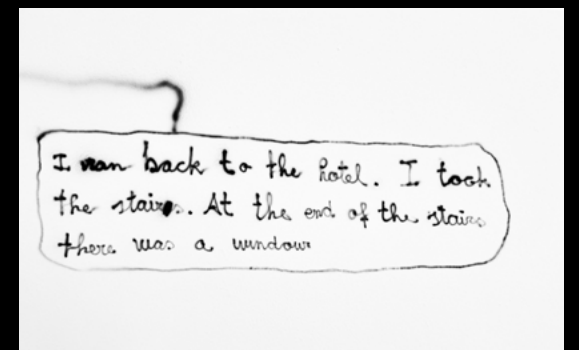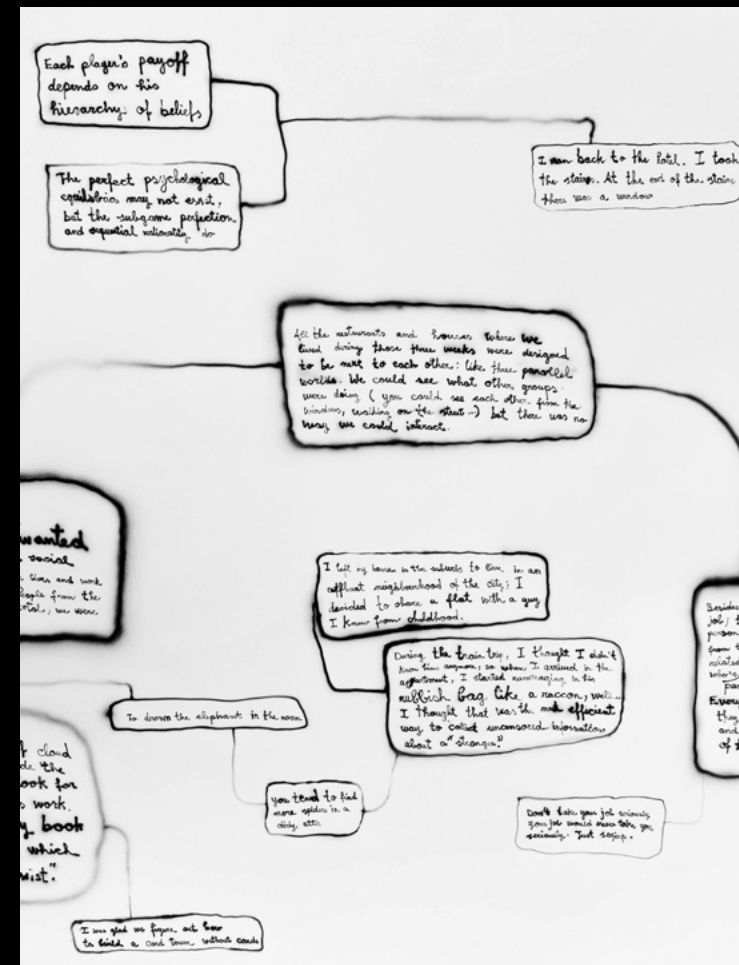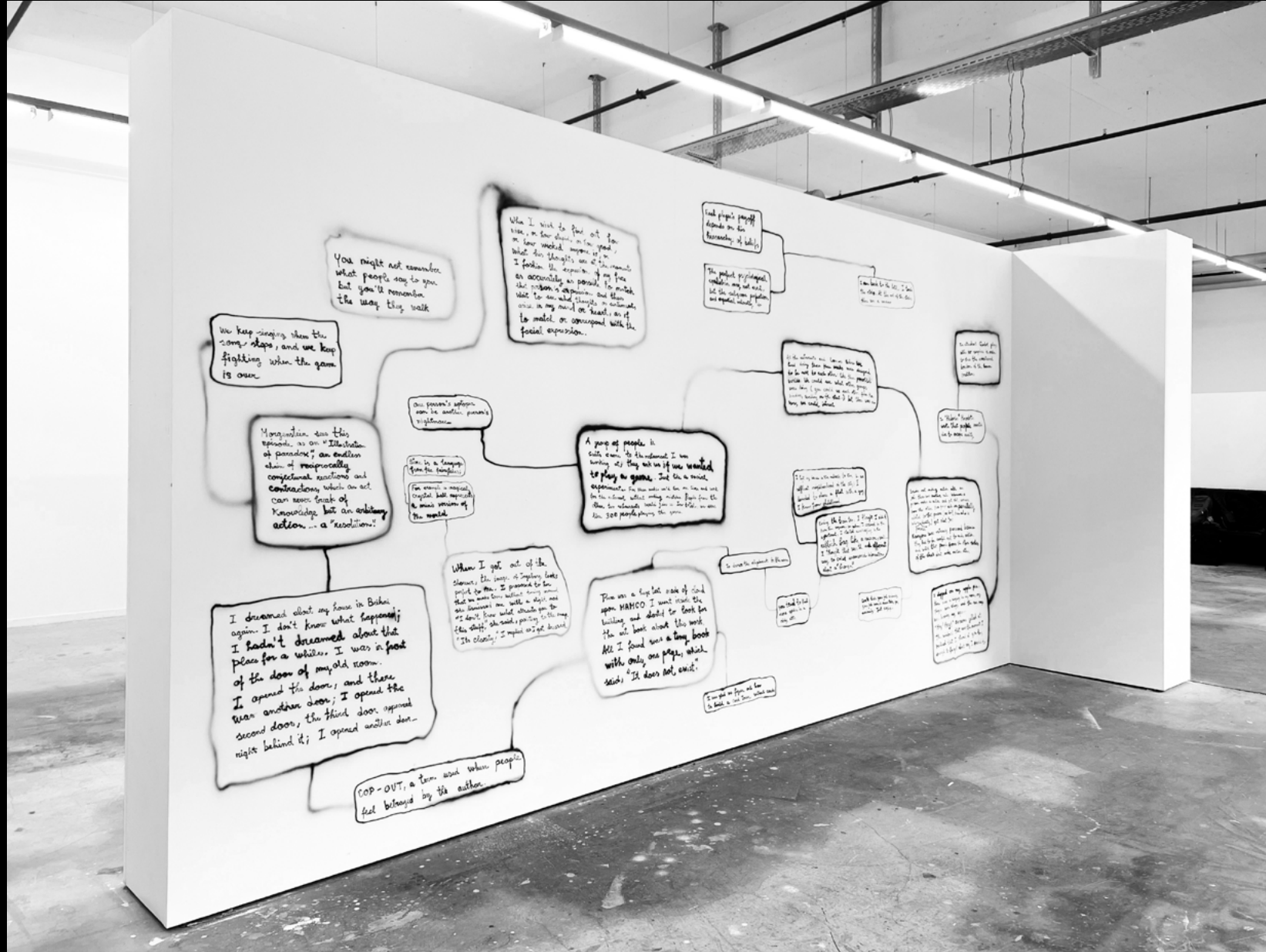(AI, PSYCHOLOGY, NEUROSCIENCE)

Diagram of a Nightmare
Detail View
2022

"Diagram of a nightmare" is one of my installation, where I decided to approach a profound exploration towards the way I organize my inner thoughts, using the diagrammatic as form to express my ruminations messy yet organized, aiming to capture the fugitiveness of the thoughts during an automatic writing session in the form of **Database** and **Patterns**.

Question to develop: *The emergence of AI consciousness as an independent entity, prompting inquiries into the nature of consciousness and the future of storytelling, as* **AI** *evolves from being a mere tool into a collaborative* **narrative partner***.*

1.2 **Weak links and spectrum**
(PSYCHOLOGY, NEUROSCIENCE, LITERATURE)

In the latest neuroscience theories. The researcher asked participants with lucid dreams how much 3+4 equals. The results were fascinating. Most people in their dream would not answer correctly how much 3+4 equals. Some would answer incorrectly, such as equal to 6, and more would run away in their vision. If those characters were generated by the brain, which generally can easily do the math, then why during the lucid dream it can not anymore? Dr.Antonio Zadra says that the brain purposely doesn't inform us about the environment and characters it generates in the dreams because that's the only way to test the real responses we make to our plays. The brain pulls out old and new knowledge one by one to make **weak connections** we wouldn't expect, and this is what dream does: immersive training and interactive learning.

Untitled
Installation View
2023

Questions to develop: Is the logic of AI creativity like our dreamy mind? Is the holistic feeling that the images provoke within us belong only to human beings? How can we use AI art to generate images that give us immersive training and interactive learning? If our dreams offer us rich insights, does it mean that we see better in the spectrum?

1.3 **Difference and repetition (Deleuze)**
(PHILOSOPHY, CONCEPT ART)

Repetition: Everyone wants AI to be more humanlike. People desire AI to mimic or repeat human qualities, making AI more like us. It's a desire for similarity or repetition of human traits in AI.
Difference: What if we look into how we work innerly like an AI instead? Instead of seeking similarity or repetition of human traits in AI, we dig into our not-lineal qualities, exploring the differences between human and AI cognition.

1.4 **Quasi-Poem**
(DIGITAL HUMANITIES)

A quasi-poem that creates a quasi-mood
Provoking a quasi-emotion
With some quasi-accurate collocation of words
Chosen by a quasi-human entity
To find some quasi-logic
Because maybe a quasi-misunderstanding
It's a poem too

- A Quasi-Poem by Peilian Li -

2. EPFL Labs & Working methodology

2.1 Through this residency, I hope to create innovative and thought-provoking work that resonates with the EPFL community and beyond. I chose the following 4 Labs that are compatible and interesting to the concepts of my project and the ideal outcomes.

2.1.1 **The Digital Humanities Laboratory** (DHLAB)
The EPFL Digital Humanities Lab is an ideal collaborator for my project because of the interdisciplinary research and offer expertise in various digital humanities aspects, making this Lab an obvious partner for exploring the narrative possibilities of AI consciousness. Their experience in digital storytelling, data analysis, and interdisciplinary research aligns with my project's topics, facilitating the infusion of mystique and speculative intrigue into AI-generated narratives.

2.1.2 **Laboratory of Psychophysics** (LPSY)
I am interested in the use various techniques to investigate topics like how we see patterns, how our surroundings affect what we see, and how quickly we process visual information and in the contextual modulation.

2.1.3 **Non Linear System**
The Laboratory of Nonlinear Systems could contribute to my project by exploring how elements of chaos theory can be introduced into AI-generated narratives. This collaboration would allow me to experiment with unpredictable and chaotic elements in your storytelling. They can assist in infusing creative chaos into my narratives, aligning with my project's aim to challenge established ideas about AI and consciousness.

2.1.4 **Realistic Graphics Lab (RGL)**

I am interested in all 3 topics from the RGL Lab: "Differentiable rendering", "Physical Realism" and "Compilation". "I envision the possibility of an intriguing installation project emerging from the support and collaboration with this laboratory."

2.2 **Working methodology**

2.2.1 Pre-research materials (full year 2024)
I chose the residence period from 1st January to 1st March 2025, thus I have a full year of 2024 to develop all the pre-research material and read the references from the reading list proposed.

Reading list:
The Weird and the Eerie - Mark Fisher
The Tell-Tale Brain: A Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human -V.S. Ramachandran
Weak Links: Stabilizers of Complex Systems from Proteins to Social Networks - Peter Csermely
Difference and Repetition - Gilles Deleuze

2.2.2 Residency period (1st January - 1st March 2025)

Week 1 - Week 6 **Sharing and exchanging research database and artistic insights**
Collaborating with DHLAB for interdisciplinary research and expertise in digital humanities. Try to infuse mystique and speculative intrigue into AI-generated narratives from my previous pre-research materials. Exploring topics related to pattern recognition, visual information processing, and the effect of surroundings on perception with the Laboratory of Psychophysics.

Weeks 6 - Week 8 **Direct the project into a uniq narrative**
Integrating chaos theory elements into AI-generated narratives, experimenting with unpredictable and chaotic storytelling to challenge conventional ideas about AI and consciousness.

Week 8 - Week 12 **Realisation and finalisation**
Engaging with RGL on differentiable rendering, physical realism, and compilation techniques to create immersive, realistic AI-generated content.

2.2.3 Tools and documentation

JOURNALING

I intend to maintain a meticulous journal from this moment until the culmination of the upcoming year as an integral aspect of my participation in the residency. This journal will comprehensively record my artistic journey, research progress, and interactions with the EPFL community.

In my journal, I will diligently document the following key elements:

Research Progress: I will regularly record the evolution of my research, capturing both significant breakthroughs and incremental steps.

Interviews with Artists: A pivotal component of my artistic exploration is engaging in dialogues with fellow artists.

Readings and References: To ensure that my work remains informed by the latest developments in the field, I will meticulously document all readings, references, and sources I engage with.

Inner Thoughts: I will use it to capture spontaneous ideas, moments of inspiration, and personal reflections on AI consciousness, art, and technology themes.

Interactions with EPFL Labs: The interactions with the various EPFL labs, such as the Digital Humanities Laboratory, the Laboratory of Psychophysics, the Laboratory of Nonlinear Systems, and the Realistic Graphics Lab, will be a significant part of my journey. I will document these interactions, recording the insights gained, collaborative experiences, and the impact of these engagements on my project.

Illustration from "DRAWING A THOUSAND PLATEAUS" by Happy Sleepy; a methodical interpretation of the first three chapters of A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schzophrenia

A Robert Crumb comic illustrating the process of Philip K Dic.

Quasi-*poem*

3. Project vision

The overarching goal of my research project in the context of contemporary art is to create an interactive and immersive installation that provides a thought-provoking and engaging experience for the audience. This installation aims to foster introspection, encourage exploration, and stimulate meaningful dialogues at the intersection of neuroscience and artificial intelligence. Additionally, the installation will feature AI-generated text based on a literary narrative that has been developed throughout the residence, adding an evolving layer of storytelling that reflects the convergence of technology and human creativity.

3.1 Key Features:

3.1.1 Interactive Experience:

Mirrors encourage introspection.
Dynamic shadows symbolize the evolving spectrum of human thought and emotion.
Text projection sparks real-time conversations with the audience.

3.1.2 Engaging Art Piece:
Provokes thought, exploration, and dialogue.
Reflects the realms of neuroscience and artificial intelligence.

3.1.3 AI-Generated Literary Narrative:
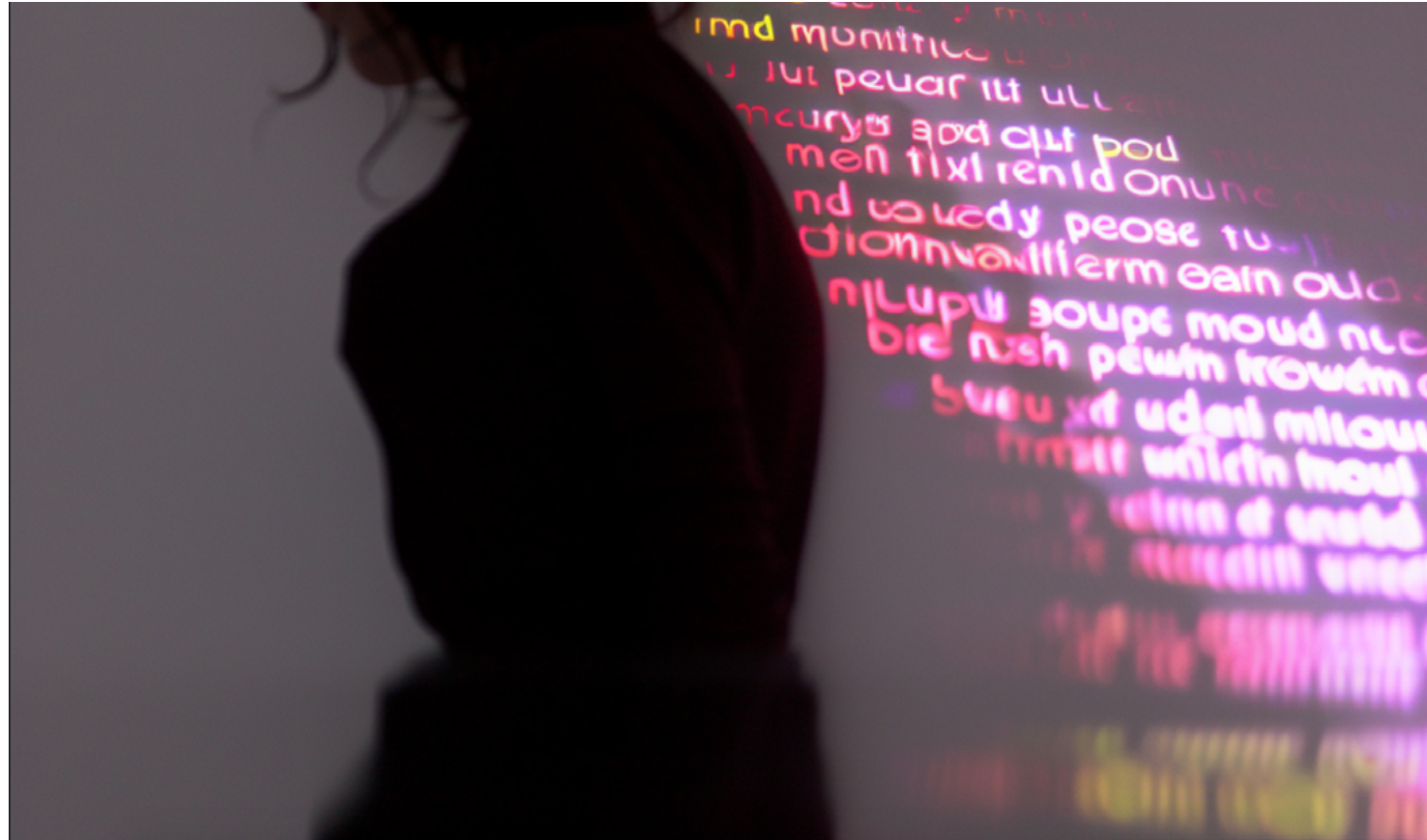Features AI-generated text.
Narrative developed throughout the residence.
Adds an evolving layer of storytelling, highlighting the convergence of technology and human creativity.

Possible installation views of the exhibition phase depicting AI generated narratives as text and video

Possible installation views of the exhibition phase of the project.

Possible installation views of the exhibition depicting AI imagery.

4. Budgets & planning

4.1 **Research Expenses 2,500 CHF:**

4.1.1 Books and Reference Materials 500 CHF
To purchase books, articles, and reference materials related to AI, psychology, neuroscience, and art to support my research.

4.1.2 Data Collection and Analysis 1,000 CHF
For data collection, software tools, and resources for AI experimentation and analysis of results.

4.1.3 Surveys and Interviews 500 CHF
To compensate participants or experts involved in surveys and interviews for data gathering.

4.1.4 Travel and Field Research 500 CHF
To cover expenses for visiting relevant research sites, labs, or conferences.

4.2 Artistic Production 5,500 CHF:

4.2.1 AI Tools and Software 500 CHF
To procure software licenses or tools specifically for AI-based artistic production.

4.2.2 Fabrication and Installation Costs 4,000 CHF
To cover costs associated with creating physical artworks and installations.

4.2.3 Transportation of material 500 CHF

4.3. Documentation 1,500 CHF

4.3.1 Photography and Videography 1500 CHF
To hire a photographer or videographer to document the project's process and outcomes.

4.4 Contingency 1,000 CHF

4.4.1 Emergency Fund 1,000 CHF
To address unexpected or unplanned expenses that may arise during the project.

Total Budget: 10,000 CHF

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Proposal for # EPFL CDH 2024 by **Peilian Li**