



**Art**

**&**

**Pedagogical  
Strategies**

**Intercultural Education Strategies**  
**Edited by: Rosita Deluigi**  
**Adéla Machová**  
**Flavia Stara**





# **MEDIA, ART AND DESIGN. INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION STRATEGIES**

**Edited by: Rosita Deluigi, Adéla Machová, Flavia Stara**



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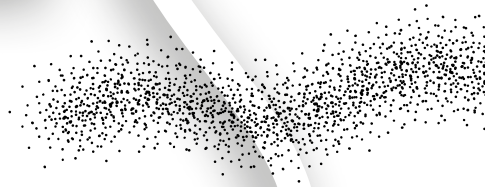
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# I. THEORETICAL FRAME





# 1

## INTRODUCTION — DESCRIPTION OF TICASS FRAMEWORK: AIMS AND RESULTS

Aleksandra Lukaszewicz Alcaraz

The TICASS project – Technologies of Imaging in Communication, Art and Social Sciences – is funded via the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Research and Innovation Staff Exchange framework in Horizon 2020 by the European Commission (Grant Agreement no 734602). It is an interdisciplinary and international research project focused on the transcultural perspectives of technological, artistic, educational, and economic aspects of visual communication in urban spaces.

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Research and Innovation Staff Exchange framework supports the exchange of research between European and third countries and intersectoral exchange, in order to help researchers learn from each other, broaden understanding, share effective practices, and produce knowledge. The following institutions participate in the TICASS project: the Polish University Abroad in London, United Kingdom; the Academy of Art in Szczecin, Poland; the Association of Education, Science, Culture, Poland; the University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic; the University of Macerata, Italy; and Pwani University, Kenya. In the first year of the project, the consortium also cooperated with the University of Witwatersrand, Republic of South Africa. Researchers in the consortium specialise in the philosophy of education and art, visual culture and history of art, design, art, economy, and pedagogy. They joined efforts in order to better understand visual languages, visual culture, and visual technologies, so as to better prepare for the transcultural global future.

The most general philosophical framework employed in the TICASS project is a pragmatic one, stemming from the influential writings of John Dewey on art (Dewey 1934), culture, and education (Dewey 1974), and of Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of signs (Peirce 1992). The Deweyan perspective allows the approaching and valuing of various cultural phenomena on the basis of the kinds of experiences they come from, and the ones they produce or affect. His grasp is democratic and open to participation, without strong hierarchies or categorisations. This allows education to be considered in participatory, experience-oriented ways. The Peircean analysis of signs (especially his general theory of signs) is also very helpful because it is general enough to embrace different kinds of signs, not just, for example, the graphic design visible in streets, without sacrificing accuracy.

Against such a background, TICASS researchers agreed on some specific tools for the analysis and interpretation of visual communication in urban spaces in different countries in Europe and Africa. After debating the similarities and

differences in specific geographical, cultural, and economic conditions in visual communication, and the similarities and differences in the perception and interpretation of visual communicates, it was decided to adopt the Paul Martin Lester proposal of visual communication analysis (Lester 2006/2011), Jurgen Habermas' notion of the public sphere (Habermas 2015), and the postcolonial critique of the construction of the Other (as presented by Gayatri Spivak; e.g. Spivak 2010). Lester's visual communication analysis is not a complicated theory, but more a guiding framework for conducting an analysis. Lester advises each image be analysed according to six perspectives in order to interpret it fully: personal, historical, technical/aesthetic, cultural, ethical, and critical; and TICASS researchers used these guidelines to interpret the material gathered from the field investigation in all the countries involved in the project<sup>1</sup>. They also conducted a series of workshops and discussions on images from different cities and cultures, searching for cross-cultural communication.

The underlining assumption of the TICASS project is that there are many visual languages rather than just one; although it is easy to believe the opposite if one is enclosed only in globalised media and the Western world. Therefore, TICASS researchers challenged themselves, searching for problems in interpretation and communication not in order to make them disappear, but rather to creatively solve them.

The major practical aim of such a broad investigation was the development of educational recommendations for studies in media, art, and design, and the manual for workshops in visual literacy. Educational recommendations are developed in a theoretical form, while manual workshops have a more practical form; giving examples of possible workshops and sharing good practices in visual literacy. For these two outcomes I must thank Prof. Rosita Deluigi from the University of Macerata and Dr. Adéla Machová from the University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem, who used their education and artistic capacities to deliver the recommendations and the manual.

The following educational recommendations for studies in media, art, and design are the collective work of Italian, Czech, and Polish researchers. The general overview of international studies of visual languages and communication is given by Prof. Flavia Stara, who presents images as a vehicular language for interdisciplinary dialogue. Relationships between knowledge structures and content and the use of visual languages are analysed in the second part of the report from the perspective of social interactions taken from transcultural vantage points. The practical application of such a perspective is presented in the text by Kateřina Dyrtrtová, who shows the importance of a deep cultural approach to visual signs and art, not just a superficial grasp and use, for the sake of understanding.

The third part of the book is dedicated to specific educational strategies for teaching visual languages, focused on the cultural context, visual literacy skills, intercultural interactions, critical approaches, creative experiences, and transcultural validations of the experience in order to develop subjective and collective visual

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1 See for ex.: eport 1 from Poland/Szczecin. Technologies of Imaging in Urban Communication, edited by Elzbieta Perzycka and Aleksandra Lukaszewicz Alcaraz, Academy of Art in Szczecin 2019; and: Report 2 from Kilifi County and Mombasa/Kenya. Technologies of Imaging in Urban Communication, edited by Elzbieta Perzycka and Aleksandra Lukaszewicz Alcaraz, Academy of Art in Szczecin 2020. The other reports are forthcoming (from the United Kingdom, Italy, and the Czech Republic).

competences – knowledge and abilities – within mutual and social understanding. In the fourth part of the book, Dr Giuseppe Capriotti explains the theoretical tools used for analysis in detail; especially Paul Martin Lester's visual communication analysis and Harold Dwight Lasswell's approach to visual signs in his communication model. The fifth part discusses the results delivered by Prof. Rosita Deluigi of the interdisciplinary round table held at the 4th International TICASS Conference "P.Art-icipA©tion. Education, Visual Languages and Intercultural Strategies" held on the 25th-26th of November at the Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism at the University of Macerata and at the Museo Buonaccorsi, Italy. The round table allowed for interdisciplinary dialogue between the participants, and the cooperative approach made it possible to focus on many research hubs, drawing useful trajectories for the development of indications and guidelines related to visual education and the promotion of intercultural dialogue, which might be useful for the future development of visual education in a transcultural perspective. Finally, the last part of the book presents the best practices elaborated during the TICASS project in Italy, the Czech Republic, and Kenya.

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## 2

# BACKGROUND — OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES ON VISUAL LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Flavia Stara

Visuality and visualisations are present in all cultures, and often interpreted and appreciated differently. In the face of the proliferation of images in all areas of human life, we can talk about the importance of education on how to adjust to and operate in visual space, and how to read and develop specific alternative languages. The use of visual technology in communication, within contemporary urban iconospheres, is connected to cultural, political, and economic differences.

Visual language is defined as a system of communication using visual elements. The term “visual” in relation to language describes the perception, comprehension, and production of visible signs. People verbalise their own thinking and can visualise it. A diagram, a map, and a painting are all examples of uses of visual language. Its structural units include line, shape, colour, motion, texture, pattern, direction, orientation, scale, angle, space, and proportion. The elements in an image represent concepts in a spatial context rather than the time-based linear progression used in talking and reading. Speech and visual communication are parallel and often interdependent means by which humans exchange information (Habermas 1984).

In visual communication information is conveyed via messages of a graphic design composition. Therefore, it is necessary to properly understand visual techniques. Visual communication is the presentation of information by visual recognition; it is also the most common way with the longest history.

Human interactions occur through verbal and nonverbal symbols. The former mainly refers to languages and words, while the latter includes music, dance, drawing, and architecture; as well as body language (Belting 2011). Contemporary communication can be divided into direct communication among people through languages, words, gestures, sounds, and so on, and indirect communication among people via multiple signs: logos, advertising, illustration, product design, directions, regulations, etc. Visual language is a rich set of principles, elements, and techniques carrying meanings. Certain arrangements of words, symbols, hues, and shapes have specific cultural meanings that create visual interactions and impact people.

Visual information is conveyed by the movement and change of the design order, direction, illusion, and psychological implication. Visual language is an effective tool to describe social attitudes, behaviours, and cultural preferences. People from different cultural backgrounds have different perceptions and imageries of reality when it is described through words. Likewise, visual languages can present

a variety of meanings in effective ways. The emotional perception of visual language is set through the combination and arrangement of psychological attitudes and elements of design, such as pattern, hue, and words. Since visual language is manifold, it produces a wide range of emotional experiences. It conveys meanings related to cultural values and traditions. Nonverbal cues function via stimulating passion and emotion beyond verbal symbols. Forms and shapes can be thought of as positive or negative, and understanding the use of colour is crucial to effective composition in design and the fine arts. Colour arrangements are very powerful, and have an enormous impact on the representation of reality on both an individual and collective level. Cultural significance in hue is strictly connected with the traditions and customs of a country and ethnicity. Certain colours are related to spiritual backgrounds; similarly, fabrics and garments create visual impacts and refer to specific lifestyles and beliefs (Panofsky 1962; Lester 2011).

The term 'visual communication studies' refers to an interdisciplinary academic field of scholarship that analyses the composition and effectiveness of messages that are expressed primarily or in significant ways through imagery or graphical depiction. While text, often called verbal or linguistic communication, may accompany these messages, in order to be considered visual communication, the objects, artifacts, or symbols that comprise the message must be designed or delivered in ways substantially dependent on the visual attention or vision of audiences (Elkins 2003, Pinotti and Somaini 2016).

The study of visual culture has emerged over the past 30 years across a range of disciplines including art history, aesthetics, film studies, graphic design, media studies, comparative literature, anthropology, and museology, all focusing on visuality as an object of study. The many studies on visuality cannot be recognised as a unified field of inquiry, as they lack a common paradigm and are characterised by lively debates over their object domain; that is, what they actually study. The term itself is complex, implying that cultural expressions become more and more visual, thereby requiring new theories and modes of inquiry and understanding. Therefore, one comes to realise it is not the epistemological status that is of interest so much as the prospect that visual culture studies might be an entire methodology with which to conduct research; of seeing and knowing, of outlining our encounters with visuality. It is in this way that the object of visual culture comes into view.

Visual culture as a research field focuses on the visual as a knowledge space where meanings are created and challenged. Western culture has consistently privileged the spoken word as the highest form of intellectual practice, and considered visual representations as a second-rate illustration of ideas. Nevertheless, the word 'imagination' suggests that one can also think in images. The emergence of visual culture generates what W. J. T. Mitchell called "picture theory", in the sense that some Western cultural expressions adopted a pictorial, rather than textual, view of the world. According to Mitchell, picture theory stems from:

the realisation that spectatorship (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance, and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of reading (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc.) and that 'visual experience' or 'visual literacy' might not be fully explicable in the model of textuality. (Mitchell 1994, p. 16)



Such remarks indicate the extent to which even literary studies came to agree that the world-as-a-text has been replaced by the world-as-a-picture. Such world-pictures cannot be purely visual, but, by the same token, the visual disrupts and challenges any attempt to define culture in purely linguistic terms.

Visual culture studies is not simply theory, or even visual theory, in any conventional sense, and it does not simply apply theory or visual theory to objects of study. It is not the study of images based on the casual premise that our contemporary culture is an image. Rather, the object of visual culture studies was born, emerged, was discernible, showed itself, and became visible over the years. In its phenomenology, the object of visual culture studies engenders its own critical way of being meaningful, of being interpreted, and even of not being understood. It is not a matter of discerning which objects are appropriate or inappropriate from the perspective of visual theories, but of recognising how social interactions take place beginning from the specifics of visual culture.

The fact that visual elements include cultural values indicates that globalisation can affect visual production only to a certain extent. Generated visual languages internalise local cultures: there are always intercultural differences in any given visual interaction. In the intercultural dialogue, the culture of the place where the visual is generated must be appreciated by the visual approach of other cultures. The otherness cannot be assimilated because the common is not the similar, the repetitive, the uniform, or the overcoming of differences, but rather a fruitful opening precisely because it is always declined in the plural. The interdisciplinary analysis of visual communication frees it from strict typologies, from secured enclosures. It is liberated from cultural constraints and encourages transcending social boundaries: it may favour grasping the essence of diverse cultures rather than fixing them in forms of specific identity (Jullien 2012).

The critical hermeneutics of the polysemic nature of visual imagery returns to visual representations a reality that articulates ambiguities and contradictions by addressing a broad range of issues concerning different layers of existential experiences. Physical and real spaces loaded with shared social values are linked to virtual and ritual spaces. Concrete spaces shaped by historical and cultural passages, as well as natural events (earth and seaquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods), are completed by imaginary spaces in which humankind projects desires, dreams, fears, and sorrows.

Any art-educational research path should explore and preserve what is alive rather than systematise the amazing variety of languages and streams of human thought, behaviours, and faiths.

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**II.  
IMAGES AS  
A VEHICULAR  
LANGUAGE FOR  
INTERDISCIPLINARY  
DIALOGUE**



# 3

## KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF VISUAL LANGUAGES — SYMBOLS, UNDERSTANDING, SOCIAL INTERACTION, TRANSCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Kateřina Dytrtová

### 3.1

#### The contextual anchoring of meaning

The knowledge and use of visual languages – here, we are referring to visual symbolic systems<sup>2</sup> – leads to rich and diverse social interactions. However, whether we apply and understand it fully depends on other symbolic systems; these have to do not only with the predictable mutual contextual pressures that individual systems create in relation to each other but also with interdisciplinary overlaps of contemporary media-rich expression. Words always interact with all symbolic systems in one way or another. Through words we speak and think of music, sounds, and noises; of images, installations, and architecture; as well as the meaning and expression contained in the movement, expressions, and gestures of the human body.

When each of a given set of symbolic systems (musical, visual, gesticulative, and linguistic) generates a purely denotative use of its means, we then speak of a one-way reference of denotation.<sup>3</sup> We do not dwell on the expression of such a symbol too much; here, the mode of its mediality, i.e. *how* the symbol is

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2 "The human mind is functioning symbolically when some components of its experience elicit consciousness, beliefs, emotions, and usages, respecting other components of its experience. The former set of components are the 'symbols,' and the latter set constitute the 'meaning' of the symbols. The organic functioning whereby there is transition from the symbol to the meaning shall be called 'symbolic reference'. This symbolic reference is the active synthetic element contributed by the nature of the percipient." (Whitehead 1998, p. 13)

3 In this text, I will rely on Goodman's (Goodman 2007) three terms: *denotation* – what aspects of the visual I have recognised or what it refers to; *exemplification* – how a given work of art is medialised, how the medium is used and the resulting physical fixity of the work of art: dimensions, technique, type of installation, light, and luminosity; *expression* – what term is stimulating as a result of previous references, which is a metaphoric shift to the world of human experience: something literally grey may be metaphorically boring, quiet, wistful, poor... Particularly in the case of constructing expression, it is necessary to pay attention to the breadth of interpretation, which, however, must indispensably discriminate between high quality solutions and those of little value.

constituted, plays the role of a mutually agreed upon design only. However, each of these systems also uses its means in symbolically richer and mutually interconnected references or two-way references.<sup>4</sup> As we shall see in the work of Ed Atkins below, such symbols are the bearers of often complicated expressions; how a given medium, which provides this reference in its own, specific way, is used definitely does matter, since it is this use that coproduces the expression.

How a car horn sounds – here we are concerned with a sound level unmissable in the context of traffic – cannot be compared with the colourful breadth of sounds made by the piano in relation to string and brass instruments in the context of the complexity of the sounds of an orchestra; just like the colour range of a set of traffic lights – in its intentionality and the level of meaningfulness it has attained – cannot be compared with the tasks associated with producing a painting and its diversely expressive, often gesticulative or experimental, colourful renditions.

When viewing the issue – what contextual explanatory level a given symbol requires: we do not test the sound of the piano in relation to street noise – from this perspective, what emerges are significant concepts through which we give precision to our text. We note the fundamental roles of *the context of the explanatory plane*<sup>5</sup> and the *intentionality* with which a work of art is created. These two phenomena are interconnected. When an author creates their work “as art”, they work differently to how they would be working if they were creating “design” from the outset. And vice versa: intentionality helps differentiate the function and quality of a set of traffic lights as a visual and design-related solution to the issue of movement on the road from the form of colourfulness of a painting.

It is possible to intentionality ascertain by asking the question “*why*” a given object or symbol is and exists. This “*why*” leads to another task: “*how*” the object or symbol will be medialised; how I will objectivise it medially; by means of what media I will express it. A painting is not a video; the movement of a living human being in front of a camera is not the movement of a computed digital being in virtual space (see Ed Atkins’ work below). Questions as to what explanatory plane I understand and justify a given work of art on – why the work of art is, and how the work of art is – are interconnected, and open the way to understanding works of art that do not just simply denote or refer to something.

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4 Denotation is just a one-way reference. The percipient does not have to see the object that is being referred to. Semantically, the appearance of the object does not play a significant role. A sign that does so is transparent (e.g. the letters of the alphabet without graphic ambitions). The properties of such a sign are “transparent” for the user. Effectively, they have no other purpose than to denote, which is why *how* this sign is designed is often a matter of a mere agreement. For instance, in a purely denotative use of words, we do not dwell on the rhythm of words. Meanwhile, exemplification (*how* a painting is: signatureless? Liquid paint in a relief sculpture?) is a two-way referential relationship. This is because it is possible to definitively determine what properties to focus on as semantically significant from the endless list of properties of a painting only when the property that the “sample” (manner of painting) exemplifies is denoted in “the opposite direction”. In order for us to know what the colour red in a set of traffic lights means, we have agreed in the opposite direction that it means Stop! This relates to the colour, not the round shape or the size of the set of traffic lights. However, samples are not used in this “agreed upon” way. On the contrary, this discipline has emerged for the purpose of creating polysemous symbols (Dytrtová, Slavík 2019; Dytrtová 2019, p. 59).

5 “Here, context is understood as a certain bonding agent (generated or identified reconstructed by research) that gives hope for objectivity and causes the cohesion and unity of past phenomena.” (Makky 2018)



From now on, we will navigate only the domain of works understood “as art” and we will also view them that way. Here, a key task, essential for understanding, will be an ability to undertake a metaphorical (illiteral) shift with reference to expression under the very precise conditions of mediality in parallel with a given topic.

## 3.2

### The intentionality of expression as conscious communication and sharing

Our knowledge of or our manner of rejecting the known in a medium will manifest in the “how”. The dynamic and performative nature of intentionality, as well as the artist’s value system, are reflected in the “why” (why at all?): the need to express one’s opinion regarding this very topic, the need to influence or protect this very thing. These are the kinds of questions that helped establish not only whole civilisations, but also their spiritual values. The questions “why” and “how” return reflections on a given work of art or symbol to the moment of selection and initiation concerning the interaction between the initial perceptual stimulus and the artist’s response: they noticed something like this and by processing it in this specific way endowed it with a specific meaning in that particular context. Meaning that – if we want to understand it and keep communicating – we must reconstruct through our own experience and knowledge.

The relationship between a perceptual stimulus and a (creative) response to it is explained as the blending of causes and their effects, in which effects are inserted into their stimuli in the sense that a stimulus is perceived through the prism of what has been inserted into it in response to it. The elementary act of production fundamentally exceeds the original causality of the immediate biological response since it assumes the conscious expression of its content invariant and provides an opportunity to seek alternatives whilst using the diversity of notions associated with a specific term. (Slavík, Chrz, Štech et al., p. 95)

Differentiating between production and an immediate biological response is relatively important here; it will help us distinguish between the expression of a work of art as an intuitively or consciously *constructed* symbol (in alterations, experiments, in the production of a concept) and an ordinary experience in real life. It is impossible to vulgarly narrow the metaphorical reference of an expression down to an immediate emotional reaction<sup>6</sup>, because the theoretical space for understanding the symbol “as a symbol” would vanish – symbols would merge with reality and metaphor would disintegrate into nonsensical idioms and phrases.

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6 Without a distance, I do not experience tension, I speak of tension, I *direct* tension (from a bird’s eye view), that is the substance of an intentional creative gesture: why still create in a world that has been created? What is it for? The narrowing of expression as a cultural exercise down to an immediate emotional reaction has occurred, for instance, under the influence of structuralism, which rejected the so-called “subjective aesthetics” and promoted the proposition that the only scientific approach to artistic expression is based on the analysis of the structure of the material form of a work of art: artwork-thing. It was Benedetto Croce who protested (against Darwin) the narrowing of expression down to a spontaneous expression of emotion (Slavík 2017).

However, the space for understanding production as a spiritual task would disappear, too. The question: How do I express a given expression? Would vanish, and so would contemplating the notion that I want to communicate something. Space for reflection: Why do I express my opinion on European values<sup>7</sup> when I experience them in this way regardless? Would evaporate as a consequence of the intersubjective sharing of discussed values. “Thinking about something”, “experience” as a cultural exercise (Slavík 2001), would disappear, too.

Nelson Goodman (1968) disproved the prejudiced hypothesis that expression is not a mere emotion by means of his grasp of expression as a type of symbolisation. Expression refers to characteristics, sensory impressions, or emotions; but as we shall see in Ed Atkins’ work below, that does not necessarily mean that the author or percipient of the expression really has these characteristics, impressions, or emotions. The naming of characteristics and expressing them are two different things: a short story does not have to express what it says, nor does it have to say what it expresses. A tale of fast action may be slow, the description of colourful music drab, and a play about boredom electric (Goodman 2007). So, this concerns clusters of complicated, *constructed*, and metaphorically chained expressions that one must be able to navigate. It is about creative performance on the side of the artist as well as on the side of the interpreter.

The reality of life is not made up of plain facts, but also of our understanding of meanings and facts, our decisions, and attitudes. That is why to think of the intentionality of a work of art or a symbol (as we shall see below, to tend to European values does not mean to be worried or ironical about them) is a different expressive “entrance” into artistic production that will fundamentally impact *why* as well as *how* and *what* I communicate (Dytrtová 2017, p. 8). Thus, that means it is a hidden, albeit a very impactful, performative moment that metamorphoses the seemingly simple situation of artistic production “from scratch” into a *relational affective field* anchored in the artist’s subjectivity (1st-person epistemic perspective) as well as in the intersubjective space of sharing a work of art in communication about its quality and meaning (3rd person epistemic perspective) (Searle 2004; Slavík 2015).

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7

By referring to the topic of European values, the text prepares the ground for discussing the topic of the transcultural perspective of the discipline, a trend one can identify time and again at major exhibitions in Kassel or Venice, as well as the theoretical delineation of expression as the substance of the discipline, which, in the visual field as well as in music, brings about understanding across cultures. This is the case because it is not a manifestation of nationality, but of humanity; as such, although it is susceptible to temporal and local ways of expressing, which it is then appropriate to get to know and investigate.

## 3.3

### The epistemic perspectives of the 1st and 3rd person: A condition of the contextuality of social interaction

This entails a relatively complex process for the artist: creating a sufficiently effective, new, and unexpected metaphor and expression that objectivise their private experience on a sharable culturally and topically stimulating level with a view to preserving its distinctiveness. Thus, its status is elevated (by the artist) from individual and private to universal. From the side of the percipient, an opportunity has presented itself to generalise their own experience in a joint act of *empathically* experiencing the values encapsulated by the work of art at hand.<sup>8</sup>

We have thus drawn attention to other related terms essential for the tasks set for the text: understanding and subsequent social interaction through a visual code. Empathy, the ability to understand the other's position (to put yourself in someone else's shoes, 3rd person "he/she") and the ability to express and medialise a personal, private, subjective viewpoint (1st person "I").

I rely on the theory of "artephiletics" (Slavík 2001, 2015), which understands Goodman's objectifying symbolic reference of expression from the side of the subject as a collision between the perspective I – he/she; between the private and the universally shared. This relational dynamic pair helps to theoretically delineate space for situations that frequently arise during the production and perception of a work of art: tension – despite me, they do; accordance – yes, I do, and they do, too; refusal – I never do, but they do. This enables a smoother solution to issues arising during common interactions regarding someone else's opinion.

For instance, the field of mathematics has no need for a repertoire of these terms since it does not have to link the emerging symbol (to a calculation) with the artist's value system. In this regard, expressive disciplines (creative writing, artistic, acoustic, musical, and theatrical production) can be labelled as normative because they endow the work of art with the author's value system, visions, wishes, and worries.

Peregrin (2003) defines normative disciplines in opposition to descriptive ones. Normative disciplines dwell on reasons and values (the humanities, "the world within"), thus distinguishing themselves from descriptive disciplines that describe "the world outside" (physics, mathematics, chemistry, biology).

By moving between these I – he/she perspectives, it is possible to understand the many shades of the breadth of interpretation necessary for sharing the varied nature of human views and perspectives. This effectively facilitates social interaction and the exchange, rejection, or support of values and their sharing. As we have been able to see time and again at major world exhibitions, the quality and non-arrogance of a transcultural perspective are conditioned by them. However, for this not to be a mere exchange or an instance of noticing something else, for

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8 Lukáš Makky (2017) regards authenticity as a central category of (not just) contemporary art, which is an interdisciplinary constant in its axiological plane. It captures (in an ideal situation) interaction between the recipient (who approaches the received work of art authentically and "sincerely") and the author (who creates the work of art and initiates a certain receptive relation in an equally authentic way, though with a degree of irony at times); therefore, it can be understood also as an apparatus of mutual understanding.

this to be truly an understanding of difference and its consequences, it absolutely must be contextual and consciously work at the interface of I/they from the perspective of the socialisation of the individual as well as at the interface of we/they from the position of minorities and majorities and their value systems encapsulated by means of a visual code.

## 3.4

### Visual symbolic systems and language

As stated above, knowledge of a symbolic system is related to the use of other well-understood systems: above all, to language, which we all use in a common denominative manner in order to communicate. Can inappropriate exchanges occur? How does a visual code relate to words, and where could an unconscious usage of word strategies be detrimental to visual discipline? This phenomenon is connected with the promoted and cultivated nature of broad communication by means of words over materialised and spatialised art – over (not only) artistic<sup>9</sup> objects of the world of art.

The capacity of words to abstractly denote (they are no longer similar to what they refer to)<sup>10</sup> enable this code to remain clear of materiality. That is why they serve to express immaterial phenomena, abstract notions, processes, and reflections very well.<sup>11</sup> We think through this symbolic system and, as a consequence, the ease with which language is capable of expressing temporally or philosophicaly complicated situations or narrations, for example, dominates the interpretation of the visual. Due to these contextual “linguistic” pressures, lay users consistently particularly employ denotation: *what* the visual depicts. Such interpretation ends with recognising what one sees in a video or an image. *Why* and *how* the work of art at hand is and exists are rarely addressed, and language may not be used at all to clear the way for verbalising the expression of a given work of art.

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9 Naturally, we use language as one of the most precise codes for transmitting thoughts not only in relation to artistic discourses but also for all the other expressively creative discourses whose meaning, quality, and efficiency we reflect on (in words). The history of music is paved with reflections about the inappropriate use of too concrete verbal descriptions of abstract configurations of musical materials. Calcified denotations of musical means are referred to as the not always welcome programmatic nature of music.

10 Except for motivated words: the expression a dog “barks”, the expression a whip “cracks”, the expression mum “embraces”: these are interjections (plonk, crack...) and some verbs that express a given sound (clatter, bang, scratch, squeak, splash...).

11 Language as much as ‘digitalises’, stamps, and spreads towards its boundaries by means of the conventional scope of words (yellow, orange, red) while visual codes create “analogue” worlds by means of shapes, colours, and materials (samples of the world).

Only denotationally built interpretations are also supported by a sizeable number of politically, socially, and ecologically motivated works of art where the interpreter is satisfied by discovering the maze of denotational connections. However, this begs the question how such an ecologically appealing art differs from other (non-artistic) ecological appeals and messages.

We may refer to this interpretation, which is popular with lay users and defined by denotation only, as non-conceptual and non-metaphorical descriptiveness. Nonetheless, through it, visual disciplines thus lose all the diversity of media (the painted and the photographed merge) as well as the exclusivity of material metaphors.<sup>12</sup> What is actually at issue here is that the medium and the quality (or lack thereof) of its use and expression utterly miss each other.

## 3.5

### Ed Atkins, or connecting the visual and the musical symbolic systems

We had the opportunity to see Ed Atkins' expressive and metaphorically impressive work of art at the Venice Biennale in 2019; for our analysis, I have chosen a video available on the Internet. For the purpose of this text, it is necessary for the reader to watch the video.<sup>13</sup>

In the video (from 8:40'), we enter an airport with an atmosphere reminiscent of a dollhouse positioned at the feet of a man who is standing in silence; or, alternatively, a colossal statue dating back to ancient times, adding the hallmark of an ordinary town square to an automated airport luggage security scanner. The upper part of the statue is lost in mythological mists and, beneath it, fleeting life ticks away.<sup>14</sup> The mechanism of the security scanner and the conveyor belt buzzes mechanically and smoothly; meaningful sound is added to the detail of every object placed in the trays for the purpose of a security check: an acoustic ready-made. The first object is a gun. We see the way the artist understands its use through the detail of a wounded hand. He brings hyperrealist (organic) details of an injured body in the realm of (artificial) fictive<sup>15</sup> computer worlds. We have thus noticed the first expressive contrast: the body injured – the abstract, pure, ideal, mechanical. Nonetheless, everything is “computed”.

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12 The publication “Expression, relations and processes” (Dytrtová, Raudenský 2017) dwells on material metaphor and expression in works of art such as watercolours (Marlene Dumas), waxwork (Berlinde De Bruyckere), and embroidery (Tracey Emin). A subsequent text “Metaphor and medium” (Dytrtová 2019) explores the connection between mediality and metaphor.

13 Ed Atkins, Untitled, [online] from 8:40 min., [vid. 24. 05. 2020]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lt4TfzN-f2s>.

14 In multilingual phenomena, it is necessary to reference interpretation breadth, i.e. everything a given phenomenon could be in order for us not to undermine subsequent relations and metaphors.

15 In the field of literature, Doležel (2003) provides thought-provoking investigations of fictive worlds in comparison with natural, mythological, or physical worlds.

From the outset, it is clear that this is a dystopian world. Thonet chairs are scattered all over the floor; there are no people. A pair of injured hands is inserting additional related objects into rotating trays for a security check: this time, it is a laptop. Behind the mechanical buzz, we can hear the tunes of Ravel's Boléro initially played lightly in the background. Imploring gestures of (shaking) artificial hands represent the second layer of the story in quickly edited segments.

The main protagonist has entered the scene and makes an almost stage-like impression thanks to the camera's circular movement and lighting. The third layer of the story consists of large and – in the illusionary world of 3D – very aggressive advertising designs or the beginnings of application dialogues that have escaped the world of media by accident. They ambiguously strengthen our awareness of the artificial world while thwarting the illusion of “real” space.

The submissive and visually rather awkward protagonist finds himself in positions commonly associated with torture ranging from being humiliated while squatting to very painful suspension where there is a danger of his arms dislocating. Another object that goes through the security scanner is a tightly spring-loaded brain. A link emerges: gun – laptop – brain; gradually, human fragments, whole bodies, and, finally, the protagonist himself are added. He has thus become a piece of “hand luggage” going through the security check. This self-destructive and denigrating human leitmotif strengthens the work of art at hand.

What is particularly strange about the inserted objects is the expectation that their organic composition would stain the aseptically clean security scanner. The objects are corporally springy but lack blood, sebum, and slime. It is another distinctly expressive contrast that contradicts our experience, thus establishing the characterisation of this wrecked world.<sup>16</sup>

The slow-motion laying down of the gun is emphasized by a cut edit focusing on a pair of shaking hands in a weird position (10:22'): the shape refers to shooting but also evokes the feeling of suffering and subsequent compassion. Hands from which the gun has fallen, hands that have dropped the gun, inactive and non-aggressive; perhaps abused hands or that have realised what they have done.<sup>13</sup>

These positions, associated with violence and suffering, and the mental suffering they have evoked contrast with the protagonist's subsequent, almost exhibitionist or seductive, flirtatious gesture in counterpoise (10:29'). Apart from Ravel's erotically tense Boléro that has strengthened in the meantime, the work of art offers no support for this expression.

Let us take a detour into this well-known orchestral piece. We could speak of the oriental yearning oboe but it is more convincing to look at the ballet rendition of Boléro: the way European tradition completes this work of art, or how it is

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16 In “Instrumental realism” (2015), most fittingly for our reflections, Kvasz focuses on the notion that our experience of the world is not direct, uncovered in the immediate way we view things or through intuition, but is instrumentally mediated by tools of symbolic and iconic representation. What in fact is “reality”? It is works of art created “as reality” but in fiction that inevitably give rise to these reflections. So, the point here is the ability to describe the process of mediating access to reality. He refers to the extent of granularity, or the precision of individual media, hence a given version of the world. His reflections thus markedly support our sensitivity for the manner of mediality of a given work of art.

currently understood in Béjart's choreography.<sup>17</sup> It effectively consists of immobilised musical media: the unchanging ostinato-based rhythm of the Spanish Boléro; the still tune and the bass accompaniment. However, what changes greatly and, thanks to the stagnation of the other media, absolutely captures everyone's attention is the changing colourfulness of instrumental combinations. Thus, a considerable tension emerges despite the minimal transformation. The choreography markedly eroticises this anticipated yet inevitably strengthened energy (ranging from pianissimo to forte fortissimo). A certain kind of delightful ecstasy occurs in erotic challenges in terms of the changing tonality (from C major to E major) fulfilled at the end through the distinctive role of percussions. The expression of movement discovered by Béjart does not allow one to determine whether it is plants, animals, or humans behaving in such tempting and erotic ways. They are undulating, regular, unavoidable, and somehow spontaneous moves common to all living things moved onto a higher generic level. Here we see the strength and power of metaphors that detest mere descriptions of denotation in which "kneeling down" – or implementation by way of the percipient's activity – does not take place.

Why have we lingered over Boléro like this? Atkins takes into account the knowledge of European culture and often uses references to European cultural heritage in his artwork though not in an autotelic way. He builds topical existential reflections on these solemnly served and recognised values: on depreciation or abuse. In the case of this video, he is being ironical about the heritage.

The video protagonist maintains the mildly erotic, narcissistic, undulating rhythm near the conveyor belt while being tortured (the painful position of being suspended by the arms, 13:08'); he hums to himself while removing his fingers and ears, accompanied by a crunching sound, and starts to take off his infinite rubber mask, removing his identity. Atkins employs certain "figures" in multiple renditions: we can see this undressing of faces or taking off of identities, which we understand as very painful despite the rubbery "possibilities" in the video we had an opportunity to watch at this year's Venice Biennale.<sup>18</sup> The faces that have been taken off are reminiscent of the sausages sold in fast-food restaurants (together with skulls, furniture, and human bodies).<sup>19</sup>

The nonchalance with which we hum to ourselves in the morning when looking in the mirror, just like the naiveté with which the fragments of our protagonist – and of people in general – and, little by little, his whole self go through the "security scan", is alarming. From the many indices in the video, we know that a crisis is approaching, but Boléro hedonistically resonates with our inward-looking European who is immersed in his own certainties. We all experience this self-destructive, society-wide "act-as-if-nothing-has-happened" during ecological disasters – the approaching drought, the current pandemic.

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17 Maya Plisetskaya – Bolero (choreography by Maurice Béjart), [vid. 24. 05. 2020]. Available on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsSALaDJuN4>

18 Un naco en la Bienal de Venecia 2019: Ed Atkins, Old Food, [vid. 24. 05. 2020]. Available on: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZFxw\\_xhK1E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZFxw_xhK1E)

19 A view of the installation at Venice Biennale 2019. Biennale Arte 2019 – "Old Food" (2017 – 2019)" by Ed Atkins [vid. 24. 05. 2020]. Available on: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIPb\\_Dksjqw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIPb_Dksjqw)

By means of the confluence of several expressions (naiveté, hedonism, cruelty, murderousness, self-destruction, compassion, terrible guilt, doing nothing, “missing” the omnipresent apocalypse), Atkins has achieved the very topical, experienced, and complicated position of every sound European who would like to “act” but the necessary changes significantly exceed their (seemingly meaningless) competence: fragments of the human body tossed about meaninglessly, such as a skull, and squelching ketchup with connotations of blood and everything organic.

The self-destructive role of the protagonist, who observes everything, begs the question about the roles, we ourselves enter into. The one figure mirrors multiple roles here: those who watched in silence; those who murdered; those who suffered; those who reproached themselves; those who narcissistically derived satisfaction from watching it.... It is a very critical video, since Europeanness – provided by the performance of Boléro – is the confluence of all of the above. Metaphorically, these reflections culminate in a pathetic, self-indulgent singing head on a tray (12:23', 14:47'); in the character of an easy-going, passive beach onlooker (16:05') who passes through the very clingy, and once again mildly erotic, long rubber bands of the security scanner (15:47'); and finally, in a frontal of the protagonist's face (16:17'). He has been so absorbed by the marginality of Boléro that the horrific disintegration of his surroundings (heaps of chairs, materialised humanity) simply does not register with him.

Boléro's clingy return to ostinato-based rhythms resonate with the return of well-known objects (the brain, ketchup, and gun are dropped again), creating a metaphor of the shift toward repetition: our personal as well as historic failures, and the whole video creates a situation as if “seen with God's eye”. The security checkpoint plays more of a role of urbanist units, of “cities along with the hustle and bustle down there”; the passive giant's feet are fatally buried in cyclical mechanic machinery. This has, unfortunately, civilisational connotations.

After enough human fragments, self-extermination catastrophes, and failures have gone through the security scan and customs, together with the protagonist, we proceed into the airplane of “all airplanes”. The already too-embalmed digitality of the previous video erupts into a heavenly Arcadic colourfulness, utter insouciance, the soulful beauty of a flying machine with pink and light blue hues as Boléro reaches a crescendo. A diversion in the kitsch and pathetic worship of British airlines – and, by extension, of all the visions that humanity has fulfilled for itself – is a seatbelt with a reverse function: childlike arms take the role of “being a thing to be used” for the purpose of protecting the adult. After a sufficiently “happy ending” mode of the rotating camera, which has deified the heavenly situation of flying in accordance with the culminating Boléro, in a quick edit, we look the protagonist in the face: injured, pimped, riddled with something.



## 3.6

### Conclusions

Symbolic systems permeate each other. Visual languages are commonly linked with words and sounds or music. Even if they specifically were not, these systems exert contextual pressures on and co-create one another. Therefore, it is not possible to dwell on only one discipline without paying attention to the cultural context because it is an intricate relational network of references: a tremor on one side of the network causes transformations and responses on the other, aptly depicted by Whitehead's reflection: "[E]very actual thing is something by reason of its activity; whereby its nature consists in its relevance to other things, and its individuality consists in its synthesis of other things so far as they are relevant to it." (Whitehead 1998, p. 24).

In the present author's opinion, this text has striven to focus on neglected and professionally little cultivated questions relating to intentionality's performativity, the mode of a work of art's mediality, and the metaphorical imaginativeness of expression. These topics entail the following core questions: *why* a work of art is, *how* a work of art is, and what expression – either hidden in life or still insufficiently consciously experienced – it has built.

Looking through these instruments, we have considered the work of a contemporary artist: Now we can try to respond. Why did he create this work of art? I think he is most outraged by the state of European customs, the inward-looking egotism of being immersed in one's own values and past. This passivity, combined with indifferent self-enjoyment, brings about a reaction of fierce repulsion and a desire for activity that would alter the state of affairs. We pondered intentionality as an influential entrance into artistic production; here, we see an example of intentionally inducing counteraction. Art has an appellative character, and we may assess how closely intentionality relates to identity construction, to the possibility of realising our visions, of fulfilling our sense of justice, and thus actually experiencing a sense of freedom.<sup>20</sup>

How is it a work of art? Let us respond to the text's initial questions (altering the work of art's circumstances): Why does it matter that Atkins' work of art is in video format and does not feature real people? The artificiality of this world creates a more contrasting metaphor in relation to the organic composition of our natural bodies, suffering, and pain. Real-life actors could never perform this "lightness" of self-destruction, which is, however, significant for the resulting chilling expression, since it expresses the rich and technologically developed world's attitude to crises it has contributed to more authentically.

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20 Regarding intentionality and activity in relation to awareness of freedom, Searle writes: "The second point to note is that it is not just any state of the consciousness that gives us the conviction of human freedom. If life consisted entirely of the reception of passive perceptions, then it seems to me we would never so much as form the idea of human freedom. (...) The characteristic experience that gives us the conviction of human freedom, and it is an experience from which we are unable to strip away the conviction of freedom, is the experience of engaging in voluntary, intentional human actions. (...) [T]here is no way we can carve off the experience of freedom. It is an essential part of the experience of acting." (1994, p. 25)

What stands out from these expressions is the contrast between the hedonistic, narcissist infatuation with the magical beauty of the orientally impressive Boléro on the one hand and awareness of massacres, human suffering, and the loss of “self” on the other. This horrific tension is manifested by the light tune of beachy idleness whilst looking on naïvely, which, compared with today’s technical possibilities (airplane, fully automated security check hall), gives one the impression of being almost perverse. As a result, the artist takes aim at the very topical feelings experienced by many Europeans.

It is this mixture of expressions, which the artist has linked with the sensual and erotically stifling Boléro with precision, that is the main and transculturally sharable content of the work of art, especially as it concerns fundamental existential feelings of powerlessness and aggression, waste, and pathetic celebration, which are generally common to all humans. Expression, with its existential charge unfettered by political and nationalist division, is the essence of transcultural sharing; in this sense, it is possible to say that expressive disciplines – which are not held back by language barriers – are the global Esperanto.

The purpose of this text is to make a case for such a theoretical apparatus, explained in the first part, which enables the mediality of a work of art – and the expression distilled therein – to live and exist at a personal as well as a universally cultural level. It means “being hit and affected” by the work of art at hand. Descriptive disciplines must take good care of this apparatus; yet disciplines, whose task it is to share and review a given value system, need to consciously build this interface.

The present text has aimed to address and expose the collaboration of image and music in the topical narrative and the way their metaphorical connection through language is grasped so as to evidence the breadth of demands made by art in today’s world, which education ought to be able to meet. What is at issue here is to not narrow the broad, contextually anchored symbols down to superficial communication; a goal in and of itself.

The art of free society consists first in the maintenance of the symbolic code; and secondly in fearlessness of revision, to secure that the code serves those purposes which satisfy an enlightened reason. Those societies which cannot combine reverence to their symbols with freedom of revision, must ultimately decay either from anarchy, or from the slow atrophy of a life stifled by useless shadows. (Whitehead 1998, p. 64)

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# 4

## EDUCATIONAL TRAINING IN VISUAL LANGUAGES — FOSTERING VISUAL LITERACY SKILLS FROM A SELF- REGULATED LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

Marek Urban

Visual literacy can be conceptualised as a learned set of skills required for the accurate understanding, interpretation, analysis, and creation of visual messages (Yeh & Lohr 2010). Following a substantial literature review, Avgerinou (2009) adds that visual literacy theorists also typically employ the metaphor of text reading and text writing in their definitions of visual literacy. Even though this direct link between textual and visual languages has often been criticised for its philosophical inaccuracy (Mitchell 2007), it is now widely accepted (Elkins 2007), leading to the claim that one has to learn how to “read”, interpret, or decode visual cues in order to “write”, create, or encode visual statements.

The fact that visual literacy skills can be learned, taught, and fostered is a crucial point for this chapter, as the main aim is to identify key decoding and encoding skills and offer a perspective of self-regulated learning regarding how these skills can be acquired in a classroom setting. Nowadays, our pupils and students are considered *digital natives*, i.e. those growing up in a mostly digital environment, thus being more widely influenced by visual rather than textual stimuli (Prensky 2001). This substantial exposure to the visual messages associated with digital technology has led some authors to the conclusion that digital natives are developing into “visual experts” (Tapscott 2009). However, further research suggests the opposite, implying that the encoding and decoding skills of digital natives must be fostered in order to allow them to critically evaluate and re-use the visual content they are consuming (e.g. when posting or sharing visual messages on social networks; Brumberger 2011). Bowen (2017) emphasises that a growing amount of evidence suggests that visual literacy is the gateway to becoming a critical visual thinker, one with the capacity to encode images and graphic representations as well as connect the knowledge from visual sources with pre-existing knowledge from other modalities, i.e. language and text (Avgerinou & Pettersson 2011; La Grandeur 2005; Kress 2003; Patterson 2019; Rawlinson et al. 2007).

# 4.1

## Visual literacy skills

Avgerinou (2007) identified 11 visual literacy skills vital for the effective encoding and decoding of visual messages (see table 1 for full description).

**Table 1. Description of visual literacy skills**

Skill	Description
1. Visual Vocabulary Knowledge	Knowledge of the basic components of visual language (i.e. point, line, shape, form, space, texture, light, colour, motion).
2. Visual Conventions Knowledge	Knowledge of visual signs and symbols and their socially agreed meanings (within the culture).
3. Visual Thinking	The ability to turn information of all types into pictures, graphics, or forms to aid communication.
4. Visualisation	The process by which a visual image is formed.
5. Verbo-Visual Reasoning	Coherent and logical thinking that is carried out primarily by means of images.
6. Critical Viewing	Applying critical thinking skills to visuals.
7. Visual Discrimination	The ability to perceive differences between two or more visual stimuli.
8. Visual Reconstruction	The ability to reconstruct a partially occluded visual message from its original form.
9. Sensitivity to Visual Association	The ability to link visual images that display a unifying theme and the ability to link verbal messages and their visual representations (and vice versa) to enhance meaning.
10. Reconstructing Meaning	The ability to visualise and verbally (or visually) reconstruct the meaning of a visual message based solely on the evidence of given, incomplete information.
11. Constructing Meaning	The ability to construct meaning for a given visual message on the evidence of any given visual (and perhaps verbal) information.

Note: Table is based on Avgerinou (2007; 2009); see Avgerinou and Pettersson (2011) for a complex evaluation of the model.

Acknowledging this classification, but with the aim of creating a more accessible model for teaching practice, Tillman (2012) developed a general classification of visual literacy skills based on the re-conceptualisation of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy and Mayer's (2002) definition of *meaningful learning*. Meaningful learning goes beyond simple information recall, aiming rather at the transfer of acquired knowledge from one domain to another with the final goal of being able to create innovative outcomes from what we have learned previously. For these reasons, Tillman (2012) states that visually literate people have to be able to *remember, understand, apply, analyse, and evaluate* different visual sources, and create their own visual messages. Tillman (2012), however, did not provide us with specific examples of what each of these skills represent. For this reason, I adapted the following examples for the field of visual literacy directly from Mayer's (2002) definitions.

### **Remember**

Remembering is the ability to *identify* knowledge in long-term memory and *recall* it accurately when necessary. In the context of visual literacy, one can remember visual stimuli relevant to the situation, e.g. a photograph from a family album when visiting grandparents, a favourite childhood cartoon for relaxation, or a graph representing normal distribution in an undergraduate statistics course.

### **Understand**

Understanding is a more complex visual literacy skill consisting of several cognitive processes. First, one has to be able to *interpret* the meaning of a visual source, i.e. translate visual stimuli to verbal expression. Once the meaning is translated, one must be able to explain it to others, e.g. one can interpret and explain the meaning of the gaze of Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and interpret and explain the meaning of the colour black in Rothko's *Chapel*. When meaning is verbalised, visual stimuli can be *compared* to different visual sources. From this comparison there can be, using inductive reasoning, *inferred* logical conclusions; e.g. after comparing Rothko and Pollock with Vermeer and Rembrandt, one can conclude that there was a significant shift between 17th and 20th century painting, a shift represented by concrete rules (e.g. abstract against realistic expression). Gaining visual experience with several other authors, one can begin to *classify* them. For example, one may observe Rothko, Pollock, and de Kooning on one side, and Vermeer, Rembrandt, and Hals on the other after coming to the realisation that they belong to certain specific traditions. Based on these visual experiences, one can employ deductive reasoning, and through *exemplification* (i.e. making a representative example from one group of visual sources), start sorting other authors with those already known. For example, Barnett Newman may belong to American expressionism with Rothko and Pollock, and Jan Steen to Dutch Baroque's Rembrandt and Vermeer. Finally, one can *summarise* the inferred procedural knowledge, e.g. explaining the specifics of abstract expressionism and Dutch Golden Age paintings.<sup>21</sup>

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21 Paradoxically, this approach towards understanding visual art is very rare in the academic education of art theory and art history, with only very few proponents such as John Berger (2008) and James Elkins (2004).

## Apply

Application represents the proper *execution* or *implementation* of procedural knowledge stated in the previous section. At this point, one can understand the difference between abstract expressionism and Dutch baroque paintings; however, there is now a question regarding the implementation of these principles when experiencing something new, e.g. impressionistic paintings. Clearly, Monet's *Impression, Sunrise*, is not quite abstract yet also not quite realistic. There are stylistic references to both styles. Application is a skill of executing existing knowledge and applying it to a new set of visual sources. This skill is vital, e.g. for recognition of quickly evolving phenomena such as *fake news* and *deep fakes*, where one must be able to apply the knowledge in an ever-changing environment.

## Analyse

Analysis is shifting from the question, "What is the meaning of what we see?" to "How is this meaning created?". In order to analyse visual stimuli, one has to be able to *distinguish* between cues that are relevant and cues that are redundant. Or one must *differentiate* between cues that fulfil one function and cues that fulfil another. After this discrimination, one must *find the outlining structure*, or, in other words, to see how different cues fit the whole picture. Finally, one must be able to *deconstruct* the hidden intent underlying the presented material, e.g. one may be asked to determine whether the photograph of a smoking person was created as a commercial or health risk warning. As an example of these three analytical processes, see the photograph in figure 1.

On the explicit level, we can distinguish two separate layers of meaning (*differentiation*). There is (a) a motorcycle standing on some kind of (b) side road. Both motorcycle and road are characterised by separate stylistic cues. The low camera angle and position in front of the motorcycle creates an impression of power and authority yet the bike stands in a somehow careless pose, leaning to the side. The road and nature are blurred. Therefore, we perceive a hierarchy of the elements (*outlining structure*): the motorcycle is the main focus here, supported by the background. However, on an implicit level, one may ask, "What do these cues represent?" The chopper is in the careless pose, standing on the side road without any other people. One may argue that the motorcycle represents a tool of freedom, of escape, and that the background represents the goal of this escape – to get far away from civilisation. The photograph of the motorcycle may very well become a photograph about the desire for freedom, yet this implicit meaning would be strongly influenced by its underlying intent (*deconstruction*). If we found this picture hanging in a high school locker, it would represent something else (the authentic expression of individual needs and desires) as opposed to an online car dealer advertisement, stating, "Buy a bike and get your freedom!"



Fig. 1.  
Photograph of a motorcycle.  
Or is it something more?  
Photo: vaun0815 on Unsplash.



## Evaluate

Critical evaluation takes on two different forms. The first form is *checking* the internal consistency of a visual message, i.e. whether the visual stimuli fulfil their intrinsic aims. If the aim of the photograph in figure 1 is the “expression of the desire for freedom”, one may ask, “Do the visual cues express the desire for freedom satisfactorily? Are there some missing or redundant cues?” The second form is *critiquing* or testing the visual message against external criteria. For example, one may ask whether the composition is visually pleasing: “Are there elements placed in golden ratio?” or whether the overall quality is sufficient for the chosen media: “Is the resolution sufficient enough for printing in a book?”

## Create

Finally, the creation of one’s own visual statements is realised in three steps. At the beginning, one must employ divergent thinking through *hypothesising* new ideas on a given topic, e.g. students being asked to generate new ideas about their own visual expression of the desire for freedom. After this divergent phase, a congruent thinking phase takes place and one must select the best idea and *plan* the steps toward its realisation. After the process is planned, the production phase consists of the execution of each separate step, finishing with one’s individual visual statement. When we understand what the aforementioned visual skills (*remembering, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation, and creation*) represent, we can start to focus on how these skills are acquired in the classroom environment.

# 4.2

## How to learn visual literacy skills. Self-regulated learning perspective

Self-regulated learning (SRL) is a cyclical approach toward learning and consists of three major phases:

- *The preparatory phase*, where learners analyse their task, set their learning goal, and plan steps toward the realisation of this goal;
- *The performance phase*, where learners apply tactics and perform practical steps in order to achieve their goal, monitor the effect of their actions, and regulate their behaviour subsequently (e.g. if the chosen tactic is ineffective, one has to try a different approach);
- *The appraisal phase*, where learners obtain internal or external (or both) feedback on their completed task.

If one’s result is not satisfactory (e.g. one does not understand the topic sufficiently), the process starts again from the beginning with a small or more substantial alternation of the goal or chosen tactic (Panadero 2017). As can be seen from this description, SRL emphasises the self-efficacy of learners, with teachers facilitating the learning process instead of providing processed knowledge (Zimmerman 2001). Two meta-analyses concluded that SRL has a strong positive impact on the motivation of learners and significantly improves academic performance among different subjects (Dignath & Büttner 2008; Sitzmann & Ely

2011). For the purposes of this chapter, however, it is important to stress the effectiveness of self-regulation training in the improvement of verbal literacy skills (Souvignier & Mokhlesgerami 2006; Sovik et al. 1996; see Dignath et al. 2008, for a review) and enhancement of creativity (Hargrove & Nietfeld 2015).

## 4.3

### Construction of SRL lessons fostering visual literacy skills

Based on their meta-analysis, Dignath and Büttner (2008) conclude that the most effective SRL interventions for children at secondary school level are repetition (over a longer time period), metacognitive self-evaluation, and external feedback. The present chapter matches these criteria, and contains six SRL lessons for the fostering of visual literacy skills constructed on the SRL model presented by Winne and Hadwin (1998). As a potential benefit, this model was later adapted as a group procedure labeled shared *self-regulated learning* (SSRL; Hadwin et al. 2018). This procedure can therefore be used both individually and collaboratively.

The most specific element of Winne and Hadwin's (1998; Winne 1996) model is its emphasis on metacognition. Metacognition – cognition about cognition (Flavell 1979) – is an ability to *monitor* one's cognitive processes with subsequent *regulation* (or control) (Nelson & Narens 1990). As an example, one may ask, "How confident am I that I learned this information sufficiently?" (*monitoring*). When unconfident, the individual will study for longer. When confident, the individual will stop learning and move to the next item (*regulation*). There are several metacognitive judgments that can be used to navigate one's learning.

At the beginning, one may ask through *ease-of-learning judgment* (EOL), "How much effort must I apply to learn this information?" During or after learning, one may ask through *judgment of learning* (JOL), "How much of the information will I be able to recall when asked?" And, after completing the task, one may ask through *confidence judgment* (CJ), "How sure am I that these answers are correct?" or a more complex *self-evaluating question*, "How much of these answers do I think I solved correctly?"

According to Winne and Hadwin (1998), metacognitive monitoring and regulation are important for each of the three SRL phases (preparatory, performance, appraisal) but they specifically accent the appraisal phase, where learners adapt or generalise metacognitive experience from previous phases for the future learning (e.g. as I finished this task quicker using strategy B rather than strategy A, I will use strategy B in the future). Metacognitive judgments (JOL, CJ, self-evaluation) are generally appropriate for children from preschool age, although children in this developmental stage typically exhibited overconfidence over several trials (Urban K. & Urban M. 2018; 2020; in press; Urban & Zápotočná 2017). However, it is important to note that metacognitive monitoring generates only internal feedback, and in some circumstances this can be insufficient. For instance, in the research with preschoolers, only high-performing children were able to foster accurate self-evaluation with internal feedback alone (Urban K. & Urban M., 2020). More importantly, Kamila Urban (2017) examined metacognitive monitoring in preschool

children from a socially disadvantaged environment. In contrast to those from a middle socio-economic background, these children systematically undervalued their abilities. In the appraisal phase, it is therefore important to include some form of external feedback.

For preschool children, simple *performance feedback* – information regarding the correctness of an answer – is enough. Yet, with age, more complex *calibration feedback* – information comparing judgment and performance (e.g. you thought you answered eight out ten questions correctly but only six out ten answers were correct, so you were overconfident with two answers) – can be adapted (Urban K. & Urban M. 2018). In the SRL research on undergraduate students and external calibration feedback, it took only two sessions to calibrate the absolute accuracy of self-evaluation (i.e. the judgment matched the actual performance) but six to calibrate the relative accuracy (i.e. students actually understood when their performance improved and worsened; Urban K. & Urban M. 2019). Taking these guidelines into account, the lessons presented in this chapter repeat the same SRL structure and contain metacognitive judgments in all phases and external feedback when appropriate.

## 4.4

### Remembering: Recalling a pool of shared visual knowledge (Lesson 1)

The first visual literacy skill described above is remembering visual messages. In order to progress to later lessons, it is important to have a pool of visual statements remembered by all members of the class. This work can be accomplished as a class or in small groups but this chapter will describe the process for peer groups, each containing three members, step by step. The visual stimuli adapted for this chapter are television commercials (i.e. typically 30 second audio-visual spots). However, they can be altered for other classroom-specific focuses (e.g. journalistic photography, television journalism, documentary movies, GIFs, memes, etc.).

#### Preparatory phase

At the beginning of this phase, it is important to describe the goals of the session to students:

- (1) The aim for each small group is to find three visual statements (e.g. commercials) that influenced you the most in the past.
- (2) When finished, each group will prepare a short presentation on the selected commercials you agreed on.
- (3) Each group will present their three messages.
- (4) After the presentation, the class will select six of the most similar statements (two different groups of three). The following lessons will focus on material from these groups.

Small group discussion (*task definition*): “Discuss the goals of the task. If there is anything unclear, ask for clarification.”

Small group discussion (*ease-of-learning judgments*): “How much time do

you need to finish the selection process? How much time will you need to prepare a presentation? How much time will you need for the presentation itself? How much time will we need to select those six final commercials?”

Class discussion: “Discuss the time schedule for the whole process.”

Small group discussion (*strategy selection*): “Now, discuss the way you identify visual statements from your past. What tools will you need for your selection of the materials? What tools will you need for your presentation? And how will we choose the three statements at the end of the class (vote, discussion...)?”

### **Performance phase**

During the performance phase, it is important for the teacher to be actively present to facilitate the processes. In the beginning, student guidelines with metacognitive questions are prepared:

- (1) “How much time do we have left?”
- (2) “Is this strategy getting us to the goal on time?”
- (3) “Do we have to change the way we solve this problem?”
- (4) “Do we need to ask for help?”

Please note that it is important for the teacher to create a psychologically safe atmosphere, so that learners do not fear asking questions and requesting help when necessary (Urban M., 2017). Moreover, Pesout and Nietfeld (2020) find that a collaborative climate, in comparison with a competitive climate, better benefits learners' metacognitive monitoring.

When the time for selection and presentation finishes, move on to the presentations. If there are learners who did not reach their goal on time, it is all right. This acts as external feedback on their ease-of-learning judgment at the beginning of the class (e.g. the group thought it would take only ten minutes to finish but only selected two out of three commercials in this time). After the presentations, select six commercials for the next lesson: three that are mostly similar, and three that are different to the previous group but still similar to each other.

### **Appraisal phase**

Small group discussion: “Which strategy helped us the most and can we use it again in the future? Which strategy caused us the most problems? What would we need to do differently in the future? Is there anything else we would need?”

## 4.5

### Understanding: What do I see? What do I think? What do I wonder? (Lesson 2)

A compatible introductory approach toward understanding the meaning of visual statements was described by Richards and Anderson (2003) as *STW: What do I See? What do I Think? What do I Wonder?* When looking at an image, the learner is asked only to verbalise the content of the picture (*describe its explicit meaning*). Then, the learner can answer the question, “What do I think about when describing this content?” The final question is devoted to understanding the image’s *implicit meaning*, or “When I look at this picture, what questions do I want to ask? What does this picture ask me to do or feel? What is its hidden intent?”. More complex approaches can be built on this method later, e.g. differentiation of meanings originating in *neoformalism* (Bordwell 1991) or description of bodily experience in *somaesthetics* (Shusterman 1999).

Taking this theoretical background into account, the second lesson has a more complex structure, consisting of three separate cycles, each with a short *preparatory* (allowing learners to discuss their own task definition, ease-of-learning judgment, and strategy selection), *performance* (with monitoring of difficulty), and *appraisal phase* (adapting efficient strategies).

#### **Cycle 1: Interpret and explain (preparatory phase)**

The first goal concerns the most basic understanding abilities, *interpreting* and *explaining*:

- (1) In small groups, discuss the meaning of each previously selected commercial. Then, write the meaning in one sentence for each commercial.

In this phase, learners can be introduced to the STW method by being asked whether they want to integrate the STW principles during their performance phase. Ease-of-learning judgments determine the lesson’s time schedule.

#### **Cycle 1: Interpret and explain (performance phase)**

Learners receive a sheet with both metacognitive and STW questions (e.g. “What do I see? What do I think? What do I wonder?”). Learners then discuss their interpretations and agree on the most plausible selections.

#### **Cycle 1: Interpret and explain (appraisal phase)**

The groups discuss efficient strategies for interpretation, and can ask: “How confident are we that our interpretations are correct?”

#### **Cycle 2: Compare and infer (preparatory phase)**

Once the group members come to an agreement on the meaning of the commercials individually, they can *compare* their ideas in-group and out-group. Therefore, the goals are:

- (2) Present the interpretations to your peers in the other groups and discuss the similarities and differences in interpretations between groups.

- (3) Confirm whether the groups are consistent and sufficiently different from each other (i.e. whether the commercials really should be in the chosen groups). Write the similarities and differences on a sheet (*infer*) and present them to the class.

### **Cycle 2: Compare and infer (performance phase)**

This task requires precise metacognitive monitoring. Therefore, ask learners to monitor their confidence regarding task completion and difficulty.

### **Cycle 2: Compare and infer (appraisal phase)**

Since each peer group has described the similarities and differences within the same two commercial groups, their presentations are the first external feedback they obtain. They will see different explanations of the same commercials, giving them the opportunity to modify their beliefs.

### **Cycle 3: Classify and summarise (preparatory phase)**

Finally, once learners understand the similarities and differences, they can label the groups i.e. *classify* them. The goal is therefore:

- (4) Based on the similarities and differences between you and your colleagues, label the two groups of commercials. Present this classification with a short explanation (*summary*) to your peers at the end of the lesson.

### **Cycle 3: Classify and summarise (performance and appraisal phase)**

Learners gain their second external feedback through their second presentation as they can compare their findings with each other. They can then ponder the question, "What did you do today that was most useful for you? What should you avoid in following lessons?"

## **4.6**

### **Application: Something the same, something in between, and something different (Lesson 3)**

Application represents the ability to apply knowledge in a new situation. So far, learners have understood and classified two groups of commercials. The aim of the third lesson is to *apply* their previously obtained knowledge to known and unknown areas.

#### **Preparatory phase**

The goal of this lesson is to:

- (1) Find two commercials that fit into already-classified groups (the first commercial paired with group 1, the second commercial with group 2).
- (2) Find one example of a commercial that is somehow between these two groups.

- (3) Find one commercial that is completely different.
- (4) In peer groups, discuss the meaning of the new commercials, write the similarities and differences, and try to give them appropriate labels. At the end of the lessons, each group of students will present new commercials and explain why they believe they are similar or different.

### **Performance and appraisal phase**

The presentation offers external feedback on the learners' conclusions. A short peer group discussion should follow and allow learners to conclude the first three lessons, coming to the question: "What have we learned so far in terms of understanding the visual messages and cooperation in the small groups?"

## **4.7**

### **Analysis: Visual cues leading our attention (Lesson 4)**

To understand how visual statements lead us to create meaning, neoformalistic aesthetics adapted the term *cue* from cognitive psychology (Bordwell & Thompson 2012). Generally, cues are internal or external events that signal significance and subsequently affect cognition or an individual's behaviour (Eysenck & Keane 2005). Specifically, we can distinguish two kinds of cues in visual messages: *narrative* and *stylistic* (Visch & Tan 2008). Typically, narrative cues (what and how we tell a story) play a major role in meaning construction while stylistic cues (music, light, camera, costumes, etc.) support the storytelling effect (Bordwell & Thompson, 2012). When analysing, one must be able to *identify* cues that are important for meaning, *distinguish* them from those that do not play a role, and find the *outlining structure* or hierarchy between cues.

### **Preparatory phase**

To train these aforementioned abilities, there are several goals in this lesson:

- (1) To start, select one commercial from the previous lessons and try to *identify* all the narrative and stylistic cues in the commercial. What is the commercial communicating? Who are the narrators? When is each piece of information delivered? What effect does the timing have? How does this commercial work regarding the camera? How does it use music? Who are the actors? How are they dressed? Where are they placed and how are they framed? Write down all of your findings.
- (2) Now try to select cues relevant to the commercial's meaning and *distinguish* them from cues that are redundant. For example, you can ask: "If this cue was missing, would it change the meaning?"
- (3) Now, describe the hierarchy (*outlining structure*) of all the relevant cues. Which cues are most important? Why? What are their relationships? You can try to draw a diagram. Self-evaluate your outcome on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 meaning that you were completely unable to identify cues, distinguish relevant from redundant cues, and find the hierarchy between cues). Present your findings at the end of the lesson.



### **Performance and appraisal phase**

After the groups have presented their findings, group members may compare their performance with others and re-evaluate their performance. They may ask: “Was it better or worse than we thought? What do we need to change? What do we need to repeat?”

## **4.8**

### **Evaluation: Are the cues consistent or do we need more or fewer of them? (Lesson 5)**

Once learners understand the role of different cues in a visual message, it is time to move towards evaluation, which can take the form of an *examination of internal consistency or comparison with some externally provided criteria* (e.g. aesthetic rules, ethics, technical specifications).

#### **Preparatory phase**

At the beginning of the lesson, select one commercial from the prior lessons different from those analysed. There are two goals of this lesson:

- (1) Like last time, identify the important and redundant cues in a commercial. Now investigate whether these cues satisfactorily fulfil their aim and ask: “Are all the cues consistent? Do they all create the same meaning? If not, what is the conflict?”
- (2) Evaluate all six commercials by external standards. For example, a learner can employ the European *Television Without Frontiers Directive* (for other countries, see Anderson 2007 for a review) and evaluate whether the commercials fulfil their standards. At the end of the lesson, each group can introduce one of the most problematic cases they evaluated.

#### **Performance phase**

In this phase, learners may employ their divergent thinking for the first time, asking, “What would be different if we alter this or that cue?” For example, what would be different if this character were performed by an actor of the opposite gender? What would be different if this commercial were in black and white instead of colour? What if there were no music?

#### **Appraisal phase**

Discuss the differences between an examination of internal consistency and comparison with external standards. Which ability do we employ in each situation?

## 4.9

### Creation: From divergent to convergent thinking (Lesson 6)

The outcome of a creative process is mostly defined by the *novelty* and *adequacy* of its new product. The product must be original but only to the extent that it better fulfils its function compared to its predecessors (Steele et al. 2017). The ability to create new and original ideas is connected to divergent thinking. Meanwhile, adjusting the ideas toward a specific purpose is related to convergent thinking (Mayer 2002). For visually literate people, it is therefore important to be able to create new personal visual statements *appropriate* for the context of their use (e.g. a visual message on Instagram as opposed to Facebook).

#### Preparatory phase

For these reasons, the first aim of the last lesson is to select a product from one of the previously analysed commercials. The goal is:

- (1) To think about the product. What does it do? Who uses it? Why do people need it? The learner will try to create new ideas of how this product can be advertised, without any restrictions, without any evaluation (*divergent thinking*).
- (2) Then select evaluation standards (e.g. length of the commercial, the target group, format) and select the most appropriate idea from those created earlier (*convergent thinking*). Discuss the exact form of the final commercial. Self-evaluate the commercial on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 meaning a commercial does not sell the product at all). At the end of the lesson, learners will present the final commercial to the others and let their classmates evaluate it: "On a scale from 1 to 10, how likely is it that you would buy the product if you saw this commercial?"

#### Performance and appraisal phase

For the first time, this lesson contains exact performance feedback (an evaluation from 1 to 10) through peer review. However, this can be avoided, or adopted earlier if the classroom climate is psychologically safe and feedback does not endanger the learners' self-perception (Urban M. 2017). During each lesson, it is imperative for teachers to employ their own metacognition, monitor their classroom processes, and ask questions like their students (e.g. "How strict does my rules management need to be?" or "Is this the right time to offer help or feedback?") since metacognitive self-awareness in teachers models beneficial learning behaviour in students (Ozturk 2018; Urban & Němejc 2019).

The aforementioned lesson plans can be understood as a guide that should be adjusted to specific class conditions, e.g. some groups may require more repetitions and one lesson can be repeated or divided (e.g. Lesson 3 on understanding can be divided into three separate classes, one for each cycle). Moreover, it is important to monitor the difficulty of the tasks with the learners and adjust wording and goal explanations according to the learners' age and skills.

# 4.10

## Conclusion

Self-regulated learning has a strong beneficial effect for enhancing literacy and student motivation (Dignath & Büttner 2008; Dignath et al. 2008). However, research evaluating the role of SRL for the acquisition or fostering of visual literacy skills in remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating visual messages has yet to be conducted. Therefore, it is crucial to continue research into examining the effectiveness of such an intervention among learners of different ages and social and cultural backgrounds. The presented chapter can be understood as the first step in the adaptation of SRL principles within the field of visual literacy.

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**III.  
EDUCATIONAL  
STRATEGIES FOR  
VISUAL LANGUAGES**



# 5

## EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR VISUAL LANGUAGES

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### 5.1

#### **Contextual knowledge: Contextual investigation, identification of visual languages within specific cultural frames**

This paragraph contains some remarks and indications on how to use visual methodologies and analysis in order to improve and implement some practices during context analysis in multicultural environments.

The development of intercultural awareness continues to gain importance within the panorama of educational studies. The changes in contemporary societies and, in particular, migrations have made communities increasingly multicultural (Crespi 2015; Camozzi 2019). Believing that intercultural awareness is the only way for contemporary multicultural societies to function well means being aware of the richness inherent in a multicultural environment and being willing to find and appreciate opportunities to discover minority, majority, and different cultures.

The fundamental aim of intercultural education is to develop the ability to live with people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Scholars in various disciplines have provided countless definitions of the term 'culture'. The definitions usually follow a precise semantic core and therefore two aspects of culture can be distinguished: Culture (with a capital C), understood as a set of highly valued and valuable products of a cultural context, and culture, which refers to a particular group of people and their way of life. Intercultural education deals mainly with the latter. The attention of intercultural scholars tends to concentrate on subjective cultures in their less tangible, sometimes invisible expressions. They focus therefore on the worldview shared among the members of a society, on a set of distinctions and concepts that can be described as cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and lifestyles.

It is necessary to stress that what we are going to describe is not a static system, but one that is constantly changing and open to the regulation of relationships between individuals and groups. Intercultural educational strategies take

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into account this dynamic concept of culture so that greater variability becomes the essence of the daily culture of the individual and society. Thus, it is clear that, given the changing conditions in the system and the living environment, there are shifts in the subjective culture and also the need to readjust the methods and techniques of observation and analysis.

Knowledge and learning about the subjective culture of others – temporarily looking at the world through other eyes – is the backbone of the development of intercultural competence. Therefore, a new capacity for observation integrated into everyday culture will lead us to the change of perspective we expect. This also applies to contacts between cultures, which inevitably leave traces in each other (Gobo 2018).

Studies in the field of interculturality recognise four moments in the development of intercultural competence: knowledge of the culture of the environment in which we live and of the foreign culture, comparison between our own culture and that of the environment/foreign culture, the awareness of differences, and the acceptance of differences.

The first moment in particular, the analysis of contexts and the identification of different languages within specific cultures, leads us to pay attention to some specific aspects:

- *Occurrence of different cultures and points of view*

A first important aspect is to recognise and observe the presence of different cultures within the same social space and in a fabric of social relations that can give a different interpretation and a different meaning to the same images that are observed from different cultural assumptions (a colour or a form, for example, has different meanings in different cultures). Moreover, each culture has its own peculiarity in the way it observes and gives importance to visual elements that also depend on the prevailing symbolic codes of interpretation (iconic, textual cultures, etc.) and this differentiation can also change across generations (think of the digital native generations compared to their teachers).

- *The relationship between cultures*

In this growing differentiation, the relationship between cultures should never be taken for granted. In particular, an accurate analysis of the context can detect the presence of cultures considered dominant or the majority and other residual cultures that may have relationships of coexistence, power asymmetry, or integration/inclusion. Starting with this information, educational strategies can be more effective and better understand how an image can reflect the relational configuration existing between the observed cultures.

- *The meaning of images in visual studies across cultures*

This meaning includes the awareness of the multiplication of visual culture, understood as a set of different images but united by being produced and reproduced socially, and the relevance of the visual, understood as a set of ways of seeing. Ways of seeing always accompany vision because they inevitably contribute to the production of visual culture, which are inscribed in it and through it are suggested, reproduced, or resisted.

- *What significance images take on within different cultures*

It is very important to pay attention to the function that an image can play within a society at a specific historical moment and in a specific culture, i.e. its capacity to act within the socio-cultural fabric that welcomes it (and of which it can – in some cases – be representative).

- *Using the visual during context analysis in educational practices*

How can context analysis strategies that are based on the visual in educational practice, in a learning situation, be relevant? The objective is more and more to consider images – drawings, maps, decorative elements, and, above all, photos – as something more than attractive illustrations or decorative elements to enrich a text.

The introduction of new technologies, visual in particular, in educational and pedagogical research has not only changed how research is conducted in the educational field but has also brought about significant changes in teacher training (Knoblauch 2012; Cescato 2017). The advent of digitalisation, along with the miniaturisation of both video cameras and storage media, has led to a dramatic increase in the use of video, particularly in terms of video production. This has led to the introduction of new teaching practices and new training initiatives derived from the analysis of these practices. The use of video, at an educational and didactic level on the one hand, and as an instrument for field observation on the other, offers a variety of benefits along with some critical issues. One of the advantages is the capacity to allow for an analytical vision of complex actions, which may be reviewed at different times by a variety of interlocutors (Falcinelli & Gaggioli 2016).

Knowledge of the context is very useful when using visual images as a teaching method because it improves critical thinking skills through teacher-facilitated discussions of visual images (D'Alessandro & Sciarra 2005). This strategy encourages participation through a group problem-solving process. It uses art/ everyday images/symbols to teach thinking, communication skills, and visual literacy. Students can contribute to the discussion by presenting their own observations and ideas to the class. All contributions are accepted and considered neutrally by the teacher and class so that students can learn from the perspectives of others.

Using visual languages to analyse cultural differences emphasizes the learning process, individually and in conjunction with others, rather than the instructor's dissemination of knowledge. Therefore, this process is learner-driven, places the power under the learners' control, and the focus is the product. Learners are not given a right answer because the process of learning and discussing is the answer.

## 5.2

### Visual Literacy: Ability to decode images

For “visual literacy” we intend the ability to decode, interpret, and give meaning to images for their value of information or message. The language we use to express this concept is meaningful because it denounces a gap: we use “literacy”, a word connected to literature and the ability to read texts and written documentation after having learned the alphabet, the morphology, and the syntax of a language, that is, the grammar; at the same time we use the verb “to read” to express the intention of decoding an image because the verb “to see” or “to look at” the image does not have the same meaning of decrypting the style and content of a visual message. For this reason, as we will see, Paul Martin Lester wrote a handbook for students explicitly delivering a grammar with which to “read” visual communication with images.

“Visual literacy” is a core theme not only for experts of visual communication, but also for educators and art historians. Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the development of visual skills started to be considered as fundamental for human learning (Avgerinou, Ericson 1997; Vezzoli 2017; Farné 2019). In effect, visual competencies help people scrutinise and discern the meaning of the objects, symbols, gestures, and expressions in the images, comprehending advertisements and works of art (Elkins 2010). Nowadays, these visual skills are considered very important because of the centrality of images and the visual media in the contemporary world. Nevertheless, we also need to have these competences to read an image of the past, produced according to a different code in a different context. The knowledge of the historical context is in effect the first step to correctly reading each image and visual message from the past in the present. I will give two particular examples: the first one is an advertisement by a brand called Mombasa in Kenya; the second is a meme spread online by a famous Italian archaeological museum.

In the middle of the label the word “Farasi” is written; that is, a company which produces barbed wire. In effect, the panel is nicely framed by the fence posts. On the left is written “Best Quality” in a white spot, underlining the loyalty of the company, while on the other side there is a white Pegasus, the mythological winged horse, about to fly. The combination of these elements is very meaningful. Normally we associate barbed wire with negative situations, like a prison or a war trench. The designer of the advertisement inverts this common place and perception by using blue, the colour of the sky, and adding the figure of a winged horse, which can fly over the fence to freedom. In this way, the barbed wire is not the image of a prison but a symbol of the freedom that you can obtain in your property, from which you can leave like Pegasus. To correctly read this advertisement: 1) you need to know the symbology of the colours, the traditional meaning of barbed wire in the common sense, and the mythological value of Pegasus as an image of freedom; 2) you need to recognise the inversion of polarity created by the advertiser; and 3) you must grasp the need of the brand to free itself from the negative perception of a barbed wire fence.

The first image is depicted on a blue panel attached to a fence bordering a private property in Kilifi (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Mombasa advertisement (Kilifi, Kenya)



The second image is an Internet meme spread on the occasion of Mother's Day by the official Facebook page of the Archeological Museum of Venice (fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Sample of a meme, Archeological Museum of Venice (Italy)

In the contemporary world, a meme is a “unit of information that succeeds within a given social and cultural context, to become a model for textual production” (Marino 2015). A meme is an “atomic” element of a culture, a concentrate of meaning, able to become viral online thanks to sharing, and continuously changing sense. The meme I am analysing is a highly cultivated image produced by a museum from an important work of art, a statue of Demeter. Demeter is the Greek goddess of wheat, famous in mythology for having desperately looked for her daughter Kore, who was kidnapped and raped by Hades. In the image, the statue of the goddess is accompanied by the phrase “I figli so piezz’ ‘e Kore”. This is a parody of the title of a popular and “trashy” Neapolitan movie in Neapolitan dialect, “I figli so piezz’ ‘e core” (1981); that is “Children are pieces of our heart”. Substituting the spelling “core” with “Kore”, we have the same pronunciation but “core” is the heart whereas “Kore” is the name of the daughter of Demeter. In this way, the meme alludes to the fact that the goddess looked for her piece of heart, her daughter, desperately. To understand the game, you must be very familiar with Greek art and mythology as well as popular movies of the ’80s, and you have to be part of a culture that celebrates Mother’s Day.

These two examples show how strongly visual literacy is connected to the historical and cultural context in which the visual message is spread.

## 5.3

### **Intercultural interaction with visual literacy: Subjective and collective narrations**

Contemporary reflection on art education faces issues relating to the complexity of contemporary social, political, cultural, and economic processes conveyed by multicultural and multidisciplinary languages. Measuring oneself in visual languages implies analysing anthropological, cultural, and linguistic horizons in which individuals grow and express themselves. This kind of analysis translates into an intercultural interaction that requires literacy of the different symbolic-linguistic categories that underlie visual languages. Just like the grammar of each verbal language has unique differences, the visual language of each culture has a unique visual grammar.

As we have also seen in the previous paragraphs, visual language and visual grammar are culture-related elements. Over the centuries, images have conveyed the evolution of the collective gaze that is an expression of a specific social attitude and the narration of a cultural curvature. The visual perspective, by producing displacement, contaminations, and intercultural exchanges, creates spaces of interpretation, aesthetic-emotional participation, and production of meaning. Each individual thus takes on multiple dimensions, becoming the crossroads of different glances, behaviours, and social belonging.

From an educational point of view, we can define intercultural interaction as a bridge between several perspectives but the heterogeneity of the context must be taken into consideration. In order to develop a transcultural framework, we need to improve the capacity of critical thinking while experiencing situations of cultural displacement. This is extremely important if we wish to increase creativity and facilitate dialogue and solidarity.



Visual education should move towards a cross-cultural understanding approach, which requires that concepts and issues are viewed from the multiple perspectives of diverse ethnic groups. True intercultural understanding should allow individuals to respond to the properties and qualities that exist in many visual forms across cultures.

Recent European postcolonial studies stressed the importance of “decolonising” institutions, public spaces, curricula, and private and public narrations. Decolonisation, therefore, is not merely an event that took place when and where formal colonial rules came to an end but rather a process of challenging the cultural and epistemic legacies of colonialism in broader domains such as history, aesthetics, art, literature, and philosophy (Andersen 2018).

We should challenge the ability to “decolonise the mind” (Ngũgĩ 1981) to avoid creating new patterns of oppression and cultural flattening. For Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, one of the strongest strategies of domination in colonialism was to control cultures as well as one’s self-perception and role in the world. The creation and diffusion of a framework in which different cultural elements are underestimated and identified as subordinate alienated people’s trust in their name, identity, language, abilities, and, ultimately, in themselves (Ngũgĩ 1981). As Paulo Freire (1987; 1997) observed, decolonisation is a mutual process between colonisers/colonised and oppressed/oppressors which weakens the conditioning and representations that undermine a unique vision of authenticity.

In order to enhance, experiment, and narrate the complexity of perceptions, interpretations, and cultural challenges, it is appropriate to develop interdisciplinary action-research frameworks (educators, teachers, artists, communication experts, human scientists, politicians, stakeholders, local communities, etc.). In this way, we can consolidate a relevant revision of those paradigms of superficial and stereotyped understanding.

To develop intercultural interaction in visual literacy, we must take the risk of inhabiting the contradictions of complexity. In this regard, awareness of historical and geo-political processes in which problems and resolutions are articulated allows us to analyse contexts and understand present and past internal community dynamics (Ahmed 2000). As everyone is a bearer of visual narrations, the subjective and collective frames of reference confront each other in the construction of identities where the local and global dimensions intertwine, triggering processes of shared and mixed knowledge.

Focusing on cultural innovation means enhancing the use of different languages through which processes of mutual appreciation of individual and collective hybrid features are initiated. This process requires new theoretical frameworks along with postcolonial educational strategies (Aman 2018; Andreotti 2011) oriented toward the recognition of oneself as the other, locally contextualised and, at the same time, globally ‘contaminated’. Visuality evolves as the space for this articulated transition thanks to the number of explorative canons on which the heterogeneity of communication messages is based.

## 5.4

### **Critical approach and recognition of different cultural perspectives: Cultural appreciation of plurality**

We live in a visual age that reshapes social processes and ways of communication, perception, and interpretation. Perceiving and interpreting the world through visuals rather than words has a direct effect on cultural structure and processes, and “visuals” are the carriers of cultures throughout the modern world. Each culture has unique properties in the context of “values”. Cultural values contain invisible moral elements and therefore they are not clearly and obviously visible and tangible structures. However, reflections of the moral side of culture can be observed in artefacts as visible culture elements. The fact that visible culture elements include cultural values indicates that globalisation can affect visual language only to a certain extent. In our visual age, there are differences in intercultural visual languages despite the rule of dominant cultures. An educative approach must take into account that the culture of the place in which the visual message is generated interacts with the visual perspective of the observer. In this context, it is inevitable that the generated images would reflect the visual language of the culture they belong to as well as the visual culture of the observer. An intercultural approach to visual languages means appreciating their multiple social uses; for instance, urging social change and improvement through visuals that range from graffiti to paintings and prints. Related activities might involve filmmaking and video, or more traditional media such as painting and sculpture. Or when visuals are used to enhance and enrich the environment through decorations and embellishment in the built habitat – for example, decorative elements in facades, clothing, and other cross-cultural artefacts or to celebrate and give meaning to key events in people’s lives.

In order to prevent the risk of homologation or closure in some localisms, we must consider the multitude of cultural phenomena that transmigrate, interface, and mix. This attitude can be very effective if we are able to create an interaction with plurality by deconstructing a monolithic concept of culture. Such a process can be implemented through a dialogue between the individual and collective meanings of images that coexist and describe trajectories of interdependence.

It is essential to understand how, in the encounter among different identities, knowledge and traditions that belong to hybrid roots can be rediscovered and enhanced by promoting creative reinterpretations (Hannerz 1996; Geertz 1999).

The research field of intercultural communication could profit from a larger interaction with the diverse fashions of visual languages, such as helping to overcome linguistic barriers, offering double cues for understanding (textual and visual elements), supporting seeing the big picture and the relationships among the concepts (Bresciani 2014).

To maximize the benefits of visualisation for supporting intercultural communication, it seems essential to investigate how cultural differences affect the encoding and decoding of visual inputs. [...] Colour and aesthetic preferences are not innate, they are learned. The meaning of symbols and the understanding of metaphors is inextricably linked to the culture. Even more remarkably, the environment in which we live has the power to shape the way we look at the world. (Bresciani 2014, pp. 83–84)

The recognition of different cultural perspectives can be supported by reciprocity and decentralisation, describing an approach in which coexistence with

otherness is crucial. In this regard, we can mention the paradigm of creolisation (Cohen 2010), from which we can outline interesting educational paths and outcomes.

Creolization is cultural creativity in process. When cultures come into contact, expressive forms and performances emerge from their encounter, embodying the sources that shape them yet constituting new and different entities. Fluid in their adaptation to changing circumstances and open to multiple meanings, Creole forms are expressions of culture in transition and transformation. Even as these emergent forms persist and become institutionalized after initial culture contact, they continue to embody multiplicity, render multivocality, and negotiate contestation while also serving as means of national identity and creative expression. (Baron, Cara 2011, p. 7)

Overcoming stereotypes allows the promotion of a cultural appreciation of plurality, with unexpected effects. Decentralisation requires an identity reformulation (Chambers, 2018), which can be facilitated by an intercultural approach aimed at capturing the dynamics and the effects generated by very distant yet not untranslatable and incomparable codes (Fabietti et al. 2012).

As educators in the field of visual communication, it is important to take into consideration the different narratives and biographies promoting mutual interpretations and understanding. The challenge is to become part of a global context with several heterogeneous and hybrid cultural roots, while running the risk of considering visually an easy way of understanding.

Mindful intercultural communicators will be sensitive to the ways that members of other cultures perceive the world differently from the way that they do, and place different interpretations on what they perceive. [...] we must strive to use visual communication with the same level of awareness and sensitivity that we bring to our use of verbal and non-verbal communication. (Sadri, Flammia 2011, p. 209)

## 5.5

### **Creative experiences: Design, production, and mastery of visual languages**

Visual art education encourages individuals to be more innovative in their thinking. Artworks often: address universal human concerns and conditions; bridge cultural and economic divides; are open to a variety of interpretations; can trigger emotional responses due to their expressive content; and contain complex layers of meaning, symbols and metaphor. (Alter 2010, p. 3)

Designing creative experiences allows social actors to negotiate different ideas and overcome individual cultural models. The skills of the subjects are redefined within participative dynamics, especially when they carry out activities based on the paradigm of bottom-up democracy and participatory planning (Mayo 2013).

This process of awareness is a way to prevent an “ethnocentric spiral” limited only to the assimilation or rejection of otherness. Ethnocentrism reinforces the perspective of the dominant group by amplifying the gaps between two or more interlocutors (individual or collective). This approach generates in-group and out-group situations in which the members try to protect their own boundaries of thinking, feeling, and responding (Ting-Toomey 2012). If the dialogue is based on a mono-cultural and self-referential approach, one can only create inequalities and exclusion on a cultural basis, producing inhospitable living spaces (Cadei, Deluigi 2019) where the relationship with otherness is a mere expression of tolerance.

It is better to promote creativity by changing conditions in the environment than by trying to make people think more creatively (Csikszentmihalyi 1996); if we establish a learning context that encourages displacement, curiosity, complexity, dialogue, and imagination, we can have a greater impact on the learning process.

Therefore, in a learning situation, we must promote creative thinking as a way of understanding and interaction and look for different components to support this approach: *fluency* (generating many ideas), *flexibility* (shifting perspective easily), *originality* (conceiving of something new), and *elaboration* (building on other ideas) (Torrance, in Alvino 1990). In order to create an appropriate educational setting, it is important not to design operative spaces and times in a static structured way, so as not to “trap” creative expressions. It is necessary and useful to have a reference plan linked to educational, artistic, and expressive objectives and purposes, but, at the same time, it is good to foresee a flexible course of activities, accepting the solicitations and feedback of the participants during the experience.

In this frame, we can see artistry as

a valuable in-process, intrinsic, transformational experience in which each individual has rights to creative self-expression and creating bodies of work based on his or her own abilities and concerns with emphasis on increasingly global relationships among culture, people, and economic activity. (Bastos, Zimmerman 2017, p. 387)

The organisation of inventive contexts and activities open to plurality facilitates the expression of the subjects as both individuals and members of a community. Through visual communication we can mediate a cross-culture interaction because the development of the visual language serves as a universal form of communication bridging linguistic and cultural gaps (Nawar, Gabr 2013). The creative use of visual language allows us to establish a dialogue, even in the absence of linguistic mediations, paying attention to the meanings that each subject attributes to the images. The visual communication system is one of the media that works like a supplement to languages to create better and faster understanding (ibid.). We can consider it one of the first levels of contact and impact among differences, with nonverbal language, body expression, gestures, sounds, and all the sensory dimensions that can be involved in the interaction.

The multicultural experiences have a significant promoting effect on the creativity of the subject, but such promoting effect depends on: (1) whether the subject really obtains the multicultural experience; only when the subject has a certain understanding of the new culture can the multicultural experience be formed; (2) the participants acquired the prototype characteristics contained in the multicultural experience. If the multicultural experience included the prototype that had a promoting effect on the creative work, the multicultural experience had a promoting effect on the creativity. (Tan, Wang, Guo, Zeng, Zhou, & Cao 2019, p. 9)

The multicultural dimension of creativity can guarantee the right of expression through plural languages that give dignity and value to plural voices and diverse paradigms of communication. Creative research and practice in art education should go beyond the comparative method and move toward models of interdependence and hybridisation. This process is effective when we are aware of plural contexts and work in a situated way.

Arts-informed research can provide opportunities to problematize research methodologies and practices generating inclusive designs that allow all who participate to be respected and recognised. Therefore, arts-informed research has potential for not only disturbing narrow understandings of creativity, but also of shaping connective and socially-responsive approaches to research design that may have a significant impact on many lives. (Bastos, Zimmerman 2017, pp. 393–394)

## 5.6

### **Transcultural validation of experience: Verification and corroboration of visual languages within meaningful interactions**

The concept and the project of transculturalism were originally defined by Fernando Ortiz in 1940 in his book *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* [Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar]:

to describe this process, the Latinate word transcultural provides us with a term that does not suggest the idea of one culture having to lean toward another, but of a transition between two cultures, both active and participating parties, both contributing in their own ways, cooperating in the advent of a new civilization reality.

The prefix “trans” here refers to continuities across borders and the permeability of borders. We want to attract attention at the interpersonal and community levels so as to promote a process of transformation within human interactions.

Transculturality means mobility in space, circulation or flow, but it is neither synonymous with them nor reducible to them. Transculturality goes beyond the flows, focuses the processes within exchange circuits in local contexts in which various forms emerge. (Gasparini 2013, p. 12)

One meaningful creative practice is the one recognised as “learning by doing” (Bruce, Bloch 2012; Gibbs 2013) in which it is possible to connect attitudes, ways of perception, and interpretations to create deeper mutual understandings.

Knowing oneself and the other through elements of proximity and commonality opens up the opportunity to imagine and put in action new opportunities of co-existence and hybridisation on personal, relational, educational, and artistic levels. Using this approach in an art-educational framework (according to the paradigm developed in TICASS) might give space to transcultural scenarios for the implementation of new dialogic practices.

The reinventing of new common culture is therefore based on the meeting and the intermingling of the different peoples and cultures. In other words one’s identity is not strictly one dimensional (the self) but is now defined and more importantly recognised in rapport with the other. In other words, one’s identity is not singular but multiple. (Cuccioletta 2001/2002, p. 8)

Hybridisation, as the interaction of people and media from different cultures, is a communication-based phenomenon crucial for finding scenarios for understanding the importance of the dynamics of history, politics, and economies. We can call this approach “critical transculturalism” (Kraidy 2005) and it can be used to validate the experience of using visual languages as meaningful media.

Dialogue through images allows the exchange of messages, understanding backgrounds, and discovering different ways of representing the plurality of realities. Although we know that this process is partial and refers to personal categories, we can still search for elements of comprehension. The intersubjective relationship produces knowledge, memory, and projects, not to be understood as parallel dimensions but as interconnected components in terms of reciprocity, cooperation, and active participation.

On one hand, we can value the paradigm of «transcultural memory» considering remembrance as a process in which the representation of diverse events flows beyond national or cultural boundaries, transcending, without negating them,

spatial, temporal, and ideational differences (Bond, Rapson 2014). On the other hand, we can refer to a “transcultural visual communication system” (Nawar 2020) to discuss the future of communication and the possibility of developing a standardised universal pictographic communication system that fosters mutual understanding and bridges diverse cultures in a post human era. In both cases, we must focus on contextualisation and the realisation of associated practices in which people can discover the multiple paths on which diversity is negotiated through appropriation, mediation, translation, “re-historicisation,” and the reinterpretation of signs.

A transcultural perspective [...] is a means and a perspective that helps us understand how that culture that we call ours was formed in history and is formed in the present. [...] We become sensitive to the ways in which some cultures are formed through interactive relationships with other cultures, and not as a “pure” product of a nation or locality. (Gasparini 2013, p. 13)

In the search for the connections between visuality, current global processes, and transcultural negotiations, it is possible to reconsider visual studies from the perspective of the transcultural approach in order to overcome ideological pluralism and liberal multiculturalism. In this frame, “cultural differences, representation of otherness, recognition of alterities as well as diverse processes of identification and subjectivism, cannot become obstacles for the expansion, legitimisation and concretion of visual extra-disciplinarity” (AGI 2007).

## 5.7

### **Subjective and collective skills empowerment: Successful and sustainable visual competences – knowledge and abilities – within mutual and social understanding**

The process and the categories indicated above allow the empowerment of critical reading, interpretation, use, and production of images. The mastery of visual grammar and lexicon is as productive for the individual (as a communicating subject-identity) as for the development of collective narratives (produced by the métissage of categories, currents, thoughts, and plural cultures). The contextual knowledge and identification of visual languages within specific cultural frames allow subjects to interrogate reality by acknowledging uncertainty and plurality as dimensions to be considered and valued in the specificity of the existential situation. The ability to decode images enables reading the contents and interpreting the intentionality of communication by using interdisciplinary categories.

The intercultural interaction on visual literacy, between subjective and collective narrations, can open new horizons of meanings and understanding:

researchers from different cultures are inclined to study different creative processes or processing modes and assign different degrees of importance to the same aspect of the creative process. [...] An exposure to a foreign culture could help expand the conceptual boundaries established in the individual's culture, providing inspiration to break free from his/her culture's limiting sets and initiating the creative re-appropriation/synthesis of diverse ideas. [...] Individuals exposed to different cultures have a great likelihood of generating novel or new things through combining different elements from the experienced cultures, which would be perceived as novel by individuals who have experience with only one or some of those cultures. (Shao, Zhang, Zhou, Gu, & Yuan 2019, p. 4)

An interpretative approach to different cultural messages encourages a greater appreciation of plurality and, more consciously, sharper communication skills. The use of visual analysis promotes a responsible relativisation of one's point of view, an orientation toward a non-generalising and superficial glimpse of reality.

The greatest danger in using visuals for intercultural communication is the mistaken perception that there is an external world that is seen in exactly the same way by members of all cultures around the world. [...] Mindful intercultural communications will be sensitive to the ways that members of other cultures perceive the world differently from the way that they do, and place different interpretations on what they perceive. [...] As mindful intercultural communicators, we must strive to use visual communication with the same level of awareness and sensitivity that we bring to our use of verbal and non-verbal communication. (Sadri, Flammia, 2011, p. 209)

Creative experiences allow participants to interconnect their skills, increasing knowledge and empathy. Through the comprehension of visual culture, we can better understand multicultural social fabrics.

The great power of the visual arts is their ability to have various and profound effects on our lives; but that power can also make them manipulative, colonizing, and disenfranchizing. Visual culture that is considered good for one group may hurt others and the complexity of this relationship needs to be considered as part of educational experience. (Freedman 2003, p. 53)

An open dialogue within the plurality of cultural productions empowers people with a "nomadic" identity and innovative codes useful to prevent an ethnocentric perspective.

This process is important because it creates possibilities for the critique of visual culture at all levels to achieve democratic educational goals intended to guide the preparation of reflective and responsible citizens, consequently leading to a more socially conscious and equitable society. From a visual culture perspective, production empowers makers and viewers by promoting critique through the process of making, encouraging analysis during viewing, and enabling makers and viewers to claim ownership of images and designed objects. (Freedman, Stuhr 2004, p. 826)

Finally, the transcultural validation of the experience enhances more authentic expressions of *métissage* from the perspectives of engagement and consciousness as a significant educational process. We can agree with Paulo Freire when he describes

the practice of freedom, as the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with their reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. The development of an educational methodology that facilitates this process, will inevitably lead to tension and conflict within our society. But it could also contribute to the formation of a new man and mark the beginning of a new era in Western history. (Freire 1987, p. 15)

In order not to remain inactive on the "Western bank of the river of the world," we can design research hypotheses and creative experiences which, through interdisciplinary and intercultural practice of visual languages, intercept original paths of comprehension. Through collaborative research in the field of art education, we can empower subjective and collective relations and narrations, promote social justice, and prevent inequalities by proposing accessible scenarios of mutual responsibility and social transformation.

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# **IV. METHODOLOGY**





# 6

## SHARING OF INTERPRETATIVE PARADIGMS FOR VISUALITY

Giuseppe Capriotti

The aim of this part of the report is to describe the interpretative paradigms selected for the image analysis; that is, the model of the so-called 5W proposed by Harold Dwight Lasswell in 1948 in the famous article “The structure and function of communication in society”, and the six perspectives first introduced in 1995 by Paul Martin Lester in the book *Visual Communication: Images with Messages* (Lester 2011). The works of these two scholars have been the theoretical framework of the practical work of the TICASS project, with the aim to revise, verify, and discuss the interpretation of images as visual messages, and their communicative and persuasive power also in multicultural contexts.

### 6.1

#### Outline of the Lasswell frame

Harold Dwight Lasswell (1902–1978) was a leading American political scientist and communications theorist. After having completed his PhD at Chicago University (1926) and a research period in Europe, where he followed seminars by the economist Keynes, worked with the philosopher Bertrand Russell, and studied Freud and Marx, he taught political sciences at Chicago University until 1938. In 1927 he published his doctoral thesis, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, in which he analysed the propaganda techniques used by Europeans and Americans during WW1. The book is the first important essay to deliver a conceptual framework for mass communication research (Lasswell 1927). Lasswell continued to study propaganda phenomena as indispensable tools for modern democracies to structure popular mass consensus, analysing the techniques and effectiveness of the propaganda messages (Lasswell 1927; Lasswell 1930–1935).

In 1948 he obtained a full professorship at Yale Law School and, in the same year, he defined and described his linear method, publishing the seminal article “The structure and function of communication in society” in *The Communication of Ideas*, edited by L. Bryson and published by the Institute for Religious and Social Studies of New York. His well-known model of communication focuses on “Who (says) What (to) Whom (in) What Channel (with) What Effect”; that is, the 5W model.

“Who” corresponds to the communicator, the sender; that is, the person or the institution, the source that sent the message: This is the sector of research called the “control analysis” because we analyse who controls the message. “Says

What” is the content of the message that we have analysed during the content analysis: This is one of the most important investigations according to Lasswell as it focuses on the political propaganda. “To Whom” corresponds to the receiver, the addressee of the message, the object of the audience analysis. “In What Channel” is an examination of the technical medium of the message, conducting a media analysis. “With What Effect” requires an effect analysis during which the effect of the communication on the audience is scrutinised.

This linear method has been considered as strongly connected to American behaviourism, according to which a stimulus corresponds to a specific response without considering the intermediate phases of comprehension of the message between communicator and receiver and, more generally, the relationship between people. Actually, Lasswell tended to consider the population as a mass to control and convince through propaganda, and communication as political persuasion. In the effect analysis, a real analysis of the feedback is missing and the receiver of the communication is considered a passive subject (see, in contrast, the interactional model by McQuail 2010).

Even if the Lasswell method is outdated and has been bettered by other communication scientists (Jacobson 1956; McQuail 2010), his linear method has been extraordinarily effective for the first analysis of the images in the TICASS project. The application of his method has been used to produce a “Lasswell card” for each selected image; that is, a basic and simple catalogue entry of the visual message, examined as a result of different components (sender, content, medium, receiver, effect; the report with the Lasswell card of the first secondment are available online: <https://ticass.eu/Main/Artykul/technologies-of-imaging-in-urban-communication-report-1-from-poland-szczecin>). The interaction of these components has been investigated more deeply, also from a transcultural perspective, using the Paul Martin Lester frame.



## 6.2

### Outline of the Lester frame

The first edition of *Visual Communication: Images with Messages* by Paul Martin Lester was published in 1995, and then republished in six other editions (the most recent being one in 2014) as a manual for students of communication and visual culture. It is still considered the only text capable of providing a wide and multiperspectival approach to the study of visual communication by using images which tell stories (Kelly 2016). The publication date is very significant: visual studies was born in the nineties; it was the decade of the pictorial turn, when many scholars, of different disciplines and not only of art history, in America and in Europe started to analyse (artistic and non-artistic) images for their value as messages or historical evidence (Elkins 2003, pp. 4–7). Influenced by the thinking of Wilson Hicks, a journalist who promoted photojournalism between the 1930s and 1950s and who was convinced that the combination of images and words would make mass communication more efficient and persuasive (Hicks 1952), Lester posits that “the most powerful, meaningful, and culturally important messages are those that combine words and pictures equally and respectfully” (Lester 2011, p. x). However,



according to Lester, whereas after the invention of movable type many grammars were drawn up to read texts and verbal messages, the extraordinary spread of cameras and the extensive use of images on TV and in newspapers have not produced any grammar of the visual world (Lester 2011, p. x). This is therefore the aim of his volume: to provide a grammar with which to read images, since those who are able to read pictures are also able to conceive and produce effective images in mass communication. The difference between effective and non-effective images is that only effective images become engraved in the observer's memory. The basic problem is thus the power of images.

In order to analyse images of various kinds, in particular non-artistic images (although various works of art are mentioned in the volume), Lester proposes six steps, six levels of analysis, which he calls "perspectives". The choice of the word is rather interesting and significant as, since the Middle Ages, "perspective" has indicated the "way of seeing"; that is, a gaze guided by the mind toward an idea (Panofsky 1991; Belting 2011). In order to give an example of his method, the analysis deals with an image (fig. 1) on a wall of a private dwelling in the district of Mnarani in Kilifi, a town on the coast of Kenya between Malindi and Mombasa. Because it is an image taken during a secondment in Kilifi, conducted for the TICASS project, the proposed example of image reading is a tangible exemplification of the connection between theory and practice held during the project.

Fig. 1. Advertisement on the wall (Mnarani – Kilifi, Kenya)



The first step is *personal perspective*. This is a superficial analysis based on a personal response, which reveals much about the person making the analysis; about their culture and their world. In this first stage, the analysis will only have been based on their personal experience. The analyst indicates whether they appreciate the picture and expresses their feelings while observing it. The picture examined could, for instance, communicate happiness (the stream of animals coming out of the house seems a merry party going toward a field or a brook) or sadness (because they could give the sense of a disturbing military march, connected to death).

The second analysis level is *historical perspective*, which is fundamental to understanding the meaning of every image on the basis of one's history. The questions that should be answered are: "When do you think the image was made? What major developments were happening in the area where the image was produced and throughout the world? Is there a specific style that the image imitates?" (Lester 2011, p. 123). In the case in hand, the image being analysed is contemporary. It was made in a peripheral district of Kilifi, that is Mnarani, the seat of the first urban settlement in the 14th century, built by Arabs; nowadays it is mainly inhabited by Muslims. The neighbourhood is made up of a main street with stonework shops and dwellings, and by many villages of huts in which peasants and breeders of small animals live. The image seems to imitate Disney's cartoon style; in particular, the animals leaving the stable remind us of certain scenes from *The Lion King*, which was set in Kenya.

*Technical perspective* analyses the techniques used to produce an image. The questions that should be answered are: "How was the image produced? What techniques were employed? Is the image of good quality?" (Lester 2011, p. 124). Our image was handmade using the ancient pouncing technique; in some of the figures, it is clearly possible to recognise a few marks which enabled the painter to reproduce the shapes on the basis of the cartoon used as a model. The author is a painter of brands, paid by the company producing and marketing the product; in this case, "Faida Feeds" which produces food for breeding animals. Therefore, the image was conceived neither by an artist nor by a decorator acting independently; it is the outcome of an advertising campaign promoted by a specific company. Compared to other images handcrafted by independent artists or decorators for the shops in the same neighbourhood and in Kilifi, the quality of this picture is very high.

The fourth step deals with the *ethical perspective* through which aspects related to human behaviour and emerging from the picture are brought to light, even by trying to interpret the image as the mirror of philosophical ideas (should it be possible) such as "golden rule, hedonism, golden mean, categorical imperative, utilitarianism, and veil of ignorance" (Lester 2011, p. 125). In this case, the ethical meaning of the picture is made explicit by the Swahili writing *Faida ni Yako!*, meaning "The benefit is yours!": the words and image convey the practical value of the advertising image and the idea that eating meat is correct and healthy behaviour. The animals filing happily in the picture are well fed by Faida Feeds and therefore may be eaten without any problem; or, rather, you may benefit from eating them in terms of health (as the writing implies). Another detail related to the eating habits of Kenyan coastal areas emerges from the kinds of animals depicted: a rooster, two chickens, a duck, a turkey, a sheep, a cow, and a goat; the pig is significantly missing – it is a rather controversial animal in the predominantly Muslim area, and for this reason it is prudently avoided.

The next level of analysis is *cultural perspective*, which "is closely related to the semiotics approach" and "involves identifying the symbols and metaphors used in an image and determining their meaning for a society as a whole" (Lester 2011, p. 130). The questions that should be answered are: "What is the story and the symbolism involved in the elements of the visual message? What do they say about current cultural values? What metaphors can be expressed through the work?" (Lester 2011, p. 130). The image taken into consideration does not tell

a story but symbolism is evident: a happy animal family, if fed well, can in turn feed a happy human family, who can benefit from Faida Feeds indirectly (as the writing says).

The final step is *critical perspective*, in which a particular image is transcended to read the culture that accepts or rejects the image; the “critical perspective redefines a person’s initial personal perspective in terms of universal conclusions about human nature” (Lester 2011, p. 131). If by the use of a cultural perspective it is possible to understand society, then in this case it is even possible to understand human nature. The questions that should be answered are: “What do I think of this image now that I’ve spent so much time looking at and studying it? What lessons does it have for those who view the image?” (Lester 2011, p. 131). In the case in hand, the advertisement by Faida Feeds tells us that it is meant for a culture based on animal breeding and agriculture; at the same time, the image tells the beholder that eating meat is absolutely lawful and healthy if the animal is bred and fed healthy food.

Lester’s six perspectives start from a personal analysis and, through a historical and technical examination, the image is read as a reflection of behaviours or philosophical thoughts, and then by the identification of stories, symbols, and metaphors as a reflection of the society in which it was produced.

This specific example shows how important it is to have the ability to read images in multicultural and global perspectives. The image producer (as the addressee in reading images) must consider the context in which the visual message is displayed, paying attention to the variables determined by religions and cultures.

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**V.  
PARTICIPATIVE  
ACTIONS: CHALLENGES  
AND OPPORTUNITIES**





# OUTCOMES OF THE INTERDISCIPLINARY ROUND TABLE HELD AT THE 4TH INTERNATIONAL TICASS CONFERENCE

Rosita Deluigi

This section of the report summarises the reflections that emerged during the round table on “Educational Recommendations for Implementation of Integral Theory of Visual Education”, held at the 4th International TICASS Conference (Participation: Education, Visual Languages and Intercultural Strategies” 28th–29th of November 2019, University of Macerata, Italy).

The conference explored the contemporary relationship between education and visual communication in contexts that emphasise intercultural strategies and promote active citizenship. The use of diversified languages and media broadens the scope of interdisciplinary domains and channels of dialogue provided there is effective accessibility (physical and cultural) to the different fashion of visual-artistic communication.

The guidelines developed by the Faro Convention (2005) on cultural heritage preservation were a starting point to rethinking and conceptualising the relationship with visual communication, in participatory and intercultural ways. Going beyond the European borders, as indicated by the Faro Convention, means to:

recognise that rights relating to cultural heritage are inherent in the right to participate in cultural life, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; recognise individual and collective responsibility toward cultural heritage; emphasise that the conservation of cultural heritage and its sustainable use have human development and quality of life as their goal; take the necessary steps to apply the provisions of this Convention concerning: the role of cultural heritage in the construction of a peaceful and democratic society, and in the processes of sustainable development and the promotion of cultural diversity; greater synergy of competencies among all the public, institutional and private actors concerned. (Article 1)

The conference focused on the investigation of visual languages as strategies for producing new messages and narratives that might favour the interaction of both different identities and tangible and intangible heritage.

In this respect, the Faro Convention Action Plan argues that when heritage is considered as a source and resource, everyone’s opinions, interests, and aspirations do matter (Council of Europe 2018). In this regard, it is extremely important to:

encourage reflection on the ethics and methods of presentation of the cultural heritage, as well as respect for diversity of interpretations; establish processes for conciliation to deal equitably with situations where contradictory values are placed on the same cultural heritage by different communities; develop knowledge of cultural heritage as a resource to facilitate peaceful coexistence by promoting trust and mutual understanding with a view to resolution and prevention of conflicts; integrate these approaches into all aspects of lifelong education and training. (Article 7, Faro Convention)

All convenors discussed visual communication, art, and cultural heritage as transcultural dimensions from an educational perspective. Further, they investigated how to promote processes of social participation in order to create spaces of interpretation, fruition, and artistic production. It was also important to explore how to design intercultural strategies for interaction through different languages and highlight the connection between visual language and storytelling (from memory to future projects). The space of debate covered the relationship between education and visual communication from the perspective of lifelong learning, and examined the link between education, memory, and visual communication from a historical perspective.

The last session of the conference hosted a round table in which the attendees discussed key points concerning education methodologies on art knowledge and visual languages. The round table involved 32 participants: academics, professionals, researchers, and students from several institutions:

- University of Macerata – Italy
- Academy of Art in Szczecin – Poland
- Stowarzyszenie Edukacja, Nauka, Kultura – Poland
- University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem – Czech Republic
- Polish University Abroad in London – United Kingdom
- Universidad de Extremadura – Spain
- Pwani University – Kenya

The main research fields were:

- human rights, intercultural studies, philosophy of culture;
- art education, media pedagogy, philosophy of education, psychology of education, critical pedagogy, social science;
- teacher training, instructional technology;
- art history and iconology, archaeology and cultural heritage, history of religion;
- visual and digital literacy, transcultural aesthetic, cultural and visual anthropology;
- art curators and cultural management;
- music and fine arts, literature, and cinema.

The presence of many participants with different cultural and disciplinary backgrounds generated a fruitful dialogue. In addition, the interactive methodology allowed discussion participation by participating.

After a short presentation, the attendees were divided into five small groups (6–7 members) to discuss the opportunities and challenges in participatory dynamics to encourage creative and collaborative processes (Brame & Biel 2015; Bransford, Brown & Cocking 1999; Davidson & Major 2014; Gokhale 1995; Johnson & Smith 2006).



The working groups met for 45 minutes and afterwards shared their inputs in a plenary session, opening the debate and providing guidelines and recommendations on the use of visual languages in education through participative approaches.

The outcomes of the round table are summarised in the table below; they can be combined with the educational recommendations (chapter 5) and with the framework of the best practices (chapter 8).

Relevant issues	Guidelines, recommendations
1. Multidisciplinary approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge is based on networking and open dialogue among several approaches, methods, understandings, and experiences.</li> </ul>
2. Intercultural relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactions among differences can be an opportunity rather than a challenge through intercultural dialogue.</li> <li>• Participation is a fruitful method in education to share content among different cultures.</li> <li>• The relevance of plurality and the <i>métissage</i> can support the process of decolonising images in order to read the reach behind them.</li> <li>• Responsibility is also conveyed by the conscious use of visual languages as a communication media.</li> </ul>
3. Online information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay attention to the responsibility and effects of sharing visual information on public spaces online (Internet, social networks, and open sources).</li> <li>• Learning skills and new digital language competences in order to “not get lost in the Internet”.</li> </ul>
4. Visual language is like a bridge in education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual language can be considered a valid educational tool.</li> <li>• Creativity and self-improvement are also supported by the critical use of images. Visual language supports the process of creative thinking (subjective and collective) and encourages the growth of free people toward an empathic society.</li> <li>• Visual language needs visual literacy because incoherent interpretations might appear and the tacit reality will be ignored. It is important to focus on the process of reading a visual image and have an actual knowledge of visual codes.</li> <li>• Through participation, it is possible to achieve shared strategies for problem solving in order to overcome competitive-centred communities toward equality and conflict mediation.</li> <li>• It is important to take into consideration the educational paradigms of lifelong learning and cooperative learning.</li> </ul>

<p>5. Collaboration and social impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration is the result of joint effort, especially when the aim is to involve important stakeholders to deal with problems in society.</li> <li>• Through a cooperative approach and using visual communication, awareness of the global situation can be improved, especially social challenges (nationalism, racism...), in an effective way.</li> </ul>
<p>6. Student/recipient involvement</p>	<p>Promoting student involvement through visual language can help them be active in the experiences. They can remember activities and learning aims for longer because engagement in memorable-actionable experiences is more interesting. Taking part in an educational-visual activity can generate collective and individual memories and identities. Using local materials and valuing personal attitudes and professional competences are ways to create intercultural dialogue and promote common understanding. Visual language allows the participation only of sighted people, and we must take persons with special needs into consideration by developing inclusive settings (using different expressive languages). It is important to develop training paths for teachers, educators, and curators to improve a creative approach to new media, starting from several perceptions of visual images (first of all, teacher/curator and viewer perspectives).</p>
<p>7. Visual images and new narratives</p>	<p>Visual languages allow the creation of new representations of oneself, of otherness, and of contexts. On the one hand, visual messages (icons, symbols, colors...) can be used to express contents and implement universal meanings in order to harmonise a transcultural understanding. On the other hand, plural images, representations, and narratives help to overcome homologation.</p>



Fig. 1–3. Round table – work in progress (Macerata, Italy, 2019)

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# **VI. BEST PRACTICES**





# 8

## INTRODUCTION

Rosita Deluigi

This section of the book presents some of the best practices in the fields of visual languages and art education developed in the TICASS project. All partners involved wrote technical entries describing the activities conducted in interdisciplinary ways. The aim is to outline the implementation of the programme, stressing the proposals, objectives set, targeted recipients, and evaluations. The following practices are completed with photographic documentation to characterise some meaningful steps of the experiences carried out during the research.

### 8.1

#### Visual TICASS – preschool education (Italian experience)

Main aims and objectives	The goal of the TICASS project is to study and understand how visual language (in its various forms) can facilitate or hinder intercultural dialogue. In this experience, through visual language and storytelling, we want to stimulate the children's imagination and creativity so they can be users and producers of images and new stories and narratives enriched by their personal experience.
Staff	TICASS institution involved: UNIMC For the implementation of the initiative, two professors from the University of Macerata (Italy) were involved (Rosita Deluigi, pedagogist, and Morena Muzi, psychologist) as curators of the project and conductors of the storytelling activities. In the project there were also four tutors (University of Macerata students: Jessica Canestrari, Laura Salvatori, Miriam Cuccu, Francesca Mondin – graduates in Education) as co-conductors of the activities, charged with observing group dynamics and responsible for the photographic documentation of the activities.
Recipients	The recipients of our activities were children from the Gianni Rodari pre-primary school of Macerata (Italy). The target group was composed of 110 pupils (children of 3–5 years divided into small homogeneous groups of a maximum of eight).

Materials	<p>We used different materials: “silent” books and children’s books, mainly composed of images and short texts. For each age range, we used two books:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children of 3 years: <i>Bear Sees Colours</i> by Karma Wilson and Jane Chapman and <i>La couleur des émotions</i> by Anna Llenas.</li> <li>• Children of 4 years: <i>Owl Bat, Bat Owl</i> by Marie Louis Fitzpatrick and <i>Copain?</i> by Charlot Gastaut.</li> <li>• Children of 5 years: <i>O segredo de Anton</i> by Ole Konnecke and <i>Copain?</i> by Charlot Gastaut.</li> </ul> <p>During the activities we used several materials: coloured cardboard, a laptop for music, speakers, a recording device, a blanket (in order to let the children to sit on the floor and enjoy the story), and a projector.</p> <p>For the final workshop, we chose the book <i>Oh! Un livre qui fait des sons</i> by Hervé Tullet, and the materials used were the following: a white cloth; blue, red, and yellow cardboard rounds in different sizes; a white poster; and a bedsheet painted with red, yellow and blue dots.</p>
Spaces	<p>This experience took place in Italy at the Gianni Rodari pre-primary school in Macerata.</p> <p>The children’s activities were carried out in a classroom in which we spread out a large blanket so the children could sit down. In front of them – near the storyteller – we placed a table with the materials.</p> <p>To celebrate the school end-of-the-year party, we created a short workshop in the school theatre, for the purpose of showing children’s achievements to parents and teachers.</p>
Timing	<p>The project lasted about three months.</p> <p>We had two meetings for all age ranges in January, February, and March 2018 (two workshops for each small homogeneous group).</p> <p>Each meeting lasted three hours and each activity 40 minutes (each date involved three small groups of a maximum of eight children).</p>
Description of the experience	<p>For the 3-year-olds’ reading activities, we divided them into small groups of 6–7 participants.</p> <p>The children sat on the blanket on the floor in front of the narrators while the tutors supervised the activity from behind.</p> <p>The text readings were carried out in a particular way: the children were brought into the story through images and visual, auditive, and tactile stimuli. Through this experience they became the narrators of their own story, based on the main events of their lives.</p> <p>The main themes of these readings were the emotions – which is a topic faced with their teachers too – their identification, and the connection with the colours.</p>



Description of the experience	<p>For this reason, after reading the book <i>La couleur des émotions</i>, a small atelier was created where the children could choose between different coloured cardboard rounds, each of them connected to a different emotion, which represented their state of mind during the story.</p> <p>The narration was stimulated by audio input to let the children associate images and sounds (for example, the sea and the sound of sea).</p> <p>The 4- and 5-year-old children were divided into small groups of eight participants. The children sat in a circle in front of the narrator, who read the story through images.</p> <p>This reading was carried out in a simpler way due to the age of the children. The children were involved through questions related to the story and stimulated by expressive inputs referring to the characters.</p> <p>The children made connections between the characters of the story and experiences in their lives.</p> <p>The narration was also stimulated by audio input (for example, the sound of the wind), involving the children in a common expression of emotions and sounds.</p> <p>At the end of the workshop, the 4- and 5-year-old children drew a picture of what they preferred about the story.</p> <p>To celebrate the end of the school year, the children joined a final workshop with their parents, where they created a “symphony” reading of <i>Oh! Un livre qui fait des sons</i>.</p>
Assessment	<p>During this experience we used different evaluation instruments. The first one was observation of participation during the storytelling activities. It was conducted by one or two tutors who observed the group dynamics and the development of the narrative. The tutors' observations were noted through a multi-item rating grid.</p> <p>Another tool of retrospective evaluation was the audio-recording of the experience, fundamental for collecting the children's feedback and their reactions during the evolution of the story.</p> <p>The specific purpose regarding the production and use of visual language through images by children was achieved. Children were active protagonists, able to experiment in an inclusive space with the mediation of the adult who provided creative input and observed in a constructive way.</p> <p>It is important to make a distinction between a more structured narrative for younger children (3 years old) and a less guided one for the older ones.</p> <p>Children aged 4 and 5 were able, even without many suggestions, to be users of the story; becoming protagonists and at the same time, producers in a spontaneous and personalised way. Children were also able to make assumptions</p>

	<p>about the continuation of the story, the characters' lives, and their evolution.</p> <p>Adult mediation was more necessary to make the images of the book usable for 3-year-old children. However, they were also able to produce interesting solicitations and generated new perspectives about the stories and links with their personal experience.</p> <p>One of the critical issues noted was the role of the teachers during the activity; in some cases, especially for the younger children, it was a source of distraction; in others, instead, it helped children to feel at ease.</p> <p>Also, the choice of the room influenced the management of the group. At first, the familiarity with the place was a distracting factor due to the equipment in the room (for example, the library shelf and the sandbox).</p> <p>The participation of children was excellent and they were always curious and open to collaborating in the activities. The small groups of up to eight participants were functional and facilitated our observation work, letting us describe unexpected points of view and group dynamics among children, and among children and adults.</p> <p>There were some critical issues, more or less predictable, like the lack of internal organisation of the teachers, which meant that, unfortunately, some children were not able to participate at all, and maybe some children participated twice. The seasonal period sometimes drastically decreased the number of participants, due to various health issues; in some cases, children had some difficulty in maintaining concentration on history, just for the presence of several inputs (such as laptop, music and images), and it was important to evaluate the situation and adapt the experience during the path.</p>
Authors of the form	Jessica Canestrari and Laura Salvatori

Fig. 1 The final workshop. Open event and creative materials (Macerata, Italy, 2018)

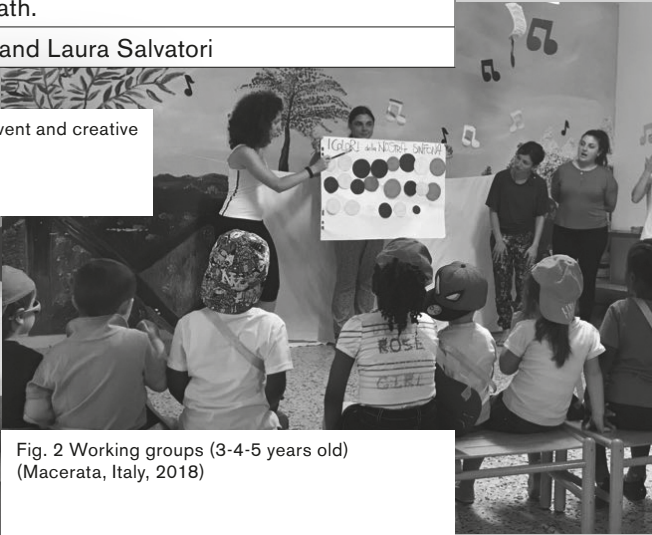
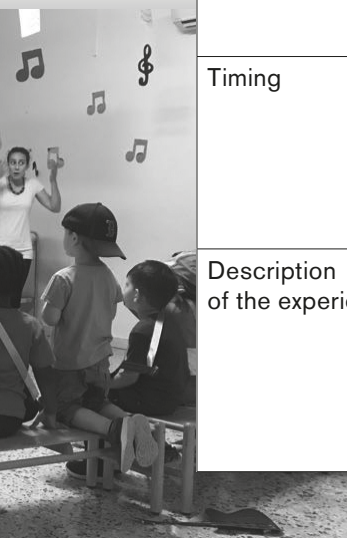


Fig. 2 Working groups (3-4-5 years old) (Macerata, Italy, 2018)

## 8.2

### Visual TICASS 2.0 – preschool education (Italian experience)

Main aims and objectives	<p>The main aim of the activity was to promote creativity and imagination as a way of shared learning and co-construction of meanings.</p> <p>Specific objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To stimulate, through experimentation of colours, the expression of creativity.</li> <li>• To compare communication styles, strategies, and expressive materials to activate personal artistic expression.</li> <li>• To understand that it is possible to create infinite chromatic nuances using primary colours.</li> </ul>
Staff	<p>TICASS institution involved: UNIMC</p> <p>Two university professors (Rosita Deluigi, pedagogist, and Morena Muzi, psychologist)</p> <p>Five university tutors (Miriam Cuccu, Francesca Mondin, Laura Salvatori, Jessica Canestrari, with bachelor in Education, Elisa Gambelli, trainee in Education).</p>
Recipients	<p>12 preschool teachers</p> <p>84 preschool children (aged 3–5 years)</p>
Materials	<p>For the activities, we used three children's books: Little Blue and Little Yellow by Leo Lionni, and Mix It Up and Say Zoop by Hervé Tullet; washable paints (yellow, red, blue, white, and black); a creative suitcase; plastic capes; sheets of paper (100 x 70 cm); paintbrushes; sponges; potatoes; plastic plates; plastic glasses; napkins; smartphone.</p>
Spaces	<p>The activity was carried out in Macerata (Italy) at Rodari Preschool. The workshops took place in a classroom and the space at the entrance, with tables and a carpet.</p>
Timing	<p>The activity lasted three months (from March to May 2019), during which time three workshops of 40 minutes for each heterogeneous group (around nine children) took place. A final event was organised in June 2019 (three hours). The evaluation with preschool teachers was organised in November 2019 (three hours).</p>
Description of the experience	<p><b>General organisation and methodology</b></p> <p>Each group of nine children of different ages (3, 4, 5 years old) was the protagonist of three workshops carried out in two phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• animated reading with art-educational books;</li> <li>• mini-workshop to experiment with paints on a shared sheet of paper.</li> </ul>



Professors' role: One professor led the readings; the other one led the workshop.

Tutors' role: At least two for each workshop to support the activities. Sometimes a tutor led the animated reading.

The professor or the tutor presented a story to stimulate, support, and arouse curiosity in the little listeners seated in a circle on the carpet. Then, children were "producers" of images in the mini workshop following the narration.

During the reading, the adult presented *The Suitcase of Colours*, which contained all the materials the children used in the workshop.

In the workshop, the children – wearing plastic capes so that they did not dirty their clothes – had at their disposal a table with a large sheet of paper. They stayed around the table – preferably alternating children of different ages – to share the space where they were going to paint (fig. 1).

During the workshop, the adult did not guide the children in the experience, but supported the creative process and their participation. Her focus was on communication-expression, and not only on the final outcome.

#### ***Little Blue and Little Yellow (March 2019)***

The activity addressed the knowledge of two primary colours (blue and yellow). The children listened to the animated story of *Little Blue and Little Yellow* for about 20 minutes, then decided which scene of the story to represent in the workshop. Some parts of the story had been printed beforehand in order to be available during the creative activity. The idea of the workshop was to repropose, even with changes, a part of the story; exploring colours, nuances, shapes, and materials. This activity lasted about 20 minutes, during which the group of children shared a sheet of paper. At the beginning, children received the primary colours of blue and yellow, brushes, and small sponges. Afterwards, professors and tutors introduced red, white, and black, and they encouraged, without obligation, the children to also start painting with their fingers and hands. This was initially a novelty and, at times, an obstacle for the young painters, who were intimidated by the idea of getting dirty and being able to paint without rules and represent whatever they wanted. Before long, their hands became a natural and immediate way in which to explore the materials (fig. 2).

**Mix It Up (March–April 2019)**

The idea of this activity was to encourage the children to go further into the infinite nuances that can be created from primary colours, black, and white. Initially, one professor animated the reading of *Mix It Up* by Hervé Tullet and children chose a part of the story to represent on the sheet of paper. Then, the team realised that children did not need a story to start exploring colours so they agreed to start directly from the presentation of *The Suitcase of Colours* around the table and with chromatic experimentation using only hands and fingers.

In many cases, children explored the colours until they overlapped into several nuances of brown sometimes “categorised” as storms or rainbows that contain every colour (fig. 3).

**Say Zoop (May 2019)**

The third workshop was inspired by *Say Zoop* but, in this case, the book was not introduced because reading was expected by the children. The idea was instead to start from an unexpected input: a different and unusual object for continuing experimenting with colours.

One professor started by presenting a suitcase in which “a family of potatoes” was contained. Then, the adult proposed to the children to start painting with the potatoes, and the group decided together how to cut them so as to use many different slices of this new tool. The research group introduced the colours and an intact potato was then immersed in the tempera that the children rolled on a coloured sheet of paper (fig. 4).

During this workshop, the children were not “inspired” by an animated story but only by their imagination and creativity so they were free to create their own story, individually or in-group.

**Final event**

For the last activity, we used some paintings realised in the previous workshops to create a story. The narration stems from what children commented on during the artistic process, when they created storms, rainbows, volcanos, hills, and rivers. The group used the sheets of paper to create a big book shown at the last animated reading.

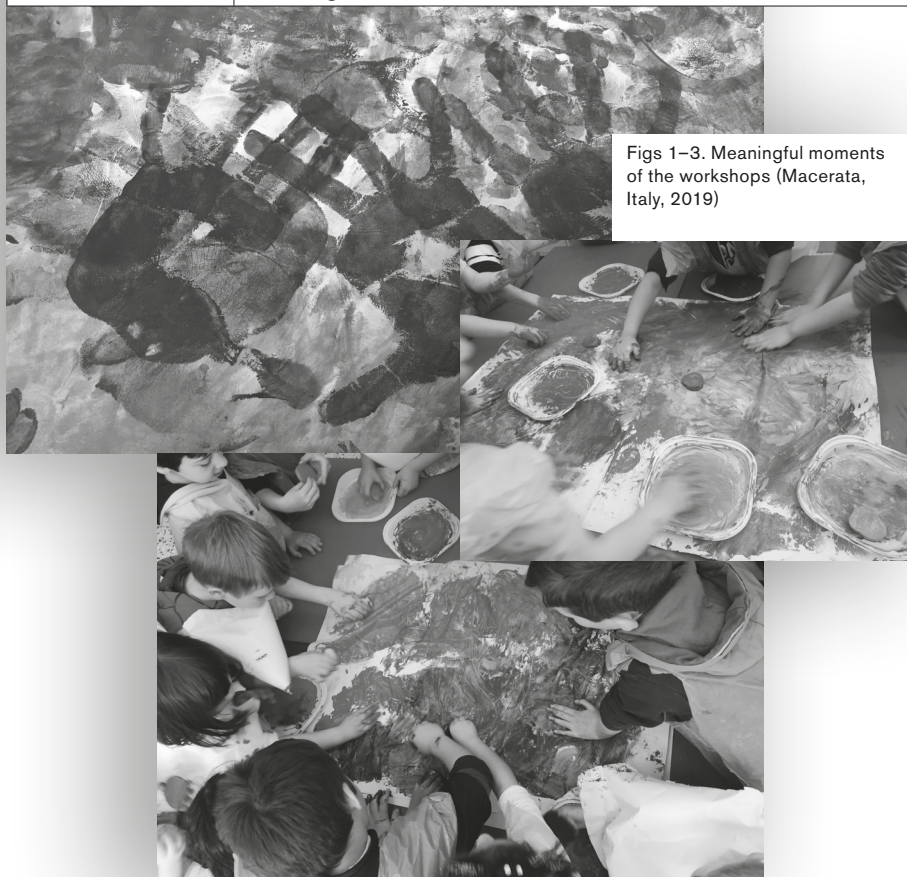
Assessment

**Evaluation in the group**

The project, inspired by “Art Based Research” and “Photo Elicitation” tools, comprised pedagogical-photographic research conducted by both professors and tutors.

During the workshop, the research group took photos of representative moments of the creative process in order to deepen the pedagogical reflection starting from images. At the end of each reading + workshop cycle, the group collected photos and reflections (audio-registered after every workshop) in a shared folder. This qualitative research allowed teachers and students to focus on some aspects that emerged during the experience without being invasive.

Professors and tutors shared the plural and contextualised reflections of each observer in the situation. In this way, the research started from a common orientation but remained open to the input of the context. This path allowed highlighting some useful aspects for planning and redesigning educational experiences and, at the same time, allowed the group to compare more languages and share different meanings of the educational actions.



Figs 1–3. Meaningful moments of the workshops (Macerata, Italy, 2019)



### **Evaluation with preschool teachers**

In November 2019, an evaluation with preschool teachers was organised in Buonaccorsi Civic Museum in Macerata during an exhibition concerning the TICASS project(<https://TICASS.eu/Main/Artykul/weekend-time-16th-17th-november>). Surrounded by photos of Visual TICASS paintings, preschool teachers and university professors and tutors were the protagonists of a reflection-feedback moment in which they revised every phase of the workshop, helped by visual languages and the comparison with Visual TICASS activities organised in Kenyan primary schools.

### **Retrospective evaluation**

Personal artistic expression and creativity were stimulated in children thanks to the space in which they were free to explore the infinite nuances of colours as they wanted. This was possible because they did not receive instructions about “how to paint well” but only some general indications concerning the organisation of the room. Sharing sheets of paper, colours, and materials in small groups was also an unusual experience that allowed children to get in touch with different ways to be the “producer” of images, individually or in-group.

A challenge was observed in the organisation of the mixed group of children from different classes. Sometimes it was difficult to respect the number of the group (nine children) or a balanced mix in different ages.

Finally, the photographic research stimulated, in the group and especially in the university tutors, reflexivity in action and promoted skills to describe in more languages the educational practices implemented and the processes intercepted or promoted. This method of research allowed the creation of a final exhibition, and from this material new activities aimed at children were created as well.

Author of the form

Miriam Cuccu

## 8.3

### Visual TICASS2: The colours of the intercultural dialogue — primary schools (Kenyan experience)

<p>Main aims and objectives</p>	<p>The aims of the activity were developed on two levels:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. With teachers – learning together in a cooperative way and implementing the collaboration, starting from the discussion around intercultural dialogue and inclusive education. Specific objectives: Improve cooperation on the basis of research in the field; exchange educational approaches and challenges; understand the role of creativity in the learning process.</li> <li>2. With children – explore in a cooperative way primary colours, shapes, sounds, and the perspective of intercultural communication. Specific objectives: To stimulate, through storytelling and experimentation of colours, the imagination of the children; to use new materials (like washable colours); to teach that with primary colours it is possible to create infinite chromatic nuances; to activate the self-expression of the children as individuals and in a group.</li> </ol> <p>Transversal objectives of the workshops:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The educational group can share new ideas, carry out action-research in the field, and develop a reflective approach, enhancing the skills of different professionals.</li> <li>• The workshop aims to develop an active dialogue among children and consolidate the cooperation among teachers and researchers.</li> <li>• The participatory approach allows finding ways of communication that can support ways of expression, interpretation, fruition, and intercultural production (for children and teachers).</li> <li>• Finally, children can express their creativity, highlighting new images and narratives.</li> </ul>
<p>Staff</p>	<p>TICASS institution involved: UNIMC One university professor (Rosita Deluigi, pedagogist) Three school heads; three head teachers; eleven teachers</p>
<p>Recipients</p>	<p>Three school heads; three head teachers; eleven teachers (from three schools) 352 children and teens (aged 7–13 years) (from three schools)</p>



Materials	For the activities we used two children's books: <i>Little Blue and Little Yellow</i> by Leo Lionni and <i>Mix It Up</i> by Hervé Tullet; washable paints (yellow, red, and blue); pencils; sheets of paper (100 × 70 cm); paint brushes; plastic plates; plastic glasses; napkins; smartphone.
Spaces	The activity was carried out in Kilifi and Mnarani (Kenya) in three primary schools: Ocean of Wonders, Kilimo Primary School, and Nazarethe Church School. The workshops were realised in several classrooms, in the courtyards of the schools, and in some locations connected with the buildings (like a field grass or a church)
Timing	<p>The activity lasted three weeks (in July–August 2018) and we realised one preliminary meeting with the heads of the schools and with the head teachers (1.5 hours for each); one training session with the teachers in each school (1.5 hours for each); three 40-minute workshops in each school of involving medium-large heterogeneous groups (from 20 to 120 children divided into small groups) due to the large number of children involved (a total of 18 workshops).</p> <p>At the end of the workshops in each school, an open temporary exhibition took place in the courtyards or in a connected place (1 hour for each).</p> <p>After every workshop, we realised a briefing with the teachers (0.30 minutes) and at the end of the activities in each school, we held a feedback meeting with the school heads and the headteachers (1.5 hours for each).</p>

<p>Description of the experience</p>	<p>Each primary school selected the classes involved in the project (from grade 2 to grade 7) and the teachers joined in on all the experiences as <i>fil rouge</i> with the children and the other teachers involved.</p> <p>During the first meeting with school managers and teachers, we had an open dialogue about the learning practices and the challenges in the school system. It was essential to share ideas, methodologies, and materials with teachers with the aim of learning to facilitate intercultural dialogue and inclusive education in a cooperative way.</p> <p>The training with teachers was based on the exchange of experiences focused on the educational relationship; learning strategies and use of images; art, visual language, and cooperative learning; and different methods of assessment. A relevant part was dedicated to discovering together the materials used in the workshops and agreeing about the methodology.</p> <p>The classes involved were homogeneous, but sometimes we conducted the same activity with two classes together (like grades 2 and 3). Each group attended three workshops composed of four phases:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The introduction;</li> <li>2. The implementation of an animated narration (images, sounds, and movements with the whole class/ large group);</li> <li>3. The realisation of the workshop (starting from visual stimuli and artistic materials) to experiment directly with colours in a common space with several small groups (maximum of 10 children for each group).</li> <li>4. Feedback.</li> </ol> <p>The heterogeneity of the groups (number of participants and age) was a complex variable to manage and required on-going redesign of the activities according to the teachers' and the children's feedback. The researcher and the teachers define, step by step, which was the best option for each group.</p> <p>The researcher was the narrator of the stories and the teachers were the mediators of the activities in a cooperative approach with the storyteller. During the workshop, the adults supported the children in order to experiment with cooperative learning, the creative process, and participation.</p> <p>The activities conducted in Kenya in July–August 2018 had already been conducted in Italy in April–May 2018 (see Visual TICASS). Some issues were similar but there had been relevant changes made to achieve the objectives in another specific situation.</p>
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**Little Blue and Little Yellow**

The activity addressed the knowledge of two primary colours (blue and yellow). The children listened to the animated story of *Little Blue and Little Yellow* for about 20 minutes. Due to the large audience, the narrator interpreted the story by dramatising it and interacting directly with the children using visual and body language. Then the children started to be confident with materials and experiment with the washable paints (yellow and blue) by mixing them and describing the results (in the same class/space but in small groups of a maximum of 10 pupils). They painted fingerprints and shared the results with teachers (like the supervisors) and the rest of the class.

The use of the washable fingerpaints was a novelty and, as observed in Italy, the young painters were intimidated by the idea of getting dirty and being able to paint without strict rules. In this case, they used the colours carefully, without mixing them too much and respecting a certain order in the placement of the finger prints on the sheets (fig. 1).



Figs 1–2. Fingerprints and perspectives (Mnarani – Kilifi, Kenya, 2018)



### **Mix It Up**

The idea behind this activity was to encourage the children to discover the different nuances that can be created from primary colours, introducing, after the first story, also the colour red.

We realised the animated reading of *Mix It Up* and used the story as a reference for two workshops:

1. In the first one, the class was divided into small groups (up to five children) in order to implement open dialogue and creativity. The groups started to mix the colours with their fingers and we allowed them to experiment. After the new experience of mixing yellow, blue, and red, we suggested they paint some symmetrical spots mixing two primary colours and then describing which shape they created by using their imagination and discovering fish, elephants, flowers, leaves, and so on. They compared their results with the other groups, which changed their perspective, and improved their imagination and the possibility of describing something creatively (fig. 2).
2. In the second one, the class was divided into small groups. They got a big sheet of paper, some pencils, the primary colours, and some brushes. Each participant traced the outline of a hand with a pencil on the sheet, intersecting with the hand of another classmate. Everyone decided on a primary colour with which to paint their hand and, at the point of intersection with the other hands, the student had to mix the two colours in order to bring out the secondary colour (for example: yellow + red = orange). At the end of the workshop, each group personalised their billboard with names and small fancy decorations. In this last meeting, moreover, the participants had fun mixing the colours directly on their hands, discovering the innumerable nuances without fear of getting dirty (fig. 3).

### **The unexpected final events**

At the end of the activities, temporary exhibitions of the works created in the various workshops were held. This phase was not planned from the beginning and took shape onsite with the collaboration of the working group (researchers and teachers). The courtyard of a school and the shaded space under a mango tree became open-air exhibitions visited by the other classes. The perforated brick walls of a church provided the backdrop for the final meeting held in the presence of parents who saw the results (fig. 4).

Assessment	<p>At the end of the activities, we can say that the objectives were achieved on different levels, which are discussed below.</p> <p>The transformative approach impacted not only the children involved who, meeting after meeting, showed themselves to be active, ready to experiment, and at first intimidated then intrigued by different communication strategies and by the possibility of using plural languages and creative tools. The moderate and controlled use of colours during the first meeting gradually increased to a greater freedom of use of the materials and sharing of creativity in groups.</p> <p>The cooperative interactions in smaller groups offered opportunities for discussion among the participants, and the teachers played a supervisory and observation role. On several occasions they actively participated in the implementation of the activities, testing the materials and arousing amazement in the students.</p> <p>The cooperation among adults was reinforced using English, but teachers also mediated the contents in Kiswahili and the researcher introduced some Italian words. It was very important for the teachers and the researcher to share the situated learning environments. The adults experimented with different approaches, mutually observing the educational styles implemented.</p> <p>During the project, unexpected objectives and results were achieved; for example, the realisation of the three final exhibitions. This strengthened the aspects of sustainability, a true criterion for the effectiveness of the development of local, community, and participatory projects. Finally, further reflections were launched with the various schools for new proposals co-designed for the future in close interconnection with the didactic-educational daily life of the various training and educational agencies.</p>
Author of the form	Rosita Deluigi



Fig. 3. Billboards in progress  
(Mnarani – Kilifi, Kenya, 2018)

Figs 4-6. Unexpected exhibitions  
(Mnarani – Kilifi, Kenya, 2018)



## 8.4

### Urban TICASS – primary schools and university students (Italian experience)

<p>Main aims and objectives</p>	<p>The project's purpose was the ideation of a photographic treasure hunt inside the historical center of Macerata. The project involved primary school children and university students of the courses "Management of Cultural Heritage" and "Educational Sciences".</p> <p><i>Goals for children:</i> Encourage and stimulate curiosity and knowledge about their city through funny, active, and engaging strategies and using visual photographic language.</p> <p><i>Goals for university students:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop interdisciplinary approach;</li> <li>• Try to practice some of the theoretical knowledge acquired during their study through real and planning experiences addressed to children;</li> <li>• Acquisition of soft skills about cooperation and teamwork;</li> <li>• Experience in animating the final event since the children's event represented the restitution of the project.</li> </ul> <p><i>Other goals:</i> Analyse which details are chosen by children and study their historical and cultural meaning.</p>
<p>Staff</p>	<p>TICASS institution involved: UNIMC Two professors from University of Macerata (Rosita Deluigi, pedagogist, and Giuseppe Capriotti, art historian) Three tutors (UNIMC students: Miriam Cuccu and Francesca Mondin, graduates in Education, Francesca Casamassima, graduate in Management of Cultural Heritage) whose task was to coordinate the activities.</p>
<p>Recipients</p>	<p>Four primary school classes (two fourth-grade classes, one fifth grade, and one third grade), for a total of about 80 children, and the collaboration of one teacher for each class (one class for each institute of the comprehensive public school E. Mestica).</p> <p>A heterogeneous group of 27 university students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 students of the Educational Science course;</li> <li>• 12 students of the Management of Cultural Heritage course.</li> </ul> <p>The families of the children were collateral recipients.</p>

Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One presentation in PowerPoint (PC and projector or multimedia whiteboard)</li> <li>• Paper format for the description of the photos the children took with the help of a personal photographic device (camera, smartphone/tablet).</li> <li>• Edmodo online platform to collect pictures and formats of analysis.</li> <li>• PC/smartphone and Internet connection for each group of students.</li> <li>• PC, paper, stationary, printer for final event materials.</li> </ul>
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Italy, Macerata</li> <li>• Classrooms of primary schools; classrooms and workroom of university.</li> <li>• Café in the city and historical centre of Macerata.</li> </ul>
Timing	<p><i>Activities in primary schools: 12 hours.</i>  Each class participated in three meetings of one hour each, with the project's professors and tutors (the first one at the beginning of school year, the second one a month later, and the third one at the end of year).  Each child also spent a few hours filling in the assigned form and making pictures.</p> <p><i>Activities with university students team: 20 hours, divided into:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• four meetings of three hours each during the academic year</li> <li>• three hours of self-employment (individual and small-group work)</li> <li>• five hours for the final event (a weekend in May 2018).</li> </ul>



<p>Description of the experience</p>	<p><b>PHASE 1 – PROJECT PRESENTATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacting primary school teachers, introducing the project, and starting the bureaucratic procedure for authorisation (several months before the start of the new school year).</li> <li>• <b>First meeting with primary classes:</b> The children were asked to take a picture of a detail in the historic centre of Macerata that intrigued them or, according to them, had a specific meaning in the past. Each shot had to be matched with a descriptive form, filled in by each child, in which it was also required to create a story relating to the chosen detail. In order to help the children understand the task, examples (shown through slides) of some details of the historic centre of the city were shown. The most original shots became clues for a treasure hunt in which the children and all citizens could participate.</li> </ul> <p>At the same time, in the university classes, the project was presented to students to collect adhesions.</p> <p><b>PHASE 2 – TREASURE HUNT CREATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Second meeting with primary classes:</b> Children were divided into groups and relayed their experience taking photos (interviewed by teachers and tutors). Forms and photos in digital format (collected by the teachers) were uploaded on the digital platform Edmodo.</li> <li>• <b>First meeting with university students:</b> Presentation of the project; knowledge activities and meeting between the students, who had never met before. Beginning of the selection and analysis of the photographic material collected; students divided into three work groups. Selection criteria: possibility of historical research about the detail, location on the map, quality of the shot, and originality of the story created by the child. Identification of three paths for the treasure hunt, (fantasy, adults, and children), each consisting of seven different details, corresponding to seven stages.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Second meeting with university students:</b> The workgroups completed the selection of materials and the creation of the itineraries and created clues in hendecasyllables to go from one stage to another. Cultural Heritage students were asked to begin historical-artistic research relating to the chosen shots while those of Educational Sciences were asked to create edutainment activities.</li> <li>• <b>Third meeting with university students:</b> Discussion and review among professors, tutors, and students on research and ideas proposed by the students. The deadlines by which students had to correct and submit their work were defined. Partition among the students of the stages of the treasure hunt. Each student of Cultural Heritage created a 10-line caption in which the history of the detail, the context in which it was located, and its artistic value was explained in simple words. Each student of Educational Sciences created two recreational-didactical activities for one stage of the treasure hunt related to the historical explanation of the photo or the story written by the child. All the material was then revised by the tutors to then be paged and assembled by an external graphic collaborator, who created the clues for the treasure hunt and the return cards for the classes that had participated.</li> </ul> <p><b>PHASE 3 – FINAL EVENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fourth meeting with university students:</b> Treasure hunt simulation and related correction of errors.</li> </ul> <p><b>Final event (a weekend in May):</b> The treasure hunt included two versions for each path (fantasy, adults, and children). One Saturday afternoon, the game was open to the four primary school classes that had taken part in the project. Families accompanied the children and, at the end of the treasure hunt, each child received a symbolic prize. On Sunday afternoon, the activity was open to all citizens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Third meeting with primary school classes:</b> Teachers and tutors received feedback from the children and gave the final cards to each class.</li> </ul>
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Assessment	<p>During the project there were opportunities for discussion within the staff team to share opinions and feedback relating to the work done by the students up to that moment and their level of participation. There was also discussion on the ways the primary school children performed their task.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief report/evaluation written by the tutors on the strengths and critical issues experienced when working with children and students.</li> <li>• Final meeting and ideas for the project for the following year.</li> <li>• Evaluation questionnaire for students at the end of the project. Prearranged goals were all achieved.</li> </ul> <p>Regarding the work done by the children, in some cases the task was not completely consistent with what was required. It was therefore thought that a greater involvement by teachers was required.</p> <p>There was a partially unexpected outcome: the participatory involvement of families. Many of them organised themselves into groups to take the children around the city to find the required detail, promoting interaction between children and parents outside school.</p>
Authors of the form	Francesca Casamassima and Francesca Mondin


Figs 1–4. Activities with students at the university and in the city centre of Macerata (Macerata, Italy, 2018)





*Supera il palazzo degli studi,  
poi un'a galleria devi passare,  
così potrai ben presto arrivare  
dove un ringraziamento lasciaron  
per coloro che li l'acqua portaron*



MINNA PER SQUADRA  
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S





Fig 5. Sample of materials used during the analysis and the treasure hunt (Macerata, Italy, 2018)

## 8.5

### Urban TICASS 2.0 – Primary schools and university students (Italian experience)

Main aims and objectives	<p>Urban TICASS 2.0 promoted the cooperation of the university, schools, and cultural associations through the search for details and significant contexts within the city walls of the city of Macerata as well as in meaningful places for those interested. The initiative verified the centrality of the detail and context notion in the cultural heritage field, also implementing reflection in an educative perspective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Aims for children:</i> Make the city known in a fun way, using visual communication through images and videos created by the classes involved in the project.</li> <li>• <i>Aims for students:</i> Share experience and communicable practices; development of interdisciplinarity; acquisition of soft skills; cooperate and work in small groups; get to know the city through the eyes of children; and finally enhance the urban context.</li> </ul>
 Staff	<p>TICASS institution involved: UNIMC</p> <p>The staff employed for the initiative was composed of two university professors (Rosita Deluigi, pedagogist, and Giuseppe Capriotti, art historian) and five tutors (university students: Maria Luisa Ricci, graduate in Management of Cultural Heritage; Miriam Cuccu, Francesca Mondin, Jessica Canestrari, and Ilenia Marino, graduates in Education) and McZee, a non-profit organisation for visual arts in Macerata (<a href="http://www.mczee.it/">http://www.mczee.it/</a>).</p>
Recipients	<p>During the activity, we involved six classes of a primary school in Macerata (from grade 1 to grade 5; from 6 to 11 years old, about 120 pupils) (one or two classes for each institute of the comprehensive public school E. Mestica).</p> <p>The children participated in the activity with their teacher and attended the final event with their families.</p> <p>A heterogeneous group of 21 university students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 students of the Educational Science course;</li> <li>• seven students of the Management of Cultural Heritage course.</li> </ul> <p>The families of the children were collateral recipients.</p>

Materials	<p>Camera, mobile phone, computer, portable radio, city maps, and the use of a PowerPoint presentation at the final event. For the creation of educational activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coloured cards, sheets, pens, colours, coloured chalks, and red ribbon.</li> <li>• Clothes pegs, white gloves, thread, empty water bottles, glasses, a plant, four bags, four baskets, and four buckets, coloured cloth tails, 20 handkerchiefs of different colours.</li> <li>• Morse-coded sheets, maps of Italy and its regions, photos of the facades of the buildings of Macerata, pictures of tree species, crossword-puzzles.</li> </ul>
Spaces	<p>Italy, Macerata</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classrooms of primary schools;</li> <li>• Classrooms of the University of Macerata at the Department of Education, Cultural Heritage, and Tourism;</li> <li>• Historic city centre of Macerata (open and public spaces).</li> </ul>
Timing	<p><b>Activities in primary schools:</b> 15 hours. Each class participated in three meetings of about 45 minutes each, with the project's professors and tutors (the first one at the beginning of school year, the second one a month later and the third at the end of year). Each child also spent a few hours filling in the assigned form and making pictures or a video.</p> <p><b>Activities with university students:</b> 20 hours, divided into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• four meetings of 3 hours each during the academic year</li> <li>• three hours of self-employment (individual and small-group work)</li> <li>• five hours for the final event (a weekend in May 2019).</li> </ul>

<p>Description of the experience</p>	<p><b>STEP 1 - PROJECT PRESENTATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We contacted the teachers at the primary school with whom we worked the previous year to present the project and start the bureaucratic procedure for the authorisation (several months before the beginning of the new school year).</li> <li>• <b>First meeting with the primary classes:</b> The children were asked to choose a place close to their home or around Macerata that was special to them. They could tell the others some information about the chosen space using visual language in two ways according to age: the children in grades 1 and 2 took a picture and made a drawing of the place, describing it also with some words. The grade 4 and 5 classes (who had participated in Urban TICASS the previous year) made a video in which they explained why that place was special to them. Slides with examples were used to help the children understand the task. The most original shots and videos would then become clues for a number of playful activities aimed at both children and adults. At the same time, the project was presented to the university students in order to collect the adhesions.</li> </ul>
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## **STEP 2 - CREATION "THE EXPLORER GAME"**

- **Second meeting with the primary classes:**  
The children were divided into small groups and then interviewed by professors and tutors. They narrated the meanings and the stories of the videos shot or photos taken. Videos, cards, and photos in digital format (collected by the teacher) were uploaded to a common folder.
- **First meeting with university students:**  
Presentation of the project, knowledge among students; creation of three working groups with mixed students (cultural heritage and educational); selection and analysis of photos and videos collected in schools. Material for the project was chosen according to three parameters: daily, extraordinary, and unexpected. These would later become the names of the paths, and we added another path aimed at children from 3 to 5 years. Each route consists of seven stages.
- **Second meeting with students:**  
The working groups created the various paths. The cultural heritage students carried out historical-artistic research related to the places chosen by the children, while the education students organised the recreational and didactical activities.
- **Third meeting with students:**  
The students presented the research activities created and the proposals were reviewed. In groups, each cultural heritage student created a caption of 10 lines in which they explained the history and the artistic value of the place depicted/filmed by the child. Each education student carried out two creative activities related to the photo or video created by the child for each stage of the game of the explorer. In addition, McZee created trackers for each stage and drew maps of the city on the model of Monopoly. Some samples of the materials:

<http://linoit.com/users/alisiamczee/canvases/PORTA%20MERCATO%20SFERISTERIO>

<http://linoit.com/users/alisiamczee/canvases/PALAZZO%20TORRI>





	<p><b>STEP 3 - FINAL EVENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fourth meeting with the students:</b> Simulation of the game of the explorer in the city. Final event (18–19 of May 2019): The game of the explorer provided two versions for each route (daily, extraordinary, unexpected, and children). On Saturday afternoon, the activity in the city center was opened only to the classes involved in the project. Families and some teachers accompanied the children. At the end of the game, each child received a symbolic award along with the map of the city drawn on the model of Monopoly. On Sunday morning, the game was open only to kindergarten children (3–5 years old) with their families while on Sunday afternoon the activity was opened to all citizens.</li> <li>• <b>Third meeting with the primary school classes:</b> Professors and tutors went to the classes to collect feedback from the children and gave them an interactive map, made with the cooperation of McZee, of the places visited and narrated by the children.</li> </ul>
Assessment	<p>During the organisation of the event, there were several opportunities to exchange opinions and feedback on the work done by the primary school children and the university students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online end-of-project evaluation questionnaire for university students.</li> <li>• The objectives have all been achieved.</li> </ul> <p>As for the work done by the children, some videos did not comply with the initial request. Unfortunately, during the final event, because of the rain, several children did not show up, but we reached a large number of people. At the same time, there was also an unexpected outcome: A very active participation in the children's path aimed at children between 3 and 5 years old and their families despite the uncertain weather.</p>
Author of the form	Ilenia Marino



Figs 1–3. University students at the final event, learning and designing playful materials for the game of the explorer and groups of participants during the event (Macerata, Italy, 2019)



## 8.6

### Urban TICASS Kilifi – primary schools (Kenyan experience)

Main aims and objectives	<p>General aim: The aim of the project is to develop the familiarity of the primary school students with visual language by using photographs to discover the details and contexts of a suburb in Kilifi.</p> <p>Specific objectives: Developing the ability to observe and analyse the context with interest; improving the use of a camera or a mobile phone as a camera to take picture; discovering the suburb of Mnarani through images; working in small groups with the approach of cooperative learning and learning by doing.</p>
Staff	<p>TICASS institution involved: UNIMC</p> <p>The research group was composed of two researchers, members of the project (Giuseppe Capriotti, art historian, and Rosita Deluigi, pedagogist), a photographer, and three teachers of pre-primary and primary schools of Mnarani (Kilifi, Kenya).</p>
Recipients	<p>A group of 25 primary school students (6 to 12 years old) was involved in the activities.</p>
Materials	<p>Paper and colours; cameras; mobile phones; a laptop (to show the digital versions of the photographs); printed photographs on plastic cards.</p>
Places/spaces	<p>The activity was carried out in Kilifi, Kenya, in the suburb of Mnarani. The meetings were held in the classrooms of a primary school and along the streets and public spaces of Mnarani.</p>
Timing	<p>The activity took place in December 2018:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. A preliminary meeting with the headteachers (1 hour);</li><li>2. A meeting with pupils and teachers at school (2 hours);</li><li>3. A meeting with pupils and teachers in the public space of Mnarani (1 full day)</li><li>4. A feedback meeting (half-day).</li></ol>

Description of the experience	<p>The four workshops were structured as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preliminary meeting: Open discussion with teachers about the activity and identification of the target group. The proposal consists of using visual language to discover the values of territories, with a participative approach.</li> <li>2. Second meeting: During the workshop each participant conceived a drawing of a meaningful place of the suburb where they live. The group discussed the individual results in order to create a map of the area, in which we have located all the places taken into consideration. The sketch of the map was made by one of the teachers and the pupils added their favourite places; to embellish the art craft, the pupils used fingerprints with different colours in order to express the vivid life of the area.</li> <li>3. During the meeting we explored the suburb of Mnarani with digital cameras and mobiles to take pictures of details and contexts. We split the group into two teams and started the walking exploration by going in two different directions and regrouping at a point to continue the exploration together. After the lunch break, we came back to school and shared the pictures taken on the screen of a laptop, exchanging ideas and impressions.</li> <li>4. The last meeting was split into two: In the first part of the morning, pupils placed their images (transferred in plastic cards) on the map; then we used the plastic cards as a visual memory game (each image was printed twice).</li> </ol>
Assessment	<p>The aims of the project were fully achieved and we can add further considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some pupils understood the difference between a detail and a wider context; in fact, some of them were attracted by details while others preferred to photograph broader spaces.</li> <li>• Some participants, from the start of the experience, demonstrated good storytelling skills. During the exploration of the territory, the students relayed episodes of daily life, also interacting with the people they met; afterwards, during the feedback at school, everyone was able to justify their choices.</li> <li>• The heterogeneous group showed good cooperation attitudes and the exploration in the city context aroused curiosity and interest also from the inhabitants.</li> </ul>
Authors of the form	Giuseppe Capriotti and Rosita Deluigi



Figs 1–2. Preparatory meeting with teachers and children and mapping the urban spaces of Mnarani (Kilifi, Kenya, 2018)



Figs 3–4. Exploring urban space and open discussion with children about the details and context of Mnarani (Kilifi, Kenya, 2018)



## 8.7

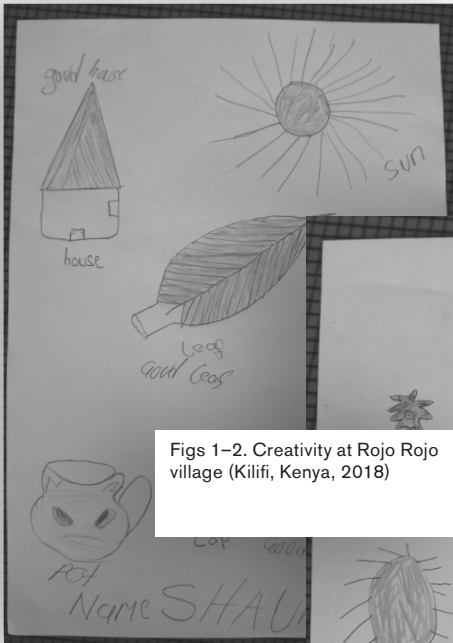
### The Lion King in Rojo Rojo village — pre-primary and primary school (Kenyan experience)

Main aims and objectives	<p>The main purpose of the activity was to get in touch with the local community, to intercept children in their territorial dimension and experiment creative processes with them. For this reason, the workshop was held directly in the village, with the objectives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• getting to know children and families in the community, and carrying out a playful, creative activity;</li> <li>• understanding the importance of images and symbols for children through their representations;</li> <li>• experimenting with artistic materials in an informal and small group setting through different visual stimuli.</li> </ul>
Staff	<p>TICASS institution involved: AASZ &amp; UNIMC</p> <p>Two researchers (Aleksandra Lukaszewicz Alcaraz, philosopher of art and anthropologist of image, and Rosita Deluigi, pedagogist)</p> <p>Two mediators (two young men from the village who introduced the researchers and assisted them with the interaction and linguistic mediation with the children)</p>
Recipients	12 children (aged 3–12 years)
Materials	For the activities we used: watercolours; pencils; one sheet of paper (100 × 70 cm); paint brushes; plastic glasses; playful accessories; smartphone.
Places and spaces	The activity was carried out in March 2018 at Rojo Rojo village (Kilifi, Kenya) in the communitarian space of the village, an informal outdoor setting.
Timing	The activity lasted half a day and was divided into various moments: knowledge of the village, its inhabitants and its spaces; the realisation of the artistic-expressive workshop; watching and discussing the movie <i>The Lion King</i> ; sharing lunch.

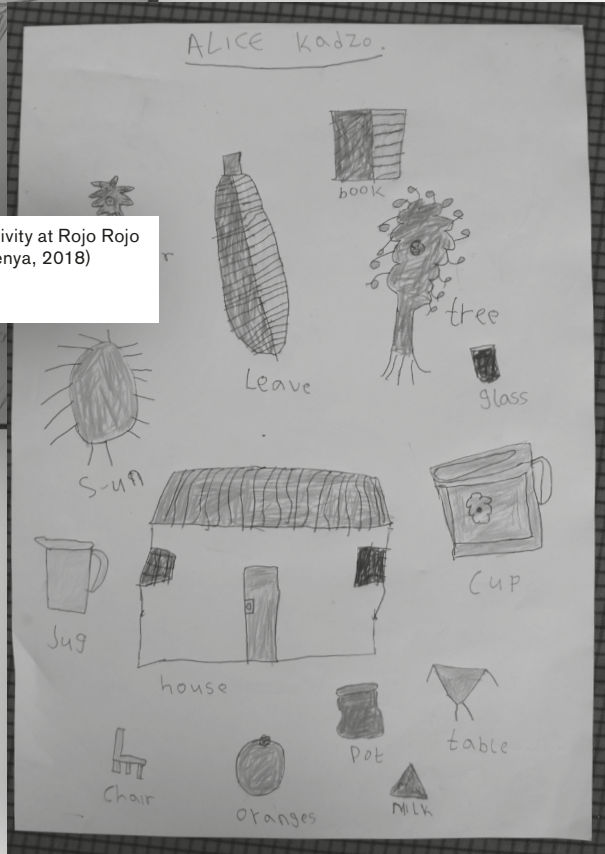
<p>Description of the experience</p>	<p>The workshop was held under the shade of the trees in the centre of the village. The children of heterogeneous ages, all belonging to the place we were working in, gathered around a small table and, with the help of the two mediators who translated from English to Kiswahili (especially for younger children), we started the workshop.</p> <p>First, we shared colour pencils and white sheets of paper, and we asked the children to draw what they liked. They were very excited to use colour pencils and draw. All of them drew forms of everyday objects in iconic forms and with a description (one word in English, such as: a tree, a hut, a flower, a table, a moon, a leaf, and so on).</p> <p>Secondly, we asked the children to work together on a shared sheet and to trace their hands with a pencil. The older children helped the little ones create the contour accurately and, subsequently, each participant decided how to colour their own imprint using watercolours. The children then played with their hands, recognizing themselves in the prints, overlapping and personalising them.</p> <p>At the end of the work, we shared the billboard with everyone's handprints, characterising each hand with the name and age of the child.</p> <p>Small animated eyes were also drawn to "give life" to the represented hands and, at the end of the activity, the billboard was hung inside one of the village buildings.</p>
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Assessment	<p>The first part of the workshop was discussed with the children. Researchers asked them for explanations of the visual forms of the objects depicted because they were sometimes unusual to researchers, for example: the sun children depicted is much more intense in colour and powerful than drawn in Europe, a tree has got external roots, and a roof of a hut is obviously made of palm trees.</p> <p>Through the experience we have achieved the set objectives and we can underline some specific dimensions.</p> <p>The possibility of carrying out the workshop in the context of the village, between the houses of the inhabitants, allowed the working group to get more in touch with the daily home life of the children. The knowledge of some of the families of the children involved has made it possible to share the informality of the experience and to create direct contacts. The mediation of the two men from the village was essential to access the community and to share convivial and informal moments.</p> <p>Placing creative processes not only within school, formal and educational contexts, was an interesting experience, also in view of future projects, identifying elements of sustainability. The presence of an interdisciplinary team has encouraged dialogue and participatory observation with different focuses, restoring value to what has been done in terms of research and educational practice.</p> <p>The use of some artist and creative tools required children to experiment with materials that are not fully known and, moreover, the collaborative approach of the activity supported peer cooperative dynamics.</p> <p>Finally, the importance of sharing the outcome of the workshop and leaving a trace of it (photographic documentation and artefact) was an important step for all participants.</p>
Authors of the form	Aleksandra Lukaszewicz Alcaraz and Rosita Deluigi



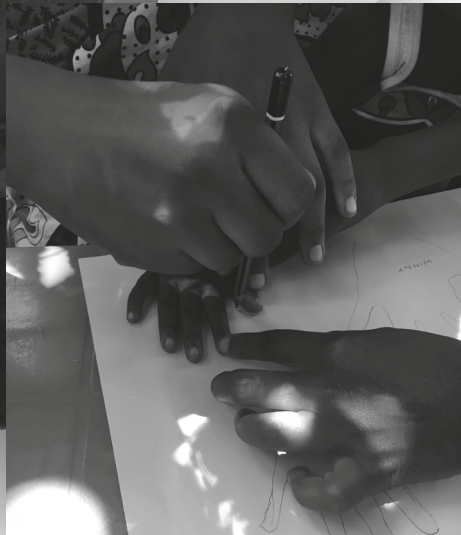
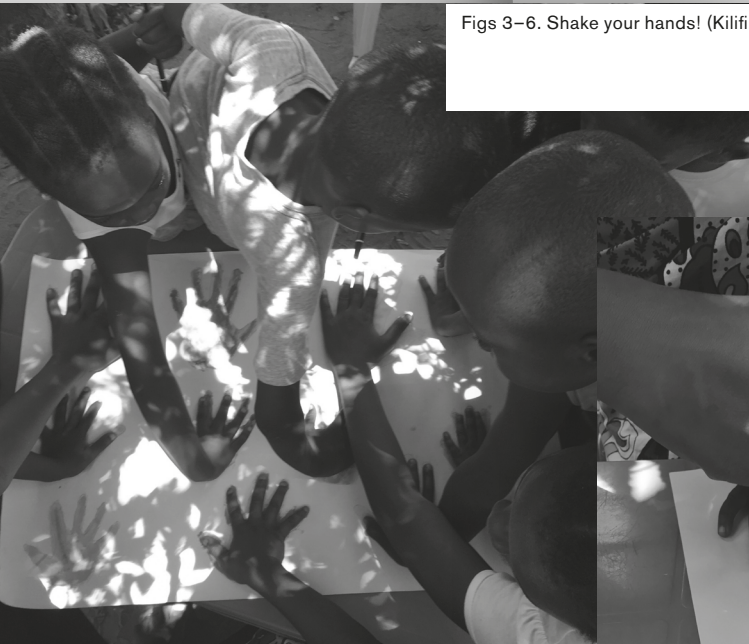


Figs 1-2. Creativity at Rojo Rojo village (Kilifi, Kenya, 2018)





Figs 3-6. Shake your hands! (Kilifi, Kenya, 2018)



## 8.8

### NLuoghi. Spazi potenziali – university students (Italian experience)

Definition of aims/ purposes	The aim of the NLuoghi. Spazi potenziali (XPlaces. Potential spaces) project is the creation of four site-specific works that will be permanently exhibited in the Luigi Bertelli Educational Center, headquarters of the Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism of Macerata University. The idea of creating these works stems from the desire to be able to read and interpret space through the artistic medium in order to bestow a richer and more aware experience of the space itself on those who live and pass through the Bertelli Educational Center on a daily basis.
Staff	TICASS institution involved: UNIMC Project organisers: Prof. Rosita Deluigi, pedagogist, and Prof. Giuseppe Capriotti, art historian, in collaboration with the McZee association. Responsible for university-artist relations: Maria Luisa Ricci
Recipients/ stakeholders	The recipients are mainly the „inhabitants“ of the department: professors, students, and technical-administrative staff; as well as all those who attend the Bertelli Educational Center.
Equipment	The materials were chosen directly by the first two of the four winners of the call for artists for the aktualisation of their works. During the first artist residency, bricks, tiles, tempera, cement, and small iron pipes were used.
Spaces	Italy, Luigi Bertelli Educational Center, headquarters of the Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism of Macerata University; in particular, the roof of the department.
Timeline	Start and end date: December 2nd – December 12th, 2019

<p>Description of the experience</p>	<p>The experience can be divided into three phases.</p> <p>In <b>phase 1</b>, meetings (formal and informal) were organised between, artists, students, professors, and technical-administrative staff to help the artists read and understand the working context.</p> <p>The first meeting (December 3) was with the students, during which the debate focused on the generic identification of the problems of the university department. The critical points detected by the students were practical-functional, related to the close functionalisation of each space of the Polo, which does not allow any social or leisure action. The second meeting (December 4) was with the professors. The debate focused on two aspects: what are the problems related to the pole and how the artist can interface with them. An extreme functionalisation of the spaces was also detected by the professors. Some professors also highlighted critical issues regarding the rigidity of the structure; a problem in which it is impossible to intervene. The lack of flexibility of the structure is repeated on several levels: from the architecture to classroom furnishings, characterised, for example, by rows of desks which cannot be moved. Another critical element that has emerged is the lack of natural elements in the building or a natural area accessible outside the Polo where you can take a break.</p> <p>The last meeting was with the technical and administrative staff (6 December), during which the same problems emerged as in the previous two meetings, with the addition of a greater interest in the internal spaces of the offices, which is natural from people who spend more time in their office compared to the other spaces of the department.</p> <p>In <b>phase 2</b>, the artists began to reflect on the type of work to be carried out, which created a close interaction with the environment and the space of the Bertelli Educational Center, and which also responded to the problems and needs that emerged during previous meetings. For each idea, feasibility was assessed in terms of costs and the materials to be used. The two artists decided to work on two completely different fronts for the creation of a non-functional space; however, choosing to also operate on the roof of the department, despite the Polo's very spacious structure, lent itself well to the choice of two different work environments.</p>
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	<p>In <b>phase 3</b>, the artists began the construction of their respective works. Matteo Messori decided to develop a masonry construction on which to place a seat in order to explicitly invite the user of the space – student, professor or member of the technical-administrative staff – to use his work of art as an experience to look beyond space; in particular, to observe the landscape of Macerata. Francesco Pellegrino decided to work on sound, building a structure of thin iron tubes to which he added speakers. Through a microphone, the „inhabitants“ of the department would be able to record their message, which will be repeated by the speakers in a non-invasive manner (so as to avoid imposing too much on the landscape), creating an immersive environment that changes in relation to the emotion and mood of the recorder (photos).</p> <p>The works are not yet finished; their completion is expected by the end of 2020.</p>
<p>Feedbacks and analysis</p>	<p>During the realisation of the works, the members of the McZee association – as well as the university staff – monitored the two artists. During the project there were opportunities for discussion between artists, McZee members, and the university staff to share opinions and feedback related to the work being done.</p> <p>The objectives of the project were only partially achieved since the works were not completed by the two artists. During the execution of the works, the artists encountered some difficulties due to their poor experience in the realisation of the type of structures they designed.</p>
<p>Author of the form</p>	<p>Maria Luisa Ricci</p>





Figs 1–6. Art in progress by  
Francesco Pellegrino & Matteo  
Messori (Macerata, Italy, 2019)



## 8.9

### Emotions and ideas described in visual language (by graphic symbols) – workshops with secondary school girls and adults (Polish and Kenyan experiences)

Main aims and objectives	<p>The workshop is aimed at getting people to express their worldview: emotions, feelings, moods, situations, opinions. It allows the participants of the workshop to see and show their perspectives, the first step to their critical analysis. Externalisation of the perception allows making it conscious, which helps to create conscious, responsible citizens.</p> <p>The creation of the common experience during the workshop focuses on bringing different world views together, sharing perspectives, and showing how we are all similar in basic human status and values.</p>
Staff	<p>TICASS institution involved: AASZ</p> <p>Two researchers (Aleksandra Lukaszewicz Alcaraz, philosopher of art and anthropologist of image; Monika Zawadzki, artist and designer).</p>
Recipients	<p>School girls from the 2nd form, around 15 years old: Christian and Muslim</p> <p>Adults (mostly men, around 20–40 years old)</p>
Materials	<p>For the activities we used the blackboard, colour pencils, sheets of white paper (one per person in the case of adults, one per couple in the case of the schoolgirls).</p>
Places/spaces	<p>The activities were carried out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in the semi-outdoor hall at St. Thomas High School for Girls in Kilifi,</li> <li>• outdoors, on the beach in Kilifi Bay, close to Distant Relatives Hostel, in an informal setting.</li> </ul>
Timing	<p>The activity lasted for around two hours and was divided into three parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction to visual communication;</li> <li>2. Lottery of the symbols to be drawn;</li> <li>3. Drawing of the symbols;</li> <li>4. Presentation of the symbols and guessing their meaning;</li> <li>5. Conclusions.</li> </ol> <p>Before the workshop at the St. Thomas High School for Girls, there was a meeting with the head of the school.</p>

Description of the experience	<p>During the workshop, each person had to depict a symbol/idea/concept, which they had received in a lottery, on a white sheet of paper with colour pencils.</p> <p>At St. Thomas High School for Girls, each symbol/idea/concept was depicted by two girls (because so many had gathered), which gave the opportunity to compare drawings between Christian and Muslim girls.</p> <p>When they had finished, the girls gave others the opportunity to guess what their drawings meant; for example, a fear, a god, nature, and so forth. Researchers tried to get the girls express their worldview, being interested to see and show them their own perspectives because the externalisation of a perception gives distance to it and helps to create conscious, responsible citizens.</p> <p>In the workshop on the beach at Kilifi Bay, 15 people participated: 14 men and only 1 woman (due to the language barrier – less often knowledge of English between women in Kenya). The unofficial surroundings helped everybody feel comfortable. The adults were excited about the possibility to draw, talk, play, and show off. They drew for a quite a long time, leaning on different objects found around the place (trees, motorbikes, etc.). Some of them showed their images, and others were shy.</p> <p>Researchers tried to get them to express their worldview, being interested to see and show them their own perspective.</p> <p>Words for the workshops:</p>
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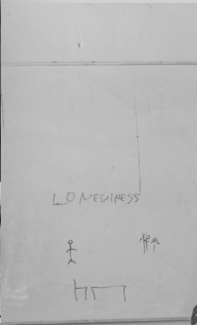
	<b><i>School girls (around 15 years)</i></b>	<b><i>Adults (around 20-40 years)</i></b>
1.	Hell / paradise	Hell / paradise
2.	Family / orphan	Family / loneliness
3.	Dreams	
4.	Joy (fun) / sadness	Joy (fun) / sadness
5.	Friendship / fight	Community / fight
6.	Hunger / filled	Work / unemployment (joblessness)
7.	Work / rest	Poverty /luxury
8.	Safety / threat (fear)	Safety / threat (fear)
9.	Compassion / anger	Compassion / anger
10.	Alone / together	Freedom / tradition
11.	Deep / high	Deep / high
12.	Jambo / hakuna matata	Rough / pole

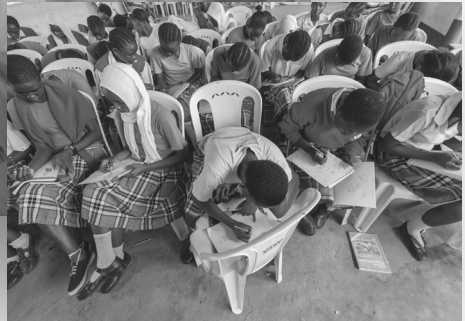


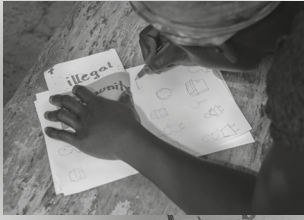
13.	Beauty / ugly	Desire / disrespect
14.	Clean / dirty	Excitation / longing
15.	Good food (tasty) / bad food (tasteless)	Exclusion / dreams
16.	Fake / true	Fake / true
17.	Africa / Europe	Africa / Europe
18.	Water / desert	Wet / dry (joblessness)
19.	High / low	Sensitive/ tough
20.	Unemployment / job	Education / lack of
21.	Legal / illegal	Legal / illegal
22.	Arrogant / nice	Giriama / Kikuyu
23.	Beach boys / beach girls	Beach boys / beach girls
24.	God / animal	God / animal
25.	Nature / city	Nature / city
26.	Dead / alive	Dead / alive
27.	Day / night	Day /night
28.	Good / bad	Good / bad
Assessment	<p>For the workshop, assessment tools such as observation and feedback from participants were used.</p> <p>Through the experiences generated by the workshops, TI-CASS researchers had the opportunity to observe similarities in the depictions of the symbols based on culture and natural environment, and the differences of those based on religious beliefs.</p> <p>The workshops provided a set of interesting data to analyse; for example, the different depictions of paradise between Christian and Muslim school girls, the similarity in the depiction of “fear” as a snake, and the sun-like depictions of a traditional African god.</p> <p>The workshops allowed the expression of the participants’ worldviews: their emotions, feelings, moods, situations, and opinions; and create a creative and critical distance from them. It also supported the recognition of the importance of visual communication and visual literacy in transcultural and interreligious dialogue.</p>	
Authors of the form	Aleksandra Lukaszewicz Alcaraz and Monika Zawadzki	



Figs 1–6. St. Thomas High School for Girls in Kilifi (Kenya, 2018)







Figs. 7–11. Beach at Kilifi Bay (Kenya, 2018)



## 8.10

### Best regards – primary schools, teenagers, and adults (Czech Republic experience)



<p>Main aims and objectives</p>	<p>The workshop aimed to develop an elementary use of visual thinking and creating meaning. The participant creates an original “view” (postcard) by observing the city they know or discovered as a tourist. The participant perceives the details of the city, its visual and cultural identity and the context of the public space – the changes in the visual appearance of the buildings through history or smog on the streets, etc. Finally, they create a new view of the city in the form of an author’s postcard where they use a collage supplemented by a drawing.</p> <p>The aims of activity are to strengthen creative and design thinking and discover the visual memory of the city with history and culture identity, and also to understand visual communication in the public space.</p> <p><b>Description of task:</b> Create and send an original postcard! You can create your own postcard with the help of pieces of old and new photos, tape, glue, scissors, crayons, and other colourful materials. You can frame a part of the city or build a view of the city with your imagination. An unforgettable postcard of the city will remind you of your trip or hometown, or you will greet family and friends with the postcard. Finally, you can send the postcard to the “world”; we will give you a postage stamp.</p>
<p>Staff</p>	<p>TICASS institution involved: UJEP One researcher for a group of 10 persons</p>
<p>Recipients</p>	<p>Parents with children, primary school children, secondary school children, creative adults (it is possible to have a mix group of recipients but we will need to explain the creativity process to each one personally)</p>
<p>Materials</p>	<p>A6 white or coloured paper (the size of postcard) Colour pencils and markers, crayons Glue Scissors Adhesive decorative tape Old pages from magazines or newspapers Promotion materials of the city (brochure, leaflets) Copies of old postcards of the city – black and white or colour on office paper Stickers of local signs, organisations, etc.</p>

Places/spaces	<p>Country of first actualisation: Czech Republic (the town of Litoměřice)</p> <p>The spaces used for workshops:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a cinema entrance hall</li> <li>• an outdoor space (garden / park)</li> </ul> <p>Facilities: tables, chairs or blanket, drawing pads</p>
Timing	<p>Workshop for a specific group for one hour (realisation of three workshops in one day for different recipients: parents with small children, primary school children, adults = three cycles of meetings/workshops)</p>
Description of the experience	<p>The workshop is based on two parts – a discussion of the task with the participants and the creative process. We prepared the facilities and materials for the workshop beforehand as well as examples of a workshop result (hand-made postcards) to show the participants. The art technique for this creative workshop is a collage and we remind or explain the process. We also give participants the possibility to complete the collage with a drawing.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Description of task with discussion – an introduction to the creative workshop with talks about the history and identity of the city, visuality in cities and a focus on the visual representation of a specific city (or it could be an imagined city).</li> </ol>

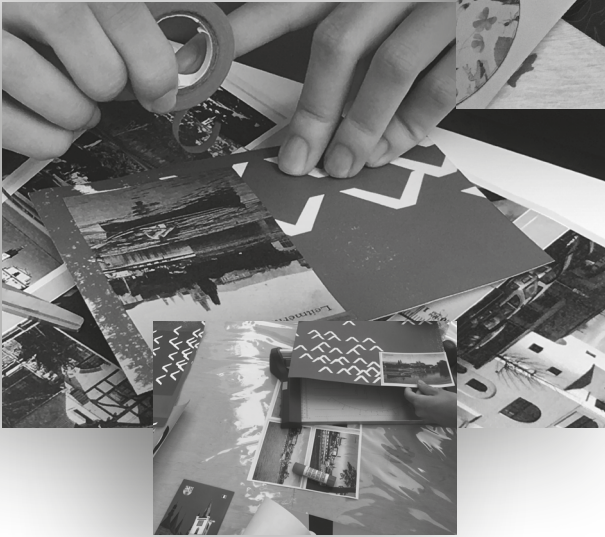
	<p>The recommended method for this introduction of the workshop is “Focus Questions.” We select a guided question for the specific group adapted to the age group or prepare our own questions. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does a “public space” mean for you? How do you perceive a public space? It is a park? Is it an entrance to a museum or city hall?</li> <li>• Do you recognise some architectural styles in this city? Are you surprised by the contrast between some buildings in this city?</li> <li>• What is typical or dominant for a main square? Is it nature, a piece of art or a situation from everyday life?</li> <li>• What is the representative visual detail of this city?</li> <li>• Which part of the city is your favourite? Can you describe it for us?</li> </ul> <p>2. Creative process – The independent creative work of the participants requires a detailed inspection of the offered material and support from the researcher to implement their proposal (draft). This is also the moment to show our own handmade postcards as examples of how to work with imagination and the visuality of the city. The participant will make a plan of a postcard – the idea is made into a sketch or a verbal description to the researcher. Then the participant will use the offered materials (images, pieces of colour tape or pencils, etc.) and they create an original postcard.</p>
Assessment	<p>The aims of the workshop – to support creativity, imagination, and visual thinking about the city – have been successfully implemented through gradual introductions to the workshop and preparation for the creative part.</p> <p>The objectives of the workshop were to understand the visual identity of the city and the public spaces and to focus on a visual detail that conveys a meaningful message.</p> <p>One of the difficult aspects of this activity was to find the time to speak with each participant personally about their vision of the city and discussing their point of view. The guiding questions from the researcher helped them to focus on a visual identity. One of the pitfalls in their answers may be an excessive personal experience or a negative perception about life in the city and social problems, but it is very important to keep them focused them on a visual representation.</p> <p>The main output took the form of a postcard; an unexpected outcome was the desire of the participants to create more than one postcard. Fulfilling their wish extended the time of the workshop.</p>
Author of the form	Adéla Machová



Figs 1–3. Creation process in the postcard workshop



Fig. 6. Examples of results – original postcards





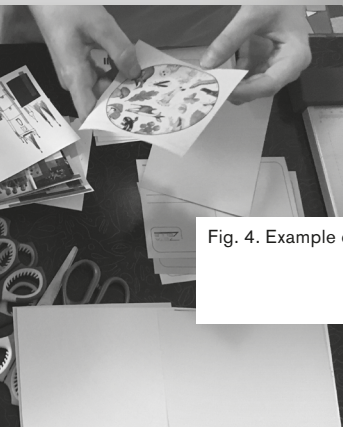


Fig. 4. Example of working place

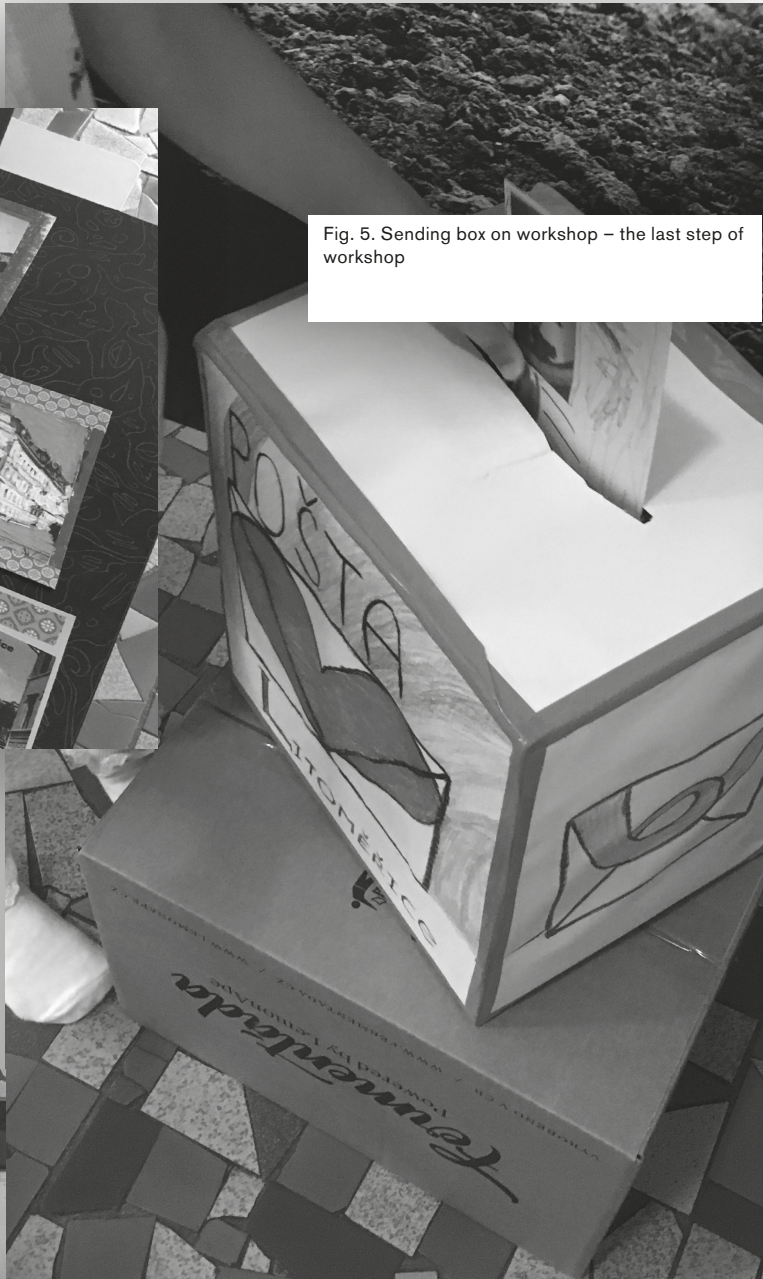


Fig. 5. Sending box on workshop – the last step of workshop





# **VII. GOOD PRACTICE**



# INTRODUCTION – WORKSHOPS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF VISUAL LITERACY

Adéla Machová

Our everyday reality is filled with images created by visual icons, symbols, combinations of colours, shapes, and our imagination. Sometimes we do not decode the meaning of the communicated visual message or we cannot generalise it even if we try to read it with patience and interest. Everything is related to our previous experience with visual material and how we have developed our visual literacy so far. If we consider visual images as a language, we can understand visual literacy as the ability to understand, create, and mediate visual communication content. At the same time, we are aware of visual literacy interdisciplinarity. It is not used exclusively in fine arts but also in education, science, graphic design, architecture, business, psychology, and other fields. In the contemporary world, communication through images cannot be avoided.

Five workshops were selected as examples of good practice for the development of visual literacy in arts education and education through art. The workshops were created for the purpose of personal development and deepening individual visual literacy by focusing on visual media (photography, video, graphic design, artwork) and the situations they create. In these workshops, refining and practicing visual literacy is based on the moments of encountering images and their interpretation, as well as the possibility of creating a visual reference (visual communicant). Participants practice visual thinking, become familiar with creative artistic approaches, and understand the variability of visual communication.

The workshops were created and implemented within the TICASS project “Workshops for elaboration on creative courses in Visual Literacy”<sup>23</sup> between 2017 and 2019 in various cultural environments (Poland, Kenya, the Czech Republic, Italy, and Great Britain). The participants were adults with different visual literacy levels, which was not an obstacle for the creative cognitive workshops. Researchers prepared the content of the workshops based on personal practical experience in their field – art education. They drew inspiration from the creative processes in visual arts and from the various mediations with the audience within the interpretive processes. Each workshop consisted of first the theoretical part – interpretation and cognition, followed by the practical part.

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23 All the workshops were prepared by the researchers from the Faculty of Art and Design at Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem (Czech Republic). The realisation of each workshop was primarily intended for the researchers in the TICASS project but also for their colleagues from partner universities, local students of universities where the project's secondments took place, and adults with an interest in visual communication.

The methods, goals, tools and technologies, workflow, and examples of the outcomes were described in order to practice visual literacy and use workshop structures repeatedly. Seeing reality is the major element that allows visual communication, but it is not enough to be called visual literacy. Visual literacy is a skill that needs to be developed so it can read and create visual messages and extend our visual knowledge and experience. New technologies extend ways of collecting and sharing visual information and also give non-professionals access to ways to create new visual messages. We are all participating in the transformation of spoken and written languages into visual ones. Therefore, it is necessary to understand visual languages and know how to create new messages in a visual field.

# 9.1

## Workshop: Image Reading Process Pavel Mrkus and Daniel Hanzlík

### **Objective of the workshop:**

The elementary use of various composition methods of framing pictures and creating meaning based on visual communication.

### **Used technologies:**

Photo cameras, mobile phones, projector, and a notebook for the presentation of examples and results.

### **Workflow of workshop:**

1. Introductory talk. Talk about the workshop theme – reading of image, changing of meaning by using the detail of image.
2. Examples of the visual items and art projects.
3. Technology. Elementary explanations of tools used and the strategy of taking images.
4. Creative action – individual works in public spaces (in streets, parks, etc.).
5. Presentations of the results, comparison, interpretation of the outcomes.

### **Content and description of implemented workflow:**

The workshop was conducted by Pavel Mrkus and Daniel Hanzlík from the Faculty of Art and Design at the University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem (Czech Republic). Both artists by profession, they introduced their art and their creative strategies. They referred to the complexity of a city, city signs, and the informational technologies used in the contemporary society in their work.

They showed several examples of how to possibly draw inspiration and concepts from just walking around the city and connecting various points. The strategies were ones of contrasts: opposite meanings of similar visibility-based signage in the streets, unveiling the historical layers in buildings, the ambiguity in meanings of images and signs, differences between presentations of the locality in the ideal “retouched” imagery and its actual situation, and so on.

The elementary composition methods of taking pictures in the way of framing and creating meaning were explained.

The participants – mostly scholars but also other researchers – were invited to walk around the city and became artists for the moment. They were instructed to photograph pairs of pictures with contrasting meanings.

In the end, all the images were collected, presented, and discussed from an artistic point of view, with focus on their meaning, composition, and the participants’ intentions. A very wide range of approaches to how to read the city appeared, from historical to architectural, and graphical misunderstandings in the city space to clearly directive, commercial, and politically unfair attacks on the citizen. The creative process of art became a great experience for all participants, and helped them to unveil their imaginations not only as artists or scholars, but as careful viewers in general.

### Outputs – results:

1. A number of series of paired photographic images taken during the workshop (uploaded on the project management platform Basecamp).
2. Discussion of the images taken and their possible readings in the context of contemporary art.

### Goals and conclusions:

- Recognition of differences between artistic, documentary, and commercial approaches in the creation of images.
- Understanding of artistic strategies in reading and compositing artworks in the context of work within the frame of a city.
- Testing the environment of the city as an inspirational area of creativity.
- Achievement of basic skills in image creation for the non-artists and opening a range of possibilities in seeing the living environment as a resource for creation.
- Providing the participants with unexpected and unusual combinations of sights within the city and its historical and social layers.
- Seeing the larger context of history through a detail.
- Motivating the participants to consider and improve their own ways of taking photographic images was an essential part of the research project.



Workshop: Image Reading Process, May 18th, 2017, Szczecin, Poland, Academy of Art in Szczecin – lecture room and one example of the participants visual work. Photo: archive of TICASS project.





## 9.2

### Workshop: The importance of context in photography Aleš Loziak and Adéla Machová

#### **Objective of the workshop:**

To present the possibilities of a photographic image acquiring different meanings or connotations, depending on its use in different contexts.

#### **Workshop tools:**

The theoretical part was focused on the presentation of artworks and artistic approaches to presenting art using various forms of installation in order to familiarise participants with the issue. In the practical part, printed photography images were used for a visual game based on telling stories with the same set of images (the aim was to create new contexts that created new meanings).

#### **Technologies used:**

Colour photographic images (prints).

#### **Workflow of workshop:**

1. Introductory talk. Talk about the workshop theme – The importance of context in the photography.
2. Examples of art projects and exhibitions.
3. Explanations of the tools used and of various approaches to visual communication.
4. Creative action – individual work in groups and preparation of photography series.
5. Presentations of the results, and a comparison and interpretation of the outcomes.

#### **Description of implemented workflow and results:**

The researcher prepared the presentation of art works and explained the theoretical frame of the topic, focusing on the importance of context in photography. The theoretical part was completed with examples from the art field and the artist's visual experience with photography.

In the practical part, the participants of the workshop were divided into five groups. Each group received the same 10 × 15 cm photographs (70 pieces). Their task was to create a series from these photographs as a photographic installation. They could create one or more different installations with the photographic images.

The participants of the workshop looked carefully at the photographs, were encouraged to make a selection, create their own selection based on their personal preferences, put them in a new context, and create work with a new meaning. The photographs, which had meaning for the authors themselves, were created for a specific purpose. They became the creative “building” elements for the participants of the workshop, who did not know the genesis of the images but could handle them in a new way of artistic creation.

The researcher followed the thoughts of the workshop participants in consultations. At the end of this task, each group of participants presented and defended their installation of pictures; they described the results and the interpretation

process. Each group explained the basic principles of their selection of images, and the form (shape or sequence) of the installation. They also tried to explain how the installation would look in an ideal case.

**Conclusion:**

The workshop focused on confirming the presumption that a photographic image may have completely different meanings in different contexts. The photography image becomes a word, forming sentences, paragraphs and chapters that bring new sense and new meaning. Like a word in a sentence or in a story, photographs form a series of images that have their own meaning.

The meaning of the context is one of the most important factors in the contemporary art world. It is a tool (instrument) but can also be a principle that determines the direction of the contemporary visual environment in the field of art.



Workshop: The Importance of Context in Photography, March 23rd, 2018, Kilifi, Kenya – Pwani University, Hall 1. Photo: Aleš Loziak.



## 9.3

### Workshop: Here & now & together Pavel Mrkus

**Objective of the workshop:**

Understanding the differences and common points of view on the TICASS research topics in visual languages between European researchers and locals.

**Workshop tools:**

Video field recordings in the streets of the town, a common projection of results, comparison talks, and interpretations.

**Used technologies:**

Personal mobile phone cameras, video projector, laptop.

**Workflow of workshop:**

1. Introductory talk presenting the workshop theme: Here & Now & Together and expectations from the various cultural background points of view of the common reality.
2. Examples of the video documentary and field recording art.
3. Elementary technological explanations of the tools to be used – phones, cameras, and editing.
4. Creative action – street field recording, individual works.
5. Presentations of the results, comparison, interpretation of the outcomes.

**Description of implemented workflow:**

Four researchers from the TICASS project and four local inhabitants were gathered. The topic and the intended process of the workshop were explained to all participants. The assignment was to record 15 seconds of video with imagery of possibly the most important or most significant situation, visual information, meaning, or message in the surrounding area. Simple instructions on the way of shooting and composing were given.

After the realisation of videos, they were collected and first projected in random pairs; each pair consisted of one western video and one local one. The authors of the clips provided explanations of their intentions and personal choices, and their approaches and preferences were compared. After the first projection round, pairs were reformulated and analysed again.

**Results**

Eight videos from local and European members were collected.

*Imagery taken*

Europeans: Reflection in water on a street; electric or communication wire systems; branded buildings of large communication companies; women cutting vegetables over plastic bowls in a traditional market.

Locals: Way through town to a crowded waiting room in a public hospital; way through town to funeral services selling coffins; market knife sharpener; colourful array of local market fabrics.

The differences were mainly noticeable in two areas:

1. Technical – Western researchers used more detailed focus and selected a one-directional way of recording the imagery, while the locals preferred a wide shot covering large areas and, in each case, took the video while walking, which resulted in lively, shaking footage. It seems that they may not have even looked through the device display while shooting.
2. Contextual – The content of the western videos was usually organised around terms like “reflection”, “extraordinary skills”, and “penetration of Western culture into local culture”, while the local participants’ interest was focused on topics of social care, insufficient policy for poor people in hospitals, death and funerals, and the movement and flow of life in the town in general.

### **Conclusion:**

Before comparing the two approaches to the visual information in the town, the Western cultural paradigm in art and art training had to be abstracted. This allowed us to focus purely on the meanings and unintentional compositions. To distinguish and compare, we can offer at least several basic differences between European and Kenyan participants: focus × wide shot, stability × motion, surface look × real-life problem, branding × colouring, system × unsatisfactory conditions, and skills × normality.



Workshop: Here & Now & Together, April 18th, 2018, Kilifi, Kenya – Coffee shop at Kilifi town centre and the examples of participants images from the workshop. Photo: Researcher’s archive.

## 9.4

### Workshop: The World at 360° Zdeněk Svejkský

#### **Objective of the workshop:**

The theoretical part focused on the presentation of artworks created in/with the help of Google Maps and Google Street View: applications that deliver the first visual contact between travelers and the unknown public spaces they intend to go to or are interested in. The participants of the workshop were introduced to the applications and the online image space was discovered. The practical part consisted of creating a photo series of selected public spaces in London with the use of the mobile application of Google Street View.

#### **Workshop tools:**

Capturing public spaces in the city with a mobile phone camera and describing the public space through the image taken; discovering that uploading the images to applications helps to show the public space in virtual (online) space; common projection of results; comparative discussion.

#### **Used technologies:**

Google Maps (online), mobile phones with cameras, Wi-Fi connection, and the Google Street View application.

#### **Workflow of workshop:**

1. Introductory talk on the workshop theme – visibility in online public space, formats, and challenges in the online world.
2. Examples of the artworks created with the use of Google Maps and Google Street View.
3. Elementary technological explanations of the tools to be used – phone applications, camera, and editing accessories in phones.
4. Creative action – street field work, individual works.
5. Presentations of the results, comparison, interpretation of the outcomes.

#### **Description of implemented workflow and results:**

The task for participants was to take a few photographs in Google Street View because the application enables spherical photography. The next step was to situate the pictures into Google Maps. The participants became familiar with this application during their work and the goal was to introduce them to other ways of using frequently used functions.

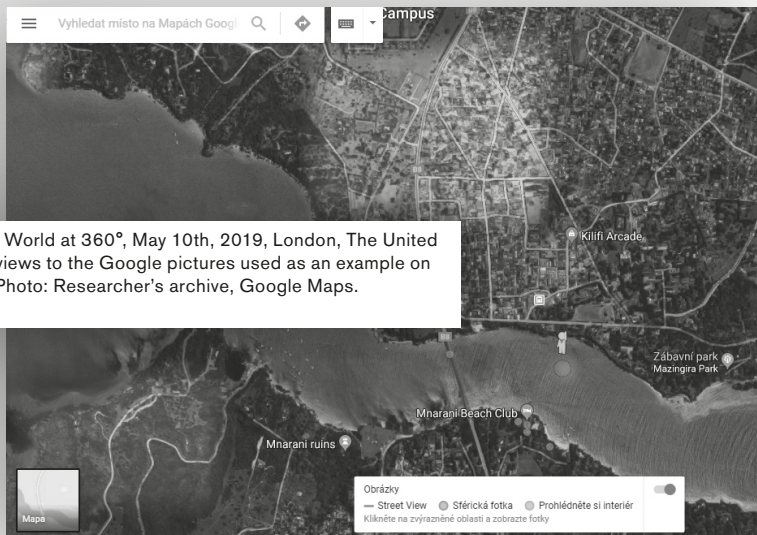
The spherical photographs in Google Maps offer a “new” form and mode of perception of public space and give new possibilities for artistic use. Although the Google Maps and Google Street View applications and their functions are generally known, the workshop showed more approaches to using them; especially differentiating between the passive way (browsing content) and the active (using the interface to create content).

## Conclusion:

The Internet has become a great participation platform in the last decade and, finally, everybody can be a creator of content. This fact created a need for web tool creators to prepare a user-friendly environment for this kind of image creation. The assumption underlying the workshop was that the user-friendly interface on web sites imposes new limits on its use and the creation of online space is undemocratic; only a few are relatively free and creative in this environment, while most of the users are passive and phlegmatic. This assumption was confirmed. The real content creators are the professionals and the small groups of fans; most people only use Google Maps as a useful tool to help with orientation in public spaces.



Workshop: The World at 360°, May 10th, 2019, London, The United Kingdom – previews to the Google pictures used as an example on the workshop. Photo: Researcher's archive, Google Maps.



## 9.5

### Workshop: Why Images Don't Need Names Adéla Machová

#### **Objective of the workshop:**

Common exploration of the notion that seeing comes after watching and discovering the process of interpretation of actual artworks, because a visual artwork can awaken new feelings and creative or critical thinking; it can bring inspiration to viewers in the gallery.

**Workshop tools:** Exhibition of artworks, comparison talks, and interpretations.

**Used technologies and techniques:** Paper, pencil, and cognition maps.

#### **Workflow of workshop**

1. Introductory talk on the workshop theme – mediation of art in museums of art, how the interpretation process helps read and understand the images.
2. Presentation of examples of artworks and introduction to the exhibition.
3. Explanations of the approach used in visual communication.
4. Practical part – individual work and group discussion, with helping questions from the researcher.
5. Presentation of the ideas, comparisons, interpretation of the outcomes.

#### **Description of implemented workflow and results:**

A working group of UNIMC students and TICASS researchers was created, comprising 16 participants. The researcher explained the topic and process – the theoretical part came first and was completed by a few tasks to explore the topic. The question: “What does the image tell me?” was asked and opened the first round of a discussion.

This question creates a situation in which the person responding to it has to look for the visual message of the image despite the missing title/label, and which focuses on the personal feeling of a recipient of the image. The participants approached the aesthetics and visual codes of the images using their actual experiences, feelings, and minds, and talked about the process of reading images as analogous to reading a book. Then, they took their papers (sticky notes) and pens and made notes of their first feelings, preparing key words for the future interpretation process. All these keywords were presented together.

Then, it was discussed that, as we know from art history, an artwork can awaken new feelings in people's minds, inspiring, raising, or evoking questions, a testament of its time but also of its recipients, comforting them, awaking their desires, or intensifying their dreams. It is important that the artworks are open for viewers, though not wide and wild, but in their contexts and where they are presented to the public.

The last issue taken up during the workshop was recognition of the frame of the picture and opening it up: The frame of an image is the same as a window frame in our room, and it depends on the point of the view, on the time, day, temperature, season, the angle of the light... What you see depends on how you watch.

The discussion about framing and the interpretation process finished with the following questions: Do we need a title for artworks? Can we recognise the stories or meaning of the image without one?

### **Conclusion:**

The eyes and minds of the workshop participants were opened by asking what images tell us through the experience of the world in which we live. The participants started to recognise different stories in artworks. They learned that seeing comes after watching, and began to understand the bridge in visual communication – the bridge created by receiving, interpreting, and understanding the meaning of the visual messages; the bridge over their visible surface.



Workshop: Why Images Don't Need Names.  
November 12th, 2019, Macerata, Italy – museum  
exposition. Photo: Aleš Loziak.

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# SUMMARY

The monograph “Media, Art and Design. Intercultural Education Strategies” is conceived as a means for a deeper understanding of the knowledge and use of visual languages. Grounded in intercultural and interdisciplinary theories, the book portrays interactions carried out during research mobility as well as implemented at regional levels both in European and Kenyan contexts in the TICASS project.

The aim is to provide an educational recommendation for studies in the fields of media and art and design, share an analysis of the international background of visual studies, and to start a path to an interdisciplinary discussion leading toward the empowerment of critical skills both in the use of visual languages and in the designing of educational methods. The book is the result of a research process on the phenomenology of visual studies, as well as a resource for their usage in all domains of education.

The theoretical and practical parts of book are allowing the reader to validate its contents in view of new projections in the use and interpretations of visual languages. The monograph introduces some educational strategies to experience visual languages within the intercultural social contexts. Clusters of images, collected and analysed according to the reference paradigms developed by the Lasswell and Lester theory, are availed calling the attention on participatory strategies and actions.

In support to the theoretical dimension and educational recommendations, the book contains the specific sections of the best practices – implemented in the courses of the project or as the special activities during the project– involving children, young people and adults within the countries participating in the project. The theoretical-practical actions produced some educational recommendations oriented to encourage a greater competence in different professional fields dealing with visuality: in the artistic domains, in education (from kindergarten to university level), in culture and communication.

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