

Thinking and Practice on the Cultivation Goal and Implementation Path of the Three Compositions

Juanyan Xu

School of Art and Design, Changzhou Institute of Technology, Changzhou, Jiangsu, China

Abstract: Starting from the re-interpretation of the word "composition", this paper sets the teaching goal of "Three compositions" as "feeling, abstraction, creation and expression". The main problems encountered in this course in contemporary times are the demand to integrate the three major modules, the demand to innovate teaching methods, the demand to improve teaching output, the demand to extend teaching content to professional design, and the demand to solve the contradiction between "high requirements" and "reduced class hours". Based on these problems, this article redesigned the overall teaching framework of the "Three composition s", and based on this, expounded the implementation path of the ability training goal of this course, which is online and offline integration, hand-painting and software parallel operation, internal integration and external extension, and gradual ability training. It also shared some specific implementation methods and teaching cases.

Keyword: 2D Composition; Color Composition; 3D Composition; Training Objectives; Implementation Path

1. Introduction

"Three Major Compositions" is a very important basic course for design majors. However, with the update of design concepts and the progress of design performance technology, the teaching system of "Three Major Compositions" has been questioned more and more in recent years. Some design schools are sparing no effort to carry out curriculum reform, integrating or expanding the teaching content of the three major compositions, and the course name has turned to "Design Foundation", "Design Composition", "Form Design" and so on. [1] However, as a basic course for design majors

that has been used for decades, the vast majority of design majors in ordinary colleges and universities still set up "Three Major Compositions" as an important basic course. So have the three major compositions really become obsolete? Is it abandoned? Is it changed? Or is it enriched and expanded? This is a question that practitioners of basic design teaching should think about.

2. Reinterpreting the Ability Training Goals of "Three Composition " from the Word "Composition"

Despite the new problems encountered by "Three compositions" in the current situation, the author believes that the word "composition" is still up-to-date, as it can most intuitively express the main content of this course. In simple terms, "composition" means constructing and organizing to complete a work. There are three questions here: (1) What to use for composition? (2) How to compose? (3) What to compose? Interpreting these three questions can help us clarify the ability training goals of this course.[2]

2.1 What to Use for Composition?

In the early stage of teaching, students should be required to create works using geometric or abstract shapes as the basic form, which is a consensus among practitioners. Moreover, it is necessary to set up exercises for transforming from concrete to abstract forms in the teaching process, in order to help new art students complete the transition from concrete thinking to abstract thinking. Additionally, with the help of "abstraction", an infinite number of creative forms can be explored, which is very important for training students' ability in shape creation and thinking divergence. Only in some special occasions, such as when creating comprehensive themes in the later stage of teaching, can there be a small amount of forms that are more concrete. Therefore, the ability of "abstract" form is the primary ability trained

in "Three compositions".

2.2 How to Compose?

We all know that commonly used composition forms, principles of formal beauty, theories of visual perception, and other specific methods of guiding visual form composition, if not applied flexibly, can become dogmatic and inflexible. For example, only by analogy with the "contrast and unity" principle in the module of plane composition can students deeply understand the universality of formal beauty principles, and can guide them to actively explore more forms of expression of formal beauty principles. Analogies, associations, breakthroughs, doubts... These innovative creative methods can not only help students open their minds, but also benefit teachers in updating teaching content and designing teaching activities. There is no doubt that "creativity" is the top priority in the ability training goals of "Three compositions".

2.3 What Kind of Work Should be Completed?

This involves the division of tasks between basic design courses and professional design courses. Professional design solves design problems comprehensively, while basic design focuses on solving "visual expression" problems. In other words, the ultimate teaching goal of the three constituencies is to teach students how to use abstract visual elements to express something through reasonable composition in plane or three-dimensional space.[3] The author believes that what the three constituencies are suitable for expressing is "feeling". The expression of feeling allows us to focus more on the ups and downs of a line, the warmth or coolness of a color tone, the reality or virtuality of a space. No matter what kind of design form it is, as long as the feeling is expressed, the design task is almost half done. Therefore, in the practical teaching links of the three constituencies, we should spare no effort to train students' ability to use abstract formal languages for various "feeling" expressions.[4] Based on the above analysis, the author believes that the ability training goals of the "Three compositions" can be clearly defined as eight words: "sensing, abstraction, creativity, and expression". All teaching content and training topics should be centered around this

ability target. However, "Three compositions" has now reached a crossroads, with educational policies and concepts being updated, teaching technologies and platforms developing, and the boundaries and integration of design specialties posing new challenges to the teaching of this course. To achieve the above ability training goals, it is also necessary to address some current issues facing the teaching of "Three compositions".

3. The Main Issues that Contemporary "Three Major compositions" Must Face

3.1 The Need to Integrate the Three Modules

The initial courses of plane composition, color composition, and three-dimensional composition were taught independently, providing deep training for each module, but also creating issues such as redundant theoretical instruction and disjointed modules. Currently, the three constitute courses are often combined. On one hand, it is necessary to re-examine the teaching focuses of each module, and on the other hand, establish a systematic view between the three modules, and gradually shift from single training to comprehensive training in project exercises.

3.2 The Need to Innovate Teaching Methods

Traditional teaching methods such as hand-painting, mixing pigments, and manual production result in low class efficiency. It is an inevitable trend to introduce software technology for assistance. The traditional teaching model of "theory + practice" only involves simple theoretical instruction before practice, which suits elite students who are eager to learn in earlier years. However, for ordinary students currently in school, this "haphazard" teaching method only leaves them blank when facing assignments.

3.3 The Need to Improve Teaching Output

Teaching output mainly manifests in the quantity and quality of student assignments and works. "Three Major compositions" is a highly practical course, and original works require a lot of time for conceive and making. One-on-one guidance from teachers and students during class is also crucial in determining the outcome of student creation. Although the unprecedentedly developed

network media and platforms provide students with a large amount of easily accessible learning resources, they also encourage laziness, imitation, plagiarism, and rigid thinking, which are common in the course assignments of "Three Major compositions".

3.4 The Need to Extend Course Content Towards Professional Design

As a common basic course for design majors, the three constitute should be able to connect with all design majors. However, there are currently many different types of design majors with different research focuses, which can cause disputes regarding the teaching focus of the three constitute. For example, there is a typical question: when students create compositions, should they focus more on geometric forms, abstract forms, or concrete forms? From the final visual presentation, design forms such as architecture, environmental art, and product design tend to be geometric and abstract; while design forms such as visual communication, animation, and public art tend to be concrete. Therefore, if the "Three Major compositions", as a general design basic course, cannot balance or resolve this contradiction well, it may cause a disconnect between the basic design courses and subsequent professional design courses.

3.5 The Contradiction between "High Requirements" and "Reduced Class Hours" Needs to be Solved

Reducing water classes and creating gold classes with "innovation, high-level and challenge" has become a consensus in the education community; the outbreak of the construction of large-scale online open courses has made the update of teaching models imminent; the educational concepts such as student-centered OBE have gradually penetrated, which also brings a sense of urgency for university teachers to update their concepts.

At the same time, the class hours of "Three compositions" have been reduced again and again, and the problem of insufficient class hours is very universal. Even if we can improve efficiency with design software, unskilled use of software still requires extra guidance time. Teachers have no choice but to adopt the practice of reducing teaching content and reducing topic training. All content can

only be mentioned briefly, making it even more prominent that the three components seem useless.[5]

4. The Teaching Framework and Implementation Path of the "Three Compositions" Based on the Goal of Ability Cultivation

Based on the ability training goals of "sensing, abstraction, creativity, and expression" and several current issues facing "Three compositions" teaching, the author has designed the overall teaching framework for this course, aiming to solve the current main problems and ensure the achievement of the ability training goals of this course. The specific implementation paths can be summarized as four aspects: 1. Combining online and offline teaching; 2. Parallel use of hand-drawing and software; 3. Internal integration and external extension; 4. "Progressive" ability cultivation.

4.1 Combining Online and Offline Teaching

In order to resolve the conflict between "high requirements" and "reduced class hours", the author adopted an online-offline blended teaching model, [6] with theoretical teaching and testing being conducted online before class, and the offline classroom being used mainly for theoretical review, homework evaluation, rapid prototyping exercises, group discussions, and "one-on-one" guidance. This flipped the traditional classroom model. Under this approach, although the learning tasks assigned before class have increased, the integrity and richness of the course content have been maintained within the limited class hours. [7-8]

Practical experience has shown that combining online and offline teaching brings several benefits: 1. The theoretical review in the offline classroom can promptly answer students' questions and doubts about theoretical learning. 2. Individualized guidance for homework can be provided in depth. 3. Group discussions can create a more intense learning atmosphere. 4. Substantial rapid prototyping exercises and discussions lay the foundation for homework, reducing students' anxiety about homework assignments.

4.2 Hand-Drawing and Software Used in Parallel

As a design foundation course, "Three compositions" also has the task of providing hand-drawing training for subsequent professional courses. The hand-drawing training in this context is qualitatively different from the sketching and color training received by students in high school. Sketching and color are copying-based precision drawing, while professional design requires creative rapid expression. "Three compositions" aims to help students achieve a transition from copying-based hand-drawing to creative hand-drawing, making hand-drawing irreplaceable.

Therefore, in the module of planar composition, the author requires pure hand-drawn representations, which are not limited to traditional paper and pen; iPad and other tablet tools are also encouraged. For color composition, the author requires the use of hand-drawn sketches combined with PS and other graphic software for scientific color selection and matching to achieve seamless integration with subsequent professional courses on color application. In the module of spatial composition, students who have a basic knowledge of three-dimensional software are encouraged to use software to train their spatial imagination. However, scheme design, production of three views, and model making must all be done manually.

Practical experience has shown that the parallel use of hand-drawing and software not only improves work efficiency but also enhances software application skills, providing good support for subsequent professional course learning. Although the use of software poses a certain "challenge", students do not resist this requirement, and their study interest is actually increased due to the diversity of expression methods.

4.3 "Internal Integration" and "External Extension"

Internal integration: To ensure that each knowledge point is thoroughly explained and effectively trained, the author did not completely disassemble and reconstruct the three components, but instead adopted a "theory independent + practice comprehensive" model. The theoretical part is still divided into three modules of planar composition, color composition, and spatial composition for teaching. However, more class

hours are allocated to planar composition. In the practical part, besides individual exercises corresponding to knowledge points, some integrated exercises are designed to strengthen the connection between modules, such as shape-color isomorphism exercises (Figure 1), poster color design, planar composition spatial imagination, and planar composition spatial stretching projects. During the teaching of spatial composition, the author emphasizes the application of planar composition knowledge to ensure that the three modules are relatively independent yet interconnected as a unified body.[9]

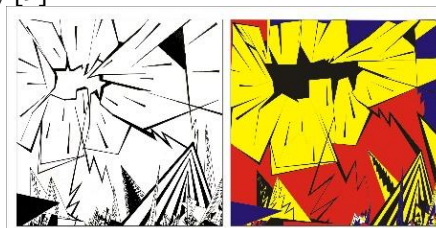


Figure 1. Shape and Color Isomerism Exercise, "Destructive Force"

External extension: To enhance the "advanced nature" of the course and appropriately extend it to subsequent professional courses, the author introduces a large amount of professional case teaching in theoretical teaching. For example, in the "form and beauty laws", product modeling design comparison cases are introduced; in "proportion and scale", grid knowledge for graphic design is introduced; in "figure-ground reversal", emphasis is placed on its application in logo design; in "deconstruction and reorganization", bionic design and deconstructionism architecture are introduced; in "gradual change", parameterized design concepts and public art design cases are introduced.

If the course is taught by professional teachers for their respective majors, in the comprehensive assessment segment, assignments related to professional design can be assigned, such as poster design for visual communication majors or public facility design for environmental art majors.

4.4 "Progressive" Ability Cultivation

To achieve the ability cultivation goals of "sensation, abstraction, creativity, and expression", the author adopts a "progressive" training mode.

4.4.1 From quantity to quality

The author believes that ability training

requires the improvement of "quantity" to achieve a "qualitative" leap [10]. Only through a large number of project trainings can the four abilities gradually accumulate, collide, and finally obtain comprehensive problem-solving abilities. Therefore, the author has designed a large number of in-class training tasks and after-class homework assignments, many of which are original training projects specifically created by the author for "ability cultivation". For example, corresponding to "sensation training", there are naming exercises and aesthetic sense analysis (Figure 2); corresponding to "abstract training", there are image abstraction exercises and personification exercises.

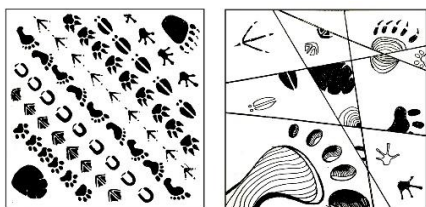


Figure 2. Analysis of Formal Beauty, Footprint

4.4.2 From easy to difficult

All practical topics are designed for one or more of the four types of training: sensory training, abstract training, creative training, and expression training. As the teaching progresses, there are more and more ability training points, and the difficulty of the training topics gradually increases from more than 30 in-class training projects, to 15 independent assignments after class, and then to 3 assessment assignments.

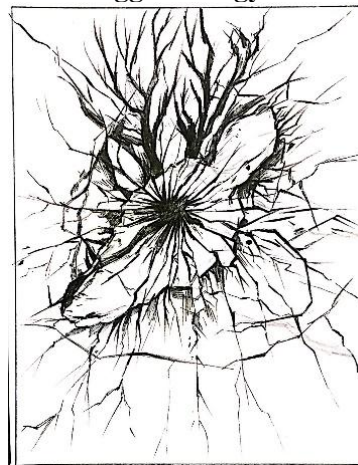
4.4.3 From single to comprehensive

In-class training tasks are generally training for single knowledge points, while assessment homework is comprehensive ability training, and the author will give enough thinking and creation time. For example, the assessment homework for planar composition is the design of a public poster for the theme of "animal protection". This assignment has a high "challenge level" for freshmen. However, this assignment is assigned at the beginning of the first class, so that students have plenty of time to interpret and analyze the theme and can also encourage students to study with problems. Practice has shown that after only 5 classes of planar composition training, students have a strong desire to express their design ideas, and some comprehensive works with good

aesthetic sense, creativity, and expression have emerged. (Figure 3)



a. "Struggle" Tangyue Chen



b. "Lost Deer" Yuxiang Ge

Figure 3. Poster Design on Animal Protection Theme

5. Summary and Reflection

Despite the rapidly changing educational methods and concepts, the core goal of cultivating talents emphasized in Bauhaus's design foundation teaching—emphasizing aesthetics, innovation, and comprehensive student ability—will not become outdated. The author has been teaching "Three compositions" for more than two decades, gradually focusing the core ability goals of this course on "sensation, abstraction, creativity, and expression." In response to the contemporary challenges faced by this course, the author has adopted corresponding strategies: "combining online and offline" to secure a significant amount of in-class time for cultivating these four abilities; "concurrent hand-drawing and software use" to further improve the efficiency of ability cultivation; "internal integration and

external extension" aims to form ability crossover through project integration; and the "progressive" ability cultivation model of "quantity to quality, easy to difficult, single to comprehensive" ensures the ultimate achievement of the cultivation goals. The author reflects on the recent "Three compositions" curriculum reform, which has seen significant progress in terms of students' learning motivation and teaching output. However, students' learning pressure and intensity have also increased significantly. How to balance these two aspects to rejuvenate "Three compositions" and truly make it a strong foundation for subsequent professional courses is a question that requires further research.

Acknowledgments

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