

Opening and Keynote
9:00am – 9:30am AWST

Welcome
Ionat Zurr & Veronika Kelly

Welcome to Country
Robyn Collard

Introduction to Keynote
Katherine Moline

Keynote
Gabriel. A. Maher,

Eindhoven Academy & University of Amsterdam



DISOBEDIENCE CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Session 1
10:30am – 11:30am AWST

Stream A
Social Cohesion through
Coalition Building

Chair: Katherine Moline, UNSW

Danielah Martinez, UNSW
Samikshya Kandel, UWA
Yuan Wan, UNSW
Naomi Blacklock, QUT

Stream B
Roundtable 1 – Art &
Design in Times of AI

Chair: Ionat Zurr, UWA

Janni McCutcheon,
Law School UWA

Penelope Benton,
Exective Director, National
Association for the Visual
Arts (NAVA)

Angie Abdilla, School of
Cybernetics, ANU

Stream C
Instituting Critique

Chair: Simone Slee, UniMelb

Benjamin Waters, ECU
Clare Rae, UniMelb
Grace Slonim, Monash
Jacina Leong, RMIT
Nguyen Ngoc Thao, RMIT

Stream D
Queering

Chair: Spiros Panigirakis, Monash

Angelique Joy, RMIT
Nicholas Chilvers,
UniMelb
Rae Haynes, QUT

Break
11:30am – 11:45am AWST

Session 2
11:45am – 1:00pm AWST

Stream A
Roundtable 2 –
Collective solidarities

Chair: Katherine Moline, UNSW

Scott Brown, Director
of Sector Engagement
(Health)ADA UNSW
Heather Contant, Director
Frontyard Projects,
Marrickville/UNSW
Chantelle Baistow, UNSW

Stream B
Roundtable 3 –
Art/Design & Science

Chair: Ionat Zurr, UWA

Oron Catts,
The Institute of Advanced
Studies UWA
Tilly Boleyn,
Science Gallery Melbourne
Paul Thomas, UNSW

Stream C
Critical Fabrications

Chair: Simone Slee, UniMelb

Teona Yamanidze,
UniMelb
Bronwen Williams, UNSW
Haider Akmal, UNSW
Danielah Martinez, UNSW
Jimi DePriest, UWA
Fuzzy Nadjar, UWA
Kit Wise, RMIT
Drew Pettifer, RMIT
Dan Harris, RMIT
Mandy Ruddock, La Trobe
Emma Sherry, RMIT

Stream D
Practices of
Material Resistance

Chair: Spiros Panigirakis, Monash

Kate Hill, ANU
Ben Woods, Monash
Terri Bird, Monash
Lara Camilla Pinho, UWA
Bradley Millis, UWA
Mita Chowdhury, RMIT
Fleur Summers, RMIT
Linda Knight, RMIT
Carmen Reid, RMIT
Skye Kelly, RMIT
Matthew Riley, RMIT
Uyen Nguyen, RMIT

Lunch
1:00pm – 1:45pm AWST

Prerecorded panel – Future Visions of the University Museum
Chair: Spiros Panigirakis, Monash

Angela Goddard, Director, Griffith University Art Museum
Theo Costantino, Director, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery UWA.
Rebecca Coates, Director MUMA, Monash University
Stella McDonald, Curator and Manager UTS Gallery.
Watch here <https://vimeo.com/1141023532?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>

Session 3
1:45pm – 2:45pm AWST

Stream A
Roundtable 4 –
Generative AI

Chair: Katherine Moline, UNSW

Oliver Bown, UNSW
Benedikt Gross, Interaction
& Strategic Design and HfG
Schwabisch Co-director of
Gestaltung.ai
Jack Conwell,
MA Design & Computation,
University of Art Berlin
Anna Tow, UNSW

Stream B
Art/Design & Science

Chair: Ionat Zurr, UWA

Yuxin Wang, UWA
Haider Akmal, UNSW
Jonathan Shaw, UNSW
Stephen Loo, UNSW
Isabella Deary, QUT

Stream C
Ecologies of
Disobedience

Chair: Monte Masi, ACSA

Michelle Douglas, RMIT
Chantelle Baistow, UNSW
Holly O’Neil, UTS
Olivia Reily, UNSW

Stream D
Critical Feminisms

Chair: Spiros Panigirakis, Monash

Amber Hammad,
Sydney Uni
Sofi Basseghi, RMIT
Pia Johnson, RMIT
Isabella Capezio, RMIT
Laresa Kosloff, RMIT
Amy Spiers, RMIT
Nguyen Ngoc Thao, RMIT
Deb Turnbull Tillman,
UNSW

Closing
2:45pm – 3:00pm AWST

Final Plenary: Awards and Prizes announced & Acknowledgements
Chair: Veronica Kelly, Uni SA



Gabriel A. Maher (they/them) is an antidisciplinary designer based in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Their practice engages a critical spatial perspective that brings into view how design and mediated systems shape our social-spatial world. Earlier work examined gendered and classed framings in design media. Current work includes Cities on Loop: The Algorithmic Rewriting of Public Space in Amsterdam, developed as part of their PhD at the University of Amsterdam, which analyses digitally mediated spatialities. Gabriel combines close readings of sites, artefacts and infrastructures with visual and embodied methods. Informed by a queer and working-class perspective, their work and teaching foreground self-reflexivity and agency in creative processes. They teach across Master departments at Design Academy Eindhoven.

Gabriel's creative and research outputs have been presented at the Venice Architecture Biennale (Dutch Pavilion), Serpentine Galleries, Whitechapel Gallery and Design Museum London; MAD Museum (New York), National Museum of Women in the Arts (Washington, D.C.), Vitra Design Museum, Milan Salone del Mobile and Het Nieuwe Instituut. Their work has been recognised with international grants and awards, including the IphiGenia Gender Design Award (2019), the Hublot Design Prize shortlist (2018), and residencies such as Iaspis (Stockholm, 2017–18)

Gabriel A. Maher



Paper Title
Abstract
Speaker and bios

Authors and Abstracts

Session 1
Stream A
Social Cohesion through Coalition Building

Ageing Otherwise: Inclusive Design and the Cultural Disobedience of Later Life

This paper explores ageing as a site of cultural disobedience, where dominant narratives of later life are challenged by older adults. It critically engages with mainstream models such as active ageing; a model born out of neoliberal rationalism that promotes portrayals of older people as perpetually healthy, mobile, and youthful in appearance. By examining how older adults both resist and reproduce these stereotypes, the paper reveals the complex and often contradictory ways ageing is experienced and represented.

Guided by a theoretical framework of care, this research employed participatory design methods to support older adults in expressing their needs, desires, and perspectives on ageing. By shifting methods away from commercial and institutional frameworks and toward situated practices, the project disrupts conventional designer-user hierarchies through inclusive and collaborative design research.

Interpreting the outcomes of this design research through the concept of interdependence, ageing is revealed as a dynamic, relational, and socially engaged experience; one that encompasses both rebellion and conformity in the face of ageing stereotypes. In doing so, this project contributes to the discourse on diversity, equality, and inclusivity by challenging normative futures and positioning creative practice as a tool for critical social engagement.

Danielah Martinez , Associate Lecturer in Industrial Design at UNSW and PhD candidate, investigates critical and participatory design methodologies to challenge normative practices. Her pedagogy research advances inclusive teaching and assessment innovation in design education. She is professionally recognised through participation in industry discourse, judging panels, and is the recipient of international design awards.

“How can sustainable material innovation in object design be used to celebrate cultural diversity and explore notions of cultural identity and belonging among younger generations within the Asian diaspora?”

This series of seashell-composite necklaces explores notions of cultural identity and belonging among younger generations within the Asian diaspora. Drawing on the philosophy of Chinese alchemy, my practice-based design research aims to integrate sustainable material innovations derived from everyday waste, collected through my lived experiences in Australia. This research questions about cultural stereotypes, in order to enhance the celebration of diversity.

My practice-based research explores the transformative and purifying forms derived from

Exploring the uses of urban streets as a stage for social disobedience: A study on the spatial dimensions in Australian and Asian contexts.

Urban streets are public spaces primarily designed for vehicle and pedestrian movements. They also accommodate informal activities like street vending, urban trucks, political expressions, and artistic intervention. Beyond these everyday activities, urban streets are often used for civil disobedience, where the public peacefully refuses to obey government rules and regulations. Though urban streets are not consciously designed for protest, they become powerful arenas for collective action. The main objective of this paper is to find out why and how the streets are used for protest by the public. This study employs a qualitative research approach, which includes a literature review, case study analysis, and visual representation through a sketch. It illustrates how ordinary circulation spaces are temporarily utilized as a stage for social change. During the analysis, it highlights the differences and similarities between the planned wide streets of Australia and the narrow, dense streets of Asian cities, represented visually through sketches. The study will provide the broader vision for the urban designers, planners, and policy makers to rethink the flexibility of urban streets as a “right to the city.” Without seeing the protest as a disruption, this perspective provides a new dimension to the spatial design of the street.

Samikshya Kandel is pursuing a master’s in urban design at the University of Western Australia. She also holds a master’s in energy-efficient buildings and a bachelor’s in architecture. Her research and practice focus on urban design and public open spaces, informed by her teaching experience and passion for art and hand sketches.

Becoming the Problem: Embodied Disobedience in Decolonial Arts Education

Arts education sits at the intersection of broader sociopolitical fractures, mediating tensions around identity and values amid rising racism and far-right ideologies. This paper centres on Art, Text and Context, a foundational unit I co-developed for over 600 students annually at Queensland University of Technology. It explores the lived realities of integrating decolonial theory in creative arts education. Student feedback reveals a divide: while many engage with art’s political dimensions, others insist it remain “neutral.” One accusation of “bias against white men,” demonstrates how decolonial pedagogy exposes assumptions about neutrality, foregrounding risks for marginalised educators. Through autoethnographic reflection as a woman of colour in a predominantly white institution, and analysis of student feedback and pedagogical practice, I examine the embodied emotional labour of being the visible face of decolonial discourse, an act of disobedience in itself. As Sara Ahmed writes, “if you expose a problem...you become

the 64 hexagrams of the Chinese alchemy - the I Ching, reflecting the relationships between human body and ecological systems through Chinese Knots connection. Aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SGD 10), the research adopts the theory of cultural hybridity proposed by Homi Bhabha, emphasizing the potential of innovative forms by blending, interacting and merging across cultures. This project examines the material, technology and process transposition (MTP) as the design methodology. I recycle shell waste from local restaurants as the primary experimental material to develop a new type of sustainable composite material suitable for jewellery design. This approach encourages the audience to re-examine their cultural identities and reconsider the use of finite environmental resources.

Yuan Wan. I am a Chinese design student specialising in ceramics, jewellery, and interaction design. My research explores cultural identity within diasporic communities and sustainable material practices. By transforming post-use shells into design resources, I aim to celebrate cultural diversity and reimagine the relationship between humans and nature.

the problem” (2023, p.18), illustrating how educators naming inequities are positioned as the problem. themselves. Drawing on critical pedagogy, decolonial theory, and Indigenous standpoint theory, this paper proposes that deliberately disruptive pedagogies are vital for transforming arts education into sites of resistance and meaningful change, requiring genuine institutional commitment beyond performative diversity policies.

Naomi Blacklock

Session 1
Stream C
Instituting Critique

Undercoated / IASA-21: A micro-disobedience in art school course infrastructure.

Undercoated (2025) examines institutional compliance in tertiary art education, treating disobedience as pedagogical infrastructure. I approach this from a trifurcated friction point—as technician, sessional academic, and HDR candidate.

I repurposed and anchored institutional bureaucratic artefacts into a live meta-syllabus using my work Institutional Affect Self-Assessment (IASA-21) a 21-item non-diagnostic instrument. Participants sit spot-lit on a corporate black chair centred on a red-carpet target, complete the IASA 21 and sit to discuss the ‘findings’ a short exchange follows to facilitate scoring: “Did your score align with your expectations? What kinds of institutional pressures do you most often navigate? Have you ever noticed these patterns before?” Each person then receives a takeaway card—

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This paper analyses the works ongoing iterations, interrogating whether aestheticising compliance renders visible managerial discourse’s governance of pedagogy; identifying ethically viable micro-disobediences; and examining how situated instruments like IASA-21 transcend localised contexts. The work reveals how institutional critique, embedded within bureaucratic frameworks, generates productive tensions between compliance and resistance, ultimately questioning art education’s capacity for transformative pedagogical practice.

Benjamin Waters is a Perth-based artist, arts educator, and writer. His practice-based research uses para-pedagogical installations, bureaucratic artefacts and institutional critique to probe compliance, micro-disobedience and assessment cultures in tertiary art education, drawing on two decades of embedded experience in Australian art schools course’s.

Can you afford it?: A review of the arts and cultural sector’s closed economy as a predetermining factor to acts of disobedience

During the 17th–19th centuries of the Edo period, the Japanese market operated as a closed economy, where trade with foreign economies was severely restricted as a political strategy to limit outside influence. Today, the Australian arts and cultural sector endures such ongoing financial precarity that it too, though unwillingly, metaphorically mirrors a closed economy. Drawing on my PhD research into the funding landscape, this paper proposes that this parallel is not the result of deliberate strategy but rather, incidental to a decade of financial damage from dwindling federal support inadequately addressed by recent cultural policy. Many arts and cultural organisations are not-for-profit and – by virtue of their organisational design – lack sufficient earned revenue to offset this precarity. This paper argues that this results in reduced financial agency, where organisations cannot afford to break from this economic closure without significant injections of external funding. However, when funders hold the purse strings that offer this solution, the relationship between disobedience – such as openly critiquing funding bodies or lobbying against their priorities – and an ability to continue operations becomes threatened. In presenting this viewpoint, the paper therefore

Untitled Actions: feminist misbehaviour in institutional and photographic spaces.

This paper presents recent research outcomes produced as part of a self-initiated residency undertaken in the University of Melbourne’s Art Collection storage facility, in outer Melbourne. The work in this presentation (artwork, critical reflection, and theoretical positioning) is situated in the fields of archive theory, museum studies more broadly, feminist and queer theories of phenomenology, and photographic theories of materiality. Through the course of the paper I will step through an embodied engagement with photographic archives, proposing a relation with and through the archive that is materially multi sensorial, in order to unsettle and disturb the conditions of the archive, that govern their meaning. Archives, and in this case the art collection and the institution, co-constitute the meanings we infer on the materials that are held within their architectures. I argue that the through the dynamic insertion of my body as researcher/artist/antagonist a third space is generated beyond the originary two spaces of archive and photograph; a third space that is also photographic and architectural space, the dynamic space of the artwork, scaffolded by the borders and material form of the photograph in multifarious ways. This third space is produced through phenomenological feminist misbehaviour to unsettle the patriarchal institutional conditions which govern the works and bodies within

Clare Rae is an artist, PhD candidate at VCA, the University of Melbourne and academic in the School of Art at RMIT University. Her practice and research engage feminism, photography, performance and the body to disrupt spatial environments.

Complaint as disobedience

This performance-lecture engages with complaint as disobedience and a call to action to complain more as a crucial action of collectivity and allyship. Following Sara Ahmed (2021), we approach complaint as a shared practice of survival, solidarity and refusal. Within art schools and cultural institutions, especially for BIPOC, speaking up often carries risk: complaints are reframed as personal negativity, absorbed into bureaucracy, or ignored.

We approach complaints as gestures of refusal and creativity: a refusal to normalise harm, a method of unsettling institutional scripts of civility, and a way of exposing how power operates through pedagogy, research and governance. Complaint interrupts defaults of silence, individualisation and institutional complicity, insisting on other ways of knowing, teaching and creating. Performed, complaint becomes more than documentation. It becomes relation, interruption, insistence.

By staging complaint as a creative method, we ask: what possibilities for resistance, repair and solidarity might emerge if complaint were recognised as creative practice research? How might institutions respond differently if disobedience was understood not as a threat but as a generative force for change?

As artists, researchers and arts workers, we claim the figure of the ‘complainer’ not as deficit but as method-maker. Complaint in this sense is not an end but an opening, always in progress, connected to injustices that extend beyond any one of us.

Nguyễn Ngọc Thảo is a Vietnamese-Australian artist, educator and researcher based in Naarm. She is the Deputy Lead of the Contemporary Art and Social Transformation research group and sessional academic at the School of Art, RMIT University. She is currently completing her PhD which investigates the impacts of whiteness and the weaponization of language on Asian-Australians.

Jacina Leong 梁玉明 is an artist-curator, educator and researcher, based in Naarm, whose practice engages with the intersections of community engagement, care ethics and curatorial inquiry. Working across cultural and educational spaces since 2008, her work considers how creative practices and organisations can respond to the converging crises of our time.

questions which organisations can afford to engage in acts of disobedience when acquiescence to funder prerogatives can mean the difference between vital financial support and organisational closure? In doing so the paper posits the art school as one of the few institutions who can lead acts of disobedience on behalf of the sector.

Grace Slonim is an arts funding strategist and PhD Teaching Fellow whose research investigates Australian visual arts funding, focusing on institutional frameworks and artistic autonomy. A PhD candidate at Monash University, she integrates research, policy, and practice to inform more equitable funding models and strengthen support for creative work.

Session 1
Stream D
Queering

Neuroqueer(ing) the Rhizome: Textual non-compliance & queer associations

Moving through and working with the Academy (and a great many other things) requires textual compliance. Divergence is acceptable only through textual legitimacy and small pockets of diversity and inclusion. For the neuroqueer, the crip and the (O)ther their/our divergence (disobedience) is legitimised and acceptable only through textual defence, appropriate associations, normative performance and recognisable rhizomic expansions.

The rhizome within arts, academic and practice-led research discourse is often shorthand for multi-directional research nodes assembled together. Characterised by its flat ontology and persistence to ignore hierarchies, the rhizome is a perfect starting point to speculate with and beyond for the neuroqueer. To neuroqueer (verb) is to queer the neuronormative, this presentation asks us to consider what might it look like to neuroqueer our creative, research texts? What would it look like if we were textually non-compliant; if our associations (references/citations) were always neuroqueer; if our rhizomes were not just multi-directional but multi-dimensional and disobedient?

Angelique Joy is a multidisciplinary visual artist and early career academic, currently a PhD candidate at the School of Art, RMIT. Angelique works with photography, moving image, textile sculpture and virtual extensions of their work to explore neuroqueer and posthuman ways of being and caring.

Subversive Threads

This paper offers a critical reflection on Subversive Threads, a new body of creative research that mobilises textile-based practices as acts of disobedience and genderqueer activism in response to current corrosive politics and cultural uncertainty. Presented in the context of a solo exhibition at Outer Space Contemporary Art, Magadjin and the MELT Festival of Queer Arts and Culture in 2025, the project re-examines embroidery and stitching samplers, appliqué and protest banners — as urgent, resistant gestures for the future. Through genderqueer methodologies of making-as-doing, the work engages with the politics of materiality, language, and gesture to provoke, reveal, and contest cultural values in relation to gender diversity, equity and inclusion. The title of this project expands on the seminal text by Rozsika Parker, The Subversive Stitch (1984), 40 years after its publication. Subversive Threads reclaims the form of the needlework sampler as a contemporary site of resistance and protest. With its historical associations of obedience, the stitching sampler is ripe for creative acts of disobedience - unpicking, unravelling, undoing. These material disruptions of normative gender codes transform ‘sampling’ into an act of both refusal and reclamation. In Subversive Threads disobedience becomes a generative force for reclaiming genderqueer politics and reimagining collective futures.

Rae Haynes (she/they) is an artist, writer and educator based in Magandjin (Brisbane), Australia. Haynes was awarded an Australian Postgraduate Award for Research for their PhD, which examined ethical encounters in exhibition practice (2009) and is a Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Art at QUT. Committed to gender ethics in the arts, Haynes actively contributes to artist-run communities of practice, including as a member of the CoUNTess Report.

Radical Ass: Centring the Anus in a Countersexual Symbolic Order.

To throw your ass in the air, as Prince once proposed in Sexy MF, is to turn it into sunshine. This paper celebrates the anus as a site of radical disobedience, a counter-sexual aperture that defies disciplinary, medical, and sexual norms. Drawing on Bataille’s Solar Anus, alongside Pedro Costa’s speculative Southern Butthole Manifesto, Arthur Rimbaud’s Sonnet du la Cul, Leigh Bowery’s Human Fountain, and personal anecdotes involving my own asshole, I explore “anal” as a philosophical and aesthetic tactic of excess, unmaking, and symbolic sabotage. Blending queer theory with embodied narrative, the paper performs the transgression it studies. It de-sanitises academic language, embraces corporeal unruliness, and challenges institutional policing of speech, subject matter, and sensibility. This methodology is offered to all gendered bodies; assholes are a kind of social choreography. Tending to yours might not only amplify your sex life but enhance psychic and somatic well-being. Though long censored, panicked over, and pathologised, the asshole emerges here as a generative threshold, resisting colonial, heteronormative, and capitalist logics of use and control. This isn’t just about sex. It’s an insurgent pivot from phallic economies toward an anal symbolic order and an invitation to write, teach, and live from the bottom up.

Nicholas Chilvers

Session 2
Stream C
Critical Fabrications

The Cinema of complicity: a travel to the digital space of deception.In this paper I argue that propaganda has shifted from the centralized state control as described by Walter Benjamin to a more decentralized, platform-driven economy where attention drive visibility. I use four case studies- Kalatozov’s I Am Cuba, Rusudan Glurjidze’s The Antique, Anastasia Trofimova’s Russians at War, and Mikhail Zygar’s history videos. Though those case studies I show how aesthetic choices, framing, and selective silencing can distort collective memory and humanize aggressors. These examples reveal that what audiences see is shaped not only by filmmakers but also by digital infrastructures that filter and boost narratives. I propose measures for epistemic repair, including media provenance verification independent archives for minority voices, and contextual framing in film festivals. Teona Yamanidze is a Georgian-born, Melbourne-based artist and PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. Her practice-led research examines epistemic violence, misattribution, and digital provenance in post-Soviet visual culture, combining painting, archives, and emerging technologies to propose ethical frameworks for digital cultural memory.

Unlearning Obedience: Reframing Assessment to Foster Creative Risk

Authority and obedience have long shaped the foundations of higher education and conventional understandings of knowledge acquisition. In design education, traditional grading systems often fail to capture the full scope of learning and skill development that result from experimentation and creative practices. We argue that disobedience, manifested through risk-taking, challenging norms, and strategic pivoting, is not only desirable but essential for students to become innovative contributors to contemporary design practice.

This paper presents a case for competency-based assessment (CBA) as a framework that supports the development of the disobedient designer, illustrated through a speculative persona based on gathered student perspectives. Drawing on the implementation of CBA in a first-year undergraduate design course, we explore how this approach prioritises process, experimentation, and learning over fixed outcomes.

Tactical Media as a practice for Contemporary Anti-War Art and Anti-Imperialist Propaganda

This paper seeks to explore the theoretical foundations of my research based arts practice which combines the creative modes of resistance found in tactical media and Soviet propaganda to generate novel forms of contemporary anti-war art. Digesting the war machine and rendering it into conceptually potent visual symbols, tissue-culture sculpture, soft robotics, hard robotics, acoustic levitation, electronics, and film are synthesized to produce engaging and interactive works of anti-war propaganda art. Through rendering anti-war ideologies into symbolic 3D forms, the works address social tensions in the imperial core which abstract and normalize the ongoing atrocities committed through automated weapons systems. Probing the deflated revolutionary spirit which proliferates throughout the imperial west, artistic reflections on the material reality forged by fascist appropriations of automation technology beckon towards a revolutionary dismantling and reimagination of its implements.

Jimi DePriest

Fabricated Loneliness

Loneliness is a prevalent topic in contemporary society and it is discussed in academic literature as well as popular media. Although social media allows access to endless narratives, etiology and solutions to this “modern pandemic”, Sagan’s critical review of recent research about loneliness identifies a lack of inclusivity, emphasizing that a large portion of society is overlooked when examining loneliness. Excluding marginalized demographics tarnishes the contextual depth and heterogeneous quality of a real-life loneliness. Sagan argues that medicalized framings depict loneliness as a dreadful modern predicament that requires excessive individualized safe-guarding routines. Likewise, Wilkinson emphasizes that such narratives underestimate the role of political infrastructure in neo-liberal societies by placing a sense of “fear” and “personal failure” within individuals. Sean Redmond evaluates the power of creative expression in adding agency and authenticity to the personal experience of community members. By “disobeying” the neo-liberal line, I follow the artistic approach by building a tactile and portable interactive art installation that includes a large-scale invitation letter, a mailbox and craft materials. The invitation letter prompts viewers to “send” tactile material-based creative expressions about their experience of loneliness. According to Wilkinson, “reflecting upon shared experiences of loneliness” challenge normative representations of loneliness.

Fuzzy Nadjar I am an inter-disciplinary visual artist and researcher. My artistic journey began by scribbling into my sketchbooks everywhere I go. I practiced sketching and painting under the supervision of Iranian artist Niloufar Ghaderinejad. I have a Bachelor with Honours degree in Arts and Visual Communication at the Art University of Tehran. Currently I am completing my Master of Fine Arts (by Research) at the University of Western Australia. My art project focuses on loneliness, as I have always been passionate about the complexity and fragility of emotions that are difficult to articulate, or are not talked about enough due to perception of shame.



Our findings suggest that students who engage in creative risk-taking experience enhanced wellbeing, collaboration, and intrinsic motivation. They emerge as designers capable of pushing the boundaries of institutional obedience while navigating its constraints with critical awareness.

By challenging orthodox assessment methods, this research contributes to broader conversations around diversity, equality and inclusivity in design pedagogy. It offers CBA as a viable alternative to traditional grading systems, fostering agency and innovation in the design classroom.

Bronwen Williams is an education focussed Associate Lecturer in the School of Art & Design at UNSW, Sydney. Her creative practice encompasses installation art, interactive media, experience design, and object design. As an educator, she is passionate about researching and applying strategies that empower students to become lifelong learners.

Haider Akmal is a speculative designer and educator working at Art & Design UNSW, Sydney. Associated with the Creative Robotics Lab, Creative Technologies Research Lab, and Imagination Lab (Lancaster, UK), his work revolves around more-than human practices in design and education, research through design, ludic design, and design futures.

Danielah Martinez, academic in Industrial Design at UNSW and PhD candidate, investigates critical and participatory design methodologies to challenge normative practices. Her pedagogy research advances inclusive teaching and assessment innovation in design education. She is professionally recognised through participation in industry discourse, judging panels, and is the recipient of international design awards.

Critique Culture: Critical friends, generative divergence, and skilled performance

‘Cancel culture’ is arguably one of the most pervasive and the toxic manifestations of contemporary disobedience. Our disciplines have a unique role to play in modelling respectful approaches to provoking, revealing and contesting cultural values and meanings through the well-established but often overlooked pedagogies of critique, common in art and design schools.

This paper is informed by current research by RMIT University in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Sport. It takes an interdisciplinary approach to explore ‘critique’ based coaching practices for excellence in art education and performance psychology.

While ‘critique’ can occur in a range of formats and contexts, best practice can involve a scaffolded, structured forum for peer-to-peer feedback on individual performance, facilitated or ‘coached’ by expert commentary. Yet it is rarely that simple, including the inherent psychosocial risks of public criticism when the identity of performer and performance, artist and artwork are closely interwoven. Through an analysis of coaching practices in the fields of art and sport, this paper contributes to respectful, generative critical engagement; as well as the wider practices of civil action.

Kit Wise is Dean of the School of Art, RMIT University. Wise practices as an interdisciplinary artist, art writer and curator. His primary research since 2015 has been interdisciplinary models of art education, including as Chief Investigator for Multiple Measures, investigating assessment design for interdisciplinary education (OLT, 2016); and Creative Currents, that addresses art, marine science & narratives in ocean climate action (ARC DP, 2025).

Drew Pettifer is an artist, academic and researcher at RMIT University. His work centres on community engagement, inclusion, and social justice. Through collaborative and archival art projects, he explores themes of sexuality, masculinity, and care. His teaching and research foster inclusive creative practices that connect diverse communities through contemporary art.

Daniel X. Harris is an international leader in creativity, diversity and social change, and Director of Creative Agency research lab: <https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/schools-colleges/education/research/creative-agency>. Harris has published 22 books and over 150 chapters/articles, and is the recipient of over \$4m in competitive external funding supporting their transdisciplinary and multi-sited ethnographic work.

Mandy Ruddock is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Psychology and Public Health at LaTrobe University. Her research expertise includes coach and athlete wellbeing, psychological impact of injury, mental wellbeing, and program evaluation. Ruddock has partnered with multiple high-performance sports organisations including the Australian Football League, National Rugby League, and the Australian Institute of Sport.

Emma Sherry is a leading scholar in sport management and Sport-for-Development. Based at RMIT University, her research advances gender equity, community sport, and policy alignment with the UN SDGs. She partners widely with industry and government to deliver impactful, evidence-based sport policy and evaluation.

Experimental Disobedience and Loose Collaborations: Unconventional material explorations that challenge existing architectural norms.

Anthropogenic perturbations of the global environment are often addressed as separate issues overlooking any inherent overlaps that take place between them (Richardson et al., 2023). By promoting experimental project-specific partnerships and ‘loose collaborations’ between multi-disciplinary stakeholders, architectural research can address the complex interconnected challenges that the built environment imposes on planetary systems. Questioning something as fundamental as materials and the steadfast imbalance caused by conventional construction we can question social, cultural, economic, and environmental phenomena giving access to deeper leverage points for systems change.

Properties of unconventional bio-based materials, typically seen as limitations, in fact present opportunities to question existing norms. This statement presents exploratory research and a pedagogical approach which uses an experimental, hands-on methodology to test the viability of unconventional bio-based materials, an in-turn creates a highly tangible focus point for interdisciplinary collaboration. The approach shows that universities hold unrealised potential to become incubators of alternative architectural trajectories, by bringing together like-minded academics and students and allowing for the cross over between disciplines and knowledge sharing.

By deliberately transgressing established regulations and systems of power within the field of architecture we are seeking to shift design approaches to integrate a deeper understanding of place and its complex systems.

Lara Camilla Pinho is an award-winning architect and educator at UWA’s School of Design. Her research explores how architectural interventions affect living systems and local ecologies, addressing imbalances caused by the built environment and seeking ways architecture can foster reciprocal relationships between humans and other species.

Bradley Millis is a researcher and educator at The University of Western Australia’s School of Design. Their design-led research explores how short-life construction and unconventional bio-based materials may accelerate sustainability transitions in the built environment, reframe architectural practice within ecological and socio-technical contexts, and foster more equitable, resilient urban futures.

Advanced Play Design: Play as a Methodology for Creative Practice

Play can be generative and collaborative but also provocative and disruptive, transgressing established ways of knowing, doing and thinking to open up new potential and possibilities. Although there is emerging recognition of the capacity of play in learning and teaching in higher education contexts, scholars have noted that play-based methods remain underutilized and devalued in university settings. This paper presents a pedagogic methodology in which play is adopted in a studio-based postgraduate program to expand student’s creative practice in unorthodox and novel ways, challenging conventional and standardized approaches in animation, games and interactivity. Through a critical reflection on the aims, practice and impact of these playful methods, we highlight the importance of play in fostering community, experimentation and collaboration in creative practice research within higher education learning and teaching contexts.

Matthew Riley is a Senior Lecturer and researcher in the Master of Animation, Games and Interactivity program at RMIT University. His work and scholarship in playful and experimental design and art practice has been recognised internationally in London, France, Japan, Austria, Portugal, New York, United Arab Emirates and Finland.

Uyen Nguyen is a play designer, researcher and academic at RMIT University. Her gallery-based, urban play and site-specific works have been shared in national and international venues, events and exhibitions including Experimenta, Tarra Warra Museum of Art, DIGRA, ISEA, Freeplay and ACMI. She is co-founder of the experimental collective YomeciPlay.

Inherent Resistance: Ceramic Pedagogy and the Politics of Everyday Materials.

My practice examines how material-based storytelling can serve as quiet yet radical acts of disobedience against colonial, institutional, and cultural erasure. This short paper reflects on two interconnected explorations from my PhD project, From the River Delta, engaging turmeric, Khadi fabric, reclaimed sari, and found tree branches as fugitive archives of memory, resistance, and inherited tacit knowledge. These everyday materials endure legacies of the Bengalis’ anti-colonial Swadeshi movement, ancestral care practices, and the emotional labour of immigrant’s In-Between life.

Through the bodies of work Embodying Resistance and Desire for Belonging, I explore how non-western pedagogies are embedded into everyday materials as acts of rejection—gestures that oppose assimilation and challenge western hegemony. Stitching, wrapping, and collecting become methods of reconnecting, rejoining, and replenishing—disobedient pedagogies that contest narratives flattening identity. Turmeric, once dismissed by western rationality that ironically is now commodified by western wellness culture, becomes an embodied archive of ancestral knowledge. My mother’s use of turmeric wasn’t theoretical but lived— embedded and passed down through generations.

In an era of censorship and cultural fragmentation, this practice-led method offers disobedience not as rupture but as an ongoing, pivotal, relational inheritance—where art creates a space for resistance, survival, and becoming.

Mita Chowdhury is a Bangladeshi-Australian visual artist and PhD candidate at RMIT University. Her interdisciplinary material practice employs textiles, spice, found objects, and hand-stitching to explore hybrid identity, memory, and belonging. Informed by decolonial and feminist frameworks, her work fosters cross-cultural dialogue through material storytelling and non-western methodologies.

Leaching attitudes: place as a disobedient guide towards a non-productionist ceramics pedagogy

This paper positions and unpacks a set of attitudes and approaches to teaching ceramics that depart demonstrably from the connection of ceramics with productionist modes of making. The researchers highlight the non-productive efforts that take root through a positioning of ceramics in relation to climate aware creative practices—breaking radically away from an inherited association of ceramics with an industrial imagination.

Stemming from pedagogies developed since 2023 at Monash University and ANU Art & Design, the attitudes and approaches to teaching that are unpacked in this paper consider the kinds of disobedience and mischief-making required in order to position a politics of place at the heart of clay-based practices. Walking excursions to urban clay-soil sites, diverse stories and understandings of place, and an emphasis on porosity through non-and low-firing, foreground the entangled and dynamic character of all forms of life. This emphasis encourages students to understand their embedded relation to place through a climate aware approach to practice.

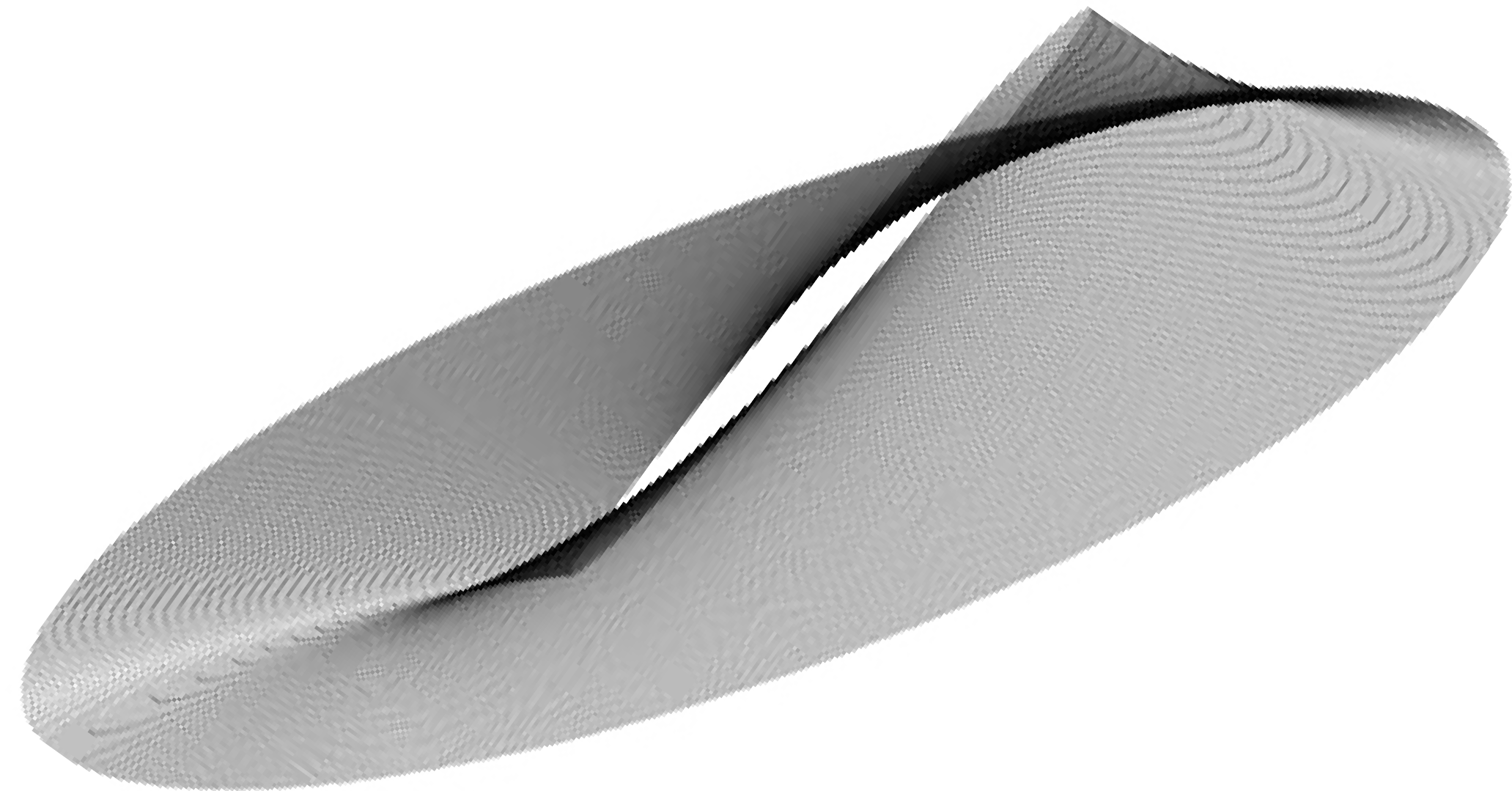
The paper locates a network of intersecting ideas that redistribute priorities in ceramic pedagogy, to confront the often extractive provenance of clay materials, their relation to unceded Aboriginal Land, their entanglement with capitalism’s colonial logic, and the leaching toxicities of contemporary life.

Kate Hill
Ben Woods
Terri Bird

Soft Sculpture as a Subversive Act: the pedagogy of the sewing circle in fine art education

The sewing circle has a rich feminist history originating as a traditional space for women to connect, evolving into a platform for discussing social and political issues, and becoming integral to the craftivism movement. This paper explores how incorporating the sewing circle into fine art pedagogy acts as a welcome disruption and enables a deeper conceptual understanding of the social and political issues embedded in textile practice. We examine how structuring a weekly soft sculpture class as a site of social engagement also enhances participation and unites students from different disciplines in a common material dialogue. By considering the politics and conceptual complexities of soft sculpture and textile art, alongside the hands-on experience of creating critically engaged artworks, this course demonstrates how fine art students benefit from collaborative environments that encourage critical discussion and political debate. Utilising the sewing circle in teaching soft sculpture is a subversive act as it offers a site of potential critique of dominant societal power relationships through creative studio practice.

Fleur Summers is the Studio Lead of Sculpture in the School of Art at RMIT University. She has experience in developing and teaching courses from bronze foundry to soft sculpture. She is interested in how learning design enables students to develop skills alongside creating community in the art school environment. Linda Knight. Taking a critical and speculative approach to the hand-rendered, Linda Knight creates counter-narratives of colonial histories, specifically exploring biodiversity, colonial women, and the fall of empire. Linda leads the RMIT Mapping Future Imaginaries research network, that creates projects focused on shaping our future lives and the world.



Session 3
Stream B
Art/Design & Science

Speculative Narratives in Edible Futures: From the Mammoth Meatball to the Pirk Chicken Project

This pilot project report examines how speculative narratives in biotechnology mobilize food as a site for negotiating extinction, ethics, and future imaginaries. It compares two emblematic cases: the Mammoth Meatball, a commercial project that framed de-extinction as consumable novelty, and the Pink Chicken Project, an artistic intervention that used absurdity and discomfort to challenge the ethics of gene drives and industrial farming. While both intersect biotechnology and culture, they generate divergent “edible futures”: one normalizing planetary crisis through spectacle, the other resisting consumability by provoking ethical unease, later amplified in policy debates. Methodologically, the report traces how these narratives operate from the sensory, to the affective, to the rational , showing how design configures the conditions under which crises become politically salient. As a pilot study, it proposes “edible futures” as a conceptual lens for future research on food design, speculative practice, and interspecies politics.

Yuxin Wang is a PhD student at the University of Western Australia researching bio-art, speculative design, and food experience. Her current work investigates how design within the context of de-extinction technologies shapes relationships between humans and non-humans.

Art-Science Collaborations: Challenging Anthropomorphic Bias In Installation Art Through Ecocentric Practice

This practice-led research investigates contemporary eco-installation art and art-science practices that respond to the urgent ecological issues of the Anthropocene and that challenge the anthropocentric worldview underpinning this epoch. It critiques anthropomorphic strategies in the field of contemporary visual art and proposes ecocentric ways to engage with the more-than-human world by exemplifying interspecies entanglement through resulting artworks. The research proposes a new art-science model of creative production grounded in an intensive study of coral symbionts and asks how contemporary installation art is capable of fostering new kinds of ecocentric multi-species relationships. The study is grounded in a new collaboration with a marine ecological research team who have monitored the decline in health of Queensland’s Moreton Bay coral communities, and is informed by qualitative methods of field observation, semi-structured interviews, co-creation, and studio experimentation with both marine ecologists and contemporary eco-artists. The project’s primary outcomes included a series of immersive installations which incorporated scientific visual data amongst coral-inspired sculptures, and the development of a novel framework for art-science practice. Ultimately, the project seeks to trial anti-anthropomorphic, ecocentric approaches to eco-installation art that enhance the public accessibility and impact of ecological research, whilst also presenting the ecosophical perspectives urgently needed in this anthropocentric era.

Isabella Deary

Neuro-Inclusive and Community-Led Design Labs: Beyond Medicine and Engineering

This discussion puts forward a critical dialogue on neuro-inclusive design and community-led practice within the context of a newly established research initiative: the Adaptive Design Lab (ADL). Responding to the conference theme of disobedience, the ADL positions co-design as a site of resistance, challenging the dominance of medical and engineering paradigms in the assistive technology and neurodiversity space. By centring lived experience, co-production, and radical accessibility, the ADL seeks to reframe ‘assistive’ technologies as ‘adaptive’ technologies; not as clinical interventions but as creative, relational, and culturally embedded tools. This discussion will share early provocations and practices from the ADL, exploring how neurodivergent-led research, speculative design, and community partnerships can disrupt normative assumptions and reclaim agency.

Scott Andrew Brown

Generative Speculative Design as Critical Ethical Disobedience: A Provocation

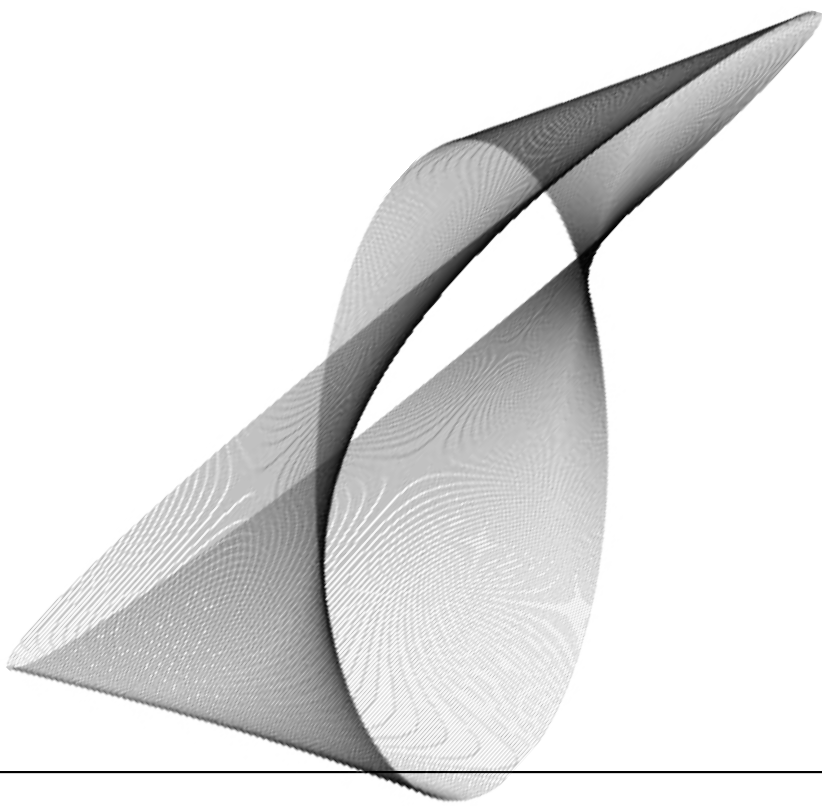
Speculative design commonly employs provocations through oppositional, agonistic, dissonant and disjunctive practices as “ethical disobedience”, challenging dominant norms and underlying assumptions. The increased utilisation (alongside abuses) of generative AI in design education has raised the need for objective critical thinking as AI becomes imbricated in human provocation presenting a moral paradox: the use of fundamentally obedient, non-intentional systems to produce disobedient outputs. Alongside are humans obeying computational ontologies and implicit epistemic ethics to craft convincing AI-driven disobedient design strategies. These ‘disobediences’ loop back into human-AI systems, challenging AI’s moral imperative and codifying resistance, design, and designer subjectivity.

This paper probes the complex ethics around this situated practice, reframing disobedience from individual choice to a distributed responsibility across complex human-AI systems. This presents an opportunity to performatively co-create ethical provocations and associated moral imperatives within human-technology relations in a tripartite framework: 1) designer inputs shaped by intent, bias and disciplinary norms, 2) AI response governed by programmed value alignment and limited moral ‘comprehension’, and 3) system architecture imposing invisible constraints. This framework is grounded in a performative analysis of two bespoke pedagogical tools generating ethical considerations in speculative design, examining the co-creation of agency, intentionality, and moral accountability, that offer a critical lens on ethical provocations in AI-driven design education.

Haider Akmal is a speculative designer and educator working at UNSW School of Art & Design. Associated with the Creative Robotics Lab, Creative Technologies Research Lab, and Imagination Lab (Lancaster, UK), his work revolves around more-than human practices in design and education, research through design, ludic design, and design futures.

Stephen Loo is Professor of Design at UNSW School of Art & Design. He works at the transdisciplinary nexus of posthumanism, ethical philosophy, psychoanalysis, architecture, sonic arts, food performance and experimental digital technologies. Recent publications include Deleuze and Architecture (2012) and Poetic Biopolitics (2016), and Tastes of Justice (2026).

Jonathan Shaw is an interaction designer, researcher and educator UNSW School of Art & Design. His design practices involve creative AI applications, interactive media, speculative design, social robotics and design sociology. His research centres on ways in which technology influences humanity, society and culture, and how social and cultural institutions adapt to these changes.



Session 3
Stream C
Ecologies of Disobedience

Dyeing for the Earth: Communing with Local Landscapes through Shroud Making on Sydney’s North Shore

This research investigates restorative craft practices in contemporary textile design, responding to the emerging shift in colonised Australia toward sustainable funerary practices. The climate crisis reflects a growing disconnection from nature, evident in traditions and laws surrounding life and death rituals—such as wooden coffins requiring plastic liners—and in the rise of mass tree vandalisms across Sydney’s North Shore since 2020. Through shroud making, I examine reciprocal and spiritual relationships between humans and nature, focusing on local landscapes in Lane Cove and Willoughby Councils, including Tambourine Bay and the Sugarloaf Bay catchments, areas significantly affected by tree vandalism. Drawing from my heritage as a descendent of an Armenian master weaver, I engage with the symbolism of traditional Armenian carpets, where storytelling through composition, materiality, and ritual positions nature and life as cyclical. Transferring these understandings to my local context, the research is informed by design advocacy methodologies and Tim

Radical Care: Designing Beyond Compliance in Coal Ash Contaminated Communities

My practice-led research project addresses disobedience by challenging conventional sustainable design approaches and environmental inaction through socially engaged design. Located within NSW’s coal communities, the research transforms coal ash waste into ceramic objects at scale. Through material-based practices serving as direct-action the work aims to resist industry and government neglect of environmental remediation. The research challenges conventional approaches in three ways. Methodologically, it circumvents academic distance by exploring activist-design-researcher positionality. Materially, it repurposes industrial waste into discursive objects at scale that divert coal ash from dumping into dams and it reframes research projects as interventions that challenge toxicity invisibility. Politically, the research applies Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) and Robert Gottlieb’s (2022) care-centred politics to expose “systemic political neglect.” This approach rejects “utopian rhetoric” of sustainable design frameworks like life cycle analysis, biomimicry, Cradle-to-Cradle and circular economy.

Ingold’s theories of wayfaring and correspondence. Using natural dyes and motifs referencing local flora and fauna, the work memorialises and honours the storytelling of the landscape, advocating for environmental and ancestral connections. Interwoven with themes of reciprocity and life cycles—including death and rebirth—the shrouds serve as conduits for spiritual reconnection, offering a transformative return to earth and safe passage into the afterlife.

Olivia Reily

Design, climate and cultural contexts: Correlating national approaches in the Design Declares climate-action network

This research explores the ambiguities in national climate-action agendas and is focused on how Design Declares, a global climate-action community, interprets and understands the nuances amongst the four main country chapters: United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and Brazil. The study explores how each chapter interprets and enacts climate accountability within design practice, attending to the cultural, structural and policy conditions that shape their respective strategies. Drawing on secondary research and published materials from the four countries, the study identifies shared concerns across chapters, most notably the urgency of embedding ecological literacy, advocating for systemic change in design education and the importance of political and key strategic backers. However, divergences emerged: the UK chapter prioritises policy alignment and measurable accountability within established regulatory systems; Ireland highlights education and capacity-building in a smaller, fragmented industry; Australia foregrounds Indigenous knowledge and adaptation to climate extremes amid tensions with extractive economies; and Brazil confronts deep socio-environmental inequalities, infrastructural limitations, and the need to integrate justice and Indigenous perspectives into design. On the sidelines of these main chapter characteristics, there is both acceptance and resistance to climate-action with various levels of engagement from government, strategic leaders and the design industry. By correlating these similarities and differences, the research illuminates both the adaptive strength of Design Declares as a transnational network and the limits of maintaining cohesion across varied socio-political contexts. The study contributes to scholarship on design cultures and sustainability transitions, positioning Design Declares as a model for understanding how global design movements negotiate local specificities while pursuing collective climate action.

Michelle Douglas is an academic of Industrial Design at RMIT University, researching design culture, industry ecosystems and regenerative transitions. Her work investigates how professional practices, institutional structures and cultural values shape design’s societal role. She leads cross-sector collaborations advancing climate-responsive design policy, education reform and place-based industry capacity building across Australia and internationally.

Instead, it positions care as radical and political. As an active NSW Greens party member, I navigate the precarious line between partisan political activism and care-centred design practice. This represents methodological disobedience that challenges academic expectations of political neutrality while acknowledging community environmental struggles. Through 3D-printing coal ash ceramics and facilitating community workshops, the project demonstrates how design can function as social and environmental justice activism. It works with political positioning while maintaining academic approaches through practice-led research methodologies that prioritise community knowledge.

Chantelle Baistow

Disobedient Ecology: A productive and troublesome reframing of Sydney’s wetland entanglements

Wetlands in Sydney have been undervalued and undergrounded since settler colonialism’s destruction in Australia. Recently, however, their reframing as “vital hydrological infrastructures” (Fletcher et al. 2013, Gawler & Tjandraatmadja, 2019), through the recognition of their “value” as carbon-sinks, water filtration, and ecological “assets”, has shifted their reputation. Through this research, I have walked with, drawn, and listened to wetlands. In doing so, wetlands often become visible through an apparent “disobedience” in the urban context – ibis on golf courses, eels swimming through drains, or waters flooding streets. This paper poses that disobedience could provide an animated, troublesome invitation to rethink the dynamics of capitalist, colonial formations of human, city and more-than-human categorisations. Rethinking “colonial fictions”(King & Keogh, 2024; Tsing, 2015), disobedience readdresses human:nature dichotomies through the reappropriation of judgement-based colonial understandings of “bad” and “good”, obedient or otherwise. In its moral positioning, disobedience prompts questions such as “Who/ what is disobedient?” and “In what constructions do obedience and disobedience occur?”. Labelling more-than-human agency thus allows tacit conversations to unfold and offers a cross-species provocation to view resilience of wetland kin in opposition to the ecological destruction of urbanisation and human “progress”. This paper explores disobedience and presents novel ways to approach creative, climate-focused research, responding to invitations for innovation in our approaches to more-than-human entanglements (Root-Bernstein et al., 2023; Tsing, 2024).

Holly O’Neil is a multimodal researcher and anthro-artist. Trained in both reportage illustration and anthropology she now works to combine her two disciplines in experimental and informative ways. Currently, she is exploring the role of audio and visual storytelling as research methodology to engage the public with the climate crisis.

Session 3
Stream D
Critical Feminisms

Disobedient Curation: SHErobots and the disruptive feminine
“There’s your mum, putting her warpaint on again...”

My father hated it when any of the women in our family wore makeup. I would sit on the edge of their bed, watching my mum humming while she applied her warpaint; only a signature pink lipstick, and only when we were going out. I was desperate to participate, to arm myself against the outside world with colour and performance. The fourth of seven children, I wasn’t permitted to wear makeup until 14, though disobedient sisters aided me from the age of 12. This disobedience served me well, in education, in feminism, in technology, in curatorial practice. Invited to the SHErobots curatorium in 2021, my colleagues and I sought to foreground the role of women leading robotic practices. We developed three exhibitions: 1) SHErobots: Tool::Toy::Companion; 2) SHErobots: Ecologies of Care; and, 3) FEM-Me: Feminine Mechanics and Other Kinetic Systems. This paper investigates the disruptive feminine in case studies from SHErobots research. Methods utilised are taught in the MCCL for UNSW’s Art & Design School, inviting students to participate with creative reflective practice. This furthers the art and architecture practices of my colleagues, and my own curatorial practice, New Media Curation.

Deborah Turnbull Tillman is an editor and author as well as a new media curator. Deborah began teaching at UNSW Art & Design in 2016, where she was awarded a Tenure Track Lecturer position in Media Arts and Curatorial in 2021. She was promoted to Senior Lecturer in July 2025.

Ethics and care in organising: reflections on developing a panel discussion on art and academic censorship

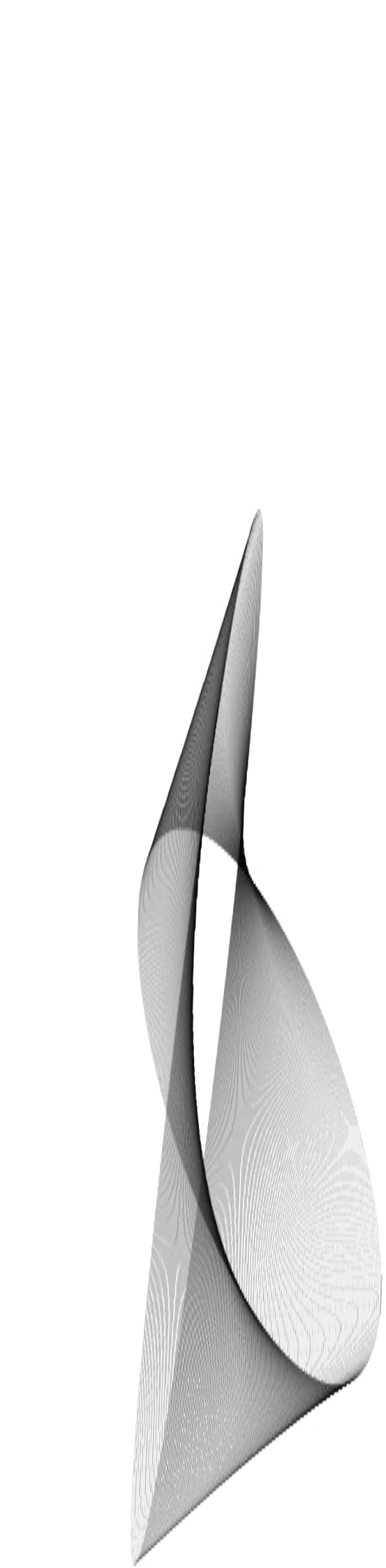
Shortly after Khaled Sabsabi’s rescinded invitation to represent Australia at the 2026 Venice Biennale, RMIT School of Art academics and HDR students gathered to share their concerns and experiences regarding censorship and silencing within cultural and art sectors in relation to Palestine. This censorship has manifested in small and large ways, from the framing and policing of language to the cancellation of events and opportunities, and the withdrawal of funding and support for individuals and collectives. The group agreed that there needed to be forms of disobedience that included leveraging positions within the institution to create space and critical discourse that included dialogue, pedagogy and informed

The Labour in Making Space: Transcultural Agency and Pedagogical Rebellion

Culturally diverse academics in art institutions are reshaping educational landscapes and developing responsive curriculum that engages with contemporary geopolitical realities, transcultural identities, and global mobilities. In this paper, we will reveal that this transcultural pedagogical work is not simply additive—it is transformative, creating spaces where Western-centric and Eurocentric artistic paradigms are comprehended, questioned, and gradually shifted. These courses become sites of possibility where students encounter transcultural concerns and alternative schools of thought as a generative force rather than an institutional afterthought. Here, complex identities are not problems to be solved but rich territories to be explored through hybrid artistic practices. With an approach to post-colonial discourses and mobility studies that acknowledges how migration, displacement, and cultural border-crossing shape artistic production alongside critical frameworks that interrogate archives, examine contested histories, and question power structures while considering gender and race, become everyday tools rather than theoretical abstractions. What emerges are courses that students’ treasure—spaces where linguistic diversity is celebrated and culturally intelligent artworks arise from rich lived experiences. This pedagogy does the slow, necessary work of de-centering entrenched hegemonies while building artistic vocabularies adequate to our complex present.

Pia Johnson is an interdisciplinary artist whose practice is engaged in performance, transcultural identity and belonging, stemming from her mixed background of Chinese Italian-Australian descent. Her works have been awarded and exhibited across Australia and internationally and are collected in private and public collections. Pia is a Senior Lecturer and Associate Dean Photography in the School of Art.

Sofi Basseghi is a Naarm-based visual artist and researcher of Iranian/European heritage. Her multidisciplinary and collaborative practice examines contested histories within political and poetic landscapes, drawing on Persian poetry, mythology, and folklore to explore narratives, both imagined and factual, emerging from complex cultural, religious, and social conditions. Her works have been exhibited and collected nationally and internationally.



discussion about protecting academic and creative freedoms. A panel discussion and screening event was developed by RMIT University School of Art’s Contemporary Art and Social Transformation (CAST) research group in collaboration with the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) committee with art industry partners Next Wave and Composite. The process of organising the panel was ethically and logistically complex, revealing tensions which the group had to work through carefully and slowly. The main tension encountered was that the very people whose voices are most urgent in conversations about censorship including BIPOC artists, academics, and activists, are often the same people already carrying a disproportionate burden of speaking out, educating institutions, and reliving vulnerable experiences in public forums. As organisers, we had to ask ourselves questions such as: How can we hold space for diverse voices without reproducing extractive processes? How to find the ‘right’ balance of speakers whilst caring for BIPOC who are often overworked and burnt out? The hidden administrative labour of organising socially and politically urgent events is rarely visible to those who attend, yet it is in this behind-the-scenes labour that ethics are most actively enacted. We would like to share insights gained from this event and the challenges and tensions we experienced organising this panel.

Isabella Capezio (she/her) is an artist living and working on stolen Wurundjeri Country. Their artwork and research connect themes of failure, power and queerness with landscape. Isabella lectures in photography at the School of Art, RMIT University and has recently completed a PhD experimenting with alternative ways to reflect on place, vision and colonial frameworks of nature.

Laresa Kosloff (she/her) is an artist and an academic in the School of Art at RMIT. She makes critical short films, audio works, and participatory artworks. Some of her projects are structured around language, whilst others use slapstick physicality to communicate ideas. Laresa’s research explores contemporary politics and cultures arising from end-stage capitalism.

Nguyễn Ngọc Thảo (she/her) is a Vietnamese-Australian artist, educator and researcher based in Naarm. She is the Deputy Lead of the Contemporary Art and Social Transformation research group and sessional academic at the School of Art, RMIT University. She is currently completing her PhD which investigates the impacts of whiteness and the weaponization of language on Asian-Australians.

Amy Spiers (she/her) is a white settler artist researcher based on Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung Country in Naarm (Melbourne, Australia). Spiers is a Senior Research Fellow at RMIT University School of Art and current recipient of an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) undertaking a 3-year project exploring settler artists’ responsibilities in the collective work of truth-telling colonial injustices and affirming First Peoples’ sovereignties.

Visibly Disobedient: Self-Portraiture as a Site of Resistance through Veiling & Unveiling.

This paper examines the intersection of disobedience and self-portraiture as a strategy for Muslim women artists to resist gendered, cultural, and systemic oppression by reclaiming identity and subverting dominant narratives. It explores the complexities of veiling and unveiling through four intersecting ideas: forced veiling, forced unveiling, veiling by choice, and unveiling by choice. Through self-portraits by artists such as Shirin Neshat and Sarah Maple, the study investigates how these creators navigate visibility and invisibility, asserting agency while challenging oppressive structures in both Eastern and Western contexts. Drawing on Leila Ahmed’s A Quiet Revolution (2011), the paper highlights the political, historical, and ideological meanings of the hijab, emphasizing the contrast between Western perceptions and lived experiences within Muslim communities. Additionally, Mona Eltahawy’s concept of the “trifecta of oppressions” situates Muslim women’s resistance within patriarchy, colonialism, and religious fundamentalism. Sara Ahmed’s notion of the “feminist wilfulness” enriches the discussion by framing feminist disobedience as a disruption of normative comfort, underscoring how self-portraiture embodies refusal and resistance. This research argues that self-portraiture is a vital feminist practice, challenging erasure and asserting autonomy in identity and representation.

Amber Hammad is a Pakistani-Australian visual artist based in Sydney, whose critically engaged multi-disciplinary practice primarily explores self-portraiture to examine Muslim women’s identity, representation, and body politics. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Sydney, researching Neo Sufi-Feminism through self-portraiture, bridging contemporary art and spirituality.

