

Question 5: From the FUTURE WORLD research strand lectures, choose a theme, movement, or selection of artists or designers that relate to your practice or interests, and construct a 2,500-word essay. Critically assess primary themes, key writers, and relevant practitioners.

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Life is a Game in 2030

Ever since you were young, have you ever dreamt of getting a teleportation superpower so that you could travel to places in time with just a blink of an eye? This question strikes me the most especially with the place where I grew up from, a hustle and bustle of the big city. It became even more inevitable nowadays for people to be stuck in the traffic every day before going to work. This is obviously not the most welcoming way to greet a good day. I am sure that in this instance, a lot would wish that a Genie could pop out in seconds just to make a wish that his/her hustles from going through all the traffic will go into dust. The notion of being on time nowadays is of utmost importance especially when it comes to being on time for the most important meeting with a client or even with your loved ones. Fret not! This will not be science fiction anymore and maybe a few years down the road all the thought that we once all had will turn into reality soon before we knew. In fact, all that you need is just a pair of smart spectacles, where it will bring you to the infinity and beyond. Bearing in mind that this is not any kind of sorcery but an advanced technology which is known as virtual reality (hereinafter known as “VR”).

VR is defined as a 3-D environment that allows users like us to interact in the immersed simulation with devices such as controllers and headsets that stimulate human senses. These devices track down every movement of a user allowing him/her the capability to synchronize with the “imaginary world.” It is a new wave driven by the gaming community to allow the users to enhance their experience in the entertainment industry. Not long after their first launch in the market, VR has expanded to fulfil a broader social groups’ needs. Most people consider VR as a recent trend. However, although VR may sound like a futuristic term, it has been invented and developed since the year of 1956. Back in the days, Morton Heilig, an American cinematographer, who had worked in the Hollywood motion picture industry created a so-called multi-sensory stimulator – Sensorama. This invention provided the features of experiencing sight, sound, and even smell. Morton Heilig created this piece as he would like others to experience how powerful the tool can be as it is designed to provide the “in the movie” effect. (*Mandal, 2013, p. 304*) As it was first launched in the 50s, the device was huge and bulky as compared to the ones that we have nowadays which comes in a much handy size and is easy to carry around as well.



Figure 1. (Fattouh, Lamya, and Alraizzah, 2017, p.78)

According to the latest forecasts by IDC Research (2018), investment in VR and AR will multiply by 21-fold over the next four years, reaching 15.5 billion euros by the year of 2022. In addition, almost half of the larger companies in Europe are expected to have a VR strategy by the year of 2020. (*Iberdrola, 2021*) As we all know, Facebook has always been the most popular social networking platform around the globe. Yet, the highlights revolving around Facebook controversies regarding the pessimistic societal impacts over the years are still left to be unsolved. Not until recently where Facebook had decided to make a bold move by changing their company name to Meta. Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of the company, is planning to build a “Metaverse” which reflects the concept of people sharing virtual realms by using various devices. This provided a gateway to prompt the birth of more related gadgets to be invented so that the users could get prepared for the whole new world that they have always dreamt of. With that said, apart from using the Oculus as a gaming device, Facebook had offered a virtual-reality service called Horizon Workrooms where it allows participants to customise their own avatar and have meetings as if they were having a meeting in a physical conference room.



Figure 2. (Isaac, 2021) Avatars in *Horizon Workrooms* (Left)

Figure 3. (Isaac, 2021) Avatar able to write meeting as usual (Right)

On top of that, this bears the question of whether the tech giant is trying to rebrand Facebook into a more positive identity with the new medium (Meta) leaving no explanation towards the algorithm misinformation such as child safety issues, online harassment just to name a few. A lot of people may, can't help but ask themselves whether this new medium is reliable for the users? Authorities such as legislators had definitely taken a proactive position by legislating new laws that governs the area of law with regards to the usage of VR and any related social media platforms. This all boils down to one aim which is to take precautions and measures to protect the users from being posed at a more disadvantaged position.

Considering that the society will be living hand in hand with the virtual system, no doubt that the economy will be affected indomitably. It is a known fact that the effectiveness of contactless payment has stepped up its game all around the world especially during the pandemic outbreak 2019. Likewise, it is foreseeable that the bank notes might be replaced in the near future. Many countries such as China, Canada, and Sweden have recognized the technology of cashless transactions. The Bank of England has also urged the UK citizens to deposit or spend their banknotes before September 2022 due to the withdrawal of paper notes lately. Additionally, the economists had advised that cryptocurrency will be part of the people's future and the functionality of cash will be slowly coming to an end. The function of cryptocurrency is essentially a new medium of exchange for goods and services under the coded transaction. The users also feel safe using cryptocurrency as a platform as it prevents the value of the coins from being depreciated. Ever since the release of the pioneer anarchic cryptocurrency, Bitcoin, to the public in January 2009, more than 550 cryptocurrencies have been developed, the majority with only a modicum of success. (Farell, 2015, p. 3)

With the ascendancy of cryptocurrencies, NFT (non-fungible token) had slowly become more and more decentralised in the early 2021. Dowling (2021) opined that NFTs are tradable rights to the digital assets (images, music, videos, virtual creations) where its ownership is recorded in a smart contract of a blockchain. For instance, the users could make as many copies as they wish to and share the copies to anyone but, the artist will still retain their own rights by limiting the supply of the digital assets. One of the most attractive attributes about NFT is that the system can verify the ownership of the original artist after

every artwork transaction has been made. Although the NFT might open a leeway for many underrated artists to make a living, the profits or value remains uncertain from a long-term view. (Kugler, 2021) Nevertheless, given that the NFT market had emerged out of cryptocurrencies, the experts explore NFT pricing as somehow related to cryptocurrency pricing. This is partially due to the reasons that in order to purchase an NFT, you will need to use cryptocurrencies as a means of payment.

This may seem bizarre as compared to the digital assets such as digital real estate and 3D furniture which are available for the collectors to purchase. These elements most probably might be able to be used in the virtual world where you get to place the items as in playing Sims a few years later. Nevertheless, everyone could be an artist regarding this digital revolution.



Figure 4. Benjamin, a 12-years-old boy earned about £290,000 by selling his NFT arts (Weird Whales) during school holidays. (BBC, 2021)

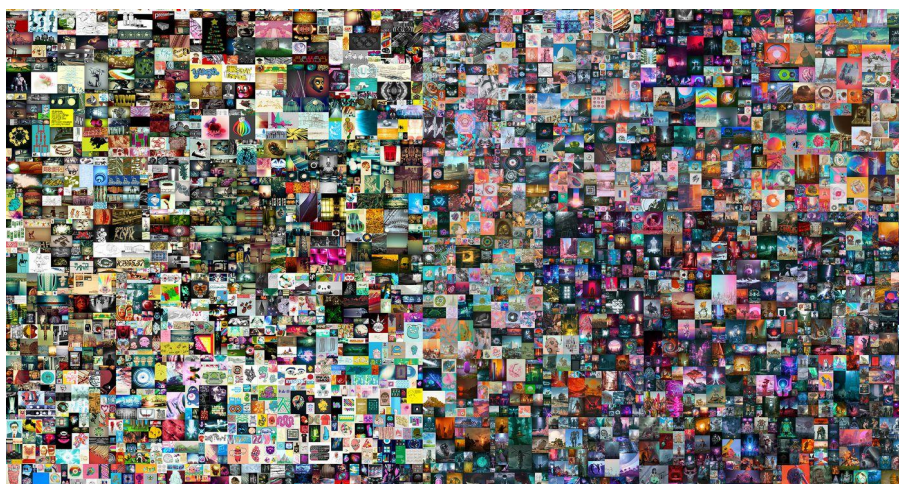


Figure 5. Beeple's collage, Everyday: The First 5000 Days, sold for \$69million at Christie's. (Kastrenakes, 2021)

NFT seems to open up new job opportunities for future job seekers as there are no age limitations imposed on them. Not only so, the authorities have intended to provide principles, as well as hands-on knowledge to plan, design, test and apply games successfully in a law enforcement environment. (Akhgar; 2019) This is to ensure that every user is safe to view and peruse the content on the webpage. Despite making a huge profit with NFT either from the perspective of a creator or collector, up to 800 million global workers will lose their jobs by the year of 2030 and their work force will be replaced by robotic automation. This figure was found in a new report from a consultancy. (BBC, 2017) While the Covid outbreak has resulted in millions of people going jobless, the introduction of machines or artificial intelligence (AI) makes the situation worse. Manpower for heavy-lifting or manufacturing workloads is no longer an issue for factories where they could bring robots into their production lines. Workforce occupations will be decreasing rapidly while the technology-related industries will be needing a massive amount of new blood. This is seen in Metaverse where they have revealed that they require 10,000 employees in Europe for the following years to work and expand on the VR projects. Hence, related parties especially those who were affected must stay wise on the impact of AI in the country. What will happen when physical labours bygone and, where should they go to make a living? Many people might be in disbelief that machines could do their jobs far better than a workman sometimes but that is the truth in reality. Not to mention that coming from the viewpoint of an entrepreneur, cost saving is always the best choice to go as compared to hiring numbers of workmen who could not carry out the same efficiency of workload as the machine. As much as it has been said, fortunately, AI does not conquer the world by taking away all the job roles that society is in need of. Thus, another 133 million new roles may emerge as companies shake up their division of labour between humans and machines, translating to 58 million net new jobs being created by 2022. (Choudhury, 2018)

Along with getting prepared for the future world, the education system definitely should step up and modify the learning structure. The younger generation needs to be prepared to adapt to the employment market as it keeps shifting from time to time. Relevant subjects such as technical knowledge and electric components should be highly focused in

school. It is all about soft skills and cognition for the virtual field as well. In my humble opinion, society will be getting more competitive and intense in getting similar job scopes. Moreover, VR will be affecting the transportation industry. Any occasion could happen in the virtual world. Since people get to travel to any place that they wish in the virtual world, no transport is needed and this may lead to the disruption of the transportation industry. No matter how cool the autopilot car was first introduced, it still could not be compared with the convenience of using VR to get to places.

Besides that, the people's lifestyle would certainly be transformed from our initial daily routine. Society could be experiencing entertainment without leaving the house. An illustration would be spectators watching movies with extra sensory input, and they also get to choose their point of view. Traveling distance is not an issue anymore as VR could take you to anywhere such as groceries shopping, socializing with friends, or working remotely. VR is especially being touted because of the belief that it can enrich the shopping experience beyond that of brick-and-mortar shopping, as it is believed to afford a more immersive experience that can be further augmented with similar information retrieval systems as found in web-based shopping. (*Xi and Hamari, 2021*)

In terms of healthcare, VR is a powerful tool for controlling the visual and auditory input for the brain. Eye tracking, gesture tracking, and biosensors allow doctors to measure the brain and bodies response to the stimulus, giving the doctors a powerful tool to investigate and alter the functioning of the body for the better. (*Shah, n.d*)

In contrast, when everything could be settled down in any private space, how do we deal with our mental health or physical ones? With that said, by focusing too much on VR, we were isolating ourselves far from anyone else. Although it enables us to hang out with friends or family in various locations, the experience is entirely different where you get to meet someone in person and talk to them. On the downside of things, we might be losing social skills and get depressed. Plus, we also need to carry the headset all day and our eyesight will be affected as well.

In other words, VR could go as far as bringing death to life. A controversy happened due to the effect of this technology.



Figure 5. *South Korea's documentary about a woman having a VR encounter with a digital replication of her deceased daughter. (Virtual Reality Society, n.d.)*

Some of the audience gained mixed feelings after watching the documentary. They questioned the ethics of this technological tool whether it showed respect to the deceased person or getting traumatized at the end of the film. Upon all of this, it is in my humble opinion that it showed prospects on the new functionality of VR. The AI simulations of people's personalities will just become more sophisticated and in a perhaps distant future, it may become possible to preserve the information in people's brains. Filling these empty digital ghosts with a real human mind. *(Virtual Reality Society, n.d.)* This innovation allows us to cherish the moments with our loved ones anytime and anywhere.

To sum up, virtual reality has created so many possibilities that we would not know where it would end. This groundbreaking technology skyrocketed around the big cities and, it has switched up the game that we were playing comfortably previously. Living in a future world which is unpredictable and we need to set up our spot real quick so that we will not be eliminated by the others at this stage. In the end, either we will go "winner winner chicken dinner" or lose ourselves at the second stage. So, are you ready, player 1?

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