

Sketching and Experience Design

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Abstract. Among others, Hummels, Djajadiningrat and Overbeeke (Knowing, Doing and Feeling: Communication with your Digital Products. Interdisziplinäres Kolleg Kognitions und Neurowissenschaften, Günne am Möhnese, March 2-9 2001, 289-308.), have expressed the notion that the real product of design is the resultant “context for experience” rather than the object or software that provokes that experience. This closely corresponds to what I refer to as a transition in focus from a materialistic to an experiential view of design. Paraphrasing what I have already said, is not the physical entity or what is in the box (the “material” product) that is the true outcome of the design process. Rather, it is the behavioural, experiential and emotional responses that come about as a result of its existence and use in the “wild”.

Designing for experience comes with a whole new level of complexity. This is especially true in this emerging world of information appliances, reactive environments and ubiquitous computing, where, along with those of their users, we have to factor in the convoluted behaviours of the products themselves. Doing this effectively requires both a different mind-set, as well as different techniques.

This talk is motivated by a concern that, in general, our current training and work practices are not adequate to meet the demands of this level of design. This is true for those coming from a computer science background, since they do not have sufficient grounding in design, at least in the sense that would be recognized by an architect or industrial designer. Conversely, those from the design arts, while they have the design skills, do not generally have the technical skills to adequately address the design issues relating to the complex embedded behaviours of such devices and systems.

Hence, in this talk, we discuss the design process itself, from the perspective of methods, organization, and composition. Fundamental to our approach is the notion that sketching is a fundamental component of design, and is especially critical at the early ideation phase. Yet, due to the temporal nature of what we are designing, conventional sketching is not – on its own – adequate. Hence, if we are to design experience or interaction, we need to adopt something that is to our process that is analogous to what traditional sketching is to the process of conventional industrial design.

It is the motivation and exploration of such a sketching process that is the foundation of this presentation.