Basic Design Course in the Education of Landscape Architecture

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ABSTRACT
Landscape architecture is one of the departments that focus primarily on design education. Teaching designing and educating designers are among the primary objectives of this education. Hence, the student's ability to come up with solutions to the problem of design, as well as his/her creative thinking, can be enhanced; and it can be enabled thanks to this education that he/she gains aesthetic sensitivity in perceiving his environment. From this point of view, basic design education plays a vital role in making ready the design student for the educational process. Basic design education enables a theoretical background for the student to perceive his/her environment and, in particular, to hone visual perception skills. Thus, it is intended to teach students to be able to interpret what they see and opt for the aesthetic one among what they see. Thus, the objective and functioning of the basic design course in landscape architecture education, the way that is followed to transform abstract concepts (e.g., harmonic, contrast, rhythm and balance) into concrete for the student and the perspective to the subject are revealed elaborately within the scope of this study.
Keywords: Landscape Architecture, Visual Perception, Basic Design Education

1.INTRODUCTION

Landscape architecture education aims to raise individuals who are able to question, think and perceive in three dimensions, materialize the abstract thinking that they generate, bring their creativity to an aesthetic level, and establish a form-function relationship. In this context, what is expected from students is to produce a characteristic and creative work and represent this with a visual language (Yılmaz et al., 2018). In this creative process, the designer should be able to comprehend the design and actively participate in the design organization, which is created based on visual thinking. The individual achieves this potential through education (Atalayer and Üstün, 2000). Hence, the basic design course, which is one of the essential courses of this educational process, is the first step in the structuring of landscape architecture education in departments that are established on design and creativity, such as landscape architecture, and in general, the ultimate goals in this educational process are as follows:

- Enabling students to think innovatively and promoting them to be creative,
- Establishing a theoretical infrastructure to assist students in understanding and feeling spatial perception and particularly to enhance their visual perception skills,
- Establishing a suitable platform for students to initiate questioning and research with artistic sensitivity (Çelik, 2014; Makaklı and Özker, 2016).

To sum up, it is ensured through the basic design course that the student improves the visual perception of his/her environment, be acquainted with the design elements, generates new forms, establishes relationships between objects, and arrange these relationships in line with specific guidelines (Uysal, 2015). Hence, this course teaches how to organize design elements with which design principles to generate aesthetically valuable compositions while enhancing the student's creativity and how to reflect the student's aesthetic sensitivity to his studies (Uysal, 2015; Yılmaz et al., 2018).

The objective and functioning of the basic design course in the Department of Landscape Architecture at Karadeniz Technical University, the way that is followed to convert abstract concepts (e.g., harmonic, contrast, rhythm and balance) into concrete for the student and the perspective to the subject are suggested in detail in this study.

2. BASIC DESIGN EDUCATION

Basic design education is a modern and advanced education in training the artistic tendency, abilities, and skills of the individual, controlling and using their experience and knowledge based on vision and visual perception, and generating authentic forms (Atalayer and Üstün, 2000; Bingöl, 2016). The basic design education process provides a contribution to the skill of establishing eye, mind, and hand coordination that is necessary for the person to visualize an image, understanding and sensing abilities (Atalayer, 2004), and the transformation of visual perception into productive thinking in design activities through applications for the enhancement of visual perception and expression (Yağmur and al., 2018). Therefore, basic design education concentrates on visual perception and takes its foundations from the Gestalt theory of perception, which states that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts". Wertheimer, one of the Gestalt theorists, argues that the principles of visual organization intuitively exist in every human being and put emphasis on the rhetoric that the visual world is so intricate that the human mind attempts to perceive its environment in its simplest form to tackle this intricacy (Tekel et al., 2016). The individual perceives not every element around him but the whole that is constituted by these factors. It is studied in the Gestalt theory that in what kind of principles the parts are perceived as a whole (Denel, 1970; Tekel et al., 2016). Gestalt perception theory establishes the theoretical basis that will provide objectivity to design education and two fundamental contributions. The first one is that it tries to formulate the rules of visual perception by analyzing object perception and groupings, and the second one is that it formulates the principles of problem solving and creativity (Sarioğlu Erdoğdu, 2016). Thus, not only gifted students but also all students can develop a design philosophy (Denel, 1970; Tekel et al., 2016).

Basic design education is disseminated across the world by the Bauhaus School, which was founded under the leadership of Walter Gropius. Bauhaus removed the boundaries by integrating fine arts with other applied arts and intended to introduce art into daily life through design (Uysal, 2015). The Bauhaus school has efficiently altered Architecture and related disciplines, and the major output of the Bauhaus School, which is maintained today, is the Basic Design course (Günay, 2007). Basic Design course is compulsory in the first year of design-oriented education in Turkey. In this course, in which 2 and 3-dimensional abstract representation methods are taught, Gestalt design principles that have been tailored by the Bauhaus school from perception psychology are typically applied (Sarioğlu Erdoğdu, 2016; Günay, 2007).

Using basic design education, students who study in the field of design can easily comprehend and perceive design principles, and a product is created by constructing a common visual language that is simple and understandable through design principles. Hence, the development of visual perception assists students in improving their design skills (Günay, 2007). Ultimately, the basic design course teaches students to learn how to use their imagination, generate different responses based on existing knowledge, and how to use essential design elements and principles while implementing them. Hence, students improve their competence to find new and original solutions to the challenges they may face. Thus, it has an abstract language of expression compared to other lessons. The visual perception and thinking skills of the student also develop in the process of transforming the information, which is obtained from the concrete world, into an abstract visual expression (Tekel et al., 2015; Düzenli et al., 2017).

2.1 The Objective and Process of the Basic Design Course in the Department of Landscape Architecture at KTU

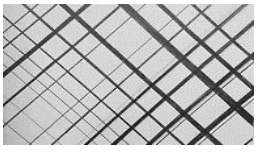
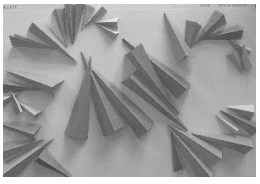
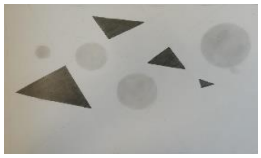
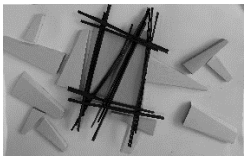
There is a basic design course in the first-year curriculum of each department with art and design content that addresses the visual language terminology. This visual language forms the basis of creativity in design, and a designer must have knowledge of visual organization principles, elements, and concepts to enhance his ability in the visual organization (Wong, 1993). Thus, basic design education, which is applied as studio training in the first grade, plays a significant role in improving the thinking styles of students. The basic design studio aims for the designer to generate a design language and internalize it throughout life. Accordingly, the basic design course of KTU Landscape Architecture Department is a lesson in which basic concepts (definition of design, design process), elements (line, measure, direction, range, color and texture), and principles (repetition, harmony, contrast, hierarchy, domination, balance and unity), and Gestalt

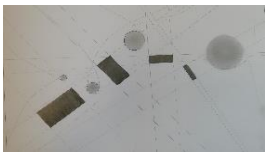
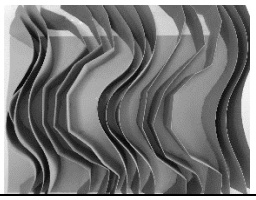
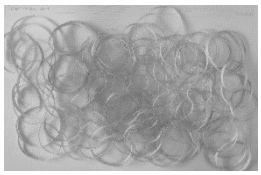
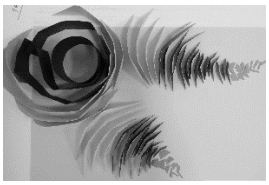
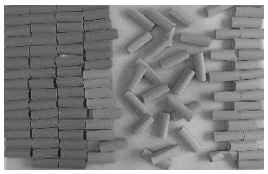
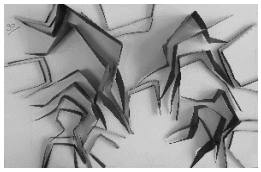
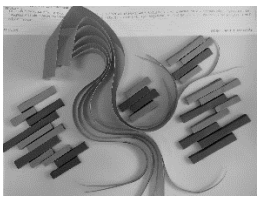
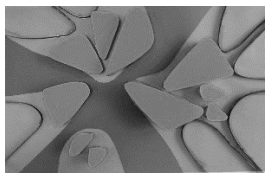
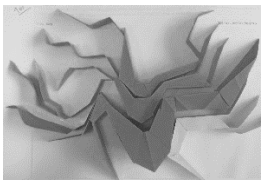
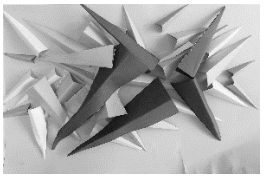
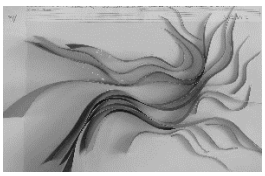
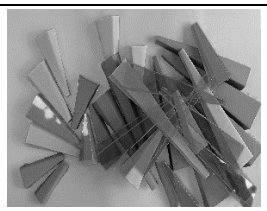
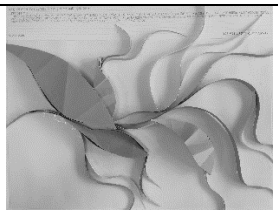
rules (principles of figure-ground segregation, proximity, similarity, closure and common motions) are lectured. In the first half-hour part of the course, the student is delivered with theoretical knowledge by the lecturer, and in the remaining part, 2 and 3-dimensional abstract applications are performed related to the theoretical knowledge, which has been given to the students (Table 1). The course is four hours, two days a week and the course is given by two faculty members and two research assistants. The lesson takes place in the studio, and students are delivered with information, suggestions, and tips about the assignment in the applied part of the lesson; the final work is improved through face to face criticism. The assignments (Table 2), which have been performed by the students, are assessed in each course through a mutual exchange of views between the lecturers and their assistants. The final assignment is an application where the gains achieved during the semester are set up, and the emphasis is put on creating space, providing continuity between these spaces, and being authentic in the stylistic understanding of the space.

Table 1. Implementation of the course

			Tasks	Material	Goals
Abstract ↓ **Concrete**	2-dimensional task ↓ 3-dimensional task	**Task 1-2-3**	• Using design elements, such as line, format, range, size and value	• Pencil producing different shades	• To generate new two-three dimensional forms using basic shapes (e.g., squares, rectangles, triangles, circles and lines) and exploring new relationships. • To develop an understanding of form in the spaces of work. • To establish relationships and continuity between the forms they create.
		Task 4-5	• Creating textures	• Paper with shades between black and white	
		Task 6	• Using cool and warm colors	• Papers with different colors and forms, free materials	
		Task 7	• Generation of figure-ground		
		Task 8… 13	• Figure expressions (transparency, concealment, linearity, effective environment, depth)		
		Task 14-15	• Uniform connectedness		
		Task 16-17-18	• Unity-domination-balance		
		Final task	• Creating space		

Table 2. Examples of the tasks

PROBLEM	SOLUTION PROPOSAL		PROBLEM	SOLUTION PROPOSAL
LINE			**PRIMITIVE SIZE**	
HARMONY-CONTRAST			**EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENT**	

RANGE - SIZE		**RETURNED REPETITION**	
SOFT TISSUE		**PIVOTAL HIERARCHY**	
COARSE TISSUE		**INFERIOR LINE**	
BRIGHT- COLD COLOR		**UPPER LINE**	
FIGURE-GROUND		**UNITY-DOMINATION-BALANCE**	
CONCEALMENT		**UNITY-DOMINATION-BALANCE**	
TRANSPARENCY		**UNITY-DOMINATION-BALANCE**	

2.2 Modeling the final task

The final assignment of the basic design course is an application that the student employs the knowledge and experience acquired until the end of the semester. Faculty members and students work face-to-face on this application for at least four class-days, and students sketch in the same class hour; subsequently, students are criticized several times, and then make changes on their sketches, and this work continues in a three-dimensional task. This mutual exchange of views goes on in three dimensions. The final assignment consists of four phases (Table 3):

- In the first phase, the student spends a period of research and data collecting to find a source of inspiration from the literature to construct it stylistically.
- In the second phase, the student examines the source of inspiration meticulously. He sketches this exactly the same way to assess the relationship between each unit that makes up this image and the next unit. This process enables the student to reveal the visual and formal organization of the inspiration source. Subsequently, the student transforms what is left in his mind into shapes or lines on the sketch. Hence, he simplifies

the visual, purifies it from details, expresses its characteristic structure, and interprets it with his own style. Since it enables the student to express what he sees by interpreting it in his mind rather than copying it directly, this process is the most challenging phase; thus, this stage is also the period during which he receives the most support from the instructor.

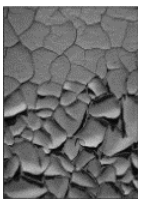
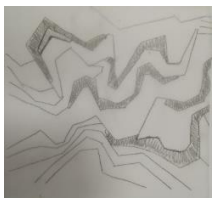
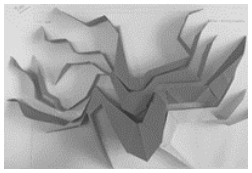
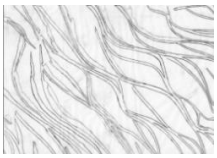
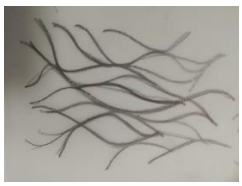
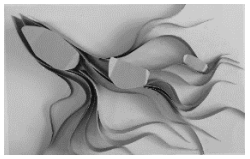
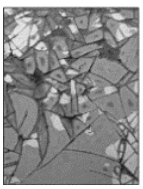
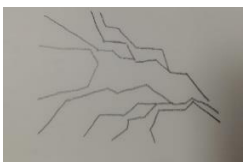
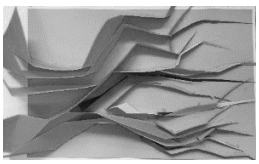
- In the third phase, the two-dimensional expressions on the sketch are developed into three dimensions in accordance with the principles of unity-domination-balance.
- In the fourth phase, the final product, which is set up by the principles of unity-sovereignty-balance, is transformed into space and the spatial organization is finalized through discussing the model and changing it.

The most significant characteristic that differentiates the final task from the tasks that are assigned throughout the term is that the student can see the process of transforming the form, which he/she puts forward, into space. In this regard, the final assignment aims to teach how a form defines space and how the relationship and continuity between spaces are established.

This process, which onsets from a source of inspiration, and reaches the space in the final assignment, questions and assesses the issues regarding;

- How much of the environment/image/object the students are looking at can see and perceive and whether they can make some judgments from there,
- The capacity of the students to generate qualified and authentic outputs using the
- knowledge and skills which were acquired from the course throughout the semester.

Table3. Final task

Inspired examples	Example Transferring Sketch	Abstraction	Unity-domination-balance	Model
				
				
				

3. CONCLUSION

"Design is to identify the form that the creative act envisions in the mind that fulfills a purpose and put it on paper, and the branch of science that trains all the talents of the artist in this process is called Basic Design" (Atalayer and Ustun, 2000). This statement underscores how significant the basic design course is for the design-based departments. Because the Basic Design course teaches the required design elements and principles to integrate different parts and create a composition/integrity. Students who have grasped the design activity and the

design process can apply their acquired knowledge and skills, with or without awareness, in further design courses, by taking this course. Hence, students who have a solid understanding of basic design can provide more creative and more authentic designs. The Basic Design course has a content that promotes the creative thinking process of students, enables them to combine their knowledge and imagination and transform them into visual expression, and teaches visual language in line with design elements and principles. In this regard, it promotes the creation, improvement, and teaching of creativity. Creativity is to notice and combine the details and make the design process easier. Therefore, creativity could be described as breathing in the education process (Cellek, 2005).

The Basic Design course in the Department of Landscape Architecture at KTU is taught in line with a program that concentrates on the creative thinking processes of the students and deals with the design elements and principles. Hence, the emphasis is not put only on the success of the students in the course. Emphasis is also placed on to assess the various approaches which are taken by the student at each phase in the course process and specific ways of thinking and the distinct pursuits he/she follows to achieve results. In this way, the student can be urged to learn creativity. In this context, an application is performed in the final assignment that will enable them to transform the images and associations, which are formed in their minds in the face of an image they see, using design elements. Since there is not just one absolute answer to a question in a basic design course, there are many answers that may differ from person to person; opportunities are provided for each student to reflect his or her own unique opinion. Thus, a design philosophy is not enforced on the student; they are urged to enhance their perception and generate a unique approach.

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