

The Motorized Bicycle is Illegal but we can Print Organs (PMA Exhibition Review)

As I move forward in this class and continue to discuss the topics of software, algorithms, and the progress towards a completely system oriented society, I cannot help but think of my upbringing, and the privilege that comes with the mere discussion of such topics. The privilege of discussing technological progress and the speculation of possible futures. Whilst the PMA's science and technology oriented exhibition: *Designs for Different Futures* was beautiful and touched on topics of sustainability, I do not believe that creating work for sustainability is necessarily the answer to this dilemma within my practice. Whether the work in the exhibition is meant to solve issues we may face in the future (or are currently facing), it continues to come from a place of privilege.

The exhibition itself showcased a beautiful range of work from different artists, designers, and labs, questioning the possibilities that the future may bring and sparking dialogues about the challenges and opportunities that may come with those possibilities. The work ranges from absurd prototypes such as "Vapour Meat [HPO.3.1] alpha" which satirizes contemporary trends of gastronomy and e-cigarettes to create an absurd helmet which would emit "meat vapors" for consumption, to other work like the PhoeniX which provides an exoskeleton for patients with spinal injuries and promotes new technologies that provide medical care. Designers such as Sang Mun and Adam Harvey on the other hand create typefaces undetectable by character recognition software and makeup which doubles as anti facial recognition camouflage.

Despite this I continue to think of the low income communities which due to economic failure, are unaffected by the speculative technology presented in this exhibition. I think of the processes of improvisation, invention, and reinvention of the people of Miami and Cuba and how their isolation has led to innovation through the use of discarded material. I think of a community that survives through adaptation and the bastardization of technology (or as coined by Ernesto Oroza: “technological disobedience”) and I think of their societal disobedience to survive poverty by circumventing capitalism.

I understand that work such as the hypothetical “MinION Portable Gene Sequencer” (manufactured by Oxford Nanopore Technologies) which 3D prints tissue from mouth swabs could potentially lower the price and difficulty of obtaining an organ donor, allowing the process to become easier for those who cannot afford it. However, I cannot help but think of the attachment created by the people of Cuba which can recharge non-rechargeable batteries through wall sockets for those those with hearing aids. Or even science fiction such as *Mad Max* which depicts “Immortan Joe” using a hand made respirator fused to the area where his jaw once was.

I do not believe it is any artist’s, nor exhibition’s, nor institution’s task to represent a community which they are not a part of. I also do not believe it is anyones job to create sustainable work or create the possibility for sustainability. I struggle within my own practice to continue making work about the community in which I grew up while not wanting to make sustainable work so that I may fulfill my own selfish creative needs. It is probable that the only difference between the sustainable work showcased in the PMA’s exhibition, and the exploitation of hardware in Miami and Cuba for

economic survivability is the use of scavenged material and the individualism of survival without the assistance of a higher economic class. In the end, what I learned from the exhibition is that perhaps that “MacGyvering” of hardware can only go so far. Perhaps as an artist I will always be in that position of privilege and so I should use that advantage to further think about these topics that others in my community cannot, rather than continue to create obstacles and barricades for myself.