

Study on Reform & Practice of Book Design Teaching

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Abstract

The key to enhance the levels of book designers lies in education. By keeping pace with the times, education requires teachers to constantly get rid of conventional ideas and improve new methods. Teachers should properly adjust their teaching methods and course contents. In addition, teaching units should establish and improve relevant bases for practice and solid training so that the book design teaching may develop in a sustainable manner. This paper discusses the current problems existing in book design courses and some new ideas on teaching reform of this course. At the same time, this paper indicates a new direction for further reform of book design course.

Key words: Book design; Teaching; Reform and practice

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1. PREFACE

Books are the ladder for human progress. They are an important media for the dissemination of information and cultures since they carry the thoughts and knowledge of mankind. The design of a book is the design of the information transmission mode. As a designer, he/she not

only needs to design the form and the related contents of a book, but also needs to re-build both physical and spiritual parts of the book. All these require the designer give full play to his/her imagination and creativity, break the conventional aesthetic habits and thinking by exploring book forms with completely new ideas in order to initiate new methods in the visual art of book design.

2. ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS IN BOOK DESIGN TEACHING

2.1 Lack of Rigorous Training Design Thinking

In the teaching process, many students often neglect the detailed design analysis to the target objects during their design of books. They make designs only based on their own feelings or even rely directly on computer software and network elements to conduct the imitation and touch of book design. This leads to the fact that the design results of students are fully occupied by rational thinking while the initial ideas and inspirations are absent. That's why the students' innovative thinking capabilities in the process of book designs are seriously confined. It is hard to give effective training to and improve their design thinking.

2.2 Absence of Detailed Survey & Analysis

For most school students, they have few opportunities for social practice. So they are aware little of market survey. What's more, some teachers have low requirements to the survey. That's why students overlook the process of design survey during their designs as they don't think the survey is essential. With the help of the Internet, they only make simple surveys and comparisons for a book design just in order to render their homework. They do not have sufficient knowledge or understanding to the targeted object. Such actions finally give rise to the designed book product lacking of complete design connotations and requirements.

2.3 Failure of Virtual Design Tasks to Motivate Student's Enthusiasm in Learning

Students may give more favor to the actual practice of book designs compared with virtual teaching. In the previous teaching, the arrangement of pure virtual teaching was hard to motivate the enthusiasm of students. Since they cannot experience the real process of a design project, some students are unwilling to learn book design. Some of them are even dilatory in rendering their halfhearted homework. The teaching effect is not assured in any means.

2.4 Dull Teaching Methods

Although there are many traditional teaching materials on book design, most of them are short of creativity and originality. The stale and unattractive teaching materials and knowledge are not only difficult to meet the needs of the current society for innovation, but also affect students' initiative and confidence of learning to some extent. At the same time, the Internet technology is developing rapidly today. Students are accessible to more and more high-tech products. Teachers comparatively fall behind as their method of giving classes is made only through their multi-media courseware, which will affect much students' learning interest and initiatives. An excellent teacher will closely follow the paces of the times and adopt more teaching methods for the sake of providing more conveniences for students to learn better.

3. STUDY ON MEASURES OF BOOK DESIGN TEACHING

As one of the important book founders, a book designer plays a significant role in creating the beauty of a book. The level of a designer will have direct influence to the external form of a book. School students are vital participants of future books. Thus it is quite necessary to give due regard to the cultivation and education of students' design of books together with the reform of book design teaching. The focus on education of book designers is to make it advance with the times, get rid of traditional system and teaching concepts, constantly innovate teaching methods, properly adjust the contents of this course, and guide the book design to develop towards the good direction.

3.1 Setting of Scientific & Rigorous Design Thinking

Teachers should take seriously the cultivation of students' rigid design thinking in the real teaching work, particularly at the stage of sketch design of a book. Teachers should do their best to demonstrate vast design examples to the students, and provide explanations as well as analysis of creative ideas and production of the design so that students fully understand the systematic process of the whole book design. At the same time, new

teaching methods such as brain storm may be adopted to enhance the training of the students in their innovative thinking. Greatest efforts are made to prevent students from piecing together a book design through finding relevant elements on the Internet or copying the results of other people.

3.2 Change of Traditional Teaching Concepts

The crux for the reform of book design teaching is to change the traditional concepts on book design. If we review the book design process in the western world, different ideas strongly prove that the change of design concepts is an inevitable result of the development of an era no matter it was German Expressionism, Russian Constructivism or Super-realism.

Since modern times, western book arts are gaining favor of Chinese artists and help promoting Chinese book art to a new step. Due to the influence of the historical era, economy and other elements, the book design industry in China was only limited to the design of the front cover in the previous book designs, which fettered people's design thinking. In recent years, the book design in China makes the transition from "binding & layout" to "book design". The teaching work in some institutions of higher learning has changed the major of "binding & layout" to "book design". Of course, this is not only the change of the name, but the change of the teaching concepts in the deep meaning. Since the traditional art for book binding and layout has provided us with exquisite skill examples and foundation, what we need to do now is to change the traditional thinking on book design and break the obsolete pattern of manifestation so as to satisfy the needs of the people in the new era. In the practical teaching, however, some teachers are still using the single teaching mode. They only arrange the students to make the virtual design of the front cover of a book even when they are assigning the homework to the students. Too stale and partial, such teaching method is hard to make students feel the visual art in the space or the real connotations of book design. The design consciousness and capabilities of students remain on the traditional and low level of book art, which is hardly to meet the demand of the society. Book art, in fact, is a kind of three dimensional overall design art. It is a solid and running pattern art consisting of words, colors space, and so on. Therefore, the reform of book design teaching must be made from the basic teaching concepts.

3.3 Combination of Theory & Practice

A theory develops via practice and practice goes up to a higher level on the basis of theory. It can be seen that there's a dialectical relationship between teaching theory and practice. It is necessary to change the teaching concepts for book design. The assurance of the close combination of a teaching theory and the practice is more worthy of education workers' attention and exploration. In the process of teaching and learning, a teaching theory

is the guidance to design practice and the theoretical foundation of book designers. However, if designers only talk about theories without realizing the significance of guidance from practice, the actual role of the teaching theory is hard to play. Only when a teaching theory and the practice are organically combined will it possible to make them run through the systematic teaching of book design and achieve the effect of yielding twice the result with half the effort.

The teaching mode of being from theory to practice is generally adopted in traditional teaching work. That means theoretical explanations are given before a design practice is provided. This mode is easy to cause the disconnection between theory as well as design practice and trainings, and the teaching effect is not significant. If some theoretical knowledge is explained at the beginning of the course and the students are arranged for practice and operation after that, teachers will be easier to find the blind points in students' study process and offer specific explanations and trainings. This type of combination of theory and practice is based on the separate explanation of theoretical knowledge. Theoretic explanations are offered during the process of design practice. In this way, students will deepen the understanding of theoretical knowledge in the process of learning and teachers are possible to give timely guidance for concrete operations during practice. Facts have proved that the combination of theory and practice is a sound and effective teaching method for book design. In the previous teaching process, teachers usually assigned homework in the form of hypothetical proposition or free proposition. Such proposition without any actual use value would make students fail to find the motivation for design. They took such design lightly in their mind and handed in vaguely a number of pages of homework which did not have any practical meaning. Such design was far from the requirements of production and consumption. So, in order to stimulate students' enthusiasm in design practice, a teacher may give lessons to related course in the form of entrusted proposition or case subject and provide students with opportunities for participation in social production and consumption, which will be better for students to transit to the society smoothly in the future.

The close and effective combination of teaching theory and practice is helpful for students to master the knowledge of book design comprehensively and good for cultivate students' participation in learning, practical design thinking and passion. It responds to the call in China at present stage of fostering innovative and practical talents.

3.4 Sound Practice Base

In most colleges and universities in China, the major of book design is part of the major of artistic design. As there are many courses in artistic design, the classes for book design are given in a concentrated period of time. Students do not have many practice opportunities or arrangements.

Our book design education exists only on paper over a long period of time. Students' homework design has also been under the condition of idle imagination. Such design is hard to withstand the test of social production and consumption. So it is extremely urgent to establish practice bases for the education of book design.

In my opinion, presses and printing houses are more suitable to be chosen as the education bases for book design teaching. This is because presses can make the review and systematic planning to the original manuscript while printing houses are mainly engaged in specific implementation of a book design. In this way, the presses and printing houses may display comprehensively to students the whole process of book production, helping students master book design related skills so that they can design the book products which really meet the requirements of the society.

The specific time arrangements of practice bases for students are under feasible adjustments based on concrete course conditions. Generally speaking, a book design course takes about 5 weeks. Colleges and universities should properly increase the number of classes for book design and make sure students' study time in order to let students better complete the teaching practice and fully understand book materials and printing processes. Arrangements can also be made for students to practice in the practice units at their spare time when the courses are tight. At the same time, the practice for book design requires the support of field and equipment. First, students are short of real operational experience. Their safety in a high-speed operating workshop needs a spacious room for guarantee. Second, students need to understand the production process of the system and take practical training. The practice bases are required to provide students with well-equipped facilities.

Students can have more practice opportunities for practice in bases located in presses. However, such presses may have strict management rule and students are not allowed to go in or out of the press randomly compared with a printing house. Restricted by equipment and field, a press is not possible for dozens of students to go there for practice at the same time. So teachers can make the arrangements for students to practice in different groups so as to make sure that every student has the opportunity for field study.

The establishment of practice bases is the product of class teaching in colleges and universities and production teaching. Only students are made to participate in factory productive operation can they really master every production process for book design and conduct excellent designs satisfying the needs of social production and consumption in a better manner.

3.5 Adoption of Internet Teaching Platform

Interest is the inducer of design aesthetics. Book design teaching cannot do without the cultivation of students'

interests. Under the conditions of new era background, a teacher's teaching method for book design should be closely associated with the times. Currently, many students have lost their curiosity to some teaching methods such as media courseware or online teaching out of the traditional book design teaching. A teacher is required to go with the times and adopt more fresh means for teaching in order to stimulate students' interest in learning. For example, a teacher may use online teaching to ask students to look for teaching contents and materials, and let them find the teacher's assignment arrangements and notices through the Internet. Such interactive relationship is kept all the time and students will gradually increase their learning efficiency in the process of equal exchanges with the teacher.

4. SUMMARY

Book design is a very practical course. In the teaching process teachers is to give students a complete book design concept from the origin to improve thinking clues, from the rational logic design to create a series of emotional and physical design implementation process. In this process, teachers and students share each other's emotions, experiences and ideas. It not only makes students gain the knowledge and think more about the knowledge; but also helps teachers to develop new teaching ideas and enrich teaching methods so as to enhance teaching effect. Teachers and students can achieve consensus and shared together. In addition, with the continuous development of social economy, people's material life can be basically meted, more and more people put emphasis on improving the quality of life. They are increasingly having high requirements for books. Especially detailed social classification requires book design should be more personalized and specialized. How to better train students' book design professional standards and improve the quality of the integrated book designer is now a teaching priority. On the other hand, students' book design learning cannot be separated from the practical teaching. Once it leaves the actual practice, students trained must be the one with higher marks in the exams and lower abilities in the society. Book design teaching courses need to focus on teaching theory and attach importance to classroom teaching practice. In the teaching

process, teachers should focus on improving students 'ability to design innovative thinking; on the other hand the teachers need to strengthen students' practical ability to meet the needs of society. Currently, traditional teaching concepts, teaching mode and teaching method are not suitable for the times, so the teaching reform for book design courses is imperative. Only the new teaching ideas and new teaching model are used, the school can cultivate outstanding designers. By the combination of theory and practice of teaching, students can not only promote a comprehensive mastery of knowledge, but also can develop creative thinking and passion for design. What's more, it is better to help build students' confidence. Book design teaching requires mutual support of theory, practice and environment so as to ensure the teaching effect. The reform of book design teaching is the necessary trend to improve thinking under current social background. Only the transform of traditional teaching concepts and modes and the advancement with the times can we fully tap designers' brilliance and personalities in order to foster more excellent talents on book design to the society.

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