

INTO THE WILD AT SOMERSET HOUSE

A one-of-a-kind creative showcase from Makerversity's MV Works

9–12 June 2016



"We live in a world where conventions don't make sense anymore. We are discovering that the limits of creativity don't really exist. If I think of the near future, I believe there is even going to be more crossover between all the disciplines: art, design, science, leading to new areas we can't even imagine..."

– **Estela Oliva, Curator, Into the Wild**

For the last seven months, nine makers, working in a diverse range of disciplines across technology, design and art, have been engaged in an experimental programme intended to nurture and support creative practices in the digital age. MV Works has provided funding, guidance, critical insight and technology to these pioneering groups and individuals. The programme is conceived and operated by Makerversity, the workspace and resource hub for creative makers in London and Amsterdam.

Now on **9–12 June**, their work will be open to the public eye – in a unique event that promises to shine a light on the processes and principles that drive their creative projects.

Into the Wild: Decoding the Creative Journey provides an insight into the manifold faces of creativity in the digital age. Makerversity invited Estela Oliva, the founder of discipline-crossing creative studio Alpha-ville to curate the MV Works event. The showcase explores common questions and themes that influence the diverse work of the artists, designers, makers and technologists enrolled in MV Works.

Their projects range from immersive artworks that borrow the technology of virtual gaming and digital/paper-fusion storytelling to desktop moulding machines, woodblock-print animation and algorithm-driven light sculptures. Every one of them is pushing the boundaries of art, design and technology, shining a light on the future of making.

By presenting the processes that these drive projects alongside their outcomes, *Into the Wild* aims to explore new hybrid practices that cross the boundaries of art, design, music and making, as well as to consider the innovative production methods and business models that will power the creative businesses of tomorrow.



THE MAKERS

Matthew Plummer-Fernandez's Shiv Integrer is a bot that makes 3D sculptures assembled from the internet. These digital sculptures can be 3D-printed for collectors to purchase on-demand, challenging conventional ways of making and collecting art. Our Own Skin, a project by designer Liz Ciokajlo, proposes a radical new way of making footwear, by using advanced scanning techniques alongside 3D printing.

Becca Rose's project Bear Abouts explores new ways of storytelling in mobile devices, mixing physical and digital components, questioning the future of narrative and publishing. Pictures of a Floating World by Common Works is an experimental moving image exploring narrative and aesthetics, which has been made of printed wood blocks and built with custom software.

Europa Mon Amour is a virtual experience by **Lawrence Lek** using gaming visuals to immerse the visitor into a simulated world referencing the upcoming European referendum in a reconstructed Dalston landscape. **Harry Sanderson's** algorithm-driven light sculptures materialise code in a unique way.

Liam Donovan's board provides a platform for enhanced technical capabilities that allow makers to explore new unimaginable realms. Twinklr is **Tom Armitage's** second iteration of his digital music box, that sees the project transformed into a real instrument that can be crafted on demand using laser cutting.

Mayku's FormBox is a vacuum-powered desktop machine that allows the mass production of 3D plastic shapes, empowering the maker community to make more, offering a social and creative benefit. It is currently being crowdfunded on Kickstarter and has already surpassed its target.

MV Works is a project by Makerversity, supported by Arts Council England and Innovate UK. Into the Wild is held in collaboration with Somerset House and Alpha-ville.



For more information about Into the Wild, MV Works and the participating makers, please contact Zetteler Creative Publicity at sabine@zetteler.co.uk or on +44(0)7791 568890.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

INTO THE WILD: DECODING THE CREATIVE JOURNEY

9–12 June

Somerset House

New Wing, River Rooms

www.somersethouse.org.uk

OPENING TIMES

Friday 10am–8pm

Saturday 10am–6pm

Sunday 10am–5pm

Free entry

EVENT PROGRAMME (TIMINGS TBC)

More events to be announced – check mv.works for details

Opening/Private View: Thursday 9 June 6–9pm

#Workshops

The MV Works Manifesto for Creative Wilderness

Music Prototyping with Bela (Liam Donovan)

Make an Interactive Character on Paper (Becca Rose)

#Conversations

Creating value with brands: the new creative sphere

Decoding our Kickstarter Campaign (Mayku)

#Live Demos

Tom and Richard play Twinkl

VR Dance Improvisation by Maria Judova & Andrej Boleslavsky

Visual Live Music with Felix Faire

MV Works programme direction Ursula Davies

MV Works programme management Christina Hayman

Event concept and creative direction Estela Oliva (Alpha-ville)

Event production Joanne Matthews

About the curator

Estela Oliva is a creative director and curator working across art, technology and design. After six years working at Google in its early days, she launched Alpha-ville, a cultural project that began as a London festival of art, technology and digital culture has since evolved into an agency and creative studio that maintains a balance of commercial and creative projects. Estela curates exhibitions, creates experimental digital projects both for online and real-world environments and acts as digital consultant for start-ups, public sector and commercial clients.

www.estelaoliva.com

www.alpha-ville.co.uk

About Makerversity

Founded in 2013 by four enterprising designer-makers, Makerversity is a place where entrepreneurial people can thrive. Based out of its hub at Somerset House in central London, the organisation provides affordable workspace to approximately 60 diverse businesses (150 individuals) of all stripes, including textile designers, app developers and installation artists. Fully equipped with tools, a digital workshop, assembly area, photo studio and recording studio, Makerversity enables its members to develop both physical and digital technical expertise.

makerversity.com

About MV Works

MVWorks is an innovative new programme run by Makerversity. Launched in 2015, the scheme offers funding, guidance, project support and a place to work for nine specially selected individuals and enterprises, enabling each of them to pursue an idea that they might otherwise have never had the chance to explore.

mv.works

INTERVIEW WITH MV WORKS PROGRAMME DIRECTOR URSULA DAVIES**How does the MV Works programme fit into the wider remit of Makerversity?**

Makerversity exists to support makers. We currently do that through providing space and making facilities and convening great communities of people. Running a more formal support programme has been something we've wanted to do for a long time, so in many ways MV Works feels like a natural extension to our day-to-day business, and we're planning to continue with the programme in some way beyond this first one.

Also everyone on MV Works is developing projects where the making aspect is very interesting and often very challenging technically – so obviously given what we do it's amazing to have that kind of work happening in our space.

What has surprised you the most about the how the programme has progressed?

We've approached it as an experiment all the way along, so you're expecting surprises in a way with that mindset. Perhaps one thing that I'm continually surprised and delighted by is the sheer complexity of the making process behind everyone's projects and the strength of their commitment to developing very specific tools and techniques that allow them to make the work they want to.

The success of MV Works is obviously dependent on what the participants learn, but what have you and Makerversity as a whole learned as a result of running it?

So much.

We've used the programme to trial different methods of one-to-one support – personal coaching, business coaching, expert technical support, PR and promotion advice. Getting to see the results of that and work, with a whole range of different experts to support people in different ways, has been invaluable.

I would say Makerversity's DNA is more rooted in design and engineering, so it's been really interesting having some fine artists on the programme and seeing how they develop and present their work in comparison to other more applied creative projects.

We've also learnt a lot about how to bring a group of people with different motivations and creative practices together but also give them freedom to do their own thing too.

What have been the most inspiring moments, for you?

Seeing everyone show their work at the crits, without a doubt. Although those are probably the hardest moments too!

Is there anything you'd do differently next time?

As the premise of MV Works was supporting people on their own terms, we've focused a lot on individual support. Next time I'd spend more time together as a group up front, probably with some external facilitation, to develop that side of things more. We've had a great dynamic within the group from the start; everyone has been really generous with their support for each other, but it's been very much the dynamic of individuals coming together to share their work. I think it would be really interesting to see what would happen if you could support people to develop work together. But that's probably a whole other programme!

Do you think the Makerversity approach could be successful for other institutions?

Definitely. It's been a very simple, light-touch programme – that's the secret of it. I think the challenge is that that can feel a bit counterintuitive sometimes. When you're running a programme for people it's natural to want to programme, organise, fill up time with 'interventions' of various kinds and actually probably what's most useful is not doing that. So anyone else wanting to run something similar would

need to feel comfortable with an approach that might feel a bit uncomfortable at times. We're very happy to share what we've learnt with anyone who's interested!

Which project in the showcase do you think has progressed or evolved the most from its original pitch?

It's impossible to pick one. Everyone has done amazing stuff over the programme and their projects have evolved massively in very different ways.

You've got people like Mayku who've just had a fantastically successful kickstarter, or Tom Armitage, who last week showed us a totally new version of Twinklr, a digital musical instrument. I could go on...

I think one of the projects everyone has enjoyed seeing progress the most is the Common Works animation, which has stuck very closely to the original pitch. It's a complex technical project with a really beautiful creative output and to be sure of being able to make it, they've had to develop it in an incredibly organised way. I feel like it's been really soothing experience for everyone to see the incremental development of that particular project at each of the crits, alongside their own more unruly charges!

Given that some of the participants don't necessarily have a finished project to show, how do you/they communicate the work that they've done and the progress they've made in an exhibition format?

The exhibition presents the process alongside the outcome. In some cases, the work is not finalised but it is presented in its current state as 'working prototype'. In terms of the process, visitors will be able to discover different stages, from mocks to contributions to videos of the making. Showing process alongside work is an unconventional exhibition format by which we aim to explore these new hybrid practices and question the new modes of production and distribution of the nine projects.

What do you want visitors to the showcase to come away thinking?

That the labels of design, art, tech and making shouldn't define how you see yourself or where your work could be successful. We also want to provide a challenge to people to really think about what sustainable practice means and the financial aspect of that too.

Above all, respect and excitement for the bravery, imagination and technical capabilities of participants – they're doing stuff that's at the boundaries of what's possible and that's really, really hard work.

INTERVIEW WITH INTO THE WILD CURATOR ESTELA OLIVA

How did you come to be curating the MV Works showcase?

I have been working as a mentor for Lawrence Lek, who is one of the participants of MV Works. Through that I met Ursula and the amazing Makerversity team. They've invited me to creative direct the showcase, finding the concept and the common themes between participants as well as designing the exhibition and programme of events. It has been a challenging experience but also very rewarding.

What have been your aims with the showcase? What do you want it to achieve?

I am interested in decoding the creative journey of the MV Works participants: understanding what are the common drivers, models, challenges, motivations and emotions of their creative process. I see the creative process as a journey, not just for this standalone project; it forms part of the participant's career and life path. Hence the name of the showcase is Into the Wild: Decoding the Creative Journey. Creativity is wild and there are no set rules.

I would like the participants to understand better their own practice and gain valuable insights to help them move forward better equipped, as creative businesses. I think this deconstruction can be beneficial to help any creative people understand where we are at today and how we can think of tomorrow.

The showcase takes form as an open format exhibition with parallel events and I am also planning to make a documentary film that will be released online after the event. Through the showcase, the live demos, some playful spaces, the film, a series of conversations and workshops, my aim is for people to discover, experiment and get inspired to unlock their creativity. I also hope that the reflections outlined throughout the journey will deepen their personal practices and motivate entrepreneurial spirits.

What are the points of intersection between Alpha-ville and Makerversity?

We're interested in cross-disciplinary entrepreneurship and we both like working with people who are comfortable moving between different worlds (art, design, technology, entrepreneurship) and particularly on MV Works that's been super important. Also we really believe in putting work out into the 'market' – getting things out there, rather than just polishing beautiful work in your bedroom.

As someone working at the junction between technology and the arts, what MV Works projects are particularly excited about showing?

I am really excited about the eclectic mix of projects, they are all very interesting. There is a good mix of design, making and art projects.

From an artistic perspective, I am especially interested in Lawrence Lek's work, which brings together art with gaming, music and experience from a critical angle. He represents a new generation of artists who work as polymaths and are self-sufficient and independent. I find this mix of art and entrepreneurship very interesting and current nowadays. Another highlight is Matthew Plummer-Fernandez's work Shiv Integrer. He is using bots to create new forms of art, while challenging the conventions of ownership, authorship and distribution of artwork. Harry Sanderson's work has also caught my attention, I actually didn't know him before, while I've previously worked with both Lawrence and Matthew. What attracts me about Harry's work is the capability to transform technology (code) into a stunning material experience (a sculpture) that speaks to me so much about the state of technology in our culture and how we might not see the implications unless we point at this technology with 'light' (critical thinking).

Conventionally, there's been a perceived distinction between the 'tech brain' and the 'creative/artistic brain' – do you think this has always been a misconception, or have we evolved beyond such oppositions?

We live in a world where conventions don't really make sense anymore. We are discovering that the limits of creativity don't really exist. We are even challenging the notion of creativity, by programming machines to be creatives, think artificial intelligence, so why would we fix ourselves to just a part of our brains? We should think expansively and not restrictively. If I think of the near future, I believe there is even going to be more crossover between all the disciplines: art, design, science, leading to new areas we can't even imagine. This to me is an interesting space for any human being.