

Timothy Thomasson
Tangible Media
CART 360
Reflection One

Prototyping for Physical and Digital Products

In the text *Prototyping for Physical and Digital Products*, Kathryn McElroy locates the importance of prototyping. Specifically, she outlines the methods used to move from a low fidelity stage to a high fidelity stage and outlines the reasons why we prototype in the first place. With each stage of fidelity the material fortitude of the object begins to develop further and the form factor that the original design or blueprints outlines begins to emerge. Low fidelity prototypes are cheap and allow one to find out core problems they may have with their design solution with little risk involved. In the mid fidelity prototype the form factor of the final product is evident and begins to emerge at varying degrees. The product is more robust and the major problems the product intends to solve or address are covered. High fidelity prototypes are where finishing touches are put on the product. Small features are implemented and each feature is designed to work with the other features and integrated visually. The fidelity types vary amongst different types of product development--from something tangible like wearable tech or furniture--to something web based and lacking materiality however the core principles of expanding the products scope incrementally remain.

Prototyping, at it's core, is about adopting an iterative and methodological process when designing a technology, object, or system. Prototypes are used, according to McElroy "to make the best product possible by focusing on a specific user and their problem" [McElroy]. This approach to the idea of prototyping is central to the focus of the text, where the interaction between the 'user' and the 'product' is kept to the forefront of the discussion. Consequently, McElroy seems to take on a very practical, product oriented approach to the idea of prototyping where the 'product' is "viable and "sellable" [McElroy]. It is interesting to divulge that thinking to art objects where the purpose may be less clearly defined and/or abstracted conceptually--where not much planning is put into the 'sellable' aspect of the object. With art objects it is still vital to bring the user experience foreword. Interaction with technology for instance must feel intuitive and non-contrived and must be purposefully utilized to engage with the artworks core purpose. McElroy also dives into different levels of fidelity and what sort of field research they can afford you.