Methods of Iterating

Written Response draft 2

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Adobe After Effects is a very capable software that produces images in a big range of different forms. Thus in the early exploration through iteration, it was hard to identify a purpose that this tool was not meant to do, at least in terms of making motion graphics. However, I had the opportunity to deconstruct the main functions and controls that designers make the most use of when creating motion graphics and how they individually affect the workflow.

I noticed that numbers and mathematical expressions are the main ways how designers communicate with the programme. Almost all the information in an AE project can be described with a set of numbers or an expression: canvas scale, frame rate, position, opacity, speed curve... There are highly accessible UI as well as an embedded version of Javascript language to help its user achieve the intended effects in a more structured and precise way.

In response to this insight, I was planning to redirect this part of its function as a way of describing number-sensitive contents: a set of data, for example. By quickly iterating around different use of expressions on different parameters, I explored the AE's potential of describing different emotions and visualizing wind force and direction data for a week in London.

In the meantime, influenced by a few articles and practices, I found that my process coincidentally compounded some principles of conditional design. In Ghost in the Machine: Distributing Subjectivity, Blauvelt introduced conditional design as a design process that responds to external influences actively, with a preset system that translates inputs and executes serial outputs, potentially visual outputs. 'Use rules as constraints. Constraints

sharpen the perspective on the process and stimulate play with the limitations.' (Maurer et al., Conditional Design Manifesto 2013). I realized that After Effects has the capacity of establishing that system, and it provides channels which make it possible to change inputs easily without changing the whole project. Therefore, I tried to imply this concept to an interactive mini-game, which uses AE to program a self-iterative generator which executes animation of an eye according to participants' answers to a list of questions. In this case, I as the designer give away my control over certain parameters to a third party: the participants, and made it possible for the system to selfiterate unlimited outcomes corresponding to the inputs. This can be a response to "Instead of solutions for problems, programmes for solutions', raised by Karl Gerstner in Designing Programmes (Maurer & Blauvelt, Ghost in the Machine: Distributing Subjectivity 2013).

In general, my process through iteration has introduced me to the concept of conditional design and also given me a better understanding of the role of iteration in creative research. It drives the deconstruction of a complex process, through which it is possible to examine the impact of separated parts of the process on their whole. When comes to conditional design, helps with the decision-making around how to set up constraints and rules, also which parts of controls to give away and to whom, so the process conveys a certain meaning. In addition, I saw conditional design as a way to co-authorship: the designer and the audience. The former's is embedded while the system is established, while the later's is represented as in some cases the audience is the source of the inputs, which are also major factors affecting the final outcome.

Bibliography

Maurer, L. and Baluvelt, A. (2013) "Ghost in the Machine: Distributing Subjectivity," in Conditional design workbook. Amsterdam: Valiz, pp. ii-xiv.