

## Futurefarmers - AiR in Digermulen, Lofoten during LIAF

***Initial residency October 2018, where they built the prototype for a portable windmill (backpack), involving the local school children in the process. The residency will continue throughout the year, leading up to the manifestation of LIAF in September-19.***

Upon invitation to Lofoten by the LIAF curatorial team, Futurefarmers were warned of the ever-present winds that move up and across the archipelago of Lofoten. Futurefarmers Amy and Lode built a small, wearable windmill to encounter these winds for their first visit. This object serves as a muse, a conversation piece and a mode of imagining a larger, mobile mill that could be used by several people for various purposes, like running a printing press.



The Futurefarmers' project in Digermulen is envisaged as a collective, situational, site-responsive processual work determined by the particular circumstance and environment of the Eastern region of Lofoten. The principles of the work will involve an enquiry-based approach to art-making that will span multiple disciplines and make use of the unique resources available, exploring themes of communication, collective memory, and resilient behaviour.

### **Digermulen**

Digermulen in the far Eastern part of Lofoten has about 140 inhabitants. This area is, in many respects, the place where cruise tourism in Northern Norway started. The German emperor Wilhelm II made a voyage there in 1889, inspired by his fascination with landscape paintings from the area. The cairn he built on top of the nearest mountain is known as *Keiservarden* (literally the Emperor's Cairn), to this day. In 2013 the local salmon farming industry was sold, which resulted in a loss of jobs. A new seaweed farming start-up is among the initiatives that aim to bring prosperity back to the area.

### **Approach**

Futurefarmers' imaginative, environmentally-conscious projects utilise making as an opportunity to help audiences question the many ways that humans separate from and control nature. Their work can be described as social sculpture, a type of art making that explores art's potential to change society. There is a strong emphasis on participation and collaboration within their ongoing artistic activities, allowing communities to access new knowledge through a direct involvement with materials and objects, framing discussions, and allowing for performative aspects to emerge through practice.

Another fundamental Futurefarmers concept is improvisation, which guides many aspects of their projects that at first glance may appear to be characterised by a results-oriented approach, or as the finding of solutions to urgent environmental and social issues. Improvisation is used throughout their work, from the initial engagement with the situation-specific materials, to the reworking of relational objects from their position as concrete and functional tools into props that can be used within ritualistic performative contexts.

## **Backstory:**

Futurefarmers has long been fascinated by alternative modes of energy production. One muse of theirs is the epic expedition of Fritjof Nansen upon the sailing ship FRAM. This expedition, its crew and shipwright have found their way into Futurefarmers projects as inspiration and in quite literal modes as in their ship-formed *Flatbread Society* bakehouse, to echo the maritime history of the city. One vignette of the Fram expedition that continues to inspire Futurefarmers is a windmill that Nansen installed on deck to power a small lamp to illuminate the cabin during the dark days of winter. Nansen planned for himself and his crew to be stuck in ice for almost 2 years as they floated north. Unlike a sailing expedition where most hands are on deck wrestling with lines, navigation or general maintenance of the boat, the Fram sat idle – stuck in ice. Nansen therefore had to create a situation to maintain good humor. He curated a wonderful library and assigned his crew to print a daily newspaper to keep busy.

## **People**

### **Amy Franceschini**

Amy Franceschini is an artist and designer who creates work that facilitates encounter, exchange and tactile forms of inquiry by calling into question the "certainties" of a given time or place where a work is situated. An overarching theme in her work is a perceived conflict between "humans" and "nature". Her projects reveal the history and currents of contradictions related to this divide by challenging systems of exchange and the tools we use to "hunt" and "gather". Using this as a starting point, she provides new tools for an audience to gain insight into deeper fields of inquiry; not only to imagine, but also to participate in and initiate change in the places we live.

In 1995, Amy founded Futurefarmers, an international collective of artists, activists, researchers, farmers and architects who work together to propose alternatives to the social, political and environmental organization of space. Founded in 1995, their design studio serves as a platform to support art projects, an artist in residence program and their research interests. Futurefarmers use various media to deconstruct systems to visualize and understand their intrinsic logics; food systems, public transportation, education. Through this disassembly they find new narratives and reconfigurations that form alternatives to the principles that once dominated these systems. They have created temporary schools, books, bus tours, and large-scale exhibitions internationally.

Amy received her BFA from San Francisco State University in Photography and her MFA from Stanford University. She has taught in the visual arts graduate programs at California College of the Arts in San Francisco and Stanford University. Amy is a 2009 Guggenheim fellow and has received grants from the Cultural Innovation Fund, Creative Work Fund and the Graham Foundation.

**Lode Vranken**

Lode Vranken has been practicing architecture internationally since 1993. In 1993, he received his masters in a UN Course on Human Settlements + Architectural Philosophy from the KU Leuven, Belgium. He has been teaching since 2005 as a Ned delegate at The Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia, Barcelona, Spain and from 1993-94 at the Asian Institute for Technolgy in Bangkok, Thailand. Lode co-founded the research coalition, De Bouwerij in Belgium that focuses on social living structures for passive houses, Cradle 2 Cradle buildings and zeroâ€™ energy construction. His research is focused on new concepts for small, self-sufficient living units; folding buildings, kinetic structures, rolling shelters all with zero carbon dioxide emission.