

The futuristic vistas of these times [1930s, 40s and 50s] are charming to behold today. Vast urban panoramas of vaguely Gothic skyscrapers connected by tunnels and bridges, huge factories in the far distance belching the smoke of mighty industry, all under skies aswarm with ornithopters, ellipsoid zeppelins, dragonfly-winged gondolas, the scene kept just familiar enough for credibility by inclusion of the occasional trolley car and horse far below on uncrowded boulevards...the perspective of long hindsight casts a touching piquancy over the age of optimism and its faith in the future as savior.

-Bruce McCall
 "Futures That Never Arrived" in *Future Perfect: Vintage Futuristic Graphics*, ed. Jim Heimann, Taschen 2002

Of course, it's West's fictional readers who do the "looking backward." But Bellamy's real original readers, even while identifying with West's readers, were also "looking forward." For them the contrast worked in the opposite direction: It was between their world of the 1880s and the future world Bellamy said would evolve from their own nineteenth-century industrial society. For us readers today the contrasts are even more complex. We read with different questions and special ironies: How much of Bellamy's analysis of our system still obtains? Are we, in spite of ourselves, still living a la 1887, or Moving Backward to it?

-Walter James Miller
 "The Future of Futurism: An Introduction to *Looking Backward*", 2000

"...the great city bazaar crushed its country rivals with branch stores, and in the city itself absorbed its smaller rivals till the business of a whole quarter was concentrated under one roof, with a hundred former proprietors of shops serving as clerks..."

-Edward Bellamy
Looking Backward: 2000-1887 1888

03

Architecture as Science Fiction:

The pursuit of architecture is, unavoidably, an exercise in forecasting the future. Though that future might be two months, two years, or 20 years away, it is within the architect's scope of responsibilities that he or she be poised to accommodate a time and a place which does not yet exist, simultaneously creating this future while also reacting to it.

The Future (A Brief History):

The tradition of predicting the future is a time-honored one, whether out of a need to look forward optimistically in dire times, or as a means to celebrate and elaborate on emerging technological advances. Given that we can't know what we know until we know it, however, such predictions cannot escape the context of the moment of their conception. All visions, dystopian and utopian alike, remain framed in the present moment (itself rapidly on its way into the past).

Edward Bellamy's 1888 novel *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* presents (to his 1888 readers) a utopian America as experienced by Julian West, who has fallen under a hypnotic trance and awakened in Boston in the year 2000, and then written the book as a way to explain his situation to his 2000 contemporaries.

06

What will Futuropolis be like? There are almost limitless possibilities. And of course, the planning of Futuropolis reveals our conflicts and uncertainties as well as our hopes and dreams. To speculate on the future is to express what is wrong with our present life.

-Robert Sheckley
Futuropolis: Impossible Cities of Science Fiction and Fantasy, 1978

Deliverables:

The presentation is limited to two 20"x30" boards displayed vertically.

No models or projections from the boards are permitted, although model photographs or drawings may be mounted on boards.

Entries must be received by 10:00 am at the Boston Architectural Center, 320 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02115. Out-of-state competitors' drawings must be postmarked no later than 10:00 am of that same date; the competitor should note the time and call his/her Monitor.

The speculative argument for the design (including siting and the nature of the home's inhabitants) must be explained in the form of text and whatever diagrams and illustrations are necessary to make the argument. Text should be a minimum of 100 words, and a maximum of 200 words.

The following drawings constitute the minimum required documentation for the project:

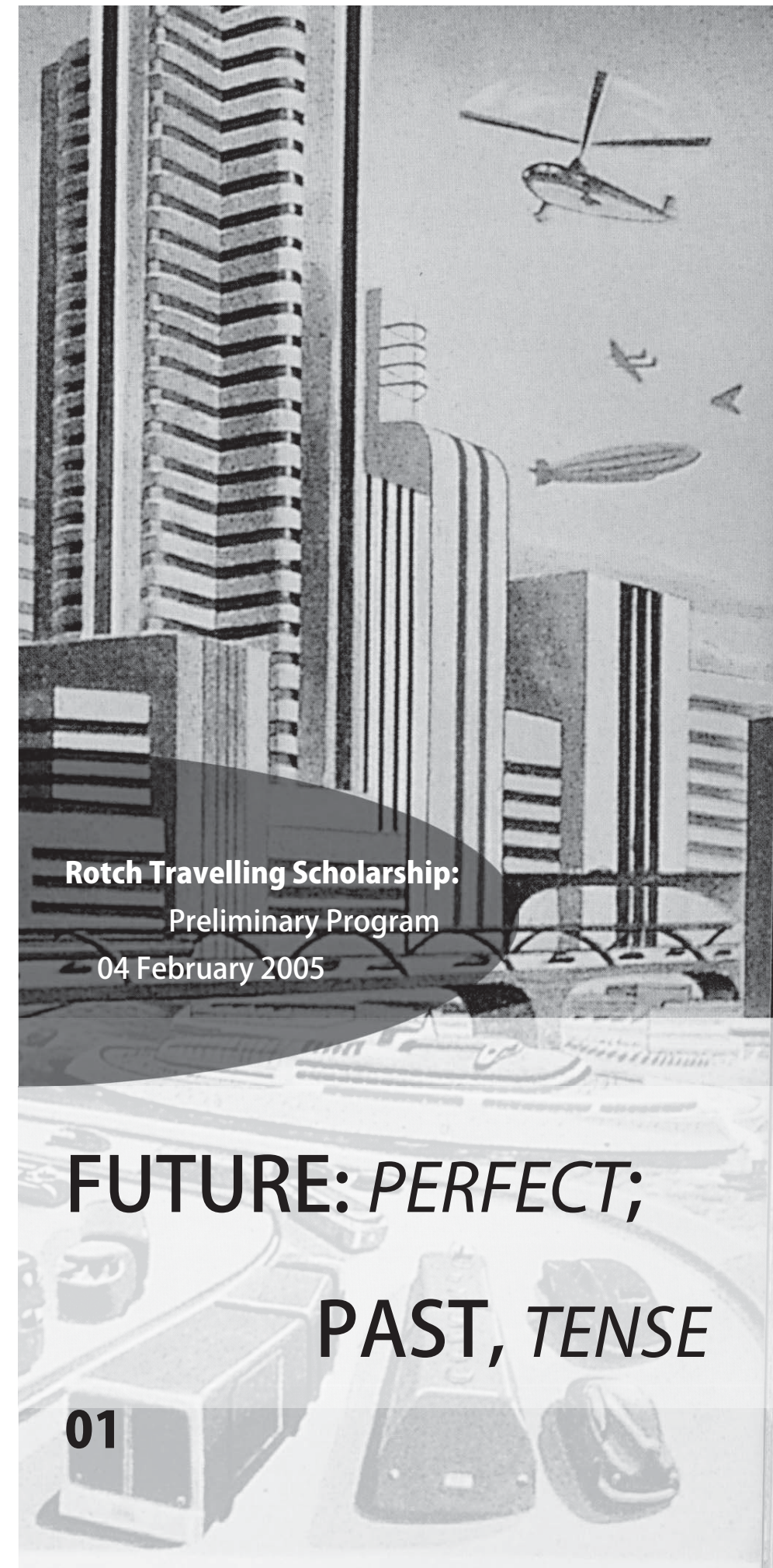
- Site Plan (real or speculative)
- Building Section
- Plans, Sections and Elevations at 1/8"=1'-0" (in the event that any of these drawings is too large to fit on the boards at 1/8"=1'-0", the designer must decide the best scale and manner in which to show them)
- Three-dimensional representation, such as model photographs, perspectives, or axonometric projection, to convey the essence of the project.

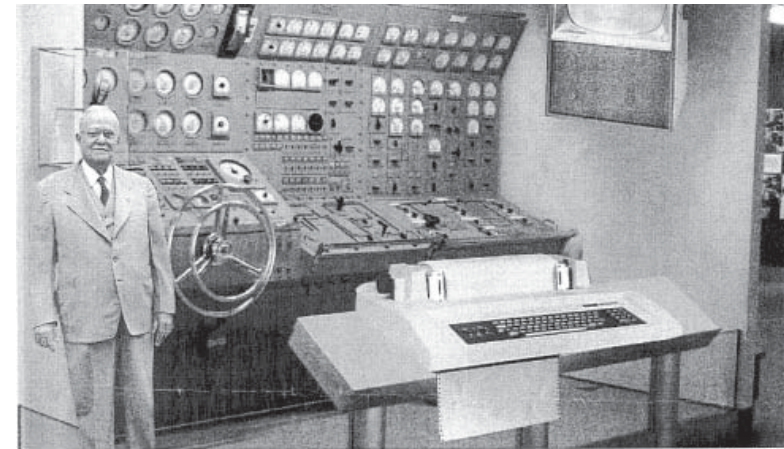
Please note that:

1. the jury has no preference for electronic renderings or hand drawings.
2. finalists should be prepared to provide pdf files — high resolution — of submitted drawings. The Rotch Committee reserves the right to use the drawings for publication.

V. Criteria for Evaluation

- Ability to construct a speculative argument about future conditions while providing a thoughtful architectural solution.
- Demonstration of craftsmanship in designing structure and architectural detail and by the selection of construction materials.
- Capacity to solve the programmatic requirements.
- Quality, completion, clarity and effectiveness of presentation.



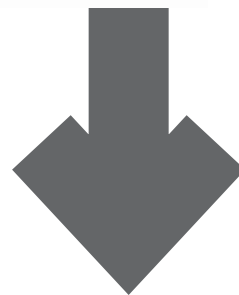


Scientists from the RAND Corporation have created this model to illustrate how a "home computer" could look like in the year 2004. However the needed technology will not be economically feasible for the average home. Also the scientists readily admit that the computer will require not yet invented technology to actually work, but 50 years from now scientific progress is expected to solve these problems.

Computer of the Future
(mid-1950s)



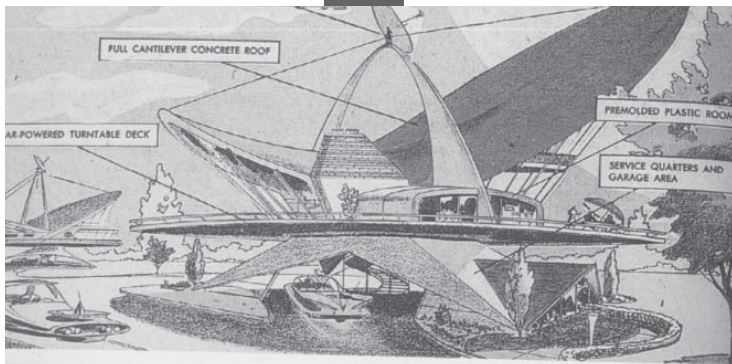
Computer of the Present
(2005)



House of the Present (!)
(2005)

02

House of the Future!
(mid-1950s)



04 the future is

A Single-Family Home in 2055

Though Edward Bellamy never lived into the 20th-century, let alone the 21st, and was therefore unable to see for himself if any of his predictions would bear fruit (some did, actually, including the use of credit cards, and centralized information not unlike the internet which allowed for mass access to shopping, dining and listening to music), his book has long provoked readers to contemplate the future and where we might be headed. An architect who is under the age of 35 in the year 2005, does, however, stand a very good chance of living to see the year 2055, if not still being in practice at that time.

now: 2055

PROGRAM

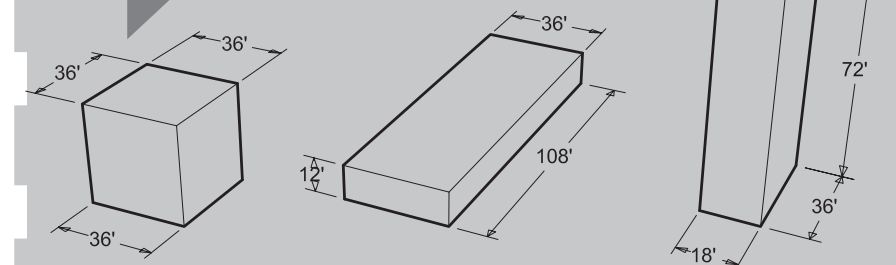
The site is Boston (to include any and all neighborhoods associated with 'Boston' - Cambridge, Allston, Medford, etc.) in the year 2055.

1. The designer is responsible for determining the nature of this site (examples: a single floor in an existing building, a suburban lot, an urban infill, a water site, etc.). It is not necessary to specify an exact location.
2. The designer is also responsible for establishing the composition of the 'single-family'. For example, is this 'family' a couple, a single person, a group of children living alone, a communal society..?

The design of the house must support the above decisions while also providing sufficient explanation of the designer's speculative argument about the future and architecture's role in that future.

Additional Minimal Requirements:

- shelter from the elements
- sleeping
- eating
- hygiene
- recreation



* These are three of infinite volumetric forms representing 46,656 cu ft.

All designs, regardless of location, must fit within a volume no larger than 46,656 cubic feet (a volume equal to a 36' cube)*, with the proportions and distribution of this volume also left to the designer's discretion. Keep in mind that the design does not need to max out this volume. The maximum volume described must contain any outdoor space and accommodation for vehicles and any attendant issues related to the house.

t h e p r o b l e m

The challenge to these willing participants is to look to Boston of 2055, and, through the design of a "single-family house", explore ways in which architecture might participate in the biggest challenges and opportunities of our world 50 years hence.

The objective is not to take on all issues which might arise, nor about 'correctly' guessing what might transpire, but to present a clear argument about how the designer's assumptions might become manifest via an architectural response to them.

Careful thought should be given to the construction of a speculative argument and possible 'categories of futurity' (forms, technologies, social arrangements). It will be assumed that in 50 years human scale and basic needs will be minimally similar to the present day. Other issues such as the composition of the family unit are at the discretion of the designer, but must be adequately explained through the required drawings, diagrams and text.

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