



Butterfly

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Anne Scott Wilson & Cameron Bishop

From X to Eternity



From X to Eternity © Anne Scott Wilson and Cameron Bishop, video still by Aaron Hoffman

Inspired by Hito Steyerl's twist on the medieval riddle—"How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?"ⁱ—this project substitutes angels with AI, pointing to the spiritual undertones of bodiless intelligences in our increasingly digital world. The confusion between metaphysical and artificial entities highlights a strange irony: even in a largely atheistic culture, we continue to invest technology with spiritual significance.

From X to Eternity marks a moment in time when AI begins to manifest in earthly, more-than-machine-like forms. The work speculates on the possibility that AI functions like a kind of angel—an artificial yet intelligent messenger. In certain Christian theologies, such as Seventh-day Adventism, Michael the Archangel is interpreted as a pre-incarnate form of Christ. In our work, the drone becomes such an Archangel: unknowable and uncanny, yet entirely earthbound.

Angels in religious texts are messengers or agents of divine will—intermediaries between God and humanity. Similarly, AI can be seen as an "artificial messenger," transmitting, processing, and executing human intentions at scale. One poignant example is the emergence of "Death Avatars"—virtual replicas of the deceased. While angels are believed to serve a higher intelligence, AI, often perceived as autonomous, is in fact shaped by human design, input, and values. This analogy invites reflection on faith, agency, and trust: Who or what stands behind the intelligences we interact with?

In the video work, a drone—guided by AI—records children wearing sensors, effectively turning them into moving targets. The drone becomes a central, improvising actor

alongside the children, whose bodies respond, adapt, and play. The programmers remain on-site, ready to intervene should the technology go awry. Over time, a game of mutual anticipation and response emerges between the drone and the children. What begins in curiosity eventually becomes a power dynamic: one side must yield. The children exit the scene singing *Dona nobis pacem* meaning "bring us peace"—a Latin hymn echoing across 2000 years of Christian history. In this emptied industrial space, once alive with machines and labour, the chant becomes both elegy and plea—a petition not only to angels, but perhaps to AI itself.

There is an undeniable parallel between medieval religiosity and our digital present. As Margaret Wertheim explores in *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace*ⁱ, the invention of Euclidean perspective helped structure Renaissance understandings of space—a fixed viewpoint producing an illusion of depth. In the digital age, this fixed viewer becomes the screen user, immersed in a similarly bounded field of vision.¹ Today's VR environments further complicate this: the user now moves, but their view remains tethered to artificial constructs, displacing physical reality. Is this merely an extension of perspective, or a reversal—where AI begins to train the human?

Unrehearsed interactions in the video demonstrate how AI and humans influence each other. While the actors learn to read the drone's movements and intentions, the drone records and reacts, guided by its own embedded code. This feedback loop reveals how rules of engagement—though designed—yield unpredictable and emergent behaviors. It also illus-

trates the psychological and social adjustments humans are making in response to AI's presence in daily life.

This work explores both the losses and gains that come from our increasing entanglement with artificial intelligence. It evokes the deep human impulse to imagine the immaterial: an invisible world of non-human agents that influence our own. It also acknowledges spirituality's enduring legacy—its capacity to unify, to guide, and at times, to control. The Christian Church has historically rendered belief visible through architecture; its cathedrals and chapels stand as monuments to a world beyond sight. AI, in contrast, operates invisibly—its presence felt through action, data, and influence.

As Wertheim observes, “Euclidean space provided a new framework for visualizing the world, one in which the spiritual dimension was increasingly excluded.”ⁱⁱ *From X to Eternity* reclaims the invisible not as superstition, but as an essential terrain—where technology, belief, power, and presence collide.

i Hito Steyerl, “They Are Oblivious to the Violence of Their Acts: Windows, Screens, and Pictorial Gestures in Troubled Times,” lecture presented at Castello di Rivoli, Rivoli, Italy, December 12, 2008.
ii Margaret Wertheim, **The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet** (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 31.

Nikiforos Staveris, Filip Lundberg & Isak Öhman

Northern Lights, lights will guide you home

Northern Lights, lights will guide you home, achieves an even deeper resonance when viewed through the lens of gender equality and the pervasive issue of safety in public spaces, particularly for women and non-binary individuals. The installation's core concept of the Aurora Borealis as a form of interactive companionship takes on a heightened significance when considering the well-documented experiences of those who often feel vulnerable and intimidated by dimly lit or deserted urban environments, especially during the long, dark winters characteristic of Umeå.

Extensive research across various disciplines, including sociology, criminology, and urban studies, consistently highlights the disproportionate fear of crime and feelings of unsafety experienced by women and non-binary people in public spaces. Factors such as inadequate lighting, isolated pathways, and the historical and ongoing prevalence of gender-based violence contribute to a heightened sense of vulnerability. The simple act of walking home alone at night can be fraught with anxiety and a constant need for vigilance.

In this context, *Northern Lights, lights will guide you home* transcends its aesthetic appeal and technological innovation, becoming a subtle yet powerful intervention that addresses these very real concerns. The projected aurora, responding dynamically to the presence and movement of individuals, offers a unique form of symbolic companionship. For a woman or non-binary person navigating a dimly lit street, the ethereal dance of light that mirrors their steps can provide a sense of being seen, acknowledged, and less alone.