

CSM CLI-FI SHORTS

speculative
storytelling from
the microscopic
to the planetary

Saturday 15 July 2023
The Trades Club, Hebden Bridge

A series of short speculative Cli-Fi projects, from Central Saint Martins' MA Narrative Environments students. Inspired by a design research residency in Keighley and Calderdale, the projects respond to questions such as: How can we rethink the relationship between the local and the global, the microscopic, the grand, and the planetary? What is resilient development across space and time? What are xeno-strategies for storrying the transformations to human and non-human entities within broader climate systems?

The climate crisis and biodiversity loss are existential issues for our species, and they shape any way we might conceive of space and time in the future. The narratives that drove us to this point, and our contemporary responses to these emergencies, are composed of profoundly tangible and intangible factors. In some ways the climate is the only long-term question with which we must contend.

Climate Fiction (Cli-Fi) is an emerging genre of speculative storytelling that builds on science fiction, exploring future technologies and social relations, demonstrating them to be inextricable, and envisioning climate progress in futures near and far.

ECHO

Man wai Chui, Marina Zuquim

A proposition set in 2060 by ECHO, a non-profit organisation, introduces an immediate way to deal with eight billion people deceased within a month. Fuelled by misleading reports on overpopulation, excessive food production has led to viral contamination, causing a global catastrophe of unprecedented proportions.

Compounding the impact of climate change through the pollution caused by the bodies, the work invites all to think about the after-life in various means. ECHO defy convention by unveiling The Capsule, designed to repurpose the deceased: a solution that optimises the decomposition phase, benefiting humanity, the environment and offering hope for a transformative new beginning in a world where death is reimagined as a part of everyday life.

Flushings Special Blend

Ana Espigares, Charlie Derbaer

A satirical advertising campaign for a tea brand, solving the issue of water pollution like a plaster on an open wound: "In the event of apocalypse, have a cuppa".

Inspired by research in Haworth, Yorkshire, the British tradition of tea drinking and the historical context of a sewage-contaminated water supply have been brewed into a speculative future scenario. In the decades to come, as we adjust to having run out of clean water, new products will be launched to help us cope.

We present a brand new Special Blend by Flushings Ltd – a tea like no other: expertly blended to make the sewage water in your cuppa palatable again. Bringing you exquisitely crafted flavour and aroma, whatever's coming out of the tap!

Dry Land

Peggy Pan, Xinyi Wang,
Yinger Chen, Mengqi Liu

Dry Land is a point-and-click gaming project about saving the future world. It was inspired by reflections on the environmental impact of livestock farming on fragile high moorland such as that in Haworth, UK.

The project considers why humans need such a large livestock industry, and draws on the Buddhist concept of 'greed, anger, ignorance'. Using gaming as a medium, participants are invited to experience a karmic force brought by the desire of the six realms of reincarnation in Buddhism.

Understanding endless desire as one of the important causes of environmental destruction, players try to make up for past mistakes by going back to the protagonist's past lives, in order to create a better environment for people in 2520.

Unreal: Climate Catastrophes Expansion Pack

Katie Beach, Lourdes Jiménez

Unreal: Climate Catastrophes is for fans of roleplaying games, climate horror, and reality tv. It is the climate emergency expansion pack to the original video-journaling roleplaying game Unreal, created by Joshua Fox at Black Armada Games.

Play as a contestant on the new season of Survivor: Humans vs. Nature, recounting the petty drama through your video confessionals. Everything seems to be normal, but something strange starts to happen. Turns out the natural disaster plaguing all of you is also here to play!

Horpor

Yuli Lee, Alsa Andriana

What if humans could spend half of their lifetime resting? What if they could exist within nature, equal with other living beings in the ecosystem? What if the human body and the terrain could collectively contribute to growing nutrient-rich future fruits? Horpor is a practice set in the future where humans get to celebrate rest as much as production! They take this rest through 'moss bathing'. While moss grows and protects resting human bodies, it attracts other life and plants, providing a nurturing environment and nutrient network for living beings all around.

Originally told through live audio narration with a rotating installation visualising the cycle of Horpor, real moss friends were temporarily stitched into the drawing. Two soundtracks symbolising production and rest crossfade throughout.

I'm Not Trash

Rhiannon Raw-rees

I'm Not Trash is a satirical political campaign set in 2026, where war and fighting among humans no longer exists. Drawing on historical post-war adaptation of military devices to everyday uses; a campaign video addresses UK households. It highlights their ability and duty to prevent climate change using surplus military money and equipment.

There is currently a disproportionate amount spent on military defence (£68B 22-23) compared to climate prevention (£11B 22-23). By focusing on household food waste, the project emphasises the need for development in education, infrastructure, and organisation to tackle the climate emergency effectively; shifting the blame from individuals to the lack of proper systems in place.

The Wind Bleeds

Christopher Gerhardt

The wind is a messenger, it possesses both strength and gentleness, often pleading for aid. It serves as a conduit of history and harbinger of forthcoming potentials.

Drawing inspiration from the Brontë family, their personal tragedies and their literary contributions, *The Wind Bleeds* embarks on a cli-fi odyssey, delving into the climate fluctuations brought on by industrialisation, as revealed through the fictional diary entries of Charlotte Brontë. This immersive journey strives to attune to the wind's cautionary signals, decrypt its messages, and manifest the narratives it imparts into tangible existence.

Algae Age

Wen Cui, Zhuang Zhu, Ming-ching Wang

Algae Age envisions a future of symbiotic harmony between humans and algae. Against a backdrop of imminent suffocation, a revelrous event triggers an unforeseen catastrophe, leading to the emergence of a remarkable relationship between the two. Inspired by a trip to Haworth, UK, this project explores the boundaries between plant and human living conditions, pushing the limits of our understanding. *Algae Age* prompts contemplation of our interconnectedness with nature and the transformative potential of symbiosis.

Wood Web Wonder

Jill Patel

Wood Web Wonder is a children's story that begins in a world that was once vibrant and thriving but is now tainted by human ignorance and misuse of the land, leading to people being trapped under the soil.

It follows a young explorer uncovering secrets of an 'underworld'. And throws light on the various systems in place: communication, transportation and food production; highlighting the symbiotic dance between microorganisms and plants. *Wood Web Wonder* puts soil under a microscope and digs deeper to learn from it the importance of collaboration and harmony.

Shalla Shalla Park

Olivia Wu, Xiaomin Fan, Yuhan Chen

Shalla Shalla is a fictional future park. Amidst the devastating effects of climate change, limited green spaces exist within cities.

Under the meticulous management of Park Guardians, *Shalla Shalla* adheres to strict rules created to maintain its aesthetic perfection. Guerrilla Gardeners disrupt this order, intentionally planting diverse flora to challenge artificiality and promote environmental stability. Clashes between the Guerrilla Gardeners and the Park Guardians are frequent, with documentary footage capturing their ongoing battle.

Compelling us to reconsider our approach to environmental stewardship, the project calls for a shift from a human-centric mindset to a symbiotic one, aiming to restore nature's equilibrium and uncover the true needs of our planet. Who or what will emerge victorious today?

Earth Landing

Andrew Pan, Yuheng Su, Penggaofei Wu

Earth Landing is a speculative story set in a future climate context where humans have attempted to facilitate Earth's self-restoration through planet-wide migration to artificial space colonies. The story begins with the protagonist investigator 4AA from the UNCG, who is the first human to set foot on their own planet for centuries. From the perspective of 4AA, we observe the progress of Earth's climate and ecological recovery.

The project explores the intrinsic relationship between soil issues and extreme climate change, speculating on the future state of soil. Through a narrative-driven short film and fictional plot, it invites viewers to detach from their everyday life context and reconsider how they perceive the environment around them.

The Sensation Earth Network

Corbin LaMont, Candi X

The Sensation Earth Network is a hotline-based immersive audio experience by Candi X (Mexico City) and Corbin LaMont (London). We invite all Earthlings to call us with an infomercial that seduces them to follow their urges to connect from their matter bodies to the matter body of the Earth. While people are experiencing great disconnection from themselves and the physical environment, we believe that our earthly demise wouldn't be possible if we felt more intertwined to one another and the more than human world.

Under a Different Sun

Nadine Kassab

Nature has become an increasingly dangerous place to live. *Under a Different Sun* is a superhabitable environment located deep underground to ensure the safety of all its inhabitants from the unpredictable hazards of the natural world.

With innovative engineering, we've created a space that not only protects us from the threats of nature but also fosters a sense of community and connection. Specific environments are constructed to simulate the earth we previously knew. Join us today!

Pondside Cafe

Peggy Pan, Xinyi Wang, Yinger Chen, Mengqi Liu

Pondside Cafe is a point and click game set in a world where all humans are wildly obsessed with ducks.

Players assume the role of a character who has a secret online fixation on a locally famous duck, named Waddles Mallard. While *Pondside Cafe* initially presents as a cosy simulation game, it eventually unveils a more sinister narrative.

Based on observations made in Hebden Bridge, where numerous shops, information booklets, and people, openly communicated a deep love for their local waterbirds; the project speculates on what an obsession might look like when taken to a more absurd level. and put in the hands of gamers. *Pondside Cafe* asks questions about the abuse of freedom that technology can give us, even when regarding subjects as wholesome as ducks.

Lichen's Lament

Holly Telfer, Akanksha Vasishtha

In the heart of the moors, Dr. Lily Harper, a microbiologist fascinated by the resilience of lichen, embarks on a risky experiment. Believing that adding human DNA to lichen symbiosis could help humans adapt to climate change, she founds Symbio Beauty with investor support. However, unintended consequences emerge as the lichen mutates and releases devastating toxins, leading to the extinction of humankind.

The tale serves as a cautionary reminder to those who ignore the true impact of climate change and opt for quick fixes. It explores the price paid when superficial solutions are chosen over understanding and sustainable measures. After humanity's demise, the lichen civilization rises, preserving the memory of the choices that brought about their existence.

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MA Narrative Environments

is a multidisciplinary course focused on the design and development of spatial stories. Over two years, students from a wide variety of backgrounds – including architecture, design, curation, media, scenography and writing – develop creative platforms, interactive experiences, and possible futures.

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