

Creating the Happiness and Harmony of Everyday Life in the Time of COVID-19: Raison D'être

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly affected our day-to-day life. It has impacted not only the lives but also the mental health of thousands of individuals. People worldwide are suffering tremendously from this unprecedented crisis. In particular, people with poor mental health are more prone to develop stress disorders, anxiety and depression. The experience of traumatic events, such as widespread lockdowns, and the uncertainty of the pandemic and other problems can typically lead to self-isolation and even suicides. In recent years, within the important research on people's happiness and harmony during the time of COVID-19, the significance of artists, illustrators, and graphic designers in this important issue has not been as fully elaborated on as it should have been. Designers have an important and quite daunting role. The objective of this paper is to remind designers of things that give people's life meaning and to motivate them to bring awareness to the importance of their well-being. This paper illustrates the process of creating an illustration for product design to facilitate a better understanding of the significance of people's feelings of happiness and harmony during the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed design method adopts a visual research approach that utilizes creative thinking, visual language, conceptual processing, photography, and illustration. This paper combines illustration design research and creative thinking to people's awareness of the value of mental health in the time of COVID-19. This research utilizes the practical insights of illustration design and applies to product design to evoke a peaceful, calm, happy, and harmonious feeling in people when they use the product.

Keywords: Illustration Design, Design Concept, Creative Process, Product Design, COVID-19

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Introduction

Doyle, Grove, and Sherman (2018) explained that illustrations are usually expressive, personally inspired, and exquisitely crafted works; however, unlike art for artistic purposes, illustrations serve an idea and seek to convey a special meaning to a specific audience. In other words, no matter how beautiful, provoking, or captivating the artwork is, it is only illustrative because it aims to convey a specific message or certain information. The illustrations may be clear, stylized, or naturalistic in their thematic presentation or have an abstract form. Illustration, as part of visual communication design, has its own visual explicitness. As a realistic and artistic form of expression that can be disseminated rapidly and widely, illustration is everywhere and can influence millions. To Male (2017), the word illustration also refers to the communication of specific contextual information to the audience. It is rooted in an objective need, and it is generated by an illustrator or a business-based client to complete a specific task. It is the navigation and diversity of these different tasks that make illustration an influential visual language. The creative possibilities of illustration are limitless. In addition, illustration is unfettered by reality, and one's imagination is free to create images and conjure up fascinating landscapes. Since print illustration was first developed, illustrations served as a tool of visual communication, integrating visual interpretations into various media, such as print media, moving images, and more recently, numerous digital forms including animation, internet memes, and e-books. A captivating illustration is one that is able to tell a story that people will remember. Illustrations have always had the tremendous power of delivering a profoundly significant message to people. According to Viction Workshop's *Illustrative Branding* (2014), illustrations have the ability to transport people's minds. Illustrations can also allow people to connect with one another. They can facilitate memorable and meaningful connections among people, which is a great asset. An illustration can allow people to connect in an intellectual, spiritual, and meaningful way, it can give people their *raison d'être*, which means "reason to be" in French. The author created a meaningful and purposeful illustration design entitled "Raison d'être," hoping to remind people of the things that give their life meaning and to raise people's awareness of the importance of their well-being. Male (2017) defined *raison d'être* as a distinct core, referring to the things that give meaning to a person's life. During the pandemic, people have had to deal with physical, mental and social problems. Designers, too, are struggling under the threat of the virus. Nevertheless, they are also finding creative ways to deal with their

individual situations and trying to make full use of them to create soothing, inspiring, and influential artworks that can appeal to people's inner feelings and bring joy, happiness, and harmony to their everyday life. In the COVID-19 era, designers have the strength and power to deflate fear, anxiety, and worry. Illustration design is both influential and aesthetic; however, its importance and impact are not always appreciated. Specifically, this is true in relation to the topic of the happiness and harmony of everyday life, which most people take for granted. An acknowledgement of the impact of illustration design on both physical and spiritual elements is very rare, people do not always consciously recognize that the creation of inspiring and effective illustration designs can help people to understand the importance of the happiness and harmony of everyday life. This study provides a conceptual framework for the design process, which illustrates how illustration design can play an important role in this specific topic, by complementing and being mutually beneficial to the inspiration-gathering effort during the creative process.

Concepts

This paper aims to study the significance of the use of illustration for products of daily life to evoke happiness and harmony in people's everyday life in the time of COVID-19. Lauer and Pentak (2008) claimed that knowing what one is doing must precede one's actions. To accomplish this, the present author developed a conceptual framework (see Figure 1) known as "the creative process" that is geared towards a design process that aims to solve a problem. The design concept was discovered when the author embarked on an inspirational, creative journey to Si Nan National Park in Nan Province during the pandemic. Nan Province is located in northeast Thailand. Werly (2013) mentioned that the northeastern region has lush, vibrant forests and towering mountains that are inhabited by hilltribes and Thai families with friendly smiles and a strong sense of culture and heritage. Northeast Thailand is about as anti-urban as it gets. Since the development of the urban areas of Thailand, Thai people have come to Nan Province to escape from the city to feel the ease of a slow-paced lifestyle and recover from the stresses brought about by the busy lifestyles in the city. Nan Province offers the charm of authenticity and sincere hearts and minds of its residents to Thai people and foreigners as well. The beautiful natural scenery, the green mountains, and the murals in Nan Province inspired the author to travel there during the time of COVID-19. According to the Toledo of Art Museum (2021), people nowadays



communicate increasingly through images and rarely through words. Images have replaced text and become the main method through which we communicate. Designers and illustrators who use images as a language to visualize and communicate an idea in fact use images themselves to develop and improve their personal creativity and creative thinking. While traveling to Nan Province, the author took photographs that inspired the author's creativity.

During the pandemic, people worldwide have been encountering such difficulties as physical and psychological problems. Examples of the latter include daily stress, frustration, fear, anxiety, and worry, which may be most pressing, although near-term relief may appear impossible. According to Thorpe (2021), as researchers have determined the COVID-19 situation to be a pandemic, some people who are overly worried about it started wearing masks in the beginning of the pandemic, and have since avoided public places and activities, among other things. Caused by excessive worry, this phenomenon, now called "coronaphobia," can significantly impair people's daily life functions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a large number of people with coronaphobia are letting their fear of COVID-19 get in the way of their everyday lives. Designers can use illustration design as a medium to address people's protracted isolation and alleviate mental stress. Most people may not think that illustration design can help them to obtain physical and mental relief due to their unfamiliarity with different social values or understandings of artistic creation. It is an indisputable fact that having a great design concept enables the creation of a significantly enhanced design that takes context into account. As previously mentioned, the author developed a design concept through creative thinking and physical experience.

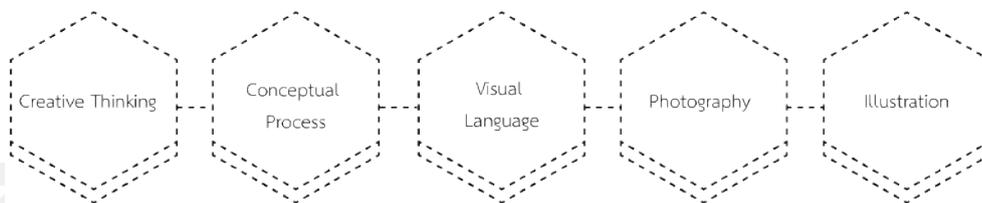


Figure 1. The Creative Process



Work Process

The present project is based on the author's travel experiences in Nan Province, Thailand, in December 2020. Traveling to Nan, the author felt connected to silence, his breathing, and his true inner feelings. Although the pandemic has produced stress and worry, growth, peace, contentment, or belief in an eternal existence of life can alleviate fear. In the end, they surmount all worries. Most designers, artists and illustrators embrace their travel experiences as sources of inspiration and creativity. This research framework utilizes personal experiences to create a soothing, warm, inspiring, memorable, and even purposeful illustration design for product design. This framework helps to evoke people's awareness on the importance of happiness and harmony in their everyday life during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 2). First, the author focused on creative thinking to capture the essence of humans' inner feelings by going to Nan Province, Thailand, which was where the author was traveling to during the time of COVID-19. The author adopted natural objects, such as the mountains, the sky, and a field of dusty straw, as the visual contents that indicate the lifestyle and natural emotions of the area (see Figure 3). Second, using these visual contents, the author illustrated the scenery of Nan Province by using the tablet app, procreate (see Figure 4). Third, the author created illustrations by manipulating the textures and setting up the color tones to convey a warm feeling and sense of freedom (see Figure 5). Fourth, the author applied computer graphics technology, such as Adobe Photoshop, to manipulate the images to render them emotionally and visually attractive to the viewers (see Figure 6). Fifth, the author experimented with hand-written and digital type settings in Thai to explore different impressions for the typography (see Figure 7). Sixth, the author used an Epson printer and heat pressing machine to test-print the illustration design and make final adjustments and changes before finishing the design (see Figures 8, 9, and 10). Last, the author finished the illustration design and applied the design to real products, such as a scarf, tote bag, hat, mug, mask, and other applications. The final resulting artworks are shown in Figures 11, 12, 13, and 14.

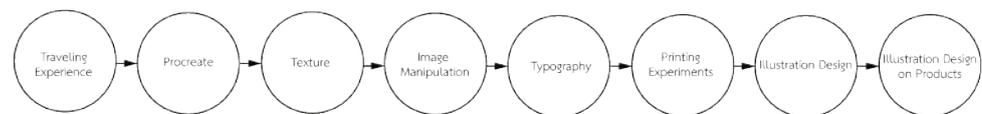


Figure 2. Research Framework



Figure 3. Nan Province



Figure 4. Procreate

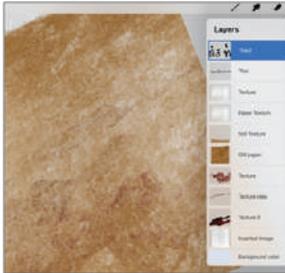


Figure 5. Texture

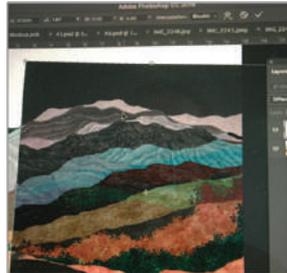


Figure 6. Image Manipulation

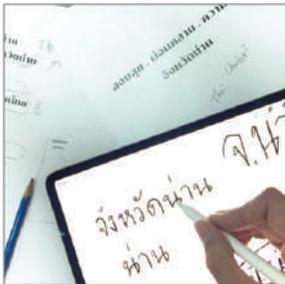


Figure 7. Typography



Figure 8. Printing Experiment 1



Figure 9. Printing Experiment 2

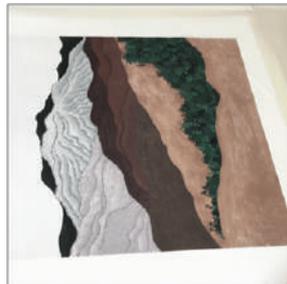


Figure 10. Printing Experiment 3





Figure 11. Scarf Design by Lung-Chi Lin Figure 12. Packaging Design by Lung-Chi Lin

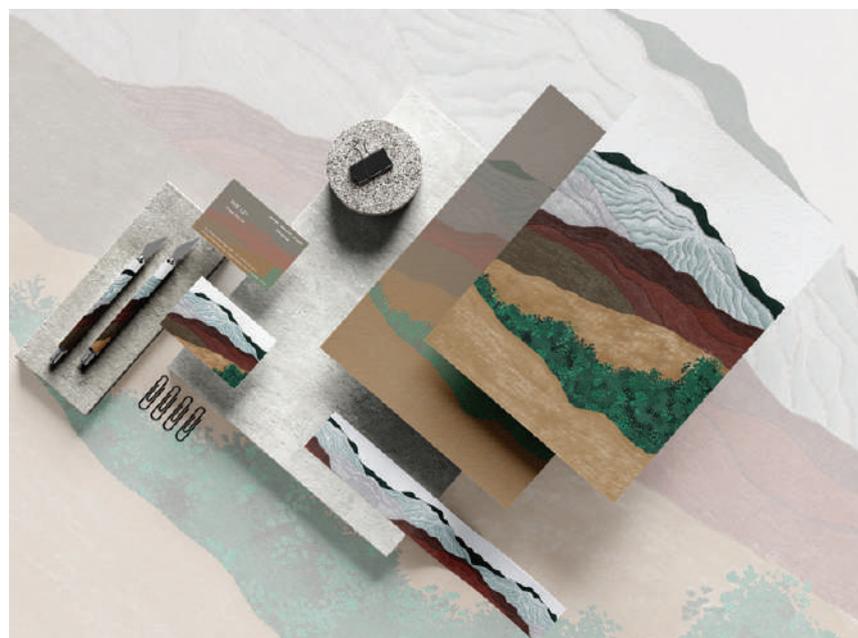


Figure 13. Stationery Design by Lung-Chi Lin





Figure 14. Lifestyle Product Design by Lung-Chi Lin

Analysis

The successful creation of a meaningful design requires a design method that has been carefully considered and planned. In this project, the design approach was one of visual research. Visual research is an effective method for facilitating the comprehension and recognition of the entire design process. Noble and Bestley (2005) asserted that visual research is primarily concerned with the composition of visual elements. Visual research follows similar investigations of the visual contents of the designed object. In this project, the process of visual research entailed looking at the intriguing visual data captured in the various photographs that the author took of Si Nan National Park when traveling to Nan Province (see Figure 15). By collecting photos related to the subject and applying photo elicitation, the scope of visual methods or visual research is broadened. A powerful photo not only provides a great visual reference but also offers a powerful and effective message. The inspiring, striking, memorable, and beautiful photographs were great visual data that the author collected and used for reference to create the artworks. The author adopted natural objects, such as the mountains, the forest, the sky, and a field of dusty straw, as the visual contents of the artwork that indicate the lifestyle and natural emotions, it has a strong psychological connection with people and gives people a feeling of peace and calm.

In terms of design, aesthetic is our perception of an object based on seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling and even tasting. For example: ; people in general associate a field of straw with country life and a slower pace than urban life. The author stated that aesthetic design is about how pleasant people feel about the physical features of products and there should be a strong connection between the product and the people who use the product. The author created an illustration design and applied it to products of daily life. The illustration design reflects a meaningful travel experience in the author's life and highlights its significance. The author's artwork hopes to remind people of the things that give their life meaning and what it is important in their life. When people look at the artwork or use the products, they can reconnect to their inner self and live in the happiness and harmony of everyday life.



Figure 15. Visual Research

Conclusions

This study examined the use of illustration design to demonstrate to people the importance of happiness and harmony in their everyday life during the COVID-19 pandemic. Happiness and harmony are essential for human beings. The author sought to highlight their significance in the time of COVID-19 by creating a meaningful and purposeful illustration design entitled "Raison d'être," hoping to remind people of the things that give their life meaning and to raise people's awareness of the importance of their well-being. During this uncertain period of time, fears and worries may threaten people's everyday life, but a great illustration design inspired by traveling experiences can help people to navigate the world with less fear and worry. People worldwide need creative and inspiring artworks so that



they can feel supported, recover some happiness, and be free from worry. The focus of this study was to explore the development of a design process using visual research. By discussing the design concept and revealing a broad spectrum of connections between the author's travel experiences in Nan Province, Thailand, and the creation of the illustration design, this project demonstrates how a design concept could have a significant impact on the creation of an inspiring and memorable artwork. The results of this study offer a new way of alleviating people's worries and fears concerning COVID-19 through illustration design: as the illustration design is applied to daily products that people will use during the pandemic, it will evoke a peaceful, calm, happy, and harmonious feeling in people when they use the products. All designers should take a stand to create inspiring, powerful, meaningful, and remarkable designs that help people to recover from this global pandemic and make significant improvements to people's well-being. As the rapid spread of the coronavirus affects our everyday life, designers can responsibly anticipate the negative consequences and seek to bring life back to normal by evoking joy, happiness, and harmony in their work.

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