Timeliness of Creative Subjects in Architecture Education

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Abstract. The following article is about the problem of insufficient number of drawing and painting lessons delivered in the process of architectural education. There is a comparison between the education of successful architects of the past and modern times. The author stands for the importance of creative subjects being the essential part of development and education of future architects. Skills achieved during the study of creative subjects will be used not only as a mean of self-expression but as an instrument in the toolkit of a professional. Sergei Tchoban was taken as an example of a successful architect for whom the knowledge of a man-made drawing is very important. He arranges the contests of architectural drawings for students promoting creative development in this way. Nowadays, students tend to use computer programs to make architectural projects losing their individual approach. The creative process becomes a matter of scissors and paste being just a copy of something that already exists. The solution of the problem is the reconsideration of the department’s curriculum and adding extra hours for creative subjects.

Absence of visible connection between general subjects and majors very often leads to incomprehension of their relation to a future profession. One of the reasons of it is that the connection of purpose and objectives of minors has nothing to do with basic specialization. It occurs to students of the Faculty of Architecture while studying such subjects as Painting and Drawing within very short period of time. Architect is a profession which combines a mixture of visual arts. An architect should be a good expert of architecture history, art history, applied art, not to mention majors, in order to use this knowledge at work. Architecture reflects its period of time, so while addressing to the past, to history of art and experience of architects of other countries, it is important to analyse and put in perspective their work and style, and to treat them as a source of superficial imitation in your own projects. An inherent part of education process is to follow principles of modern architecture and contemporary form making while teaching to draw. To know how to use graphical methods, techniques of line, tonal and colour graphics is important not only for sketching.

Drawing is a language of an architect, to use it is an important step to become a competent professional. In the history of art, architects who knew drawing became the ones who shaped the look of Saint Petersburg and Moscow in 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. There are works of such architects as Francesco Rastrelli, Georg Friedrich Veldten, A Voronikhin, A Kvasov, Giacomo Quarenghi, Carlo di Giovanni Rossi, V Stasov, K Thon, A Kaminisky and others. Nowadays one of the most successful and talented architects is Sergei Tchoban, who studied in I Repin St. Petersburg State Academy Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. Since 1996 he lives and works in Germany.
So far that Russian and German architect has designed about 20 good and already constructed buildings. In Germany the most interesting complex is AquaDom near Berlin Cathedral. In the complex there is a huge aquarium through which the lift moves. His projects were accomplished in Russia too, in Kazan, Sochi, Saint-Petersburg and Moscow. In 2009 House of Benois, built in Saint-Petersburg, became the winner of Best Building Awards during open public voting “House of the year: people’s choice” (Figure 1).

Sergei Tchoban is an excellent drawer as well as a passionate collector of architecture graphics (Figures 2,3). In fact Museum for Architectural Drawing was built in 2013 in Berlin.

He also creates very interesting and unique projects as the AquaDom in Berlin which represents acrylic glass aquarium with built-in transparent elevator. The AquaDom contains about 1 million liters of water and population of the small fishes living in this aquarium is constantly multiplied (Figure 4).

Figure 1. Sergei Tchoban, Museum for Architectural Drawing in Berlin, 2013. It is situated in the district of Prenzlauer Berg, on the site of a former brewery Pfefferberg.

Figure 2. Sergei Tchoban, Rome.

Figure 3. Sergei Tchoban. A picture exposed at exhibition “Water”, Milan.
In one of the interviews for magazine Archplatfoma he says about special kind of architecture graphics — man-made drawing. This compulsory element of architectural studying allows to get unique skills that cannot be replaced by digital technology and can be useful for further professional growth. It is important to draw attention of wide audience to art of architectural drawing, to emphasize value of professional skill for development and fixing of architectural thought, for form creating, for understanding of space and large-scale ratios.

In his book “Architecture drawings” it is written: “Architectural drawing will always be the official language of an architect, whereas computers help us – to a constantly growing extent – to carry out a project. But even today, people are still fascinated by looking at hand-drawn images. We can see this by a rising number of museum visitors of our exhibitions and their comments”.

Despite the widespread use of increasingly sophisticated design softwares, the architect’s hand can still represent the spark and engine that start the architectural project. A sign that grows and becomes a body, a pattern that unfolds stories and uses. Drawing has never ceased to surprise for its generative power and closeness to artistic work.

Nowadays a lack of sufficient amount of hours of drawing discipline for architects influences their architectural training in a bad way. Not getting enough skills in drawing and not having “firm hand” while making sketches for a project lead to a limited idea and limited final result of the work. It is also sad that contests of architecture drawing held in Russia remain inaccessible for our students because they are uncompetitive by reason of small amount of hours for drawing discipline. Modern students, using computer graphics, limit their abilities and deprive their projects from individuality of approach and performance. It reveals low quality of graduates’ education and weak competition on the market of architecture. That makes young specialists abandon their ideas to make challenging and interesting architectural projects after being graduated.

P.S. Despite the advance of computer technologies, man-made architecture drawing stands still. Russian architects continue to take part and to be among the best in world contests of specialized graphics. Recently Sergei Tchoban was nominated twice and won a prestigious award of Architecture in Perspective.
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