

A MAP OF A DREAM OF THE FUTURE

NICOLAS LOW

A CONTEMPORARY ART DATA-SCAPE
TRAM SHED FUNCTION CENTRE
4 INVERMAY RD, INVARESK
LAUNCESTON, TASMANIA
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HOW TO READ THIS INSTALLATION

Each cluster of plants shows the thinking of one young Tasmanian. A cluster closer to the top shows that person is optimistic and resilient; those at the bottom are pessimistic about climate change.

Clusters at the front indicate people who favour a return to slower, more natural ways of life; those at the back show faith in high-tech, high-energy solutions.

Clusters of plants to the left tell us the person believes it is up to the individual to do what they can, while those who would rely on authority to enforce top-down strategies sit to the right.

Taken as a whole, the installation shows a sample of 100 young Tasmanians.

Optimistic and resilient



Pessimistic

High-energy, high-tech
solutions to climate change

Make
your own
decisions,
fend for
yourself.



Government
and authority
take action
whether we
like it or not.

Low-energy, back to nature solutions
to climate change

HOW WE COLLECTED THE DATA

We created an education kit to teach year 5 and 6 students how climate change may affect Tasmania. The kit uses art activities to help students imagine life 80 years in the future, and encourages creative thinking about how to tackle problems that might arise. Students then completed a detailed survey designed to capture their thoughts on issues around food and water, shelter, transport and migration. From their answers, we generated scores for each student on three axis: nature-technology, libertarian-authoritarian, and optimism-pessimism. These scores were graphed, and then the graph translated into our installation.

We found that on average students tended towards optimism, have a slightly greater faith in technology than low-energy futures, and don't want anyone to tell them what to do.

A Map of a Dream of the Future's surreal hanging garden of 400 native Tasmanian plants is a work of data visualisation. It explores what young Tasmanians think about the future regarding climate change.

www.mdfproject.com
www.dislocated.org

MAP GUIDE

A Map of a Dream of the Future's surreal hanging garden of 400 native Tasmanian plants is a work of data visualisation. It explores what young Tasmanians think about the future regarding climate change.

Physically, AMDF is a reworking of traditional Victorian-era hothouse gardens, with their neatly laid-out specimens, hanging plants and water features. In the traditional conservatory garden, collectors displayed exotic orchids or birds-of-paradise as a symbol of colonies visited and natural resources extracted; all kept alive in an artificial climate by coal-fired boilers; and all based on the idea of nature as an ordered and infinite resource. You could say that the conservatory garden was a micro-climate of Victorian-era industrial thought. AMDF appropriates the conservatory garden framework to explore the legacy of this attitude towards nature.

AMDF's hanging garden is just as artificial as its predecessors, but it manipulates nature towards different ends. It is both a garden and a large-scale three-dimensional scatter graph. Based on data

gathered from workshops, and a detailed survey and education kit delivered to Tasmanian primary schools State-wide, the position of each cluster of plants tells us what one young Tasmanian thinks.

The layout of the garden is entirely determined by our data. Yet any data depends on the questions asked, the assumptions made, and how ideas are interpreted by people in positions of authority. In passing the hopes and fears of young Tasmanians through the filter of an abstract contemporary art installation, AMDF asks questions about the complex ways community opinion can be interpreted.

AMDF's garden is specific to Tasmania: local plants, local schools and an exploration of futures specific to a green island in the southern seas. The installation has also been designed so that where possible materials are sourced from local businesses and are returned or re-used afterwards. A selection of the plants will be permanently planted as a carbon offset for the project.

The AMDF installation is the culmination of an 18-month process involving local artists, academics,

teachers, students, horticulturalists, statisticians, a climate-change psychologist, an artificial intelligence programmer, local tradesmen and many others.

ONLINE FUTURE SETTLEMENTS

AMDF is presented online as an experimental Google Earth Map. Using sophisticated organic programming systems, AMDF 'grows' virtual future cities across the map of Tasmania, based on data collected during the educational process. Each student gets his or her own futuristic 3D settlement, grown on the map according to the type of future they envisage. North to south, settlements change from authoritarian to libertarian. East to west, they shift from back-to-nature to high-tech. A settlement's density and height tells us the level of optimism and resilience of its inhabitants. Where students have similar ideas, their settlements grow together, creating cities that represent a high concentration of a particular way of thinking. This mirrors the way real cities form around common ideas.

COMMISSIONING

AMDF is a project from Tasmanian Regional Arts and the University of Tasmania's School of Environment and Geography. It was commissioned by Associate Professor Elaine Stratford, with input from Neil Cameron and Angela Barrington. Elaine is a world expert in island studies, some of whose work focuses on how island communities are affected by and are responding to climate change. The project is part of her ongoing initiative to develop an interface across island studies, community resilience and the arts. Elaine is currently Head of the School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania.

LEAD ARTIST

Nicolas Low is a New Zealand-born, Melbourne-based artist, writer and festival director. Nic has been commissioned to create new work and exhibit nationally; he has recently worked as Artistic Director of the National Young Writers' Festival, as a curatorial advisor on the Next Wave and This Is Not Art festivals, and has written for various Australian publications including *Griffith Review*, *The Lifted Brow*

and *Realtime*. He is also responsible for Asialink's international writing residency and touring program.

INSTALLATION TEAM

Krista Horbatiuk
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Tom Doig
Damian Ford
Jim Carroll
wSam Hoffman
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Tina Leaman
Professor Jamie Kirkpatrick

EDUCATION TEAM

Josie Hurst
Nadine Kessler
Heidi Douglas
Kate McDonald
Tim Cotter

PROGRAMMING

Richard Procter

LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORTERS

Habitat Plants
Timber World
Tas Native Landscapes and Paving Supplies
Pitt & Sherry
Prime Plumbing
Garden City Plastics

PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP

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