
How do we take our bodies with us into the future?

The great power and responsibility of curation is to set the conditions. At present and at large, we find ourselves in this condition: The climate crisis threatens to make Earth inhospitable to human (and much non-human) life. Financialisation and privatisation threaten to make public spaces (digital and non) inhospitable to a cohesive social fabric. The “digitise everything dogma” threatens to commodify and abstract all culture, making knowledge into information and inhospitable to the experiential and embodied.

In a world of inhospitable conditions, we must take responsibility for becoming better hosts. Even when hosting artists or audiences in their own space, how do we take responsibility for their physical conditions? The art might be digital, but it is still made by and for humans. How do we host with care the toiling between artist and artwork and the moment of encounter between artwork and audience? Because art becomes art through the possibilities of that moment of encounter.

We may be inside a digital condition, but we still experience it as bodily agents—with our senses, with our imaginative capacities, with our emotions. These are faculties that our bodies host so well for us, and we must in turn find ways to host our bodies. We cannot leave our bodies behind. (I am preferencing the term “our bodies” over the more widely used “the body”, in order to include all bodies, in acknowledgment of multiplicity and difference). Throughout this research, one question persisted, and it is the question at the core of my curatorial framework:

How do we take our bodies with us into the future?

Why Digitise? (or) Why Digitalise?

And, how do we mitigate fallout? What are we doing to people (and communities) when we guide them to spend their life force (time) attending to touchscreens and keyboards, often sitting still, often alone, almost always in written English, project-managing (as artist) output/deliverables/content (that ends up enriching for-profit advertising platforms)? And what are we doing to audiences when we funnel them towards interfaces where they must drink from a fire hydrant through a straw.

Beware, Data Nullius

Almost always there are pre-existing communities of artists already invested and re-enchanting the tools/technologies/social and digital infrastructures to reshape the world. Let us not pave over people who already work in the digital realm as dissidents, with artists already known to us/art institutions. Let us not force “pivots” to digital. The artwork suffers as does the artists and their communities/stories/culture/context/canon. And to make a safe space we need to curate and prepare the audience. How do we do that if the audience is everyone who is online now and into forever?

Engagement is not a metric.

‘Digital strategy’, especially western-centric reactions to the Covid19 syndrome, seem to (accidentally?) perpetuate capitalist values. They prioritise archive, distribution, financialisation. This is actually a business plan. It does not facilitate a cultural movement of any communities wanting to change their lives/the world through artistic interrogation. **We could ask, what if we instead prioritise subversion, sovereignty, social cohesion, curiosity, wonder, and expansion of faculty...?**

Knowledge systems for example, are best kept alive, embodied and shared across generations in communities - a digitised archive is a poor substitute and should be thought of as a backup or reference. How do we support this?

Digital does not necessarily expand access to all, it sometimes shifts access to different people.

The music industry does not sell music, but technologies that give access to it.

The bottled water industry does not manufacture water, it manufactures plastic bottles.

What can the arts industry do?

2038.

The following is an offer of programming focus statements. One per year until 2038. Ordered by most radical to least.

- 2023. A programme of artists using digital but with the parameter that the audience does not meet the work via remote pixels/screens. (Tiyen, Kai)
- 2024. [Hypertext](#) focused art and artists. (Nancy, Natasha)
- 2025. The non-english world wide web. ([Indigemoji](#) project)
- 2026. Interface Diversity - almost unthinkable but extremely necessary - ([Example 1](#),
- 2027. Tele-sensual - The networked extension of our senses and intimacy (Alice, Harriet).
- 2028. Our already augmented reality. (Example artists)
- 2029. The digitally determined biological and physical world (a generation of kids due to algorithmic guidance) (Example artists)
- 2030. Avatars! association+/-dissociation. (vehicles, icons, FPV RC,) what about acculturated movement styles, what about motion capture sovereignty etc? (Example artists)
- 2031. The physicality of working digitally.. (amazon workers, coders, GP's, call centers etc)
- 2032. Tandem thinking/Digital Determinism (leading the witness) - eg text prediction that defaults to US spelling, default tempo and metre in music software. (Example artists)
- 2033. Rejecting the 4 pillars of digital capitalism. (as outlined by Australia Council - archive, distribution, financialisation, accessible to all.) (Example artists)
- 2034. Human Exclusion Zones (for non-human beings including "nature" alongside automated manufacturing, logistics operations and server farms) - ("Machine landscapes" publication). (Example artists)
- 2035. Misinformation, propaganda, how to propose a radical shift and not be just another voice amongst ill considered conspiracy cult(ure). (Example artists)
- 2036. Network/Internet but not Web - Network potential that avoids "Web2.0" ([G.O.D.](#))
- 2037. Translation from one medium/platform/community to another - [Matthew Buckley](#)
- 2038. Misnomer - dispelling hyperbole with precise language "engagement" "AI" "cloud"

What is what we're doing, doing back to us?

"The first principle is that you must not fool yourself, and you are the easiest person to fool."
Also "I was talking to a friend who was going to go on the radio. He does work on cosmology and astronomy, and he wondered how he would explain what the applications of this work were. "Well," I said, "there aren't any." He said, "Yes, but then we won't get support for more research of this kind." I think that's kind of dishonest. If you're representing yourself as a scientist, then you should explain to the layman what you're doing—and if they don't want to support you under those circumstances, then that's their decision." - Richard P. Feynman - *The Pleasure of Finding Things Out* (1999)

"Don't tempt me Frodo! I dare not take it. Not even to keep it safe. Understand Frodo, I would use this ring from a desire to do good. But through me, it would wield a power too great and terrible to imagine." - Gandalf the Grey - *Lord of the Rings* (first movie)

Instrumental convergence - "Suppose an advanced artificial intelligence was tasked with manufacturing paperclips. If such a machine were not programmed to value human life, then given enough power over its environment, it would try to turn all matter in the universe, including human beings, into either paperclips or machines which manufacture paperclips. - Nick Bostrom (2003). "Ethical Issues in Advanced Artificial Intelligence"

When we "wield" digital technologies we must be full of care to not become the agent of a technology whose incentive structure would work through us to continue financialisation, individuation and commodification of culture and community. We must not fool ourselves in such a way that we become agents furthering [digital colonialism](#) ("Terra Nullius -> Aqua Nullius -> Data Nullius").

What is art for? What is culture for? What is life for? To be digitised? According to the latest collab between Ray Ban and facebook, [Rayban Stories](#), yes. But I propose we're here for immersion, for belonging, for epiphany, for transformation, for becoming. And if art has to be instrumentalised, this is a more human value alignment.

The current WWW is the paperclip maximiser thought experiment. Except instead of turning the universe into paperclips, it is remaking the world into 90's Corporate America aka "The Market", further promoting a neo-liberal free market—which is neither liberal, nor free. Your home is an office, your friends and community are trading partners/patrons/customers, your thoughts and body a commodity. Your desire to do good becomes a resilient missionary, taking this social technology into places not yet penetrable by networked machinery.

How do we wield the tools without them wielding us?

How do we not fool ourselves that we are facilitating artists and communities when we instead are financialising artists (into content creators) and commodifying communities (into cultural mine sites)?

How do we take our bodies, all of our bodies—of culture, of water, of knowledge, of sensuality—with us into the future?

What happens next is what the next wave of artists can explore when supported and resourced by people like us!