

Rachel Armstrong



**Confronting the Unbelievable,
on designing in Unreal Times**

Engagement

MEDIATING TACTICS
curated by Thierry Berlemont

Faculty of Architecture GOING PUBLIC Lecture series #13

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The GOING PUBLIC program of the Faculty of Architecture is a series of lectures, exhibitions and publications organized throughout the year highlighting certain themes and topics that are important within each of the 4+1 Engagements: Urban Cultures, Mediating Tactics, Craftsmanship, Legacy and the Brussels Way.



Image: 999 years, 13 sqm (the future belongs to ghosts) by Cecile B. Evans and Rachel Armstrong

Rachel Armstrong is Professor of Experimental Architecture at the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. Her career is characterised by design thinking as a fusion element for interdisciplinary expertise. She creates multi-disciplinary research teams to address strategic and even “wicked” real world problems through conceptually pioneering design prototypes that advance innovation at the point of implementation. Exploring the transition from an industrial era of architectural design to an ecological one, she pioneers an ecological, technological and humanistic practice called “living architecture” that considers the implications for designing and engineering in a world thrown off balance. This lecture will focus on what happens to innovation when there is no ordinary, operational society. The role of Design is a critical one that can prepare us for unbelievable architectural transformations that provide a research and innovation platform for creatively and urgently reinventing our futures.

She creates open innovation platforms for academia and industry to address environmental challenges such as carbon capture & recycling, smart ‘living’ materials and new approaches to sustainable design, such as Synthetic Biology- the rational engineering of living systems – and Smart chemistry.



Chemistry Outreach Laboratory, Newcastle University, courtesy Rachel Armstrong, 2016.

Rachel Armstrong has been nominated for a Katerva Award in Urban Design as the designer of the smart chemistry in a team of visionary practitioners for the Hylozoic Ground installation.

She encourages and designs change as well as promoting new transferrable ways of thinking ‘outside the box’ that enables others to develop innovative environmental solutions. Her approaches are outlined in her publications that include: *Experimental Architecture: Designing the Unknown* (2019), *Soft Living Architecture: An Alternative View of Bio-informed Practice* (2018), *Invisible Ecologies* (2019). In her TED talk *Architecture that repairs itself* (2009) she stressed the fact that buildings today are not sustainable and that she believes that it is possible for us to construct genuinely sustainable homes and cities by connecting them to nature, not insulating them from it.