

10 conversations on design

Summary statement

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Digital Transformation

'...Because of technologies, a circular relationship between the arts of production and the science has been established' (John Dewey "By Art and by Nature"). It is this circular relationship which always drew me into the realm of computing, because here I still find the chaos and the undefined, where I can take part in inventing and creating categories and shapes.

Dewey didn't refer to the technology of communication. It is technology in the sense of experimental thinking or a sense of innovation and creation which has a revival with the digital transformation. It's the new, and it's the place where the old terms and categories shouldn't be applied.

But confusion and draw backs come with applications of existing terms and metaphors we use. The new tools, the new (digital) media are the new equipment to structure data; to design information.

This is a dangerous simplification, which starts to have a huge impact in our lives and our daily constructions, which we call reality. I think we can only revise that impact, if we start to think the processes by ourselves.

The digital transformation starts with the hardware, no doubt. But we could also call it the end of a process. We all know that the hardware needs software: 'operating system and application software'. And in order to understand the black box we have to realize that our software is a text, a text which has its logic and grammar etc, and which gets repeatedly processed. We call it computing. Since we are able to process images within this frame, we take a photograph, an image which we took with a more simply mechanical apparatus and we scan it, dot by dot. A photograph is an abstraction by itself, it is never the 'reality' and we process it into digital data, in a binary code. The photograph, which is an abstraction, gets transformed in a higher abstraction, in binary text. If we want to see it again we have to display it on a screen or we have to print it out. But what we get is not the photograph, it is a digital print, it is a digital display, which went through two abstraction processes. And even if the resolution gets higher and we call it better, it doesn't eliminate the abstraction processes in-between.

Does it matter?

What we see displayed what we see printed and screened, (and there is hardly any image anymore that isn't framed and reproduced digitally) is an abstraction of a higher order.

We all know it isn't live, and yet we know that it is live, because it creates a convincing believable reality, a virtual reality. What we see is clearly not what we experienced. The image doesn't have to relate to 'real life' because it went through abstraction processes. We know that the news on the screen is a virtual illusion and meant to be entertaining. It is not about information, because we

realized that we can not be informed by the digital data. Information isn't data.
Information has to mean something in order to in-form us.