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THE REDUCTION OF EDUCATIONAL HOURS  
OF THE FINE ARTS AT THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE  
OF THE SILESIAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
AS A RESULT OF CHANGES IN REGULATIONS  
ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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SZTUK PIĘKNYCH NA WYDZIALE ARCHITEKTURY  
POLITECHNIKI ŚLĄSKIEJ JAKO EFEKT ZMIAN  
W PRZEPISACH O SZKOLNICTWIE WYŻSZYM

**Abstract**

The article presents the changes that have taken place in the educational program in the field of fine arts at the Silesian University of Technology Faculty of Architecture since the 90s of the twentieth century to the present. They were caused by the new laws and rules relating to higher education, adapting it to the requirements of the European Union. There was a reduction of some courses of art and number of teaching hours while increasing the size of student groups. Observation of change leads to the impoverishment for aesthetic sensitivity and artistic skills of students, which is essential in communicating your design ideas. The results of analyzes were obtained on the basis of participant observation of teachers lecturing on the above mentioned subject.

*Keywords: teaching progra, fine arts*

**Streszczenie**

Artykuł prezentuje zmiany, jakie zaszły w programie nauczania przedmiotów z zakresu sztuk pięknych na Wydziale Architektury Politechniki Śląskiej od lat 90. XX wieku do teraz. Spowodowane były nowymi ustawami i zasadami dotyczącymi szkolnictwa wyższego, dostosowującymi je do wymogów Unii Europejskiej. Wystąpiła redukcja niektórych przedmiotów plastycznych i liczby godzin dydaktycznych przy równoczesnym zwiększeniu liczebności grup studenckich. Obserwacja zachodzących zmian prowadzi do sformułowania wniosków o zubożeniu wrażliwości estetycznej i umiejętności plastycznych studentów, co jest niezbędne w przekazywaniu własnych idei projektowych. Wyniki analiz uzyskano na podstawie obserwacji uczestniczącej pracowników dydaktycznych prowadzących zajęcia z wyżej wymienionego przedmiotu.

*Słowa kluczowe: program nauczania, sztuki plastyczne*

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## 1. Introduction

June 19, 1999, Poland, along with other countries signed the Bologna Declaration, starting The Bologna Process, whose task was to create a European Higher Education Area [1].

The aim of the process was, inter alia, the conversion of one-stage study MSc course into two-stage studies and the introduction of a European Credit Transfer System for students (ECTS). This has led to major changes in the curricula of almost all universities in Poland. These guidelines also contributed significantly to the development of the curricula of fine art courses at the Faculty of Architecture, Silesian University of Technology, majoring in Architecture and Urban Planning. The paper attempts to show the evolution starting from the 90s of the twentieth century to the present.

## 2. Methodology

Participant observation of both authors. Analysis of selected regulations of the Minister of Science and Higher Education and the curricula at the Faculty of Architecture of the Silesian University of Technology.

### 3. The fine arts subjects teaching in the 90s of the twentieth century

After the political transformation, in practice for most of the first decade, the curriculum in the field of fine arts at the Faculty of Architecture, Technical University of Silesia remained unchanged touching a wide range of issues related to the aesthetic sensitivity education of future architects and developing their artistic skills. Students' contact with diversified fields of art remained virtually maintained throughout the whole course of five year long lasting study:

- **Semester 1 and 2 – drawing** – the curriculum began with drawing fundamental, geometrical structures, through analysis of basic spatial forms (simple furniture, dishes, appliances) consisting of rectangular elements, round and cylindrical forms, then architectural details (head, column, stairs), to complex still life systems, figures, architectural interiors, greenery and nature sketches, own, abstract drawing compositions, drawn in various techniques, with a full analysis of lighting (ill. 1); laboratory providing 4 hours teaching per week, conducted in groups of approx. 10 persons,
- **Drawing and painting plein-air** – after the first year of study the plein-air course was organized – exit or (later) outdoor stationary – obligatory for all first-year students, including three, then two weeks at the beginning of the holiday; the programme was set individually, depending on the location, and usually included studies of architecture and architectural details, also studies of greenery, of the nature,
- **Semester 3 and 4 – painting** – curriculum began with color exercises aimed at understanding the colour range (gamut of warm and cold tints, abstract compositions with simple colour systems), through collages of colour patches the to the full colour painting study of still life and other forms; during the course students have the opportunity to

get acquainted with various techniques and tools for painting (tempera, watercolor, oil, brush, spatula, etc.); laboratory classes, 4 hours a week, conducted in groups of approx. 10 persons,

- **Semester 5 and 6 – drawing, painting and graphics** – during the courses drawing, painting and designing exercises were carried out, closely linked to the architecture, using a variety of techniques from many fields of fine arts: typography – lettering and design of the sign, graphics issues (monotype), designing mosaics, sgraffito, wall painting, stained glass and artistic blacksmith; laboratory classes, 3 hours teaching per week, organized in groups *ibid.*,
- **Semester 7 or 8 – sculpture** – a two-hour laboratory classes in one semester, performing two themes: a study of the nature – the human head, the project of architectural abstract composition,
- **Semester 8 and 9 – elective courses** – optional subjects in the practical use of visual arts in architectural design – a two-hour lectures; 60 hours of teaching in total.

Ratio of the number of classes transferred to effective teaching hours were as follows:

- hand drawing (drawing, painting) at the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th semester of one-stage MSc study – 240 hours in total,
- a three-week, plein-air of drawing and painting – approx. 90 hours in total,
- fine arts in architecture at the 5th and 6th semester – 90 hours in total,
- sculpture at 8 or 9 semester of one-stage MSc study – 30 hours in total,
- elective courses – 60 hours in total.

The total number of teaching hours performed for the fine art courses was about 510 hours (including 12% of the hours of elective – 60 h). The total number of teaching hours in curriculum realized over the entire five-year course of study was then around 4000 hours, so **the percentage ratio of hours of teaching fine arts in relation to all teaching hours was 12.5%**.

#### 4. Step „transitional” – 2001–2011

During ten years period changes and amendments in the curriculum of Architecture and Urban Planning study are still undergoing, also referring to the courses of fine arts. There comes gradual reduction of the number of teaching hours allocated to them and the total reduction of some of them:

- reducing the number of teaching hours for the initial semesters: first from 4 to 3, then into 2 per semester 4<sup>th</sup>, and subsequently – the total elimination of classes in semester 4<sup>th</sup>,
- abolition of the plein-air drawing (2008 year),
- elimination of the fine art courses at the third year of study,
- gradual elimination of sculpture course – along with expiration of cohorts continuing education at the one-stage, five-year MSc study system.

Moreover – which is extremely significant in the educational process – they gradually increased the number of students in groups: from 10 to 15 or even slightly more people per one person who conducts the classes.

The last cohort continuing their studies at one-stage system started in the academic year 2006/2007. In their curriculum the following courses of fine arts were written, including in total 210 hours of teaching carried out during the study:

- hand drawing (drawing, painting) on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semester of MSc study – 3 hours of laboratory per week (conducted in groups of approx. 15 persons),
- sculpture at the 9<sup>th</sup> semester of MSc study – 2 hours of laboratory per week (conducted in groups of approx. 15 persons).

Under the Act of 27 July 2005 [2] and, published two years later, the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education [3] they introduced a study stage division – engineering study BSc, at the Silesian University of Technology Faculty of Architecture including eight semesters, and three-semester master's degree MSc. Introduction of a new, two-stage education system entailed further reforms in the curriculum, now based on a set of the defined by the University learning outcomes that are consistent with the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, and based on the teaching methods leading to achieve these outcomes, together with the ECTS points' values assigned to the various modules of the process. When estimating the number of ECTS credits for each module (course), they adopted – in accordance with the University President regulation – that one ECTS corresponds to the time effects of education, which requires the student to obtain an average of 30 hours including lectures organized according to the study plan (contact hours) and individual work specified by education programme. Saved in the curriculum number of ECTS credits (240 credits for the Bachelor's degree and 90 credits for the Master's degree), converted to hours of classes, distorts somewhat the picture of effective number of hours provided for each subject.

The first academic year in which they implemented engineering, Bachelor's studies was the year 2007/2008. The curriculum included the courses called Art Techniques (drawing and painting) on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester – 3 hours of laboratory per week (conducted in groups of 12–15 students), which yielded a total number of 135 hours of teaching hours in the field of fine arts.

In the academic year 2009/2010 they introduced the full-time MSc education at the Silesian University of Technology Faculty of Architecture with the programme which included classes on the subject of Fine Arts in Architecture (design of stained glass, sgraffito, mosaics, etc.) – 2 hours laboratory per week at the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, which increased the summary number of fine arts teaching hours for the BSc and MSc to 165.

In 2011, the rules on the standards of education for faculty of “Architecture” became clarified. They clearly defined the qualifications of the Bachelor's degree graduate, which “should have knowledge of: the history and theory of architecture and urban planning, **fine arts**, building and construction technology, construction, building physics and architectural and urban design (...) have the skills (...) **to create projects that meet the aesthetic requirements**, functional and technical”. Under the Ordinance [4] fine arts and their technology workshop were qualified to the second group of educational content (directional), but they were not specified a minimum of ECTS credits for the individual courses (components of content), only the total number of credits for the whole group (68 pts. ECTS). Teaching contents and learning outcomes were also clarified which, for the courses of the fine arts teaching should include:

- content of education: the development of spatial, artistic, and compositional sensitivity – studies of drawing, painting and sculpture from nature and imagination; art techniques workshop; modeling,
- learning outcomes: skills and competences – the use of artistic workshop, addressing issues of art, the use of techniques workshop.

For the Master's degree graduate the educational content and learning outcomes in the field of fine arts and techniques workshop were not identified.

## 5. The current curriculum (since the academic year 2013–2014)

As the effect of the implemented by the law recommendations another amendments to the BSc and MSc study curriculum were provided and since the 2013/2014 academic year, the programme of teaching fine arts issues at the Faculty of Architecture of the Silesian University of Technology, at the first and second stage of the study of Architecture and Urban Planning includes the following items:

- **Fine Arts Techniques** (drawing, painting and small spatial forms) at 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semester – 3 hours of classes per week (ongoing in groups of 30–32 students), that are assigned sequentially: 2, 2, and 3 ECTS credits; due to time constraints classes with drawing and painting in relation to the former scheme is geared more to stimulate the imagination of students, hence their subjects from nature are intertwined with drawings of the imagination;
- **Visual Techniques** at 4<sup>th</sup> semester – 2 hours of project classes per week (conducted in groups of 12–15 students), which is assigned with 2 ECTS credits; activities carried out in the framework of two topics: detail in the architecture, architectural structure analysis: for each topic analysis of the composition and colours are carried out and developed with the system of board design, typography, illustration, photo, etc.;
- **Fine Arts in Architecture** (2 ECTS) – the elective course occurring at the second stage of studies was transformed into a lecture – 1 hour lecture on the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester; due to the fact that the subject is “the elective mandatory” and all the students participate in it, course credit achievement is based on the posters prepared by groups of students of 5-persons; poster themes in 2013/2014 concerned ideological concept of visual information in the building of the Faculty of Architecture, Silesian University of Technology.

The total number of teaching hours performed for subjects in the field of fine arts summarized for the BSc and MSc studies is now 180 hours (including 15 hours of elective courses, ie. 8%). The total number of teaching hours performed together throughout the whole two-stage course of study is now 3600 hours, so **the percentage ratio of hours of fine arts teaching in relation to all teaching hours is now 5%** (Ill. 2).

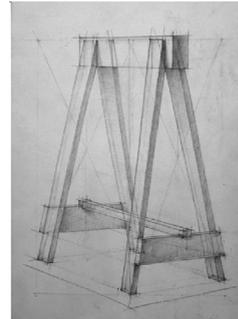
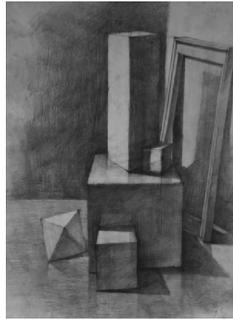
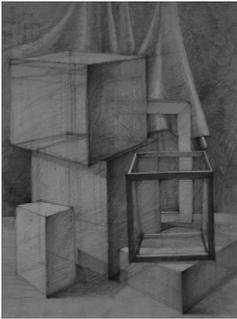
## 6. Conclusions

In the 90s of the twentieth and early twenty-first century truly deep and accurate study of fine arts courses was clearly reflected in the high level of student works on architectural objects at the design courses.

Currently, as a result of the changes described in the paper, the evident decline in artistic skills of students, their aesthetic sensitivity, color-matching skills to the proposed design solutions, skills of quick, sketchy presentation of their design ideas is observed.

The authors, as the persons carrying out fine art classes, have the impression that the new curricula reducing the time of fine art teaching contribute to the loss of good practices, lack of time for the development of art techniques workshop, and thus diminish spatial imagination of future architects, of which the quality of the aesthetics and usability of our cities and urban space will depend on.

A



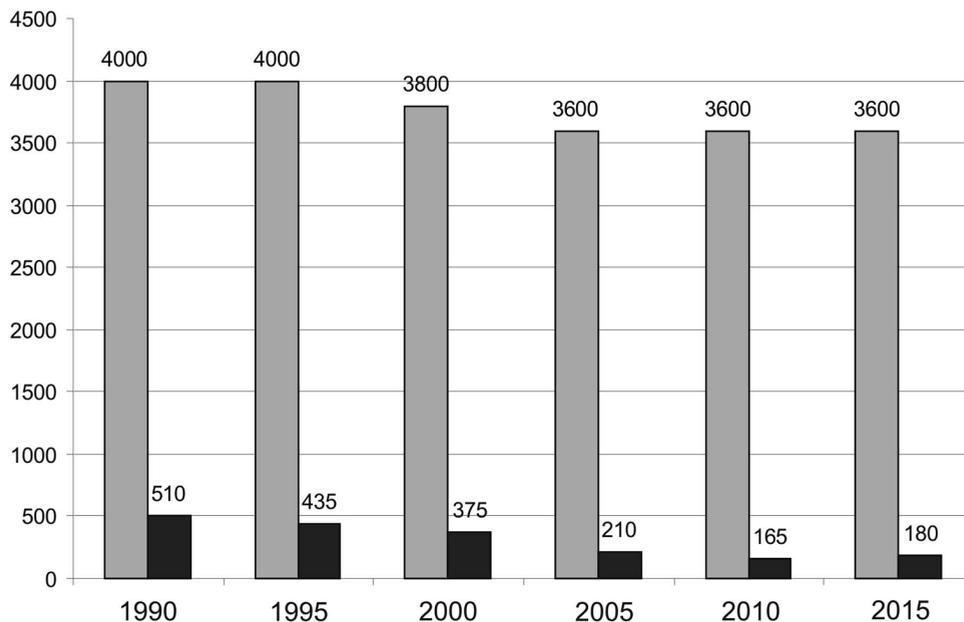
B



C



III. 1. Teaching process on hand drawing: A– geometrical structures, B – still lifes, characters, C – architecture



III. 2. The changes of total number of teaching hours and numbers of teaching hours on Fine Arts courses in 1990–2015

### References

- [1] Krasinski A., *The Bologna Process: where is the European higher education going?*, Warszawa 2006, [www.krasp.org.pl/pl/uka/uka2009](http://www.krasp.org.pl/pl/uka/uka2009) (access: 01.03.2015).
- [2] The Act of 27 July 2005. *Law on Higher Education* (Dz. U. Nr 164, poz. 1365 z późn. zm.).
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- [4] Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 2011 “on education standards for veterinary faculties and architecture” (Dz. U. 207, poz. 1233).
- [5] General Characteristics of Conducted Studies, Internal document of the Silesian University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture.