

## Imaginary Museum 2016

### Preserving our Imperfect Imaginary

By Marcus Civin

These days, we are not as advanced as our recent predecessors imagined we might be. There are no flying cars. Self-driving vehicles are still in test phase. Despite our best efforts, science has not halted human aging; we have yet to decode disease.

Still, we have invented invaluable prosthetic limbs and built unbelievably tall buildings. I can make doctor's appointments by pressing a few buttons. While walking to an art exhibit, I can take out my phone and bang in a ridiculous jumble of letters; usually from this jumble, through the magic of predictive text, a message emerges in some semblance of something I more or less wanted to say. I type in BURD OS CREATBE, and my phone knows that I am referring to a BURST OF CREATIVITY. The hastily typed nonsensical MST HEADVO becomes MAKING HEADWAY. H-I- P-E becomes HOPE.

In the air, on our commutes, between meetings, during meetings, right when we're hungry, we of digital hearts desire to be algorithmically textually meshed. These days are days of a new connectivity and everything streaming on-demand. Sometimes electronic dreams seem like our highest human aspirations, but in spite of our massive hurry to interact, we know humanity is far from perfect. Our aspirations might be higher. The quality of the air we breathe is moderate at best. We did that damage. Some among us are certainly savvy, permissive, broad-minded, or slick, but intolerance and inequity are extreme—maybe more so now than in other times.

It is no wonder, then, that we expect our artists and designers and museums and colleges to host inclusive learning moments where we can create with our children, learn how to better manage our relationships and our cities, find solace, challenge bias, promote new consciousness, or take back power through satire. Like mailboxes stuffed with some of everything, we are ferocious, preoccupied, greedy, flawed, and constantly trying to catch up.

What if, for example, we had an Air Museum? MICA Graphic Design MFA student Miles Holenstein proposes that the logo for this museum would contain roaming blue particles. The type treatments throughout the museum would be spare; they would seem to float. Located in Los Angeles, California, one of our smoggier cities, the institution would rent breathing rooms and sell healthy and not-so- healthy air samples; related educational materials and art exhibitions would aim to inspire improved stewardship of the planet.

As Holenstein and his classmates point out in their Imaginary Museums, we require these days the space to sort things out, to take responsibility, reflect, and respond. We want flexible cultural institutions to record what we are in this moment. We want also to preserve what we have not yet completed. We hold up our current aspirations and our best humor and intellect as reflected in our designs for what we think we could become.