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## Human experience and ubiquitous art

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## ABSTRACT

In this chapter we propose that art is ubiquitous and is part of every day human life and experience. The notion of 'ubiquitous' is defined according to the Oxford Dictionary as present, appearing, or found everywhere. Human experiences are defined in both physical and virtual spaces and in various contexts: personal, social, cultural, economic and ecological. Humans give meaning to their life through a process of seeking, sensing, sharing, shaping and sustaining meaning in interaction with subjects and objects. Many of the meaningful encounters include objects of art. 'Art' is defined as (1) the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power; works produced by such skill and imagination; creative activity resulting in the production of paintings, drawings, or sculpture. 'The Arts' is defined as (2) the various branches of creative activity, such as painting, music, literature, and dance. The third meaning of arts is defined as (3) subjects of study primarily concerned with the processes and products of human creativity and social life, such as languages, literature, and history (as contrasted with scientific or technical subjects). We will use the notion of ubiquitous art as *any creative form, process and product of human skill and imagination that we encounter everywhere in the world around us*. A longitudinal study (Thijssen, 2006) identified design categories and principles for co-creating meaningful experiences through learning-by-sharing. A number of case studies illustrate the use of these design categories and principles as well as the role of ubiquitous art in human experience and the process of co-creating meaning. Implications are indicated for further exploration of the use and impact of art in experience design in the Experience Industry.

**Key words:** Human experience, ubiquitous art, experience landscape, experience co-creation, human centered experience design, learning-by-sharing

## **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on understanding human experiences and the role of ubiquitous art in every-day life. In this section we will define human experiences in general and discuss the experience landscape of experience spaces and contexts. We propose that art is ubiquitous and shapes our daily experiences. In section 2 design principles are introduced for co-creating meaningful experiences and the role of art. In section 3 3 cases are discussed and interpreted. Finally in section 4 the implications are indicated for the Experience Industry.

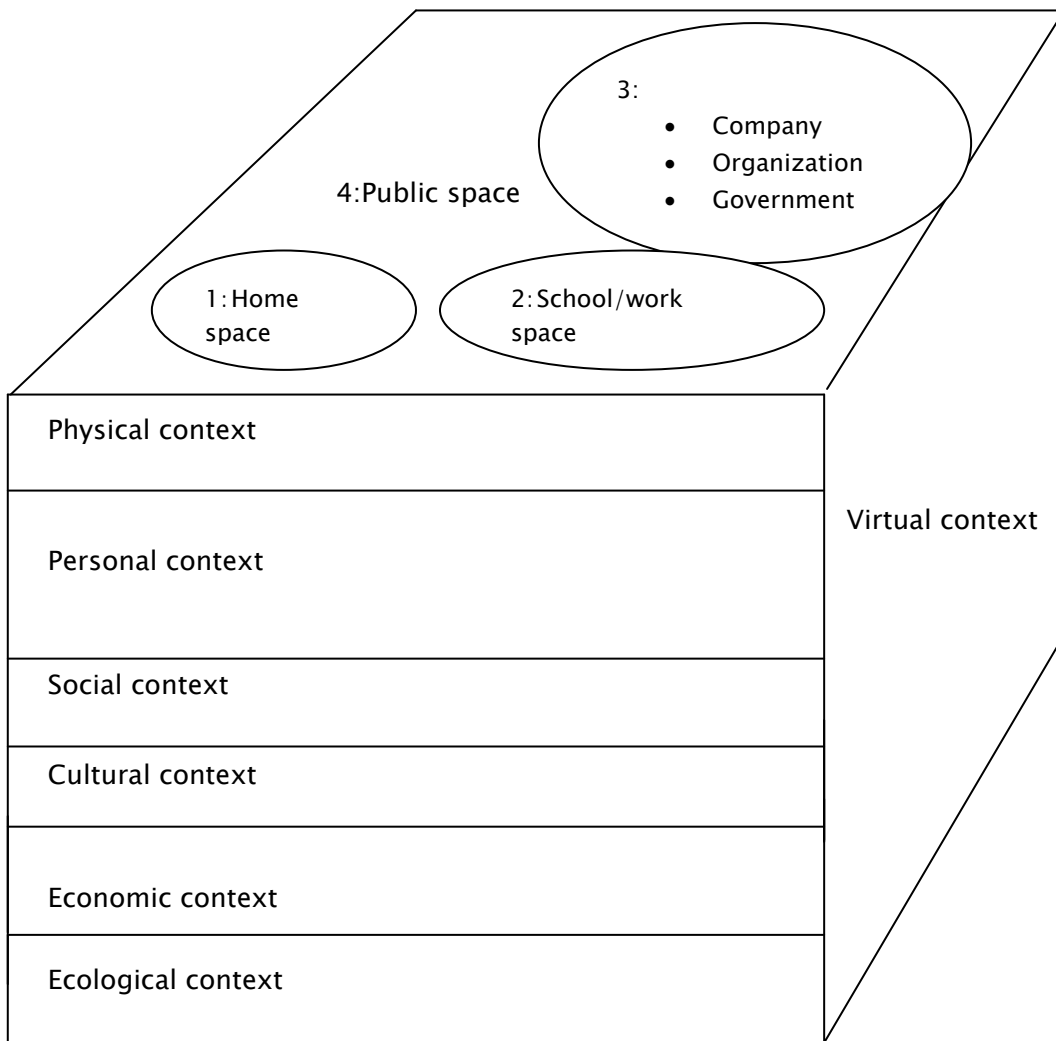
### **Defining Human Experiences in general**

Human experiences can be defined as a process of meaning making (Köster, 2004) involving perception through the senses, leading to emotions (Frijda, 1986), leading to an experience (Boswijk et al., 2005) thereby generating meaning in a specific context. An optimal experience (Csikszentmihaly, 1990) includes the following aspects: a sense of play and a feeling of control over one's actions, and pleasure in the activity itself, high concentration and losing one's sense of time, a balance between challenge and personal capacities and a clear goal. We define human experiences as human actions in a specific spatial and temporal setting. It can be seen as a process of doing and undergoing (Dewey, 1938) as an interaction between ourselves and the people and objects around us. In this chapter we will particularly focus on the role of art as an expression of human experience. We see ubiquitous art as input and product for meaningful experiences.

### **The Experience society and the Experience Landscape**

If we combine the various contexts (personal, social, cultural, economic and ecological) with the various experience spaces that we visit almost every day, we come to the following holistic interpretation of an experience society (Thijssen et al., 2005). Understanding the dynamics of the complex interrelationships may enable us to learn and shape the future and the quality of our life in such a way that we may be able to support meaningful experiences and better appreciate the role of ubiquitous art.

*Figure 1: Experience Society, Experience Spaces and Experience Contexts*



*A holistic model on the Experience Society and the Experience Landscape with experience contexts and physical and virtual experience spaces*

In this section we describe the relevance of the various experiences contexts ranging from a physical, virtual, personal, social, cultural and economic context and to a lesser degree the ecological context. The ecological context we define as nature, animals and wildlife, water supply, natural resources, agriculture, woods, lakes, forests, parks and rivers etc. Now we will turn to the physical and virtual experience spaces where we shape our daily lives and the role of ubiquitous art.

### **Ubiquitous Art in physical and virtual experience spaces**

The relevant physical and virtual experience spaces we visit almost daily, in order of importance that follow from our explorative research are:

### 1) Home experience space and art

Our personal home where we connect and share experiences with our (extended) family in the first place and where our identity takes shape through meaningful experiences. We act in the role of family member. The physical space is the home where we meet in person. The virtual space is the connectedness to the extended family through new media as telephone, SMS, MMS, e-mail, chat and more recently our personal blogs. Art and design play an important part in our life as we listen to music, watch video, TV and film, enjoy sculptures and paintings in and around our home and read books and magazines. Even the objects that we use to shape our day-to-day life are designed for functionality but more and more for immaterial values that enhance our identity. The choice of architecture, interior design, fashion and lightning help us to shape our home to fit our identity.

### 2) School/work experience space and art

Our teachers, fellow students, or colleagues and managers where we study or work, allow us to establish our identity through interaction and value production. We gain value through the application of our competencies in voluntary and paid for work. We act in the role of (knowledge) worker through a full range of cross media. Schools and offices as architectural art and design allow us and facilitate us to learn, connect and work with others. The spatial design is designed for inspiration and for various forms of human interaction. Often paintings and floral art are part of the interior decorating.

### 3) Company/organization/government experience space and art

When we shape our future and strive for quality of life we need goods, services and paid for experiences that we use as tools to satisfy our needs. Examples are shops, restaurants, hotels, banks and insurance companies, car companies, real estate agencies and other commercial providers where we relate to as the *customer*. But also organizations which support us at a fee where we can be a *member* such as Green Peace, World Wild Life Fund, museums, concert halls, sport venues etc. Also government agencies where we are *citizens* who provide services such as pass ports, social security, waste disposal, building permits, police protection etc. We can visit these spaces in person and seek meaningful experiences and more and more we can access websites for on-line delivery of products, services and experiences. For companies, organizations and governments to differentiate themselves in a global world, art and design is ubiquities. In our role as customer, member or citizen we interact with companies, organizations and government, often on a daily basis.

### 4) Public experience space and art

The fourth experience space can be described as the natural world in which we travel from home, to school, to work, to company, to organization and to government. It includes our cultural heritage in the form of landscapes, cities, villages, and rural area's with our cemeteries, churches, roads, rivers, woods and other infrastructure. We act in the role of visitor, traveller, sports person etc. We stay in contact with our extended family and or colleagues through on-line communication.

Rural planning and urban planning and architecture as art are ubiquitous in all areas of public space in the western world. The cycles, cars, buses, trains and planes we travel with are produced for their functionality, but are at the same time all expressions of industrial art. They enhance not

only our mobility but express who we are and shape our identity. Landscaping and garden architecture are forms of art that shape our living environment and thereby the quality of our lives.

#### 5) Virtual experiences spaces and art

The above holistic view of the Experience Society comprises both experience contexts and physical experience spaces. This model is complemented with virtual experience spaces, where we connect to other worlds and leave our body behind. The virtual context enables us to link ourselves to relevant contexts and cross boundaries of physical spaces through the use of interactive media. The issues of virtual spaces, virtual communities and virtual mobility are new to us. We can be anywhere at any time and still be connected. This can be considered an opportunity for individuals shaping their life and expressing themselves. The art of designing interactive media is booming as bandwidth growth is boosting on-line gaming and entertainment as well as user generated content in for instance Flickr (photo sharing) and YouTube (video sharing).

We as humans, in different roles, live and shape our identity. But in fact *we are one and the same person in different experience spaces and contexts*. We apply our talents together with other human beings to create value for ourselves and for others. We propose that as humans shape their live, ubiquitous art plays a significant role in the process of human experiences and meaning making. Humans are not only experiencing art as a passive receiver, in today's world people actively construct works of art as they publish their texts, their photographs, their videos, their music and other forms of self expression on the Internet and rate the works of others.

### The Art of Seeking, Sensing, Sharing, Shaping and Sustaining

To capture the above notions of human experiences, the relationship with art and the process of meaning making in a comprehensive view, we see life itself as a form of art in *seeking* meaning, through using our *senses*, *sharing* experiences, *shaping* and *sustaining* our lives. Both physical objects of art and virtual objects of art are part of us and allow us to enjoy experiences of togetherness, convenience, pleasure, beauty and wellness. In this view art is ubiquitous. In section 2 we will describe the process of co-creating meaningful experiences and the role of ubiquitous art.

### Ubiquitous Art and Co-creating Meaningful Experiences

As we argued in the previous section art is everywhere and playing an important part in human day-to-day experiences. Based on extensive literature research and empirical research, design principles are generated for co-creating meaningful experiences (Thijssen, 2006) through learning-by-sharing. The model of learning-by-sharing is developed over the past 20 years at the department of Information Management of the University of Amsterdam aiming to bridge the gap between theory and methodology (rigor) and practice (relevance) by introducing the world of practitioners in the academic world to co-create meaning (Thijssen, Maes & Vernooij, 2002). For practitioners in organizations *meaning* can be described as developing and implementing new and effective strategies. For academics *meaning* can be described as developing and testing new theory. For humans in general *meaning* can be described as the pursuit of happiness and the

quality of life itself. This way the products and processes of thought are integrated in communities of practice with a common purpose aiming for meaningful human experiences. The design categories and principles have been developed using case studies, interpretative studies and longitudinal action research in complex social settings and in human centred business innovation.

In this section we will provide an overview per design category for co-creating meaningful experiences, including the context, the problem complexity, the timing, the purpose, the people, the processes and the performance. In each design category we will highlight the role of ubiquitous art. These design principles of co-creating meaningful experiences through learning-by-sharing have been generated over the past 20 years at the University of Amsterdam (Thijssen, Maes, Vernooij, 2002). Here we provide a list of relevant design categories and principles that can be applied for human centred experience design. In section 3 we illustrate how these design principles can be applied in practice to design, describe, explain, shape and evaluate meaningful experiences.

### Context

- Place the problem (lack of quality of life) at hand in context.
- Client-infrastructure: Place the project in the client-infrastructure system of specific organisations and individuals *using the experience landscape* in section 1 of this chapter.
- Unit and levels of observation and analysis: Identify the units and levels of analysis in the specific context. Identify the initiator for co-creating meaningful experiences.
- Regulatory Issues: Take into account the influence of regulatory issues.
- Competencies of people in the context: Take into account the competencies of people.
- *What role do art, architecture and design play in this context?*

### Complexity

- Problem Complexity: Determine the dynamic and behavioural complexity of the problem in the context.
- *How can art, architecture and design help reduce complexity?*

### Timing

- Sense of Urgency: Timing is key in initiating, hosting and completing projects. Through quality relationships the sense of urgency can be measured and if the sense of urgency is high then the timing is right. If the sense of urgency is low, political entrepreneurship is applied to create a sense of urgency.
- *How can art, architecture and design help to create a sense of urgency?*

### Purpose

- Common Purpose: Define the common purpose of creating meaningful experiences.
- Common language: A common purpose is expressed in a common language. In particular the language of the constituents served should be leading.
- Learning as a social process: Shape learning as a social process to explore and exploit the potential value of diversity.
- Define Transformation: Transformation from an 'undesired state' to a 'desired' state.
- *Define how art, architecture and design can assist in defining a common purpose, envision the desired state and enhance the transformation process to the desired state.*

- Real world issues: To study real-world fundamental issues *that enhance the quality of life and meaningful experiences*.
- Roles: take into account the role of initiator and negotiate the role of all other participants.

## People

- Inclusiveness: Include artists, academics, practitioners and constituents served (customers, members, citizens) in every setting and promote role switching.
- Diversity: A variety of different talents and means add to creative problem solving.
- Connect: Connecting all units of observation: individual, team, organisation, network, society.
- Quality relationships: Quality relationships build on care for other, trust, openness and transparency and flattening power.
- Quality of expression: Quality of creative expression to enhance cultural exchange.
- Power and cultural change: Deal with the issue of power balance and power equality and the requirements for new mental models, learning, innovating and cultural change.
- Roles: take into account the role of moderator and the roles of consultants, artists, designers and researchers and other participants.
- *Define how art, architecture and design can assist in inspiring people to develop a common purpose, envision the desired state and enhance the transformation process to the desired state.*
- Research skills: In practice researchers should become reflective practitioners and acquire consultancy skills. Theories are only welcomed by participants in a trusted situation enabling practitioners to see things differently and adjust their actions. *Art, architecture and design* are means to help people to see things in a different way. Reflecting on actions may prove or disprove the theory. Practitioners do not solicit grand theories in theoretical and abstract terms. Humans pursue happiness and quality of life.

## Process

- The co-creation process of meaningful experiences is based on Action Research (AR): Action learning (Learning by Sharing) and action research (AR) coincide.
- Common frame of reference: Use a common theoretical frame of reference based on the common purpose of co-creating meaningful experiences as the desired state.
- Mental models: Participants define the solution or the desired state (mental models, common purpose, future vision and mission). *To imagine desired futures art as expression of meaning can assist the process.*
- Combine organisation and university: Combine business and university in action learning programs to study the real-world fundamental issue at hand.
- Fundamental theories: Apply fundamental theories to diverse and complex practices.
- Human action: Pattern of human action of building trust, enabling and enacting.
- Quality relationships: Include and maintain openness, authenticity, listening, affirmation and empowerment.
- Power balance: Pattern of balancing and flattening power relations.
- Entrepreneurship: Through entrepreneurship defined as: engaging, Learning-by-Sharing, innovating and accounting for aimed at experience value creation.
- *How can art, architecture and design help the process of co-creating meaningful experiences?*
- Roles: take into account the role of moderator, the roles of consultants, artists, researchers and other participants.



## Performance

- Culture: Performance is based on norms and values of people. It is cultural based. Prevailing mental models may enhance or hinder performance. The performance gap should be made explicit in terms of mindsets about the desired situation for people.
- Experience return on investment: For a sustainable project the experience benefits should be balanced against time and money spent.
- Experience value for clients: Reflect on and define experience value for the clients in the specific situation in terms of quality of life.
- Experience value for employees: Reflect on and define experience value for the employees in terms of quality of working life and organisation requirements.
- Learning to learn capabilities: Focus on cognition, skills, and attitudes to stimulate generative learning and learning-to-learn capabilities and generate competencies required by the employees and the organisation to support the client.
- Connect human action: Individuals connect and use 'means' to an 'end' as a new co-creation approach to generate meaningful experiences.
- *Define how art, architecture and design can assist in defining a common purpose, envision the desired state and enhance the transformation process to the desired state. How can art visualize the performance of meaningful experiences?*
- Power balance and politics: Reflect on the political performance and the equality of power and identify the requirements for the flattening of the power structure to improve client's life.
- Accountability: Accounting for aimed at experience value creation.
- Roles: take into account the role of initiator, the roles of consultants, artists, researchers and other participants.

The above design categories and design principles for co-creating meaningful experiences are based on the Learning-by-Sharing model as developed at the University of Amsterdam (Thijssen, 2006) and are tested and evaluated in diverse settings of experience co-creation such as education and research, social value creation and business innovation. In the following section we will illustrate the role of ubiquitous art in the co-creation of meaningful experiences according to the design categories and principles above in three cases. As is indicated above, art is present in each of the design categories to enhance the meaning making process.

## Case studies

In this section we will discuss three cases to illustrate the design categories and principles from section 2 in the setting of Dance, Apple iPod and Skating.

### ID&T, Q Dance and Art

#### *Context*

In 2006 ID&T and Q Dance as market leaders (Stutterheim & Tavecchio, 2006) in the Dutch dance market merged to host over 25 themed dance festivals with in total more than 550.000 visitors per year in the age group of 18 –35. These dance experience providers aim to provide a 'moment of release' for dance and music lovers, offering a line-up of famous DJ's in often spectacular locations inspiring all senses before, during and after the event.

### *Timing*

Youth dance culture is growing and expanding throughout the world. The aim is to expand and export a major dance festival White Sensation throughout Europe and later to other parts of the world. The art of music, staging performances, dance and distributing music is the key of the business concept. The timing for international expansion appears right as was proven during recent dance events in Germany and Poland. Youth dance culture appears to be part of a global culture driven by on-line access to favourite forms of musical art and dance.

### *Complexity*

The art of inviting and engaging youth in mega dance festivals of up to 40.000 visitors is a major and complex operation. After 13 years of experience ID&T and Q-Dance master the art of staging such events in great detail. Research supports the future strategy development understanding the impact on youth experiences and guarding the interest of visitors to provide meaningful music and dance experiences.

### *Purpose*

Young people are involved in day-to-day routine activities as school and work. To escape from these day-to-day activities they listen to music and visit clubs with their favourite dance music with their friends. They connect and share information and music, select and rate major events for entertainment and enjoyment. The purpose is to provide a preferred experience moment of “release” to match the cultural dance and music preference and to delight visitors.

### *People*

The people involved are the DJ's who enjoy a great reputation and provide for the music with just the right sound and beats per minute. This can be considered as a new form of art. It attracts millions of people worldwide. To cater for the dance and music lovers the experience provider employs 40 staff to design, develop and implement major dance events and sub-contractors in many fields. The organisation is flat and the teams are guided by entrepreneurial leadership, aiming to be the first choice in international dance experiences by the target group in Europe and other parts of the world.

### *Process*

In the process the experience chain of youth with over 40 experience touch points (points of meaningful interaction between the individual and the organization) who love dance and music is leading. The process of *seeking* release moments, engaging all the *senses*, *sharing* information and music, *shaping* a dance event together and *sustaining* the identity as dance and music lover is fully described and understood in over 40 meaningful touch moments. The true art is to provide access to information, music, tickets, food and beverage and facilities to enhance the dance experience per meaningful touch moment.

### *Performance*

The word performance and dance go together very well. The art of dance and music is a form of ‘user generated art’. It is a form of self-expression and co-creation. It provides intense pleasure, togetherness, celebrating life with people like myself. It provides a true release moment

in contrast to day-to-day routine activities. For ID&T and Q-Dance performance also means business performance, excellence and growth.

#### *Evaluation and the role of ubiquitous art*

Youth culture, dance and music go together well. In this particular case the art of designing, developing, implementing and evaluating meaningful dance experiences is a combination of art as music, art as dance and art as design of the setting with light, colour and sound. Art is ubiquitous in each of the 40 steps of the dance experience chain, before, during and after the event both in physical spaces and virtual spaces.

### **Apple iPod and Art**

#### *Context*

The success story of Apple with G4 desktop and notebook computers and the recent introduction of PowerBooks, with the appealing design is overly known. Apple, in fact, is migrating into the entertainment industry through the introduction of iPod and transforming from a technology provider to a entertainment and experience provider. Apple entered the entertainment industry and took advantage of the convergence of digital media. Microsoft is only responding now with the introduction of the Zune in the US in 2006 presented as the iPod killer and only coming to Europe in 2007. Apple dominates the market by 75% in the US for portable music players and Microsoft aims to take a share of this market (Jobs, 2006). Access to music and video content is key.

#### *Timing*

Apple has a head start in the portable music players market and providing Apple keeps up the attractive design and improves the functionalities of watching videos on larger and better screens with excellent sound and picture quality it will stand a chance to stay ahead of competition.

#### *Complexity*

The complexity of the music and entertainment market is high. Especially when it comes to digital rights and deals with content providers. Also the technological complexity is high as new technical developments present themselves continuously.

#### *Purpose*

Music lovers seek access to their favourite music and want to listen to it immediately as a new release comes out. Peer influence drives the sharing of information and music. For apple the purpose is to expand in the portable music player market and making money on the sales of singles, albums, video's and movies through excellent quality and design. Providing access to music and video experiences, anytime and anywhere is the key purpose.

#### *People*

Music artists and movie stars play an important part in the content. The market of music lovers of all genres is fast and globalizing. Top designers and developers at Apple provide for the

Apple identity and image. Users of iPod and other Apple products and software enable people to seek, sense, share, shape and sustain their lives in a meaningful way.

#### *Process*

The process of generating meaningful experiences is fully understood. The process of *seeking* music, *sensing* the sound and images, *sharing* information and music, *shaping and sustaining* meaningful music experiences anywhere at any time is explored and exploited to the full. Music lovers all over the world fall for the iPod experience.

#### *Performance*

Again a portable music player as iPod and performance go together well. The art of the design, the quality and sound of the music and the images, the ease of access and the ability to share music with friends all enhance a great performance. Both in experiencing music and video and in terms of commercial performance.

#### *Evaluation and the role of ubiquitous art*

Digital entertainment as a ubiquitous form of art is driven by new technology. The Apple iPod case is an excellent illustration of meaningful experiences and ubiquitous art.

### **Underground Culture, Play, Art and Skating**

#### *Context*

The MU Bowl can be considered as 'skate artwork' annex 'sports facility' and is designed by Maurer United Architects (Maurer & Maurer, 2002) in the city of Eindhoven in the Netherlands. The design of the skate facility is an important part of the skateboarding culture. The philosophy behind skateboarding is based on the fact that at all times it is the skateboarder himself who determines the rules and the challenges of his actions. Therefore a skate facility can only be designed and built by (the community of) skaters themselves. Authentic skaters would never approve of a facility designed on the desk of an architect and built with municipal money.

#### *Timing*

To develop a 'skate bowl' in the city of Eindhoven in 2002, is an example of correct timing. Youth culture in skating is an international culture and skaters in Europe travel to skating rings to experience their sport to the max. For the city marketing of Eindhoven skating would add to the identity and image of innovativeness in younger target groups.

#### *Complexity*

Designing an authentic skating experience is a complex process that can only be achieved by co-creating meaningful experiences and involving the skater community.

#### *Purpose*

The realisation of a skating bowl by and for skaters with an authentic skating experience, in short is the purpose of the design project.

### *People*

The designers from Maurer United Architects involved the skating community through collaboration with the students of the Building Technology Group of the University of Eindhoven as an educational project. Many of the students were active skaters themselves.

### *Process*

The process of *seeking, sensing, sharing, shaping and sustaining meaningful and authentic skating experiences in a skating bowl* could be fully realised through the concept of co-creation with the skater community. Art, design and culture are integrated in the process of design and realisation to generate an authentic skating experience.

### *Performance*

The skating bowl in Eindhoven is realised as the largest skating bowl in Europe and attracts thousands of visitors from all over Europe to experience authentic skating.

### *Evaluation and the role of ubiquitous art*

The MU bowl is an excellent example of co-creating a meaningful and authentic experience. As an educational project the design included many skater students and the art of understanding skating culture was fully incorporated in the design. Art is ubiquitous in every aspect of design.

## **Interpretation of the cases and the role of Ubiquitous Art**

Individuals, in their personal, social, cultural, economic and ecological contexts seek meaningful experiences in day-to-day life at various experience spaces at (1) home, at (2) school and at work, (3) with businesses, organisations and governments and in (4) public spaces. Experiences come about in physical and virtual worlds as part of making meaning and shaping identity. The cases illustrate that the model of the Experience Landscape as explained in section 1 can be applied to better understand the temporal and spatial co-construction with others of meaningful experiences. The process can be described as seeking, sensing, sharing, shaping and sustaining meaningful experiences. The design categories context, complexity, timing, purpose, people, processes and performance allow us to describe, explain and understand the process of designing, developing, implementing and evaluating meaningful experiences through learning-by-sharing. As we see art is part of our daily life and is ubiquitous. If the details of meaningful experiences are well understood by the experience provider, the meaningful touch points can be identified before, during and after the experience and ubiquitous art can help shape and enhance the experience. The cases show that art is ubiquitous in shaping and sharing meaningful experiences and in arousing all senses.

## **Implications for the Experience Industry**

The hardest part of this study is to define the experience industry. One can raise the question if *one* experience industry exists or can be defined? From a human centred design perspective any human action involves human experience. In this definition any industry could be an experience industry if only the industry includes the notion of meaningful human experience in

their strategy and experience delivery. It requires a different lens from a supply driven perspective to a demand driven perspective (Boswijk et al., 2005), putting the individual in his/her context in the centre of thinking and not the offering of the company or organisation. This requires a lot of unlearning as we have developed many refined supply driven marketing techniques to try and capture the consumer. This push strategy of 'tell and sell' loses terrain as people more and more design their own life (pull strategy) as expressed by, amongst others, Ikea and the philosopher Arnold Cornelis (1999). The answer to any industry is to adopt a pull strategy of 'invite and engage' and of 'co-creating meaningful experiences' together with the people served. New competition in a global market space will drive the demand driven movement as Apple, Maurer Architects, Id&T and Q-Dance demonstrate. As can be seen in this chapter art is ubiquitous in the world of meaningful experiences. The implication can be stated as follows: Include artists, academics and practitioners as well as the target group in co-creating meaningful experiences and generating high performance as quality of life. The design categories and principles of learning-by-sharing can be seen as a roadmap to the art of co-creating meaningful experiences. The hardest part is to change the lens to a human centred co-creation and design approach through learning-by-sharing. Can we unlearn the company and product driven design approach? If we aim at quality of human experiences, we must. Ubiquitous art can inspire us to do so.

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