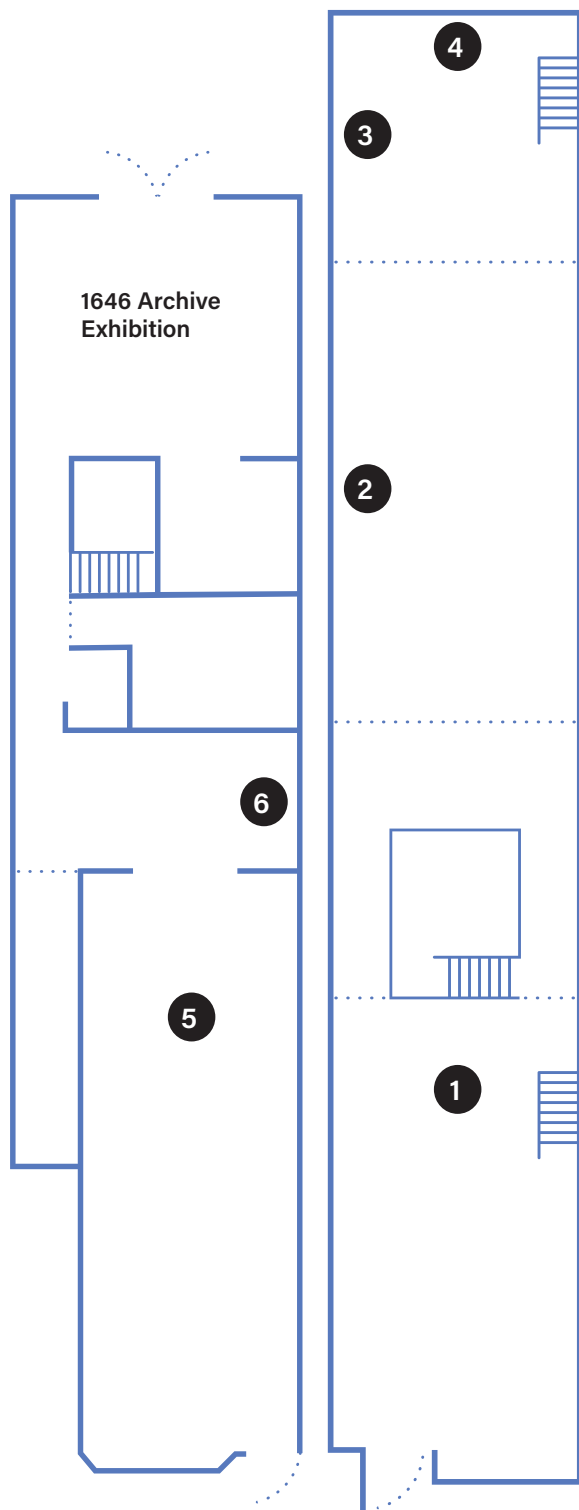


To provide you with more insight into the development of this exhibition, we're sharing a conversation between the artist and a correspondent. The correspondent was not familiar with the artist's work and, like you, has discovered through this dialogue the often invisible choices made during the creation of this project, as well as in the artist's general working process.

Agnieszka Polska in conversation with **Inigo Wilkins** As part of the exhibition **TRAVELS IN SCALE**

- 1 The New Sun**
Full HD animation, 16:9 ratio,
12 min. 45 sec., 2017
- 2 Orange**
Full HD video, 24 min.,
2025
- 3 Braudel Clock -
Fern and Trilobite**
Chromaluxe print on
aluminum, UV print on
acrylic glass, rotating
aluminum and steel
clock mechanism,
70 × 70 × 17 cm,
unique, 2022
- 4 Braudel Clock - Snail**
Chromaluxe print on
aluminum, UV print on
acrylic glass, rotating
aluminum and steel
clock mechanism,
70 × 70 × 17 cm,
unique, 2022
- 5 What the Sun Has Seen**
Full HD animation, 16:9 ratio,
7 min. 16 sec., 2017
- 6 Braudel Clock -
Wash liquid**
Chromaluxe print on
aluminum, UV print on
acrylic glass, rotating
aluminum and steel
clock mechanism,
70 × 70 × 17 cm,
unique, 2022



Agnieszka Polska

in conversation
with
Inigo Wilkins

As part of the
exhibition
**TRAVELS IN
SCALE**

For more information about this and other projects,
check our website or scan the QR-code:



1646.nl

Agnieszka Polska

Agnieszka Polska (b. 1985, Lublin, Poland) is a visual artist and film director based in Berlin. Polska employs computer-generated media to explore themes of individual agency, social responsibility, and the shaping of historical narratives within environments driven by rapid technological changes and the flow of information. Her work bridges the past and the digital present, using hallucinatory animations and poetic storytelling to delve into the ethical ambiguities of contemporary society.

Polska's art has been showcased internationally, including exhibitions at the New Museum and MoMA in New York, Centre Pompidou in Paris, Tate Modern in London, and the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C. She has held solo exhibitions at Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, M HKA in Antwerp, Frye Art Museum in Seattle, Nottingham Contemporary, and Salzburger Kunstverein. She participated in the 57th Venice Biennale, 11th Gwangju Biennale, 19th and 24th Biennale of Sydney, 14th Shanghai Biennale, and 13th Istanbul Biennial. In 2017, she was awarded the Preis der Nationalgalerie.

Inigo Wilkins

Inigo Wilkins is a writer and lecturer (CalArts, New School for Research and Practice) who has done extensive research and writing on subjects related to noise, moving across many disciplines, such as sonic culture, cognitive science, philosophy, AI, and political economy. He completed his doctorate in Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London in 2016. He is co-director of the online journal and research platform *Glass Bead*, (www.glass-bead.org), of the [Noise Research Union](#), and of para-academic workshop series Sonic and Somatic Transdisciplinary Research and Practice Program SSTRAPP. Publications include 'Improbable Semantics' in *Construction Site for Possible Worlds* (Urbanomic), 'Topos of Noise' in *From The Mental State of Noise to the New Frontiers of Techno-Human Cognition* (Angelaki), *Ghost Semantics* (Cripta747), and his forthcoming book is called *Irreversible Noise* (Urbanomic).

September 2, 2025

Hi Agnieszka,

It is a pleasure to meet you, and I am really glad we can begin this exchange.

In line with 1646's approach, I don't yet know much about your work, so I would love to start by asking how you have arrived at this point. More specifically, how do you see this upcoming show in relation to your previous work? Do you think of it as a continuation of techniques or concerns you have already been developing, or as a departure into something new?

Since my own background is in theories of noise, I am also curious about your process: do you usually map things out fully from the beginning, or do you prefer to leave space for contingency and improvisation along the way?

Looking forward to your thoughts.

Best,

Inigo

October 9, 2025

Dear Inigo,

I am sorry for such a delay in my reply.

First of all, let me express my excitement about having this opportunity to talk to you. I am absolutely overjoyed by it – a few years ago, I saw one of your online lectures and it left a lasting impact on my work. Ever since I have been following what you are doing, I am still reading *Irreversible Noise*, as it is a demanding text – congratulations on publishing it!

The contents of your lectures resonate in the 1646 show, titled *Travels in scale* – especially an idea to bound randomness and noise with its processing. Hence the scale in the title, as, if I understand correctly, the perception of noise is dependent on scale, and what looks like noise at one resolution might contain a signal at another. *Travels in scale* focusses on the role of an observer, and the work that only the viewer/observer can perform, shifting in scale in order to get a clear signal/form/image.

In the show, I present two existing, older films from a few years back, some kinetic time-based sculptures shaped like clocks and a new video installation, commissioned by 1646. I am editing it now, that is why I am so erratic with answering emails – but I promise to do better next time. As with every new work, it derives from my interests and continues previous work, but it also adds something new – otherwise there would be no joy in creating it. I will be happy to tell you about it in the next email, after I shift in scale and get a clearer idea of what I am actually doing ;)

To answer your last question, in my work as a filmmaker there is no space for contingency as a tool. In filmmaking, in most cases contingency is disruptive: it means technology failures, delays, broken collaborations. Even though I am not a spiritual person, I am keen to follow an idea taken from Indian classical music, that music is not invented, but discovered. I believe it is the same with any form of culture-making, including filmmaking: that stories, text and images are pre-existing as fragments of larger cultural truth and discovered by those who seek it. In this sense, randomness might be working against the discovery of these truths. But there is one space for contingency in my work, that eludes any form of control: it is the act of perception by the viewer and their emotional response to it. I see the viewer's response as an intrinsic part of an artwork, and an entry point to transmit its message/signal to circulate in the recursive system of our society, regulating it. But this response is often unpredictable and there is no way around it.

I hope I didn't start our conversation with a high level of over-the-topness.

I am looking forward to hearing back from you.

Have a nice day,

Agnieszka

October 15, 2025

Hi Agnieszka,

Thanks for your kind comments about my work, I am glad you have enjoyed my lecture!

Travels in scale is a great title, and yes it is very pertinent to the question of noise. The perception of noise is indeed relative to the scale of analysis or observation, and also to context or frame, which may be an interesting thing to discuss. The most major limitation of current AI is known as the 'frame problem', which is that machine learning systems trained on certain data sets or directed towards the accomplishment of certain well-defined tasks do not generalise to other data or tasks because there is no way of pre-stating the distinction between relevant and irrelevant differences without processing all the data and sharply defining the task. Humans are able to fluidly transition between different contextual frames in 'processing' their informational environment, but this ability is also related to our tendency to follow social scripts and no doubt there is a lot of information which we take to be irrelevant which we should not. Is the notion of contextual framing, and what we take to be irrelevant, significant for your practice?

I see that amongst your previous works are a series called *Braudel's Clocks*, which I am guessing are the kinetic time-based sculptures you mentioned. The title makes a reference to Braudel's conception of the *longue durée*, a temporal scale that is often too large for us to comprehend, and the inclusion of items such as cigarette butts and microchips on the clock shaped sculptures obviously brings to mind their long decomposition time, and the unintended consequences of this process, such as

microplastic pollution. This also seems relevant to an understanding of the work entitled *The Thousand-Year Plan*. Though in your practice you see contingency as disruptive rather than a tool to draw on, as you say, would you say that it is conceptually important to your work?

We perceive and act at a certain medium-sized spatial and temporal scale, and although we now have technological capacities to observe processes beyond this scale, we still find it very difficult to understand what is below or above it, or how these different scales relate to each other – a difficulty your works seem to be addressing. Our personal-level experience is structured by processes occurring at other scales that are inaccessible to it: subpersonal neurological processes and suprapersonal socio-historical processes that are constitutively unavailable to experience or control. Something it made me think of is an analogy that Norbert Wiener makes when discussing the scientific paradigm shift of cybernetics, which he refers to as a move 'from clocks to clouds'. The idea is that the absolute certainty associated with Newtonian physics is superseded by a radical contingency in which there can only be the calculation of statistical probabilities: a mechanistic or clockwork universe that is entirely predictable and reversible has given way to a world image closer to meteorological science, where processes are essentially unpredictable and irreversible. The title *Travels in scale* makes me think about how this statistical turn, which is fundamental to current technological developments, has given rise to an unprecedented degree of uncertainty, lots of unintended consequences, and where all the risk falls on those who can't afford it. Your work on affective technologies also brings to mind the way in which such developments manipulate us at the personal level precisely because of our inability to access those subpersonal and suprapersonal scales. It seems to me that the idea of *Travels in scale* points on the negative side to something that is already happening, for example in the massive statistical data processing of current AI, and on the positive side to something that ought to happen, which is our capacity to understand how our medium-sized perceptions relate to those other scales. How would you react to this 'viewer's response'?

If you are ready to talk about it I am very interested to hear about the new video you are making for the show, and the ways in which it continues or adds something new to your previous work.

Looking forward to your response.

Best,

Inigo

October 31, 2025

Dear Inigo,

It is very interesting that you bring up the 'frame problem' in relation to my work. I find the idea intriguing that, much like the artificial minds, the human mind is forever limited by its inability to imagine a wider conceptual frame. So in that way, human cognition is always guided by 'human common sense', and even progress in mathematics and physics translates to a more precise mapping of the world, without deepening our actual understanding of it. Even the discoveries from the mid-20th century remain as mysterious to us now as they were at the moment of their formulation. In some ways, it took humanity five centuries to comprehend Copernicus's revelation – as humans had to see the Apollo image of the 'whole Earth' to truly grasp it.

In the show, I present two older videos forming a diptych: *What the Sun Has Seen* and *The New Sun*. In both films, our star is personified as a cartoonish, child-faced character, addressing the human but failing to communicate because "we don't share the same temporality, baby". This clash between the human and astronomical scales creates a situation in which two entities, the Sun and humanity, are forever forced to be the observers of each other's collapse, without any possibility of interfering in one another's fate.

The universe depicted in *Braudel's Clocks* might follow a similar logic of various layers locked within their own temporalities, functioning together as one complex system but with each element lacking a comprehension beyond its own temporal scale. The works are constructed from laser-cut plexiglass discs with printed motifs, that rotate above an aluminium 'dial' thanks to a specially designed mechanism.

What comes to my mind here is Stanisław Lem's view on the future rise of Artificial Intelligence, shared in his *Summa Technologiae* (and, in a more symbolic way, in *Solaris*). According to Lem, human tendency to imagine machine intelligence as an aggressive, malevolent force bent on civilisational destruction stems from projecting human axioms onto non-human behaviour. But what is much more possible is that the machine intelligence will simply be too different for the human mind to communicate with. (Of course we may remind ourselves of the aggressive and the malevolent economic infrastructures that currently drive AI research, that Lem hasn't imagined.)

I really appreciate your interpretation of the notion of affect and manipulation in my work as related to the "inability to access those subpersonal and suprapersonal scales". We are, quite obviously, directed by the recursive circulation of emotions within our societies, as we are biologically conditioned to seek the most effective means of reproduction. (Here, yet another science fiction author comes to my mind: James Tiptree Jr. (Alice Sheldon), with her brilliant short story *Love is the Plan the Plan is Death*, in which the protagonist creature's actions are driven by a physical lust for eternal love, obscuring a wider awareness of own mortality.) Yet the rise of affective technologies, supported by planetary-scale data processing, traps us in solitary, psychophobic confinements of pseudo-satisfaction, further depriving us of any broader critical 'frame'.

So let us talk a bit about *Orange*, as that is the title of the new film commissioned by 1646. I am not sure if you are familiar with King's Day, the annual Dutch celebration of the monarch's birthday? It is a nationwide, one-day holiday, during which people dress in orange (the national colour of the Netherlands), and indulge in a kind of medieval-style street festivity: dancing, drinking, selling and buying in open-air markets.

The footage of *Orange* was shot amid the crowd in Amsterdam using a 360 degree camera – which captures a spherical image containing hundreds of people in each frame. During editing, I was moving a small, 16:9 frame across this sphere, focusing on individuals or groups I found intriguing, usually unaware of being observed. In the later stage of post production, I worked with an AI engine to hide the identities of the people in the crowd.

As in my other works, the social context is essential: we observe a generally white, though still diverse, crowd forming an 'imagined community'. To an alien observer, the only visible common denominator might appear to be the colour orange, as other social characteristics, such as class, are less legible.

The film avoids forming a clear interpretation of the celebration. The event and people's behaviours might be met with mixed feelings and read as cringe, disturbing, claustrophobic but also charming and filled with joy. The crowd and its behaviour is disturbingly homogenous and the festivity shown both in its banality and magnetism. An important intervention in the film is scoring it with a specially composed, looping track by the Dutch producer De Schuurman, a pioneer of Afro-diasporic bubbling scene, which poses questions about the true nature of this 'imagined community' and its (battled) diversification.

My intention was to focus on the figure of an observer also, in the context of the shift in our perception through the ubiquity of social media, surveillance and the new AI-powered technologies. The AI effect of altering the faces is difficult to notice at a first glance, although it adds some uncanniness.

I think the film can be interpreted through the lens of Gilbert Simondon's theory of individuation, where "the individual is only a phase of a process," and individuals, such as living beings, technical objects, psychic beings, social groups come into existence as a temporary result. The formation of groups, norms, values, shared imaginaries, and social bonds is also a result of ongoing, everlasting and liquid process of individuation.

And of course, there is a context of nationalism and patriotism represented in this monarchistic celebration. To be honest, even after working on this for many months, I still find myself unable to fully grasp this form of collective manifestation, as patriotism carries a very different meaning in Slavic cultures and has long been hijacked by nationalists.

Thanks for taking time to read this.

All the best,

Agnieszka

November 6, 2025

Hi Agnieszka,

I know your show is just around the corner now so I am sure you are very busy with the preparations. I wanted to let you know what a pleasure it was to talk with you about your work, which I really hope to get the chance to see at some point. The comment you made about it taking five centuries to understand the Copernican revolution was spot on, and it sounds like your work goes some way towards producing an 'Apollo image' that would allow us to comprehend the recent series of information-computation revolutions, particularly with regard to affective technologies and AI. I wish you all the best with your show and your ongoing work, and thanks to 1646 for initiating this fascinating conversation.

Best,

Inigo

November 15, 2025

Dear Inigo,

These are such kind words, thank you. And thank you so much for all the brilliant insights into my work and all the fascinating thoughts you have generously shared with me - it has truly been a pleasure to read your work and to be in this conversation with you. I hope that our conversation won't stop here and we will get a chance to continue it in the future!

All the best,

Agnieszka