

# EPISODE 7: THE FUTURE AND STUFF

[00:04 Narrator:]

The Law is a White Dog is a podcast series developed for TULCA Festival of Visual Arts 2020. Made during the global pandemic, the series places artists and artworks in dialogue with lawyers, advocates and activists. As a festival of visual art produced in a time of confinement and restriction for many, the podcast series explores unseen dimensions of the artists' work.

[00:37]

Forerunner is the name of the collaborative practice of artists Tom Watt, Tanad Williams & Andreas Kindler von Knobloch. Individually and together, they work across visual art, design and architecture.

Forerunner's project for 'The Law is a White Dog' is a sculpture made by Tanad and Andreas, titled *the Future and stuff*. This new sculpture incorporates cast concrete and a water pump, and takes inspiration from design accommodations such as 'fish ladders' and audio description:

[1:09 Tanad:]

Hi, my name is Tanad, I'm a white male in his 30s nearly turned 31, with short brown hair, whose forehead is getting bigger and bigger every year. I've got some stubble on the face, and a bit of a moustache today.

[1:21 Andreas:]

My name is Andreas I, I'm sitting in my room. And I have brown curly hair, which is a little bit out of control at the moment. But I'm wearing a blue jumper.

[1:33 Narrator:]

In this episode, Tanad and Andreas discuss with their collaborator Tom, their starting points for developing the sculpture, we hear first from Tanad, who describes their concept of 'material navigation.'

[02:00 Tanad:]

Part of our work sort of is designed around material navigation, which whether that's a shiny marble floor in a shopping centre, which is made to make you slow

down where it might slip. So you'll you'll look at the display cases a little longer or sharp concrete stairs, which might help you look for a handrail or a guide rail or wood which will feel more mature touch or bronze steel, all these types of materials are around us. And in using them correctly or incorrectly, you can kind of create different ambiences or different types of spaces.

[02:41 Andreas:]

I would say that the idea of material navigation that we use is also like a tool for collaborating together, where sometimes we use it as a as a form of decision making.

[02:56 Tom:]

And rules...following rules, sort of like, makes it easier to make decisions as a trio.

[03:09 Andreas:]

I think, for us the work really changed after COVID happened in March, once we realized that people were not going to be able to touch these things. And I think, was it you Tanad that had thought about working with people with impaired vision?

[03:29 Tanad, over occasional background sound of water:]

I guess that came out of that concept, material navigation and a sort of much more literal sense helping someone move through space with a material or with a physical prop. And that might have been what prompted the idea of working with people who are visually impaired, especially as we consider ourselves or usually tag ourselves as 'visual artists.' A couple of the recent works we've made actually have had an audio quality as well, whether that's moving through space and the sound of standing or walking, or touching things that we've made, or the sound of water moving through space is also quite frequent. So I think that was one of our early ideas was to try and facilitate a different kind of viewer.

[04:12 Andreas:]

I don't know, I guess maybe it's from our previous work with dams that we got into

fish ladders. I think they're kind of funny things, fish ladders. Probably the first reason they came about is because whenever a dam was built in a river that was near the sea, the salmon who would have previously climbed the rocky waterfalls of the river would not be able to go up the river anymore. And then the people that were fishing the salmon were upset that they couldn't fish. So then they were like, okay, we need to build this, this fish ladder. So even then, that it was about like someone not being able to catch a fish as opposed to thinking directly about what the fish *need*.

[04:53 Tanad:]

I think fish ladders were interesting to us first of all in 2018, when we found a fish elevator in Ardnacrusha. So on the Shannon, in the biggest hydroelectric dam in Europe when it was built in the 20s. In the 70s, I think or in the 50s, they put in a fish elevator to help the fish get over it. And it seemed at first to us like a quite a funny thing that you would need fish to use an elevator. But it's quite a poignant thing as well, that there seems to be this sort of huge movement towards technological advancement, that then thousands of years later, people realize was devastating to the natural wildlife and to the environment. And this other thing had to be built to try and solve that. And it's quite a comical thing on its own, a fish ladder, but when you have an extra damage becomes quite, maybe quite sad or poignant thing.

[05:42 Tom:]

Yeah, it's funny that like these, like huge permanent structures get made, and then there's a problem with them, like they, they're killing the eels. And then you have to have a rethink, but because they're made of concrete, they just sort of sit there. And maybe they're failures, but maybe like, another one gets built around the side of it, or they just keep trying... But there's doesn't seem to be much like backtracking or use of maybe easier materials, like, adaptable materials.

[06:09 Tanad:]

A lot of the time seems like the term 'sustainability' actually refers to market value

– producing and reproducing things, or sort of, shelf-life of a material. Rather than an ecological disaster, or being responsible with how or what you make. I guess a primary concern in our practice is what happens to sculptures or installations after they've been seen, what happens to a work or an environment that you've designed, once that small show window has finished. Typically, exhibitions might last anywhere from two weeks, four weeks to a couple of months. And our recent works, at least involve an awful lot of material production, or changing and manipulation of space, which has to return back to its standard casual, white self, again. And so the past few times that we've done this, we've always ended up with a sort of problem of what do we do with this material or these objects afterwards? And maybe this is the beginning of us trying to come to terms with what we do with works after the show's closed.

[07:15 Andreas:]

And definitely when we were mixing the concrete for the steps for this work, *the Future and stuff*, I was often thinking about how if we had been mixing that concrete, I don't know in the 1960s, and we didn't know the concrete was bad... that maybe we wouldn't have had this like, well, they're feeling while we were mixing that it would just be like, Are we just making like fresh new stones that are going to be around forever? Well, now we're like, we're making fresh new stones that have this like embodied carbon, where the products have to be made in a kiln using all this energy, and then what's going to happen with them afterwards how they're going to end up in a backyard. What will happen with this work, you know?

[07:56 Tanad:]

The work is called *the Future and stuff* with a lowercase s and a capitalized F. Responsible use of materials is maybe a nicer way to put it.

[08:17 Narrator:]

You will now hear an audio description of the completed sculpture, written and read by Fala Buggy. The composition in the background incorporates sound recordings of the sculpture being built, and was created by Tanad Williams.

[08:36 Fala:]

In a cold industrial warehouse in Galway city, a free-standing sculpture of a concrete spiral staircase. The sculpture is approximately 2.5 meters high, and water trickles down the steps from the top to the bottom. The sound of water dripping can be heard in the echoing space. The sculpture has an overall feeling of Brutalist architecture, signified by the bare and unembellished materials – cast concrete and two by two white deal timber, which act as a support for several steps of the staircase. The staircase is dimly lit, by combination of natural and artificial light; a long skylight embedded in the corrugated steel roof, and fluorescent tubing attached to vertical beams around the space. Soft shadows are cast by the staircase over the pale grey walls and dusty pink concrete floor. The staircase is made up of 14 cast concrete steps, 13 of which are identical and stacked neatly on top of each other, to form a central concrete column around which they rotate. The steps fan out to the left, descending in a spiral to the right, where the bottom step, slightly larger than the others, pools the slowly falling water. The water seems to be recirculated through an invisible and silent pump. Underneath the edge of the fourth, fifth and eleventh steps stand long, thin pieces of timber support, wedged between the ground and the smooth underneath. The steps there are not fixed but are bowed under the weight of the sculpture. The supports seem quite spindly and weak in contrast with the thick concrete steps, particularly the support, which stretches up to the eleventh step. Each step has a slight depression on the flat, like a miniature dam, retaining the trickling water until it pools and overflows through a central gap and onto the step below. The process repeats until the water reaches the bottom step where it collects and recirculates the top step. The water stains the light gray concrete dark in the centre of each step, appearing like a stair-runner. The upper side of the steps, mottled from the water, contrast the dry smooth and pale underneath of the staircase. The overall color of the sculpture is a light cold grey, a poured concrete. Closer inspection: small color variations can be seen on the steps. There are soft hues of muddy yellow and brown over the cool grey.

[11:40 Narrator:]

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