

Microsoft Research Design Expo have allowed our design students to acquire a series of experiences that have expanded their vision of the critical situation of Mexico and the rest of the world; as well as the responsibilities of designers within the Network Society. Through their projects the students have shown a self development of new process of learning, different from the one generated in the classroom, which is clearly related to a more global and less fragmentary vision of contemporary problems.

MRDE projects facilitate the synthesis of theoretical and practical concepts and connect them with new media and information technologies. During these two years, that we have participated at Design Expo, the students have generated innovative solutions thanks to the connection with specific Mexico City's problems, where they have evaluated if their concepts have been pertinent and viable.

Manuel Castells affirms that: "technology is a fundamental dimension of social change". MRDE students know now that new communication media constitute a susceptible tool for a positive or negative utilization.

Howard Rheingold says that: "beneficial uses of technologies will not automatically emerge just because people hope they will. Those who wish to have some influence on the outcome must first know what the dangers and opportunities are and how to act on them"⁵¹. Through MRDE projects students assumed the responsibility of the social, economical and political changes that come with design and information technologies; they had to be capable of analyzing and evaluating properly the context where a specific need is located so their proposals should be pertinent to the places and people, incorporating in them, a pertinent formal language and an effective use of technologies and design.

Design Expo students have confronted the enormous problems of urban Mexico, assuming in their projects the social impact and economical implications of design and information technologies. They have realized they have a great challenge in the future: to humanize new technologies in order to collaborate with Mexican social development.

Details sewing the invisible

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A Costura do Invisível took 180s days and 700 hours and a team of 150 people to create. For clothing I chose the late nineteenth century, a period when fashion was extremely elaborate and precious, both in volume and textures. Those values would be crucial in causing in the spectator an instantaneous, intense feeling of wonder at the work.

The paper reliefs were embossed by Brazil's most traditional engraving company, Balsemão. To cut the lacework for each model, we used the laser technology of Universal. And among paper manufacturers we negotiated with ArjoWiggins, which produce a unique paper products line. We therefore selected vegetable-fiber paper because of the subtle transparency it would give the clothes, and verge de France for its toughness, suitable to the setting.

Aline, my assistant, cross-referenced all the possibilities and brought together those who were cutting, weaving and sewing. Hilda, our seamstress, amazed herself by sewing paper. In his studio Julinho, our scenographer, came up with the solution to the fauna for the setting around our fairies, designing and producing anemones out of paper cones.

In order to generate enchantment we created the Playmobil fairies. This playful element so present in people's memories, would make it easy to the spectator to project themselves into the work, as if in a fairy tale. The serial reproducibility of the dolls – after all, they are exactly alike – would allow the spectator to identify with any models on the catwalk. As in a forest, where there are no well-trodden paths, everyone would be able to strike out on their own, choosing a new direction with each new character.

Fernando Andrade, our make-up artist, re-created the Playmobil esthetics in the models by outlining only their eyebrows and mouths. To achieve the fairy's glance, he would paint their eyelashes white. Inês Sacay, our hat maker, was in charge of the Playmobil wig that would connect the audience minds with our universe. Vana, our props manager and doll-maker, coordinated the efforts of a team of craftspeople entrusted with the task of transforming

⁵¹ Rheingold, Howard. "Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution". Basic Books. 2002. p xxii

miscellaneous materials such as glue, wires, strips and laceworks of paper into "human works".

It was time to dress. In the first fitting sessions we told the models that the clothes had not yet arrived and that they would be trying on only the mock-ups. We dressed them in their black leotards, and then their caps. We made them up, doing their eyebrows, mouths, eyes. We dressed them carefully in their paper clothes: the skirt, then the corselet, the sleeves, the collar. Finally, the Playmobil wig.

At that moment, as if by enchantment, instead of paying attention to the language we allowed ourselves to be swept up in the image. We no longer distinguished the leotard, the skirt, the corselet, the sleeves, the collar, the Playmobil wig. We were surrounded by a larger meaning. Above and beyond impeccable pieces, the craftspeople were perceiving their whole art no longer as a setting for metaphors but rather as a realm of metamorphosis that led to an active behavior, an invitation to the game, to a transformation.

We had closed the circle

Many things had changed over those 180 days. We had rediscovered the importance of marveling at the world, of being attentive and sensitive enough to find new meanings in the most mundane things, or in an instant of lightness. We had rediscovered that there exists a still-invisible 'possible' hidden within the real; that it is necessary to shun the most obvious actions, to dare, to innovate, to learn how to sail on an ocean of uncertainty through the archipelagos of certainty that surround us; that we have to think like cartographers to create our own map, freeing ourselves from the static, but being sensitive to the transformative movements all around us.

We rediscovered the essential participation of the audience in the work, the precise use of the vague, the principle that things which at first appear chaotic and interminable can gradually show signs of leading somewhere, that it is essential to repeat over again until things are different, and that it is good to know how to incorporate the haphazard into artistic creation.

We need to strip our souls bare to reveal our capacity to be light, to dream of the unsayable, the impossible, the inexplicable, the indefinable. And to associate the visible trace with the invisible, creating volumes, textures, colors, words, designs, openings and pathways toward a new thinking. That is what it means to sew the invisible.

Sewing the invisible has caught the attention of the international community and awed the audiences at the Sao Paulo Fashion Week at the theatrical element of the show.

I never could imagine such great reaction. This work was considered one of the most important fashion shows of the century by Galliera, Fashion Museum of Paris. All the art curators considered a stunning performance. But the most impressive reactions, that really touched me, were 3 commentaries.

After the show, when I was going home, a cleaning lady shouted my name, left behind her working tools, and came running in my direction. Enthusiastically she shook my hand and deeply thanked me for what her eyes had seen. As the fashion show access is very restricted for press and buyers, I asked her how she could see the show. She explained that exactly at the moment of my show, she was in front a big screen, that was showing my performance alive, and at that moment she stopped working and started gazing it. I asked: why did you like so much? She replied: I think your work means: people are not important for what they carry outside, but inside.

The next day I was going inside a sponsor lounge. A very big security man stopped me at the entrance, all the public relationship staffs started to explain who I was. He calmly said: I know. He took from inside his jacket a newspaper with pictures of my show in the front page, polite he asked me: Please can you sign for me? I'm collecting everything about your work to tell this tale to my wife and sons.

A journalist came inside the dress room after the show. He couldn't spell a word. Tears in his eyes. He was very very touched. With his hands, he signaled he was going to call me later. Next day he called me: Jum, you broke my legs yesterday. I was seated in the first row watching your show. Writing about what was in front of my eyes. As usual, I thought I understood everything. When the models started to tore off. I could barely remain stood. I seated and started to cry. My certainties got me blind.