

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Katie Paterson

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Katie Paterson, artist:

Hi, good morning. Thank you for watching our new documentary feature, *Future Library: A Century Unfolds*. It brings together the whole project so far with author interviews, shots of the handover and so on. And so I'm going to answer the questions that you sent in.

The first one is: How are the authors chosen?

So we come together as a trust, the Future Library Trust, which is made up of publishers, the project director and myself. And we have a long list and we have a short list of authors who we would love to invite. And we do a lot of reading and a lot of discussing. And we also choose each author year on year, as in we are not lining up a set of authors for the years to come, but we're really thinking about who do we want to ask this year, this year for 2020, this year for 2021 and so on. So the authors are invited because of their outstanding contribution to literature. But also we invite those who have some kind of synergy, some kind of chemistry with the project itself, for example, if their writing deals with time, the imagination, ecology, nature, that kind of thing. So for example, Margaret Atwood was asked because, well, she deals with all of these things with, for example, some of her work projects forward through time to a moment where the people could actually be reading the books and each author has brought something completely different to the project so far.

The next question is, can you explain how it feels to work on a project that will come to fruition after I am gone?

Of course, working on a project that goes on beyond my own lifespan is quite disconcerting to think about. Because of course, I will be gone. But more so that everybody I know, just about, will no doubt be gone also. So that's very saddening, of course. However, the whole project was conceived to go on and belong to future generations and those who aren't born. And so it's not really about me and my life. It's about all the different voices that come together to contribute, to bring together a project that is, again, in a way for future civilizations, that leaves something else behind. And so, of course, it is quite saddening to think about that. But also, it gives me great joy to imagine the people who are going to be undertaking the project after I am gone. And of course, the project actually is very much alive right now. That's why we take part in rituals, we have the yearly handover and the authors very much participate in it. So it feels like a living, breathing, organic project that goes on very much in my lifetime but, of course it will really come to fruition when I'm gone.

Did different authors have different responses and did it affect their writing process?

Yes, absolutely. Every author has responded to the project differently. When we first invited them, some said yes really quickly. Some took a bit longer to think about it. It's obviously a really unusual request. And so some people respond really positively at the beginning. And then it takes a little bit longer for others to decide that it is something that they want to take part in. And in terms of the writing process, I can't answer that entirely but I do know that each author has responded quite

differently, but many of them have said that they haven't written any differently than they normally do. They kind of followed the same processes. However, it's like the way they imagine the audience who's going to be reading is entirely different, of course. And so, Margaret Atwood described it a little bit like every book is a transmission through time. Every book is a way to communicate over time. And this one just takes a little bit longer.

The next question is: It's a beautiful idea, a dialogue between us now and future custodians. How do I think about these future people, the admin folk who will be sending out copies of the text to galleries who have purchased them. How do I imagine this process and what the future galleries will make of them?

So, how do I think of these future people that are going to be managing the project in a way? Well, if they were to be listening, I want to thank them very much of course, it's quite an undertaking. And those who are in a way the last to receive it will be the first to begin the really practical processes of bringing the books to life. So I imagine there will be of course, the foresters. The foresters right now are an incredible group of people who have been tending the trees. They've actually said that they think anyway in a hundred year time span. So it's not so new to them. It's quite ordinary. So I imagine there will be foresters. Perhaps they will be of the same families and heritage of the foresters now, because I know many of them are. And they will have to cut down the trees. They'll have to work with paper makers. We've already worked with some Norwegian paper makers to make the certificates that are made out of the trees that we got. So that was a little bit of a testing process. And then, of course, there will be all the printing and binding and so on. And then there'll be the distribution of everything. Well, how do I imagine that? I suppose I imagine it in the only way that I can, which is how publishers distribute books right now. Of course, it'll be a different kind of task because a whole number of people have, in effect, bought the books in advance through owning the certificates. So right now we collect as many details as we can of who the people are and we have a big archive. Actually, it's ongoing with a lot of details like that. So I imagine we'll be carrying that forth throughout the project and trying to keep in touch with those who own a certificate. And then just hope that the future trustees, because it's the trustees job, in a way to compassionately stay the artwork for its 100 year duration. And in fact, it's beyond its hundred-year duration, because at that point, that's when the books will exist, and they will go into the world. And so I imagine we'll be leaving a set of instructions, like with many things to do with this project, that hopefully will be followed through. And of course, many of the certificate owners now, it will be their families or if it's a library, for example, passed down through there and through the museums, it will be different people but we have to just manage this network of our future custodians of the project and make sure we know who everybody is and so they can receive their book in a century's time.

Who will be the first to read the texts?

Of course, I have no idea who will be first to read the texts, but I do love to imagine the first reader opening the first page and reading Margaret Atwood's page or maybe having a flick through the book to read other pages first. I kind of love that I don't know who that reader is. They are so unknown and a little bit mysterious. But also I hope that they're kind of just like us. I hope very much that they feel a connection with what we've done right now and what we're trying to achieve with this project.

The authors already involved in the project are really great and obviously you don't know what they have created. Might there be any plans to include a children's author or wordless picture book as part of the one hundred so that the books can communicate different ages and audiences.

So there is a plan to include a children's author for sure at some point during the project. But one of the rules is actually no illustrations, only the written word. There's not that many rules that the authors have to follow. For example, they can actually write any number of words, from one to infinity. But no illustration. However, that doesn't mean to say that a children's author couldn't be part of it and absolutely, I'd love that.

I think the project definitely does resonate with children now, as well as potentially children in the future. They have generally such rich imaginations. And the forest anyway is quite a place of magic, mystery and folklore, and so on. We have lots of children visiting the forest during the handover ceremonies and also, of course, we deeply hope that many of our children now and especially grandchildren, will be the ones to read the books. And so we often have a number of babies and toddlers coming to the forest each year. I'd really like to imagine that they might be some of the ones to read the book first of all and to be part of the project through its life, including my own son.

Number six. How will the anthology be published and distributed when the hundred years passes? What will the anthology look like and how many copies will be produced?

First of all, what will the anthology look like? I haven't done it yet, but my plan with the trust is to design the book and leave behind strict instructions about what it is to look like, its form. Its font size, the colour, the binding cover, all of that kind of thing, whether it's the box set or not. And so that's something that's on the horizon still to plan in the years to come. What I imagine right now is that it will be made up of 10 books, one for each decade. Because, of course, we never know what people are going to write. So we can't plan exactly the size of the book. But what we can do is imagine thinking decade by decade. So I think that might be quite a nice form in a box set.

So, how many copies will be produced? Again, it's kind of unknown because we can't predict the length of the text, so therefore we can't predict how many pages and of course, you cannot precisely predict how much each tree is going to produce in terms of paper but from our predictions and from taking estimates and so on we imagine around three thousand copies will be printed in a century's time. The other question was how will it be published and distributed? Well, that's kind of a question for the future generations. Again, it be something that we can stipulate and write down and request and how it's managed and how it's done. And I very much hope that the *Future Library* Trust will still be running it by then, because part of the idea is that the trustees switch hands and they're always going to be responsible for the artwork. So I imagine they will take part in the distribution and possibly work with others, work with the network of people to make sure everybody who has got a certificate now receives their anthology, but also publishes it. And again, that's kind of up to the publishers at that moment and how they go about it but we will do our best to leave instructions behind.

The next question is: Can anybody visit the Future Library forest?

Yes. Anybody can visit the *Future Library* Forest. That is very much the intention right from the beginning. It's a common space. It's open to all. And in fact, the whole area of forest that surrounds the city has been designated as a free common space that is protected under law. And they did so around one hundred years ago. They protected that space. And so when we were choosing the site for the *Future Library* forest, it was very important to me that the place was accessible because we really wanted people to be able to visit and to be able to visit easily from the city. But yet for the forest to feel also remote, to not hear any city noise, for example, and to be deep inside the forest. So you can access it easily by taking the metro and also by taking a walk through the much wider forest that actually extends all the way to Sweden. So we really encourage people to go and take a

walk through the forest. We've got a map that you can download with coordinates and it can be visited any time of year. It's open always. And you can follow the street lights and then there is a sign, which is kind of nailed on to one of the trees at the entrance to say, you're here: Here is the *Future Library* forest.

So the next question is, has Future Library as an artwork changed since you first conceived it?

Yes, the artwork has definitely changed since I first conceived it. Because right in those early days, which must have been about 2012, when I had the idea, it was very clear and much of it has remained the same. It was drawing tree rings and the matching chapters, in a book and imagining a whole forest growing over time, over deep time and containing words which would be printed in a book, which, of course, is exactly what is happening. However, there were so many unknowns at the beginning. As with every artwork that I make, I see something at the beginning. And then you have to bring it about, you have to bring it into being. And then it comes alive and it throws up many questions, especially this project, right at the beginning. Of course, we didn't know about the Trust, we didn't even know if we could get a forest, we didn't know where it would be, we didn't know what kind of authors might take part, what they might write. We didn't have the idea about the room until we got a bit deeper in. The room is going to hold the authors' manuscripts and we built that with the wood we have stored so it is very much alive and changing. And I love that. I love that it's not static. And I love that each author brings something completely new to the project and each handover ceremony is also really different. And so even planning the handover ceremony each year is something really different for us. So we stick to the sacred rituals. We'll go together and invite the author to bring the manuscript. But the authors can do anything they choose. And so they, for example, Han Kang brought a white cloth and she dragged it through the forest and then she wrapped her manuscript in the cloth. So it's always bringing us something new. But of course, the core of the artwork remains the same. The trees growing a hundred years, a hundred authors. And their manuscripts being protected for that time.

Also, what's really changed and what I can never have predicted from the start are the responses, people's responses and how it's become a kind of community gathering and all the ideas about hope and trust and the connection to the environment and ecology.

That was always kind of there from the beginning. But of course, you can never really predict what's going to happen in time. And especially in the past six, seven years. The planet, of course, has changed enormously and our perspective on the climate and the climate emergency that we're now in. And so I would say that that's a major way. It's not that the artwork has changed, it's just that our responses to what it is and what it evokes in us, it has changed. And then something else I just could not have predicted is the incredible response that we've had from people all over the globe. And that's so heartening that people are checking on the project from countries all over the place and with so many different languages and so many diverse people are connecting with it. And so that's enormous. And of course, that's something that although I had really hoped for at the beginning, you can never predict. And so it's been a great joy to watch people get involved with the project and connect with it.

The next question is, have there been new developments as the work has evolved, or issues that have arisen that have been unexpected or surprising?

Yes, there's been so many new developments in the project. In fact, they seem to happen almost week by week. And one of the major developments is every author. Those who we choose to invite and those who said yes. And their responses and how they choose to participate and immerse

themselves in the project. That's brought something completely new every time. And something that I can just never have predicted from the outset. I mean, of course, I will run this project for my whole life and I love working on it. I didn't realise all the relationships that would open up and it's just been incredible to build relationships with authors that I could never have imagined before, and we've become really very close to just about everybody who's taken part in the project so far, especially the authors, the foresters, those that work at the library, the architect and the room has brought so many new developments. We've been working on that for, well, nearly five, six years now. And it's taken many different twists and turns in the design and the way that we've cut the wood and the colour of it. At one point we were thinking about using blackened wood and visually it has changed a lot. A lot of the techniques have changed but something that's really stayed the same is our ritual in terms of we all gather together every year and we tie a ribbon around the tiny trees before people arrive in the forest. We serve coffee and light a fire, if there isn't a heat wave, which there was one year. And so there are things that are very much regular and a ritual and would stay the same. But there's developments happening all the time and I'm also being asked different questions about it from people in lots of different places that open up new perspectives for me as well and making this film was a really nice moment to reflect upon all of those changes and quite, quite how much has happened in a fairly short span of time. And on the other hand, I can't believe that we're already six years into the project. Something else that's definitely been surprising and unexpected are some of the ideas that we've had from people sent in. For example, we had a woman in Kenya suggesting that we grow an entire *Future Library* forest there. She suggested that every city should have its own *Future Library* forest, which of course, is just the most amazing thought. I have been moved by some of the responses that we've had to the project. Mosul Eye, for example, said that the *Future Library* made him feel safe. It brought him to a safe space. And for some people, it communicates the idea of hope and trust and that we're leaving behind something else for future generations. It's not just that kind of environmental devastation of right now. And I'm also hoping that in a simple way we are believing in those in 96 years to undertake the task of cutting trees and printing the books. We have to trust that the authors don't share what they've written and we have to trust that everybody across the world doesn't try to hack and find what they've written.

The next question is, the National Galleries of Scotland has a Future Library certificate, so will receive the anthology once printed. How do you envisage museums displaying or sharing the anthology of books? Is this something that you will dictate?

Yes and no. I won't dictate it, exactly, but along with other kind of instructions I imagine leaving some ideas, maybe some instructions and ideas, for people about how to display the book in exhibition settings. I mean, in the simplest way, it'll just be a book on the shelf at libraries and museums and people's homes. And I hope to design it in a really beautiful way, you know, where you can feel the texture still of the trees, for example, and that we use the correct kind of colouring and natural ingredients when the paper is being made. The thing is that as well as the book there are so many aspects of the project that we're trying to document and archive that, of course, were unpredictable from the beginning. So you never know. Maybe there'll be a display about the project that in 100 years brings together many of these different elements. And of course, there's always going to be the room. The room will stay and hold the manuscripts always, I hope, for as long as the room can continue and the Library can take care of it.

What will happen to the Future Library forest once the trees have grown, been cut down and the anthology published?

I imagine the forest when the trees have been cut down almost remaining exactly the same. Well, that's my hope anyway. It will reseed itself or the foresters of that moment will help the forest reseed itself and more spruce trees will grow, which is the kind of trees that we've planted along with some birch. And in a way, I hope not too much has changed. I hope you still hear the same kind of sounds. I hope you still have the same sense of peacefulness in the forest. I hope there's the same kind of nature and wildlife there and I hope it's still a common space. And of course, it will look very different because it will be open and it'll possibly be quite similar to the way it is right now in a way, because right now the trees are maybe a foot or two. So it'll be like going right back to the beginning again, starting again. And of course, something that will definitely change over time in our ritual is how we gather together amongst the trees because as I say right now they are just a few feet tall. But over the years to come, of course, the whole landscape is going to change and year on year our gathering places will be quite different. So, yes, it's a lovely idea to think about what the forest will look like when this project comes to fruition.

Are you hopeful that the skills and societal values employed to bring Future Library to fruition, writing, sharing, integrity, tree care, tree felling and book making will also stand the test of time?

I certainly hope so. Writing, sharing, integrity, tree care, tree felling and book making really stand the test of time. I love the quote by Umberto Eco that the book is like a reel and it just can't be improved upon. It is a process. It's a form that clearly will, I imagine, always stand the test of time. Technology could change, of course, but ultimately the printed book, I mean, I don't know how that could be improved upon. And yes, the core values of the project, the community aspect, the coming together, the rituals, again, these are things that are just so true to human beings and so innate. And actually with Coronavirus and this moment that we're in right now, I think has shown that really strongly: that coming together and the inherently social beings that we are is something that we can never go away from. And so actually, a large part of the project is to try to work with core ideas that will remain the same throughout and to kind of go through time. So books, paper, words and stories, narratives, these will always stand the test of time. It is what humanity has been doing always and will always continue to do.

Tree felling and tree care. This is something the foresters in Oslo and, of course, everywhere have been doing for really, really long expanses of time. And so I hope that it won't have changed enormously. I know techniques have been changing. For example, all of our trees are actually logged in a computerized system, so the foresters can keep track of them and if any have died and so on. And so perhaps there will be new techniques. But generally, I imagine the process of how the trees are tended to will remain the same.

The next question is how sacred is the annual ritualistic meeting in the forest. And can you see that it might grow to become something like a large public festival? Or is it the intention of the Trust to ensure that the event is kept for the family circle or the inner ring that includes the authors, artists and library representatives?

So the annual ceremony we plan will go ahead every single year. Until now, it's always been the springtime. The author brings a manuscript, and as you can see in the film, we take a walk and currently it's open to everybody and we hope it will remain that way. However, we are beginning to think as it grows and grows, as the project grows and more people come each year, will the trees be safe? It is a big priority of ours to protect the trees. At the moment, we tie a small ribbon around them so that people can kind of gather around the trees and make sure that they don't sit or stand on one but of course, if it becomes a really big gathering in years to come, we might need to change that a little bit. For example, this year, the idea was that all authors came back to the forest. Of

course, it could be quite busy. And so we need to protect the trees. One idea we've had, rather than covering the trees is to have a human guardian of each tree. And let people gather around those. So this year, sadly, of course, the handover is postponed. But it will happen in September instead. And we've always thought that things like changing plans are inevitably going to happen. It's come a bit sooner than we thought. The Coronavirus of course was incredibly unpredictable. And it's one of our first major challenges actually in terms of the ritual and how to do it. So at the moment, it's happening in September. And of course, that might change and we'll just have to think through imaginatively how to do the ritual if people can't even be there, which, you know, has sadly become a possibility. *Future Library* was never intended to be something that did just take part in a family circle or the Trust. Also, of course, there's different variants of different sizes of groups involved in the project and making it happen. Everybody from the volunteers who take part in the handover to the library, the librarians, the architects, all the visitors, the authors and even the authors' representatives and their families, but it's not something that we wanted to close off to anybody. Quite the opposite. It's something that's meant to be very inclusive and open to all. And so we do invite anybody to take part in the rituals. And of course, in context, we'll set what those rituals might be in, for example, this year, it is going to be treated quite differently or for now, it's just postponed. But it has made us think we might need to approach the ritual slightly differently depending on what is thrown at us over the years to come.

How will the trees be protected over the one hundred year period? You have talked about the hazardous future we perhaps face, and of the climate crisis, as well as other threats to us and our environment - how will the Trust physically protect the trees?

The foresters are a major part of *Future Library*. There are an amazing group of people that are currently tending for the trees and they'll pass down through generations to come. They will tend to trees simply. Nature in this forest is taking care of itself. It's a self-soothing forest and it's a mixed species forest. So it has spruce, it has birch. And if we were to just do nothing at all, the forest would take care of itself. However, of course, the threats to the forest are human-made threats. The environmental crisis that is upon us right now and that we will be facing through the entire duration of the project and through thousands of years to come could be the major impact and could bring catastrophe, of course, to the forest from forest fires and insect infestations. If we have major flooding. Who knows what's going to happen. Those are the kind of extremely dramatic images of what might come and our hope is that the forest is well protected. It's actually very high up. It also has been protected already from development through the declaration that they made a hundred years ago, that the forest is common land and exists for the people to enjoy. And that's written into history. So in that way, the trees are protected already in some regard. Otherwise, I think in a way there's only so much we can do. And the major threats to us are the major threats to all of humanity. And of course, we can't predict quite how bad things are going to get, but also in a way we are facing a really pivotal moment right now where enormous change can happen due to the kind of decisions that we make right now. And so in the most hopeful and positive point of view, perhaps, we'll be building a greener, cleaner and more environmentally-friendly society, where the trees will be thriving and we'll need to do very little in fact, just stand back and let them do what they've always done.

The Future Library room is made of 100 layers like the rings of a tree containing an author's manuscript in each layer. Can anyone come and visit the room or will it only be open to the public during the time when a new manuscript is introduced?

The room in the library is complete and it's in the new Deichman Library in Oslo, which is actually complete and ready to be opened. It is postponed right now due to the pandemic. It is in Bjørvika.

And right on the harbour development. And it's very, very beautiful. The *Future Library* room that I've been calling the 'silent room' is on the top floor of the library and it's complete. It's ready and it's waiting to be opened to the public and it's likely going to be opened during the handover ceremony, which is postponed at the moment, but which will be in September. We're really excited for the authors to put the manuscripts inside. We're inviting all the authors back to the forest this year to open the room. And the room is always going to be open to everybody. It's in a very, very public space of the library whose core values are all about being open to all. And that's always been our intention. Saying that, it is a small room. It's intimate and not a great deal of people can fit inside at one time. But that's always been part of the intention. It's a really quiet space, a contemplative space and a place where people can glimpse the manuscripts through the glass drawers and read the authors names, but nothing else. They don't know a single thing other than the authors titles. But they can be in that room and they can allow themselves to be kind of transported through their imagination. And so, it's open to everybody and we're really excited to be opening it because, of course, we've been working on this for years with Atelier Oslo and Lund Hagem. The design has gone through so many different developments and so it's really wonderful to see it come to life. And the next stage is, of course, is people coming to take part in it. And I'm really excited to see the reaction and how people feel when they're inside the room.

How does it make you feel to think that you will not be able to read the manuscripts by the authors, or live to see the project completed?

I actually feel completely fine about the idea that I won't be there to see the completion of the project. I love working on it now and I love the changes that it brings and how it is alive right now. I have always reckoned with the fact that I won't be there to read the books, so I'm not even tempted to read them at all because that would kind of break the pact of the whole thing. On the other hand, what I find really difficult to reckon with is that nearly everybody I know, my family, my friends and everybody involved in the project will most likely not be there. And of course, it's that pondering on mortality, which is difficult but necessary as well to learn to live with the idea of us not being there and that our future ancestors will be there and that we always have to keep them in mind, which I think is particularly important just now when there's such a lot of short term thinking we need to expand that and, in the long term, think more slowly.

Can you imagine that through this project, other collaborations will be formed as over time authors and others will come together to form a circle of trust that will in turn develop new relations and opportunities for artistic exchange?

Yes and I actually love already what's come about through the collaborative nature of the project. And that is the connection between authors. I know that so far the authors taking part in Future Library all communicate together and they meet each other often at festivals. And they know that they certainly feel like they're part of something that is shared. As Sjón described it, each author walks the footsteps of the others that have gone past and all of those are yet to come. So they are, they are connected and bonded in all their lives. And there's a lot of other amazing collaborative things have happened already, like the room. And I loved working on that with the architects. The design process, working with materials and coming up with concepts together and the glass makers just recently. It's really, really lovely to get to use different processes and work with amazing people. The architects have just brought a vision that began as something simple for me and it's now become incredibly intricate and way more in-depth. And they've been able to bring that to life really beautifully.

In terms of collaborations to come, certainly when you think that there's another 94 authors yet to be involved and who knows what else might happen? And even as part of the handover ceremonies, new collaborations are formed as musicians are invited and so on. Also, I really enjoy collaborations at the handover events. We've always asked the author to envisage what they would like to happen during the rituals. And so, for example, Sjón had the golden harp brought in and a French harpist played while we had opera singing. We had a choir in the forest with David Mitchell. Han Kang made a whole beautiful performance dragging her white cloth. And a Norwegian kulok singer. So that also opens up something entirely different each year. And so I can only imagine that these really rich collaborations will continue and get even more varied into the future.

Will the Future Library still remain as the Future Library, once it is no longer the 'future', and will the newly printed books be stored in the same drawers?

That's an interesting question. Will the *Future Library* still remain as the *Future Library*? For me, it will always be the *Future Library*. That is its title and it brings together all of the different elements of the project. Of course, that would be something very different when it comes to fruition in a century's time. Of course it won't be the future then, but it always has been the future for us now. We don't know exactly what's going to happen to the room. But I very much hope that it will stay open and of course, be a very different experience then, when the books have been published. Perhaps for example the drawers can then just be opened to the public and they can look at the manuscripts themselves which will be something different again.

When the Future Library books are made public, will they be published as one work, or will the 100 writings be available separately?

I imagine right now that the books will be published in a set of 10, one for each decade. Of course, we don't really know the length of the text that the authors are going to write. We allow them to write any length they like so some will be short poems, some will be short stories, some might be novels and, of course, there's no limit to how many pages there could be. So, of course, it's very hard to predict. But by taking kind of averages and making some assumptions we imagine there will be 3,000 books printed on the trees that we planted, 3,000 full anthologies. And it will no doubt be far too big to be one book. But I also don't really want to print them separately because they're part of this much larger set of writing. So I kind of thought maybe a box set of 10 books, bringing together each decade might work quite nicely.

When did you come up with the idea for this 'time piece'?

So I came up with the idea for *Future Library* many years before it came to fruition. It took a long time to get it off the ground, of course, it's such a big project. I came up with the idea when I was on a train basically drawing tree rings and I just made a very visual connection between the rings of the tree and chapters in a book and paper and trees. And I imagined this forest growing and containing author's words. And at that point, I was imagining just one author and one book being printed. But the same concept of that happening over 100 years, just beyond our lifespans.

That happened several years before I was approached to do a commission. I kind of put the idea aside as I do with so many of the ideas I have, because they really do seem almost impossible, a lot of the ideas that I have in general for artworks. But in this case it was something that could be very difficult, but it wasn't impossible to do. It just took the right kind of set of situations and people and context. And remarkably that did come about years later. I got invited to Oslo to take part in a conference commissioning artworks about slow time and slow space. And I just thought this could be the right place, the right time. And with people that, you know, are in a place that understands

long term thinking and has a connection to nature, that has a deep connection to literature and so on, already. And maybe I could propose this idea and it could become a reality here.

How was the Future Library room constructed, and how are the manuscripts displayed?

I'm so pleased that the room is finally opening to the public this year. We cut down and stored the trees that are used to make the room many years ago, when we first planted the *Future Library* forest and we took away the old trees and we stored them with the carpenter for years. We dried them out and we always knew that we would be building the room using these trees and making a connection between the room and the forest. So the room is built in a hundred layers. And it is a little bit like stepping inside a tree that rings around you. And we've kept the wood really natural. You can see the grain really clearly. It has been cut into something like over 40,000 individual pieces.

And you walk into a room, you take a slight turn and you see light coming and you see the drawers and then you enter a space and you're surrounded by a hundred different drawers that are lit and they have cast glass on the front and the author's names are inscribed on that glass. And there's a slight glow that comes through that will allow you to glimpse the manuscript inside. It was a quite complex piece to make with the amazing architects at Atelier Oslo and Lund Hagem. We've been working on it for many years. It's gone through different processes, but yet it's kind of common round to many of our original ideas of using the tree rings as a form within it and keeping it very simple, very natural and smelling of wood. And of creating quite an intimate-sized space where you can either be in there alone or with a very small group of people. And for it to be quite a magical place and for it to allow you to kind of dream distant thoughts and to think of future generations. So we've constructed it using fairly simple methods. I mean, it's been complex with so many different pieces involved, but the carpenters have done such an amazing job. It's so intricate and it uses the same kind of system of a layer for every single drawer. And the same cast glass, which is, of course, slightly different because every drawer is very unique, as is every manuscript with the author's words. And so I'm really excited to think about how people are going to respond and how long they stay in the room, for example, and what it makes them feel and think about.

Working on the film itself was a really super experience. We have filmed the handovers every year so far, we've always recorded an interview with the author and we're going to try to continue that. And we brought together a lot of that footage and shot new footage and of course in the room, which is opening this year. And it really allowed me and everybody involved in the project to reflect on things so far. And although it's a slow project, a lot has happened in in just six years and so it allowed us to address some of these things and reflect on all the author's voices so far and the very unique ways that the authors have approached the project and how they relate to one another and how to go forward with everything. Probably the most major change for me, reflecting on the project so far is the ecological connections. It's always for me been a project that connects nature and time and environment. However, it's just become more and more explicit and those connections are amplified as the climate crisis just escalates, or at least our awareness of the climate crisis escalates. And so it's because it's a project that thinks about and deals with those beyond our lifespans. And right now, we're in a really critical moment to address climate change, address how we choose to make changes right now that are going to really have major impacts on future generations.

Something else, a really nice collaboration that's been coming about over the years and is the work we do with the essayists that we invite each year. And so not only is there a writer who leaves a manuscript, but we invite a writer to respond to the projects this year, whichever year that is, which can be read and be read by everybody. And so we keep making booklets that are designed with our

tree rings on the front and that change year by year. The authors themselves write something responding to the project and also the essayist that year writes a text. And so if you haven't read them, I really encourage going back through the archive and reading the essays, which are really varied and wonderful. And this year's essay is by Alain de Botton and we'll be super excited for the handover this year, too.

I think in this moment of time when the world is facing the Coronavirus pandemic, I have been reflecting upon *Future Library* and what it might offer right now. I think it's a deep time aspect. Although what we're facing right now is, of course, really grave and extremely difficult, it will pass whereas the climate crisis that is upon us will not pass. That could create crisis upon crisis upon crisis. What has been astonishing is watching people come together in solidarity and compassion. And I hope that those values will be carried forth. And I think *Future Library* can allow us to step outside our time a little bit and maybe practise something that I've heard called timefulness which is having awareness of time passed, time to come and of even seasons changing and our relationship to change on a planetary scale and a cosmic scale. And I hope that the idea of connecting with those that go beyond us can help us measure the moment that we're in right now.

Something else scientists definitely could not have predicted from the beginning of the project is quite how it has affected me personally in my own life. I realised that I kind of measure my life and those around me through the years and through the rings of the trees, even. One year I was pregnant in the forest and I had my child the year after and of course, he's going to be there as long as we possibly can. So many major things have happened in my life and in the organisers' lives. And so it's kind of amazing to think 'this happened in 2014', then 'I my child this year' and so on and that kind of becomes connected to the authors in that year's handover. And it's very emotional. I couldn't have predicted the really emotional side of the project. It brings a lot of joy. And you know, it opens up a lot of human relationships and events and thoughts in my life that I just could not have predicted and that I'm really, really grateful for.