Annotated Bibliography

Kankainem, Tomi, et al. "Interactive Drama and User Centered Product Concept Design." *AIGA, the professional association for design* (2005): 2-9.

Summary

Kankainem, et al explore how combining human-centered design (or as they call it 'user centered product concept design') and drama methods can provide unorthodox, but powerful, opportunities for user research in a controlled setting. Kankainem, et al's notes their reasoning for utilizing a combination of these two disciplines, are as follows:

> *"With interactive drama we enter the domain of three-dimensional experiences and of physically penetrable virtual space, where the audience/users can explore different possibilities, solve problems, propose a variety of scenarios, and provide information… Thus the audience becomes part of the act and actively produces the material and shares the experience."* (Kankainem, Mehto and Kantola)

The team, operating at Helsinki Institute for Technology, contains both design and theater practitioners who conducted their research with 180 total users through three different drama-based methods: (1) playback theater, (2) drama workshops, and (3) forum theater.

These three pieces worked together. The first, providing users a platform to tell their story; the second, providing users an opportunity to comingle; and the third, providing the researchers an opportunity to tell users' stories back to them through professional actors – with room for the users to provide further insight and feedback on the researchers' interpretation of the experience.

Analysis

Kankainem, et al's research explores the implementation of theater-based methods in a human-centered design (HCD) method-based product-development cycle. The team does a strong job of outlining their HCD process, but provides a very shallow view of their methodology and results – which makes it hard to truly validate the effectiveness of these tools in comparison to other traditional, non-drama based methods.

Additionally, Kankainem, et al don't properly explore the possibility of experimenting with multiple drama-based methods. While having actors perform the researcher's understandings of the users' experiences provides the researchers with opportunities for validation, I feel stronger insights would have been gained by intermingling users with actors, allowing them to co-create these previously described experiences. While Kankainem, et al's decisions to use the former method may have been methodical, this isn't expressed in their report.

Overall, Kankainem's piece provides interesting insight as to how drama-based methods are, or may be, utilized in the HCD process, while providing a number of resources to further pursue to uncover research in this area. Their work proves that there is potential value in mixing the two that should be further explored – validating my research focus.