CRITICAL REFLECTION

OUR *SYMBIOTIC LIFE* - AN EXPLORATION OF INTERSPECIES RELATIONS

Professor: Elio Bidinost & Sabine Rosenberg

Course: CART 360

Student: Liu WenYue (40098425)

Date: December 4th, 2019

Github repository URL: https://github.com/Liu-WenYue/cart360-2019

As an art student, using existing text designs, visuals, graphic designs, and animations is a common approach for me to communicate my current ideas and convey messages. I feel I am relying too much on the power of visuals as I rarely think about incorporating social and political issues in my design in the future context. After reading this article, it provides me a chance to jump out of the square by introducing a more interactive and expressive way of conveying the message. In this way, most of the public will be able to understand the message or idea better. This approach is called Design fiction. As its name suggests, this approach uses speculative experience for people to better visualize and explore the unknown future, and therefore helps them to anticipate the coming future or challenges.

In this article, the author used design fiction to discuss recent controversial issues by picturing four different scenarios. In the first scenario, the theme is Harmony and it first provided the socioeconomic context that people in this scenario are aware of the challenges brought by the environmental changes, and the sustainability of the resources has become one of the most important matters that people care about of. Instead of making graphics that show people do not have enough resources, this scenario shows how people have to incorporate plants and crops into the vehicle design that they use every day. The theme of the second scenario is Invasion, it described the phenomenon of protectionism and nationalism. By introducing the invasive species Equinops Cupidus, the author conveyed the message that there are obstacles for nations to work together, and there are also some nations that are "overharvested". Moreover, in the third scenario, it uses the plant products to meet the market needs which perfectly convey the theme On demand. For the last scenario, a power pet product called the bottle garden is popularised among teenagers. It portrays the idea of inequality and stratification. In all of these scenarios, it talked about how plants affect the states of human beings and how to use design fiction and plants to match the relating issues. Therefore the author is able to study the tangible outcomes from these scenarios. Penny also stated in the article, Design Fiction: A Tool For Visualising Possible Futures that, "This work isn't about making predictions, it's about creating tools; tools that help to connect our present and future selves so that we can be active participants in creating a future we want" [1]. Design fiction creates possible futures that allow the audiences to explore and to reflect on the relating social and political issues.

The purpose of this project is to increase awareness and reduce the barrier to the topics of plant science and climate change. I think this project really achieved its original purpose. By using the

design fiction approach and plant representations, it is conveying the messages to its audiences successfully. Moreover, I believe this project is meaningful as it makes people really think and reflect in-depth after looking at these different scenarios. Not only to the public but also to the artists who are exploring different design options to convey their ideas. As Tran stated in one of his articles that, "Speculative design gives designers an opportunity to stretch their imaginations and develop new and boundary-pushing systems and prototypes for the future" [2]. Design fiction allows artists to work with the future that has more possibilities and inspiration for artists to explore. Furthermore, projects in different fields are using design fiction nowadays [3].

Design fiction is definitely powerful in conveying the author's messages and exploring the possible options of the future. And using actual representation to enrich the scenario makes the idea more connected to the audience. I believe artists should be aware of this design option and think from multiple perspectives.

Bibliography

[1] Simon Penny,

http://www.bromfordlab.com/labblogcontent/2018/3/22/design-fiction-visualising-possible-futures

[2] Tony Ho Tran, April 8 2019, https://www.invisionapp.com/inside-design/speculative-design/

[3] Bruce Sterling,

https://www.wired.com/beyond-the-beyond/2018/08/design-fiction-croatian-speculative-designers-riffing-world-calamity/

[4] https://dlnext.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/3322276.3323698