New forms of design education

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Abstract

Design has been in a period of change for the last decade, but design education and more specifically design educators haven't kept up with these transformations. As a result, design students continue to learn outdated methods and techniques. A designer needs to understand processes, methods, and mediums of design. At all of these levels, the process is the same, while methods may change slightly and the medium differs dramatically. Without expertise in mediums, a designer is only able to facilitate what others do; they become a means or a manager, a step in communication, repeating existing content without adding value. This makes such an individual easily replaceable.Design education usually places an emphasis on medium, usually at the expense of methods and processes. Students learn a process, but they quite often learn without comprehending. They are unable to negotiate the steps necessary to adjust to the realities of the environment and in the end, that reality may be troubling for such an idealistic student. Without understanding the design process, design students have no way of understanding a design problem, or how to add constraints in order to better shape the problem into something that is manageable.We need to find a way to educate future designers, providing them with a firmer grasp of design processes and a variety of methods - in other words, comprehensive expertise of a medium. This implies a longer course of study than a simple undergraduate degree and a few years of graduate work; most professionals receive this training more by actually doing design work and skipping formal design education.While some of the inability to keep up with changes is due to the difficulty of revising the curriculum, the largest issue appears to in terms of subject matter, methods, theory, and the reluctance of educators to give up what they learned and have been teaching for decades so that they can make room for new material.Design students of the future must learn design during their formative years, studying both the abstract and tactical. This approach challenges the traditional system in which educators who have repeated the same tired exercises for years may find themselves teaching something that it is without an audience, and as a result they may well find themselves without a role to play. But the new approach will create a cadre of competent designers for industry, government, and the non-profit sector, where design thinking and detailed, knowledgeable design is fundamental to address the complex and dynamic qualities of our world.

1. Introduction

Design has been in a period of change for the last decade, but design education and more specifically design educators haven't been able to keep up with those transformations. As a result, design students continue to learn outdated methods and techniques.

The university is a space devoid of political and social tension, and due to its autonomous nature, spending 20 years there as an academic can place a remove between a designer and contemporary cultural experience. They may reflect on culture, but this reflection becomes increasingly marked by a gap. Now the young people coming into school, they are freshly through the educational structure of more powerful actually in terms of education, in a university then the traditional system makes them a peer. These days there has been a lot of discussion about the

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university in terms of educational structure, one aspect of which is that young people coming into the university are often underestimated. A new structure should be created in which these students are treated as specialists, and very early on educators should strive to help students acquire their own voice. Through their training they should develop the ability to share ideas with their educators, and in art and design education it is necessary to properly respect those seemingly inexperienced young designers with a certain quality and standard. Through this, they will be able to contribute to research and teaching work at the university.

A designer needs to understand the processes, methods, and medium of design. At all of these levels, the process is the same, while the methods may change slightly and the medium differs dramatically. Without expertise in mediums, a designer is only able to facilitate what others do; they become a means or a manager, a step in communication, repeating existing content without adding value.

2. Design Education Today

Design education usually places emphasis on the medium, usually at the expense of methods and processes. The students learn a process, but they quite often learn without comprehending. They are unable to negotiate the steps necessary to adjust to the realities of the environment and in the end, that reality may be troubling for such an idealistic student. Without understanding the design process, design students have no way of understanding a design problem, or how to add constraints in order to better shape the problem into something that is manageable.

In this way, a student going through a four-year educational program actually gets what we would call a general education. In the sense that a designer needs to understand the technological workings of things - including natural science and engineering - they also need to understand the relations between people. Also, they need to appreciate the qualities of aesthetics and emotion as part of an ethical life. These three things have to come together in the balance of the product, regardless of the scale of the product in industry, or regardless of the degree of technological complexity, and in the same holds true for graphic work. Design education should be thought of within these parameters.

But there are just a handful of universities around the world that are trying to find new ways to organize learning, and clearly, in those institutions there's an interesting combination of theory and practice emerging, but there is also a third issue, which is production – that is, the actual making. This issue is what is causing a blurring of the boundaries of the disciplines - this curious combination of thinking and doing and making.

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences is a remnant of the old learning system. The new system should be very much centered on design. We are looking at how we express ourselves in meaningful ways, with images, and we are looking for how that translates into artifacts either through numerically controlled production, or the understanding of the dimensionality of products, adding the factor of time. Industrial design has not changed much over the last 100 years, but it has in a very subtle way, because industrial designers have developed a great ability to grasp human tasks and performance.

But we may agree that a combination of different types of knowledge is what constitutes actual productive phenomenon; this is common knowledge, that you have to bring together a lot of minds to be creative. One possible way of addressing such a dilemma is to help undergraduate and graduate develop the ability to be critically aware of their backgrounds so they can reflect on their professional and disciplinary development and hence be open to what they will be doing in the future, not only immediately after graduation but also in their careers so they will have the flexibility to adapt to future changes. That capability is in itself something that has to be addressed in education.

2.1. Suggestions/Possible Solutions

Design educators must find a way to teach students the skill of flexibility. So the question is: where and how in the curriculum they can teach that? Therein is the challenge.

2.1.1. Redefining the relationship between theory and practice

There is a desire to define design as a practice and thought process, rather than being object-focused. Curricula should be able to engage students with as many strategies and applications as possible, and it should suggest an institutional structure – in other words, theory and practice in mutual support.

2.1.2. Design education should address as many common issues and interests as possible

In the 1960s, many architectural schools set up so-called community design centers, and these were a form of practice in which students and faculty participated and devoted themselves to providing professional services to individuals who were in need of them. On the one hand, this approach was practical, both technically and in terms of dealing with clients and those relationships; on the other hand, it represented yet another model of practice infused with the political and social problems of society. This was a set of problems in areas that were elaborated in terms of competition with professionals. It also describes a model of design education as a service, and it is a way of remaining outside of the classroom which liberates the structure. In this way, university design centers could indeed be useful.

2.1.3. Merging performativity and design

The methodologies of design in this new kind of practice would involve teaching improvisational techniques, scenario building, and doing performative work in playing out the scenarios and practices that we hope to model in the future. One of the attitudes required is the ability to communicate well. Every course should have something that will motivate students to be active in the classroom, and hence course should teach presentation skills as well. In this way, courses could incorporate exercises or projects that cultivate speaking techniques. In this way, students would learn how to speak well in front of groups and this would indoctrinate them into the culture of design.

Since the interest in performative studies at the moment is a driving factor in developing knowledge in this type of aesthetic knowledge/practice, a driving factor in the development of departments would be a closer cooperation between performance, theater, performativity, communication, and design.

My one point of hesitation is that if the notion of performativity is universalized - if everything is performative - then making distinctions within the field of the performative become problematic, and we wind up on the side of the opposition: doing focus groups, and play-acting, and so on and so forth. So without the metaphysical or the ethical dimension I think this is a quandary. So if a student cannot make a distinction between designing an emergency shelter for earthquake victims in Haiti and doing the Chanel No. 9 bottle, there is a problem; however, whatever kind of performative technical instrumentalities are employed to achieve this, something absolutely fundamental is lost, which brings us back to the utility of thinking in environmental terms - which is, at the moment, an absolutely critical locus for discussing the ethical. So I strongly urge that we think very hard about distinctions within the field of the performative. Communication is never neutral.

What happens, however, is when you explore the performative, you end up discovering distinctions that are very useful, and become more and more specific and particular – in effect, you are singling out the particular. One of the challenges is, how do you take the traditional disciplines of design and connect those to this notion of performance?

There is a need to define distinctions within the realm of performativity.

2.1.4. Interdisciplinary Education: strengthen relations, encourage collaboration and interdisciplinary/cross disciplinary studies

Universities need to implement interdisciplinary activities which will lead to joint projects and courses, as well as research collaborations locally and abroad. They need to consider sustainability as an overarching concern spanning all design departments and representing the possible link between them. Different types of knowledge are the actual

productive phenomenon of so-called interdisciplinary education. The goal of this type of education should be: to meet global standards in professional practice while promoting interdisciplinary and professional research, collaborative learning, and intellectual development.

3. Conclusion

We need to find a way to educate future designers, providing them with a broader knowledge of design processes and a variety of methods - in other words, a more comprehensive expertise. This implies a longer course of study than a simple undergraduate degree and a few years of graduate work; in fact, most professionals receive this training while actually doing design work rather than through formal design education.

While some of the inability to keep up with changes is due to the difficulty of revising the curriculum, the largest issue appears to in terms of subject matter, methods, theory, and the reluctance of educators to give up what they learned and have been teaching for decades so that they can make room for new material.

Design students of the future must learn design during their formative years, studying both the abstract and the practical. This approach challenges the traditional faculty system, in which educators who have repeated the same tired exercises for years may find themselves teaching something that it is without an audience, and as a result they may well find themselves without a role to play. But a revamped approach would train competent designers for industry, government, and the non-profit sector, where design thinking and the creation of detailed, knowledgeable design is fundamental to address the complex and dynamic qualities of our world.

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