Digital Imagery as Meaning & Form in HCI/d

Project 7. Digital Imagery as Social Mechanism: Awareness and Social Change (Design Research & Design Concept)

March 1st and 3rd 2011

Eli Blevis, Associate Professor of Informatics

Project

PART A
Find or create your own images or illustrations which denote or picture how digital imagery is implicated as a mechanism of social awareness and social change. This is the design research part of the project—I am not interested in your original concepts, but rather things you find by observation or secondary sources that are interesting and compelling. Choose three contrasting images or illustrations. At least one of your choices must be connected to digital technologies in some way.

Explain why your choices complement or contrast one another and what’s interesting about them. To do so, you may want to use or research some of the following terms: Digital image processing, algorithmic image generation, social mechanisms of awareness, journalism versus gallery orientations, alternative publishing mechanisms. This list of terms is by no means complete—use your own initiative to relate your research to existing concepts in interaction design and HCI as best you can.

PART B
Create an image or set or sequence of images using digital photographic means that are documentary images with the potential to raise social awareness of create social change. You may modify your images in Adobe Photoshop or similar software. This is the design concept part of the project—I am interested in your original images you have taken or otherwise create yourself. You do not need to take the project title too literally—a fair bit of latitude in possible interpretations is both permitted and encouraged.

Explain how your images relate to interactivity with the materials of digital technologies. For this project, think about the notion that image making is as much or more a social skill, as it is a technical skill.

Format:
Your project must be presented on five landscape mode pages in pdf format. That is, a (i) design research sketch and (ii) design research final, a (iii) design concept sketch and (iv) design concept final, and (v) an attributions page. The design sketch pages are NOT strictly required. Upload your work to oncourse, as instructed in class. Be certain to reference all of your sources accurately and completely.

The example on the pages that follow gives an idea of what a design research project could look like for the purposes of this class project. The example is by no means the most ideal project—yours should not be longer, but it can and ideally should be more compelling and interesting. Note that I did not include a sketch this week, but instead I have included two model final projects.

DUE
I561 : MAR 8th no later than 4:00 PM
I590/I400/H400 : MAR 10th no later than 9:00 AM
A FINAL form completed project.

NOTE: For this project, you may—as a matter of your own choice—choose a partner to work with you from the class. If you do elect to choose a partner, you and your partner should each submit (presumably identical) individual copies of the project, clearly indicating on each copy who your partner is. Because there are two parts to this project, I strongly encourage you to choose a partner this time. It is permissible for you to divide the labor on the two parts of the assignment between you and your partner.
Political & Social Activism as Journalism: ban.org

Basel Action Network (source: www.ban.net)

The Basel Action Network site reports on the “The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.” The site provides resources for understanding the global state of e-waste policies and practices. It provides many compelling and widely distributed photographs that it makes available to journalists.

Digital, Algorithmic Photography about Social Awareness as Art: chrisjordan.com

Chris Jordan’s photographic arts site (source: www.chrisjordan.com)

Chris Jordan is a highly regarded photographer who uses digital techniques to make very compelling large gallery oriented images targeted at providing greater understanding of global social issues such as consumerism, waste, and the environmental effects of consumerism.

High Production Values, Analogue Documentary Photography as Art: edwardburtynsky.com

Edward Burtynsky’s photographic works site (source: www.edwardburtynsky.com)

Edward Burtynsky describes the theme of his work as “Nature transformed through industry.” Burtynsky’s themes are similar to Chris Jordan’s, but his techniques involve more direct, less digitally processed photographs. The use of very deliberate wide angle high resolution imagery makes his images very compelling as social commentary and mechanism of awareness.

(All sites referenced on this page accessed on 2.25.2010)
Images of Distribution & Recycling of Packaging Materials (Hong Kong, China & Bloomington IN USA) These images show the seemingly banal and mundane daily enterprise of distribution and recycling in two very different locations. The images are also very political in their depiction of the way in which these activities are implicated in the quality of life of not just consumers, but everyone involved in the supply chain.
Primary Attributions
Part B Images by the author

Secondary Attributions
source: www.ban.net @ 2.25.2010
source: www.chrisjordan.com @ 2.25.2010
source: www.edwardburtynsky.com @ 2.25.2010