Image description as sedimentation:
Strata Signals (2025) by Simulaa

Rather than operating as a static, fixed image description, the text that follows is an accretion of layers of observation that will be built up over the exhibition's timespan. A base text was drafted during the final install hours, a bedrock for incremental descriptive deposits and redescriptive corrections.

- Phase 1 draft, completed 24/2/2025 8:53PM

Entering the Space

Stepping through sliding glass doors into a cavernous gallery space, the ceiling is punctuated by an even pattern of perforations, a field of tiny dots from which a row of cool white lights descends, creating a sightline along the length of the space.

Simulaa's *Strata Signals* (2025) dominates the room: a diagonal structure that cuts across the gallery, pointing north-south, disrupting the rectangular white box architecture. Constructed from repurposed steel grating, this structure or armature has a modular quality. Evoking scaffolding, or shelving, it resembles the rigid organisation of a lab, but with the provisional architecture and high key chromatic accents of a night market.

The armature presents a landscape in fragments: a rigid construction that both archives and disturbs the phenomena it seeks to document. Its linear structure invites visitors to walk a timeline of geological extractions, interspersed with audiovisual artefacts of human analysis and intervention. It is a study in extraction and indexing.

To the sides of the central structure, reclaimed civic bluestone blocks rest on the floor, propped up by wooden supports. Some are rough hewn rectangular blocks, others are more circular on shape. Their irregular surfaces contrast with the orderly rows of core samples. The bluestones offer places to sit and pause amidst the density of research material on display.

Rock Data: The Geological Core Samples

The lower level of the structure recalls an industrial conveyor belt—stilled, mid-motion. Dusty rows of geological core samples line the length of this level, cradled in metal trays, loaned from the warehouse archives of the Geological Survey of Victoria's Drill Core Library.
Black markers scribbled on the sides of one of the trays read:
PRC-4
1.4 arrow 5.1m
#1
PRC-4 5.1 arrow 9m
#2

Things seem in order …

Some of the core samples are smooth and cylindrical. Others have crumbled and fractured, exposing layered sediment. Here are records of deep time compressed into stone. Focusing in on one area, a spiky, echidna-like formation catches the light, its surface glimmering with sparkly mineral flecks.

Handwritten numbers on small wooden blocks interrupt the sequences, sporadically scattered amongst the fractured lengths of stone. The writing is not standardised; anonymous authors scribbling notes in a geological archive of field reports. Many of the scrawled numbers seem to signal depths underground: way-finding markers suggesting an attempt to chart what lies beneath us, a calculation mediated by each writer's idiosyncratic approximations.

The cores have been arranged according to a logic that has been printed along the length of the gallery wall, using a handheld inkjet printer to annotate the architecture with Times New Roman informational texts.

Closest to the entrance, the text reads:
Drilled 2006

Age (approx.) 5 - 1Ma
Neogene/ Quaternary
Basalt
Gunditjmara
(Hamilton)

A dot typeface announces the core code (PRC-4), and below, Times New Roman reappears, clarifying depths.

Fine red arrows run along the samples, suggesting directionality—perhaps mapping their journey from deep underground. Nearby, blue handwritten annotations offer additional clues, details marked in the language of geologists.

Surfaces, Screens, and Signals

Two sections of the spine of the structure feature in-built illumination: above-head-height LED strips, daisy-chained together to form precise, linear zones. They bathe the shelves underneath in clinical, cool white—like a research lab or a luxury display case—framing objects as specimens for study.

Mounted above the light strips, on the top level of the steel framing, are billboards, very close to square in shape. They display aerial images, overlaid with graphic white lines and directional markings, merging the genres of satellite imaging, topographic maps, the visual language of scientific diagrams. Each describes the broad geographical areas where the geological cores beneath were extracted from.

The imagery contained by the billboards feels in flux—like a blurred photograph, a Gerhard Richter painting with its pigments smeared across the surface, or an earth surveillance image stretched and distorted by time. Layers of sediment, water stains, and mineral leaching bleed across the panels.

At the end of the first strip of lights is a billboard with uppercase labels overlaying the topographic imagery, identifying MURRAY BASIN

SEDIMENTARY COVER, NEOCENE, NW VICTORIA … The lower left corner of the image is a blue rectangle, a plastic covering hiding surplus wheat.

Below the billboard, hanging under tension from metal cables, is a sack made of jumping castle material in a similar shade of deep Yves Klein blue. A darker square patch sits on its surface, a subtle register of material repair. A clear flexible tube, curled like an umbilical cord or a cow's udder, emerges from one end, connecting it back into the structure.

Each of the illuminated sections of the armature is segmented by a trampoline-like rectangle of cloth, strung up with white yarn zig-zagging between holes in the frame and steel loops pressed into the cloth. These rectangles softly deflect and diffuse light, and separate the structure into different research zones, like a chapter marker.

Along the mid-section of the armature, flat wooden panels interject, their surfaces made from compressed hemp board—a material with the texture and density of a compressed biscuit base. They lay flat as tabletops, or upright as dividers. Some smaller pieces support mounted iPad screens – most displaying uRADMonitor's 'real time environmental monitoring' data in the form of austere graphs of temperature over time, 'VOC', formaldehyde; atmospheric pressure and carbon dioxide … expressed as jagged white lines ranging over gridded black backgrounds.

There are larger video screens dispersed along the armature. The screen closest to the entrance is a large flat panel which leans upright against one of the hemp boards, facing upward. It shows Clean Air Task Force's saturated, high contrast videos of invisible pollution, captured by infrared thermal cameras. In one sequence, a steaming, periscope-shaped chimney holds a glistening spider's web in its elbow; vapour or smoke rises from pipes, chimneys, grates and windows, dissipating into grey, orange, lime green, fiery orange skies. The inverted shapes of trees sway, ominously. As they cut from site to site, subtitles announce each new facility or location, with a clear photograph of each briefly superimposed.

A flat screen lays flat on the mid-level of the armature, placing observers in the vantage point of an airborne or drone camera. It shows a topography revealed by hyperspectral and thermal sensing. Red and green and purple and touches of blue tint ploughed fields, water courses, and vegetation, washing representational aerial imagery with painterly abstraction.

Fluid Systems: Green Bubbling Tubes

Eight cylindrical canisters contain green bubbling liquid, tiny aerators sending streams of movement through clear tubing. The liquid's foggy, mint-green hue, shadowing down into a minor fluff of sediment, suggests a substance that it is alive, fermenting, cultured: a biotechnological experiment.

The wall label identifies these tubes as live algae cultures from Algal Processing Group, 'cultivated February 2025'.

Holding the tubes, one might imagine the careful handling of a fragile ecosystem, a delicate balance of microbial life and human intervention. Above and to one side of them, screwed onto the backing panel, a small black box lurks like an apostrophe: 'Environmental Monitor A3'.

The green tubes are arranged above the conveyer belt of drill cores. Underneath, on the concrete floor of the gallery, are a cluster of three metal trays, housing a collection of rocks of irregular form, several palm sized, sourced from unknown locations in Antarctica. Further down the structure, are a few more clusters of trays of Antarctic rocks, also on the floor level. They give a sense of tectonic movements that are only partially understood.

Orientation and Movement

Thin wooden bars, set within the frame at intervals, suggest a line of movement—like a ballet barre or a handrail guiding the body through the space.

Elsewhere, canvas tent awnings stretch diagonally, bringing a sense of temporary shelter, or perhaps referencing surveyor's tents used in remote geological fieldwork.

Throughout the installation, the peering presence of metal wind-capturing devices—polished like three reflective scoops of an ice cream cone—introduce a sensory dimension beyond the visual, hinting at ecological forces in motion.

Forward casting: Elements nominated for close description in Phase II

- Plastic bottles, milky sided with blue spray tops for wetting down drill cores
- Six speakers in metal casing
- Mud cores
- A plastic tray with a single rock, hand labelled, "? GABBRO DOOKIE"
- Bundles of straw, with a flat screen mounted above, flat, upside down
- Beyond the straw are two small screens on particle board. One shows a floating platform on a water body, tree branches behind. On the platform, a group of people gather in a circle, three in jeans, three in work shorts and work boots. The central figure is standing with hands on hip. The second screen shows amber coloured algae, overlaid with a focusing device: a blue circle bisected by crossed lines
- A screen that shows a greyscale image, a topography but with minimal detail. White caps font overtop of the landscape identifies locations by name (GEELONG, BENGIGO, MELBOURNE …) and by degrees. Triangular markers mark the location of rocks (CLAYSTONE, LIMESTONE, SEDIMENTARY SANDSTONE, SCHIST, PHULLITE, GNEISS …)