INTRODUCING A NEW CONCEPT

Gil Biggie

One of the benefits from attending a button show is the opportunity to keep a "finger on the pulse" of innovation in the button world. For example, I would have been unaware of the uranium glass craze if I wasn't at a show where everyone was running through the dealer tables with a black light. I had a similar enlightenment at the Oregon State show the first week of May this year.

Joss Howells of Oregon submitted an award (see below) for "interactive buttons," accompanied by an article on the OSBS web site to explain and clarify what she had in mind.

I, personally, love this concept—an expansion of the accepted mechanical buttons category. I am not alone in this thinking, as there were several trays entered, and people were using the new term while shopping. Here is the article so you can be up-to-date on one of the latest trends that I believe will be a "forest fire" when it gets around. You can say it started in Oregon with their Spring 2013 bulletin, and you heard it first right here through WRBA! Spread the news!

AWARD 56. Div. IX Class 23-12. 30 any. Specific types unlisted, specialized to interactive buttons, which include mechanical, movable, and optical (hologram, blinking eye, iridescent luster that requires movement to see all colors, etc.). Assorted materials are important—please label. No more than 15 pictorials. Two studio buttons allowed, which must be labeled "studio," along with the name of the artist, if known.

Bell
Compass
Dangle
Door knocker
Flexible protrusion
Glow in dark
Google eye
Image/color change
Iridescent luster that shows definite different colors when tipped back and forth (glass)
Mechanical/movable misc.
Abacus beads move
Arrow lie detector
Balls roll around circular track
Beads in border turn
Clothespin opens
Dials change date
Expand/contract
Jointed body parts
Mouse tail wiggles at joints
Parts move back and forth in track
Spinning parts
Tongue
Parts can be wiggled
Pull string toy
Puzzle, 4 pieces fit together
Racing car wheels turn
Spur spins on boot
Toy w/metal ball moves inside
Open/shut – screw or hinge:
Colt rouge/perfume
Compact with powder puff inside
Locket
Smuggler
Rattle
Screw turns
Trembler
Tumble
Wings open on ladybug
Brush in Bakelite
Eraser on Bakelite pencil
Interchangeable parts (glass "nestle-togethers")
Mirror that can be used as a real lookingglass
Springs on bat and pumpkin
Water-filled cavity

INTERACTIVE BUTTONS

by Jocelyn Howells

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Today I'm venturing into uncharted territory (again!). While having fun with this concept, I am also seriously trying to hone in on a new class of buttons, which would incorporate the current mechanical/movable class, but take it beyond. I'm thinking to eventually propose a new class in "Specific Types" in the NBS classification system for all types of buttons that DO something (actively or passively) when we interact with them, and this competition will be a trial run.*

Button manufacturers have been very imaginative and clever in some of their creations. Other than the mechanical/movable category that I included for the first time in the NBS classification when I chaired the revision of the synthetic polymer section, there has been no organized or official recognition of all the various aspects of buttons that DO something or have other interactive qualities.

OK, so what am I talking about? I'm *not* talking about what buttons might do to *us* when we look at them. I'm *not* considering the emotions that buttons can evoke in *us*. That would be *us* reacting to the buttons, such as:

⇒ "Oooh how beautiful!"
⇒ "Oh, isn't that cuuuute—reminds me of a dress I had when I was a little girl; wonder whatever happened to its buttons—sniff-sniff."
⇒ "This was a gift from my late husband that I will take to my grave."
⇒ "Oooh, I'm so jealous I don't have that one, too!"
⇒ "Oh I wish I hadn't let that one get away from me."

You get what I mean?

I am talking about what happens with a button when handled by us, such as: jiggle, dance, dangle, tinkle, rattle, twist, turn, screw open/shut, hide/hold objects, change image, change color, keep time or date, play games, move, wink, blink, make googly eyes, float, bend, vibrate, tremble, sift (sand), flutter, open/shut by hinge (compact, locket), glow in the dark/fluoresce, spin, reflect image, spring, dance, tip hat, brush, wiggle, tumble, walk, flex, slide, erase, rotate, motate, expand/contract, ring/clap, add/subtract, knock, detect lies, take temperature, make a puzzle, change parts, etc.

I'm referring to something that requires physical effort on our part to fully enjoy all aspects of the button.

I have not included sparkle or twinkle, as they seem to manage just fine without our help, as long as there is sufficient light. Iridescent luster is a bit different, as some require movement in order to see all the colors—especially some of the vintage c.1950-60 examples—e.g., tipped one way, we see mostly gold; tipped another way, we see mostly purple.

Flexible protrusion: fur.

In my collection, I found the most prevalent of all these to be dangling parts, followed by buttons that have flexible protruding parts, followed by buttons that call for manipulation of moving parts. There are more than enough examples to make complete trays of each of those three types.

Here is a preliminary listing of the various aspects included in this group, followed by the materials I have found so far in each type. It is not meant to be complete, but representative.

Bell (metal)
Compass (wood, metal, acetate filled with liquid)
Dangle (metals, NY, wood, casein, acetate, acrylic, polyester, fabric, bakelite/phenolic resin, aluminum, plaster, ABS, bone, pearl)
Door knocker (metals, casein, bakelite/phenolic resin, VI, glass mounted in metal)
Flexible protrusion (body: fabric, wood, casein, bakelite/phenolic resin; protrusion: feather, fur, fabric, beads, hair, leather, cord, wicker, plant parts, beads
Glow in dark (PE, acrylic DUP mounted in metal)
Google eye (wood, nylon, acetate, acrylic, polyester)
Image/color change (acetate, ABS, PE, wood)

Moveable ears. Ivory bunny with jet eyes. Carved by studio button artist, Brad Elfrink.

Balls rolling in a heart-shaped track.

Paper button. Blinks by using a battery.

Iridescent luster that shows definite different colors when tipped back and forth (glass)
Mechanical/movable miscellaneous
Abacus beads move (wood, brass, white metal)
Airplane propeller spins (nylon)
Arrow lie detector (white metal)
Balls roll around circular track (nylon)
Beads in border turn (wood)
Body moves in middle, giving impression of walking (motating)
Boy (nylon)
Charlie Chaplin (modern gilt with cold plastic enamel DF)
Clothespin opens (wood)
Dials change date (white metal)
Expand/contract (white metal)
Mouse tail wiggles at joints (metal)
Parts move back and forth in track (nylon)
Airplane
Car
Soccer ball
Tongue
Parts can be wiggled (nylon)
Pull string toy (wood)
Puzzle, 4 pieces fit together (nylon)
Racing car wheels turn (nylon, ABS)
Spur spins on boot (wood)
Toy w/metal ball moves inside

Pewter. CPE glows.

(polystyrene)
Open/shut – screw or hinge
Colt rouge/perfume (amino resin)
Compact (white metal) with powder puff inside
Locket (gold/gilt, military brass Div. II)
Smuggler (enameled silver)
Rattle (casein, polystyrene)
Screw turns (white metal)
Tremble ("Gay 90s" glass mounted in metal, nylon, polystyrene)
Tumble (outer material: metal, acetate, polystyrene, casein; inner material: sand, shells, seeds, plant life, metal shavings, plastic bits)
Wings open on ladybug (nylon)
Unlisted miscellaneous
Brush in Bakelite
Eraser on Bakelite pencil
Interchangeable parts (glass, what I call "nestle-togethers")
Mirror that can be used as a real looking glass (casein, NY)
Springs on bat and pumpkin (polyester)

Mechanical vegetable ivory. Three round paste sizes & a heart paste. 94 total pastes. Twisted brass wire and white metal OME prong setting. Pierced. Aurora luster. Bob Benson, studio artist.

Hologram

It's interesting to note that certain materials seem to lend themselves better to this type of button. Metals and plastics seem to predominate, but not celluloids. I've found just two celluloids so far, and one is iffy. Also, there must be many more different examples out there in buttondom yet to be discovered. And, of course, clever studio artists can create interactive buttons from many other materials.

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*Comments after the OSBS show 2014: Several people entered this award, there was a first, second, and third awarded. No one was disqualified, but some BOD (benefit of doubt) seemed to have been allowed. My observation was that some buttons were used

that took two categories a bit too far, in that the changes were not obvious enough to my taste.

1. Image/color change
2. Iridescent luster that shows definite different colors when tipped back and forth

I would be careful to choose the very best, most obvious, example of those two categories. And I would always recommend using BOD in judging.

Another question that arose during this competition was how to use the nylon 4-piece puzzle of the boy or girl. Both ways (all 4 pieces assembled together, as well as a single piece superimposed on a scan of the full puzzle) were used, and the judges accepted both. I can see how all 4 pieces assembled together might be sewn on a garment as one large button, so liked the judges' BOD here.

This is a very fun concept to collect – a new way to "play" with our buttons – so enjoy!

Saphiret glass. Gold content.

ABOVE: Thermochromatic liquid changes color. These are heat sensitive, i.e., heat causes the color change.

RIGHT: Clear glass. Iridescent salts produce variant color.