

“14 February 2030”

by Tom Klinkowstein, Carla Gannis

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14 February 2030, 22:30–22:59 UTLT (Universal Terrestrial/Lunar Time)

Subject: Your Questions re: Walled Gardens

From: Tom Klinkowstein, Carla Gannis

To: Virtueel Platform, Amsterdam

Via: Temporal tunneling email, 14 February 2030 > 14 February 2009

Transliterated from a Blog-Con* between Tom Klinkowstein, designer, of New York and Jamestown Lunar Colony, and Carla Gannis, founder of the ART-ificial movement, en route via hypersonic transport from Mumbai to the Blue Ridge Mountains.

(**Blog-Con*. A sensory-centric conferencing system employing gestures; a 10th-generation descendent of a blog.)

In the background, for ambiance, lyrics by MOMUS sung to the tune of Steve Reich’s “Music for 18 Musicians”:

*Appalachian mountain girl
Coming home to me
Appalachian mountain girl
Keep me company
Won't you come and comfort me
Electronically
Appalachian mountain girl
Coming home to me*

*Electronic mountain girl
Say you'll always stay
Electronic mountain girl
Never fade away
If you should ever fade away
I would fade to grey
Electronic mountain girl
From the Appalachia Way*

*Electronic mountain girl
Say you love me do
Electronic mountain girl
And your love is true
When I look into your eyes
Appalachia blue
I spend my life coming home to
Electronic you*

*Electronic mountain girl
If I had my way
Electronic mountain girl
By your side I'd stay
I'd stare into your deep blue eyes
Every night and day
Electronic mountain girl*

What technological changes would surprise a visitor from the first decade of the 21st century to 2030?

T.K. That era (the first decade) was just so heavy with things dedicated to a single purpose. In the mid-2020's, when quantum computing came out of the lab and into EVERYTHING, we realized we could breath this stuff in, paint it on, spray it around the room like deodorizer, ingest it with dessert, gulp it down with the morning coffee. Invisible and almost too-cheap-to-charge-for augmented intelligence that wafts through our lives like the comforting aroma of freshly baked bread.

C.G. Skynning. At some point during the “Naughties” (2000–2009), my mom showed me a photo of the 93-year-old Louise Bourgeois. Her face was lined, dimpled, and marked like an exquisite topographic map of the universe, and her eyes twinkled conspiratorially. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. That night I dyed my hair gray, drew character lines on my face, and tried to learn to squint. I was deep into the old age lust that presaged Skynning—what we now call the etching of sensor and communications engrams onto the epidermal layer.

What changes to societal morés?

T.K. In the late Naughties, people talked about “Walled Gardens”. They meant the old Internet and how cozy, micro-exclusionary enclaves were being formed then cordoned off from the *hoi polloi* of the larger Net. A few years later, the Gardeners (retirees who described themselves as “crotchety Internet social activists”) staged political theatre of a sort. They

literally carried large stanchions into Starbucks, business-class commercial aircraft cabins, university classrooms and the like, and partitioned physical spaces to create smaller spaces that conformed to Facebook Friends groupings. The absurdity of it all more or less put an end to the walling era.

C.G. Being “over the hill” (too old) when one reached 70, 80 or 90, when one no longer had that old-style sexual oomph, or what was more politely referred to in the Twenty-Teens as “OCSed” (“Outlived Cultural Significance”).

An obsession with youth gave way to a lust for wrinkly, crinkly, deeply knowledgeable, sensory-augmented centenarians. 105-year-olds became the new It-guys and It-gals, loaded as they were to the (artificial) gills with millions of exabytes of memories and the sly coyness that only 10 decades of multi-realm experience can bring.

What personal changes?

C.G. My mother was an accomplished digital artist whose idol was C. Lady Ada Lovelace, the first computer programmer (mid-19th-century!). Mom gave me a novel, Herland, that was written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in 1915. In the utopia that was Herland there was no allowance for contradictory impulses.

I, her daughter, exist as a prism without conflict. I celebrate and embrace multi-personages, I live Anais Nin’s 20th century rant: “I will not be just a tourist in the world of images, just watching images passing by which I cannot live in, make love to, possess as permanent sources of joy and ecstasy.”

T.K. Hundreds of thousands of times each day, I reconfigure my analytical, political, and economic faculties through a prism of the hundreds of millions of smart things in my semi-sentient environs and through the co-decisive choices made by thousands of my closest friends.

A prism without conflict, that’s what they were so fearful of with their Walled Gardens! Quoting myself from a recent lecture at the Design Thinking Institute: *“(G)ive me life, liberty and the pursuit of the reflected, rearranged, reified, unclassifiable, living-in-between-the-words-and-the-data-sets. My inalienable right to inhabit 10⁴-power personae, travel through nanotubes, play with puppies incarnated from smart dust, act out King Lear in an imagined 22nd-century Macy’s window, and resurrect*

Kirk, Buckminster Fuller, Ghandi, Steve Jobs, and Abe Lincoln—with my hair looking just right while I'm doing it."

How has the concept of work changed?

T.K. Not sure, but this is what I'm working on:

–Research for terrestrial-based participatory 1/6th gravity experience using sensor nets connected to the cultural, scientific, and commercial life of Jamestown prototypical lunar colony.

Primary goals of the engagement: maximize terrestrial participation in colony life; encourage earth-based businesses to use lunar spin-off technologies; help maintain public support for \$1.75 billion/day colony cost.

Other related research:

–Review colony's cultural history, including failed attempt to introduce color into moon's grayscape.

–Look into ongoing debate with neurologists and linguists in fourteen countries and on the moon regarding the possibility that the effects of 1/6 gravity on brain neural pathways may explain colony residents' predilection for enormously long run on sentences.

–Create 4-D diagrammatic narrative for potential lunar tourism venture on human response to hypoxia-motion sickness stress disorder as a predictor of the space sickness syndrome in pre-teen astronauts.

–Investigate sensory and motor function robotic manipulandum in relation to disturbances of balance, locomotion, and whole-body coordination. Question: is there total reorganization of skeletal-motor movement control upon re-entry to 1g?

C.G. Now I don't want to get all gendery here, but in my mother's day they did say that women's brains were particularly adapted to multi-tasking. The collective sharing of thought and action patterns (particularly popular with women), made possible by T.P.S. (Thought Positioning Satellites), led to greatly increased capacities for "executive control" processes in the brain's prefrontal cortex and other key neural regions such as the parietal cortex. This in turn begat the whole Think It / Have It movement, which at one point in 2027 enabled 11% of the world's population to work as "proactors" (user-citizens who play ongoing roles in the continual renewal of brands).

How did designers, artists and researchers influence the evolution of what used to be called the “online environment”?

C.G. Artists were the first adapters to O.I. (Other Intelligence), the deeply intimate connection to the members of one’s polycommunities through personal sensor nets. Separation between the old online world and what remained outside of it became largely semantic.

T.K. The divisions within my profession that had developed during earlier decades gave way to multidisciplinary designer/directors who orchestrated interests, technologies and relationships across all realms. Near-unlimited digital storage led to a collective memory of everything, and trust in the convergence of information, privacy, and security has followed.

In everyday events, I now see the hallmarks of established, trusting, and deeply comfortable relationships between designers and their smart things, relationships fostered by self-managing systems that present a rich palette of options for knowledge gathering, task time-shifting, nomadism, well-being and civic engagement.

The smart objects that surround me act according to a well-balanced ecology of action/reaction. They are agents of change, challenge, and ease—capturing data, engaging in dialogues among themselves and with me, feeding data and compiling and documenting it, and influencing and effecting actions without direct supervision. Reliable, helpful, and supportive, they ingratiate themselves into every niche of my life without imposition. They are the quiet technology that earlier pioneers craved.

And the “classic” (material) world?

C.G. Computer art began around the 1950s with artists writing algorithms. By the late 1990s, media artists were no longer doing their own programming. Because artists no longer had to be scientists and technicians as well as artists, creatives from other concentrations began to implement digital tools and technologies into their more physical media. Thanks to their lead, the digital world and the material world “kissed and made up” after decades of not talking to each other. So the physical world is no longer this stolid thing. It has ambitions, it has tendencies, it is part of our body politic, it has a kind of semi-sentient presence that can be frightening, caring, or sexy.

T.K. This reminds me of Plato’s dialogue “The Symposium”, in which Aristophanes describes the beginnings of the two genders. He suggests that human beings were originally big blob-like entities with double sets

of all the appendages, legs, arms, and sexual organs. Zeus split them apart for being too full of themselves. Since that time, we have been trying to put ourselves back together again.

That searching for the original other half may be futile, but the trip itself is very important. The quest for unity, the urge to reunite what is split apart is an artful–designerly impulse. It restores things to their proper balanced aesthetic. It is trying to create a thing of beauty. That was the aim of media artists, researchers, designers and professors of interactive media of the early 21st century, with their writings, conferences, projects, and experiments. They were attempting to bridge the divided realms of the virtual and the physical and make beauty.

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