

Art and Design Education in the UK

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Abstract

This paper seeks to identify the philosophical origins of the teaching of art and design and subsequently trace its incorporation into a teaching program in the UK. It briefly discusses the nature of its classical ‘drawing’ background and the conflicts in the debate as to what ‘design’ means. It then goes on to identify the cultural and political context which shaped the institutions, such as Art Schools, Regional Art and Design Schools, Municipal Institutes, and finally faculties within the University system. There are some indications of curriculum for the early stages of the Regional Schools and concludes with an indicative summary of the structure of a large University Faculty of Art and Design.

Keywords: Art Education, Design Education, Teaching, UK.

Introduction

It was as late as the renaissance in Italy, the 15th/16th century that brought about the recognition of art education as being distinct from craft training. It was eventually acknowledged that art was an expression of the intellect rather than exclusively skill of the hands. Also, with Vasari’s documenting the artists in his book ‘the Painters’, Alberti reinterpreted Vitruvius, who, in turn, had followed Plato in the means of instructing and providing a contemporary interpretation of classical style.

Early teaching of the arts was primarily done through apprenticeships and working ‘at the feet of the master’ with the prime skill being that of competent technique and obedience. The acknowledgment that art is both a craft and a skill can be traced back as far as the times of ancient Egypt and this persisted through the classical periods and the Middle Ages. In Egypt, all arts, architecture, engineering and technology were seen primarily as crafts and were rated highly in their canon of skill. Huge colonies were established adjacent to any necropolis, temple or other such construction and they took the form of an almost permanent settlement, comprised masters and apprentices.

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In ancient Greece, artists worked for money in the form of payment from their clients and fees from their pupils. Sometimes these activities took place at 'schools', focusing on particular skills such as drawing, painting or sculpture and normally revolving around a 'master' or 'masters' who were supported by a number of apprentices or students. This 'culture' was inherited by the Romans and were incorporated into the 'arts liberales' and 'artes sordidae' then parts of classical Latin, subsequently forming the Trivium of Grammar, Dialectic and Dialectic, and the Quadrivium of Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy and Music. Music was generally preferred to art as the Romans had already rejected the representational arts as of having the same intellectual standing as music.

To the Medieval 'educationalists', painting and sculpture were classified with craft trades and rated with tailoring and leatherwork, and below agriculture, hunting and medicine in status. In general, a medieval artist-craftsman was normally a member of a guild, separate ones for each craft, and these separate guilds controlled its own practitioners through a system of awarding fellowships and masters. Their skills were much in demand mainly as a result of massive program of great Gothic Cathedral and abbey building initiated throughout Europe in the eleventh to fifteenth centuries. Throughout this period, these guilds were all powerful, offering almost the only route into the realms of art and crafts. In Italy, however, a new way of thinking about the arts was evolving:

'If you say that sciences which are not mechanical are of the mind, I say that painting is of the mind, for, as music and geometry treat of the proportions of continuous quantities, while arithmetic treats of the discontinuous, painting treats of all continuous quantities, as well as the proportions of shadow and light, and the variations of distance in perspective' Leonardo Da Vinci 'Treaties on Painting'

In this statement, Leonardo makes a clear case for painting being a liberal art, thereby setting the scene for the first of the Italian 'academies' of art, established about forty years later towards the end of the fifteenth century, followed by many throughout the sixteenth century. In circa 1488, Lorenzo Dei Medici set up the first school of

painting and sculpture in the garden of the Medici Palazzo, and this proved to be the forerunner of the art academy. It cut across the all previously powerful guild systems and allowed apprentices to come and go with freedom and paying no fees.

It was the *Accademia del Disegno*, supported by Tamas Vasari in Florence in 1563 under the protection of Cosimo dei Medici that could be said to be the first fully developed *Accademia*. Thirty six members were elected of whom, three, selected by Vasari, were required to instruct young artists; there were lectures on perspective, but otherwise no regular classes. A more organized, and therefore more effective and intellectual example was the *Accademia di San Luca*, founded in Rome in 1593 under the aegis of pope Sixtus V. Following this example, many Corporate academies sprung up in Turin, Mantua, Venice and Naples and they were followed by private academies; however it was the Rome academy, founded by Pope Urban VII in 1663, that became the most influential centre for art education in Europe, until this ‘mantle’ was passed to Paris in the nineteenth century.

19th Century Growth

In 1666, Colbert, one of the most powerful ministers in the court of Louis XIV- The ‘Sun King’ set up the *Académie de France* in Rome in order to be close to the copies of Classical Art deemed to be so important for such ‘academic’ art education favoured at the time. It took guidance for its structure from the *Accademia di San Luca* in Rome, but remained basically a national institution. It was a small institution whose numbers ranged from twelve initially – six painters, four sculptors and two architects – to twenty in the nineteenth century. In 1795 and as a result of the recent fall of the French monarchy in the revolution of 1792, the academy was taken over by Jacques Louis David who reconstituted the French academy as *Académie des Beaux Arts*. This turn towards Classical art proved attractive both to the new republicans and Napoleon.

Within the *Académie*, the *École des Beaux Arts*, the school of the Academy, developed a high standard of drawing and explored teaching methods across a syllabus which covered perspective,

anatomy, design and life drawing. In 1863, the school was separated from the Académie and additional subjects in French were introduced in order to maintain a strong French student body which, due to its growing reputation, was becoming increasingly anglicized with an influx of English students. This reputation soon led to the École des Beaux Arts becoming the model for several such institutions which were growing up throughout Europe. Perhaps the most illustrious of these was the one in Brussels which confirmed the professional intensity with which they pursued their educational and training goals.

British Art Education Development

In 1711, the first British academy of art was set up in Queen Street, London; however, internal disputes led, in 1716, to a new school being set up in the Piazza, Covent Garden. This was followed in 1734 by the establishing of a new institution in St. Martins Lane, by William Hogarth, one of the students of the Covent Garden School. This became the St. Martins Lane Academy, and along with the Dilletanti Society, prepared to establish a Royal Academy. In 1755 the initial relationship broke down, due to the professionals of the Academy objecting to the wealthy amateurs of the Society wishing to share government of the new Academy. However in 1768, a more successful move resulted in the instrument of the new foundation being signed by the monarch, thus setting up the 'Royal Academy of Arts in London'. The Schools of Design of the Royal Academy were established by the following instrument:

'...That the Schools of Design may be under the direction of the ablest artists, there shall be elected annually from amongst the academicians (40 only) nine persons who shall be called visitors; they shall be Painters of History, able sculptors, or other persons properly qualified; their business shall be, to attend the schools by rotation, each a month, to set the figures, to examine the performances of the Students, to advise and instruct them, to endeavor to form their tastes, and turn their attention to that branch of the Arts for which they shall seem to have the aptest disposition' Hodgson & Eaton 'The Royal Academy and its Members'.

There would also be elected Professors of anatomy, architecture, perspective and geometry and painting. The Schools' locations

changed frequently during the initial years, but in 1867 the academy eventually settled in Burlington House, its present location, where the schools were located in the basement.

For the latter part of the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth century, the Academy, and therefore the Schools, played host to most eminent artists of their day, William Etty, and John Constable being two; however the schools seemed to lose much of their vitality, and seemed dull and uninspired when compared to the vigour and innovation evident from the growing strength of the Beaux Schools in Paris and the other European centers. The emphasis was on life as the most important subject, but advanced students could study only in the Painting school. Overall, consensus was that instruction in the schools throughout the nineteenth century was not up to acceptable standards and teaching methods, particularly drawing, compared unfavourably with that used in the Beaux Arts in Paris.

At present, the Royal Academy occupies the same accommodation in Burlington House, London that it has since 1868, with its art school on the basement. It is a registered charity; therefore, its income must be raised by the members; however it continues to follow the same dictate as set out in its founding document;

'To promote the arts of design, that is; to present a broad range of visual art to the widest possible audience; to stimulate debate, understanding and creation through education; and to provide a focus for the interests of artists and art lovers' Royal Academy of Arts web site

Its educational responsibilities are delivered through its art school, traditionally known as the 'schools' due to the fact that originally each school corresponded to a different element in the training of the artist that had to be mastered in a particular order. Currently sixty students study drawing, painting and printmaking in a three-year post-graduate course, the only such course available in Britain (RA Web site)

In the nineteenth-century London, in keeping with the ebullient spirit of private enterprise of Victorian England, there were many private art schools. Of these, many were well-run with sound programs and good instruction, however they mostly had a common aim which was to gain a place in the RA for their students.

In fact, the basis for all art education in Victorian England was copying. It was even prevalent in the early times of the Beaux in Paris, however this changed much earlier there than in England. The objects being copied were normally casts of classical origin with intense, and sometimes extraordinarily long times being given to single drawings of such casts. In some cases where medal drawings were concerned, periods measured in years could be lavished on one single drawing. This whole process was stultifying Art education, as design teaching was also stuck in a 'rut' of mimicry and the obsession with natural forms, so often made unnatural by a rigid form of expression.

A National System of Art Education

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Britain set up a complete and comprehensive system of public art education. It extended from state art education in the school system through training colleges, art masters association to great museum of applied art, later to become the Victoria and Albert Museum. There were, of course, a network of schools of art and schools of design throughout the country, but not a common curriculum,

The first school of design was called the 'Normal School' and was set up in London by the Board of Trade (The Government) in 1837. Very soon another school was set up by a private consortium, in St, Martins Street, Leicester Square. Once again the argument raged between the classicists who wanted the continuation of drawing casts of classical features and designs based in antiquity and those who wanted figure drawing with live models including the naked human body.

The Normal School (or Head School of Design) became the *Central Training School* in 1852, then renamed to the *National Art Training Schools* in 1863, and finally reconstituted as the *Royal College of Art* in 1896.

While this debate ensued, schools of design/art were starting up in the provinces with Manchester being the first in 1842, followed by Spitalfields 1841, Female School (London) and York (1842), Birmingham, Nottingham, Sheffield, Coventry and Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1843), Glasgow (1844), and then almost every town in Britain,

even small ones, acquired a School of Art finally giving a number totaling almost 160. In general these schools were not expected to occupy new premises, however the government gave a fifty percent grant towards the provision of premises. After 1842, they also took on the responsibility of the salaries of the masters which eventually facilitated the policy of introducing a common curriculum which was in force for the remaining part of the century. The following is a brief summary of the common curriculum:

The Drawing Course

Ornament Stages:

- Stage 1: Linear Drawing with Instruments
- Stage 2: Freehand outline of rigid forms from the flat copy
- Stage 3: Freehand outline from the round (solids or casts)
- Stage 4: Shading from the flat; examples or copies (usually in chalk)
- Stage 5: Shading from the round, solids or casts (usually in chalk)

Figure and Flower Drawing Stages

- Stage 6: Human or animal figure from the flat.
- Stage 7: Flowers, foliage and objects of natural beauty from the flat.
- Stage 8: Human or animal figures from the round or from nature.
- Stage 9: Anatomical Studies.
- Stage 10: Flowers, Foliage, landscape details and objects of natural beauty from nature.

The Painting Course

- Stage 11: Painting ornament from the flat.
- Stage 12: Painting ornament from the cast.
- Stage 13: Painting flowers, objects of natural beauty or landscapes from the flat.
- Stage 14: Painting the above from nature.
- Stage 15: Painting sketches of an object or a group as a colour composition.
- Stage 16: Painting the human figure or animals in monochrome from a cast.

Stage 17: Painting the human figure.

The Modeling Course

Stage 18: Modeling ornament.

Stage 19: Modeling the human figure or animals.

Stage 20: Modeling flowers fruit or foliage or objects of natural history from nature.

Stage 21: Time sketches in clay of the human figure or animals from nature.

The Design Course

Stage 22: Elementary design

Stage 23: Applied design; technical studies

Twentieth Century Municipalisation

In 1901, a reorganization of local government finances resulted in a major take-over of most of the Schools of Art throughout the country, by their local Municipal Council, followed quickly by their coming under the control of the Local Education Committee under the Education Act of 1902. The Royal College had, meanwhile, organized itself into four schools, namely, Architecture, Painting, Sculpture and Design, and most of the now municipalized Schools did likewise. At this time, the Arts and Crafts movement had gained much popularity with people all too disenchanted with what industrialization had done to their cities. However industrialization had also led to an increase in the awareness of the need for trade schools, and many of the newly acquired Art Schools were soon absorbing these trade schools and responding to what had been a growing criticism along the lines of 'what use were they?' One response to what type of education they were now producing went along the lines of:

'The school gives tuition to three classes of student – Craftsmen: to make workmen better workmen. General Students: for the cultivation of observation, appreciation, and knowledge of art. Teachers: to qualify those who are, or intend to become, teachers to give instruction in art.' Leicester School of Art.

It was a report published in 1926, The Hadow Report, that eventually introduced the principles of the Arts and Crafts movements into schools, having been introduced into Arts Schools some forty years before. At this time, the Bauhaus School in Dessau began having a significant influence on Art and Craft education in Britain so clearly there is a broadening of the definition of Art, Craft and Design, with a corresponding change in curriculum of traditional Art Schools across the country. Also, with the Bauhaus came politicalisation in the form of an implied social agenda for the arts and crafts.

In 1933, the National Board of Education decided to create regional centers of Art education and designated nine colleges throughout the country as regional centers. These would be expected to increase the range of courses offered, both in terms of subjects, and levels, and it would be assumed that these regional centers would have the facilities to take students to what was later to become Masters level work. It was this move to firstly create a whole range of new higher education institutions, polytechnics, and then to require most of the regional art schools to be incorporated into them that created the next major change in Art and Design education.

It was in 1961 that the Minister of Education set up the National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design who replaced the old NDD (National Diploma of Design) with the new Diploma in Art and Design. Its structure would have a brief pre-diploma course of one year, followed by a three-year Diploma Course in one of four areas of specialization: Fine Arts, Graphic Design, Three-Dimensional Design and Textiles/Fashion. History of Art was to be studied throughout the course and examined for the Diploma with History of Art and complementary studies taking fifteen percent of the overall course. Students entering had to be at least 18 years old with at least five passes at GCE O level. This course was administered by the new body referred to above.

By 1969, forty colleges across the country had received approval from the National Council to run these new courses. Meanwhile another major policy change was in the offing, the forerunner of this being the according of University Status to the Royal College of Art, allowing it to immediately convert its diplomas to degrees and it's

students and general financing, to come within the remit of the University Grants Commission

It seemed almost inevitable that as the old CAT's (Colleges of Advanced Technology) were about to receive University Status, then the even newer Polytechnics would likewise follow, taking all the recently incorporated Regional Colleges of Art and Design into the University 'world' with them, thereby generating a major re-think of the just recently designed Diplomas in Art and Design – from NDD to Dip.AD to BA (CNAA validated) and now, within an autonomous University, BA (self validated).

Conclusion

There is no real conclusion possible from this infinitely complex story. It is clear that the Art and Design education, like most pedagogic studies is subject to political, philosophical, cultural, fashion, financial and any other influences which pervade the context in which they exist. What I have bypassed is, of course, the great influences exerted by individuals and strong personalities, a wild card in a 'hand' of wild cards. Throughout this paper, I have refrained from bringing them into the process simply because it would have extended it beyond a reasonable size; however anyone reading this should be aware that they did exist, and the resulting decisions can often be seen to be a direct product of personality clashes and the resulting policies.

Addendum

Most of the old Regional Art and Design Schools are now incorporated into Universities and are designated as Faculties. They are independent of their Local Municipalities and have self awarding and validating powers for their degrees and most of the other qualifications awarded. A typical structure might be the following, taken from The Faculty of Art and Design, (more commonly called BIAD – Birmingham Institute of Art and Design) Birmingham City University.

There are Five Schools of Art and Design

Art

BA Degrees in Fine Arts, and Visual Arts, MA (suite) degrees in Art & Art Education, Contemporary Curatorial Practices, Art Practice & Education, Digital Art in Performance.

Visual Communication

BA degrees in Visual Communications, Animation, Animation for games design, Graphic design, Illustration, Photography, Theatre & performance, Event Design., MA degrees in Visual Communication, Photography; documentary, Sub-degree courses: HND Graphic Design, Visual Communications.

Fashion, Textiles & Three Dimensional Design

BA degrees in Design studies, interior design, Interior Products, Product Design, Furniture design, Industrial Design, design in Business, Design Management, Strategies, Fashion Design, Fashion retail management, Textile design. MA courses: Interior design, product design, design Management, MA Fashion Styling, MA Fashion promotion, Textile, Fashion and Surface, design, Design & visualisation. Sub-degree courses; HND/C in Three dimensional design, Practice, design for Fashion & textiles.

Architecture

BA degrees in Architecture, Landscape architecture; MA courses in Architecture, Architectural Practice, Arch Practice Administration, Architectural Studies, Landscape architecture, Urban design. Diploma and Postgraduate degrees in Architecture, Architectural practice; and graduate diploma in Landscape Architecture.

Jewelry

BA Degrees in Jewelry & Silversmithing; jewelry & Silversmithing; Design for Industry, MA in Jewelry, silver-smithing: Sub-Degrees courses HND/C in Horology, Gemmology, Jewellery & Silver-smithing, ND design crafts.

Research

The Faculty of Art and design also offer a full range of Post Graduate degrees by Research leading to M.Phil. and PhD degrees of the University.

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