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ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to determine what level of artistic perception or art taste is brought into the classroom by students in schools of journalism and whether it can be demonstrated that design instruction can raise the level of artistic perception among journalism and advertising students. It was hypothesized that women would score higher in art taste than men, that graphic design majors would lead the other fields, and that advertising majors would outperform journalism majors. In random semesters from 1967 to the present, students in the beginning course in typography and graphic production at the University of Illinois were twice given the Maitland Graves test, an art-taste test. There were 142 males and 225 females among the first-test respondents; 118 males and 213 females took the second test. Test results verified the hypotheses. Granting the value of Maitland Graves's test, the raw data indicate that art taste--certainly an important ingredient in graphic design and visual communication--can be improved in the classroom. (RB)

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Development of artistic perception
in students of graphic design:
a preliminary report

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Since World War II technological advances in printing have made possible wider use of graphics in the print media. The competition of visually oriented media like television and the cinema have accelerated the use of pictorial communication via print. The nation is more visually oriented than ever, and the younger generation has come of age within the Age of Television.

Now, and even more in the years to come, journalists and advertising persons must exploit pictorial information and graphic design. Design sophistication is looming as large in journalism as the five-W lead. Journalism education must move into the fields of visual communication and graphic design.

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The growing concern with graphics in mass communications raises two important questions:

1. What level of artistic perception or art taste is brought into the classroom by students in schools of journalism?
2. Can it be demonstrated that design instruction can raise the level of artistic perception among journalism and advertising students?

This study is an attempt to answer these two questions.

Methodology

In random semesters from 1967 to the present, students in the beginning course in typography and graphic production at the University of Illinois were twice given an art-taste test. The first test was administered prior to any design instruction in the course. The second test came near the end of the semester after the design instruction and practice had been completed. Students were not informed of their performance on the first test until after the second test had been taken.

The test

The test used was copyrighted in 1941 by Maitland Graves and was reproduced in color in the August, 1941, issue of American Magazine. The test consists of a series of 14 pairs of abstract designs in color; slides of the designs are shown on a screen for 10 seconds, and the students are asked to note their preference in each pair. (See test sheet appended at the end of this report.)

The sample

The first and second tests were taken by 367 and 331 students.

There were 142 males, 225 females among the first-test respondents; 118 males and 213 females wrote second tests.

Four major fields of study were represented among the subjects:

1. News-editorial majors (151 in the first test, 144 in second).
2. Miscellaneous majors such as teacher training in English, industrial education, occupational therapy, radio-television and liberal arts majors (88 in the first, 74 in the second).
3. Graphic design majors from the College of Fine and Applied Arts (67 and 59).
4. Advertising majors (61 and 54).

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that women would score higher in art taste than men, that graphic design majors would lead the other fields and that advertising majors would outperform journalism majors.

Test results verified the above assumptions.

The results

Table 1 (see page 4) is a tabulation of the test results. Scores at the left are indicated in terms of the number of slides marked incorrectly. Scores are tabulated for all students, by sex and by major field.

Table 2, showing the range of scores in both tests, is of interest because it tabulates the number of perfect papers written by the two sexes and by the four major fields (-0 is perfect).

Table 3 lists the median scores for both tests with a breakdown by sex and major field.

Table 4 shows percentages of perfect scores by category.

Table 1

First and second taste-test scores tabulated by sex and major field.

Number slides wrong	All stdnts		Male stdnts		Female stdnts		News majors		Adv. majors		Art majors		Misc. majors		Number slides wrong
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	
- 0	13	47	5	12	3	35	1	10	5	12	7	16	0	9	- 0
- 1	37	63	13	21	24	42	12	28	5	8	15	15*	5	12	- 1
- 2	66	67*	19	19	47	48*	22	33	12	9*	17*	11	15	14	- 2
- 3	61	41	24	17*	37	24	19	21*	13*	6	12		17	8*	- 3
- 4	27*	32	12*	14	15*	18	10	10	5	7	3		9*	11	- 4
- 5	46	32	14	10	32	22	27*	15	4	6	8	4	7	7	- 5
- 6	23	14	8	7	15	7	10	7	4	1	1	3	8	3	- 6
- 7	26	12	13	7	13	5	13	6	4	1	1		8	5	- 7
- 8	20	12	8	6	12	6	9	9	2	2	2		7	1	- 8
- 9	22	7	10	3	12	4	7	4	5		1		9	3	- 9
-10	18	3	11	2	7	1	15	1	1	1			2	1	-10
-11	7	1	4		3	1	5		1	1			1		-11
-12	1		1				1								-12
-13															-13
N	367	331	142	118	225	213	151	144	61	54	67	59	88	74	

*Indicates the median score in each column.

Table 2

Ranges of scores of first and second taste tests, by sex and major

<u>All students 1st test</u>	<u>All students 2nd test</u>	<u>Male students 1st test</u>	<u>Male students 2nd test</u>	<u>Female students 1st test</u>	<u>Female students 2nd test</u>
-0 to -12	-0 to -11	-0 to -12	-0 to -10	-0 to -11	-0 to -11
	<u>News-ed. students 1st test</u>	<u>News-ed. students 2nd test</u>	<u>Adv. students 1st test</u>	<u>Adv. students 2nd test</u>	
	-0 to -12	-0 to -10	-0 to -11	-0 to -11	
	<u>Art students 1st test</u>	<u>Art students 2nd test</u>	<u>Misc. majors 1st test</u>	<u>Misc. majors 2nd test</u>	
	-0 to -9	-0 to -6	-1 to -11	-0 to -10	

Table 3

Median scores of first and second taste tests, by sex and major

<u>All students 1st test</u>	<u>All students 2nd test</u>	<u>Male students 1st test</u>	<u>Male students 2nd test</u>	<u>Female students 1st test</u>	<u>Female students 2nd test</u>
-4	-2	-4	-3	-4	-2
	<u>News-ed. students 1st test</u>	<u>News-ed. students 2nd test</u>	<u>Adv. students 1st test</u>	<u>Adv. students 2nd test</u>	
	-5	-3	-3	-2	
	<u>Art students 1st test</u>	<u>Art students 2nd test</u>	<u>Misc. majors 1st test</u>	<u>Misc. majors 2nd test</u>	
	-2	-1	-4	-3	

Table 4

Percentages of perfect scores in first and second tests by category

<u>All students 1st test</u>	<u>All students 2nd test</u>	<u>Male students 1st test</u>	<u>Male students 2nd test</u>	<u>Female students 1st test</u>	<u>Female students 2nd test</u>
3.5%	14.2%	3.5%	10.1%	3.5%	16.4%
	<u>News-ed. students 1st test</u>	<u>News-ed. students 2nd test</u>	<u>Adv. students 1st test</u>	<u>Adv. students 2nd test</u>	
	0.6%	6.9%	8.2%	22.2%	
	<u>Art students 1st test</u>	<u>Art students 2nd test</u>	<u>Misc. majors 1st test</u>	<u>Misc. majors 2nd test</u>	
	10.4%	27.1%	0.0%	12.1%	

Analysis

While these raw data have been treated statistically in only a few simple ways, it is clear that the test results bear out the prior assumptions.

Women scored better than men. Although the median score was the same for both sexes in the first test, the women marked two more slides correctly in the second test, and the men bettered their median by only one slide. Percentages for perfect scores for the sexes show the same relationship.

As expected, art majors led the field, followed by advertising students. It is interesting to note that news-editorial majors' median had five slides wrong in the first test and improved to -3. The ad majors started out at the news students' improved level of -3

and went up to -2 on the second test. The graphic design majors came out of the first test with a median score of -2, the advertising students' improved standing, and earned a median result of -1 on the second test.

The tables on percentages of perfect scores and the ranges provide additional understanding of the results.

Conclusions

Granting the value of Maitland Graves's test, these raw data indicate that art taste--certainly an important ingredient in graphic design and in visual communication--can be improved in the classroom.

It is not claimed that all the improvement in test scores were the result of the writer's instruction. Simply living in our world, surrounded and bombarded by design in all its ramifications, should tend to enhance one's art taste. Of course, the art majors would be exposed to much design instruction that would give them more sophisticated taste during the course of a semester. And advertising majors are daily exposed to professional design, especially if they are enrolled in an ad layout course.

But the typography instruction can claim at least part of the overall improvement in scores from the first to the second test.

The students, after taking the first test, were given no clue as to their performance. Only after the second tests were given and scored, were the students given the results of their tests.

It is interesting to note that the writer in his design in-

struction made no reference to the tests. Nor does he use any of the usual art terms like rhythm, proportion, harmony or unity.

His instruction is strictly pragmatic with an emphasis on results. This approach is felt to be the only successful one since instructional time is limited and his students have such disparate art talents, design experience and art motivation.

The writer believes that much--not all--of graphic design can be reduced to coldly intellectual, logical--not subjective--terms that even the rankest non-artist can understand and profitably apply. While the intent of the design instruction is to enable students to turn out professional graphic design and layout in a hurry, these test results would appear to suggest that the instruction can also enhance the students' art taste as well.

Further study

The data will be subjected to more rigorous statistical analysis. And a number of additional avenues of study suggest themselves.

For example, which slide or slides are most frequently missed by the students (who are upperclassmen or graduate students)? Is there a significant sex or major difference in the slides missed? It might also be interesting to see if there are sex differences in scores within major fields.

With the growing importance of visual communication and graphic design in the print media, there should be much more research done in this field.

Presented to the Graphics Division, 1974 Association for Education in Journalism convention, San Diego State University.

Name _____ Lab _____ Sex _____ Major _____

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How good is your taste?

Copyright 1941 Maitland Graves
Adapted from American Magazine, Aug '41

Good taste is important not only to professional designers, but to all of us who want to make our homes, our offices, our products, or our clothes attractive and appealing. Whenever we pick out a necktie, a new suit or dress, wallpaper for the living-room, or a rug for upstairs hall, we face a definite problem in color, form and design. Good taste can add pleasure and beauty to the everyday business of living.

Here is a test that will enable you to test your taste. On the screen you will see, for about 10 seconds each, 14 pairs of designs. Look at each pair and write in the appropriate blank A or B for the design that appeals more to you. Don't be too analytical about it. Just pick the one in each pair that strikes you as more unified, better balanced, or more appealing than its mate.

These odd designs were chosen because they resemble nothing on earth and, therefore, can awaken no prejudicial associations in your mind. The validity of this test as an index to good taste has been substantiated by surveys in art schools throughout the country. A group of widely known interior decorators and architects averaged a score of 13 out of 14 correct, or about 93 per cent.

This test will be given twice during the semester, at the beginning and at the end. Your grades in these two tests will not be counted as part of your course grade, and you will not be informed of your scores until the end of the semester.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____
- 11. _____
- 12. _____
- 13. _____
- 14. _____