Plywood Toys

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FRAMEWORK
In 1967 Yale dean Charles Moore in collaboration with Kent Bloomer established one of the first permanent design/build studios in the country, the Yale First-year Building Project. Yale required ALL first-year graduate students to participate in the design and construction of a structure. “Moore saw that getting out of the studio and building something (making) would have several benefits for the students. As a believer in simple tectonics and basic technologies, he hoped students would be inspired by the mechanics of building.” (Vlock Building Project summary).

The importance of engaging ALL students in the making process cannot be overemphasized. In its theoretical form, an idea can only be challenged conceptually. Once an idea is given physicality, however, these artifacts (the drawings, models, etc.) can now be used to challenge the idea not only conceptually, but also physically. 1:1 exercises reinforce the notion that how we make things and how we think about them are intrinsically linked.

ARCHITECTURAL TOY
While traditionally design/build exercises have been implemented at the scale of a space or a building, this exercise, at the scale of an object (and executed by an entire class of junior level students), delves deep into issues of intimate user interaction and tectonics. Students developed a project from conception to fabrication and finished with a better understand of the relationship between ideas and making. The students were asked to design, in teams of two, a transformable toy for a child while using a limited vocabulary of shapes and a single material palette of 5/8” Baltic birch plywood. The deliverables were not models, but the actual toy.

A local museum provided funds for the Baltic ply, allowing students to experiment without the concern of costs. In addition, the museum also displayed the best toy designs alongside an exhibition called Serious Play that highlighted the work of Ann Tyng. This provided students a venue to disseminate their ideas to the public. Children from the local daycare served as toy testers providing dynamic feedback to the student designers. The partnerships along with the design and construction process allowed students to consider spatial and material experiences through tectonics in combination with how users interact with objects in their environment; and how designs benefit from careful consideration and inclusion of specific human experiences. The scale of the toy

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allowed for this assignment to be completed within a controlled timeframe and served as a primer for a satellite center for the local art museum.

This exercise also reinforced a critical discussion regarding means of fabrication. The laser cutter and CNC mill have been indiscriminately introduced into our design studios. The project offered a way to critically evaluate the roles of these tools relative to design. Students began to recognize that different tools leave different marks on the same piece of material. How can one capitalize on the positive aspects and minimize the negative ones? Realizing these relationships can only be understood as one actively engages with the process of making.
 Plywood Toys

György Kerecsen, The Bartlett School of Art and Design, 1995

This workshop shows the significance of objects in their potential for practical applications or play. The children were given the chance to make objects from a variety of materials, and they enjoyed experimenting with different shapes and colors. The students were asked to design and build objects that would be used in the workshop, and they were encouraged to think about how their objects could be used.

Framework

In 1997, the Bartlett School of Architecture and Design established a workshop for students to design and build objects. The workshop was called the "Bartlett School of Architecture and Design" and was sponsored by the Architecture Foundation. The students were given the opportunity to design and build objects that would be used in the workshop, and they were encouraged to think about how their objects could be used.

Practical Toy

While traditionally design students have been interested in the shape and color of an object, this workshop focused on the interaction of objects with the environment. The students were asked to create objects that could be used in various ways, such as in a classroom or a playground. The objects were designed to be interactive, and the students were encouraged to think about how their objects could be used.

The importance of engaging with objects cannot be overstated. In their final projects, students were encouraged to think about the objects they created and how they could be used. This approach helped students to think about how their objects could be used in real-world situations.

A local museum provided funds for the Bartlett School of Architecture and Design to create an exhibit of their work. The exhibit was a success, and the students were proud of their work. The museum also provided a venue for the students to exhibit their work to the public, allowing them to share their ideas and how they were able to interact with them. The students were encouraged to think about how their objects could be used in real-world situations.

The workshop also highlighted the importance of collaboration. The students worked together to create objects that could be used in various ways, and they were encouraged to think about how their objects could be used in real-world situations.