The Fate of Things to Come: Deconstructing Design[s] Future[s]

Matt Ward, Department of Design
assumptions
Design is a product
Design is a producer
Utopians
There's no place like 127.0.0.1
This looks like a good place to put a sticker.
Utopia as a fictional, ideal society
Utopia as a construction of alternative organisation
(Parker Et. Al, 2007)
things
“Thus, trained in all learning, the mind of the Utopians are exceedingly apt in the invention of the arts which promote the advantage and convenience of life”
Designers are really powerful?!?
Social transformation
“Get back in your place, where Mies van der Rohe designed you to stand”
Judge Julius Hoffman
CONTROL AND POWER
“Accordingly they [critical utopias] attempt to realise the contours of a desired future society in their very textual form via incorporation of elements of contradiction, ambiguity, and openness. In doing so, they disrupt the unified and homogeneous narrative of the traditional utopia and demonstrate the multiplicity of possible futures.”

Tom Moylan *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination.* Routledge, 2003, p26
“The transformative potential of Utopia depends on locating it in the future, on thinking through the process of transformation from the present, and identifying the potential agents of transformation”

The Future
“The future is like a dead wall or a thick mist hiding all objects from our view”

Hazlitt, 1822
Planning and projecting
Divination, prophesy, prediction, forecasting, foresight and scenario planning
“future is not a noun, it’s a verb”

Bruce Stirling
Designing Futures
Conjecture, creation, colonisation and control
As with history, ‘visions of the future’ tell us a lot about the values, hopes and desires of the present.
Super Chef - 1965?
Democracy
What kind of society will we be living in?
The Network Society:
always on, always connected

http://www.flickr.com/photos/37375661@N00/2106858189/
The Surveillance Society: watched and controlled
The Cyborg Society: Upgraded and updated

http://www.flickr.com/photos/garethfordwilliams/540537088/
The Geneticised Society: Reconfiguring our genes
The Nano Society:
Self cleaning, self constructing

http://www.flickr.com/photos/sliver108/115992645/
Stuffed futures*

*After Mike Michael
problem free
problem free
//personal
problem free
personal
plentiful
nomadic
problem free
personal
plentiful
nomadic
chinese
problem free
personal
plentiful
nomadic
chinese
shared
obese
wet
Designer as agent of change
Contested futures
Contingent futures
How does design engage in these futures?
Negotiating expectations
Tight curl futures
‘Long now’
futures
Utopian futures: contentful, value laden
Dystopian futures: provocative, scare mongering
How do we ‘forecast’?
Empirical examination and projection
“Over 55’s spend £195M a year on improving their sex lives”

“Almost a quarter of men and women in England are now obese and the proportion is forecast to grow to 60 per cent by 2050”

“By 2050 one third of Europe’s population will be over 60”
Fiction
The Route to 5 a-day

Healthy blood, healthy bones, healthy heart, healthy body and a peaceful mind: all thanks to the healing powers of sex. Next time you’re in the mood let her know you’ve got the doctor on your side!

The NHS is launching a brand new campaign to get people to have more sex, because of these benefits, for more advice about how to get your ‘5 a-day’ please find your nearest clinic overleaf.

Your Local Clinic

Dr Berman & Partner
58 Vesta Road, London, SE42NH
Tel: 020 7639 0654

The Medical Centre
24 Laurie Grove, London, SE146NH
Tel: 020 8692 6427

St Johns medical Centre
56 - 60 Loamspit Hill, Lewisham, London, SE137SX
Tel: 020 8692 1354

Dr Butler
42 Gellatly Road, London, SE145TT
Tel: 020 7639 1027

Mornington Surgery
433 New Cross Road, London, SE146TD
Tel: 020 8692 8299

Honor Oak Group Practice
20 Turnham Road, London, SE42LA
Tel: 020 7639 9797

Deptford Medical Centre
2 Peasons Avenue, London, SE146TG
Tel: 020 8692 0033

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2 Peasons Avenue, London, SE146TG
Tel: 020 8692 0033

The Medical Centre
2 Peasons Avenue, London, SE146TG
Tel: 020 8692 0033

Jayram Surgery
504 New Cross Road, London, SE146TI
Tel: 020 8694 1331

Clifton Rise Medical Centre
27 Clifton Rise, London, SE146ER
Tel: 020 8692 1387

The Queen Road Partnership
387 Queens Road, London, SE145HD
Tel: 08444 127296

Waldron Teaching Practice
108 Queens Road, London, SE148RG
Tel: 020 3049 3630

Honor Oak Group Practice
20 Turnham Road, London, SE42LA
Tel: 020 7639 9797

Deptford Medical Centre
2 Peasons Avenue, London, SE146TG
Tel: 020 8692 0033

Dr Batra’s Practice
Waldron Health Centre, Stanley Street, London, SE84BG
Tel: 020 3049 3650

Waldron Health Centre, Stanley Street, London, SE84BG
Tel: 020 3049 3650

Waldron Health Centre, Stanley Street, London, SE84BG
Tel: 020 3049 3650

Sexual Health
For the over 55’s
“it is the gaps, ruptures and voids that act as ‘stimuli or propellants for the reader's imagination’ (Dolezel, 1995). With this approach it calls into question the need for careful selection of the routes and traces we make throughout the network, how we stay silent in the our representations of tomorrow” Ward, M. & Wilkie, A. (2008) Made in Criticalland
Designer as material-semiotic storyteller
Design can be seen as ‘starts’ or ‘departures’ in the material relationships of objects: trajectories of a conceptual life and propellants for the imagination.
SCIENCE FICTION
STORIES

NEW 2nd ISSUE

New Stories by
ALGIS BUDRY
PHILIP K. DICK
MILTON LESSER
WINSTON K. MARKS
M. C. PEASE
MACK REYNOLDS

35¢
Trajectory, possibility and ethical ambiguity

Revital Cohen, Life Support
GATTACA

There is no gene for the human spirit

UMA THURMAN
Diegetic Prototype

Kirby, D. 2003
THE LOST WORLD
JURASSIC PARK
“[Scientists'] warnings went unheeded until two recent Hollywood films, Armageddon and Deep Impact, showed Earth being ravaged by such impacts. The publicity prompted scientists at the British National Space Centre (BNSC) to investigate the risk, and their report is said to have startled the government into action.”

(Leake & MacAskill, 1999)
Fictional representation and perceptual reality
hype
Utopia as an expression of the ‘principle of hope’
(Bloch, 1986)