

DEAR READER,

LETTER BY
**LAURENS
OTTO**
CURATOR & CRITIC

EDITORIAL LETTERS
**SEVEN
CLICKING
INDEX
FINGERS**

- GRADUATES MENTIONED
- DAVID C. KANE
 - FABIAN TOMBERS
 - BEN TUJPPER
 - SARA, SANTANA
LÓPEZ
 - NICHOLAS REILLY-
MCVITTIE
 - MIRIAM KONGSTAD
 - MYRTO VRATSANOI

Dear reader,

Cc: David C. Kane, Fabian Tombers, Ben Tupper, Sara Santana López, Nicholas Reilly-McVittie, Miriam Kongstad, Myrto Vratsanou,

I'm writing this letter to you, because you are reading it *now*.

If Modernity was an attempt to take hold of the present, our current times are geared towards the future. Or rather: the present is formatted by the future. The present can no longer be extrapolated from the past, it is supposedly governed by speculations on what's believed to come. What happens today is based on a pre-emption of the future, or, so we are told.

Extracted data sets determine actions in the present, based on predictions of the future. They provide models to predict crime, locate diseases, and determine consumer behaviour – in advance. When a website suggests products even before you know you need it, it is creating your pre-emptive personality. More detrimental are pre-emptive policing and drone-strikes, taking place before harm is done.

It took me a few days to decide who to write this letter to: who holds the most sway over the future? Is it Amazon, as the company with the biggest investment in research & development? Or Alphabet, Google's conglomerate, as the prime holder of internet services and other data-related businesses? Or, should I write to Bridgewater, the world's biggest investment fund? As a hedge fund it anticipates movements that are yet to happen, producing returns uncorrelated to current market indices.

But I prefer writing to you, dear reader, being in the *now*.

No matter how much of the present is governed by corporate and state fuelled predictions of the future, abiding by that logic is fatalist. Neither the present,

nor the future, are set in stone. Protests against racism and police violence, for instance, suddenly pushed for much more radical demands than earlier (more modest) requests to reform criminal justice. It made me see how much some of the graduates of the Sandberg Instituut in 2020 are vested in the present, even when their work appears to be future bound.

Researcher and artist David C. Kane's work explores the utopian impulse and the desire to (re)imagine the future through a political corrosion of late capitalism. Magnetised by twenty-first century pandemonium, the work *Everyone's Allowed a Future They Don't Care to Mention* is a series of video and sound installations that explore the future as a mythology. Each component imagines lost and forgotten futures, creating new speculative fictions as an exercise in world-building.

Fabian Tombers investigates post-capitalist desires through fully automated luxury queer space communism, solar punk revolutions, domestic realities and psychedelic socialisms. He explores what a design practice of resistance may look like, calling to 'embody your utopias today'.

Other works have a more imminent scope. Ben Tupper works with essay and fiction to explore how language can be understood as a site of social struggle. His stories aim to create a world that taps into the uncanny. *Short Worlds for Radio* is a collection of very short stories that are broadcasted during a moment of interlude, where listeners would usually hear a radio jingle or a commercial.

Sara Santana López looks in the power relations inscribed in cultural practice, to find ambivalent strategies which implicate herself simultaneously as author, mediator, and part of the public. Her work *Escribas Modernas* is a long-term collective translation of Cristina Morales' novel *Lectura Fácil*. The slow pirating process towards a free multi-authored publication, makes distribution

political and transformative, a living process. Rather than an effort to project global solutions for the future, it's a local proposition in the present.

Nicholas Reilly-McVittie's work is predominantly concerned with the relations between aesthetics and ideology. *Worldviews* is a video essay which traces relations and affinities between aesthetic 'worldviews' (artistic and scientific visual representations of the world) and ideological 'worldviews' (philosophies and belief systems), from the Renaissance period to the present day. In recognising the impossibility of a totalising worldview that could 'see' everything clearly, the video attempts to draw attention to what is lost from such views.

Miriam Kongstad's work expands from a background in choreography. It is discreetly violent, static but in movement, eclectic yet stylised – a form of cynical magic. Her work *Chimera or Non Compos Mentis* is a collaboration with musician Alexander Holm to unite harmonica compositions, breath, voice and text to form an intimate, sensorial and dystopian soundscape, unfolding and expanding views on the body.

Nowhere is the sense of now more pronounced than in the dizziness induced by technology. Myrto Vratsanou's practice revolves around the sensual aspects of technological, digital and material spaces. *Free Immersion Notes* is a non-linear journal that reflects on the potential of corruptions, glitches and aberrations in immersive technologies. The videos explore the relation between body, water, air, pressure, weight and object, expressing the scattered and oceanic feeling of being out-of-joint.

It's tempting to forego the present for an alchemy of the future, abiding by a world where speculation determines reality. It's an accelerationist trap, that negates the power that every present moment holds. As Walter Benjamin cryptically assessed that every history turns to the present just as sunflowers turn to the sun, so should the present conjure the future.

Dear reader, please accept my invitation to encounter these works in Sandberg Instituut's Graduation publication *The Subject of the Email*. Let's use that moment to see how to deflect a pre-empted future. In the meantime, continue seizing the present.

Take care,

Laurens Otto

Graduates mentioned:

sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/david-c-kane

sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/fabian-tomers

sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/ben-tupper

sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/sara-santana-lopez

sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/nicholas-reilly-mcvittie

sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/miriam-kongstad

sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/myrto-vratsanou

Laurens Otto is a curator and critic working on questions of circulation and distribution within economies underwriting artistic production. He is editor-in-chief of RESOLUTION Magazine, a print magazine that explores the impact of the digital image. He worked as curator at Het HEM, Zaandam (2019-20) and associate curator at Human Activities, Lusanga, DR Congo (2016-19). His most recent exhibition is *Prelude: Melancholy of the Future*, curated with Antony Hudek at Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens.