

## July 2018 Public Tour: **Imagining the Future**

Website tour description:

*Take the challenge to envision the future, as expressed by artists ahead of their time.*

Our ability to imagine the future informs our decision-making and our survival. In our complex times many visitors will be eager to discuss both their hopes as well as their fears for the future. We are already experiencing dramatic changes in technology, the environment, science, and society. Encourage visitors to share how they imagine these changes will affect their lives and the lives of future generations. Personal connections will make the tour memorable.

For additional perspectives, see this article: *Imagining the Future is Just Another Form of Memory* by Julie Beck:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/10/imagining-the-future-is-just-another-form-of-memory/542832/>

**These are ideas, suggestions and approaches from which to build your own tour!** Choose objects from several topical areas.

### **Fueling Imagination**

- Where do people get new ideas? Mia's Art Stories are helpful for exploring ideas behind **Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky's Frankfurt Kitchen**. How did she introduce ideas for a modern workspace? How did her ideas help housewives realize a less tedious future?
- The audio clip about **Marcel Breuer's 1926 "Wassily" armchair** (2002.133.1) explains what inspired him and how his chair introduced a new vision for 20th century furniture.
- What about the **Tatra** or **Model AC74C radio** (2001.167) helped people imagine the future?
- Minnesota pioneers and entrepreneurs of the 19th century were energized by a vision of the future. Chose an object in G303 to discuss what might have inspired them.

### **Envisioning Utopia**

Imagining an ideal future can be an emotional escape or the first steps to creating something new. What kinds of perfect worlds do these artists envision?

- **Enchanted Mountains: Chinese Landscape Painting Exhibition** (G203). Many collectors of these paintings lived in a challenging world of work and cities. The paintings provided an escape by imagining a refuge in nature. Visitors can "enter" and explore a painting using their 5 senses. Where do visitors find escape and refuge? Do they visit websites to aid their imagination?
- **The American Dream**. In the Dec Arts corridor (G333) there is a **French terra cotta medallion** of Ben Franklin (92.13.1). Brush up on Franklin's American dream in this brief summary of his autobiography. (<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-autobiography-of-benjamin-franklin/critical-essays/franklin-and-the-american-dream>)  
How does Franklin's vision influence us today?

- **Voyageurs** (81.108.1) by **Charles Russell** (G301) depicts an exploration party in the “New World.” How might each individual portrayed imagine the potential of this vast landscape?
- **Dream Castle in the Sky** (71.25) by **Maxfield Parrish** (G334). What is he dreaming about? What is the significance of a “dream castle”?
- **Frank Lloyd Wright**. Choose a piece of furniture, the hall or an architectural model. What do Wright’s designs say about his vision for life in the future?
- **London: St Paul’s Cathedral** (61.36.9) by **Paul Derain** (G371). Is that really gray, foggy London? What does Derain’s painting say about his visit to and vision of London?
- In **The Competitive Lover** (88.65.1) by **Kamrowski** (G376) the artist evokes a world of microscopic cells, nerves, and muscles, as well as cosmic space. His surrealist vision also embraced the connection between mind and body. What do advances in modern medicine offer for our future? How do visitors see the mind-body connection?
- **Post War** by **Henry Koerner** (Kunin collection loan, G359). As people live and work amid the rubble of post-WWII Berlin, there are colorful, shining buildings over the hill. What does this say about hope for the future after such a devastating event?

### Dystopia

Science fiction in video streaming, film, and books is increasingly popular. Will science fiction become science fact? Will technology grow beyond our control?

- The prints in **Piranesi Prisons** (G344), created in the 1700s, may be a helpful starting point for discussion of anxieties about a dystopian world. Pick a print. What fascinates you and draws you into Piranesi’s world? What is disturbing? What do you see that makes you say that?
- **Supermarket** by **George Tooker** (Kunin Collection loan, G359). Is this a normal world or is something not quite right? How does a painting from 1972 speak to us today?
- **Remembering** (2017.107) by **George Grosz** (G377). Apprehension can be a warning... (see the label copy). Memories and premonitions inspired this work envisioning WWII.
- For the right audience, consider **The Young Gladiators #7** (2017.80.3) by **Mitchell Squire** (G380) created in 2013. What message might this image suggest in envisioning the future of our society?
- **Vortex Drawing 17** (2017.80.6) by **Alexa Horochowski** (G374) is a good starting point to discuss environmental issues. Her process and purpose is explained in the label. What role does art play in calling our attention to the future of our environment?

### After Life

All cultures ponder what comes after this present life. What ideas about the afterlife can be explored through art?

- **Kiss of Victory** (76.32) by **Sir Alfred Gilbert** (G357). Gilbert’s brother had died only months before he started working on this sculpture. What kind of afterlife does he envision for his brother or others who died in battle?
- **Nayarit House** (47.2.37) and ancient Greek **Grave Stele** (31.4) present opportunities to compare and contrast ideas about the afterlife.

- Pick a **Chinese Tomb Object**. How was it significant to the living? What purpose did it serve in the afterlife?
- **Crucifix** (2014.8, G254). The Kongo culture embraced Christianity in the 1400s. The label explains how the crucifix mirrors their indigenous “cosmogram,” a cross-like symbol conveying the Kongo concept of a two-way passage between the world of the living and the world of the dead. How do belief systems shape our conception of an afterlife?

### Imagining the Future: Our Children

- **Polaris** (2017.35) by **Martin Wong** (G373) gives us an optimistic view of a brighter future. Consider that this painting was done 30 years ago (in 1987). What kind of world did Wong envision for our children? What might the boy who looks away be thinking?
- **The New One** (51.21) by **John Flannagan** (G367). Imagine the external factors that will shape this new life: race, religion, economics, family, health, place of birth, and more.
- **Les Winzins** (2017.25) by **Armand Boua** (G236). This powerful object begs us to consider their future. What kind of world does Boua envision for these forgotten children?

### Seeing the Bigger Picture

Imagining the future has always included the unimaginable, but it remains part of human nature to try to understand and control what will happen. Conclude your tour with an object that instills a sense of curiosity, imagination, and wonder about the future.

- **Untitled** (2017.100) by **Gabriel Orozco** (G374) deals with the human desire to create order in a changing universe. Its vision is both microscopic and macroscopic with a little “Big Bang” thrown in.
- In **6EQUJ5** (2013.19) by **Jennifer Steinkamp** (G380), the animation of asteroids was inspired by the prospect of extra-terrestrial intelligent life in the universe. What will our future be like “when we make contact”?