

Suspect Culture Resource Pack

Please note this is an extract from the pack. For the full resource pack please e-mail devina@suspectculture.com

Suspect Culture, National Theatre of Scotland and Brighton Festival present a new theatre show

Futurology: A Global Revue

April 10 – May 10

Glasgow • Edinburgh • Aberdeen • Brighton



Introduction

Suspect Culture's shows usually start with a question or line of enquiry, which the creative team then rigorously pursue over an extended development process. For this project, the development process started with initial ideas in November 2004 and evolved over a series of workshops, the last of which took place in January this year.

The aim of this pack is to provide some simple starting points for people to pursue the lines of enquiry used by the creative team during the development process, as well as a background to the main themes and issues explored in the show. It can be used by teachers as an aid to help with workshops and discussions (for pupils aged 15-18 years old).

Suspect Culture

The company was formed in the 1990s and is based in the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow. Its work is devised and unlike traditional theatre companies where the writer delivers a script and other members of the creative team join the development process at a much later stage, Suspect Culture works collaboratively. This means that the writer, director, designer and musician work together on a project from the very early stages right through to the end.

Strange Behaviour

This pack is part of our Strange Behaviour interpretation programme which the company expanded in January 2007. Unlike traditional education and outreach programmes, this allows for learning through the exploration of the project's line of enquiry, using a range of interpretive activities. In addition, it offers learning through association with many different groups and viewpoints. The interpretive activities are offered in an integrated manner so that they complement one another, with the ultimate aim of broadening and increasing people's understanding and enjoyment of contemporary art.

Interpretation is inspired by the work already carried out extensively and successfully in the field of visual art.

Other interpretive activities available for *Futurology: A Global Revue...*

As well as the other activities outlined below Suspect Culture and NTS Learn have been working with a variety of community groups across the three cities in Scotland, to explore the lines of enquiry that *Futurology* will open up, creating an environment of debate and a range of multimedia outcomes that will be exhibited throughout the tour.

- **www.whatisfuturology.com** is a blog created for this show only, to discuss and debate current ideas around futures thinking and to explore how we think about the future
- **Website** ▪ In the run up to the opening, our website www.suspectculture.com will contain preview material, such as interviews with the creative team
- **Accessible Performances** ▪ **Glasgow SECC** signed performance 12 Apr, audio described performance and touch tour 7pm, 14 Apr ▪ **Edinburgh Corn Exchange** signed performance 19 Apr, audio described performance and touch tour 7pm, 21 Apr ▪ **Aberdeen AECC** signed performance 27 Apr, audio described performance and touch tour 7pm, 28 Apr
- **Exhibition Area** ▪ Information about the company, the show, the people and the processes involved in the creation of the show will be presented in the form of visual displays, text and multimedia material in a dedicated area within each venue
- **Programme** ▪ A programme made available to audiences as an accompaniment to the performance will be in the form of a 'delegate pack,' in keeping with the conference environment created for the show
- **Symposium – Arts & The Future 13 Apr @ SECC** ▪ An interactive, interdisciplinary forum to explore the possible relationship between the field of futurology and theatre/ arts will be held prior to the show on 13 Apr, 2pm – 6pm. Tickets will be sold separately and details will be on the website later in March
- **Post-show Discussions 12 Apr Glasgow, 19 Apr Edinburgh, 27 Apr Aberdeen, 7 May Brighton** ▪ A chaired public forum will be held to discuss the themes and processes of the project with the cast and creative team

For further details about the activities being offered as part of our interpretation programme, please visit our website or contact Devina Kumar on devina@suspectculture.com

Future Projects

As well as *Futurology: A Global Revue*, a large scale production which we are launching very soon with National Theatre of Scotland and Brighton Festival, we are also going to embark on a range of creative projects this year, including film and visual art.



Summer 2007: DigiCult Shorts – *Missing* (working title)

This Summer we will be working with DigiCult to produce our first short film. Lasting ten minutes *Missing* follows the story of Rachel, whose husband has been missing for seven years without a trace.



Autumn 2007: Suspect Culture and CCA's Exhibition

This Autumn we will be expanding our role as cultural tenants of Glasgow's Centre for Contemporary Arts. We will be collaborating to put together a series of events to examine the interface between theatre and visual arts practice, including an exhibition of new and existing work from both fields, a symposium and film programme.



Spring 2008: *Word 7* (working title)

This will be a co-production with leading English theatre company Graeae, with whom we have a shared sense of curiosity about the world and the ways in which we communicate (or fail to). *Word 7* will be a devised piece working with Suspect Culture's associate artist Dan Rebellato and Graeae's artistic director, Jenny Sealey

Did you know...?

The origins of modern futurology can be traced back to the vast spending of the US military-industrial complex during and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. With the onset of the Cold War, the US government set up the RAND Corporation in 1946 to look at new ways of waging warfare in light of the dropping of the two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This involved developing future scenarios addressing such ideas as 'Mutually Assured Destruction' and 'the missile gap' – which transfixed a large part of America in the 1950s and 1960s

There are more Ethiopian doctors working in America than in Ethiopia

The country which receives the most workers' remittances from abroad is Mexico which received \$13.2 billion in 2003, followed by India with \$ 8. 4 billion and the Philippines with \$ 8.0 billion

The country with the largest share of its electricity created by nuclear energy is Lithuania (79.9%), followed by France (77.7%). The UK (23.7%) and the US (19.9%) account for two of the lowest shares in developed countries

The Spratly Islands in the South China Sea are made up of forty or so islands. They are claimed wholly or in part by six governments: China, Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. Five military forces occupy parts of the islands: China, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam

There are currently 191 nation states in the world. However, the onward march of democracy – which the end of the Cold War raised hopes of – has increasingly stalled. A recent survey by The Economist Intelligence Unit rated that there were only 28 'full democracies' in the world, and twice as many (54) 'flawed democracies'. The survey placed the US 17th and the UK 23rd

More households in China have DVD players than running hot and cold water

Futurology

“When we first started to think about futurology as a concept for the show, we were still very interested in the show having a political content and exploring ideas around global economics. Obviously this is a very broad and challenging aspiration so we’d been trying to think of perspectives that might give us more focus. That’s where the idea of futurology came in.”

“The idea of predicting/depicting the future seemed interesting to us, as much for what it says about the present (and the politics/anxieties/aspirations of those doing the predicting), as what it says about the future. A lot of discussions around global economics, and even environmental issues which often seem to be drawn in, involve the use of ‘scenarios’ – if trends x and y persist then in 2020 we can expect to see z. Obviously what z describes varies wildly depending on whether it’s a neo-conservative or an environmental campaigner who’s doing the predicting”.

Suspect Culture’s artistic director, Graham Eatough, talking about how and why the idea for doing a show around the subject of futurology came about.

Almost everyone thinks about the future. We talk about the future, make predictions about it, and sometimes even bet on it. Thinking and imagining the future is one of the main ingredients of what it is to be human. What people and organisations rarely do is to make a concerted attempt to connect what we do in the here and now to what we think will happen in the future.

Q. Which do you think about more, the past or the future?

The term ‘futurology’ is a very mysterious and ambiguous term which had connotations of a secretive science. It has normally been the preserve of governments, public agencies and business. Governments and large organisations have a need to try to understand future trends which may affect their economies, public revenues and the state of the planet. But in truth we can all engage in futures thinking.

Q. Do you feel you have the power to influence the future – your personal future or that of your wider community?

There is no real mystique or secret set of tools involved in futurology, though the terminology can be can make it sound so... scenarios building, visioning, the Delphi method, backcasting, environmental scanning. In reality the methods utilised are techniques which are widely and publicly used in other settings. For example, scenario-building is one the most common tools associated with futures thinking and it basically involves collating and understanding data, trends, what these might mean, and where these might lead.

A common place way of imagining the future involves science fiction and technology. This can be seen in films as far as apart as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* in 1927 and *Minority Report* in 2002. Despite the years between these films, both of them have similar ideas of how the future might work out; a future shaped by flying cars, impersonal, modernist cities, and a society where the individual is less important than the mass. But Futurology isn't about such futures. Instead it is about developing scenarios which illustrate different possible futures. These are never actual predictions, but are offered to people as a starting point in discussions about how people want to act now, and what future changes or trends may be important to respond to.

Q. What role do you think art and creativity plays when it comes to thinking about the future?

The use of futures thinking can be used to aid political change and identify common ground between people who are political opponents. A range of scenario-building exercises were used in the period from the twilight years of the South African apartheid regime to the establishment of a democratic political system. One of these exercises in the late 1980s saw two futures illustrated, a 'High Road' and a 'Low Road', and the materials used in discussions between the South African government and the ANC. Some commentators have pointed to this, and subsequent exercises in the early 1990s, as being factors in the peaceful end of apartheid.

But the future by its nature is unpredictable. Things happen which just cannot be predicted. It is true that futures thinking can sometimes for all its claims be too influenced by the framework and priorities of the present day. An example of this was the US published book *The Year 2000*, published by the Hudson Institute in 1967. It attempted to address how the last one-third of the twentieth century would pan out, and while it got many things right, there were some vital oversights too. Despite being written during the 'summer of love', it did not dwell on the social revolution that was sweeping across the US and Western Europe and leading to more equality between men and women, and greater tolerance for lesbians and gays. At an international level, it failed to see the Middle East or the resurgence of Islam as significant factors for the political climate of the future.

Q. What do you think are the three most important global concerns for the future? And what do you think are the factors that affect how each individual would answer this question?

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Futures Research Quarterly

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*For the full resource pack contact Devina Kumar on devina@suspectculture.com
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