GODS // Keiichi Matsuda // 190328

This age of computing is being characterised by technology leaking out into our physical world. It is becoming infused in our cities, our institutions, our products, our culture. As our lives are increasingly mediated through technology, it is the interface that will shape the way we understand reality.

KamiOS is a powerful and magical new way of interacting with the world around us. It is built to re-frame our relationship with technology, focusing on transparency, privacy and trust, to give agency back to the people. It is built to work with today's emerging technologies, giving us intuitive new ways of harnessing 5G, AI, IoT, cloud and wearable tech to name a few.

The interface has roots in our oldest and most primitive ways of understanding the world around us: gods.

Japanese *Tsukumogami:* objects that have come to life

KamiOS channels the spirit world using AR. When you put on your headset, you will be introduced to many different gods who will guide you through your virtual and physical life. Gods of navigation, communication, commerce. Gods who teach you, gods who learn from you. Gods who make their home in particular objects or places, and gods who accompany you on your journey.

There are no buttons or menus in KamiOS. The gods may hear your words, but can also learn about your routines, your connection to others, the way you spend your time. You can ask them for things, but they will be active even without your input. Your interaction with them is social, based on a contextual understanding of the world around you.

Today, the big tech companies are represented on this earth by their supposedly all-powerful prophets (Siri, Alexa, Cortana, Google Assistant). Joining one of these almighty ecosystems requires sacrifice, and blind faith. You must agree to the terms and conditions, the arcane privacy policy. You submit your most intimate searches, friendships, memories.

From then you must pray that your god is a benevolent one. The big tech companies are monotheistic belief systems, each competing to be the One True God.

KamiOS is different. It is based in pagan animism, where there are many thousands of gods, who live in everything[1]. You will form tight and productive relationships with some. But if a malevolent spirit living in your refrigerator proves untrustworthy or inefficient, you can banish it and replace it with another. Some gods serve corporate interests, some can be purchased from developers, others you might train yourself. Over time, you will choose a trusted circle of gods, who you may also allow to communicate with and manage one another.
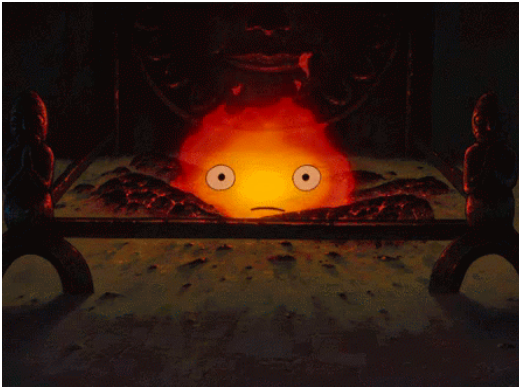
'Calcifer' in Studio Ghibli's Howl's Moving Castle, Lumire and Cogsworth in Disney's Beauty and the Beast

The spirit world is accessible through a growing number of devices. This world will envelop our physical cities, and gods will come to be our connection to our appliances, our institutions, our applications, and much more. These gods will operate machinery, curate and play music, drive cars. Their influence will be increasingly felt in the physical world. You will live and work in community of both physical and virtual beings. Access to this world and to this community is the true product vision for AR.

Unlike today's virtual assistants, the gods of KamiOS are not all-knowing or all-powerful. They are limited, fallible, and have different agendas and loyalties. There is no pretence that these gods can answer any question you ask of them[2]. Often they will only be able to answer one or two questions. But they also have extraordinary abilities that go far beyond virtual assistants and conversational interfaces. As social animals, we will quickly come to know the extents of their abilities, and this will lead to better interactions that lean on our human intelligence[3].

This is a radical vision for a true step-change in interaction[4]. It is not intended to replace mobile or desktop functionality like-for-like, it is about creating a new mythology that opens

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[1] I am not the first to notice the synergy between animism and augmented technologies. See also: Van Allen / McVeigh-Shultz's Anithings

[2] See BERG's design principle for conversational interfaces: B.A.S.A.A.P (be as smart as a puppy)

[3] KamiOS leverages the Theory of Mind, and extends it to non-human agents.

[4] Why should it be radical? AR inputs cannot beat touchscreens or mouse/keyboard for existing formats (like email). Rather than trying to make marginal gains in efficiency or productivity, we should offer a bold, magical, native approach. To find new ways of communicating, creating, playing, and unlocking people's imagination.

up the imagination and brings new opportunity. It is built around a decentralised, open infrastructure, which protects and empowers people to create[5]. It carries with it new business models, and is inherently 'social', embedded in the physical world around us. It is natural and easy to use, leveraging our social instincts to give sophisticated control over our data.

Most importantly, it uses our ancient systems of belief, ritual and community to create a better, more human relationship with technology.

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[5] I imagine that developers will build these gods, and gods will help users create 'content', amongst other things.