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THE PRACTICAL ASPECT OF DEVELOPING ART APPRECIATION

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Abstract

In the present article the significance and the role of art appreciation are dealt with. The ways and procedures of developing art appreciation of pupils in primary school are presented. With the support of the procedure of gradual uncovering of an artwork, in which two different methods were employed, namely increasing the sharpness and fragmentary image, the response and experience of 14 – 15 years old pupils were investigated in this study. In this, focus was on the examination of appropriateness of the procedures according to the type of the selected artworks. The procedures were examined on two sets, namely on a set of artworks with realistically depicted motifs and on a set of abstract paintings. We have found the selected procedures were to a certain extent more appropriate for dealing with realistic motifs, and to a lesser extent for abstract motifs. For pupils it is more difficult to accept an unknown, alien image, they much more easily identify themselves with recognisable forms and motifs. The latter motivate and inspire them more; they activate communication and in consequence raise the level of the development of art appreciation.

Key Words: art appreciation, communication, artworks, methods of developing art appreciation.

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Introduction

“Art production and appreciation seem universal and are observed in all cultures, and various explanations about its functions have been posited” (Schabmann, Gerger, Schmidt, Wögerer, Osipov, Leder, 2015: 1). This is why it is important everyone involved in shaping the education system is aware of this. Speaking about appreciation abilities, we must tend toward making pupils watch the work of art, understand it, and enjoy in it (Duh, 2004). “With observing and understanding art we are accustoming children to thinking creatively about art, to developing a sense for beauty and for understanding the language of art” (Duh, Pavlič, 2015: 26). Although art appreciation is often advanced as an example of highly subjective experiences, empirical research lead to an increased understanding of its nature. The process of reception is subjectively conditioned, it is individual and dynamic, as recipients interpret a work of art to themselves adequately to their ideas (Awe, 2001). Visual perception involved in art perception is fundamentally cognitive because it requires processes such as selection, focusing, and abstraction, which he summarized as visual thinking. For the development of appreciation it is important perception of artworks is more than just watching and quick reaction; it must be a meaningful experience. In the process of developing art appreciation Panganay (1992) defined the phases:

- perceiving the work of art with all senses,
- releasing emotions,
- transforming images into language,
- acting.

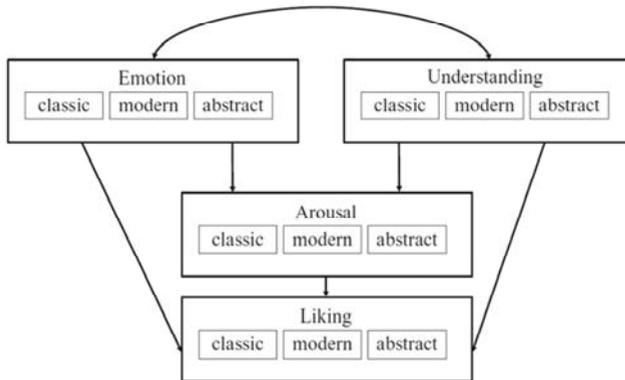
All normally developed children have the ability of art appreciation (Duh,2004). Research (Kraguljac & Karlavaris, 1970) also found in favourable conditions, literally, every child can progress in the techniques of painting and that they can develop both artistic creative and art appreciation abilities. Here the link between art appreciation and art formation is very important, with development of art appreciation also influencing the quality of artistic production, which means the pupil who sees and recognises a larger number of artworks is also better able to create. In this, also the aesthetic experience is important, about which Tinio says: “The aesthetic experience of art begins with the perception of the surface features of an artwork and peaks when the viewer achieves a sense of having grasped an underlying meaning, context, or concept regarding the work that might have some personal relevance” (Tinio, 2013: 265). In art classes, art appreciation can the most successfully be developed with the support of artworks. It is important in the process a relation gets established between the learner and the work of art, for which appropriate atmosphere is needed, in which pupils are not afraid

of expressing their opinions. In turn this process is again influenced by the aforementioned aesthetic experience. "Aesthetic experiences of art are dependent on the information perceivers are able to infer regarding the creative art-making process and how such information interfaces with their knowledge base, personal characteristics, and current motivational and emotional states" (Tinio, 2013: 272). At school, too little attention is paid to the role of art appreciation, as it requires plenty of experience and training, which primarily shows as "perceiving complex artistic content in all its subtle details" (Duh, 2004, p. 50). We can also completely agree with the reasons quoted by Ishikawa: "The reason why teachers do not develop art appreciation in their classrooms is "they do not know the history of art and do not understand how to teach art appreciation" (Ishikawa, 2008:1).

It is quite likely that in the perception and reception of a students' work of art the view of it will also intensify the experience in other learners (Duh, 2004). "... some individual differences in aesthetic preferences appear idiosyncratic, suggesting that individual differences in visual processes may also influence art preference by modulating the appreciation of visual features" (Sherman, Grabovecky, Suzuki, 2015:2). With an open approach to artworks visual abilities and organised observation are developed in children, as well as mental, emotional, and other activities. "Aesthetic objects require from the recipient openness to often unusual effects of motifs and materials, composition, colours, rhythms, and tones" (Kirchner et al., 2006:12). The development of the art appreciation ability must take place through conversation or dialogue between teacher and learners. "For teachers the procedure of observation and asking questions has an added value," says Barnes and continues: "Together the child and the teacher talk about things that build the vocabulary for describing the seen" (Barnes, 2002: 135). "Associations allow linking different images and lean on common features and similarities such as external form, colour, line, or composition. Because associations are subjective and often biographically accepted, adequate conditions must be established in the group, in which children will be able to express their personal opinions without fear. Because of their own perspective and associations these are different in each of them" (Duh, 2016: 76).

In literature different procedures can be found for the development of art appreciation, through which children learn how to see. "Watching," says Berger, "denotes a relatively passive activity of watching," and continues, "seeing indicates the act of searching and discerning meaning in the seen, i.e. active interpretation of the seen" (Berger, 2008: 7-8). With such approaches we will follow the laws of teaching fine arts and thus take into account "a network of factors that are in interactive relation: acting, creating and thinking, perceiving, producing, and

reflecting from the facets that give rise to mutual intertwining of educational activity” (Bering, 2001: 43). Also interesting is the authors’ (Schabmann et. al., 2015) view, where a model of theoretical structural equation for the analysis of appreciation is developed. It is presented in the scheme below (Scheme 1).



Scheme 1: Theoretical (full recursive) structural equation model for the Analysis of art appreciation (Schabmann et al., 2015).

“According to the model, understanding represents the outcomes of the cognitive processing stages, and emotion and arousal together represent the outcomes of the affective pathway.” (ibid.: 6). With the support of such methods we can encourage pupils to observe the work of art more precisely, while in the sense of perception and reception simultaneously not imposing on them our own or professional interpretations “At the level of individual experience and feelings it is possible to better and with more preparedness agree about art than at the scientific-reflective level based on the knowledge about the work and the artist.” (Seumel, 2001:4).

Methodology

Purpose and objective

With the research, we examined the efficacy of different forms of developing art appreciation in direct educational work with 14 – 15 years old pupils. The objective of the study was to examine different ways of developing art appreciation and to implement them in our primary schools in everyday educational practice of teaching art.

Research sample and methods

In the study, 113 randomly selected 14 – 15 years old pupils from three primary schools in Maribor were included. The sample consisted of 62 girls (55 %) and 51 boys (45 %).

In the study, the qualitative method of educational research was applied; or more precisely a case study based on the interpretative paradigm and ideographic approach (Peez, 2005).

Measurement instrument

The measurement instrument consisted of 12 reproductions of artworks of Slovenian authors, divided into two sets (realistic art, abstract art). We started from preceding research (Duh, Herzog, 2012) on different preferences towards artistic motif from the viewpoint of pupil's gender, thus applying reproductions of artworks with different motifs. Likewise, research has shown (Duh, Herzog, Ros, 2013) the attitude toward a work of art is not only influenced by the motif, but also by artistic elements such as colour, forms, and composition. This is why we selected diverse artworks. "Analyzing how artworks are processed using SEM could reveal for which kind of artworks a sense of comprehension is important for aesthetic appreciation. Representative, classical art might be understood in a similar way by all perceivers. Abstract art by definition has no depictive content. However, it is unclear whether a sense of understanding is essential for its appreciation. In contrast, the class of modern art, which in the present study consisted of a mixture of representational and abstract elements, might be prone to comprehension because of their ambiguity." (Leder, Gerger, Dressler, Schabmann, 2012: 3).

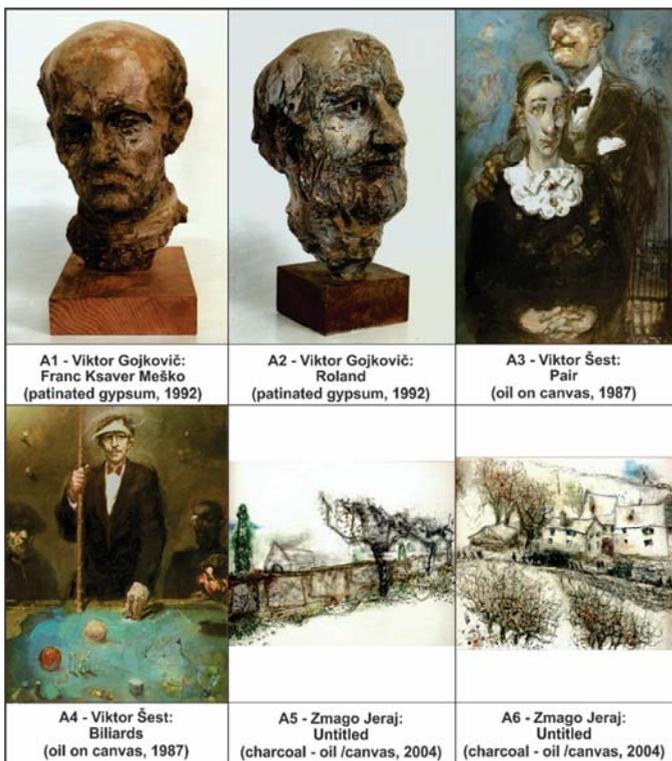


Figure 1: The first set of presented artworks – realistic depiction

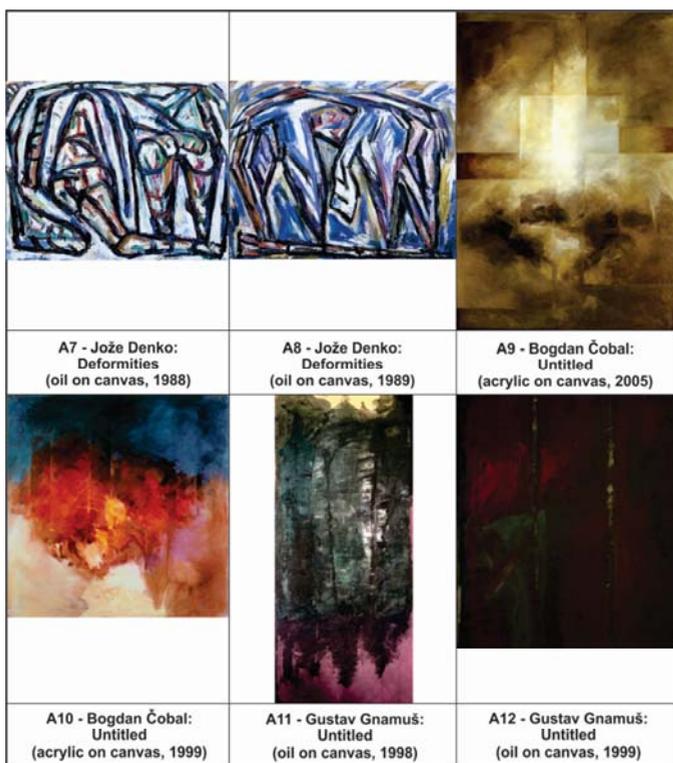


Figure 2: The second set of presented artworks – abstract depiction

Table 1: Detailed presentation of measurement instruments with individual methods

Applied methods	Artworks
Increasing sharpness	Viktor Gojkovič: Franc Ksaver Meško
Fragmental image	Viktor Gojkovič: Roland
Fragmental image	Viktor Šest: Pair
Fragmental image	Viktor Šest: Billiard
Increasing sharpness	Zmago Jeraj: Untitled
Fragmental image	Zmago Jeraj: Untitled
Fragmental image	Jože Denko: Deformit
Fragmental image	Jože Denko: Deformit
Fragmental image	Bogdan Čobal: Untitled
Increasing sharpness	Bogdan Čobal: Untitled
Fragmental image	Gustav Gnamuš: Untitled
Increasing sharpness	Gustav Gnamuš: Untitled

The procedures of gathering and processing data

We acquired the data with the support of a non-standardised narrative group interview with questions that were not prepared in advance. We informed the pupils the whole interview will be recorded with a Dictaphone. In all classes the research took a school period with pupils

verbally answering our questions. In the process of performing the lesson 12 reproductions of artworks were presented to the pupils with the support of an LCD projector. The data gathered with the interview were analysed with a qualitative content analysis, which took place in two phases: (1) paraphrased transcription of audio records, (2) interpretation with formulating theory according to research questions. The names of pupils in the section presenting the results are invented.

Research questions and hypotheses

The hypotheses are expressed in the form of research questions.

In the formation of research questions, we followed equal starting point: determining whether the method of gradually uncovering the (selected) artwork is appropriate. This is why in this part the research question is equal; it only differs in the part denoting the selected artwork (see Figures 1 and 2).

RQ: Is the method *gradual uncovering of the artwork* appropriate in dealing with artwork (A)?

In the answer to the research questions we especially paid attention to numerating the artworks in series: RQ1 - A1, RQ2 - A2, RQ3 - A3, RQ4 - A4, RQ5 - A5, RQ6 - A6, RQ7 - A7, RQ8 - A8, RQ9 - A9, RQ10 - A10, RQ11 - A11, RQ12 - A12.

Results and interpretation

Analysis of the appropriateness of procedures related to realistic depiction

The analysis will be presented by individual steps of uncovering the artwork. The uncovering of artworks was carried out in three different classes. Due to limited space, we will hereinafter only present the answers of the pupils of those classes that are representative to the responsiveness of pupils regarding the presented artworks.

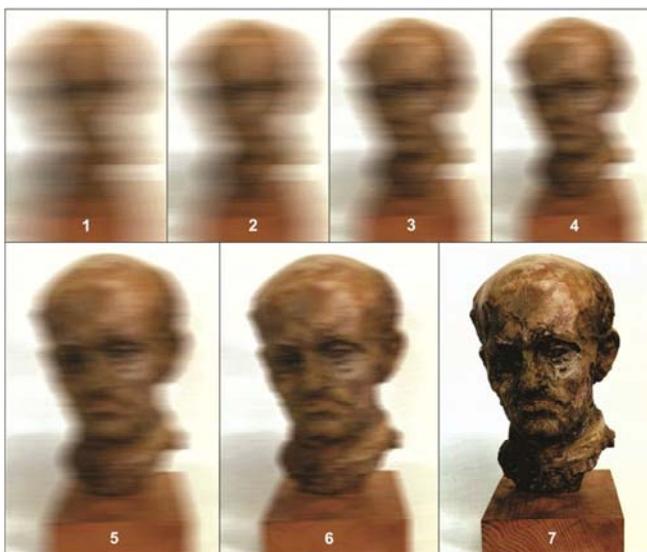


Figure 3: A1 (Viktor Gojkovič: Franc Ksaver Meško)

The first artwork is Viktor Gojkovič's sculpture of Franc Ksaver Meško. Below we are presenting the reactions of pupils by individual steps.

First we get responses *blurry image, brown colour and face, "interweaving of two letters, letter o and letter v"*. Jure continued saying: *"This is a grown up poodle, because it has curly brown hair."* In the second step the pupils recognised a face *"in its form"* and *"above the circle functions as a head, and the lower part as an elongated neck"*. Anja and Urška think *"It is probably a statue, the bottom stand can be seen"*. At step four the pupils recognized, it was *"a statue"*, even before any question had been set. Jan says: *"Now I can see it is a statue, because on the statue the beard and and the eyes are visible."* Concerning the material we got the answers *"clay, because of brown colour, and because it was made by kneading"* and *"stone; traces of chiselling can be seen and it is definitively a very old sculpture."* In the sixth step, we got the answer it was a male person, because the statue had moustache. Uroš said: *"It is the statue of Leon Štukelj"*. Urška and Maja think, *"This is an older person, because wrinkles can be seen on the face."* In the sixth step we learnt *"The statue has sharp and expressive features, not smooth ones, it functions as if it was close before death."* Tina mentioned: *"The statue has a wooden square basis, and the head is made of clay, created with modellers."* In the last step, the whole artwork is uncovered. To the pupils the statue seems to be *"sad, serious, looking down."* Urša mentions: *"The face shows the features of weariness, as if it was about an exhausted older man."*

The uncovering procedure was close to the pupils. They reacted to the artwork spontaneously; they were motivated. We noticed in this the pupils were more self-conscious providing answers related to artistic materials with which they themselves handle in art classes. The pupils experienced the artwork more intensely through associations; they clearly expressed their thoughts and ideas they got during observation and conversation. They wished to interpret each individual part and internalise it with their own experience. We conclude the procedure of gradual uncovering was appropriate, the students accepted it well, and thus we can answer the research question RQ1 affirmatively.

Below we will present the results related to the other artwork by Viktor Gojkovič: Roland (A2). We are presenting the reactions of students at each individual step.



Figure 4: A2 (Viktor Gojkovič: Roland)

At the first step the pupils told they saw *a triangle, a skull, a mosaic, a stone, an ancient stone, a vase and a tree*. At the second step already four girls said: *“There is a man in the picture; the lower part resembles a beard.”* At the third step some still argued it was an ancient stone. Pia’s answer stood out; she said: *“It is an ancient stone. It can be seen from the shape, and this is why somewhere in the gallery it is placed on this chair, and it is very precious.”* After the fourth step pupils have already found out *“it is a male person.”* At the one but last step a majority of pupils said *it was about an older statue of a male head*. After uncovering the whole picture the pupils described what effect the statue had on them. Some found the statue as *pleasant, warm* and cheerful, primarily because of colours. A girl pupil said: *“It functions friendly at me, as if it*

wanted to be my friend.” In comparison with the previous statue this seemed to be merry and warm, it didn't have an ugly view. From this we can discern they liked this way of getting acquainted with a work of art. It encouraged the pupils to communication and searching for associations, and primarily to active observation. The applied method of fragmented image with gradual uncovering proved to be appropriate in dealing with this artwork (A2). So we can answer positively to the second research question RQ2.

Further we present the results related to the third artwork dealt with, Viktor Šest: Pair. Below we are presenting the reactions of pupils by individual step.



Figure 5: A3 (Viktor Šest: Pair)

Initially the pupils were withheld answering the question what they saw. They did quite a lot of thinking and at the first step saw *fog, sea, somewhere there is more light, there is something greenish, blue colour, it resembles a corridor and universe*. At the next presentation of the picture the pupils who before had looked for a concrete display of the picture were a little disappointed. Matej said, *“It is a pirate picture, because sea surface is shown.”* Aljaž and Matevž argued, *“It is a picture in a church and in a cave.”* Irena had an interesting idea saying, *“This is a pirate painting, with pirates, because there are noughts and crosses.”* At the next step a group of pupils thought the artwork resembled a *“map with the place marked to which the pirates are going to travel.”* At the next step they were looking for ideas, known details, motifs, and identify

themselves with the role of the painting. They think the person in the painting *is carrying something or holding something in the hand, a treasure*. Petra said: *“There is a female person in the picture, because this is a women’s clothing.”* They commented, *“Perhaps it is a portrait of a man and a woman.”* The pupils are increasingly astonished. They find out it is an old painting. Two pupils say: *“It is a painting of modern time,”* while Lana says: *“It is a misleading painting, strange art.”* At uncovering the whole painting, the pupils burst into layghter. The painting has had a very good effect on them. They say the man looks pleased and the woman sad, *the woman has a sagging face without smile* and that the man *looks pleased because of the raised head and a slight smile*.

Diversity in providing associations, the wish for experiencing the seen, expressed motivation in presenting ideas and interpretations, the idea of placing the painting into a time period are the indicators telling the pupils were active, motivated and ready to accpet the artwork. So we can say the selected method is appropriate for artwork A3 and with this confirm the answer to the third research question RQ3.

The analysis of the third artwork follows, also by the artist Viktor Šest entitled Billiards. Below we are presenting the reactions of pupils at individual steps.



Figure 6: A4 (Viktor Šest: Billiards)

First, three pupils said, in the picture there was a *stick, someone was holding in the hand, a male person holding a stick*, but they were not certain whether it was really that. At the second step Mojca convincingly told, there was a *table* in the picture, on which there were *glasses and balls*. Urška said: *“There is a person in the picture who is worriedly looking at the table.”* At step three they said *“I see three persons, two of them sitting, while one will probably be standing.”* Quite soon Uroš said there were *“four persons in the picture, not only three.”* Manca said, to her the persons look *in deep thoughts, as if in a serious meeting*. At the last step the pupils were satisfied with their oppinions. Žan said, *“The painting shows a tranquil scene, because the men have got drunk.”*

Tadeja said: *“It seems there are elderly persons in the picture who playing games and gambling are beguiling away their time.”*

To the pupils the seen fragments gradually helped in content interpretation, the answers were not diverse, but quite unified, the associations, though personally conditioned, quite similar with all pupils. It is interesting, however, they looked for the interpretation of the seen in the iconologic sense, they wished to tell how the persons felt and in what relations they were. We can conclude from this the given method of presenting the work of art (A4) proved to be appropriate. So we can respond positively to the fourth research question RQ4.

We are following the analysis of the fifth artwork, Zmago Jeraj's Untitled. Below we are presenting the pupils' reactions by individual steps.

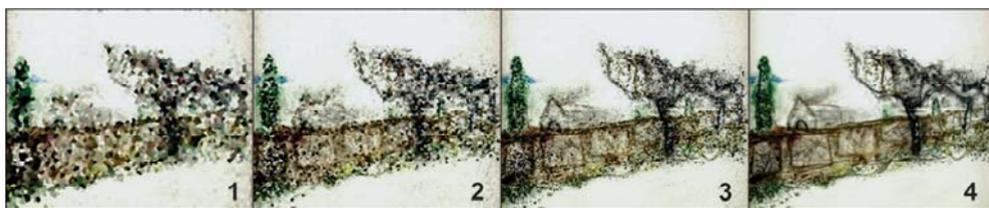


Figure 7: A5 (Zmago Jeraj: Untitled)

The pupils first saw *a mozaic, a dog, nature, trees, a fence, flowers and a garden*. In the answers one could feel they were not yet quite sure what was presented in the picture. At step two we uncovered the picture to the pupils, with the fragmented picture becoming a little sharper. Boštjan and Miha told, in the picture they saw *a horse that was tied to the fence*. Urška saw a man with a bow hiding behind the fence. The painting reminded Monika of a scene from Harry Potter. At step three Mitja and Anže noticed a detail that resembled a house to them. Matej said: *“There is a road in the picture and behind the road a horse is tied.”* Vanja said: *“It is a playground closed off by a fence.”* Other pupils only said they saw a house, a fence, a tree, light colour. Sara and Tina said: *“The artist did not think very profoundly about the painting, because it is very simple, as if it was not finished.”* Andrej and Tomaž said it was a collage picture he drew and painted upon. The others thought it was an oil painting; only two girls did not agree with this and thought he used watercolours. They also denoted the picture with adjectives such as bright, calm, soothing. Peter said to him it looked sad, like autumn. When finally we uncovered the whole picture, the pupils' feelings were mixed. Some were satisfied with their findings, others were disappointed by the picture, because it looked unfinished to them. We asked them about the title of the painting and received the following answers: A

House at a Fence, Nature, Autumn, Little Village, Tree Avenue, Dying Nature, Still Nature.

Interpreting the selected procedure we can say for this artwork, the pupils looked in it for tangible images and forms and had difficulties understanding the artist's approach or way of painting. They felt puzzled because concrete shapes could not be detected, with artistic technique not being defined and the artwork not being finished. With such approach we have, however, achieved the pupils looked at the work of art in a different way, that they shaped their final opinion gradually and with argumentation. We can say therefore the selected method of presenting the painting (A5) is appropriate and thus answer the fifth research question RQ5 affirmatively.

Further, we presented Zmago Jeraj's artwork *Untitled* to the pupils as the sixth work of art. Below we are presenting the pupils' reactions by individual steps.

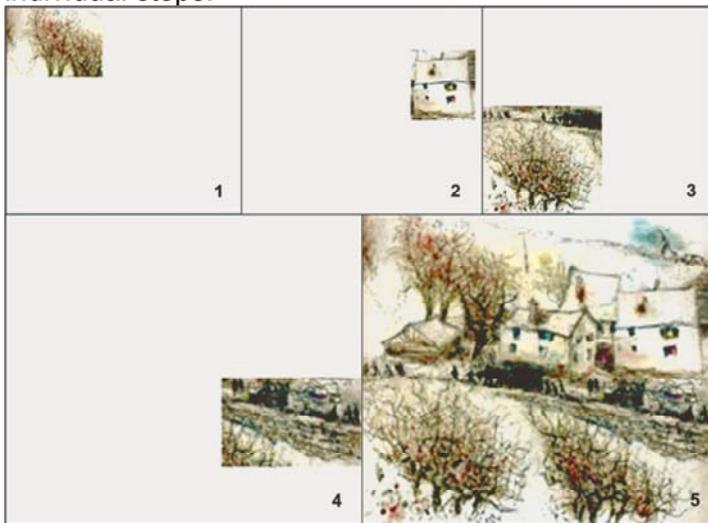


Figure 8: A6 (Zmago Jeraj: *Untitled*)

We present the first step, at which one part of the painting is uncovered. Each step is presented in the sharp form. The pupils wished to recognize and read from the presented part of the picture as much as possible: a treetop, branches of trees, foliage and bushes. Manuel said it reminded him of a park. An interesting answer of a pupil followed: "Among the trees a path can be seen, a path in snow." We ask him in what way he recognised this, and get the answer: "Because of the white colour on the ground." Hiding the first part we present the second step to the pupils. In this way we wished to make the pupils try to remember as many seen things as possible and with each new uncovered part of the

picture integrate them into the whole picture. The pupils start giving answers such as a house, windows, a chimney, a curtain, and a classical house. At step three two pupils express their opinion an orchard is presented in the painting. Mojca said: "I see peasants walking in the street," and three girls added the peasant had a horse. Everyone quickly identified some elements in the picture, and they were even more motivated for the observation of the picture. At step four the boys recognised automobiles, two pupils said there was a tractor in the picture. We ask them what helped them recognise this and get the answer: "The black colour and because it is bigger than other cars."

We ask them if they could imagine the whole picture and what it would present. Mateja immediately told in a determined manner "the picture presents a farm, because we saw trees, an orchard, and peasants." Sandi said: "I see countryside in the painting, because there are cars and houses." We also heard two interesting answers, namely from Sanja, who said the picture presented a funeral, "because people are clad in black and there is also a black car, probably a funeral car," and from Alen, who thought: "This is army, because people are walking like in a squad." Our objective was the pupils would remember each individual step and integrate them into a whole without too much effort. We show them the whole picture and watching pupils's faces conclude they are satisfied with their findings.

With this artwork extremely precise observation was noticed, dedicated participation, and imaginative thinking. Comparing the pupils' responses to Jeraj's previous artwork and to this one we see with this work the pupils had less difficulties in interpretation; they interpreted the forms more clearly, they better identified themselves with the painting and created stories, associations and also internalised the artwork. We can therefore claim this method of presenting the artwork (A6) it is appropriate and thus answer the sixth research question RQ6.

We continue with the presentation of the analysis of the second set, where we presented abstract works of art to pupils. The first presented work of art was *Deformities* by Jože Denko. Below we are presenting the reactions of pupils by individual steps.



Figure 9: A7 (Jože Denko: *Deformities*)

At step one the pupils recognised lines, a circle. Because the pupils were not sure what was depicted, they provided answers to the current association, this is: zebra, blue colour, artwork that is from modern time, lines, geometrical shapes and gardens. At step two they observed attentively and with interest, whereupon Mitja said: "I see a person that is lying on the floor." We were very surprised by this, because he rather quickly recognised a person. In consequence, other pupils began looking at the picture differently and so four of them recognised a hand, and three pupils saw several persons in the picture. Tine said: "Here I see a swimming pool with stale and dirty water." Suzana saw entrance door to the yard, while two pupils claimed they were fishes.

At step three Andrej said: "Now I also see human muscles, because it is red colour." The pupils also saw human skeleton of the lower part, a horse leg, a horse head, icecream, and letters. We ask, what colours are in the picture and a majority of the pupils reply light colours, the picture seems to be colourful. Two girls said the picture looked very merry to them because of the variegated colours. At the last step the pupils have positive feelings looking at the picture. Most pupils were satisfied with their answers and findings; only a few pupils said they did not like the picture very much, because they did not know what exactly it represented. We notice in spite of initial uncertainty the pupils were strongly focused during the presentation and that they actively observed individual steps.

The pupils were very much surprised with the presented painting and with the selected method of presentation, because they had not expected they would have so many interpretations for the observed picture. With this work of art we perceived at the end, seeing the whole work of art, the pupils were a little uncertain, disappointed, because no clear image appeared at uncovering, which would finally allow them to formulate interpretation and to see what the painter had really depicted. In the interpretations they clung to every, even any hardly clear form or colour and by all means wished to relate it to their iconologic interpretation. We are satisfied, though, as with such approach we triggered exact observation in the pupils, looking for associations and therefore we can say the selected method is appropriate also for artworks with abstract motifs, such as (A7) and thus answer research question RQ7.

Further we present the results associated with the presentation of the eighth artwork – Deformities by Jože Denko. Below we are presenting the reactions of pupils by individual steps.



Figure 10: A8 (Jože Denko: Deformities)

With this artwork (A8) the pupils reacted similarly as with the previous (A7) work. So at the first step they were looking for images such as garden, shapes, fence, bird's-eye view, map, road, letters and triangle. At step two Mark and Tilen told they saw an igloo, three pupils said a tent was depicted. The pupils watch the painting and Sandra tells: "It is a wounded person, one with a wounded leg." With an interesting answer Simon told: "These lines resemble geometric shapes and everyone can imagine these shapes in different ways, so we cannot know exactly what it is." The third step follows at which also the pupils begin to take part that before did not have the courage to express their opinion. They shouted over each other there were two persons in the picture, and six pupils recognised buttocks. Ksenija says: "The lying person wishes to lean against the other person, who is showing the back to us." We ask them what colours there are and a majority of them answer there are light colours, the picture looks colourful and lively. Two girls said earth colours were used, while Ines said white colour prevailed. Looking at the picture at step four the pupils laughed a little, because they found the whole depiction of the painting funny. We conclude the pupils accepted this work of art well, although at the beginning they had not been too enthusiastic about what was presented.

We noticed they compared to each other the previously presented artwork (A8) and the present work, which was very encouraging. Also this method proved to be appropriate and so we can affirmatively answer the eighth research question RQ8.

The ninth work of art was the work Untitled by Bogdan Čobal. Below we are presenting the reactions of pupils by individual steps.

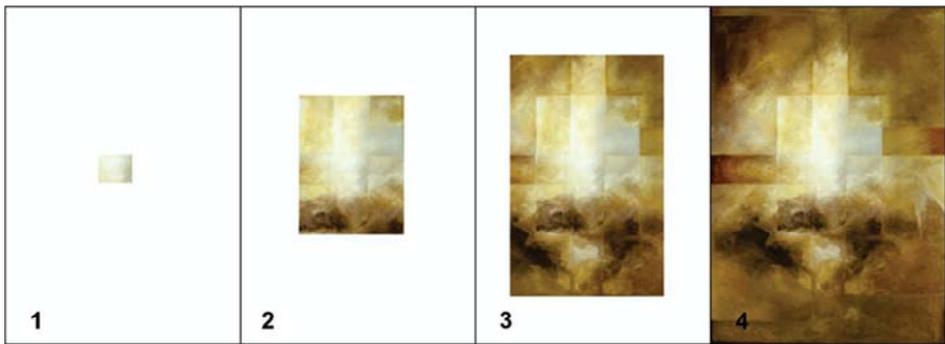


Figure 11: A9 (Bogdan Čobal: Untitled)

Without hesitation the pupils start providing answers such as: a yellow stain, light, yellow spot, eggs, the Sun, sunrise, clouds, and nature. At step two they gave associations: mountains, clouds, sunset, trees and the Earth. David said he saw rectangles of different sizes, and two pupils said it represented the path to heaven. Ela added, “the paths to heaven are divided into several categories, because of the different nuances of colours.” Also the thinking of the pupil who said: “To me the look at the picture itself is completely enough, because it works positively and I do not need to know what is in it,” was interesting. At the third step we get the answers “mountains are rising and there are clouds among them”, “the sun shining on earth.” We ask them what feelings they have at watching the artwork and we get the following answers: pleasant, warm, and calming. Two girl pupils said the colours were applied one over another, and that the artist used shapes to assist himself with. At step four most of the pupils think it is light and the trace of the sun.

The pupils were overwhelmed by colour, they enjoyed in providing associations and we already identified the understanding of abstract approach. They got to love the picture and therefore attributed it positive opinion; they provided imaginative answers. So we can say such approach was appropriate, that the pupils internalised the artwork (A9), and thus affirmatively answer the ninth research question: RQ9.

The tenth work of art was the picture Untitled by Bogdan Čobal. Below we are presenting the reactions of pupils by individual steps.

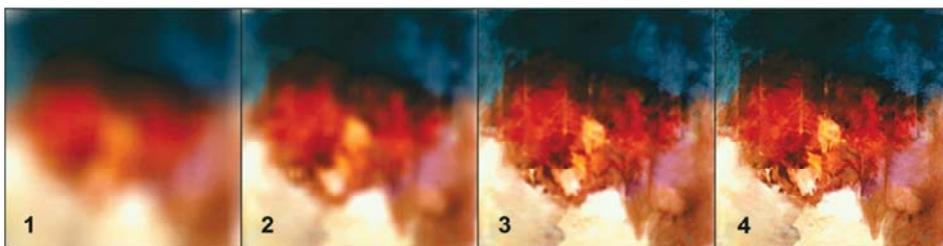


Figure 12: A10 (Bogdan Čobal: Untitled)

First we get answers: fog, smoke, fire, red colour, blue colour and heart, fire. Manica said the picture reminded her of birds, while five pupils said the form reminded them of a little heart. At the second step we had not expected the pupils would identify themselves so much with the story, as they easily described it and thought about it. We find the pupils experienced red colour in different ways and that they did not repeat the already heard answers of their schoolmates. Immediately after the presentation of the third step five pupils said: "This is abstraction," to which one pupil remarked: "Again I will not exactly know what is in the picture." The picture reminded Eva of fire and she said, "Red colour is fire fought with water." At step four immediately after uncovering of the picture nine pupils told it reminded them of the heart. Peter supplemented his opinion saying: "This is a fire of trees. Only trees are burning."

We conclude the pupils observed the picture very well and that they also thought about it more in-depth. They also express tolerance toward abstract art, accept it already, yet the wish can still be felt for tangible objects in the picture and the tendency toward looking for iconological contents. The pupils show constant activity, curiosity, enthusiasm, and also the wish to evaluate the work of art. Thus they were active all the time and they wished to tell their views, as each pupil could build for themselves their own image of the picture (A10) in their own creative way. So we can affirmatively answer the tenth research question: RQ10.

The eleventh artwork was Untitled by Gustav Gnamuš. Below we are presenting the reactions of pupils by individual steps.

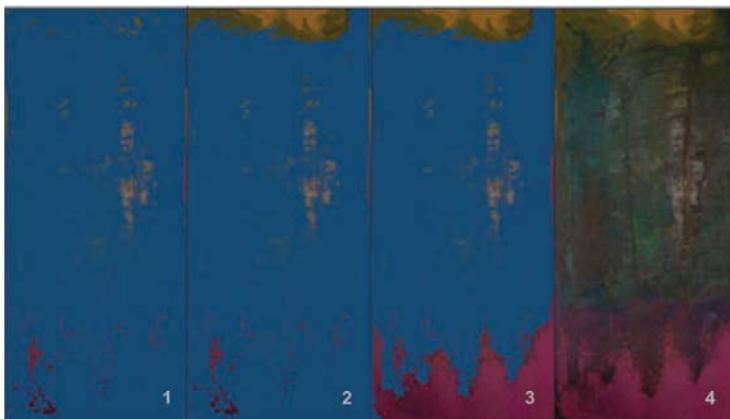


Figure 13: A11 (Gustav Gnamuš: Untitled)

The pupils first see smoke, trees, a ghost, a stick, yellow colour, the sun, geometric shapes and a road. At the next step we have already uncovered a larger part of the picture, we get the answers a hill, smoke, trees, mountains, gardens lightened with little lamps. Answers followed such as someone coming from darkness, night, and dark forest. At step three their opinion is in the picture there are a mountain and water. They described the picture with adjectives such as gloomy, cool, mysterious and fearsome. Also interesting were, among others, the answers: a Japanese painting, botanical garden, a lake near a mountain. Katja said: "This scene is nature depicted from far away and that works soothingly." Also others agreed with Katja that the picture worked calm and it soothes you. When we presented the whole picture to the pupils, they were glad to see it. With great joy they said jolly beautiful painting, it works interesting, the colours are applied well. With this we find the picture has left positive feelings in the pupils and that seeing it they felt well. We felt fear from expressing their own opinion. Interpretation is still oriented toward the wish for tangible forms and searching for known images. Although they did not like the work of art, individual pupils made efforts looking for associations, less motivation was felt, however. Answering the research question (RQ11) we find the method of gradually uncovering the artwork (A11) was less appropriate.

Also the last presented work of art was one by Gustav Gnamuš. We will start the presentation of the results by presenting pupils' reactions.

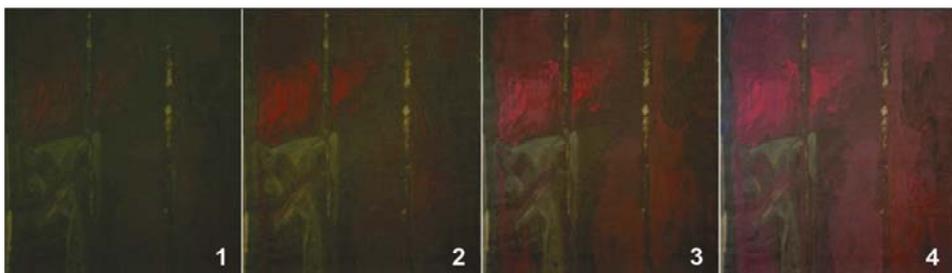


Figure 14: A12 (Gustav Gnamuš: Untitled)

In the introduction there was a long consideration. And then we got the answers: a meadow, a forest, grate, prison and white colour. We present the next step, where the picture becomes a little sharper and the pupils look in it for familiar features and elements with which they could help themselves explain its content. We get the answers jail and garden. An original view of the picture also appeared: "A person behind grid, in the background there is fire and there a scarecrow is standing in the middle of the garden." At step three Simona said: "This is a shoe on display in a shop window decaying in the shop." Manca said, "it is a scene from a horror film, and in the picture there is a person with long hair." Peter adds: "In front a little girl is depicted who is going to step out of the picture." They described the painting as dark, cool, horrible and scary. At uncovering the whole picture the pupils were satisfied with their opinions, as their faces looked merry and pleased. At certain steps with this artwork the selected method presented some difficulties, because at the first step some pupils did not get even a single idea; only after thinking for a long time they got some associations. In spite of our motivation and with supplementary subquestions we were not able to obtain a better response. We assumed the reason was the abstractness of the painting they did not understand very well. With negative answers they indicated they did not like the work. The response was such with all pupils. We conclude the selected procedure of presenting the artwork (A12) did not prove to be effective and thus answer the research question RQ12.

Conclusion

Today the profession agrees “from ages seven until 11 the realism of depiction showed to be most important, and design principles such as contrast, harmony and artist style were the determining criteria for preference beginning at age 12” (Schabmann, Gerger, Schmidt, Wögerer, Osipov, Leder, 2015: 2). In our research, older pupils (14 to 15 years) took part and we decided to examine the responsiveness of pupils - besides to traditional realistic motifs - also from the viewpoint of abstract works of visual arts. Abstract art leaves more space for different interpretations and exactly because of this, it is a good basis for the development of art appreciation. The few studies concerned with the way children perceive and like art often distinguished abstract from representative art. For example, Gardner et al. (1975) found that four- and five-year-old children prefer abstract paintings, because they reported to see no trouble identifying whatever they assumed to be depicted. They assigned some content, and liked the artworks. Although we are referring to different kinds of research and with different starting points, we can say visual arts are universal, independent of motifs and the methods of construction, and as such, with adequate art educational work, irrespectively of their age, it activates associations in pupils and develops their communication skills and creativity. In research (Duh, 2016) the role of art and the selected procedures of representing works of art have shown positive correlation between the development of art appreciation and communication abilities in preschool children. “Around the age of six or seven, a tendency towards representational art was observed, because such artworks are more realistic and look more similar to reality (Machotka, 1966). So around this age, the depictive nature of art seems to emerge as a criterion for quality.” (Schabmann, Gerger, Schmidt, Wögerer, Osipov, Leder, 2015: 2). The quality of a visual work of art does, however, not depend just on the interpretation of the artistic motif, but on its multilayeredness and artistic materialisation of the fundamental idea, the message. Multi-way communication among the teacher, the pupils, and the artwork will, provided adequate procedure is selected, activate motivation and attain the desired educational effect: raise the level of the development of art appreciation. Of this fact all those must be aware who in the area of visual arts, along the whole vertical, are involved in the educational process.

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