SEGD
A multidisciplinary community creating
experiences that connect people to place

SEGD.org

Experience Design Methodologies

prepared by
Timothy McNeil
UC Davis
SEGD Academic Task Force
03.01.2019

Introduction to EGD

SEGD Training Module

Overview

Amsterdam, Netherlands

"Experience design is transactive and transformative: every experience designer is an experiencer; and every experiencer, via his or her reactions, a designer of experience in turn."
— Futures: Experience Design, California Association of Museums, 2014

The principles of experience design have undergone significant transformation in the last 30 years. Designers now not only devise innovative approaches to the display of artifacts and the communication of stories, they design for fully immersive audience engagement, interaction and participation. Content is relayed through multiple levels, intellectually as well as participatory.

Experience Design

Overview

J. Paul Getty Museum

Experience design shapes environments ranging from cultural institutions to theme parks, to commercial trade shows and global expositions, to public parks and civic spaces. It is the most inter-disciplinary of the design fields, encompassing architecture, interior, lighting, graphic, digital media, product and industrial design. Experience design is primarily concerned with how to communicate an object or information led narrative to a defined audience in an engaging manner. Interpretive strategies using spatial planning and architectural elements, furniture, lighting, graphics, audio, film and new media enhance the delivery of this narrative.

Experience Design

Principles

Experience Design Course, UC Davis

Ten Principles of Experience Design

1. CONTENT - Develop compelling stories and content

2. AUDIENCE - Know the audience

3. SITE - Understand the site

4. MARKET - Plan for pre/during/post experiences

5. PRECEDENCE - Learn from other parallel examples

6. SPACE - Create dynamic spatial experiences

7. STAGE - Generate environments that engage the senses

8. LAYER - Vary the range of interpretive methods

9. COMMUNICATE - Establish a unified visual language

10. DETAIL - Specify clear, appropriate and resolved designs

Experience Design

Principles

> **1**

CONTENT - Develop compelling stories and content
Key words: content/story/narrative

Considerations: What is the overall message or big idea? What are the project goals? How will content be layered, themed, divided, expressed, conveyed, broken down, focused? What content/objects/artifacts already exist or can be acquired to tell the story? Is the exhibition/experience medium the right format to convey this particular content?

Tools: historical and contemporary reference materials, curatorial practice, object research, reading, searching, literature review, best precedence identification, writing, diagramming, storyboards, project brief, object lists

> **2**

AUDIENCE - Know the audience
Key words: audience/visitor/guest

Considerations: Who is the intended audience? What are their contextual experiences, learning level/capacity, behavioral characteristics, diversity, socio-economic background, hunger for the content/experience? Can the audience be entertained, informed and inspired by the content? Is the goal of the project to be 100% inclusive?

Tools: formative evaluation, interviews, workshops, questionnaires, surveys, human centered research/design thinking, audience personas, reports, Visitor Bill of Rights (Rand, 1996)

Experience Design

Principles

 3

SITE - Understand the site
Key words: site/space/environment

Considerations: What are the dimensions, boundaries or parameters of the site? How accessible is it for the chosen audience? What is the relationship of the site to surrounding communities? How can the site's potential be maximized? How does the site operate and connect to any existing infrastructure? What are the site's security and safety concerns/needs?

Tools: sites area and dimensions, existing plans/drawings, photographs/document, access points and traffic patterns, sketches, parti diagrams, massing studies

 4

MARKET - Plan for pre/during/post experiences
Key words: partnerships/budget/ROI (Return on Investment)

Considerations: How can the experience take advantage of a gap or opportunity in the market/public forum? How will it make a profit/be successful/be financially viable? Who will underwrite or support the endeavor? What elements or methods will attract, hold and return an audience?

Tools: gap analysis, financial analysis, spreadsheets, best precedence identification, development opportunities, sponsorships, donor cultivation, questionnaire, surveys, website, social media

Experience Design

Principles

> **5**

PRECEDENCE - Learn from other parallel examples
Key words: context/best practice/standards

Considerations: What can be learned from history, other similar and not so similar examples, other sectors? Has it been designed in the past, what worked and didn't work? What will make it stand out or different? What industry standards need to be followed?

Tools: web searches, field trips, industry presentations, conferences, look books/mood boards, written summaries, past project evaluations and surveys

> **6**

SPACE - Create dynamic spatial experiences
Key words: planning/placement/relationships

Considerations: How will the site/space/area be made accessible and logical to navigate? What experiences, objects, exhibits or content will pull people through the space and occupy the primary sightlines? Is the space intimate or open, will there be a forced or open-ended traffic flow, can the floor be elevated, the ceiling lowered, the entrances restricted, the walls opened up? Are the walls straight or curved, how high are they? Are there multiple levels?

Tools: scale models, study models, sketches, renderings/representational drawing (plans, elevations, cross-sections, perspectives), fly-throughs, mock-ups, full scale prototypes, universal design and ADA requirements

Experience Design

Principles

> **7**

STAGE - Generate environments that engage the senses
Key words: surprise/immersion/escapism

Considerations: How will architectural volume, composition, features and finishes convey an appropriate atmosphere? How will a palette of texture, materials, color, sound, smell, lighting and embellishment evoke a feeling, a mood or a memory? How will gestalt compositional theory be applied? Where will objects be placed so that they are easy to view, accessible for everyone, safe and secure? What exhibit structures, display furniture, seating and fixtures will need to be created and specified?

Tools: mock-ups, full scale prototypes, scale models, color and material samples, perspectives and visual renderings/representation drawings, design palettes, universal design and ADA requirements

> **8**

LAYER - Vary the range of interpretive methods
Key words: multi-modal/variety/diversity

Considerations: How can the experience deploy multi-modal forms of content interpretation and exhibit design, using contemplative, sensory, discovery and participatory methods of audience engagement? Do the experiences range from passive to active? What content entry points will be provided, do they speak and relate to a broad range of users? Can the type and media of the objects be varied, the elements be juxtaposed in unusual or surprising ways, the content arranged to challenge the audience?

Tools: detailed drawings, product samples, testing, evaluation, mock-ups, full scale prototypes, material assessment and sustainability, maintenance and repair studies

Experience Design

Principles

> **9**

COMMUNICATE - Establish a unified visual language
Key words: consistency/voice/resilience

Considerations: How can the experience be branded and communicate clearly and consistently to the audience? What "voice" is been used? What is the language tone, level of reading and learning comprehension of the content? How will the visual language be systemized, legible, hierarchical, and employ exemplary information design principles? Is the visual identity flexible, can it adapt, evolve and be applied to a wide variety of formats and mediums from websites to printed brochures and from small object texts to billboards.

Tools: writing, language, learning/educational theory, palettes (color, typography, images, symbols, pictograms, arrows, diagrams, maps), grids, templates, renderings, representational drawing (screen shots, proofs, comps), material samples, graphic standards, mock-ups, prototypes

> **10**

DETAIL – Specify clear, appropriate and resolved designs
Key words: intent/development/production

Considerations: Are the design concepts/solutions the right ones for the project? Do the designs meet code and any constraints dictated by the space? How will everyone know in advance what the experience will look like and how it will function? What needs to be specified/generated in order for everyone to understand the final design intent and how much everything will cost? How will someone fabricating or producing the designs know what to do, how big to make things, and what materials/finishes to use? How will someone building out the space, installing the objects, or placing the exhibits know where to put them, how they function and how they fit together? What's the best way to document the final result, test its success and the audience response?

Tools: texts, scripts, spreadsheets, design drawings, construction documents, code/safety documents, product and material cut-sheets, design palettes, media tests, product samples, prototypes, as-built drawings, punch-lists, documentation, summative evaluation

Experience Design

Case Studies

Exhibition

[J. Paul Getty: Life and Legacy,](link) J. Paul Getty Museum

Designer: Getty Exhibition Design Studio

Exploring the life and legacy of museum founder through personal objects and interactive media

Exhibition

[Home Lands: How Women Made the West,](link) Autry National Center

Designer: munizmcneil; Fabricator: Cinnabar

Women's, Western, and environmental history unite in this engaging narrative with compelling object experiences and surprising material choices

Exhibition

[London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE,](link)

Designer: Local Projects

Mixing original archaeology, next-generation installations and contemporary art commissions, inviting visitors to encounter an ancient mystery cult that re-imagines how we engage with archaeology

Case Studies

Interactive Experience

[Bill and Melinda Gates Discovery Center](#), Seattle

Designer: Bluecadet Interactive

Designed to foster a collaborative working environment and help educate the public about the organization's mission

Exhibition

[Like me: Our Bond with Brands](#), Bloomberg

Designer: Lippincott; Fabricator: R Too Worldwide, Inc.

Exhibition invited visitors to consider their role in the worldwide brand phenomenon

Exhibition

[The Flight Gallery](#), Nova Scotia Science Center

Designer: AldrichPears Associates; Fabricator: Kubik

Explores invention and innovation through the lens of flight and aircraft maintenance, and features open-ended exhibits that encourage visitors to experiment, test and re-try to learn more about how the world works through a science-STEM lens

Experience Design

Resources

Academic Courses

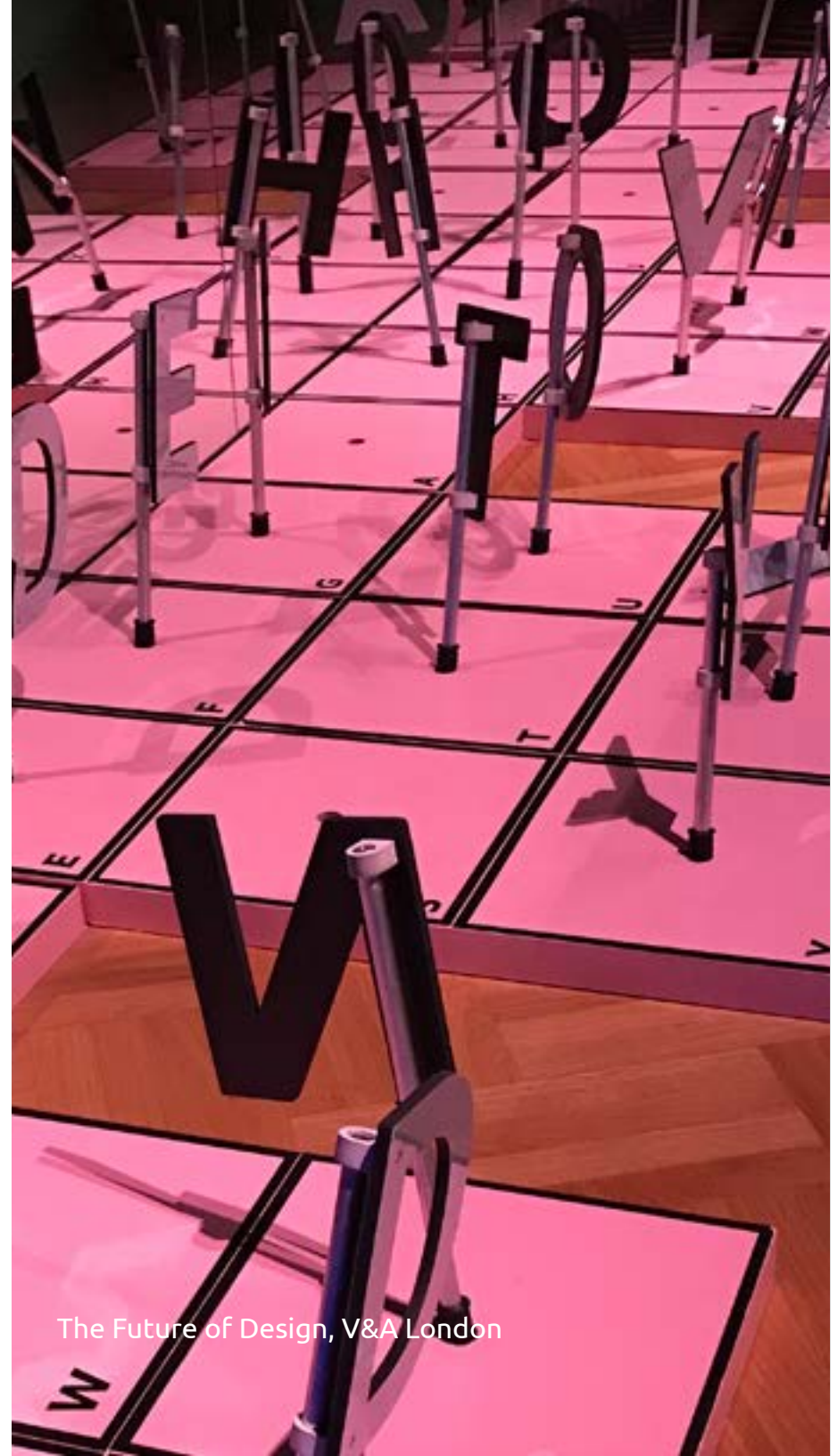Master's degrees in exhibition/experience design

Corcoran College of Arts + Design, Washington, D.C.
MA Exhibition Design

FIT SUNY, New York
MA Exhibition and Experience Design

University of the Arts, London
MA Narrative Environments

University of the Arts, Philadelphia
MFA Museum Planning and Design

University of California, Davis
MFA Exhibition Design

The Future of Design, V&A London

Experience Design

Resources

Books

Exhibition Design, Philip Hughes, 2015

Creating Exhibitions, Polly McKenna-Cress and Janet A. Kamien, 2013

Exhibition Design, Pam Locker, 2011

Engaging Spaces, Kossmann.dejong, 2010

Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions, Kathleen McLean, 2005

Manual of Museum Exhibitions, Barry Lord and Maria Piacente, 2014

The Museum Experience Revisited, John H. Falk & Lynn D. Dierking, 2013

Creating Great Visitor Experiences, Stephanie Weaver, 2007

What is Exhibition Design?, Lee Skolnick, Jan Lorenc, Craig Berger, 2007

Exhibition Design, David Dernie, 2006

The Art and Power of Placement, Victoria Newhouse, 2006

Designing Exhibitions, Aurelia Bertron, 2006

The Power of Display, Mary Anne Staniszewski, 2001

Visitors Bill of Rights, Judy Rand, 1996

Designing Exhibitions, Giles Velarde, 1988

On Display, Margaret Hall, 1987

Exhibits: Planning and Design, Larry Klein, 1986

Museum of Natural History, Utah

Experience Design