



The spherical object could suggest the existence of entities in the Universe, or perhaps the presence of energies and other dimensions that would not have an earthly nature. Its volume allows us to judge that the object is not compatible with human experience. It is true that it is a ball, therefore its relationship with the spiritual world is weak at first glance. However, it is not just any ball, but a golf ball. We can assume that, somewhere in the Universe, someone who has supernatural power could practice a hobby like golf... Golf balls are easily lost, they fall into furrows, are left outside of the field.



JOINT GAME

Dagmara Wyskiel

JOINT GAME

Prologue: Huanchaca Ruins Cultural Park, SACO2, Antofagasta, Chile, 2013

Stop 1: *The Driest Place in the World*, Meteorites Valley, Quillagua, Chile, 2013

Stop 2: Chajnantor Plateau, Astronomical Observatory ALMA / Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array, Chile, 2015

Stop 3: Última Esperanza Province, Magallanes and Chilean Antarctic Region, 2015

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The scale is mysterious, it is one of the unknown elements, and it is not about working with size, but about the relationship between size and meaning, therefore it is not an aesthetic problem. It has to do with the Kantian sublime.

Anish Kapoor



The object appeared for the first time in the Meteorites Valley, in Quillagua, the driest place in the world, suggesting an inference to the history of the disproportionate British power in the saltpeter pampas and from there referring to imposition, whatever its origin.



A globe that travels around the globe creating life experiences

We can affirm with certainty that the universe is all center, or that the center of the universe is everywhere and the circumference in none. (Giordano Bruno, Of the cause, beginning of one, V)¹

A giant sphere that from our Antofagasta travels the world, is the intrigue that Dagmara proposes to us. An endeavour that commits the author's own body in an exercise already started virtually with her arrival in Chile from her native Poland, but not to any Chile but to Chile of the desert, that one of Antofagasta. Strange decision that brings us to that obsession of Rugendas according to Cesar Aira², to find in the Argentine pampas the impossible point of all horizons, a point that, in the midst of the perception of nothing, would be the center of all the worlds. She seems to discover this impossibility in constructing the giant sphere, which will be rolling out of that the center of her fulfilled desire, in an incessant search whose testimony now rests in the MAC. Proof of a pilgrimage that would be one of finding that center, where being the point of all the horizons or being while roaming, that of adhering horizons of other worlds. In short, turning them into the paradox produced by each track that is left and by each accumulated experience in the whole accumulation of horizons and their points, from the virtual loss of your own center until it is lost. A world that risks being dissolved in the experience of oneself.

That world that dissolves in itself could be the one told, by Italo Calvino as belonging to the city of Trude³, from which one leaves to later arrive, after a long trip to another city,

which is Trude itself, and thus in every trip was always the same city, something like the infinite pleasure of the same, which seems to be, thanks to globalization, the desire for many. But also the sphere of Dagmara, could be, in its departure, from our Antofagasta, an opposite virtual proposition, that which would be derived from Giordano Bruno's statement regarding the conformation of the universe and from the discovery by Copernicus, a compatriot who also made to roll a sphere with enormous consequences, as was the loss of the centrality of our terrestrial sphere, the existence of a center everywhere and a circumference in none. Dagmara could be proposing to us with the journey of her sphere, that center everywhere and each one in its cultural particularity, a turn of the screw to its happiness, thus installing the idea of the diverse everywhere and the sphere, as a finite body, enclosed, by its reiteration in none.

Francisco Brugnoli
Director of Museum of Contemporary Art
University of Chile

¹Quoted by Borges in *Pascal's Sphere. Other Inquisitions*. Complete Works, Emecé Publishers. Buenos Aires, 1989.

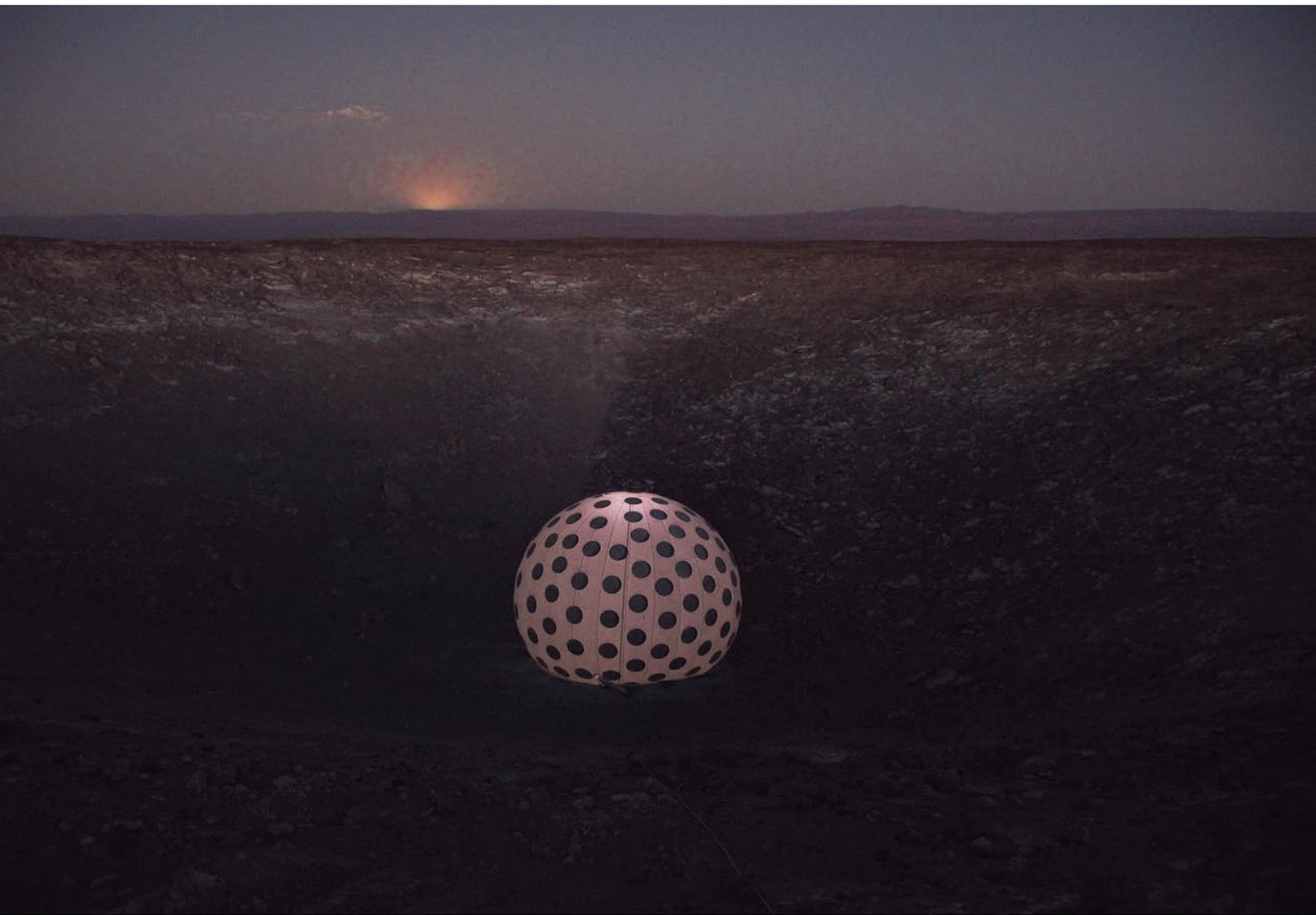
²Cesar Aira: *An episode in the life of the travelling painter*. Random House, Barcelona 2015.

³Italo Calvino: *Le città invisibile. Le città continue 2*. Oscar Mondadori. Italia. Reprinting No. 49, 2015.























Its presence in the Chajnantor Plateau, 5,000 meters above sea level, in ALMA, the most important astronomical observatory in the world and the Mecca of contemporary science, activates questions about our need for knowledge and its limits. What are we really looking for?



Dagmara's game and the astronomers' game

The first time I saw an image of the golf ball, the spherical protagonist of the *Joint Game* by Dagmara Wyskiel, I understood it as something very different from what it turned out to be. I had not read about this artistic creation, so I absorbed and processed the scene as it came: Snow, ALMA's antennae and a giant moon that someone had rolled onto the Chajnantor Plateau, halfway between the earth and the sky. The representation of lunar craters, so regularly and homogeneously distributed, seemed naive to me, and I found that it was a regrettable mistake not to represent the seas of our satellite (which are not true seas of salt and water but the romantic name of the dark valleys of dry lava in which the popular tradition likes to see images of animals or people). Yet it seemed interesting to me that someone invested their time and energy in this exercise, which I imagined would have to do with some educational project. Maybe the idea was that, just like the astronomers spend their days and nights observing the stars, now the stars were paying us back and were drifting between telescopes, antennas, domes and control rooms?

A few months later I blushed a little when I discovered that the moon in question was actually a golf ball. A giant golf ball at an observatory? The question remained in my head until I was fortunate to attend a presentation that Dagmara made of her project, and talked about this giant game in which the golf course is the world and the ball jumps from place to place without worrying neither for the score nor for the ride and for what it represents. I discovered that this object, which for me have transformed from a moon into a golf ball, has at the same time a power that allows it to travel, transmuting the world in its path. Contrary to Duchamp's objects, which become works of art when they are placed where works of art are exhibited, this object of Dagmara's converts the space where it visits into a place of play, simply because the object she has created is the accessory of a game and is stronger than the space it visits. ALMA suddenly became a site where anything could happen - perhaps a

giant would appear from among the mountains, looking for the ball that he had hit from beyond the border. Maybe the ball would get bored of being a ball and would get excited about being a moon, or maybe the radio telescopes would also turn out to be parts of a game that at the end of the day we would have to store in a box before going to sleep.

I like to imagine that, as a result of its trip around the world the golf ball ends up taking a little bit of every place it visits; that it never ends up perfectly clean, so that at the end of its journey it carries with it a sample of what it has covered. What would I like it to have taken from its pass through ALMA? The thin air, which leaves in evidence the fragile and minimum layer that we inhabit, between a sphere of rock and the interplanetary nothingness. The sand, of course, that every day is thrown into turmoil between the unmitigated heat during the daylight hours and the nearly perverse cold of the desert nights. The starlight, that cosmic blessing that illuminates the northern part of our country with the unique light that those privileged nights need in the midst of the darkness and the silence. And, since it was rolling by an observatory it is right to expect that it takes with it a little of the invisible light that the radio telescopes capture and that completes the rainbow with colours for which our senses are not enough.

The ball has now gone from here; a gigantic burst of imagination has been launched toward southern Chile (which is not much to say, since when you live in the north, the entire rest of the country is south). But it doesn't take with it the whole game. Every night (and in the radio observatories, every day and every night) the astronomers play the game of decoding the Universe. It's a complex game in which a large part consists of what rules it has. We know the board and many of its pieces. We know how many points we win or lose by making certain moves with our instruments. Sometimes, after many turns, we recognize something that seems to be a rule, which we write down in a book so we don't forget it and thereby give the players who will come an advantage that we didn't have. In this process we have made audacious reflexions and marvellous



discoveries. We have learned that we live in a Universe that has not stopped inflating (perhaps some artist in a multiverse is inflating our Universe to use it as a golf ball in its own joint game). We have learned what makes us up - you, me, Dagmara, the ball, the radio telescopes, the medium on which you are reading these words - everything is made of the material that at one time was part of a star: Our whole Universe was born from a grand “bang” and we from a small but no less significant “bang”, in which all the Lego pieces were formed, which at an atomic level make up everything that forms our daily existence. We have also learned that it is very likely we are not alone. Nobody can be sure yet, but the vastness of the Universe and what we know of science and mathematics makes us think that this is the most likely answer to the eternal question.

It’s not an easy game that we play; nor is it quick to play. The prize, however, is a prize that is for everyone. Each time one of us makes the right move, all of Humanity wins.

Eduardo Unda-Sanzana
Unit of Astronomy
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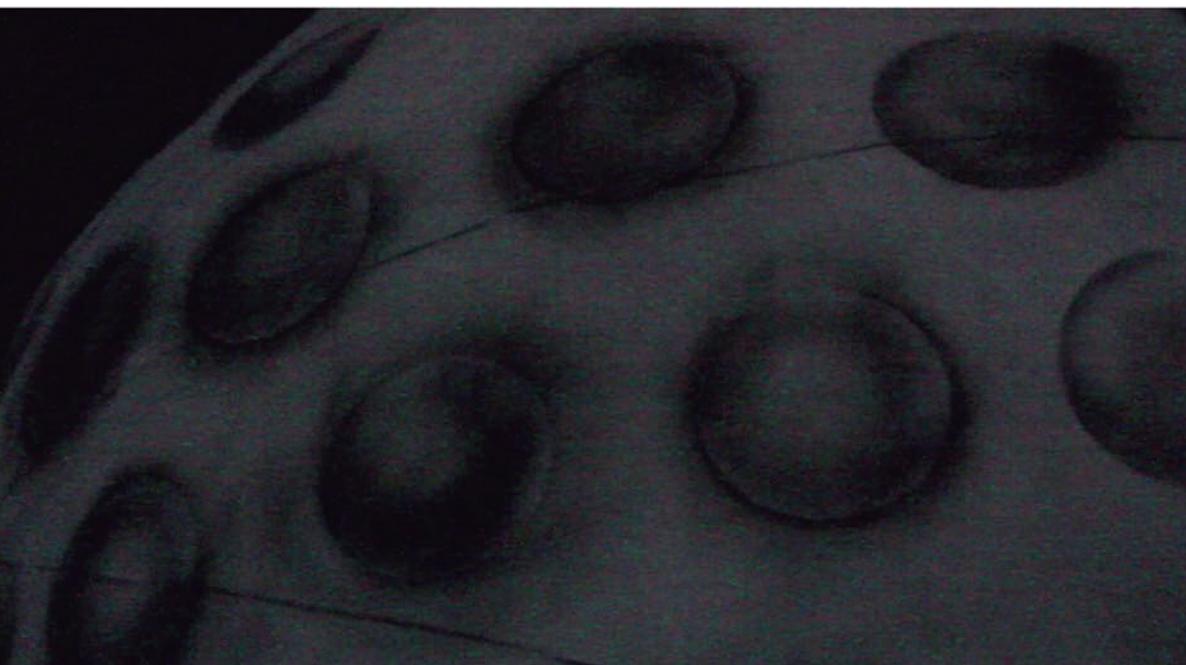
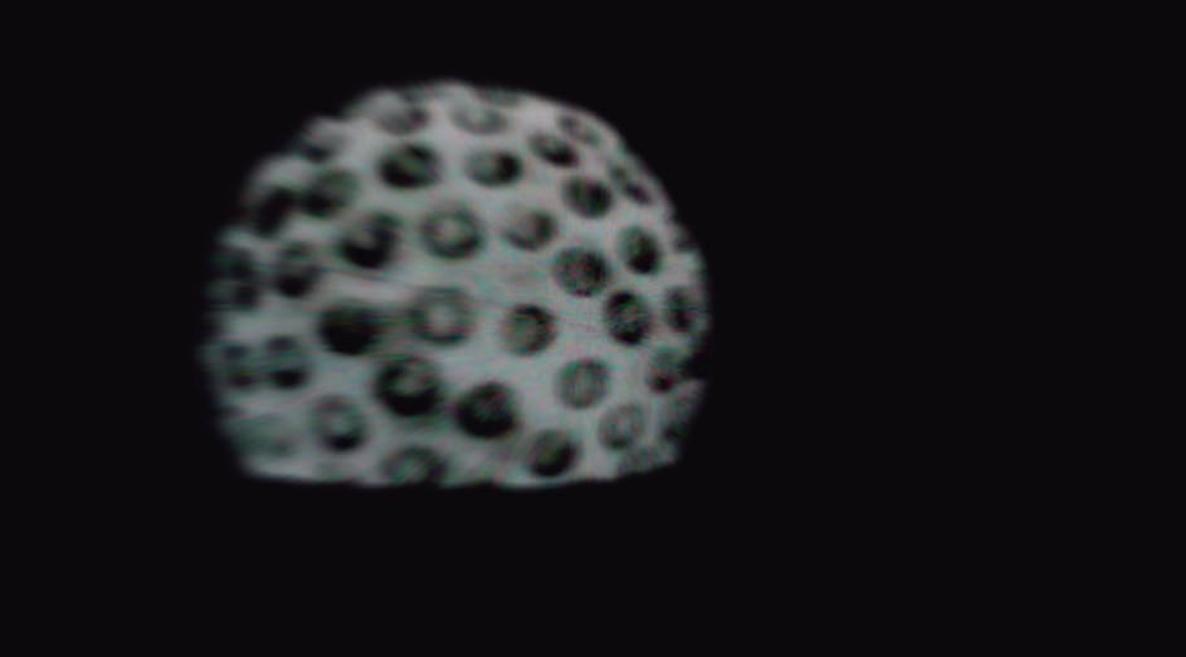


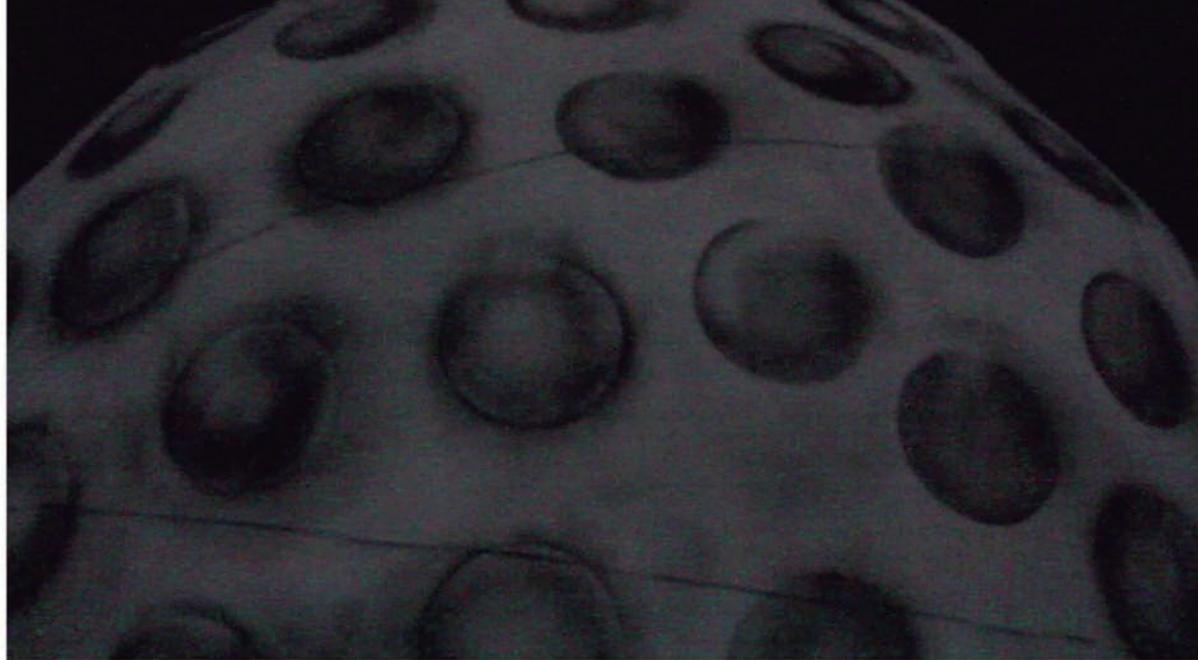












Province of Última Esperanza, end of the world and inhospitable land. The rolling of the object through the place where everything ends (as if the ball could end at some point) could be related to what is beyond the limits, as well as with the water and time, resources that are diluted but that leave a grand illusion of what is inexhaustible.



Optics of a geo-graphy

A contemporary art action that intends to deal with the landscape that the arid plains of northern Chile expose us to, undoubtedly must inexorably take in the litany that that geography has imposed as one of the most desolate places on the planet, places that besides their eternal abandonment and under the scrutiny of cultural studies, have recorded, for example for many centuries, stories of invasions by conquering pioneers who had been speculating on the mineral riches of this desert in order to inhabit, dominate and modify it.

Many of these human actions typical of modern man's practice of building industrial and residential settlements in inhospitable places has also been part of a process of conquest of what we have called "empty" space. However, these "empty" spaces in continental Chile have been the base for recording objects, machines and the immateriality itself that these places that evoke questions that go beyond the existential and inorganic impose on us. This is how, for those who have experienced different settings, both in the north and south, the simple act of exposing and questioning them becomes part of a discipline that studies the narrative and descriptive links of the environment and what the same territory commands.

With these premises, the vision that we have captured of the texture of the Atacama Desert, the peculiar central coast and the always adverse southern zone have led us to infer that the audio-visual proposal by the artist Dagmara Wyskiel, called *Joint Game* becomes a metaphor that evokes the optic of these mutually dissimilar landscapes, like traces that tell us about part of those already conquered territories. Also, with the long research process that the production of this work involved, the spaces chosen seem like reliefs from where the human interventions sprout and that, under the narcotic effect that the desolate image of these spaces entails, they lead us to imagine eternal mirages.

Creating an exercise that moves a golf ball around different corners obligates the artist to identify with the landscape. Singularly, the ball is large in size and seems to be rising as it turns and ploughs through the relief, a survey of the place, a capricious act that undoubtedly evidences a sensorial moment with the earth and from which we could capture the totality of those tracks that these images have been describing for us. Images that do not leave out under any context the artist's exercise of exploration in order to determine a profound review, both of the geography and the natural settings.

The art critic Benjamin Buchloch defined the artist as "wise, philosopher and artisan" who provides society with the objective results of his work. A definition that could be related in a radical way to this work by Wyskiel, since it is she who has brought together a methodical and contingent focus that has been inserted among some of the indomitable spaces that this country possesses; at the same time, an action like this opens infinite questions for studying an artistic project from the current way of thinking about art. This way, *Joint Game* is not more than a work in progress that relates part of the artist's work within an exposition. Certainly, these videos are a step toward expanding an interaction toward other movements, along with Wyskiel's own relational reality, and has been inevitably highlighted from the core concept imposed by a local dimension and that expands to other settings.

Also, it is not for all of us to understand the artist's fits that enter into the conception of her proposal, but it is possible, from a heterodox posture, to question it, feel it, deconstruct it, etc. Nevertheless, from what we have captured, the golf ball, with its peculiar movement that alters the space, is in itself capable of picking up the image of a nature that is always disconcerting and that alarms us through a series of reflections that put the dilemma into context, in order to create and investigate those geographic landmarks where the landscape certainly plays the leading role. Along



that same line, in appreciating the colours, the textures, and mainly the sequence of these videos, our interest is piqued regarding basic concepts that reinforce the action of observing. Because by observing, we guide ideas that reflect, in part, what is inherent in this action. Now, if this is combined with what the images themselves and in combination incite, we will have encountered praise regarding the road that this artist has travelled. For these reasons, the textures she has created are an intricate visual spectacle that imposes the various ecological grounds of an always rebellious country.

Faced with the image of a golf ball, we investigate and interpret the landscapes, geographies and climates that coexist in different places. But this video also reproaches the processes in which some visual artists are immersed, as a way of revising the vicissitudes that we have questioned faced with the aesthetic shown in audio-visuals. A question that arises with the exposition of *Joint Game* and that has an impact on historical and political, not to mention relational issues. Thus, the operation of this audio-visual project seeks to bring these political feelings toward an image, whether set in the framework of the desert, the Pacific or Patagonia.

The aesthetic considerations merged in the investigative work on geography and its influence on the physical factors of the place, challenge the historical perspectives that have incited interest in research work in little explored territories totally dominated by nature. Ideas that cite the geography of the landscape and how, based on that, a drift is speculated toward the historical and cultural geography that is predominantly taken note of within the landscape, but understanding the landscape as a cultural product.

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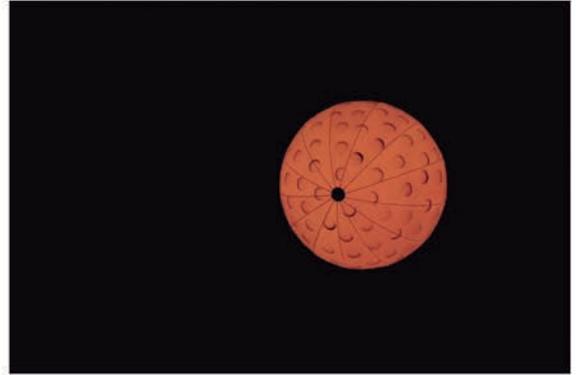












Valparaíso is a mirror of ourselves, of a major city that makes us proud and sad at the same time. The owners of the nitrate operations entered through this historical gate and there the object went down from the continent to the sea, on its way back to Europe, to return the ball to the English.















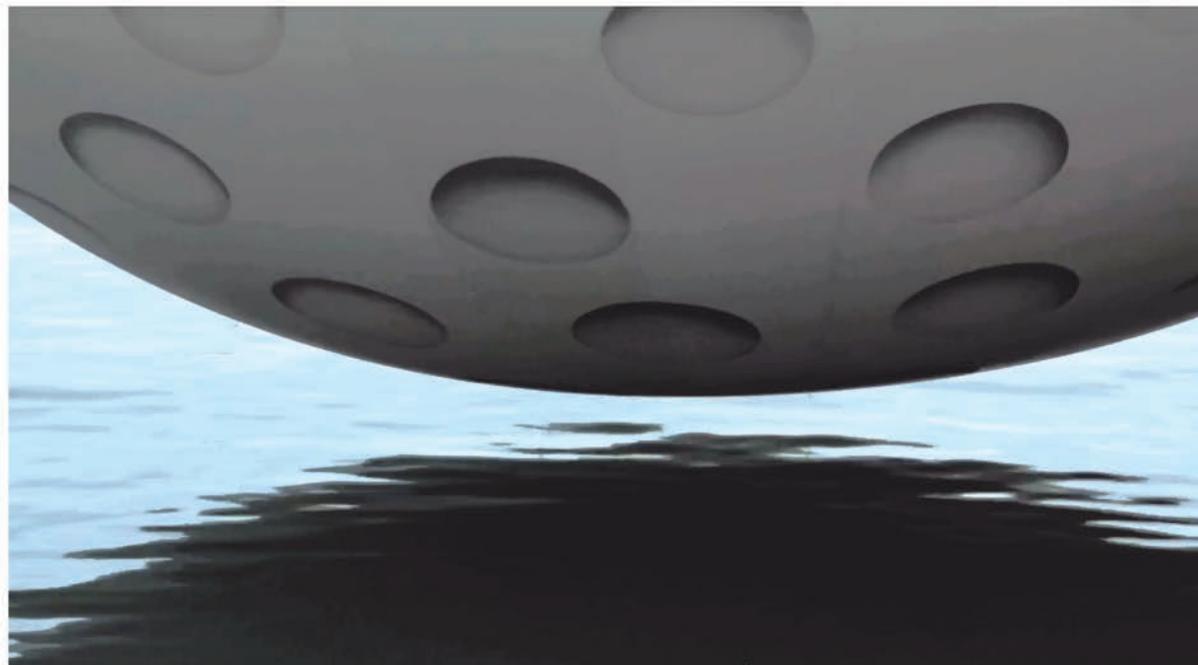


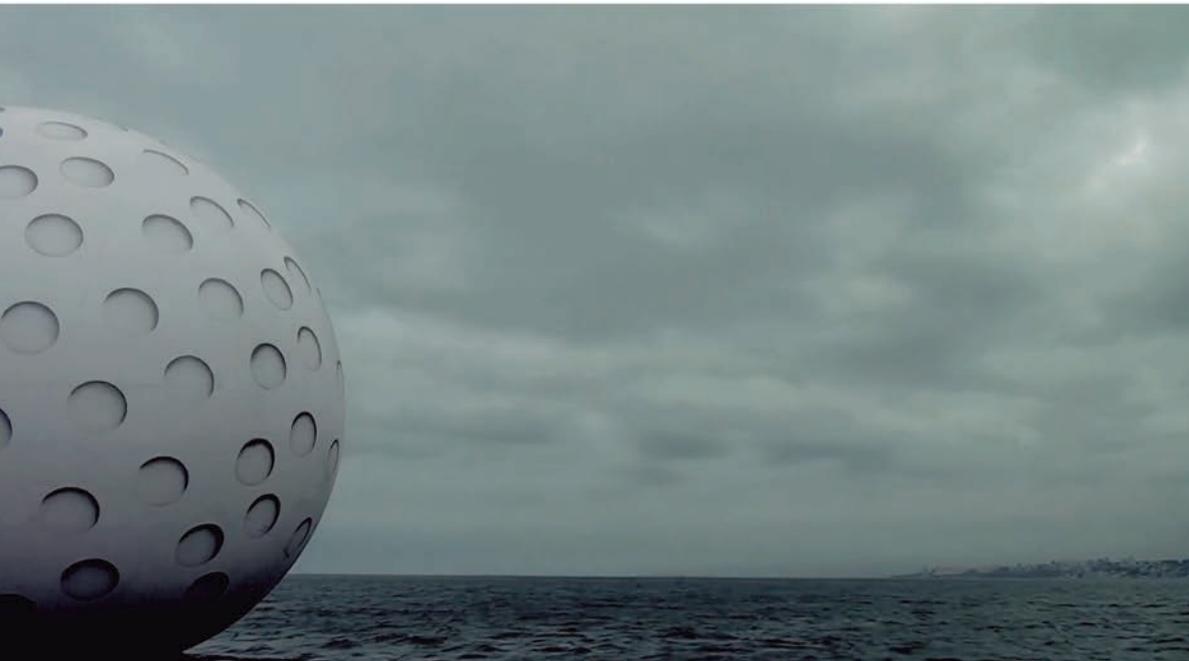














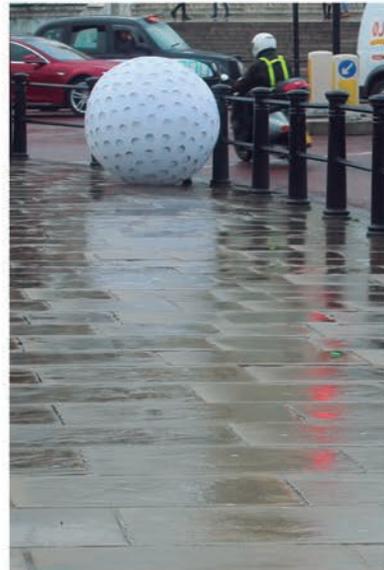
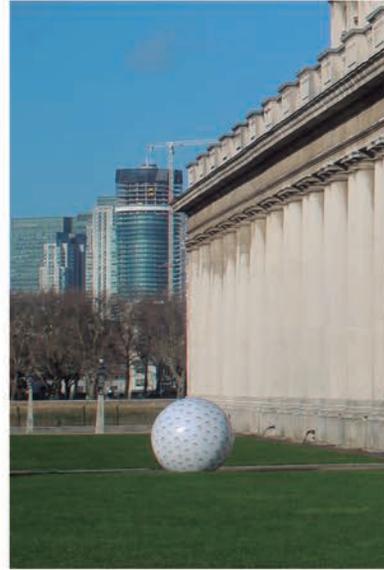




The last time the object was seen in London, it was much smaller, converted into an anecdote, making it seem that the story was diluted with time and distance.





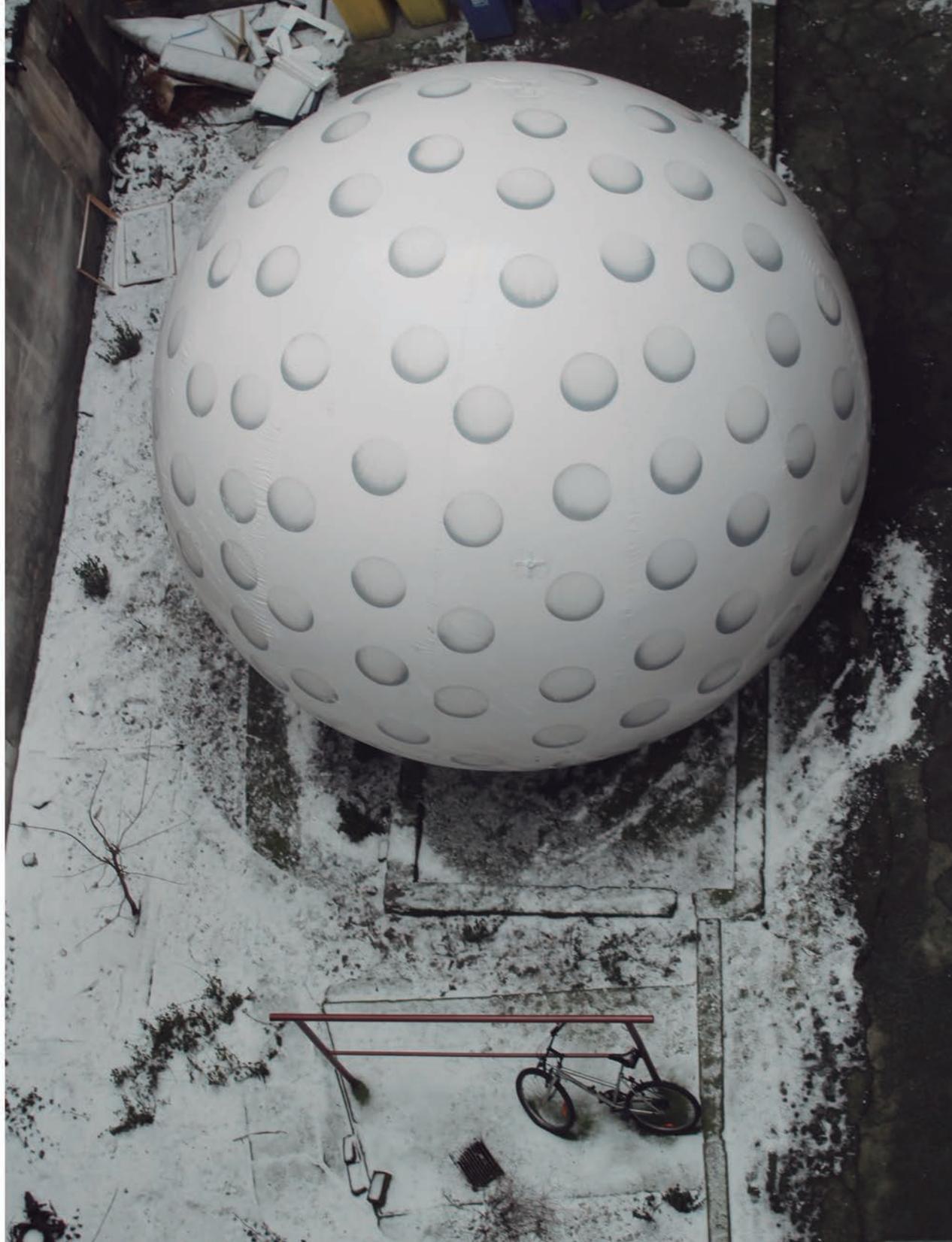






Meaning of emptiness

Joint Game should be entered into the spectrum of operations in the outside space, open space; space which is understood as a stage facing the Cosmos and extended by a movement which takes place in time. It explores the meaning of emptiness. It is the result of my research and personal experiences in the Atacama Desert and, at the same time, of a personal creative search. Similar to the way it was done in *Polonus Populus*, I was also trying to find a form here that would provoke contemplations of the phenomena of history understood as a course book about ourselves. The examples collected here propose, in an indirect but suggestive way, an understanding of artwork as a mirror, a magnifying glass or a macro-lens of the contemporary world whereby the choice is subjective. I mention what provoked a significant interior resonance during my search for references and relations and what influenced the conscious shaping of my own creative vision.



Stones

*But people say, and they speak knowingly,
That they are not tears, but stones.*

At the beginning of 2013, I made a decision to implement my own, large format, open space intervention: in the Quillagua area, in the Meteorite Valley.

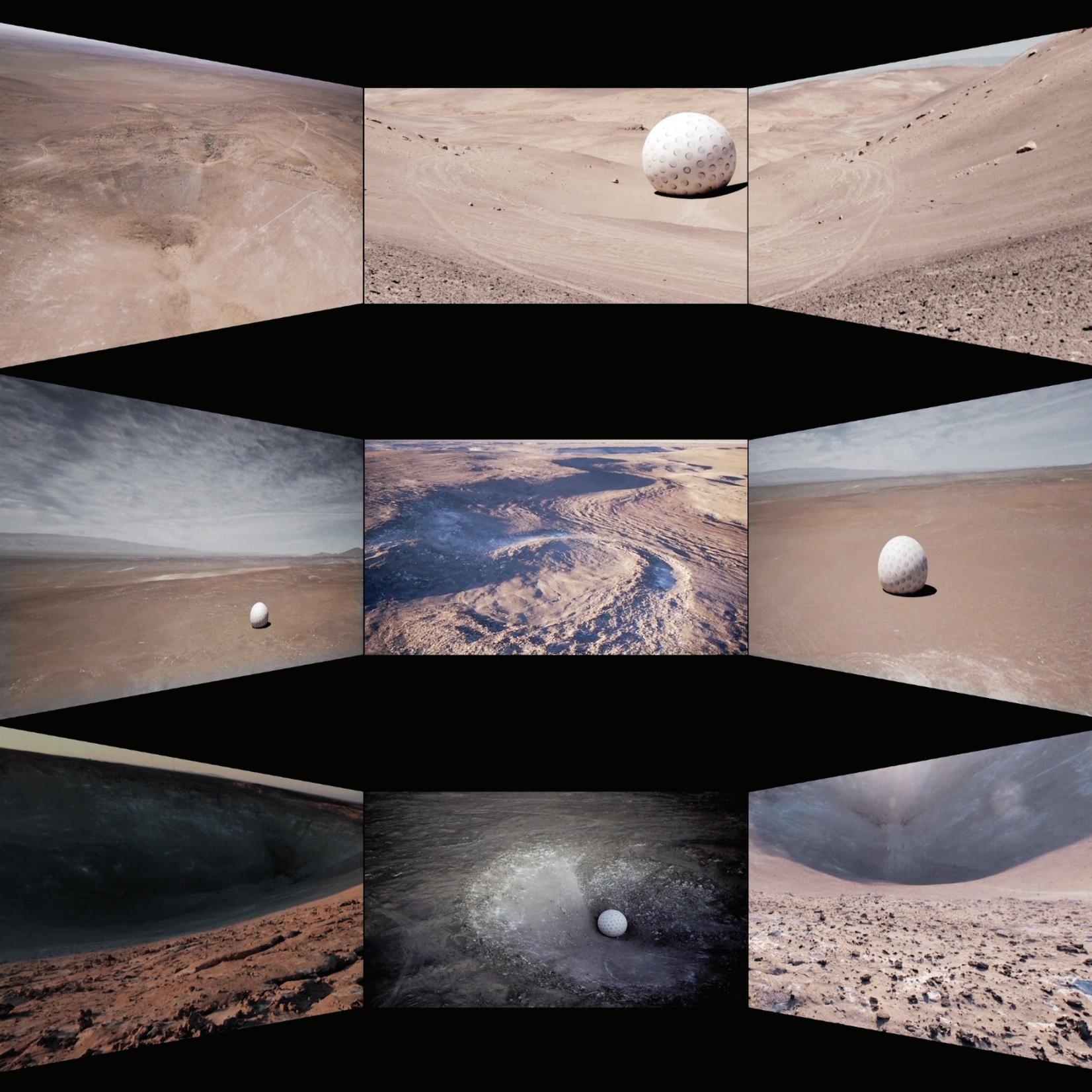
The story of that vast, space studded with craters is not clear. The moonlike landscape stimulates the imagination, the space seems relatively close. The deep and sheer voids of even a few dozen meter diameters seem like proof of physical contact with something that comes from outside the atmosphere. The stones, which after the sun sets, give off a metallic sound, are almost evidence of someone's presence.

After the ecological disaster the citizens of Quillagua turned from farming to tourism counting on the fact that the pre-Columbian reliefs, dusty remains of mummies and most of all, the Meteorite Valley, would attract foreigners. Signposts were put up and a parking lot was created near the biggest of the craters. Slowly the first tourists started to appear, more like wanderers, hungry for authenticity outside of the main, more heavily treaded trails.

But the problem appeared to be one of authenticity. According to the Chilean Geologists' Society it was the underground water springs in connection with the subgrade of the particular geological composition that caused rocks to dissolve and in consequence, resulted in these crater depressions. Nothing has ever fallen here; nothing unusual had happened here. They are just some washed out holes.

The citizens of Quillagua send visitors to the Meteorite Valley. It is their valley. You can take a piece of a meteorite home. Apparently, they have incredible energy.

¹C.K. Norwid, *W Weronie* [In Verona], fragment in: *Wiersze* [Poems], Algo, 2007, trans. Agata Hamilton, Jeffrey Judson Hamilton



Landscape

Feudal relationships have existed in South America much longer than in Europe and that is one of the reasons many Europeans moved there and started their businesses in Argentina, Bolivia or Chile. The incredibly cheap and defenseless work force reduced the cost of labor to a minimum. Ruling the new countries was limited to maintaining order which encouraged the development of entrepreneurship and ruthlessly crushed any form of resistance. In Chile, as opposed to Peru for example, slavery has never been legalized. The population of the poor, farming south signed on to work in the desert which was two of three thousand kilometers away.

Enganchador, an intermediary at that time, earned commission per each head brought to a niter village. The Longino train traveled for about a week and it stopped at many stations, but when it entered the desert, there was no place to run away to, there was also no return trip. In the niter villages all kinds of people worked, independent of their age, sex or health condition. They were paid with tokens which you were able to exchange for products only in the same village. The tokens from a nearby village had no purchasing value. That eliminated the possibility of migrating between the villages or to the coast and cities. The only store belonged to the owner of the village, in which the owner also set the prices and gave (or did not give) loans. The smallest children were well suited to put dynamite into the openings in the rocks. The dynamite sticks often exploded in the process due to movement or rubbing.

The Atacama Desert is covered by a carpet of abandoned cemeteries. Today they are regarded as a national heritage site and they have found their place on to the pages of multilingual photo albums.



Irrationality

Joint Game introduces an enigmatic, but at the same time visually synthetic element into the absolute emptiness of the landscape. The historical-social context associated with the minimalist nature of the desert became the starting point in the creative process and a deciding factor in selecting the place for the project. The open space of Atacama may only be compared with endless snow or endless water. This area's history is endless. Endless emptiness also belongs to this area. NOTHING. A vast, terrifying nothing. Every physical presence is materially limited; it ends somewhere. Only absence is endless. Only emptiness, such as silence, can be uninterrupted and absolute.

A sphere is the closest to emptiness, because it starts and ends nowhere. All its points may be brought to one. From a planet to an atom, it seems to be the most perfect and simultaneously the simplest of existing forms.

A golf ball with a diameter of twelve meters refers to the notion of a (lack) of scale and (dis)proportion. The absence of reference points in the desert creates an uncertainty in the scale of what we see, and it is uncomfortable to not have clarity, not to know whether what we are looking at is big or small. At the same time, the observed situation is an actual act, we are not dealing with a computer simulation or photomontage. The lack of artifacts, plants, or humans suggests that we may also be on a different planet. There is nothing for your vision to hold onto, to capture what we see. Only the rocky, naked hills on the horizon call up a feeling of the abyss, and an object in this context reaches monumental dimensions.

The open space intervention rebels against being closed in a gallery, it seems impossible to translate into white cube language. The process of moving is a creative challenge due to the extremely different conditions in the open space and in the gallery room.

The adapted strategy is to return to the effect of depth by surrounding the viewer with the desert. The simultaneous large format projection onto three adjacent walls creates the effect that the viewer is physically present in the open space. I mostly care about that swathing (or embattling) by the landscape. Three different moving pictures give the impression of movement. Although physically the viewer may be in one place, he or she has the impression of moving. The idea is to create a sensual fiction which will enable me to translate the experience of observing the object in the landscape through moving projections.

The video installation aims to transport the viewer to the desert and to provoke a palpable impression of the ball. The effect is reinforced by the visual connection of the projection (you cannot run away from the sight) and mostly by the sound. The sound effects were composed by Fernando Godoy and Zofia Moruś especially for this piece – they were attempting to submerge the viewer in a created reality.



Cosmos

In the same region where Quillagua is, in the Andes, 5000 meters above sea level, the world's most modern and largest international astronomy observatory ALMA¹ is located. The American, European and Japanese antennas, sixty-six in all, search space for answers to questions that have eluded humankind. The object I introduced to the Chajnator plain near the antennas may suggest that due to constant and intense exploitation, probing and sending signals into space, *Something* has finally appeared. I assume that this something is not what we would have expected in response to our interest in the universe. At the same time, the antennas have turned out to have an intelligence and will of their own because they turn and watch the ball which is an intruder – white, big and round, it tries to pretend it's one of them but in the end, its cover is blown and it has to leave.

¹Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (www.almaobservatory.org/)



Proof of existence

There is also another lead taking us further from questions of a scientific nature and pointing us towards a transcendental search. The spherical object may suggest *Beings* in the cosmos, or the existence of forces and dimensions which are not of an earthly nature. Its dimensions force us to consider that it is not compatible with human experience.

It is a ball, so ostensibly, any relationship with the religious world would seem to be scarce, but on the other hand, it is not just any ball - but a golf ball. We may assume that somewhere in the cosmos *Someone* who has supernatural powers might have a hobby – playing golf for example... Golf balls get lost easily, they fall into cracks, fall out of play on the golf course.

Both these leads seem important but at the same time the video installation is open to the interpretation of a moving, geometrical, abstract visual digression or simply – a joke.



DAGMARA WYSKIEL (1974)

Polish, Doctor of Art from the University of Fine Arts of Cracow. President and co-founder of the SE VENDE Mobile Contemporary Art Platform, director of the Contemporary Art Week, SACO. She was field editor for the Triennial of Chile in 2009. She carried out large-sized object actions in Meteorites Valley in the Atacama Desert, the ALMA astronomical observatory, Amargo Lake in the Magallanes and Chilean Antarctic Region, the old Jewish district in Cracow, the coast of England and the port of Valparaíso. She participated in biennials in Russia and Poland. She carried out several intervention in the salt flats in the Argentine Andes, in public spaces in Manizales, Medellín and Bogotá in Colombia, in London and Hastings in England, and in Antofagasta, Coliumo and Castro, in Chile. She has also had exhibitions in the United States, China, Mexico, Uruguay, Indonesia and Argentina. She won the Grand Prize at the 17th Asian Art Bangladesh Biennale, 2016.



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Chile is a country of great landscapes, which must be understood not just as a simple photogenic background for an image, but rather as a way of connecting with various universal questionings. A great advantage, a window through which we can see more, if we want to.

