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## **week 7 :: tangible interfaces + ambient computing**

Tangible Bits Ishii + Ullmer, CHI97 presentation videos check out website Tangible Media Group

Slow Technology Hallnas & Redstrom

Personal + Ubiquitous Computing Journal Vol 8 Nr 5 Special Issue on Tangible Computing

Ambient Interfaces: Design Challenges and Recommendations, Fraunhofer Institute

Cohen & McGee, Tangible Multi-modal Interfaces

Mobile Feelings, Sommerer + Laurent Mignonneau

the article i found most appealing and pertinent was the 'slow technology' paper by researchers at the interactive institute in sweden. i sympathize with the motivation behind their work; namely, technology that may not be wholly instantaneously gratifying, where you 'get it' not upon immediate use but with extensive and patient degrees of time. the flashy demo + gadgety stuff superficially impresses people, rather than changes their perspectives in interesting and unpredictable ways. can we look to nature for the beauty in slow, reflective processes? seasons change gradually [a harsh winter particularly seems to last forever], yet with each passing year we cry, 'where did all the time go?' there exists a pervasive trend in our culture that looks speedily forward but never stops to treasure the present. technology, with all its power, seems to be primarily utilized to compress time unnaturally, spinning into a perpetual catch 22; i hope that we can balance it out with technology that expands time poetically and artistically. as we appreciate more the everyday tasks and tools, the easily-forgotten yet inarguably-deep associations between ourselves and other people and places garner authenticity and significance.

prof. ishii's philosophy manifests itself in seamless computing, where the world becomes the environmental interface, in line with mark weiser's vision of true ubiquitous computing. however, many of the research projects within tmg deal with highly specific task-based tools, harnessed to a flat, finite tabletop augmented with tagged phicons, a projected image, and various cameras and sensors. although touching actual objects has its tangible satisfaction, the table interfaces still seem very much two-dimensional, digitally expressed, and artificially implemented. however, i applaud the non-table projects, such as topobo, comtouch, and the i/o brush. tangible media seems to be most favorably effective when the technology becomes incorporated within, not augmented upon, the physical affordances of the object.

the 'guidelines' to designing ambient interfaces by gross seems like a helpful rubric for evaluating a design. however, depending on so many factors such as use, intent, and context, many of the standards could be completely subjective. how does one judge

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utility? or consistency? a lot of the slow technology philosophy runs counter to this 'efficient computing' setup of standards.