Who is Designing the Future?

A guest lecture for students who will build, lead and design the next society.

I've spent more than 20 years designing spaces across four continents where societies gather at scale. Now I'm bringing that practice into the rooms where the next generation of thinkers, makers and designers gather themselves.

The Lecture

If you listen closely to how the impact of the future is described in the media, you can see a pattern. It comes in "waves" and "storms". It is like the weather: things that hit you, and things you brace for. This is the language of forecasting, something that happens to you no matter what you do about it. It removes our agency, and our aspirations for the future. In September 2026 even the people running the major AI labs started talking about it as if it were happening to them too. It has turned a generation of creative practitioners into spectators of something they are building - the society of the future.

Most futures are not chosen. They accumulate, through hundreds of reasonable decisions made inside briefs too narrow to hold what they add up to. I call it The Drift and it is a far older phenomenon than the current AI disruption. AI has just made it faster. We are building a highly capable future without having designed the society we want to live in when we get there.

Societies rarely plan their best outcomes directly. They plan the conditions. Britain's post-war settlement did not plan the Beatles. Sweden's home computer reform did not plan Spotify or Minecraft. South Korea's cultural policy did not plan BTS, or a seven-year-old in England learning a K-pop routine off YouTube at her own birthday party. Even if the outcomes were not planned, someone planned the conditions, and those conditions took about 25 years to pay out. The work commissioned this decade lands on someone who is seven now.

The AI labs have written thousands of words about human flourishing and lives that are meaningful, relational and community-building. Not one of those documents contains a proposal for the places where any of that actually happens. That gap is the work, and it falls to the people who build the rooms where strangers end up together.

What the Session Covers

- **The Drift**, and why the brief is always narrower than the consequences.
- **The Weather Framing**, and how we redefine the language of disruption.
- **How to Create the Right Conditions** (rather than outcomes), and why the returns arrive a generation late.
- **The Human Layer**, the trust, belonging and shared experience that become scarce as output becomes infinite, and what it costs when they are missing.
- **The End of Innocence,** and why no one will come to sort the future out for us.
- **Where the Value Has Moved**, why the thieves at the Louvre left the most valuable thing behind, and why a classical cellist found music she recognised in a Metallica mosh pit.

Format

Each guest lecture runs 60-90 minutes, structured as a keynote argument with an open Q&A. Lectures are delivered in person. For programmes interested in a more intensive format, the lecture can be extended into a small-group seminar with extended case discussion and structured critique.

Students will be equipped with two questions to take into every project:
What can we build, and what kind of society does this produce?







About Me

I'm a Swedish-born, London-based Creative Leader, Strategist and Executive Adviser. For more than 20 years I have designed and delivered large-scale cultural experiences across four continents, including the UK Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, the Mobility Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, and major giga-projects in Saudi Arabia including NEOM and Qiddiya. My work sits at the intersection of culture, technology and society, helping governments, institutions and organisations build the environments where communities gather, experience belonging and negotiate shared futures. I'm the founder of Frank Kelly Consultancy and a Fellow of the RSA. Previously Senior Creative Adviser to the UN Science-Policy-Business Forum and Managing Director and Chief Creative Strategist at Immersive International. Currently writing my first book, *The Undesigned Future*.

Guest lecture engagements include the Royal College of Art (RCA), London College of Communication (LCC), and the Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm (upcoming). Speaking engagements include A+E Lab at The Historic Dockyard, Chatham (upcoming), Pro Integration Future Europe at NEC, Birmingham, Immersive Experience Futures at Brompton Technology, London, InnovateX at the Wellcome Collection, London, MAPIC at Palais des Festivals, Cannes, UN Stockholm+50 at Berns, Stockholm and UK House at SXSW, Austin.

"He called it drift. The idea that most futures aren't chosen, they accumulate. The sum of reasonable decisions nobody was watching. Not chaotic, not malicious. Just unintentional."

- LCC Design student (feedback on LinkedIn after the guest lecture at LCC in April 2026)