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Apprenticeship in Product Design: Integrating Craft Workshops in Istanbul and its Training System To Product Design Education

In this paper, a different approach to run second year product design studio that incorporates contemporary design education with local craft knowledge will be explored. Being practiced in Istanbul Bilgi University, Faculty of Architecture, Industrial Design since 2013, this paper focuses on the approaches taken and outcomes of the last semester of the studio which took place in the Grand Bazaar.

Similar to "open studios", craft neighbourhoods in Istanbul such as Sishane and Grand Bazaar districts bear great potential for understanding the practice of craft, its materials, diverse techniques and networks involved in this small scale production. Originating from this idea, a new design studio was formulated to bring together design education with craft and micro-scale production in the city.

The studio aims to fill the gap between the domains of local craft workshops and academy in order to provide a new opportunity for design students and craftsmen to work together. As a result of integrating a new generation of designers to the craft practice within the framework of academy, and enhancing craft knowledge by combining it with contemporary design approach; studio also aims to support sustainability of craft neighbourhoods.

In order to explore possibilities of craft production-design education cooperation, the declining tradition of "apprenticeship" was remodeled to form foundation of the studio; integrating master- apprenticeship's own training approach to design education. As "apprentices", students are paired with craftsmen to observe, take part and get closely accustomed to the everyday working environment of the workshops and its network. Thinking-through-making is practiced instead of "sequential" design process, supported by feedbacks from not only tutors but also from masters. By expanding the borders of product design studio and relocating it from university campus and into the city, and Büyük Yeni Han, a traditional production cluster close to the Grand Bazaar is recreated as a design studio. Throughout their apprenticeship, students not only experience a different mode of manufacturing and design process first-hand, but also participate in a production-design practice they will employ after they graduate.

The background of the studio is based on the know-how of social design project Made In Sishane's 10-year long work with craft neighbourhoods in Istanbul. At the same time, the studio is constantly developed with the input of tutors, students and masters who took part in the project since 2013. Through additional participation of NGO's and municipalities to project, the studio expanded its impact to an urban scale. The reciprocal mode of knowledge transfer between students and masters are shared with public through exhibitions, talks and publications.