ABSTRACT: Design is practiced along a spectrum. Practicing at any point along the spectrum comes with different kinds of uncertainties and risks. On the pragmatic end of the spectrum, designers apply Design Thinking to drive down value-risk—will people spend their time, attention, or money on this today? On the imaginative end, writers and filmmakers, futurists, and designers conceive of futures that face feasibility-risk—what chain of events and conditions are necessary to realize an imagined future?

Kristen Leach and Michael Yap have practiced on both ends of the spectrum. On the imaginative side: Kristen designed “future of” multimedia experiences at the New York Times; Michael designed for the first commercially-available mesh network. Now, they design for Etsy. Their practice exists between extremes: it is a speculative space that mixes pragmatism and imagination to develop long-term company and product strategy. It relies on a mix of emerging design practices (critical, design fiction), foresight, and strategy.

Join Kristen and Michael in a conversation to learn how they are evolving to successfully design products for the long-term. Participants will learn how to anticipate future customer needs, imagine a wide-range of possible futures that satisfy customer needs then, and identify-and-evaluate the consequences of innovation on a timescale of tens, hundreds, and a thousand years from now.

BIO: Michael Yap is a designer, developer, and educator. He holds a Bachelor of Studio Arts and Master of Fine Arts in Interaction Design. Yap has worked with design and innovation consultancies like IDEO and now develops company and product strategies and helps oversee operations at Etsy. He has taught design at the California College of the Arts and the School of Visual Arts. His work is published in Raw Data (2014), a book by Steven Heller, and has been covered by a number of publications including Fast Company, Site Inspire, and Wired.

Kristen Leach is a designer, game maker, and developer. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Product Design from Stanford University, where she contributed to research in the Human Computer Interaction Group. Kristen has worked on several digital design teams including the multimedia team at The New York Times where she designed “future of” audio, video, and augmented reality experiences. Now, she is developing and designing product strategies at Etsy.

HOST: Chinmay Kulkarni & Yasmine Kotturi

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