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 chronarium

In an [article for Arts Professional](#), Drew Hemment, Founder and Creative Director of FutureEverything, writes about the process of developing FutureEverything Singapore. The festival took place in October 2015 and created an unprecedented open and critical debate on the future of Singapore and the national vision as a Smart Nation.

In 2013 a call came in to the FutureEverything office in Manchester. The Singapore government was on the line and it wanted to work with us to develop a tech conference for Singapore. Four months and several calls later, I was invited to drop by Singapore on my way back to Manchester from Beijing. I was shown a very nice presentation on our place in the world, and treated to a week of meetings culminating in a box at the Singapore Grand Prix.

Originally, we were invited to develop a business conference, which no doubt would have been profitable, but for better or worse, I declined and made a counter proposal of a festival spanning art and technology to explore the coming 50 years in Singapore. We were awarded the commission for the cultural festival, the first time the Singapore government has used culture to advance its technology development objectives. Our promise was to deliver highly imaginative ways to engage people in envisioning the future of technology and a 'Smart Nation'.

By championing open culture, with art and artists centre stage, we hoped to make some small ripples. We proposed that Singapore's national vision as a Smart Nation needs everyone in the tent – and we can make the tent with you. In the end we accomplished more than we could have imagined.

[... article continues]

The festival created an unprecedented open and critical debate on the future of Singapore and the national vision of a Smart Nation. In his conference keynote, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister in Charge of the initiative, championed a people-first take on the national vision, and urged Singaporeans to be active and create the future. In his speech at the opening ceremony, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for Communications and Information, presented an argument new to Singapore: “Art is an expression of human creativity, it inspires us to imagine a different reality and challenges technology to find ways to bring those ideas to life in order to imagine the world’s first Smart Nation in Singapore.” This is significant in Singapore, a city state where the government is far more hands-on and influential than in the UK.

My abiding memories of the festival were of people who had been on the outside, who were empowered by these debates and events. They included Serena Pang, a new media artist, who told me the festival changed things for her. Visionary educator Tong Yee gave us the most powerful moment in the conference when he spoke movingly about how Singaporeans can develop ownership and change things. Singapore’s national vision of a Smart Nation needs Serena and Tong inside the tent. For nine days in October, FutureEverything was that tent.

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*Image: The Chronarium, a public sleep lab*


Drew Hemment is Founder and Creative Director of FutureEverything, and a Reader at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee.

[futureeverything.org](http://futureeverything.org)

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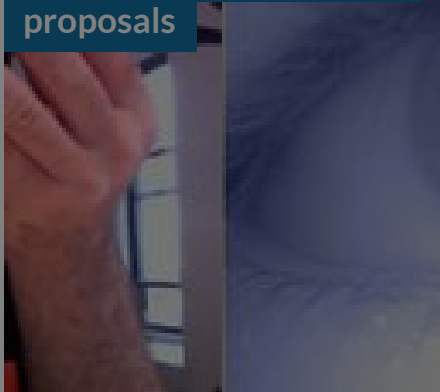
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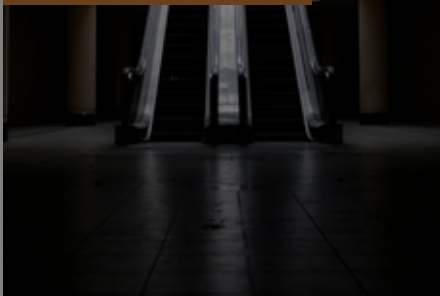
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