

TWO CUPS OF TEA ON A WINTERS DAY

tOmi - I don't remember who said that.. but I always found it precise: as soon as an idea leaves a head it becomes common property. Sounds like the first paragraph of the copyleft or open source movement, but it's an old pre-net-quote. What do you think about it? Does it relate to you or our work?

Pamela - It is fascinating that a verbalized idea becomes common property.. it's fascinating to me because in this way the idea gets alive and transformed by everyone who feels it.. but the question for me is how to put the idea in form, how to shape it. The problem of dealing with the idea inspired by someone else is not about the concept, but about the realization, the shaping of a concept. And you, why do you like it?

tOmi - I like this quote because it makes something clear to me, something which is not an opinion but a fact, I suppose. There can't be anything like an original, exclusive idea because all ideas are popping up from within the complexity of life, of culture and communication as such. Jim Jarmusch brought it to the point - it's all about authenticity, not originality.. authentic things can only be said or done honestly or straight from the heart, whereas originality always is stressed by concepts and word monsters such as "intellectual property" which are not clearing anything.. but tell me more about the distinction you make.

Pamela -I'd be curious to know what Jarmusch would answer.. who or what inspired him for what they said? Design, for me, is about both: originality and authenticity. Too many times we can fall in love with our ideas, just for the fact that something new comes up, into our perception and that's just because our brain made a link, sometimes between two completely absurd things, which together make an astonishing truth.. but that's not enough.. this feeling is authentic, but I think we should search for appearances which really fit this authenticity to make it original and even immortal.. in the sense that it will live on in other's minds and works. Even if this costs a lot of work, which in most cases it does.

tOmi - you mean photoshopping versus doing it analogically?

Pamela - yes but not only.. it's more like taking an image from the web instead of making it yourself.. we have seen too many posters based on "ready made" images found on the web and not on what the designer find with his/her own eyes, experimenting with patience and love for what he/she does.

tOmi - OK, but how can one look for something he/she never saw?

Pamela - that's the interesting thing of design: trying it, imagining it.. I always have the impression that what we like in a piece of art, a nice design or an artisan artifact, is not only the appearance or the shape in itself, but also the invisible hand which shaped it.. the feeling which reaches you from the person who did it.. do you think this counts for our work?

tOmi - yes, I suppose so.. If you think of the giraffe for instance, and you see this very simple visual result and you remember how long we were playing around with light, the appearance of more or less moving sand in the water and how this changed the drama of the image, the long shooting process.. and how this image worked also for the audience and the critics who liked it.. it seems to be all in there, even the struggles we both had in taking decisions towards the result. But I think my central point, what most interests me is neither the idea, nor the shape.. everyday more I feel the most crucial point of life for me and therefore also the point where most conflicts arise, is the relational. Every realization, may it be the atom bomb or a simple poster, is talking explicitly about the relation between who did it and the subject on which something was done. So, to make it short, our collaboration is about the quality of our relation.

Pamela - and how about the relation in these 5 years of collaboration?

tOmi - I like the conflicts that our decision-takings provoked, because I could learn from it.. in the end I think it always got better, than if I would have decided alone. But it is not that easy. Because I see 'trust' as the main phenomenon which brings things forward, and trust seems such a windy term.. although it is so relevant in all our relations. Maybe its the most difficult thing to learn - to give up all preconceptions and fixed images and to really open up to the other's view, to her way of seeing it, her sensitivity, to really listening. therefore it was frustrating for me in moments in which I was too much hooked onto what I was convinced of. I think right now, after maybe months of not having collaborated with you seriously, and after we both expressed that spontaneity and a much more intuitive approach and not an analytical or conceptual one should become more crucial.. that this could lead to a qualitative jump in our teamworking culture. That's open. How do you feel about it?

Pamela - I think working in a team is at the same time more complicated and easier than working alone. I agree with you that sometimes it leads us to a better solution and a more precise development, but in some cases I feel so strongly the "maternity" of an idea that this makes it so difficult to discuss its possible realization.. so after these years I do really think that there are works that just can't be co-created. Because, it's not easy to explain, it's not about sharing an opinion or a position on something that makes you involve the other in a project, sometimes you have to face it alone.. it's about feeling it completely. In some cases you just need the complete trust and the professional help of the other, but that's not co-creation, right? Or what is co-creation.. for you?

tOmi - I feel that actually those works we did in which, as you expressed it, you or me got the complete trust and the practical help of the other, are actually the most authentic we ever did.. maybe because trust is the characteristic par excellence which makes co-creations interesting, and not the insistence of having the rational part and right of an idea. I still didn't understand why I always wanted to be a collaborator and always had the feeling that ideas find us and not we them.. when Beuys said he thinks with his knees, and when I read that Einstein said he thinks more with his muscles than with his brain, I felt I should profound the question of the origin of ideas.

Pamela - yes, but what happens if you want to burn / delete / transform after time the work you realized with the help of someone? And.. is not co-creation a way to hide yourself behind a team, share responsibility for your beliefs instead of taking your very own responsibilities?

tOmi - yes, sure that's possible. Perhaps I can say that ideas can be shared and co-realized but "inner freedom" can not.. the ultimate responsibility in a project has its "director", I mean the one who started it and mainly moves it on. In case it leads to the conflicts that you mention, for me it's not about the problem of authorship, but a question of respect. In relations where it can't be seen like that, well, in hierarchies, I just don't want to be active. But Pam, we now have worked and lived intensively together for 5 years and are even doing a little book about it! But now we find each other in a huge change we still can't see where it will move us to...what are you into, what's next for you?

Pamela - I want to go back to surprise myself, leave the symbolic, abandon the tricks I have learned and feel lost, hoping to find something new, unseen, unimagined, maybe getting closer to art.. graphic design contains a big problem to me.. it has to deal with print shops and often the final result is a big frustration, I want to realize and print things myself. Which are your perspectives?

tOmi - I'd like, to use your term, to go back to the problem of the spacial and the spiritual. I think I should reboot my love for shaping spaces I didn't feel and start to experiment with what I often just talked about: to shape the unshapable... I mean we shouldn't shape love, but love it, but I still believe that shapes between and around us can help to bind us closer together.. I would like to do the layout for a book, let's say from Jiddu Krishnamurti, in which typography, the look, has the same importance than the meaning of the words. I'm tired of the so called "social design", because often it seems so naive and flat to me and I'd love to provoke with what I like to call "spiritual design".

Pame1a - looks like we need to go back to go forward.

tOmi - yes, like going higher to reach deeper.

Polignano a Mare,
in the Kitchen, 2012