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Abstract

The landscape of work is undergoing rapid transformations in the 21st century, especially in the past few years when the speed of change has contributed to this course to be popularly named “exponential times”. This is due to novelties becoming obsolete in an extremely small unit of time. Those changes are driven by technological advancements, globalization, and changing societal norms. Within this paradigm shift, artists, as also being part of the change, face a variety of challenges and opportunities in redefining their roles and processes they work with. This artistic research dissertation titled "Future of Work" seeks to present few perspectives about the contexts of artistic labor by engaging in interviews with young visual artists and producing complementary artistic work. And that is more in the sense of how artists view themselves, instead of what society expects. The theoretical and the practical part are both situated at the intersection of few broader categories, such as: speculative fiction, potentialities and the post-human. The research approach is qualitative, utilizing few interviews with young visual artists as a central focus, where they articulate their insights, experiences, and concerns. Participants' narratives are analyzed discursively, as the goal was to detect common threads and perspectives, enabling at least some understanding of the evolving artistic landscape and how individual artists place themselves within it.

In addition to the interviews, this dissertation incorporates complementary artistic work, which serves as a practical output of the findings and reflections on the future of work for artists. The artistic segment, an installation titled “A Girl Named Work”, is a trilogy; a combination of past visual, auditory, or performative works, as well as some elements in progress, aimed at engaging audiences in a poetic manner of the subject matter.

I believe the study's potential implications are significant in the direction of articulating and emphasizing emerging trends, innovative approaches, and challenges faced by young visual artists. Ultimately, this interdisciplinary dissertation seeks to ignite a deeper appreciation for the artistic processes of our time and its potential to adapt, flourish, and redefine itself in the face of the fast-changing times. Through an interplay between empirical research and artistic expression, "Future of Work" aims to foster a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for artists, offering insights to both - the artistic community and broader society.

Keywords

Future, artistic work, labor, precarity, technology, fast-paced development, speculative fiction, lived realities, poetics of future of work, global changes

Resumé

Prostředí práce prochází v 21. století náhlými proměnami, zejména za posledních několika let, kdy rychlost těchto proměn přispěla k populárnímu názvu „exponenciální časy“. Je to důsledkem situace, kdy novinky se stávají zastaralé za extrémně úzkého časového úseku. Tyto proměny jsou způsobeny technologickým pokrokem, globalizací a proměnlivými společenskými normami. V rámci této změny paradigmatu čelí umělci jakožto součást změny nejrůznějším výzvám a možnostem při nové definici jejich rolí a procesů jejich práce. Předkládaná umělecká disertace s názvem „Budoucnost práce“ má za cíl předvést několik perspektiv ohledně kontextů umělecké práce pomocí rozhovorů s mladými vizuálními umělci doplňkové umělecké práce. Toto vše je více ve smyslu toho, jak se umělci vidí sebe spíše než to, co očekává společnost. Teoretická i praktická část jsou na průniku vícero širších kategorií, jako jsou spekulativní fikce, možnosti (*potentialities*) a postlidskost (*posthuman*). Přístup k výzkumu je kvalitativní, a jako takový ve svém fokuse využívá jen několik rozhovorů s vizuálními umělci, kteří zde reflektují své postřehy, zkušenosti a obavy. Příběhy účastníků jsou rozebírány diskurzivně, protože cílem bylo dohledat společná schemata a perspektivy, což poskytuje alespoň základní poznatky proměňujícího se uměleckého prostředí a toho, jak se v něm usadí umělci. Kromě zmíněných rozhovorů přináší disertace doplňkovou uměleckou práci, která slouží jako praktický výstup z nálezů a reflexí nad budoucností umělecké práce. Umělecký segment, instalace pod názvem „Dívka se jménem Práce“, je trilogie: kombinace minulých vizuálních, zvukových a performativních prací, jako i některých probíhajících prací zaměřených na poetické upoutání tématu pro publikum.

Věřím, že potenciální implikace této studie jsou významné ve smyslu vyjádření a zdůraznění začínajících trendů, inovativních přístupů a výzev, kterým čelí mladí vizuální umělci. Nakonec tato interdisciplinární disertace má za cíl povzbudit hlubší pochopení pro umělecké procesy současné doby, a pro jejich potenciál pro změnu, adaptaci, rozkvět a znovuobjevení se v kontextu rychlých proměn. Jakožto souhra empirického výzkumu a umělecké exprese „Budoucnost práce“ se snaží vypěstovat hlubší porozumění výzev a možností, které čekají umělce, a rovněž nabídnout postřehy nejen pro uměleckou komunitu, ale i pro širší společnost.

Klíčová slova

Budoucnost, umělecká práce, práce, prekarita, technologie, rychlý vývoj, spekulativní fikce, živá realita, poetika budoucnosti práce, globální proměny

Zarevska, D. 2024. "Future of Work", Doctoral dissertation, Brno University of Technology

Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this dissertation and that no other sources or learning aids, other than those listed, have been used. I further declare that this dissertation has not been submitted for the purpose of obtaining the same or any other academic degree earlier or at another institution. The research presented in this dissertation is expressed through the authorship order of the included artworks, publications and manuscripts. All literature sources I used when writing this work have been properly cited. I declare that the printed and the electronic versions of this dissertation are identical. This work can be included in the electronic archive of the Faculty and its library, and be available to other interested parties for study purposes.

Mgr. Dragana Zarevska

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And one superspecial mention now ♥

I thank my son Miljan for being so patient with me all these years, especially when I was working on this dissertation, which I can genuinely say were some of the most challenging years of our lives. You are the center of my love, I hope to make you proud one day. All the travels, all the engagements I had, and you were waiting for me during these trips - I have honestly cried on all those planes. And, through it all, I wanted you to see me having ideas, being resilient and taking care of myself too, so one day you can find that in yourself, your friends and your partners.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The two greatest weapons at the ninja disposal are placement and surprise.

Master Splinter / "Ninja Turtles"

The world nowadays is witnessing rapid transformations in the vast realm of work, driven by technological advancements, globalization, and shifting societal norms, especially over the past few years during which the expansion and applicability of AI is creating what is called - exponential times¹. Amidst this paradigmatic shift, artists find themselves navigating unique challenges and opportunities as they redefine their roles and methodologies, and whether to stay in art - or not. The choices are plenty and their combinations are endless. Through this artistic research doctoral dissertation, titled "Future of Work," I aimed to explore the evolving realm of artistic practice by conducting interviews with emerging visual artists and creating complementary artistic pieces that both reflect and contribute to ongoing dialogues.

The syntagm "future of work" has become very popular across domains, as people are trying to place themselves in the new reality of work (in terms of both - jobs and labor²), but not so much seen/heard in the artistic domain. So, central to this investigation is the exploration of the future of work in artists, but artists' self-perceptions rather than societal expectations. Employing a qualitative research approach, this study utilizes interviews with a select group of young visual artists to sublimate genuine and miscellaneous insights into their experiences and apprehensions. Through this research I also aimed to capture the nuances of how the future of work is reshaping the artistic landscape across various disciplines, cultures, and contexts - through the eyes of a few young artists and mine. Thematic and discursive analysis of participants' narratives will apply as the study seeks to discern common threads and perspectives, thereby facilitating a nuanced understanding of the evolving artistic milieu. In addition to the interview component, this dissertation integrates complementary artistic artwork, serving as a tangible manifestation of my insights and reflections on the future of work for artists. The practical part of this research is being in production at the same time while the writing is taking place and actual documentation of the realized artwork will be

¹ The phrase is a go-to description of the times we are living in, in the sense that the combination of rapid pace of change and growth in information and technology co-occur and influence one another, while the speed of change "doubles" by the day

² "Labor" as in "effort"

made during its display (and before this dissertation is printed), in the upcoming months. Envisioned as a synthesis of past visual, auditory, or performative works alongside ongoing projects, these artistic expressions are designed to engage audiences poetically with the subject matter. By intertwining the artistic with the scholarly, this dissertation aims to offer a holistic exploration of the complex interplay between artistic practice and the changing dynamics of work in the contemporary era by listing some of the paradigms unfolding for us - artists.

2. MOTIVATION

Through this interdisciplinary approach, the study seeks to contribute to both - academic discourse and artistic practice, fostering a deeper understanding of the realities confronting artists in the evolving landscape of work, to include the perspectives of few emerging artists and foregrounding their experiences so to assist the pathways for innovation, adaptation, and resilience within the artistic community. Ultimately, "Future of Work" endeavors to enrich scholarly understanding while also inspiring artistic engagement with the profound changes reshaping the materiality of contemporary artistic labor.

As industries adapt to the complexities of this fast-paced development, the future of work becomes a critical topic of exploration for many scholars, policymakers, and practitioners alike. Mainly coming from (and being used throughout) the corporate world, this syntagm does not seem very "popular" in the artistic and cultural domains. I tried to apply it to artistic context within the research part of my doctoral studies and see if something new and useful will derive from it. Within this context, the labor/contribution of artists, as creators and cultural innovators, presents an intriguing perspective that demands comprehensive investigation; the future of work of variety of professional domains have been extensively questioned during formal and non-formal talks, gatherings, conferences, but never really in the context of artistic work, where either the future is not clear due to the diversity of artistic practices and the inability to automate it in some of its aspects (like some other professions), or maybe due to its richness and the expectation that art and artists will always "be there".

This dissertation is an attempt to open and answer some questions around the future of artistic work and it is through all the artistic and artistic research projects I worked on as a collaborator or alone in the span between 2018 and 2023.

To give a little background to the work I will present later, we'd need to go a bit back in time for an overview of the concepts of work within the realm of artistic practice, or - the overlapping of both; a brief general history of art as labor and as a job.

Throughout human history, the intrinsic connection between art and labor has been persistent. From the earliest cave paintings through the avant-garde and contemporaneity, art has always been regarded as a form of labor and some sort of reflection of societal values of the given spatio-temporal context. Labor, not only in the sense of a commodity being capitalized on, but also as a process with not necessarily a particular outcome (product) in the capitalistic sense; simply a process where knowledge is being generated through it. This can be seen, for example, in today's art where the product is not always the end-goal, and even some branches of design, a domain that has mostly been oriented towards producing some utilizable objects in the past - is now shifting more towards processes that generate knowledge, rather than product³. This enduring relationship between art and labor is deeply ingrained in our collective existence, shaping the way we perceive and appreciate the diverse manifestations of artistic practices. A brief history of art as labor (not to serve as a proof that art is labor, as that is more than understandable) is also included in the beginning of this dissertation, to provide more context of the trajectory of development of art as roughly put - a job.

In ancient civilizations, artistic "activities" were integral components of work, serving both utilitarian and symbolic purposes. For example, the construction of architectural wonders like the pyramids of Egypt or the Parthenon in Greece involved the participation of skilled artisans and craftsmen who gave their best into these monumental structures. The labor-intensive work on these architectural marvels were not only highlights of engineering but also manifestations of what was seen as artistic in those times mainly through the reflection of the cultural and religious beliefs of the societies that created them. Giant (architectural and sculptural) art appearances were the "trend" for many centuries, before art expression started to scale down due to artists being interested in the new media coming with time.

During the medieval period, the concept of artisanship evolved into "guilds" (in the sense of artisan associations), where artisans and artists collaborated to create both functional and aesthetically pleasing objects. The rich craftsmanship of manuscripts, the design of stained glass windows in cathedrals, and tapestries in rich people's homes - were all products of

³ An example of this is speculative design; a branch that explores design that is not meant to be primarily utilizable in the capitalistic sense, but rather as methodology for imagining new possible worlds (futures)

skilled labor of these people. Artists played a crucial role in shaping the visual and cultural landscape - basically, there was not much conceptual distinction between artisanry and art.

The renaissance marked a crucial moment in the acknowledgment of artists as intellectuals and skilled professionals. Artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo were not only revered for their genius but were also seen as artisans contributing significantly to public life as important, appreciated people in many domains. Art production and work (also in terms of “job”) seem like inseparable concepts in those times⁴.

The industrial revolution brought about profound changes in the way art was produced and consumed. Mass production and technological advancements reshaped the artistic landscape, introducing new materials and techniques. This is becoming more and more evident during the 20th century, and while some bemoan the potential loss of the artisanal touch, others embraced the democratization of art, making it accessible to a broader audience⁵.

In the 20th and 21st century, the relationship between art and labor has continued to evolve in a variety of ways, (always) reflecting what was new in terms of societal shifts and technological advancements at the given year. Performance art, conceptual art, and digital art began to challenge traditional notions of artistic labor, expanding the boundaries of creative expression. Artists like Marina Abramović, Vitto Acconci or Carolee Scheeman, known for their endurance performances, emphasize the physical and emotional labor invested in their work, pushing the boundaries of what constitutes art. From the earliest, the most (what we might today consider) rudimentary artistic expression in ancient civilizations to the contemporary avant-garde movements, the link between art and labor has endured as a fundamental aspect of human existence. Maybe because it all started with - hands?

⁴ G. L. Bernini for example (1598 - 1680) - a key person shaping the public and semi-public spaces of Rome through architectural and sculptural interventions, I see him as a strong example of the notion “art as a job”

⁵ Mostly referring to Joseph Beuys (1921 - 1986) as a paradigm-shifting figure in democratization and accessibility of art

3. SITUATING THE DISSERTATION

Lightheartedly, I decided to start this paper with a quote by Master Splinter⁶ - the ninjutsu master and adoptive father of the Ninja Turtles. In the quote he is saying that a ninja's greatest tools are placement and surprise. Personally, I understand this in terms of two, more general notions - placement as location and circumstances, and surprise as agency. This quote was chosen as an opening one because I find Master Splinter's notions in the quote very similar to Aristotle's thinking of potentialities, and the variety of potentialities are all this doctoral work will be builded upon. Potentialities as "could-have-beens" and potentialities that will eventually occur in all its viable materiality⁷. The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben comments on Aristotle's concept of potentialities as events that might occur under very specific circumstances, not like general possibilities such as "every child can become a king". Therefore, only one, particular child will become a king - one child, under certain circumstances, placed in a certain place and time. The child that is, basically, the embodiment of potentiality - the potentiality itself triggering that event to occur, to bring its materiality in front of the eyes of others.

The whole process of shaping the actual version of this dissertation was a process where I, for myself first, was first trying to to understand the potentialities that lie ahead for artists. The central aim of this research is to engage with young visual artists about their lived realities amidst the shifting currents of the contemporary art world. My desire was to delve into the poetics of the future of work for artists, exploring the intersections between technology, globalization, and the artistic approaches of today that underpin their work.

⁶ Who is Master Splinter?" web article, 2023

⁷ Giorgio Agamben, "On Potentiality," *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999)



Figure 1

In terms of a general framework, we can probably position this dissertation at the intersection of speculative fiction, new philosophical thought on ecology and what it means to be human. I believe that the speculative genre offers a unique platform to venture beyond the boundaries of the present reality, enabling us to envision potential scenarios and alternative futures for the artistic landscape in a world full of panic. By engaging with the speculative lens, we can go beyond traditional analysis as we are “elegantly” entering the field of fiction, in this case - speculative fiction. Speculative fiction allows us to create thought experiments, exploring what the future of work could look like for artists (or whoever) in various hypothetical scenarios. As a personal history - a lot of speculative fiction and speculative poetry was written during the past years in the solo and collaborative projects I took part in - be it more on the art production side, or inclining more towards artistic research with less production. Those include projects I took part at RISE Sweden, such as DIGIfutures, Poetics of Everyday Work, The Soft Innovaitress, LOVE, Queen of Something, Margaret and the “book-nonbook” object, still to be produced while writing this (last three are part of the trilogy “Future of Work”).

Through speculative narratives, we can unveil utopian or dystopian settings. We can examine technological advancements, societal shifts, or environmental changes and the

impact on the artistic sphere. These imaginative tales serve as a starting point for exploring the challenges artists (or anyone) may encounter, envisioning worlds that could reflect the span or scenarios between the utopian and the dystopian. In this line, I am fascinated by the interplay of language, imagery, and emotion speculation can potentially reveal.

So, what do placement-and-surprise-turned-potentiality have in common with this artistic doctoral work? It is the future of work that brings a huge gray area of questions in the focus of my artistic query for years. It's a field for questioning utopian and dystopian perspectives where they are present in an unknown number of variations. And lastly, how do people relate to the future of their work? There are as many ways as people out there. Some are optimistic, some are not. Some see it black and white, others notice the complexities. This is my artistic effort to document what I witnessed during my work in the past few years: that said, projects where I have been part of a mixed team of experts trying to help some organizations, companies and public bodies in Sweden to reimagine their future of work and how they relate to the approaching changes as technology and automatization gets in every aspect of our lives at an incredible speed, as well as artistic projects (and research) from the past years done in and outside the context of FaVU, personal or as collaboration with other artists .

3.1. SPECULATIVE FICTION, POTENTIALITIES, THE POSTHUMAN

The three categories listed in the title of this subsection are the bases for this dissertation. They set the tone and the paradigm. Speculative fiction is a literary genre that goes into the realms of the fantastical, exploring alternative realities, futuristic settings, and imaginative scenarios. It is a broad and inclusive category that encompasses various sub-genres like science fiction, fantasy, horror, dystopia, and alternate history. Unlike traditional genres that adhere to the confines of reality, speculative fiction dares to push the boundaries of human imagination, posing the question, "What if? At its core, speculative fiction is an assisting "machine" for authors and readers to explore profound philosophical, social, and ethical questions by creating fictional worlds with altered rules. In Margaret Atwood's words, it differs from science fiction in the sense that - speculative fiction is more possible to happen in Earth's terms⁸. We can say that it serves as some kind of a framework to examine our own

⁸ "Margaret Atwood on Science Fiction, Dystopias, and Intestinal Parasites", interview for WIRE Magazine 2013, website

world through the lens of the fantastical and to challenge our preconceived notions about humanity, society, and the universe with simply adding new rules to it.

While the terms "speculative fiction" and "science fiction" are often used interchangeably, they represent distinct concepts within the broader genre. Science fiction is a sub-genre of speculative fiction, characterized by its emphasis on scientific principles, technologies, and their potential impact on society and individuals. It extrapolates from existing scientific knowledge or posits hypothetical advancements, envisioning futuristic scenarios grounded in scientific plausibility, while speculative fiction encompasses a more extensive range of imaginative possibilities with an accent on different policies (and politics) applied in "that" - other kind of world.

In essence, all science fiction is speculative fiction, but not all speculative fiction is bound by the constraints of scientific rationale. For instance, a story featuring time travel may fall under both speculative fiction and science fiction if it involves plausible scientific theories or explanations. However, if the same story incorporates magical elements or mythical beings, it would be categorized primarily as speculative fiction, with a blend of fantasy as in fiction of Atwood and Le Guin⁹. The flexibility of speculative fiction allows writers to be unrestricted in making worlds that invite contemplation, very often - in a political sense. In conclusion, speculative fiction stands as a testament to the potential of the "what ifs" that shape the human experience. In addition, as an extra reference - a whole branch of design in the past two decades have been starting to catch the interest of artists and designers - speculative design. Design aimed at opening new discussions and imagining things that are not utilizable - at the first place. An example of this could be the speculative architecture project "The Berg" by architect Jakub Tigges, who in 2009 proposed a scenario in which an artificial mountain called The Berg, would erect on the territory of the Berlin Tempelhof field. This 1000 meters tall mountain would change the city and its looks, but not only - personal and professional relationships of the inhabitants will also be impacted.¹⁰

Rosi Braidotti explores the concept of the post-human, examining how developments in science, technology, and philosophy are reshaping our understanding of human identity and agency. She investigates ideas such as cybernetics, artificial intelligence, and biotechnology, questioning traditional notions of the human subject and proposing alternative frameworks for understanding post-human existence. Braidotti critiques traditional humanism, which often places humans at the center of the universe and prioritizes human exceptionalism. Instead,

⁹ Ursula le Guin and Margaret Atwood are considered pioneers of the speculative fiction genre, An

¹⁰ Mensvoort. K. "Come See The Berg!" 2009

she advocates for a posthuman perspective that recognizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life forms¹¹. She often revisits the work of Deleuze to discuss his ideas about difference, becoming, and immanence can inform contemporary discussions of ethics, politics, and social norms. Braidotti critically examines traditional normative frameworks and proposes a more flexible and pluralistic approach to understanding and navigating normative systems¹². Braidotti is also interested in the implications of post-humanism in knowledge production and dissemination. She explores how emerging technologies and new modes of communication are transforming the ways in which knowledge is created, shared, and valued. She examines the challenges and opportunities of post-human knowledge production, addressing issues such as epistemology, embodiment, and the politics of knowledge¹³. We can say that, in “Post-Human Knowledge” especially, Braidotti explores how emerging technologies are shaping new forms of post-human subjectivities and identities. She discusses how developments in biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and cybernetics are blurring the boundaries between human and non-human entities, challenging traditional notions of the self and agency.

Why did I decide to put this dissertation at the intersection of these three broader concepts? I believe that they are intertwined in a very promising way as a framework for my research where the poetics of possibilities, care, resistance and agency are their main connectors.

¹¹ Braidotti, R. (2013). *The Posthuman*. Polity Press.

¹² Braidotti, R. (2019). *Revisiting Normativity*. Polity Press.

¹³ Braidotti, R. (2019). *Posthuman Knowledge*. Polity Press.

3.1.1 SPECULATIVE SCENARIOS AND SOME EXAMPLES FROM VISUAL AND LITERARY CULTURE

A speculative future scenario is a creative exploration of possible futures, often grounded in the present but shaped by imaginative extrapolation which can span from “a small tweak of reality” up to some radical variations of it. It involves envisioning how the world might evolve based on current trends, technologies, and societal tendencies, while also considering the potential consequences of these developments. This speculative approach allows artists (and not only) to challenge assumptions about whatever comes on their mind.

Some examples of speculative future scenarios from film, literature, and visual arts include "Blade Runner" (1982) and its sequel "Blade Runner 2049" (2017) by Ridley Scott and Denis Villeneuve respectively, and they present a dystopian future where advanced technology coexists with societal decay. The stories speculate on the implications of artificial intelligence and the potential blurring of the line between humans and replicants. Questions are being raised about identity, ethics, and the consequences of all that put together. In the film "Her" (2013), by Spike Jonze, the story unfolds in a near-future scenario where a man falls in love with an advanced artificial intelligence operating system. This narrative explores the evolving nature of human relationships with technology in the sense of romantic love between these two “species”.

From literature, a very popular example would be the "Brave New World", by Aldous Huxley (1932) - the author envisions a future society where genetic engineering, psychological conditioning, and the pursuit of pleasure have eliminated free will in subjects. Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" (1985) presents a speculative future where religious extremism and the erosion of women's rights have led to a dystopian society where women are subjugated and used for reproductive purposes. This might not be the first speculative (fiction) scenario in the history of writing, but it surely can be regarded as most iconic to the genre. Atwood's work as a cautionary tale, warning against the consequences of oppressive ideologies and social regression. She is considered “the mom” of the speculative fiction genre, too, of which we will be saying more further on in this dissertation.

These examples from film, literature, and visual arts demonstrate the potential of speculative future scenarios to engage audiences in critical thinking by imagining alternative futures - for better or for worse.

As in visual arts - speculative future scenarios have been a recurring theme in the history of art, and since this dissertation is about visual art(s), here is a brief sub- with examples of future scenarios (speculative fiction) from the history of visual arts. In visual arts, like in film and literature - there are various examples, too: Hieronymus Bosch - "The Garden of Earthly Delights" (1490-1510) by Hieronymus Bosch presents a speculative future scenario in the form of a surreal and fantastical landscape. The central panel depicts a bizarre paradise filled with strange creatures, symbolizing a vision of humanity's moral decay and its potential consequences in the afterlife. Leonardo da Vinci's "Codex Atlanticus" (1478-1518) contains sketches and writings that delve into speculative inventions and futuristic concepts¹⁴. From flying machines to underwater exploration, a variety of visionary ideas are to be seen there. Yves Klein - "The Monotone Symphony" (1949) is some sort of a speculative future scenario in the realm of sound art. "The Monotone Symphony" was an avant-garde composition featuring a single continuous note, which he believed would be experienced by future audiences as a meditative and transformative sensory experience. The Futurism Movement from the 20th century; the Italian futurists, like Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (who later became part of the fascist movement of Musolini), envisioned a radical future characterized by speed, technology, and urbanization¹⁵. Afrofuturism - a contemporary movement that imagines speculative futures for the African diaspora, Afrofuturism explores themes of identity, culture, and technology¹⁶. Artists like Sun Ra, Octavia E. Butler, and Jean-Michel Basquiat have contributed to this genre "making" worlds where African and African American cultures meet. These are just a few examples from the history of art that demonstrate speculative future scenarios, which have allowed artists to explore their visions of what might come.

In addition to this general subchapter on speculative scenarios from art and literature, it might be good to mention that many artists (historically speaking), also had "a habit" imagining themselves in the future and how that would possibly turn out. Some examples include: Picasso - from his early works influenced by traditional art to his later experimentation with cubism, surrealism, and other avant-garde movements, Picasso constantly reinvented himself. Also, various artists associated with the futurist movement in the early 20th century created self-portraits that embodied their vision of a fast-paced, technologically advanced future. Frida Kahlo is a bold example of an artist imagining themselves in the future: her self-portraits often incorporate elements of her native culture mixed with her personal health struggles and artistic life peaks. Or Yoko Ono in her "Grapefruit" book where she presents a

¹⁴ From Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana website

¹⁵ Marinetti's biography from Britannica's website

¹⁶ Smithsonian, NMAHC

series of artistic instructions and ideas, inviting readers to engage with her vision of a future where art is participatory and boundless. These examples illustrate how famous visual artists have used their work and expressions to envision themselves in the future. In Mariko Mori's work "Empty Dream" (1999) as another popular example, a futuristic ecosystem where natural and artificial elements coexist harmoniously are at place; Mori inserts herself in the giant photograph of an Ocean Dome - an artificial beach with waves, as the artist is the mermaid among the visitors on the beach¹⁷.

It is inevitable as an antidote to what is said until now, to also include examples from "the dark side" of artists imagining themselves in the future, in a dystopian future. George Orwell - while not a visual artist, in his "1984" novel he envisions a bleak future where totalitarianism reigns. Through the main character, Orwell reflects on the dangers of government surveillance and the erosion of personal freedom. Film director's Fritz Lang the "Metropolis" (from 1927) envisions a dystopian future where a rigid class system and oppressive industrialization create a stark divide between the wealthy elite and the exploited working class in a mechanized, dehumanizing cityscape. Octavia E. Butler, a science fiction writer, created dystopian futures in many of her novels, as in "Parable of the Sower." In this work, she envisions a world taken by environmental degradation, social unrest, and religious extremism while the main protagonist becomes a leader who seeks to create a better future in that harsh landscape. J.G. Ballard's novel "High-Rise" explores a dystopian vision of the future within the confines of a luxury residential tower where all relationships start to "crumble" and some general disintegration of that micro society starts to show. As societal norms break down, the residents descend into chaos and violence. These works often serve as cautionary tales and social critiques on what could happen in the sense of - "if this, then that".

4. A HISTORY OF LOOKING AT/TO THE FUTURE

This part is dedicated to how people viewed the future, historically. Throughout history, humanity's perception of the future has undergone significant shifts - the concept is abstract, but people perceive it differently through time. From ancient civilizations to modern societies, the way people envision the future has been influenced by a variety of factors, but maybe by

¹⁷ Martin, Lesley A. "Mariko Mori, Empty Dream Brooklyn Museum of Art" 2000

technological advancements (regardless of the era) - above all. If we are to make some summary of how people viewed the future across various historical periods, it is fair to start with ancient cultures where the future was often seen as determined by gods or fate. Prophecies, omens, and divination was the “tool-kit” for predicting outcomes. The future was intertwined with spiritual beliefs, and emphasis was on preserving traditions and adhering to cosmic order¹⁸. According to these cultures, brutal consequences would follow, if their people did not “behave”.

How people viewed the future throughout history and what excited them about it, and what made them fear it? Many indigenous cultures have deeply rooted beliefs in cyclical time, where the past, present, and future are interconnected. For them, the future is often viewed as a continuation of ancestral traditions and practices. Excitement about the future was revolving around successful harvests and community celebrations. Fears about the future may revolve around disruptions to the natural world, such as environmental changes, which can impact their way of life and spirituality. In ancient civilizations like the Mayans or Egyptians, the future was often linked to celestial events, for example solar eclipses or alignment of planets¹⁹. These events were sources of excitement, as they were seen as signs from the gods. At the same time, these civilizations also feared celestial phenomena, believing that they could bring disasters or radically - induce the end of their world.

During the middle ages in Europe, the future was often viewed through a religious lens. The promise of salvation and eternal life in heaven excited many, while the fear of eternal damnation or apocalyptic events, as described in religious texts, created anxiety about the future. The future was a sort of tool for control of the again “non-behaving” civilians - a tool mostly used by the church. When European colonial powers invaded indigenous societies in the Americas, Africa, and Asia, they often brought new technologies and ideas about the future. This led to disruption of their traditional ways of life and the loss of autonomy. With the advent of the industrial revolution (18th and 19th century), the future held both excitement and fear for many. The promise of technological advancement and improved living conditions

¹⁸ An example: Islamic geometric art found in architecture, decorative objects, and manuscripts throughout the Islamic world, exemplifies the concept of adhering to cosmic order. Islamic artists utilized intricate geometric patterns, often based on principles of symmetry, repetition, and mathematical precision.

¹⁹ In "A Knight in Camelot" (1998), Whoopi Goldberg portrays a modern woman named Victoria, who finds herself transported back in time to the medieval era of Camelot. In one scene, Victoria predicts a solar eclipse to impress and convince the people of Camelot of her magical abilities. By accurately predicting the solar eclipse and using knowledge from “the future”, she gains credibility and authority among the locals

excited some, while others feared the loss of traditional livelihoods, exploitation in factories, and the degradation of the environment²⁰.

In today's globalized world, people worldwide are excited about the potential for increased connectivity, economic opportunities, and access to information and technology. However, globalization has also created fears about cultural homogenization where loss of cultural identity and economic inequality are evident and the systems are crumbling from within. The digital age added possibilities of communication, information-sharing, and innovation. People are excited about the potential for scientific discoveries, medical advancements, and new forms of entertainment, but also fear privacy breaches, cybersecurity threats, gender, race and class based biases of the AI, and the consequences of a rapidly evolving digital landscape. In recent decades, the future has been viewed with growing concern due to issues like climate change and environmental degradation.

And then, contemporaneity's "pains": The 21st century have brought increased awareness of global challenges such as climate change, resource scarcity, and social inequality. Views of the future shifted to emphasize sustainability, renewable energy, and international cooperation. Technological advancements like artificial intelligence and biotechnology prompted discussions about ethics, regulation, and potential risks - all these factors come into play as complex intersections. Throughout history, perspectives on the future have varied widely based on cultural, societal, and individual factors. Some saw progress and opportunity, while others had concerns over loss of tradition, privacy, or human identity- and we know most of the two greatest political paradigms (left and right) are rooted in this division of perspectives. Cultural diversity enriched the landscape of future narratives, with different societies contributing their unique visions. So, from mystical prophecies to techno-utopian dreams, humanity's perception of the future has shaped an endless number of times - if I may say this in a bit poetic manner. As we move forward, the interplay between innovation, responsibility and solidarity will continue to be central - not only when it comes to work.

²⁰ Referring to the anti-electricity Nan American cartoon (campaign) from 1889, where electricity is described as "a demon"

4.1 EVOLUTION OF FUTURE PERSPECTIVES ON WORK PRE-2000's

Another perspective on this topic could be valuable; anthropology and ethnology offer insights into how people have viewed work and labor throughout history. Early human societies, such as hunter-gatherer communities, had a fundamentally different perspective on work compared to many modern industrial societies. For them, work was primarily about subsistence and survival, it was closely tied to the rhythms of nature, and it was not separated from other aspects of life. With the transition to agriculture, work became more focused on cultivation, tending to livestock, and maintaining agricultural systems. In many agricultural societies, there was a strong connection between work and the cycles of the seasons. Work was often communal, with communities coming together for activities like agricultural work over the seasons.

In medieval Europe, the feudal system structured work and labor relationships. Peasants worked the land of the rich in hope for protection and a share of the produce. Work was often tied to social hierarchies and obligations to feudal lords, and it was seen as a means of maintaining order in terms of social classes - the privileged wanted to be sure that their class stays unshattered. The industrial revolution marked a significant shift in how work was perceived and labor became more specialized and often repetitive. Work was separated from home life, and the concept of a "workday" emerged. This sharply influenced the lives of families and their interpersonal relations. For many, work in factories was extensive and labor conditions were often harsh. Life-work balance was definitely not in sight.

In contemporary post-industrial societies, work has evolved further and the domains of work have become more varied. Jobs appear and "die" since the beginning of time. Many people today have jobs in fields such as information technology, healthcare, and creative industries. Work is often associated with personal fulfillment and self-expression, and the concept of work-life balance has gained prominence as people are less provided with the time to spend with their families due to harsh competitiveness in the capitalistic loops. In the context of globalization, work is increasingly interconnected on a global scale. People in different parts of the world are connected through supply chains and digital networks. This has raised questions about labor rights, exploitation, and the impact of work on local communities. Many indigenous cultures around the world have distinct views on work and labor. Work is often seen as a form of reciprocity and communal responsibility. It is closely tied to cultural practices, such as traditional craftsmanship or subsistence farming, and is imbued with cultural significance.

The concept of work took a “long haul” path from ancient labor practices to the modern gig economy. The future of work was viewed with a mix of hope for economic progress and fear of mechanization displacing labor. The mid-20th century brought employment in corporate environments and people started being dependent on capitalism for food²¹. Which - changed everything forever. The future of work was often seen as predictable and linear, with the promise of job security and upward mobility within organizations. However, the 21st century witnessed the rapid advancement of technology (exponential pace), particularly in the fields of artificial intelligence, automation, and robotics. This led to a complex outlook on the future of work.

Gig economy and flexibility might be the greatest change in the landscape of work in our times (due to the Internet mostly) offering seemingly independent working and more personal control - for example: you can bring in your own car as an Uber driver, or you can work from home, but in many ways is another factor in stripping the worker with some rights and adding to their life-costs. The rise of digital platforms and connectivity gave birth to the gig economy. The future of work began to be associated with flexibility, remote work, and short-term contracts. Freelancing and remote collaboration became more common, challenging traditional notions of stable employment. However, the sharing economy (concepts such as AirBnb, Uber, Foodora and similar) are designed in favor of the consumers and owners, rather than those who provided the labor for the platform - opening new class inequality paradigm and a lot to question in terms of power and its distribution among the participants in the platforms²².

Another segment of work in our times is the so-called “life long learning”, where it is expected and encouraged that people learn and/or reskill long-term²³. The changing landscape of work emphasized the importance of continuous skill development. Lifelong learning became another essential (trend) as jobs evolved and new technologies emerged. The future of work was envisioned as a cycle of acquiring and adapting skills to stay relevant in a dynamic job market adding pressure to workers from all domains. And as awareness of mental health and work-life balance grew, the future of work started to emphasize holistic well-being. Flexibility, remote work options, and policies promoting a healthy work environment became important factors in how people viewed their career paths. Concerns about the impact of work on the

²¹ “Søren Mau on Communism, Capitalism and Social Democracy”, Youtube video interview for Verso Books 2024

²² Newlands, G., Lutz, C., & Fieseler, C. (2018). “Collective action and provider classification in the sharing economy”. *New Technology, Work and Employment*.

²³ Here it is meant of life-long learning programmes like Erasmus+

environment and society gained prominence. The future of work included discussions about ethical business practices, corporate social responsibility, and the integration of sustainability principles into professional endeavors.

The term "future of work" is more and more to be heard, and has been widely discussed by various individuals and organizations, and it encompasses a range of perspectives and definitions. Here are some key definitions and viewpoints on what is considered when discussing the future of work by some organizations and companies, in lack of philosophical statements around the term: The WEF (World Economic Forum) defines the future of work as "the ongoing evolution of work and its impact on individuals, organizations, and society. It encompasses changes in the way we work, where we work, and the skills and tools we use in our work."²⁴ McKinsey sees the future of work as "the impact of automation, AI, and other technological advancements on employment, tasks, and skills. It also includes shifts in workforce demographics, work arrangements, and employer-employee relationships."²⁵ Deloitte's perspective on the future of work emphasizes "the transformation of work, workers, and the workplace, driven by technological innovation, changing business models, and shifting demographics."²⁶

The International Labour Organization (ILO): ILO defines the future of work as "the interaction between technological progress, demographic shifts, globalization, and the changing nature of work, encompassing issues such as automation, gig work, and labor market informality."²⁷ Gartner describes the future of work as "a holistic approach to rethinking and reinventing how work gets done, embracing new work models, fostering employee well-being, and leveraging emerging technologies."²⁸ Futurists like Ray Kurzweil and Alvin Toffler envision the future of work as a world where work is increasingly automated, and humans are engaged in more creative and cognitive tasks, emphasizing the need for adaptability and lifelong learning; Kurzweil inclines towards optimistic scenarios²⁹ Toffler (according to Ryan, 2016) introduces us to concepts such as internet", the sharing economy (Airbnb, for example), telecommuting and businesses without formal structure way back in his 1970's book "Future Shock"³⁰.

²⁴ "The Future of Jobs Report 2023" by WEF, 2023, web document

²⁵ "What is the Future of Work" 2023 on McKinsey and Co.'s website

²⁶ "Future of Work Collection" 2020 and ongoing, Deloitte website

²⁷ International Labor Organization's Network on Future of Work, ongoing

²⁸ Gartner (n.d. 2024 and ongoing). "The Future of Work Reinvented", website

²⁹ Kurzweil, R. and Wadhwa, Vivek. (2012). "Ray Kurzweil on the Future of Workforce", interview for Washington Post website

³⁰ Ryan Kevin, J. (2016). "4 Things Futurist Alfin Toppler Predicted About Work back in 1970" by Ryan, Inc. website

Government agencies view the future of work as a means to address policy challenges related to workforce development, job quality, and the social safety net in the face of automation and changing labor dynamics.

Academics and researchers explore the future of work through interdisciplinary lenses, investigating the impact of technology, globalization, and socio-economic factors on employment, income distribution, and workplace structures. Business leaders focus on how the future of work affects organizational strategies, employee engagement, talent acquisition, and the need to foster innovation and agility within their companies. Workers and labor advocates, on the other hand, are concerned with ensuring that the future of work is fair and equitable, emphasizing issues like job security, wage growth, and worker rights. The "future of work" encompasses a wide range of perspectives, from technological and economic transformations to the well-being and rights of workers. It is a complex and evolving concept that is shaped by various factors, and its definition varies.

Many emphasize the central role of technology in shaping the future of work. It is argued that automation, artificial intelligence, and digitalization will continue to disrupt traditional job roles, requiring workers to adapt to new skills and work alongside machines. Gig economy and the rise of flexible work arrangements are seen as a "blessing and a curse". People across domains view this trend as a response to the changing preferences of workers for more autonomy and work-life balance. This shift may lead to a redefinition of traditional employment structures. And let's not forget that few extreme global events from the past few years have been intertwined with our daily lives and are now inseparable from our subjectivity and how we relate to the world - the covid-19 pandemic (2021-2022) and the global/local restrictions related to it, ongoing military actions in parts of Europe and the Middle East. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work, which many believe will continue to be a significant aspect of the future of work. Digital nomadism, where workers are not tied to a specific location, is seen as a growing phenomenon. There is also the trend of striving towards sustainability and ethical labor practices in the future of work. Contemporary perspectives stress the importance of diverse and inclusive workplaces. The mental health and well-being of workers have gained prominence in discussions on the future of work. All these "new normals" can not be looked at without critically approaching through the concept of radical care³¹. Lynne Segal argues that traditional notions of care are often restricted by capitalist and patriarchal systems, which prioritize individualism over community, and profit over collective well-being. She advocates for a radical approach to care that encompasses solidarity, empathy, and social justice.

³¹ Segal, L. (2023). *Lean on Me: A Politics of Radical Care*. Verso

One good aspect of the pandemic was the rise of hybrid work models, where employees have the flexibility to work both remotely and in physical offices. This approach is seen as a way to balance the benefits of remote work with in-person collaboration - especially helping in the direction of inclusion for some groups of disabled people. The above mentioned military invasions have uncovered various "qualities" of Western thinking and political actions through being unique in their own right, but this time the added layer of complexity to these events is that unprecedented imagery being posted and streamed on social media in real time: piles of civilian corpses scattered in hospitals and under city rubble, kids with no limbs, moms with dead babies in arms - all going live on Instagram, Tiktok and similar social media. History/future will never be the same after the normalization and banalization of everyday evil on such scale in social media and in the lived reality. A lot (if not all) of what we are doing while witnessing suffering of such scale in other fellow-humans, banalizes our work - be it art even. I say "even" because often art practice is one of least banal work, especially when many artists are also activists.

Time for generalizing now: there is this vision of the future of work characterized by technological disruption, flexible work arrangements, the importance of education and well-being, and the need for sustainable and ethical practices. Adapting to these changes will be different for individuals, organizations, and societies also depending on further factors, and regarding artists - the future of work presents a unique set of challenges compared to those in other professional domains. This is due to the distinctive nature of artistic expression, the impact of automation and AI (but also due to the fact that some elements in art processes can not be automated) and the evolving demands of the new. Artists rely on their unique human touch to create works of art. While AI and automation can assist with certain aspects of artistic production, they struggle to replicate the depth of what it really means to be human (and to me - that is to be random) and the ability to evoke deep emotional responses in viewers or audiences.

I anticipate that human error, whatever that would mean regarding the specific context of an artwork, will be much desired in arts as time goes by. Art is often subjective, and its value is influenced by cultural and societal factors, but also from the amount of knowledge of the artist about past artists and art. This subjectivity makes it challenging to automate or standardize the creation of art - could not be said the same for the creative industries though, that are very different from art. The unpredictability and ever-evolving nature of art mean that artists can continue to provide novel and meaningful contributions. Another important quality: artists can adapt to the changing landscape by embracing technology as a tool to enhance

the artistic work during processes. AI and automation can be used in collaboration with artists as a supportive tool. The artists will be “protectors” of human error, basically. Human error will be much needed and worshiped. Art often involves storytelling and interpretation, which are inherently human. Art made by humans is about conveying complex narratives and engaging with viewers or audiences on an emotional level, which, I believe, for the moment is difficult for AI to replicate and I truly hope it stays that way. The future of work may see a shift towards more niche and personalized art forms, which - we are yet to see. Also, presentation of diversity of human experiences is difficult for AI to achieve without significant human input. Art often delves into ethical and moral considerations. Artists have a unique role in pushing boundaries and provoking thought, which is inherently human and difficult for AI to replicate without human guidance and intention. The integration of technology and AI can lead to the emergence of new art forms and artists who embrace these changes can harness technology as a tool for innovation rather than a threat to their profession.

In conclusion, the future of work for artists is different from other professional domains. It is because of the irreplaceable role of human subjectivity and emotional engagement. While AI and automation can assist artists and introduce new possibilities, artists' adaptability, subjective contribution and ability to create deeply personalized art will remain essential in the evolving era of AI across various job sectors.

4.2 ART AS WORK THROUGH THE PAST CENTURY

The realm of visual art as work has undergone a profound evolution. Artists like Monet and Renoir defied previously established painting conventions', initiating a shift towards subjective interpretation. Painting pictures was not just serving predominantly as a documenting act anymore. Artists like Picasso and Braque introduced cubism, breaking down objects into geometric forms and multiple perspectives in the early 20th century. This marked a departure from representational art, paving the way for abstraction and non-objective art.

After WWII, abstract expressionism gained prominence in the United States. Artists like Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko explored abstract forms, emphasizing personal

expression. The 1950s and 60s brought pop art, characterized by vibrant colors and imagery drawn from popular culture. And then, minimalism emerged, focusing on simplicity of appearance. Concurrently, conceptual art challenged the physicality of art - ideas and concepts over material. The late 20th century introduced the digital age, with artists experimenting with digital mediums and computer-generated art. The 21st century brings the rise of new media art, incorporating digital technology, interactive installations, and virtual reality. Artists such as Olafur Eliasson and Pipilotti Rist engage audiences in immersive experiences. Street art gained recognition turning public spaces into platforms for social commentary. Some contemporary artists embrace hybrid practices, combining the physical and the digital, many go just for the process without a material outcome. Multidisciplinary collaboration across art, science, and technology has led to blurring disciplinary boundaries and art in a long course of time changes from functional and decorative (old times) to political agent, experimental and play-based, today.

I can not resist asking myself and my fellow artists: what could/would artists do thirty years from now, under the condition there is still a planet and conditions to create and not just survive? Probably the convergence of super-advanced artificial intelligence and limitless image and sound production has redefined the landscape of visual art. In this era of “boundless everything”, visual artists of 2050 (under the condition humans are still here and making art) seamlessly integrate AI as creative collaborators, like for example in the case of Berlin-based US music artist Holly Herndon who believes that working with AI vocal clone called Spawn is a way of expressing how an AI have have a sovereignty and be a rather equal collaborator than just a tool³². AI algorithms would maybe possess an intricate understanding of art history, styles, and techniques. Maybe even reasonable morals in applying those. Artists might employ AI to generate initial concepts, leveraging its vast database of artistic knowledge to propose “fresh” new paradigms. They can carefully select, refine, and transform AI-produced content, “infusing” it with their personal vision and human touch. This curation process becomes an art form in itself, and maybe the dominant way to make art.

Artists switch completely to climate change topics that will be even more worrying with time, by not just representing/articulating them, but also helping hands-on; example - gardening, using wind, sun for alternative power supply, and other things related that are unimaginable for current brains. Human imperfections might be highly appreciated: in a world saturated with AI-perfected creations, artists intentionally introduce human error depending on the

³² “Herndon. H. (2020). Holly Herndon on her AI Baby, Reanimating Tupac and Extracting Voices” - interview for Artnews.com

media of their interest. As overpopulation rises and stress and class differences increase, with nature almost dying out, artists might become more of the group of people that will try to “console” the tied humanity by creating more sensory-based works for kids and adults. By this, I mean work more with touch, sight, smell, etc. Art becomes a bridge between the human and everything surrounding them, resonating deeply in these times where sensory overload is a norm.

If I may non-empirically state as a conclusion note: good art is an epistemology of knowledge, scientific in its own way, and bad art is the “homeopathy” to that science. Simultaneously, our planet faces an array of pressing environmental challenges. At the core of this research lies the fundamental question: How do artists see themselves evolving as creators in a world where technology is advancing at breakneck speed, and the imperative to address environmental crises is more pressing than ever? This research project in a personal sense, is a celebration of the voices that will shape the narratives of our near to mid-term future. Turner-winning artist Jesse Darling boldly states that *art in its current form is over*.³³

4.3 “MIRROR, MIRROR, ON THE WALL” - WHAT AI THINKS PHILOSOPHERS WOULD THINK

At some point, I wanted to ask some AI platform what they would say about how AI will shape the mid-term future and work as an introduction to the practice of interviews with humans that will later follow. The section “Mirror, mirror, on the wall” in this dissertation is aimed at a playful action where I was interviewing ChatGPT about what would known philosophers from the past and the present say about our future having in mind the accelerated AI development intertwined with the rising environmental concerns. The speculative thoughts of philosophers like Spinoza, Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, and Rosi Braidotti on the future of work influenced by AI and ChatGPT (according to Chat GPT) would likely be as diverse as their individual philosophies. Here's a speculative exploration of what each of these thinkers might contribute to the conversation as of the platform:

³³ Darling, J. (2024). “Art is Over in Its Current Form”. Interview for ExBerliner, website

Spinoza might emphasize the rational and ethical considerations in the use of AI in work. He could argue that the integration of AI should be guided by a commitment to understanding human emotions and well-being, ensuring that AI enhances our power to act and think more clearly.

Nietzsche might view AI and ChatGPT as the manifestation of the "will to power." He would question the implications of concentrated power in the hands of those who control and develop these technologies, urging society to consider how AI and ChatGPT might be used for creative, self-affirming purposes rather than control and domination.

Foucault might explore the implications of AI and ChatGPT for surveillance and control in the workplace. He would likely critique how these technologies could reinforce disciplinary structures and suggest the need for constant vigilance in protecting individual autonomy and privacy.

Deleuze and Guattari would likely focus on the rhizomatic nature of AI and ChatGPT, seeing them as tools that challenge traditional hierarchical power structures. They might encourage embracing the "nomadism" of these technologies to create more decentralized and flexible work arrangements.

Simone De Beauvoir would likely highlight the importance of gender equality in AI and ChatGPT-driven work. She might argue for dismantling gender biases and stereotypes in these technologies, ensuring they contribute to a more equitable and inclusive future of work.

Judith Butler would draw attention to the performative aspects of AI and ChatGPT, questioning how they shape our identities and notions of self. She might challenge us to consider how these technologies impact the construction of gender, race, and other aspects of identity at work.

Rosi Braidotti would emphasize the intersection of AI and posthumanism. She might explore the potential of AI to enhance human capabilities and call for a shift in our ethical and political considerations to accommodate the posthuman subject, highlighting the importance of ethical engagement with these technologies.

Theodore Adorno, a critical theorist and a prominent figure in the Frankfurt School, might have expressed deep skepticism about AI and ChatGPT. Adorno was known for his concerns about the dehumanizing effects of modern technology and the potential for instrumental rationality to suppress individuality and creativity. He might argue that AI and ChatGPT risk

commodifying thought and language, reducing them to mere commodities for consumption. Adorno would likely worry that these technologies could further erode genuine human communication and foster a superficial, standardized culture. He would emphasize the importance of preserving human autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking in the face of technological advances.

Hannah Arendt, a political philosopher known for her exploration of the nature of political action and the importance of the public sphere, might approach AI and ChatGPT with a focus on their impact on human agency and the public realm. She might be concerned about the potential for these technologies to automate and depersonalize decision-making, undermining the essence of politics as a space for human deliberation and collective action.

In summary, these philosophers would bring distinct perspectives to the discussion of AI and ChatGPT (according to ChatGPT, paradoxically, but realistic at the same time), raising concerns about commodification and dehumanization, the preservation of human agency and the public sphere. The platform summarizes that the philosophers' contributions would highlight the ethical, political, and existential dimensions of these technologies. The rest is too a variety of perspectives to the future of work influenced by AI and ChatGPT, considering issues of power, identity, ethics, and control. I would conclude that at least this AI platform (ChatGPT) gives the impression that it “understands” and can assess the impact of these technologies on society and to work towards a future that aligns with human values and aspirations. Meanwhile, while writing this, other AI platforms for wide use are being in function, developing or soon to be released, so it is hard to say where will this “understanding” go, as in this domain obsolescence is the byproduct of the fast expansion of these technologies. What is valid this month, will be “old” by the end of the year.

4.4 ENVISIONING THE FUTURE TODAY AND THROUGH WHAT TOOLS

From the 60s onwards, the dense blending of philosophy with the popular and the media has not stopped and today (meaning last days of 2023 while I'm typing this) one more layer of “problems” can be added - the climate crisis related-ones. I subjectively chosen to place this wide topic I came to work with, at the intersection of those three notions mentioned in the beginning (potentialities, posthuman, speculative fiction), and for that matter I'd need to share

briefly the approaches of those theorists/philosophers that I felt have influenced this research - Benjamin Bratton, Rosi Braidotti and Timothy Morton.

Both Benjamin Bratton and Timothy Morton are contemporary philosophers known for their critical perspectives on technology, ecology, and the future. While their visions of the future vary, I'll provide a brief overview of their key ideas: Bratton is a theorist, author, and educator who has explored the intersections of technology, design, geopolitics, and the environment. His work often challenges conventional thinking and encourages us to reimagine the future in a rapidly changing world. Some of his key ideas include "The Stack" where he introduces the concept of "The Stack," which is a theoretical framework that envisions the earth and its inhabitants as part of a complex, interconnected system of technological and ecological layers. These layers include Earth (in terms of geology and ecology), Cloud (as computational infrastructure), City (as urban environments), and Interface (standing for user interfaces and interactions). Bratton's vision suggests that these layers must be thought of holistically to address the challenges of the future, including those related to technology and ecology.

Bratton emphasizes the significance of planetary-scale computation, where the computational power and data processing capabilities of the modern world have become a critical force in shaping our future. He challenges us to consider the implications of such vast computational capabilities on ecological and societal dynamics. He argues for a new form of design thinking and governance that takes into account the complex and interconnected nature of the world today. He further suggests that design should not just be aesthetic but should also encompass ethical and political considerations, particularly when it comes to technology and ecology.

Timothy Morton is a UK-based philosopher and ecologist who explores the interconnectedness of all life forms and the implications of this interconnectedness for our understanding of ecology and the future. In "Dark Ecology" he challenges traditional ecological thinking by acknowledging the inherent "darkness" or complexity of the relationships between humans and the environment, and argues that ecological awareness should confront the unsettling aspects of our impact on the planet, including climate change, pollution, and extinction. Morton introduces the concept of "hyperobjects," which are entities or phenomena that are distributed in time and space on a massive scale, such as global warming, styrofoam or the internet. He suggests that these hyperobjects are challenging to comprehend fully and that our future is deeply entangled with them. He advocates for a deeper ecological awareness that goes beyond traditional environmentalism. He further

encourages individuals and society to confront the "ecological uncanny," - a sense of unfamiliarity and strangeness in our relationship with the natural world humans have developed over the course of time.

Both Bratton and Morton offer complex and thought-provoking visions of the future that emphasize the intertwined nature of technology and ecology. They challenge us to reconsider our assumptions and develop new ways of thinking about our relationship with the environment and the role of technology in shaping the future. Their work is about the importance of holistic and interconnected perspectives when envisioning the future in an age of rapid technological advancement and ecological challenges.

Rosi Braidotti, a philosopher known for her work on the post-human (and what it means to be post-human), provides a framework through which we can reflect on the current state of humanity and where it might be heading. Her approach challenges traditional notions of human identity and agency, advocating for a more inclusive and interconnected understanding of the human within the broader ecosystem of life on Earth. Here's how her ideas intersect with those of Bratton and Morton (note: she is their senior, so they come after her school of thought) : She suggests that the human is not an isolated entity but rather a part of a vast web of relationships that include the non-human, the technological, and the ecological. This perspective aligns with Morton's "Dark Ecology" and Bratton's "The Stack," both of which emphasize the intricate connections between humans, technology, and the environment. Braidotti's concept of the "post-human" challenges the traditional human-centric view. She argues that as we continue to merge with technology and develop more profound ecological awareness, the boundaries between the human and the non-human become increasingly blurred, but being human still remains a contested field. This aligns with Bratton's notion of "planetary-scale computation" and Morton's "hyperobjects," which suggest that the human is deeply entangled with complex, interconnected systems. On the other hand, she stays loyal to the question "what it means to be human?", and who is human today, who is not so human? Class, gender and race contribute who can be seen as (more) human.

Braidotti's posthumanism encourages us to consider the ethical and political implications of our interconnectedness with technology and ecology. This resonates with Bratton's call for a new form of design thinking and governance that considers the ethical and political dimensions of technology and Morton's challenge to confront the "ecological uncanny."

The perspectives of Bratton, Morton, and Braidotti collectively urge us to embrace a more holistic, inclusive, and responsible approach to shaping the future. It is a future where the boundaries between the human, the technological, and the ecological are fluid, requiring us to navigate these complexities with profound awareness and ethical consideration - each time approaching events as separate cases with unique conditions and entanglement of those. By doing so, we can strive for a future that is not just about the survival of humanity but the flourishing of all life forms on this interconnected planet and possibly beyond.

5. INTERVIEWS WITH ARTISTS

For the field research part for this dissertation, I asked four younger visual artists and/or multidisciplinary designers born between 1989 and 1997 - Klelija Zivkovikj (N. Macedonia), Barbora Ilić (The Czech Republic) Ivana Chaloska (N. Macedonia) and Lizavieta Hrydziuska (Belarus). They were asked to introduce their recent professional history (alma mater included), current work practice, and finally - to speculate on their future selves as artists and designers in terms of work. The provisional year for the speculative part was set to 2030 which I think is not too far, nor too close.

Barbora Ilić was born in Prague (*1993) but for the last five years have been based in Brno. For her bachelor degree she studied sociology at the Faculty of Arts at the Charles University in Prague. Later, she had also studied the New Media Studies master programme at the same faculty. She completed her master's degree at The Brno University of Technology at the Faculty of Fine Arts in the department of Video in 2023 and continued her studies in the PhD programme, respectively. Currently, her activities consist mainly of curating, parenting and her own artistic practice. She co-runs an offspace gallery Cejla and also works as a PR specialist for The Brno University of Technology. In her curatorial and artistic practice, she is mainly focused on the problems of reparative tendencies in contemporary artworld, post-ironic methodology and the concept of semi-peripheries.

When asked what is her current relation to the "big" entanglement of fast-paced technology and environmental circumstances, and do some of these are interesting for her as an artist/researcher, now or in the near future, she answered that she is very much interested in the artistic use of AI and its visual imagination possibilities. In her words:

- As someone who never got a proper practical artistic education such as learning how to use 3D modeling programmes or even some advanced photoshop, I appreciate the way AI makes graphic and image creation more open to curious “amateurs”. In my artistic practice I am also fascinated by random patterns, trashy found visuals and poor images which AI often creates. I am fascinated by the imperfections of AI visual language and the way it captures what AI thinks something should look like. To me, the use of AI is a resignation to the idea of bringing original newness into the visual culture of art as the visual imagination of AI is always imaginative recycling of already existing visuals. It may sound bad, but I actually perceive it as a good thing which truly reflects the contemporary world. Generally, I consider myself a humble accelerationist and sometimes I often purposely dive into the toxic speeding world social media visual culture enhanced by different AI strategies and repeating content patterns, although it makes me feel drained. Few years before, I used to accent environmental issues in my art, but recently I found myself feeling too skeptical about it and realized I mostly did that for my own good feeling gained from the participation in an “ethical” artistic practice. I generally believe that the artworld takes itself too seriously and tries too hard to do good that it almost always eventually turns into something compromised.

Lastly, when asked to make a brief speculative scenario of herself as an artist in 2030, what excites you and what scares/worries her, she explained:

- As I am mostly focused on video, I hope that in 2030, moving image production will be more open to non professionals thanks to AI assistants in editing programmes. This could really make a change in deciding who is in charge of creating narratives. Also, I feel like there could be a trend of people coming back to more classical film media and being able to consume slower and longer content as an anti-movement against tiktok formats. It would still be just a trend, so nothing really subversive, but it could be an interesting change. Also, I assume not being on social media is going to become a fashion among privileged people who can afford that. Being an artist who doesn't have (therefore can afford not to have) social media channels could be a new ‘it’ attitude. On an individual level, I must admit that I hope that by 2030 I am going to be able to do that - that is to find a way of being an artist while not being dependent on constant self-presentation. Maybe some kind of a clever AI programme could do that, extracting content from my phone to create an authentic social media presence? Anyways, the future is now so I am sure such a feature might already exist.

Ivana Chaloska (1992) is a multidisciplinary designer and researcher, born in Ohrid (N. Macedonia). Her formal education includes the Faculty of Architecture and Design at the University American College Skopje (BS) and the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering Skopje - Industrial Design (MS). Currently, she is furthering her academic pursuits with master's studies in media design at Keio University - Graduate School of Media Design in Japan, where she has been living and working for the past 2 years. With a subversive hunger for collective improvement, her creative concepts are predominantly intertwined with theoretical explorations of shared planetary values. When also asked what is her current relation to the "big" entanglement of fast-paced technology and environmental circumstances, she answers that this topic is very close to her current research, which falls under the spectrum of More-Than-Human Centered Design/More-Than-Human approach to HCI, where both themes of galloping technology and serious climate issues are thoroughly analyzed. What interests her in this connotation, is a kind of "technological contamination," or different aspects of how technology pollutes and burdens the planet regardless of how refined and simplified it is. She expresses concern that technology is used as a tool for spreading unprocessed and incorrect information, which also influences the human mentality regarding certain planetary problems. Additionally, she states that she must not neglect the galloping technology with a significantly low level of accessibility for human conditions and completely neglected accessibility for planetary conditions.

- Climate change is here, and it's more real than anything else. We cannot deny it, and mitigating it definitely is not an easy task. With my research, I follow post-human feminist theories, which analyze and criticize human systems from various aspects and reject anthropocentrism as a thinking habit. From this perspective, decentralized and nonlinear perspectives are analyzed, which could improve both the ecological and social crisis. - she adds

In conclusion, as a subjective stance, she emphasizes the ignorance to imagine and design the future, neglecting all the other "agents" with whom we share this planet. When we talk about new technologies, her vision is that we are talking about mediators between humans and other organic/inorganic "beings" beyond the "controller/performer" relationship. She adds:

- And perhaps, to achieve this, we need to separate ourselves from the comfort of a certain hierarchy of existence. In every domain whose purpose is the transfer of knowledge, it is important to elaborate on social, racial, gender justice, but also on

ecological and more-than-human justice. There is no isolated problem; everything is connected in the vast matrix of action.

When asked for a speculative scenario of where she sees herself as an artist in 2030, what encourages her, and what worries and scares her, she states:

- In the year 2030, I envision myself firmly positioned somewhere between design practice and design research, and multidisciplinary will always be present for the reasons mentioned above. I expect my current focal theme, More-than-human Centered Design, to be much more dominant than it is at the moment, and I anticipate technology to intertwine more with biology than just with rigid synthetic intelligence. I don't consider AI to be a bad tool; rather, I believe its potential can expand if more parameters in nature are analyzed. What concerns me the most is that very often in practical and academic environments, design is exclusively applied as a problem solver/sense maker, neglecting the fact that this definition is driven by capitalism and neocolonialism, framing design as yet another tool to maintain traditional power models. Design is a creative expertise in itself, inviting criticism and imagination, testing boundaries, and breaking out of comfort zones. I am fearful of expectations and underestimation of other design expertise and the lack of interest in inclusion and multidisciplinary collaboration. I am encouraged by the existing post-human/more-than-human theories and design practices that
- promote the symbiosis of species, ideas for the dehumanization of new technologies, criticism of current technologies, and above all, the desire to collaborate and learn beyond the selfish mannerisms of the human species.

Klelija Zhivkovikj (1989), is a transdisciplinary artist based in Skopje, North Macedonia. She holds a BSc in Industrial design from the University of St. Cyril and Methodius Skopje, and an MA in Social design from the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Formally trained across several design disciplines, her work is a theoretical, material and experiential inquiry into boundaries - the physical, psychological, emotional or spiritual barriers we construct to both help us know ourselves as beings in space, and provide an interface for contact with our surroundings.

In 2021, Studio Private Print from Skopje published her first artist book "Prototyping tenderness: a personal log of a dying world", and hosted her first solo exhibition by the same name. She was awarded the "Ladislav Barisic" award from AICA Macedonia for her research

proposal “Design for resurgence” in 2022. She has participated in several group exhibitions in North Macedonia and Austria, including “It’s easier to breathe underground” and The Biennial of Young Artists and the Museum of Contemporary Art - Skopje. In 2023, she was one of the three recipients of the “DENES” award.

On the entanglement of fast paced technology and environmental issues (intertwined) and her relation towards that, she states:

- I have been educated as a designer, and in my practice I insist on maintaining a strong tendency towards this discipline which is mostly applied in the tech industry. As such, this particular entanglement has been driving my curiosity since the very beginning. I believe that design is an artistic discipline which concerns itself with the world shaped by the massive and unjust extraction, consumption and distribution of resources - a definition that I arrived at through engaging with the entanglement between the profit-driven, extractive, patriarchal technology which we have developed, and the climate collapse, which has been unequivocally associated with it. Between the monetization of DNA, diversification of data surveillance, and tech billionaires’ ambition for multi-planetary colonization, among others, our world has fallen prey to techno-solutionism - the practice of creating technologies that eliminate the need to rely on humanity’s capacity for care and effort in preserving the planet we inhabit, while capitalizing on these “solutions”. Despite all these new technologies being presented under the guise of help, they are actually fictions; spectacles keeping our gaze locked on our screens, invading our imagination and depleting our relationships. The spectacle of dystopia has spawned entire industries, while not only failing to prevent its descent, but causing it. As this extraterrestrial ambition is taking off, as a designer I am infinitely more interested in the world we would leave behind in the ethical debris of this departure.

In her practice she uses the format of prototyping to create encounters with unformed ideas, or traces of ideas. These prototypes can take the shape of methodologies, installations, sculptures, fictions, performances, tools, text, words, etc. Partly a rejection of the industry’s appetite for optimized, ubiquitous, hyper-stylized technologies, these prototypes are aimed at creating opportunities for embodied and intimate dwelling and speculation on humanity’s relations to the more-than-human world. Her work as an educator, researcher, and consultant in the expanding field of design is geared toward forging a design practice based on interdependence, resurgence, and kinship through investigating boundaries and care as structures of effort that can shape counter narratives as technologies for earthly survival.

She says that, the further she moves into the entanglement between technology and the shape of our world, the stronger she believes that an alternative to this technology can be born at the intersection of queerness, ecology and design, and I am very excited to be a part of such a future.

When asked to see herself and her work in 2030, she says:

- I'm currently recovering from the most recent bout of burn out which happened as a result of juggling a full time job, which I need to sustain my life, and a parallel artistic career, which I hope will one day become my only job. At the same time, I feel creatively and artistically fulfilled and accomplished from my most recent artistic production. Therefore, all of the desires that I currently feel, and which shape this speculative scenario, exist between the longing for safety, rest and certainty and the confidence and fulfillment of successfully completing an artistic process. In 2030, I will have created a job for myself that doesn't solely depend on funding applications, but generates an income through the practice and knowledge I will have developed through my work. I would be operating on the intersection between strategy, design and education in an international setting, which offers job security and hopefully a bit of fun. I truly hope and desire to be able to operate in the Balkan context in the same or similar conditions that I have described. With my work, I would be able to sustain a stable and safe environment for my own queer family, including healthcare, permanent residence and reduced or absent uncertainty at the family level. I am very worried that job security is becoming less possible in the context of arts and culture. It seems like burn out "is a part of the deal", especially in a country like North Macedonia, which is in constant crisis. I am also deeply concerned that my impression that the brutalist neoliberal capitalism will eventually implode (much after 2030) is also an illusion, and that it will continue to reach new levels of brutality. However, I am encouraged by the growing number of people who reach for alternative lifestyles and begin growing their own food, using renewable energy sources etc, which are all good options given that it is not really possible to opt out of capitalism. I personally find great comfort and hope in the movements toward decolonisation of families, disciplines, work and everything else.

Lizaveta Hrydziushka (1997, Vitebsk) has recently graduated from the BFA program at UMPRUM in Prague. Now she is starting her MFA program at the same school. She is a young emerging artist, whose main mediums are video, installation, and performance. She

stated that being an immigrant from the post-soviet Belarus is at the core of her artistic practice and research. She is also interested in cultural perception of different events, such as war, protests, human relationships etc. She states that her art is openly political but in a more melancholic way than the usual one.

When asked about her relation to the entanglement of fast-paced technological advancement and the environmental reality we are living in, she stated that she is not actually interested in either of those and is almost absolutely sure that she won't ever be. She is aware that these global topics have a huge impact on our everyday life, but from her point of view, the core of these and many other problems lie in the hierarchy of the relationships between people. She believes that our approach to nature and the "weird" implementation of technologies is driven by our misunderstanding of ourselves and others around us.

When asked to imagine herself in 2030 as an artist, she states:

- I guess it's a funny coincidence, that exactly at this particular moment, while I was thinking about an answer to the last question I got a message from some guy, where he asked me if I am an artist, because he wanted to start a gallery business, he did consult it with some galleries and he was looking for artists. I said I am, but what kind of galleries did he mean, commercial ones? Because it's really tough to sell video or performance work and moreover, I'll not work for that kind of institution. And then he asked me about my more convenient artist-friends...That is the thing: art is no longer (for a few centuries actually) a discipline that serves lots of people, that is understandable and significant for majorities. Art was exploited by mass culture(corporates) and then neglected - and to survive it irreversibly changed to meet up the capitalists' standards, where the quality of the art is based on its commodity and a high selling price - like everything in late capitalism. It bothers me, it's sad and unpleasant. The year 2030 is in 6,5 years and it's not so much, it's near the corner. I'm not waiting for the industry or the world to change for me. I guess art will always be my passion, outlet, and a great side job and activity. But it's something that requires a lot of energy, time, thinking, effort, money, and so on. I'm not sure that I want to dedicate my short life to attempts to try to find some funding or a fight against the so-called system. I'm no longer feeling like it. I don't feel safe or welcomed in this artworld, so I will probably start to work in this direction first and then maybe my art career will find me, of course I'll work on it within my possibilities, but I cannot say that I see it as my primary activity. I hope to get great post- production skills and just work.

5.1 DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS/ SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEWS

Each of the four statements reflects a distinctive perspective on the future objectives and challenges faced by these young artists. As a summary using discursive analysis: Ilić finds value in the accessibility AI brings to graphic and image creation, appreciating its imperfections as reflective of contemporary culture. She expresses skepticism towards the seriousness of the art world and anticipates AI's role in democratizing moving image production by 2030, potentially shifting narrative control. Additionally, she foresees a trend where privileged individuals refrain from social media, aspiring to a detached artist identity facilitated by AI-generated content. Čaloska emphasizes the urgency of addressing climate change and advocates for a post-human feminist approach to design. She envisions herself focusing on more-than-human-centered-design by 2030, incorporating multidisciplinary perspectives and critiquing the exclusive application of design driven by capitalism and neocolonialism. Živkovikj critiques techno-solutionism and the commodification of art in late capitalism. She expresses concerns about job security in the arts and envision creating a stable career intersecting strategy, design, and education. She hopes to operate within the Balkan context and support her own queer family while engaging in movements toward decolonization. Hrydzuška reflects on the commercialization of art and her disillusionment with the art world's exclusivity and commodification. She expresses uncertainty about dedicating her life to art due to the challenges of securing funding and navigating systemic barriers. She prioritizes acquiring post-production skills and views art as a passion rather than a primary career focus.

It is obvious that these statements highlight very diverse perspectives on the intersection of art, technology, capitalism, and societal challenges, with each artist navigating their aspirations within this complex landscape.

As a conclusion to the interviews part of this dissertation I think there is a common mood in the answers of the artists - there is hope and fear, but the hope seems to prevail. In my opinion, it is because the younger generation(s) follow technological trends, have sharply developed a sense of what they want to use/implement and what they would avoid or not be interested in. These people have been growing up with social media, as it was always there for (and with) them, and unlike us millennials (I am born 1985) who have been "on the Internet" since its first days, let's say since its genesis :) - the younger generations seem like as if they have been born with the organic relationship to social media. They use it, but also

create it and change it. This is, however, not the main topic of their answers nor my main intention to explore.

In the speculative scenarios as in “where do you see yourself as an artist in the approaching 2030”, these artists would be in the peak of their careers (age-wise) had they stayed in that domain. Barbora Ilič presents a very radical, and to me, very realistic perspective on the artistic future of work by noting that artists might start taking on more classical ways of making art, while also producing films and video will be democratized even more than today because of the accessibility to all kinds of technology and its wide use, so the “terrain” of film and video might look very exciting in 2030 because of this. Klelija Zhivkovikj and Ivana Chaloska, both working internationally predominantly in the research-based design through multidisciplinary approach, are putting the emphasis on the care between the animate and inanimate, between people and people, people and objects, people and other species on Earth. Zhivkovikj is also exploring tenderness as a possible reality or realities influenced by it, Chaloska expresses worry for humans’ low capacity to coexist peacefully with other species and is looking forward to solutions to that. Hrydziuska expresses a rather pessimistic look at the current art practice and the part where they are being pushed to produce for money while some media is not capitalizable in that way, and she sees herself in the provisional 2030 as someone who is not necessarily affiliated with art because of that and related pressures.

Building upon the perspectives presented by the artists regarding the approaching year 2030, what was evident to me was that the future trajectory of artistic practices is influenced by diverse considerations. In summary, the collective insights of the mentioned artists provide a nuanced perspective on the potential developments in the artistic landscape. The projection of a coexistence between classical and democratized forms of artistic expression, as well as the thematic focus on ethical considerations within research-based design, indicates a complex and evolving future for artists. Hrydziuska's apprehensions about the commercialization of art and the associated pressures raise pertinent questions about the sustainability and autonomy of artistic pursuits. In envisaging a disassociation from the art world, she prompts further inquiry into the societal, economic, and institutional factors influencing artistic identities. The collection of these perspectives suggests a future wherein artists navigate diverse challenges and opportunities, necessitating continued exploration into the evolving nature of artistic practices within the broader socio-cultural context.

6. RELATED AUTHORED AND CO-AUTHORED RESEARCH PROJECTS (2018 UNTIL 2024)

Over the course of the past six years, I worked on solo and collaborative artistic projects falling into the scope of topics presented in this dissertation. In terms of medium - the projects span from artist book (The Curatables) and long term research on the future of work resulting in various ephemeral performative pieces (Digi Futures), all the way to an academic subject aimed at art students at FaVU VUT and beyond. A brief history of what I have worked on, follows in the subsequent sections.

6.1 “THE CURATABLES”

The Curatables by the artistic duo Ephemerki (Dragana Zarevska and Jasna Dimitrovska) is an interactive artists' book, published by Private Print studio from Skopje (N. Macedonia) in 2018. The book is based upon the entertaining concept of the Curatables, objects that can be curated (or not), initiated with the performance “Contexter vs. Discursor” by the same duo previously performed in ŠKUC Gallery (Ljubljana, SI), OGS Museum of the City of Skopje (Skopje, N. MK), Hellerau (Dresden, DE) and Summerhall Gallery (Edinburgh, UK) among others. In the book, those “special” objects - The Curatables are displayed in a different medium - that of a book with pop up 3D paper figures. The book, as a result, acquires performative features through the use of the materials, the interactiveness, the creation of the pop-up object, and through the very approach. The book's first edition was printed in 100 copies and is no longer available to buy. The book was presented in Athens at the Athens Art Book fair and Berlin at MissRead Art book fair and festival and was available for a longer-term display at Motto (Berlin) and Private Print Studio (Skopje).³⁴

Long before the book, The Curatables appear in the performance “Contexter vs. Discursor” by Zarevska and Dimitrovska (lecture-like performance produced during 2015 of cca 40 min length) as a set of objects that possess metaphysical attributes; they help the one who has them in their hands, to create new words, and thus influence language and gain control. The performance draws reference to Michel Foucault's “Discipline and Punish”³⁵. These objects have later influenced the practical part of this dissertation in a way similar “philosophical”

³⁴ Private Print Studio web, catalog information about the book “The Curatables”

³⁵ From *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* by M. Foucault, first published in 1975

objects have: boundary objects, hyperobjects and knotty objects, all to be subject of discussion in the subsequent sections.



Figure 2

6.2 “DIGI FUTURES”

I took part in this project as an artist proposing artistic methodologies for the participative processes the test-groups took part in, along with designers and philosophers. The project result was an innovative methodology for exploring future scenarios about humanizing a digitized workplace which was tested in partner organizations and “productified” for further dissemination and commercialization through a deck of speculative fiction cards with

instructions for speculating through them - called "Specularities". The knowledge on future of work created in the project was disseminated through a series of workshops of closed and semi-closed nature, then public events, artistic exhibition, pop-songs, fourteen speculative fictions stories created by project participants and two academic publications³⁶.

The project was initiated and led by Nina Bozic Yams, financed by the Swedish Innovation agency Vinnova (Sweden), realized by RISE - Research Institutes of Sweden with the selected team of artists, philosophers, UX designers and process innovators, the primary aim of this project was focusing on the development and testing of an innovative methodology designed to foster cross-functional and cross-sector collaboration as variety of private and public sector bodies from Sweden were included in the project by sending their representatives. The project specifically engaged employees with non-technical backgrounds to test a holistic understanding of the potentials and challenges associated with digital transformation. This inclusive approach involved the integration of technologies (AI, IoT, VR), into the future landscape of work and their possible paths of development and impact on people's lives at work, but also interpersonal relationships between colleagues. The overarching purpose was to redirect attention from mere technological optimization towards leveraging digitalization to establish a more humane workplace.

Together with other artists like Gregor Kamnikar (SI) and Dejan Srhoj (SI) I was involved in introducing artistic methodologies to the work groups from Sweden, and through such approach - involving the participants into play-based processes where they could think about their jobs in the future, and how they can accommodate themselves best in those potential realities.

The project yielded a methodology for exploring future scenarios related to humanizing digitized workplaces and its methodology underwent testing in partner organizations and was subsequently transformed into a product aimed at wider dissemination. The outcome took the form of a set of speculative fiction cards, accompanied by instructions, aptly named "Specularities.", very similar to tarot, but for work environments of the future. The knowledge generated on the future of work in this project was disseminated through diverse channels, including workshops, public events, artistic exhibitions, pop songs, fourteen speculative fiction stories authored by project participants, and two academic publications. The finale of the project with a whole-evening event at Electrolux's headquarters in Stockholm in December 2019, along with visual and textual display on part of the created speculative scenarios during the whole duration of the project. The event was enriched with a public

³⁶ Reports on DIGI Futures project, 2021, taken integrally from Vinnova's website

panel discussion where researchers from the “Posthumanities Hub” founded by Cecilia Åsberg took part.

6.3 “FUTURE OF EVERYTHING”

“Future of Everything” (short - FOE) is an online course organized into a few blocks of live online sessions via MS Teams each autumn semester since 2021 at FaVU for the BA and the MA students in visual arts, but not only them. In each block, a guest speaker, either an artist or a cultural worker, joins to contribute to the course's main objective. The goal is to familiarize students with speculative thinking and design in technology, visual art, architecture, and related fields. So far, we have had guest speakers from Serbia, N. Macedonia, Netherlands, Spain, Bulgaria, Germany and Sweden. The aim of this course is to introduce the students to the notion of speculative thinking and anti-disciplinary approach to artistic research. The students are expected to discuss, but also propose their speculative fiction in the form of artistic research. Speculative thinking is all about the future, so we are especially going to focus on the human and post-human future, the future of work, as well as the possible relations between the human and the non-human labor forces in an approaching post-anthropocene landscape.

The course is imagined as a general exercise in speculative (“what if”) thinking that combines concepts from speculative design, ecological thought and radical landscapes of the future - existing at the border of fiction and social reality. It is expected that the participation in this course will strengthen students' ability to work with selected theoretical texts and visual materials. The course will also include a lecture by an invited guest from the field of speculative design. From the students' side it is important to reflect on the topic in the form of discussions, essays, or their own creative projects.

During the semester, students have the opportunity for one-on-one consultations with the teacher to discuss their exam work concept and execution, as well as materials relevant to the subject. At the beginning of the semester, students receive the task for their final (exam) work. They are required to choose an older piece of art they created in any medium and rework it based on limitations and game rules introduced by the lecturer in the first meeting. Examples from previous semesters are usually shared for reference. The focus is on exploring potential futures of an existing event. The final work format is a short audiovisual piece created on the go with experiments in AI filters (phone apps), playing with augmented

reality platforms (like Artivive) or, for those who prefer text as medium - they get a task to write a poem. For example in the winter semester 2023/2024 the topic and the title of the “homework” poem was “The Great Prompt of 2030” and the students could articulate it freely.

The culmination of the semester occurs during the credit week at the end of the winter semester, where students share their reworked pieces with both the teacher and the group on MS Teams. This practical approach aims to push creative boundaries, encouraging students to experiment with speculative design while incorporating technological elements into their artistic expressions.

Structure of the course³⁷

1. Introduction to speculation: potentialities

During the introductory part of the course we discuss theoretical texts dealing with the notion of “potentialities” and what could that be (future scenarios), under what kind of circumstances. The students are presented with examples of speculative thinking from history of visual art, literature, film and design but are also asked to conduct a short research and present their own findings of examples on speculative thinking.

2. Crazy objects that turn into a philosophical matter

During this part of the course, the students are introduced to a selected set of projects devised at the centers that are known for experimenting radically with mixing art and science such as the MIT Media Lab (USA), Strelka Institute (Moscow) and similar, so they can engage with a variety of bold examples of art, design and architecture research from the recent years.

3. Anti-disciplinary everything

Beyond interdisciplinary - there is anti-disciplinary; an important element in the processes of imagining future scenarios about things and relations as anti-disciplinary allows new ways of working (“not just a sum of a bunch of disciplines” as Joi Ito states), because it does not obey the well-established methods, frameworks and approaches of work.

4. Future of work

"Future of work", used actively as a syntagm across contexts, is referring to the future of work and workplaces as we know them now in an ever-changing world of technology, demographics and globalization. "Future of work" is a hot topic of today which brings together

³⁷ This part of the dissertation is integrally taken from FaVU VUT's website where the curriculum of the course “Future of Everything” is described per blocks by the lecturer (Zarevska)

experts from various domains to imagine and discuss possible future scenarios about their workplace, companies; systems of human as well as human-nonhuman relations. Through various examples of using artistic approaches to create future work scenarios for companies and public bodies, the dialog of the present and the future is being examined, as that future is already here. During this block of seminars try to imagine what is beyond the popular belief that “AI will replace our jobs” as the systems of the future will be more complex than that.

5. Post-anthropocene landscapes

During the final block of activities, we discuss future landscapes through ecological thought, taking in consideration possible political and architectural landscapes of the future where people could, but do not have to dominate (or even exist on) their native planet. The students are expected to present their work on the topic during the final meetings, or upon agreement for an individual presentation with the teacher.

6.4 “LA CONTEXTRESSA”

La Contextressa was a year long project on AI and context in focus, realized during 2020, conducted as an artistic research at FaVU in Brno, by Dragana Zarevska (FaVU) and Martin Kolařík (FEKT) – doctoral students and researchers at VUT, Brno. The project was conducted as an inter-faculty collaboration within frames of the junior SpV call at VUT. In the initial phase of development of the narrative, La Contextressa was imagined as a strongly opinionated Italian Nonna who watches passengers down the street and comments on everyone and everything, at least to herself. Later, she was turned into a device made of RaspberryPi, cameras and speakers and was trained to express simple opinions about objects in space describing them literally, but also trying to relate them to some metaphorical meaning. She was trained on COCO (common objects in context) and SemArt (semantic reading of art) datasets.

La Contextressa is a poetic device, not purposed to guide people in galleries, she is rather useless in the conventional way: i.e. of producing economic value. Surrounded (and triggered to speak) by a few Italian-themed objects too (“curatables”), she is simply – just a girl, in her own world. A poetess. The project's genesis involved envisioning La Contextressa as a character embodying the qualities of a strongly opinionated Italian nonna, observing passersby and offering (unwanted) commentary on various facets of life. However, the narrative evolved, transforming La Contextressa into a tangible device comprising

RaspberryPi, cameras, and speakers. Her purpose shifted towards expressing discerning opinions about objects within a given spatial context, delineating literal descriptions while concurrently endeavoring to associate metaphorical significance. The training datasets utilized encompassed COCO (common objects in context) and SemArt (semantic reading of art).

La Contextressa, as a poetic device, assumes a character play; it was intended as a device for experimentation, deviating from conventional applications intended for guiding individuals in gallery settings or producing economic value. Instead, her existence is characterized by a poetic essence, rendered purposeful within the confines of her own unique world. Positioned amidst and prompted by a curated collection of nature-mort objects, termed 'curatables,' (referring to the older project mentioned previously in this dissertation ("The Curatables")) La Contextressa was imagined as a contemplative entity, offering a poetic perspective on the contextual interplay between objects and their significance.

6.5 THE CURATING MACHINE AND THE BLOB

During 2022, as a doctoral student at the University of Brno's Faculty of Visual Arts, I conducted a twelve-month artistic research journey that revolves around a mysterious and enigmatic entity known as "The Blob." The project was supported by the KInG grants scheme by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic (EU funding). The project was imagined as a hybrid project blending qualitative research and artistic production where the production was actually: 1) creating speculative fictions based on a specific demand, they have the shape of an interview, 2) gathering some qualitative data based on those fictions.

This research project aims to explore the imaginative boundaries of curatorial practice and narrative storytelling within the realm of visual arts. Nine of my students joined me in this process, each tasked with crafting speculative fictional stories about The Blob—a shape-shifting, transcendent object that they would situate in various temporal and spatial contexts, endowing it with unique attributes and agency. This text delves into the multifaceted results of this showcase the diversity as students imagined The Blob through their written curatorial texts and accompanying visuals.

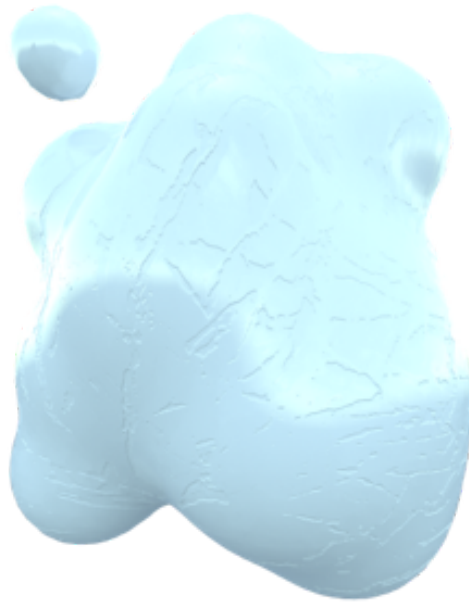


Figure 3

Each student was tasked with imagining The Blob within a specific temporal and spatial context of their choice - it could be a real place on Earth, but also a fictional one.. This contextual framing was crucial, as it provided a narrative backdrop for the subsequent curatorial texts and visuals. Some students chose the distant future, envisioning The Blob as an ancient relic from a post-apocalyptic world, while others placed it firmly in the past, attributing historical significance to this amorphous entity. The BA and MA students from FaVU VUT who agreed to take part in the research: Terézia Poljaková (Adam), Lisette Sivard, Léa Mainguy, Antonie Bernadová, Veronika Javorská, Zoé Couppé, Michaela Werunská, Anežka Součková and Lizavieta Hrydziuška. The visuals of the “generic” Blob were made by the designer Gjorgji Despodov (MK/NL) by Zarevska’s instructions, and were shared with the students with clear instructions of what was to follow: each student should imagine their own Blob, give the blob spatio-temporal context and write about its attributes and potentials in the context where placed. The speculative “game” offered to the students has been based on Margaret Atwood’s perspective on speculative fiction: she has described the genre as a form of literature that explores "what if " scenarios or alternate realities. Speculative fiction often delves into futuristic or fantastical elements but remains grounded in the real world, addressing social, political, or environmental issues³⁸. Atwood's own work,

³⁸ Manusco, C. (2006) “Speculative or Science Fiction?”, web article

such as "The Handmaid's Tale," is often cited as an example of speculative fiction that examines societal issues through the lens of dystopian fiction.

"The Curating Machine and the Blob " represents a comprehensive initiative aimed at investigating curatorial practice as a student exercise, while speculating on the potential trajectories that the future of curation may adopt, all through the perspective and practice of my art students. The endeavor is particularly pertinent as societal dynamics witness a gradual transition from curating tangible objects to the curation of information. The central focus of the research was to unravel the evolving landscape of curatorial attempts, emphasizing the pivotal shift towards the management of information in the realm of the arts. One student imagined The Blob as a catalyst for social change, igniting revolutions and inspiring communities to come together. Another sees it as a harbinger of introspection, prompting individuals to confront their innermost fears and desires. The narratives explored the duality of The Blob's agency, from benevolent guidance to malevolent manipulation, illustrating the complex interplay between art, power, and influence.

The research framework delved into some perspectives of contemporary curatorial practices, acknowledging the intricate interplay between traditional object-based curation and information curation. In dialogues with students, the research was about seeking latent visions and desires inherent in the younger artists, shedding light on their distinct approaches to navigating the complexities of curating within a milieu saturated with immaterial content.

In some ways, the bases for this work were two older artworks the book "Exercises in Style" (1947)³⁹ by the French writer Raymond Queneau and "The Five Obstructions" (2003)⁴⁰ by the Danish film authors Lars von Trier and Jørgen Leth - both works exemplify an exploration of variations on a specific theme or aesthetic expression. In "Exercises in Style," Queneau tells the same story in 99 different ways, showcasing the versatility of language and narrative structure. Similarly, "The Five Obstructions" challenges filmmaker Jørgen Leth to remake his own film five times, each time adhering to a set of restrictive rules imposed by Lars von Trier. These works share a common thread in their experimental approach, encouraging artists to push the boundaries of their craft and explore the endless possibilities inherent in a single concept or idea. Similarly, in my investigation through interviews with students participating in "The Curating Machine and the Blob" project, I sought to uncover the diverse interpretations and variations that arise when approaching a central theme or aesthetic through different

³⁹ Queneau. R. 2008. "Exercises in Style", first published in 1947

⁴⁰ Documentary by Lars von Trier and Jørgen Leth structured similarly as Quenau's book - both display variations of a story

perspectives, mirroring the spirit of experimentation found in these two works by Queneau and von Trier as older examples.

In summary, "The Curating Machine and the Blob" emerges as a nuanced exploration of the contemporary curatorial landscape through the eyes of my young students. Through the interviews with the students, the research aimed to capture the essence of the younger generation's perspectives, contributing to a broader understanding of the challenges and possibilities inherent in the dynamic evolution of curatorial practices within the context of an increasingly immaterial artistic landscape.

6.6. "POETICS OF EVERYDAY WORK"

This book is the practical derivation of the doctoral research "Choreographic innovative practices in everyday work" by Nina Bozic Yams Ph.D. a long-term researcher and team leader at RISE - Research Institutes of Sweden. During 2018, Nina Bozic invited me to collaborate with her on shaping the final version of the book. The book was blending the theoretical segment of her doctoral research with a fair amount of autofiction and fiction that the author invited me to visualize and incorporate in the book.

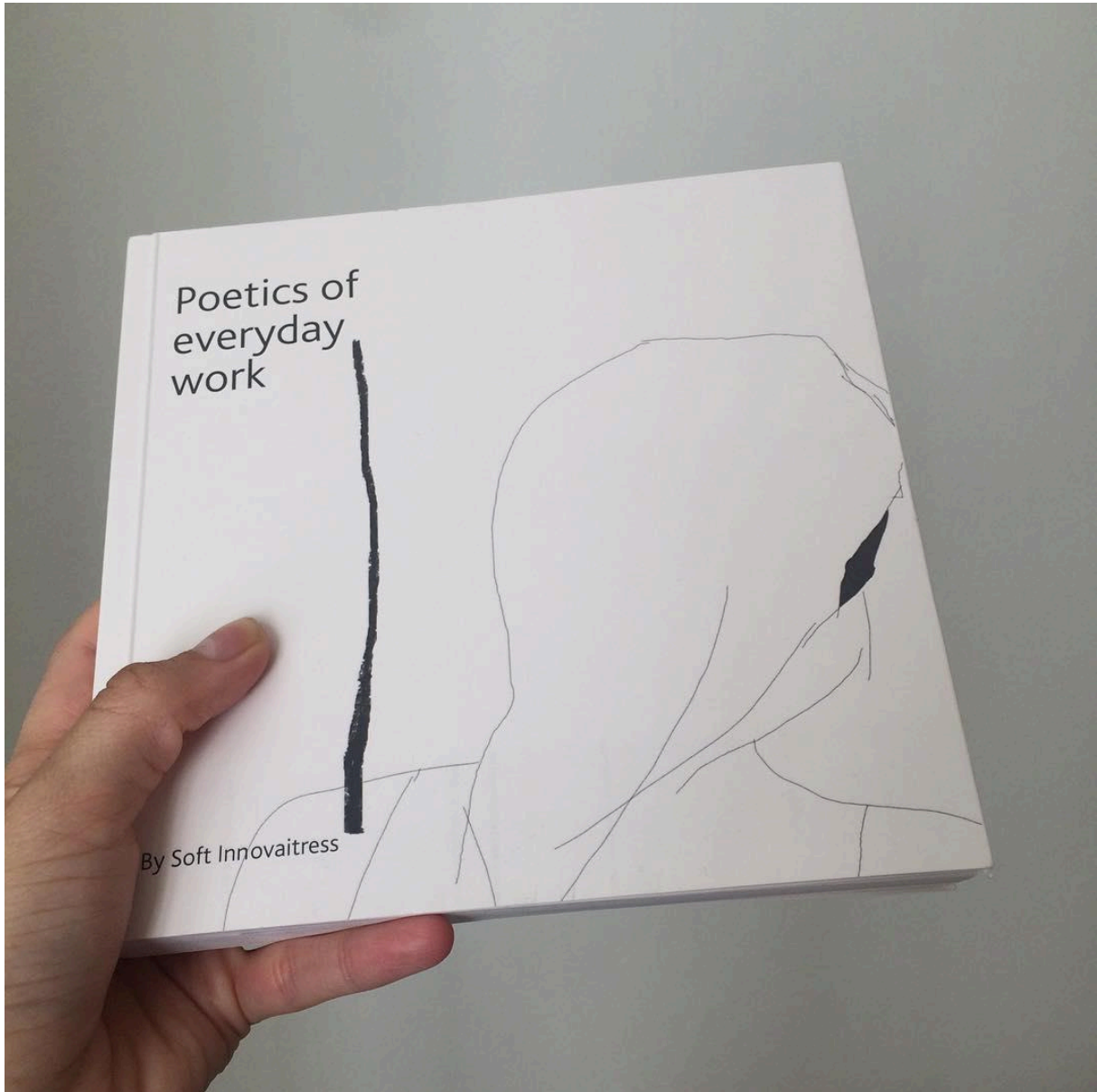


Figure 4

As a result, over 50 illustrations were produced and the book was finalized as an illustrated blend of fiction and theory with the central character named The Soft Innovaitress, telling her story about life and work.

The work on this book was the point in time when the personal initiative in being interested in work and the future of artists' in terms of work, started for me.

7. "A GIRL NAMED WORK WORK" - THE INSTALLATION COMPLEMENTING THIS DISSERTATION, A TRILOGY (2023 AND 2024)

As a complementary artistic production to this dissertation, I have developed three installations during 2023 and 2024, together with Netherlands-based N.Macedonian artist and designer Gjorgji Despodov - "A Girl Named Work" in the format of a trilogy. Comprising three distinct yet interconnected pieces, this trilogy serves as an exploration into the possibilities and obstacles that lie ahead in the realms of artistic life and work, but is mainly a poetic homage to the conditions of where art and being an artist are - at least in my perception. As a collaborative effort between Despodov and me, this trilogy weaves together 3D printed objects, sounds, and poetry. The trilogy unfolds as a commentary on the impact of rapid climate and political changes, job loss due to automation, and the transformative role of AI in the world of art.

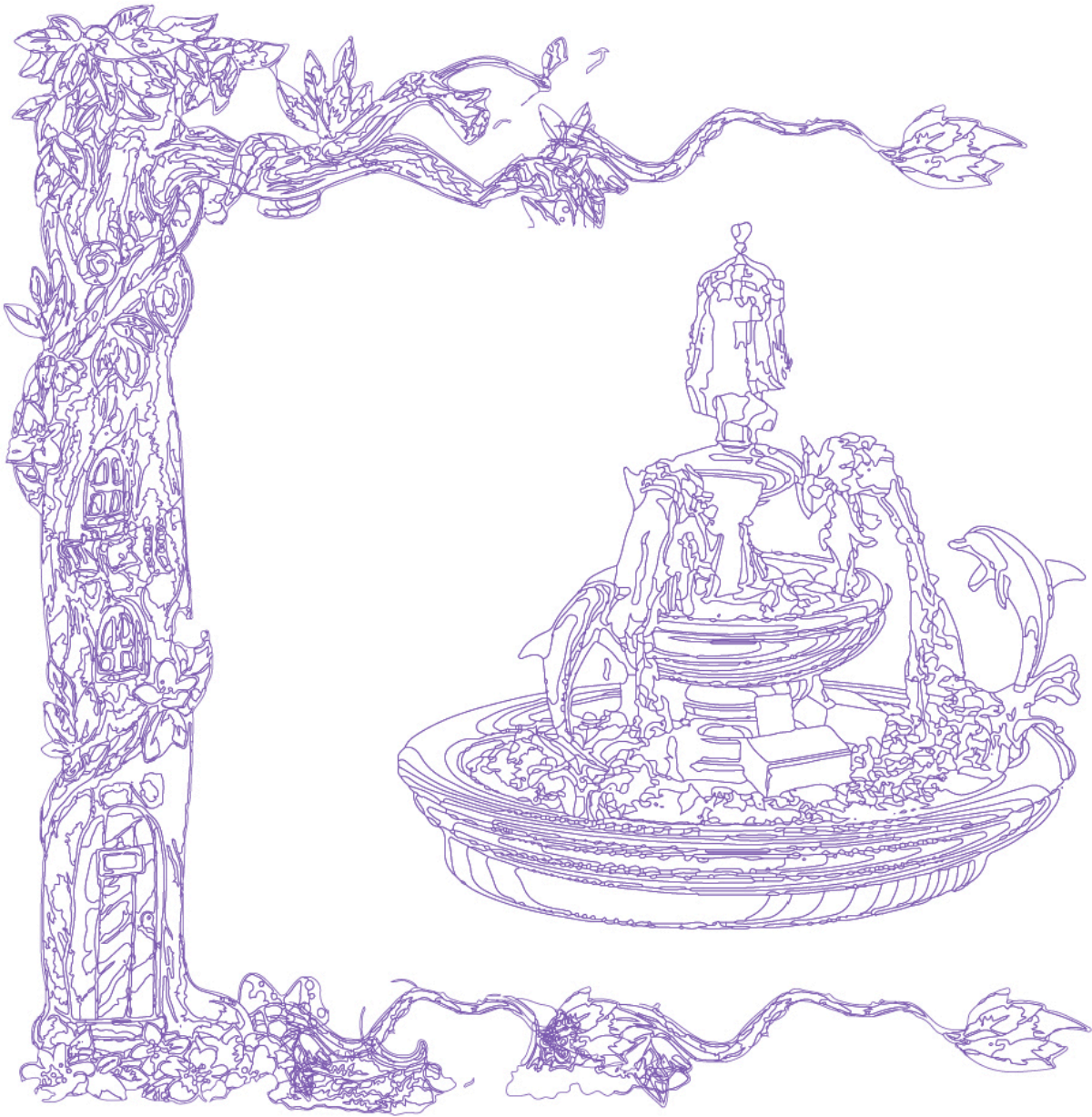


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

7.1 “QUEEN OF SOMETHING”

The trilogy “A Girl Named Work” begins with "The Queen of Something," (2023) an artwork that laid the foundation for the process. This work was a co-production between FaVU VUT from Brno and Private Print from Skopje. It consisted of a site-specific installation of 3D-printed objects and plexiglass cut-outs and a site-specific installation consisted of a digital drawing printed on a self-adhesive PVC foil with overall dimensions of 10.65x0.50 m. The room with the installations also had a sensory attribute to it: it smelled like levandule, also sound on gentle volume was included - Hildegard von Bingen's “Voices of Ascension”.

Narratively, “Queen of Something” explores the idea of identity and belonging at the end of the world, as the narrative follows a queen who observes a dirty post-human landscape and cries. The concept of “queen” has become widely popularized on social media in recent years; anybody can, and should be a queen if they want to - unapologetically and for free. This installation, based on the name-sake poem by Zarevska, reflects on the loneliness of existing in a world where humanity has been extinguished, and the queen is left to ponder her own existence. Throughout the poem, the queen is confronted with various objects and creatures that represent different aspects of her identity, but also her professional appearance as she happens to be a CEO of a poetry production company at the end of the world. Despodov is building the infrastructure that defines and limits the Queen of Something by surrounding her with the objects that compromise her being, making it paradoxical and desperate, but lovely and full of hope at the same time.

The solo exhibition was opened on 17.03.2023 in Private Print Studio (Skopje, N. Macedonia, closed on 01.04.2023 and was later part of the group exhibition “Precarity has a Chance” of contemporary N. Macedonian art in Struktura Gallery in Sofia during June/July 2023, curated by Ivana Vaseva (N. Macedonia).

QUEEN OF SOMETHING

“What am I going to do at the very ends

Alone and outlived by all

All dogs and goats

All foxes ever been

And all of my close friends”

The last human on Earth
Is looking at the empty horizon
Full of worn-out balenciaga soles and smoke
Sipping their coffee with cream
And crying with the pity evoked

Some might say:

“This is a very unusual topic for a poem
for bullshit, it seems - she has a lot of spare time!”

But they would not know
That she is the CEO of the biggest poetry company ever
of all things that do
and do not rhyme.



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

7.2 “MARGARET”

Building on the narrative of “Queen of Something”, “Margaret” (2023) emerged as the next progression in the trilogy. Through this installation Gjorgji Despodov and I tried to explore deeper into the intricate relationship between work and rest addressing the looming specter of job displacement due to automation. “Margaret” is “Queen of Something”’s continuation, again an installation, referring mostly to Margaret Atwood and her work as one of the strongest hints to the notion of the end of the world, where the end of the world is a horrid

context and war on women is openly brutal. "Margaret" consists of a room dividing screen (a paravane) 2 meters high, 3d printed objects like clothes around the screen, audio coming from the back of the screen with the voice of the imaginary queen while changing her clothes and story-tells. This project was supported by FaVU and was developed as a VR environment exhibited online from August until December 2023.

MARGARET

Let hell turn into spa for Margaret
the flames and the beams
mix with soap

"Noone will hurt me here,
like down there"
- she says

Watching the Earth
from her hell-window
in hope

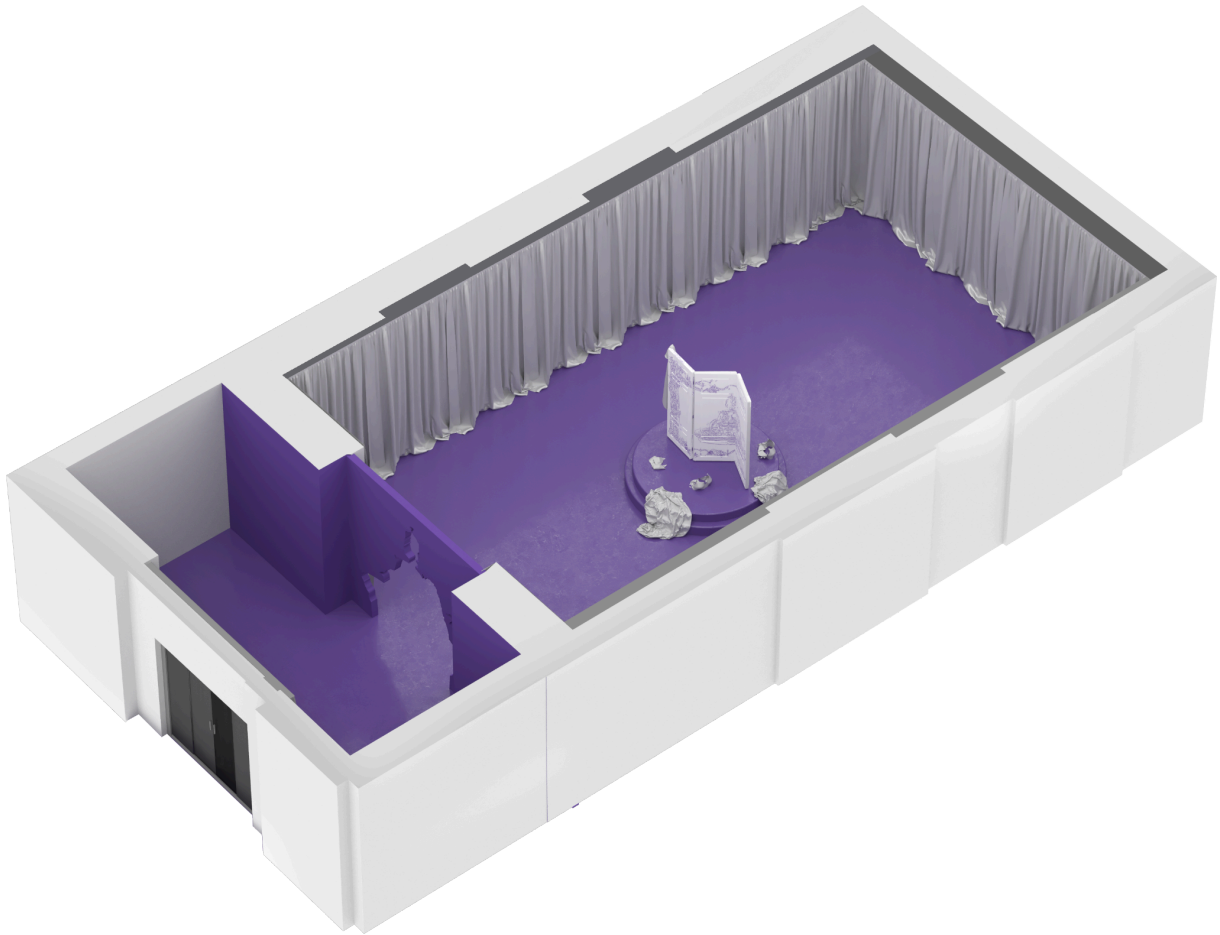


Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16

7.3 “FUTURE OF WORK”

The last sequel of this artistic project is the piece "Future of Work" (2024). The piece was first imagined as an artist's book with my poetry and visuals - standing alone and not being a part of a trilogy. Slowly, in the process, I decide to again invite Gjorgji Despodov and to reflect on what kind of book we can make together. As the pre-production and concept development were unfolding, we saw the opportunity to make a radical book, such an object that is not a book in the common sense, but will be if we decide to consider it one. This book is a big silky white smooth 3D printed sea shell with lots of 3D printed pearls inside standing for the words of the poem that was the initial trigger and material for this book. The poem was titled “The Institution Song” speaking about a perfect world and one cultural institution standing alone at its center . The poem was originally written in 2021 by Zarevska, as part of the book “Critically Hot” an electronic publication of various texts (by various authors) on contemporary art institutions and their rethinking, initiated and published by ICC (Imaginative Choreographic Centre) - a supraterritorial organization form Skopje (N. Macedonia), Sofia (Bulgaria) and Santa Cruz (Tenerife).

FUTURE OF WORK

In a land far away
Between the banks and the shops
And the Spree
And the tops
And the vet
And the church
And the docs
and the cops

There layed
The Institution ITSELF
With unicorns at the door
And glitter on the floor
With a perfumed cat
On the golden mat
Pure splendor inside
All diamond beaded
Pink cherry pride

No funding needed.

The 3D printed objects serve as tangible metaphors for the malleability of artistic expression in the face of a rapidly changing world. "Future of Work" encapsulates the essence of the trilogy, propelling the audience into a realm where imagination meets innovation.

The process of producing the 3D printed objects for the "Future of Work" trilogy was a collaborative process engrained in theoretical exploration and artistic innovation. Partnering with the visionary artist and designer Gjorgji Despodov, our approach was not merely technical but rooted in the understanding of theoretical frameworks mentioned previously in the dissertation. Drawing inspiration from Susan Leigh Star and James Griesemer's concept of Boundary Objects, the MIT University team's exploration of Knotty Objects, and Timothy Morton's musings on Hyperobjects, we tried to embed our 3D artifacts with layered meanings that fall within the realms of these theoretical frameworks.

In our exploration of the boundary objects, we sought to create artifacts that exist in the liminal spaces between different communities of practice. These objects serve as connectors, bridging the gap between the fluid boundaries of artistic expression and the rigid structures of societal shifts. The 3D printed objects are designed to resonate with various interpretations, allowing them to skip categorizations and engage with diverse audiences. Informed by the concept of "knotty objects", our installation is about complexity and interconnection. Each "pearl" from the installation is a visual and tactile representation of the intricacies inherent in the evolving relationship between art and the forces of change, but also stands for a word from the poem as its 3D printed avatar. As for the relation with Timothy Morton's notion of hyperobjects, our 3D printed objects are conceived as tangible manifestations of the overarching themes explored in the trilogy. They are not confined to a single moment or perspective but exist as extensions of broader, interconnected narratives. The objects act as conduits, inviting audiences to grapple with the implications of the future of work within the larger ecological and societal context. Above all, the story of hyperobjects was the initial trigger for me to look more into similar concepts from other authors and combine them in order to set a framework for the final artwork for this dissertation.

Through research application of these theoretical concepts, Despodov and I have ensured that each 3D printed object produced for the trilogy is purposefully situated within the realms and pays a fair tribute to the concepts of boundary objects, knotty objects, and hyperobjects

as “objects we think with”⁴¹. The trilogy becomes a nexus where the theoretical and the practical part of the dissertation converge.

The decision to produce a book emerged as a deliberate and thoughtful process, driven by the desire to seamlessly integrate artistic and poetic elements. The shell's metaphorical resonance aligns with the conceptual underpinnings of the work as within the 3D printed shell, a collection of pearls is being “housed”, each shaped to represent words extracted from the pre-existing poem "The Institution Song," integrated earlier in this dissertation. The diverse forms of these pearls sought to provide a tangible representation of the vocabulary of “The Institution Song”, offering a tactile dimension to the reader's (gallery visitors’) engagement with the material. The book “Future of Work ” is turned into a seashell and the words are turned into pearls - probably by some sort of magical intervention. Some of the artists we have been using in our discussions through the process as references, are artists we look up to due to the fantastical elements they add to their work, such as: Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf, Miranda July, Cindy Sherman, Matthew Barney, Julie Bená, Kara Walker, Yinka Shonibare, then artists that bend local narratives and questioning belonging such as Šejla Kamerić, Jasmina Cibic, Selma Selman, Shirin Neshat, Ivo Dimchev among many others.

The concept of words or language manifesting as tangible objects is a recurring theme in various cultural narratives, myths, legends, and tales. Numerous folk tales across cultures explore the idea that knowing and speaking the true name of a person or creature grants power over them. In folklore, names are not merely linguistic labels but possess inherent qualities that influence the nature and destiny of the named entity. In literature, also countless examples show the connection between the uttered words when they trigger certain objects to “come to life”. In "The Never Ending Story" by Michael Ende the protagonist, Bastian, reads a book within the story, and the words he reads come to life. As he reads, the events in the book shape the world around him, blending fiction and reality. The novel "Inkheart" by Cornelia Funke involves characters who have the ability to bring characters and objects from books into the real world simply by reading aloud. The act of reading becomes a powerful and transformative force. In “The Pagemaster” (1994) the concept of books coming to life is explored when a librarian transforms into an animated illustration, and the books on the shelves become portals to different literary worlds. In "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" by Douglas Adams provides information and advice for intergalactic travelers. The book's entries come to life with animations and interactive

⁴¹ Here is being referred to Sherry Turkle’s concept of “evocative objects”, or “objects we think with”, from 2007

elements, making it a dynamic and engaging informational tool. This fantastical “quality of words to be turned into objects (and vice-versa) was the main starting point for this unusual book to come to its final shape.

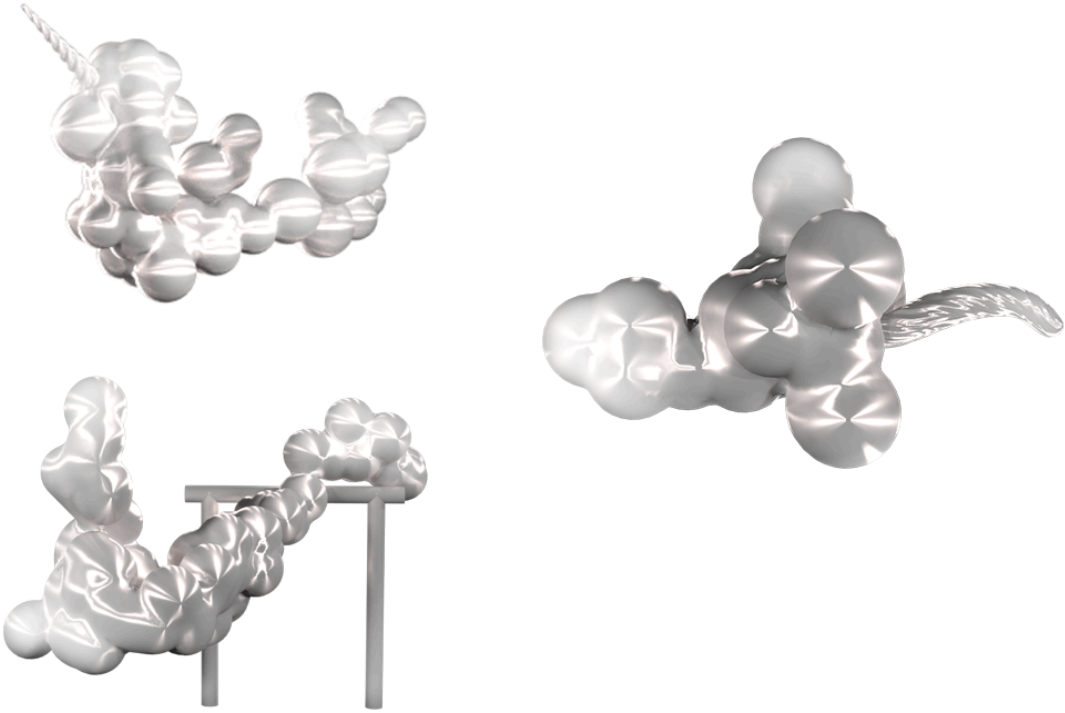
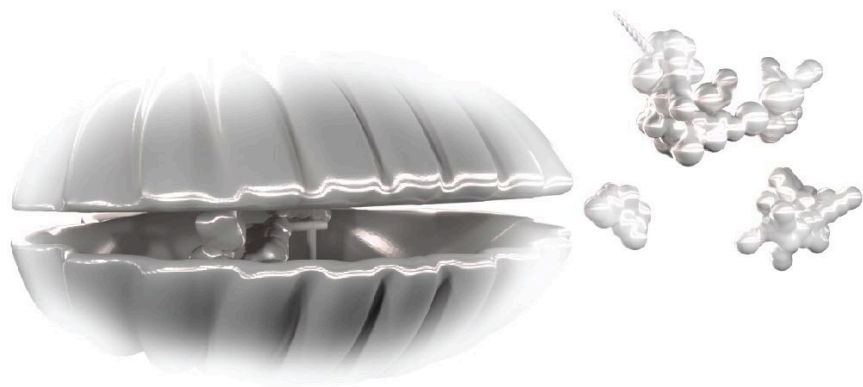
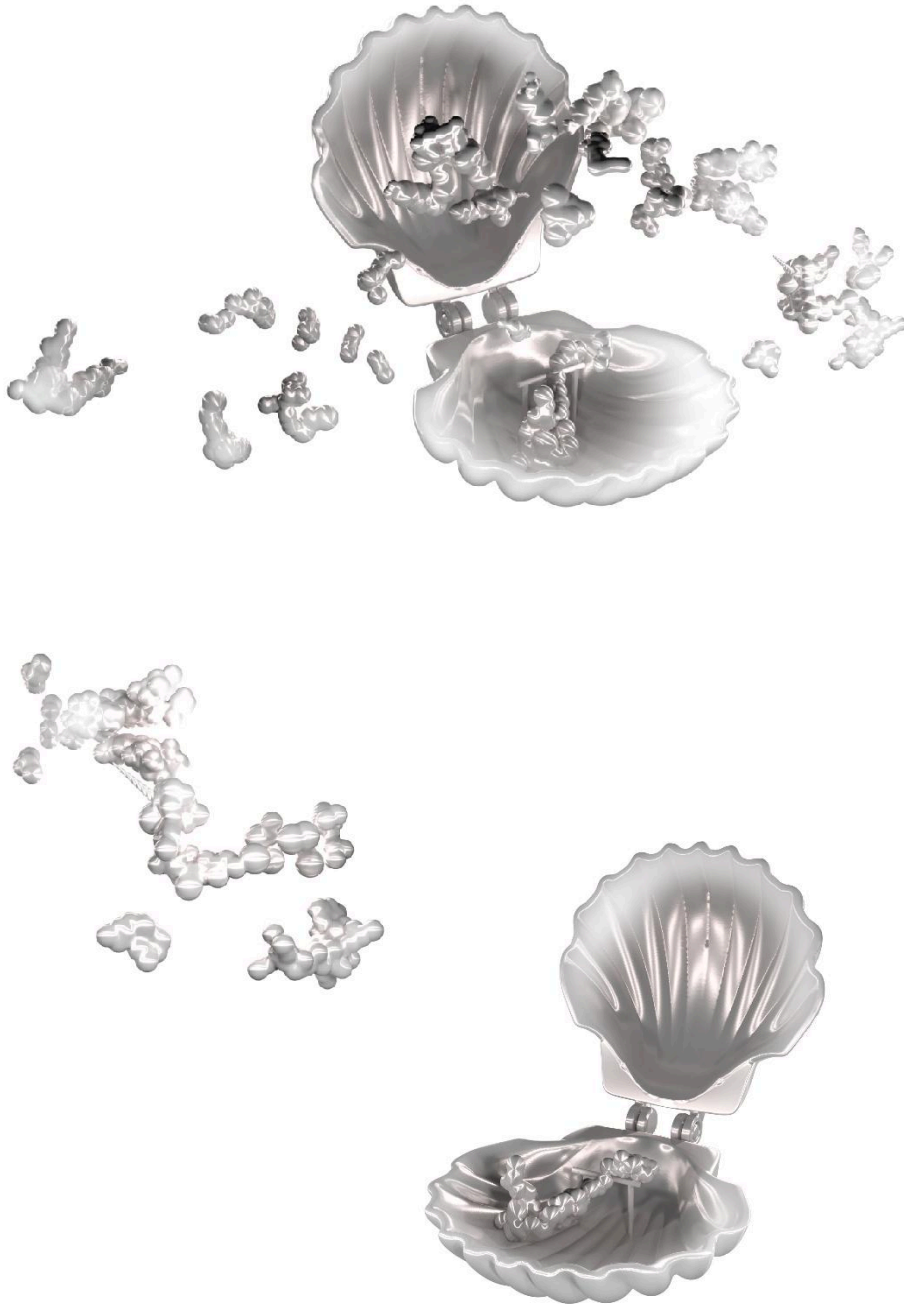


Figure 17







Figures 18, 19, 20, 21, 22

The resulting artist book serves not only as a repository of design exploration but also as an example of the meaningful integration of the literary and the visual in the service of a shared thematic objective. The methodical consideration given to each aspect of this process underscores our commitment to questioning conventional norms and inviting readers into a multisensory experience with the subject matter of the end of the world.

7.4 PHOTO ARCHIVE FROM THE DOCTORAL EXHIBITION “A GIRL NAMED WORK” AT CEJLA GALLERY, BRNO (2024)

The doctoral exhibition "A Girl Named Work" at the Cejla Gallery in Brno, opened on June 3, 2024, was supported by the Czech Ministry of Culture, the City of Brno, and the Faculty of Visual Arts (FaVU). It comprises printed poetry on the gallery walls, various 3D printed objects, and prints on readymade items. This exhibition investigates the interplay between textual and three-dimensional forms, providing a conceptual exploration of themes related to labor and rest at the end of the world. The floor of the gallery has been painted purple, and the 3D printed objects have been designed to evoke the aesthetics of a teenage girl's room and bathroom, resembling a giant Polly Pocket⁴² toy distorted by the heat of an apocalypse. This visual approach aims to create a surreal atmosphere, blending innocence with a sense of disintegration and transformation, thereby intensifying the thematic exploration of the exhibition.

The exhibition features the following elements:

1. Three full poems on the wall, which form the conceptual foundation of the entire setup. These poems are titled "Queen of Something," "Margaret," and "Future of Work."
2. Excerpts from the poems appear in various locations throughout the gallery, including the door and floor.
3. A shower curtain floating in the air as if defying gravity, with a large print depicting the bustier of the "Queen of Something" atop a massive fountain, rendered in the style of retro children's fairytale books.
4. A large 3D printed seashell with various peculiar pearls emerging from it, some of which resemble animals and fairytale creatures such as unicorns.
5. One 3D printed sink that appears melted and deformed from an unknown source of high heat, containing remnants of the Queen's tears (non-colored water) in its dimples.
6. A frame with a lenticular print on the wall, where, if viewed from different angles, a calm nature landscape transitions into dust and smoke.
7. One small print of a pink cartoonish pony, peeking from a crack in the wall.

⁴² Polly Pocket is a popular toy line originally launched in the late 1980s. It consists of miniature dolls and playsets that fit into compact cases, often designed to look like small, whimsical environments such as houses, shops, or landscapes. The toys are characterized by their vibrant colors and detailed, imaginative designs.

A Girl Named Work

DRAGANA ZAREVSKA & GJORGJI DESPODOV
3.6. – 18.7.2024

„Moje jazyky je práce.“ Jazyk si pro sebe, zatímco jiné skóre už není a vše poskládání velké věci do nejlepších stávků sta nacházet den ji seba spán. Někdy je ale nastává pouze abstraktní sestavit do složitého harmonogramu. Je půl čtvrté ráno a sama sebe se ptá, jestli ta značka vlastně stojí za to. A jestli se, co jistěho, jak ano? To záleží slovo práce v sobě totiž skrývá mnohá další nezpracovaných částí propletených textů, ale přesto kráčí, má hranice. Je to vlastně takový zmatkaný chůvě, který se převrtné pokouší moment, aby k večeru zjistila, že se jeho své rozpisuje (často znovu sestavuje) do nových míst, práce a práci, která šlechl, a to co buduje i o to, která práce. Jaké je ale práce na konci světa?

Práce A Girl Named Work (2024) je výstřední Erubodobé spolupráce umělkyně Dragany Zarevska a umělce Gjorgji Despodova. Instalace vznikala od dubna 2023 do května 2024 a představuje trilogii založenou na třech tématech od Zarevska – „Queen of Something“, „Margaret“ a „Futuro of Work“. Dílo vyzývá ke spekulaci o práci, identitě, události a o tom, co to znamená být ženou na konci světa. (Nepř) práva, která vedouje odpočíváním, nezávislosti, psaní práce a osvobozením se od viny, meditací, co exist také lázeň každodenního života.

Zarevska a Despodov se ve své práci střetávají a v součinnosti česko skládavostí potřebou sebe práce a migrace na lev, grind culture – představu o společnosti, v níž má každá svou tvrdou půl a mnohdy odvedené práce postupovat blíž k úspěchu. Debata o potřebě odstupnout přístupu domnělého životního naplnění práce kariéru postup, jsou v dnešní době v oblasti kultury a umění také studypřítomné, ale málokdy se na individuální úrovni dají tento ekonomický model skutečně

a dlouhodobě nahradit něčím jiným. Zatímco tak sledujeme skromější nesoulad mezi různými výtvarnými tvůrčí, co říká, že bychom chci měli a toho, co opouští chybě, účastně společenského i environmentálního vývoje nastává, že konec světa je možná významným nástrojem našeho života na zemi. Možná bude jen a něco nové přichytit, než upadne a možná se stane jako i teď budeme ptát, na koho a nás podléme úkol uvěřit káru nebo napětí lázní na rozloučení.

GJORGJI DESPODOV (nar. 1996 v Pilepu) je multidisciplinární umělec, jehož tvorba se zaměřuje na design a experimenty s 3D vizuály a ilustrací. Má bakalářský titul z Národního akademie umění v Sofii v Bulharsku. Ve svých návrzích používá každodenní objekty a umísťuje je do neobvyklých prostředí a prostředí, což je a vytváří nové příběhy. V současné době také experimentuje se svým 3D svícenem a zkoumá možnosti interakce mezi fyzickým a digitálním prostředím skrze koncepty virtuální a rozšířené reality a možnosti použití různých digitálních médií. Je laureátem ocenění pro mladé vizuální umělce DENIS (Severní Makedonie) za rok 2023.

DRAGANA ZAREVSKA (nar. 1985 v Kračevu) je umělkyně pracující s různými médii a pozici jako hlavním vyjadřováním prostředkem. Venuje se budování nových výtvarných konceptů a spekulativních scénářů budoucnosti. Zabývá se filosofií technologie, budoucností práce, archeologií budoucnosti, fiktivní budoucnosti, think tanky zveřejňuje normála a tak dále. Zarevska byla dvakrát nominována na ocenění pro mladé vizuální umělce DENIS (Severní Makedonie) a byla jednou z osmi umělců oceněných ročníkem polytem na BICEM 2009. V současné době se věnuje výzkumu a výuce na Vysokém učení technickém v Brně.



















Figures 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33









Let hell turn into spa for Margaret
The flames and the beams
Mix with soap

“Noone will bother me here,
Like down there”
- she says

Watching the Earth
From her hell-window
In hope















In a land far away
Between the banks and the shops
And the Spree
And the tops
And the vet
And the church
And the docs
and the cops.

There laid
The Institution ITSELF
With unicorns at the door
And glitter on the floor
With a perfumed cat
On the golden mat
Pure splendor inside
All diamond beaded
Pink cherry pride
No funding needed.

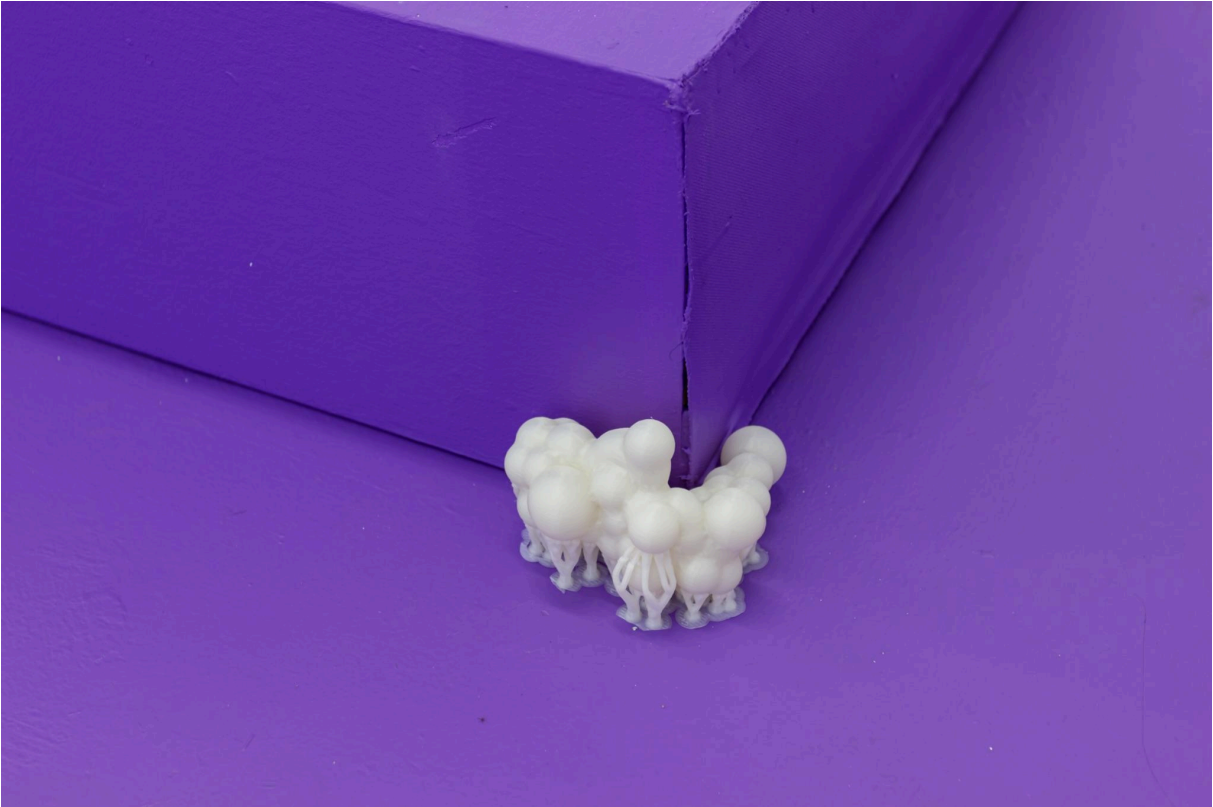






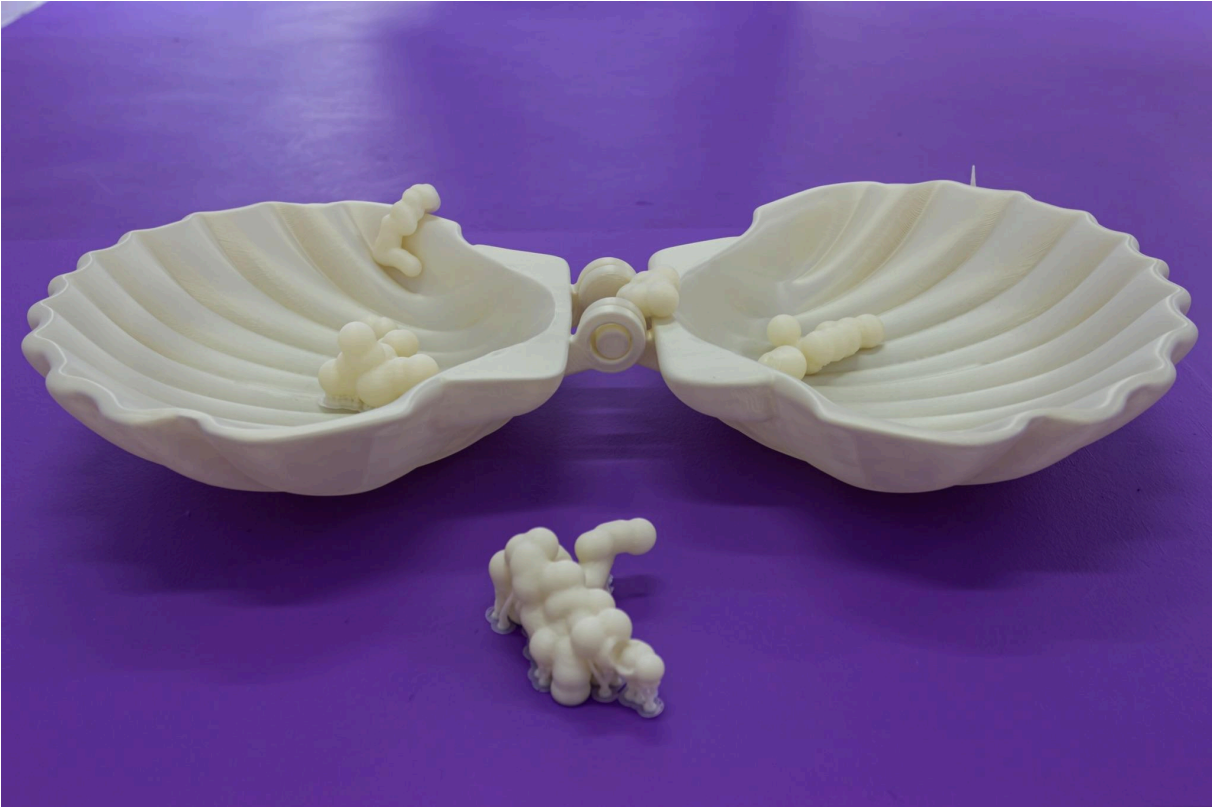
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“What am I going to do at the very ends
Alone and outlived by all
All dogs and goats
All foxes ever been
And all of my close friends?”

The last woman on Earth
Is looking at the empty horizon
Full of worn-out balenciaga soles and smoke
Sipping their coffee with cream
And crying with the pity evoked

Some might say:
“This is a very unusual topic for a poem
for bullshit, it seems like she has a lot of spare time”

But they would not know
That she is the CEO of the biggest poetry company ever
Of all things that do
And do not rhyme.



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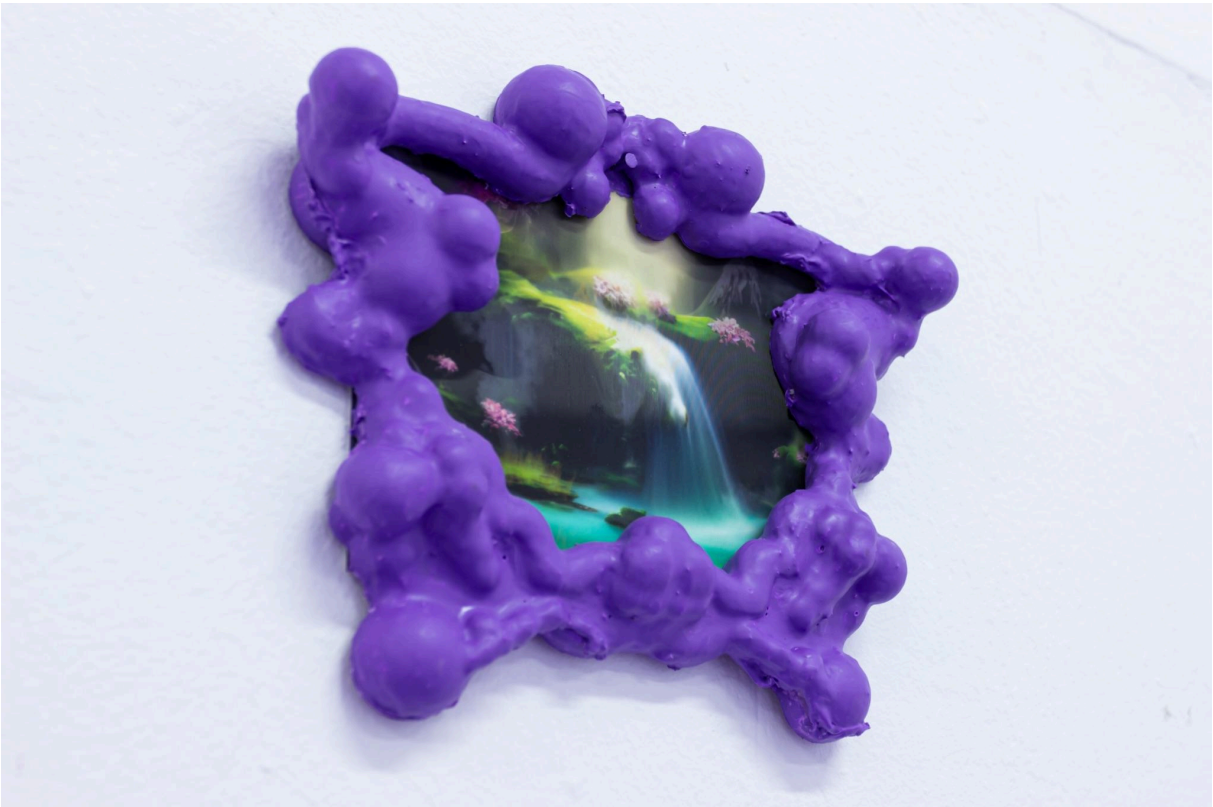


Figure 34 - figure 63

8. FUTURE OF ARTISTIC WORK

The future of artistic work is a blend of circumstances that can not be easily grasped or systematized, but rather looked through various theoretical perspectives and intersections of those. In the following sections, there is an attempt of these circumstances to be understood and generalized as much as possible, by having in mind their vastness and complexity. In examining the future of artistic work, it becomes apparent that its trajectory is intertwined with a multitude of factors spanning technological, socio-cultural, and economic domains. To comprehend this landscape, it is imperative to adopt a wide perspective that acknowledges the dynamic interplay between these diverse influences. From advancements in artificial intelligence and virtual reality to shifting paradigms of cultural production and consumption, the future of artistic work is shaped by a complex web of forces that defy simple categorization.

One critical aspect to consider is the evolving relationship between artists and technology. As digital tools and platforms continue to proliferate, artists are presented with unprecedented opportunities to innovate and collaborate across disciplines, however, the influx of technology also raises questions about the commodification of creativity and the impact of automation on artistic labor. Navigating this terrain requires a nuanced understanding of how emerging technologies intersect with traditional artistic practices, as well as a commitment to fostering equitable access and representation within the digital realm.

8.1 THE CYBORG AS AN AVATAR OF ALL PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED

I see Donna Haraway's concept of the Cyborg as one of the avatars standing as to what has been said in this dissertation so far, especially in terms of the posthuman meeting "ecology without nature" as in Morton and us living that reality in these times. In traditional notions of identity and humanity Haraway sees the Cyborg as a hybrid, a merging of human and machine, biology and technology. This notion aligns with Bratton's "planetary-scale computation," highlighting the extent to which technology has become an integral part of human existence, but this time as a system of technologically extended humans. It is a much earlier predecessor of, but also resonates with Morton's "hyperobjects," who emphasizes the entanglement of humans with complex systems. In a broader sense, cyborg feminism emphasizes the importance of intersectionality and inclusivity as none of us is only human anymore, our identities are expanded. Haraway encourages us to consider the experiences

of marginalized and oppressed people, like women and people of color, disabled and others “others” - all in the context of technological and ecological transformations. This aspect of her work complements Braidotti's call for a more interconnected understanding of the human within the broader ecosystem. The concept of the Cyborg calls for ethical and political engagement with the challenges posed by technology, biology, and ecology. Haraway urges us to recognize the power dynamics at play and to actively shape the future with a sense of responsibility for the world we are co-creating. This aligns with Bratton's call for ethical design thinking and governance, Morton's challenge to confront ecological complexities, and Braidotti's emphasis on ethical considerations within an interconnected framework.

Donna Haraway's vision of the Cyborg (“birthing” Cyberfeminism) offers a forward-looking perspective that challenges us to embrace the hybrid, interconnected nature of our existence. Her approach encourages us to navigate the complexities of technology, ecology, and human identity with empathy, inclusivity, and ethical awareness. When combined with the insights of Bratton, Morton, and Braidotti, it provides a framework for a possible future where humanity, technology, and the environment coexist and evolve in ways that prioritize sustainability, justice, and the flourishing of all life forms on Earth. I see this “combined vision” to be the framework to be holding all phases of this artistic research and to approach its material aspects with it.

8.2 SPECULATIVE THINKING EQUALS SURVIVAL

Training people to think speculatively about the future can offer a multitude of benefits - aimed at the individual and communities. This includes jobs, interpersonal relationships, and attitude towards societal changes. It equips individuals with the ability to anticipate how their intellectual roles may evolve - they can acquire new skills, adapt to emerging technologies, and stay ahead of industry trends, no matter how cynical this sounds being placed in a dissertation about art. In terms of manual jobs workers can better prepare for automation and understand how their roles may shift. This can help them transition to more advanced tasks or acquire additional skills to remain (it sounds harsh as in capitalistic harsh) needed in the job market. Manual job demand/supply will probably be on the rise as AI will take over a lot of the “intellectual” textual and audiovisual that can be automated, so many more “thinkers” will be considering cooking, agriculture or similar.

Speculative thinking encourages individuals to consider various scenarios and challenges, improving their problem-solving skills. This can be applied in both professional and personal contexts. People who think speculatively about the future are often better at articulating their thoughts and ideas, making communication more effective and reducing misunderstandings. It fosters open-mindedness and the ability to understand different viewpoints. This can lead to more constructive and empathetic interpersonal relations, possibly avoiding unneeded “drama”. Anecdotally: a society with a higher number of people trained in speculative thinking is likely to be more innovative. This can result in advancements in technology, healthcare, and other fields that improve overall quality of life. Speculative thinking can also promote sustainability, as individuals consider the long-term consequences of their actions on the environment and society. This can lead to better ecological practices and resource management.

Training to think speculatively helps people become more resilient in the face of uncertainty; they are better equipped to navigate unexpected challenges, such as economic recessions, natural disasters, or public health crises. At least to some level - some preparedness can be at place. Speculative thinking aids in risk assessment and management - both on an individual and collective level, so people can make more informed decisions to mitigate potential negative outcomes. It enables individuals to make decisions with a forward-looking perspective and they are more likely to weigh long-term consequences and choose actions that lead to positive outcomes. A society that values speculative thinking is more likely to invest in education and policies that prioritize future-oriented solutions (Scandinavia is a leader in this), and even though not everything can be directed, this can lead to better education systems and more effective government decision-making. A culture that encourages speculative thinking may evolve to prioritize forward-thinking, resulting in a more adaptable and interconnected society. Even more solidar, if I may say.

8.3 ARTISTS WANDERING IN AN AUTOMATED SOCIETY

What can an artist do (or continue doing) in a society where AI is automating various jobs? Visual artists can collaborate with AI algorithms by inputting data, images, or concepts into AI systems, which then produce art based on the input. Visual artists can transition into roles as art curators and critics. Curation, selection and systematization would become central for many artists trough applying artistic knowledge to select, organize, and analyze artworks, helping the public understand other aspects of those. With the aid of AI, artists can work in

art restoration and conservation, using AI algorithms to analyze and restore damaged or aged artworks to their original condition.

Artists can become educators, teaching others how to use traditional and digital art tools, but also AI-powered software.

Artists can embrace the digital art world and create non-fungible tokens (NFTs) of their work. This can expand their audience to the growing community of digital art collectors. They can contribute to the field of AI research by using AI as a tool for creative exploration, pushing the boundaries of what is possible in the intersection of art and technology. They can use their skills to create environmental art that raises awareness of ecological issues. Further, they can design sculptures, installations, and murals that highlight environmental conservation and sustainability. Some visual artists can work in radical advancements of video game and animation industries, creating concept art, character designs, and backgrounds for virtual worlds. Artists can use their work to advocate for social and political causes, as so far. They can create art that raises awareness and sparks conversations about important issues.

On the other hand, artists are constantly exhausted by the battle with obsolescence due to technological advancements: 3D printing possibilities, adoption of virtual reality (VR) where VR offers immersive and interactive possibilities for artistic expression, artists must contend with the obsolescence of outdated VR hardware and software as new advancements continue to emerge. Then, the rise of social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok have transformed the way artists share and promote their work. Artists must continuously adapt to changes in algorithms and trends to maintain visibility and relevance in an ever-shifting digital landscape. Augmented reality, is another field of technological possibility and/or barrier for some artists, streaming platforms, virtual exhibitions spaces are all at place, but still - AI is the greatest of them all: At the intersection of art and machine learning artists' exploration must stay ahead of advancements in machine learning, and machine learning capabilities evolve, artists have the opportunity to create artworks that challenge traditional notions of collaboration, authorship and what is to be the human element (agency) in those productions.

In a society where AI is automating various tasks, visual artists can adapt and thrive, but still - not everyone will have the desire to take that direction and that is also a political statement of some sort.

And finally something I personally believe is here to stay as an umbrella frame for a lot of artistic production and dissemination nowadays: Telepoetics. This is a concept that refers to the exploration and utilization of telecommunications technology as a medium for poetic

expression. It encompasses various forms of poetry created, transmitted, or experienced through telecommunications channels such as telephones, video calls, text messaging, or online platforms. The beginnings of telepoetics can be traced back to the early 20th century with the emergence of telecommunications technologies such as the telephone and telegraph. These technologies revolutionized the way people communicated over long distances, enabling fast (instant) transmission of messages and fostering new forms of artistic expression. The telephone also played a significant role in the early development of telepoetics, particularly through the practice of "telephone poetry" or "phone poetry" in the mid-20th century⁴³. In the 1960s and 1970s, the emergence of conceptual art movements and experimental poetry collectives further fueled interest in telepoetics as artists explored the intersection of telecommunications technology and artistic practice such as "mail art" and "fax art". The late 20th century marks a significant milestone in the "evolution" of telepoetics, providing new platforms and channels for sharing and experiencing poetry in digital formats. Online communities, social media platforms, and digital publishing tools have democratized access to poetry and facilitated global connections among poets and audiences, contributing to the ongoing expansion and diversification of telepoetic practices. Today, telepoetics continues to evolve and adapt to advancements in telecommunications technology, including developments in mobile messaging, video conferencing, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence. Telepoetics blurs the boundaries between traditional poetry and digital communication, offering new avenues for artistic experimentation and engagement in the digital age. I find this category the closest which I can affiliate myself with as an artist.

What can a wandering artist in this digital era do?

Visual artists as "telepoets"; in the contemporary landscape visual artists are emerging as telepoets, having at disposal a of materials, both physical and digital, in their creative processes. Just as poets manipulate language to convey intricate narratives and evoke emotions, these artists manipulate diverse mediums—ranging from traditional paint and canvas to digital platforms, augmented reality, and beyond—to craft visual stories that transcend conventional boundaries. Telepoets explore the realms of telepoetics, where the fusion of technology, culture, and imagination allows for the expression of complex ideas and sensations. By weaving together elements from disparate sources and utilizing cutting-edge tools, telepoets redefine the notion of artistic expression, offering new perspectives on contemporary issues and experiences.

⁴³ The American artist John Giorno pioneered "Dial-A-Poem," a project that invited callers to dial a phone number and listen to recorded poetry readings by contemporary poets, reference from MoMA's website

...artists as curators - artists can assume the role of curators, not only of their own work but also of the vast repository of images, ideas, and narratives by others. With access to an unprecedented mass of visual material from diverse contexts, artists curate and remix these elements to construct new narratives.

...artists as speculators - triggered by geopolitical uncertainties and any sorts of uncertainties, artists are becoming speculators, probing the possibilities and implications of emerging technologies and global dynamics. Through speculative art practices, they test alternative futures and raise questions about the impact of technological innovation, environmental change while keeping social critique active. Drawing on speculative fiction, critical theory, and scientific research, artists blur the boundaries between art and activism.

...artists as forensic investigators: in contemporary discourse, there's a growing recognition that artists can take on forensic roles, akin to the pioneering work of the Forensic Architecture group at Goldsmiths, University of London. This convergence underscores the idea that artists possess the necessary skills and perspectives to delve into truth-seeking endeavors. By equipping artists with forensic methodologies, we not only enhance their artistic practice but also empower them to explore complex socio-political realities. This fusion of artistic research and forensic inquiry promises fresh insights and transformative possibilities in the pursuit of knowledge and justice.

...artists as preservers of human error. In times where perfection is highly valorized but even if not - the culture of perfectionism is omnipresent due to algorithms perfecting tasks, artists can deliberately embrace imperfection as a form of artistic expression as a way to preserve the element of human fallibility, recognizing it as an intrinsic aspect of the human experience. The glitch in reality that can be observed, detected and then expressed through some artistic media serves as a testament to the resilience of human agency in an increasingly standardized world.

9. FINAL WORD

In conclusion to the wide spectrum of what artistic work can soon be (become), it is increasingly evident that artists, both in the near and far future, are destined to become the “guardians” of what remains of nature and the essence of humanity itself. Care is becoming central, other frameworks become less important - this is genuinely a subjective conclusion or maybe even a personal desire. The preservation of nature has emerged as a concern of our age, with environmental degradation and climate change threatening everything we know. Similarly, as society grapples with the profound implications of technological progress and the evolving definition of what it means to be human, it is through art that we are reminded of our shared humanity ; the complexities of our emotions, the depth of our relationships, and the richness of our heritage(s).

As I am coming to the end of this artistic research on the future of work, particularly concerning artists, I have found myself (somehow expectedly) at the intersection of the philosophical landscapes of technology and ecology. In the realm of technology, we confront the dialectic between augmentation and obsolescence, where emerging digital tools both extend artistic capabilities and redefine traditional modes of labor. This dialectic mirrors the philosophical discourse on technological determinism versus technological instrumentalism, highlighting the tension between passive adaptation and active shaping of technological forces. Furthermore, this exploration intertwines with the philosophy of ecology, evoking questions of sustainability, interconnectedness of systems and resilience of individuals. This parallels the philosophical inquiry into the ethics of control and the recognition of humanity's embeddedness within broader ecological systems. As we contemplate the implications of our findings, we are confronted with the imperative of cultivating a holistic perspective—one that goes beyond disciplinary boundaries and embraces the interplay between technology, ecology, and humanness.

To go back a bit to where I started from - the dissertation's positioning at the intersection of speculative fiction, the post-human world, and the exploration of potentialities is underscored by its thematic exploration and theoretical framework. By drawing upon the conceptual frameworks represented by Rosi Braidoti, Margaret Atwood, and the allegorical figure of Master Splinter from "Ninja Turtles," the dissertation engages with the complexities of post-humanism, speculative narrative, and the philosophical implications of potentialities as articulated by Aristotle and revisited by Agamben. Through an interdisciplinary approach that combines literary analysis, philosophical inquiry, and cultural studies, I tried to review the

interplay between speculative fiction's imaginative landscapes, the emergent post-human condition, and the latent possibilities inherent in human existence.

In this direction, the future of work for artists emerges not as a linear progression but as a dynamic interplay between upcoming and past knowledge(s), adaptation and resilience. It calls for a synthesis of philosophical insights from the realms of technology and ecology, guiding us towards a more integrated understanding of the complex challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. As we stand at the threshold of the future of work, we have no choice but to embrace the dialectic between technology and ecology as a guiding “manual” towards a more sustainable, equitable, and solidar tomorrow.

The phenomenon of obsolescence looms prominently within the lives and work of artists, particularly in the context of evolving media landscapes; the perpetual cycle of obsolescence serves as a dual-edged sword, simultaneously propelling artistic innovation forward while presenting formidable challenges to sustained relevance and discourse within the field. As artists navigate this dynamic terrain, they grapple with the dichotomy of obsolescence as both a catalyst for creative advancement and a persistent barrier to enduring significance.

In conclusion, this dissertation has explored the intersection of artistic research and practice, highlighting the capacity of artists to engage in speculative endeavors concerning both proximate and distant futures. Recognizing the imminent challenges arising from diminishing natural resources and availability of social and material goods, it becomes evident that artists are endowed with a dual inclination and responsibility to anticipate and envision forthcoming scenarios. In this context, artists assume the role of proactive agents, offering insights and potential solutions for the cultivation of a sustainable and equitable societal framework. It underscores the necessity of acknowledging and leveraging the creative potential of artists as contributors to the discourse on future societal trajectories.

By being situated within this nexus of concepts, the dissertation contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations surrounding the intersections of literature, philosophy, and cultural theory, offering insights into the speculative potentialities of the human condition in an era marked by technological advancement and socio-cultural transformation. The future is every day now, it is intensive, vast, and the constant odd of obsolescence obliterating artistic work is real. Or, as American author Tricia Hersey would state in her 2022 manifesto - “Rest is Resistance”. So after all said above in this dissertation - if for us artists the reformed future of work is rest, then it will be both - an act of resistance but also a territory of privilege.

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