

# **BASIC DRAWING APPRENTICESHIP THROUGH A VOCATION FRIENDLY METHODOLOGY**

ID 146

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## ***ABSTRACT***

*This is an experience-based paper which addresses the importance of Drawing in formative disciplines of young students enrolled in fashion design courses, and present an innovative use for this basilar discipline in a Fashion Design Program.*

*In this pedagogical approach we consider the implication of Drawing as interface and also acknowledge the important elements: conceptual operations; taxonomic icons; and drawing process, as interface components.*

## ***KEYWORDS***

*Drawing, Fashion, Project-Based Learning, Art Based Pedagogy, Interface*

## INTRODUCTION

**This paper** addresses innovative and expanded usages of Drawing in a Fashion Design Course. We expect to broaden the comprehension of Drawing as a privileged interface in design's creative process. This article is a development from a previous publication *Uma experiência de desenho para alunos de Design e Marketing de Moda*<sup>1</sup>.

We believe that Drawing is a very important tool for the development of vision, perception, representation, graphic exploration and creativity. Through practical exercises we can refine visual acuity, develop manual skills and cognitive tools that enable the student to improve his/her creative and artistic work.

As drawing tutors we have been exploring the role of drawing as an "expanded view" in the teaching/learning methods of this instrumental discipline and as a creative methodological approach in project-based learning.

The reflection we present in this paper results from an experience in a fashion design course in a drawing class. We teach Representation Drawing (RD) in a Bachelor Course in Fashion Design and Marketing (FDM) at the School of Engineering of Minho University. This has a theoretical and practical syllabus, for half a year with a total of 140 hours, of which 80 are contact hours. This is a first year unit and so the propaedeutic guidance aims to establish a foundation for learning and practice of drawing and design (which here is understood as the design tool, and distinct from artistic drawing, although may also be contemplated as possessing aesthetic and plastic properties).

## DRAWING FRAMEWORK

The integration of drawing in FDM is based on two pillars: drawing as a translation of an observable reality (drawing from life) and drawing as a tool for creative problem solving (design). In this duality we have found space for formal, technical and also inventive progress of the student. It enables contact with the plastic and formal diversity that exists in the personal environment, and it promotes the creation and exploration of individual forms that are essential to the development of individual and inventive solutions in design.

<b>learning outcomes:</b>	<b>concepts: perceptual drawing</b>	<b>concepts: design (concept drawing)</b>
To show observation capacities of form and space	SEEING Space and Form perception; Visual acuity; Representation; SUBJECT - EYE - MIND - HAND	THINK - SHAPE - CREATE Represent an image or mental idea; Represent the subject (and its variations) in a space or environment, MIND - HAND - SUBJECT - EYE
Acquire representation abilities through drawing	Drawing from life; Representation systems; Relations between real and image - notational forms; Graphic and plastic expression; Technical methods in drawing: visual elements; shapes; volume; texture; colour;	COMMUNICATE Representation systems; Operating with concepts; Shaping concepts into forms; Technical methods in drawing;
Identify and implement drawing methods into the creative process of design and art	CREATIVE PROCESSES (creative capacity in applying acquired skills in new design problems)	
Mastering drawing instruments	SUPPORTS, MATERIALS AND IMPLEMENTS (techniques and significance)	
Articulate information in (with) communicative functions	ILLUSTRATION	CREATE - COMMUNICATE

**Figure 1** - Conceptual framework (Class Curriculum)

Drawing from life contributes to the recognition, understanding and communication of the surrounding reality, filtered and conditioned by the sensory and visual dimensions of drawing. It is through this practice that the student contacts with the subject, that analyzes, understands and recognizes its visual or tactile properties, and it is through drawing that he/she can "build the stock of visual and drawing experience"<sup>2</sup>. It is through this practice that the student acknowledges the importance of drawing as a discipline and as a visual and a mental tool. We should not forget that it is through this practice that the designer may develop graphic and plastic strategies used to express emotions and ideas.

Design (drawing) enables imagery translation and communication processes, and the growth of operational strategies that can help shape imagined forms or spaces, as well as explore methods of creative graphic work. This practice is based on techniques and systems that are underpinned in observation drawing and also in processes that deal both with abstract concepts and concrete shapes, designed through the application of conceptual operations. These practices aim at the development of experimentation and search in creative processes directed to solve problems in fashion design.

We believe the drawing present in these processes, as an extension of design, reflects a set of rules and procedures that are affected by the nature of the subject (fashion), by its technical limitations, its socio-cultural and symbolic functions, which influence and interfere in the different phases of the project, from the conceptual idea to the production stage.

The importance of external pressures related to subjects that encompass fashion motivated the educational direction outlined here. For future designers dedicated to the three-dimensional shapes, this being their creation paradigm, we consider important to move drawing from its two-dimensional form (fig.2) to a three-dimensional structure (fig.3).



**Figure 2** - Student's drawing. Catarina Guedes (2009-2010) / João Cardoso (2005) / José Lima (2005)



**Figure 3** - Student's drawing. Catarina Martins (2009-2010) / Rafael Silva (2009-2010)

As Drawing teachers we have been investigating new territories both in and through drawing, so we can articulate representation and graphic inquire using instruments and materials that are traditionally used or explored in different spatial and sensory dimensions. We have been exploring instruments and materials that can approach the student's interest and aims, such as needle, thread, fabrics or fibers. These materials are closer to the course syllabus in the sense that it is a fashion design program.

We work with lines, which we see as a 2D surface but explore as a 3D form. From the moment line is a 3D form it establishes a relation between the paper (support) and the 3D structure. If we work in 3D, line acquires a new dimension as a support.

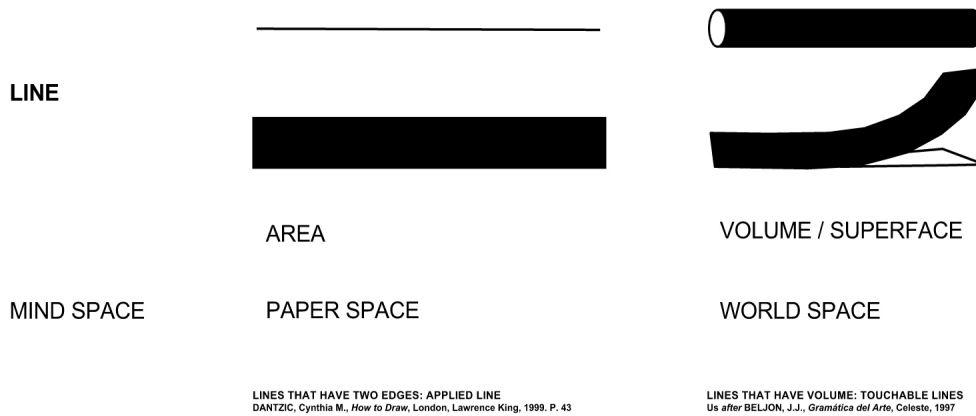


Figure 4 - Drawing: expanded view<sup>3</sup>

## DRAWING AS AN INTERFACE

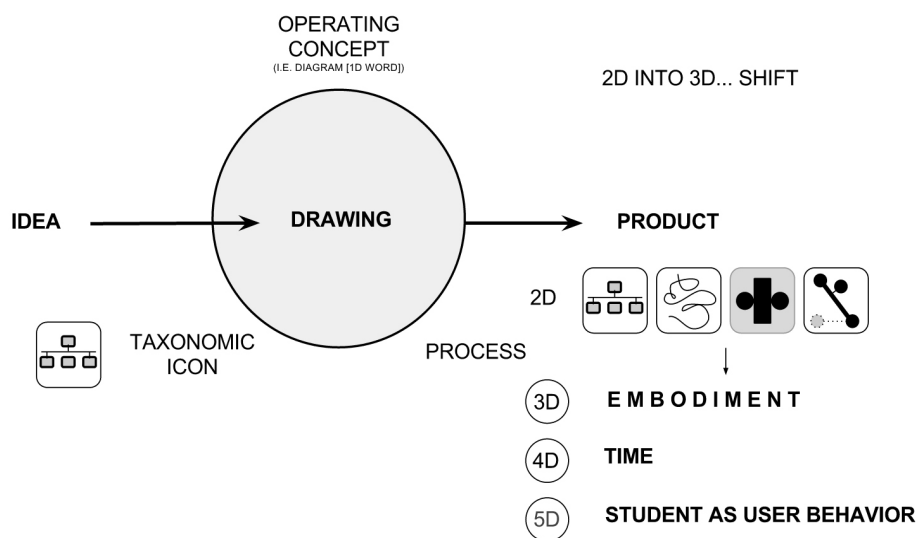


Figure 5 - Drawing as an interface

With this pedagogical approach we consider the implication of drawing as an interface.

Drawing as an interface seeks to establish a connection between the idea and the outcome. It can achieve a link between the mental conceptions and the actual physical result of that concept. This mediating character, acknowledged as a privileged means for visualization, should have an amplitude that allows to consider the various dimensions and possibilities of representation and its specific content. Drawing also allows that translation, from idea to form, through a natural 'language' that is inherent in its process and medium. This particular characteristic allows a visualization of the proposed design solution through distinct perceptive and cognitive modalities, which can improve the user/draftsman relation with drawing and the result of the drawing actions.

In drawing as an interface we consider the need for the student, through an insight, to compose a mental visualization about each drawing operation. The set of experiments, when properly conceived, will generate an icon. This icon, as an idea synthesis, can be an important resource. It is a kind of taxonomic picture that represents the range of possible commands in drawing operative actions.

In the context of a creative project when the student explores new dimensions, new materials or new supports, it generates deep alterations in the final design solution. This has consequences not only in the final outcome, but also in the way that he/she approaches the design process. Reflecting on this process, the student improves the final results and changes his preconceptions related with the use of drawing. If the student understands the conceptual idea behind the drawing's commands he/she can appropriate the words/ideas which designate a pluralistic set of actions. This enables the student to apply these commands in any dimension, support or media and still be drawing.

For example, the word "calligram" can have several meanings, different interpretations that overlap the drawing of the shape of the letters. Some of them are related to drawing and the draftsman should distinguish between a calligram as a literary form and as calligraphic gesture. This concept fit considers both the picture of the word and the concept in the way it is structured in the draftsman's mind.

As mentioned, the taxonomical image allows from its 2D features, elementary and synthesis, to operate a direct identification with a set of actions. In this case, as shown in software interfaces, it does not reveal all the possible or available operations enabled by the command. In our opinion the need of manual practice

is mandatory, complementing and enhancing the understanding of the commands and to promote a critical thinking about the use of the interface icons and tools.

Therefore, we would like to consider that through 3D development drawing, we can participate in a broader understanding of the concept and also to help articulate its use both in an analog or/and digital framework. Designing for the body, for one's body, implies different parametric and conceptual ground that override visual illusion. In this case, the existence of the body as support outruns the XY paper dimensions but also the picture in a computer screen.

After considering the conceptual operations and the taxonomic icon we need to acknowledge the third component of this relation - the process, which is paramount to drawing. In the fashion world, haptic is as important as optical perception. Therefore, conceptual operations related to form, position, orientation, dimension, texture, colour, and their transformative parameters acquire new meaning when the expressive media are predominantly three-dimensional and volumetric. When using the human body as 3D support, it is essential to contemplate movement, scale, or context (social and environmental) as drawing process components.

To these previous dimensions we emphasize the duration of the experience and the conscientious awareness as basilar aspects to this interface approach. The transfers between supports, from paper to body and body to paper, create a narrative. Time allows structuring actions like the exercise of scale, the texture adaptation to the volume and scale of the body, the consideration of the chromatic changes due to the human perceptive system, and much more. Also the need to observe the structure, the material qualities of the medium, and its mechanics and the way lines or value can represent objects allows a net of relations and sensations that override the mediation process in environments where the operations are occluded and instantaneous.

Enhancing this process is the volume and shape that one needs to consider in this proposition, one's body. Working for one's body means that we need to be aware of our body proportion, our movements, our way of walking, and our taste. On the other hand through the creation of something for oneself we can help develop a critical judgment based on the image we can use to express and that we can identify with.

In this conceptual framework we have realized that the students became aware of the design process, of their user/consumer behaviour, of drawing as an interface between their ideas and the object that they design for the body.

We believe that this dimension implies simultaneously the design process time and the critical awareness for the way the student can and uses drawing. They structure the use of basic drawing semantics and reflect the identity character that enriches the process and present new attributes to drawing as an interface for the creative process.

As teachers and as researchers we have been developing this project, we have been working with new data that can help rethink and improve this pedagogical approach.

The students that first participated in this experience have already completed their graduation and presented their final catwalk show (Fig.7), so we have an overall view of the experience results. The matured work of the students has resonances with our teaching/learning strategy. We can find links between their results in our class and their graduate work, not only formally but also in their creative process. We believe that this experience helped them to develop new and innovative results and unleash their creativity as fashion designers.

The first examination of the new data has been so positive that we are repeating and improving this experience to verify results and explore new outcomes.



**Figure 6** - Pictures from KINETIC Runway 2009. Source: [www.design.uminho.pt](http://www.design.uminho.pt)

These are some of the outfits designed by final year students before (Fig. 6) and after (Fig.7) our pedagogical approach. After reflecting upon the results from 2009, we felt that through drawing we could improve the diversity and the quality of the design. Starting from something that looked too flat, we explore new elements and concepts that could upgrade these experiences: layers, opacities, textures, dimensions and material diversity.





**Figure 7** - UNIO 2012: Ana Roldão, Catarina Martins, Marta Dias, Patricia Cunha, Rafael Jesus, Rita Miranda Supervisor: Ana Maria Rocha; Fotógrafo: Tiago Roldão; Modelo: Fábio Nogueira; Produção: Tiago Aguiar. Courtesy of the authors

## NOTES

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