

Art in Denmark hospitals – ‘FairyChairs Tale’ – interactive chairs installation

Sztuka w duńskich szpitalach – interaktywna instalacja ‘FairyChairs Tale’

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Poprzez prezentację sztuki interaktywnej w środowisku szpitalnym staramy się pobudzić nowe postrzeganie budynków służby zdrowia. Okazuje się, że istnieje zapotrzebowanie nie tylko na właściwą architekturę i projekty, ale także na różne formy sztuki i kultury (Staricoff, 2004). Poprzez projekty interaktywne badamy związek sztuki ze zdrowiem – połączenie, które ostatnio uznaje się za ważny element zdrowia psychicznego. Pamiętając o potrzebach pacjentów i personelu chcemy stworzyć wyjątkowy nastrój i kolorową przestrzeń. Nasza instalacja interaktywna składa się z kilku znanych obiektów – krzeseł, z których każde ma inną cechę. Różne kolory i dźwięki słyszalne podczas siedzenia na krześle pokazują pozytywny wpływ interaktywnej sztuki na zdrowie. Użytkownik jest motywowany intelektualnie i doświadcza pozytywnych emocji poprzez połączenie wrażeń wzrokowych i dźwiękowych. Naszym podstawowym celem jest kreacja przestrzeni definiującej społeczną interakcję pomiędzy osobami przebywającymi w szpitalu i krzesłami szpitalnymi.

Słowa kluczowe: projekt interaktywny, krzesło, technologia, dźwięk, uczucia, środowisko szpitalne, bodystorming

By presenting interactive art in a hospital environment we seek to achieve a new imagination of health care buildings. It appears, that there is not only a need of adequate architecture and design but also a need for various forms of art and culture (Staricoff, 2004). Through interactive design we would like to investigate the relationship between art and health, a combination, which recently has become an important element of mental health. With the ambition of satisfying patients and personnel needs we would like the installation to create a unique atmosphere and add colour to the space. Interactive chairs installation consists of a few well-known objects – chairs. A different feature characterizes each of them. Various colours and messages supported by sound, which can only be heard the moment the chair is used and only for one at the time, will highlight the health benefits of interactive art. The users become motivated to be active intellectually and experience positive emotions. This can happen through ‘FairyTale Chair’ by combining seeing and hearing senses. Our primary aim of the project is to create space, where we seek to define social interaction between ordinary inhabitants and the chairs in a hospital environment.

Key words: interactive design, chair, technology, sound, feelings, hospital environment, bodystorming

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The idea

The idea of our project was born from the primordial desire to make people feel better, at their ease, and to promote optimism [1]. A simple gesture, but apparently one that implies multiple definitions. Our work focuses on communication, to leave something for the people who take part in the project and will use it. The shape, colour, comfort, and music are the aspects that together seek to give users a different feeling, breaking the daily routine, or simply as a diversion to change the stereotype of a hospital as a negative and oppressive place.

The object itself can introduce the concept of performance; its connection with the public in fact

is the greatest demonstration of the success of our work. The unique and unrepeatably event that was created from the encounter between the artist and the audience is one of the most interesting events of contemporary art. To appreciate this, however, you must free your mind from images of sculptures and art created centuries ago.

Motivation

The formulated goal for the fourth semester project was how we could create an interactive art installation to be included in a hospital environment, with beneficial aspects for health [2, 3]. Our motivation to make ‘FairyChair Tale’ was mostly

derived by the knowledge and experiences gained during observations. This part of the report will give the reader an understanding of the driving force by which we seek to achieve our goal and will be a trial to find a core of our motivation. The group chose the already existing object, which is closely related to the waiting room space, by making this object significant for the users so they might become aware what a chair is. The physical concept that chair provides is rest but not sleep. Our project offers a place for a little contemplation, a place where you can look at others and dwell into your own thoughts of feeling secure. On the other hand, the active participation in the installation it is not the only way to influence the users. Changing the understanding of the existing chairs that are already installed in a space, by putting a new specific one that differs from the 'old', you are creating an awareness of the 'chair' concept.

Aim of the project

From the beginning of our designing process our group had a common force. It was our wish to work with people's behavior and a need of changing characteristics of hospital space. What is more, we kept our focus on inhabitants' feelings and their interaction with the surrounding space. Our group has been trying to face old stereotypes that had been in medicine for many years [3, 4]. A negative perception of a health care institution might reduce the level of trust and cause anxiety. It might prolong therapy and recovering time. By the presenting art and culture, 'FairyChairs Tale' in a hospital we want the inhabitants to be enthusiastic and optimistic in their perception of their visual surroundings. What is more, we have been trying to improve the quality of life of people in the hospital and make them feel better. This project gives us an opportunity to develop and innovate traditional forms of healing and promotes healing to the people around us. The knowledge and experience that we gained in the process will be extremely useful in the future. For us, as young artists, one of the objectives is to make people's lives better through our pieces, as well as in our future work.

The aim of the project and the flow of group energy has become something that is not just a supplement, but a motor for the whole project. In order to succeed as a group – each member needs to be involved and has to participate actively. This is what led us in this semester art therapy.

„Art Therapy is about using art as a tool for communication and through the therapeutic relationship, emotional, psychosocial and developmental needs are addressed with the intention of effecting lasting change” (International Art Therapy Organization, 2009). There are several features which

make our interactive installation valuable in a field of art and technology.

Innovative – the art and science connection, in order to promote the art therapy, is not very common, even though it gives a huge possibility to develop this aspect in the future.

Sensibility – the whole project put us as artists in a very important role, which might coordinate and control people's behavior and their perception of surroundings. The project underlines feelings, emotions and experiences of users, it creates a unique environment for them.

Confidence – the project goal expresses our willingness and capacity to help people and promote health.

Community – interactive chairs relate between inhabitants and increase social benefits of art in public spaces.

We are in a process of building a bridge, linking both: art and medicine. We believe that it is a very promising prediction for the future. The experience of work in a hospital made us sure about the strength of the installation. We have taken the art to a new level. Each method and tool used in the project motivated us as participants to admire it and obtain a feeling of positive emotions. We wanted to use objects, which already existed in the environment. Not a new element in a waiting room, only a one different visually and with new functions. Interactive chairs are in the same 'family' as other objects. By the look of the chairs we wanted to get people's attention, so they were less focused on their own problem with which they had come to the hospital. People had interacted with these kinds of objects before (chairs), so we aimed to design a chair which could provide different feelings than only waiting approach. Questionnaires gave us feedback and a huge part of the space users was focused on colour and the need to change it became the most important one.

Conclusion

The installation shows communicative, social, interactive functions. Participation releases the essence of an object, created to convey emotions. This might be individual for everyone. With the use of technology we differ from an art installation and create a tool for people to improve their everyday life and simply make a diversion for those who are there only once.

The technical solution changed many times as the result of bodystormings. Various proposals have been created in the group. Techniques and ideas gradually took shape during the first weeks of work. The visual aspect is a result of empirical trials – models. Combination of trials and theory had provided a very

rich learning process, which developed different perspectives and ways of thinking. Visual design is a result of embodied actions, studies of colours, shapes and analyses of perception. Together the technical and the visual aspects are continually influencing the final result. Starting from a very simple idea, we managed to achieve a solution that meets the needs of both: hospital users and project requirements.

With the appropriate writing exercise, from week to week and day by day, we have cleared the path to follow. We have always analyzed new and old ideas, going back to the starting point when we felt the need to have a clearer situation and not to lose focus on the project purpose.

Our theory and methods made us see that the interactive design can provide the wanted change in a hospital environment. The strength of empirical trials – bodystormings, which provided changes in a participant's mood on a level of social relations, proved the potential of 'FairyChair Tale'. Sometimes the straightforward idea starts to bring beneficial results. Interactive chair installation is very much a product of the process behind and the theory that influenced our design. Inside the report we tried to include everything, using different tools to explain it in the best way, from the early sketches, through brainstormings, readings and research, to the final look of the 'FairyChair Tale'.

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Nine groups from 4th semester, Art and Technology, Aalborg University was making an art exhibition called MEDiART. The exhibition deals with art in relation to health.

Each group gave their interpretation on this subject with interactive art installations.

The opening took place in the new foyer the 10th of June 2011 at 13.00.

FAIRYCHAIRS TALE

In the field of art and technology, the complexity of the design approach rises.

As a one of the nine groups of 4th semester, Art and Technology, Aalborg University, we have created the piece 'FairyChairs Tale' as a part of MEDiART.

It has been a process of persistent research and focus at the field of art, technology and health. The material, objects and sound was chosen because of significance qualities which have been exploring along the whole semester.

As a group we took ordinary objects and we used their embodied quality, forms and sheer quantities to impress upon people the weight of time and meaning inherent in everyday items. We had a fondness for soft and comfortable materials – from textiles to sponges to covered.

Often the process of setting up objects in place, piece by piece, carries persistent input and influence – which becomes strong part in the final intent of the work.

The relation and interaction between the material, the sound and participants – different experience and opportunity of communicate has been overall discussion in making of the piece. As well as remanding of the hospital being a place which has a various possibility to make you feel better!!



Fot. 2. Group number 9 working on the electronic part of the 'FairyChairs Tale' project / Grupa numer 9 pracująca nad częścią elektroniczną projektu 'FairyChairs Tale'



Fot. 1. A disabled person using one of five installation chairs during the days of installing the project in a hospital area / Osoba niepełnosprawna używająca jednego z 5 krzeseł instalacji podczas dni instalowania projektu w przestrzeni szpitalnej



Fot. 3. One of the parts that make up an interactive installation in the hospital area - 'Snow Queen' chair / Jedna z części składających się na interaktywną instalację w przestrzeni szpitalnej - krzesło 'Snow Queen'

Photographs were taken by a person cooperating with the project / Fotografije zostały wykonane przez osobę współpracującą przy realizacji projektu

Opening event Friday 10th June 13.00

Exhibition continuing from Friday 10th to 1 July