

Memory lane 9

Those Enchanting Days at NID

It goes to the credit of Prof. Kumar Vyas to gather that many resource teachers as visiting professors at that time (1967-70). Of course we also had silent internal contributors from whom we learnt. I will dwell on those memories.

1. Dr. Panubhai Bhatt



Panubhai, that is how we used to call him fondly, was a Phd in History. He had original thoughts on 'Shaking Minars' of Ahmedabad, revealing how the 'shaking' was not planned. According to him it was accidental. He taught us 'Art History'. He was very friendly and used to tell us about many things about Gujarati Culture. He used to bring a series of booklets, showing the paintings of great western painters and talk about them. His voice with a typical Gujarati accent still resounds in my memory. Panubhai's introduction to '*Modigliani's style with elongated human faces*' occupies an unforgettable space in my mind. Only when I visited Lour Museum in Paris much later, I realised how big these paintings are. We had seen them in the book size till then. But for the emphatic presentation of Panubhai, one would easily forget them.

Dr. Panubhai Bhatt, also came to IDC, IITBombay, later to give talks on 'Art History' to design students of IDC.

2. Dr. Kalthod- Knowledge of Polymers

Dr. Kalthod taught us plastics. He was a professor in VJTI, Mumbai and used to come for 3 to 4, days to teach. ' Fundamental difference between thermo forming plastics and thermo-setting plastics due to the cross links of Carbon and Hydrogen Molecules' reverberate till today with Dr. Kalthod's resonating

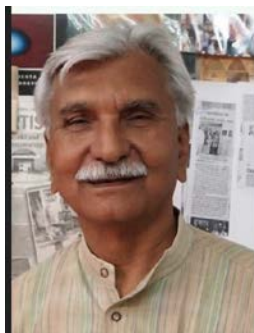
voice! With such clear fundamentals, I had no difficulty in initiating 'FRP' work at NID, along with my classmate V.M.Parmar, later.

Couple of years later when we were in Bombay for our Industrial training we got a warm reception at his office in VJTI. As the Tea was brought for us, we suddenly realised that he was functioning head of the Institute!

3. Brigadier Pennathur- Introduction to Ergonomics

We were introduced to Ergonomics or Human Engineering by Brigadier. Pennathur who used to come from NITIE, Mumbai. Ergo-stories he told cannot be forgotten! One of them is how he got chairs designed for visitors whom he wanted to get rid off. Many Indian visitors have a habit of assuming you have unlimited time for them! These chairs had a small slope towards front. You tend to slip down and need to keep an effort to sit for longer duration on such chairs! This was his polite way of getting rid of unplanned visitors! How creative(but nasty).

4. Paramanand Dalwadi - Learning photography



Dalwadi was a full time photographer at NID. He got trained under Christian Staub at NID. We used to hear stories from Dalwadi and his assistant Khan of how (ferocious) Staub would demand absolute discipline in the photography dark room. Staub would shout if a tong or towel moves from developer tray to Hypo tray. In those days we learnt how to print 'Black and White' photographs. One night I printed 50 photographs, which I had shot in the streets of Ahmedabad! NID used to get huge number of Imperial size photographic rolls for exhibition. Many rolls remained after the famous exhibition on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru designed by Charles Eames. The dates got expired. But they were quite usable as they were put in a cold storage. But

they had to be consumed! Here was an opportunity for us! Kumar Vyas 'set us a task' to make a photo essay . I had taken a theme of 'aesthetics in display of local shops at Ahmadabad'. We were allowed to shoot 200 photographs and print 50. Material was freely given to us. (*What a luxury!*) Great learning happened. We became aware of our cultural strength. Indian fruit, vegetable and sweet vendors have a great sense of aesthetics. After all he/she knew how to attract customers!

Dalwadi taught us product photography. Those were the days we learnt studio photography in 'Black and white', with a Packo-bellow camera. Hours were spent on lighting for product photography. I think it is still a great way of learning product 'form'. You learn to see 'form' through light and shade. Dalwadi's most memorable teaching was, 'Think twice before you talk'. In 2002, we had a great time together when he accompanied us in a trip to 'zero' in Arunachal Pradesh, for my study on Bamboo and Cane! Dalwadi eagerly captured in depth character of local craftsmen with his Camera!

5.Prof. Mavlankar

Dr. Mavlankar was an Engineer and Manager. He had his own enterprise. He had studied in Germany. He used to teach 'Production Engineering'. His stories at Germany were very revealing. Once he met a German Manager in a train and got friendly with him. When dr.Mavlankar told him, how hard he works as a Manager in India, the German Professor laughed and said ,”it is not important for a Manager to work hard. His job is to make (motivate) his employees to work hard!” , an interesting 'insight'!

6.Prof. Kumar Vyas

Our whole and sole design (teacher) for a long time was Kumar Vyas. Prof. Nadkarni arrived after a year and half. Kumar taught us sketching, colour, form, history of Design, Design methods and Product design. He brought in to his teaching his field experience of working with Douglas Scott, a well known designer in England. He was meticulous in his preparation of lectures, studio tasks, and projects. The studio tasks were always given in a written format (I still carry those sheets and give similar briefs to my students). These tasks and projects were very imaginative. He was scholarly in his readings. Our reading

list included Naked ape by Desmond Morris, Series of 4 volumes on design themes edited by Georgy Kepes, Understanding Media by Marshall McLuhan, Mechanisation takes Command by Gideon. These made us thinking designers and later thinking design teachers! I call him a Guru Brahma who created a generation of design-teachers in India! When I met him in recent past he recalled the time when we were students *as those enchanting days!*
