

## OPEN-AIR DRAWING WORKSHOPS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN STUDENTS EDUCATION AT THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE AT THE SILESIA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, POLAND

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Received: 15.01.2018; Revised: 07.02.2018; Accepted: 11.06.2018

### Abstract

For many years in the curriculum of the Faculty of Architecture in University of Technology in Gliwice very important place took open-air drawing and painting workshops, which in recent years as a result of program changes have been withdrawn from the learning process. Reducing the number of hours of drawing studies resulted in a drop of artistic skills and aesthetic sensitivity. Having several years of experience in teaching of drawing and painting, the authors of the paper confirm their belief in the importance of teaching drawing by studying the forms from nature (open-air workshops). The authors of the paper who led open-air workshops and analyzed the works carried out by the students, prove that drawing from nature through a meeting with living architecture completed the didactic process. Based on participant observation and analysis of selected works authors prove that drawing from nature through the encounter with the living architecture complemented the teaching process. It also enriched and developed the future artists workshop, allowed to study drawing and enabled cognitive abilities. The observation of objects allowed the analysis and synthesis of form, taught history, sensitivity to the context of the environment and the value of space.

### Streszczenie

Przez wiele lat w programie nauczania studentów na Wydziale Architektury Politechniki Śląskiej w Gliwicach ważne miejsce zajmowały wakacyjne plenery rysunkowo-malarskie, które w ostatnich latach w wyniku zmian programowych zostały wycofane z procesu nauczania. Zmniejszenie ilości godzin przedmiotów artystycznych spowodowało spadek umiejętności plastycznych i wrażliwości estetycznej studentów. Kilkunastoletnie doświadczenie w pracy dydaktycznej autorek artykułu utwierdza je w przekonaniu o ważności nauczania rysunku poprzez studiowanie form z natury (plenery rysunkowe). Autorki artykułu uczestniczące w plenerach (prowadzące plenery), na podstawie analizy wykonanych przez studentów prac dowodzą, że rysunek z natury poprzez spotkanie z żywą architekturą dopełniał proces dydaktyczny. Wzbogacał warsztat przyszłych twórców, pozwalał na naukę rysunku, a także dawał możliwości poznawcze. Obserwacja obiektów pozwalała na analizę i syntezę formy, uczyła historii, uwrażliwiała na kontekst otoczenia i wartości miejsca.

Keywords: Teaching of freehand drawing; Open-air drawing; Painting; Perception and creation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

For many years open-air drawing was included in the curriculum and complemented the educational process at the Faculty of Architecture in University of Technology in Gliwice. The curriculum incorporated indoor drawing and painting workshops as well as design classes that integrated fine arts with architecture. Design classes covered designs of stained-glass works, wall painting, sgraffito, mosaics and artistic metalwork. Moreover, graphical techniques and calligraphy classes were taught as well. They included both on-site and off-site open-air workshops organized inside and outside the buildings. Such workshops were attended by first-year students of full-time studies.

## 2. DIDACTIC PROCESS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF “FREEHAND DRAWING” CLASSES

An open-air drawing workshop constituted an indispensable element of future architects' curriculum. Drawing classes were obligatory; initially three-week open-air workshops were organized in towns with a rich history, plenty of monuments and atmospheric lanes, constituting a source of inspiration for artists, such as Krakow, Wrocław, Bielsko-Biała, Cieszyn, Sandomierz. Since 1994 open-air workshops were organized in Silesia and they contributed to the popularization of the architecture of Silesian towns and the Silesian University of Technology. The outcome of these workshops included albums of students' works: “Zabrze in Drawings”, “Mysłowice in Drawings”, “Katowice in Drawings”, “Courts of Gliwice Region”, and “Churches of Gliwice Diocese in drawings”. Within the framework of Gliwice open-air resulted in the drawing documentation of the structures of the Silesian University of Technology in the form of a portfolio entitled “University of Technology in Drawings”. In consecutive years students captured images of architectural monuments of Gliwice, Zabrze, Mysłowice, Katowice, Rybnik, Tarnowskie Góry, Pławniowice. Subsequent open-air workshops were devoted to the buildings of the Auto Robot Zone as well as the sacral, post-industrial and regional architecture.

During open-air workshops students had an opportunity to get acquainted with the urban space, frequently of a large city; they also learnt how to study forms incorporated in space, architecture and architectural details. Open-air drawing and painting work-

shops facilitated contact with the real layer in a specific context in space. The curriculum kept on evolving in time, subjects concerning drawing and painting were changing, but the skills acquired during an academic year were practised during open-air that constituted an integral element of Freehand Drawing classes during which students mastered techniques they acquired. The study of architecture-landscape nature is a basic exercise regardless of the subject and the method of work; it is an attempt of defining and exposing certain features of spatial arrangements [2]. Creative work culminated in exhibits that allowed students to present their works. It was an element of confrontation (comparisons, skills to resist any objections) at the field of action of young adepts of art with authors of works coming from their university or other home or foreign centres. The ability to present a drawing or a painting, its exposition at a student exhibition enriches an entire didactic cycle. The possibility of presenting own creative work is for students a perfect practice of independence. For many years in the curriculum of the Faculty of Architecture in University of Technology in Gliwice very important place took open-air drawing and painting workshops, which in recent years as a result of program changes have been withdrawn from the learning process [4]. Reducing the number of hours of drawing studies resulted in fallback of artistic skills and aesthetic sensitivity. With having several years of experience in teaching of drawing and painting, the authors of the paper confirm their belief in the importance of teaching drawing by studying the forms of nature [9].

## 3. OBJECTIVES AND METHODS OF CONDUCTING OPEN-AIR WORKSHOPS

Based on participant observation and analysis of selected works authors proof that drawing from nature through the encounter with the living architecture complemented the teaching process. It enriched future artists workshop, allowed to study drawing and enabled cognitive abilities. The observation of objects allowed for analysis and synthesis of form, sensitivity to the environment and the context of space.

### 3.1. Research instrument

The practice of drawing was an obligatory subject. Outdoor classes were held under the supervision of the teaching staff of the Faculty of Architecture of the University. There were 15 people in the group.

Each time, open-air exercise began with a brief discussion of the topic of work. The works were evaluated on an ongoing basis, during afternoon confrontation with students. The final evaluation issued listed practice based on the review of the portfolio with a set of outdoor work carried out in the format 100 × 70 cm and prior work sketches in A4 or A3. The best works were presented on the exhibitions.

### 3.2. Open-air drawing and painting based on method-purposefulness:

- focus on drawing and the role of drawing in architectural works;
- consider the mutual relation between the perception and creation of composition skills;
- trigger creativity, train the spatial imagination, artistic sensitivity and the sense of: proportion in composing the drawing plane in accordance with the principles of perspective, chiaroscuro, texture and colour, spatial context;
- develop the skills of creative thinking through drawing, become sensitive to the value and colour as elements which shape and enrich the spatial architectural form;
- shape personality of a future architect through the possibility of free, creative and original expression;
- make a series of works of art concerning the study of form and spatial arrangements from life in a certain cultural environment and improvement of the student's artistic technique;
- train the students to acquire the ability to experience and sense the spirit of the place, creation of new architectural value based on the specificity of the region and cultural tradition;
- acquaint with shaping the relationship between the architecture and nature in the scale of a building and the urban space;
- learn the methods of work from the stage of the analysis of the context and define the idea of the rough drawing through making the work of art up to the stage of presenting it on an exhibition.

The aim of these classes were to develop artistic skills and perception of relations taking place among elements in space. The task was to improve the skill of observation and analysis of space, to develop creative imagination by means of artistic forms of expression. Drawings and paintings were made with the use of various art techniques [9, 12].

## 4. SELECTED EXAMPLES OF OPEN-AIR DRAWING AND PAINTING WORKSHOPS CONDUCTED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF INTERNSHIPS

Open-air student works selected for this presentation illustrate creative approach shown by means of various art techniques. They depict both the structure of an architectural form and its components as detail solutions. These drawings resulted from creative thinking, analysing, synthesising as well as experimenting. The works distinguished themselves with varied artistic character starting from quick free sketches and ending up with developed technical drawings or paintings where the abundance of artistic forms of expression indicates the versatility of authors. The examples included herein shown creative original work of young people – the students of the Faculty of Architecture of the Silesian University of Technology – based on cognisance (knowledge of the rules of composition, perspective etc.) and sensitivity acquired and founded during the terms that covered the subject of Freehand Drawing followed by open-air drawing and painting workshops.

### 4.1. Modernism in Gliwice

During open air workshops students captured images of the most famous examples of Gliwice modernism, e.g. Weichmann's Trading House designed by Erich Mendelsohn dating back to 1921/22, "Ikar" department store (formerly "Defaka") dating back to 1929 designed by Justus Fiegler (situated at Zwycięstwa street), the building of a faculty of the Silesian University of Technology MT designed by Karl Schabik dating back to 1929, the Jesus the King's Church Karla Maya dating back to 1934. In 1918–1945 social housing developments of stylistically uniform complexes were built in Gliwice. Simple bodies of the buildings, steep gable and shingle hip ceramic roofs created complexes that were characterized by the clarity of a spatial form. Both through their form and arrangement they constituted small "settlements-gardens" and about twenty of them were created within the territory of Gliwice, the largest of them being: Süd Housing Development in Rybnicka Street, Nord Housing Development in Tarnogórska Street.

Tenement houses and public buildings were drawn with great attention especially when it comes to window framing and portals made in brick bonding or also setting of concrete emphasized with horizontal line texture, quoins of residential buildings. The pur-

pose was to popularize this kind of architecture and to draw attention to this part of cultural heritage that requires particular care, i.e. protection from degradation and oblivion.

#### 4.2. Architecture of the buildings of Courts of the Gliwice Court Region

An open-air drawing workshop was organised to show the architectural diversity of court buildings arising not only from functionality and aesthetics but also the specificity of a place, time and conditions in which they were created. The outcome of the work was presented in the form of an exhibition held in the seat of the Regional Court in Gliwice at 15 Kościuszki Street and the publication entitled "Courts of Gliwice Region" containing works of students of the Faculty of Architecture of the Silesian University of Technology, the Department of Fine Arts and Design; under scientific guidance of Beata Kucharczyk-Brus Ph.D. Eng. of Architecture and Joanna Zabawa-Krzyrkowska Ph.D. Eng. of Architecture), which presented:

- the Regional Court in Gliwice whose seat is located in the historic building of infantry barracks dating back to 1902;
- the District Court in Gliwice, the structure erected in 1865 to serve the needs of the judicial authority, an example of neo-baroque architecture;
- the District Court in Jastrzębie – Zdrój, the structure erected at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, situated in the former health resort district;
- the Court in Racibórz built in 1823–1826 according to the design of K. F. Schinkel, an example of classical architecture in Silesia;
- the building of the Court in Rybnik situated in a beautiful historic castle which has been the seat of judicial authorities since 1849;
- the building of the Court in Ruda Śląska built in 1930 is subject to building preservation maintenance;
- the edifice of District Court in Tarnowskie Góry built in 1889–1895 according to the design of Eugen Rohr in the style of Dutch mannerism;
- the District Court in Wodzisław Śląski located in the edifice of a former Franciscan Monastery erected in early 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- the edifice of District Court in Zabrze built in 1892–1894 in Neo-mannerism style;
- the District Court in Żory located in the building dating back to 2003 to serve the needs of the judicial authority[5].

#### 4.3. Zabrze in drawings

The city turned out to be an interesting cognitive and drawing area for young drawing adepts who could draw residential architecture of the turn of the century and of interwar years, sacral architecture as well as the 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial architecture. The catalogue published after the open-air workshops included: Teatr Nowy [theatre], Dom Muzyki i Tańca [Entertainment Hall], St. Joseph's Church, St. Jadwiga Church, St. Anna Church, 24 Stycznia Square, Wolności Street, the building of "Stara wozownia" [Old Artillery Carriage-store], a building of the post office, the water tower, the building of the fire station, developments of the urban hospital and Jewish cemetery.

The purpose of the work was to capture images of the structures that started slowly to sink into oblivion, became history, deteriorated in front of the city residents. Students drew mineshafts, steam machines, halls, pithead buildings, power plant, steam mill etc. While drawing they discovered uniqueness and beauty of post-industrial architecture. The images they captured show the such mines as "Ludwik", "Luiza", "Guido", "Mikulczyce", pithead buildings, halls, Zabrze Ironworks, mill, water towers, Maciej mine-shaft in Maciejów, electrical power and heating plant, a steam mill, staff developments of Donnersmarck Ironworks, sponsored housing developments built in 1863-1871 and housing developemnts for workers: Kolonia Ballestremów [Ballestrem Complex] in Rokitnica, Kolonia Piaskowa [Piaskowa Complex], Kolonia Borsig [Borsig Complex] as well as the sponsored development within the territory of Biskupice.

#### 4.4. Chełmno

Since the dawn of time the city of Chełmno has been the source of artistic inspiration. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Georg Friedrich Steiner, a draftsman from Toruń portrayed the city by means of engravings illustrating the area of Chełmno. Today these drawings constitute both artistic heritage and an important historical document. Monuments of unique value became a leitmotif of student drawing and painting works. The First Polish Open-Air Workshops of Architecture Chełmno 2004 were attended by students of Białystok University of Technology, Lodz University of Technology, Szczecin University of Technology, Silesian university of Technology and Wrocław University of Technology. Open-Air Workshops ended with an exhibition of the most interesting drawing and painting works prepared by students,

lecturers and tutors. On 29 October 2004 a post open-air exhibition called “Rediscovering Chełmno...” was held in Sala Mieszkańska. Until now Chełmno has hosted the training for the students from Cracow, Radom and Lwów Universities of Technology, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, School of Economics in Bydgoszcz and the West Pomeranian University of Technology in Szczecin [1].

#### 4.5. Zakopane impressions

Participants of open-air drawing and painting workshops watched and drew objects of both historic and contemporary local architecture. They saw that Zakopane is a city with plenty of both interesting and picturesque places. They know the Zakopane Style, the Witkiewicz Style which is a style in architecture introduced by Stanisław Witkiewicz in the nineties of

the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the constructional, architectural and ornamental solutions. Witkiewicz strove to create the foundation of modern Polish national architecture based on the art of the Podhale region. Wonderful mutual atmosphere during the first and the following open-air workshops, which were carried on until 2009, resulted in a high level of drawings (later published in catalogues). Works of the students of the Faculty of Architecture at the Silesian University of Technology, supervised by Kinga Palus, PhD, Arch., next “Impressions from Zakopane 2005” supervised by Beata Komar PhD, Arch. and Kinga Palus, PhD, Arch. and “Open-air- Zakopane 2008” supervised by Kinga Palus [10].

Examples of students works done during open-air workshops in Zakopane, Chełmno, Zabrze.



Figure 1.  
Zakopane, residential building, 2005



Figure 2.  
Zakopane, chapel in Jaszczurówka, 2005



Figure 3.  
Zakopane, well, 2005



Figure 4.  
Chełmno, city view, 2004



Figure 5.  
Chełmno, street view, 2004



Figure 1.  
Zabrze, mining shaft

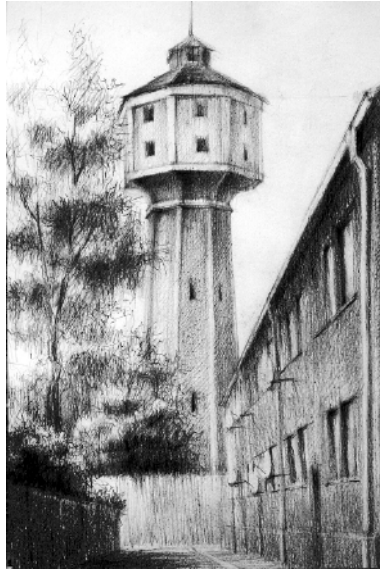


Figure 2.  
Zabrze, water tower



Figure 3.  
Zabrze, coalmine

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Works of the students from the faculty of architecture show diversity resulting from creative work, sometimes fun, improvisation – familiarizing with and discovering new art tools and techniques – and the outcome of which is an orderly, well thought-out and completed entirety. The beauty of historic and modern architecture is additionally emphasized with greenery of surroundings captured in the works. Each of visited, drawn or painted places had its exquisite, unique charm reflected in urban arrangement, architecture of buildings or details. The abundance of stimuli allowed everybody to find what they find interesting for their individual artistic quests taking into consideration proper composition, perspective or chiaroscuro. The diversity of sensations and the way they are experienced made students aware many times how differently they perceive their surroundings. The works that were created were inspired by a detail such as an architectural element or an elusive situation. Each of the open-air workshops, either on the spot or away from home, left unique memories marking students' artistic work, being part of subsequent stages of development. A lot of participants treated those outdoor workshops as a possibility to search for originality through the willingness to work out their own individual style on the basis of established principles. It should be emphasized that many of the works were distinguished by high technical and artistic level.

We list some of the theoretical concepts that can be

learned after practicing:

- composition which refers to the arrangement of the individual elements in drawing: size, position and orientation, geometry, proportions, rhythms, spatial organization, shape, contrast, depth, relationship with the environment, etc.;
- perspective: one point perspective, two or three point perspective drawings;
- color: choices which explore the theories of color;
- art techniques: drawing and painting techniques.

Students experiment with the possibilities of free-hand drawing as a tool for understanding the genesis of architecture.

Despite computer techniques freehand drawing remains a good tool for architectural and urban design – as a quick sketch and form of communication with people. Having several years of experience in teaching drawing and painting, the authors of the paper confirm their belief in the importance of studying the forms of nature by drawing it [3, 6, 7].

Drawing is kind of practical tool for recording thoughts and is a method of presenting architectural vision. Withdrawal of internship from the curriculum for future architects is the impoverishment of their learning process. Freehand drawing shall remain an important element in architectural design education [8].

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