In early 2021 I was confronted with the satellite view of Lavapiés, the neighbourhood I live in, in Madrid. Although technically I was looking at the place I call home, the image on my screen was one I did not recognise. A view from above: detached, flattened. It was as if someone had sliced the top of all my surroundings, rendering all the layers in between that led to my view at ground-level, as non-existent. This image was also mostly grey with little to no green to be seen.

And yet when walking through Lavapiés, this colour was present throughout: from plants hanging from balconies to the mesh covering construction sites. From the parking lines painted on the pavement through the weeds growing in the cracks to the awnings used by fellow neighbours.

Images 1-3: Lavapiés, Madrid

This gap, between the spectral view of the area and my lived experience, evidenced the gaps generated by this digital mediation. Upon reading Raymond Williams book 'Marxism and Literature' the term 'structures of feeling' resonated deeply. Williams explores the idea that the ways of thinking are already in and of themselves attuned with matters of affect. How is the way we think of our environment influenced by these digitally mediated views? How are these affects driven by the digital image?

'The Overlay' reflects on the entanglements that arise when attempting to reconcile these global tools and narratives with tangible lived experiences. Part of the chromatic inspiration for this work is closely linked to 'Go Away Green.' A colour patented by Disney and whose sole purpose is to camouflage specific objects (like: light boxes, spotlights, garbage) that may interrupt the magical experience of visitors to Disneyland.

Amid our current ecological crisis, what are the implications of using green to uplift romanticised and idealised views of Nature? What are the consequences of using these stereotypes to reinforce outdated binaries of natural vs artifice?

The Overlay, Explore More

As part of the development process of the work, I collaborated with an Artificial Intelligence system to reimagine greenery and built environments as one interconnected system. In the lead-up to this collaboration, I documented all the existing greens that I could see from ground level throughout Lavapiés.

Nearly 300 images of green were processed to calculate the vanishing point - an image where this divide (of natural and built environment) no longer exists.
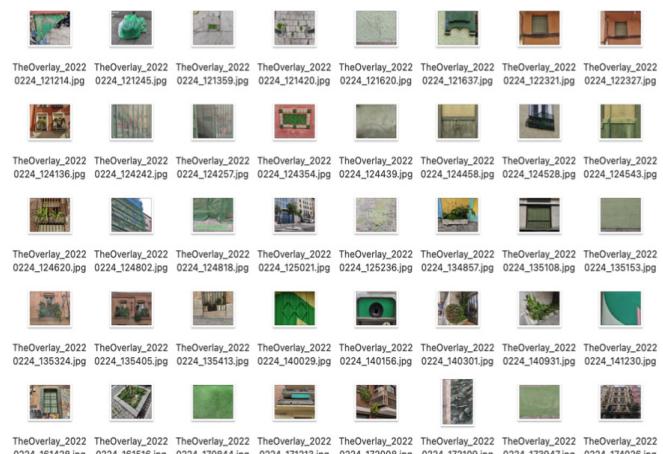

Image 4: Screenshot of database created documenting greens

This colour was then taken to Antonio Sánchez, also known as 'Spain's last living colourist' to translate this digital hue into a tangible material. Using his eyesight, intergenerational knowledge along with the technologies in his workshop, his craft

Images 5: Inés & Antonio in his workshop

becomes the translating mechanism by which this hue, derived from the processing with an AI, is transformed into something substantive: paint.
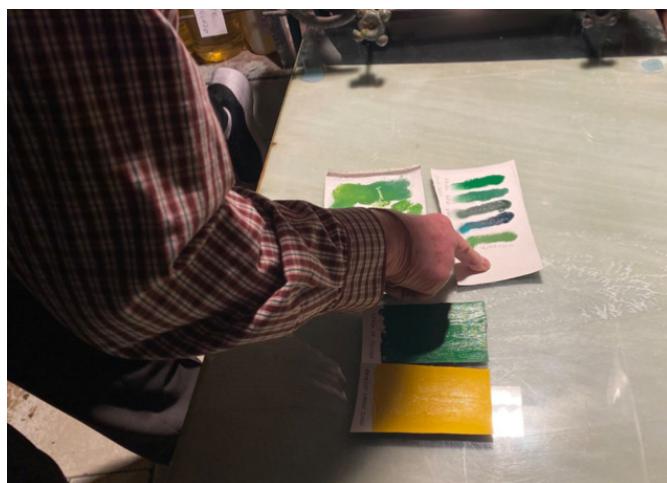
Images 6: Antonio colour-matching greens

In the final stage of the work, two critters, formerly used in carousel rides, are set in 'Esta Es Una Plaza' in Lavapiés. 'Esta Es Una Plaza' is a public plot of land where cultural, educational and environmental activities are developed. It is a self-managed space: run, used and cared for by the neighbours of Lavapiés. The work then follows how neighbours engage with the critters and the colour in its material form.

The score of the film is composed with the frequency and semitone of the colour green and blends direct recordings of birds with birdsong recreated using synthesisers.

This website has been built using global mapping tools and a database of worldwide greens to enable anyone, anywhere on Earth, to find their localised hue.

In the website click on 'Find a local green' to explore a specific area's hue and let us know whether it matches your idea of it.

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