GENDER CONSEQUENCES
Applying The Exquisite Corpse Surrealist Game as a Collaborative Method in Graphic Design Education

Neda Firfova
Nagoya City University, Graduate School of Design and Architecture

Introduction: In order to establish a collaborative platform between the graphic design students attending my undergraduate seminar at The School of Design and Architecture at Nagoya City University and the students I was going to meet at the International Workshop Week at The School of Design of La Rioja in Spain, I started exploring turn-of-the-century word and picture games that proposed consequential activity of group members or “blind” collaboration. This was fitting because, at that early stage of the project conception, there was no opportunity for the two groups of students to meet each other and collaborate in person. The Exquisite Corpse (Consequences) was one of a series of chain games, developed by the surrealists that could be played collectively, according to a set of rules that also proposed the technique of paper folding to hide the contributions from previous players in order to generate circumstantial designs and enjoyable conjunctions.

The Exquisite Corpse/Consequences: The Exquisite Corpse is perhaps one of the most widely known such games to the public. According to its description in A Book of Surrealist Games compiled by Alastair Brotchie it is described as:...for a minimum of 3 players, sitted around a table, and each writes on a sheet of paper a definite or indefinite article and an adjective, making sure their neighbors can’t see them. The sheets are folded so as to conceal the words and passed to the next player. Each player then writes a noun and the process is repeated with a verb, etc...The paper is unfolded and the sentences read out. 1) Possibly based on an older parlor game called Consequences, the game was also applied to the production of collective drawings.

The GENDER CONSEQUENCES Assignment: To introduce this game to the students, during my seminar we first played the original games. (Fig.1) An additional constraint introduced within our game playing of Consequences was a common predetermined theme to which all players committed before starting each round. In the same manner, when designing the assignment, it was important to have a common social theme to which the students both in Japan and Spain can relate to and engage with easily. Upon discussion with the students, Gender was determined as the theme of the project. The students’ designs were to meet at least one of the following six criteria:

1) Express gender equality 2) Design to spread gender discussion 3) Design to break gender stereotypes 4) A design that seeks out gender stereotypes in language 5) Genderless related design 6) Gender-free related design

Since the Consequences game proposes continuity and divergent ideas co-existing through a common denominator, it was a challenge to decide the media format suiting the game. Formats such as posters and other printed media aiming to directly transmit a message were deemed too complex to support the game concept. Therefore, it was decided that the students would design pattern design that can potentially be applied to various printed media.

The Collaboration Process: Although The Exquisite Corpse was designed for at least 3 players, in the case of Gender Consequences it was decided that each collaborative design will derive from the work of 2 students, one from The School of Design and Architecture at NCU and one from The School of Design of La Rioja. The 4 junior students attending my seminar at the School of Design and Architecture at Nagoya City University were tasked to design at least 2 patterns each. 9 patterns were created. These will be referred to as base designs. 18 students signed up for the workshop at the School of Design of La Rioja in Spain. Each of them was to select 1 base design pattern of their choice and complete it. That meant that each base design pattern could be selected by more than 1 student at La Rioja, and more consequential designs using one same base design would be produced. The merged designs will

Fig. 1 Introduction to The Exquisite Corpse

手が何を書いたか（描いたか）を知らないまま、同じ紙に文章（や絵）を続けて書きます。その結果実験的な作品が生まれます。両校の学生たちに共通する関心事のテーマとして（今回の場合はジェンダーでしたが）、デザイン教育へこれを応用した時、このゲームのおかげで両校の学生たちは協働の作品を作り出せることができ、通常の解釈や交換というような経験へ変化させることができました。
be referred to as finished designs. In terms of the design assignment, the goal of the collaboration was to have the consequential designs be referential or related to the base design which is partially concealed. The non-concealed elements will be referred to as visible elements of the base designs. Two types of concealing were introduced.

1. One that followed the concealing technique from The Exquisite Corpse. The base design was printed in the upper half of an A3 working sheet. Then it was folded in a way that only certain elements in the middle of the sheet are left visible for the next player to see. (Fig. 2) The bottom part of the sheet was empty and left for the next player to continue the design. Digital data was also prepared accordingly to finalize the designs in B5 format.

2. One that was originally designed for Gender Consequences. The base design would spread across the whole surface of the A3 working sheet but some key elements of the pattern would be left unprinted. (Fig. 3) Digital data was prepared accordingly to finalize the designs in B5 format.

The workshop at The School of Design of La Rioja lasted 5 days. On day 1, the visible elements of the 9 patterns from The School of Design and Architecture students were printed on A3 working sheets and presented in front of the 18 workshop members. The above criteria concerning the theme of Gender were also discussed with the workshop members. The rest of day 1 and day 2 were used for the development of the consequential designs. On the morning of day 3, the students presented their readings of the visible elements and how their designs related to them. On the afternoon of day 3, the base designs were uncovered and the workshop participants could have a more in-depth look into the concepts behind them. During day 4 the participants worked on merging the base designs and the consequential designs. Day 5 of the workshop was assigned for the set up of the Gender Consequences Exhibition in the halls The School of Design of La Rioja and the presentation of students’ finished designs. (Fig. 4, 5)

Results: 9 base design patterns were designed by the students of The School of Design and Architecture at NCU. 16 consequential designs were designed within the International Workshop Week at The School of Design of La Rioja. Out of the 16, 12 complied with the 6 criteria of the assignment. 12 designs were finished. Concerning the concealing techniques, 42% of the works were developed according to technique 1 and 25% were developed according to technique 2. The remaining 33% were rooted in technique 1 but upon the reveal, the workshop members working on them attempted more complex merging techniques that qualify as a mix of techniques 1 and 2 into a technique 3 category. Once the workshop in Spain was over, the finished Gender Consequences designs were presented in my seminar back in Nagoya and discussed with the part-takers. This marks a conclusion for this first phase of the project but further plans about exhibiting the works at The School of Design and Architecture, recreating the assignment in different environments, with different sets of rules and through different international partnerships are being considered.

1. A. Brotchie, M. Gooding; A Book of Surrealist Games, Shambala, 1995, pp.25