

INTERVIEW WITH JEONG YEONJOO FROM IMPRESS DESIGN MAG, KOREA

1. To start things off, for those who don't know much about you, can you introduce yourself and tell us how got into interactive (web) design?

My name is Daniel Jenett, I am 34 years old, live and work in Hamburg and Berlin, Germany, with my own company [jenett.com](http://www.jenett.com), on my own clients and projects.

Before coming back to Europe last year I was living in Los Angeles for 1 1/2 years working as experience lead broadband/future TV for Razorfish Inc. In that period I was working with FUEL broadcast design, a company acquired by Razorfish to be capable of iTV and broadband design as much as TV branding and identity. Between 1999 and 2000 I was in New York working primarily on the Charles Schwab account, before that I was Creative Director in the Hamburg office of Razorfish. In 1998 I was working in Berlin for META design (<http://www.metadesign.com>) as a consulting designer on the Audi projects, particularly the first Audi-TT website (<http://www.audi-tt.com>).

I was also briefly working as Creative Head New Media for Frogdesign in San Francisco in '98-'99.

Between 1995 and 1997 I was starting up a multimedia company called overnet GmbH (whis is now defunct) in combination with one of the most prominent advertising agencies in Germany (Jung von Matt, <http://www.jvm.de>). Before that I was studying communication design at Art Center Europe in Switzerland leading to a BFA in communication design in 1994. In general one might say I am a 200 % designer and entrepreneur by training and ambition.

Before my studies, which amongst others also brought me to Wuerzburg and Kassel / Germany, I was always involved with art exhibitions, graffiti arrests, airbrushing and many more things that I now try to forget.

In the last two years in Switzerland at Art Center Europe (<http://www.artcenter.edu>) I got involved with a class called 'multimedia-design' by Octavian Dibrov that was exploring Macromedia Director and CD-ROM design and programming. I remember the first time I saw projects done in this class and I new I had to get into this. There was a design produced on a computer, that was not supposed to leave this very computer, and had all the elements that had always interested me: typography, images, sound and motion.

Interactivity was not what I was interested in then, and that hasn't changed much.. I am a visual person, I am interested in what I can see, I am less interested in how it gets moved, with my own hands or mouse, by somebody else or by itself. Of course I had to readapt this concept a couple of times when working on real-life projects, but I am still deeply convinced that most people really care more about what they see, than how they get there.

Right now I consider myself a designer in the field of identities in modern media, not exactly an interactive designer or webdesigner. My goal is to create designs that span across modern media, PC, TV, mobile, PDA, ATM machines, telematics and LED billboards, generating recognizable and distinct brands and systems that support the intended communication goals.

In other words, I am applying everything that is good about conventional graphic design (branding, corporate design etc.) to the increasingly important screen-based new environment that we are living in.

My clients are getting a corporate design that is based on the needs and demands of our digital time, not a paper and print system. The identities are tailored for an interactive, digital contact, making sure that services and products are standing out of the cluttered environment, providing guidance and recognition across multiple screens. Usability in my vision is a *conditio sin qua non*, but not a final target, the wish to use something comes before usability matters.

2. Regarding your works, give me specific notice to your works(site URL, concepts, workflow, etc. in detail)

I have worked on a couple of very different projects, lately I have done a lot of projects that are not on the web, but on TV and in special locations and interiors. These projects are referenced at <http://www.jenett.com> as much as a list of links to all the free projects that I have contributed to in the last couple of years.

Two projects that I have worked on in the last 10 month I would like to highlight here, both can be found on [jenett.com](http://www.jenett.com). The first is a motion design project I was asked to design for the Credit Suisse Bank. They are opening a couple of flagship stores in different cities in Germany and had a video/computer installation that needed to be digitally branded and required a design that would combine pre-produced commercial film content with news and data that was real-time web feeds. Most important to me was to find an integrated design that would override the difference between what was web and what was film, what was canned and what was life. The project currently is a permanent part of the stores, being implemented on the ATM screens, the projectors and plasma screens and being shown to the street on a 13x6 meter LED monitor.

The second project I would like to talk about is a TV commercial I did for an artist in France, announcing his latest CD: Henri Salvador is a French chanson singer who has a spectacular revival at the moment in France. The agency MILK PH (<http://www.milk.fr>) asked me to do an animated spot based on the last concert within just a couple of days (including design AND production!). So that is how I did my first TV commercial on my G4 Powerbook in a nice and tiny office in beautiful Paris in 5 days.

These both projects were done with my company [jenett.com](http://www.jenett.com) in collaboration with other agencies, Milk PH and Caspari Film Production GmbH.

3. What do you do currently.

Currently I am working on a couple of projects that are in early stages. One is a website for an event location/hotel in the former eastern part of Germany. Actually I am coaching another agency on the process of doing this project. I am the person to answer all questions regarding Design, Information Architecture and development/process for them, or enable the process to find answers. Special about this project is the integration of regional content like the punctual weather forecast and information about every member of the events.

I am also developing a marketing campaign for the city of Hamburg that is supposed to help it become the Olympic tournament location in the year 2012. This campaign is a multi media (print, TV, radio, web, subway-TV) quiz that gets played through SMS on mobile telephones.

Another project I am working on at the moment is a company that represents motion designer and produces jobs. This company will be launched end of August at a big celebration for a famous German photographer (Thomas Rusch, <http://www.thomasrusch.com>). Also I help brand a TV-show/website combination starting September for a European format.

In general as you can see, I am on summer vacation at the moment ;).

4. How long have you been doing web design and what made you do that?

I consider myself a designer in new media, including web design to a certain extent but actually reaching beyond. I understand a website as (part of) a communication effort that must follow communication design rules as well, for example legibility and information design principles. Also it is usually part of a bigger strategy, a brand, an identity or a campaign. Of course it is also a/the product itself, but it is a visual product. From my point of view the progress will ever make it easier to produce sufficient technology, which in turn will make the communication challenges harder. In other words, the more people knowing flash, the harder it is to design unique things, which has primarily become a (graphic) design challenge.

This is why I consider myself not a web-designer, I am a communication designer (which is also what I studied 10 years ago).

5. Everyone says you are the best and the most respectable designer to most of the people who web desinger. What is your unique design style?

If unavoidable I try to only copy myself and not other people's work, and I usually intend to move my own ideas a step further with every project. It is one of my ideals to not bore myself and my audience with predictable solutions. I know there is a whole different school of thought going into GUI design or usability/product design and I must say I have respect for

these principles.

But beyond creating things that are usable, I focus on making products that create the desire to use and possess them. Curiosity and seduction should always be part of good solution.

6. What is a fascinating thing of design?

To me, design is a form of communication, in professional terms it is the service of communicating on behalf of another person or entity. It is not the simple act of doing something (a website, a car or a building), but to do it in a specific way, so that it has meaning to others.

That is what I like about the philosophy of design, from a business perspective I must say that I am less happy these days. Design is often misunderstood as the production and not the 'shaping' of products. On top there is no real theoretical foundation of design, put this times dotcom problems times worldwide economical difficulties and you get the idea. The dotcom boom-days are definitely over, having left us with a public perception of design that is very negative and uninformed. We have to do a lot of good projects one step at a time to regain trust and insight from potential clients now.

7. What is your design philosophy?

Design is 'what objects say', in contrast to 'what you say about objects'. Basically digital design is about communication, both content and functionality. Funtionality has to be as easy and appropriate as possible, content has to do what serves its message best. To me the variety of messages of graphic content is open ended and can be re-arranged eternally depending on the creativity of the designer and the tasks to solve, functionality shouldn't.

In a presentation I gave last year at the Hochschule fuer Gestaltung in Offenbach, Germany (Design University, Offenbach) I made the pun that users really only need the 5 buttons of a simple remote: play, pause, rewind, fast forward and stop. Of course that was exaggerated.

I am also very much influenced by the technological developments that are happening now and in the not so far future. Digital television including video on demand, PVR and DVR digital video recorders, interactive TV, ubiquitous broadband, broadband telephony, WIFI wireless LAN's to name just a few. I expect these technologies to change the face of the digital supermedium from the current PC and work-related HTML typography space, to a far more integrated yet potentially moving dvd-like environment.

Don't get this wrong, I don't mean that everything will be film instead of text, but I can imagine in the permanent need to differentiate one offering from the other, designers have no choice but to integrate all available dimensions into their products, including sound, motion, etc. This can be a blessing or a curse, already now the blinking flash

banners are a tiny preview of the next era. In my point of view only clarity and real graphic design knowledge will provide the edge here, creating consistent yet recognizable identities, creating clarity for the eye.

The shift from a static text medium to a multi-medium is why I call my design motion design sometimes.

8. Who influenced you most?(I wonder why...)

I would like to list a couple of influences here. First and maybe the most important single person that influenced me was Paul Rand through his books. He has a mixture of sharpness and to-the-point-ness that I really admire. Also he had the guts to stand for a certain opinion for good or worse. His work shows how client services can be combined with deep knowledge and empathy for the human spirit.

I am also influenced by a range of teachers, co-workers and friends: Erik Spiekermann from META design who's books about typography are a must for all designers, Dan Friedman, Tucker Viehmeister and of course Steven Heller for all the excellent writing about Design (e.g. in Critique and his books). And maybe a hundred more..

9. If any, what is your working style and unique habit or jinx?(in detail),

10. Inspiration

I have a very hands-on approach to my work. I like to play and investigate new options myself. For that matter I have to be able to control all involved aspects, programming, filming, animating, and of course layouts and sketching.. So basically I try to bring in ideas that come not from the direct vicinity of the project. To really have options one needs to be a good observer.

I once bought a pair of underpants in San Francisco at Banana Republic (clothes store) that had a certain pattern of dots of different hues and shading. This pattern inspired me to do a certain animation on my website. This animation later was copied a thousand times, I am sure there are copies of copies of copies now still around of this animation, even the German TV just recently in the TV soccer world-championship coverage used an animation on TV that was derived from this one simple idea.. The point here, it doesn't always have to be rationally justifiable, not even afterwards where ideas come from. One has to trust ones instincts in doing creative work, one can always find reason afterwards if necessary. And also: Find your own inspiration!

I just finished reading a book that I can really recommend: Visual Thinking by Rudolf Arnheim (1969, University of California Press, ISBN 0-520-01871-0). This book explains how perception is thinking, instead of being a source that delivers data to the brain. Accordingly my conclusion is, that designing is an expression of intellect (if done properly). Highly recommended!

One of my most important inspirational sources has always been traveling and living abroad. As I have outlined above I have spent time in Switzerland, various different cities in Germany and also in different places in the US. I know I was very lucky to be able to work in all these places, but I also put a lot of effort into making it happen.

11. What makes web design good or bad? Furthermore, how do you see the future of web design?

The future of web design is not web design. Web design in itself is just an intermediary step in a bigger plot, the development of all things turning digital, and that means a lot for communication and therefore also for design in general. The design I am doing is not only for the PC, it extends the IP based web to the TV, cell phone and many more things. Due to the different using patterns of all these devices, the future digital design is not going to be of the same nature as the PC workplace-inspired www. It is of course also not going to be internet on TV, TV on the broadband web, or anything else of that kind. We as designers with future vision will give it a new shape based on everything we can possibly know about the nature of humankind, way beyond stupid marketing schemes or technologists expectations.

Good design on the web and elsewhere is a design that fulfills its purpose.

Bad design: Wrong objectives, bad execution.

12. Can you give some advice to others who wish to be a designer in Korea?

As far as I know Korea is the country with the highest adoption rate of broadband/highspeed internet and broadband telephony. If I were there by now I would focus on dynamic content, would improve my flash programming, but also animating skills. As I said above, the current state is only going to change, so anticipating the next level anybody that combines motion and interactivity is definitely going to be well prepared.

Things to watch:

DVD development

MPEG 4

MINI DV filmmaking

Flash MX

French techno!

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/jenett-news/> My newsgroup about the continous digital revolution!

On a slightly less hands-on perspective I would always recommend drawing and learning about painting and graphic design. As I said, also the web is a visual medium, so knowledge of composition, abstraction and harmony is very important. These are the things that are most likely going to be constant, technology is always going to change.

13. What is your plan for the future?

After having spent almost completely the last ten years in changing places I will focus on building my own business now here in northern Germany, Hamburg and Berlin. I will live through the current climate of crisis with smaller projects and help clients understand the opportunities of design especially in the current unsettling economy. For many the internet dream is over, for jenett.com it has just started.