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Emoji Disorder

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EMOJI DISORDER

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B.Arch Undergraduate Thesis Prep Document
Syracuse University School of Architecture

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01. STATEMENT

The introduction of emoji to language creates a universal form of communication through expression. The thesis posits that with the contemporary context of a rising digital and visual language, the elastic architectural design language has the capability to be updated. The updated design language is translated from the existing context of emoji and reflects its pragmatics and characteristics. The duck, based on form, and the decorated shed, based on signage, are no longer adequate to project meaning on architecture. The symbolic language of emojis calls for a new model: the duckerated shed. This thesis will use the house typology as a testing ground to test this new language.

“The language of emoji applies the decorated shed to the duck: another layer of language is encoded onto a form, one of image and form and the other of linguistic meaning.”

Joanna Grant, “Emoji: Image, Meaning, Form” in Duck, Duck, Shed on Paprika!
02. BACKGROUND

LANGUAGE

PAREIDOLIA
The progression of language has moved from symbolic to alphabet to emoji. The contemporary language includes both the pictogram and the alphabet. Both are incongruent but one has the ability to compliment the other.
In comparing verbal and emoji languages, phonology does not apply to emoji and the semantics, or implied meaning, from language becomes semiotics, the understanding of signs and symbols.

According to Umberto Eco, denotation is the surface meaning of architecture while connotation is the deeper meaning. Connotation becomes what communicates as emojis are applied to architecture.
02. BACKGROUND
PAREIDOLIA

Applying emojis to architecture allows for a graphic immediacy of understanding. This quick reading of faces can be explored through pareidolia, which means the perception of apparently significant patterns or recognizable images, especially faces, in random or accidental arrangements of shapes and lines.
Pareidolia Meets the Digital Dialect

Initially associated with mannerist paintings, in which realistically proportionate faces are depicted of alternate objects, viewing pareidolia through the lens of emojis allows abstracted forms to be read as simplified faces.
03. INVESTIGATIONS

EMOJI
PAREIDOLIA ANALYSIS
BUILDING BLOCKS
KIT OF PARTS
A deconstruction and proportional study of emoji allowed for a greater understanding of emoji elements to inform design. Profiles, emotive and facial elements and additional features form the ensemble of parts. This study is based on the contemporary emoji by Microsoft on the Windows platform from Unicode. The first emojis were created by Shigetaka Kurita in 1999 for Japan’s mobile carrier DOCOMO and now Unicode contains different versions of emojis across several platforms.⁷
Ordinary elements become extraordinary when viewed through the lens of pareidolia. One mutual characteristic between the ordinary houses and the emoji is that their profiles do not matter and only the elements within foster communication. The profiles give the sense of scale and character.
Pareidolia - Catalogue of Parts

The catalogue of parts shows what architectural elements can equate to facial/emoji elements such as eyes, eyebrows, and mouths. When architectural elements are separated from their context (face in terms of emoji or elevation in the language of architecture), the denotation still stands and the connotation of each part become ambiguous and illegible.
03. INVESTIGATIONS
BUILDING BLOCKS

The process of translation to emoji started as more literal. By simplifying the emoji parts through fundamental geometries, the original emoji becomes spatial only through extrusions. This drawing depicts how the translation presents the original emoji.
Simplified geometries were given and assigned to each type of eye and mouth. The centered, slanted, and squint eye relate to the parts that were found and catalogued in the pareidolia images. The blocks of eyes themselves do not connote specific meaning and are only superimposed with assigned denotation. The same happens with the simplified geometries of the mouths.
Emoji Mix-up

When the blocks are combined and reorganized, emojis were formed which do not exist in the Unicode. The hide-and-seek nature of this layout allows for new configurations of emoticons to emerge. Because of the tetris way of arranging the parts, the blocks of eyes may become mouths and blocks of mouths may become eyes.
03. INVESTIGATIONS

KIT OF PARTS

The thirty Emojis on the right were chosen from different categories from the Unicode showing a range of expressions and emotions.
The kit of parts were applied to buildings with a set of rules: to create a profile, add the elements, and refine the form, manipulating the extrusions and adding any accessory elements. The emoticons were to have two primary sides as emojis and two secondary sides as ambiguous forms.

Kit of Parts and Their Rules

As Joanna Grant wrote in her article, "Emoji: Image, Meaning, Form," the placement of BIM elements in building models is similar to the pragmatics of emojis. This transformation took the elements of emojis and translated them into functioning building elements.
04. PROPOSAL
PROCESS
CONTEXT
04. PROPOSAL PROCESS

We will apply this new digital and visual language onto architecture through a process of translation. Emojis will be projected onto built forms as a whole and not limited to parts. The diagrams shown are eight from the chosen thirty emojis.

The *Emoticonstructs* on the following page are shown in frontal oblique projection to emphasize the one-sided quality of emojis. The designed composition of emoji elements is abstracted and translated into architectural elements. The profile of the forms is designed to enhance the emotion of the emotion. This process will work between the design of the overall form and the design of the elements, expanding to the design of the interior, to inform the development of the project as it moves forward next semester. The *Emoticonstructs* will be arranged in a row of multiple houses, allowing the faces to be read in series as emojis are read in context to others on a keyboard.
04. PROPOSAL

CONTEXT

The program will be rental properties along a boardwalk. The context was chosen for its high visibility, heavy foot traffic, the temporality of inhabitants emotive identities, and the ability to easily compare the Emoticonstructs.
Atlantic City, Ventnor City, and the Boardwalk

A site along the boardwalk was chosen for its linear reading of frontal elevations. The Atlantic City Boardwalk is over 4 miles long along the coast stretching from Atlantic City to Ventnor City, which is adjacent to Atlantic City. The boardwalk has high foot traffic because of the casino activity in Atlantic City and there are private beach houses and hotels along the boardwalk as one walks south towards Ventnor City.

Ventnor City Boardwalk

At the end of the boardwalk in Ventnor City, there are a series of empty plots of land along the boardwalk. We propose to use this area as a testing ground for these Emoticonstruct rentals. The entire length of the empty lots along the tail of the boardwalk is roughly 2,125 ft. We propose to design a master plan for this development of Emoticonstructs.
Architects often use domestic houses as manifestoes for new architectural design languages. To name a few, Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye, Robert Venturi’s Vanna Venturi House, and Peter Eisenman's House VI. Thus, this thesis will utilize domesticity as the testing ground for this proposed updated architectural language. As emoji are meant to represent a temporary emotion of the individual, we chose a site in which the building’s inhabitants are not permanent: rentable homes. Having the houses situated along a boardwalk in New Jersey with the emoji elevations facing the water opens dialogues between the houses and those on the boardwalk and beach.

THE DUCKERATED SHEDS: DUCKS IN A ROW
3. Steven Pinker. “Linguistics as a Window to Understanding the Brain,” released September, 2011 at The Floating University, video, 56:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_B_ONJlEeE.
6. Ibid.
7. Unicode, “Full Emoji List, v11.0.”
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
The article took the stance of arguing the importance of characters in objects. The fictional, humorous, emotional, and adaptable quality of character in architecture is exemplified. Metaphors of characteristic objects could be a potential tool in the architectural discourse.

Marcel Danesi, a semiotician at University of Toronto lectured regarding the transition of language pragmatics. In the lecture he highlighted how language and human brain works when encountering emoji, the contemporary visual emotive language. He tied emoji back to how human started communicating, via cave paintings and symbols.

This book investigates the language of emoji from its contemporary use to the understanding and future trends of emoji. Danesi also wrote about how the emoji language use also has grammar, particularly in text messages. Emoji, as a rising language also presents its obstacles to its users when communicating.

Eco wrote about the meanings of architecture and the understanding of symbols. Architecture is not meant to communicate thus it is difficult but by understanding the difference between surface meaning and symbolic and hidden meaning, architecture may be communicative as well.

This text illustrates the change in the architectural discipline (from line drawings to BIM software modeling) and compare with the rise of emoji as a visual language. The paradigm shift in both architecture and language seem to have multiple common grounds and perhaps other interpretations of architecture can be found learning from emojis.
An article that looks at the humor in architecture, especially in Japanese cultural context. Nirvana House, a white house with subtle facial features in Japan designed by Aida-Doi Architects was introduced in the article. The Japanese carpenters’ method (okoshi-ezu) of making architectural models to better understand the construction of a building is indicated here as well.

This excerpt indicates the possibility and capability of architecture to communicate. However, as a medium, architecture is difficult to be communicative because of its bounded quality. Thus, by introducing the swirling between fiction and non-fiction, architecture may be best to be communicative.

This text described and investigated the notion of faces on building facades. Those faces are metaphors onto the building and thus created multiple codings onto architecture, which is one of the most significant features of Postmodernism architecture. Kazumasa Yamashita’s Face House was mentioned in the text as a reference as too much of a literal metaphor.

Provides backdrop for the history, origin, cultural significance, and impact to contemporary society. The text source also explicates and exemplifies the use of contemporary emoji (circa 1990). This text source includes visual materials.

An example of a more literal depiction of a face as a building facade. The source includes relevance to Postmodernism and symbolism of the use of faces in architecture.

A study looking into the evolution of emojis used in conversation and whether different orientations of the emojis change the emotional reactions. Emojis typed out as such ‘:-)’ tend to have less of an emotional reaction than emojis which are oriented in a vertical orientation, the same orientation as one of the emojis change the emotional reactions. Emojis typed out as such ‘:-)’ tend to have less of an emotional reaction than emojis which are oriented in a vertical orientation, the same orientation as one would view an actual human face.

Pinkser, Steven. “Linguistics as a Window to Understanding the Brain,” released September, 2011 at The Floating University, video, 50:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_B.ONJIlxeE.
This video introduced to the basics of how language works. With four primary aspects, phonology, semantics, pragmatics, and grammar, respectively. Each of these four aspects represents the sound of a language, the meaning, the use and application and the rules, respectively.

Sedlock wrote about an upcoming trend of emerging architects experimenting with exaggerated figural forms and narratives. These trends are traced back to the elasticity provided by the discipline of architecture and by rejecting the binary, architecture may have multiple codes of meaning and possibly build new audiences.

The increased use of emojis is changing the way we communicate. Looking at emojis creates a similar emotional reaction in the brain as looking at the emotion on a human face. The use of emojis in conversation changes our speech patterns. We use them to enhance plain text and give a statement greater meaning.

A book questioning the role of populism in architecture. Must a successful project meet the public’s wishes? Trends and expectations of the public may create a certain expectation for architecture. The text looks at whether designs should oppose popular trends or adapt to them.

Before the contemporary and world wide emoji system, the Japanese poets and writers used simple brushstrokes to create the first “emojit”. Emojis, as pictograms, means both ‘drawing’ and ‘character’. The emojis first appeared in private mails.

Somol illustrated in this article a methodology of designing architecture to maximize graphic immediacy step by step. The significance of rules when designing in figural, decorative, and formal language was emphasized and investigated in the text.

The complete library of contemporary emoji across all platforms. Includes detailed information of a standardized pictogram catalog. Each emoji has its own unique code and the code is recognizable across any social networking or technology company’s platforms although each has its own proprietary set of emojis.

The anthropomorphism of product design allows the consumer to better relate to the object. When seeing faces through pareidolia, symbolic meaning of the object aligns with the viewer’s self-image. Effects of culture and self-congruency affect the viewer’s range of interpretation. Designing to make object more relatable to the user elicits greater pleasure from the consumer.

This excerpt documents and introduces the Face House in Kyoto, Japan by Yamashita built in the 1970s. The literal and peculiar facade of a human face with distinctive facial features were considered unprecedented and yet successful in terms of its context.
Full Names: Doria Miller & Irving Shen
Title: Emoji Disorder
Subtitle: Using a Digital Dialect to Enhance Architectural Communication

Thesis Advisor: Gregory Corso
Advisory Group: Ordinary Conditions

Thesis Statement:
The introduction of emoji to language creates a universal form of communication through expression. This progressing visual language calls for an update to architectural language. The duck, based on form, and the decorated shed, based on signage, are no longer adequate to project meaning on architecture. The symbolic language of emojis calls for a new model: the duckerated shed. Applying emoji to architecture allows for a graphic immediacy of understanding. This quick reading of faces is explored through pareidolia\(^1\). Initially associated with mannerist paintings, depicting realistically proportionate faces of alternate objects, viewing pareidolia through the lens of emojis allows objects to be read as simplified faces.

The thesis will apply this new digital and visual language onto architecture through a process of translation. Emojis will be projected onto built forms. The designed composition of emoji elements will be abstracted and translated into architectural elements. The profile of the forms will be designed to enhance the emotion of the emoticon. The Emoticonstructs will be arranged in a row of multiple houses, allowing the faces to be read in series as emojis are read in context to others on a keyboard. The project will include the detailed design of multiple houses and a master plan of the proposed development.

\(^1\) The perception of apparently significant patterns or recognizable images, especially faces, in random or accidental arrangements of shapes and lines - Oxford Dictionary

Image Caption: The Emoticonstructs