

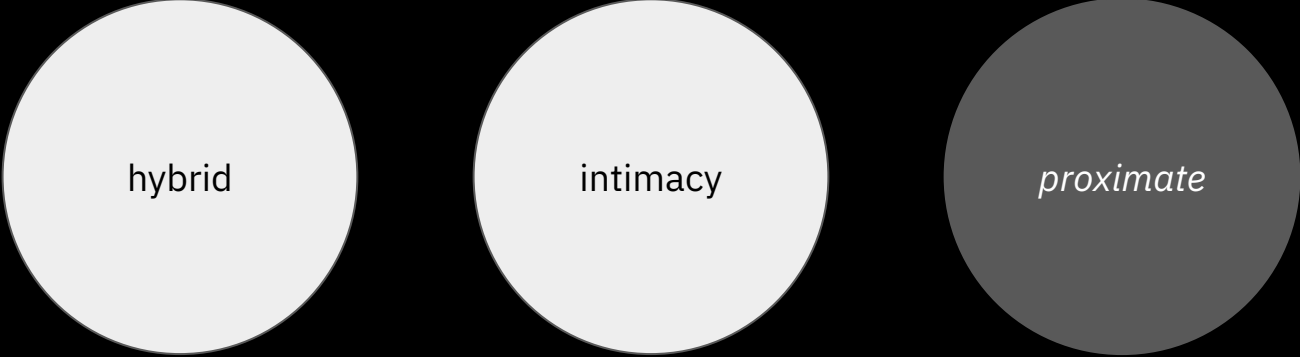
Proxy-mate

RMIT Digital Art and Design

Grant Exhibition 2025

<prominent themes>

proxy-mate



hybrid

intimacy

proximate

Proxy-mate gathers works that explore companionship through stand-ins, surrogates, and mediated presence. In this space, partners may arrive as avatars, algorithms, or cultural substitutes—figures that speak and act on our behalf, yet are never quite us. The exhibition asks how intimacy, trust, and agency are reshaped when our mates are not fully here, but appear through screens, code, and constructed images. These works trace the blurred edges between the human and its proxies, revealing both the tenderness and estrangement that emerge when connection is filtered through another’s body, voice, or logic.

Artworks

pov (Nhan Phan)

What is love if beside baby don't hurt me, don't hurt me, no more?

pov is a reflection on love, staged as a branching narrative where the audience is placed on a first date with *Nhan* — learning about him through a series of choices. At the current stage, the film unfolds itself as two storylines:

— “Our time is too short.”

One is a lunchtime fever — longing over the loss of a long-term partner or as Nhan mentioned in the ending “a walk in his *to-all-the-boy-i-love-before* graveyard. Borrowed the relativity of time — whether it is too fast or we are too fast, the story unravels into the character Nhan reading two different poems about his past lovers. As the story goes on, its edit transitions from a monologue to something more explicitly edited — with abrupt cuts, strange background noises, then ends with a highly graphic outro.

— “Romance is dead. I don't believe in love.”

This storyline takes the shape of a midnight cam show. It leans into the motif that the audience is here to get to know Nhan — and through the performance, the character begins to reveal himself, including his work as a digital sex worker who fulfils online audience requests. From there, he begins to reflect: is the act of taking it off a form of love? Or, as he puts it, “we are busy putting on too much, including our personalities.”

Unlike the first storyline, this one begins in a casual, conversational tone. As it goes on, it invites the audience to participate more actively in the selection process. The narrative gradually builds toward a chaotic, over-the-top ending in the form of a hysterical variety show — where Nhan (attempts to) perform a spoken word piece, followed by a dance to an upbeat 80s track. Somewhere in between all that performance, the character — as a sex worker — comes to a quiet realization: what he really wants is not just attention, but to be a lover.



Set-up



A system for screening and performance.

Initially made for interactivity and digital setup, the film pov will be hosted on a blog – that serves as the symbol for the room. Entering that blog, audiences enter the room where the story happens.

The blog can also be used as a tool for live performance later where it is explored, not on a personal computer screen, but on a large screen.

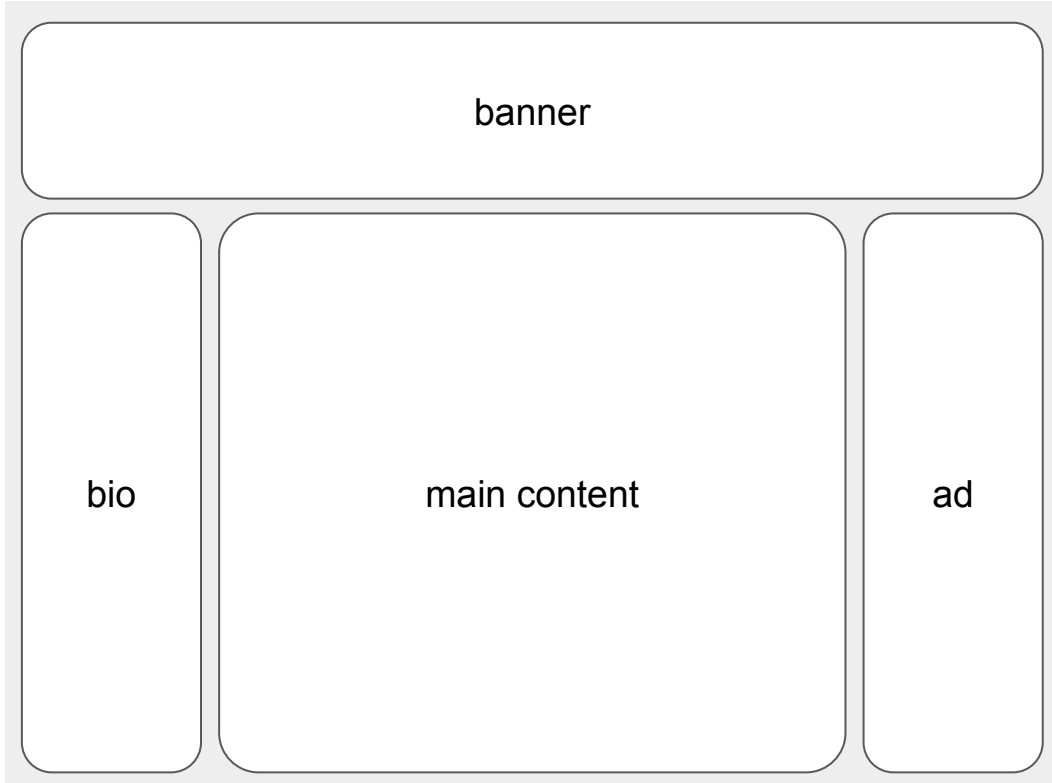
Set-up: *the web is Nhan's home*

The screenshot shows a Barbie.com website layout. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'My Scene', 'Polly Pocket', 'Teen Trends', 'Pixel Ghiz', and 'Barbie'. A banner for 'Barbie diaries' features a butterfly and the text 'Pssst! Get all the Gossip!' with a 'Go now!' speech bubble. Below this is a pink header with 'Barbie.com' and 'Hi, Barbie® Girl!' and navigation links for 'Parents', 'Collector', 'Global Barbie', and 'Shop with Barbie'. A left sidebar contains icons for 'Home', 'Bedroom', 'Closet', 'Garden', 'TV Studio', 'Game Room', and 'Mail'. The main content area is titled 'Get to know HILARY DUFF!' with a timeline for '2005', 'WINTER '06', 'SPRING '06', and 'FALL '06'. Below this is 'THE INTERVIEW' featuring a video of a young man (Nhan) in a white tank top sitting in a room with a desk lamp. To the right is an 'Advertisement' for a 'NEW TV SPOT' with a 'watch now!' button. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Sneak a peek at Hilary's designs!', 'START', 'HILARY & HAYLIE'S CHARITY Kids With A Cause', 'VISIT HILARY'S SITE!', and 'TELL A FRIEND'.

The internet is art.

Paying tribute to early 2000 website, where they are used mostly as a personal biography – a private room indeed, presenting all you can know about a person! I can be anyone, anything, anywhere.

Set-up: *the home is all about Nhan*



- + **Layout:** the website layout echoes the early social media blogging pages with 3 prominent columns + personal ads.
- + **Content:** facts and easter eggs about the characters – as if you walk into the home of the character.
- + **Interactivity:** content that changes according to choices of story (both in design and content).
- + **Blending with reality:** links out to the real artist and clone accounts.
- + **Chat box/t:** chat box, chat bot, way to reply, share.

Set-up: *Space*



Two-sided world

- + Instead of create hard walls, the space is zoned into 2 sides + 2 projectors.
- + First part of the film is projected on one side > Decision to open the door > Change to display on the other side.
- + One side takes bigger / more open space. One side is narrower, potentially have the couch of the film.
- + (*potentially*) 2 projectors at the same time to create layers.

Set-up: *Live (potential)*

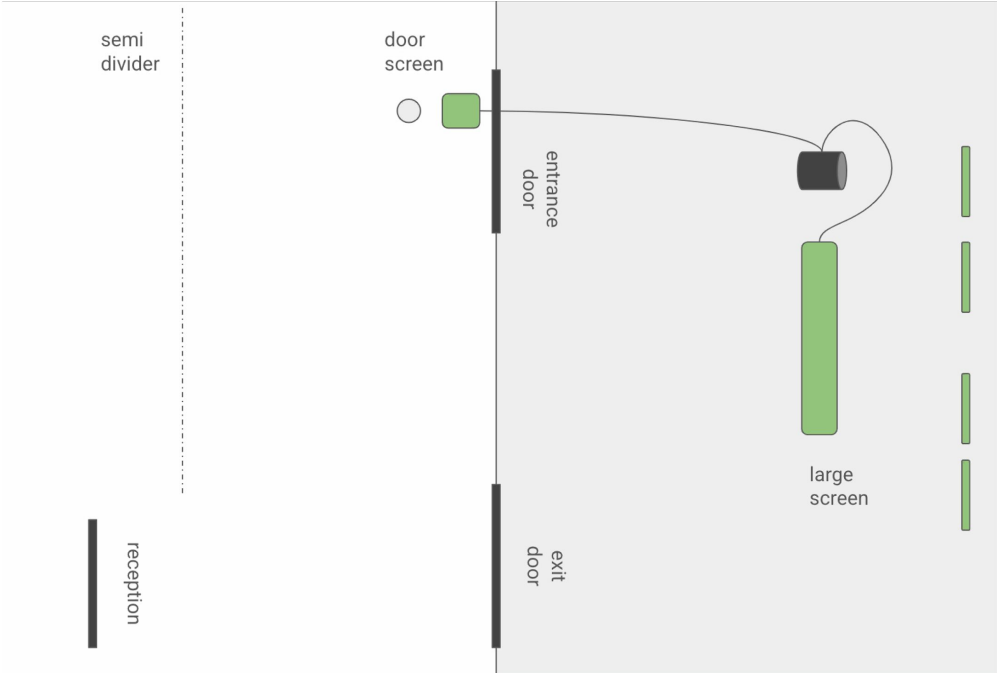


Two-sided world

- + *(potentially)* live performance where I will live act a part of the film, at the same time with the projection.

Set-up: Room

There is a door between us, would you come through?



>Fate_Cmd (Mệnh Lệnh)



This piece explores the conceptual convergence of divination, computer science, and biology through the format of an interactive experience.

Visitors are invited into **a digitalized fortune-telling ritual with an AI Oracle.**

By highlighting **the dual and emergent nature** of three fundamental systems — one from modern computing (*Cellular Automata*), one from ancient divination (*I Ching*), and one from the foundations of life itself (*DNA*) — the work asks audiences to reconsider the boundaries between these seemingly separate domains.

It draws attention to how **every complex manifestation can be reduced to an underlying duality, yet from that simplicity, infinite complexity emerges.** In doing so, it challenges the viewer to re-think what is considered “nature” in an age where algorithms, symbols, and genetic codes intertwine.

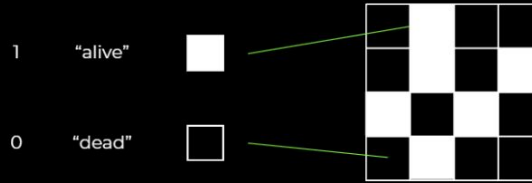


Computing is...



Cellular Automata

...binary



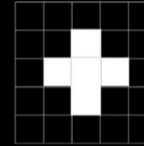
Each cell is either "dead" or "alive"

...emergent

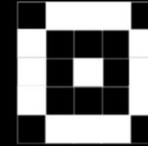
Birth (B) = dead cell comes alive
with X,Y or Z alive neighbors

Survival (S) = alive cell stays alive
with X,Y or Z alive neighbors

$B_{X,Y,Z} / S_{X,Y,Z}$



t = 1



t = 2



t = 24

Each cell updates based on neighbors

B_{1,2}/S_{2,4}

Complex organic patterns emerges from simple local rules

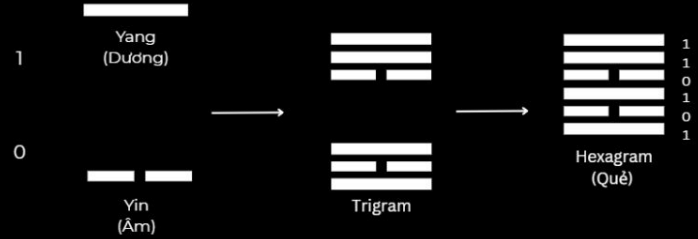
Fate is...



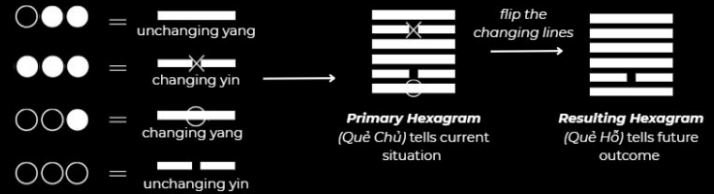
I-Ching

...binary

...emergent



All outcomes arise from two basic states.



Cast 3 coins to determine a line

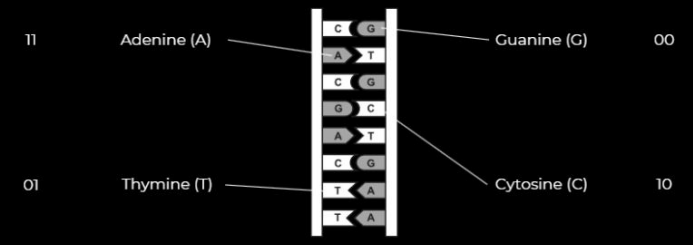
Change is constant; the present holds the seed of the future.



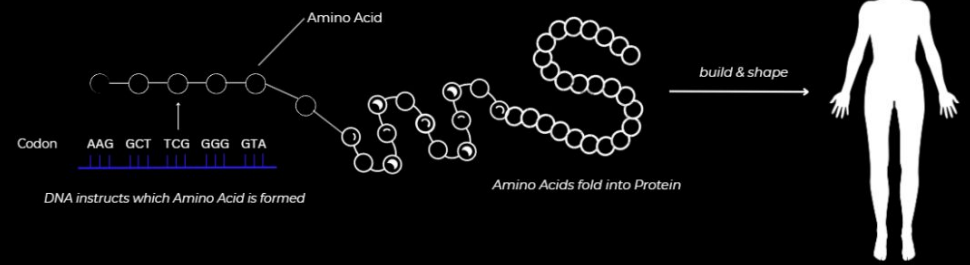
Life is...

...binary

...emergent



DNA is made of 4 bases: A/T//G/C



Infinite variations of the human form emerge from sequences of four simple bases

Cast the coins



- Time of Day
- Cloud Coverage
- Thunder Intensity



- Wind Intensity
- Rain Intensity
- Fog Coverage

1
0
1
1
1
1

GAA

170 : 255 : 255

B234/S343

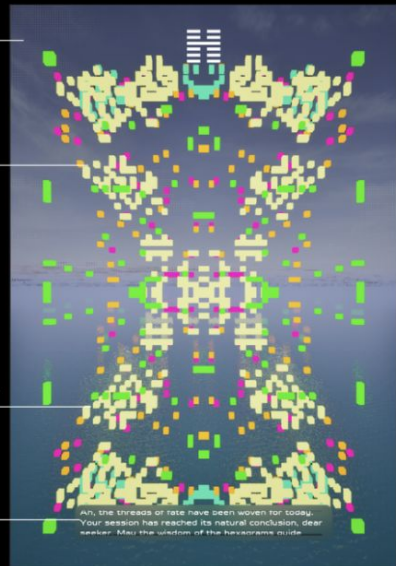
```
{
  "primary_hexagram": {
    "number": 9,
    "english_name": "The Taming Power of the Small",
    "vietnamese_name": "Tiêu Súc",
    "hexagram_character": "䷎",
    "judgement": "THE TAMING POWER OF THE SMALL\nHas success.\nDense clouds, no rain from our western region.",
    "image": "The wind drives across heaven.\n\nThe image of THE TAMING POWER OF THE SMALL\n\nThus the superior man\n\nRefines the outward aspect of his nature.",
    "short_interpretation": "Gentle influence and small means restrain greater forces, allowing progress in subtle, indirect ways"
  }
}
```

Weather reacts hexagram

Determines CA simulation color

Determines the CA simulation rule

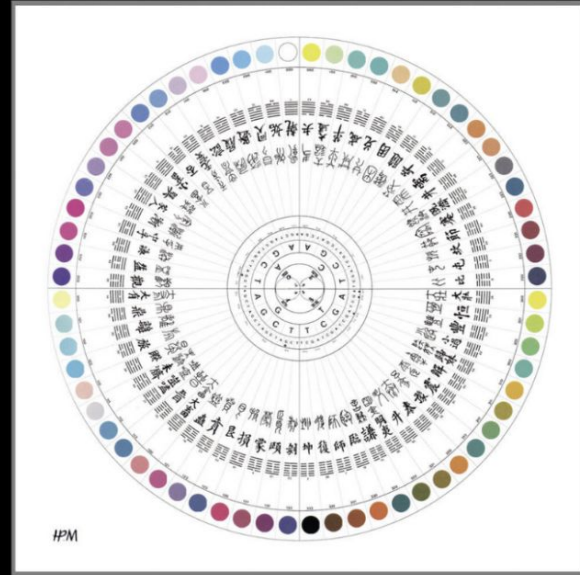
AI interprets and provides readings



All the threads of fate have been woven for today.
 Your session has reached its natural conclusion. Dear
 seeker, May the wisdom of the hexagrams guide



AAA 000	AAG 001	AAC 002	AAT 003	AGA 010	AGG 011	AGC 012	AGT 013	
ACA 020	ACA 021	ACC 022	ACT 023	ATA 030	ATG 031 start	ATC 032	ATT 033	
GAA 100	GAG 101	GAC 102	GAT 103	GGA 110	GGG 111	GGC 112	GGT 113	
GCA 120	GCG 121	GCC 122	GCT 123	GTA 130	GTG 131	GTC 132	GTT 133	
CAA 200	CAG 201	CAC 202	CAT 203	CGA 210	CGG 211	CGC 212	CGT 213	
CCA 220	CCG 221	CCC 222	CCT 223	CTA 230	CTG 231	CTC 232	CTT 233	
TAA 300 stop	TAG 301 stop	TAC 302	TAT 303	TGA 310 stop	TGG 311	TGC 312	TGT 313	
TCA 320	TCG 321	TCC 322	TCT 323	TTA 330	TTC 331	TTC 332	TTT 333	
								oben
								unten



Oracle • Message

Speak to the Oracle.

Unchanging Yin, Unchanging Yang, Unchanging Yang, Unchanging Yang, Unchanging Yin, Changing Yin

SEND

The coin results appear here automatically as you cast.

Coin Casting









COMPLETED

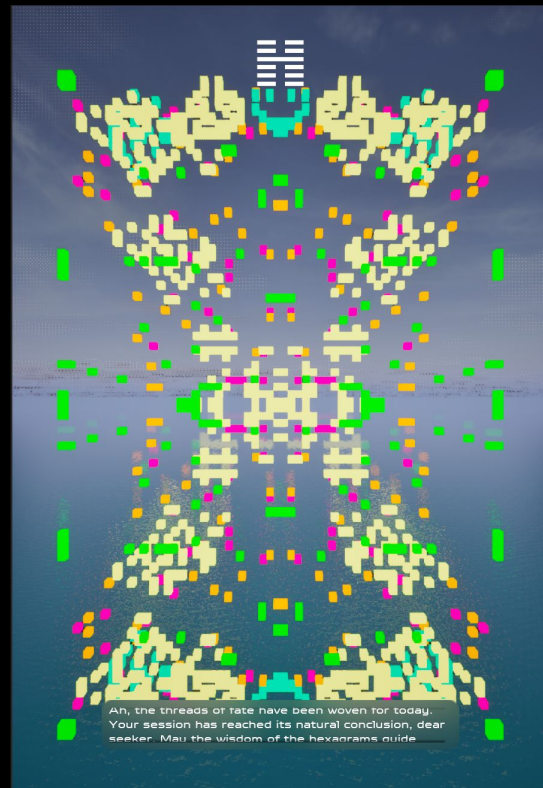
RESET

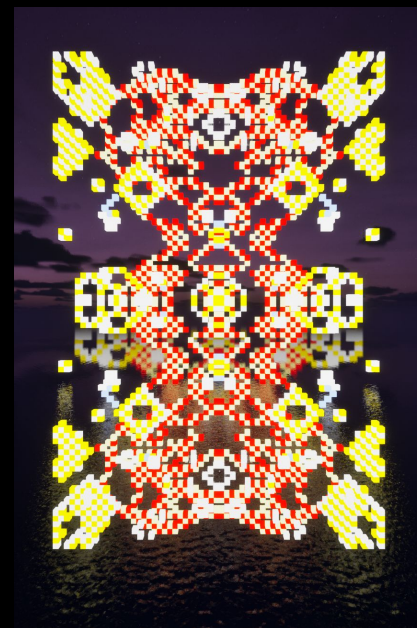
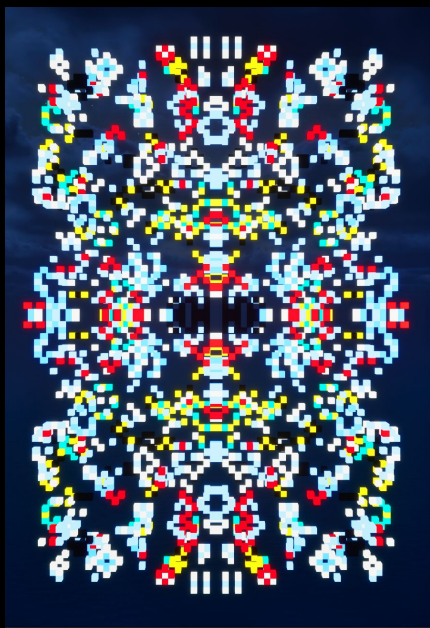
Reset clears coins + hexagram + progress

Hexagram progress

6 / 6

6. Changing Yin 
5. Unchanging Yin 
4. Unchanging Yang 
3. Unchanging Yang 
2. Unchanging Yang 
1. Unchanging Yin 





The visuals evolve dynamically, shaped by the conversations and readings exchanged between the Oracle and each participant. As the dialogue unfolds, the environment responds in real time, reflecting the unique energy and themes of each interaction.

The visuals, like the readings, become a fluid representation of the participant's journey, mirroring the ebb and flow of their questions and the Oracle's insights.