

## POETIC DETOURS

Art is emblematic for the creative power of imagining possible worlds. Even in the first known cave paintings, early peoples adopted aesthetic models to capture their surroundings, arrange objects, and reinvent them.

These international artistic positions introduce the exhibition's themes and suggest imaginative readings and lines of thought. In this sense, the works contrast and question the cultural historical exhibits and technical visions presented, enabling us to speculate playfully on possible futures and our roles in them. Here, viewers are invited to engage with the photographs, objects and installations, and offered the space to pursue the poetic detours in their own thoughts.

**Aleksandra Domanović** *Vukosava 2013/Untitled 2015*

**EcoLogicStudio** *PhotoSynthetica 2020*

**Antonia Hirsch** *Cosmic Nightshade 2014*

**Hyphen-Labs** *Neurospeculative Afrofeminism NSAF 2017*

**Fabrice Monteiro** *The Prophecy 2015*

**Suzanne Treister** *Survivor (F) 2016-2019*

**Pinar Yoldas** *Designer Babies 2013-2016*



ecoLogicStudio, HORTUS XL Asthaxantin.g.

ecoLogicStudio is specialized in urban environmental design and the incorporation of natural areas in building design. © photo by NAARO

**Back to Future** Visions of Technology between Fiction and Reality

Funded by the German Federal  
Cultural Foundation



With a virtual reality by:



Cooperation partner:



Media partner:



**3 December 2021 – 28 August 2022**

**Expotizer:** [back-to-future.museumsstiftung.de](http://back-to-future.museumsstiftung.de)  
Explore the exhibition online!

**Admission:** € 6 | reduced € 3 | under 17s free

**Opening hours:** Tuesday to Sunday  
Before visiting the museum, please read our COVID-19 guidelines on our website. [www.mfk-berlin.de](http://www.mfk-berlin.de)

Visit our website for more information on guided tours and events : [www.mfk-berlin.de](http://www.mfk-berlin.de). Follow us on social media: Twitter /Instagram: @mfk\_berlin, Facebook: @mfk.berlin, #mfkbacktofuture

**Public transport:** U2 Mohrenstraße, U2/U6 Stadtmitte  
Bus M48, 200, 300, 265 U Stadtmitte/Leipziger Str., Leipziger Str./Wilhelmstr.

**Museum of Communication Berlin**

Leipziger Straße 16, 10117 Berlin-Mitte  
(030) 202 94 0, [mfk-berlin@mspt.de](mailto:mfk-berlin@mspt.de)  
[www.mfk-berlin.de](http://www.mfk-berlin.de)

**A Museum Foundation Post and Telecommunication museum**

Funded by Deutsche Post and Deutsche Telekom

# back to FUTURE

VISIONS OF TECHNOLOGY  
BETWEEN FICTION AND REALITY  
3 DECEMBER 2020 - 28 AUGUST 2022



Illustration Klaus Bürgele

Museum für  
Kommunikation  
Berlin



## THE VISIONS OF YESTERDAY ARE THE REALITIES OF TODAY

Back to Future takes you on a journey to yesterday's visions of future technologies as imagined by pioneering creative minds. The images they invented as illustrations and postcards and in novels and films expressed the hopes, yearnings, fears, and discontents of their particular eras. Their works present fantasy scenes and very concrete ideas – and while some have now become unquestioned realities, others provide a fun insight into past ideas of our present world.

In the four themed rooms Optimising Humankind // Boundless Communication // Conquering Time and Space // In Search of Another World, the exhibition takes an entertaining look at the history of ideas in 16 selected technological visions of communication and mobility. Since each thematic area is designed independently, visitors can easily explore the technological visions they find most appealing.

The exhibition opens with a prologue on utopian thinking and concludes with an epilogue where visitors are encouraged to invent their own interactive utopian scenarios. Last but not least, international artistic positions offer a visual and visionary access to inspire speculation – 'What would the world look like if...?'



Fabrice Monteiro, *Untitled #12, The Prophecy*, 2015

Fabrice Monteiro presents environmental problems evidently ignored by our consumer society. © Fabrice Monteiro, Courtesy of MAGNIN-A, Paris

## OPTIMISING HUMANKIND

Can homo sapiens be changed, adapted or even recreated? A desire to optimise humankind can already be found in ancient sagas and tales – and is still only too evident in today's life-saving implants, smart sensory devices, and attempts to attain immortality.

The drive to optimisation can be traced to the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on human beings now shaping their own fates and no longer relying on the presence of an omniscient creator. Increasingly, the human body became viewed as a machine 'repairable' by interventions and surgery.

With the right 'spare parts', there is no need to fear the failure of bodily organs – the essential reason for death. Science fiction writers have also explored how such a technological optimisation would impact human society and communities – and even today, the issue of immortality is still part of social discourse and debates.



**Aleksandra Domanovic, Untitled, 2015**

In her works, Aleksandra Domanovic reflects on the technologies permanently changing our bodies and considers possible future developments. She takes her examples from the history of technology, focusing especially on non-Western cultures as well as women scholars, scientists and visionaries.

Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton, Berlin. © Gunter Lepkowski

## BOUNDLESS COMMUNICATION

People want to communicate with each other – everywhere and at any time. In the 19th century, this desire drove visionaries to dream of 'visio-phones' and 'telephones for a waistcoat pocket'. They drew their inspiration from modern telegraphy, at that time rapidly forging a global communication network fuelling a sense of transcending distances.

In Europe from the mid-20th century, the telephone became an everyday device, later perfected by the invention of the video and cell phone. The spread of the Internet seemed to overcome the last hurdle to communication and mark the birth of the global village. Utopians dreamt of freely accessible information for all without language barriers, misinformation, or political censorship – dreams still topical today.



**Collectible Pictures of Future Fantasies, 1930**

Enjoying a drink in the countryside, these women can still chat with their families via handheld devices. Source: Echte Wagner Album No. 3.

## CONQUERING TIME AND SPACE



**Klaus Bürgele, Passenger Pneumatic Post, 1984**

In 1984, Klaus Bürgele's illustration of a passenger pneumatic post shows how 'every hour, 9,000 people race off at 500-600 km/h over the shopping streets of the world's metropolises'. © Fabian Scholz

The air taxi, time machine, and personal pneumatic post – when visionaries pictured the world of transport in future, they gave free rein to their imaginations. Yet all these bold and pioneering creative minds shared the common goal of conquering time and space.

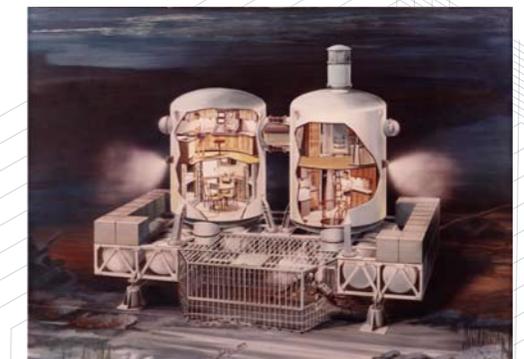
In the 19th century especially, boffins and amateur inventors competed for speed records. They thought up countless means of transport on water, road and rail, in the air and in tunnels, often adventurously combining their inventions into 'crossover utopias'.

Such technological visions were not only invented by daring enthusiasts, but also by science fiction writers – an interface where texts, drawings, and technology proved mutually inspiring in many ways.

## IN SEARCH OF ANOTHER WORLD

For centuries people have been dreaming of new worlds. When Christopher Columbus drew the European gaze to the American continent some 500 years ago, he gave a new impetus to visionary thinkers. Now, new horizons of experience were opening up – not just new continents, but also the oceans and the night-time skies.

The search for other places to live is intimately connected to a desire for new forms of society. While visionaries, writers, and adventurers hope to find better civilizations, their critics fear a cheerless life on inhospitable planets or under water. Even today, the dream of a better society in a new place is still very much alive – with NASA, the US space agency, planning to construct a moon station by 2034 as a base for human missions to Mars.



**Artist's cutaway view of Tektite II habitat**

The Tektite mission, the first US underwater laboratory, started on the seafloor of the US Virgin Islands in 1969. © NOAA Central Library, Historical Fisheries Collection