



Plate 1. Esther, Interface the First, & Mechanical at their farm.

**O**NCE UPON A TIME the King of the Five Senses, and the Queen of Insight had a beautiful daughter. They named her Æsthetics, but they called her Esther.

Esther grew to be creative and engaging, sometimes serving and sometimes wishing to be served. She could be exotic or pragmatic; at turns wild or tame; emotional and stormy; or as placid as a deep forest pond. For her the senses were ablaze with the richness of life, and she ever desired to share this passion with all those whom she would meet.

The gods bestowed upon her another great gift; this being that Esther should be perpetually youthful.

One day, as Esther was joyously frolicking with some wild things at the edge of her realms, she happened upon a cave, and there entering was met with an oracle who prophesied something that made Esther much afraid. It was this: that Esther must marry a prince from the Kingdom of Technology. And further: that Esther should loath him at first, and lose him at last. Now this created great consternation, as Esther's ancestors had always viewed persons from the Kingdom of Technology with great suspicion—claiming they were magicians and conjurers.

But fate had demanded this union, and, upon leaving the cave, Esther found there resting, a young prince whose name, she learned, was Mechanical. Mechanical's middle name was Practical Engineering.

Though Esther derided the idea of marriage, and knew

that they could not live happily ever after (for he would age and she would not, and as prophesied, she would lose him in the end), there was something about him...

The relationship was (as anyone could have predicted) a tumultuous one. They could agree on virtually nothing. Should the chickens be kept inside the house, or outside? Was the cow's milk to be analyzed, or simply drank for taste alone? Should they fence in the garden, or would it be preferable to plant more seed and let the wild things take their portion?

For the first couple of centuries it did not seem to be getting much better—Esther would want to go on random walks in the wild seeking out a new view or an unfamiliar scent or taste or touch yielded by the forest flora. Mechanical preferred staying at home, examining the farm, and seeing if this variation on a familiar tool might yield another bushel of grain over the previous harvest. (Esther thought that the whole concept of harvesting was quite suspect!)

Mechanical kept aging (he didn't seem to care how he looked anyway), but he was getting wiser all the while. Esther, who once would not even think of allowing Mechanical to handle an æsthetic decision, gradually sought his advice on ways to share her gift.

One day Mechanical invented the Day Job. Esther didn't mind. It was something new.

After a couple decades they truly became compatible. Things around the house were decidedly improving; several favored Chickens were living indoors. The Garden was

partially fenced. And, although Esther made sure to keep some milk for Mechanical to analyze, most of it could be chilled and refreshingly enjoyed. Mechanical had, by the way, come upon this concept of chilling the milk during some of his experiments and Esther enthusiastically admitted that it was an almost inspired stroke.

She wondered privately if the muses had actually taken a liking to her mate.

It wasn't many decades before Mechanical was a real nine to five. Everything was organized, things were functioning like clockwork (which was marvelous from Mechanical's view point, for he had invented the clock) Mechanical's motto became, "There must be a faster way to do this" even though Esther noticed that he always seemed to be working just that much harder and that much longer with each passing season.

Esther became deeply committed to Mechanical; for almost any idea; fantastical or austere, that Esther could dream up, he could "actualize" (Esther did not favor words such as actualize, but Mechanical insisted that nothing is new, or better, unless you rename it with more letters than it had before.)

They still argued however, Esther kept trivializing Mechanical's inventions and using them to a purpose they were not intended for, and Mechanical had a hard time figuring out just what Esther really wanted.

It was their child, whom they named Interface the First, that really brought harmony to the family. [Plate 1.] Interface seemed the perfect balance of his mother's wildness and his father's obsessions for function and reliability—in fact, it was only a very short time before no one spoke to the parents anymore because Interface was so much more approachable.

When Interface made his way in the world he was a very influential friend to a fellow named Germanmann who transformed the art of a writing into a printing process called letterpress. This altered whatever came after forever, and showed that the this offspring of Esther and Mechanical was a person of reckoning.

One leap year day, tragedy struck; just when Esther was happiest, (for almost every one of her most daring fantasies could be made real through the magic of Mechanical's craft and expressed most consummately through Interface) her husband could not be found.

The cause of his disappearance was this. Mechanical

went to work that day, but, experimenting with a new kind of traveling device, he lost his way and ended up in the Kingdom of Technology. The King of that land, upon seeing his eldest son so changed, was furious and forbid his return. But the next son, upon hearing the wonderful tales about Esther's realms, grew jealous of his brother.

One night the younger son stole his elder brother's cloths and secreted into the lands of Esther. His name was Electrical. He pretended to be as his brother for some time, but Esther was most suspicious, and at last he revealed that, though he had the charms of his brother, he secretly wanted to change the world.

It was a striking blow, and Esther was beside herself in fear and rage.

She vowed that Electrical could never replace Mechanical, but Electrical was very insistent and had a lot of energy. Electrical (as Mechanical before him) had to handle all the early æsthetic decisions on his own, because Esther felt that anything he did in her name was a travesty. Still, as the centuries passed Esther began to see some promise in this young man. Over the objections of Interface the First they were married.

Initially, it was worse than Esther's former union. You couldn't even see Electrical for half of the time. He flitted about. But when Esther was inspired, he really lit up—and this was pretty exciting.

They had a child and named him Interface the Second. Just as before, the subtleties of his parents were lost on the masses and people clamored to see their new son. He was a bit more ambitious than his older brother, and took up with fellows whose name's began with "E" (in honor of his father) like Edison and Eastman. Interface the Second particularly liked the moving pictures. One night during a most violent lightning storm Electrical went out and lost his way, as had his brother before him. He too, stumbled back into his home kingdom, and the King, upon seeing his deprived and subservient condition, chained him in his room. Electrical cried and cried to return, seeing it was hopeless he then fell to telling wonderful tales about Esther.

Overcome with curiosity and jealousy upon listening to the stories of his elder brother Electrical, his younger brother, the third son, now gaining strength and coming into manhood, decided that he too must have a glimpse of Esther. A short time later he made off with his older brothers cloths and stole into Esther's realms.

His name was Digital.

Esther was not deceived. This was ignomy and shame; the ultimate injustice; for Esther was nothing if not analog. For her, every gesture was a gesture of the senses, seeing, hearing, touching—all modulated—ever varying. Could she share her perpetual youth with something that could only say yes, or no? Would the subtleties of the ages be reduced to off or on, zero or one, pulse or lack of pulse?

At first Digital was quite proud and overtly self-assured, and despite outward appearance Esther was really quite afraid of Digital. For Digital had a very strange propensity for storing things. He was always going off to his day time place to put things in columns and rows, Digital was truly a codependent, everything he did was based on this vast collection of things he kept in a fiefdom called database.

But, eventually, it was a case of opposites attracting... and, as before, there was something about him...

Digital (as Mechanical and Electrical before him) had to handle all the early æsthetic decisions on his own, because Esther felt that anything he did in her name was a travesty. But only several years later, Digital found ways to share the most complex of Esther's ideas.

They still had differences—Esther (as you can imagine by now) would eat her fruit whole (allowing the nectar to trickle down her wrist and forearm); Digital would first dry the fruit, and then dice it into the tiniest of pieces. Esther would speak to the animals, each according to their language; Digital painstakingly trained them to speak as he did. (He called it a universal tongue.) But Digital was fast, and had a marvelous knack for multiplying whatever Esther created—the enchanting gardens for example—were duplicated and spread out for as far as the eye could see.

Esther obviously cherished this attribute of Digital. Indeed, everything that Esther's insight and passion had created, or even suggested, Digital had neatly stored in his columns and rows. Most wonderful of all she admitted (with a nervous eye cast to the future) that this was the

most significant moment in all of her life and realms.

They had a son named Interface the Third. For him everything seemed possible. He married a woman named Interactivity, who was a delight to all she met. All who came under the influence of Interface the Third were eventually swayed by this magic of the zero and the one. Digital vowed never to depart his love, and Esther felt perhaps that the prophecy was fulfilled. She could share her talent as never before, and believed that perhaps she would indeed live happily ever after. It was indeed a golden age.

Epilogue:

Over in the Kingdom of Technology, it is widely believed, particularly as they have (in their minds) lost three or four princes to the enchantress æsthetic, that this Esther is both dangerous and desirable. So the Technologists are quite determined, that the fifth\* and youngest prince, must on no account trespass into Esther's realms.

But this very prince (whose name is yet to be determined but is something like: Analog Intelligence Entity) has just (so you might have heard) breached the walls of Esther's realm, and is even now, crouching at the gates.

# PIIMPAPER09

A FABLE OF ÆSTHETICS & TECHNOLOGY:  
WITH OBSERVATIONS ON THE STATE OF THEIR UNION  
& COMMENTARY REGARDING THEIR OFFSPRING  
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**ENDNOTES:** \*This presentation was shortened slightly in order to accommodate time restraints at the conference. One “prince” was deleted from the script. The missing prince would have been named: Chemical. For clarity on the generations of interface design see: <http://piim.newschoo.edu/manifesto.html> (Go to text on generations of the interfaces and click on relevant illustrations for elegant diagrams concerning the metaphors alluded to in the story.)

For theory behind some of these images go to: <http://www.spire-id.com/infomap>

Also, the spire-id site (without the /infomap) gives practical applications.

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In a manner, the very process of interacting with information causes more and more information to be generated. This is why practitioners must think with non-linear methods and cast a net of containment over the whole, by doing so they may ascertain patterns that permit reduction. There is a joy in working with creative individuals while they collectively struggle to reveal just what kind of logical key can generate info-insightfulness.

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