

Brand

“You need to find a place for yourself, a job that only you can do, that makes people remember you. Should you not be there, people feel your absence and ask each other ‘Where is that guy today?’” - Ric Michael, in the conversation with students at University of Worcester, in Pic-n-Mix workshop.

What practitioner in the media industry doesn't want to achieve recognition?

Talking about brand, of course anyone would immediately think of a logo and a name, a 'trade name' as professionals in the industry would call it. This is true; to create yourself a logo and a name is the first level of branding. Obviously you don't want to post your visa-styled photo everywhere (even if it is taken nicely which those photo booths rarely do) - I can't imagine what Mercedes owner would feel if their faces were put on the 'behind' of the cars; hence you need a logo. And of course Moebius is much cooler and more impressive than just plainly Jean - that's why people desperately look for unique pseudonyms (let's not talk about the cool-guy-loves-cats sort of names).

And after a pseudonym and a loo, you need a business card to put them on. Recently I had a class about business card which was totally enlightening. Aside from the basics like reasonable layout and legible typeface, there are a long list of what can be called 'hidden rules' as they are more related to connotation - what impression the card can give whoever look at it about you - other than just whether it looks nice or not.

Now the important question is how you can choose the right name, the right logo, and make the right business card for yourself? That is the deeper level of branding.

As a third year student, my collection of 'long and deep conversations' with tutors by now, if each were materialised as a rock, is equal to a small hill. Blowing up that hill with TNT, and I find some of the following gems:

“This is a good time for you to find your own style.”

“If you can't be funny, don't try to write comedy. Write what you're good at.”

“Write about your own strengths and weaknesses, and tell me, tell the world who you are.”

Doing my research homework like a diligent student, I've found out all that is what the practice of branding is about. It is what people often say in a very cliché way "Find your own voice".

Isn't it easy to find a hundred different quotes like that? Another common one would be "Project yourself into the work of art". For a visual artist, it is the aesthetic style, the colour choice, the media, and the way every single stroke is put down. For a writer, it is the language, the tone, the rhythm, the vocabulary. It is hard to put a finger on what exactly 'brand' in this aspect is; some may prefer to use the word 'style' (which is just equally abstract).

In this day and age, thanks to the miraculous invention of the Internet, it is so much easier for an artist to reach his audience, to reach the world; just upload a drawing or a short story to your blog and hash-tag 'art', and immediately thousands of phones will beep and the unfortunate owner would not be able to resist the urge to turn it on and check out the art. At the same time, it is awfully easy for the work to be stolen; we are not at all unfamiliar with someone reposting our blog entry on Tumblr as their own, and then there are those who print out drawings to trace.

In an interview, when asked for her opinion on such acts of art thievery, Tuyet-Dinh-Sinh-Vat, a young female Vietnamese artist, said: "I always sign on my work, but signature can be easily erased in Photoshop. And so I can only try to make each piece I produce speak as mine, try to put the 'me' in it, so that any viewer, without seeing the signature, can easily announce 'That's her work'".

That is the true meaning of 'brand'.