

Study Career Coaching

PART ONE

Before I Die

The Before I Die project which started in 2011 was internally inspired by Candy Chang, who at the time was going through grief and depression after a loved one had passed away. The first Before I Die wall was on an abandoned building in New Orleans. After seeing the success of the experiment, more than 5,000 other walls all around the world have followed. The wall can be seen as a ritual, it is there to help people confront death, reflect with one another, and build community.

Because the wall has been translated to 35 other languages than English, the target audience of this project is very wide. The requirements of the interactor with this project are that you need to be able to think about what you want to do before you die. Kids really start understanding death between the age of 5-7, so the target audience is probably from that age until the age of when people die. This makes for a great variety of answers.

The first wall was an inexpensive project and therefore funded by Candy Chang. The walls nowadays are funded by donations from companies and organizations, these donations help to make the resource kit free to download for people that want to set up a Before I Die wall in their community. Chang now calls the Before I Die wall everyone's project because anyone is allowed to use this concept.

“Since the first Before I Die wall, I have become passionate about the role of ritual in public life. Loneliness is a public health crisis. Anxiety is on the rise. Distractions are bombarding us. Society feels increasingly polarized. These are alarming trends, but I believe our shared spaces can play a vital role in our emotional health.”

– Candy Chang

In the social practice, we focused on viewing and affecting society, this is exactly what Chang did with this project. Chang put her experiment out in the open and waited for society to interact, to ultimately build environments where people have communion and kinship.

PART ONE

Event identity BJDW

Beijing Design Week is an annual event held in Beijing with the purpose of creating better design infrastructure and raising public awareness for design. The visual identity, campaign, and wayfinding system made for the Beijing Design Week 2015 were designed by Johan Nijhoff at Lava Beijing. The main communication of this project is through shape, color, and pattern making the designs playful and recognizable. This project is inspiring to me because it is simple and yet very smart. The identity is meant to attract people to design, this makes the target audience fairly broad. However, because being mobile is important for visiting the Beijing Design Week the targeted age probably ranges from 16 to 70.

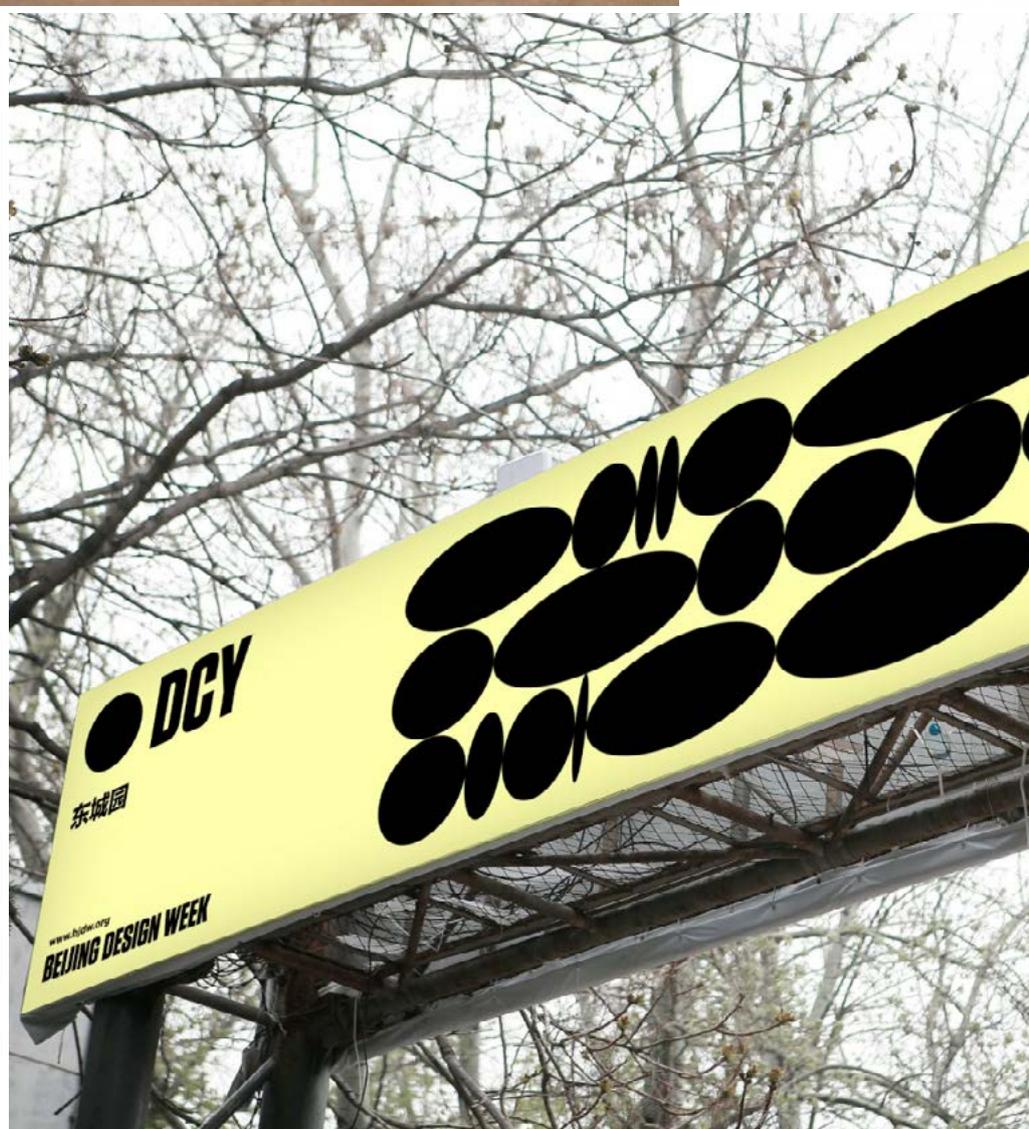
“Taking this year’s new Core Areas into consideration, we’ve extended the BJDW shape family and created a distinctive symbol for each area. These shapes can be stretched, squeezed, and morphed into new configurations. All of the shapes merged together form larger patterns, representing the different elements that make up the BJDW program – diversity in coexistence.”

– Johan Nijhoff

To promote organizational trade as well as commercial and economic opportunities, Beijing Design Week invites a different city’s representatives each year to share their wisdom and experience. This sharing of wisdom and experience was also done for the design of this project, the team of LAVA worked together with different professionals to make the visual identity for this event work.



- ◆ BIFT PARK
- ⌘ GEHUA TOWER
- DCY
- ◆ GMM
- ⌘ THROUGHOUT BEIJING



PART ONE

Invisible

This campaign from The Australian Childhood Foundation that took place in 2009, was about raising awareness for the seriousness of neglect as a form of child abuse.

To attract attention from the target group, which I think is city people from age 16 to elderly age, the foundation decided to team up with Wunderman Thompson Melbourne. Some of Wunderman Thompson's creatives: Richard Muntz (Executive Creative Director), Keith Nicolas (Deputy Creative Director) & Scott Glennon (Senior Copywriter) worked together to make the project come to life. Not literally, but it almost seems that way due to the partly visible child-size mannequins, wearing clothes and standing behind huge white posters. These installations were located at popular sites around Melbourne. The covered-up abandoned figures give the impression as though they are not seen, which is often the case with neglect. Kids are not seen for who they are, their worth is not seen, and their pain is often not seen. Once someone took the mannequin out from behind the poster, a second message was revealed:

“Thank you for seeing me.”

The element of trying to affect social situations played a big part in this campaign. This is also one of the elements I got to experience during the social practice. Affecting social situations can be very challenging because you need to find a way into the social situation. This project did a great job of finding a way to involve people in a situation that they might be turning their heads away from.



PART TWO

The mash-up

Society likes to say:

“The best job there is one that comes forth out of passion.”

This is just one of the few things in which I directly agree with society. During this assignment, there was one project that really spoke to me because it shows true passion. The Before I Die wall by Candy Chang started as more of a personal experiment and later it became a huge global hit. I think this project is so successful because Candy Chang started with a passion and it attracted more people, who later also became passionate and started linking to this project. There are multiple small and large communities coming together and connecting over one idea, which has turned this project into a “we” thing instead of an I thing. This catches my attention because it can start with one person’s idea, however, being vulnerable and open to do it together can make affecting society on a larger scale possible. This project is a huge inspiration for me because even though affecting society might be something that I have not found my way in yet, Candy Chang shows that it is possible to even by starting with small simple steps, thinking about that makes me hopeful.

Candy Chang started by turning a neglected space into a lively constructive one, and now she has made the neglected subject “death” come to life. Most people get uncomfortable thinking about what to say to a person that is dealing with loss or is about to pass away themselves. Because the wall is outside and therefore out in the open, it takes vulnerability to interact with this project, and vulnerability makes for greater communion. Which brings me to the vision that Candy Chang has for this project:

**“if we continue to question what our public spaces can be,
our built environment can offer profound moments of
communion and kinship.”**

- Candy Chang

PART THREE

The designer

About Candy Chang

The designer of the Before I Die wall, Candy Chang, is a very well achieved and successful person with many titles to her name. However, besides being a top artist, designer, and urban planner, she is also just a normal human being. The Taiwanese-American artist was born in Pittsburgh, she is an introvert cat-loving lady that travels the world.

Besides her interest in cats, Chang is interested in personal well-being, this interest is used for good by bringing projects that involve her own words and those of the collective into communities to help them reflect. She is an artist that likes to examine the patterns between society and the mind, being isolated or in community and taking people out of the online world of today and attracting them to public spaces instead. Her works go in against the almost religious stream of actions we partake in public life. She searches for emotional communion in places that may often feel isolated and calls herself a creator of rituals for emotional health.

Her work

In Chang's early work she already used the outside world as her canvas for helping others. For example, her project Sidewalk Psychiatry (2006) was created to give free public therapy. This street art project was made to help people reflect by asking themselves deep questions that were spray-painted on the streets of New York.

In one of her more recent projects, The Atlas of Tomorrow, she speaks of when our insides meet the outsides. This is what she likes to do in all of her projects including the Before I Die wall, bring the inside things to the outside in a meaningful way.

Another project which was in collaboration with James A.Reeves, named Monument for the Anxious and Hopeful, is a project about the uncertainty of tomorrow. Again, she brings the insides of people to the outside by creating a huge living catalog where people have the opportunity to be vulnerable about their interactions with anxiety and hope. This being a space where all the maybe isolated thoughts come together to form a collective where communion is stimulated.

PART THREE

The designer

Her journey

To say the least, Chang has made quite a few accomplishments. There are so many of them and also so many that are still unseen, that I will not name them all. However, I will name the accomplishments that speak to me and give a glimpse of how she got to where she is today.

Chang had the drive to study, her degrees entail a bachelor's degree in Architecture and Design, and a Masters in Urban Planning from Columbia University.

After studying she involved her passion for helping people lead better lives into her work. She collaborated with community organizations to make citizens' rights and resources more easily accessible in cities like New York, Nairobi, Vancouver, New Orleans, and Johannesburg. After this, she became an art director at The New York Times and she traveled to a different continent to become a design researcher at Nokia in Helsinki.

She was named a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader, one of the Top 100 Leaders in Public Interest Design by Impact Design Hub, and a "Live Your Best Life" Local Hero by Oprah Magazine. Her work has not only been exhibited outside, but also in many museums including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Venice Architecture Biennale, New Museum, Tate Modern, and Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum.

The introverted artist has brought out a self-help book and become an international speaker, she was named a 2011 TED Senior Fellow. She speaks on community and emotional health, and her TED talk has been viewed over five million times. This is the most interesting to me because besides being a top artist, she has worked her way up to being an influential person in other areas like emotional health as well.

This is what attracts me to her as an artist, she branches out in many areas, gets over fears, and is not afraid to ask the hard questions. The main reason I think she has made it so far is because of her passion and will power. Candy Chang is a great example of an artist to look up to.

PART THREE

My future

When thinking of the future, two things come to mind: designing things that are on my heart and being in a team that lift's each other up to make work of greater value. Achieving these two points may be easy because it can be small scale, yet it can also be more challenging and interesting because it has the opportunity of being something big at the same time. Where life takes me I'm not sure yet, however, I am a very goal-oriented person, therefore, I want to finish my degree at the Willem de Kooning Academy to grow as much as a designer and person as possible.

One of the most important steps to me is the upcoming internship. I have not found an organization or company that I would like to intern at yet. However, this is one of my goals to look around and find a place that will help me get work experience that leans towards the social practice. My past internships at Elle magazine and Oilily have given me great connections and lead me to freelance work. Therefore, I think finding the right internship in the third year might help me get the connections I will need after my studies. These connections will hopefully help me achieve my goal of designing things that are on my heart and being in a team that lift's each other up to make work of greater value.

PART FOUR

The sources

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