



4IR

UNIT SIX | PAOLO ZAIDE + FARLIE REYNOLDS

'A love of nature keeps no factories busy.'
— Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

We are on the brink of 4IR - the fourth industrial revolution. Building on the momentum of last century's digital revolution, 4IR is beginning to merge our cyber networks with our physical infrastructure at an accelerating rate, creating new hybridised environments. With every mile of optic fibre laid and each new artificially intelligent device embedded in the *internet of things*, the ways in which we interface with our physical environment are modified and the ways we interact with one and other are shaped. In this technological storm our culture and economy will be forged. How will these advances fundamentally change the way we live, and ultimately, challenge our way of life? Intrigued by this fragile tension between cultural tradition and technological progression, this year's brief invites you to enter tomorrow's *Brave New Worlds*.

This year's programme is sited on the city's edge, a suburban landscape that will be reinvented with 4IR. Once thriving sites of production and manufacturing in previous industrial revolutions, these forgotten factory townscapes are now promised a new lease of life, set to boom with new creative and cultural economies. Our brief this year challenges you to determine the emerging futures of these urban fringes and imagine how new technologies might redefine them. The factory typology is now being optimised through automation, but how do we picture our homes and neighbourhoods to be? In a digitally oversaturated world what kinds of spaces do we design in which we can live, learn or simply do nothing?

[Hindsight / Foresight] We will be forecasting 50 years ahead, envisioning our technologically enriched societies of 2067, whilst grounding ourselves 50 years behind, observing and learning from the progress we have made over the last 50 years. With the hindsight of the last half-century, you will curate a personal narrative which allows you the foresight to design for the near future. We will discover a century of bold progress and bold mistakes, of utopian miracles and naïve follies:

1967. *The world's first ATM is installed in Enfield, Star Trek debuts on television screens, the World Expo showcases a new building typology with Buckminster Fuller's Biosphere, the Apollo missions are on the verge of putting man on the Moon and the first human is cryogenically frozen. Around the world technologists, culturists and designers were confidently writing a bold and beautiful future promising social progress as emerging technologies were coming of age.*

2017. *Billions of pounds exchange hands globally in the swipe of a smartphone yet ATMs still line our high streets. Cryogenics are still the stuff of science fiction and we have not returned to the Moon for almost half a century, yet members of the public are signing up in droves to colonise Mars. Star Trek reboots.*

2067. *Where do we start and on what scale do we, as designers, begin to imagine our future? Observing the course of the last half-century, we are simultaneously surprised and underwhelmed by the progress we have made. The *Brave New**

Worlds promised in '67 haven't quite materialised, yet something else has happened altogether: the intellectually appealing and awe inspiring predictions have aged badly, whilst the most affordable and mundane innovations have had far reaching impacts on our lives: *Star Trek* brought the mobile phone into our collective consciousness along with larger scale visions of space travel, yet we failed to predict how our everyday lives could be transformed here on Earth. The canonical vision of our mid 21st century future *Blade Runner* made the embarrassing inclusion of payphones on our High Street because it was similarly distracted by fantastical innovations. Five billion people are connected to mobile devices today, whilst only 220 people have ever set foot on the international space station. Do the real clues on the impact of technology begin with the human-scale?

BRIEF + SITE

The first project asks you to explore an individual's encounter with a new technology through a short design piece pairing science AND fiction, the second project is an architectural building proposal that will tease out the forms of spaces and conditions that cater for the wellbeing of the towns' future communities.

Gravesend, once a naval and shipbuilding town, is now a commuter zone that maintains only a small proportion of industrial activity. Across the water, Tilbury remains the principle port of London with a rich industrial history. East Tilbury's 1932 *Bata* factory provided a unique model of a Company Town, which followed the blueprint of the industrial garden city of Zlín, Czech Republic. Unique to the architecture of *Bata Town* was its utopian vision of community living, that offered a farm to supply the eggs and milk for the guests at the Bata Hotel, tennis courts, football pitches and a swimming pool for the worker's leisure, and a local cafe complete with an espresso bar and jukebox. Taking delight in *Bata Town's* past, we ask you what opportunities the fourth industrial revolution might offer to provide a similar sense of togetherness, care and taste for the exquisite.

01 High Street - Future Streetscapes

The first project is a small-scale intervention. You are asked to reimagine a piece of the High Street through a piece of technology. Despite the rise of e-commerce, the physical high street still retains a vital role in our towns and cities. Will you go to the future park house to smell the first blossoming of spring, what will become of the paperless post office or the public library and what will happen to the payphone on the high street? In the first weeks of the project you will construct your narrative primarily through drawing and working models, and in the second half of the term you will develop this through into a three-dimensional proposal. A combination of science and fiction will form critical interventions for the new High Street, which will form the basis for the building project and the rest of the year.

02 Road Trip - Explorative Fields

In January we will travel across industrial towns and cityscapes. The journey will start in Zlín, the birthplace of *Bata Town* and continue from Brno north to Prague and Berlin, to explore the transformation of what are regarded to be model cities. Prague has shed its industrial past, and is establishing technical start-up hubs of the future. Berlin's layered history, as a divided and reconnected city, was of course also the home of the revolutionary *Bauhaus*, and the urban experiments of *Gropiusstadt*. Meanwhile, a nondescript former factory building on the border of Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain has established itself as the uncontested capital of Techno. These towns and cities of imaginative adaptation and regeneration present a rich cross-section of case studies for future communities and transformations.

03 Gravesbury - Revolutionary Townscapes

We will return from our travels to Zlín - Berlin back to Gravesend and Tilbury in Essex. The connection between these towns will become our focus for the main building project, where you will reimagine the impact of technology on the production, spaces and communities along the Thames Corridor. What will be important for these towns' communities - and how will the hybrid of technology and space support our lifestyles beyond the functional and pragmatic? How will it help to reconnect to its historic past, the societies of today and the ecologies and architecture of tomorrow? With a focus on the community over technology, what types of programmes and forms of living will cater for the welfare, ambitions and dreams of these neighbourhoods? 4IR provides an opportunity to think how we can connect and reconnect with these virtual and physical realities. Still untested, *Gravesbury* presents a site for sensitive experimentation, wonder and a taste for the unknown.