

Art, Technology & Climate Change

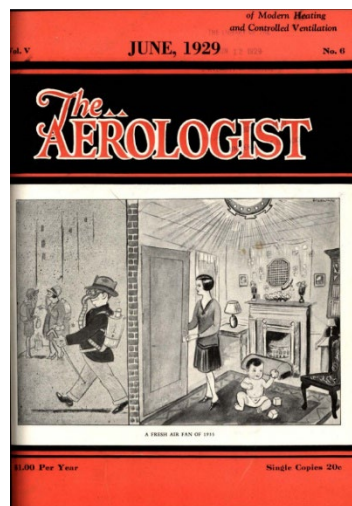
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For the first time in human history, humans now occupy a geological epoch that is driven primarily by anthropogenic activity¹. This era, known as the Anthropocene, is largely characterized by an inseparable relationship with high-density energy - also known as 'fossil fuels' - which forever changed the course of the planet. Beginning with the manipulation of fire, humans have used technology to address anthropocentric needs unsolved by nature alone, "extending and amplifying human power over nature"². Viewed through a deterministic lens, the human fabric was forever changed by the development of machines. Ancient civilizations are often classified by their technologies, with rapid development the mark of a sophisticated society. "What separates the instruments of fully developed technology from primitive tools is that they have, so to speak, detached and dissociated themselves from the model that nature is able immediately to offer them"³. However, there are other aspects beyond technological innovation that have shaped our relationship with nature and our dependence on mechanical technologies.

Technological advancement is a coupled social-technical phenomenon. The direction of technological innovation during the preceding 200 years has often been set by social trends more than science, such as those motivated by the industrial revolution and the capitalistic method of resource distribution. Similarly, adaptation to climate change will respond to social conditions under the pressures of humans' needs, disparities, expectations, desires and injustice. **This course will explore the technological developments associated with energy consumption in the 20th century to understand how mitigation and adaptation strategies can also have strong social and experiential impacts.** Students will explore theories of both social and technological sustainability in an interdisciplinary group of art, architecture and civil engineering students.



Everything's at its best in Cellophane, 1956. DuPont, the maker of cellophane, launched an aggressive and expansive marketing campaign geared towards women, exploiting the germ anxieties connected to human touch.



Aerologist Cover, 1929. The first trade journal on air conditioning predicted that air conditioning would become indispensable in American life - more than the radio or automobile.



Still from H.G. Wells' 'Things to Come', tells the story of a Europe devastated by plague and rebuilds as a technocratic civilization, solving all of humanity's problems with machines. 1936.

¹ Paul J. Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind," *Nature* 415, no. 6867 (2002): 23-23, <https://doi.org/10.1038/415023a>.

² Henry Dicks, "Nature as Mentor: Foundations of Biomimetic Epistemology," October 10, 2018.

³ Kapp et. al. 1930, 302, referenced by Dicks 2018