

Bringing Design to Software, ch4

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About the Authors



Shelley Evenson & John Rheinfrank

Fitch, Doblin, Scion
Founded seeSpace
Began Interactions magazine

Focused on understanding the human experience of design

Essentially began the field of "interaction design" as we (here at SCAD) know and define it

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Design Language

"Visual and functional language of communication with the people who use an artifact" (64)

- The basis for how we generate and interpret things in the world.
- Present everywhere in our constructed environment.
- A means of communication.

**We do not just use our language:
We live with it.**

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Design Language



How do you describe this "design language"?

Why do you describe this 'design language'?

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Design Language and Unfolding Meaning

Designers build meaning into objects



Objects express themselves to people



People learn to understand and use objects



Objects become assimilated into people's experiences

"Doing design requires more than making meaningful objects; it requires crafting whatever it is about objects that lets them participate in the creation of meaningful experiences."

According to this view of meaning, the sense of an object cannot be separated from the experience that the object simultaneously sits in and helps to create" (69).

What does this mean?

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Elements of Design Language

- Collections of elements.
- Sets of organizing principles.
- Collections of qualifying situations.

Design languages evolve gradually:



What are the positive and negative tradeoffs of this gradual evolution?

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Benefits of Explicit Design Language

Transparent-box design vs. black-box design

"In a black box, all functionality is opaque, or hidden from view, and people accomplish their goals by pushing buttons that signify nothing whatsoever about the inner workings of the object ... the technology is made foolproof ... from one perspective, they de-skill users and lead to impoverished communities of practice" (71)

What are the tradeoffs of transparent vs. black box design?

How does this relate to "affordances", as discussed by Don Norman?

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Development of a Design Language

1. Characterization
2. Reregistration
3. Development and demonstration
4. Evaluation
5. Evolution

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Development of a Design Language

Characterization.

"Process of describing the existing underlying assumptions and precedent-setting design languages" (74)

assumptions established =>
assumptions challenge =>
assumptions recast

Why is it important to challenge assumptions?

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Development of a Design Language

Reregistration.

"creation of a new assumption set and design framework" (76)

Contextual research, ethnography
Acting out the idealized situations of use

"results are best when customers, users, engineers, salespeople, and executives can all participate in this .. Process" (77)

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Development of a Design Language

Development and demonstration.

"At the same time that the language elements are being developed, they are being demonstrated, in scenarios sketches, or prototypes" (77)

Why is this important?

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Development of a Design Language

Evaluation and evolution

Understanding what aspects of design fall short, and reflecting on where design languages accurately support the process

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Putting it all together

Why are we reading this article in this class, Interactive Product Design?

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