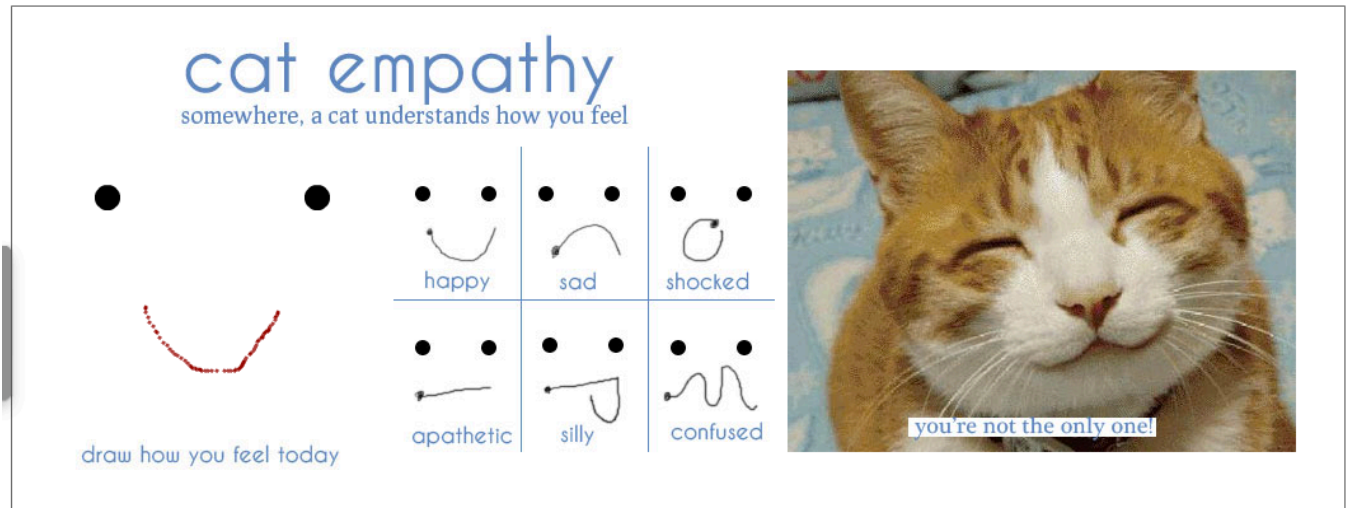


Cecilia Watt (ciw2104)
21 November 2011 (4 late days)
User Interface Design
Assignment 3 Documentation

Cat Empathy



Cat Empathy is a Flash application that allows a user to input one stroke denoting the shape of their mouth in correspondence to their emotions. The application will then display a corresponding photograph of an emotive cat.

An online version can be found here: <http://www.columbia.edu/~ciw2104/canvas/bin-debug/canvas.html>

Simply draw a mouth in the space below the eyes and a cat corresponding to that emotion should appear!

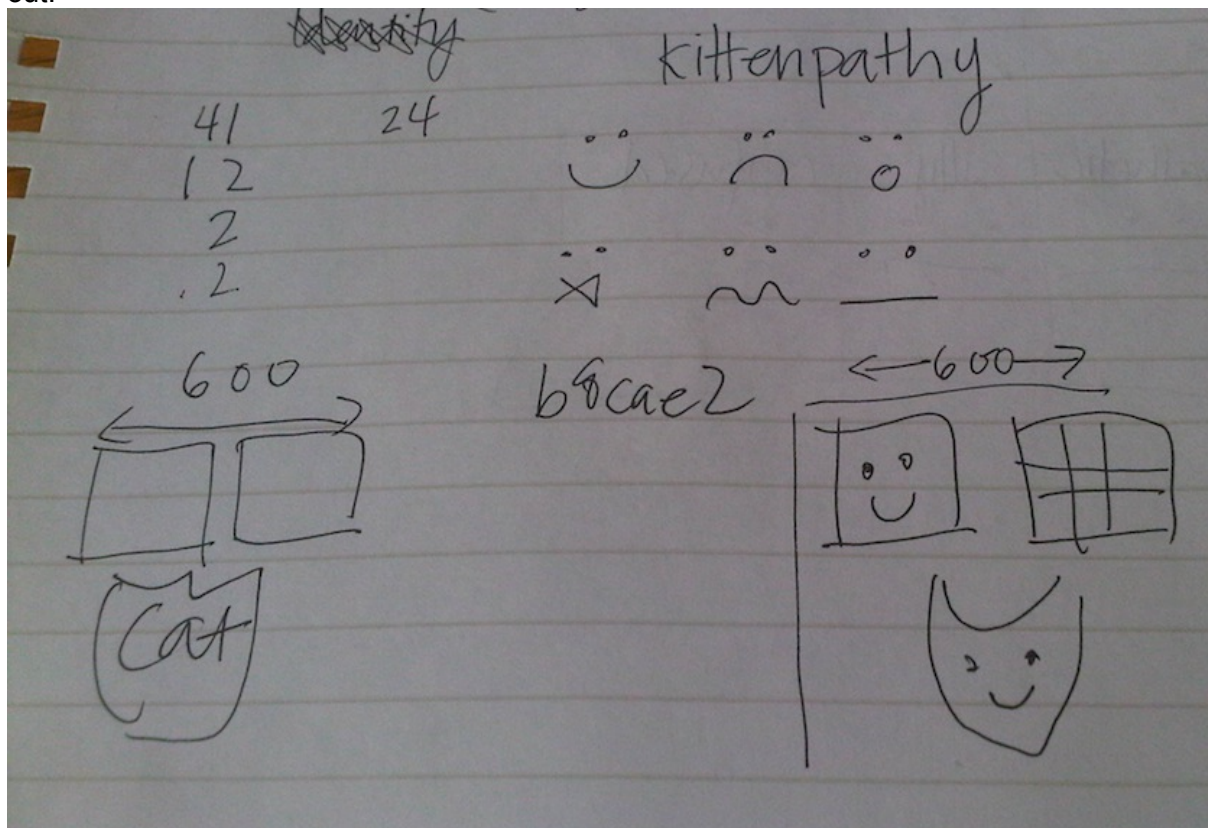
Development

The challenge I wanted to overcome, for this assignment, is how unnatural gestures can be to people who are unfamiliar with them. I wanted natural shapes that had a clear correspondence with their meaning. At first, I thought of an image viewing application, where maybe the gesture would be a + or - sign, and the application would zoom in or zoom out. But it isn't very natural to draw a + or - on a picture and have it zoom—it's far more natural to have the current iPad implementation of stretching the picture out with multitouch. Of course, with the \$1 recognizer, this was impossible.

Finally, I decided that what logically follows from drawing a gesture on a screen is the act of *drawing* itself. I decided to think of the most simplistic drawings possible—stick figures, happy faces. I then realized that drawing the mouth on a blank face provides both the natural shape and clear correspondence to meaning. Since the eyes are already placed, the user is at all times aware of the shape they have just drawn, and it actually looks like a face. There isn't any ambiguity to what a happy face might mean, in this case: happy face means happy. Sad face means sad. There is even less of a learning curve than with "+/- zoom" idea.

To have more variety of faces, a small key is provided. The only unnatural-seeming one

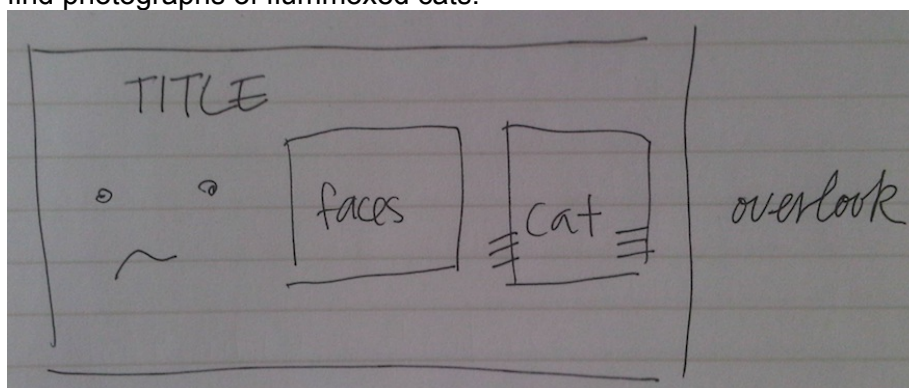
is “silly,” which is based on the common internet emoticon :P, of a face with a tongue sticking out.



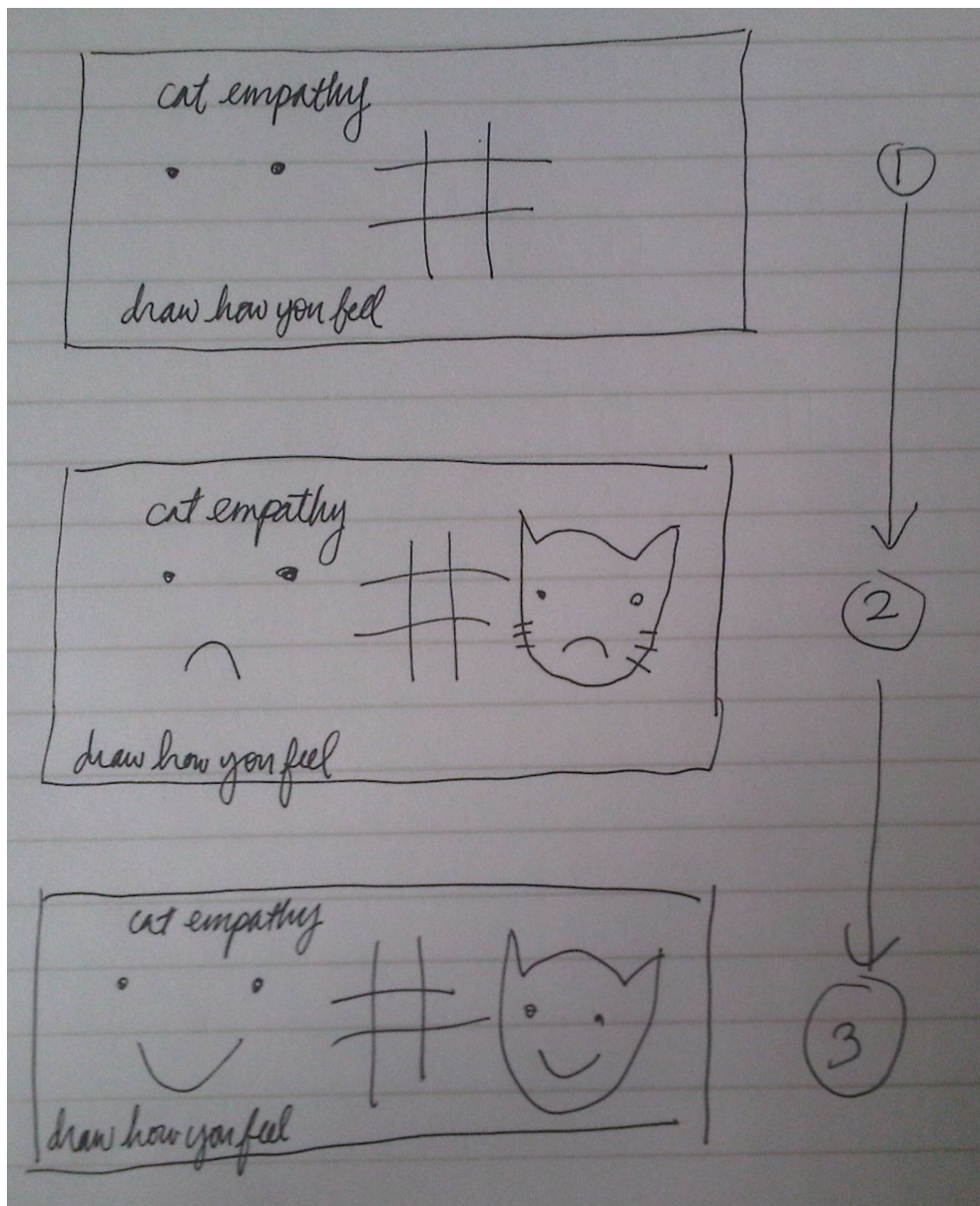
The above are some preliminary sketches of the application, as well as the original name, “Kittenpathy,” which I felt was not as simple or intuitive as “Cat Empathy.”

Initially the cat was going to be placed below the drawing box and the key, but I didn’t want the user to have to scroll down to see the cat. In the final design, there is a blank box next to the drawing box and key, which makes the user expect that something will show up there.

The above also shows the initial offerings for the emotions. The bottom left was meant to be a :X face, i.e. flummoxed, but I didn’t like how the X gesture had to cross over itself. It doesn’t look like an actual X, and since this application is so concerned with how the visual face appears after you’ve drawn a gesture on it, the X wasn’t such a good idea. Also, it is difficult to find photographs of flummoxed cats.

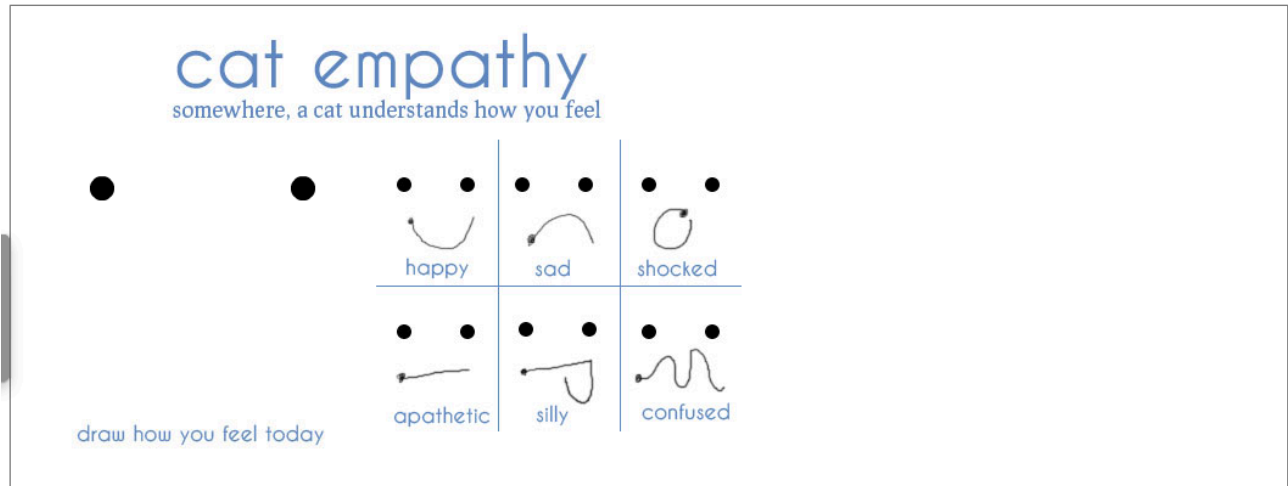


The above is a general overview of what the application was meant to look like.

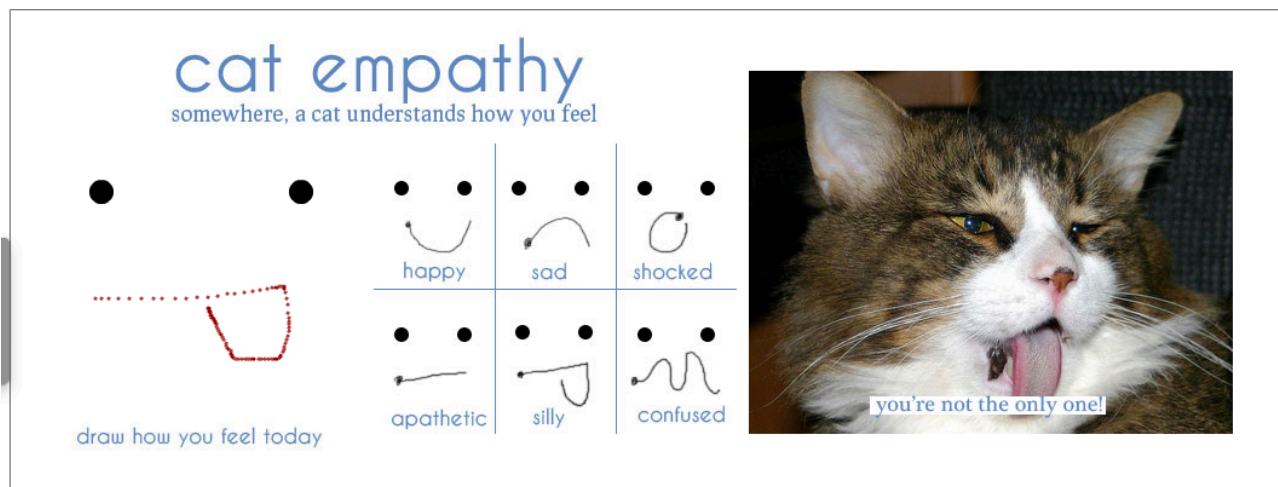


Final rough sketches depicting states. 1 is the initial state.

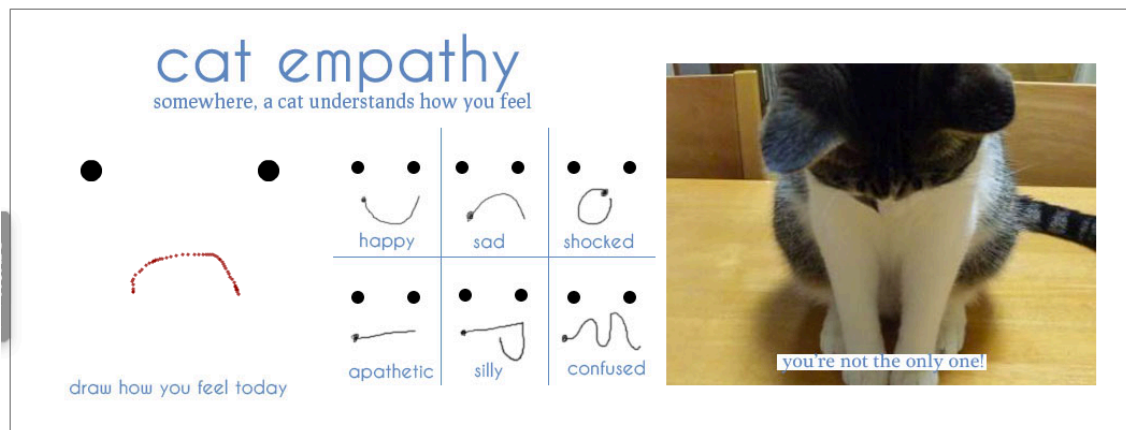
Screenshots of the Application



Initial loading screen. The blank space on the right leaves a user expectant.



Sample result from drawing the "silly" face.



Sample result from drawing the "sad" face.

I have found that it is very difficult to trigger the "apathetic" recognizer. Here is what it looks like, if correctly triggered (I believe it may be not enough points in the template.)

cat empathy

somewhere, a cat understands how you feel



draw how you feel today



happy



sad



shocked



apathetic



silly



confused

