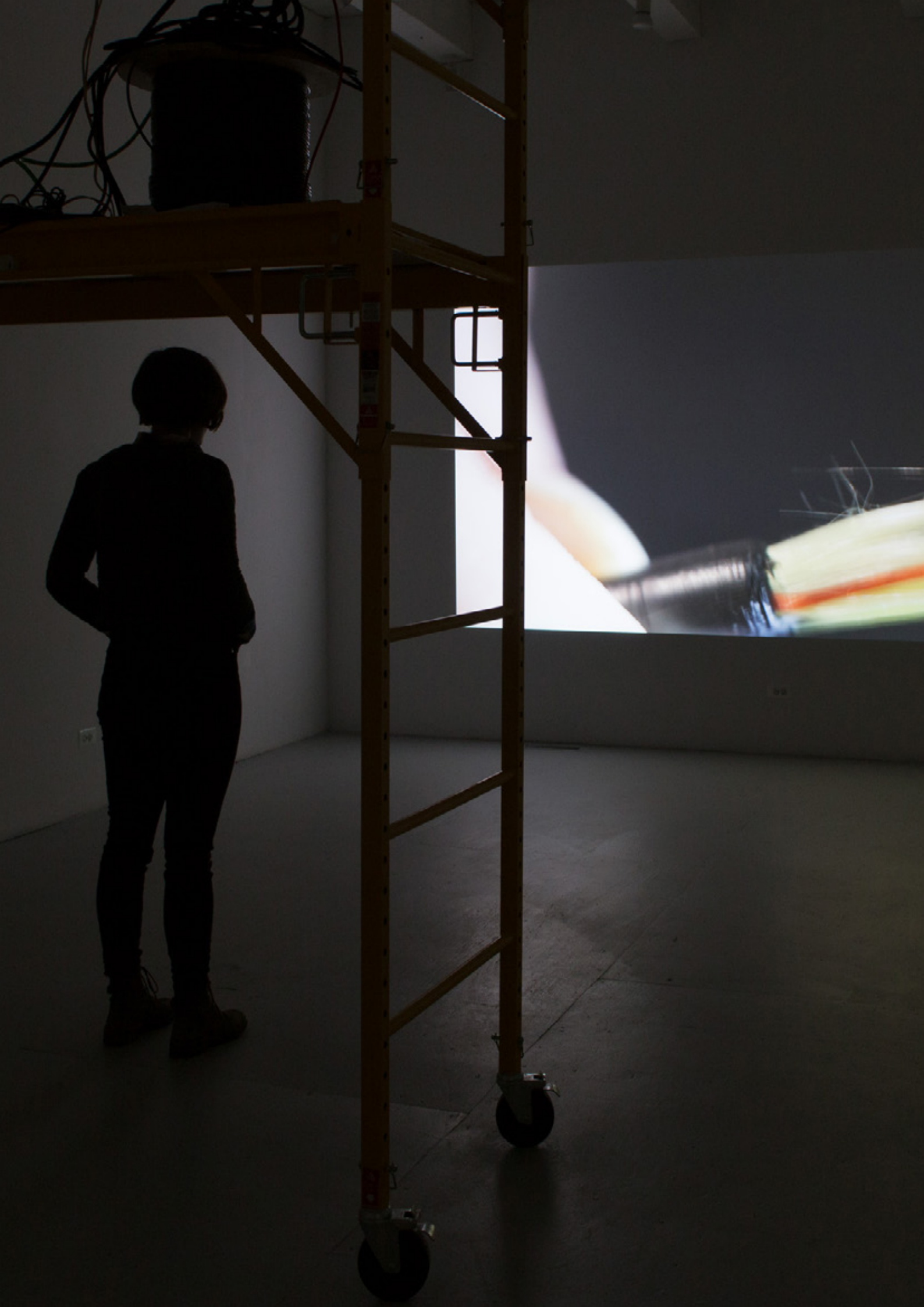


MARISSA LEE BENEDICT

DAVID RUETER

DARK FIBER

Wrightwood 659	2019
US Pavilion, Venice Architecture Biennale	2018
Illinois State University Galleries	2016
Contemporary Art Brussels	2015
EXPO Chicago	2015
Chicago Artists Coalition	2015



“DRAW. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, to draw is an act of creation. What is drawn (the Body without Organs, the plane of consistency, a line of flight) does not preexist the act of drawing. The French word *tracer* captures this better: It has all the graphic connotations of “to draw” in English, but can also mean to blaze a trail or open a road. “To trace” (decalquer), on the other hand, is to copy something from a model.”

– Brian Massumi, “Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgements,” *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari

Viewers entering the video installation, *Dark Fiber* (2015-19), are greeted with scenes of Benedict and Rueter digging, burying, pulling, and cutting a fiber-optic cable in the shadows of large-scale infrastructure. Locations such as the US/Mexico border wall, Chicago-area refineries, and an Antwerp shipping canal segue into urban, then interior spaces, gradually reducing in scale and increasing in strangeness, until a tiny specialized machine cuts a single strand of fiber. The exhibition site eventually appears on camera, inviting viewers to literally and uncannily connect the filmic industrial worlds with the installation space. The video, which inaugurated the artists’ collaboration in 2014, has traveled to six exhibitions around the world.

At the time of the work’s conception (2014) a quick Google image search for the phrase “internet infrastructure” revealed little about the sites, materials, and labor of internet infrastructure. Searches instead retrieved a procession of tangled, blue-tinted node-link diagrams. The results for “cloud computing” were (and still are) even more optically jejune; one could reasonably think that the internet is simply carried along by a combination of blue icons, arrows, and boring magic.

In telecommunications industry jargon “dark fiber” is a term for unused, or “unlit” fiber optic cable. As of 2014, adding a few latent strands to a fiber rollout cost little compared to leasing land, negotiating rights-of-way, digging trenches, and sawing through city streets. Telecom companies frequently opted to overbuild capacity in anticipation of future demand. The demand for this capacity became, in many instances, superfluous with technologic leaps that paced increasing amounts of information into light wave frequencies. The latent, now surplus, cable became a real estate opportunity for a growing number of private companies to lease this unused fiber to create their own exclusive networks.

The node-link diagram, a mathematical abstraction that is now shorthand for the complexity of networked society, can obscure more than it reveals. Frame-by-frame, *Dark Fiber* draws a different

approach to network representation, suggesting that one might instead follow a single line: one that hops between systems and scales, through vast landscapes, industrial infrastructure, media apparatuses, walls and conduits, lived space, and imagined worlds. Histories of property, white settlement, frontierism, innovation, and technologies of "progress," trace, and are traced by, this line. The result is not an understanding delivered whole, but a subjective experience, one afforded by walking a path.

Dark Fiber was exhibited first at the [Chicago Artists Coalition](#) (US) as a solo exhibition in 2015. The video is site-adapted (the ending reshot) for each exhibition of the work.

Consequent sited-adapted exhibitions of the video installation took place at: EXPO Chicago (US) in 2015 (selected by Jacob Proctor, formerly of the Neubauer Collegium at the University of Chicago); [The Works: Artists In and From Chicago](#) in 2015, curated by Abigail Winograd and Dieter Roelstrate for Contemporary Art Brussels (BE); [Placelessness](#) in 2016, curated by Jason Judd for the Illinois State University Gallery (Normal, IL, US); [Dimensions of Citizenship: Architecture and Belonging from the Body to the Cosmos](#) for the U.S. Pavilion's "Transit Screening Lounge," curated in part by Iker Gill, for the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale (IT); and [Dimensions of Citizenship](#) for Wrightwood 659 (Chicago, US).

A link to a video excerpt for the version of *Dark Fiber* produced for the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale can be found [here](#).

Special thanks over the years to: Meghan Moe Beitiks, Alex Benedict, Ingrid Burrington & Creative Time Reports, Lindsey French, CLUI & Matt Coolidge, Pat Elifritz, Jeremiah Jones, Brian Lee, John & Patricia Lee, Adam Mansour, Juan Luis Olvera, Marc & Anne Rueter, Eleonore de Sadeleer, Teresa Silva, and Andy Tokarski.



EXHIBITED AT CHICAGO ARTISTS COALITION (2015), EXPO CHICAGO (2015)
CONTEMPORARY ART BRUSSELS (2015), EXPO CHICAGO (2015), ILLINOIS
STATE UNIVERSITY GALLERIES (2016), 54TH VENICE ARCHITECTURE
BIENNALE (2018), WRIGHTWOOD 695 (2019);

10:20-MINUTE LOOPING VIDEO INSTALLATION WITH SITE-ADAPTED FIBER
OPTIC CABLE AND JUNCTION BOX.



Previous page, this page and next: installation images of *Dark Fiber* at the Chicago Artists Coalition (2015).



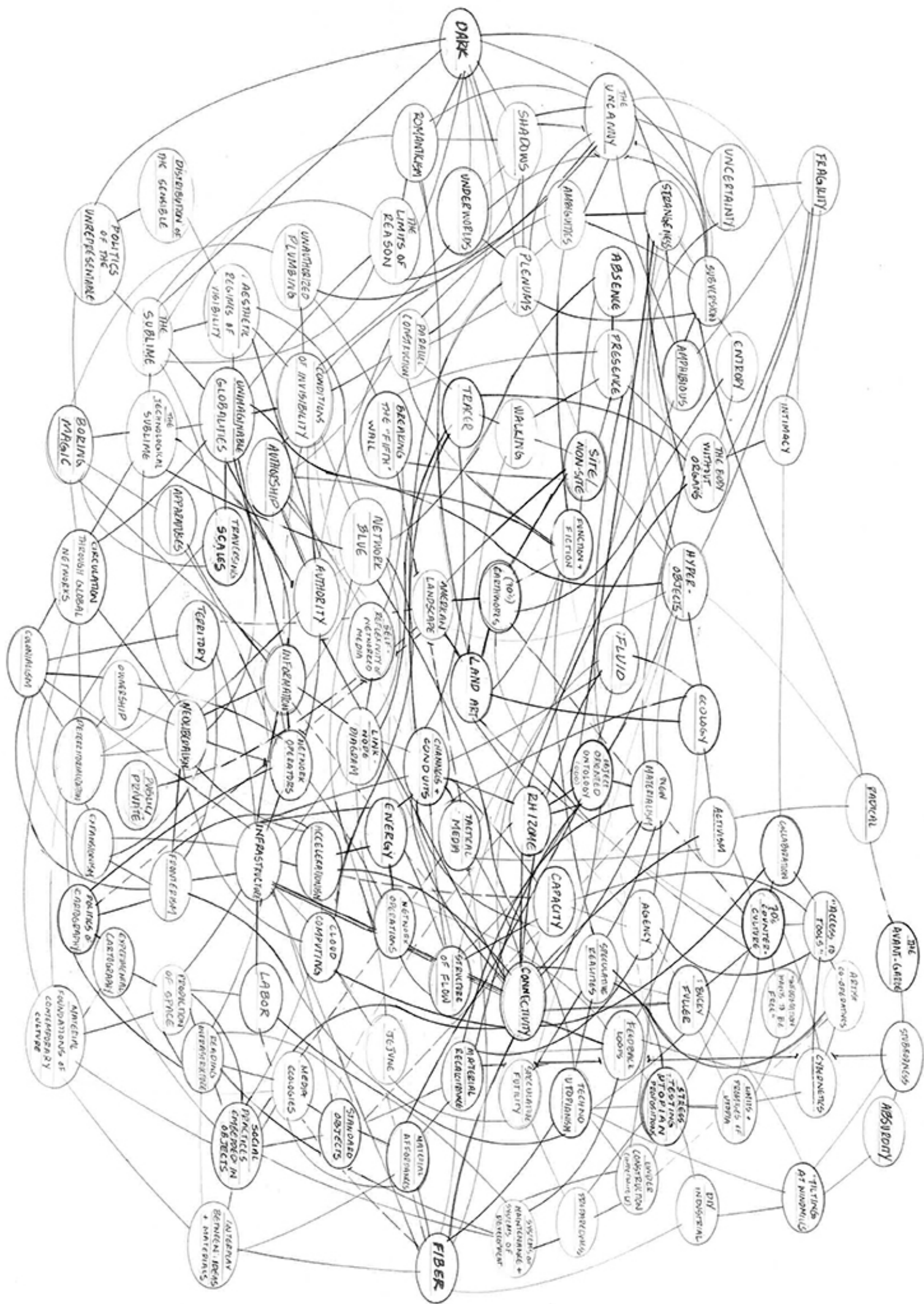


This page and next three: video stills from *Dark Fiber* (2014-19).











Previous page: diagram created by the artists during production.

This page: while *Dark Fiber* was installed at the Chicago Artists Coalition (2015), Rueter and Benedict created an open call for a video screening program under the title "Line of Site." The call solicited videos, of any nature, the only requirement being that the means of delivering the video to the gallery must be considered as part of the work. The video program screened works by artists: Kayla Anderson, Kathryn Trumbull Fimreite, Lindsey French, Donny Gettinger, Stephanie Graham, Cristen Leifheit, Alyssa Moxley, Jeremiah Jones, Phil Peters, and Andrew Rosinski.

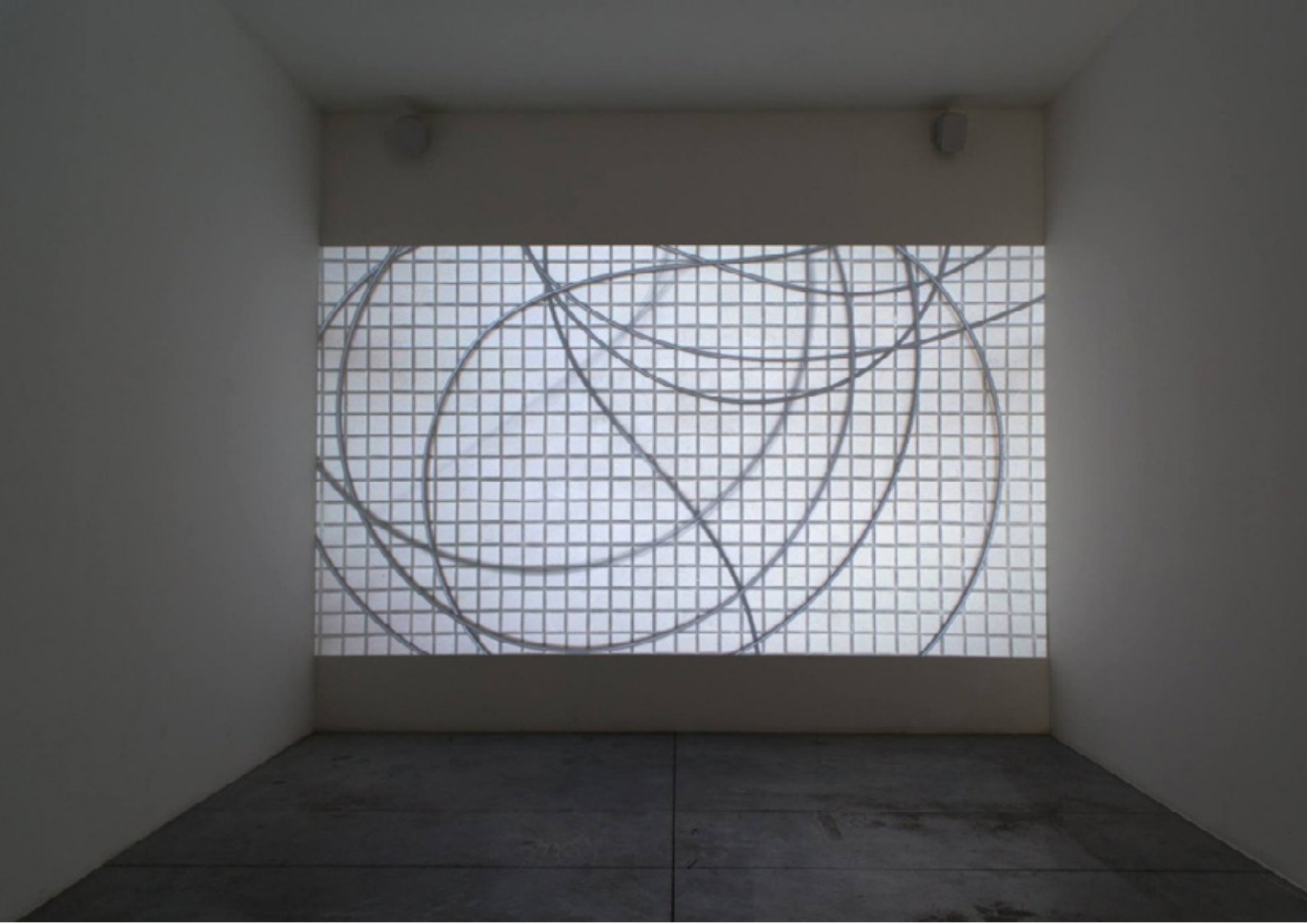


This page and next three pages: video stills from *Dark Fiber* (2014-19).









This page and next two: installation images of *Dark Fiber* at Contemporary Art Brussels (2015).







This page and next three: video stills from *Dark Fiber* (2014-19).









This page and next three: installation images of *Dark Fiber* at the EXPO Chicago art fair (2015). The third iteration of the work was housed in a custom-fabricated modular “telecom equipment shed” built to the dimensions of the art fair booth.. The mobile screening room, built from laminated and painted structural insulated panels, hid in plain site. Viewers stepped up into the unit, entering a small air-conditioned, felt-lined room projection room. A line of real fiber optic cable ran from over the back wall, draping to the floor before treading through a cable port hole plate into the building, where it plugged into an artist fabricated “splicing” box.







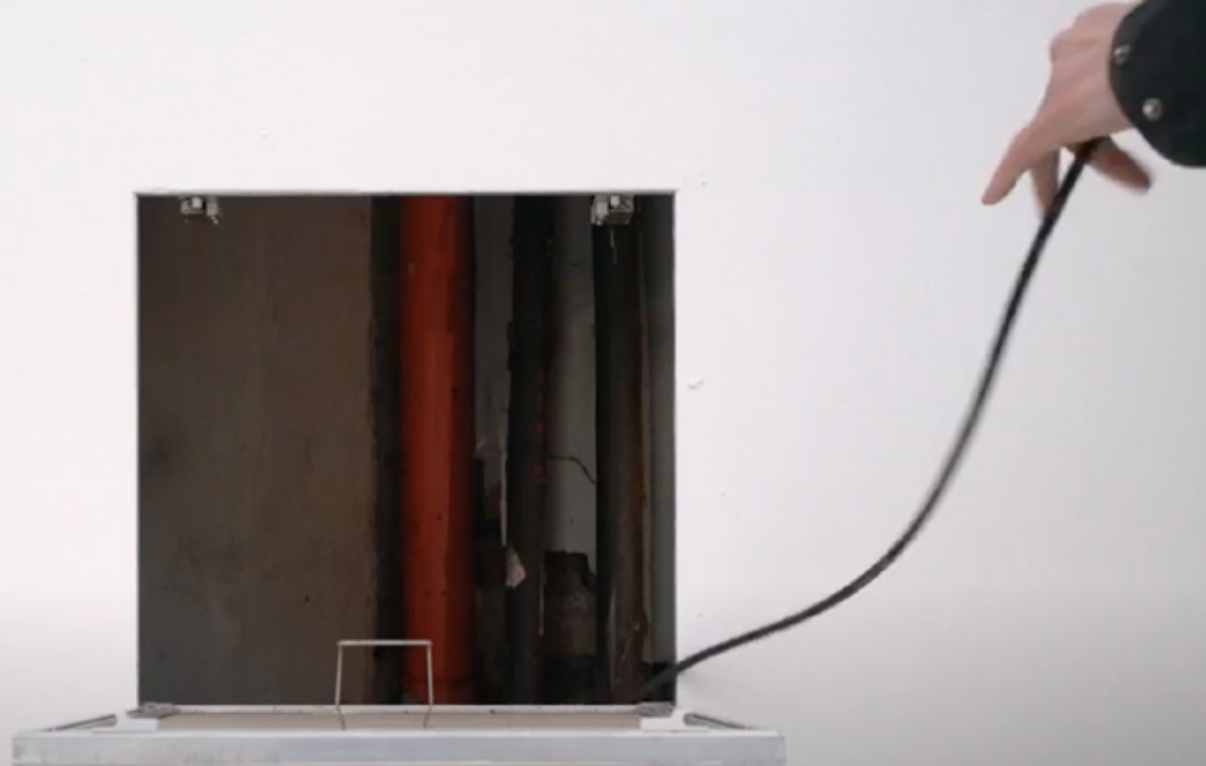


This page and next: in addition to exhibiting their own work in EXPO Chicago, in this iteration Rueter and Benedict organized a selection of videos to periodically interrupted “Dark Fiber” over the course of the art fair, every hour on the hour. The curated selection of 21 short videos collectively reflected themes of interrupted communication, language, friction, race, place, technology, and landscape. The video program was billed under the title “INTERLOCKING SINGLE-MODE 21-STRAND FIBER OPTIC CABLE” and featured works by artists based within a 285 mile radius from Chicago: Kayla Anderson, Ruth Ann (Nina Barnett and Robyn Nesbitt), Jeffrey Michael Austin, Melika Bass, Sarah Belknap and Joseph Belknap, Rashayla Marie Brown, Hope Esser, Lori Felker, Snow Yunxue Fu, Chido Johnson, Ben Moren, Johana Moscoso, Stefanie Motta, Dan Paz, Alejandro Figueredo Díaz-Perera, Phil Peters, Andrew Rosinski, Casey Smallwood, Sanaz Sohrabi, and Hyounsang Yoo. The above installation image features Rashayla Marie Brown's 10:06 minute single-channel video *Off the Hook* (2013) playing at 6:00 PM on Sunday, September 20th, 2015.



This page and next four: video stills from *Dark Fiber* (2014-19).











Installation view of *Dark Fiber* at the Venice Architecture Biennale (2018).



This page and next: video stills from *Dark Fiber* (2014-19).

