



THE CULTURE OF SHARING IN EVALUATION PROCESSES

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze how the presentation model of Design undergraduate final projects was converted into the exhibition BA Creative Collectibles at Centro Universitário Belas Artes de São Paulo. It also shows long term impacts on Fashion Design graduates. In order to do so, the case study considers the concept of mesh economy as developed by Gansky (2011) and the understanding of metadesign in complex systems proposed by Alão (2015) as elements of symbolic resignification of evaluation processes. Therefore, the study observes how BA Creative Collectibles eliminated examination boards, mainly composed by professors, on behalf of an interactive exhibition that includes Brazilian design market players, such as academic members, researchers and professionals, as evaluators. As a result, students had access to various sources of professional opportunities and it was possible to observe that the strength and diversity of the Creative Economy ecosystem depends on a broad and balanced education. Such proposal develops a large spectrum of paths towards creativity, with a strong accent on an active cultural life, as well as student's communication and entrepreneurship skills. Consequently, academic excellence parameters guarantee positioning and market visibility to both graduates and the educational institution itself.

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Keywords: Undergraduate final project. Evaluation method. Metadesign. BA Creative Collectibles

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1 INTRODUCTION

New needs and demands related to final project quality standards and evaluation format were observed during the 2016 periodical syllabus revision of Fashion Design, Interior Design, Graphic Design and Product Design undergraduate courses at Centro Universitário Belas Artes de São Paulo. This study aims to understand in which ways and to which extent the aesthetic experience of Design courses final project presentations possibly might move forward the integration among students and professionals, fueling a new evaluation system, more humanized and participative. This is due to the establishment of an organic network which privileges knowledge sharing among its participants during the evaluation process. In order to push the approach between school and market, it relies on a multidisciplinary showcase, opened to the community, following the principles of the so called “mesh economy”, as described by Lisa Gansky in her book *The Mesh: Why the Future of Business is Sharing*.

It considers that, in the culture of convergence, an educational institution can eventually be considered as an interface (DE WAAL, 2014) and the act of sharing might be seen as an element of symbolic liaison of objects and their functions (GANSKY, 2011; BOTSMAN e ROGERS, 2011). Additionally, it aims to understand the factors that might unleash such transformations through the study of the relationship between evaluation process and metadesign, considering as the corpus for analysis the final project presentations of Design undergraduate courses students from Centro Universitário Belas Artes de São Paulo, an educational institution that, for 92 years, has been showing an outstanding performance in attracting creative people. According to Alão (2015, p. 127), precisely

when collaborative solutions are used (...) almost always one is talking about metadesign: a service is created with necessary resources so that users can develop solutions using them as a tool. On a first approach, it looks like the designer disappears when metadesign techniques are applied, and the user assumes the responsibility, but that is not the case. It is the designer who conceives the interaction possibilities among users, how they can collaborate, what they can create, how they should share archives, how they can associate, how they will profit from what they produce.

Specifically, this article aims to discover how these parameters were built and implemented at the Fashion Design undergraduate course, starting from the creation of a final project exhibition called BA Creative Collectibles. This showcase united all Design students from the second semester of 2016 on, altering deeply the way projects are evaluated at this stage. BA Creative Collectibles can be considered a service, or collaborative solution in the sense mentioned by Alão (2015, p. 127), since the education institution is responsible for calling qualified public in various

spheres in order to interact with the students and their projects, what enlarges their presence in the community.

Its first edition, in December 2016, the event received around 2800 visitors and 450 market experts, who appreciated over a hundred projects in two days of exhibition. Two editions followed this landmark, always at the end of each semester, that is, in June and December 2017. In the occasion, university graduates could present the results of their projects and potential to the fashion industry to trade experts². The event resulted in higher visibility to graduate students and closer integration among fashion and design market players, repeating and improving this performance in the following editions.

The focus of this article is to present and analyze this unusual model of participative evaluation. Adopting the case study methodology, this approach contextualizes the Design final project delivery at Belas Artes and the launching of BA Creative Collectibles, observing how the event prioritized the importance of interaction among students and distinct players. The first part introduces the Fashion Design course journey, relating it to the qualitative principles of design school international rankings. Afterwards, based on metadesign principles and the creative class demands, the study considers the showcase as a teaching and learning strategy. *“This distinction is important because it moves the design goals from the physical presentation – to show the items to the public in order to be seen from a distance – towards the more demanding work of capturing and modeling the perception that the public will have from the exhibition”* (HUGHES: 2010, p. 78).

Due to this route, the work highlights in the final considerations how the final project results could be appreciated in trade shows around the globe – such as SPArte, MADE, Eco Fashion Week and Fashion Meeting, in São Paulo; Salone Satellite, in Milan; and London Fashion Week, in London – through special editing done by the professional visitors that came to visit BA Creative Collectibles. In this

² Among those we can cite Lucius Vilar, Assintecal researcher and Bloom magazine stylist; Renato Kherlakian, founder of brands Zoomp and Zapping; Eduardo Dugois, Ellus PR; Mareu Nitzchke, designer and founder of Quadrado Gallery, as well as previous creation director of Havaianas; Karlla Giroto, artist and founder of Casa do Povo; Dóris Bicudo, journalist; Gilberto Mariot, lawyer and author of Fashion Law; Thays Leite Toschi, lawyer and founder of Fashion Law section at São Paulo Brazilian Lawyers Order (OAB-SP); entrepreneur Alice Ferraz, FHits founder; Daniela Dornellas, Fashion Meeting founder and owner of WeExpand; Cadu Dantas, menswear blogger; Beto Guimarães, Carme director; Alexandra Von Bismarck, stylist; Daniela Pizetta, Iguatemi Mall marketing director; Carina Duek, fashion designer; Juliana Jabour, fashion designer; Marcella Kanner, Riachuelo fashion retail chain marketing director; Leticia Veloso, founder of Index PR Office.

sense, the study considers that BA Creative Collectibles converts the cycle system of evaluation processes in a complex system, thanks to what ALÃO (2015, p. 138) characterizes as “positive feedback”. According to the scholar, a variation on the same direction of the stimulus designates positive feedback, generating a waterfall effect, herd effect or butterfly effect (as it is called in the complexity sciences), which is observed in the results achieved by BA Creative Collectibles.

2 LIFELONG LEARNING, CONSTANT EVALUATION

2.1 Fashion at Belas Artes

In order to understand the context, it is important to underline that the Ministry of Education authorized the bachelor degree in Fashion Design at Centro Universitário Belas Artes de São Paulo to function, with the highest possible score, in October 2000. Its first class graduated 23 students in 2004, while Brazilian fashion experienced an upgraded positioning in the global fashion scene. Over a decade later, the Brazilian Association of Textile Industry and Apparel (ABIT) projections indicate that the textile sector earnings might register a 5,5% increase in 2018, reaching BRL 152 billions. Garment manufacturing will probably raise 2,5%, to 6,05 billion items, and textile might advance 4% in the same period, to 1,84 million tons, pointing its importance to national economy. Brazil is a world reference in beachwear, jeanswear and homewear, but segments such as fitness and underwear are growing as well. Nevertheless, questions related to sustainability, technological progress and consumer behavior demand constant analysis and formal education adequacy.

The Fashion Design bachelor degree course at Belas Artes highlighted itself through the years due to its interaction with the textile chain, always discussing the student competences and abilities. Changes in the syllabus were implemented when needed, so that the graduate could overcome any difficulties in the market. Strategic partnerships with suppliers, sector organizations, social movements, events and specialized press allowed the students to circulate in showrooms, fashion shows, factories and stores. Therefore, the students developed projects devoted to real life demands.

This interaction was extended during 2015, 2016 and 2027, when foreign experts, representing the international fashion market, were integrated to the evaluation board of Works in progress, in order to help students to adjust their

projects before the final evaluation. Among visitors we find Pascale Mussard (artistic director and founder of Petit h, brand that is part of the Hermès group), Gustavo Garcia Villa (creative director of L'Officiel México), Mariana Muzi and Magdalena Villaró (fashion design experts and teachers from Universidad ORT, Uruguay), Adriana Chaparro (director of the Garment Producers National Association of Paraguay), Carolina Cenzano (teacher from the National Institute of Technology of Argentina). Occasionally, Belas Artes design students exhibited their work at Salone Satellite, in Milan, extending the visibility of their academic production. On the other hand, Turkish teacher and design researcher Sakir Ozudogru decided to pursue his doctorate field research in Brazil through the study group Design and Convergence, sponsored by Belas Artes. All these actions were accompanied by external mentors: Waldick Jatobá, art and design curator, and Jorge Grimberg, fashion journalist, who helped students every week during the semester, supervising their projects.

2.1.1 The Final Project development context

International rankings of design schools global institutional positioning, such as *QS World University Ranking by Subject*, consider academic reputation as evaluation criteria, as well as reputation among employers, citation of papers produced by teachers and students and the impact of researchers in the academic community (H-index). On the other hand, the Warwick Report 2015, which analyzes superior education in Great Britain, observes that the strength and diversity of the Creative Economy Ecosystem depends on a balanced education, which develops a large spectrum of alternatives to professional creativity, with a strong focus in an active cultural life, as well as communication skills and entrepreneurship of the students.

This document foresees that the employability of graduates with such profile might rise in British Creative Economy, reaching around 67% around 2020 (WARWICK Report, 2015: 46). Likewise, the report produced by *The Business of Fashion*, website specialized in fashion business, states that Steve Pateman, head of Santander bank British unit, emphasizes how students today need many new abilities to be successful in the next decades:

“they need to acquire new analytical abilities, focus in emotional intelligence, creativity innovation, as well as in consumer behavior shifts of patterns... It is fundamental to future leaders to train abilities such as communication and problem resolution skills” (BOF, 2015).

As a result of such observations and discussions, one can realize that the Fashion Design Final Project should always target collective and individual wellbeing. It must also be able to launch sensibility, focus in relationships and reveal unexpected ways of facing challenges that come from scarcity of resources, consumption restraints, globalization, technological progress, among others. *“We need creative scientists as much as artists that understand materials qualities as well as the potential of new technologies”* (WARWICK Report, 2015: 45).

As a result, the Fashion Design degree should aim at a graduate profile that results in competences such as reflexive thinking and artistic sensibility, so that the designer might be able to produce projects that involve systems of visual, artistic, aesthetic and technological information. Ideally, the graduate should observe historical adjustments, cultural traces and the development of communities as well as user characteristics, cultural and socioeconomical backgrounds. In this sense, Belas Artes decided that the Design courses should create a pattern to all Final Projects, so as to achieve these excellence goals.

The syllabus of the Fashion Design course contemplates disciplines around arts, technology, human sciences, design and fashion in order to guarantee a professional that deals with principles and fundamentals of communication, language, art and society in the cultural, economic and political fields.

Beyond that, it provides the student with specific matters of his trade, so as to establish a connection with theory and practice from the very beginning, so as to promote a professional knowledge that reflects necessary abilities. Each semester, the student develops a multidisciplinary integrated project that allows him to exercise current practices and methodologies of the fashion design field. It also promotes the ability to produce scientific knowledge according to Brazilian national methodology standards. This allows the student to get familiarize with such practices that will be important to his final project from the very beginning of his academic journey.

Concerning such aspects, the Final Project comprises two relevant aspects:

- **Research applied to the creative economy field:** to establish academic research and practical experimentation in the development of projects, founding them in theoretical studies so as to provoke reflexive thinking and entrepreneurship as a source of responsible innovation.

- **Share the use of resources:** to promote social interaction and to share institutional resources, including laboratories, studios and Market networks, as assets on project development.

In order to establish both premises, various aspects were taken into account, among which quality standards that lead to performance metrics. Various sources were consulted in order to build such parameters, including design leading influencers, international trade shows, international contests, ranking of global schools, companies as well as academic researchers, including Belas Artes teachers and experts from other universities. The professionals discussed BOF Global Survey 2015 performance index items, such as: **global influence** (global reputation and university influence among headhunters of prestigious design companies); **learning experience** (student satisfaction with course colleagues, professor, class energy and institutional resources); **long term value** (preparation of the student to face the “real world”, accessing graduate satisfaction towards employability, career preparation, post graduate studies access, validation of projects by agencies and investors and access to successful former students).

2.2 Metadesign in BA Creative Collectibles organization principles

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In order to optimize resources and guarantee process fluxes, the agenda was unified to all Design courses at Centro Universitário Belas Artes de São Paulo, Fashion design included. The unification of parameters allows the university to promote a single event to present all Final Projects simultaneously. This synergy allows the establishment of networks among students and market actors through public exhibition. This event, called BA Creative Collectibles, is organized and operated by the course coordination with support from departments such as marketing, security and maintenance every semester. It comprises and occupation of the building that hosts Design courses at Belas Artes campus, from the underground to the fifth floor.

The presentation model started on the second semester of 2016, after six months of studies, and it was approved by the University Council. Initially, it was necessary to build a workflow, so as to map the building available spaces, share them into thematic rooms in order to make it easier for visitors to circulate, and submit such proposal to the Fireman Board and Ethics Board. These groups inspected the grounds previously in order to guarantee safety to both students and

guests. Municipal, state and federal organs helped out, including the education, health and traffic departments at all levels, which were consulted previously. It was also imperative to evaluate the electric capacity of the building, the sanitary conditions of the projects, the public circulation, the reception and hosting process, as well as the distribution, organization and housing of the documents concerning the evaluation of each project. Certainly, the most defying resource was the development of an exhibition set of furniture that would allow the personalization by each student as well as the establishment of a certain visual pattern to the exhibition displays.

Figure 1 – Exhibition sets.



Source: Author (2017).

Each project receives from the institution this exhibition set, that offers an articulated wall and a small table, where the author presents his work. This equipment allows the student to customize it and elaborate the visual presentation in order to capture the audience attention and eventually incorporate elements, characterizing a metadesign.

Therefore, one fundamental characteristic of a traditional design project, which is typically top down, is subverted through metadesign in order to give place to emergent processes among the community that circulates around the project (ALÃO, 2015, p. 128).

The students take care of the stall fixing and organizing, as well as guest reception, provoking engagement among them. The decoration of exhibition sets is entirely up to the students, as well as the maintenance during the exhibition and the organization of the place after the event. They might invite friends and family members to help them at this stage. The institution offers a maintenance team and the help of both staff and teachers. The exhibition opens at night one day after the

set up (from 7 to 9 pm) and stays opened the following day (from 10 am to 4 pm). This organizing and reception is considered part of the project.

On the other hand, the reception of visitors, press and invited evaluators is done by voluntary students from previous semesters, allowing them to get familiarized with such activities. This action is supervised by the events and marketing staff. On top of it there is the global supervising of the head of Design, who is responsible for the whole event. All these procedures require previous training, which is organized by teachers linked to the design studios and Belas Artes project incubator.

2.2.1 The evaluation process during an interactive exhibition

All things considered, the Final Project applies efficiently all the knowledge acquired in graduation years. Consequently, the student sees the results of his intellectual production actually presented through the research, development and documentation of BA Creative Collectibles project. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the cycle of evaluations is gradually replaced by a continuous evaluation of processes, that gains complexity by involving external agents, such as market and trade actors and the general public.

Considering this scenario and the syllabus structure, it is possible to understand that, in order to achieve excellence, all Design Final Projects must comprise the study of academic research in the project area, selecting key authors and concepts to justify the development of the proposal. It has to consolidate scientific grounds that furnish the basis for a solid research which will lead to the practical aspects of the project. Equally, it should promote research and experimentation in the essence of academic vanguard practices. As a result, the aesthetics of the project might bear in mind technical possibilities, market opportunities and adequate finishing. Maximum academic excellence is achieved when these items are perfectly integrated.

It is fundamental to observe that the public presentation at BA Creative Collectibles is appreciated by a minimum of three evaluators, one of them the supervisor of the project and the others invited guests that are well known for their expertise. It is common, however, that the student shows his project to dozens of visitors, in a truly live laboratory of ideas exchange. The idea is to provoke learning at

each moment, so that the student, by repeating the presentation continuously, will discuss his ideas organically and stress free.

The evaluators are defined by the project supervisor, along with the head of Design, in a blind review system. This format allows a transparent dialogue. The appreciation is documented in a proper file, considering the following items:

1. **Idea and concept:** to evaluate the project globally, including its capacity to relate to the Brazilian and international market (items: pertinence; relevance).
2. **Creative potential and project differentiation:** to evaluate originality, innovation potential and the ability of the project to fit into contemporary demands (items: creativity; innovation potential).
3. **Execution capability:** to evaluate how the project uses resources available at the regional or Brazilian Market and if it shows finishing compatible with the target market. Resources, providers, processes, raw materials and technology should be taken into account (items: research and development; finishing).
4. **Impact and engagement:** to evaluate the benefits of the project considering responsible innovation, as well as the impact on surroundings and the ability to influence positively the communities where it is established. The student pitch is to be considered: motivation, passion and knowledge in the project field while speaking about it (items: user oriented; proposal presentation).
5. **Viability and projection:** to evaluate the possibilities the proposal has to access the business ground and commercial expansion (items: economic viability, commercial potential).

Each evaluation parameter adds 2 points to the final grade, one per item. The total items fully achieved sum up to 10 points. The final grade considers such items multiplying by one each evaluator grade and multiplying by 2 the supervisor grade (which includes the evaluation of the project steps before the final presentation). The general public can also leave notes to the authors in a proper file. Although these do not add to the final grade, the feedback is considered highly relevant to the authors, that might get a glimpse of the public reaction to the project. These documents are shown to the student when the final grade is released and then go to the university archives.

2.2.2 The process of diffusion and visibility

It is important to note that the student receives training for his pitch as well as media training through workshops with experts. This action allows the launching of proper promotion strategies in social media, which results in growing organic exposure of the projects through posts, likes and *reposts*.

Diffusion procedures are largely considered in this model. The organization of a storytelling report of the project is mandatory, so that the student has a document ready to send to trade shows and other events if needed. This includes the production of a short video (maximum duration one minute), website, immersive reality video or App, able to be promoted in social media. The student also produces five to ten pictures (300 dpi) and a press release. These allows the institutional publicist and press agency to promote the projects in various media. These materials are also included at Belas Artes digital library inventory for further research and archives. It is also mandatory to produce a scientific abstract and extended abstract for such purpose.

2.3 Steps of the Collectibles model

As previously mentioned, the Final Project comprises the elaboration of the project itself, but also the creation of a portfolio for the student in the last semester. Before that, the previous semester prepares the student discussing the theme of the project and organizing the summary and the pre-project according to a scientific model.

Specifically, it's expected that in the Final Project (which will be presented at Collectibles) the student will show the following competences:

- To build own design philosophy in terms of contexts and how to express their symbolic meaning, expressing historic knowledge as well as reflection over contemporary issues.
- To affirm continuous commitment with the creative process through strong intellectual thinking and the versatility required to work in multidisciplinary and hybrid teams.
- To draw, produce and progressively present coherent, contemporary and authentic creations.

- To express curiosity towards emerging technologies and raw materials to elaborate projects, showing profound knowledge about techniques and materials.
- To identify and explore complex issues in order to generate creative solutions, incorporating all aspects of design projects.
- To contextualize challenges and optimize resources in the search for solutions towards responsible innovation.
- To know excellence standards related to sustainable practices, materials research, environmental quality, aesthetics, technology and integration between man and urban environment.
- To promote the convergence between design and scientific research – from bio design to the internet of things – allowing results to take form into daily life.
- To present results in 2D and 3D processes, including detailed technical files that allow innovation in shapes, volumes, cuts and forms.
- To implement aesthetics sensibility through digital and analogical techniques, including immersive narratives, in order to communicate ideas and projects.
- To demonstrate exceptional ability in building and modeling prototypes.
- To develop humanistic vision towards final users' needs in terms of ergonomics, aesthetic, symbolic, historic and commercial aspects.

7 CONCLUSION

Nowadays, the public presentation of results obtained at BA Creative Collectibles is considered by both teachers and students as a fundamental incentive to the teaching and learning process. In this sense, three goals might be underlined: to stimulate the student to give his best to the project development; the establishment of a professional network to the graduate and the recognition of *alumni*; the visibility gained by both the student and the institution among respected external public (media, corporations, academic experts, future students, etc).

Thanks to the success of BA Creative Collectibles Design Experience, its third edition, which was held in December 2017, included all the university undergraduate courses and expanded its grounds to different urban spaces, summing ten thousand visitors and 500 evaluators. The Design area presented 220 projects, including fashion collections, costumes, accessories, fashion films, textile

design, wearables, apps, electronic products, books, magazines, among others. Moreover, the Fine Arts and Photography courses took their production to a São Paulo landmark, Memorial da América Latina, for one month, gathering seven thousand visitors and allowing the trade of art Works for both galleries and private individuals.

Specifically, it is possible to conclude that the Fashion Design course is part of the national fashion scene and that the fortification of its image happened through BA Creative Collectibles. For example, 2017 graduate student Maísa Mariottini left the design team of Isolda, a fashion brand, to create her own brand. In the same year, her brand was selected to represent Belas Artes at Blaiz showroom, in London, during London Fashion Week. Her recently graduated colleagues Antônio Borges, Beatriz Barbosa Azevedo (WeMe 3D printed accessories), Gisele Faria and Ariadne Cordeiro (Kiru patchwork garments) also joined Blaiz during that season, selected by international expert Simone Jordão. In two different occasions, fashion design graduate Heloísa Gomes represented Belas Artes at Sallone Sattelite, being the first fashion designer invited to present dresses in the Italian event, originally dedicated to furniture, due to the quality of her textile surfaces. Clayton Berini was a finalist at Focus Design Contest. Jéssica Sakawura, Marina Boaventura and Livia Accorinte produced inspirational print collections to fashion brand Iorane, launched at Miami Design Week and sold at the brand local shop in São Paulo. Moreover, Thamires Smidi produced collections in botanical printing to textile industry Texprima, sold in industrial scale.

Cultural dissemination implemented through BA Creative Collectibles became more visible in 2018, through a partnership with Passarela ecommerce, that will sell third year students' productions, preparing them to elaborate the Final Project with a broader commercial vision. These opportunities came up due to a favorable scenario created by BA Creative Collectibles concerning the opportunities for university and companies to get closer. When projects are displayed in the same area simultaneously, and users can circulate among them, there is a continuous feedback and many interactions that led to a different evaluation approach, more humanized and balanced. The traditional evaluation method, distant from daily professional life, dissolved. As a consequence, processes that were linear before are repeated spirally, including new actors in more complex environments.

All things considered, it's possible to understand the impact generated by BA Creative Collectibles in various areas. On the student side, a better use of resources offered by the institution is seen, including the use of libraries, laboratories and studios, as well as the help of information technology staff, pedagogical and psychological teams, innovation and entrepreneurship departments and institutional agreements with different partners. Such broad spectrum of support allows projects to achieve better quality and finishing. In terms of reputation, there is a stronger commitment on quality which allows better positioning and branding results both to the university and the individual students. Influencers from the fashion trade constant visits to the university premises and students' broad media presence is also a plus achieved through the event.

This aspect impacts directly in the career development segment, with a broader return tax for *lato sensu* and *stricto sensu* courses, and a better use of institutional career services and coaching, as well as massive presence in events promoted by Belas Artes. Considering the percentage of *alumni* employed before six months of graduation and the high satisfaction level of graduates, there is also an understanding that the network among former students established during the event extends itself outside the university campus. There is a benefit considering the relationship between current and former students, which is knowledge exchange. Moreover, prizes obtained in contests and trade shows in the latest years stimulate teachers and students alike, who search for improvement in their own abilities.

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