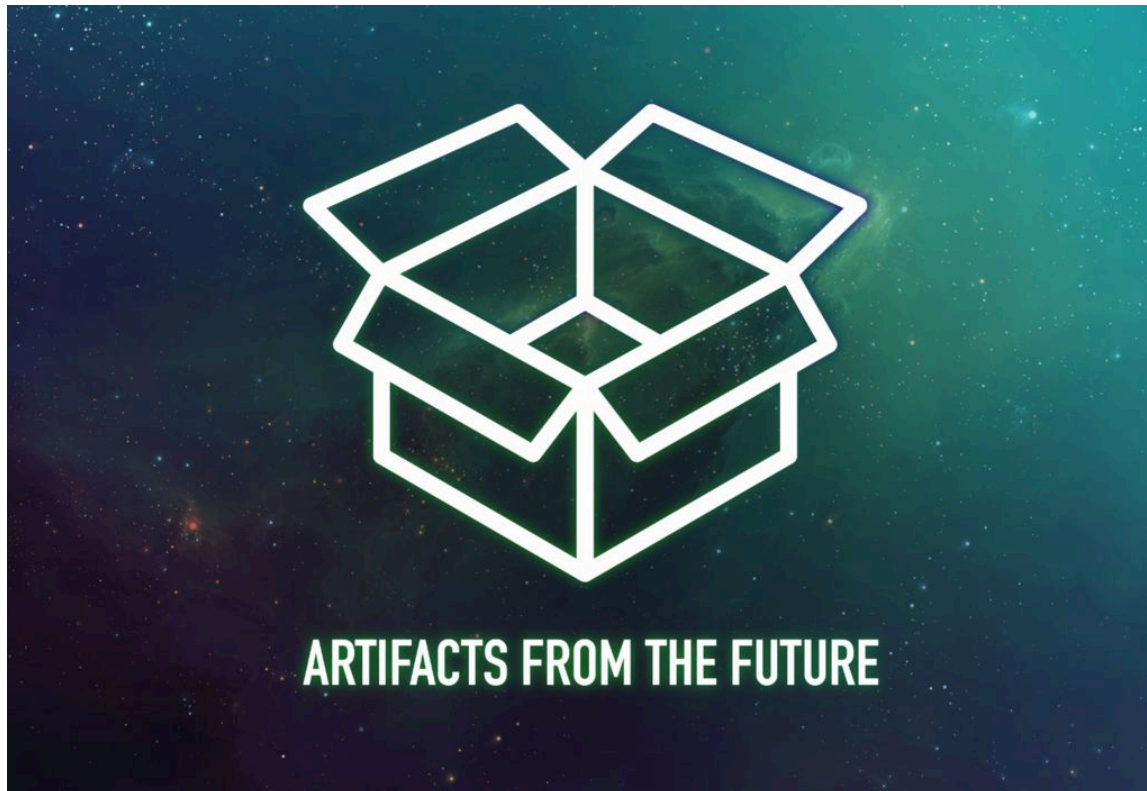


# How to Make Artifacts From the Future

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First of all, what are Artifacts from the Future?

Imagine that you could take an archaeologist's expedition to the future to collect objects and fragments of text or photos to understand what daily life will be like in 10, 20, or 50 years. Artifacts from the Future give us this tangible experience of the future. They make the details of a future scenario concrete, helping us to understand, almost first-hand, what it will be like to live in a particular future.

Artifacts from the Future may take dozens of forms, from the familiar bumper sticker to labels for the food we eat to future credit card statements. They can be 3D objects, like product containers, or videos that give us the physical experience of wearing augmented reality glasses as we walk down a street. These familiar objects of everyday life help us translate today's trends and signals into intimate future experiences—and these experiences, in turn, increase our capacity to draw on our intuitive intelligence when making decisions about the future.

Artifacts from the Future provide a rich starting point for strategic discussions, whether for a new products team in a technical organization or a community group looking for ways to engage young people in building a stake in their own neighborhood. Creating Artifacts from the Future is also a great way to get people thinking about the future—their assumptions, their goals, and the path from here to there.

Note: This definition of Artifacts from the Future is from Institute for the Future: <http://www.iff.org/what-we-do/foresight-tools/ar...>

This instructable will walk through the general process of creating Artifacts from the Future. The process will be explained by exploring an example future where animals engage in capitalism.



Step 1: Focus on a Future





When creating Artifacts from the Future, it is important to identify what aspect of the future you wish to explore. This can focus can be ambiguously defined and expansive, or it can be hyper specific, constrained by a specific technology or social trend.

For this example set of Artifacts from the Future, we're exploring the idea of “Animals Doing Capitalism”. What does this even mean, you ask? For a moment, suspend your disbelief, and imagine a future where animals and artificial intelligence have teamed up and are seeking financial profit.

This idea isn't too far out. Consider the following:

Animals already play a crucial role in many economies, everything from food production to entertainment.

For decades, scientists have been scanning and mapping animal brains.

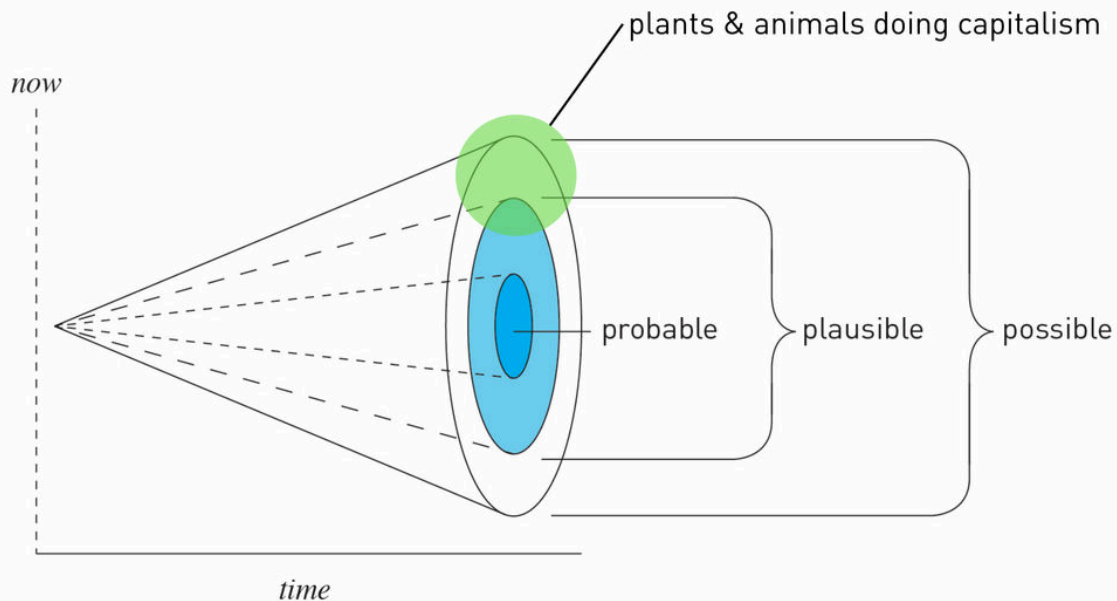
More recently, technology companies have started offering brain interface devices for pets. The image of a dog with a fancy collar is from No More Woof, a company that is attempting to translate animal thought into human language.

In another sector of technology, computers are becoming increasingly intelligent, and the mythical Artificial Intelligence could be just over the horizon. Or maybe it is already here, and we just haven't realized it.

If Artificial Intelligence happens, and animals have their brains scanned, uploaded, and plugged in, then the next logical step is that animals and Artificial Intelligence would begin communicating. From there, it is entirely plausible that animals and Artificial Intelligence would team up and make some cash together.

## Step 2: The Cone of Possibility

# *The Cone of Possibility*



This sounds crazy, right? What are the chances that this future will really happen, and why does it matter?

A common futures thinking model used to help expand how we think about the future is the Cone of Possibility. If you extrapolate the known trends of today, it is pretty easy to forecast a future that is **probably** going to happen. However, we know from looking at historical events that improbable things sometimes do happen. Looking back to the future, if we take into account the possibility of improbable events happening, the number of possible future scenarios will expand significantly. Here we find futures which are **plausible**. Beyond the plausible, we can see an ever-

expanding number of futures which are theoretically **possible**, according to the laws of physics. I suspect that Artificial Intelligence teaming up with Animals (and plants!) to do capitalism is probably not going to happen in the near future. However, it most certainly is **possible**, and maybe even **plausible**.

If you wish to create Artifacts from the Future, you could explore the idea of Animals Doing Capitalism, like we're doing in this instructable. Or maybe you choose to focus on something completely different, for example you could explore the future of DIY space travel, cyborg sports, robot contraband, or climate change resiliency.

### Step 3: Gather Signals of the Future



After we chose area of interest to focus on, the next step is gathering relevant Signals.

A signal is typically a small or local innovation or disruption that has the potential to grow in scale and geographic distribution. A signal can be a new technology, emerging trend, social practice, product or service.

We have already discussed a few signals in the Focus step (animal brain interfaces, Jeopardy-winning robots). Some examples of signals relevant to animals and capitalism may include:

Lab grown meat: Many laboratories around the world are growing meat.

Everything as a service: Lyft, AirBnB, Task Rabbit. Lots of things are available as a service these days.

Pay-As-You-Go business models, such as the Keurig Coffee maker or micropayments in videogames.

Watermark Technology: Used to enforce copyright on movies, sound, and even money. What else could be watermarked?

The Monkey Selfie Copyright Dispute: [A fascinating story.](#)

Whale poop and its effect on the Carbon Cycle: [Also a true story.](#)

Insect populations in decline.

What signals can you think of related to animals or capitalism?



Step 4: Brainstorm Ideas

**IN 10 YEARS, YOU'LL SEE**

**CHICKENS GARDENING  
WITH SYMBIOTIC MIXED  
REALITY INTERFACE.**

WHAT ELSE MIGHT THE FUTURE BRING?

**THE DATE IS 2028. IMAGINE**

**MUSICIAN SONGBIRDS  
BUSKING WITH A TASTING  
TICKET.**

WHAT ELSE MIGHT THE FUTURE BRING?

**IN 10 YEARS, YOU'LL SEE**

**GAMER OCTOPI  
NAVIGATING WITH A  
COLLABORATIVE STREET  
SIGN.**

WHAT ELSE MIGHT THE FUTURE BRING?

To really get the creative juices flowing, it is sometimes useful to randomly combine a bunch of signals together with various nouns, verbs, and adjectives. For this project, the Artifact Engine was used. This is like a game of science fiction Mad Libs.

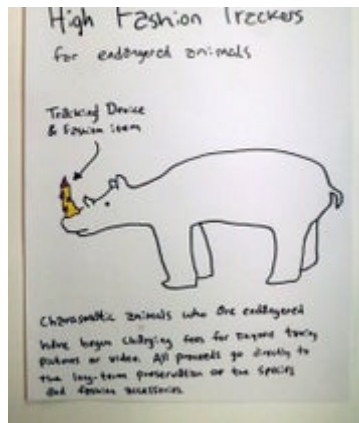
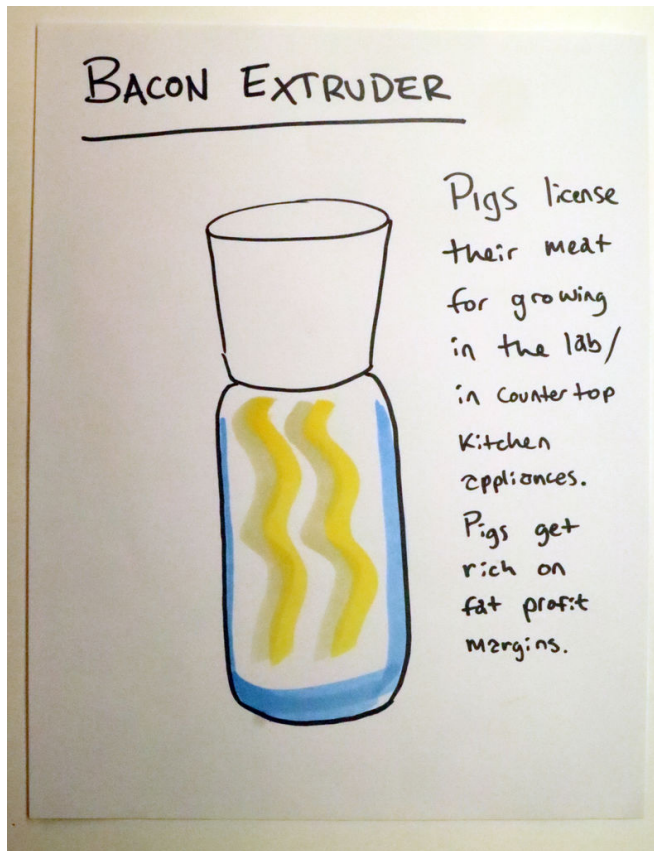
These are a few examples that the Artifact Engine has created. You can summon more Artifacts from the Future at: <http://artifactengine.iff.org/animalsdoingcapital...>

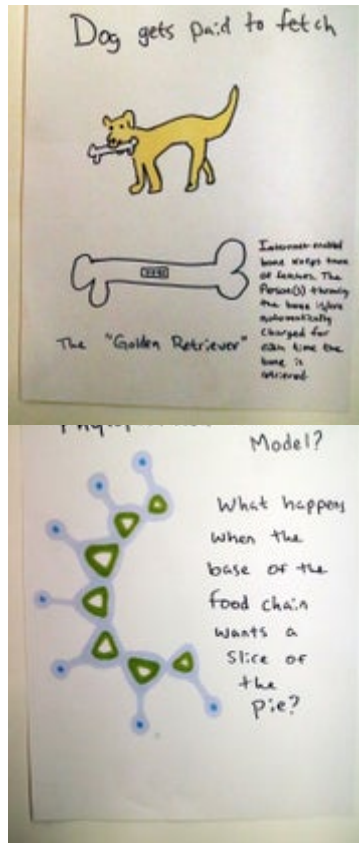
Instructions for how to make your own Artifact Engine are available here: <http://www.iff.org/future-now/article-detail/arti...>

This Artifact Engine is based on some open source code that was published by soulwire on Github: <https://github.com/soulwire/WTFEngine>

Please Note: The Artifact Engine does not often provide fully polished ideas, so it is useful to re-interpret them.

## Step 5: Refine Ideas





Here are several ideas for animals practicing capitalism. They are based on Signals of the Future, and output form the Artifact Engine.

## Step 6: Get Feedback on Your Ideas

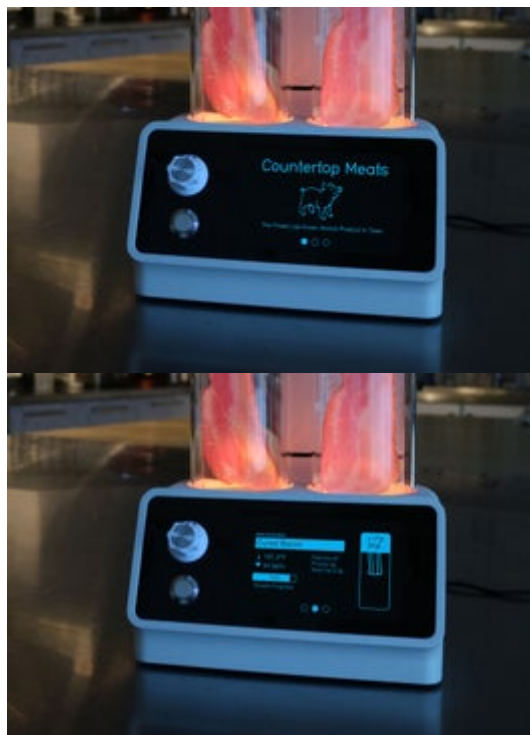


Artifacts from the Future can be pretty out there, so it is super useful to get feedback throughout your process. It isn't always obvious what which ideas are thought provoking, so try to share your ideas early and often.

The following are three steps show finalized Artifacts from the Future, based on the theme of Animals Doing Capitalism.



## Step 7: DRM Bacon Extruder



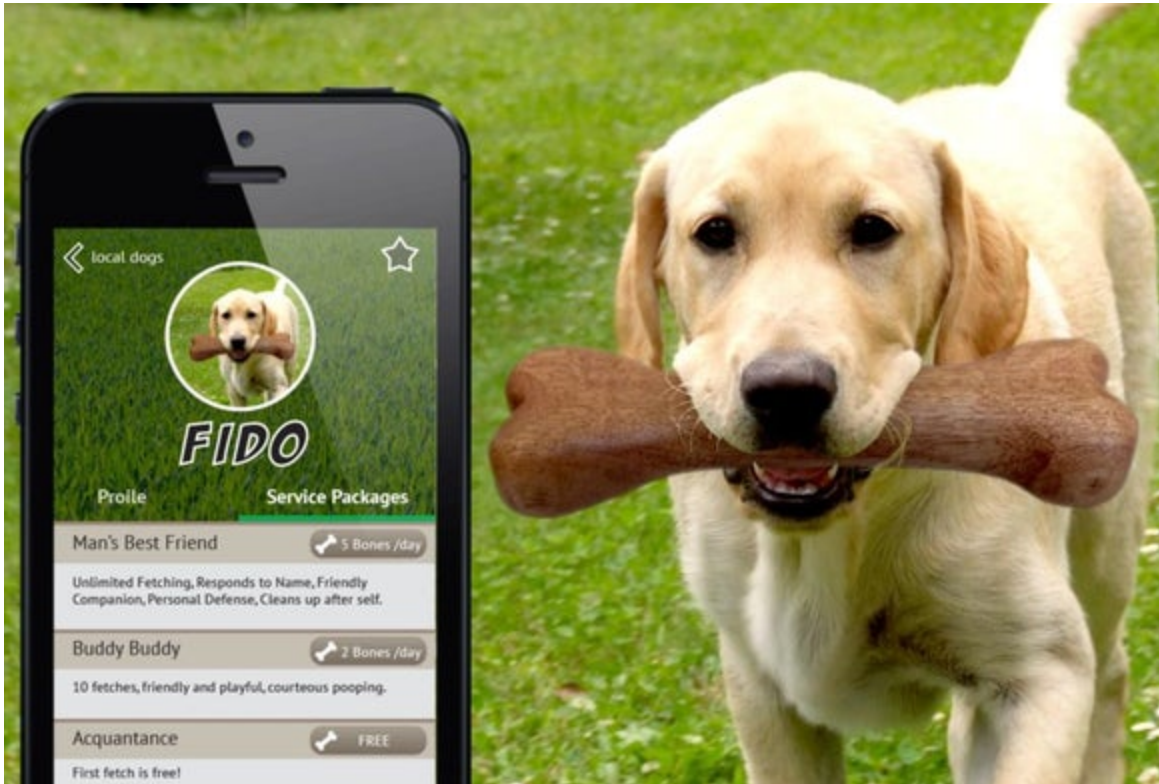




The year is 2028. AI and cybernetically augmented pigs have teamed up to make money on lab grown meat. After centuries of factory farming, the pigs are fed up with exploitation by humans. With the help the latest animal-computer interfaces and AI collaborators, the pigs were able to design manufacture a countertop bacon extruder. The machine is charged with proprietary capsules that contain pig DNA, and all required growing substrates and nutrients are used in the machine, similar to how a Keurig coffee maker works. In this world, the pigs' AI lawyers have secured rights over all pig DNA, making it illegal for third parties to sell pig DNA, or any pig products without consent and expensive licensing fees from the pigs. In this future, the only way to eat bacon is through this proprietary system that ultimately makes the pigs filthy rich.

Documentation on the process of creating this DRM bacon extruder is available here: <https://www.instructables.com/id/Pier-9-DRM-Counte...>

## Step 8: Smart Bone Fetch Finder



The Smart Bone has allowed dogs to take control of who they are best friends with. In this future, dogs will approach people in parks and offer to play fetch as a service. The first fetch is free, and additional play time can be purchased through an app that pairs with the Smart Bone™. Premium services such as personal defense, and not getting your lawn pooped on can be purchased through premium fetch packages.

Documentation on the process of creating this Smart Bone Fetch Finder is available here: <https://www.instructables.com/id/Pier-9-Smart-Bon...>

### Step 9: Eurion Jewelry for Endangered Animals



The unique pattern on this jewelry helps endangered animals enforce copyright claims on their image. It is unlawful to photograph, or distribute images and video of endangered animals without their consent. The more

charismatic endangered animals can fetch licensing fees that rival the biggest Hollywood stars. An unfortunate side effect of this technology is that some endangered animals choose to keep their population numbers low, in order to keep the cash flowing in their direction.

Documentation on the process of creating this Eurion Jewelry for Endangered Animals is available

here: <https://www.instructables.com/id/Pier9-Eurion-Jew...>

### Step 10: Global Pollinators Union

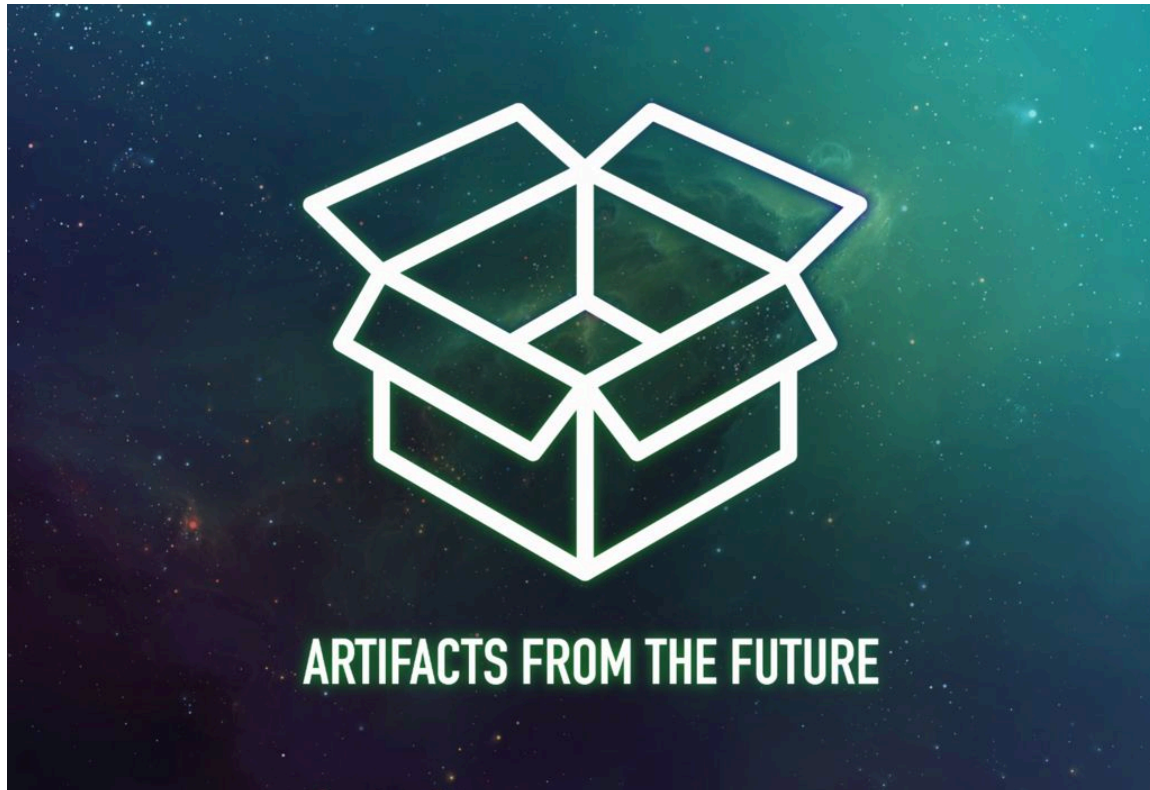


Pollinators from around the world have unionized for workers' rights. They were able to rapidly turn around negative trends, such as excessive agricultural pesticide use, and large-scale mono-cropping. Some local



unions are avidly against the use of GMOs, while other local unions have offered to help in the assist in administering modified pollens.

### Step 11: Share Your Artifacts From the Future!



After creating Artifacts from the Future, it is best to share them with the world to collectively imagine what that future might be like. What implications might this future have for you, your friends and family? How would this affect the daily lives of people and animals living in the future? Is it a future we want to live in, or one that we want to avoid? And how should we act today, knowing that this future is possible?

If you choose to create an Artifact from the Future of your own, please share it! I would love to see what weird and interesting possible futures are out there.

## Further Reading:

For further reading on Artifacts from the Future, check out the Institute for the Future website: <http://www.iff.org/what-we-do/foresight-tools/art...>

Institute for the Future's Future Now Mini Mart: <http://minimart.iff.org/>

The Next Nature's website has a great collection of Artifacts from the future: <https://www.nextnature.net/projects/nanosupermarke...>

In a similar vein, Speculative and Critical Design is a wonderful rabbit hole of futures-oriented objects: <http://www.dunneandraby.co.uk/content/bydandr/13/0>

This process for creating Artifacts from the Future is brought to you through a collaboration between Institute for the Future (iff.org), and the Autodesk Pier 9 Artist in Residency.