

# Interface

# The role of design in digital history

Visualization of data  Interaction with data

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# The role of design in digital history

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The same humanistic principles apply as with visualization:

**Form is inextricable from content.**

**Interface design is part of the argument/interpretation.**

**Interface is not limited to the screen.**



SAGE – Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (1958)

What's at stake...

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# What's at stake...

“The cognitive processes of reading, viewing, and navigating make meaning...

we have yet to engage seriously with modeling environments that support cultural difference, rather than register it...

**If the platforms set the terms of cultural production, then whose worldviews and ideologies will they embody and structure into the creation of knowledge?”**

Burdick, Drucker, Lunenfeld, Presner and Schnapp, *Digital\_Humanities* (2012), p.91



# What is an interface?

A “surface” or a “boundary”  
where two or more  
“systems”, “devices”, or  
“entities” come into  
“contact” or “interact”



Ivan Sutherland demonstrating SketchPad (1963)

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Ivan Sutherland demonstrating SketchPad (1963)

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A venue for representation

An information-space

(Kirchenbaum 2004)



Ivan Sutherland demonstrating SketchPad (1963)

**Are we living in an “interface culture” (Kirchenbaum)?**

**How does the notion of interface as cultural organizing principle relate to the “database as genre” (Manovich)?**

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“The ridiculous trappings of the scholarly profession...can interfere with the appreciation of the **actual work itself**” (“The Blake Archive for Humans”)

**Is showing or hiding complexity more desirable from a humanistic point of view?**



**Should design be left to the pros?**

**What does it mean to be the “user” of a digital history project? Alternatives?**

# Beauty

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Beauty not as uncommunicative, but a form of knowledge, the form of “what we do not yet know.. Predictive rather than descriptive, dynamic rather than settled, infinitely serious and useful” (Lisa Samuels)

# What makes an aesthetically beautiful DH project and why? Examples?

THE WILLIAM BLAKE ARCHIVE GALLERY MODE

LATEST PUBLICATION (1/12/21): Poetical Sketches

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Illuminated  
Books

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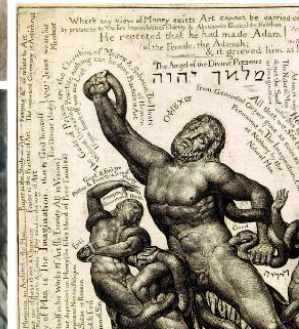
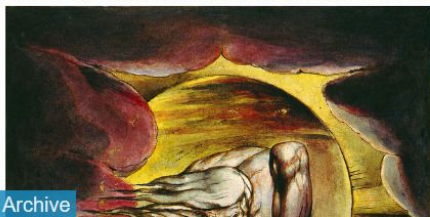
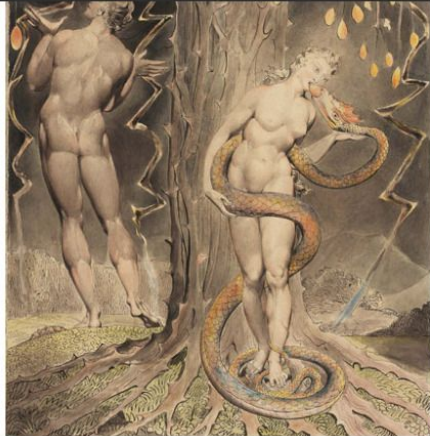
Separate Prints and  
Prints in Series

Drawings and  
Paintings

Manuscripts and  
Typographic Works

All  
Works

Archive  
Exhibitions



Random Sample of Objects from the Archive

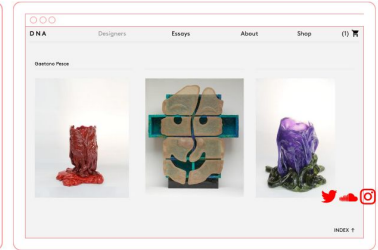
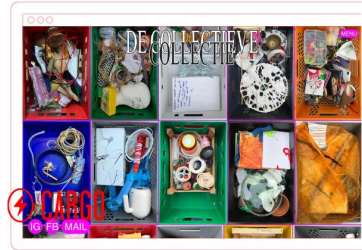
Compare examples from the **CSS Zen Garden** (<http://www.csszengarden.com>) and **Cargo Collective** (<https://cargo.site/In-Use>).

How has web design evolved?  
How do content and form “interface” in these examples?

brutto.studio  
Template → Blot Press

goenarchive.com  
Template → Any Crisis

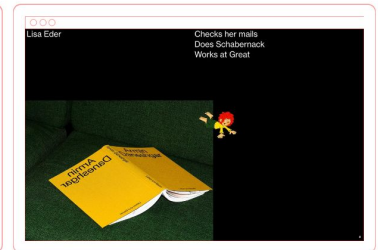
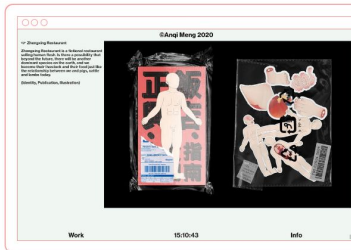
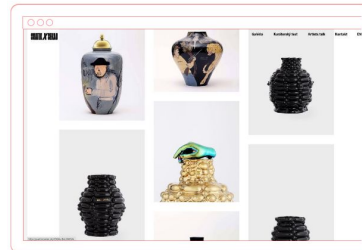
maria.petschnig.cc  
Template → Empty Studio



collectivecollectie.be  
Template → Scroll

inkristl.com  
Template → Fixed Width

dnadnada.design  
Template → Ideal Associates



svatiksekac.sk  
Template → M.T. Music

angi-meng.com  
Template → Untitled

lisaeder.at  
Template → Solo

Compare the interfaces of the two exhibits presented by Dr. Christina Hodge, **Modeling Mesoamerica** (built with Story Maps), and **Our Dark Materials** (built with Scalar). How do the platforms shape the user experience of the content?