



FLUX: Design Education in a Changing World

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Alta Schoeman

Stellenbosch Academy of Design & Photography

PO Box 762
Stellenbosch
7599
RSA

Tel +27 021 880 2623
Fax +27 021 880 1233
Mobile 0845758359
Email altas@stellenboschacademy.co.za

A short story: towards developing a Personal and Professional Development (PPD) curriculum for first-year design students

Abstract

The changing world of education is clearly reflected in the development of courses designed to support first-year students in bridging the gap between secondary and higher education. The introduction of Personal and Professional Development (PPD) into the first-year programme of a Bachelor of Arts in Applied Design at the Stellenbosch Academy of Design and Photography is an intervention with the emphasis on assisting (underprepared) students in acquiring transferable generic skills. The challenge was to develop from scratch a PPD curriculum geared towards Applied Design students, a curriculum which would enrich and feed into their course material. In the absence of an appropriate model, carte blanche was effectively granted for the formation of a brand-new course. A chance encounter with a short story by A.S. Byatt entitled 'Art Work' provided inspiration and led to a series of discussions which would furnish students with opportunities for relevant and stimulating experiences. The interdisciplinary approach which resulted gave scope for the integration of literature, art history, geography, history, mathematics, sociology and much more. The topics were chosen in collaboration with the design educators' input in order to link the generic skills with the students' degree programme content. Themes explored against the backdrop of the story were, for example, vocabulary building, research methods, referencing, plagiarism, academic reading and writing, art terminology, and even such topics as time management and students' responsibility for their own learning. Feedback from the Institution's Experiential Learning Report was also incorporated in areas such as client liaison, meeting protocol and cost estimations. Visual presentations of paintings, graphic work, and objets d'art invariably contributed to the students' involvement with the visual. This move away from the old school of thought (with life skills taught out of context) towards a more integrated and holistic approach seemed to strike a chord according to student feedback. A greater emphasis on the enjoyable and entertaining aspects of learning, which the poet Horace called delectando pariterque monendo (by equally delighting and instructing) can support students in their journey towards self-realisation and being elastic enough to make a valuable contribution to the creative community they ultimately join. It is hoped that this concept might serve as a starting point for some brilliant ideas to be generated by practitioners in the field of curriculum development. In an ongoing project like this, new avenues will continuously have to be opened for students and educators alike and so contribute to the great flow of change in education that has already been set in motion.

Key Words: *Personal and professional development; generic skills; interdisciplinary approach; curriculum development.*

Introduction

'The universe is flux, our life is what our thoughts make it.'
(Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4, 3)

When the Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius uttered these words he could not have foreseen just how appropriate they would be nineteen centuries later. For if there is a single trend that characterises the 21st century it is probably the notion of change. But however exhilarating such a changing world might be, it presents us with vast challenges across life's whole spectrum. And nowhere have the effects of change been more noticeable than in the field of education. In many instances students do not seem to be prepared for the rigours of higher education in terms of generic skills and, in addition, often seem to be sadly lacking in the most basic areas of knowledge.

Stellenbosch Academy of Design and Photography

The changing world of education in South Africa is clearly reflected in the development of courses designed to support first-year students in bridging the gap between secondary and tertiary education.

In the Department of Education's chapter on 'Equity and Redress' academic development is considered in terms of the articulation gap between the demands of higher education and the preparedness of school-leavers for academic study (Department of Education, 1997). In order to address this challenge and to support first-year students in bridging the gap between secondary and tertiary education, the Stellenbosch Academy of Design and Photography devised a strategy to alleviate the situation by introducing a Personal and Professional Development (PPD) course into the first-year programme of its Bachelor of Arts in Applied Design.

PPD can be broadly defined as a non-credit-bearing first-year programme which seeks to support students' learning through integrating academic and personal development with transferable generic and career management skills. These are intended to support students in becoming more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners; understanding how they are learning and relating their learning to a wider context; improving their general skills for study and career management; encouraging a positive attitude to learning; and developing lifelong learning skills.

Generic skills

The value of generic skills in a changing environment cannot be overestimated. In a major research project entitled *Vision 2000* in Ontario in 1990, it was found that employers, in particular, wanted graduates to master not only vocationally specific skills, but skills that would enable them to work well in a team, master new technology relatively quickly, adapt to changing circumstances, grow and change as their careers developed—the kinds of attributes that make for a good employee, no matter what the vocation. As a result, the Ministry decided to require all college programmes to include, along with vocationally-specific outcomes, some generic learning outcomes (Rodgers, undated).

In a seminal study by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2003:1 & 8) in Australia, generic skills are defined as the core competencies that apply across a variety of jobs and life contexts. There is no one definitive list of generic skills. Instead, there are a number of lists incorporating the following six common elements:

- Basic skills—literacy, numeracy, using technology;
- People-related skills—communication, interpersonal, teamwork, customer-service skills;
- Conceptual skills—collecting and organising information, problem-solving, planning and organising, learning-to-learn skills, thinking innovatively and creatively;
- Personal skills and attributes—being responsible, resourceful, flexible, able to manage own time, having self-esteem;
- Skills related to the business world—innovation skills, enterprise skills;
- Skills related to the community—civic or citizenship knowledge and skills.

Generic skills need to be open to review and reinterpretation as the environment changes. According to Kearns (2001:85) it must be recognised that the new agenda of generic skills for the 21st century is about essential life skills as well as enterprise and employability skills. As examples of desired traits in graduates, the following are mentioned (NCVER 2003:10 citing the University of South Australia as their source): ability to operate effectively upon a body of knowledge to begin professional practice; prepare for lifelong learning in pursuit of personal development and excellence in professional practice; solve problems effectively, and apply logical, critical, and creative thinking; work both autonomously and collaboratively as a professional; commit to ethical action and social responsibility as a professional; communicate effectively in professional practice and as a member of the community; and demonstrate international perspectives as a professional and as a citizen.

Problem

The challenge was to devise a curriculum which would best address the needs of students in a graphic design environment by enriching and feeding into their course material.

Designing a PPD curriculum

Integrated curriculum and interdisciplinary approach

The sense that our society and the kinds of problems we face are changing rapidly has led to a renewed interest in an integrated curriculum in both art education and in education in general – a curriculum which encourages students to think about important ideas, to interpret them and relate them to themselves, their own time and context (Parsons, 2004). To attain an integrated curriculum an interdisciplinary approach was considered to give scope for the integration of literature, art history, geography, history, mathematics, sociology and many other fields. ‘Current research indicates that using an interdisciplinary, or integrated, curriculum provides opportunities for more relevant, less fragmented, and more stimulating experiences for students’ (Furrier, 1995:4). Interdisciplinary courses, programs, and/or activities link together and integrate information and methodologies from two or more separate, traditional, and/or artificial disciplines. Such linkages and integration create a multi-faceted picture of a topic through the exploration and synthesis of various approaches/views (ACS Interdisciplinary Task Force).

Since an integrated and interdisciplinary approach was decided on, the first step was to obtain input from the subject facilitators in order to glean what they regarded as important issues and to link the generic course with the students’ degree content. Feedback from the facilitators indicated that the following were areas for improvement: academic reading and writing skills; basic English; putting a portfolio together; writing assignments; knowledge of terminology and visual terms; referencing; plagiarism and copyright issues; use of the library and care of books; research skills; general knowledge; time management; and responsibility of students for their own learning. Feedback from the Experiential Learning Report (2006: Point 5 EL Programme: General Remarks from Employers) pointed out that students were taken aback by the amount of researching and operations needed to be coordinated before the design actually commenced. In addition, inadequacies in telephonic skills, dealing with meetings, liaising with clients, and coping with budgets were also highlighted.

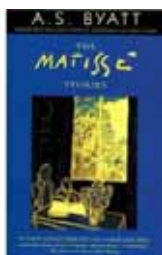
The move away from the old school of thought (with life skills taught out of context) towards a more integrated and holistic approach seemed to strike a chord according to student feedback. PowerPoint presentations of paintings, graphic work, and *objets d’art* invariably contributed to the students’ involvement with the visual. A greater emphasis on the enjoyable and entertaining aspects of learning, which the poet Horace called *delectando pariterque monendo* (by equally delighting and instructing) were also thought to support students in their journey towards self-realisation. It was hoped that a positive outcome would be a spontaneous fostering of a sense of wonder at the creation (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*) and result in enrichment and a broadening of stimulating experiences.

In practice the result was an interdisciplinary curriculum that comprised general orientation (first term), academic reading skills (second term), academic writing skills (third term), and practical client-related skills (fourth term). This paper will focus on the academic reading skills developed in the second term.

Academic reading

The ability to read academic texts is considered one of the most important skills that tertiary students need to acquire. To help students cope with texts encountered in an academic setting, reading skills and strategies are first taught on the basis of simpler texts and then practiced on authentic reading material. General aspects of academic reading include comprehension, developing vocabulary, extracting main ideas, extrapolating information, drawing conclusions, interpreting charts, timelines and tables, interacting with text through writing, and note taking.

A short story



In order to link the development of academic reading skills to the field of art, the short story ‘Art Work’¹—about three artists of different capacities—by the famous writer and art critic A.S. Byatt was selected. *The Matisse Stories* from which the story is taken is a book of three short stories each inspired by a Henri Matisse painting. One review reads: ‘In each story, Byatt uses bright splashes of verbal color, in exotic and elegant combination, to paint word pictures similar to the oil paintings of Matisse. Each story incorporates the fields of art and art history into its plot. Colors, textures, and surfaces play a central part in creating imagery both rich and deep’ (Burkhardt, undated). ‘Art Work’ was

¹ Byatt, A.S.1994. *The Matisse Stories*. London: Vintage.

inspired by Matisse's *Le silence habité des maisons*, in which the adage, 'a picture is worth a thousand words' is pivotal to the story.

Reading with understanding and interpreting the text

Building reading comprehension skills is a *sine qua non* of higher education, which, for graphic arts' students, can pose some interesting challenges since these students are typically more visually inclined. To play upon this characteristic, especially at the onset of the course, students were given the opportunity to graphically illustrate what they understood from their reading.

The first paragraph (pp. 31-32) of 'Art Work' entails a description of Matisse's *Le silence habité des maisons* :

In 1947 Matisse painted *Le Silence habité des maisons*. It is reproduced in Sir Lawrence Gowing's *Matisse*, only very small and in black and white. Two people sit at the corner of a table. The mother, it may be, has a reflective chin propped on a hand propped on the table. The child, it may be, turns the page of a huge white book, whose arch of paper makes an integral curve with his/her lower arm. In front, a vase of flowers. Behind, six huge panes of window, behind them, a mass of trees and perhaps sunlight. The people's faces are perfect blank ovals, featureless. Up above them, in the top lefthand corner of the canvas, level with the top of the window, is a chalked outline, done as it might be by a child, of a round on a stalk, above bricks...

As a comprehension exercise the students were asked to interpret the text above by rendering (in class) a sketch of the Matisse painting without having seen it first. In order to translate the words on paper into a visual representation requires a number of skills to be developed. Not the least of them is vocabulary building. This is clearly illustrated in the image of the stork (Figure 1, 1) visualised instead of 'stalk' (as in the other images in Figure 1, 2-9). Only after the students had completed their sketches was an image of the Matisse painting projected onto the screen. The results (Figure 1) were quite a revelation in the sense that most students incorporated almost all the details mentioned in the description. These sketches were then compared to an image of the authentic painting (Figure 2).

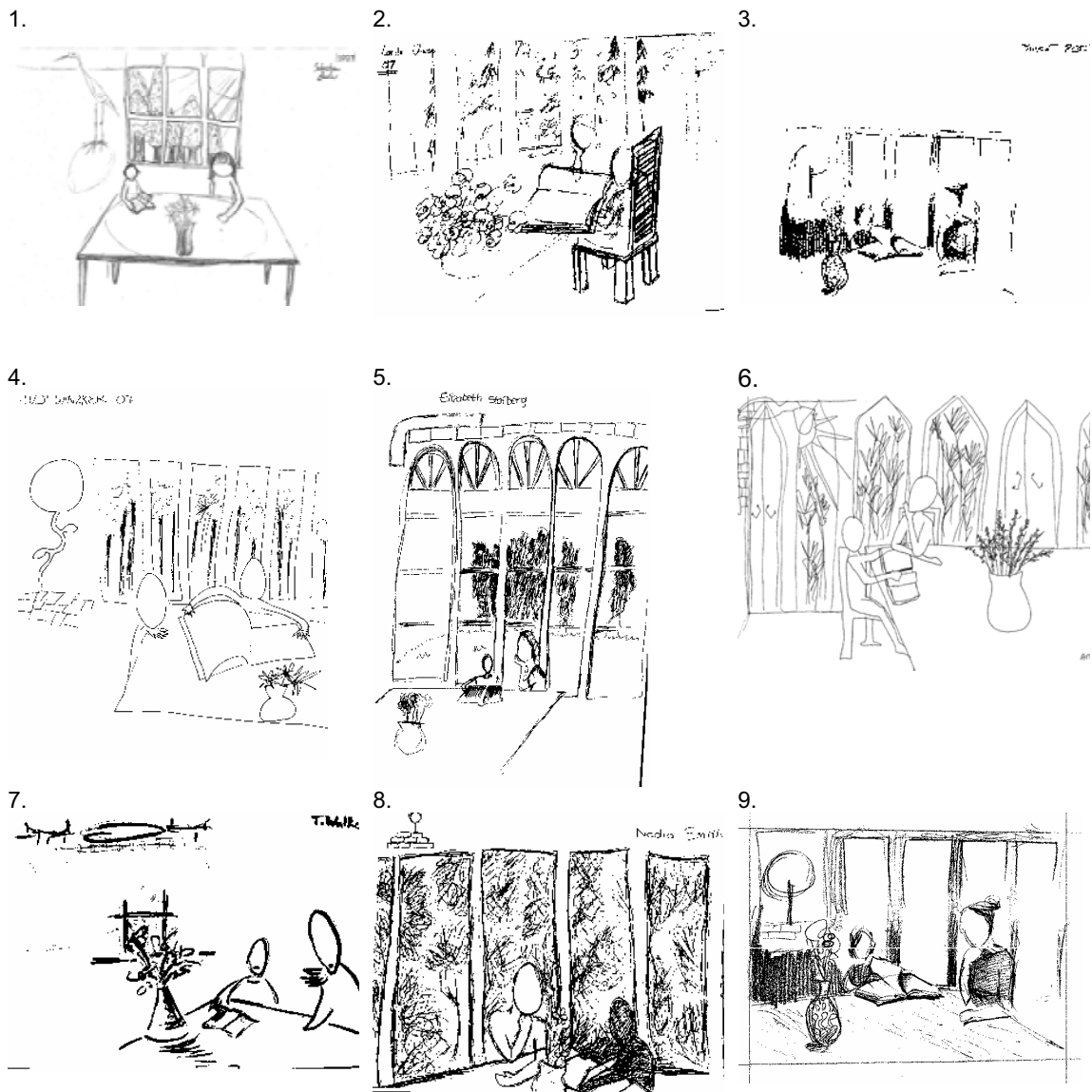


Figure 1 : First-year students' renditions of the description of Matisse's *Le silence habité des maisons*



Henri Matisse :
Le silence habité des maisons (1947)
 Oil on canvas. 61 x 50 cm
 Bridgeman Art Library, London (reproduction)
 Private collection
<http://ebc.chez-alice.fr/ebc123.html>

Figure 2: Representation of the painting by Henri Matisse, *Le silence habité des maisons*

Structure of a text

The next few pages (pp. 32–38) of the story in which examples of an ‘inhabited silence’ are given offer opportunities to discuss the way in which a text is structured and how paragraphs and ideas are linked. After reading the passages the students can answer questions like the following, in groups:

Paragraph subject	
Par. 1	Description of Matisse’s painting <i>Le silence habité des maisons</i>
Par. 2	‘There is an inhabited silence in 49 Alma Road’ (leading sentence) <i>How is this paragraph linked to the first paragraph?</i> By the concept of ‘silence’. <i>What is the meaning of ‘inhabited silence’?</i> The normal domestic sounds in a home that is lived in. Examples of ‘inhabited silence’ are given in the paragraphs 2–9. Write down.
Par. 2	Washing machine
Par. 3	Dryer
Par. 4	Television
Par. 5	Electric train
Par. 6	Typewriter
Par. 8	Waiting for doorbell; telephone ringing
Par. 9	Hoover

Figure 3: Example of text structure

Another example of designing an exercise to develop reading with understanding and vocabulary is taken from the physical description of Mrs Brown (pp. 39-41), the most enigmatic character in the story:

Mrs Brown had a skin which was neither black nor brown but kind of amber yellow, the sort of yellow bruises go, before they vanish, but all over. She had a lot of wiry soot-coloured hair, which rose, like the crown of a playing-card king, out of a bandeau of flowery material, tied tightly about her brow...Mrs Brown’s clothes were, and are, flowery and surprising, jumble sale remnants, rejects and ends of lines, rainbow-coloured jumpers...She came for interview in a not too clean (but not too dirty) film-star’s trench-coat...revealing pantaloons made of some kind of thick cream-coloured upholstery linen, wonderfully traversed by crimson open-mouthed Indian flowers and birds of paradise...Mrs Brown does not smile very much. Her face has some resemblance to a primitive mask, cheeks in triangular planes, long, straight, salient nose, a mouth usually tightly closed.

Words from the passage and their roots can be discussed (e.g. pantaloons, triangular and salient) by means of images (Figure 4). Breaking up a word such as ‘triangular’ (from Latin *tri-* three plus *angulus* corner) is useful for deriving the meanings of other words containing the same roots. Illustrating new words with the use of images (Figure 3) will also have greater impact than a mere discussion.



Figure 4: Illustrating the meaning of words by means of images

Once the unfamiliar words have been discussed, the students can illustrate what they have read and understood (Figure 5).

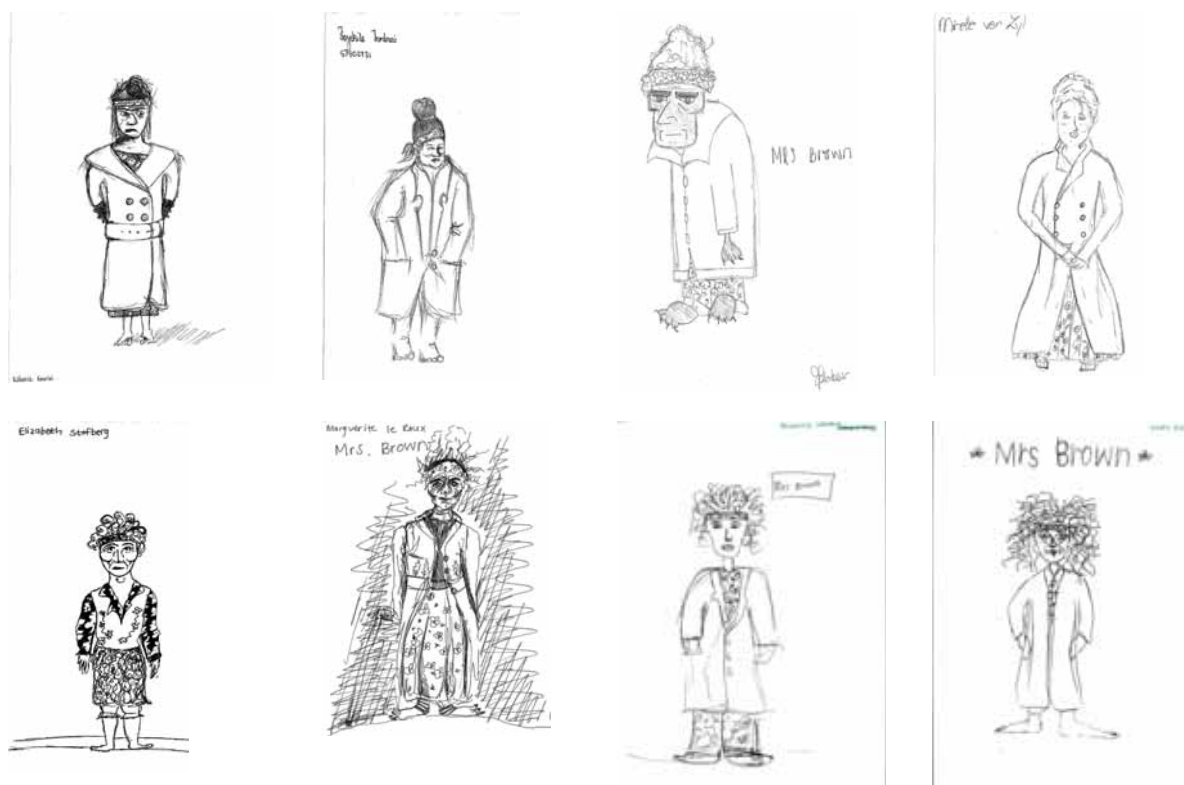


Figure 5: Students' interpretation of Mrs Brown

Drawing inferences

The description of the husband, Robin (pp. 45 – 52), provides ample opportunity to draw inferences or draw conclusions from premises rather than from explicit information provided in a passage. Reading between the lines or decoding information is an essential skill (closely akin to decoding art work) and one with which the majority of students struggled.

Robin has the whole third floor, once three bedrooms, a tiny room with a sink and a lavatory, as his studio. He has large pivoting windows set into the roof, with linen blinds, a natural cream, a terracotta. He can have almost whatever light he likes from whatever angle...(pp. 45-46).

Debbie does as he asks, abstracting the cufflink, which she will return to his dressing-table. She looks at her husband, who glares back at her, and then gives a smile, like a rueful boy. He is a long, thin, unsubstantial man in jeans and a fisherman's smock, with big joints, knuckles and wrists and ankles, like an adolescent, which he is not (p. 49).

Questions such as the following (Figure 6), can lead to useful discussions of the 'sixties, gender roles and the wife's place in the home—in fact, social comment.

Drawing inferences (pp. 45-49)

Question:

What can be read into the topic sentence: 'Robin has the whole third floor, once three bedrooms, a tiny room with a sink and a lavatory, as his studio' when compared to 'Debbie's office, or study, is very cramped. There is a drawing-board, but if it is not in use, it is blocked up against the window, obscuring much of the light...Debbie can work at her desk or work at her drawing-board, but not both at once, though she would like to be able to, she is the design editor of *A Woman's Place*, of which the, perhaps obscure, promise is that a woman's place is not only, perhaps not even primarily, in the Home' (p. 35)?

Answer:

In the 'sixties a woman's place was still, for the most part, in the home. The husband was usually the only breadwinner perhaps in consequence of which he was regarded as the head of the household with the greatest privileges belonging to him. Debbie's household was in a transitional stage where she was the breadwinner but still had to be subservient to her husband.

Question:

What can be inferred about Robin's character from: '[He] gives a smile, like a rueful boy' and the fact that he wears 'jeans and a fisherman's smock...like an adolescent, which he is not'? (p. 49).

Answer:

From the rest of the story it has already become clear that Robin is extremely childish and self-centred (perhaps as a result of his not really having a proper job). The above passage is ironic: he is in fact very much like an adolescent.

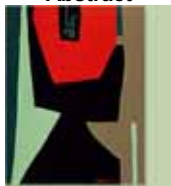
Figure 6: Worksheet: drawing inferences

Art terms

An Art Timeline can be used to place Robin's art in context as discussed (p. 51 and 52) and numerous art terms (in bold) examined:

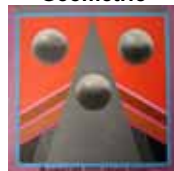
Deborah loves Robin. She has loved him since they met at Art School, where she studied Graphic Design and he studied Fine Art. She wanted to be a wood-engraver and illustrate children's books. What she loved about Robin was the quality of his total dedication to his work, which had a certain austere separateness from everyone else's work. Those were the days of the **sixties**, in fact the early **seventies**, when much painting was **abstract**, washes of colour and no colour, **geometric patterns**, games with the nature of canvas and pigment and the colours of light and their effect on the eye. Robin was a neo-realist before **neo-realism**. He painted what he saw, metal surfaces, wooden surfaces, plaster surfaces, with hallucinatory skill and accuracy...It was just this side of **kitsch**, then and now. (Emphasis added.)

Abstract



Marion Nicoll
Prophet (1960)
Oil on canvas
Glenbow Museum Collection
www.glenbow.org/collections/art/1969.cfm

Geometric



Howie Green
The 1960s
www.hgd.com/.../retrospective/geometric2.jpg

Poster: Neo-classical Italian film



<http://www.arttimesjournal.com/art/Art%20Essays/Dec%20'03%20It%20Film%20Posters/cinema.htm>

Kitch



Juliet Peers, Guest editor
Taste Meets Kitsch
Artlink Vol 15 #4
www.geocities.com/jumeau_overflow/jppubs.htm

Figure 7: Art terms used in the text (pp. 51 and 52)

Summarising

The description of Debbie's love-hate relationship with Robin (pp. 53 – 55) can be employed for a discussion on the making of summaries (Figure 8), an indispensable skill in an institution of higher learning:

When they got married, Robin had a few hours part-time teaching in a college, and Debbie, whose degree gave her more marketable skills, got a job doing layout in a corset-trade magazine and then a subordinate job in *A Woman's Place*, and then promotion. She was good, she was well-paid, she

was the breadwinner. It seemed silly for Robin to go on teaching at all, his contribution was so meagre...Her fingers remembered the slow, careful work in the wood, with a quiet grief, that didn't diminish, but was manageable... Debbie continued to love Robin, whilst hating him because of the woodcuts, because of the extent of his absence of interest in how she managed the house, the children, the money, her profession, his needs and wants, and because of his resolute attempts to unsettle, humiliate, or drive away Mrs Brown, without whom all Debbie's balancing acts would clatter and fall in wounding disarray.

List

- Debbie is the breadwinner
- She loves Robin
- She sometimes hates Robin because:
 - ❖ he doesn't ever mention her woodcuts
 - ❖ he's not interested in how she manages the house
 - ❖ he treats Mrs Brown badly
- Sad because she is not doing woodcuts
- Fanatical about keeping Mrs Brown

Diagram

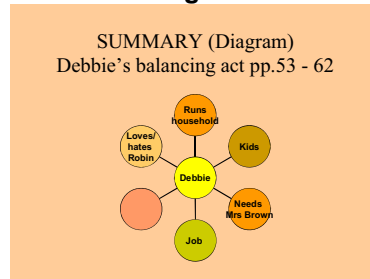


Figure 8: Examples of a list and a diagram summary

Note taking

An overview of Robin Dennison's 'fetishes' (pp. 62-68) proved a useful means for implementing the Cornell Note Taking System format (adapted) according to the 5 Rs (Record, Reduce, Recite, Reflect, Review) method²:

Robin Dennison's 'fetishes' have a table of their own, a white-painted wooden table, very simple. Once they were mantelpiece 'things' but as they took on their status of 'fetishes' they were given this solidly unassuming English altar. (p 62) The exposition of Robin's fetishes (pp. 62-68)

Main ideas/Definitions	Details
<p>Robin's fetishes (displayed on white table)</p> <p>Fetish: Object of obsessive devotion</p> <p>Icons of a cult of colour; Mantelpiece things; English altar</p> <p>Rainbow spectrum: Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet</p>	<p>1. Wooden soldier</p> <p>2. Objects of single colour:</p> <p>(a) cobalt-blue candlestick-glassworks at Biot (b) grass-green apple-Wedgewood (c) butter-yellow sauceboat with blue rim-Monet (d) no orange object, but real orange and lemon (e) purple-handmade china sculpture-bowl of violets (f) red-German plate, heartshaped pincushion</p> <p>3. Multicoloured things:</p> <p>(a) Venetian glass tree (b) Pottery jug-Deruta-flowers of all colours, birds (c) Deruta pot-tawny-gold, merman dragon with fire (d) Korean kite-puce, yellow, blue, green, scarlet (e) Chinese silk pipe-cleaner birds-crimson, blue, etc.</p>
<p>Summary</p> <p>Robins wants his fetishes to represent all the colours, He has mostly single-coloured objects, but a few multi-coloured ones as well. He has objects of each colour: blue, green, yellow, purple but no orange (he sometimes uses real oranges). These objects are not allowed to be moved as they are in a fixed pattern: apple next to pincushion, violets in front of sauceboat beside candlestick. Mrs Brown wanted to stand them in a rainbow line.</p>	

Figure 9: Summary (Robin's fetishes) done on a Cornell University template

² See http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/docs/cornell_note_taking.doc.

Subject-specific information can also be developed from the content of the story. Themes such as the art time-line, eras in the history of art, and information about colour spontaneously flow from the story (for example on p. 67):

Robin in his fit of educating Mrs Brown observes to her that the blue rim makes the yellow colour sing out because the colours are almost complementary. (p 63) Mrs Brown's preference was for standing the fetishes in a rainbow line, from infra-red to ultra-violet, so to speak. (p. 67)

This extract is ideal for a review of complementary colours and the rainbow (even spelling comes into play when the difference between 'complementary' and 'complimentary' is explained) and for a discussion of art works where this phenomenon features: Van Gogh's portrait of Alexander Reid with its complementary red and green (Figure 10), is a case in point.

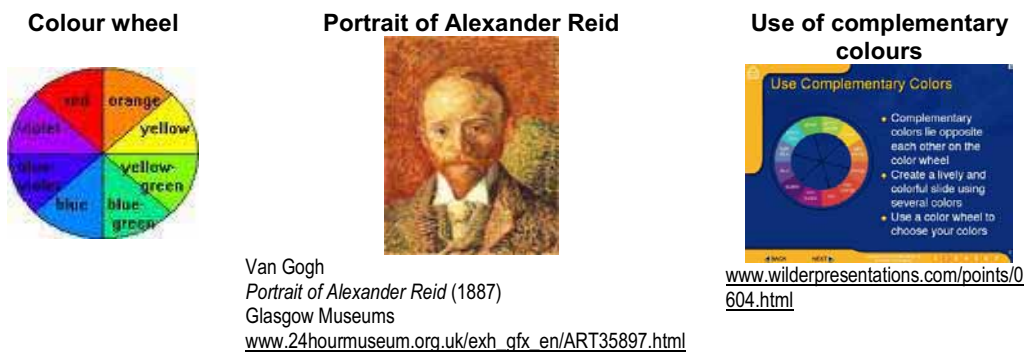


Figure 10: Use of complementary colours

Culmination and ultimate irony

The last part of the story (pp. 76 to end) contains the dénouement (final outcome of the main dramatic complication) of the story where the housekeeper's clandestine art works are exhibited in an art gallery. This is in stark contrast to her employers' lack of success in the art world despite their being professionals—the 'real' artist Robin fails to sell anything and Debbie slaves away at a magazine regardless of her own artistic aspirations.

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Underneath the line of letters a photograph goes up. Debbie goes out into the street to look at it a photograph of Mrs Brown under a kind of wild crown of woven scarves, with her old carved look and an added look of sly amusement, in the corners of mouth and eyes. Her skin has come out duskie than it 'really' is, her bones are sculpted, she resembles a cross between the Mona Lisa and a Benin bronze.

As far as Debbie knows, Mrs Brown is at this moment hoovering her stairs...She thinks with pure delight of the unexpectedness and splendour of Sheba, for Mrs Brown. She thinks inconsequentially of a ball she once went to...in the mulberry-coloured dress which is now the dragon-scales. She thinks, with a terrible flutter of unreadiness to think about this, that Mrs Brown will now for certain leave. She wonders why Mrs Brown said nothing...She thinks with terrible protectiveness of Robin in his attic, explaining his fetishes to Mrs Brown, and roaring as he will roar no more, about her forays into his workplace. (pp. 81, 82)

And the lady is flesh-coloured and twisted, her body is broken and concertinaed, she is draped flat on a large stone, her long limbs are pink nylon, her chains are twisted brassieres and demented petticoats, pyjama cords and sinister strained tights. She has a cubist aspect, crossed with Diana of Ephesus again, her breasts are a string of detached and battered shoulder-pads, her pubic hair is shrunk angora bonnet...At first you think that the male figure is totally absent, and then you see him, them, minuscule in the crannies of the rock, a plastic knight on a horse, once silver, now mud-green, a toy soldier with a broken sword and a battered helmet... (p. 80)

Here sufficient scope is provided for discussions on the nature of art, and for reviewing and applying the various aspects of academic reading. For extracting the main ideas, students can be asked to give

headings the above paragraphs. Developing vocabulary and art terminology is developed in context of the story with discussions of the Mona Lisa, Benin bronzes, Diana of Ephesus, and cubism featuring in the passage. Interpreting charts, timelines and tables is done in context to determine in which era this type of 'art' would have fallen, and for debating the genre under which this would reside. Extrapolating information (reading between the lines) and drawing conclusions become exciting challenges as the description of Mrs Brown's art work is analysed (the char has obviously not had an easy life; she has been battered and betrayed by her husband; she has had to bring up her children as the sole breadwinner; she has lost much of her femininity as well as her respect for men). Interacting with text through writing (note taking and summarising) is finally rounded off with a short assignment: an analysis of the role of the Matisse painting *Le silence habité des maisons* in A.S. Byatt's short story, 'Art Work'.

Conclusion

The short story 'Art Work' revolving around art and graphic art—something with which the students could identify—proved to be a veritable treasure trove containing the means by which a variety of academic reading areas and other generic skills could be explored. The story served as an interdisciplinary springboard from which to develop skills in a comprehensive manner without the often artificial barriers of demarcated disciplines. At this stage, student feedback on the value of the PPD course indicates that the course is enjoyable and interesting, although there are some students who feel that the time could be more profitably spent, in the darkroom, for example. However, student evaluation will need to be under close scrutiny and properly researched as an ongoing process so as to provide this most essential information.

But it is common knowledge that curriculum research and development are ongoing processes that constantly need to be reviewed and renewed. Many aspects of this new PPD curriculum will have to be refined and adapted. Further research to explore all aspects of the course is essential. Since the development of generic and employability skills is a matter of continued importance, these attributes require explicit attention and will have to be developed and assessed in context. Assessment in context and on multiple occasions is an essential feature of learning these skills and of being able to reliably report performance and help students to become 'work ready' (NCVER 2003). Institutional-level assessment is another valuable feature of curriculum development. The nature of PPD and its effectiveness in supporting students' learning will have to be continually examined. The ideal is for all staff to be involved in the activities and to be engaged in evaluation. In addition, more research on identifying benchmarks and good practice nationally and internationally is indispensable to help foster an evidence-based approach. The use of curriculum action research through supporting academic staff in undertaking their own pedagogic research into the relationship between PDP and subject-specific developments is also essential; this is in line with what was undertaken by the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, University of Bedfordshire, in a longitudinal study of the impact of their curriculum model (CETL 2007).

It is hoped that the notion of a PPD curriculum according to which generic skills are taught within context might serve as a starting point for some brilliant ideas to be generated by practitioners in the field. In an ongoing project like this, new avenues will continuously have to be opened for students and educators alike and so contribute to the great flow of change in education that has already been set in motion. In conclusion, a message from an executive director³ of the Academy provides a neat summary: 'Expressions of work and education in our country change so quickly that anything you write about them is redundant by the time the ink dries. Stellenbosch Academy of Design and Photography aspires to conquer this uncertainty by producing graduates who are elastic enough to make a valuable contribution to the creative community they ultimately join'.

³ Online. Available: http://www.stellenboschacademy.co.za/green_ways/index.html.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Alta Schoeman is a classicist and teacher with an MA in classical drama and a BEd from the University of Pretoria and UNISA respectively. Having taught at various schools she has also been involved with six universities in South Africa and Namibia. She spent seven years at the Centre for Teaching and Learning of the Stellenbosch University as an academic coordinator involved in the academic support of first-year Faculty of Arts students. In 2006 she took up a similar post at the Stellenbosch Academy of Design & Photography. She has lectured extensively on her pet subject, Cleopatra, and also on bridging the gap between secondary school and higher education. Publications include articles on first-year students' problems, classical topics such as Roman drama, and educational papers such as overviews of school editions and a study guide, always linking these with paintings and other works of art

