

JÓZEF WĄSACZ, BARBARA BAJOR, PIOTR IDZI\*

THE DIDACTIC PROCESS AT THE ATELIER OF  
SCULPTURE, PREPARED FOR STUDENTS  
OF ARCHITECTURE

**A b s t r a c t**

The article presents the purpose and suitability of teaching method consists of co-creation artistic concepts that are models of space with specific characteristics. It describes results showing the individual creative experience obtained in a relation to the collective experience of a group of students. Summarizes actions that shape the creative consciousness of the student, allowing the use of current and future technologies.

*Keywords: Sculpture, visual communication, didactic process.*

\* Józef Wąsacz, Assist. Prof., D.A., Barbara Bajor, PhD, Arch., Piotr Idzi, MFA, Division of Free Hand Drawing, Painting and Sculpture, Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology

## Introduction

It is different. Description of the present otherwise is impossible. We cannot relate processes and unknown and unnameable phenomena using ceaselessly redefined terms. Description of the present, by principle, transcends our cognitive powers. To some extent, actuality is accessible to us in the experience acquired during the realization of a set purpose. The Atelier of Sculpture at the Kraków Department of Architecture places this purpose in the didactic curriculum realized there. The curriculum consists of three activities: seek, find-recognize, name. We realize it on the basis of the texts, in which we found our personal intuitions, and which became for us the set point of reference for the artistic and didactic experience. Gilbert Durant and his [Wyobraźnia symboliczna<sup>1</sup>] is an important text for us. The definition of liberties as creative meanings there is fundamental to our notion of creativity and didactics. We base ourselves on the definition of art formulated by Georg Steiner in his [Rzeczywiste obecności<sup>2</sup>], where he defines it as maximization of semantic immeasurability with reference to formal means of expression. It means that an object whose description of components may be finite, generates infinite response. Steiner believes that organization of our senses, and the structures which constitute an intellect and expression, are beyond our cognition, or refer to itself. Language is embedded in those structures. We juxtapose those definitions with his reflection describing a computer as something more than a pragmatic tool. Computers initiate, develop non-verbal thought configurations, meta-verbal methods of formulating decisions, and even non-verbal aesthetic reflections. The narration of a formal algorithm is not a narration of discourse form.

Apart from Steiner's definition of art, we refer to the definition by Nicolas Bourriaud, who, in his [Estetyka relacyjna<sup>3</sup>], sees art as a complex of aesthetic practices for which the theoretical and practical starting point are interpersonal relations and their social context. Art is a kind of activity consisting in creation of relations with the world through signs, forms and gestures.

Important for the formulation of the purpose of exercises at the atelier of sculpture is the theory of teaching called [Connectivism<sup>4</sup>] created by George Siemens. To its author, the key competence is the ability to correctly use technological achievements, and find information in external data bases.

Apart from the texts, in our work on the didactic objective, existential experience is primary. At the atelier of sculpture it is simply present in a stage like manner. It is an experience of difference and foreignness of the matter. Modelling clay with its pliancy to every hand gesture is extremely resistant to the abstractness of the form which is being created. The foreignness and resistance of the matter beget the necessity of mediation, a peculiar dialectics between the creator and the created work. Creativeness is the continuous decision making-process about the difference and resistance of the tool and the matter, and resistance against own

earlier decisions which ceased belonging to us and became foreign through adhesion to the external structure of the world.

### **Purpose**

The subject of this conference „Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Draw, paint, whether use the computer” refers only to the education of the future architect. In the case of a mature artist, the word “**whether**“ is not an expression of doubt, but it is connected with the choice of the method to realize the idea. A conscious artist decides him/herself **whether** he/she operates with ready-made signs, or **whether** he/she seeks meanings with traditional tools. The whole creative process and the end result are one of the possible traces of the author’s discourse “I”. Regardless of the kind of tool or material used in it, creation entails continuous decision making and always leads to an individual solution. Virtual reality appears as a great value only if the real presence of its user can be felt. The real presence is understood as participation in the dialectics of the creative process. Virtuality with the technology allowing free manipulation of its unlimited resources is the realm for the formed “I”. In the process of formation of the creative identity of the student, virtuality and reality should be complementary.

The purpose of the curriculum realized at the Atelier of Sculpture at the Kraków Department of Architecture is to reveal and activate self-consciousness of the course participant. Classes at the atelier are a collective work experience. To some extent their nature is that of a spectacle conditioned by unity of time and place of the plot, and the necessity to observe the set rules. Consequently, the didactic process runs concurrently through coexistence and simultaneity. During the whole class, diversity of ways to interpret the subject and the rules to realize it is presented. In the process of finding those differences, the authors of the curriculum find the self-updating manner of education. In this sense, it fulfils the contemporary requirements. Preparing students to the modern times involves teaching them to creatively use the potential of virtuality. In the curriculum of the atelier, virtual reality is the space in which the result of the student’s work is confronted with opinions of the participants of the social network. It is virtuality that becomes the space in which it is possible to obtain actual relations between the author of a work and its recipients. The effect of the teaching appears as a result of participation in the whole course of classes.

### **Method**

Student’s activity in the atelier is described by words: search-find, notice-name. The class begins by a short exercise of spontaneous reaction to a design task and a discussion about the results. The event introduces the participants to the model

of classes at the atelier, and to the system of communication between the class teachers and their students. The method assumes work in the same material. The basic material is clay treated at a material which has no primary shape. It is susceptible to gesture thanks to its sense of weight and volume. In the second stage we use recycled materials. Most often those are elements of models obtained from friendly urban design studios: cardboard fragments, carton, foil, plexiglass; colour and graphic signs appear. Those materials have their own structure, they additionally introduce a kind of former history, they meant something in relation to other elements of the models. Therefore, the material thus obtained may bring to the formal explorations a potential close to a sign. It is the nature of the material that makes it possible to enter the discourse essence of the creative process. It forces the discovery of individual rules of the game played by the author between his intuitively made decisions and their consequences. As a result of the game, the shaping form poses real demands from the author. The process shows the necessity to constantly renew the purpose. A simultaneous element of the creation process is the act of redundancy. It takes place in two directions – focusing of formal elements in the creation process in order to make the communication more legible, and redundancy being the nature of the act of seeing and interpreting of the aesthetic communication which is the ready sculpture. (Compare with [Myślenie wzrokowe <sup>5</sup>] of Rudolf Arnheim)

### **Summary**

At the atelier, the individual experience is confronted with the results of the rest of the group. There is an area of many possible decisions, vis a vis which one's own decision must be taken. The common subject, tools, and similarity of material constitute the fixed point of reference for that confrontation. The possibility of confrontation with other works allows to constantly renew judgements about own results. Our team participates in this experience by means of initiating a series of mediations. Their result is the realization what the essence of freedom of seeing is (freedom as the creator of meaning – compare with Gilbert Durante [Symbolic Imagination<sup>1</sup>]). Its result is acquiring the ability to liberate oneself from patterns, post-images, similarities, and maintaining the authorship discourse, whose expression is the form. Taking part in the classes, we attempt to stimulate such relations. We provoke judgements, for instance, juxtaposing works with each other. Simultaneously with the confrontation taking place in real time of class in the atelier, the students, using their personal communication devices (mobile phones), prepare a visual communication (film, or set of photos) presenting the prepared composition on the popular social network. The confrontation with opinions of users of such websites, reveals the area of differences between intentions,

opinions, and interpretations of the authors, and the disinterested judgement in the virtual space. The situation is fundamental for the formation of the meaning of aesthetic communication. Some judgements are revealing, others are trivial, some are close to the author's interpretation, others are surprisingly different. There is an interesting relationship between the author's presentation, and the reaction of internauts. A space of potential manipulation appears, allowing to bring the author's vision closer to the recipients. Based on that experience, students prepare graphic communications in identical format telling the idea of their works.

Combination of the visual communication with the spatial model by the author is the last act of the creation process. A collective exhibition of students works is opened. Its participants, in open vote, select the works which, in their opinion, best realize the purpose of the task. The event ending the didactic process is their public presentation by the author and the promoters. The presentation is accompanied by a discussion – dispute about the interpretative differences. The multitude of associations are focused. As a result, through the voices from the audience, we jointly name the presented work. The moment, when the author is faced with this name, is an opportunity to realize the presence of some inexpressible part of our consciousness which is a precondition of the existence of art.

#### Literatura

- [1] D. Gilbert, *Wyobraźnia symboliczna*, przeł. C. Rowiński, PWN, Warszawa, 1986, oryginalny tytuł: *L'Imagination symbolique*, 1964.
- [2] G. Steiner, *Rzeczywiste obecności*, przeł. O. Kubińska, Instytut Kultury, Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, Gdańsk- Warszawa, 1997, oryginalny tytuł: *Real Presences: Is There Anything in What We Say?*, 1989.
- [3] N. Bourriaud, *Estetyka Relacyjna*, przeł. Ł. Białkowski, MOCAK, Kraków, 2012, oryginalny tytuł: *Esthétique relationnelle*, 1998.
- [4] G. Simens, *Connectivism* - internet
- [5] R. Arnheim, *Myślenie wzrokowe*, przeł. M. Chojnacki, Gdańsk-Warszawa, Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2011, oryginalny tytuł: *Visual Thinking*, 2004.

#### Ilustracje

Ill. 1. Space of Atelier, Kraków, ( photo by Wąsacz Józef, 2015)