Getting people to interact

VC Project 2 by Aditi Kulkarni

Guide: Prof. Raja Mohanty

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Acknowledgment

Project 2: Getting people to interact

Guide: Prof. Raja Mohanty

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Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/data/ fact/ source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

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There was a garden green where grew.
A thousand roses of different hues.
And though there were no electric blues.
Fiery reds there were.
Orange, crimson and scarlet too.
The deepest purple that you can think.
And some were even a shocking pink.
In such a place, where one may
expect things to be joyous and gay,
like a child's laugh on a wintry day,
the mood was bad.
And it is indeed sad, to say that
hidden under the pretty roses lay,
jealousy and anger,
clothed in ugly shades of grey.

These lines taken from an IDC project 2 report in late 80's speak of a garden actually but strangely describe IDC. IDC is a place where lots is happening and yet there is an undercurrent of discontent and indifference amongst its denizens. This project is done with a hope that it may continue to flower and realise possibilities that are only vaguely sensed at the moment.

Introduction

How did the idea start?
One day in hostel, I heard a girl screaming and crying loudly. I thought she is best left alone after all those are her "personal" problems but when she threatened to kill herself- (she was probably talking on the phone) I was reminded of a suicide that had happened earlier in a hostel at IIT Bombay, the rampant drug abuse and other methods of escape students resort to when they feel pressured and trapped. That's when I finally decided to intervene- I went to her room, did not speak to her really just offered her some biscuits and hung around making a small conversation. After a while she calmed down and I left. I could not get the issue out of my mind. My premise being if people shared their joys and sorrows with others they are less likely to feel completely trapped/pressured and be pushed over the edge. Opening up around peers, is a good way to de-stress and would keep problems like depression, suicides, drugs away. An observation was made- though a design school; IDC lacks the much needed open environment for intellectual dialogues to take place. And this clearly needed to change if the quality of work and environment at IDC was to improve. Thus with the conviction that- if my project "Getting people to interact" works in the IDC context it would also work in other ecosystems, my project topic was frozen.

My initial definitions of "interaction"
Initially I understood "interaction" as a face to face exchange of ideas. With this notion in mind I proposed "Getting people to interact" as my project topic, hoping that interactions amongst students and staff and faculty at IDC become friendlier and livelier than now. However as I started working on my project, I realised the obstacles were truly enormous. I have not stopped attempting to do what I

set out to do. However I realised that it is more realistic to address my goal in a more modest manner by attempting exercises that could help my learnings of design language. My modest efforts include a set of podcasts, a newsletter and the beginnings of activating the dead spaces at IDC.

When it happened, tea conspiracy seemed unsuccessful. It helped reclaim this space for ever. Now the space is lush green and has provided a relaxing nook for many interesting conversations. Specially during conferences etc, a lot of guests, speakers were spotted here- tea cups in hand. I would say this space now has a character of it's own. (see appendix)

In chapter one: reading and reflection, I discuss the readings and inferences drawn thereby- a modest attempt on my part to understand design education as it was and as it stands today. I look at Bauhaus, Ulm and present day design schools for the same. I also look at Auroville for further pointers. I examine what design education could borrow in terms of philosophy from liberal arts education and the role of self-reflexivity in design education (and why is it important?). In chapter two Charged minds- charged place: the parameters I take a look at parameters that make up the ideal design education. I go in detail of each parameter- looking at what all it encompasses, how it helps. In chapter three: IDC Audit I look at the process I went through to determine how IDC fares in each of the parameters established in chapter two and the results that emerged therein. Chapter four comprises of proposed ideas for the project- a look at the issues and how they could be addressed. Finally, the last chapter includes my inferences, outcomes of the projects. What worked, what did not and why. I also look at the processes that I followed, their efficiency and the results I got.

In a nut shell, this is my journey at getting people at IDC to interact about the topics and issues that need to be addressed and urgently so; however they get brushed under the carpet.

This balcony between faculty rooms was being used to dump old furniture, it was reclaimed as a part of this project. An initiative to make spaces in IDC people-conversations-friendly

Chapter 1 Reading and reflections

Modern design education in India began with the setting up of National Institute of Design (NID) in 1961 and Industrial Design Centre (IDC) in 1969. Much has happened since then. From the days of 'License-Raj' India has taken a path to liberalisation and opened its markets to the world. In the wake of all this and the shift from a socialist outlook to a more capitalistic inclination, the role played by design schools needs to be reviewed and re-examined. This chapter is related to my readings and reflections on subject of design and design schools. I also look at Auroville (though not a design school) as it has an atmosphere conducive to growth and nourishment for creative spirits. Two other notions that offer interesting standpoints that can enrich educational approaches at IDC are liberal arts and self-reflexivity. I explore these notions very briefly at the end of this chapter.
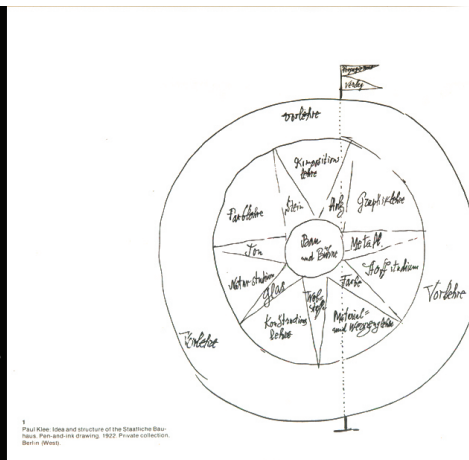
A study of modern design ideas: Bauhaus

[1] Bauhaus means "House of Building" or "Building School" is the common term for the Staaatliches-Bauhaus, a school in Germany that combined crafts and the fine arts, and was famous for the approach to design that it publicized and taught. It operated from 1919 to 1933. The Bauhaus school was founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar. In spite of its name, and the fact that its founder was an architect, the Bauhaus did not have an architecture department during the first years of its existence. Nonetheless it was founded with the idea of creating a 'total' work of art in which all arts, including architecture would eventually be brought together. The Bauhaus style became one of the most influential currents in Modernist architecture and modern design. The Bauhaus had a profound influence upon subsequent developments in art, architecture, graphic design, interior design, industrial design, and typography.

The school existed in three German cities (Weimar from 1919 to 1925, Dessau from 1925 to 1932 and Berlin from 1932 to 1933), under three different architect-directors: Walter Gropius from 1919 to 1927, Hannes Meyer from 1927 to 1930 and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe from 1930 until 1933, when the school was closed by the Nazi regime. The changes of venue and leadership resulted in a constant shifting of focus, technique, instructors, and politics. *[1]*

*[2]*The Bauhaus was an institute for art, which emerged as the successor to an academy and a school of arts and crafts through their mutual "integration." The Bauhaus was marked by an antiacademic attitude from its very beginnings. It was a practical education establishment with all the usual theoretical trappings and with a strong tendency toward practical and manual training. The synthesis of ideas achieved by the Bauhaus was more than a simple bringing together. It was a sovereign creative act. What made Bauhaus suspect

"The Bauhaus was not an institution with a clear program-it was an idea, and Gropius formulated this idea with great precision...The fact that it was an idea, I think is the cause of this enormous influence the Bauhaus had on every progressive school around the globe. You cannot do that with organisation, you cannot do that with propoganda. Only an idea spreads so far... "

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Paul Klee: Idea and structure of the Staatliche Bauhaus. Pen-and-ink drawing. 1922. Private collection. Berlin (West).

in the eyes of the residents of Weimar was not only the novelty of its artistic conceptions, but most of all its social tendencies which were labeled anarchistic. This prejudice was reinforced by the bohemian conduct that characterised many of the students during early Bauhaus years. What the Bauhaus produced turned out to be quite different from the kind of achievement in craftsmanship the public had come to expect from the postulates of the program.
At Bauhaus, first the emphasis was on the requirement of synthesis of the crafts and art. To give meaningful expression to the ideal and no less to the practical , union with the crafts, Gropius dispensed with the academic title of "professor". Instead he introduced for the teaching staff the use of craftsmen's title "Master" which was

also to be conferred upon the students at the conclusion of their course of studies. After completing an obligatory basic course, students joined the Bauhaus workshop of their choice and worked their, like the craftsmen in the making, as "apprentices" and later as "journeymen." The students were required to take the journeyman's examination and the master craftsmen's examination before the apprenticeship board. For education in subjects outside the competency of the board-the stage workshop for example, the principle of "free analogy" was applied. To sum up in words of Walter Gropius " Bauhaus is a diversity of individuals who are willing to cooperate without relinquishing their identity." *[2]*
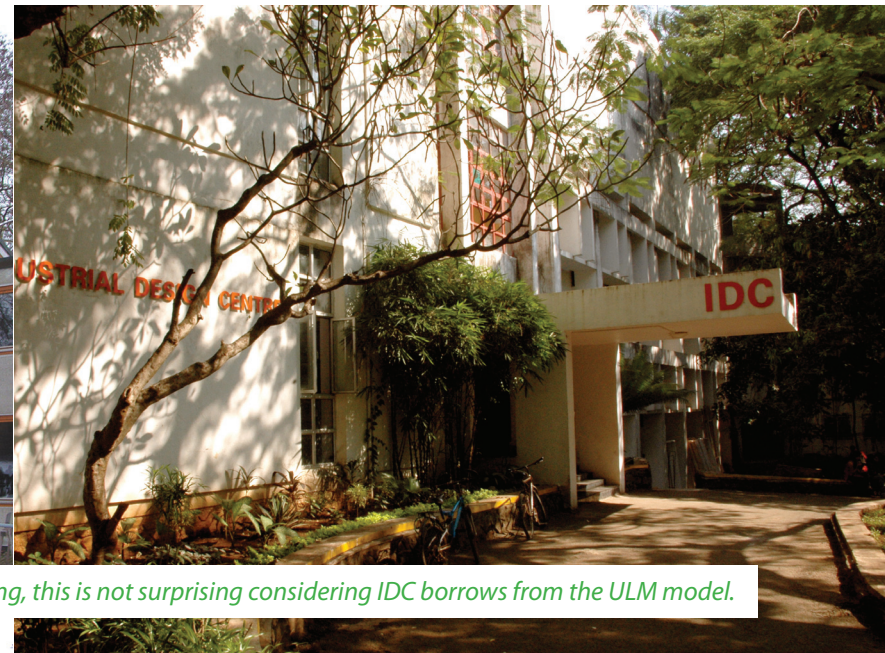
The IDC facade bears an uncanny resemblance to the HFG ULM building, this is not surprising considering IDC borrows from the ULM model.

2 Wingler, Hans M.The Bauhaus, The MIT Press

Ulm School

[3] The Hochschule fűr Gestaltung (HFG) at Ulm, West Germany can be considered one of the most influential design schools of the world in the second half of the century. In just 15 years of its existence (from 1953 to 1968), a theoretical and practical structure fro training of designers was developed at HFG, which was to have a major influence on the plans of study of all the schools of design throughout the world. Known as the "Ulm Model", it was an approach which emphasised the role of rational methods in design strongly supported by scientific and technological know-how. Though usually considered an extension of the Bauhaus, the philosophy of the Ulm School of Design was qualitatively different. Ulm School did not see 'Design' as an individual centered, art and craft activity. The emphasis was not on 'self-discovery', on awakening the intuitive, inner personality, but in seeing designers' collective responsibility as one of the important contributors to man-made environment. The Ulmers were idealists- they believed that the quality of human life can be improved by improving the quality of built environment. If all the factors could be taken into account- rationally and objectively- then it would be possible to find workable solutions to all problems- no matter how complex they may be. The factors were not just factors of material, function and production but social, economical, political, behaviour factors. Indeed, it was the recognition of the fact that problems of designing the whole man-made world are exceedingly complex, and cannot be solved by isolated acts of design, that let HFG, Ulm to develop a set of design methodologies to solve these complex problems. It drew upon scientific disciplines and the objective approach of the scientists to formulate these methodologies. *[3]*

By study of acknowledged design schools world wide, one may hope to draw a set of parameters conducive to a good learning environment. Ideally close familiarity of such institutions would be of immense help. To an extent I have attempted to do so by studying schools I haven't visited. My first hand accounts of design schools are limited and based on public opinion. I am also including Auroville though not a school but my visit exposed me to the culture of the place and I feel it is very conducive to creation and growth.

Industrial Design Centre *[4]* It began with an academic programme in industrial design. The initial efforts were focused on setting up the facilities and developing the faculty. IDC as an institution was conceived to be part of the 'Indian Institute of Technology Bombay'; to give it a strong "result oriented" character so that there is always the possibility to actualize the design concepts emerging from its field of education and research along with a broad technological support from the IIT as a whole.

As the design center emerged, it was realized that industrial design in a developing country with its varied cultural heritage has a vital role to play in national development. It soon became clear that a profession constantly dealing with development and the future of people will have to inculcate values in the society appropriate to fulfill the physical, social and cultural needs and aspiration of the people; in a manner acceptable to the majority. The efforts at the center have been concentrated on the task of inculcating these 'desirable values' through education, practice and propagation. The design projects and other activities reported throw light on how this task is being tackled at the Center.

3 Trivedi, Kirti. Readings from Ulm, Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay, 1989, 4 http://www.idc.ac.in

IDC set out to address India's socially unmet needs, but appears to be without a clear focus at this juncture. Its strength has been grooming people for the industry. Conceptual thinking is emphasized but the joy of working with hands is diminishing.

Design education can be the means to understand, disseminate and practice design in society. IDC's experiments in design education and awareness have inspired several designers, design educators and design schools. In the emerging socio-economic-cultural scene, IDC intends to play an important role. The concern at IDC for the problems at the grass root level in developing economies has led to efforts in solving such problems with design as a means and a tool.

The designer in a global economy requires competence to deal with a broad range of challenges thrown up by socio-economic and cultural diversities. This diversity is reflected in the structure of the educational program, the type of research activities and the projects the students and faculty undertake. The emphasis is on addressing the unmet design and communication needs of the community. [4]

National Institute of Design [5] In the early years following independence, rapid changes were taking place within the Indian environ-

Industrial Design Centre
a decade of design experience
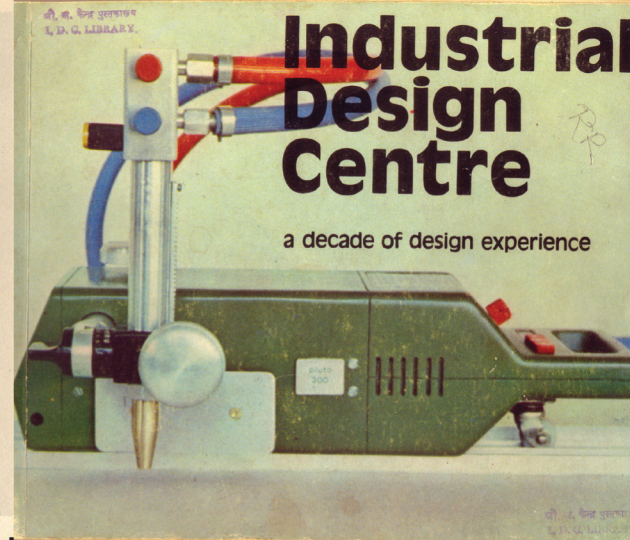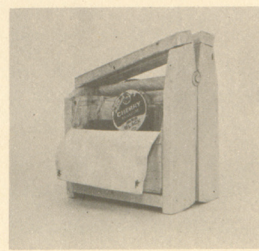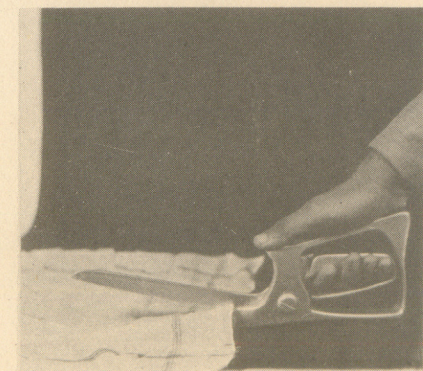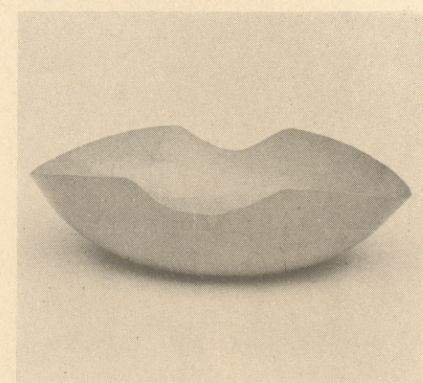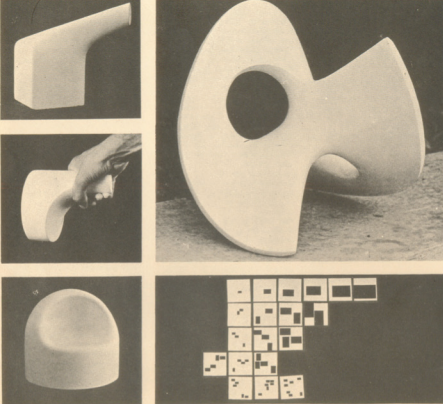
Initial projects of IDC, addressed definite social purposes, like the shoe-shine box, the Ghamela, the scissors on the left and recent PD, VC, animation and interaction projects in auto styling, sustainability, game design and material animation on the right.

Though projects addressing social needs are still being taken up the focus has largely shifted towards catering to the aspirations of urban middle class most often. It is imperative that IDC re-examined its own philosophical standpoints to live upto its reputation of a pioneering institution.

An extract from 'Making India Work' by William Bissel
Final Thoughts

While democracy and human rights exist on paper in India, only a small minority have the money, connections or luck to be able to exercise these rights. For the rest of India, the Constitution is simply a piece of paper. When the only way to address anything is to leverage a relationship of patronage, the nation has failed.

I am deeply worried about the future of India. It is being pulled apart bydifferent forces. Amongst the rich, a new ideology is taking hold, 'therepublic of one'. The elite have made themselves into tiny republics, with private security, health care, transport and a water borehole in each backyard. Neighbours are strangers. Expectations from the state are low.There is no sense of community. Amongst India's poor, a different ideology threatens to pull the country apart. The Naxalites, armed left-wing extremists, now affect over 30 percent of India's districts. The issue is not one of politics, but of development. Under the present system, at least half a billion people will remain a long way from India's wealth for a long time to come. Hundreds of millions of Indians are so poor, that to quote Marx and Engels, theyliterally have 'nothing to lose but their chains.' If we do not rapidly give every Indian the opportunity to be a stakeholder, we face a bloody future.I do not blame India's leaders for the current mess. They are locked into a system that makes it impossible for them to succeed. The new framework, a self-regulating system, proposed in this book would facilitate rapid, environmentally sustainable growth and put governance in the hands of the Indian people.

NID has acquired the reputation of being a centre of design in India. However it is increasingly driven by the aspirations of the urban elite. It's emphasis on crafts and skills has had a positive impact on its graduates.

ment, in economic and social objectives and in production process-es, new technologies were beginning to enter the remotest corners of our sub-continent. There were at that time, minds sufficiently aware that the process of development demanded a re-investiga-tion of the postulates and resources that determine the pattern and pace of growth envisioned for India.

The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1953 articulated these concerns and indicated broad guidelines. It was in this setting that the Gov-ernment of India invited the renowned design team of Charles and Ray Eames to recommend a programme of design to serve as an aid to small industry. On the basis of their remarkable document, 'The

India Report', the Government of India set up the National Institute of Design in 1961 as an autonomous national institution for research, service and training in Industrial Design and Visual Communication.

The aim was to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to design, to satisfy the complex problems of India's changing environment. This year, NID completes 49 years of distinguished service in design edu-cation, design training and design practice. Today, it is internation-ally recognised for the quality of its programmes, which will always continue to be the hallmark of this premier national Institution. It was a change in kind, and not merely in degree[5]

CEPT has succeeded in forging a vibrant academic program and has fostered a healthy interaction amongst faculty and students.

CEPT [6] Knowledge with wisdom is the motto of the university. CEPT University through its programmes strives to make students aware of the multidimensional issues of contemporary society and to meet the challenges arising in resolving these issues with a gain of knowledge and wisdom. The students need to be equipped to understand the complex societal forces that would increasingly bear on them when they begin their professional life and to cope with them successfully. It also aspires not only to train a competent technocrat but also to increase the student's sensitivity to the emotional, spiritual, cultural and aesthetic dimensions.

Innovative changes in the curriculum and teaching methods are undertaken from time to time to keep pace with the advances in the relevant areas. Considering the professional nature of the disciplines dealing with human habitation and the built form, a number of experts from the industry / profession regularly teach at CEPT University as visiting faculty.

A substantial part of the student's time at CEPT is devoted to the elective program through which they can choose courses offered by the various schools, to enable them to broaden their background and to pursue areas of specific interests, in addition to their main discipline. For the undergraduate programmes, sandwiched practical training and research thesis are required. [6]
Interactions between seniors, juniors and faculty took a whole new meaning at CEPT. It has junior class room overlooking the senior class room, at staggered heights, without any walls blocking the view between the two spaces. Juniors can see how seniors work, even juries of seniors in progress.

On a lighter note, during rangpanchami celebrations that follow Holi, students chased after a very senior professor, caught hold of him and dunked him into the pool of coloured water. Its amazing that students and faculty members can have such an informal equation though both take their work and output seriously.

[7] **Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology** was founded in 1996 by the Ujwal Trust with the objective of providing art and design education in an environment of creativity and maximizing individual potential. Srishti's inter-disciplinary approach helps promote self-initiated learning and independent thinking, while expanding perceptual perspectives and developing artistic vocabularies. Courses are taught by industry-experienced faculty and the curriculum is built on a broad based liberal arts foundation.

Over the years, Srishti has gained recognition as a provider of quality contemporary art and design education. Its mission is facilitated by its organizational structure - a "community of learners" consisting of both faculty and students. [7]

Echoing the sentiment of "chilled out equations" with faculty are Srishti graduates who said that faculty members and students would hang out together and even go partying together at times. When it came to work- it never seemed like assignments it was always an extension of who you are. With neither faculty nor students mincing any words when it came to criticism, Srishti (of earlier times, not any more these students rue) school takes the adage "work hard, party harder" seriously.

At Srishti courses are taught by industry experienced faculty and the curriculum is built on a broad based liberal arts foundation. Many courses follow the 'laboratory' concept of rigorous experimentation

Auroville *[8]* Auroville is a universal township in the making for a population of up to 50,000 people from around the world. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity – in diversity. Today Auroville is recognised as the first and only internationally endorsed ongoing experiment in human unity and transformation of consciousness, also concerned with - and practically researching into - sustainable living and the future cultural, environmental, social and spiritual needs of mankind. *[8]*

Auroville for me would always be a community of doers. People brought together by zeal to start something, follow their calling, be with environment and thereby experience spiritual growth and nourishment of mind, body and soul. In the time I spent working at Auroville- I realised once people come together for a cause or purpose, keeping them together is also an art in itself. Work is treated as purpose of being, people at work are not mere colleagues they are in fact friends and collaborators. There is no pretentiousness or sense of hierarchy and other such trivial factors overshadowing the purpose. This strong community feeling is fostered by breaking bread together at the community kitchen called Solar Kitchen and various other occasions through mingling at parties, workshops etc. Hands-on learning rather than rote learning is encouraged. Dignity of labour, doing things with hands is respected as well.

Auroville though not a design school has many valuable lessons for designers with it's emphasis on spiritual growth and an eye for detail in the material sense.

8 http://www.auroville.org

Two areas of relevance

Liberal Arts Education

 [9] The term liberal arts denotes a curriculum that imparts general knowledge and develops the student's rational thought and intellectual capabilities], unlike the professional, vocational, technical curricula emphasizing specialization. The contemporary liberal arts comprise studying literature, languages, philosophy, history, mathematics, and science. A liberal arts education is said to result into a thinking mind, that is capable of feeding on imagination and creativity. Liberal arts education helps students to diversify their efforts and inculcates in them a feeling for a broad horizon and a panoramic view. They not only learn to think well but gain confidence that they can learn whatever there is to learn whenever a need arises. So, they can quickly adapt to changing situations, learn to adopt new jobs, and maneuver through life inventively.

Professionalism may prepare us for a career but Liberal Arts education prepares us for a resourceful life. In short, Liberal Arts education liberates us. *[9]*

Self- reflexivity

Self-reflexivity is the act of watching the self and the process while one is engaged in it. Example if one is making a pot- we not only look at how the pot comes about on the wheel but also look at what process we followed, was it the best one, what could have changes etc. So we are not only looking at the pot being made but we are also looking at ourselves (as if from outside of our own body) as we are making the pot. It's the act of watching one's own actions.

Self-reflexivity is the act of watching the self and the process while one is engaged in it.

9 T. Kaori Kitao, William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of Art History, Swarthmore College Keynote Address, The 1999 Institute for the Academic Advancement of Youth's

Chapter 2 Charged minds– charged place: the parameters

Based on the reading, study and numerous conversations I had with people around- it became evident that for internalising the notion of creativity and design, certain parameters are of paramount importance. These parameters are:

1. Freedom and rigour
2. Awareness
3. Playfulness and Creativity
4. Learning
5. Evaluation

Freedom and rigour
For a person to be able to create, she has to be free in her mind, body and spirit. A recurring reaction from all students interviewed, touched upon "lack of freedom" to explore, to break beyond conventions. But what is freedom really? The way I see it freedom begins and ends not only with academics but goes beyond it. Freedom is speaking up, asking questions, sharing opinions, criticizing without fear or favour. Freedom is also choosing your own schedule of work and play. Freedom is having a licence to explore whatever subject, medium, technique a student wishes to. Freedom is being able to work on personal projects apart from assignments. Freedom is the possibility of a student charting her own course of path at IDC.

To Understand the notion of freedom a little better one may do well to look more closely at the attendance rule even format of courses, projects and the manner of evaluation. The attendance rule requires students to sign the muster everyday before 9:30 am.
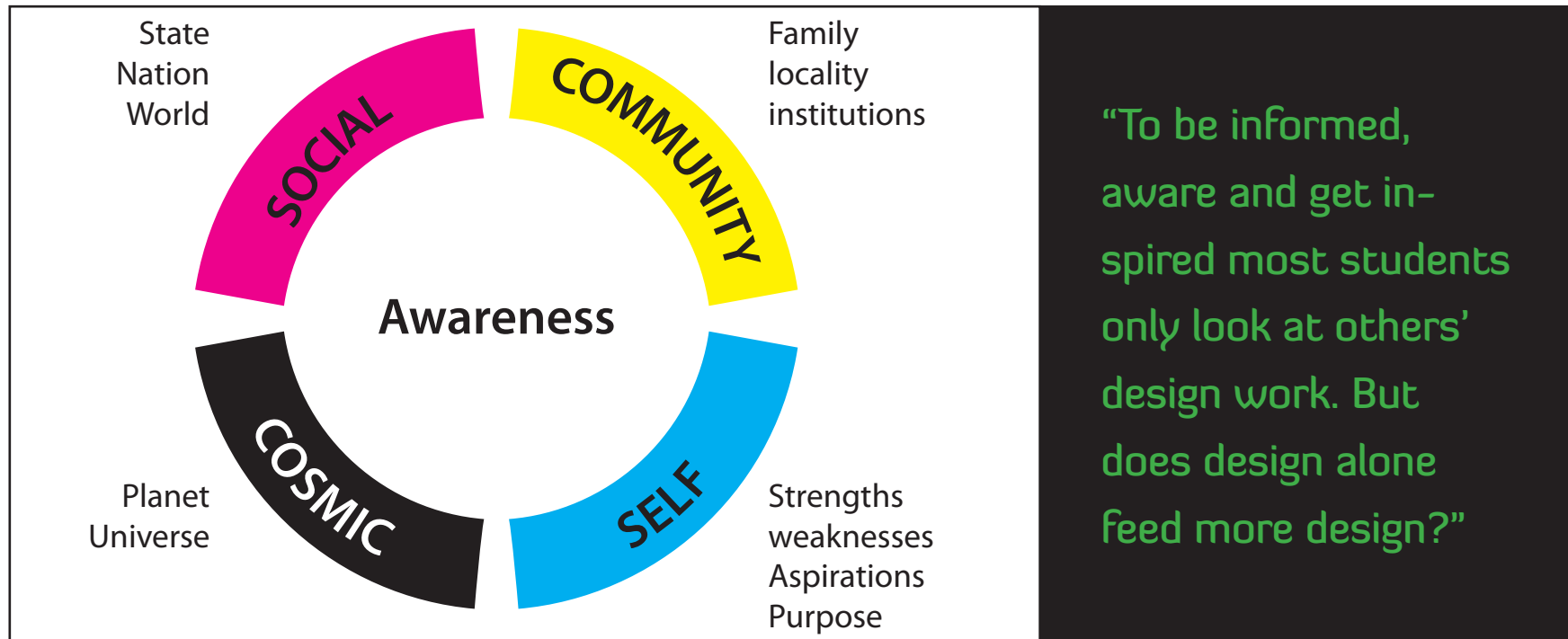
Such a rule is often regarded by students as an imposition on their freedom. Some members of faculty are inclined to regard this rule as something that emerges for poor attendance for the morning interactions. Unless there is an internal discipline, whether in academics or otherwise it would be difficult to rigorous, a quality with which somebody in a creative discipline thrives. The current scenario in IDC thereby, definitely needs to be re-examined in this regard.

Facilities and education provided to students at IDC, IIT Bombay are subsidised by the tax payers of the country. In the early years of IDC there was a conscious attempt to ensure that projects be of social relevance. With the growth of the middle class the situation is more complex. It appears that the increasing disparities in the country leave a large section of social needs of the most underprivileged unmet, in fact untouched. There has been, in my understanding little discussion in recent times over whether the projects students take should in some way lean towards bridging these social gaps. What responsibility do students of this institute have towards the tax payers, as designers in making needs to be discussed at length. Unless that happens, a disconnect between the needs of the nation and the projects undertaken will prevail.

Awareness
I am referring to awareness at three levels. The self, the institution and the society at large. For any student awareness regarding her field of study is critical. Not just her field but what's around it, including its context and it's place in society.
Self- awareness: Awareness of self is of prime importance. Knowing

Dimensions of awareness

SOCIAL
State
Nation
World

COMMUNITY
Family
locality
institutions

COSMIC
Planet
Universe

SELF
Strengths
weaknesses
Aspirations
Purpose

Awareness

"To be informed, aware and get in–spired most students only look at others' design work. But does design alone feed more design?"

one's own self, strengths, weaknesses, ambitions, desires etc will help a student articulate her plan of action while at IDC and later. This perhaps will also help students further their personal academic interest by utilizing assignments as an opportunity to try out new things and not merely looking at them like a burden. Every person has a certain individuality and a voice of own, its important to be aware of this voice and what it is trying to say.
[10]The need to face up to personal inadequacies without a sense of shame, to be able to shelve ego and carry on regardless of not having

lived up to one's own expectations and those of others, is part of personal and professional growth. It's the will to try again that matters.[10]

Institutional awareness: IDC is a very small department, approximately 150 people overall. Yet people are so wrapped up in their own cocoons that what other students/ disciplines are up to is often not known. There is little awareness in terms of projects that RAs are working on or for that matter the consultancy projects the faculty is working on. This is not to say that everyone has to know everything

10 Saint, Amita. Educating the Designer. Design concerns: Volume 1 Students colloquium papers, Publications Department, National Institute Design, March 1993

all the time. Neither is this debate about whether students should work from their studios or hostel rooms. Its only to say that having a brief knowledge of what people are up to may lead to better peer to peer learning opportunities. It may also lead to consultancy projects being treated like case studies for the rest of the department. The staff too might benefit learning alongside students in terms of upgrading and updating their knowledge and students will benefit from rich experience of the staff specially in workshop operations.

Society awareness: Students at IDC, study design which is an all encompassing discipline, meaning its connected to disciplines as diverse as FMCGs (fast moving consumer goods) to space research. There by, one must be updated about practically everything under the sun right from latest printing technology to current international affairs. Cause no one knows what our brain needs to cook up ideas or for that matter where the next stroke of creativity is going to come from. To be informed, aware and get inspired most students only look at others' design work. But does design alone feed more design?

Perhaps as students we should make more efforts of going to the other side of the main gate, beyond sheltered environs of IDC because that's where we all will find ourselves, 2 years of M. Des hence. For us to make any impact as designers we need to be well-informed humans first. This is to say that design feeds on a variety of influences- films, music, theatre, people, social sciences, senses of sight, sound, smell and taste etc. One should not deprive oneself of this nourishment.

Apart from being informed and observant, it is important for students to participate in competitions, activities and events. Winning is not so

much a criteria as much as experiencing peer cultures, peer institutions is. It makes lot of sense to have a feel of what one's contemporaries are up to. Also this opens up possibilities of collaboration on projects and enriching our experience as students.

"Design feeds on a variety of influences- films, music, theatre, people, social sciences, senses of sight, sound, smell and taste etc. One should not deprive oneself of this nourishment".

Playfulness and creativity

Definitions of the two abound. One leads to other and both are intertwined for sure. As children none of us had to define or articulate them to experience them. We just played and were perennially creative. Right from imaginary friends to the kind of games we invented. It came pretty naturally to all. So what happened as we grew up?

The biggest roadblock we hit as we grow up is that we develop inhibition. A strong resistance to what we refer to as "making a fool of oneself" specially in front of others. This constant self-censorship kills creativity and play.

Not just in terms of personal behavior, but even in terms of design explorations- as students we are unwilling to take risks, try out new things. The project presentations too are pretty standard and bland. So also certain assignments which have remained unchanged for a few years now.

Even equations between students, faculty and staff by and large remain an academic affair and are mostly devoid of any sense of play. A general sense of comfort that emerges having spent time together is lacking. This stifles communication, process of any positive change and completely kills enthusiasm. And nobody knows why this happens. I got this reaction from many- staff, students and faculty alike wondering "why are we so reserved, hung up and uptight?"

Perhaps we are better off than rest of the departments at IIT Bombay but they are hardly a yardstick. True yardstick would be other design/art/architecture schools whether NID, CEPT, Srishti etc.
Infusing playfulness and creativity in the atmosphere might actually

INHIBITION IS A NAIL IN THE HEAD

From "Art of looking sideways" by Alan Fletcher
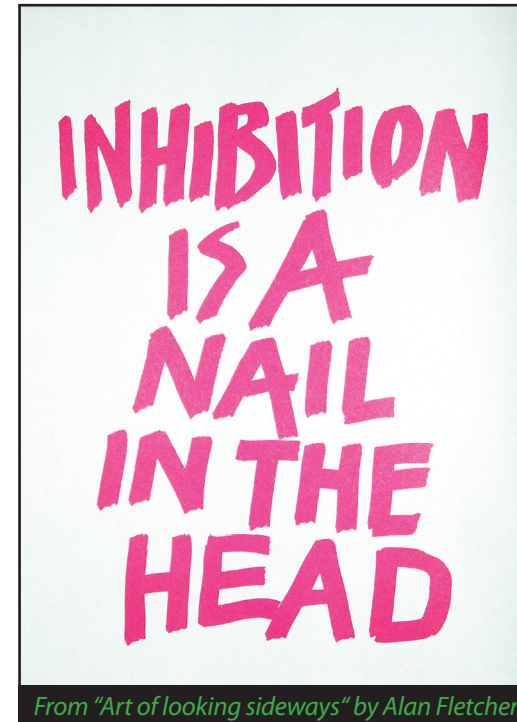
usher in the much needed vigour and rigour in IDC. Not just in academics but in everything and every moment of being at IDC and beyond.

Learning approaches

There has been much debate about this. There could be an open framework with emphasis on self-learning, where students decide what to work on right from the outset of their masters at IDC, after basic foundation in first semester.

*[12]*How can a student best help himself? An understanding of the student's own strengths, weakness, abilities and a self-critical attitude is essential to be able to bring out the best in his work. Under the pressurised and success-conscious conditions in which we live, students are naturally anxious to prove themselves as rapidly as possible, to themselves and to their contemporaries and teachers. Something as intangible as the growth of understanding may seem a poor substitute for the almost measurable achievement marked by a high input of design projects. The awakening of design consciousness happens, more often than not, at a subconscious level, with sensitisation to one's environment, enhanced sensory perception, being aware of the inner processes of the mind. All contribute to overall growth but are not necessarily tangible at once.*[12]*

Alternately, there could be another approach where a course structure is laid out by faculty which students follow with assignments and electives every semester which is the current mode of learning at IDC.

The grouse with the current system that students have is that there are too many assignments and practically no time to internalize what one has learnt, if at all. Secondly many feel a five working days' "module" is too little an immersion time specially incase of completely new subjects. Which in turn varies across students since everybody comes from a diverse background. Thus students feel that by the time they understand a subject and begin to take an interest in it, the said module is over and a new one begins bringing with it more assignments. Eventually a steady piling up of assignments ensues through the semester. Though it was a consensus that this happens more out of lack of time management skills than out of unreasonable workload. Also many assignments are of basic exercise nature, to clarify a

certain theory or concept and thus can't be included in the portfolio. So when does one start creating one's own portfolio?
Perhaps the pros and cons of both the systems need to be weighed and a decision needs to be taken about it. Some professors feel that system of self- learning is more likely to do justice to a student in masters programme owing to the freedom, flexibility it allows and lets student chart her own path rather than spoon feeding them a standard pre defined one solution fits all agenda. Also, other options if any need to be evaluated. An open discussion in this regard involving all those connected to IDC needs to be initiated and soon.

Evaluation Methods
Evaluation methods could be firstly classified as self-evaluation and evaluation by others. It could also be classified as continuous evaluation as is the case with all IITs vs one evaluation at the end of the program. Another parameter would be open book vs closed book exams. Jury/ defense vs discussion/informal showcase of one's work.

Self-evaluation as a concept might seem elusive but is critical specially in a masters' program. As we grow we are expected to depend on ourselves more and more and when it comes to evaluation its important to be self-critical.

Appropriate evaluation methods will help maintain freedom and infuse rigor. Evaluation not just of output but even input that is nature of assignments, methods, processes, choice of projects etc needs to be evaluated. There should be a clear dialogue about deciding the parameters for quality and quantity of work that comprises 2 years at IDC (not just project work in the second year). More so in the context of the purpose of IDC which is to meet India's unmeet social

12 Trivedi, Kirti. Readings from Ulm, Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay, 1989.

needs. Are current projects true to this?Both faculty and students have questioned the point of an open book exam. At the same time if one has to do away with the format of exams as they exist today what would other appropriate methods of evaluation be?
Currently IDC does not attach much importance to one's CPI how-ever what matters most is the quality of projects in students port-folios when they graduate. As evaluations methods are at the heart of quality of designers IDC churns out they ought to be investigated into and taken seriously.

*[12]*Nothing is easier in teaching design than to conduct set exer-cises developed decades ago. Models become mechanical rituals. While this ensures safe, predictable design teaching, the spirit of 'design' itself is lost- "design as a holistic problem-solving activity, which is self-renewing and self-adjusting according to different social and temporal contexts.
Philosophy is more important than one set of practise to have evolved from that philosophy. It is not possible to judge philosophy from examples of practise alone. *[12]*

This project by itself is never ending. But the next degree project saw a new method of evaluation or rather 'presentation' .Thanks to efforts from some faculty members, students of Visual Communication now follow a method of showcase of work in the morning, lunch with the jury and one on one discussion with the external guide followed by a small presentation for all in the evening. This has replaced the old method of 'defense'. What ensues now with the external guide is a discussion of work and future plans. This system is much better than earlier one.


'Design is a holistic problem-solving activity, which is self-renewing and self-adjusting according to different social and temporal contexts.

12 Trivedi, Kirti. Readings from Ulm, Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay, 1989.

Chapter 3: The IDC Audit

With the parameters for the ideal design education in place, the next step was to conduct an extensive IDC audit to check how IDC fares across the parameters. The emphasis was not so much to play the 'point-fingers' game but to find out what is the ground reality and the ways ahead to improve. The audit was audio and video documentation. People at IDC were asked two questions. What do you think of IDC? How can it be improved? Based on the responses a list was made of issues that need addressing and they were clubbed under the appropriate parameters.

About the video documentation
For video I urged people around to respond to the two questions-what you think of IDC? How can it be improved? And I recorded their responses. The method of video documentation has a ring of authenticity to it which is the plus point but it also requires the interviewee to bold and frank at the same time. Many people were uncomfortable going on record. Some were worried about the critical comments they make inviting flak from others, some saw it as an intrusion in their space/time. Students were by and large forthcoming, the staff was largely politically correct and with faculty my method of approaching was incorrect which lead to delay. Overall IDC Audit did help me put together a list of issues that needed addressing. For my own clarity I chunked each issue under one of the five parameters and began thinking on what would be the way forward for getting people to interact.
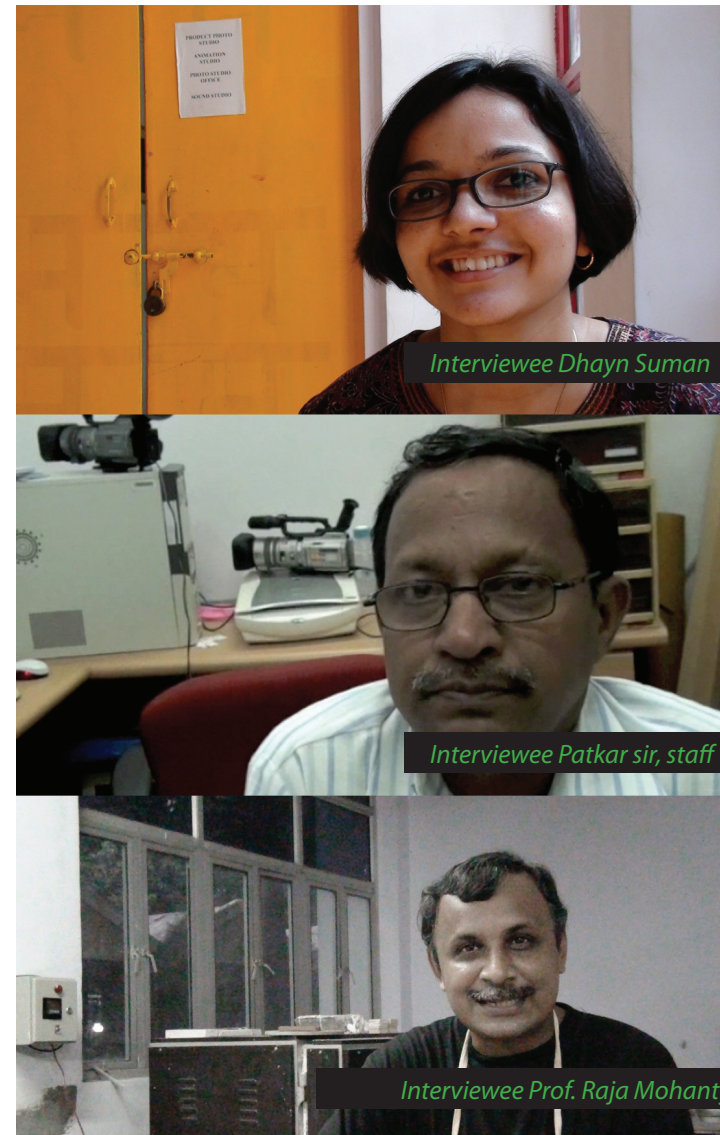
Interviewee Dhayn Suman

Interviewee Patkar sir, staff

Interviewee Prof. Raja Mohanty
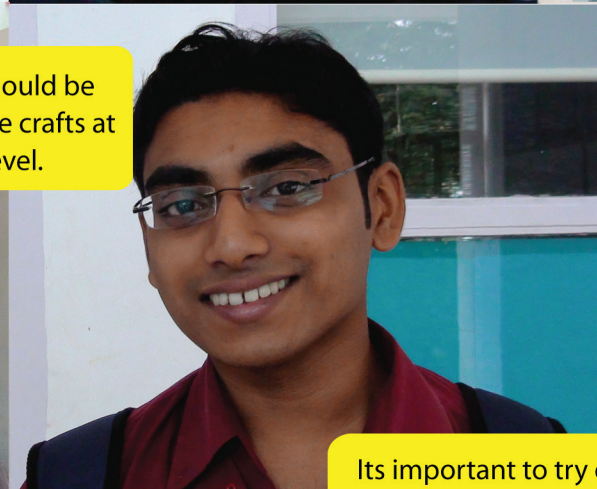
The audit yielded the following results:

- Lack of free intellectual dialogue
- Reserved, uptight, serious atmosphere
- Constant onslaught of assignments
- No time for self-learning/ exploration
- Lack of rigor in work
- Pseudo-scientific behaviours
- No workshops for staff for upgrading technical knowledge.
- Students, staff, faculty in their own clusters.
- Lack of enthusiasm
- Lack of playfulness and creativity
- Lack of clarity of the institute's role towards taxpayers.
- Lack of clarity on kinds of projects to be taken.
- Purpose of IDC and its projects today.
- The culture of working with hands fast disappearing.
- Lack of sensitivity to India's unmet needs.
- Unresolved clashes between faculty w.r.t. methods followed in a project (to use or not: yellow post its')
- IDC is cut off from the national craft circuit
- Discipline or imposition: Attendance and other issues.

The strategy to dealing with these pointers one by one, was to start with the simplest of them all and move up the complexity ladder. The logic being that the success from the simpler tasks will fire up the energies for more complicated tasks.

Chapter 4: Ideas: proposed & implemented

To tackle issues ranging from lack of academic freedom to making the space-place come alive the following ideas were proposed.

Open-house This idea lies at the heart of getting people to interact. Agreed that at the end of it the tempers might be flying high and several arguments would ensue- open house is a general body meeting attended by everyone connected to IDC. Here students, staff and faculty will all be on the same plane and everyone's issues will be looked into and addressed. The pluses are free intellectual dialogue, creating awareness of issues, learning from issues of everyone and opportunity for collective evaluation- leading perhaps to faster redressal. To keep the atmosphere amicable special efforts can be made in terms of playful and creativity quotients of the open-house.

Certain difficulties with an open-house are getting all the people at IDC together at the same time, practically the place will come to a halt for a while. Other difficulty is probably in initial open-houses, till people get completely convinced- they just might choose to not attend, thereby defeating the purpose.

However while this project was underway, an open house of sorts did take place at IDC. All the faculty members and students gathered in the design circle to have a 'free and open dialogue'. Many issues came to the forefront. It resulted in Prof. Kirti Trivedi starting a 'free' module. Where the student chose what he or she wanted to create in that time. Addressing the 'No time for self-learning/ exploration' lament of the students.

Crit-wall A student, staff or faculty can put up his/ her work on the walls set-aside as crit walls to start a conversation about one's work. Get feedback, counter-views etc. People usually work in their class-rooms, cabins, hostel-rooms but by putting the work up in a very public space one is encouraging a much wider response and a willingness and openness to discuss one's work.

The secondary outcome of this would be several spaces which are now cluttered, could be de-cluttered and re-utilized for this purpose.

A faculty member's initiative, 'The Changing Display Wall' came as an answer to this. Not a crit-wall for assignments, this space was open for anyone wishing-willing to express a thought or an idea in any form. Be it photographs, paintings, an installation, even poetry. Every time the exhibit changed, it got those in IDC talking, in many cases for the first time. Not just that, whatever was not digested in the first conversation, would spill out in form of further conversations, improvising ideas, new concepts etc. Though very encouraging, the push always came from the faculty side, and it will be a while before people start using 'The Changing Display Wall' pro-actively.

Newsletter

It gives voice to all the murmurs that are waiting to be heard and addressed. It would in fact have its finger on the pulse of the place. A more unobtrusive way than open-house or a crit-wall. It can discuss at length several issues and with a tone of voice which communicates the issue the best. It could be read at leisure and it will help you stay abreast with what's happening at IDC. It could also be utilized to keep the alumni network in loop if they want to be informed.

Views and counter-views can be elaborated on, myths burst, fallacies clarified all this without immediacy that face to face conversation denies. This is the advantage. They would also act like chronicles. Issues like freedom, awareness, learning, playfulness, creativity and evaluation all get addressed through a newsletter. I will be taking this further in my project.

The clarity of editorial voice makes all the difference between an insipid and a good newsletter. I closely looked at several newsletters and journals to understand the editorial voice.

A newsletter allows a longer discourse on any topic, without the immediacy of a response. This rumination perhaps will help broach awkward topics in best possible manner.

Content: Before I started working on the possible articles, names for the newsletter- I looked at couple of them to get hang of what is the tone of voice, how are various themes dealt with, and how content changes according to change in the audience. I decided to call my first draft off-shoot. My final newsletter is called 'Dfrost'- Cool not cold. It is so named, as if to poke fun at our cold selves who do not wish to know much about the well being of student working at the next work-station. It is also a pun of sorts indicating, becoming warmer, in the mind and brains. Being open to new ideas, giving up frozen rigidity etc. Hence the by-line, cool not cold my personal take on my own generation that undervalues emotions and seem to think that not caring is cool.

Through the newsletter I am hoping to achieve a sustained and an elaborate dialogue regarding topics that need to be addressed. The idea is to get students, faculty and staff to contribute to the newsletter- symbolic of getting them on the same plane. The tone of voice is on a broad level contemporary, urban, hip so as to speak to all without sounding preachy. In the wake of short attention spans and rich media like the internet and video it's getting increasingly tricky to keep mediums like print relevant.

Offshoot, first draft, front and back

Initial Dummy and final newsletter on the right

CLOSE-UP with Sheetal Barge

What feeds your work?

SB: My work largely feeds on my **doodling**. Even **photography**, which is undergoing a shift of sorts. After coming to IDC I began shooting pictures which are mostly environment/ city-scapes devoid of humans. Currently they are pretty random. I am working towards developing a voice of my own, I am not there yet- but I am just about beginning to articulate through my photographs. In **Films** I am not loyal to a particular kind yet and watch all kinds of films. Biographies are especially relished due to the constraints involved. In terms of content you can't tamper much with what's existing, compressing life span of a person to the duration of film, picking up highlights- pruning the unnecessary- all makes for good learning. So does environment creation through cues. My current favourites are My blueberry nights, The Bridges of Madison County, Cold Mountain. Incase of animation, before IDC I was a Disney buff, but after coming here I have seen french as well as Japanese animation films and it's amazing the variety of themes and styles explored.

I relish **work of Sameer Kulavoor, Ulhas Moses and Ravi Paranjpe**.

DF: What are you personal work tastes?

SB: I like flat coloured simplified illustrations, shapes coming together to create new forms. I like all aspects of motion graphics.

DF: What was it like working for two years?

SB: I worked at two places and they were extreme contrasts of each other. In terms of the size, culture, philosophy and obviously the lessons learnt. My first job was at a small studio catering to animation pre-production. I was mainly involved with story-boarding and character designing. Though the place was very small I was given a lot of freedom to experiment and everything was learnt from scratch, handling different kinds of projects. The next job was at a relatively bigger e-learning firm and I made show reels for clients, in flash. Though the work was not as creative as the first job- I learnt in terms of certain tips and tricks that enable you to churn out quality output to meet tight deadlines.

DF: Future plans?

SB: Near future- Motion graphics, someday- Paintings.

DF: Parting words

SB: Over three semesters, I have realised that if you don't plan your time well and don't gauge your own capabilities things can go really haywire. It's critical to have a realistic estimate of both how much time certain work would take and one's own capacity of doing justice to it. Of course one should push oneself, but taking on unrealistic goals can be really frustrating.

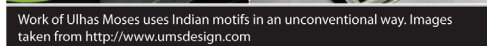*Sheetal Barge is a visual communication senior at IDC*

Sheetal's work largely feeds on her doodling, photography and films. She is interested in multiple aspects of motion graphics. She mostly works in clean, 2D, flat colours illustration style as far as her motion graphics work goes. She values the learnings that came out of two years of work in contrasting atmospheres.

I like by Shilpa Bisht

My favourite Indian designer is Ulhas Moses. I have been loyally in awe of him since 2006- back when I never knew of IDC. His website was being lusted after by a couple of my friends in office. It was the very first time I saw an Indian designer's work looking Indian. First time.

I had practically created a database of all design studios in India, wondering whom I should work with. It soon hit me, that they all do the same work. That they all lack a voice. They have no distinct design style. Indian design invariably becomes kitsch driven, or is derived from a humorous exaggeration of a normal Indian product. Worse still, it goes into a spiritual, exotic land of snake charmers' imagery. Moses has broken the cliche. His prints are full of play and action, where art and craft does combine into a design that is not pre-meditated. He uses Indian motifs in an unconventional way. He transforms some into cosmic algorithms, reminding me much of John Maeda's work, for his computer art. Yet his work is organic. One can sense how he has evolved over the years in his own way. And he is still at it.

Work of Ulhas Moses uses Indian motifs in an unconventional way. Images taken from http://www.umsdesign.com

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Inaugural Issue

EDITI

First of all thank you for picking up the inaugural issue of Dfrost. I write these words with a sense of anticipation and anxiety at the same time. Dfrost is an extension of the various views and counter-views discussed on IDC Suniyore- the podcast series. Both clubbed together are an attempt to bring in the open, conversations that have been going on in smaller groups, whether in studios or at Descafe. These conversations revolve around IDC- it's people, their work, the culture. I am trying to spark off a dialogue on what this place currently is about and the numerous possibilities of what it could be.

In each issue the attempt would be towards bringing together staff, faculty and students on the same page. Literally and metaphorically. In this issue I am looking at IDC through the lens of an insider who is zooming in and out at different points in the picture. The Point of View section this time talks of an important issue- freedom at IDC. While the podcast is a lighter easing in into a serious subject the article here attempts to look deeper.

This entire attempt is an outcome of my project 'getting people to interact.' Why get people to interact? So that IDC is a charged place full of openness, ideas and learning. The process however begins from the self. I hope you find this modest first attempt enjoyable and excuse me in advance for any shortcomings you might notice. Your feedback is always welcome.

Aditi
helloaditi@gmail.com

Scaricature by Kunal Parida

Many thanks to the contributors of this newsletter. Kunal Parida, for the 'Scaricature', Shilpa Bisht for 'I like', Sakshi Gambhir for tea party photos and Prof. A. G. Rao from whose book A Decade of Design, I borrowed material for 'Archived inspiration'.

Point of View

For a person to be able to create, she has to be free in her mind, body and spirit. But what is freedom really? The way I see it, freedom does not begin and end with academics but goes beyond it. Freedom is speaking up, asking questions, sharing opinions, criticizing without fear or favour. Freedom is also choosing your own schedule of work and play. Freedom is having a licence to explore whatever subject, medium, technique one wishes to. Freedom is being able to work on personal projects apart from assignments. Freedom is the possibility of a student charting her own course of path at IDC.

Students like faculty are divided over whether IDC is really a free place. To Understand the notion of freedom a little better one may do well to look more closely at the attendance rule, even format of courses, projects and the manner of evaluation. The attendance rule requires students to sign the muster everyday before 9:30 am. Such a rule is often regarded by students as an imposition on their freedom. Some members of faculty are inclined to regard this rule as something that emerges from poor attendance for the morning interactions. Unless there is an internal discipline, whether in academics or otherwise it would be difficult to be rigorous, a quality which helps one thrive in a creative discipline. The current scenario in IDC thereby, definitely needs to be re-examined in this regard.

Freedom and rigour go hand in hand. In fact, working with rigour is the responsibility of anyone who enjoys benefits of freedom. Also rigour will result not out of external force or push. Those might help a bit, but in the long run rigour will result only out of passion, a burning desire to learn and curiosity.

What about academic freedom? Do students have the freedom to chose the projects they wish to do? Yes, but then one ought to remember that facilities and education provided to students at IDC, IIT Bombay are subsidised by the tax payers of the country.

There has been, in my understanding little discussion in recent times over whether the projects students take should in some way lean towards bridging these social gaps. What responsibility do students of this institute have towards the tax payers- as designers in making, needs to be discussed at length. Unless that happens, a disconnect between the needs of the nation and the projects undertaken will prevail. And the notion of freedom at IDC will continue to be hazy. Academic or otherwise.

Freedom?

The Gamela, scissors and shoe-shine stand were amongst the earliest projects at IDC and addressed the need of tools and equipment amongst the lower income groups. Practicing designers may never design such products but IDC chose to sensitise it's students in the area of India's unmet needs.

Archived Inspiration

Products designed in IDC for occupational and professional use: Products for occupational use become the priority items in a developing country. The income distributions clearly indicate that 70% of the population in the lower income groups consume only 30% of the national produce. This would mean that the poor majority spends very little on problems of comfort. Design of products for poor has little meaning unless it deals with their earnings. Workers and professionals have seldom any say in the choice of tools and equipment they use. Practicing individual designers may never be commissioned to design these products in the present circumstances. Here comes a socially responsible and visionary role for a design institute to tackle such problems and propagate them among those responsible for decision-making. Students at the Centre are encouraged to take up such problems though from a narrow commercial and professional point of view such exercises may look academic.

The Japanese style cups from ceramic studio were given to Descafe and Sakshi organised a tea party to mark the occasion. The cups and the Tulsi tea being the highlight. Not to forget chai conversations!

Overheard@IDC: "Rigour, woh toh apne liye hota hai. Faculty ko dikhane ke liye thode hota hai?? Rigour toh kaam mein ana chahiye, you should have a higher aim for yourself than previous time, bass."

Podcasts

Podcasts are radio shows or TV shows that can be downloaded from the internet. They could be based on a variety of subjects right from education to entertainment. For a long time my concept of interaction was limited to people talking face to face. I saw internet as a deterrent to this objective and kept fighting it. However it is also a good opportunity to share ideas. The anonymity it offers is also a plus. The medium of podcasts combines the positives of internet with the old world charm of hearing a live voice or seeing visuals. Which have a ring of authenticity to them. They also "talk" to people and encourage a talk back. More over they are unobtrusive, in a sense that you can choose when and where to tune in.

Further the podcasts has two aspects- the content (what is being said and how), how it will be conveyed to the audience (delivery mechanism- whether internet or physical object etc). Like a newsletter a podcasts addresses all the parameters of freedom, awareness, playfulness, creativity, learning and evaluation. It allows me to feature anonymous opinion and have the advantage of using a human voice to convey it all. As a medium its the most unobtrusive. Its more a precursor to the topics and ideas that could be further elaborated on in the newsletter.

Podcasts I would divide Podcasts into two aspects- content and delivery.

Content
I gathered material for podcasts mainly through the video documentation, talking to people and at times even eavesdropping. The video documentation had yielded several responses from which evolved the following topics for the podcasts-

- Free intellectual dialogue
- lack of rigour
- self-awareness
- why we are cocooned and cut off at IDC
- Playfulness
- Notion of creativity
- Learning structures- (should there be a module, its ideal duration)
- Projects (basis of choice, evaluation parameters, time management, input-output)
- Evaluation (by self or others)
- Electives, workshop week (process, outcomes, learnings)

Initially I recorded a few podcasts and bounced it off my guide. They sounded okay on quality he said but lacked on real issues. Later when I incorporated the real issues it began to sound very serious and at times preachy. Finally I wrote down what tone of voice do I expect from this podcast series. It reads as follows, "It need not start with the topic name in first sentence. The essence of topic should ease in slowly as a thought from some incident, joke, a conversation one eavesdropped on etc. Then there is a build up leading to perhaps getting other people (different voices) to share their opinion on the topic. A useful and succinct quote can be included. Overall, since the attention span is so low the podcast should not go beyond 2 to 2.5 mins. With half a minute of issue based talk and rest of the time for general banter which makes the podcast listenable in the first place. Keywords: Humour, crisp, street-smart, playful sarcasm, wit

This was the rough skeleton for the ideas for actual recording, I used the 'Garageband' software, in built microphone of MAC book pro.

Editing the podcasts using Garageband software, the podcasts are informal in tone but raise issues critical to the Industrial Design Centre.

'Garageband' interface is fairly simple and after trials and error I was able to record the podcasts. Apart from the audio "radio-show" podcasts, I also included some video footage I had shot during audit and generally around interactions in IDC to make a audio-video podcast for the occasion of Diwali. My podcasts needed a name and after toying around with couple of names I decided to call the show "IDC suniyore" after a popular hindi film song.

Delivery
With an idea and iterations of content in place, the delivery of podcasts needed structuring. From what I read up two methods were possible given my time and resources- one was to upload it online and make it accessible to all and the other was to play it using physical objects, radio look a likes at IDC just to recreate the old world feeling attached to a radio. These podcasts can be made available via Bluetooth exchange too. I bought few mp3 players and speakers from Lamington road and will make a mock-radio using the same.

One of the podcasts on Sustainability:
Signature tune fades in
Voice of hostess:

> Listen Up! The show is called IDC Suniyore and I am Aditi. Well its been raining sustainability conferences all around the globe now for a while. Come November and IDC shall get its very own called "In a planet of our own". With preparations in full swing and sustainability as a recurring theme in projects, I am compelled to look at sustainability in the Indian context. The scenario today is not very pleasant I am afraid, with computers, AC, lights almost perpetually switched on all round the institute. Institute has tried to combat this overt consumption by

introducing the "Energy general championship" amongst the hostels. A competition that will award hostels with least energy consumption. Back home in IDC we could do with some responsible behaviour ourselves; switching off lights, fans and computers when not in use. Limiting the use of air conditioning. Getting leaky water taps fixed. As well as being responsible consumers of paper and printing.

Techfest this year couldn't be left behind, could it now? And has introduced a competition called "Architech" which is about building an eco-friendly structure- a house. Looking at the larger picture sustainability seems to be woven in the fabric of Indian life since ancient times. The ancient scriptures with Vedic literature or Upanishads is full of examples that first of all attach sacredness to resources and then have rituals and practises connected to the same ensuring their sustianable use.

The reproduction techniques module with its water cosmogony theme for VC seniors as well as the ongoing Indian thoughts and traditions threw more light on this concept.

And now for the point of view of the POV question of the day. When it comes to sustainability and environmental responsibility do you think designing posters actually helps? Would you be the fly on the wall or the fly in the soup?

That's all for today, but before I say goodbye here's quoting MKG "Be the change you want to see in others" he said. Take care and see you.
Signature tune fades out

Chapter 5: Ideas: proposed, awaiting implementation

Exposure visits
It is critical for students to step outside the comfortable confines of their design school and see the world for what it really is. It is essential to keep abreast of latest happenings whether in printing technology or the latest photography exhibition or even theatre. As it can enrich us. Such trips informally organised specially can be a lot of fun and are a great reason for people to get together and interact in a non-hostile environment. This too satisfies all of the five parameters.

IDC Parties
A regular feature, where everybody can let their hair down and spend some time together. Not essentially talking about work but just bonding and having fun is a great way to get people to interact.

And instead of doing a similar party routine each time, they could have themes like parties of Bauhaus which adds to the event and makes it truly special and memorable. Not just big parties each time even smaller tea gatherings where by and large all meet could also become a regular feature. The idea is to not only get students involved but getting as many people in involved in making arrangements as well as attending.

IDC Clean-ups
The workshops and studios tend to get messy all the time. And its not just the responsibility of the staff to look into it. IDC clean-up, a cleaning up session at regular intervals is about keeping the space at IDC clean, spic and span- at the individual level and at the department level. Certain things cannot be junked without institute

permissions and are piling on since- one will have to find a creative way to re-appropriate this stuff unless its already being re-used. When done collectively the act of cleaning won't seem a burden of one person anymore and the order in surroundings will probably also reflect via clarity in thought process. Of the above I have chosen to taken forward the Podcasts and the newsletter. So also the video documentation asking questions, "what do you think about IDC? What would you change about IDC?".

Chapter 6: On a concluding note

Having been through this process and having tried certain things to get people to interact I feel what I have been able to address and achieve is small portion of the tip of the iceberg and so much remains to be done. Since all my podcasts aren't out yet and newsletter is on its way I would not mention what kind of outcomes they have had w.r.t. getting people to interact. But the one activity I tried my hand at was organising an informal project 2 discussion over tea called the "Tea conspiracy". Which did not work out too well. However similar thing organised later in the semester by a fellow batch mate Sakshi got a much better response. I tried to examine why and this is where my own definitions of what comprises an interaction changed.

It's not that people don't interact at all at IDC. They interact when it's convenient to them on topics which are not to "sticky" a subject.

If you invite people for an event with a clear academic agenda spelt out, students are most likely to not come. Anything in your face doesn't work.

Timing the event well in advance and sending reminders through relevant medium and at appropriate time intervals is equally important.

Trying to fight the effect of internet specially on the way students choose to interact through it as opposed to face to face interaction is futile. Fighting Facebook is nearly impossible so why not use it to one's advantage and try and initiate online debates by putting up podcasts and newsletter online on sites like Facebook frequented by students. Just an e-mail, more so a common thread e-mail hardly works. Firstly, it would get lost in the sea of mail in every inbox, secondly people

want a personal mail- if at all, addressed to them and not some mass mail invitation. Perhaps these are soft skills of interaction but they are very important and if not taken care of can put people off instantly.

Getting faculty, staff and students on the same page though not impossible is difficult because three kinds of egos, identities are at play.

Nobody likes to listen to preachy sermons, never talk down to anyone whether children, youth or adults.

People are like to come for an event/ gather if they truly feel its worth their time and it does not take them a great effort to add it to their already busy schedules.

With regards to video documentation and interviews, initial rapport building is must otherwise the responses you get are artificial and trivial.

This is a self-evolving, never-ending project I realised. Because no matter what, there will always be a scope for improvement. The project, in it's current shape is being sustained due to efforts of few people. Without their push, it will wither away. The need of the hour is a self-sustained initiative that won't stop working even if it's instigators passed out or left IDC.

Appendix

Tea Conspiracy
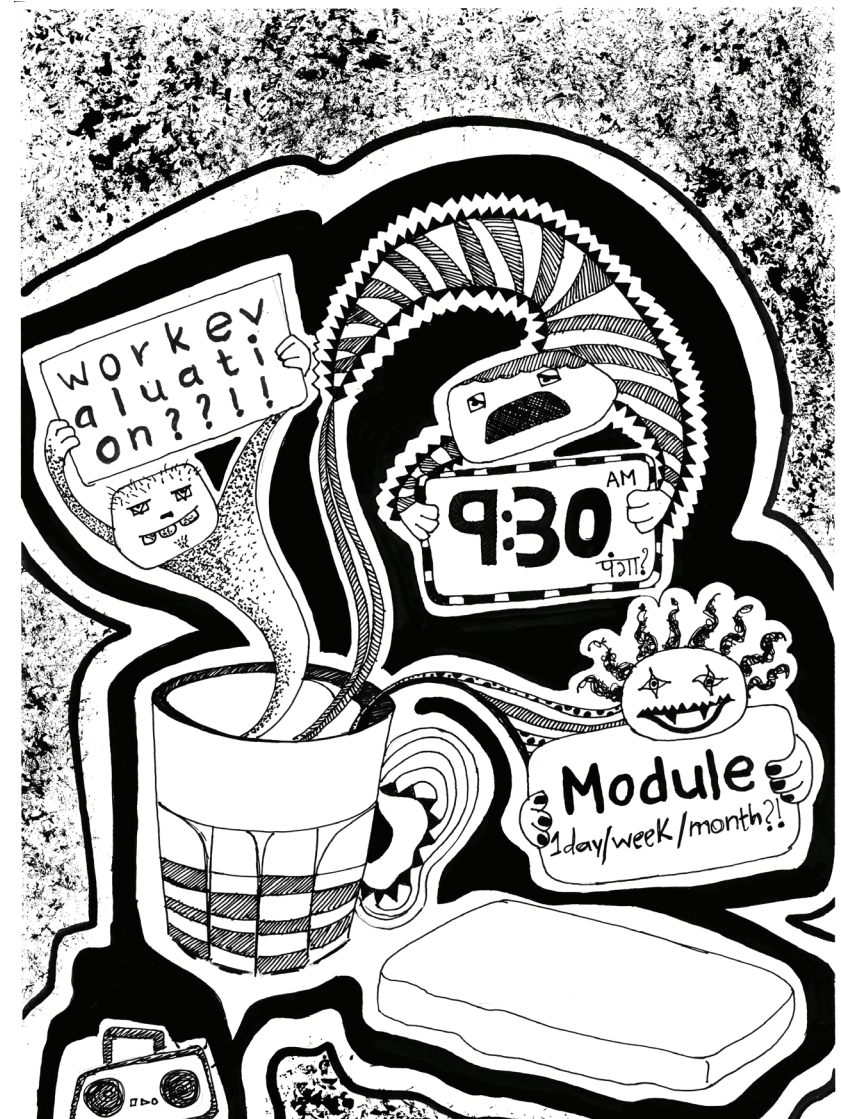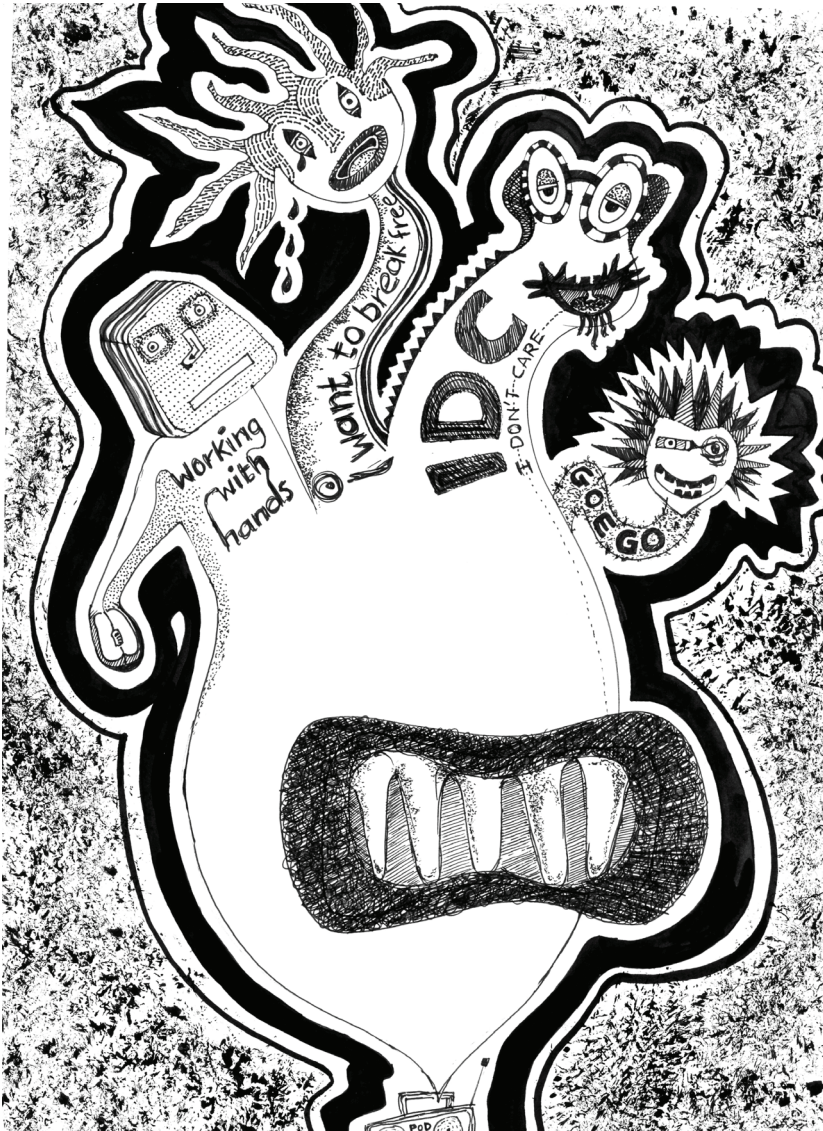what does it take to start a conversation?
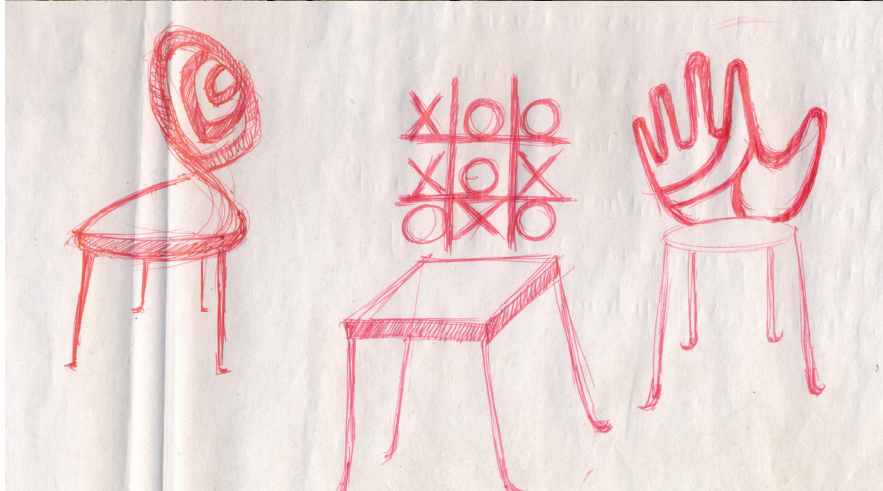
Appendix

This piece of furniture was brought to IDC, thanks to the permission and efforts of faculty, who further suggested that we could craft our own wrought iron furniture at IDC. Following ideas were explored on paper for the same.

Appendix

Flyers designed to promote the podcasts

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