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The education of graphic designers - a contribution to the debate

Introduction

Due to the continually changing reality, new standards of social life, and the civilization development, graphic design gained an enormous significance. It has more and more influence on shaping social consciousness and is present in numerous areas of human interaction. It is hard to overrate the role of design, including graphic design, as it accompanies us in nearly all of our activities; for we live in the age of the civilisation of media¹, based on the information society and the omnipresence of media and media transmissions.

Graphic services market is one of the branches that benefit from the development of the internet, new technologies, and the increasing significance of visual communication. The demand for graphic design is constantly growing². There is a need for graphic services in the companies operating in the area of social media, as well as in marketing and PR agencies which realise communication campaigns, addressed not only to the young generation. In this context, the increasing number of academies' educational offers connected with this field does not surprise – by offering new educational methods and authorial programmes, they try to meet new demands of the society³.

Graphic design – along with other languages of creation, such as painting, photography, and industrial design – is becoming an important element of a larger whole, more and more frequently referred to as visual communication.

Well-designed visual message factors in not only aesthetic or artistic preferences, but also a measurement of understanding it by the recipients. It is oriented on graphic usefulness. Designing visual information therefore requires achieving

[1] Sociologist Tomasz Goban-Klas described the civilisation of media as a media explosion, that is, “the construction and fast generalisation of a whole range of new instruments of accumulating, processing, and transmitting information, which has a deep influence on every area of human life”.

[2] Karolina Kubicka, *Badanie. Rynek usług graficznych 2013: wyzwania i perspektywy*, Signs.pl. Portal polskiej reklamy wizualnej, <http://www.signs.pl/badanie:-rynek-uslug-graficznych-2013:-wyzwania-i-perspektywy,18585,artykul.html> [access: 29.04.2015].

[3] In the academic year 2012/2013 there were 453 academies functioning in Poland: 19 universities, 25 technical academies, 7 agricultural academies, 76 economic academies, 17 pedagogical academies, 9 medical academies, 2 marine academies, 6 physical education academies, 23 artistic academies, 15 theological academies, 7 national defence and internal affairs academies, and 247 other institutions. 321 of them were private academies.

some balance between aesthetics, technology, context, and the interaction of the creator and the recipients. Most didacticians are more or less able to cope with this challenge; nevertheless, there still exists an area of electronic media democracy which does not go hand in hand with good understanding of the principles of visual communication.

Jorge Frascara⁴ in his article *Graphic design. Fine art or social science?* emphasises that “a basic duality of graphic design becomes apparent when the formation of practitioners is considered: what skills do they need to develop? Graphic design is both a rational and an artistic activity”. In this context, striking the above-mentioned balance of proportions between artistic and rational elements seems to be the fundamental pedagogical duty of every department of graphic design. And since academies’ most important didactic task is to prepare students to knowingly and rationally deal with broadly-conceived design problems, it becomes crucial to find an answer to the question about the educational methods by which it is to be achieved.

This article is a contribution to the debate, as well as an authorial answer to the following question: how do the design departments take on themselves the responsibility for preparing students to fulfil the important function of designers? Design is a kind of a dialogue and an anticipation of the consequences of the recipients’ reactions to a signal, for example a graphic one. A dialogue is an exchange of observations on the level of the word and image – it is a conversation. The role of a lecturer is to coordinate and support his students with his experience and methods, and to not constrain the development of their original way of treating art and describing it in their own authorial language of design.

By referring to my own didactic method and literary examples I define the theoretical foundations of educating graphic designers and describe the didactic means implemented in this process.

Visual studies – different educational proposals

Most communication, culture, and media researchers agree about the historical triumph of the media visibility over the other forms of communication in the contemporary culture. They consider visual culture to be the most important, privileged platform of information exchange between people and cultures, as well as one of the areas fundamental for contemporary culture and science. At universities there are more and more departments and faculties focused on the cultural and social role of image and visibility, which contribute to the emergence of a new discipline of cultural research – visual studies – which utilise the achievements and perspectives of many other fields of science.

From the theoretical and methodological point of view, visual studies are exceptionally diverse. Visual culture, visual arts, media art, visual education, and visual design, as well as schools of communication and media – these are just some

[4] Jorge Frascara was born in 1939 in Buenos Aires. He is an academic lecturer, a specialist in the area of visual communication, Professor Emeritus

at the University of Alberta in Canada, and a member of the editorial boards of “Information Design Journal” and “Design Issues”.

of the examples of the attempts to introduce them into the academic practice. At different kinds of universities – of arts, humanities, technology, social sciences – the contents of visual culture or communication lectures are interpreted in various ways. The broad spectrum of issues discussed within visual studies requires from didacticians to elaborate authentically individualistic approaches. By realising authorial educational programmes, academies provide their adepts with a possibility of developing cognitive, technical, and social competencies, profiled according to the type of their education. The newly-opened faculty of Graphics at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, which in its programme combines the elements of social communication and graphics, can serve as an example; on the school's website we can find a following information: "We do not educate artists in the traditional sense, but capable, competent visual communication designers". We can assume that the students there will be taught not only the artistic, but also – most of all – social skills and competencies. In higher schools of informatics, management, or journalism the faculties are being open such as advertisement graphics or graphics and multimedia productions – and although all of them educate graphic designers, if we were to define and outline a draft of their graduates' profiles, each of them would be illustrated with a different figure. One sure thing is that the programmes of visual studies in schools of the artistic, humanistic, and technical profile will be constructed in a completely different ways.

Today, the issue of communicating through images is connected to the intensive development of new areas of knowledge, techniques, technologies, and creative fields – it is not surprising then, that academic teachers face tasks in the process of educating students that 15 or 20 years ago were being worked out by isolated, specialised groups of professionals – not only graphics, technical editors, and photo editors, but also engineers, urbanists, marketers, psychologists, and representatives of other scientific disciplines⁵.

Piotr Francuz in the introduction to an anthology of eleven original articles⁶ written by authors from the academic world and practitioners in the area of visual communication notes that "despite the increasing expansion of visual media in the social space, there are sparse publications (both national and foreign) which authors take up reflection on this multi-faceted phenomenon. Most works concerning visual communication have a character of commercial and/or designer (auto)presentation of achievements in this field or they constitute a broad, yet usually rather superficial review of issues connected with its different manifestations". While presenting texts by the authors involved with visual culture or creating it, he also emphasises another important thing, namely that "regardless of their affiliations, all authors share a need of a deeper reflection about the essence of different forms of visual communication, their origins, manifestations, and semantics"⁷.

[5] According to Tim Brown, today's design is not only about designing things, but also about solving particular problems, using diverse knowledge resources and competencies of the designer, as well as other people and groups involved.

[6] *Komunikacja wizualna*, red. Piotr Francuz, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2012.

[7] Both quotations in own translation.

I agree with the above observations not only as a graphic designer. As an academic teacher I propound that what both the visual communication research and the academic practice need today is an exchange of experiences and reflections concerning propositions and the scope of the educational process. The quality of education depends on many factors, among which the preparation of teachers, their personality, and methods are of special significance. I believe that every publication describing both the methodology and practical aspects of educating graphic designers would contribute to the good development and understanding what actually is the area of interest of visual studies, not only in Poland, but all over the world. Today, the course of educating designers is a “living methodology”, built upon new interdisciplinary strategies of understanding the manifestations of visual culture. It is a fascinating phenomenon, which evades simple interpretation.

Design – at the boundaries of disciplines

As I have mentioned above, today the concepts of visual culture and communication gain an enormous number of meanings and are being analysed in many theoretical contexts. One example of this process is an increasing quantity of the relations of an inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary character, which we undoubtedly observe in the visual studies area⁸.

The interdisciplinarity starts when we use another discipline’s data, tools, and techniques, or laws and theories. In my academic practice I put the most emphasis on the idea that design should implement such an interdisciplinary approach and engage many techniques, technologies, and creative areas; for the digital revolution, as I have indicated above, significantly changed the face of design, including graphic design. Static (classic) forms, such as poster or illustration, although important from the point of view of content, synthesis of the message, and their design culture, became the elements of a larger whole, and common access to information, knowledge, tools, and technologies facilitated the acquisition of diverse abilities.

Aware of working at the boundaries of disciplines, apart from an interesting educational programme and cyclically given classes I also try to offer students something more. Since 2013 I have been organising a cycle of interdisciplinary authorial presentations entitled “Designing in the world of ideas”. In the introduction to the publication which summarises the 2013/2014 cycle professor Sławomir Witkowski, the associate dean of the Faculty of Graphics at the Fine Arts Academy in Gdańsk wrote that it was a “project answering the needs of the students. The invited guests are the leaders in their areas of professional activity; their understanding of their professions is much wider than their dictionaries’ definitions. Latest printing technologies specialists, branding specialists, music composers, book publishers... Professionals who have succeeded in their fields. They shared their own

[8] Nevertheless, I believe that the increasing number of contexts of addressed issues can also influence the further development of the visual culture studies.



Illustration 1a

Illustrations 1a, 1b i 2a, 2b

An interdisciplinary presentations series: “Design in the world of ideas”. Presentation of Mikołaj Trzaska, 2015, and Leszek Bzdyl, 2014. Photo: Angelika Rychert

Illustration 1b





Illustration 2a

Illustration 2b



worlds of ideas and personally gained experience, which is what the students primarily lack”⁹.

In the methodology of this project I also tried to implement and familiarise students with the multi- and transdisciplinary approach to design. Within multi-disciplinary explorations the problems are being solved independently of one another, and the results are put together in a way similar to the articles in an anthology. During the meetings held as a part of the “Designing in the world of ideas” cycle the lecturers, invoking different experiences, search for an answer to the questions regarding primarily the understanding of such concepts as creative process and design. Their answers formed an inspiring mosaic of meanings, which after the end of the first edition provided material for issuing an equally interesting publication. The record of the 2013/2014 meetings shows that the set of ideas and theories concerning such a rapidly developing field as design, can and should be understood holistically¹⁰ and analysed multi-dimensionally.

It is worth to quote here the words of Tim Brown, who created a concept of design thinking, now functioning in the global design discourse: “After I finished the Academy of Fine Arts, I considered design to be a deeply personal artistic activity. I certainly did not concern myself with its connections to business, engineering, or marketing. Nevertheless, when I entered the world of professional practice, I submerged myself in projects whose interdisciplinary complexity reflected the world around me. I started to discover abilities I wasn’t aware of before”¹¹. These words set the foundations of my didactic activities, which are aimed at educating designers successfully operating in the area of graphic design. Interdisciplinarity starts when in a group of dozen people we begin a discussion about designing visual messages. I do not expect my students to give strictly graphic examples; they formulate them on the basis of their previous interests and experiences. Many aspects of design appear then within this common space – the examples of students’ statements or presented works concern art, architecture, music, education, fashion, or advertisements, as well as their quotidian activities. Our discussion about the means used to create an image (influencing viewers’ imagination) or expression (invoking emotions) helps to properly define the designatum – the process of teaching about design at a given academy as well as our contribution to the team which starts to work on a given project – understood as designer’s education.

Sustainable teaching about design

Working with my students from the basics – from typography workshops with children and youth, presentations and interdisciplinary lectures, to bachelor’s

[9] Sławomir Witkowski, *Projektanci/Designers* [w:] *Cykl interdyscyplinarnych prezentacji autorskich 2013/2014 “Projektowanie w świecie idei”/ The cycle of interdisciplinary authorial presentations 2013/2014 “Designing in the world of ideas”* (“Zeszyty wydawni-czy – Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Gdańsku” nr 11), Gdańsk: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych, 2014, p. 2. In this publication the Reader can find

records of every meeting held as a part of the cycle.
[10] Holism – an idea that the world constitutes a whole which cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts.

[11] Tim Brown, *Change by design: How design thinking transforms organizations and inspires innovation*, New York: Harper Business, 2009 [own translation from Polish].

and master's degree diplomas – is a didactic manifestation of my way of thinking about preparing them to perform the jobs of designers. Graphic design is an intellectual, technical, and artistic activity. Graphic designers not only illustrate and devise methods of visual presentation, but also organise the working process. This profession involves all forms of visual presentation and information, designing graphic signs (logos), illustrations, typography, and packaging.

The aim of my classes for different age groups is to raise creative awareness and, as a result, awareness of actions and their consequences, as well as to enable my adepts to gain experience and courage which will allow them to dialogue more confidently not only with people but also with problems concerning the organisation of the space around them. Seeking contact with other people and connections between our knowledge and other disciplines teaches us new ways of cooperation. In Poland, graphic design enjoys a long tradition, but it has recently changed immensely. Nowadays, graphic designers work using computers and specialised applications. They should be able to draw and illustrate in graphic programmes and perform the tasks connected to the further edition of their graphic projects (i.e. preparing them for print or putting on the website).

Easy access to knowledge and facilitated process of acquiring new abilities carry the risk which I try to counteract – a kind of superficiality of creation, which is a result of using solely technological solutions. It is understandable – we have technology at our disposal, so we make use of it. Nevertheless, applications and devices are more and more often designed to facilitate and speed up the process of achieving desired results. As a consequence, the final effect becomes an end in itself, and the pace at which it can be achieved eliminates former, manual and intellectual ways of pursuing the highest quality possible. Such a working routine effectively deprives the authors of the possibility to realise their mistakes at the stage of a drawing, to define and eliminate them, or to develop a new thought. Such elements of graphic design as idea, creation, developing a project, adjusting the workshop, choosing technologies, or production should not be condensed and reduced to a set of commands, algorithms, and buttons.

On every stage of education I try to convince my students that the process of designing transcends even the best technologies, that it is complex and multidimensional. My didactic activities are always accompanied by the observation made by John Thackara, the author of *In the bubble: Designing in a complex world*, who proves that modern methods of communication introduced an isolating layer – a sort of a blindfold – between people and the biosphere¹². Design, the way Thackara understands it, most of the time means working out new ways of connecting the already existing data, resources, and abilities¹³. While designing, we make use of our own and other people's resources.

[12] Biosphere is a global ecological system which encompasses all living organisms and their mutual relations.

[13] Thackara proposes six strategies for action which support the design process in today's complicated world: from a draft and a plan to an under-

standing and a reaction; from simple concepts to deep concepts; from designing from above to utilising boundary phenomena; from "science fiction" to "social fiction"; from designing "for..." to designing "of..."; from a design as a project to a design as a useful solution.



Illustration 3a

Illustrations 3a i 3b
Creative workshops, creator Ramon Izrael, 2015.
Photo: Adam Kamiński

Illustration 3b





Illustration 4

Illustration 5

Illustrations 4, 5, 6
Typography workshops "Grafikam", Gdańsk 2015.
Photo: Adam Kamiński

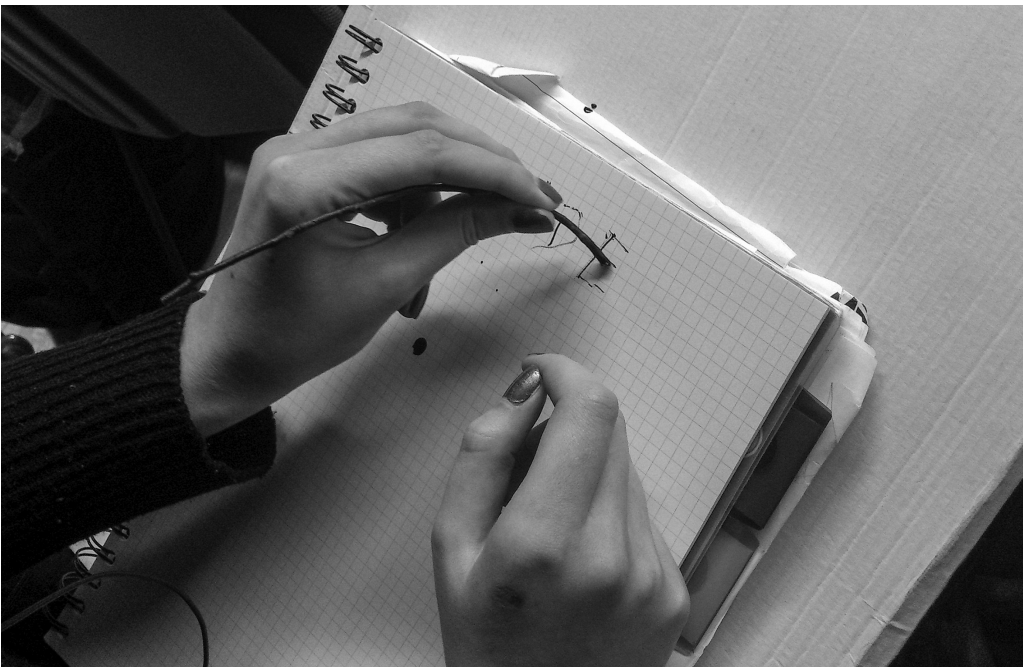




Illustration 6

I am convinced that sustainable design, conceived as a part of sustainable development, begins to constitute a challenge for contemporary and future generations of designers, including graphic designers. Sustainable design, which not long ago was just a trend, becomes a standard.

After an architect Andrzej Baranowski we can say that the consequence of sustainable development is sustainable design, which should be characterised by contextuality, chronicity, and communisation¹⁴. This statement concerns equally the urbanists, architects, engineers, and graphic designers responsible for designing and constructing the settlement structures and networks.

In my didactic model together with my students we implement the idea of sustainable development; we try to find reasonable ways of using our resources, engaging one another in the process.

The model of educating graphic designers

Preparing to be a graphic designer also means developing artistic skills. Artistic education offers a possibility to acquire a certain ability, a desire of aware creation. Artistic experiences as a psychological phenomena which constitute a link between sensory and emotional experiences and mental activity lead to the for-

[14] Andrzej Baranowski, *Projektowanie zrównoważone w architekturze*, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Politechniki Gdańskiej, 1998.



Illustration 7

Illustration 8

Illustrations 7, 8, 9, 10
Display of BSc theses supervised by Adam Kamiński,
Gdańsk 2014. Photo: Aleksandra Kamińska,
Angelika Rychert

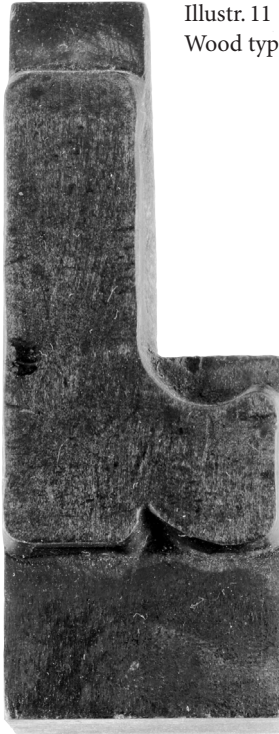




Illustration 9

Illustration 10





Illustr. 11
Wood type

mulation of standards of conduct and the release of creative and transgressive potential. Their formation and development take place in the process of students' direct, active participation in situations involving emotional experiences. An artistically endowed person takes pleasure in drawing, painting, modelling, constructing, and building. She enjoys experimenting and demonstrates creativity in subject, techniques, composition, and material selection. Through art, she expresses her feelings and emotions, notices details and colours which not every person sees.

Giving classes to students and leading workshops for younger people, I organise their artistic experience. I also share with them my own experiences¹⁵. I am interested in designing a concise and simple graphic form and attach great significance to lettering signs, whose presence subordinates itself other elements of the project. I pay much attention to letters, signs, and pictograms, as they are able to independently formulate full artistic messages. The form of letters and narrative of a composition is often more eloquent than more than one drawing, painting, or

photograph. There is an extraordinary potential in a well and richly designed lettering set.

Benchmarks in the form of intersecting lines and the spaces they map out constitute the foundations of my way of designing. When we work on a project which is to culminate in a visual realisation, together with students we search for such benchmarks, to which we can later level out the verticals and the horizontals. If we want to achieve a certain aesthetic continuity, we have to be able to compare forms and signs. In time, this "levelling out" – tonal, formal, expressive, or ideational – transforms into a specific style; one's own style, which will translate into a high level of visual culture and quality.

Another objective of our exercises is to familiarise ourselves with many drawing and painting techniques, as well as with the alphabet of forms which will allow us to express the multitude of our inner experiences and emotions, make us more sensitive to the beauty surrounding us, and facilitate its contemplation. In my workshop, the starting point of any design is always a lettering sign – very often it is a typographic font, but the design process proceeds in different directions. At the basis of my didactic conception is a grapheme, a medium of the architecture of a sign, which inspires and, as a benchmark for creative spaces, is a symbol of order and support. A creative space is an area in which we create our artistic work – paper

[15] Adam Kamiński, *Intuicja w projektowaniu znaku litericznego*, PhD thesis, 2009, The Academy

of Fine Arts in Gdańsk; field: plastic arts, discipline: fine arts.

size, proportions of a poster, playbill, book, the internet space. Nevertheless, designing is not only about using letters, confining oneself to lettering and typography. Design culture requires from graphic designers to have at their disposal a wide set of tools, which inspire to create original constructions and provide a reason for discussions about the composition, contrast, shape, and logical course of a given project.

I emphasise the significance of drafting in the artistic practice – when we design, we create conceptual drafts. We are interested in lines and spaces, contrasts and different ways of determining the proportions of the objects. During my classes, when I analyse the works of students at different stages of completion, I try to draw their attention to different types of composition and to making conscious use of them. We experiment with different drawing and painting techniques. Another important element is studying the light effects and colour as sources of movement and expression, especially in the context of exhibition activities.

That notwithstanding, the primary target of these classes is not to teach students to draw and paint – it is rather to allow them to acquire the foundations of perception through an acute, deepened observation of the reality. The education should reflect all aspects of the design process – an artistic, emotional, rational, communicative, technological, and social one. Lecturer's and teacher's practice thus requires making aware and at the same time critical choices regarding the organisation and implemented methods.

An important reference point is Rudolf Arnheim's¹⁶ *Art and visual perception: A psychology of the creative eye*, the now-classic treatise from the borderlines of psychology and theory of art, first published in 1954, in which he analyses ten aspects of visual perception – balance, shape, form, development, space, light, colour, movement, dynamics, and expression. The whole text of *Visual thinking*, on the other hand, is dedicated to equating the role of vision to that of the mind. The process of visual perception of the reality is being confronted with our experience and knowledge. With the perception of shape begins the formation of concepts; the creation of shapes (commonly referred to as “looking”) is an active process, just like memory operations. Making use of the achievements of psychology, Arnheim formulates the principles of visual arts perception and proves that seeing is a kind of understanding, and every man's vision anticipates abilities which we are accustomed to attribute solely to artists¹⁷.

[16] Rudolf Arnheim (1904–2007) – psychologist, aesthetician, theoretician of arts and film. In the '20s, while still living in Berlin, he was interested in experimental psychology and philosophy; he was also one of the pioneers of the European film thought (*Film as art*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947) and radio thought (*Radio: An Art Of Sound*, New York: Da Capo Press, 1936). In 1934 he left Nazi Germany and went into exile – first, to the United Kingdom, and then the United States of America. There he began working on his

own idea of the psychology of art (*Art and visual perception: A psychology of the creative eye*, Berkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954). While developing his psychological theory of vision, he was also giving lectures at the most prestigious American academies, mainly the Sarah Lawrence College in New York, Harvard University, and University of Michigan.

[17] In *Visual thinking* Rudolf Arnheim emphasises that “the artists of our time have gone a long way in making the old categories inapplicable by replacing

In my diagnosis of educational demands I refer to the principles of guided discovery learning formulated by Jerome Seymour Bruner¹⁸. In his translated into many languages work entitled *Process of education* he presented a dynamic conception of education, describing the important role and requirements of positive motivation and encouraging children and youth to perform cognitive activity. Mental development depends on appropriate external influences which impact the process of acquiring techniques rooted in the culture and passed down by its representatives. Bruner claims that actual mental development begins when we retrace our steps to recode in a new form, with the help of experienced teachers, what we have already done and seen, and when we implement these newly coded information in our further acts of organising reality.

Bruner is said to be the creator of a theory of education according to which a person should be learning primarily by herself, and the role of a teacher should be only to guide her discovery process¹⁹. He formulated two especially inspiring for my didactic work principles, which should be taken into account by any effective teaching strategy. The first one concerns a proper way of posing a problem, the second one concerns minimal guidance.

The architecture of lettering signs and space

When we entered the XX century, in typography a time of experiments began. During my classes, we try to observe and understand the enormous significance of this technique. The art of typography and typesetting is present in our everyday reality – we buy books and papers, read many news; we receive a lot of different types of messages, if only those in the form of large-format banners and advertisements.

In the '80s Katherine McCoy and her students from the Cranbrook Academy of Art developed a conception of typography as discourse based on post-structural-

the traditional works of brush and the chisel with objects and arrangements that must merge in the environment of daily life if they are to have any place at all. [...] This broader concept [...] must be supplemented by a psychological and educational approach that recognizes art as visual form, and visual form as the principal medium of productive thinking" (*Visual thinking*, Berkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971).

[18] Jerome Seymour Bruner was born in 1915 in New York. He is an American psychologist, one of the main representatives of contemporary cognitive psychology, and the son of Polish emigrants Heman and Rose Bruner. In the years 1952–1972 he was a professor at Harvard University in Cambridge, where in 1962 together with George Miller he founded the Center for Cognitive Studies. In the years 1972–1979 he was a professor at Oxford University, and in 1982 he started giving lectures in the

New School for Social Research in New York.

[19] Bruner sees the development through the prism of three different ways of representing the world (understanding), which, although they may co-occur, are characteristic of the developmental phases of an individual. They are:

- action-based (enactive) representation,
- image-based (iconic) representation,
- language-based (symbolic) representation.

He believes that the stage in which the enactive representation plays a primary part corresponds to the sensorimotor stage of development, the iconic representation dominates at the stage of concrete thinking, and the symbolic representation – at the stage of formal thinking. The research on the structure of intelligence also shows that different types of representations dominate in the understanding mechanisms of different people.

ism. They rejected the traditional division between reading and looking, claiming that designers should actively combine these two forms of cognition – an image can be read, just as a written word can become an object to look at. Contemporary typography reinterprets some of the old tendencies – that is why we try to retrace, both practically and formally, and understand the distance it has travelled to reach today's pluralism²⁰.

Searching for pointers for my own work with students I realised that the discussion about the essence of today's design and the role of designers requires in Poland many additions. According to Przemek Dębowski's and Jacek Mrowczyk's thesis presented in *Widzieć/Wiedzieć. Wybór najważniejszych tekstów o dizajnie (Seeing/Knowing. A selection of the most important texts about design)*, in the XX century, while on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean a heated debate continued, in Poland this subject was passed over in silence. Polish design was dominated by posters – acknowledged here, they also went down in global history of design.

In the years 1952–1985 Henryk Tomaszewski ran a poster studio at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. His method consisted in assigning future poster designers conceptual tasks; it helped to develop intellectual sensitivity, the ability to think logically, and use imagination. Tomaszewski wrote: "I provide a subject, from which a student should in a course of analysis remove all that is superfluous, and thus, achieve an abstract – a sing. I accustom them to forego predicates, adjectives, and any beautiful, yet most of the time expendable embellishments. In every task there is a mystery which he has to solve. Everything goes to the EYE. It has to be well-trained, sovereign – abstract". In teaching graphic design and designing posters he rejected the achievements and experiences of the European avant-garde, rationally approaching the process of constructing visual information (the tradition of Bauhaus, constructivist typography, functional print, Swiss typography)²¹, which after the World War II became an international alphabet, the "ABC of forms"²².

Performing the work of a graphic designer, more and more often I am also concerned with adjusting the project to a given space. To me, its environment and ambiance are of great significance; in a natural way they support the final result – or

[20] A fantastic example of today's pluralism (social tolerance of many different styles and subjects) in typography is "TypoGraphic", a magazine published by the International Society of Typographic Designers – every issue is designed by different author, nevertheless they remain legible. The New York typographic magazine "Mmm... skyscraper, I love you" has a distinctly different character; it is designed by Tomato and known for its powerful, surprising formal solutions – it is an excellent example of living expression.

[21] As an opposition to the views of futurists and Dadaists, new art movements have been developed, such as Bauhaus, De Stijl, constructivism, and

later – the Swiss style. They promoted typographic clarity, legibility, and functionality. The location of every typographic element was determined by the rules based on the visual and linguistic hierarchy of importance; the boldface and lines were used according to the rules of typographic clarity.

[22] Nonetheless, well-understood, the design process is about something more. The work of Tomaszewski outgrew the standards of commercial design. He used to say about his work: "Graphics, the way I do it, is an art service; I once said: I am a kind of graphic designer, who carries furniture, because when a client comes and says: 'Carry this furniture'; I carry it".



Illustration 12, Katarzyna Rzepka

Illustration 13, Julia Parchimowicz

Illustrations 12–17. BSc theses 2014, being or to be defended, supervised by Adam Kamiński.
Photo: Adam Kamiński





Illustration 14, Szymon Sawicki

Illustration 15, Angelika Rychert





Illustration 16, Łukasz Obłązewicz

Illustration 17, Weronika Lipniewska



destroy it. I pay much attention to this aspect when my students prepare their diploma works, but also every chance I get to present our shared design idea: to see further – wider.

In 2014 in the Lesser Poland Art Garden functioning within the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre in Cracow the exhibition was organised, inspiringly entitled *Topography/Typography*. It concerned the issue of interpenetration of lettering and public space, analysing the ways in which typography influences the character of the environment and vice-versa, how a specific space determines the form of letters, signboards, and advertisements, which constitute an important aesthetic aspect of our day-to-day reality. Getting familiar with a set of lettering artefacts is an excellent opportunity to observe various ways of identifying and adapting public spaces. For me, an essential stage of design is casting aside the fragments and details which do not provide any substantial, constructive information on a given subject. The simplest way to put it is that unnecessary details spread confusion, unbearable noise which distorts the message and the reception of its essence. It is as though we were walking through a beautiful meadow and in the corner of our eyes we saw a plastic bottle tossed into the grass. It distorts and destabilizes the harmony of natural beauty.

My classes are also an occasion to discuss detail, construction, and the art of building a coherent whole. I pay much attention to spatial experiences – seemingly absolutely unrelated to art or artistic visual design. I often reach for solutions implemented in manual work, at construction sites, and for different technologies and ways of wood processing and metalworking. In an amazing way being aware of the above-mentioned technologies, acts of construction or raising buildings allows us to specify the details in creative spaces of our graphic projects. Understanding the consequences of using volumetric and heavy materials, searching for stable forms, balance, and right proportions of line segments and large-format objects enables me to predict faster the consequences of potentially wrong choices made during the process of graphic creation.

During my classes, manual work is understood as touching and knowing the structure and weight of materials and tools, as it essentially helps in analytical perception of most design problems in graphic environment. A certain slowness of manual work imposes a deepened understanding of all steps in a system of acts. We understand the pros and cons of every change of approach to the task. We see our mistakes and we are able to retrace our steps.

I believe that apart from the light – a medium which stimulates visual perception – manual work is another indispensable aspect of delving into every variation of design. For me, the master of such an approach is Peter Zumthor, a laureate of the Nobel Prize in architecture, the Pritzker Award. Zumthor is one of these creators who do not try to dominate the environment and respect the given context; his works are characterised by simplicity, durability, and elegance. His buildings, which he subjects to art and history, despite their modesty, remain in the consciousness of the visitors as an architectural masterpieces. In his works we can see the great attention which he pays to details as well as evident joy which he derives

from handicraft quality – in the case of Zumthor, everything indicates perfection and nothing is left to chance²³. In his book *Thinking architecture* he speaks of sustainable and responsible design: “In a society which venerates the superfluous, architecture can constitute an opposition, work against the devaluation of meanings and the degradation of form, and speak in its own language. I believe that the language of architecture is not a matter of specific style. Behind every building is an idea of a certain function, a specific place and user. My buildings are an attempt to provide a maximally precise and critical answer to the questions which arise from these simple matters”²⁴.

During my work with youth and students on different levels of creative abilities I pay much attention to discussing the topic of architecture of a lettering sign, its significance for the whole project and for the space in which it will be exhibited. This way, I try to teach them to think about order, achieving harmony through the resignation of things dispensable – dispensable not only in terms of an idea or meaning, but also visually. Some students are able to see this right away, some need a little more time.

When we design using abstract elements and gradually broaden their number, everything becomes more complex. At first, the above-mentioned “plastic bottles” are often invisible. Without practice and adequate teacher’s guidance we may never see them.

Because we talk about art and because we care for it and for harmony in our artistic works, we are able to notice the disorder around us. As designers we gain confidence by making creative choices regarding the paper, paints, and forms. When to this process we add a requirement to verbalise its stages, we realise that we have at our disposal a set of arguments, which – transferred into other areas, including our day-to-day lives – can lead to improving the quality of the visual aspect of our environment.

Printing technologies and design

In times when there are less and less printing schools, I consider the presence of students in a printer the most effective form of educating them. Printing is interesting not only because of the changes it has undergone in the course of centuries – equally fascinating is its today’s industrial stage, which is developing at an even faster pace.

The printing industry includes preparing stencils (printing forms) of drawing and text originals and using them, printing copies, mainly for mass production. As every production branch, it can also be defined through the technologies it utilises, the characteristics of its products, and its relations with other economic fields. The size of technological lines and machine parks and the level of complexity

[23] One of the extraordinary works of Peter Zumthor is the Bruder Klaus Field Chapel – the chapel of brother Nicholas of Flüe, a saint from the XV century and the patron of Switzerland. This little chapel funded by a local farmer was built in

2007 on the field in Mechernich in Southern Germany. The architect engaged the local community to help him in his work, and patterned the building process after traditional techniques.

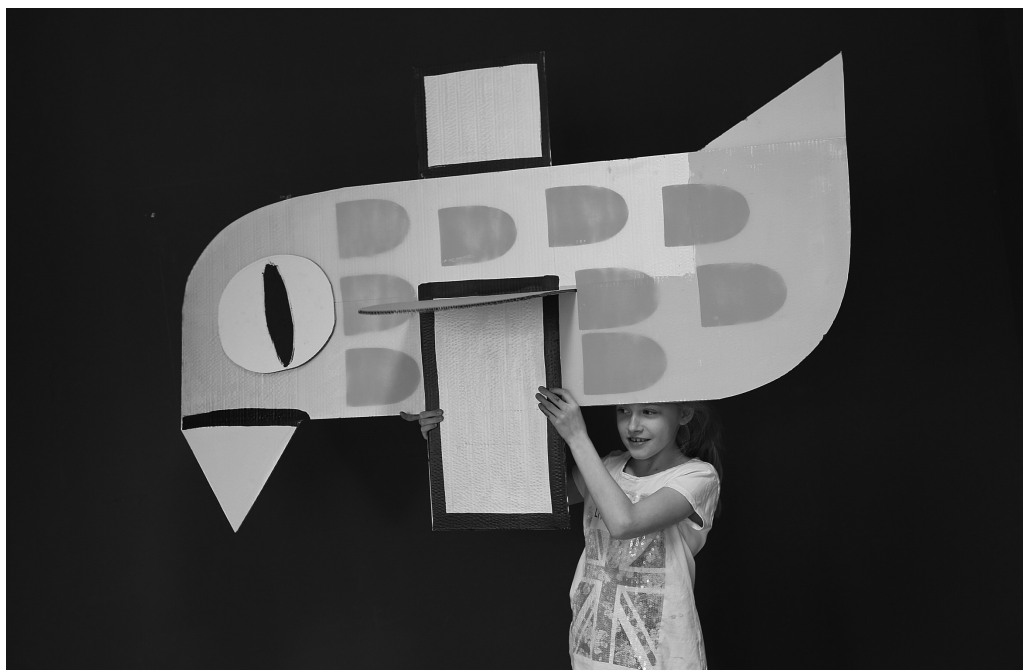
[24] Own translation from Polish.



Illustration 18a

Illustration 18b

Illustrations 18a, 18b
Typography workshops "Grafikam", Gdańsk 2015.
Photo: Adam Kamiński



of performed tasks can create certain cognitive barriers. Thus, aiming at familiarising students with the possibilities of contemporary printing technologies, I try to convey to them that today's printing is still the same act, even if it is industrialised and computerised often to an unimaginable degree.

Thanks to the active cooperation with the "Grafix" Printing Centre in Gdańsk I make it possible for students to make use of this form of "living education", sometimes in very short sessions illustrating specific stages of the process. The practical (industrial) aspect of education notably broadens the awareness of art students, who often design having in mind high-volume reproduction.

I begin familiarising my adepts with complex technological processes during my workshops with children, when for the first time they print fonts on paper. The principle of making copies is always the same – there is an element which transfers a layer of paint and makes a print on a base material. Artistic and aesthetic education of children, youth, and students becomes an active prototyping, which allows them to create and develop technologies by themselves. Their understanding of technology becomes natural, and, as a result, highly developed; it makes it possible to introduce into the creative process additional aspects of education regarding precision, consistency, and perfect reproducibility of industrial activities. Thus, it is all about an education which allows designers not only to avoid mistakes and shortcomings in the printing practice, but also to achieve better quality of graphic designs thanks to the optimal utilisation of printing techniques. Only then, in my opinion, a designer starts to implement advanced technological processes. He does it consciously, anticipating and aiming for what is most important – he is equipped with competencies which enable him to achieve high-quality final results of taken up challenges.

Graphic design is a creative act, nevertheless the development of printing also makes it necessary to obtain factual knowledge – to understand the relevant technologies and to be proficient in the use of graphic programmes. Not until we combine all those aspects we can speak of a full education of a designer.

Summary

The more we know, the better designers we are. A designer educated in many artistic and practical fields knows his capabilities, thinks constructively, and is oriented towards intellectual creation; he can answer the question about his potential contribution to the team which is starting its work on a given project. Today's designer more and more often have at their disposal a broadened spectrum of creative possibilities, which they effectively combine within one creative enterprise. There also exists another approach: the authors can form a creative group, supporting each other on the way to achieving desired results and combining their contributions within the dynamics of a common operation.

While describing my own model of educating graphic designers, I tried to emphasise the importance of bringing out the artistic and aesthetic sensitivity in children, youth, and students as an important element of the development of creative awareness – not only in artistic, but also in interpersonal surroundings –

which consists in the ability to work in creative groups and to make reasonable use of the environment and its resources.

Well-educated designers create regardless of the environment or latitude. They do not feel dependent on one community, but find and adapt proper solutions everywhere they are. They are able to think creatively, make lists of necessary sets of tools, adjust and utilise any resources they have at their disposal in a given situation. The aim of their activity is quality – care for details and a high level of emotional satisfaction from a job well done. Over the years, as a designer and an academic teacher, I changed my approach to properly equipped workshop of a graphic designer. Today, next to the computers and graphic applications, there are also tools, which allow us to work efficiently without losing our motivation.

The job market is open for creative, confident, and stable designers good at organising their and their team's work. Preparing the students for performing the important role of designers begins in university departments; and this activity is always oriented on a certain goal – students' development in various areas.

Teachers do not come to the workshop fully equipped with an absolute knowledge of everything they should know. Nevertheless, with increasing ability to think, discuss and cooperate, the number of “What is the best way to do it?” questions decreases.

It is my belief that for such a goal it was worth it to get out of a safe space of my own didactic practice and... to write this article.

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Streszczenie

Kształcenie projektantów grafików – przyczynek do dyskusji

W niniejszym artykule poprzez odwołanie do doświadczeń własnych oraz literatury przedmiotu autor przedstawia zjawisko nabierania przez grafikę projektową coraz większego znaczenia w świetle wszechobecności wizualnych przekazów medialnych, a także kwestię właściwego kształcenia projektantów grafików. Autor duży nacisk kładzie na interdyscyplinarność projektowania – korzystanie z narzędzi i technik właściwych rozmaitym obszarom twórczym – a także zrównoważone kształcenie i rozbudzanie w uczniach świadomości własnych działań poprzez zapoznanie ich z manualną i praktyczną stroną projektowania. Omawia również rolę znaku literniczego we własnej praktyce dydaktycznej oraz w przestrzeni publicznej. Praca ta ma być przyczynkiem do dyskusji i próbą odpowiedzi na pytanie o rolę dydaktyków w przygotowaniu studentów do pełnienia funkcji projektantów.