

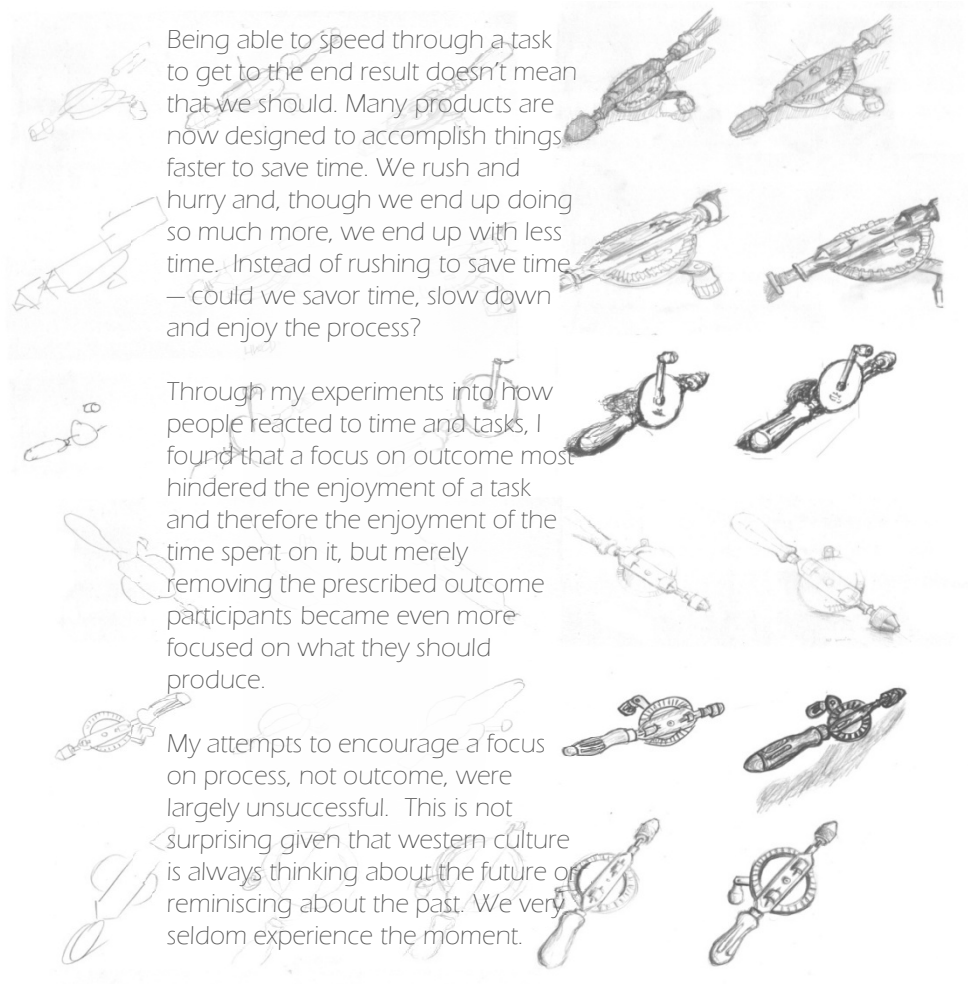
And you were given swiftness, not for haste,
Nor chiefly that you may go where you will
But in the rush of everything to waste
That you may have the power of standing still

-Robert frost



So many things to do - time runs by - posing us a complex problem, how to get everything done? We reach for calendars, PDA's and communication devices. We plan to the n^{th} degree and work "on-the-go". Yet, still there is never enough time. With all the time saving devices we have, there only comes more expectations of what is achievable.

The question: "How can we really save time?"— The answer can't be by doing things faster."



Being able to speed through a task to get to the end result doesn't mean that we should. Many products are now designed to accomplish things faster to save time. We rush and hurry and, though we end up doing so much more, we end up with less time. Instead of rushing to save time — could we savor time, slow down and enjoy the process?

Through my experiments into how people reacted to time and tasks, I found that a focus on outcome most hindered the enjoyment of a task and therefore the enjoyment of the time spent on it, but merely removing the prescribed outcome participants became even more focused on what they should produce.

My attempts to encourage a focus on process, not outcome, were largely unsuccessful. This is not surprising given that western culture is always thinking about the future or reminiscing about the past. We very seldom experience the moment.

Don't

Why do people say "don't" so much,
Whenever you try something new?
It's more fun doing than don'ting,
So why don't people say "do"?

Don't slurp your spaghetti
Don't kiss the cat
Don't butter your fingers
Don't walk like that
Don't wash your books
Don't bubble your tea
Don't jump on your sister
Don't goggle at me
Don't climb up the curtains
Don't feed the chair
Don't sleep in your wardrobe
Don't cut off your hair
Don't draw on the pillow
Don't change all the clocks
Don't water the phone
Don't hide my socks
Don't cycle up stairs
Don't write on the eggs
Don't chew you pajamas
Don't paint your legs...

Why do people say "don't" so much,
Whenever you try something new?
—Richard Edwards

It's more fun doing than don'ting, So
why don't people say "do"?

—Richard Edwards



To change thinking from focusing on the outcome to focusing on the process, it helps to ask, "When is outcome unimportant?" Child's play places no importance on the outcome is all about doing. When children play (not competitive play, but unorganized imaginative play) they are not worried about how good their make-believe story is or how pretty their mud pies are. It's all about getting to try out being something you're not, getting messy, enjoying the feeling of the mud. Stewart Brown, psychiatrist and founder of the National Institute of Play in Carmel, describes play as "an absorbing, apparently purposeless activity that provides enjoyment and a suspension of self-consciousness and sense of time". (Elkind 2001) (Lloyd 2009)

The challenge for designers is to provoke imaginative play, even though once we are older our culture and upbringing discourages it.

To **play** is:

To **do** not don't

To explore

To discover

To be surprised

To surprise

To encounter

To lose oneself

To enjoy

To do for the sake of doing

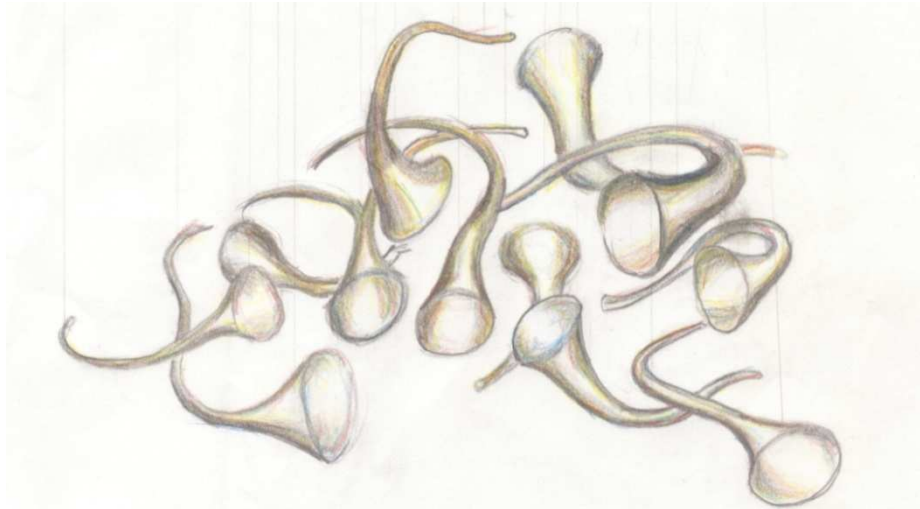
To experience 'now'

The act of playing needs no 'why', but the nature of play is in itself the action of why.

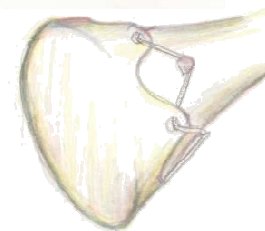
A space to encourage play

A space that makes 'now' enjoyable

A space which requires exploration and interaction to make it complete



A string is plucked. A sound behind me resonates. A drum is struck. Two strings are plucked... to my left and front volumes of sound encroach upon me. People begin to play. The rhythm and tones build around me – enclosing me – and then diminish – revealing to me the outside sounds. We wait for an unsuspecting passerby. I release the twang held in the string. They jump. And we laugh.



concept one

As you walk, you feel the change of space through your feet. The sand is being shaken so you sink in faster. You have to play differently, not linger, the sand castles don't stand up but instead melt back in to a flat surface.



To play with sand in a new way.
To discover new properties and
mesmerize yourself. A suspension
of reality.

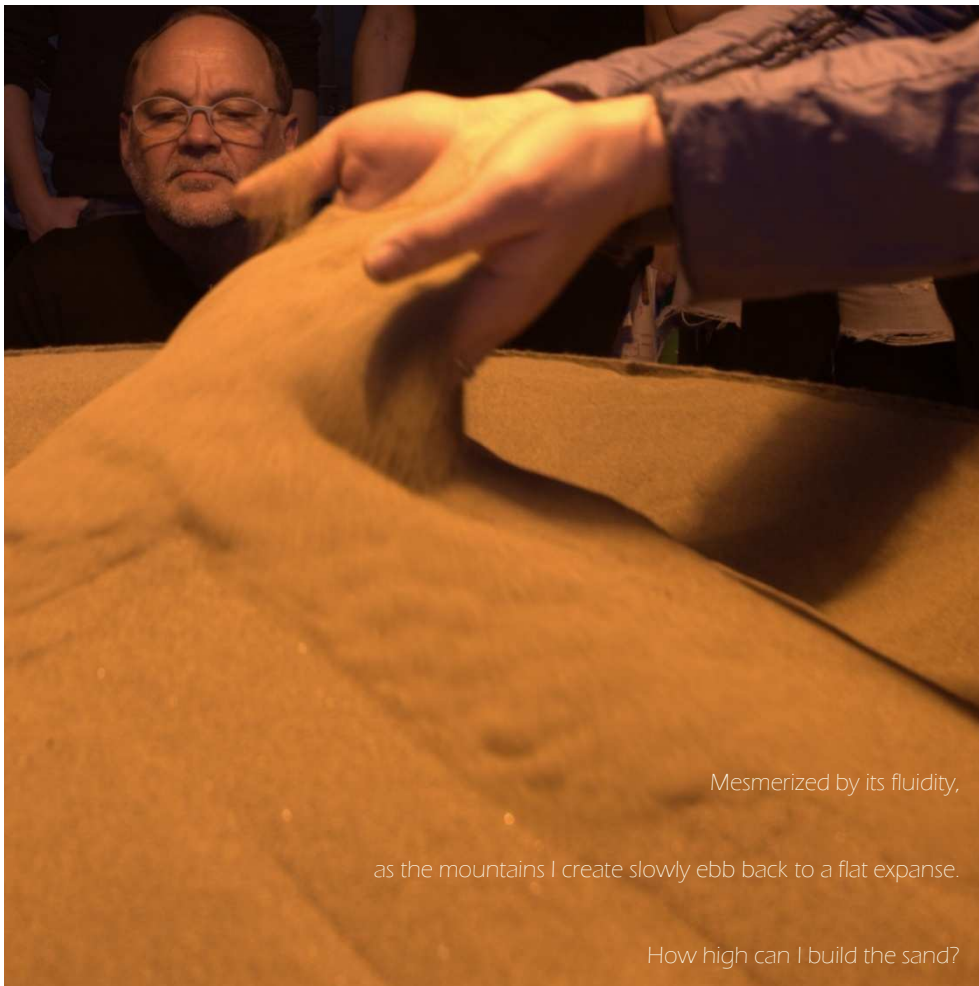


PLAYCE



Soft.

Smooth.



Mesmerized by its fluidity,

as the mountains I create slowly ebb back to a flat expanse.

How high can I build the sand?

How deep can I go ?



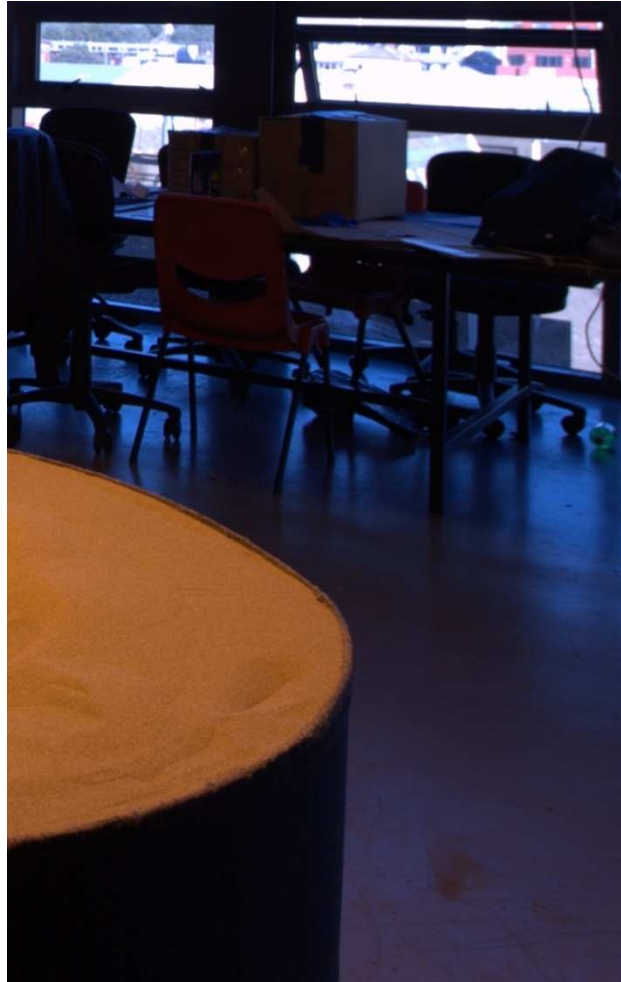


Captivated

as the tiny
particles flow
round each
other trying to
settle deeper.

Handfuls I trap
trickle through
every gap and
are gone.

Sound breaks
through
and the thoughts
come rushing
back. Things that
have to be done,
responsibilities
and expectations
once again
infiltrate my
mind. I step back
into the work
space
my eyes
beginning to
adjust back to
the blue dimness.





If only to live in a place where things were as simple as sand falling through your fingers.

I believe the space was successful in creating an experience free from an outcome focus - a space where people could enjoy the process of playing. Combining 'playce' with research I had done into space and light enabled me to separate it from the surrounding work area, adding hierarchy to the larger space, stressing the importance of play. I chose a work environment to contrast outcome and process focus.

Interestingly, the dynamics of the space during the presentation were very different from the rest of the time the space was up.

When I first set up the space and turned it on, everyone gravitated towards it. Hands were in the sand in a matter of seconds, usually as they were still asking, "Is it ok to touch it?" Every time I smoothed the sand off and walked away, I would come back to find patterns and holes. People couldn't resist playing. Even when asked not to touch, they would absentmindedly stop to trail their hands in the sand as they passed by. Holes were dug to see how deep it was and how it was vibrated. It was explored and played with purely for enjoyment, there was no wrong way and the outcome didn't matter.





However, during the presentation, it was hard to get people to play. All of a sudden no one wanted to step forward in case they did something wrong. Just the presence of an “authority figure” made us slip back into outcome-based thought.

Somehow the play needed to be even more inviting. The “feeling of now” needed to be even more desirable than the “fear of doing it wrong” or the environment needed to be safe enough that people didn’t fear doing it wrong.

I still, however, only see this as another step in my research. This ‘experiment’ again helped me understand play better and how sensitive it is to pressure. I hope it helped people think a little bit about how we live, play and experience time.

What I am interested in now is no longer contrasting play to tasks but integrating it. Play lets us enjoy time because there is no outcome. How can we enjoy time while having an outcome? Can we take important aspects of play and integrate them in to tasks and devices to help people shift focus to the 'now'?



I think one path of investigating this could look into and build on Matt Jer's work "disturbing the expected"—taking the everyday task and object and adding an element of exploration through disturbing what they expect. This is only a way to grab people's attention and make them notice. You can't force them to think. But regardless of the means, subtle or unsubtle, the essence is to get people to shift their focus from what they are doing, to looking at what they are doing - the way their hands move as they do a task or the feeling of muscles tightening and releasing as they smile - the way they turn a page.



Throughout this research experience, I have found myself analyzing in a new way. I have always observed and analyzed; however, I now find myself staying in the place of observation for longer. Analyzing the moment for the moment - not in relation to the future, or the past, or to what I constitute at good or bad. I find myself observing, instead of analyzing. I can now observe my thoughts as well as analyze whether they are good or not and why I thought them. I observe the feeling of typing and the pressure of each finger on the keys, the patterns words make and the fingers I use. I notice the writing down of words, instead of the essay or the sentence. I have added to my experience of life a new aspect where I can enjoy just watching what I do before adding any critical analysis.





In some sense my observation became the culmination of my research – to observe the moment and experience now. By observing, I can savor time with no regards to the outcome while still accomplishing the everyday.

The challenge ... to provoke time-savoring observation and give life an aspect of play.

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