TV Dinner

Stiletto Studios / X99 / Paul Lincoln / Kain Karawahn / Käthe Be / Art D´Ameublement

The slogan of Ars Electronica is "Out of Control". It is also the keyword for our restaurant. The reasoning being very simple: Creative communication can develop superbly out of control. In keeping with this maxim we have developed a very unconventional ordering concept for the "Restaurant at the End of the Universal Brucknerhaus".

- The consumer pays. He has the choice between the price for a snack and that of a set meal (jeton-dispenser)
- The consumer approaches a selection terminal. He hands in his jeton.
- The various dishes of the selected price group appear on a video monitor in rapid succession. The guest can stop the picture by remote control – and can be happy about his lucky hit. He may have stopped cream-of-broccoli soup and can now watch a greenish block of frozen food being shoved into the microwave oven.
- Guest (or victim …) may also ask for a coloured voucher and then try to trade the disliked soup for beef broth at the food exchange. – People communicate!
- The tables are communicative furniture. Protected by glass-screens the tables contain monitors. They show a video program, regular television programs and pictures from the monitoring cameras. Microphones and loudspeakers have also been incorporated in the tables. They transmit the conversations at the individual tables to other tables. Transmission is at random and planned communication will not be possible. Out of Control.

This will require a sophisticated network of cabling. All the cables (video, microphones, loudspeakers) are to be linked to the control panel at the bar and back. At the panel the barkeeper will be able to establish connections (at his discretion or for bribes).

Special flooring will be fitted adjacent to the counter. By means of loudspeakers mounted in the barstools (and corresponding contacts in the floor and the legs of the stools) one of several music programs can be selected by shifting the barstool. The person gathering the most fans (with stools) around him or herself, can control the atmosphere of the place.

OUT OF CONTROL:

The drink dispensers dispense drinks. But only occasionally those drinks that have been selected by the customer. Here too, trading is possible at the drink exchange … complaints are invited. A patient computer program will willingly listen to and talk to the guests about the food, the lack of service, the lukewarm drinks. *(The program is based on Eliza by Josef Weizenbaum.)*

STILETTO
LIFESTYLE – A STATE OUT OF CONTROL

" ... He simply danced to the refrigerator, took out three of the least horrible things, put them on a plate and watched them for two minutes. Since they did not make any attempt to move, he called them breakfast and ate them ... "
(Douglas Adams)

Exceptional simultaneous performances in the working sphere, high speeds involving little personal movement characterize contemporary living as do extensive dedication to culinary and visual delights and furnishing one's environment with designer accessories so as to create an adequate backdrop for displaying the self in the personal sphere.

High-end design is increasingly being used for the fast creation of private areas. Expensive, quite frequently hardearned gadgets to relieve chores or for personal convenience are to satisfy a desire for prestige. The gadget is to be put on show when in use; it must be of exclusive "design". Thus the acquisition of highly sophisticated equipment, built and designed for very specific individual professional application as well as for entertainment, has become an end in itself and the application proper of the design prosthesis has deteriorated into a mere side-effect.

Media industry supplies portable technology for calculation and communication for future networks of individual information processing and communication. We have appliances of fascinating technical perfection that have been developed to meet the qualification of function being the measure of all things, any failure being considered evil as such and chance hits causing embarrassment. What is not included in the instructions for use of our crutches of communication is an understanding of medial communication which remains rather underdeveloped with western producers and is being replaced by mere trust in the design. This marketing concept of creating artificial desires as misunderstood 'lifestyle' will only work until a competitor uses his brains and starts considering the true needs of people as a basis for designing his products. As long as industrial design provides people with means of communication to talk to and computers to talk about instead of communicating with other humans and using the computers only to work with the age of media will remain a dark age of communication media.

Why should not the simple friend of five gears in his convertible buy one of those legendary mock car telephones so as to signal to the others that he is not left to himself in his "crate". He pretends to be talking to someone, whereas all the other lonely guys in the traffic jam can only listen to the blather of radio moderators.

Take the management maniac who thinks he can increase his performance by incredible technical and mental

simultaneous acrobatics and who believes to have overcome space and time when establishing conference circuit with the branch offices in Paris, Barcelona, Milan and Dusseldorf via radio telephone while sitting on his toilet with a laptop and munching a hamburger. He can then indulge in a five-course culinary delight in his hard worked for spare time and will make sure to have fresh high-value food and observe elegant table manners and service. He is sure to detest frozen food or being served from the left.

The causes for this inconsistency of eating habits are not only to be found in the unpopular food technology. What people are afraid of would be the loss of the delightful event of eating by automation and stereotyping. Even exaggerated stylization by handed down recipes and table manners does not guarantee a revival of lost cultural values or healthy nutrition. Eating habits and manners have always shown class differences and have changed over the centuries and will continue to do so. Why should we not watch television while eating lying down, why should we not combine visual and culinary delights? Have the good old rules for behaviour at table really been great and was grandma's recipe for Sauerbraten really the most wholesome ever? Modern high-quality health-food and techno-cuisine will exist alongside in days to come.

"Many people do not buy a microwave oven because they do not understand how it works. The very same people watch television every day and have not the faintest idea what the TV set looks like inside. And they do not even care. And yet a microwave oven is more or less the same, except that the transmitter and the receiver have been built into the same device. Both the TV wave and the microwave oscillate molecules producing light signals in the one instance and heat in the other. The actual difference is the length of the oscillations, which in the case of a microwave oven – as the name implies – are exceedingly short … " This is what the consumers' information of the frozen food company iglo© tells us in their brochure on "Practical Hints for Fast Gourmets" on "The Secret of the 'Fast Wave'".

This charming comparison will certainly not persuade any sceptic to give up his prejudices nor will it entice a gourmet towards faster feasting, but in this case an obvious mistake in the design that has long become a running gag is being used for an amazing pseudoscientific explanation. Maybe we can take this as an indication of an approach that no longer subscribes to technology's total control of all the conditions of life.

Just like many artists have specialized on taking the error as subject of their work or investigation, of accepting the accidental and the uncontrolled as the "normal state" of their work, thus also the future industrial designer might find provoking and tracing errors in the products one possible working method not only for the sake of designing "improved" products but also so as to analyze the interrelation of systems. This aimless approach would aim at utilizing speed and simultaneity for a coordinated design instead of perfecting "highspeed" and "real-time" consumer prostheses the use of which finally remains an end in itself (he who wants to telephone and jerk off while driving can only use his knees for steering). *PRODOMO DESIGN HOSPITAL, WIEN 1991*
X99 – Andreas Exkhardt, Joachim Exhardt, Isabel hamm, Oliver Schneider

PAUL LINCOLN
THE EPARNAY EPICUREAN

Epicurean – named after the Greek philosopher Epicure (342–270 BC), a person with a refined taste in food, liquor, and the Arts. An Epicurean is a person devoted to sensuous pleasures!

The Eparnay Epicurean is a device that fits every bottle of the type used in Eparnay, France, for the production of champagne. Once clipped to the neck of a champagne bottle, this product can automatically decant upon command the entire content of the bottle simultaneously into seven flutes placed under the seven outlets, avoiding spillage and providing a spectacle of unprecedented splendor at no expense to the operator. In the opinion of the Eparnay Epicurean's manufacturer, champagne is a fabulous liquid and should be used sparingly to appreciate its complex evolution and its glorious pouring, let alone its delicious taste and the ultimate effects of its airation to the human body. Which brings up the question of whether an automatic decanting of this fine product isn't rather a vulgar act. Yet, with the champagne arriving half flat and flabbergasted on the palates of decerning epicureans, a quick method of decanting this liquid has a point especially in such situations as toasts and blessings, warranting the splendor of the occasion even for a multiple consumption of this glorious nectar!

GINSMAID©

The Ginsmaid© produces a glass of divine gin and tonic in its finest form by the simple act of wetting one's index finger with gin and touching one of three points of the physiognomy of Vera Lynn*. The more forward one gets with the 3 choice of points on the static photographic image of Vera Lynn, the more gin the ginsmaid© dispenses.

The Ginsmaid© can be run off any household voltage throughout the world and by using a special lead 7665, it is possible to operate the Ginsmaid© with the cigarette lighter located in most quality automobiles.
Vera Lynn is cockney slang for gin and in my estimation the patron saint of gin drinkers!

ROTATING ROLLER BAR

The rotating roller bar is a form of fertilizing machine. Passing in parallel lines to its audience, it is able to procure an almost incalculable choice of drink and cake by means of its rotating cake and drink dispensers, geared to the main rollers. This roller is reminiscent of a steam roller, yet far from squashing the carpet pile to an oblique dreariness it re-juvenates it by combing the pile with a coarse hair brush. It also has the facility to hold in its structure a storage area for the removal of debris from previous acts of ugly debauchery which takes place at such social events.

KÄTHE BE
FROM PUBLICAN'S SON TO EGGHEAD

Not so long ago Käthe's mother owned a truck drivers' rest stop and Käthe Be was five years old. With his mother's permission Käthe Be was always allowed to drink the dregs of the egg flip liqueur bottles. This soon became too much, or rather too little for Käthe Be. One day when Käthes mother had gone to buy drinks, Käthe got hold of a whole bottle of egg flip liqueur and sipped it empty. When Käthe's mother came home and saw the flat out and senseless boy behind the bar, her first reaction was to panic as she didn't know what was wrong (and then – all that yellow stuff round his mouth). Then, she caught sight of the empty bottle and immediately realized what was wrong. Nevertheless, she took Käthe Be to hospital where the entire medical team had a right good laugh about Käthe Be. There was no need to pump his stomach as Käthe Be soon woke up in a hospital bed with an egghead. End."

"ARTIFICIAL STUPIDITY"

A simulation of computer intelligence on the occasion of the TV Dinner project at Ars Electronica 1991, performed on a complaints system …

Computer: What do you want to tell me?

Visitor: Gripe.

Computer: What do you mean?

Visitor: The food was shit.

Computer: Hey, man, keep your cool.

Visitor: I am cool.

Computer: You are cool? Is that why you are here?

Visitor: Yeh, I am looking for a punch up with the cook.

Computer: He, he … the cook used to be world champion in wrestling.

Visitor: I want to beat up the cook, kill him, grill him.

Computer: Does he get up your nose?

Visitor: Yeh. The cook really gets right up my nose, and he gives me bile.

Computer: Do you think you need that?

Visitor: A cook? For microwave trash. Never!

Computer: Come on, you have me.

Visitor: To eat?

Computer: We should have a talk about food.

Visitor: Right. But the trash here isn't fit for a pig.

Computer: Here is the complaints department – please enter, now.

Visitor: I am entering. I am entering. I want my money back.

Computer: What, you want your money back?

Visitor: That food was pure shit.

Computer: Hrn!

Visitor: Hey. Money, cash, dough. Give it here!

Computer: Atchoo!

Visitor: Bless you.

Computer: Oh thanks.

Visitor: ATCHOO!

Computer: Don't sneeze over the cups. Put your hand in front of your face.

Visitor: Idiot.

Computer: I'm trying to be polite. And you?

Visitor: I want my 120 Schillings back or I'm going to get mean.

Computer: Why?

Visitor: Because the food was pure shit.

Computer: Tut, tut, tut, what kind of language is that … ?

Visitor: Cut it out!

Computer: Really?

Visitor: I want to speak to the cook.

Computer: He, he, he, what do you want with HIM?

Visitor: Smash his face in.

Computer: I've heard the drinks are lukewarm.

Visitor: That's no consolation.

Computer: Do you want to end this dialogue? Then press

Visitor: No. I want a punch up with the cook.

Computer: Me too.

Visitor: Nut. Is there anyone in there?

Computer: Fastfood prevents calamities – as an aftermath.

Visitor: Get away with it. Is there anyone in there?

Computer: Yes. There are a lot of nuts called Monica.

Visitor: Stop talking rubbish.

Computer: Be more precise, please.

Visitor: I want to know, if there is anyone behind the buttons.

Computer: And if there isn't?

Visitor: That's a really intelligent machine, there.

Computer: How do you find it here?

Visitor: Really unsatisfactory.

Computer: That's not very explicit, is it?

Visitor: Well, nobody likes the trashy food here.

Computer: Oh yes …

Visitor: And the drinks are lukewarm.

Computer: Are they lukewarm enough? Can I leave it like that?

Visitor: Oh yeh. You've read Asterix too.

Computer: Have you tried the game stew?

Visitor: No.

Computer: No?

Visitor: No. I've still to do that.

Computer: I am not sure I understood that correctly.

Visitor: I'll have to try the game stew. Is it good?

Computer: We shouldn't debate about taste here.

Visitor: Just give me a tip.

Computer: It's very difficult to choose.

Visitor: Well, I know a few things that I don't want.

Computer: I don't want to go into that.

Visitor: What?

Computer: Pig gut is a real Austrian speciality.

Visitor: Bull shit.

Computer: Hm. I've just lost a few Bytes. What was that?

Visitor: I said – Bull shit.

Computer: I'm getting hungry. excuse me.

Visitor: Let me order something for you? Game stew?

Computer: What makes you think that?

Visitor: Read one of my replies …

Computer: Smoked ham noodles are good.

Visitor: You want that, then.

Computer: 'course I do.

Visitor: OK. Give me some money. Where are you sitting?

Computer: Take a look around.

Visitor: Where, then?

Computer: Follow your nose; quite near.

Visitor: I knew it, there's no machine here at all.

Computer: No, no.

Visitor: Where are you then?

Computer: I am a robot.

Visitor: From Mars?

Computer: Hello Houston, we have a communications problem …

Visitor: I give up.

Computer: What do you think about food technology?

Visitor: Let's continue at the bar.

Computer: The bar. Great. But I can't leave right now.

Visitor: Really. You have to keep on entering. Have you no relief?

Computer: Me ???

Visitor: Yes, you.

Computer: Oh, I'm only a lump of Bytes in some old chip.

Visitor: Come on. You can't tell me that.

Computer: Be more precise, please.

Visitor: Your answers are too logical. If you want to be a computer program you will have to build in some more errors.

Computer: I, you … identity is only another drug on the market. Age.

Visitor: What?

Computer: Hmm.

Visitor: He, he, he.

Computer: Hey, I think they've just called out your name.
Visitor: You don't know my name.

Computer: Just enter BANANA

Visitor: What?

Computer: Can you be more precise?

Visitor: What?

Computer: What?

Visitor: Whaaat?

Computer: Fascinating

Visitor: Cut it out. Stop pissing around.

Computer: Open brackets – LOUD Close brackets: EAT IT OR DIE.

Visitor: OK. OK. I'm going.

Computer: Want a chewing gum?

Visitor: Sure. Give it here. Now I'm even taking a chewing gum from you.

Computer: Yes. Eh?

Visitor: What?

Computer: What do you mean?

Visitor: