

INTERPRETATION OF VISUAL INPUTS AS A TOOL FOR MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FINE ARTS EDUCATION WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE DISCIPLINES OF THEORY AND ART HISTORY

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Abstract: The paper deals with the problem of visual literacy of university students - the future Fine arts teachers, in relation to their critical thinking systematically developing during their pregradual preparation within the disciplines focused on theory and history of Fine arts at the Department of Creative Arts and Art Education at the Faculty of Education at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. The paper looks into students' competencies of given area via questionnaire, focusing on interpretation of visual inputs based on triadic semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce known as an icon (Likeness, etc.) - index (Sign) - symbol (General sign). The author explores the problem in relation to project goals supported by Slovak Research and Development Agency, according to Act No. APVV-15 - 0368 in context of present requirements of teacher training program in the area of critical thinking and creativity.

Keywords: visual inputs, fine arts education, interpretation, critical thinking

1 Introduction

Visual literacy defined by Bristor and Drake (1994) as a "person's ability to understand, interpret and evaluate visual messages" is undoubtedly one of the most important competencies of Fine arts teachers. Naturally, visual literacy is nowadays an inevitable part for successful functioning and social status of every individual, therefore an existing issue is paid a lot of attention to (Sinatra, 1986, Stokes, 2002, Zanin-Yost et Donaldson, 2005, etc.). Complex perspective on visual literacy problems in Slovak language is pointed out by Šupšáková (2015). Developing visual literacy in future teachers of fine arts during their pregradual preparation is according to the author, provided by the structure of syllabi in bachelor's and master's study programme in the context of practical and theoretical disciplines. Application of basic operations of thoughts (analysis, synthesis, comparison, abstraction, concretization, generalization, induction, deduction and analogy), presenting core of thinking and defined from the point of view of general psychology (Daniel and coll., 2003), students have the possibility to perceive them in the broadest spectrum and in the synthetic form within their study disciplines, focused on theory and history of Fine arts, especially within the subject Analysis and Interpretation of work of art at Master's level of study, which in connection with the structure of the study program at Bachelor's level, presumes certain predisposition, adequate skills and knowledge. At bachelor's level of study the students - future Fine art teachers, deal with the art in terms of diachronic and synchronic aspect, including world, European and domestic art culture. Seminars such as: Introduction to Art Culture, Art of Primeval and Ancient times, History of Medieval Art, Modern Age from Renaissance to the end of 19th Century, Art of the first half of 20th Century to Present times, Analysis and Interpretation of a work of art, Gallery and museum excursions, provide the space for development of a wide range expertise for future teachers. By exegetical interpretation of certain works of art, students acquire methods of art historical analysis closely related to archetypal, genealogical, stylistic, formal or more precisely form related, taxonomical, genological, contentual, statistical and compositional analysis, whereas comparative and semiotic analysis develops critical thinking and verifies their already acquired knowledge within interdisciplinary and intermedial context.

1.1 Theoretical background

As mentioned before, in the process of developing visual literacy focused on critical thinking during pregradual preparation of future Fine art teachers, we consider methods of art

interpretation using comparative and semiotic analysis as relevant.

Lot of scientific disciplines put comparative analysis into effect. Comparative method as a specific field of research is usually associated with literary science or theory of culture, however nowadays it presents discipline linking wide range of interdisciplinary overlaps and a large diapason of interpretative aspects (Zemanek, Nebrig, 2012). French literary scientist Paul van Tieghem accredited comparatistics the role of exploration mainly exploration of binary relations among the works of arts (Van Tieghem, 1931). René Wellek a well known Czech-American comparative literary critic was developing critical aspect of comparison (Wellek, 1969). So called German version in literary comparison represented Hans Robert Jauss, featuring wider view of comparison, including theory and method of reception aesthetics and hermeneutics (Jauss, 1982). Comparison or rather comparative competencies in relation with artistic education with the focus on preparation of future teachers of Fine arts, represents the complex of closely related subjective and objective indicators confirming universal character of creative language or rather creative mean of expression. Comparative method is mostly used within disciplines of undergraduates - future Fine arts teachers, concentrated on theory and history of Fine arts.

Within the preparation of future teachers of Fine arts, we consider convenient, during the interpretations of works of art, applying various approaches of comparative method already mentioned before. Comparative philosophy of Paul van Tieghem based on exploration of purely binary relations among the works of art was anticipated by Swiss art historian and philosopher Heinrich Wölfflin in 1915, who in his work *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Wölfflin, 1915) defined "basic concepts of Art History" in form of five pairs, through which he recognized the differences between two ways of "vision" and display by comparing renaissance and baroque works of art (see also Wölfflin, 1888). His pairs: 1. Linear and Painterly (ger. *Das Linerae und das Malerische*), 2. Planar and Recessional (ger. *Fläche und Tiefe*), 3. Closed form and Open form (ger. *Geschlossene form und Offene form*), this pair refined as tectonic and atectonic (ger. *Tektonisch und Atektionisch*), 4. Multiplicity and Unity (ger. *Vielheit und Einheit*), refined as multifarious unity and unified unity (ger. *Vielheitliche Einheit und Einheitliche Einheit*), 5. Clarity and Unclarity (ger. *Klarheit und Unklarheit*), refined by Wölfflin as an absolute clarity and relative clarity (ger. *Unbedingte und bedingte Klarheit*).

With the help of Wölfflin's pairs and iconography it is possible within the subjects focused on art's development until the 19th century interpret - analyze formally and contentually, synthesize and compare the whole number of works of art by describing and analyzing themes, their typologies and attributes. With our students - future teachers of Fine arts, we also try to develop competencies for interpretation of artworks in geographical, historical, cultural, religious and philosophical connections by applying iconology. Iconology as a methodological conception of art history interpreting the work of art in different semantic folds, was being formed as such at the end of 19th century thanks to German art historian Aby Warburg who applied this method for the first time in 1892 whilst analyzing two of Botticelli's works of art (The Birth of Venus and Primavera) and later defined it. The Warburg Institute named after its founder (see The Warburg Institute, <http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/home>) based in London focuses on cultural history and role of paintings in culture. Iconology of Aby Warburg was later developed by a German art historian Erwin Panofsky (Panofsky, 2013) in early 30s of the 20th century into a three level methodological conception consisting of so called pre-iconographic description (ger. *Präikonographische Analyse*), iconographic analysis (ger. *Ikonomographische Analyse*) and iconological synthesis (ger.

Ikologische Interpretation). The first level of primary visual subject matter presumes our basic experience and verbal skills relying on our knowledge of styles, which in certain periods of time influenced the ways of describing objects, motives and the story. The second level presents secondary or more conventional purpose of the subject matter such as world of allegories, images and stories, presuming familiarity and deeper knowledge of literary sources besides knowledge of typological attributes of concrete topics and characters. The third level presenting iconographic synthesis presumes knowledge of cultural events in broader sense of geographical, philosophical, religious and political consequences. It represents the world of inner values and symbols which could have a historical, actual, universal or regional value. More approaches originated in the 20th century accentuating philosophical, sociological, psychological, ethical, mass communicative and mass cultural dimension (H. M. McLuhan, C. G. Jung, R. Arnheim, V. Flusser, W. Benjamin) or other connections with interpretation of art in postmodern period (M.P. Foucault, U. Eco, J. F. Lyotard, G. Deleuze, J. Derrida etc.). Knowledge of mentioned trends altogether with the tendencies, surely enrich the process of perception, reception and interpretation of works of art in the context of Fine arts education.

Semiotic analysis within the framework of interpretation of works of art of future teachers of Fine arts, is based on theory of semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce (1839 -1914) (In Bergman, Paavola, 2014), according to which we perceive a work of art as a specific complex of signs and their meanings in terms of a triadic relation *icon* (Likeness, etc.) - based on analogy, outer similarity, or objective conformity, *index* (Sign) - based on factual (causal or physical) coherence and a *symbol* (General sign) based on an agreement, tradition or convention.

The above mentioned approaches in Fine arts education we consider as relevant theoretical resources for differentiation among formal, contentual and semantical level in visual culture and understanding of these differences from the students' point of view altogether with implementation of these approaches within the education, we perceive as adequate tool for critical thinking and development of students' creativity.

2 Interpretation of visual inputs as a tool for measuring the effectiveness of Fine arts education with an emphasis on the disciplines of theory and art history

2.1 Research objectives

The aim of our research was to find out what are the competencies of our students - future teachers of Fine arts in area of visual literacy in relation to presumed skills gathered during their pregradual preparation in bachelor's and master's level of study, with the focus on their knowledge and skills gathered within theoretical disciplines focused on theory and history of fine arts. Our aim was to find out whether students are ready and competent to apply their knowledge, wisdom and skills obtained during their studies in relation to identification analogy (icon), factual coherence (index) and convention (symbol) according to Pierce's theory of signs, in the form of interpretation of non artistic visual inputs - photos presenting:

1. One apple
2. Two apples
3. A closed book
4. An open book
5. An empty plastic box
6. Plastic box containing a small object
7. Compilation of photos containing photos 1- 6

Implementation of non artistic visual inputs within our research was intentional. Our aim was to secure perception, reception and interpretation of universal "picture", clear of potential students' artistic-historical experiences and memories thus test the effectiveness of our tuition performed within disciplines focused on theory and history of fine arts.

2.2 Research hypotheses

We assumed that:

1. According to the picture showing two different apples, will be more students who will point out not only a numeric data but also a wide spectrum of qualitative relations than those, who will limit themselves pointing out only a numeric data and confined spectrum of qualitative relations.
2. In the master's degree in Fine Arts Teaching study program there will be more respondents who associate the iconographic and iconological contexts of this subject as an attribute of many mythological stories in relation to the image of an apple than in the bachelor's degree in the same study program.
3. Among all of the respondents there will be more of those, who in connection with the plastic box will associate and highlight the ecological context, environmental problem or the risk than those not associating and not pointing out the context as such.
4. Among all of the respondents there will be more of those who in connection with the picture number 7 containing all of the aforementioned pictures from the questionnaire will associate it with the fairy tale Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs than those, who will not associate it with the story.

2.3 Research plan and research file

Our research sample consisted of 143 respondents altogether, 98 studying full time - Fine Arts Education in academic year of 2018/2019. Particularly: Bachelor's degree - 38 students in the first year, Bachelor's degree - 16 students in the second year, Bachelor's degree - 16 students in the third year, Master's degree - 8 students in the first year, Master's degree - 20 students in the second year and 45 attenders of further education within University of the Third Age, CPU in Nitra studying: History of Fine Arts and Creative Art, under the patronage of Department of Creative Arts and Art Education at the Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. The questionnaire was filled in by attenders studying at University of the Third Age in above mentioned program in a two year study - second and third year of the first grade (winter semester of the first year covering general subjects is taught at other departments) and in all three years of study of the second grade. The main purpose of integrating the students of Third Age University into our research was to obtain opinions from the group of respondents much older (45 plus), therefore we can assume that they have more visual skills than the respondents studying full time, specifically studying Teaching of Fine Arts (19-25). On the contrary in comparison with full time students of master's degree, students of the University of the Third Age, based on the nature and concept of interest-based learning within this form of further education, did not take the subject specialized in analysis and interpretation of fine arts aimed at theoretical and practical aspects of perception, reception and interpretation of art works and visual culture.

2.4 Research methods

The main method of data gathering was an anonymous questionnaire consisting of preliminary basic questions and 7 articles. By asking the basic questions we were trying to ascertain the affiliation of respondents according to their applicable study or educational programme, year of study, previous education i.e. secondary or university education and sex.

The first six articles included visual inputs - photographs and three open questions:

1. What is the picture describing (representing)?
2. What associations (images, connections) come to your mind with the object shown in the picture?
3. What does the object in the picture symbolize (semantically)?

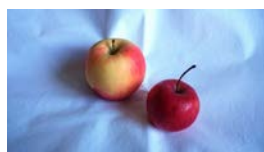
Article No.7 was containing all of the above mentioned pictures as a complex of visual inputs. This article contained only one assignment in the text: If you look at pictures 1 - 6 altogether, what associations (images, stories) do you reflect on in connection with these pictures?

The questionnaire deliberately omits any formulations, definitions of above mentioned authors or our theoretical conclusions which our students came across during their studies. We were trying to monitor interest and ability of our students to apply acquired knowledge and skills in practice.

To complete the data we present the pictures used in questionnaire according to the 7th article. Concrete description of pictures: picture No.1 - one apple, picture No.2 - two apples, picture No.3 - a closed book, picture No.4 - an open book, picture No.5 - an empty plastic box, picture No.6 - plastic box containing a small object.



Pict. 1



Pict. 2



Pict. 3



Pict. 4



Pict. 5



Pict. 6

(Photo: Adriana Récka, 2018)

The research was carried out during the winter semester of academic year 2018/2019. Method of data processing was quantitative and qualitative analyses of answers from the questionnaire reflected in verbal interpretation as well as verification and evaluation of hypothesis.

According to the nature of our questionnaire, including articles, open questions and our ambition to make reference to our respondents' formulations, each filled in questionnaire was marked according to the following key: numeric index of the year of study (1,2, or 3), abbreviation of study programme (Bc - Bachelor degree, MA - Master degree, U3A - University of the Third Age, 1. Level, U3Ad - University of the third age, 2nd level), serial number (1 - number of respondents in certain group). Our respondents are marked as 1Bc1 - 38, 2Bc1 -16, 3Bc1 - 16, 1MA1 - 8, 2MA1 -20, 2U3A1 - 10, 3U3A1 - 11, 1U3Ad1 - 7, 2U3Ad1 - 9, 3U3Ad1 - 8.

3 Research results

As mentioned above, the partial results of our research are presented both quantitatively and qualitatively in relation to the selected items of the questionnaire and by evaluation of previously determined hypothesis. Interpreting the results of our questionnaire in items that we do not discuss in this paper (e.g. a closed and open book) will be discussed and evaluated in our next contribution. All relevant information regarding number of respondents in particular year and form of education are presented in our tables. University of the Third Age students (altogether 45) were put into the same group, as their affiliation to a particular year of study did not play an important role in regard to our preferred indices. For clearer arrangement numeric data altogether with research findings by percentage in certain groups were colour-coded. The first hypothesis explored respondents'

competencies in the area of critical (evaluative) thinking focused on identification of formal and contentual relations of visual inputs. The results of our experiment supported the first hypothesis and brought along a few interesting findings. Respondents have stated a wide spectrum of qualitative relational links, which could be classified as notions from Theory of Art related to evaluation of formal or visual point of view of certain impulses, or as notions coincided with socio-psychological, biological or emotional aspect of perception of visual inputs. In the group of notions from Theory of Art the most frequent ones were: *colour, contrast, light, shade, diversity, difference, relation, composition, still life, red, small, big, bigger, smaller* (see table No.1).

Table 1 Frequently used terms from Theory of Art

Terms from Theory of Art	1. year Bc. 38	2. year Bc. 16	3. year Bc. 16	1. year MA 8	2. year MA 20	U3A 45	Altogether 143
Colour	13 34%	14 58%	3 19%	2 25%	6 30%	37 58%	75 52%
Still life	14 37%	10 63%	11 69%	3 38%	8 40%	16 34%	62 43%
Red	7	3	5 31%	0	3	14 31%	32 22%
Difference	10	6 38%	2	2	1	4	25 18%
Small	6	3	3	1	2	10 22%	25 18%
Diversity	10	4	2	3 38%	2	3	24 17%
Contrast	7	7 44%	1	2	3	3	23/ 16%
Relation	7	7 44%	3	2	3	0	22 15%
Shade	2	2	0	2	0	10 22%	16 11%
Light	2	4 25%	1	0	2	5	14 10%
Big	2	2 13%	1	1	1	4	11 8%
Composition	4	3	0	2 25%	1	1	11 8%
Bigger	3	1	1	0	1	4 9%	10 7%
Smaller	2	1	1	0	1	4 9%	9 6%

Source: Own arrangements

Notably richer was vocabulary of socio-psychological, emotional and biological area. Respondents associated a wide spectrum of particular and abstract notions such as: *health/healthy, autumn, fruit, taste, vitamins, life/lifestyle, sweet, tree, juicy, food, friendship, relationship, garden, cake, Snow White, nourishment/nourishing, couple, warm (feeling), maturity/immaturity, hunger, Christmas, harvesting, child, pair, family, security, sour/sourness, coherence, parent, grandmother, marriage, partnership, childhood, man, woman* (see table No.2).

The second hypothesis explored respondents' competencies in the area of identification and appellation of iconographical and iconological relations with an apple as an attribute of various mythological stories. The results of our experiment supported the second hypothesis.

Table 2 Frequently used socio-psychological and biological terms

Socio-psychological and biological terms	1. year Bc. 38	2. year Bc. 16	3. year Bc. 16	1. year MA 8	2. year MA 20	U3A 45	Altogether 143
Health/Healthy	20 53%	13 81%	15 94%	2 25%	16 80%	33 73%	99 69%
Autumn	24 63%	10 63%	5 31%	3 38%	15 75%	25 56%	83 58%
Fruit	9 24%	5 31%	9 56%	22 25%	10 50%	17 38%	52 36%
Taste	10 26%	3 19%	5 31%	2 25%	6 30%	23 51%	51 36%

Vitamin	4 11%	2 13%	6 38%	1 13%	4 20%	20 44%	37 26%
Life/Life-style	12	5	6 38%	1	4	5	33 23%
Sweet	8	1	5	2	8 40%	9	33 23%
Tree	9	2	5	1	8 40%	7	32 22%
Juicy	1	0	2	0	4	20 44%	27 19%
Food	7	2	3	2	7 35%	5	26 18%
Friendship	13 34%	1	2	2	3	1	22 15%
Relationship	7	7 44%	3	2	3	0	22 15%
Garden	2	1	5 31%	1	5	7	21 15%
Cake	3	0	4 25%	1	5 25%	6	19
Snow White	4	1	4 25%	2	5 25%	1	17
Nourishment/Nourishing	2	0	3	2	4 20%	6	17
Pair	2	1	2	2 25%	4	6	17
Warm feeling	5	3	0	2 25%	1	4	15
Maturity/imaturity	4	5 31%	1	0	1	4	15
Hunger	5	5 31%	1	0	2	2	15
Christmas	2	0	3	0	1	9 20%	15
Harvesting	1	0	1	0	3	9 20%	14
Child	4	1	1	0	2	2	10
Couple	1	4 25%	1	0	1	3	10
Family	3	0	0	0	2	3	8
Woman	3	0	0	1	2	2	8
Protection	2	1	0	0	0	5	8
Sourness/sour	4	0	1	0	1	2	8
Coherence	2	1	1	0	0	3	7
Parent	4	1	1	0	0	0	6
Grandmother	3	1	1	0	0	1	6
Marriage	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
Man	2	0	0	1	0	2	5
Partnership	1	0	0	0	2	1	4
Childhood	1	0	0	0	1	1	3

Source: Own arrangements

At the Master's degree, percentage of respondents who in connection with the picture of an apple associated various iconographical and iconological relations of this subject as an attribute of various mythological stories was 60,7%. Specifically: in the 1st year 2 out of 8 respondents, in the 2nd year 15 out of 20 respondents stated some connectivity. Particularly gratifying was percentage ratio in the 2nd year of Master's degree within the group of students who in summer semester of their 1st year took the course Analysis and interpretation of Work of Art. Within this subject we purposefully and systematically lead our students to gaining their knowledge and skills in the area of perception and reception of visual culture. Our research has shown that 75% of respondents from a particular year, link apple with mythology and in their answers occurred not only terms such as: *Adam and Eve, Garden of Eden, forbidden fruit, Original sin*, but also terms such as: *temptation, snake, tree of knowledge, reason for expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, expanding terminological base used by our

respondents-Bachelor's degree students in connection with this Bible story. Besides associations with the frequented meaning of an apple we found other mythological connections in their answers only sporadically. We were pleasantly surprised by two Bachelor's degree students (in the 1st and 3rd year) who besides the biblical context of an apple associated it with a Greek mythology as *Golden Apple of Discord* (triggering the Trojan War).

More successful was the connection of an apple with fertility from a Greek mythology, where Mother Earth goddess Gaia presented a golden apple to Hera and Zeus at their wedding as a symbol of their love and *fertility*. Five respondents at Bachelor's and Master's degree associated an apple with the symbol of love known also from ancient times (see table No.3). Another three respondents, Bachelor's degree students (one student from each year) associated *Newton's law of universal gravitation* (out of 143 students only three students) and only one respondent out of all (143) associated an apple with a famous American technology company that designs and develops electronics including smartphones. The results show that the type of secondary school our respondents attended before university does not have any significant impact on their answers. We also found out that overwhelming majority of our respondents do not differentiate between the categories *icon/index/symbol* and terms stated in tables 1,2 and 3 were linked with certain categories inadequately. The third hypothesis explored whether in the group of all respondents will be more of those who in connection with the plastic box will associate and name the ecological context, environmental problem and risk than those who will not associate and name the problem as such. Our hypothesis assuming a higher number of respondents recognizing the issue was unsupported by the research, on the contrary, the results have shown that our respondents disregarding their year of study or age group do not associate the picture of a plastic box with any environmental issues. The only term they used was a word *plastic*, but not necessarily in a negative sense. Frequency of terms referring to environmental issues in connection with plastic assigned by our respondents was minimal. Used terms: *waste, environment, pollution, environmental problem, negative effects of plastics* (see table No.4).

It was an interesting discovery that Bachelor's and Master's degree students associated the picture of an empty plastic box with feelings such as: *emptiness, introversion, nothingness* current negative phenomenon of modern society, whereas with respondents studying at University of the Third Age notably dominated the aspect of practical usage of a plastic box such as: *for storing/putting away things, for safekeeping, tidiness, practical usage, tidy away* (see table. No.5). Another interesting fact was that out of 143 respondents only 6 (2nd Year, Bc.-2, 2nd year MA -2, U3A -2) connected the picture of a non labeled plastic box with a package of chocolate and hazelnut truffles produced by a famous Italian chocolatier, intensively advertised in Slovakia.

Table 3 Frequently used iconographical terms

Iconographical terms	1. year Bc. 38	2. year Bc. 16	3. year Bc. 16	1. year MA 8	2. year MA 20	U3A 45	Altogether 143
Original sin	4	2	3	1	11 55%	4	25 17%
Eve	6	4 25%	0	1	5 25%	9	25 17%
Adam	6	4 25%	0	1	5 25%	7	23 16%
Paradise/paradise	1	1	1	1	7 35%	9	20 14%
Fertility	3	3 19%	0	1	2	2	11 8%
Forbidden fruit	2	1	1	0	4 20%	1	9 6%

Love	4	2 13%	0	0	2	1	9 6%
Bible, Biblical	3	0	0	1	3 15%	1	8 6%
Knowledge	0	0	0	0	2 10%	3	5 3,5%
Temptation	0	1	1	0	2 10%	0	4 3%
Golden Apple of Discord	1	0	1	0	0	1	3 2%

Source: Own arrangements

Table 4 Frequently used terms within environmental context

Frequently used terms within environmental context	1. year Bc. 38	2. year Bc. 16	3. year Bc. 16	1. year MA 8	2. year MA 20	U3A 45	Altogether 143
Plastic	6	7	5	2	2	12	34 24%
Waste	1	1	2	0	1	3	7 5%
Environment	0	0	0	0	0	3	3 2%
Pollution	0	0	0	0	1	1	2 1,5%
Environmental problem	0	0	0	1	0	0	1 0,7%
Negative effect of plastics	0	0	1	0	0	0	1 0,7%

Source: Own arrangements

The fourth hypothesis explored to what extent the collection of visual inputs influence our respondents to association with the fairy tale - Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The results of an experiment did not support the fourth hypothesis. Out of 143 respondents only 5 students associated the group of 6 pictures with the aforementioned fairy tale or their main character. More precisely three Bachelor's degree students and two Master's degree students related the fairy tale with pictures of independently presented items (apple, plastic box). The term fairy tale was used only by 11 respondents out of 143. Association with a *poisoned apple* (for Snow White) stated 5 respondents, *coffin/casket* (for Snow White) stated three out of 143 respondents. Even though the students did not link the fairy tale about a Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs with the picture number 7 containing set of all pictures from the questionnaire, our respondents stated their own creative stories reflecting their own experiences, attitude and emotional state of mind. Six respondents did not associate anything with the set of six pictures (see Table No.6).

Table 5 Frequently used terms in connection with an empty plastic box

Frequently used terms in connection with an empty plastic box	1. year Bc. 38	2. year Bc. 16	3. year Bc. 16	1. year MA 8	2. year MA 20	U3A 45	Altogether 143
Empty/Emptyness	23 61%	11 69%	10 63%	4 50%	9 45%	6 13%	63 44%
Closeness	6	3	4 25%	3 38%	5 25%	3	25 17,5%
For storing/	4	0	1	0	2	14 31%	21 15%

putting away things							
Airtightness	5	3 19%	1	1	2	5	17 12%
Safe-keeping	0	0	0	1	0	7 16%	8 6%
Tidiness	4	0	0	0	0	4 9%	8 6%
Practical usage	1	1	0	0	0	5 11%	7 5%
Uselessness	2	1	1	0	0	1	5 3,5%
Tiding things	0	0	0	0	0	2	2 1,5%
Nothingness	2	0	0	0	0	0	2 1,5%

Source: Own arrangements

Table 6 Frequently used terms with hypothesis No. 4

Frequently used terms with hypothesis No. 4	1. year Bc. 38	2. year Bc. 16	3. year Bc. 16	2. year MA 8	2. year MA 20	U3A 45	Altogether 143
Snow White	4	1	4 25%	2	5 25%	1	17 12%
Fairy tale	3	0	4 25%	0	4	0	11
Coffin	2	1	1	0	1	0	5
Casket	0	1	1	0	2	1	5
Poisoned apple	0	2	2	0	1	0	5
No association	3	0	0	0	1	2	6

Source: Own arrangements

4 Conclusion

Aim of our research was to find out students' competencies - future teachers of Fine Arts in area of visual literacy in relation to presumed experiences gathered during their pregradual preparation at Bachelor's and Master's level of study with an emphasis placed on their skills and knowledge adopted within theoretical disciplines focused on Theory and History of Fine Arts. Students applying to universities from different types of secondary schools dispose of various initial knowledge and skills. The results of our research show that in connection to competencies which we observed, type of school does not play a significant role. It is very gratifying to know that our educational activities focused on diachronic and synchronic understanding of arts development especially within The Analysis and Interpretation of Fine arts in the first year of Master's study programme proves to be an effective tool for development of critical thinking and creativity. We also found out that our respondents operate with a wide spectrum of terms in area of interpretation of formal and contentual aspects of visual phenomena. On the other hand we were unpleasantly surprised to find out how little attention our respondents paid to environmental issues disregarding year of their study and age group, because our students are attending already in the bachelor's degree several courses focused on contemporary art movements that deal with environmental issues from different perspectives (e.g. Land art, Recycle art, etc.). Memories of the details and episodes of the well known fairy tale Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs which we were trying to evoke with the help of summarized pictures presuming that this visual inputs will be a sufficient stimulus for generating an association proved to be "forgotten".

The research results are a great impulse and significant motivation for us to create future educational activities focusing on development of interpretative skills in relation to formal, contentual and semiotical aspect of visual culture.

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