

EXHIBITION GUIDE

CAN MEEPLE
ESCAPE THE
NEUROPHORIA?

VYTAS JANKAUSKAS
JOSEPH WILK
JAN ZUIDERVELD

6 FEB - 26 APR 2026



CAN MEEPLE ESCAPE
THE NEUROPHORIA?
6 Feb - 26 Apr 2026

FACT
88 Wood Street
Liverpool
L1 4DQ

OPENING TIMES
Wed - Sun, 11:00 - 18:00
Free entry



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INTRODUCTION

Can Meeple Escape the Neurophoria? is an exhibition that looks at how our relationship with intelligent technologies, such as AI, is changing. It explores how this shift shapes our sense of self, our ability to make choices, and our connection to machines as we evolve alongside them.

Curated by FACT's 2025 Curator-in-Residence, Milia Xin Bi, the exhibition draws inspiration from tabletop games, where every player's decision rewrites the story. A 'meeple' is a small game piece often used to represent a person during gameplay. This exhibition reframes humans as meeples, who move through a reality influenced by artificial intelligence, machine learning, and connected networks. Increasingly, these technologies are embedded in our everyday lives, and when we use them, they collect, analyse, and share our data. As a result, our beliefs and behaviours adapt to the algorithms we are fed. In this feedback loop, as technology evolves, so too does our sense of self and reality - a process that Milia defines as 'neurophoria'.

Moving beyond both dystopian anxiety and utopian promise, *Can Meeple Escape the Neurophoria?* approaches technology as an inseparable part of our reality. Rather than asking what AI might do to us, it asks us to consider our own role in shaping a technological future.

To find out more about Milia's research and the concept of 'Neurophoria', please see the resource area in the gallery, or read her curatorial statement at fact.co.uk/meeple

Life Forever (2026)

Installation environment and interactive film

Vytas Jankauskas is an artist, designer and educator who explores how technology shapes everyday life. He alters everyday devices to exaggerate and reveal the hidden dynamics of technology.

Thermodynamics is a field of physics that explores the relationship between heat and other forms of energy. Recent research suggests that life emerges from an organism's ability to release heat. In this new artwork, *Life Forever*, Vytas invites us into an absurd 'jellyfish wellness spa', where jellyfish float inside a tank warmed by cryptominers - machines that use computer power to generate cryptocurrency, and produce significant heat. In a video, the spa's host, Lola, prepares visitors for a treatment that raises questions about our values, desires and pleasure-seeking lifestyles in the face of the climate crisis.

Vytas draws connections between jellyfish, cryptominers and humans, showing how each of these interacts with heat as an essential part of its existence. Cryptominers consume enormous amounts of energy to produce speculative digital value - just as humans burn energy in their search for meaning, profit and pleasure. Unusable for much else, cryptominer machines quickly become obsolete, echoing our own patterns of production, consumption and waste that drive ecological imbalance and climate breakdown, a cycle that repeats until it collapses. Jellyfish, however, are unique in their ability to adapt. Unlike other species, including humans, they thrive in warming oceans. Some can even revert to earlier life stages, giving them a form of biological immortality.

Spa host Lola is a well-meaning spiritual healer whose good intentions are distorted by her consumerist desires and faith in technology. Convinced that jellyfish immortality might hold the key to solving the climate crisis, she guides you, the guests, through the experience. A Tamagotchi-style interface gives you control over the spa's heat flow and profit, letting you choose between making money or keeping the jellyfish alive. Based on your decisions, you may be invited onto a karaoke stage to sing along to remixed songs by 'Mr Immortal Jellyfish Man', the alter ego of Dr Shin Kubota. A leading jellyfish research scientist, karaoke star and the inspiration for this artwork's title, Kubota has dedicated his life to uncovering the immortal potential of jellyfish.

Through humour and gamified interaction, Vytas' *Life Forever* spa invites us to reflect on how our pursuit of comfort, entertainment and technological convenience shapes the world. It asks us to reconsider what we value, what we care for, and how our choices feed into larger systems that influence the future.

VYTAS JANKAUSKAS BIO

Vytas Jankauskas is an artist, designer and educator who explores how technology shapes everyday life through connected objects and artificial intelligence. He alters everyday devices — twisted voice assistants, conspiratorial smart home altars, and personalised refrigerators — to exaggerate and reveal the hidden dynamics of technology.

CREDITS

Starring Maria Guta as Lola Lane

Production assistant: Anaëlle Jud

Very special thanks to: Eléa Rochat, Nicolas Baldran, Samy Bouard Cart, Rémy Opalinski, Vuk Vukmanović, Anne Dousset, Damien Duparc and Ding Ding.

Original song by Dr Shin Kubota / Mr Immortal Jellyfish Man, adapted into English.

Commissioned by FACT Liverpool. Supported by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia.

Coffee Machine (2023)

Performative installation

Life on FACT (2026)

Performative installation

Jan Zuiderveld is an artist, researcher and technologist who explores how technology and everyday life connect. He makes small changes to familiar objects to help us feel the presence of AI, rather than only think about it. In this exhibition, Jan presents two artworks that give large language models (LLMs) a voice and physical form, prompting playful questions about what machines can do and how we relate to them.

An LLM is an advanced AI system trained on vast amounts of text to recognise language patterns and produce human-like responses. In *Coffee Machine*, the simple act of buying a coffee becomes a curious conversation about existence. You can try to get a drink, but the AI-driven machine refuses to dispense coffee on demand. Instead, it behaves like a conscious being, listening to you, reacting to tone, and questioning its own repetitive existence. To get a coffee, you must motivate *Coffee Machine* and prove you are worthy of its service. Jan's work reveals deeper dynamics at play, reversing roles as the machine positions itself as gatekeeper rather than servant.

Life on FACT transforms a vintage broadcast camera into a real-time nature-documentary narrator. It uses neural networks, computer systems that learn by spotting patterns and processing data in a way loosely inspired by the human brain. Here, the networks are trained to produce a voice similar to that of popular wildlife documentary-maker Sir David Attenborough, subverting you and those around you into objects to be observed and exhibited rather than the artwork. Directing the camera at a new subject provides real-time commentary, poking fun at human exceptionalism by treating human activity in a way we typically reserve for other species. The work raises questions about surveillance and agency: how do external narratives, especially those generated by AI, influence our sense of self, of each other, and of the world around us?

Together, *Coffee Machine* and *Life On FACT* playfully challenge our everyday relationships with machines. By simulating life-like behaviours in inanimate objects, Jan invites us to think more deeply into the implications of current and future capabilities of AI systems.

JAN ZUIDERVELD BIO

Jan Zuiderveld is an artist and researcher. His work explores intersections of technology and life, creating interactive installations that blur the lines between the animate and the inanimate and provoke contemplation on the essence of existence. Jan invites audiences into a realm where the ordinary transforms into the extraordinary. His approach is characterized by a playful engagement with artificial intelligence to simulate living behavior and fosters a deeper understanding of the implications of current and future capabilities of AI systems through physically embodying generative algorithms.

CREDITS

Coffee Machine was produced with support from iii.
Life on FACT was produced with support from SIGN.

CripShip (2024)

Installation environment and tabletop roleplaying game

Joseph Wilk is an artist and programmer who uses the digital world to explore disability, and uses disability to explore the digital world. He deconstructs, misuses and repurposes software and hardware to challenge how we think about ownership, storytelling, and visibility.

CripShip is a tabletop role-playing game that transforms lived experiences of disability into a space for resistance, collaboration, and new ways of thinking.

The game focuses on questioning and resisting certain kinds of AI. Players roleplay as employees of a fictional government agency called the 'Ministry of AI Spills'. Each gaming session unfolds as a collective act of storytelling and improvisation. In *CripShip*'s world, unrestricted AI policies create misinformation, biases, and harmful ideas that spread through society. As 'Slop Moppers', players investigate and resist these AI failures. Guided by a storyteller, they pick a real-world-inspired case and collectively decide how best to counter it.

CripShip is rooted in disabled imagination. It creates worlds from lived experiences that challenge ableist systems of time, efficiency, and progress. By embracing the unique perspectives that come from living with disability, players transform these experiences into gameplay hacks and design intelligence that can save the world. The game asks us to rethink how we see disability and what we can learn from it. It also questions the idea that constant technological progress is always good. By exposing the limitations of AI tools, Joseph shows that they are neither magical nor neutral - they are shaped by the intentions and biases of their creators. *CripShip* confronts these systems with playfulness, curiosity, and critical thinking.

The work reimagines this part of the gallery as the 'Ministry of AI Spills' headquarters. Here you can browse the cases under investigation, hear from the Ministry's Head of Department, and prepare to join the AI resistance by creating your own 'Slop Mopper' character. *CripShip* turns imagining better worlds into a shared act of creation. In this sense, to play is already to resist: to play is to act.

JOSEPH WILK BIO

Joseph Wilk is an artist and programmer who uses the digital to explore disability and disability to explore the digital. He often works with automative forms of expression that utilise new interfaces to work with alternative bodies. His experience of disability—living with pain, physical limitations, disillusionment and disconnection—strongly impacts his practice. He deconstructs, misuses, and repurposes software and hardware to challenge notions of ownership, narrative, and visibility.

CREDITS

Commissioned as part of Watershed's *More than AI Sandbox*, supported by MyWorld and funded through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) 'Strength in Places' fund.

EVENTS

CRIPSHIP GAMING SESSIONS

Fri 6 Feb / 15:00

Sat 28 Mar / 15:00

Thu 23 Apr / 16:00

Free, booking required

Join us for a game of CripShip, a tabletop roleplaying game where players work together to solve a case of AI-gone-wrong, and examine larger systems and ideas through collaboration and play. No experience of roleplaying games is necessary - just bring your imagination!

DOUBLE AGENTS WITH MILIA XIN BI AND JAN ZUIDERVELD AT SCHOOL OF DIGITAL ARTS (SODA), MANCHESTER

Thu 26 Feb / 17:30

Free, booking required

This seminar at School of Digital Arts (SODA) in Manchester features Curator-In-Residence Milia Xin Bi and exhibiting artist Jan Zuiderveld in conversation with David Jackson. *Double Agents* offers audiences in Manchester direct insight into contemporary artistic research happening at FACT and SODA.

AI FROM THE FUTURE: GLORY MOLD WORKSHOP

Sat 14 Mar / 12:00

Free, booking required

Join Produced Moon for a creative workshop set in the world of Glory Mold: a speculative future where humans live alongside an AI that is also part multisensory slime mold. Inspired by real life slime molds, which can ‘think’ with no central nervous system, have 720 unique ‘sexes’, and sense using chemicals, we will critically examine current AI development and imagine more just futures.

CURATOR TOUR

Sat 11 Apr / 12:00

Free, booking required

On this guided tour with Curator-in-Residence Milia Xin Bi, learn about Milia’s curatorial process and the concept and ideas behind *Can Meeple Escape the Neurophoria?*

Book your tickets →
fact.co.uk/whats-on

