

about time sensemaking and future thinking in uncertain times

“How to embrace ethical responsibility not only towards current contemporaries but towards the future contemporaries.”
B. Adam, Future Matters

Justyna Doherty



The Time Journal
Digital mock up

The aim of this research was to develop and test new design-led methods which can shape and influence attitudes towards the long-term future with a view to affecting behaviours toward our individual futures, and our planet's.

I developed and tested exercises, experiments and experiences which enabled an exploration of the entanglement of past and future and the multidimensional nature of time, together with developing futures literacy and long-term thinking.

Normative role of design
Engaging with the future is a fundamental part of design, as design is about exploring, creating, and proposing something new. This 'newness' entails a wide range of possible changes, from altering the form of an already established product or service to creating entirely new forms and functions. Simon underlines the normative aspect of design in stating that design is not about any changes but about "how things ought to be".

Long term thinking
Our present actions are future-orientated in various ways. What to eat, what to wear - small daily tasks combine and inform our predictions. Schedules, work, leisure - we are designing our lives to combat time flow and doing it often unconsciously. But these tasks are also past-oriented; they are based on our current knowledge. Similarly, it seems that differences depend on whether we think about short-term or longer-term futures.

On the other hand: some of the most significant challenges that humans presently face could result from our "short term thinking", which is, in fact, insufficient 'futurity' built into the world.

Charette
In my autumn charette, I was trying to reframe the conversation about time and temporality. I invited students to engage in speculative design and proposed reflection, storytelling, and worldbuilding as tools.

My research
As my research progressed, I learned more about future thinking and long-term thinking. I concluded that any type of futuring or speculating about time should be cognitively touching.

I was trying to find a medium or tool to connect to the future in a personal way. I also wanted to combine reflection, meditation, play and inspiration in one document. On the other hand, I wanted to invite participants of my project to build up steps to futuring literacy, as the first step into long-term thinking and practising creative, positive future visions.

As my final project, I created a template for a journal, which would aim to engage with the subject of time, future, and long-term thinking.

Conclusion
Rituals and storytelling are tools for creating spaces of possibility where we can ask, "what sort of world do you want to live in?" If I dream of one takeaway for anyone using or flicking through the journal I created, it would be asking ourselves the very same question: what sort of world do I/we want to live in? What world are we creating?

The time I spent on my dissertation allowed me to ask myself the very same and not an easy question; it opened my eyes and let me revise my legacy. I hope that, through my final project, I will be able to take others on this time journey with me and that the journal may become a space of possibility, so we can create a better future together.



About time
Collage on paper



The Future
Etching with chine-collé
and watercolour

Thank you

Special thanks,
to my
Thesis Advisor
for inspiration
and patience:

Clyde Doyle,
Programme Chair,
MA Design for Change
IADT

and to the
Faculty:

Shirley Casey,
Programme Chair,
MA Interdisciplinary Design
Strategy - IADT

Christopher Pandolfi,
Department of Unusual
Certainties

Fiona Snow,
Digital Fabrication,
Architectural Modelmaking
IADT



Charette "about time"
Students working on
their animation