Thinking manifesto on basic design studios in architectural education

Hakan Saglam*, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Architecture, Ondokuz Mayis University, Samsun, Turkey

Abstract

Design education delivery is reconsidered every semester from the first basic design course through to the final project class, and while there are diverse approaches to architectural theory worldwide, the problem of teaching architectural design is a continual question to educators, especially for design educators. Over different periods of time, very different approaches to design education have been pursued. These differing theories form the basis for architectural design education. Throughout this process, the history of design education has been shaped and it is important to be able to use the accumulation of knowledge from different fields within the context of 'architectural education'. When we consider the transformation of design education historically and the differing approaches today, such as the effects of changing theories, scientific-cultural sub-structures, transformed super structures and the ever-changing theories on architectural education, the design studio educators should incorporate the benefits of this diverse learned knowledge into the design studio education.

Keywords: Basic design, architectural education, design studios.

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* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE **Hakan Saglam** Associate Professor, Ondokuz Mayis University, Samsun 55270, Turkey.
E-mail address: hakan.saglam@omu.edu.tr / Tel.: +90 362 312 19 19.

One of the most discussed issues in the world of architectural education is which path to follow when delivering design lectures; these lectures represent the backbone of architectural education. Almost all design history continues its progress depending on the opposition of all togetherness. This situation can be presented clearly, especially when we look at the history of design theories.

In 2011, people over the world who ascribed to the belief in Gestalt, the belief behind design under the influence of Bauhaus, saw that this was another illusion. It was revealed in the words of Barbara Veigl that 'there is no connection between Bauhaus and Gestalt'. It is a bad experience when one realises that all the things that one believes in, trusts and depends upon vanish and one must go back again to the beginning. But in this lubricous and fickle environment, the most important thing is the use of the accumulated knowledge collected in the field, within the scope of 'architectural education'. If we consider its transformations and all the different approaches since the Bauhaus; contributions of changing architectural conceptions with changing contexts, scientific and cultural substructures, transformed political superstructures and the emergent form of design lecture, it can be accepted as the general aim of architectural education. Maybe the real problem is not the things we do; but what we learn from them with regards to deepening the education of architectural design.

Foucault states in his book 'The Order of Things' which was inspired by the Las Meninas painting of Velazquez and points out that all the senses and information belonging to the human are the result of sudden changes.

This painting can be accepted as the best example of which summarises the situation we are in. The painting is one of the best examples for its portrayal of the absoluteness of the senses and information, that is to say, it cannot be perceived in one go and cannot stay the same forever.

'Las Meninas' is not just the breaking point of our perspective of the real, simile and sense in the history of art, it also brings forward the primary question: 'Is the enlightened person, the individual who expands his awareness, an objective observer from outside, or an interactive participant from within the circumstances'?

This person can be compared directly with the one who is unleashed from his chains in Plato's Allegory of the Cave or with Neo from Matrix (as a modern reflection).

From Plato's time until the present, a lot of philosophers and their followers have suggested theories that are poles apart. For the individual who succeeds in coming out alive from the war between objectives, means and morals, the only universally permanent thing is 'to question'. In a world where not only the actors and situations but also our roles are changing, the only way to protect our 'humanity' as a summation of values is to be in a constant state of questioning. Because, as the categories in such fields as information, science, technology and art become clear, and as descriptions fall into pieces, we also understand that any idea or theory from any field cannot be falsified/verified entirely. We know that the information that mankind has acquired down through the ages is a cumulative, hoarded information.

In the field of politics, we can see that this information is thinning out the soil and turning it into a fragile and slippery ice rather than creating defined areas in our range of motion. Today, when political impacts cannot be incarcerated within territorial limits; unrestricted forces have an impact on an unrestricted geography. In the words of Neil Postman, 'politics' which has to be taken very seriously as it is the field in which decisions about our lives are made, is not based on ideas anymore; it is based on the image. Everyone knows that President Nixon lost the election because of his make-up artist, B. Obama won the election thanks to his handsomeness and Melania Trump is the most clicked person today. So, as a conclusion, when politics is turned into a popularity show and aestheticised, the reality disappears. This may be the most radical conclusion we have ever made, or at least Jean Baudrillard thinks so.

It is possible to describe this period as in which;

Cosmetics replaces ideology,

Truth is defeated by image,

Everything is perceived as entertainment and turned into meaninglessness,

Visual information pollution is turning today's human beings into unresponsive persons,

Collective memory is lost.

The ability to perceive and reason has decreased. Studies[1] made to explain the meaning of today's situation, dwell on the fact that we live in a transitional process of a post-capitalist period and draw attention to today's chaotic vagueness, while many other countries are waiting to live the capitalist dream. It is emphasised that even though we want to lean on the old order, the only specific thing in a transitional process is 'change'. It is said that the transformation we are going through is the end of the capitalist world that we know. It is no doubt that architecture is affected by these transitional changes.

The act of design, realised between the creativity of the architect and the social, economic and cultural reality of the building, is constantly fighting for its life on the soil thinned out by politics. Architecture being a fast-food product on one hand and an haute-couture visual feast on other has degraded the occupation to a visual show and an absolute graphic transmission that excludes competencies and is easily made. It can be said that the easily perceived upmost visual layer of the architectural design process or product takes the esoteric intellectual and social content's place.

Today, when the speed that images move around the world is many times faster than that of ideas; architect's 'branded' designs are perceived as disconnected from their context and intellectual background and are considered as values in their own right.

Owners of the power and capital, who insist on exploiting this value to the end, consider planning, construction and architecture as the easiest and fastest economic development and this attitude prevails globally. The construction sector is constructing new symbols for the owners of power on one hand and constructing investment projects suitable for an economic boom on the other.

The architect is slowly being seen as a creator of forms with ambiguous content. Pioneers of this sector want forms, heights and densities that have never been seen before, and so architecture has become a 'form/facade visual image' design art. Architecture has been turned into a show based on form and not on content. As Harvey points out, because of the image obsession of society, we need to think again on the relationship between reality and display.

Today, media is bombarding society, especially students of architecture, with images narrating the false notion of architecture as a 'ready-made' product. From the vast capital of the last 20–30 years, footloose architects and their works are appearing in world cities.

Growing architectural offices has begun to exist as globalising firms or as controlled offices under these firms.

Now, architectural offices are opening branches in every big city and are working as chain stores, with the architects name as branding, while both architects and architecture are being transformed from the foundations up.

In this way, when architecture becomes the new image of the administrations, municipalities and managements; it creates new opportunities with budgets for unbelievable projects. On the one hand,

[1] Immanuel Wallerstein, Donald Kuspit or Michael Kelly may be an important source. Wallerstein's 'Utopistics, or, Historical Choices of the Twenty-first Century', in the 'the end of the world we know' section. Kuspit's 'The End of Art'. Kelly's 'Iconoclasm in Aesthetics'.

national identities are being underlined and on the other hand, fast-growing globalisation uses architecture as a successful instrument. Architecture improves under the guidance of power and capital, more than ever.[2]

No doubt that this improvement/change affects us, too. Generally, students reflect a visual and image-dominant culture rather than an architectural understanding based on meaning and context. They want to be distinctive and interesting and create works modelled on their admired architects. Imitating stylistic stunt-driven designs that have become the common ground of a hyper mediatic culture is considered important. In the present situation, the popular products of this current architectural environment are looking closer, more familiar and more possible than their own reality and the slums right behind them in their backstreets.

On the other hand, educational institutions have clearly increasing tendencies toward the fields of architecture's own information, experience in the process and being 'interdisciplinary', these are our most important questions.

In the face of the question, 'What can we do, in terms of intertwined-interconverting politics, architecture and education, for the students trying to build their own existences/identities both as individuals and as architects'? It is necessary to remember 'Las Meninas' to find the right way in every moment when simile and reality interlace.

For each person who has the will, enthusiasm and effort to be an architect, architectural education shouldn't be an 'education' based on a hardened understanding in which we replace its 'causes and aims' with a visual language and aesthetic taken from familiar architectural imagery. We need to provide students with an environment in which they can create conditions and opportunities to question their own roles, places, meanings and aims as a key to both the 'learning process' and in being an architect for the future. Only then will the seeds of being a multidimensional individual and an architect who can think through concepts, be planted.

It seems important to reveal that architectural style is the result of a content coming into existence not as an aim but as a means and this content is a product of the intellectual environment of the time. It should be underlined that this content is not an idea to be found or discovered by going backwards from form and not an idea that begins and ends at architecture, but it is the composition of a sensitiveness that is searched for by philosophy, narrated by art, and most importantly, is belonging to the human being.

From this point of view, it must be the aim of the student, both in the past and today, that he/she embraces the content and idea behind every form and style, and to realise the parts that are 'invisible' and especially 'ignored' too much these days, with their own comments and conclusions. Opportunities must be created for architecture students to form a basis of intellectual competence and to search for the unprecedented, based on historical and theoretical backgrounds. It is clear that this intellectual competence will create the core of the general, personal, professional and contextual competence of the architect.

It is architectural education's responsibility to enable the conclusions we need for making architectural designs or criticisms that are no longer based on choice or pleasure, and move them into the plain of intellectual consideration. Of course, it is important to start this from the first studio experience. Such an environment must be the aim and begins with a basic design studio. In this way, students must search for opportunities to look upon and produce with an intellectual regard, enabling an aesthetic conclusion with conceptions belonging to daily life. As everyone knows, in 1989, Gattari, too, points out that 'a new formation can be succeeded only by returning to the ethical and

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[2] This situation had been like this throughout history but especially after the industrial period, more social democrat projects, which determined the general medium, were outside of the agenda now and low-income groups were sacrificed to gentrification.

aesthetical radicalism' and underlines that we must immediately get rid of scientific references and metaphors to bring this to bear and to create new paradigms.

Among the required things that must be learned and comprehended concerning architecture, the most predominant studies are the conceptual ones. When studies start from the abstract concepts that represent the backbone of design lectures, periodical readings and discussions are considered to be significant for conceptual expansion.

But we mustn't forget that the main purpose of all the processes that, for some reason, are very painful in the eyes of the students of architecture, is to have students' hearts beating with the love of architecture.

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