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## **PREFERENCE FOR VISUAL MOTIFS IN FIRST GRADES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Matjaž Duh<sup>1</sup>, Jerneja Herzog<sup>2</sup>, Špela Ros<sup>3</sup>

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### **Abstract**

A visual motif is an important component of an art project and is the thing initially detected in the visual art. A suitable introduction into visual motifs is provided by art education classes. A teacher can enable a successful execution of an art project to a pupil, only with a detailed introduction into visual motifs. These are not defined with the curriculum; instead, they are freely chosen by the teacher himself. The motifs should be more unusual, out of the ordinary, colourful and original. With the right approach and the selection of artworks, the teacher can develop artistic creativity in his pupils. At the same time, pupils can develop the ability for observation, critical analysis and evaluation of visual art.

In this article, a study is presented, whose purpose was to examine the preferences for visual motifs by gender and stratum of pupils on 4th level of primary school. The findings show the differences are more commonly reflected through gender, and less through stratum from which the pupils originate.

**Keywords:** visual art, preference for visual motifs, primary school, 10 years old pupils

### **Introduction**

The basic goal of art classes is to develop artistic creativity. However, only a creative teacher says Duh (2004), who sees the learning process as a creative act, is able to develop creativity in his pupils. A successful development of creativity requires a lengthy quality art education process, which has to be implemented at an early stage. The teacher's role in art education is to identify and develop creativity in his pupils.

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child's creativity can be detected when he has expressed it in an original way (ibid.). Roca (1981) believes art classes have to be creative and focused on exploring and recognizing the limits of pupils' freedom of expression. An important segment in the properly guided art classes is also encouraging visual observation, thinking, and acceptance of innovations, new ways of creativity, evaluation and (self-) criticism. Karlavaris and Berce-Golob (1991) also draw attention to the importance of developing the ability to evaluate art and visual culture. Bertscheit says, the goal "of once successful artistic evaluation occurs spontaneously: curiosity, the desire to discover, provoking questions." (Bertscheit, 2001, p. 11).

When rendering their artwork, artists tend to choose various motifs. Upon examining the artwork, every individual can be identified with the visual motif, but only if the motif has touched him in a deeper way. Höfler (1998) believes the motif is a fundamental subject of the artwork. Vrlič (2001) adds, whatever artist renders in his work, it is called a motif in fine arts. A motif is the most important factor and contributes to pupil's engagement with given artwork. Properly selected visual motifs can motivate a pupil, which is resulted in the pupil's creativity (Berce, Hocevar, Prestor, 1980). Gerlovič and Gregorač (1968) believe, the ability and creativity evolve when it is possible to form various motifs, and are reflected in the pupil's good will when he is able to tackle the visual motif on his own. Tomšič Čerkez (2003) believes that for the successful execution of an art project, a detailed acquaintance with the visual motif is essential, for which the teacher is responsible for. In order to achieve originality and an interesting visual motif, a precise and lively presentation is needed. Visual motifs motivate pupils to become more creative (Berce, Hočevan, Prestor, 1980). When choosing a motif, the teacher needs to consider the pupils' age or their stage of development, specificity of the visual design range, content and objectives of the art project, particularity of the chosen visual technique and the possibility of correlation and integration with other subjects (Tomšič Čerkez, 2003). In art classes, choosing the motif is very important (Duh and Herzog, 2012). In modern art classes, the teacher has the option of freely choosing the motifs, since they are not defined with a curriculum (Berce-Golob, 1993). However, in the words of Tomšič Čerkez (2003), the motif has to correspond with the visual problem and area, visual technique and the environment where pupils live and work. It has to be generally known. The author adds, "visual motifs are generally classified according to their origin of "images", with which a pupil develops ways of depiction in visual expression" (ibid. p.32). With the types of motifs we have to consider the ability of the pupils' thinking and absorption in the motif. Vrlič (2001) wrote, a man is the most important and universal motif in the

visual arts. It is suitable for representation in all visual techniques and fields. Through this motif, a child's progress in artistic expression is possible to monitor. At the beginning of his artistic creation, a child renders a man as a cephalopod and gradually moves onto a more human figure with hands that are perpendicular to the hull. Only then he renders the man from its side and a more detailed image (ibid.). The motif can be simple or compounded. There can only be one motif in the art work, or there can be more. Motif, as a concept, cannot be ultimately defined. It helps us to interpret the content of the visual artwork (Höfler, 1998). For the artwork in the first three grades of primary school, various motifs are suitable. Suitable motifs are: human figures, animals, still life, landscape, interior, different genres, such as occupation, scenes from everyday life, fantasy motifs and decorative and abstract work (Duh and Vrlič, 2003). Fantasy motif is suitable for pupils in lower grades because of their richly developed imagination. In the first triad, the pupils find abstract motifs strange because they are still thinking on a concrete level. Therefore, they have to be carried out in the form of visual art games (ibid.). In the first grades of primary school we can use various visual motifs from pupils' environment (people, animals, plants, nature phenomena, objects), from fairy tales, anecdotes, poems, folk costumes, events, holidays and ethnographic heritage (Grgurić, 1996). A teacher should try to find unusual, different motifs to every issue he addresses in art class. These motifs offer the possibility of developing general and spatial-visual abilities for the pupil (Vrlič, 2001). It is important to recognize, it plays an important role in choosing the motif, as said by Wichelhaus, "so that boys have a wide repertoire of aesthetic possibilities and can create bold, original works of visual art". (Wichelhaus, 1996, p.100).

Major influence on the pupils' artistic creativity and expression is his contact with the artwork. With forwarding the artwork "the fundamental question about the interaction of self-perception on one hand and explained information on the other hand is raised." (Barth, 2000, p. 7). The teacher is responsible for the introduction to the art work (Županič, 2011). With the help of the media, he introduces them to the work, which is an original or a reproduction. The teacher explains the visual motif, the problem and the technique with the help of the visual artwork. The motif in art education represents an affective part of the art project and is very important from a motivational point of view. An important factor in understanding and responding to the work of art is the emotional response of pupils' perception of the artworks (Duh in Herzog, 2012). In art class, the pupil develops observation abilities, critical judgement and evaluation of visual artworks. Manifestation of artworks is called appreciation, the pupils see the work of art, and they understand it and

enjoy it (Duh in Herzog, 2012). In relation to the artwork, pupils develop its competences which are connected with watching, thinking, listening, reacting and expressing through art. The teacher, who is the intermediary between the pupil and the work of art, has to support the artistic development of pupils. He achieves that with the help of properly selected visual artworks (Županić, 2011). In the first three years, pupils are acquainted with classical, contemporary, figural and abstract works of art (Duh and Herzog, 2012). With the selected artwork, the teacher encourages emotional responses in pupils. They describe their feelings and reactions to it. For a simple content analysis of a visual art, figural works of art are suitable, which contain recognizable motif and are suitable for lower grades. Conceptual artworks are used in lower grades. The difference in selection is because of the perception inability of the whole mental background with pupils of the first three grades (ibid.). Pupils' awareness of the visual experience and the ability of an artistic eye and critical view of the surrounding, help the activities related with the artistic work (Duh, Kljajić, Nurikić, 2010).

Visual art can be perceived and analysed according to their elements. It is necessary to detect the integrity of the individual work of art. Detection of the artwork is reasonable, if it's properly explained (Duh and Herzog, 2012). As an integral part of art education is visual evaluation which enables the development of evaluating visual art and aesthetic phenomena in the surrounding area. While evaluating, it is necessary to draw pupil's attention to concrete elements and work structure. The pupil has to evaluate by himself, why he likes the artwork. Artworks, reproductions, which we evaluate, have to be of high quality. Visual art from local and art treasury has to be used (Duh, Kljajić, Nurikić, 2010).

## **Methodology**

### **Aims and hypotheses**

In the study section we explored how different motifs of visual artwork are popular with pupils in the fourth grade (10 years old) of primary school. Which works of art 10 years pupils like the most, and which styles are they attracted to. We were also interested to see how gender and environment influence the selection of the favourite motif.

The study was based on the hypothesis related to gender and social strata of pupils.

We presumed, there are statistically significant differences in the popularity of visual artworks according to gender in the first set (HS1),

second set (HS2), third set (HS3), fourth set (HS4), fifth set (HS5), sixth set (HS6), seventh set (HS7) and eighth set of artworks (HS8).

Given the social strata of the pupils involved in the study, we presumed there are no statistically significant differences in the choice of motifs, according to the social stratum of schools in the first set (HS1), second set (HS2), third set (HS3), fourth set (HS4), fifth set (HS5), sixth set (HS6), seventh set (HS7) and eighth set of visual artworks (HS8).

### **Method and sample**

We used a descriptive and causal non-experimental method of pedagogical research. In the study sample, we included 203 of 10 years old pupils from eighth primary schools in Pomurje region in Slovenia. Of these, 90 (44.3 %) were boys and 113 (55.7 %) were girls.

### **Data collection procedures and instrumentation**

In fourth grades of the selected primary schools, we gained information through evaluation forms. We carried out a lesson in the fourth grade departments, where pupils have individually filled in evaluation forms. Reproductions of visual artworks were projected using an LCD projector. Pupils were presented with the variety of visual motifs arranged in eight different sets of visual artworks. Each set was represented by five images, all together, we presented forty.

Instrument for data collection was the evaluation form. The flow of presentation was as follows: first, we showed pupils five visual artworks in turn, each was projected eighth seconds. In the next projection, which was interrupted, we showed them altogether. This way, they could have another look, compare them and evaluate them from 1 to 5. The image they liked the most they evaluated with 5, and the one they liked the least, with 1. It was important they use each mark only once. They could not evaluate two different artworks equally. In every set they had to write, using their own words, why they liked the visual artwork they evaluated with 5 and what attracted them the most. Only when the evaluation was complete, we proceeded onto the next set. Using the same technique, we evaluated all eighth sets.

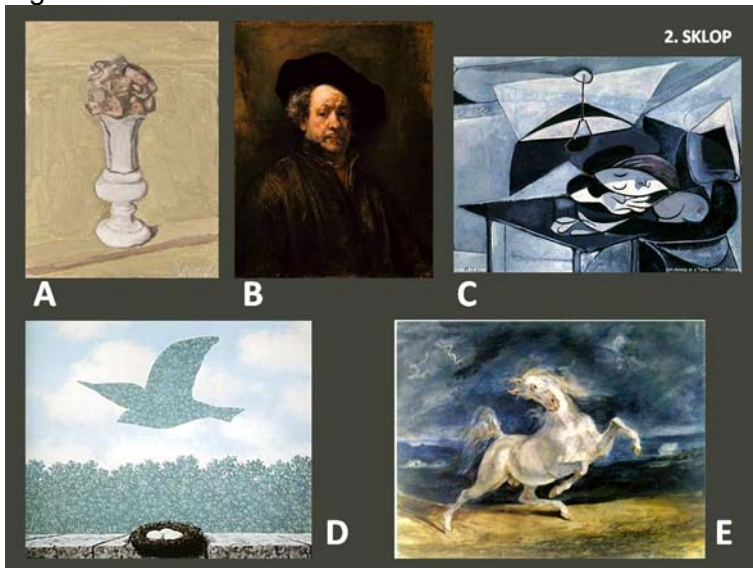
In the first set of visual artworks, pupils evaluated five images with various motifs, in which the visual problem of colour graduations in luminance was detected. The following images were presented: Paul Klee: *Senecio*, 1922; Zoran Didek: *Landscape in Green*, 1975; Pablo Picasso: *The Tragedy*, 1903; Henri Matisse: *Woman Reading*, 1894; Joan Miró: *Self Portrait*, 1919.

Figure 1: Artworks of the first set



In the second set, the pupils evaluated five images with different motifs, in which we detected the brightness hue problem. The following images were presented: Giorgio Morandi: Fiori, 1948; Rembrandt van Rijn: Self Portrait, 1660; Pablo Picasso: Girl a Sleep at a Table, 1936; René Magritte: Spring, 1965; Eugene Delacroix: Frightened Horse, 1824.

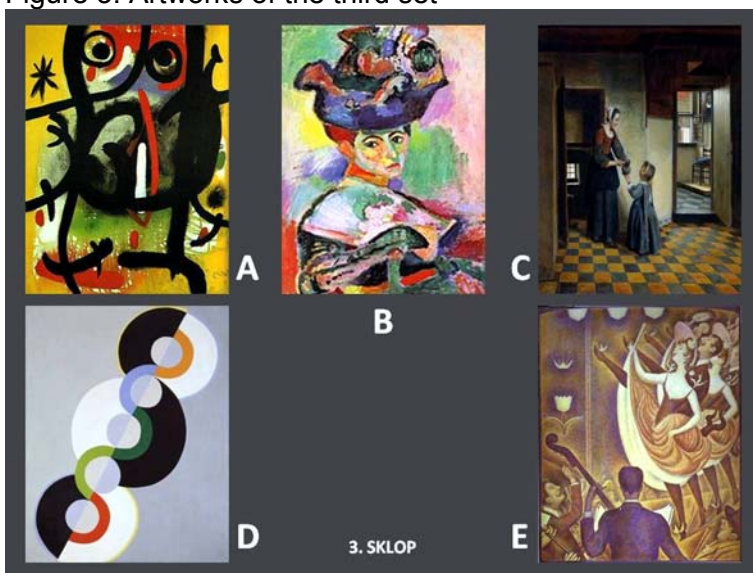
Figure 2: Artworks of the second set





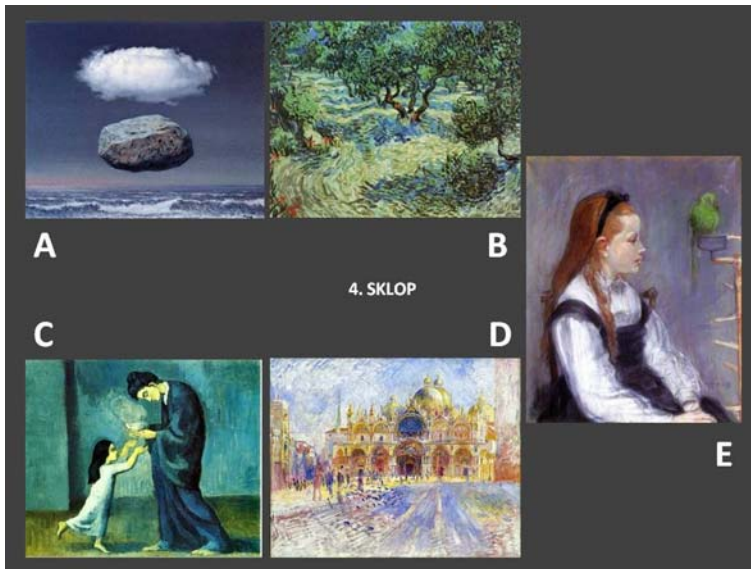
In the third set, pupils evaluated five images with different motifs, where we detected the problem of even and uneven distribution of shapes in the image. The following images were presented: Joan Miró: *Woman in The Nigth*, 1970; Henri Matisse: *Woman With a Hat*, 1905; Pieter de Hooch: *The Pantry*, 1660; Robert Delaunay: *Endless Rhythm*, 1934; Georges Seurat: *Le Chahut*, 1890.

Figure 3: Artworks of the third set



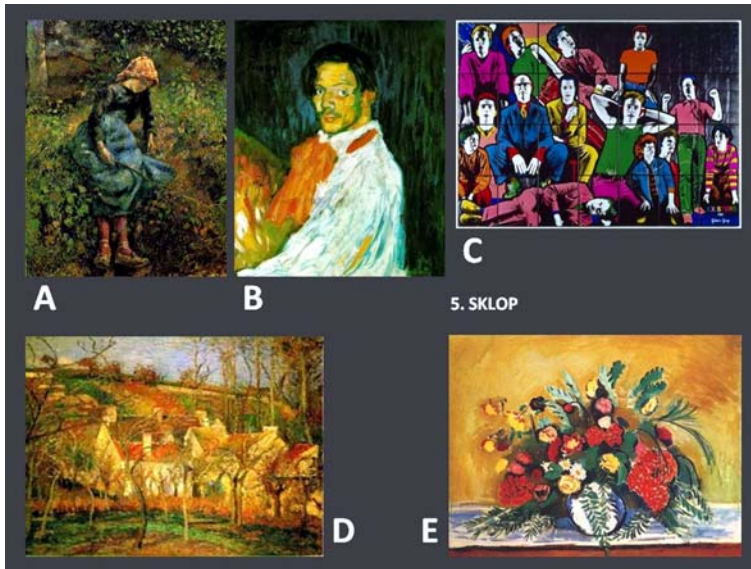
In the fourth set of visual artworks, the pupils evaluated five images with different motifs, where we detected the problem of light-dark contrast. The following images were presented: René Magritte: *Clear Ideas*, 1958; Vincent van Gogh: *Olive Orchard*, 1889; Pablo Picasso: *La Soupe*, 1902; Pierre-August Renoir: *The Piazza san Marco Venice*, 1881; Berthe Morisot: *Young Girl With a Parrot*, 1873.

Figure 4: Artwork of the fourth set



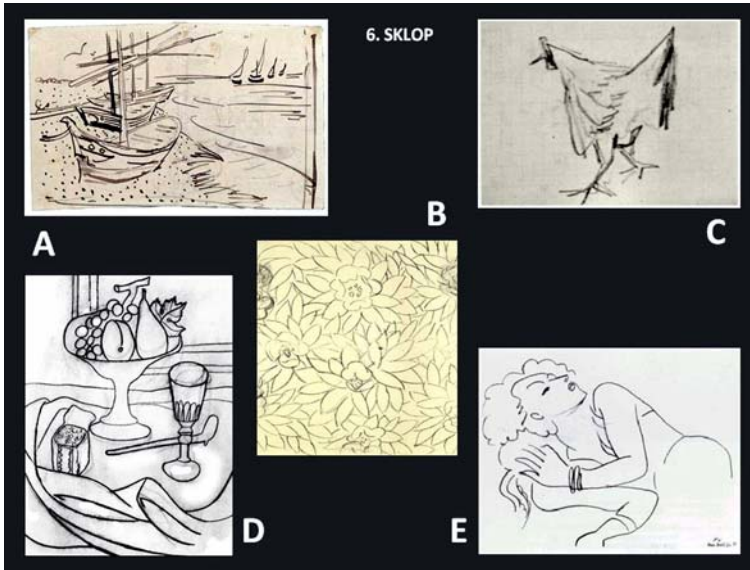
In the fifth set, the pupils evaluated five images with different motifs, where we detected the problem of visual motifs in the image. The following images were presented: Camille Pissarro: *The Shepherdess* 1881; Pablo Picasso: *Autoportrait yo, Picasso, 1901*; Gilbert in George: *Exsters, 1984*; Camille Pissarro: *The Red Roops, 1877*; Henri Matisse *Bouget of Flowers in a White Vase, 1909*.

Figure 5: Artworks of the fifth set



In the sixth set, the pupils evaluated five images with different motifs, where we detected the problem of rare stringing of the lines - bright surface (rasterization). The following images were presented: Vincent van Gogh: Fishing Boats on Beach at Saintes-Maries, 1888; Henri Matisse: Magnolia Motif, 1945; Vincent van Gogh: Sketch of The Hen, 1890; Pablo Picasso, Still Life, 1919; Henri Matisse: Themes et Variation, F6, 1941.

Figure 6: Artworks of the sixth set



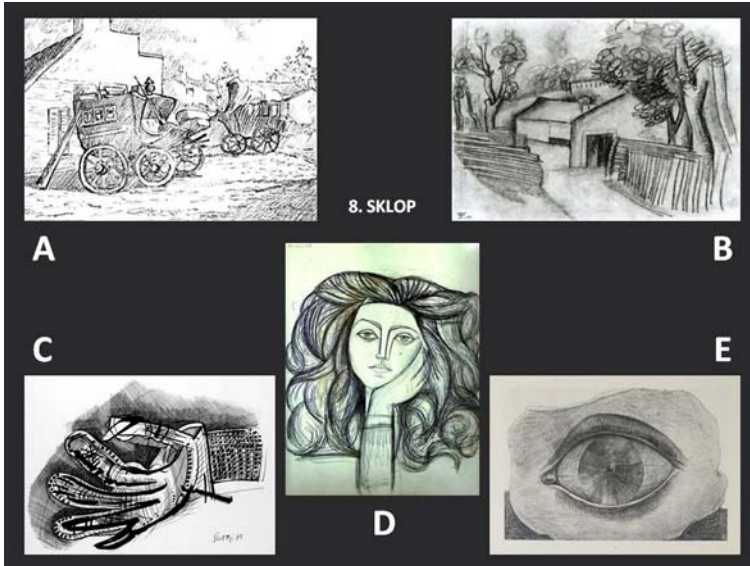
In the seventh set, the pupils evaluated five images with different motifs, where we detected the problem of densely plumbing lines - dark surface (rasterization). The following images were presented: Leonardo da Vinci: Self Portrait, ca. 1512-1515; Vincent van Gogh The Carrot Puller, 1885; Alfred Kubin: Vrtinec, 1936; Louis Soutter: Ornement, 1935; Albrecht Dürer: Rhinoceron, 1515.

Figure 7: Artworks of the seventh set



In the last, eighth set, the pupils evaluated five images with different motifs, where we detected the problem of arranging of light and dark plots hatched. The following images were presented: Vincent van Gogh: Tarascon Stage Coach, 1888; Veno Pilon: Sketch of sawlogs, 1923; Miroslav Šutej: The hand, 1978; Pablo Picasso Portrait of Françoise, 1946; The Wheel of Light, 1926.

Figure 8: Artworks of the eighth set



**Data processing**

Findings were analysed with basic descriptive statistic. To identify the differences between gender and stratum, we used the  $\chi^2$  test.

**Findings and interpretation**

The study examines the popularity of visual motifs with pupils in fourth grade (10 years old) of primary school. We were curious to know, if there are any differences between genders and pupils' environment.

Table 2: Popularity of motifs in the first set of visual artworks based on gender, and results of the  $\chi^2$  test based on gender.

1st set: Visual art problem: colour graduations in luminance				$\chi^2$ test results	
Code	Artwork data	Highest mark			$\chi^2 = 7.603$
		Boys	Girls	Total	

		n = 90		n = 113		n = 203		P = 0.107
		f	f%	f	f%	f	f%	
A	Klee: Senecio	5	5.6%	5	4.4%	10	4.9%	
B	Didek: Landscape in Green	59	65.6%	69	61.1%	128	63.1%	
C	Picasso: The Tragedy	2	2.2%	7	6.2%	9	4.4%	
D	Matisse: Woman Reading	20	22.2%	31	27.4%	51	25.1%	
E	Miró: Self Portrait	4	4.4%	1	0.9%	5	2.5%	
Total		90	100%	113	100%	203	100%	

In the first set, as shown in table 1, pupils liked the artwork of Zoran Didek best, which features the landscape motif in different shades of green. This was chosen by 63.1 % of all pupils. Boys liked the image more (65.6 %) than the girls (61.1 %). With other artwork there are differences in popularity of visual motifs. The result of  $\chi^2$  - test showed, there is no statistically significant difference ( $P = 0.107$ ) with motif choice based on gender. Both boys and girls liked the art work Zoran Didek best, Landscape in Green. With this result we refute the hypothesis HS1. This image is the most realistic among the images of the first set; therefore, it has attracted the pupils of both genders.

Table 3: Popularity of motifs in the second set of visual artworks based on gender, and the results of  $\chi^2$ -test based on gender.

2nd set: Visual art problem: Brightness hue								$\chi^2$ test results
Code	Artwork data	Highest mark						$\chi^2 = 8.480$ $P = 0.075$
		Boys n = 90		Girls n = 113		Total n = 203		
		f	f%	f	f%	f	f%	
A	Morandi: Fiori	7	7.8%	7	6.2%	14	6.9%	
B	Rembrandt: Self Portrait	7	7.8%	4	3.5%	11	5.4%	
C	Picasso: Girl	12	13.3%	9	8.0%	21	10.3%	

	a Sleep at a Table						
D	Magritte: Spring	11	12.2%	32	28.3%	43	21.2%
E	Delacroix: Frightened Horse	53	58.9%	61	54.0%	114	56.2%
Total		90	100%	113	100%	203	100%

Table 2 shows; in this group of artworks the majority preferred the animal motif of Eugena Delacroix, Scared Horse. It was chosen by 56.2 % of all pupils. Boys preferred the image more (60.0 %) than the girls (54.0 %). With other images there were only minor differences in choosing the motif. We found, there were no statistically significant difference in the second set of artworks ( $P = 0.075$ ) based on gender in choosing the motif. Both boys and girls liked best the artwork of Eugena Delacroixa, with the horse motif. With this result we can refute hypothesis HS2. Among the cubist image (Picasso), surreal (Magritte) and almost monochromatic (Morandi) and a classic portrait (Rembrandt), the pupils of both genders were most drawn to a dynamic image of a horse. Girls were probably drawn to it due to the realistic depiction of an animal, and the boys for its dynamic composition.

Table 4: Popularity of motifs in the third set of visual artworks based on gender, and the results of  $\chi^2$ -test based on gender.

3rd set: Visual art problem: even and uneven distribution of shapes in the image							$\chi^2$ test results	
Code	Artwork data	Highest mark						
		Boys n = 90		Girls n = 113		Total n = 203		
		f	f%	f	f%	f	f%	
A	Miró: Woman in The Night	6	6.7%	0	0.0%	6	3.0%	$\chi^2 = 9.430$ $P = 0.051$
B	Matisse: Woman with a Hat	3	3.3%	4	3.5%	7	3.4%	
C	de Hooch: The Pantry	25	27.8%	40	35.4%	65	32.0%	
D	Delaunay: Endless Rhythm	29	32.2%	34	30.1%	63	31.0%	

E	Seurat: Le Chahut	27	30.0 %	35	31.0 %	62	30.5%
Total		90	100%	113	100%	203	100%

Table 3 shows; in the third set of images most pupils liked the image by Pieter de Hooch, The Pantry, a genre motif that shows a mother and a child. This was chosen by 32.0 % of pupils. Both boys and girls equally liked the artwork by Georges Seurat, Circus. 31.0 % girls liked it and also 30.0 % boys. Results show, there is no statistically significant difference ( $P = 0.051$ ) in choosing the motif based on gender in the third set of artwork. Therefore, we can refute hypothesis HS3. However, there is a tendency of differences between the genders. Boys were more drawn to the abstract image, where circular forms intertwine in diagonal and dynamic composition. Girls, meanwhile, were most drawn to the realistically painted genre image by Pieter de Hoocha, The Pantry, which shows a mother and a child in traditional Flemish interior.

Table 5: Popularity of motifs in the fourth set of visual artworks based on gender, and the results of  $\chi^2$ -test based on gender.

4th set: Visual art problem: light-dark contrast								$\chi^2$ test results
Code	Artwork data	Highest mark						$\chi^2 = 27.880$ $P = 0.000$
		Boys n = 90		Girls n = 113		Total n = 203		
		f	f%	f	f%	f	f%	
A	Magritte: Clear Ideas	50	55.6 %	35	31.0 %	85	41.9 %	
B	Van Gogh: Olive Orchard	18	20.0 %	14	12.4 %	32	15.8 %	
C	Picasso: La Soupe	2	2.2%	2	1.8%	4	2.0%	
D	Renoir: The Piazza San Marco	15	16.7 %	26	23.0 %	41	20.2 %	
E	Morisot: Girl With a Parrot	5	5.6%	36	31.9 %	41	20.2 %	
Total		90	100%	113	100%	203	100%	

In the fourth set of images (Table 4) the pupils liked best the work by Rene Magritte, Clear Ideas, with imaginative stone motif which floats in



the air. It was chosen by 41.9 % of all pupils. This image was more preferred by the boys (55.6 %) than the girls (31.0%). The girls liked best the image by Bertha Morisot, a portrait of a girl with a parrot, which 31.9 % of girls chose. The results of the test showed, there is a statistically significant difference ( $P = 0.000$ ) in the fourth set of artworks, based on gender. Thus, we confirm the hypothesis HS4. The majority of boys were most drawn to the most unusual surrealist painting by Rene Magritte. The fantasy motif, which shows a floating rock above the rough sea and under a cloud, was obviously unusual enough to impress the boys. The girls liked the most the classic depiction of a girl and a parrot, a painting by Bethe Morisot.

Table 6: Popularity of motifs in the fifth set of artworks based on gender, and the results of  $\chi^2$ -test based on gender.

5th set: Visual art problem: visual motifs in the image								$\chi^2$ test results
Code	Artwork data	Highest mark						
		Boys n = 90		Girls n = 113		Total n = 203		
		f	f%	f	f%	f	f%	
A	Pissarro: The Shepherdess	1	1.1%	10	8.8%	11	5.4%	$\chi^2 = 23.241$ $P = 0.000$
B	Picasso: Autoportrait yo. Picasso	2	2.2%	0	0.0%	2	1.0%	
C	Gilbert in George: Externs	31	34.4%	15	13.3%	46	22.7%	
D	Pissarro: The Red Roofs	23	25.6%	19	16.8%	42	20.7%	
E	Matisse: Bouget of Flowers in a White Vase	33	36.7%	69	61.1%	102	50.2%	
Total		90	100%	113	100%	203	100%	

The results in the fifth set of images (Table 5) show, the pupils liked most the artwork by Henri Matisse, with still life. It was chosen by 50.2 % of all pupils, 61.1 % of girls and 36.7 % of boys. Also with the other four sets there was a difference between genders. We find, there is a statistically significant difference ( $P = 0.000$ ) with choosing the motif in the fifth set of artworks, based on gender. We can see from all five images, there are differences in popularity between boys and girls.

Therefore, we confirm the hypothesis HS5. Even though the Matisse painting was preferred by both genders, the dispersion of other results showed clear differences between the genders. As their second favourite image, the boys choose the dynamic and unusual figural composition of painters Gilbert and George. With girls, second place was reserved for a landscape painting in a post-impressionistic style of a painter Jacob Camille Pissarro.

Table 7: Popularity of motifs in the sixth set of visual artworks based on gender, and the results of  $\chi^2$ -test based on gender.

6th set: Visual art problem: rare stringing of the lines - bright surface (raster)								$\chi^2$ test results
Code	Artwork data	Highest mark						
		Boys n = 90		Girls n = 113		Total n = 203		
		f	f%	f	f%	f	f%	
A	Van Gogh: Fishing Boats	37	41.1%	37	33.6%	74	36.9%	$\chi^2 = 13.204$ $P = 0.010$
B	Matisse: Magnolia Motif	4	4.4%	24	20.4%	28	13.3%	
C	Van Gogh: Sketch of the Hen	3	3.3%	2	1.8%	5	2.5%	
D	Picasso: Still Life	31	34.4%	38	33.6%	69	34.0%	
E	Matisse: Themes et Variations	15	16.7%	12	10.6%	27	13.3%	
Total		90	100%	113	100%	203	100%	

The following table (Table 6) shows, in this set of artworks pupils preferred the Vincent van Gogh drawing, Fishing Boats on the Shore. The work was preferred by the boys (41.1 %) more than the girls (33.6 %). The drawing by Pablo Picasso also liked 33.6 % of the girls. The biggest difference in choosing the motif was with the artwork by Henri Matisse, with the motif of flowers. It was preferred by the girls (20.4 %) more than the boys (4.4 %). The results of the  $\chi^2$  – test show there is a statistically significant difference ( $P = 0.010$ ) in the sixth set of artworks in choosing the motif, based on gender. With this result we confirm the hypothesis HS6. The boys liked more the dynamic line drawing by Vincent van Gogh, Fishing Boat on the Shore. While the girls, in addition to this drawing, also opted for the drawing by Pablo Picasso, Still Life.

Table 8: Popularity of motifs in the seventh set of visual artworks, based on gender and the results of  $\chi^2$ -test based on gender.

7th set: Visual art problem: densely plumbing lines - dark surface (raster).								$\chi^2$ test results
Code	Visual art data	Highest mark						$\chi^2 = 40.519$ $P = 0.000$
		Boys n = 90		Girls n = 113		Total n = 203		
		f	f%	f	f%	f	f%	
A	da Vinci: Self Portrait	8	8.9%	11	9.7%	19	9.4%	
B	van Gogh: The Carrot Puller	5	5.6%	5	4.4%	10	4.9%	
C	Soutter: Ornament	7	7.8%	55	48.7%	62	30.5%	
D	Dürer: Rhinoceros	63	70.0%	37	32.7%	100	49.3%	
E	Kubin: Vortex	7	7.8%	5	4.4%	12	5.9%	
Total		90	100%	113	100%	203	100%	

The table above (Table 7) shows, all the pupils in this set (49.3 %) preferred the work by Albrecht Dürer, with the animal motif. This work was more popular with the boys (70.0 %), and less with the girls (32.7 %). The most popular with girls in the seventh set (48.7 %) was the work by Louis Soutter, The Ornament. Only with one part the difference is not noticeable, since the drawing of Vincent van Gogh was chosen by five boys and five girls. In other four parts, there are differences between the genders. Even in this set, the results of the  $\chi^2$  – test show there is a statistically significant difference ( $P = 0.000$ ) with motif choice, based on gender. With that, we confirm the hypothesis HS7. Dürer's textually rich painting of the mighty animal, apparently took over the boys. The power and elegance of the depicted rhino was probably the thing boys were drawn to most. With girls, the preferred choice was the subtle tonally rich drawing of the dynamic ornament.

Table 9: Popularity of motifs in the eighth set of visual artworks based on gender, and the results of  $\chi^2$ -test based on gender.

8th set: Visual art problem: arranging of light and dark plots hatched								$\chi^2$ test results
Code	Artwork data	Highest mark						$\chi^2 = 19.965$ $P = 0.001$
		Boys n = 90		Girls n = 113		Total n = 203		
		f	f%	f	f%	f	f%	
A	van Gogh: Tarascon Stage Coach	14	15.6%	17	15.0%	31	15.3%	
B	Pilon: Sketch for a Sawmill	22	24.4%	16	14.2%	38	18.7%	
C	Sutej: The Hand	11	12.2%	5	4.4%	16	7.9%	
D	Picasso: Portrait of Françoise	13	14.4%	48	42.5%	61	30.0%	
E	Ernst: The Wheel of Light	30	33.3%	27	23.9%	57	28.1%	
Total		90	100%	113	100%	203	100%	

The table above (Table 8) shows, the most popular work in this set was the drawing by Pablo Picasso with the portrait motif. The drawing was more popular with the girls (42.5 %), and less with the boys (14.4 %). The most popular drawing with boys in this set (33.3 %) was by Max Ernst. Even in this eighth set of the art works, the results of the  $\chi^2$  – test show, there is a statistically significant difference ( $P = 0.001$ ) with choosing the motif, based on gender. There are differences between genders with all works of art. With that, we confirm the hypothesis HS8. Tonally rich and unusual painting by Max Ernst, which has the pupil of the eye centred in the frame, appealed to one third of the boys. Most appealing for the girls was Picasso's depiction of a girl with luxuriant hair in a symmetrical composition.

In this study we confirmed the hypotheses in five sets of five images, where we predicted there would be a statistically significant difference between genders, based on preference for motifs. In three cases, the hypothesis was not confirmed; however, we did notice a tendency in favour of preferential differences toward motifs between the genders. Differences exist due to different preferences for visual motifs. Thus, it was demonstrated that boys prefer more dynamic, fantasy motifs, whereas girls like motifs which reflect motherhood and tenderness.

In this study, we were also interested in the role of the social stratum with popularity of visual motifs. We compared the popularity of visual motifs with pupils from urban and rural area. In six cases, we confirmed the hypotheses (HSTR1, HSTR2, HSTR5, HSTR6, HSTR7 and HSTR8), where we predicted there are no statistically significant differences between the pupils when choosing the motif, based on social stratum. In continuation, we will highlight only the interpretation of the situations in which there are statistically significant differences between pupils of urban and rural schools, i.e. cases where the hypotheses (HSTR3, HSTR4) were not confirmed.

Table 10: Popularity of the motif based on the stratum from which the pupils originate and  $\chi^2$  – test

Sets	Code	Artwork	City		Stratum		$\chi^2$ test results
			f	f%	f	f%	
Third set	A	Miró: Woman in The Night	3	2.7%	3	3.2%	$\chi^2=13.167$ P=0.010
	B	Matisse: Woman in the Hat	3	2.7%	4	4.3%	
	C	de Hooch: The Pantry	28	25.5%	37	39.8%	
	D	Delaunay: Endless Rhythm	45	40.9%	18	19.4%	
	E	Seurat: Circus	31	28.2%	31	33.3%	
		Total	110	100.0%	93	100.0%	
Forth set	A	Magritte: Clear Ideas	55	50.0%	30	32.3%	$\chi^2=18.959$ P=0.001
	B	van Gogh: Olive Orchard	21	19.1%	11	11.8%	
	C	Picasso: La Soupe	1	0.9%	3	3.2%	
	D	Renoir: The Piazza San Marco	21	19.1%	20	21.5%	
	E	Morisot: Girl with a Parrot	12	10.9%	29	31.2%	
		Total	110	100.0%	93	100.0%	

The table above (Table 9) shows, with the third set of images the pupils from urban area choose differently on what they liked compared to pupils from rural area. The majority of pupils from the city (40.9) most liked the work by Robert Delaunay, *The Endless Rhythm*. Meanwhile, the pupils from the countryside choose the artwork of Pieter de Hooch, titled *The Pantry*. The result of  $\chi^2$  –test showed a statistically significant difference ( $P = 0.010$ ) with choosing the motif, based on social stratum in the third set of art works. Therefore, we refute the hypothesis HSTR3. The difference can be explained by the amount and variety of visual information (posters, advertising signs, images on the side of the bus), which daily surround the children in the city. We can infer from this that this was the reason they were more drawn to the abstract motif on the Delaunay's painting than their peers from the countryside.

In the fourth set of the artworks the result of  $\chi^2$  –test also showed a statistically significant difference ( $P=0.010$ ) with choosing the motif, based on social stratum. With that, the hypothesis HSTR4 is refuted. Half the pupils from the city (50.0 %) liked the Magritte's painting the most, and the same percentage of pupils (19.1 %) paintings of Van Gogh and Renoir. The pupils from the countryside (32.3 %) liked the Magritte's painting the most, close behind (31.2 %) was the painting by Bertha Morisot. The differences in preferences for motifs can be explained by the notion, that Magritte's painting is the only one from this set to have animal depicted. It is probable, the proximity and the connection of the bird and the child was more appealing to children from the countryside than from the city.

## **Conclusion**

In this study we tried to assess the preferences for visual motifs in the fourth grade of primary school in Slovenia, with 10 years old pupils. We were interested in whether there are some kind of differences in pupils' gender and their stratum when choosing their favourite motifs. We found significant differences based on gender; meanwhile, differences based on the social stratum were not so visible. Therefore, the gender plays a more important role than the child's environment. We found, both boys and girls liked the motifs connected with landscape, animals and still life. We have reached an interesting finding regarding the landscape motif. Previous studies (Duh, Herzog, 2012) were focused on the fact, that the landscape motif is not the most popular among the younger pupils. Boys were more drawn to the abstract and fantasy motifs, while girls found the motifs of interior, genre and portrait more appealing. We found statistical differences between the pupils from urban and rural schools only in two sets. In three sets there was no statistically significant difference based on gender.

With the obtained results, we found that the popularity of the visual artwork not only depends on the motif but also on visual elements, colours, shapes composition and other. We can conclude, there are differences between boys and girls when choosing the motifs. That is why the findings of the study have to be taken into account with teaching in class and choosing quality art with motifs that will be liked by both, girls and boys. For an experienced learning of famous artists' artwork, quality art with various motifs has to be used. Findings of the study can help to improve the art class. In their pedagogical work, teachers should use art reproductions with properly chosen visual motifs, which should be interesting, familiar for the pupils and popular with the majority.

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