

“You think that because you understand ONE you understand TWO, because one and one makes two. But you must understand AND.” - Sufi proverb

In the middle, lives between,
Connecting synapses bridge all unseen,
The corpus callosum, the cross-over zone,
We as designers, know this place as home.
At first so simple, each thought discreet,
In the course of designing, more threads come to meet,
The corpus callosum, the cross-over zone,
We as designers, know this place as home.

What if designing is not a storm raging between two halves of the brain but instead a spindle creating new threads of understanding throughout the mind?

In general, the left hemisphere processes things more in parts and sequentially, while the right hemisphere processes things more holistically and nonlinearly. They are connected by bundles of nerve fibers, the largest known as the corpus callosum¹. 250 million nerve fibers are responsible for information processing, and converting chemical and electrical signals back and forth, enabling our two halves to communicate. Although this explanation of our thought process works and is easy to understand, it is a very limited one. In actuality our minds are much more complex.

According to Eric Jensen, author of *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*, there is a much stronger connection and overlap between hemispheres than previously believed. Recent research shows that as synaptic connections (or neural pathways all over the brain, not just between hemispheres) increase, our ability to understand complex systems also increases. “Problem solving is not limited to one area of the brain. After all, you can solve a problem on paper, with a model, with an analogy or metaphor, by discussion, with statistics, through artwork, or during a demonstration.”² As a result, as new problems are encountered more neural pathways are developed.

If designing is the generation of new neural pathways, or threads of understanding, then the expertise of the designer is to weave a fabric of complex solutions and ideas resulting in a holistic design that addresses proposition, implication, application, and solution. Good designers dwell in the space between, constantly weaving performance with composition, while creating a memorable place of tension and balance.



¹ Jensen, Eric (1998). *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

² Ibid. Pg 10.