



A GATEWAY TO POSSIBLE WORLDS

ART & SCIENCE FICTION

05/11/2022 → 17/04/2023



Ilya Kabakov. *L'homme qui s'est envolé dans l'espace depuis son appartement*, 1985, installation, Centre Pompidou, Mnam
Previous page: Wangechi Mutu. *The End of eating Everything*, 2013, courtesy Victoria Miro Gallery

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1.

INTRODUCTION

A GATEWAY TO POSSIBLE WORLDS

Art & Science-Fiction

November 5, 2022 – April 17, 2023

Grande Nef and Galerie 1 (2300 m²), Centre Pompidou-Metz



Edgar Arceneaux. *Detroit Monolith, It's Full of Holes*, 2011, Centre Pompidou, Mnam

The broadcasting on television of the first steps of the space age, whose development had been gathering pace in the 1950s, fired man's interest in the stars; the small screen would then gradually replace the celestial screen as the source for his imagination.

The media and commercial explosion of science fiction was a natural consequence. In the 1960s, the genre becomes omnipresent, influencing daily life not just through television, cinema, comics and, of course, literature, from the popular to the more elitist, but also with its brightly coloured pop aesthetic in fashion, design, architecture, and the visual arts.

However, with the Cold War and the war in Vietnam intensifying, and the developing nuclear threat, a sense of obsolescence pervaded the somewhat naive, futuristic and technical craze for the space age. Replacing the backdrop of space with more familiar horizons, a caustic and politically committed SF emerged at the same time as the hippie protest movements. Philip K. Dick, J.G. Ballard and John Brunner, authors of this new speculative fiction, explored the imperfections of our immediate future, employing philosophical, psychological, political, societal, and environmental themes.

Following in the tradition of this rebellious science fiction, reexamining ideas and blind spots, the exhibition "A Gateway to Possible Worlds: Art & Science-Fiction", at the Centre Pompidou-Metz from October 2022, will focus on SF as an active medium for doubting and questioning reality.

Bringing together in a 2,300m² space about 150 artworks from the late 1960s to the present, the show will explore the place of mankind in the world and his choices. In a time when the need for another world is becoming more and more urgent, a time that is seeing the emergence of a "liquid" form of modernity, in which our convictions are crumbling, accelerating our discoveries and their subsequent obsolescence, the exhibition will look at the connections between imagined worlds and reality, with the input of writers and visual artists, as well as architects and film-makers.

By expounding on the possibilities within the present world, developing narratives based on scientific hypotheses, and conceiving alternative ways of life and realities, SF is a genre that confronts man with a radical otherness and offers emancipation from mainstream political discourses. As a result, it has always been a breeding ground for protest movements seeking freedom and self-determination, such as cyberpunk, afrofuturism and biopunk. At the crossroads of science, art and philosophy, it embodies dissimilarities, political utopia, the anticipation of all possibilities, and a profound rethinking of our understanding.

Science fiction is an art of the present; through its futuristic stories, it opens our imagination to current developments, such as in NBIC sciences (nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and cognitive sciences). A real laboratory of problematisation, it questions, more accurately and profoundly than other genres, the potential of human beings, by going beyond the particular divisions between science, ethics and politics, amongst other things, to offer an "outside" look at mankind and his inventions. The last two decades have seen an increase in artworks informed by the world of SF, guiding critical reflection around subjects such as alienation, trans-/post-humanism, the breaking of gender boundaries, colonialism, social fragmentation, ultra-capitalism, new forms of panopticism and totalitarianism, and, of course, ecological disaster and human obsolescence. However, since Harald Szeemann's historic 1967 exhibition "Science Fiction" at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, a time when SF was very popular, there have been few major exhibitions dedicated to the fruitful relationship between Sci-Fi and art.

With its self-fulfilling prophecies, science fiction continues to change our vision of the future and to play a part in its construction. By not looking through the dominant dystopian lens, the exhibiting will consciously aim to revitalise and re-appropriate our vision of the future.

Curator: Alexandra Müller, Centre Pompidou-Metz



Anita Molinero, *Sans titre*, 2005, installation, Cnap, [mac], musée d'art contemporain de Marseille

2.

THE EXHIBITION LAYOUT

Beginning with the Earth and mankind, the exhibition will take us to more and more distant horizons, alternating immersive installations with more classical artworks. The journey will address the major contemporary themes of Science Fiction through six sections whose titles are borrowed from classic works of the genre. Alongside the visual arts and literature, architecture, intrinsically in touch with societal issues, will be particularly highlighted.

I. **Brave New World**

Dynamics and manipulations of socio-economic powers:
the political nature of science fiction

II. **Neuromancer**

Cyberspace and Big Data:
how technoscience redesigns our life

III. **Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?**

Metamorphosis of the body:
the cyborg as the matrix for identity politics and political voice

IV. **Soylent Green**

Facing environmental collapses:
restoring our intimate connection with the living

V. **2001: A Space Odyssey**

Space travels and encounter of the third kind:
aliens as a metaphor of the unknown being

VI. **If you find this world bad...**

Epilogue:
science fiction as an artistic means for a forward-looking free thinking



Gordon Cheung, *Masterplan*, 2007/08, Edel Assanti gallery



Konrad Klapheck, *Der Krieg*, 1965, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

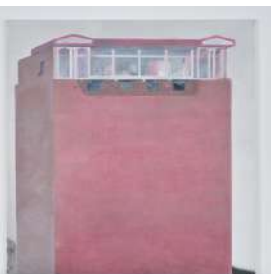


Ryuta Amai, *Fiction*, 1998, Centre Pompidou, Mnam



Laurent Grasso, *Soleil double*, 2014, Courtesy l'artiste et Galerie Perrotin

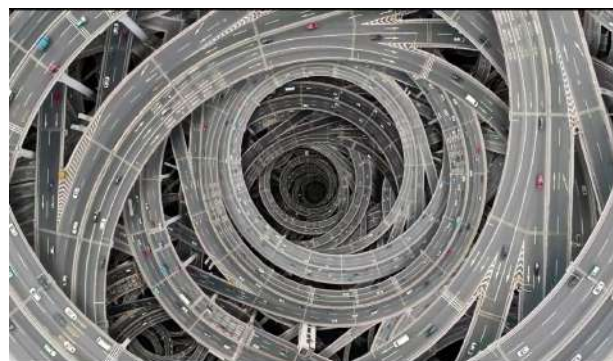
Yang Yong Liang, *Heavenly City 05*, 2008, Galerie Paris-Beijing



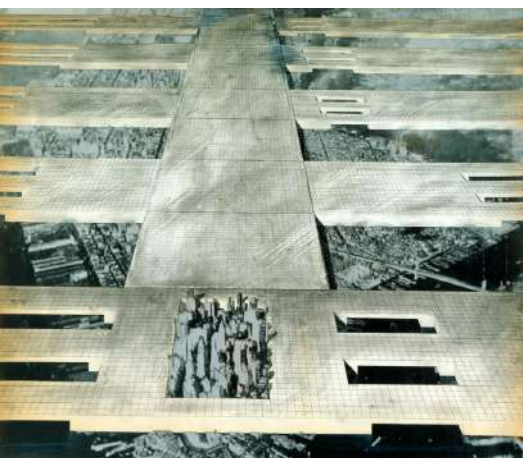
Edi Hila, *Penthouse*, 2013, Galerie Nathalie Obadia



Nicolas Daubanes, *Prison Saint-Michel, Toulouse*, 2017, Galerie Laurent Maubert



Kevin McLaughlin (vidéo) / Max Cooper (musique), *Repetition*, 2019, courtesy des artistes



Superstudio, *Manhattan*, 1969, Centre Pompidou, Mnam



Larissa Sansour, *Nation estate*, 2012, Cnap

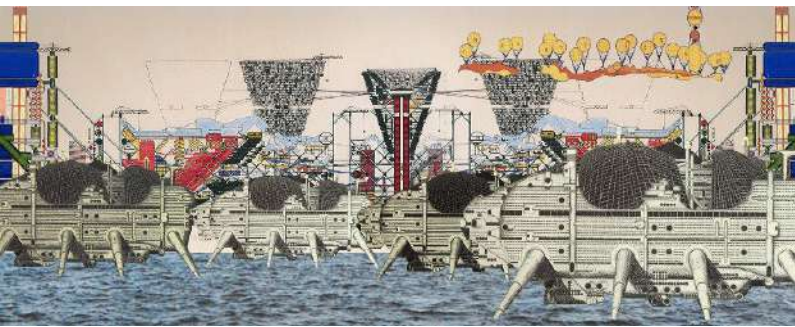
I. BRAVE NEW WORLD

The major political and social struggles have been the product of a clash of imaginations and rival utopias. Each era seems to have its own ideologies, each society its dreams. Since Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), major social utopias have followed one after the other, leaving a lasting mark on their respective eras without ever becoming a reality. It is clear that the twentieth century has seen the rapid emergence and disappearance of a number of utopias: that of modern times and its idea of constant progress inherited from the Enlightenment; of May 1968, absorbed by the consumer society; of communism and an egalitarian society. And what of the present? One might agree with the literary critic Fredric Jameson that "it is characterised by a loss of a sense of history, not only of the past but also of historical futures." This inability to imagine historical difference – what Marcuse called the "atrophy of the Utopian imagination" – is a far more significant pathological symptom of late capitalism than 'narcissism'.^[1] With the collapse of the great collective utopias accompanied by environmental upheavals, are we lacking dreams and inspiring imaginations? The time may be ripe for change; it is from the rubble that the most daring dreams take shape. We need anticipation, desirable imagery, we need science fiction. One of the most obvious and important ways it can help is by introducing subtle variants into our present, with the potential to shape history, to divert the present towards another tomorrow. Social criticism is part of its DNA: by projecting the shadows of our fears and hopes, by interpreting and extrapolating our potential fates, it takes a stand, it is political and engaged.

From the literature of Aldous Huxley and Alain Damasio, and the architecture of Superstudio and Dogma, one issue in particular seems to preoccupy these creators of futuristic visions: the desire for control which drives individuals and authorities in power (physical, health, moral, political and financial control), which goes hand in hand with the subjugation of dissenting parties. Surveillance and manipulation as a societal phenomenon have always been central issues in science fiction. Today, in the Postmodern age, which has seen a dramatic rise in information and communication technology, a tipping point making it possible to control every detail of our lives, to the point of being offensive, it has become an issue of the utmost importance. No wonder then that since the early 1980s, which saw the emergence of the cyberpunk trend, futuristic scenarios have often been inspired by an explosive cocktail combining, on the one hand, the use of big data for political and commercial ends, and on the other, unbridled ultra-capitalism and the uncontrolled growth of multinationals colluding with states, when they are not able to replace them. Cradled in the comfort offered by new technologies, cajoled into a system we forget is even there, we pay for information, entertainment and solace that encroach ever more on our lives, at the cost of new forms of alienation and in the currency of the 21st century, an incalculable mass of data exploited by internet giants and states thanks to their increasing "algorithmisation" of our lives. The present, with citizens who can be physically and virtually monitored, opens the door to the Orwellian excesses of technoscience and the insidious undermining of free will.

By casting a critical eye on digital capitalism, science fiction makes it possible to tame the progress which has lost its lustre before it comes to fruition. SF is a safeguard which offers low-tech strategies to shake up the "tracking society" from within, without denying the inherent emancipatory potential of technology. It gives our present the artistic means of free thought, resolutely oriented towards the future.

^[1] Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the future. The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, Verso, London / New York, 2005, p. 345.



Archigram (Ron Herron). *The walking city*, 1964, Archigram Archives



Nicolas Darrot. *Dronecast*, 2002-07, Collection Antoine de Galbert



Heather Dewey-Hagborg. *Stranger visions*, 2012/17, Centre Pompidou, Mnam



Cao Fei. *Nova*, 2019, video, Galerie Sprüth Magers



John Isaacs. *Is more than this more than this*, 2001, Collection Antoine de Galbert



Josh Kline. *In Stock (Walmart Worker's Arms)*, 2018, Gallery 47 Canal



Liam Young. *In the robot skies*, 2016, courtesy l'artiste



GERIKO (Hélène Jeudy & Antoine Caëcke). *Lorn - AnVA*, 2017, Courtesy des artistes



Jon Rafman. *You are standing in an open field (Mental Traveler)*, 2020, Galerie Sprüth Magers



Diego Bianchi. *Hardware*, 2021, Collection Antoine de Galbert

II. NEUROMANCER

Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts . . . A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the non-space of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding...^[2]

Computer networks are omnipresent in our universe. Cyberspace, that sparkling almost urban jungle, fantasised about and christened in the 1980s by the author William Gibson, has escaped from the ghetto of the SF counterculture to become part of mainstream culture. The hypertechnological worlds, as imagined by the cyberpunk and then post-cyberpunk novels, plagued by voracious multinationals and devastated by pollution, have gone from being distant chimeras to plausible tomorrows.

11:06 – that is the average time American adults spent per day interacting with media in the first quarter of 2018, according to a study by data analytics company Nielsen. As for the French, according to the National Public Health Agency, they spend nearly 8 hours a day on their various screens – televisions, smartphones, tablets, computers and games consoles. Our reality expands, the virtual world streams into our surrounding environment, doubling our existence, immersing our bodies like islands in a computer ocean. But reality is also shrinking, society is divided into individuals connected to multiple social, professional, political, and cultural networks, beyond any geographical limitations. "Connected individualism" with its virtual extensions of the self, its open and blocked profiles, makes sharing a privilege and the economy of attention a valuable resource.

This new form of segregation is compensated for by what the science fiction author Alain Damasio calls the "techno-cocoon": "[...] we all dream of a caring world, attentive to our needs. A world that takes care of our stressed minds and bodies, that protects and pampers us, that helps us and corrects our mistakes, that filters the environment and its dangers for us. A world that strives to create a techno-cocoon for our well-being. Ambient intelligence provides for this. It listens to us and responds to us. It moulds this bubble around our solitude. It lines it with cool objects and interfaces [...] A social network is a web of connected solitudes. Not a community."^[3] Have we become the tools of our tools?

For the protagonist of the seminal novel *Neuromancer*, Case, freedom from technological alienation has already been achieved, paradoxically, through a return to the body: the rediscovery of his physical faculties and the caustic, liberating power of his imagination enable him to thwart attempts to manipulate and enslave him. The myth of human emancipation through technology is behind us. In SF, cyberpunk has given way to biopunk. Here, there is no primary rejection of technology, but a return to a new form of sobriety in its use, a rediscovery of life, in harmony with nature. Science fiction hijacks technology, it suggests successful sidestepping strategies by using it for new purposes and consciously avoiding heteronomy. "Escape Fiction?" Yes, to show us how to escape from technological torpor into creativity.

^[2] William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, Ace Science Fiction Books, New York, 1984, p. 37

^[3] Alain Damasio, *Les Furtifs*, La Volte, Clamart, 2019, p. 277



Jim Sharman, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, 1975

Nancy Grossman, *Ali Stoker*, 1966–67, Michael Rosenfeld Collection

Willie Cole, *Fly girl*, 2016, Alexander and Bonin Gallery, New York



Dara Birnbaum, «Technologie / Tranformation: Wonder Woman», 1978–79, Frac Ile-de-France



Zanele Muholi, «Phila I», Parktown, 2016, Yancey Richardson, New York



Kiki Kogelnik, *Female robot*, 1964, Mnam, Centre Pompidou

Mathieu Briand., *A-s1/14 | BL *RL/18*, 2018, Courtesy l'artiste



Nancy Grossman, *Untitled*, 1976, Michael Rosenfeld Collection



Damien Deroubaix, *Eve of the Apocalypse*, 2008, Mnam, Centre Pompidou

Aïcha Snoussi, *Installation in situ*, 2022, production Centre Pompidou–Metz

III. DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?

Bodies are maps of power and identity. Cyborgs are no exceptions. [...] The machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment.^[4]

The relationship between man and machine is changing fundamentally: technology is infiltrating our daily lives, literally slipping under our skin in the form of prostheses, operations carried out with the help of robots, or through our dependencies and the virtual manipulation of the psyche. Prosthetic fantasy, transhumanism and posthumanist dystopia, the artificial "augmentation" of man's physical and mental capacities, and thus the extension of his life expectancy, all galvanise the debate on scientific progress and ethics. Are we making a Faustian pact with artificial intelligence that will lead to the outright obsolescence of Homo sapiens?^[5]

With his novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* which inspired Ridley Scott's cult film *Blade Runner* (1982), science fiction author Philip K. Dick has been masterfully pursuing the questioning of robotics since 1968: it is not the loss of clear boundaries between artificial intelligence and humans that poses a problem, but our greed and a kind of inward-looking attitude devoid of empathy. In 2020, there is still no prosthetic God on the horizon, but there is a growing urgency to question the morality of algorithms created – by humans – with profit the sole intention. They govern our lives and we surrender, naively, to their comforts and diktats. In this framework, it is not humanity as a species that is threatened, but rather the virtue of humanity, its kindness, compassion and fraternity.

However, together with these torments, the technological revolution is bringing real societal advances. It is not only the boundaries between man and machine, between life and screens, that are being broken down, but also many age-old conflicts, such as that between man and woman. In her *Cyborg Manifesto*, feminist historian of science and primatologist Donna Haraway sees these hybrid beings as an opportunity for humanity to deconstruct binary and archaic gender norms: "The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and individual self. This is the self feminists must code."^[6] The parable of the cyborg can inspire a way out of the patriarchal impasse colonising our imagination. It crystallises the divergent forces of a society in transition and gives increased visibility to previously marginalised social groups. New technologies are already fully enabling the virtual transcending of previously constraining biological, biographical and cultural contexts, in order to conceive freely chosen fictional identities. Queer positions open social acceptance to ambiguous and shifting forms of identity and gender.

Science fiction novels, social networks and exhibition venues are now full of hybrid representations – avatars, digital revenants, and androids – that question universalist doctrines. Fifty years ago, in the political fight for equality, the body was highlighted as a medium in the political struggle for equality. Today, it is regaining relevance as a matrix for identity politics and as a political medium representing other possibilities.^[7]

^[4] Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980's", *Socialist Review*, n° 80, vol. 15,2 (March-April), London, 1985, pp. 65–107. Reprinted in *The Haraway Reader*, Routledge, 2003 pp. 7-40, here p. 37-38

^[5] See Günther Anders' *The Obsolescence of Man. Volume II "On the Destruction of Life in the Era of the Third Industrial Revolution" [1980]*; URL: <https://libcom.org/files/ObsolescenceofManVol%20II%20Gunther%20Anders.pdf>

^[6] Haraway, p. 32

^[7] French and international SF is currently undergoing a major revival with authors highlighting racial and/or queer minorities, such as Luvan (Marie-Aude Matignon), Sabrina Calvo, Mélanie Fazi, Nnedi Okorafor and Nora Keita Jemisin.



Daniel Arsham. *Foggy*, 2005, Centre Pompidou, Mnam



Wangechi Mutu. *The End of eating Everything*, 2013, courtesy Victoria Miro Gallery



Motohiko Odani. *Honeycombman*, 2019, courtesy l'artiste



Stéphane Degoutin et Gwenola Wagon. *Erewhon*, 2018-2019, courtesy the artists



Marguerite Humeau. *The Dead, The Dancers, and The Air*, 2019, courtesy Galerie Clearing et l'artiste



Aida Mulneh. *The Shackles of limitations (Water Life series)*, 2018, Jenkins Johnson Gallery



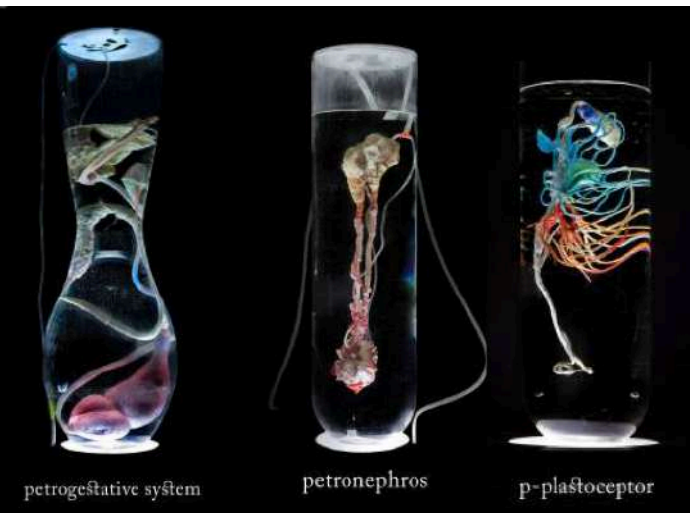
Sandy Skoglung. *Radioactive cats*, 1980, Mnam, Centre Pompidou



Otobong Nkanga. *Ralterscape I à III: Playground*, 2005, Frac Paca



Tetsumi Kudo. *Sans titre*, 1971, Collection Antoine de Galbert



Pinar Yoldas. *Ecosystem of excess: organs for the plastivore*, 2014, courtesy the artist



Allora & Calzadilla avec la collaboration de Ted Chiang. *The great silence*, 2014, courtesy the artists and Galerie Crousel

IV. SOYLENT GREEN

It seems that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism^[8].

"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and every living thing that moveth upon the earth,"^[9] so the founding myth of Judaism and Christianity, in the Book of Genesis, enjoins us. This story of the origins of the Western world therefore sets out the idea of a Man/Nature dualism as well as that of the control and exploitation of the environment's resources in the service of humans. But God is long dead and the divine exhortation, which once served as an excuse and even a source of pride, is now putting us to shame. In our age of environmental and societal collapse we urgently need new narratives, desirable and engaging fantasies, including science fiction.

The term Anthropocene, the "age of the human", is used to refer to the major global impact of humans on the Earth's ecosystem. In the field of humanities, however, the term is controversial: does it not fall into the same trap as the anthropocentric prism that offers no alternative to the transformation of the Earth by Man, and that sees nature as a mere setting, a force to be dominated? And what about the interweaving of ecological devastation and capitalism, colonialism and the oppression of women?

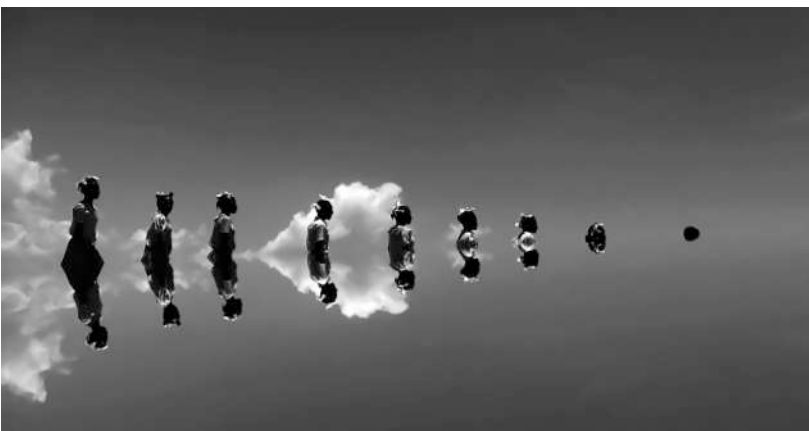
Replacing semantics and imagery also means influencing the trajectory of societies. Radical dystopias have long been popular. Do they reflect our inability to overcome our stupefaction, our impotence in the face of real disasters, or do they testify to the irreconcilable nature of profound reforms of the capitalist economy or human "nature"? "It is important to oppose political attacks on the idea of utopia, as these are usually reactionary statements on the behalf of the currently powerful, those who enjoy a poorly-hidden utopia-for-the-few alongside a dystopia-for-the-many,"^[10] says novelist Kim Stanley Robinson. In science fiction, Hollywood film productions aside, the days of virile, messianic, all conquering superheroes are definitely over. Today, the tide is turning in favour of biopunk, solarpunk and ecofeminism (in literature as well as in the visual arts), appealing to a network of creative and pleasurable interdependencies, a sense of belonging, rather than the traditional domination of nature by Homo sapiens. Restoring our intimate connection with the living, becoming one with this devastated Earth, believing in the power of resilience. If the dislocation of the present world is a fact, the end of the world is not. A "better" way, that bears witness to the traumas, but also to the plurality of links and stories that bind us to the Earth, is always possible. Dystopia is serving as a form of hope, of utopia. As Ursula Le Guin writes, "science fiction can be seen as a far less rigid, narrow field, not necessarily Promethean or apocalyptic at all, and in fact less a mythological genre than a realistic one."^[11] With cli-fi and solarpunk, the pleasure of creation becomes a militant and powerful unifying act.

^[8] Fredric Jameson, « Future City », *New Left Review*, n°21, London, May-June 2003, p. 76

^[9] Gen. 1:28

^[10] Kim Stanley Robinson, « Dystopias Now », *Commune magazine*, 11/02/2018. URL: <https://communemag.com/dystopias-now/>

^[11] Ursula Le Guin, "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction" (1986), in *Dancing on the edge of the world*, Grove Press, New York, 1989, p. 154



Jeannette Ehlers, *Black Bullets*, 2012, courtesy the artist



Josèfa Ntjam, *Commande*, 2022, Centre Pompidou-Metz



Sanford Biggers, *Quilt N°19 / Rockstar*, 2014, courtesy Marianne Boesky Gallery



Yinka Shonibare, *Spacewalk*, 2002, courtesy l'artiste et Friedman Gallery



Alexis Peskine, *Le Radeau de la Méduse*, 2016, courtesy October Gallery



Hew Locke, *Where lies the land*, 2019, courtesy Hales Gallery



Wangechi Mutu, *Beneath lies the power*, 2014, collection particulière



Fabrice Monteiro, *Waxologie*, 2014, Galerie Magnin-A



Frances Bodomo, *Afronauts*, 2014, film, courtesy l'artiste

V. 2001, A SPACE ODYSSEY

One day, creatures who didn't look like us and who spoke a strange language, armed with state-of-the-art technology, arrived, brutalized us and exploited our resources. It was an alien invasion!

Who better than the people who have been colonised to tell these stories?^[12]

Space exploration and encounters of the third kind are ingredients generally associated with space opera, bringing to mind epic intergalactic battles and incredible adventures like *Star Wars*. But the gulf between the big productions of commercial cinema and the literary and artistic works of this SF sub-genre is colossal.

Since the 1970s, Western ethnocentrism has given way to alternative narratives and fantasy from elsewhere, with artists such as Samuel Delany, Olivia Butler, Nnedi Okorafor and Nora K. Jemisin in literature, Sun Ra and DJ AfrotroniX in music, Wangechi Mutu, Rigobert Nimi and Alexis Peskine in the visual arts. The interstellar empire, a recurring civilisational figure of the genre, with its expansionist appetite and geopolitical destruction, reminds us of our own very real colonialism, while the figure of the Alien, a metaphor for the unknown being par excellence, probes our ways of apprehending the other, of projecting our fantasies and our preconceptions on a being about whom we know nothing. The exploration of the infinite and the unknown leads to a critical questioning of the very nature of the human being.

Afrofuturism, an artistic movement theorised by critic Mark Dery^[13] in 1994, is often seen as a salutary outlet alongside African and diasporic literary movements that carry the weight of the traumas of colonialism and slavery. Afrofuturists cultivate a different, paradoxical relationship with history. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four: A Novel*, George Orwell, whom Mark Dery quotes, wrote: “[I]f all records told the same tale — then the lie passed into history and became truth. ‘Who controls the past,’ ran the Party slogan, ‘controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.’”^[14] Uprooted and dispossessed, they seek resilience by reclaiming their long memory, reinventing it, re-enchanting it, in order to break the vicious circle of a western-oriented conception of history that ignores the richness of a cosmopolitan heritage, confining descendants of the black continent to the role of the oppressed and beggars. Other artists, outraged by a historical humanism based on the exclusion of black subjects, are discharging their human nature to declare themselves extraterrestrial, like the artist Kapwani Kiwanga, who presents herself as a “galactic anthropologist from the year 2278.”^[15]

It is not a question of opposing cultures or establishing an obvious legitimacy, but of performing a historical and cultural blending to challenge the age-old, emasculating systemic racism. At a time when the legitimacy of ultra-capitalism is being called into question, a reservoir of possible forms of living together is within our reach.

^[12] Tade Thompson, interviewed by Élisabeth Thévenet, “« Ce ne sont pas que des Noirs avec des pistolets lasers » : quand l’afrofuturisme repense l’humanité”, *Le Monde*, Paris, November 23, 2019

^[13] See: Mark Dery, “Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose”, dans *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyber Culture*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1994, p. 179-222

^[14] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four: A Novel* (1949), Open Library edition, 2001, p. 33. URL: <https://archive.org/details/NineteenEightyFour-Novel-GeorgeOrwell>

^[15] Gavin Steingo, “Kapwani Kiwanga’s Alien Speculations”, in *Images Re-vues. Histoire, anthropologie et théorie de l’art*, No 14 / 2017. URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/imagesrevues/4051>



Mary Sibande. *A Reversed retrogress, scene 2*, 2013, MAC VAL

VI. IF YOU FIND THIS WORLD BAD...

EPILOGUE

Speculative fiction is not compliant; it irritates, it is unruly, rebellious, it pushes us forward by scaring us, stamping its mark on our customs and our conscience. "One of the most forceful and distinguishing aspects of science fiction is that it is marginal. It's always at its most honest and effective when it operates – and claims to be operating – from the margins."^[16] On the margins of society and art, therefore, but at the heart of the current societal problems that concern all of us. It is a laboratory of hypotheses that manipulate and extrapolate the repressive norms and dogmas of today's world, its ambitions, social torments and environmental threats.

"Science fiction is the art of the possible,"^[17] Bradbury said. However, we are witnessing the harnessing and instrumentalisation of many of these possibilities by the giants of the internet and social networks, who profile our habits and impulses to predict, channel and direct our desires and choices more effectively. One of the disaster scenarios of SF that has featured prominently since the 1980s involves our willing self-abandonment and the alienation of our society through dependence on big data. It is therefore fundamental to believe in the emancipatory capacity of imagination, the basis of any change. Fantasy literature can contribute to this. Once you have really immersed yourself in science fiction, once you have looked further afield, it is difficult to be satisfied with the current state of affairs. SF quickly becomes a liberating riposte, a joyful addiction that fuels action.

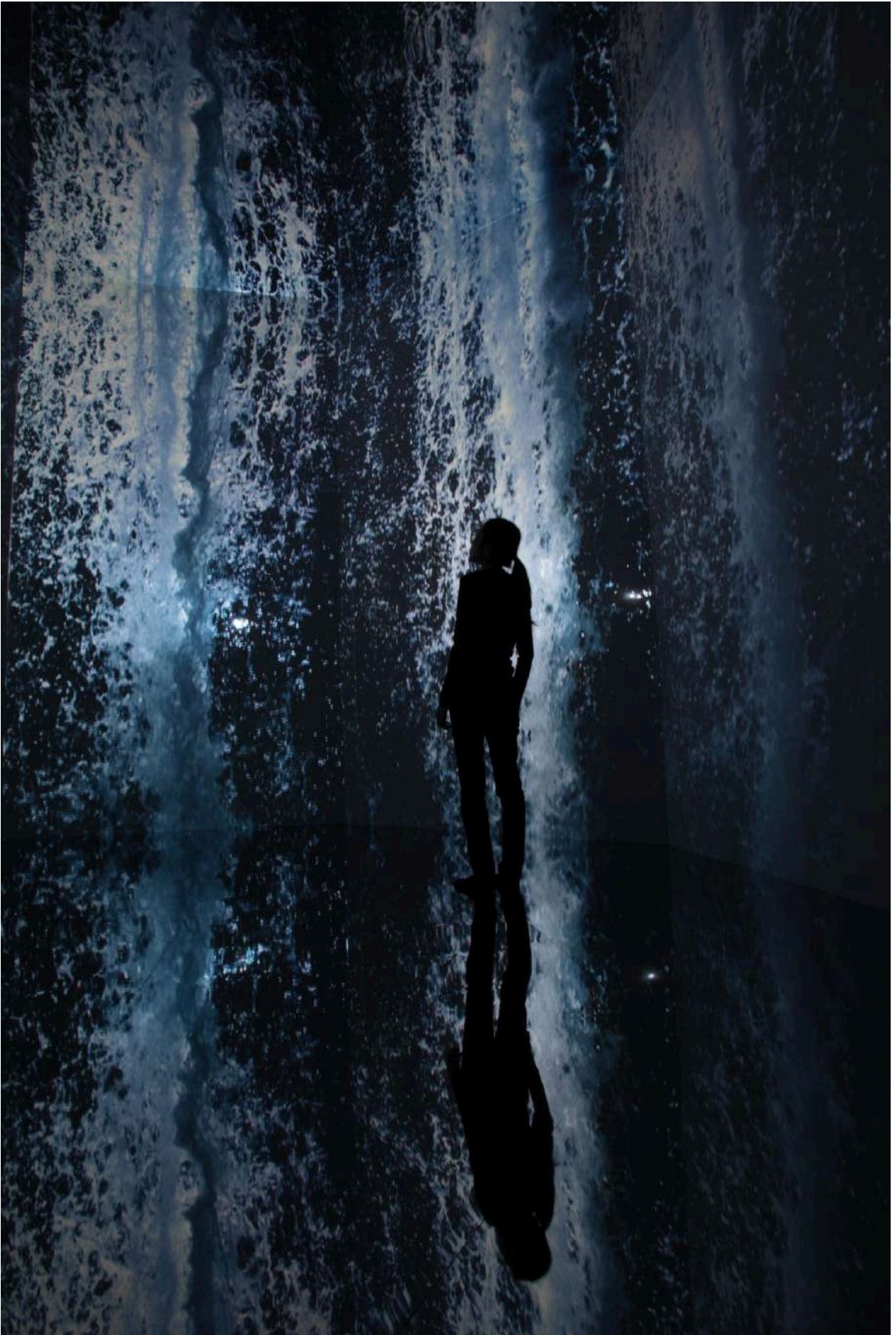
Until recently, pure, anxiety-provoking dystopias were favoured by critics. If they are a necessary reminder of the expiry date of economic and societal models, they also have a paralysing effect: the growing risk of weariness and torpor with each new apocalyptic warning. A turning point is apparent, however, a change of paradigm that does not deny the risks that threaten us, but which offers a glimpse of a desirable future with a wealth of possibilities; fantasy literature that persists in believing in a future that is not just an automatic continuation of the status quo, that pictures clear skies and inspires confidence and tenderness. Like the French *Zanzibar* group of auteurs who seeks to "extricate the future", or Solarpunk, which supports an optimistic vision despite the current environmental decay, this SF is boldly trying to do away with swansong dystopias in order to free us from the overwhelming weight of buried perspectives.

Nothing is fixed, every *modus operandi*, doctrine and destiny has been imagined at some point in time. It is up to our imagination to change things once again.

^[16] Samuel Delany in "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose", in Mark Dery, *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyber Culture*, Duke University Press, Durham und London, 1994, p. 189

^[17] Ray Bradbury interviewed by Mary Roach, « Martian Tourist. The writer who gave us the future talks about the technology of the present », *The New York Times Magazine*, New York, November 5, 2000. URL:

<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/20001105mag-qa-bradbury.html>



Motohiko Odani. *Inferno*, 2008–2010, installation, courtesy the artist

3.

THE PRESENTED ARTISTS

(still under development)

ALLORA & CALZADILLA
David ALTMEJD
Ryuta AMAE
Christian ANDERSSON
Jean-Marie APPRIOU
Edgar ARCENEUX
ARCHIGRAM
Daniel ARSHAM
Rina BANERJEE
Guillaume BARTH
Eric BAUDELAIRE
BERDAGUER & PÉJUS
Patrick BERNATCHEZ
Huma BHABHA
Diego BIANCHI
Sanford BIGGERS
Dara BIRNBAUM
Nuotama Frances BODOMO
Mathieu BRIAND
Lee BUL
CAO Fei
CASTELLANOS & VALVERDE
Julian CHARRIERE
Gordon CHEUNG
Willie COLE
Philippe CURVAL
Alain DAMASIO
Nicolas DARROT
Nicolas DAUBANES
DEGOUTIN ET WAGON
Damien DEROUBAIX
Heather DEWEY-HAGBORG
Jeannette EHLERS
Vincent FOURNIER
Yona FRIEDMAN
Cyprien GAILLARD
Ellen GALLAGHER
GERIKO
Dionisio GONZALEZ
Laurent GRASSO

Nancy GROSSMAN
GUERRILLA GIRLS
Kiluanji Kia HENDA
Lynn HERSHMAN LEESON
Edi HILA
Hans HOLLEIN
Max HOOPER SCHNEIDER
Tishan HSU
Marguerite HUMEAU
Peter HUTCHINSON
John ISAACS
Renaud JEREZ
Ilya Iossifovich KABAKOV
Kiripi KATEMBO SIKU
Zsófia KERESZTES
Kapwani KIWANGA
Konrad KLAPHECK
Jürgen KLAUKE
Josh KLINE
Kiki KOGELNIK
Tetsumi KUDO
Kisho KUROKAWA
Hew Donald Joseph LOCKE
M/M
Stéphane MALKA
Kevin MCGLOUGHLIN
Anita MOLINERO
Fabrice MONTEIRO
Nicolas MOULIN
Zanele MUHOLI
Aida MULUNEH
LINDER STERLING (Linda
MULVEY, dit)
Lavar MUNROE
Wangechi MUTU
MVRDV
CONSTANT (Constant
NIEUWENHUY, dit)
Otobong NKANGA
Josèfa NTJAM

Motohiko ODANI
Neri OXMAN
Eduardo PAOLOZZI
Alexis PESKINE
Floriane POCHON
Julien PRÉVIEUX
Jon RAFMAN
Kim Stanley ROBINSON
Martha ROSLER
Aldo Loris ROSSI
Larissa SANSOUR
Jim SHARMAN (James DAVID, dit)
Ward SHELLEY
Yinka SHONIBARE
Mary SIBANDE
Charles SIMONDS
Lorna SIMPSON
Sandy SKOGLUNG
Robert SMITHSON
Aïcha SNOUSSI
SODA_JERK
Gerda STEINER & Jörg
LENZLINGER
Tavares Henderson STRACHAN
STUDIO ORTA
SUPERSTUDIO
MARY MAGGIC (Mary TSANG, dit)
Anna UDDENBERG
Joep VAN LIESHOUT
Adriana VAREJÃO
Adrián VILLAR ROJAS
Bettina VON ARNIM
WAI ARCHITECTURE THINK TANK
James WINES
Erwin WURM
Tadanori YOKOO
Pinar YOLDAS
Yang YONGLIANG
Liam YOUNG