THE CONTRIBUTION OF HISTORY OF DESIGN FOR THE FASHION LEARNING

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Abstract

This article deals with the relevance of studies in the history of design as an important way for a fashion student getting repertoire. We bring to debate the importance of practical application of a theoretical content such as history in a course that develops manual skills and explores creativity. We present in this work two activities carried out in Design Fundamentals, the discipline in which the history content was taught. It is a narrative of the experience of both authors with from when they worked together at SENAI CETIQT Undergraduate Fashion Design Course. Despite the fact of being one of the few theoretical subjects of the first period, the discipline of Design Fundamentals was not attracting as much interest as the other practical disciplines of the same period. In addition, the form of assessment was 100% through theoretical evidence. Therefore, between the years of 2015 and 2017, the forms of evaluation were rethought in order to make the discipline more attractive to students. In this article we will present two modalities of activities used following the concepts of active methodologies of learning.

Keywords: history of design; fashion design; upcycling; education.

1 INTRODUCTION

The present article is the report of a face-to-face experience with students from the first period of the Design Undergraduate Course with an emphasis on Fashion from SENAI CETIQT (National Service of Industrial Learning - Technology Center of the Chemical and Textile Industry) [1]. CETIQT is one of the many SENAI departments, which is an important Brazilian private non-profit entity, supported by resources coming from the national industry. CETIQT’s mission is "to promote - with a focus on textile and clothing value chains - sustainable development and competitiveness in Brazilian industry (2018). In this sense, the Bachelor of Design has been the course with a great demand. Moreover, the tradition of the school in the training of professionals to attend the fashion industry as a whole has been one of the reasons that attract the students; from free courses, passing by technical courses to culminate in Undergraduate Course. SENAI CETIQT also offers postgraduate courses, but with lower hourly workload and with lower demand.

1.1 Design fundamentals

In all, the Bachelor is divided into seven periods of six months, which corresponds to three year and a half. Each period has a group of disciplines that were planned to be offered together and should not be changed. So the student may have a more appropriate learning according to their knowledge progress inside the course. The experience that is being shared in this article belongs to the first period and it is called Design fundamentals (in Portuguese, Fundamentos do Design). It is a theoretical discipline with a sixty-hour semester load, which corresponds to four hours per week. The said discipline has the function of helping the beginning student to be inserted in the context of the Design. This purpose is part of the discipline guidelines. In the general objective, it is written that students will be encouraged to "recognize the main facts, actors and concepts of Design and its history in order to discuss a repertoire of information pertinent to the area". To achieve this main objective, there are four specific objectives: 1) Define the etymology and history of the term "Design"; 2) Relate design theories and practices; 3) To recognize the transformations of Design in history (world and Brazilian); and 4) Interpret and relate books to substantiate their research.

As for the first specific objective, discussing and defining the contours of the profession is a constant necessity, since the understanding of fashion as pertaining to design realm relatively recent in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). Until the 1980s, training for creative professionals in the fashion industry was technical rather than superior. Furthermore, Anglicism in the name of the profession is a constant question in the field, since up to the present no other term of the Portuguese language has been absorbed by society that was so democratic. That is, the term design allows you to encompass so many specific areas with
a single word: graphic design; product design; digital design; service design; and why not fashion design? So as to meet the second and third specific objectives, respectively, "relating theories and practices of design" and "recognizing the transformations of Design in history", it is essential to use the History of Design. This is because the needs of society combined with the inventions made are the key to the designer being the mediator in transforming ideas and creating products and/or services. And this understanding is made easier when we explain with the support of the story.

Finally, the last specific objective: "interpreting and relating books to support their research" is a way of teaching the beginning student about the need to consult more than one reference source. To them is presented a rich bibliography of national and foreign authors. The main source of reference that has been used is the book "An Introduction to the History of Design" [2], by Brazilian professor Rafael Cardosso. This is precisely because it is a book that mixes the history of international and national design. Such a comparison helps in understanding that international history is very different from national history for the most part. Cardoso shows the socio-economic-cultural contrasts, which serve as a stimulus to understand that the origins of many contemporary issues have roots in the past. The teacher also presents the history of design with a broader understanding, presenting examples in the most varied areas of design, including clothing. Thus, the student has a broader knowledge, which is added to the compulsory subjects of History of Clothing. From the cited reference, the others are mediated, always with the concern of teaching the basic precepts of citation author and date in the format ABNT (Brazilian Association of Technical Norms), a Brazilian citation system such as IATED and APA. In this way, it is being taught what will be charged in the completion course project, there in the seventh period. In addition, all books in the bibliography are in the Portuguese language, which facilitates the dynamics in the classroom. Finally, it is also expected that, at the end of the period, the student will create the habit of substantiating his research, relating and interpreting the content of books.

1.2 Historical contributions

To talk about history is to use a rich and countless facts, actors, and objects; that is, an increasing source of data which grown as time passes by. Regarding the history of design, there are authors who point to the period of the Industrial Revolution as a milestone for the emergence of the designer's profession, and there are authors [2] [3] who argue that design is linked to the history of man in society as an artefact maker. With this, a challenge is imposed on the teacher of a discipline such as Design Fundamentals. How to fit a huge historical references source into one semester of sixty-hours distributed into fifteen classes?

We selected the themes based on the guidelines of "Analysis of concepts and definitions of design; Research on the origins of design; Search for understanding the historical panorama of design in the world and in Brazil; Reflection on the paths of contemporary design". Considering a limit of fifteen classes, having to reserve at least five meetings for inaugural classes and assessments, we reserve ten classes to work on ten relevant topics in history. The theoretical content was divided into ten topics, one topic per class, making ten classes. Then there were five classes that were organized as follows: a class for the first day, the inaugural class; two for the presentation of papers by the students (one in the middle and the other at the end of the semester) and two for the teacher's feedback to the students, one week after each presentation.

Thus, the time of four hours with the student in the room allowed a development of the theory through practical exercises. The beginning of the theory coincides with the history of mankind and was being developed until the present time. The emphasis was on the mode of production that stood out in each historical moment, as defended by Gustavo Bomfim [4]: the artisanal production mode until the Middle Ages; the mode of manufacturing, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the modes of mechanical industrial production after the Industrial Revolution that lasted the nineteenth and twentieth centuries until the arrival of the modes of electronic industrial production of contemporaneity. This content has been divided into ten macro themes over ten meetings: 1) Before the Industrial Revolution; 2) Period of Industrial Revolution; 3) Victorian Era; 4) Art Nouveau; 5) Art Deco; 6) Bauhaus; 7) USA; 8) Modern Design; 9) Postmodern; 10) Digital Revolution. In the latter, the student was invited to reflect on the production, its benefits and harms to the planet and the student was encouraged to think about other forms of production that did not use the virgin raw material, but reusing what would be discarded, as it happens with upcycling.

Upcycling, in its turns, is a present issue in the life of the student and society, especially in what concerns the exhaustive production of fashion. Brazilian design brands such as À La Garçonne, signed by the internationally renowned Brazilian designer Alexandre Herchcovitch, brought to catwalk fashion in 2016 upcycling collections. They had the same glamour of a piece with a totally new raw material.
Sustainability is one of the best of the brand which works on the reuse of clothes and the use of recycled fabrics [5]. The theme that stood out in the scenario at that time served as inspiration for the two proposals of work, one individual and another collective, uniting theory and practice in a design thought, characteristic of the profession of the designer.

2 METHODOLOGY

The theoretical nature of a discipline such as "Design Fundamentals" may seem to be easily carried by a traditional methodology based on the power of the verb and the intensive use of memory. This would, however, place students not only in a passive posture but also leave the class monotonous. A student who is preparing for the job market must above all develop his autonomy through meaningful and contextualized learning [6]. Practical activities are a great way to achieve that aim. In other hand, a Bachelor Course demands theoretical disciplines that will help students to reflect about their performance while active agent at market workplace. However, this sort of disciplines, such Design Fundamentals, tends to be as not as much attractive as techniques of drawing and modelling; especially in the first semester when beginners are seeking to practice.

The authors have experienced teaching this discipline enough to understand that methodology and evaluation form should be updated. “Good teaching involves striving continually to learn about students' understanding and the effects of teaching on it.” [7] Therefore, between the years of 2015 and 2017, the forms of evaluation were rethought in order to make the discipline more attractive to students. Moved by the precepts of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire [8], of which “teaching requires common sense”, "teaching requires apprehension of reality", "teaching requires joy and hope" and especially "teaching requires readiness for dialogue", and by listening students feedback, we carry out different sort of practical assessments in order to learning. Two of the most successful activities were the ones we brought to share in this article.

In order to minimize the discomfort of students with the theoretical evaluation modality and also to involve them in the content of the discipline, we apply as part of the evaluation a practical activity. We experimented at different semesters two modalities of performance: Individual activity (T-shirt customization); and Group activity (Upcycling proposition). Both activities aimed to use the visual references of the topics covered in ten macro classes: 1) Before Industrial Revolution; 2) During Industrial Revolution; 3) Victorian Era; 4) Art Nouveau; 5) Art Déco; 6) Bauhaus; 7) EUA; 8) Modern Design; 9) Postmodern; 10) Digital Revolution. Despite of have being performed in different situations, both activities was based in the same creative process, which mainly consisted of three stages: 1) research; 2) generation of alternatives; and 3) prototyping. In the research stage students were responsible for reviewing the main historical data and stylistic characteristics, such as colours, shapes, textures, typography, and materials. Students should then outline customization or upcycling alternatives. And finally produce the pieces. All the process lasted no more than a month, a period in which the students received guidance from the teachers.

The individual activity has as basis of the discussion was the different possibilities that a customization can bring to the same piece. In this activity each student had as a starting point the same white cotton T-shirt. Each one of them was in charge to work over one of the ten themes (macro classes). The students were free to change the modelling or just customize it, working on the surface design. The group activity was performed with three to four members and the focus was the Upcycling proposal. The goal was to take advantage of existing and uninteresting pieces of clothes and give them a new life. Each member was responsible for customizing one of the pieces based on a visual direction established by the group. We expected as final result that each group present a complete look, ready for a fashion catwalk.

The two proposals presented to the students are aspects of the new assignments of the designer, in a scenario in which the virtual platforms of co-creation has been growing exponentially and allowing the expansion of the creative processes in varied scopes in which people, even if not graduated, share their experiments. We argue that attitudes such as these are the basis for social innovation. And the designers, through their interdisciplinary academic training, have tools that can facilitate the evolution of these processes, intervening in a way to enhance the positive results, acting more as author or co-author than as absolute responsible for the final product.

The Makers movement expresses the growing number of people who are no longer content to get their daily products and services provided by companies. They want to use their skills and learn to make the products they need by developing pieces that are different from mass-produced pieces (Anderson,
2012). So it happens in fashion, where the number of tutorials in blogs and social networks grows exponentially. Techniques of clothing customization are taught through a movement called DIY (Do it yourself) by its users.

3 RESULTS

In the briefing of both proposals, we emphasized that it was to make an interpretation and not a mere reproduction of a past style. This was done to prevent a photograph from being simply applied on a piece of clothing. In this way, at the stage 1 (research), they need to identify characteristics of the periods studied - such as colours, shapes, materials, textures, prints and patterns - in order to translate them into a contemporary piece. To do so, before the stage 2 (generation of alternatives), a moodboard was made to show a selection of chosen inspirational images (see figure 4).

A frequent question of the students was whether they should only observe the clothes of the past. We also clarified that we were not dealing with history of clothing but history of design, which would include the analysis of graphic pieces - such as posters and other products, as well as clothing. We pay attention to the need to instigate a creation that, although based on references from the past, was authorial and innovative [9].

In addition, the two types of work, individual and group, have different objectives. The individual is the moment for the teacher to observe and give space to show the talents of each one. Already with the group work, we aim to develop students’ ability in how to divide ideas and to build teamwork, simulating the work marketplace reality. The following will show some of the results. Individual activity: T-shirt customization

For individual activity, we asked to the students to wear a white Basic T-shirt and use it as blank paper and they could make the necessary modifications. When observing the result in figure 1, it is possible to perceive that the variation in the shapes, the rhythm and in the colour dialogues with the studied periods. Waists, armholes, sleeves and T-shirt heights were modified by the students. The Bauhaus t-shirt brings the geometric shape of a triangle, creating a style that would show the waist. The Postmodern t-shirt brings unusual features on the back, alluding the rebelty and the psychedelic. We can see the drawing of a strange eye and strange mouth together with the sentence: Craziness is already inside me.

![Figure 1. Examples of T-shirts customized: 1. Original T-shirt; 2. Victorian Era; 3. Art Nouveau; 4 and 5. Art Déco; 6, 7 and 8. Bauhaus; 9. Modern Design; 10. Postmodern](image-url)
exhibition and to be able to explain to the public, which basically consisted on other students of the school. In addition to this, the backside of each tags contained a QR code in which the students were free to include extra content such the creative process for example. In this way, we fulfilled the communication role and the promotion of discussions about the design solutions given by the students.

![Figure 2. T-shirts customized.](image1)

The exhibition lasted about two weeks and was displayed at the Hall of the School. All the pieces made were exposed. For lack of space, we placed some of them on hangers and the others, on mannequins. The students assisted in the assembly and, as can be seen in figure 3, we place a totem with the identification of the academic period, the discipline, the teacher's name and the activity proposal.

![Figure 3. T-shirts exposition.](image2)

Finally, we noticed that the exposure of the T-shirts was a form of fixation of the knowledge, besides valuing the effort of the student. In a traditional modality of presentation inside the classroom presentations are often limited to a brief presentation of 10-15 minutes.

### 3.1 Group activity: Upcycling proposition

As performed in the individual activity, in the work of upcycling, students should do a previous research (stage 1) on the content; then following they should make photos of selected pieces used so as to register "before and after" and then create a moodboard to help them in the generation of alternatives (stage 2). This activity, though, gained higher proportions than expected. Students got so involved with the activities that, once they finish the prototyping (stage 3), they asked if they could present it in a open modality at the School, simulating a fashion parade launching a new collection. So as to illustrate the results of this activity, we bring some figures that show: elements of inspiration (figure 4); “before and after” (figure 5); images of a fashion editorial the groups performed to present the final look (prototype); and finally, the fashion catwalk event.
The figure 4 presents two works based on Brazilian products and facts: one based on Modern Design and one based on postmodern movement (Vernacular Design). On the right side, the Modern proposal was inspired by the straw and the leather, from the furniture pieces of renowned Brazilian designers, respectively, Joaquim Tenreiro [10] and Sérgio Rodrigues [11]. In addition to form and texture, it is possible to perceive the colours ochre and black as a representative tone of that time of history. On the left side, the spirit of vernacular design was translated not only into the visual syntactic elements (colours, forms, materials and prints), but also on a symbolic approach such as the critique of Brazilian politics. In the look it is possible to observe the criticism, because the student is with a yellow tape crossing the mouth, in an ironic gesture to the scandal of the politician Aécio Neves that was caught by fraud by a phone call.

According to Cardoso [2], in recent years there has been a postmodern logic of an appropriation and recombination of references (often typographic) made by non-designers with a critical or ironic content. We can notice the same logic on the students Postmodern proposition. With regard to visual elements used, the students got inspired by the free hand-made typography commonly used in supermarket advertisements of Rio de Janeiro city; as well as, by the visual language of the traditional "Profeta Gentileza" (Prophet of Kindness), a wanderer who, when alive, preached love and had a graphic form of writing on the walls of the city [12]. Music theme and inspiration for many designers, the green and yellow colours of the Brazilian flag associated with the free hand style of writing are already part of the Brazilian national identity, a typical case of vernacular design.

Another fact to be highlighted was the requirement of the delivery of a "before and after" board of the finished piece. The figure 5 presents examples of two other works based on Brazilian Modern Design and Postmodern movement. On the left side, we can see that the students identified in a school uniform T-shirt the colour black and white as a support to compose the modern Brazilian design look. Those colours were very common in that period in Brazil. The piece of clothing alludes to the commemorative mark of the Centennial Room of Rio de Janeiro and the bag to the brand of electric energy company
Light, both made by designer Aloísio Magalhães [13]. On the right side of figure 5, we can see that the group of students used luminous colours much found in the graphical works of April Greiman so as to compose a typical gym look of the years 1980, making a reference to New Wave [2]. It is worth noting that the long trousers turned over to a cropped style t-shirt; the orange camiknickers turned over a dress; and the pink t-shirt turned over leggings. The transformation was the highlight of this group.

![Figure 5. Editorial.](image)

In order to assist students in the initial composition of a portfolio, a photo essay was requested. As a backdrop for Kitsch, for example, the stairways made by the artist Selarón [14], a traditional tourist spot in Rio de Janeiro, was the choice. The steps show a profusion of colours as they are lined with coloured tiles. Each group searched for places according to the message they wanted to express. By analysing the wall inscription in figure 5 “Brasil, Eu te amo” (Brazil, I love you), we can infer that students had understood that it is possible to merge historical inspiration with elements of nationality. It shows that students were able to create in a creative way on a given theme. Another image that is worth commenting on the same figure is the giant Ferris wheel at night. The nostalgic ambience, which recalls to childhood, was a great choice to present a look with retro inspiration. Walls with city graffiti also served as the setting for postmodern photographs. In addition to the scenarios, the act of drinking a milk shake that, added to the band on the head, to the hairstyle and the lighting, transport us to the New Look of the 1980s.
The parade was the big day, organized as a closing of the discipline. The entire faculty was invited by notices in the disclosure system. A large hall was arranged with chairs, sound. Each group prepared a short paragraph explaining its look that was explained as the model (one of the group members) entered the catwalk. After the last student parade, the music was increased and all the students paraded at the same time. To the applause of the audience, the models were photographed by other members of the group. In a separate division, each member of the group had its function: model, photographer, makeup artist, assistant, speaker and whatever else they thought necessary for the parade.

4 CONCLUSIONS

About customization, the exposure experience was interesting because the students could enjoy their T-shirts being displayed and could see how it behaves next to their friends T-shirts. The exhibition becomes an extension of the classroom in which it prolongs the time of the experience of learning.

In relation to upcycling, one of the advantages of creating used clothes was to stimulate contact with the parts, with the structure of the clothes. By disassembling a T-shirt, detaching a button, cutting a pant leg, the students begin to notice the modelling and irregularities of the body. In this way, learning by doing, they start testing solutions and experimenting, which is very important for a beginning student who is receiving a tremendous amount of knowledge. Moreover, the sense of touch is developed by bringing together pieces of different texture.

It was notorious the involvement of the groups in the second activity, since the groups themselves divided tasks, were enthusiastic about the event as if it were a professional event; from the choice of songs for the parade to the photographic coverage to an audience of teachers, relatives and friends.

Finally, both activities was developed at the same time students were still learning drawing and modelling techniques, history of indumentary, visual methodology. So it was not only important for learning history and how to apply it into fashion but it allowed an integrated vision of what is real designing to fashion.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The authors wish to thank SENAI CETIQT students for have accepted the challenge, for sharing the photos, and for putting so much efforts and emotion on those activities.

REFERENCES