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Some ideological considerations in the Bauhaus for the development of didactic activities: The influence of the Montessori method, the modernism and the gothic☆

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ABSTRACT

The way in which Industrial Design confronts materiality and transforms it into products of use, obeys influences that are not always scientific. From its origin, artistic movements, ideologies, culture, technology and market demands, among many others, have continually modeled its epistemology and phenomenology. The Bauhaus, established a conception of Design almost a century ago but that is still valid in Latin America, even though its extreme dogmatism was the cause of its decline. In this opportunity, we review the influence of the Gothic, the Montessori pedagogy, the ideologies of the late nineteenth century, intuition and modernism, as central aspects in the original didactic and with it we have developed a simple classroom exercise, where they apply to identify the original elements that still prevail in the teaching practice of Design. These influences tend to be forgotten, but they have evolved since 1919, until decanting in the "Design Thinking" method, which, with the filters of contemporaneity, has put the own way of "thinking and doing" of the design at the disposal of other disciplines.

1. Introduction

Industrial Design is about to celebrate its first century, since it originated in Germany in 1919. Its didactic methods and the rationalist approach proved to be an innovation in the higher education oriented to the industry. However, over time the sense that gave rise to the methodology of teaching and especially the context where it occurred was lost. Currently the method is replicated, without further considerations, under the name of "Design Thinking" which, originated in the United States in the 1970s, reduces the method only to a process that focuses creativity towards the generation of an innovative solution to some problem Although there are detractors, it has been seen as an efficient methodology (Uysal & Topaloglu, 2017) but the Bauhaus was much more than that and the intention of this work is to remember that particular approach, where it was considered that not all knowledge is epistemic, but gnostic vision and pre-cognitive processes are also influential.

Once the central elements of the Bauhaus didactic were identified, an exploratory activity was proposed, whose purposes were two:

1. Verify if the foundational elements of the Bauhaus didactics could be useful in the contemporary didactics of Design, even though the contexts are very different.

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2. Verify if the exercise could also be implemented to engineering students, after a brief creative induction, incorporating the same didactic elements.

In relation to the latter and as a hypothesis, it was suggested that, if engineering students were given a creative induction, they would be more intuitive in making decisions.

From the study of both the founding manifesto and the available literature, about the origin of the Bauhaus didactics and the exercises and classroom activities, we have identified the four central variables that gave rise to the didactic model:

1. The Gothic influence;
2. Modernist pedagogy and rationalism;
3. Intuition
4. The ideology;

1.1. The Gothic influence

The teaching of Industrial Design and the way of facing the materials,[1] originates in Europe, in a time of changes marked by the influence of Victorian "medievalism", the beginning of the workers' movements, the rise of capitalism, neo-colonialism, industrialization accelerated, mysticism and rationalism, all in a time of relative peace, known as Belle Epoque.

As is known, the industrial era began in the late eighteenth century, with the introduction of steam power that drives the machines, which in turn replace the muscular force. With industrial manufacturing, artisans could not intervene directly in the processes, because many of these were simultaneous and had to be planned. The once individual work became collective and the artisan stopped making the complete production process, specializing only in one task. From that specialized craftsman, urged to work collectively and to plan production processes in series, directly derives the industrial designer.

The origin of contemporary design, recognized in the Bauhaus of Weimar,[2] had in the neo-Gothic,[3] a decisive reference because of the revaluation that was made of it in Victorian England[4] in the late nineteenth century. In that period the most technologically advanced nation was England, while Germany maintained a position of second importance, but with the interest in achieving greater prominence after its unification and subsequent birth of the German Empire in 1871. Because of this, a series of visits by German experts to England to learn about the style that gave great success to industrial production. This resulted in the creation or reformulation of the German arts and crafts schools beginning in 1896 (Droste, 2006).

In this context, Walter Gropius[5] visits England at the end of the 19th century and meets William Morris, together with the Arts and Crafts movement. Morris, of socialist orientation, exerted a great influence on this movement and gave him a political sense, situating it as the expression of an action of resistance against the machine. Mainly due to the negative consequences for workers of accelerated industrialization and the rise of capitalism (Kennedy, 2008). For Morris, the medieval cathedral was a symbol of joint work behind a unique ideal and declared the harmonious union of craftsmanship with man (Kennedy, 2008). In this way, the movement promoted the return to medieval production and the revaluation of craft trades and guilds.

In Germany, the Arts and Crafts made a lot of sense and medievalism was based on German Gothic, because the way of producing that was proposed made direct reference to medieval workshops and artisan guilds. This is how the Gothic was re-valued by them as an element of identity and national unity, towards the beginning of the 20th century (Droste, 2006). The Gothic, has its origin in northern Europe and the Goths (Germans), who cultivated it, were a people whose epic of resistance in defense of their freedom against the Holy Roman Empire, was a metaphor very appropriate to the contingencies of the Victorian age, between colonialism and independence. Therefore, in the German case of the early twentieth century, Gothic was a political and nationalist reference, but not necessarily aesthetic (Brooks, 1999).

The Gothic style, strongly expressive, luminous, naturalistic and humanistic, was also constituted in a good metaphor of rebirth and elevation, propitious to the historical moment. However, the Gothic would soon find the modernist movement (Jugendstil) and the theories of Worringer (Gómez, 2008) who postulated that the tendency in art, since antiquity, is to evolve towards linear abstraction and this also included the Gothic. The psychological and scientific vision of art that Worringer sustained, which, according to him, originated in the artist's emotional and expressive tensions (Kaufmann, 2008) would also help to create the Bauhaus own style, which finally tried to reconcile art with the machine.

During the Gothic, artisan workshops were grouped according to the trade, in highly regulated guilds (Stabel, 2007), which were located close to each other, whose quality and ethics were supervised by "jury guardians" or "juries" (Sears, 2006). A workshop could elaborate objects of use, while others were dedicated to art, not a few those who were dedicated to the production of artifacts of use, made by artists. The internal organization was very hierarchical and there were three levels; teacher, officer and apprentice, all with specific requirements to move from one to another. The Master was the expert in the trade, who belonged to the guild and had given evidence of its quality before a guild council and it was not strange that it received awards and had great prestige in terms of its

[1] We establish the distinction between matter and materiality, where the scope of work of the Design refers to the materiality or, in other words, to the materials that adapt to industrial processes and not to the raw material.

[2] That in its origin it was a school of architecture and arts.

[3] Style also uses Itten in his workshop.

[4] Neo-Gothic or medievalist movement.

[5] Walter Gropius, architect and founder of the Bauhaus School, considered the originator of Industrial Design.