play {1/2}

There seems to be a growing importance in having playfulness imbedded into our daily lives. Whilst technology has fuelled gaming to become popular through the use of smartphone Apps, playful design solutions have also brought elements of humour and light-heartedness to our environments. As the advantages of playfulness are brought to the forefront, there are growing developments in partnering this activity with other aspects of everyday life such as work and consumption. {March 2012}

A quick glance at the phone of the person sitting next to you on the London Underground reveals the activity of the everyday commuter. We play games to pass the time on a journey, unwind after a busy day or simply just to switch off. Although the occasional emailing or the avid speed texting still occurs, catapulting an angry bird across an iPhone screen is what today's commuter does best. We are downloading the latest Apps, for the temporary amusement that they might offer until the next one comes along.

Brands and businesses have detected the extent to which consumers have become accustomed to gaming interfaces and are ready to feed this phenomenon with the next smart and addictive service and/or product that they have devised. As consumers become increasingly engaged in gaming that often requires them to think originally, solve problems and take risks in various scenarios, it seems that elements of this trend might be used in the work place. At the 'Gaming Normal' event at The Theatre of Innovation – Future Human in March 2012, discussion arose that 'play' is a state that requires individuals to be 'creative, competitive and guileless – qualities that also characterise many of the world's most productive and innovative work environments.' This has triggered game techniques to transform the 'normal' work practises of companies. What was also raised is that as more industries begin to recognise the creative benefits of facilitating 'play states' in the workplace, the installation of game-like structures might increase productivity and inspiration. It seems that companies such as, The PRIZM Game Company Ltd are promoting videogame mechanics, from reward systems to player rankings, across multiple industries.

During work hours and leisure time, gaming and technological forms of interaction such as text messaging and video calling are increasingly used to replace personal interaction, for activi-ties such as office meetings, socialising and even getting fit.

'Play' has been an area of inspiration for work in the art and design industries for some time. In 2008, the Exhibition of Contemporary Art hosted, 'The Artists' Playground', the work by artists, designers and architects such as, Ai Weiwei, Zaha Hadid and Tom Dixon was themed around leisure and recreation. The work touched upon nostalgic references such as tree houses, mazes and playground rides. Design duo, the Campana brothers also do this in their work through the use of unused toys and objects from everyday life, this was a welcome touch of humour to the furniture design industry. 'The Banquete Chair' [2002] was memorable and an instant hit for its light-hearted quality.

Childhood memories and experiences allow for play and nostalgia to be easily paired and this can be seen in the growing popularity of classic toys such as Lego. They constantly undergo rejuvenation. For example, in a recent collaboration between Muji and Lego, titled 'Bricks and Paper', an additional tool has been created for interacting with Lego, it is a hole-puncher that allows you to add paper to three-dimensional Lego forms. The simple yet thoughtful addition from such a well-established brand has reintroduced Lego to the forefront of the toy industry. Lego manages to remain true to its identity yet remains current through branding and collaborating with on trend retailers and creating current film characters as editions to its range. To celebrate its 100th issue, *Icon Magazine* invited leading architects to create buildings made out of Lego during the London Design Festival 2011. By showing leading industry experts playing, this changed the perception of practices to outsiders.

With the identity of designers and consultancies becoming increasingly important, an element of playful competitiveness has also appeared in the realm of branding, the Apple adverts dated around 2006, recreated

Lego
Tube
Birds
Attention
Building
Join
Solitaire
Span
Miserable
Lose
Compete
Online
Luxury
Missing
Puzzle
Dull
Western
Animals
School
Childish
Eastern
Cartoon
Nostalgia
Fun
Toys
Chuckle
Comfort
Passing
Extension
Bored
Speed
Classic
Difference
Trend
Compete
Humorous
Security
Mundane
Download
Technology

play {see also audience, performance}

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a playground like childish banter between itself and Windows, this was part of it portraying itself as a light-hearted, no harm intended company. It seems when brands that are encountered on a daily basis have a light-hearted personality an endearing relationship is formed between the consumer and product. In 2003, Matthias Megyeri's 'Sweet Dreams Security' designs highlighted small details that might bring a moment of light-heartedness to the mundane qualities of every day life and were a comical commentary on a nation that has various forms of high tech and low tech security systems. Italian design company, Alessi, uses anthro-pomorphism in its products to highlight that adults need play just as much as children do. They create products with names and characteristics that relate to the company's history. The automotive industry also identifies adults' need for toys. Cars such as the Volkswagen Beetle and the Mini Cooper are made to look like toys; they have enhanced features on the exterior and playful interiors. Films such as 'Die Another Day' and 'Fast and Furious' intensify the interaction with transport through thrill and excitement.

The stress and pace of life that an adult may experience on a daily basis means that unwinding and relaxing has become increasingly important for the work/life balance and whilst playful, comical and exciting design solutions are continued to be welcomed in everyday life, it will be interesting to see how the introduction of gaming mechanisms in the workplace unfold in the future and how playing at work will differ from playing at home.

Revival
Cuddly
Identity
Branding
Cartoon
Familiar
~~School~~
~~Gender~~
Children

play {see also audience, performance}

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