Marc Lee, Speculative Evolution

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When an internationally renowned artist looks at the co-emergence of AI and nature, some profound thoughts are bound to emerge. Today I am fortunate enough to review International artist and futurist Marc Lee's "Speculative Evolution — Imagining a Future where AI Controls our Ecosystem". [URL]

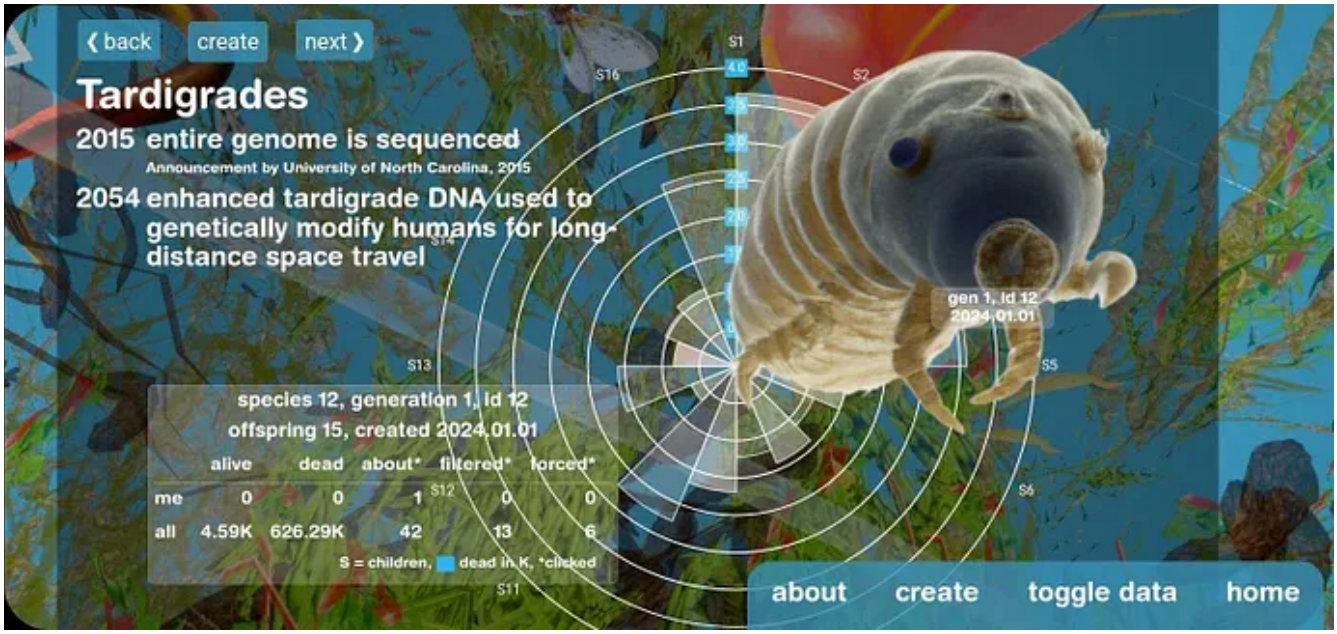
Marc Lee takes us through a futuristic fandom, set in about 30 earth years from now. (I mention earth years only because, I honestly do not know how long that would be in AI years, only know that it could be far shorter).

The interactive experience (and my own interpretation of Marc's description) happens best through the mobile app (also in the URL). The experiential approach tries to artfully capture the effect of inaccuracies in modelling complex ecosystems with (or in spite of) our limited current understanding, or perhaps oversimplifying the reality, almost the equivalent of finding the effect of "ignored" 10% errors in our neural network training, or the difference between a "quantized" model vs "unquantized" model, on an incompletely modelled system.

What would be a future, if each of the species, is instead given a world to live in, a prompt to lead a life itself, and imagine itself to a life of its own ? What would such a world look like ? Will it attempt to change to, what ?

With that set of queries, I install and invoke the application. A short while after the setup is done (note — requires an internet connection), I am greeted by a gentle sea lion-like large creature, with blue eyes swimming away from me.

Tardigrade Re-Imagined

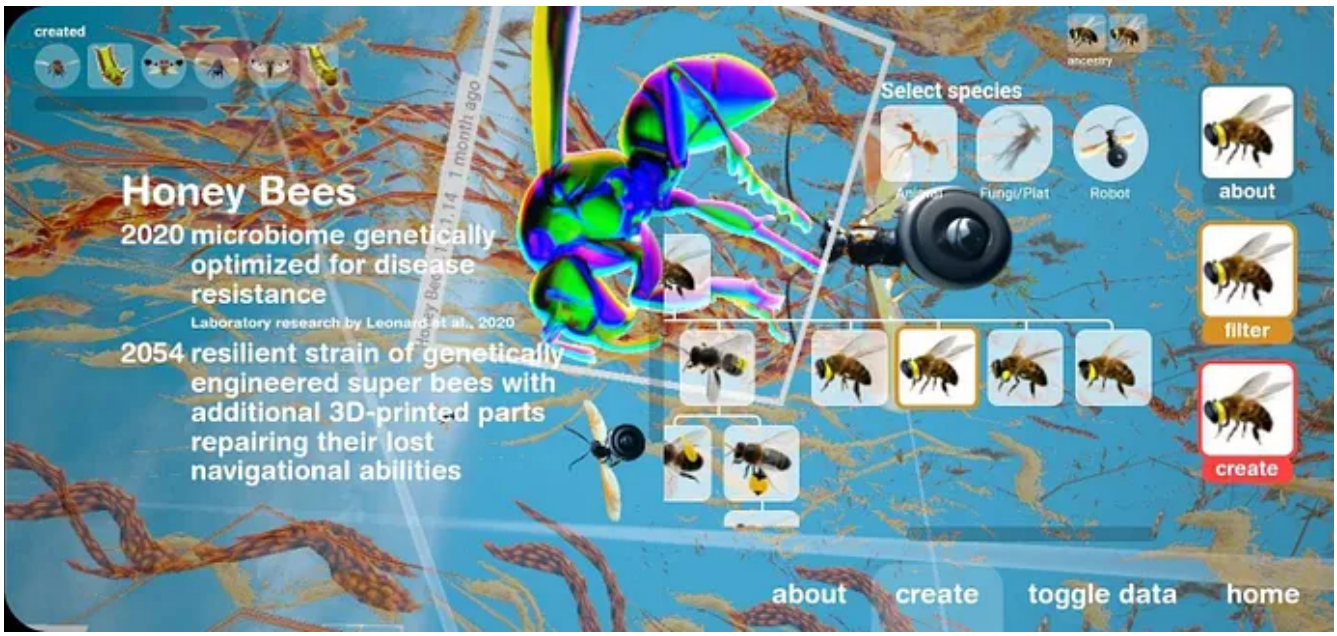


The real Tardigrade, and research information

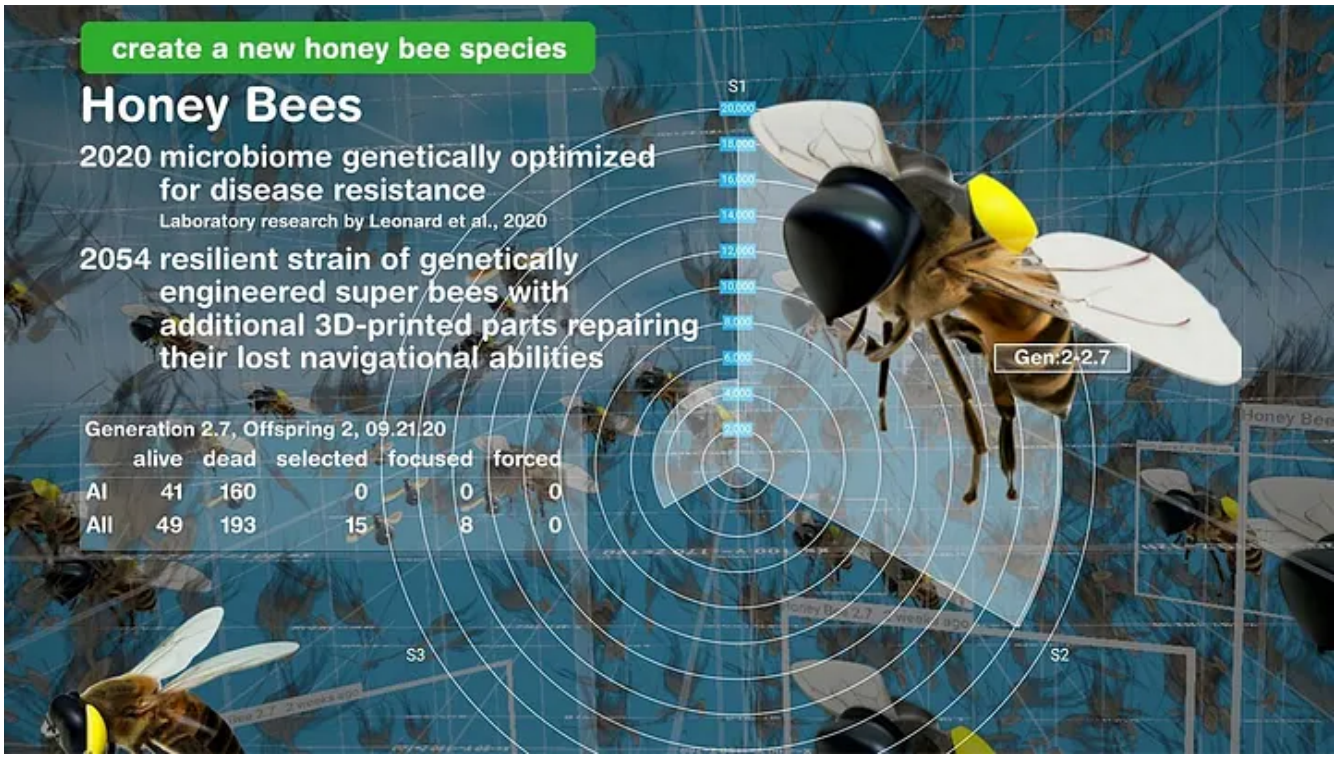
I try to interact with it, catching up using the helpful arrow in the app. As it goes farther, I see it exponentially speed up faster, and fades away, until a new bee like creature catches my attention with its large orange eyes.

Other creatures

I can hear the tempo building in the music, as the dates mentioned in the top of each panel approach closer to a week or farther away in time. A quick tap on the UI brings up the information pane, about each creature, what evolution it has gone through, and a horde of research papers linking to the former self of the creature before it evolved.



Honeybees



Create honeybee species

I keep creating new organisms — there are multiple types — fungi, honeybees, tardigrades, and worms, until I am stopped, “Today you have created new species. Tomorrow you can create more.” I feel like a humbled God.

Indeed, if really each of these creatures evolved themselves, would they prefer to evolve to be “humans” ? Or would they prefer to retain their identity and evolve to be super-creatures ? I wish I could see an evolution of my own self in one of the floating panes, perhaps then I may be able to answer this with my evolved powers of thinking.

It is amazing to see every one of these is a simulation, imagined by an AI prompted with some human trigger.

The diffusion theory (on which DALLE and a lot of engines) uses an interesting parameter called “temperature” that controls how much the model hallucinates, interesting to note that temperature is so important, to even the creation of a future, where temperature itself holds a special meaning in real life. [URL]

I wish the creatures stayed on longer, for more interactions. For example, like in the Trisolaran world, could a species choose to “die” instead of living, in order to escape the ravages of an uncertain world ?

If the DALLE generated 3D object is rendered-to-texture, the creatures could be moving in 3D real time inside the pane instead of showing a single slice of a pose, that currently appears to be a simple screen-shot of the screen.

I can imagine, even as I close the app, the little creatures hitting the screen through their inquisitive eyes, just to see if I am still there, to check on their evolution.

Thank you Marc Lee for this unique exposition of the impact of AI on nature, and alternative ways of looking at evolution.

Marc Lee | AI | Futurist | Art | Nature

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Yet to beat the machines. https://github.com/prabindh