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Image created in the Graduate
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Images of Research Competition
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Archipelago

Semi-finalist (2019)

Inspired by the speculative worldbuilding of Ursula Le Guin, Selkie folktales of Scotland and the Faroe Islands, and open-world videogames, Archipelago is a virtual environment generated from the user data of a single Google account. The viewer assumes the role of the Selkie, a liminal figure that mediates between two worlds, land and sea, by donning and removing its sealskin--an apparatus that both is and is not part of its body. This piece is part of my ongoing series of work using folklore and mythology as lenses to explore our evolving relationship with technology. Increasingly, our notions of the self include not just our physical bodies, but also our social media profiles, and online presences, as well as the technologies we use to access and shape this information. Similarly, our search histories, medical records, and purchases are used by independent entities to create profiles of us, outside of our direct control, that have tangible impact on our experiences in the physical world. The networked body is simultaneously incredibly powerful, and immensely vulnerable. My work negotiates this double bind, exploring both the generative possibilities afforded data collection and analytics, and their very real and documented potential for abuse and exploitation.