

Interaction Design Association (IXDA) Conference, Opening Keynote 2011, Bill Verplank

Section 1: Art, Design, Craft (00:00 - 08:00)

Bill Verplank began his keynote by exploring the dynamic interplay between art, design and craft, which he sees as the cornerstone of interaction design. He explained that art is about self-expression and making emotional connections, while design is a structured process that aims to solve problems with the user's needs in mind. On the other hand, craftsmanship emphasises hands-on skills and mastery of materials, demonstrating the importance of both precision and focus in creating high-quality work. Verplank introduces the 'hand, head, heart' model: the 'hand' symbolises the tangible creative and prototyping behaviours, the 'head' represents analytical thinking and problem solving, and the 'heart' captures empathy and emotional connection. This framework highlights the holistic and interdisciplinary nature of interaction design, where creativity, the ability to think logically, and a user-centred approach to design merge seamlessly.

Section 2: The Importance of Sketchbooks (08:00 - 10:00)

In this part, Verplank emphasises the indispensable role of sketchbooks in a designer's workflow. He argues that sketchbooks are more than just drawing tools; they are important tools for visual thinking and capturing ideas. Sketchbooks enable designers to express complex concepts quickly, facilitating the integration of ideas and further innovation, and Verplank demonstrated how simple sketches can connect abstract concepts to concrete solutions, emphasising that sketching is not about perfection, but about clarity and ease of communication. By consistently recording ideas, designers can refine their thought processes, identify patterns of thinking, and refine the design process based on early inspiration. Verplank's insights reinforce the design value of sketchbooks.

Section 3: The Three Questions of Interaction Design (10:00 - 28:00)

Verplank introduces three guiding questions that form the basis of interaction design: how you do it, how you feel it, and how you know it. These questions provide a framework for thinking about creating user-centred design. 'How do you do it?' examined the ways in which users interact with systems, focusing on interactions, gestures and controls that feel natural and intuitive. 'How do you feel?' Delves into the emotional impact of design, emphasising the importance of design that creates positive empathy with the user. 'How do you know?' involves customer feedback mechanisms that ensure that users are kept informed of the status and functionality updates of product systems through a constant stream of rhetorical questions. Verplank illustrates these principles through specific case studies, showing how effective design can facilitate and help customers intuitively understand and empathise with a product's functionality. This section emphasises the need for reflective thinking and empathic design to improve user satisfaction.

Reflections

Bill Verplank's keynote blends principles and practical applications. With an emphasis on sketching, theoretical models and user-centred approaches, he provided a comprehensive framework for interaction design. The 'Hands, Head, Heart' model encapsulates the essence of the design process, integrating creativity, logical analysis and empathy. Similarly, the three fundamental questions - 'How do you do it?' , 'How do you feel?' and 'How do you know?' -- are fundamental approaches to design that make design more immediate, emotionally resonant, and principled. Verplank's presentation demonstrated the relevance of these concepts and encouraged designers to think holistically and self-reflectively at every stage of the design process, and that designing a product needs to prioritise the user experience.