

know: like a drop of water dispersing throughout all the water in the bucket, its molecules bump into, set into motion, and rearrange, all the molecules that are already there. The attitudes already in the bucket get shaken up, turned around, reexamined, and sometimes changed.

The work of designers is intimately affected by experiences that mix up the stuff in their buckets. For example, a scene designer working on designs for a production of *King Lear* learns that his grandfather is suffering from Alzheimer's disease and has been placed in a nursing home. Shakespeare's text takes on new meaning because of the new information that dropped into the designer's life. His exploratory sketches are dark with looming shapes that cast angular shadows, perhaps reflecting his distress over his grandfather's condition and his fear that he will be badly treated.

An experience does not have to occur in the present to have an identical effect on the images that inform design work. A scene designer working on designs for *King Lear* might be reminded of his grandfather, who suffered from Alzheimer's disease and died in a nursing home ten, or twenty, years before. Perhaps the memory comes to him because he chanced upon a family photograph, or ran across a book his grandfather had given him. It is equally likely that the memory of his grandfather quite suddenly popped into his mind without seeming to be prompted by anything at all.

Indeed, an experience that causes a designer to know and see in a new way does not even have to be something that happened to that person, nor does it have to be something that actually occurred. Vivid experiences plop into our buckets by way of fiction as well as fact, through books, movies, paintings, articles in the newspaper, trips, chance conversations, what we hear on the radio, what our friends tell us, and indeed through every sort of human sensory encounter we can imagine.

Perception and Memory

To note that the thing I call my individuality is only a pattern or dance, that is what it means when one discovers how long it takes for the atoms of the brain to be replaced by other atoms. The atoms come into my brain, dance a dance, and then go out—there are always new atoms, but always doing the same dance, remembering what the dance was yesterday.

Richard P. Feynman, "What Do You Care What Other People Think?"