

# 2025: PROVOCATION FROM THE NEAR FUTURE

## PROVOCATION 03

due 27 april 2025

*Imagine something never done before  
by a method never before used  
whose outcome is unforeseen*

- Allan Kaprow

Social Distancing, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Hospital Ventilators, Self-Isolation, Pandemic, Flatten the Curve, Online Classes – recall the unwelcome new vocabulary of 2020. As designers, we operate within the current, cultural milieu. As humans, we search for ways to support, solve, and be in solidarity with efforts to ameliorate and triumph over a crisis. Recall the year 2020 when news channels, blogs, and social media were all abuzz with the need for engineering design efforts to combat a range of urgent health care challenges around the COVID-19 emergency. **In this provocation, we want you to leave the urgency and anxiety of the 2020 COVID-19 crisis behind.**

We invite you to time-travel with us 5 years into the future. It's a lovely Spring day in 2025. The COVID-19 crisis is behind us. The once unwelcome vocabulary above is almost never heard. The anxieties of early 2020 have subsided. Much has changed in the world, though of course, many things have also remained the same. However, there are clearly some new artifacts that are unusual, perhaps even unrecognizable. Some of these are objects that were projected to arrive in the near future – the self-driving car, the widespread use of drones for agriculture, and personal fabrication tools for creating on-demand bespoke couture. However, there is another category of novel, unfamiliar artifacts – those that resulted from the 2020 COVID-19 event. These objects had no reason to exist in that pre-2020 world. In fact, they don't make any sense at all before the 2020 COVID-19 event. But now they are essential, common, almost ubiquitous everyday objects within our 2025 landscapes and lifestyles. In this provocation, your team will select one such interactive digital artifact from 2025 and bring it back to 2020 for us to experience, interrogate, or celebrate.



It's up to your team to decide which object to bring back from 2025 to showcase to our class. Is it a new personal medical device, wearable social connection tool, piece of urban infrastructure, educational appliance, etc? Together you will need to explain its history, evolution, motivation, design, and technical operation. Each team member will be responsible for bringing back the same (or slight variants of) the same 2025 object. If you are unable to bring the actual object back directly (please do not get caught stealing objects from 2025 – we do not have the resources to bail you out of the 2025 prison system), each team member should fabricate unique variants of the object themselves.

You will be looking for guidance on which object from 2025 to select and to what fidelity to express it in a model if you are unable to bring it back directly. Here are some guiding criteria to consider:

- This object should not make sense prior to the year 2020, or at least seem downright ridiculous or silly in 2020.
- The 2025 object you select should be one in widespread use by some demographic of society (teachers, service workers, bartenders, doctors, police, politicians, parents, students, etc)
- This object must be a 2025 object whose design was directly influenced by the 2020 COVID-19 event. Please think broadly and creatively here. It does not have to be literal and immediate. Please recall the full series of events of the COVID-19 crisis. Not just those during the Spring and Summer of 2020. Recall the tapering but relevant episodes of Fall 2020 and into 2021. The slow but eventually return to the “new normal”. Select an object whose genesis is along this timeline of events – not necessarily one from April 2020.
- It must be a physical object. While it may operate within a new 2025 landscape of public policies, economic values, or technological infrastructures, it is the object itself which we are interested in critiquing. If the object you select needs additional context within which to understand and evaluate it, you will need to detail that as part of your introduction and motivation.
- Preference should be given to more interactive objects rather than static ones.
- Since you will be describing a suite of objects (based on the number of members in your team), think about a similar suite of 2025 COVID-19 inspired designs.
- While not required, if you are able to bring back an object with interactive electronics (or have the ability to prototype those experiences) you are strongly encouraged to do so.
- While your first impulse may be to select a dystopian 2025 object, we encourage you to be open to selecting utopian and other artifacts that resulted from the 2020 COVID-19 event.

With each team member in possession of either the genuine 2025 object or an adequately detailed, personally fabricated facsimile of the selected 2025 object, sufficient documentation and study the 2025 artifact can be made. This should be done through images, text, and a brief video that collectively help communicate the design, usage and everyday experience of life with the 2025 object. Fortunately, each team member will have the same object or unique objects within the same family of products to generate a video representing different perspectives of usage and interaction.

We look forward to you showcasing your work in:

- A written document, created by the entire team, detailing the history, evolution, motivation, design, and technical operation of your artifacts. (40% • due 2 May)
- A stand-alone 3–5 minute video featuring each team member’s interactive artifact showcasing usage. Each team-member should contribute at least a full minute of their particular version of the object, representing different perspectives of usage and interaction. Submit one cleanly edited single video file. (40% • due 27 April)
- A live 5 minute “behind the scenes” presentation of the artifacts and video making. You’ll present this to the entire class over Zoom on 29 April. (20% • due 29 April)

Happy travels to 2025...looking forward to what you bring back for us!

