



ILLUSTRATION

The Future of Us Exhibition

Coming Together to Dream

Singapore launched The Future of Us exhibition from December 2015 to March 2016 to present visions of the city's future. In this essay, the exhibition's Creative Director **Gene Tan** and Deputy Director **Wan Wee Pin** illustrate how their innovative presentation of urban plans encouraged citizen ownership of the future.

In 2015, Singapore marked 50 years of independence with a year-long series of celebrations. The Future of Us exhibition was the capstone event that aimed to present future visions and plans of Singapore in everyday situations. Matching visions to plans has always been a universal problem for urban governments. According to an ancient proverb, "a vision without a plan is just a dream, and a plan without a vision is just drudgery; but a vision with a plan can change the world". In many cities, individual agencies and organisations present unilateral visions of the future to the public. This results in a fragmented vision of the future for the citizen. To circumvent this problem, the

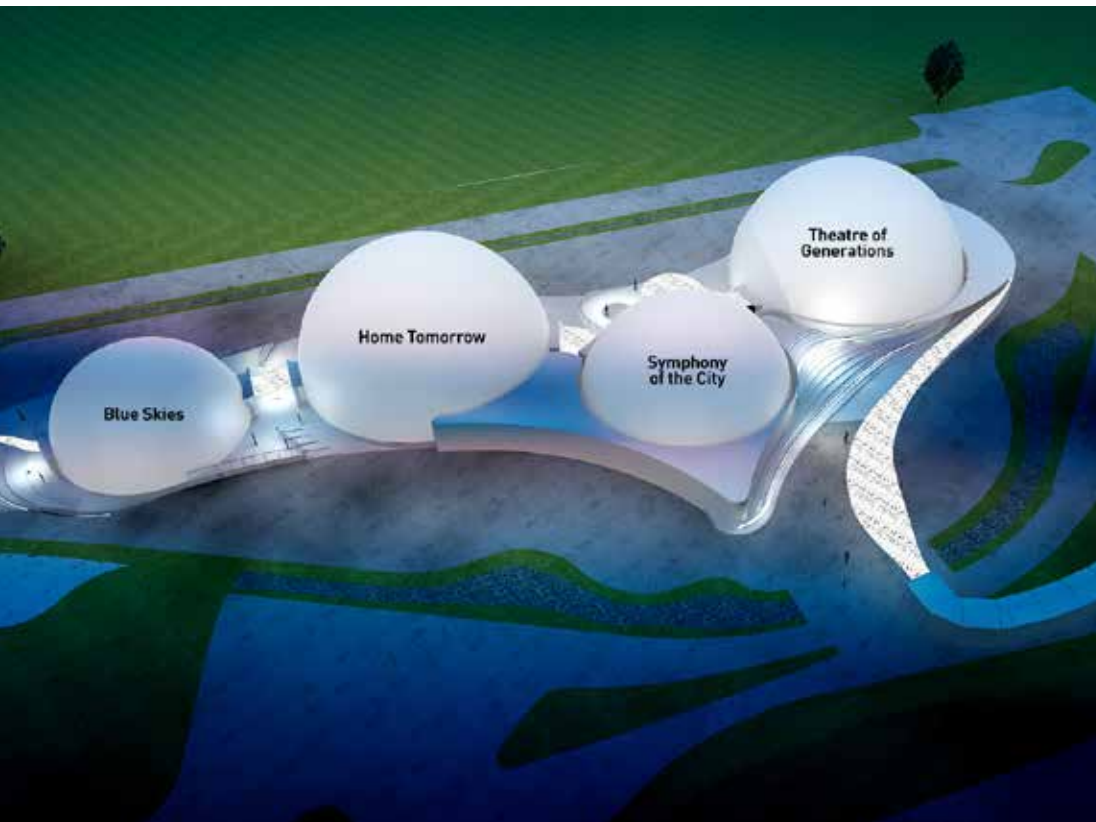
Future of Us team consolidated the future visions of more than 140 public and private agencies.

The team also reviewed 15,000 ideas from the public, from which we identified four key areas of concerns for the future: sustainability of the environment; transportation; caring for the community; and the desire to create an inclusive society. The team combined the visions of the future and public concern into a core narrative. Four protagonists were created for visitors to relate to the challenges of the future, as well as, possible future solutions through urban innovations.



(Left) **Gene Tan** was the Creative Director of The Future of Us exhibition.

(Right) **Wan Wee Pin** was Deputy Director of The Future of Us exhibition project team.



01

The Future of Us team decided at the outset to break through the traditional exhibition format and selected Marina Boulevard, a garden, as the site for the exhibition. Unlike a building with pillars and walls, a garden location eliminated the spatial limitations for the exhibition. This made it possible to create an unbroken space that represented a seamless narrative.

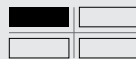


02

The space outside the exhibition was converted into an inclusive play area.



The Four Protagonists of The Future of Us



Ravina is a 38-year-old horticulturist, whose ambition is to grow more plants in the city. Ravina envisions a “sky farm” city. In her vision, green urban solutions, such as the hydraulic farm, produce vegetables for consumption using minimal resources. This results in a city with low carbon outputs. Ravina’s dream of a sky farm city addresses the increasing interest amongst Singaporeans on environmental issues—in particular, we are addressing future urban farming possibilities for the “grow-your-own-food” movement.



Yixin is a 30-year-old designer, whose ambition is to design universally accessible spaces, products and environments. She envisions “multi-generation play spaces” in the city. In her vision, design has enabled peoples of all ages and abilities to work, live and play together, without barriers. Yixin’s dream reflects the increasing desire for inclusive designs and architecture amongst Singaporeans to accommodate people of all abilities. We strive to portray urban design possibilities for a better designed future.



Faizal is a 22-year-old entrepreneur. His ambition is to allow city dwellers to share rides, so as to reduce road congestions and air pollution. Faizal aims to create a transport-accessible city, where people seek to have access to, rather than ownership of, vehicles. Faizal’s dream reflects the growing concerns that many Singaporeans have towards transport and mobility issues. We hope to present the various transport innovations for a more mobile urban future.



Joseph is a 45-year-old social worker. His ambition is to create a strong network of social support. Joseph’s vision is to create a caring society. In his vision, a strong support network enables swift response to accidents and medical emergencies, and gives people of all abilities opportunities to give and receive help. Joseph’s dream highlights the increasing demand for caregivers and community solutions in the face of an ageing population. We wish to portray a strong volunteer network through community innovations to address these needs.

A Walk-Through of The Future of Us

Visitors to the exhibition experienced four domes sequentially: the Theatre of Generations; Symphony of the City; Home Tomorrow; and Blue Skies.

At the Theatre of Generations, they watched a short film that began in 1965 with the hopes and dreams of the first generation of Singaporeans. The scene then shifted to 2030, where the aspirations of the citizens reflected those of their forebearers.

In the second dome, the Symphony of the City, a table presented different levels of the city, from underground structures to high-rise buildings. A wraparound multimedia screen expressed the different layers and

highlighted future urban plans such as the Changi Airport Project Jewel, Biophilic City Development, Future Tuas port, Rail Corridor and Greater Southern Waterfront project.

At the third dome, Home Tomorrow visitors found a floating city in the clouds, where urban innovations were embedded into the everyday lives of future citizens.

The team recognised the importance for each visitor to take ownership of the narrative, hence in the Blue Skies dome, visitors could submit their aspirations and wishes through a “wishing well” installation that beamed their responses to the top of the dome.



03

The Theatre of Generations featured a 360-degree short film that connected the hopes and dreams between generations of Singaporeans. The film used a time-lapse approach to fast-forward from 1965 to 2030 to portray the similarities in the hopes and dreams of both generations, and how the older generation had inspired their grandchildren—our protagonists.



04

In the Symphony of the City, a 270-degree wraparound multimedia screen depicted the urban future of Singapore city by showcasing the different levels of the city from underground structures to high-rise buildings. The designs included water taxis, vertical farms, a floating hawker centre and an underground Science City.



05

Home Tomorrow showed the collective vision of over 100 private, public and people organisations. The installation depicted scenes of urban living in a future Singapore—showcasing healthcare, technology, learning, sustainable living and agriculture, both as ecosystems and in their day-to-day functions. It also drew on more than 15,000 public contributions, including the concept of the floating public housing.

The creation of a coherent narrative enabled another layer of interactivity, which was to discuss the exhibited vision of the future. The discussions took place through the SGfuture Conversations, a series of public engagement sessions organised by government ministries and statutory boards. These conversations provided Singaporeans with a platform to share their ideas as well as commit to actions and plans to bring about tangible changes. More than 20 such sessions took place, and over 1,000 activists, experts and members of the public participated. The conversations bridged the intangible future with the concrete considerations of the present day.

The exhibition's innovative approach brought citizens closer towards urban planning and increased transparency in the policy process. We believe when citizens can envision the future, they are able to take ownership of it. ●

“ There are endless possibilities ahead. I would like a kind and caring society and I will volunteer in my free time to achieve that. ”

Shu Wei, 33, participant

“ To help the plants live. I will make sure nobody will cut trees. ”

Anvika, 6, participant





06

The Blue Skies dome was a giant wishing well that enabled visitors to pen down their hopes and dreams for Singapore. After they had done so, their hopes and dreams were projected to the top of the dome to form word clouds. A total of 479,963 submissions were collected.



07

Various organisations and interest groups discussed urban renewal in Singapore during the SGfuture Conversations.