

Design Portfolio

2012

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Bio

My name is Amelia Black.

I am a design researcher and user experience expert interested in helping people and organizations to do better through design. I am passionate about information and am always looking to design new platforms for engagement around ideas and thinking.

For over eight years, I have been working across a broad range of design disciplines, producing award winning strategies and concepts in the form of publications, products and brand strategies as well as exhibition and interactive work. Currently my practice is based in New York, NY where I work hands-on with cultural clients and design firms to research and develop communication tools that make experiential complex sets of ideas and information. I have done this as the director of publications at the Environmental Health Clinic (xDesign), an incubator for design strategies run by Natalie Jeremijenko at NYU. Prior to which, I served as the assistant curator at ARUP's Phase2 Gallery in London where I oversaw collaborations between artist, engineers and architects that helped to make tangible the complex ideas shaping the man-made world. I have my masters in Design Criticism from the School of Visual Arts in New York, and received my bachelors in Architecture and Designed Objects from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Amelia Black

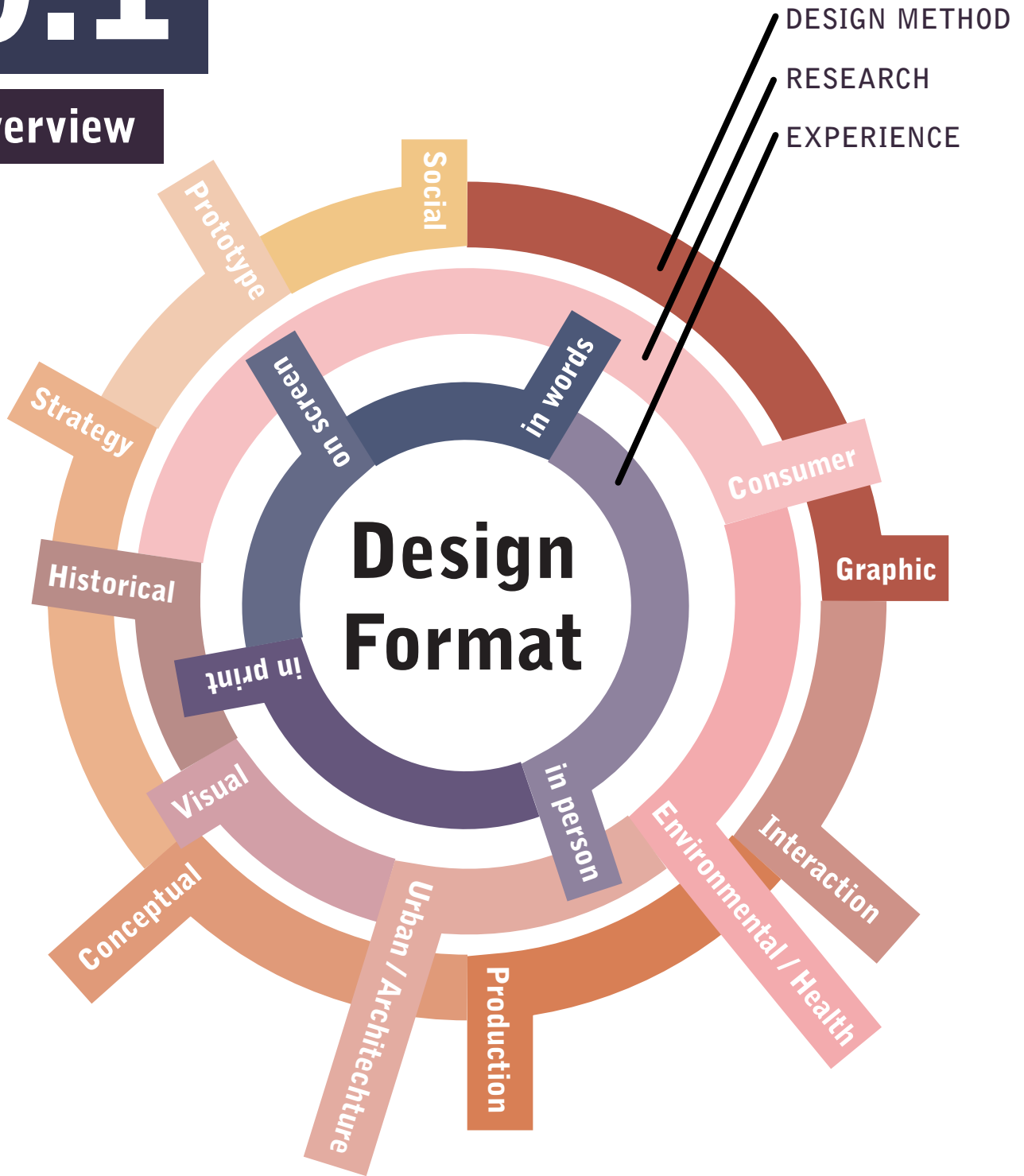
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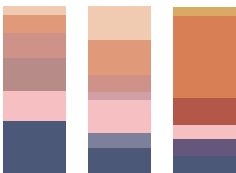
Overview



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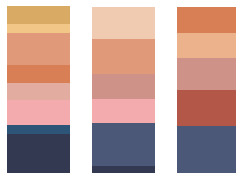
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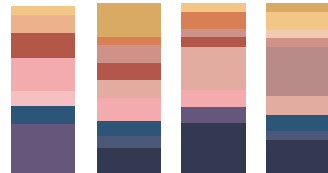


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0.2

Research as a Design Process

Design is a practice that embraces the complexity of problems and aims to provide solutions that can be measured in outcomes. Design research, however, reframes complex problems by developing stories and strategies that uncover existing frameworks. Including a research phase in the design process ensures that the resulting solutions are reflexive and insightful. Design research does not simply provide a patch to symptoms, but systematically identifies and responds to the core issue.

As someone with knowledge of object design as well as interaction, communication, and environmental design, I approach design research from a multidisciplinary perspective. I love my job most when I work in collaboration to build tools and realize prototypes that are meaningful in and to the real world. I think of this diverse approach as a form of experience design, one that considers in the round the complex drivers that shape the world of the man-made.

Design done well is, by its nature, a socially just practice with the potential to affect lives and support wellbeing. But not everything is or needs design. My role as researcher and strategist demands an ability to tap into an understanding of marketing and consumer psychology as well as cultural and environmental awareness that exists outside of design, in order to create more effective products that are accessible to a larger community. This is in itself an opportunity to see our community (professional and public) as co-collaborators in the design process. Research done well gives us the ability to see users as fellow designers, collaborating in an effort to find solutions that will be valuable and lasting, together.



Practice

Experiential Research, Sensory Design, Communication Design, Interaction Design, Object Design, Environmental and Service Design, Co-Creational Exploration.

Techniques

Collaborative Design Workshops; Analysis of Existing Research & Understanding; Fieldwork/Data-Collection, User Experience Mapping, Interviews, Observation, Personal Inventories; Character Profiles, Affinity Diagramming, Framework Analysis, Prototyping, Community Feedback & Testing.

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Design & Display

1.1

Civic Action

Project Overview

Working with the artist, George Trakas and Rice+Lipke Architects, I conducted a historical analysis of the Queens shoreline from 1600-1980, looking at the various factors that effected change along the edge of Long Island City/ Astoria and the communities that made their home there. My research utilized several methodologies including film fieldwork, interviews, cartographic explorations and archival investigation, the outcome of which was the production of a series of graphics and essays to tell chronological narratives that were linked directly to existing structures still visible in the neighborhood. Now, in response to the feedback I received from my conversations with local groups and individuals, I am currently leading the development of a digital platform for continued civic engagement called the *Living Archive*. Using mapping technologies and behavioral prompts to conduct an informal study of community opinion, the *Living Archive* seeks to give a voice to the community and in turn manifest results by getting their opinions heard by local law makers.

The outcome of this project will be on view at The Noguchi Museum through April 22, 2012. Further realized components will be exhibited at Socrates Sculpture Park beginning in May 2012. An catalogue and community platform are to launch in the later half of 2012.



My Role

Client: Noguchi Museum

Location: New York City

Date: 20011-2012

Title: Researcher / Scribe

Skills:

- historical site analysis
- public speaking & workshops
- content direction & writing

Client

Home to The Noguchi Museum and Socrates Sculpture Park, the Queens community where northern Long Island City and Astoria converge is a textured, mixed industrial and residential community. In response to new development, re-zoning, and an increasing residential population, The Noguchi Museum and Socrates Sculpture Park have developed a collaborative initiative, *Civic Action: A Vision for Long Island City*. Four artists -- Natalie Jeremijenko, Mary Miss, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and George Trakas -- known for their work in the public sphere were invited to form individual teams featuring architects, researchers and writers to consider the neighborhood defined, in part, by both Noguchi and di Suvero.

1.2

China in Motion!

Project Overview

Arup's involvement in the 2008 Beijing Olympics included seven buildings, 3 urban planning projects and numerous design challenges. To reflect this work, our team commissioned ten special projects and collaborations between designers and artists to explore the human impact of this massive architectural undertaking. The result was the exhibition *China in Motion!* on view at Phase2 Gallery at the London headquarters from 7 July - 2 October, 2008.

I was responsible for the production and creative direction of a number of exhibition strategies we used to illustrate this story in the gallery environment. These projects included: the developing a film documenting the journey of a Chinese beekeeper; a book of portraits of Chinese construction workers; an interactive map display of the migration of Chinese employees; and a series of rapid prototyped city blocks in China using Z-Corp Color 3D printing technology to demonstrate the human impact on the architecture itself that utilized the capabilities Arup's *RealTime* software to map the noise, light and temperature dimensionally onto the proposed development area.



My Role

Client: Arup Associates

Location: London

Date: 2008

Title: Assistant Curator

Skills:

- project management
- creative direction
- interaction design
- information architecture
- design production

Client

Arup is one of the largest global architectural engineering firms whose job entails everything between the architect's cocktail napkin sketch and the finished artifact. Within the company exist a wide and inspiring breath of material scientist, computer engineers, audio experts on top of the architects, mechanical engineers that one might expect. To highlight this capacity for creative practice they have established a public facing series of events, exhibitions and collaborations to show the world what architectural engineering is and what is possible.

1.3

Amphibious Architecture

Project Overview

Commissioned by the Architecture League of New York for Mark Shepard's exhibition, *Toward a Sentient City*. xDesign collaborated with the architecture lab, *The Living*, to conceive of and realize the Amphibious Architecture in situ project over the summer of 2009. A fish-human interface installed along the shorelines of the East River and Bronx River, the project consisted of two networked arrays of sixteen led and sensor-enabled buoys. It monitored water quality and fish presence below the surface, and translated this information into colored light above the water. Visitors to the sites could sms text the array and receive tongue-in-cheek responses from the fish.

As the publications director it was my job to oversee the public elements of the project: exhibition, website, digital sms platform. I worked with biologists and computer engineers to build different ways to experience the project off site. In the gallery, I led the research and development of a wall graphic to explain the local aquatic ecosystem. The installation also included an interactive data feed that illustrated information about fish presence and water quality. In concert with the exhibition a bike tour program helped to bolster waterfront awareness among local riders.



My Role

Client: xDesign
Location: New York City
Date: 2009
Title: Publication Director
Skills:

- exhibitions design
- book proposals
- web and phone apps
- creative content development
- art direction

Client

The Environmental Health Clinic (xDesign) at NYU is the brainchild of the artist and scientist, Natalie Jeremijenko to facilitate public interactions, exhibitions and publication around her conceptual projects. While working as her publications director of the fast-paced, education aimed studio practice; I oversaw the production of content by her creative entourage of graduate students and PhD candidates. My main focus was the development a variety of physical and digital platforms each aimed at making the complex ecological science of her work more approachable to a wider audience using playful and experiential strategies for participation

A group of people are gathered around a table in a meeting room. The room has yellow cabinets, a sink, and a clock on the wall. A woman with glasses and a headband is looking towards the camera. There are papers and a red cup on the table. The text "Media Strategy" is overlaid in large white font.

Media Strategy

2.1

Teaching Nutrition Education

Project Overview

CookShop is the nutrition education program at the Food Bank For New York City. Reaching over 30,00 New Yorkers to provide access to the skills and knowledge to help them to eat a nutritionally balanced diet on a limited budget. The CookShop program includes in-school curriculum, an after-school program, a families program, a community education program and a teen advocacy program around food access and media literacy called Eatwise (Educated and Aware Teens Who Inspire Smart Eating).

Working with the education team as a strategist and graphic designer, I helped to develop, design and produce the in-school, after-school, and families print curriculum and educational collateral for the 2011-12 school year. We were also responsible for the training of over 3,000 public school teachers and volunteers who run the program at the various sites. As my relationship with the educational team grew, I was hired to develop and run a new multimedia curriculum for the Eatwise program that provided the teens with the skills and experience to develop their own digital food advocacy campaign which they then launched in their own schools.



My Role

Client: Food Bank For New York

Location: New York City

Date: 2010-2011

Title: Communication Strategist & Designer

Skills:

- curriculum design & production
- digital strategist for educational tools
- nutrition ed.v training
- multimedia educator

Client

One of the nation's largest food banks, the Food Bank for New York City's goes beyond simply supplying access to food, but also provides nutrition advocacy, information and outreach to further its mission of ending hunger in NYC. By providing poverty assistance, the Food Bank takes a three-pronged approach to hunger through: food distribution, income support and nutrition education. CookShop, the nutrition education program, is a series hands-on workshop that is taught in food pantries, community kitchens and public schools in all five boroughs. It centers around a curriculum that fosters enthusiasm for fresh, affordable fruits & vegetables in children, parents and communities at large.

2.2

Digital Branding Pathways

Project Overview

Hillside is a family run school that has been especially successful in helping kids thrive in a highly individualized Waldorf-like environment, especially those students who might otherwise not succeed in traditional settings. The community has recently hit upon hard financial times and in an effort reach their desired numbers of incoming student has decided to explore social media as a means of expanding their outreach. With an incredibly small and techno-phobic staff, the project was as much about finding solutions that integrated smoothly into their existing structure as it was about highlighting the opportunities possible with the use of these new digital tools.

I worked with their community director to design a user-friendly digital platform for both perspective students and the school's existing community of teachers and families. This included an updated graphic identity, digital brand guidelines for unifying their collateral, two Wordpress based sites that integrated social media rich applications with necessary security features without becoming difficult for their staff to maintain, a html newsletter to replace their outdated word attachments and a series of templates for future outreach.



My Role

Client: Hillside Student

Community School

Location: Seattle

Date: 2011

Title: Branding Strategist & Web Designer

Skills:

- html coding
- wordpress customization
- graphic design
- digital & branding strategy

Client

Hillside Student Community School is a small, Waldorf-esque private school located in a remote woodland area just outside of Seattle, WA. Since 1969 Hillside has been providing their student from grades 5-12 with a highly creative and individualized education that combines the arts and sciences in an effort to inspire students who might not otherwise thrive in traditional settings. As a family run school, the branding identity and outreach had not evolved much beyond word of mouth and as a result Hillside was running into growth issues.

Platform Creation



3.1

Smell Glossary

Project Overview

As a tool for exploring the tangible role of smells in our day-to-day life, The Smell Glossary is an smartphone application designed to help users to capture, collect and explore olfactory moments in their lives using mobile technology and an olfactory nomenclature.

A platform for self-guided exploration, this app makes tangible the role of smell as a communicative tool in the man-made world. The Smell Glossary opens up a larger dialogue around sharing smell experiences through the use of language, images, and geographic locations to create a growing database that will help consumers and designers to be explicit in their engagement with the olfactory. This app acts as a kind of thesaurus or glossary to aid in the discovery of right word to tag an experience, enabled with a database designed to find patterns and suggested terms to narrow down on the right descriptor for the user's entry.

The Smell Glossary aims to help users re-engage their own olfactory vocabulary helping them to become more conscious consumers of the scent in their environment.

The Smell Glossary is a practical application of research completed as a part of my graduate thesis, *Design Smells: Olfactory Rhetoric in Design Experience*, which was an in-depth analysis of the role smell plays as an overlooked tool in the meaningful communication of design.



My Role

Location: New York

Date: 2010

Skills:

- research & synthesis
- GUI design
- wire framing
- geo-tagging
- hand coding
- Headspace Symposium

Client

D-Crit is a two-year graduate program developed around the practice of critical thinking in design as a tool for storytelling and meaning making for the uninitiated design audience. The MFA in Design Criticism—the first of its kind in the United States—is a terminal degree that seeks to cultivate design criticism as a discipline and contribute to public discourse with new writing and thinking that is imaginative, historically informed and socially accountable. The course of study couples a theoretical framework with significant opportunities for practical experience.

3.2

Pollution Tourism

Project Overview

New York's pollution (air, earth, water and waste) and its corporeal experience is an essential element of living in the city; we fight it, we create it, and we have resolved ourselves to live in its debris. We've transposed grit for a more romantic take: the incandescence of light pollution on a foggy night, the Hollywood-ized glimmer of oil slicked streets, and the A/C units that pickle the surface of buildings. *Pollution Tourism* imagines creating an economy around introducing tourists to the pollution experience in NYC. *Pollution Tourism* is a project, a brand, a cultural program (tours, events, kiosks, etc.) and a series of souvenirs that are limited in edition only in as much as pollution is limited in addition (maybe they could be marked with the pollution figures on the day they are produced instead of edition numbers?) that in some way collect or are made from the city's waste.

Commissioned as a curator for the ExpoTENial project, I conceived on *Pollution Tourism* lab as a opportunity to collaborate with fellow designers and film makers and also as a means to engage with people in a useful dialogue around sustainability.



My Role

Client: ExpoTENial

Location: New York City

Date: 2010

Title: Curator

Skills:

- writing/editing
- public speaking
- team development and management
- product production
- creative direction

Client

ExpoTENial is a multi-dimensional festival curated by Laetitia Wolff that seeks to foster New York design community's engagement with the city by investigating ideas for a slower, smarter, livelier, healthier urban experience. The labs focus on a selection of complex, pressing and sustainability-related challenges (food systems, climate change, transportation, energy efficiency, recycling, information overload, etc), using the city as a context for design and design as a specific point of view.

The project is currently stalled due funding issues.

3.3

Drivers of Change

Project Overview

First printed in 2006, but with yearly editions since, the *Drivers of Change* cards are a series of publications that deal with key issues affecting the future of the built environment. The intention is for these cards to act as a trigger for discussion, further research and reflection about our future. Each set of cards is arranged and presented within societal, technological, economic, environmental and political domains that together are known as the STEEP framework.

Each card depicts a single driver. A factoid and rhetorical question are on one face, backed up by a brief indication of the breadth and depth of the content on the other face. The publication serves not only as a vibrant visual record of research, but also as a tool for discussion groups, personal prompts, for workshop events and asks the question: "What will the world be like in 2050?"

Contracted to help the Foresight team on the 2008 edition of the *Drivers of Change* cards, I researched and designed the categories of poverty, waste and demographics.

Later I assist the head of public exhibitions at Arup, Jennifer Greitschus, to evolve the *Drivers of Change* project into a full-scale exhibition and launch the Phase2 gallery space at London's Arup headquarters.



My Role

Client: Arup Associates

Location: London

Date: 2007-2008

Title: Assistant Curator

Skills:

- research
- exhibition design
- graphic design
- database development
- project management

Client

Drivers of Change is an initiative from the Foresight and Innovation team at Arup that identifies and monitors the trends and issues likely to have a significant impact upon the built environment and society at large.

The Phase2 Gallery is an exhibition space that curates collaborations between Arup's many experts and outside artists.



User Research

4.1

Evolving the Dealership Experience

Project Overview

Automotive consumers today know far more about the cars they wish to drive before they show up on the lot than ever before. Using online review sites, searchable databases, and manufacturer websites - today's car buyer arrives educated and yet the dealership experience itself has yet to evolve beyond the old paradigm. IDEO was asked to re-think the user experience and the role that location-based services could play for the future of dealerships for the re-launch of a major car manufacturers American heritage brand.

I was contracted to develop original design research to inspired the design team around five core design principles. I presented my findings in a series of print posters that illustrated the brand landscape around the themes of: American luxury, lean service design, digital keys, sensory user experience, toolkits and membership rewards. Although my efforts were only ever meant to serve as an inhouse tool, the project's leads were so excited by the work that they chose to share it with the client, which ultimately lead to a shift in the overall direction of the work.



My Role

Client: IDEO

Location: New York City

Date: 2011

Title: Design Researcher

Skills:

- brand landscape analysis
- service design survey
- prototyped and tested service design tools

Client

A major North American automotive manufacturer worked with IDEO NY to re-think the dealership experience and develop a service design model for the re-launch of their heritage American brand as a luxury product.

4.2

Rebuilding a Consumer Relationship

Project Overview

As often happens with many brands, the consumer that the design team wishes they could market to is not actually the person who consumes their product. In this project IDEO worked with a classic American men's outerwear brand to discover and reintroduce them to their real consumers. In reframing these personas we were able to build empathy and open up new opportunities for growth within the brand.

I was contracted to design and produce the final project deliverable, from collecting and managing a prop library to leading location based and studio photo shoots and designing the layout of the final book. This design challenge called on almost every area of my design production expertise (photography, visual storytelling, photo retouching, layout, print graphics, physical assemblage.) It was a fun opportunity to apply my perspective, wide array of talents and work with a strong team to reframe the creative direction of a popular brand.



My Role

Client: IDEO

Location: New York

Date: 2011

Title: Production Designer

Skills:

- prop styling
- art direction
- design & production

Client

An almost 30 year old, global lifestyle brand of classic American men's outerwear suited to an adventurous lifestyle. This brand has evolved to include a collection of apparel and accessories for men, women and children and is available in more than 64 countries with over 170 branded stories worldwide. IDEO was hired to help its new creative director rebuild the brand's relationship between the creative design team and their core American consumer.

4.3

Futures in Personal Hygiene

Project Overview

Streng worked with a major manufacturer of consumer goods to develop a new line of products for one of its existing laundry care brands. Working with the brand's marketing team, we conducted consumer research and user testing that highlighted three areas ripe for brand evolution. Our team then designed and tested a series of concepts before reverse-engineering them into a market-ready line of products.

As a designer, I was specifically interested in understanding the specifications of the user's physical and emotional relationship to the act of doing laundry. In understanding the controlling factors that determined the 'how', 'when' or even 'why not' for washing clothing, I was able to isolate the exterior social pressures that played a role in the laundry experience. We then design a series of portable/pre-wash and pre-measured laundry products that responded to the targeted needs of different user groups and their corresponding predictors. Both my first real taste of design research in the field and having my designs realized on a large scale, it was a great opportunity to explore user-centered design.



My Role

Client: Streng Design

Location: Chicago

Date: 2007

Title: Industrial Designer

Skills:

- user research & market testing
- concept generation
- graphic design & prototype rendering

A Fortune 500 multinational manufacturer of consumer goods including laundry, personal care, baby, health care brands. It remains one of the most successful manufacturers globally.

4.4

Haptic Futures in Home Appliances

Project Overview

At a time when screen-based interaction design was just coming to home appliances, Steng was asked to develop an innovation roadmap for a leading producer of North American home appliances that would help them to design future concepts for appliance-based interaction and uncover potential user interfaces.

As a member of the design team, I conducted fieldwork to observe the way people use appliances in their homes and how users learn to navigate them in a store setting. An insight that came from this exploration is that haptic feedback, as a navigational shorthand that was in many cases related to the age of the machine and not a design feature, played an extensive role in driving interaction and would often over-rule any visual indicators.

Inspired by the older machine we were seeing in user's homes, I conducted an graphic analysis of futuristic interfaces from popular culture from the late 1950s to present, and isolated a design vocabulary of 'future-kitsch' that could be used in the development of future interfaces. This was an especially fun stage of the research for me as I got a chance to not only observe but interpret the rich network imagery that consumers bring to screen-based interactions.



My Role

Client: Steng Design LLC

Location: Chicago

Date: 2006-7

Title: Industrial Designer

Skills:

- user research & testing
- design research
- concept generation
- graphic design
- full-scale prototype

Client

A leading producer of major home appliances in North and Latin America with a significant presence in markets throughout Europe and India. Steng specifically worked with their in-house design innovation studio in Michigan to consider future concepts that would inspire the design of home appliances. Many of these products are on the market today.