

# IS THE FUTURE OVER?

By Abel Cervantes

The 20th century inaugurated a time that today we see dying. After the formidable technological impact that the nineteenth century brought -the invention of photography, X-rays, cinema, etc.- a promise of progress was built in the middle class that positioned universities and their academic training as the opportunity of a promising future: a solid economic outlook that allows anyone to buy the goods they want. Happiness was access to goods. And the future guaranteed that we would have access to whatever we wanted as long as we had a professional career.

OPINION

With the advent of the Internet, and specifically of social networks, the fantasy fell apart. 2020 and its global Covid verified what we suspected: we have reached the end of an era in which the future was a space we longed for and we would reach at the end of days. The end of days is nothing like what we imagined. Or maybe we had imagined it that way, but we had not noticed it. Over the past decades science fiction movies have projected a bleak future where there is only death and destruction. I don't remember if it was Fredric Jameson or Slavoj Žižek who mentioned that in current science fiction movies it is easier to imagine the destruction of humanity than the end of capitalism.

When I check the morning papers I notice with surprise that the Covid has caused more economic damage than health. Mexico City, one of the regions most affected by the virus, is an example: hospitals are saturated, economic activity paralyzed. If someone has the audacity to walk the streets of the city, they will find a larger than usual number of posters advertising the rental of real estate. Especially in local shops. Informal trade (which represents a very large percentage of the Mexican economy) is



Illustrations by Julio Derbez

in ruin. Deaths from coronavirus in Mexico are around 130 thousand. And worldwide there are almost 2 million. If you look at the OMS figures, you will notice that diabetes causes a similar number of deaths worldwide.

The virus has the ability to adapt to environments and spread at great speed. But beyond the damage to health, it has shown a panorama that some of us still cannot see: people are dying not only because their immune system has been affected, but also because of the inability of governments to provide an ideal health service. Due to the incompetence of the communities to build an economic system that guarantees survival for a period of time without the need to work.

Art has imagined scenarios that, together with science, solve some of the most urgent problems to be addressed. However, most of these problems do not take into account neither the economy nor the populations that do not have access to technologies. Sometimes it is difficult to imagine that while some of us think about living on Mars, others are still concerned about having access to a stream to drink water.

Have we lost our ability to imagine a non-catastrophic future as James or Žižek announced? From my point of view, we have reached the end of the future. We begin an era of annihilation where only those who adapt the fastest will survive. The annihilation, of course, will not only be around health, but fundamentally about the economy. And what path could art start to initiate a path where economic annihilation does not happen? ♡

