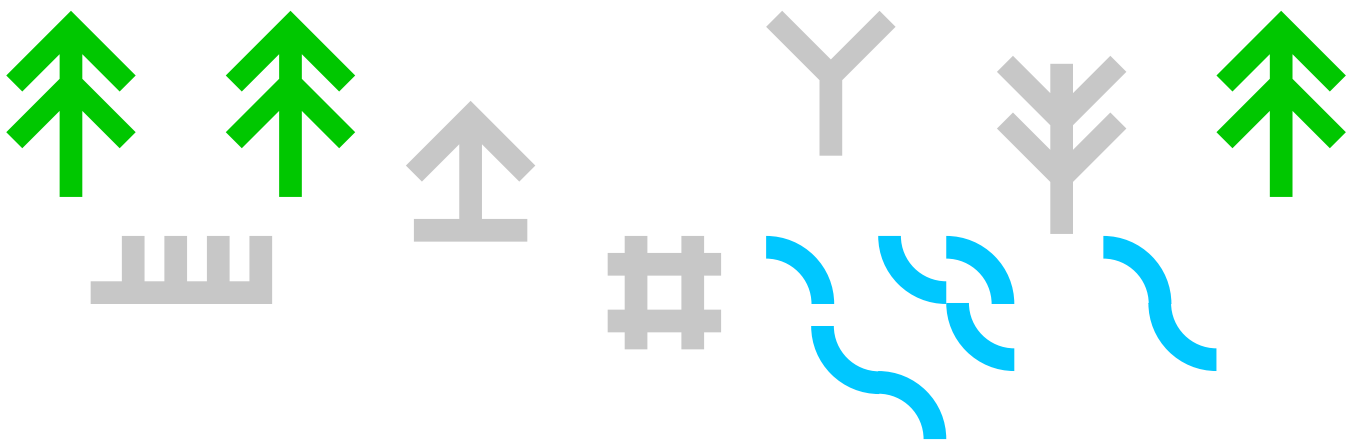


reworlding as method;

approaches to urban play in the future play lab.



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about the lab.

The RMIT future play lab is home to a diverse community of researchers, students, industry leaders, and policymakers focussed on the social, cultural and economic opportunities of urban play.

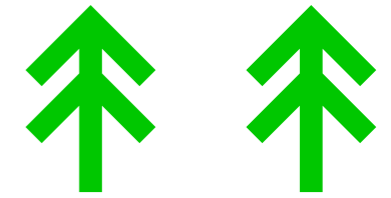
The lab was founded by Dr Troy Innocent in a disused School of Design studio space in post-lockdown Melbourne with a vision to connect speculative design, creative placemaking, and varied forms of urban play.

The lab is now the place for researchers and industry to bring creative experimentation into the urban landscape, and to nurture Melbourne's best emerging play designers.

reworlding as method documents lab's distinctive approach to urban play. The future play lab invites you to explore the lab's unique 'reworlding' methodology and its impact on urban design policy in Melbourne, Australia.

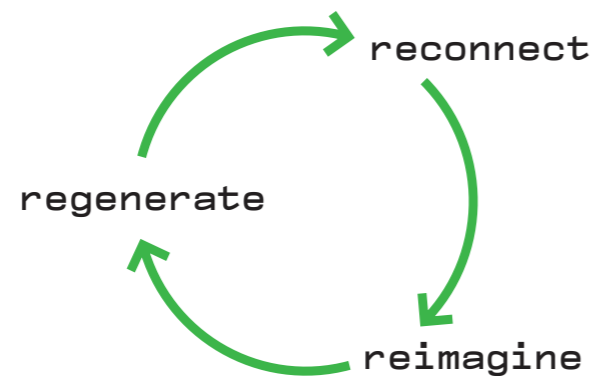
Over the past four years, the future play lab has developed and delivered over thirty projects in public spaces establishing methods of reworlding in diverse contexts and communities.

Using examples from the lab's projects and interviews with affiliated researchers, educators and playmakers, this report will outline how the work of the lab directly translates into strategies for teaching and learning, play design methods, policy and strategies for Melbourne's future development.



why reworlding?

reworlding is a transdisciplinary methodology for practice-based research. It is circular and experiential, constantly cycling through three core processes:



The recurrence of the prefix *re-* is a deliberate action in this strategy. It counters linear thinking to subliminally signal actions and ways of being that are cyclical, moving forwards and backwards at once, decentred and relational.

Worlding is an ontological process that acts to make tangible worlds through experience, **reworlding** hacks and hijacks dominant patterns in our collective social imaginaries to show and reveal alternate patterns, other possible worlds.

reworlding in action

“*Reworlding frames play as dynamic and disruptive but also immersive, collaborative, and generative.*”

Troy Innocent, future play lab director

How can we reimagine and remake our cities over the next decade to be adaptive and responsive to change?

The future play lab approach is based on lab director, Troy Innocent's unique approach to reworlding through urban play. For Innocent, situating players within direct experiences allows possible future scenarios to assume tangible forms through reworlding. Future thinking becomes embodied and relatable to the conditions, structures, and material forms that shape our everyday lives.

Reworlding through play is centred on speculative and relational world building, focusing on nurturing and developing existing patterns in culture, environment, and society. The method materialises through everyday actions, speculative design and playful thinking. This approach also connects to 'regenerative design thinking' by placing the circular economy and ecological literacy into practice to respond to the challenges of climate crisis and 'post-covid' cities.

During this time of unprecedented change, policymakers need new knowledge to tackle the multiple challenges of urban futures, and need strategic insight into how to best invest their time and resources to benefit citizens.

The future play lab aims to establish our reworlding method as central to creating future ready policy.



the players



Troy Innocent

Director: future play lab

“ Playable cities can strengthen our connections to where we live and work by drawing on an eclectic mix of play, creative technologies, public art and urban design. ”

Associate Professor Troy Innocent is an urban play scholar, artist gamemaker, and Director of the future play lab at RMIT University in Naarm Melbourne, where the methods of reworlding were developed.

They are creator of 64 Ways of Being, an urban adventure platform combining audio walks and mixed realities to situate players in new experiences of place.

They have 25 years' experience in exhibitions, symposia and site-specific projects, developing augmented reality games that blend physical objects with digital interfaces to reimagine everyday urban environments in playful ways; situating their work in Aarhus, Melbourne, Bristol, Barcelona, Istanbul, Ogaki, Sydney, Tampere and Hong Kong.

N'arweet Carolyn Briggs

Traditional Custodian

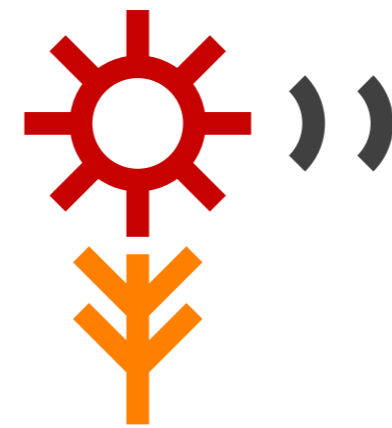
“ We've just got to unlock all that ancient knowledge in all of us. I think that's one of the things we've forgotten to do. We are entities that are made up of so many different influences, but we exist.. ”

N'arweet Professor Carolyn Briggs AM PhD is a senior Yalukut-Weelam and Boon Wurrung elder and Indigenous rights activist. The Boonwurrung people are one of five language groups in the Kulin Nation that currently occupies the same land as many recently established cities, including Melbourne, Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong.

The lab is located on the land of the Kulin Nation, which is N'arweet's Country.

As a traditional custodian and future play lab leader N'arweet is central to methodologies that explore regenerative futures.

By connecting landscape and geography before European colonisation, while also responding to present relationships between place and its infrastructure, N'arweet's focus is to bring, through creative play, new ways of imagining and interpreting place within Indigenous Knowledges and Practices.



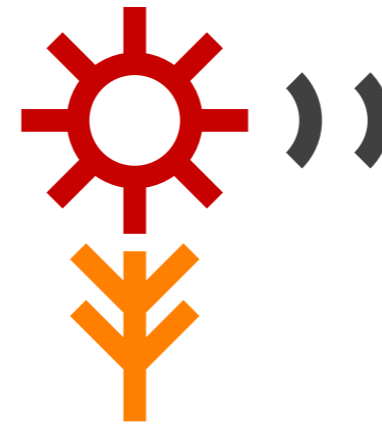
about the lab play as method

The lab develops socially engaged and site responsive urban play connecting experimental game design, public space, posthuman methods, and creative technologies.

Working with the city as a material, the lab's approach to reworlding develops posthuman methods that reimagine, reconfigure and reconnect with the world.

The future play lab brings together a multidisciplinary team, many of whom have extensive personal and professional histories in games and play. Members of the lab have disciplinary backgrounds in play design, game development, animation, industrial design, fine art, sociology, architecture, urban design, music and performance.

They bring these theoretical knowledges to bear on practice-led approaches to research. Lab members use reworlding methodologies to translates speculative ideas into real-world contexts where public engagement with the design or play format is fed back into future design iterations. Experimentation and testing go hand-in-hand with a culture of collaboration. Teams of researchers collaborate in largely self-organising ways, drawing upon their complimentary skills to respond to a project brief or design.



methods of reworlding playful pedagogies

Playful pedagogies are focussed on how to transform institutional structures and norms. They purposively act between structure and openness to find new, participatory processes that improve capacity for flexibility and change within a system.

Troy Innocent developed playful pedagogical approaches that operate at the intersection of urban play, posthuman thinking, speculative design and process philosophies.

Playful pedagogies are creative processes that engage at levels of individual, collective, place, and world. In the lab playful pedagogies are a method for negotiating between different civic actors, from community participants, to cultural institutions, to government decision-makers and policymakers, to game designers.

This mediating work is intended to open up pathways for more democratic and participatory processes within existing structures, as well as working to transform and expand these structures from within.

Carlo Tolentino Creative Producer

Carlo came to the future play lab as an alumnus of the first Urban Play School in 2020. He is now an integral part of research and learning in the Lab as a creative producer and educator. As a Creative Producer during the development of the Clarendon Street Arcade, Carlo applied his own practice expertise in the field of interactive art and design, and fostered methodologies of play with the vibrant and diverse community of collaborators, artists, interactive design practitioners working on the project.

“Research through the future play lab is centered around urban play projects that are conceptualized, developed and practically put out on-location in public spaces for people to engage with. Lived experience as a form of research enriches and shapes our individual creative practices, as well as how we can collectively inquire and meaningfully apply how the concept of play reimagines ways we can experience and connect with people and place.”

Carlo also brings this approach to his role as an educator in RMIT School of Design's Masters of Animation, Games, and Interactivity (MAGI). The future play lab allows Carlo to use play as a learning and teaching tool, providing opportunities for students to explore, experiment, and develop their skills through hands-on experiences. His contribution to the lab's Urban Play School gives students a valuable opportunity to collaborate with industry professionals, engage in real-world projects, public playtesting, and gain practical experience on urban play and creative placemaking.





**Gin Lin +
Nicholas Leong**
Urban Play School alumni

Gin Lin and Nicholas Leong are recent Urban Play School alumni who successfully used the Lab's playful pedagogies to create the interactive sound installation, *Symphony With*. RMIT Creative connected with students working in the Future Play Lab to offer an opportunity to develop and test new public art games for Melbourne International Games Week (MIGW).

Nicholas and Gin used this opportunity to think about how to allow individuals to engage deeply with their surroundings and with each other.

“*Symphony With* organically encourages students to explore patterns, collaborate, and compose a ‘symphony’ together. It bridges the gap between strangers and friends, fostering social interaction and connection.”

Symphony With invites participants delve into the intricate patterns of a cardboard sculpture, and in doing so, unlock a symphony of sounds. Each pattern produces a different tone, encouraging exploration and discovery.



playful pedagogies in action

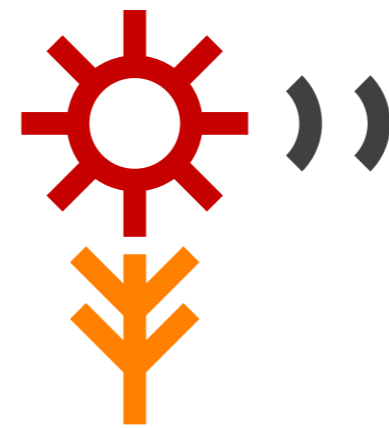
Urban Play School

“Urban Play School (UPS) was established in 2019 to support learning and teaching in the RMIT University School of Design. Since 2020, UPS has worked with partners to develop playful pedagogies through location-based games.”

UPS partnered with *RMIT Creative* to deliver a three-day urban play festival on Bowen Street during *Melbourne International Games Week* in 2023 responding to the theme of RMIT as a Playable Campus. This event drew hundreds of participants and generated five student-led street games about campus life.

From these, two games were selected for further development and inclusion in RMIT student orientation programs: *Symphony With*, by Gin Lin (MAGI) and Nicholas Leong (Industrial Design) and *Find Me Here* by Elizabeth Amanda (Industrial Design).

Urban Play School has developed scalable methodologies and continues to deliver events.



methods of reworlding regenerative play

Regenerative play is about how we create a future without abandoning past ways of being and knowing.

As a process, play can be generative – by creating new ideas or perspectives, speculating on alternate worlds or possibilities.

But play can also be regenerative, by improving individual or social wellbeing, and regenerative in relation to place or world, through methods of creative placemaking and by extension cultivating alternate social imaginaries that nurture creative placekeeping.

Aramiha Harwood

Research Fellow

Aramiha Harwood is interested in the capacities of play to decolonise social space at a personal and community level.

Harwood has published a tabletop game called *Tribal* targeted at young Māori boys to learn more about their cultural background. Rather than pursuing the usual, “one dimensional” militarist objectives, the game is about cultural traditions and accruing Mana – spirit or ritual.

“Given my upbringing [as a person of Māori background] in country Australia, public space is contested space, and the opportunity to play in that space, kind of, liberates it from that contestation. It’s like a permission to engage with that space.”

Harwood’s experiences of exclusion, his sense that “his kind” were not welcome in the streets, shopping centres, and public spaces where he grew up, vividly illustrates how the kind of spaces mapped and promoted by urban policy research “aren’t available for everyone”.





regenerative play in action

Playful Parklet

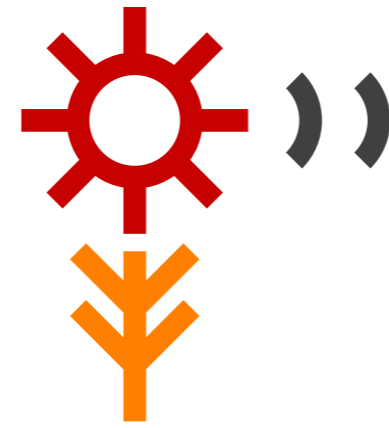
“The Playful Parklet was inspired by the disruption of the pandemic, especially the urgent need for methods to allow different ways of being together.”

Playful parklets aimed to situate people in lived experiences of alternate urban futures.

We Are Where Now? was the lab’s first urban playful parklet to launch in post-pandemic Melbourne. The platform travelled to five locations across the city, commissioning and hosting works by: *Public Assembly, Yomeciplay, Communitas, Chad Toprak and Helen Kwok, Lichen Kelp, Dylan Martorell, Alliance for Praxis Research, Café Games, Jade Armstrong, Dale Nason, Melbourne in Motion, Playable Streets* and others.

The parklet culminated in an improvised junk playground created in collaboration with Danish play activist Mathias Poulsen in Carlisle Street, Balaclava. These methods were shared at Signal Play, a four-day urban play game jam for young people commissioned by City of Melbourne at the Kathleen Syme Library.





methods of reworlding play about place

Methodologies of play about place centre embodies knowing, being connected and way finding to connect to people and place.

The future play lab is interested in the capacity of analog-digital hybrid modes of urban play to reimagine and reconnect people and place.

Urban play is not just about being located in an urban environment or providing entertainment for an urban audience, but about using the materiality of the city as 'urban material' to work with.

One unique aspect of the future play lab's approach is to create place-based experiences that situate knowledge, stories and place as a creative practice methodology.

This has significant impact in relation to place and to the world, for individual and collective ways of being, by making perceptible and tangible internalised rules, systems and bias in cities—and creating lived experiences of alternatives, other ways the world could be.

Uyen Nguyen Emerging Play Designer

As an emerging play designer, Uyen Nguyen brings her experiences as an artist, designer, and researcher to the future play lab. Researching how play can be harnessed as a design strategy for interaction with sound, Nguyen has developed YomeciPLay. YomeciPLay is a collaboration between Nguyen, Matt Riley and Max Piantoni to create a series of works exploring the potential of sound and play. This has led to projects such as YomeciBand, Yomecihole and YomeciOrchestra, with each augmenting the sonic world creatively to construct new perceptions and interpretations for players.

"With paint on the floor, tape on the wall and spaces for students to make a mess and experiment with their ideas, ideas bounce around and get cooking up everyday in the open lab space of Organised Chaos... Everyone has their sleeves rolled up and going in with their hands to turn a shared vision into reality."

Yomeci Hole, for example is an experimental outdoor arcade game commissioned by the Future Play Lab for the Clarendon Street Arcade (2021) and Play Capitol Arcade (2022) that explored how to reconnect people to public life post-pandemic through arcade gaming trails. In Yomeci Hole the player stands above a virtual 'grassy' hole in the ground using their feet to activate ground buttons (pressing, jumping, tapping etc), and encountering various inventive objects, creatures and entities as they go down. The Lab's focus on rapid prototyping and play testing has allowed Nguyen to work with game makers, cultural organisations and creative producers to further develop YomeciPLay into other iterations.





play about place in action

64 Ways of Being

“The 64 Ways of Being platform creates place-based experiences that situate Indigenous knowledge and stories through analog-digital hybrid modes of urban play that reimagine and reconnect people and place.”

Jarra Karalinar Steel Artist and Collaborator with the lab

Jarra Karalinar Steel, a Boonwurrung, Wemba Wemba and Trawlwoolway artist brings an ethos of cultural education and challenging norms of public space into her art installations and video game design.

“Inserting this young Aboriginal character in a world that never existed for them. Taking elements of Melbourne how I would like to see it in the future, with the acknowledgement of our art and our culture, integrated as if it’s normal within that space... But also creating a character that’s Aboriginal and can just exist as well ... It shouldn’t be, but that’s kind of groundbreaking...”

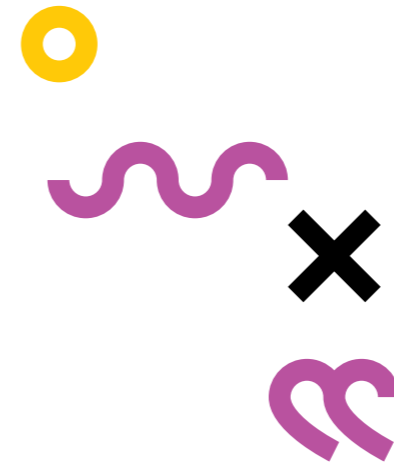
Jarra Karalinar Steel, a Boonwurrung, Wemba Wemba and Trawlwoolway artist brings an ethos of cultural education and challenging norms of public space into her art installations and video game design.

Steel came to the lab through N’arweet Carolyn Briggs, while she was working with augmented reality to complete her Masters in Public Art at RMIT. She is now undertaking PhD study in the lab exploring Indigenous game design as socially engaged practice.



64 Ways of Being is an app that offers immersive walking tours to locations across Melbourne and draws on the city’s multicultural communities and Indigenous knowledge.

The innovative project combines games and art with augmented reality as players follow characters, activate architecture, discover hidden worlds, interact with strangers, and talk with trees and rivers. In some tours, the voice of N’arweet Carolyn Briggs AM draws attention to landmarks through stories about Indigenous language and experiences.



Kel Glaister
PhD Candidate

Kel Glaister's Phd is applying playful pedagogies to questions about working within existing structures and the built form of the urban landscape. Her research on parkour is intended to inform urban design.

“There is a paradox at the heart of it in that I’m taking what you do in spaces in a way to subvert what they’re designed for and then trying to bring that back to design practice.”

Glaister believes the physical play of parkour trains practitioners to see the city “in terms of its playability” or its “parkourability”, always looking at the possibility of challenging the way we see designed urban spaces to denaturalise how we inhabit them.

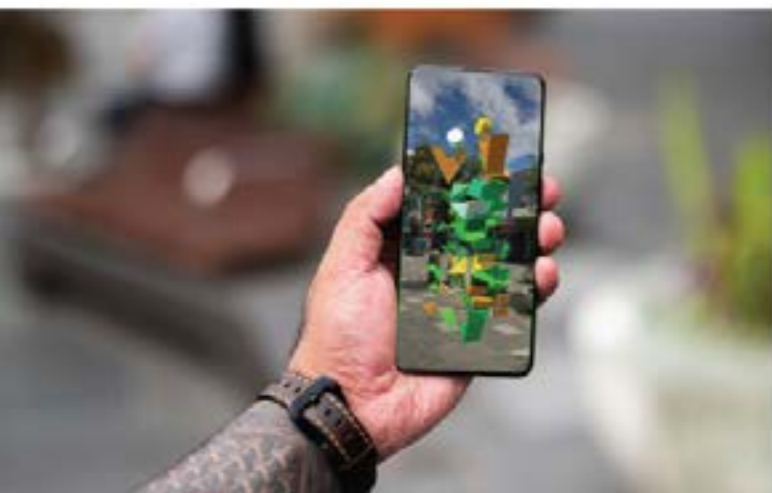


Dale Leorke
Embedded Ethnographer

Dale Leorke (he/they) is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Sydney. His research focuses on the intersection of games, play and public space. They have published five books, including *Location-based Gaming* (Palgrave, 2018), *Games and Play in the Creative, Smart and Ecological City* (Routledge, 2020) and most recently *The Library as Playground* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022).

Leorke works in the lab as an embedded ethnographer, observing urban play as it happens on streets, mobile devices, parks and rivers, and has designed research studies for lab projects and published two industry reports on formative projects.

Their research examines how digital technologies are reshaping public spaces and public institutions, including libraries and universities. In 2019, they curated a temporary exhibition at the Finnish Museum of Games that showcased the history of location-based games from geocaching to *Pokémon GO* and beyond.



future play lab. projects

working with playful pedagogies



Yomeciband

Uyen Nguyen, Fynn Michlin, Matthew Riley

Step, jump, skip, dance or walk on chalk drawings of colourful Yomeci creatures on the footpath. The footpath becomes a track, playable with your feet. Tunes and compositions are activated in a improvised exchange with passers-by as they move across clusters of pavement drawings of creatures. In temporarily activating a street through making it playable, the work connected people and place through urban play and creative technologies.

Players followed a trail of five playable arcade machines embedded in shops and cafés. Made by Melbourne artists, designers and musicians, each arcade machine has been transformed into a playable artwork featuring games that will have you race to catch a tram, learn indigenous language, make music from emojis, battle it out with Jukebot or head down the Yomeci Hole.



Street Arcade

trail of playable art machines
Troy Innocent, Carlo Tolentino, Nick Loki

Performance ensemble connecting play design with musical improvisation. Events combine a street drum kit, vocalists and trombone. A set of 'call and response' musical rules governs the performance between the performers so that music is generated in response to play. Furthermore, passers-by are invited by accompanying signage to make hand signals to the musicians prompting them to play specific musical phrases.



Communitas

Troy Innocent, Tanya George, Paul Guseli,
Dan Witton, Ros Jones

An immersive experience like a 'giant sensory toy' that invites individuals to engage deeply with their surroundings and with each other. It's an opportunity for collaborative expression. As participants delve into the intricate patterns of the cardboard sculpture, they unlock a symphony of sounds. Each pattern produces a different tone, encouraging exploration and discovery.



Symphony With

Gin Lin and Nicholas Leong

future play lab. projects

working with regenerative play



Reworlding: Cardigan Commons
Troy Innocent

Building on five years of experimental urban play, this climate action game explores story-driven live action role play where speculative fiction meets urban adventure at a village carnival.

Players are taken to the year 2050, where Naarm Melbourne has grown into a sprawling megacity grappling with climate change, societal shifts, and evolving technologies. Participants navigate this future through a two-day, streetwide immersive climate action game that shapes the city's regeneration by joining factions, gathering resources, solving puzzles, and working together on creative solutions to make a future community thrive.

In 2024, the game ran for two days, allowing players to build their own neighbourhood together while Cardigan Street, Carlton was closed for a weekend.

Building on five years of artists labs exploring posthuman publics, this interdisciplinary laboratory explores intersections between Braidotti's posthuman methods and First Peoples knowledges. Over the six-day lab participants developed collaborative, place-based projects leading to a program of public projects and a book publication on emerging posthuman practices.



Posthuman Summer Lab

Prof. Rosi Braidotti & N'arweet Carolyn Briggs
Co-convened by Fiona Hillary & Troy Innocent

Yawa means journey in Boonwurrung language. Four players explore an abstract map of Country discovering words as they go, each becoming a possum spirit (walert marrup) as they explore a colourful world filled with Boonwurrung language. As the possum spirits move about the world they reveal Indigenous words about place spoken by N'arweet Carolyn Briggs as they appear on the game map.



Yawa

four-player arcade game
N'arweet Carolyn Briggs, Jarra Karalinar Steel,
Narayana Johnson, Troy Innocent

An immersive role-playing game set on the streets of Meanjin/Brisbane in 2050, played over a three-hour journey through the inner-city, that invites diverse groups of people to imagine a Meanjin of the future. Along the way, they engage in urban play responding to impacts of climate crisis. At the end of their journey, players build an alternate city together in the Museum of Brisbane.



Reworlding Meanjin

urban role-playing game
Troy Innocent

future play lab. projects

working with play about place



64 Ways of Being — Walking Backwards Into The Future
Gap Filler, Kris Herbert, Troy Innocent, Vanessa Gray

An urban art experience that brings Ōtautahi Christchurch's lanes, streets, parks and river to life via audio stories and augmented reality – to create a conversation with the city about its past, present and future.

Players are guided along the banks of the Ōtakaro Avon and through the labyrinth of the city. Along the way, players are prompted to reimagine the world through urban play.

This project connects Indigenous knowledges and diverse stories of the city through playable public art, and encourages people to engage with the city in new ways. This collaboration also supports long-term strategic research and evaluation of the social and cultural benefits of urban play.

Connections between a tree, a rock and a beach are remade through increasing awareness of the ways in which Indigenous knowledge is central to the regeneration of our natural environments. This Indigenous-led cross-cultural walking and listening experience weaves together Boon Wurrung knowledge on caring for Country and western tools for regenerative living and working.



kummargii yulendj

N'arweet Carolyn Briggs, Jarra Karalinar Steel, Allara Briggs-Pattison, Troy Innocent

Reframing waterways through urban play starting with Boon Wurrung journey cycles, this workshop is situated along the Birrarung to speculate on a near-future flooded world. In order to tension dominant relations with water so we can envision alternative possible futures, participants will encounter hidden memories of waterways and engage in play design thinking to intimately reconnect with water.



Regenerating a Body of Water:

A Walk with Birrarung-ga

Alliance for Praxis Research, N'arweet Carolyn Briggs AM, Troy Innocent

Originally created for Melbourne International Games Week, Wayfinder live is a live game in which you explore cities through play. Wayfinding not to get from a to b but to find a new way to be. That way to be is in a place called the Micronation of Ludea. If you have played a game then you have been to Ludea. It is that space you go to when you are 'in-game', in the zone, immersed in play.



Wayfinder Live

location-based augmented reality game
Troy Innocent



future play lab. government and industry partners

Creative Victoria
British Council
City of Melbourne
City of Port Phillip
City of Stonnington
Maribyrnong City Council
City of Yarra
Merri-bek City Council
City of Yarra Ranges
Knox City Council
ACMI
Melbourne Design Week
Melbourne International Games Week
MPavilion
VicHealth
Gap Filler
ChristchurchNZ
Christchurch City Council
Bass Coast Shire Council
These Are The Projects We Do Together
Regeneration Projects
Regen Melbourne
Boonwurrung Land & Sea Council
Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

do you want to play?

future play lab. is open to partnerships work with our reworlding methods.

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+ [@future.play.lab](https://www.instagram.com/future.play.lab)



reworlding as method; approaches to urban play in the future play lab.
translates interviews and research completed by Danielle Wyatt and
Troy Innocent between 2024-2025 on research projects working with
methods of reworlding developed between 2020-2025

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