

*Symposium*

# **Futures Brought to Life**

*From Immersion via Agency to Engagement*



**Futures Brought To Life** is part of *Curiouser and Curiouser, cried Alice: Rebuilding Janus from Cassandra and Pollyanna (CCA)* - an art-based research project from **Design Investigations (ID2)** at the **University of Applied Arts Vienna** and **Time's Up**. It is supported by the Programme for Arts-based Research (PEEK) from the **Austrian Science Fund (FWF): AR561**.

# Symposium

## Futures Brought to Life

*From Immersion via Agency to Engagement*

### **WHO**

Time's Up Linz in collaboration with the University of Applied Arts Vienna and AIL - Angewandte Interdisciplinary Lab

### **WHEN**

May 12-13, 2022  
each 10.00-17.00

### **WHERE**

AIL - Angewandte Interdisciplinary Lab  
Alte Postsparkasse  
Georg-Coch-Platz 2,  
1010 Vienna

### **ONLINE**

12 May 2022:  
<https://youtu.be/Yl4JJ4LTuls>  
13 May 2022:  
<https://youtu.be/biT5mHzv-Ro>

### **CONTACT**

Time's Up  
[info@timesup.org](mailto:info@timesup.org)

In times such as these, we need to be interested in 'What if..?' questions and 'As if...' experiences. Not as 'mere speculation' but as an exercise of our imagination: to develop Arts Thinking processes that help us anticipate multiples and options, to work with ambiguity and contingency. Actively training this faculty will give us agency and prepare us to step confidently into the future, thereby creating a basis for the democratisation of the future.

The Future Brought to Life (FBTL) symposium offers applied and theoretical insights into practices that aim to create experiences of futures. The symposium covers a wide spectrum of Experiential Futures practices, from Speculative Design via Mutant Futures to Physical Narratives. Meanwhile, its focus on Futures Literacy will make the diversity and plurality of possible futures accessible to all interested parties. This literacy fosters the capacity to imagine how things could be different and how these differences could be meaningful.

The field of Futures Literacy aims to bring the capabilities of futures thinking to a broader public. The capacity to 'think out loud' about possible futures has escaped from the ivory towers, government buildings and large corporations and is becoming part of all our lives.

Futures Literacy takes many forms, including the emerging field of Experiential Futures. Experiential Futures create direct encounters with possible futures. This unmediated experience removes the barriers of complexity, fear and paralysis, which often emerge when imagining possible futures. The immersive experience of being part of a possible future cuts through that obstacle.

This symposium investigates the ways experiences of a possible future enable engagement with futures in general and thus provide a sense of agency. Bringing together some of the most innovative and experimental future practitioners from the fields of speculative design, activism, policy, business and the arts, this symposium will broaden our horizons.



12th of May	9:30	Registration	
	10:00	Welcome	<b>Gerald Bast</b> , Rector University of Applied Arts Vienna
	10:15	Introduction	<b>Time's Up</b>
	10:20	<b>Session 01</b>	<b>Superflux (Anab Jain)</b> You Can Only Be The Revolution
	11:20		<b>Extrapolation Factory</b> A decade of participatory futures
	12:10		<b>Katharina Unger</b> Farming insects: from speculation to industrial technology
	13:00	Lunch	
	14:00	<b>Session 02</b>	<b>Alex Davies</b> The Present Edge of a Very Near Future
	15:10		<b>Time's Up</b> Sweaty Futures, Snooping and Joy: Social Immersion in Experiential Storyworld Futures
	16:00		<b>FoAM (Maja Kuzmanovic &amp; Nik Gaffney)</b> Life, life support and afterlives of (im)possible worlds

13th of May	9:45	Registration	
	10:15	Introduction	<b>Time's Up</b>
	10:20	<b>Session 03</b>	<b>José Ramos</b> What Can we Learn from a Conversation with Three Mythological Beings from the Futures?
	11:20		<b>Paul Graham Raven</b> The limit(ation)s of literacy: meandering toward a (trans)media ecology of futures
	12:10		<b>The Yes Men (Andy Bichlbaum   Jacques Servin)</b> Fiction can sometimes lead to reality
	13:00	Lunch	
	14:00	<b>Session 04</b>	<b>Lucy Kimbell</b> Prototyping social and policy futures
	15:10		<b>Changeist (Scott Smith &amp; Susan Cox-Smith)</b> Calibrating Experiences
	16:00		<b>Sophie Howe</b> Why [do] we need a Future Generations Commissioner[?]



12.05.2022 – 10:20

**Superflux Anab Jain**<https://superflux.in/>*You Can Only Be The Revolution*

Who we are, how we act, what we gather around, our collective agency, our hopeful futures; are all deeply entangled with messy histories of mindless extraction, oppressive colonialism, social injustices and climate apathy. The roots of fractured post-truth narratives, climate crisis and the pandemic are part of this continuous narrative.

*If we want to find hope amidst crisis, we must force a reckoning with such interconnected complexities, and imagine alternatives beyond our present limitations of reality. With immersive installations, speculations and films Anab, with her partner Jon Ardern and their studio Superflux confront some of the most complex challenges of our times, and carry us towards different worlds of possibility, care, and hope. Professor of Design Investigations at the Angewandte and Superflux Co-founder Anab Jain will share their recent works whilst drawing inspiration from the writing of one of her favourite author Ursula Le Guin, whose book 'The Dispossessed' holds the origins for this talk's title.*

12.05.2022 – 11:20

**Extrapolation Factory (Chris Wuebken & Elliott P. Montgomery)**<https://extrapolationfactory.com/>*A decade of participatory futures*

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Extrapolation Factory, a participatory futures research studio founded in 2012 in Brooklyn, New York. Most notable for the project 99¢ Futures, Extrapolation Factory has become known for the studio's experimental and collaborative productions of future vision in familiar contexts: junk mail, pawn shops, ice cream trucks, city services, and public parks.

Some of the studio's projects, such as Testing Hypotheticals, have won awards such as the Lexus Design Award in 2018. Others, perhaps not as well known, like Living Tweaks, are referenced as examples of scrappy design futures visioning.

In recent years, the design studio's co-founders have devoted time and energy to sharing what they've learned by teaching courses on speculative design at Parsons, RISD, Columbia and SVA. They've also worked to open-source their findings from 10 years running the studio by publishing the book, Extrapolation Factory User's Manual. The book starts with a foundation for the studio's principles and chronicles their years of experimentation and participatory futures design, offering text in English and Chinese, with 11 futures methods.

*The Extrapolation Factory is a design-based research studio for participatory futures studies, founded by Chris Wuebken and Elliott P. Montgomery. The studio develops experimental methods for collaboratively prototyping, experiencing and impacting future scenarios. Central to these methods is the creation of hypothetical future props and their deployment in familiar contexts such as 99¢ stores, science museums, vending machines and city sidewalks. With this work, the studio is exploring new territories for democratized futures by rapidly imagining, prototyping, deploying and evaluating visions of possible futures on an extended time scale.*

12.05.2022 – 12:10

**Katharina Unger**<https://www.livinfarms.com/>*Farming insects: from speculation to industrial technology*

Working as a designer one needs to observe the world on a systems level, in order to create impact through physical or strategic inventions. Livin Studios works with developments in the food industry with a focus on fungal and insect sources. This talk will cover the entrepreneurial journey of a creative founder going industrial technology, from speculations and design fiction through to functional devices, systems and solutions.

*Katharina, being entrepreneur, Industrial Designer, Speaker, Inventor is currently living and working in Hong Kong and Vienna. She is often described as a thought leader in the space of design for sustainability, food and agricultural innovation. Katharina has founded Livin Studio and Livin Farms, companies leading in the field of edible insects and novel food innovations. She has brought her own and her clients' products successfully from idea to market. She lectures widely and has received several awards, fellowships and stipends.*

**12.05.2022 – 14:10**

### **Alex Davies**

<https://schizophrenia.com/>

*The Present Edge of a Very Near Future*

Alex Davies is a media artist and academic at U.N.S.W. Australia whose work has evolved into large, space filling physical narratives. The VR/AR project “Edge of the Present” developed together with the psychologist Michaela Davies, investigates whether immersive mixed reality can impact an individual’s mood, state of well-being and capacity for future thinking via exploration within a purpose built room that is combined with virtual landscapes.

*Alex Davies is an award winning Australian media artist whose practice spans a diverse range of media and experiments with interaction, technology, perception, mixed reality and illusion. In 2013 he was awarded a PhD in Media Arts at the UNSW College of Fine Arts examining the relationship between the techniques of stage magic and the creation of illusion in media arts. He is a Scientia Fellow and Senior Lecturer in Media Arts at UNSW Australia Art & Design, and has exhibited widely in Australia and internationally. He is the recipient of Qantas Foundation Contemporary Australian Art Award, UNSW Scientia Fellowship, Creative Australia Fellowship and has received numerous grants from the Australia Council's Inter-Arts, Music, Visual Arts, and New Media Boards.*

**12.05.2022 – 15:10**

### **Time's Up**

<https://timesup.org/>

*Sweaty Futures, Snooping and Joy: Social Immersion in Experiential Storyworld Futures*

Haptic experiences and social immersion are the mainstays of human existence. People explore and discover stories and understandings best in physical spaces, playfully using physical and social intuition. We create physical narratives as explorable stories of possible futures.

We encountered futuring as a practice, took it as a grafting, a mutation, a retrofitting to our existent processes. Interweaving utopian and dystopian trends, imminent ecosystem collapse and social adaptation, the ever evolving co-crafted Turnton 2047 scenario-storyworld was started. Built to encourage curiosity, our work aims to elicit joyful anticipation of futures.

*Time's Up is a nonprofit organisation founded in 1996 in Linz Austria, to investigate the possibilities of haptic interactive human scale situations. As a laboratory for the composition of experimental and experiential situations, Time's Up creates explorable, narrative spaces, especially in the context of constructing models of possible futures and building physical narratives that explore contemporary sociopolitical issues.*



12.05.2022 – 16:00

**FoAM (Maja Kuzmanovic & Nik Gaffney)**<https://fo.am/>*Life, life support and the afterlives of (im)possible worlds*

Stories, scenarios and situations. They can be tools, techniques, or ways of testing assumptions. How can we bring to life the stories of worlds around us? How can scenarios help us prepare for their externalities, for everything other than a scenario? Incessant adaptation to uncertain situations and the inexplicable present is becoming an essential survival skill for most contemporary humans, whether by choice or necessity. Tumbling from one urgency to another, acting with incomplete information, engaging with wicked problems and dealing with unintended consequences is just as much a personal and social circumstance as it is the purview of governments or institutions. How do we develop capacities to cope with increasingly complex uncertainties in our daily life and in the worlds we inhabit? How can we enhance our sense of agency amid chaotic external circumstances or internal transitions? How can we bring futures to life for individuals and collectives dealing with problems caused by chronic (un)certainty?

Some suggestions we propose include ways of examining and diagnosing the most critical uncertainties. Along with scenario building, future prehearsals, and RADMIN interventions we might resort to strategic unplanning, VUCA therapy or targeted situational awareness to reduce acute symptoms. The time-honoured techniques of running away, hiding, and giving up will also be discussed. In situations of global instability (such as a war or pandemic), we may need to apply palliative, rehabilitative or emergency approaches to becoming comfortable with uncertainty. When circumstances become too hostile, we might need a sanctuary (or sanatorium) for alternative futures, the unattainable, the unwanted and endangered futures that can not exist in the present. A seedbank. A refugia. A nursery for propositions to germinate. Sometimes, bringing futures to life (or back to life) can benefit from a position of remove. Sometimes, our possible futures may need a refuge from the world. Sometimes, they may need another world.

*Maja Kuzmanovic and Nik Gaffney are members of the FoAM network, exploring futurecrafting as a way of re-enchanting the present. In an act of resistance against dystopian fears of uncertainty, they cultivate kinship networks and circumstances for conviviality and collaboration, resonant with animist approaches to presence, attunement and reciprocity. They create propositions, immersive situations and (peak) experiences, to invoke new worlds and summon echoes of voices otherwise unheard. Navigating between (post-capitalist) open-resource ethics and mainstream economic realities, they experiment with diverse approaches to financing, administering and sharing infrastructure, grounded in collective imagination and solidarity.*

13.05.2022 – 10:20

**José Ramos**<https://actionforesight.net/>*What Can we Learn from a Conversation with Three Mythological Beings from the Futures?*

Our species has generated problems, planetary in scale, that we currently do not have solutions to. It might be said that the futures is calling forth new strategies, methods, and solutions that are beyond our current comprehensions and imaginations. A basic proposition is that the future is calling forth an unprecedented and new stage of creativity to address and solve these challenges. As a thought experiment, if these challenges were personified into mythological beings, what beings would they be and what might they say to us about how we need to think differently, what we need to create, as well as who we need to be and become? This discussion takes on three mythological beings that represent three planetary challenges: equity, ecology, and peace. These mythological beings, which embody these challenges, generate a horizon of speculation and experimentation to consider how we think and act differently, and about this new stage in human creativity: the methods, strategies and solutions we bring forth within these Epic Times.



*Dr. Jose Ramos is an action researcher, social innovator and mutant futurist with a focus on the commons. His work uses vision driven social experimentation, anticipatory governance and participatory futures. He has 20 years experience as an advocate, writer and organizer, which includes the ethnographic study of alternative globalisations and sustainable development pathways, writings on collaborative governance, and research on applied foresight and social change. He is the director for Action Foresight, a boutique futures practice and Futures Lab, a virtual laboratory for visionary experimentation; he is co-editor of the Journal of Futures Studies; and is co-founder of the Participatory Futures Global Swarm. Mexican, born in Oakland, he grew up in a very multi-cultural suburb (Whittier) in Los Angeles. He lives in central Victoria near Melbourne, Australia with his wife, De Chantal and their two children, son Ethan and daughter Rafaela.*

13.05.2022 – 11:20

### **Paul Graham Raven**

<https://paulgrahamraven.com/>

*The limit(ation)s of literacy: meandering toward a (trans)media ecology of futures*

Experiential futures (and related practices) have done much-needed work on opening up the question of futurity to more creative and diverse narratives. I have argued previously that all futures are necessarily narratives, and now I advance a corollary: if all futures are narratives, then all futures are media(ted).

From that point of departure, and with the theoretical toolkit of media ecology close at hand, many questions might be asked. For example: is there any point in adding yet more futures — however desirable or critical or just — to a field of futurity which is surely more crowded than it has ever been before? Is there any point in advocating for a specialised futures literacy when the general state of media literacy is so impoverished?

I will explore these ideas with reference to recent and ongoing projects (by myself, by colleagues, and by other practitioners) with the intention of posing (but not answering) a provocation to the field: is the real work of futuring, experiential or otherwise, the work of developing not just a passive media literacy, but an active media competency? And if not, should it be?

*Dr. Paul Graham Raven is (at time of writing) a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at Lund University, Sweden, where his research is concerned with how the stories we tell about times yet to come shape the lives we end up living. He's also an author and critic of science fiction, an occasional journalist and essayist, a collaborator with designers and artists, and a (gratefully) lapsed consulting critical futurist. He currently lives in Malmö with a cat, some guitars, and sufficient books to constitute an insurance-invalidating fire hazard.*

13.05.2022 – 12:10

### **The Yes Men (Andy Bichlbaum | Jacques Servin)**

<https://theyesmen.org/>

*Fiction can sometimes lead to reality*

Fiction can sometimes lead to reality. Phrased differently: Sometimes utopian fictions come true — but even when they don't have immediate results, utopian fictions can highlight our self-imposed limits and help us to get rid of them. Beautiful Trouble calls them “prefigurative interventions”, creating glimpses of a better, more just future. This is only one, out of many, lessons have been learned, collected and shared by The Yes Men.

Take two more out of the long list of lessons. Randomly or deliberately. Let's start with: “Believe you're going to change everything. Sort of.” Sounds like a strategy, or at least a good state of mind.



And then: “Follow utopia, but don’t believe you can make it”. Utopia as a direction rather than a goal; sounds good. And now observe The Yes Men with their masterful PR move “bridging”.

*The Yes Men describe themselves as “Just two guys, Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno, who decided to have fun as we stuck it to the man”. One thing led to another, and soon — thanks to a network of ultra-capable friends and allies — we were infiltrating conferences, producing fake spectacles, disrupting events, destroying brands, and otherwise exposing wrongdoing as well as the better world we could have.*

13.05.2022 – 14:10

### **Lucy Kimbell**

<https://www.arts.ac.uk/ual-social-design-institute>

*Prototyping social and policy futures*

This contribution shares perspectives about the use of design approaches such as prototyping and co-design in developing and testing responses to public policy and social issues. Design expertise and research are increasingly visible to address contemporary challenges through various formats such as policy labs, funded academic research and initiatives such as the New European Bauhaus. What is opened up and what is obscured through this deployment of design in such settings? What are the consequences of these developments for those within practice, higher education and research?

*Dr Lucy Kimbell is Director, Social Design Institute, and Professor of Contemporary Design Practices at University of the Arts London. Her research looks at the development of ‘design thinking’ and the use of ‘social design’ to address social and public policy issues. Lucy was co-investigator on two UKRI funded projects using design to address the contemporary issues of AI and Anti-Microbial Resistance. She co-supervises four PhD students doing cross-disciplinary research at the intersection of design and political science studying between UAL and Kings College London. She was AHRC design research fellow in Policy Lab, a team in the UK Government Cabinet Office in 2014-15 and worked with the EU Policy Lab team using design and futures approaches. She was previously Clark Fellow in Design Leadership at Said Business School, University of Oxford for five years and taught design thinking on the MBA for 15 years.*

13.05.2022 – 15:10

### **Changeist (Scott Smith & Susan Cox-Smith)**

<https://changeist.com/>

*Calibrating Experiences*

From the earliest days of the practice, Experiential Futures took aim at policy and asked how we can translate alternative vision into reality the hard way — through bureaucracy. This often means carefully calibrating approaches, borrowing the language and affordances of policy and delivery. Scott Smith and Susan Cox-Smith of Changeist will discuss examples from their own decade of experiential futures work with governments and NGOs worldwide to explore how to balance estrangement of experience and logics of policymaking in opening up other futures.

*Changeist engages in a spectrum of activities around the future, from strategic advisory to creating expert networks. We are always searching for weak signals, trends, and driving forces to bring rich insights to the organisations and conversations we support through different forms of strategic advisory. We apply sensemaking tools, develop scenarios, imagine stories and prototype new ways of experiencing possible futures for clients and partners. The team leaders have more than 25 years of experience in strategy, design, collaborations and consulting.*





13.05.2022 – 16:00

## **Sophie Howe**

<https://www.futuregenerations.wales/>

*Why [do] we need a Future Generations Commissioner[?]*

As a question, the answer offers itself; a Future Generations Commissioner acts as a Minister for the Unborn. The role is to provide advice to the Government and other public bodies in Wales on delivering social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being for current and future generations and assessing and reporting on how they are delivering. As a statement, the claim that such a role is necessary in all areas of governance is similarly clear; in spite of political rhetoric to the contrary, the responsibilities of governments are not only to the current voters in their electorate, but emanate beyond these in time.

*Previously Sophie was the first Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales where she led programmes to tackle violent crime and violence against women and girls, focusing on early intervention and partnership working. As “the guardian of the interests of future generations in Wales”, Sophie Howe is the world’s only Future Generations Commissioner. She has led high profile interventions around transport planning, education reform and climate change challenging the Government and others to demonstrate how they are taking account of future generations.*



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