Trash Talk: The Eco-Friendly Robot

By: Madison Colvin

My piece, *Trash Talk*, is a walking-talking robot that resembles a trash can. This piece was designed to be integrated into a public, urban space, and interact with the bypassers in the area. *Trash Talk* was created to spark environmental change and make people think twice before they throw things away. The piece will be built with a sensor that indicates when individuals approach the robot, the robot will respond with sayings such as “uh, are you sure you don’t want to recycle that?”, “please no more trash!”, or “you sure you want to do that?”. Additionally, the robot will be equipped with

facts about how waste impacts the environment, why people should recycle whenever possible, and how trash impacts wildlife and humans.

Visually, *Trash Talk* will resemble a garbage can, but will have additional features such as a face, display, and legs that set it apart from other trash cans on the street. These differences should not take away from the fact that it is a functional trash can, because we still want people on the street to be able to identify it as a garbage can. The "face" of *Trash Talk* will be a very happy, friendly, and approachable face with the mouth serving as the opening where users will deposit their garbage. *Trash Talk* will display its happy appearance when it is empty, or when people are far away and not attempting to dispose of their trash. On the other hand, when users approach the robot and attempt to throw away garbage, *Trash Talk* will begin to get very sad and its happy appearance will change into a sad frown.

As depicted on my design mock-up, *Trash Talk* will also show the weight of its current contents on the front display along with the time that the trash accumulated in. Additionally, since the piece will know the weight of its content before each user deposits their trash, the display will output the weight of the trash can's last piece of garbage deposited. I added this display in hopes to discourage users from throwing away their waste and demonstrate that their garbage doesn't disappear once it goes into the trash. I understand that not all materials can be composted or recycled, but *Trash Talk* encourages users to actually think about the most sustainable way they can dispose of their waste.

Trash Talk has legs that allows the robot to be mobile. When users throw away too much, or the trash can reaches max capacity, *Trash Talk* will give the user feedback, become distressed, and will begin to race around in a circle. This feature adds a dramatic flare to the piece, attracts attention, and emphasizes how waste affects us all.

This piece was inspired by *Beggar Robot*, an interactive piece by Saso Sedlacek discussed in lecture #3 that resembles real life beggars (Sedlacek, 2006). The piece was allowed to walk around upscale shopping districts, places that real life beggars are often not allowed to go. *Beggar Robot* demonstrated the lack of empathy people have towards beggars, and how those who are less fortunate are often shrugged off. This piece inspired me to think about interactions between artwork and the surrounding world. I wanted to create something similar, a piece that challenged those in its surrounding environment and evaluated peoples' reactions. *Trash Talk* attempts to showcase how people thoughtlessly dispose of their waste without thinking of the consequences, and much like *Beggar Robot*, relies heavily on the input and reactions of those that interact with the piece.

The implementation of *Trash Talk*, an autonomous robot, creates a unique user experience that aims to make a difference. Not only do I believe this piece will generate interesting interactions, but I hope that it will spark environmental change and make people reconsider how they dispose of their waste.

Works Cited

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1. Sedlacek, Saso. *Beggar Robot.* 2006. https://sasosedlacek.com/beggar-robot/