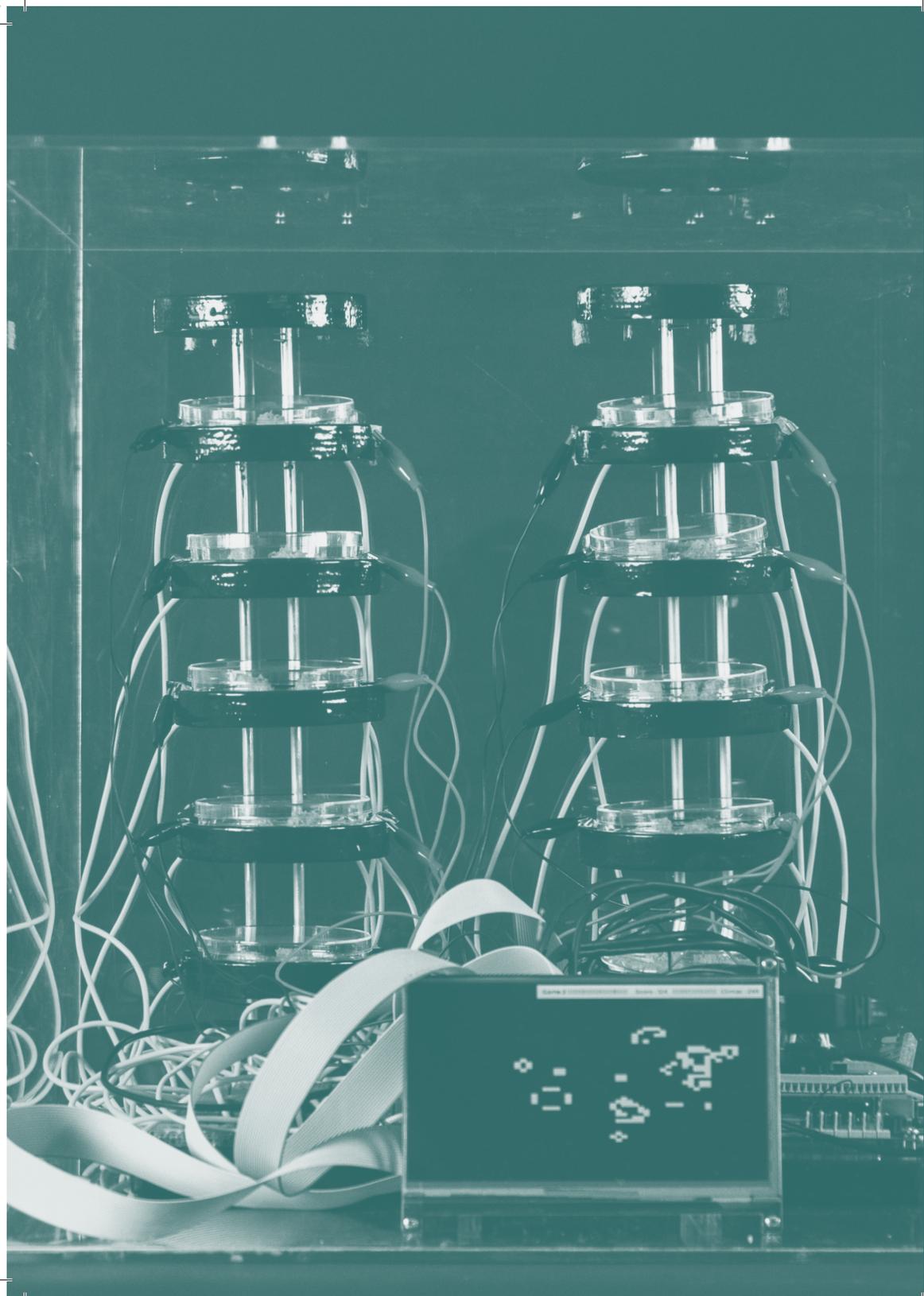




ILLUSTRATIONS



CTRL

MICHAEL SEDBON

Cover art and illustrations are taken and adapted from *Ctrl* (2018) by Michael Sedbon. *Ctrl* is an installation in which 10 *Physarum Polycephalum* – also known as slime molds - compete with each other to play John Conway's Game of Life.

The slime molds are connected to a food source through a protoplasmic tube. The electrical potential of the molds is measured through Galvanic Skin Response sensors, hooked up to an Arduino Mega. This data is then transmitted to a single board Windows 10 computer and processed through custom software. The resulting outputs are used as spatial co-ordinates that control the gaming, and set the original state of the Game of Life.

The original Game of Life consists of a computer game in which a collection of cells live, die, or multiply based on a few mathematical rules.

MANIPULATING THE MAP

In his short story *Del Rigor en la Ciencia* (1946), Jorge Luis Borges describes how we must make maps in order to perceive and extract value from reality. A king, unhappy at being presented with maps that do not do justice to his kingdom, demands the creation of a map so detailed that only one on the same scale as the empire itself will suffice.

In order to manipulate a system we must abstract it into a model. But the efficacy of these models depends on the resolution of the abstractions. Our data-maps inform decisions in many parts of society, feeding into decision-making algorithms. From the way we pass through borders, to the tracking of what we buy in a supermarket, algorithms hold tremendous power in our lives. We are increasingly datafied. Our digital selves are transformed into an immense flow of avatars, formatted into parsable datasets in order to inform predictive measures around targeted advertising and law enforcement. We are building a spinning feedback loop between need and outcome: the more data artificial intelligence is trained on, the better it will be at producing new information.

In *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), Jean Baudrillard nods back to Borges' map allegory, but argues that the territory is fading away and we are now only left with the map: a simulated abstraction of what once was.

