



Throughout the Spring Gathering on Saturday, April 23rd, attendees participated actively in immersive, experiential futures and speculative encounters envisioned by project teams from the Design Futures Spring 2022 elective class. Attendees engaged in some exciting and playful possible futures as well as offered feedback and their own views of the preferable. In addition to just offering a glimpse of future stories, the class also offered a sketch of both qualitative and quantitative future actions that may be taken to achieve the interventions and disruptions to attain those preferred futures. The project teams spent the semester investigating and applying anthropological, ethnographic, and design futures methods to explore, critique, materialize, and stage these speculative futures encounters. The project teams are grateful for all attendees and to the University of Houston for allowing them to showcase the future.

The Future of Public Transportation Safety

In New York City alone, public transportation dropped 90% during the pandemic. These rates have yet to recover, setting off a vicious cycle of *decreased* income from fares, and *increased* petty and violent crime. Should this continue to spiral downwards, the future of public transportation as we know it will be jeopardized for urban city dwellers, commuters, tourists, and the like. In this project, we tackle how scenarios of the future might play-out to combat subway crime and violence, focusing on a specific hypothesis: what if sharing our personal data more publicly could create more empathy amongst strangers and thus ultimately reduce subway-based crime?

The Future of Cities

By 2070, two significant developments have followed the inundation of major cities along the east coast of the US: numerous floating, collaborative communities have been developed along the coast; and a technology-enabled and sophisticated barter economy has emerged, linking these "Aquacommons" to each other and to the other collaborative communities such as the Geocommons and VR Commons. After viewing a background story narrated by the avatar of one resident of the Provincetown Aquacommons in what is now the Cape Cod Archipelago, participants were invited to project themselves forward to his world in 2070 with the aid of several detailed persona cards. Using the persona cards' information about their knowledge, skills, and

abilities, participants were invited to propose barter arrangements with the avatar, who was available following the background video for live questions and answers.

The Future of Sex + Intimacy

The future of sex and intimacy explores a world in which shame has been eradicated- specifically shame associated with sex, intimacy, and relationships. This experiential future transports participants to Clear River High School's Social Emotional Xcellence (S.E.X) curriculum in the year 2052. The team crafted an experiential scenario set at a Parent-Teacher meeting to preview a completely re-designed high school sex education curriculum. It explored a variety of provocative topics including shameless pleasures, sexual identity, human-to-human and human-to-robot relationships, kinks and preferences, and consent. Parents had the opportunity to explore and learn to model behaviors grounded in personal integrity and values as it relates to sex and intimacy in order to extend the classroom into the home, creating a fully integrated learning environment. How would the world be different if we knew we would be accepted - kinks, oddities, and all?

The Future of Death

Aiming to portray a future where death is de-stigmatized, the team took existing technologies: alkaline hydrolysis, terraburial, and anerobic-bioconversion, and framed them in a future where they were common and preferred. The earth has become the primary stakeholder, and societal priorities were focused on community and re-unification with the earth. Participants went through an experiential, theatrical process of what it would be like to lose their fear of death, elevate their consciousness and, much like a modern funeral home, explore their options to decide how they would most like to re-integrate into the life cycle. The goal was for participants to leave with an interest in continuing this conversation, to further research the technology already available to us and to consider making death related decisions that could move us closer to a preferred Future of Death.

The Future of Sports

The future of sports in 2102 was an expo style, fully exploitable display that posed the question, "why are we still using bombs, bullets, and destruction to solve conflicts?" What would society look like if sports became the conflict resolution space? The team explored Zoe Skyes' desk and asked participants to take a look at a day in the life of a coach and international organization representative in this experiential future.

Future of Truth

The team posed an experiential project where participants interacted with a determining jury selection in an intensified complex truth environment, specifically regarding an act of shame possibly covering up an act of violence. Team members utilized multiple technologies and created an understanding of metaphysical and physical differences, our reactions and acceptance of each and how the perceived world may or may not be what we believe—and who controls that as we move deeper into distributed, unmonitored channels and new technologies.

Future of Government

What is the future of participation in democracy? We explored a lot of angles and options for what that might look like. Ultimately, we settled on an experience for the election of 2065 to allow participants to be introduced and calibrate their own digital twin which was built off their digital footprint, which would participate directly in voting on policy decisions on behalf of the participant. There are many questions that

arise here: can we bypass corruption by elevating direct participation? Can we focus on describing people's values instead of their opinions as a foundation for voting? Does the future require a major restructuring of how we expect government participation to work?

Future of Time Spent

In a future that feels like an extension of the present, how does the average American with access to the latest technologies “choose” to spend their time? This team explored cutting edge medications and ancient physiological rhythms, self-regulation of bodily functions, a microchip that fixes everything and the choice to go outside in nature or bring “nature” into our lives as packaged products. Through film and artifacts, personas were created from the future to bring in a juxtaposition of choices of how time is being spent.