Visual communication: design studio education through working the process

Fatos Adiloglu [a] *

[a] Department of Communication Design, Bahcesehir University, Besiktas- Istanbul, 34353, Turkey

Abstract

Visual communication designers must possess the intellectual tools to perform creatively and effectively in addressing the complex visual construct and new media. This paper discusses the process of a study with university freshman developing dialogue and thinking in the visual design studio for the realisation of the creative process. In this respect the study aims to unfold what is hypothesized as the design process at the root of design education in the department of visual communication design. The paper underlines communication and design thinking focusing on the design learning environment surrounded by the natural premise of connectedness with technology. The study begins by introducing the course material design and reveals teaching and learning strategies on the final project of the basic design course which sets the foundation for the design track in the curriculumn. Student works are exemplified in terms of 3D explorations, photography, sketches. Text and self reports are employed as a projection of students thinking process including the view and comments of the instructors in the must course. The result of the study may offer insights for educators in developing teaching and learning approaches through working the process of design thinking, exploration and discovery.

Keywords: Visual Communication, Design, Basic Design Studio, Student Learning

1. **Introduction**

In the age of information, within the field of communication, messages that have the creative, different, eye catching and esthetic(quality) edge creates a positive value in communications. Today, the borders between art and technology, information and entertainment are blurred, while the distribution, access and production of information is easier than ever. Visual imagery have "pervasive influence in, both positive and negative senses: they can inform, direct, influence, arouse, confuse and infuriate" (Heskett 2005, 55). Within this environment communication calls for design and seeks creative and impressive solutions in printed medium, moving image and interactive media. Visual communication designers must possess the intellectual tools to perform creatively and effectively in addressing the complex visual construct and new media. Visual communication designers of tomorrow need to think critically and act creatively in order to cope with the global forces. In the era where information is readily available and at our visual disposal the production of effective messages need to be designed. This paper engages itself with visual elements of communication and ordering of communication. The primary objective of this study is to draw the attention to the bottom line of visual design underlining basic design studio education at the core of a visual communication department in a university in Istanbul, Turkey. The introductory design course is presented as the basis of design track in the curriculum ; a course where photographic camera is the only visible technology

* Fatos Adiloglu Tel.: +90.532.392.4917
E-mail address:fatos.adilogluatbahcesehir.edu.tr

exercised. In the beginning the paper briefly introduces a program and curriculum in progress to set an overview. The positioning of technology framed as tool of design rests at the root of the paper which might be provocative at first considering the seamless connection of the department with technology. Dondis had reported on the visual component of expression and communication to be changing sharply with technology in   early 1970's.   The importance of visual literacy for the negotiation of visual messages and the impact on communication (1974, x) has long been anticipated. Visual communication is integrated with technology more than ever however technology should not be overestimated in design education. Visual design education is more about how to use technology. The use of technology for the making of design is fostered by the focus on design process and creativity. The act of creativity is a series of stages of exploration (Cook 2008, 169). " Designing is about ideas: needing and finding ideas, examining and identifying their nature, and most important, illustrating and explaining them so they can be realized " (Aspelund 2010, 5). This study puts technology on hold for the sake of concept development exercised in the final project of the basic design course which limits the use of digital technology. The study engages with the course which forces students to test and improve their skills in traditional technologies. The realization in the use of materials and design principles is anticipated later on. The paper discusses basic design studio experience and subscribes to the consideration that design process is the capital on visual communication supported by technology.

2. Visual Communication and Design

"If one of the purposes of communication design is to create a sense of identity in visual terms, the capacity of new technology to enhance mutual understanding between those who create images and those who receive them offers considerable potential for the future"(Heskett 2005,67).

Visual communication is an interdisciplinary field. The visual communication design education aims to develop in students the competency in design towards creating an effective visual language and communicating with it. Students are exposed to inter-disciplinary visual communication platforms adapting to the current developments in information technology and changing aesthetic values. The program included in this study offers a learning model to develop visual communication design skills in print, time-based and interactive media while promoting the management of the design process. The course program combines theory, technology and practice accommodating visual design thinking and problem solving. The focus of the department is on the exploration of design through a comprehensive analysis of the   visual construct   integrating   visual arts and design through practice oriented workshops and seminars which help the students to understand the nature of visual message. Students create their personal portfolio and present their work in national and international platforms. The department offers technology based courses such *as   introduction to computer and information technology*, *drawing*, *computer for art and communication*, *introduction to animation, digital image processing*, *remediation and technocultures*, *digital video processing*, *introduction to multimedia*, *interactive arts and design* and *computer animation and modeling*. 'Basic design', 'drawing' and 'animation' courses complement each other in the first year. 'Typography' complements 'word and image' course following the design track. 'Animation' course introduces the students basic principles of motion besides under structuring the 'digital image processing' and 'digital video processing' courses in the upper years. Following up on history of graphic design students are introduced to new media and interactivity in the 'remediation and technocultures' course where sound design is exercised. 'Introduction to multimedia' sets up ' basics of web design' and ' 'interactive arts and design'. Finally the design track ends with the 'graduation projects' where technology and concept development are active forces of visual communication design.

2.1 Basic Design Studio: Core

When asked by the publisher of the book " Six chapters in design " a series of fifty works Milton Glaser offers a display of twenty five pieces accompanied by their sketches or preliminary drawings. Glaser remarks:

" *in some cases there is a direct relationship between the sketch and finished work; in others an obligue one. Occationally there is no seeming relationship at all. What becomes obvious is that the process often reveals more than the work itself* " (1997, 129).