

Future Artifact: Marry Me!

The Marry Me! is an engagement ring dispenser for the polygamists of the future. In the future, open marriages will be the norm and will be accepted by the population at large. As such, people will need to carry around engagement rings for all the people they see and want to get hitched with. The Marry Me! is for the polygamist on the go who never wants to miss their chance at love.

How I brought this into the world after creating the artifact was to go around and propose to people randomly to see their reactions. I enlisted Tim's help with the filming and execution of the proposals. We went and asked people if they minded being in a video and if they agreed I opened the Marry Me! and asked if they would marry me, giving them a choice of rings. Most people, while very confused by the whole thing, seemed willing enough to participate. Some people even asked what we were doing and had a good laugh after finding out, while other people just looked at me like I was crazy.

I staged it this way because it does not break people's conceptions of marriage and commitment so that I would not have to get into a debate about the greater purpose of a polygamist society. If I had of staged it inside a jewelry store or something and asked people about how they felt about carrying around rings for the everyday encounter proposal I felt they might get offended or the like. By staging the proposals, you can see how the Marry Me! would work in the future and react to proposals as an accepted practice. I chose to show how it functioned on a day to day basis as opposed to getting people's reactions about whether they would accept or use a product like this in the future.

I don't know overall whether I've made anyone reflect on the state of marriage and relationships as a whole but after explaining the idea to them they seemed to think it was a neat carrying case for a specific purpose. As such, I am wondering if I had of set up an advertisement on a counter in a store how people would react to it. Perhaps that is another way to bring people into the conversation about possible futures. What I learned from proposing to random people is that if it is as nerve-wracking for me to propose to strangers for a fictional thing, how will I be when I propose to someone for real? In a future where polygamy is widely accepted, I'm not sure that proposals will mean as much as they do now or if it will even be a meaningful experience. Perhaps people will spend money on rings and propose to people just to show their status in the world ("Hey, I have 200 wives!" "Oh yeah? I've got 300 plus 50 husbands. Bow to my superiority!"). I think in a polygamist future, engagement rings won't really mean anything beyond the material object and marriage as a whole might be abolished if the meaning behind such artifacts lose their value.

To make the encounter more effective, I would have had to not give the stranger any knowledge about what I was doing beforehand, as well, if someone I had proposed to saw me proposing to another person immediately afterwards this would have given a better idea of how the society in the future would work and why the artifact exists. This is because it would make people question more of the concept behind the artifact and would show the function of it more than staging things. I think it also would have given it a more realistic portrayal.