

STARTING DESIGN EDUCATION “BASIC DESIGN COURSE”

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As the beginning of general design education, the course entitled “Basic Design” in Haliç University Faculty of Architecture is conducted within the two semesters (spring and fall) of the first year design education in Departments of Interior Architecture and Industrial Design. The course occupies 6 hours a week and is conducted as a studio practice.

“The foundation of the Basic Design concept is based on the human perception theories of Gestalt, which constituted the educational curriculum of Bauhaus school. Unlike the fragmentalist ideology of classical psychology, Gestalt theory proves that the ‘whole’ is far ‘more’ than the mathematical synthesis of its fragments. By this way, Gestalt theory provides the required theoretical framework for both arrangement and perception of visual environment (Denel, 1981)

Cropius and his colleagues initiated these courses and composed them in a way that they can evaluate students from various geographical regions, provide them with a preparatory educational process in which they could realize their potential, determine the levels of their creative skills, help them to choose a branch of artistic production and inform them about the fundamental design principles.(Gürer, Gürer,1987)

“Until nineteen-eighties, various techniques had been experimented in architecture and design education. Some of these techniques were; giving a functional problem to the student to design accordingly, a fragmentalist approach that suggests handling design problems as smaller pieces and solving each piece individually, an approach that focuses on basic design education to enhance creativity, and another view that experiments design education process on abstract design problems. Some of these approaches have been chosen by the scholars themselves and they are still employed in various architecture schools today. (Usta,Usta, Ertürk, 2000)

Basic design course occupies the foundational basis of design education in interior architecture and industrial design departments, and enables students to get prepared for the consequent stages. Despite the traditional education systems that are composed of conservational views, basic design education requires constant reformation and renovation. For this reason, in our faculty, the structure of basic design course has been systematized to fit into several stages. In the first stage of the course, theoretical information is delivered to students. In the second stage, students are expected to develop solutions to given design problems. Consequently, in the third stage, students prepare presentations for their works. Finally, their solutions and presentations are evaluated.

THE PURPOSE AND CONTENTS OF BASIC DESIGN COURSE

“Basic design education is planned to be a critical workshop study/discipline that triggers creativity in architecture education; and therefore, it has considerable importance for students to create a certain system of thinking. Basic design not only directs students towards representing a project with geometry and shapes, but also teaches them its cultural, historical and sociological background. For this very reason, it should be understood as an educational system and an audio / visual sensitivity, not just as a primary year course in professional education institutions. (Teymur,1998)

For the design students, first year is a transition period, and basic design course has a critical position in this transformation. By the help of this course, an introduction to design education is provided, and high-school graduates - with no prior experience in design – are accustomed to the process. Initially, the technical equipments that are used in drawing are taught to the students. During the education process, general topics of tutoring include: gaining necessary design and problem-solving skills, abstract and creative thinking, observation and taking visual records, colors and their psychological affects, i.e. Interior architecture students’ environmental design and industrial design students’ product design skills are intended to be enhanced by providing them with necessary expertise in various drawing and presentation techniques, presenting and defending their projects with appropriate methods, time management, critical thinking, 3-dimensional perception, material knowledge and using appropriate materials for their designs. By

these enhancements, students are expected to establish a solid base that would determine their design vision and their design processes.

“Basic design is an education of emotion and sensitivity, which occurs through a process. The courses of actions that define basic design process are: observation, research, appropriation, creativity, ruling, application, testing, controlling, criticizing and finalization. Basic artistic education is programmed to provide students with the abilities of conceptualization and understanding through visual records, visual impression and expression methods. Here, the ability of perceiving the whole and details at the same time and the skill of interpretation are mutually important. The course would focus on visual elements and provide associations between various disciplines through common elements. (Cellek,2000)

The contents of the course include: fundamental geometries that cover the basis of design (such as point object and lines), intersecting lines, qualities of linear elements, direction, and such. Afterwards, surface-marking studies, and texture-based studies (rough and smooth textures) are made. Dimensional and proportional qualities are another major topic, which follow these studies. In addition, colors, color values, primary/intermediate colors, warm/cool color tones are taught and studies are made by using principles such as harmony and contrast. In consequent classes, the topic of study is “shapes”; and sub-topics include harmony and contrast in shapes, shape and base (background) relations, covering, depth, dimensional properties etc. When students gain the necessary knowledge on lines, textures, colors and shapes, the topics shift towards transparency, linearity, dominant environment, repetition (full and rotational), koram (centripetal, axial, peripheral), visual equilibrium (symmetry, asymmetry) and hierarchy. In the first semester, 2 dimensional works are made during these processes. In the second semester (spring semester), 3 dimensional trainings begin; structures, modularity, geometry, fullness/emptiness, mass (equilibrium-dominance, harmony-contrast) and space are major topics during these studies.

In addition to teaching students about these topics of study in class, one of the major goals of the course is to inform them about the materials that are used during these studies, and about the application methods of these materials

PRESENTATION OF THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE AND PROBLEM SOLVING

In the first semester, theoretical knowledge in the basic design course is shaped in 2-dimensional methods into 2-dimensional and abstract works and represented by various visual expression techniques by the students. In consequent classes, studies on forms, structures and design of products/spaces begin by the students start working on 3-dimensional works.

Generally, within the first hour of the class, lecturers give information to the students on theoretical background of that particular day's topic. Illustrations of that topic are provided by showing students some related artworks, natural scenes and various visual materials. A written description of the problem is distributed to students with a course-specific form; and students are expected to collect and save each form in every class. Initial sketches are made after a brainstorming session takes place with the students.

Problem solving activity is generally limited by the class hours, and students are expected to grasp the design problem and develop a solution within a limited time period. This process is conducted as a workshop/studio practice, and students can ask the lecturer for critiques and ideas during their activity. (Usta, Özdemir, Kulo•lu, Ustaömero•lu, Be•ben, Vural, 2000)

Obviously, the fundamental processes of design in basic design involve the designer's mental processes. Here, the concepts of rational thinking, comprehension, and problem solving have a significant role. By this logic, design activity can absolutely be related with mental processes of the designer. In this stage, designer attempts to develop problem-solving approaches by the interpretation of his/her prior knowledge on the subject matter.

PRESENTATION AND EVALUATION

Students use a given area to present their solutions; and within this area, they are free to use any presentation method (various graphical styles, free hand techniques, 3-dimensional works, i.e.). They are expected to make 2D or 3D visuals that target the solution of their understanding to the given problem, and submit it at the end of the class.

Students can use any material in their design that would fit their expression (various paints, crayons, watercolors, guaj paints, markers, colored pencils, colored papers, ropes, fibers, pasteboards, screws, paperclips, cotton, fabric, wood, plastics, etc.). The major

goal here is to enable them to select and use the most appropriate materials, by which they can effectively present their design.

Observations show that the variability and freedom in material usage affects the design process and the final design. By trial and error method, students would be able to use the selected material's structural features for their design solution. This shows that: not only are the design solutions to the given problem, but also the materials used during the process critical elements of design. For instance, outputs of shaping an aluminum plate by bending and twisting (such as in Fig.7), usage of wood (Fig. 8), using transparency of glass, endurance of cardboards (Fig.12), flexibility of paper and cardboard (Fig.11), rigidity of metals show various design solutions that were made by students in class. Another noteworthy conclusion of these studies is the fact that a proper and well-suited presentation technique is a key element for success for a creative process.

EVALUATION

For the evaluation of student works, there are some pre-determined rules and criteria for all the lecturers of the course. First, each student is expected to prepare his/her design inside a proper white paper or any other paper within a frame of 32x42cm. The problem definition, name and student number of student and the date of the class should be written in defined locations, and they should submit their works at the end of the class-time with successful time management.

Submitted designs are classified and evaluated according to level of student's interpretation of the problem, the authenticity of his/her solution to the given problem, and the usage of given design elements (color, texture, materials, i.e.). If the evaluation process takes place in the workshop, students are also asked to participate in with their remarks and comments.

Grades are marked on the workspace of the design work and the works are returned to the students after the grades are recorded. Each class session is reserved for one topic and one design work, so students are required to submit their missing assignments afterwards. As the classes work in a consequent order, students are also required to prepare a folder of their works in Basic Design course and keep their design solutions in an orderly fashion. The grades taken by each design work are combined with the general interest and success of the student and his/her frequency of

participation in the class and the cumulative evaluation determines the student's grade for the semester.

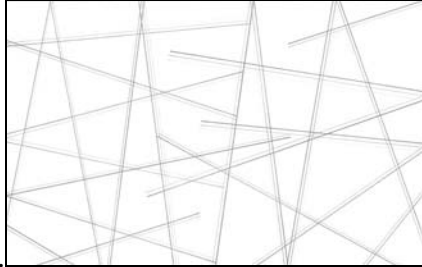


Figure 1. *Eray Koço•lu,*
Lines and Direction – Using different characteristics of lines (bold, thin, polylines, curves), making spatial arrangements by using harmony, contrast and direction

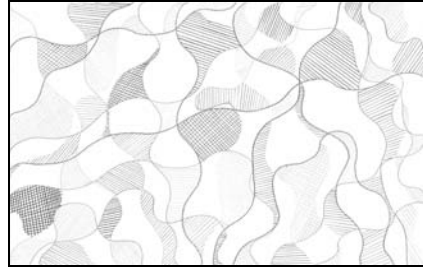


Figure 2. *Zeren Tank,*
Dimension – Shape, using conjunctions of shapes in different directions



Figure 3. *Öznur Topçu,*
harmony within warm colors, using yellow, orange and red tones

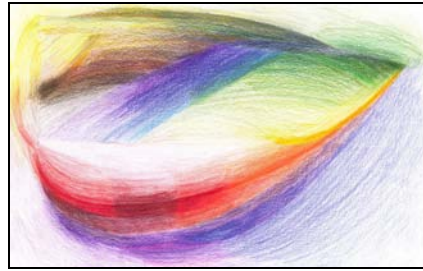


Figure 4. *Fatih Akdo•an,*
harmony within warm-cool color tones



Figure 5. *Tolga Karşlı,*
Exercise on shape-ground relations, using passive background with active shapes and expression of visual depth



Figure 6. *•ahin Ya•ayan*
Exercise on,Linearity, using only linear elements in visual field and arranging them in a way to achieve visual depth



Figure 7. *Tuncay Günaydın*,
Exercise of Harmony, Using
aluminum plates.



Figure 8. *Metem Perihan*,
Exercise on Modularity, using
wooden materials



Figure 9. *A.Emre Tuna*,
Exercise on Modularity, using
both warm and cool colors in
colored cardboards as materials

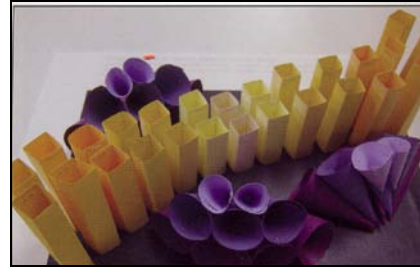


Figure 10. *Bü•ra Pars*,
Exercise on Modularity, using
contrasting colors in colored
cardboards as materials

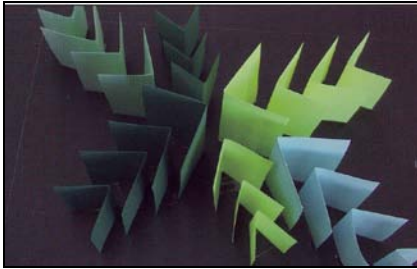


Figure 11. *O.Koray Yılmaz*,
Visual Balance, using cool
colors in colored cardboards
as materials

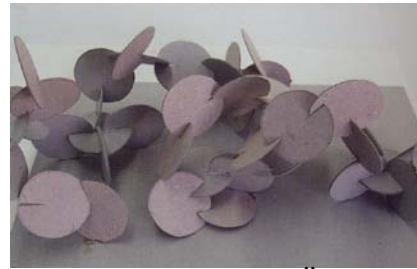


Figure 12. *M. Burak Özban*,
Balance, using gray cardboards.

CONCLUSION

The general aims of basic design course in our faculty's interior architecture and industrial design departments are to educate creative and skilled design students by expanding their limits of conceptualization, enabling them to think outside conventions, to

express their thoughts through conceptual designs, and to use time and materials in an effective way.

In this respect, the first differences of basic design education from conventional educational methods that students come across are the workshop studies, which is a distinguished method from their previous experiences, and the possibility to share ideas and concepts with a number of lecturers throughout the progress.

The observations from our basic design course throughout the recent years, and with a total number of 250 students, are summarized below:

- In the beginning of studies, most students tend to use analogies in design problem solving processes
- The concept of using color as a design element attracts students attention, and most students tend to prefer warm colors in their works
- In earlier works, students cannot use shapes other than standard geometries, and frequently use triangles and rectangles as visual elements
- 3 dimensional studies are more attractive to the students, they can grasp the subject more easily an work with more enthusiasm in 3 dimension
- Students generally have difficulties in choosing the most appropriate presentation technique, and in their following works, they begin to find the most appropriate method by which they can express themselves
- During the progression of work, interaction between students becomes noticeable
- Most students suffer from time management problems, especially in the earlier classes
- The usage of different materials enable students to express themselves more independently
- Especially in group studies, students tend to consult a number of lecturer during the process
- The usage of different and authentic materials in their designs make them enthusiastic, and they tend to interpret the class as “play-time”
- Students’ comprehension of the subject improves when they are informed about the theoretical aspects of the subject matter and when they are introduced to the examples of the concept

- The expectance for a high grade from their works is a significant motivator it was observed that students with lower grades tend to question their works and methods in consequent classes

Attitudes of students towards the earlier class works is generally about recalling their previous experiences with the given materials; such as drawing geometrical forms, folding papers, cutting pieces and gluing elements. Some of the most frequent questions (asked by students) in these periods are “Why are we doing these?” and “How will we benefit from doing these exercises?”. But after while - when classes advance - students begin to grasp the subject and the reasoning, to interpret basic design course as “play-time”. With the improving experience and knowledge, students’ abilities to build creative solutions in shorter time intervals increase significantly.

Another noteworthy improvement is students’ improvement in increasing the variety of materials that they use in their designs, especially by observing their surroundings and collecting everyday materials, such as water bottles, their lids, tea spoons, plastic glasses, matchboxes, i.e. In addition, students’ interest in asking questions throughout the class improves significantly. Thus, they begin to criticize their works and methods, and ask “What more can I do?” as the classes advance. This shows that the progression of the course improves their questioning and critical thinking skills.

Our basic design course begins with points and lines, and ends with 3 dimensional experiments. The design works produced by students throughout this progress are collected in our faculty’s archive and classified for further demonstrations. Between 4-10 September 2007, a number of these student works are selected for an exhibition in “Istanbul Design Week” on the old Galata Bridge in Balat. With the contribution and participation of students, the exhibition reached a wide range of public, and attracted great attention from the visitors. Consequently, the selected works are published by our university and exhibited again, inside the campus, between 1-31 October 2007 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Haliç University.



Figure 13. İstanbul Design Week – Haliç University Basic Design Course Exhibition

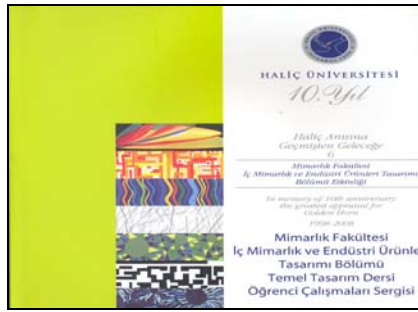


Figure 14. Book cover of Basic Design Course – Selected Student Works (published in celebration for the 10th anniversary of Haliç University) (Haliç anısına Geçmişten Geleceğe e-6 Mimarlık Fakültesi İç Mimarlık ve Endüstri Ürünleri Tasarımı Bölümü Temel Tasarım Dersi Öğrenci Çalışmaları Sergisi)

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