EXPLORATIONS: SIMULATIONS AND ARTIFICIAL BEHAVIOURS

“There is more information available at our fingertips during a walk in the woods than in any computer system, yet people find a walk among trees relaxing and computers frustrating. Machines that fit the human environment, instead of forcing humans to enter theirs, will make using a computer as refreshing as taking a walk in the woods.”

- Mark Weiser, *The Computer of the 21st Century*

A billion sensors, why so frustrating? As we enter the era of big data we need to rethink and reconcile our relation to computing, information, their representations and metaphors. Let’s break free from the old models of cold and static spreadsheets and desktop data visualisation and let’s try to humanise machines and systems, giving them a voice of their own addressing us in a way that is a little more expressive, persuasive, suggestive and less analytical. The computer of the 21st century is perhaps less about numbers and statistics than it is about anthropomorphic motives, behaviours and agency.

For this project you are asked to “personify" and anthropomorphise two simple web-based sensors – giving them a voice of their own. To make the task of picking sensors easier, we have carefully pre-selected four sensors to base your exploration on, these are:

- Weather Data (one of the following: wind speed, barometric pressure, temperature, humidity)
- Blood Glucose Levels (from diabetic patient who monitors levels at a given time of day)
- Bitcoin price USD (conversion fluctuating during the day)
- Email / Inbox (number of email pilling in an inbox at a given time of day)

Each web-sensors (quantity) has to be paired with a given psychological trait (quality):

(1) Vivacious (animated, full of life, effervescent)
(2) Attention-Seeking (dependent,),
(3) Assertive (self-confident, bold, determined)
(4) Exuberant (extravagant, exaggerated, dramatic).

These traits will inform your design explorations tailored around the salient and expressive potentialities of simulations and time based behaviour modelling of graphics (Transforms (scale, rotation, translation), Colour, Morphology (shape changes)) and sound. We will be steering participants towards strong and minimalistic visual aesthetics.

As we project the future with a billion sensors, we also foresee changes in the way our computing devices are shaped. As a constraint for the project, you are asked to produce your design on a 512 pixels x 512 pixels canvas, simulating types of displays which could potentially be embedded in a watch or other wearable artefacts. Following Mark Weiser’s idea of calm and ubiquitous computing, your exploration needs to render a certain graphical behaviour on a limited budget of pixels and convey a feeling of the sensor data in a split of a second. Interactions with your system should swift and simple.

Group size: Teams of 2