CORSA NEWS

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GM: A WINDOW TO THE FUTURE

General Motors is developing smart windows so that rear-seat passengers have richer experience while traveling.

Bored in the back seat? DVD players and Game Boy are from five years ago, but a new concept in entertainment technology for the windows of the rear seats of vehicles could replace boredom with interactive and more enjoyable trips.

The Research and Development (R&D) division of General Motors posed that challenge to researchers and students of the FUTURE LAB of the Academy of Art and Design in Bezalel, Israel. The task: conceptualize new ways to help rear-seat passengers, especially children, to have a richer experience while traveling.

The "Windows of Opportunity" (WOO) project was inspired by psychological studies that indicate that car passengers often feel disconnected from their surroundings. GM asked Bezalel students to convert vehicle windows into interactive displays capable of stimulating awareness, fueling curiosity and encouraging greater connection with the outside world of the vehicle.

Since GM has no immediate plans to put interactive windows on production vehicles, the R&D team unleashed Bezalel students to create applications without worrying if they could massively occur. The applications are:

Otto: an animated character that projects on the landscape that responds to the performance of the vehicle, the weather and the landscape in real time. Otto enables passengers to learn about their surroundings as a fun game.

Foofu: allows passengers to create, explore and discover by drawing with their fingers on the steam of the window.

Spindow: provides its users with a look at the windows of other WOO users around the world in real time.

Pond: allows passengers to upload and share music with other vehicles that circulate, download favorite songs and share messages with other passengers on the trip.

To demonstrate these applications, the students produced a full-scale functional prototype of a rear passenger seat and side window. The students used motion and optical sensor technology developed by EyeClick to convert the standard window glass into a gestural and multitouch sensitive surface.

If these interactive windows were put into automotive production, they would probably use electronically charged "smart glass" technology, which is capable of generating variable states of translucency and transparency and that can reflect projected images. "Smart glass" is increasingly used in architecture and projection applications, but except in films such as Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol, it can rarely be seen in vehicles.

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