22 Anthropomorphic Aesthetics

Friday, March 19, 2021

Today:

Discussion. 2 WILDLY different aesthetics for your project.
> On Sunday, in your critiques, help each other re-imagine your projects. Push outside your comfort zone.

Anthropomorphic Effects
> Anthropomorphic Form
> Hip-waist ratio
> Baby-face Bias
> Uncanny Valley

Anthropomorphic Form

A tendency to find forms that appear humanoid or exhibit humanlike characteristics appealing.

Humans are predisposed to perceive certain forms and patterns as humanlike—specifically, forms and patterns that resemble faces and body proportions. This tendency, when applied to design, is an effective means of getting attention, establishing a positive affective tone for interactions, and forming a relationship based, in part, on emotional appeal. To explore how anthropomorphic form can be applied, consider the design of three bottles.

The classic 1915 Coca-Cola "contour" bottle, often referred to as the "Mae West" bottle due to its distinctly feminine proportions, was a break with the straight and relatively featureless bottles of its day. In addition to its novelty, however, the bottle benefited from a number of anthropomorphic projections such as health, vitality, sexiness, and femininity, attributes that appealed to the predominantly female buyers of the time. The Mae West comparison is apt, because like the actress, the Coke bottle demanded (and got) the attention of all passersby.

Anthropomorphic forms do not necessarily need to look like a face or body to be compelling. Consider the Adiri Natural Nurser baby bottle. The bottle is designed to look and feel like a female breast, and not surprisingly it elicits the positive associations people have with breastfeeding. The affective tone set by the bottle is one of naturalness and caring. What parent would choose a traditional, inorganic-looking bottle when such a supple, natural-looking substitute for the real thing was available? This, of course, does not mean the bottle performs better than nonanthropomorphic bottle designs, but it does mean the general inference of most people, based on its appearance, is that it does perform better.

Lastly, the Method Dish Soap bottle, nicknamed the "dish butler," brings a more abstract anthropomorphic form to bear. The bottle transforms the perception of dish soap bottles from utilitarian containers to be hidden beneath counters to sculptural pieces to be displayed proudly atop counters. The large bulbous head triggers baby-face bias cognitive wiring, reinforcing its aesthetic appeal as well as associations such as safety, honesty, and purity. Labeling is applied in what would be the chest region, with a round logo on top, giving it the appearance of a kind of superhero costume. It is more than a dish soap bottle—it is a helper, an art piece, and a symbol of sophistication and cleanliness.

Consider anthropomorphic forms to attract attention and establish emotional connections. Favor more abstract versus realistic anthropomorphic forms, as realistic depictions often decrease, not increase, aesthetic appeal. Use feminine body proportions to elicit associations of sexuality and vitality. Use round anthropomorphic forms to elicit babylike associations, and more angular forms to elicit masculine, aggressive associations.

See also Baby-Face Bias, Contour Bias, Uncanny Valley, and Waist-to-Hip Ratio.

Empirical literature on anthropomorphic design is surprisingly nascent. See, for example, "From Seduction to Fulfillment: The Use of Anthropomorphic Form in Design" by Carl DiSalvo and Francine Gemperle, *Proceedings of the 2003 International Conference on Designing Pleasurable Products and Interfaces*, 2003, p. 67–72.

"Mae West"

1899-1902 1900-1916 1915 1957 1961 1991 1993 2007

Coca-Cola

Mary Jane "Mae" West (August 17, 1893 – November 22, 1980) was an American actress, singer, playwright, screenwriter, and sex symbol.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mae_West

https://www.linkedin.com/learning/universal-principles-of-design/waist-to-hip-ratio?u=42275329
Discusses Mae West bottle design in terms of waist to hip ratio.

Adiri Natural Nurser. Designed by Whipsaw Inc
http://www.yankodesign.com/2008/12/04/better-bottle-for-baby-adiri-natural-nurser-review/

petal vent

soft
supple
realistic

Nanobebe Flexy Silicone Bottles, 3 Pack, Gray, 9oz	Medela Breast Milk Collection & Storage Bottles - ...	Tommee Tippee Advanced Anti Colic Newborn Bottle...	Boon Nursh Reusable Silicone Pouch Bottles - 8...	Goolrc Baby Silicone Bottle Colic Air Vent Wide Ne...	Dr. Brown's Options+ Baby Bottles, 4 Ounce,...	Bab... Colic A... Neck N...
$24.99	$13.99	$19.61	$31.73	$20.98	$32.01	$17.69
Walmart	Walmart - Lullaby...	Amazon.com	Walmart - DARY...	Walmart - ArtmyH...	Walmart - Avenue...	Walmar...
★★★★★ (5)	★★★★★ (1,030)	Free shipping	★★★★★ (341)	Free shipping	★★★★★ (989)	Free sh...
	Free shipping		Free shipping		Free shipping	

About this page ⓘ

Old bottle design, from 1950's and before

Evenflo Classic Clear Bpa-Free	Fillable Plastic Baby Bottle Baby	Dr. Brown's Natural Flow	Natursutten Glass Baby
$3.99	$1.74	$13.59	$30.00
⚲ Target	Walmart	⚲ Target	The Tot
★★★☆★ (34)	★★★★★ (9)	★★★★☆ (4k+)	★★★★☆ (14)

The Method Dish Soap bottle (left) designed by Karim Rashid put the Method brand on the map. Though not free of functional deficiencies (e.g., leaking valve), its abstract anthropomorphic form gave it a sculptural, affective quality not previously found in soap bottles. Contrast it with its disappointing replacement (right).

A

B

TOP heavy

Seems like more easy to squeeze

Which would you rather buy?

Which would you rather buy?
A) left
B) right **95%**

easy to squeeze
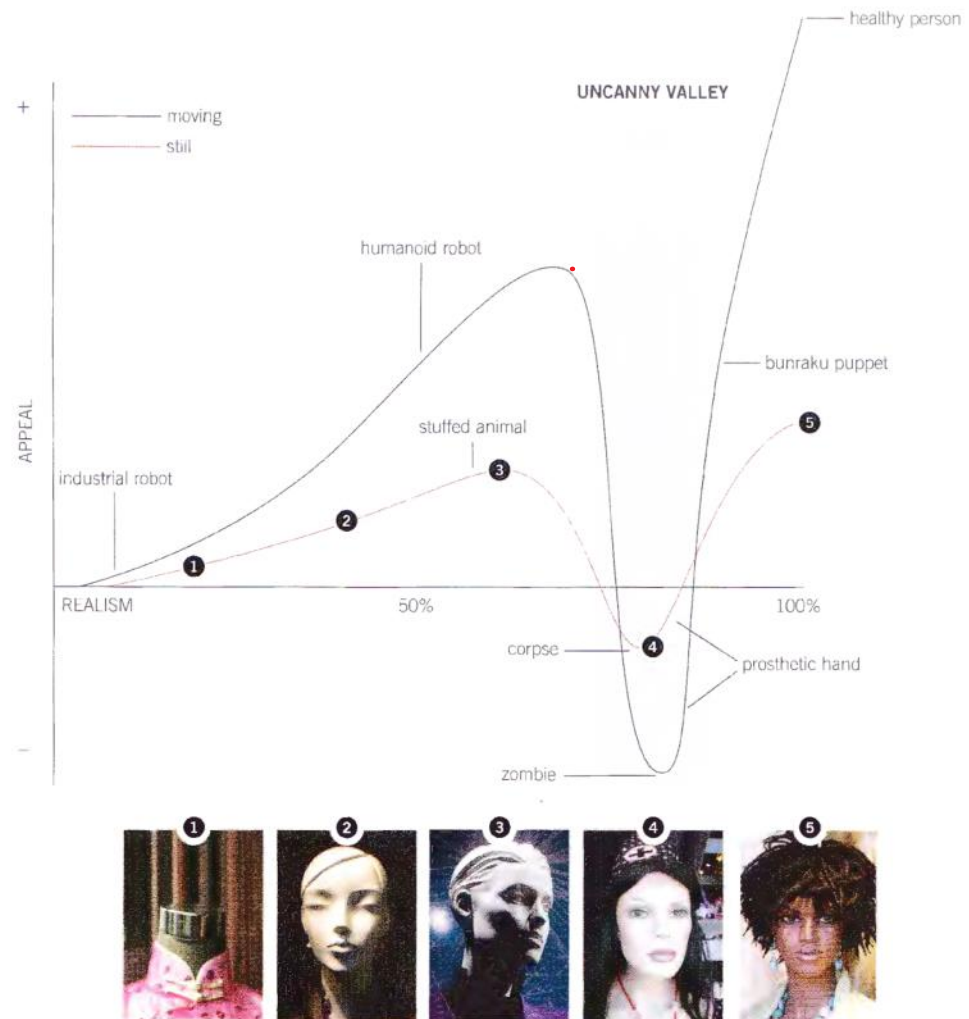
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Uncanny Valley

UNCANNY VALLEY

Masahiro Mori's classic graph plots familiarity or appeal of an anthropomorphic form against its degree of realism. The uncanny valley resides to the right of the continuum, dipping sharply just before the likeness of a genuine healthy person. The mannequin images illustrate the benefits of abstraction and total realism in depicting human likenesses, as well as the perils of the uncanny valley.

https://www.polygon.com/2017/4/6/15207502/mass-effect-andromeda-patch-eyes-comparison
Playstation 4 game: "

It may seem like a subtle thing, but the eyes have gone from looking like they were painted onto the character to having actual depth and expression."

Uncanny Valley

Anthropomorphic forms are appealing when they are dissimilar or identical to humans, but unappealing when they are very similar to humans.

Applies to other natural forms; flowers, plants etc.

Anthropomorphic forms are generally appealing to humans. However, when a form is very close but not identical to a healthy human—as with a mannequin or computer-generated renderings of people—the form tends to become distinctly unappealing. This sharp decline in appeal is called the "uncanny valley," a reference to the large valley or dip in the now classic graph presented by Masahiro Mori in 1970.[1] Though some have disputed the existence of the effect altogether, attributing any negative affective response to a simple lack of familiarity with artificial and rendered likenesses, more recent empirical research suggests the uncanny valley is a real phenomenon. The cause likely regards innate, subconscious mechanisms evolved for pathogen avoidance—that is, detecting and avoiding people who are sick or dead.[2]

Although a full understanding of the variables required to take an anthropomorphic likeness into the uncanny valley has not yet been realized, some conditions have been identified. The strength of the negative reaction seems to correspond to the fidelity of the likeness—a highly realistic likeness that is identifiable as artificial will evoke a stronger negative reaction than a less realistic likeness. Abnormally proportioned or positioned facial features, asymmetry of facial features, subtleties of eye movement, and unnatural skin complexions are all sufficient conditions to trigger uncanny valley effects.

Although the uncanny valley is generally observed by animators and roboticists, there are plenty of examples where the caveats of the principle are not abided. For example, director Robert Zemeckis decided to depict computer-generated characters with a high degree of realism for the movie *The Polar Express*. The resulting effect was both impressively realistic and eerie. The movie raised awareness of what is called "dead eye syndrome," where the lack of eye movements called *saccades* made the characters look zombielike, taking the Polar Express straight through the uncanny valley. Another example is found in retail contexts. There is a general perception among retailers that the effectiveness of mannequins is a function of their realism. However, barring a mannequin that is indistinguishable from a real person, the uncanny valley suggests that retailers would be better served by more abstract versus highly realistic mannequins.

Consider the uncanny valley when representing and animating anthropomorphic forms. Opt for more abstract versus realistic anthropomorphic forms to achieve maximum acceptance. Negative reaction is more sensitive to motion than appearance, so be particularly cognizant of jerky or unnatural movements when animating anthropomorphic bodies and faces.

See also Anthropomorphic Form, Threat Detection, and Top-Down Lighting Bias.

[1] The seminal work on the uncanny valley is "Bukimi No Tani [The Uncanny Valley]" by Masahiro Mori, *Energy*, 1970, vol. 7(4), p. 33–35.

[2] See, for example, "Too Real for Comfort? Uncanny Responses to Computer Generated Faces" by Karl MacDorman, Robert Greena, Chin-Chang Hoa, et al., *Computers in Human Behavior*, May 2009, vol. 25(3), p. 695–710; and "The Uncanny Valley: Effect of Realism on the Impression of Artificial Human Faces" by Jun'ichiro Seyama and Ruth Nagayama, *Presence*, Aug. 2007, vol. 16(4), p. 337–351.

Straandbeest
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jansen's_linkage

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LewVEF2B_pM

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