Speculative Imagining + Video Art



Why speculate?

- -prediction of future outcomes to guide present actions (problem-solving, risk assessment)
- -imagine alternate ways of organizing society and civilization (utopia/dystopia)
- -deepen our understanding of how the past, present, and future are interconnected (sci-fi, alternate history, magical realism)
- -interrogate the bias of archived history (alternate history)
- -interrogate societal fears cultural taboos (horror)
- -situate ourselves within a vast and unknowable universe (cosmogeny + origin stories)
- -guide our thinking beyond the anthropocentric (fantasy, [eco-]sci-fi)

STORYTELLING is ancient & human.

Contrast realist art and speculative art. What makes them different, in both purpose and effect? Speculative imagining can be a strategy for activist hope, change, revolution, and liberation. It can be cautionary, integrating, revealing.

What's the shadow side of speculative imagining?

- -conspiracy theories + denial of history
- -divine promise to territory as a justification for colonization
- -claims of racial/cultural superiority as a justification for genocide

[Books pictured, top left to bottom right: Woman on the Edge of Time by Marge Piercy (1976), Kindred by Octavia Butler (1976), Mrs. Friday and the Rats of NIMH by

| Robert O'Brien (1971), The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula K. Le Guin (1969), The Iron Man by Ted Hughes (1968), Annihilation by Jeff Vandermeer (2014), and The Giver by Lois Lowry (1993)] | |
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Imagining the "after" through post-apocalyptic film. Ecological disaster, zombies, aliens, war, plagues - this speculation is an assertion that human life will continue (often in depravity) after the disintegration of societal structures as we know them. Have you come across any post-apocalyptic stories that present a livable (not scary) future?

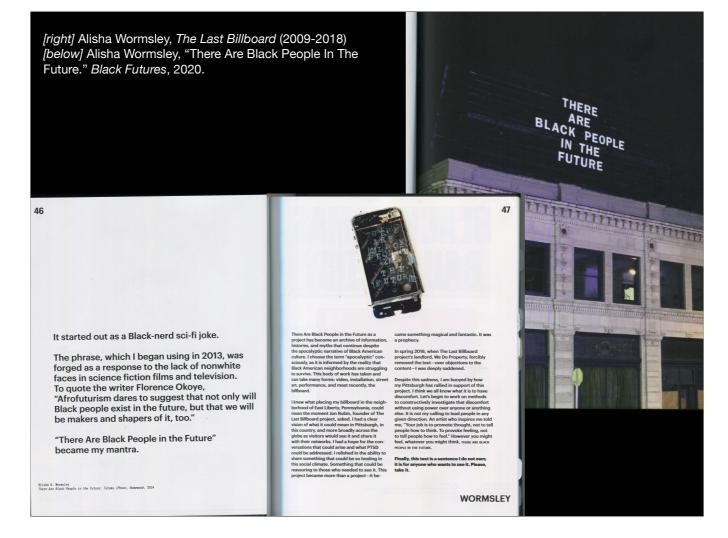
Read "Science Fiction into Science Action" segment from Elvia Wilk's Future Looks (pp. 117-121).

[Films pictured top let to bottom right: Waterworld dir. Kevin Reynolds (1995), Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind dir. Hayao Miyazaki (1984), Polaris dir. Kitten Carthew (2022), Mad Max: Fury Road dir. George Miller (2015), and Blood Quantum dir. Jeff Barnaby (2019)]



Afrofuturism: speculative future-building, an assurance of liberation for Afro-diasporic peoples who will survive and thrive for all time to come. An aesthetic movement in music, film, literature, and fine art; as well as a philosophical approach to technoculture that centres Afro-diasporic history and experience.

Indigenous futurisms, Chicanafuturism, etc. developed out of Afrofuturism.

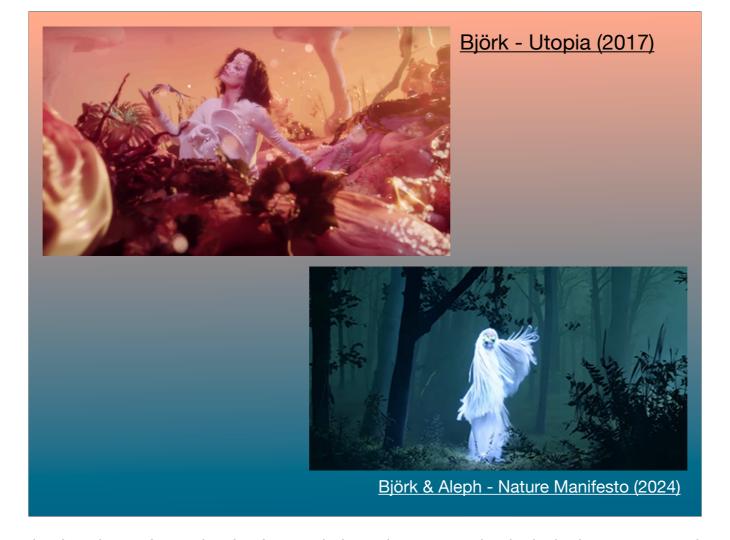


Further reading: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/guelph-kween-raechele-lovell-art-exhibit-removed-9.6932784





Indigenous futurisms focus on decolonial, self-determined representations of sovereign identities and futures as a resistance to colonial narratives that have been forced on Indigenous populations for hundreds of years. Challenging stereotypes of Indigenous culture and technology; video games are a popular medium.



Eco-futurism is a speculative sub-genre that imagines a future that forefronts a balance between technological advancement and ecological stability.

In Nature Manifesto, Björk and Aleph use AI to aid in the (re)generation of endangered and extinct animal vocalizations.



Speculative imagining as a way of "trying something on." Sin Wai Kin uses drag artistry to investigate discourses around gender, sexuality, and racial identities.



Speculative imagining is often a guiding force in my practice - a way of structuring scenarios for performance and video.

fairyhunter (2018) - A satirical take on the hyper-masculinity of sport hunting. Bear Grylls' twink cousin (or something like that) is hunting delicate little fairies in the Westfjords of Iceland.

A Tender Engine (2023) - The bimbofication of the Flying Scotsman steam locomotive—the most famous British steam engine of all time, beloved by the nation as a symbol of Britain's modernist techno-imperial prowess—as a way of playfully displacing meritocratic, racist, misogynist, transphobic, and homophobic colonial history with the power of Love!

Dog Time (2023) - A collaboration with my loved ones to imagine a quiet apocalypse that forces (invites? Allows?) us to live as a multispecies family pack, wandering across rural Newfoundland together. An accompanying short story gives context to the slow-TV-style video.

SPECULATIVE VIDEO ART SCREENING

Rihab Essayh - The Hymn of the Warriors of Love [excerpt] (2022); 1:13

Megan Arnold, Clayton Dyon, & Farley - Dog Time (2023); 16:54

Marisa Müsing - Stuck in the Motherboard (2023); 7:38

Emily Pelstring - A Flame the Colour of Air (2025); 7:27

Marcus Coates - The Last of Its Kind (2017); 15:48

Lizzy Rose - Sick, blue sea (2018); 10:34

Theo Cuthand - Medicine and Magic (2020); 5:00

Samra Mayanja - Letter from Oliver Dowden (2025); 4:17

Screening is approx. 75 mins

CWs:

Dog Time - some shaky footage throughout may induce vertigo A Flame the Colour of Air - sexual imagery throughout

Sick, blue sea - 4:15-5:15 endoscopic footage of gastrointestinal system; descriptions of nausea and illness throughout