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Bildiri başlığı: THE ROLE OF DRAWING AND ART CLASSES IN THE GRAPHIC DESIGN EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the role and importance of the Arts relevant courses, concentrating on Drawing lessons, in the light of evolving technology and new expectations in the Graphic Design education era.

First, the article briefly focuses on the relationship between art and design area. Then, the topics such as the possible contributions of art and drawing classes in education and the link between art, culture and a good design are covered.

In the next section, the old fashioned Graphic Design education methods and new approaches are compared. The relation between creativity and knowledge, necessity of hand drawing while creating designs and the question about the competency of computer design programmes are discussed. The discussion is exemplified through comparison of Graphic Design curriculums from different higher education institutions.

Another important question attempted to answer here is, to what extent the computer programmes an instrument of abstract design or the execution process are.

The expectations and demands of the students are examined in context of previous discussions.

The final objective of the paper is to show that manuel drawing skills and art culture knowledge are still valuable achievements for a graphic design student. Therefore, the work ends with thoughts about convincing them to notice and properly learn these skills.

Design areas such as Industrial Design, Fashion Design and Interior Design are popular options for university candidates in Turkey as well as in the world. Graphic Design departments are one of the favourites among them. This has many reasons: the variety of job opportunities, the role of computer technology and media tools –which is very attractive for younger people-, the remarkable position of the design professionals in society etc... For this reason many Graphic Design and Visual Communication Design departments are founded all over the country. In our country, Graphic Design departments first founded as a section of fine art faculties. Some of them turned into art and design faculties afterwards.

For the last couple of decades the definition “fine art” is fading away worldwide. The eternal question about the definition of art has gained a new dimension, as well. Now the meaning of art is quite different, more specific yet comprehensive. The visual art disciplines like painting and sculpture combined with photography, music, performance arts and new media grew to another dimension. The discussions about the postmodern era –even it has begun recognized as ended- are still vibrant. We can tell, the boundaries between arts and crafts or art and design are more ambiguous now. The situation has its advantages as many as disadvantages. The advantages seems to be pointing more to the side of design field.

It is interesting to see that graphic design is still defined so simple by most of the dictionaries: “*The art or skill of combining text and pictures in advertisements, magazines, or books.*”[1] This was from the Oxford dictionary. Dictionary.com makes a more actual definition: “*The practice or profession of designing print or electronic forms of visual information, as for an advertisement, publication, or website.*”[2] These and other similar ones are the basic definitions which can be found in standard dictionaries.

There are more satisfactory definitions from designers and lecturers like the one from Jessica Helfand: “*Graphic design is a popular art and a practical art, an applied art and an ancient art. Simply put, it is the art of visualizing ideas.*”[3]

Graphic design should really be accepted as an ancient art if recognized as an idea visualization and a tool for communication even it was first coined by William Addison Dwiggins in 1922 as a term. A graphic designer is a professional of visual communication that combines images, words, and ideas to convey information to an audience, especially to produce a specific effect. This feature, “having an aim to produce a specific effect to convey an information”, is the main difference between art and design. Artworks generally do not have this kind of aims; they are mostly not produced because they are ordered, their materials and media are freely chosen and the production phase is more open to coincidences and improvisation. Every artwork is some kind of design, but not every design is an artwork.

From this standpoint it seems like a good decision to rename the fine art faculties of the past, which incorporate all arts and design departments together, as arts and design faculties hereafter. This is what we observe in Turkey recent years. This may give people a clear and more accurate information and avoid misunderstandings and false expectations; but on understanding the necessity of revising the curriculums of the graphic design departments.

It is necessary to consider the fact, that a graphic design product should not get evaluated like an artwork. In his essay “Graphic Design: Fine Art or Social Science?” Jorge Frascara explains: “*The excessive importance given to the avant-garde movement in the context of graphic design history is based on the failure of theory to recognize graphic design as something other than an art form. Furthermore, as an art form, graphic design is viewed only from an aesthetic perspective, without enough consideration for communication and social significance. Surely aesthetics is important, but is by no means the sole measure for quality.*”[4]

Even though this is an old article, it still related to the issue that is still being seen today in the Graphic Design world. The aim of this essay is to emphasize the role of drawing and art classes in graphic design education, but this paragraph is important to remind us where to draw the line. It is to remember, drawing and art related classes for design students are valuable for design students to boost their manual skills, creativity and vision, but this aspect is only one side of the coin.

As Frascara stressed in his article, “*...quality in graphic design is measured by the changes it produces in the audience.*”[5] The development of information and communications theories and semiotics after World War II, the investigations related to perceptual psychology and Gestalt school in early 1950’s caused made an important impact on art schools. The developments provided theoretical concepts for visual fundamentals courses in art schools. Communication became a very important field all over the world after 1950’s and 1960’s. The foundation of visual communication design schools was a natural result of the process.

Visual communications effectively uses images to persuade, entertain, inform, and enlighten an observing audience of products, ideas, and messages. Graphic designers, advertising designers, art directors, and visual artists all utilize various forms of visual media to communicate their ideas to their desired audiences. Modern visual communicators know how to use various types of visual technology to create artistic images that communicate with the public.

Founding of “Visual Communication Design” departments is relatively a new situation in Turkey. There are still some questionings going on around them. After a brief comparison it is to be realized, that there are not so many significative differences between them and the most of the graphic design departments. In this case, the question of why different nomenclatures are used here is waiting to be answered. Is it maybe because the term “Visual Communication Design” sounds more contemporary and pleasing to the ear?

The need for the new definition was derived from the evolution of graphic design field. Graphic design was once more perceived as a design branch about printed material. The rapid evolving of the digital media changed the trends of the field radically. But essentially they are based on the same visual principals using different tools. Of course a graphic designer (or visual designer) must know more about technology, video, photography, cinema, internet today then yesterday. And not every designer intends to work on digital media. The world still needs packaging designers, poster and brochure designers etc... These are not to underestimate.

Some faculties have very rich looking curriculums, but what you at the website observe not every time coincide with the reality. Some of the selected courses are never really opened, some are not given by proficient tutors or do not have the adequate equipment. So the students think they are studying “visual communications” but in fact they are studying old fashioned graphics design.

The educational institutions should give accurate information to student candidates about their programmes so that both students and lecturers –and the the society of course- be happy of their end positions. As a matter of fact, curriculums must satisfy the promised requirements with well-planned lectures and competent lecturers so neither feels deceived.

An issue, which one of our basic problems in academic training is that some students really don’t know, that they’re not at the faculty to become a computer programmer or operator! Many of them have different imaginations of their future jobs. The computer games programming is very popular nowadays. It’s really an exciting, creative and progressive field. I know, that will look like an exaggerated example to you, but even some of the undergraduate students think that they will make a game and someone else will visually design it for

them. So, they don't need to draw or know anything about aesthetics, basic design or other visual fields. Dealing with that kind of students who attend design classes without knowing much about the content of their academic field is stalemating the instructors.

For the arts and design fields drawing classes have always been an important element of the education as well as the basic design classes. The main reason of this is that drawing is an effective way to express thoughts, understand the world and communicate with others even before verbal communication was invented. Using many different types of drawings is a characteristic of the design process. There are many skills which designer candidates gain from basic design classes; like shape, color, structure, texture knowledge, ability to create a composition with desired physical and psychological affection. Drawing will help training the eyes to see the lightness and darkness of grey areas on a page, a skill needed while balancing text, images and white space as a designer. Awareness of light and perspective are other fundamental skills gained through drawing classes.

Drawing classes are still one of the main classes with a significant weight in curriculums of graduate classes, especially in the beginning semester. But it is often witnessed by the tutors that most of the students don't show sufficient interest and effort for these classes. The reduction of hand labour in process because of the use of design software is an important reason of the situation.

It seems like that the students think the design software do the most of the work by themselves. But that's not the case. The reality is that they ease and polish the end product. These are really important contributions, but in fact they only can perfect a design, if there is a really good idea, knowledge and creative power in the background. Someone without the proper skills and knowledge will not be able to create a good design in spite of his –or hers- design programmes operating skills. The knowledge part consists not only of a good understanding of basic design and manual creating skills, but also of a strong awareness of general and popular culture, arts, philosophy etc...

My personal experience shows that, the students think that they don't need anything else if they are able to use these software. But there are two things that they are not aware of: First, they really don't know to use them as good as they think they do. It is rooted basically in their former education style. Our educational system in Turkey is unfortunately yet not development-oriented and libertarian enough to train independent-minded and creative people. A teenager who gropingly becomes able to make very simple designs, instantly begins to think he's good enough to become a stunning graphic designer.

Here is an abbreviated citation from a designers blog on internet. I think it states the role of digital tools in design very well. The heading is "Digital Tools are Approximations, not Replacements": *"All the digital tools we use as designers are imitations of the real deal. Hence the "pen" and "pencil" tools, "erasers" and "brushes". The marketing campaigns of the greatest design applications are almost always "looks more natural" or something along those lines. The latest release of Photoshop CS5 is really highlighting just how "more natural" the new brush tools work. These digital tools approximate their analog parents. In some ways, they are better, as is the case with "undo". But the Holy Grail of all design applications is really being as close to analog as possible, while sneaking in some digital goodness."*[6]

Compared to traditional media, computer illustration software offers superior editing power. But they do not nullify the need for hand drawings. For example, not every logo consists of a typeface and a default Illustrator shape. If you want to take on logo design work, you're going to have to know how to draw. Ciparts or stockarts are not enough to create a corporal identity image . Logo symbols must be original. Most logo designers either sketch, scan and trace their ideas, or draw directly into Photoshop or Illustrator with a tablet. Using these media tools require serious drawing skills. And there is some debate whether computers enhance the creative process of graphic design, too. On the contrary, sometimes the wide range of choises make the process more complicated, effects the creativity negatively and keeps the designer from finding the best clear solution.

Now is the right time to ask the question: How far does an undergraduate graphic design student have to learn to draw? It is obvious that we are not expecting them to draw like a painter. The qualities expected in a drawing class mainly are that they can analyse what they see and transfer it onto the surface as much as correctly and easily perceptible for the viewer. After a specific time there comes a stage when the students transform their investigations to new designs, but not earlier. Everyone with a serious background in arts and design field knows that ideas don't come flying to one. You have to observe, study, read even live to collect experience and knowledge for a lifetime. Or you'll become only a lame, uncreative copycat designer. Creativity needs to be fed regularly. It's not only a matter of creativity but also drawing is needed to show your ideas to other people. Clients demand many things and there isn't always time in a meeting to make a digital demonstration. It's known

that customers have more confidence in designers who can snap up their demands easily and visualise them in front of their eyes in a slick and quick way. Drawing skill is always a plus for a graphic designer and a big advantage while working with professional photographers, animators, and illustrators.

There are many “graphic designers” at the market without academic education. They work in a designing company for a time, they observe and gain experience through practice. That’s a way for learning, but it’s not our way. A university is an academic institution and aims to provide its students the highest quality possible with practical and theoretical classes. Student candidates disregarding these features always have the option to choose high schools with suitable curriculums for them.

These are some problems based on institutions but there are others rooted from the the higher education system. The selecting process is a problematic case for our system. Candidates do not always make adequate research before choosing. There are different kinds of institutions with various curriculums. Some prefer a more classical system by following the Bauhaus principles, some lean on digital media more. There are traps on the way for both of them. The classical ones are the ones founded within the fine art faculties by a majority. For these there is the danger after a four year education that the student knows the manual skills well but can’t do anything with computers. That means that he is unequipped for the market and learning the skills by himself is not so easy after all these years. On the other side, the departments with lots of digital media lectures and theoretical classes push the students from the side of the designer to the computer operator. Without knowing the basic design principles and having artistic visions, there’s the risk of being effected too much of other designers and become a copycat designer. Or the graduates can only use the given features by the software and try to create something by only combining them. Why academic education then? The 14, 15-year-olds can do it by themselves. Why a company should pay lots of money for a standard design everybody can compose using simple software? The client does not have to choose between a complete non-artistic, low profile design and a much more artistic, complex but perplexed one. A good designer is who can set balance between all given properties. The presence of artistic elements and intellectuality always carries the design to a higher level.

Given the above, that we have to understand that the graphic design education cannot be satisfied by traditional art schools anymore. The faculties should determine their directions; every institution has to choose their areas of design to concentrate on. It is necessary giving the candidates accurate information about the design field and clarify the differences between educational institutions before higher education. After that, at the faculty, the students should have the proper educational facilities not only for visual studies and manual artistic skills, also for the theoretical studies and the use of computer graphic software. After gaining the basic qualifications, a wide range of elective course options can give the students the chance to draw their own path through the design field. If there are well established links and a certain continuity between the courses, every student can feel the importance of basic design and drawing skills and theoretical classes. Certainly universities should not directly serve industry, but graduate programs should encourage students for more practice at the field to create design solutions on their own. The new graduate programs have to secure a good balance between theoretical and practical studies. It is important to remember and explain people that no graduate program can create a designer or an artist; they can only give the basic requirements. Only when all institutions think sincerely about their objectives, design themselves accordingly, train and employ qualified academics, we can expect a brighter future for our graduates and the design industry.

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