

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 shiny gold pattern and the big sign on top make it truly 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 magic 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 find out ;)"

“Seeing such a machine might start some roaring, but the real conversationstarter comes with the photo you get from the photomatique.”

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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 numerous different studies. We are two of those students and we know the students of our class, our practice project and maybe some people we met through 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.

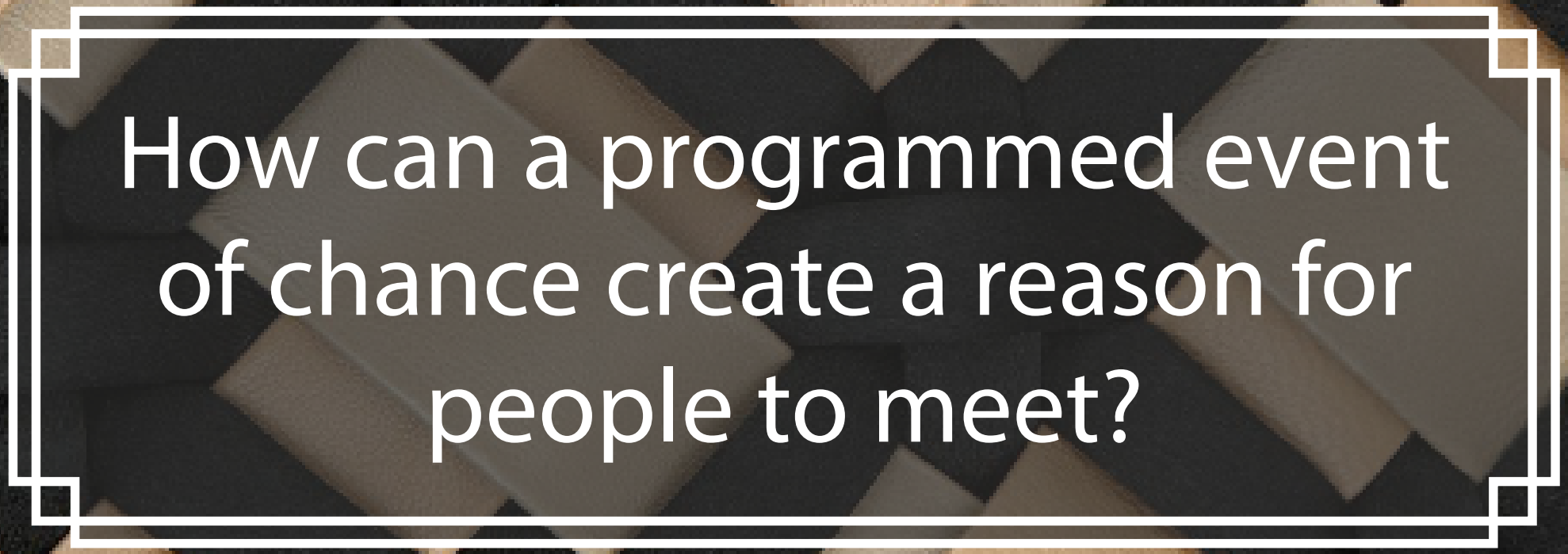
There are of course many reasons not to talk to a stranger, you might have trouble finding a topic to start the conversation with, they might not like you or you might just simple not be in the mood. But remember: in the beginning everybody you know was once a stranger to you.

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

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 specification 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 influence of new technology changing the way people meet new people.

We discovered our goal was to use technology to connect people in a different way, most preferably in real life.



How can a programmed event
of chance create a reason for
people to meet?

Research Design

How did we structure the design?

We started

What tools or methods did we use?

What is the foreseen result?

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Inspirational Projects

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.

‘it presents both similarities and differences in these characteristics, reminding us of our connectedness and uniqueness, creating strong visual patterns and playful juxtapositions.’



Inspirational Projects

Face to Facebook Paolo Cirio and Alessandro Ludovico

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



Inspirational Projects

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 opportunity 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 from 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.

'it is a global platform for people to share their untold stories and transform messages of personal identity into works of public art.'



#insideoutproject A global art project by JR <http://www.insideoutproject.net/en/actu/0027110099>



Inspirational Projects

Leaveamessage

Yoana 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 through cityscapes.

'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 through cityscapes.'



Inspirational Projects

ZKT Job Taks

“ZKT.#1

Rotterdam counts 3586 art students divided over 18 different HBO educations. Why is there so little collaboration between these students? That’s why we are launching ZKT. (Dutch abbreviation for search). ZKT. is a creative platform for and by art students in Rotterdam.

We celebrate the start of this network in Rotterdam. You are invited for ZKT.#1 on Friday the 14th of February at 20:15. It will take place in Maaspodium: St. Jobsweg 3, Rotterdam, in the Lloydkwartier.

On this night we will meet each other, speeddate, share our projects and maybe make agreements to collaborate in the future. Help yourself to get a bigger network and become a member of our Facebook group. In this group you are able to post, read and answer requests of other students who are maybe looking for you. Also like our Facebook page to gain information about successful collaborations, results, exhibitions and performances.

We think it’s always nice to know who takes photos, acts, dances, sings, designs and makes music. You will only find out if you start searching at ZKT.

We hope to meet you there!”

“We think it’s always nice to know who takes photos, acts, dances, sings, designs and makes music.”



Design inspiration; Photobooth

For the design of the Photomatique we looked at existing 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 exist 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 appearance 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.

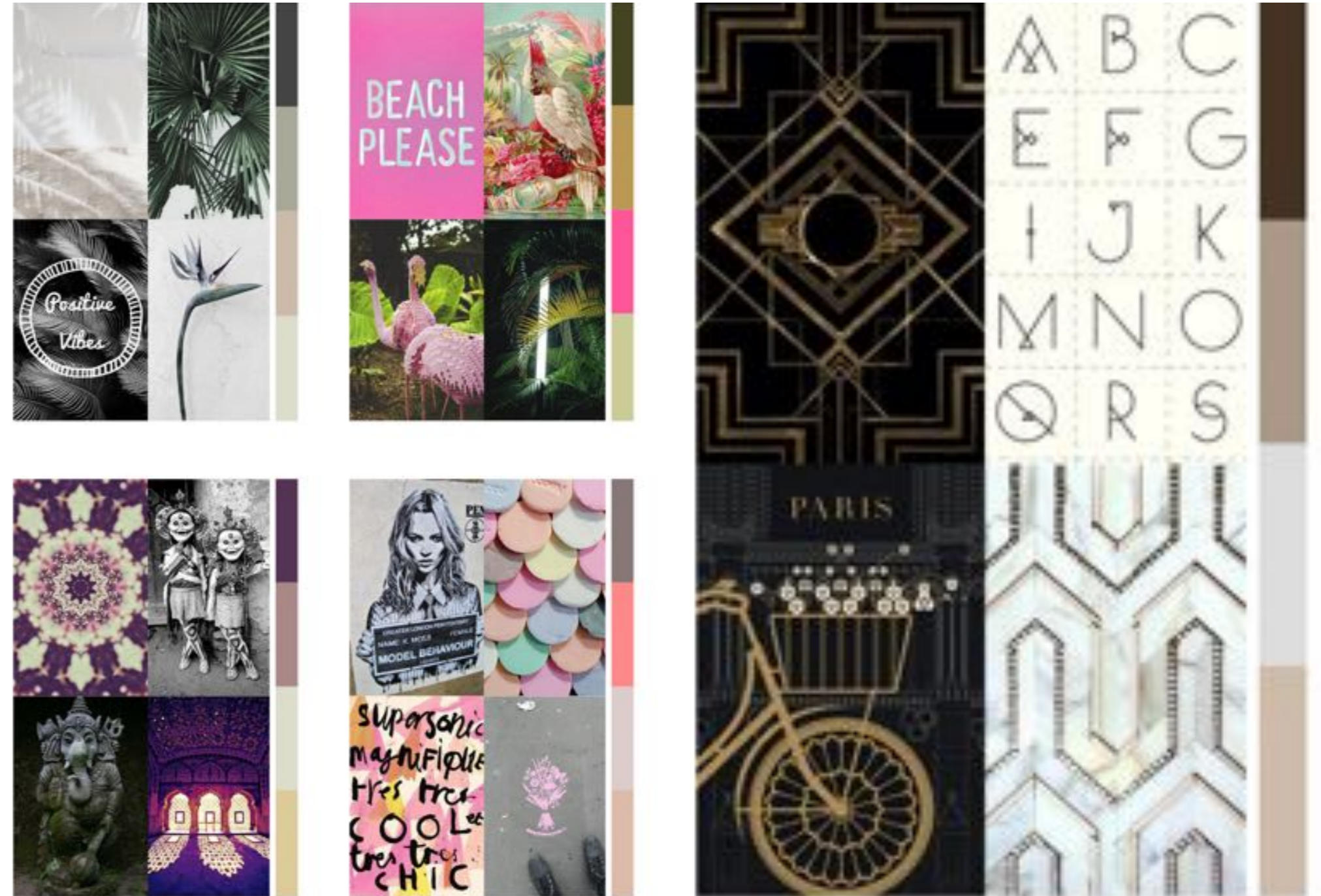
we want to create a simple but welcoming look, which gives



Style sketches - 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 than all the other photobooths. The look has to be fun, 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 interaction.



going back in time corresponds with the idea of an alternative way of interaction.

20s inspiration

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 great twenties it was!



Style sketches - Patterns

Photomatique is going to be a photobooth 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.

Eventually we chose for two patterns (pattern 1. and 2.) that we are going to use. The marble look gives a rich and luxurious feeling which fits the zeitgeist of the Roarin' Twenties.



Style sketches - Patterns



Design inspiration; Photowall

For the design of the photowall we were inspired by the Low Res Knitting workshop: Bringing a very complex combination of colours or shades to a very simple graphic, or maybe even just one colour.

“By having your photo taken in the photobooth, you are becoming part of an enormous piece of art”



Technical part

To make all of this possible we will be working with a photo unit connected to a raspberry pie. Coding will happen in bash and python, with the help of some amazing teachers at the academy.

Conclusions

The biggest difference between our first ideas and the actual outcome of these ideas has been the amount of photobooths. In the beginning it seems absolutely needed to use two photobooths, so the photos could be exchanged between the two different locations. However while developing ideas for the photobooth we came to the conclusion of a single machine . In one of our first ideas there would have been a direct contact between the people by swapping eachothers photos, this is nice of course, but with the single photobooth people might come in contact with the person on the photo you got, but also the person who got your photo, more interaction!

Reflection

Up until now it has been a bumpy road, facing many difficulties ranging from technical skills, material and the ability to work together as one team. Most certainly it has been an enormously valuable learning experience, filled with lots of interesting tools and tech, but most importantly: lots and lots of fun!

Appendix #1

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 accidentally 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

Appendix #2

Introduction

Hello, as it is courtesy of a conversation, I will start off by introducing myself. My name is Sean Nelissen and for the design of my one square kilometer I want to dive into one of my biggest fascinations; human interaction – the making of new connections and getting to know about others interest.

As you may or may not already know, recently the Willem de Kooning Academy has drastically changed it’s curriculum. The echo of which can still be seen in the architecture of the building itself. With the removal of its walls and the introduction of Stations, the school has been deconstructed to be reconstruct into a transparent learning environment, with the ideal of promoting: interaction among the students from the different courses. With this vision they want to realise their new mission of creating multiple disciplined pioneers. However, do you feel like you been talking to a lot more new people lately? Has the the removal of the walls and the addition of Station been enough to make our “social through our mobile phone” generation feel comfortable enough to risk an conversation with stranger? If you feel like me, this has not been the case. Which is a real same, because I’m sure you will agree with me that the full potential of the WDKA can only be reached by doing the most humane thing; talking.

Before we jump into the micro-organism of the Willem de Kooning Academy, let’s look a bit more into the importance of speaking.

WHY DO WE TALK

“For millions of years, mankind lived just like the animals. Then something happened which unleashed the power of our imagination. We learned to talk and we learned to listen. Speech has allowed the communication of ideas, enabling human beings to work together to build the impossible. Mankind’s greatest achievements have come about by talking, and its greatest failures by not talking. It doesn’t have to be like

this. Our greatest hopes could become reality in the future. With the technology at our disposal, the possibilities are unbounded. All we need to do is make sure we keep talking.”

Stephen Hawking

So what do you think of the quote? Nice right. This quote by Stephen Hawking is for me one of the clearest example of the importance of talking. Speech is one of the fundament parts of being a human and it feels so natural that at time we forgot how amazing it can be. Through conversations we’re able to learn about sociability and our solidarity. Helping us to become a better person, while learning about the thing others hold most dear to them; their beliefs and ideals.

Each person has witnessed so much by just living. Their stories, from which we can learn from. And especially if they are not a part of our social circle, their experience can differ beyond that which we could have even imagined. Strangers hold the keys to all kinds of knowledge that we want. They help us understand more about people and how we relate to each other, recalibrating our cultural misunderstandings. They have so much to offer us, but I’m sure I also don’t have to remind you of how uncomfortable it can be to start a conversation with a stranger. Which is a shame, because as the following experiment will show, doing so can even make us happier. I hope you don’t mind a long read, but trust me it worth the time.

WHY IS IT EASY FOR KIDS TO INTERACT?

ANTISOCIAL PARADOX

Nicholas Epley, a psychologist at the University of Chicago, noticed what he calls an “antisocial paradox” among his fellow commuters; “every morning they’d get on the train, the most social animals on the planet, and they’d ignore each other,” he says. “That’s the kind of observation that, at least for a psychologist, gets you pretty excited. Why on Earth do people do

that?” The reason Mr Epley come up with was: the first being that maybe we enjoy interacting with friends and family, but dealing with strangers is the worst. The other was that conversations with strangers actually are not that bad, but we mistakenly predict them to be. He and his student Juliana Schroeder set about to test these two hypotheses.

In the first of several experiments, commuters were approached before hopping on the Metra train toward Chicago. Some were instructed to have a conversation with whoever sat next to them, some were told to keep to themselves and enjoy their solitude, and others were told to do whatever they normally do. Afterwards, they mailed a surveys describing their experience; how much they enjoyed the ride and how productive they felt during it. Of the three groups, those in the conversation condition reported the most positive train ride, and those in the solitude condition reported the most negative. Among those who talked, the longer the conversation, the better the ride. So what can be conclude from this is that maybe people mis-predict what will make them happy — a common finding in psychology.

Epley and Schroeder ran a second experiment in which commuters were asked to imagine taking part in the first experiment. Sure enough, here the results flipped: participants predicted that talking to a stranger would make for the least positive experience, and also the least productive. A matching pair of experiments with bus riders found the same reversal between expectations and experience. We obviously have the wrong idea about either ourselves or other people. Why?

A follow up experiments can help explain. Train and bus riders were asked to imagine having a conversation with a stranger and to rate the conversation. In general, they expected it to be pretty pleasant. But when asked about the process of initiating a conversation, they rated the difficulty of breaking the ice at a four on a scale of zero to six, and they guessed that fewer than half of their targets would want to talk back. This runs counter to the evidence from the first experiments in the train, in which no one reported being ignore by the fellow stranger.

Thus, the thing which stops us from talking is our own ignorance:

everyone is willing to talk, but we thinks everyone else is unwilling. That means there could be a train full of people who want to strike up a conversation, but it remains silent nonetheless.

Where does this fear come from? Lizzie Post, of the Emily Post Institute, pondered. The answer she came to was our fear of insecurity of ‘Why would that person want to talk with me?’ Also, ‘we’re very afraid of feeling or making somebody else feel trapped,’ she hypothesises. ‘It’s like the stranger in the waiting room who tells you all about their problem. You feel like you can’t get away.’

The problem with the expectation that no one wants to talk is that it reinforces itself, preventing any action that would lead to disconfirming evidence. So Epley and Schroeder wondered if all it took was a bit of experience to correct our expectations. A research assistants approached traveler waiting for cabs at the airport. They asked riders to talk to the driver, avoid talking to the driver, or carry on as usual — or to imagine being asked to do those things. People who said they don’t normally talk to the driver, for the sake of clarity let’s name them ‘loners’, predicted that silence would be more pleasant than talking, and those who normally talk to the driver (‘talkers’) predicted that talking would be more pleasant than silence. Talkers were correct. Everyone, both talkers and loners enjoyed talking more than solitude. The loners mistakenly feared interaction not because of negative experience but because of inexperience. Hence, we feared our own fantasy.

Up until now, we have read that we fear a conversation with a stranger will go horrible, because we may not be interesting enough for the other, even though experience dictates. However, what about the souls who are being chatted to. How did they feel about being talked to? In a final experiment, pairs of subjects sat in a laboratory waiting room between tasks, with one having been instructed to talk or not talk to the other. Afterwards, they rated the experience. It turned out the joy of small talk was mutual.

From these experiments Epley stated that the start of a conversation with a stranger is; ‘like a speed bump at the top of a hill, but after that it is

smooth sailing. Our daily lives are guided by inferences about what others think, believe, feel and want'. The problem is, our inferences are often wrong. And it turns out we'd all be happier if we just talked to one another. The reason? When we talk to strangers, we're motivated to show them a happy, friendly version of ourselves. As the Art of Manliness; the way you act changes how you feel – fake till you make it. Next to this, speaking to people we do not know opens doors to different cultures and ideas we may otherwise have not even contemplated. So, all we need to do is keep talking and you just might be helping to make someone's day.

The WDKA itself

Now that we have a better understanding of interaction and how it can influence our daily life, our mood, our view on multiple cultures and can even grant us with knowledge that we weren't even aware we wanted to know. It is not hard to see how important elements like this can play in an institutions such as the Willem de Kooning Academy. Especially in the case of the sudden shift to the new curriculum, interaction can play a fundamental part of discovering the type of designer you want to become. But can this interaction be found in the school which has been deconstructed to be reconstruct into a transparent learning space. Have the hall ways been filled with echoes of more chatter? Or is the removal of these walls and the addition of station enough to cause interaction among the students?

In order to answer this beating questions , I will nest myself like a parasite in one of the 'Station' in the Willem de Kooning Academy. There I can note all the subtle and less than subtle movements, with the research method of: Ethogram, the catalogue or inventory of behaviours or actions.

It is of importance that you know my definition of 'human interaction' for this research: The moment we indulge in a conversation with another.

Place observation of interaction station text here.

Aldje van Meer is the one who has received the mammoth task of

managing the various Stations. In order to gain a better insight into the interworking, thought and future plans for the Stations, I sat and spoke with Aldje van Meer.

(s) What is the idea for the Stations?

(Aldje) The idea behind the stations is to create a open and transparent working space. A think tank. A place where you can meet people with the same interest, indulge into different media's and disciplines, which may not be touch upon in your mayor. And a place to discuss your own work with others. I know it isn't always easy to show your work to others, because it is something very personal for the maker. However, you can learn a lot from talking to other students, and we want to stimulate this with the openness of the Stations.

What can you tell me a bit more about the thought that went into the design of the Stations?

(Aldje) With the recent change from a class based curriculum structure, to a project based one – the spaces needed to change to reflect this. Instead of looking like a classroom, we wanted to make a space which can provide the students with a look into how a studio could look.

Something that is important to keep in mind – which I often feel the students forget or don't even know, is that the current lay-out of the Station or not yet finalised. It is just temporary. The idea that in the end each Station lay-out will give an insight into the media and technique that can be used and learned there. So for example: if you were to walk into the Interaction Station, displayed on the wall you will see a bunch of e-readers and tablets, with on each students work and important and interesting article already upload onto them. I don't know if it is really going be possible to realise this, but that is what we're striving to.

(S)I gather that it is important for the school to have interaction among students from the different disciplines. What design choice have been made in order to aid towards such interactions?

(Aldje) Yes, this is very important for us, because in the past we have seen how students can learn for each others interest. To promote this we have the Keuze modules [various curses each tackling a different subject outside of the mayors, from which a student can choice from to follow for a quarter]. Or the Open Aanbod [short curses tackling different media's or techniques]. These provide a place to get people together with the same problems and interesses. The Stations do the same. Creating a place to bring students facing the same problems or sharing the interest together, and maybe even creating communities.

(S) What is your opinion on the initiative of adding a huiskamer to the stations?

(Aldje) It's amazing. I'm really happy that the initiative came from students. It shows that they are also busy with thinking about that is missing in the school and they also want to make it their own place. We are currently busy designing all different types of furniture, that will match the needs for the individual Stations. Meaning: the table you might find in the Publication Station could be very different from the one you will find in the Drawing Station. These are actually being designed by Teachers and Students and will be developed at a local Rotterdam company. And we have even asked the makers of the Huiskamer to help us with brainstorming about the designs.

Do you feel this is happing more, that students are making the academy their own place?

(Aldje) I do, student don't always seem to see it happing, but I can differently see that they are making it their own building. Not always in a good: like drawing on the power-plugs. They do try to push how far they can get with it, but still I do think if we each can gain a feeling of responsibility towards the spaces, it can become something very positive. The school should feel like a home, but still promotion the working environment.

(?)Are you happy with the how the stations are being used. Is it how you envisioned it(?)

Conclusion

I am surprise to see that there is a lot of activity of human interaction taking place in the Stations. However, the conversation are mostly happening between classmates or teachers. During my time in the Stations I witnessed very few 'new' conversations. One the biggest problem for this seems to be what I am doing write now, sitting in a corner with my headphones on in the Interaction Station. Furthermore, it is clear that it is very easy for us to interaction with fellow students from our class, for we already know we share an interest with that person. And this is something I saw happing quite frequently.

The Practices do really work well as a platform to get students from different curriculums together. I was pleasantly surprised to discover this. When I formulated my concept, I expected to found very little interaction taking place between the multiple disciplines. But, yes of course there is a but – otherwise there really wouldn't be a need for me to continues, we only start following the Practices in the third year, when we are relatively quite formed designers.

During the time I entangled myself into micro-organism of the Interaction Station, I did witnessed three strangers talking to each other. The first of which being a girl who approach the lecture after his presentation. Second being two students that were complaining of the new structure of the school's curriculum. A girl joined into the conversation for she had enough to say on the subject. And finally the third being the who girl approach me for directions to a classroom.

This leads me to conclude that there is two forms of human interaction. One where there is a need for help or an object. Because of such a need it becomes second nature for us to talk to strangers. The strange and weird feeling we might have had before alleviates, and we start to interact

without even contemplating what we are about to do.

The second is when we share an interest. Because of this shared interest we do not fear the possibility of that the other would not be interested in talking to us. These often lead to the longest conversations.

It is starting to become clear to me that even though the Stations do make it easier for us to talk to each other by being so open, there is more incentive needed for us to over come the discomfort we face when contemplating about talking to others. Making me wonder is there some way to program an event or create a product to act as an ice-breaking. Something that will created an incentive for interaction?

CRITICAL PRODUCT

For this part of the book we will look into what solutions the creative people that patrol our planet, have come up with to over come the discomfort of speech to strange. What program an event or create a product all ready exist as an ice-breaking. And what is needed to taken into consideration to make them effective.

The Water Cooler

The Office Water Cooler is very notorious for being a social hub. A place to take a break, while grabbing a cup of water and talk about political, cultural, domestic, the weather, or even the weather with your collages. But how come does The Water Cooler work so well to create such a talkative area?

The answer lies more in the creation of a need and shared interest. The need being: creating an opportunity for a small break. And the interest being the location. Since the Water Cooler is placed in the office in which you work, you already know you have a connection with whom every may make use of the Water Cooler. Furthermore, it is less awkward to indulge in a conversation with the stranger, than wait around awkwardly till your cup is finished. Thus an opportunity is to start an interaction is created.

There have even been some reports that indicate workers come up with

better ideas when they are engaged in natural conversations, as oppose to say conducting a meeting to specifically talk about something. It has been referred to as the 'water cooler effect' people naturally begin to talk about work related things in a natural conversations and better ideas can actually blossom.

The Water Cooler is also very known for being a place to discus rumours. According to a survey done by The Creative Group, 80% office rumours take place in this very location. As a personal interest I'm rather interest why we feel this need to discuss. Psychologist Nicholas DiFonzo for which we seek. In The Watercooler Effect, DiFonzo explores the anatomy of rumors, and probes just what happens at the world's watercoolers. His conclusion for why we have a tendency to discus rumors: through the discussing of rumours, we forces a change in the conversation as we try to reconcile what we think we know with what we've now been told. Hence it is a way to share and recalibrate our own beliefs – a method of self discovery.

Dunne & Raby: EVIDENCE DOLLS, 2005

In 2005 Dunne & Raby, a design studio known for their critical product design. Dunne & Raby describe Evidence Dolls as being a: “ongoing investigation into how design can be used as a medium for public debate on the social, cultural and ethical impact of emerging technologies.” Thus, their aim was to use hypothetical products as a way of exploring how one group in society felt biotech might impact on their lives.

“We focussed on young single women and their love lives as this provided a number of interesting perspectives on genetics – designer babies, desirable genes, mating logic, DNA theft. It is not intended to be scientific, but more a way of unlocking their imaginations and generating stories that once made public, trigger thoughts and discussions in other people.”

The Evidence Dolls does not literally present itself as an item to start a conversation, but because of the sensitive topic it touches upon, it because

a medium to stimulate discussion and debate amongst designers, industry and the public about.

COCA-COLA FRIENDLY TWIST

Every one knows the awkward feeling we face on the first day of school. I'm sure you once in your life you must have witnessed: sitting around with no familiar face to be seen. Hoping some-one will just to come up and say hello. We are so quick to forget how perplexing the task of making new friends can be. To help students on their first of school along to make new connections, Coca-Cola Colombia and Leo Burnett came up with a unique way to break the ice. Their solution: The Coca-Cola “Friendly Twist” bottle, which first needs to be interlocked with another bottle in order to be able to open the drink. Meaning: it can only be opened with the help of another person. Because of this very low-key approach and creation of a need, interaction becomes very easy for the students to approach each other and start a conversation among each other.

Street Pong

StreetPong is a concept about playful urban interactions. The starting point was the problem of waiting for a long time at a pedestrian traffic lights. During the red phase of the traffic light, the touchscreen display switches to a game of pong and you can then compete against your opponent; anyone waiting on the opposite side of the street.

The game itself is based on the classic arcade game 'Pong' published in 1972. Due to its high popularity, this game is very well suited to be understood and played in a short period of time. Looking at each other across the street and engaging in a game creates contact. StreetPong provides a platform for communication and interaction among people of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

Molson Canadian Passports Opening Beer Fridge

Molson Canadian placed a beer fridge stocked with their beverage, in many different cities throughout Europe. The catch? it will only open once you it scans a Canadian passport. The fridge creates a “need” and as we see in the video; making it easy for people to start to shout out: “who is Canadian”. Once some one has opened the fridge, he is pretty much expected to share his findings with those who are standing around. The discourse of drinking a beer is already seen as a social event, when we are quicker inclined to start an interaction with each other.

Such a programmed event works really well for the following reasons: first of all we feel obliged to thank the who ever opens the fridge. He becomes the hero of the story. Secondly it is less awkward to start a conversation with a stranger, than to stand around quietly drinking a beer. However, of course the true intentions is to promote Molson Beer.

Conclusion

So what from these explain we can make a list of seven commandments the item needs to check off, in order to gain the desired effect of creating an interaction:

1. Hot triggers change people. Many people would argue that information matters most when designing for a behaviour change. However, a hot trigger is are the most powerful element in changing behaviour. It creates in connection and shows a shared interest, forming an opportunity to share our ideals and beliefs.
4. The object needs to create a need, give a reason why we should approach a stranger. Because of such a need it becomes second nature for us to talk to strangers. The strange and weird feeling we might have had before alleviates, and we start to interact without even contemplating what we are about to do.
3. The product should not ask to much from the user. It should always stay

long low-key, in order to make the user feel like he is not asking to much for the stranger.

5. We humans are lazy – this is the reason why many designs fail to achieve results. Simplicity matters more than motivation when it comes to influencing people. The product needs to be self explanatory and easy to use in a short amount of time

6. Just like telling some-one not to think of a pink elephant has the opposite affect, the product should not till the user to start an interaction. It should entice the need to start a conversation, by never showing its true colours.

7. It must be fun! The object should be so fun to use that you don’t even care or think about that you have to ask a stranger to help you.

WDKA STUDENT BUSY WITH INTERACTION

For my this research I have been speaking to a lot people about my interaction, to hear their opinion on the matter and by doing so I have discovered that I am not the only very interest of connection with strangers. For the next I will be looking into two project on the subject of Human Interaction, which have been initiated by students of the Willem de Kooning Academy.

Naomi Martopawiro Documentary

Naomi Martopawiro is a third year student from Audio Visual, who is currently indulging in a social experience to start a conversation with strangers, throughout the city of Amsterdam. With this she wants to not only question how we look for interaction with stranger in the safety of social networks – while such interaction remain a taboo in real life. But also show how positieve such interaction in the real world can be. The form she has chosen to present her research in will be a documentary.

(S) What is the inspiration that lead to you wanting to indulge in a conversation with strangers?

Naomi: When I’m traveling, I have the safety of my phone. But but it doesn’t last long until my phone has become boring. I’ve read all my Facebook messages and it is in these moments I feel like I want to talk to some-one, but I wouldn’t even know what to say or if they would want to talk to me. That is why I wanted to test this out. Also to see if I can do it.

(S)What was the inspiration that lead to the idea of the Documentary?

Naomi: The idea actually started from my own experience on an internet dating site. I had signed up to the site: Badoo, more as a joke. But this lead to me meeting my girlfriend. After this, my usage of social media’s grew rapidly and I ended up on the site Chatroulette. I found it fascinating that as soon as I was confronted with the image of the person I am talking to, it becomes a lot more awkward and “real” for me to talk to that person. I like how the lines of reality seem to get blurred in Social Media. I also find it weird how we are constantly looking for strangers to talk to, on sites and apps like: Facebook and Tinder, where we are more faceless, opposite to the really world, where it is a taboo.

Sean: The way we told: “don’t talk to strangers when we are young”.

Naomi: Exactly

(S) Do you find it easy to speak to strangers.

Naomi: No!, In school I find it easier to do so, yes. But on the streets I’m more in my own world. I often do feel I would like to talk to a strangers, but I don’t feel like it is even possible. And otherwise I wouldn’t even know what to say. But I’m going to watch youtube video for tips and otherwise I will find out how I can best approach strangers by just doing it.

(S) Don’t you think that people are not speaking to strangers, for example in the Academy?

Naomi: No, I don’t see it happing. There are always group formed. You do speak to people from different course, but what I notice is that you often already know these people – they’re not stranger.

(S) Why did you chose the format of a documentary?

Naomi: Because the assignment was a documentary. [Naomi states with a joking smile on her face]. To me a documentary can be something very close and personal, but at the same time it can also speak to a lot of people. For the introduction, I want to have footage of people in various place that are not interaction – busy on their phone or just staring straight ahead. To show people that we are all do this.

(S) What are you expecting to happen when you approach these strangers?

Naomi: I hoping to get a positive reaction. It is weird to say, but I notice after I have spoken to a stranger, I have this kind of happy feeling. I hoping that people will see that even though it is hard to approach a stranger; it can be something very positive.

(S) What are you hoping to achievement with the documentary?

Naomi: I want to gain a better understanding of why we talk to each other and break the taboo we have towards talking to strangers. To make people understand that: to make the world a better place, starts with yourself.

The Photomatique: Roza Schous and Jessica de Troije

For their practice; Digital Craft, students Roza Schous from Photography and Jessica de Troije (Product Design), have been busy with developing a Photo Booth. And although at first it may seem like your typical Photo Booth; straight out of the roaring 20th, with its curtain door and cramp but atmospheric room. Once your vision re-adjust from the white blinding flash, you will find that this Photo Booth is unlike the ones we’ve seen in the plentiful romantic movies. Instead of spitting out a photo of yourself, from this Photomatique you will receive a photo of a stranger who visited the booth before you. By programming the booth to do so, they hope to create a ice-breaker, where the people visiting it, have to interact with one another in order to retrieve their photo. To found out more about the project , I sat down and spoke with Roza Schous.

(S)So, What is the inspiration that lead to the concept of an interaction starting Photo Booth?

(Roza) From me it has never been hard to start a conversation with a stranger. It’s something I always enjoyed doing, making new connection and getting to know about their interest, instead of just having boring conversation about the weather or political bullshit. But, it isn’t so easy for others to speak to strangers. That is how we came to the idea of an ice-breaking; a programmed event of chance, that creates reason for people to interact with one other. With the project we don’t want to push people to do so, if they don’t to do it fine! But we want to make it a bit easier for the ones who want to meet new people.

(S) And do you think that a photo of a stranger is enough to get people to interact?

(Roza) We hoping to find that out through this project. The Photo Booth is in a sense a “designed research”. A practical research to see how people will react to the programmed event. Is it enough to work as an ice-breaker? So, for us it’s actually an experiment. One thing we have noticed is that it isn’t easy to start a conversation, but once you realise that you both share an interest, it’s pretty easy to keep it rolling. We just need something to

connect us.

(S) What result do you hope these small interaction will have?

(Roza) That when people see each other again in the Academy, they will say hello to each other. It doesn't have to be more than, but that the school becomes more social – a community, were we aren't just strangers.

(S) Don't you think then that such "small interactions" are talking place in the Academy?

(Roza) I do think so. Especially when the first years switching their mayor for a quarter, and the third year Practices. I thinks these really help to meet new people. But for example: I'm in a practice with only fifteen other students and I know them all already. And now? I want to meet more people and I think it can be done bigger, easier and more fun.

(S) Can you say something about the Photo Booth?

(Roza) The Photo Booth has the aesthetics of the roaring 20th. The periode before the big technological boost. Before we communicated through social media and we went to parties to meet new people. The photo booth is something mysterious and through it we are trying bring people back to that friendly time.

(S) Where can we see the Photo Booth?

(Roza) The PHOTOMATIQUE will be placed at the next "open dag". hopefully helping to create familiar faces before the students even start at the academy.

Conclusion

During this rollar coster, we have discovered the importance that the interaction plays in our daily life. How it can help you to become a better person. Next to this we have seen how although the school does have many

element which help to human interaction in the school, more emphasis could be placed on this.

I want to use my findings to translate them into a product which will function as an ice-breaker; making it easier for students to start an interaction with fellow stranger. The idea is to implement the product on the first day of school, in the hope to turn the school into a social environment; a community.

Why should we interact with others

- What do we get out of leaving our comfort zone
- Do we still interact with each other (train station and publication station)
- Why do some people interact while others chose to rather not to (Interview Jim vs Rianne)
- Can we cause interaction? Can we make it easier for other to interact
- How other react to being approach

Coke tested the bottles – fitted with specially designed, interlocking caps that can only be twisted open by a matching top – earlier this year on the first day of classes at a university in Colombia. After reaching into a cooler and pulling out what appeared to be a regular bottle of Coca-Cola, the students realised they needed to first interlock the bottle with another in order to be able to drink the beverage.