

## Reflection

### DCM180 - The Sound of Smart Things

*This course was the second elective course in my first year of my master Industrial Design. In this first semester I felt the freedom to have a more exploratory mind-set and figure out what area of design I want to dedicate the rest of my master to. Several of my graduated colleagues recommended taking this course, since I am intrigued by designs that stimulate multiple senses at the same time. Additionally, I wanted to do a project focusing on sound design for quite some years, but did not know how to position myself in this world as I am unexperienced. So, I mainly wanted to take this elective to explore my interest and since it was not obligatory to have experience, I felt that this course could offer me an opportunity and perhaps a challenge.*

I enjoy doing many things at once, writing this reflection while listening to the radio, doing my dishes while playing a podcast or organizing my clutter while playing a Netflix show in the background. Looking at passing cyclists on my way to wherever, I realized many do. These interactions have nothing in common, but the stimulation is enjoyable and create this double dimension of I am seeing and doing this, while my ears and my mind are traveling to another place. But **the main thing that I learned during this course was to listen more carefully**. Always. I easily blocked all surrounding sounds out when I was going somewhere, by putting my 'noise' cancelling headphones on. From the assignment in week one, where we were asked to make an audiocumentary of a day-in-the-life-of, I realized that we categorize a lot of sounds as noise. Past three months I only used my headphones when I had to sit at a desk and concentrate on a task. Simply to let more sounds in and think about how intentionally designed or accidental they were.

I discovered that the role of sound in design, is not just about the sounds on their own, but also about **where these sounds live**. In fact, during the last assignment I learned it is important to go through the trial-and-error process to determine what sounds suit an environment and when a sound dominates the atmosphere in a room. Many times the teachers told us that silence is also valuable, which was still a bit forgotten when me and my team made the soundscape for the smart home video in the third assignment. I knew how to better apply this, by trying and repeating the sounds while doing the interactions which I used in my video. Some were fine to repeat, but it became clear many other small sound effects for small interactions such as putting salt in the water were creating an overly designed world as demonstrated in the smart home video. This is something I want to take with me when making my next designs: **living with them for a while and giving the soundscape more thought**. I believe this will make my designs more intentional and help me understand what a user might be feeling when interacting with my designs.

Overall, my interest in thinking about sounds, sound and design and interaction design has grown past three months as I realized that it can truly **enrich your experience with other senses**, such as vision. Reading the papers which were provided to us, helped me see that this is a direction that also fits me as a business designer. I found it particularly interesting that Berry Eggen talked about his time as a designer for Phillips and told us about the teams he worked in. I am currently reading more papers about interaction design with a role for sound and using YouTube to hear more videos on sound design.

Upcoming year (two semesters) I will take a break from the Industrial Design department and continue my law study. I feel like this gives me some time to further develop my skills in the expertise area of creativity and aesthetics. Before this course I was an unexperienced video and sound editor. Even though I am still a big-time beginner, I have more confidence and courage to try and fail, because that means I am learning. I also learned how to approach sound (design) and use Audacity to create a soundscape, which allows me to experiment and start making. As said before, I aim to figure out what direction I want to take with future projects within this department. I am still interested in legal design, but I also want to find out more about sound design and interaction design to perhaps divert from legal design or see if there is an opportunity to combine these two worlds.

## **Feedback**

The course instructors asked us to also write feedback about the course in our reflection, so this paragraph is meant for Bart and Berry. I enjoyed the course so much that I became greedy. Currently I am still (re)watching and trying to find more of the type of videos that were shared with us in the lectures. I do not know if there are other students that used this course as an introduction to sound design, but for 'us' it would be great to have a list or playlist with recommended materials to watch. Reading is great, but for this topic I remember way more from the lectures, listening to sound samples, to you and the videos we watched. I truly sad the quartile is over.

Also, doing the final assignment on our own made me feel less motivated. I enjoyed the assignments in the weeks before since this allowed us to brainstorm together, but also understand each other's perspectives on the heard sounds. It would be interesting to do the initial part of the final assignment individually for one object and combining our soundscape with other students to see how a sound family can be created with both (probably very different) soundscapes. This would allow for a more interesting discussion with peers.

Thank you for this fun course!