

## Speech by Jan-Christoph Zoels

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At the graduation of the last 17 graduate students of Interaction Design Institute Ivrea, now located in Milano

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Dear students, dear parents, esteemed colleagues!

**“Design predicts the future when it anticipates experiences!”**

Augusto Morello

Foresight and design are both activities that aim to imagine the future. Both are employed for social and commercial benefit, helping to prepare people and companies for change.

**“Design predicts the future when it anticipates experiences!”**

What does Augusto Morello’s quote mean for us today? Lets take a look at our students’ answers:

Ana Camila is challenging our ideas of constant mobile availability;  
Aram is proposing a new union of service design and entertainment; and  
Hayat offers new touchpoints for relocation services;  
Shawn imagines hands-on gesture interfaces; as  
Dave makes our reputations visible to reduce the barriers of sharing.

Or check this out:

Alexandra designs for new ownership patterns of music between friends;  
Dana reflects on her state of being in redefining personal space; as  
Didier is concerned about his status and proposes new social tools to map our digital identities;  
Oren is talking to the hand - gesture interfaces to reveal hidden properties.

Imagine bringing beat to street corners like Chia Ying;  
or enabling reflective tools for programmers like David Mellis;  
discuss, vote and visualize issues with Tristam, and  
to discover accessible locative media with Victor.

Vinay grows ideas into enterprises through open-source technologies;  
Nicholas re-introduces media-centered social occasions based on coincidences;  
The MULE is never in his office as Alejandro designs pervasive games;  
Haiyan is the eternal Control Freak of play adventures - making us jump, swivel and stomp.

**“Design predicts the future when it anticipates experiences!”**

**This is it!** Congratulations & thank you - you excelled in difficult circumstances - as you discovered the treasures of your street. It is my honest opinion that you are a graduating class with one of the best end-of-year shows following up on an already outstanding show at the Salone del Mobile. A graduating class with very high standards - we evaluators had long discussions before agreeing on four distinctions in a sea of inspiring thesis work.

**This is it!** We called ourselves Gillian and the six dwarfs. We started five years ago out with a singular vision to innovate, examine and challenge interaction design education in the world. Naively, we even stated that we want to build an outstanding masters program of Interaction design on par with RCA, ITP NYU, MIT's Media Lab and the Carnegie Mellon design programme. A vision focused not on content but on the perceived leaders of the field. But this kept us open and flexible to adjust, question and innovate. Five years later we can say: a fast ascent, an abrupt ending! The end of Interaction-Ivrea as we know it.

But our evolving vision of interaction design continues on - tailoring processes, services and solutions to the needs of people - **Putting People First!**

Putting People First in the future will mean for you to look beyond the desires, needs and ambitions of your classmates. Extend your empathy to the people you don't know yet, challenge your pre-conceptions, engage their imagination. Innovate! Understanding people is about: sharing experiences, shaping experiences and evaluating experiences!

This is the power of experiences - learning about real users and using these insights in crafting physical or digital form to imaginable futures!

**What is your vision? Imagine!**

**This is it!** If we look at the history of great schools in the last hundred years - the average lifespan were just under twelve years. The Bauhaus in Germany existed 14 years, Black Mountain College in North Carolina fell apart after twenty years, College of Design in Ulm, Germany, was closed after 11 years, MIT's Media Lab in Dublin held out for four years, we managed one year longer! But what an impact!

The reasons for closure are always varied - from political to financial to lack of vision. And this applies also to us. Our own reasons are also a mixture - from lack of understanding of the Italian context we operated in, to a poor strategic administration of the quite large financial resources we were given initially, to an eventually demoralising lack of internal communication and transparency. One thing is for sure: never before have corporate tax savings brought forward such an innovative and diverse group of graduates.

But there is always hope in the end - a new school might be founded in Denmark, an undergraduate program is starting in Venice, Domus will have a chance, for them to take, to capitalise on Interaction-Ivrea's innovative teaching methods and results. One thing we learned: even a two-years masters program cannot address all the diverse skills and methods needed in the growing field of IAD.

**Learn from the opportunities we had, our mistakes and grow your own visions. Imagine! And let the myth begin.**

**This is it:** our second strength was our collaborations with companies - from 17 Applied Dreams - collaborative innovation workshops with industry leaders such as Mattel, Sony, Hitachi, Nokia, Alcatel, Orange, Fiat and Telecom Italia to projects with industry and public institutions - *The future of train travel* for Trenitalia; *Mobile embodiments* ; *Innovative technologies for new generations of FIAT cars*; *Design for Future Needs* and *Convivio* for the European Union to name a few. One of the results: our students found easily internships with companies around the world.

Let's not forget a handful of exhibitions - Salone del Mobile in 2004 and 06 in Milano, participation in art & design exhibitions in Turin, Venice and London. Our show in Salone del Mobile saw 20 000 visitors in just five days putting us on the map and into the press. Or take a look at Casey Reas' work at the Triennale right now.

Imagine reaching out to Italian industry...

**This is it!** Just enough prototyping! Gillian's call for action stimulated the development platforms of Wiring, Programma 2003, Arduino and Instant Soup. Open-source technologies to support the interaction between the digital and tangible worlds. Now they are used in schools around the world. Thanks to Hernando, Massimo and Yaniv!

**This is it!** The vision lives on! Three great spin-offs: fluid time designs mobile time management applications in Vienna, Interaction Lab design exhibitions in Milano, and Experientia in Turin helps companies to innovate their products, services and processes by making them simple, easy to use and desirable.

**This is it!** Putting People First! Look around - this is a graduating year where nearly half of the class have already job offers from IDEO to imaging a school in Copenhagen to designing interactive play experiences in Torino.

You are joining an outstanding group of alumni's around the world - working in companies like Nokia, Hitachi and France Telecom, who consult at the Institute of the Future in Palo Alto, at Cooper or IDEO, to creating their own design consultancies like Cute Circuit or Project Bureau.

Now lets imagine the future companies of our graduates!

Here it starts - Putting people first! Lets harness the power of experience:

- in understanding users and their experience
- in creating imaginable futures grounded in the life of every day people
- in using design strategy to inform decisions.

Let us think about new ideas for future needs.

This is not the end! Your future starts NOW!