Authorial Practices in Graphic Art Education:
Empowerment and Communication through Words and Image

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Abstract

This paper describes a workshop that was run in summer 2010 in the School of Visual Communication in Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, a faculty of Birmingham City University, UK. Students with a background predominantly in Illustration, graphic Communication or animation were introduced to new developments in the field of narrative story telling through small press books. These small batch production books provide simple tools for communicating personal stories and developing an authorial voice. This paper is in response to one of the proposals of the Design Discipline session which offered the opinion that "design is sometimes called a process?… or a way of thinking?".
Are there examples of a contribution of design methodologies in an artistic education (and vice-versa)?

Introduction

In summer 2010, the School of Visual Communication ran a workshop for school pupils aged 16-18 (to be referred to as 'students' from here on) as part of an outreach project to engage the local community in creative practices within the Higher Education sector. The University's music school (the Conservatoire) and the Birmingham School of Acting were also engaged in this initiative. The aim of the workshop we ran was to develop a visual language through drawing processes and to then take the resulting work into autographic and digital printing as part of the process of self publishing. New processes in traditional print making alongside evolving digital programmes has meant the process of self publishing has never been easier and is being used as an opportunity to communicate across cultural diversity as well as providing a means for personal expression and values. The workshop had been trialed with undergraduate students so that we could expand narrative ideas from research journals into free formed books. The use of artist books and 'zines' has long been an established work shop exercise and has the added benefit of working across both Fine Art and Design practices. With the ever increasing pressure in higher education, art and design is becoming an amalgamation of varied intentions, compromises and adaptions, now seems very timely for artists/designers to re-stake their 'territories' and take control of the whole publication process. Out of these initiatives we have been able to consider cross-school/faculty collaborations, it would not be uncommon to see the School of English working alongside the School of Visual Communication. I was also keen to build on the information and workshop sessions from the ELIA Teachers' Academy I attended in July 2009. The workshop theme was story telling. The practice of story telling both aural and written is very current in contemporary teaching practice. This paper seeks to build on some of the ideas and findings from that workshop and to consider further developments. The participatory aspect of self authored work that involves visual thinking and dialogue allows accessibility for greater numbers of artists/writers from different backgrounds. A wider participation from culturally diverse groups encourages different views and identities to be empowered with a personal, visual voice.

Workshop Description

The Aims of the Workshop

The main brief was to be realized over a period of three days. Participants were to devise a personal narrative that could be developed into a story using sequential images supported by text (optional). These were then adapted into a book format which would be produced as multiples using both traditional and digital print methods. The books would then be either folded or bound and distributed/disseminated at artist's book fairs across the UK. Students seeking skills acquisition would have been introduced to drawing, design, printmaking as well as bookbinding and basic marketing.

The Concept

The main workshop lecturer other than me, Chiu Kwong Man has a background in drawing as well as interactive art and has had many of his narrative sequences/books published online as well as limited edition batch productions. The initial exercise was for each pupil to devise a personal narrative and in order to achieve this we divided the group (12 participants) into three groups of four, supported by a member of staff (George Hart was the third staff member on this occasion) Each group concentrated on producing a visual map as a way of establishing the identify of each individual member's personal contribution. This could then be used to enable the group to discuss intentions and to allow for positive feedback. The work was then shown to the whole cohort and from this presentation the individual members were able to employ their ideas along with selected feedback/suggestions towards a working rough of the book. Students were encouraged to ask questions and make a proposal of how they foresaw their ideas in a sequential format.

Preparatory Exercises and Inputs

Tutors introduced their own work alongside student produced at previous undergraduate workshops, this was largely to encourage discussion but also to show the possibilities involved in the mechanism and production of the book. There was also discussion centered around theoretical models of artist publications The students were required to research the field of self publishing and this led to interesting discussion across the cohort. At this stage health and safety issues were addressed and workshop code of practice, this is the norm regarding teaching students unfamiliar with equipment and machinery. Tutors also gave introductory technical demonstrations in Silkscreen printing, relief printing as well as Photoshop and In design. The workshop also included BCU student ambassadors from the School of Art; these were experienced volunteers who were there to help enable the visiting school pupils.

Discussion and Evaluation of the Workshop

The workshop allowed the participants, both teachers and students, to work together in a process of small press production and self publication. The students felt the workshop had been both worthwhile and relevant and for the majority this was the first time they had experienced working across digital and autographic platforms. The developments of personal narratives allowed students to recognize their individuality within the group and to share ideas amongst their peers. This was one of the most encouraging aspects of the workshop as it helped establish strong criteria for the 'published' work. Students recognized the benefits of working in areas strongly associated with design disciplines and Fine Art practices without having to choose between them. In this respect a print workshop naturally transcends the practice disciplines and allows work to be carried out irrespective of a student's intended future direction. Whilst most of the workshop participants eventually produced books which could be exhibited and sold, some wanted to produce prints as stand alone items and again this was seen as a valuable addition to the original intention of the workshop. Throughout the workshop, discussion was had between all those involved as to how the finished work would evolve and look, there was an opportunity to show work in a gallery situation or alternatively as table top displays (more commonly seen at artist book fairs) As the actual books would attract audience interaction it was felt that a display that would encourage handling of the artifacts would be preferable to a traditional display. Several of the students wanted to read their texts as they were designed as oral experiences and a degree of performativity would enrich the audience's perception of the work. This was an interesting situation as what had begun as a visual exercise starting with the written word became an oral experience.

How can this be used in higher arts education?

The area of artist book/self-publishing has become an area of recognized common interest between the disciplines of fine art and design (in this case graphic design). Increasingly there are moves to dissolve the 'barriers' that have been erected between traditional art school disciplines and to establish collaborative engagement between these areas of study. In the Faculty of Art & Design at Birmingham City University, the School of Art runs a bachelor's degree, Art and Design where cross disciplinarity is actively encouraged, in 2011 a postgraduate degree, MA Art & Design will start. This will provide a progression route for students studying on the BA Art and Design but will also strengthen the notion of design existing within the fine art disciplines.

Pedagogy

The pedagogic aim of the workshop was to establish a means of enabling students to use 'design thinking' whilst engaging in the traditional processes of fine art printmaking. The 'process' of design was embedded into the workshop exercise and consequently the notional divide between the two subject disciplines never became a barrier to the project. The students were able to adapt to the work based learning model that was adopted for the workshop and several of the schools involved have developed this further.

References:

Biggs,J (2003) Teaching for Quality Learning at University (second edition): Open University Press
Mortiboys, A (2005) Teaching with Emotional Intelligence: Routledge
Race, P (2004) The Lecturer's Toolkit (second edition): Routledge

Integrating Digital Storytelling with Art Education. In the summer of 2005, pre- and in-service art teachers at the University of Houston learned about art education technology through a graduate-level course, which focused on the application of digital story-telling to art education. This course explored the potential of digital storytelling for visual culture art education through the expan-sion of technology skills and knowledge for teaching art in a digital age. Images, photos, and video are central to a digital story and can be obtained online, in print, or students can produce them on a computer. The application of digital storytelling to art education is an interdisciplinary, inquiry-based, hands-on project that integrates the arts, education, local communities, technology, and storytelling. Unit code: QCF Level 3: Credit value: Communication through Art and Design. D/502/4969 BTEC National 10. Guided learning hours: 60. Aim and purpose This unit aims to develop the breadth and depth of learners knowledge, and understanding of and skills in communication through art and design. Learners will achieve this by studying how practitioners use primarily visual imagery to communicate ideas, messages and meaning, and then applying findings to their own ideas. Potential audiences and clients are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the different forms of communication and there is a constant requirement for fresh, creative ideas to replace or revise familiar forms. Graphic Design and Industry Technology. An Introduction to Pixel Graphics (Adobe Photoshop) 3:01. Vector vs. Pixel Graphics. 2 Gain visual communication project ideas that incorporate both hands-on art making and technology. 3 Explore ways to honor your students' work by displaying and critiquing completed visual communications projects. 8. Creativity A. Designs experiences to practice critical thinking and problem-solving skills B. Designs instruction to allow for freedom of expression and independent thought within student work. 9. Connections C. Values how the arts connect with other disciplines and provides opportunities to experience those connections D. Develops instruction that incorporates current issues and themes in education. Janani Nathan. Teaching Communication Arts Multicultural ly. One of the major components of multiculturalism is to promote sensitivity to students' communication patterns in culturally diverse settings. classroom can be reduced through the integration of multicultural education in the school's curriculum, and the multiculturation of the school environment. Such an approach will achieve the balance between the school's input and its desired educational outcomes. the communication and learning styles of their peers in the class; (7) Empathizing with the learners by communicating efficiently with students in terms of their. cultural orientations; (8) Encouraging acculturation of students while maintaining pride in their linguistic, cultural. Democratic empowerment: through overt persuasive texts but also through narrative fiction and poetry, where young people can express their understandings and responses to their world. The Art of Communication. Rhetoric as an Educational Tool for Teaching Writing. The definitional problems of rhetoric have been discussed extensively elsewhere (for example, Fleming 1998 and Eidenmuller 2018), but conceived most broadly, rhetoric is "the art, practice, and study of human communication" (Lunsford 1992, p.79). In practice, however, the teaching of argument in England has strong echoes of rhetori-cal traditions with considerable emphasis on rhetorical questions, anaphora, tricolon and pathos (although this metalanguage is less commonly used to describe it).