

Die Stadt

FIELDS

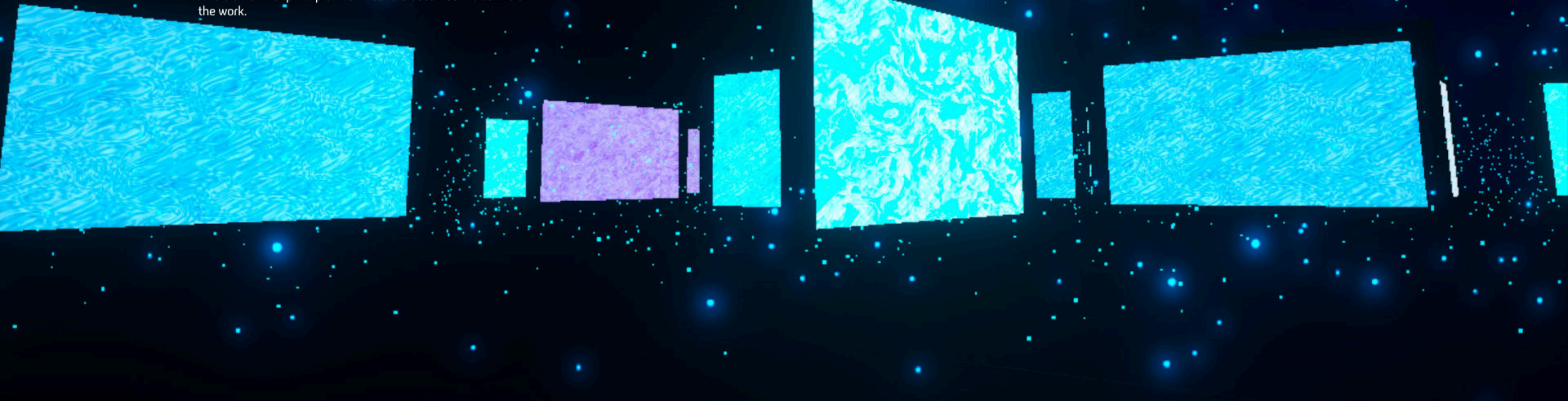
VR Experience soundtrack

The Matter of the Threshold:
Electronic music and virtual reality as territories of the same space

Correspondences between immersive sound and virtual experience

There are experiences that cannot be observed from the outside. They have no frame, no distance, no seat from which to contemplate them safely. They demand something else: that the body enter, that the senses surrender control, that the boundary between self and environment becomes porous. Ambient electronic music and virtual reality share that same radical ambition: not to create objects to be perceived, but spaces to be inhabited.

For centuries, art organised itself around separation. The painting had its frame; the symphony, its stage; the spectator, their assigned place in the darkness of the hall. The aesthetic experience was an act of contemplation from a distance. What has happened over recent decades — first at the margins of sound art and later in the laboratories of virtual reality — is an inversion of that principle: the threshold becomes the centre of the work.



1. Space as Material

Before virtual reality existed as a technology, some artists had already understood that sound could construct invisible architectures. **Brian Eno**, in developing the concept of ambient music in the nineteen seventies, was not composing songs: he was designing environments. His idea that music should function like _"the light and atmosphere of a room"_ anticipates with precision what VR would do decades later with the image: turning the medium into the space that contains it.

This intuition has deeper antecedents. Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* — the total work of art that would fuse music, drama, space and image — already dreamed of an experience that would envelop the spectator completely. What contemporary technology has achieved is to carry that dream to its logical conclusion: the headset that erases the outside world, the speakers that surround the body, the generative environments that respond to the visitor's presence.

Two pioneers of electronic music translated that same ambition into concrete technological gestures decades before VR existed as a medium. **Jean-Michel Jarre** turned the concert itself into total spectacle — monumental audiovisual events where architecture, light and sound merged into a single immersive field long before headsets made that fusion portable. More recently, with *Oxymore* (2022), he composed directly in spatial audio: not a stereo object to be played back, but a three-dimensional space to move through. **Mike Oldfield** went further still. With *Tr3s Lunas* (1994), one of the first albums released as an interactive video game, he let listeners navigate his music as explorable terrain rather than a fixed sequence — an early, unmistakable rehearsal of what *Fields* now completes with real-time virtual reality.

In installations such as those of **Ryoji Ikeda**, sound does not accompany image: both are the same thing expressed in different registers. His spaces of data and pure frequencies transform exhibition halls into instruments of perception, where the visitor does not look at a work but *becomes part of it*. **Alva Noto** operates from a similar logic: sonic geometry occupies physical space with the same precision as sculpture.

2. Generative Art and Digitalised Nature: Landscape as Code

One of the most persistent impulses in the confluence of electronic music and VR is the desire to reinvent nature from within the code. Not to reproduce it — to photograph it, film it, display it — but to **extract its internal logic and reconstruct it as sensory experience**.

TeamLab, the Japanese digital art collective, has spent years exploring that territory. In their installations, visitors walk among cascades of light that respond to their movement, among forests of particles that follow the laws of water and wind yet belong to no physical world. The result is not a simulated nature: it is a *possible* nature, an ecosystem that can only exist in the space between algorithm and human perception.

Marshmallow Laser Feast, the British collective, takes that idea to its most organic limits. In works such as *In the Eyes of the Animal* or *We Live in an Ocean of Air*, VR transports the spectator into the interior of a forest seen at molecular scale, where oxygen becomes visible and the time of trees becomes tangible. The sound accompanying these experiences is not music in any conventional sense: it is texture, frequency, the resonance of living things.

In the sonic realm, artists such as **Aes Dana** construct electronic landscapes of similar density: layers of synthesis that mimic the fractal complexity of natural systems, where no element is random yet none is entirely controlled. Their music does not describe a landscape; **it generates the perceptual conditions for inhabiting one**.

3. Suspended Time: Contemplation and Technology

There is a widespread prejudice about technology: that it accelerates, fragments, distracts. And yet some of the most significant technological experiences of recent years have pursued exactly the opposite — **the dilation of time, sustained attention, interior silence.**

Char Davies, a pioneer of contemplative VR, built a work in 1995 titled *Osmose* that remains an unavoidable reference. In it, the visitor navigated a virtual world using nothing but breath and bodily balance. No joysticks, no controllers: only the awareness of one's own body as interface. The result was a radically slow, almost meditative experience, in which technology disappeared to give way to something resembling contemplation.

That same desire for slowness and presence runs through the music of **Jon Hopkins**, whose electronic compositions — designed explicitly to alter states of consciousness — share with the finest contemplative VR a common structure of gradual depth: the experience that begins at the surface and descends, layer by layer, toward something without a precise name but which the body recognises.

Caterina Barbieri works from modular synthesis with an analogous philosophy. Her repetitive patterns do not seek trance through an accumulation of energy, but through a subtraction of noise. Attention sharpens, details emerge, time becomes elastic. To hear her in an immersive environment would not amplify the experience: it would complete it.

4. The Body Inside the Sound: Technological Synaesthesia

Virtual reality is not solely a visual technology. In its most advanced form, it is a **sensory** technology: it spatialises sound, responds to movement, erases the boundary between what is seen and what is felt. And it is in that dimension where the convergence with electronic music becomes most radical.

Halina Rice is perhaps the most eloquent example of this fusion in real time. A London-based electronic producer and audiovisual artist, Rice has transformed her performances into immersive experiences where sound, generative imagery and physical space fuse into a single sensory environment. Described as "*part rave, part art-happening*", her work — above all the *New Worlds* project — combines binaural spatial audio, mixed reality visuals and the live presence of the artist's body rendered as avatar. She has performed at venues including Abbey Road Studios and in the metaverse, exploring how electronic music can become literally three-dimensional. Rice does not perform *for* the space: she performs *inside* it, and draws the listener in with her.

Björk, with projects such as *Biophilia* and its VR extension *Vulnicura VR*, was among the first to propose that an album could possess a spatial dimension inseparable from its musical one. Her VR experiences do not illustrate the music: they complete it with a layer of presence that audio alone cannot provide.

And **Refik Anadol** closes the circle from the visual side: his data installations transform memories, information flows and climatic patterns into audiovisual landscapes where music and image are inseparable. His works are, at their core, the same thing that the finest ambient music pursues: **a space where perception is recalibrated.**

5. The Threshold as Art Form

What unites all these artists — and what defines the territory where electronic music and virtual reality meet — is not the technology they use, but the question they share: **what happens when art ceases to exist outside us and begins to exist around us?**

The threshold — that instant when the familiar environment dissolves and something new begins to take shape — is not merely the moment of entry into a VR experience or the first chord of an ambient piece beginning to envelop. It is, in itself, a form of art. Transition as experience. Passage as work.

When sound fills space so completely that there is no longer any direction from which it does not arrive; when the generative image responds to the movement of the body; when breath becomes navigation and the eyes cease to search for the edge of the frame because there is no edge — in that moment, something shifts in the relationship between spectator and experience.

One no longer contemplates. **One enters.**

And entering, always, is the beginning of something.

Fields. VR Experiencie soundtrack

01: First Space	09:32
02: Second Space	09:28
03: Third Space	10:53
04: Fourth Space	08:20
05: Fifth Space	08:04

Music composed, arranged, and produced by Die Stadt.

Mastering by Die Stadt assisted by Claude Sonnet 4.8

Graphic Design by Antonio Montilla.

Dedicated to my family. To Eva. To you.

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About

Die Stadt is Antonio Montilla's electronic music project, founded in Seville in 2008. Specialising in ambient, downtempo and cinematic music, his work places electronic textures at the intersection of sound, image and space — sonic architectures that do not describe emotions, but build them.

Over the years, Die Stadt has brought its music to art galleries, bookshops and museum spaces — including the Interactive Music Museum of Málaga — and has collaborated with artists across disciplines, driven by the conviction that electronic music belongs in places where its presence is unexpected. In 2018 one of his tracks was a finalist at the inaugural Synthetic Generation Awards. In 2019, the Cantillana Town Council recognised his multimedia project *Dentro del Mosaico* for its contribution to local heritage.

OneNightCircus is Antonio Montilla's digital arts laboratory: a space for aesthetic risk where technology, design and art intersect to create experiences that linger in the mind long after they disappear from the screen. Not a studio. A place where the edges of each discipline become the starting point.

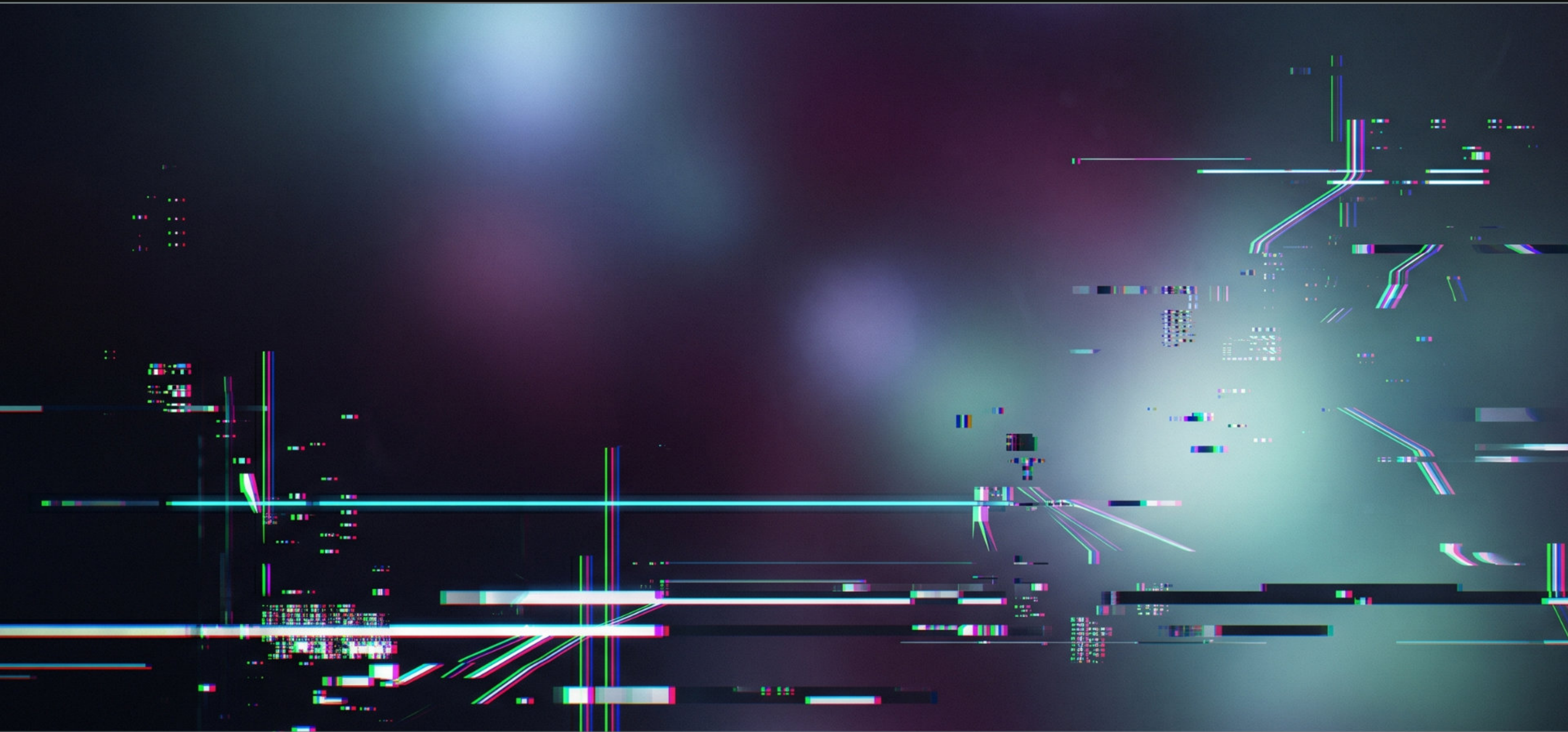
Fields is where both worlds converge. An album and an immersive virtual reality experience that share the same sonic and visual universe — the same space, inhabited in two different ways. Fields is not something you listen to. Not something you watch. It is somewhere you enter.

Experience the edge.

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