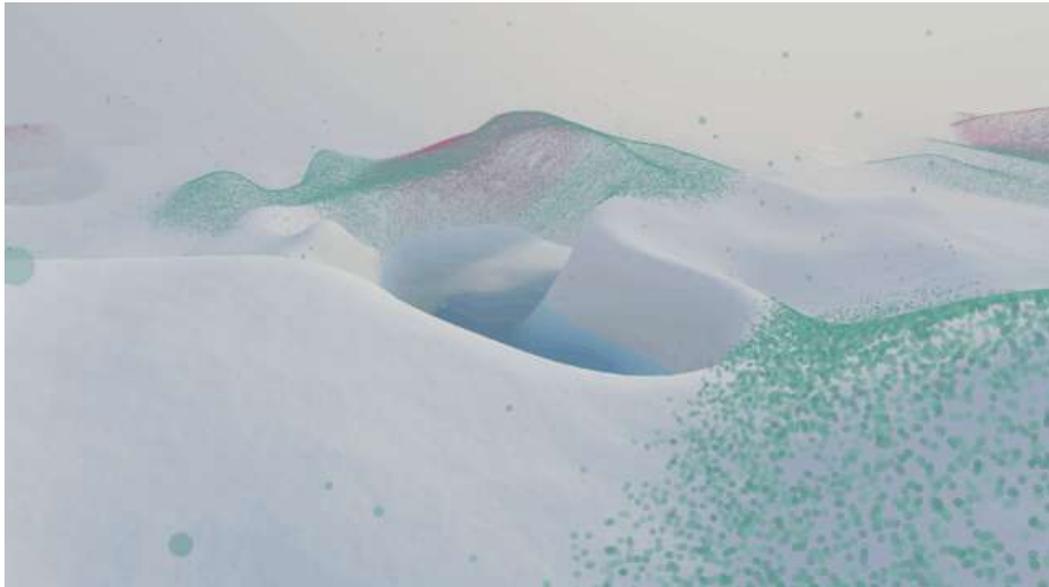


Wetlands

A new interactive ecosystem, poetically visualising living data and user interactions



Wetlands is a living, breathing algorithm, showcasing the studio's experimental approach.

Having used the lockdown period as an opportunity to define the studio's mission, values and brand identity, Lucy Hardcastle Studio is unveiling a new website incorporating an interactive feature, based on a data visualisation of her own brainwaves.

Wetlands is a self-initiated project that outlines the vision and approach of the studio. By combining Lucy's own neurological responses to material tactility with the user's own interactions on the site, the project creates a unique digital landscape that constantly shifts in colour and form as the two data sources intersect.

Developed in consultation with specialists in the field of neuroscience, the project takes Lucy's personal response to sensory materials as its starting point. A wearable headset was used to track electrical activity in her brain, as well as heart-rate and breath-rate, during stimulating experiences with different surfaces while in a closed-eye meditative state. These data were compiled into linear waves, graphs and cross-sections, which were then translated into a 3D landscape – a spectrum of colour and wave movement that acts almost as a 3D graph.

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This landscape captures Lucy's responses to a range of material textures, including glass, suede, acetate, slime, silicone rubber, sandpaper and silk, translating her brainwaves and other bodily data into high-points and valleys, rock pools of fluid and flurries of different coloured particles. Accessing the site, the user is brought into this realm, and encouraged to play with their surroundings. As they navigate the 360° digital space, their interactions disperse colour and trigger wave motions in correlation with the data, creating mini-ecosystems or tides. The more the user plays with the pools, the more they spread and melt into the landscape, creating a flooded effect, with the outcome of an ever-changing digital environment.

"For our new identity, we were inspired by the importance of presence, as a way to represent how we 'bring the human' into our practice. In order to feel connected and personal to the foundations of the studio, we chose to use my sensitivity to materials as an area of exploration and data extraction, creating a visualised algorithm that is as much living and breathing as I am. The outcome is a digital landscape in a constant state of change between the data and the individual user's input."

– Lucy Hardcastle

Touching new worlds

Lucy Hardcastle Studio pioneers sensual storytelling in the digital age



As more and more aspects of our lives are mediated through digital, artists, designers, brands and institutions across the world are recognising the need for increasingly sophisticated approaches to storytelling that push the limits of the technology at hand.

A unique voice in this field, Lucy Hardcastle stands alongside the likes of United Visual Artists for her thought-provoking installations, Thomas Traum for video-game-inspired narrative play and Wang & Söderström for her explorative approach to materials and surfaces. By weaving together sound, animation and 3D visuals, Lucy Hardcastle creates immersive virtual worlds that reflect or reinterpret physical reality with a distinct bodily aesthetic.

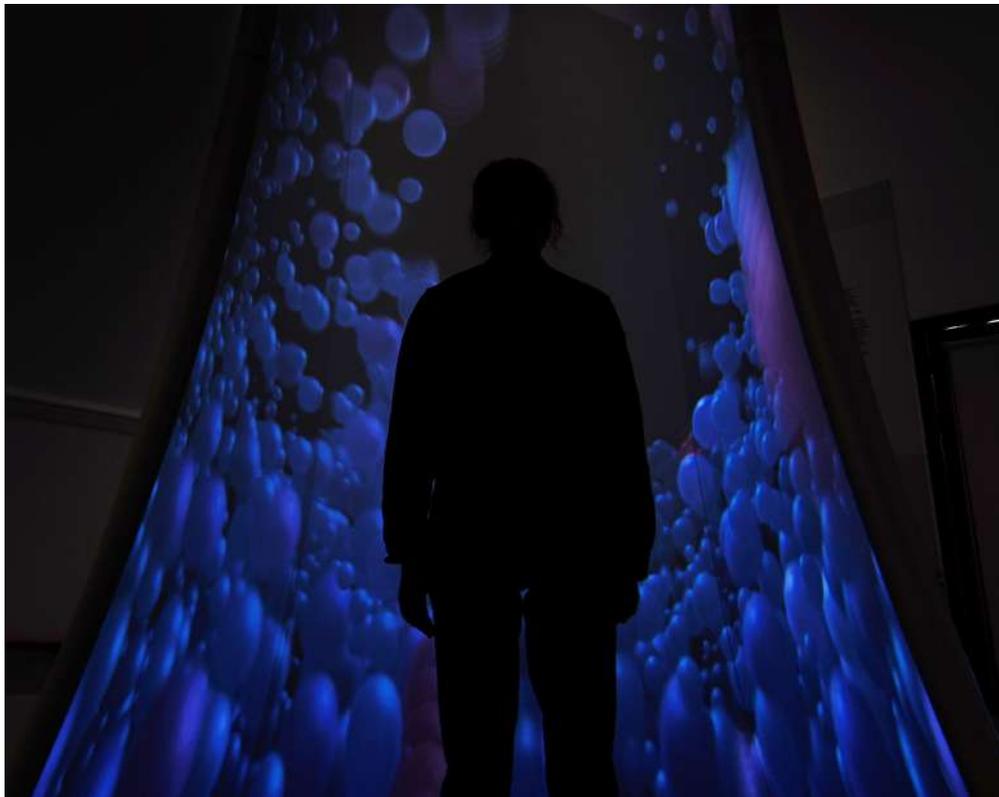
Pioneering the relationship between touch and technology, Lucy Hardcastle is at the forefront of a rapidly evolving new field of creative art – one that bridges the gap between data and emotive storytelling. A determination to use design and technology to communicate complex ideas, making intuitive sense of cold

LUCY HARDCASTLE STUDIO

information in beautiful, evocative ways, makes Lucy Hardcastle's approach stand out.

This distinctive methodology is the engine behind the studio's ambitious new digital project, created for its newly relaunched website at lucyhardcastle.com.

Tactility in the digital world: adventures in form, colour and texture



Lucy Hardcastle data inspired installation at the V&A for LDF 2019. Photo by Gareth Williams.

A digital artist with an MA in Information Experience Design from the Royal College of Art, Lucy Hardcastle set up her studio in 2016. Its affinity for evoking texture, together with its ability to weave emotive narratives from abstract ideas have won commercial commissions from the likes of Chanel, Heimtextil, Uniqlo and others, and have seen the studio partner with medical scientists for an installation at the V&A.

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“Our approach combines a radical use of the senses and a human-focused design language. We break down a brief into its bare elements, which may be certain codes, themes or properties that can be represented in a metaphoric, abstracted, or hyper-real way. Our aim is to have a physiological and emotive impact – we want the viewer to feel like they’re temporarily transported to another place, to go on a journey involving the senses that may not necessarily be comfortable, but which encourages them to learn about themselves and their own uninhibited responses.”

– Lucy Hardcastle

The studio’s work ranges from commercial campaigns to large-scale design installations and self-initiated research experiments, and encompasses both physical and virtual forms. Although diverse, each project shares an emphasis on the sensory and human perception.

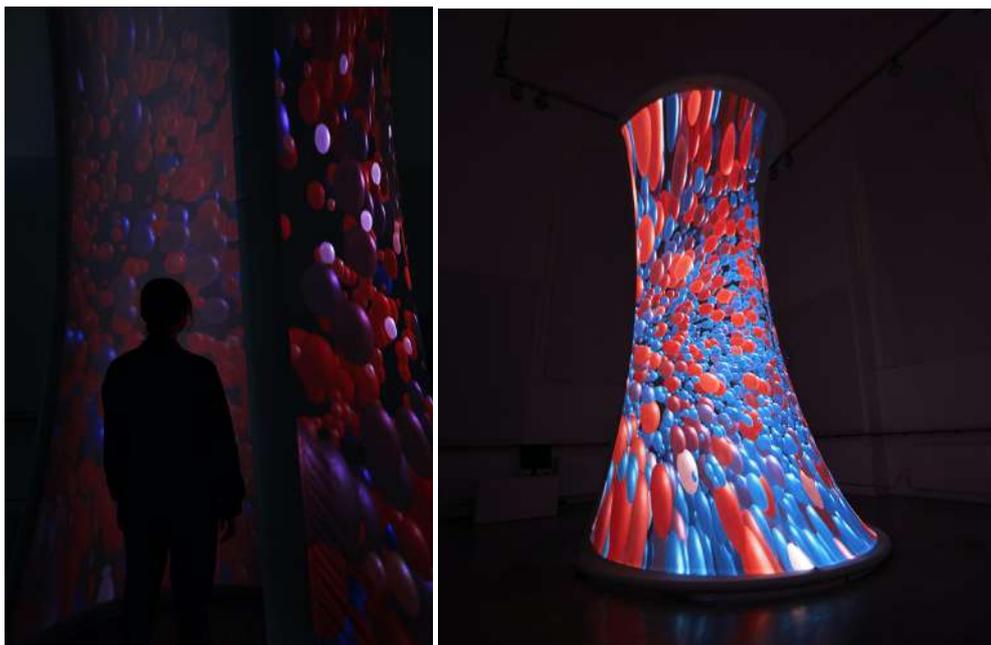


An exploration of touch and technology remains at the heart of Lucy Hardcastle’s practice. Photo from Mirage for Facebook in 2019. Photo courtesy of Refinery29.

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Kalostasis (2019)

During London Design Festival 2019, Lucy Hardcastle Studio collaborated with Cellule Studio and Dr Pablo Lamata on the installation Kalostasis at the V&A.



During London Design Festival 2019, Lucy Hardcastle made advanced medical imagery tangible. Photo by Gareth Williams.

The multisensory interactive work explored how the human heart sustains a state of equilibrium within the body. Drawing on advanced medical imaging methods from King's College London and bio-inspired design from Cellule Studio, Lucy Hardcastle created a monumental 3D structure that served as a canvas upon which the unseen beauty and complexity of the heart's life-giving pulse and the flow of blood through the aorta could be made visible. Using real-time rendered graphics, projection mapping and sensor tracking, the installation translates blood flow data into an immersive blend of touch, sight and sound. The presence of a viewer creates turbulence, gradually returning to neutrality as they leave – a reflection of the heart's stamina and remarkable ability to rebalance after periods of stress.

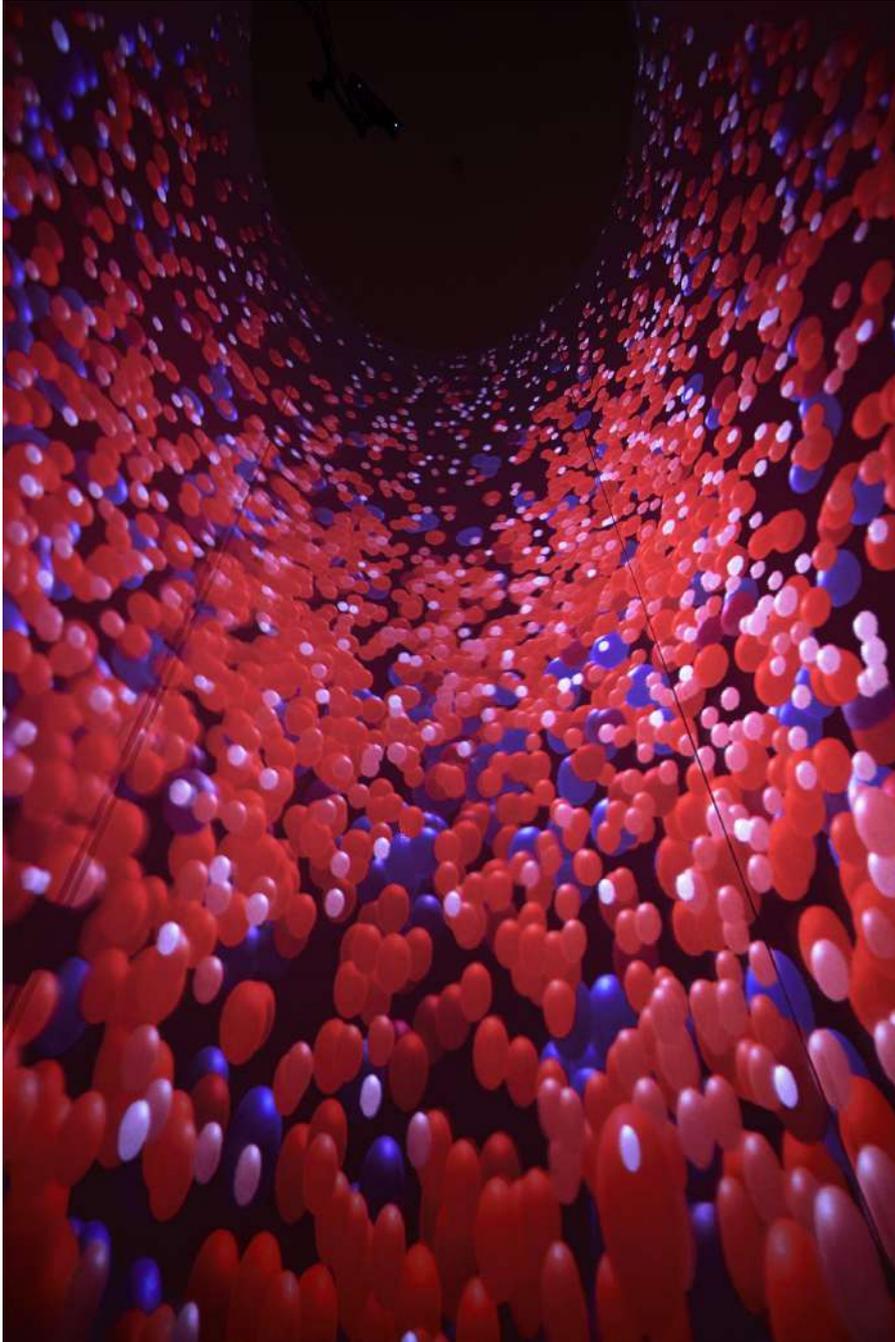
Kalostasis was the studio's first project to be fully funded by a scientific institution, and gave the Lucy Hardcastle team the opportunity to demonstrate the role designers can play as interpreters and communicators of complex information to the public.

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“There is a huge difference between how we visually communicate things in the creative industries compared to the scientific fields, which is where the role of visual designers is important and can challenge ways of seeing. It made sense to collaborate with King’s College London on a project intended to help us learn more about the inner workings of our bodies – and ourselves – in a way that’s engaging as well as educational.”

– Lucy Hardcastle

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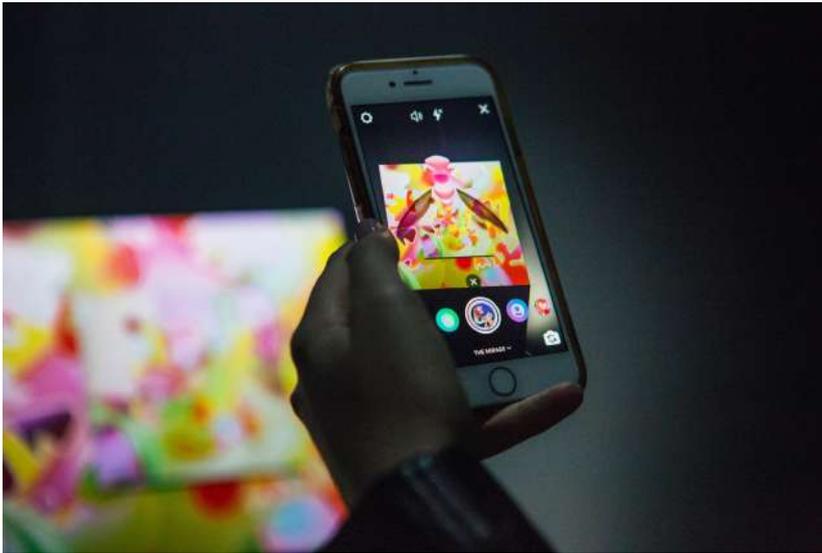


Engaging as well as educational, Kalostasis (2019) brings science and art together. Photo by Gareth Williams.

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The Mirage (2019)

In the Mirage, physical and virtual worlds collided with spellbinding results. Commissioned by 29Rooms in collaboration with augmented reality specialist Spark AR for Facebook, the installation encompassed a number of rooms featuring an assortment of still images, objects and murals that triggered AR activations via an Instagram filter as the viewer travelled through the space with their smartphone.

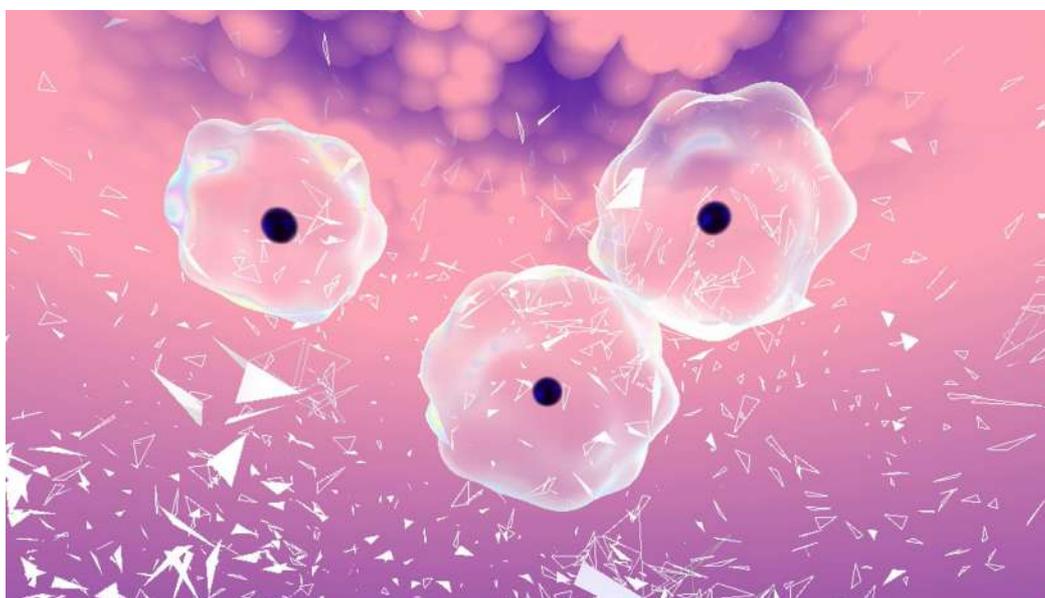


Using augmented reality, Lucy Hardcastle bended perception in Mirage (2019). Photo courtesy of Refinery29.

Inspired by the mirage as a natural optical illusion, the installation exploited the tensions between perception and reality to examine ideas such as light, mimicry and the movement of particles. The Mirage toured LA and New York in late 2019.

Intangible Matter (2016)

What does fragrance look like? How does it feel? Part of the multidisciplinary series the Fifth Sense by Chanel and i-D magazine, Intangible Matter is a piece of interactive digital art created to reinterpret scent through the other senses.



Working with Chanel and i-D, Intangible Matter (2016) pushes the boundaries of our senses.

Delivered as a globally accessible interactive website, the piece is in effect an online game in which the user is encouraged to play with their environment across five distinct digital landscapes. Each one of these visualises a different facet of Chanel No. 5 L'Eau, from the process of extraction and the meeting point of liquid to skin, to the act of bottling and the connection between scent and memory. (Available online: https://lucyhardcastle-thefifthsense.i-d.co/en_gb/)

"I was asked to make a personal response to scent within a digital space that could be globally accessible, and I chose to create a piece where people could build upon their own memories and relationships with fragrance through responsive visuals. I saw it as an opportunity to really push boundaries and show the potential of digital storytelling."

– Lucy Hardcastle

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Notes to editors

For more information about Lucy Hardcastle Studio, interviews, and imagery of her work, please contact Chris Hayes at chris@zetteler.co.uk or on +44 (0)7342 344613.

About

Lucy Hardcastle Studio is an interdisciplinary studio based in London, which explores the tensions between physical and virtual worlds through interactive technologies, moving image and animation, and 3D visuals, objects and spaces.

Working alongside world-leading brands such as Chanel, Nike, Alexander Wang and Levi's, LHS creates groundbreaking experiences and content with a focus on real and imagined touch, visual illusions and sensual aesthetics, under creative director Lucy Hardcastle.

lucyhardcastle.com/