CHAPTER II

THE ANALYSIS OF SYMBOLS AND ICON IN LOUBELLE SHOP'S PRODUCTS

This chapter presents the research finding and further discussion in relation to the research questions. This research is conducted as an attempt to analyze kind of signs that is found in Loubelle's product and to find out the characteristic indicating that the sign are symbol or icon. Based on the data analysis, there are not only 2 classifications, symbol and icon, but also 1 special classification where symbol and icon blend each other and construct the **symbolic-iconic mode**. These classifications occur because every characteristic represent different kind of sign, while in the symbolic-iconic mode both characteristic of symbol and icon become one.

2.1 Symbolic Mode

Data 1:



Figure 1. “Where have you been dad?” T-shirt by Kidol

The design can be categorized as symbol. There are some characteristics of symbol can be seen in the design. At the moment we see this design, we see that this design contains the language that can be understood by most people. This design also contains general meaning; it means that if we connect the signifier and the signified, it refers to general idea.

There are 3 characteristics of symbol that can be seen in this design. First, it contains general meaning. When we see the design, we practically know that this design represents the general idea that is contained in the sentence. It also refers to the general meaning that can be understood by most people who read the sentence; it shows us the second characteristic. The third characteristic is related to the agreement within the society that there is nothing wrong with the sentence. Everyone agree that this language uses English as the universal language.

In general, this design can be interpreted as the symbol of lost. The question mark “where have you been?” is usually used by someone who questions the existence of someone else, in this matter “dad”. The language “where have you been dad?” can be perceived as the general language of question mark. If we make a relation into social life, this t-shirt is worn by 5 years old child who lost his or her father for example, we may perceive a deeper meaning. This deeper meaning probably related to the situation that the user of this t-shirt faces. However, the general meaning of this design mostly related to “lost”.

Data 2:



Figure 2. “Grey” grey T-shirt by Estman

While in the first figure we see that the symbol is in the form of full sentence, this second figure only contains one word. However, if we take a look closely, the whole design in figure number 2, both word and T-shirt, is one. The word “grey” in the t-shirt is a symbol of color. Color is a symbol because it

contains general meaning in each of it. For example, black is the color of darkness, death, or mourning.

Grey might be perceived as the color of ambiguity. If we take a look back to the history of mixing chromatic color, grey is right in the middle of black and white, making grey is half black and half white. This position of grey in the mixing color determines society to make a connection to interpret the meaning of the color grey. If we analyze the whole design, the word “grey” in the t-shirt emphasizes the color of the t-shirt. The word “grey” also has color grey as the design’s color; it also emphasizes the color grey. So the whole design is about grey, and the whole design both word and the t-shirt is the symbol.

In the connection between signifier and signified, the color of grey has meaning of ambiguity. Symbol of grey has the general idea of ambiguity, thus whoever see the t-shirt may perceive the symbol of ambiguity.

2.2 Iconic Mode

Icon is not a copy of the real object, but it represents or resembles the object that related to the real object. For example, the painting of Monalisa is not the real Monalisa, but it represents the real Monalisa that captured in the painting. We also know in the moment we see the painting of Monalisa that it refers to real Monalisa, not the real Monalisa.

So how about shape? Shapes might have familiar characteristic that is instantly recognized by people. We, as the member of society, are familiar with shape. Basic shapes like triangle, rectangle, oval, pentagon or hexagon are things that we commonly see in everyday life.

In **Loubelle Shop's** products, the writer sees that some designs contain familiar shape, object or figure. However those designs are not always contain an icon. Thus, in the following analysis, there are indications which the data are fit to the characteristics of icon.

Data 3:



Figure 3. Noodle Bags by Mannequin Plastic

For some people in Asia, they instantly recognize the image in those bags. It resembles the noodle, one of favorite food around Asia. This design shows us that noodle is one of favorite foods in Asia. Some people in another part of continent may perceive this icon same as the people in Asia, because noodle is well-known around the world nowadays.

This icon, however, is not the real noodle. It only resembles the real noodle that is perceived within our mind. Our perception instantly catch the image of noodle, how its taste, and how its texture. Although we cannot taste or touch it directly, our mind recognizes that this is noodle. This happens because the sign system within our perception shifts into mode which called iconic mode. Because of iconic mode has characteristic of easily recognize,we statically make a connection between the sign (image of noodle) and the real object (the real noodle and its real properties). Like any other iconic food, this kind of noodle can be easily recognized by its properties;it has yellow color, curly and long shaped. As we can see on the image, that noodle in the design only represent the real noodle.

People's perceptions may be various if they see this design. Some people may perceive that this design is represents Asia's favorite food. Even though there are so many foods which are familiar to the Asian people, noodle is the most recognizable food in Asia. Thus, it is fair to say that noodle is the icon of Asia's food because people are already familiar with this type of food.

Data 4:



Figure 4. Coffin bags by Pinx

In this design of bags, we see that this is not a regular shape of hexagon. As icon is something that easily recognized, at the moment we see the shape in the bag we instantly make a connection between the sign and the meaning. This shape resembles the shape of coffin. The shape of coffin usually is in the form of "special" hexagon; it is different from usual hexagon. This special hexagon only represents the real object of coffin.

When we make a connection between the shape, the signifier, and the real object, the coffin, we find the similarity of both of them because icon only represents or resembles similarity. This similarity means that the shape in the design that is perceived by our senses is similar to the real object, the coffin itself. Coffin had become the icon of death, and this matter is emphasized by the phrase "it's okay to decay". The phrase represents death because "decay" is similar to "death". Because of this similarity of both shape and the phrase, it is concluded that this design is the icon.

Some people may perceive that this design is about "death". Although the perception that involved in this design can be various, the first thing that comes to the people's mind usually related to death. This happens because iconic mode takes part within our perception. At the moment we see this design, our perception is taken by iconic mode tothe conclusion that this design is related to death. The similarity of the sign and the real object is perceived by our minds, thus the perception within people's mind is often about death when they see this design.

2.3 Symbolic-Iconic Mode

As we know that both symbol and icon has its own characteristic, it seems like there is a thin line between both of them that distinguish the two of them. We know that symbol is general while icon is something specific. In the study of sign, people again make a connection between signifier and signified. While the signified in symbol is something in general, the signified in icon is something specific. For example, in figure 1, the symbol refers to general idea such as lost, and it is called symbol because it contains general idea. People, most of them, usually interpret sign into symbol because it is easier than to think there is another meaning behind the sign. For some reason it is acceptable because our mind usually think the general idea first and then think of the specific idea. That is why icon is not "pure" icon because behind every specific idea there is general idea.

Data 5:



Figure 5.Munir T-shirt by Siren Merch.

For some people in Indonesia, this image will be instantly recognized because this image has become the icon in Indonesia. Munir is public figure and activist for human right in Indonesia. As the writer has described in the previous chapter that icon is represent the real object, it can be popular people or public figures, the image above is the silhouette of iconic Munir figure.

If take a look back to history of Munir, we might have the general idea of this figure. Munir is the activist of human right in Indonesia. He fought for several cases that related to crime against human right. He also criticized the government in Soeharto's era. He thought that in this era, human right often got violated. That is why in 1996 he found ***KontraS*** (Lost People and Violation Victim Commission). He actively defended people who violated and kidnapped by the authority. He granted the victim a freedom after several sessions in the court. He kept his action for human right until he was murdered in 2004 on the airplane. The man who fought for human right and also got the noble prize for **The *Right Livelihood Award***in Sweden will also be remembered by people in Indonesia.

Because of his action in his life, Munir later be known as the hero of freedom and human right. He also became the icon and also the symbol of freedom. This matter inflicts the icon to become the symbol because society treats this icon as representation of something beyond the figure itself. So that symbolic-iconic mode arose within perception of society that saw this figure as icon but also have general meaning of symbol behind it. The general idea of symbol blended with recognizable figure of icon is causing the signified has two branch of

meaning. In this case, the general idea of freedom is laid beneath the well-known iconic figure of Munir.

The perception that involves in this design is wider than usual design. This probably happens because the general idea in this design is mixed with the specific idea. However, as icon directly connects the sign and its meaning, this design leads us to directly perceive the exact figure of Munir. People may perceive that this design represents social movement. This is acceptable considering Munir is the icon of social activist and his history is related to social movement. We may perceive that the general idea of this design is freedom because we know that Munir actively fought for freedom when he was alive.