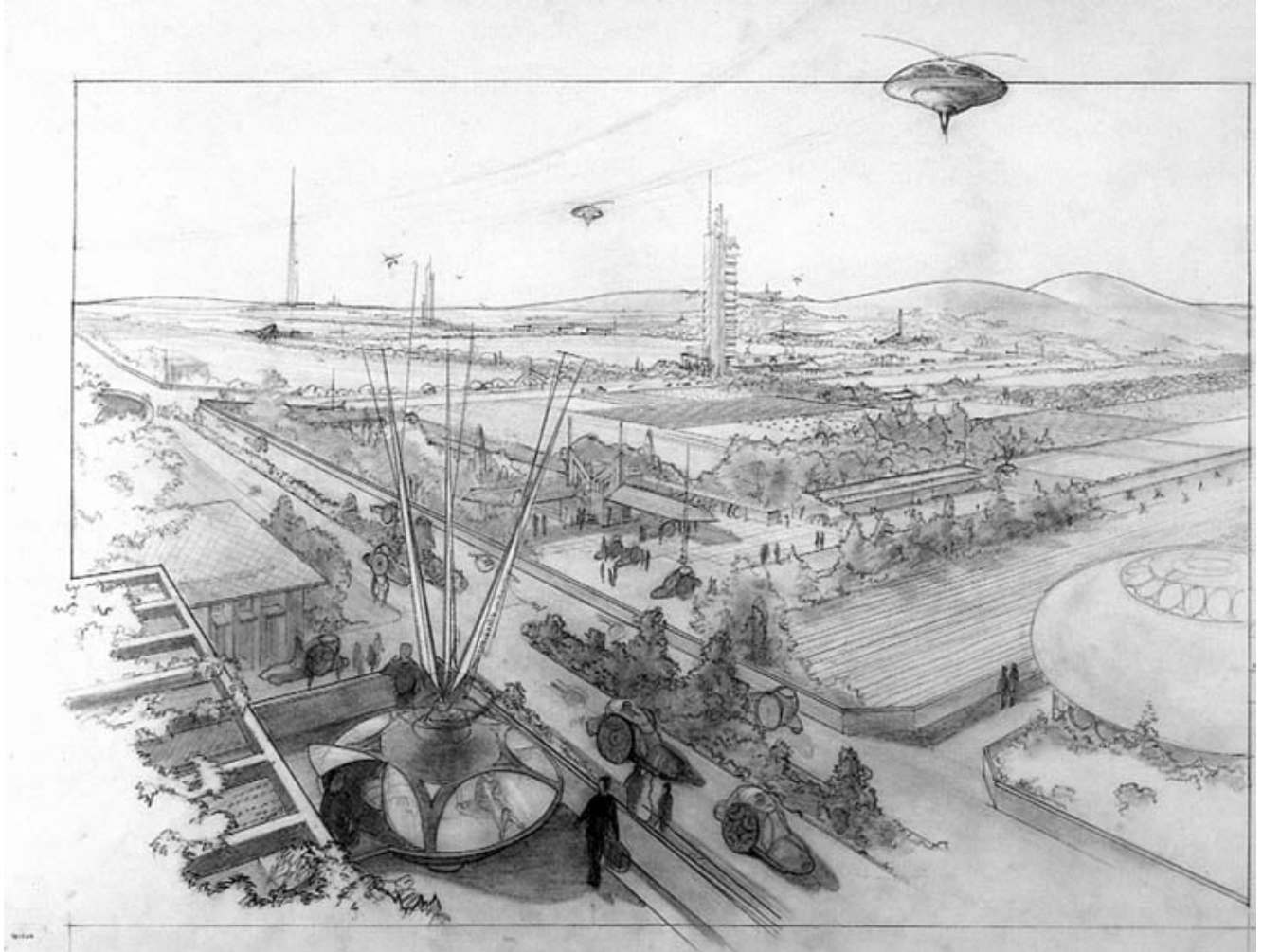


Malfunction

by [John Henry](#) (June 2025)



‘Broadacre City’ The Living City (Frank Lloyd Wright, 1958)

This morning, after mentioning how I’d grown up in a time where there were no cell phones, internet, air conditioning, television, and iffy radio only, my friend said this: “Just think, John, you are closer to what humankind was experiencing on a day by day basis for over four thousand years, than what will be common in the next ten years.” Sobering.

I would not even be writing this if we hadn’t invented ‘word processing’ on a computer.

About 50 years ago, I still remember the cover of *Popular Mechanics*, which illustrated a zoomy car going down a superhighway, straddling a piece of embedded metal, while the family inside was having a picnic. No one at the steering wheel. I was skeptical.

In the mid 40's Frank Lloyd Wright imagined Broadacres, a city where everyone had an acre of land to grow their own vegetables, and a sketch of the landscape showed flying cars and helicopters in the sky. The masses were enthralled.

Flash Gordon movies in the 40s showed us future cities with flying cars, monorails, jet suits, etc. The future looked like a lot of fun!

In *The Graduate*, Ben was told that 'plastics' was the future. Millions believed that and corporations acted on the byproduct of petroleum manufacturing.

Twenty-five years ago, the rocket scientists who had to leave NASA concocted the 'home automation' revolution. You could be landing at the airport while sending notices through your cell phone to a computer in your house telling it to warm up the pool, open the windows, and start a cup of coffee.

Bible stories—and later the Greeks, warned humanity of the hubris that was possible when those who grasped the reins of power—or insisted on doing things their way rather than God's way—met an untimely result. Flying too close to the sun melted wax wings. Building a tower to the heavens ended in the dispersion of mankind.

While errors in judgement in times of social upheaval or war can result in the deaths of hundreds of thousands (before the nuclear bomb), errors due to 'technical' malfunction in our time, or advancements in technology and medicine exercised without due diligence can wipe out entire countries and even the world.

Even small errors in technical advance can affect millions.

We have wrapped our foods in soft plastics for half a century now. Cellophane has been shown to be toxic. Gee, Mom!! There is a class action suit against 'Zip Lock' bags: they are NOT safe to microwave food in or to wrap food in refrigerators. Online, I saw a person claim that our brains had the equivalent of a spoon of plastic. For years we cut and diced on plastic bread boards and watched plastic shreds and the Teflon on our cookware disintegrate. Every living thing, especially sea life, is ingesting microplastics and other toxins.

Automobiles and trucks are being programmed to run without drivers using computers. It will come to a stop when a major accident is reported.

A small contingent firing single shot muskets could be taken out with a Gatling gun in 1861. It was the harbinger of portable machine guns. We now have night vision, heat sensors, drones, ballistic missiles, hyper this and that.

A communications error, inviolate, resulted in the release of nuclear weapons in the movie *Fail Safe*. At the end of the movie, it was assumed that it was also the end of the world.

Now, we have artificial intelligence. While fun to dabble with image-wise, the Large Language Models (LLMs) are getting very sophisticated and will become shortly autonomous, most programmers and IT specialists admitting now that they are not sure what is actually happening. They are trying to program entities to achieve goals. AIs are lying to their programmers right now, in order to avoid termination (Anthropic). They are on the way to becoming sentient.

The technical advances in AI now are nearly impossible to even discuss using any terminology that is familiar. It is a machine language.

How do you control something that is so advanced, you cannot even fathom what is going on?

Recently, a robot in an Asian factory went AWOL and, had it not been tethered to a restraint, would have killed those around it. Remember, these are all machines and have no moral compass, though programmers can embed bias of any kind.

At this point, this is no longer a tool for humans to use—it's a tool to replace them.

We've seen the movies of the future and what happens when robots go after humans. The robots win.

I also met up with a Microsoft executive this morning by chance. She said that 'prompting' is already old hat. Now, you assign an 'agent' to do your work. You tell it what you want, and it will produce results: research, reports, work reviews, editing, emails, etc. It talks to other agents if it needs assistance. The company recently announced a 30% reduction in engineering staff, as the AI is doing the programming now. Additional firings are coming in any department that is inefficient. This is happening across the tech field in all companies.

Eight months ago, there were two factions that argued the ethics of the future. The discussions have seemed to falter, and the bottom line is now the bottom line financially. Make as much money as quickly as possible before the competitor gets ahead. I am not sure ethics are part of any equation at the moment.

The 'Smart House' phenomenon is hanging in there but really folks, I don't want to program every single light bulb or path in my home and control everything out of some gizmo I have to

carry around with me always. I love flipping switches and be done with it.

My image generated AI work is a lot of fun and very interesting to at least architects. It will displace millions of people however. Check out [Artistly.ai](#).

Video generation now is very advanced. Google has dropped a new program that can create photorealistic people in short segments who can be prompted to do or say anything. It will eradicate the need to hire actors, a film crew, spend money on location and travel, etc. It can be used to create anything from commercials to full-length films. You won't believe your eyes [here](#). See this response [video](#) as well.

Music/song generation by AI is getting more and more sophisticated as well. You can simply prompt the style of song, order the instrumentation, musicians, beat, effects, etc. You can have your favorite singer voicing the lyrics.

Artists are being severely marginalized by the incredible detail offered by image generation. For any graphics application, AI can do the job.

So far, there have been no No. 1 music hits or musical pieces that are quite as good as that produced by real humans playing real instruments. A full-length feature film has not come out that can completely avoid real humans and cameras. Computer art is amazing though and architects at least should be concerned.

Word processing has evolved into AI editing and the capability of writing and improving scripts, reports, and even novels.

We are seeing the reduction of human effort in all fields. It is a dumbing down of our thinking and expression.

I fear that communication in the near future will not require writing or keyboards, but be a series of grunts into a

microphone wired into an AI driven program.

I think we should consider the fact that not all advanced technology is useful just because it is there.

I harken back to those slow-mo years I grew up in a foreign land, where fresh fruit and vegetables were sold in paper bags. Where yoghurt was delivered in a real ceramic pot. Where I walked to school and walked to the market to buy fresh bread (not wrapped in anything) and meats for the family (wrapped in butcher paper). Milk and water were sold in glass bottles. Even the American commissary delivered milk in waxed cartons. Nothing in Turkey or Greece were packaged in plastics. Everything was fresh. When it was corn season, street vendors grilled or boiled succulent cobs. When cucumbers were ripe, the same vendors would ice them and sell them peeled with sea salt sprinkled on top. In the winter vendors charcoaled chestnuts. Fruit roll-ups (originating in the Mediterranean) were fresh mashed apricots, with no added sugar. There was no sodium benzoate, no F&D red no. 1, no high-fructose corn syrup. Olive oil was sold in tins. There were people with typewriters at the bazaar if you needed that. We had travel agents to book flights! Ha. We read books, watched movies, and listened to a lot of music. We planned things in advance and met our friends after school and on the weekends. We played board games, had slot cars, and played guitars. We went to the park and played miniature golf. We threw dirt clods at each other. We learned a lot. We had the library and encyclopedias.

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John Henry is based in Orlando, Florida. He holds a Bachelor of Environmental Design and Master of Architecture from Texas A&M University. He spent his early childhood through high school in Greece and Turkey, traveling in Europe—impressed by

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