

Project 1: Interactive theory : propose an interactive theory installation.

Role-playing as design consultants, your band's project is to research, design, and propose an interactive learning installation based on a work of experimental theory. Your client is a major research library building the world's first Humanities Museum, which will share advanced humanities research with the general public in ways analogous to contemporary science, art, and history museums, such as the Field Museum, MOMA/PS1, and the National Museum of American History, though on a smaller scale.

As consultants, you'll want to describe and justify your proposed installation using concepts and perspectives drawn from our design readings and exercises and, most important, your group's engagement with your experimental theory text. Develop your ideas by first analyzing and documenting the text's experience design, information architecture, and information design (its xD, iA, and iD, respectively), and then translate these into the xD, iA, and iD of an interactive installation. Your group's task will be to develop and communicate a creative concept that interweaves conceptual, aesthetic, and technical elements. Your designs work toward a prototype: you're proposing, not building, an installation.

The client requests three deliverables: a 1500-word proposal with supporting graphics, a model of the installation, and a 10-minute multimedia presentation. While the production of text, model, and presentation will require specific skills and software training, the proposed installations can contain any imaginable technology or media: objects, kiosks, machines, games, laptops, iPhones, iPods, wii, windmills, etc. Likewise, a team's research, production, and communication can also proceed by any media necessary.

Evaluation – Projects will be evaluated on the conceptual, aesthetic, technical, and organizational merit of their work. Organizational merit refers to the collaborative dimension behind the project. Students will contribute to the evaluative process in two ways: by assessing the presentations of all groups, and by assessing the contribution of your own group's members.

Exercise 1: create a toy

Using household materials, create a toy in under 60 minutes that can be brought to class for others to safely play with. Your toy can be simple or not, sensible or not, for children or not. Your toy will likely be an object. Avoid instructions, which I guess means create a toy and not a game. In any case, players will play with your toy without instructions. It's okay to buy materials, but don't buy a toy: make one.

This project has several goals. The first is simply to create something that's fun and engaging for others. The second is to get us started thinking about and working in experience design, the eliciting and shaping of interactions, emotions, and ideas through materials, objects, and symbols. We will begin by playing with a few toys as a class, and then break into groups, with some groups playing and others observing, and then switching roles.