

# INTENSIVE CARE

## The potential of external workshops in design teaching

### Why workshops

Within the Bachelor - and Mastersystem in Design education students have a tight time schedule which perfectly prepares them for their later professional work. In addition to that external workshops have a huge potential to gather experiences in a different setup and surrounding. Thought as an addition to scholar education, workshops may help to apply the knowledge achieved at university. Furthermore, workshops rather focus on gaining hands-on-experiences as well as executing and communicating ideas directly instead of concentrating on a „perfect result“.

Workshops that are held away from the daily infrastructure symbolize an antithesis to modern times, where information and theoretical knowledge can be gathered within seconds through new media. Workshops enable participants to make their own practical experience and extend their personal and professional horizon through ‚learning by doing‘.

The participants have the possibility to interact with international groups of people with different cultural and educative backgrounds. Another advantage is the mixture of ages, approaches, opinions and aims that creates an interdisciplinary melting pot which might enable the participants to rethink their point of view.

### Workshops as a micro cosmos

Workshops most of the time do not take place in your everyday surrounding - in companies and universities etc. - and therefore force and foster participants to leave the known structures behind. The participants have the possibility to interact with international groups of people with different cultural and educative backgrounds. Another advantage is the mixture of ages, approaches, opinions and aims that creates an interdisciplinary melting pot which might enable the participants to rethink their point of view.

### Workshops as a playground

By the examination with a new theme in the restricted time of a workshop (7-10 days), the educational approach is different from the one at universities. Participants learn to find the balance between playing around within the subject of the brief and making quick decisions. The very much „hands on“ and „trial and error“ work process allows for a direct execution of the concept and fosters a true learning by doing experience.

### Workshops as an exploring journey

Innovations mainly happen when people with ideas meet materials and techniques. Therefore, workshops are not only interesting for the participants to explore their own abilities and to learn about new materials but as well for companies that collaborate for example by submitting materials or equipment to learn more about their own possibilities and new applications.

### Workshops as a catalyst

Workshops have benefits in several directions for all parties involved. Through meeting with personalities, materials and techniques, participants have the possibility to enlarge their professional network and knowledge. For the industrial partners involved, workshops help to introduce their materials and their potential applications directly to future users from the creative industry. Another advantage for both parties is the international press coverage.

### International summer academy at Domaine de Boisbuchet

In cooperation with Vitra Design Museum and the Centre Georges Pompidou, CIRECA has been putting on an international summer academy at Domaine de Boisbuchet since 1996. The international summer workshops are offered from July through mid-September at the Domaine de Boisbuchet in France which grounds extend across ca. 150 hectares – with historic and new buildings, gardens, meadows, fields, woods and a lake. Participants are housed in the „Dépendance“, the previous residence of the estate manager.

The courses in this unique environment are led by renowned designers, architects and artists who live and work together with the participants for a length of six to ten days. Each year around 300 participants from over 30 nations take part in the workshops. Every workshop is run with up to 20 participants who work either alone or on groups.



### General conclusion

In the past decade, Design has gathered major economical, cultural and social awareness. For our future, the importance of design in all its variations and for every aspect of life cannot be undervalued. Therefore a diverse design education is fundamental. Universities react with a well structured schedule which perfectly prepares for their later work. In order to face the challenges of the education of the future designers, external workshops can provide students with additional practical experiences and exchange of knowledge in an international context and in direct contact with professionals.

The role of workshops within the design education:

- serve as a international micro cosmos
- provide an independent playground
- offer an exploring journey
- serve as a catalyst

Workshops may be as diverse as the teachers approach to design is varying. And that's precisely where the didactical focus of an external workshop is pointing towards: To offer the students another - slightly or very - different view onto the design process.

**GRASP THE POTENTIAL, THINK THE IMPOSSIBLE, PROBE THE BOUNDARIES AND THEN EXECUTE THE POSSIBLE.**



### Showcase 1: Manufactured Nature

Briefing: One of my greatest passions is experimenting with all manner of materials and the materially appropriate realization of the results in product form. The goal is to grasp the potential, think the impossible, probe the boundaries and then execute the possible. And that is precisely what we are doing during the workshops in abbreviated form – quasi as a „crash course“: We will realize various design projects with the focus more on thought, development and design processes rather than the finished product. In terms of the content, a few guiding keywords are material research, undogmatic thinking, material development, eagerness to experiment, materially appropriate design, direct implementation, presentation – with a dash of wit and poetry thrown in for good measure.

Material: As the object of investigation and material, I have chosen biopolymers, a group of compostable plastics. Biopolymers possess interesting properties such as: simple manufacture from renewable raw materials, ease of processing even when using rudimentary means of production, worry-free disposal and not least, depending on the composition, very high strength values.

Result: Participants started with peeling 40 pounds of potatoes to extract the starch as the base to experiment with self-created recipes. Colorants were supplied by nature and reached from blackberries to charcoal and structural integrity was achieved through newspaper, leaves, bamboo, and wood to name a few. The former barn of the Domaine de Boisbuchet was remodeled to hold a kitchen stove on which ingredients were cooked, baked, fried or micro waved to achieve the consistency needed for the individual project. After the material to work with was explored, groups created objects for Boisbuchet. These were due to their ingredients biodegradable and at the end of the week put into the landscape.

### Showcase 2: Molded Nature

Briefing: Bending, rolling, kneading, casting, pressing, modeling, folding, drawing, tying, laminating... These are just a few of the techniques for processing the materials, achieving the envisioned form and realizing the desired function. Depending on the selected material and processing method, the results will vary considerably, from precisely defined to repetitively different up to intentionally random.

Material: In the context of these variations, we will work with semi-finished products made of biopolymers and probe the range of possibilities as well as the limitations of forming and processing the material. The focus is not on achieving the perfect product, but on remaining undaunted in our approach. We will not investigate the material itself, but its potential for realizing a design. For the materials, we will employ biopolymers in various forms, since their possibilities as well as their limitations make them ideal for experimentation. Yet in addition to all the technical questions, the subject of biopolymers also challenges us to think about the oft-cited issue of sustainability and the broader social impact of our work – hence we will also be trying to shape a number of arguments in our discussions.

Result: The results were as diverse as the concepts and the groups. Lamps have been realized by exploring a new method to process granulate. A low tech extruding machine was built and used to produce profiles. In a big mold a swing with reinforced attaching points made out of two different Biopolymers (Hybrid) has been pressed. And a series of fruit bowls as well as a vacuum formed cradle, both projects made from natural fleece, have been realized. All of the results reached the stage of a functional prototype and have been tested and used after the presentations.

