



Cumulus Newsletter • September 2021

# President's Message

## Anticipation, Imagination and Community

In the face of current challenges, those already here, and those yet to come, we know that we can turn to the arts to open up new avenues for inquiry and imagination.

For the next virtual Cumulus Conference: Arts Imagining Communities to Come, the concept of imagination and its agency vis-a-vis the interplay between artistic and educational practices and communities provides a critical thematic anchor. It is also foundational to the multi-disciplinary practices of the conference tracks and of the inspiring artists and academic experts that make the keynote line-up just announced: Jon McKenzie from Cornell's Studio Lab Pedagogy; Delma Rodríguez from Anilla Cultural; José-Carlos Mariátegui Alta Tecnología Andina and Susan Hansen Visual Methods Group at Middlesex University (more in the full story of this newsletter).

As I look forward to participating in this conference, I am reflecting on this concept of imagination- it has, as we know, so many contested definitions and a plurality of meanings. I came across this articulation by the Irish philosopher Richard Kearney: **“imagination is about the capacity we all have as human beings to connote absence into presence, actuality into possibility, what is into something—other—than-it-is.”\*** As an educator deeply committed to community work, I am often moved to reflect on my trajectory of project engagements in the field of design for social innovation. Like many other colleagues, I wrestle with the ethical dimensions of “what it is that we leave behind” in our communities when engaging in art and design projects that aspire to provoke social change. So Kearney's definition of imagination resonates because it is generative and hopeful at its core. It reminds us that imagination unleashes a process of seeing, sensing, seeking, making, and creating conditions for reframing and dreaming new possibilities. In these times of profound social reckoning worldwide, I am grateful for the many imaginative acts that we see every day in the many diverse communities in our midst.

I invite you to join me virtually with our hosts at UArtes in Guayaquil next November!

Mariana

**Mariana Amatullo, PhD**

President, Cumulus

Associate Professor, Strategic Design and Management, Parsons

Vice Provost for Global Executive Education and Online Strategic Initiatives,  
The New School

\*Kearney R. *The Wake of Imagination: Ideas of Creativity in Western Culture*.  
London: Hutchinson; 1988