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The Gazed Ones

Sara Sherif

‘The Gazed Ones’ is an audiovisual series, that I produced for station.plus. This ad-like TV program is built on the structure of Charles Baudelaire’s poem ‘Le serpent qui danse’.

Published in 1857, the work of Baudelaire was highly provocative, accused of gross indecency and even brought to trial. Sharp-tongued and subtly playing with a fine line, the assumed love poem actually describes the arousal of sexual pleasure until its climax. Baudelaire was playing with a controversial ambiguity. Was it love or the objectification of his sexual desire? The text is a description of Charles’ lover seen through his eyes, and as the author could not connect with her soul, he portrayed her mesmerizing body.

The poem gives the rhythm to the format. Each stanza stands for an iconic building of our globalized culture. At the outset of each episode, a commentary is placed to question what is about to be shown. Is it a contentious ode, an ironic ‘mise en scène’ or both?

Starring Baudelaire as the image creator, the woman as the architecture and the poem as the gaze, the aim of this audiovisual piece is to build an analogy between the image of women (in general) and the one of architecture, formed in our society, in order to question the culturally educated gaze. Using this idea of the fine line, I want to reflect upon the way (star-)architecture is created and represented. The format is underlining the sensuality those cold objects are charged with, evoking a disgusted fascination. What is so repellent about those appealing masterpieces and why do I hate to love them and love to hate them?

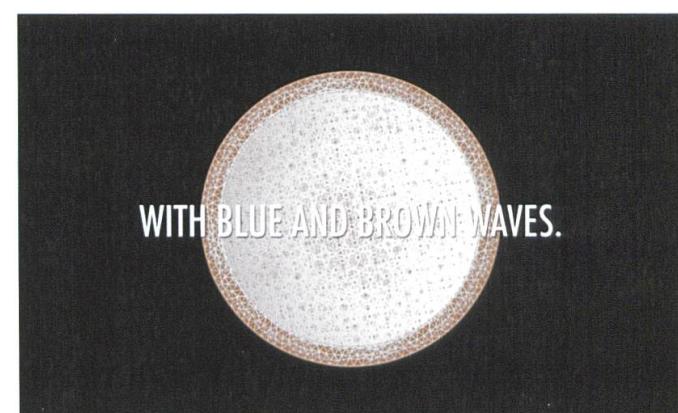
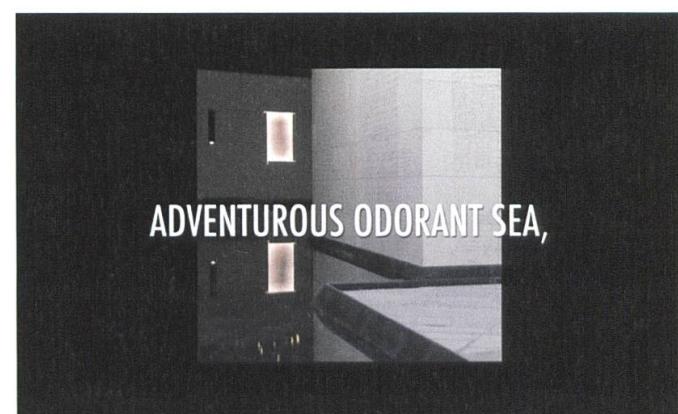
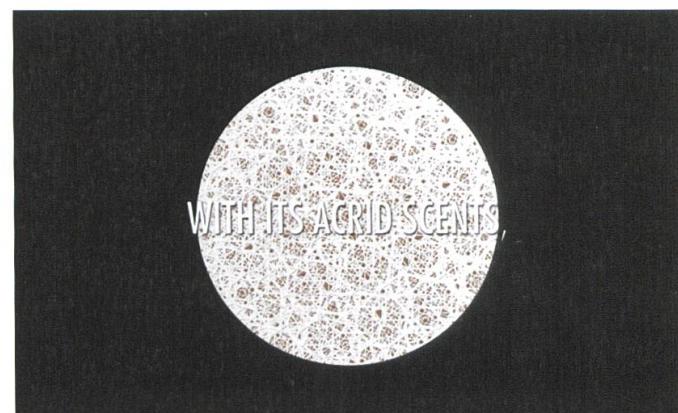
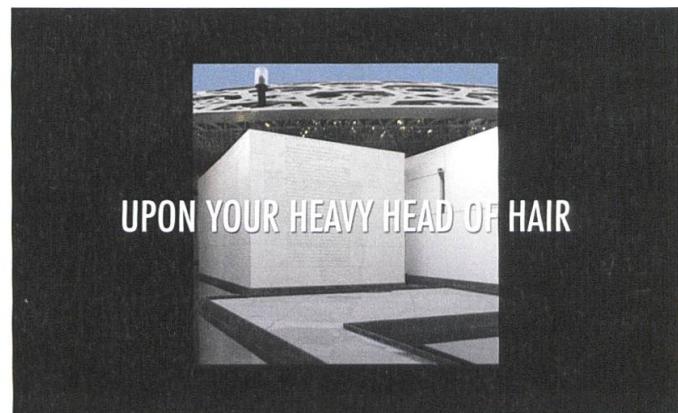
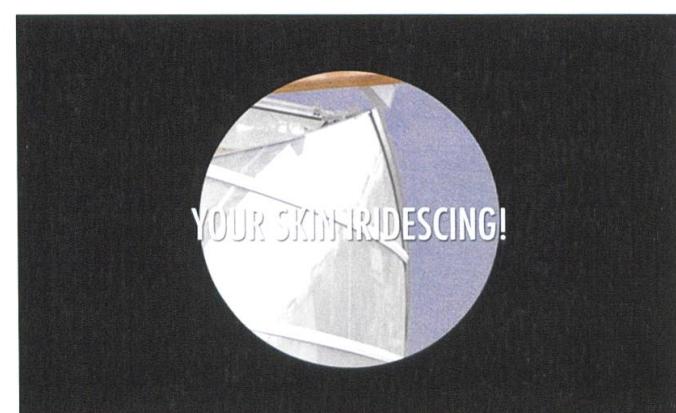
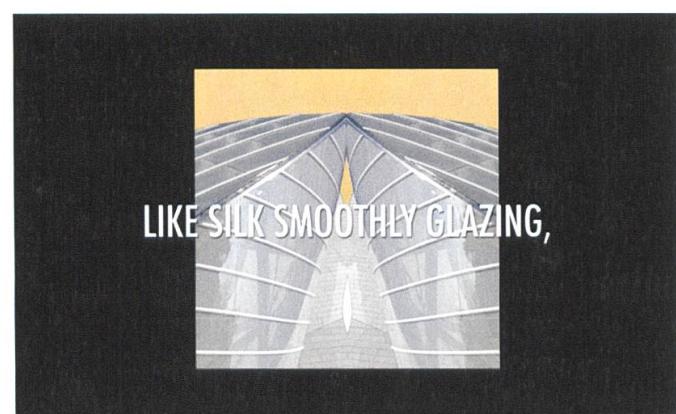
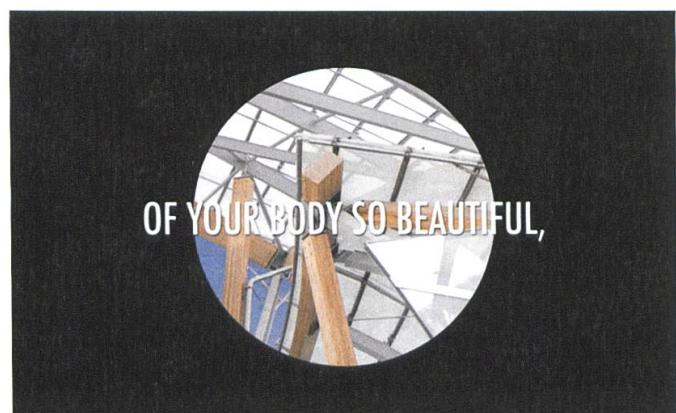
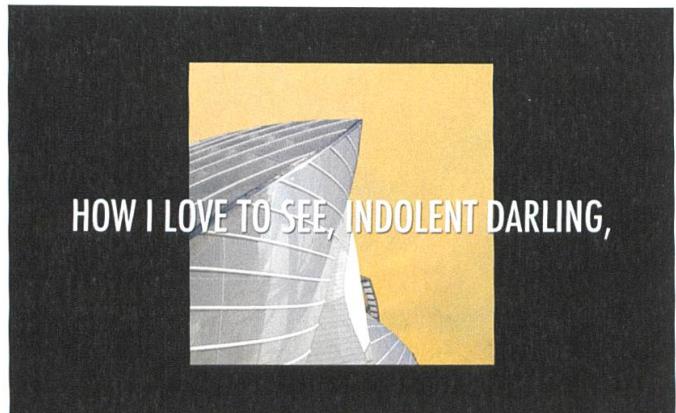
With the iconic turn of the 90s, the weight of images gained in power and pushed aside other important architectural qualities. The most celebrated designs (among others in media and in the public eye) are gaze oriented and not human-focused. Extravagance is pushed to the limits. Those erected monuments play with the sublime and flirt with neoliberal power by imposing themselves fiercely on the ground. The authors gain in prestige and their signatures are easily recognized by a larger audience. Working with corporate identities, they are today the showcase of the architectural practice for others. So what brings architects to this position? Is it the image they purposely create or the identity they are assigned by external gazes?

How come that the portrait Baudelaire made of this woman is so well suited to describe the facades of those objects?

‘The Gazed Ones’ will premiere spring 2018 on station.plus.
for more information check www.brandlhuber.arch.ethz.ch

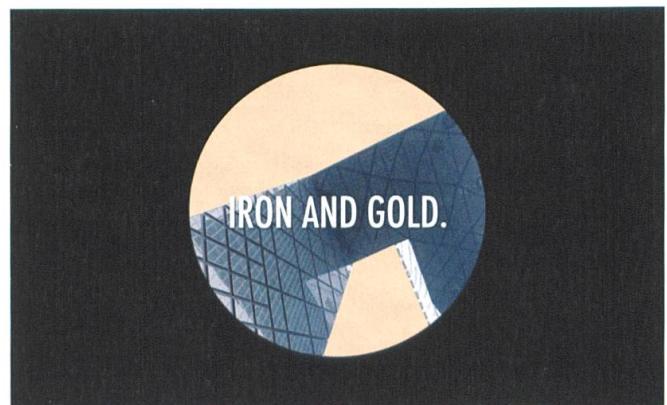
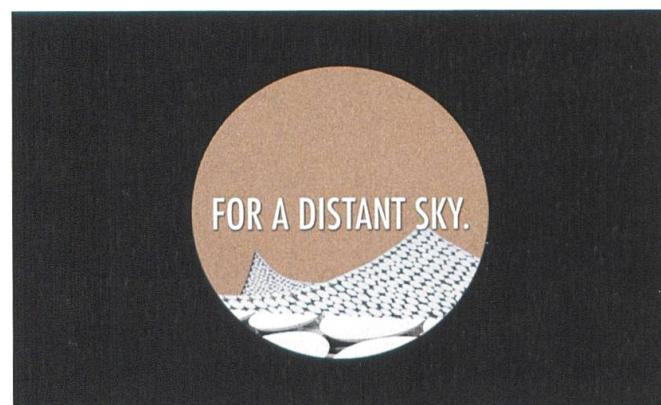
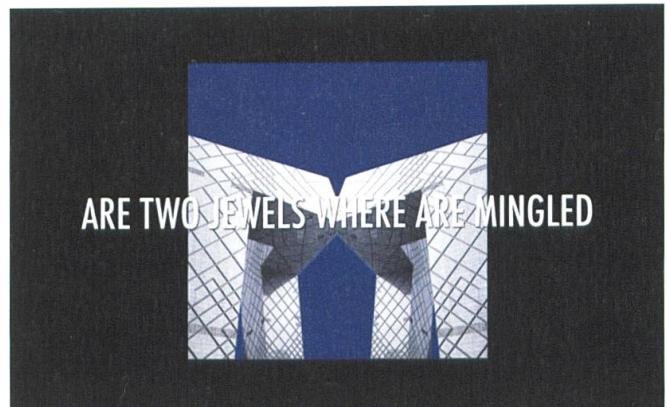
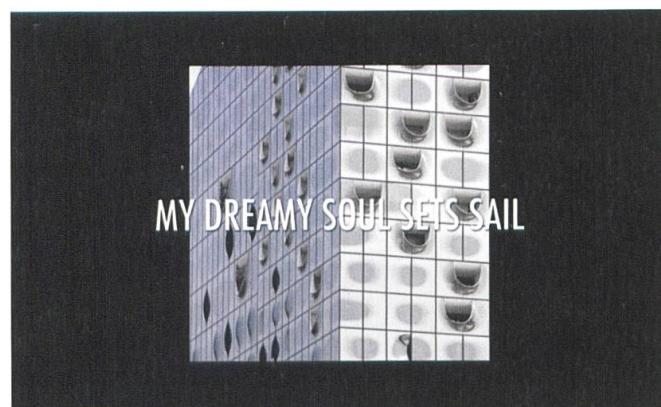
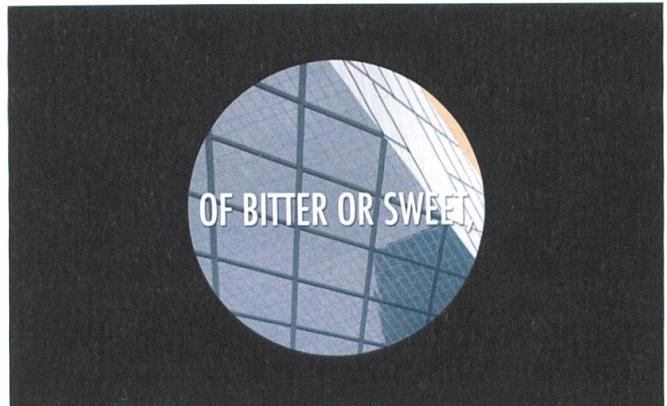
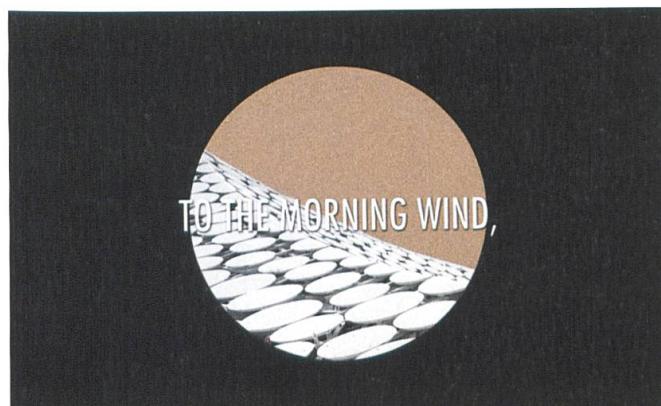
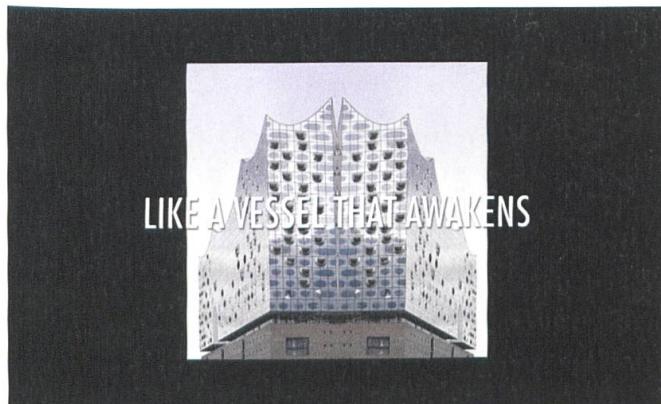
With the iconic turn of the 90'
The power of images dramatically increased.
Bring out the champagne!
The object is celebrated.

Just tell me Jean-Charles...
Is this love or sexual desire?
Playing with lust,
On what did you build this empire?



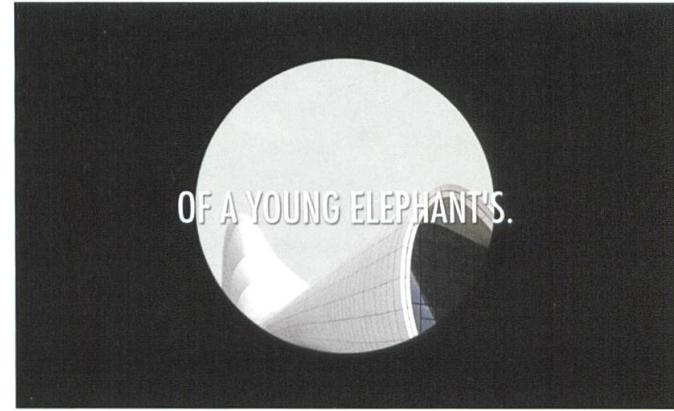
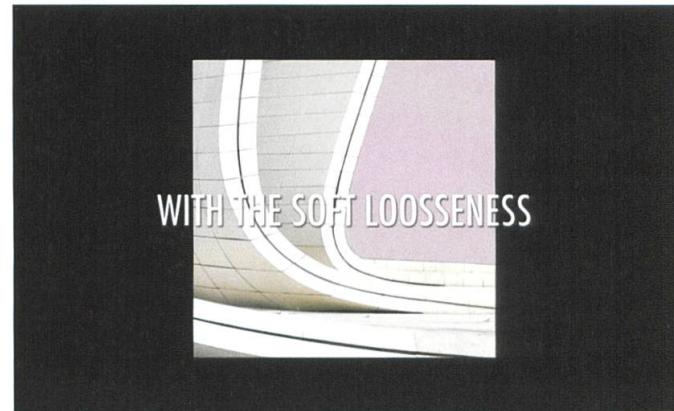
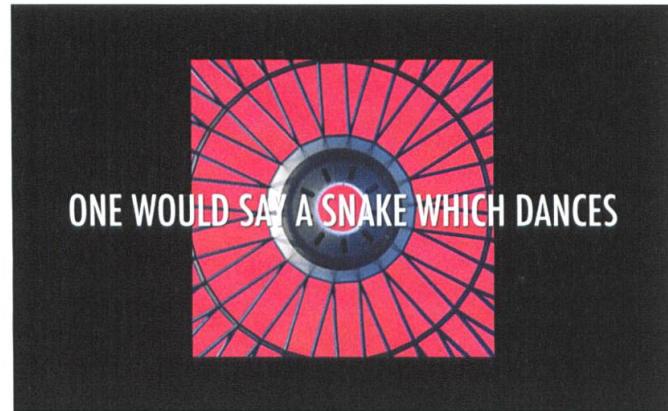
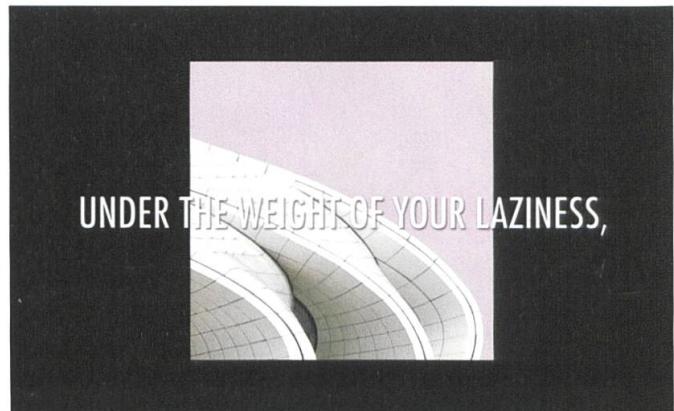
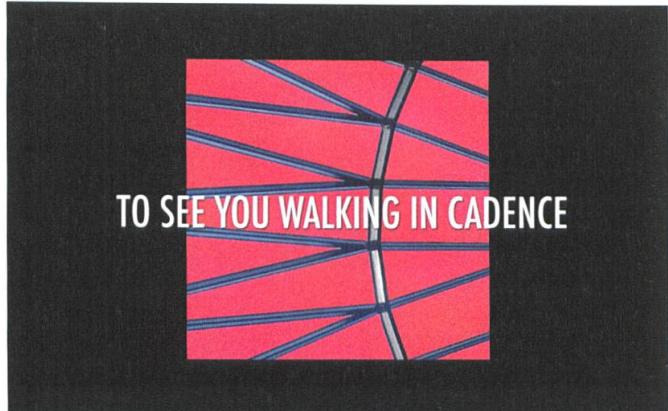
Flirting with the sublime,
Designing through the divine,
Acting like the new Noe,
But your ship echoes your ego.

The gaze is the power over a subject,
Who looked into Medusa's eyes,
Losing its complexity,
It got frozen into an object.



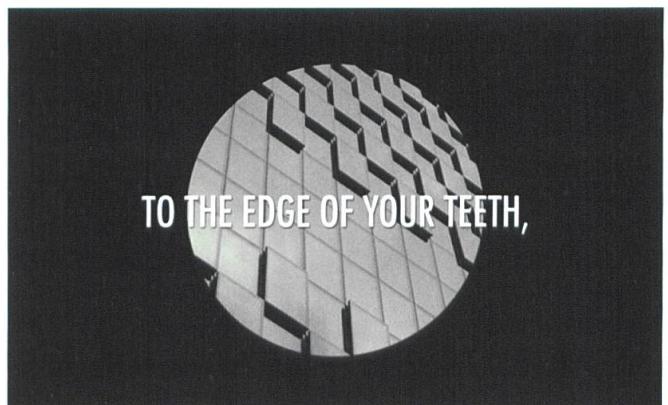
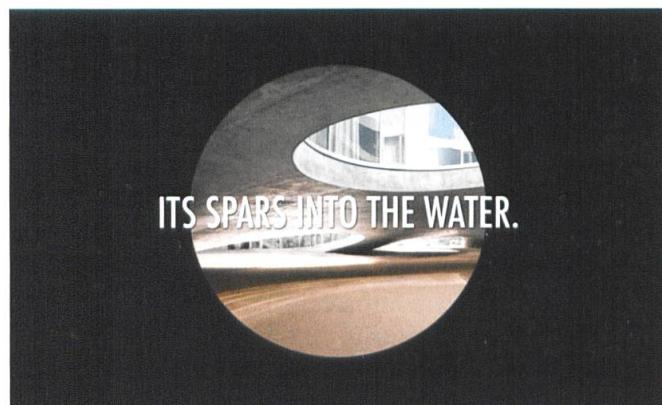
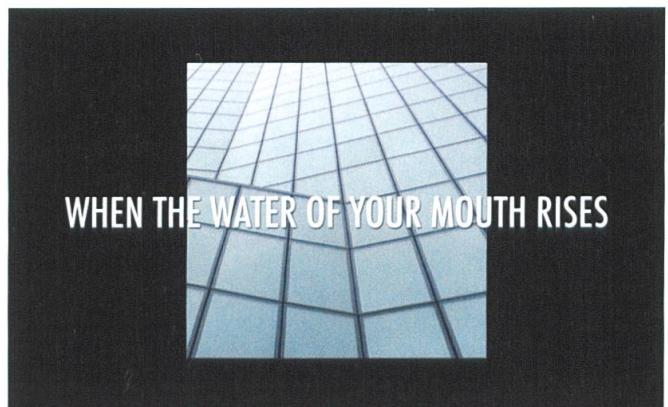
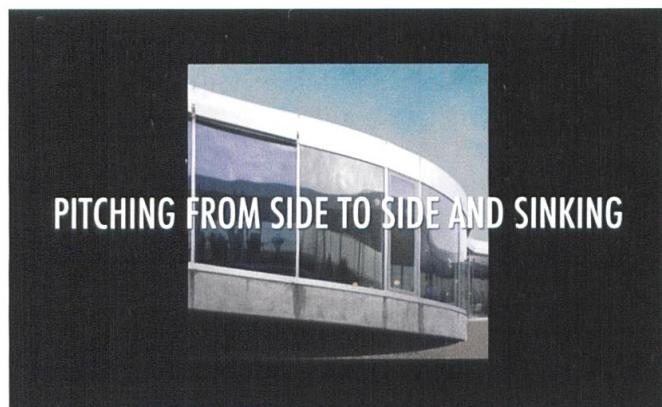
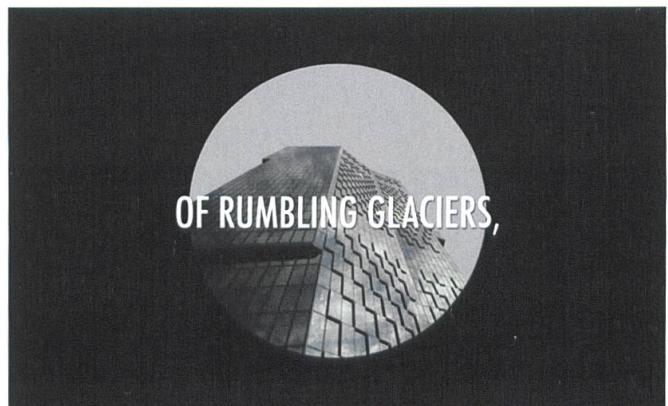
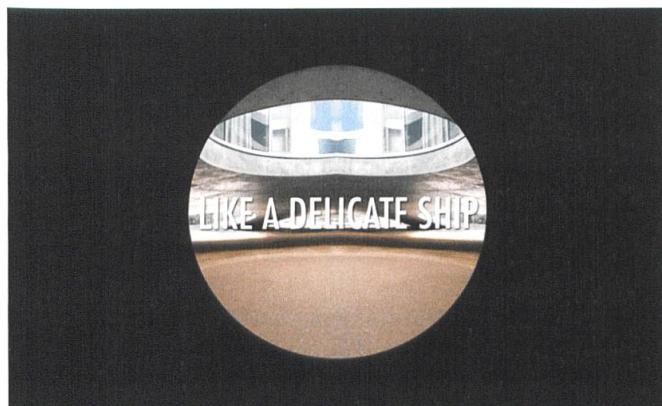
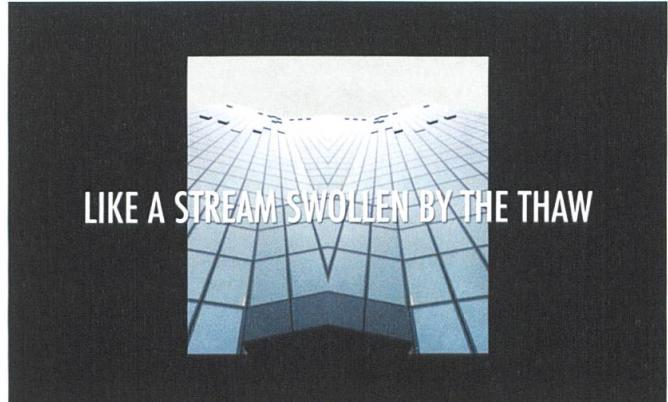
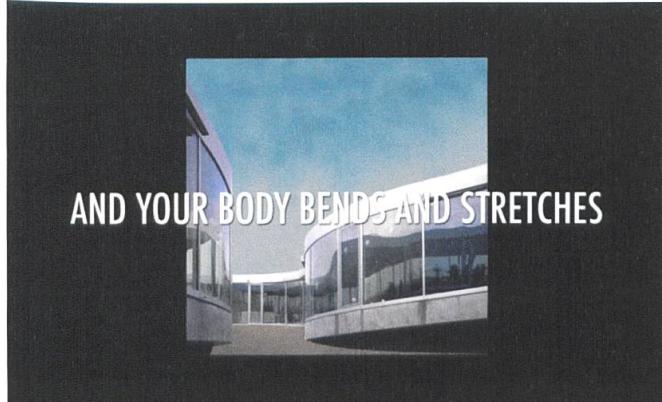
Power, money, and medicine.
It's not the last rap in the game.
Just Norman and Swiss RE
Fucking the context.

Eccentric extravagance,
Built on master narrative,
You educated our gaze,
How can we escape the fascination?

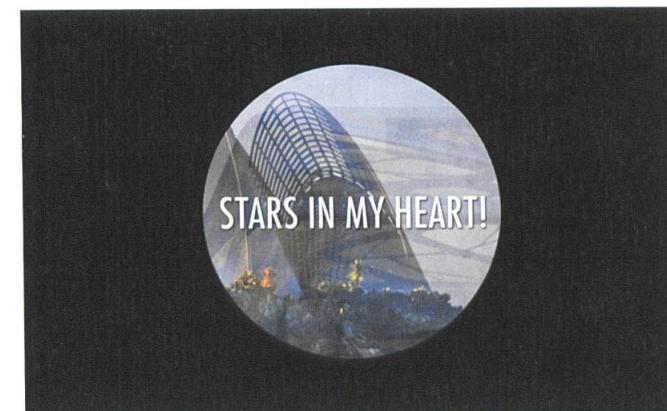
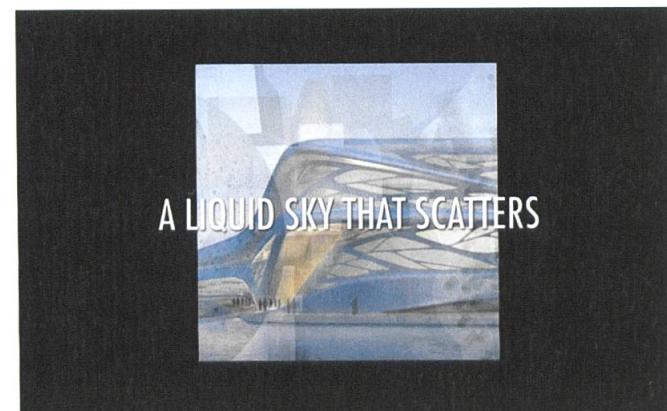
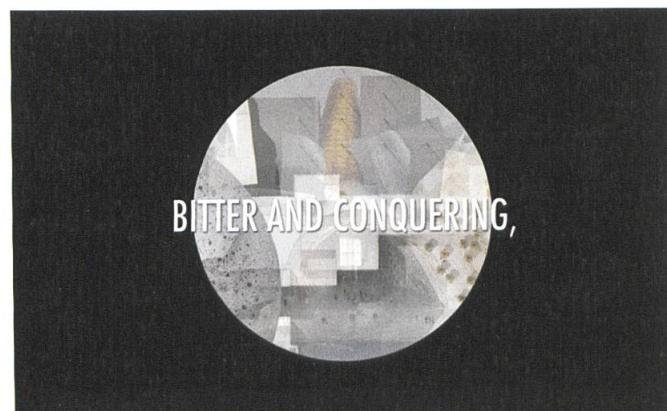
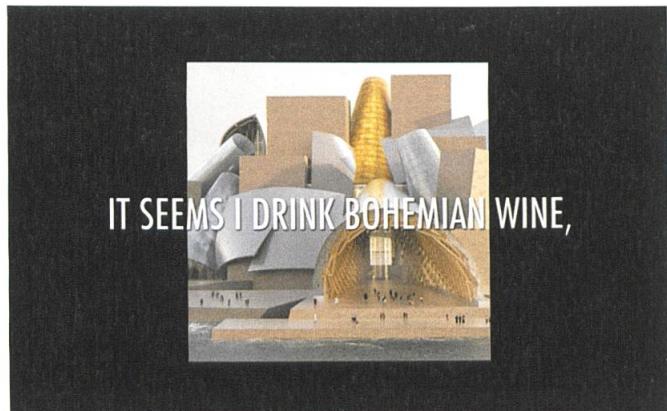


The induced gaze.
The subjected gaze.
The educated gaze.
How is your image created?

The act of seeing and being seen.
The awareness that one can be viewed too.
Your face is well known.
Your light reflects prestige.
But what is hidden behind this mask?



Each powerful actor wants a signed trophy
To exhibit in his city.
Small players...
You want a city to exhibit your trophies.



Film stills from Sara Sherif, 'The Gazed Ones', 2017 © station.plus