

New Media, Experience and Japanese Way of Tea (Chado)

Biography

Jennifer Gunji is a design educator who is currently an instructor in the graphic design program and the narrative media program at the University of Illinois. Her focus encompasses the various facets of design, which examine both traditional and new media. Her teaching integrates study of Japanese aesthetics in the study and practice of design. She is currently studying to become a tea master under the Urasenke Tradition of Chado. Gunji's web and design work has been highlighted in several international and national publications. Her design work for @art: an Arts and Humanities Portal was recently shown at the *Computers in Art and Design Education Conference (CADE)* in Scotland.

Abstract

The philosophy of the Japanese Way of Tea (Chado) can play a significant role in design education. By heightening use of the senses, Chado cultivates inner awareness of self and others through process, form and practice. Established by sixteenth century grandmaster Sen Rikyu, Chado is based on the Zen principles of "harmony, respect, purity and tranquility." This synthesis of ideals becomes a spiritual manifestation of the human soul.

Concentration on the senses is becoming more critical in design. Development of multimedia technologies challenge designers to create more experiential expressions in virtual settings. To accomplish this, one is required to possess advanced technological skills and enhanced intersensory awareness. Inevitably design will come to express olfactory, taste and tactile sensations through a primarily visual setting. This inclination will encourage the generation of design experiences that awaken consciousness, emotions and empathy within their audience. The focus becomes the creation of experiences that are humanized through the sensitivity of designers and their ability to interconnect mind, body, emotions and spirit into design, while developing interaction with the audience.

Establishing Japanese aesthetics as a fundamental experience in design education will prompt students to cultivate their sensory perception, sharpen their aesthetic understanding, heighten cultural discernment and enrich their ability to create and express what they experience. Exposure to these ideas will inspire students culturally, intellectually and spiritually which ultimately contributes not only to their understanding of design, but also to appreciation for life.

As a student finishing her master's degree in graphic design at the University of Illinois, I have experienced, first hand, the evolving predicament of design education. With the influx of new media programs across the nation and the demand of students to integrate these programs into existing graphic design programs, the state of design education has become rather indeterminate and unfocused. Many students are captivated by and desire to be further versed in new technologies, which allow for an expression of design in new terms: design as interaction and experience versus design as layout. Yet, many graphic design programs are unable to provide students with instruction in the flourishing areas of web and multimedia design.

Thus, students leave with a background primarily focusing on traditional print-based design and with only light exposure in the world of new media.

Like many universities, my graphic design department is undergoing the same identity crisis in terms of relinquishing parts of tradition and opening a willingness to embrace a needed redefinition of thoughts, languages, methodologies, processes and tools. With the subsequent advancement of new media and technologies, the teaching of graphic design has been ultimately faced with significant decisions concerning how to position itself in a hypermedia environment. This program, no different than many others, has struggled to iden-

make

A FUSION OF FORM AND CONTENT

tify with the changing climate of design. Due to the lack of faculty proficient in technical skills, the program has no option but to resist forging new structures of multidisciplinary studies that focus on new media.

In my graduate studies, I am not seeking answers, but I am expecting to shape the context for current and future design pedagogy. Instead of waiting for new ideas to be embraced by the graphic design department, I would like to participate in the development of new ideas, in shaping new programs and in redefining the field of design. Many students feel that they are being force-fed recipes for education, as defined in design cookbooks from twenty years ago. I wish to add my own recipes to the book, by defining a future of design with expanded goals, philosophies and deliverables. Ultimately, I feel I am part of the redefinition of design education and thus what it will become is a personal responsibility.

function
relation
structure
association
creation

I entered the graphic design program to develop new ways in which design could be made a part of our daily lives. I am not interested in "making things pretty" nor am I interested in developing the "catch-all" end product. I came with the intention to further focus upon the possibilities of design, without concentrating upon a specific media. What I

discovered was that I was becoming a product of a traditional design program that failed to encompass my interests and goals because the program itself had lost direction in the confusion of the changing climate of design education.

The lines between art and design, research and product, conceptualization and content, teaching and learning need to blur. I am seeking the understanding and exploration of design as an experience. Graphic design can no longer be limited to an orchestration of text and image. By introducing dimensions of sound, space and time, the study of design has evolved into the creation of experiential expressions of reality. To do this successfully, one is required to not only possess advanced technological skills but an enhanced intersensory awareness and intellectual willingness to explore and challenge the possibilities. These technological demands lead to a need to create and develop designs that embody more human-like experiences through the visual and the aural, moreover, it will also be increasingly critical for designers to express olfactory, taste and tactile sensations through a primarily visual setting. The current need is for students to become "adept at the traditional skills of design, and engage in dialogue with the virtuosos in the world of social science, economics, architecture, theatre and the narrative arts."¹ Thus, design education must be willing to reformulate the teacher-student dynamic (understanding that learning and teaching

lay
OUT DESIGN TO ENTAIL A
PART-WHOLE RELATIONSHIP

arrangeme:
hierarch:
thought
ord
restrai:
struc:
traditio:

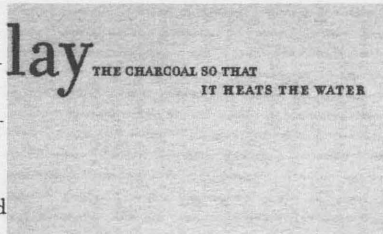
inner
outer
concept implementation

becomes more collegial), build teaching strategies that focus upon concept / content development, explore new forms of expression which allow freedom of experimentation, and finally, see design as experience rather than layout or product. Focusing upon experience and interaction, design must begin to willingly encompass the use of elements beyond pure layout: sounds, emotions, feedback, motion, time and behavior. Design is more than a one-way experience, but rather a two or even three way conversation. The inclination is to encourage the development of web or multimedia experiences that awaken new depths of consciousness, feelings, emotions and empathy within the audience | participants. The elemental focus becomes the creation of an experience that is humanized through the sensitivity of the designer to interconnect her/his mind, body, emotion and spirit into design, but also with full understanding of how the design will relate and develop interaction with the audience.

Redefinition of design education becomes increasingly important in light of global culture. The World Wide Web allows for unprecedented communication. As these new means of interaction emerge on a daily basis, design if present, can frame those interactions aesthetically, functionally and emotionally. The future of design lies in our understanding and exploration of interaction.

For over ten years, I have been studying the discipline and philosophy of the

Japanese Way of Tea (Chado). Chado is a means of cultivating an inner awareness through respect for process, form and practice. Beginning my design studies simultaneously, this synthesis of abstract ideas is naturally manifest in my study and cultivation of design. As a means of broadening awareness and appreciation for a diversified viewpoint of design, my exposure to Japanese aesthetics and



philosophies, with the primary focus on Chado, gave a new understanding of diverse cultures and their impact on design. It also inspired me to examine my own culture with more scrutiny.

What I discovered was that this combination of studies and disciplines was fully applicable to further understanding and exploring interaction in design. I began to develop and apply teaching techniques that explore thinking, seeing, understanding and experiencing as it relates to Japanese aesthetic teaching methods and how it is relevant to the study and understanding of new media

and design education. Traditional Japanese techniques do not rely upon notes or other mechanical means to help a student. It is based on repetition of principles in different forms that underscore

process explored to develop that product. In the study of the Way of Tea, although serving a bowl of tea with utmost respect to a guest is the ultimate goal, it is the understanding and application of the process that becomes most critical.

Although the study, practice and experience of the Way of Tea may seem extremely far-reaching in relation to developing web or multimedia design, I believe that the interconnection will be clear with continued technological advances. As students of design, it is necessary to have sharpened technological skills and enhanced sensory skills that enables the evolution of connections and experiences without alienation or removal of the senses. A means of balancing the two and also cultivating the latter, can be done through the study and understanding of the Way of Tea. The study of the Way of Tea encourages a heightened use of the senses. Concentration on the senses is and will continue to become more and more critical in the practice and understanding of design.

My goal is to further develop the significance of Japanese aesthetic education as an essential experience in teaching the study of art and design. I believe that the philosophy and understanding of the Way of Tea, as a primary aspect of aesthetic education, is basic to the quality and appreciation of life. It is within the framework of the Way of Tea that students are asked to cultivate their sensory perception, sharpen their aesthetic understanding, elevate cultural discern-

the realization that things *are* and we must, as creators and receivers, learn to recognize the subtle forms and variations of that which is communicated.

Japanese aesthetic theories provide abstract ways to perceive the world. The abstract means maintain itself independently from the material form. Things imply materials. However, things do not imply thought. Thought will last beyond the lifespan of an object. In most forms of Japanese art, it is the individualized responsibility of receivers to identify the relationships to these forms of art. The study of Japanese aesthetics maintains that it is easier to understand the abstract than it is to try to understand the theories of the material. Material forms are manifestations of ideas. With this comprehension, one is able to remanufacture those ideas by producing or applying it to another object. We no longer focus on the end product, but the conceptual

make

A DELICIOUS BOWL OF TEA

emotions
essence
form
heart

tradition
etiquette
ritual

experience
ritual

tradition
etiquette
ritual

experience
ritual

ment, appreciate the moment and enrich their ability to create and express what they experience.

Focusing on the development of interconnecting the study of design and the Way of Tea, this unification provides a necessary balance between what is rational and systematic to what is emotional and what prompts such reactions. It introduces and recognizes the connective fiber between the mind, heart and spirit as a means of enriching ones' perspectives and capacities to experience life. My interest is to heighten student's sensitivities through experience. This heightened sensitivity provides the means to create design experiences that further scrutinize the process of development to fully account for the audience, rather than focusing solely on the end product.

When experiencing tea for the first time, participants are often left with a sentiment of beauty and tranquility through their heightened senses, which is beyond their everyday realm. It is not a customary form of art or design here. Yet, in its most simplified form, it is an everyday occurrence in which we are all participants—washing, cleaning, making, serving, organizing, seeing, interacting, etc. We generally make such ordinary actions unconsciously. But through its ritualization, establishment of process and form, and philosophical recognition and implications these common everyday actions through the Way of Tea are elevated into an art form. Through single-mindedness of practice and

understanding, and by surpassing the conscious effort to have perfect form, Chado enters a realm in which art becomes a way of life. The study of tea focuses on the development of the human spirit. This is something that we can naturally strive for on a daily basis, however this is rarely the case. We are often forced to amass information and knowledge and simply store it in our minds. The study of the Way of Tea, as everything else in life, also obligates us to acquire new knowledge and information; however the central focus does not remain that accumulation. Rather, the

tranquility | **S E I** | *purity* | **K E I** | *respect* | **W A** | *harmony*

clarification
emotions
essence
form
heart
inner
intellect
mind
outer
simplicity
thought
universality

art
association
creation
etiquette
humanity
individual
order
restraint
ritual
selection
spirit
study
surroundings
tradition
utensil

aesthetic
arrangement
change
environment
exchange
experience
function
heart
hierarchy
interaction
nature
practice
process
relation
self
sincerity
structure
thought

HOUSE AND

attention is on the process of knowledge accretion as it relates to our emotions and our spirit. The process is not only inclusive of the intellect, but embodies and requires the very elements that provide us with human interaction.

GUEST AND HOST BOTH J

SHARE

IN TRANQUI

NO MARGIN DIVIDES

T H E R O J I I S A

APART FROM THIS

AND ITS MANY CARES

HOW WILL THAT PA

THE DUST FROM WITH

In the Way of Tea, a person is confronted with the awareness of Space — the physical space (architecture), the mental space (metaphysical) and the spatial relationships between objects, elements and ideas (frame of mind | way of thinking). The architectural structure or setting of tea is often referred to as, "sukiya."

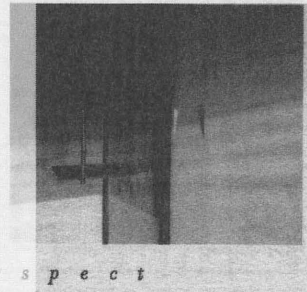
Sukiya becomes a space in which one experiences the ephemeral, recognizes its fleeting nature and accepts its true concept as "nothingness." Ultimately, the idea sukiya becomes the manifestation of non-spatial space. It is no longer the physical space on which we place emphasis, but the idea of the space. The actualization of the space is fully dependent on the means of its use by human beings.

Sen Rikyu, tea master of the 1500's, "brought together the tea ceremony and the human element in a new and simple form of space in which the person was the central theme rather than the style of architecture. This space creates an atmosphere soothing to humans and has been preserved in the tradition of sukiya architecture."² Rikyu also established the "roji" or pathway to the teahouse, which further perpetuated the idea of isolating the physical space from the everyday world. The physical act of walking on the roji is the mental act of detaching oneself

from the outside world of current concerns and obligation. In reflection, one could perceive the act of entering the World Wide Web as a similar notion. The teahouse was specifically established to be a physical space in which tea was practiced. Moreover, the sukiya was established as a metaphysical space in which people could seemingly escape the everyday world into a space or setting, which was carefully orchestrated through selection of objects, elements and messages, to form the "total experience" for the participants.

Early Japanese sense of space was viewed as "system of places, i.e. spatial and temporal events, separated by homogeneous non-place."³ Interestingly, this same ideology can be passed on to the reflection of cyberspace and how people relate to that space. Cyberspace only truly exists when humans visit that space. The tearoom may physically exist with no participants, but to exist as it is truly intended, it can do so only with the participation of humans. Furthermore, this idea re-emphasizes that existence in cyberspace is more about a holistic experience than a surface glance. It is a mental immersion of our senses in virtualization. It is thus the utmost challenge of the designer to utilize their understanding of how to create a physical atmosphere in relation to a cyber atmosphere. As in cyberspace, there is no true sense of past or future, but the ultimate focus is the immediate. The Way of Tea continually emphasizes the ephemeral qualities of life. It views life as a fleeting

286



r e s p e c t

yourself, your client, your audience
 the medium, materials, type and images
 the concept - how it affects an audience intellectually,
 culturally, and functionally
 tradition - understanding what has been established

art
 association
 creation
 etiquette
 humanity
 individual
 order
 restraint
 ritual
 selection
 spirit
 study
 surrounding
 tradition
 utensil

coming together of interactions, elements, thoughts and chances. By doing so, the exchange between the receiver and the creator (guest and host) becomes all the more fulfilling. As designers of new media, we should consider embracing these ideas in hope to create experiences that affect the receivers' consciousness and enables them to become immersed as participants rather than mere spectators.

Students of design must learn by the physical act of doing and thus, learn to question and inquire appropriately. It is not only through presentation of theories and philosophies, but through physical practice that students will learn to ask the questions that they need to define. They learn to feel the questions that should be asked. They question because they conclude that they need to know the answer. They question because they have intuitively learned what questions to ask. They begin to make the relationships on their own through inquiry and find suitable ways to further develop designs conceptually.

Japanese aesthetic teaching methods also nurture intuitive creation. Intuition relies on the comprehension of each element and how they interrelate not only outwardly but also inwardly. The outward manifestation is only a result of developed inward reflection and understanding of one's own expression. It is this reflection that enables us to give new meaning to form. Creation becomes the mental and emotional unfolding of one's personality and understanding. The process becomes a part of who one is.

clearing excess thoughts or preconceived ideas
 full focus on task at hand
 allows for us to see the true essence of all things
 creates an established, natural order
 each design has a unique solution

p u r i t y



Understanding self, enables one to see others in a different light. We create because we develop an understanding as to how this design relates to an individual as a person rather than as an external and isolated entity.

These teaching methods transcend the simple imparting of information and skills. They engage students in seeing such studies as a comprehensive attitude to life, which embraces their soul and spirit. These methods expose students to a way of thinking, seeing, understanding and experiencing that possess spiritual, artistic, moral, philosophical, disciplinary and social significance. This teaching presents to students a way of conducting life. The significant aspiration of these methods becomes the revelation of one's sincere and pure heart, mind and spirit. It is not the perfection or mastering of technical skills or production, but it is the process focus itself. The result is the productive and thoughtful communication or interconnection that can be made between the creator and the receiver.

Through the single-mindedness of that purpose, this study becomes the study of the way of life rather than concentrating only on to art or design. It becomes a way of conducting human behavior and relationships. In this viewpoint, it becomes a manifestation of all that is universal.

There is much more study and exploration that can be done with regard to this way of thinking and its application to teaching. The relationship is there. Acknowledging its existence is the first

step. A different way of recognizing relationships between seemingly disconnected elements and ideas and how to present those findings in the cycle of teaching is the goal. There is no solution or formula, but merely ideas and thoughts that can guide students of design to see, think, feel and experience learning in a way that may not have been introduced or recognized.

This method cultivates inner awareness through respect to process, form and practice. Exposure to these ideas enables students to heighten their sensitivities through experience. Through such teaching, the goal of design education is not to train students, but to enable students to make aesthetic judgements guided by their own convictions and realizations of life and how they view it. Through this awareness, an individual can achieve a new way of seeing, understanding and giving sense and order to her/his life.

**New Media, Experience and
Japanese Way of Tea (Chado)**

Jennifer Gunji

University of Illinois
School of Art and Design
408 East Peabody
Champaign, Illinois 61828
gunji@uiuc.edu

Design is the fusion of form and content, the realization and unique expression of an idea. Design entails a part-whole relationship expressed in terms of facture, space, contrast, balance, proportion, pattern, repetition, scale, size, shape, color, value, texture, and weight. These are the means; unity, harmony, grace, and rhythm are desirable ends.

Visible Language, 35.3
Gunji, 278-291

©*Visible Language*, 2001

Rhode Island School of Design
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

This list of means and ends has been cited so often that it has almost lost its meaning. However, these very considerations are what ultimately distinguish art from non-art, good design from bad design. Furthermore, perfection in design depends on the integration of all ingredients. Since such ingredients are inexhaustible, perfection is really unattainable.

Implicit in all this are inventiveness, intuition, judgment, and experience.

Endnotes

¹ See www.experience.aiga.org/expdesign/index.html

² See www-rr1.meijo-u.ac.jp/a/semi/mshimizu/index2.html

³ NUTE, KEVIN. *Relativity, Cyberspace, and the Sukiya*. *Chanoyu Quarterly*, 87, 45.

References

ANDERSON, JENNIFER. 1991. *An Introduction to Japanese Tea Ritual*. New York: State University of New York Press.

BIERUT, MICHAEL, editor. 1994. *Looking Closer: Critical Writings on Graphic Design*. New York: Allworth Press.

CASTILE, RAND. 1971. The Way of Tea. *Chanoyu Quarterly*, 1-88, 1970-1999.

HAMMITZSCH, HORST. 1958. *Zen in the Art of the Tea Ceremony*. London: Element Books Ltd.

HELLER, STEVEN, editor. 1998. *The Education of a Graphic Designer*. New York: Allworth Press.

HUME, NANCY G. editor. 1995. *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

IZUTSU, TOSHIHIKO, and TOYO IZUTSU. 1981. *The Theory of Beauty in the Classical Aesthetics of Japan*. Boston, Massachusetts: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

KOREN, LEONARD. 1994. *Wabi-Sabi: For Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers*. Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press.

MARGOLIN, VICTOR and RICHARD BUCHANAN, editors. 1995. *The Idea of Design*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

MITSUKUNI, YOSHIDA. 1990. *Tsu Ku Ru: Aesthetics at Work*. Hiroshima: Mazda Motor Corporation.

- OKAKURA, KAKUZO. 1989. *The Book of Tea*. New York: Kodansha International.
- RAND, PAUL. 1985. *A Designer's Art*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- . 1993. *Design Form and Chaos*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- RAO, G. HANUMANTHA. 1974. *Comparative Aesthetics: Eastern and Western*. India: Mysore Printing and Publishing House.
- SADLER, A. L. 1962. *Chanoyu: The Japanese Tea Ceremony*. Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company.
- SEIZO, HAYASHIYA. 1979. *Chanoyu: Japanese Tea Ceremony*. Tokyo: Weatherhill.
- SEN, SOSHITSU. 1979. *Chado: The Japanese Way of Tea*. New York: Weatherhill.
- . 1979. *Tea Life, Tea Mind*. New York: Weatherhill.
- . 1998. *The Japanese Way of Tea: From Its Origin in China to Sen Rikyu*. V. Dixon Morris, translator. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.
- SUZUKI, SHUNRYU. 1970. *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. New York: Weatherhill.
- IANAKA, SEN'O. 1973. *The Tea Ceremony*. New York: Kodansha International.
- VARLEY, PAUL, editor. 1989. *Tea in Japan*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.
- YANAGI, SOETSU. 1972. *The Unknown Craftsman*. Japan: Kodansha International.

Websites

- www.art.uiuc.edu/japanhouse/tea/
- www.geocities.co.jp/Hollywood/index.htm
- www.urasenke.or.jp/eframe.html
- www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/people/chadoI.html