

Higher design education, as it is often practiced, is superfluous in modern society. Technologies are ever-changing, and information is readily available for anyone curious enough to seek it. Many schools teach students how to emulate trends and work under the present-day systems. However, too little focus is placed on fostering critical thinking skills, creativity, design planning, and cultural development.

American education tends to fear that which cannot be easily assessed, and the creative student isn't given opportunities to develop her valuable gifts. However, in practice, the general assumption that creativity is autonomous does not stand. The school must vigorously oppose the view that, given proper modern technical equipment, one can live in a perfectly functioning organization requiring no extra effort or input, and automatically enjoy success and financial security.¹ Students must be challenged to question existing strategies and encouraged to engage in system-level thinking—looking at the larger cultural context or whether or not the problem they are faced with is even worth solving.

This design teaching philosophy must not neglect design history and theory or forsake instructing students in the foundational art of looking. No design movement exists within a bubble. On the contrary, hand-in-hand with vigorous formal aesthetic training, the student trained in design theory and creative thinking processes will have the advantage. Through a process of analysis and investigation of alternative solutions, students will experience the essential and timeless components of graphic design that will last far beyond fads and trends; they must possess the skills and reverence for the career they are embarking on.

From the micro to the macro, a design student's entire academic career must be well designed—from the progression of courses to the daily activities within the classroom. There are many ways in which this ideology manifests in the day-to-day. As the instructor, I infuse my curriculum with theory and socially engaged projects. Students' projects often have a personal bent. They are encouraged to work with content they care about. Because of this, they are highly engaged in the process—they work harder, experiment, expand ideas, and learn more. This model teaches students to experience more of what is happening around them and participate in conversations of broader social issues.

¹ Hofmann, Armin. (1965). *Graphic Design Manual: Principles and Practice* (pp. 9-12). New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.