

Aide Memoire

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Physical Computing, Design Fiction, Prototyping, Appropriation

1. BIOGRAPHIES

Tom Flint is a lecturer and researcher at Edinburgh Napier University. Tom's research revolves around interpretation of the arts in digital media. His practice is in creative technology and he has a history of building and exhibiting bespoke electronic devices and experiences.

Tommy Dylan is a digital product designer and researcher. His design approach has stemmed from a fascination with invention and working hands-on with both digital and craft materials – Tommy has developed a range of digital artefacts for the everyday life of people with dementia in care.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE WORK

The Aide Memoire is a fully realised product constructed from discarded testing equipment. Born out of a series of creative sessions exploring the broad theme of interactivity the product was developed in partnership between Tom Flint and Tommy Dylan. The intention was to produce real tangible products with which people could have direct and personal interactions.

The aesthetic of the product is part bricolage, Edinburgh Napier University's engineering school discarded a large quantity of pre transistor



Figure 1 Aide Memoire

equipment, and part a reaction to current technological product design. The large look and feel of the equipment evokes emotions of a past that is made of mechanical, tangible technology.

By the use of an embedded Arduino communicating with software written in Max/MSP the object was appropriated. It was felt that, as the equipment evoked a sense of the past, that it should be used to explore memory and the concept of a box that related family memories was invoked.

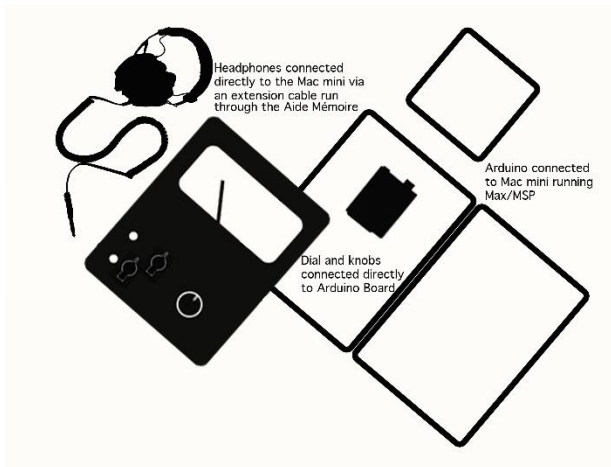


Figure 2 Schematic Diagram

The Aide Memoire is a design fiction of a product that had been handed down between generations was created. The box itself is a product of a fictitious company and includes the service of recording members of the family in their own words. The product provides authentic first-hand accounts of memories rather than an interpretation from another family member.

Interviewing elderly members of our families as well as utilising the archive source SCRAN created the main memory samples. The other sounds were retrieved from a number of royalty free repositories.

In order to enforce a personal, enclosed relationship with the object, its output is through headphones. To select (sound samples of) memories, a person turns a large knob, rather like a radio tuner. The memories fade into one another as the knob is turned. Two smaller knobs are used to produce atmospheric sounds. One knob is linked to thematic music whilst the other contains environmental sound samples. Using a combination of dials, one is able to listen to the memories as if they were being related in a pub or on a country walk, with or without incidental music.

The resulting artefact creates an emotional relationship between the person using it and the media itself. The fact that the memories fade into one another allows a person to create accidental narratives. From presentation to realisation, this artefact is designed to create a meaningful and personal interaction. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the artefact is the fact that, though we believe its use is intuitive, we have to make subtle changes in order to try to orchestrate interaction without explanation.

The first iteration of Aide Memoire was exhibited at the 2009 Sonica Festival of sound and audiovisual experimental arts in Ljubljana Slovenia. After this event, a second iteration was constructed adding functionality, such as a visual gauge relative to the position of the main tuning knob and the inclusion of some visual instructions. The second iteration was displayed at Create '09 held at the BCS in London. and Creative Cultures '09 held at Edinburgh Napier University. The Aide memoire has also been shown at Edinburgh *Mini Maker Faire 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016*



Figure 3 Aide Memoire in use