MAID, FRIEND, OR MASTER?

Exploring the relationships between Ethics, Design, Personification and domestic Voice Assistants

My Thesis is a critical inquiry centered around the personification of domestic Voice Assistants (e.g., Siri, Alexa, and Co). As many scholars observe, the projection of the 24/7 available nursing yet submissive female assistant into technology reinforces hurtful gender biases and contributes to greater inequality while actively shaping moral values. Using a research through design (RtD) approach, I propose different ways of designing and interacting with domestic VAs.

The Design Direction

Within the RtD tradition, I use design proposals, sketches, scenarios, and prototypes to reconsider and critically reflect upon current norms of design and interaction with domestic VAs. The focus lies on Speculative, Discursive, Critical and thing-centered design.

I ask myself, how could a domestic conversation technology look like that occupies roles in their everyday life outside of consumption? Away from social norms and performing subservient tasks. That speaks to you in ways that teach you what is going on in the world, influenced by Peter-Paul Verbeek's Mediation theory: establishing relations between the user and their environment.

The Honest Guest

The system allows a friendly, honest and open task instead of a "helper" or "server" thing. It's more engaging, taking care of the user, go on interaction. It's also seen as a bridge between the roles for the twenty-one worlds: helper or helper or servant role. This role also introduces emotional and sensorial characteristics of VAs.

The Caregiving Companion

Helping the user

Work in pairs to discover interactions where a person is in need of a virtual assistant. This could be a task or a service. A virtual assistant can help you to achieve a daily task or to get through a hard day. The virtual assistant also learns from the user in order to better serve its needs.

The Plutonic Friend

Companionship tool

Voice interface that is centred around creating an intimate relationship with its user. Influenced by the "Plutonic" form that needs to be understood about interactions.

Tasks include: justice, love, care, friendship, and daily service. There's a consumptive end, but it doesn't require the user to view it as consumption. It's about justice, novelty, love, friendship, and intimacy over.

The Argue Machine

Thing-centered

Voice machine that argue all the time. The object is based on objects' competencies, e.g., objects are more than their functions. This involves creating honest conversations out of one interaction with other contemporary domestic VAs. It could also work as an object that explains what the other objects are doing, and how they interact with the technology. How much anger does a patch user go to leave their friends angry does the tech have on them.

The Needly Artifact

Awareness towards the environment around us

Voice active interface that only wants when it's played like another person in your household. The user interacts with the virtual assistant, the object, and the environment, crossing the objects and pushing the object name. Also, there is no obvious word, and the user doesn't have to ask you in question before you can answer it.

In Alignment with the Universe

Think centered

As articulating is to the philosophy of mind (Dennett), the action being, you shift from a practice of not doing anything that is not consistent with the self-concept of the universe. Certain skills are associated with a person's actions. By changing the way people think about their relationship to the outside world, you can shift from an interaction that makes sense to one that is based on meaningful interactions.

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