

Announcement, 19 June 2025

SERPENTINE ARTS TECHNOLOGIES PROGRAMME

The 5th annual strategic briefing series *Future Art Ecosystems* details the role of artists and cultural organisations in shaping technologies for public good

Announcing the Summer and Autumn programme

Future Art Ecosystems 5: Art x Creative R&D



Serpentine Arts Technologies is delighted to celebrate five years of Future Art Ecosystems with the release of the fifth publication that focuses on the importance of Creative R&D for building equitable technologies of the future.

This will coincide with the development of a major new project by Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley that will open at Serpentine North in September 2025 that interrogates the civic potential of video game technologies.

With the growth of the art and technology ecosystem over the course of the last decade, 'creative R&D' has been gaining traction as a self-standing area of artistic and institutional activity, particularly in relation to Art and Advanced Technologies (AxAT). FAE5 maps out this evolving space and makes recommendations as to how the cultural sector, creative industries, industry, academia, civic technology and policy can contribute to shaping it. FAE5 explores the



impacts and public value that R&D can have as a major aspect of cultural production by demonstrating the R&D potential of artistic production processes and roles of cultural organisations as vital hubs of societal experimentation with advanced technologies that can have wide-reaching impact.

With contributions from over 60 individuals including Ian Cheng, Natsai Audrey Chieza, Anicka Yi, Wendi Yan, Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, and representations from organisations like the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Creative UK, British Council, Watershed, Manchester International Festival, RadicalxChange, UCL, Open Future Foundation, MoMA, Mozilla Foundation, Adobe Research, New Inc and many more.

Bettina Korek, CEO, and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Artistic Director, Serpentine, said: “We’re excited to share the launch of *Future Art Ecosystems*, the annual strategic briefing from Arts Technologies, which examines how artists and cultural organisations are shaping technologies for public benefit through Creative R&D. Now in its fifth edition, the report reflects Serpentine Arts Technologies’ ongoing commitment to championing digital artists and ensuring they have a voice in the development of transformative technologies that are influencing the future of society. We’re grateful to all collaborators and supporters.”

Kay Watson, Head of Arts Technologies said: “Future Art Ecosystems 5: Art x Creative R&D builds on the strategies and recommendation of five years of Future Art Ecosystems and over ten years of Serpentine Arts Technologies work in production, commissioning and creative R&D. It presents the vital contributions of artists and cultural organisations in collaboration with colleagues from across academia, industry and civic spaces in the development and our collective understanding of advanced technologies. Making the case to nurture and support how this space grows and to create the mechanisms through which we can see and understand the true impact of this valuable work.”

Since 2014 Serpentine Arts Technologies has combined convening, commissioning and creative R&D to support the development of an art and technology ecosystem with a public mission. With the launch of Future Art Ecosystems in 2020, we took on a more proactive role in shaping this ecosystem through sharing insights in annual strategic briefings and becoming a platform for a growing community of artists, technologists, policy-makers, researchers and fellow organisations to experiment with new infrastructures.

Past issues have accurately predicted a variety of phenomena that now dominate the art and technology landscape, from the changing role of art patronage with the expansion of the tech sector (FAE1) to emergence of a new artist-led technological and commercial practice as represented by artist Refik Anadol (FAE1), and the use of the art space as a test case for new technology-driven economic and governance models as represented by Holly Herndon and Mat Dryhurst (FAE3 and FAE4). Previous briefings on the metaverse, blockchain and AI have also led to larger prototyping projects exploring alternative ownership systems for art and data governance for AI training.

FAE5 builds on the insights from previous publications and creative R&D projects, to address some of following key questions:



- How do artists function as critical agents of creative R&D, generating value that extends beyond traditional artistic outputs?
- How can cultural organisations evolve to become vital anchors within creative R&D ecosystems?
- How might policy frameworks better recognise and support the distinctive characteristics of creative R&D as practiced within art and technology?

Insights from FAE5 include:

- Creative R&D generates value beyond individual institutions or commercial products, contributing to a broader ecosystem where technological development is informed by cultural perspectives and public interest considerations.
- The AxAT ecosystem functions as both an adaptation engine for the cultural sector and simultaneously connects to research and commercial innovation ecosystems, bridging disciplinary and sectoral boundaries.
- Current evaluation frameworks, designed for linear innovation processes in scientific domains, fail to capture the networked impact of creative R&D, leading to systematic undervaluation and underinvestment.
- Cultural institutions can serve as strategic R&D partners offering unique testing environments for innovations where social and environmental impacts are central to value propositions.
- Addressing barriers to creative R&D requires coordinated interventions across policy, funding, education, and organisational practice to create an ecosystem that supports diverse forms of technological experimentation and innovation.

For example, in March 2024, Serpentine Arts Technologies released the fourth volume of the annual strategic briefing, Future Art Ecosystems 4: Art x Public AI (FAE4). The insights from the publication informed the development of a new template for responsible data governance in AI, and now serves as a new benchmark for organisations in the cultural field and beyond. Supported by AHRC's BRAID Fellowship programme, this was also used to inform current policy on AI in the UK. The findings from the project are shared in a dedicated white paper, reviewed by leading thinktanks and data researchers in the UK.

The publication comes at a pivotal moment as the UK Government develops its Industrial Strategy and Sector Plan for the Creative Industries. With formal policy documents on cultural policy, digital cultural policy and creative industries still in development, Future Art Ecosystems 5: Art x Creative R&D presents a timely intervention to inform these emerging frameworks. The report offers policymakers a deeper understanding of art and advanced technologies (AxAT's) distinctive contribution to culture, society and innovation, and the specific support structures needed to realise its full potential.

The report is released digitally on 19 June via futureartecosystems.org with a print version following on 30 September to coincide with the opening of Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley's exhibition at Serpentine North.



DANIELLE BRATHWAITE-SHIRLEY | SERPENTINE NORTH | 30 SEPTEMBER 2025 - JANUARY 2026



In Autumn 2025, Berlin and London-based artist Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley (b. 1995, London) will present a major new collaborative video game, exhibition and R&D project, commissioned and produced by Serpentine Arts Technologies, at Serpentine North.

Working predominantly in animation, sound, performance, and video game development, Brathwaite-Shirley's practice focuses on intertwining lived experience with fiction to imaginatively archive and empower Black Trans stories.

Encouraging the active participation of the visitor-player in her installations, the artist highlights the role of individual choices in shaping narratives and histories. The project will bring together artists, technologists, interaction designers and specialist research to expand the artist's exploration of the creative and civic potential of video game technologies.

Building on her love of retro choose-your-own-adventure games, improv theatre and new research into online communities, digital democracy and the extreme polarisation of today's world, this project implicates the 'audience as medium' to activate and complete the work. At the core of the project will be a new game that will be developed over the course of the next year. Conceptualised as a 'performance machine', or performance infrastructure, the game will be activated throughout an immersive exhibition, which will function as a live playtest, and living archive, where players' inputs determine how the story, a speculative future fiction, continues.



Serpentine Arts Technologies has been working with Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley since 2021, when she was invited to contribute to *Future Art Ecosystems 2: Art x Metaverse*, a report that examined how the metaverse represents a fundamental shift in our notion of digital systems and the impact of the video games industry on art and culture. Since then, Serpentine Arts Technologies has collaborated on R&D, developing prototypes and experimental hybrid gaming projects including WE CAN'T DO THIS ALONE, YOUR PRESENCE ALONE CHANGES HOW OTHERS BREATHE, and THE LACK.

WE CAN'T DO THIS ALONE hosted in 2022, was an interactive playtesting event in the form of a live improv play, where the audience became the actors. YOUR PRESENCE ALONE CHANGES HOW OTHERS BREATHE, in 2022, was conceived as an interactive murder mystery and conversation hosted via Twitch. THE LACK: I KNEW YOUR VOICE BEFORE YOU SPOKE was commissioned in collaboration with Art Night and NeON Digital Arts for Art Night Dundee in 2023. In this dystopic, interactive art video game, audiences shaped a new world through their interactions, highlighting the urgency of choices in a time of meteoric change.

This marks the continuation of Serpentine Arts Technologies' ongoing commitment to video game technologies, in particular game engines, through commissions such as Ian Cheng, *Bad Corgi* (2015) and *B.O.B.* (2018), Jakob Kudsk Steensen, *Catharsis* (2020); Trust, *Hivemind* (2022) and Gabriel Massan & Collaborators, *Third World: The Bottom Dimension* (2023). As with the current exhibition, *Holly Herndon & Mat Dryhurst: The Call*, the project will be supported by the Future Art Ecosystems initiative in the development of technical, legal and creative R&D to be shared with the wider cultural sector that explores how to embed technological spaces with ethical and community-focused infrastructures.

Notes to editors

About Future Art Ecosystems:

Future Art Ecosystems (FAE) is an initiative by Serpentine Arts Technologies that supports the development of the art and technology ecosystem for the public good through research, reports and experimental projects. Since 2020, its annual publications have focused on the implications of different technologies for art and cultural organisations, providing concepts, references, language and arguments that can be implemented into operational agendas. Previous publications have contributed important insights and strategies relating to AI, blockchain and the metaverse.

About Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art, London in 2019. Danielle's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions and performances at institutions including Fundació Joan Miró (2024); LAS (2024); Studio Voltaire (2024); SCAD (2023) ArtNight (2023); FACT (2022) David Kordansky, LA (2022) Project Arts Centre, Ireland (2022); Skånes konstförening, Malmö, Sweden (2022); Arebyte Gallery (2021); QUAD (2021); Albright-Knox (2021); and Science Gallery, London (2020). Her work has been included in group exhibitions at institutions including WSA (2024), Julia Stoschek Foundation (2022); Les Urbaines (2019) and Barbican (2018).



About Serpentine

Building new connections between artists and society, Serpentine presents pioneering contemporary art exhibitions and cultural events with a legacy that stretches back over half a century, from a wide range of emerging practitioners to the most internationally recognised artists, writers, scientists, thinkers, and cultural thought leaders of our time.

Based in London's Kensington Gardens, across two sites, Serpentine North and Serpentine South, Serpentine features a year-round, free programme of exhibitions, architectural showcases, education, live events and technological activations, in the park and beyond the gallery walls.

The Serpentine Pavilion is a yearly pioneering commission, which began in 2000 with Dame Zaha Hadid. It features the first UK structures by some of the biggest names in international architecture.

Public art has emerged as a central strand of Serpentine's programme. Major presentations include a collection of Eduardo Paolozzi's sculptures (1987), Anish Kapoor's *Turning the World Upside Down* (2010), Lee Ufan presented *Relatum – Stage* (2018-19), Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *London Mastaba* in the Serpentine Lake (2018), *I LOVE YOU EARTH* by Yoko Ono (2021), Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster *In remembrance of the coming alien (Alienor)*, (2022), and Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg's *Pollinator Pathmaker* (2022 - ongoing).

Proud to maintain free access for all visitors, thanks to its unique location, Serpentine also reaches an exceptionally broad audience and maintains a profound connection with its local community.

About Serpentine Arts Technologies

Serpentine's Arts Technologies programme explores the impact of technology through art, research and experimental projects. It supports artists to produce projects that use advanced technologies and convenes people working in art, technology, law, policy, and academia to share knowledge and develop new ideas about technology and society.

The foundation of Serpentine Arts Technologies' programme is in an evolving R&D Platform that nurtures innovation for future art ecologies by securing a crucial institutional space for pragmatic interventions and necessary risk-taking at the intersection of art, science and technology. This is achieved through dedicated research projects, knowledge-sharing with the wider sector through Future Art Ecosystems, and co-facilitation of a national Creative R&D Working Group.

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