Feeling Textures

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1. INTRODUCTION

A collection of anthropomorphic textures for feeling, seeing and sharing, between human and technological materials. Feeling Textures aims to create a shared empathy between object and viewer, using movement, colour, interaction and response.

Humans have an incredible capacity to relate with inanimate objects. We will see shapes in clouds, tree trunks and even tealeaves. But to what extent does this relate to technical objects? Do we only see technology as tools of servitude; cold and hard metals that communicate through binary digits, or could we build an empathic relationships and a shared mutual understanding with machines?

Figure 1: Example of Feeling Textures

2. ORIGINS

This project came out of research undertaken in my Goldsmiths masters in Computational Arts. I developed the piece 'Does It Feel Better Yet?' after reading into emotional pain and care-giving strategies. Looking particularly at the influence of touch, 'Does It Feel Better Yet?' is a sculpture that responds to touch to create a unique interactive light display in the centre of its breathing organ. The sculpture aimed to comment on how touch can be a double-edged sword, consoling or causing pain. I was particularly interested in the dichotomy of physical and emotional pain, and how each can be visualised on the body.

Feeling Textures is an extension of this work, building out my investigation into communicating subtle human emotions through technology and textures. Through this work I aim to produce empathy for the materials, encouraging the viewer to respond emotionally to the works by projecting human characteristics to a non-human object.

3. INFLUENCES

The project was inspired by a range of sources spanning digital arts. 'A Ghost in the Shell', produced by geist.xyz (2019) is a collection of digital dancing fabrics, showing how the combination of movement and sound can create a light hearted, comical quality to digital fabrics.

Figure 2: 'The Woman of War' and 'The Lady of the Wild Things', Liliann Lijn.

Figure 3: A selection of screens from 'A Ghost in the Shell', *geist.xyz*.

4. PROTOTYPES

Each prototype explores a different medium and aims to convey a specific sentiment to the viewer. From themes of grief, comfort and nurture, the works aim to create a semantic bridge between their function and intended feeling. Viewers are invited to interact with each prototype, and give feedback on how each prototype made them feel. This will provide useful conversation around digital empathy for larger scale projects using the textiles in the future.

5. FUTURE DIRECTION AND IDEATION

The future scope for the project is to create larger installations and sculptures using the Feeling Textiles. From garments to paintings, the textiles

will be used in conjunction with traditional artistic mediums to add an extra dimension in viewer engagement. The findings from this Research Workshop will be instrumental in guiding the future direction, as the response from the viewers will be imperative to future subsequent of the works.

6. REFERENCES

geist.xyz (2019) The Ghost in the Shell. <http://www.geist.xyz/> (retrieved 13 April 2019).

Lijn, L. (2019) Conjunction of Opposites: Lady of the Wild Things and Woman of War. <http://www.lilijnelijn.com/portfolio-item/conjunction-of-opposites-lady-of-the-wild-things-and-woman-of-war-1986/> (retrieved 13 April 2019).