

Big Dada

From visualisation to experience

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Our approach to the future of visualisation focuses on experience as a central concept, questioning what is considered information or data, moving to multimodal, multisensory forms of representation, and redefining the designer as an artist with a critical perspective who works with a range of media and materials.

Information

It ripples through a flock of starlings in a preconscious wave. It's the basic unit of life [18] and of matter [10]. A concurrent VISAP paper [17] describes a project which moved from scientific data to concepts and processes. While we visualise quantitative data and research findings in our practice, we are also interested in cultural practices [13], subjective interpretations [2], and exformation [6]. As well as representing and communicating data, designers have a responsibility to acknowledge the hidden assumptions implicit in the selection, curation, interpretation and representation of such data. [5]

Experience

Thinking fast not slow [7], people encounter information in contexts – personal, social, physical [4] – and our 'innocent consciousness' [1] precedes and predates understanding. Smell the city from the gallery [11]; hear, feel and perform data rendered in the thousand-year-old communications medium of bronze bells, unmediated by screens or scientific instruments. A small dog enchants you from the edge of a champagne glass [2], *Un Chien Andalou* perplexes you with dream logic, exquisite corpses and cabinets celebrate random associations and data mashups. The future of visualisation is narrative noise [14] frozen in the architecture of chance [9], and meaning emerges in dialogue [8] and subjective experience [3]. Maybe interactive, maybe fictional, always immersive, spatialised, sonified, materialised; people sense the data.

Design

Yet experience has a material basis, in subjective neural patterns and biochemical reactions. Man against entropy, design is a reverse particle simulation striving to bring order to chaos. Design for us is a verb not a noun – a practical, speculative process in which ideas become forms which are at once solid yet fictional; they may find academic or commercial use but should regardless have the power to harvest attention, alter behaviour and change the future [16].



The Exquisite Cabinet by Caroline Claisse



Change Ringing by RCA student Peter Shenai



Colony by RCA students Gabriele Dini & David Hedberg



Materials Story by RCA student Xinglin Sun



Internet access in 6 countries by RCA students



Canterbury smells by RCA student Kate McLean

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And life itself relies on both information and material. Analogue media beats digital for archiving – by hundreds of years. Life stories can be cast in wood and brick and marble [15], and the black mirror of our dead devices gets covered over by data-driven vines. Designers like gardeners must weed out outliers and tend walled gardens of time-based experiences through orchestration, choreography and staging, while smart materials and biomaterials [12] hold promise for tactile, even digestible, data experiences.

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