

About cultural artifacts

Media design research seminar

Department of Media

Aalto University, School of Art and Design

By Professor Lily Díaz

14.09.2010

Interaction in the world...

“...Psychologist Irving Biederman estimates that there probably 30,000 readily discriminable objects for the adult... Supposing that each everyday thing takes only 1 minute to learn, learning 20,000 occupies 20,000 minutes—333 hours or about 8 forty-hour work week...”

Don Norman, *The Psychology of Everyday Things*

Causality

- A psychology of causality is at work when we use everyday things.
- It is as if narratives emerge from within the structures created through this causality.

Affordances are...

- The perceived actual properties of a thing that determine how it could possibly be used.
 - Chair = sitting
 - Glass = seeing through, and for breaking
 - wood = solidity, support, carving, etc.

... not all chairs
are created equal.





In spite of globalization...

- Our daily life varies depending on our social *milieu* and culture.
- The artifacts that support, enable, and circulate throughout our daily life also vary.



Central line ↓



← Central line



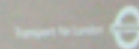




Morning travel alerts. Know about news that could affect your commute before you leave home.

Get free travel alerts by text. Register at [MGoAlert.com](#)

MAYOR OF LONDON



© CBS

Artifact

- Artificial items created by humans.
- Can be material objects like pencils, computers.
- Can also be “immaterial”
 - Methods, or tools for learning
 - Symbol systems

Research in design

- Aims to obtain knowledge to:
 - Designs highly targeted products that address the needs and desires of the audiences that they are intended for.
 - Considers the impact that our design products have in the world.
 - Develops sustainable products and practices.

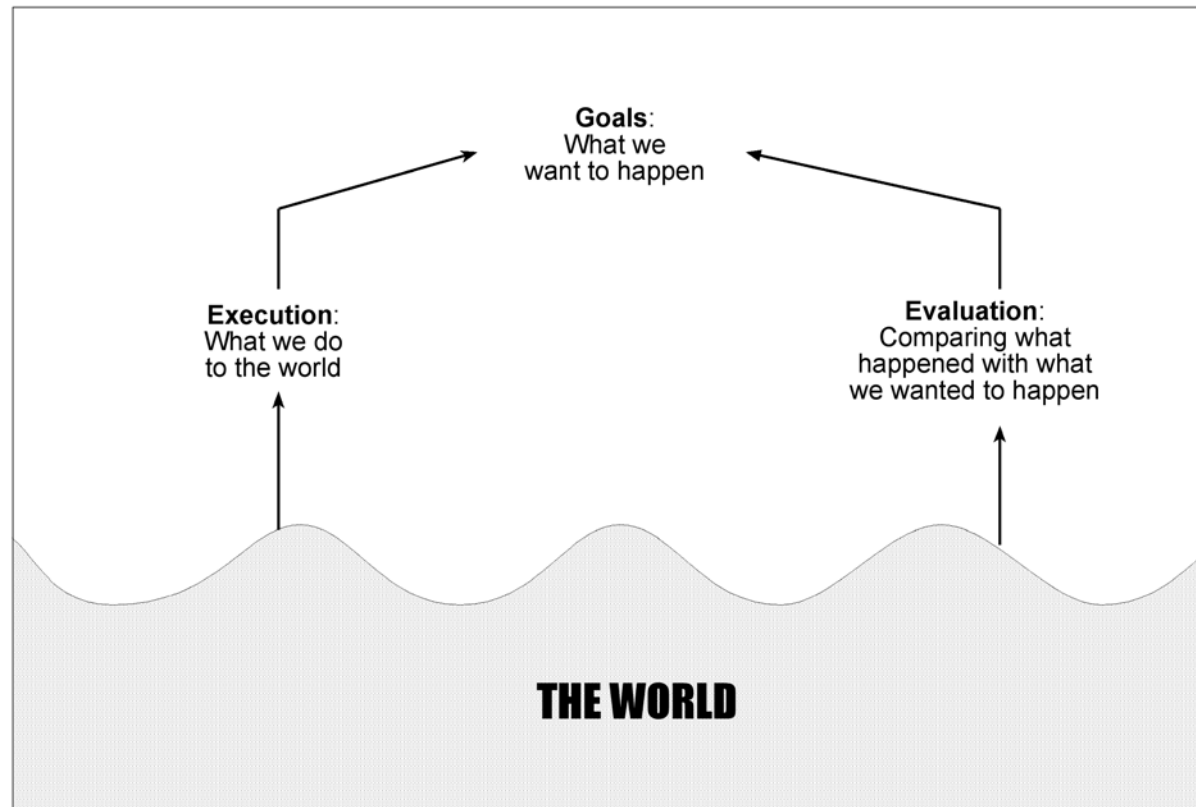
Human activity

- Identity/agency related
- Tool dependent
- Practice-related
- Communal/socially influenced.

The Activity of Design

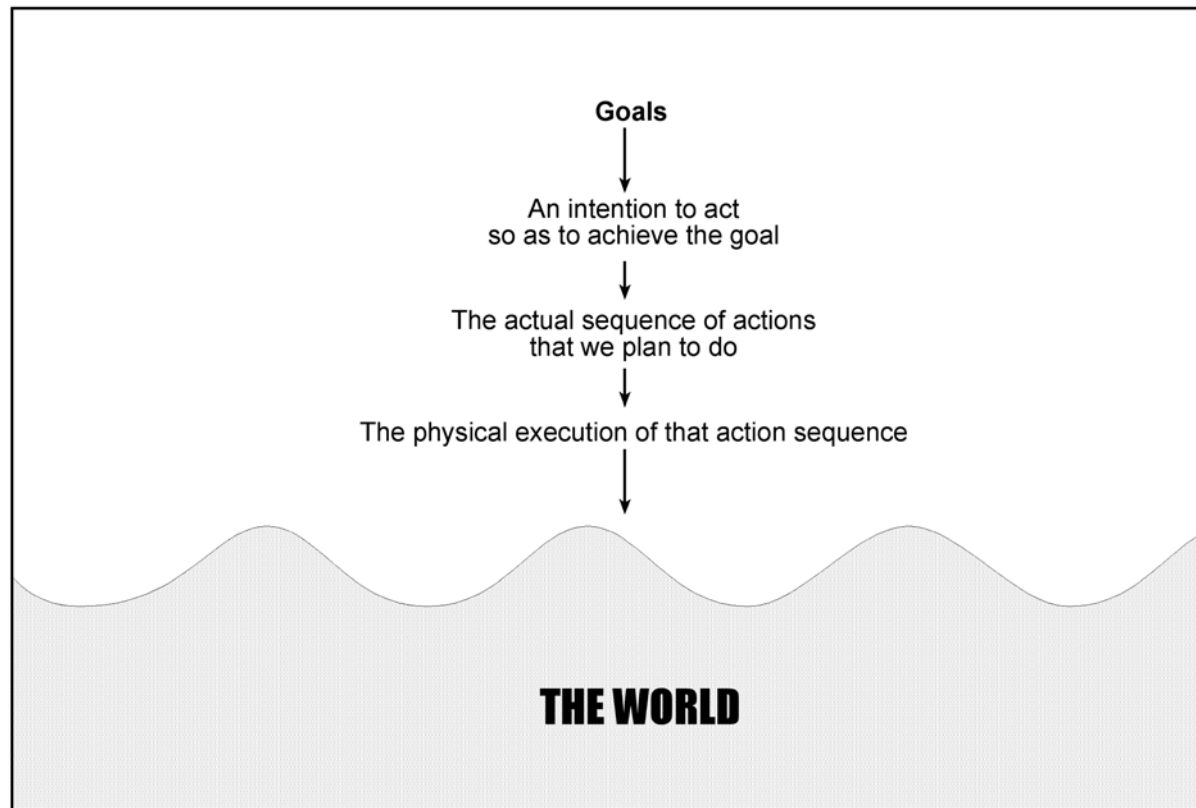
- Is [“goal-oriented behavior”] concerned with
 - Tools
 - Practices
 - Communities
 - Communities of Practice (Etienne Wenger)
 - Communities of Interest (Gerhardt Fischer)

The action cycle



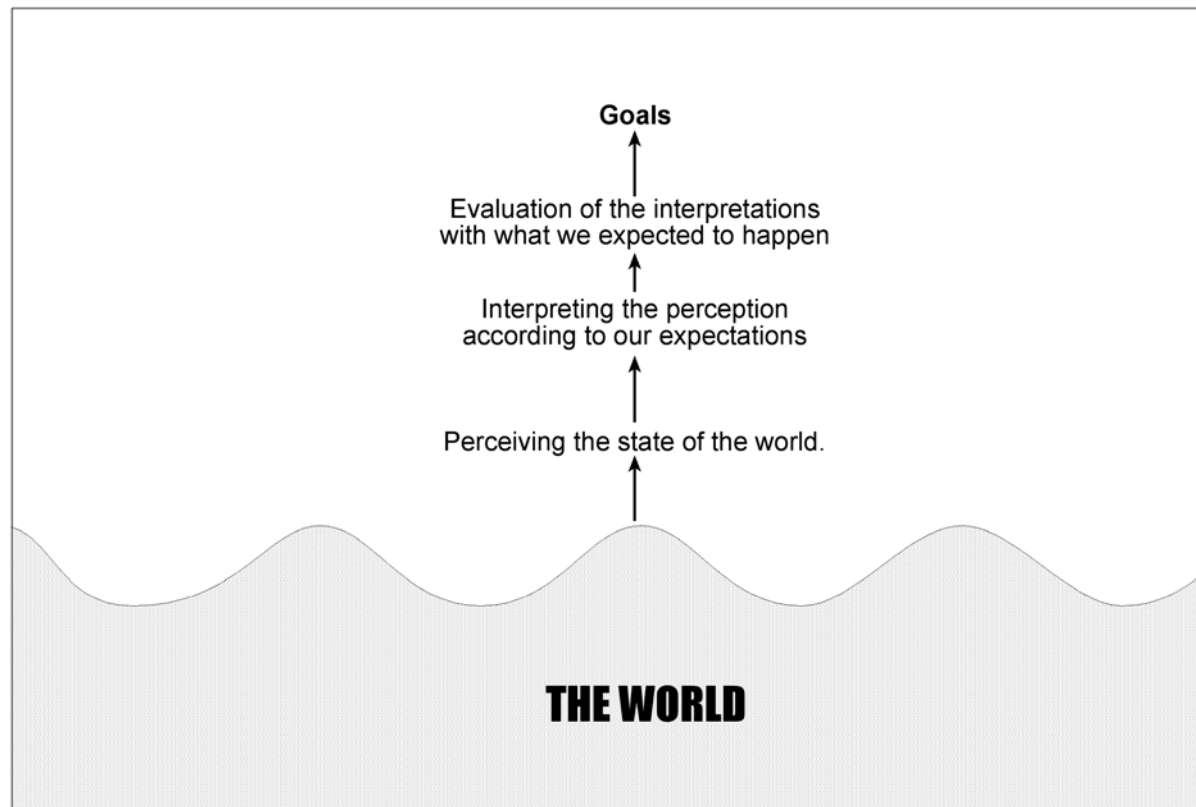
Adapted from Donald Norman, The Psychology of Everyday Things

Stages of execution



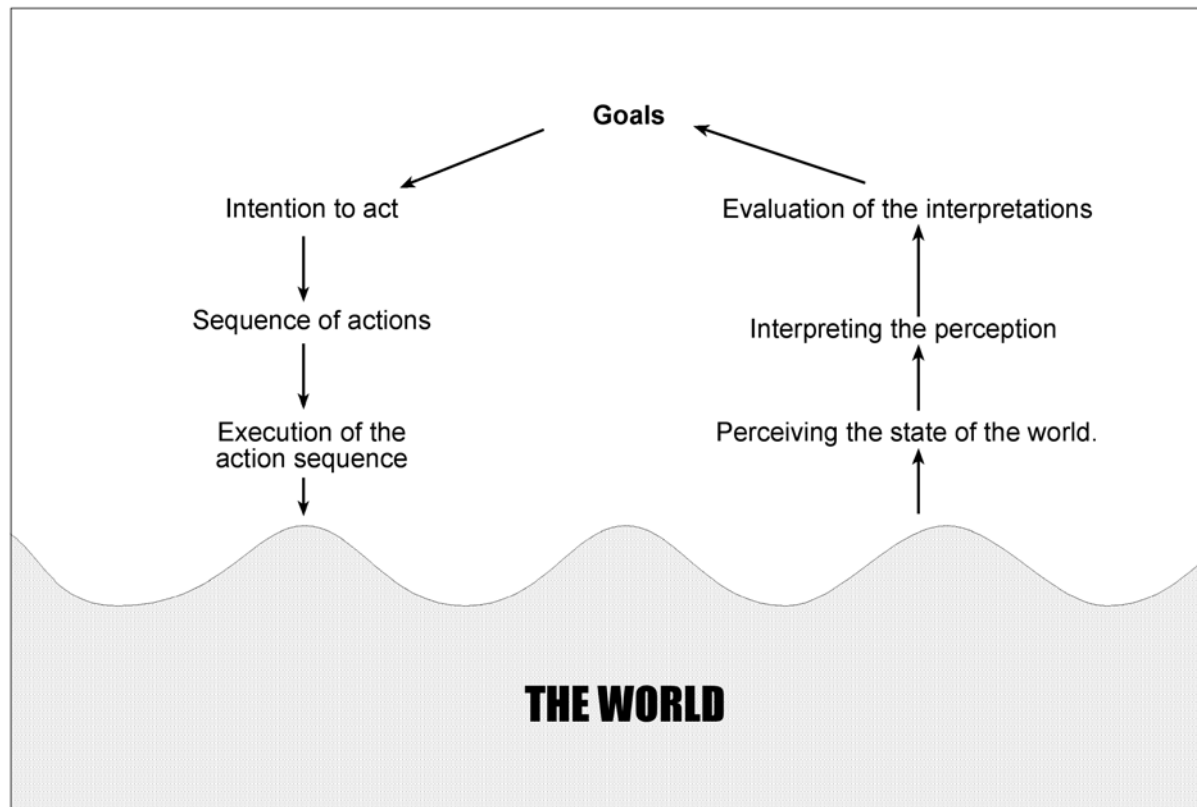
Adapted from Donald Norman's The Psychology of Everyday Things

Stages of evaluation



Adapted from Donald Norman's The Psychology of Everyday Things

Seven stages of action



Adapted from Donald Norman's The Psychology of Everyday Things

However...

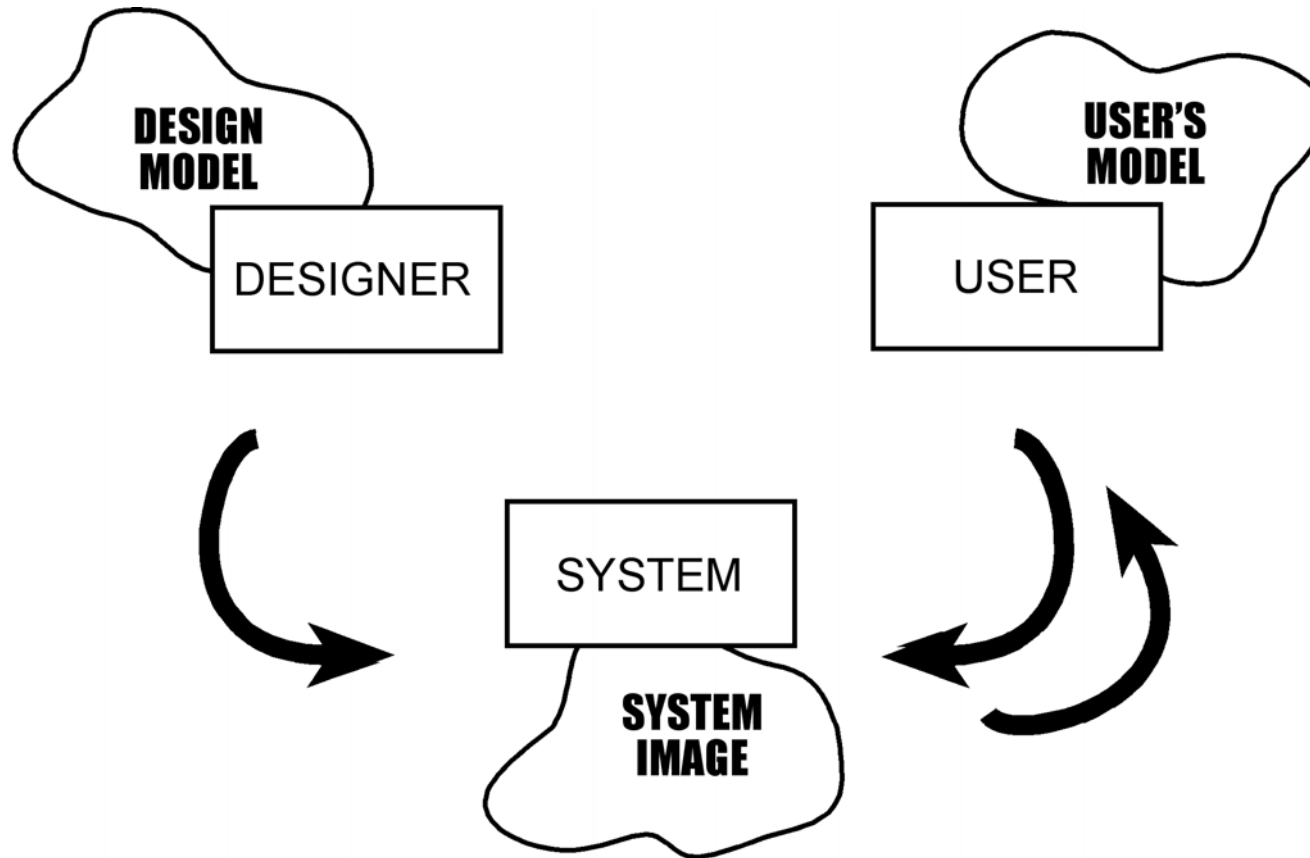
Our interaction the world is seldom direct, but rather *mediated* through artifacts.

- Mediation:
 - Cultural
 - Social
 - Biological

Remember that

- Artifacts are not only material objects but also include ideal counterparts:
 - A research method
 - A concept
 - A group of symbols

Conceptual models

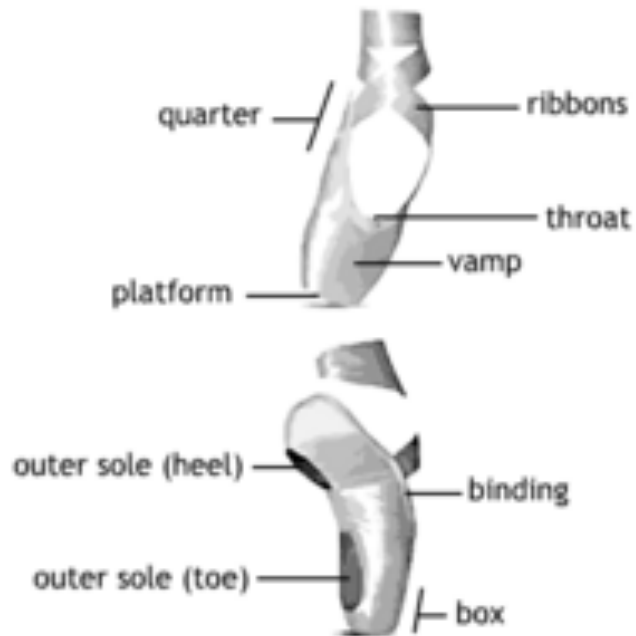


Adapted from Donald Norman's The Psychology of Everyday Things

**ARTIFACTS CAN NOT ONLY
ENABLE BUT ALSO CONSTRAIN**



Where is the interface?



Artifact are multidimensional









