Emojinating: Hooked Beings

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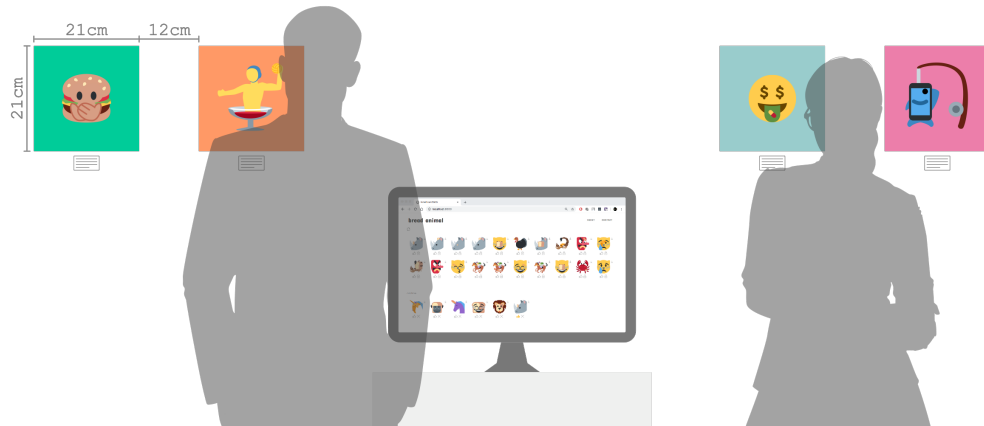{jmacunha,pjmm,machado}@dei.uc.pt

Figure 1: Installation mock-up

ABSTRACT

Emoji are pictorial symbols encoded in the Unicode Standard and thus available in most of writing systems. The popularity of emoji is constantly increasing among both users and brands, used to represent more concepts each year. Due to the connection between their pictorial representation and associated semantic knowledge, they can be computationally exploited. Emojinating is a co-creative system that produces visual representation of concepts by visually blending existing emoji. This paper presents an installation that offers a sneak peek at the different stages of the co-creative process: co-creation, production and interpretation. It has a dual nature, being composed of videos that show the interaction between artist and computer, and a set of four finished artworks under the theme "Addictive behaviors in the digital Era".

CCS CONCEPTS

• Applied computing → Arts and humanities.

KEYWORDS

Computational Creativity, Emoji, Visual Blending.

1 Introduction

Emoji have taken an important role in written communication, used as complementary signs to transmit non-verbal. Their impact is such that some authors even mention a possible language shift towards visuality [5].

As of version 12, the emoji set is composed of 3019 emoji, including 230 new ones released in 2019[1]. In spite of the constant addition of emoji, there are still concepts that do not have an emoji representation. This gap has motivated several emoji proposals, such as *condom*[2] or *menstruation*[3], which in some cases led to the adoption of emoji by the Unicode Consortium (e.g. *taco*[4]). Several brands have also attempted to take advantage of emoji hype by

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[1] blog.emojipedia.org/230-new-emojis-in-final-list-for-2019, retr. 2019
[2] businessinsider.com/durexs-condom-emoji-for-safe-sex-2015-11, retr. 2019
[3] https://bit.ly/2UREKNB, retr. 2019
[4] tacobell.com/stories/Tacoemoji, retr. 2019

proposing their own version of emoji, e.g. Burger King's chicken fries emoji campaign[5] or Pepsi's[6]. On the other hand, less concrete concepts are usually absent in the emoji set, as they do not meet the Unicode Guidelines for new emoji, which values general concepts over specific ones. Despite that, some examples exist of proposals that address concepts related to neologisms, e.g. *sleep working* by Mentos[7] and *drop the mic* by Microsoft[8].

Due to their high usage in written communication, they come to be associated with semantic knowledge, which makes them suitable to be computationally exploited. One example is the Emojinating platform, which follows an interactive evolutionary approach to visually represent user-introduced concepts, using visual blending of emoji [1][3]. The system behind Emojinating combines data from ConceptNet [6], EmojiNet [7], and Twitter's Twemoji dataset[9] in order to generate the visual representations. It is able to produce solutions that vary in terms of nature, going from literal translations to more metaphoric representations. The system is useful to represent concepts that do not yet have any emoji representation [2] to foster the creativity of the user [4].

2 Artwork Description

"Emojinating: Hooked Beings" delves on the subject of addictive behaviors and their integration as emoji in today's digital culture. The idea of turning everything into an emoji is taken to the limit by addressing societal open issues. The installation is divided into two parts (see Fig. 1): a series of printed artworks resultant from a collaboration between user and system and a collection of videos that show the interaction between the two. With this format combination, the viewer as the chance of having a glimpse at the different stages of a co-creative process: co-creation, production and interpretation.
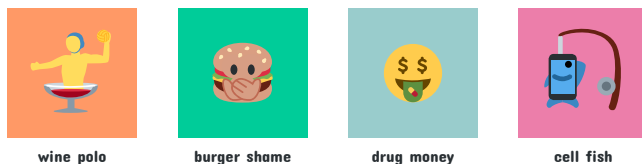

wine polo   burger shame   drug money   cell fish

Figure 2: Print Artworks ©João M. Cunha

2.1 Print Artworks

As already mentioned, despite being constantly updated, the emoji set does not have a representation for every concept. In "Emojinating: Hooked Beings", we present a set of four visual representations of concepts related to addictive behaviors -- junk-food, drugs, alcohol and digital devices (see Fig. 2). It portrays the transformation of the concept into an emoji-like representation, which can be integrated in the emoji set and used in written communication. On the one hand, it aims to raises awareness to

such issues. On the other hand, it plays with the idea that they can easily be assimilated and turned into something considered normal.

Each artwork addresses a different topic and is composed of three different elements: the concept (artwork title), which was used as input on the system to produce visual blends; the visual representation (see Fig. 2) which results from the interaction between the artist and system; and description, which consists in an interpretation by the artist regarding the usage context of the new emoji. The four artworks are the following:

- **Artwork #1**
    title: "Wine polo"
    description:
    "Troubles finding balance between training and drinking? Try wine polo!"
- **Artwork #2**
    title: "Burger shame"
    description:
    "Eating a burger...
    ...thinking it should have been a salad."
- **Artwork #3**
    title: "Drug money"
    description:
    "Money for drugs,
    Drugs for body,
    Body for working,
    Working for money...
    ...drug money."
- **Artwork #4**
    title: "Cell fish"
    description:
    "Hold tight your line of thought,
    'cause the fish is hooked elsewhere."

2.2 Video Collection

The second part of the installation consists of a video collection set in loop. Each video addresses a different concept and shows how the user interacts with the system to evolve solutions that fit his/her preferences. An example of a video can be viewed using the link in the caption of Fig. 3.

3 Tech Rider and Setup Details

The installation is composed of a series of 4 print artworks and a video collection to be setup in loop. The video loop should be displayed on a screen near the print artworks (see. Fig. 1)

We are able to bring the printed materials but the installation requires a computer to show the videos. The videos do not have sound. Changes can be made to the proposal in order to meet the specificities of the exhibition location.

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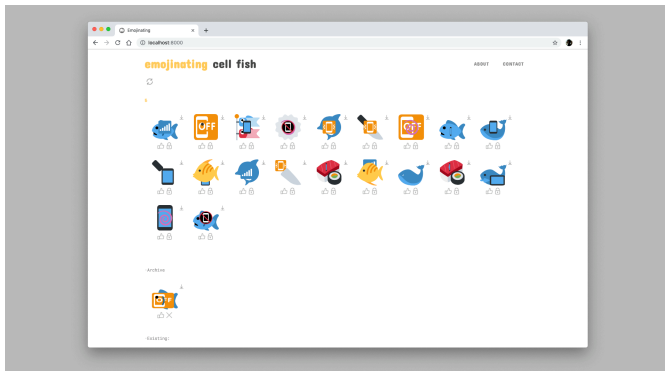
Figure 3: Screenshot of a video

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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