Study Of Milton Glaser's Creative Process
In Creating Design

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ABSTRACT

Those in the art and design field, such as graphic designers, should be creative and inspired, and they usually have their own ways to be creative. Yet, some designers are considered to be so outstanding that they receive such recognition in their creative process. One of them is Milton Glaser. He has been considered one of the first rank designers for decades. Therefore, it is really appropriate and wise for young designers to recognize Glaser's creative process in order that they could learn and be inspired by his experience. This study focuses in the examination of Milton Glaser's creative process gained from interviews conducted by the media. The short-term goal of this study is to learn the creative process of a design expert, which hopefully would inspire and open the mind of young designers in their work. After gaining inspiration from this creative process, hopefully the young designers would be much more creative and easily inspired in developing their idea, which is the long-term goal of this study.

Keywords: Milton Glaser, Creative Process, Inspiration, Design

ABSTRAK

Orang-orang yang berkecimpung dalam dunia seni rupa, seperti para desainer grafis, dituntut untuk kreatif dan mudah terinspirasi meskipun cara mereka mengekspresikan kreatifitasnya boleh berbeda satu dengan lainnya. Beberapa desainer dianggap memiliki proses kreatif yang luar biasa sehingga mereka mendapatkan pengakuan orang banyak. Salah satu dari mereka adalah Milton Glaser. Glaser dianggap sebagai bapak desain America Serikat dan salah satu desainer terhebat selama puluhan tahun. Oleh karena itu sangatlah layak dan bijaksana bagi para desainer muda untuk mengetahui proses kreatif Glaser dalam menghasilkan karya desain sehingga mereka bisa belajar dan terinspirasi dari pengalaman beliau. Penelitian ini memfokuskan peninjauan proses kreatif Milton Glaser yang didapatkan dari hasil wawancara-wawancara yang dilakukan oleh media. Tujuan jangka pendek dari penelitian ini adalah mempelajari proses kreatif dari seorang pakar desain yang diharapkan mampu menginspirasi dan membuka pikiran para desainer muda dalam berkarya. Dengan inspirasi yang didapatkan dari proses kreatif ini maka diharapkan akan tercapai tujuan jangka panjang dari penelitian ini yaitu menjadikan desainer muda yang kreatif dan mudah terinspirasi dalam mengembangkan ide desain.

Introduction

Education is a medium to develop knowledge and ability within a person. Each child must receive education so that their aspects of knowledge, skills, values and insights can be developed. The government has announced that every child must get education for at least 9 years. In the global era and the beginning of free trade markets therefore the trading or labor competition is even higher. In order for this nation to be able to compete with other countries, therefore education must be considered and improved.

A nation will becoming great and having a competitiveness when the education level of the nation is good. Education is an effort so that student can reach his goal and purpose in order to improve their quality of life. Whereas the education gets better and having good quality which is applied to a country, thus will open up a great possibility of progress obtained (Soedjadi, 2000: 6). On the contrary when the concern toward the quality of education is low therefore the progress of the nation will also be low.

In order to achieve good education for young generations, adequate effort must be made in the education sector. The world of education in Indonesia is growing rapidly. Many new universities were established to accommodate students. The total number of students registered in Indonesia is 6,924,511 with 555 universities. With the number of universities that operate as many as 555 universities, East Java Province is one of the provinces with the second highest number of universities in Indonesia.

Background of the Study

Being creative and easily inspired has been a desire, even a must, for all designers. Without creativity, a designer's work would be considered boring or mediocre. Nevertheless, many designers, especially the fresh graduates, still struggle in finding fresh idea or inspiration. They usually do research and observe a lot of noted works from Internet, books, and their surroundings, but the end result is often a mere imitation of styles of the existing works, although it is not a copy.

Accordingly, is there any other way to develop and improve our creativity? There are many for sure, and one of them is by observing the creative processes of the experts. Hence, this article will discuss the creative process of a distinguished graphic designer from New York City, Milton Glaser. His works have been known and admitted internationally. Should people study graphic design history, they will usually be introduced to Milton Glaser's style and designs. Because of his great work and long experience, it would be wise for young designers to learn from his insight and experience in achieving his creative process, which will be discussed in this article.

Milton Glaser's Background

Milton Glaser was born in New York on June 26, 1929. He graduated from the High School of Music and Art in 1947 and won a scholarship to the Cooper Union Art School. In 1952, he got a Fulbright scholarship to study in the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna, Italy. In 1954, with Seymour Chwast and friends, Glaser found Pushpin Studio, a graphic design studio in New York. In 1968, with Clay Felker, Glaser found New York magazine. In 1974, after the disbanding of Pushpin in 1974, he found his own illustration and design studio, Milton Glaser Inc. In 1983, together with Walter Bernard, Glaser created WBMG. He had been an educator at the School of Visual Arts in New York since 1961. He also had become a member of the Board of Directors at Cooper Union and an active member of the American Institute of Graphic Arts (Hamill 1999, 94).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses descriptive qualitative method. Data is obtained through many articles about interviews of Milton Glaser and the study of some literatures about creative process. Included are some Glaser's works to help depict the creative processes that Glaser offers and discusses. The result of the study is analyzed and offered in a simple and easy to understand article for both students and young designers.

THEORETICAL STUDY

Creativity is a cognitive process that leads to a new idea or results in a renewed concept of an old idea. It is not something that merely exists or just happens without effort. (Gabora 2002)

There are five steps of creative process model:

1. Preparation: Someone is just introduced to a problem, then he becomes very curious about the problem and determined to find the solution. He starts early preparation, such as conducting research, setting a goal, managing ideas, and doing brainstorming as different ideas come into his mind.

2. Incubation: Using imagination to synthesize different ideas, the individual starts to build or create a new idea in his mind. He does not try to directly find a solution, but he just keeps thinking about the new idea in his head.

3. Illumination: As ideas ripen, the person guided by an epiphany in his mind puts the pieces of ideas together through a system that makes sense to him. He may suddenly have an illumination in regard to the solution of the problem.

4. Evaluation: After reaching the solution, the individual evaluates whether the solution makes sense to imply or worth pursuing. He may make some changes to the solution if it is necessary. He may also ask the opinion of others regarding the solution.

5. Implementation: This is the step when that person transforms his solution into something real or real application. (Gustafson 2018)

DISCUSSION

The way to creativity is different for everyone. Experts have many years of experience in working with projects and clients, so that they have developed their own unique process in achieving creative idea. Learning from their experience could be an exciting and mind-opening enlightenment for many young designers. Milton Glaser is one of the design experts distinguished in graphic design field. Here are some experience and thought about creative process that he shares.

A Process Without A Preconceived Idea

Glaser believes that creative process should really be a process that designers do not have a "preconceived" idea before. They should let information flow freely and spontaneously without being forced by their will. His most meaningful developments in his work are those that happen incidentally and blindly; the works are the results of his not knowing what he is going to do. He just waits and believes that his creative process would happen without forcing his own will to find the solution. Glaser implies that the creative process should be a blind process in which people do not "prestructure", and they have to allow information or ideas to come up spontaneously without being forced or controlled by their own will (Glaser, 1974).

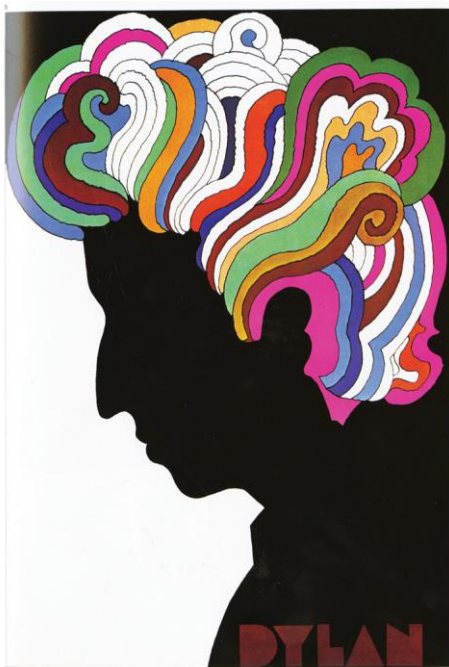### Different Ways Of Getting Ideas

Figure 1. Bob Dyland

Figure 2. Bach

For Glaser ideas come in various ways. Some just comes into his mind when his client is presenting the problem. At other time, he has to toy around an idea for weeks, especially for a complex one, while he is exploring different possibilities. He sometimes finds dead ends, changes his directions, until finally he reaches the desired solution. Most of his ideas come from imagination. This imagination comes as a result of a lot of reading and seeing. He says that he is very "lose" in terms of ideas and cultural visual; he does not exclude anything. The world history becomes one of his sources of inspiration (Davis 2002). Example of his work influenced by Islamic painting is the Dylan's hair in *Bob Dylan* (Figure 1) and the structure and geometry in *Bach* (Figure 2). However, the great ideas he has always come from his unconscious, which he considers as his inner self. He believes that subconscious mind can make connections that conscious mind is not capable (Davis 2002, 35).

History Can Be A Good Resource

Glaser does not have a certain style in his design. He could not keep being interested in a form of style for a long time because he easily gets bored. However, he is greatly inspired by the history of the world. Through history, he feels he could explore a lot of phenomena (Martin, 1995). He could not really explain how his styles develop. He just guesses that he uses many styles in his works because he is incapable to solve problems in one same expression/ way. He also uses a lot of styles because he decides not to commit himself to certain design, typography, or illustration, so that he can do anything he wants (Glaser, 1974). Hence, designers should not limit themselves to certain things or style, especially not at the beginning of their ideation, because they would not be able to be really creative if they have limited themselves by some certain styles. Designers should try many different things, and history can certainly become a good resource for their idea and inspiration.

Accordingly, conducting research, part of the preparation step in the creative process, such as reading history books and observing different cultures, is an important step to do since it helps designers broaden their knowledge useful in problem solving and develop their style. The wider someone's horizon is, the more easily he gets inspired.

Through Our Brain, Eyes And Hand

According to Glaser, the best way to sketch an idea is through someone's brain, eyes and hand. When a person does a sketch by hand, the thing he draws would be unclear, indistinct. From the fuzziness, his brain would imagine another "iteration," which would make the thing a little bit clearer. Then he should make another sketch, which his brain would make another "iteration" of. This process should be repeated until he gets the appropriate idea. Computer should not be used to sketch an idea since it forms images too clearly. When someone sketches on the computer, the images he creates will be precise in shapes and colors. As a result, they have been "crystallized" before he goes through the back and forth process between the brain and the sketch, the natural way a human learns in solving visual problems. By making things too clear or precise too soon, someone would lose the crucial part of developing an idea (Hamill 1999, 100).

The back and forth process between the brain and the sketch fulfills the incubation step in the creative process. The brain does not directly find the solution of the problem, but it keeps building and thinking over the sketches (building new ideas). A lot of designers do

sketches on computer to save time in order to get their work done as soon as possible. As what explained above, the downside of sketching on computer is the designers would lose the incubation part of the creative process, which is building an idea – a unique, creative idea.

Go Through With An Idea

Glaser proposes that when designers start an idea, they have to go through with it. They should be passionate about the idea and keep moving forward with it. They should not think critically too early since it would stop their creative process. They can step back and test the work with both objective and subjective criteria only after the exploration of the idea is thoroughly completed. Glaser hopes that throughout the creative process some idea not expected, not rational or obvious, will come to the surface; an idea that will not come in a rational way (Davis 2002, 35). In other words, designers should expect an idea they usually could not think in the rational way would come up at the end of the long process. It would be the excitement of the moment: finding a great and unique idea, the cream of the crop.

Appropriate incubation time would lead to illumination, the third step in creative process. That is why Glaser suggests that a designer should be passionate and keep exploring his idea, the incubation step. He should not be critical too soon towards his idea since it would stop the creative process. Through this incubation process, an unexpected, irrational idea, an epiphany, would come into his mind. This would be the sign that he has begun he illumination step. During illumination step, a designer is guided by the epiphany to find the solution, the great and unique idea, the cream of the crop.

Engage The Audience

Figure 3. I Love New York

Glaser loves to create a design in which the viewer would have to get involved in solving the problem. This kind of engagement is a great way to make people really pay attention to the work. He likes it when a work contains "a mystery." For example, *I Love New York* logo (Figure 3) consists of an idea that needs to be translated by the viewers. It is still a mystery until it is translated. The "I" is by itself a complete word already. The heart is a symbol that conveys an experience (love). The "NY" are initials that stand for a name (New York). Hence, there are three kinds of translation that the viewers have to do; three little game to solve. The kind of work that could engage people is not easy to create, but it would be an effective one. (Hamill 1999)

The Heart Of Imaginative Pursuit

Glaser conveys that taking risk would be the heart of an imaginative pursuit. Someone should be willing to try things he does not fully understand and leaves his comfort zone to move into an area of uncertainty. Certainty would kill imagination. A designer should believe that in order to create a good work, he should be willing to take risk (Davis 2002, 33). A lot of designers are afraid to try something new since they would have to face uncertainty and maybe failure, whereas certainty is what makes them stagnant as designers. Therefore, designers should change their mindset: not viewing risk and uncertainty as things to avoid, but as an opportunity to grow creatively and skillfully.

Follow Your Heart And Be True

Above all, Glaser implied that creative success is not about taking risk, breaking rule, or working hard. Those factors are maybe important in creating a design work, and he has gone through them all, but they are not the important factors that define a creative success (Davis 2002, 31). In order to be creative, someone has to follow his heart and be himself. He has to be true to himself and others. In other words, someone should not just follow other's style or way of work or way of thinking in creating a work. However, he should look into himself and find his own strength and uniqueness, then he use them in creating his work. This is what creative success is all about. Many designers/ artists have produced a lot of great works and are successful financially, but they still have not achieved the true creative success if they do not work from their heart and be true to themselves.

Conclusion

Glaser believes that a creative process should be a process without a "preconceived" idea before; the information should flow freely and spontaneously without being forced. Ideas could come from different ways, such as history, imagination, reading and seeing, but as for Glaser, the unconscious is the best source of idea. Glaser suggests that designers should be willing to take risk. They should be willing to do something they do not fully understand and leave their comfort zone to move into the area of uncertainty; it would help them grow creatively and skillfully. Above all, to achieve true creative success, designers should follow their heart and be true to themselves.

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