

# Re-education of critical prospects on visual arts in graphic design students: interdisciplinary learning relations

## Re-educación de las perspectivas críticas sobre artes visuales en estudiantes de diseño gráfico: relaciones interdisciplinarias de aprendizaje

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### Abstract

The critical dimension in university teaching and learning processes constitutes a higher stage of intellect and morality in educators and in educating. It finds its theoretical, epistemological and methodological base in the reconstructive and autonomous capacities of the free subject who thinks and creates. In this research we intend to tackle the contextual scaffolding that places critical discourse as an educational necessity in Graphic Design students. We will carry out an analysis of the curricular components that intervene in the decisions to form a critical apparatus towards the visual artistic object and answer the question: what is the meaning of critical education and its discourse on Visual Arts in Graphic Design students? To do this, we propose to rethink the notions of criticism, in diverse contexts through which visual culture travels for the sake of a more complex education, through stories that tell the intimacies of the visual arts.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, critical speeches, visual arts, graphic design

### Resumen

La dimensión crítica en los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje universitarios constituye un estadio superior del intelecto y la moral en los educadores y educando. Encuentra su base teórica, epistemológica y metodológica en las capacidades reconstructivas y autónomas del sujeto libre que piensa y crea. En esta investigación pretendemos abordar el andamiaje contextual que sitúa al discurso crítico como una necesidad educativa en estudiantes de Diseño Gráfico. Realizaremos un análisis de los componentes curriculares que intervienen en las decisiones para conformar un aparato crítico hacia el objeto artístico visual y responder a la pregunta ¿qué sentido tienen la educación crítica y su discurso sobre Artes Visuales en estudiantes de Diseño Gráfico? Para ello, proponemos repensar las nociones de crítica, en contextos diversos por los que transita la cultura visual en aras de una educación más compleja, a través de relatos que cuentan las intimidades de las artes visuales.

**Palabras clave:** Plan de estudios, discursos críticos, artes visuales, diseño gráfico.

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## 1. Introduction

Learning or educational environments today have the mission of snooping around and evaluating the realities that interweave the popular imagery or the ideologies in general that design and redesign the thinking of young

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people. Based on these diagnoses, teachers have to redirect teaching based on current social dynamics; aimed at developing the capacity of reflection, irreverence, questioning, dissent and disobedience in student is in order to strengthen critical capabilities.

The mass media are influential scenarios in the transmission of vices, chimeras, canons of beauty and lifestyles that settle in dominant social groups in a locality, territory, region or country and then legitimize attitudes that dominate and manipulate other groups. Less visible social post. Precisely these scenarios or controversies must be exploited by the curricular tools to route the top level students toward an awareness and a critical attitude. not only within the ambit or specialty but in the environment or where they interact socially.

Is it not one of the objectives of education to prepare the subject for society? Students of Graphic Design once they have graduated from the Pontifical Universidad Catholic Campus Santo Domingo must perform as a function of commissioned work where they will often have to say "yes" to everything, to please the client. This does not mean that the critical exercise should not be improved from the curriculum through a powerful weapon such as visual arts. Responding to commercial demands - when appropriate - does not limit the creation of works of designs converted into powerful artistic works, but these with the passage of time and with the breaking of complacent inertia can contribute to generating or renewing culture visual in the masses.

Our research aims to jump-start the execution of some actions to fortify critical judgments in students studying Graphic Design. To materialize these proposals it was necessary to consult some authors who deal with the subject of criticism from educational contexts or from other territories that allowed them to adapt their theoretical foundations to what we propose to materialize in the classroom or in the learning spaces. In this way the student will be able to identify nonconformities and sustain these based on the abilities of relationship, analysis, synthesis, associations and arguments.

The curriculum must be the powerful weapon that allows to capture and redirect the gaze of the sleeping eye towards the liberating, critical, questioning and sensitive eye through the visual arts and other epistemological fields that provide the basis for developing the critical culture in students.

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## 2. Methodology

This work is the result of a qualitative investigation that was developed within the doctoral program in Arts and Education of the University of Barcelona, Spain (2015-2018) to respond to the problem How Graphic Design students can approach the critical exercise on Visual arts? We consider pertinent a social constructionist approach where the history of the formative future, the experiential stories of the students and professors regarding the confrontation with the interdisciplinary curriculum and the critical view of the intellectual production of the students of Graphic Design of the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador , campus Santo Domingo.

We decided to tell our experiences because "neither science nor art can exist outside of experience, and experience requires a theme. This topic is qualitative "(Eisner, 2014, p. 43) and not to play along to scientific writing amputee, that traditionally have characterization: objective, clear, precise and concise, without subjectivities. On the contrary, on this occasion subjectivity is guiding because we are the subjects who think about the object and assemble it according to our experiences and communicative needs of representation of what we are and know. Therefore, the present study has been manifested from the narrative perspective, we are the subjects who speak, who have a voice and make decisions.

To this should be added that we have used the theoretical framework supporting ideas on building social, considers do this as creating meaning through collaborative work. We agree with Gergen and Gergen (2011)

when they propose: "The social construction is not attributable to a single individual or a group, nor is singular and unified, but responds to a shared creation socially" (p. 9).

We assume this position although the great thing about this theory is that it invites us, in the words of Kenneth and Mary Gerger, permanently to the creativity that it represents and as it has been explained, we try to provoke the student to create his critical discourse from what the work itself provokes and awakens you.

What we intend with this methodology is to create and defend spaces where the permanently open dialogue predominates, where another voice, another way of appreciating the world is taken into account, another revision, in which one can ascend as a human being from the values that are possessed. We intend that what the student feels individually becomes the meaning built among many people.

We try with this methodology to go in search of the relational as a source of meaning, in which, as we build, we open more new doors and, why not, better ways of acting, much more creative and promising.

On the other hand, we declare that it is a critical ethnographic investigation, because we have used dialogue, dialect and collaborative to awaken critical positions in students, using the knowledge they possess and the culture in which they are heirs today, which will serve to offer opinions and at the same time behaviors.

Other reasons that have moved us to use ethnography as a method have been for being personalized, according to Angrosino (2012), researchers are in face-to-face contact with the people who study and who are participants and observers of the life they study. We have been involved with the students in this process, as we are part of the discussions and debates that arise around the works of art that are subjected to analysis.

On the other hand, in this walk through the different educational and artistic experiences, we use observation, a method that allows us to look beyond the perceivable and then interpret the processes that make the object of study interesting; among them, the construction of a critical discourse.

We conducted several interviews with teachers, students, critics, these interviews were open, dynamic, and script-free. If you want we could translate them into dialogues or stories in which we find different notions about our subject of study.

To provide some credibility and support some proposed theories, we have accompanied our speech with quotes and paraphrases from other authors with more experience in art education through bibliographic signing techniques.

We consider it pertinent to state that we are facing qualitative research, since the experience of us as researchers and of the students who have participated in it have been valuable for the achievement of such results.

In his book *The Illustrated Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and Improvement of Educational Practice*, Eisner (2014) exposes six features of qualitative study. In this work, one of this is present, the self as an instrument, since we have dedicated ourselves to observing our students in the process of critical construction, we have taken it as a reference and we have been able to perceive and interpret their actions against the artistic phenomenon, subject of analysis

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### **3. Results**

#### **3.1. The curriculum and its critical demands. Relevance from curriculum design, study programs and syllabus**

For more than five years we have been working full time at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador, campus Santo Domingo, sharing knowledge with students of the Graphic Design career. During this time we have taught

classes of five and more subjects per semester. These are among others an object of study in common: visual arts, broad concept and complex we will delimit later.

The initial step was made from the distributive of courses, study's programs subjects (PEA) and instructions to develop the syllabus. However, we will begin the curricular analysis from the design of the career. We rejoice when we read carefully the mission, objectives, relevance of this as they were directed toward the importance of developing critical thinking in students, focuses other levels of production that not only has to do with the objectification of matter.

We could not stop treating the curriculum in this first chapter of empirical stories about higher education in Graphic Design and the look towards Visual Arts from the focus, critical discourse. We think, like Stenhouse, that the curriculum "is a document that mentions a list of contents, objectives, activities and evaluation methods" (Agirre, 2005, p.51). We believe that the curriculum becomes "an object endowed with significance. It is something that has physical existence; but also a meaning embodied in words images, sounds, games (...)" (Agirre, 2005, p.51).

From the PUCE mission, we were able to notice a concern for the strengthening of criticism in Higher Education. Literal a) was consistent with this: "It is an academic community that, in a rigorous and critical way, contributes to the protection and development of human dignity and cultural heritage through research" (p.1). This is at the Institutional level, globally. The mission compromises a path to follow, with pre-established intentions and these lead to a more complex level of training that is given from research with ethics.

We want to pause the last specific objective whose fundamental stimulus falls on "critical awareness", much more ambitious than what I intend to achieve with this research. Having critical awareness means being truly critical, having critical faculties strengthened and implies an integral and complex formation.

For this, the fight has to be done from two fronts: on the one hand, from the creation of what is called as informed resistance through the hermeneutics of the suspicion regarding the analysis processes and, on the other hand, from the creation of effective visual products, of critical, socially powerful visual products. Combining learning to read with learning to do (and especially in this proposal this second objective is almost more important), [this doing, I do not see as mere production of iconic objects, also textual], art education becomes a political weapon of the first magnitude (Acaso, 2010, p. 155).

The curricular design includes the Relevance of the career, another section that corroborates the need to strengthen the critical sense in Graphic Design students and contributes to the development of the National Plan for Good Living. From this last point of view, it aims to "improve the quality of education at all levels and modalities for the generation of knowledge and the integral formation of creative, supportive, responsible, critical, participatory and productive people" (Curriculum design, 2017, p. 12).

We consider it pertinent to support this section from the epistemological horizons that are present in the profession. We were able to notice the projections of the career, these are not limited to the construction of graphic objects merely, they care "the highest level of incorporation of design as Philosophy (Reason for Being, Design Thinking)" (Curriculum Design, 2017, p. 13).

We were motivated to continue with this research the paradigm that they propose: "to move from a disciplinary vision to an intern, after and multidisciplinary one. To integrate the Graphic design disciplines to build experiences. All this gives way to believe in the transcendence of our proposal, which aims to develop the critical discourse written in Graphic Design students, that is, to complicate education. We do not conceive of a designer with dramatic mistakes in writing and without intellectual interpretative and constructive abilities. By the way, in the Design of the career (2017), it is expressed that "the knowledge of complex realities is invariably multidimensional, therefore pertinent knowledge must include complexity, which implies that the different elements that make up a whole are inseparable" (p.15).

The object of study of the profession was declared in the Curricular Design of the Graphic Design Department. This was clear and complex (the result of intelligence and mastery of the epistemological field of the career); not at all biased or prejudiced. He declares:

In the graphic design professional training, the configuration of graphic messages and the relationships, interactions, conditions and problems that result between the design (graphic message), its authors, coders and target audiences defined in a specific context and moment of enunciation are studied. This study requires the compression of morphological elements and visual language, theoretical, conceptual and methodological conceptions, the appropriate use of technologies and the impact they generate on the social, cultural, economic, technological environment, etc. (p.23).

We continue reading the document in question and find the answer to another timely question, what do you want to transform with the profession? We never imagined that curriculum design had these aspects so eloquent and consistent with the relevance of our object of study. This question had already been asked by thesis director Fernando Herraiz. Maybe at that time we didn't have a solid theoretical support to answer him. From the curricular design it is proposed (as necessary) to transform:

- The low understanding of the graphic message and its communicative functions (informative, didactic and persuasive)
- The educated interest in formative research oriented to the production of knowledge, critical reflection and design education (p.23)

Exit profile, we were realizing that wants to train professionals who make decisions against the draft Design approaches from Inter after and multidisc - disciplinary. A designer with complex solution capabilities, that "foster consensus, applying inclusion, empathy, compassion, persuasion, patience and critical thinking" (p.32).

After having analyzed the general descriptions of the Career Redesign, it merits landing on the subjects that will be intervened by Visual Arts studies and especially by the scriptural discourse with critical vocation. Have we displayed the descriptions of these subjects in some specific goals Redesign and pointing to the need to address this rhetorical question?

### **Study programs and syllabus**

We observe the curricular components of the study programs corresponding to the subjects Visual Arts, History and Design Theory V (Latin American) and Semiotics; these are the ones that work the most with the theories and speeches written about Visual Arts. We will not analyze the programs in their entirety, but rather those information that articulate the learning outcomes and activities based on our research interest: the critical discourse on Visual Arts in students of Graphic Design.

The last result of learning focuses attention on discourse about visual arts, it does not specify what type of discourse; but warns the demand. This results we jarring because in the direction academic, learned to express what subject was purely practical. We seemed contradictory regarding what we have been teaching for 5 years and proposed curriculum design, mesh study and study program.

We continue to investigate and we realize that in the syllabus<sup>4</sup> of this subject there are discursive activities: concept maps and a report (see Detail of evaluations of the subject Visual Arts I). These make up the summative or systematic evaluations proposed by the teacher during the semester. However, in addition to the high level

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<sup>4</sup> Training Experts of the Educational Institution Differently (2014) define it as: "an instrument of university education planning, which fulfills the function of guidance and guidance of the main aspects of the development of a subject, and must maintain logical coherence and functional in the formal presentation of the contents and actions planned" (p.2).

of development proposed in this learning result, they do not defend the critical value. In the methodological orientation of the aforementioned exercises there is no point towards strengthening critical capabilities.

We stopped to reflect on the learning outcomes of the subject History and Theory of Design V, the first one makes clear what kind of manifestations the student of Graphic Design should master; it's about the visual. Therefore, we do not doubt his interest in the Visual Arts, nor the possibility of developing skills for his understanding and theoretical construction. One of the most significant verbs is: to illustrate; which implies "serving from your own understanding," according to Immanuel Kant. What it means to be creative and critical.

The Semiotics subject, whose syllabus has become features of the traditional educational model and some constructivist approaches, is contemplated in the curriculum of the Design career. While it is true that this organizational support of the teaching and learning process raises contents consistent with the purposes of the subject, it is indifferent to the development of critical discourse on the signs of the visual arts based on the cognitive interests of the designer.

If the themes proposed in the syllabus of the 201701 academic periods are analyzed, we will obviously find the absence of the epistemological map and the methodological corpus that focus the development of criticism from the design student's perspective. To write a discourse of this nature requires not only readings on the components of semiotics, but a method or several that advocate scrutiny, authenticity and creativity with ethical sense. Strategies have been proposed that reinforce a formalist-historicist discourse, exams are thought "with objectivity" (understanding this with selection questions and some alternatives) and losing sight of development exercises: open questions that allow students discursive freedom.

In the first part of Semiotic we ask Professor Abraham Viñán (colleague of the University) to put a writing exercise on the students of Graphic Design since, as can be seen in the PEA, it is not proposed literally the development of critical discourse on Visual Arts. With this we must have a lot of tact because if it is not considered, the professor is prohibited from Academic Management. The attitude assumed by the highest direction of the teaching and learning processes of the PUCE SD, is not consistent with the progress and freedom that the avant-garde university educational framework has achieved today.

Therefore, we did not find activities based on critical discourse in the syllabus. The compliance of the syllabus and its relationship with the PEA is controlled by the Academic Directorate. A dogma that must be claimed because the teacher and the students are wearing shirts of thematic forces and emerging needs are not valued. Thing that cannot be thought a priori to the educational experience. On the other hand, if we realize the evaluation criteria, they value oral and written expression, a minimum approximation to scriptural discourse.

In dialogue with the teacher Abraham Viñán, we talked about this problem that students have to write and build a literal communicative apparatus that demonstrates progress in the integral expression of the messages. In this regard, Agirre (2005) reflected,

If we do not form comprehensive skills, skills and a positive virtue towards the arts (artistic sensibility, in short) we can hardly raise the social consideration of our task and we can hardly have a teaching staff with the appropriate knowledge and attitudes to make it good art teachers (pp.53-54).

### **3.2. Moving towards the problem-object of study**

The visual arts are handled like phantasmal in the classes. Students find it easy to tell art stories that are already written; that is to say reproduce them. It is no problem for them to talk about the system-form, with an excessive taste for color theory. In addition to the certainty and importance of these knowledge applied to Design, we consider that the gaze must undergo a turn inward from a more complex or systemic exterior. This academic concern arises from the expressions:

What a beautiful work! It is interesting The Color is are striking; the color and its psychology attract our attention. I like the treatment of lines and shapes. Cool the brand. Design is advertising and marketing. It is well drawn, has a good finish. The author reflects sadness because it puts a tear on the cheek of the portrayed or joy and happiness since they have fun in the composition, balance and proportion are well achieved (...)

We cite the answers most used by students of Graphic Design because they serve as a starting point to understand the genesis of the problem-object of study. These expressions are heard in Visual Arts, Audiovisual Production, Semiotics, History and Design Theory classes; whose curricula cherish visual artistic manifestations such as painting, photography, cinema, artistic poster and engraving.

Not that we row to exclude the knowledge of the structural elements of the forms and the organizational laws, we consider that all knowledge starts from the perceptual process as Aristotle thought and many centuries later Eisner (2004) reaffirmed the idea when he wrote: "see, in itself, It is a formulation process; the understanding of the visible world begins in the eyes" (p. 18). However, it should not be there when you want to achieve a more mature discourse, which implies capacity for abstraction and imagination for the construction of ideas and that lives up to Higher Education. In this regard, Acha (2002) expressed:

It forces us to see the play with morphological criteria, constrained to the format of the object, without considering at all the relations of the parties themselves nor these to the whole or structure and the receiver (...) Everything revolves around the mere recognition of objects, thus promoting the intellectual laziness to which man today is very prone, so fond of entertainment (p. 33)

It warrants raising awareness of the value of mental progress in university education, this is based - in part - through dialogues that deconstruct the visual artistic object and build a new apparatus of meanings. We wanted to find an argument, a rhetoric that touched deeply on the nuances of sociology, visual culture, among other more ontological fields emanating from their experiences. Students find it difficult to relate their experiences to the artifact; that is to say they fail to constitute an object alive and for the first time. It is worth highlighting a text written by Hernández (2000) when referring to the trajectory of the visual or visual language as objects of consumption in education; and he wondered: "Where is a dialogic reading in which the interpreter constructs versions of meaning against the closed path taken by the curriculum? Or a cultural criticism?" (p.78).

Whenever you carried a pictorial discussion, work or photographic film was oriented or any valuation exercise of their work, expected to observe in students skills interpretive and discursive coherence. But everything was in suspicion and yearning. Hence the need to undertake this research to answer the questions what is the situation regarding the critical discourse of visual arts in higher education of Graphic Design at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador, campus Santo Domingo?

We refer to a speech that tries to reconstruct the messages through the assessment of the work of visual art as an objectified construct of the psychological and cultural projections of the creator. "It is neither a simple job nor a person nor a product; it constitutes a socio-cultural phenomenon" (Acha, 2002, p. 12).

In class tutorials, students commented that they were good at drawing or designing things in digital format, not to interpret or write. A response to the difficulties in writing, composing and analyzing texts that touch the theory and praxis of Graphic Design from the complex spectrum of visual culture; without raising awareness of the need to train as eloquent professionals. They lose sight of "the essence and value of art that is not in the artifacts themselves, but in the experiential activity through which they have been created and are perceived" (Agirre, 2005, p. 33) and this implies the story critical.

The Director of the School of Graphic Design, Mr. Nelson Carrión, commented on the resistance of some designer teachers and the students of Graphic Design themselves to the comprehensive educational aspect and the attachment to production with an emphasis on objectification of form. Opposite to this hegemonic unidirectionality of higher education in Graphic Design at PUCESD, Acha (2002) considers the critical thinker

You must have a rich background of knowledge, experiences and professional criteria. I refer to history and art theory: by the latter we must understand the discipline occupied in the theorizing of all the different components of the sociocultural phenomenon of art, such as its psychological and sociological, artistic and aesthetic processes for which the critic takes hold of all social sciences (p.60)

In this process of observation and development of exercises in view of critical discourse, one must be bold to reveal the problem. Teachers are not allowed to change curricula and syllabus have to respond to them. The critical activity have we developed to the students themselves and make claims under the attempt of a call for attention.

So to analyze the critical capabilities of visual arts in Graphic Design students, we are committed to the writing exercise. In the three exams, mentioned above, we proposed to develop discourses on visual arts, graphic design and the relationship of these concepts with a view to the formation of a student who is not only interested in the objectual production of the form but also to be aware of the integrality that it includes critical faculty and artistic sensibility. Rodriguez (2007), about reading and writing, approach:

They should be considered linguistic-cognitive macro abilities that do not only involve the decoding of spellings and their proper pronunciation or reproduction. These activities require the human being the need to understand what is read or, in other words, to have the ability to reconstruct the general meaning of the text and organize their ideas to translate them in writing; This act should not only lead the reader to take into account the conventional norms of the language, but also to understand that the written text also has the intention of communicating the ideas, thoughts and feelings of the writer (p. 242)

Writing becomes "relief and anchoring" (Barthes, 1986) for the understanding of the global image of Graphic Design. It is a very common sign in the productive universe of this profession. Graphic posters of artistic and cultural promotion maintain a format that includes literal texts, and their importance depends largely on the designer's critical faculties. The complexity of the graphic discourse does not allow a divorce of the iconic letters and images, this break can lead to inconsistencies in the integral message of the artistic and / or advertising object.

The following question was asked in the examination of the first part: Graphic Design is an artistic visual expression? The majority of the responses were messages without arguments or power of relation between the components of the Graphic Design and the Visual Arts, a vocabulary that remains in the naivety of the most basic descriptive processes. The students wrote what they saw, and neglected the look inside the rhema. They included a drawing that tries to illustrate what was missing with words.

The abandonment of writing, its lack of exercise brings difficulties in creative writing. That is why we find it consistent that it is difficult for students to write and more achieve a critical discourse on topics that respond to the object of study of Graphic Design in a general sense. Not only is the way they write worrisome, but the naivety with which they write. While it is true that writing does not lead to self-sufficient knowledge, it forms codes and languages to communicate how much we know. Especially when the company asks to write. It should be noted that this company we are talking about is a metaphor to refer to the intellectual supply and demand of the designer; whose discharge profile is not reduced to drawing or merely creating marks. They can also teach and



devote themselves to research and publication on Graphic Design. This requires strengthening writing skills and critical faculty; that is, dare to be generous with the reading society.

We refer to the participation in the discursive exercise of a subject that values the object in its systemic becoming, this means subject-visual relationship; by the way Agirre (2005) said:

The subject that is being manufactured in his encounter with the different vital experiences through which he passes, including aesthetics. It is the experiential subject to which I refer, the crucible subject which merge into a singular experience the aesthetic object, cultural meanings and excited own biography I (p.31)

The colleague Abraham Viñán, who is in charge of the subject of Semiotics at the School of Design, provided very valuable information for the development of this research about his experience regarding the discursive abilities of the students. Viñán guided an exercise in the exam of the first part of Semiotic where students had to prepare a speech about a visual artistic object. Hence we consider three students to analyze their scriptural and critical discursive abilities.

In noting this responses, it became clear once again the lack of imagination, creativity and critical faculty. They did not are able to establish links between written language and functions connotative the iconic image, describe superficially what he sees, deconstructs not the visual object. Obviously there is no knowledge about the dimensions asked by Professor Abraham Viñán. Eisner (2014) states: "For knowledge to have a public presence, we must turn to criticism, so that it provides a public face to knowledge" (pp. 105-106).

### **3.3. Critics theories and practices in educational contexts**

After knowing the initial empirical context of the Design students (object of study of the previous chapter) - which embracers a panorama of different realities, concerns and situations that lead to interest in this research - other theoretical epistemological dilemmas that drive us To become aware that both students and we should go beyond the formal recognition and identification of visual artistic work to approach the critical discourse that demands processes of cultural, social, contextual and hermeneutical interrelations.

So far the critical discourse that we have been talking about has been shown as our own desire and a collective need for higher education in Graphic Design that we must resolve as we answer certain questions; among them: what do we understand by criticism and critical discourse in the educational field? What are pedagogical critics about? What relationship are we going to establish between criticism, design and visual arts?

#### **3.3.1. Notions of criticism from educational contexts**

When we take the initial steps as students of the university career in Art History, the first conscious confrontation of the critical exercise is aimed at the work of art, both plastic and audiovisual. The tension generated by the discursive practice with critical approaches prevented the process of critical production from being enjoyed since its value in the development of human thought was not perceived.

From this reality, the reading of texts on criticism, including those of Oscar Wilde, Elliot W. Eisner, Iván de la Torre, Ana María Guasch, Fernando Hernández, Aída Sánchez and it can be concluded that the criticism is still a complex reconstruction of any object, subject or social phenomenon; but since the emancipation of the phantasms and its relationship with values that transcend people's lives. Therefore, criticism compromises what from Aristotle is known as duality of virtue referring to the intellectual and moral.

Hence, we propose to address, within the framework epistemological notions of criticism, without losing sight of experiences as a reader is - investigator is also the condition teachers. This order will allow us not only to

enter the universe of criticism as a philosophical or hermeneutical issue but as an expression of empirical cultural and visual artistic theorization.

### 3.3.2. Criticism as art of art, dating Oscar Wilde

Could not we reach the critical notion of visual arts in higher education in graphic design, without referring us the concept and the sense has criticism from the first readings taken. To do this, we find an answer in Wilde's voice (2002): "It is the critical faculty that invents new forms (...) It is the critical instinct to which we owe each new school that emerges, each new model that art finds ready for his hand" (p. 99).

While it is true that it has rained long after Oscar Fingal O'Flaherty Wills Wilde (Dublin, Ireland, 1854 - Paris, France, 1900), his ideas still transcend the authenticity and credibility of his approach to criticism as art of art, a theoretical-cultural, autobiographical reunion, with intellectual and social experience. The work of Oscar Wilde (2002), sees the "critic as an artist" (p.121), the one who has the ability to relate life (his life and that of others) with art and find life in the complexes and intrinsic processes of art.

On more than one occasion students and some Design teachers are heard that they prefer practice and are better in it than in theory. The practice understood as the action of doing something objectified and theory as a process of interpretation and scriptural production. Wilde (2002) analyzed this dichotomy and reached the following conclusion:

The action is always easy, and when it is presented to us in its most serious version, because it is the most persistent, which in my opinion is that of pure industriousness, it simply becomes the refuge of those who have nothing at all. What to do (...) is a blind thing dependent on external influences, and driven by an impulse whose nature itself is unconscious (...) incomplete in its essence (...) its basis is the lack of imagination (...) is the last resort of those who do not know how to dream (p.103)

By consulting Wilde's work (2006) we can highlight something very valuable about criticism as a human faculty that invites freedom, sleeplessness and the power of the unintelligible. It is a dynamic project whose spirit

Adopts of democracy its intolerance towards dogmatic authority; of physical science the suggestive analogies of law and order, and of Philosophy the conception of an essential unit that underlies the complex manifestations of phenomena (pp. 21-22)

Wilde said (2002), "criticism requires infinitely more culture than creation" (p.99). "Creation", in this context, refers to the construction action of the conventional artistic object (plastic). This faculty gives a social, collective and detonating value of the same artistic dyne. In this regard, another of his ideas is worth mentioning, "a time that has no criticism is a time of still, hieratic art, reduced to the reproduction of formal models, or a time completely devoid of art" (Wilde, 2002, p.95 ).

Oscar Wilde's ideas about criticism have contact with education to the extent that they invite to tell learning stories, does not provide a specific didactic of control, nor does it give recipes for knowing more or being a scholar; on the contrary, it detracts from the ineffective way of scholarly communication and prefers an emancipatory education . Regarding the above , he wrote: "The scholarly conversation is the dawn of the ignorant or the profession of the mentally unemployed (...) Education is an admirable thing, but it is worth remembering from time to time that nothing worth knowing is can teach" (p.71). So criticism does not consist of writing with elaborate or specialized words, but with words that emanate from life experiences, subjectivity and imagination, words that carefully reconstruct the object.

That is what the highest criticism means, the story of our own soul. It is more fascinating than history, since it deals exclusively with oneself. It is more pleasant than philosophy, since its theme is concrete and not abstract, real and not vague. It is the only civilized form of autobiography (Wilde, 2002, p. 125)

The most fruitful of Wilde's theory (2006) - on the subject of criticism - is embodied in his text: The emergence of historical criticism, when he states that "looking for hidden metaphors and meanings should be considered one of the germs of historical criticism" ( p. 27).

### **3.3.3. Criticism as educational revelation: learning with Elliot W. Eisner**

Sometimes the notion of criticism is confused with the offense, hence students - as part of the majority - consider criticism as an action that can be destructive. From the notion of criticism, consistent with the readings on texts corresponding to Elliot W. Eisner (United States, 1933-2014), we consider that critical thinking always edifies and reveals,

(...) criticism can be conceived as the art of revelation. The basic function of criticism is educational" (...) "each act of criticism is a reconstruction. The reconstruction takes the form of an argumentative narrative, supported by the evidence that it is never incontestable (Eisner, 2014, p. 106)

The genesis of criticism is found in the capacity of relationship between the elements of daily life and the hermeneutics endowed with astonishment and scandal, in recreational activities, in the desire to have imagination, allegory and myth. Criticism not only reveals crisis, but seeks its solutions through the judgment of reason, the ability to discern and decide.

Criticism is an educational medium by which students learn freely; the latter understood as the faculty of assimilating experiences, defending ideals and feeling bearers of knowledge. Therefore, the criticism of any object and in space the visual artistic work, becomes a conception of education. That is why criticism as a faculty is important in the life of every thinking person. "In Art as Experience," John Dewey writes: "the purpose of criticism is the reeducation of the perception of the work of art (1934, p.324)" (Eisner, 2014, p. 105).

So criticism constitutes an intelligent and moral action that makes known - from deconstruction, reconstruction, reflection and scrutiny - ideas regarding the transcendence of artistic production and its educational function. When students talk about a photograph, a poster, any audiovisual, it is done with the intention of recreating a space of knowledge through visual metaphors, a fiction of reality that embodies various life scenarios. All this provides a critical discourse that finds a support in writing, in this regard Eisner (2014) said:

The trick is to create in the public world a structure or form whose features represent what is experienced in private. The sensation of discovery and excitement emanating from a classroom is not simply a set of words; it is a set of qualities, including a feeling of energy that must somehow be made palpable through prose. This is what efficient writers get. (p. 110)

In dialogues with Eisner (2014) a theory emerges that embraces the structure of criticism from an educational perspective and proposes four dimensions: "description, interpretation, evaluation and thematic" (p.109). It is essential to reach this theoretical point because we have been warning in the previous chapter that design students - how much more - approximate the descriptive level (usually). This does not mean that it is bad or good, I think it is necessary as a starting point because "it allows readers to visualize what a place or process is like. It could help them see the school or classroom that the critic is trying to make them understand." (p. 109)

The interpretation digs into less visible domains, it is more rigorous because the weight of the message falls on the explanation of the meaning and justification of the contexts and antecedents. As this dimension is analyzed , we understand the possibilities that it generates, the development that propitiates in the processes of symbolic

production, what is necessary to expand the mental abilities of the Design students and how useful it is to “find hidden meanings or implicit in a situation, the surface must be penetrated” (Eisner, 2014, p. 118)

Another of the dimensions mentioned is evaluation, whose mission is also educational, and “its purpose is not merely to change students, but to improve their lives” (p.120). In it the criticism intervenes to avoid dogmas and weigh with the ballasts of the reproductive model, domain and comfort zone instituted by the ministries of the educational administration. It is worth saying that in the evaluation process of the design regarding the visual artistic work, the Evaluation at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador, Santo Domingo, there has been retrograde and unexciting. What the student thinks and their interests do not matter but what the teacher has established as a valid. In this sense, I agree with Eisner (2014) when considering evaluation as the action of “assessing the type of experience that individuals have and determining the educational values of school practice” (pp. 121-122).

The last dimension, the theme, has to do with the notion of experience, the contents as life stories. In this sense, the promotion of pedagogical imagination is important. All this requires changes in the bond with the students. Eisner (2014) considers that “in the educational critique a story is told” (p. 125), the history of the students and teachers. Hence the class becomes a nerve center where experiences are built. Here is another question, what kind of experience? The answer includes experiences with works of art, with works of criticism and with what has been lived.

One of the differences between works of art and works of criticism is that works of art usually tell more generalized stories as an integral part of their total form. The author of a play does not provide an explanation of the moral of the story in the end: any reader understands it, or loses the thread of the play. In criticism, the punctualization of critical history is often made explicit in critical analysis (Eisner, 2014, p.125)

How valid is criticism in the educational context? Elliot W. Eisner also speaks of this in his book *The Enlightened Eye*. Qualitative inquiry and improvement of educational practice. Criticism in educational contexts finds its place par excellence in qualitative research and these at the same time develop capacities to tell about the work of art and the experiential framework of those who produce and interpret. Students become great observers, receivers and emitters of judgments. “Criticism is inherently an action of judgment” (Eisner, 2014, p. 131).

### **3.3.4. Criticism as an artistic-cultural discursive experience**

It is appropriate to mention some ideas written by Ana María Guasch (Barcelona, Spain, 1953) who - from a historicist and practical approach - connects the notion of criticism with cultural experience through a discursive sequence similar to Eisner's proposal when he spoke to us of the critical dimensions.

(...) the criticism canonically implies three successive speeches: the descriptive, the interpretative and the evaluator, speeches that on the one hand assume the character of a scientific or historical analysis, that is, objective, and, on the other, the character of cultural experience from which the critic's taste derives - interpreter of the work of art, that is, from subjective discourse (Guasch, 2003, p.211)

There is something that attracts attention in the descriptive discourse proposed by Guasch (2003): “Critics must try to develop a living description that not only seeks to create the effect of reality (of evidence and energy), but also to produce the illusion of presence (p.217). This evokes criticism as a judgment-generating apparatus, stimulating dreams, and a discourse whose constitutive networks mark the future of a new section of the history of human thought.

Along with describing and explaining, the critical act implies a third stage that puts into play the critical capacity of the critic: the search for the meaning of the work of art, that is, interpreting (...) In the search process, and Sometimes, creation of meaning, the critic uses imagination, original discoveries and, above

all, language, specifically, (...) of rhetorical figures (allegories, metaphors, metonymies, etc.) (Guasch, 2003, p.221)

There have been several authors who agree that interpretation is a necessary phase for criticism, interpretation means looking at the metaphysical of the object in question, it implies rethinking stories, searching the significant tissues for an experience and "giving meaning to the meanings. Partials that are discovered in the course of this search (Guasch, 2003, p. 221).

The proposal of this dimension in the course of criticism is necessary if we want to touch its very essence. And it does not end here, criticism requires an evaluation, of an ethical posture against the object that constitutes us as a human person and strengthens interpersonal bonds in a social environment. By the way, Guasch (2003) wrote:

The last stage of the critical exercise is probably the evaluation or judgments of the works of art. Judging a work of art means appreciating its value both intrinsically and in relation to other works of art, (...) assessing the degree of conformity of this work with the original artistic intention (p.230)

Critical discourse is a theoretical-practical exercise whose function of judging or evaluating is not synonymous with speaking badly about something / someone or going out to hunt errors to feed the ego, but to show a flexible and full path of dialogic learning. "We must assume that acts of writing - criticism, above all, is an act of description, communication, inscription - allow us to reach an understanding of dimensions that can only be so" (De la Torres, 2012, p. 40).

Graphic design constitutes an artistic, cultural and visual manifestation that demands, in these times, more critical capacity than any painting, sculpture, etc. Especially because around it there are conceptual dilemmas to solve and notions to rethink. Design is handled as an object for advertising purposes, it has been treated as a means of visual communication lacking in artisticity; I would say we do not conform called "Fine Arts" by conventionality; but we defend the idea that art is designed, therefore, a design can become an artistic object if it enters the legitimizing space of art.

### **3.3.5. Criticism in the framework of the discourse on visual culture**

The project of criticism on the visual arts goes beyond the friction with styles and forms, finds its diegesis in the visual culture linked to educational processes and generates learning from interactions; it allows to tell stories about lived experiences related to contemporary artistic development. Fernando Hernández Hernández has contributed to this new narrative "from the critical understanding of the manifestations of visual culture" (Agirre, 2005, p. 14). This author considers that

the current visions of art, the currents of thought about culture and society (especially those derived from postmodernity) have led to establish that the purpose of an artistic education in today's changing and interrelated culture would be to learn what is significant, critical and plural (Hernández, 2000, p.78).

Dr. Fernando Hernández, in an interview with María Domingo, in 2015, proposed - as a critical action - to learning from the links between the participants of the educational process, taking into account the travel perspective where you do not know what you are going with to find; but at the same time it gives you pleasure and encourages you to continue. Criticism colonizes in an interactive education whose object is a reflection of social and cultural relations. The same author wrote:

Beyond pleasure or consumption, a systematic study of visual culture can provide us with a critical understanding of its role and its social functions and the power relations to which it links, beyond its mere appreciation (...) (Hernández, 2000, p. 142)

The criticism we suggest for students and the one they require is not based on purely historicist and / or formalist discourses of art or on the indispensable requirement of the perfect use of technique; it is about expanding the visual field towards more ontological and cultural areas, of understanding the critical process as a higher phase in the education and culture of Design students, of understanding that

The notion of visual culture responds to changes in the notions of art, culture, image, history, education ... produced in the last fifteen years and is linked to the notion of mediation of representations, values and identities (...) aimed at the sense of the look (Hernández, 2000, p. 141)

Critical discourse is understood as "an event language (written or spoken)" (Hernández, 2000, p.131), a representation through symbols of visual culture. Here it is important to communicate the contexts of life and their authentic ways of showing themselves to the community that looks and feels.

Criticism and its expression (critical discourse) is responsible for climbing mountains of uncertainties and doubts, of complex questions, and establishing access routes to reach the goal of understanding and revelation of knowledge. For this, it is necessary to develop the capacity for relationship and consider criticism as a means that requires cultural heritage and understanding of its meanings, of intimate and external visuals. Foucault (1995), refers to the critical attitude as

A certain way of thinking, of saying, also of acting, a certain relationship with what exists, with what we know, with what we do, a relationship with society, with culture, also a relationship with others (...) Criticism only exists in relation to something other than itself: it is an instrument, a means of a future or a truth that she herself will not know and will not be, it is a look at a domain she wants to control and whose law does not is able to establish (pp. 5-6)

### **3.3.6. Criticism as an attitude and virtue: a complex conception of ethics**

To critically discuss it is necessary to have a strengthening of ethics as an attitude towards life to think and live reasonably well. It has to do with the being who wants, can and does. Hence, there is "something in the critique that is related to virtue" (Foucault, 1995, p. 6). The critic is virtuous because he first learned to be and then to think.

Ethics is manifested, imperatively, as a moral requirement. It is born from an inner source to the individual, who feels in his mind the duty. It also comes from an outside source: culture, beliefs, and norms of a community. There is also, without doubt, an earlier source, arising from the living organization, the genetically transmitted one (Morin, 2006, p.21)

The resistance of students and teachers to the critical exercise is due to the lack of autonomy and the little progress of individuality for the community; this is a consequence of ethical weakness. In general, when there is not enough knowledge about the contexts of graphic objects, when one has not lived since suspicion and astonishment, when personal improvement is not interested and there is no social commitment; hardly a critical thought can emerge.

Ethics is for the autonomous and responsible individuals, the expression of the relief imperative. Every ethical act (...) is an act of relief, relief with others, relief with their own, relief with the community, relief with humanity and, ultimately, insertion into the cosmic relief (Morin, 2006, p.40 )

Regarding autonomy, it is not a matter of thinking, much less doing what you want, but of acting with individual moral consciousness, which "re-inscribes the individual mind, on a higher level, in the Trinitarian loop: individual, society, species (Morin, 2006, p. 26). So autonomy becomes a critical capacity when there is a link with the

environment, thus "it needs external energy to regenerate and external information to survive" (Morin, 2006, p.38).

Fernando Herraiz Garcia is another author who has resolved "crisis" in educational processes through autonomous work in his classes in Sociology of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property to students of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Barcelona. This implies a resituate of attitudes in the educational process. To do this, he proposes to transform "the experience in production and authorship by students" (Herraiz, 2015, p.48). This critical way of proceeding makes fools of the systems that still do not accept that the students are authors and who believe that the teacher is the only one qualified and authorized to teach.

We are facing a critical thought when - beforehand - there is ethical complexity. We consider, like Morin (2006) that "the most complex involves greater diversity, greater autonomy, greater freedom and greater risk of dispersion, solidarity, friendship, love are the vital foundations of human complexity" (p .41).

The critical attitude is far from ordinances and the typical rigidity of the reproductive educational model, in which students fulfill the order of the exercise, without the right to meditate or to go beyond the limits of a rubric pre-elaborated by the teacher, where the evaluation criteria are counted and scored. Morin (2006) proposes a principle of action that does not order but organize; not to manipulate, but to communicate; Let him not lead but encourage "(p.71) to create educational, complex and critical contexts from ethics.

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#### 4. Conclusions

We can conclude that if we want to achieve freer people, we must prepare them to achieve that freedom, which must be translated into more knowledge built on the knowledge that is reached, inherited and shared.

In the same way, we have made it clear that critical discourse is a theoretical-practical exercise whose function of judging or evaluating is not synonymous with speaking badly about something / someone or going out to hunt errors to feed the ego, but to show a flexible path and full of dialogic learning. That is precisely what we want our students to learn, that through the possibility of sharing different ideas, new knowledge can be found, that sharing different positions before the same object, phenomena or problem, makes us see that the works of art that today we have and that we can enjoy has a value and that this value that it possesses is pierced or reached by the eyes of those who enjoy and feel it.

Also, the graphic design constitutes an artistic, cultural and visual manifestation that demands, in these times, more critical capacity than any other painting, sculpture, therefore, assumption that a design can become an artistic object if it enters the space legitimizer of art.

To critically discuss a prior strengthening of ethics is necessary, that which is an attitude towards life to think and live reasonably well, that which has to do with the being who wants, can and does.

Finally, we must conclude that we are facing a qualitative research that has a social constructionist approach where the history of the formative future, the experiential stories of the students and teachers regarding the confrontation with the interdisciplinary curriculum and the critical view of intellectual production matters of the Graphic Design students of the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador, Santo Domingo headquarters.

With a methodology that seeks, among other things, to create and defend spaces where the permanently open dialogue predominates, where another voice, another way of appreciating the world is taken into account, another revision, in which one can ascend as a human being from the values They own. We intend that what the student feels individually becomes the meaning built among many people.

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