

THE METHOD OF AESTHETIC TRANSFER AS A DIDACTIC PRINCIPLE IN MUSEUM PEDAGOGY

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Potrjeno/Accepted
8. 7. 2022

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Objavljeno/Published
28. 8. 2022

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Keywords:
Method of aesthetic transfer, art appreciation, museum pedagogy, gallery, elementary school

Abstract/Izveček Previous research has shown that the method of aesthetic transfer works successfully in preschool as well as in primary and secondary education when it comes to regular forms of teaching. In this study, we were interested in how this principle can be implemented in museum education in an authentic gallery space. To this end, a case study was conducted with a sample of 55 students aged 12–14 ($n = 55$). The method of aesthetic transfer was tested on 4 works in the Maribor Art Gallery. The results show that the method of aesthetic transfer proved to be a successful didactic principle even in the gallery space, especially as a successful principle for learning about contemporary visual art.

Ključne besede:
metoda estetskega transfera, likovna apreciacija, muzejska pedagogika, galerije, osnovna šola.

Metoda estetskega transfera kot didaktični princip v muzejski pedagogiki

Dosedanje raziskave kažejo, da se metoda estetskega transferja uspešno obnese na predšolski populaciji ter osnovnošolski in srednješolski, kadar govorimo o rednih oblikah pouka. V pričujoči raziskavi pa nas je zanimalo, kako se njen princip lahko odraža v muzejski pedagogiki, tj. v avtentičnem galerijskem prostoru. V ta namen smo izvedli študijo primera na vzorcu 55 učencev, starih med 12–14 let ($n = 55$). Metodo estetskega transferja smo preizkusili na štirih delih v Umetnostni galeriji Maribor. Rezultati kažejo, da se je metoda estetskega transferja izkazala kot uspešen didaktični princip tudi v galerijskem prostoru in predvsem kot uspešen princip za spoznavanje sodobne likovne umetnosti.

UDK/UDC:
[373.3:7]:069

DOI <https://doi.org/10.18690/rei.15.Spec.Iss.93-114.2022>

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Introduction

Museums serve society and provide services to society and its development. They preserve the material aspects of our historical heritage in all areas of nature and culture, technology and art. The same applies to galleries, which provide independent educational opportunities through their collections of unique originals and exhibitions. In this way, they enable an intensive, cognitive and sensual engagement with the collections. The role of museums and galleries is thus not only to collect, process, document, research, preserve and present their collections. Educational and mediation tasks within the four classic pillars of museum work are also becoming increasingly important, says Kunz-Ott (2007). Therefore, the need to train the target audience was recognised, as museum and gallery staff felt the need to respond more effectively to the needs of a modern pluralistic, multicultural society. Direct encounters with original artefacts in the museum and gallery, which schools usually lack, creates the basis and criteria for preserving heritage and tradition. These original artefacts are called *realia* by Wagner (2007). This term describes the original object found in the museum, which is usually of outstanding quality and of the superior sensory quality. Regardless of whether a statue, a painting or a print is on display, the aura of a living original object always constitutes the uniqueness of the museum. Museums offer more than collections of artistic artefacts. They are also a repository of cultural knowledge. Thus, museums convey aesthetic values, provide access to past eras and promote important leisure activities, thus becoming a place of lifelong learning for all generations. At the same time, museums are an extraordinary resource for schools, given the quantity and quality of what is on offer and the breadth of topics covered. Such an educational process has a lasting effect, as the museum collects experiences that are integrated, understandable and can be experienced with the senses.

It follows that schools are an important target group for museums. Children and young people are the largest visitor group in terms of numbers. Yet museums often find it difficult to engage with them, especially with the target group of young people. Today, museums are increasingly aware of the need to open up to this target group (Wagner, 2007). A group of authors (Clarkin-Phillips, Carr, Thomas, Tinning and Waitai, 2018) report on research looking at how to guide children on a museum visit. They highlight the varied learning opportunities that are unavailable in other settings.

They talk about the importance of connecting children with museum objects and artefacts and their own experiences. The fact that the museum is an ideal place for learning is also emphasised by Vogel when he says that museums enable interdisciplinary, action-oriented and integrated learning. The exhibition space, the original objects, the credibility of historical testimonies and the methods of museum work all enable learning on site and can ideally complement school learning (Vogel, 2007). The same applies to experiencing works of art. Many teachers not only know about the abundance of offers and possibilities of the original, but they also know about the attractiveness of changing the place of learning. The gallery, as an unknown place, offers opportunities for school lessons, especially with this atmospheric character. With their school education, children and young people bring systematic, contextual knowledge to the galleries that is certainly underused and that is perfectly complemented by the vividness of a concrete work of art. The interaction between authentic art and the curriculum shows the potential of two complementary strategies for learning and teaching the fine arts (Wagner, 2007). Modern concepts of artistic intervention in galleries result from the fact that visitors are assigned a more active role in which they participate in art both psychologically and physically. Thus, artistic institutions with art educators form special concepts of new cooperation, which Krebber calls collaboration (Krebber, 2020:130). Rogoff (2002) says that the goal of art reception is individual reflection under the sign of artistic experience. He concludes that the frontal relationship should be replaced by collective performative processes with art, as exhibitions require interaction with the artworks (Rogoff, 2002). In this way, the concept of collaboration in art education can be highlighted and transferred to art education (Henschel, 2012). The fact that students can approach an object, for example, if they want to see how the paint was applied or what the surface of the painting looks like, means that they learn from the original (Otto, 2007).

Artistic appreciation and the aesthetic transfer method

Contemporary museum pedagogy brings to the fore the question of how to present the works on display to older people and especially to young visitors, children of pre-school and primary school age, who are just beginning to learn about the visual arts (Duh, 2015). Decades ago, Tripps described the task of museum education as “the need to develop museum-specific forms, methods and means” (Tripps 1990, 3).

Today we know that various art and museum education workshops are suitable for both independent and guided tours through the exhibition. The method of aesthetic transfer is the most suitable pedagogical approach. In this method, the presentation of selected artworks must allow the viewing of such an artwork to lead to an interaction between the viewer (child, student, adult) and the artwork, directly connecting the sensory stimulus with memories, experiences, emotions and associations. “As they express their opinions, their perceptions will enhance the experiences of other children” (Duh and Zupančič, 2011, 49). Experiencing an artwork can lead to an artistic response, which is the individual solution for each child and represents a new aesthetic experience.

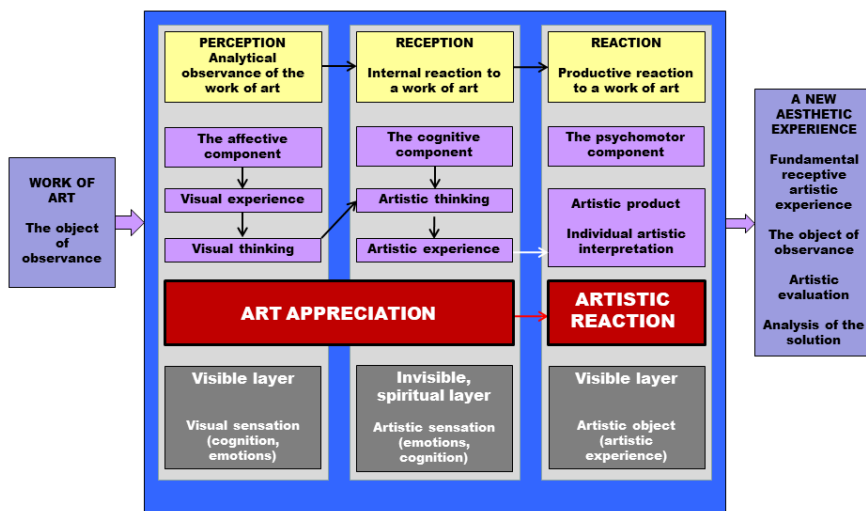


Diagram 1. Structure of the method of aesthetic transfer (Duh and Zupančič 2011).

The method of aesthetic transfer takes place in three phases: (1) perception, (2) reception and (3) reaction. “In the perception of works of art, it is necessary to encourage the emotional reaction, which is an important component of appreciation, and which is triggered by contact with the work of art. The emotional reaction is the result of individual factors of each person and leads from visual experience to visual thinking. In this way, students enter the realm of their own mental capacities when interacting with artworks” (Duh, 2015, 92). “Perception is a product of the perceived image on the one hand and the viewer's ideas on the other” (Bering, 2001, 43). Reception is a “creative process of actively taking in information and processing it” (Uhlig, 2004, 4).

It is an interior reaction to a work of art, a reflection of what is experienced and received, where the cognitive and affective components overlap. The process of receiving works of art implies the gradual inclusion of conscious and rational components as components of appreciative skills, without abandoning the emotional and spontaneous components, as the process of artistic appreciation develops in the same way (Duh, 2015). These first two phases are therefore referred to as artistic appreciation. The aim of appreciation is for students to use a few examples of artworks to make complex connections whose individual components are so closely linked that students can remember them (Schütz, 2002).

High quality pedagogical work can lead from the viewing of artwork to the perception and reception of the artwork. With the artwork experienced and internalised, an appropriate level of artistic appreciation is achieved (Duh and Zupančič, 2013). This provides a good basis for appreciation, i.e., reaction. This can be done with words, descriptively or artistically. “The reaction, i.e., the productive response of an individual to a work of art, constitutes the psychomotor component of the method of aesthetic transfer. It depends on the age of children and students, their artistic knowledge and the level of developed artistic competences and skills” (Duh and Zupančič, 2011, 52). It depends on the field of artistic creation and the chosen art technique. In this last phase of the method of aesthetic transfer, educators and teachers must act in a way that is typical for the modern understanding of art education. Drawing and modelling from a gallery exhibit, which is not mandatory for the child, but involves the opportunity choose the artwork as a model, gives the child the chance to freely choose content, format, form, and colour when drawing. The teacher or curator acts in the role of an animator and a transmitter of knowledge (Tavčar, 2009).

Purpose and objectives of the research

Experts (Hardman, 2001) have long noted that children are an ignored group in museum studies. In recent years, researchers have also begun to observe children’s activities in museological research (Hackett, 2014). These studies have used qualitative methods, such as observation of predefined activities or tours, or interviews with children and parents. Notes written during and after the visit have also been used to preserve and record important findings from the museum visit.

In our study, we sought to determine the success of the aesthetic transfer method as a didactic principle in an authentic gallery space at Studio UGM (Maribor Art Gallery). We visited the exhibition *Zipped worlds/Photography in Public Space* because we were interested in students' attitudes towards contemporary artwork. When planning the research, we began from two starting points: 1) the contemporary artwork cannot be fully experienced by simply showing reproductions, and 2) the contemporary artwork can be described, but it is more difficult to fully explain it. In planning the activities involving the curator and the educator, we paid attention to the following: authentic space, contact with authentic art, conversation with an expert, students' attitudes towards the concept of the artwork, placement of the works in the environment, stimulation of feelings, stimulation of thinking and contemplation of the art. The tour of the exhibition was conducted in three steps to promote appreciation of the art and to apply the method of aesthetic transfer (perception, reception, reaction).

The exhibition presented twelve artists from different European countries with mainly photographic works, including a spatial layout with photos and a tablet, two videos and light objects with photos. Students viewed the exhibited works independently, in pairs or in groups and completed the worksheets.

Methodology

Research methods and data extraction

We conducted a case study with elements of traditional empirical-analytical research, using the causal, non-experimental method of qualitative pedagogical research. We used a descriptive and documentation method, i.e., we investigated on the basis of various documentation sources (photos, observation protocols, sound recordings) and the interview method.

Diagram 2 shows the frequency of the methodological steps, the research methods in each part of the case study and the data collection. The observation protocol was used in the perception and conclusion phases, guided conversation in the perception, reception and reaction phases, audio recording in the perception, reception, reaction and conclusion phases and the photograph in the reaction phase.

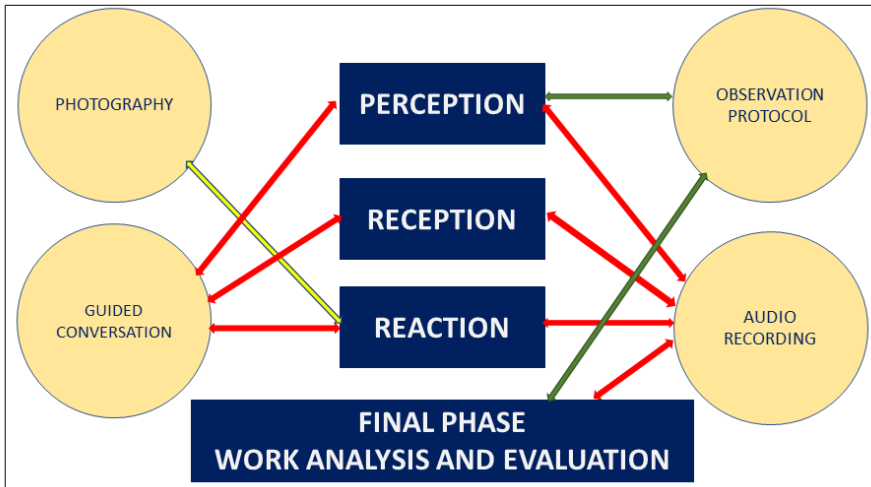


Diagram 2. Schematic representation of methodological steps, research methods in the case study

Research Questions

In the study, we started from three general research questions:

- How will students experience the displayed artwork (RQ1)?
- How will students clearly formulate and express their opinions and views (RQ2)?
- How will students develop a more positive attitude towards works of contemporary fine art (RQ3)?

And two specifically explicative research questions:

- How do students' attitudes change when they experience authentic works of art, and what is their individual artistic response (RQ4)?
- How successful is the method of aesthetic transfer as a didactic principle in an authentic gallery space (RQ5)?

Research sample

Students in the seventh grades of primary school (12 - 13 years; $f = 25$, $f\% = 45.4$) and two eighth-grade primary school classes (13 - 14 years, $f = 30$, $f\% = 54.6$) in the Educational Institute of the Regional Unit of Maribor participated in the survey. We did not divide the groups of students by gender, as this aspect did not interest us in the research. The research took place on the premises of the Maribor Art Gallery.

Results and interpretation

Since our research focused on investigating the suitability of the aesthetic transfer method as a form of museum work, we will present the results of the research in four parts. In the first part, we present the students' activities and reactions in the perception phase. In the second part, we present the students' activities and reactions in the reception phase. In the third part, we present the students' activities and reactions in the reaction phase. In the fourth part, we analyse the work with the evaluation.

Analysis of the first part: Perception – active observation – promotion of the affective level

In the first part, the curator gave instructions to the students. Each of them was given a worksheet with a recording of part of the text from the exhibition catalogue and some statements by the curator of the exhibition. When the students looked at the exhibition themselves, they underlined parts of the text, the words that spoke to them the most or that caught their attention during the exhibition. In this way, we encouraged students to consciously observe the acquisition of fictional impressions from the exhibition. In this way, we enabled everyone to experience the individual aspect of the artwork. The interaction between the individual and the artwork enabled the transformation of visual perception into visual thinking.



Figure 1. Independent tour of the exhibition (Photo: Kozjek Varl)

The students looked at the exhibited artworks with interest, and each chose their own statements, which they recorded on the worksheet. In observing the activity, we noticed that some students looked at the exhibition independently, while most students viewed the exhibition in pairs or groups. In the latter way of viewing the exhibition, students spontaneously shared their own views, experiences and opinions about what they had seen.

The first part concluded with a guided conversation between the curator and the students, in which the students were asked to describe their first impressions of the exhibition, with three possible answers: *Interesting; I cannot decide; Uninteresting*. We found that the majority (83.6%) of students could not decide on their first impression of the exhibition, followed by students (10.9%) who found the exhibition interesting, and in last place (5.5%) students who found the exhibition uninteresting based on their first impression. The guided conversation also focused on interpretation and analysis of the worksheets. Students could underline several statements or none on the worksheets, so the number of statements does not correspond to the number of students (Table 1).

Table 1. Ranking range of underlined statement categories on the worksheet

Rank	Category
1	We are the most photographed, recorded global population, the most visually controlled population of all time.
2	In a time of mobile phones and digital cameras, we insist on the right to privacy, while at the same time we take "snapshots"
2	Photography enters a public space with its physical presence

The most frequently underlined statement (*We are the most photographed, recorded global population, the most visually controlled population of all time*) was substantiated by students with comments:

Student 1: *"The fact that we are photographed around the clock is terrible."*

Student 2: *"We never think about it at all, but it is logical."*

Student 1: *"We were photographed today: teacher, Google street view, satellites ..."*

With the second most frequently underlined part of the text (*In a time of mobile phones and digital cameras, we insist on the right to privacy, and at the same time we take snapshots*), students identified themselves and illustrated this with the following statements:

Student 3: *"I don't let other people take pictures of me because they can put me online. I would not like to see that happening."*

Student 2: *"It means that we want to have privacy, but in reality, we post photos about ourselves."*

Student 1: *"The right to privacy is important."*

When asked if they had already published any of their photos, they looked at each other and answered the opposite.

Student 4: *"Yeah, it's no big deal."*

In conversations, we found that students discovered connections to their lives in both the text and the photos in the exhibition. They thought about how many photos they had seen on the way from school to the gallery (billboards, advertisements, magazines, mobile phones etc).

The analysis of the first part shows that the students experienced the artworks in depth and critically and that we encouraged them for the activities in the next part. So, with the results of the first part, we can answer research question RQ1, where we were interested in how the students would experience the artworks.

Analysis of the second part: Reception – exploration of the layers of artwork and the texture of images – interlacing of cognitive and affective levels

In the second part, the curator led a tour of the exhibition, which lasted 40 minutes. In addition to the artwork on display, the curator introduced the students to definitions, with new concepts that the students could relate to the artworks. Through a guided conversation, the curator encouraged the students to look at the artworks synthetically and fostered associations in the students that were related to the artists' content and messages. At the same time, the students discovered the differences between reproductions and authentic artworks. They learned about different conceptual and content approaches, as well as multiple views on public and private space and expressed their opinions and views in dialogue and debates. They learned about the artist's message through their response to the problems of everyday life.

Below, we highlight some of the works that students used to express their opinions in more detail. Most of the student responses were guided by an artwork titled *Where is the beginning of our private space?* (Fig. 2). This artwork is represented by photographs taken by the artist on the World Wide Web. These were taken with security cameras that people installed themselves.

By exhibiting them in the gallery, the artist took away people's intimate space. The photos show people in their private space - their homes.



Figure 2. Discussion of the work by Dario Belić, *Where is the Beginning of Our Private Space?* (Photo: Koźjek Varl)

Students were visibly surprised, some also appalled, as they identified with the people in the recordings (Figure 2).

Student 1: *“What, can our photos be put on display?”*

Curator: *“Of course, if you post them online, you’ve put them in a public space.”*

Student 2: *“This is rude!”*

Student 1: *“So what can they do?”*

Curator: *“It was a photo online.”*

Student 3: *“Do these people know about this? Can they sue the artist?”*

While working, students thought that privacy was as important as security. Next to the photos, a tablet was placed, with the help of which students were photographed on their own.

Curator: *“What can happen to your photo now?”*

Student 1: *“Anything. You can decide.”*

Student 2: *“Delete, publish, develop and display it in the gallery.”*

Curator: *“Why?”*

Student 3: *“Because we put it in a public space.”*

This artwork took students the longest to identify with the people in the shots and to think about what would happen if they were alone in the shots.

The students were also attracted to an artwork that was different from the others because of its visual aspect.

These were light objects placed in such a way that the photograph could be viewed from top to bottom and could only be viewed by four students at a time (Figure 3). A paper entitled *Special Place in the City* showed scenes of the operation. There were black bars on the photos that covered part of the shot.



Figure 3. Visiting the artwork of the COLLECTIVE, *Special Place in the City*, 2004–2009 (Photo: Kozjek Varl)

Below we present the conversation that took place between the curator and the students.

Curator: *“Why did the artist exhibit photos like that?”*

Student 1: *“To look from the top down.”*

Student 2: *“To look from the same position as the photographer took the photo.”*

Curator: *“How many people can look at a photo at the same time?”*

Student 3: *“Maximum of four.”*

Student 1: *“That we can’t all see them at the same time.”*

Curator: *“Why shouldn’t we look at it?”*

Student 3: *“Because the photos show the surgery. Doctors don’t operate in a crowd of people either.”*

Curator: *“What does surgery mean for a person?”*

Student 4: *“This is a private matter. No one would want to be looked at when they were in this situation.”*

Curator: *“Why do you think there are black bars in these photos?”*

Student 1: *“So we don’t see everything because the surgery is not beautiful.”*

Student 5: *“That we are even more interested in what is underneath them.”*

The students had varied opinions about the work, which provoked a range of feelings. Most students agreed that the artist emphasised the privacy of the process through the layout and aroused curiosity with the black bars.

The following artwork titled *One and Twenty-Four Chairs* (Figure 4) also aroused great interest among the students and encouraged them to express their opinions.



Figure 4. Viewing the work of Adriana Pacija, *One and twenty-four chairs* (Photo: Kozjek Varl)

In the performance, at the invitation of the artist, twenty-four people each brought a chair from home to an agreed place where they sat in a circle waiting for each other. They brought their personal belongings from a private space to a public space, raising the question of the relationship between private and public space. A conversation about the work was initiated by one of the students.

Student 1: *“Isn't it a little weird that they're sitting in chairs in a circle somewhere outside?”*

Curator: *“Correct. That's not normal. What do you think the artist was trying to say with this action? What does the chair mean at home?”*

Student 2: *“A chair means safety.”*

Student 3: *“This is something cosy, something that is yours.”*

Curator: *“What do we take from private to public space?”*

Student 3: *“A wallet.”*

Curator: *“Usually we feel safe in an intimate space, but not so much in public.”*

Student 4: *“Why are they in a circle?”*

Student 5: *“Maybe it's 24 hours, every hour, one comes with his chair.”*

Student 6: *“It's about time and how everything passes.”*

Student 7: *“Or so that everyone can watch us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.”*

The Rules of the Game artwork fascinated students because of its size (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Conversation in front of the work of Fabrizio Giraldi, *The Rules of the Game* (Photo: Kozjek Varl)

In the following we present a brief conversation about the idea behind a work of art;

Curator: *“How was this photographed?”*

Student 1: *“With a camera on his head?”*

Curator: *“Why would an artist take pictures like that?”*

Student 2: *“To put the viewer in the artist’s place and we become gamblers.”*

Curator: *“Is gambling private or public?”*

Student 1: *“Private.”*

Student 3: *“No, everyone can see you.”*

Student 2: *“Only if you are addicted, you hide. You don’t want others to know you’re gambling.”*

While contemplating this artwork, students reflected and exchanged opinions on whether it was private or public. They expressed a range of opinions and agreed that gambling addiction is one of the most widespread diseases in the world. At the same time, some students associated gambling with the games they play themselves via web applications, either on a computer or on a mobile phone.

Let us look at another example. Figure 6 shows one of the photographs that the students liked best in the first part. All the photos by the authors Eva Petrić and Laurent Ziegler showed scenes of military fortifications or objects that served the army.



Figure 6. Eva Petrič and Laurent Ziegler, *Gray Matters* (Photo: Kozjek Varl)

When the curator passed this information on to the students, some of them changed their minds about the attractiveness of the photos. Suddenly they no longer liked the photos. At the same time, the students found that additional information given by an expert could influence or even change the viewer's opinion. In contrast, some students commented that they "*still liked the photos*", regardless of what they depicted. The students also paid more attention to photographs by the Slovenian artist Borut Krajnc (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Borut Krajnc, *Empatiness* (Photo: Kozjek Varl)

Curator: "*What do you see in these photos?*"

Student 1: "*They suck.*"

Student 2: "*The Jumbo posters are empty.*"

Student 3: "*There is nothing interesting.*"

Student 1: "*It represents boredom to me.*"

Student 4: "*I don't find it interesting.*"

Curator: "*Why did the artist decide to leave the billboard blank? When is something empty?*"

Student 2: "*We are used to jumbo posters being full.*"

Curator: “*Yes, what we are used to as being full is now empty. He made it empty. Why?*”

Student 5: “*Perhaps he was trying to say that people no longer have compassion for man – this is emptiness.*”

Student 6: “*Maybe that the world is collapsing.*”

Student 2: “*He pointed out the opposite.*”

The analysis of the second part showed that the students did not express (or were unable to express) any opinions or feelings in the first part (perception) when they looked at some of the artworks for the first time, nor did they read the message. Only after the interview and a partial explanation of the conceptual background of each artwork did the students come to their conclusions, based on which they could form their own opinions. Some students evaluated the works critically and expressed negative opinions. This is how we answered the research questions (RQ2). It turned out, above all, that in many cases the students identified with the themes highlighted in the works. At the same time, some students expressed their views very clearly and specifically. Through successful two-way communication between the students and the curator, the students acquired the ability to describe the artwork in words and, with additional information about the artwork, successfully express their own beliefs and form an individual opinion on the subject. We can summarise the result that the students developed a more positive attitude towards contemporary visual art (RQ3) in a more in-depth study of the exhibited works.

Analysis of the third part: Reaction – productive response to works of art – psychomotor level

The third part was an individual reaction to the artworks and to the content of the exhibition, i.e., the reaction. The students represented their attitudes to the private, intimate space in different ways on small pages. They had a variety of drawing materials at their disposal (markers, pencils, crayons). The medium of their expression was not fixed; they could express themselves in a drawing or a painting, representational or non-representational, in the form of a record (text, poem), or even in the form of a comic. The students found their own workspace in the gallery, so they could spread out throughout the gallery. Since the task was to express an opinion about the intimate space, one of the students enquired before the work: “*Who will see it?*” He would get his answer after the ta



Figure 8. Independent work by students (Photo: Kozjek Varl)

Most students worked in pairs or groups, rarely alone (Figure 8). Students expressed their attitudes towards intimate space in different ways: some drew a specific motif (bed, toilet, mobile phone, etc.), while others just drew lines talking about their comfort; many students expressed themselves in words. Out of all the students, only one decided to complete this part of the task alone. He retreated to the corner of the gallery and wrote a poem.

The students took between 21 and 24 minutes to work independently. After completing the work, the students put each of their products in an envelope and used it for their own purposes. In doing so, the students took responsibility - just as when posting on the World Wide Web. The curator answered the students' questions:

"Can we leave the envelope here?"

"If you leave it here, you do not know what will happen to it. It could end up in the exhibition."

"Then better not," the student replied.



Figure 9. Student discussion with the curator after the reaction phase (Photo: Kozjek Varl)

After the reaction phase, the students and the curator analysed the work process (evaluation) in a guided conversation and discussed the students' attitudes towards the artworks (renewed phase of synthetic observation). The guided conversation lasted nine minutes.

Curator: *"Did your attitude towards the photographs and other works change after viewing the exhibition? Has it improved or worsened?"*

Student 1: *"In the beginning, the idea seemed lame. I didn't know what the artist was trying to portray with a photograph. I didn't know what was going to happen. Now I find the idea interesting."* (note by the author: work of Borut Krajnc, Figure 7)

Student 2: *"When you find out the background of a painting, when someone explains it to you, you also know what the artist was trying to communicate."*

Curator: *"Have you learned anything new since viewing the exhibition? Have you come to any conclusions?"*

Student 3: *"Now everyone knows what is private and what is public."*

Student 4: *"Maybe now we're thinking about what we're going to take off the web."*

Student 5: *"I was expecting more pictures. There are too few of them at the exhibition."*

Student 2: *"We learned how photography is created. It was nice to see the exhibit first. So we can have an opinion."*

Student 1: *"When we looked at the photos ourselves, we imagined what they represented. Then you told us about the content, and we changed our mind."*

After the final guided conversation, we found that additional information often influenced a different experience of the artwork. This opens up new topics for us to think about.

Before we left the gallery, the curator asked the students to delete the photos they had taken. Some students decided to leave the photos in the gallery (tablet), while others deleted the photos while still in the gallery. At the exit, three students handed over the envelopes with their products to the curator with the statement *“as we have nothing to hide”*. The handing over of the envelopes sounded like a provocation. The student who had written the poem on a piece of paper handed the envelope to the curator with the request that the curator read the poem aloud. At least half the students decided to leave an envelope in the gallery and have no concern with what would happen to their product.

Analysis of the fourth part: Analysis of work and reflection

After visiting the exhibit, we observed the students' distinct impressions through a relaxed conversation and found changes in student attitudes when presenting an authentic artwork:

Student 1: *“The Black-and-White pictures were interesting.”*

Student 2: *“I expected a little more, I didn't find it interesting.”*

Student 3: *“I didn't like it when artists invaded people's privacy.”*

Student 4: *“I liked it.”*

Student 5: *“When you said we were going to the exhibition, I expected pictures and drawings. I always pictured that as art. Here, however, photos were presented.”*

Student 6: *“Yes, photographs accompany us everywhere, even in toilets, for example in the cinema.”*

We found that many students expected to like the artwork. When asked if the artists' intention was for them to like the photos, the students answered:

Student 1: *“No, they wanted to attract attention.”*

Student 2: *“They wanted to tell us something, they had an idea.”*

Student 3: *“They want to draw attention to something.”*

The students had very different opinions about the exhibition. Some found it interesting because it was different, because the artwork showed motifs that they thought were not usually depicted by artists. Some students from all three groups said that the exhibition *“sucked because no photo was beautiful.”*

At the conclusion, we record a few more opinions that represent the learners' insights:

Student 1: *“In fact, contemporary art is great because you can say what you think.”*

Student 2: *“Art also reminds us of the problems someone has.”*

Disciple 3: *“Even the problems that we all have, in terms of the country or the place where we live.”*

The analysis of the fourth part has shown that the two specific explicative research questions (RQ1e and RQ2e) can be answered. We found that most students experienced a positive change in their attitude towards contemporary art. Their individual artistic response to the perceived art was also of high quality, especially in terms of content. By analysing all four parts, we can also answer RQ2e, because the method of aesthetic transfer has proven to be a successful didactic principle in an authentic gallery space.

Concluding comments

The aim of the empirical study was to test the success of the method of aesthetic transfer as a didactic principle in an authentic gallery space. The method of aesthetic transfer considers all the basic premises of art didactics and art education, and its main focus is on the transfer of aesthetic messages to the participants in the learning process. Research (Zupančič and Duh, 2009) has demonstrated the success of the method with preschool children, and now it has been demonstrated with primary school students. When visiting the gallery, students had the opportunity to interact with the authentic space and authentic artwork. During the study, we observed the students' attitudes towards the conceptual issues and the artworks themselves. We found that student attitudes changed after visiting the exhibition. In the first part, when the students visited the exhibition alone, some had already formed an opinion about a particular work, and some could not explain the meaning of a particular work. With guidance after the exhibition, guided discussion and additional explanation, as well as encouragement from the curator, the students changed their opinions to some extent, but we noted differences between the students. For the same work, some students accepted the artist's idea with enthusiasm, while other students did not see the point. The reasons for the varying responsiveness of the students are to be found in their different life experiences, for some identified with certain parts more than others. In general, we can conclude that the first part, i.e., the development of artistic appreciation, went according to expectations.

A similar process of systematic introduction to the experience of artwork was demonstrated among primary school students in a previous study (Duh, Herzog and Zupančič, 2014). Likewise, a similar process proved to be appropriate for high school students (Duh, 2013, 2014).

We can conclude that, according to our assumptions, these artworks were experienced and understood by the students when explaining and speaking. We also found that students involuntarily connected the artworks to their lives and looked for parallels to issues that were current for them, regardless of individual experience. It was also interesting to learn that the themes or content of a work of art can be linked to different areas of our lives. Conversely, through artistic work we can express our thoughts, feelings or critical stance on any subject. Similar findings were made in a previous study with younger students (Duh, Pavlič, 2015). At this point we would like to highlight the task that the students worked on in the third phase of the aesthetic transfer method, the reaction phase. The task was not typically artistic, as these students would have been used to from school in the form of artistic-creative work. Interestingly, no student commented negatively on it, indicating that with this kind of practical work, the students understood and grasped the essence of contemporary visual art, where idea is more important than form.

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