ENCOUNTERING ELLA BARCLAY’S installations you are enveloped by enigmatic tones, flashing lights and, sometimes, rising steam. No, it is not a Dr Who episode, but she’d be amused if you described it as that. Barclay engages with the familiar materials of technology – wiring, plastic, luminescent paneling and pulsing tones – to reconstruct it into something uncanny and unfamiliar.

What led you to practise art?
I’ve always wanted to be an artist in different capacities. When I was young I was inspired by the art around me but also film and understanding how things work, looking at the agency of artists. It is not necessarily an exact decision, it is more just the way you see the world and you process information. It’s also about seeing your life as an exercise in creativity and in understanding and seeing the culture in things.

Who has influenced you?
There are artists whose works speak to my practice. Tony Oursler’s assessment of the histories of media technology, and how he taps into how the early inventors of the telegraph or the telephone instigated the mysticism that is prescribed onto newer technologies. Also Simon Denny, for his exploration of the silicon aesthetics, the prototypes of the weird new machines, and the inherent dagginess of that is interesting. Recently I’ve been interested by the work of British artist Suzanne Treister, in that she makes amazing giant drawings that map out the history of confrontation/computation, the histories that are lesser known, such as the role of women in the innovation of technology, which is undersold. By observing these it provides such a strong antidote to the idea of the programmer, or the clinical office space, and Silicon Valley that we know.

Your approach to technology seems to engage with a post-Romanticism. Instead of idealising a spiritual connection with nature and a platonic state, it is with the machine or technology.
Definitely. It’s a kind of techno-romanticism or dealing with this idea of a techno sublime.

What underlies this immersion of the figure into these chaotic technological settings?
I’ve always been interested in the notion of immersion, which is a romantic term of losing yourself in the elements. That manifested for me at an early age through cinema and going to techno-squat parties – experiencing this kind of late night euphoric,
Yes, a lot are from literary influences, or lines from emails people have sent me. I have then giant note-taking things that I have then continued that in 'Ebb' (2012-13), where I worked in Taipei in 2011 with three Taiwanese artists, filming them in paint. I couldn't wait around for divine inspiration and I kept thinking about these things that are lesser known. There are works in 'I had to do it' (2010) that are essentially just giant note-taking things that I have then scrunched up into balls. A lot of that is my aesthetic is intuitive; I don't over-think how things look. It is that lack of perfectionism that exists in a lot of network architectures because a lot of the time it does happen haphazardly. It is basically anything that is outside of our control and the crumpled black plastic forms kind of look like computers, but they look more like a kid has scribbled what they think a computer is on a piece of paper and someone has recreated it in 3D form. On some levels it's about the aesthetic exploration of those things, instead of a direct point of criticism.