

Natalie Kane & Marlies Wirth

episode 3

The Culture & Technology Podcast

<https://culture-technology.podigee.io>

Episode 3: Collecting Digital Objects
Natalie Kane x Marlies Wirth

INTRODUCTION

When an object consists of bits instead of atoms, how do you preserve and display it for future generations? For Episode 3 of the Culture and Technology Podcast, two pioneers of digital culture curation, Natalie Kane at London's V&A and Marlies Wirth at Vienna's MAK, discuss the digital objects and share the challenges and rewards of collecting art that tells the story of our current moment – from Amazon Echo to the Women's March Pussyhat.

GUESTS

Natalie Kane is Curator of Digital Design at London's Victoria and Albert Museum. Ndkane.com

Marlies Wirth is Curator of Digital Culture and Head of the Design Collection at the Museum for Applied Arts in Vienna. [instagram.com/marlieswirth](https://www.instagram.com/marlieswirth)

HOST

Severin Matusek is a writer, producer and editor who has spent the last decade researching how technology transforms culture, communities and society.

CONCEPTS, PROJECTS AND PEOPLE IN CONTEXT

- **The Pussyhat™ Project** is a social movement centering on a pink handcrafted hat made and worn by participants in the 2017 Women's March in Washington DC. Chosen for its statement of solidarity with women in a political climate of discrimination and problematic rhetoric, the design was chosen to reclaim a word often used in the context of sexual harassment and transform it into a symbol of empowerment. pussyhatproject.com
- **Cointemporary** was an online artist-run gallery that exclusively traded in Bitcoin, running from 2014-2015. twitter.com/cointemporary
- **Wiener Werkstätte** (Vienna Workshop) (1903–1932) was a cooperative of artisans, architects, artists and designers co-founded by architect Josef Hoffmann in 1903. wien.info/en/sightseeing/architecture-design/best-of-vienna-wiener-werkstaette
- **Adolf Loos** (1870–1933) was an Austrian architect and counts among the most influential European Modernists. Loos took a highly divergent and often antagonistic aesthetic and theoretical position to Hoffmann and the Wiener Werkstätte movement. One of his best-known essays, and an insightful portal into his thinking, is the 1908 work 'Ornament and Crime'. architectuul.com/architect/adolf-loos
- **Ivan Illich** (1926–2002) was an Austrian Roman Catholic priest, philosopher, and social critic known for his prescient works on technology and society. His 1973 book *Tools for Conviviality* outlined a framework for thinking about technology that is still drawn on by many today. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Illich
- **The MAK – Museum of Applied Arts** is an arts and crafts museum in Vienna with a focus on architecture and contemporary art alongside crafts and design, and, increasingly, digital culture – as represented through initiatives

such as the MAK Design Lab, which was established as part of the Vienna Biennale 2019. mak.at

- **The Victoria & Albert Museum** (V&A) in London is a leading museum of art, design, and performance, housing over 2.3 million objects spanning 5000 years of history. vam.ac.uk
- **Valentin Ruhry's 'Grand Central'** exhibition at MAK brought to light the decentralisation of the digital world and its digital totems. The large-scale installation draws its name from the Apple Store at the New York train station. ruhry.at/en/work/items/grand-central.html
- **Andy Boot's** artistic practice occupies and blurs the boundaries between the digital and the physical. andyboot.com
- **Harm van den Dorpel's 'Event Listeners'** limited edition screensaver was the first work of art ever sold to a museum – the MAK – for Bitcoin in 2015. harm.work/work/event-listeners
- **Uncanny Values: Artificial Intelligence & You** was an exhibition held at the MAK in Vienna as part of the Vienna Biennale for Change 2019. 100 years after Freud wrote “The Uncanny”, the exhibition delved into the impacts of artificial intelligence on every aspect of contemporary life. uncannyvalues.org
- **Process Studio's Almoji** project, one of the works exhibited as part of *Uncanny Values: Artificial Intelligence & You*, generated new emoji via Deep Learning, with unsettling results. process.studio/works/aimoji-ai-generated-emoji
- **Anatomy of an AI System** is a 2018 art project by Kate Crawford, AI researcher and founder of AI Now Institute, and Vladan Joler, Share Foundation director and chair of New Media at the University of Novi Sad that considers the Amazon Echo as an anatomical map of labour, data and resources. anatomyof.ai

CREDITS

The Vienna Business Agency supports businesses, the economy and the city in developing the Austrian capital's creative industries and shaping its future trajectory. viennabusinessagency.at

Editorial Team: Paul Feigelfeld, Anna Dorothea Ker, Severin Matusek, Elisabeth Noever-Ginthör, Elisa Stockinger, Heinz Wolf.

Theme Music by Zanshin.

The topics of the Culture & Technology Podcast will be further discussed at the Creative Days Vienna 2021 - part of Vienna UP'21. <https://viennaup.com>

TRANSCRIPT

“One of my favorite things about museums is when you kind of walk into a museum, you go, Oh, I have one of those at home, or I have one of all 50 years ago, I saw that my Nan's kitchen, that kind of thing, because it makes me read kind of reassess and think I said, Well, why is that there then?”

Hello and welcome to the Culture and Technology Podcast. I'm your host, Severin Matusek. The Culture and Technology Podcast is a virtual salon initiated by the Vienna Business Agency in which experts from Vienna and around the globe explore how technology is reshaping the future of culture.

What's the last thing you used your phone for? Maybe you just checked your email. Or scrolled through your Instagram feed and stopped at memes that make you laugh - or sigh. All these photos, videos, files, are digital objects: objects that make up the digital culture we share as creators and consumers.

Given the high speed of digital cultural production today, it's easy to forget that the internet has only been around for 30 years – and the iPhone for fewer than 15. In very little time, digital objects have not only changed how we communicate and find information; they've become our interfaces for reality, the screens through which we experience the world.

So that makes me wonder: in a world where our devices are constantly upgrading, how can we preserve our current digital culture for the future?

In this episode of the Culture and Technology Podcast, we look at the role of museums in collecting and presenting the digital objects of today, for tomorrow.

Our first guest is Natalie Kane, Curator of Digital Design at London's Victoria and Albert Museum.

From Vienna, we're joined by Marlies Wirth, Curator of digital culture and Head of the Design Collection at the Museum for Applied Arts in Vienna.

Working with museums like the V&A and the MAK, both Natalie and Marlies have a huge responsibility when it comes to making digital culture accessible to the public and preserving it for the future.

It's a pleasure to have them explore the question with us: what exactly are digital objects and why do museums collect them?

Natalie and Marlies, welcome to our virtual salon.

—

SM

Very glad to have both of you on the podcast. To start with: I'm curious, Natalie, how did you get into collecting digital objects?

NK

I've always been really interested in how we think about the future of technology for the last maybe 10 years actually. Then eventually, I started curating technology, and putting on exhibitions and working with people and also the designers, they kind of imagined what the future of technology might be. And then eventually, I started research, you think the legacy of it might be so then you kind of naturally see all these complications.

They don't act like other objects, like paintings and sculptures and all the other things that come with more physical and analog objects, and you suddenly realize that we're losing all these extra facets of our digital culture, which we may have not really thought about. Because they become, it becomes sort of more a consideration around sort of the social, the ethical, and the political, which have always been a matter of our analog objects. And I'm not saying they're different. But because it's so wide ranging, and distributed and networked with the digital, that is a slightly different consideration that we have to think about.

So I've always been really fascinated with that. So when the job with the V&A came up, a friend kind of encouraged me and said, "Well, you've been thinking about this for a long time with futures folks and with art folks – why don't you kind of try and see how a museum can think about it? And then I went for it. And I found I've enjoyed ever since, really.

SM

What is the definition of a digital object? You mentioned? Do you have a short definition?

NK

No. [Laughs] I mean, I say that with the greatest respect because that I mean, there's born-digital, there's digital hybrid objects, which are objects, which may be kind of brought to life digitally. So the Internet of Things and that kind of thing. And then there's objects, which, for instance, may kind of be networked or brought to life through digital means, or there's actually objects which may have been born out of digital culture.

So we have objects like the Pussyhat, for instance, from the Women's March, which we at the V&A, consider additional objects, because it would never have really been brought to life in the same way had it not been that that design has not been passed through a Facebook group and the swell of interaction from people had not come

through that Facebook group. And it's – we don't see it like a textile design in that sense, we see it like an object of digital culture.

SM

So, digital culture is an interesting term that I would like to dig a bit deeper into, because Marlies, your role at the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna, as to be the curator of digital culture. So, what exactly do you do there? And how does digital culture relate to the digital objects that Natalie just very succinctly described?

MW

In the beginning, the position that I now have was defined just as the Head of Design Collection, but when I took it over, we were in the course of having our second Vienna Biennale preparing that, which was dealing with digitalization and that impact on culture and our society and the world economy basically.

And that's how my role was named, Curator for Digital Culture, which is a major difference actually, for Head of Digital Collection, as Natalie's position is described. So I am not only in charge of digital objects or digital design, but digital culture as a broader term. And I also work and collect with, with very analog objects, still.

And how it all started, basically, for me was when I curated a solo exhibition with the Austrian artist Valentin Ruhry, titled 'Grand Central.' And he was interested in Apple stores, and specifically the one in the Grand Central Station in New York, which was the first one as many may know, which was kind of in public space, just randomly tables with products standing there without being confined to a shop, you could just walk through on your way to train and buy objects, and not even go to the cashier's desk, but obviously, like it is now in every Apple Store, do it via your smartphone.

And that was back in 2014. I think, or 13, when that started. And the exhibition was started in MAK in October 2014. And so working with the artist on this project, I really got to talking with him about his knowledge on so many other digital things that I had just kind of read about or known about, but not in a scientific or theoretical way, like the blockchain and all the related cryptocurrencies which were booming at this time.

Valentin also had founded a platform called Cointemporary, together with another Austrian artist, Andy Boot, where they were selling artists editions and artworks, not

And one of the objects on sale there was the digital object by the digital artist Harm van den Dorpel called 'Event Listeners,' as a screensaver for OS. And that became our first digital object that the MAK ever bought and collected, and we bought it specifically with bitcoins, and it was inscribed in the blockchain. So that was a major, like, media deal, also that we did that. We haven't done it again, I admit, but that was it made sense for that specific kind of object.

SM

So I'm curious about both your positions in your respective museums. My understanding is both the Victoria Albert Museum as well as the MAK They're very well established institutions in London and in Vienna. And you know, digital culture and digital objects are fairly new things to deal with.

And I understand that probably your the role of your museums in society is also to translate and to educate the large public about what these objects are, what digital culture is, what challenges have you encountered so far, maybe Natalie, you start with presenting digital objects, making people understand that a gif or a meme is something worth collecting?

NK

It's a very interesting question. Because that means that I work with I see along slide my colleague, Corinna Gardner, Senior Curator of Design and Digital, and she's very well versed in that and we spend a lot of time trying to think through how you present something like, again, a gif for a mobile application, alongside, for instance, Memphis School wardrobes, and, and all of these objects, which I think often centers, like tend to be seen as quite unique or quite precious.

And, and I think the issue is because we live so often kind of alongside these objects, like the iPhone that we don't tend to see them as being the same as like a Raphael painting, right? And it's, and it's not because it's often kind of like trying to think what the museum is, in some senses. And one of the great things about museums is how it can put design in context.

One of my favorite things about museums is when you kind of walk into a museum, you go, "Oh, I have one of those at home, or I have – 15 years ago, I saw that my Nan's kitchen, that kind of thing, because it makes me kind of reassess and think I said, Well, why is that there then?" And like how you put that alongside something and go, "Oh actually, what 's doing this talking to me about labor, or production, or manufacturing, or the role we have around communication or the role that we have around technology and the role that has in everyday life?" And that's a really empowering thing about what you do when you put something in the kind of context within museum making or exhibition making. It's not so much about, oh, we collected because we kind of we have to.

We have to be really careful about what we collect. We don't collect comprehensively or particularly chronologically. We don't collect it for collecting sake. We kind of collect because you want to have a conversation around a particular object.

But it's a challenge. Because how do you then you have to sort of think about Okay, so how do I want to represent the experience of a 16- year-old girl using Snapchat in a way that's comprehensive and emotional and social and cultural? And what are the

ways we have to think about that, that doesn't kind of isolate people from that experience and that sense as well. And, and it's, that's why you have to bring it back to the object and then build out rather than try to collect everything. And I think that's that can sometimes be quite paralyzing for curators of collections especially. So it is a challenge. But I think it's quite an exciting one.

SM

Marlies, what challenges have you encountered with presenting digital culture to the general public at your museum?

MW

So funnily enough, the general public reacted quite positively on those topics. For example, when we had Vienna Biennale in 19, and presented the exhibition, *Uncanny Values: Artificial Intelligence & You*, but internally, some of my older colleagues, most of them are in retirement right now, we're a little bit astonished by my research project because we always have to write those and then discuss them with the colleagues. And they were like, what, what's, what's going on with you? And?

I mean, we were founded in 1863 years to miss the Royal Museum of Art and Industry, actually, based on the example of the VNA, our mothership, and 'art and industry' meaning that there were always contemporary ties to production and to very up-and-coming technologies, in fact, but like in the 1900s. And so why should we do it any differently now that we live in the 21st century?

So it seems quite clear also for our director, Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, who is very progressive in this regard – to rethink collecting in a way that we have to open up towards gifs, emojis, other objects. We don't own them yet, but we have been dealing with those topics in lots of exhibitions.

And I feel very happy about that, because as you just said, you can encounter things that you might have at home, or that you would ask is, why is it in the museum, such as, for example, the first iPhone, which is there is just the body, but we still need to talk about that how it doesn't work, it is still between, but it stands there, it sits there as a signifier of what it enabled of the interface that it opened up.

Of the whole cultural shift that basically started with that tiny little object. And it can't be reduced to the design of the surface, but it's what lies beneath. All the development of apps, the age of social media, surveillance, capitalism, data, consumerism, etc. So we are trying to convey these topics just like Natalie and the V&A are doing through objects, and those can be varied and also digital, and they are not in a kind of concurrence with the old collection. It's just different.

And I think the question of originality or uniqueness, it's hardly to be compared, because many of our objects are for a specific elite. So we have a lot of very fine Wiener Werkstätte, products or things designed by Josef Hoffman or Adolf Loos, the grandfather of Vienna modernism. But we always have to know that these objects, be it a chair, a cup, a vase, or this have been in contexts that were very elite and limited. And I think to open up to our daily lives throughout history as we became a more open and equal society, I think that's also reflecting on our collection strategy.

SM

I'm very interested in that, you know, you could also say the distinction between the so-called high art and low art. And also, to me, digitalization and the internet, what it has done over the last 30 or 40 years, was a great equalizer in terms of power structures, in terms of democratic access in terms of very broad access to millions and millions of people.

So how do you think this digital culture and the digital objects are changing power structures, that more people have access to creating, to distributing these artworks than before where we were still, you know, caught in hierarchies of distributors, people who held the power museums, even who acted as distributors? How do you think that's changing because of digital?

NK

I mean, there are power structures, but they're just different power structures. Now. I mean, I wouldn't, I wouldn't say that it's democratized and made it better, it's just really shifted them in some ways. I mean, I hesitate to think that the internet has made it suddenly, magically, better. I think it just distributes the power in different ways.

We still haven't solved the fact that there are issues of power and labor by who produces the materials that make the internet happen, for instance. It's one of those interesting conversations about what we should be bringing. And I think this is why I'm always really intrigued by the idea of like, when people talk about museums being these kind of producers have conversations and dialogues, it's it's the fact that museums aren't neutral places, and they never have been particularly, whether it's they're the kind of objects that we bring in from our past is I was asked this quite recently, actually in a conversation:-

And someone said, like, also, how do you think digital objects can help us sort of decolonize or the sort of reboot or bring to light the politics of our current collections? And I still think that we should think about how the objects we bring in can create and make space for the political conversations of the now, particularly around digital culture.

Because when we think about the objects that we bring in, and all of the things that we try to, to talk about, within our collections – an object an object has to do so much work in that sense been to give you a kind of provocation, in some ways, the way that we collect objects obviously, when I bring an object in as a curator, I have to serve a very particular role in that I can't be super, super biased and be like, I'm bringing this into this particular reason, but I can present to you as much information about it for why it was collected. And, and, and and be, and present the facts in some way. But I can also bring in a series of objects to kind of create a kind of a conversation in some senses.

An example of that, for instance, is what recently, I collected the Amazon Echo. And shortly after I collected Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler's project 'Anatomy of an AI [System]'. And the reason why I did that is because I wanted to present two very important conversations around digital cultural objects, which is one, Amazon Alexa – Amazon Echo sorry, is a very difficult object to acquire for a museum, because of two reasons, which is the fact that it's essentially a black box in terms of digital preservation, because we can present to you the fact this is a very important cultural object to this generation of in terms of smart speakers.

And the fact that it's is, I think, one of the most sold pieces of product design, the digital connectivity of virtual speakers, the fact that it has so many amazing conversations around gendered voice assistance about connectivity in the home, the role that like the fact that people shout at it, because they don't see it as being part of part their family. And the fact that you can't actually kind of acquire the main body of why it's important, that you can't acquire the software, because Amazon won't let you and that's a real problem for museums. And so we acquired that.

And the second part of that acquisition, a separate kind of object, that we acquired as well was the 'Anatomy of an AI' project, which I think was in – was it in your show?

MW

It was in our Vienna Biennale exhibition, Uncanny Values, as well. And it's on view in the Design Lab.

NK

Yeah, and it's a fantastic piece of work, which is essentially kind of gathers all of this information that Kate and Vladan and their team kind of acquired around the Amazon Alexis from sort of extractionist politics around the materials that can increase it to be AI that runs it to the people involved to the fact that how it's disposed, and it's – it kind of shines a light through this graphical language about all the things that we can't know about it, if you don't have the, if you don't have the thing behind the object.

And that's a way that institutions can kind of bring that conversation to their audiences around digital culture without quite kind of being asked to reveal it. And that's a way of sort of bringing kind of a little bit of political conversation in some senses. That's how we can be kind of aware of that as an institution, maybe.

MW

I couldn't agree more. It's basically – we also acquired this object, the Amazon Echo, and put it on view in the Design Lab in the section titled 'Design Dilemma,' especially for the reasons you already mentioned. And unfortunately, we don't own the Anatomy of an AI yet; it's on loan, but also on view in this given context to actually talk about doing versus in the amount of very low or even unpaid labor that we are not aware of, and also the problems that are caused by this object not being repairable or reusable after you've discarded it.

SM 23:58

I'm curious now, you both mentioned the anatomy of an AI as an artwork that you collected or you loaned. I believe this is not work that's entirely digital, it has no physical body. So it's a piece of software. My question is, how does it work with an object like this to actually acquire it and collect the certain additions that are being released by the artists that a museum can acquire? Because it can be multiplied infinite times, right?

NK

I mean, there is a physical side – there's a newspaper as a PDF, there's a huge poster and PDF posters there is physical clutter. But in terms of the question around digital digital works and digital objects, it is difficult to acquire digital works because it throws into question the whole idea of editions and whether I mean, there's a wider conversation about whether we should be doing additions of digital works at all, because it actually butts up against the idea of what the digital is about in the first place with the idea of copying – I mean, it's funny, the V&A.

It was founded by a guy called Henry Cole, who was kind of – he was the inventor of the copy. So he was the guy who took, like David, you know, the big famous David and he copied him. And he was like, we should be making copies of all these amazing Italian works, and taking them out of Italy, one to protect them, but to keep their legacy going, and to stop them from being damaged, and bring them to England, and bring them out so we can study them, and everyone can enjoy them. And he was the guy back in like the kind of 19th century. I think it was the 1800s, as I always forget, but a 19th century historian – and the idea was that everyone could enjoy them.

And there was, but obviously now later, and respectively, they will become an edition, which I always find quite ironic. But we did a project at the V&A called 'Reach', which is about the importance of digital reproductions of works to try and

make them more accessible for people. And so I don't know, I'm kind of I'm kind of interested in the notion of copying, but I appreciate that that's not how artists make money. Sometimes.

That's not how it works. But it's also how the market can impose that pressure on artists to have to make money through that. And actually, there should be a better structure for supporting artists as more utopian, more progressive, and better and better, which is more about this system of supporting artists. But that's maybe me being maybe provocative.

But it's the notion of being able to acquire work from us, it's like, we should be able to see it in terms of labor and, and kind of almost like paying back for labor, than paying for the addition. So figuring out how much you pay for the labor in some ways. But often, people kind of gift it as well, if they see it as being something that you can gift, and they can just give away as much as they want.

That's another way you can think about it as well. But it's a tricky conversation, it's very, it's very case by case often been times actually preserving that work. You just have to think about how you're going to preserve it, which is a whole different concession, depending on the complexity of the work, if it's a PDF it's extremely easy to look after. But if it's an algorithm, or a social media platform, it's a whole different conversation.

NK

I've got a question for Marlies: What's the most complex thing that you've attempted to acquire digitally?

MW

It's actually the 'AI-moji' project that was produced by Process Studio for our exhibition 'Uncanny Values', which was done by machine learning, by a generative adversarial network, and created new emojis from existing data sets. We used it as our communication design. And we got us a donation, a little Raspberry Pi where the little AI emojis run on. But it's not the actual thing, so I would like to acquire the actual thing. But we are not sure yet how we can preserve and host it. That's why that hasn't happened yet.

So this is an ongoing project, basically. And maybe on the notion of copies, that we just talked about, I think it's a major difference between, say, the aforementioned Raphael painting or Michelangelo's statue, maybe, and Applied Arts, in terms of collecting and the original because also, you could argue that a Thonet chair is not an original because it was mass produced, it was one of the first objects to be mass produced in that form. So and still, we have a huge collection of Thonet furniture, and it's considered very unique and special. And maybe we can start to shift that kind of thinking on to current objects, and also digital objects.

SM

I love that you mentioned that. And that brings me maybe to my final question, because I believe that often when we talk about digital or cyberspace or anything virtual, it's still being regarded as this second world that's not being taken that seriously that's kind of like playful, and you know, and but I completely agree with you Molly's that when we look at Instagram, or TikTok, what have what's happening on social media, in many ways, is often reflective of the larger socio cultural economic context influences that in many ways. So my question would be – and it's an open-ended question – so how does technology change culture?

Unknown Speaker

Technology is culture.

SM

So how do they influence each other?

NK

I mean, they can't can't not – I mean, techne comes from the Latin for knowledge, and like, and the idea of the the making of knowledge, right, and like the idea of a knowledge is ultimately culture, and the making of and making a culture in that sense – I mean, it can't not mean the idea of anyone.

So I get really, really frustrated and annoyed when I hear that technology is ruining or diluting culture in some senses, or people kind of go, 'Well, all these kids on TikTok that they're not reading books on it's like, not, but no. And it's and it's why people get annoyed about it or they're looking at their phones all the time.

I appreciate that. But the reason why when you're not looking at that you're not looking at the issues that are there are a hand around, again, things could be various other things. But the thing that I get frustrated about is that you're missing out on so many other conversations that we need to be addressing, or talking about and missing opportunities to engage was to really figure out what those socio-technical or socio-cultural conversations that you really should be having.

And but yeah, technology is culture is, is it's, you're, you're not understanding how the history of human culture operates or functions – any anthropologist will tell you that, any ethnography or or sociologists will tell you that.

And, the way that it changes us and makes us is reciprocal, in some ways, like we create technology, then technology feeds back to us. And then we feed back to how technology is created. It's just how it was. And but then you have to layer on things like capitalism, and the way that political structures influence that. So actually, there's technology and culture but then there's things.

So if you think about things, I mean, I've read recently, last year, actually, I went through a period of re-reading Ivan Illich's work. So I'm not sure if you know Ivan Illich, he's fantastic, he's a fantastic writer around alternative technology structures. So he wrote an amazing book called convivial tools or tools that can be reality. And back in '70s, and the idea of how you can think about the tools and technologies in terms of different political structures, and the fact that when you create a kind of series of tools, they should be convivial and not dependent on a massive structure of other tools in which to exist. And they should be like, so when you pick up a hammer, you should need a network of other things for it to exist. And as an analogy, in some ways for like, our dependence on net on Facebook and networks, other technologies of surveillance in order for us to exist in some sense.

And it's a really interesting way to think through how we've kind of got to the point where technology where we depend so much on so many things for us to be able to exist as a human culture. And he is an amazing educator as well – he talked a lot about how you can learn so much from just having lunch together.

And that kind of thing is a massive hippie, he used to be a Roman Catholic priest, and then he went into like, alternative education structures. But the ways of reimagining the ways in which our relationship to technology can be thought actually more through political structures, than through which we think about technology as technology in some sense. But it's a whole different conversation here.

MW

I would absolutely agree to what Natalie said, and I want to expand on the role of design here a bit as well, because upon entering our MAK Design Lab, we claim that design shapes the world around us, analog and digital, but also the world around us shapes us. So all things shape us. And then we mean technology as well.

And one of the first objects we present there upon entering his by next Nature Network, the pyramid of technology, which basically shows a pyramid of technology, not only digital, but that was invented and was science fiction at the time being but then became applied and is now unthinkable of living without in our human lives, such as electricity, or airplanes or trucks, or I don't know, a table, fire, the wheel, the internet.

And as we climb up this pyramid, these things that have been envisioned technologies for a long time, are already moved on in the pyramids to be applied and very much the basis of our lives. And every culture or society would break down if you take them away. And I think, like, yeah, looking at our smartphones, addiction is another kind of discussion that we can also have, but this is just a symptom of how these things are designed. And I think that will also shift through time.

So to claim, to wish back for olden days where children read books, because they didn't have TikTok, it's just a wrong kind of conclusion, because the world changed and you can't just raise your kids nowadays without those technologies, you just have to maybe think about how to put them in a purposeful context, and how to maybe limit access to certain harmful content, but it does shape our lives and ever more so politics, actually;

—

And that's a wrap. Our next Culture and Technology Podcast episode is a bit different, mainly because it's in German. Actor Mavie Hörbiger and costume designer Aino Labrenz will discuss the relevance of theatre in the age of digital technology.

If you're like: "Oh no, but I don't speak German!" we've got your back. The show notes of this episode will also be in English and will provide a summary of the key points made in the discussion.

The Culture and Technology Podcast is produced by the Vienna Business Agency – The Vienna Business Agency supports businesses, the economy and the city, developing Vienna's creative industries further and therefore changing the city.

That's it from my side for today. I hope that our little virtual salon sparks some new thoughts and that you'll join us for the next episode.