



# **PECTATIONS**

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When we began the brainstorming process for this project, the future quickly became our focal point. We reflected on Rachel Kuo's podcast and pondered the question: is the future already colonized? This provocation led us to several other queries: If the future is already colonized, is there any hope at all? If the future is not yet colonized, how might we imagine a methodology to keep it that way? And if the future is potentially colonized but there is still hope, how do we get things back on track? As we considered these questions, we came to a consensus that we cannot imagine the future without considering queerness. Imagining a future that's equitable and inhabitable for everyone requires a complete deconstruction of our current social condition. It was from this revelation that we began to consider the conditions necessary for imagining such a future. This project is rooted in inquiry, not prescription.

One roundabout and perhaps laborious method for imagining an Afro-Asian future is doing the opposite: imagining what it will not look like. Capitalism is an excellent starting point for such an exploration. Global capitalism is a ruthless mechanism that co-opts trends and turns them into profitable goods. Suddenly anti-system social phenomena like LGBTQ+ movements, for example, are taken up by fashion conglomerates like Adidas in their yearly Pride Collections. Coupled with a generous donation and attached tax write off, major capitalistic enterprises create the facade of 'wokeness'. Consumers may not realize the extent of such deception, and unknowingly support and reify notions that capitalism can be included in our future when, in fact, capitalism is the very thing destroying it.

The first few songs before the apocalypse sequence illustrate the contradictions between this carefully curated 'wokeness' and the implications of such portrayals. Ariana Grande's "7 Rings" and Vava's "我的新衣" illustrate shallow aestheticizations of Afro-Asian fusions that portend to convey a togetherness and enmeshment but, instead, reveal a capitalist agenda dedicated

to a minimal engagement with cultures and peoples. Ariana Grande's appropriation of Japanese culture and language (not just in this song, but also in the merchandise she sells on her website), theft of drag queen Farrah Moan's sequined dress design, and reduction of Blackness to twerking all speak to the harmful effects of such practices of aestheticization. Vava wears braids and cornrows in her hair and even has a product placement ad for beats in her music video. Yet another example of fabricated cultural fusions as a ploy to further a capitalistic agenda and amplify the voices of those who already take up too much space.

Reimagining an equitable future requires a reconsideration of binaristic gender performance. Toxic masculinity and the hyper-sexualization of womxn are global epidemics; as such, we see these social values reflected in the music realm. In our soundtrack, we explored how these attitudes appear in both African and Asian diasporic cultures. To capture these ideas sonically, we included the track "Trapanese" by lil ricefield. We chose "Trapanese" because the song clearly shows how lil ricefield, as an Asian American, has been musically influenced by hip hop and rap which, of course, are inextricably linked to Black American culture. Even lil ricefield's name is a play on popular Black artists prominent in the music industry today like Lil Wayne, Lil Yachty or Lil Uzi Vert.

In the section of "Trapanese" we chose, lil ricefield raps: Shawty think I love her but I'm on to the next / Now she tellin' big tales, tyrannosaurus rex / That hoe be textin' me she just askin' me for sex so I fuck her from behind like a thousand years of death. The misogynistic nature of the lyrics in "Trapanese" further demonstrates how harmful attitudes towards womxn and their bodies transcend cultures. He raps, for example, about one womxn, then clarifies that he does not love her and can quickly move on from her to the next. The next womxn he raps about he calls a "hoe" that wants his sexual attention. He gives it to her, implying a power dynamic at play, and

likens his sexual act to a “thousand years of death,” which is a reference to *Naruto*, a popular Japanese manga. The sexist sentiments expressed in this song deeply troubled us as a group and raised concerns around the normalized objectification of womxn’s bodies.

Those who hope to emulate the flashy and most profitable parts of mainstream hip hop and rap can easily assume that for their music to be successful, it must further perpetuate harmful narratives. Thus, we concluded that the Afro-Asian iterations we see today in songs like “Trapanese” are incompatible with the egalitarian future we hope to establish and live in.

In our soundtrack, the audio jumps from the upbeat and fast paced tune of “Trapanese” into the mellow and melancholy croon of Frank Ocean singing on his track “Pink Matter.” In our selection Frank sings, “Sensei replied / ‘What is your woman? / Is she just a container for the child?’ / That soft pink matter / Cotton candy, Majin Buu.” Frank and his Sensei are grappling with what a womxn is to a man. Is she simply an object of desire? Is she and can she be anything more than just “a container for the child?”

These lyrics, in addition to highlighting themes of uneven gender dynamics, led our group to questions of the future and how it will be populated. We want our soundtrack to pose questions about *who* can populate the future. How might queerness continue to inform new modes of kinship and relationality as we reimagine what the future will look like? With this question in mind, we wanted to complicate our viewer’s notions of womxnhood, wombs, and the role of autonomy in creating the future.

To postulate questions of womxnhood, we chose to depict Beyoncé and her daughter, Blue Ivy, in Beyoncé’s music video “Blue.” Though we all recognized the singer’s powerful and influential position in the music world, we also reflected on how marketed and public each of Beyoncé’s pregnancy announcements have been. Through our soundtrack and video, then, we

wanted viewers to acknowledge how often society romanticizes the pregnancy of a few, thus narrowing the boundaries of what womxnhood “should” be and dismissing the various ways in which an individual can choose to be a womxn.

To illustrate what a transition to the future might look like, we turned to the apocalypse as a potential threshold between the old world and the new world we hope to build. We imagined apocalypse not in a religious context, but rather as one way to illustrate a shift towards the future. This crucial metamorphosis is fundamentally fueled by revelation. We aimed to convey the tensions and contradictions inherent in apocalypse with the chaotic noises in Farai’s video, followed by the joyful and hopeful gospel chorus and the subsequent quietude as the flowers burning. As Grace Lee Boggs suggests that the system we have is failing us, Shannon Funchess, a queer artist, is depicted with a beam of light. The convergence of Boggs speaking truth to power and Funchess ushering light into the darkness demonstrates the crucial roles queerness will take on in producing clarity.

Although we chose to separate the word apocalypse from its biblical meaning, we were still interested in exploring the mythology and symbolism of an apocalypse. As such, we chose to analyze the figure of the white horse, which is portrayed as a part of the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” The horse as a symbol appears three times in our video: first in VaVa’s “我的新衣,” where we considered the future as an already colonized space. The second time it appears is during the chaos of the apocalypse we believe to be necessary, where we have Childish Gambino’s “This is America” playing. Here, we reversed Gambino’s video to symbolize the non-linearity of time. The third appearance of a horse is at the very end of the soundtrack, where we decided to end on a shot from Patrice’s “We are the Future.” There, a woman riding a white horse appears with the words, “From girls to women to queens to slaves to goddess” displayed below her. The horseman

typically imagined on a white horse of a more “traditional” apocalypse is here replaced by a Black womxn, which we felt represents womxn empowerment and supports our apocalypse narrative.

To imagine a future that celebrates queerness, we chose to show clips of Shannon Fuchess (Light Asylum’s head singer), BTS’ colorful “Boy with Love,” and Teyana Taylor’s “WTP” voguing video, which we cut with Amanda Palmer’s visuals of revolutionary *pussies*, a word they reclaim. Indeed, we’re convinced that the future should be a place for fluidity which mandates a deconstruction of heteronormativity. Though queerness can be co-opted by capitalism, like any other revolutionary enactment, capitalism is a system sustained by the (re)production of the nuclear family. As such, queerness exists as a kind of refutation of the capitalist schema and provides an important entry point into futurity.

The queer Afro-Asia future we imagine is founded in a hope that rejects queer nihilism, a theory posited by Lee Edelman that describes the future as a fundamentally heteronormative space. In *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz responds to Edelman, arguing that queer nihilism is a kind of privilege that minorities facing multiple oppressions cannot afford. According to Muñoz, queer people of color having hope in the future *is* an act of resistance. In claiming their existence, Muñoz believes that queer people of color cannot be erased. We chose to demonstrate this at the end of our soundtrack, utilizing the chorus and video of “We are the Future.”

As the *Manifesto* by the Black Quantum Futurism Collective states, the future is for everything that’s rendered illegible. The politics of valuation we have today have deeply failed those rendered illegible, and thus we need a new kind of world-building. Or, as the queer witches Camille Ducellier’s movie *Sorcières queer (Queer witches)* say, “We don’t wish for the end of *the* world; we aspire for the end of *your* world”.

## Soundtrack (in order)

“7 Rings” - Ariana Grande

“我的新衣” / “My New Swag” - VAVA

“Chicken Noodle Soup” - J-Hope feat. Becky G

“Trapanese” - lil ricefield feat. seiji oda

“Pink Matter” - Frank Ocean

“Space is a Place” - Farai

“We Are the Future in the Present” - PATRICE

“No Fear Choir” - Garageband

“This is America” - Childish Gambino

“Grace Lee Boggs On Being Human” - Grace Lee Boggs

“Dark Allies” - Light Asylum

“Boy With Luv” - BTS feat. Halsey

“WTP” - Teyana Taylor

“Louie Louie” - Toots & Maytals

“We Are the Future in the Present” - PATRICE