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LONELINESS OF THE LONG- DISTANCE CYCLIST/SOLO CREATOR.

Cycling can be employed as a means of getting from A to Z, as a form of exercise, as a way to relax, or as a competitive sport. Setting the relative demands of physical strength and creativity aside, it is often analogous to working as a self-employed designer. Self-discipline and self-motivation are key in both endeavours, even the highly organised business of race-riding.

This usually involves a time trial — all the major tours (of France, Spain, Italy, etc.) have one. During this stage, the riders have to complete the same course — but on their own, setting off at two- or three-minute intervals. So they can't rely on team-mates for drafting or tactics. In the Tour de France, they call it "Contre la Montre" or "Against the Clock" because it involves an individual rider racing against a stop-watch, using their judgement and experience to pace themselves to reach the finish line in the shortest possible time.

They have to reconnoitre the route, account for ascents, descents, different road surfaces, sharp corners and so on. The one thing that throws a spanner in the works is the weather. One rider may be blessed with a favourable tail-wind while another, starting maybe an hour later, rides into a thunderstorm. The intervention of fate in this way adds spice for race-followers. Would it be better to forego

sleep altogether and risk having to rely on a tired brain, or give yourself plenty of power-restoring rest in between bursts of creative energy? Should you attempt to maintain a steady pace or intersperse short sprints of activity at intervals? How much thinking time is enough before you "just get on with it" in the hope that inspiration will magically appear if the initial ideas are not flowing? These are questions that only you can answer.

Then there is the sheer drudgery. Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw famously described genius as "one percent inspiration, ninety nine percent perspiration". Working out in a gym doing cardio exercises for a cyclist could be compared to the mundane process of practising photoshop filters for a designer. To say nothing of all the other routine tasks attendant on running a one-person enterprise — book-keeping, material-purchasing, office-tidying, all comparable with the cyclist's daily machine-maintenance.

Returning full circle to the different types of cycling we listed at the start, these too have their counterparts in the design world. For some creatives it's a hobby, for others it's a life-or-death means of making a living, and yet others "just want to have fun" as the old song has it. Whatever, it's probably time to bring some design thinking to your design practice!