Task 1: Design Insights from Two Films
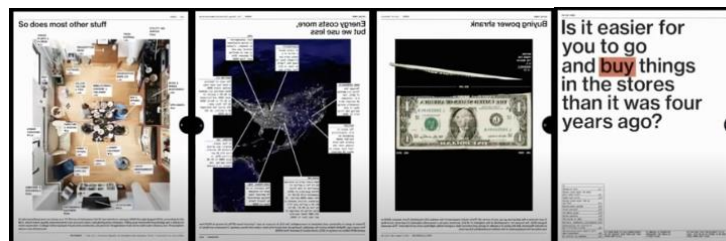
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Watching Tracy Ma's talk and learning about the Avatar Robot Café really opened my eyes to the power of empathetic design. Design isn't just about making things look good, it can solve real problems and even spark social change. Here are some of the insights I've gathered that I plan to apply in my own work.

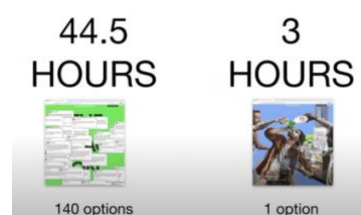**Part 1: Insights from Tracy Ma's Talk**

1. **Coherent Themes**
   Tracy highlighted the importance of a central theme in design, as seen in *BusinessWeek*'s election issue. This showed me that good design goes beyond visuals, it ensures every element reinforces the main message. I aim to prioritize thematic cohesion in my work to deliver clearer and more impactful communication.

Screenshot 1. Cohesive design approach in BusinessWeek election issue (did Obama do a good job or not in his first term?)

2. **Balancing Speed and Depth**
   Tracy compared quick illustrations to long-term projects that require months of effort. This taught me to adjust my approach depending on the project. I learned to work efficiently on smaller tasks while dedicating time and attention to more complex designs.

Screenshot 2. Comparing project depth: 44.5 hours vs. 3 hours

3. **Fun and User Connection**
   Her "petable dog" project showed that design can be light-hearted and foster emotional bonds with users. As a dog owner, I related to this deeply and realized that design can be fun while creating meaningful interactions. I want to explore more such playful designs.

Screenshot 3. Interactive design for emotional relief during 2018 U.S. Midterm Elections
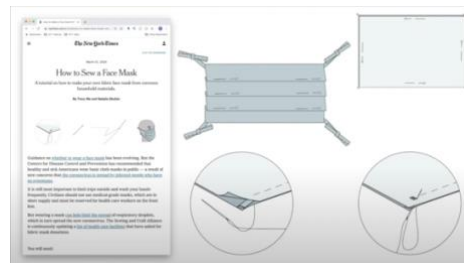
4. Technology as a Tool

Tracy's interactive animations illustrated the power of technology in design. To create dynamic experiences, I aim to develop basic programming skills, allowing me to break beyond traditional static visuals.

Screenshot 4. Interactive experience: Swat Trump's tweets away

5. Empathy in Design

Tracy's mask tutorial during COVID-19 showed how design can empower users. I realized that empathy should be at the heart of design, focusing on addressing user needs and creating positive emotional impacts.

Screenshot 5. How to sew a face mask: Empowering users during COVID-19

Part 2: Insights from Avatar Robot Café

1. **Design Can Empower Marginalized Groups**

   The café's use of remote-control technology to empower individuals with mobility impairments showed me how design can break barriers and promote inclusion. I want to focus on creating accessible, user-friendly solutions for marginalized groups, ensuring design empowers and improves lives.

Screenshot 6. Empowering disabled workers through remote-controlled robots

2. **Technology Can Foster Human-Animal Connections**

   While the video focuses on people with disabilities, it also made me think about how similar technology could create opportunities for stray animals. For instance, remote interaction devices could allow people to "virtually adopt" animals, building emotional connections while raising awareness about stray animal issues. Such a design could satisfy emotional needs and potentially lead to real-life rescue actions.

Fig 1. WeChat mini program enabling remote feeding for stray cats (Hello Street Cat)

3. **Balancing Emotion and Functionality**

   The robots in the video were more than tools as they gave dignity and a sense of value to their operators. This showed me that great design should go beyond functionality and connect emotionally with users. In the future, I want to create designs that address practical needs while offering care and emotional support.

Screenshot 7. Providing dignity and value through meaningful work

4. **Daring to Challenge Social Perceptions**

    Avatar Robot Café goes beyond a technological experiment and acts as a social dialogue on equality and inclusion. It made me realize that design can be a powerful tool for social change, challenging perceptions and encouraging people to rethink inclusivity. In the future, I aim to use design to raise awareness of social issues and inspire positive change through creative solutions.

    > Disarmingly futuristic, The Robot Café offers a literal out of body experience to the severely disabled. Harnessing human, not artificial, intelligence and unlocking potential for those with limited mobility. It made me uncomfortable, it made me think, it challenged my preconceptions and it made me feel. The stuff of science fiction becoming science fact and inspiring hope for a fulfilling life beyond the boundaries of the human body.
    >
    > Sarah Moffat, CCO, Turner Duckworth

    Screenshot 8. Challenging societal perceptions of ability and inclusion

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