

Spaces frame interactive emotions, the ELASTICO principle

- Architecture designs the interaction of people,
compressing or releasing emotions -

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Abstract

"THE FIVE SENSES, PLUS ONE"

Interactivity is often associated with contemporary technology.

It happens also for 'multimedia', another 'computer science' appropriation.

"Inter-action" is an action that occurs between two or more entities, since "inter" means "between"; gravity is one example of interaction between masses, we know it exists, we can calculate it, but we still don't know what it is.

"multi-media" is the shortening of "multiple media", a communication that stimulates multiple senses: sight, hearing, touch, and potentially smell and taste.

We experience reality using our five senses, so -for example- reading the newspaper while listening to the radio and drinking coffee is a common morning multimedia experience.

We tend to forget that everything in the universe is both interactive and multimedia, simply because even the most isolated phenomena needs an environment to be isolated from, therefore it has boundaries where interaction effects the neighbors.

But we are egocentric beings so we place humans at the center of the picture, every phenomena we research is related to its effect on our life, from altruistic perspective (to save the world) or personal greed (fame, a PhD, a new motorcycle).

Therefore we treat any topic from its interactive potential between ourselves and the rest of the universe.

What we call interaction design is a discipline that looks into these connections, predicting them and directing them.

When the Romans stated that to rule the population they had to provide 'bread and circus', meaning food and entertainment, they introduced a common rule of interaction between leaders and masses. If one party is satisfied with the food of the body (bread) and the food for the soul (entertainment) any other interaction becomes smooth.

Even the most passive and relaxed audience is interacting with the lecturer.

Often in Asia students sleep during lectures and even if this could be quite offensive for a

foreign speaker there is a form of interaction between cultures: the foreigner will learn about a different sleeping habit and daily life. Such borderline situations require a highly developed interaction sensor in order not to react and induce amplified interactivity (such as screaming "wake up!").

Anger can represent one of the many amplifiers of interaction, altering perceptions and bypassing inhibitors.

Army training for example adopts anger to create the stress simulation of warfare.

A rigid rule of interaction such as the Army provides decoded levels and bridges between levels.

A Chain of command is quite similar to the Asian education system.

Survival instincts as many other automatic reactions are good basic ingredients for interaction design. The design of space is often tested once a large amount of people reacts to a panic situation, security regulations predict the interaction of masses facing emergency.

If we move from the extreme condition to daily life we can design other emotional reactions of the user. We still use instincts in their transformations into cultural trends, phobias, habits, and status symbols.

While the design for masses in extreme conditions has a larger objective base (being the reaction instinctive and shared by large numbers) when we design subjective emotions we enter a difficult zone.

A stadium can be considered secure by a large number of people, but the same audience cannot perceive it as "beautiful". Extreme conditions make our judgment similar: it is easier to make a scary movie than a good movie.

Another common bases of choice that can cross cultures and disciplines are size and price.

A bigger car, a bigger house, a smaller cell phone has an automatic appeal, an expensive marble floor will impress more than a good interior design.

Size and money are highly communicative: size is a heritage of survival, a bigger animal will win over a smaller one, a bigger apple will feed me more than a small one and at first glance quantity is much more easy to detect than quality. A large amount of bad food still wins over a small portion of good food, even in the surprisingly suicidal American population. Two Americans over three are Obese or suffer from eating disorder, even if America could easily select quality foods and grow a healthier population, but the pioneer instinct of quantity is too strong.

Money is the most common translator, you can evaluate basically anything and therefore translate it into monetary value.

With the help of money we can compare a child to a car: the cost of a child, from birth to 20 is worth a Ferrari. With this powerful translator we tend to evaluate all by its cost and value starts to become a purely economical term.

Family values, moral values, emotional values become numbers in the calculation for divorce settlements.

A luxurious design becomes much more easy to sell than an elegant one, because something elegant is not as visible as something expensive.

We still say the best things in life are priceless. It is true that happiness or even beauty (in

its complete form) are not easily bought, but interaction design (actually any good design) is trying to go in that direction.

From basic tasks, design explores alternative ways to do the task. I must feed myself to survive and food-designers of the past started to test, develop, and transform the basic nutrition into tasty, practical, beautiful experiences. Our current dinners are interactive experiences where the survival nature is quite secondary.

Designing interactivity is introducing the user into a new path to reach point B from point A. Architecture can block a bad view or frame an inspiring one, offer healthy shadow (without the need of air conditioning) or set a romantic stage for a meeting corner. A building can enhance the dreams of the owner and reveal the deepest fears.

We try to give shape to such intangible cocktails of sensuality, providing an experience of space, which is not only a sum of square meters and expensive materials.

The lecture will explain the interactive quality of some designs by EL A S T I C O, but the design application can touch any field.

A car can take me from home to work that is its function, a car I love can still carry me for the same distance, but it will also give value to the trip. A good car designer is able to add this value to the object, (not only bigger or more expensive) because a good designer doesn't focus only on the basic function.

We are complex beings and any functional philosophy that has been introduced in the past has failed, communism as well as consumism, we are not all common as communist thought and consuming something that a company sells is not our final goal, we need a personal interaction with the others, we are not all equal and not all equally just consumers.

The evolution of humanity relies on the new ways of looking at things, the power of alternatives that from innovation became traditions, only to be surpassed by new innovations.

This ability to interact with our knowledge and peoples expectations (tradition is a way to compare, it is a shared rule of expectation) goes beyond the 5 senses.

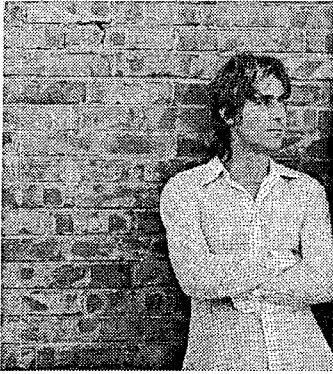
I do believe that multimedia is not about five senses and it should comprehend any multiple media over the known five.

My favorite sense, the most difficult to master and to educate, the one that everybody think to have is the sense of humor.

Humor is a privileged place to look things from, humor saves the designer and the user because it links any task to the elusive meaning of life.

And to see how rare humor is you should consider if you understand the value of what I just wrote, it is not a joke, it is a very deep concept.

Do you see what I mean?



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