The Curious Interface:
A Design Manifesto in Favor of Play
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Ambiguous displays invite interpretation. Mysterious signals demand investigation. Curious interfaces provoke play.

OUR BELIEFS

We believe that clarity in design is not always an advantage.

We must insist, on the contrary, that there is currently a crisis of natural interfaces, frank labels and straightforward instructions.

We contend that our opportunities to engage digitally are increasingly limited and pre-determined by technologies that *too clearly* announce their intentions and capabilities.

We argue that the user who instantly understands the purpose and processes of a technology is compelled to respond in specific, directed ways.

We have observed that, once learned, these habits preclude user experimentation, modification and intervention.

We are concerned that as ubiquitous computers become more responsive to their users and environments, users are becoming *less* responsive to the environments in which our technologies are distributed or embedded.

We support ambiguity, multiplicity, and open-endedness in design, so that we perceive, rather than receive, our technologies.

We believe that designers have a responsibility to encourage exploratory play.

OUR DEMANDS

We call for more curious interfaces.

We ask for more freedom in interpreting the purposes of distributed systems.

We long for embedded sensors that we must fully sense in return.

We demand a stop to the "interfaceless" interface. If we can't *perceive* the interface, we can't *play* with it.

We propose that our digital domains become mysterious once again so that our so that every user becomes a bold investigator, a wild interpreter and an inventive player.

OUR CALL TO ACTION

Help us teach smart environments how to play dumb now and again.

Join us in thwarting the coercive power of clarity.

Fight with us against the tyranny of predetermined interaction patterns.

Work with us to free your users from the constraints of the *illusion* of "multiple choice".

Let your users make meaningful choices instead.

Enable your technologies to surprise its users.

Enable your users to surprise the designers.

Join us in rejecting the clear interface, which we believe is merely a window to the designer's intentions.

Opt, instead, for an opaque interface, which will act as a mirror, reflecting different motives and modes of deployment with each user it engages.

When what surrounds us confounds us, when the computable tends toward the inscrutable, only then will users become strategic, resourceful, poetic actors. Through your design, implore your users: Be responsive!