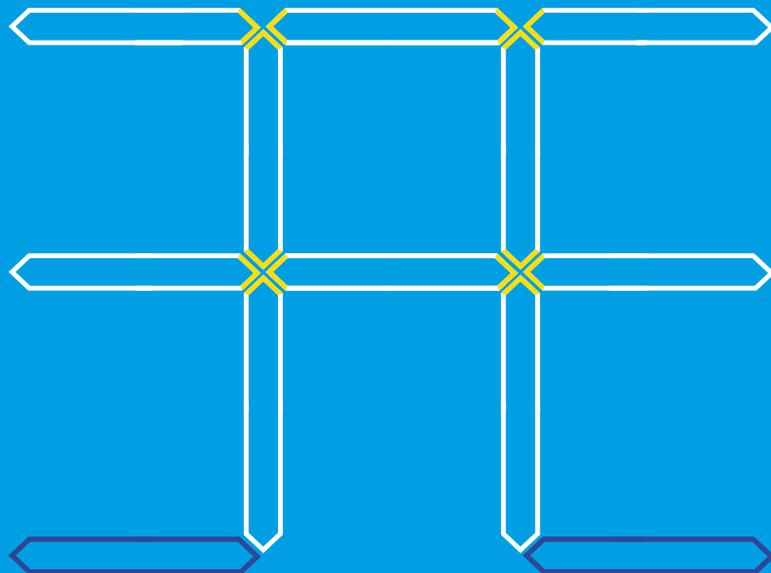
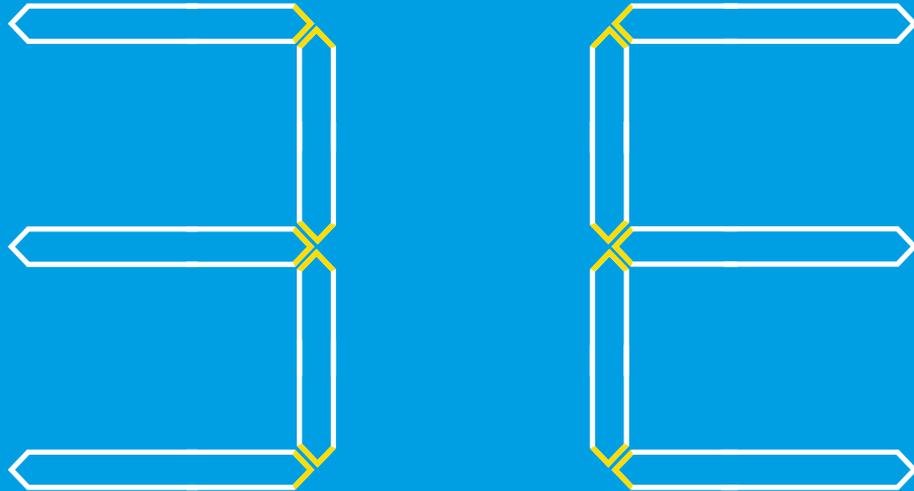


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Cumulus Working Papers
33/16

Open Design for E-very-thing

21 – 24 November 2016
Hong Kong
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Open Design for
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EXPLORING NEW DESIGN PURPOSES



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EDITORS

Cecile Kung, Elita Lam and Yanki Lee/
Hong Kong Design Institute

Hong Kong Design Institute
3 King Ling Road
Tseung Kwan O
New Territories
Hong Kong
www.hkdi.edu.hk

Cumulus International Association of Universities and
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Aalto University School of Arts
Design and Architecture
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Safe Niños: designing empathic environments for child burn survivors

Mariana Amatullo, Stella Hernandez, Penny Herscovitch

ArtCenter College of Design, Pasadena, United States
designmatters@artcenter.edu, stella_hernandez@msn.com, pad@padlab.com

ABSTRACT

Over 7 million children a year suffer from burn injuries across Latin America, and a child's healing process can take over 20 years, due to multiple surgeries as children grow¹. In partnership with COANIQUEM, a nonprofit pediatric treatment facility in Santiago, Chile that cares for young burn survivors free of charge, the Designmatters Safe Niños multidisciplinary studio hosted by the Environmental Design Department at ArtCenter College of Design, Pasadena, California, challenged students to co-create with stakeholders to reinvigorate the 6-acre campus with innovative, human-centered and engaging environments aimed at optimal healing for children, and support the holistic medical approach of the center.²

Field research at COANIQUEM afforded the design team the experience of living alongside pediatric patients and their families, and connecting with them across language, culture, art, play and music. Students and faculty used various design ethnography tools to uncover issues and opportunities informed by stakeholders' daily behaviors and activities across campus, from day-in-the-life patient journeys to brainstorming sessions with medical staff. Two follow-up field testing trips allowed a smaller group from the studio to further test ideas and push co-creation and empathic methodology to arrive at novel and useful solutions that are integrated together under an umbrella concept of an "Ecosystem of Healing."

The Safe Niños: Design for Holistic Healing book,³ published by Designmatters in 2017, presents a narrative overview of the studio, beginning with its inception and concluding with a look toward impact at the project implementation level. The exhibition presented at the Cumulus conference features prominent illustration and graphics incorporated throughout the Ecosystem of Healing proposal.

Keywords

co-creation, social-innovation, design

INTRODUCTION

Designmatters' newest publication, Safe Niños: Design for Holistic Healing, is a comprehensive narrative of the Safe Niños transdisciplinary studio and subsequent Development Seminar. The publication offers an overview of the project's inception, beginning with the students' empathic, co-creative research at COANIQUEM with patients, families and medical staff. Back at ArtCenter, the narrative follows students through their initial concept ideation and prototyping, as well as their decision to collaborate as a unified team and present holistic, patient-centric outcomes to COANIQUEM stakeholders. The publication concludes with a look toward impact, featuring environmental and graphic design projects from the Safe Niños Development Seminar that are seeing implementation on COANIQUEM's campus. The book's designer, as well as key contributors, will be present to share insights on the design process and field questions.

The Cumulus Exhibition is a series of illustrated panels that present the empathic design process of the Safe Niños studio, as well as significant outcomes from the collaboration that are already making an impact with COANIQUEM stakeholders. Tying in with the Safe Niños publication, illustrations, photography and spreads from the book are featured throughout the exhibition.

Aim & Objective

Over 7 million children a year suffer from burn injuries across Latin America. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the rate of child deaths from burns is 7 times higher in low- and middle-income countries than in high-income countries. A child's healing process can take over 20 years, due to multiple surgeries as children grow, with the process often representing a significant psychological and economic toll on the entire family unit. In partnership with COANIQUEM, a nonprofit pediatric treatment facility in Santiago, Chile that cares for young burn survivors free of charge, the Designmatters Safe Niños multidisciplinary studio hosted by the Environmental Design Department at ArtCenter challenged students to co-create with stakeholders to reinvigorate the 6-acre campus with innovative, human-centered and engaging environments that afford optimal healing for children, and support the holistic medical approach of the center.

From a design for social innovation pedagogical perspective, the project modeled a highly collaborative professional studio environment, where students and faculty collaborated as a unified team to

envision innovative and cost-effective ways to create human-centered environments that will support a healing and nurturing atmosphere within the existing campus of COANIQUEM, where young burn survivors across Latin America receive treatment.

Driven by a co-creation mindset and methodology framework, the team seeks to design creative spaces and patient-centric experiences that are welcoming and therapeutic, as well as fun and interactive. With the aim of meeting the needs and aspirations of pediatric patients from underserved communities in Latin America, the studio presents an interesting exemplar of a design for social innovation project where empathy was integral to the research process and proposed design interventions.

Methodology & Process

At the onset of the studio, co-creation as a mindset and collective creativity were paramount as students reached out and established rapport with a variety of stakeholders (ranging from patients to medical personnel) for generative research, contextual inquiry and problem-solving.

Two weeks of immersive field research at the COANIQUEM burn rehabilitation campus in Santiago, Chile, afforded the design team the experience of living alongside pediatric patients and their families in the residential housing of the Center's campus. In small teams, students listened to people's stories and aspirations, learning from their experiences and developing empathy with patients, their families and medical staff. They connected across language and culture, through play, art, dance & music.

Co-creation was also used as a method of inquiry and adopted as a design research technique that influenced the design exploration and design development phases of the studio. While on campus teams used various design ethnography tools from day-in-the-life patient journeys, cultural probes, participatory design research sessions through art-making and play, qualitative interviews, participant observation and brainstorming with medical staff, etc in order to uncover issues and opportunities informed by stakeholders' daily behaviors and activities across campus. Many of these various techniques were codified ahead of time by method cards and a research guide manual developed the faculty for the studio.

Result/Discussion

Upon their return to ArtCenter – and inspired by the holistic nature of COANIQUEM's approach to treatment– the studio decided to work together as a unified team, integrating proposed design solutions across the spectrum of opportunities and challenges uncovered in the field. This allowed students to develop one overriding concept with interconnected elements that they iterated and prototyped in a cyclical feedback-loop process guided by faculty and COANIQUEM stakeholders feedback. This process of co-design was amplified through a second trip to the COANIQUEM campus from a representative team midway through the project.

By the conclusion of the 16-week studio, a number of proposed designs solutions emerged and were unified under the umbrella concept of an "Ecosystem of Healing" that is intended to trans-

form the experience of patients and families seeking treatment at the clinic into a journey that promotes nurturing spaces for healing and play. At the conclusion of this second studio in August 2016, the team returned to Chile to do a second round of prototype testing and started implementing some of the solutions that were ready. Projects that were piloted in this phase included: environments that provide age specific relaxation and play spaces (TeenZone); a digital check-in system for the waiting room area; an environmental graphics system of signage and storytelling for the clinic and interactive therapeutic toys for young children to accelerate healing.

About NGO Partner, COANIQUEM

Since its inception in 1979 by Dr. Jorge Rojas-Zegers, COANIQUEM has cared for more than 100,000 children suffering from devastating and life-altering burn injuries. Because of partnerships and international support, COANIQUEM can offer their services at no cost to families, many who live in underserved communities. COANIQUEM treats 8,000 patients annually, with survivors and families living on the facility grounds for weeks and months as they undergo treatments and therapy sessions. Taking a holistic approach, COANIQUEM combines medical attention, restorative healing and comprehensive rehabilitation programs to treat physical and psychological scars.

References

¹ Data source COANIQUEM, see <http://coaniquem.cl/estadisticas-de-quemadura/>

² For a complete case study of the Safe Niños studio, see <http://designmattersatartcenter.org/proj/safe-ninos/> and <http://designmattersatartcenter.org/proj/coaniquem-safe-ninos-dev-seminar/>.

³ The Safe Niños: Design For Holistic Healing publication is available for download at <http://designmattersatartcenter.org/library/books-articles/>.

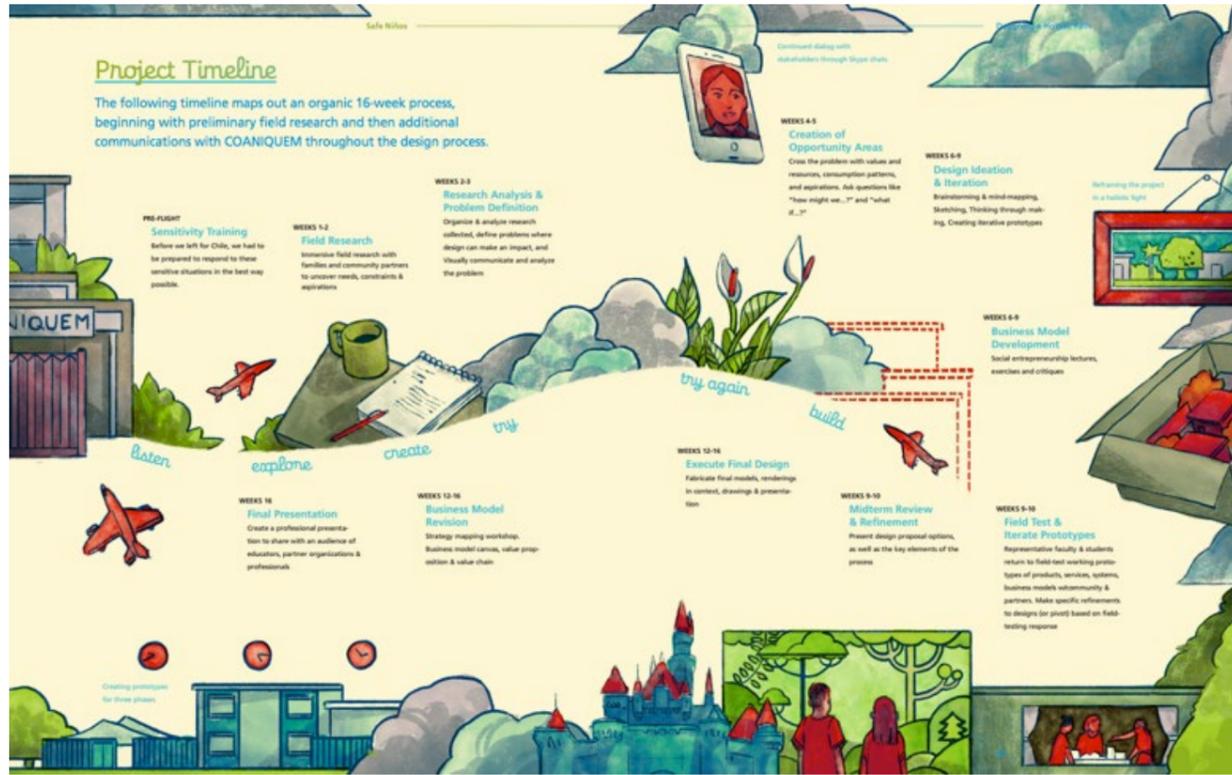


Figure 1. (Project timeline) excerpt from the Safe Niños: Design for Holistic Healing publication



Figure 2. (Field research) excerpt from the Safe Niños: Design for Holistic Healing publication



Figure 3. The Safe Niños Healing Tree Project by Alvin Oei is a magical Chilean-inspired ecosystem that helps burned children become experts in their own path to healing.

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