



## Vertical Design Studio Experience in Interior Architecture Education

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### ABSTRACT

Design studios are at the core of interior architecture education. Environments where “learners form their own learning” enhance the communication between the teacher-learner, and learner-learner. Within this scope, the organization of design studios and the models that are applied are still the crucial research subjects on which teaching interior architecture works on. This paper investigates into the vertical interior design studio experience that is rebuilt in accordance with contemporary approaches towards studio education. Vertical interior design studio experience is built on associations, separations and on the interrelations between these associations and separations. The other input of this formation is the relations, associations, separations among the students within the group. The vertical studio setup that is applied during the 2016- 2017 Fall Semester at Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design of FMV Işık University is examined in terms of its construction, experience process, outputs and further critical investigation is carried out on the learning method.

**Keywords:** Interior Architecture Education, Design Studio, Design Process, Vertical Interior Design Studio.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As in other design-based disciplines, interior design studios are at the center of the interior architecture education. Obligatory and elective courses in curricula are constructed to improve and contribute to the design process in the studio. In accordance with the requirements of a given design problem, students are expected to mix the new pieces of information they have acquired in other courses and add the new ones in the



studio. Studio education covers several scopes and contexts as it is based on the idea of experiencing the design process. These contexts may vary by the studio director, the students and the purposes of educational institution. They also vary by diverse educational-instructional approaches and methods.

How studio education can be, design can be taught, and the student-director relationships are constantly investigated from various aspects. Several approaches are tried or suggested for the improvement of studio education. For instance, the constructivist educational model refers to learning of how to construct the information rather than the direct transfer of information (Aydınlı, 2014). Piaget suggests “learning through exploration” for this process. Learning through exploration is about arousing the sense of curiosity in learner, start of exploration, acquiring and internalizing the information during and at the end of exploration. Therefore, comprehension through internalized information is actualized (Aydınlı, 2015). Dewey argues “learning by doing” so that the will and excitement to learn is formed. Learning by doing allows students to question themselves, express themselves and explore themselves when learning. This approach is based on experiencing the learning process. Co-experience is important on the contrary of instructor-learner discrimination (Aydınlı, 2014 and Aydınlı, 2015). According to Dewey, the new educational approach refers to the idea of expression and improvement of individuality rather than the idea of coercing the student to learn. Contrary to the idea of applying discipline externally, freedom of movement, learning through experiences, the idea of benefiting from the opportunities offered by today’s life in the best possible way and being acquainted to the changing world are among the basic acceptances of the neo-progressive educational (Dewey, 1997).

How studios are organized and the studio models are essential elements for the student contribution to the idea production in the improvement of design education. As for design studios, Gasco describe them as environments in which both knowledge and concerns and data and questions characterize the development of a cooperative design awareness (Gasco, 2009). In this sense, it can be said that studios put forth alternative strategies of communication and form new study systems, therefore enriching the educational method in regard to experiences. Different studio approaches have been experimented in Turkey to date. As two studio models, vertical and horizontal approaches are applied at schools providing the design education. Vertical studio is based on students on different educational levels sharing the same environment. Hence, vertical studio forms its own internal dynamics and takes the education from the director-student relationship to the student-student exchange (Yıldırım, 2000). This allows the design studio to contribute to student’s “learning to learn” and to form an organizational schema of different layers.



Because each student has a different answer to the design problem, it reflects on the final product and creates the diversity and richness.

Since design is learned by doing in the studio, it is believed that “each learner forms their own learning” and it is evaluated in that way. Moreover, this learning process advances with the interviews between the director and the student. On the other hand, it is expected from the interior design studios to renew themselves in accordance with the rapidly changing and transforming requirements of the world. The studio education bringing the ability to transform critical, creative and theoretical information into the design knowledge to the student is of importance for that renewal. To cover these scopes, interior design studios were constructed as vertical studios within the curriculum of FMV Işık University, Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design in the fall term of 2016-2017. The study discusses both formational structure and experience process of the vertical studio construct and reveals the outputs in this context. The formational structure of studio construct is questioning in a critical overview within the approach of learning by doing.

## **2. VERTICAL DESIGN STUDIO APPROACH: [DIS] AGREEMENTS**

Before discussing the vertical studio approach, it is necessary to address the educational structure of FMV Işık University, Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design which involves this construct. The integrated system is adopted in the department and shaped in accordance with the principle “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” Rather than being taught in individual courses, the subjects are handled in such a way that all courses are interrelated (Ertürk, 2008). Project studio, as the main part of this system, refers to the center through which all parts, or courses, are interconnected. Concept, content and context form the three main principles of this integrated system. Each project studio and each academic year is shaped by these three principles. Within the concept, content and program of the project studio is set for the year and its context (environmental context, continuity context, historical context, etc.) is defined. Director of the studio creates the studio construct depending on these three principles and the subject of the given year.

In FMV Işık University, Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design, the vertical studio is adopted for the fall term of 2016-2017. The vertical studio hosts the Interior Design Studio I, II and III<sup>1</sup> students. The structure of vertical studio was questioned and reconstructed in accordance with current educational approaches. The

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<sup>1</sup> As FMV Işık University, Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design has been newly founded, there are no students of Interior Design Studio IV and Graduation Project.

studio was planned to bring the competence of finding different and creative solutions to multiple problems and developing the design by questioning the problem from diverse aspects. In this context, the vertical studio process was addressed in a holistic mentality formed by the agreements and disagreements. The same design subject, current building and space scale was handed to all groups and the agreements were defined. The disagreements were planned as the design problem according to the groups, size of the space which would functionalize in the building and the detail scales through which the project would be discussed (Diagram 1).

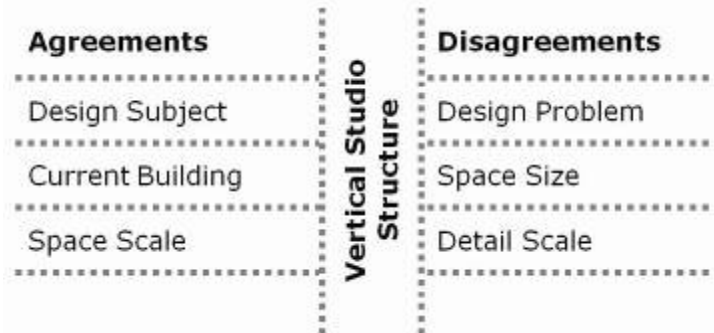


Diagram 1: Agreements and Disagreements in the Vertical Interior Design Studio

The balance of this construct was based on the body of agreements-disagreements relationships and student relationships (Table 1).

	Interior Design Studio I	Interior Design Studio II	Interior Design Studio III
<b>Agreements</b>			
<b>Disagreements</b>			
Design Subject <b>Food &amp; Beverage Space</b>	Thematic (Boutique) Food & Beverage Space	Thematic (Boutique) Food & Beverage Space	Culinary Arts Academy
Current Building <b>Milli Reasürans Building of Directorate General</b>	270 m <sup>2</sup> floor area Two-story height	380 m <sup>2</sup> floor area Two-story height	580 m <sup>2</sup> floor area Three-story height
Space Scale <b>1/100-1/50</b>	1/20 Scale Furniture Design Spatial Design	1/20 Scale Furniture Design Spatial Design System Sections	1/20 Scale Furniture Design Spatial Design System Sections

Table 1: Relationships of Agreements and Disagreements in the Vertical Interior Design Studio

The agreements and disagreements reflected on the studio sheets as in Figure 1.

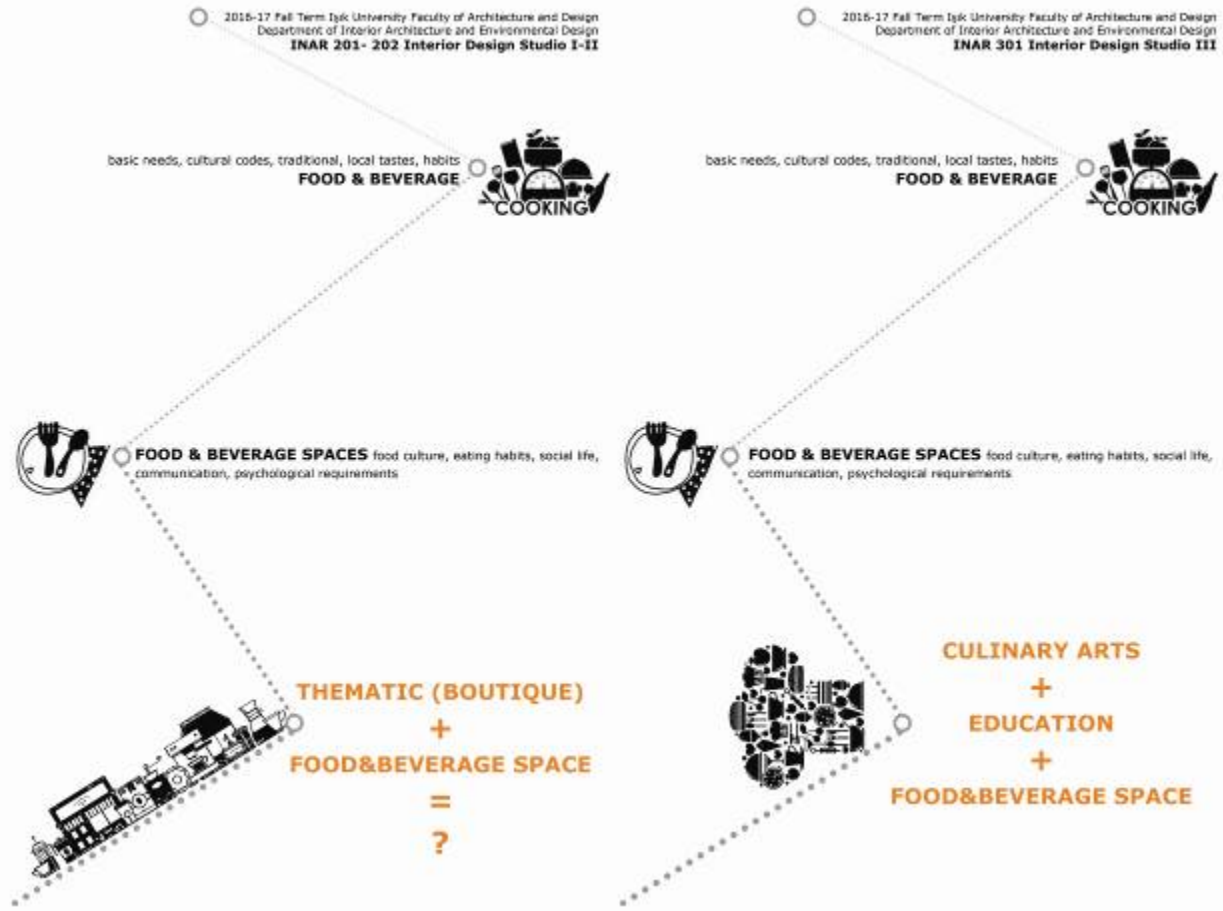


Figure 1: Sheets of the Vertical Interior Design Studio

## 2.1. Subject of design

As one of the basic needs of human, food has been in interaction with the development and culture of the society since the dawn of humanity. The food culture and places are influenced by several environmental, social, economic, and cultural factors which have been experienced by societies throughout the history. Today, food & beverage culture changes and diversifies by diverse needs (Adıgüzel, 2012). As this change is underway, innovative design solutions that reflect the current approaches are expected from the food & beverage places. In the studio study, this subject was constructed through different spatial approaches from the “analysis-synthesis-design” point of view.

**Design problem - Themed (Boutique) Food & Beverage Place-** A theme was added to the place in consideration of the food & beverage function, the needs of the place and the user expectations within the courses of Interior Design Studio I and II. Within the framework of the selected theme, the subject of food & beverage place was questioned and creative suggestions about the project were expected. The theme may be a music

café, a hash house, a breakfast café, a cookie shop, a confectioner, a pickle shop, a slow food restaurant, or a soup restaurant, etc.

**Design problem - Culinary Arts Academy-** Interior design of a “Culinary Arts Academy” which will operate to train educated and professional individuals for the food & beverage sector was done within the scope of the Interior Design Studio III course. Within the project, a theme to be specified by pastry, different world cuisines or the designer was chosen. It was anticipated that there would be a restaurant & café, a library, a filming studio, reception and recreation spaces, meeting and instructor rooms, and storage spaces in addition to the main function of “training” according to the selected theme.

## 2.2. Current Building

Milli Reasürans T.A.Ş. Building of Directorate General is located on Teşvikiye Street in Maçka, İstanbul. The building is the project of Sevinç-Şendor Hadi who took the first place in the competition held by the Management of Milli Reassürans. There are executive offices, work units, an insurance institute, recreation spaces, conference and exhibition halls, a bank, a library, and a museum in the building (Figure 2, URL 1).

The architects interpreted the design of the building as an object by “*creating a contrast with the massive block of Maçka Palas next to the building and retracting the front from the street. This interpretation suggests that Teşvikiye Street is “public” and Milli Reasürans Building is a “private” building. Placing a “semi-private” plaza between these two structures, the architectures both made the citizens a present of an area-space and ensured that the building receives enough light*” (URL 1).



Figure 2: Milli Reasürans T.A.Ş. Building of Directorate General and its Location<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The photo on the right of the image in Figure 2 was retrieved from URL 2 source, the photo on the left was retrieved from Google Maps and processed.



**Space Size:** Given the educational structure and student difference by years, the space sizes were readdressed. The same space division was given in the current building, but linear space length was specified to be longer for the Interior Design Studio II and III groups. Therefore, floor area in square meter for the Interior Design Studio II and III groups differed from the Interior Design Studio I. Furthermore, the Interior Design Studio I and II groups were given two times of the volume and the Interior Design Studio III group was given three times of the height. It was therefore expected from the students to understand, interpret different dimensional relations of the place and develop a project.

### **2.3. Space Scale**

“Scale” is used for explaining the relation of something with another thing. Apprehending the scale requires understanding the actual measures of objects as well as their perceived or represented measures. Concept of scale is of importance in education at the comprehension and representation stage of design (Garip, Garip, Eke, 2015). Students need to use scale properly to communicate their design correctly, clearly and efficiently. Farrelly (2011) states that scale helps us imagine a space, an object or buildings on different detail levels.

In the light of these considerations, the Interior Design Studio I, II and III groups started and advanced their designs by making their spatial organization decisions on scale of 1/100 and spatial designs on scale of 1/50. Toward the end of the project process, for the linear detail scale, the Interior Design Studio II-III students detailed up to 1/20 in the furniture design, space design and system sections and the Interior Design Studio I students detailed up to 1/20 in the furniture design and space design. Hence, the detail scale was 1/20 for all groups; however, spaces and spatial attributes for which 1/20 scale would be changed.

### **3. PROCESS AND OUTPUTS OF VERTICAL INTERIOR DESIGN STUDIO**

The vertical studio structure was planned as being the same but flexible for the three groups. The students started the process with research on food & beverage culture, analysis of food & beverage places and development of spatial need program and participated together in term juries and the final jury.

The studio process is composed of the conceptual discussion, spatial decisions, detailing and delivery preparation steps which stratify over each other. Time limitation of these steps was specified according to the progress of the students. Agreements and disagreements in the relations of interior design groups in the context of vertical studio

were constructed in accordance with the requirements of these steps (Diagram 2). As the same design subject had been given to the students, the conceptual discussion step advanced along with other studies. Therefore, the students found the chance to utilize each other's ideas and question the other problem because they considered the problem from the aspect of different design problems. Since they worked different space sizes of the current building, the step of space decisions started from agreements towards disagreements. In the detailing step, even though how it was the same building had triggered agreements in the first place, it continued with disagreements as the spaces and spatial attributes for which they discussed the detail scale were different. Preparation for delivery created agreements; this helped more experienced students contribute to others' architectural representation statements. The term was ended with the final jury.

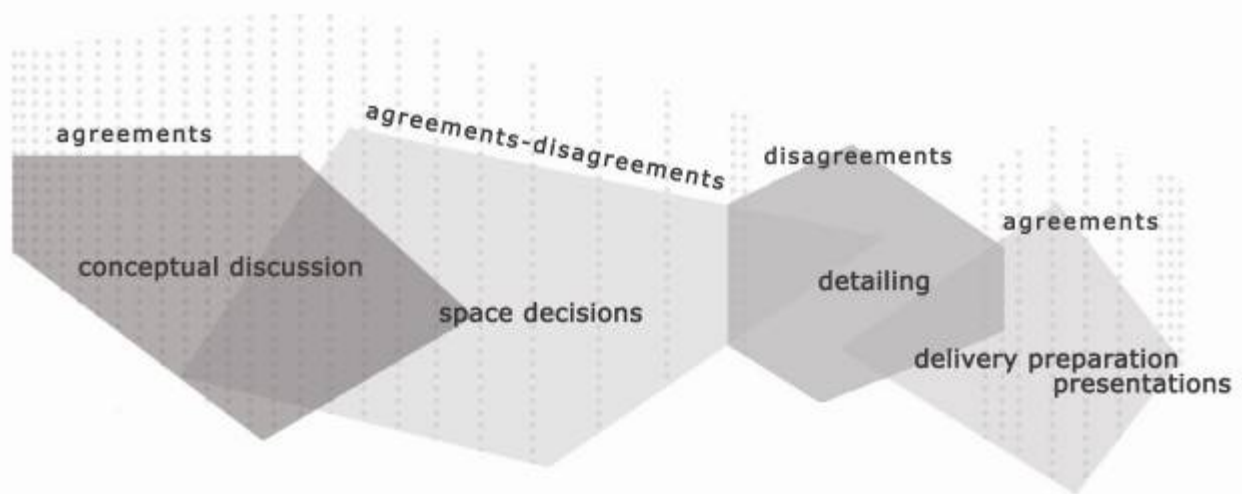


Diagram 2: Agreements and disagreements in student relations in the vertical interior architecture studio process

Examples are presented from the projects produced during the vertical studio process of which details are mentioned above within the scope of this study (Figure 3).





Figure 3: Vertical Interior Design Studio Process

The themes added by the Interior Design Studio I students to their café projects were addressed in such a way that it would reinforce the concepts up to the components of the space design. One of these themes were based on “The Young Ladies of Avignon” by Picasso and the project was named “Picasso Café”. The mentality of painting which presents different and broken perspectives of Cubism was reflected on the space in 3D in an effort. The spatial organization, floor-wall-ceiling continuity, gaps opened in the space and furniture decisions was shaped by the idea of presenting the different perspectives of the painting. This concept was strengthened with the painting workshop added to the project and the exhibition system which was considered together with the wall design (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Picasso Café project, Merve Güneş

In the project considered as a bookstore café, a flexible design understanding was adopted for the users that diversify at different times in Teşvikiye where the current building is located and for their needs. The concept of flexibility was handled from several aspects such as spatial organization, furniture design, and different uses in the project. Movable panels in the project allow for the reconstruction of the space from time to time. Hence, flexible use was achieved based on time and space. Expansion-reduction flexibility of the furniture was considered in the design to support that use (Figure 5). In another project, fondue & crepe café, stairs were handled as a perpendicular-horizontal connector allowing for spatial design on different levels. Spaces and gaps were shaped around the level differences of the linear stairs in the center. This mentality also reflected on the furniture design decisions in the place. The furniture designs were done with wooden plaques that break into pieces perpendicularly and horizontally and join with the fitting system (Figure 6).



Figure 5: Bookstore café project, Damla Öztürk



Figure 6: Fondue & Crepe café project, Ali Cenk Boy

The theme of organic diet was considered in this project of Interior Design Studio II. To that end, gardens were designed to ensure that users can touch the nature and collect their own vegetables-fruits horizontally and perpendicularly. An organic market function was also added to the project to strengthen the concept (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Organic café-market, Selin Yeğın

In the Interior Design Studio III group, “Culinary Arts Academy” was developed as a design proposal. Each design differentiated by being enriched with concept works and additional functions to customize the project subject. The projects were developed with concepts and approaches constructed on “healthy life”, “modern pastry”, “city-fashion-food”, “pasta-cheese-wine triplet” and “meat-chicken-wine triplet”. Reflections of the ideas on the project were ensured with different spatial organizations or design methods. For instance, the project using the modern pastry concept reinterpreted the familiar design elements such as color and shape in pastry to create an atmosphere with the continuity in the gap in the spatial design and the application of yellow, purple and gray (Figure 8). In the project of meat-chicken-wine triplet, the volume of space was broken down and rejoined around the specified circulation areas, and the idea of triplet was strengthened by achieving a visual continuity constructed on transparency (Figure 9). In another triplet concept, the pasta-cheese-wine, training and food & beverage spaces were constructed on separate levels for each action of the triplet.

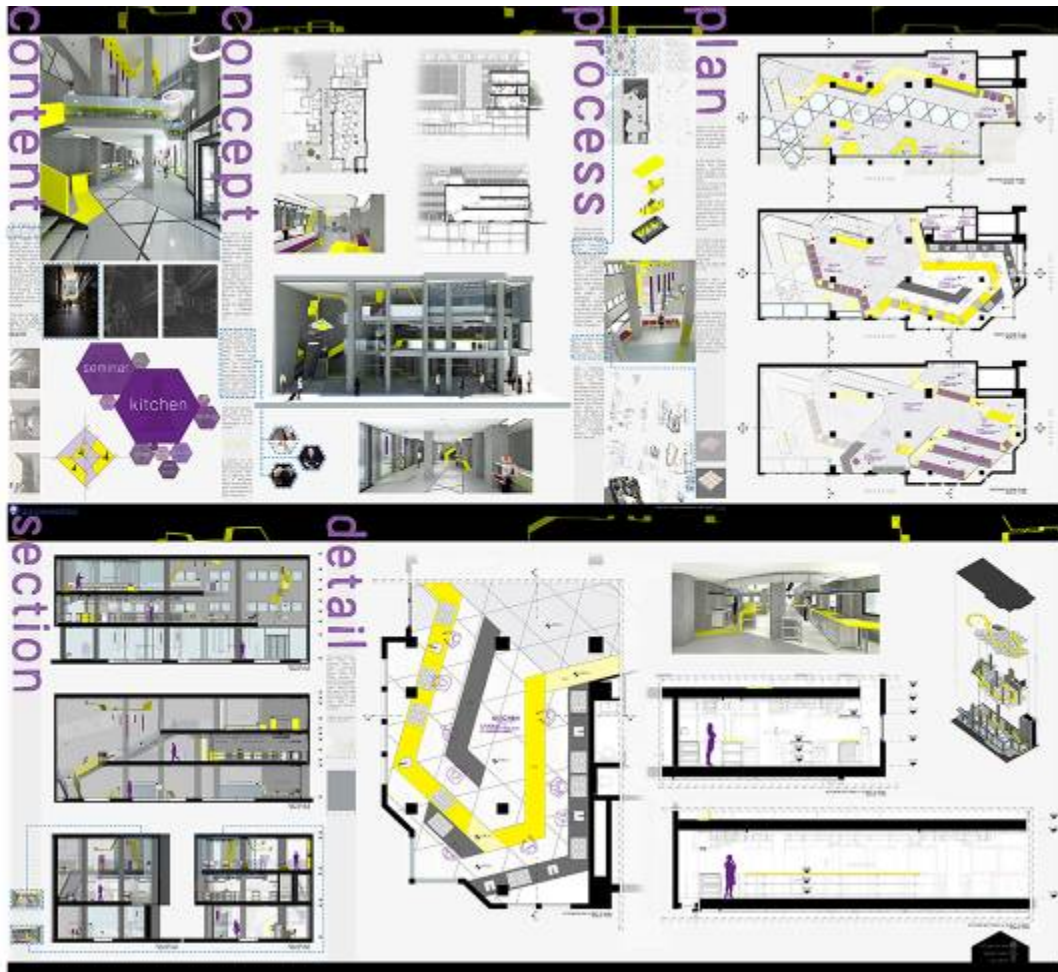


Figure 8: Pastry culinary arts academy project, Kübra Bahadır

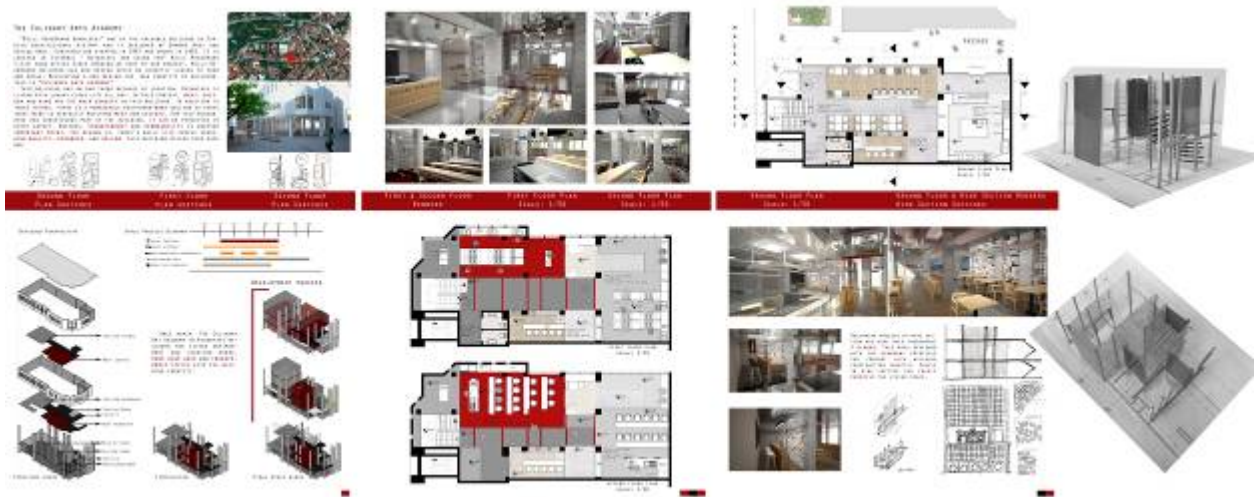


Figure 9: Meat-wine culinary arts academy project, Ege Özsen

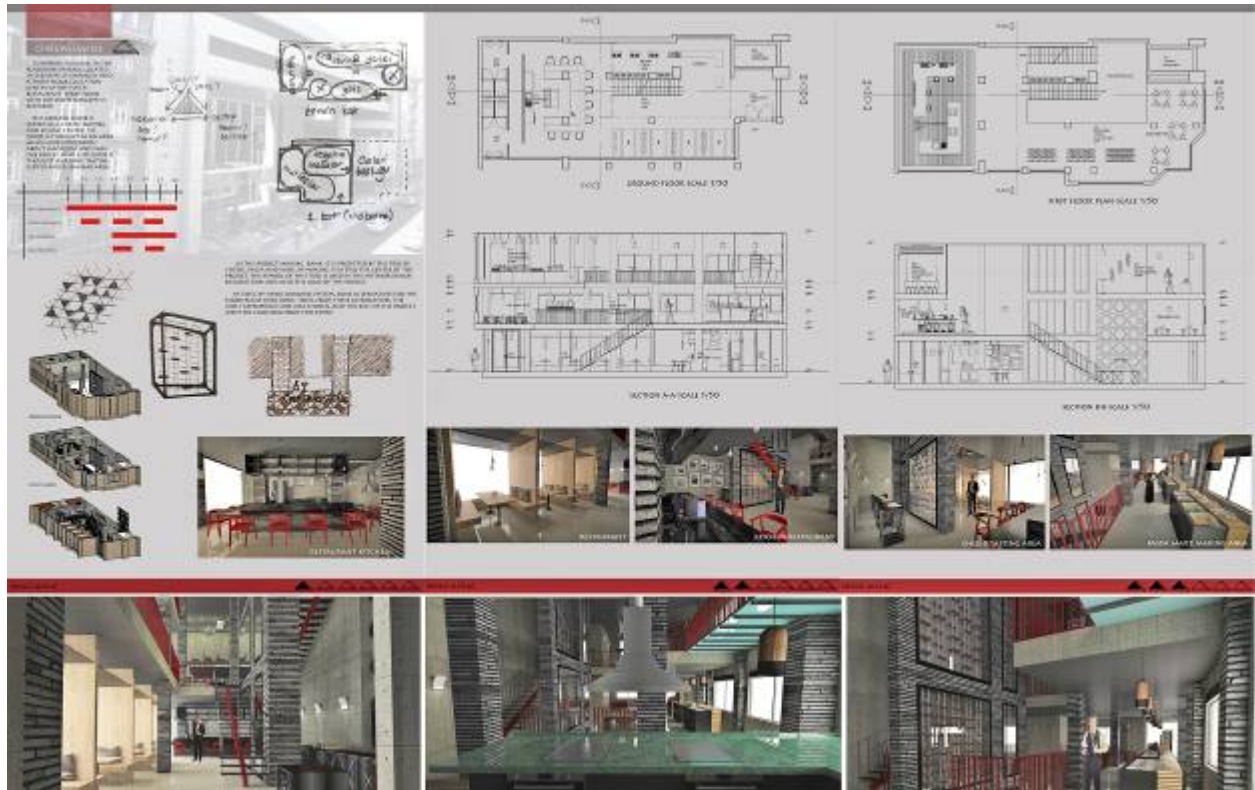


Figure 10: Cheepaswine culinary arts academy project, Deniz Altuğ

Another point where the students differentiated is the additional functions they attributed to the culinary arts academy in accordance with their concepts. In the project using the concept of healthy life, the student regarded the “Vertical Garden” located around the ramp which achieves the circulation with the café space to strengthen this concept as an additional function (Figure 11). Another suggestion is an additional restaurant function putting forth the relation between city and food to concentrate on the shared spaces simulating the urban public areas in the project which used the city-fashion-food concept. Furthermore, considering a multi-purpose training-practice space to concretize the main function strengthened the suggestion (Figure 12).

As understood from the works, projects produced with agreements and disagreements which were achieved during the vertical studio process provided diversity in design. Especially given the fact that interior architecture brings space and human together, how interior architecture students explore and differentiate this contributes to the richness in education.

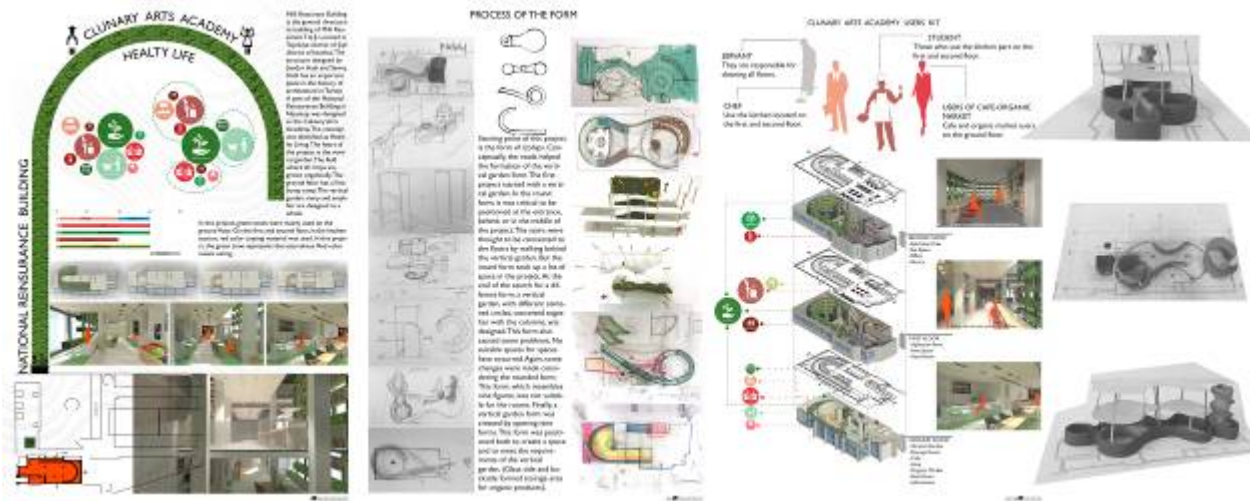


Figure 11: Healthy life culinary arts academy project, Büşra Yılmaz



Figure 12: Fashion in city culinary arts academy project, Şura Kocabaş

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Studio courses which are in the center of design-based educational programs continue to be the research subject both in Turkey and different countries. How to teach design, instructor-learner relationship, studio's physical structure, questioning of teaching action, discussion of student perception within psychological studies have continued to be investigated to date. Today, studio courses have been evolving into a more complex



formation with the advancing design technologies. In such an environment, this study reveals the vertical interior studio experience constructed on the basis of current educational discussions. Outcomes of the vertical interior design experience can be evaluated in terms of the structure of the construct and this structure's reflections on the students.

Agreements within the vertical studio construct strengthened the dialog between students and directors. Moreover, agreements contributed to the creation of diverse discussion environments, and therefore multi-dimensional evaluation of the design. Disagreements guided the director in the balance to be set with students. Relations between agreements and disagreements and the reflection of these relations on the process can be questioned in terms of learning-teaching theories. It is thought that the restructured vertical studio approach is also suitable for experimental project production platforms. Accordingly, the next step of the study can be the experimental project production in the vertical studio.

The following results were achieved in consideration of the reflections of the vertical interior studio on students:

- Students of different terms sharing the same studio ensured that the students in the department met each other and student dialog within the department became stronger.
- Rapid progress of experienced students during the project motivated some of other students and helped them gain momentum. On the other hand, some students lost motivation by thinking they fell behind. At that point, the director has a great responsibility and should ensure the balance.
- How upper-group students shared their experiences of project representation and computer software with lower groups defined a common learning platform among the students. The case applied to the jury members and they coped with the jury stress and process.

Consequently, agreements, disagreements and relations between them in the vertical interior design studio created the structure of teaching the design language. Retrying the outcomes of this construct in different project studios would enrich the study, providing it with new dimensions.

The curriculum of FMV Işık University, Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design which was put into effect this year will make significant





contributions to our country's interior architecture education with its similar specific characteristics.

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