

Project Proposal

VA401

Gülce Baycık

Project Name

Social Educator

Project Definition

An interactive installation, criticizing the way a society builds an individual's character and morality.

Objectives & Goals

My first goal is to create an entertaining simulation for the public. Secondly to make this installation work as a self-critic machine (The participants will be forced to make decisions in a common area where anyone can see their responses). And also to see how society's norms and ethics shape the behaviour of an individual.

My objective is to execute the project with various social groups and classes, and then compare and contrast their results to see how their cultures and backgrounds affect the end results.

Target Audience/User

This project is meant for medium class people, with at least an average amount of education, and able to make some pop-culture references.

Background Information

I'm very passionate about character design and illustrations. I wanted to create a project that will include a flash animation with a character I created, and also enable people to interact to the story and be a part of it. I thought it would be interesting to see how people would generate the character's individuality collaboratively; and how the outcome would change each time with different groups.

With this project,

1. In the short-run we will be able to see the attributes of the society we live in, that being the behaviors or actions the majority believe within our society to be acceptable and vice versa.
2. In the long run, if the project could take place in different cultures, social groups or social classes, we will be able to compare the datas that are collected and analyze the similarities and differences of their own understanding of norms and morality.

My biggest challenge is that without acquirin information about a large range of groups, the outcome would not be totally satisfying. But nevertheless we will be able to see how our region's norms are structured, having the fact that there are a lot of mixed classes, groups and cultures live here.

My other challenges lie within the technical side. I will have to learn how to work with an accelerometer, and I will have to master flash for the animation. I will also have to learn coding to be able to get feedbacks from people, which is vital for my character's behavioral growth and for me to make a chart of the outcomes. Last but not least, I will have to learn how to make a sculpture out of a mold.

Working on this project I will learn the basic mechanism of a sensor, which will enable me to do more projects on my own with different kinds of sensors. Also having the experience of doing a comprehensive animation, and learning of the necessary techniques to do one, I am going to be more sufficient in the area that I want to work on in the future. Learning to make a sculpture will supplement to my previous statement too.

Detailed Project Description

The project will consist of a screen on the wall playing the animation of the character that I've designed, and the character's sculpture in front of the screen. The material for the sculpture will be something that will work with a touchscreen. There will be an accelerometer inside the sculpture and touchscreen on the outside to sense if the participant is scolding or appreciating the action of the character.

The animation is about a character who has just landed on earth and doesn't know how to act in a social structure. I've chosen my character to be a robot for a couple of reasons. Firstly, when executed to a wide range of cultures and groups, everyone will recognize the character easily, and therefore won't be influenced of any social or cultural aspects the character may have had otherwise. Secondly a robot is designed to perform tasks mechanically, in a human way. This way, it will create some sense of empathy in people. And lastly, a robot wakes no emotions in people, such as love or hate; it is just neutral.

We will see the robot in a regular environment on the street, doing everyday activities. Some of its actions will be considered as "appropriate", some of them will be considered as "inappropriate" and some will be ethical dilemmas. But these ethical dilemmas will be the ones that are most likely occur in a regular day. An example would be: While walking you notice a man drop 50ytl on the floor. In the first scenario our character takes it and walks away, in the second one he runs after the guy and gives the money back to him. The decision will rest in the viewer's hands.

If you consider the action of the character is wrong, you will simply punish it by hitting him. If it's O.K you will praise him by petting him. But there is a catch, if you don't notice an action that has a pre-defined value, the program will accept it as if you gave it a positive response. For example if the character burps after drinking something and you simply don't give any reaction to it, the program will take it as a positive feedback. I'm going to write a program for the project that will collect the count of negative and positive responses for each action. Every action will have it's own scale for negative and positive feedbacks. If an action has more positive responses than negative, the character will do that action more. If negative responses are greater for the action, the character will do that less. When the negative scale hits zero, character will completely stop doing the action.

Required Know-How and Resources

I need to master Adobe Flash CS5 and I need to learn how to write codes for an accelerometer, the touchscreen and for the feedback chart that is going to be made during the procedure. For the sensor and the accelerometer. I will use the programs Arduino and Processing. Also I need to teach myself how to make a sculpture out of a mold.

I could get help from my assistants and maybe other CS students while learning about coding. Also, for everything, including the codings, I will use online tutorials.

About the hardware, I will need my computer, my graphic tablet and later on a projection or a LED tv for screening the animation.

Difficulties & Risks

There are a lot of things to do and learn while doing the project. The animation on it's own will be a very intense assignment. I will need to think of and combine a lot of everyday behaviors. Also, the system that I'm going to create for the positive and negative feedbacks will be a massive challenge. If I don't form it well, the whole meaning of my project will be at risk.

Phases of the Project

1. Design the character
2. Decide on and list the actions he's going to perform and create a storyboard.
3. Start to learn the needed softwares while drawing the illustrations.
4. Make the animation on Flash.
5. Make the sculpture of the character's head.
6. Get the needed materials for the accelerometer and apply it.
7. Write the needed codes to connect the sculpture with the animation.
8. Write the needed code for the feedbacks and the chart.
9. Place it in a common area where anyone could participate.

Criteria of Success

I would be able to finish all the illustrations and start combining them on flash this term. For this to be a successful project, firstly I need to make the animation and the sculpture visually very appealing and entertaining. And in the end, if I was able to do all of the codings right, if my character actually stopped doing some actions and continued doing others (meaning, if my character actually learned something from the collaborative response of the people participated) I will accept the project as a success.

Bibliography and References

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