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Filial piety

A new view for domestic product design

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Abstract

Filial Piety: A new view for domestic product design

In New Zealand, residential problems related to old age are of concern due to the increasing population of older people and the challenges that aging brings. These challenges include generational social expectations and intergenerational living, accompanied by cultural traditions of family, living and the home environment.

It is becoming common for younger generations to live away from their elderly family members in the western world, which can cause psychological, financial and safety issues for the older generation. In New Zealand's aging population, which includes Maori, Samoan and Asian people, these aging issues are approached in culturally specific ways.

This design-led research project explores 'filial piety', an ancient Chinese philosophy, in the context of an industrial design practice that embraces established principles and design processes related to product design, ergonomics, emotional design and universal design.

The design emerged out of an observation that New Zealand domestic environments do not typically allow for or attend to modes of intergenerational living, a societal attribute common in China where the philosophy of 'filial piety' leads families and their homes to be more generous and responsive to the

physical and spiritual needs of all, in particular, the needs of the elderly.

Developed using various modes of an iterative design practice including site analysis, sketching, drawing, digital and physical prototyping, observational analysis and physical body testing in addition to literature review, this research proposes a conceptual design for the design of a bathroom product, namely a bath tub and shower unit.

Contents

SECTION / TITLE	PAGE
1. Preface	2
1.1 Exciting environmental research	3
1.2 Design exploration	11
1.3 Audience	15
2. Global Aging Problem	19
2.1 Changing demographics	19
2.2 Different living attitudes	20
3. Culture Comparison	23
3.1 New Zealand European perspectives on intergenerational relationships	23
3.2 Māori and Pacific perspectives on intergenerational relationships	24
3.3 Chinese and Asian perspectives on intergenerational relationships	25
3.4 Comparisons and analysis	25
4. Concept - Filial Piety	26
5. Aim & Objectives	31
6. Design Theories	32
6.1 Filial Piety in universal design	33
6.2 Filial Piety in emotional design	39
7. Design Process	46
7.1 Mind mapping	47
7.2 Persona	48
7.3 In their shoes	50
7.4 Try it yourself	54
7.5 Role-playing	57
7.6 Storyboard	63
7.7 Brainstorm sketch	65
7.8 Foamed plastic prototyping	68
7.9 Ergonomics	71
7.10 Experience prototyping	75
7.11 Appearance models	76
7.12 The final design	78
8. Conclusion	86
<i>Bibliography</i>	89
<i>Image References</i>	92

Chapter I

Preface

This idea was inspired by, and developed from, my own experiences of living with my grandparents for many years and my vision of transforming their home for aged living.

I have a considerably strong relationship with my grandparents, because they took care of me when I was very young, and served as my second set of parents.

After I became an adult and independent, I gradually realized that they were no longer able to live in their old home, as they needed more support. There is a variety of problems with their old house, in particular, the rooms are too small. The most serious problem was the bathroom – it is too shabby and dark, and also the floor is slippery. All of these problems raised my awareness of the needs of this distinctive, disadvantaged group (the elderly), because very few designers are focused on this specific demographic which is growing as the population increasingly ages. Therefore, my project and its underlying researches will have significant future application.

China is now facing the challenge of a significantly aging population, because of the "baby boomer" period and the one-child policy which began in the 1970s. New Zealand is now also facing a similar demographic challenge.

I am one of the 'only child' generation and my parents are middle-aged and facing retirement within the next decade. So the work I am now doing could help improve their living circumstances and enhance their future quality of life.

In this chapter I explore the following:

1. Exciting environmental research
2. Design exploration
3. Audience