

Prototype #1

Music Visualization

Idea

We decided to go with one of our more dark horse ideas of visualizing music. Usually, the most touching and central part of religious music is the words. People connect with the lessons and teachings of hymns. What if we could convey these lessons and teachings to people who did not understand any of the words? What if we could use shapes, images and colors to capture not just the feel of a song but its message. To do this, we decided to design a music visualizer, which would take in audio data and generate compelling, colorful geometric visualizations of the song along with familiar images. We theorized that as a universally accessible language, shapes could help people of different faiths have a similar experiential feeling.

Question

The question of whether we could convey everything a song was meant to say with just visuals was a large one. We decided to focus first on the ways in which shapes and colors could change the way people experience music to see if it would make any difference at all. Our central question in prototyping therefore was: **“Do shapes help people feel more connected with music they cannot understand audially?”**

Prototyping

To prototype this, we played an Islamic prayer song on iTunes and used the iTunes native visualizer to generate the shapes. Subjects sat at a desk, watching the laptop with the visualization, for 8 minutes (the length of the song) and then were asked about their experiences. Subjects were individuals who described themselves as either non-religious or spiritual but relatively unaware of traditions not their own; such people fit the design group of busy, harried young people we originally designed for and also carried little outside knowledge of the faith that would confound their responses.



A screenshot of the visualization of the prayer song that test subjects saw.

Prototype #2

Life Flow Visualization

Idea:

We discussed the issue of people's lives being compartmentalized. Why would this be the case? Because we conceptualize things in compartments. Why? Because it's easier to deal with the task at hand. Why? Because things must be prioritized. Why? Because consequences with a short time frame become artificially amplified in magnitude.

For this reason, we thought of ways to change the way we situate short term versus long term consequences as they relate to our daily lives.

Our idea was to deconstruct the traditional, linear to-do list in terms of a goal map. We wanted to facilitate people thinking about their daily actions in terms of their long term goals. We came up with an idea for an app that would visualize people's to-do list in the context of a circle or other holistic shape. Instead of a to-do list, their short term goals would be represented as small pieces of a large puzzle.

Question:

We thought the central question of this prototype was **does it actually make a difference for people to see their short term tasks categorized under long term goals?** Is this categorization something that positively affects people or rather something that doesn't make much of a difference at all?

Prototype:

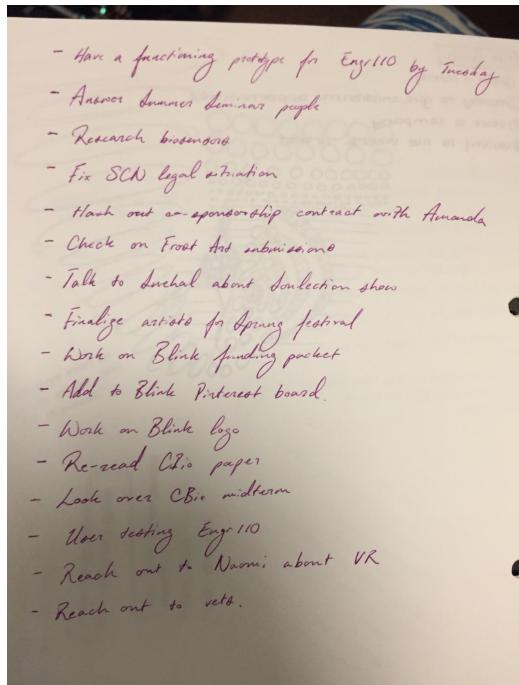
To test this, we categorized people's short-term goals. We had them write down their to-do lists for the next 3 days. We also had them separately write down their overall life goals. We then showed them the same list but this time it was categorized. We asked for their feedback afterwards.

List Before:

List After:



Writing the List:



Prototype #3

Thumb Ritual

Thumb Ritual

People on the go need a more portable way to reflect -- it's hard to go to a temple, synagogue, or church when you're constantly moving. We also needed to capture the shared, reflective nature of ritual practice. As a result, due to the insights we derived from reflection, we posed the design question: *How might we capture the practice of ritual for travelers?*

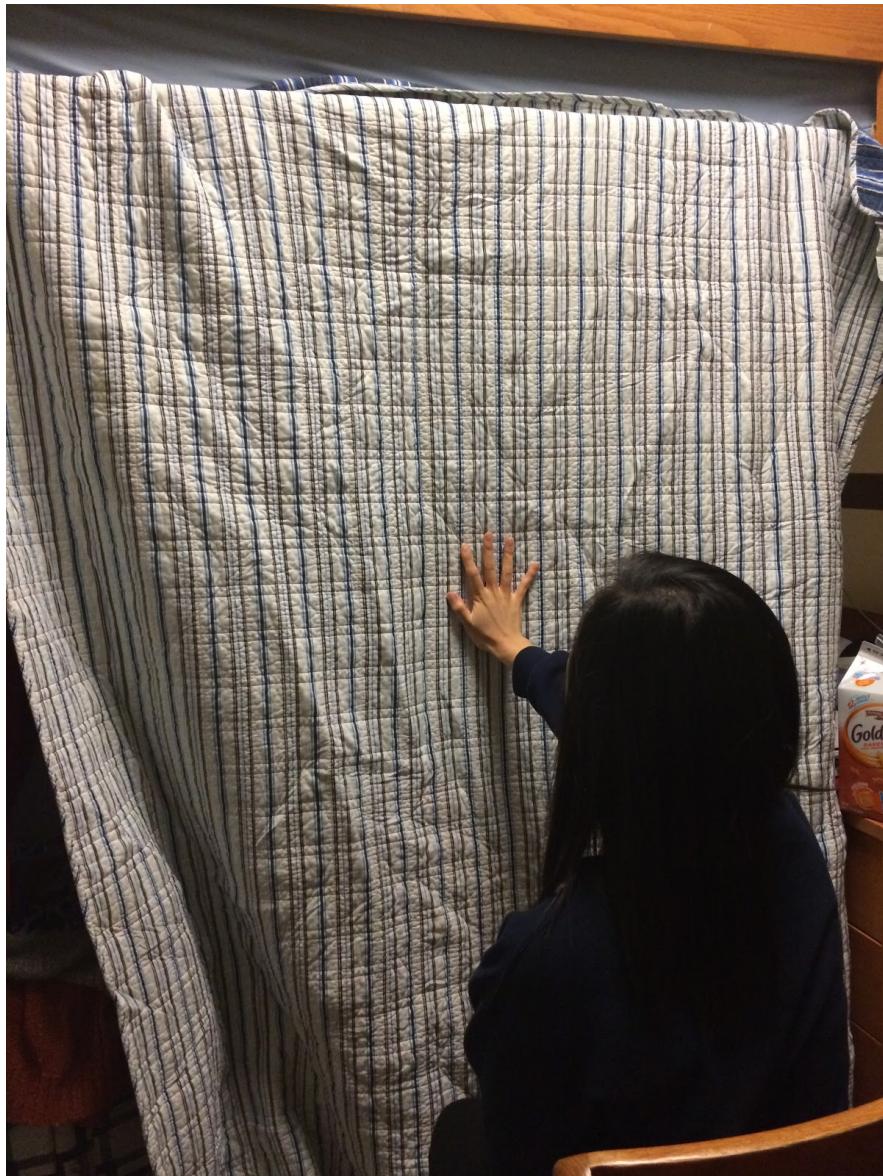
The idea we chose to design, and therefore prototype, is a thumb ritual. When entering the app, the user chooses a topic or category to reflect upon (this part of the app is still under thought). Then, the user would be randomly paired with someone else feeling a similar emotion at that time. As she places her thumb upon the screen, the partner's print appears. Placing her thumb on her partner's, she holds it for a moment and mentally engages in her ritual. Both parties remain anonymous and carry their special services in their head.

We are considering having both parties share what the moment meant to them or tracking progress of reflection; the consideration is the tradeoff of forced self-reflection with the higher burden of performing a ritual.

Prototyping

In prototyping, we simply focused on the experience of placing thumbs together when you know a person is there but don't see the person. The question we asked was: "Does joining thumbs actually create a feeling of connection?"

To test this, we hung a sheet and had people sit on either side of it, so they wouldn't be able to see each other. A piece of paper was placed on each side, so each person would know where to place their fingers. We then told them to do this and then find each other's fingers. After holding contact for 10 to 15 seconds, they were told to let go; then, they were asked about the experience.



One of the test subjects holds her hands up on one side of the blanket, trying to find her partner's hand.