

Interaction Statement

COMP1720 Standard Project Specification to the Theme of "CHANGE"

Sally Chau, u5490723

October, 2014

My project submission to the topic of "Change" focusses on the change of perspectives regarding our universe and especially our earth during the course of life.

The interaction of my art piece is focussed on one window. The very first scene of my art is an interface which reminds of a graphics program. The main part of the window is completely black offering a space to design one's own pattern. For this purpose, there is a toolbar at the bottom of the screen. This familiarity and the fact that the squares look like buttons, appeal to the user's conceptual model that they should be clicked. This is supported by the mouse arrow changing into a hand when the mouse is located on the buttons. However, the two rightmost buttons cannot be clicked when the screen is empty. This is indicated by the fact that the mouse arrow only turns into a hand when on those buttons, when the screen is non-empty. Thus, the user clicks a button with a symbol. When the user moves the mouse over the black screen, he sees that the mouse turned into the symbol on the clicked button. The user can choose the patterns he would like to place on the main screen. By doing so, the user will see that a symbol placed on one part of the canvas will be reflected on four symmetrical parts of the canvas. It is a kaleidoscope interface allowing the user only to build symmetrical art. This environment offers the user a lot of space to design and think about his own art he is creating within mine. He will question the meaning of the available symbols which can be put under the topic of one of the four elements: earth, water, fire and wind.

Since life is never static, especially throughout the course of time and change, the user can enable the animation of his design by clicking the button which looks like the "Play" button on music or video devices. Here, we appeal to the user's conceptual model which tells him that something will change, move or play when the button is clicked. Indeed, this activates the movement of his design. And the "Play" button changes to a "Stop" button to stop the animation and return to continuing the design. Another button containing a big "X" allows the user to clear his current design and to restart. In order to distinguish those two buttons from the ones containing the patterns, they are located further away from the other buttons. Also, a white information box pops up saying "Clear Screen", "Animate", "Stop", respectively, to indicate their function to the user.

Since the "Play" Button is unusual for a graphical interface and the user is most likely to try out all buttons on the small toolbar, he will eventually click on the "Play" button. By doing so, he unintentionally activates the transition to the next scene: First, the user will only see his design being animated and he can continue his work with his art as before. However, once clicked on the "play" button after a design is on the screen, the setting will change. In the eyes of the user this happens suddenly. White lines start to grow from four directions meeting in the middle of the screen. The lines divide the screen into four equal parts and the symmetry of the kaleidoscope design becomes even more visible. Once the lines are complete, the canvas breaks into its four parts and moves out of the screen leaving the user alone in a new surrounding.

A giant sun makes its way through a completely black background only enlightened by some white stars. The user understands that we are in the setting of the wide outer space. After the sun disappears from the screen, the user is again left with nothing but black space. A feeling of being small and powerless is evoked. At this stage the user cannot interact with the art at all, any of his attempts to interact or influence the screen are not seen in results. With the uncertainty of what will happen next and the helplessness of not being able to act, the user has to wait until the planet earth appears on

the screen. It is surrounded by the moon, cycling around its atmosphere over and over again. We zoom in to the earth and change the perspective on our solar system. This is introduced by the words “Time and Tide wait for No Man”, while the screen fades out into complete white. This stimulates the user to think about the art and provokes the feeling that he is not able to change, influence or interact in this huge surrounding the space is.

However, this impression is changed in the following scene. The white screen now blends in the same dark background again. From the centre of the screen, something grows bigger and bigger, until it becomes clearly visible to the user. It is a flower, symbolising soil and growth on our earth. While the flower is growing the user can only watch. But after it has reached its full size a green background appears behind the flower and the flower starts to rotate. More flowers in smaller size than the first one appear surrounding the big one. This change and the stop of growth attract the user’s attention. Furthermore, the mouse turns into a shape which looks like a water drop when hovering over the flowers. The flowers start to rotate faster. Since water symbolises growth and life, fitting well to the flower, and together with the proceeding changes, the user is motivated to move the water drop around the flowers. By clicking the mouse, the flower either grows or produces another small one appearing at a random position. By time, the user understands that the green circle behind big flowers appear to indicate their full growth and their ability to reproduce new smaller flowers. This process is continued until the screen is “full” of flowers. Expecting nothing new to happen, the user will be surprised by the sudden change.

As life, symbolised by the flowers, cannot continue endlessly, the growth of the flowers is stopped. They stop moving and lose their colours. White clouds move along the screen and the mouse now turns into a small cloud itself. This indicates the user that he can influence the situation again. Getting close to the clouds on screen, they start to jiggle. As from the previous scene, the user knows that he can influence the situation by clicking on the clouds. By doing so, the clouds change their colours and become bigger with every click. Continuing clicking let them grow even more and the colour turns more and more into a dark blue. The growing clouds cover the whole screen and build up pressure with every mouse click until the pressure finally explodes into water drops. Again, the user cannot anticipate when the change will happen.

Now, again the mouse is turned back into the normal arrow shape. This indicates the user that this time, there will be no direct interaction just like the beginning. He can only watch how the water drops make their way down the screen leaving marks along their way. This forces the user again to think: As a human being we are able to change the world only up to a certain degree. Forces like wind and weather are not under our control. By time, the drops bring along another statement for the user. The words “Every Teardrop is a waterfall...” slowly move down and the screen starts to fade black once more. These words convey the message that although there are only few drops on the screen, they are of importance as they leave stains on the screen like a waterfall would do as well. Thus, every drop is important contributing to the whole the waterfall is. It shows how valuable every water drop, every piece, even the tiniest one, in our universe is.

This last screen concludes my art piece in the following way: The first scene shows that we are capable of designing and expressing ourselves. However, this is only possible in a restricted way since we have to take care of our environment in this process. This is symbolised by the restrictions on patterns and predefined animation movements. The following scenes show how valuable and at the same time vulnerable our environment is. It reacts to little changes really fast: Water gives life symbolised by the flowers growing. Still, time and life are perishable: The flowers will wear away. The user is given a sad and uncomfortable feeling and is encouraged to think. He leaves with the idea that although we are such a small part of this yet undiscovered universe, we are still able to change at least our own “private universe”. And that changes in ourselves and our acting influence our environment as vice versa.