

Acknowledgements

An event of the size and scope of the 2024 Making Futures conference, which is documented through this edited volume, could not be achieved without the committed work and brilliance of many people. There were also a number of featured projects and programmes developed with partners, colleagues and supporters as a component of the 2024 conference that must be recognised.

One most significant project was a month-long artisan-in-residence programme co-developed with the British Council in partnership with the Delhi Crafts Council and Arts University Plymouth, featuring master weaver Shamji Vankar from the Kutch region of northern India. An expert in traditional indigo dyeing and loom weaving processes perfected over many generations, Shamji worked with our BA Textile Course in an exchange of knowledge and techniques that taught us how to optimise place-based dyeing processes, particularly in the context of our Natural Dye Lab. I would like to thank the British Council and Delhi Crafts Council for their support of the residency as well as for their long support of Making Futures.

In addition to this artisan-in-residence programme, there was a roundtable discussion celebrating the 10-year anniversary of our Fab Lab Plymouth, with a review of the meaningful case studies and impactful innovations we have developed as the first Fab City in the UK to be part of the Fab City Global Initiative. This anniversary relaunches the Fab Lab Plymouth as the expanded Fab Lab South West.

To guide our discussions and to help frame the possibilities and challenges set by the conference, Making Futures 2024 was fortunate to have three accomplished keynote speakers:

Sherry Lassiter, co-founder of MIT's FabLab network, and CEO of the Fab Foundation, joined us to share her views and experience of the power of new technologies to shape not only creative practice and manufacture, but to shape our relationship to knowledge, where access to emerging technical skills and increased digital literacy transform communities. Sherry's work has had a lasting and far reaching impact on the ways in which technical knowledge and expertise is distributed across cultures and nations, ensuring that this knowledge is an accessible, transformative resource for all.

The conference also welcomed entrepreneur and designer Elissa Brunato, Founder and CEO of Radiant Matter, a London-based start-up company which is revolutionising the small in size but not insignificant environmental impact of the metallic sequin used in fashion around the world and consequently lodged in our water supply and landfill. Elissa has worked closely with physicists and materials engineers to develop a new Biosequin made of structured cellulose through a molecular design that transforms a naturally clear polymer into a brilliant, iridescent surface. Her iridescent Biosequins demonstrate that biologically derived and ecologically resilient design products can be beautiful, colourful and, most recently through a partnership with designer Stella McCartney, a viable alternative to fast fashion.

The final keynote was delivered by Professor of Materials and Society, Mark Miodownik, from University College London who is also co-founder of UCL's Institute of Making. Prof Miodownik's deep knowledge of materials and their impact on our society and social relationships provides artists and designers with the opportunity to return to the very building blocks of the natural world with new eyes. His work provides us with a pathway to reimagine the broader role of creativity in designing a world that is less alienated from the phenomenal

forces around us. This is his second appearance as a keynote speaker at Making Futures, where he spoke in 2017, demonstrating his lasting influence on the project and the ambitions of this research platform.

We are grateful for the willingness and enthusiasm expressed by each of the keynote speakers to frame the discussions held over the three days.

I also want to offer my thanks to those scholars, curators and cultural leaders who accepted my invitation to lead the conference thematic sessions as peer reviewers and Track Chairs, including: Beno Juaréz, Director, FabLab Peru; Assistant Professor Carla Paoliello, of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon; independent curator Ligaya Salazar; Jonathan Boyd, Reader in Jewellery and Head of the MA Programme in Ceramics and Glass at the RCA; and Heather Martin, design educator and Course Leader at Arts University Plymouth in Fashion Design. I want to also thank Nancy Diniz, Course Leader in MA Biodesign at Central Saint Martins for reviewing the abstracts for Track 04 and for her expert feedback on the papers which informed the session on post-natural creative practices.

I also wish to express our gratitude to sponsors Micronomy and Plymouth Art Weekender for their support in providing the funding, content or promotion of the conference and its participants.

I want to offer my gratitude to our city centre museum neighbour, The Box, for providing the venue at St Luke's Church and for hosting our opening reception. Thanks also to sound designer Neil Rose, Course Leader in Film and Screen Arts at Arts University Plymouth, and Bristol-based artist Harriet Bowman for their live sound performance using glass sculptures.

Lastly, I want to thank my many Arts University Plymouth colleagues for their contribution in developing and producing the conference which resulted in the essays gathered in this volume. I am especially grateful to: Cat Edwards and Adam Levi who worked closely with me for a year to realise the conference; BA Student in Graphic Design, Jessika McCarron, who designed all of the conference branding and visual materials; Lauren Taverner-Brown, who heads our Brand and Communications team; Katie Elloway for her coordinating assistance with hospitality; Ian Hutchinson and Dr Alexandra Murphy for operational support and Tima Metcalfe for her very practical wisdom when this iteration of the conference was in its early stages. And a final offer of thanks to Jonah Garner, Academic Librarian and Digital Education Advisor, who worked closely with me as copy editor for Volume 9 of the Making Futures Journal and layout designer of the downloadable PDF version.

I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to all authors and participants in Making Futures 2024 and for the meaningful provocations and creative insights which you brought to the conference and its ideas.



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