

## Leap back and forth: time travel at FACT

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If you could travel without gravity, how would the human being look like from outer space? If you can travel through time, whose memory would you visit? Would you like to travel alone or with a 'like-minded' group? The ongoing exhibition at FACT is the right place for you to find the answer via 'Flashback' and 'Software' —two episodes of Liverpool Biennial 2016.



Compared to the display at Cain Brewery, Yin-Ju Chen's *Extrastellar Evaluations* discards the clearly political discourse of human history and the relationship with the universe. Instead, Chen's work takes us flying into the cosmos to see the ancient message left by the Lemurians on the earth, who inhabited the lost continent of Lemuria thousands of years ago. From Chen's point of view, there is an indescribable connection between the universe and the behaviour of the creatures on the earth. Nowhere more than in the 1960s, which signified a complex interrelation of cultural and political events worldwide which included the beginning of the Cold War, Africa's independence movements, protests in Europe, cultural revolution in China and so on. Trying to help humans better understand their society in the present, and in the future, the survived Lemurians disguise themselves as artists. In doing so, they create a passageway through which they are able to deliver glimpses of a foreboding message of future dystopia: a momentary view which might have the power to bring our thoughts back to the love, humanity and spirituality we used to have.

Coming back to the earth, traveling through a different time-scale, Krzysztof Wodiczko's works provide us yet another of these portals, or passageways, to access various memories of human history as experienced by different groups, and taking place along a variety of borders. Underlining the fact that any citizen's survival is under authoritarian control, *Personal Instrument* (1969) empowers the user to edit what they hear—allowing them the option of rejecting the one-directional

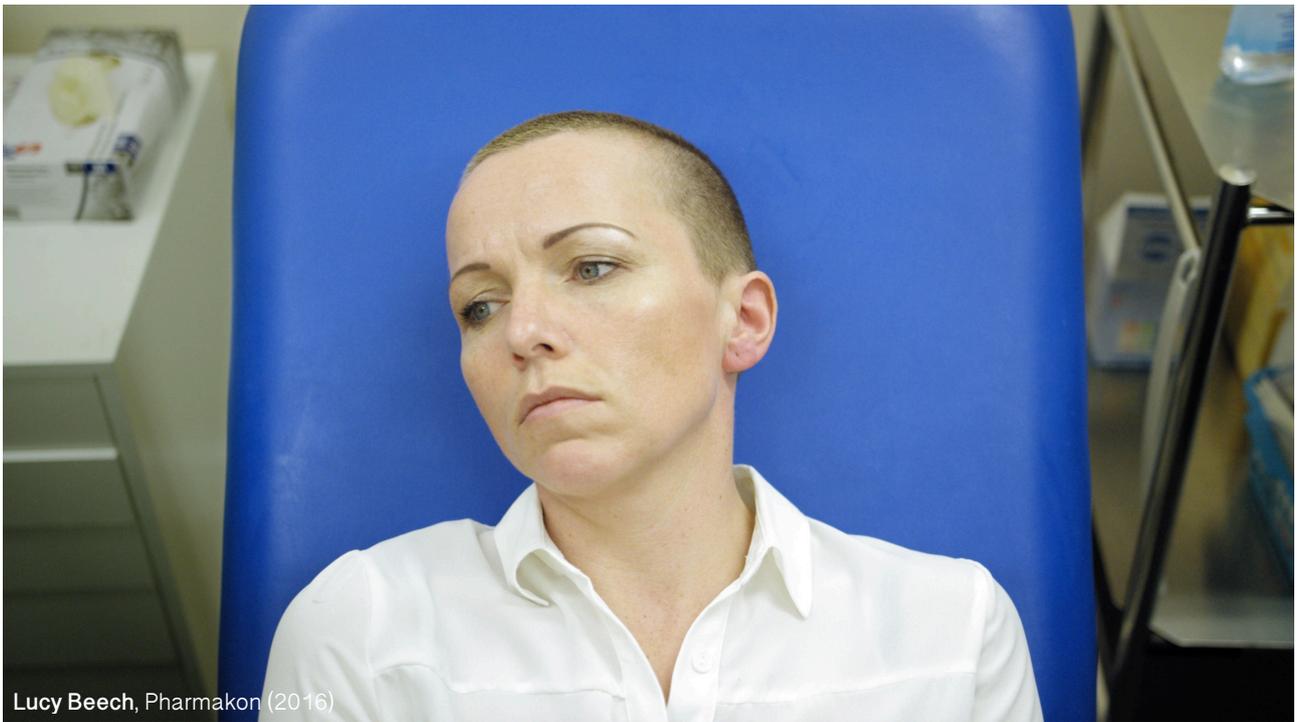
propaganda which usually accompanies such a regime. Other works include *Homeless Vehicle Project* (1987-1989) and *Poliscar* (1991), in which Wodiczko extends his view to the homeless: a group who are not seen as wholly part of our society, nor entirely categorised as a 'group as citizens' in their own right. This results in their exclusion from the protection of any state or nation: never fully excluded, never entirely included. Not only does Wodiczko ensure that the usually ignored voice of these 'marginal' members of society is heard, but also that the invisible group is very clearly seen. *Guests* (2009) depicts a similar experience of enforced transience, and in doing so, touches upon the currently (and constantly) burning issue of the migration crisis. Here we see the experiences of (never fully visible) 'legal' and 'illegal' immigrants, as they describe their incredible efforts hard to become naturalised in their adoptive society, and undertake labour-heavy (and unreliable) work in an attempt to remain part of the system.



Commissioned in Liverpool in 2009, the *War Veteran Vehicle* underscores Wodiczko's continued interest in the social reintegration of returning soldiers. The work stems from the question of how the traumatic experiences of conflict could be represented properly to the public, and by which means the mental status of veterans could be understood with empathy. These are the ongoing requests towards not only the artist within his extensive history of collaborative practice, but also outwards, to a wider society as well which seems destined to continually forget entire sections of people on whom it is completely dependent.

Lucy Beech's latest film *Pharmakon* (2016), part of the 'Software' episode, brings us to another portal, through which we are able to rethink the constantly shifting definition of 'illness' and 'wellness'. Focusing on the protagonist, a female bouncer, and her vacillating emotion (which could be easily determined in any direction within different contexts), Beech ingeniously co-mingles a variety of discourses via her elegant cinematic narrative and leaves the viewer with many pressing

questions: Is connectivity the best way to solve our anxiety of 'being ill' ? Is medical diagnosis and treatment the most healing power, or is it the empowering and encouraging speech of self-support groups which has a true impact on your state of wellbeing? How do we as individuals receive messages from the external world and allow these to act on our bodies and souls... Beech has left the audience a clear clue with the title of the work: *Pharmakon*. Derived from Greek, and meaning both poison and antidote, this carefully chosen name encourages us to ruminate on the dilemma of connectivity (and it's very real effects) in an era of hybrid media.



Lucy Beech, *Pharmakon* (2016)

If you are curious about how it feels to travel through time, and space, and to link up with different realities, come and explore this [Liverpool Biennial 2016](#) exhibition at FACT, and take your first leap into a city-wide journey of time travel.