

“Interactive Bag Of Hammers”

Objective

To enhance a space in a simple, subtle yet powerful way.

Every language has figures of speech. These nuances are often the hardest part of a language to learn, as they do not make any sense at first glance. Once learned, they blend smoothly into one’s vocabulary and are rarely thought of. Like many things around us in physical space, they are taken for granted.

A plain white wall is taken for granted, but through various artistic methods it can be enhanced. The result shapes the visitor’s experience of the space. They pay attention to the wall, and rather than merely see it, they look at it. Optimally, in these cases, the visitor is meant to reassess their assumptions about what a wall can do, or what a wall can be. It is this sort of process which transforms the banal into the extraordinary.

But what about language? Can the curiosities of language be brought to life and enhanced in a similar way? Can a common phrase be brought to life in a way that makes the viewer stop and really think about the quirks of the phrase specifically and the language generally? Can a physical object make someone examine the nature of language in a simple and direct way? And can, in doing so, a space be simultaneously transformed?

This project attempts to address these questions.

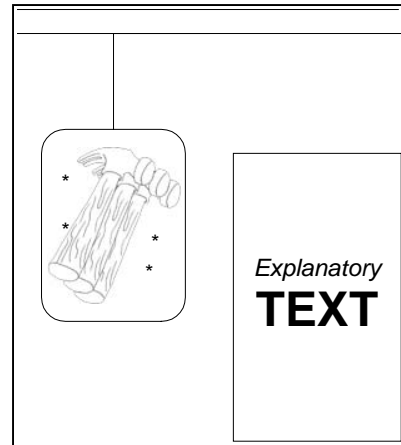
Summary

A handful fairly common English expressions refer to “a bag of hammers”. They most often carry negative connotations, including “dull” or “dumb” etc. A bag of hammers is used in these expressions as an example of the ultimate simple, lifeless and dull object. This project aims to use this perception as a way to create surprise and delight in the viewer’s experience.

The installation will unfold surprise in two stages. The first, from afar, is the surprise experienced by seeing a bag of hammers hanging from the ceiling. It goes without saying that this is a very uncommon site. Particularly in the context of a venue that is full of intricate and abstract objects, this site would catch visitors as a surprising site. It will catch the eye and draw them near.

The second surprise comes as they approach the panel on the wall besides the hanging fixture. A light sensor will cause LED's hidden carefully amongst the hammers to light up. At this point, the initial surprise has been compounded in two different ways. Firstly, the interactive element is surprising because hammers are naturally thought of as being among the least interactive objects one possesses. Secondly, the lights will be carefully arranged to create a soothing ambient glow amidst the plain looking hammers. This juxtaposition makes a statement about the beauty and secrets that often hide behind the plain and the ordinary.

The key elements to the total experience are the clarity afforded the visitor regarding these simple ideas. The total experience should be a pair of gentle surprises that should make the user smile, and then make them think. In an elegant marriage of spatial manipulation and linguistic ideas brought to life, the visitor is left with, perhaps, a new way of thinking about both.



Requirements

Materials:

- Hammers (7)
- Clear, strong bag
- Rope
- LEDs (7)
- Light Sensor
- Miscellaneous electronics
- Foam core board
- Paper

Space:

- 1m x 1m of floor space underneath a ceiling hook
- 70cm wide column of space on the wall as close to the hook as possible

Component 1 – Hanging Object

It is key for the element of surprise that the hanging object appear to be as simple and placid as possible. Therefore a clear bag will be used so that the visitor's eye is immediately drawn to the hammers. Once they see the hammers and approach, they ought to be primarily consumed with the initial surprise described above.

A strong, clear bag (most likely made of vinyl, will be employed to house seven carefully arranged hammers of varying sizes. Tucked away amongst these hammers will be 7 LED's. The wiring for these lights will be discreetly hidden in the bag and run up along the rope that is suspending the bag. The wiring will go with the rope over the hook and to the wall, where it will meet the wall fixture.

Component 2 – Wall Fixture

The wall fixture portion of the project will be comprised of two parts. The first part will be a panel with a light sensor. The word "touch" will be above the light sensor, to further entice the visitor to approach it. Inside the panel will be a breadboard with a microprocessor that will control the lights.

Adjacent to this panel will be a display of text and images illuminating the role of the phrase "bag of hammers" in the English language. This will provide further context to the installation piece.

Conclusion

The name "Interactive Bag of Hammers" advertises the piece as a contradiction, and it will meet this expectation. It will be a charming, thought-provoking element in the room, and will undoubtedly spark conversations about language, space and the way in which they are intertwined.