

Backward Compatibility: Techniques for Speculating Futures

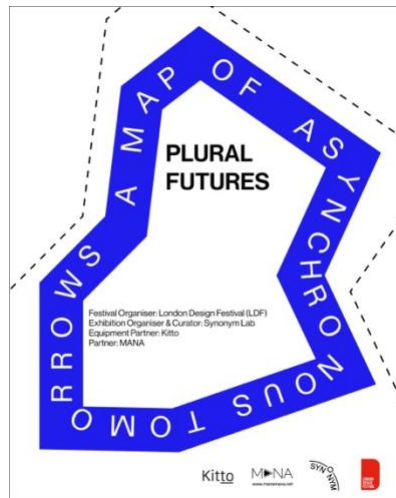
Synonym Lab at London Design Festival 2025



As an official partner of the 2025 London Design Festival, Synonym Lab presents *Backward Compatibility*, three series exhibition running from **September 14–22, 2025** in central London-ANNEX 1 TIVERTON ST SE1 6NT. Curated by Synonym Lab, the project introduces a unique curatorial methodology that draws from both technical systems and speculative thinking to explore the continuity of artistic practice across time.

The term *Backward Compatibility* originates in software, where it refers to a system's ability to support earlier versions. Reimagined here as a curatorial logic, it becomes a speculative tool: a way of asking how techniques—whether material, technological, or linguistic can carry the residue of the past while projecting possibilities for the future. Rather than viewing history and futurity as opposites, this approach emphasizes coexistence, layering, and adaptive continuity.

This exhibition also marks a rare convergence: the first time **Liu Gang**, President of CAFA International College, presents work in London; the first time **MANA** brings leading Asian new media artists to a London stage; and the first time **Goldsmiths Design alumni** co-curate a decade-long survey of their practice.



The exhibition unfolds across three curatorial chapters, each developed with a leading institution and each probing a distinct dimension of compatibility—generational, technological, and linguistic:

- **Inner Ripple (Echoes of Material and Time)** – Liu Gang
- **Plural Futures | A Map of Asynchronous Tomorrows (Dislocated Arrival of the Future)** – MANA New Media Art Platform
- **A Decade in Practice | Goldsmiths Design Alumni (2013–2023) (The Blurred Boundaries of Language)** – Alumni of Goldsmiths, University of London

“Backward Compatibility is not about reproducing the past or predicting a single future. It is a curatorial strategy that mobilizes technique and speculation to imagine plural futures—futures that emerge through coexistence, translation, and negotiation between systems,” explains Synonym Lab Director **Ke Bao**.