

The following text explores the article “Designer as Author” by Michael Rock, using “Exercises in Style”, by Raymond Queneau, as a method to re-present the article’s main ideas.

DESIGNER AS AUTHOR

MAIN IDEAS

What does it mean to call a Graphic Designer an author?

The codification of authorship dates back to the 18th century with the adoption of the Statute of Anne, establishing copyrights and laying a legal ground for the ownership of writings. Authorship may suggest “new approaches to understanding design process in a profession traditionally associated more with the communication than the original authorship of messages”. (Rock, 1996)

There are four proposed ways in which we can approach the designer as author. Power plays, implying taking more responsibility and expressing a personal connection to the work. Translating, looking at remodelling the content from one form to another to create something new. Performing, seeing the designer as one who transforms and expresses the content through graphic devices, just like an actor would do with a script. Directing, taking into account the role of arranging and organising great amounts of disperse information in order to create a cohesive outcome.

EXERCISES IN STYLE

BLURB

An exciting story of tensions and contradictions fuelled by the design industry and modern concepts of authorship. The plot revolves around the nature of authorship, how it came to be, how designers willingly relinquished their part in the authorial process, and how they are trying to claim their voice back by exposing the multidimensional role of the designer in shaping, transforming and delivering communication pieces. But, will the graphic designer be ever considered and author?

NARRATIVE

One cold morning in 1996, Michael crossed the street to enter his favourite café downtown. As he found an empty table by the window, he pondered about the gravity of his thoughts and then began to write:

Can a designer be also considered an author? What is an author and where did that concept came from? Can a film director be also considered an author? Maybe there’s a parallel? Will there be a time when we will associate the creation and the production of the message as an intrinsically connected activity?

So many questions without answer. As he put his pen and notebook down he mustered courage to write an article about the subject that very same year.

SUBJECTIVITY

I read an article about the idea of considering designers as authors. I don’t know if the industry is ready for that jump, but times have move on quickly and design practice seems to be expanding in a way that breaks the boundaries of authorship established in the 18th century. I think those ideas of what or who an author is or is not, are irrelevant in today’s world where content flows unrestrained. I feel like, as a matter of fact, designers bear all those hats: authors, creators, performers, directors, translators, etc. So why do we have to defend our point?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Rock, M. and Luna, I. (2013) "Graphic Authorship," in Multiple signatures: On designers, authors, readers and users. New York: Rizzoli International Publications.