

Anxiety, Culture and the Future

How can we imagine the future when we can't see it?

Anxiety, Culture and the Future explores collaborative cultures that enmesh arts with science, clinical and other knowledges to create new ways to imagine the future in a time of general anxiety.

DAY 1: MORNING Friday, Oct 18, Art Gallery of NSW, Domain Theatre

"Empathy and kindness ... drive social change. These are not just sentiments, they are tools."

- Jacinda Ardern

Day one explores the role of art and cultural institutions in promoting empathy, mental health and social justice. It asks how we go beyond sentiment to provide the tools we need for social change.

9.30 am Welcome on behalf of Art Gallery of NSW: **Miranda Carroll**

9.35 am Welcome to country: **Uncle Charles (Chicka) Madden**

9.45 am Convenors opening address: **Lizzie Muller**

9.50 am *Empathy and the Overlooked: Options for Action*

Unless we can imaginatively 'step into someone else's shoes' we cannot empathise. But the empathy problem goes deeper. Neuroscientific evidence suggests we direct empathy to people we perceive to be 'like us.' Some of us make a conscious effort to overcome bias and stigma, but are we really comfortable with difference and diversity? Can we deal with another's distress, or even listen effectively?

Introduced and chaired by **Jeremy Smith**, Australia Council

Jill Bennett discusses *The Empathy Clinic* - an experimental art exhibition that offers practical strategies for addressing fear of difference and cultivating empathy.

Debra Keenahan, artist in *The Empathy Clinic* exhibition discusses her experience of fear, hate and being overlooked, and the virtual reality film *Being Debra* which offers the audience an insight into the embodied experience of living with achondroplasia dwarfism.

Discussion and audience Q&A

Evelyn Araluen, a poet born, raised and writing on Dharug country, and a descendant of the Bundjalung nation, screens *INTERIOR ANXIOUS*, a new commissioned work for The Big Anxiety Festival. Made in collaboration with Hugh Clark.

Performance dialogue: **Evelyn Araluen** and **Jonathan Dunk** explore ways that class and cultural difference can limit and complicate empathy.

11.10 am BREAK - tea and coffee served in the Yiribana Foyer

11.45 am *Voice, Treaty, and Truth*

The Uluru Statement from the Heart calls for a 'First Nations Voice' in the Australian Constitution and foregrounds the mechanisms of truth-telling as fundamental to an equitable future.

Megan Davies, Aboriginal Australian activist and human rights lawyer identifies the importance of voice, treaty and truth telling and introduces the innovative hybrid art practice of **Uti Kulintjaku** and **Rene Kulitja**, the artistic director for the Uluru statement.

Performance presentation: **Uti Kulintjaku** (NPY Women's Council)

Uti Kulintjaku is the initiative of Anangu women artists and ngangkari (healers) from the APY lands, working at the intersection of traditional cultural practice and western approaches to mental health,

finding ways to address trauma, youth suicide, addiction, mental health and incarceration. NPY Women's Council will be represented by: **Rene Kulitja, Nyunmiti Burton, Illawanti Ken, Wanatjura Lewis, Naomi Kantjuriny** and **Patrick Hookey** (interpreter).

12.45 pm LUNCH

2.00 pm ***Cultivating Future Thinking***

Introduced and chaired by **Bec Dean**, Senior Curator for The Big Anxiety Festival

The capacity to imagine the future is linked to the capacity to remember.

Muireann Irish, cognitive neuroscientist illuminates the emotional, cognitive and neurological dimensions of future thinking in conversation with artists working on the mechanisms of memory and imagining.

Visual artist **Shona Illingworth** discusses her work based on memory and trauma, including her long-term art collaboration with a woman with profound amnesia, which was nominated for the Jarman Prize.

Artist **Alex Davies** and the Australian team behind *Edge of the Present* discuss their commission for The Big Anxiety Festival based on their research into suicidality and the use of art and technology to cultivate future thinking.

2.45 pm ***No Feeling is Final***

Graham Panther in conversation with the director of one of the UK's most radical arts for health programs, **Clive Parkinson**. **Graham Panther** and **Honor Eastly** co-wrote the ABC podcast *No Feeling is Final*, which opens the door on what it is to live with thoughts of suicide.

3.15 pm BREAK

3.45 pm **Nathan Filer**

Introduced by **Vanessa Bartlett**

Award-winning novelist and former mental health nurse **Nathan Filer** talks about the process and experience of writing his books *The Shock of the Fall* and *The Heartland*, reflecting on the challenge of writing about psychosis in both fiction and non-fiction. Filer's interdisciplinary creative practice, drawing on first-hand experience as a care professional as well as extensive research into the lived experience of so-called schizophrenia, raises profound questions about the way we perceive schizophrenia and, by extension, mental health and diversity in general.

Discussion and audience Q&A

4:30 pm ***Plenary and Q&A***

Chaired by **Vanessa Bartlett**

EVENING EVENT: UNSW Galleries, UNSW Art & Design, Paddington

5.30 pm ***The Empathy Clinic*** private viewing

6.30 pm **Leigh Ledare** in conversation with psychosocial researcher **Lynn Froggett**

Leigh Ledare's *The Task* is an art project using Group Relations—a psychosocial method developed by London's Tavistock Institute—to surface the dynamics of empathy, race and gender politics, conflict and responsibility.

According to *BOMB* magazine:

"...*The Task* is "a movie for anyone who" has ever been paralyzed with resentment when told they need to check their privilege—but then, maybe it's for those whose disabusement has yet to begin..."

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DAY 2: MORNING Saturday, 19 Oct, Powerhouse Museum Theatre

Day 2 explores the civic and social role of cultural institutions in synthesising individual and collective visions of the future. Can the cultural sector be a platform for shaping a future that is inclusive and responsive to the experiences of all people? What work do audiences do in reshaping future imaginaries and institutions?

9.30 am Convenors opening address: **Katie Dyer**

9.45 am **Lynn Froggett**, *From Privatised Anxieties to Shared Imaginaries: What Can Cultural Institutions Do?*

Introduced by **Adrian Collette**, Australia Council

If contemporary anxieties are lived as private misery, is there a role for cultural institutions in revealing how they are embedded in both subjective experience and a culture that is shared? In other words, can they expose the psychosocial nature of anxiety through the objects and processes that give it symbolic form? Can museums, galleries and performance venues foster the 'third spaces' in which shared imaginaries of the future can emerge? This session will draw on a research programme which has come to understand third space as both a state of mind and a set of conditions. These spaces can enable us to use art and other cultural objects in public settings to achieve a closer relation to reality and to imagine a future that is different.

10.45 am BREAK - tea and coffee served outside the Theatre

11.15 am **PANEL: *Memory, Trauma and the Future of Cultural Institutions***

Cultural institutions serve to memorialise, repair and also to perpetuate trauma. Languages, artefacts, stories and memories are cared for, co-opted and held hostage by institutional practices. Panellists present creative strategies to re-imagine future institutions and create enduring spaces to address trauma: learning from memories to build collective futures.

Chaired by **Ien Ang**, Distinguished Professor of Cultural Studies at the Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University

Paula Abood, creative producer, educator, community advocate, writer and director

Bonney Djuric, OAM, artist, advocate for "Forgotten Australians" historian, Adjunct lecturer NIEA, UNSW and co-founder of Parragirls Female Factory Precinct Memory Project

Lisa Havilah, CEO, Powerhouse Museum

Karen Therese, Artistic Director - PYT Fairfield, interdisciplinary artist, creative producer and activist

Rene Kulitja, artist, senior community advocate, director of NPY Women's Council, member of Uti Kulintjaku. Rene was artistic director for the Uluru Statement from the Heart. In 2015, she represented Tjanpi Desert Weavers in the 56th Venice Biennale.

Discussion and audience Q&A

12.45 pm LUNCH

1.45 pm ***Feeling the Future***

Exhibitions create opportunities to experience the future in immersive, emotional ways. An emerging

global group of “third spaces” that entangle art, science and other forms of community knowledge, are creating collective environments to experience the affective and ethical dimensions of the future, including technological change and climate crisis. Through a series of case studies speakers discuss curatorial strategies that support optimism and agency in the face of anxious futures.

Introduced and chaired by **Katie Dyer**

Case Study 1: **Bec Dean**, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at NIEA, UNSW, and Senior Curator for The Big Anxiety Festival discusses the need for “curatorial care” in her exhibition *The Patient* which gathered artists working with biomedical art to explore themes of illness and death.

Case Study 2: **Nina Ernst**, Associate Director, Programmes, ArtScience Museum, Singapore, explores the idea of emotionally-led programming in exhibitions that deal with the art and science of the future, including *Human+: The Future of the Species*.

Case Study 3: **John O’Shea**, Interim Head of Programming (2018-19), Science Gallery London
John O’Shea, Interim Head of Programming, Science Gallery London considers the emotional experience of exhibitions and the link between agency and anxiety through the exhibition *On Edge: Living in an age of anxiety*.

Discussion and audience Q&A

3.00 pm BREAK

3.30 pm **Claire Doherty MBE**, *Unsettling the Status Quo: Becoming Relevant and Resilient in the 21st Century*

Introduced by **Lizzie Muller**

As the final keynote of the conference, Claire will reflect on how psychosocial audience research changed her understanding of how transformation occurs through encounters with art, and subsequently how she changed the way in which she led a 21st century arts institution. In search of a more relevant and empathic way of directing and producing the arts, Claire will reflect on the implications for civic, embedded institutions in meeting the environmental and social challenges of the future.

Responder: **Mehreen Faruqi**, Greens Senator for NSW, Social and Environmental Justice Activist, Civil and Environmental Engineer

4.30 pm *Plenary and Q&A*

Chaired by **Lizzie Muller**

Anxiety, Culture and the Future Conference is convened by **Vanessa Bartlett** (UNSW Art & Design), **Jill Bennett** (UNSW Art & Design), **Katie Dyer** (Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences), **Lynn Froggett** (University of Central Lancashire) and **Lizzie Muller** (UNSW Art & Design). The conference is produced by Curating Third Space, The Big Anxiety Festival and Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, and supported by the Art Gallery of NSW.

Curating Third Space is led by UNSW Art & Design and supported by the Australian Research Council, Australia Council for the Arts, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, the ArtScience Museum, FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) and Australia’s Science Channel.

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