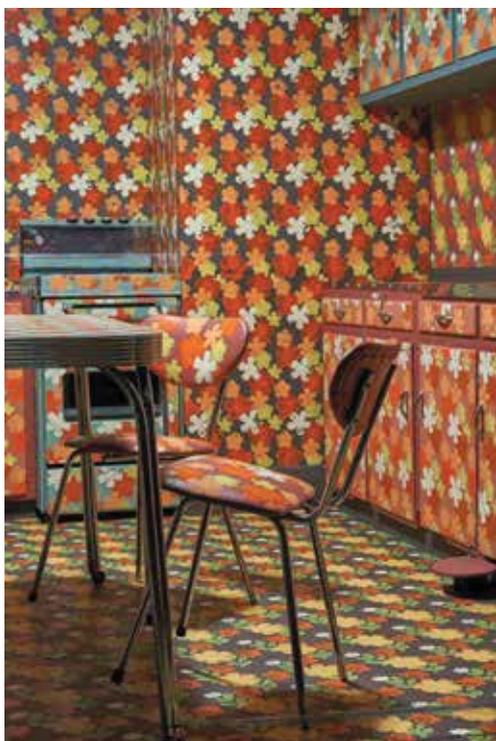


# Artlink



Cover image:

**Nicholas Folland**

*Other Homes and Gardens*, 2019  
mixed media. Installation view,  
Adelaide Central School of Art Gallery  
Photo: Sam Roberts  
Courtesy Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne  
© Nicholas Charles Folland/Copyright  
Agency, 2020

## Artlink Australia

PO Box 182  
Fullarton SA 5063  
Phone: +61 (0)8 8271 6228  
info@artlink.com.au  
advertising@artlink.com.au  
subscriptions@artlink.com.au

Artlink is a quarterly themed magazine on contemporary art and culture from Australia and the Asia-Pacific. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editor or publisher. Artlink has peer review status as an independent journal or critical writing on the contemporary visual arts in compliance with the Australian Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) specifications and is listed on the Australian Research Council ERA 2012 journal list.

© No part of this publication may be reprinted or electronically reproduced without permission.

Artlink Australia is a non-profit company limited by guarantee.  
ABN 490 632 261 39  
ISSN: 0727-1239

## Artlink\_It's Time

Issue 40:1 | March 2020

**Executive Editor** Eve Sullivan

**Finance & Administration Manager** Amanda Macri

**Advertising & Communications** Matthew Hill

**Creative Director** Marita Leuver, Leuver Design

**Designer** Kimberley Baker, Flux Visual Communication

**Website development** Isaac Foreman, Triplezero

## Board of Directors

Lisa Slade (Chair),  
Ali Gumillya Baker, Marc Bowyer, Jessica Coppe,  
Bill Morrow, Jackie Wurm

Distribution through newsagents via Ovato Retail Distribution Australia and to galleries and museum bookstores by Artlink Australia. Further details at [artlink.com.au/stockists](http://artlink.com.au/stockists)

Register for monthly online free e-newsletter at [artlink.com.au/artlink-news](http://artlink.com.au/artlink-news)

For sales, stockist or subscription enquiries, phone 08 8271 6228 or email [subscriptions@artlink.com.au](mailto:subscriptions@artlink.com.au)

**Printing & Prepress** Newstyle Printing, Adelaide



Artlink has made all reasonable endeavour to locate the owners of copyright material appearing in Artlink's print and digital editions, including the website at [www.artlink.com.au](http://www.artlink.com.au). Should anyone become aware that Artlink has used material without permission, please contact us.

Artlink Australia is generously supported by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Australia Council and the Government of South Australia.

Artlink acknowledges the law, customs and culture of the Kaurna People, the traditional custodians of Tarnpanyanga Adelaide, and extends this respect to all Indigenous peoples across Australia.

# Issue 40:1\_\_March 2020\_\_It's Time



- 08\_\_ **Editorial**
- 10\_\_ Art in the time of the burning  
**Ian Milliss**
- 16\_\_ Nicholas Folland:  
Secondhand time  
**Eve Sullivan**
- 20\_\_ Crafty prepping  
**Sera Waters**
- 29\_\_ 2019: The year of our cyberpunk future  
**Darren Jorgensen**
- 32\_\_ Stuart Ringholt:  
Time pressures  
**Wes Hill**
- 44\_\_ Living rocks:  
A fragment of the universe  
**James Darling**
- 48\_\_ Time and transition in the work of Lee Harrop  
**Mandy Treagus**
- 52\_\_ Geological pit stops:  
Kate Hill and Isadora Vaughan  
**Abbra Kotlarczyk**
- 60\_\_ Duchamp and Australia:  
In opposition  
**Rex Butler and ADS Donaldson**
- 68\_\_ The Brazilian moment:  
A picture gallery in transformation  
**John Mateer**
- 76\_\_ **Reviews**

More reviews and  
online archive at  
[artlink.com.au](http://artlink.com.au)



# 2019: The year of our cyberpunk future

Darren Jorgensen

Three of the great science fiction films of the twentieth century, *Akira* (1988), *Blade Runner* (1982) and *The Running Man* (1987) were set in 2019. Their sprawling, neon-lit streetscapes have proved to be not so unlike the futures they predicted, with extremes of technology, power and wealth concentrating in the mega-cities of today. In each film there are heroes and anti-heroes who contest this hi-tech power, from *Blade Runner*'s escapee android to *The Running Man*'s policeman who refuses orders to open fire on an innocent crowd. Security cameras and police are a notable presence in these films, driving early fantasies of a society of surveillance.

Science fiction films released in 2019 have blown up to the scale of the solar system: an astronaut finds his father and saves the world in *Ad Astra*, while in the even more ridiculous *Wandering Earth*, Qi saves the Earth as it is being propelled by giant rockets away from a dying sun. Science fictional exhibitions of 2019 also play out the fantasies and fears of a world under threat. In *Phantom Plane: Cyberpunk in the Year of the*

*Future* at Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong, Shinro Ohtake's *MON CHERI: A Self-Portrait as a Scrapped Shed* (2012) is a cluttered caravan and shed equipped with everything you might need to survive a collapse of the twenty-first century, from collaged magazines to fur-lined gas bottles. This exhibition also featured older work, the standout being Bettina Von Arnim's psychedelic cyborg-robot paintings from the early 1970s. Set in a virtual world of wingless airliners and gridded landscapes they appeared bizarrely contemporary, as giant machines looming over squares of colour become metaphors for the powers of control that underscore the digital landscape.

Taking the city of Hong Kong as its subject, Yuri Pattison documented the do-it-yourself technologists of the waterways, who install their houseboats with antennae and fluorescent tubes. Such works illuminate the way computing technology has become the stuff of survival in our cyberpunk modern cities that are designed to accommodate digital infrastructure, dominated by solar panels and

satellite dishes bristling at odd angles. To see Pattison's video, exhibition visitors must step inside the chassis of a giant PC, as if to actualise the way society is increasingly driven from inside the virtual realm.

This digitisation of the world is the stuff of nightmares for those suspicious of the rise of an industrial scale data complex. In her book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* Shoshana Zuboff describes the transformation of early hopes for the internet and wireless technologies into a regime of control, while in *New Dark Age* (2019) artist James Bridle accelerates an older, Marxist argument that capitalism has taken away our ability to imagine the future to claim that we are no longer capable of thinking time itself. Bridle is cynical about this future we cannot imagine, drawing his examples from children's YouTube videos, military research and flight paths in an argument that machine learning has enabled a world that nobody can truly grasp. Cory Doctorow also released a pessimistic futurology in 2019, his story collection *Radicalized*

# F

**Guy Louden**  
*Ark (II)*, 2019  
Wikipedia backup, custom computer, gold leaf, hard case, custom fabric, rolling plinth  
Courtesy the artist and Fremantle Art Centre





Clockwise from top:  
**Yuri Pattison** *False Memory*, 2019  
 Installation view, Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong

**Loren Kronemeyer** *Wounded Amazon of the Capitalocene 1*, 2019  
 Lie detector, compound bow, targets, hay bales, accessories  
 Courtesy the artist and Fremantle Art Centre

**Dan McCabe** *Red River Biddy*, 2019  
 automotive carbon fibre vinyl on acrylic, stainless steel and "gun blued" steel  
 Courtesy the artist and Fremantle Art Centre

following the fate of the poor trapped in webs of deceit by governments, health insurance companies and appliance manufacturers. For these three authors we are locked into systems of behavioural prediction and data gaming. Algorithms dominate the mediascape, endlessly learning from the movement of bodies and cursors. Technological progress is the province of machine learning that relies on increasing surveillance to improve its performance in modelling consumers and terrorists alike. Advances in technology have come to express human dysfunction rather than ambition.

Artists living within this increasingly narrow horizon work within a data-rich but imagination poor world. Australian artist Guy Loudon illustrates this point in two exhibitions in 2019, making work from the other side of the apocalypse. *Network Archaeology* at Cool Change Contemporary, Perth, featured a broken-down artificial intelligence, and in the recent *Preppers* exhibition at Fremantle Arts Centre a downloaded version of Wikipedia is stored in a hardened suitcase computer designed to withstand an aircraft crash. There is an immediacy to Loudon's works that describe a world that has stopped at the present moment, symptomatic of the way in which time itself has been circumscribed by our anxiety about the sustainability of the present.

*Preppers* is the latest in a series of shows by a group of artists interested in the doomsday preppers phenomenon, as people prepare to survive disasters by building

hideaways and learning unfamiliar skills to be self-sufficient. The artists became preppers themselves to make this exhibition, Loudon rebuilds computers while McCabe shows off some serious fabrication skills with a *Compound* welded together and decorated with carbon fibre camouflage. They model the experience of those who have come of age in a gig economy, already primed to draw on such lateral survival strategies. But Loudon now wonders whether prepping is the most responsible theme to explore. Since 2016 when Loudon, Dan McCabe and Loren Kronemyer first conceived of doing preppers shows, the climate emergency that has prompted school strikes and Extinction Rebellion has gone mainstream. Loudon's attention to current events, and to #hashtag trends, like preppers itself, is symptomatic of the generational experience of Web 3.0, and the mood swings and virtual spotfires that drive these radical shifts between the poles of pessimism and optimism and the latest cause to drive the algorithms of online attention. The *Preppers* exhibition and prepping itself is an attempt to devirtualise data populism into actual phenomenon. The virtual environment has become what in another context Hegel called a "bad infinity," relying on a repetition of the same informational world, the mediocrity of cyberspace without end.

More violent in its suggestion, Kronemyer's work for *Preppers* consists of an archery bow, arrows, targets and traps on location as a feminist or *femme fatale* survival

fantasy (taken literally), dotting the walls with arrows bearing tips made from sharpened knives and forks, and man traps with boy scout handbooks for living in the wild. The gendered war she imagines suggests that the real problem lies much deeper than data manipulation and a takeover by machines. It is still possible to see the digital at work here, as a target drawn into the shape of an infinity symbol stands as a metaphor for the spiralling movement of online cultures in which members affirm each other's obsessions and paranoias, just as social media in more general terms turns us into cybertribes.

The recent protests in Hong Kong suggest that it is not archery or metal welding that is going to help us when the world as we know it breaks down. For many activists, civil society has already come to an end as they look upon the face of a monster state built upon the power of surveillance. They are using alfoil, laser pointers, spray paint and umbrellas to avoid camera and digital surveillance while tracking police. Their encrypted messages build what Doctorow calls "transitive trust", a term he uses to describe a group of teenagers who drift from downloading pirated video games to evading police. As Apple and Google remove the protestors' apps and tear gas wafts through shopping centres and facial recognition technologies lurk behind street cameras, Hong Kong once again realises the dystopian fears of the cyberpunk imaginary. And yet these protestors prove that technologies can also be used to disrupt the panopticon, arriving like a



From top:  
**Bettina von Arnim**  
*Verkehrswesen*, 1971  
 oil on canvas  
 © Arnim, Bettina Von Arnim/VG  
 Bild-Kunst. Copyright Agency, 2020

Entry to MOCA Yinchuan, China  
 Photo: Darren Jorgensen

Opposite:  
**Zhang Xiaotao**  
*Rear Window*, 2006  
 © Zhang Xiaotao Chek

flash mob to burn down a bank only to disappear again into the labyrinthine metropolitan railway system.

It is all too easy to judge other countries, but Australia is not far behind China in deploying its own system of facial recognition software, now at work in police stations, schools and football stadiums, as well as legislating to create a digital time machine that records the online and phone histories of its own citizens. It is as if the Australian government saw what Edward Snowden had revealed in the Stellar Wind program in the US and thought it was a good idea, rather than the shocking invasion of privacy most of us took it to be. Watching the rise of the surveillance state, Australian art collective PVI anticipated the umbrellas of Hong Kong in their 2004 performance *Panopticon Sydney*, in which they covered a person in umbrellas and attempted to walk him across Circular Quay avoiding the security cameras but were themselves intercepted by security guards, never completing the journey. Today another art collective are attempting to elude surveillance cameras in London, but with face paint. The colourful, angular designs of Dazzle Club are reminiscent of the New York cyberpunk classic, *Liquid Sky* (1982), with its fashion show of junkies and nightclubbers. The walks these artists perform are not outright protest, as in the PVI performance; but, rather, designed to function as a form of camouflage within the urban landscape.

When it comes to imaging this dystopian future in China, artists are among the first to experience

the state's pervasive apparatus of surveillance and control. In 2019 artist Zhang Xiaotao had his science-fictional retrospective at the Yinchuan Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) cancelled by local authorities. This was ostensibly because his show was not deemed happy enough, a negative influence in a booming, positivist China. Some quick political manoeuvring put the opening back on schedule, although with some of the video works taken off the walls. No wonder Zhang's work is melancholic. His paintings of rotting food, abandoned piles of hospital equipment, crashed cars and the drowning lights of a bus are metaphors for the way Chinese modernity has failed to meet the aspirations for freedom and opportunity; instead, leaving its citizens marooned in a bureaucratic, polluted haze. The Chongqing power station is a recurrent image in his paintings and animations, remembered from his childhood. In reimagining this neighbourhood monstrosity, Zhang turns a national tradition that balances line and tonality into a garish illumination of artistic isolation and psychological disturbance in response to the vast political and industrial machine that dominates urban life.

Yinchuan MOCA is itself a symbol of these contradictions. Its gleaming white exterior rises from a vast grassy steppe in the cold north of the country as the sentinel of a future that has not yet arrived. It was built for \$400 million by a real estate company as part of a deal with the local government, and conceived

as part of the modernisation of the city of Yinchuan that lies an hour's drive away. But the increasingly conservative and restrictive Chinese state has left the Museum and its aspirations in something of a hiatus. Such is the emerging paradox of the twenty-first century, in which increasing regulatory control has coincided with a boom in data and communications technologies. Yinchuan MOCA has become retro-futuristic although it is only a handful of years old.

The Chinese dystopia is a symbol of how modernity has come to a crashing halt in the twenty-first century; rather than driving freedom and technological progress, this surveillance-rich world is instead defined by a retreat into highly politicised, militarised and stifled systems of governance and control. It is no longer possible to imagine immense, systemic changes; instead we live in an era of incremental and multiple small changes. Instead of the space elevators and orbiting hotels we were promised in the 1950s, today we are sold ever more complex phones and increasingly automated cars that keep us anchored and on the ground.

The apocalypse is more likely to happen slowly rather than all at once, with a slow creep rather than a bang. In *Other Suns*, another speculative Fremantle Arts Centre exhibition held in 2019, Francis Russell notes that the obsolescence of alternative futures have become quaint, cultish relics of the recent past. Here Lisa Sammut's beautiful, wall-sized installation of an extraterrestrial



landscape could have easily been used for a Star Trek set from the 1960s series, while Shalini Jardin's watercolour illustrations of hybrid alien-human-fish creatures look like studies for the cover art of 1950s pulp genre novels. In mining older modes of making art, with paper, cardboard and mirrors, these artists remind us that not everything is overwhelmed by the faceless data crunching of corporations and governments.

It may be that radical visual technologies have become so prevalent that artists can only return to older modes of visualising the Other, using paper, cardboard and mirrors to work the genre that is no longer estranging. Jardin's hybrids also point to a very different feminism to Kronemyer's gender war, instead playing with body pieces in order to reimagine our relationship with tentacles and scales. Rather than the structural feminism

of Joanna Russ or Margaret Atwood, here we see the fractured heterotopias of Octavia Butler. In her incredible *Dawn* (1987), an alien spaceship arrives after a nuclear war, and it turns out that this ship's inhabitants are keen to breed with humans, to merge with them into an altogether new configuration of alien life. Not surprisingly, the humans are loathe to have sex with these tentacled creatures from outer space, but it proves the only way that our flawed species might prolong life, and even enjoy it.

This heady mix of disturbance and attraction characterises much of the work in *Other Suns*, in which alternative communities, interests and particular weirdnesses thrive in a do-it-yourself space of a retro-science fiction culture. Symptomatic of this retro-futurism is Soda\_Jerk's breakthrough *Astro Black* from 2007, about the afro-futurism of Sun Ra and



his legacy. But it is hard to imagine this latter-day video work by two white girls on Afro-American musical culture being made after the rise of Black Lives Matter in the later 2010s, and the growing sensitivity of social media to cross-cultural and racial appropriations. This phenomenon has been so encompassing that *Astro Black* feels archaic already, although it is barely more than a decade old.

It is possible to be nostalgic for simpler times, when the risk of being vilified on Facebook was not so apparent, nor the risk of censorship so great in China. And yet this nostalgia betrays a certain truth about freedom itself; that freedom is not quite what it appears, and relies on the “transitive trust” of spectators

who may or may not share similar values or even a similar sense of humour. While mass media took this trust for granted among its television viewers and newspaper readers, it is no longer possible to know your audience in a digital age. This is as much a problem for the Hong Kong protestors, who work to “capture the ghost” of undercover police, as it is for artists, who cannot know how their work will be received into the future.

The philosopher Michel Foucault, who made the panopticon central to his theories of society, once conceptualised the police and law enforcement as people who surveil themselves as much as one another. The panopticon lies in the constitution of societies of extreme visibility, networked as

much by one’s neighbours as by Facebook friendships and preppers channels on YouTube. It may be that in the future other modes of art and exhibition-making will similarly be brought back from the past, such as the private apartment showings of Chinese art in Beijing in the 1970s and 1980s, or the performance art of the Moscow conceptualists, which took place in discrete places so that they would not be noticed by authorities and the regular public.

For now, it is enough to register the transformation of art in the age of information. Artists and protestors alike have turned to low-tech solutions to rethink their place in a global industry of information sharing and mass-surveillance. The prepper



Darren Jorgensen lectures in art history in the School of Design at the University of Western Australia. The following exhibitions have been reference points:

NSW Hongkongers: The Art of Defiance  
m2 Gallery, Sydney, 6–18 February 2020

Guy Loudon: Network Archaeology  
Cool Change Contemporary  
1–23 February 2019

Other Suns: Cult Sci-Fi Cinema & Art  
Fremantle Arts Centre  
27 July – 14 September 2019

Phantom Plane: Cyberpunk in the  
year of the future  
Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong  
5 October 2019 – 4 January 2020

Preppers  
Fremantle Arts Centre  
16 November 2019 – 27 January 2020

Microscopic Event: Zhang Xiaotao Exhibition  
Yinchuan Museum of Contemporary Art  
7 December 2019 – 1 January 2020



imagination is a means to imagine how communities might thrive in spite of and even because of this overwhelming and impending drama, in the process driving new speculative and expressive forms. If these forms sometimes appear to have come from earlier times, such as Dazzle Club's 1980s style of face paint, or Kronemyer's gender war, it is because these earlier strategies remain pertinent to the new problems of the present. After all, and as Foucault points out, surveillance was a problem

in the nineteenth century, while the patriarchy persists. Art and power tend to innovate in their uses of new technologies but remain tied to their own ends. If science fiction has come to recall the futures of the past rather than the future itself, this is because its subject remains this conflict between individuals and great powers, the site where revolutions take place.



Opposite:  
**Shalini Jardini**  
*The Archive*, 2013  
oil on marine ply  
Courtesy the artist

This page, from top:  
**Gianluca Constantini**  
*[Untitled]*, 2019  
Photo: An Rong Xu  
Courtesy the artist and NSW  
Hongkongers

**Alex Chan**  
*Our present and our future*, 2019  
digital painting  
Courtesy the artist and NSW  
Hongkongers