PHOTOMATIQUE

by Roza Schous & Jessica de Troije

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Abstract

Photomatique might seem like a normal photobooth: you get in, strike a pose and collect your photo afterwards. But there is more to it! Let's start with the physical appearance of the photobooth. It's already quite an eyecatcher by size, but the golden frame, marble pattern and the big sign on top make it truely impossible to oversee. It holds a certain elegance, quite like the art deco style of the roaring twenties. Seeing such a machine might start some roaring, but the real conversationstarter comes with the photo you get from the Photomatique. Seeing the photo coming out of the machine is always a magical moment, full of excitement and curiosity about the potential beauty of the photo you just took. With the Photomatique this moment of joy will be most probably followed by a moment of confusion, since you will be receiving a photo of a person you might not even know. To help you understand what happened there will be small text on the back of the picture saying: "Oops, something must have gone wrong, well nobody's perfect, right? Maybe the person on the photo accidentally got your photo! Only one way to fnd out ;)"

SEEING SUCH A MACHINE MIGHT START SOME ROARING, BUT THE REAL CONVERSATIONSTARTER COMES WITH THE PHOTO YOU GET FROM THE PHOTOMATIQUE.

Table of Contents

Introduction

At this very moment, there are more than 7,286,168,831 people living on this planet, just over 16,515,057 of them live in the Netherlands, 619,879 of them in Rotterdam, of which about 2500 of them study at the Willem de Kooning Academy, divided over 4 years and numurous diferent studies. We are two of those students and we know the students of our class, our practice project and maybe some people we met though electives or parties. Most of them have facebook and might even be part of a Willem de Kooning related facebook group, yet only a small amount of people will actually start a conversation with a stranger at school.

There are of course many reasons not to talk to a stranger, you might have trouble fnding a topic to start the conversation with, they might not like you or you might just simple not be in the mood. But remember: in the beginning everybody you know was once a stranger to you.

Our project is designed to help you a little in your (first) interaction with such a stranger, enjoy!

IN THE BEGINNING EVERYBODY YOU KNOW WAS ONCE A STRANGER TO YOU

Research Question

From the moment we started working together we were very clear about our theme: connection. Not realising this was enormously broad and needed quite a bit more specifcation before it was able to represent the essence of the ideas we had in mind. All our research ideas had quite a lot in common, dealing with connecting people in a new way, researching the way people connect on a daily basis and the infuence of new technology changing the way people meet new people.

Now-a-days people connect a lot via social media. Our faces are almost buried in our smartphone screens and we don't have any attention for our environment anymore. Even when we go out with friends, there are moments that everyone is standing with their phone in their hands staring at the screens like zombies. Also when you meet new people, you almost always ask them if they have facebook and if you could send them a friendship request.

We want people to connect on the old fashionned way again, face-to-face, not face-to-facebook, but still with a little and fun twist. We discovered our goal was to use technology to connect people in a diferent way, most preferably in real life.

HOW CAN A PROGRAMMED EVENT OF CHANCE CREATE A REASON FOR PEOPLE TO MEET?

Research Design

From the start we had quite a clear idea of what tool we wanted to use for people to connect. This tool was the photo booth.

Searching for inspiration
We will start our research with searching for Photobooths that already exists. We want to take a closer look at what these photobooths look like, in what places they are standing, how they work and how people interact with them. We are also looking at projects of designers that are connecting people in an alternative way. We want to create an overview of projects similar to our own project so we can see what we can improve in our own design.

Style
The appearance of our photo booth needs to be attractive to people. It needs to invite people to come in and use it. Next to this is also needs to stand out from all the other photo booths that already exists. So we by using the research of the existing photo booths as inspiration and doing some more visual research for different style we should be able to come up with one that suits our project. And of course a fitting name for it. After we determine the style we can build the photo booth and implement the technology.

Technology
As we both have a deep love for aesthetics and minimal knowledge of technology this part of our project could be tricky. We need to figure out how to get this thing working. What the photo booth actually needs to do is three steps, which are; 1. Taking a photo, 2. Selecting a random photo (which was already taken and archived), and 3. Printing the selected photo. So what we need to do is finding someone who knows something about programming and ask that to help us, because we have actually no clue how to do it on our own. Next to this we also need to do some research on Lynda.com or other website to look for tutorials that could help us further. Another thing we need to do is figuring out how to transform the taken photos into a wall installation. Mostly this is a visual process, but partly we have to change the photos in Adobe Photoshop to create the pattern for the installation.

Testing
Our foreseen results for the testing ranged from people not understanding the surprising element of the booth, to people laughing and hopefully looking for or talking to the person on the picture. Keeping in mind the text on the back of the photo we don't expect everyone to fully understand the situation right away. But we do hope it will create some new connections within the academy.

Research Theme

The three main themes of this semester were Body, Identity and Technology. Body is quite an easy one to explain. You need somebody for the photo booth to work, to take the photo, and to be in the photo.

Identity is very closely connected to photography. Especially passport photos, something a photo booth is usually used for. By taking a photo we capture a part of our identity.

We need technology to make our concept work. Even though the role of technology changed a lot during the process it still plays an important role in the project.

Aside from these three themes we also worked with Gamification and Chance, by adding a surprising element to the photo booth. The last theme was Connection. In our case the connection between two strangers.

ASIDE FROM THE THREE MAIN THEMES WE ALSO WORKED WITH GAMIFICATION, CHANCE, AND CONNECTION

Experiments

Visual Appearance
Technical Attempt
Building up
Social Experiments

Visual Appearance

Moodboards
Roarin' 20s
Logo Design

Digital Marble
Analog Marble

Installation

Moodboards

We want to keep the shape of the photobooth simple, but it has to look welcoming for the users. For this to happen we wanted to create a look, or a theme, that is different then all the other photobooths. The look has to be fun and make the users enthousiastic. We came up with five different theme's; Minimal Tropical, TropiCarnaval, Indian Twilight, Metro Sugar, and Twenties Greatness.

For every theme we made a moodboard with colour pallet. After reflecting on each theme, we chose for Twenties Greatness. Going back in time corresponds with the idea of an alternative way of interachtion.

Roarin 20s

After we chose our theme, Twenties Greatness, we did some research about the 1920's. We collected a lot of books and pictures of art, advertisements, products, and lifestyle from that time. In those days if you wanted to meet with friends you would call them or write them a letter and invite them for a party.
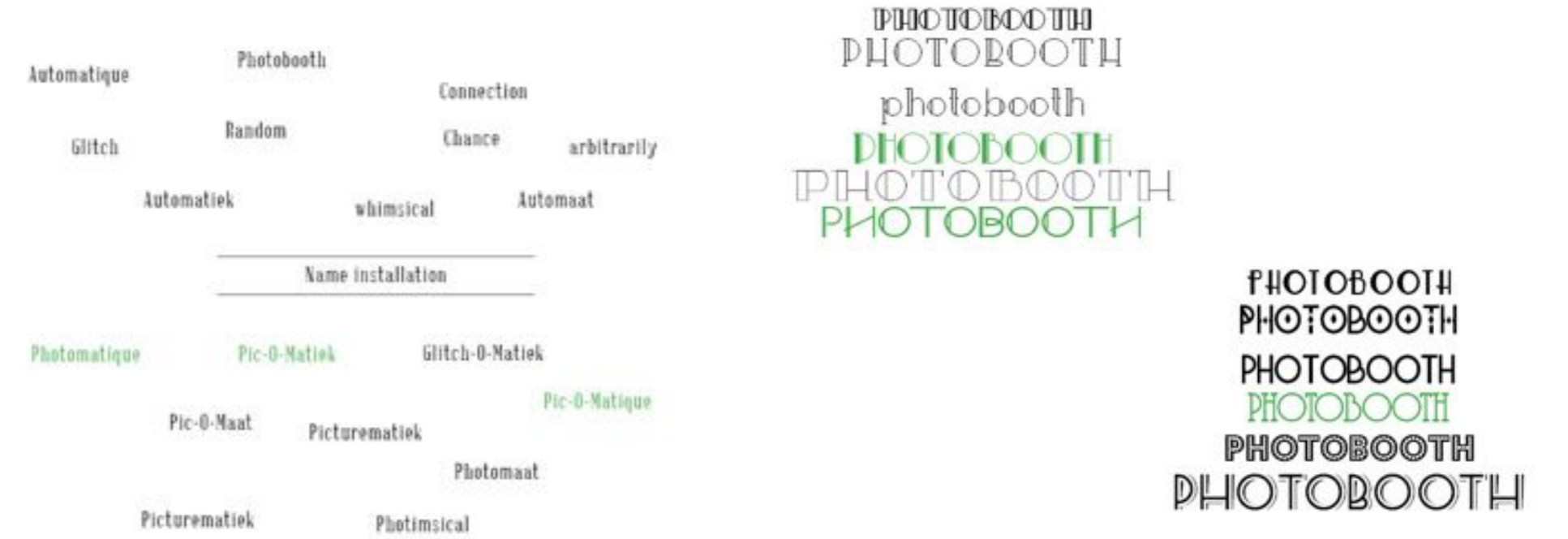
Going back in time corresponds with our idea to interact with people in analog way. The aesthetics of the photo booth should also correspond with this.

Logo Photomatique

To give the styling of the photo booth the finishing touch, a name and a logo had to be made. We came up with the name Photomatique, which gives a classic feeling fitting the 20s style. We experimented with different Art Deco style fonts. Eventually we chose for the font Coventry Garden, which was altered for the final logo design.

The logo was also changed into an Adobe Illustrator file which could be cut out of wood with the laser cutter. These letters were placed on the photo booth later on. (For more information see; Building the Photomatique on page ...).

Automatique   Photobooth
                                      Connection
Glitch   Random   Chance   arbitrarily
      Automatiek   whimsical   Automaat

_____ Name installation _____

Photomatique   Pic-O-Matiek   Glitch-O-Matiek

                                              Pic-O-Matique
      Pic-O-Maat   Picturematiek
                              Photomaat
Picturematiek   Photimsical

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PHOTOMATIQUE

Digital Marble

Photomatique is going to be a photo booth complete in the 20s style. With some 1920s patterns as inspiration and Adobe Illustrator as tool we made sketch patterns that we can implement into the design. The marble look gives a rich and luxurious feeling which fits the zeitgeist of the Roarin' Twenties.

Eventually we didn't use these prints anymore. Because of some changes in our construction of the booth, we couldn't use these patterns anymore. Instead of doing the marble digital, we painted the marble by hand on fabric.
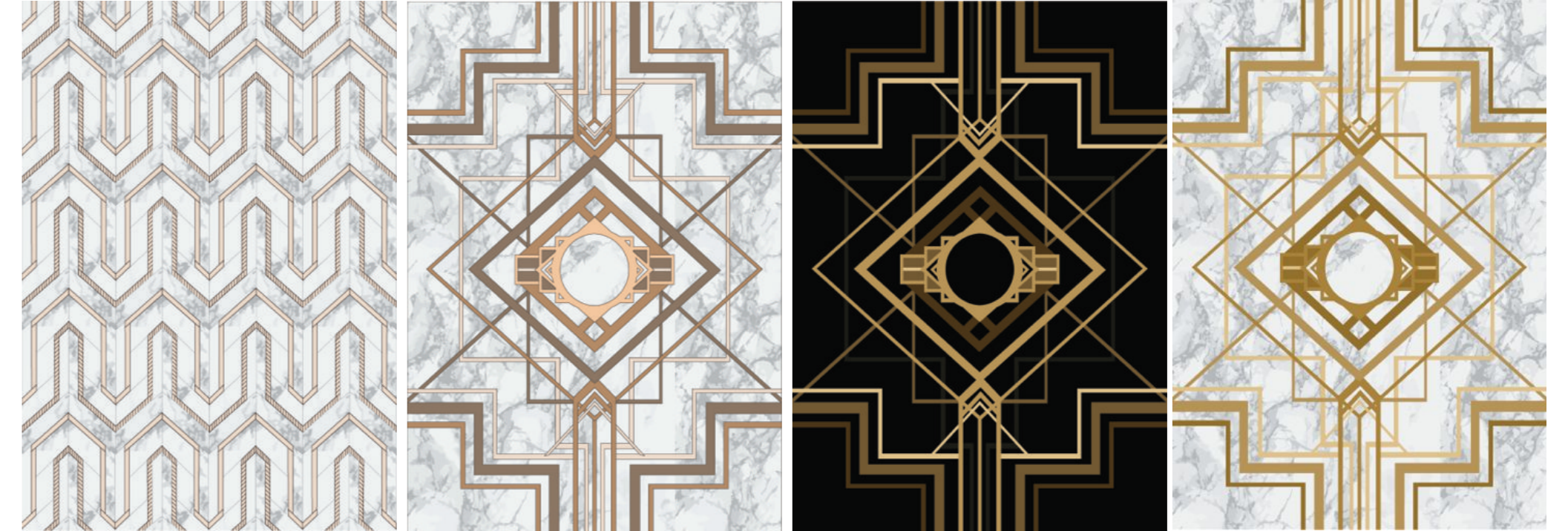
Analog Marble

Because of changes in our construction of the booth, we made marble patterns by hand. The walls of the photo booth are made out of white fabric, which we painted by hand with metallic grey paint. Using some photos of marble as guideline, we painted the marble in three different metallic grey colours with small brushes. The patterns were created by loosely holding the brush and making very natural movements with the arm. The process of making it was very freely to make the marble look as natural as possible.

Installation

To give our project an extra dimension we decided to create a unique art piece of the photos taken in Photomatique. At first sight these grey tiles might seem to have little in common with the photo booth. Until you know the origin of these tiles. The photo you see on the right is an illustration of the artwork after a certain amount of time. It will start with just one grey tile, slowly expanding as the Photomatique will get more visitors. With the use of Adobe Photoshop (see tutorial on next page) all photos taken in the Photomatique will be transformed into a shade of grey representing the person on the photo. Together these tiles create a unique and personal work of art.
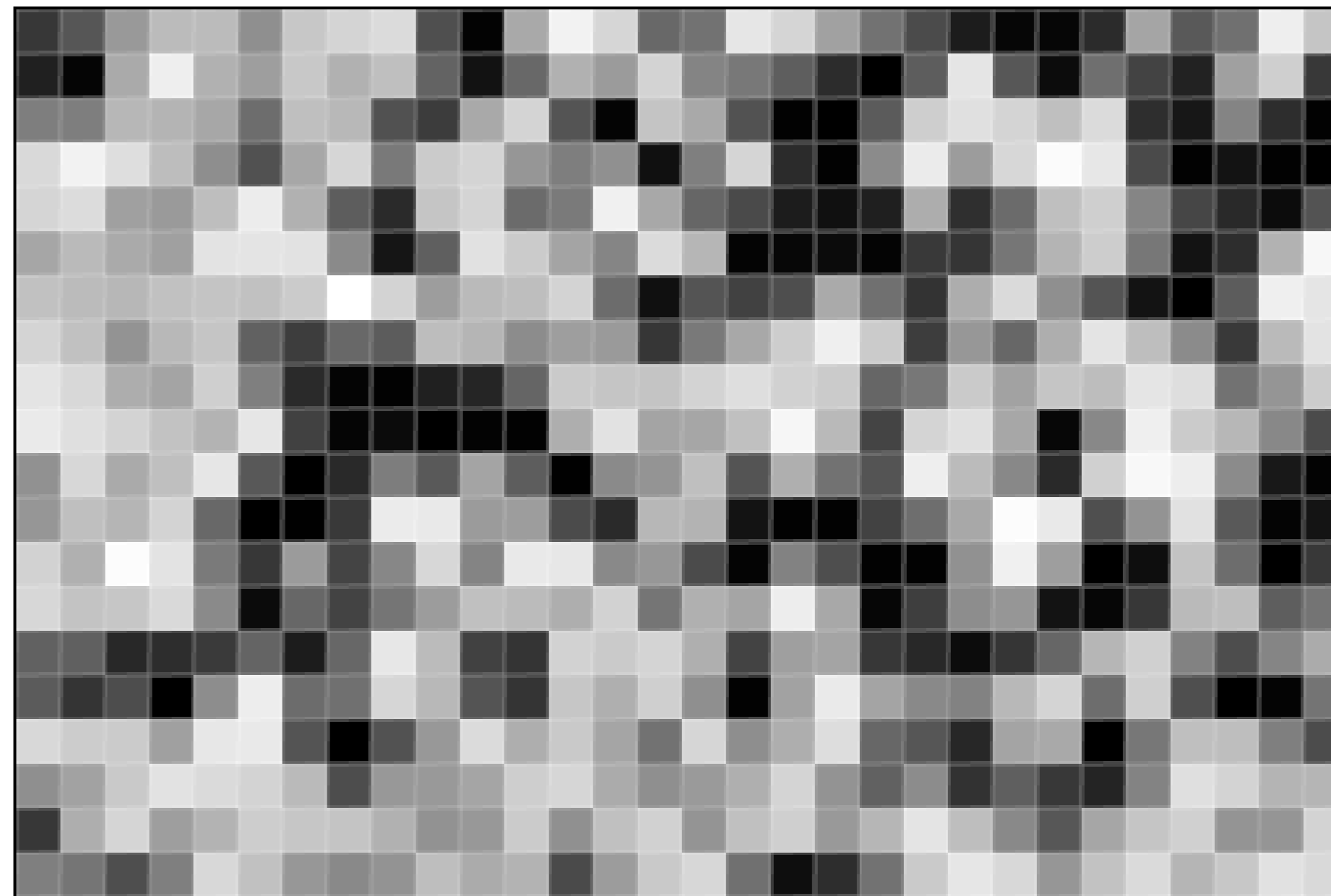
Photoshop tutorial

01 – open photoshop
02 – file > open
03 – select file
04 – window > actions
05 – record new action
06 – image > image size
07 – set width and height to 1 px
08 – be amazed by the tinyness of your photo
09 – image > image size, set image size to 1500px and make sure to select
the right option at resample image
10 – click the little square to stop the recording
11 – File > Scripts > Image Processor
12 – Select the right folder and choose your action
13 – Click "run"
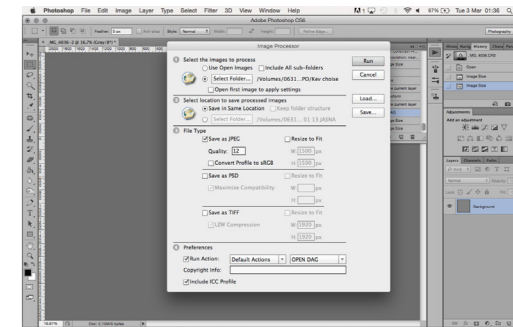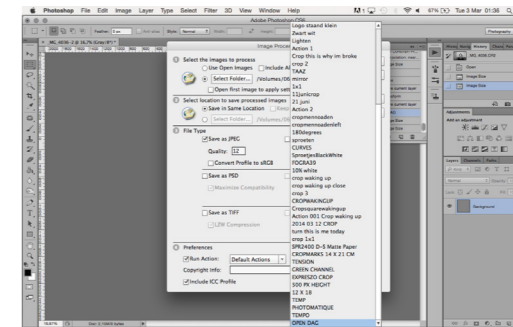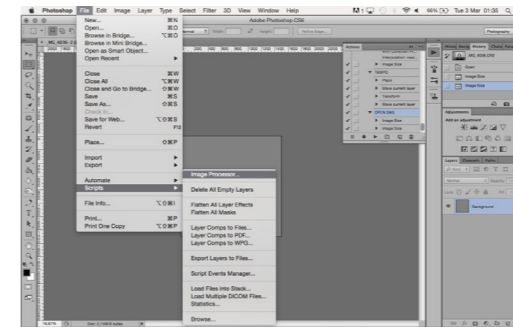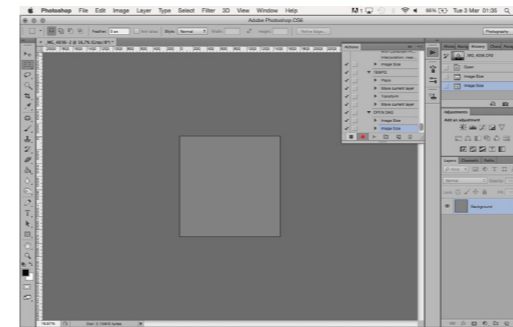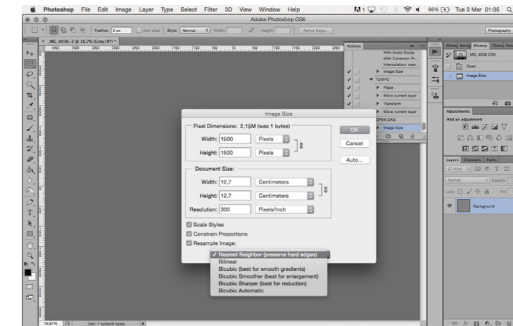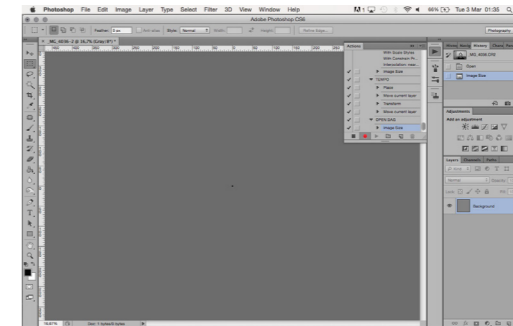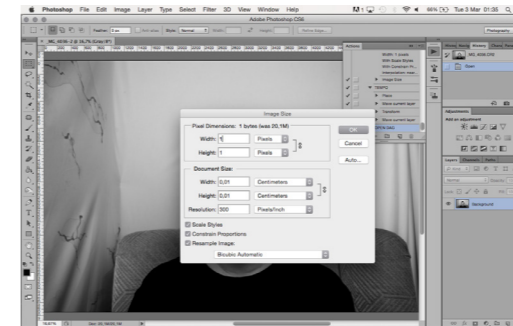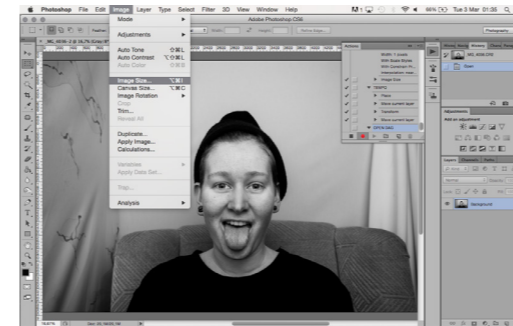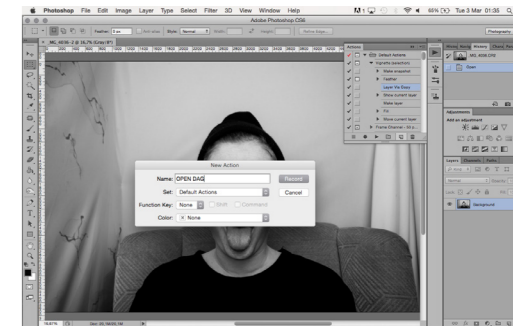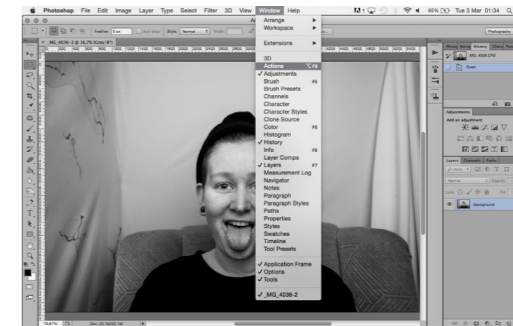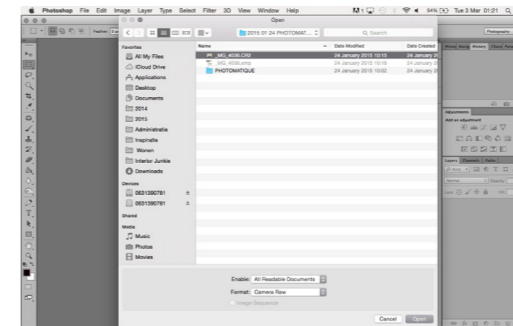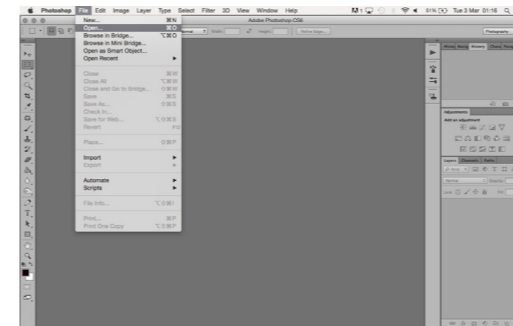
Technical Attempt

Because we didn't have a lot of experience with Arduino or Raspberry Pi we asked Simon de Bakker if he could help us. Although he really wanted to help us, it was quite difficult to plan a meeting due to his busy schedule. When talking about our project with Brigite she mentioned a project Yoana Buzova did with speakers in different countries. It so happens to be this very Yoana also works at the interaction station. Therefor we approached Yoana with the same question. Yoana had plenty of time and was kind enough to help us. Unfortunately she also wasn't really a Raspberry Pi expert so it was a process of trial and error for her too. We met a few times and discussed about the technology we wanted to use and how we wanted to program it.

The idea was to use a Raspberry Pi as main tech. On it we would connect a photo module which was connected to a button. When you push the button a picture would be taken. This seemed quite easy, but turned out to be much more difficult than we thought. Simon helped us quite a lot with writing a script for us that would make this possible. It became really tricky when we wanted to connect a printer that directly printed a random picture at the time the picture was taken. Not only did we not know how to program this, also Yoana didn't know how to do this. The programming code became really complicated and eventually it just wouldn't work in time.

We really underestimated the amount of time it would take to program and the complexity of our idea. Even though Yoana had plenty of time it would have been a better idea to ask Simon for help. His knowledge of programming would have helped us quicker and we would have finished the photo booth in time.

WE REALLY UNDERESTIMATED THE AMOUNT OF TIME IT WOULD TAKE TO PROGRAM AND THE COMPLEXITY OF OUR IDEA

Building the Photomatique

Before you start, note that this will become quite a large object. Moving it within a room a rather easy due to it's light mass, but to squize it through a door you might need the assistance of a magician.

Required materials:

Frame:
10 wooden slats (3x3x200 cm)
4 wooden slats (3x3x100 cm)
32 metal furniture corners
4 long screws
128 small screws
Electric screwdriver

Marble fabric:
A large piece of fabric (200x700cm)
Gold paint
Metallic grey paint
Metallic white paint
Paint roller
Sponge
Small paintbrush
Small bowl
Scissors
Stanley knife

Inside:
Wooden board (20x100x1 cm)
Wooden board (20x10x1 cm)
Wooden slat (20x2x2 cm)
Camera with remote
Printer
Sheets of paper (10x15)
Laptop
Laptop charger
Volunteer
8 small screws

Letters:
2 Wooden boards (70x40x0,3 cm)
Lasercutter or a fretsaw and lots of patience
12 small slats (3x1x1 cm)
Glue
12 small screws

Things that might come in handy:
A big room
Plier stapler
Cardreader
Studiolamp or speedlight flash
Old newpapers
A pillow to kneel on while painting the fabric on the floor
An example image of marble
An extra pair of hands
A small table
Stool
Black marker

Let's start with painting the frame. You will need the gold paint, the paint roller and a tray big enough for the paint roller, the empty box from a frozen pizza also works.

Use the paint roller to paint multiple slats at the time by laying them next to eachother on the floor. If you use acrylic paint you will be able to turn the slats after a few minutes to paint the other sides, if not, we suggest you practice your photoface in the meantime. Eventhough acrylic paint dries remarkable fast, we highly suggest placing the slats seperately against a wall to prevent the paint from damaging.

While the slats are drying you can start by spreading out the fabric on a table or floor. To make the painting easier, it can be useful to look up an image of a marble structure to use as a example for the pattern you're painting.

Mix some water with the white metallic paint in the small bowl. Use the sponge to create big fluffy clouds on the fabric, these will be the background of the marble.

While the paint is still wet, pour some of the grey paint with a small amount of water in another bowl. Use the small paintbrush to paint the characteristic veins of the marble.

Continue with this process untill the whole surface of the fabric looks like a giant piece of marble stone. You might need to do this is phases considering the fact not everybody has enough empty space to fit a piece of fabric the size of a modest student room.

While the fabric is drying you can start assembling the framework, if the golden paint is dry, of course.

While all the other tasks are reasonably doable on your own, we absolutely recommend you to ask a helping hand while assembling the frame!

Start by placing one of the long slats on the vertically on the ground. Form a corner of 90 degrees by placing another long slat horizonally on the ground. Perpendicular to this one you will need a short slat horizontally. It should look something like this:
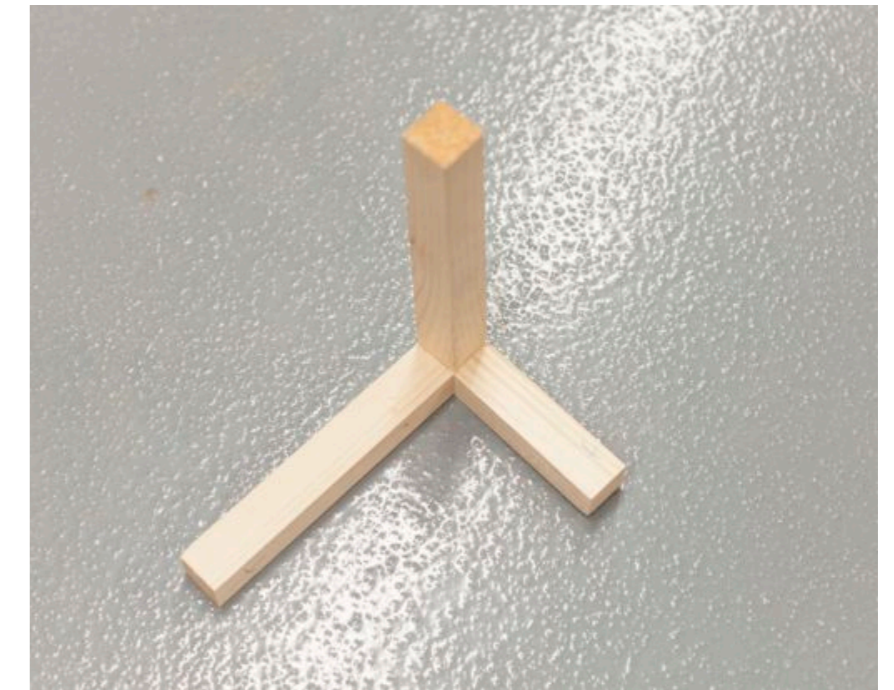
Place the metal furniture corners on the horizontal slats to connect them with the vertical slat. Repeat this untill you have a wooden horizontal rectangle on the floor, with four long slats standing vertically in each corner.

Now comes the tricky part, turning the frame over. The metal furniture corners become quite flexible due to the length of the slats, so you have to be careful!

When you stopped cheering and dancing after turning it over without hurting anyone or breaking the frame you can place 4 of the remaining slats of the ground and connect them to the standing frame. You will need the last 2 slats after stapling the fabric to the frame.

Now you can start building the shelf for the camera. After you screwed the small slat to the small wooden board you can use screws to attach this shelve to the bigger slat, you can choose your own placement, but to make the booth user friendly we suggest you just screw it in the middle of the wooden board. For now your amazing selfmade camera shelf will have to wait in line after all the other awesome parts to be done.

When your paint on the fabric is dry, you can start shooting with the plier stapler. Please note we do not accept any claims of violence involving the plier stapler, this is your own responsibly, use it wisely.

We experienced starting from the inside works the best. Grab one of the remaining slats and two of the long screws place one of the corners of the fabric in the middle of the top slat in the frame, the long one. By placing the fabric in between the slat and the frame before screwing them together, the fabric will stay in place. Don't use this same method to attach the lower part of the slat to the frame so you can still go in and out of the closed part of the photobooth.

Attach the rest of the fabric to the frame by shooting staples in the upper and lower horizontal slats. In the corners you can shoot the staples in the edges of the vertical slats to make sure it will look even better.

When working on the last metre of fabric, only attach the top and cut the fabric along the vertical slat to create a curtain, because of course people will appreciate some privacy while striking a pose!

Now you are ready to place the camera shelf on a height of choice. Determine this by placing a test person on a stool, chair or even just standing inside the booth. We placed the camera at the same height as the person's face, but feel free to make is a chestcamera or even a feet photobooth if you please.

After screwing the shelf at the choosen height you need the camera to determine the whole in the fabric, unless you want the same blurry close up pictures of the marble fabric over and over of course. Also make a small hole for the remote, so people can actually take their own picture. Next to this you will need a

small slot for the photo to come out. Feel free to add a nice text to instruct the people coming into the photobooth.
Now you are ready to create your technical set up. Place the laptop, printer and camera inside the closed part of the photobooth, together with a willing volunteer and some food. (Or somebody you want to lock up, but do know we take no responsibily for the consequences.)

Take your first photo and print it on the paper sheets. On the back you can add a text explaining why they didn't receive their own photo. We used a photo of Roza and wrote this:

"Whoops, something must have gone wrong. Maybe this person has your photo?"

Now all you have to do is lasercut the letters and glue a small slat to the back so you can screw them on top of the photobooth, this of course sounds a lot easier than it actually is, just like every ikea manual.

Social Experiment

During the Open Day we managed to present our photo booth with an alternative technology installed in it. Roza was sitting in the closed compartment of the booth with camera, laptop and printer. Even though we had some slight problems with the computer and printer, we managed to add a surprising element for the user. The user could make a picture himself by clicking on the button. The photo that came out was a photo of Roza. On the back of the photo was written suggestion saying: "Oops, something must have gone wrong... Maybe this person has your picture!" This resulted in quite some laughs and even a few very enthausiastic search quests trough the school. When Roza left the booth to go to the toilet, she walked into one of the participants of the photo booth, who indeed asked her where her own picture was. Directly after that asking not the put the picture on Facebook.

Conclusion

Something we did not foresee were the connections made during the process. One of our teachers told a graphic design student about our project resulting into an indirect collaboration. During the building of the Photomatique we got into contact with people we would not have spoken to without our project, leading to new connections.

Our foreseen results were quite accurate. The photo booth did indeed create new connections between some strangers. Though other people didn't expect anything to happen and rushed off before even seeing the photo.

SOME PEOPLE DIDN'T EXPECT ANYTHING TO HAPPEN AND RUSHED OFF BEFORE EVEN SEEING THE PHOTO

Design Proposal

During the open day we learned a lot about the practical aspect of our project. One of these things was humor. Something we discovered to be a very powerful tool. As a result of a language difference some people did not understand us the first time after hearing the English word photo booth. One time this resulted in a very special discovery: PhotoBOEF, somebody who steals your photos. This just happens to be a big part of our project. Even though we really liked our current name, Photomatique, this name contains the humor we were missing. If we were to develop our photo booth even further this might very well become the new name.

For the artwork we were inspired by IXXI, a company that creates huge artworks build entirely of small tiles. The tiles can be rearranged however the client wants. We believe adding such a dynamic interaction can bring our project to the next level. It is closely related to our goal, connecting people. It would be amazing if people would join in while somebody is rearranging the tiles, resulting in collaboration and hopefully in some new connections.

Reflection Jessica

The last few months I learned a lot about working with a partner day in and day out. I have to say that past group assignments were not as intense as this one. Maybe it was because of the new system of working in projects instead of classes. We had far more time to work on our project then in the past. I'm very happy that I had Roza as my partner in crime, even though it wasn't always rosy. The thing I liked the most of my partnership with Roza is her ability of connecting with people. I learned a shitload of new people through her. I think our project wouldn't have come that far if we didn't had her connections which often helped us with realizing our idea.

One thing I'm not really happy about is that the Photomatique isn't working the way we planned. The technology behind it was far more complex than we thought it would be. And that is actually a shame. We should have put more time in trying to program the tech, not only so we could present a fully working photo booth, but also for our own knowledge in programming. I have minimal experience with technology like the Arduino and the Raspberry Pi, and this project would have been a nice opportunity to get to know a bit more about this. Unfortunately we didn't take the chance.

Reflection Roza

I learned a lot in the previous months. Like all the new techniques during the workshops in the first weeks, something I really enjoyed! But most of all I learned a lot about myself and what I want, but also what I don't want.

I had never really worked together with other students at the academy. My only reference to group projects was from my secundary school and this wasn't very positive. But this semester I learned the value of combining forces, something that will most definitely change my projects for the coming years

I'm a photography student, but my range of interests is goes much further than capturing moments with a camera. I love getting my hands dirty, am very interested in graphic design and enjoy seeing new technical developments.

In the first weeks I was constantly busy documenting all the cool things we did and throughout the semester my camera never went fully out of sight, but the role of my photography did change. It became an extra tool, something that wasn't the most important thing anymore. I think I got a little cought up in all the amazing world of new knowlegde and lost focus.

Looking back I am glad I had the opportunity to discover all of this in my third year, giving me the opporunity to rethink what I really want for my final year: become a better photographer. Therefor I have decided not to go on with digital craft next year.
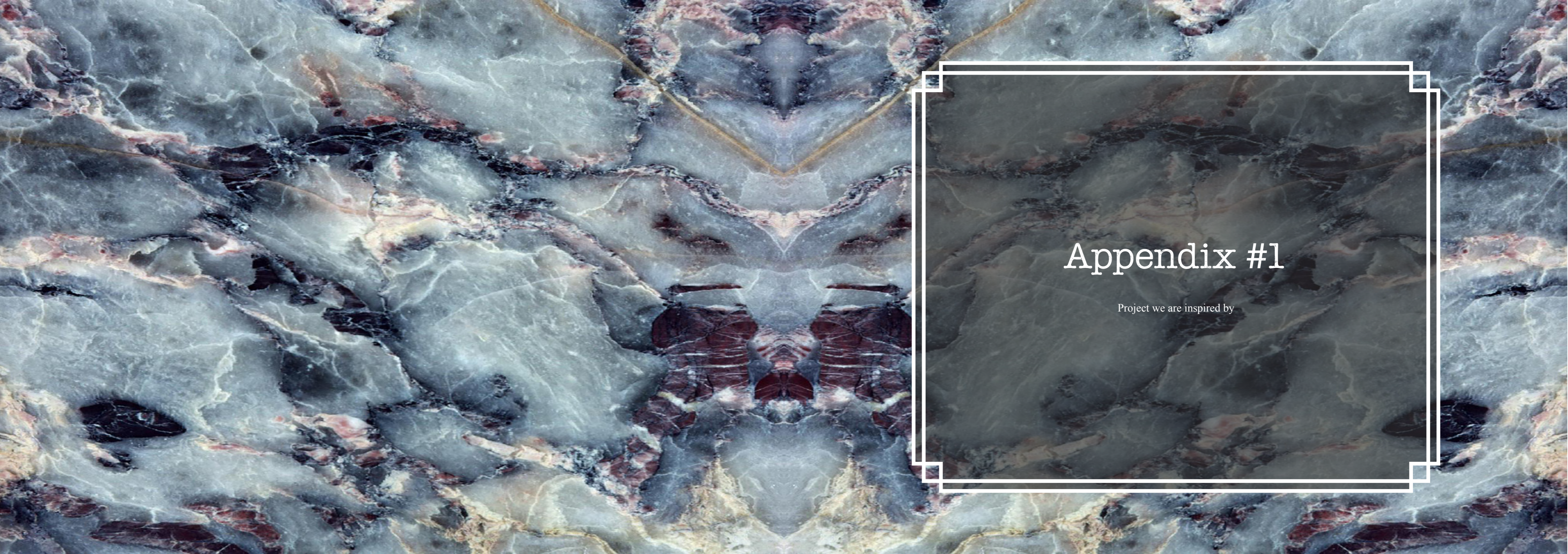
Appendix #1

Project we are inspired by

Portrait Machine

Theo Watson
Portrait machine, 2009

Portrait Machine is an interactive photography installation that visualizes the connections between visitors. It makes these connections based on a number of features, such as clothing choice, hair color, facial expression, and composition within the frame. It presents both similarities and differences in these characteristics, reminding us of our connectedness and uniqueness, creating strong visual patterns and playful juxtapositions. Portrait Machine was a collaboration with Kyle McDonald, and was produced by Nina Meilof for CBK Amsterdam.

Face to Facebook

Facebook is based on the voluntary uploading of personal data and sharing it with friends. The more friends the better. Being personal and popular a Facebook user is exposing him/herself to many others, continuing to establish new relationships.

Through special custom software Paolo Cirio and Alessandro Ludovico collected data from more than 1,000,000 Facebook users. What they collected was their "public data" - some of their personal data (name, country, Facebook groups they subscribe to) plus their main profile picture and a few friend relationships. They built a database with all this data, then began to analyze the pictures that showed smiling faces. The vast majority of pictures were both amateurish and somehow almost involuntarily or unconsciously alluring. And they are almost always "smiling".

Once the database was ready, Cirio and Ludovico studied and customized a face recognition algorithm. The algorithm used self learning neural networks and was programmed to "group" the huge amount of faces (and their attached data) in a few simple categories. The categories are among the most popular that they usually use to define a person at a distance, without knowing him/her, or judging based only on a few behaviors. There were six categories picked; "climber", "easy going", "funny", "mild", "sly" and "smug", with some intuitive differences, for both male and female subjects. The software effectively extracted 250,000 faces that were connected to the relevant public data in the database.

After grouping them, the designers started to dive into these seas of faces, with all the perceptual consequences. "We started to think about why we felt so overwhelmed."

In "The Love Delusion" essay, Dan Jones cites Martie Haselton's research, which indicates that men typically overestimate the sexual interest conveyed by a woman's smile or laughter. When men see someone of the opposite sex smile at them they tend to think "she must be interested." By the way, women simply see a smile. [Dan Jones "The Love Delusion", March 31 2007, New Scientist]. Further, Heather Rupp, a graduate student at Emory University in Atlanta completed a study about the difference between the reactions of women and men when looking at the same erotic images. Tracking the eye movements of study participants "the big surprise was that men looked at the faces much more than women did."
Dr. Kim Wallen (who directs the lab where this experiment was performed) suggested that men scrutinize faces in pornographic imagery because a man often looks to a woman's face for cues to her level of sexual arousal, since her body, unlike a man's, does not give her away.

So the role of the face in establishing a potentially intimate relationship is stronger than generally thought. And this is also at the base of Facebook's social system. A Facebook user is supposed to have increasing numbers of friends, but the website can also be used to actively look for a new relationship, by exploiting the illusory capital of accumulated relationships, signified by switching (mentally or often practically) into the "single" status.

In "The Social Network" movie Mark Zuckerberg (Jessie Eisenberg) becomes more and more excited as the concept of Facebook gets refined and he lets it be known that "I'm not talking about a dating website". Facebook is not a dating website, but it works using the same triggering principles. And for a few million of its "500 million active users" it does become a dating website.

So by combining all this information Cirio and Ludovico wanted to make this further step easier for everybody. They established a dating website, www.Lovely-Faces.com, importing all the 250,000 profiles. This step builds the virtual land that Facebook is always close to but never explicitly steps in, being just an enormous background to the active process of searching for potential sexual relationships. The profiles will be definitively "single" and available, in a fairly competitive environment, with real data and real faces that users have personally posted. Their smiles will finally reach what they unconsciously really want: more relationships with unknown people, attracted by their virtual presence. The price users pay is being categorized as what they really are, or better, how they choose to be represented in the most famous and crowded online environment. The project starts to dismantle the trust that 500 million people have put in Facebook.

The project talks about the consequences of posting sensitive personal data on social network platforms, and especially the consequences in real life. These consequences are always underestimated because we still instinctively tend to confine what we do online in the visual space of the screen. Face-to-facebook practically questions online privacy through one of the web's most iconic platforms. The designers are not just making a sophisticated critical action against a giant online corporation, but they are also trying to formulate a simple hack that everybody can potentially use. Everybody can steal personal data and re-contextualize it in a completely unexpected context.
And that shows, once more, how fragile and potentially manipulable the online environment actually is.

Appendix #1.A: Face-to-Facebook Theory by Paolo Cirio and Alessandro Ludovico

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Face-to-Facebook Theory by Paolo Cirio and Alessandro Ludovico

Social networking is naturally addictive. It's about exploring something very familiar that has never been available before: staying in touch with past and present friends and acquaintances in a single, potentially infinite, virtual space.

The phenomenon challenges us psychologically, creating situations that previously were not possible. Before the rise of social networking, former friends and acquaintances would tend to drift away from us and potentially become consigned to our personal histories. Having a virtual space with (re)active people constantly updating their activities is the basic, powerful fascination of the social network. But there's another attraction, based on the elusive sport (or perhaps urge) to position ourselves. The answer to the fundamental identity question, "who am I?" can be given only in relation to the others that we interact with (friends, family, work colleagues, and so on). And the answer to this question seems clearer after we take a look at our list of social network friends.

So an intimate involvement and (endless) questioning of our online identity (often literally juxtaposing with our physical one) is perpetrated in the social network game. But social network platforms are not public organizations designed to help support social problems but private corporations. Their mission is not to help people create better social relationships or to help them improve their self-positioning. Their mission is to make money. Economic success for these corporations rests on convincing users to connect to the several hundred people who await them online.

The market value of these companies is proportional to the number of users they have. Facebook is valued at around 50 billion dollars [1]: it sports 500 million users [2]. The game can often translate into a form of social binging in which the number of friends a user has is never enough to satisfy.

But what kind of space is Facebook? Facebook is not home - it is way larger and more crowded. And it's not the street, because you're supposed to know everybody in your space. Facebook is an eternal, illusory party, under surveillance and recorded for all time. Its structure invites you to first replicate and then enhance your real social structures, replicating your experiences on your own personal "screen space".

In this unending party, you meet and join old and new friends, acquaintances and relatives. As with most parties everything is private, or restricted to the invited guests, but has the potential to become public, if accidently shared. Here the guests' activity and interests are also recorded through their posts in different formats and media (pictures, movies, trips, preferences, comments). It's an induced immaterial labour with instant gratification. Guests produce content by indirectly answering the question "who am I?" and they get new friends and feedback in the process.

In fact, Facebook's subliminal mantra seems then to be "be personal, be popular, never stop." It has even gone so far as to make it difficult to notice when a friend closes their account (you need to check the friend's list to have any idea).

The more successful (and crowded) the party, the more the private funders are happy to put money into it. The price the guests are unconsciously paying is that they are giving away their (constantly updating) virtual identity. Guests, in fact, organize their own space, and therefore their own "party", offering the party owner (Facebook) a connected, heterogeneous group of people who share interests.

As such they offer what can be termed as "crowdsourced targeting" – the indirect identification of people's targets and desires by the users themselves. In fact the spontaneously posted data provides an endless (almost automatic) mutual profiling, enriching and updating the single virtual identities, in a collective self-positioning. But can profile data be liberated from Facebook's inexorable logic? The answer is yes, but it's important to focus on the core of the Facebook profiles and see how they are recognized as virtual identities.

First, the profiles sublimate the owners' (real) social actions and references through their virtual presences. Second, they synthesize their effectiveness in representing real people through a specific element: the profile picture. This picture, an important Facebook interface, more often than not shows a face, and a smiling one at that. Our face is our most private space and simultaneously the most exposed one. How many people are allowed to touch our face, for example?

And generally speaking, the face is also one of the major points of reference we have in the world.

There are even "special" regions of the human brain, such as the fusiform face area (FFA), which may have become specialized at facial recognition [3]. Faces are now so exposed that they do not remain private, but are thrust into the public domain and shared (they can even be "tagged" by other people). So any virtual identity (composed of a face picture and some related data) can be stolen and become part of another identity, through a simple re-contextualization of the same data.

Furthermore, "face recognition" techniques can be applied to group vast amount of Facebook pictures. This process is also quite paradoxical, because the "surveillance" aspects (face recognition algorithms are usually used together with surveillance cameras) here are not used to try to identify a suspect or a criminal, but to capture a group people with similar somatic expressions. The resulting scenario is that different elements forming the identities can be remixed, re-contextualized and re-used at will. Facebook data become letters of an unauthorized alphabet to be used to narrate real identities or new identities, forming new characters on a new background.

And this is a potentially open process that anybody can undertake. It becomes more tempting when we realize the vast amount of people who are smiling. When we smile in our profile picture, we are truly smiling at everyone on Facebook.

So any user can easily duplicate any personal picture on his/her hard disk and then upload it somewhere else with different data. The final step is to be aware that almost everything posted online can have a different life if simply recontextualized.

Facebook, an endlessly cool place for so many people, becomes at the same time a goldmine for identity theft and dating - unfortunately, without the user's control. But that's the very nature of Facebook and social media in general. If we start to play with the concepts of identity theft and dating, we should be able to unveil how fragile a virtual identity given to a proprietary platform can be. And how fragile enormous capitalization based on exploiting social systems can be. And it'll eventually mutate, from a plausible translation of real identities into virtual management, to something just for fun, with no assumed guarantee of trust, crumbling the whole market evaluation hysteria that surrounds the crowded, and much hyped, online social platforms.

[1] Rushe, D. (2011). *Goldman Sachs suffers Facebook fiasco*. New York: The Guardian. Web, http://www.theguardian.com/business/2011/jan/17/goldman-sachs-facebook-private-placement

[2] Hicks, M. (2010). *500 million stories*. Web, https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook/500-million-stories/409753352130

[3] Wikipedia. (2006). *Fusiform face area*. Web, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fusiform_face_area

Inside Out Project

Inside Out Project

JR

On March 2, 2011, the photographer and artist JR won the TED prize at the TED Conference in Long Beach, California, and called for the creation of a global participatory art project with the potential to change the world. This project is called INSIDE OUT.

Inspired by JR's large-format street "pastings", INSIDE OUT gives everyone the oppertunity to share their portrait and make a statement for what they stand for. It is a global platform for people to share their untold stories and transform messages of personal identity into works of public art.

Each INSIDE OUT group action around the world is documented, archived and exhibited online. Nearly 200.000 persons form more than 112 countries and territories have participated. The INSIDE OUT project has traveled from Ecuador to Nepal, from Mexico to Palestine, inspiring group actions on varied themes such as hope, diversity, gender-based violence, and climate change.

In order to participate in the INSIDE OUT Project, you need to organize a Group Action. This INSIDE OUT Group Action happens when one or more group leaders commit to leading their own independently organized project somewhere in the world. Group leader(s) choose a statement and gather a minimum of five participants to have their portraits taken with the statement as their focus. The digital images are sent to the INSIDE OUT studio, printed into 36" x 53" posters and shipped back to the group leaders who paste them in the public space of their choice.

Leaveamessage

Leaveamessage
Ioana Buzova

Leaveamessage is a participatory project, a network of voice mailboxes, that allow members of the public to record and distribute audio messages in public space. The boxes are installed in different counties, cities, and contexts. Connected to each other, the boxes provide playful, performative moments for strangers to break from their routine and enter into a network of anonymous voices, travelling an unplanned journey trough cityscapes.

Design inspiration;
Photobooth

For the design of the Photomatique we looked at exciting photobooths. We want to create a simple but welcoming look, which gives nothing away of what happens after your picture is taken.

Most of the photobooths that already excist are used as props for weddings. They have a vintage look, mostly remakes from the 40s, 50s, and 60s, with props that fit the wedding scene.

Others are placed into public spaces where the metropolitan nature takes over the original appearence of the photobooth. Stickers, posters, graffiti and handwritten messages are added, layer over layer.

For our Photomatique we are going to use a simple rectangular form. But to make it appealing we are going to connect a theme with it.