

The New Real Pavilions and Salons: Creating Spaces for AI Futures



Image credit: Andrew Perry

The New Real Pavilions and Salons explore how to share transformative ideas through art and AI to equip future generations to flourish on a thriving planet in the midst of surprising, joyful and inclusive forms of intelligent life.

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How do we move conversations about AI beyond technical specifications into meaningful dialogue about our collective futures? Between 2022 and 2024, The New Real created new formats for technology-arts-society interaction through its Pavilions and Salons – physical and discursive spaces where artists, scientists, technologists and publics could explore how AI might shape our future on a planetary scale.

A new model for engagement

The New Real Pavilion combines physical stagings of artworks, research activities and technology demonstrations, contextualised in carefully curated narratives that invite deeper engagement – something we refer to as ‘wrap around engagement’. Rather than traditional exhibitions, the Pavilion is conceived as a ‘concept-touring’ space that can adapt to different settings and audiences, creating opportunities for direct interaction with the concepts, works and their creators.

The New Real Observatory (2022)

The inaugural Pavilion and Salon showcased the first artworks created with, and in response to, The New Real Observatory platform. Works by [Inés Cámara Leret](#), [Adam Harvey](#), and [Keziah MacNeill](#) demonstrated how artistic practice could help us rethink AI design – embracing human traits like bias and uncertainty as creative opportunities rather than problems to solve. Through interactive exhibits and discussions, we explored how AI-art collaboration might address urgent challenges, from energy-intensive computing to the disconnect between global climate data and local experience.

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Another new invention is the accompanying curated ‘pop-up research hub’ – which offers multiple opportunities for rich data collection in different media (video, text, drawing etc) with impromptu interviews, feedback surveys and observations.

The New Real Salon format complements these physical installations and interactions with focused discussions, conversations and workshops. These gatherings bring artists, curators and scientists into direct dialogue with broader societal concerns, creating spaces for critical reflection on emerging technologies and their implications.

Uncanny Machines (2023)

The Spring 2023 edition focused on the evolving relationship between artists and AI technology. Featuring works from the [‘Uncanny Machines’](#) commission, the Pavilion demonstrated how artists were using the Observatory platform's new text analysis capabilities to conduct profound experiments with AI and climate data. The accompanying Salon discussions examined how artistic practice might enrich or challenge AI development, exploring ways to combine machine learning with human intuition and embodied experience.

Legacy

Through these new event formats, The New Real developed new models for public engagement with AI development. By creating spaces where technical innovation could be explored alongside its social and environmental implications, the Pavilions and Salons demonstrated how research translation might become a two-way process – not just explaining technology to the public, but bringing public insight into technological development itself.

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