SEMINAR SERIES

How Experiments in Architecture, Cybernetics & AI Poured the Foundations of Interaction Design

ABSTRACT:

Inspired by cybernetics and artificial intelligence researchers who modeled intelligence in hardware and software, architects in the 1960s and 70s applied computational practices to interfaces, rooms, buildings, and cities. In so doing, they began to build feedback, cognition and intelligence into their work at the level of their design processes and their interactions with the user. Some modeled cybernetics and artificial intelligence in their architecture and design projects; others engaged directly and shared funding with cyberneticists and AI researchers. The process worked the other way as well: as technologists and system designers sought to address complex problems in the real world, they turned to architecture and architectural metaphors. This collaborative, hybrid space between architecture and computation gave rise to a new, hybrid interactivity that didn’t belong to one field or set of practices alone. It poured the foundations for interaction design and HCI conventions—and has ramifications for contemporary questions on the impact of machine learning and other AI practices.

BIO:

Dr. Molly Wright Steenson is an associate professor in the CMU School of Design. She is the author of the forthcoming book Architecting Interactivity (MIT Press, 2017). She also leads the Doctor of Design (DDes) program and has a courtesy appointment with the School of Architecture. Prior to CMU, she was an assistant professor of journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, an adjunct faculty member at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, and a resident associate professor at the Interaction Design Institute Ivrea in Ivrea, Italy in the early 2000s. She has worked professionally with the web for Fortune 500 & innovative startups since 1995. Steenson holds a PhD in architecture from Princeton University and a Master's in Environmental Design from the Yale School of Architecture.

HOST:

Jodi Forlizzi

Molly Steenson
Associate Professor, School of Design, Carnegie Mellon University