

MONITORING THE SUCCESS OF THE INTEGRATION OF CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICES IN ELEMENTARY ART CURRICULUM

OBSERVACIÓN DEL ÉXITO DE LA INTEGRACIÓN DE LAS PRÁCTICAS DE ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO EN EL PLAN DE ESTUDIOS DE ARTE ELEMENTAL

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Abstract:

Monitoring, knowledge and understanding of contemporary art influence thinking and empathy of the individual with the environment in which they live. In elementary school, students learn about contemporary art, by solving artistic tasks arising from the situation of contemporary art. Contemporary arts enable students to understand the environment, the time and the conditions in which we live.

In action research, which was based on elements of traditional empirical-analytical research, the qualitative methodology of pedagogical research was used, namely, a causal non-experimental method. On a sample of 55 pupils (n = 55), aged between 13 and 14 years, the attitudes to art, their knowledge of art, thinking, and attitude towards contemporary art were determined. We used the unstructured interview. The findings showed that students' artworks are associated with everyday life, and they interpret these artworks according to their own experience.

Keywords: contemporary art, students, understanding, interpretation;

Resumen:

La observación, el conocimiento y la comprensión del arte contemporáneo influyen en el pensamiento y la empatía del individuo con el entorno en el que vive. En la escuela primaria, los estudiantes aprenden sobre el arte contemporáneo, al resolver tareas artísticas que surgen de la situación del arte contemporáneo. Las artes contemporáneas permiten a los estudiantes comprender el entorno, el tiempo y las condiciones en que vivimos.

En esta investigación-acción, que se basó en elementos de la investigación empírica-analítica tradicional, se utilizó la metodología cualitativa de la investigación pedagógica, es decir, un método causal no experimental. En una muestra de 55 alumnos (n = 55), con edades

comprendidas entre 13 y 14 años, se determinaron las actitudes hacia el arte, su conocimiento del arte, el pensamiento y la actitud hacia el arte contemporáneo. Usamos la entrevista no estructurada. Los hallazgos mostraron que las obras de arte de los estudiantes se asocian con la vida cotidiana e interpretan estas obras de acuerdo con su propia experiencia.

Palabras clave: arte contemporáneo, estudiantes, comprensión, interpretación;

1. Introduction

For the development of the child, fine arts are extremely important, because with new knowledge the child obtains competences for the future (Kroflič, 2010; Robinson, 2006). Art is not just about learning about arts. Through art we also educate, form, and teach the learner how to become a human, how to understand the environment in which we live, and how to get integrated into the society (Kroflič, 2010). Fine arts are associated with getting to know the language of arts, which is ennobled with emotional and spiritual contents. If we wish to understand fine arts, we must not only develop the content but in parallel to it also the visual language (Huzjak, 2010). In this, knowledge must not be neglected. Lachapelle, Murray, and Neim (2003) highlight the knowledge that supports the learner to gain new and more satisfactory understanding of a work of art. The authors add experiencing and understanding a work of art precisely is the process in which two kinds of knowledge - experiential and theoretical knowledge - are united (ibid.). From the perspective of experiential knowledge, the knowledge of visual language can be highlighted in arts, which helps experience an artwork both in its emotional as well as in its spiritual aspect (Huzjak, 2010; Gonen, Aydos & Erdem, 2016). School plays an important role in training young people to accept the world in which they live (Uzunboylu et al., 2017). It must teach them the ability to also accept and understand the cultural field, although it might be inappropriate or even controversial (Ozcan & Gunduz, 2016). Zupančič (2011) believes “controversial” artworks are also an important component of modern arts and through them of contemporary society. He agrees with Efland (1990) and Hardy (2006) that this kind of contemporary art is an indispensable component of arts education in schools. As today’s time is to a large extent marked with visualisation, the role of the teacher is very important in art-educational practice, because it is only with an adequate approach that learners can eliminate the gap of the failure to understand modern time in contemporary fine arts can be eliminated. This is the reason why art teachers are responsible to make their students familiar with contemporary fine arts (Zupančič, 2006). Students must be introduced into the understanding of the contents of contemporary fine arts gradually and systematically, they must be guided from established ways of practicing art through modernistic approaches to contemporary artistic practices, and the key moments and concepts must be explained to them. Existing proposals for the introduction of the contents of contemporary art (Zupančič, 2006) have shown the students who are confronted with contemporary art, get acquainted with it, and learn about it, have positive experience. Vrlič (2002) underlines emphasising “the broader background of the origin of the artwork, the intertwinement of the artwork with the environment, presentation of links between the artwork and life, relations with ideological contents, which seems to especially make sense in presenting the conceptual artistic practices that represent the mainstream contemporary arts” (p. 7). Several authors (Zupančič, 2006, 2011; Bračun Sova and Kemperl, 2012; Kemperl, 2013) have pointed to the lack of contents of contemporary art in the teaching of art in Slovenian educational space for several years. The curriculum for art education (Učni načrt za likovno vzgojo, 2011) states students ought to visit an art gallery, a museum or artist’s studio, talk with the artist, and have a look at spatial arrangements in public space at least once a year (Delibaltova, 2017). When it is not possible to reach for the artefact, reproductions of artworks represent the only visual experience in the

classroom. When selecting reproductions their quality is important (Yurtseven & Muluk, 2016). Research indicates, however, from the perspective of the use of reproductions in the teaching of art the situation is reason for concern, as teachers do not use reproductions in art-educational practice to a satisfactory extent (Duh, Herzog, and Batič, 2009). For a more concrete illustration of the semiotic and spiritual content of an artwork visits to galleries and museums are extremely important (Tavčar, 2009). A gallery includes getting to know the content of art, which we cannot find in school. "A gallery also means that students can take a walk around an open space, around a statue or through an installation; they can touch the materials of works of art." (Duh, 2015, p 95). For students also the interpretation of the artwork is important, which is understood through the integration of analysis and evaluation of the work of art (Arriga and Aguirre, 2013). It is a response in which certain abilities of shaping one's own opinion through reflection, questioning, and integration with the environment are developed (Charman, Rose, and Wilson, 2006; Baglama & Demirok, 2016). Without explanation it is difficult to understand these or we do not understand them at all, so they repeatedly get subjected to unfavourable or even rejecting first impressions. These first impressions exactly are important for further experiencing the work of art, irrespective of what they are like (Strnad, 2009; Allahverdiyev & Yucesoy, 2017). At one and the same work of art we can encounter a whole range of feelings, because everyone experiences a work of art in their own subjective way. It is important the viewers are overwhelmed with feelings and that they know how to recognize them, even though they change the feelings after explanation or having learnt the context (Strnad, 2009; Isitman, 2017).

2. Definition of the research problem

Between the initial and the final acquisition of data action research was carried out with three research steps. We wished to make students familiar with contemporary visual arts, teach them how to actively observe contemporary works of art and to encourage them to critically form individual attitudes toward contemporary visual arts. At the beginning of the research all students showed great interest, at the beginning of action steps they were motivated for work, motivation was also pronounced during their creative work. In the first research step the students were introduced into and made familiar with some concepts of contemporary visual arts and a contemporary Slovenian artist was introduced to them, with the presentation also including the principle of his functioning. After the introduction, practical artistic-creative work followed, through which the students gave meaning to the learnt concepts in individual way. In the second action step we visited an art gallery with the students emphasising the authentic artwork and the authentic space. Under guidance of an expert the students got familiar with certain contemporary works of art. They experienced the artworks more actively and expressed their views. Following a theoretical discussion of the topic the students also expressed themselves creatively (drawing, poetry, cartoon, etc.) in the second action step. The third step was designed on the basis of cross-curricular integration, namely with the school subject *Civil Education and Ethics*. In this research segment the students expressed their thoughts on the selected topic with the assistance of artistic material or modern media (photography, computer, the Internet). Highlighted was the concept of the individual formed in a socially critical way. After the artistically creative part of each action step we evaluated the resulting artistic products according to the set criteria of the artistic task and carried out a relaxed conversation with the students. Based on the conversation we acquired information we analysed together with students' comments and searched for causes why something was found interesting or not and reasons for successful or unsuccessful solving of the artistic task. For the student's different approaches in the planning and realisation of artistic tasks represented challenge for creative expression and formation of their attitude towards contemporary visual arts.

2.1. The purpose and research questions

The purpose of the empirical research is to determine the attitude of students toward contemporary visual arts before and after artistic experience; in what ways students understand the communication capacity of artworks or how they link this to everyday life; and how systematically introducing contents of contemporary art into the classroom to stimulate its understanding. In this framework we will answer the general and the specific research questions. The general research question is: (RQg) Are there differences in the attitude toward contemporary art between the initial and the final interview? Specific research questions: (RQ1) Are there differences in the description of contemporary visual art between the initial and the final interview? (RQ2) Are there differences in the qualitative interpretation of contemporary visual art between the initial and the final interview? (RQ3) Are there differences in the identification of the material in the realisation of contemporary visual art between the initial and the final interview?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research methods and research sample

Action research (Vogrinc, Zuljan, and Krek, 2007; Mažgon, 2008) with elements of traditional empirical-analytical research was carried out. Qualitative methodology of educational research, namely causal non-experimental method (Mason, 2002; Vogrinc, 2008), was applied. In this way we examined the effects of the introduced experiments and innovations. For the description of the results we applied the descriptive method. Participants in the research were 13 years old (hereinafter referred to as 13A) students and two classes of 14 years old (hereinafter referred to as 14A and 14B) students of the Basic School Malečnik (Slovenia).

Groups	13A		14A		14B		Total	
	f	f%	f	f%	f	f%	f	f%
Boys	9	36	7	47	6	40	22	40
Girls	16	64	8	53	9	60	33	60
Total	25	100	15	100	15	100	55	100

Table 1. Distribution of the sample according to age and gender

From the table (Table 1) we can see group 13A had the largest number of students (25), while the remaining two groups (14A and 14B) each consisted of 15 students.

3.2 Preparation of the instruments and conduct of the research

Before and after the execution of the research we carried out a non-structured interview (Vogrinc, 2008) with the students. In all the groups the interview was carried out from the front and recorded: 13A (8 January 2016 and 25 March 2016), 14A (8 January 2016 and 25 March 2016) and 14B (6 January 2016 and 23 March 2016). In the first part we presented the students some contemporary works of visual artists on a worksheet. In the second part the presentation programme PowerPoint was applied for the presentation of the reproductions. In addition, in this case the students described the delivered pictorial material.

3.3 The procedures of data processing

The obtained students' responses were grouped into codes and theoretically shaped into concepts in the form of explanation and clarification (Vogrinc, 2008). Students' responses and statements were transcribed in conformance with the grammatical rules of written language, however, bringing them as close to the original (ibid.) as possible. In this way we obtained the record of the initial and of the final state. We analysed the data gathered with the interview with the so-called qualitative content analysis that was conducted in two stages: (1) the paraphrased transcription of sound records, (2) interpretation with the formulation of theory according to research questions. In the qualitative research, we pursued the principles of ethics in all its aspects, namely: voluntariness of participation in the research, information about the research, protection of the identity of the individual, confidentiality and privacy, and respecting the truth.

4. Results and interpretation

Before and after the action research we carried out a non-structured interview with the students. The data and information were transcribed and shaped into the record of the initial and of the final state. Below we present the analysis of the initial interview and the analysis of the written (initial situation) and of the recorded (final situation) responses.

4.1. Analysis of the responses of the initial state

With the initial interview, we checked the students' knowledge of and their attitude towards contemporary art. We performed the analysis combining students' responses and thoughts of all the three participating groups (13A, 14A, and 14B). Below we highlight the responses related to contemporary visual arts.

In relation with the concept of contemporary art the students stated the most frequently it was "something new", "something that is topical at the current time", and "modern". At the second place by frequency the responses of the students follow who thought that "contemporary art is unusual and different", and following that we find the responses "today contemporary art can be literary anything". Quite a few unique, interesting responses and responses conveying a message occurred, such as *"it is street art, they are unusual, strange things, because through them people express themselves more easily, it is what comes to their minds first"* (boy student1-14B); *"contemporary art is if something is done nicely, once everything was kitschy"* (girl student 14A). It is interesting a student (boy student2-14B) described contemporary art: *"Contemporary art is the type of art that is emerging now. It means a different feeling for aesthetics, once everything was more mathematically correct, it was nice to look at, today it is messier. It is more popular, and old arts have also been returning to today's time."*

At the term contemporary art the students thus expressed withheld attitudes and opinions, which reflects their lack of knowledge and uncertainty in the discussion on the unknown topic. We recognized the desire to learn, curiosity, and interest to get more in-depth information about the topic. The type of art also support this: girl student 14A *"we wish we could be more informed about contemporary artists"* and boy student 14B: *"we are more interested in contemporary art than in old artists"*.

After that, we distributed the student's worksheets presenting three contemporary artworks: Richard Serra, Matter of Time, 2005, Marcel Duchamp, Fountain, 1917, and Christo and Janne-Claude, Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin, 1975-1995. Observing the artworks students

delivered a short description of the latter, their own interpretation and their identification of artistic material.



Figure 1. Richard Serra, (A); Marcel Duchamp (B), Christo and Janne-Claude (C)

Recognizing the content of the work of Richard Serra (Figure 1) represented enormous difficulty for the students. Only a few similar responses emerged: “maze” (21.8%), “various forms” (20%), “museum, gallery, exhibition” (20%); otherwise the students identified various forms or contents (38%). Beside the above the students wrote the work represented “a street with obstacles”, “winding walls”, “*the universe*”, “*man’s feelings*”, “*a modern building*”, “*skiing ground*”, etc. The most frequently (21.8%) the students interpreted the message of the work as “a variety of forms, materials”. A majority of students stated a large number of diverse answers – here we highlight the most interesting ones: “*how a space can be made more lively*”, “*how we feel in winding spaces*”, “*the opera*”, “*being lost*”, “*that some things are bigger than we, the people*”, “*what a museum of modern art looks like*”, “*winding life*”, “*how complicated humanity is*”, “*calmness*”, “*being lost in our thoughts*”, “*that the world is modern*”, “*creativity*”. Also identifying the material, the students had different opinions: “plastic” (25.4%), “wood” (25.4%), metal – “iron, aluminium, copper” (23.6%), “tempera paints” (10.9%).

From the analysis of the responses about this work of art, we can conclude the students found this work strange, perhaps incomprehensible. At the same time it stimulated deeper thinking, as in the work each student saw something entirely their own.

In Marcel Duchamp’s work (Figure 1B) most students (70.9%) recognized a urinal, because of the reverted form also a potty (10.9%). Interesting were also the statements “*chair*”, “*an interesting form*”, “*a rack*”, “*a seat in the form of a pear*”, and “*a fountain that could be attached to a wall*”, which indicates the students thought already why the artist presented an urinal as a work of art. The most frequently the students in the groups 13A and 14A interpreted the content of the work of art as “*useful purpose*” (30.9%), and the students in the group 14B with responses “*otherness of a toilet*”, “*creativity*”, “*resourcefulness*” (25.5%). There were also many interesting and diverse responses (43.6%): “*that drinking fountains can take diverse forms*”, “*that we can wash our hands*”, “*it represents a modern seat*”, “*the work speaks about the modernity of materials*”, “*and that all people are the same*”. It is remarkable the students in the groups 13A and 14B the most recurrently identified the material the fountain was made of as plastic (40%), while students in the group 14A wrote the most often (34.5%) it was ceramic. The answers stone (7.2%) and other (16.3%) represented a minority.

We can conclude interpreting this work of art, not only did the students largely identify the motif and the material, but also the message of the work of art. We can conclude for a successful interpretation of a work of art at least the knowledge of the context in which the work was created is necessary.

In the case of Wrapped Reichstag’s artwork in Berlin (Figure 1C) the students in the groups 13A and 14B identified the content of the work of art as a mansion, a palace, or a castle (60%), but there were also a few different responses. A girl student in group 13A stated the work

represented *“a tourist attraction, because a lot of people are watching it”*. In group 14A a boy stated it was about *“humankind after some time, what is going to happen”*. Some students linked the work with rocks and stones; a girl in group 14B wrote it was *“about a cathedral made of stone, which cannot be entered.”* Only one girl student (14B) described the motif more precisely, namely that it was about *“a palace that is covered with cellophane or plastic, which represents man’s art.”* From the perspective of content the students in all the three groups wrote the most frequently (25.5%) responses which were *“in relation with art and artist’s creativity”*. The second most frequent response was *“castle”* (16.4%). In the third place there were the responses of group 13A who related the pictures with *“ice”* and *“a glacier”* (12.7%). The fewest were the responses that related to *“life in the past”* (7.2%). Also at this work a lot of different interpretations appeared (38.2%); here we are just highlighting the most stimulating ones: *“the beauty of nature”*, *“that something magnificent can be created even from apparently useless things”*, *“shield and protection from something”*, *“how much work must be invested into something to make it durable”*, *“power”*, *“safety”*.

47.3% of students in all three groups agreed that the artistic material was stone. Perhaps the color of the material associated them to this. The responses of the student’s in group 13A followed (10.9%) who correctly identified the material writing it was about *“sheets”*, *“linen”* or *“curtains”*. In group 14A we came across no such responses, while in group 14B there was only one such response. The work awoke quite some interest in the students, as they exchanged glances and even began loudly commenting it. Every student, with no exception, wrote a response at this work, difficulties arose again, however, with the identification of the material.

4.2. Analysis of the responses of the final state

After the performance of the action research, a non-structured interview was carried out with the students that referred to the attitude toward contemporary art after their recent experience. To the question *“How would you define contemporary art after the artistic experience?”* the students answered the most often in contemporary art the idea and the process matter the most. The statement of a girl student in group 14B demonstrates this: *“We often do not understand a work of art, it is necessary to hear the story.”* The second rank order was formed on the basis of students’ responses, who claimed that contemporary art was no longer only beautiful.

Boy student 14B: *“It doesn’t matter what it looks like.”*

Girl student 13A: *“Art is no longer beautiful, which is right, because in this way depressed people can create artistically, showing in this way how they feel.”*

The responses of the students followed who pointed out contemporary art draws attention to social problems.

Boy student 14B: *“Today works are more public.”*

Girl student 13A: *“We too have pointed to the problems of the whole society.”*

In the first place the students in all the groups stated the use of modern media is the main reason why modern artistic practices are interesting. In the second place they exposed the finding that artists expose their works in public places. Into the third rank order the statements of the students were arranged who believed also in art there is decreasingly less privacy:

Boy student 13A: *“The point is you do not have much privacy any longer.”*

Girl student 14A: *“We too have borrowed photos from the web and created a product.”*

To the question what topic they would like to put forward and send a message to the people with it if for a day they were contemporary artists, they answered the most often they would expose the problem of the use of modern technologies in spare time. This response surprised us, because students themselves spend a lot of time with modern technologies. It seems here students are aware of excessive use of mobile phones and of other technology. Rank in the second position by frequency were the responses of the students who exposed different types of addiction. As the last, the students named school and topics or problems related with it, as they perceive them:

Boy student 13A: *"Too much work at school."*

Girl student 14A: *"Some teachers' unfairness."*

Girl student 13A: *"Too many tests."*

Finally, we asked students the following question: *"What questions must we ask ourselves at observing a contemporary work of art to be able to understand it and to find the right answers?"* Without too much hesitation the students answered:

Girl student 14A: *"Why did the artist make this?"*

Girl student 14B: *"What did she/he want to tell with this?"*

Boy student 14B: *"What was his/her idea?"*

Girl student 13A: *"Why did she/he undertake this?"*

With the last question we wished to encourage students at a planned or perhaps a chance encounter with a contemporary work of art to be able to develop their attitude towards contemporary art in a suitable way.

In the following, we showed the students three contemporary works of art: Kumi Yamashita, *City View*, 2004; Louise Bourgeois, *I Do, Undo, Redo*, 2000; and Leandro Erlich, *Swimming Pool*, 2004. This time we presented the works from the front using an LCD-projector. The students expressed their ideas, which we recorded, and after the transcription we combined them into categories.



Figure 2. Kumi Yamashita, (A), Louise Bourgeois (B), Leandro Erlich (C)

Referring to Kumi Yamashita's work (Figure 2A), students of all groups answered the question what the work represented the most frequently *"numbers"*. The second most frequent answer was the work represented *"a human standing at a fence"*. Few students exposed *"shadows"*. The presented work was illustrative enough for the identification of the motif.

The largest number of students of all group interpreted the message of the work as relationship of numbers with mathematics. Let us underline this with the answers of two girl

students from group 14A: *"Numbers are related to computing"* and *"Perhaps it is about a bank"*. At the second place there were the answers of the students who interpreted the work as a message about the life of a woman:

Girl student 14B: *"The woman has died and the things are coming out of her."*

Girl student 14B: *"Perhaps it symbolically represents her life."*

Boy student 14B: *"The work represents a woman who has gone bankrupt."*

Girl student 14A: *"A gust of wind has blown her worries away."*

Surprisingly, a majority of students recognized it was a *"projection on a wall"*. At the second place were the answers it was about *"numbers and their shadows"*. Further, very diverse answers appeared, which could not be condensed into a common category (clay, wood, plastic, birthday candles, etc.).

In conclusion, let us mention the finding of a girl student in group 14A, who described the work in a continuous sentence: *"Numbers are attached to a wall, somebody has turned light on it, so shadows of the numbers are falling to the other side of the wall forming the contour of a human."* With this statement the girl student accurately described the essence of the artist's work. Some students still could not see the shadows and the letters, while others were exclaiming enthusiastically: *"Indeed, what a trick!"*

At the second work, the one by Louise Bourgeois (Figure 2B) the students from all groups answered the question what the work represented the most frequently the work represented *"stairs leading to transmitters"*. The students placed the finding the work represented a *"lookout tower"* to the second place. As the last the students stated it was merely about *"an installation"*.

In this case it seemed to be the most difficult for the students of all groups to express themselves regarding the interpretation of the message of the artwork. Encouraged by the teacher they stated the most often the work tells to the audience *"they can go to the top of the stairs and tell anything they wish."* At the second place, they stated, *"going to the top you test your competences."* The following two statements describe this:

Girl student 13A: *"Going to the top you beat the fear."*

Boy student 13A: *"High up in the air you are all by yourself."*

We categorized the answer *"I don't know."* to the third place. The most often the students recognized metal: *"iron construction"*, *"steel"*, *"scrap iron"*. They placed wood to the second position; they exposed satellite dishes as the third. We can conclude from the analysis of answers referring to the work of Louise Bourgeois the work was incomprehensible for the students. Even when encouraged by the teacher they did not manage to link the appearance of the artwork with its message. This artwork required a more detailed teacher's explanation. According to the results we conclude again that a work that is intended for physical presence of the onlooker is not really suitable for display in the classroom, because with it we do not achieve the desired outcomes.

At Leandro Erlich's work (Figure 2C) we put the responses of the students to the front, who stated the most frequently the work represented *"a swimming pool"*.

Boy student 14B: *"It is obvious it is a swimming pool."*

Girl student 13A: *"A pool, but it is not quite a real swimming pool."*

The answers of the students follow who believed the work represented *“caught people”*. In the third place by frequency we find the answers the work represents *“reflection”*, as a girl student in 14A stated: *“Looking into water we see ourselves.”*

In the first place the students exposed and interpreted the work in the sense the artist wishes to convey us the feeling how someone feels under water. At the second place the students exposed the fact the artist wished us to have a look at each other. We can support this with the statement by a girl student 14A: *“Today we all walk past each other, and the artist wished us too look at each other from time to time.”* The third rank category says the artist wished to highlight the problem we humans are always separated with something. The statement by a girl student in 14B corroborates this: *“Perhaps we also set us barriers ourselves.”* We noticed in this part in comparison to initial situation students’ responses are deeper and closer to life. We can look for reasons for this in the fact students have understood the contemporary artist wishes to point to a problem that can touch upon each individual onlooker.

Identifying the material of this artwork the students put a real swimming pool built of concrete to the first place. The most frequently students of all groups placed plastic at the second place and various materials at the third place. We have noticed with some works of contemporary art identification of materials represents a challenge for students; but because the work of art cannot be observed in authentic space identification of material most often does not really make sense.

5. Concluding findings

The research showed in the initial test students did not have a formed opinion about contemporary art and neither did they recognize the principles of contemporary artists’ expressions. They linked contemporary art with otherness and searched for the interpretation of contents in their own experience from everyday life. After all the steps of the action research were performed we conclude. Students’ attitude toward contemporary artistic contents changed or formed. We have detected links with previous research (Zupančič, 2006), which have pointed to positive experience of students with contemporary art. We can expect at planned or perhaps chance meeting with contemporary works of art students will develop an appropriate attitude toward them. With this we have answered the general research question (RQg).

In the research we were interested in whether there were differences in the descriptions of contemporary visual arts between the initial record and the final interview. From the analysis of the responses we can conclude in the initial record the students described the motifs on the presented artistic reproductions better than their content. They recognized these on the basis of previous knowledge about visual arts. In the second part we can—also via diversity of responses—recognize a more in-depth reflection about the content. Also the descriptions no longer remained at the expressive level of the artistic motif. With this finding we answered the research question (RQ1).

From the perspective of the interpretation of contemporary visual arts we detected in students’ initial responses they started from their own experience, while we can conclude from the analysis of the final conversation the students experienced and deepened the contents more and linked them to a wider environment. We can conclude the students understood contemporary art wishes to highlight a certain problem that can touch upon each onlooker. The results thus indicate that between the initial record and the final interview there are differences in the quality of interpretation of contemporary visual art. We have thus answered the research question (RQ2). We can conclude for a higher quality of the interpretation of the content additional theoretical knowledge is needed. Here we find also perhaps the reproductions were

selected inappropriately, because the experience and the interpretation of this kind of works depend on the immediate encounter with the work of art.

We were also interested in finding whether there were differences in the recognition of material in the realization of contemporary visual art between the initial record and the final interview. In the selection of this question we started from the fact in art-educational practice material represents a high motivational moment for students. It has also proved here the most often the students recognized the material on the basis of their own experience. In the second part of the research the recognition of the material was slightly better with some works of contemporary art. We have thus answered the research question (RQ3). We conclude, nevertheless, because artwork cannot be observed in its authentic space, the recognition of the material often does not make sense.

Summarizing the findings, we can write that at the end of the research students were able to express their individual view, which with most students was positive. We have also noticed progress in students' comprehension of contemporary artistic practices. At works of contemporary visual art the students thought much more in-depth and analytically than at the beginning of the research. The reasons for better experiencing and understanding works of art can be found in more in-depth learning about contemporary visual art through quality planned steps of the action research.

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