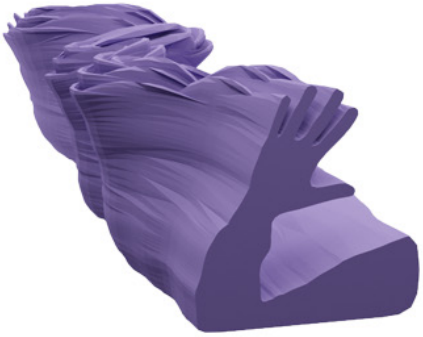
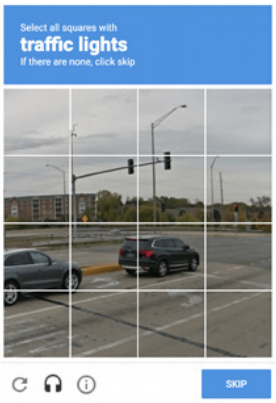
Old Media → New Media → Synthetic Media





A CAPTCHA (Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart) is a type of challenge-response test used to determine whether or not a user is a human or a computer

The experience of interacting with CAPTCHA is appropriate for my design considering my attempts to gauge the differences between humans and computers within the context of synthetic media.

CAPTCHAs are typically presented in the form of distorted characters, a grid of images, or a check-box. Each test is difficult for automated software to read and decipher, but are still recognisable by humans.

In a way, the CAPTCHA challenge represents the boundary between human and computer capabilities.

The introduction of synthetic media, and the increased ability of computers to mimic humans is moving that boundary.

Not only does CAPTCHA represent our changing relationship with computers, our interaction with CAPTCHAs also contributes to the change. It's a tool used to create synthetic media.

For example, the human response to the distorted text CAPTCHA is used to train machine learning algorithms to identify words (old newspapers and books were scanned and processed using this algorithm to create a database of text now used by ChatGPT).

The image-based CAPTCHA asks humans to identify road based objects. Our answers help train Google's self driving car software.

As humans answer CAPTCHAs, the database of responses grow. The larger the database, the more effective and accurate the algorithm that uses it becomes.

Every version of CAPTCHA becomes less effective as the capabilities of algorithms (computers) develop - representing the advancement of computers and the increasing difficulty of telling us apart.