THE WEEK THAT WAS

TD1 @ Geneva Auto show

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TD1 @ CERN

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Kultur på campus
Culture at campus
Thursday March 15th, 12:10 - 12:50, Ljusgården, Lärarutbildningshuset

It is the 24-year old rapper and singer Nathalie Missaoui that is behind the name Cleo. She has been rapping and releasing music since the beginning of 2007, and since her first release “Yes She Do” together with Meldeah she has been given a lot of attention in media and been often played on the radio.
Felix shows some of his artworks at the top floor.

Carlos Arturro, Shih-Yen Lo and Nien-Fu Chen participated in the yearly snow sculpture competition in the center of town. Unfortunately no win this year!

**INSPIRATION**

http://www.chromexperiments.com/ - A showcase for creative web experiments, the vast majority of which are built with the latest open technologies, including HTML5, Canvas, SVG, and WebGL.

http://www.medicaldesignblog.com/ - Blog following recent designs within the medical field. Unfortunately only in German, but can be translated with Google Translate.

http://www.dexigner.com/ - Delivering design related news, events, competitions, and resources.

Do you have any inspirational sites or blogs that you want to share with the rest of the school? Send them in to wozzop@gmail.com.
CAD versus Sketching? Why ask? by James Self

A continuing issue in industrial design education is when to allow students to move from sketch work to 3D CAD modeling during studio practice or whether to let them use CAD at all? I’ve heard of first year undergraduate modules where students are ‘banned’ from the use of CAD in an attempt to encourage sketch-based work and more explorative conceptual design practice. In my view this approach is somewhat draconian and does little to deal with the underlying reasons that attract less experienced designers to the comparative certainty of 3D CAD.

Instead of setting constraints or limitations to dictate where and under what circumstances design tools were used, design education needs to provide opportunities for young designers to reflect upon the nature of their own design activity and how this informs their use of design tools. Undergraduate students should consider the bigger picture that constitutes the various requirements of the design process in order to think about how tools use locates within and inform a more considered approach to design. This awareness will then provide opportunities for students to critically reflect upon their informed decisions when working with design tools: to be more critical in their use of CAD tools and more confident in their own sketching abilities.

My own research has explored the increasing variety of tools the industrial designer has at their disposal to support the development and communication of design intentions. Findings indicate that sketching continues to be an integral part of design activity. Professional experience also influences the use of sketching in support of design activity. Inexprienced design students tend to lack confidence in their sketchability and they find the dynamic, unconstrained medium at odds with an approach to design activity that aims towards fixation and attachment to concept.

As part of my research I visited practicing designers at their places of work and interviewed them about their use of design tools. Interestingly, the designers often juxtaposed the affordance of sketching against the limitations of 3D CAD tools like many industrial design educators. Practitioners stressed the explorative, divergent affordances they enjoyed over the more constrained convergent nature of CAD.

Of course they understood the value of CAD, but spoke of a concern for the ways it limited student creativity. A student’s design being too influenced by the constraints of this or that software.

Of course, when used to support design activity, both sketching and CAD tools have the ability to complement one another in a process that has at its heart the representation and communication of design intent. Rather than limiting the use of a given tool, design education must provide opportunities for students to consider the relationship between their use of a given tool, the tool’s possible influence on their own design activity and how tools is located within and informed by the wider requirements and responsibilities of the design process.

Much criticism has been leveled at the inability of CAD to support the kinds of explorative design activity required for conceptualisation. There can be no doubt that the tool-in-hand has an influence on the character of the design representation. However, it is also true that a tool is only a tool insular as it is used as such by the tool-user. In turn, the user is motivated by their own perception of the purpose of tool use. For students to make best use of the availability of an ever-increasing variety of underspecificity of the activity of divergent design tools, they require an understanding of tool use informed by a more nuanced understanding of the different requirements of the process of industrial design.

Experienced designers know this and tend to take a process-first approach of using design tools. They think more about what is required in terms of the design process: stakeholder expectations; budget; communication of intent: from explorative, divergent conceptualization to more convergent specification. In short, they draw upon a wealth of knowledge and past experience to guide their approach to design activity and tool use.

By contrast, my research suggests the less experienced student of design is both reassured by the command-based affordances of CAD and dazzled by its ability to create slick glossy images. A problem with this tool-first approach is that the designer is restricted by what is achievable within the tool’s constraints. Their explorative design activity and the purpose of tool use shifts away from thoughts of the creative design practice towards the production of the CAD model as the motivation for design activity. This results in the ‘This is what I did at the weekend’ CAD model. ‘Doesn’t it look good?’

Rather than design activity and tool use located within and informed by a wider design process, the emphasis and motivation for design becomes design embodiment itself. The design embodiment becomes the outcome of design activity and the driving motivation for the purposeful use of the design tool.

It may look good, but is it good design?

After my first few trips to design studios in and around London and the South East of England, it soon became apparent that industrial design practitioners were most interested and wanted to talk about the differences between two design tools: hand sketch and 3D CAD.

This polarisation centered on the alignment of CAD with a more convergent, generic way of working that resulted in the constrained representation of design ideas. Experienced designers at least with a perception of hand sketching as supporting a more divergent, explorative design activity able to provide insight into design thinking and ability. Misogyny can be seen in discussions of tools within the design research community.

Brian Launson, an experienced practitioner and academic, describes the use of CAD tools as a halted, clumsy interaction when compared with the flowing, more reflective process he has seen when observing the sketcher at work.

A search through the discussion forums of Core77 reveals comments by those that see sketching as something of a holy grail of design ability. ‘the analogue dreams’ (to borrow a phrase) camp. Sketch-A-Day, a popular weblog where sketch work is uploaded and discussed, profiles sketchers and the drawing skills these expert sketchers have. And there are those that argue that at some point somewhat arrogantly be termed ‘CAD junkies’. These designers speak fondly and with some pride of losing all track of time and space while engaged in marathon CAD sessions. The end result of which are stunningly slick digital embodiments of their concept ideas. Too very different embodiments of design intensity, the result of two very different design tools.

This is of course true. The tool will have an influence on the design representation and the nature of design activity. This distinction is, however, somewhat artificial: it is important to take into account the designer’s skills, experiences and understanding of the tools they use. As an influence on the ways the tool is used. An awareness of the ways in which various tools support the dynamic requirements of the design process will inform the character of design activity.

This awareness is engendered through the various requirements of the design process, influence the designer’s approach to design activity, choice and use of design tools.

A tool is only a tool insular as it is used as such to achieve a particular purpose of an activity.

Returning to my own research, the experienced designers seemed more inclined to take a holistic approach to their design activity and tool use. Those with experience of practice possess a stronger awareness of tool use as located within and informed by the requirements of the design process.

They understood how tools may be best deployed to support this process.

In contrast, design students tend to adopt a more constrained and fixedated approach to their design activity. Their use of CAD tools only compounded a pre-existing tendency towards attachment to concept and fixation. This approach influences the ways in which students approach design activity and tool use. A tendency to fixate reflects the students’ lack of confidence in their own design ability derived from a limited understanding of why and how design tools are used.

Design education needs to foster confidence in less experienced designers. One way this may be achieved is to provide students with greater awareness of the character of design tools, their strengths and limitations. This awareness would help them better understand the role tools play as they are used in support of the design process as well as providing students with opportunities to experiment upon their own approaches to design activity and tool use. This awareness will come from opportunities to use tools in studio work. However, knowledge must also be developed through an education that describes and makes more explicit the relationships between tool, tool user and context of use.

Mere stating the benefits of one tool over another is not enough with design education. My research has tried to develop knowledge that can be used in teaching, alongside studio work, as a way to help student designers to understand and critically analyse their use of design tools.
Wednesday Lecture

Silence in the inner and outer space

Green Room
13:15-15:15
March 14th

Peter Bryngelsson will talk about silence as a symbol and a concrete experience and will tell about his interviews with people that cannot hear, priests, drug abusers, tortured, musicians, architectures etc.