Preface

One might say that the origins of this book go back many decades, to when I was first motivated to draw Walt Disney cartoon characters as a child of about 8. Shortly afterward, I visited Disney Land for the first time in about 1957, 2 years after the theme park opened in 1955. I was very moved by and interested in Mickey Mouse, among other characters. I read and collected thousands of comic books as a teenager.

Many decades later in 1990, I drew chapter-opening cartoons for my first book, *Human Factors and Typography for More Readable Programs* (Baecker and Marcus 1990), coauthored with Prof. Ron Baecker, University of Toronto. In 1991, writing user Interfaces for the 90s with Prof. Andries van Dam, (van Dam and Marcus 1991), I began to show user interfaces that were designed for particular cultures, ages, and genders. In 1999, I began to study user-interface design across cultures and published several articles about this topic. After my first tour of China in 2002, I began to pay more attention to the growing number of cute forms in products, advertisements, movies, and other forms of communication. I wrote about the "Cult of Cute" in an essay for my "Fast Forward" column in ACM SIGCHI member-publication's *Interactions* magazine that year (Marcus 2002).

After years photographing cute forms in China, Japan, South Korea, in countries of Europe, in the USA, in South Africa, and elsewhere, in 2014, while attending the International Design and Human Factors Conference organized by Prof. Ren Xiangshi at the Kochi University of Technology, to give a keynote lecture for the conference, I was fortunate to meet Ma Xiaojuan, then with Huawei and later at the University of Science and Technology in Hong Kong. I was delighted to discover that she, too, was interested in all of the cute characters, images, and products that could be found in many countries like China and Japan. We spent an afternoon and part of several evenings photographing many examples. We discussed the possibility of writing an article about cuteness, especially in relation to China, and we were able to publish a paper in the *Proceedings* of the conference that I chair, Design, User-Experience, and Usability 2016 (Marcus and Ma 2016). For the paper, we began an initial taxonomy of cuteness, which seemed more complex than I had ever previously imagined. We also came to realize how many examples we

had collected on this topic, how more and more computer-based imagery employed cute forms, and how complex the subject matter seemed, especially in relation to the history of cuteness in East Asian countries, about which I knew relatively little at the time.

Prof. Ma and I began to outline a book-length treatment of the topic. I was fortunate to benefit from her insights and to learn that Prof. Masaaki Kurosu and Prof. Ayako Hashizume were interested and available to assist us, providing valuable insights from a Japanese perspective. Through them, we were able to convince Sanrio to permit us to interview the managing designer of Hello Kitty. Through my own contacts with Mr. Wang Wentao, a noted user-experience designer at Baidu, we also were able to secure an interview with him that provided a Chinese perspective.

Our resultant book provides a start at analyzing what cuteness is and how it can be used to design products and services, especially for computer-based media. Commercial examples of the use of cuteness are appearing more and more in products and services of all kinds, especially in communication and entertainment media. We have extended our taxonomy and provided access to designers thinking about incorporating cuteness.

I am grateful for the cooperation and contributions of my coauthors and to all those who provided time, thoughtful insight, and assistance to us incompleting this book. We hope that readers find this book usable, useful, and appealing.

Berkeley, CA, USA   Aaron Marcus
June 2017

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