
teknion
future
smart

ready for the future
when it arrives

We envision a path forward, inspired by an informed optimism, equipped with tools that are simple, smart and able.

04

Startled by a global event that arrived without warning, a virus that leaps across borders and boundaries, we see that we are, all of us, connected by a fragile biology, as well as the aims we share. Can we now enlarge our thinking? Can we make room for a more inclusive sense of purpose? Will we shape a future that looks like the world we want to see?

05

“Predicting the future is easy, getting it right is the hard part.” Anonymous

06

At Teknion, we remain optimists. We envision a decade of renewed creative energy as we find new ways to conduct our lives and our work. And while we cannot predict with certainty the course of cultural or corporate evolution, we can plan—and design—for uncertainty. We can recognize uncertainty as a state of extraordinary potential.

07

As human beings we are connected across continents and seas, but also through time. History offers perspective. A look back tells us that profound change, the “premature arrival of the future,” may destabilize social and economic structures, but can also mobilize human ingenuity—inspiring achievements that have remade the material world.

European Renaissance: 14th-17th century

The outbreak of a plague marked an inflection point in the history of Europe, leading to an extraordinary era in western culture.

09

Arriving in Europe in the 14th century, a devastating plague created conditions that ushered in the Italian Renaissance, a transformative epoch in art and architecture, science and invention. The bacillus arrived in Italy by ship, spreading across Europe and disrupting the feudal social system of the Middle Ages. Its effects were acute and enduring, ultimately a catalyst for exploration, discovery and a quickened sense of human possibility.

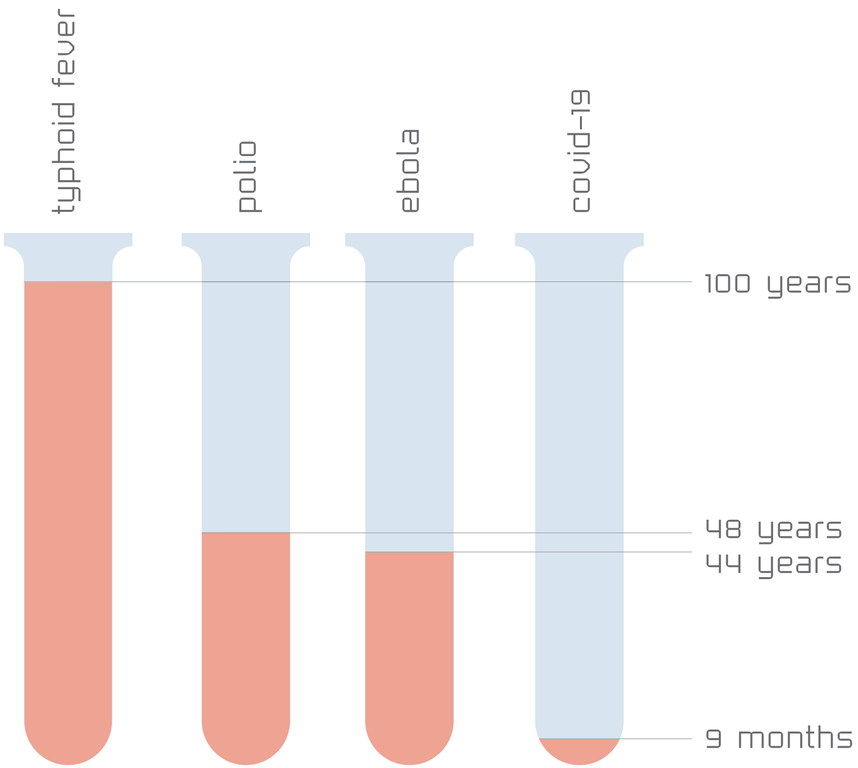
The stage was set for Leonardo da Vinci to imagine and design a flying machine, for Copernicus to deconstruct the science of astronomy, and for Brunelleschi to engineer the great masonry dome that defines the city of Florence. In Germany, a humble blacksmith, Johannes Gutenberg, invented the printing press in 1440, often considered to be the seminal advance of the Renaissance.

Renaissance Man:
Looking into the mirror of history, we can see that the narratives of the past are often retold in modern dress, how disruption may lead to a renaissance of innovation.

Beyond the flowering of literature and the arts, the 14th and 15th centuries saw an escalation in the study of medicine, astronomy, mathematics and architecture, laying a foundation for the discoveries of Galileo in the 16th century and Newton’s laws of motion in 1687.

COVID-19 was diagnosed in North America in January 2020. An effective vaccine was deployed less than a year later, changing the paradigm for vaccine development.

pandemic vaccine development times



“The knowledge of past times….
is a nutriment to the mind.” Leonardo da Vinci

Early 20th Century: 1918-1920's

A war in Europe, followed by a pandemic, tilts the western world on its axis.

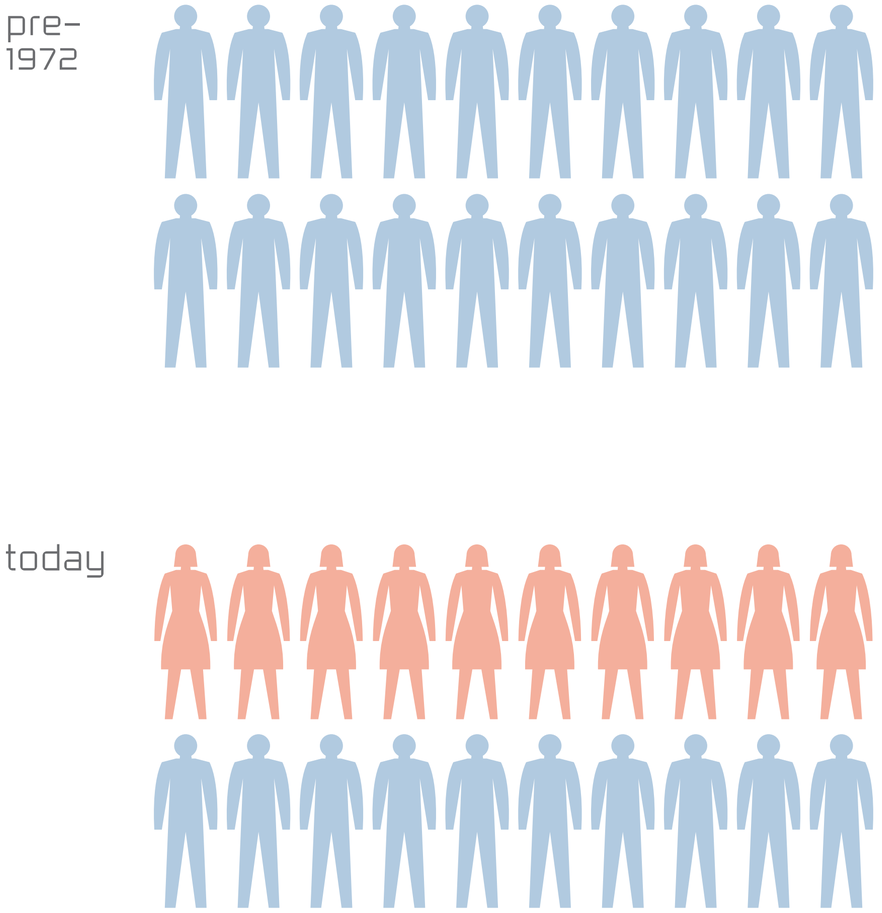
The narrative of history continues to tell of human resilience. In the wake of the Great War and the influenza pandemic of 1918–1920, new ideas emerged to transform the social and cultural landscape. The volatile years that followed were defined by economic growth and scientific advances, social shifts and radical movements in the arts.

Artistic movements like Art Deco and Expressionism flourished in the 1920's, as did literature in the form of poetry by T.S. Eliot and the novels of Edith Wharton, the first woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Literature. Eileen Grey established herself as one of the leading designers of the period, along with Le Corbusier and Marcel Breuer. At the same time, new products defined the decade following the Great War: the automobile, phonograph, radio, and the airplane as peacetime transportation, revolutionized the way people lived.


VOTES FOR

Tea & Equality:
History speaks if we are willing to listen, offering insights that can sustain us in times of change. In the years surrounding the 1918 influenza pandemic, women in Canada, the U.S. and the U.K. fought to win the right to vote—a step towards political rights for all women and an example of how audacity and resolve can lead to positive change.

Today, women account for half of architecture program graduates. Prior to 1972, most North American schools refused to admit women to the study of architecture.

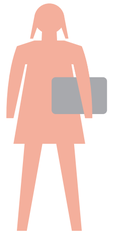


“Change, real change, happens one step at a time.” Ruth Bader Ginsburg

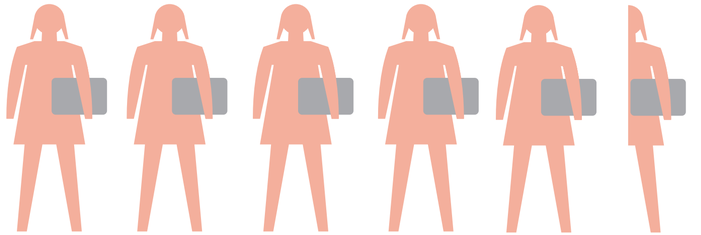
Play Fosters Creativity:
A simple folk toy animates the child's imagination, reminding us that a spirit of playfulness often unlocks creative potential—producing ingenious new objects, tools and furnishings.

Tech companies are increasing support for science, technology, engineering and math education with classes, computers and other resources for k–12 schools.

students supported by amazon's future engineer program



2018
100,000 children



2020
550,000 children

Mid-Century Modern: 1947-1957

Profoundly affected by a decade of global conflict, industry and the arts emerged with a buoyant spirit of optimism.

As designers and architects rekindled the spirit of modernism in the 1950's, images and artifacts generated new cultural directions. Organic modernism, born in the 1950's and 60's, produced objects with shapes drawn from nature. Other designers looked to industry or geometry, welding form to function or advocating for rigorous precision, while architects employed "modern" materials—steel, glass and concrete—to approach an ideal of "space, light and order."

The influence of mid-century design is ongoing, not only in terms of objects that became icons, but in the context of a concept: “good design.” Good design as “art applied to living” is now an idea woven into our culture, a precept we owe to the men and women who created the images, tools and environments of the 1950’s, who believed that design could help put the world back on its feet.

New Cubism:
The concept of modularity captivated mid-century architects and designers in Europe and America. Modularity enables more adaptive spaces and furniture that can flex to accommodate the needs of people and the dynamics of work.

A study of community foundations reported an 80% increase in donations from March to May 2020 compared to a similar period in 2019.

2020
mar-may

2019
mar-may

"...we are called to be architects of the future....".

Buckminster Fuller, Anticipatory Design Scientist

Towards the Future: 1964–2021

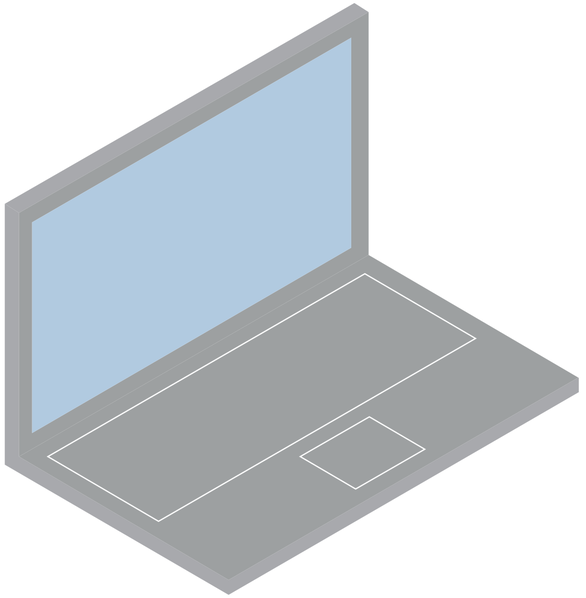
The pace of social and technological change accelerates as one century draws to a close and another is born.

Future Forward:
The World's Fair of 1964 kindled new interest in science and technology, showcasing a nascent Space Age and foreshadowing a digital era that would transform our lives and our work forever.

increase in digital skills

2019
10 million daily Zoom calls

Digital skills for all exploded in 2020. Zoom meetings grew from 10 million to 300 million daily.



2020
300 million daily Zoom calls

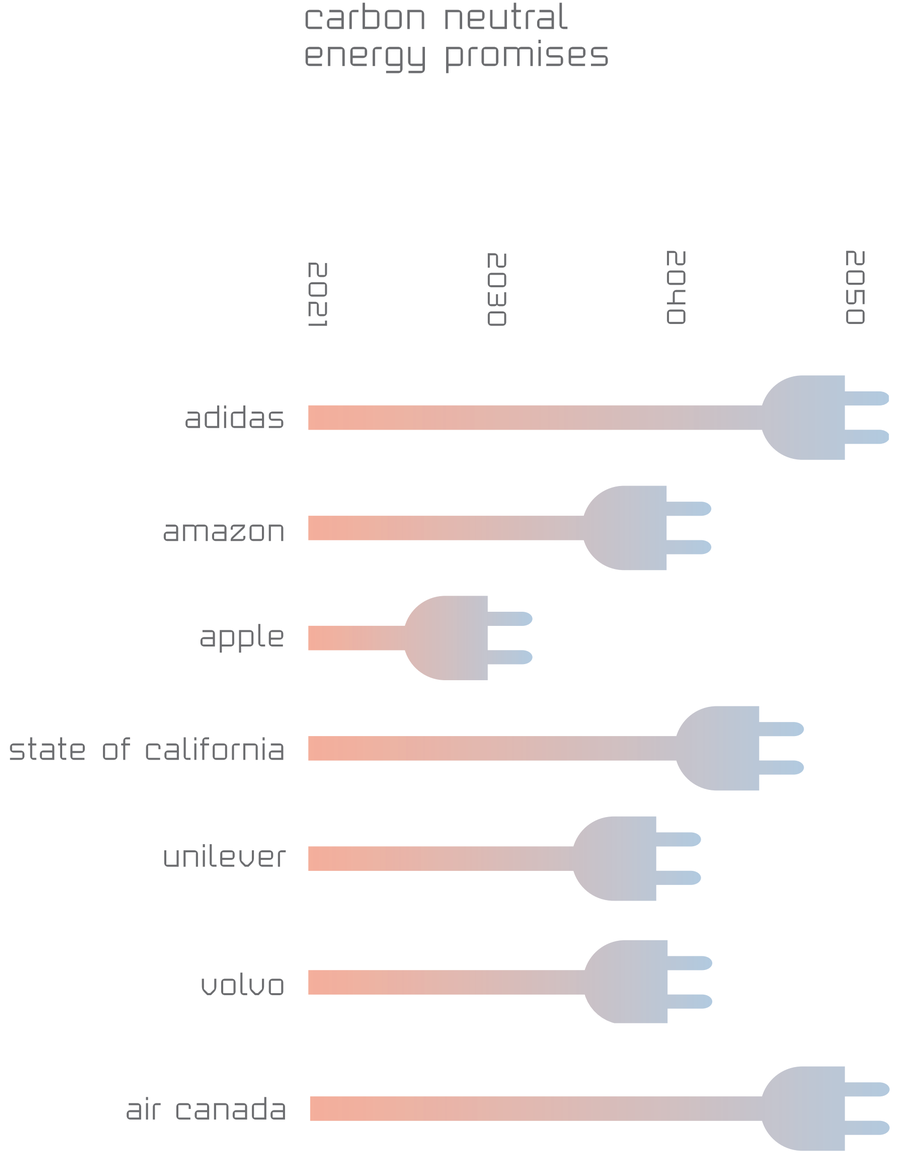
With the publication in 1962 of Silent Spring by Rachel Carson, the word ecology began to enter the lexicon, signaling a new world view that found expression in the first Earth Day in 1970, the founding of Greenpeace and the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. The seeds of environmental awareness were planted, and the first “green” products came to market.

In 1993, entrepreneur and activist Paul Hawken published “The Ecology of Commerce,” which inspired business leaders like Ray Anderson, then Chairman of Interface, to become fervent advocates for environmental responsibility. On a global scale, the 2015 Paris Accord charted a new course in response to climate change. At the same time, pervasive technology allowed many to forget that our planet is teeming with life forms—including microbes. In 2020, we were sharply reminded of nature’s power to upend economies and societies.


NASA

Space Minimalism:
Extraneous elements are stripped away. The SpaceX flight suit is an elegant expression of purpose. In both attire and apparatus, it reveals how design and technology transform our tools and decode complexity.

The worlds' top companies and governments are stepping up to meet a 2050 target to be carbon neutral.



“I really believe in the idea of the future.” Zaha Hadid

We are heirs to such inflection points in history. Adversity has led to sweeping change in every century and, at the same time, awakened reserves of courage and resilience, and expanded the boundaries of imagination and knowledge. The uncharted decade before us can be met with anxiety or anticipation. At Teknion, we believe that an informed optimism will help us to find our way toward the humane, the sustainable and the beautiful.

What now? Prior to conclusions about how to structure the office, decisions must be made about whether or not workers can perform adequately elsewhere. Who is suited to WFH? Which activities are best accommodated in the office? Will 60% occupancy allow for 100% participation? How will we create flexible, equitable, human-centered spaces that are engaging and safe in equal measure?...

At Teknion, we understand the extraordinary complexity of designing a workplace in the context of heightened concerns about health and safety, personal and ... corporate responsibility. We are committed to deepening our knowledge, to posing more and better questions, and to developing new products born of lessons learned.

Whatever the future looks like, Teknion will offer products that allow for transitional solutions, that help companies to adapt and re-adapt, that are indeed, “future smart.”


teknion
future
smart

The narrative of history continues to inform our future. Looking back, we see that disruption often yields periods of creativity and innovation, that each step on the way to equal rights moves us forward, and that our innate imagination is the equipment we need to frame new concepts. Once radical movements like cubism yield concepts like modularity that enable adaptive workspaces, and science tests the limits of what we believe to be true about our world and tools we need. We begin now to propose simplicity and economy of means as tenets of design that will inform the work products and environments of our future.