

UNITED
DESIGNS

UNITED

GRAPHIC DESIGN

PRACTICE & EDUCATION

DESIGNS



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On the Turning Away

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QATAR

One cannot manage change. One can only be ahead of it [Peter Drunker].

As societies are moving from industrial thinking to knowledge thinking, there is also a change in the methods of understanding and communicating with the new created environment. Methods of assimilation and learning are changing. It is no longer learning by doing but learning by trial and error. Learning by comparing “Nintendo games” against our industrial logic’ – when ratios change, men change [Marshall McLuhan, 1968]. Consequently, the new altered environment may be evoking in us new ratios of perceptions and evaluations we are still trying to understand.

Coming back to Teaching, since this is still what I do:

FACT: Students will eventually graduate and go out to practice in the outside world.

FACT: As their instructor, I am supposed to give them the right learning package in order to face future challenges.

FACT: The ‘outside’ is in constant change. The ‘change’ ratio is in-calculable. Just observe all the new technology that continues to shape our environment and our perception of things.

QUESTION: Can anyone really forecast what it will be like 10 years from now?

MY ANSWER: I doubt.

FACT: On average, our students are presently aged between 20 and 25 years of age. In ten years, they will be 30 to 35 years old. They will be in the prime of their careers.

QUESTION 1: What can we teach them that will still be useful in 10 years time?

QUESTION 2: How can we prepare our students today for future inevitable changes?

New ratios of perceptions and evaluations

“The essential difference between emotion and reason is that emotion leads to action while reason leads to conclusions.”

[Donald Calne]

Human beings are powered and driven by their emotions. They consume, shop and learn using their mind and their heart, or if you prefer, their emotions. They simply trust in them. Emotions are the center of our communication. And when we can not show or express them, we have emoticons for the internet and mobile phones. All information in our universe is transmitted to us through our senses. We evaluate through them. The Big Five as they are called allow our emotions to react. But we also have other vital senses: Are you cold or warm? Happy or sad? Whatever... Our senses instigate our actions. *“The range of our senses is extraordinary. Thank evolution once again. The world constantly changes. Who won the evolution game? Answer: the one who responded fastest to the widest range of stimulation and information.”* [Kevin Roberts, 2004]. Ratios of perceptions are related to the senses. So is the ratios of learning.

New Profile (students)

Our students are becoming digital nomads. On the run, untraceable, and unpredictable. Their reactions are shaped by the new wallpaper on their up to date mobile phones. Mobile phones, laptops, wireless internet connections, Ipods, digital cameras, everything is becoming portable and mobility is becoming the key issue. The easiness of accessing information from anywhere you are in the world is playing a major role in shaping the new students’ profile. *Does the student know what is going on around them? Do they care? Do they appreciate the beauty and the essence of what is happening? How would they react? How would they interact? How would they decide on the actions they need to take? I know the answer to this one: by trusting their emotions. How can you then lock someone in a classroom?*

New Profile (classroom)

Thinking does not happen only in the classroom. My best ideas have come to me in weird places. So what is the new role of the classroom? What kind of interactions will happen if we were to change the classroom environment, as we know it now? I guess that the classroom itself needs to be redesigned. The space where education happens should be rethought in order to cater for the new digital nomads' perceptions and evaluations. I believe that there is a direct connection between the head, the heart and the hand. These all together, create and shape a design or any other produced work. Head, hand and heart: or if you prefer emotions. *"For me, the problem still lies in the present tense... for the times they are a changing."* [Bob Dylan]

So what can you teach them today that will useful 10 years from now?

How would I speak to their mind, educate their emotions and teach them to question and analyze their senses. I would inspire them to help them navigate through these crazy times. I would teach them how to make the right decisions. But that is not all; one must develop the brain's critical side. A side that is able to make the right decisions. And creating self-critical awareness, so they can educate their clients in the future.

We can no longer tell a student what to do and what not to do. Technology has taken over and is playing this role for us. We have been being replaced. Sorry about that folks! The unfortunate problem is that we can not prevent students from logging in and benefiting from this source. The question that remains is how do we teach student's to make the right choices about what is good and what is not good for them. The correct choice concerning the information they should use, and the information they should discard? And where? And how?

Anyone, at this point in time can open a book and copy/or do a similar design and claim it to be theirs. The fluidity between professional borders is not helping in that matter. We need to graduate thinkers. People, who can analyze, understand and make the right decisions. People who can conquer untamed grounds and chart new places.

How do you teach students to live up to the inevitable changes?

By trial and error. As a new method of teaching. Right!? Wrong? Maybe? No answer at this point. I am still developing new techniques based on my readings, discoveries and physical interaction within my teaching environment. However, a few things have emerged: unquestioned trust, absorbable senses, and deep passion beyond all known limits.

How should we address these issues? Trust, sense, and passion. Technology is teaching our students. Technology is shaping their perception, their senses or should I say their perceptive senses. Senses are our receptive channels. Everything happens through them. We should be able to benefit from that in the classroom.

I recently was on a trip to Dubai. On a school bus passing by our car, our car since I wasn't alone, I noticed the following quotation that didn't mention who said it.

If you show me: I forget.

If you teach me: I remember.

If you let me do it: I will understand.

I would like to continue this quote

If you let me do it my way: I will learn

If I make my own mistakes: I will correct them

If you let me do it again: I will develop my own thinking

Feels much better. Thank you very much.

Here and now

Fact (another)

Qatar is rapidly changing. Changes are happening so fast that it is awkward to keep up with the pace. This is a fertile ground where one can experiment, but also teach and learn. The latest forms of technology are being implemented and tested in all the new building sites and varied areas. Why not in education? Golden opportunities for most businesses and investors are being offered. A new design education program can also be carried out. I am sure that the results will be beyond comparison. I would like to see new investments in humans for a change. To build people before building buildings. How about that... for a change? *"In Arab countries you make friends for life. The people were genuine, emotional, family-focused, hospitable. They understood their traditions and the past, and they really understood that they have a completely different future... There was little resistance to the new because they didn't have much of a present. They had a past and they had a future."* [Kevin Roberts, 2004]

Now that I have to go...

Duty makes us do things well, but love makes us do them beautifully. I don't know who said this. I read it on a menu in a vague restaurant. I was with you actually. Maybe someone else knows who said it? Maybe someone else can help me identify what needs to be done. What changes we need to undertake in order to be ahead of change.

I love teaching. Always did. That's who I am. I have been doing it for the past 12 years. In all my work years and my experience I have encountered all kinds of students – from all milieus and thinking patterns. In all these variables the only constant is how the students and I felt and perceived things. I am still searching for a term to define this emotion. Developing this emotion is the only reward of my achievements. In a fast changing world, where all the variables are consistently changing, the only fixed thing that never ceases to amaze me is both the mind and body's ability to adapt to various situations. Depression becomes then the inability to adapt. Mind thinking emotions.

Create a sense of value for your students... new incentives to live and strive for. Show them how much you care and how much you want them to succeed. The understanding and the feelings are molded by interaction. The understanding and feelings are corrupted by interaction. Digital nomadity happens in the heart.

References

Kevin Roberts, *Lovemarks the future beyond brands* (New York: Powerhouse Books, 2004).

John Lobell, *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis I. Khan* (Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, Inc, 2000).

Note for the designers

"I revere learning because it is a fundamental inspiration. It isn't just something which has to do with duty; it is born into us. The will to learn, the desire to learn, is one of the greatest inspirations. I am not that impressed by education. Learning, yes. Education is something which is always on trial because no system can ever capture the real meaning of learning." [Louis Kahn]

DESIGN BEHAVIORS