

*"I am an endlessly sensitive photographic plate.
I never forget that I feel."*

Fernando Pessoa

Gamification of life

If the contemporary world has an address that may for many be considered the Mecca of Modern times, it is located in the USA. More precisely in the Silicon Valley.

Nothing could be more natural. We live under the egis of American values. The acceleration of competitiveness, a result of globalization, of technological revolution and the arrival of a new digital environment, which has connected us all, brings along attributes and paradigms that materialize this brave new world and this culture in particular: (predatory) competitiveness, (compulsive) innovation, (chronic) obsolescence, (inhuman) efficiency and focus (on economical results).

The digital world and everything that it has come to revolutionize is just beginning. In the map of design and innovation, new words and abbreviations are appearing (nothing more American than that) that haven't yet entered the common citizen's world, but which are already becoming obsolete, in the same speed as technology, to the geeks of the digital world: UX (User Experience), UI (User Interface), IoT (Internet of Things) are some of the new disciplines being born with the digital revolution and which present themselves to the Designer as new territories of knowledge and potentials to be mastered.

The physical world is dematerializing and virtualizing/digitalizing itself. Simply look at how much industrial design (to design buttons, for instance) existed before in the design of a telephone and how much this has become graphic design and interface design today (the buttons are icons). Or the expansion of screens and displays in the same devices, more space for graphic design.

And this digitalization needs someone to give form, functionality and humanization to this new virtual and immaterial environment. These are primarily functional decisions, but not only, because what is at stake here is the reconditioning and transfer of sensitive and aesthetic experience of the real world to the virtual world, maintaining or recreating the sensitive world. A territory in which vision gains even more power over the other senses, followed by hearing (remember, for instance, what it is to send an e-mail today and hear that sound of something moving, of the *displacement in the physical world*, which simulates the real world and confirms that something has been displaced and was addressed to its destination, with speed, the great paradigm of Modernity.

Amid this revolution, even the ludic children's universe, that which shapes the future generations and therefore our future, is in a process of accelerated mutation. Every toy manufacturer – our first ludic tool of work and fantasy and imagination exercise – knows today that children play in the real world only up to the moment when they can interact with an interface, and then... Goodbye, sensitive world experience... And this time only shortens, leaving the segment with the challenge of surviving with what is named “first childhood”. From then on, children start being “educated” to the “adult world”, virtual and more intellectual than sensitive.

This adult, on the contrary direction of this movement, or as consequence of it, ends up extending his child-time and dedicating himself for a longer time to ludic activities offered by games. Who doesn't have a friend that, to relax, after the hard battle, arrives home and goes prostrate himself in front of a TV and surrenders himself to the world of symbolic wars, of deaths and lives, of sanitized violence, of the level changing and advancing... Even the character Frank Underwood (Kevin Spacey) of the TV series *House of Cards*, American President, relaxes that way... (Couldn't get more American, once again).

The surrender to the universe and logic of games ended up contaminating the corporate world and life in general. “Gamification” became an education tool and a mantra that is part of the dictionary of managers of people and companies. And this new manifestation of the Peter Pan syndrome seems to be the safety valve to this individual under pressure by results and performance spreadsheets, who grows and survives in the corporations being an “adult” during the day, but relaxes “playing” and killing zombies at home at night.

Thus, if we live under pressure of accelerated competitiveness and in search of the ludic safety valves, which end up contaminating our world experience and that which we call “life” with the logic of “levels” from the games, it is good to remember that, in real life, game has only one “game over”. And that each moment of this journey is more than a level to be completed. It is a real grace to be celebrated and savored by all senses, along with those who accompany and inspire us, transforming the lived in an aesthetic and ethical experience of illumination and celebration of joy, in all its dimensions.

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