Becoming a Designer: Some contributions of design reviews

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outline

• motivation/interests
• method
• data selected
• situation of the crits: described
• what is accomplished (lens: instructor’s roles)
• opportunities to learn how designs (can) function as rhetorical devices for
  – engaging persuasively with clients
  – evolving design proposals
• relation to becoming a designer
3

*Practical exercises*

Observe the street, from time to time, with some concern for system perhaps.  
Apply yourself. Take your time.  
Note down the place: the terrace of a café near the junction of the Rue de Bac and the Boulevard Saint-Germain  
the time: seven o’ clock in the evening  
the date: 15 May 1973  
the weather: set fair

Note down what you can see. Anything worthy of note going on. Do you know how to see what’s worthy of note? Is there anything that strikes you? Nothing strikes you. You don’t know how to see.

You must set about it more slowly, almost stupidly. Force yourself to write down what is of no interest, what is most obvious, most common, most colourless.

The street: try to describe the street, what it’s made of, what it’s used for. The people in the street. The cars. What sort of cars? The buildings: note that they’re on the comfortable, well-heeled side. Distinguish residential from official buildings. The shops. What do they sell?
Decipher a bit of the town, deduce the obvious facts: the obsession with ownership, for example. Describe the number of operations the driver of a vehicle is subjected to when he parks merely in order to go and buy a hundred grams of fruit jelly:

- parks by means of a certain amount of toing and froing
- switches off the engine
- withdraws the key, setting off a first anti-theft device
- extricates himself from the vehicle
- winds up the left-hand front window
- locks it
- checks that the left-hand rear door is locked;
if not:
  opens it
  raises the handle inside
  slams the door
  checks it’s locked securely
method 3

Selection through theoretical sensitivities interests & motivations

Discipline of discourse analysis

Organising framework of others’ work on studio crits
The data selected for this study includes:

**Industrial Design (Junior)**
- Formal education in a design discipline
- Project has external client
- Some stakes beyond fulfilling the curriculum requirements

**Student Task Focuses (1-5):**

1. **1-ID-jr:** Two examples
2. **2-ID-jr:** Three examples
3. **3-ID-jr:** 1:1 crits student with instructor 1-ID-jr 2-ID-jr [& 4-ID-jr]
   - Task focus
   - Designer formation focus
4. **4-ID-jr:** Meetings with/presentations to clients 3-ID-jr & 5-ID-jr
   - Task focus only
5. **5-ID-jr:**

Note: This is part of the method.
Characterisation of the reflection

responding in a situation
\sim reflection in action

critically reviewing response to events
\sim reflection on action

evaluating events, establishing contributory factors, developing understanding through constructing an interpretation

considering conditions that shape experience
\sim emancipation

task bound: thinking and acting

task focused: reviewing incidents

awareness of learning: interpreting events
situation of the crits

Physical and temporal setting
  • ownership of space, agenda

Underlying design process

Discourse characteristics
  educational sphere
    • students conform to the instructor-student relationship
  professional sphere
    • inculcation (forceful instillation) into profession – social identity
The generation of a design concept usually starts after some initial exploration of the ill-defined problem space. Cross's model includes communication as a final stage. Archer (1963) may have been the first to include communication as an explicit stage in a design process model.

Writing from an engineering perspective, Cross developed this "simple descriptive model of the design process, based on the essential activities that the designer performs. The end-point of the process is the communication of a design, ready for manufacture. Prior to this, the design proposal is subject to evaluation against the goals, constraints and criteria of the design brief. The proposal itself arises from the exploration of the design problem.

- **Exploration**
  - client's brief; research client's current product ranges; research competitors' offerings; iconic designs/precedents

- **Generation**
  - sketches of > 5 design ideas (ready for 1-ID-jr)
  - selection and elaboration of 5 design concepts (ready for 2-ID-jr)
  - selection and elaboration of 3 design proposals (for 3-ID-jr)
  - develop storyboards & prototypes of 3 designs (supported by meeting with instructor (4-ID-jr))

- **Evaluation**
  - present to clients (5-ID-jr)

**Underlying design process**
what is accomplished

Prescribing activities and goals and encouraging design thinking
• Tells them what to do not what to think

Lens: instructor roles [Goldschmidt et al 2010]
• Being a source of expertise and authority
• Coaching and facilitating
• Being a ‘buddy’

For each notice conversational strategies to accomplish
what is accomplished: how

Being a source of expertise and authority
– How to proceed and what will happen next
– Authority in technical matters related to the design brief, the clients and design and manufacture of furniture
– Answers technical questions [avoids answering qs about design choices]
– Makes references to design precedents

Coaching and facilitating
– Asks questions to open up proposals
– Other ‘opening up’ strategies include indirection – saying what he might do, uses hedges such as ‘maybe’
– Makes positive appraisals drawing attention to attractive features inviting students to attend to these
– Avoids negative appraisals, does this indirectly by drawing attention to features that students need to focus on

Being a ‘buddy’
– Non-buddy: Uses ‘you’ in coaching, ‘I’ for suggestions applied to himself
– Non-buddy: Puts onus on student to decide ‘you’re the designer’
– Indirectly: sets himself alongside by giving positive appraisals which are not justified (cf above)
Designs as rhetorical devices - to help clients

• Use of designs to allow clients to see and appreciate the qualities of designers’ proposals

“what I always like to do is I like to have, you know, safe, medium and extreme to some degree, that’s kinda it helps them”

ID-jrSecondReview with Alice
Designs as rhetorical devices - for developing design ideas

- Use of designs to scaffold their own thinking – as sacrificial entities

“I would do the, the easy simple form ones first, and the more complex ones later, and that way – ‘cos you’re gonna find out on your forms whether or not it’s something you want to work with”

ID-jrFirstReview with Tim
Permission
- professional inculcation

As Greg advises his students about what to do to develop their design concepts and choose between them, he creates opportunities for them to develop their own understanding that:

- their own preferences are legitimate criteria for selecting in favour of one move over another;
- their evaluations of the outcomes of moves may legitimately lead them to revise their own preferences and goals;
- meeting hard constraints may undermine the essential features of a design concept.
So what?
- for designer education

‘experience alone is a poor teacher’

‘a poor teacher is a poor teacher’

The subtle ways in which the experience of the crits provides value entails an understanding of what design expertise comprises.

Raising to the surface the qualities of good instruction has implications for the necessary abilities and background experiences of those who play the critic’s role.