

INTERACTIVE MEDIA TOOLS

Creative processes for project-based research in interactive media

Context

This course aims to provide a set of conceptual and methodological tools to facilitate the design process for interactive media. These creative processes and research methods are practiced in the context of a project brief, for which students are expected to produce novel concepts illustrated by mock up prototypes. The Macromedia Flash program is introduced as a prototyping tool, however students are encouraged to use any other tools they are familiar with to produce the project.

The design brief

This project is focusing on how we can communicate a sense of other people's presence through design. The project encourages a thorough investigation in the design of presence-enabled technologies and the social aspects of computing. One of the main avenues of research for the project focuses on how we can design interactive media that reflect social processes and patterns of human communication. Through exploration of the concept of presence, the project introduces the creative space mapped by emerging technologies, location-positioning, connectivity, people, cooperation and communication practices. In view of these developments, the project asks: how does design communicate presence and how can we experience other people's presence in different contexts of everyday life? And how does the context and location affect this experience?

Outcomes

Conceptual

- Students employ a set of design research methods to explore emotional and behavioural aspects of presence and identify ways to connect with people crossing the boundaries of the physical and virtual world.
- Through design processes students identify the notion of collective presence in the context of everyday urban living and produce concepts for interactive products exploiting this sense of awareness.

Practical

The creative process should be documented in the form of sketches and storyboards in a sketchbook, which will be submitted as part of the project. A repository of group work produced in the studio session will be uploaded online at learn.gold in a course-specific wiki to facilitate ongoing collaboration and concept development. Students are asked to submit a mock up prototype or interactive user - scenario illustrating their solution to the design brief, using Macromedia Flash or other interactive media tools.

Recommended reading

Preece, J., Y. Rogers, et al. (2002). Interaction design: beyond human-computer interaction. New York, John Wiley & Sons.

Laurel, B. (2003). Design Research: Methods and perspectives. Cambridge, MA London, The MIT Press.

Rheingold, Howard (2003) Smart mobs: the next social revolution. Cambridge, MA: Perseus.

Fulton Suri, J. (2003). The experience of evolution: developments in design practice. The Design Journal 6(2): 39-48.

The projects and publications by the Sociable Media Group at MIT Media Lab @ <http://smg.media.mit.edu/>

Foundation Macromedia Flash MX 2004 by [Kristian Besley](#), Sham Bhangal, friends of ED, 2004 (introductory book to Flash and Actionscript).

ActionScript for Flash MX: The Definitive Guide by Colin Moock, O'Reilly, 2003 (coding-focused book).

Flash to the Core: An Interactive Sketchbook by Joshua Davis, New Rider, 2002 (advanced Flash art).

Timetable

Week 1: 3rd February 2006

Lecture: *Exploring the context of Design 1*. Introduction to the design brief. Design ethnography and context mapping techniques.

Workshop: Practice observation (40 minutes) followed by context mapping (40 minutes).

Follow-up work: Identify a domain of interest for the project and continue working on context maps.

Upload the maps online for sharing (wiki site for the course).

Week 2: 10th February 2006

Lecture: *Creative Process*: role-playing, prototyping, personas and scenarios.

Workshop: Create a character (sketching/ cards) and brainstorm on his/her daily life. Develop concepts in response to the design brief through sketching, storyboarding or video.

Follow-up work: Concept development in the sketchbook using collage and drawing.

Week 3: 24th February 2006

Lecture: *Exploring the context of Design 2*. Introduction to generative design research techniques ('context of design' processes). Theory: Smart Mobs, Ubicomp and where it all comes together: technologies for collaboration and social play.

Workshop: Use characters and ideas from previous weeks' work to develop the context of design (cards on map). Spiral dynamics.

Follow-up work: Complete the contextual framework, upload it online.

Week 4: 3rd March 2006

Lecture: Introduction to the Flash MX environment (working with the timeline, buttons, movie clips and animation techniques)

Workshop: Exercises using the program.

Week 5: 10th March 2006

Lecture: Introduction to Actionscript (events, target paths, user interaction)

Workshop: Exercises using the program.

Week 6: 17th March 2006

Lecture: More Flash and using Flash as a prototyping tool.

Workshop: Students develop their project.

Week 7: 24th March 2006

Project presentations (15- 20 minutes each). Students present their projects followed by a discussion.

Discussion – sum-up activity: Adaptation and use of some generative design research techniques in future projects