AnyType: Creating Typography from Anything, Anywhere

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ABSTRACT

AnyType is a creative application that lets people transform elements and objects in the physical world into novel digital typefaces. The portability, computational power and network capabilities of AnyType allow the user to take design into the wild so that they can create and share in the same moment in which they are inspired. With AnyType, we invite people to reinterpret their everyday environment and transform it into a set of possible creative inputs.

Author Keywords typography, creative expression, mobile computing, design in the wild

ACM Classification Keywords H5.m. Information interfaces and presentation.

INTRODUCTION

"Well chosen words deserve well chosen letters." — Robert Bringhurst (1992)

A creative medium allows an individual to translate their point of view into an outward, communicative message. Each medium, be it canvas, clay, or the computer, imposes a set of constraints upon the user. These constraints leave an imprint of the resulting artwork and provide it with a distinct character and meaning [1]. A truly expressive medium is one whose constraints suggest a form without limiting the individual's ability to reinterpret and individualize the result.

AnyType is a project to explore mobile and ubiquitous computing as an expressive medium. Such technologies are ever present, always on, location aware and networked. AnyType leverages these qualities to provide a system that takes the visual properties found in the physical world as input and digitally assembles them to produce new typographies as output.

ANYTYPE

When users launch the AnyType application on a smartphone or touch pad, they are presented with the device's camera with a shape overlay on top. The user finds an object in their environment, fits it into the shape overlay and captures it (take a photo). After this process is repeated with four more shapes, the users are presented with all the letters of the alphabet, automatically composed of the five shapes they personally captured. They create composition from their personal alphabet by dragging letters onto a canvas.

Each visual element is captured with a short video clip, allowing both the composer and the audience to playback a short moment revealing where the particular element was captured. The system also allows experienced users to edit the outline of the letter shapes to give them more control.

One possible usage scenario involves travelers to a new city. As they explore the sites they capture shapes from their surroundings such as the arch of the golden gate bridge or a famous street sign (Figure 1). They create a composition and share it with their friends like sending a post card. Another involves a constructed approach where a user arranges objects such as a scarf, into the various letter shapes to create a design artifact.

CONCLUSION

AnyType allows people to make a creative composition made with visual elements in their immediate environment in the very moment that they are inspired. Since the possible input into the system is any visual elements in the physical world, AnyType may push people to look at their environment in a new way assigning new roles to everyday objects. AnyType invites people to play the role of designer as they traverse their environment in search of elements for new typefaces.

REFERENCES