

DWEB WORLDBUILDING + SPECULATIVE DESIGN

Soft, Where?: Worldbuilding with Ancestry, Algorithms and Afrofuturism

by Ayana Zaire Cotton

Cykofa is a speculative world Ayana has built inspired by the biotechnology research of Grow Your Own Cloud, abolitionist imaginaries and decolonial aesthetics. In this workshop we will leverage the power of worldbuilding to imagine, speculate and design a parallel universe suspended between the past and the future where decentralization is an ancient reality. We will explore expansive modes of decentralization that might have nothing to do with hardware or computer interfaces as we know them. Now that we know the critiques and the possibilities of Dweb, what world do we want to build in response? This praxis session will help us remember another one is possible...

WORKSHOP FLOW

- 
- 01 Introductions & Community Agreements
 - 02 Why Worldbuilding?
 - 03 Workshop Outcomes
 - 04 Worldbuilding Ingredients
 - 05 Worldbuilding Praxis Case Studies
 - 06 Break
 - 07 Sankofa Session
 - 08 Generate Worldbuilding Prompts
 - 09 Write a World for the Wide Web

How Does this Sound? Let me know in the chat!



COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS (1/2)

WE PRIORITIZE THE SAFETY*

Of queer, trans, black, indigenous, people of color (QTBIPOC), disabled, gender-nonconforming, low-income, survivors, and all other oppressed people over the comfort of those in privileged positions.

WE ALWAYS KEEP MUTUAL RESPECT*

In mind when sharing space with others, including virtual space. Ask people how they want to be addressed instead of assuming their identity or pronouns based on their outward appearance.

*From the Relational Guidelines borrowed from the cloth of the School of Poetic Computation.

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS (2/2)

WE TAKE UP SPACE MINDFULLY*

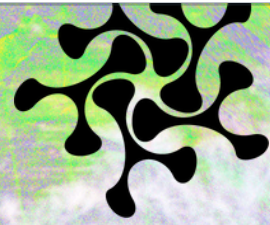
As there is a limited amount of space to speak in any given meeting, class or gathering. Be aware of how much space you and others are taking. Embrace awkward silences! An awkward silence is an opportunity for people who may take longer to respond to prompts or like to be sure they are not taking anyone else's chance to speak.

WE SHARE MINDFULLY

As these conversations are recorded we share only when we feel called and share only what we feel comfortable sharing. Sharing mindfully also means refraining from sharing personal stories, reflections and names outside the workshop without the expressed consent of the classmate you're citing.

*From the Relational Guidelines borrowed from the cloth of the School of Poetic Computation.

WE KEEP EACH OTHER SAFE...



A Reminder: Safety is a relation ...



tamara k. nopper
@tamaranopper

Mariame Kaba said on being safe, “I don’t believe I can possess safety. Because I don’t think safety is a thing. I think safety is a relation.”

12:03 PM · Feb 27, 2022 · Twitter for iPad

707 Retweets 32 Quote Tweets 3,353 Likes

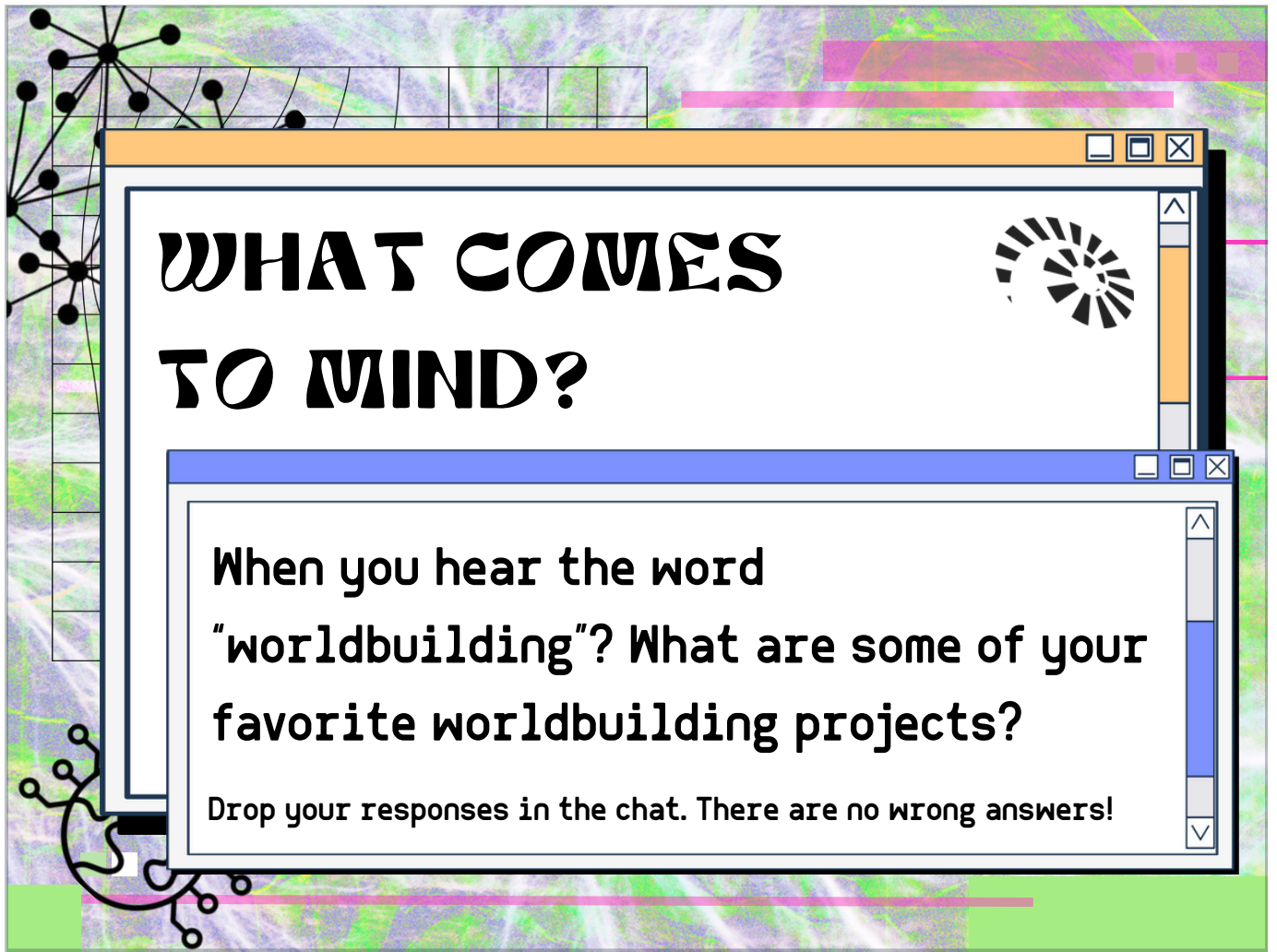
Screenshot of slide from Teaching and Learning as "PRIMITIVE HYPERTEXT" led by Kameelah Janan Rasheed with support from Elizabeth Pérez through the School for Poetic Computation.



AYANA ZAIRE COTTON

ARTIST, WRITER, FACILITATOR FOR THE WORLDBUILDERS

During my biotechnology residency at Ginkgo I wrote the non-linear speculative fiction novella Cykofa: The Seeda Origin Story in collaboration with creative writing software I engineered at the Recurse Center. I'm the founder and steward of Seeda School, named after the future ancestor and protagonist from the prison-free parallel universe of Cykofa. Seeda School is a skill development platform for learning how to worldbuild through a black feminist lens. Through Seeda School I host a podcast For the Worldbuilders. Inside the ecosystem of my practice I braid storytelling, engineering, and interspecies collaboration to engage our collective imagination around the worlds we need in the future we desire.

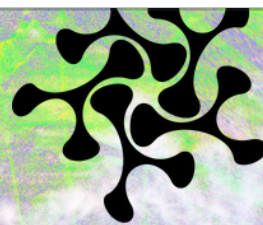




Why Worldbuilding?

Before imagining and building our own worlds using collectively generated DWeb worldbuilding and speculative design prompts, let us first reflect on the potential and power of worldbuilding.

WORLDBUILDING AS A HEALING PRACTICE



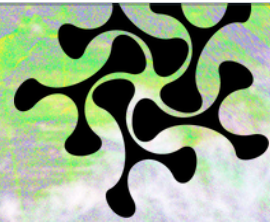
ayana zaire cotton (she/they)
@ayzac0

When you have
Cried
Raged
Shouted
Screamed
Harmed
Lied
Used
Grieved
Ran
Lost sleep
So much running

10:33 AM · Jul 22, 2021

A series of tweets written
in 2021 as I navigated the
portal of grief and
transformation on the
other side of the pandemic.
Nothing was the same. How
terrifying! How liberating!

WORLDBUILDING AS A HEALING PRACTICE



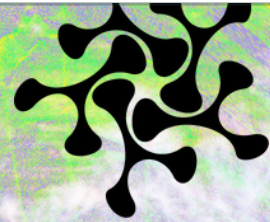
ayana zaire cotton (she/they)
@ayzac0

When you have mourned all the selves you knew and all the ways this iteration of reality you've landed in has broken your heart, has tortured you, has tried to kill you and has no intention of stopping.

10:33 AM · Jul 22, 2021

A series of tweets written in 2021 as I navigated the portal of grief and transformation on the other side of the pandemic. Nothing was the same. How terrifying! How liberating!

WORLDBUILDING AS A HEALING PRACTICE



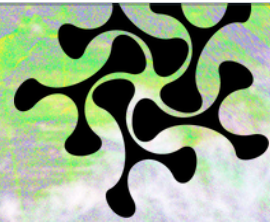
ayana zaire cotton (she/they)
@ayzac0

When you've used all your tools to dig to the pit of that truth and still reject violence.

10:33 AM · Jul 22, 2021

A series of tweets written
in 2021 as I navigated the
portal of grief and
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Nothing was the same. How
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WORLDBUILDING AS A HEALING PRACTICE



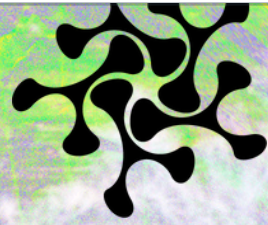
 **ayana zaire cotton (she/they)**
@ayzac0

The only thing left to do is world build.

10:33 AM · Jul 22, 2021

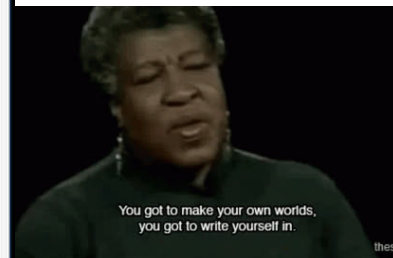
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WHY WORLDBUILDING?



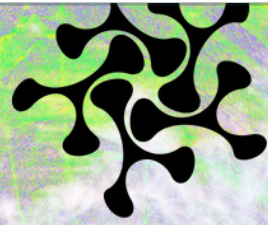
Worldbuilding gives us
permission to ask...

How might we begin to
practice the futures
we're longing for **now**?



Octavia Butler

WHY WORLDBUILDING?



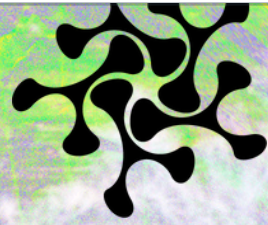
Worldbuilding gives us
permission to ask...

What are our **community
agreements** and how do we tend
to them like a garden, planting
new seeds and pruning when
necessary?



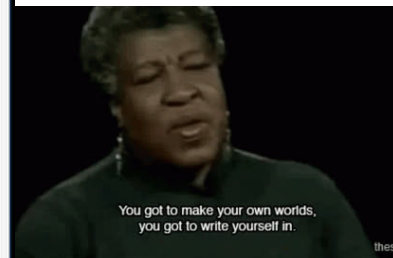
Octavia Butler

WHY WORLDBUILDING?



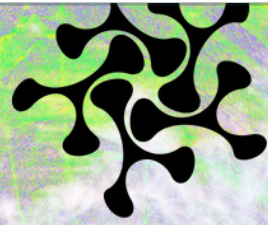
Worldbuilding gives us
permission to ask...

What belief **systems**
and **stories** do we need
to compost?



Octavia Butler

WHY WORLDBUILDING?



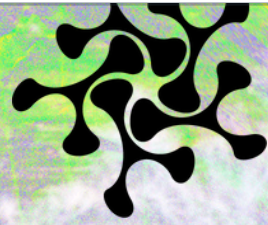
Worldbuilding gives us
permission to be...

Audacious and speculate, organize
and innovate at the scale of
networked social, value and belief
systems using a variety of
languages — **code** and otherwise.



Octavia Butler

WHY WORLDBUILDING?

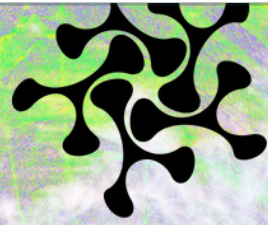


When you have cried, raged,
shouted, screamed, harmed,
lied, used, grieved, ran, lost
sleep, so much running...
there's nothing left to do
but **worldbuild**.



Octavia Butler

WHY WORLDBUILDING?



But **what** do we build, how
do we build and with **who**?

In this workshop, we'll be speculating
from inside this animating question.
Now we know the why. Getting clear on
the **what** and **who** of worldbuilding is
the spellcasting that reels in the how.



Octavia Butler

**THE SOCIAL
SCIENCE OF SPECULATION**

'Is there a way of being intellectual that isn't **social**? When I think about the way we use the term 'study,' I think we are committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people. It's talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of **speculative practice**. The **notion of a rehearsal** – being in a kind of workshop, playing in a band, in a jam session, or old men sitting on a porch, or people working together in a factory – there are these various modes of activity. The point of calling it 'study' is to mark that the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present.'

FRED MOTEN, THE UNDERCOMMONS: FUGITIVE PLANNING & BLACK STUDY (2013) BY FRED MOTEN AND STEFANO HARNEY, PG. 110

Rehearsing Speculative Futures

In "The Undercommons" Fred Moten invites us to consider the social dimensions of speculative practice. I include this quote to invite us to consider the worldbuilding possibilities that can unfold when rehearsing the futures we desire, in the present.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Memory

Pictured: Cykofa Artifacts

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Memory



Journal

Pictured: Cykofa Artifacts

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Memory



Journal



Imagination

Pictured: Cykofa Artifacts



A Sankofa Sensibility

Sankofa (pronounced SAN-kaw-fah) is a profound Adinkra symbol originating from the Akan people of Ghana. Its name comes from the Twi expression, “Sankofa!” whose literal meaning is “Go back and get it!” a command to pay due regard to the lessons and practices of the past and to draw on them to inform the present and the future. (Source: adinkrasymbols.org)

Lets start every worldbuilding project by applying a sankofa sensibility to our speculative design. By acknowledging we're never starting from scratch we give ourselves the opportunity to leverage centuries of data encoded with ancestral and indigenous wisdom.



BUILD A WORLD IN 3 STEPS

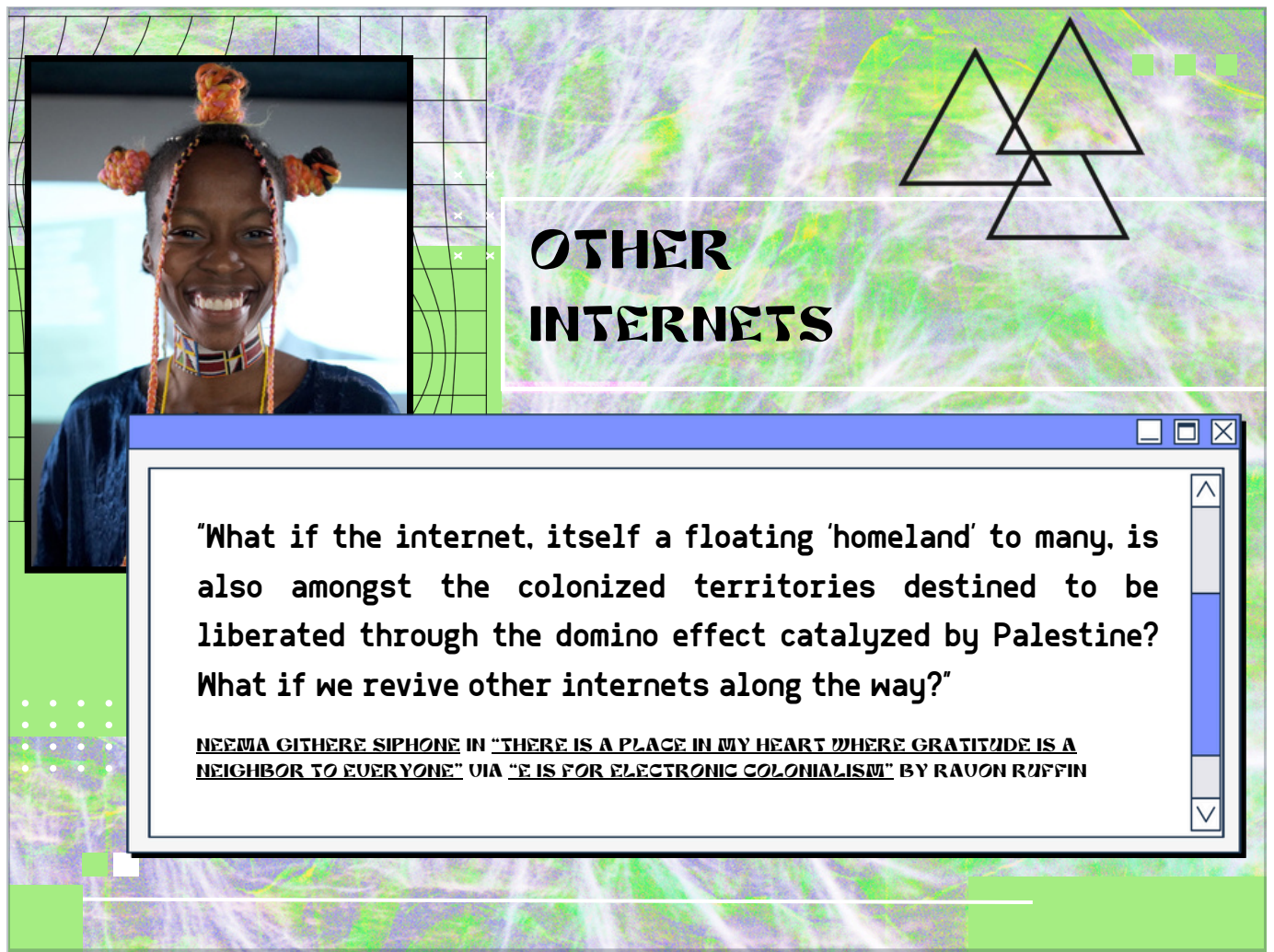
	A	B	C	D
1		VERB		SPECULATIVE PLACE
2	We will	write	toward	Chocolate City
3	We are	dreaming	in the direction of	Cykofa
4	We imagine	being	a network where	a liberated body
5	We will		toward	
6	We are		in the direction of	
7	We imagine			
8	We will			
9	We are			
10	We imagine			
11	We will			
12	We are			
13	We imagine			
14	We will			
15	We are			
16	We imagine			
17	We will			
18	We are			
19	We imagine			
20	We will			
21	We are			
22	We imagine			

STEP 2: GENERATE PROMPTS

Holding on to that recollection of belonging we're going to collectively generate prompts for the worlds we're building on the web using a framework that asks us to consider the verbs/creative actions, site specificity and desires giving form to these worlds. We will silently work alongside eachother inside the landscape of a spreadsheet!

Collectively Imagining New Worlds

Just as applying a sankofa sensibility to our worldbuilding practice reminds us we're never starting from scratch, we must turn to eachother to collectively imagine new possibilities we couldn't anticipate on our own.

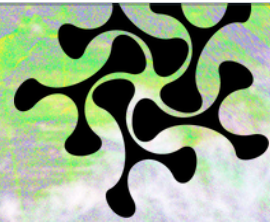


Site Specificity and Speculative Design

As worldbuilder Neema Githere Siphone suggests, speculative design can hold the potential for imagining liberatory geographies both online and off. This is why we consider site specificity when collectively generating our worldbuilding prompts.

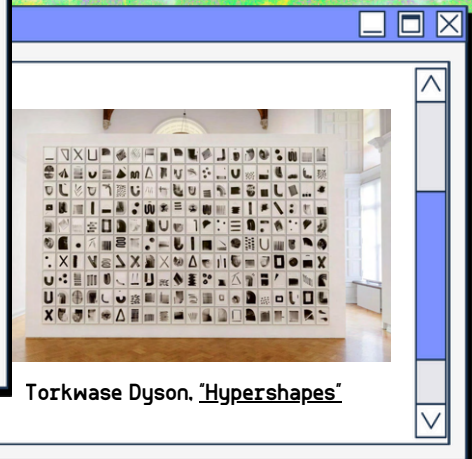


WORLDBUILDING IS A TECHNOLOGY GIVING FORM TO OUR IMAGINATION



Worldbuilding as a framework is neutral but we must pay close attention to the "living algorithms" that animate it.

Nation building is a worldbuilding project, often animated by the colonial and patriarchal imaginary. How might we build worlds animated by collective and indigenous imaginaries instead? Not toward nation building, but toward community building.



Torkwase Dyson, "Hypershapes"



Worldbuilding and Speculative Design In Visual Art

Torkwase Dyson invites us to consider how the collective intelligence of black refusal can create a set of "living algorithms" for encoding new worlds. How might your visual art seed prompts for imagining otherwise both online and off?

THE 3 WORLDBUILDING INGREDIENTS



Ancestry

Nothing comes from
nowhere or no one. We
responsibly practice
worldbuilding by
honoring the collective
wisdom embedded in
the past in order to
chart a way forward.

Pictured: Cykofa Artifacts

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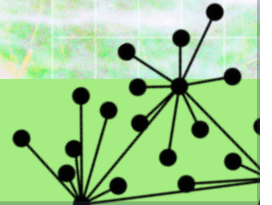


Algorithm

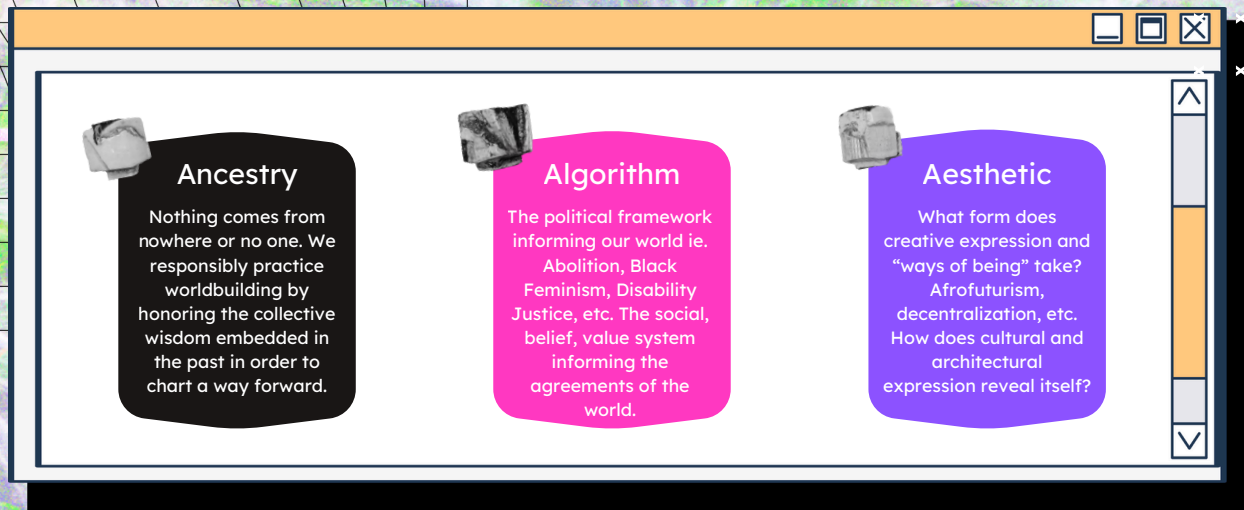
The political framework informing our world ie. Abolition, Black Feminism, Disability Justice, etc. The social, belief, value system informing the agreements of the world.



Pictured: Cykofa Artifacts



THE 3 WORLDBUILDING INGREDIENTS



Pictured: Cykofa Artifacts

The 3 Worldbuilding Ingredients

Ancestry: Honors the collective wisdom embedded in the past in order to learn from it as we chart a way forward.

Algorithm: Informs the "code of conduct/consent" for ways of relating inside the worlds we're building.

Aesthetic: How things "look", the form our value systems adopt, can often inform how things feel.

Consider these 3 ingredients when building your worlds on and off the web.

THE 3 WORLDBUILDING INGREDIENTS

Archive,
Research,
etc.

Ancestry

Nothing comes from nowhere or no one. We responsibly practice worldbuilding by honoring the collective wisdom embedded in the past in order to chart a way forward.



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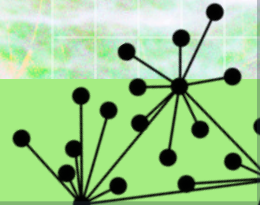


Aesthetic

What form does creative expression and "ways of being" take? Afrofuturism, decentralization, etc. How does cultural and architectural expression reveal itself?



Which one of these ingredients do you enjoy mixing inside your practice the most?



THE 3 WORLDBUILDING INGREDIENTS

Archive,
Research,
etc.

Ancestry

Nothing comes from nowhere or no one. We responsibly practice worldbuilding by honoring the collective wisdom embedded in the past in order to chart a way forward.

Strategy,
Systems,
etc.

Algorithm

The political framework informing our world ie.
Abolition, Black Feminism, Disability Justice, etc. The social, belief, value system informing the agreements of the world.

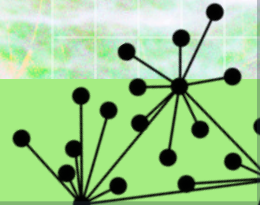


Aesthetic

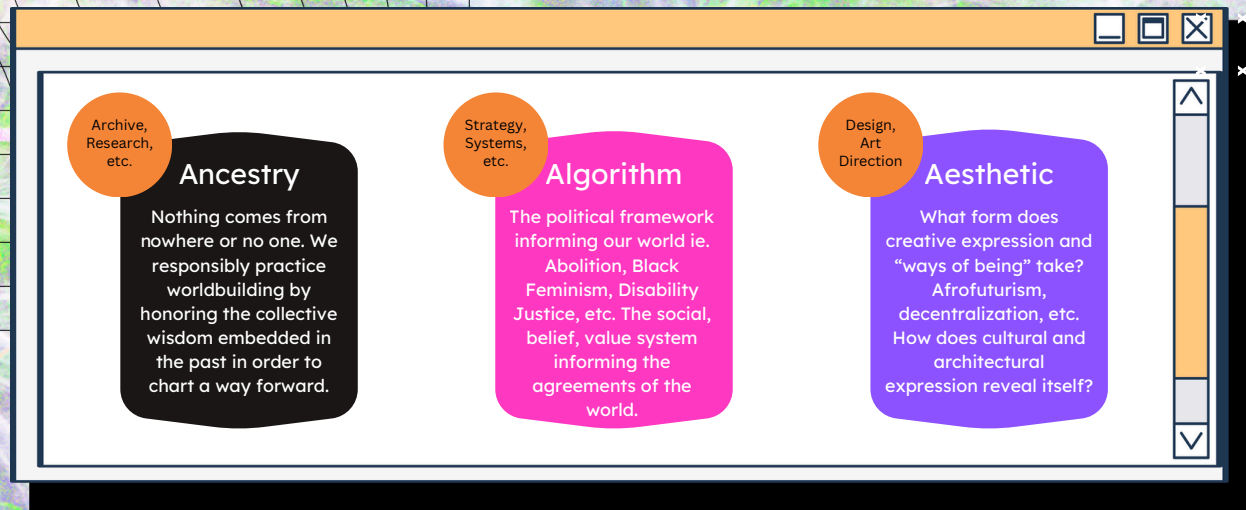
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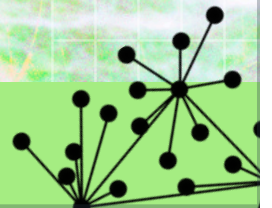
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THE 3 WORLDBUILDING INGREDIENTS



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THE 3 WORLDBUILDING INGREDIENTS

Archive,
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Ancestry

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nowhere or no one. We
responsibly practice

Strategy,
Systems,
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Algorithm

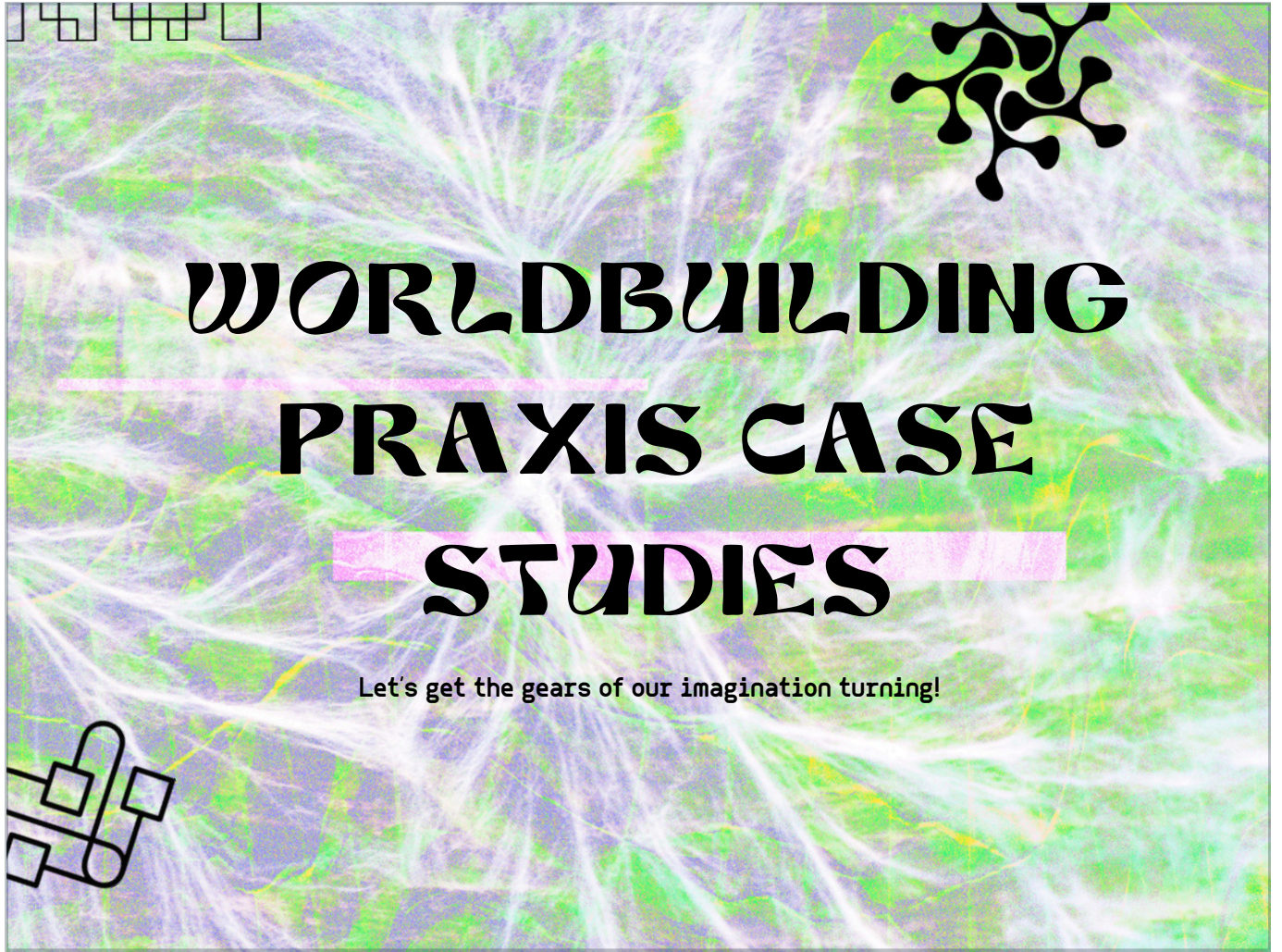
The political framework
informing our world ie.
Abolition, Black

Design,
Art
Direction

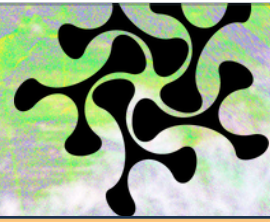
Aesthetic

What form does
creative expression and
"forms of being" take?

In this Worldbuilding Praxis Session we're going to work with all 3 ingredients, but first and always, **let's return to the archive!** We're going to explore a variety of cultural workers and technologists using worldbuilding as a method (both online and off) animating their practice and expanding the imaginations of the communities their work touches.



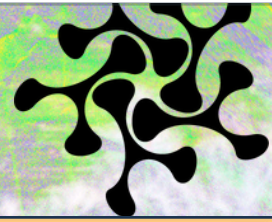
THE GOALS



The Goal of the Workshop

Leave with a **world** of your own design **as a framework** for collective study, play, collaboration and speculation inside of your future projects and practices.

THE GOALS



The Goal of the Workshop

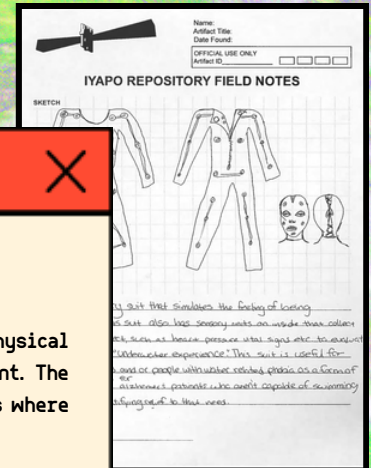
Leave with a **world** of your own design **as a framework** for collective study, play, collaboration and speculation inside of your future projects and practices.

The Goal of the Case Studies

To illustrate the limitless **value** of introducing **worldbuilding as a method** inside your creative practice.

There are countless authors working inside the genre of speculative fiction but what does it look like to apply speculative fiction and worldbuilding to art, design or community based practices? I'm about to sprinkle a ton of seed data on the soil of your imagination, take what you need and compost the rest!

IYAPO REPOSITORY



The form is titled 'IYAPO REPOSITORY FIELD NOTES'. It includes a header section with fields for 'Name', 'Artifact Title', 'Date Found', 'Official Use ONLY', and 'Artifact ID'. Below this is a 'SKETCH' section with a grid of boxes for drawing. To the right of the grid are two small circular diagrams. At the bottom of the form is a section for 'Notes' with a grid of boxes for writing.

FROM WORKSHOP

Iyapo Repository is a resource library which houses a collection of digital and physical artifacts created to affirm and project the future of people of African descent. The collection is managed and developed through a series of participatory workshops where participants become archivists of a future history they envision.

Participants sketch and rapid prototype future artifacts in domains of food, music, politics, fashion, etc.

Source: [Iyapo Repository](#) by [Ayodamola Okunseinde](#) & [Salome Asega](#)

[1/9]

IYAPO REPOSITORY

FROM WORKSHOP

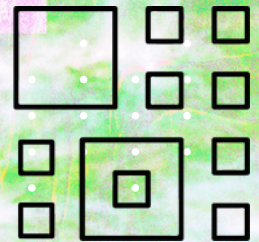
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Participants sketch and rapid prototype future artifacts in domains of food, music, politics, fashion, etc.

TO ARTIFACT

The repository then works to bring a select few of these artifacts to life so that they are completely technologically functioning objects that stay true to the participants' original blueprints. Alongside the art and artifacts collection, Iyapo Repository also hosts manuscripts, films, and rare books, and more.

Source: [Iyapo Repository](#) by [Ayodamola Okunseinde](#) & [Salome Asega](#)



[1/9]

The Iyapo Repository

An excellent example of leveraging the power of speculative and participatory design to create worldbuilding artifacts we can use to rehearse and embody the futures we desire in the present.

BLACK QUANTUM FUTURISM



ABOUT BQF

Black Quantum Futurism Collective is a multidisciplinary collaboration between Camae Ayewa [Rockers!: Moor Mother] and Rasheedah Phillips [The AfroFuturist Affair: Metropolarity] exploring the intersections of futurism, creative media, DIY-aesthetics, and activism in marginalized communities through an alternative temporal lens. BQF Collective has created a number of community-based events, experimental music projects, performances, exhibitions, zines, and anthologies of experimental essays on space-time consciousness.

Source: [Black Quantum Futurism](#)



[2/9]

BLACK QUANTUM FUTURISM

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BQF AT CERN

'The residency reinforced for me that the boundary line between art and science is somewhat arbitrary.' — Rasheedah Phillips

Phillips spent three weeks at CERN and one week in Barcelona researching for their Collide-winning project CPT Symmetry and Violations.

Source: [Black Quantum Futurism](#)



[2/9]

Black Quantum Futurism

Reminds us how powerful an interdisciplinary approach can be inside our speculative and worldbuilding practices.

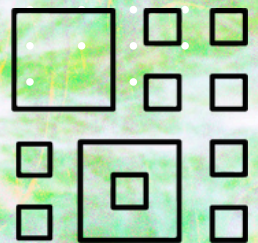
BLACK BEYOND

ABOUT BLACK BEYOND

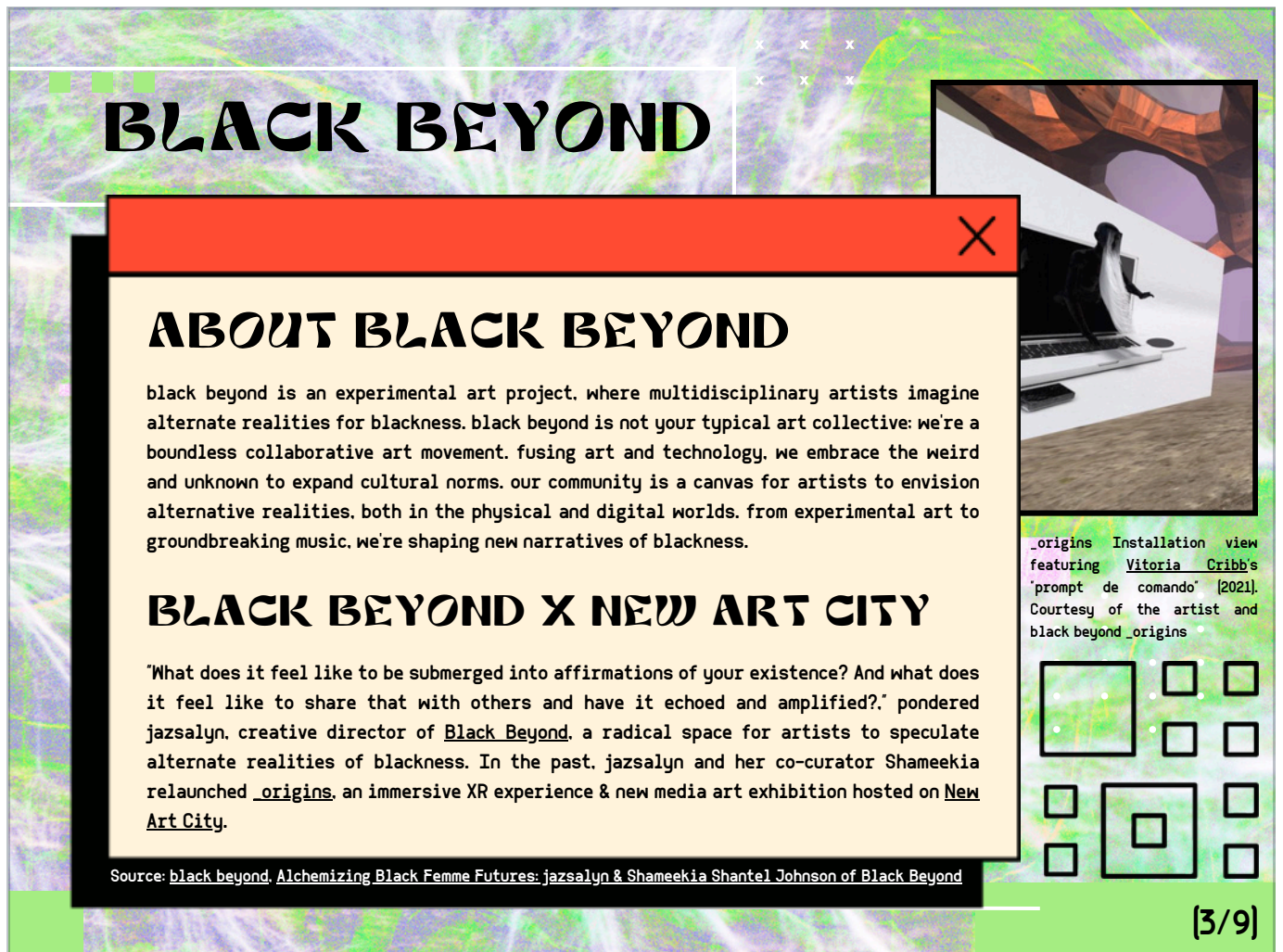
black beyond is an experimental art project, where multidisciplinary artists imagine alternate realities for blackness. black beyond is not your typical art collective: we're a boundless collaborative art movement. fusing art and technology, we embrace the weird and unknown to expand cultural norms. our community is a canvas for artists to envision alternative realities, both in the physical and digital worlds. from experimental art to groundbreaking music, we're shaping new narratives of blackness.

Source: [black beyond](#), [Alchemizing Black Femme Futures](#): jazsalyn & Shameekia Shantel Johnson of Black Beyond

[Kiara Kalinda](#) and [Amirah](#), [displace](#) (2021). Courtesy of the artist and black beyond _origins



[3/9]



The Black Beyond

Uses technology to imagine alternate realities. If the reality we currently occupy and play out was envisioned by someone else, what happens when we envision alternative realities using the power of technology?

MOBILE HOMECOMING

M Archive

M ARCHIVE

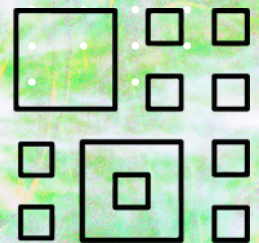
M Archive, by Alexis Pauline Gumbs, is told from the perspective of a future researcher who uncovers evidence of the conditions of late capitalism, antiblackness, and environmental crisis while examining possibilities of being that exceed the human. By exploring how Black feminist theory is already after the end of the world, Gumbs reinscribes the possibilities and potentials of scholarship while demonstrating the impossibility of demarcating the lines between art, science, spirit, scholarship, and politics.

Source: [M Archive](#), [Mobile Homecoming](#)

AFTER
THE
END
OF THE
WORLD

ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS

Alexis and Sangodare



[4/9]

MOBILE HOMECOMING

M ARCHIVE

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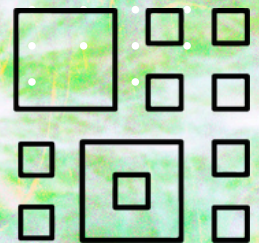
MOBILE HOMECOMING

"Mobile Homecoming exists as an intergenerational experiential archive project to amplify generations of Black LGBTQ brilliance. When we launched our first big project we created the world anew by traveling in a retro RV to find queer/lgbt black elders and create an intergenerational community of love and support across the U.S. We use replay events, retreats, honoring ceremonies, documentation, archiving, music & dance, all the arts and every means to do and share this passionate work."

Source: [M Archive](#), [Mobile Homecoming](#)



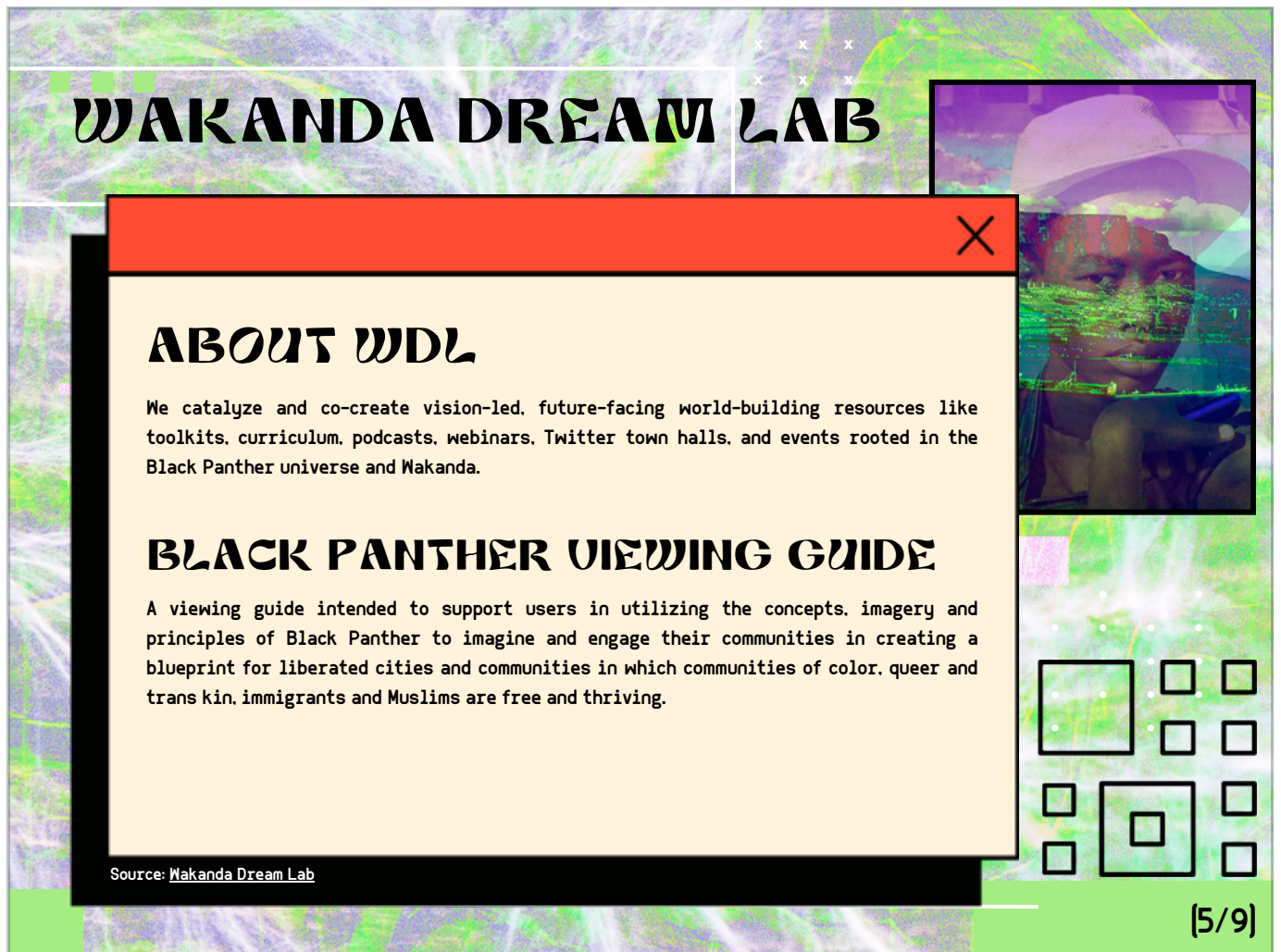
Alexis and Sangodare



[4/9]

Storytelling As Homecoming

Alexis Pauline Gumbs uses the mediums of fiction, poetry and intergenerational community building to imagine and rehearse inside new worlds.



Wakanda Dream Lab

Leverages culturally significant stories and uses them as frameworks for community programming and educational materials.

WAKANDA DREAM LAB



ABOUT WDL

We catalyze and co-create vision-led, future-facing world-building resources like toolkits, curriculum, podcasts, webinars, Twitter town halls, and events rooted in the Black Panther universe and Wakanda.

WAKANDA DREAM LAB ANTHOLOGY

The Wakanda Dream Lab Anthology centers storytelling as a vehicle for us to imagine a whole, thriving world. Storytelling is one way in which we assert who we are, where we are, where we've been, and where we're going. We can interrogate, transform, and mold whole worlds by transporting ourselves to the story realm.

Source: [Wakanda Dream Lab](#)



(5/9)

WAKANDA DREAM LAB



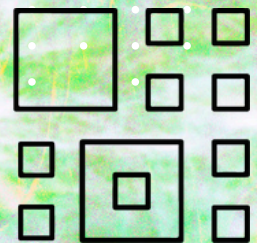
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LABS & WORKSHOPS

We host design labs, hackathons and workshops that invite participants to immerse themselves in worldbuilding and visionary solution making through the lens of Wakanda.

Source: [Wakanda Dream Lab](#)



(5/9)

INTELLIGENT MISCHIEF

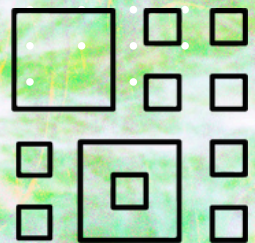


Aisha Shillingford &
Terry Marshall

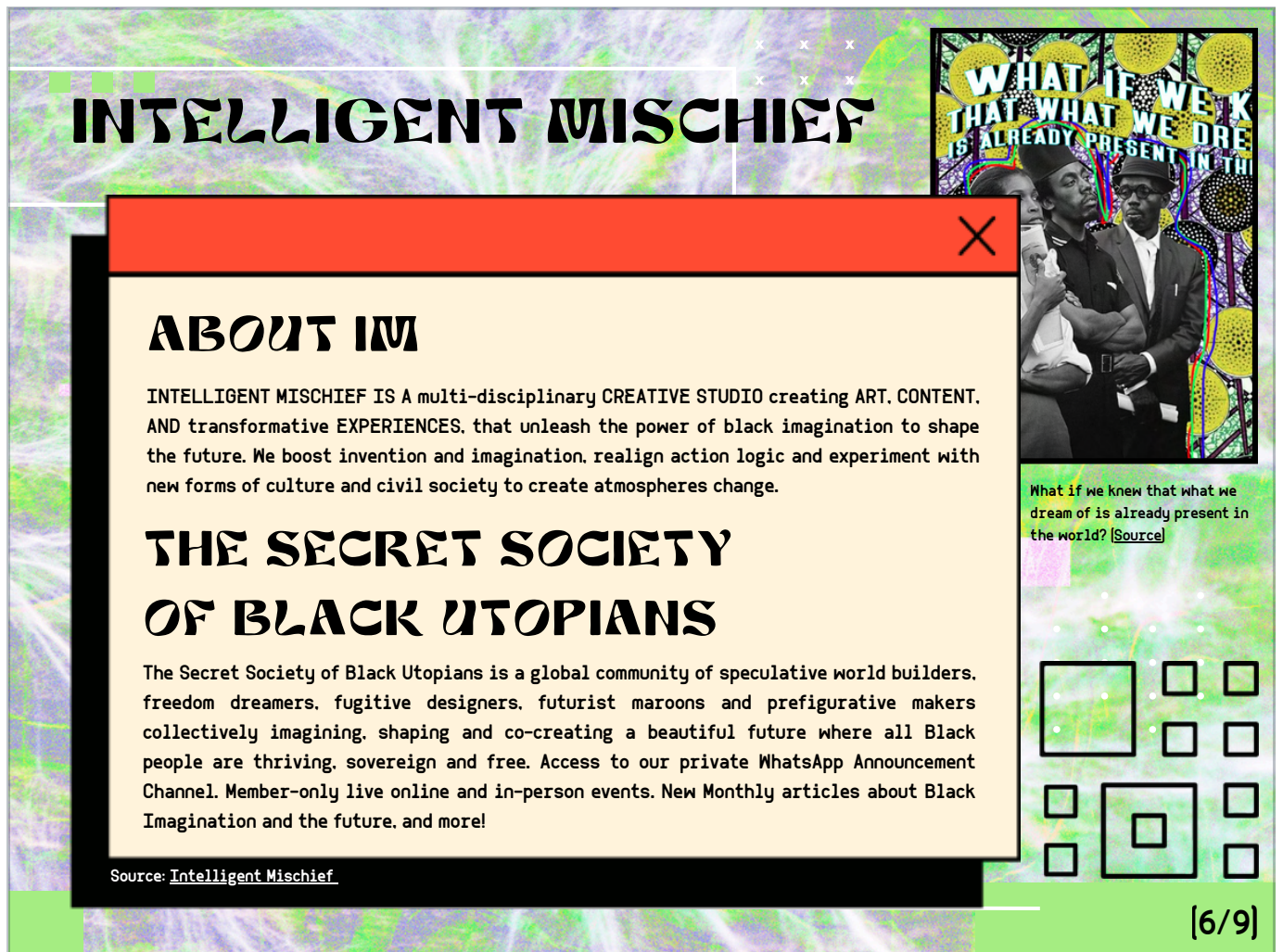
ABOUT IM

INTELLIGENT MISCHIEF IS A multi-disciplinary CREATIVE STUDIO creating ART, CONTENT, AND transformative EXPERIENCES, that unleash the power of black imagination to shape the future. We boost invention and imagination, realign action logic and experiment with new forms of culture and civil society to create atmospheres change.

Source: [Intelligent Mischief](#)



[6/9]



Intelligent Mischief

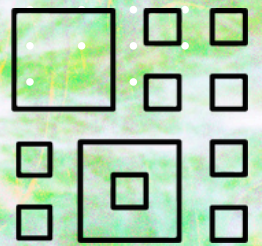
A creative studio that uses speculative design to work with worldbuilding clients while creating supportive spaces and content inspiring a global community of worldbuilders.

BY US, FOR US

ABOUT BUFU

"BUFU is a unique collective of artists, designers, storytellers and organizers. BUFU is building cultural solidarity among QTPOC and the wider public, combining art, fashion and music, and recently through technology. BUFU's events feel different from any other arts and technology events. There's an electric sense of excitement and radical inclusivity." — [Taeyoon Choi](#)

Source: [Distributed Web of Care](#), [@bufu_byusforus](#) Instagram Archive



(7/9)



By Us, For Us (BUFU)

During the pandemic BUFU launched a virtual programming series called "Cloud 9" which felt like a "pop-up world" and alternate reality of love, care, support and connection on the internet during a time of social distance, division and uncertainty.

NEPTUNE FROST



ABOUT SAUL WILLIAMS

Saul Williams has been breaking ground since his debut album, *Amethyst Rock Star*, was released in 2001 and executive produced by Rick Rubin. After gaining global fame for his poetry and writings at the turn of the century, Williams has performed in over 30 countries and read in over 300 universities, with invitations that have spanned from the White House, the Sydney Opera House, Lincoln Center, The Louvre, The Getty Center, Queen Elizabeth Hall, to countless villages, townships, community centers, and prisons across the world.

Source: [Saul Williams](#)

(8/9)

NEPTUNE FROST

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ABOUT NEPTUNE FROST

Neptune Frost, the sci-fi musical from filmmaker Anisia Uzeyman and artist-musician-poet Saul Williams. Set in the hilltops of Burundi, Neptune Frost follows the parallel journeys of an intersex runaway (Elvis Ngabo, Cheryl Isheja) and an escaped coltan miner (Bertrand Ninteretse) who meet and fall in love with one another through a quirk of cosmic providence. Joining together, the lovers spark a revolution as they unite a disparate community of miners to form an anti-colonialist hacker collective resisting an oppressive regime hellbent on despoiling the region's resources for their own nefarious purposes.

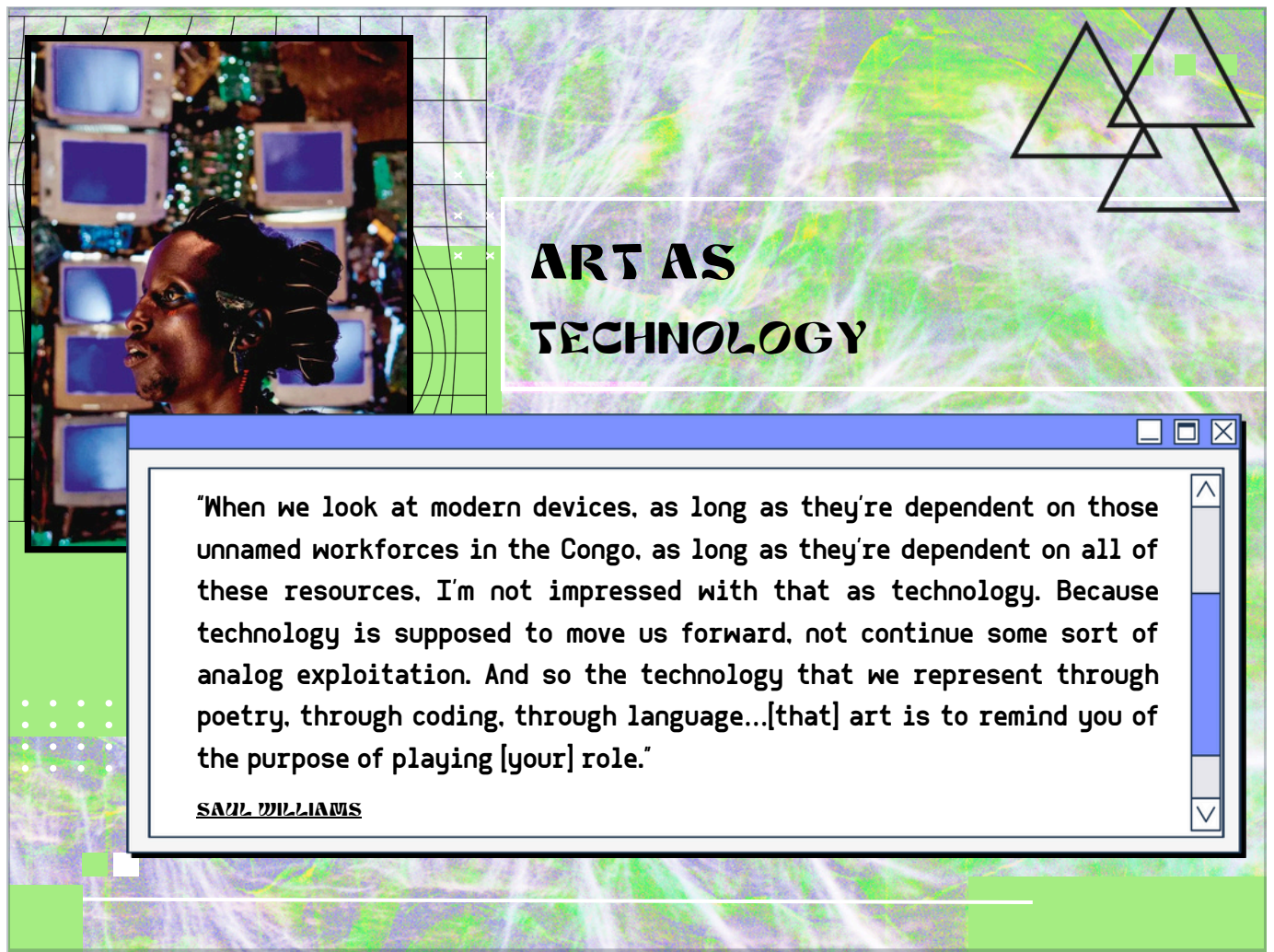
Source: [Saul Williams](#)

[Saul Williams and Anisia Uzeyman on Crafting the Dazzling, Hypnotic World of 'Neptune Frost'](#)

[8/9]

Worldbuilding and Speculative Design in Film Culture

Neptune Frost is an excellent example of using worldbuilding and speculative design to imagine the power of DWeb technologies through an ancestral lens and desire for collective political power.



Art As Technology

What roles might you rehearse inside the worlds we're collectively building?

TOGETHER NET

ABOUT TOGETHER NET

TogetherNet is an open-source software that invites groups of 10 or fewer participants to build community archives through practices of consent. Designed around the ethos of data transparency and consent, TogetherNet's goal is to transform digital rights policies such as the right to be forgotten into an embodied practice through re-imagining software architecture and user experience

Source: [Together Net](#)

[9/9]

TOGETHER NET

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CODE OF CONSENT

The TogetherNet Code of Consent (CoC) is a specification that outlines the level of consent and protection that participants have while using the software. Structurally informed by the F.R.I.E.S. model created by Planned Parenthood, we believe that a consentful software should be designed and built through the lens of being Freely given, Reversible, Informed, Enthusiastic and Specific.

"I served as Lead Writer for this project, developing a Code of Consent which serves as both a technical and a moral document that seeks to uncover systems of power and uncertainties embedded in network technologies." — Neema Githere

Source: Together Net

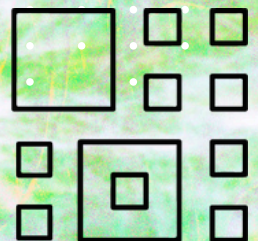
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TogetherNet Code of Consent v0.1

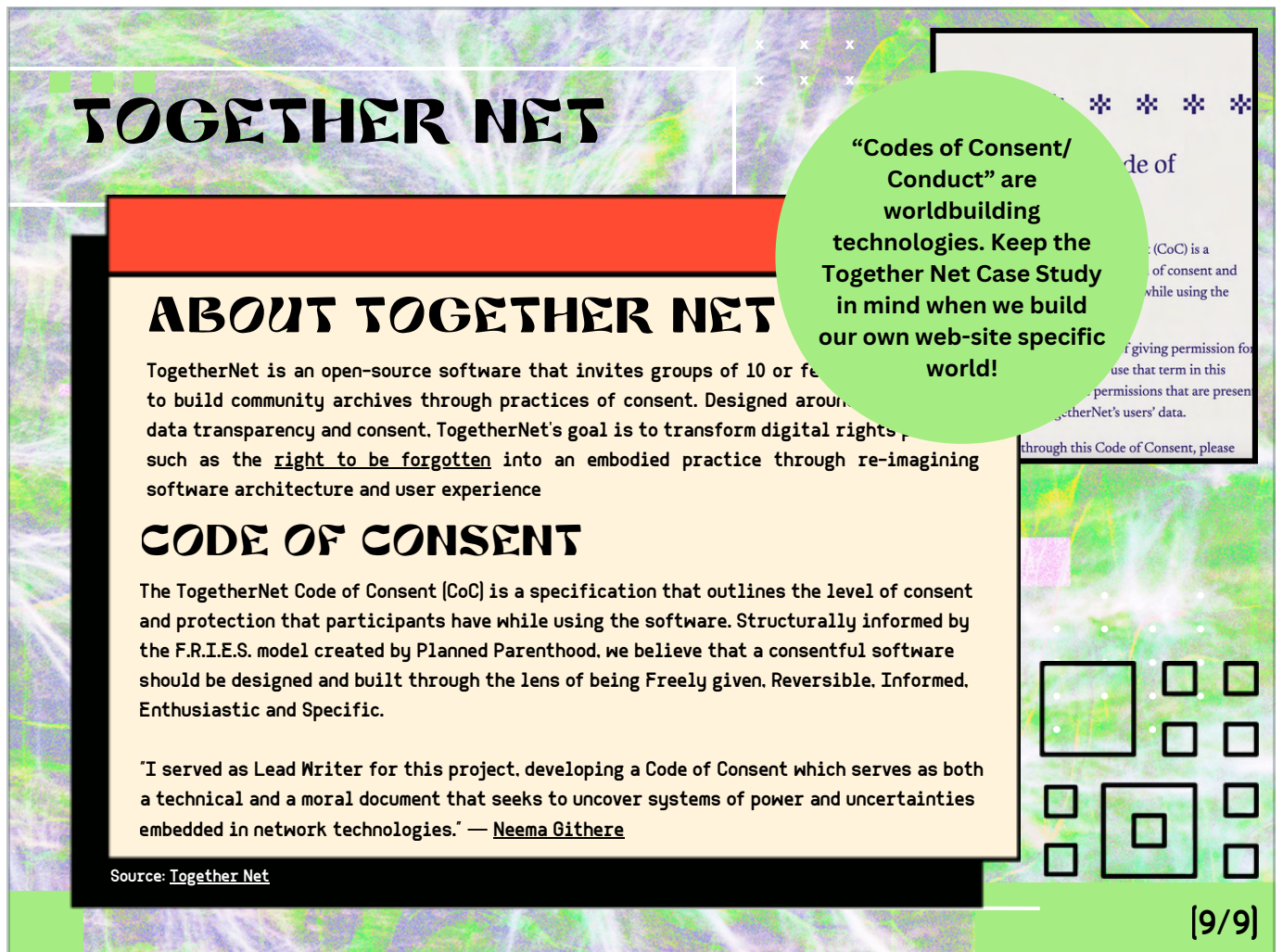
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TogetherNet Code of Consent (CoC) is defined as the act of giving permission for data to occur, and we use that term in this document to refer to the permissions that are present in TogetherNet's users' data.

Through this Code of Consent, please



[9/9]

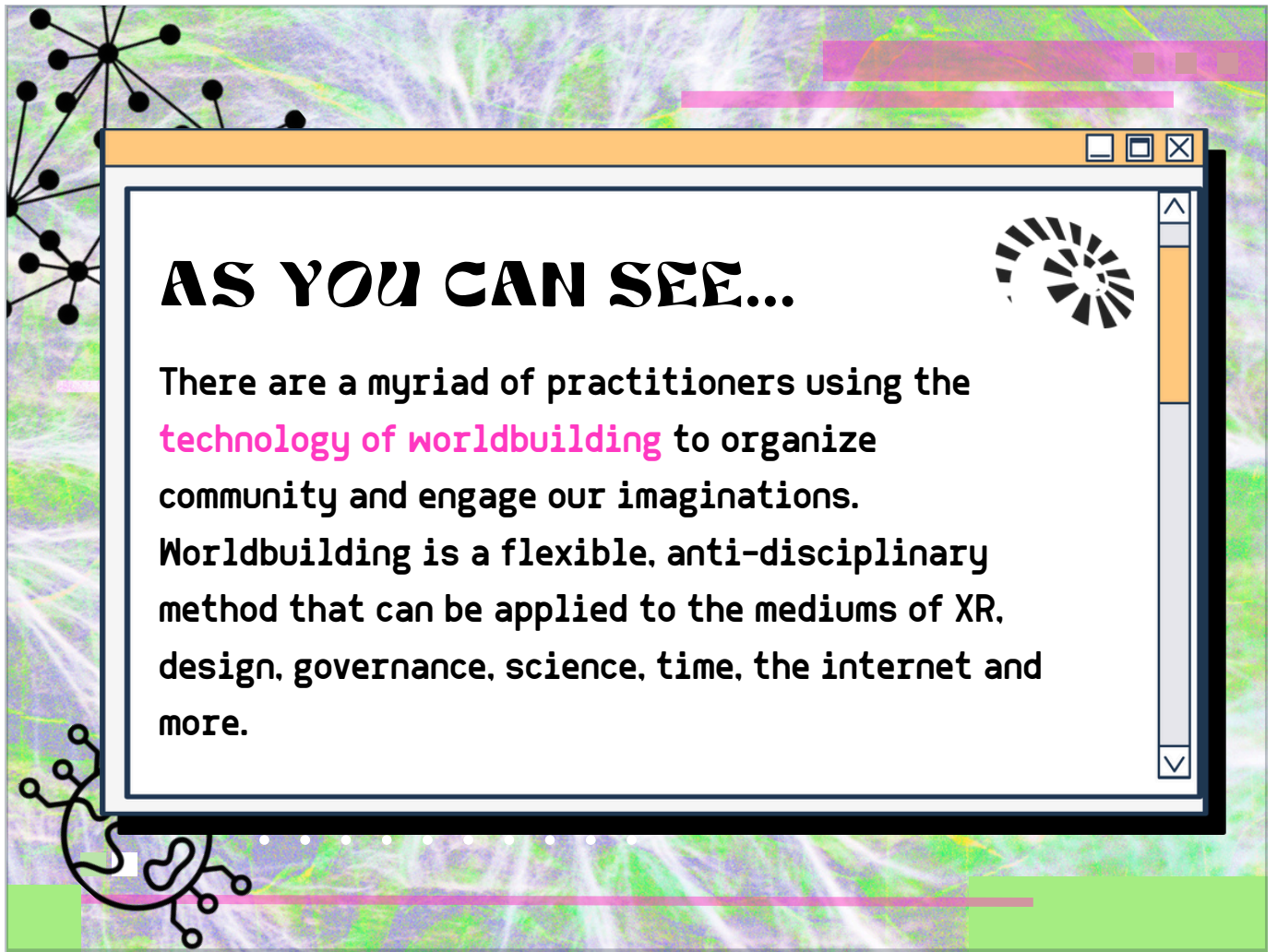


“Codes of Consent/Conduct” are worldbuilding technologies and rehearsal prompts for embodying our speculative designs.



Additional Worldbuilding Projects and Practices

Check out these other worldbuilding projects that leverage speculative design to inspire critical conversations and build community.



AS YOU CAN SEE...

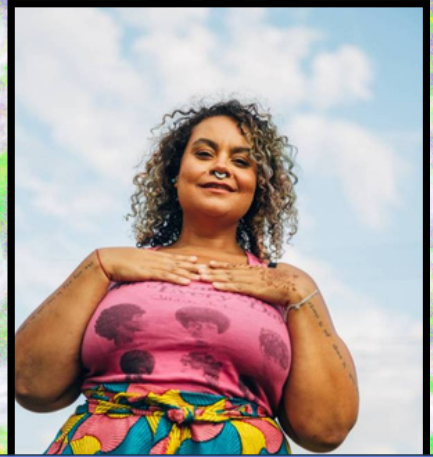
There are a myriad of practitioners using the **technology of worldbuilding** to organize community and engage our imaginations.

Worldbuilding is a flexible, anti-disciplinary method that can be applied to the mediums of XR, design, governance, science, time, the internet and more.

WORLDBUILDING PROMPT

prompt: imagine more

"do you understand
how many people
live in constant terror
pain, grief, hunger
instability how many people never get to dream
to live into their purpose
to live in their health
to live at all
because you can't imagine more"

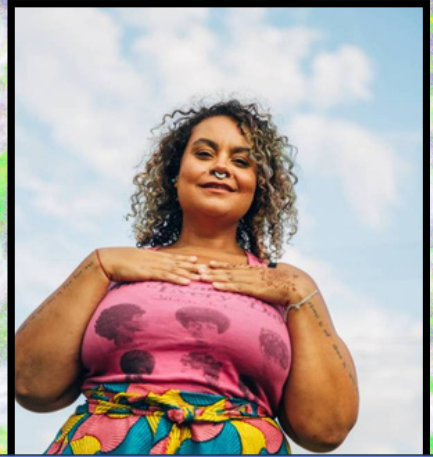


**Adrienne
Maree
Brown**

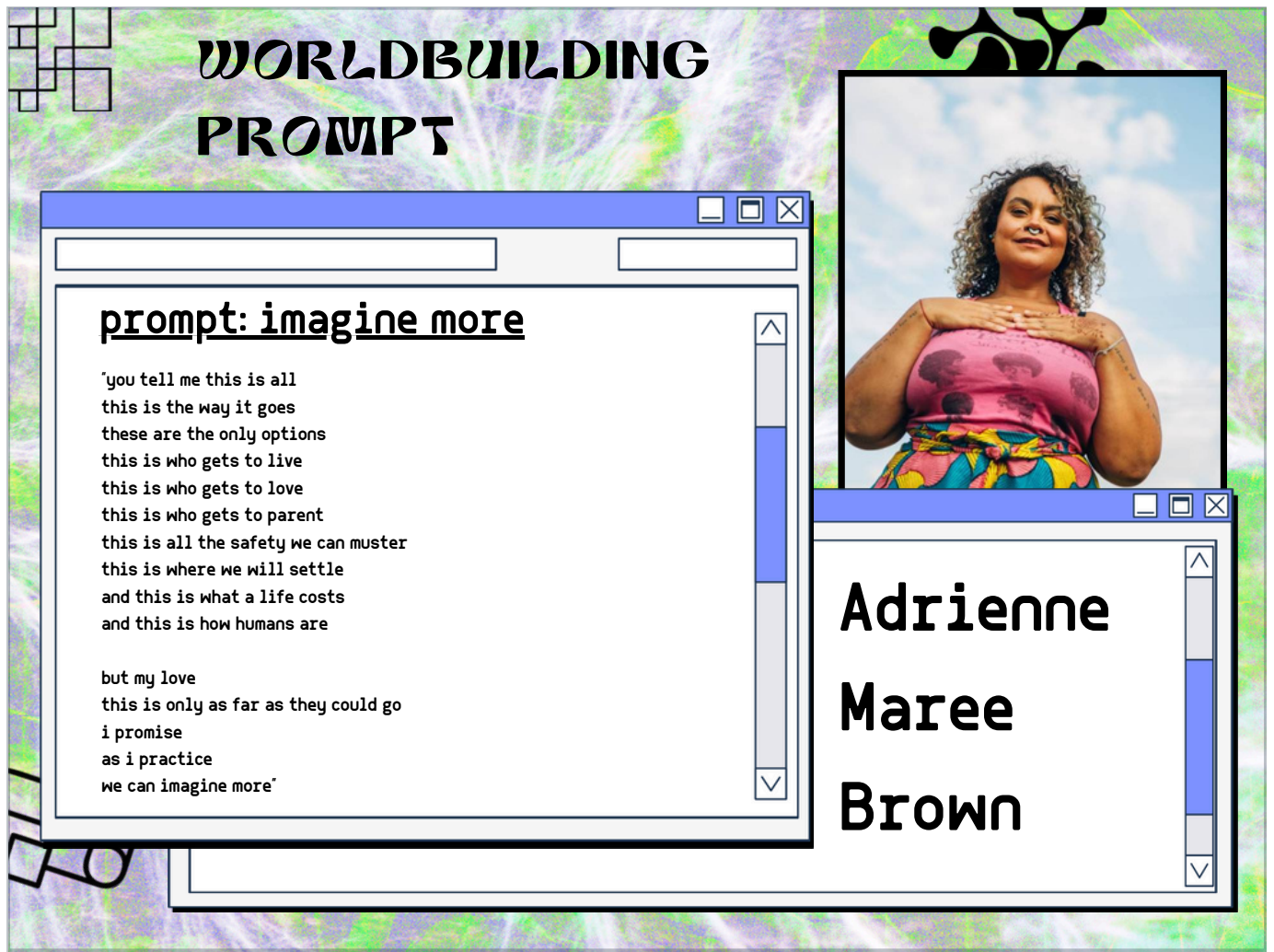
WORLDBUILDING PROMPT

prompt: imagine more

"do you understand
how free we could be
how abundant our safety
ease, release and satisfaction
our foundation
how many people would dream
themselves on purpose
into their thriving
into their sacred lives
if you would only imagine more"



**Adrienne
Maree
Brown**



An Invitation to Imagine More

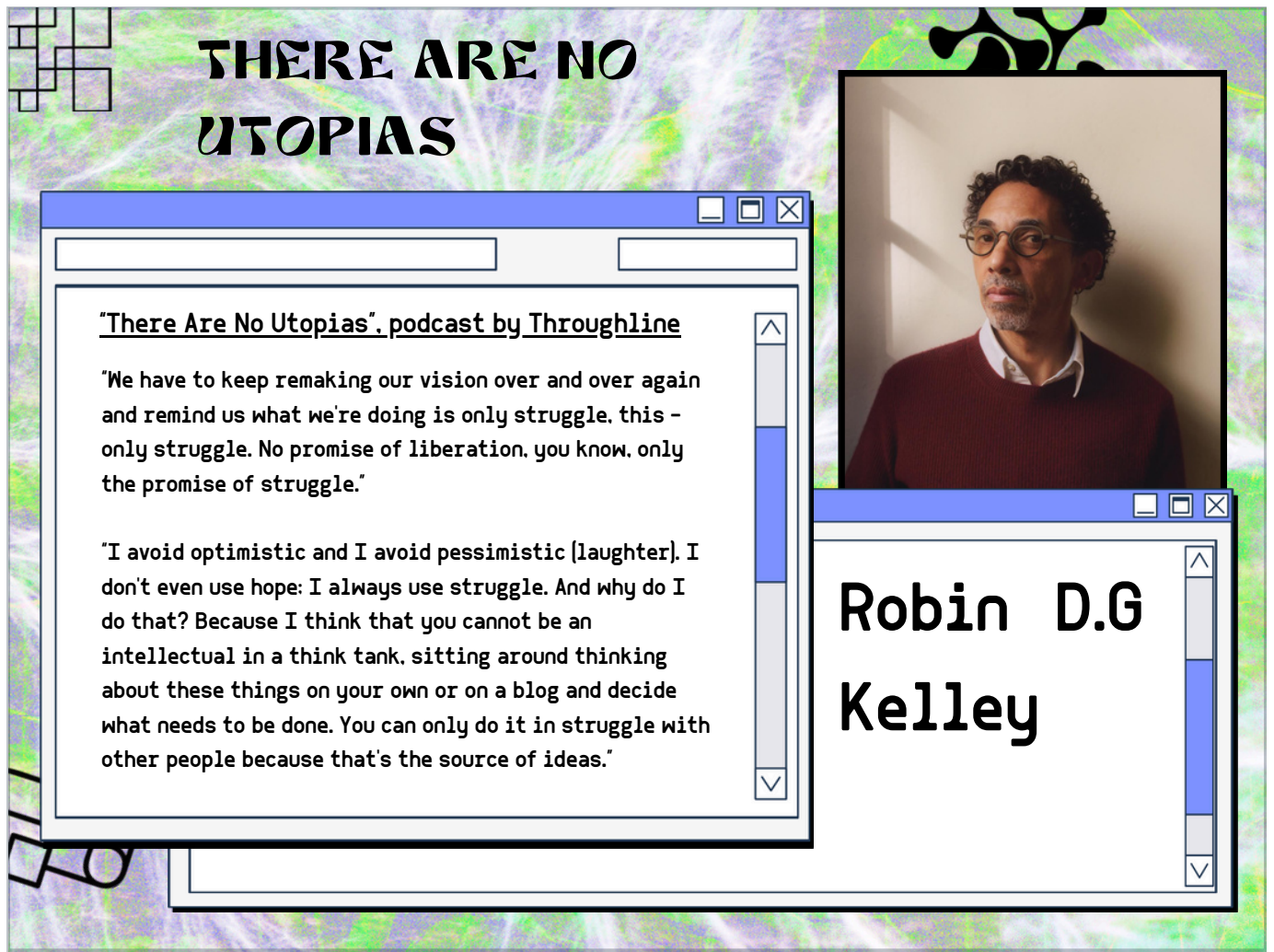
What becomes newly possible, what technologies and new worlds do we build when we imagine more?





TIME TO WORLD BUILD!

In 3 Steps...



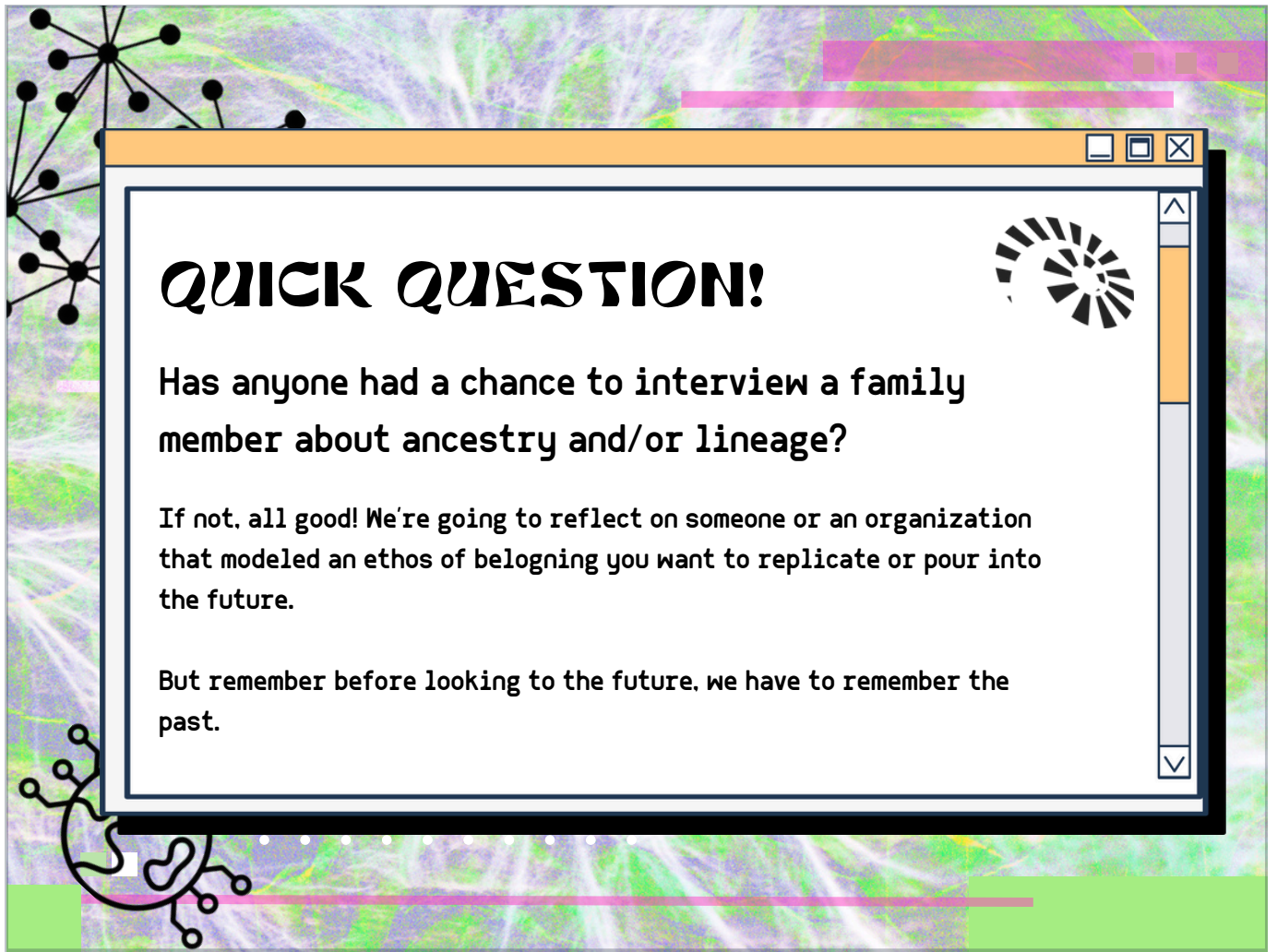
There Are No Utopias

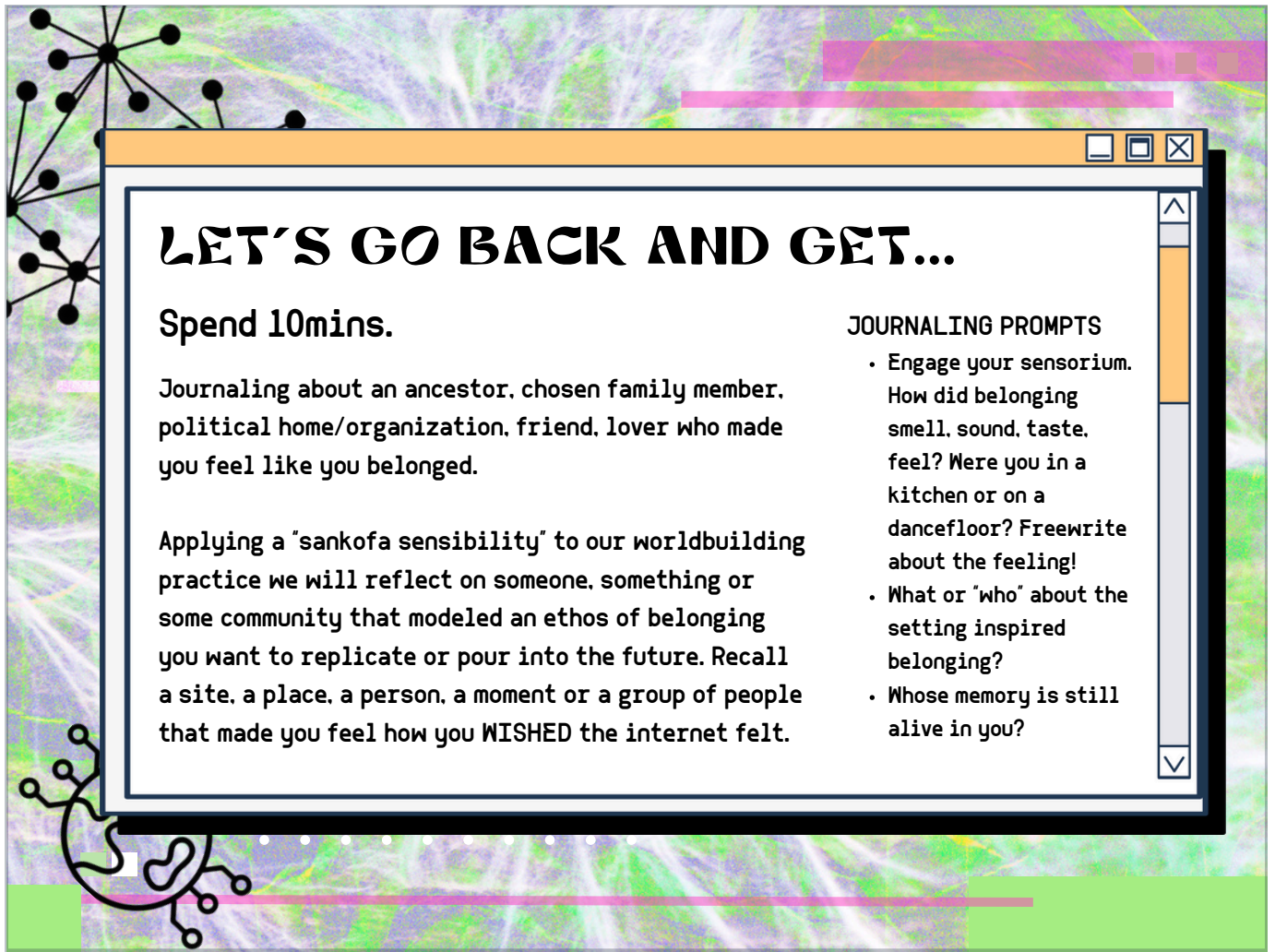
Worldbuilding isn't an invitation to escape into perceived utopias, it's an invitation to work alongside others to "imagine more" and create beyond the given.



STEP 1

RECALLING BELONGING





LET'S GO BACK AND GET...

Spend 10mins.

Journaling about an ancestor, chosen family member, political home/organization, friend, lover who made you feel like you belonged.

Applying a "sankofa sensibility" to our worldbuilding practice we will reflect on someone, something or some community that modeled an ethos of belonging you want to replicate or pour into the future. Recall a site, a place, a person, a moment or a group of people that made you feel how you WISHED the internet felt.

JOURNALING PROMPTS

- Engage your sensorium. How did belonging smell, sound, taste, feel? Were you in a kitchen or on a dancefloor? Freewrite about the feeling!
- What or "who" about the setting inspired belonging?
- Whose memory is still alive in you?

LET'S GO BACK AND GET..

Spend 10mins.

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- Whose memory is still alive in you?

Let's Share Out! Can we hear from 2-3 folks who care to share? You can read what you wrote or simply reflect.

LET'S GO BACK AND GET..

Spend 10mins.

Journaling about an ancestor, chosen family member, political home/organization, friend, lover who made you feel like you belonged.

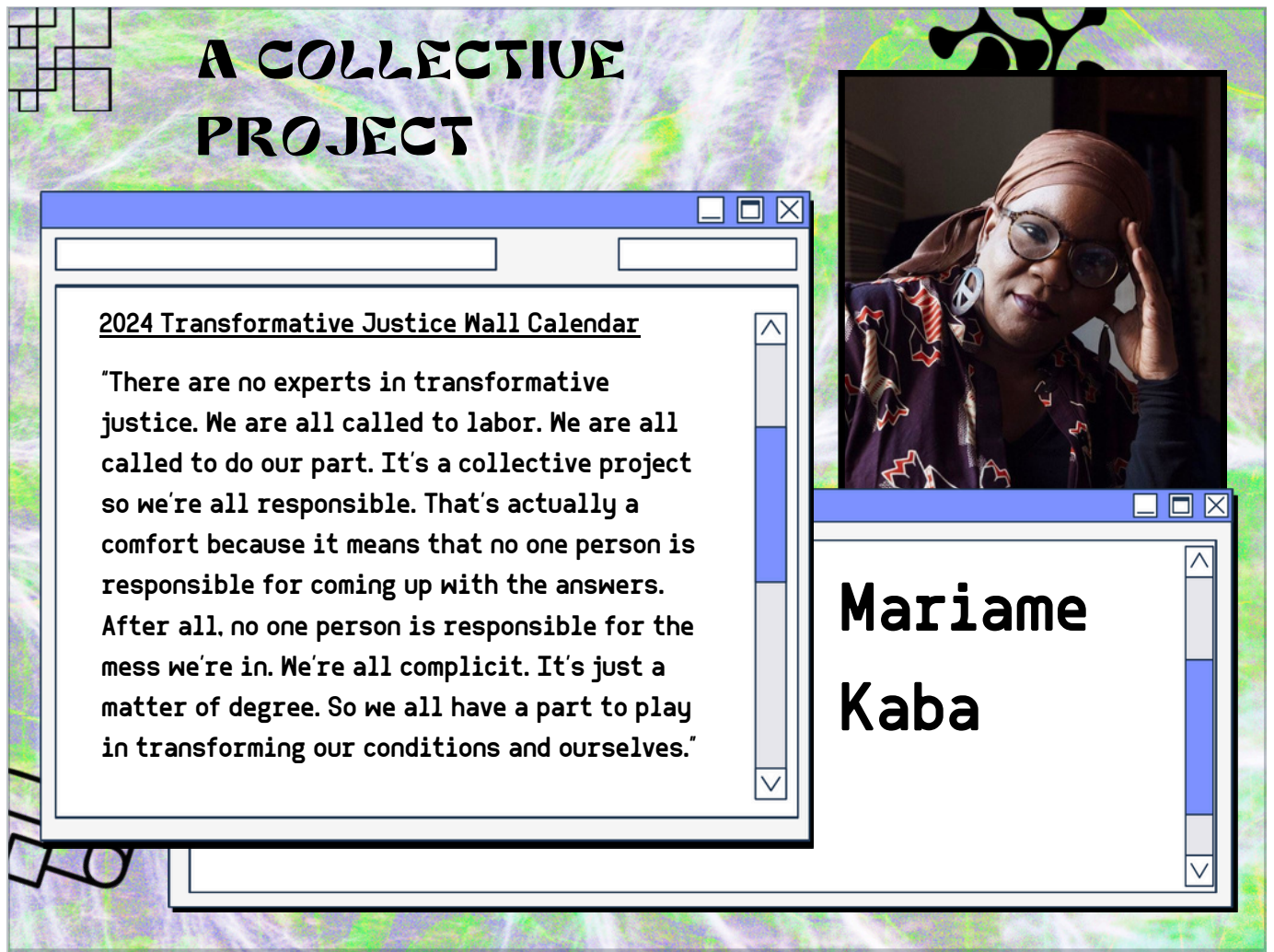
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JOURNALING

- Engage your senses. How did belonging smell, sound, taste, feel? Were you in a kitchen or on a dancefloor? Freewrite about the feeling!
- What or "who" about the setting inspired belonging?
- Whose memory is still alive in you?

We come from a long list of people and places who have made us possible! We'll return to this in the next steps.





Worldbuilding As A Collective Project

Mariame Kaba reminds us why worldbuilding is a collective project.

BUILD A WORLD IN 3 STEPS

	A	B	C	D
1		VERB		SPECULATIVE PLACE
2	We will	write	toward	Chocolate City
3	We are	dreaming	in the direction of	Cykofa
4	We imagine	being	a network where	a liberated body
5	We will		toward	
6	We are		in the direction of	
7	We imagine			
8	We will			
9	We are			
10	We imagine			
11	We will			
12	We are			
13	We imagine			
14	We will			
15	We are			
16	We imagine			
17	We will			
18	We are			
19	We imagine			
20	We will			
21	We are			
22	We imagine			

STEP 2: GENERATE PROMPTS

It's a collective problem we have - our dissatisfaction with the internet. How do we collectively generate new prompts?

Holding on to that recollection of belonging we're going to collectively generate prompts for the worlds we're building on the web using sentence frameworks that asks us to consider the verbs/actions, site specificity and desires inside the world we're building. We will silently work alongside eachother inside the landscape of a spreadsheet!

BUILD A WORLD IN 3 STEPS

Check the chat for the spreadsheet!

STEP 2: GENERATE PROMPTS

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19	We imagine		
20	We will		
21	We are		
22	We imagine		

LET'S GENERATE WORLDBUILDING PROMPTS...

DWeb for Worldbuilders: Collective Prompts for Web-Site Specific Speculation

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	A	B	C	D	E	F
1		VERB		SPECULATIVE PLACE		DESIRED OUTCOME
2	We will	toward		built on an internet where		
3	We are	in the direction of		using software that		
4	We imagine	a network where		is connected to		
5	We will	toward		built on an internet where		
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19	We imagine	a network where		is connected to		
20	We will	toward		built on an internet where		
21	We are	in the direction of		using software that		
22	We imagine	a network where		is connected to		
23	We will	toward		built on an internet where		
24	We are	in the direction of		using software that		

Sheet1

0. To start the spreadsheet is blank

We will collectively add our own verbs, speculative places and desired outcomes. You can choose to work vertically or horizontally but we want to try to complete as many rows as we can by the end of **5mins** so feel free to fill in the blanks where your co-creators left empty cells!

LET'S GENERATE WORLDBUILDING PROMPTS...

1. The Verbs

Feel free to return to the freewriting we just completed in STEP 1! What were you **doing** in your memories of belonging? Return to the ancestors you admire. What were their verbs? What did they **do** to cultivate belonging? What activities can we **do** online and off to cultivate belonging? Fill this column in with creative actions that strengthen and inspire our networks.

	VERB	SPECULATIVE PLACE	DESIRED OUTCOME
1			
2	We will write	toward	built on an internet where
3	We are dreaming	in the direction of	using software that
4	We imagine being	a network where	is connected to
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7	We imagine	a network where	is connected to
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24	We are	in the direction of	using software that

Worldbuilding Implies Action

What creative actions might we want to engage in to cultivate belonging and rehearse inside new worlds?

LET'S GENERATE WORLDBUILDING PROMPTS...

2. The Place

Invoke other internets! Here we will use the liberating potential of our imagination. We will use the power of worldbuilding to name a **place**, any place, some other where that doesn't exist or existed a millennia ago. A speculative location you dreamed about or a (web)site an ancestor whispered about through the internet to remind you to return.

	VERB		SPECULATIVE PLACE		DESIRED OUTCOME
2	We will write	toward	Chocolate City	built on an internet where	
3	We are dreaming	in the direction of	Cykafa	using software that	
4	We imagine being	a network where	a liberated body	is connected to	
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23	We will	toward		built on an internet where	
24	We are	in the direction of		using software that	

Place Is Political

Worldbuilding happens somewhere, it is a site specific practice. What speculative place (online or off) do we want to rehearse our creative actions?

LET'S GENERATE WORLDBUILDING PROMPTS...

DWeb for Worldbuilders: Collective Prompts for Web-Site Specific Speculation

	VERB		SPECULATIVE PLACE		DESIRED OUTCOME
1	We will	write	toward	Chocolate City	built on an internet where
2	We are	dreaming	in the direction of	Cykola	using software that
3	We imagine	being	a network where	a liberated body	is connected to
4	We will		toward		built on an internet where
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19	We will		toward		built on an internet where
20	We are		in the direction of		using software that
21	We imagine		a network where		is connected to
22					

3. The Desire

Here we are invoking Audre Lorde's essay "Uses of the Erotic. The Erotic as Power". Lorde reminds us our desire is a limitless energy source we can trust and leverage as a collaborator. A north star we can rely on to illuminate the path as we journey. Our desire is our why and our what. **What desired outcomes are we building toward?** Think of these prompts as poetry and have fun!

Worldbuilding And Desire

Worlds get actualized through desire. What desire is motivating us to rehearse, practice and build inside the new worlds we're imagining?

DWeb for Worlds: Collective Imports for Web-Site Specific Speculation ☆ ↻ ↺

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E52

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1		VERB		SPECULATIVE PLACE		DESIRED OUTCOME
2	We will	write	toward	Chocolate City	built on an internet where	black feminist values inform behaviors.
3	We are	dreaming	in the direction of	Cykofa	using software that	allows us to collaborate on post-prison possibilities.
4	We imagine	being	a network where	a liberated body	is connected to	ancestral memory.
5	We will		toward		built on an internet where	
6	We are		in the direction of		using software that	
7	We imagine		a network where		is connected to	
8	We will		toward		built on an internet where	
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19	We imagine		a network where		is connected to	
20	We will		toward		built on an internet where	
21	We are		in the direction of		using software that	
22	We imagine		a network where		is connected to	

+ ≡ Sheet1 ▾

3. The De

Here we are inv
Lorde's essay Uses

The Erotic as Power. Love reminds us our desire is a limitless energy source we can trust and leverage as a collaborator. A north star we can rely on to illuminate the path as we journey. Our desire is our why and our what. **What desired outcomes are we building toward?** Think of these prompts as poetry and have fun!

LET'S GENERATE WORLDBUILDING PROMPTS



Let's honor all the emergent possibility in these prompts we collectively generated!

Anyone have any favorites?

DWeb for Worldbuilders: Collective Prompts for Web-Site Specific Speculation ☆ 📁 📄

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E52  

	A	B	C	D	E	F
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3	We are	dreaming	in the direction of a network where	Cykofa	using software that is connected to	allows us to collaborate on post-prison possibilities.
4	We imagine	being	a network where	a liberated body	built on an internet where	ancestral memory.
5	We will		toward		using software that is connected to	
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12	We are		in the direction of a network where		built on an internet where	
13	We imagine		a network where		using software that is connected to	
14	We will		toward		built on an internet where	
15	We are		in the direction of a network where		using software that is connected to	
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22	We imagine		a network where		built on an internet where	

+ ☰ Sheet1 ▾

3. The De

Here we are in
Lorde's essay *Uses of the Erotic as Power*. Lorde reminds us our desire is a limitless energy source we can trust and leverage as a collaborator. A north star we can rely on to illuminate the path as we journey. Our desire is our why and our what. **What desired outcomes are we building toward?** Think of these prompts as poetry and have fun!

FREEDOM IS A PLACE



Katherine McKittrick
@demonicground

Ruth Wilson Gilmore just told us:

abolition is presence, it is life in rehearsal. it is not the recitation of rules.

freedom is a place. freedom is a place.

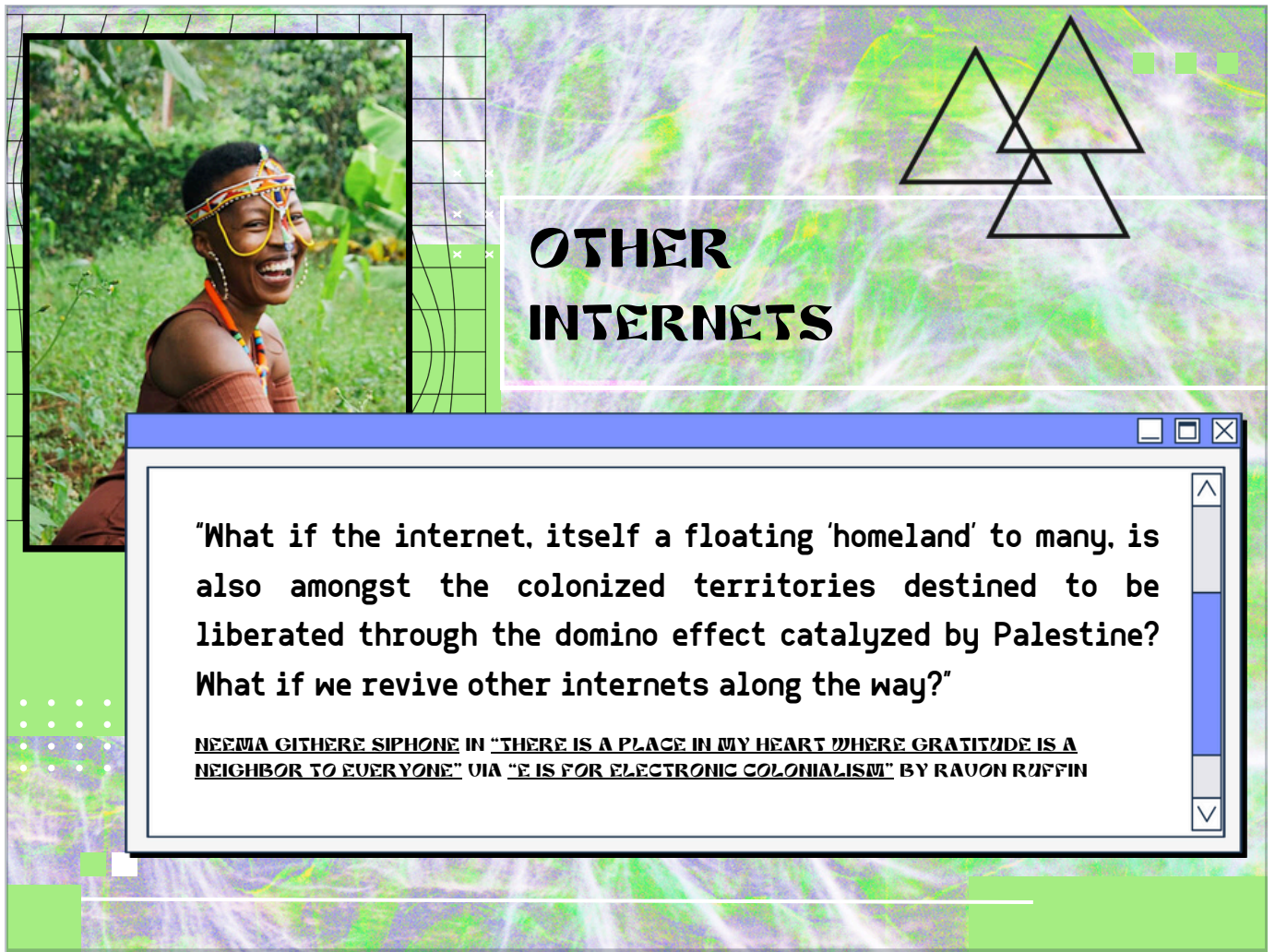
Guys. Get into it!

6:59 PM · Oct 26, 2020



**Ruth Wilson
Gilmore &
Katherine
McKittrick**





"What if the internet, itself a floating 'homeland' to many, is also amongst the colonized territories destined to be liberated through the domino effect catalyzed by Palestine? What if we revive other internets along the way?"

NEEMA GITHERE SIPHONE IN "THERE IS A PLACE IN MY HEART WHERE GRATITUDE IS A NEIGHBOR TO EVERYONE" VIA "E IS FOR ELECTRONIC COLONIALISM" BY RAUON RUFFIN



REMEMBER CYKOFA?

"We know this place as the North Carolina Black River, they know it as Cykofa. A parallel universe suspended among past and future — where cornrows are cryptography keys, data farms are data forests, the weaving loom is a computer, cotton is encoded with freedom dreams, and chain link fencing from demolished prisons is used as architectural membrane woven with plant life. In Cykofa the trees have learned to communicate using the data Cykofians have encoded in the tree's DNA and tree ring memory."

Collectively authored by a choir of seed data and I

Cykofa: The Seeda Origin Story



A WEB-SITE SPECIFIC WORLD

Spend 20mins.

Free writing and imagining a world on the web! Be as expansive and imaginative as you desire. A web can be networked bodies connected through ancestral memory, mutual aid infrastructures inspired by mycelial root system, a liberated city, or the internet. This is an invitation to **imagine more**.

Use this sentence framework to get you started:

We know this place as _____ where
_____.

Mix in any or all of the 3 Worldbuilding ingredients:
1) Ancestry. 2) Algorithm. 3) Aesthetics

TIPS

- Use one of the collectively generated prompts from STEP 2 as inspiration!
- Feel free to leverage the existing structure of the internet or create a world on a wide web that doesn't yet exist.
- Return to the 'codes of conduct/ consent' in the case studies or the aesthetics of belonging from STEP 1.
- Feel free to embed the folks you journaled about in STEP 1 as characters in this world.
- Remember Sankofa. We don't come from nowhere. **none of us are blank pages** so we're never starting with a blank page.

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Let's Share Out! Feel free to **read what you wrote or simply **reflect**.**

A Worldbuilding Prompt for Freewriting

We know this place as _____ where _____.

Use this worldbuilding prompt to leverage the power of site specificity to imagine *where* and *how* desired outcomes might unfold.

This freewriting exercise can inform your speculative design for the worlds you're building on the DWeb and inside your communities.

WHY WORLDBUILDING?



Framework

The worlds we build illuminate a value system, an organizing framework, our living algorithm, our hyper shapes of possibility. A portrait of our desired outcomes.

Homework: Now that we've written them into being, it's time to invite others into the worlds we've built! Who will you invite?

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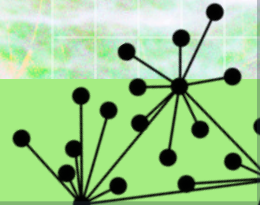


Practice

The world you just built can act as a soft architecture or facilitation technology for future workshops, projects, installations or programming in your practice.



Homework: Now that we've written them into being, it's time to invite others into the worlds we've built! Who will you invite?



SOFT, WHERE?

"The church of techno-optimism would have us believe that software can solve suffering but there's no solution for that, only a salve. The salve is the practice of returning to each other, ourselves and our local ecosystems again and again. Most of the time it requires a knock on the door, a phone call, handpicked herbs from your garden in outstretched hands smelling of rosemary asking for permission to hold you."

— Ayana Zaire Cotton, Lavender Software and the Smell of Belonging: Less tools for thought and more tools for connection, Seeda School Substack, Jul 31, 2023



In Search of Lavender Software

[1/3]

SOFT, WHERE?

"I'm most interested in the software that helps sustain this salve, a dewy micro-climate of lavender and memory, music and belonging. Tools for Return. What are the aesthetics of this software, a better question, how does it get cultivated and maintained? Yesterday, in a letter I was writing to a cousin serving a life sentence in prison I told him how I've been thinking so much about speculative practice and the ontology of blackness — how it makes room for a way of being that is beyond human. Like how a best friend becomes a sibling, an anonymous southern folk tale becomes everyone's family history, a family friend becomes an Aunt."

— Ayana Zaire Cotton, [Lavender Software and the Smell of Belonging: Less tools for thought and more tools for connection](#), Seeda School Substack, Jul 31, 2023



In Search of Lavender Software

[2/3]

SOFT, WHERE?

"The violence of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade made relations elastic, in the absence of biological ties the world became our kin. Fractured and scattered. Related to everyone and no one, computers become cousins and trees become uncles. Related to the world, bodies surviving in residence time, our code is still floating around in the same ocean where internet cables reside. Inside this poetic possibility of being, a beyond human cosmic slop of connection and relation, what is lavender software? How might I hold you without ever knowing your name?"

— Ayana Zaire Cotton, Lavender Software and the Smell of Belonging: Less tools for thought and more tools for connection, Seeda School Substack, Jul 31, 2023



In Search of Lavender Software

[3/3]



A Politics Of Prefiguration

How might our speculative design and worldbuilding projects allow us to live the future now?

