

The Death of the Author

This lecture will examine the interrelation between the artistic author and audience in context.

What does *The Death of the Author* refer to?



- *The Death of the Author* is a 1967 essay written by literary critic Roland Barthes.
- Traditionally the biographical details of an author (their age, gender, political positioning etc...) would have been considered important in providing an explanation for a text.
- *The Death of the Author* argues against a method of reading that relies upon knowledge of the author's/artist's/designer's/director's identity.

- Barthes proposes the author as a tyrannical figure insistent upon an almost quasi-theological reading.
- This proverbial author-God appears to articulate a hegemonic attitude toward artistic authorship.
- The traditional figure of the author/artist/designer/director, when believed in, is regarded as an expressive, individual voice, an author-God, and is commonly considered to be an originator of meaning.
- In *The Death of the Author* Barthes suggests that assigning a text an author is to impose a single meaning on that work and thus limit its potential.

What strategies do contemporary visual practitioners use to deconstruct the traditional relationship between the author and the reader? (between the artist and the viewer, designer and consumer, etc.)

- Socially engaged practice
- Collaboration
- Interactivity
- Performance/ live art
- Non hierarchical writing platforms – Blogs, Tweets, self publishing etc..
- Personalized design systems

Socially-engaged practice is a term for an approach to visual arts practice where people and social or environmental contexts and the artistic and aesthetic concerns of artists are brought together for mutual examination, exchange and experimentation. (http://www.a-n.co.uk/knowledge_bank/shortcut/article87021)

Take Care of Yourself, Sophie Calle, 2007, 52nd Venice Biennale



“I received an email telling me it was over. I didn’t know how to respond. It was almost as if it hadn’t been meant for me. It ended with the words, “Take care of yourself.” And so I did. I asked 107 women, chosen for their profession or skills, to interpret this email. To analyze it, comment on it, dance it, sing it. Dissect it. Exhaust it. Understand it for me. Answer for me.”
Sophie Calle.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnW_trUPUml

- [illegible]

Take Care of Yourself is a collaboratively created work where Sophie Calle performs the role of a 'silent manager' (identified by Miwon Kwon) rather than a traditional artistic author.

Plural artistic authorship suggests a destabilization of the modernist concept of 'individual' expression.

Deconstruction is the critical process of 'dismantling the appearance of unity and totality.

Deconstruction is a word first used by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida in the 1970s, deconstruction asserts that there is not one single intrinsic meaning to be found in a work, but many, and often they can be conflicting.

Deconstruction



- Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)
- Associated with poststructuralist and postmodern philosophy.
- Deconstruction is a method of critical analysis introduced in Derrida's 1967 work *Of Grammatology*.

Deconstructionists' response to *The Death of The Author* may be seen to manifest itself in the performance of the reader. The birth of the reader is a concept that, theoretically, offers the possibility for plural meaning.

Five Truths, Katie Mitchell, 2011

Five Truths presents the same 10-minute scene – Ophelia's mad ramblings and subsequent death, all featuring the same actor- in the styles of Stanislavski, Brecht, Peter Brook, Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski. Housed in a darkened cube lined with 10 screens of different sizes (two per practitioner) playing simultaneously.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62-gYcO6jrY>

Brecht



Death of the ~~Author~~ Auteur

Auteur - a film director who influences their films so much that they rank as author.

Auteur theory holds that a theatrical performance or film reflects the director's creative vision, as if they were the primary "auteur" (the French word for author)

Active Reader Paradigm

An active reader paradigm recognizes 'the capability of 'readers' to be dynamic creators of significance rather than being understood as simple receptors of textual meaning'.

The Active Reader Paradigm deconstructs the author/reader binary.

Thus:

An Active Audience Paradigm deconstructs the artist/audience binary.

Thus:

An Active Consumer Paradigm deconstruct the designer/consumer binary.

- Design your own
- Customize your own
- Personalize your own

An examination of the designer-as-author could help us to rethink process, expand design methods and elaborate our historical frame to incorporate all forms of graphic discourse.

An 'original' meaning can become distorted through user appropriation and new relationships become integrated into an environment through constant use and change. (The bicycle becomes a coat peg for a day.) Recognising, or being able to see or read the ordinary or everyday things that people do with space, offers opportunities in design and technology to grapple with complex relationships that are seemingly absent in a more clinical examination of hand-held products. (Sprake, J., 2002. Death of the designer. Design & Technology Association International Research Conference, 12-14 April, pp. 171-176)



Richard Wentworth

The Death of the Author suggests a reconsideration of the relationship between author and reader/ artist and audience/ designers and consumer/ director and audience.

