

Digital Craft Assessment By Jermaine van der Kolk, 0869226

When I was a child my dad usually read aloud books to me. I enjoy being immersed into various fictional worlds and stories. I grew up playing videogames, going outside to explore and watching movies. I loved seeing characters and creatures coming to life through storytelling. I think this playful introduction to stories turned my fascination towards storytelling. I wanted, as a child, to come up with stories that I could act out with my toys and in my room. This playfulness remained when I started doing animation. If I try to figure out the core of my story I place my character in a setting and give them a reason to be there, a motivation to do something and question their actions. So in a playful manner I bring the story alive.

But what is the background behind stories? Where did we start crafting stories? Storytelling predates written text or art, since it's been told orally to its listeners. From mouth to mouth, stories were passed on to others. There is no concrete date when the first stories were told, but there are indications that stories were passed on as early as the prehistoric age. There are cave paintings in caves around the world. They often portray pictures of a hunt, animals or humans. It is speculated why the cave paintings exist, it could be to for religious meaning or trying to communicate with each other, but nonetheless it shows that humans in the prehistoric age already tried to convey messages or pictures to each other or tried to remember what the storyteller wanted to tell. People not only used pictures to convey their stories, but also with dances or songs. Some stories of the past are still sung or danced, mostly seen in more religious circles. There is Gospel or there are Indonesian traditional dances where they portray the story of their gods.



1. The Flood Tablet / The Gilgamesh Tablet / Library of Ashurbanipal.¹

So is there any story long enough to actually survive ages of time? The oldest tale that has survived is a tale named *Gilgamesh*². *Gilgamesh* is an epic originated from the ancient Mesopotamia. The epic is written around 2150 to 1400 Before the Common Era. In the epic *Gilgamesh* the story tells about a king named Gilgamesh who was arrogant and too proud. The gods wanted to teach him a

¹ *The Flood Tablet / The Gilgamesh Tablet / Library of Ashurbanipal*. Not On Display, The British Museum, London, London. *The British Museum*. Web.

<http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=372371001&objectid=309929>.

² Thompson, Diane. "Gilgamesh." *Gilgamesh*. NVCC, Web.

lesson. The gods decided to send him a man, named Enkidu, a wild man to humble Gilgamesh. Once they meet they start having a fight, but neither were able to defeat each other.

Instead of staying enemies, they became friends, start to have journeys together and have adventures together. At some point, Enkidu has died. Gilgamesh is overtaken by his grief. When Enkidu passed away, he realized that through his death his own mortality wouldn't last forever as well. This starts his long life struggle with the meaning of life and his mortality. He does not eventually claim immortality, but does manage to live on for decades through his written down epic *Gilgamesh*.

Written text or crafted work made it easier to pass knowledge along each other. Story telling let the reader engage with the story and let them learn new things. The way the listener receives their learning is depending on the storytelling. Old myths and metaphors let the listener learn life lessons, morals and values. On the other hand you have digital story telling which allows listeners to engage in a world controlled by the story teller, where they can interact with other listeners and engage in the story itself. whatever the case, storytelling is for young and old. There is no age gap where people can't tell each other stories. The content of the stories however; varies based on knowledge the story teller wants to tell to its listener. Stories are told from mouth to mouth and they are in many other forms. There are fairytales, myths or ghost stories, each story giving the storyteller respect for the listeners.

I see animation as a tool for storytelling. It's a form of crafting that can be used in different mediums and can be created analog or digitally. While animation is a young profession, its tools are diverse. As an animator I could use tools like traditional pen and paper, clay animation, stop-motion. On the other hand I could use digital tools like Maya, Photoshop, After effects, TV paint to create 2D digital animation or 3D animation. It is daunting to know there are so many possibilities of creating animation and they are all with their own quirks and technical limitations or benefits. It's an incredible tool to use for storytelling.

I often start my story process in my head. Once I have an idea of what direction I want to go I study the various methods of creating. I compare the story with possible designs I sketch and see what medium fits the story thematically. The biggest problem I am often facing with my ideas is that they can become quite ambitious for the time I receive. This method of working made it easier for me to adjust the scope of my ambitious ideas based on the limitations the medium throws at me.

But the core of animation is that you make the viewer believe there is a sense of movement with imagery. You want to make them believe the animated object has emotions instead of making them think about the technology behind it.

Storytelling is increasingly becoming more important in today's society. You can see its use in marketing where big companies start to use storytelling for brand recognition and trying to make the viewer feel something for their product.



2. *Johnny Walker - The Man Who Walked Around The World*. Dir. Jamie Rafn. 2009.

You can see storytelling's mark well in advertisement. Companies can use stories to promote their products. An example of the use of storytelling for commercial use was the advertisement short film *Johnny walker - The Man Who Walked Around The World*³ made by *Bartle Bogle Hegarty* advertising agency. The advertisement video uses the background story of the company *Johnny Walker* and let it be told by the actor while he's walking on a road with various props that compliments the story. It's not the product itself that is being shown, but the story the actor tells that has to convince the viewer that the *Johnny Walker* brand is worth to buy. I think it is interesting that the advertisement does not promote the product directly but with a story surrounding the product. I thought it was a clever use of storytelling for promoting a commercial product.

I worked for a small game company *Wispfire* during my internship and I learned that whenever they had to promote their game in interviews or previews a large portion of that article does not actually talk about the game itself, but instead focuses on something else. It focuses on the story of development team itself. The story of how the team came to be is a lot more relatable for the reader and makes the story feel more personal than when it was just about the game. Storytelling allows us to make the viewer feel something. Especially in games storytelling is important. As it can enrich the world the player will be walking around in. A good story can lead to suspension of disbelief.

For example in the game *Alien: Isolation*, the player plays the character Amanda Ripley, who searches for clues about her missing mother in a remote trading station. It is a horror game, where the player is being hunted. But in order for the player to feel fear, the player has to believe she is Amanda. Everything in the game has to compliment the story, whether it is the art design of the environment or the movements and actions Amanda would do while playing. A good story keeps the player wondering what is going to happen next and makes her want to play further. Storytelling can enrich the environment without even needing the interaction of the player. The *Fallout* games are good examples of this kind of storytelling. The game takes place after a Nuclear apocalypse and allows you to explore it world. There are often environments where there are enough pieces of a story to see what has happened, but where the player has to fill in the blanks themselves.

³*Johnny Walker - The Man Who Walked Around The World*. Justin Moore (Writer, BBH) London) & Jamie Rafn (Director) August 11, 2009.



3. NBA 2K16. Developed: Visual Concepts Published: 2K Sports. September 29, 2015.

Either way, game genres like sports or racing which are often more focused on game play before story are now seen having more storytelling in them to create a closer relationship with the player. They achieve this by letting the player have their own avatar and show them their progress in the game through story. It makes the player come back to continue with their own character. Companies try to engage more with customers in a storytelling way. teaching them lessons about what feels good and trying to get them bond with the company on a more personal and engaged level. No longer is the time that companies have to sell and market their products through adverts and word of mouth. Companies can now reach their customers through social media or interactive campaigns and talk to the customers. Overall, I think storytelling is an important practice for the newer technologies and the technology of today. we can use it to convince consumers, make people feel involved with the product and create interesting worlds or stories for people to immerse in.

My new tool for my trade is about distraction.

The idea started around my own distraction toy called a yoyo. It distracts me from my work and also helps me to come back to my work with a fresh new perspective on it. During my research, I stumbled upon various artists online that use various distraction methods for their work. It was an article⁴ where the writer spoke with other people from his community about approaching an 'artist's block' or how to not be distracted.

The writer was easily distracted by looking his community website, making tea and checking emails. His solution to focus was by sitting in his car drawing on the passenger side. he did mention that he found it hard to find inspiration for what to draw. He tries to find it through shifting through his portfolio to find themes he didn't work on for a while or look at what other people made. He also adds the opinions of other people, who explain that they find inspiration through viewing their work in a different light such as shifting their view of perspective on it. They may also find that listening to music, drawing abstract shapes or using imagery of the TV to fix their lack of inspiration. Others

⁴ Edwards, Dave 'BLYHART' "ARTIST'S BLOCK AND HOW NOT TO GET DISTRACTED by BLYHART." *Redbubble*. Redbubble, Web.

believe that by taking a break, visiting art shops or by reading or watching about other people's work help to find inspiration for drawing.

What I have gathered from the article was that by doing something else it can lead you to inspiration or gives you motivation to create something. There are different ways to tackle a lack of work sense. some need something as music to get into the flow, others need to walk outside to gain outside input.

There are also several cultural distractions I've been researching. For example there is tea leaves reading. The basic idea is that you do basic shapes recognition and mediations which in return grants you new insights or thoughts.



4. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Dir. Alfonso Cuarón. Perf. Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint. Warner Bros., 2004. DVD.

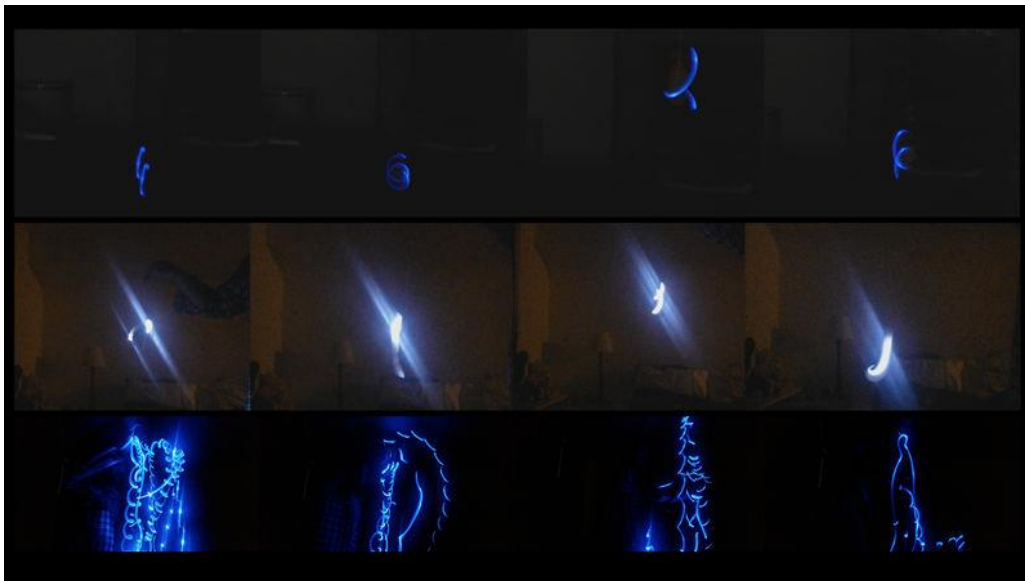
The way tea leaves reading works is that you first start drinking while clearing your mind and thoughts and if a troubling thought keeps returning, it will be the subject of your tea reading, Otherwise it's general based reading. once there is a little bit of tea left, you drop the tea on the saucer. You have to identify small shapes on your saucer in the tea pieces. This is based upon the idea that the basic shapes recognition is linked to the subconscious of yourself. and that by seeing these shapes you are reflecting and reading yourself. It's very subjective.

In order to study more about the subject Distraction I read the part *Art of Distraction* from the book *The Antioch Review*⁵ which talks about the use of distraction in media and how it effects the viewers of multimedia. The first few pages of the chapter were the ones that interest me the most of the book, because it gives us a view of what distraction means and can mean for society in general. Basically the first few pages of the chapter explains the society's need for distraction and how the government, communication media and entertainment uses it. It defines 'distraction' as 'to divert or draw the mind away from something' It also explains it means 'to cause conflict and confusion'. He starts explaining how distractions are affecting us mentally. It changes our way of looking or thinking. It also

⁵ Cottle, Thomas J. "Art of Distraction." *The Antioch Review: Vol. 51, No. 2, Spring 1993*. Yellow Springs, OH: Antioch College, 1993. 284-93. Print.

talks about how certain aspects of our society uses this knowledge to capture our attention. As examples the writer uses Advertising and celebrities.

I started with experimenting based around the idea that distractions that could be inspiring the user. I started to play around with the first distraction device I thought of, which was my yoyo. I added lights to it and started playing around with it in a darkened room. I recorded the experiment and looked at it in *Adobe After Effects*, where I tried to capture the light movement by motion tracking it. During the tracking though, I came across another fun artifact. The film frames of the light were slightly blurred because of its movement and created small shapes in their frames. It reminded me of the slow shutter photography, where people can draw shapes or art with moving light objects quickly inside the border of their photograph. I did not possess a camera or device that could shoot slow shutter photos. I did however manage to find an application on my phone to create them. I once again started experiment in a darkened room, where I started playing around with a yoyo that has a light attached on it. I played around with it while having the application set onto a timer to create photographs. The photos showed what I wanted to accomplish. The photos showed all sorts of shapes and forms that were all different in sizes.



5. Light Experiments⁶

I wanted to come up with various other objects that could inspire the user. I took into account that it could be something moving, since the paths the object could make could be interesting to experiment with. I wanted to animate example objects that could possibly be used to create inspiring patterns or shapes with. But also objects that could give you new way of ideas by interacting with them and not just by things generated by them. During this time I was talking with others about what kind of distraction I was trying to create. Was I trying to create an inspiring objects, which was not much about actual distraction at all. I was busy trying to find objects that could inspire the user through various means, such as patterns, shapes or movements that I lost distraction part that object should entail.

⁶ Van Der Kolk, Jermaine Michael. *Experiments of Light*. Digital image. *Opensource.wdka*. Wdka, 4 Dec. 2015. Web. <<http://opensource.wdka.nl/wiki/File:JMvdKOLKexperimentslight.jpg>>.

So after my confusion and the red herring path what exactly defines distraction? It has a broad amount of explanations of what it is and how it can be used. What entails an object that is supposedly distractive? After reading up as many definitions of distraction I could find in dictionaries and on the internet, I started making a list of what distraction could mean. It boiled down to a few definitions that could explain distraction.

- State of mind. (The act of being distracted.)
- Interruption.
- Your attention has been brought to something else than what you were focusing on.
- As entertainment.

So there are four definitions that could explain distraction, they each give a different aspect to the word distraction. It could be seen as entertainment, where you could think of playing games or watching a good movie to relieve stress or take your mind of other matters. It could also be seen as procrastination which means something as not willing to continue and doing something else instead of something which seems more fun. It also can be seen as a state of mind, which means, for example, that you could be distracted by having just heard upsetting news. The brought news could distract you from your activities and from your thought and denying you to focus. It could also be seen as something that diverts your attention, grabbing your attention more than what you are doing at the time. Another definition is that it could mean interruption, that you are busy with something and are obstructed and no longer be able to continue for indefinite or short time.

I started brainstorming about possible ideas I could create and one of my ideas was experimenting with web browser applications. My idea was to create an sort of add-on that would remove unessential features of social media and make you procrastinate more effectively. Instead of trying to create an add-on, I went a more practical route and created a couple of screen enhancers that you could mount on your monitor screen. Each version of the screen enhancers would tackle a certain social media website. The main goal was to keep the scrolling element of the website intact, while removing all the parts of the website. This would mean that the user would be stuck in the scrolling section where they can endlessly scroll through its content. The accompanying video would compliment that, turning the device into a marketed product. Specifically tailored for the user's preferences. The downsides however are that it's impossible to apply this specifically crafted board for another monitor, so besides the monitor the user is using, it's hardly applicable for someone else, unless he buys his own custom made board. The tool wouldn't stand on its own in terms of social or larger public use. which would mean that the devices crafted should become more applicable on larger scale instead of only on personal scale.

My newer tools will therefore focus more on its usability, not being restricted to personal scale. The tools will represent a toolkit in which devices can be found. These devices will all have attributes from the definition of distraction. The devices utilize the definitions and show the user, with the use of distraction, what distraction is.

Because distraction is a common day occurrence for people. They use books, games or follow TV shows to entertain themselves or to procrastinate from their work. People can receive upsetting news

that changes their state of mind. There are so many forms of distraction that you can be easily lost in what distraction you're actually performing. This was the case during my research behind it. I believe a toolkit which demonstrates all the sorts of distractions will not only give you an explanation of what you're distracting yourself with, but also let you realize why you need distraction at all in your life. The relief it can give us and the small break in our lives can help us progress our work or journey.



6. Yoong, Shing. Chopstick Fan. Digital image. Culturemap. The Culture Map, 11 June 2015. Web. <<http://www.theculturemap.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/chindogu-noodle-fan.jpg>>.

For example while experimenting with ideas, I came across the artist *Chindogu*⁷, who played around with the idea of absurd items that seem useful and are providing a solution to a problem, but the solution is also creating more problems than it solves. The object also often put the user in embarrassment which in return makes the device feel useless. He handles a few rules when it comes to creating his objects. They should stay in public domain, which means they're not being allowed to patented. They also have to be everyday objects. They should not be exclusively for humor or only deliver a critical standpoint on the inventor and lastly he has to be able to actually produce the object, how absurd it seems. Despite these points it does often deliver critique to the consumerism and trying to make accessible and quick for use. We are searching for quick solutions to everyday problems. Distraction often delays our worries, letting us procrastinate and think not of the problems we have ahead. The procrastination might feel useful time while we are doing it and we try to justify our actions, but in the end when we look back at it we start to realize how useless the time spent has been. But despite the time that has passed it gives us time to reflect upon our busy lives and sometimes the absurdness of our distraction causes us to give us insights we never saw before or the devices might help us understand why we are feeling the need to be distracted.

⁷ "Chindogu | Official Home of the International Chindogu Society." *Chindogu*. Chindogu, Web.

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