



9. On-Screen Interactivity

Read chapter 9 of *The Culture of Design* 'On-Screen Interactivity'

This chapter considers the way that on-screen interactivity is designed and the tensions between promises of freedom and real constraints take place there. Designers are not just giving form to things that are read, but also structures by which they are encountered. This tension of freedom and constraint is also found more generally in terms of the internet and what it allows.

1. CD-ROMs and other digital technologies

The CD-ROMs is not as common a platform for digital interactivity as when the original version of this chapter was written in the late 1990s. Internet bandwidth has grown to replace this. In the introduction to the 3rd edition of *The Culture of Design*, it was argued that whilst the CD-ROM may seem outdated, the overall argument that is developed in this chapter still stands for other similar technologies. Do you think this is the case? Are there other design features available that this chapter doesn't address? Does this make any difference to the central arguments of the chapter? (You might want to make this discussion also with reference to chapter 12 on 'Networks and Mobile Technologies'.)

2. Cybernetic loss

Much is made in this chapter about the way that visual representation in digital interactivity is sometimes exaggerated or distorted. Thus, for instance, icons on the desktop are sometimes drawn from historical forms or some computer games use imagery from heavy industry. This is, it is argued, to make up for the loss of information when we move from real to virtual worlds. Take a computer game or a desktop design and review if and how this is done. Are there instances where this doesn't happen? Is this idea of 'cybernetic loss' still prevalent or is there another visual language which is more 'native' to on-screen interactivity these days?

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