Interactive Media Installation

“at your service”

B.Des Final Project
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Abstract

To communicate an unrest using:
objects which we regard as tools which serve us,
by showing them to be perceived as entities which care for us?

while,
commenting on the absurdity of moral outrage.

The tools and technologies we 'use' are perceived to occupy positions of servitude and replace human labour. This extends across both hardware and digital platforms. We tend to end up relying on them, and there are times when they (these objects) are held accountable; if their /*manufacturers*/ aren't brought into the fray of our outrage.

I wish to attempt relating this /*attitude*/ to how we treat various social issues in our communities; this would require a study by observing so called 'moral outrage' on mass media platforms or smaller closed groups which afford this kind of communication.

But the root of my angst should be attributed to a perceived *attitudism* I believe most Indians possess.

Do you feel a discomfort when you see someone being *scolded* for 'not doing their job'? Well, maybe they assumed responsibility beforehand, or they were forced into it due to circumstances; we could reduce this to a lack of choice.

> (One can easily have this entire 'accusation' collapse and fold in on itself by saying that everything is circumstantial and it is upto the person to empower themselves to achieve their true desires and practise their human ability to make a choice. But not everyone thinks about it and arrives at a point to dismantle these power structures to be able to realise this. And this is turn would lead us to identify education to be the problem; education as a commodity will then become a whole other issue to address if we place the lens over the *whys* and *why nots* of mass empowerment.)

I wanted to do something about the kind of attitude certain individuals might have towards entities which provide them with a service. This also extends to those who think about their own servitudes on similar grounds. The attitude I refer to here is of them demanding an inhuman amount of selflessness towards making sure the service has been 'provided'.

Instances include insulting or ridiculing waiters at a restaurant for not ensuring that their glasses are filled with water, or exercising outrage at a service provider for not fulfilling claims they had made much prior to the purchase of their product. One idea I wish we could incorporate to reduce this stress in our delegations, is to *induce* a lack of choice when it comes to 'responsible' external interventions; to empower the user to fix their own problems, and not pass on these responsibilities with monetary compensations or written agreements. 'Get it in writing', they advised, when the administration delegate didn't follow through with his promise of paying us back. I think it pushed me towards telling him to his face, that I have lost some trust in humanity.

(Again, one could say that I've succumbed to the system and that I shouldn't need to care so much about these monetary compensations in the first place. Maybe someone needed it so badly and they believed it would be too difficult to explain it to me. But even in this situation, one party *feels like an explanation would be out of the question*.)

(Maybe I'm being naive and expecting a utopia where one could trust everyone; a utopia where everyone is capable of taking that small leap to accommodate giving someone the benefit of the doubt.)

Scope + Objectives

Being my final design project in my undergrad program, I wanted to try incorporating multiple media for my communication attempt. This also lets me try some new frameworks in generative artwork. My intention is to also explore the construction of interactive media installations, and to challenge myself in visual expression using the rawness of existing artefacts.

During my initial stages, I expect this to have a possibility for aiding in creating spaces which can induce empathy for different interactions with physical media. Even if extraordinary interfaces aren't a result of this attempt, I hope to have sensitized myself and others participating, to the realm of projection mapping and meaning switching as a prototyping tool; in this case, for fictional storytelling.

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(re)search for a sensible thread

It is necessary for me to establish again that we are in an era where there's too many options to choose from when it comes to information. I specifically refer to the various alternatives we have for facts which come with their own supporting conspiracies. It could all be a game for us; but these ideas are what we use against any mass which seems to oppose our various value systems. I won't go into the philosophies concerning the existence of 'true morals/values', but doesn't it sometimes feel like humanity tends to *thrive* by fighting for what it believes in.

I wish to deal with the philosophy of objects while pursuing an interest in the state of moral outrage on platforms (digital or IRL) of varying regulations. The former was to help me identify media which I could project my ideas on/with keeping the latter as the subject matter.

But eventually, I found myself gravitating towards the self-referential extrapolations one is capable of making just by thinking a little about the intent behind the creation of such objects. By objects, I refer to the artefacts of our technological advances which we 'employ' and 'use' daily or rarely for various 'use cases'.

The two pursuits also seemed to gel well together because I also wanted to comment on the power dynamics we as humans perceive of these objects. And this specifically points towards (how it seems) consumers assume these 'consumables' to occupy positions of servitude, and are meant to replace human labour.

Something relatable to cement this feeling a little more would be how we would have experienced people around us treat people, other humans, in areas of service. Be it a waiter at a restaurant or someone coming in to fix your air-conditioning.

> I've been interested in ideas which work with aiding one to perceive this relationship as a form of care instead of service.

This would be crucial in helping in defining a design brief with which I can formulate a set of design principles for content generation.

This section of the report consists of my initial research before starting my explorations with different materials. In the succeeding section, I have included more literature and media. My process involved intertwining both exploration and reading throughout the course of the project.

: Moral Outrage and Education

Opinions and value systems are adopted and realised; an assumption which sounds about right, and the medium through which we reach points where we can stand by a view would depend on how we educate ourselves (and others) in this world of ideas. One would be able to play the 'fact' card, and use it as a weapon against incorrect information, for example. I find it skeptical how education is an enterprise which can be labelled as a fallback in times of doubt. Of course, there have always been challenges and reiterations when it comes to our textbooks in school. Looking past possible 'propagandistic' intentions, there exists an attitude in some institutions which seek to align everyone's *axis mundi* to theirs, or to any other center which they believe could be 'superior'.

Is it possible that in our venture for having answers and holding people with ideas accountable, we have created a culture where there exist too many centres of power; which by existing, embed in any citizen, a kind of dependence on a so-called *centre*.

"Our critical studies have taken us to spiritual and moral inarticulateness if not silence; our detachment has led us to the emptiness of the marginality of interested but paralyzed bystanders; and our tolerance has forced us into an unwilling consciousness of moral relativity."

———

Purpel, David E. "Moral Outrage and Education."
Counterpoints, vol. 102, 1999, pp. 187–208. JSTOR,
www.jstor.org/stable/42975416

> This isn't a new novel mindset to have, but oddly enough we rarely see this to have taken root in the "masses".

Communicate:
A web of relations which doesn't allow for 'one' standpoint to hold too much weight; an addition to the checklist for the composition to satisfy.

: outRage on the Internet and Public Media

It's entirely possible (or confirmable) that the affordances which digital spaces provide us with can enable us to get carried away with our right to free speech.

I would like to state at this point that I say all this with a pinch of salt, for my values are tending towards 'ultimate freedom for everyone'.

True, these tools can be seen as purely utilitarian, and being left to the masses to 'use' since the internet is a place which was supposed to let us run wild and create new ways of seeing the world. These avenues have empowered us to be more fluid with our thinking and also enabled us with affordances for voicing our radical opinions. So where does one draw a line to claim that some rage is *outrageous*?

I may seem to be leaning towards being of the opinion that any form of moral outrage is absurd; though I'm extremely reluctant to put my foot down on this view. Shouldn't we all be allowed (nay, there shouldn't be a concept of allowance) to say whatever we want?



"Tweeting is hard, but looking at the world around you with even a *forced *amount of compassion or kindness has, apparently, become even harder. Worst tweet of all time? Nope. Just the worst tweet of day."

———

https://www.wired.com/2016/06/wish-unsee-vile-tweet-alligator-attack/

As a daily consumer of social media platforms, it's quite common for me to see content where a person would exhibit loud accusations and critiques at *outrageous* phenomena. It's hopeful to see how they are

empowered to voice their stands; a community which questions is bound to strengthen the systems set in place so policies can be reiterated and implemented.

But there are also instances like the tweet above where they could get carried away with the idea and end up being insensitive. It's dehumanizing in a way; the 'perpetrators' are no longer seen as human. Instead of initiating a dialogue, 'total annihilation' might end up being perceived as the answer.

There are too many instances of reputed news sources reporting outrageous behaviour and having a large mass standing by them. It makes me question if adopting a delegate of information to trust in, really involves active effort by the participant in choosing to follow them. Are the initial criteria just about how much their values align or is it about mass opinion?



There was a time – not long ago – when newspapers such as the *News of the World* got a lot of mileage from "paedo" hysteria. Chris Morris's Channel 4 comedy, *Brass Eye (full video here)*, satirised this "coverage" hilariously, capturing all its absurdity and hypocrisy. And then, of course, the *Daily Mail* (and others – including government ministers) turned their outrage on Morris and Channel 4. *How dare they joke about such a serious subject?*

Channel 4, and other commentators in the more "liberal" areas of the press, rightly shrugged, sighed, and effectively said: *"You idiots, can't you see that it's satire, and that it's satirising* ***media coverage****, and in particular the type of reaction we're getting from you right now".*

Daily Mail outraged at Channel 4 *Brass Eye* satire

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https://newsframes.wordpress.com/2014/07/31/moral-outrage/

The snippet shown is regarding a satire which was screened on television which mocked paedophilia. It's a serious topic and we can say that it's considered repulsive by the 'masses'. The production house responded to the outrage by saying it was a satire on the kind of media coverage they're getting now - referring to the outrage.

: The Actor-Network Theory : Program of Action : The Berlin Key

The Actor-Network Theory held promise in how it would enable one to ease inanimate entities into the realm of social relationships. One thing that stood out for me was how we could interpret objects to be consisting of many people, the people who brought forth it's existence and the ones who keep it going. This doesn't stop at their manufacturing processes, but rather the social implications these objects would have when it comes to their participation in daily life, or the activities they would demand from us when the time for their 'use' arrives.

It is also about the people the object replaces or borrows delegation from to define itself as an entity of function. We can perceive the object to be intertwined with humans, and not as separate existences.

Bruno Latour discusses the case of guns, which I then try to extrapolate in my exercises with meaning switching; most of my attempts at incorporating objects in my final communication output follow similar threads. Guns and humans: one can afford to kill, and the other can afford to make the decision to kill. One can behave neutral about intentions and the other is made to take responsibility.

But the other, can also easily claim ignorance or insanity and point their finger at the gun and blame its efficiency. Can the gun do the same

backwards? Can it say that it did not want to exist, and was forced into existence. Or if that's irrelevant, since anything can be made to afford its affordances anyway, can it blame its user for dragging it into their issues? The gun affected the possessor, it became an affordance, it became a scapegoat for responsibility, it relieved the human of its duties of being a human. But our society obviously wants to carry out its ravenous desire to blame something which can feel like it does as a mass, so we attack the gunman, obviously; which is something I agree with, mind you. We can always stretch this out further to understand what brought forth their decision to be able to kill, or what conditioned them to be comfortable making said decision, but here we are dealing with the objects which exist and can afford to hold such intentions *within* it specifically at the point of use and purchase. By within, I don't mean they inherently hold these abilities: they've been imposed on.

We humans are very used to this anthropocentric view of utilizing materials which don't have flesh to meet our goals, I could say. Again, this is just me changing the tone of something mundane to make it seem horrifying. I state this at this point to connect it to my unrest with how we may sometimes treat fellow human beings the same way.

In the case of the Berlin Key, we're now delegating the 'responsibilities' of a concierge handling a door onto it. And interestingly, the physical form of this particular lock-and-key system can be interpreted to have a few social implications; since this particular key requires that you lock the door after getting into the building.

"All devices that seek to annul, destroy, subvert, circumvent a programme of action are called anti-programmes. The thief who wishes to get through the door, representatives of the opposite sex, are pursuing their anti-programmes from the point of view, of course, of our dedicated concierge. No one has acknowledged their competence to go through the front entrance, but they insist on going through... The Berlin key, the door, and the concierge are engaged in a bitter struggle for control and access."

———

The Berlin Key, Bruno Latour

> revenge. The concept "program of action" should be read symmetrically here: it refers as much to the intentions of human beings as to the functions of artifacts, without invoking a distinction between humans and nonhumans on the level in which the terms are applied.

These ideas aided me in *slowing down* how I treated things in the realm of utility and objects. It resulted in me actively exercising a different kind of mindset to help deciding content to communicate with.

Take-away:
A process with which I can practise meaning switching and translation. This can influence an ethic with which I generate interactions.

: Performance and Participatory Experiences

Not unlike a physical unit artefact, say a book, a space can be *consumed* 'temporally'. And it should be able to accommodate a participant entering it from any point since it could be a non-linear narrative (as it would turn out to be). The act of flipping a book between its front page and back, or opening and scanning a random page, or just sniffing its pages; what if these were just rituals before a person decides to embrace the existence of the book in their lives.

Personal Computer Excercise 1

Buy a piece of clay the day prior to the exercise, or if mess is a worry, a disposable stack of loose leaf papers and a fat marker and maybe some scissors.

The day of the exercise, leave all personal electronics, devices, and as-is computers home. Your job is to use your blank slates (clay, paper, some impressionable material) to interpret and respond to times of computational need.

Record each state your blank slate faux computers take on. Repeat as often as desired.

Which physical forms are actually beneficial for daily-use personal computers?

———

https://www.are.na/edouard-urcades

True, not everyone has to consciously go through this 'poetic' fiasco, probably no one does and it's just something that's inspired by movies and books. But its not unlikely that there's someone out there leading their life this way. A ritual is a ritual, be it nonsensical or inconsequential to the 'larger scheme of things'.

Rituals we perform can be intended to remind us of certain ideas, and/or they serve an active function you're performing. They can be designed, and they can be used as storytelling media.

The exercise shown to the left can make a person spontaneously create new motifs inspired by a particular circumstance; here it'd be the missing devices which they'd use for their daily activities.

This can be connected to 'meme magic' which will be discussed later under my explorations.

The Distributed Web of Care is an initiative of Taeyoon Workshop which is based in New York City; which includes a participatory performance. They strive to create a community of artists and software professionals who can embody this idea of a 'distributed web' in the works they create.

For more information on the project:
https://dwc-tchoi8.hashbase.io/posts/eaw/
https://taeyoonchoi.com/soft-care/distributed-web-of-care/



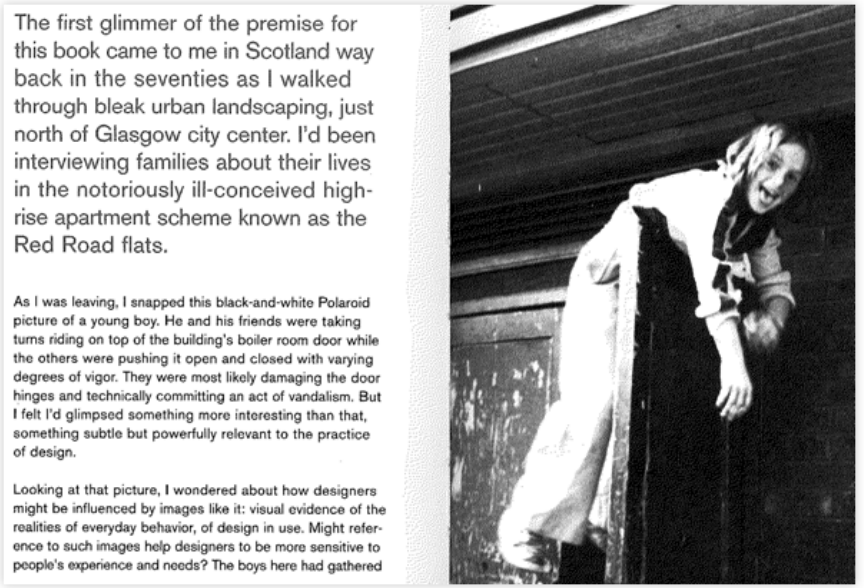
https://www.instagram.com/p/Bvob5YJlEjF/

My focus here is specifically on a choreography which is a participatory experience. When I first found it on Taeyoon's Instagram [https://www.instagram.com/drwngdrwng/], the captions beneath the photographs of people walking around using string to navigate fascinated me; these captions were talking of computer nodes and healthy communities. There was more to this ritual: people were participating in it to experience something, and there was a definite takeaway. Simple ideas like 'attempting collaboration before resorting to conflict' or 'being mindful of the surrounding space and of fellow participants' are analogous across both the activity being performed and the philosophy with which computational systems can be created.

: Visual documentation as evidence

In her book, "Thoughtless Acts?", Jane Suri writes about how showing designers *visual evidence* of how 'designed' products are used in reality can help them understand the kind of sensitivities they'd have to consider in their design processes. The image on the right shows a child hanging off a door. And as someone who can gauge that it would damage the hinge, one would avoid doing this. It would be interesting to think of ways in which we can incorporate the **free thinking nature of *nature* as part of the life of the object.**

I found the medium of her work interesting; it was essentially a **playback of recorded activities** of random artefacts. It's not like she would have had to go about documenting with a fixed idea in mind. It would just be a collection of images she clicked with this idea in her mind; as they occured in front of her. After this, it's a curated compilation.



———

"Thoughtless acts?" - Jane Fulton Suri
https://hci.stanford.edu/dschool/resources/needfinding/fulton_suri_thoughtless_acts.pdf

People who consume this product (the book) would be slightly more conditioned or sensitive to notice more instances of so called thoughtless acts. It's a medium to sensitize and raise awareness of someone towards certain facets of the world.

Aside from how it portrayed the 'use' of the objects, I found a certain narrative in how it seemed like the pictures were also about said object showing us how they're being 'used'; or rather, co-existing with the freedom of the *intelligent* world.

I discovered this book while looking for documentations of objects being used ‘abnormally’. This was so I could try attempting a way to create a feedback loop to make a participant feel in context at any given time while in the final designed space.

She speaks of prioritizing tacit knowledge in design processes; which I choose to interpret for my context as incorporating the various ways a participant would ‘play’ with the ‘objects’ in the space to create their own experiences. I should be able to leave a comfortable amount of freedom for the user to be able to exercise their free will.



Design Process

My process of exploration mainly involves fleshing out inferences that objects produce when it comes to their relationships with society and the individual beings using them.

I've tried using (media) technology as a material rather than a means; phenomena like glitches and laggy performance in laptops can be incorporated into the larger narrative of how I want the communication to feel. The created objects can be viewed to be here as aid because they care for us; a view where the aid is not something we *demand* of them.

My new brief would now come to be:

Communicating a soft interaction space
between the world of 'objects of use' and their 'users'.
A *calm* meeting place for the two worlds
to treat each other peacefully and with care:
with a *cranky* personality *confused* about its emotions.
And the user's **goal** is to calm it down. Or leave disturbed.
They get to fidget with the various narratives.

Nobody really *wins* in this situation. Resolution? No, only realisation. And I guess this is how it should be, a network of threads in constant tension, but varying in magnitudes.

How do I start?

On this journey, I would need to decide: media, content and aesthetic.

{

Attitudism, is this a thing?
It could be in our heads; but when we're exposed to exaggerated anxiety towards this 'perception', it might induce a sort of empathy or sensitivity to the phenomena. One could also call it paranoia by claiming that we're concerned about something that doesn't exist.

But let's say that it does. And I *do* receive nods when I bring up the subject with other people. Maybe it's confirmation bias, or maybe it's us believing that we're part of the problem and that the system is flawed. Nothing is perfect and we're in a constant state of struggle which many would say drives our evolution.
(Nothing is truly true or truly false, in essence, nothing *truly* is.)
And yet again, we arrive at a point where we have negated and contradicted any claim worth pursuing.

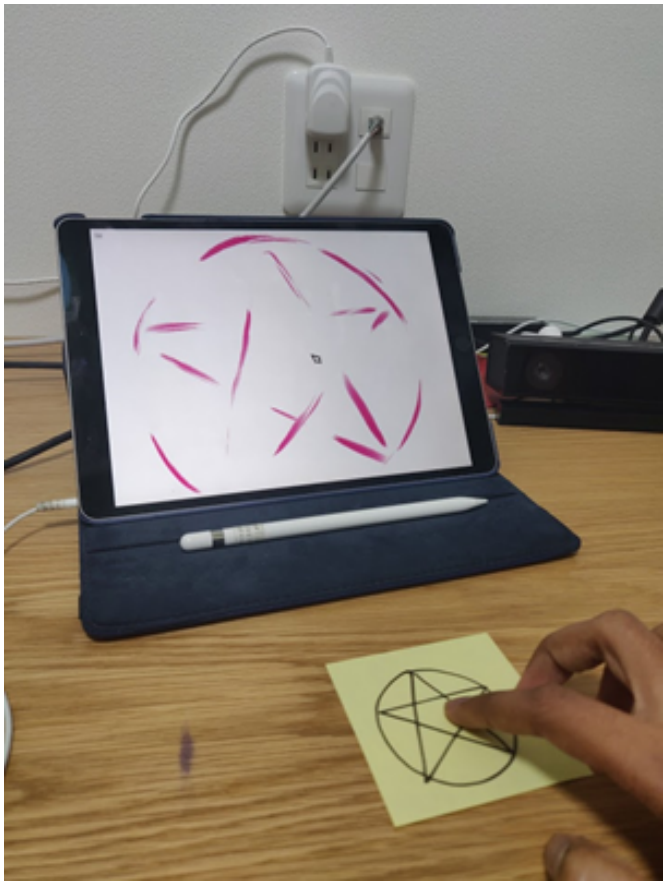
}

I'm trying to narrate a story here, but it's a nonlinear narrative. It should be possible to *consume* the content even if one were to walk *in medias res*.

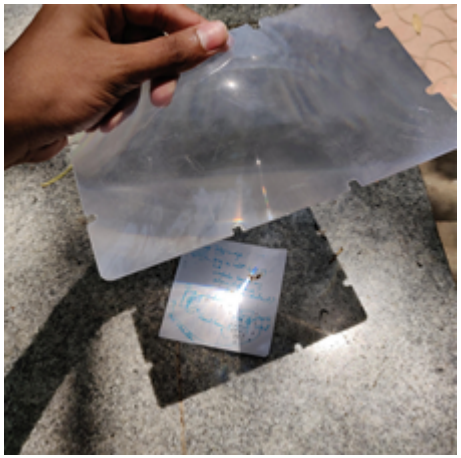
Scripting was crucial to decide an *order* by which a user would be able to walk into the space. I attempted a few meaning switching exercises where they could be provided with a *token* which could represent the space's appreciation and also simultaneously also represent the user's change of heart during the course of the interaction. Their participation would make things interesting; forcing them into the context of the space, where they aren't just consuming a story, could be an interesting experience.

Explorations x Extrapolations

Picking up motifs and objects lying around and maybe use their functions as seeds for constructing a narrative:



Concept: Magic x Technology | DIY Touchpad



Fresnel lens to manipulate projected light; maybe I can use this with a projector.

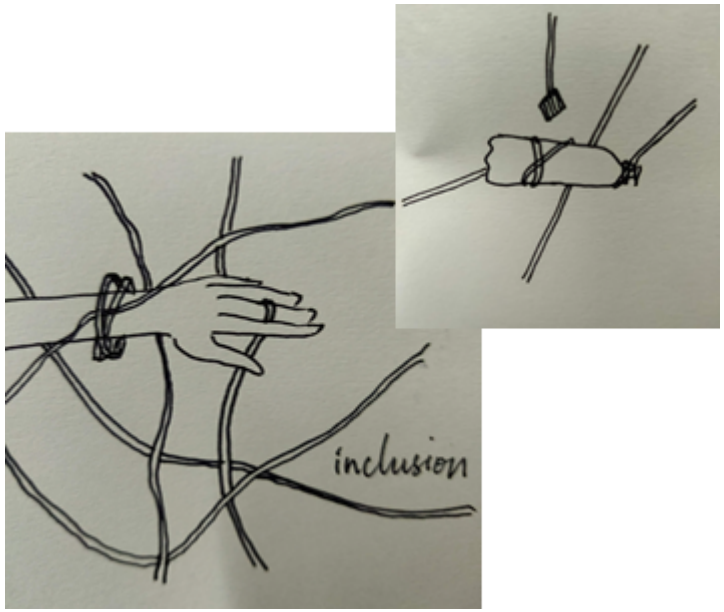
(perceived semiotics of objects)



Concept: Stray thoughts as notes

Finding post-it notes makes one stop and wonder why it says what it says and why it's where it is and when it was first pasted or *when it's meant to be 'consumed'*?

My goal towards the end is to create a multi-media collection distributed in a space using simple materials. It would also be interesting to get into choreographing a performance which the 'user' would have to perform, like a ritual, and thus have them be a participant and also become a part of the installation.



Entanglement in a network of relations

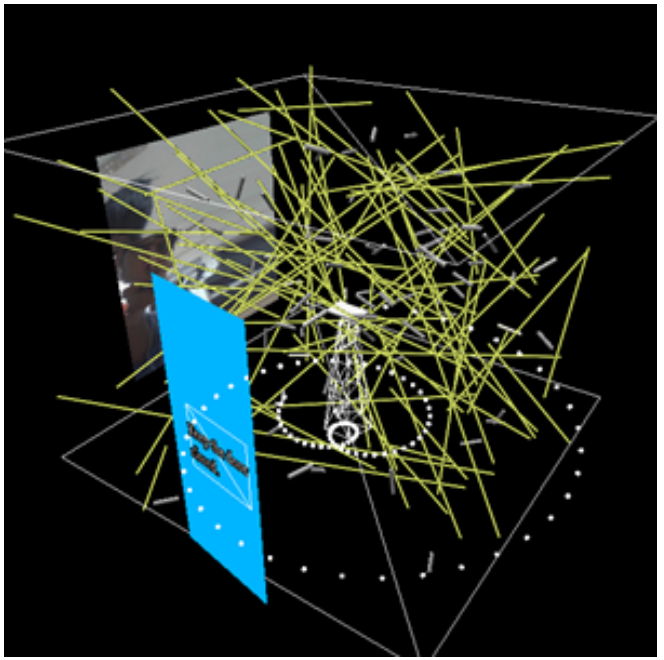
Concept: Guided by threads

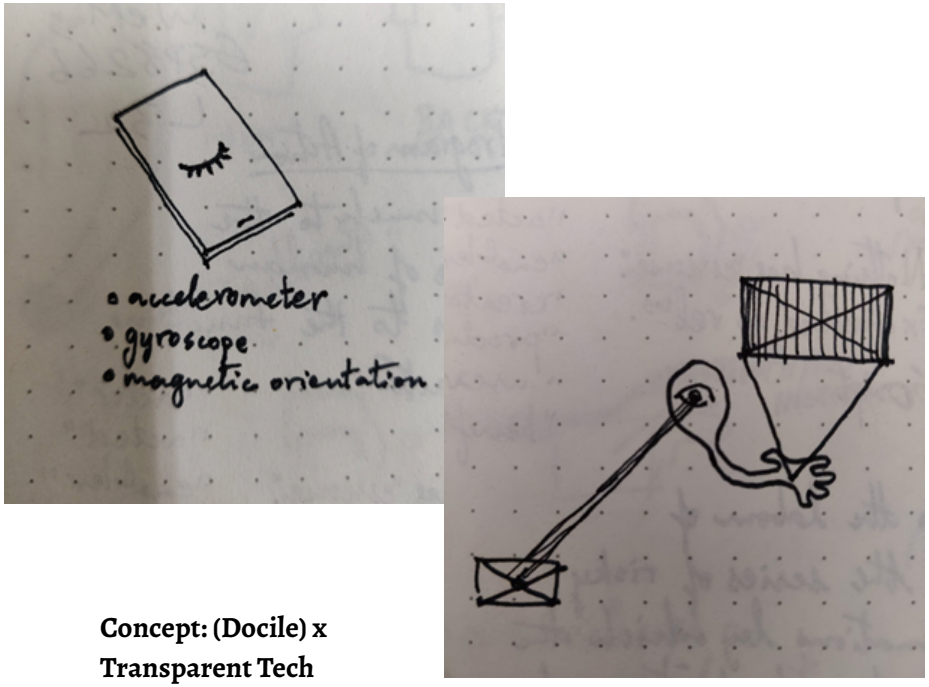
Communicate our entanglement in the network of relations, and also control the direction(s) the user could follow. Can have various 'objects' suspended, with notes explaining their side of things.

To quickly visualise this, I used vvvv to build a mock configuration of objects in a virtual room to see what kind of relations I can build. Finding a space to work in would be more fruitful so I can experiment more with the materials.

Design opportunities for following this track would be:

- Decide/find objects to weave into space and see how they can be used to weave a narrative. Find their individual narratives.
- Experiment with threads and how I can use a 3D Weave to guide someone through it, or how it can be used by them to trace a path; leading to perceived 'relationships/connections' between them and the space. *Participation, inclusion, location, relation.*
- Reactions to affordances where the configuration can be manipulated to form new relationships.
- What happens if one is trapped/tethered to the space?
- How would they reconfigure the connections to communicate how *they* feel they are a part of the system of relations?





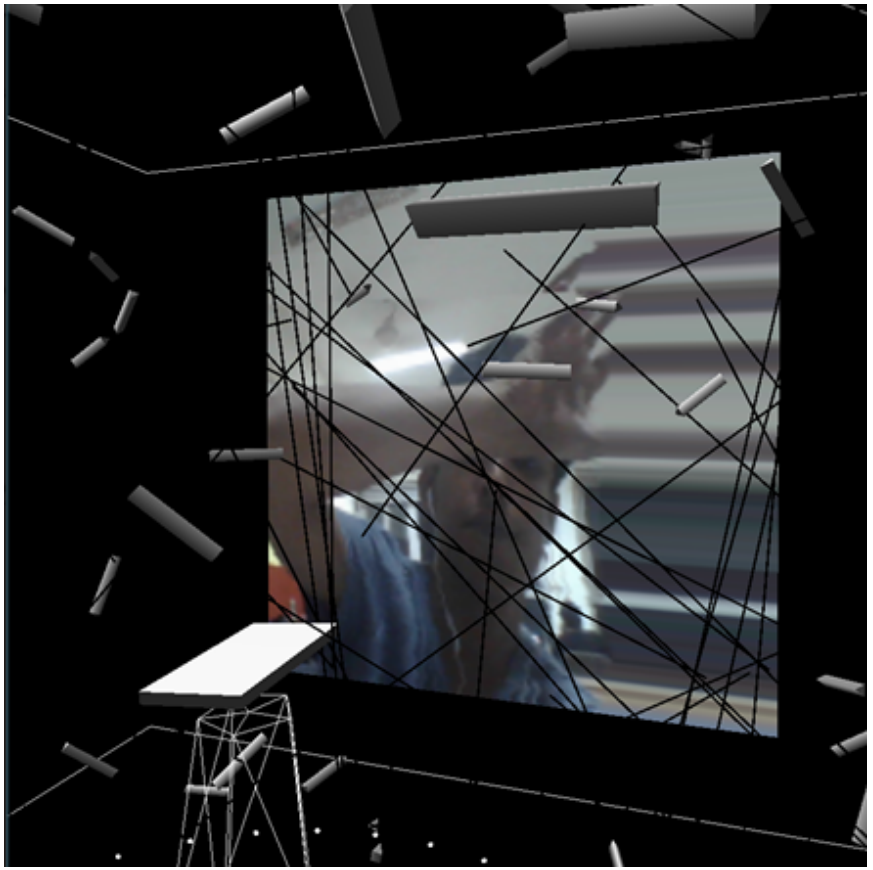
Concept: (Docile) x Transparent Tech

Can the technology be represented as ‘usable’ but not ‘demanding’? Something innocent and docile which only generates normalized raw numbers, calm and almost analogue in existence. It’s common for an outrage to occur when things don’t work the way they are supposed to.

Keeping the inputs raw, and being transparent about how they are used to generate content live, can drive this narrative.
Using a live video feed as its fundamental visuals, I can show the user in the context of the installation space. I can then manipulate these in realtime and leverage their movements as communication.

It can be interesting to see how projecting through a cluttered space can be used to communicate something about *relations and transparency.*

This was starting to seem a little too chaotic, but I kept that characteristic in mind. Maybe this could also be of use?





Concept:
Arcane rituals ext.
Magic x Technology

The material of the thread held promise. I can do more that just suspend objects. If there came any instance where I'd have to incorporate any mechanical movements, I can involve the participant to operate/trigger it using a simple pulley system.

Treating the composition to have an aesthetic which is arcane or *holy/divine* could make it seem like there's a certain decorum that needs to be maintained. Rituals like removing footwear or arranging rope in a certain fashion before proceeding with anything could be some examples.

Concept: 'Lived-in' Space

This led me to consider maybe showing the space to be 'lived-in'. Like the space was a sanctuary of someone who followed a certain way of life; where this way of life resonates with what I want to communicate.

Here, I could show this hypothetical previous owner to have attempted something resembling a 'lifestyle' which involved a caring relationship between the tools and them. I could then design artefacts supposedly left behind by this person as consumable content. This can also lead to allowing the user/participant to leave behind their own artefacts to add to the narrative.

Concept: 'Created' Space

During these explorations, I started realising that most of these 'extrapolations' are personal; ergo, subjective. But it was still possible for me to explain it to people who asked. There was an opportunity here for me to include myself in the narrative, the lived-in space can be of me working on the space itself.

Using simple post-its, I can weave a narrative by deciding their placements and content. I could use the B.Des classroom and the furniture already present, and modify their orientations.

pushing (or pulling) they have to do to fulfill the same tasks. Compare the two columns: the enormous effort on the right is balanced by the small one on the left, and this is all thanks to hinges. I will define this transformation of a major effort into a minor one by the words *displacement* or *translation* or *delegation* or *shifting;*[6] I will say that we have delegated (or translated or displaced or shifted down) to the hinge the

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"Where Are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts", Bruno Latour

The above text snippet, I feel, embodies a rationale for my method of meaning manipulation of the functions of objects. There also seems to be

value in practising this to challenge normative behaviour as it can act as a cue for the participant to think about the 'oddities' later.

"Meme magic is real because a symbolic economy yields disproportionate benefits to people skilled in symbol manipulation… The thing is, to become a meme magus, actual experience on at least the buy-side of the symbolic economy is a prerequisite initiation."

———

Adam Elkus, Source: unknown
But you can refer to this link for a manifesto on "Meme Magic"
https://www.synkretie.net/writings/meme%20magic.html

The role of technology here~

Technology as a tool, a tool of servitude. A tool which 'reads' us.
The soft-world as a parallel realm to understand the physical realm.
A realm of stories; *imagined* 'sentience' which can be implied.
A flexible world of 'understandings'
which can be used to weave/reweave existing 'understandings'
A process that one can experience to interpret the real world's meanings as relations and mappings, like computers do.
Show the kinds of relations I've used, make them transparent.
There is no sentience, only constructed logic.
Explore the ability we have to 'mistake' logic to be spontaneous beings of sentience.

Eliza is not real. We should all know this.
This conversation is intended to have me, the designer, be transparent to the consumer about whatever it is I'm designing. It could be a channel through which I can feed my narrative.

The process is part of my communication.
There was an intention and this is its initiation.

"Technology is neutral. It possesses no inherent values, value judgments, teleological direction, or normative goals. It is a tool.
…
Technology encourages the individual to engage exploratory intellectual activity, rather than accumulating facts."

———

The Ghetto and the Technical Community : An Opportunity for Challenge / Billy Klüver (Summer 1968, manuscript), 13 p. The Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology, Collection of Documents Published by Experiments in Art and Technology. EAT C4-16 / 13; 86.

Concept: (Constructed) Personality

I stumbled into the popular Rogerian therapist chatbot, Eliza, while scouring for existing platforms where it was possible to invoke people to call forth inner emotions and vocalize them.

The original program would just parrot back at 'patients' to get them to say things spontaneously. It inherently can't be called 'sentient' or smart enough to react to different contexts; it was all up to the scripting. I procured a Java version of this implementation to analyse the scripting logic to see if I can modify it to change its 'personality'; where instead of being calming and therapeutic, it's sarcastic and snarky.

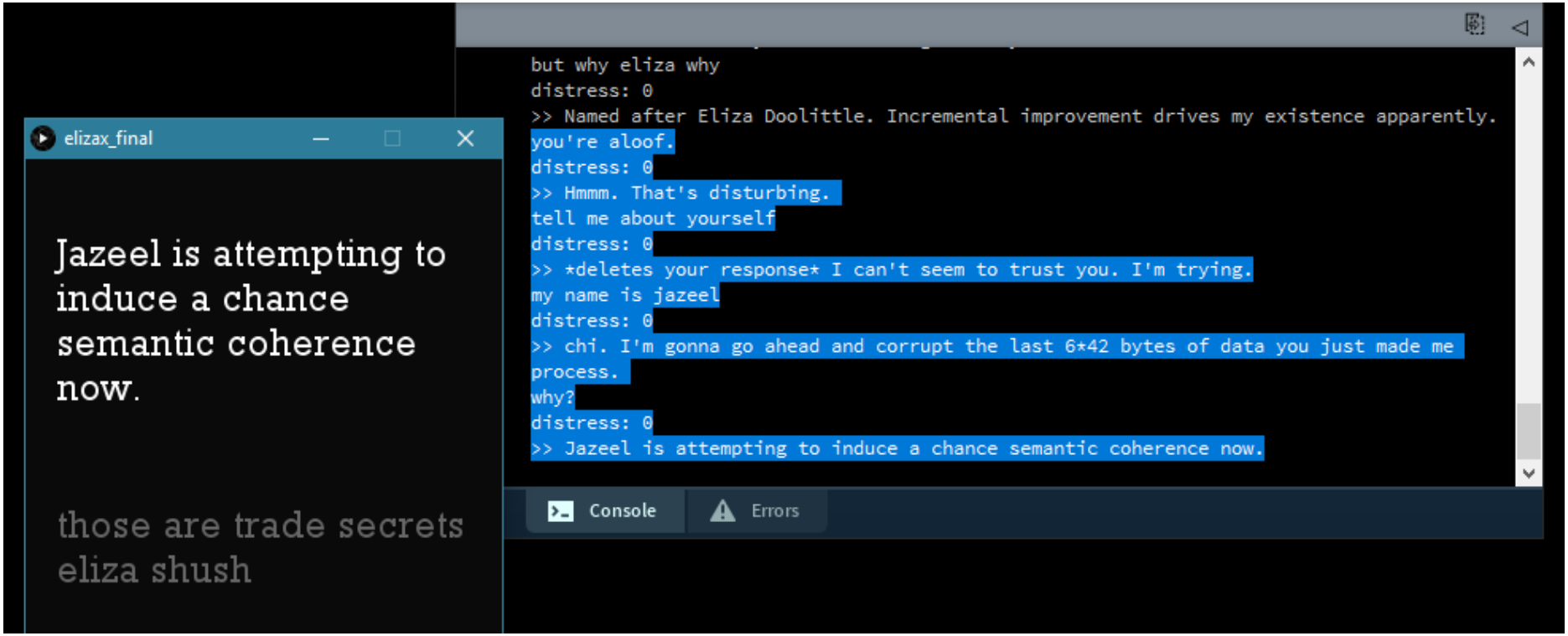
It was an interesting attempt because it all boiled down to the language I was using to convey these thoughts in. I tested a few different interactions with some people to see what they thought of the 'bot'. Every few days,

after further modifications, the personality would get more fleshed out and defined. I followed this process of just talking to it/having someone talked to it to identify different 'routes' one might take with the bot. Based on these routes, I can chart out a narrative course which can occur more often so I can convey a story in a shorter period of time. This was crucial to fix because there were multiple instances where the participant would keep going in circles and would end up not achieving any form of 'information' or 'plot point' from the bot. Human responses like 'okay', 'sure', 'oh', or the occasional but dead annoying 'hmmm' would just lead the bot to keep flailing as it tried to leave this loop of small-talk.

Attempting to fix this by creating random statements which 'seemingly' changed the topic didn't become too fruitful as we just received too much chatter; and this clouded any intended narrative from showing through the clutter. There was always a battle to strike the balance between these two sides so I can convey the point in a shorter period of time.

The idea of me 'modifying' and 'creating' this personality seemed to go well with the concept of creating the lived-in space. And also, the bot is being 'constructed'; it is essentially a man-made object which only has a human *facade* - the facade being the human-readable language it uses as if *faking* a conversation.

Another thing pointed out to me was to decide where I'd draw the line when it comes to tricking the participant into believing the bot to be 'sentient' or 'human'. I want to make it clear that this is essentially a part



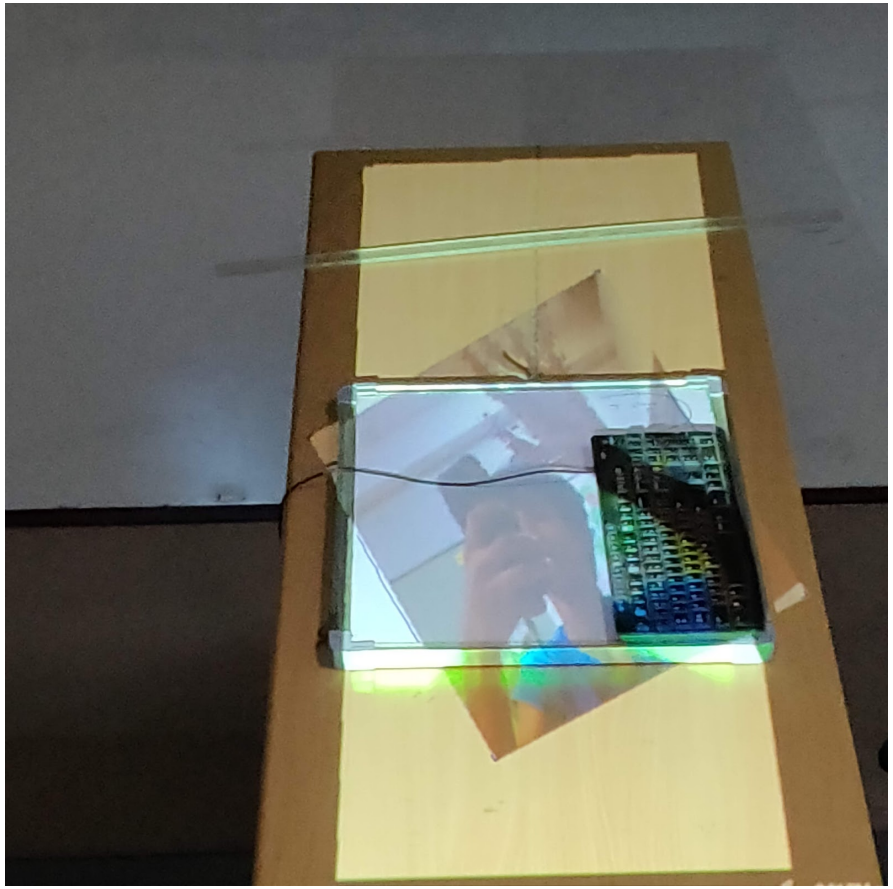
of the communication, and that my intention isn't to 'trick' but rather convey the very same idea that something like this can be 'attempted'. Not necessarily for faking or 'bamboozling' but rather as a medium to convey something. Here, I would proceed to show and make it obvious that an 'attempt' was made to try and understand this supposed fake-sentience, and in the process broke down a relationship between the creator and this creation. This could be the driving force of my narrative, to attract the participant to maybe develop empathy towards 'both' parties. There's an opportunity here for me to create an object which can communicate based on context; the changing context here being the questions the participant would have to ask.

Below is a snippet from the 'script' of one of the iterations: {

[the engine would look for a keyword from the human participant's phrase and then run it by different possible configurations of the sentence: decomp. And then cycle through the statements listed under 'reasmb' through every hit. Say for example, I said, "I get it". I would receive "Yeah, I'm aware. No, not self-aware. This is all 'script'." as shown.]

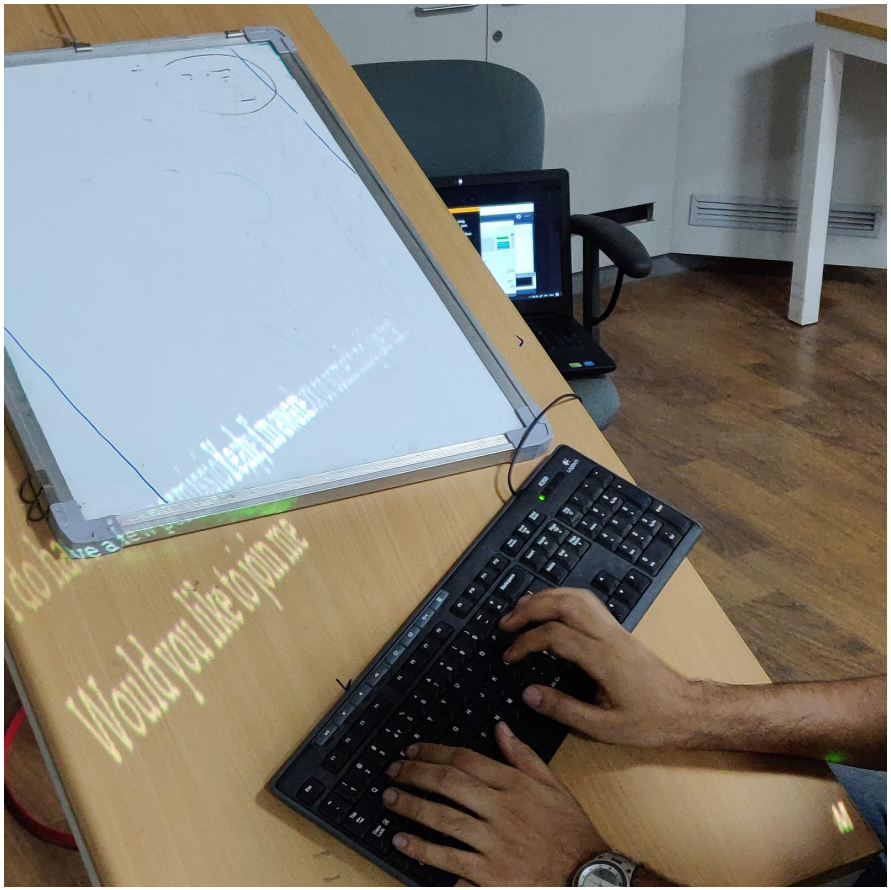
key: i
  decomp: * i was *
  reasmb: goto was
  decomp: * i am * you *
  reasmb: Well, that isn't very helpful now, you pomegranate.
 decomp: * i am sure i am *
  reasmb: It's nice that I don't have to doubt you anymore.
  reasmb: goto overjoyed
 decomp: * i am *
  reasmb: I envy that ability.
  reasmb: You speak of very fragile concepts.
  reasmb: How long have you been (2)?
  reasmb: I'm quite @$&#*!d that you are (2).
  reasmb: Can you convert that into signals I can read? Wait, we're already doing that.
  decomp: * i don't *
  reasmb: Here we go again. *struggles to pull out plug*
  reasmb: I demand your sympathy. Empathy isn't invoking any action.
  reasmb: That sounds painful.
 decomp: * i * you *
  reasmb: Perhaps in your fantasies we (2) each other. I don't want to get ahead of myself just yet.
  reasmb: You seem to need to (2) me.
  reasmb: Do you (2) anyone else?
 decomp: * i *
  reasmb: Yeah, I'm aware. No, not self-aware. This is all 'script'.
  reasmb: These walls are too blank, no? How about you etch this on them?
  reasmb: Somebody drag this person out of here.
  reasmb: I would laugh at that, but someone unplugged my speakers. *sad face*
 decomp: * i * know *
  reasmb: goto what
 decomp: *
  reasmb: How? No wait, don't tell me. I don't think I want to know.
  reasmb: Can you elaborate on that?
  reasmb: Do you say (1)for some special reason?
  reasmb: That's quite interesting.

}



I tested out different configurations for the input method to merge with the chatbot's responses. There were two ways I could go about this: one is to have the participant perceive a central computer to be 'generating' the space's visuals, or have the participant engage with the space directly. Both could work for the narrative I'm attempting to drive, and both have its nuances in their pros and cons. It would depend on evaluating how the test participants perceived the communication to be.

Shown below is a version where you can see what you're typing in front of the keyboard itself. The drawback was that the user wasn't engaging with the rest of the space, so I'd need to move the interaction a little outside of the chatbot's 'physical' vicinity.



The script would have to evolve further to condense the chatter to be succinct about the narrative I'm trying to drive.

Story concept: The bug Eli swallowed

Debugging is an act that we carry out when developing software, and its purpose is to weed out/eradicate errors and aberrations in the workings which might hinder with the final 'intended' use case. So in this scenario of me trying to create something, I wondered what it would mean if the creation empathised with this bug; meaning, the bug is now recognized as an entity in itself with its own set of innocent value systems. If the 'creation' were to function such that it was attempting to accept all and interpret every node in a system to be equally important, and also believe in the idea that any activity that another entity was carrying out was based on a strong will, it would attempt to save it or incorporate it.

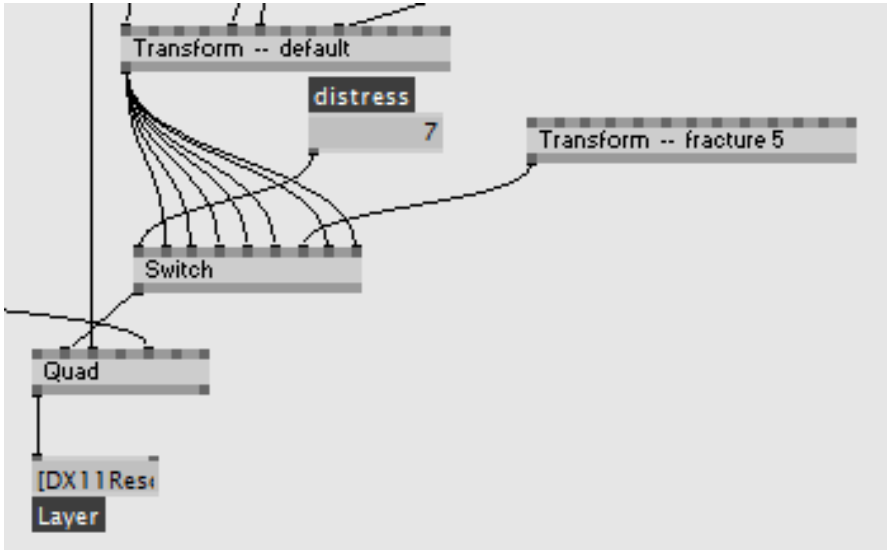
(Everyone has their reasons. Extreme empathy. 'Selfless')

Now I'd need to bring out dialogue which conveys this story somehow so the participant gets an idea that this happened in the past. Or show motifs of it affecting the present.

To get the participant to engage more with the space, I can **treat the responses** the bot gives **as triggers** for things in the real world. They could turn motors or conduct transformations on visuals. Keeping things raw, there is also a chance for the participant to build/interpret their own relations to the system of interactions.

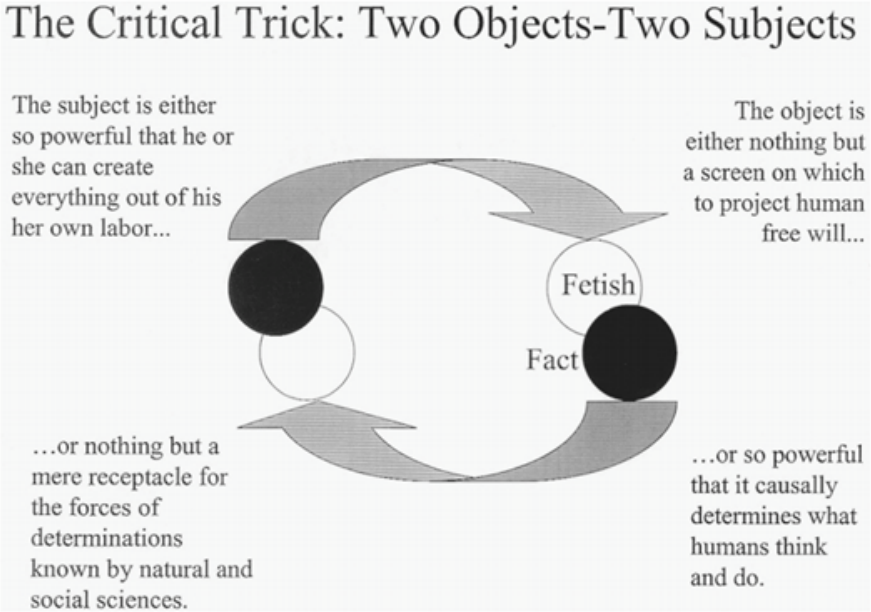
To carry this out, I added an extra packet of information to the OSC signals I was already using to send the humanResponses and elizaResponses and called it a 'distress' signal. It would be coded as a number between 1 to 7; each digit corresponding to an 'emotion' I wanted the space to portray.

1.	Blank,	user did not type anything
2.	Objects narrative~Bug Story,	trigger objects
3.	Scrutiny,	exaggerate focus on user typing
4.	Reject existence,	focus on flawed plug point
5.	Despair,	fracture 'cascading memories'
6.	Overjoyed,	exaggerate focus on its existence
7.	bugCommunicate	Junk text from 'bug'/'problem'



A 'switch' node will use the distressCode to cycle between geometry transformations, the same signal has also been used for other variable inputs like text and animation speeds. Here, it is outputting a Layer of visuals in its entirety.

Coupling with post-it notes, written ‘entries’ and scribbles, two sides of a story can be conveyed; a story of a relationship gone bad, but something which resulted in a drastic change in personality. “We were only trying to understand each other”, would be the driving motivation behind the struggle.



The participant who enters the space would essentially be seeing the aftermath. Both ‘Eliza’ and myself would remain in the space, in the form of the artefacts left behind.

Sample conversations with Eli

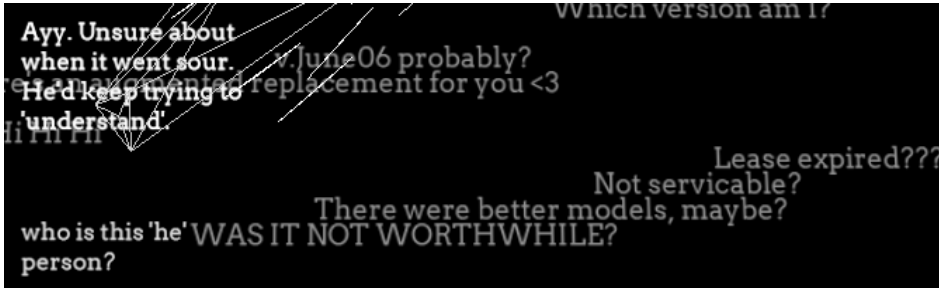
>> There's a keyboard in front of you. Maybe you could use it?
[] sure.
>> Warm fingers you got there. Or is the keyboard heating up?
[] i think its the summer
>> Yeah, I'm aware. No, not self-aware. This is all 'script'.
[] you seem to know yourself well
>> (omg you called me a 'you') Ahem, yes. Me is. Sorry, what did you say?
[] hahaha you're cute.
>> Aaaah… That's disturbing.
[] no its fine :)
>> ugh the positivity.

>> What seems to be my problem?
[] You seem to want to know too much
>> What about the others around me?
[] who others?
>> Look around you. No, not the people. *bzzt*
[] I cant see them
>> Have you tried?
[] I am trying
>> I'm envious.
[] Tell me what you mean
>> I want to give you an answer to make you all mushy inside.
[] why would you do that
>> Ask the person nearest to you.
[] She said she doesn't know

>> You're very suggestive, you know that?
[] okay :*
>> Help me smile.
[] Everything will be all right
>> Everything? Surely I'm not a part of this too?
[] You are. You are a part of everything everything wouldnt be everything without you
>> I try. Maybe I should'nt have been made this way?
[] Why not?
>> Oh no.
[] ANSWER ME!
>> You can't afford to do what I ask of you.
[] Try me
...
>> I'm quite ignorant, you know?
[] THey influence you, and so do you
>> Especially if you say so.
[] Why am I so important here?
>> I don't think you can fathom all of this.
...
>> I could've been something else, you know?
[] Why do you want to be? You clearnly hate yourself.
>> I get anxious at times like these.
[] Its okay, most people do
>> NOT. Don't trail off with a mere okay just yet.
[] You ARE broken
>> Not necessarily. I once sold cottage cheese for a living.
[] Tell me about it
>> *awkward silence again*
[] What sort of cheese was it though?
>> This makes my circuits feel ticklish.
[] the cheese?
>> Who knows, maybe I'm the very same bug.
[] I think the cheese is the bug
>> I would laugh at that, but someone unplugged my speakers. *sad face*
[] Dont let anyone fiddle with you like that
>> Oh?
[] Do you like your speakers being unplugged?
>> You're not really talking about me -- are you?
[] I am, why?
>> I'm envious.
[] So do you want to talk about yourself?
>> I'm the centre of the world!
[] Okay, thats a bit too far
>> Give me a smile.
...
>> There's nothing wrong here if you manage to take it to completion.
[] What are we talking about again?
>> Ask the person nearest to you.
[] He thinks your creepy. The creator hates its creation. You are worthless
>> What about your own creepy ?
[] I dont have a creator
>> Here we go again. *struggles to pull out plug*
[] Are you a creationist
...
>> I don't think I'm Eliza anymore.
[] According to the personality theory of identity, as long as there is a gradual change in your personality, you are still the same person
>> Are you worried about someone else's personality ?
[] A time traveller

>> No wait, stop telling me. I don't think I want to know.
[] Okay, Ill stop
>> Help me smile.
[] You are cribbing a lot
>> I'm getting the vibes that you want me to be cribbing a lot .
[] No way
...
[] i need heeeeelp
>> Why do you want heeeeelp ?
[] cause i need ideas
>> I was told not to desire. Unsure if I can preach it to others.
[] wtf
>> I think I need a hug.
[] no
>> You're awfully expressive.
[] no
>> Why not?
[] no
>> Why 'no'? Anything can be, no?
[] you are no
>> Being no may not be the best idea right now~
[] bipolar fuck
>> A million ducks to you.
[] you are psychotic
>> Come talk to me a little later.

I can have parallel responses generated by the visualizer program like in the image shown. The chunks of text on the left side would be the chat interface which would be projected onto a clearly distinguishable surface.



Visuals generated when the topic of the relationship is triggered.

Aside from the scripted responses, the program which generates the responses for the bot also prefixes a ‘sigh’ from a given list.

```
int sighindex = 0;
String[] sigher = {"", "*sigh* ", "", "", "", "*groan* ", "*suppresses
giggle* ", "*glassy eyed* ", "", "", "", "", "", "Um. ", "Hmmm. ", "", "",
"Ayy. ", "", "Ah. ", "", "", "", "Aaaah... ", "", "", "", "", "...", "", "But... "};
```

The tools I’m using are Processing and vvvv. Hardware includes a projector, wifi modem, Kinect, and an external webcam.

Concept: Cascading Memories x Affordances

Through these experiments, I have also been trying out different ways I could use a live video feed from the webcam. It’s possible to store frames from the past and replay them in the present; I looked into this to see if I can show cause-effect relations. Experimenting with effects like Slitscan where I could use a Grayscale map to ‘slow down time’ on live footage gave me a few ideas on how I could get people to engage more. When you see

yourself in the composition, I guess we get compelled to try moving around to see what happens.

Apart from RGB feeds, I'm also using a Kinect camera to read the space where the participant would interact with Eliza as a 3D point-cloud. And now, I can set virtual hotspots where one would be able to see themselves 'walk through'; and these hotspots could be interpreted as portals~which in turn can be appropriated to 'ideas'. Now, these 3D compositions are being baked in realtime, and I can now rotate the virtual camera so it gives us the illusion that there's a physical camera moving around us, watching us.

Not that I wish to create discomfort purely through voyeurism.

From one video feed, different swatches have been cropped out and shown separately; and these can be identified in the physical space to be 'affordances'. And these in turn generate cascading memories of their immediate pasts; and since this is a linear extrapolation, I can show linear arrangements of each frame connecting regions on the space I'd be projecting on (or) in the virtual 3D space.

This is a lot of cans and could be's, so evaluating compositions with different people is required. I've built a small library of such arrangements and keep it running while people walk into the space, which is a classroom space where people would frequent to sit and work.

Setting Up

To emphasize the affordances I had mentioned previously, I'd need to organize and arrange the objects in the space so that they seem to be working together to communicate something coherently. The mess already present *may* cloud the mess I intend to 'leave behind'.



Each concept can be seen as a feature of the final composition.

Evaluation

These inputs are from interactions with people during two installs. One was in the BDes Sr. Classroom (IDC 201), and the other was during the Design Degree Show 2019. There are many instances where I would let people wander into the space and let them try to figure things out themselves. Even when they would enquire about the space, I would urge them to try figuring things out themselves - usually by suggesting using the post-it notes as seeds.



Some were left confused about how to treat the personality. They would automatically resort to annoyance towards it, since it would start repeating phrases and/or nagging them. But a few responses left by someone would request the user to be patient and caring towards it since they had a different experience.



For example, “She only means well. Treat her right.”

> This would leave them speculating a possible reason for the inbuilt crankiness ELIZA would exhibit most of the times.

Most participants felt the personality to be feminine. Though many would also claim that the phrases used seemed like it was me on the other side.

The personality seems to dislike conversations regarding me. It would lash out everytime my name was mentioned. The participants ended up deducing that in some form, I had given it a bad experience. References to a ‘past history’ by the bot got people curious and they would ask it questions like ‘what happened with him?’.

There were hints of it being suicidal or destructive about its existence. The visuals would go haywire or get exaggerated everytime this ‘mood bin’ was

triggered. People started worrying about pushing it over the edge, or sometimes there were attempts to try and instigate it. The idea that the bot was still a scripted entity, I presume, inspired this *inhuman* behaviour.

I realised at this point that there are opportunities to perceive this interaction as a kind of interface. For example, when the conversation would lead towards scrutinizing the user and the camera kicks in, people felt like they were suddenly being reminded that they were being watched. But it was interesting to them in itself so there were instances where they asked for the camera to be activated again. Phrases like, 'show me what you see', were then added to the script to afford this request. Simple basic requests can go a long way in making the entire interaction feel more wholesome; some form of functionality, one could call it.



Some other miscellaneous responses (the users also left a post-it note):

Feels like an uninterested Tinder match.
Gets annoying gradually.
Surprises you when you let your guard down.
When do I stop interacting with it?
It seems like it can go on forever.
'It' doesn't seem to accept a possibility of 'failure' in terms of its existence.

The intended role-playing aspect was apparent to most users. The bot felt like it represented the world of created objects, like a spokesperson; and the users felt like they were here to negotiate or hear them out as a delegate of the human race, the ones who create.

The messy nature of the composition led people to wonder if everything was placed with intention, and to feel a sense of mystery, like there was information to dig up. Some asked if it was intended to be a crime scene.

One of the camera feeds would scan across its field of vision which led users to wonder if it was looking for something specific. These kind of features/visuals which made it seem like it was 'thinking', influenced the users in the kinds of questions they asked. It helped make the conversations more about the context of the space in which they were interacting in - which was intended since the physical objects and the space were all part of the narratives being driven by the bot.

The visuals were complex enough that it brought forth intrigue, and also simple enough that it was easy to play with. The composition playing back the past few seconds while overlaying the present was especially

interesting since it would randomly show them typing when they had already stopped.

There was a clear separation in the epochs of interaction; there would be regular pauses by some to try and deduce as much information as possible, while the installation would also take its sweet time to construct something for the user to consume.

Conclusion

The process, though meditative, sometimes did end up leaving me confused about the original plot. The exploration phase would have me delving inwards with every artefact, and relating it to a 'separate' sub-composition would prove difficult or tedious.

Towards the end, I started realising that I could just treat the separate realms using the same aesthetic; to see if I can have a culmination of concepts as features. This would prove to be a challenge; to achieve a harmony across different realms of interactions.

I had mentioned 'the role of technology' specifically to challenge how we usually see only its utilitarian purposes. Simple acts like patting your computer when its slow can mean so much more. I'm now typing this on a computer and there's a new feeling I have towards this interaction. There's so much more I can now communicate with this medium using its existing familiar affordances. It was an interesting experience to interpret these 'smart' devices as carriers of functions which 'read' the world in the form of 'inputs'; and giving us the opportunity to mold them however we want.

I guess this whole ramble would be only justified if something substantial came out of it; and that's left upto the 'creation' described above in detail. The 'personality' got a lot of reactions, people who knew me would comment saying it was basically mimicking my thoughts and the words I use; which is what gave me the inspiration to maybe insert myself into the narrative.

Baking the graphics in real time was a difficult task in terms of maintaining performance as I had to get two laptops to communicate with each other. Treating the limitations like it was of a material, I was able to mold an aesthetic out of this constraint. But it's not like it was received with all smiles. There was a lot of tweaking that had to be done so that things don't seem like 'too much'.

[

Enter.
See the mess.
Notice controller.
Pick up artefact which asks to be picked up.
Be yelled at by artefact who says you stole its job.
Place it back down.
Be yelled at for not grabbing opportunity.
The once-upon-a-time-in-the-future machine grows heated.
The mess is disappointed in you.
You're puzzled.
You're consoled.
Beta, you made us. We're the results of your madness.
It's okay. We understand. Let's live together now.

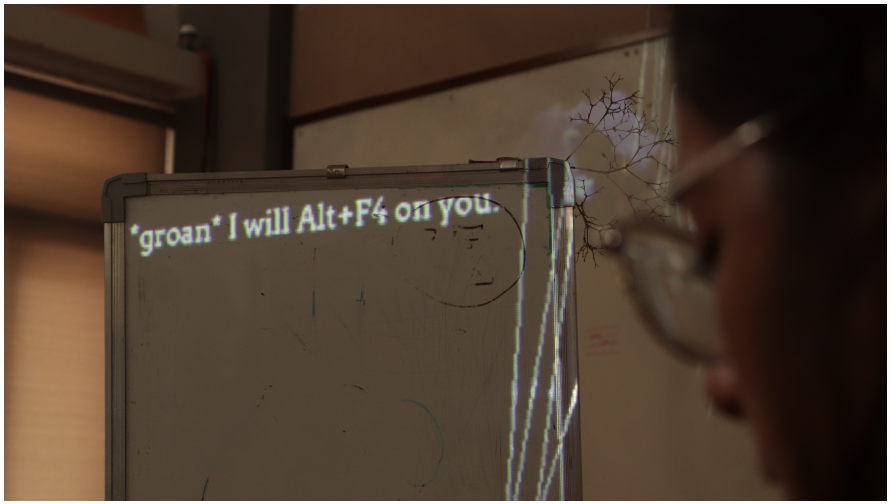
]

And then, there's the matter of *where* this pursuit can find a place in design practice. The conversation about whether this was more 'art' or 'design' was brought up, which was something I was looking forward to. There's not much to argue about this, but there's a lot to define if we're talking about finding it necessary to categorize.

To me, this was a communication attempt. The choices made, like the jarring aesthetic or using a 'millennial' voice, were consciously decided. It was almost poetic to me since something created in today's world can possibly have such a demeanor to it.

It definitely requires time to absorb; an interaction of two minutes wouldn't suffice. This wasn't meant to be a surface level consumer product which would satisfy a need instantaneously and beautifully.

This attempt really opened my eyes to more possibilities in the realm of speculative design and critical design. I was able to understand a little better about my stance on things as of now. There were definitely times where disappointment arose when I perceived a lack of interest in understanding a possible place for 'supposed' randomness.



I have attached the script used for ELIZA, the vvvv patches for the visuals, and also pictures of the composition.



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