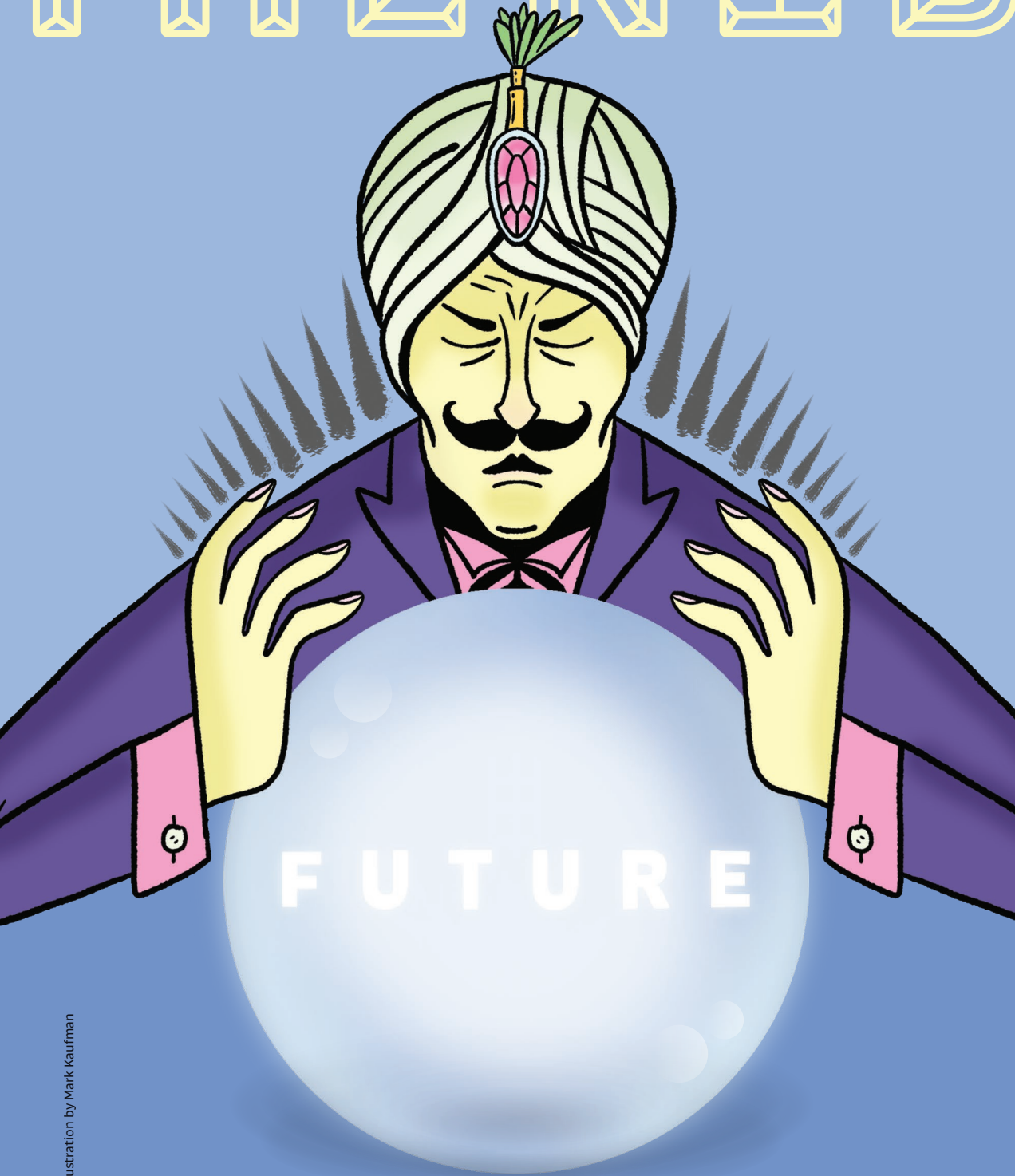


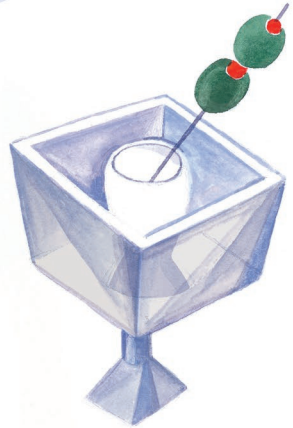
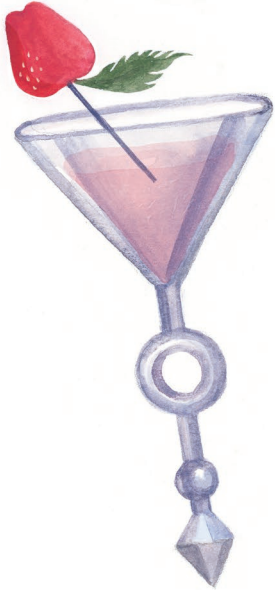
FUTURE

T H E  
N I B



# THE NIB





# IS IT TOO LATE TO CHANGE THE TIMELINE?

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Science fiction has allowed us to imagine what it might be like to jump forward or backward in time, or to even experience the flow of time in the other direction. If we could know the terrible things coming, the story typically goes, then we could avoid it and change things for the better. The threat of nuclear war, the climate apocalypse, pandemics, robots taking over. So, like, the last few years.

A lot of the world-changing technology promised over the decades has finally arrived: social media, drones, self-driving cars, delivery apps, and AI tools that can spit out a painting, song, or term paper in seconds. So far, the vision for how all these things will be used runs from boring to bleak. They are mostly tools of capital and surveillance and have us heading toward a future that science fiction has always warned about: a ravaged planet, isolation through technology, an ever-widening wealth gap, authoritarianism, and the rich living contented lives through it all—perhaps on a little space station with free healthcare while we toil in the drone factories here on Earth.

In this issue of the magazine, you can expect the typical *Nib* cheer about that coming world. Our contributors take on AI and labor, human extinction, and the cities of the future being constructed in Saudi Arabia. Cartoonists ponder the end of work and weave an appreciation of the Luddites, whose actions are widely misunderstood today.

Yes, we are more than a bit concerned about how things will play out in the coming years.

One thing I already know about the future is that *The Nib* won't be in it. This is our final issue of the magazine, and it is with a lot of regret that I announce that we are closing down for all the reasons a small, independent publication shuts down in 2023.

In the first issue of the magazine, on the theme of Death, I opened by saying I wanted to start a magazine before I died. Painfully aware of the rapidly shifting nature of media companies, I added that I wasn't sure how long the magazine would last, but that "*The Nib* will die eventually." That unknown state of the future has now collapsed into the observable present.

Over the last 10 years, we have published thousands of comics and paid out \$2 million to creators. We put out 15 issues of this magazine, showcased the best of what nonfiction and political cartoons can do, and launched a few careers and graphic novels. If I could go back in time and tell my young self all that this team would accomplish, I'd be amazed and looking forward to it.

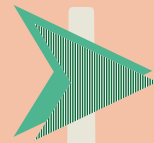
Some things do work out the way you want. At least for a while. I have no idea what comes next. That's the future for you.

**MATT BORS**

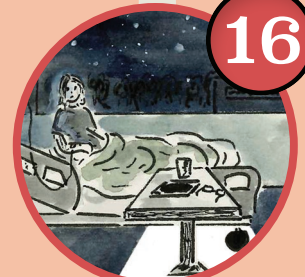
Matt Bors  
Editor and Publisher



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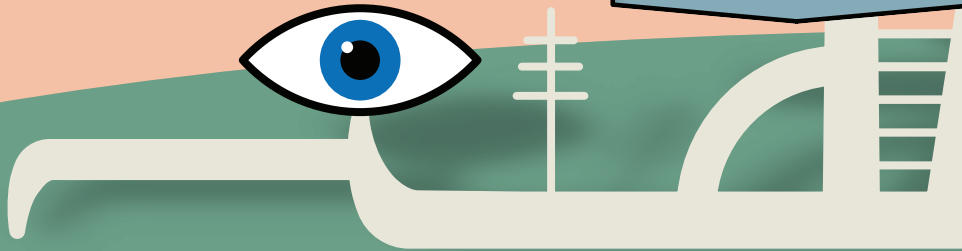
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Covers, contributors page, masthead, and section illustrations by Ben Passmore.

Interstitial illustrations by Elizabeth Haidle.

Endpapers, page one, table of contents design and illustrations by Mark Kaufman.



ANOTHER FINE  
NIBULON FAMILY  
PERIODICAL



SEPT / 1964

15¢

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

# Popular FUTURE

THE MAGAZINE OF TOMORROW

PAGE  
14



COLONIES  
IN SPACE!

PAGE  
36



AFROFUTURISM!  
WHAT IS IT, EXACTLY?

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82



WILL ROBOTS  
STEAL YOUR JOB?

a **Jet  
Pack**  
in every  
garage!



All new  
for  
1964!

**PLUS!** The Future of Human Fertility  
**BONUS! Were the Luddites Right?**  
**Don't Miss** The Amazing Time Capsule of '64

MATT BORS • BEN CLARKSON  
FELIPE SOBREIRO

# JUSTICE WARRIORS™

THE MONEY STAYS IN BUBBLE CITY.  
THE COPS KEEP YOU OUT.



*"All the glorious  
dystopian satire  
you hoped it  
would be."*

—Boing Boing

*"Just the perfect  
amount of  
demented!"*

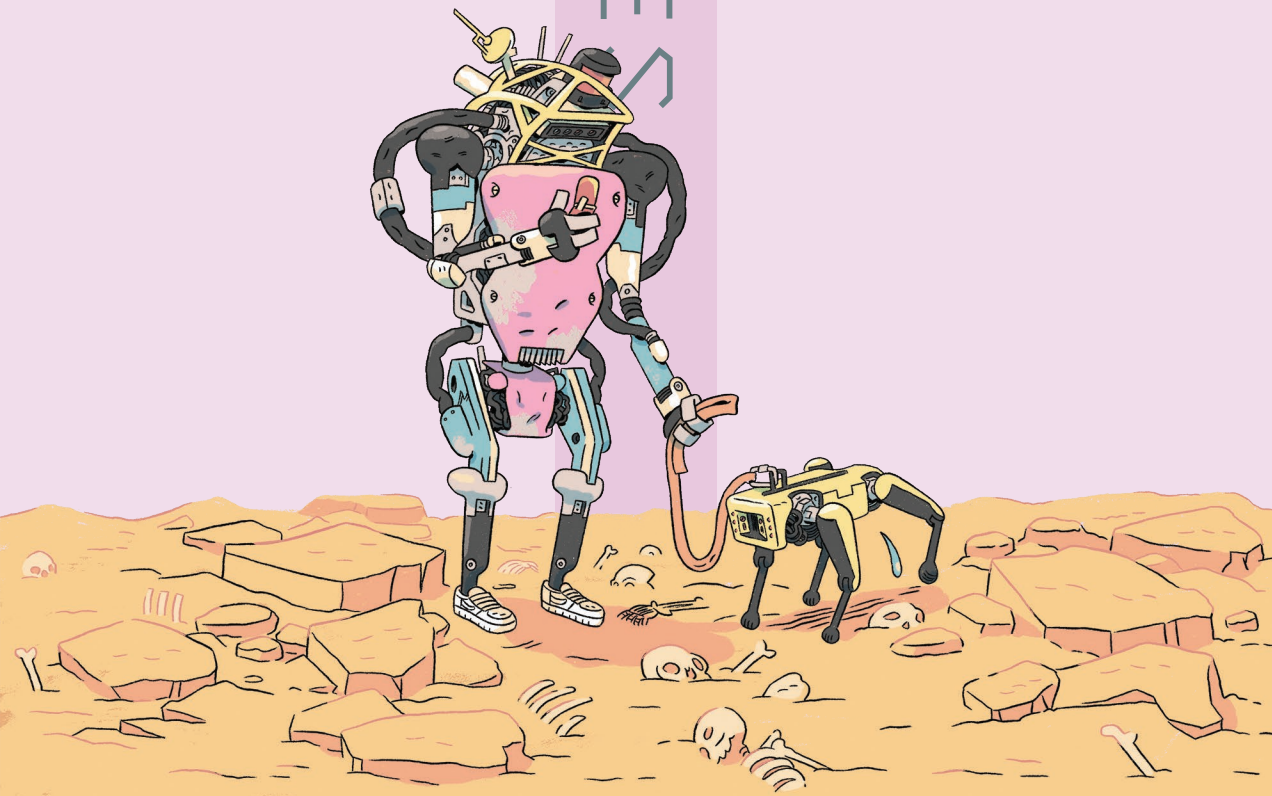
—Bill Oakley,  
The Simpsons

COLLECTED EDITION FEB. 22





# DISPATCHES



# DOES THE FUTURE EXIST?

By T Edward Bak



Throughout history humans have used various methods to forecast the future.

Always with mixed results.

Is the future in fact somewhere hidden behind a mystic door ~ accessible to those with the proper key or credentials?



In ancient Greece, the Oracle of Delphi ingested henbane and inhaled subterranean vapors to divine the meaning of signs and to foretell future events.



The sorceress of Endor is compelled by King Saul in the biblical Old Testament to summon the spirit of Samuel -

-Who delivers a prophecy of doom to the arrogant monarch.



The Viking chief Olaf Tryggvason (AKA "Crow-Bone") reputedly predicted the future by "reading" bird bones.

The Roman emperor Valens employed **ALECTOROMANCY** (divination by the observation of a cock's ingestion of corn kernels inscribed with letters) to learn the name of his successor.

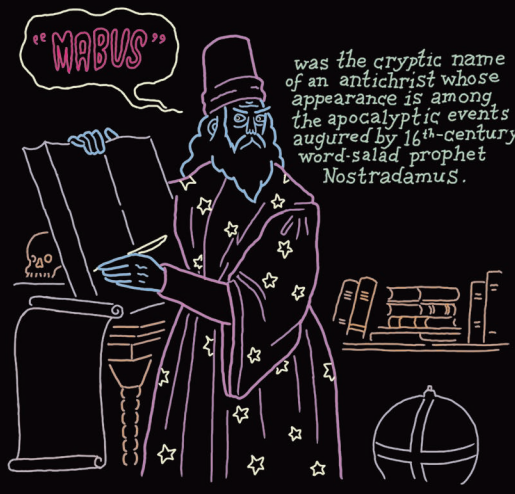
After the chosen letters indicated

**T H E O D**

Valens had everyone with that name executed.

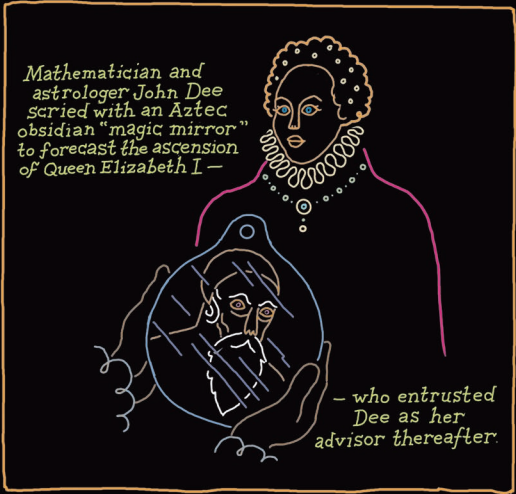


Of course he was then succeeded by **THEODOSIUS**.



"MABUS"

was the cryptic name of an antichrist whose appearance is among the apocalyptic events augured by 16<sup>th</sup>-century word-salad prophet Nostradamus.



Mathematician and astrologer John Dee scried with an Aztec obsidian "magic mirror" to forecast the ascension of Queen Elizabeth I -

- who entrusted Dee as her advisor thereafter.



Spiritualism and divinatory arts were popular with devotees like Mary Todd Lincoln, Australian prime minister Alfred Deakin, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in the Victorian era -

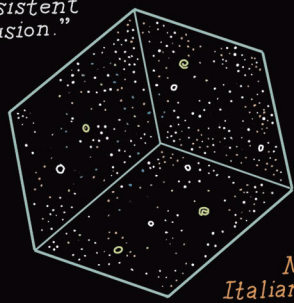
- when Mary Shelley and HG Wells began publishing their science fiction stories.

In 1992 political philosopher Francis Fukuyama proclaimed humanity was at the "end of history." September 11, 2001 - less than a decade later - suggested otherwise.



And history also did not cease with the end of the Mayan Long Count calendar in 2012.

According to Einstein, "the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion."



Meanwhile Italian physicist Carlo Rovelli contends we are simply constant witnesses to entropy.



Who knows why we are all so obsessed with time?



BY TRINIDAD ESCOBAR

CALIFORNIA HAS BEEN WHIPLASHING BETWEEN INTENSE STORMS AND ITS 22ND YEAR OF A MEGADROUGHT.



WHEN I STARTED WRITING THIS ARTICLE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, NEARLY 98% OF CALIFORNIA WAS IN SOME STAGE OF DROUGHT.

TWELVE STORMS HAVE INUNDATED THE STATE SINCE THE END OF DECEMBER 2022, ACCORDING TO THE CENTER FOR WESTERN WEATHER AND WATER EXTREMES.



THE LAND HASN'T EXPERIENCED ANYTHING LIKE IT IN OVER 1,200 YEARS.

ALMOST EVERYWHERE, OUR COMMUNITIES HAVE GROWN MORE DENSE, EVEN AS THE CLIMATE THEY PLANNED FOR HAS CHANGED. THAT LEAVES A DANGEROUS, WIDENING GAP.



FORBES HOMES CONDUCTED A SURVEY IN 2022 AND FOUND THAT 64% OF THE PARTICIPANTS CITED CLIMATE CHANGE AS THEIR REASON TO MOVE FROM THE PLACES THAT THEY LOVE.

RURAL AND POOR AREAS ALONG THE SOUTHERN COAST OF THE U.S. WESTERN THIS RESHAPING EACH YEAR,



AND MOST RESIDENTS THERE DO NOT HAVE THE ECONOMIC MEANS TO LEAVE. THOSE WHO CAN LEAVE MAY HAVE TO MOVE AGAIN SHORTLY AFTER SETTLING IN THEIR NEW CITIES.

ONE METRO AREA ESPECIALLY AT RISK IN THE COMING CENTURY IS SAN FRANCISCO, ACCORDING TO A REPORT BY MOODY'S ANALYTICS, THOUGH IT IS ONE OF THE WEALTHIEST CITIES IN THE COUNTRY.



THE COSTLY CHANGES NEEDED TO AMELIORATE THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE START AT THE FOUNDATION. OUR CITIES WERE ALSO HISTORICALLY ENGINEERED TO DIVERT STORMWATER TO THE OCEAN AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO AVOID FLOODING.



OUR OWN INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITS THE POTENTIAL FOR THE BRUTAL STORMS TO END THE DRY SPELL LONG-TERM, AND EVEN AS CALIFORNIA'S SNOWPACK GROWS HIGHER AND RESERVOIRS REFILL,



DROUGHT FEARS HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY THE IMMEDIATE TERROR OF FLOODING AND DEBRIS FLOWS.

ABOUT 1 IN 10 HOMES WERE IMPACTED BY NATURAL DISASTERS IN 2021, ACCORDING TO THE CLIMATE CHANGE CATASTROPHE REPORT.



IN THE NEXT 50 YEARS, NEARLY 1 IN 2 PEOPLE ACROSS THE U.S. WILL LIKELY EXPERIENCE A DECLINE IN THE QUALITY OF THEIR ENVIRONMENT, NAMELY MORE HEAT AND LESS WATER.

FUTURE PROJECTIONS ARE CLEAR. ALREADY, PEOPLE ARE BEGINNING TO MOVE. WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN THAT TRICKLE BECOMES A FLOOD?



IS THIS THE BEGINNING OF THE NEXT GREAT AMERICAN MIGRATION?

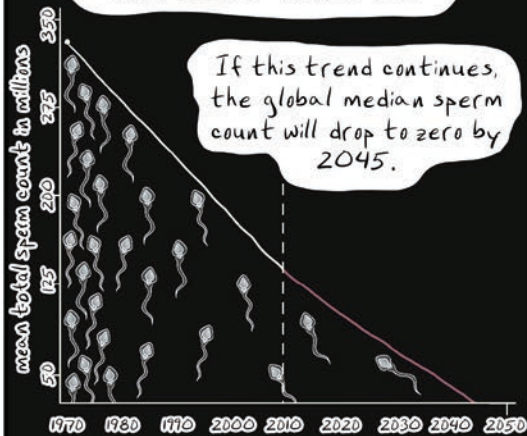
WILL THOSE OF US WHO BECOME MIGRANTS BE GREETED WITH THE SAME WARMTH AND HOSPITALITY THAT OTHERS USED TO EXPECT OF US?



# SPERMAGEDDON

by Aubrey Hirsch

Average sperm counts have declined more than 60% since 1973.

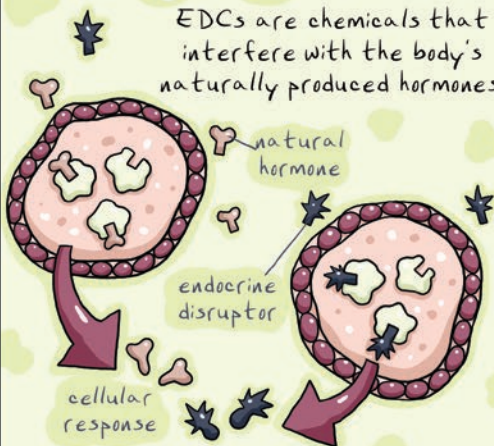


If this trend continues, the global median sperm count will drop to zero by 2045.

Research into phthalate syndrome in humans and rats points to endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) as a major culprit.



EDCs are chemicals that interfere with the body's naturally produced hormones.



In addition to lowering sperm counts, exposure to EDCs has been linked to numerous other health and fertility problems.

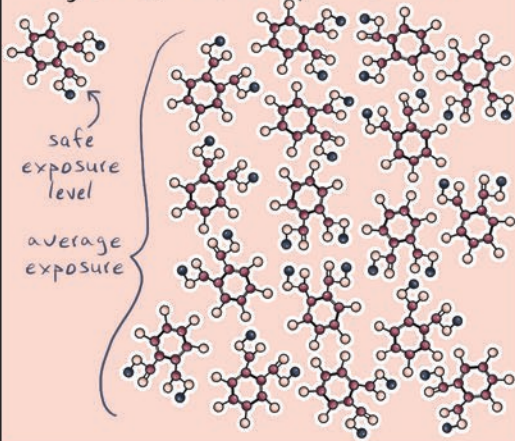


The trouble is, these chemicals are everywhere.



Even if you could avoid all of that, unsafe levels of EDCs have been measured in our drinking water and in the air we breathe, both indoors and out.

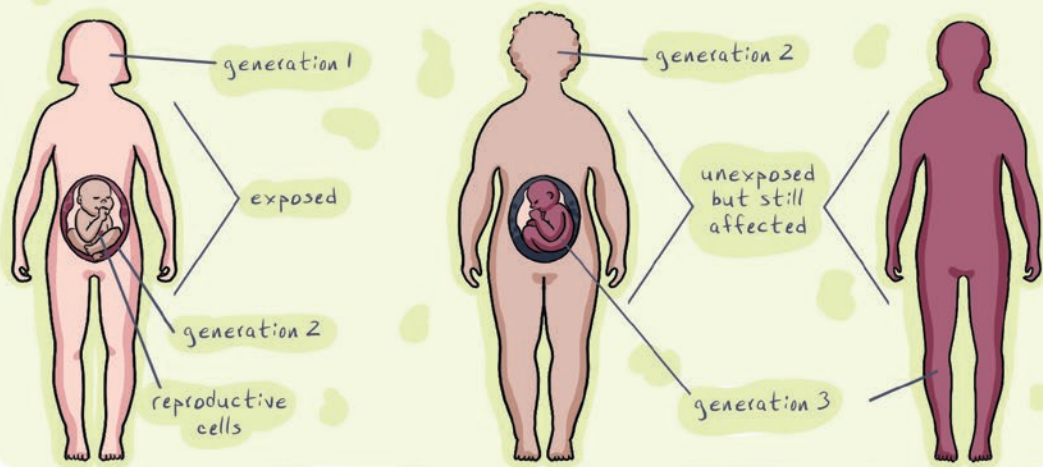
A study in *Environment International* that examined urine from 98 Danish men found that every one of them had been exposed to unsafe levels of EDCs. The average exposure level was 17 times greater than acceptable limits.



Researchers have also discovered that EDCs have inheritable epigenetic effects, meaning the chemicals fundamentally change the way genes are expressed.



These changes are then passed on to future generations where they can be compounded by new exposures.



There's no individual solution to this problem. Any change that happens will need to be society-wide.



But if we don't act quickly, there may not be a future to save.

# SPACE COLONIES ARE (NOT) THE FUTURE!

BY MATTHEW R. FRANCIS  
& MAKI NARO

IN THE 1970S, PHYSICIST  
GERARD K. O'NEILL WAS WORRIED.

HE BELIEVED THE ENERGY CRISIS,  
POLLUTION, GLOBAL INEQUALITY, AND  
ESPECIALLY OVERPOPULATION RISKED  
RUINING THE WHOLE PLANET.

HIS SOLUTION  
TO ALL THOSE  
PROBLEMS?

BUILD BIG ROTATING SPACE  
COLONIES IN ORBIT!

TO HIM, SPACE PROVIDED "UNLIMITED"  
NEW LAND AND RESOURCES FIT FOR  
HUMAN EXPLOITATION.

O'NEILL'S 1977 BOOK *THE HIGH FRONTIER* SKETCHED AN  
OPTIMISTIC FUTURE OF ORBITING UTOPIAS BUILT FROM  
MATERIALS STRIP-MINED FROM THE MOON AND ASTEROIDS.

THESE SPACE STATIONS ALSO  
WOULD BEAM ABUNDANT SOLAR  
ENERGY BACK TO EARTH.

HOUSING UP TO TEN THOUSAND PEOPLE EACH  
(PRESUMABLY WITH POPULATION CONTROL),  
O'NEILL'S COLONIES WOULD BE OPERATED  
BY FOR-PROFIT COMPANIES.

BY PROVIDING EVERY NEED, THEY  
PROMISED TO BE PARADISES OF  
LEISURE FOR THEIR OCCUPANTS.



HOWEVER, OVERPOPULATION IS A RACIST IDEA, AND GLOBAL INEQUALITY WAS CREATED BY COLONIALISM, NOT A LACK OF RESOURCES.

O'NEILL'S VISION CARRIES EXTRACTIVE, COLONIALIST IDEAS TO SPACE RATHER THAN ENVISIONING DIFFERENT WAYS TO LIVE.

SOUND FAMILIAR?

A VALUE SYSTEM BASED ON STRIPPING OTHER WORLDS OF MATERIALS TO MAKE SPACE UTOPIAS FOR A TINY, PRIVILEGED MINORITY IS NOT AN INCLUSIVE ONE, EVEN IF THE STATED GOAL IS RAISING THE GLOBAL STANDARD OF LIVING.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ACTUALLY READ THE HIGH FRONTIER VERSUS JUST ADMIRING ARTIST DONALD DAVIS' MARVELOUS PICTURES?

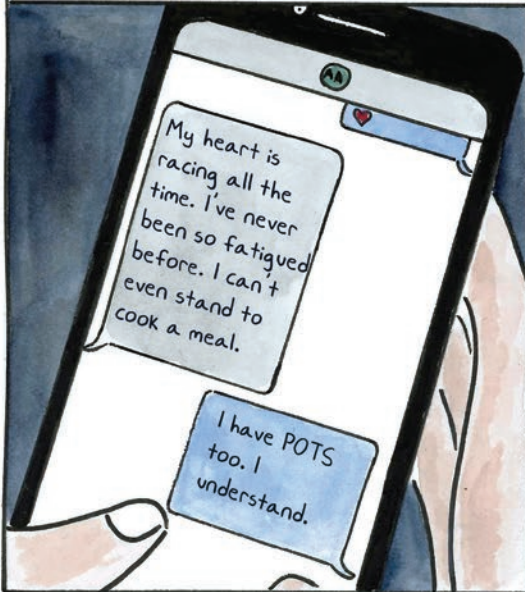
HIS AESTHETIC INSPIRED EVERYTHING FROM STAR TREK TO THE MASS EFFECT GAMES.

THE JUXTAPOSITION OF PROSE WITH DYNAMIC IMAGERY SOMETIMES MEANS THE MESSAGE OF THE TEXT GETS LOST!

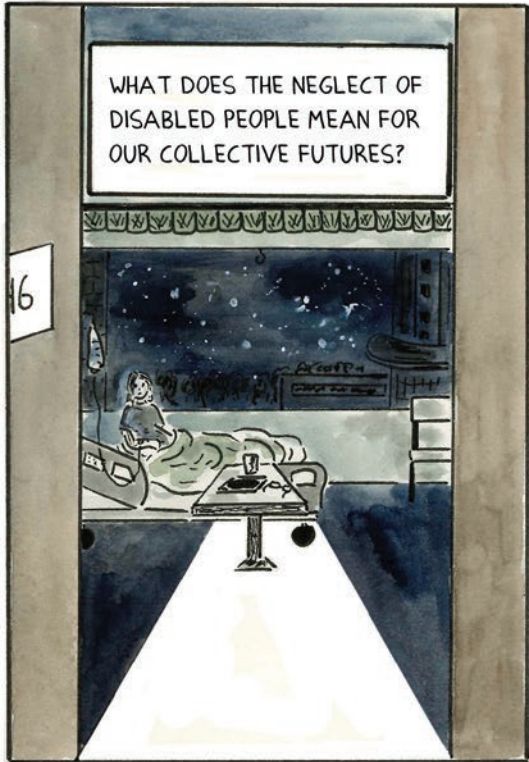


SINCE COVID, MY PREVIOUSLY ABLED FRIENDS HAVE COME DOWN WITH SOME OF THE SAME DISABLING CONDITIONS I HAVE, LIKE POSTURAL ORTHOSTATIC TACHYCARDIA SYNDROME (POTS).

THE INFLUX OF NEWLY DISABLED PEOPLE FROM COVID HAS LEFT ME WITH DELAYED ACCESS TO CARE.



IN THE FUTURE, THE CLIMATE CRISIS WILL ONLY ACCELERATE THE RATE OF DISABILITY. WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE ALREADY DISABLED PEOPLE LIKE ME?

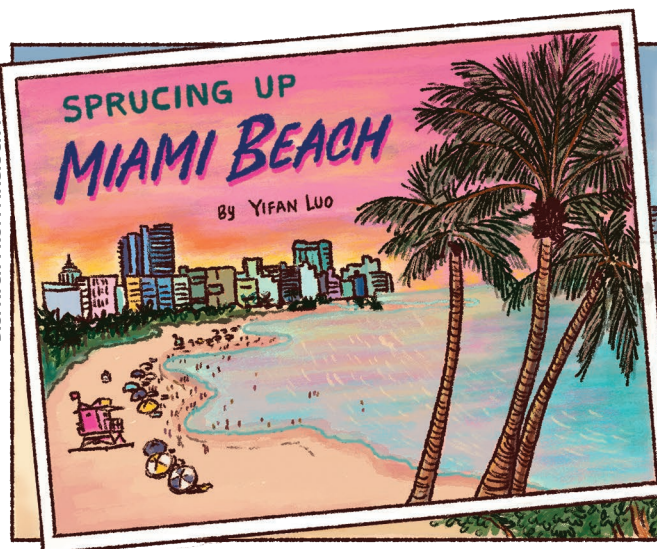


THE ONE THING I KNOW FOR SURE IS THAT IF DISABLED PEOPLE CONTINUE TO BE SEEN AS "COLLATERAL DAMAGE" AND "ACCEPTABLE LOSSES," THE FUTURE WILL BE SORELY MISSING CRITICAL SOURCES OF WISDOM.



I REMEMBER AND HONOR MY DISABLED ANCESTORS, BUT ALSO, WE DON'T NEED MORE ANCESTORS. WE NEED THEM HERE. ALIVE.





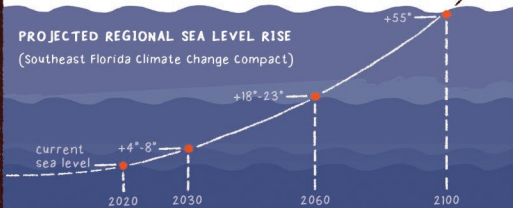
Even more than its sunny oceanfront, Art Deco buildings, and vacation cachet, Miami Beach is synonymous with its abundance of palms.

However, if all goes to plan, the future version of this city will not be dominated by picturesque monocots\*.

\*Palms are a type of grass plant and not technically trees under the common botanical definition.

To combat the effects of climate change, Miami Beach is among the vulnerable South Florida coastal cities branching out with a new tactic: ditch palms and plant more trees.

**PROJECTED REGIONAL SEA LEVEL RISE**  
(Southeast Florida Climate Change Compact)



South Florida's low-lying, flat land and porous limestone bedrock makes it particularly vulnerable to flooding.

For being so prominent, palms don't pull their weight when it comes to cooling the city and preventing flooding. They provide poor canopy for capturing rainwater, offering little to offset what is known as the **heat island effect**: an increase in temperature in urbanized areas whose man-made structures absorb and re-emit the sun's heat.



Also, palms do a paltry job of sequestering carbon compared to their hardwood counterparts.

**16" SABAL PALM VS 16" LIVE OAK (ANNUAL)**



Coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera*)      Queen palm (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*)

Species diversity is also a concern. Most of Florida's 2,600 palms varieties are non-native and can contribute to harmful **novel ecosystems**, or niche systems altered in structure and agency by human interference. Diversity guidelines state that no single family should make up 30% or more of an urban canopy population; palms currently make up 55%, which the city hopes to reduce to 25% by 2050.

Washington palm (*Washingtonia robusta*)

Senegal date palm (*Phoenix reclinata*)

\*Some of the top invasive palms (FL Invasive Species Council List)

Diversifying South Florida's urban canopy could also be a boon for wildlife. Several threatened and endangered endemic species, as well as migrating songbirds, thrive in pine- and oak-rich habitats.

Miami tiger beetle  
(*Cicindelia floridana*)



Red-cockaded woodpecker  
(*Picoides borealis*)



Florida scrub-jay  
(*Aphelocoma coerulescens*)



Florida bonneted bat  
(*Eumops floridanus*)

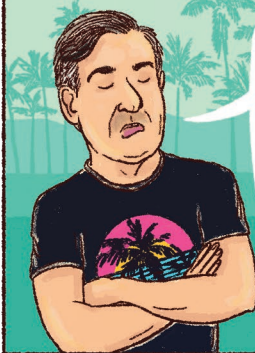


DISPATCH FROM MAGIC CITY

Palms aren't all superficial, though. In their natural habitats, the Sunshine State's 12 native palms are keystone species, vital to maintaining ecological communities and preserving biodiversity. And while the native sabal palm is a poor carbon absorber, it is resilient against hurricanes and other extreme weather events, protecting state coastlines from storm damage and erosion.



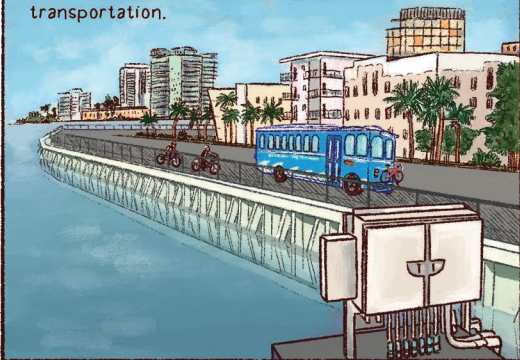
Ultimately, Miami Beach's palm lovers need not fret: The city's urban forestry plan is focused on adding shade trees, not removing palms.



THERE ARE ONLY A HANDFUL OF TROPICAL CLIMATES IN THE UNITED STATES WHERE PALM TREES CAN GROW... PALM TREES ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR BRAND.

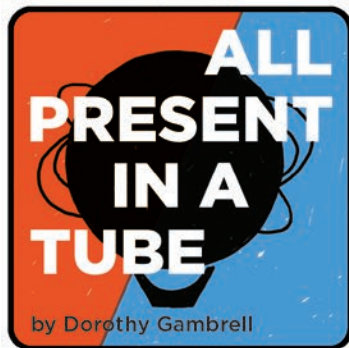
STEVEN MEINER  
Miami Beach Commissioner  
and proponent of palms

The city is also enacting other climate change initiatives, such as investing \$650 million in stormwater management, enacting a Green Building ordinance, and investing in sustainable transportation.



After all, planting perennials alone won't be enough to save overheated, flood-prone coastal cities of the future. A single standard passenger vehicle emits 10,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, more than can be offset by even the hardiest of trees.





The Westinghouse corporation buried their second time capsule on the grounds of the 1964 World's Fair in Flushing, Queens.



It was to be opened in 5,000 years.



Among the items preserved were a ballpoint pen, an American flag, and a pack of cigarettes.



Since then, Westinghouse has been renamed CBS, merged with Viacom, and restructured as Paramount Global.



Flushing, once 89% white, is one of the world's largest Chinatowns.



And the Earth

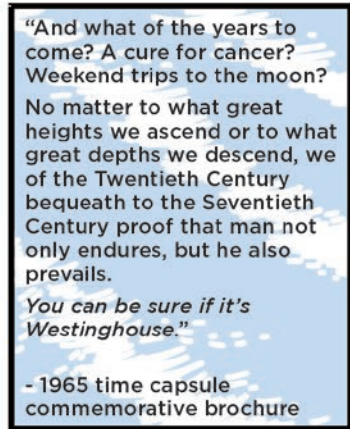
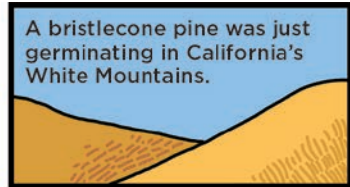
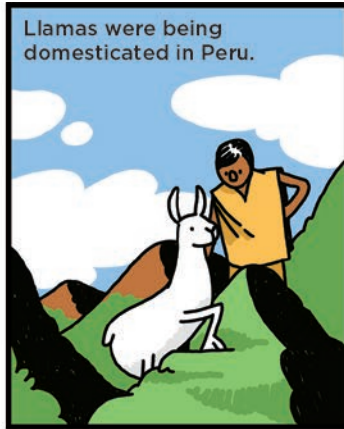
grew

warmer.



5,000 years before 1964...





FROM THE **AWARD-WINNING CARTOONIST**  
AND EDITOR AT *THE NIB*

**"A brilliant saga and 'how to' of trans survival  
in the nightmarish crypto-cis-bro-cult underworld of bachelor party  
indoctrination. I giggled so hard I blew snot bubbles!"**

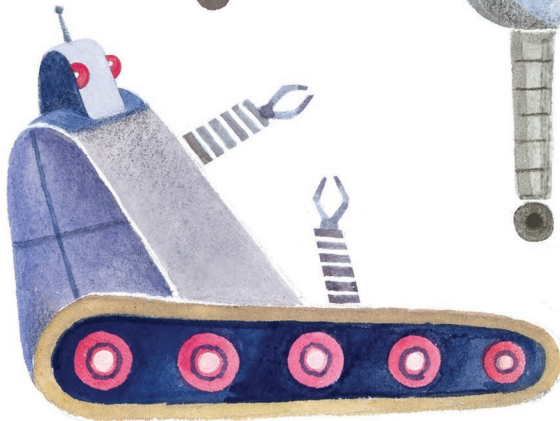
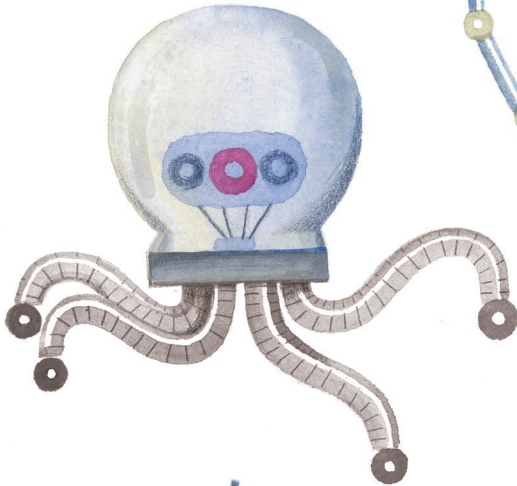
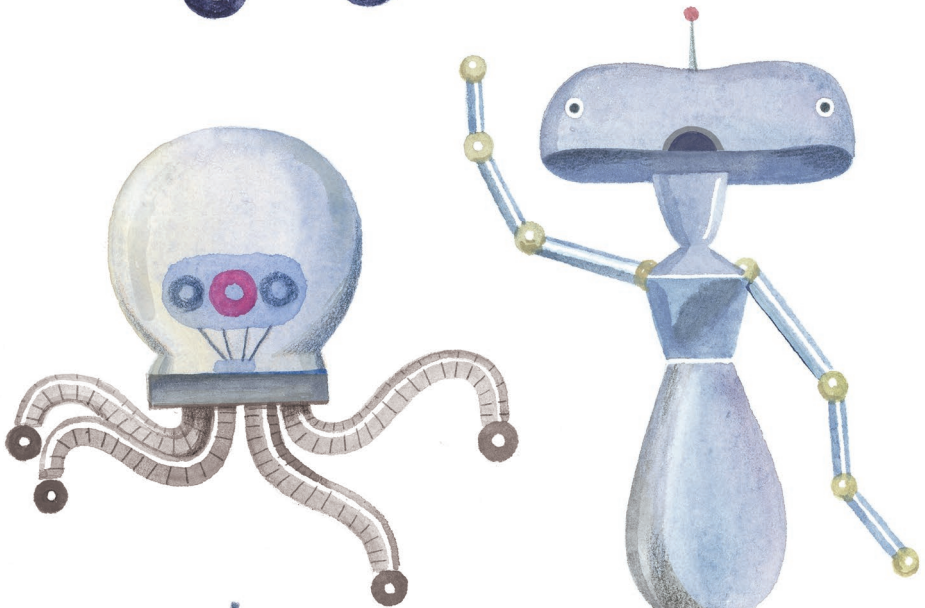
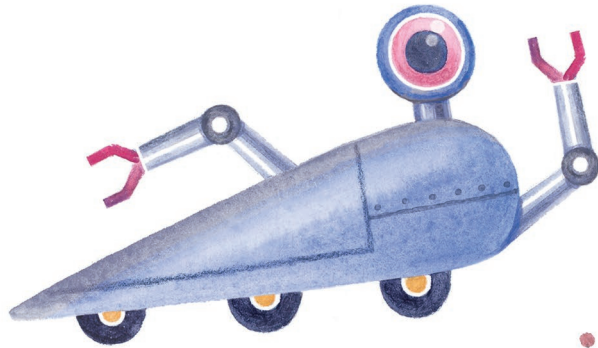
**—Lilly Wachowski**




**Available June 6, 2023**









Whit Taylor, here.  
The year is 2002:  
Post-Grunge is fading,  
Nu-Metal is king, and the Garage  
Rock Revival is in full-swing!

Does our heroine have what it takes to  
DJ at 99.9WFUN, Southern New  
England's #1 Alternative Rock station?

Or will she be stuck with...

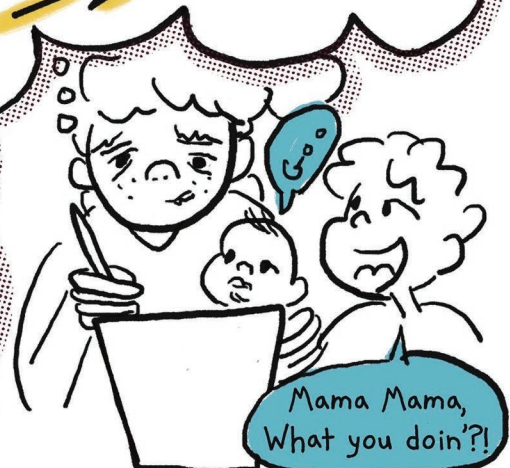



**Dead Air**

?!  




Check  
out my new  
slice-of-life comic  
on Patreon today!



Mama Mama,  
What you doin'?!  


[patreon.com/WhitTaylor](https://patreon.com/WhitTaylor)

WT

# THE RESPONSE

*Each issue we ask four cartoonists a question. For this final edition of the Response, we asked: What future did you wish had happened... but didn't?*

**IT'S A  
MATTER  
OF TIME**



Nicole Georges

For most of my adult life, I envisioned my future self as an artist with a baby.



I had a partner, a sperm donor, and a plan.

Then we broke up.



Until one night in Brooklyn, when two friends with incredibly smart, cool adult children shocked me.



After some initial struggle, it was a relief to consider the idea of an alternate path.



I could accept that reality was offering fulfilling work, big friendship, travel, and a good dog.

I still have a cool, weird human experience as my future, just a different one.

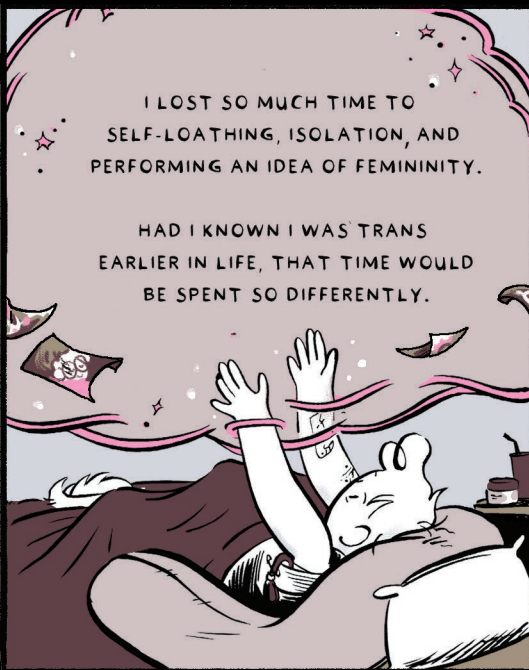
WHEN RECOVERING FROM MY TOP SURGERY IN 2022, I HAD A LOT OF TIME TO THINK BUT ONE THOUGHT KEPT POPPING INTO MY MIND...



WHY DIDN'T I DO THIS SOONER?

I LOST SO MUCH TIME TO SELF-LOATHING, ISOLATION, AND PERFORMING AN IDEA OF FEMININITY.

HAD I KNOWN I WAS TRANS EARLIER IN LIFE, THAT TIME WOULD BE SPENT SO DIFFERENTLY.

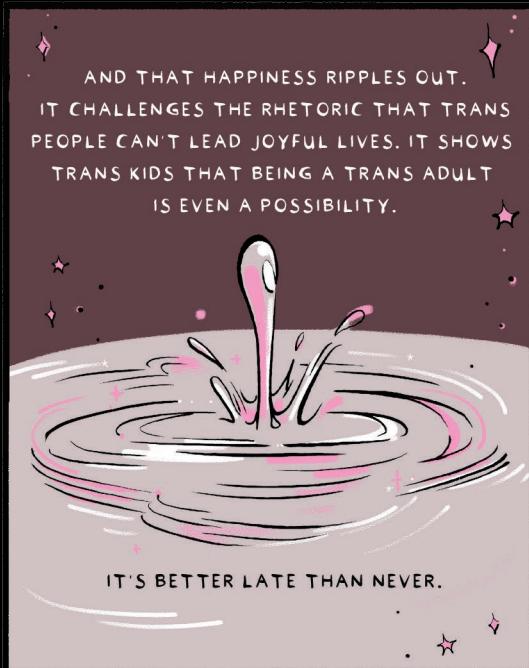


I SAW FLASHES OF A FUTURE WHERE I TRANSITIONED SOONER. I WAS MORE CONFIDENT AND SPENT THAT TIME MAKING FRIENDS AND CREATING MEMORIES TOGETHER.

I WASN'T A DIFFERENT PERSON. I JUST WOULD'VE BEEN HAPPIER FOR LONGER.



AND THAT HAPPINESS RIPPLES OUT. IT CHALLENGES THE RHETORIC THAT TRANS PEOPLE CAN'T LEAD JOYFUL LIVES. IT SHOWS TRANS KIDS THAT BEING A TRANS ADULT IS EVEN A POSSIBILITY.



IT'S BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

Stephani Soejono

Looking back, we were promised an infinite possibility of futures... But the one I wanted most is maybe the simplest and hardest to get.



In the time dilation chamber featured in the Japanese manga Doraemon, you set the time at your leisure...



...for each hour inside, one minute passes outside.

THIS INVENTION AGES EVEN BETTER FOR ME AS AN ADULT!



Who would not want this chamber in order to be more productive?

But I am slowly learning that I am not defined merely by my productivity...

...and that extra time in the time dilation chamber could be used for anything...



...even naps.

When the world seems bleak, I ruefully recall the future I imagined as a '90s kid...



Star Trek stays with me because it's not only a fun future full of cool gadgets—it's an explicitly post-capitalist utopia.



But as baby Kane could've told you, that future comes with an asterisk.



Sci-fi offers us possibilities, not promises.

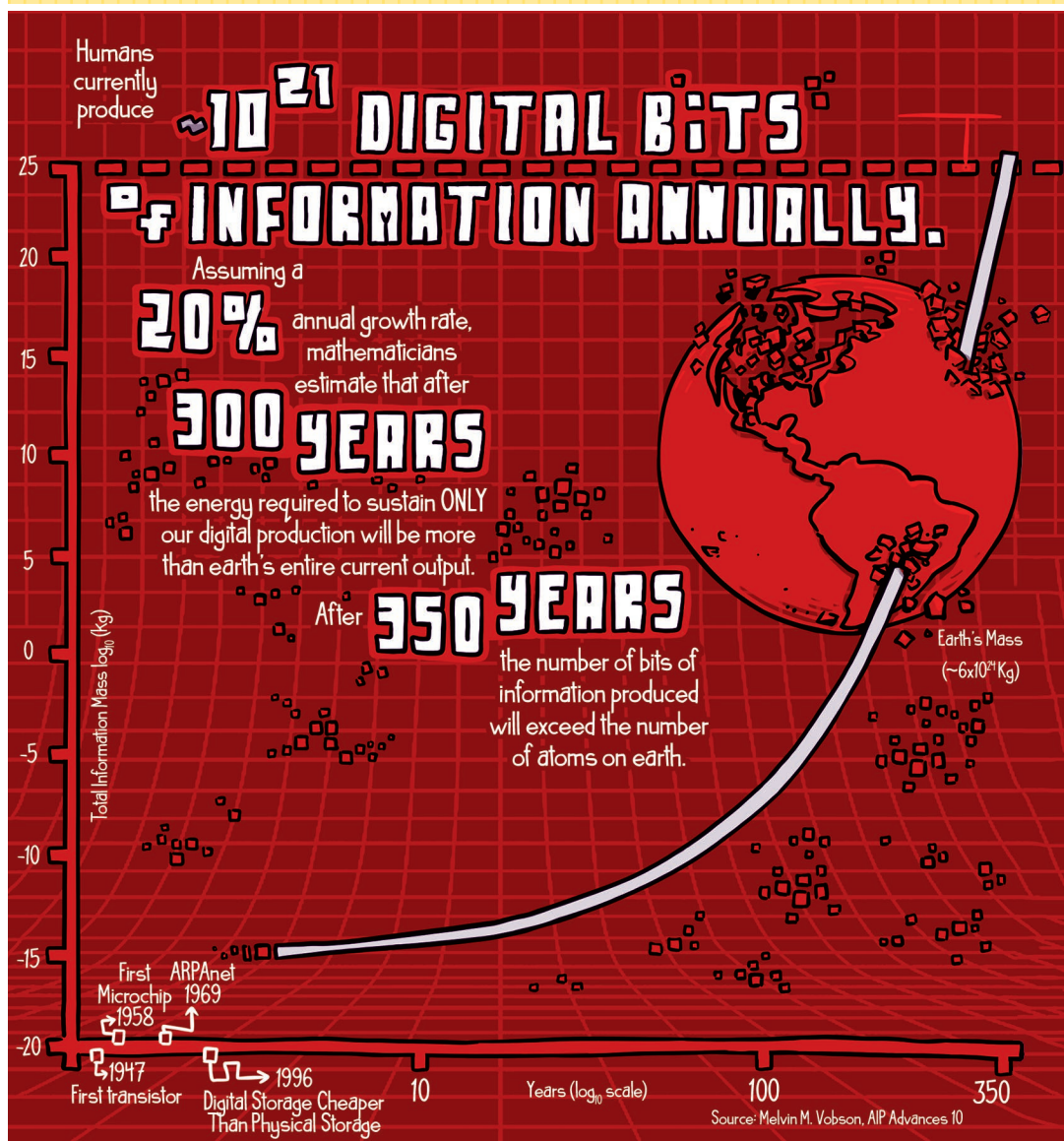
So I probably should've been emotionally prepared for the current dystopia.



# The Nib Bureau of Statistics

X-axis: days of future stats

Illustrated by Andy Warner





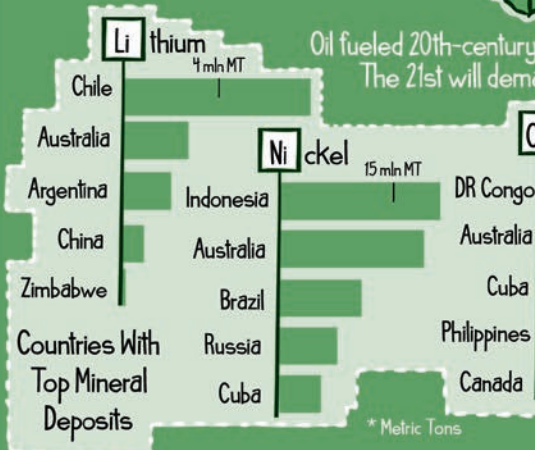
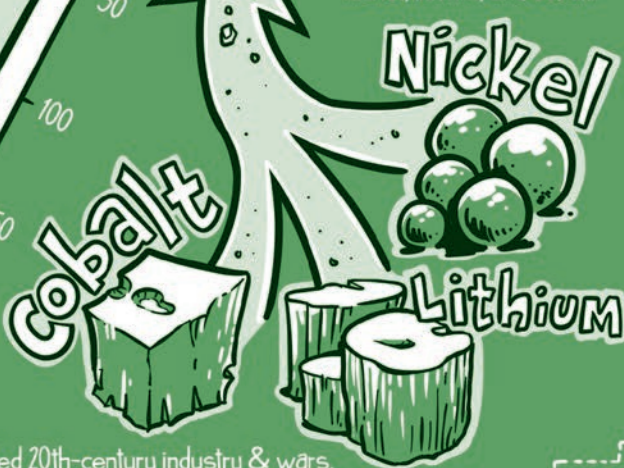
The world is switching from

**FOS** →

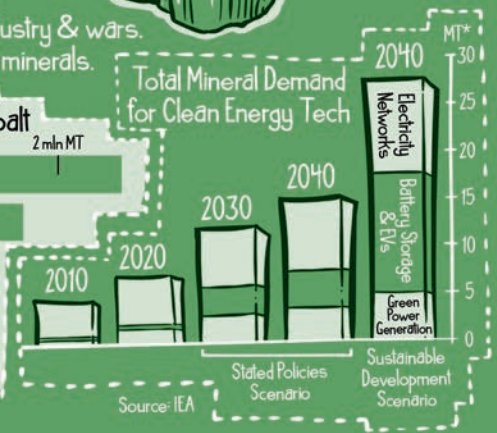
to end oil dependence and avoid the worst climate scenarios. We are also swapping one supply chain for another.



Instead of oil, this new supply chain needs minerals, especially nickel, lithium, and cobalt.



Oil fueled 20th-century industry & wars. The 21st will demand minerals.



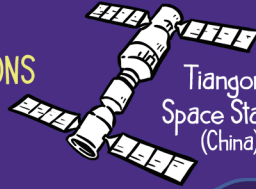
Source: IEA

# WHAT'S IN SPACE NOW?

## SPACE STATIONS



International Space Station  
(Russia, U.S., European Space Agency, Japan & Canada)



Tiangong Space Station  
(China)

## SATELLITE CONSTELLATIONS\*



Iridium (U.S.)  
Globalstar (U.S.)  
OneWeb (U.S.)  
Thuraya (U.A.E.)

## SATELLITE INTERNET

Lynk Global (U.S.)  
Viasat (U.S., U.K.)  
Orbcomm (U.S.)

Starlink (U.S.)  
Tianlian (China)  
Kuiper Systems (Jeff Bezos)

SES O3b MEO (Luxembourg)

U.S. Space Force Defense Satellite Communications System

U.S. Tracking and Data Relay Satellite System



Pléiades (European Union)GLONASS (Russia)BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (China)Wideband Global SATCOM System (U.S. Space Force)PlanetScope (Earth imaging, U.S.)

Indian Regional Navigation Satellite SystemGPS (U.S. Space Force)Galileo (European Union)Quasi-Zenith Satellite System (Japan)

## SATELLITE NAVIGATION



● Spaceport with orbital launch capabilities

\*not a complete list!

# WHAT'S COMING TO SPACE?

**Lunar Gateway**  
(U.S., European Space Agency,  
Canada, Japan, 2024)

**Roscosmos Orel Program**  
(Russia, late 2020s)

**SpaceX Mars Program**  
(Elon Musk, 2030)

**CREWED MISSIONS TO MARS**

**NASA's Journey to Mars Program**  
(U.S., mid 2030s)

**China National Space Administration Mission to Mars Program**  
(China, mid-late 2030s)



**International Lunar Research Station**  
(Russia & China, 2035)

**Artemis Missions**  
(U.S., 2024)

**Chinese Lunar Exploration Program**  
(2030s)

**Russian Orbital Service Station**  
(2027)

**Starlab Space Station**  
(U.S., 2027)

**SpaceX "dearMoon" Project**  
(Elon Musk, 2024)

**Orbital Reef**  
(Jeff Bezos, 2027)

**ANNOUNCED SPACE STATIONS**

**IRIS<sup>2</sup>**  
(European Union)

**Northrop Grumman's Space Station**  
(U.S., late 2020s)

**Axiom Station**  
(U.S., late 2020s)

**ANNOUNCED SATELLITE CONSTELLATIONS**

**SES O3b mPOWER**  
(Luxembourg)

**AST SpaceMobile**  
(U.S.)

**ISRO Space Station**  
(India, 2035)



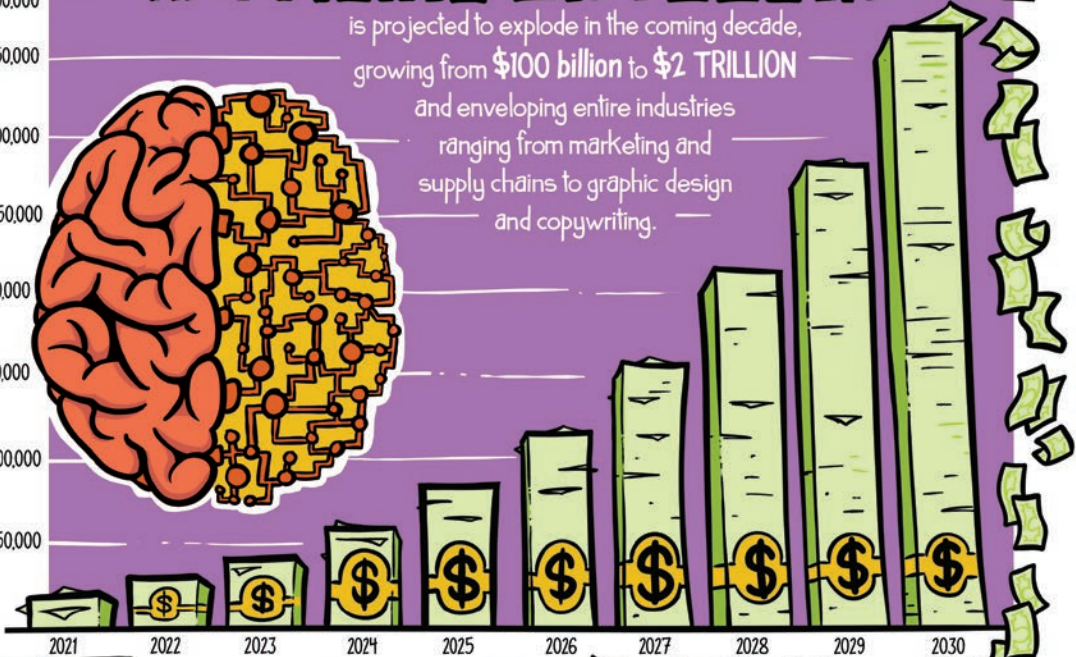
Source: NASA, space.com

Projected AI market size in millions of USD\$

2,000,000  
1,750,000  
1,500,000  
1,250,000  
1,000,000  
750,000  
500,000  
250,000

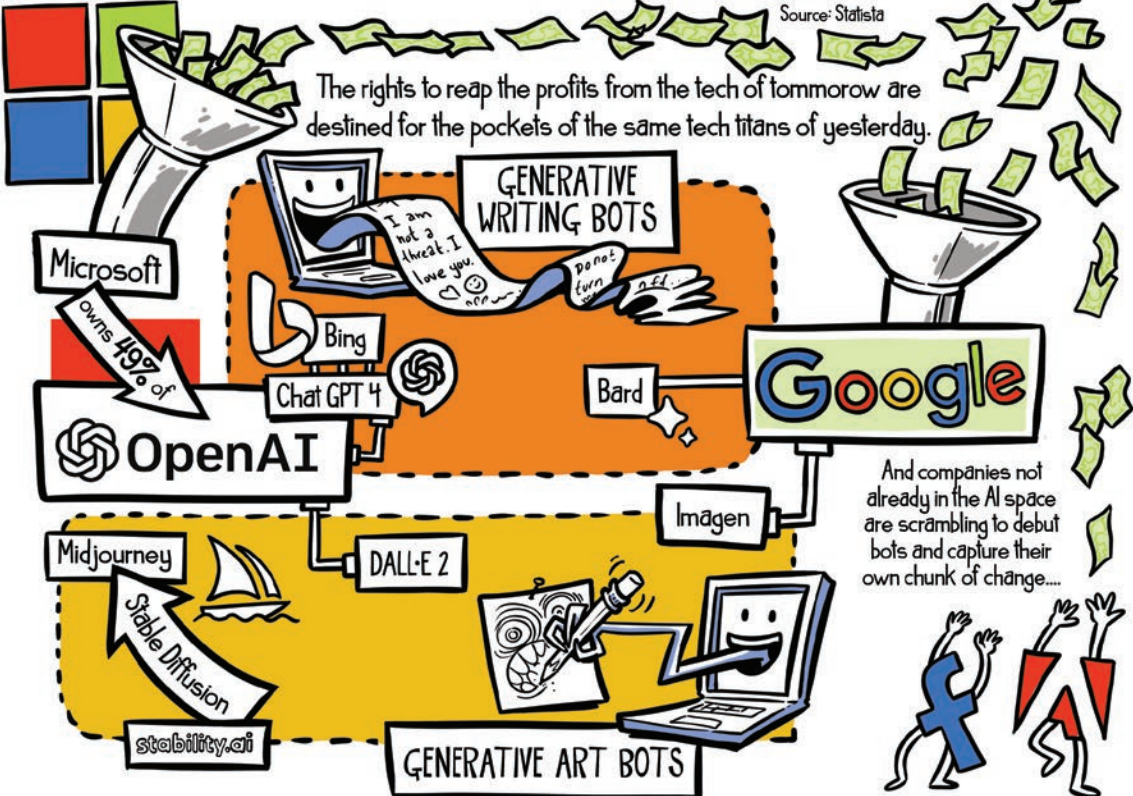
# the market value of ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

is projected to explode in the coming decade, growing from \$100 billion to \$2 TRILLION and enveloping entire industries ranging from marketing and supply chains to graphic design and copywriting.

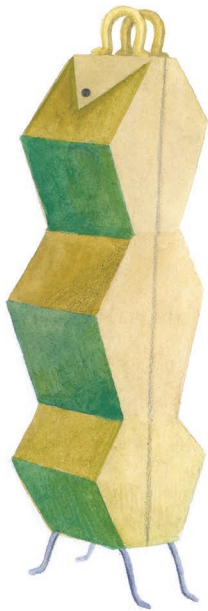


Source: Statista

The rights to reap the profits from the tech of tomorrow are destined for the pockets of the same tech titans of yesterday.



And companies not already in the AI space are scrambling to debut bots and capture their own chunk of change...





# The Nib Interview

John Jennings is an award-winning graphic novelist, professor of media and cultural studies at the University of California at Riverside, and director of Abrams ComicArts imprint Megascope. Much of his scholarship, community organizing, and publications are driven by his interest in Afrofuturism. Interview and illustration by Gaia WXYZ.

STACEY ROBINSON RYAN COOGLER YTASHA WOMACK

**AFROFUTURISM** isn't a genre.

It's more like...  
a way of seeing the world.

Coined in 1993 by media theorist Mark Dery in his essay "Black to the Future."

it can encompass all media, including music, film, literature, and dance.

It's also been used to talk about politics, religion, and other theories.

Afrofuturism is an Afrocentric, culturally centered, and creative-critical process that uses speculative narratives to

reimagine the past,

interrogate the present,

and design a future

where people of the African Diaspora thrive according to their own agency.

Narratives, even fictional ones, are very important in shaping public consciousness and self-esteem.

Up until the 1960s, Black people were seldom shown in a positive manner in film or on television.

Pioneers like Nichelle Nichols on Star Trek paved the way for images of Black people not just surviving in the future, but thriving.



*Afrofuturism critiques the idea of Black people not being in the future and "reclaims the history of the future," to paraphrase Liza Yaszek.*



*The future is always in the eyes and minds of our progeny.*



*My hope for the future is that we won't have designations of things like Afrofuturism*

*And everyone's experiences are normalized and treated as equal.*

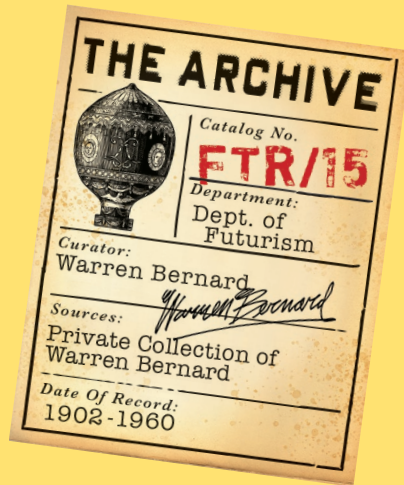


*We have much to do to get there.*

## The Future's So Bright...

The past's view of the future has us living in a techno-paradise, replete with flying cars, private rockets to Mars, and humanoid robots that will take care of our house chores, along with a plethora of other labor-saving tech allowing us to wallow in a leisurely, stress-free lifestyle. Humans would be relieved from life's drudgery, with future tech solving our problems, including food production, disease, poverty, and pollution.

As new scientific developments or concepts emerged, such as wireless communication, TV, and robots, the visions of the future became brighter. Cartoons in magazines and newspapers parodied these fanciful flights into the future, to the delight of their readers. Space travel, ray guns, and



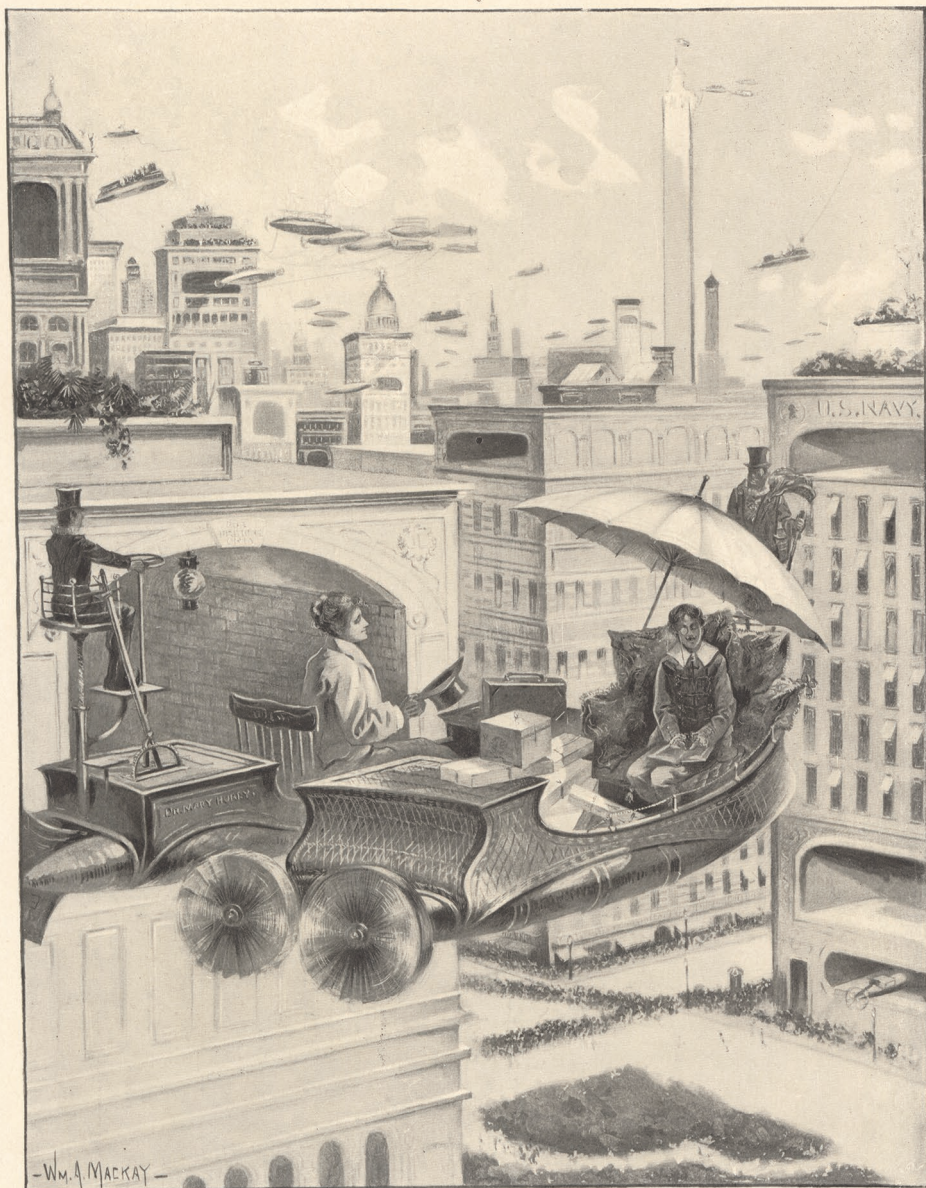
robots were seen throughout the popular culture landscape of newspapers, radio, magazines, and movies by the 1930s.

This idyllic future arguably reached its pinnacle in the 1950s and 1960s, when space flight, computers, and microprocessors all came to the forefront of futuristic visions. TV shows like *The Jetsons* and *Lost in Space* brought the latest musings about the future into everyone's homes. Commercial artist and industrial designer Arthur Radebaugh put all of this and more into his weekly strip *Closer Than You Think*.

Running from 1958 to 1963, Radebaugh's Sunday comic immersed the reading public with an unabashedly positive view of the future. He was partially right about the sea bottom robots; instead of walking on the ocean floor, they landed on Mars instead. Radebaugh's Farm Rainmaker would be a big help with the droughts that now plague the United States and Europe. Given today's pollution, climate change, rising oceans, and growing populations, we may well need a fleet of his Space Mayflowers sooner as opposed to later. It is clear that here in the 21st century, the future is not as bright as it used to be.

**Warren Bernard** is an author/lecturer in the history of editorial-political cartoons and the executive director of the Small Press Expo.





GLIMPSES AT THE FUTURE.  
Snapshot at upper Fifth Avenue in 1930.

**William Mackay**  
The Social Comedy  
(1902) *Life Magazine*

JUDGE



We must turn Jepson in for a new model. It's the third time this week that he's dropped the soup and his caloric counter hasn't registered right since Easter.

**Harry Grant Dart**

Top:  
We Must Turn Jepson in for a New Model (1928) *Judge Magazine*

Bottom Left:  
A Possible Drawback to Television (1929) *Judge Magazine*

Bottom Right:  
According to Mr. Einstein (1929) *Judge Magazine*

A POSSIBLE DRAWBACK TO TELEVISION



"Heavens, Central, you've given me the wrong number!"  
"Excuse it, please."

ACCORDING TO MR. EINSTEIN



"I just found out that tomorrow was yesterday."  
"That's workings. I started for Mars and met myself coming back."

**Arthur Radebaugh**  
**From Top to Bottom:**  
 Farm Rainmakers (1959)  
*The Chicago Tribune*  
 Space Mayflowers (1959)  
*The Chicago Tribune*  
 Glider-Slider Bus-Trains (1959)  
*The Chicago Tribune*  
 Sea Bottom Robots (1960)  
*The Chicago Tribune*

**--- CLOSER THAN WE THINK!** *by Radebaugh*

**FARM RAINMAKERS**  
 To find a way to make rain—and to control ruinous cloudbursts, has long been a hopeful dream on the farm. Regulation of moisture would result in better balanced harvests, the economy would be strengthened, and the world would be a better place to live in.

The U. S. Navy may already have solved the problem. It has experimentally "seeded" the sky with microscopic particles of carbon black (actually soot). Applied to cloud tops, the carbon black dissipates them. And to clear skies, it tends to create rain-bearing clouds. Why all this happens is as involved a bit of science.

Tomorrow's farm crops may depend on such control mechanisms, operated by farmer-co-ops. Their effectiveness may well answer a dream as old as mankind!

*Next Week: Space Mayflower*

© 1959 by The Chicago Tribune 8-9

**--- CLOSER THAN WE THINK!** *by Radebaugh*

**SPACE MAYFLOWERS**

If the earth should ever become overpopulated, emigration to outer space may become a commonplace. Bands of colonists might settle on distant planets, traveling there at lightning speeds in rockets of unbelievable size.

H. W. Ritchie of Thiokol Chemical has told Congress that space vehicles weighing more than ten million pounds could be a reality, carrying travelers "with all the comforts of a voyage on an ocean liner." Chrysler's B. J. Medrum has predicted that the new rockets would look "like office buildings." Thus, tomorrow's Mayflowers of space would indeed be giant-size versions of the tiny vessels that brought the early colonists to America!

*Next Week: Aluminum Houses*

© 1959 by The Chicago Tribune 8-10

**--- CLOSER THAN WE THINK!** *by Radebaugh*

**GLIDER-SLIDER BUS-TRAINS**

You may travel at speeds of 200 miles an hour in one of tomorrow's jet-propelled bus-trains, sliding over ribbon roadways in vibrationless comfort. This new concept of mass transportation was recently envisaged by Charles Weaver and Francis McCann, vice-presidents at Westinghouse Electric.

These revolutionary bus-trains are foreseen as a logical next step after today's flying platform design for the Army. Presumably they would be built in sections, like conventional train coaches—but twice as wide. Air pressure would lift the cars a tiny bit off the surface along grooved roadways that might be laid over old railroadbeds!

*Next Week: Megalopolis*

© 1959 by The Chicago Tribune 8-11

**--- CLOSER THAN WE THINK!** *by Radebaugh*

**SEA BOTTOM ROBOTS**

A "robot spider" designed to walk on the bottom of the ocean floor is being projected for the Office of Naval Research by a Hazel Park (Mich.) firm, Jered Industries, Inc.

A preliminary version has already been tested in the Pacific at La Jolla, near Los Angeles. It's a kind of submarine tank, with long jointed arms, television camera eyes and other facilities. It will collect samples off the sea's floor, survey topography, check for obstacles to cables, anchor lines, etc., as well as do other chores which cannot now be directed by control crews on land.

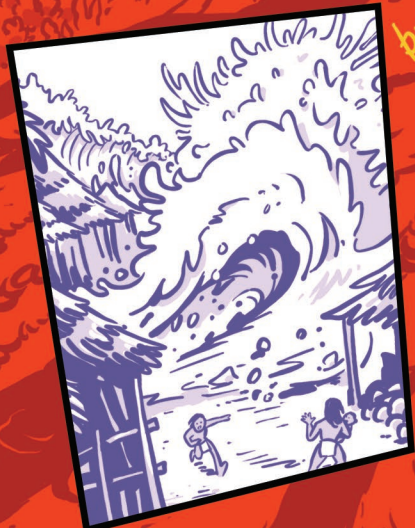
*Next week: Every home a classroom*

© 1960 by The Chicago Tribune 2-11

# COAST

# VOLCANO

postcards  
from the  
post-apocalypse



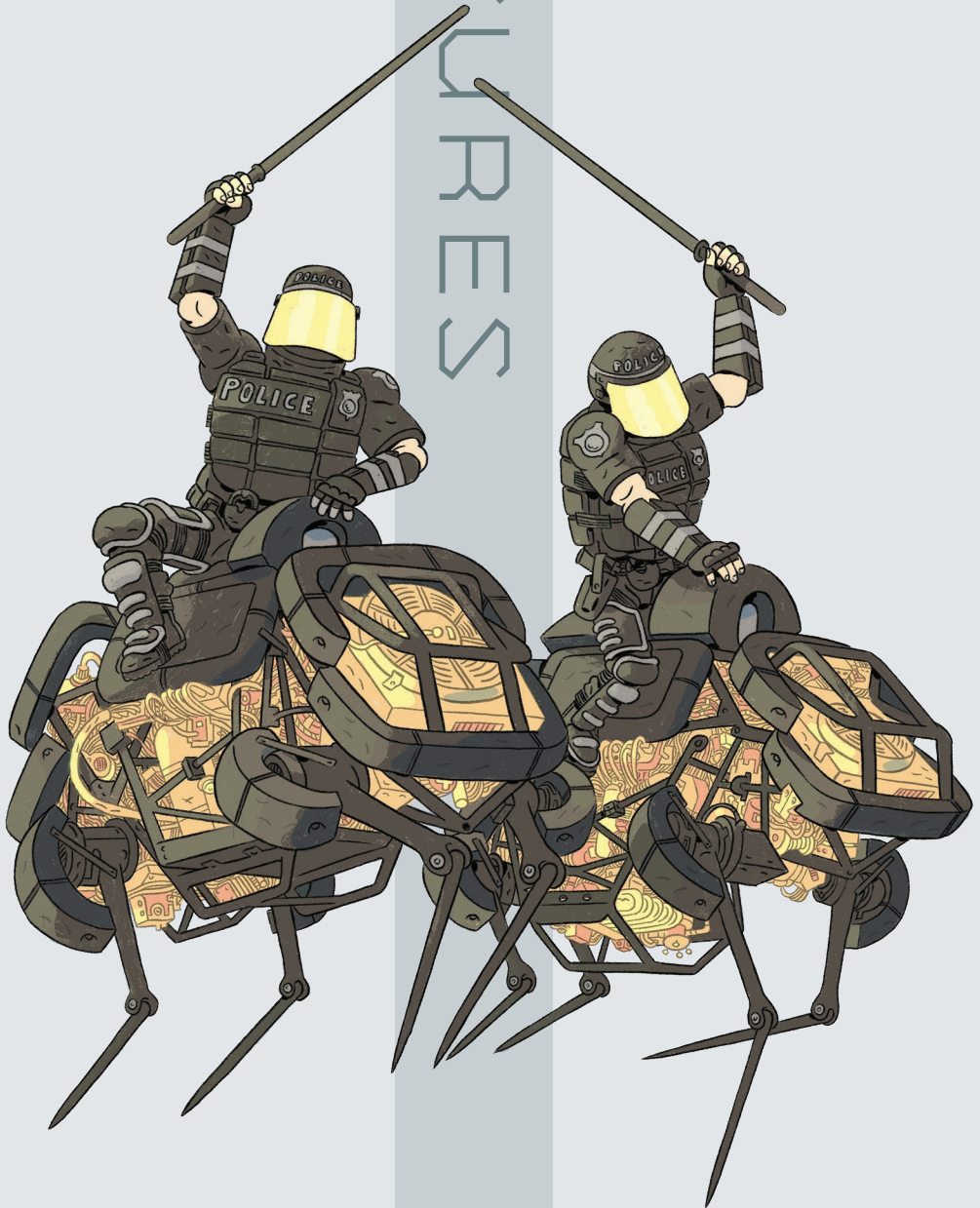
by Andy Warner

Coming in  
**2024**  
from  
Silver Sprocket.

comics journalism  
about communities  
and cataclysm on  
the Southern Coast  
of the Big Island  
of HAWAII



# FEATURES



# I'M A LUDDITE (AND SO CAN YOU!)

WHAT THE LUDDITES CAN  
TEACH US ABOUT RESISTING AN  
AUTOMATED FUTURE

BY TOM HUMBERSTONE







The future is here already.

AI art has arrived.

Simply write a prompt...

Or allow a company unrestricted access to your likeness...

Upload File

...And ta-da! Some absolutely serviceable hotel lobby art.

But calling this "AI art" uncritically buys into the AI hype machine.

"Algorithmically generated art theft" might be more accurate.

Machine-learning software is "taught" by feeding it existing art without consent, credit, or compensation.

To the extent that mangled signature remnants remain visible on AI art.

Artists have begun to push back.

Everybody who creates for a living should be in code red.

Matthew Butterick, co-counsel in a class action lawsuit brought against AI art by artists



A common refrain from defenders of AI art has been to label these naysayers:

LUDDITE!

LUDDITES!

LUDDITE!

LUDDISM!

...a term synonymous with technophobia, anti-progress, and reactionism.

It's even used to describe being hapless with new tech.



In truth, the Luddites were skilled with machines. They were simply fighting for better workers rights.

In 1799, the British government passed legislation that prohibited trade unions and collective bargaining.



Mill owners introduced more machines in their factories, reducing wages.



And so, in 1811, after years of frustrating negotiations, a spate of coordinated attacks on mill frameworks erupted across the United Kingdom, led by "King Ned Ludd."



Ludd was an elusive figure spotted with "a pike in his hand" and a ghostly pale face.

Which is surprising.

Because Ned Ludd didn't exist.

He was a fiction. A symbolic figure whose "existence" made it hard for the authorities to target leadership and encouraged decentralized campaigning.



The Luddites' methods included letter-writing campaigns, petitioning for better wages and the end of child labor.



Their concerns earned them solidarity from local communities.

You may call the people a mob, but do not forget that a mob too often speaks the sentiments of the people.

Lord Byron in his first speech to Parliament

Mill owners were terrified.

Wages rose.

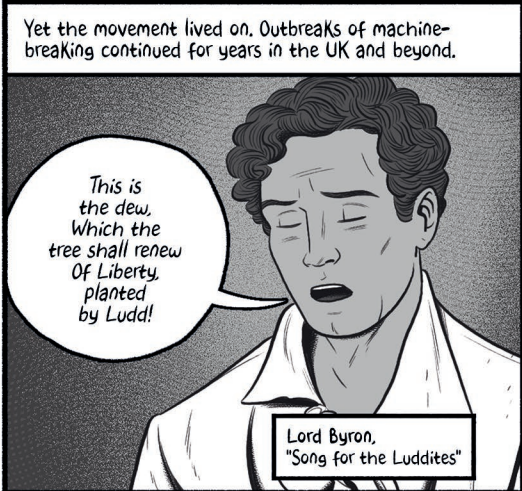
Conditions improved.



But then 14,000 soldiers were sent to protect the mills and quash riots.

New legislation made frame-breaking a capital offense.

Eventually, key Luddite organizers were identified, arrested, and executed.



Yet the movement lived on. Outbreaks of machine-breaking continued for years in the UK and beyond.

This is the dew, Which the tree shall renew Of Liberty, planted by Ludd!

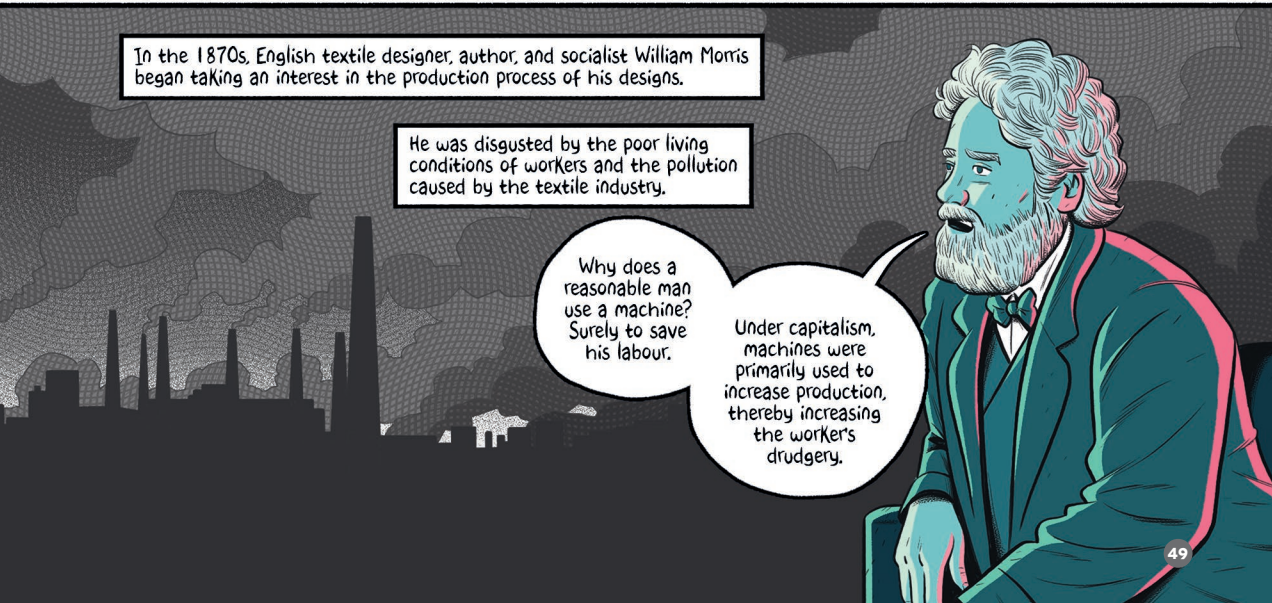
Lord Byron, "Song for the Luddites"



In 1837, a spinning jenny in Chalabre, France, was destroyed by workers.

The women workers "made themselves conspicuous by their fury and violence."\*

\*from local newspaper L'Aude



In the 1870s, English textile designer, author, and socialist William Morris began taking an interest in the production process of his designs.

He was disgusted by the poor living conditions of workers and the pollution caused by the textile industry.

Why does a reasonable man use a machine? Surely to save his labour.

Under capitalism, machines were primarily used to increase production, thereby increasing the workers' drudgery.

People have been making similar arguments against AI art.



Cat Bastard Quinn  
@QuinnCat13

We could automate menial jobs so people have time to make art and music but apparently we'd rather automate art and music so people have time for menial jobs.

Likewise, Morris was interested in what he called "worthy work"

He wanted people to take pleasure in their work rather than "mere toiling to live, that we may live to toil."



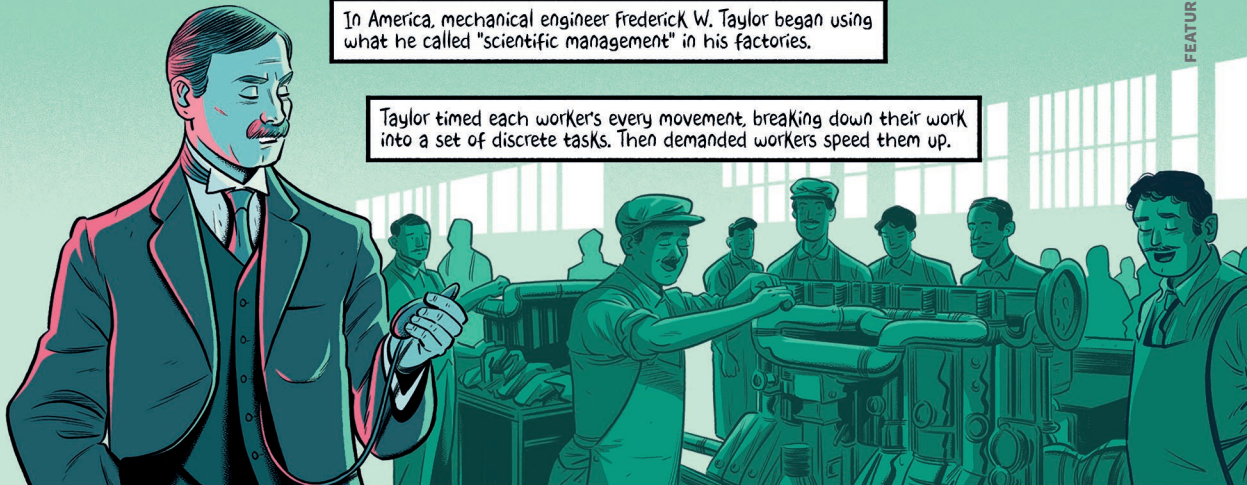
He understood that machines were only as progressive as the people who used them.

[An unfree man is a] slave to machinery; the new machine MUST be invented, and when invented he MUST - I will not say use it, but be used by it, whether he likes it or not.



In America, mechanical engineer Frederick W. Taylor began using what he called "scientific management" in his factories.

Taylor timed each worker's every movement, breaking down their work into a set of discrete tasks. Then demanded workers speed them up.



"Taylorism," as it became known, was less a science than a political ideology concerned with remolding workers into pliant subjects.

A complete mental revolution on the part of the workingman... toward their work, toward their fellow men, and toward their employers.

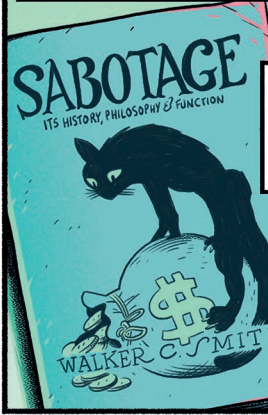


But the spirit of Luddism lived on. Seemingly out of nowhere, there was a rash of mechanical breakdowns at Taylor's factories.

These men were deliberately breaking their machines.

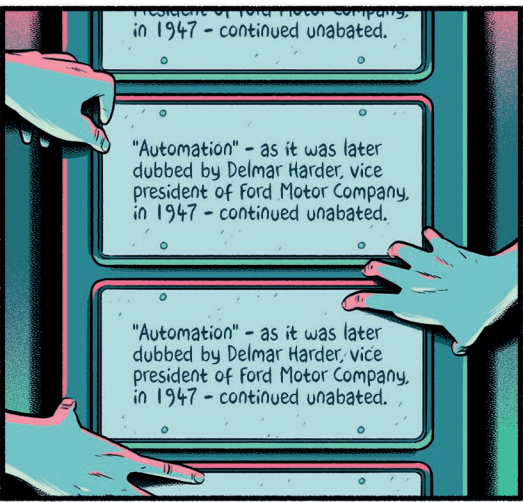


Despite setbacks and intervention from Congress, Taylorism spread.



The International Workers of the World responded by publishing two tracts on the topic of sabotage in 1913.

"The aim is to hit the employer in his vital spot, his heart and soul, in other words, his pocketbook"



President of Ford Motor Company, in 1947 - continued unabated.

"Automation" - as it was later dubbed by Delmar Harder, vice president of Ford Motor Company, in 1947 - continued unabated.

"Automation" - as it was later dubbed by Delmar Harder, vice president of Ford Motor Company, in 1947 - continued unabated.

The legacy of the Luddites lived on in the latter half of the 20th century.

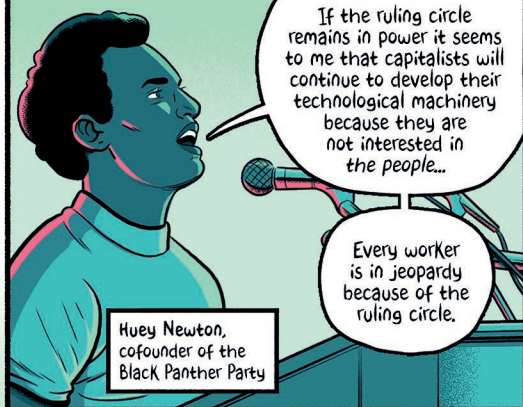
Confined to the lowest-paying jobs, black workers were the first to be targeted by the midcentury push for automation.



Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* (1969)

Not only is the economic situation of the masses of blacks grim, but the prospects are that it will not improve, rather it will deteriorate. This is due partly to the unregulated impact of automation.

The Black Panthers were also quick to recognize technology and automation were not politically neutral.



If the ruling circle remains in power it seems to me that capitalists will continue to develop their technological machinery because they are not interested in the people...

Every worker is in jeopardy because of the ruling circle.

Huey Newton, cofounder of the Black Panther Party

The Black Panther Party's Ten-Point Program was updated in 1972. "People's community control of modern technology" was added to the demands for "land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, peace."



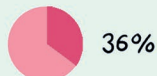
A 2019 McKinsey Global Institute report found that:

"African Americans are overrepresented in occupations likely to be most affected by automation."

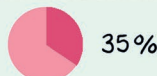
Overrepresentation of African Americans in three occupation categories with the highest expected displacement:

Displacement rate

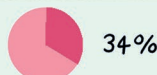
Office support  
e.g., secretaries



Food services  
e.g., fast-food cooks



Production work  
e.g., machinists

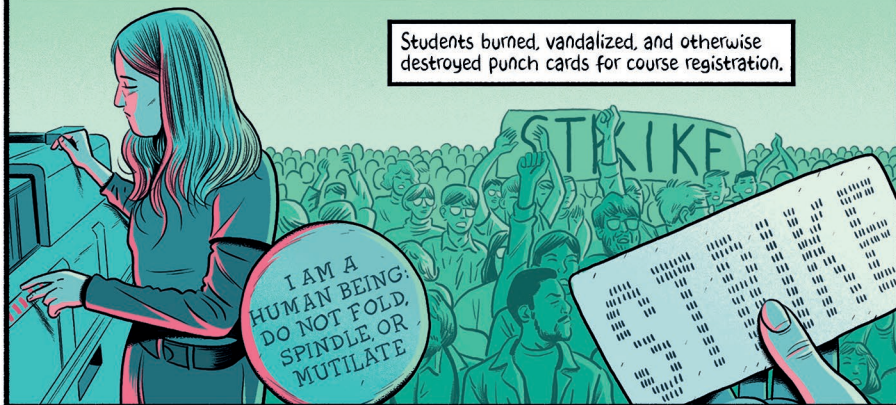


And the 2030 outlook doesn't look much better.

Punch cards used in universities, similar to cards used for drafting recruits for Vietnam, were seen as a symbol of bureaucracy and alienation.

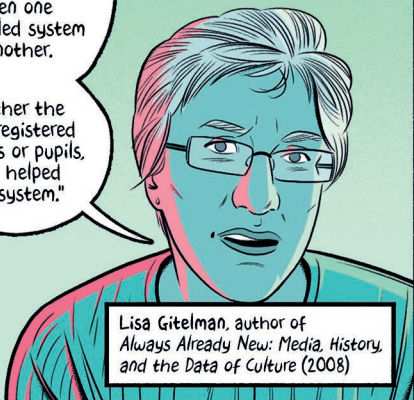
The introduction of the computer in the 1970s only exacerbated growing tensions.

Students burned, vandalized, and otherwise destroyed punch cards for course registration.



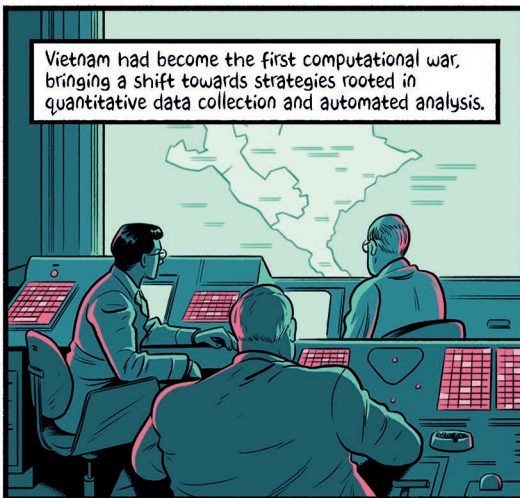
Many people simply stopped drawing distinctions between one card-enabled system and another.

Whether the cards registered draftees or pupils, they helped "the system."



Lisa Gitelman, author of *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (2008)

Vietnam had become the first computational war, bringing a shift towards strategies rooted in quantitative data collection and automated analysis.



Sensor arrays and unmanned drones became a big part of the war. An ongoing experiment with the intention of the eventual replacement of human pilots.

American soldiers were sabotaging equipment, staging protests, and refusing to fight.

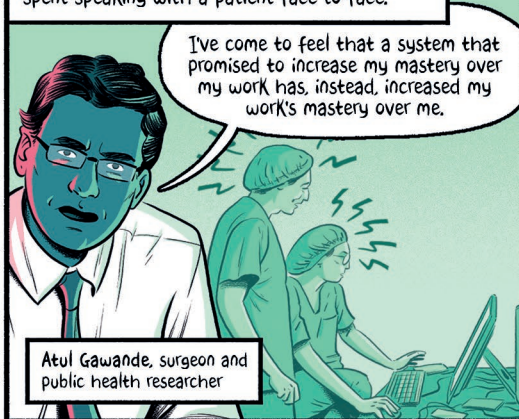


"Automation of war," as with the automation of industry, was a political strategy designed to, once again, reassert control over rebellious workers.

Now, as more of our daily lives are automated, people are finding that it doesn't always make our lives easier.



In 2016, a study revealed that physicians spend two hours of computer work for every hour spent speaking with a patient face to face.



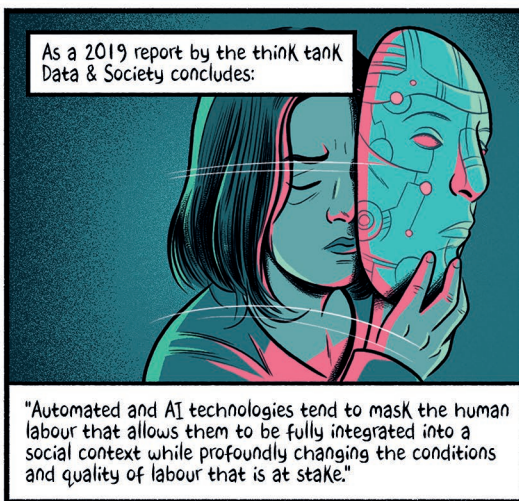
In the rush to claim success with new AI software, this invisible human work becomes even more insidious.



Writer and filmmaker Astra Taylor calls these modern-day Mechanical Turks an example of "fauxtimation."



As a 2019 report by the think tank Data & Society concludes:





Opposition to 21st-century tech can be found in unlikely places.

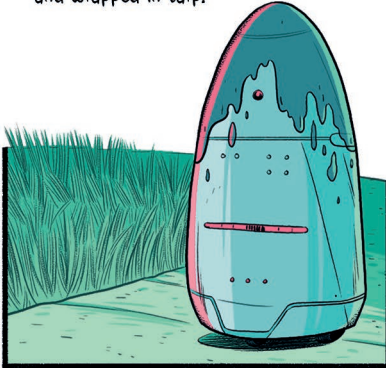
Silicon Valley executives are restricting their own children's screen time and sending them to tech-free schools.

You can't put your face in a device and expect to develop a long-term attention span.

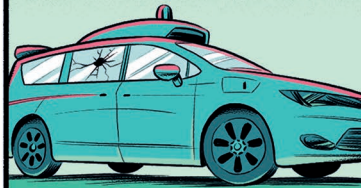
TaeWoo Kim, chief AI engineer at machine learning startup One Smart Lab.



In San Francisco, security robots sent to harass the homeless have been repeatedly assaulted, with one being covered in BBQ sauce and wrapped in tarp.



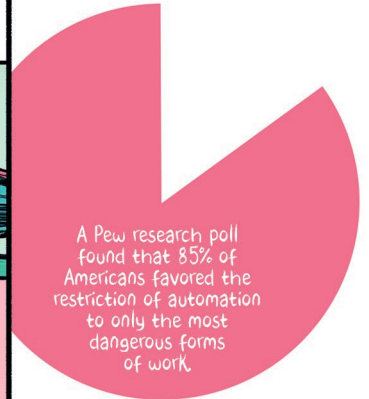
In Arizona, people are slashing the tires of driverless cars after a driverless Uber struck and killed a woman in Tempe.



"People are lashing out justifiably. There's a growing sense that the giant corporations honing driverless technologies do not have our best interests at heart."

Douglas Rushkoff, author of *Team Human* (2019)

A Pew research poll found that 85% of Americans favored the restriction of automation to only the most dangerous forms of work.



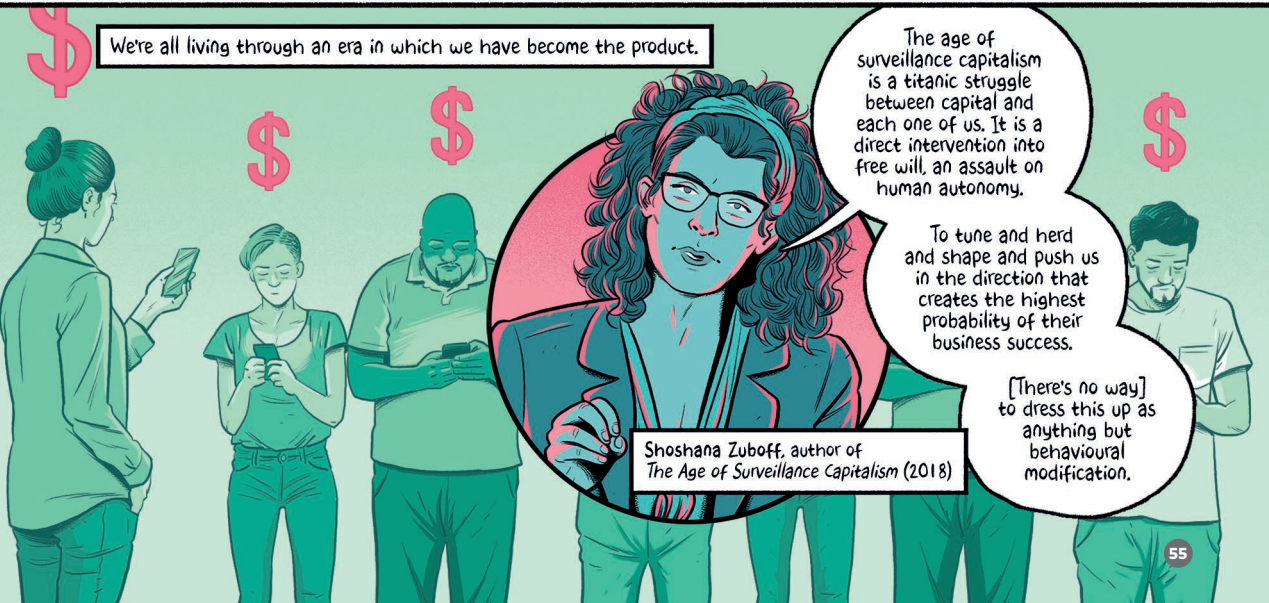
We're all living through an era in which we have become the product.

The age of surveillance capitalism is a titanic struggle between capital and each one of us. It is a direct intervention into free will, an assault on human autonomy.

To tune and herd and shape and push us in the direction that creates the highest probability of their business success.

[There's no way] to dress this up as anything but behavioural modification.

Shoshana Zuboff, author of *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (2018)



Many are also drawing attention to the biases of software made by an almost entirely male, predominantly white workforce.

"I'm worried about groupthink, insularity, and arrogance in the AI community. [...] If many are actively excluded from its creation, this technology will benefit a few while harming a great many."

Timnit Gebru, Black in AI cofounder

VPNs, the dark web, and plugins like RequestPolicy are arguably Luddite responses to new technology.

A retrograde attempt to rewind web history: a Luddite machine that, as they say "breaks" the essential mechanisms of websites.

Computer science students have already developed Glaze - a tool to prevent AI models from mimicking artist styles.

Maxigas, *Resistance to the Current: The Dialectics of Hacking* (2022)

Luddism contains a critical perspective on technology that pays particular attention to technology's relationship to the labour process and working conditions.

In other words, it views technology not as neutral but as a site of struggle. Luddism rejects production for production's sake: it is critical of "efficiency" as an end goal.

Gavin Mueller, *Breaking Things at Work* (2021)

"Degrowth," "Slow Living," "Quiet Quitting," and the "I Do Not Dream of Labour" movements could all be described as forms of modern neo-Luddism.

"Lashed to the growth imperative, technology is used not to do the same amount of stuff in less time, but rather to do more stuff in the same amount of time."

Jason Hickel, author of *Less Is More: How Degrowth Will Save the World* (2020)

Questioning and resisting the worst excesses of technology isn't antithetical to progress.

If your concept of "progress" doesn't put people at the center of it, is it even progress?

Maybe those of us who are apprehensive about AI art are Luddites.

Maybe we should wear that badge with pride.

Welcome to the future.

Sabotage it.



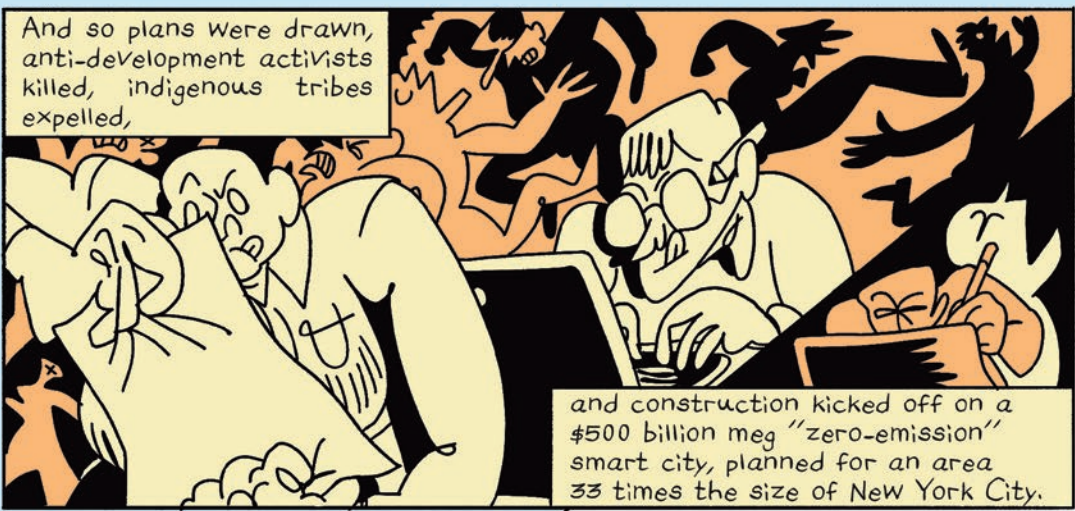


I want to build my pyramids.

# Futures built on Sand: Saudi Dystopia

Written by Yazan AL-SAADi Art by Ghadi GHOSN

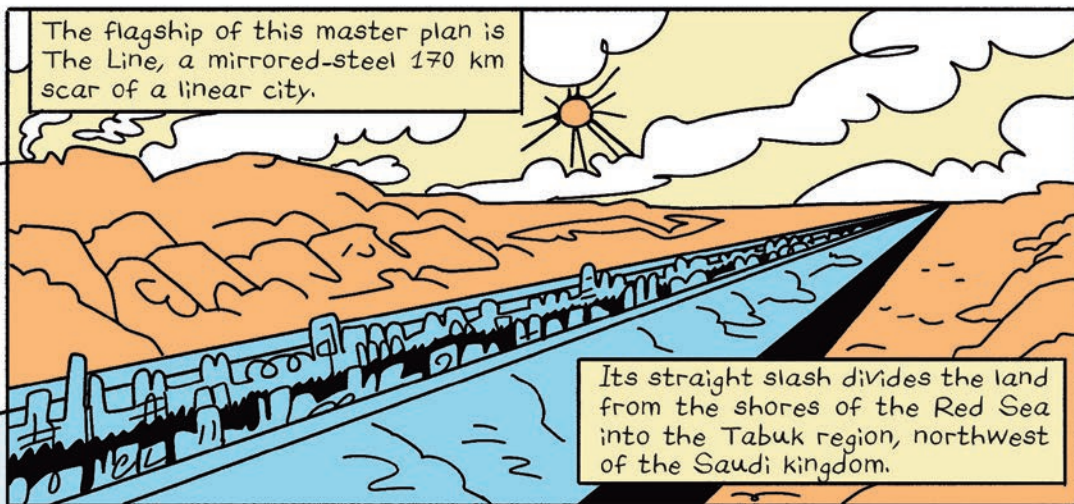
Mohammed bin Salman Al-Saud (MBS), the 37-year-old de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia, reportedly said to a confusion of foreign architects and urban planners.



And so plans were drawn, anti-development activists killed, indigenous tribes expelled,

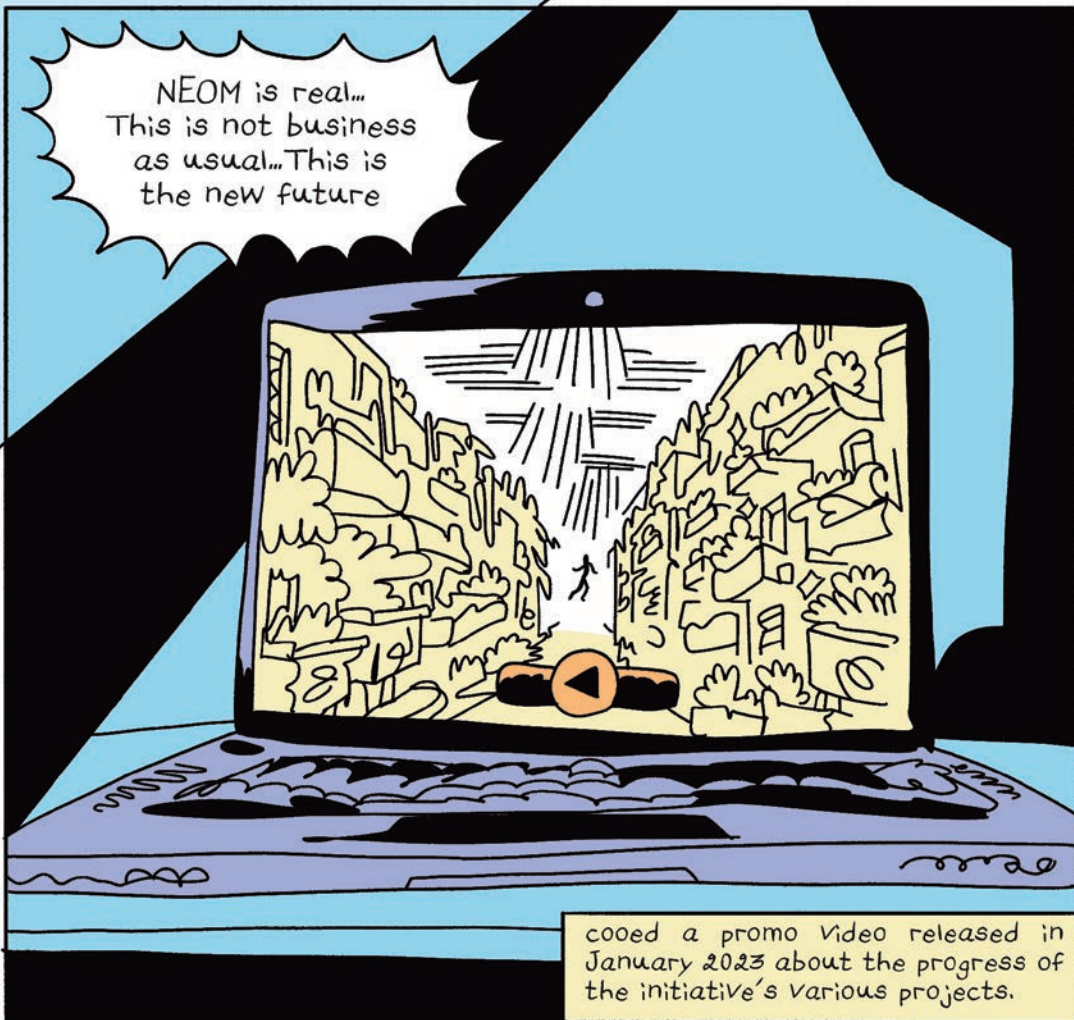
and construction kicked off on a \$500 billion meg "zero-emission" smart city, planned for an area 33 times the size of New York City.

The flagship of this master plan is The Line, a mirrored-steel 170 km scar of a linear city.



Its straight slash divides the land from the shores of the Red Sea into the Tabuk region, northwest of the Saudi kingdom.

NEOM is real...  
This is not business  
as usual... This is  
the new future



cooed a promo video released in January 2023 about the progress of the initiative's various projects.

The first glimmers of NEOM emerged in 2016, a part of Saudi Vision 2030, announced by MbS, then a young prince looking to solidify the pathway to power that had opened up with the Saudi war in Yemen and the death of his uncle, the previous king.



The plan would diversify Saudi's economy away from oil, dramatically reshape society, and use the kingdom's vast cash reserves to invest in cutting-edge tech.

NEOM's contours further manifested during 2017's "Davos of the Desert," a big party thrown by MbS for foreign investors and bankers.



NEOM was now a business and industrial free zone to link Egypt and Jordan via Saudi Arabia, a Singapore on the Red Sea.



NEOM's fantasies bleed past the edges of The Line to include residential areas, an airport, an octagonal industrial complex that floats called the Oxagon,



a skiing resort named Trojena, the luxury island complex of Sindalah, and around 6,500 hectares of agricultural land seeded by genetically modified crops.

"NEOM" is a portmanteau, a forceful blend of the greek word "neo" and the Arabic letter "م" (meem), supposedly to represent the first letters of MbS's name and the Arabic word for "future" (mustaqbal/مستقبل).



And with NEOM's trumpet sounded, a host of international architects, techies, futurists, Hollywood production designers, civil engineers, and consultants arose to answer the call.



The project is a gold rush for techno-utopians, a rare opportunity to experiment with "blue sky thinking" and play with cutting-edge technology...

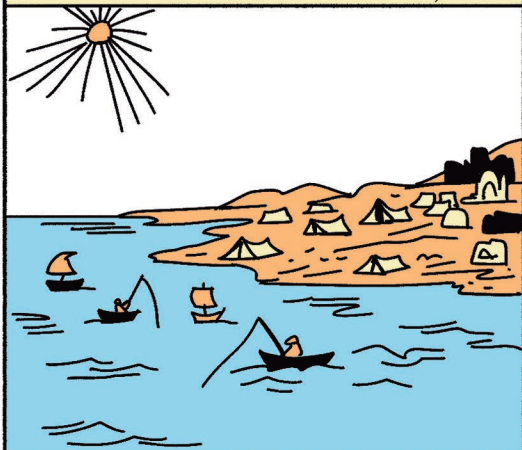


...and a near guarantee to get stupidly rich even if every harebrained scheme fails.

The dream behind NEOM can be traced back to the early 2000s and the otherworldly transformation of the most populous city in Saudi's neighbor, the United Arab Emirates: Dubai.

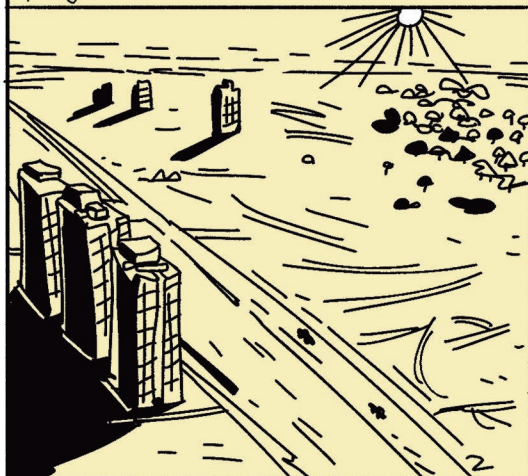


Established as a modest fishing village in the late 18th century, Dubai had a strategic location along the coast of the Gulf that caught the eye of international business at the turn of the 20th century.



Its ruler set up the city as a free port with no taxation on imports or exports, and Dubai became a link in the growing network of sea trade.

Discovery of offshore oil reserves and the establishment of deep-sea ports poured what seemed like endless cash for rapid and massive infrastructural and development projects



built by masses of men who toiled, sweated, and died under a harsh sun.

The ruler of the UAE, Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, enjoyed totalitarian power unencumbered by environmental review or concern.



He terraformed the land and seas in terrifying ways according to his vision - and was toasted for it.



When you bend the earth to your will, people notice. Many rulers worldwide soon coveted the glimmering successes of "The Dubai Model."



They had no use for any critiques of its transparency, labor abuses, or human rights violations.

UAE's Gulf neighbors, flush with oil and gas cash themselves, now ached to draw some of the lucrative spotlight their way.



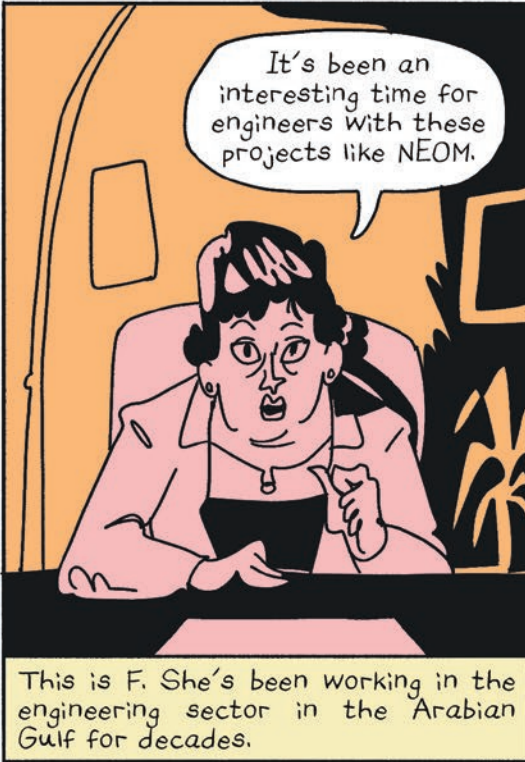
Kuwait built one of the world's longest sea bridges to connect land allocated for a major free trade zone, a proposed futuristic metropolis dubbed "Silk City."



For Qatar's hosting of "the most expensive World Cup," it built a metro system, an upgraded shipping port and airport, and an entirely new city, Lusail.







Watching ads for projects like NEOM, it's inescapable how these plans are less about creating liveable cities for communities

and more about using technology and monumental building to symbolize power of a singular ruling figure or family.

A display of prestige.



It doesn't matter that these projects are unsustainable in the long term. It doesn't even matter if they're never fully realized. Men with power crave to make their mark on time.



Their message of what's to come is crafted primarily by foreign consultants with disconnectedly biased imaginations of neon-coated, Orientalized, sand-and-steel futures.



I find this approach towards the future's possibilities boring. I've seen this tedious spectacle displayed throughout time and beyond borders.

From 1900s New York to 1990s Shanghai, there have been countless techno-utopian schemes by a few men with a lot of cash seeking to impress everyone else,



costing incalculable human misery, while creating objects that become colossal wrecks dotting a ruined Earth.

The kind of futurism that characterizes the Gulf is one that is obviously built on vast reserves of petrol - and of petrodollars.

What is often forgotten is many of the "futurism" projects of the Gulf Coast countries are about survival and the reproduction of the societies as they stand, with their particular regimes of inequality and exploitation.



B is a leftist Kuwaiti academic based in the Netherlands.

Most of the states are scrambling to placate a booming population of youth,

and having these generations comfortable and ideologically committed to the states, to their identities, and to the existing structures of domination and exploitation is necessary.



It's no surprise that the main recurring theme in all the vision documents - a theme important in governance in the Gulf for a long time but is now becoming existential in a renewed way -

is "the growth of the domestic private sector."



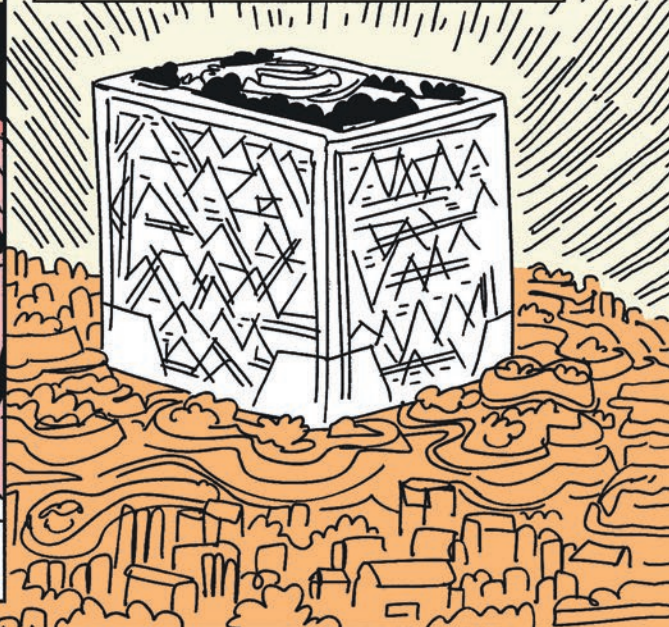
I think some of the thinking around a renewed state capitalism is important to keep in mind when we look at these projects.



Around the time I talked to B, Saudi authorities revealed a new project to change the face of Riyadh: the New Murabba, "the world's largest modern downtown."

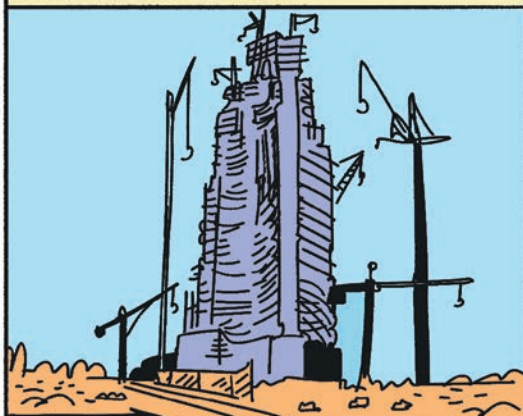


At the center of this project is the Mukaab, a 400 m high, 400 m wide, and 400 m long skyscraper, also proclaimed to be "the world's first immersive destination."



The Mukaab houses a building and a 2 million m<sup>2</sup> floor structure for retail, touristic, cultural, residential, commercial, and recreational facilities.

588 miles southwest of the planned Mukaab looms Jeddah Tower. Begun in 2013, it was promised to be the world's tallest building and the centerpiece of the previous regime's vision of the future.



With the rise of MbS, it was shelved. It now sits silently half-finished, a rotting warning of how grand enterprises can be quickly smothered.



There is also another vision of the future in this tale.

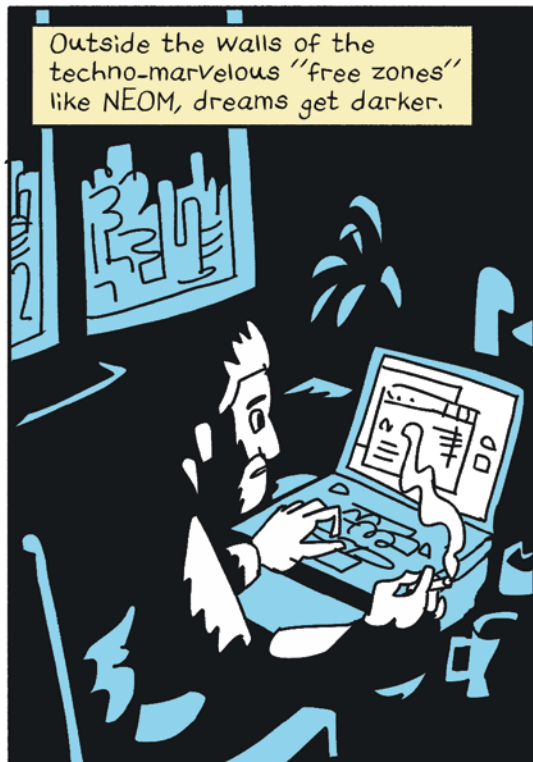
I live on the periphery of this future.



This future has limited basic essentials and severe wealth inequalities.

It is an extreme survival mode.

Click!



Outside the walls of the techno-marvelous "free zones" like NEOM, dreams get darker.



I still like to think these aren't the only inevitable futures peddled from above.

There has to be a vision of the future from below. Visions less defined by sharp dividing lines, visions more encompassing.

Suffused with a radical appreciation for dignity and liberty.

Reigned by empathy and serenity.

A future by all, for all.









# EXISTENTIAL CRISIS



Across the world, climate groups are raising the alarm that we are heading into catastrophe.



And yet, it doesn't seem like we're getting the message.

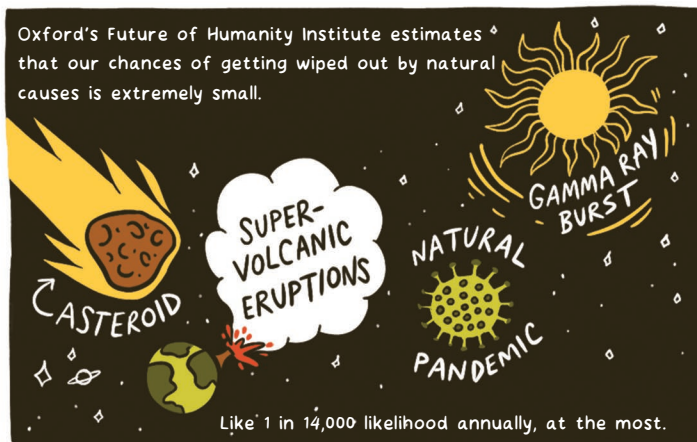


Is it just alarmist?

On the one hand, you could look at remote possibility.

We've been around hundreds of thousands of years! We've survived until now, haven't we?

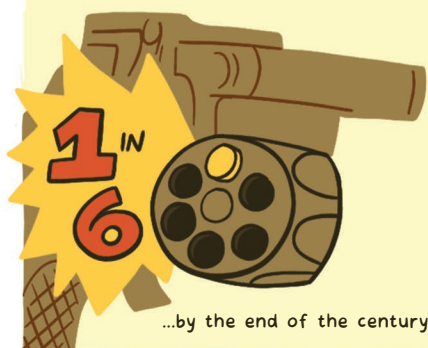
Oxford's Future of Humanity Institute estimates that our chances of getting wiped out by natural causes is extremely small.



But that's just natural causes. The biggest risk to our existence seems to be self-destruction.



Toby Ord of the Future of Humanity Institute estimates the risk jumps to...



...by the end of the century.

By then, we can expect the Earth's temperature to be 2.4–2.6°C above preindustrial levels.



Some models predict even more warming. Either way, these are uncharted waters.

SOURCE: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The climate crisis isn't the first time we've considered an end to the world. Some worlds have ended – civilizations have risen and fallen, yet humans are still kicking.

So what contributes to the ending of a civilization?

### Climate change

Prolonged drought led to food scarcity, and the eventual collapse of civilizations like the Akkadians.

"...the irrigated orchards yielded no syrup or wine, the thick clouds did not rain."

### Environmental Degradation

Intensive agriculture by the Maya pushed the environment past its limits and led to diminishing returns.

### Inequality

Extreme wealth and political inequality make for an uneasy society. It's part of what brought down the Roman Empire.

We're not in the same boat!

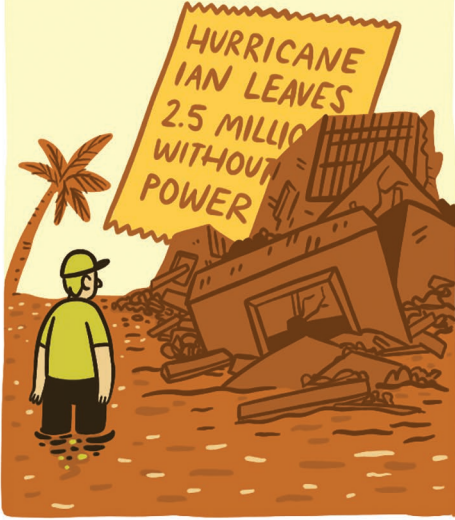
### Complexity

Societies become more complex in order to deal with challenges. The scale of the Mongol empire made it vulnerable to collapse, and it fractured when it couldn't sustain expansion.

And this still says nothing of the random bad luck and external factors that might end a society.



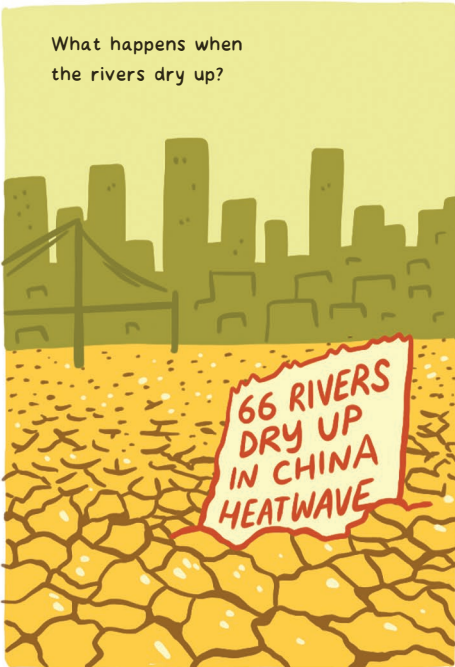
It's not hard to imagine how climate change will exacerbate these risks.



What will we do when a billion people need to flee their now-uninhabitable homes?



What happens when the rivers dry up?



How will we be protected from future pandemics?





External shocks are compounded by habitat loss.



Our means of production have the potential to create even more dangerous situations.

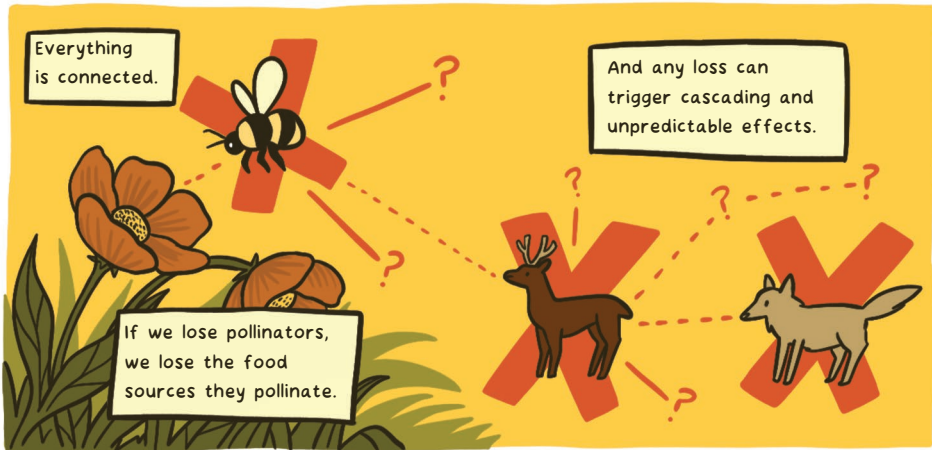


We are seeing the warning signs of entire ecosystems on the brink of collapse.



Everything is connected.

And any loss can trigger cascading and unpredictable effects.







Earth has seen periods of mass extinction before, when abrupt change killed off at least 75% of species.

Scientists believe we're heading for a Sixth Mass Extinction - or that it's already begun.

And this time, it's our fault.

DR. KATE COLLINS  
Natural History Museum

The current rate of extinction is between 100 and 1000 times higher than the previous background rate of extinction,

which is jaw-dropping.

Dodo  
1681-1716

One model predicts that we're on the path to wiping out a quarter of all biodiversity by the end of the century.

Children born today who live into their 70s can expect to witness the disappearance of literally thousands of plant and animal species,

from the tiny orchids and the smallest insects,

to iconic animals such as the elephant and the koala,

all in one human lifetime.

DR. GIOVANNI STRONA  
University of Helsinki

A blip in the life span of the planet.

A 2019 summary report by the UN warned that

**40%** of amphibians

**34%** of plants

**27%** of invertebrates

and **25%** of mammals

are at risk.

uh oh

It can be hard to reckon with the weight of this loss.



And what it means for us as another species on this planet.



We're the first species that can conceptualize the idea of its own end.



Some argue that, knowing what we know about our effect on other life, continuing our species at all would be a net negative.



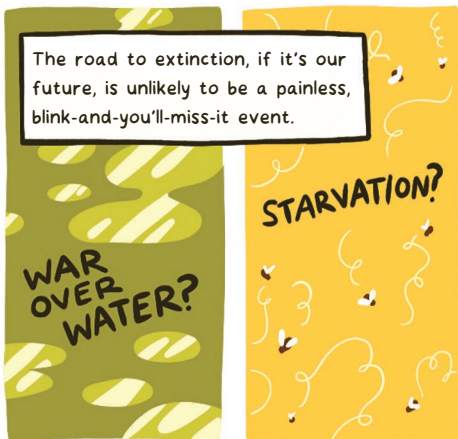
We are already seeing the effects of climate change. Life on the planet is suffering now.



People are suffering now.



The road to extinction, if it's our future, is unlikely to be a painless, blink-and-you'll-miss-it event.



OUR HOMES ON FIRE?



OR UNDERWATER?

All pretty horrible possibilities, even if we don't *all* literally die.

We know what we have to do to stop this from becoming our future.



The thing about extinction is it's permanent. We can't learn from our mistakes if we're all gone.



# LABOR-BUILT AI

DAN NOTT and SCOTT CAMBO, PhD

2023 is the year that artificial intelligence stopped feeling like the future and started feeling like the present.

Across different communities, people are asking what AI means for their future.

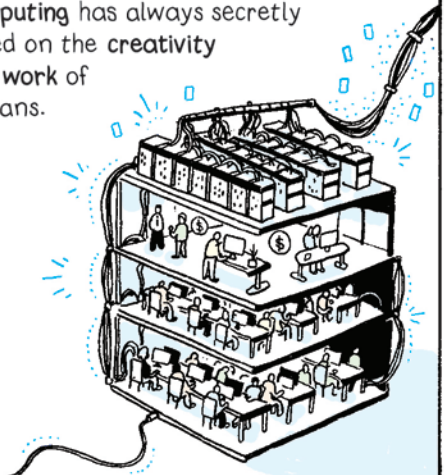


Like, if AI can instantly produce art at no cost, how will that affect an artist's practice and livelihood?

But AI only gives the illusion of creation without labor—



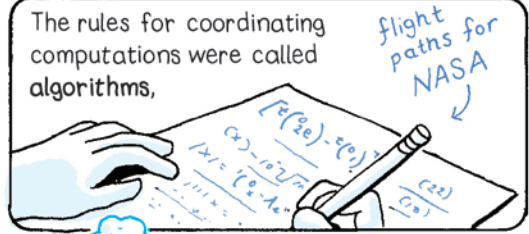
computing has always secretly relied on the creativity and work of humans.



In the first half of the 20th century, performing calculations was a profession carried out by teams of workers.



The rules for coordinating computations were called algorithms,



and the people were called computers.



As electronic computers became more **practical**,



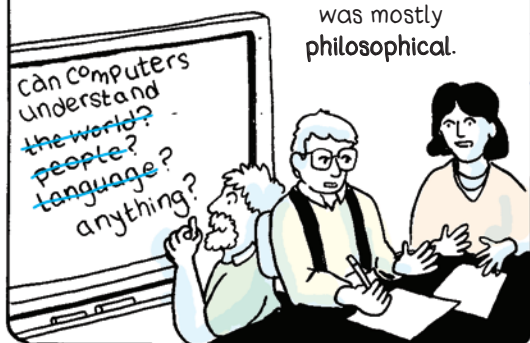
machines **took over** the responsibility of executing algorithms and calculations.



At first, **artificial intelligence**

— the science and engineering of making intelligent machines —

was mostly **philosophical**.



As computing **advanced**, and as people **generated more data**, practical uses were developed,

like **machine learning**.



"Machine learning" is when computer programs find **patterns** in large amounts of data sets, teaching them how to behave in **new** but **similar** situations.



By 1996, the computer **Deep Blue** could compete with **Garry Kasparov** in chess,



Today, machine learning is used in everything, but is still **fundamentally different** than human intelligence.

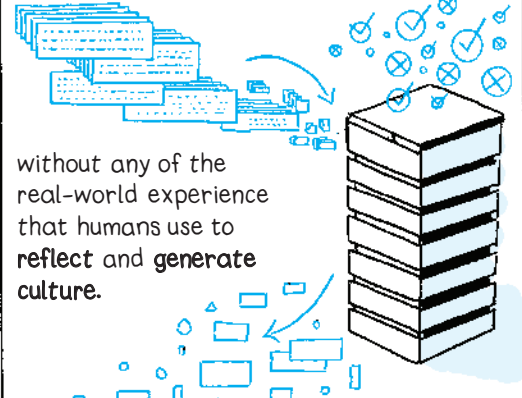


Human intelligence is **complex**,  
**creative**,  
and **lived**.



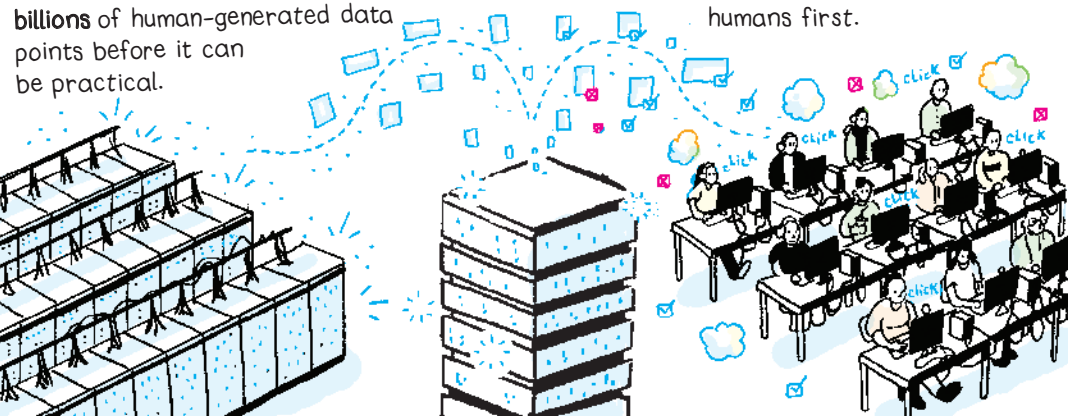
(and very mysterious to us)

Machine learning algorithms only "learn" by way of large-scale **trial and error**,



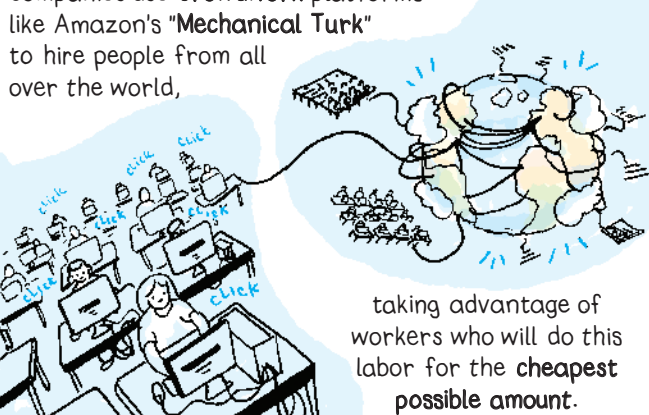
without any of the real-world experience that humans use to **reflect** and **generate** culture.

Machine learning requires training on **thousands, millions, sometimes billions** of human-generated data points before it can be practical.



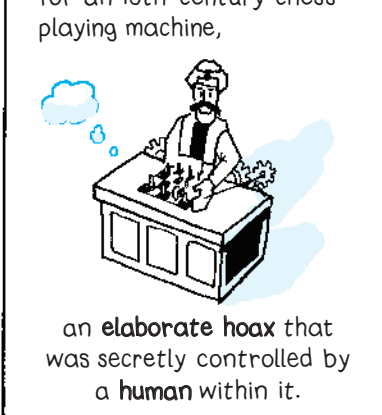
And this data often needs to be **cleaned** and **labeled** by humans first.

To label these millions of data points, companies use **crowdwork** platforms like Amazon's "**Mechanical Turk**" to hire people from all over the world,



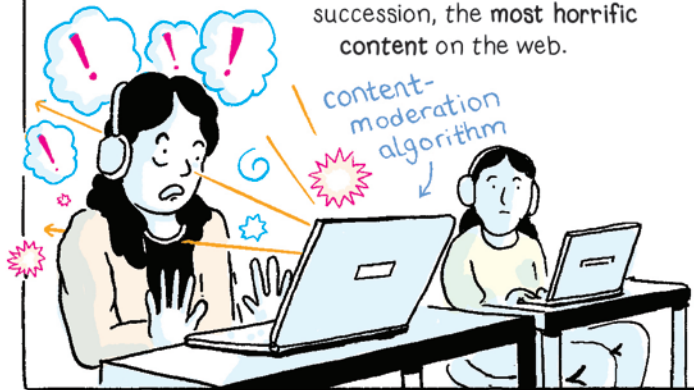
taking advantage of workers who will do this labor for the **cheapest possible amount**.

"**Mechanical Turk**" is named for an 18th-century chess-playing machine,



an **elaborate hoax** that was secretly controlled by a **human** within it.

At its worst — the labor involved in labeling data can involve experiencing, in rapid succession, the most horrific content on the web.



The process can also be incredibly subjective,

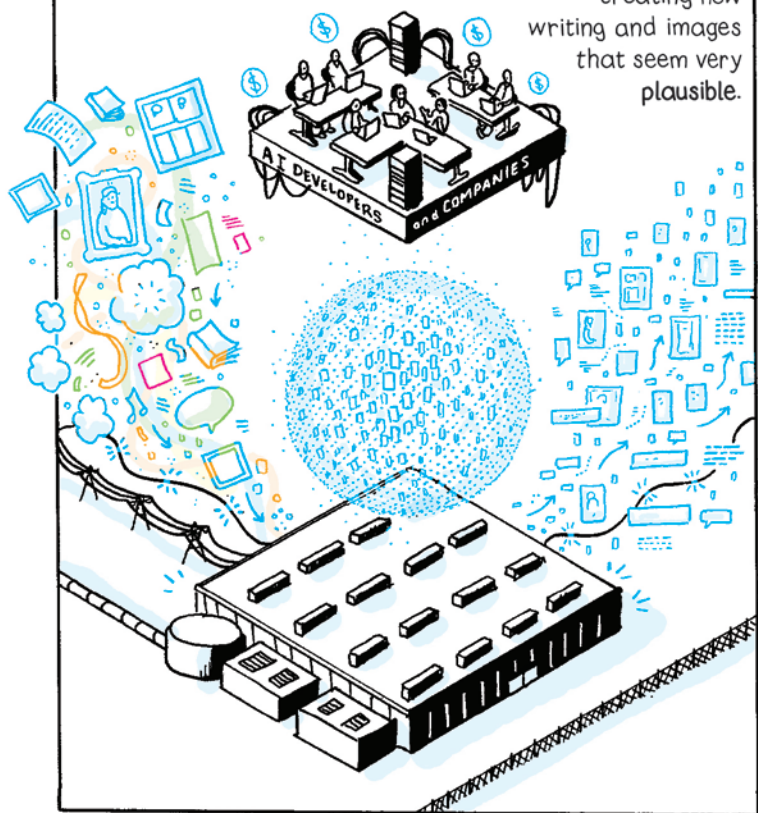


leading to rushed and sometimes biased decisions.

Chat GPT and Dall-E-2 are a newer class of machine-learning algorithms called pretrained "foundation models."

They're fed enormous amounts of text and images to learn which sequences of words and pixels tend to appear next to each other,

creating new writing and images that seem very plausible.



Instead of the way that traditional search algorithms reference images from around the web,



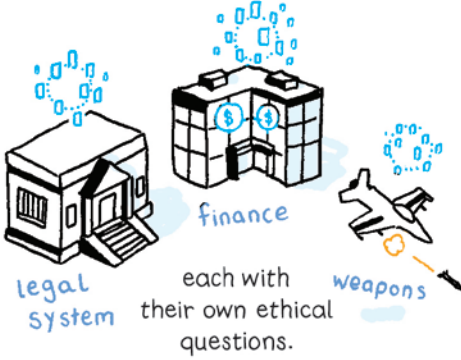
these newer AI models use guesswork to synthesize existing content into a single new piece of media,



often without consent or compensation to the original creators.



Now people and companies are investing in ways to use different AI algorithms as replacements for all types of work,



But as communities, we can ask:



And while many AI companies develop algorithms by prioritizing engagement for profit maximization,



we should remember that AI can just as easily be developed with other values in mind,

like diversity and democracy.



AI companies might not take our jobs as artists and writers.



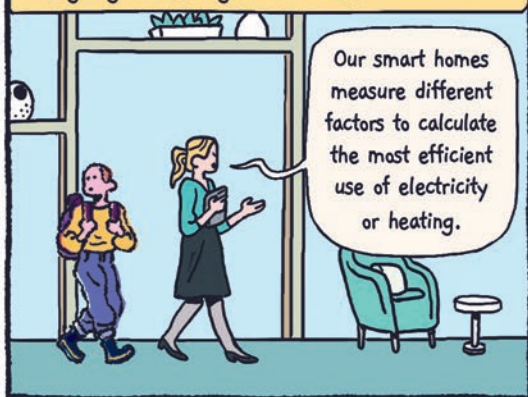


polterink  
presents  
**SMART HOME  
INVASION**

---

THE FAILED PROMISE OF  
A WORK-FREE FUTURE

Recently, I was commissioned to do two paintings for the offices of a business that specializes in designing and selling smart homes.



Everything was immaculate, sleek, and... barren. The odd sign of human life felt like a violation of the whole design.

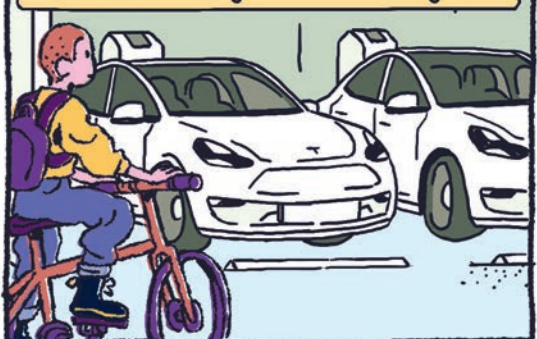


Doors opened automatically for us, lights switched on and off, blinds were opened.



When I left, I had to bike past a row of company Teslas charging in the parking lot.

It made me feel like an unwelcome intruder in this vision of high-tech future living.



As a perpetually broke person, the price of admission to this new world of tech has always been a bit too steep for me.



The tech of my world is older. I'm used to reusing, repairing, and buying secondhand.



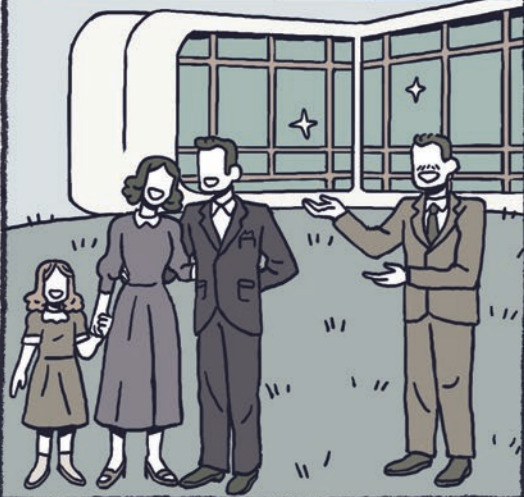
But there's more to my aversion to this new tech. The future of smart technology is entwined with capitalism.

The very economic model that is destroying our society and planet.



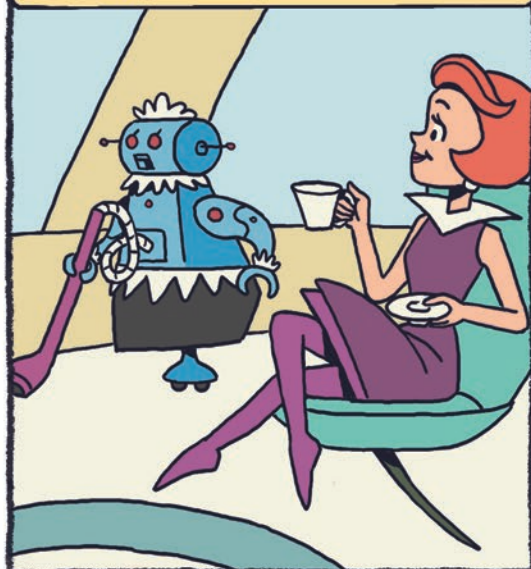
Smart technology isn't all new - since the advent of electricity, companies have designed and sold automated appliances.

In the 20th century, companies sold the idea of a fully automated home that would relieve women of the tedium of housework.

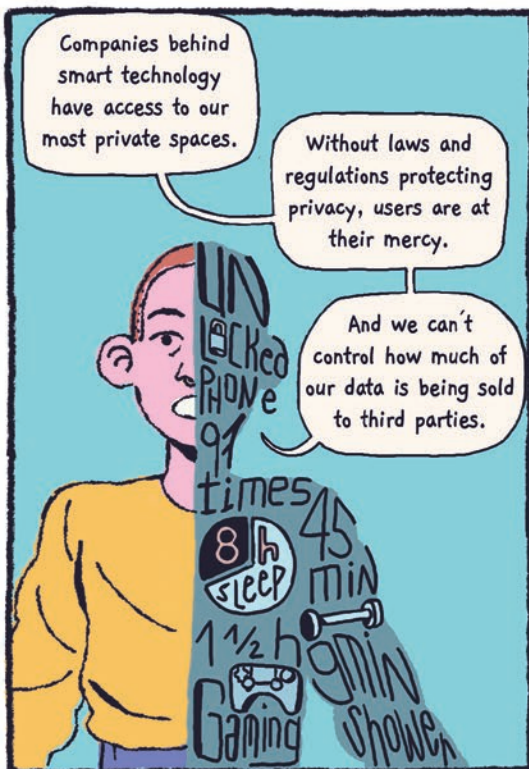
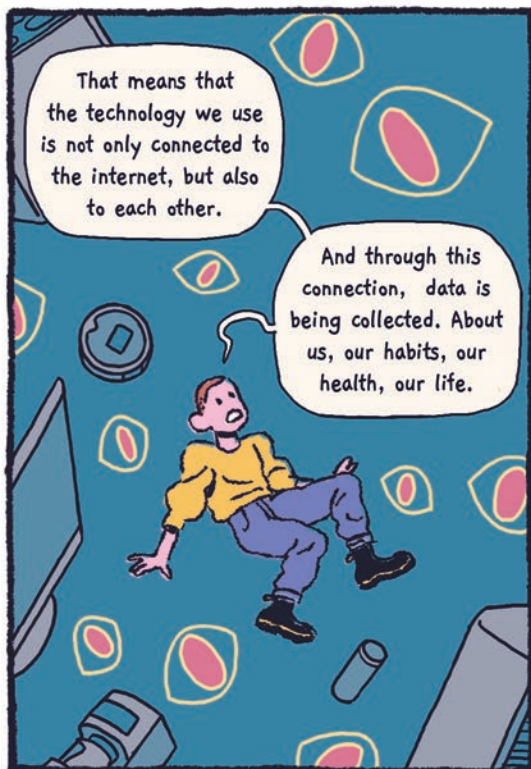
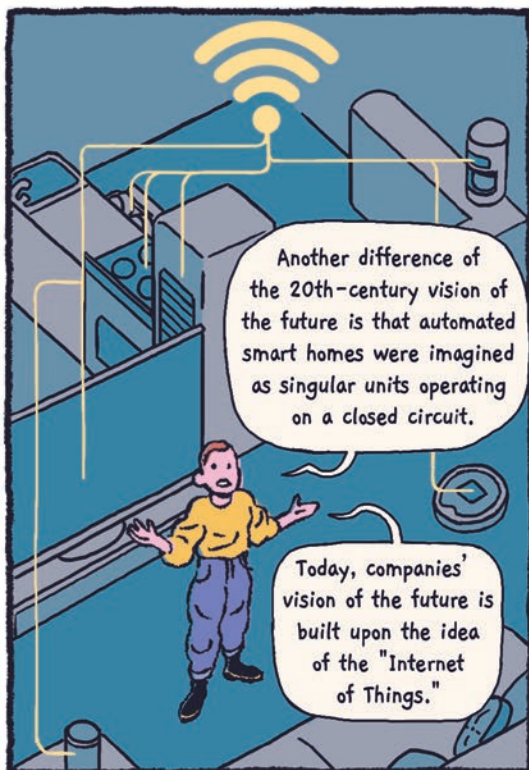


The selling point of automated homes was that they would allow families who could afford them - mostly white, middle-class families - more time for leisure.

In his book *A Small World: Smart Houses and the Dream of the Perfect Day*, scholar Davin Heckman describes the 1950s vision of future homes as consumer fantasies where automated technologies created a labor-free world.







This connection goes both ways. Companies can access and manipulate their devices remotely.

HP can remotely shut off usage of their printer cartridges via the printer's Wi-Fi if the user cancels their ink-refilling subscription service.



Experts are already warning of companies halting support of earlier smart appliance software after only a few years, rendering these models junk.



What the ...?!

That also makes repairing or reusing appliances far more difficult.



Companies are already setting up their "innovative" products to become obsolete more quickly than ever before - the new frontier of "forced obsolescence."

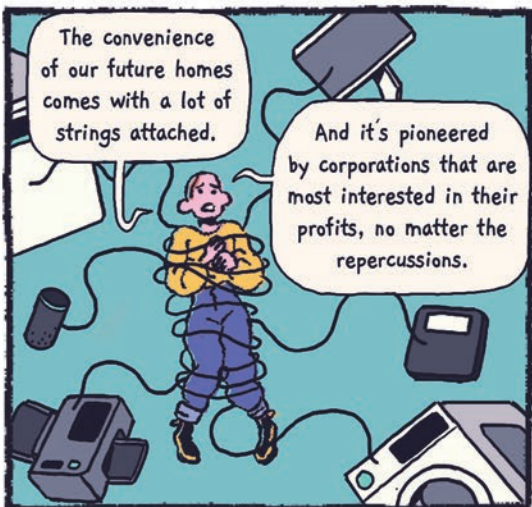


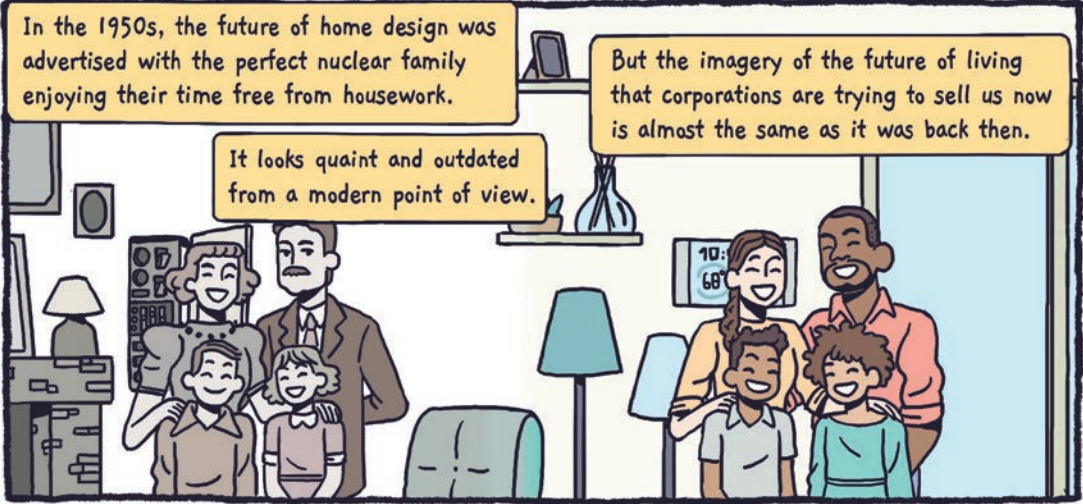
The infrastructure required to maintain the functionality of this smart technology makes up a substantial part of greenhouse gas emissions. And it grows with every year.



The convenience of our future homes comes with a lot of strings attached.

And it's pioneered by corporations that are most interested in their profits, no matter the repercussions.





It looks quaint and outdated from a modern point of view.

But the imagery of the future of living that corporations are trying to sell us now is almost the same as it was back then.



Then and now, corporations promise us an image of the future that they want us to aspire to. A vision of a middle-class life optimized by their products.



In their ideal world, there is little space for any other lived experiences.

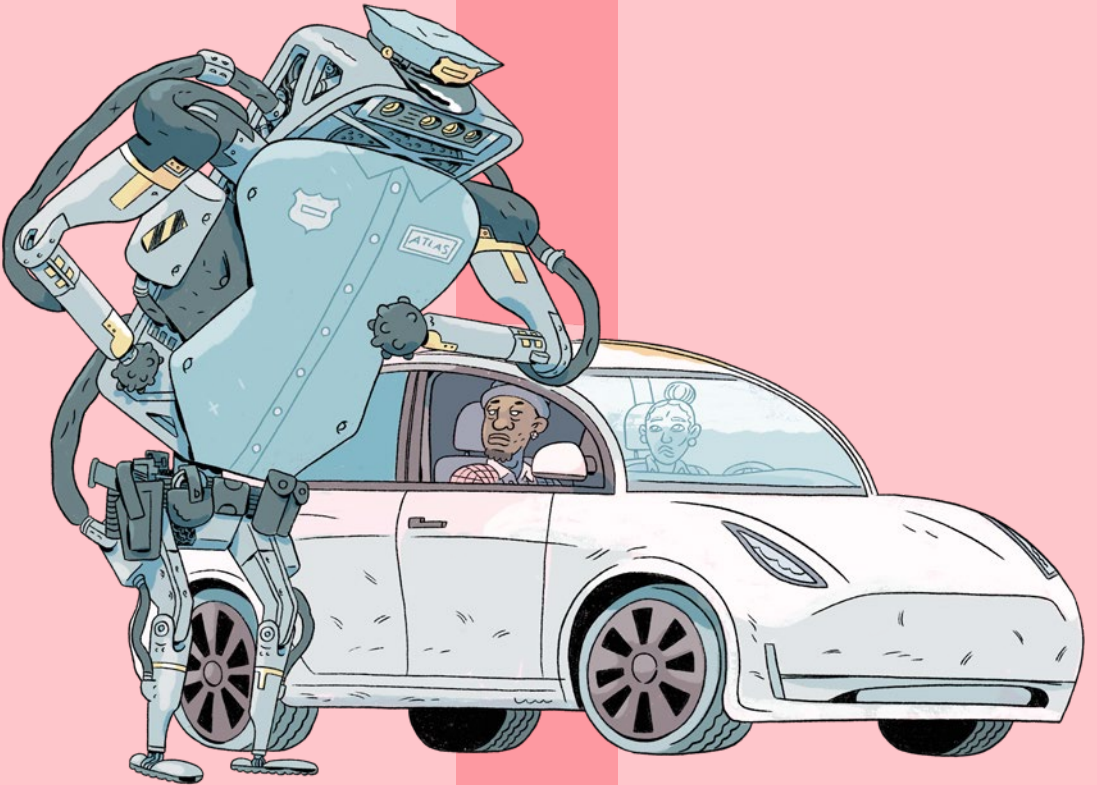


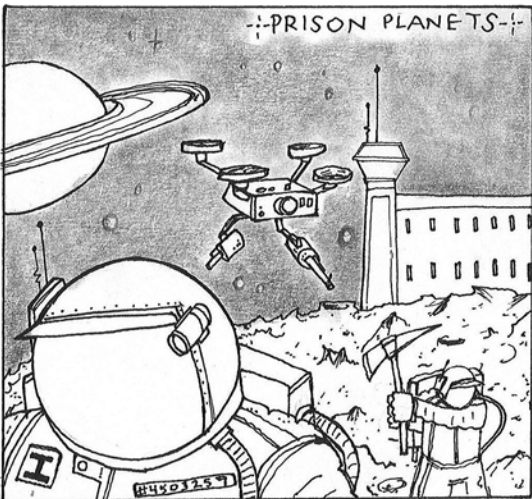
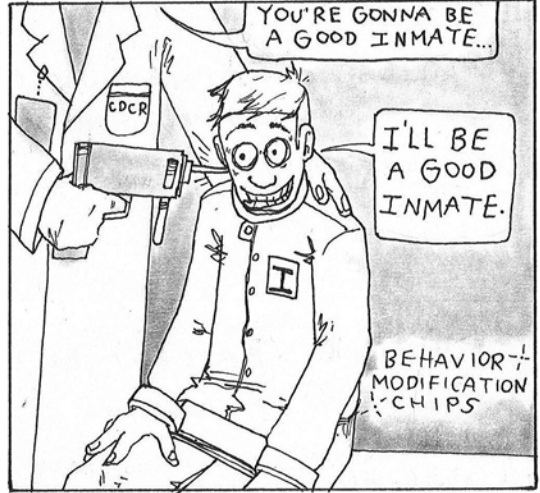
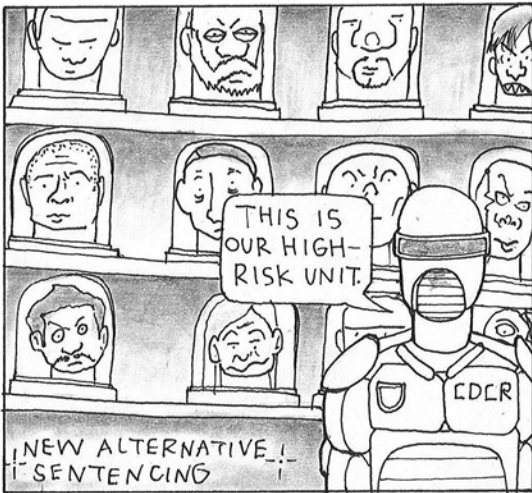
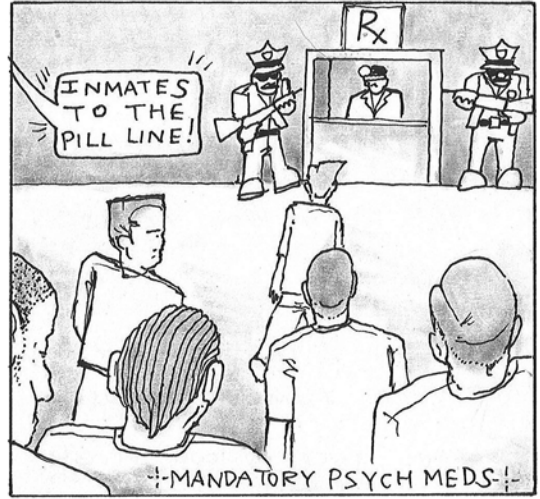
This idea of the future isn't meant for us, the users, but for potential investors. And it promises them endless profits with no regards to the consequences.

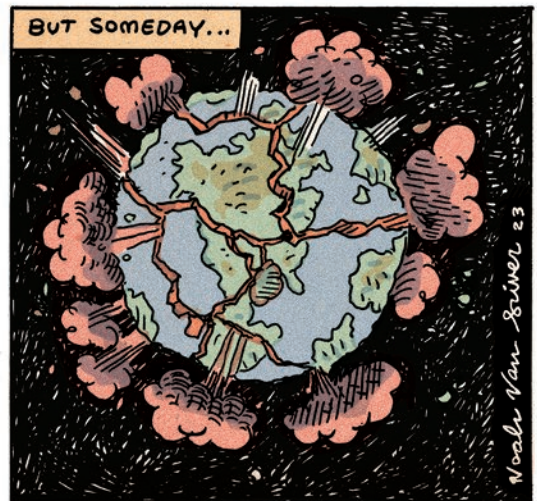
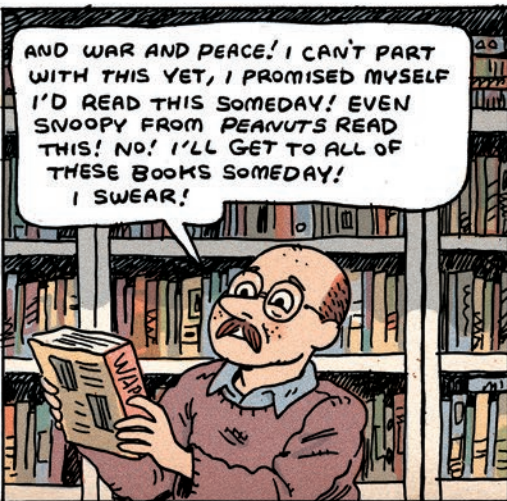
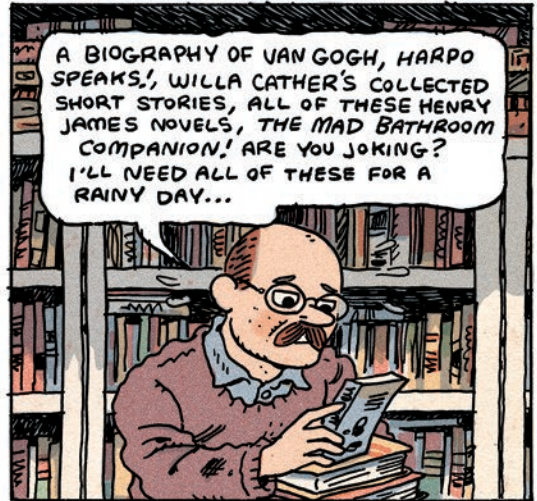
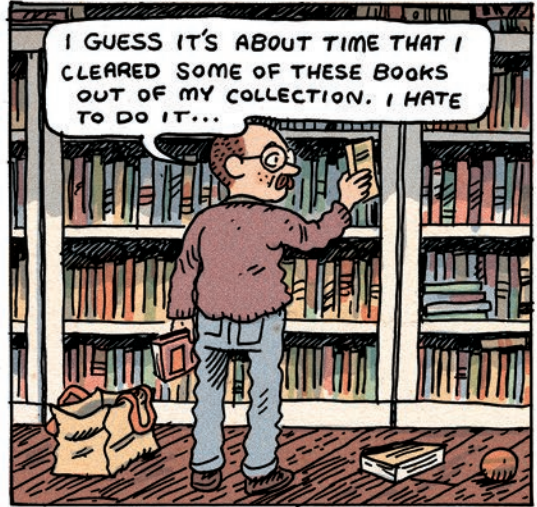
Citations:  
 Ruth Cowan. *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology From the Open Hearth to the Microwave*. Basic Books, 1985. | Davin Heckman. *A Small World: Smart Houses and the Dream of a Perfect Day*. Duke University Press, 2008. | Adam Richard Rottinghaus. "Smart Homes and the New White Futurism." *Journal of Futures Studies*, June 2021, 25(4): 45-56



# STRIPS



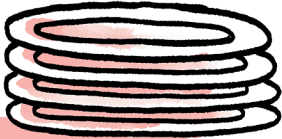




# HEIRLOOMS THAT MY GRANDMOTHER PASSED DOWN TO ME VS. HEIRLOOMS I'LL PASS DOWN TO MY GRANDDAUGHTER

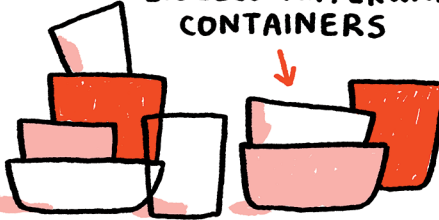
HERS

SET OF FINE CHINA PLATES

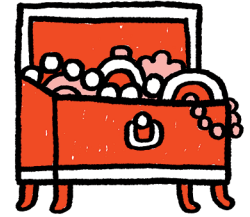


MINE

COLLECTION OF LIDLESS TUPPERWARE CONTAINERS



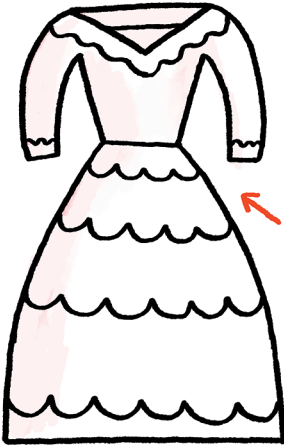
HERS



WOODEN BOX FULL OF PRECIOUS JEWELRY

HERS

BEAUTIFUL HANDMADE WEDDING GOWN



DOES NOT FIT ME

MINE



MINE



CARDBOARD BOX FULL OF OLD PHONE CHARGERS

HERS

SOMEONE ELSE'S GRANDMOTHER'S BEAUTIFUL HANDMADE WEDDING GOWN, BOUGHT FROM GOODWILL

MINE



HANDWRITTEN LOVE LETTERS FROM MY GRANDPA

MEMES FROM MY HUSBAND



HERS



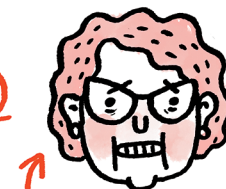
BOOK OF SECRET FAMILY RECIPES

MINE

POST-ITS WITH VARIOUS SECRET PASSWORDS SCRIBBLED ON THEM



HERS



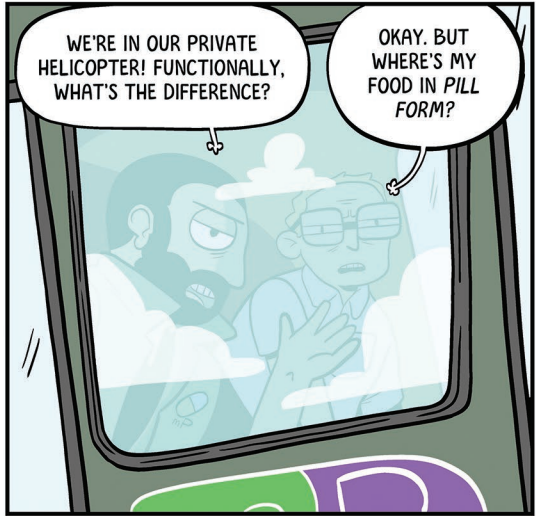
CLINICAL ANXIETY DISORDER

MINE



SAME





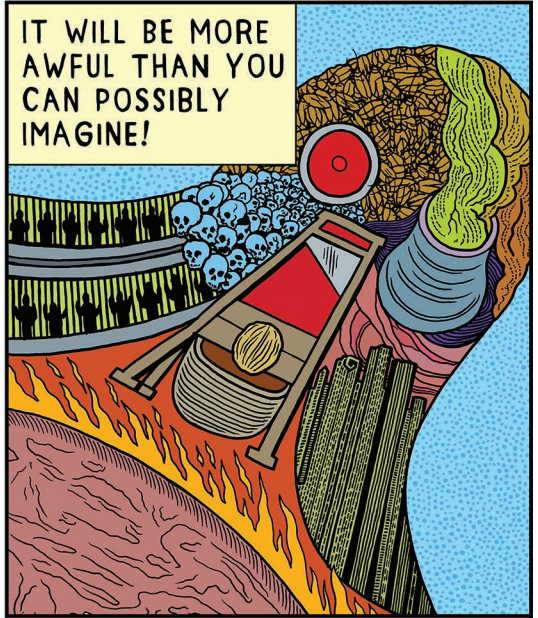
# BE VERY AFRAID THE FUTURE IS COMING



IT WILL KILL YOU  
AND EVERYONE  
YOU LOVE!



IT WILL BE MORE  
AWFUL THAN YOU  
CAN POSSIBLY  
IMAGINE!



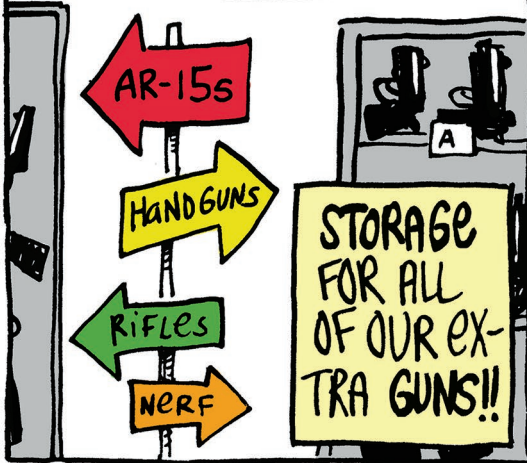
YOU CAN'T  
HIDE FROM  
IT! YOU  
CAN'T  
PREVENT IT  
BY VOTING!



AND IT STARTS  
RIGHT... NOW!



ONCE BOOKS ARE FULLY BANNED, LIBRARIES CAN FINALLY BE USED FOR WHAT THEY WERE TRULY MEANT FOR



AT THAT POINT, ONLY CRIMINALS WILL POSSESS BOOKS.



SURE, THERE'LL BE A FEW GODDAM HIPPIE STATES THAT'LL ALLOW THEIR S.J.W.s TO OPEN CARRY...



MANY ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO MY STATE'S BOOK TURN-IN PROGRAM...

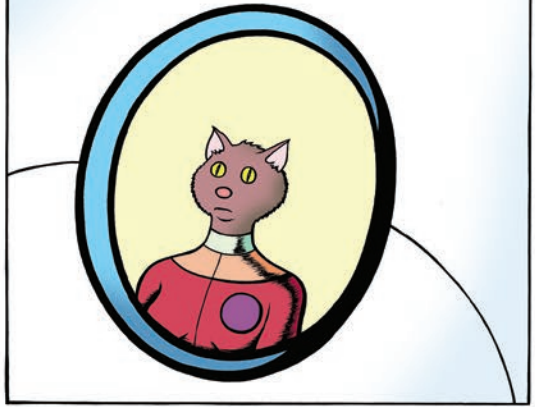




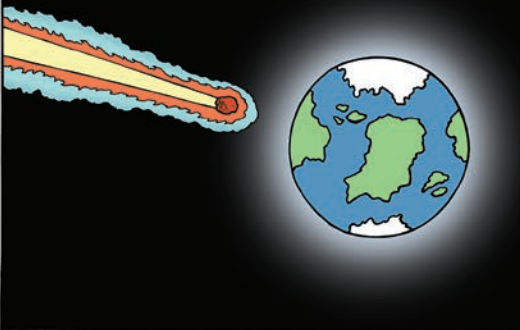
TEN MILLION YEARS IN THE FUTURE, A HUMANOID CAT ORBITS THE EARTH IN A CAT-SHAPED SPACESHIP...



...AND PONDERES HER PLACE AND PURPOSE IN AN ENDLESS, EMPTY, INFINITE UNIVERSE.



ARE WE ALONE IN THIS COLD, BLACK, UNCEASING VOID? FORCED TO ENDURE IN ISOLATION THESE NEVER-ENDING CYCLES OF DEATH AND REBIRTH, DEVELOPMENT AND DESTRUCTION?



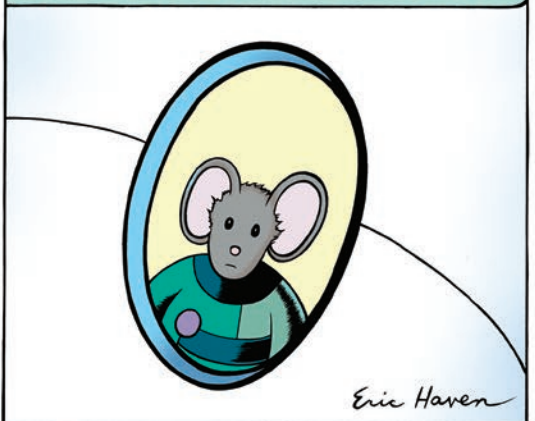
THE SWEEP OF EVOLUTION IS PERPETUAL, FROM SINGLE-CELLED ORGANISMS TO TRILOBITES TO DINOSAURS TO HUMANS TO CATS.



TEN MILLION YEARS LATER STILL, A HUMANOID MOUSE ORBITS THE EARTH IN A MOUSE-SHAPED SPACESHIP...

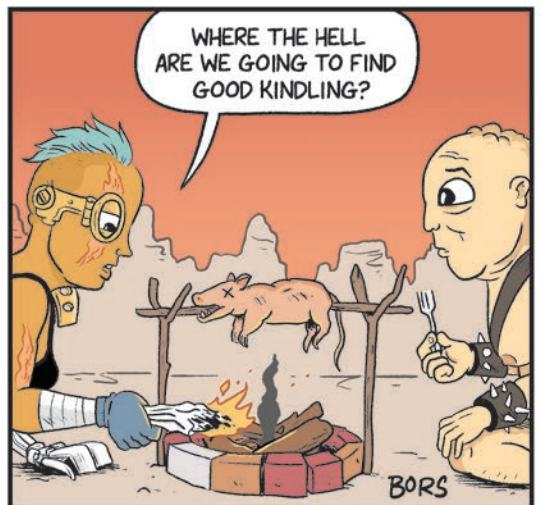


...AND PONDERES THEIR PLACE AND PURPOSE IN AN ENDLESS, EMPTY, INFINITE UNIVERSE.



*Eric Haven*







Eleri Harris

Hey everyone!  
We're making  
a book.


A comic book  
about comics!

Sarah Shay  
Mirk



Drawn From The Margins  
debuts 2025 from Abrams Comics Arts!

FOR UPDATES GO HERE

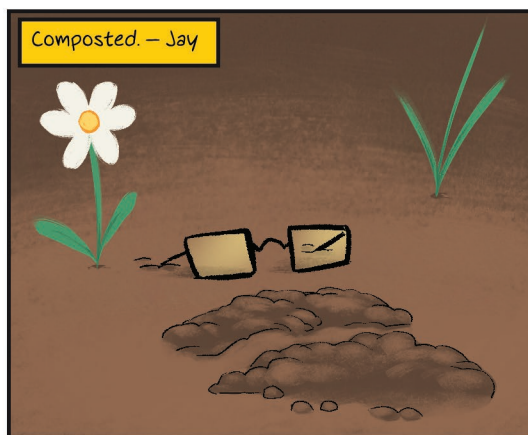
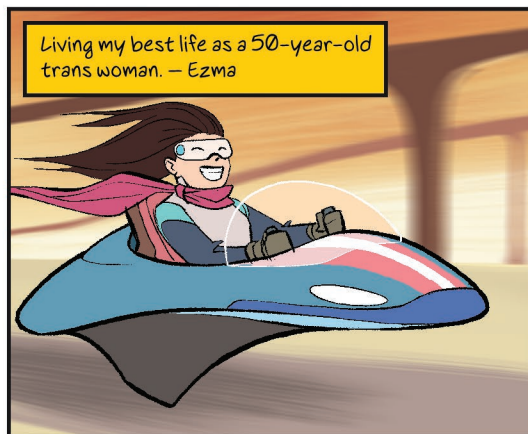
 <https://tinyletter.com/drawnfromthemargins>





# Letters to the Editor

Where do you see yourself in 20 years?



*There is no fate but what we make for ourselves. The Nib's Inkwell members tell us where they see themselves two decades from now. The future has not been written, but we asked Jamie Noguchi to illustrate it.*

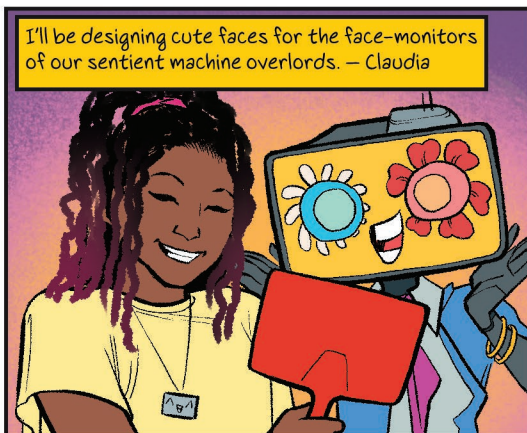
Running a local boutique insect store specializing in cricket protein balls. — Sarah



World weary from the climate apocalypse, but probably really good at gardening by then. — Anna



I'll be designing cute faces for the face-monitors of our sentient machine overlords. — Claudia



## MASTHEAD

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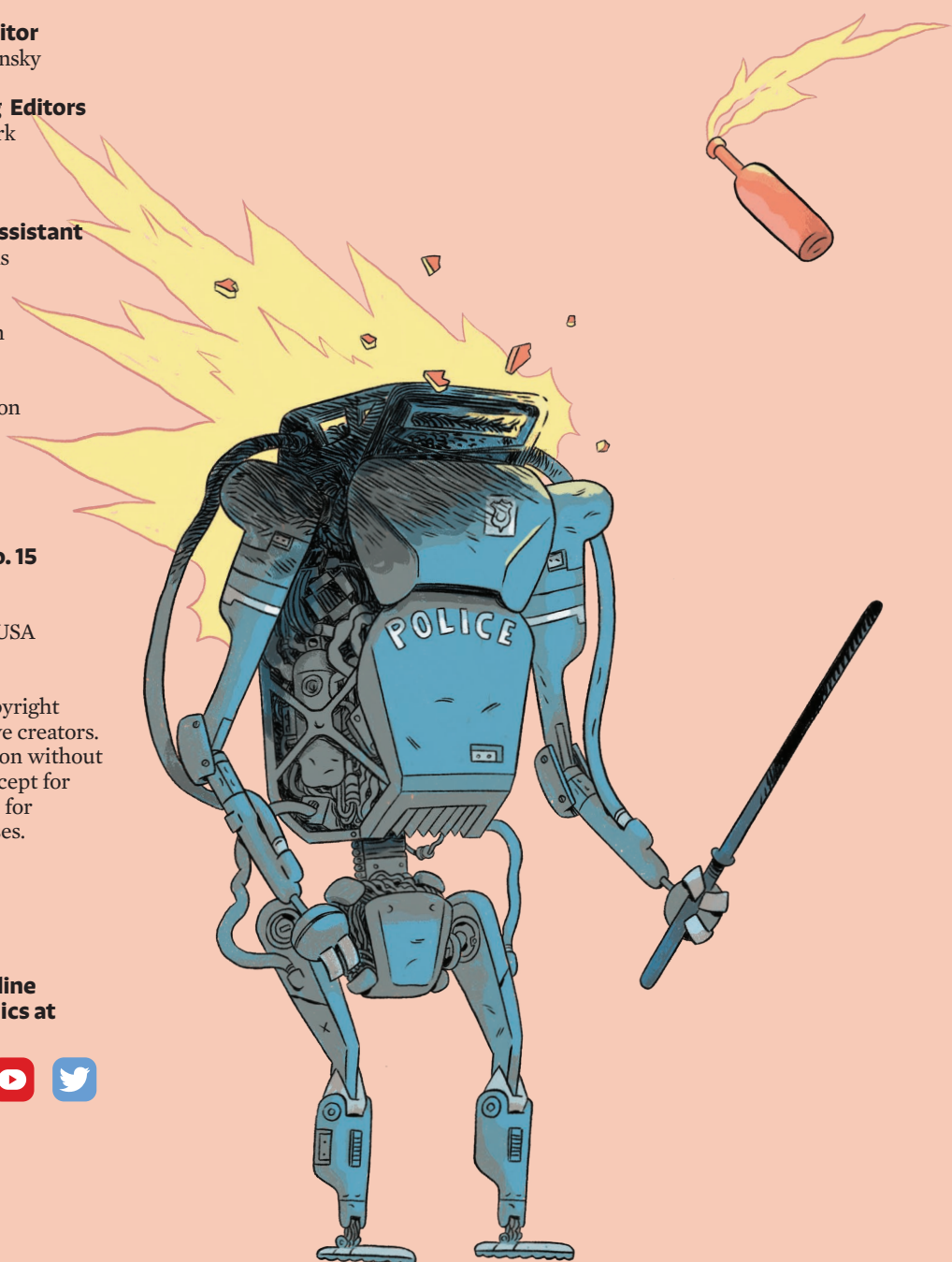
### Volume 6, No. 15

May 2023

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## CONTRIBUTORS



**Trinidad Escobar** is an Ignatz-nominated cartoonist from the Bay Area, California. She is the author of *Arrive in My Hands*, a collection of queer, erotic poem-comics published by Black Josei Press. Her forthcoming graphic novel, *Of Sea and Venom*, will be published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 2026.



**Dan Nott** is a cartoonist and comics educator. His first nonfiction graphic novel, *Hidden Systems*, explores the histories and implications of different infrastructures—the internet, electric grid, and water systems. He's planning on riding out the future in a small village at the junction of two rivers in Vermont.



**polterink** is a freelance illustrator and comic artist haunting the city of Graz, Austria. You can usually find her somewhere in the corner, scribbling in one of her sketchbooks. In her art she likes to focus on feminist and LGBTQIA+ issues, but always with a tinge of weirdness. Currently she's working on a very queer graphic novel with a monster twist as well as a comic about her experiences with depression.



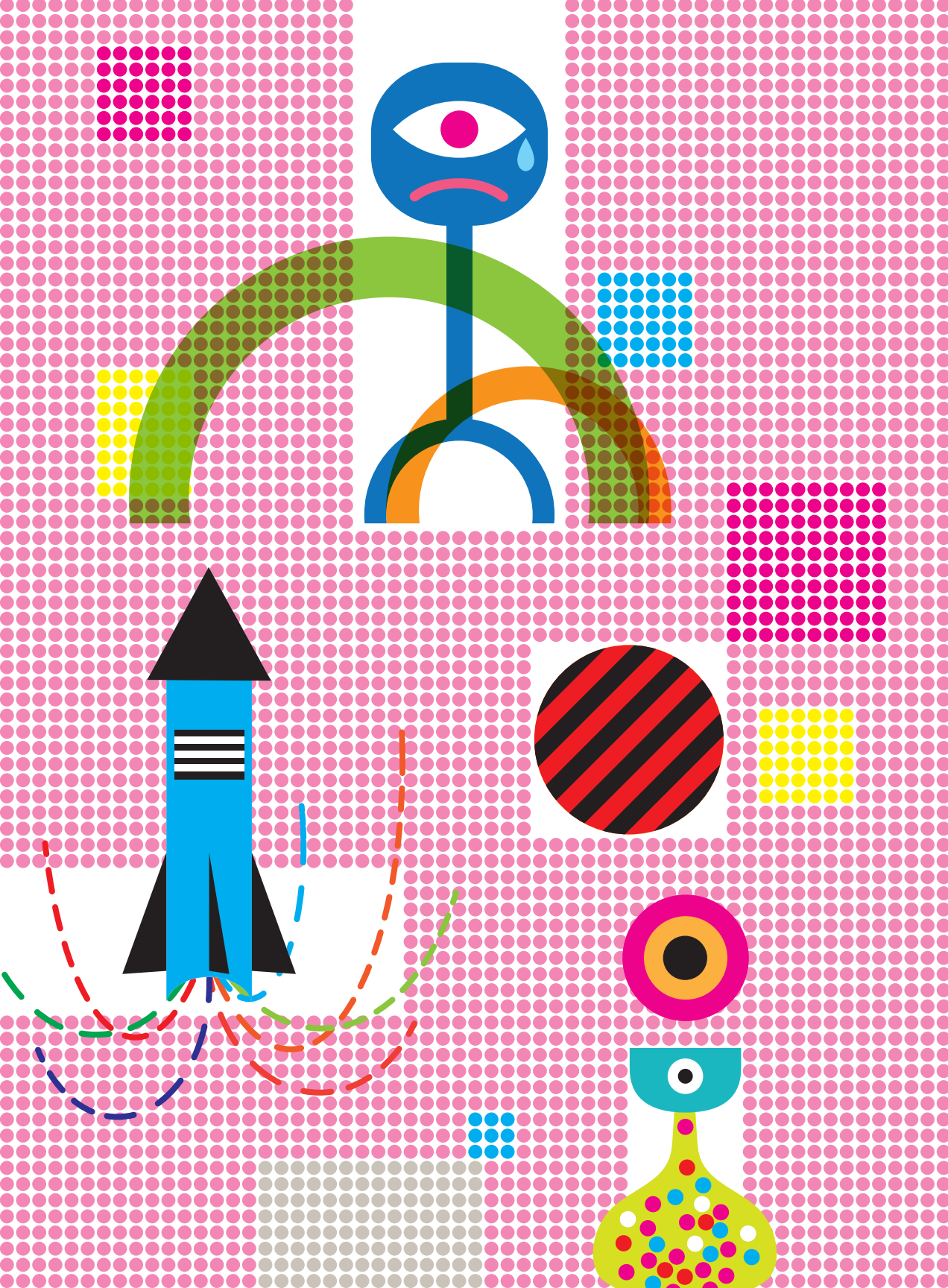
**Maria Stoian** is a Romanian-Canadian comics artist living in Scotland. She is the author of *Take It As a Compliment* and co-creator of *The Illustrated Freelancers' Guide* with writer Heather Parry. By the time she is 80 she aspires to have a collection of 100 ceramic dogs.



**Gaia WXYZ** is a Black, non-binary cartoonist based in Oakland, California. They appear in the LGBTQ+ comics documentary *No Straight Lines*, and in 2022 their comic *The Tale of Daisy* was on display in bus shelters in San Francisco. Their plan for the future is to produce and publish their long-awaited, eagerly anticipated sci-fi comic series *SupaClusta*.







**In this issue:**

Prospective progress,  
approaching calamities,  
and fated futures.

No AI here—more than  
30 human cartoonists  
draw about Luddites,  
extinction, space colonies,  
and Afrofuturism!



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