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An overview of art and design education

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Abstract

To what extent is this system effective in cultivating creative, distinctive and unique individuals within the field of Media, TV-Cinema and Advertising? To what degree is it possible to establish free thought, the freedom to bend the rules, creativity and individuality which are vital for the art and design process, in line with the current repressive, disciplined and theoretical education? In parallel with the rapidly developing world of technology, the visual design field nowadays requires individuals who are able to keep up to date with the latest trends, and create and develop authentic ideas. Therefore, a solution for the future and critical perspective, which covers the possibility of coexistence of the scientific and theoretical aspects of communication, alongside the unique-creative-aesthetic concepts, is necessary.

Introduction

For centuries, human beings have been communicating through their instincts that are existent in their innate creativity. This natural necessity compels us to communicate verbally or non-verbally. This pursuit is often supported by visual elements, which effectively developed the process of communication design. In time, the paintings on the cave walls, which was the initial form of communication, was replaced by the alphabet, and throughout this period writing deemed more important than visual elements. Over time, the equality of writing and visuals as part of the communication process became widely accepted. Visual communication design, which was developed alongside a number of art and design movements and was established upon a contemporary system, has become an indispensable part of mass communication. The developing countries' (second world countries) efforts to keep pace with the sophisticated structure of the rest of the World are proving insufficient. An education system that does not nurture creativity, which essentially constitutes the backbone of the creation process, makes it almost impossible to cultivate individuals who can contribute to the fast changing field of communication design.

1. Communication and Public

Human beings do not only struggle for existence, but also to express themselves. This natural necessity that compels us to communicate verbally or non-verbally. Expressing oneself, reassessing oneself upon feedback, and sharing information are all parts of the communication process. In other words, communication is an action human

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beings practice in order to find necessary tools and equipment to survive within the same natural conditions in a particular geography; to arrange division of labour within the society; to create various values and beliefs in order to justify the differences that stem from the division of labour and strive to integrate the society by giving them common upper identity (Oskay 2005: 9).

Altering lifestyles, developing and ever-changing technological and economical conditions have effectively changed the communication means and processes, and in return this change brought a different aspect to mass communication. As a result, the communications network has become an essential part of society. According to Giddens, over the past 30-40 years we have been witnessing a convergence in production, distribution and consumption of information. Even though press, television and film used to be closed forms of communication before, nowadays they are nested within each other, to a considerable extent. The difference between forms of communication is no longer massive. Besides, due to technological advancements and the fact that internet is sweeping though the world, the sector of television, radio, newspaper and telephone are going through dramatic changes. Even though newspaper and other means of mass communication are still the focal point of our lives, the organisation and service delivery style are changing immensely (Giddens 2005: 450). Within modern societies where the main form of communication is established through mass communication, predominantly makes use of visual elements.

2. Visual Communication

The paintings drawn on cave walls in ancient times constitute evidence that mankind's effort to communicate with one another, as well as the masses, transformed these images into a visual language. 5000 years ago, Sumerians living in the Middle East created around 2000 pictograms and ideographs by using nails. As the simple set of pictograms (symbols for spoken sounds) Phoenicians developed around 3000 years ago started to spread, it became the universal form of communication. The pictograms are considered to be the birth of the phonetic alphabet, and since then it has played an essential role in facilitating communication between societies.

As soon as printing was introduced by Johannes Gutenberg, the number of literate people soared, and shortly after this led to other inventions regarding communication. In order to improve the teaching and learning of texts, designers proposed ideas towards the standardisation of letters. These ideas have changed in due course, although the universal phonetics alphabet preserved its structure, and aimed to facilitate legibility of all sorts of texts. Since the 19th century, typography designers have been developing unique fonts, out of respect to the archetypes of letters, the paintings in cave walls. Therefore, writing, as a means towards expressing oneself through use of symbols transferred onto paper by combining drawings and verbal expression has become two separate elements of communication (Bektaş 1992:1).

Graffiti, which is more often than not considered to be vandalism and can be comparable to paintings on cave walls, is a form of urban communication in our modern society (Figure 1).

Wall paintings can be considered as a good example for this. Nowadays, there are several cities where people wish to express themselves through colourful spray paint: Vandalism, wall paintings, or words expressed through everyday language... All of these visual expressions are in fact, a complex form of communication. The messages communicated through wall paintings can sometimes manifest itself as an organisation, or a simple wish, a holler of unabated love, and sometimes as an utterance of threat towards the enemy or a satire on government policies. Figure 2:

Figure 1:Bjørn Christian Tørrissen, Olinda, Pernambuco, Brazil 2008

Throughout human history, the need to create, and communicate the outcome to others, has led people to use multifaceted and various means of communication. Whether it be cave paintings or neon billboards, it is the need to appeal and reach to the masses, is what lies beneath all these practices. For that reason, the concept of visual communication has become an indispensible part of mass communication, such as newspaper, television and cinema, the internet and advertising. Content and visuals, and text and images, should be considered as two equally important segments of the formatting process of mass communication elements.

2.1. Graphic Art and Design in Visual Communication

Before the Industrial Revolution, the form and beauty of the creations of human beings were directly linked to the functionality they possessed, and as a result art and life were considered as a whole. The technological developments brought by the Industrial Revolution (end of 19th century and beginning of 20th century) created a massive gap between the materialistic and inner needs, by turning social life upside down and the machine age taking handcraft, which used to be a part of the community, out of the equation, (Bektaş 1992). The revolution brought about design arts and the sole purpose of such products/elements/fields was to contribute and bring quality into people's everyday lives. Architecture being one of the main design application areas, interior design, product and graphic design were influenced by the art movements and trends of the period. This period is considered to be the contemporary development phase of graphic design, which represents the most fundamental area of application within the visual communication field and witnesses the contemporary issues within society. The contributions from Jules Cheret's (1841-1917) (Figure 2) and Eugene Grasset's to the Art Nouveau period helped pave the way to other Modern Art Movements, such as Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Suprematism-Constructivism.

The German "Das Staatliche Bauhaus" (State Home for Building), which was one of the most prominent art and design schools of the period was founded in 1919, during the financial and cultural collapse after the war. Bauhaus aimed to boost and add momentum to the industry, by combining art and design with industry, which resulted in mass production, therefore infusing the cheap and mediocre quality goods with better aesthetics and functionality. The cooperation of designers and craftsmen enabled the educational institutions to teach essentials of design and handcraft, as well as industrial, materials related and modern production issues, in detail.

Figure 2: Jules Cheret, Prom poster, 1894.

An architect, painter and a craftsmen worked together to tackle the design issues of the period. In 1920, painter Paul Klee (1879-1940) and in 1922 Wassily Kandinsky started teaching at Bauhaus, which paved the way for a more progressive form of education. According to Paul Klee, "People are incomplete. Therefore they should always seek to progress, and become the outstanding child of the creator and creation" (Bektaş 1992:199).Instead of setting a style, Klee and Kandinsky (Figure 3) encouraged scrutinising style and developing a new approach to art education. They taught their students to trust their instincts while working on their designs. In 1923, constructivist Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, who contributed to the world of art with his paintings, photography, film, sculpture and graphic works, joined Bauhaus with his distinctive innovative style. He is also well known for combining typography with photography to draw attention to visual communication.

Figure 3: Laszio Moholy-Nagy & Herbert Bayer, Bauhaus Book Cover Design, 1923.

In the first Bauhaus book, Moholy-Nagy's article on the importance of typography suggested that typography is a means of communication and that legibility is essential to communication, therefore, it should not be forced into certain patterns or templates. In 1924 the school was closed due to administrative reasons, and in 1924 it reopened in Dessau. This period (1925-32) can be considered to be the maturity period of the Bauhaus, where it was highly influenced by Constructivism and De Stijl. Several designs developed at Bauhaus, manifest itself in the 20th century as products, furniture, architecture, and typography. Once the graduates of Bauhaus joined the staff, a printing house was founded and a lot of innovations were introduced. The font designed by Bayer (Figure: 4) was simple, easy to perceive and universal. For that reason, it became one of the most favoured fonts.

Figure 4: Herbert Bayer, Universal Alphabet, font design, 1925

At the beginning of the 20th century, most of the creative innovations in the field of graphic design came about as an extension to modern art movements. Around this period, not only Bauhaus designers, but a number of independent designers too, contributed the "New Typography" trend with their innovative designs. These designers were equipped with visual theory knowledge and style awareness, and they skilfully applied these to graphic design. They asserted that, since functionality creates aesthetics, while establishing a visual expression, the designer should strive to assign functionality to the outcome (Bektaş, 1992: 85). After the Second World War, "Visual Expression of Concepts" movement emerged. This movement supported the idea of the designer, expressing their personal style through conceptual work, and it was adopted by countries such as Poland, USA, Cuba, Germany and France, as one of the primary design practice.

After the 1990's, in line with globalisation, the cultural gap between countries diminished and allowed for universal understanding of art and design. Innovations, inventions and several events had already influenced other countries As a result, the boundaries around communication was gradually erased.

3. Creativity in Current Visual Communication Design Education

The communication networks and means we use abundantly in our everyday lives encouraged progress in visual communication design. As a result of the fast-changing and improving technology, demand for visual design increased also. However, the extent to which the functionality of a design, namely the communication it allows for, depends on how appealing it is aesthetically or how enduring or creative it is.

From the 20th century onwards, the art and design education has mainly covered curricular and extracurricular education. This kind of education should be considered as a developing system. Otherwise, it is inevitable that one will lack the merits of rapid changes, developments and innovations around the world, and get stuck with the traditional practice. Visual arts which require creativity and the outcome expected of a visual design education depends on the students in general, the institution's education policies and the country's socio-cultural structure. For example, Bauhaus approach, an art and design school which was founded in 1919 in Germany, took cognizance of communication within both art and education, and aimed to render art more comprehensible and interesting for the society. "Considering the negative reaction the impressionists received and the expressionists who were subject to harsh criticism, Bauhaus, commits itself to enable communication" (San, 2003:103).

One of the most important issues in compulsory education in several countries is that they lack the qualities of a school to cultivate confident, questioning, creative and critical individuals. This approach also contradicts with the idea behind a primary school, which sets out to encourage creativity, curiosity, exploration, and self-expression (Artut, 2007:200). Individuals who are educated within this system are not only far from creativity, but also deem

art and design activities as unnecessary and a hardscrabble, and therefore suppress their creativity potential. Considering that creativity is an innate instinct, it must be recognised that a wrong education system, can be responsible for suppressing creativity, instead of encouraging it. In order to develop, a society requires extraordinary and creative individuals. Schools that favour and focus on positive sciences and theoretical information produce unhappy and unsatisfied individuals. Therefore, implementing creative visual practices will not only increase the quality of students' lives, but also fill the visual design void within the society and allow creative individuals to come up with innovative and unique creations in the field of visual communication.

Creative thinking can be taught and learned. However, acquiring such ways of thinking depends on innate skills, as well as the duration of education. In order to teach creative thinking, a suitable environment is essential. Such an environment should be free from suppression and stress, and should make individuals feel free and safe to express themselves. In order to maintain communication and practice, an improved way of thinking and interaction between individuals is also required. The language and volition used throughout interaction carries utmost importance (Doğanay, 2000).

1. Conclusion

Visuals are indispensable parts of communication, and it has been used in several areas within smaller communities, as well as the masses in order to enable communication. Several studies demonstrate and agree that only 20% of a text is remembered by an individual, whereas visuals allow for around 80% of the materials to be imprinted on one's mind. For that reason, developed countries are attaching importance to visual communication, which is becoming increasingly fundamental. The importance placed upon visual communication in such countries firstly manifests itself in education policies, which injects art and design to children's lives even before school. Educators who favour text before visuals must remember that the alphabet and other characters are also products of creativity and design.

Following the middle school and high school, individuals who opt for Visual Communication studies often aim to work in the sector of Media, TV-Cinema, Multimedia and Advertising as creative, unique individuals, who are capable for introducing something new to the society. However, the fact that individuals lack the background for art and design concepts hampers the creative education of the individual. Considering this, to what degree is it possible to establish free thought, the freedom to bend the rules, creativity and individuality which are vital for the art and design process, in line with the current repressive, disciplined and theoretical education?

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