Written Response III

(Unit 1 Brief 3: Methods of Translating)

Runlan (Cecilia) Lin

Please note: The following text explores the main arguments and ideas from Michael Rock's article *Designer as Author*, using *Exercises in Style* by Raymond Queneau as a method to re-present them.

Styles used below:
1. Official Letter
2. Telegraphic
3. Blurb



Subject: What Does It Mean to Call a Graphic Designer an Author?

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to inform you of certain phenomena that I have observed in the field of graphic design. Authorship has been a popular term in design circles, yet the question of how designers might truly become authors remains complex. Who, indeed, is the designer/author? Does emphasizing authorship conflict with recent critical efforts to overthrow the perception of design based on individual talent? What does it really mean to ask a graphic designer to become an author?

With these questions in mind, I have humbly turned to the insights of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault (and other people) on the concept of authorship, attempting to re-examine the designer's role through the lens of definition of this term.

As I traced the evolution of the concept of authorship, I began to question the idea of viewing designers as authors. I grew concerned that emphasizing authorial authority and promoting the designer-ashero model might serve as a too limited framework for understanding the designer's role. Perhaps, in the end, authorship is not a very convincing metaphor for the activity we understand as design.

Thus, I propose three models that might better describe the designer's role:

Designer as translator
Acting as an intermediary between the spirit of the work and its audience, reshaping the content through form.

Designer as Performer
Interpreting and embodying the content of the work, bringing it to life to complete the narrative chain.

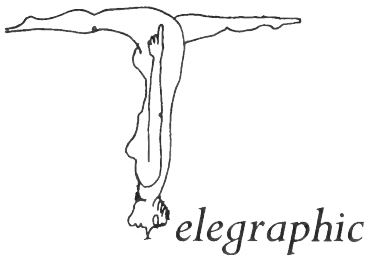
Designer as Director
Overseeing the production process to reflect the meaning of works, guiding many elements to work together on complex, large-scale projects.

In today's collaborative design environments and with the diversity of design language, the concept of a single "author" no longer fully encompasses the identity of a designer. Even if some designers want to undertake entirely independent creations to emphasize their author identity, this approach may diminish the fluidity and readability of both their work and themselves. The discussion around authorship is merely a way to compel designers to reconsider "expanded practice". However, it seems we could describe this activity, which includes imaging, editing, narration, chronicling, performing, translating, organizing, and directing, simply by letting *Designer = Designer*.

These are my reflections, and I would really appreciate it if you can share the conclusions you have drawn from this situation, as well as the stance you believe designers should adopt in shaping their sense of identity moving forward.

Sincerely,

Michael Rock



RE-EXAMINE DESIGNER ROLE THROUGH AUTHORSHIP TERM DEFINITION. TRACE CONCEPT EVOLUTION. QUESTION VIEWING DESIGNERS AUTHORS. EMPHASIZING AUTHORIAL AUTHORITY PROMOTING DESIGNER-ASHERO MODEL TOO LIMITED. AUTHORSHIP NOT CONVINCING METAPHOR FOR ACTIVITY UNDERSTANDED AS DESIGN.
3 ALTERNATIVE ROLES TRANSLATOR PERFORMER DIRECTOR.
DESIGNER = DESIGNER.



Designer = ?

The new story *Designer as Author* by Michael Rock is a masterwork filled with contradictions, questions, and mysteries that boldly challenges the circles of graphic design! In this captivating narrative, the concept and essence of authorship are dissected and examined. Are designers, in their longing to be seen as authors, perhaps misunderstanding the true implications of this metaphor?

Where is the identity of designer headed? Translator, performer or director? The answers seem almost within reach! However, as the practice of design continues to expand, it appears there may be even more possibilities waiting to be explored…

Reference

Rock, M. (2013) 'Designer as Author', in *Multiple Signatures: On Designers, Authors, Readers and Users*. New York: Rizzoli, pp. 45–56.

Queneau, R. (1998) *Exercises in Style*. London: John Calder.