

# RCAST\_Barbara\_Brownie (final)

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

students, discipline, communication, programme, rca, people, technologies, necessarily, school, clothes, evolving, space, relationship, approach, digital, future, communicate, sound, interesting, idea

## SPEAKERS

Benji Jeffrey, Barbara Brownie

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### **B** Benji Jeffrey 00:08

Hello and welcome to RCAST. A podcast from the Royal College of Art home to the next generation of creatives. And the world's number one art and design University, representing the largest concentration of postgraduate artists and designers on the planet will be bringing new insight into the philosophy behind the programmes at the RCA by talking to staff, students and the wider RCA community about what we do here and how the work of architects, artists, communicators, designers and researchers affect the world at large. I'm Benji Jeffrey and today I'll be talking to Dr. Barbara brownie about emerging questions and practices in communication. Barbara is a design theorist who considers the relationship between clothes and the body, most recently concentrating on the dress body in microgravity. And she is also the Assistant Dean in the School of Communication here at the RCA. Barbara, thank you for joining us today. Hello, how you doing?

### **B** Barbara Brownie 01:02

I'm not too bad. Thank you

### **B** Benji Jeffrey 01:03

Good. So let's start with the big question. The word communication can mean lots of different lots

### **B** Barbara Brownie 01:09

of different things it can and even more if you put an S on the end of it. Yeah, it means lots of different things for different people. There are people who are associated with telecommunications with other people with language and linguistics. And, and really, it's it's lots of different things to lots of different people. And it spans disciplines. And the School of Communication here at RCA very much focuses on communities on storytelling on dialogue on

conversation. And it's not necessarily associated with a particular discipline. But I think we are particularly focused on the space between the analogue and the digital, and communication across those things. And across communities in that context of the transition from analogue to digital and back again, and that relationship between the two.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 01:58

And it always seems to me like within school communication, things kind of sit on a kind of blurry line somewhere between

**B** Barbara Brownie 02:03

Oh absolutely

**B** Benji Jeffrey 02:04

the school.

**B** Barbara Brownie 02:05

Well, I'd say that the RCA more broadly is although you know, we do have schools that are associated broadly with disciplines. One of the things that the RCA does that's quite distinct is challenges those disciplinary boundaries. And the school of communication in particular, is always looking at ways of shifting and pushing those boundaries, particularly in the context of new and emerging disciplines that haven't yet got fixed boundaries. So we are very concerned with reflecting critically and continuously on where those disciplines sit and what the boundaries are and how they're evolving.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 02:40

And within your own practice, you've been looking at the relationship between the body and designed objects, and sometimes how they're communicated on screen. Could you talk a little bit about that?

**B** Barbara Brownie 02:50

Yeah, I mean, on screen, particularly the dressed body, so So my research doesn't focus on the body so much as the relationship between body and clothes. So I mean, just as an example, I've looked at Foley and the cloth Pass, which is the sound specifically that is recorded to orally communicate the relationship between clothes and the body. So for example, the sound of somebody undressing or putting their clothes on or the sound that limbs make when they're moving against clothes. And it's very much something that I think people take for granted. But it is a sound an audio track, on top of all the other audio tracks, and that adds to the emissivity and the realism of film. And, more recently, my research has been focused on the closed body

in space. So weightlessness, microgravity is what I'm looking at. And depictions in that in sci-fi, particularly interesting because you've got an environment there where the clothes are separated from the body, so they don't touch each other, the clothes kind of hang around the body in space, rather than actually drape on the body. So that relationship between clothes and the body very much changes then, and ways to present that on the screen are tricky and difficult to duplicate.

B

Benji Jeffrey 04:11

Okay, so is that based on like the realistic sounds that exists? Because I know that a lot of the time we found these stuff. It's not necessarily the sound that would actually be made. It's a heightened version of right.

B

Barbara Brownie 04:23

Yeah, I mean, often it could be produced by a thing that is not the thing that we're seeing on screen. I think mostly in the case of cloth passes, it is going to be cloth, and fabric and clothes that are recorded to make those those noises, but it's amazing how much the sound of clothes also tells us about the space in which things are happening. So the sound of clothes in a big space. So let's say for example, a character on screen is taking their clothes off in a bedroom and they land on carpet, that's gonna vary, it could have been a very different sound to somebody taking their clothes off and dropping to the floor on a wood floor. So so there's environmental things as well as the actual sound of clothes that need to be taken into account. So it contributes to much more than our understanding of the relationship between the clothes and the body, but also the space around the body as well.

B

Benji Jeffrey 05:09

And I guess that had in relationship to kind of the the truth of the matter, or the kind of fiction of the matter, right? Like, you maybe don't want to have carpet, you want a wooden floor, you know what I mean? Like, it's interesting in terms of communication, thinking through whether we're communicating something that is true, or communicating something that will do something or communicate a particular message, or that is

B

Barbara Brownie 05:28

not shown. Yeah, yeah. So you're often the cloth past is what's what's communicates these actions that are not actually shown on screen. And again, going back to undressing as an example, it may be that one way they get around, showing a scene of somebody becoming naked on screen is just by having the sound of their dress falling on the floor. So, it's surprising how much of a narrative can be told through the sound of clothes and the sound of the relationship between the sound the clothes and the body.

B

Benji Jeffrey 05:58

Yeah, so your practice comes from a design background. And I think particularly in the School

mean, so your practice comes from a design background. And I think particularly in the School of Communication, people are coming from different places, and with the new programmes that are coming, where students are gonna be able to do units in different schools and then come back to the kind of host programme, is that right?

**B** Barbara Brownie 06:13

Yeah, absolutely. So the new communication programme, is quite explicitly engaged in this idea of not wanting to define communication as a discipline, but acknowledging that it is an evolving discipline, that there are emerging practices that could be informed by student's experience of other disciplines as well. And that includes doing elective units in other schools. So what we hope is that every single student will do something different, and they will have their own unique journey through the programme. And therefore, by the time they get to their final project, they will be coming at it from a different place to all the other students in their same cohort, because they will have done different electives in different schools, they will come with different questions, different experiences. And so their approach to communication is gonna be different from the students standing next to them your class. And I think that's one of the things that we really want to encourage in a race on the programme is, is that potential for everybody to look at the discipline from a slightly different perspective.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 07:13

You just mentioned the idea that they're not thinking about communication as a discipline, what do we think about it as if we don't think about it as a discipline? Would you say?

**B** Barbara Brownie 07:22

It's about being human? So I say it's almost more fundamental than a discipline, what makes our species distinct is our ability to communicate and the way that we have developed a society based on our ability to communicate and willingness to do that. So it's very fundamental. And I think we use ideas about discipline to to frame different aspects of communication or different practices in potentially quite artificial ways. And that has possibly caused us to think in slightly siloed ways that is actually sometimes unhelpful.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 08:02

Right.

**B** Barbara Brownie 08:02

And and I hope that the programme will help us to overcome that a little bit.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 08:06

Yeah. I think as creatives generally we're always oscillating between between this idea of

Yeah, I think as creatives generally we're always oscillating between between this idea of defining something and then completely defying the definition and then rebuilding it again.

**B** Barbara Brownie 08:16

Well, you need to define something in order to then defy it. Yeah, yeah. So. So yeah. And one of the key steps on the journey towards expanding a discipline or reconsidering it, is defining it and then picking holes in that definition.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 08:32

Mm hmm. Are there any, so we've just got RCA2023 at the moment with all our students are showing we've got the digital platform. Is there anything happening on there in particular, they think kind of exemplifies this quite well?

**B** Barbara Brownie 08:42

I think one of the things that people will see if they look at any of our exhibitions, or you know, in person or on the online platform, is the extent to which there is overlap between the programmes in the school. And that overlap is sometimes in the form of the technologies that are being used or the themes or the questions that are being asked. And I think that that very much shows us that there is these difficulties, not necessarily that they're negative, but there are these overlaps, at the ages of of those disciplines, which is why it's so important that we are a community as a school, and allow for these opportunities for cross pollination of ideas and themes across our programmes. Because it's very much a positive that students are able to be inspired by each other across the programme boundaries.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 09:32

Yeah, I think that's the joy of the programme boundaries, I guess, is knowing what conversations you're gonna have, rather than what work you're gonna make. So I did moving image and it was really great to be having conversations around the moving image, but I probably could have had been having conversations in sculpture or you know what I mean, it's about how that conversation is centred, I suppose.

**B** Barbara Brownie 09:51

Yeah. And we don't necessarily centre those conversations around stuff that is clearly or obviously within a discipline, we tend to look outwards for the themes for a conversation, and so we would look at other stuff that's happening in the world. And in particular, for example, UN sustainability goals, things that are happening in the world, climate crisis stuff in science stuff that's very much outside of the discipline of communication, even outside of the arts. So those conversations begin very far outside of a discipline that you might recognise as communication

or any of the sub disciplines within it, but then, are considered through the eyes of that discipline, or in somehow interpreted in whatever the individual discipline that the student might have, which can be different perhaps to a student that they're sitting alongside in class.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 10:36

I'm thinking about these UN goals and sustainability. And coming back again, to what you were saying about how what we have as humans is to be the ability to communicate, I feel like on the RCA2023, I've seen quite a few things where people are challenging even that, right. So the idea that we can communicate with plants, plants can communicate with each other, once again, like trying to push what that boundary is.

**B** Barbara Brownie 10:55

Yeah. And actually, again, there's something else that we do that's quite interesting in the school is not just looking at human communication. But sometimes thought exercises happen where students imagine being a non-human entity, so for example, how would you approach climate crisis if you are not human? If you are a lake, what is your your thoughts about crisis? If you are a beaver, how would you address climate crisis? These other ways of looking at the world from a non human perspective.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 11:22

Yeah.

**B** Barbara Brownie 11:22

Also a very much part of our conversations.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 11:24

Yeah, and a really challenging thing to do, because it's hard to do that without kind of going anthropomorphic, right? There's a difference between ascribing human values to something than actually genuinely thinking about that thing. And as part of that thinking, I suppose speculation is really, really important to the work that students are doing.

**B** Barbara Brownie 11:41

Speculation and empathy, being able to see things from the perspective of other people and other things. And a lot of our students are prompted to reflect on what it means to be human, just just what it means to be human from different perspective. So for example, looking at the human body as a system rather than a single thing. So moving away from this idea of the individual, and more towards a human as a living system that has all sorts of other things going on inside it, if you were a microbe in somebody's body, you wouldn't necessarily recognise the

identity of the body that you're in, as far as you're concerned that's a whole ecosystem. So So there's other bit bigger questions there about how we perceive the world through the perspective of being human being an individual, whether that is even a thing, you know, that's a very artificial construct this idea of the individual. Yeah. And it's something that we impose it's, you know, it's a worldview that isn't necessarily universally understood from the perspective of other non human things. And that's something that we try to challenge.

B

Benji Jeffrey 12:41

Yeah. And there's a lot of collaboration that's involved in these programmes as well. Right? This this kind of individualist, I spoke to Martin Knuth about this kind of briefly as well, this idea that there over the mass last 20 years, maybe there's been more kind of trust in community, rather than this idea of the otter and the one person who is the source of all knowledge.

B

Barbara Brownie 13:02

Oh, absolutely, yeah. And we do hope that students will bring interesting ideas and knowledge with them, we absolutely don't want to create a situation in which there is a master standing in the front of the classroom in passing all that wisdom to the students. That's not what we want at all very much we look at our students as, as peers as people who will come to the college with their own knowledge and their own background and, and their own idea of what communication is.

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Benji Jeffrey 13:30

And I suppose a lot of sorry, just referring back to another episode, Tandy lewinsohn, was talking about that undoing about how a lot of this has to do with undoing rather than kind of piling piling on top, which I guess is once again, think about this idea of the human and thinking backwards. What what what do we define that as is through getting rid?

B

Barbara Brownie 13:46

Yeah, identifying the things that you've taken for granted, identifying the assumptions, so that you can then reflect on them ask why there's assumptions exist and unpick them and say, Well, what if something else was the case?

B

Benji Jeffrey 13:58

Yeah, yeah. Which I guess there's a lot of on the RCA 2023 platforms, a collection that was done by the neurodiverse society, which is a student from Visual Communication in it, you know, it's kind of people thinking through language as something that we can use for communication and thinking about what that does and how it can be rethought rather than working with the tropes and ideas we've always had. So how do you see what's happening within the School of Communication moving beyond the school and into the world? For

example, digital direction have started doing work without net which is this this wild new space in London that has all these giant screens that people in Tottenham Court Road are constantly like able to engage with.

**B** Barbara Brownie 14:37

Yeah, I think one of the things that happens particularly well at RCA is relationships with industry. And Outernet is a brilliant example of that the screens Outernet in these huge big room size screens living you know, whole whole room that is effectively a box of off screen so you can be completely immersed in a piece of students work. And those venues and those commercial partners offer our students opportunities to, to work outside of the college in oppression around but also with technologies that they would never otherwise have a chance to work with. And in particular, we've forged these relationships with companies who develop new technologies. And they'll come to us to ask our students to propose new ways of using technology or to test them to their limits or do interesting things that those companies have not yet thought of. And so it's a mutually beneficial relationship in which the students get to experiment with new technologies. And then the companies are prompted to consider new uses that they haven't yet thought about.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 15:38

Right. So we've talked a little bit about the kind of like UN goals, and there are a lot of big questions being faced by communication practitioners, are there any other particular ones that you see emerging through this call?

**B** Barbara Brownie 15:51

I think at the moment, we are very concerned with the metaverse with AI. And again, this is about pushing boundaries and redefining what the discipline is, and the way that new technologies can redefine or push boundaries of, of communication. And there are emerging disciplines as a result of emerging technologies. I'm really interested in seeing where those things go, and also having students who question where those things could go. And I think AI in particular, is something that we're very interested in seeing how students engage with it. I know there is a lot of fear.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 16:30

Yeah.

**B** Barbara Brownie 16:31

But there is also an awful lot of potential to do some really interesting things. And it's so important that we engage, particularly with things like the potential for for bias in AI, because the datasets that they're drawing from are biased. So I think that's something that I'd really like to see your students engage directly with. And not to be afraid of it, but to look at ways of



addressing that directly. So that there is more awareness and so that there are creative uses, and there's there's ways that our students could potentially direct the future of the use of AI for for creative communities and for the wider communities as well.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 17:12

Yeah. Which is really important work because it is it is kind of terrifying. To think what is possible, particularly I guess for you know, animators, I'm just thinking of as one example, the ability to kind of produce these, I mean, they're not, they're not as good, but they do something they do the thing, right.

**B** Barbara Brownie 17:31

And they're not as good yet

**B** Benji Jeffrey 17:32

Not as good. Yeah, no, exactly.

**B** Barbara Brownie 17:34

Long before they are indistinguishable from other things. The technology has evolved so fast.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 17:40

Yeah. And it's too easy to say, Oh, you can tell it is AI now. But you know, a few months time a year or twos time, you will not be able to tell. Yeah, so where does that leave us then? Yeah.

**B** Barbara Brownie 17:51

And those are the kinds of questions that I hope students will ask.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 17:54

Yeah. And it's always tricky, isn't it this this relationship between kind of more traditional formats and new formats and the kind of like, do you see much kind of butting of heads between the two within the school do you think?

**B** Barbara Brownie 18:06

I hope that there is in a positive way?

B

Benji Jeffrey 18:08

Yeah

B

Barbara Brownie 18:10

One of the things that actually our programmes do really well, is that relationship between the analogue and the digital, and so you see a lot of projects that have physical aspects to them, or printed aspects to them, and then also a digital dimension, you know, maybe data that is manipulated or collected digitally, and then that somehow forms a physical thing, or vice versa. And, and so I yeah, I do think that there is that butting of heads, or that that conflict, or that interface between the analogue and the digital and that is one of the things that actually defines a lot of what we do in this school. So we have quite a few students who do things like stop motion animation, or who find themselves soldiering and building constructing objects, and maybe creating something digitally, and then projecting it onto objects. So it's very much about the physical and the making of three dimensional things. But then also the print as well. We do have things like letterpress going on Reiser printing, but we don't ever really see those in isolation, right. And there's a interesting example of a piece of work at the recent exhibition from information experience design, with a student who was generating a font with unrecognisable letterforms produced from digital interaction data that was generated live from people who are viewing and interacting with Padlet. And then so that created live an evolving typeface. And that was all hooked up to a system and that was printing out physical postcards and pieces of paper with stuff written and there's this ever evolving font. So there's that live input of data, but also the relationship between the digital and the physical and the new Digital methods and slightly more what you might call old school approaches to visual communication.

B

Benji Jeffrey 20:06

Yeah. I guess that's the nice thing about these kind of analogue methods in the present day is that they very much become timestamps. T one should that is printed it is that particular thing. So with this idea, that physical entity becomes a timestamp of that moment, whereas the digital can be an evolving thing where we don't even know it's changing. It's just constantly turning into something new,

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Barbara Brownie 20:23

Although it's surprising how much the technology that you use does timestamp something. Because if you use outdated technology that does look retro, or it looks like it belongs in a particular era. So in some ways, I'd say even more so than the analogue, sometimes the digital does date something right, right. Right, right. And particularly students now who are young enough that they have had their entire lives with the internet and with with the digital, that's the world that they live in. So they don't necessarily make the distinction between pre and post internet or pre and post digital, it's much more about different generations of digital being different things and those evolving technologies.

B

Benji Jeffrey 21:01

Yeah. Thinking about this, this idea of discipline, specificity, what one thing I found interesting about our, the show that we've just had for RCA 2023, was that within the painting studios, in particular, it felt like there was so much more painting, which seems really obvious than there has been in previous years, do you see a kind of like move to more maybe traditional or analogue ways of working in school communication?

B

Barbara Brownie 21:25

I think particularly in visual communication, we got a lot of students experimenting with what might be considered technologies or tools that are possibly old, you could call them old fashioned, but they are, you know, long standing tools and technologies that have been around for hundreds of years. So that kind of embracing of old, traditional ways of doing things is very much present in the school as well. And because those technologies are so well established, I think it's possibly tempting to take them for granted. But again, the critical approach to absolutely everything, including physical processes means that we can look at those existing technologies afresh, and experiment with them and explore them from the perspective of different environment. So I think in a weird way, the future technologies, the things that are only just emerging, the technologies that we think will emerge in tenuous time, can be looked at almost in similar ways to those very well established technologies that have been around for 100, 200, however long two years, because none of those technologies past or future are necessarily native to now. And all kinds of beyond the place that we occupy now.

B

Benji Jeffrey 22:45

And I guess alongside these kind of, well established ways of working, there's there's sometimes kind of rediscovering of technologies, which kind of ties into the kind of ideas around like decolonizing. And you know, kind of not showing necessarily preference for the the canon, that the technological kind of if that's the thing.

B

Barbara Brownie 23:04

I think, to really work effectively with any medium any technology, you have to go through a process of making strange of a hammer, stepping back and, and critically reappraising what it can do and defamiliarising it. And that is the best way to do interesting things with it is to not just approach it in the same way as people that has before or follow in the footsteps of people who have used that media or those technologies before but again, not taking that for granted. But but being more critical in your approach to it.

B

Benji Jeffrey 23:37

Yeah, I guess it's, you know, people say that we're in that period of post production, right, where it's not about so the trying to make new things but augmenting what has gone before perhaps.

B

Barbara Brownie 23:47

yeah and you know, being self referential, and yeah

B

Benji Jeffrey 23:49

Yeah.

B

Barbara Brownie 23:49

critiquing the past uses are these things.

B

Benji Jeffrey 23:51

Yeah. And one phrase that I know is used a lot in the School of Communication is what if could you just tell us a bit about that?

B

Barbara Brownie 23:58

Absolutely. Yes. So a lot of the projects that our students do, or the things that they're asked to consider, start with this? What if What if one thing was different? What if this world that you inhabit was completely transformed by one thing? In my own research, for example, with weightlessness? I asked, well, what if you remove gravity? What effect does that have on everything? And actually, it's really quite fundamental, because you take this one thing away, and everything that we take for granted changes. And those kinds of questions we ask a lot in the school and it forces students to question everything they've taken for granted. So we're going back to these these ideas about the assumptions that we make. And and the process of discarding those or critically reflecting on those assumptions, and imagining new worlds in which there are significant differences. But it really only needs to be one thing, you change one thing and the whole entire world changes.

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Benji Jeffrey 23:59

Yeah.

B

Barbara Brownie 24:00

And then everything has to be approached from a different perspective. Yeah. So could you tell us a bit about this work with microgravity. At the moment, I am particularly looking at space as a site for creative practice. And broadly that I mean, that's a huge topic. But the main difference between the environment in space if you're inside a spacecraft at least, and the environment on Earth is the absence of gravity. And it means so many things that affect the things that artists and designers do very differently have to start from very different

foundations. So for example, we are so used to this idea of things being upright and having a top and a bottom. Those concepts don't exist in space, there is no such thing as a top on the bottom, and you could very much approach things in the round.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 25:38  
Right.

**B** Barbara Brownie 25:39  
So these fundamental ideas that we take for granted have to be completely reconsidered, you have to discard these ideas that I think has a top and bottom. And my own research, for example, into the dress, body and space. And what silhouette is we are used to the idea of a silhouette as being this upright standing form, not only the bodies in space, not stand that, you know, they're in much more of a kind of seated position a little bit like a snowboarder, so they don't ever take that, that posture. But also, you would really approach a weightless body from the front. So you'd see all sorts different angles, you might see a body from above the shoulders or below the feet. So you start to see angles that you don't necessarily encounter on Earth. And we are so used to designing the front of clothes and the back of clothes and possibly the side of clothes, we don't think about what a dress might look like underneath or from above. Yeah. And so you start having to think about all these different angles, and the idea of a silhouette, then changes. And throughout the history of fashion we have had this idea of the new silhouette and silhouette has evolved. And it's always evolved in terms of things like the ratio of bust to the waist to the hips, but soon as you get into space, and you're not seeing an elevation view or a front on view of of a body and upright view of a body, then you start to see the kind of new paradigms in what silhouette could be, it's no longer about that ratio of bust to waist to hips, it might be an entirely different thing. But it's always evolving and changing as the body rotates around and floats in zero gravity and is, is approached from different angles.

**B** Benji Jeffrey 27:09  
And how does this manifest then? What does the silhouette of the future in space look like?

**B** Barbara Brownie 27:13  
I think we have to completely discard the idea of silhouette for one. So that's and that's the kind of thing that happens when you ask what hit what it if, you do have to just discard these things that you take for granted that have been fundamental to practice for a long time. And again, you know, in fashion, we have this history of practice based on on drape clothes are fabric draped on the body. But in space, there is no such thing as drape, because there is no gravity to hold fabric down on the body. So you have to completely discard this, this approach to practice that is no longer applicable.

**B** Benii leffrev 27:43

Benji Jeffrey 27:12

And you've been working with other practitioners on this is that correct? You've kind of got a group that's forming around this.

B

Barbara Brownie 27:49

At RCA yeah, we've got a space group. So we're not just concerned with the stuff that I'm doing, which is about weightlessness, but more broadly about the relationship between the arts and the space sector. And different people in the group take different approaches. So we might have people like me who are concerned with the environment of space and the potential for space as a site for deploying creative practice. But also, there are other people who are concerned with things like the data that's collected from space through satellites and things that they can do on earth with that data. So there's the astronomy side of things as well. There's, there's also people who are interested in the broader idea of the earth in the context of space and what it means to be human and to be an Earthling, as we explore the stars. So there's lots of different perspectives, that's different perspectives on space, and its relationship to the arts in in that group, and we will all kind of come together to, to focus on exploring those things.

B

Benji Jeffrey 28:47

Nice. And is the idea that this group will produce something, is it more a kind of conversational group? How does it operate?

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Barbara Brownie 28:53

I think we'd it's the group is a an opportunity, really, for conversations to happen,

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Benji Jeffrey 28:58

Yeah

B

Barbara Brownie 28:59

For collaborations to happen. So it's a big enough group that we won't always just be doing one thing, there'll be little groups within that group subgroups, working on different things at the same time, but then also kind of coming together and communicating with each other about shared interests. So I think broadly, we are very interested collectively, in the relationship between the arts and the space sector, but actually, in our individual groups, there are specific concerns that we have that are leading to lots of different projects or with that associated theme.

B

Benji Jeffrey 29:28

And do you see much of that emerging through student work? For example, we have the Grand

And do you see much of that emerging through student work? For example, we have the Grand Challenge where people are working on kind of like emergent topics which might need solving in the future. Is there any of that happening?

B

Barbara Brownie 29:41

I think we're very much focused on the future across the board, particularly in the school of communication, but also, particularly school of design as well. We are future facing. And again, this comes back to discipline and what your disciplines might be in the future and how they evolve. We're also solving problems that we see happening in the future, and making a better future building a future.

B

Benji Jeffrey 30:06

I guess that's why a lot of kind of creative education and creative fields in general, it's kind of about about building the world that you want to see.

B

Barbara Brownie 30:14

Yeah. Shaping, shaping the future, and hopefully, in positive ways. I think the way that we want to shape the future is not necessarily always through problem solving. I think that's probably one of the biggest differences between design and communication is that, you know, without oversimplifying things, I think in design, the approach to the future is often identifying and then solving problems that might exist in the future. Whereas in communication, we are more concerned about asking questions than we are problem solving. And so asking questions that help us to define what the future might be or who we might be in the future. Not necessarily finding answers, but just asking those questions.

B

Benji Jeffrey 30:59

Yeah. it's interesting to think about how the the different ways of thinking about this are across all the different disciplines as well. I was talking to Tandy on the last podcast about this, I was using a rubber band as a metaphor for saying, you know, we've speculate on these huge ideas, and then perhaps we spring back, and we do a little bit, and she was saying, Well, no, we actually have to, you know, be trying to solve the whole thing. It's not enough to just be doing a little bit, you've got to be getting the whole thing.

B

Barbara Brownie 31:21

Yeah, we don't feel the need to solve in the way that I think some of us do. I think I think we're there to ask provocative questions. Not to say we've got a definitive solution, It's all fixed now. I think we recognise that it's often quite, quite a bit more complicated than trying to solve a problem. And it's important to ask an answerable questions.



B

Benji Jeffrey 31:42

Yeah, yeah. I think there's less about solving problems and more about kind of saying that, you know, these these big pictures that we have can become realities.

B

Barbara Brownie 31:50

I think, yeah, we speculate not necessarily about things that might become realities, but also looking at an realities and fictions as a way of finding meaning that is applicable to the real world. But not necessarily focusing single mindedly on unreality, but I think questions that it's sometimes it helps to move beyond reality to, to understand reality.

B

Benji Jeffrey 32:15

Yeah.

B

Barbara Brownie 32:16

So we engage with fiction as a way of looking at the real world.

B

Benji Jeffrey 32:19

Yeah. And reality is just another boundary that we think we understand.

B

Barbara Brownie 32:25

Yes, then you get back to AI and virtual reality and all these other things as well, which are very much the core of communication. And the way that it's it's evolving. Yeah. What is reality is a bit too big a question.

B

Benji Jeffrey 32:37

is too big. Is there any advice you've got for people that want to engage with kind of topics around communication or get involved in in the field of communication.

B

Barbara Brownie 32:47

I'd say don't be too focused on communication itself, be focused on other things. And communication is a lens through which you can look at those other things.

B

Benji Jeffrey 32:57

I think this is in the conversation have been having that keeps coming back to which is I



I think this is in the conversation have been having that keeps coming back to which is I personally call it about like finding the joy. And then and then and then finding the way to do it, but you know, finding the thing you're interested in then working out what's right.

B

Barbara Brownie 33:09

Yeah.

B

Benji Jeffrey 33:10

and then communicating that thing. Cool. Well, thank you for joining me today. Barbara.

B

Barbara Brownie 33:15

Thank you very much.

B

Benji Jeffrey 33:16

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