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User & Social Innovation Essay
Group 20

3 GAPS // F_LL TH_ G_APS

By reading this essay, please consider that it is a result of three different people's opinions who had worked together on one task. We tried to contain the main thought about our creative process during working on the task, which follows:

You have to make a writing (1) in an American language, it has to be an (2) affirmation and has to be (3) on a green surface. The writing has to be about (4) syntax and (5) memory. The title of the writing has to feature the number 3.

WHO ARE WE?

We are three Erasmus students studying product design and interior design at the Politecnico di Milano. One of us is from Germany, two from Poland. Before starting working on that project we have not known each other very well.

INVENTING PROCESS

In the beginning we were confused and did not understand the meaning of the task. We did not know exactly what kind of work we should prepare, so we decided to have a brainstorm to discover meaning of the task. First of all we had discussed and had tried to find the best definition of every single keyword. We had tried to discover connections between them. Because of our cultural determinants (we are from different countries, cultures, families and societies) it was important to explain single words and our impression to discover main idea. Finally we had agreed on the meaning of the task. Then we had discussed how our project should look like.

"Memory" is some kind of a never ending thing, with a wide range of topics and unknown fields. The word "syntax" really caused difficulties for us to understand. Nevertheless we kept on brainstorming and searching for more information and articles about creativity, affirmation and memory – which of course were very helpful to look at our task from different point of views – psychologist, designers, scientists. After long discussion and research we decided to carefully select and extract, the strongest and most meaningful statements.

This part certainly caused a long discussion, spending hours sharing our opinions with each other and trying to find one statement which will reflect idea of every person from our group. Finally we had agreed to create a type of sentence which will motivate us. Affirmation is like mantra – you are repeating one sentence every day and finally you believe in its power, you believe that you can achieve something. But what will be the best motivation for us - students of design? What is the most important? Being creative of course. So we asked ourselves these questions: What are we doing all day? What are our motivations? When we should use our creativity, how we should use it? To improve our world, our daily life, our environment? Every day we are filling gaps in our environment by inventing new things, searching for new ideas, improving our surrounding. "Fill the gaps"! That was it!

Finally we have found a short but meaningful phrase, expressing everything we wanted to include in our project. Furthermore this sentence is more than just the statement itself, but is a kind of challenge for the audience.

Then we had to think about second part of the task: to put our writing in a green surface. We thought that it would be fascinating to see this phrase every day while going to university, to be inspired each morning. That is why we decided to put our sentence on the street, on the wall which we are passing by every day. To meet task expectations we decided to create moss graffiti. Making moss graffiti is a new trend, it is an ecological way expressing ones opinion on walls and you cannot get caught for vandalism. It puts some nature to grey surfaces of a city.

We wanted to encourage people to think about our “writing on the wall” and to give them opportunity to interpret its meaning by themselves. It is not just a short sentence on the wall, it is a challenge for every pedestrian, it is a sentence which is a kind of game. We strongly believe that our “Fill the gap” is not only a normal sentence, it has deeper meaning. Our main goal was to force people to stop and think about this sign. Should I fill the gap in my surrounding, am I the person who is filling the gap in the global structure or it is just that moss which is filling gaps on the old wall?

MAKING OF

After the process of developing our slogan, we wanted to test our result by asking our friends if the message is understandable, clear and encouraging – fortunately they fulfilled our expectations.

The last part of our work was the easiest one – without exchanging opinions or discussions about ideas. Actually our whole team was calm and relaxed drinking coffee while we planned the further steps to finally execute our idea. None of us ever tried to make a moss graffiti – of course we were very curious about the final result. We did not expect further stumbling blocks for making the moss graffiti, we had to wait for a suitable weather, because rain probably would have washed it away. Producing our graffiti liquid was adventurous as well, the smell of this beer-moss-yoghurt mixture was terrible – but finally, after waiting for a few days, we saw our work growing on the wall.

CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES

There were some constrains in our group. But we tried to use them in a creative way. For the first sight some things seemed to be drawbacks, but every of us tried to find the positive aspects of this barriers and transform it to advantage.

What was also positive – all of us tried to find the best solution. We did not compete among our team, but showed each other that we are reflective, creative persons and every of us was able to fix this task. We did not feel a pressure that we have to find better solutions than others. We wanted to achieve it together.

In our international group there was a little problem with the language barrier. Sometimes it made difficulties to explain our ideas not in a mother tongue, missing the appropriate meaning. But it was an interesting experience to work and quickly react on others doubts or to expressing our disagreement with somebody's opinion or statement.

During our inventing process we especially focused to work and to communicate like professionals. In particular it means, that everyone's opinion was respected and we allowed discussions about it.

Further we divided the work tasks equally in order to keep the balance. There was no leader in our group. There were some moments that one person had stronger opinion or state than others. But we decided to discuss it every time to find one statement which will reflect our common opinion. Every member of our group had a big influence on what we had done.

The biggest challenge in this developing process was to cope with the diversity of personalities, opinions, experiences and ways of working. For example each of us requires different length of time for working. For some of us time was the limitation, for others pressure was a motivation factor.

MOTIVATIONS

When it comes to write about motivation – we are all Erasmus students. In general opinion this kind of students give university a miss. But our group gave it's the best to have the most interesting solution to that task. It was surprisingly! Each of us was really involved in that project and felt motivated to improve it and offer her creative qualities, aiming for a result that would even transport our working process, our experiences and our task.

SUMMARY

We cannot say that we had one inspiration to do this moss graffiti. It was long process to make it and it was not a one thing that directed us to that solution. It was a complex way to create exactly that thing, not a different one. There is nothing accidently in our project – every small detail has a tangible explanation.

We are satisfied with the result of our work and that we were able to deal with all challenges that appeared during working process. We are delighted to write that it was not only a school project that ended with deadline. This sentence has still influence on us and has become real affirmation – we pass it by everyday on our way to the university.