DESIGN PROBLEM

future

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“To predict is extremely difficult, especially the future.”

introduction

We humans have been fascinated by the future. There were times when changes took place very slowly. For example, during the Middle Ages, it is said that the economic inflation rate was about 1% over one hundred years, meaning there were hardly any changes in society. Probably the very concept of the future was irrelevant then. Indeed in some societies like feudal China they did not really want to have much changed. The future and change, the unknown, can be unsettling at times.

Our society is preoccupied with the future and change. The Moore’s law states that the power of computing doubles every 18 months making computers obsolete very rapidly. In fact some say the computer you buy today is already obsolete. In modern times, the idea of the future is associated with growth and progress, and has often been depicted in rosy
optimistic visions. With the publication of “Limit to Growth” by the Rome Club, however, a shadow was cast over the bright projection of Modernism. American Modernism coincides with the prosperity of the post WWII era leading to the proclamation by President Johnson’s advisor Patrick Monyhan that “America has a 10 billion dollar surplus in the federal budget. We can now solve any social problems we have!” Of course the Vietnam War led the United States into confusions and eventually into the economic recession of 1980’s. The optimistic modernist architecture was replaced by the more cynical Post Modernism. Then an unprecedented economic recovery of 1990’s somehow changed our perception again. The new Information Technology and Genetic Engineering appear to give us the power to change our society for the better, finally! Digital technology seems to give architects the ability to design more freely.

Perhaps it is a good time to reflect.

This semester the school will receive the Smithsonian exhibition “Yesterday’s Tomorrow,” which include many images proposed by architects and planners. You may want to review the information available at the:

- Smithsonian Exhibit web site
- Yesterday’s Tomorrow web site

Looking back at the images of the future envisioned 50 years ago is quite enlightening. The optimistic idealism of the Modern movement had resulted in creating problematic urban conditions. Nonetheless, it is important for us as architects to be aware of the future and develop some critical sense of vision. After all, buildings can last for hundreds of years. Starting a new millennium, some have apocalyptic visions of the future, others have faith in human capability. Architects can not solve the world problems, but need to profess, to believe and to act. Can architects make contribution to the betterment of our living environment?

The first project of the semester is to think about the future which will set a tone to the design studios of the whole year.

**project**

**Critical issues of the future:**
Teams of 3 members will select a particular topic to develop their project. For instance, they could choose to work on a specific issue within one of the following (or other) topics.
- Environment and resources
- Population, society and life style
- Technology
- Food production and consumption
- Transportation
- Healthcare
- Education
- Urban conditions

The project should provide arguments and rationale supporting an ‘architectural perspective’ of the future of an area that is of the team’s interest.
**reading list**

Please, see at the end of this exercise.

**tasks**

(1) Research: Gather, read, analyze, and interpret information related to the topic your team is to work on.

(2) Summarize your findings and present them in the format described below. Make your team’s future vision.

**presentation**

Present our research findings in a concise format of 3 sheets of 11” x 17”. At least a third should be text. Then propose your team’s vision through one image on 16” x 24” board, and reduce it to 4” x 6” postcard size. Make one hundred copies to be distributed during the exhibition together with the Smithsonian postcards. On the back side write a note (or message) to the future.

For examples, please check the web site:
http://www.arch.utah.edu/courses/arch4010/postcards.htm

**schedule**

Research phase discussion: 2:00p.m., August 27 (M)
Preliminary review drawings due: 2:00p.m., August 31 (F)
Final review: 2:00p.m., September 7 (F)

**evaluation**

Open jury and grading using the following criteria:

— methodological rigor and consistency
— creativity of the inquiry
— strength and clarity of the argument
— compelling power of the vision
— use of representations to convey the message
Reading Package Project 1

General Trends


Architecture


Culture


Environment/Ethics

Technology
http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/8.04/joy.html
http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/8.04/joy_pr.html#12
http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/lanier/lanier_index.html

The City/Workplace
Davis, Mike (1995) "House of Cards Las Vegas", *Sierra Magazine*, v80,n6 (Nov-Dec)
http://www.rut.com/mdavis/housecards.html

Other Sources
Books
*The Third Wave* – Alwin Toffler
*Silent Rachel* – Rachel Carlson
*Spaceship Of The Mind* –Nigel Calder
*Programs And Manifestoes On 20th-Century Architecture* – Ulrich Conrads
*City Of Quartz* – Mike Davis (Particularly, Chapter 7)

Journals  (available at the Marriott Library)

Film
Blade Runner, A.I., Metropolis, Gattaca, The Truman Show, etc.

NOTE: for more sources, please consult your instructor.