

The Teaching Space Project: Cultivating Meaningful Teaching of Illustration and Graphic Design*

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Figure 1: Dana Gezs- Graduate - 2009

Introduction

In 2013, a world-famous illustrator gave a four-day master class for the Illustration Track at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. The students knew and admired her, and were very excited about her visit. At the end of the first day of the workshop, the artist asked for an ironing board and clothes iron: "I asked the students to bring me their sheets for ironing", she explained... We obliged her odd request. And so, from the second day onward, the award-winning illustrator stood behind the ironing board and ironed the students' laundry while teaching them!

At the end of the workshop, which was very successful, we asked her about it. Her reply was a fascinating lesson in meaningful teaching: "I realized that the students were so keen on impressing me that they did not allow themselves to loosen up and take creative risks, so I decided to set an example by doing something really odd and stupid".



Figure 2: Bezele Buildings – 1906/2018



Figure 3: Maira Kalman's Master Class- 2013

The Teaching Space project began in the Illustration Track at the Department of Visual Communications (VC) some six years ago as part of the development of the Teaching Center in Bezele. The project was designed to explore teaching approaches and methods in the track and the department, formulate the lecturers' tacit knowledge and develop their teaching knowledge and skills. This process is aimed at encouraging the lecturers' engagement with the practice of teaching, to validate teaching as a significant aspect of their professional identity, and to open up new space for thought and action in teaching illustration and design.



Figure 4: The Language of Illustration course, Second year- 2017

The VC Department at Bezalel offers a four-year undergraduate program for 400 students and includes more than 80 teachers. The first two years focus on foundation subjects, and all courses are required. These introduce the students to the basic knowledge of the discipline and equip them with the basic skills of typography, layout design, branding, interaction design, game design, motion design and illustration, alongside traditional foundations such as drawing and photography. It is a highly demanding and intense program, which ensures that after the first two years, the average student is capable of successfully dealing with a basic VC challenge using more than one approach. The next two years of the program cater to both students who wish to specialize in one or more discipline, and to students who wish to acquire multidisciplinary knowledge.



Figure 5: Illustration and Text, Third year, Illustration class- 2017

The Teaching Space concept is founded upon the belief that the teaching of illustration and design in the department is not a problem that should be fixed, but a rich action field that must be studied, represented and conceptualized. Teaching

is performed in a way that attests to considerable knowledge, proven experience and enormous dedication on the part of the lecturers. The challenge, therefore, is not only to provide the lecturers with new knowledge, but to translate their tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and practical affective tools, finding a shared language and a joint observation space.

We understood this as a problem of representation and communication. How could the many complex layers of practice be represented? And how could practice be engaged and discussed by a wider range of people concerned with teaching and learning? (Ball & Lampert 1998:373)

The objective of the Teaching Space is to cultivate, validate and develop teaching in the department. Focusing on the question, "How do we teach?" Our systematic observation of teaching and learning allowed us to conceptualize the various approaches and methods, analyze their modes of operation and assess their strengths and weaknesses, identify opportunities and obstacles, to elicit insights that could be applied to useful tools for quality, meaningful and relevant teaching. This approach created a safe space that enabled the lecturers to sincerely take part in the process, share, dare and err without fear of judgment or failure.



Figure 6: Illustration and Text, Third year, Illustration class- 2017

One of the challenges we faced was the lecturers' fear of standardization and homogenization of the variety of teaching styles and approaches that coexist in the department. A significant aspect of the department's identity and one of the sources of its strength, is the department's polyphonic culture, which is composed of diverse lecturers, courses, students, teaching styles and learning methods. Thus, while attempting to develop a shared language and joint space, we validated our commitment for diversity.

Chapter 1: Mapping the Characteristics of Teaching and Learning

The first stage in the project was to map the characteristics of teaching and learning in the VC Dept. in order to answer the following basic questions: How do we teach? Why do we teach that way? What knowledge is embodied in the action? What is our approach to teaching? What are our teaching methods? Our assumption was that understanding, conceptualizing and categorizing the existing modes of operation would identify and formulate a corpus of teaching practices and notions, that will inspire new ideas and insights.

The mapping process demarcated three spaces:

1. **The teaching space**, where the lecturer's point of view is in the center. This space refers to the possibilities available to the lecturer to design learning.
2. **The learning space** has to do with the students' experience from their perspective. This space is "inhabited" by various forms of learning, which are not necessarily related to the interaction with the lecturer, including autonomous and peer learning.
3. **The interaction space** focuses on reciprocal learning between the learner and teacher. This space does not belong exclusively to either side, and at the same time fully belongs to both. It is a creative space where meanings may be developed and exploration and discovery facilitated. This space may exist in a frontal course, practical meeting, or workshop, supervision critique, in the hallway or in an email correspondence.



Figure 7: Illustration and Text, Third year, Illustration class- 2017

As in many leading academic departments of art and design worldwide, most of our lecturers operate successfully in the professional field, but did not experience professional training as teachers. In addition, many of them are graduates of the

department; this is particularly true in the Illustration Track where 13 out of its 14 lecturers have graduated from the track.

Consequently, learning and teaching in the department are mostly based on evolving traditional methods of experiential learning, learning by doing, practice and reflection. Experiential learning can be defined as learning through reflection on doing. Kolb (Kolb 2014) views learning as a four-stage, continuous process where the participant acquires knowledge from each new experience. His theory treats learning as a holistic process where one continuously creates and implements ideas for improvement. According to Kolb, effective learning can only take place when an individual completes a cycle of the four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. In a sense, the approach to teaching in the department continues to follow the master-apprentice tradition, where the lecturer is considered a master-teacher or a mentor whose authority derives above all from his or her professional status. Thus, teaching simulates professional working processes in the course of which the lecturer shares his experience with the apprentices-students, but also guides their way into the discipline in a transformative process at the end of which they become illustrators and designers.



Figure 8: The Language of Illustration course, Second year- 2016

The learning process acts as a cognitive and affective generator of this transformation, until a new identity is formed. A powerful and turbulent process that requires total dedication and trust in its agents, this is one of the reasons for the dominant departmental ethos, so typical of design and illustration departments, for the emotional upheaval, the intensive learning and the encouragement for total dedication.

At the end of the process, the student-apprentice becomes a member of a community of practice. This occurs via a process of social learning that occurs when

people who share a craft or a profession collaborate over an extended period, sharing ideas and strategies, innovating and finding solutions. Through legitimate peripheral participation, learners enter a community and gradually take up its practices and identity (Lave & Wenger 1991). "Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger-Trayner 2015).

The department's lecturers compose a Community of practitioners, thus representing different professional cultures within its multiple disciplines. Since each lecture has a different style, method of working, values and approaches to the profession, the students benefit from a diverse encounter with different cultural agents, enriching their professional identity as it develops through inspiration, imitation, adoption and rejection of the various cultures they experience.

The lecturer affects the student's learning space both manifestly and latently. Manifestly, the lecturer is an agent of knowledge and skills. Latently, a different kind of knowledge is transferred, as the lecturer's culture is also related to his personal style and norms: manner of speaking and dress, the way he holds the paintbrush, and of course his personal and professional life as revealed to the students online. The effect of these latent characteristics is evident almost immediately: within their first few months in the program, students change their haircuts, adopt a new dress code, change their eyeglass frames, and start to look like they are part of a clan.

Another characteristic of the learning environment is the performative aspect of teaching: the unique way in which the lecturer teaches. This allows the lecturer to instill in his student's values that are more abstract, such as enthusiasm, curiosity, daring and irony, by modeling his "classroom persona".



Figure 9: Introduction to Illustration course, First year- 2018

Reciprocity, trust, accepting the lecturer's authority, enthusiasm and a safe environment are all conditions that facilitate learning. If these conditions are not fulfilled the experiential and critical learning space can also produce inhibitory conditions that lead to a sense of deadlock, stress and frustration. For example, when the student experiences an unmediated gap between her and the lecturer, which can occur when she does not understand him, does not know how to complete a task, or simply what to expect from it, she can feel uncertain and helpless. In an attempt to rationalize these feelings, she might attribute negative characteristics to both herself and the lecturer. This makes some students say things like "this doesn't interest me", "I'm bad at it", "he doesn't know anything", "he doesn't like me", or even "he resents me". In such an emotional state, the student is not available for learning, as it is blocked by lack of motivation and self-efficacy. If we add to that the additional negative feelings that might occur when learning art and design such as envy, shame, and fear of failure, we will see how effective and meaningful learning can be damaged.

Chapter 2: The Modes of Operation of the Departmental Teaching Space

The study of teaching and learning in the department is primarily a voyage of exploration, identifying spaces of teaching and learning, mapping and conceptualizing them. The mapping process is ongoing, allowing constant fine-tuning of the learning and teaching activities in the department.



Figure 10: Teaching Space Seminar- October 2015

The project's main mechanism is reflective practice, which sustains faculty beyond the moment, providing them with the opportunity to stand back from the teaching-learning encounter and reflect on it. Reflective practice refers to the active process of examining one's own experiences to create opportunities for learning. In a

teaching context, reflective practice involves willingness to participate in a development process requiring ongoing critical reflection on both classroom practices and core beliefs.

Donald Schön (1983) presented two types of reflective practice: reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. Reflection-on-action involves reflecting on an experience one has already had, or an action one has already taken, and considering what could have been done differently, as well as looking at the positives from that interaction. Reflection-in-action means reflecting on one's own actions as they are performed, and considering issues such as best practices throughout. "When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories or established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case" (p. 68).

As part of this reflection, we held a series of interviews with the department's "founding fathers", or veteran lecturers. These were documented on video and in writing and presented in the project launch ceremony attended by the entire faculty. On this occasion, the lecturers also met the Batsheva's Dance company's rehearsal director Mr. Hilel Kogan, who presented the instruction methods of three of the leading choreographers of modern dance: Merce Cunningham, Pina Bausch and Ohad Naharin.



Figure 11: The Teaching Space Seminar, Japanese Calligraphy Workshop- May 2012

Our teaching development process is based on introspection, but also on the search for new ideas, tools and methods outside the department. The juxtaposition of the familiar and unfamiliar in this first meeting continued to shape the Teaching Space. In our view, the combination of learning from a directly relevant model of design teaching and a less familiar one allows emotional distance and rapt

attention that facilitate brainstorming and contribute to meaningful learning by the lecturers.

This combination of identification and defamiliarization was also applied in a practical workshops offered to the lecturers in calligraphy and manual bookbinding, at the first year of the project, as part of the actions to integrate it in the department's mechanism. These workshops, dealing in skill development rather in teaching, enabled the lecturers to experience learning from the students' point of view and within the class dynamics typical of design courses. Subsequently, the lecturers were asked to reflect on the experience and analyze the workshop dynamics, with reference to their own role in managing a classrooms and designing a learning process. It was fascinating to experience the immediate transformation of the lecturers to their "Pupils" role, becoming the "Clown", the "Pleaser" and the "Disturber" once they were in this situation.

Parallel to the Teaching space activities involving/including all the departments lecturers, the project operates in defined arenas such as the final project, the first year, and new teacher mentoring. In these cases, the reflective process is adjusted to each arena: the lecturers teaching in it, the challenges involved, needs and opportunities arising from the mapping process.

One such context is the third and fourth year studio courses added to the curriculum in 2013 as a new learning environment that foster in-depth learning. Every studio course spans an entire day. Some address a certain knowledge area, some are bi-disciplinary and some are thematic, allowing creation in each of the department's disciplines. The courses are in workshop format, combining hands-on work with theoretical lectures and critique sessions. The studio courses' preliminary introduction to the department involved significant challenges for both the students and lecturers, as they needed to adjust to a different teaching format and to create a new learning space. During the first year of their existence, a studio teacher learning group was created to examine the unique elements of the studios courses and identify the challenges and opportunities inherent in the new format. As part of the Teaching Space, the group met four times during the year to share and analyze teaching experiences and provide methods and tools to meet the challenges. This way, a formal body of knowledge and practice was gradually constructed, available to the lecturers currently teaching the course and to others.

An additional arena for examination is first-year teaching. Here, the work began with a lecturer survey that examined the unique aspects of teaching during that year, defining the first year as a year of integration and adaptation, often accompanied by student difficulties requiring the lecturers to be more attentive to the student's situation. We also found that this was when the most dramatic

transformation took place in terms of the lecturer's impact on the student. The first-year lecturers' learning group contributed to mapping the unique challenges of this year, and to deepening their awareness of the emotional processes involved and their own role in them.

Another arena of the Teaching Space is the new lecturers. Every year, the department is joined by several lecturers of different ages, with varying experience in teaching different types of courses. Therefore, their training process involves both group meetings and facilitation, alongside individual supervision by a mentor – a senior lecturer from the department.



Figure 12: New Lecturers Seminar session- December- 2017

Work within each of these arenas required different methods and tools. Working with the studio lecturers, for example, required tools for efficient time management. The new studio classes offered the opportunity of developing new tools for working in workshops in all department courses and encouraging student involvement, as in acknowledging the need for different space arrangement, recognizing the fluctuant nature of the course timeline, and creating a sense of community by dining together.

At the end of each year, the learning outcomes of the different work groups of the Teaching Space project were presented to the entire department and the newly developed vocabulary and tools were introduced, practiced and embedded.

As we accumulated and conceptualized knowledge about our teaching from our work in the defined arenas, we were able to address wider issues common to the entire faculty. These included the critique, course planning, the conflict between process- and result-oriented teaching, teaching in a multicultural environment, teaching millennials, and teaching students with learning disabilities. All lecturers were invited to a Teaching Space Seminar, to learn these issues in depth and practice the new tools to assimilate them in their teaching culture.

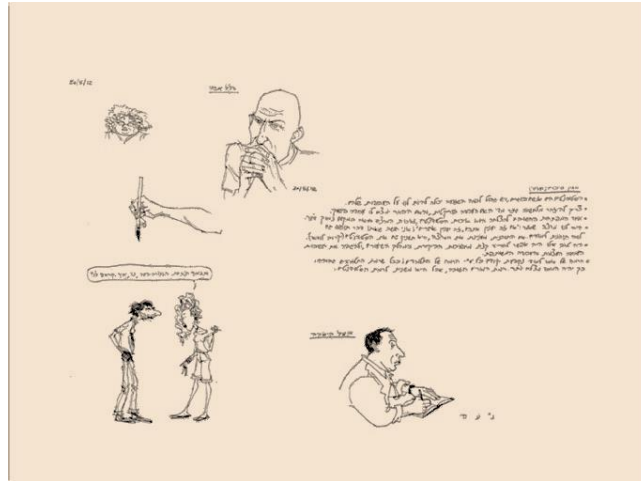


Figure 13: The Teaching Space Seminar, self documentation- May 2012

The project encourages lecturers to adopt the dedicated tools offered to them in the seminars and at the same time, based on the agency principle, to also adopt the project processes themselves – the study, mapping and conceptualization of teaching – and adapt them to their teaching space. Accordingly, concepts borrowed from the projects became integral to the departmental discourse, including the terms: course culture, Transformative learning, learning outcomes, learning conditions, or informed intuition. Similarly, the tools used in the work groups, such as – surveys, interviews, self-documentation, role play, round tables and sharing circles – became accessible to the lecturer's expanding toolbox.

The Teaching Space is relevant to the department's entire teaching staff: founding fathers, faculty members, external lecturers and teaching assistants. The project operates as an autonomous body supported, but not directed, by the Head of the Department. Fortunately, since the beginning of the project, the lecturers' cooperation and motivation have been superb. Despite coming at the expense of their private time, many of them attend our activities and do so enthusiastically – attesting to their high relevance.



Figure 14: Teaching Space Seminar- November- 2017

Chapter 3: Concepts and Tools Formulated in the Teaching Space

As part of our learning processes, we developed tools that were widely adopted by the lecturers. These were taken from different arenas and developed to meet the needs that arose during the research process. Focusing on two of these tools, the Classroom Contract and the Feedback Session, can illustrate the Teaching Space's modes of operation.

1. Classroom contract

In the course of mapping the learning and teaching challenges, we realized that although presenting the course in the first lesson is a common action performed by most lecturers in the department they were not implemented in an effective way. The first encounter between the students and the lecturer was performed with no regard to the momentum's needs and advantages, and the course was presented in a vague and poetic terms, causing confusion and suspicion.

Classroom contract (CC) refers to the explicit course culture, and includes the set of terms, values and rules presented to the class by the lecturer in a given course. It is a simple tool for establishing clear communication and for aligning expectations between the two parties. When applied as a course management tool utilizing the opportunities embedded in the first meeting of the course, it cultivates the momentum in to a meaningful and significant encounter, while reducing misunderstandings and frustration on both sides.

The CC is an adaptation of the psychological contract from the field of organizational psychology, adopted and adapted for our needs with the help of Shely Sussman, an organizational psychologist and one of the project's cofounders.

It meets the needs to establish a stable learning environment, increased trust and reduce the uncertainty experienced by the students. This in turn can maximize the resources the students and lecturer can devote to effective learning.

The CC presented in the first class includes the following "clauses":

- Course description: its syllabus, objective and how it will be conducted.
- Learning outcomes expected at the end: knowledge, skills and values.
- Evaluation methods and parameters determining the final grade.
- Values and ways of learning important for the lecturer. For example, participating in class discussion, originality, research, etc.
- The course's relevance in the broad academic and professional contexts.
- The lecturer's professional and academic credo. For example, "my job is to teach you a profession", "I'm here to make you think", "illustration is becoming obsolete", "illustration is the most wonderful art there is!"
- Rules of conduct: uploading materials to a central; attendance and punctuality; eating in class; leaving class in the middle of the lesson; submission deadlines, etc.
- Required equipment.
- Communication channels: Moodle, email, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.

Implementing the CC has achieved its purpose by reducing student uncertainty. Presenting the "contract" to the students structured their learning conditions and defined a learning space. We recommended refreshing the CC in mid-course, and again towards the end, according to the course progress and the particular nature of the class.

The process of formulating the contract proved effective in an additional aspect of teaching development. It required the lecturers to write their own contract in a way that sensitizes them to the culture they bring to class and motivates them to fine-tune the nature of the course. It also required them to identify learning outcomes, plan the evaluation process, and design the various instruction methods.



Figure 15: Introduction to Illustration course, First year- 2015

As a tool, contracts are effective in other contexts as well, such as between the department and lecturers or as part of a specific exercise. Contracts can also be useful as local tools in a critical discussion of student works, where the lecturer defines the rules in advance and reduces the element of surprise.

2. Feedback session

One of the themes arising in all territories was the Critique. Public “crit” of student works is a significant tool in all art and design departments used to promote learning, for formative and summative assessment and for professional acculturation. Our Departments’ vision is to nurture graduates that are critical and opinionated with interpretive skills, have a sense of responsibility, motivation and self-efficacy. To cultivate those qualities, we aspire to use different forms of critical manifestations and appreciation.



Figure 16: Fourth year Final Project Presentation- 2013

Critical observations and reflections are held from the candidate screening stage and all the way to the Final Project at the end of the four-year program. The forms of critique include feedback by a teacher, by peers, individually or in groups, feedback by visitors, verbal and written.



Figure 17: Fourth year Final Project Presentation- 2013

It appeared, early in our work, that despite being such a central tool, it is applied in the department in a rather limited and uniform manner. We therefore concluded that we needed to foster a broader understanding of the Critique in order to develop and implement additional tools to enhance its effectiveness.

The first stage was mapping the critique territories in the department. We discovered that as the student's knowledge and skills progressed, they become increasingly dependent on the lecturer's ruling, opinion and instruction, losing their independence in the process. This was particularly true in multi-stage projects, beginning in the second year where the student's dependence on the teacher made them insecure of their own abilities and less interested in peer learning. They executed less decisions by themselves, were cautious in their research and apologetic in their presentations.

Over the past three years, the department has been collaborating with the Department of Visual Communications at the Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm, Sweden. This enabled us to learn about the **feedback session** approach developed in their graduate VC program, offering visual reading of a given artwork informed by a predetermined set of questions. The objective of the feedback session is to enable meaningful learning by addressing the problems of the conventional critique session: biases that affect the students and the lecturer and are intensified when the work is presented by the student; the lecturer's status as the chief arbitrator; and social dynamics deflecting the discussion from the merits of the actual work.



Figure 18: Feedback Session Introductory Seminar, with Prof. Johanna Lowengard- 2016

Figure 19: The Language of Illustration Course Feedback Session in small groups- 2017

In the feedback session, the work is presented to a peer group without the student's mediation, any explanation and without the lecturer taking a position in the matter. In two time-limited consecutive stages, each of the project participants writes her answers to two series of questions, without public discussion. The first series refers to emotions arising out of the visual reading of the piece, and the second to effective and challenging aspects in the piece. Upon concluding their answers, all session participants read what they have written to one another, without revising, avoiding, or responding to what is said around them. This creates a space with diverse perspectives and interpretations, without session participants affecting each other. Every student whose work is commented upon encounters the broad interpretation of his work, and is able to assess its merits and the gap between his intentions and the visual result. The process of implementing the feedback session in the department began with presenting it to selected lecturers by a delegation from Konstfack. Subsequently, after practicing it and learning its strengths and weaknesses, we adapted it to our department's needs. It was presented to all lecturers in a designated seminar, allowing them to experience it as peers providing feedback. This exposed the department to the possibility of a different kind of critique, one where the lecturer's view is not privileged, one that lacks value judgment, and one that does not involve debates and persuasion attempts but instead facilitates multiple readings. As opposed to the traditional critique session, in the feedback session, the artwork is read rather than judged, making it an essential innovation that was received in the department in open arms. Moreover,

concepts related to this method became integrated into departmental terminology, expanding the boundaries of discourse on teaching and learning.

Figure 19: Feedback Session Questioner- adopted from the Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design. Stockholm, Sweden, VC Graduate program- 2016

Chapter 4: The Impact of the Teaching Space Project on Teaching and Learning

<p>Feedback Session - Visual Reading</p> <p><i>Originally developed at the Department of Visual Communications Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm, Sweden</i></p>
<p>Step 1: Perception</p> <p>In each session, one student will display her/his work without discussing her/his intentions. If explanations are necessary she/he can introduce the minimum information only to realize the context of the work. All participants have <u>3 minutes</u> to note down:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do I see? 2. What happens in me?
<p>Step 2: Analysis</p> <p>All participants have <u>5 minutes</u> to note down:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What ideas or discourses on quality and taste might my reactions be connected to? 2. What references am I using? 3. Why do I use these references? 4. What parts of the work do I regard to be challenging norms and what do I regard to be preserving norms? 5. What aesthetic features of the work are most dominant and thus affect my reading of the work as a whole? <p>At the end of Step 2, one by one, all participants read their answers to Step 1. Then, one by one, all participants read their answers to Step 2. All written notes are given to the student whose work is on display.</p>

After six years, the Teaching Space Project has produced a well-organized body of knowledge that includes articles, surveys, interviews, documentary materials, methods and tools. This knowledge is accessible to lecturers and the public through Bezalel’s Teaching Center. The in-depth attention to teaching evoked a dynamic and constructive discourse in the lecturer community that has been spreading throughout the department and crossing over into their professional practices. Indeed, concepts associated with the projects are now frequently used as part of the daily discourse in the department, among the lecturers, between them and the students, and increasingly, among the latter themselves. This ripple effect – a key modus operandi for this project – results in the constant spread of ideas, concepts and tools shared by all.

In six years, the concept of “the teaching space” became a generic term for active engagement with teaching and learning, integral to the department’s unique

identity. The project's effects on the quality of learning and teaching in the department is evident in the following aspects:

- Lecturers reporting that student learning is characterized by:
 - Greater proactivity, independence and responsibility
 - Greater creativity and daring
- Students reporting:
 - Greater satisfaction and meaningfulness in their learning
 - Greater attentiveness of the lecturers to their needs
- Emergence of an independent discourse on teaching among the lecturers
- Lecturers attesting to a stronger sense of engagement with teaching
- Less student complaints about lecturers and the department
- Greater diversity in course activities
- Stronger relations between declared learning outcomes and the actual outcomes

Devoting attention to teaching and learning has clearly opened up a new and exciting space for continual development. Placing the lecturer at the center of the field of study has created an empowering effect, providing an opportunity for honest reflection and motivating change. The project's research practices have been adopted in the form of learning design tools, and at the same time perceived as a way for the department to invest in and cultivate its teaching staff. This in turn led to a paradigmatic shift in the historical relationship between the department and lecturer, maximizing the willingness to engage in reform.



Figure 21: Teaching Space Seminar- October- 2015

As the Teaching Space became established in the department, the project aroused interest in other departments in Bezalel and other academic institutes. There is great demand for workshops and lectures on the project both in Israel and abroad, including an invitation by the Teaching Promotion Committee of the Israeli Council for Higher Education. In the future, we intend to continue with project activities in

existing and new arenas, establish a well-organized program for training lecturers, expanding their toolbox, integrate students in the development processes and address complex issues such as student evaluation and grading.



Figure 22: Niv Tishbi- Graduated- 2012

Chapter 5: The Future of Teaching Illustration and Design

One of the most salient features of the digital revolution is multiple changes within a short period. The rate of technological development and their dissemination is such that the most important qualities for success today are agility and rapid adjustment.



Figure 23: Anat Warshavsky- Graduated- 2015

For students today, time and geographical distance have become insignificant given the internet and the low cost of travel. The new media platforms and means of production challenge traditional hierarchies. The sources of information and channels of distribution, marketing and advertisement have changed. We are in the midst of the visual age where the image rules. This age is also characterized by an overflow of information in the form of multiple decontextualized images, most of which are mediated through a small two-dimensional screen of fixed proportions and directed at an individual consumer.

Given this reality, how are we to train illustrators and designers to succeed? How can we cultivate a responsible cultural leadership when the future of the world – from the climate to the very nature of truth – is so uncertain? How are we to equip our students for a professional career in a field that is changing by the minute? How responsible are we to ensure their financial survival and self-realization? How relevant is the education we give them?



Figure 24: Noa Snir- Graduated- 2012

Today's students are millennials. This means that we often find ourselves required to mediate between their worldviews, expectations and values and those of their lecturers. Nevertheless, generation gaps have always been inherent to teaching, and in fact have always provided, through frictions and tensions, a generator for action and a motivation for change. Hence, the discussion of the future of teaching cannot refer only to the question of how we teach. Facing forward also involves difficult challenges regarding what we teach. Are we to teach illustration and design software, or can today's students be expected to master them independently? What is the proper role of digital illustration in the early stages of learning? Should we continue teaching drawing and print making? Should students know the difference between coated and uncoated paper? Is there any point in teaching editorial illustration for newspapers?



Figure 25: Keren Katz- Graduated- 2010

Since the practice of the Teaching Space involves ongoing systematic observation and analysis to identify challenges and opportunities, it is ideally suited to the changing reality and the new generation. The Teaching Space operates in a way that enables us to overcome the changing challenges of teaching illustration – and teaching in general – in our times. By its very nature, the reflection on the lecturer and her role as the designer of a meaningful learning environment attracts attention to questions of relevance and the changing needs of the discipline. These can refer to implementing a new technology in the classroom; cultivating proactive, independent, and agile students; promoting enterprise and market savvy; addressing accountability and ethics; as well as creating conditions conducive to learning for this generation of restless students – and the next.



Figure 26: Or Yogev- Graduated- 2017

Our concern with preparing our students for the professional reality outside the academic nursery required us to motivate them to practice independence and ownership of their projects, without giving up on their need for supervision and control. One of the simplest and most effective tools we developed for that purpose was revealed to us by way of informed intuition. Frustrated by the students' experience of passivity with relation to their projects, in one of the mid-project submissions of the second-year "Language of Illustration" courses, I decided that instead of having the students describe to me what they have been doing and expecting me to respond with full in-depth analysis of their work in its embryonic stage, I asked the students to compose and direct questions to the class and me, relevant to the stage of their work process, with the intention of helping them develop it further. No more of that "one-man show" ranging between a stand-up comedy and a requiem, where I squirm and beg the students to take an active part in the discussion. All I asked was for the students to open the discussion by addressing a question to the class – one that preoccupies them, and must be answered in order for their work to proceed.



Figure 27: Eitan Eloa- Graduated- 2015

The transformation was instantaneous. Once responsibility for project management was delegated to the students, the very need to formulate a question about their creative process, and without having to give up on the lecturer's ongoing support, they became the project's owners, responsible for its successful completion. They asked concrete questions, such as, "Should the figure smile or not?", "Should I change the color of the sky to a darker tone?"; fundamental questions such as, "Do you find this work interesting?", "Is it communicative?"; and questions related to work processes, such as "Where do you find inspiration beside Pinterest?".



Figure 28: Pierr Kleinhouse- Graduated- 2016

The new method was immediately adopted by the students who quickly used it in all their courses. They directed their questions to the class, to the lecturer and to themselves. Today, asking questions as a tool of independent process management is a common method in many courses, increasingly replacing the lecturer's solo critique performance. Using this tool, we managed to awaken the students to take a more active position towards their work and experience an autonomous engagement with the creative process what would help them in the future as independent artists in an entrepreneurial world.



Figure 29: Masha Shachaf Menapov- Graduated- 2008

To conclude, the perspective of the Teaching Space, which simultaneously observes the field of teaching and learning in the department from above and on the ground, enables it to identify potential barriers that inhibit teaching and

learning processes, as well as opportunities to facilitate teaching, making for a learning environment adjusted to the needs of the present and future. Being a supportive system that is integral to the department, the project's activity in generating innovation and streamlining processes provides the department with a variety of working structures that ensure constant forward movement.

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