Steeven Villa

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Senior UX Researcher / Human Factor Engineer

Senior UX Researcher blending technical expertise, **human-centered design**, and **mixed methods** to deliver data-driven insights. Led cross-functional teams across VR, robotics, and AI, synthesizing complex findings into actionable recommendations and delivering user-centered solutions at scale.

Professional Experience

LMU Munich   **Munich, BY, Germany**
HCI | UX Researcher   *Sep 2019 - Present*

- Led cross-functional UX projects (3–10 members) using Agile methods, culminating in 30+ co-authored publications.
- Designed and implemented large-scale experiments & online surveys (50K+ lines in Python, JS, R), enabling robust data-driven insights.
- Conducted 50+ hours of qualitative research (interviews, focus groups), translating findings into user-centered design improvements.
- Developed interactive prototypes (robotics, VR) with Python, C#, C++ (100K+ lines), validating feasibility and refining user flows.
- Created and delivered 700+ hours of course content for Master's/Bachelor's students, bridging research to practice in HCI.
- Supervised 30+ junior researchers through weekly reviews and pair programming, fostering technical growth and academic excellence.
- Optimized internal workflows by digitalizing processes (e.g., automated pipelines), reducing maintenance workload by 60%.

Aalto University   **Espoo, Finland**
Visiting Researcher   *Jun 2024 - Jul 2024*

- Mentored two junior researchers in human AI interaction and virtual reality, providing weekly guidance and feedback sessions, resulting in a co-authored paper accepted at a top HCI venue.
- Managed multiple research projects on emerging VR/AI technologies, collaborating with diverse teams to publish findings in leading conferences.
- Coordinated with faculty and industry partners to drive innovation in AI-enhanced VR, expanding the department's research scope.

The HIVE LAB   **Munich, BY, Germany**
Research & Innovation Lead   *Sep 2019 - Jun 2022*

- Led cross-lab collaborations between academic and startup stakeholders, organizing strategic workshops and hackathons, accelerating product innovation in emerging tech.
- Identified skill gaps across multiple R&D projects, implemented targeted training sessions with industry experts, boosting solution quality for client deliverables.
- Managed a €2.74M shared grant and oversaw resource allocation, ensuring efficient lab operations and maximizing research output.
- Implemented protocols during COVID-19, enabling project continuity and maintaining milestone delivery despite lockdown constraints.

INRIA   **Rennes, France**
Research Associate   *Jan 2019 - Jul 2019*

- Developed and conducted user studies on haptic perception and user experience (UX), integrating Unity3D and robotic haptic devices for immersive testing.
- Applied psychophysical methods to analyze visuohaptic sensory feedback, driving insights that improved XR product design.

Petrobras   **Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil**
UX Researcher   *Mar 2017 - Jul 2019*

- Designed and prototyped physical UIs for offshore pipeline-control robots, applying safety-critical design principles, reducing operational risk on oil platforms.
- Engineered and documented a remote-control UI/UX for undersea pipeline robots, contributing to a U.S. patent on intervention drive systems.

- Proposed, supervised, and implemented new product features based on user feedback analyses, enhancing usability and accelerating deployment in explosive-environments.

Education

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
Sep 2019 - May 2025
PhD, Human Computer Interaction
- Researching behavioral and physiological impacts of AI technologies in daily life.
- Investigating social acceptance of AI and its influence on user decision-making, resulting in multiple peer-reviewed publications.

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande Do Sul
Mar 2017 - Jul 2019
Master's, Computer Science
- Studied perceptual boundaries of tactile technologies for smartphones and AR
- Engineered prototype devices manipulating users' tactile perception in mobile settings.

Instituto Tecnológico Metropolitano de Medellin
Jul 2010 - Nov 2016
Bachelor's, Mechatronic Engineering
- Computationally modeled thermal phenomena to inform product design

Skills

UX Research Methods: User Interviews, Hypothesis Testing, Surveys, Usability Testing, A/B Testing, Focus Groups, User Journeys, Contextual Inquiry, Mixed-Methods
Research Tools & Technical Skills: Figma, Google Analytics, SQL, Machine Learning, C#, Qualtrics, R, Python
Analysis & Insights: Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory, Affinity Mapping, Statistical Testing
Team Leadership: Mentoring, Project Planning, Cross Functional Collaboration, Budget Management, Agile
Languages: English (Fluent), Spanish (Fluent), Portuguese (Fluent), German (Intermediate)

Selected Projects

AI and Me Exhibitions at Multiple Museums
Nov 2023 - Mar 2025
Lead Researcher, Project Manager
- Led the end-to-end design, development, and deployment of an interactive exhibition where visitors co-created children's books with AI, fusing concept design, backend engineering, and visual art for human-AI collaboration.
- Implemented data collection and user analytics (observational + user testing), investigating how AI affects visitors' sense of ownership in creative processes.
- Demonstrated the exhibition across major cultural venues (e.g., Alte Pinakothek Munich, Deutsches Museum Munich, Deutsches Museum Bonn), garnering extensive public engagement and contributing to new insights on AI-driven user experiences.

Decision-Making in Human-AI Collaboration
Nov 2022 - Present
Lead Researcher
- Conducted a series of EEG-supported user studies exploring how believing an app is AI-driven influences user risk-taking behavior.
- Found that high AI expectations (even when primed with negative cues) lead users to perceive the system's performance as superior and take more risks, revealing powerful cognitive biases.
- Published and presented findings at top HCI conferences (CHI, CHB) and featured in 30+ online science portals, expanding discussion on trust and bias in AI.

Public Workshops, Tutorials & Talks

- **Workshop** | Evaluating Human-AI Interaction | CHI24 | Hawaii, US
- **Workshop** | Human Augmentation - Immediate Issues | Cognitive Augmentation Seminar | Dagstuhl, Germany
- **Workshop** | Haptic Visual Interfaces: From Theory to Prototyping | Advanced Visual Interfaces | Rome, Italy
- **Workshop**| Engaging with the arts in XR BMBF, The Hive-Lab | Munich, Germany
- **Additional Conference Talks** at CHI25 (Japan), CHI23 (Germany), AHS25 (UAE), ICMI24 (Costa Rica), mHCI24 (Australia), ISMAR24 (USA), Ubicomp & ISWC23 (Mexico), ISS22 (New Zealand), MuC22 (Germany), *among others.*