ARTS TECHNOLOGIES

Announcement, Tuesday 22 November 2022

FUTURE ART ECOSYSTEMS 3: ART X DECENTRALISED TECH

The 3rd Serpentine Arts Technologies’ annual strategic briefing provides new learnings around decentralised technologies: what role does Web3 play in the future of art?

The report identifies emerging organisational patterns and puts forward recommendations for building a more empowered cultural sector for supporting democratic societies.

Image: FAE\ artwork by Harm van den Dorpel, 2022 and cover.
On 25 November 2022, Serpentine’s Arts Technologies will release the third Future Art Ecosystems (FAE) briefing to be presented as part of a sector convening event at Reference Point in London and streamed publicly via Serpentine’s Twitch platform (@SerpentineUK).

**FAE3**

FAE3 identifies new patterns for organisational and creative innovation within the broader space of decentralised technologies, variably dubbed as ‘Web3’, ‘crypto’ and ‘Dweb’. Through a series of interviews with specialists across art, decentralised technologies, innovation policy and civic, FAE3 formulates a series of prospective strategies for existing and new cultural organisations interested in Art and Advanced Technologies (AxAT) as well as the latter’s role in supporting resilient democratic societies.

Born out of a need to inform ecosystem design for art and advanced technologies (AxAT), Future Art Ecosystems (FAE) is an evolving resource for crystallising the dynamics and opportunities within emerging technology spaces for building 21st century public cultural infrastructure: systems required to produce, distribute and financially support AxAT practices that are responsive to the most urgent techno-social issues of our time.

**Some of the key questions that FAE3 addresses include:**

- Beyond the NFT hype, what is the significance of such decentralised technologies as distributed ledgers, smart contracts and Decentralised Autonomous Organisations (organisations built on blockchains) for the cultural sector?

- How does understanding the potential of decentralised technologies allow us to approach the cultural sector as a mutable and experimental space?

- How can better interconnections across existing and new organisations in culture, research, civic activism, and industry become a testing ground for the next generation of democratic systems?

**Insights from Future Art Ecosystems 3 include:**

- While NFTs have empowered artists to make use of the recent boom in digital asset economy, the long-term implications of the Web3 ecosystem for art and advanced technologies practitioners includes new business models and ways of interacting with audiences

- Building new coordination and operational tools is at the heart of the decentralised technologies’ approach to innovation. The cultural sector has much to learn from this approach
-Web3 view of ‘public value’ is constrained by overidentification with financial means of participation and, more generally, a lack of contextual grounding beyond the immediate communities who gather around minoritarian interests.

-Against the backdrop of increasing societal and geopolitical fragmentation, decentralised technologies signal the potential of building bridges across and through institutional contexts in order to renegotiate how cultural production is organised, financed and distributed as a public good.

The learnings will inform the future of the art and advanced technologies (AxAT) ecosystem and its implications for artists, audiences and institutions, and society.

FAE3 is produced by Serpentine R&D Platform in collaboration with artist Gary Zhexi Zhang, and advised by Seb Chan (CEO, Australian Center for Moving Image), Maria Paula Fernandez (Co-Founder of JPG Protocol and Founder of Department of Decentralisation), Aslak Aamot Helm (Diakron), curator & strategist Sophie Netchaef and Rival Strategy.

The briefing features actors and innovators including legal scholar and blockchain specialist Primavera De Filippi, leaders of Serpentine’s Blockchain Lab and author of Radical Friends, Ruth Catlow and Penny Rafferty, artists Harm van Dorpel and Sarah Friend, crypto Strategy Director Kei Kreutler, Black Swan DAO, Director of NEW INC Salome Asega, Head of Programme at FACT Liverpool Maitreyi Maheshwari, CEO of Australia’s Centre for the Moving Image Seb Chan, Creative Commons’ Catherine Stihler and Brigitte Vézina, Head of Challenge at UKRI Andrew Chitty, and President of RadicalxChange, Matt Prewitt.

Bettina Korek, Serpentine CEO, and Hans Ulrich-Obrist, Artistic Director, Serpentine said: “We are thrilled to share our Arts Technologies team’s deep research into how decentralized technologies are evolving new opportunities for artists, cultural organizations and society as a whole. Our annual Future Art Ecosystems report not only convenes interdisciplinary conversations on advanced technologies and art, but also stands as a blueprint for how these powerful innovations can be applied in the world. We look forward to continued debate and discussion with our collaborators and audiences following FAE3’s publication, and to putting these findings into action through our programme, towards Serpentine’s mission of building new connections between artists and society.”

Kay Watson, Serpentine Head of Arts Technologies said: “As a sector convenor in Art and Technology, Serpentine is committed to developing and sharing know-how that is developed by the public sector for the public sector.”

Victoria Ivanova, Serpentine R&D Strategic Lead, said: “Future Art Ecosystems is a living document that would not exist without the generosity of our peers in culture, technology and policy. It allows the Serpentine R&D Platform to reflect on the role of cultural production in technologically driven societies, and to action proposals through new partnerships and collaborative networks.”
Since 2019, FAE has united and platformed the voices of leading artists, technologists, cultural organisations and civic actors, whose efforts are directed towards building out new systems that can drive organisational and creative innovation.

The strategic briefing informs the next chapter of Serpentine’s R&D Platform, which supports creative R&D for Arts Technologies and the cultural sector at large and facilitates the development of networked know-how and cross-organisational prototyping of new tools and infrastructures. It is intended as a shared tool to align the objectives and strategies of organisations, funders and policy actors.

Informed by a creative R&D approach, and following the inaugural *Artist Worlds* commission, *Primal Tourism*, produced in 2021 by Jakob Kudsk Steensen, Serpentine is developing a multilevel downloadable game and a complementary blockchain-based project developed with Brazilian artist Gabriel Massan and a team of collaborators. *Third World*, is described by Massan as a ‘consciousness-raising game that explores Black-Indigenous Brazilian experiences.’ It will launch in February 2023 online via Steam and onsite at Serpentine and amplify Serpentine’s commitment to gaming projects.

Leveraged by Tezos, Third World’s Web 3 strategy will expand the game’s reach into online player communities by building an active and ongoing archive of gameplay.

**LAUNCH EVENT: An evening of conversation and celebration**

**Friday 25th November**
**Reference Point**
2 Arundel Street
Temple WC2R 3DA
Please RSVP to nicolass@serpentinegalleries.org

During the launch, collaborators at RadicalxChange, a global movement for next-generation political economies, will lead a collective deliberation exercise with the help of pol.is, a real-time system for gathering, analysing and understanding what large groups of people think in their own words, enabled by advanced statistics and machine learning.

**About Pol.is workshop with RadicalxChange**

Pol.is is a digital platform for deliberations, which uses machine learning and advanced statistical methods to highlight the points of agreement and disagreement that exist within a community. In this exercise we will use pol.is to work with the question: “What are the steps we need to take to help bring about an interoperable cultural sector?”. Participants will be asked to write short statements in response to the question (anonymously), and evaluate each other’s statements. At the end, a
The artworks commissioned for FAE3 are created by Harm van den Dorpel as an adaptation of his 2022 NFT collection, Markov’s Dream. In the original series, van den Dorpel’s software produces thirty-two animations whose compositions are generated by subdividing and transforming the rounded shapes through a Markov-chain-inspired mutation (in which the probability of each consequent event depends exclusively on the state attained in the previous event). In keeping with FAE3’s themes of hybridity and composability, this imagery identifies novel aesthetic formations emerging from the generative algorithm of Spawn and UI (You and I). The forms have been enlarged, converted to monochrome and processed through a custom halftone rasterisation algorithm.

About Serpentine Arts Technologies

Serpentine’s Arts Technologies proposes critical and interdisciplinary perspectives on advanced technologies through artistic interventions.

Supporting artist-led experimentation that challenges and reshapes the role that technologies can play in culture and society is at the heart of Arts Technologies’ commitment to Serpentine’s public mission. The programme supports artists in nurturing ambitious ideas and developing artworks that work with advanced technologies as a medium, tool or topic, often evolving iteratively and operating beyond gallery walls.

The foundation of the Arts Technologies programme is located in an evolving R&D Platform that supports the development of infrastructures for ongoing artistic exploration and interrogation of wider technological conditions within society.

About the Serpentine Arts Technologies Team

Alexander Boyes is an integrated Producer within Serpentine Arts Technologies. Alex augments with creators and researchers across art, gaming, science and performance to best achieve their outputs and processes that have previously included Art Gallery of NSW Sydney, Design Museum London, The Francis Crick Institute, and Royal Opera House.

Tamar Clarke-Brown is Curator (Commissions) Arts Technologies, working across artist-led projects that push the civic capacity of technologies, with emphasis on the power of myth and storytelling.

Róisín McVeigh is Associate Producer within Serpentine Arts Technologies team and Comms and Content Lead at Protein Community. In her work as a producer and communications strategist, she collaborates to build games, worlds, experiences and communities.
Victoria Ivanova is R&D Strategic Lead within the Arts Technologies team. As a curator-strategist, her focus is on infrastructures for shaping socio-economic, political and institutional realities. Her practice-based PhD collaboration between Serpentine and LSBU informed the prototyping of what are now the R&D Platform and Future Art Ecosystems.

Eva Jäger is Curator of Arts Technologies and Co-Investigator of the Creative AI Lab at Serpentine and King’s College London. In 2021 she developed the R&D Labyrinths series together with Trust to produce new formats for showcasing artistic research.

Kay Watson is Head of Arts Technologies. She is a producer and curator working with art and advanced technologies, with a specialisation in building teams for full stack art commissions. She is also a Trustee of Brighton Photo Fringe, Mediale and The Photographers’ Gallery. She has led on Serpentine’s highly experimental and acclaimed arts technologies projects including Jakob Kudsk Steensen’s Augmented Architecture commission The Deep Listener in 2019.

Gary Zhexi Zhang is an artist and co-writer of FAE3. His work explores social infrastructures, technical histories and conceptual systems.

RadicalxChange (RxC) is a global movement for next-generation political economies. They are committed to advancing plurality, equality, community, and decentralization through upgrading democracy, markets, the data economy, the commons, and identity.

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