Emoji Disorder

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DORIA MILLER & IRVING SHEN
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THIS THESIS POSITS WITH THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT OF A RISING DIGITAL AND VISUAL DIALECT, THE EMOJI, THE ELASTIC ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN LANGUAGE HAS THE CAPABILITY TO BE UPDATED. THE DUCK, BASED ON FORM, AND THE DECORATED SHED, BASED ON SIGNAGE, ARE NO LONGER ADEQUATE TO PROJECT MEANING ON ARCHITECTURE. THE EMOJI IS NEITHER PURELY SYMBOL NOR SIGN AND THUS IT BECOMES A FUSION OF THE TWO: A DUCKERATED SHED. BY REFERENCING A FAMILIAR LANGUAGE RATHER THAN CANONICAL ARCHITECTURAL PRECEDENTS, THOSE OUTSIDE OF THE DISCIPLINE CAN BETTER RELATE TO THE BUILDINGS THEY INHABIT.
IN VERBAL CONVERSATIONS, ONLY 7% OF WHAT WE COMPREHEND IS FROM THE PHYSICAL WORDS SPOKEN. AS DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS LACK FACIAL CUES AND INTONATION, MESSAGES WITH SOLELY IDEOGRAPHMS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE MISINTERPRETED.

Albert Mehrabian, *Nonverbal Communication* (Chicago, IL: Aldine-Atherton, 1972)
COMMUNICATION
THEN TO NOW

Language was initially symbolic, eventually progressing to the alphabet. Contemporary digital communication includes both the pictogram and the alphabet. Both are incongruent but the emoji has the ability to complement and enhance the other.
In architectural communication, Eco states denotation is the surface meaning while connotation is the deeper meaning. Emojis are able to communicate architecturally with connotation.
Digitally, the characters which create different languages are organized by the Unicode Consortium. Unicode is a non-profit organization which provides a unique number for every character, whether that is a letter in an alphabet or an emoji, so these characters can be read across platforms, programs, or languages. Without this system, an emoji sent via an Apple device would be illegible on an Android phone, etc.

In Japanese, the term ‘emoji’ translates to picture (e) character (moji). Though there are some cultural discrepancies among certain emojis, the visual representation of real objects allows emojis to be the closest thing to a universally understood language. There is no translation needed to comprehend emojis as there is across verbal languages.

In 2015, Oxford Dictionaries word of the year was the ‘face with tears of joy’ emoji. Not only was the chosen word a pictogram, but one of the most prestigious dictionaries in the world chose it. As emojis influence digital conversations, they should be applied to architectural language as well.

Though emojis are becoming increasingly widespread, they become less successful as a universal form of communication when they attempt to work as their own language. Communicating with purely emojis is considered ‘substitutive text’. From *Pride and Prejudice & Emojis*, above, the novel is translated to emoji sentence equivalents. Without the textual reference, the emoji phrases become confusing and nearly illegible.

Written entirely in symbols, *Book from the Ground*, above, follows the day in the life of an office worker. The entire book, front, back, and even publishing information is represented as symbols. It is meant to be a book that anyone can understand, yet it is widely misinterpreted. In order for symbols to enhance communication, they need to augment their context rather than replace it entirely.

‘It is a truth universally acknowledged

that a single man in possession of a good fortune

must be in want of a wife.’

Written entirely in symbols, *Book from the Ground*, above, follows the day in the life of an office worker. The entire book, front, back, and even publishing information is represented as symbols. It is meant to be a book that anyone can understand, yet it is widely misinterpreted. In order for symbols to enhance communication, they need to augment their context rather than replace it entirely.
PAREIDOLIA

n.

THE PERCEPTION OF APPARENTLY SIGNIFICANT PATTERNS OR RECOGNIZABLE IMAGES, USUALLY FACES, IN RANDOM OR ACCIDENTAL ARRANGEMENTS OF SHAPES AND LINES
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.
EYES

NOSE
HUMAN INTERVENTION

MOUTH
EYELIDS
INTENTIONAL

Nirvana House
Aida-Doi Architects

Knuezburg Tower
John Hedjuk

FACES

Face House
Kazumasa Yamashita

Carlos Ramos Pavilion
Alvaro Siza
A PLACE IN ARCHITECTURE

THE SAME PARTS OF THE BRAIN ARE ACTIVATED WHEN LOOKING AT A GIVEN EMOJI EMOTION AND THE SAME HUMAN EMOTION. APPLYING EMOJIS TO ARCHITECTURE CREATES A BUILDING TYPOLOGY WHICH COMMUNICATES ITS PROGRAM THROUGH THE USER’S EMPATHETIC REACTION TO THE ARCHITECTURE. ARCHITECTURE PARLANTE AIMED PROJECT A BUILDING’S FUNCTION OR IDENTITY. THIS WAS LATER REVITALIZED WITH THE EMERGENCE OF POSTMODERNISM.

Charles Jencks’ definition of Postmodernism:

“DOUBLE-CODING: THE COMBINATION OF MODERN TECHNIQUES WITH SOMETHING ELSE (USUALLY TRADITIONAL BUILDING) IN ORDER FOR ARCHITECTURE TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE PUBLIC AND A CONCERNED MINORITY, USUALLY THE ARCHITECTS.”

“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

AS EMOJI ARE BOTH LANGUAGE AND SYMBOL, THEY WOULD NOT FIT INTO EITHER THE DUCK OR DECORATED SHED CATEGORY. WHEN INTRODUCING EMOJI TO ARCHITECTURE, THE DUCK AND THE DECORATED SHED ARE NO LONGER ADEQUATE TO PROJECT MEANING ONTO ARCHITECTURE. THE SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE OF EMOJIS CALLS FOR A HYBRID MODEL: THE DUCKERATED SHED.
THE FACE HOUSE BY KAZUMASA YAMASHITA IN KYOTO IS A HOME FOR A COUPLE WHO ARE GRAPHIC DESIGNERS. THE HOUSE ACTS AS A GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THEIR PROFESSION AND IS ENTHUSIASTICALLY ACCEPTED BY THE RESIDENTS.
IN CONTRAST, THE KREUZBERG TOWER BY JOHN HEJDUK WAS DESIGNED WITH A FACE FOR A FACADE BUT THE DESIGN WAS ULTIMATELY CHANGED TO A MORE MUTED REPRESENTATION OF A FACE.
ACCORDING TO THE “FULL EMOJI LIST, V. 12.0” BY UNICODE, THERE ARE 102 EMOJIS UNDER THE “FACE” CATEGORY. THE CATALOG ON THE RIGHT SHOWS ALL 11 CATEGORIES WITH AN EXCEPTION OF THE PENDING “YAWNING FACE”. THIS THESIS SELECTED 40 EMOJIS, INDICATED BY THE ONES HIGHLIGHTED WITH COLORS ON THE RIGHT. THE EMOTION OF EACH EMOJI ADVERTISES THE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES ONE CAN RECEIVE FROM THE ASSIGNED ARCHITECTURAL PROGRAM.

PROJECT SCOPE

*All emojis shown are from the Windows platform.
EMOTICONSTRUCTS FROM EACH CATEGORY ARE ASSIGNED WITH COLORS THAT RESONATES WITH THEIR EMOTIONS. THE ASSIGNED COLORS ARE THEN APPLIED TO THE DESIGNED EMOTICONSTRUCTS. FACIAL ELEMENTS ARE TRANSLATED INTO ARCHITECTURAL PARTS, FOR INSTANCE, EYEBROWS BECOME ROOFS AND EYES BECOME WINDOWS. LASTLY, THE PERIMETERS OF THE EMOTICONSTRUCTS ARE CURVED, THE FRONTAL READINGS OF FACES ARE IMMEDIATE AND THE EMOTICONSTRUCTS MAY HAVE MULTIPLE FACES AS THEIR FACADES TO MAXIMIZE VISIBILITY.
tongue

face savoring food
Pizzeria

squinting face with tongue
Compost Center

zany face
Gag Gift Shop

winking face with tongue
Adult Store

winking face with tongue
Adult Store

Plan

Section
Film Studio

Fire Station

Art Gallery

Police Station

Plan

Section

neutral-skeptical
Relieved face
Spa

Drooling face
Baby Food Store

Sleeping face
Hotel

Pensive face
Funeral Home

Plan
Section
unwell

- face with head-bandage
  - Physical Therapy

- dizzy face
  - Club

- exploding head
  - Laboratory

- nauseated face
  - Emergency Care

nauseated face
Emergency Care
accessories

- cowboy hat face: Saloon
- partying face: Party Store
- nerd face: Optometrist
- face with monocle: Bookstore
Plan

Section

flushed face
Public Restrooms & Lockers

confused face
Information Center

pleading face
Animal Shelter

tearful face
Financial Assistant

flushed face
Public Restrooms & Lockers
negative

face with steam from nose
Anger Management

angry face
Dog Obedience School

face with symbols on mouth
Poker Game Hall

smiling face with horns
Jail

Plan

Section

smiling face with horns
Jail

64
PROGRAMMATIC RELATIONSHIPS
TO BALANCE THE TONGUE-AND-CHEEK QUALITY OF THE PROJECT, A PHYSICAL CONTEXT IS NEEDED TO CREATE FRICTION AND ENHANCE THE COMPREHENSION OF THE PROJECT. THE FOUR SITE CRITERIA ARE: VISIBILITY, PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY, AND WALKABILITY. WHILE EMOTICONSTRUCTS CAN BECOME PART OF A NARRATIVE OF ANY GIVEN CONTEXT, WE CHOSE ROOSEVELT ISLAND, LOCATED ON THE EAST RIVER BETWEEN MANHATTAN AND QUEENS IN NEW YORK, AS A SITE. USING ROOSEVELT ISLAND AS A TESTING GROUND FOR THESE EMOTICONSTRUCTS ALLOWS FOR A UNIFORM SENSE OF IDENTITY TO BE GIVEN TO THE ISLAND. THE COMMUNICATIVE ASPECTS OF THE CANDY-COLORED BUILDINGS WILL ENCOURAGE TOURISM AND INCREASED ACTIVITY TO THE SITE. THE ISLAND IS 2 MILES LONG AND ONLY 800 FEET WIDE.
Emoticonstructs were placed in networks on Roosevelt Island to relate to either the existing context or each other. The placement of all the emoticonstructs are areas of greater visibility from either side of the island. Although most of the emoticonstructs sit on the ground plane to allow public access, there are a few that are situated on top of existing buildings because of their specific architectural programs.
WEST ELEVATION
“If buildings are to speak, they must have freedom of speech. It seems to me that one of the most serious dangers to architecture is that people may just lose interest in it... If architecture is to survive in the human consciousness, then the things buildings can say, be they wistful or wise or powerful or gently or heretical or silly, have to respond to the wide range of human feelings.”

- Charles Moore
“And yet we see not the gratifying reflection of ourselves we had hoped for but another thing looking back at us, watching us, placing us.”

- K. Michael Hays on John Hejduk