

Chanju Lee

Essay for Mapping Project- "Mapping My Brain"

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In "Mapping My Brain", I tried to design a very personal space, my brain, with abstract contents, such as emotion, memory, thoughts about my children and life, and my artwork and dream. By dividing four sections of the brain, I wanted to present the relationships among multiple thoughts. I chose three key terms for my mapping project. This project is about my identities as an artist, a woman, and a mother. My creativity and personal freedom are represented in this project. I used the designed webpage as a tool of enhancing private authorial expressions without deviating basic design conventions such as grid and type crime rules.

What I pursued most in designing this project is achieving creativity by choosing a brain that has symbolic meanings and by presenting abstract and personal contents. People often admire genius masters or star artists like Leonardo da Vinci or Jackson Pollock. Are genius designs and artwork only coming from God's gift? We can adapt the notion of author to designer. The perception of designer as author is based on believing existence of brilliance from genius individuals. Rock mentions that authorship has become a popular term in graphic design world and designers also pursue the freedom of expression like the artists do.ⁱ Is the desire to be a genius artist or designer just a naïve dream in this postmodern art society?

When I first saw the *Surface Film's* official website, I surprised because of the beautiful imagery of the film and unique expressions of Varathit Uthaisri, a director.ⁱⁱ After looking at the official website of the film, my curiosity about the unique expressions are somewhat satisfied. Varathit presents similar motifs from various artists in his pre-production section. In production and post-production section, the involvement of many designers and assistants are revealed. The website exhibits the production process in designed formats. I was amazed because he revealed his creative sources and he used the documentation (including the webpage itself) as a designed product. He and his group present the unique way of expression and honestly revealed their inspiration sources and filmmaking processes.

Karsten Schmidt, with his studio PostSpectacular, also opens their programming codes and design sources to public in their website. Especially, in their “type & form” design section of the website, they open the design process of the product from the inspiration to failure and success of trials in molding process.ⁱⁱⁱ

During the Middle Ages of Europe, information of art making was closed to the public. Art apprentices studied under the guidance of a master artist and the skills and styles are secret strength of the group.^{iv} In Asian traditional art society, design technique and painting skills also were taught only inside of the masters’ group or family group. Sharing the unique technique on art making created by the group members was prohibited. However, after postmodernism arrived, the meanings of originality, creativity, and objectivity are changed and keeping the originality is not necessary. Based on Benjamin, people are sociological beings who continuously correspond with their environment. The public culture is the product of the collecting different experiences of people, various individuals. Benjamin believes that technological development changes our idea, the value of artwork, and history and depreciates product’s authenticity, aura’s decay. To him, artwork is not an unchanged sublime from the past but it rather relates to a timeless concept and a continuously changed form by cultural and social changes of our society.^v Michel Foucault also tried to reconsider the myth of the author and authorship, and investigated the relationship between the author and the work.^{vi}

Roland Barthes points the multiplicity of writing.^{vii} We can adapt the notion for design, multiplicity of design sources and the creativity from various researches about previous designs and artwork. Design is now beyond the issues of heroism or elitism in design. Barthes mentions that “the birth of the reader must come at the cost of the death of the author”.^{viii} After designing, the designed product does not belong to the designer. The viewers and consumers of the designed product are the owner and construct the new meanings of the work.

My project is originally from my personal desire of expression, and my intent is to raise meaningful questions to busy people. However, after designing, this project moves beyond my intent and is opened to the public, diverse individuals. The decoding of meaning in the contents of my project will be varied depend on the background of the viewers. The construction of new meaning depends on users’ interaction with buttons and the order of information of chosen pages.

ⁱ Rock, Michael. "What does it really mean to call for a graphic designer to be an author?"

<<http://www.eyemagazine.com/feature.php?id=30&fid=258>>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.surfacefilm.com/>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://postspectacular.com/process/20080702_printmagcover

^{iv} Jones, Tom. "The History and Philosophy of Art Education." A History of Art Education. < <http://arts.jrank.org/pages/14455/art-education.html>>

^v Benjamin, Walter. "the Author as Producer." *New Left Review* 1/62, Jul-Aug. 1970

<http://roundtable.kein.org/files/roundtable/Walter%20Benjamin_%20The%20Author%20as%20Producer.pdf>

^{vi} Woolfrey, Chris. "Author Theory –The Work of Barthes and Foucault What is the Position and Importance of the Author in Literature?" Dec 7, 2008

<http://referencebooks.suite101.com/article.cfm/author_theory_the_work_of_barthes_and_foucault>

^{vii} Barthes, Roland. "The Death of Authorship." *Image, music, text*. New York : Hill and Wang, 1977.

^{viii} Ibid.