Computer-Aided-Design for a Visual Merchandising Class: A Case Study with the Program Developer and the Industry for a Curriculum Development.

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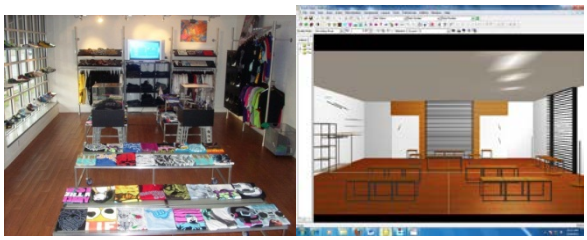
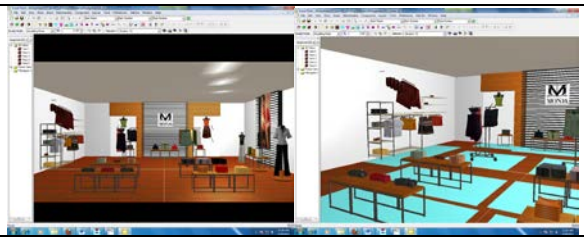
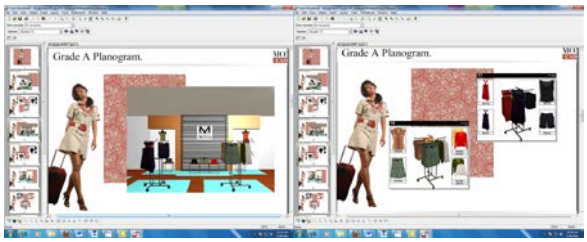
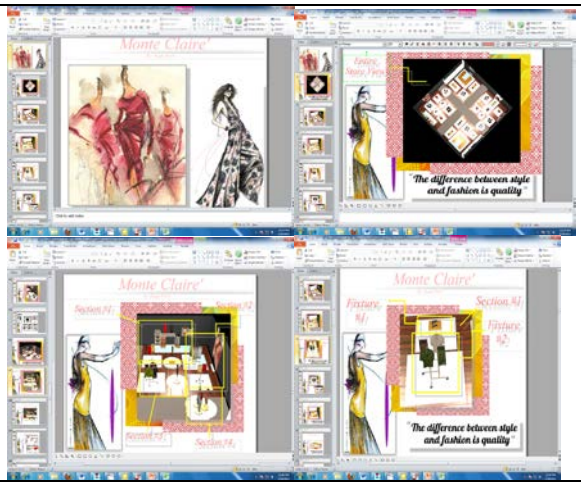
Recently, the importance of Computer-Aided-Design (CAD) in visual merchandising, which creates 3D store designs, is increasing in the retailing industry. According to *vrSoftware*, CAD in visual merchandising can significantly save time and labor for store design (cost-saving), improve communication with staffs globally, increase consistency of brand identity, help buyers' merchandise selection with a sense of store atmosphere, and ultimately drive sales. Educators in higher education recognized the importance of CAD for students (Meakin, 2010); however, not many colleges are currently offering students an actual 3D store design CAD program in the classroom. Even if teaching a CAD, no clear direction/criteria exist to evaluate the class curriculum/outcomes to determine whether the class teaches students necessary skill sets that are transferable to their future professional job and whether students' store designs are artistic and scientific enough to be used in a commercial setting. Therefore, this study examined whether the current curriculum of the author's class is appropriately developed for students to achieve necessary skill sets that meet the industry expectations. This study is a case study with the *Mockshop* program created by *vrSoftware*. Two types of surveys were developed, one for the Mockshop program developer and the other for the companies in the industry, to receive valuable inputs for the curriculum development. The surveys include students' Mockshop assignments developed based on the program developer's objectives and questions for the program developer and the companies to evaluate students' designs (see Table 1).

The survey results are similar between the program developer and the industry. They strongly agree that students utilized all the programs they learned (i.e., Visual Story, Visual Range, Visual Library and Visual Storyboard) very well and showed proficiency. They mention that students' artistic level and creativity are important criteria to evaluate students' designs, and for storyboard, students should be able to create the storyboard that even a 10 year old will understand. The results also show that the most important programs for students to utilize the Mockshop program effectively and efficiently are Visual Store, Visual Storyboard and Visual Analysis. The most important programs for students to prepare their job in visual merchandising are Visual Storyboard, Visual analysis and Visual Report. Therefore, Visual Analysis and Visual Storyboard are strongly recommended to learn. The program developer suggests teaching Visual Fixture because some companies design their own fixtures. The curriculum will be revised based on the industry experts' recommendations by adding Visual Analysis and Visual Fixture.

Meakin, K. (2010). Are we delivering the best practice curriculum for a degree in visual merchandising? *Dublin Institute of technology*. Retrieved February 5th, 2012, from http://arrow.dit.ie/aaschadpoth/2.

Table 1. Assignments, student's designs and objectives of the program by the developer.

Assignment Description	Student's Designs for Each Assignment	Objectives of Program
No Assignment. Skills not learned due to time constraint : Visual Export, Visual Import, Visual Report, Visual Analysis, Visual Fixture.		Obj. 1: Create the product database (including all product data). Graphics and photos of stock are automatically converted into 3D garments.
Assignment 1: Create an existing store. Learn *Visual Store* and *Visual Library*. Imitate the store as close as possible (without garment). Use all the store space. Put all fixtures and circulations inside store.		Obj. 2: Build the virtual store. Lay out the shop floor. Drag and drop merchandise fixtures, garments and graphics. Use posters, photos or sketches of actual merchandise.
Assignment 2: Add garments. Learn *Visual Range*. Add garment into the store from Assignment 1. Create 5 Named Views.		
Assignment 3: Create a Story Board. Learn Visual Storyboard. Use five Named Views from Assignment 2. Add all fixture planograms under each Named View.		Obj. 3: Generate planograms automatically. Obj. 4: Distribute planograms to colleagues, electronically or as hard copies. Clearly show merchandised to shop floor staff how they should be.
Assignment 4: Create your own store & story board. Use *Visual Store, Visual Library, Visual range* and *Visual Storyboard*. Apply theories and concepts in visual merchandising. Enhance your creativeness & artistic skills.		N/A