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ART&TECH

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The New Institutions

SPECIAL REPORT

THE REVIVALISTS

The reopenings of the New Museum in 2026 and Centre Pompidou in 2030 promise a new edge from two institutional pace-setters

TRANSATLANTIC AI

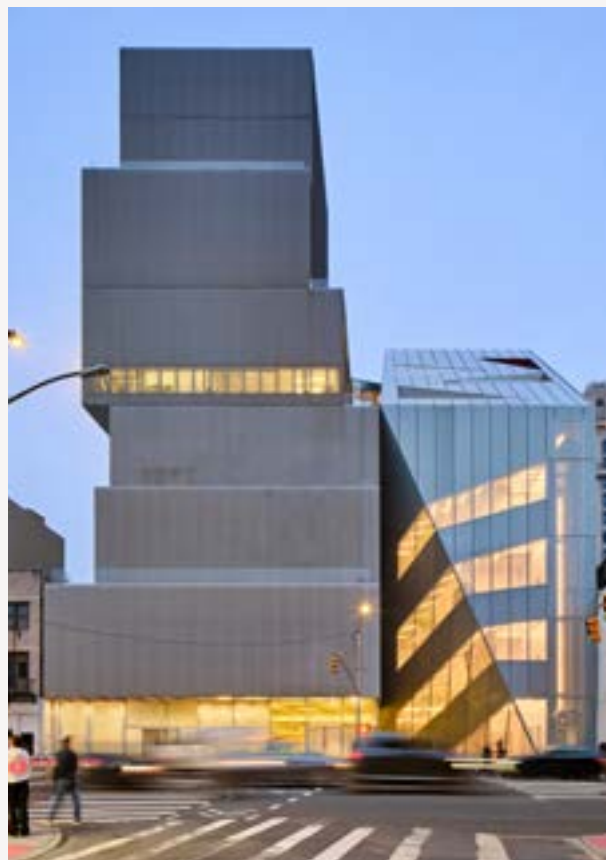
Refik Anadol and Anna Ridler mine the archives at the Schwarzman Centre, Oxford University, as Anadol opens Dataland Museum of AI arts, LA

EDUCATIONAL ECOLOGIES

Scholars from the Royal College of Art and Goldsmiths are curating futures in design and creative technology

FESTIVAL CODE

Creative Intelligence, a three-day London festival, examines digital innovation and AI's role in reshaping global society



The enlarged New Museum, New York, now serves as a permanent home to New Inc, its incubator for art and technology, and Rhizome, its digital arm since 2003

FORUM | On the Super Bowl-ification of Digital Art ...

On Right Click Save's new community noticeboard, Joana Kawahara Lino warns of the provincializing perils of centering the digital art scene on Eastern Standard Time

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COVER IMAGE: COURTESY OF NEW MUSEUM. NODE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY FELIX URIBE

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS



The opening night of “10,000”, NODE, Palo Alto, January 2026. A wall in the Silicon Valley space showing all 10,000 *CryptoPunks*

New Art. New Institutions

Welcome to the second edition of *Art & Tech*, a quarterly digest of recently published articles from *Right Click Save*. It is designed to be a space for slow reading, and an alternative to the always-on culture of the attention economy. The latest quarterly’s subject is “The New Institutions”: the museums, galleries and educational entities that are engaging with artists, curators and scholars to drive critical conversation about digital art as part of an expanded contemporary art ecosystem.

In an interview in the quarterly, the artist Anna Ridler highlights the importance she attaches to undistracted attention. “Attention is the thing”, she says, “paying attention to something is a huge act. It’s a form of listening, it’s how you show love, it’s how you can help heal and repair.”

That article is centered on Ridler’s commission for the opening arts program at the Stephan A Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, Oxford University. The Schwarzman Centre’s debut, in April 2026, was a distinct milestone in the launch or reimagining of transformative institutions

of the digital era. Other highlights include the opening of NODE, in Palo Alto, California, and Refik Anadol Studio’s Data-land museum of AI Arts, in Los Angeles; the remodelling and enlargement of Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the New Museum, New York; the forthcoming unveiling of Canyon in downtown Manhattan, and of Powerhouse Paramatta in Sydney, Australia. There is also the launch in September 2026 of Creative Intelligence, a three-day London festival, bringing together the city’s artists, museums, scholars and creative coders to examine digital innovation and AI’s role in reshaping global society.

The cross-pollinating conversations that these institutions host are the subject of editorial focus for Alex Estorick, the Founding Editor of *Right Click Save*, and Louis Jebb, the magazine’s Managing Editor; as well as for the digital art community’s discourse in the magazine’s new Forum section. Those exchanges gain urgency at a time when the art world’s concern with climate change is as vital as ever, and when the adoption of AI continues to re-engineer global culture. ■■■

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NEW ART | AN IDEA EMERGING FROM TECH-CENTERED SOCIETY

The curator Valentino Catricalà proposes the term “New Art” for today’s world of fragmented but connected practices that are reshaping contemporary art



Installation view of Rebecca Allen, “A Tangle of Mind & Matter”, at The School of Digital Arts, Manchester, including *Musique Non Stop*, 1986. The exhibition was curated by Valentino Catricalà

A New World: The Foundations

It has been discussed for some time — it is in the air, yet it remains elusive. It likely began with the advent of the “post-everything” movements, or perhaps even earlier. Let us recall the first — the most famous of them all: postmodernism. Launched in various ways by philosophers including Frederic Jameson, Jean-François Lyotard, and Douglas Crimp, it decreed the end of something ... of the modern, of modernism; either way, the end of an era. For Lyotard, postmodernism was defined by “incredulity toward metanarratives.”

Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* was published in 1979 with a subtitle that is often forgotten but important: *A Report on Knowledge*. This was a transformed knowledge, which the French philosopher identified in the effects of technology on society. This led him to curate an exhibition — an unusual endeavor for a philosopher — at the Centre Pompidou, titled “Les Immatériaux” (1985). The exhibition was a demonstration both of how societies were changing, and how technology had influenced art and aesthetic

NEW ART NEITHER A TREND NOR A MANIFESTO

- “New Art” describes an expanding world that lives beyond classical rules built around categories and mediums
- The term acknowledges a half-century since postmodernism defined technology’s effect on art and aesthetics
- It includes artists who operate as industries of innovation or who exhibit at the junction of spectacle and high art
- Neither a trend nor a manifesto, it is an “impulse” working toward “a definition of art that is constantly rewriting itself”

categories. Indeed, the show was an eclectic mix of art, science, and industrial technology.

“Les Immatériaux” is one of the foundational milestones toward which we must define explicitly today as “New Art”. From that milestone, the various “post-everything” movements gradually sought to theorize a world in constant evolution, as well as the emergence of new artistic disciplines that had been separated from the traditional art world for years.

Those disciplines formed an entire sector that, for years, justified its existence by being identified under labels that placed art in opposition to technological terminologies. There are many such labels, including “video art”, “computer art”, “software art”, up to more general and inclusive terms like “new media art” and “digital art”.

These labels delimited more or less precise spheres separate from contemporary art, in which the technological medium used by the artist was the defining hallmark, existing alongside, but without intersecting, a contemporary art world that proceeded at a different pace and with different interests.

COURTESY OF THE SCHOOL OF DIGITAL ARTS, MANCHESTER



Installation view of “Strange Rules” at Palazzo Diedo Berggruen Arts & Culture, Venice, 2026, with work: Ken Stanley, *Picbreeder* (2008-2020).

Back in 2011, James Bridle launched the concept of “The New Aesthetic”. Yet, for years, the technological question was sidelined or marginalized, as if it were something secondary. We find evidence of this in the reactions of experts and museum directors.

A few years earlier, in 2008, Ekow Eshun, director of the ICA in London, had declared: “The practice of new media-based arts has its place in the sector, but it is my opinion that, in general, it lacks the cultural depth and urgency to justify a continuous and significant investment by the ICA in a Live & Media Arts department.”

Art criticism of technology has earlier roots. In his famous essay *Art and Objecthood* (1967), Michael Fried asserted: “Art degenerates as it approaches the condition of theater”, or rather, that art vanishes the moment it becomes a mere demonstration of an effect or a device.

The Double Helix

And so, we arrive at contemporary art, which hides in its very name the idea of something in constant motion. But the concept

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOAN PORCEL

“Les Immatériaux” is one of the foundational milestones toward which we must define explicitly today as ‘New Art’. From that milestone, the various ‘post-everything’ movements gradually sought to theorize a world in constant evolution, as well as the emergence of new artistic disciplines that had been separated from the traditional art world for years.

of contemporary art must be conceived not only in a temporal sense (the “now”) but also in a conceptual one. We might say with Roland Barthes that “the contemporary is the untimely” in that there is always something anachronistic about it; it is a temporal superimposition. Or, as the philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman put it: “Anachronism is the way time opens up, splits, and articulates itself.”

However, the contemporary in art is not only a philosophical concept but also a practical one, from the Latin *ars*, a translation of the Greek *techne* — the capacity to do, a technical skill guided by rules and knowledge. And this capacity to do, as structured by contemporary art, has, if not rules, at least orientations.

We are at a moment when the orientations that have defined the contemporary art world — which have characterized exhibitions, events, and professional figures, and have been taught in schools, universities, and academies — have been joined, challenged, and radically reshaped by New Art. We are not beyond, but within, contemporary art.

As the Italian philosopher Massimo Cacciari states, to think of an archipelago is “to harmonize, without violently reducing them to One, the different figures, the different islands—all ‘saved’ in the individuality of their own character, but all grasped in their common search, in their common love (philia) for that Name or that Homeland which all of them lack”.



The opening of Dataland museum of AI Arts, Los Angeles, June 2026

New Art represents new modes of making art, of exhibiting, and of being an artist that can no longer be reduced only to the categories of contemporary art, just as they can no longer be locked into boxes whose boundaries are determined by the simple use of a medium. What we call New Art seems to have been generated by a double-helix process.

Modes from within contemporary art
New modes have gradually emerged — a germ born from within, a parasite, to use the philosopher Michel Serres’s concept, which has influenced the entire sector. Think of the new modes of production that are establishing a new figure of the artist.

When an artist such as Ian Cheng founds a company that pays salaries to engineers and technicians to invent new AI software before the creation of his works, we are not only talking about art, nor the traditional workshop, but about new forms of technological innovation applied to art.

The same applies to many artists working with technology today, including Cecile B. Evans, Lawrence Lek, Oliver Laric, Cao Fei, and many others. When painting becomes

an extension of technological processes, erasing the distinction between online and offline, we are no longer talking about traditional media, representation, and creative intuition. The body sculpture of Ivana Basic, not to mention the body metamorphosis of Ambra Wellmann’s paintings, recall the digital metamorphosis of tech society, just as Rachel Rossin fuses media. The same is true of FormaFantasma, Forensic Architecture, and Metahaven, who hybridize design, architecture, and fine art in ways that challenge the standard categories of contemporary art.

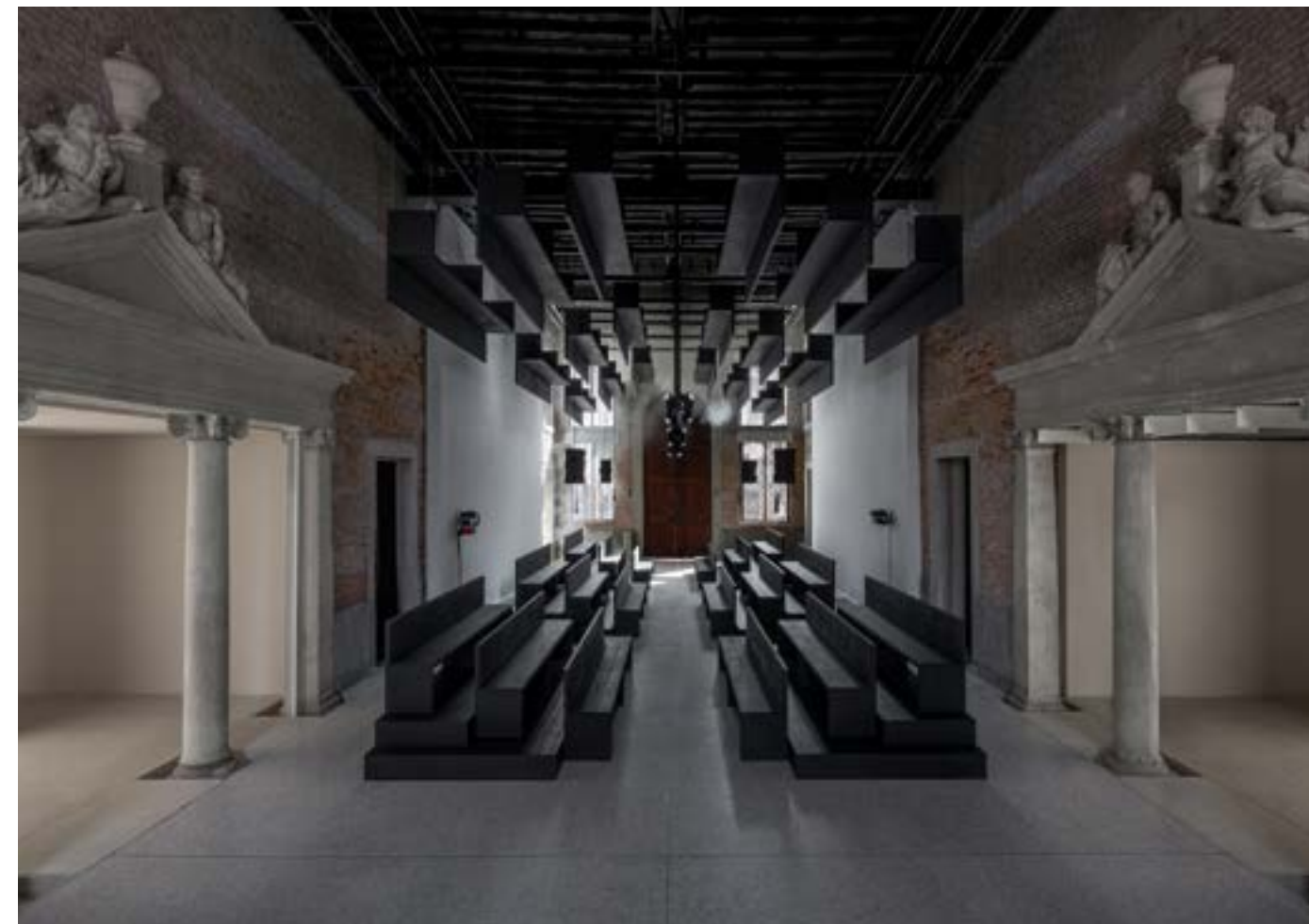
Experiences are also changing within the exhibition space. Today, entertainment companies leverage artistic credibility to elevate their commercial appeal, all the while the art world seeks out new audiences, immersive formats, and substantial budgets. This intersection has given rise to a new exhibition model exemplified in Refik Anadol’s Dataland museum of AI arts in Los Angeles

as well as the sites created by the Tokyo-based digital art collective TeamLab, which live between high art and spectacle, and beyond conventional exhibition experience. “Euphoria: Art is in the Air”, an exhibition of inflatable art that I curated at Le Grand Palais in 2025, offers another example.

Expanding boundaries

Contemporary art itself has expanded beyond its own borders, influencing and incorporating other disciplines, thereby causing the solidity of its own nature to be lost while introducing new cultures. When an artist such as Neil Beloufa founds a company to collaborate with museums to design non-exhibition areas, or when figures like Olafur Eliasson or Tomás Saraceno operate as veritable industries — whose studios are directly influencing scientific research, as with Saraceno’s *Aerocene* project — are we still talking about art or innovation?

Even if the final output is an exhibition the process is hard to frame within classical rules. The same applies to the old master Michelangelo Pistoletto, whose recent work *The Third Paradise* is not a physical work



Installation view of “Strange Rules” at Palazzo Diedo Berggruen Arts & Culture, 2026, with work: *Attention Guild* (2026) by Mat Dryhurst and Holly Herndon

nor an object but a symbol that activates social, scientific, political, and technological processes.

The Archipelago and the “New Art”

It would be easy now to announce something bold — the end, death, “post”, or birth of a new and absolute dogma. Or to speak of a new artistic trend like Arte Povera or Minimalism. But I will not, because it is no longer the time for such critical attitudes.

We are not “beyond” contemporary art but in the midst of a broader mutation where New Art takes shape. It is too broad to be understood through narrow categories. Within the art world it can be considered a hyperobject, just as climate change is a hyperobject for the global ecology.

There are overlaps and connections, tendencies to exit and re-enter, and temporal superimpositions. There are also “family resemblances”, to quote Ludwig Wittgenstein: just as in a family, members resemble one another without everyone possessing all traits, so concepts are joined by partial and crossed similarities.

The shape of the New Art is an archipelago.

Valentino Catricalà is currently working in Saudi Arabia on a new large-scale project. He was previously the Artistic Director of MODAL Gallery at the School of Digital Art (SODA) in Manchester and a lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University. Valentino is a member of the Advisory Board of ZKM Karlsruhe, and of ESEA Contemporary in Manchester. He has also curated exhibitions in important museum and galleries, including the largest exhibition about the relationship between art and inflatable at Le Grand Palais, Paris, as well as Fondazione Prada, Milan and Tokyo, Minnesota Street Project, San Francisco, The Hermitage, Saint Petersburg, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, MAXXI (Roma), Palazzo Reale (Milan), Museo Riso (Palermo), Media Center (New York), Istituto Italiano di Cultura, New Delhi, Ca’ Foscari, Venice, among others. His research is also reflected in his publications, including *Afterwards: Art in a Time of Change* (2025), *Michelangelo Pistoletto. From the Third Paradise to the Formula of Creation* (Treccani, 2024), and *The Artist as Inventor* (2021). He also co-curates the D’ORO D’ART project with Barbara London in collaboration with Marian Goodman Gallery. Valentino was lecturer at Jiao Tong University, Shanghai and IULM University, Milan.

As the Italian philosopher Massimo Cacciari states, to think of an archipelago is “to harmonize, without violently reducing them to One, the different figures, the different islands—all ‘saved’ in the individuality of their own character, but all grasped in their common search, in their common love (philia) for that Name or that Homeland which all of them lack”.

The homeland exists in the archipelago, not in the concrete sense of a place but metaphorically, in the imaginary that makes it possible to conceive of the archipelago. The Center, as Cacciari puts it, is lost in the archipelago, “because the Center is, in truth, nothing but that impulse which compels each one to ‘transcend’ itself by navigating toward the others, and all of them toward the absent Homeland”.

This absent homeland is precisely the concept of “New Art”. It is not a rigid category, a fixed label, or neo-avant-garde manifesto; it is an “impulse”, a dynamic tension that cannot but be found in the parcelling out of becoming so many islands — navigating toward a definition of art that is constantly rewriting itself. ■■■



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Anna Ridler with *An Infinity of Lists*, 2026, one of three works that make up “A Perfect Language of Images”, one of the first arts program commissions for the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, Oxford University

ANNA RIDLER | ON CLASSIFICATION

With a new commission on show as part of the opening arts program at the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre, Oxford University, the artist reflects on the systems of knowledge and challenges of classification she has uncovered in a decade of work with AI. By Louis Jebb

For more than a decade, the artist Anna Ridler has been exploring, and sharing, the possibilities of working creatively with artificial intelligence. She makes her own datasets to train neural networks, and investigates how knowledge, and the language that describes it, is displayed and shared.

Ridler has a special interest in the process and patterns of classification, and in the challenge of attempting objectivity in recording the natural environment, whether working solo or with her regular collaborator Sofia Crespo. Her investigations as an artist are expressed in a series of richly conceptual, archive-based works, which address

John Wilkins wanted to create a perfect language where every object, every concept had a unique symbol that exactly described what it was. But he failed. And what I found moving is that he knew that he was failing when he was trying to do it.

Anna Ridler

questions of time, attention, and market value, many focused on plants; pieces that explore the beauty to be found in attending to growth, as well as the inevitability of decay, in the natural order.

“A Perfect Language of Images”, Ridler’s recent commission for the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre, Oxford University, made in collaboration with William Poole from the Faculty of English at Oxford, was inspired by the work of the 17th-century Oxford scholar John Wilkins, whose publication *An Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (1668) sought to classify every object in the world in a rational, ordered system of his own invention. The work also

addresses how, nearly three centuries later, in the essay *The Analytical Language of John Wilkins* (1942), Jorge Luis Borges looked with wry affection, and all due historical context, at Wilkins’s doomed attempt to create an artificial “language of all things”, with Borges concluding that all classification is somehow negotiated, incomplete, and incapable of containing what it describes.

Wilkins’s concept was to organize everything in the universe into a system of linguistic building blocks that represent divisions and subdivisions, each of them assigned syllables, consonants, or vowels, which could be combined to represent anything. An example, cited by Borges, is “de, which means an element; deb, the first of the elements, fire; deba, a part of the element of fire, a flame”. Ridler’s work with Poole shows how Borges’s reflection on Wilkins’s fruitless venture — the basic flaw, or tragedy, for Borges, being that no one can understand the entire universe any more than anyone can pretend to express verbally the infinite gradations of human experience — applies equally to machine learning. Because the “desire” built into generative models to totalize knowledge is a quest that is itself doomed to distortion.

“I’ve been deeply interested in classification and its relationship to artificial intelligence for over a decade,” Ridler said at the launch of “A Perfect Language of Images” at the Schwarzman Centre in April 2026. “I’ve been building all of my own data sets by hand, making photographs, [assembling] archives, training neural networks, on material that I’ve made myself. The process, the labor, the choice of what to include and what to exclude has always been the subject, not the method. And I’m interested to see what it means to teach a machine to see and to think and what that reveals about the limitations, especially when things are classified.”

“John Wilkins wanted to create a perfect language where every object, every abstract concept had a unique symbol that exactly described what it was,” Ridler said. “But he failed. And what I found moving is that he knew that he was failing when he was trying to do it.”

“What Anna Ridler and I share,” Poole said in a launch statement, “is a sense that the grandeur and ambition of such a project is also distinctly ‘Babelic’: and, paradoxically, it is in its limitations that it is most revealing.”

“Across all of the different pieces, across Wilkins, across Borges”, Ridler tells *Right Click Save*, “is this very human impulse to try and label and classify the world. It is ultimately one doomed to failure. Nothing will ever fit into a perfect language. There will always be things that don’t fit, things that fall out. Showing this lineage and this history [is important] because people are talking



The Great Hall at the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, Oxford University



Anna Ridler, *An Infinity of Lists* (detail), 2026



Installation view of "Traces Remain" at Nagel Draxler, Cologne, with work: Final Edition (2020/2026) by Anna Ridler

about it in relation to machine learning and artificial intelligence. [The] eternal problem of how to capture the world and make it understandable."

Ridler finds it interesting that Wilkins started his project immediately after the English Civil War, which had led to the temporary replacement of the monarchy with an 11-year Commonwealth. "It's a very Utopian idea; that if you have a language that everyone speaks, there will be no misunderstanding," Ridler says. "So it's a very hopeful piece; it acknowledges hope for a 'perfect' language; but ultimately it is about how that won't happen."

One part of "A Perfect Language of Images" — *A Catalogue of Exceptions* — analyses the objects that struggle or fail to fit the Wilkins taxonomy; a second, *Between Things*, presents examples of Wilkins's phrases that demonstrate "evidence of classification under pressure", where his system cannot decide; the third, *An Infinity of Lists*, shows every coded word used in the Wilkins system, but shifting between the Wilkins artificial order and purely statistical relations, with the visual expression "fluttering", as Ridler puts it, between word, image, and symbol.

A Catalogue of Exceptions is the piece

that Ridler found most interesting, she said at the work's launch. "The things that he couldn't classify at all: like coral, fungi, weird things like jellyfish. I generated those things using a decade's worth of generative models [created since] 2016, and the AI can't properly render them either. So you have Wilkins in 1668, semantic models [now a decade old], and contemporary diffusion models, all attempting the same impossible task, all failing differently."

For Ridler, an artist as concerned with recording the provenance of creative inspiration as she is with the use and hidden meaning of words and their expression through handwritten script, the Schwarzman Centre commission, and working with Poole, has been like coming home. She studied English Language and Literature as an undergraduate at Oxford, a time when she first discovered both Wilkins's work and Borges's response to it, some years before taking a master's degree in Information Experience Design at the Royal College of Art, London.



Read the full article at www.rightclicksave.com

The fragility of archives

Meanwhile, Ridler's "Traces Remain", her second solo show at Nagel Draxler, Cologne, examines another kind of informational frailty: the ephemerality of archives, language, and memory "in an age shaped by automation and disappearing online infrastructures".

The exhibition covers work from the last decade of Ridler's practice, including *No Replacements Found* (2015) in which the artist investigates how the autocorrection results of big online platforms reveal "the implicit conservatism of large corporations around topics such as abortion, suicide, sexuality, and non-stereotypical sexuality". In the process, the work becomes a meditation on online absence and the challenge of archiving loss.

The Cologne exhibition also features Ridler's latest work focused on handwriting, a device which appears across her practice, including the Schwarzman commission, and which she sees as a counterbalance to automated data extraction.

"The mark-making, the idea that it is made by a body rather than a machine in what is otherwise a very digital process, keeps coming in," Ridler tells *Right Click Save*,

talking about the use she makes of handwriting in "A Perfect Language of Images". "And the fact that there is this large amount of labor that goes into almost every project."

"Writing by hand is one of the oldest recording technologies, requiring time, physical presence and sustained attention," Ridler says in a statement. "Set against the scale and speed of automated data extraction, it becomes a deliberate countermeasure to digital decay."

In "Traces Remain", the artist's handwriting is deployed in parts of her "Every Iris" series — an examination of datasets and the word as a name for a woman, a flower, the heart of an eye — in *A Partial Atlas of the USA, Lost Islands* (2026), and *A Partial Atlas of the USA, Lost Lakes I* (2026), which catalogue islands lost to climate change and human intervention; and in the handwritten captions for the latest installments of *Final Edition* (2020/2026). In *Final Edition*, Ridler is recording, often through on-the-ground research, the archives of the ever-growing list of local newspapers that have closed in the US since 2004.

"By transcribing captions onto paper, the work attempts to hold onto fragments of an internet that is otherwise slipping out of reach," Ridler says, "preserving what would normally remain abstracted, compressed, or lost."

The artist's role in an age of institutions

Ridler has been a compelling voice for years, able to address the challenging beauty of working with AI in the expanding art world of the 2020s, at global festivals, conferences, and museum and university sessions. She has shown or spoken at a wide variety of institutions, including Ars Electronica, Buk Seoul Museum of Art, ZKM Karlsruhe, and the FEMGEN event "Expanding the Art World with New Digital Practices", at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, in 2024. Ridler returns to Oxford in September 2026 to give the William Empson Lecture at the Annual Conference of the British Society of Aesthetics, a scholarly forum for philosophy of art in the UK.

The unveiling of Ridler's Schwarzman commission in April 2026 marked a distinct, and public, moment in a year which has seen the opening of new institutions, or the revival of existing ones — the Schwarzman; NODE, in Palo Alto, California; Dataland museum of AI Arts in Los Angeles; the remodelling and enlargement of Los Angeles County Museum of Art and of the New Museum, New York — all of which are open to the entangling of art and technology in a wider public debate about existential issues such as climate change and artificial intelligence.

Ridler and Poole's work was presented in the main hall of the Schwarzman Centre, at

By transcribing captions onto paper, the work attempts to hold onto fragments of an internet that is otherwise slipping out of reach, preserving what would normally remain abstracted, compressed, or lost.

Anna Ridler

the launch of its public arts program, and was accompanied, in the centre's White Box space, by *Archive Dreaming* (2026), the artist Refik Anadol's own deep archival dive using an AI model, created in collaboration with the university's botany department.

Ridler presented her new work in company with Professor Daniel Grimley, Head of Humanities at Oxford University, in a symbolic demonstration of how the advent of the Schwarzman has enabled the university to work directly with contemporary artists to re-examine parts of its rich archives, built up over nearly a millennium.

A few weeks later, the artist Beeple, in northern California for his mid-career exhibition, "BEEPLE: / INFINITE_LOOP", at NODE, Palo Alto, was addressing the subject of AI and creativity at Stanford, the academic powerhouse behind the rise of Silicon Valley. Shortly after that, Anadol and the artist Holly Herndon were discussing "AI, Creativity and Ethics" with academics from Oxford University — Professor Raphaël Millièvre, of the Institute for Ethics in AI, Oxford University, and Dr Kathryn Eccles, of the Oxford Internet Institute — as guests of the Schwarzman Centre, where Anadol is the first recipient of the Lau Fellowship in Creativity and AI.

These examples of artists — Ridler, Beeple, Herndon, and Anadol — being offered institutional space to address society's most pressing concerns feel indicative of how Schwarzman Centre, NODE, and their companion institutions, represent a genuinely innovative culture.

It is one that places art of the digital era in custom-designed space, working with pre-release software or bespoke AI models, and able to draw on the archival depth and institutional stamina of universities like Oxford and Stanford.

The "back to the future" nature of much of this development is powerfully expressed in Ridler and Poole's work. Wilkins was one of the founders of the Royal Society of London, the UK's leading scientific academy,

which supported Wilkins in his project, in an example of what Poole describes as "twinning" of what have since been treated as "separate areas of inquiry, namely language and science". But with the rise of AI — and the work of artists like Ridler with institutions like the Schwarzman, and the wider academic community at Oxford — these areas of study are returning to a closer, 17th-century style, entanglement.

Ridler tells *Right Click Save* that the Schwarzman commission came with the idea that it would be "something that would reflect some of the research that was happening within the building and [that it would use] machine learning". "I keep coming back to this moment in history, the 17th century, in various different works," she says. "It felt quite rich for this particular context [because] it was a moment where a lot of things were happening in Oxford. Discoveries were being made about the natural world, science and philosophy. You would have people who would be [both] philosophers and linguists, or scientists and theologians."

"There wasn't this hard set-in-stone [division] between disciplines," Ridler says. "Which is also one of the things that I think the Schwarzman building is trying to do: to intermingle disciplines and to think of technology through the [prism of the] humanities, which is a very important thing to do."

"In the piece, the symbols are taken from scans of the Wilkins manuscript in the Bodleian Library [at Oxford]," Ridler says. "And it's my handwriting. [There are also images] generated using Wilkins's descriptions [from] his text, which [the model] sometimes gets hilariously wrong: because it will make [a] washing machine for 'washing' because that's the context which the model holds."

The resulting visual output exemplifies Ridler's long-standing interest in organising material in grid patterns, and the cumulative power in the massing of multiple, closely related, small objects; as well as a parallel concern with what she described to *Right Click Save* in 2025 — when showing work with Crespo at the exhibition "Infinite Images" at Toledo Museum of Art — as her fascination with the historic tradition of making and showing cabinets of curiosities.

"It's all about a tiny thing doing the same thing again and again and again," Ridler says. "And I think that almost every work I make is about that. It's about something very small, maybe at the scale, like the domestic feminine scale, that you start to understand when it's repeated or when it's shown in aggregate. It's an organic thing."

That aggregation to create scale is nicely captured in the collaged prints from a work like *Final Edition*, on show at Nagel Draxler, or in a recent collaboration with Crespo, *3.31424e+126: clematis armandii*, 2025. The

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND NAGEL DRAXLER. PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIMON VOGEL

latter work is based on a large climbing clematis in Ridler's London garden, which sports thousands of blooms, which the two artists photographed using a variety of photographic methods, and at different times of the day. What is so nice about this clematis, Ridler says, is that it "heralds the start of spring. It will bloom at the end of March, or the beginning of April, and then, after a couple of weeks, it will be gone".

The work exists both as a large, tiled, photographic print, and in a digital version that is designed to cycle through all possible permutations of the hanging. The digital version, Ridler says, "is in theory eternal but it isn't. All of these things have finite lives. And Sofia and I created this deliberately using very experimental photographic methods so that the prints, too, are shifting and changing".

The work was originally displayed, at Art Brussels, in April 2025, and in the succeeding months became, she says, less and less pink in appearance.

On process, and collaboration

In 2025, Ridler and Crespo were joint winners of Arab Bank Switzerland Digital Art Prize, with the jurors citing their "confrontation with AI tools, as well as their commitment to the environment, nature and their quests to better understand the world around us". A monograph of their work is due to be published in October 2026. Their collaborative work, Ridler says, reinforces both artists' concern with showing their process.

"When we work together it's never just about producing an artifact," Ridler says. "Both of us are very interested in process and the way of making and that's certainly something that's very true in my own individual practice. It's not about producing an artifact, it is about the process; where making is meaning."

Ridler enjoys, she says, how rapid her work with Crespo is. "In my individual practice it takes a year to make a single piece. But when Sofia and I work together, it all comes together. We work really quickly. I think that is because we spend a lot of time thinking in our individual practices, so that when we work together we shoot out these pieces. It's very instinctive, and it's only after we've made them that we are [able to see that] 'It's this and this and that's how it connects into that'."

At a time when the notion of AI art has been largely "collapsed down to AI slop", Ridler says, she feels it is "really important to show, or to pull out, the different parts that sit behind [work with AI, giving weight] to process and to experience as a way of making something seem more human, more artistic". She sees that showing of process — which she expresses by having an Artist Notes (Thoughts & Process) section as a key part

There wasn't this hard set-in-stone [division] between disciplines. Which is also one of the things that I think the Schwarzman building is trying to do: to intermingle disciplines and to think of technology through the [prism of the] humanities, which is a very important thing to do.

Anna Ridler

of the "Works" entries on her website — as a way to welcome people in, and to show the different layers and levels, as well as the craft and the skill that runs through it.

"When you look at an artwork, that's not the work," she says. "The work is everything that goes into it, all of the thinking, all of the ideas."

Ridler sees the emphasis on making and process is important for both ends of the audience "spectrum": "People who are less knowledgeable about digital art and who want ... to see the blood, sweat and tears that goes into it. And then for some of the collectors, who are more in the Web3 space, who are comfortable with the idea of holding these things as assets, showing process reveals the history, and the connections — something not necessarily obvious — that sit behind a work."

The tulip motif

The tulip, Ridler says, is an "ever-present motif" in her work. "I've been working with

Anna Ridler is an artist who works with systems of knowledge and how technologies are created in order to better understand the world. She is particularly interested in the natural world. Her process often involves working with collections of information or data, particularly datasets. Her work has been exhibited at cultural institutions worldwide including Times Square, the Barbican Centre, the Centre Pompidou, HeK (House of Electronic Arts, Basel), the Photographers' Gallery, ZKM (Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe), the Ars Electronica Center, and the Victoria & Albert Museum. She received an honorary mention in the 2019 Ars Electronica Golden Nica awards for the category AI and Life Art.

Louis Jebb is Managing Editor at *Right Click Save*

the tulip since 2017, in various ways, across machine learning, across the blockchain, doing different things with it". Much of that relates to Ridler's work with NFTs and her concern with measures of value and time in art on the blockchain, and how the Dutch tulipmania of 1637, one of the world's first speculative financial bubbles, connects to 21st-century cryptocurrency markets.

Ridler talks of an "incredibly complicated work" such as *Mosaic Virus* (2018) — a single-screen work displaying a grid of AI-generated tulips, whose colors, shapes and movement are controlled by the price of Bitcoin, changing over time to show how the market fluctuates — where "a lot of the time when people look at it [they say], 'It's a beautiful tulip' ... but actually there's a huge amount of research, connections, and concepts that sit behind [the work] and that are belied by the apparent prettiness of the work."

"There is something really interesting about making something that's pretty, because I think people find it hard to square prettiness with the conceptually interesting," Ridler says. "And also, the idea of something being at once absurd, and pretty, and conceptually interesting, is often dismissed. That's something that I'm very conscious of and find very interesting."

Ridler says she is interested in creating "intellectual frictions" of this sort, because they "help bring in a non-specialist audience". She is happy when her work is shown away from an art fair stand or outside a white cube gallery. "There is something very powerful," she says, "about trying to meet people where they are".

To that end she recently made *Circadian Bloom App* (2025) to bring an installation-scaled long-term project on to a smartphone — using AI-generated flowers to tell the time, and drawing inspiration from the 18th-century concept of a "flower clock", which was devised by Carl Linnaeus, the scientist behind the modern system of naming organisms. Her intention is "to bring art to where people actually consume media — on their phone — or where they live their lives, which is not in a white cube space. I think the internet and people's phones can be very powerful public art platforms."

Time, value, and attention

The tulip paradigm has also served as one of the ways Ridler has engaged most pointedly with the world of art on the blockchain. "The vast majority of the NFTs that I make as part of my practice are very difficult to trade or sell or own," she says. In 2019 she created *Bloemenveiling*, an online auction of short GAN-generated videos of tulips, with smart contracts on the Ethereum network. "You could only trade it on a specially designed auction website, and if you bought one it



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND NAGEL DRAXLER

Anna Ridler, (Still from) *The Black Tulip*, 2023

would only last for a week," she says. "It was 100 days, 100 auctions, 100 tulips, none of which lasted longer than a week, the same amount of time that a cut tulip would last and then it got blighted and then it disappeared."

She also made the "anti-speculation" NFT *Black Tulip* (2023) — named after the feverishly desired but "impossible" variant of the flower that became the subject of Alexandre Dumas père's 1850 novel of the same title — which could only be traded on one auction site and "for what you pay for it or less". She has also made "tokens that you can only trade after 200, 400, 800 years". They are all sold, "for very good sums of money".

Alongside tulips, Ridler works a lot with shells. In London, she "mudlarks" along the river Thames at low tide, and likes finding shells, "because they're a really nice record of London". The Thames, she says, is "the oldest open archaeological site in London and you can find oyster shells" that speak to a history when they were eaten in great quantity in the city, or new, exotic, types of shell that represent both globalisation and climate change.



Ridler photographs the shells, trains models on them, and in 2025 made a series of tokens, *The Breathings of the Moon*, with each "assigned to a different location along the Thames from the mouth of the river to where it stops being so tidal". And the tokens are only viewable, and tradeable, at low tide (twice in every 24-hour cycle, at a different time each day). Her aim is to "introduce friction or difficulty into these economic systems but also getting people — and this is also one of the reasons why I did it for the tulip in *Bloemenveiling* — to stop treating art as an asset and to make people enjoy it and experience it". You can only trade it by looking, by paying attention. You have to actually watch the work, you have to look at it."

That quality of attention is one of the primary concerns of works such as *The Breathings of the Moon*, *Bloemenveiling*, and "A Perfect Language of Images", and in Ridler's unveiling of process, her taste for a slowing artistic friction, and her use of handwriting as a medium of recalibration and preservation.

At a time of extractive platforms that enforce digital distraction, "attention is the thing" for Ridler. "You have a finite resource of attention. Paying attention to something is a huge act," she says. "It's the thing that makes things good. It's a form of listening, it's how you show love, it's how you can help heal and repair. It's all of these things." ■

INTERVIEW

DREAMING WITH DATA

Efsun Erkılıç and Refik Anadol, co-founders of Refik Anadol Studio, on launching Dataland Museum of AI arts, Los Angeles, collaborating with the academic rigor and archival richness of Oxford University, and the developing ethics of creative AI

LOUIS JEBB



Installation view, Refik Anadol, *Machine Dreams: Rainforest*, 2026, Dataland, Los Angeles

Efsun Erkılıç and Refik Anadol have played a central role in what is proving to be an enthralling year for new institutions, with a range of reimagined or newly established spaces — museums, educational bodies and festivals — offering fresh frames through which to view the entanglement of art, design, science, and technology that has long been an editorial focus of *Right Click Save*. These entities include NODE, in Palo Alto, California; the remodelled and enlarged Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and New Museum, New York; the forthcoming launches of Canyon in downtown Manhattan, and of Powerhouse Paramatta in Sydney, Australia.

Since April 2026, Erkılıç and Anadol have taken a leading part in the inaugural cultural program at the Stephen A Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, Oxford University, building an AI model in collaboration with the university's academics and Oxford's rich botanical archives.

In June 2026, Erkılıç and Anadol opened an institution of their own: Dataland, a grand-scale, interactive museum of AI arts they co-founded in a Frank Gehry-designed development, the Grand LA, on Grand Avenue, downtown Los Angeles.

The building sits in a cultural corridor with the art hub of The Broad and the Museum of Contemporary Art; Gehry's landmark Walt Disney Concert Hall; and the nearby Music Center's opera and theater spaces. Dataland's opening was greeted as a big moment — with full-dress articles on the two co-founders published by *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker* — a dozen years after Erkılıç and Anadol co-founded Refik Anadol Studio (RAS) in the same city in 2014.

For the public opening of Schwarzman Centre, Anadol, the globally recognized media artist and public face of the studio, created *Archive Dreaming* (2026), which RAS developed as an AI model through a deep archival dive in collaboration with the university's botany department, building data sets from a vast collection of plant specimens and their images in the university's botanical collections, working with the herbarium's curator, Professor Stephen Harris. Anadol is also the first recipient of the Lau Fellowship in Creativity and AI at the Schwarzman Centre, a role which has brought him into close contact with philosophers and scientists in the building and on stage at the center for a public debate in May 2026 on the ethics of creative AI.

Both Erkılıç and Anadol tell *Right Click Save* that working with the Oxford academics was remarkable for the flexibility and quick decision-making the university team showed on *Archive Dreaming*, and related archival projects, but also for the sense of institutional staying power they feel when working with

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Refik Anadol (left) and Efsun Erkılıç in Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, the site of Dataland museum of AI arts

an entity that has been teaching for close to a millennium.

It is interesting, Erkılıç says, to collaborate with such an historic institution, which is “so alive and sound”, and experimenting with a technology like AI, a subject that “creates a lot of worry” around the ethics of data collection and the fate of the human. “But they have the tolerance to be able to bear that worry,” she says. Newer institutions, she thinks, won’t always “have that stamina”. An institution with Oxford’s longevity, she says, has a “flexibility and also wisdom to be able to adapt or accept the new things in their existing infrastructure. Sacrificing a lot [over a long history].”

Staying power matters on a topic like AI, where it is a role of artists, institutions and publishers to offer the wider public the tools to stay with a difficult subject. “That’s why I think that the age of AI is going to challenge a lot of institutions,” Erkılıç says. “The ones who have more tolerance are going to survive, succeed or thrive.”

For *Archive Dreaming*, in the Schwarzman’s White Cube space, open free to the public, visitors were encouraged to explore Anadol’s work using an interactive console placed in close proximity to a latest-generation, large, arc-shaped screen, one

that offered a vivid representation of the rich pigments of Anadol’s data visualizations. Anadol was careful, in preparing *Archive Dreaming*, not to overcomplicate the data science. “We focused”, he said, “on a subset of beautiful data from the historic specimen drawings from the herbarium archive.” The piece is designed to have “a research mode” where the character of the archive images is most apparent, “and a dream mode”. “Dream mode,” Anadol says, “is of course when the artwork dreams and it creates hallucinations. But the research mode is truly a scientific place where the AI shows incredible new connections between the [specimens].”

Harris said in an interview with the Schwarzman Institute, that he sees the

herbarium’s archive specimens as nodes on a multi-dimensional space connected by each specimen’s date, taxonomy, geography and the identity of its collector. *Archive Dreaming* offers him, Harris said, an “amazing” interpretation; one that showed him how all these archival data points are connected. Harris’s reaction — he was said to have been visibly moved by his first experience of *Archive Dreaming* — is “exactly the mission of this project”, Anadol tells *Right Click Save*. “He was so touched. And the data was so special. It’s not just a cool technology, disconnected from humanity, but an extension of the human mind. It did the work emotionally, intellectually.”

The Anadol studio has not wanted for public attention in the past five years and has shown work at high-profile institutional level, with installations at multiple landmark spaces, including MoMA, New York; Antoni Gaudí’s Casa Batlló, Barcelona; Serpentine, London; Sphere, Las Vegas; and the Guggenheim Bilbao. The studio has also presented regularly at quasi-governmental level, with organizations such as the World Economic Forum annual meetings at Davos and the United Nations, deploying symphony orchestra-accompanied theatre-scale data visualization works, with subject-matter

We learned that public art, one of the most inspiring forms of art, brings people together without any concern about background, culture, or ages.

Refik Anadol

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DUSTIN DOWNING



Installation view, Refik Anadol, *Archive Dreaming*, 2026, Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, Oxford University

emphasis on climate change and protecting the global ecology.

Underpinning much of the studio's work in the 2020s has been the development of its Large Nature Model, constructed from millions of pieces of ethically acquired data supplied by leading scientific institutions including the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., the Natural History Museum in London, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, New York state.

A moment in time for the studio

The Schwarzman Centre collaboration and the opening of Dataland — followed by the announcement of its first cohort of AI artist residents who are joining a six-month-long program run by the museum in partnership with Google Arts & Culture, with close interaction with RAS and Anadol himself — represent a moment for RAS. They amount to more than new big-ticket openings for an extraordinarily prolific studio whose work has been closely concerned with two of the existential issues of the day: climate change and the ethics of AI.

Together these two very public presentations represent at once a coming home, an attention to timescale and to the sharing of tradition, and a focus on extended interaction with users and collaborators alike. Followers of Anadol's work have seen *Archive Dreaming* as a taking of aesthetic stock,

where the character of the source archive shows through to beguiling effect in the final experience of what Anadol calls its “research mode”, much as it did with Anadol's Large Architecture Model, based on the historic archive of Frank Gehry's studio, when *Living Architecture: Gehry* was shown in the vaulting spaces of Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao in 2025.

The bricks and mortar reality of Dataland gives the studio a public base in a city whose artists, artistic culture, and academic institutions — Anadol teaches at his alma mater UCLA — have long been interwoven with the studio's work.

The launch of the six-month-long residency at Dataland gives a further sense of institutional longevity. “The residency is designed to give artists both the freedom to experiment and the support of a thoughtful community,” Erkılıç, Chief Strategy Officer at Dataland, said at the time of the cohort's announcement. “Together with Google Arts & Culture, we wanted to create an environment where responsible innovation could flourish.”

With Dataland, Erkılıç tells *Right Click Save*, “we are experimenting with the concept of the museum. We are not like a traditional museum. Not in the business side, not in the practical side. Our exhibition is a timed experience, so every 10 minutes up to 20 people can be let in [to allow visitors to linger

immersively in each of the five spaces].” The concept of the museum, she says, “needs to be discussed again, because I think it renews itself, it updates itself, and then you have to do a spring cleaning for the concept.”

They decided to use the term “museum”, Erkılıç says, “because we don't have any existing word to describe Dataland Let's experiment with this word. Maybe we can create another provocation”. Dataland, she says will have an exhibition mode and also an event mode. “Imagine an album presentation in the space,” she says. They recently hosted the Quantum AI team from Google for a symposium, Anadol says.

At Dataland, Anadol says, “the museum is the artwork ... the institution is the artwork. So we don't treat it as a corporate or organizational world, but we think the whole concept is the artwork.” They found nothing inspiring in the existing museum system, he says, so they experimented with the ticketing system, with the merchandise by having “a design store with items that are personalized”.

It is telling that within Dataland's first exhibition “Machine Dreams: Rainforest” (until January 31, 2027), developed from the Large Nature Model, visitors are encouraged to take stock of their feelings, to spend time in each space as the AI-generated sound, visuals and scents the visitor experiences are intermediated through the biometric wristbands they wear to track their physical and

emotional responses, as they move through five large chambers. The studio team worked with L'Oréal Luxe to create a device that goes around a visitor's neck and combines 12 different scents — including forest floor, a mushroom-infused earthy smell and a jasmine experience — that are individualized as a visitor moves through the experience.

“We are changing the artwork right now,” Anadol said as he walked through the Infinity Room. “As we're moving, the color is shifting. Colors, the moment, the sounds. So there are multiple algorithms in real time that are transforming the world.” Anadol said he used a virtual reality game engine to test *Machine Dreams: Rainforest* before bringing it into the space at Dataland. “We got it out of the headset,” he said. He likens it to cinema: “Being together, and understanding.”

The LA Phil's conductor laureate Esa-Pekka Salonen came to Dataland shortly before it launched, to experience the 48-channel audio and the museum's acoustics. “He was blown away,” Anadol says, “saying ‘for years I have been on stage hearing the audio. This is the first time the whole system moved around me.’” “It's one of the most advanced sound systems in the world,” Anadol says. “So we are specifically receiving information where we are; [the sound] comes with you [...] The whole system is real-time, recomposing itself, so it knows where we are, everything is recomposed.”

Anadol has brought similar experiences to institutions around the world, but at Dataland the opportunity was to create a space after making the artwork. “Instead of putting the artwork on the wall, we first designed the work and then designed the gallery,” he says.

It was poignant for RAS to create Dataland in a Gehry-designed building, and to open to the public six months after the architect's death. The studio's relationship with Gehry dates back to 2014, when Anadol was working on his master's project at UCLA and projected data from the LA Phil archives on the inside walls of the Walt Disney Concert Hall. This was *Visions of America: Amériques* (2014), a site-specific architectural video installation developed to illuminate Edgar Varèse's composition *Amériques* as it was played by the LA Phil. Four years later, Anadol's career was taken to a new level when he made *WDCH Dreams* (2018) using machine learning on the LA Phil orchestra's digital archives, and projecting the resulting narrative onto the full external breadth of the hall's distinctive titanium “sails”.

The role of architecture

Part of Erkılıç and Anadol's embrace of their home city relates to one of the main strands of their studio's work since 2014; its commitment to the marriage of art and architecture. That concern is a useful prism

Staying power matters on a topic like AI where it is a role of artists to offer the tools not to turn away from a difficult subject. “That's why I think that the age of AI is going to challenge a lot of institutions,” Erkılıç says. “The ones who have more tolerance are going to survive, succeed or thrive”

through which to view multiple elements of the studio's development: the timeline of its rise to global attention; the scale and spectacle of many of its projected works; the high seriousness of its work and concern for showing process, especially as it concerns the ethical gathering and handling of data for the practice's AI models.

“Over the years,” Anadol said during the AI ethics session at the Schwarzman Centre in May 2026, “we learned that using light as a material and architecture as a canvas allowed us to see new forms of art that are perhaps hard to perceive in an exhibition setup. We learned that public art, one of the most inspiring forms of art, brings people together without any concern about background, culture, or ages.”

Erkılıç and Anadol first experimented with media art in gallery spaces, during their early life and education in Turkey, working with data gathered from the natural forces of tides, temperature and wind, in a conjunction of interdependent natural and built environments.

Refik Anadol (b. 1985, Istanbul, Turkey) is an internationally renowned media artist, director, and pioneer in the aesthetics of data and machine intelligence. He is the Director and co-founder of Refik Anadol Studio in Los Angeles, the Artistic Director and co-founder of DATALAND, and teaches at UCLA's Department of Design Media Arts.

Efsun Erkılıç (b. 1982, Istanbul, Turkey) is an artist, producer, cultural researcher, and co-founder and Chief Strategy Officer of DATALAND, and co-founder of Refik Anadol Studio. With a career spanning over a decade, Erkılıç has been the Executive Producer of multidisciplinary artworks at more than 80 venues worldwide.

Louis Jebb is Managing Editor at Right Click Save.

Laura Hertzfeld provided additional reporting.

While still an undergraduate at Istanbul Bilgi University in Turkey, in 2008, Anadol saw the idea of embedding media art in architecture as “the ultimate dream”, and he has since defined his AI data paintings and AI data sculptures as “site-specific, three dimensional, dynamic sculptures at the intersection of architecture, media art, light studies, and AI-based data analysis”.

Anadol's concern for showing process in AI data sculptures has been apparent in RAS's exhibitions since 2022 and beyond. In 2023 Anadol spoke to *Right Click Save* about the importance of “demystifying AI and machine decisions in general”. “As an artist,” Anadol said, “my role is to take responsibility. In every exhibition we do, we dedicate one major space to demystifying where the data comes from, which algorithms we use, which AI domains we are researching”.

That journey with architecture has engaged with scale: from intimate VR, in a first-generation Oculus Rift headset (2013-14), to exo-architecture on a colossal scale at The Sphere, Las Vegas (*Machine Hallucinations — Sphere*, 2023); to large conference halls at the World Economic Forum, Davos (2023-25), and the United Nations headquarters, New York (*Large Nature Model: Coral*, 2024); to a floor-to-ceiling interactive archival narrative in Agnes Gund Hall at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (*Unsupervised*, 2022-23); to data stories projected onto landmarks like Casa Batlló, Barcelona (*In the Mind of Gaudí*, 2021, and *Living Architecture: Casa Batlló*, 2022), as well as Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

“Casa Batlló,” Anadol wrote on LinkedIn in January 2026, “was our proof of concept—a moment where Gaudí's masterpiece building became a living memory ... Now, that philosophy expands into an entire reality. At Dataland, living architecture isn't just one iconic facade—it's a permanent ecosystem. Inside our Living Galleries, the Large Nature Model doesn't just display data; it dreams it Casa Batlló was the door. Dataland is the world beyond it.”

A decade's worth of RAS's architectural work was brought together in the Large Architecture Model (LAM), launched in March 2025, at Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, with *Living Architecture: Gehry*. The work incorporated data taken from the archive of the LA-based architect's 65 years in practice, along with a mass of ethically accessed open-source architectural images, combining them with data in the Large Nature Model.

At *Echoes of the Earth: Living Archive* at Serpentine Galleries, London, in 2024 the studio used a data process wall to show radical clarity on the raw data sources and functional make-up of the Large Nature Model. *Echoes of the Earth*, in the close-coupled quadrangular spaces of Serpentine



Samira Ahmed (left) moderating a conversation on “AI, Creativity and Ethics” at the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, Oxford University, May 28, 2026, with (from second left), the artist Holly Herndon; Professor Raphaël Millière, of the Institute for Ethics in AI, Oxford University; Dr Kathryn Eccles, of the Oxford Internet Institute; and Refik Anadol

North showed that architecture can be intimate, confiding and at one with nature, as the Amazon birdlife of the AI model felt ready to fly free into the surrounding urban oasis of Hyde Park, central London, in a symbiosis of built and unbuilt ecologies of nature and architecture.

Speaking of the process walls, or process videos — there was one on show at the Schwarzman installation — Erkiç tells *Right Click Save* that they are looking at turning them into a learning program at Dataland. “And we can start talking about AI, what we know, or invite people who are pioneers in the field and share their knowledge with the public.” She sees that as a way “to start the discussion and conversation around AI because all we know about AI is from the mainstream media” and the products of the big tech giants, rather than the bespoke models, and data sets within them, created by RAS, Ridler, Herndon, and other artists

At the same time that Anadol and Erkiç were attending discussions of AI ethics at Schwarzman and presenting Dataland to the wider world, other leading digital artists have been engaging with the expansion of institutional ambition and the academic and public discourse made possible by it.

Anna Ridler presented her own AI art commission at Schwarzman at the same time as the launch of *Archive Dreaming*. She unveiled “Anna Ridler: A Perfect Language of Images” (until August 25, 2026) at the center in company with Professor Daniel Grimley, Head of Humanities at Oxford University,

in a further demonstration of how the Schwarzman enables an historic university to work directly with contemporary artists. Shortly after, Beeple, in northern California for his mid-career exhibition, “BEEPLE: / INFINITE_LOOP”, at NODE, was addressing AI and creativity at Stanford, the academic powerhouse behind the rise of Silicon Valley.

“AI, Creativity and Ethics”

Anadol was on stage at the Schwarzman Centre on May 28, 2026, in company with the artist Holly Herndon to discuss “AI, Creativity and Ethics”. They were talking with Professor Raphaël Millière, of the Institute for Ethics in AI, Oxford University, and Dr Kathryn Eccles, of the Oxford Internet Institute. The conversation was moderated by the broadcaster Samira Ahmed, presenter of the flagship BBC radio arts program *Front Row*.

The discourse was a demonstration of the worth of bringing artists as informed and thoughtful as Herndon and Anadol together with the academic rigor of Oxford University and the journalistic rigor of the BBC. It was a moment when the long-term societal value of the physical and intellectual architecture of institutions such as the Schwarzman Centre was demonstrated in uniting artists, scholars, and a critically engaged public, drawing on a genuine variety of generational experiences,



Read the full article at www.rightclicksave.com

to shed light on existential issues of the day. Millière characterised his work as stressing the importance of language, and the definition of terms, and shared his interest in the intersection of AI and art, and how he has been “thinking for quite a few years about how pioneering artists like Holly and Refik and others using AI are blurring the boundaries between creation and curation in really interesting ways”.

At one point, Ahmed intervened to ask what Anadol meant by his assumptions that “machines are hallucinating and machines are dreaming”. Even the best model in the world can make things up,” Anadol replied. “We are feeling, seeing, hearing, sometimes smelling new realities. I think we may need to define a name for this era, for this feeling. I’m calling it generative reality. These systems are creating realities.”

“But they’re not realities, are they,” Samira Ahmed interjected. “They have the appearance of being real, but it’s not real.” For his response to this point, Anadol drew on his experience of working with students, where two of them might have developed different expectations of an AI model’s behavior, and how that is affected by how the model is used. “The more we expose and demystify these tools,” he said, “the more the chance of ‘biased’ tool usage” may be reduced.

Eccles said she felt it is important to let students have “lots of different experiences and empower them to be curious and critical about the tools that are in front of them.[...] They’re heavily encouraged not to use them in many ways. But how can we understand what these tools are without using them?” Eccles said she felt lucky to have Herndon and Anadol present because their work with AI models shows what it means to push these tools “so that we can understand where we feel comfortable with their use, or very uncomfortable”.

Anadol’s closing contribution to the discussion was to describe a pop-up session that the Dataland team held in Los Angeles in December 2025. For a generation that grew up with the internet, and with the technologies that have come since, it is important to remember, he said, how intuitive that felt. He feels the same thing will happen with upcoming generations “born in the age of visual intelligence”.

“We opened our AI model to the public and 1500 people came,” he said. “The majority were families. And parents were so [happy] to see their children doing awkward things with the model in a fun way, like asking interesting questions [about] the flying unicorn [...] But what was fun was [to see families] enjoying in a public setting a kind of artwork that allows the young ones to interact with a new ‘being’, and to be present without fear... I heard a lot of joy.” ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RIGHT CLICK SAVE

INDEX

On July 1, 2026, *Right Click Save* launched its **Index** — a knowledge bank drawn from across the magazine’s editorial coverage. It shows how people, artworks, events, organizations, and ideas connect in our archive of more than 430 articles. Rather than a comprehensive biography or dictionary definition, each page surfaces the salient elements from our ecosystem. Readers can access the Index from the navigation bar of the website, through the Search window, and from in-article “cards” that link to Index entries, or direct to articles in the Magazine archive.



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INTERVIEW

NODE | A PHYSICAL SPACE FOR A DIGITAL WORLD

The Silicon Valley institution's founders share what they learnt from its opening shows with Larva Labs and Beeple. By Louis Jebb



Beeple, *Diffuse Control*, 2025. Installation view, "BEEPLE: / INFINITE_LOOP", NODE, Palo Alto

When NODE Foundation opened its first physical space for the exhibition of digital art in Palo Alto, in the heart of Silicon Valley, on January 23, 2026, it ushered in a year of new and revived art institutions that promise radical ways of curating and experiencing art made with technology.

NODE launched with "10,000", an artist-led exhibition by Matt Hall and John Watkinson, the founders of Larva Labs, centered on the artists' *CryptoPunks* (January 23 to April 12, 2026). While "BEEPLE: / INFINITE_LOOP", a mid-career survey of the work of Mike Winkelmann (Beeple, April 18 to June 28, 2026), presented a selection of the artist's ongoing 19-year project *Everydays* (2007-present), the headline-grabbing tech-titan-headed robot dogs *Regular Animals* (2025), and his kinetic sculptures *Heaven and Hell* (2023), *Tree of Knowledge* (2024), *Transient Bloom*

The architecture, software, lighting, pacing, scale, even the movement of people through the building — all of it becomes part of the artwork itself. That is one of the core ideas behind NODE. We are not simply presenting work on walls. We are producing environments, alongside artists, that could not exist anywhere else.

Micky Malka, founder, NODE

(2024), *Diffuse Control* (2025), and *HUMAN ONE* (2021-present), whose seventh iteration was unveiled at NODE. On July 11, 2026, NODE opened "PXL" by Kim Asendorf, a leading figure in the world of generative art.

The NODE project is backed by a \$25 million endowment from its founders, Micky Malka of Ribbit Capital and his wife Becky Kleiner. In May 2025, NODE acquired the full *CryptoPunks* IP from Yuga Labs for approximately \$20 million. Hall and Watkinson are members of NODE's advisory board, and also donated 25% of the proceeds from their 2025 project Quine to the foundation.

NODE is part of a new generation of institution designed to meet audiences where they are, favoring accessible language as well as a graphic, interactive welcome, while deploying state-of-the-art hardware and software, as the digital age interlaces the age of AI. They promise fresh frames through which

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FELIX URIBE

to view the entanglement of art, design, science, and technology that has long been an editorial focus of *Right Click Save*.

NODE defines itself as artist-first: "built with artists, by artists, and for artists", clearly articulating an appreciable trend in 2026: artists taking control of the curation, distribution, and cultivation of critical discussion around their works.

Part of the significance of NODE is its situation in the tech "here and now" of Silicon Valley, reimagining the cradle of online interaction and frontier-breaking AI companies as a home for artistic discourse. During his NODE show, Beeple, one of the world's best known digital artists, was discussing AI and creativity at the d.school, Stanford University, the academic powerhouse behind the rise of Silicon Valley. Meanwhile, two other leading figures in the field, Holly Herndon and Refik Anadol, were discussing "AI, Creativity and Ethics" with academics from Oxford University, as guests of the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities.

The executive director of NODE, Phil Mohun, describes it as "a physical space for digital art. We want to continue to create these physical spaces for digital art because it's the best way to get people's attention in a world that is increasingly saturated online."

For Malka, since the launch of NODE, "our core mission has become even clearer: to present, educate around, and preserve the art movements emerging from internet culture and computational systems. Everything else — the technology, the architecture, the programming — exists in service of that mission."

Malka, Kleiner and Mohun spoke to *Right Click Save* about what they learned from NODE's opening shows with Larva Labs and Beeple; and their vision for the future.

Louis Jebb: The first two headline shows you presented at NODE were with Larva Labs and Beeple. What most struck you, and most surprised you, in experiencing the two exhibitions on site?

Micky Malka: What struck us most was realizing that digital art does not behave like traditional art once it enters physical space. *CryptoPunks* and Beeple could not have been more different. One felt almost archaeological — a cultural artifact of the early internet becoming physical for the first time. The other felt alive, adaptive, and constantly mutating in real time. But both confirmed the same thing for us: presentation is now part of the medium.

The architecture, software, lighting, pacing, scale, even the movement of people through the building — all of it becomes part of the artwork itself. That is one of the core ideas behind NODE. We are not simply

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FELIX URIBE

NODE THE FIRST THREE EXHIBITIONS



Larva Labs, "10,000", centered on the artists' *CryptoPunks*, January 23 to April 12, 2026



"BEEPLE: / INFINITE_LOOP", a mid-career survey of the work of Mike Winkelmann (Beeple), April 18 to June 28, 2026



Kim Asendorf, "PXL", featuring \$PXL, a utility token that ties each coin to a pixel, July 11 to September 13 2026

presenting work on walls. We are producing environments, alongside artists, that could not exist anywhere else. The biggest lesson was that great digital artists think like directors, systems designers, and world-builders — not just image-makers.

Matt and John approached *CryptoPunks* with incredible restraint and historical sensitivity. They understood they were not simply showing images; they were stewarding a piece of internet culture that millions of people already emotionally identify with.

Beeple operates almost at the opposite end of the spectrum. He pushes scale, intensity, velocity, and iteration constantly. Working with him feels less like preparing an exhibition and more like building a live operating system. What connected both collaborations was the level of conviction. Neither artist wanted a passive exhibition. They wanted to shape how people physically

experience the work. That is exactly the kind of artist NODE was built for.

Becky Kleiner: What struck us most was how radically different the artistic directions were. Both exhibitions were deeply intentional, but in completely different ways. The artists were incredibly clear about what they wanted to communicate and how they wanted audiences to experience the work.

Phil Mohun: When we opened "10,000", it was also the grand opening of NODE. And it's easy for us to forget that most people outside of our little [digital art] bubble don't pay very much attention to what's going on here [...]. One of the most common things I heard when we opened was, "Oh, wow. Is this that NFT thing? I didn't realize that this was still going on."

The front room of "10,000" intentionally showed the marketplace activity, prices and all, front and center, and it caught people's attention: "They paid how much for what?" And it started a conversation which was basically us catching the public up on five years of progress [in networked art]. The last time they had heard about it was probably on a late-night talk show in 2021 and then they haven't heard about it since.

And so it felt in the first few months [like we were] reintroducing this concept of digital ownership to the world in which *CryptoPunks*, to me, are the epitome of digital ownership. It is the reason that the project exists and it's an incredibly elegant formulation of it. In 246 lines of code, you get digital ownership.

"INFINITE LOOP", because it's a blend of physical objects, kinetic sculptures, and purely digital works — the *Everydays* — is changing people's idea of what digital art can be. And this is what I'm so excited about. There are so many different forms that we are going to explore [that] fall under the umbrella of digital art. People have a hard time grasping purely digital ownership. But when you have something physical that you can show them, they get it.

Before the Beeple show opened, we hoisted up two plaques that have our mantra ["Presentation, Education and Preservation"] and our Ten Commandments. [Never midcurve. Have serious fun. No one leaves empty-handed. Bring a beginner's mindset. Iterate daily. Make people feel at home. Everyone has something to offer. Rules are meant to be broken. Experience comes from doing. There's always a place for Punks.]

Those are good reminders of what we're doing ... [as a] home for artists defining digital culture today. One of the [commonest] questions we used to get when people walked in during the *CryptoPunks* show was, "What is this place?" We still get that question, but

now it seems to be answered nicely [on the two plaques].

LJ: Of the Ten Commandments now displayed at NODE, “never midcurve” feels particularly striking. How have visitors interacted with the commandments?

MM: “Never midcurve” started almost as an internal joke, but it became surprisingly serious very quickly. The internet tends to reward extremes. The work people remember is rarely the safest version. It is the work that takes a real risk — aesthetically, emotionally, technically, or culturally.

NODE exists because we felt too many cultural spaces had become optimized for consensus. Safe lighting. Safe programming. Safe ideas. We wanted to create a place where experimentation itself felt visible. Visitors react to that immediately. Some people love the commandments. Some people argue with them. Honestly, we enjoy both reactions equally. The worst possible outcome for NODE would be indifference.

BK: We are not chasing perfection. We are chasing originality, experimentation, and emotional impact. The commandments invite people to think differently about creativity — to embrace risk, curiosity, and boldness. Visitors engage with them constantly. Some laugh, some debate them, and some take photos and send them to friends. But most importantly, they understand that NODE is trying to build a different kind of cultural space.

LJ: What have you learned about presenting digital art from your live experience of artists and audiences at NODE?

MM: We’ve learned that digital art cannot simply inherit the exhibition logic of older mediums. A painting can survive almost any wall. Networked art is different. It depends on systems, synchronization, light, scale, latency, software, sound, interaction, and increasingly real-time computation. In many cases, the exhibition itself becomes part of the artwork. That changes the role of the institution completely. The institution can no longer behave like a passive container. It has to become an active collaborator. That realization sits at the center of NODE.

BK: We always believed digital art would resonate with younger generations, but we never imagined that seven- and eight-year-olds would become some of our most engaged visitors. They pull their parents into the space, ask incredible questions, and interact with the work instinctively.

There is something deeply native about this media for them. In many ways, they are

We are already seeing curiosity from institutions around the world because many of them recognize the gap. They know internet-native culture matters deeply, but most existing cultural infrastructure was never designed for it. NODE is our attempt to help invent that new language.

Micky Malka

already helping us imagine the future of exhibition-making.

PM: What I love about our ability to work with artists and have them show their work here is they’re speaking the same language as [Silicon Valley]. These artists are software engineers, builders, developers, but they’re coming in with this outside perspective that’s putting a mirror up to what’s being created here. And that’s really healthy.

Our job is to provide the artists with a canvas that they can use to do work that they couldn’t do anywhere else. What I love about the artists that we work with is often they’re using the technology before it’s ready for commercial use. And so you get this glimpse of the future. Inside of “Infinite Loop” there’s [...] the first sculpture that Beeple made with AI. It’s from about 2023, and then the walls and the ceiling are using a video model from 2026. [It had] only been out in the US for two or three weeks at this point.

LJ: What has it been like presenting the latest version of Beeple’s *HUMAN ONE*, in company with previous versions of the sculpture?

Becky Kleiner is an investor and the founder of NODE, a nonprofit foundation dedicated to transforming how digital art is experienced in Palo Alto.

Micky Malka is the founder of NODE and the founder and managing partner of Ribbit Capital, a venture capital fund focused on investing in innovative companies in financial services.

Phil Mohun is the Executive Director of NODE, and CEO and cofounder of Windward Labs, a creative agency. He previously helped start Bright Moments, a digital art gallery that minted on-chain artwork as part of a ten-city world tour from 2021 to 2024.

MM: *HUMAN ONE* is an extraordinary artwork because it refuses to stand still. What makes it powerful is not only its scale or technical sophistication, but the fact that it continues evolving over time. Beeple keeps updating it, expanding it, and placing it into dialogue with the present moment. That changes the relationship between artist, artwork, and audience entirely. Most traditional artworks are frozen in time. *HUMAN ONE* behaves more like a living system carrying memory while continuously transforming itself.

For us, that captures one of the most important ideas in digital art: permanence no longer has to mean permanence through stillness. A work can endure precisely because it evolves. Seeing multiple generations of the sculpture together inside NODE made that idea incredibly tangible.

LJ: How do you see things coming together for your ambition to share the NODE model more widely?

MM: We do not think NODE is just a building. We think it is an emerging institutional model. Museums were designed around static objects. But more and more important cultural works now behave like living systems — networked, iterative, programmable, and constantly evolving. That requires different infrastructure, different production methods, and different relationships with artists.

We are already seeing curiosity from institutions around the world because many of them recognize the gap. They know internet-native culture matters deeply, but most existing cultural infrastructure was never designed for it. NODE is our attempt to help invent that new language.

PM: One of the first things we did was [to publish] all of our specs on our website. All of the hardware that we use is open source and, increasingly, we’re allowing artists to integrate directly with the software we are building to control the space. And we’re getting better with that with every show. We want to be able to essentially provide a layer that artists can hook into and we turn this physical environment into a software problem.

The benefit of [doing] these big quarterly shows is all of the R&D that goes into [one] can be repurposed at zero marginal cost. So, we build something as part of a large show and that takes time, it takes development hours, it takes trial and error, but then, once we have it, other artists can use it essentially for free.

And so we built with Matt and John, for example, the “10,000” wall [of all the *CryptoPunks*]. We had to really design this solution. Matt and John spent so many hours on “How



“10,000”, NODE, Palo Alto. Attendees around the *CryptoPunks* screens

do you precisely map this wall?” Because there are distortions in the image and the projector. Now we’ve solved that problem and future artists don’t have to deal with it.

LJ: How have the Palo Alto neighborhood and its resident student communities engaged with NODE?

BK: The response has exceeded every expectation we had. The community embraced NODE far faster and more deeply than we imagined possible in such a short time. High school students are writing about NODE in their school newspapers. Universities are bringing students for tours and discussions. Families come back multiple times. Neighbors stop to tell us that this kind of cultural space was something Palo Alto truly needed.

There is a strong alignment between the curiosity of this community and the spirit of NODE. People here are excited by innovation, but they are also hungry for meaning, creativity, and shared experiences. We feel incredibly welcomed.

MM: What has been especially encouraging is watching audiences mix in ways that rarely happen in traditional cultural spaces. You

might see a Stanford researcher, a *CryptoPunks* collector, a high school student, and a family visiting together, all reacting to the same work from completely different perspectives. That feels very “NODE” to us.

LJ: What do you hope that NODE will bring to the arts and culture of the Palo Alto neighborhood, and to the wider San Francisco area?

BK: We hope that NODE becomes a true cultural landmark for the Bay Area — a place people feel they must experience when they visit the region. But beyond visibility, we hope NODE helps expand the cultural conversation. The Bay Area has shaped so much of the technological future of humanity, and we believe it should also play a defining role in shaping the future of artistic expression.

MM: Silicon Valley has shaped how humanity communicates, works, learns, and connects. But culturally, the region still lacks

institutions that fully engage with the artistic consequences of the technologies created here. We hope NODE helps close that gap.

LJ: During the first months of public operation, how has your vision for the space and the foundation developed?

MM: One of the biggest realizations has been that NODE behaves more like a living organism than a traditional institution. Every exhibition changes how we think about architecture, audience behavior, software, production, education, and community. We are learning in public. That openness to iteration is important because digital culture itself evolves incredibly fast. A static institution risks becoming outdated almost immediately.

BK: One of the healthiest things we have done is approach NODE with the mindset of a startup — probably the most fun startup imaginable. We understand that the first year is about experimentation, learning, adapting, and discovering what truly resonates. We allow ourselves to evolve. That constant evolution is part of NODE’s identity. We are building something living, not static. ■■■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FELIX URIBE



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THE NEW MUSEUM GOES BACK TO THE FUTURE

Massimiliano Gioni, the New York institution's recently appointed director, spoke in the lead-up to the museum's reopening in March 2026 about tracing the impact of new technologies on art history

LOUIS JEBB

The New Museum, founded in 1977, has built a reputation over five decades as a nimble, experimental, home to contemporary art. It is a kunsthalle, with no permanent collection, that mounts single-artist survey exhibitions and ambitious themed shows covering topics with societal resonance beyond the confines of an art museum. It has also developed important entities in education and research, including Rhizome, the museum's digital arm since 2003, and New Inc, its incubator for art, design, and technology, launched in 2014.

In spring 2024, the museum's home, in the Bowery district of Manhattan's Lower East Side, designed by the SANAA practice in 2007, was closed for construction work. A seven-storey extension, designed by OMA's Shohei Shigematsu and Rem Koolhaas has been added to the south. The new, extended, building offers the museum considerably more office accommodation — including permanent homes for Rhizome and New Inc — as well as an additional 10,000 square feet of exhibition space.

The enlarged institution's first thematic exhibition, "New Humans | Memories of the Future" (until August 9, 2026), explores artists' concern with what it means to be human in the face of technological change. The show is curated by Massimiliano Gioni, the former Edlis Neeson Artistic Director who was appointed director in July 2026; Gary Carrion-Murayari, Kraus Family Senior Curator; Vivian Crockett, Allen and Lola Goldring Curator; and Madeline Weisburg, Senior Assistant Curator; with Calvin Wang, Curatorial Assistant.

"New Humans | Memories of the Future" has been installed across both parts of the enlarged building, and includes the work of some 200 artists, historical, modern and contemporary, including 15 exhibition commissions from artists such as Ryan Gander, Camille Henrot, Jamian Julian-Villani, Wangechi Mutu, Hito Steyerl, Alice Wang, and Santiago Yahuarcani. There are also three longer-term commissions that will be on show for two years before being returned

to the artists: a Tschabalala Self work on the museum's façade; a Sarah Lucas piece in the entrance plaza; and a large-scale sculpture by Klára Hosnedlová in the atrium. A new interactive work by Ian Cheng is installed in the restaurant.

The exhibition includes works by contemporary artists such as Rebecca Allen, Thomas Bayrle, Meriem Bennani, Pierre Huyghe, Tau Lewis, Precious Okoyomon, Pamela Rosenkranz, and Anicka Yi, as well as pieces by canonical figures such as Francis Bacon, Salvador Dalí, Alberto Giacometti, H.R. Giger, Eva Hesse, Hannah Höch, Tatsuo Ikeda, Kiki Kogelnik, and El Lissitzky.

A number of artists, including Julien Creuzet, Jaider Esbell, Jana Euler, Christopher Kulendran Thomas, Tau Lewis, and Portia Zvavahera, have contributed work reimagining "speculative universes in which the definitions of the human are constantly renegotiated with both the animal and the natural world".



Louis Jebb: Back in 2019, when the plans to enlarge the New Museum were first announced, and before the Covid-19 lockdowns of 2020-21 imposed a delay on the project, you spoke to *The New York Times* about how you hoped the new building would have a transformational impact on the museum, in part from doubling the exhibition space. With the reopening of the museum, how do you reflect now on that hope, both for the museum's exhibition program and for its education and innovation initiatives?

Massimiliano Gioni: Growth and expansion looked very different in 2019 [to how they appear] in 2026; and that has to do with external factors, mainly the effects of the Covid lockdown.

From the beginning, and more so after 2020, we wanted this expansion to feel and

to be truly necessary. We felt the need for this expansion because we were already using the building next door [which was demolished to make way for the OMA-designed extension] for many purposes. We had offices; we were programming the ground floor. We felt we could embark on an expansion because there was a true need for it.

We also wanted to make sure that [in] doubling the [exhibition] space, we remained an extremely flexible, experimental, nimble institution. That's still the case. So we are not renouncing our ethos or our DNA but we have many opportunities to do more things or different things.

Having more exhibition space allows us to do three things better. First, the New Museum is not a collecting institution, so a lot of the energy that others put into preservation we put into production. This new building allows us to do that, because we have more space but also because we have activated a series of partnerships internationally to commission [and] realize new works. In the opening program we have three major commissions: from Sarah Lucas, Tschabalala Self and Klára Hosnedlová. These are commissions with different partners and foundations. They will be on view for two years and at the end of those two years they will return to the artists. In the case of Sarah Lucas and Tschabalala Self, because those are sculptural works, they can also make multiple editions.

Our mission is to produce the work and we are happy when the work has a life that extends beyond our presentation. Because we don't acquire the work, [it] can take on a life of its own, and often these works continue their life exhibited elsewhere or being bought by others. We have some 15 new commissions that were realized specifically for the inaugural exhibition.

The second aspect is a house specialty of the New Museum: [giving] the first solo shows to artists in New York [across] a very wide spectrum [from] very young artists [to] more established ones like Judy Chicago [in 2023-24] or Theaster Gates [in 2024]; artists who, for differing reasons, had not



Installation view, "New Humans: Memories of the Future", 2026. New Museum, New York

[previously] received the recognition they deserve.

We will continue to do that but now we have the [space] to have simultaneous presentations. The first big solo show after the round of inaugural shows is Arthur Jafa [September 25, 2026 to January 5, 2027]. And at the same time, we [will be able to show] new productions by younger artists.

The third area, which connects us to the inaugural show, is another house specialty: big thematic group shows, of which there is less and less in New York City. We feel it's a niche that we really own [and part of] the history of the New Museum. [The thematic exhibitions] tackle contemporary art, but we look at them as a way to understand topics that are central, well beyond the world of art.

This is the case in point with "New Humans". It is an exhibition about art and technology and more broadly about how definitions of the human shift under the impact of new technologies.

These [thematic] exhibitions are strongly focused on contemporary art but they also wander off into the past because we think that a true experimental contemporary museum, as it defines the present and the future, also needs to revisit, to be ambitious, and also to rewrite the past a little bit. "New

Humans" takes a vantage point of today to look back at different moments in history in which different definitions, different technological innovations, have transformed the way in which we understand the human.

LJ: You have mentioned that you will have more space for your initiatives that support education research and art design technology.

MG: There are a lot of components of what we do which remained a little invisible before, maybe for lack of space; what we call our discursive platforms. We have two affiliates in house: Rhizome and New Inc. Rhizome is our digital arm and New Inc is our incubator for art design technology. These two will come in-house, thanks to the new building, and their activities and programs will be a more apparent presence, together with our education program which is very strong and has grown stronger. They will have a more visible manifestation in the new building.

The new building is structured as a triangle. If you look at it from the side, the lower floors are all exhibitions. The top floors are discursive, or more programmatic spaces, and there is a new theater. We have a full floor dedicated to New Inc and Rhizome. So

their presence is more manifest. And we have a new [education] team program that brings 100 teens every year to work with artists at the museum. While with New Inc we have 100 members who work on site.

Education is also very present in our community, in our neighborhood. We give classes in the [public] housing in the neighborhood of the Lower East Side. With New Inc and Rhizome we are present locally, internationally and digitally.

LJ: How does "New Humans | Memories of the Future" offer a prism on how artists see, and have seen, humanity's relationship with technology?

MG: The show is very large, but then the topic sustains it. It is about how representation, perception and definition of the human have changed and continue to change under the pressure of new technologies. It's a show that in a way looks [back to the past through] an inverted telescope. It starts off from today but establishes a symmetry [with history], particularly with the 1920s. I hope it's not a fateful symmetry.

[One hundred years ago] humans were confronted with similar technological revolutions. [The show makes the point] that

the word robot, which now takes on so much space in our imagination, was created in the 1920 play *Rossum's Universal Robots*, by Karel Čapek.

It was a moment in which fantasies and fears of automation were [abroad] in Europe, America and many other places, [as were] aspirations for a future where labor will be automated and we will dedicate ourselves to play. [These aspirations] were very present in the 1920s as they are today. They are both moments of technological upheaval and social change and in some cases dramatic social change.

The exhibition also looks at the conflation of totalitarian regimes and technologies. The use of propaganda and misinformation [a century ago] and today; with sadly many similitudes in the way in which technology allows for propaganda. My hope is that by looking through a series of case studies with an emphasis on the symmetry between the 1920s and today [...], by looking at this dialogue across time, there is a sense that we have been faced with dramatic changes in the past and [...] that we have survived them and have adapted in ways that suggest that we can also face what we're going through today. That is one of the premises of the show.

The exhibition [also addresses] new technologies and how they revisit, or force us to reconsider, what is human. More deeply it's about the myth of giving life which intersects a lot with ideas around technology. You can go all the way back to Hephaestus and his first robots [in 2500BC] and tell the history of a myth that has less to do with technology and more to do with a desire to give life. It's probably a misplaced desire, but it's one that is also very close to the act of making art.

It's a show that looks at new technologies, but it looks at them as a place where this perennial idea of humans creating life is revisited. It is a theme that is charged with many dangerous ideas; [where] at the beginning of the 2020s, as in the 1920s, certain guys are dreaming of usurping the right of making life from women. There is a whole sub-theme to the historical avant-garde — the Surrealist, the Dadaist, and the Futurist — [which is] frighteningly dreaming of making babies. They fantasized about a society where women won't be the only ones who can [give birth].

I hope as the exhibition gets deeper and denser some of these questions will appear to be even more fundamental than the question of technology; around the myth and the fantasy of giving life.

LJ: How do case studies in the exhibition address these fantasies: from Classical myth, through Modernist provocations, and the works you have commissioned for “New Humans”?

The show takes as a starting point a quotation from Karel Čapek, in Ross Universal Robots, [where a] character says “there is nothing stranger to humans than their own image” and Čapek’s play is all about the uncanny valley and the strangeness of the encounter with artificial life.

Massimiliano Gioni

MG: The historical avant-garde, futurist or realist fantasies around machines are very present. Francis Picabia writes a book of poems, *Daughter Born Without a Mother* (1918), [which is made up of 18] drawings of machines. He has this fantasy of reproduction as a mechanical construct that doesn't need sexual reproduction. And that's a fantasy that recurs in many of the historical avant-gardes.

It's also a classic locus of science fiction. Wangechi Mutu is one of the artists making new work for the show. She made a beautiful series of drawings inspired by Octavia Butler's “Bloodchild” (1995), an amazing story of a future where humans become hosts for an alien civilization that uses humans as surrogates for their offspring. We have Hito

Massimiliano Gioni is Toby Devan Lewis Director of the New Museum, New York. He joined the institution as Curator in 2006, and had been its Edlis Neeson Artistic Director before taking over as Director in August 2026. Gioni joined the New Museum in 2006 as Director of Special Exhibitions, and was appointed Artistic Director in 2014. At the museum, he has curated exhibitions of artists including John Akomfrah, Pawel Althamer, Ed Atkins, Lynda Benglis, Judy Chicago, Nicole Eisenman, Urs Fischer, Theaster Gates, Hans Haacke, Camille Henrot, Carsten Höller, Kahlil Joseph, Kapwani Kiwanga, Gustav Metzger, Marta Minujin, Chris Ofili, Raymond Pettibon, Faith Ringgold, Pipilotti Rist, Anri Sala, Peter Saul, Nari Ward, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, among others. Gioni's international exhibitions include Manifesta 5 (Donostia-San Sebastian, Spain, 2004); Berlin Biennale (2006); 10th Gwangju Biennale (2010); the 55th Venice Biennale (2013); and The Great Mother (Milan Expo at Palazzo Reale, 2015) and The Restless Earth (Milan Triennale, 2017), both with the Trussardi Foundation.

Steyerl, an artist who has done a lot of work about technology and she takes a very interesting spin by looking at the physical labor of AI [in *Mechanical Kurds*, 2025]. She goes to a refugee camp in Kurdistan where people are hired to [help an] AI to identify images, so that the AI can learn image recognition.

And the irony, which is typical of Hito's work — she's an artist who embraces new technology and the piece uses new technology — [is that] she reveals the very physical human and infrastructure that supports new technologies.

We have an artist like Christopher Kulendran Thomas who uses deep fake. So, we'll have “Kim Kardashian” speaking about globalization and labor and delocalization. And we have a series of flying vehicles by Anicka Yi [In *Love with the World*, 2021/2025] which are in a section of the exhibition that looks at fantasies of future cities and we have automated vehicles or drones flying above the galleries. There is a hall of robots, combining contemporary art, historical works and popular culture. In this hall of robots we will have the prototype for *ET* [1981], designed by Carlo Rambaldi, and the prototype for the [biomechanical Necronom], made famous in the film *Alien* (1979) and designed by H.R. Giger.

The exhibition is based on the idea that artists can both debunk and create new myths around these subjects; [but also] on the idea that these subjects are so crucial that we also have to look at visual culture at large, not just to art itself. So it includes scientific drawings, actual robots, robots designed by artists, and robots from the world of science fiction.

LJ: How does the exhibition address the ways artists are approaching the existential unknowns of AI, whether “embodied” in robots or not?

MG: The show takes as a starting point a quotation from Karel Čapek, in *Rossum's Universal Robots*, [where a] character says “there is nothing stranger to humans than their own image” and Čapek's play is all about the uncanny valley and the strangeness of the encounter with artificial life.

Many artworks in the exhibition make use of artificial intelligence in the exhibition itself, but viewers may be surprised that there are a lot of paintings, a lot of handmade materials. With humans being the subject, we also looked at portraiture as the site of representation.

[I have spent] a lot of time in the building across the street from the [works on the New Museum, and it has been] surprising, and a little humbling, to see how a new building is still very much handmade. [It has been both] reassuring and humbling that even the most futuristic-looking buildings are still



Installation view, “New Humans: Memories of the Future”, 2026. New Museum, New York

made by hand. That is [a tension] the show addresses. The continuous dialogue between the machine and the human. I joke when presenting the show that it is about that weird feeling when your computer is asking you to click on a box to say you're not a robot. That confusing moment where a machine is asking you to prove you're human and what does that mean — ontologically?

I don't think that the exhibition has answers to [questions of humans being made redundant by AI]. It swings back and forth between being optimistic [and not]. [The] sense of urgency is maybe exaggerated because we have had other technological watershed moments [when] everything changed and nothing changed. Part of me sometimes feels that that is why we took a long view on the problem. At other moments I feel existentially threatened.

One of the assumptions of the show is that in moments of existential threat — and I borrow this idea from Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, the anthropologist — we go back to myth. His argument being that this is a moment of existential threat. He's making the argument more about climate change but I think you can make it about technology as well. And so new myths are created and perhaps the role of artists and the role of museums is to analyze those myths.

So I think ultimately of the museum, and the exhibitions, as places where myths are analyzed and in some cases supplanted by new myths; new myths that will maybe guide us in dealing with that existential threat. Maybe [the show is] less about the technology and more about the need for the human to invent stories to deal with these threats.

LJ: Are there other elements of the exhibition, addressing human interaction with the non-human, that might surprise visitors?

MG: Defining the human in relation to the machine also means categorizing what is non-human and so the show inevitably looks historically and in the present at examples of people who didn't get to be considered human. And at the scary conflation of technology and totalitarian regimes; the idea that we can remake the human. One of the essays in the [exhibition] book speaks about the artist as an engineer of the human soul.

If you define the human in relation to the machine at one end, you're defining the human in relation to the subhuman, or the animal, at the other. And that definition is loaded with consequences.

Weirdly, definitions of technologies have been complicit with definitions of who gets the privilege to enter the world of humanity. That's one of the subtexts in the show: [where visitors will] be confronted with artists making work with a brush and a piece of canvas or paper. Because that's where, in depicting yourself, you are also defining yourself either as part of a human community or as excluded by the human community.

LJ: What do you hope people take away from the exhibition?

MG: Part of me — I don't know if it's moralistic, or naive — hopes they will take away a sense of reassurance [from historical parallels to today]: that we've been through a lot and [in the Second World War] through even worse. If you see the same set of problems repeating, the bad news is we've been through this, and at what cost; but on the other hand we have been through this and I hope we can handle that. That would be the reassuring, consolatory, aspect.

It is also a show that combines masterpieces with very modest objects. It combines highly technological works [with book illustrations] cut out and reproduced. A show that takes advantage of tools of reproduction and imagines the show as a combination of precious and very modest materials — as a form of storytelling.

We tried to make a show that feels grand and complicated but in some cases also uses very modest materials. A lot of these ideas might circulate more in books, particularly in the early 20th century, in illustrations, in photographs, and we wanted to present them as such. Just as certain ideas today are disseminated through the internet and your phone, more than they are in museums. And we wanted to reflect that in the quality of materials included in the show.

LJ: This is an exciting period for museums, opening or reinventing themselves with an often radical, technology-adjacent purpose. Powerhouse Paramatta, in Sydney, Australia, is due to open at the end of the year and there has been great activity in the US, including the opening of NODE in Silicon Valley, the debut of the Geffen Wing at LACMA, Los Angeles, along with Refik Anadol's Dataland Museum of AI Arts, and the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, in the same city. With Canyon due to open in New York later in the year. How do you view the New Museum's reopening on the crest of this museological wave?

MG: It forces us to understand that art could not just be entertainment or financial investment. I think it reminds us every day that what we do is important and it can be a tool for understanding the world outside the museum. So that's a general premise.

Maybe this new wave of museums that started at the end of last year with [the reopening of] the Studio Museum in Harlem and [the new] Princeton University Art Museum building has to do with delays in schedule caused by Covid. But it also [signals] that museums are here to stay and they play a vital role in many cities.

Though many are still struggling with attendance, I think museums are places of encounter, places of discovery, and learning. We seem to be necessary and that is, I think, encouraging and exciting. ■■■

COURTESY NEW MUSEUM. PHOTO: DARIO LASAGNI



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Centre Pompidou, Beaubourg, Paris

BEAUBOURG UNBOUND

The Centre Pompidou has spent fifty years collecting the future. Now closed, dispersed, and lent out to the world, it may be the institution best positioned to engage with what comes next, writes Alexis de Bernède

1: A Pioneer in Disguise

There is a joke that the Centre Pompidou has always looked more like a blockchain than a building. Its famous façade of pipes and ducts colour-coded by function, its skeleton worn on the outside, reads like a transparency manifesto: every system visible, every layer legible, nothing hidden behind walls of stone. When Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers unveiled the building in 1977, critics hated it. But the institution it housed became, over five decades, the most adventurous repository of modern and contemporary art in Europe — known as Beaubourg, after the Paris district it inhabits — and one of the most technically inquisitive of museums.

That sense of curiosity has rarely been

linear. In 1979, the year the music and acoustics research centre IRCAM (Institut de recherche et coordination acoustique/musique) was finding its rhythm beneath Place Igor Stravinsky, across from the main Centre Pompidou building, an experimental computer-art laboratory called ARTA — the Atelier de Recherches en Techniques Avancées, led by the engineer Christian Cavadia — was formally attached to the Centre de Création Industrielle (CCI). ARTA had been operational since 1973, developing software for graphic creation and image processing on what were then the first generations of micro-computers. It hosted Vera Molnar. It collaborated with Italo Calvino and Jean Tinguely on television projects. It won

prizes from Tokyo to Melbourne to Munich. It was, for the visual arts, what IRCAM was for music: a research lab embedded inside a public museum, producing tools rather than merely displaying objects.

It did not survive the decade. By 1983, ARTA had been dissolved. The reasons, documented in the Pompidou's archives, are instructive: ageing hardware, an absence of stable software pipelines, the museum's drift toward more traditional museography under new leadership, and, most tellingly, internal competition for budget, with the composer Pierre Boulez, founder of IRCAM, reportedly perceiving any other research laboratory at the Centre as a rival to his institute. Two years later, "Les Immatériaux", the 1985 exhibition

curated by Jean-François Lyotard and Thierry Chaput, became the institution's high-water mark for thinking about networks, dematerialization, and the post-object condition. The exhibition is still cited today as the conceptual ancestor of any serious curatorial argument about digital art. But the lab that might have built on it was already gone.

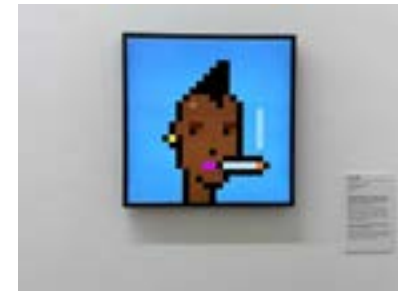
This is the institutional memory worth holding in mind. The Pompidou's relationship with computing was not linear. It has been a story of one laboratory (IRCAM) that survived and another (ARTA) that was abandoned, and of curatorial ambition that has periodically outrun the institution's willingness to maintain the infrastructure it requires. The Musée national d'art moderne — which moved into the Pompidou in 1977 — has for just as long been acquiring work that challenges conventional ideas of the art object: video art, net art, generative art, sound art, installation. Curators like Marcella Lista and Philippe Bettinelli have steered the Nouveaux médias collection towards one that situates blockchain-based work within a long genealogy of immaterial and post-object art, from Yves Klein's receipts for invisible paintings to Tino Sehgal's ephemeral constructions, with "Les Immatériaux" as its great precedent. It is a curatorial argument as much as an acquisition policy: art has been renegotiating its materiality for sixty years, and NFTs are a chapter in that story.

Now the building is empty. As of September 2025, the Centre Pompidou has shut its doors for a five-year renovation: asbestos removal, energy overhaul, structural renewal, with a planned reopening in 2030. Its collection of some 150,000 works has been dispersed across France and around the world under a programme named, with arresting aptness, Constellation. Around 8,000 artworks are on loan. Satellites exist or are emerging in Metz, Málaga, Shanghai, Seoul, Brussels, Massy (south of Paris), and Foz do Iguaçu (Brazil). IRCAM, on Place Igor Stravinsky, remains open; for now, the only node still burning on the original Beaubourg "plateau".

The question the art world should be asking is not whether the Pompidou will survive this closure. It will. The question is whether a period of radical enforced decentralization might do something more interesting: push the institution toward a new relationship with the communities, technologies, and governance models that are reshaping culture from below. Whether, in other words, the Centre Pompidou might become the first great national museum to genuinely engage with Web3 and its culture.

IRCAM was born from the same political will that created Beaubourg. President Georges Pompidou tasked Boulez with building it in 1970; it opened in 1977, its 3,500 square metres of studios, anechoic

NFT ACQUISITIONS AT CENTRE POMPIDOU

Larva Labs, *CryptoPunk #110*, on show at the Centre Pompidou, 2023

In February 2023, the Centre Pompidou became the first institution dedicated to modern and contemporary art to acquire a set of works dealing with the relationship between the blockchain and artistic creation. 18 projects by 13 French and international artists, including *CryptoPunk #110* (donated by Yuga Labs), Sarah Meyohas's *Bitchcoin* (2015), and works by aaijiao, John Gerrard, Jonas Lund, and Rafaël Rozendaal. Framed explicitly around "the most daring uses of technology". The institution saw beyond blockchain as cultural phenomena. It saw blockchain as a medium for critical artistic reflection.

The timing was deliberate. As Philippe Bettinelli, curator in the Nouveaux médias department, puts it: positioning the acquisition after the 2021 speculative boom allowed the museum to take "the time to study and reflect" before committing to works that, once entered into the collection, are *inaliénables* and cannot be deaccessioned. The 2023 acquisitions were the first wave. The museum continues to acquire NFT-based work today.

chambers, and variable-acoustics concert halls housed underground. From its inception, the organisation of the space reflected what its founders called, even then, a commitment to computing.

IRCAM is where Max/MSP music software was written. Where FM synthesis was pioneered. Where some of the foundational software tools of electronic music were developed. For over four decades, it has run residencies where composers and researchers work alongside engineers. It is a model of collaborative, cross-disciplinary making that anticipates by decades what the Web3 space now calls "artist-in-protocol" work.

2: The Constellation Gambit

The Pompidou's closure and its Constellation programme have created something genuinely unprecedented in the history of public museums: a national institution without a fixed address, operating as a network of nodes. The framing is more than poetic. It is a description of the architecture — cultural,

operational, logistical — that the Pompidou is now being forced to build.

The geography is remarkable. Metz, the first Pompidou satellite, opened in 2010 and has been one of the most visited contemporary art institutions in provincial France. Málaga hosted a Pompidou for a decade. Shanghai has had one since 2019. Now: Seoul, Brussels, Massy, and Foz do Iguaçu. The Centre Pompidou makes clear that these are not branch offices or secondary locations. They are, in the language of the program itself, nodes in a constellation, each hosting loans from the collection, each generating programming in dialogue with their own cultural context.

The word "constellation" matters. Unlike a hierarchy or a franchise, a constellation has no single dominant point. Each star emits its own light. Walter Benjamin used the term to describe a mode of thought in which ideas are brought into proximity not to create a narrative synthesis but to generate a field of meaning through their juxtaposition. Whether or not the Pompidou's programmers were thinking of Benjamin, the metaphor they have chosen describes exactly the kind of distributed, non-hierarchical, cultural logic that Web3 was invented to enable.

The Pompidou's curators have been quick to read the closure as an opportunity rather than only a constraint. "Moments of closure are always conducive to reflection on practices presented as 'immaterial' — even if that is largely a misnomer — or at least practices that develop in virtual spaces," Bettinelli observes; the pandemic, he notes, was a forced rehearsal of exactly that. The renovation is now allowing the museum to take stock of its digital collection while putting it into circulation.

Two travelling exhibitions, both drawn from the collection, make the point concrete. "Unstable Media in the 21st Century", organised by Lista, opens at the Hamburger Kunsthalle in November 2026 and proposes to reconsider the field of so-called "new media" by foregrounding what she calls the "philosophy of instability" that accompanied the rise of video and now resonates in the way networks and flows have become the operators of artistic and economic circulation. "Computer Worlds", organised by Bettinelli, Camille Lenglois, and Olivier Zeitoun, with Victor Guégan as associate curator, will open at the West Bund Museum in Shanghai in late September 2026 and will trace the relationships between computing and creation across the visual arts, design, and architecture. The NFT ecosystem, in Lista's framing, takes its place within this broader history of media that question the specificity of artistic form.

This is a meaningful shift in register. A museum that has just closed for five years is,

in its first full year of dispersal, choosing to send its digital and computational holdings on the road and making this a primary curatorial argument. The Constellation is both redistributing works and redistributing the terms on which those works are read.

3: After the Gold Rush

The Web3 art world that Centre Pompidou might engage with in 2026 is not the Web3 art world of 2021. That distinction is essential, and any honest case for institutional engagement has to begin with it.

The intervening years have been a long, sometimes painful contraction. Platforms that defined the early ecosystem have closed or pivoted. Marketplaces have consolidated. Magazines and editorial outlets that briefly flourished alongside the speculative boom have shuttered or thinned. Communities that were noisy and ambient in 2021 — Twitter spaces, Discord servers, Telegram channels — are quieter, more dispersed, and in many cases have migrated to smaller and more committed venues like Farcaster. The phrase “NFT art” has become, for many practitioners, something between an embarrassment and a strategic liability.

Pompidou’s own curators describe this with characteristic precision. “There was a gold-rush phenomenon in the early 2020s,” Bettinelli observes, “which saw many actors position themselves around questions of digital art — or sometimes simply around NFTs, independently of any artistic consideration.” What followed, he argues, is “a form of rationalisation of the ecosystem, a resizing to a more realistic scale, and an adaptation to successive technological enthusiasms” — the metaverse, then artificial intelligence. What remains, in his reading, is not nothing. It is “works, artists who are more numerous in being able to live from their practice than in the past, and the structures that support them: as many elements as are essential to the development of an artistic milieu.”

Lista adds a complementary observation that cuts against a common assumption in the institutional world. The closures of recent years, she suggests, may say something about the overvaluation of physical exhibition venues for this kind of practice in the first place. “The communities tied to digital creation are attached to a form of nomadism and to the renewal of forms of artistic experience.” Meanwhile, she notes, many artists trained in the plastic arts or music have absorbed advanced software techniques into large-scale works that now circulate through more established exhibition venues — typically museums — while international art fairs increasingly carve out dedicated sections for digital and on-chain practice that sometimes become events in their own right. The map has not so much shrunk as redrawn itself.

The Pompidou was born of a 1970s belief that culture should be porous, participatory, and connected to its moment. Web3, at its best, is a set of tools for building exactly that kind of culture: open, composable, governed by communities rather than only by institutions

This is the diagnosis. It matters because it changes the terms of the institutional argument.

A flourishing market does not need a museum. A contracted, more serious, more committed scene might. The question is whether a national institution can offer durable anchoring to a community that has just lost a significant portion of its commercial scaffolding and is now in the slower, harder work of building what comes next. The artists are still making the work. The collectors who matter are still buying it. The critical writing is still happening. What is missing, in many cases, is the kind of long-horizon institutional partnership that protects practices from the volatility of the markets that produced them.

This is not unique to digital art. Video art faced the same contraction in the 1980s after its first commercial flush; net art faced it in the early 2000s. In each case, what eventually mattered was that a handful of public institutions chose to take the work seriously over decades rather than over hype cycles. The Pompidou’s Nouveaux médias department

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is one of the very few that has done this consistently, across all three waves. That track record is the credibility on which any future engagement would rest.

It also reframes the urgency. In 2021, an institutional embrace of Web3 would have looked like a museum chasing a market. In 2026, it would look like something different: a museum extending its long-standing curatorial argument, that art has been renegotiating its materiality for sixty years. The closure of the building is a constraint. The closure of much of the Web3 commercial ecosystem is, paradoxically, an opportunity. Both pressures point toward the same horizon: an institution that engages with digital-native communities not as an audience to be courted, but as a constituency whose work belongs in the long history the Pompidou has been writing all along.

4: Imagining a Web3 Horizon

The convergence between Pompidou’s situation and Web3’s tools is almost too obvious to state, and yet stating it clearly is worth the effort. An institution that has been collecting blockchain art since 2023 and continues to do so. An institution that has, by necessity, become a distributed network of cultural nodes across three continents. An institution whose curators describe the Constellation in language Walter Benjamin would have recognised and a designer of a Distributed Autonomous Organization (DAO) would find familiar. The materials are there. The question is what, if anything, the institution chooses to make of them as it moves toward its 2030 reopening.

An interesting line in the Pompidou’s own forward-looking thinking comes from Lista. Asked what she hopes the closure period will have allowed the institution to construct with digital communities by 2030, she answers that it will become possible “to rethink the presentation of networked digital works in their native environment”, online exhibitions, evolutive and decentralised works. “It is a particularly stimulating prospect,” she adds, “to welcome current creation beyond the physical walls of the Centre Pompidou.”

Bettinelli, for his part, hopes the collection will continue to develop in ways that allow the museum to tell a broad history of digital art and to integrate it fully into the history of modern and contemporary art that the Pompidou has been building for fifty years. He also hopes that history can be shared not only with the communities that already know it, but with the visitors who live every day with the technologies that shape it without necessarily recognising the artistic genealogy behind them.

These are curatorial horizons, not commitments. But they describe a museum already comfortable with the idea that the



IRCAM (centre right), place Igor Stravinsky, Paris



Centre Pompidou Metz



Centre Pompidou x West Bund Museum Project, Shanghai

works it cares about no longer live, in any meaningful sense, only inside its walls. That is the conceptual door through which a Web3-native programme might walk.

What such a programme might look like is, at this stage, more usefully imagined than prescribed. The mechanisms are not speculative: they exist. The WAC Lab, co-founded by Diane Drubay of We Are Museums and launched at Art Basel in 2021, has already worked with cultural institutions on structured engagements with Web3. The Musée d’Orsay introduced digital collectibles through a partnership with the digital souvenir specialists Keru. The Louvre’s foundations have explored NFT drops tied to exhibition access. These are early experiments, but they point toward a model in which the relationship between institution and audience becomes something other than a one-way broadcast.

The more ambitious version imagines something closer to what Ruth Catlow and Penny Rafferty called *Radical Friends*, the title of their 2022 book on DAOs and cultural institutions. A DAO-governed collecting fund for the Pompidou might, in principle, work like this: a defined community of digital-native collectors, historians, curators and critics pools resources and votes on acquisitions within a defined scope. Curators from the Nouveaux médias department set the research framework and ensure conservation standards. The DAO governs the selection. The Pompidou holds and exhibits the work, issues provenance credentials on-chain, and reflects the community’s trust back into the culture.

This is offered as a thought experiment rather than a policy proposal. It is not, in the abstract, as radical as it sounds. The Pompidou already has a Société des Amis, a friends-and-patrons structure that has channelled private support toward acquisitions for decades. The conceptual question is whether that model can be extended, opened, and partially put on-chain; not to displace institutional authority, but to share it in a defined and bounded way like it does with other patronage groups. DAO or DAO-like initiatives might also be used to involve the community in the life of the works after their acquisition, locations of their exhibition around the world. Beyond acquisitions, this might help the museum bring many international patrons, and interact with them in a different way. Traditional friends and patronage groups are often built with local participants. International groups could have a hard time involving patrons in the life of the museum and creating activations for them. DAOs and blockchain technologies could change everything.

This tension is one Bettinelli himself has identified, though in more general terms. The most cutting-edge technologies, he observes,

DIGITAL TIMELINE AT CENTRE POMPIDOU

- 1970** IRCAM founded by Pierre Boulez at President Georges Pompidou's request — computing embedded in its founding charter from day one.
- 1973** Christian Cavadia begins the work that will become ARTA (Atelier de Recherches en Techniques Avancées), a computer-art research laboratory focused on graphic creation and image processing on first generation of micro-computers.
- 1977** Beaubourg opens. IRCAM opens. First interdisciplinary exhibitions under the centre's director, Pontus Hultén, bring together art, music, film, and computation.
- 1979** ARTA formally attached to the Centre de création industrielle (CCI).
- 1983** ARTA dissolved amid budget pressures.
- 1985** "Les Immatériaux", curated by Jean-François Lyotard and Thierry Chaput.
- 198** Max/MSP written at IRCAM by Miller Puckette — now a foundational tool of electronic music worldwide.
- 1992** *Revue virtuelle* runs until 1996 as a quarterly gallery programme jointly developed by the CCI and the Musée national d'art moderne.
- 2010** Centre Pompidou-Metz opens. The first satellite. The network begins.
- 2015** Málaga satellite opens — the first international Pompidou node.
- 2017** "Imprimer le monde", first exhibition of the Mutations/Créations cycle, on 3D printing tech and the changing status of work and the author.
- 2018** "Coder le monde", second edition of Mutations/Créations, tracing creative history of code since the 1960s.
- 2019** Shanghai node opens on The Bund. "La Fabrique du vivant", third edition of Mutations/Créations.
- 2020** "Neurones. Intelligences simulées", fourth edition of Mutations/Créations.
- 2022** "Réseaux-Mondes", fifth and final edition of Mutations/Créations.
- 2023** First NFT acquisition.
- 2025** Building closes September 22. Constellation programme disperses some 8,000 works globally. Seoul and Brussels nodes launch.
- 2026** Centre Pompidou Francilien opens in Massy. "Computer Worlds" opens at the West Bund Museum, Shanghai; "Unstable Media in the 21st Century" opens at Hamburger Kunsthalle.
- 2030** Planned reopening of redesigned Beaubourg building

remain difficult to access, both in terms of infrastructure and expertise, and the material conditions of serious research are far from easy to assemble in the field of art. At the same time, Web3's culture of decentralization "can seem antithetical to the constitution of large institutional research centres". That tension exists, but it isn't a closed door. It is an invitation to think more carefully about what kind of institutional form might actually serve a decentralized community: not a recreation of IRCAM for visual artists, which is the ARTA story repeating, but something more porous, more lightweight, co-built and closer in spirit to a residency or experimentation programme distributed across the Constellation nodes than to a single great laboratory on Place Igor Stravinsky.

The point of imagining these horizons is not to specify the answer. It is to suggest that the answer is now worth asking for. The Pompidou's curators have built the conceptual scaffolding over five decades. The closure has created the operational opening. The community has, through its own contraction, become the kind of constituency a serious institution can engage with on serious terms. What follows from all of that is a conversation that the institution is in a stronger position to lead than almost any peer in the world

5: What Has the Pompidou Done Before?

One thing the Pompidou has historically done well (and that major institutions often fail at) is the cultivation of new audiences before they become the mainstream. The Piazza at the heart of Beaubourg was designed to be a public space where artists, street performers, passersby, and museumgoers would intermingle. Studio 13/16, its youth-focused programme, has worked with teenagers and digital natives for years. IRCAM has always attracted composers, engineers, and hackers in equal measure.

But the communities that have built the NFT and broader Web3 art world are culturally distinct in ways that institutions have struggled to bridge. They live on Discord and Farcaster, not Instagram. Their critical discourse happens in threads and voice chats, not panel discussions and academic journals. They have built their own marketplaces, their own magazines, their own models of behaviour. It is a separate art world operating in parallel to the institutional one, often invisible to it.

The Pompidou is in a position to make a bridge. It already has the credibility of the 2023 NFT acquisition, received with genuine respect in the Web3 art community precisely because it was serious, contextualized, and curatorially argued. Lista and Bettinelli framed blockchain art within the genealogy of immaterial and conceptual art, speaking the language of art history without

What would Beaubourg look like if it were not only a building that looks like a blockchain, but an institution that operates a little more like one?

condescending to the new. Their shared curatorial insistence on "the most daring uses of technology" treated blockchain as a medium for critical artistic reflection. They held the acquisition to the same standard as the rest of the Nouveaux médias collection.

What would complete the move is now an invitation. A sustained, structural programme of engagement that treats digital-native communities as co-creators of the institution's future. This means putting Web3 artists in IRCAM, or a new form of residencies. It means designing Constellation node programming that includes artists from the fxhash or Art Blocks generative-art communities. It means having conversations on Farcaster or other digital platforms, not only at symposia.

There is a precedent for exactly this kind of sustained program, and it is worth recovering. Between 1992 and 1996, the Centre Pompidou ran the *Revue virtuelle*, a quarterly experimental format jointly developed by what was then the CCI and the Musée national d'art moderne. Three times a year, two modules in the museum's galleries presented an installation and a videodisc anthology, open to the public free of charge. Each issue was accompanied by a printed booklet and a public lecture. The format ran for 16 numbers and brought figures including Nam June Paik, Karl Sims, Edmond Couchot, Anne-Marie Dugué, and Matt Mullican into sustained dialogue with French institutional audiences. Jean-Louis Boissier, one of its curators, has described the project as a deliberate attempt to bridge the museum and the more accessible CCI, to put experimental practice in the galleries without first having to settle the question of whether it qualified as art. It was a programme of structured ambiguity, sustained over four years, in a public space, with institutional backing.

This is the model worth remembering. The Pompidou can recover a method it once practised, and to update it for an art world whose native infrastructure now happens to be a blockchain.

The aspiration here is modest and concrete: a recurring, gallery-anchored programme that takes Web3-native practice seriously on its own terms, that is built in dialogue with the communities producing



Paris seen from the roof of Centre Pompidou. It is scheduled to reopen, following renovation, in 2030

the work, and that does not need to resolve in advance the question of whether what it shows is "art" or "research" or "infrastructure", because the *Revue virtuelle* showed that an institution can productively leave that question open for years at a time, and that the public is more than ready to follow.

6: The Renovation as Reboot

Buildings shape institutions in ways that are easy to underestimate. The Beaubourg's visible infrastructure, those famous pipes, that great piazza, the transparent escalator that lets you watch the city as you ascend through the collection, was an architectural argument about openness, about culture as a live process rather than a sealed archive. "Reinventing this extraordinary utopia" is how the Pompidou's president, Laurent Le Bon, has described the ambition of the 2030 redesign.

If that spirit is to mean anything in 2030, it has to grapple with the fact that some of the most genuinely experimental work in collective culture, open access, and networked creativity is now happening not in buildings but on chains. Not all of it. Not even most of it. But enough of it, sustained over enough years, by enough artists who have outlasted the speculative cycle, that the institution's relationship to that field is now a real question rather than a marketing one.

The Pompidou was born of a 1970s belief that culture should be porous, participatory, and connected to its moment. Web3, at its best, is a set of tools for building exactly that kind of culture: open, composable, governed by communities rather than only by institutions, traceable rather than opaque.

HORIZONS TO EXPLORE

Thought experiment forms for the next phase of engagement:

- A scoped collecting fund for digital and new-media acquisitions, governed by a community of artists, collectors, and critics in dialogue with the Nouveaux médias curators
- On-chain provenance records for the collection's digital-born works, starting with acquisitions from 2023 onwards
- Token-gated access to IRCAM residency documentation and live events for participating communities
- A recurring residency programme placing digital-native artists alongside IRCAM researchers, or within the Constellation nodes, in the spirit (though not the form) of ARTA
- Programming partnerships with the Constellation nodes — Seoul, Brussels, Massy, and others — that give local digital communities a participatory role in node-level commissions

This is where the urgency argument matters. A flourishing market does not need a museum. A contracted, serious field does. The renovation is a reboot. The Constellation is a distributed network. The NFT collection, ongoing since 2023, has been described by the institution itself as a first wave rather than a final position. What is missing is the leap: the decision to let a new generation of communities inside, as participants more than simple guests. To treat the logic of decentralization as a principle to be enacted, lightly and provisionally, in forms the institution can sustain.

The Pompidou has everything it needs to make that leap. The DNA of experimentation, and, as the ARTA story reminds us, the institutional memory of what happens when that DNA is allowed to wither. The curatorial seriousness, sustained across video, net art, and now blockchain by Lista, Bettinelli, and their colleagues. The global network of Constellation nodes, which is itself the most distributed cultural infrastructure of any major museum in the world. The collection. The moment. What it needs now is the willingness to ask, in public and in dialogue with the communities concerned: what would Beaubourg look like if it were not only a building that looks like a blockchain, but an institution that operates a little more like one?

The pipes are visible. The escalator is waiting. And IRCAM is still running, the one node that never went dark, still asking what it sounds like when art and technology think together. The next question: what does it look like when art, technology, and community govern together, is one Pompidou is uniquely positioned to ask. ■■

DESIGNS ON THE FUTURE

Scholars from the Royal College of Art, London, are rethinking design for the age of AI and its asymmetries of imagination. They spoke to Alex Estorick

Since the turn of the millennium, The Royal College of Art (RCA), London, has become a test bed for hybrid creative practices that sit between traditional fine art and design.

For the decade between 2005 and 2015, the design duo Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby turned the concept of “critical design” — design as a form of critique — into a frame through which to imagine alternative futures. It is no coincidence that a number of graduates of their “Design Interactions” program, including Troika, Sputniko!, and Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg, have gone on to become successful contemporary artists rather than traditional designers, with many involving new technologies in their work.

Since Dunne & Raby’s departure, the RCA has continued to interrogate alternative realities across multiple schools and departments, spearheaded by a new generation of tutors at sites in Kensington, Battersea, and White City. This year, the university hosted its own RCA AI Festival in order to explore the intersections between artificial intelligence and creative practice.

Because of the tendency of AI models to inherit bad habits from their training data, the RCA is placing emphasis on designing AI in a way that is inclusive for all, while questioning its asymmetries of imagination.

Given the university’s incubation of critical approaches to emerging technologies, *Right Click Save*’s Founding Editor, Alex Estorick, invited four faculty members to share how they think about designing the future in an age of deep pessimism. The four participating scholars are Elise Hodson, academic lead for the Masters of Design in Design Futures; Fernando Galdon, tutor in Innovation Design Engineering; Carolina Ramirez-Figueroa, senior tutor in Information Experience Design (IED); and Gem Barton, Reader in Design Pedagogies & superFUTURES lead Interior Design MA. They begin by sharing responses to a recent provocation from Dunne & Raby.

Fernando Galdon: My feeling is that this quote refers to their latest book, *Not Here, Not Now* (2025), where they position design as a way of understanding reality. They are collapsing space and time (hence the title

*The future as a concept for facilitating imaginative thought, in design, has become too restrictive.*¹

Dunne & Raby

Not Here, Not Now) to give them a different kind of setup in order to imagine otherwise. There is an advancement in the way that they are positioning design as a way of doing philosophy.

We have two books in the area. [*Not Here, Not Now* and] Brian Dixon, *Philosophy Through Design* (2026). The two books have different interpretations of what is reality; in Dunne’s it is the fabric of existence, and for the other it is about values. The first is speculative, the other is pragmatic. These are the two main schools of thought. The second would trace back to [the design theorist] Tony Fry and the other to Tony Dunne. I’m writing a paper, which is going to be a prelude to both works. In terms of the future and whether it is too restrictive, I think the future’s problem is that it is not restrictive enough in the sense that it is very difficult to control the speculation, which normally ends in fantasy.

Talking last year to James Auger, who wrote his Speculative Design thesis at the RCA in 2012, he commented that he was pivoting into this idea of reconstraints — the idea of using constraints to control the speculation. Today, futures are at an intersection with policy and governance, and therefore need to be more grounded. I understand what Dunne & Raby are doing. In their context, the future is too restrictive, but in traditional futures, I think it is too loose.

Gem Barton: For me, it is not “the future” as a concept that has become too restrictive, but rather that design has limited ways of engaging with the future. I am interested in the role of design in/of futurity: the conditions that determine what can be imagined,

¹ F Raby, interviewed by the author on November 1, 2024

whose futures become legitimate, and what design is able to rehearse in the present. I believe this is where they have the potential to become radically expansive again.

Elise Hodson: For me, it’s design that is too restrictive in some ways. In the new MDes Design Futures, we’re up against legacies of design disciplines and approaches that are very well defined in people’s minds. Design is now going in many different directions, such as policy, creating new outputs that don’t necessarily look or behave in the ways that people expect of design. We don’t fit those models anymore, but we are also figuring out what design can do in relation to established and emerging futures approaches, both in design and other fields. Sometimes the future can seem restrictive to design students in the sense that it’s too open-ended and the uncertainty and ambiguity of designing for the future can feel uncomfortable, or out of scope.

Carolina Ramirez-Figueroa: For me as well, it has to do with the design imaginary of the future. We still have a very dominant Western modern idea of the future, where we think about time as linear, as something that moves forward, and where the idea of innovation drives progress. Humans are seen as the primary agents of change. I think a lot of this is still tied to the idea of the future as something that can be designed, controlled, and optimized. For me, that’s what is quite restrictive.

It’s not so much design itself that is restricting the imagination, but rather the dominant idea of design that we still have, one that is very much shaped by Western modernity. Alongside this restriction of imagination, there’s also the question of the asymmetry of imagination: who is allowed to imagine, in which contexts, and why?

In my research, and in my work with students, we often talk about which geographies are allowed to imagine the future, and which ones have a future imposed upon them. That future is then presented as opportunity, ambition, and progress, and they are expected to catch up to it. It becomes restrictive because there’s no space to aspire to something else; the future is already given.



Hanna Park, *Cupidastic: Can microplastics hormone disruption be turned into future love sparks?*, 2025

EH: That resonates with this idea that the future is already colonized, that it’s already predetermined. And who has predetermined it? Is it big tech? A wealthy elite? The underlying logics can be difficult to see but dominate how people perceive the future.

FG: But that was the approach of Tony Fry in [*Defuturing*, 1999], no? The idea of defuturing, which actually is refuturing. Which is kind of interesting. I think James Auger is also pivoting in that direction.

In practice, what we have seen is a contextualization of the future. It’s being anchored in regions and constraints, which is the way of framing the imagination within specific sensitivities. But then it’s different from the way that Dunne & Raby want to approach the imagination as making reality or understanding the fundamental fabric of reality. I think it depends on how you use it. Design has expanded so much since the 2008 financial crisis that now we have all these possibilities, and for me, this is the most interesting thing about all this. My feeling with the maxim we are discussing, this quote, is that it embodies a very specific advancement that Dunne & Raby have made, where they position design in a very sophisticated position never thought of before.

This contrasts with the advancement that they made in 2007 which is now becoming mainstream, with the management consultants McKinsey or the fashion brand H&M hiring speculative designers. That was absolutely unthinkable back in 2008, and that

wasn’t the plan Dunne & Raby were envisioning at the time. If you read their a/b manifesto (2009-onwards) it is absolutely clear. But this is how it has been evolving. When you put these tools in the wild, they start to evolve with the affordances of the system.

I think what we have to celebrate is this multiplicity of options to implement change. In the RCA we have published eight PhDs on futures between 2012 (James Auger) and 2022 (Joanna Schmeer). We have five PhDs on different methodologies, expanding this idea of who is entitled to make that representation and then whether we need to understand the speculation or not. And then three variations within Speculative Design, which focused on new methods within the methodology; Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg, Austin, and Anima. So it’s been eight PhDs in ten years.

My feeling with the maxim we are discussing, this quote, is that it embodies a very specific advancement that Dunne & Raby have made, where they position design in a very sophisticated position never thought of before.

Fernando Galdon

EH: In the Design Futures program, there’s a lot of discussion about different perceptions of time and different perceptions of the future. How do you think about the future from the perspective of nature? Different cycles, different shapes of time — cultures that look backwards to see the future. It’s really fascinating to think about this. One of the models is the *Entangled Time Tree* (by Terry et al., 2024). This really captured the imagination of the students. How do you bring in multiple histories, presents, and models of the future branching out of one tree? The “Futures Cone” might be in there but there are other models and they all have to coexist.

FG: I think the Cone was very instrumental. It is like the Double Diamond for design thinking. It can explain in a simple way the idea of the future for designers to implement when they go into practice. In reality, it’s a little bit more complicated, and you have to make adjustments to address cultures, identities, and the context. But I think it’s useful. Now, are you saying it is evolving towards a branching tree?

EH: Yes. The *Entangled Time Tree* is quite organic. It doesn’t look anything like a future cone. It doesn’t go left or right. It’s not linear. You start your project by thinking about the multiple paths of different actors and then they all emerge at a point in the ground. And then the tree goes off in many ways and in many shapes.

FG: But then how do you make a decision? That's my problem with transition design. They make these beautiful maps. But then you have 100 elements in there, which then you need to design. If each of them needs ten design interventions, that means you have 1,000 interventions. How do you start? What is the criteria for starting the intervention to make that change? Because at the end it's all about that.

CRF: Yeah, in Information Experience Design, I run the Interspecies Entanglements Field Collective, and a lot of what we do follows the kind of [Entangled Time Tree] model you're describing. It's very much about temporalities, but also about relationality. In IED, we work a lot with systems and information, navigating complexity and looking at it across different scales.

One of the things I do with my students is work across the micro, meso, and macro scales. We start by looking at histories, and not just human histories because, as I said, the whole idea is around interspecies thinking. How do we connect beyond the human, and how do we decentralize the human?

We begin with histories so they can develop a timeline of the past. Then they situate themselves in the present at the macro scale of communities and examine how they actually relate to one another. That involves a lot of observation. Finally, at the micro scale, they focus on a particular place, situating themselves within it both spatially and temporally.

EH: Speed has become a new interest this year among the students. We have a student who is looking at the pace of urban development, looking at Chinese work culture and how you slow down, and use rest as resistance. And then another who's looking at the long-term maintenance of high-rise council buildings; the kind of mundane acts and investments in the future, the speed of care and repair versus the speed of decline if you let something go for too long. If there's no upkeep, buildings that could last a century have their lives cut short, torn down for new developments, creating huge disruptions for residents and their long-term stability. [Students are] overlaying different timelines to understand relationships between the lives of buildings, humans, communities.

FG: But that's interesting. It's almost an evolution because the first iteration of the future was very much technological (Critical and Speculative Design). Then, the second wave became much more focused on the social, the intersection with policy and participatory (Co-Speculative, Cybernetics, Prospective). And now what you are suggesting is that there is a third wave, which is much



Yuhe Hu (Wendy), Today is 32nd, 2024. Courtesy of the artist



Jane Lee and Seonbin Yun, (Still from) Micro Dérive, 2024. Courtesy of Jane Lee

YUHE HU: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST. JANE LEE AND SEONBIN YUN: COURTESY OF JANE LEE

more focused into nature and biology logics (Xeno,)

CRF: That third wave, the biological, the more-than-human, is precisely where Interspecies Entanglements sits, and I'd add it's not just a new subject matter, it's a new ethics of authorship. Once a fungus or a microbe has agency in the project, the designer stops being the sole author.

EH: One of the very simple but poetic projects last year was about plankton. It was called *Living in Plankton Time* (Yike Chen, 2024-25), and it was about multispecies temporality. The student looked at tides and the rhythms of plankton, how humans might move beyond an anthropocentric idea of time and coexist with natural cycles. She looked at the life of plankton, nutrient flows, seasons, how plankton moves through the ocean and when, and the ecosystemic impacts when it is disrupted.

The decision point came from how we rethink human activity in the ocean to accommodate plankton time. [The student] created a calendar and a manual, covering things like when ships should travel, or minimize light and sound pollution, reorienting human life around nature's timelines.

FG: For me, the golden era of design interaction is between 2008 and 2015. It became the main practice after the banking crisis, because after the collapse of the system, we needed a critical space to propose alternative views.

For me they are the hinge between the applied art component of design, that comes from William Morris, in which you are an author, and the transition into much more applied sciences, with the social sciences being the main thing, which is more about impact. They embodied the two souls in that period. If you see the work of James, Anthony, or Fiona, you see the two elements intersecting. They have the sociology and they have the element of authorship. After 2015 the authorship element started to dissolve much more into the collective. And then sociology became much more dominant than art. Currently, and probably consequently, I think there is less emphasis on aesthetics in Design. The methodological turn is affecting this element. Now I'm experimenting with the idea of exo-aesthetics, but it's still in its infancy.

CRF: I'm so glad you mentioned aesthetics because students come in wanting to do projects using speculation or futures, but there's still this huge legacy of the aesthetic that Dunne & Raby established a long time ago. It's a very modernist aesthetic: clean, white, gallery-like, very controlled. There's still this

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Elise Hodson

assumption that this is what future-oriented design should look like. It takes quite a while to move beyond that and ask, "OK, where do these aesthetic representations actually come from? What values do they embody?" It's important for students to understand that speculative or futures work isn't defined by a particular visual language. It's much more about the methods, the questions you're asking, and the way you're approaching the work.

The challenge is that those earlier aesthetics are still incredibly desirable and recognizable, so students often default to them. But newer approaches have very different aesthetics. They can be messier, more situated, less clinical, and less polished. They don't necessarily land as immediately because they don't carry the same visual legacy, but in many ways they're much more aligned with the kinds of futures we're trying to explore.

In Information Experience Design we have a very phenomenological approach to the world. It's all about how we experience it through our senses — sight, touch, taste, and smell — and how that connects with emotion, cognition, and culture. The whole idea behind the program is that experience is not neutral. It's shaped by personal histories, social environments, and the spaces we inhabit. We see experiential design as a practice that creates spaces, objects, and systems that allow people to engage with different forms of information in meaningful ways.

We bring together a range of strategies. We work with storytelling, technology, and psychology, and we also use a lot of systems thinking because we're interested in different ways of engaging with information and shaping it in ways that can open up new forms of understanding.

I run Interspecies Entanglements, which is focused on relationality and on decentering the human. My colleague Nestor [Pestana] runs a unit called Impossible Futures, which challenges current norms through world-building. We also have colleagues working on future cities and other themes. But what connects all of these is the experiential lens. The question is always: how do we inhabit these possible futures in meaningful ways?

EH: Fernando, you kind of build out of IDE [Innovation Design Engineering] through your PhD.

FG: Yeah, I think we have been evolving over the last few years. We used to have a module which was called "X-Y", and we used to do a lot of space-related interventions and inter-planetary contexts. Now with the change of curriculum it's much more pragmatic. We start with context and normally we give a real-world context, but within the future, that is going to have a range of social and political and climatic impact. Students need to design with those kinds of constraints. So it is open to social impact.

We are not implementing a technology-led approach, rather a context-led approach — technology that comes to service whatever is going to happen if it's needed. That's for IDE year one. And then in year two, if projects start to become too pragmatic, we do some workshops, sometimes using cartoons and comic strips. Sometimes, if students are not going green enough, we do a workshop called "The Green Dictator".

GB: The major distinction between Super-FUTURES and what you two have just described is the spatial perspective. It's situated in inhabited space. We're in the school of Architecture. It's one of the pathways through the MA in Interiors.

I often talk about architecture, futures, and queer theory as this ethically non-monogamous throuple — they all need one another, but none quite speaks the others' language.

We work through film with an experiential kind of methodology — spatial design within a filmic lens, not [only considering] the spaces that exist in the film, but film and cinematography as a spatial methodology, and film as a design method, querying all those definitions as you go.

There's the underlying pedagogic question for me that sits inside my teaching and also inside my research: how do you teach care for things that don't yet exist in this world where we're all so blinded and deafened by the present?

How on earth am I supposed to put tomorrow's next generation, or someone in a different country, or a version of humanity that

Gem Barton is Reader in Design Pedagogies & superFUTURES lead Interior Design MA at the Royal College of Art. Gem is an author and senior academic specialising in the interrelations between human behaviour, speculation and spatial design. Currently teaching at the Royal College of Art, she was awarded a coveted National Teaching Fellowship in 2019, is Senior Fellow of AdvanceHE, and founding chair of QuEAN – Queer Educators in Architecture Network. Gem’s work in the future(s) space comes to life through her advisory, research, teaching and leadership of superFUTURES at the RCA, her directorship of the Experimental Realism platform and consultation services offered through her Office for Speculative Spatial Design (O-SSD).

Dr Fernando Galdon is a design practitioner, researcher and educator whose work brings together design, computer science, neuroscience, philosophy and sociology. His work investigates the social, technological, and political implications of designing trust. As a tutor at the Royal College of Art, Fernando co-leads Innovation Design Engineering modules on Transdisciplinary Practices and Regenerative practices (SuperGreen) .

Dr Elise Hodson is Academic Lead and Senior Tutor in the MDes Design Futures programme at the School of Design, Royal College of Art. She has been instrumental in building this new programme, launched in 2023, and takes great inspiration from colleagues and students who are pushing the boundaries of design futures approaches and pedagogy, applied to a wide range of complex issues through the lenses of strategy and long-term thinking. Elise’s research combines design culture and collaborative design practice with a focus on global production networks and social sustainability. Elise holds a Ph.D. in communication and culture (York University, Toronto) and Master’s degrees in design history (Bard Graduate Center, NYC) and museum studies (University of Toronto).

Dr Carolina Ramirez-Figueroa is an architect, designer, researcher, and educator whose work explores the intersections of design, architecture, living systems, and critical technologies. As Senior Lecturer in Information Experience Design at the Royal College of Art, she investigates how design can engage with more-than-human worlds to imagine alternative technological, ecological, and social futures. Her practice combines speculative world-building, immersive media, and biological systems to question anthropocentric assumptions and explore new forms of coexistence between humans and other living entities. Her work has been exhibited internationally, including in London, Mexico, Helsinki, Tokyo, Taipei, Montreal, Brussels, Edinburgh, Tel Aviv, and India.

Alex Estorick is the Founding Editor of *Right Click Save*.

With special thanks to Elise Hodson.

I don’t yet understand or have never even thought of? How do I understand any of that? And how do we teach others to be open to designing for that or enabling those things? You’ll be hard pressed to find anything architectural or spatial. Nothing about home and domesticity. I’m internally tangled with the profession and the bodies that drive it at the same time.

EH: One of the things the students notice is that the faculty use the same terms to mean very different things. This is partly because we all come from different backgrounds, but also because there are so many interpretations of futures and so much overlap in terminology across fields. We are in a sense creating our own meanings now as the program develops.

You could say that our Design Futures program aligns closely with strategic foresight in terms of a process. It’s very research heavy. It has elements of IED in terms of visualization, technologies, storytelling, and experiences. All projects have to communicate multiple future scenarios based on primary and secondary research. In the end, they need to propose a preferable future and explain who it is preferable for, plus a theory of change.

Some of the best student projects are the ones that get stuck in the research. They end up focusing on facilitating conversations about the future, or first figuring out how to even bring people into conversations about the future. What tools do you need? How to engage people in thinking differently about the future, let alone come up with a plan for the future? How do we even start talking about the future?

CRF: When I was in Design Products and working within the Design Futures pathway, it was very much driven by a commercial output that had to be situated in the market, or at least demonstrate some form of impact. One of the things I noticed quite a lot with students, and why my pedagogy has changed quite significantly, is that this notion of the future often feels very detached from them. They tend to see it as something separate, something external that they have to influence from a distance. As a result, this idea of care doesn’t really come through. It’s quite difficult for them to understand how they themselves are implicated in it, or how relationality works in practice — how they impact, and are in turn impacted by, these systems.

EH: Many of our students choose topics that reflect priorities in their home countries, and we are learning as much from them as they are from us. More are starting to choose London as a context, but they often default

It’s not so much design itself that is restricting the imagination, but rather the dominant idea of design that we still have, one that is very much shaped by Western modernity. Alongside this restriction of imagination, there’s also the question of the asymmetry of imagination: who is allowed to imagine, in which contexts, and why?

Carolina
Ramirez-Figueroa

to where they’re from. China has a 100-year plan. I had a student recently explain the country’s previous two five-year plans, and the next five-year plan, as common knowledge. I wonder what kind of impact that has on awareness and comfort with long-term thinking.

FG: I think the trap is always to guarantee. It is the tension between the two schools of futures — constructivist versus anticipation — the latest with Buckminster Fuller or Herbert Simon versus the former with John Chris Jones.

The problem is that we cannot guarantee, even if you go fully scientific, because you cannot control the main variable, which is the context. This determines the value of things or the direction of things. So, we are all the time trapped into this idea of the guarantee. And I think we need to fight almost every corner to be able to propose different approaches that cannot guarantee but can inform about that future to see how we can operate it in a different way.

FG: Can we talk about the million dollar question. Do we use AI?

GB: Our position is it’s a tool [so] if you want to use it you can. But you must declare at all stages what it has done.

For our students that do use AI in the film animation processes, they are required to demonstrate exactly how they’ve made a typical scene in a film. Part of their submission is to develop a workflow that provides them with consistency. AI rendering and video software are secondary tools that students use alongside the more typical



Sanyukta Mathure, (Still from) Breathing Futures: Envisioning the Future of Urban Resilience for Mumbai 3.0, 2025

architectural software such as Rhino and Blender. Students design and build the locations that the film scenes take place within, quite similar to the process of building a set for theater or a backdrop in a lot for a movie. In different software programs, they will build their characters and mobilize them. The student’s role extends then into a spatial choreography, instructing AI software to mobilize the characters in the same way a director might “walk from scene left to scene right, scratch your nose, pause, and look out of the window”.

It’s not making the film for them, but it is enabling them to make things that they couldn’t make otherwise. We create the processes for sense-checking those things. Part of their submission is a technology ethics statement that doesn’t come from the program.

EH: We just sent an email to all the students. Are they using AI for things that they should be using it for, to help them co-create images or help them synthesize well, to help them find sources or help them write? Now the primary research is more important than ever — show us the process, which has to include going to talk to real people, going to real places. I think AI works super well for some students who use it conscientiously and go back to it over and over again, and put so much work into reprompting and redoing and merging it with other softwares. Some really good films have come out of it.

FG: For us, it’s the same. It’s almost a render. It’s kind of a tool. You are in control. So then it can help you a lot [at] different stages. But I think where it’s getting better results [is] at the end, almost as a renderer.

CRF: Beyond AI-as-tool, the thing I find most live for us is AI meeting the more-than-human directly — projects like the Earth Species Project and Project CETI using machine learning to decode animal communication. That’s the speculative-becoming-real moment: “Talking to animals” was a design fiction, now it’s a machine-learning paper. And it raises exactly the critical question our students sit with when we build an AI to “translate” a whale. Whose categories are we imposing? On robotics, it’s less central for us than the biological, but where it surfaces in interspecies work is around sensing and soft/biohybrid systems: machines as instruments for perceiving non-human worlds rather than as autonomous agents.

EH: Could we talk now about London as context. Why futures now in London?

GB: There’s lots of futures work happening all around the world. London’s privilege isn’t that more futures work happens here, it’s

that it’s heard. Which carries a responsibility: to platform the geographies that are handed a future rather than allowed to imagine one.

FG: In the UK we have an educational model which is very flexible. Some of the decisions made in the 1990s allow for experimentation that in other places doesn’t happen. For example, in Spain, it is the government who decides what the curriculum is. The last evolution was 1982. So they are still teaching 1982 design. It’s interesting that a lot of things probably happen here in the UK because there is a much more flexible framework which is open to other kinds of propositions than may be the case in other places.

EH: Are there any particular contemporary artists or academic texts that we’re all using?

CRF: The references we use on Interspecies Entanglements are quite specific: theoretically, Donna Haraway’s *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) and Anna Tsing’s *Mushroom at the End of the World* (2015), Karen Barad on entanglement and intra-action, Arturo Escobar’s pluriverse, and Jakob von Uexküll’s Umwelt, which is really the IED reference because it’s about perceptual worlds. On the artist side: Tomás Saraceno, Pierre Huyghe, Jakob Kudsk Steensen, and bio-art practitioners like Heather Barnett, who works with slime mold, and Špela Petrič. They matter to us because the non-human isn’t a metaphor in that work, it’s a collaborator. ■■■

SANYUKTA MATHURE: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



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INTERVIEW

THE CURATOR ECOLOGY

A new generation of computational artists and creative technologists discusses the evolution of the curator-artist

RACHEL FALCONER AND ALEX ESTORICK



Rafa Roeder, *An effort to communicate or to do the exact opposite*, 2026

RIGHT CLICK SAVE

What does it mean to occupy the hyphenated space between artist and curator? In a conversation hosted at Goldsmiths, University of London, *Right Click Save*'s Founding Editor, Alex Estorick, joined the college's Head of Creative Technology, Rachel Falconer, to examine the evolving figure of the curator-artist — a hybrid actor increasingly central to the ecology of contemporary art.

Moving between media theory, market history, and pedagogy, their discussion with a group of emerging talents from the MFA program traces how digital technologies, and the NFT in particular, have disrupted the infrastructures of the legacy art world, creating new freedoms and hierarchies in the process.

If remixing original content — or prompting generative AI that has been trained on original content — is now inherent to the digital condition, then creativity is increasingly a curatorial act.

At stake in this conversation is not simply the ascent of the curator, but the broader question of how cultural value is produced, contested, and distributed in the age of AI. One through line in the discussion is the language through which art legitimates itself: who gets to name movements, align emerging practices with canonical precedents, and determine which artists are remembered.

In the legacy art world, language has often been used to obscure rather than to illuminate meaning, transferring interpretive authority from artists to the keepers of the gallery system. Against this, editorial practice can also serve as a form of ethical curation and layer of resistance, one that is capable of rebalancing hegemonic structures and making legible the entangled realities in which digital artists are enmeshed.

The artists participating in the discussion are London Ham, Youwei Luo, Isabel Merchante, Mikhail, and Rafa Roeder. Their exchanges on smart contracts and resale royalties, display and spectacle, process and commodity, and access and privilege represent vital insights into the new age of hybrids.

Isabel Merchante: Nowadays we need to be curator-artists. We also have to behave like entrepreneurs or artists developing a business.

When NFTs came out, the part I found most exciting was that you could create a smart contract attached to your own work and continue receiving some benefit from the secondary market.

As an artist, I'm interested in learning more about ways to sustain my practice. But in the end, this seemed all talk, because when you collaborate with a gallery, nobody knows about these things.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RIGHT CLICK SAVE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.



Rachel Falconer and Rebecca Aston with students from the MFA Computational Arts at Goldsmiths, University of London

Alex Estorick: A lot of the reason Web3 technologies — blockchain, NFTs and smart contracts — were disruptive was because they challenged pre-existing legal regimes as well as the habits of the legacy art world. While there had existed ways of preserving digital media, we didn't have a means of creating a sustainable market. NFT marketplaces replaced traditional galleries as mediators in these natively digital transactions.

For a couple of years, there existed a generally accepted minimum 10% resale royalty, which has been a holy grail for contemporary artists for many decades going back to The Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer And Sale Agreement of 1971. At *Right Click Save*, we've covered various projects that seek to automate equity. At its best, the smart contract can function as a way of automating the compensation of digital labor. But because of the bust that followed the NFT boom, the potential value of smart contracts as a means of obviating the conditions of precarity in the digital economy has not been fully realized. These technologies offered the potential — indeed the temporary reality — of an alternative art world. We are now living in the aftermath of that.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHENCHEN CAI

Rachel Falconer: Which brings us back to the agency of this curator-artist, who is a hybrid creature in themselves who can influence the flows of gatekeeping, whether institutional, para-institutional, or external to the institution.

As computational artists, we can't avoid the agency that we are drawn into through our hybrid condition: interfacing with a

Taking the process and putting an artificial punctuation mark on it is essentially what exhibitions, institutions, museums, and the academy do: they impose a false punctuation mark on something that, if left to its own devices, would continue to evolve and rotate.

Rachel Falconer

complex art ecology. The aftermath is something that can be highly generative. It can provide versatile ground to renegotiate our position as computational practitioners.

AE: It's also hard to ignore the fact that many artists in this new cultural economy are also collecting. That is partly a function of a natively digital market that started out life as a gift economy, which invites people to perform behaviors that might have once been carried out by a gallery or PR agency. But because it often privileges individuals with big social followings, success in the Web3 ecosystem has often involved an artificial, and temporary, inflation of cultural value. The fact that many participants in the digital space have often embraced hype — in contrast to the legacy art world, which tends to trade in clever-sounding artspeak — is not a cause for celebration, but it does indicate a generational shift.

It's hard not to feel that the new creator-collector-curator is a late capitalist incarnation of homo economicus. But, at the same time, because of their literacy in code-based systems, today's radically-minded digital artists can also double as disruptive and

ART & TECH | Q3 2026

London Alexander Ham is an artist from Houston, Texas, who lives and works in London. His ideas manifest in whichever material best suits their needs. His practice emerges from a long relationship with filmmaking that is refracted through experiments in sculpture, computer graphics, sound, and performance. From 2016 to 2019, he was the director of Blank Check, an artist-run gallery space. From 2022 to 2024, he was the director of The Car Wash. He is currently an MFA candidate in Computational Arts at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Youwei Luo is a contemporary artist with more than five years of professional experience working across sculpture, installation, 3D printing, sound, and computational media. He is pursuing an MFA at Goldsmiths, University of London. Youwei's work interrogates the boundaries between life and machine, nature and culture, and the artificial and the organic. Central to his approach is materiality, metamorphosis, and post-anthropocentric perspectives, creating hybrid objects and environments that invite reflection on resilience, transformation, and the evolving relationships between humans, technology, and the natural world. .

Isabel Merchante is a visual artist with a background in design and computation. Her work integrates programming, neural networks, projection, and ephemeral matter to reimagine technology as an emotional and poetic tool. She designs systems in which technical objects are displaced from their sociopolitical logic of efficiency to become companions in thought. An alumna of the Royal College of Art, London, and UFV, Madrid, Isabel is currently completing an MFA in Computational Arts at Goldsmiths, University of London, supported by a "la Caixa" Foundation Postgraduate Fellowship Abroad.

Mikhail is an arts student and programmer based in London.

Rafa Roeder is an artist and researcher based in London. Her work is concerned with how humans relate to the technological and societal systems shaping their lives. Keeping the inner workings of film, electronics, performance, and other technology-based processes on the surface, she demystifies these systems. She holds a BA in Filmmaking and is completing an MFA in Computational Arts at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Dr Rachel Falconer is an independent curator, Senior Lecturer, and Head of Creative Technology at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her systems-based curatorial practice operates across contemporary art, feminist technoscience, critical AI, and networked culture, developing alternative exhibition models and research platforms that investigate the entanglement of network apparatus and technological and social behaviors. She is an RSA Fellow.

Alex Estorick is the Founding Editor of *Right Click Save*.



Youwei Luo, *Prism of Belief*, 2026. Photography by Chenchen Cai

ethical regulators, reprogramming technical systems toward more inclusive operations.

London Ham: There's also a pretty strong analog history of artists trading paintings with other artists — Marcel Duchamp selling [works by Constantin] Brâncuși to survive while he was making his own work in New York. What I'm really curious about is the idea of aesthetic rigor and how that gets established within a distributed ecosystem.

AE: Back in 2022, I led a study "In Search of an Aesthetics of Crypto Art", looking at approximately 20,000 tags — words artists were associating with their particular works on the marketplace SuperRare. What we found was that of the top 50 tags, 30 had nothing to do with fine art, but five of the top 10 did. You had words like "surreal" or "abstract", and colors like black and red alongside a range of media terminology. It was clear from that study that we were dealing with a hybrid discourse as well as an age of relative innocence.

Few of that generation had an art historical training, but that doesn't devalue the cultural importance of a project like *CryptoPunks* (2017), which is simultaneously a collectible, a blue-chip digital asset, and a prototype of long-form generative art. It is its polyvalence that makes it so disruptive of art-world norms.

Youwei Luo: The process of tokenization — which is a form of symbolization — seems to carry cultural values and attributes that cannot be separated. Even though commodity value and artistic value are not essentially

related, [the token is] reduced to a currency rather than an artistic output. I'm wondering why it is necessary to frame [the work] as art in that scenario, and how we avoid [producing] another inevitable monopoly.

AE: Blockchain and NFTs have been used as a form of resistance to traditional frameworks. Crypto art, which was codified by Jason Bailey, was one solution for how to mobilize these technologies in support of a movement for radical inclusivity. We've published articles about memecoins, which are not generally regarded as art even though they combine a visual image or signifier with a financial asset in much the same way as work of tokenized digital art.

As an editor, I'm always frustrated when language ceases to be a means of coming to terms with an artwork's intended or unintended meanings, and becomes instead a vehicle to evacuate meaning entirely. This often coincides with a transfer of control over a work's cultural significance to the keepers of the gallery system or indeed crypto's own clan of whales. What is it like studying a specific creative medium at a time when you can see for yourselves that the domains beyond your own are just as relevant — and that having hybrid literacies is, in a way, the only way to survive in a world of layered realities?

Rafa Roeder: I come from film, and I came to Goldsmiths looking for a methodology for things I was already trying to navigate. To me, it's a question of what I'd be interested in expressing — perhaps from something I've read or something that resonates

unconsciously — and then asking: what's the ecosystem of this idea? Maybe it's important to have a VR headset but then, maybe not. Right now I'm thinking about lecture-performance techniques as a way of addressing audiences directly. Even the most beautiful and sensitive exhibition can be nebulous but there are direct forms of expression that we can use to bring audiences in.

As a viewer, the exhibitions I enjoy most involve displays that go beyond the tool to the building of an ecosystem. I remember an exhibition by Pipilotti Rist at MOCA in Los Angeles a few years ago where you'd enter a whole ecosystem with a lot of different media: sculpture, video art, as well as more technically involved work. That invited curiosity and allowed one to enter further and further.

My education in film has taught me that everything matters: every light, every color, every edge of a table, everything can prompt something. But I also try to resist that impulse as I can get lost in trying to drive an experience for the audience. I would like my audiences to be curious and contemplative rather than hoping for entertainment.

AE: Are you conscious of the benefits of an interdisciplinary outlook or of synthesizing different literacies?

Mikhail: I've been working like that for quite a while, so I'm not sure I'm conscious of it anymore. It's less common for me to think "I'm doing X and Y and merging them" than "this direction is interesting to me."

AE: How important is the output to you relative to the concept or code?

M: I'm currently more interested in parameter spaces than in any particular point or output within them. I keep returning to the Lyapunov fractal as a beautiful space. One might ask: "What is the space of all possible animals, and what would it look like to navigate that?"

Rather than looking at a single animal or output of a system, what if computational art looked at spaces?

AE: I wonder whether it's possible to engage audiences in this expanded, interdisciplinary field of digital arts without reverting to tired, skeuomorphic terms.

LH: I remember seeing Laure Prouvost at the Moody Center in Houston, and the thing that tied everything together was narrative. The show included VR headsets inside baskets suspended from the ceiling: you'd pull the basket down over your head, which was simultaneously a sculptural object and an immersive experience. What bound it all

It's hard not to feel that the new creator-collector-curator is a late capitalist incarnation of homo economicus. But, at the same time, because of their literacy in code-based systems, today's radically-minded digital artists can also double as disruptive and ethical regulators, reprogramming technical systems toward more inclusive operations

Alex Estorick

together was the attempt to tell a story. Like Rafa, I come from a film background and, for me, the idea is to try to filter an idea through a medium instead of the medium itself being the idea, which seems like the trap in working with bleeding-edge tools or computation.

You're building this extraordinary tool, and someone's asking: "Okay, but why? What does it do? What do I care?"

RF: Not what does it do but what does it communicate?

LH: Exactly.

RF: The NFT era was this imaginary moment where tech would save us, where tech would address the class system that permeates the traditional art world. But then a different type of class system came into play. Tech bros have very well-resourced platforms. Maybe that disruption was one of the first moments to start challenging particularly computational arts practice [and] to start to become more destabilized or decentralized.

AE: But then, if one is not giving people an entryway or allowing them to locate themselves within a particular techno-social reality, what is the point? That is an imperative for a curator in this expanded and uncertain space. Artists can write the rules — and DIY is, I think, increasingly the only way of adequately coming to terms with the

monopolistic nightmare that envelops digital experience.

RR: For me, resisting the commodity definitely puts the process in the middle. I live the process; I'm not constantly producing products. But then the commodity becomes the process. I come from the Global South; I was born and raised in Peru, so resistance is sort of in my background. Process is vulnerable, uncertain, messy, beautiful, chaotic, which are all the things I grew up with. But there's a conflict between process, commodity, bringing people in, and output as a product that entertains, which is what we expect from tech. In my own practice I try to leave the process uncertain and cryptic.

AE: I'm interested in your process of suspending different considerations in a kind of flexible, maybe even unstable, framework. That feels to me like a really sensitive curatorial strategy — not to come down on the side of process or output, but to suspend both in tension. That's a real solution: unfinished perhaps but not in a negative sense.

RF: I'm wondering how that contingency, confusion, ambiguity, and blurred edges — the constant shifting of all those elements within your practice — could then be laid bare in an institutional context. To me, that's exciting and specific, not nebulous.

AE: Coming back to the curatorial layer within these patterns of entanglement, to me there's an imperative to inject a kind of legibility about artistic approaches that are hybrid, elusive, and perhaps necessarily shapeshifting.

RF: Curatorial practice is not neutral, and it doesn't have to be delivered by one person or entity — it can be a collaborative process with other humans and other-than-humans. I formulate my curatorial approach around this idea of holding my responsibility as a curator lightly, but also with a certain adherence to that responsibility — operating as a kind of archivist or counter-cartographer; a fluid interpreter of the situation.

Taking the process and putting an artificial punctuation mark on it is essentially what exhibitions, institutions, museums, and the academy do: they impose a false punctuation mark on something that, if left to its own devices, would continue to evolve and rotate.

AE: Perhaps part of the role of the curator or artist or hybrid is to try and render temporary and porous structures that are fixed and hegemonic.

RF: Whether we come back to this idea of artist, curator, or resistor, it's DIY. ■■■



Read the full article at
www.rightclicksave.com



Yinka Ilori, *Dreaming with Flamingos* (2026) is the artist's first digital interactive work. It was created in collaboration with Google Arts & Culture Lab, and will be presented at Creative Intelligence

A FESTIVAL FOR LONDON: CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE

Digital innovation and AI's role in reshaping global society is the subject of an inaugural three-day event that also marks the 75th anniversary of the Festival of Britain

The artists Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg, Holly Herndon, Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, Ayoung Kim, Andrew Thomas Huang, Liam Young, Kate Crawford, Vladan Joler, and Sougwen Chung are among the participants in Creative Intelligence, a new London-based festival exploring how art and technologies, including AI, are combining to shape the future.

The event, which will be rich in music as well as visual art and public discussion, is inspired by the 75th anniversary of the Festival of Britain, the utopian, post-austerity artist and scientist-led celebration of the future which was the Centre's foundational moment in 1951.

Creative Intelligence was commissioned and produced by the Centre and is curated

with PACT (Planetary Art Culture Technology). Keri Elmsly, founder of PACT, was invited by Mark Ball, the artistic director of Southbank Centre, to curate the first festival. "The fundamental engagement with our own power and agency and imagination is what I want people to come away with," Elmsly tells *Right Click Save*, "in whatever form that speaks to them. Because this is for everybody."

Peckham Digital — the annual, community-led festival and creative technology organization in south-east London — will

present the city's grassroots creative computing communities in the foyer of the Queen Elizabeth Hall during Creative Intelligence. The festival also includes a one-day Creative Intelligence Summit, involving discussions and performances led by many of the featured artists. It includes a deep listening exercise, led by Herndon, and a discussion of "The Image After AI" with Sougwen Chung, K Allado-McDowell, and Andrew Thomas Huang, hosted by Alex Estorick, the Founding Editor of *Right Click Save*.

Elmsly, Ball, and Peckham Digital's co-founder Bea Taylor Searle outline their plans for the festival, a gathering designed to offer an institutional, and grassroots prism on digital innovation at one of London's central public spaces for arts and creativity.



Read the full article at www.rightclicksave.com

Our ambition is to invite future-facing artistic practices that place human agency at the center

Keri Elmsly on a quest to discover the art center of the future

When I returned to London in 2025, after 11 years away working on Sphere Las Vegas's development and at ACMI, Australia's national museum of screen culture, I found that the city's rich ecosystem for critically informed art and creative computing had continued to thrive in DIY communities, collectives, and institutional programs. What was missing in the UK was an institutionally-backed annual festival to prototype, exchange, and showcase ambitious ideas, with a focus on human agency, imagination, infrastructure, and process.

Creative Intelligence, commissioned by Southbank Centre, is designed to fill that gap. Conceived as a home to "art for all", and presented as a public prototype, the festival is a three-day takeover of the Southbank's site. Our aim is to be audacious and collaborative, and to create a festival that invites experimentation; to curate with an open mind, allowing the messy and imperfect, while simultaneously presenting refined installations and concepts by leading artists.

When so many conversations frame the tsunami of artificial intelligence as something inevitable, we are looking to allow complexity on the subject; to admit the need for explanation, for the assertion of ownership; and to bring the debate to the stage.

I believe there is an incredible amount of existing work that deserves to be presented to new audiences, rather than always asking artists to make something new when there is rarely the capital to support it. That is one of the reasons we are working with Serpentine Arts Technologies to present Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley's exhibition "The Delusion" after its successful run at the Serpentine in 2025-26, and Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler's work *Anatomy of an AI System* (2018), a map of the supply chains, labor, power, capital, and environmental cost behind a single consumer object.

The festival's program architecture opens with the "Glossary of Creative Intelligence" section, where the artist Love Ssega and the creative technologist Razik Darji are producing a visual and textual work offering a living vocabulary for the ideas the festival holds.

In "Algorithmic Ecosystems", nature is the main character and entanglement between nature and technology feels inevitable.



Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg, (detail from) *Pollinator Pathmaker*, 2021-present. The work, which designs gardens algorithmically for pollinating insects rather than humans, will be on show at Creative Intelligence

We are presenting an installation by Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg, *Pollinator Pathmaker*, and the premiere of a new sound work from Katie Paterson, *Ideas*, narrated by Mary Anne Hobbs — an expansive recital of the planetary-scale ideas, materials, and systems we are all part of. At the Creative Intelligence Summit, Anab Jain of the design and experiential futures company Superflux, gives a keynote on ecology and interdependence, while new platforms for artist-led

Keri Elmsly is a global curator and producer whose collaborative practice builds institutional programs, cultural infrastructure, and the work of artists operating at planetary scales and worldbuilding. In 2025 she founded PACT (Planetary Art Culture Technology), a collective championing artists' unique utility as engines for imagination, agency, and change. Keri recently served as Senior Vice President at Sphere Studios (Sphere, Las Vegas) and Executive Director of Programming at ACMI (Australia's Museum of Screen Culture). As commissioner and executive producer, credits include: Ayoung Kim, Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg, Katie Paterson, Liam Young, Marshmallow Laser Feast, Quayola, Serwah Attafuah, United Visual Artists, and Universal Everything. She also mentors at New Inc at the New Museum (New York), and with Serpentine Arts Technologies' new Future Art Ecosystems R&D Fellowship (London).

products and invention are presented with the business accelerator Restless Egg and the quantum computing company MOTH.

At the "Exploration Bazaar", curated by the digital strategist Justin Spooner and the expert on AI in education Professor Rose Luckin, students, researchers, and creative technologists from London's universities will present works-in-progress and live experiments, accompanied by a rolling program of pop-up debates on how we want AI to inform our lives.

The live performance program uses the stage as a testing ground for creative technology, born of poetry and movement, while tackling entanglement and embodiment.

I'm thrilled we are presenting a program of London firsts: Holly Herndon leading a Listening Session; and Bantutronic — Finding 15 Live, directed by Julianknxx, performed by THABO, guiding the audience into the world of Bantutronic philosophy, accompanied by live composition from the pianist Aron Kyne. It is a meeting of ancestral voice and contemporary technology that is made to resonate not just today but 500 years from now.

Jazia Hammoudi, a member of PACT, has led the curation in bringing US projects, co-produced by Onassis ONX, to have their UK premieres at Creative Intelligence. Making his UK debut, fresh from the Lincoln Center's Collider Fellowship, Kevin Peter He asks what becomes of touch when bodies are separated, extended and remade through technology, in his kinetic performance *Vestige*.

"Living Mythologies" draws together four large-scale installations across the site, each constructing a world with its own proposition about what transformation, and belonging, require. The UK premiere of the LA artist Andrew Thomas Huang's *The Deer of Nine Colors* (2025) speaks to transcendence, and transformation. Liam Young's *World Machine* (2026) imagines a future where a planetary supercomputer emerges, in a work that asks if we can reshape the planet for new technologies without repeating the destruction of the past.

Our ambition is that Creative Intelligence should offer an invitation to future-facing artistic and creative practices that actively shape and challenge technology, placing human agency at the center.

It is a privilege to be working at an historic site, one of such protopian civic ambition, and to be asking, with this festival, what the art center of the future can be.



An aerial view of the Festival of Britain, London, 1951, featuring the Royal Festival Hall, right, and two temporary structures, the aluminum Dome of Discovery, and the 300-foot-tall spike-like Skylon

This is about creating an open, collaborative forum

Mark Ball on lessons from the radical optimism of the Festival of Britain

Picture this. A crowd of people in the summer of 1951, still living under the shadow of post-war rationing, huddled in absolute fascination around a massive metal structure. They are playing Nim, a simple game of mathematical strategy, against Nimrod, the first digital computer designed specifically to play a game, built by the engineers John Bennett and Raymond Stuart-Williams at the electrical engineering company Ferranti.

There were no pixels or video screens. Just rows of lightbulbs on a raised stand flashing to represent the moves. Visitors took turns pressing buttons on an illuminated control panel to play against the machine, watching the blinking lights demonstrate its actual calculation process.

For those visitors to the 1951 Festival of Britain, it was a total revelation. They probably did not fully realize it at the time, but as they tried their hand at the controls, they were on the cusp of history. They were witnessing a world-changing moment when the public could directly see, touch, and

interact with a digital machine. It completely reframed the boundary between human agency and technology, 75 years ago.

That incredible post-war summer festival was defined by these glimpses of tomorrow. Down on the South Bank, right by the Royal Festival Hall, crowds were also queuing up at the futuristic Telekinema to put on special glasses and witness the world's first public showcase of 3D film and stereophonic sound.

The Festival of Britain was not just an exhibition. It was a radical blueprint for the future. Its masterminds used art, science, and

Mark Ball is Artistic Director, Southbank Centre. Joining the Southbank Centre as Artistic Director in 2021, Ball is responsible for the delivery of the entire artistic program, working with the Southbank Centre's talented artistic team and extensive creative network to produce a dynamic and world-class program in the heart of London. Prior to the Southbank Centre, Mark was Creative Director at Factory International, where he led the artistic program for The Factory. He has also held positions as Artistic Director and Chief Executive of the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT), Head of Events and Exhibitions at the Royal Shakespeare Company, and Artistic Director of Fierce!.

design as a “tonic for the nation”, a glorious burst of full Technicolor that snapped the country out of its monochrome post-war gloom. This year, as the Southbank Centre celebrates 75 years since the first chapter of its story, that same spirit of restless innovation and optimism is precisely what we are channeling.

Our site was built to be a democratic testing ground for big ideas. Today, we find ourselves at another historical crossroads. The rise of rapidly accelerating technologies, including of course AI, is fundamentally reshaping how we live, work, and express ourselves.

That is why we are launching Creative Intelligence, a festival that transforms our 11-acre site into a playground of human imagination. We need to get back into communal spaces. This is about creating an open, collaborative forum where artists, technologists, and the public can figure out the future together.

This isn't about just sitting back and watching. Just as those curious festival-goers did in 1951, we are inviting everyone to get hands-on with the world-changing possibilities of tomorrow. It's an invitation to dream, to play, and to assert that human creativity is at the absolute heart of the machine age.

COURTESY OF THE SOUTHBANK CENTRE ARCHIVE

Creative Intelligence matters because it builds on a long and often overlooked history of digital arts in London

Bea Taylor Searle on bringing creative computing to the festival

Peckham Digital's origin story starts on a gloomy day on Zoom in November 2020. Amid the isolation of lockdown, the London Creative Coding Meetup hosted an evening of bite-sized talks. Right at the end, the artist and entrepreneur Matt McDonnell put out a call for people interested in establishing a new digital arts festival in Peckham, south-east London.

Looking back, it feels like a synchronicity. At the time, I was writing a dissertation exploring the relationship between physical and Web-based art, while Matt was imagining a place where digital art communities could step away from their screens and meet in person. The idea immediately felt exciting and necessary. I sent him an email and, by March 2021, we had established Peckham Digital as a Community Interest Company (despite still not having met in person).

From day one, our focus with Peckham Digital has been on expanding access to creative computing. We want people to leave feeling that technology is something they can shape rather than simply consume.

Alongside that, we offer emerging artists their first paid exhibition opportunities while creating space for more experienced practitioners to share their knowledge.

Over the last four years, I have developed what I call “hands-dirty” programming. It aims to shift audiences away from passive consumption and toward active, embodied engagement with digital systems.

Creative Intelligence marks Peckham Digital's first major commission outside our annual festival. In the foyer of the Queen Elizabeth Hall, at the Southbank Centre, we will be celebrating London's creative computing communities, bringing them into view for

COURTESY OF ALGORHYTHMS, PECKHAM DIGITAL, AND CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE



AlgoRhythms is one of multiple creative computing groups that Peckham Digital will present in the foyer of the Queen Elizabeth Hall during Creative Intelligence

audiences who may never have encountered them before.

The program will reveal just how many forms creative computing can take. Audiences will experience Lady Ludd playing the electronic loom, discover work-in-progress projects through Phreaking Collective's Open Projector talks featuring Ubeboobey's cyberdecks, and witness Rock & Robots transform the space into a battleground for antweight robots.

What excites me about bringing these projects together is how they reveal creative computing as an ecosystem rather than a discipline. Threads from weaving, engineering, hacking, and art become tangled together, creating unexpected routes into the subject.

Bea Taylor Searle is a cultural producer and co-founder of Peckham Digital CIC, a Community Interest Company dedicated to widening access to creative technology within the arts. Through its annual festival and year-round programming, it platforms emerging computational artists, champions open-source tools, and builds inclusive spaces for communities to engage with digital art. She is currently pursuing a PhD at London South Bank University, exploring how computational arts can expand digital literacy.

Creative Intelligence matters because it builds on a long and often overlooked history of digital arts in London. Communities such as Furtherfield, Backspace, and node.London have provided spaces where artists and technologists can test new ideas in public. Furtherfield's concept of DIWO (Do It With Others) recognized that some of the most important developments in digital culture emerge collectively rather than individually. Their influence can still be felt in today's meetups, maker spaces, and independent cultural projects.

To me, Creative Intelligence continues that lineage. It shines a light on the communities doing this work right now and reminds us that innovation doesn't belong exclusively to Big Tech.

Some of the most interesting ideas emerge around folding tables, in workshop spaces, and at meetups where people build strange things simply because they are curious.

For London, the festival strengthens the connections between these communities. For the wider art world, it demonstrates that the UK remains home to a rich culture of creative technology. Creative Intelligence is not only a snapshot of what is happening now; it is a meeting point for the people shaping what comes next. ■■■

On July 1, 2026, *Right Click Save* launched a new Forum section as a discussion board for the digital art community. It has attracted posts and comments on a range of topics, not least on AI. In this Forum post, Joana Kawahara Lino warns of the provincializing perils of centering the art world in Eastern Standard Time

ON THE SUPER BOWL-IFICATION OF DIGITAL ART

There is a peculiar physics to attention in digital art, and it does not obey the logic the technology promised.

A blockchain has no time zone: a token minted in Yokohama settles identically to one minted in Brooklyn. And yet, the culture that grew around these systems behaves as if it has one clock, one season, and one championship game, played annually in a convention center in Florida or a hotel block in Manhattan. Call it the Super Bowl-ification of digital art: the collapse of a global field into a single televised event, where everything that happens outside the stadium is understood, at best, as preseason.

This is not a complaint about American talent, which is real, or American institutions, which are often generous. It is an observation about noise. The volume of a scene has become indistinguishable from its significance, and volume is unevenly distributed. Crypto Twitter runs on Eastern Standard Time. The market's mood is set between a New York morning and a Los Angeles afternoon. An exhibition in Tokyo, Lisbon, or Lagos does not lack quality; it lacks amplification, and in an attention economy the difference between the two has quietly been abolished.

Guy Debord saw this coming in 1967, before anyone had minted anything. The spectacle, he wrote, is not a collection of images but a social relation among people, mediated by images. What matters in the spectacle is not what happened but what was seen to happen, and by whom. Digital art's spectacle has a geography. The images that mediate the field's social relations are timestamped in one country's prime time. Everything else arrives as a rerun, if it arrives at all.

Art history has a name for this condition, and it predates the blockchain by half a century. In 1974, Terry Smith diagnosed what he called the provincialism problem:

Whether digital art becomes a global field or a domestic league with international broadcast rights is not a technical question. It is a question of where we choose to sit, and what we agree to call the game.

Joana Kawahara Lino

the structure by which one metropolitan center defines the terms of artistic value, and every other place is left to choose between imitation and invisibility. Smith was writing about New York and painting. The remarkable thing about Web3 is that it inherited this structure while claiming to have dissolved it. Decentralization was supposed to mean that the province no longer existed. Instead the province was globalized, and the center kept its zip code.



Byung-Chul Han offers the sharper diagnosis of why. Attention, in his account, has become the scarce resource of late capitalism, and scarcity produces monopoly. A field that measures itself in impressions will consolidate around whoever generates the most, and the machinery of impressions, the platforms, the conference circuits, the collector bases with disposable liquidity,

sits disproportionately in one country. The result is not a conspiracy. It is an acoustics problem. The room was built so that some voices carry and others, speaking at identical volume, do not.

The cost is not abstract. It is a canon assembled from what was loudest rather than what was best. It is the generative artist in Seoul whose practice will be discovered by the discourse three years later, framed as an influence on someone who came after. It is the exhibition reviewed by no one because it opened during an American holiday weekend. It is a field that congratulates itself on being borderless while its memory, prices, and prestige remain thoroughly bordered.

Simone Weil wrote that attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity. The line is usually quoted as sentiment, but it works as economics. A field decides what it values by deciding where it looks, and a field that only looks at the stadium has made a decision, whether or not it admits to one. The Super Bowl model does not merely overexpose the center. It trains everyone, including artists at the periphery, to make work legible to the center, on the center's schedule, in the center's idiom. Smith understood this as the deepest damage of provincialism: not exclusion but self-adjustment.

The corrective is not another platform or another fund. It is duller and harder than that. It is criticism willing to file from the quiet rooms. It is collectors treating a Tokyo opening as an event rather than an exotic dateline. It is the slow, unglamorous work of paying attention before the noise arrives, because after the noise arrives, attention is no longer generosity. It is just consumption.

The blockchain never had a home team: the culture built one anyway.

Whether digital art becomes a global field or a domestic league with international broadcast rights is not a technical question. It is a question of where we choose to sit, and what we agree to call the game. ■



Read every post and comment on the Forum