



Contemporary Art in the teacher training. International collaboration, students' dialog in visual language

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Abstract

The presentation shows the artworks of an on-going contemporary art project between Hungary/Budapest&Finland/Rovaniemi based on the idea of Pataky Gabriella in cooperation with Seija Ulkuniemi. In addition to such traditional techniques as oil painting, graphics and modelling, visual artists freely experiment with unconventional materials, or employ customary ones in novel ways, and even the latest technology becomes a vehicle of expression as a matter of course. Using a variety of methods and materials, working in an experimental spirit, relying on curiosity and seeking originality: these have indeed been the fundamental goals of the currently employed methods of arts instruction. With changing basic conditions, however, we must lay a special emphasis on their conscious use; we must refresh our repertoire, we must combine tried and tested exercises with new ideas, we must deal with the subjects from the perspective of contemporary man. The artist involves the viewer in the creative process, and occasionally makes him or her an element of the artwork, making the latter a joint enterprise, an "open work." Most works of contemporary art are calls to a dialogue, an expression of opinion. Openness, an unprejudiced outlook, a receptivity to things old and

new: these are key to a contemporary strategy in life. To develop our students' creativity and innovative attitude, it is not enough to contemplate works of art in a passive manner: when we involve them in artistic creative processes, we ensure that the experience is consolidated through a multitude of senses. The examples of contemporary art provides new input for visual education, whether for project education or to attain adaptivity. Several of the qualities of the contemporary artist coincide with what is needed for good-quality visual education. The world transforms at an immeasurable rate, and education is hard put to keep abreast of the changes. Instead of the transference of data and knowledge, the emphasis should be laid on effective communication. We need to train educators who are aware of TODAY's problems and can handle them. Making contemporary art part of teacher training curricula successfully engenders a modern outlook on the part of the trainees, and helps them to deal with the conflicts of the age, as well as identify with the profession they are learning. The presentation introduces the results and effects of a project that is based on the apparatus of contemporary art, and which has been in progress in the teacher training institutions of several European countries since 2011 (the InSEA World Congress in Budapest), emerging in an unusual dialogue whose language is visual.

PAPRIKA: A cross-cultural visual communication exchange project for teachers-in-training. An international educational project with elements of contemporary art. Contemporary Art in the teacher training. International collaboration, students' dialogue in visual language



Photo 1. Project: Pataky Gabriella, Photo: Preisz Tivadar

Contemporary Art reflects the issues of all our todays, of our society, our private lives, and also the most up-to-date questions in and of the arts (Bodóczy,2012). The role of contemporary art is to ask questions, and not to give answers. It could be said that contemporary art is a diagnosis rather than a cure or a therapy. In contemporary art ethical issues are more important than aesthetic aspects. In addition to such traditional techniques as oil painting, graphics and modelling, visual artists freely experiment with unconventional materials, or employ customary ones in novel ways, and even the latest technology becomes a vehicle of expression as a matter of course. Using a variety of methods and materials, working in an experimental spirit, relying on curiosity and seeking originality: these are the fundamental goals of the current methods of art

instruction. With changing basic conditions, however, we must lay a special emphasis on their conscious use; we must refresh our repertoire, we must combine tried and tested exercises with new ideas, we must deal with the subject matter from a contemporary perspective (Pataky, 2013).

The artist involves the viewer in the creative process, and occasionally makes him or her an element of the artwork, creating a joint enterprise, an "open work." Most works of contemporary art are a summons to dialogue, and an expression of opinion. Openness, an unprejudiced outlook, a receptivity to things old and new: these are key to a contemporary strategy for life.

In order to develop our students' creativity and innovative attitude, it is not enough only to contemplate works of art in a passive manner, but when we involve them in actively creating works of art, we ensure that the experience is consolidated through a multiplicity of senses. The examples of contemporary art illustrated here, provide exciting new input for visual education, whether for project education or adaptive education. Several of the qualities of contemporary art coincide with what is needed in good-quality visual education. The world transforms at an immeasurable rate, and education is hard put to keep abreast of the changes. The emphasis on the transference of data and knowledge should rather be laid on effective communication. We need to train educators to be aware of today's problems and to be able to handle them.

Making contemporary art part of teacher training curricula successfully engenders a modern outlook on the part of the trainees, and helps them to deal with the conflicts of the age, as well as to identify with the profession they are learning.

The report introduces the results and effects of the PAPRIKA project that is based on the creative possibilities of contemporary art, and which has been in progress in teacher training institutions in several European countries since 2011, emerging as an unusual dialogue whose language is visual. InSEA members are open to opportunities to engage in intercultural education and involve their students in exploring the world through art. A couple of

years ago at an InSEA Conference Melanie Davenport from Georgia State University, Atlanta, a German colleague Manfred Blohm from Europa University Flensburg, and I, decided to make a cross-cultural collaboration through art between our students!

In 2015 approximately one hundred teacher training students of the University of Lapland joined the project with Seija Ulkuniemi. This project could not exist without the encouragement of Bodóczy István (H) and Wendy Randall (UK).

The first steps of the project by my students of Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE TÓK) and Moholy-Nagy Art University (MOME) were of vital importance to the organization and management of InSEA's world congress in Budapest, 2011. The group of students forged together by this experience formed the core of this subsequent PAPRIKA project. They wanted to stay together, and initiate a dialogue with other students of their age who live in different cultures, while enjoying the effervescent international atmosphere of an arts education. Different cultures, countries and languages spice up this entente. Language barriers and time differences are challenges to be enjoyed and overcome.

¹ Already we have two reports published:

<http://www.edition-kupaed.de/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/05-2013-07.pdf>

http://www.edition-kupaed.de/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/05-2013-08_englisch.pdf

Let me introduce you to the Hungarian Part.
The project is entitled PAPRIKA, an acronym standing for:

PAPRIka



Photo 2. patakygabriella

P=Project

A=Atlanta – the headquarters of our American partner institution. Without the discovery of America, Hungary would not have its emblematic foodstuff, the paprika.

P=BudaPest

R=Rovaniemi – the University of Lapland and FlensbuRg – the headquarters of our German partner university. Flensburg sailors played an important role in bringing the goods of America to Europe. The wall of their oldest church bears not images of

saints, but models of ships.

I=InSEA – but also for Internet, sharing our artworks on the web.

“-ka” is a diminutive suffix in Hungarian, and served to emphasize our humility towards high art. It can also stand for the Hungarian words for “adventure” (kaland) and “creation” (alkotás).

Paprika is also, of course, the Hungarian word for ‘pepper’, thus this acronym also stands for something often associated stereotypically with Hungary.

What can we show of Hungary that cannot be found in any guidebook? You can see a selection of the works of the Paprika project students here. In addition to the individual creative projects, we made joint works, creative happenings and performances. Taking inspiration from contemporary art, my students concentrated on certain parts of their lives to create a personal response to life at the university, in the city, their immediate environment, and their national or global identity.

The results of the brain-storming were mind maps with drawings instead of words. (this is only 1 example of 6, about 2 square metre each)



Photo 3. patakygabriella

Simonyi Enikő

We worked much after dark in night-time Budapest, though we prepared during the day at the university. We sought to emphasise our identity as a group by all wearing red clothes - the colour of paprika. This conspicuous look contributed to many delightfully interesting unexpected encounters and new acquaintances.



Photo 5. patakygabriella

We created luminous, kinetic or mobile (rocking, floating, exploding) inscriptions, some of them very large.



Photo 6. patakylgabriella Project of Wágner Bendegúz

We made an exhibition of light-boxes made from children's plastic lunchboxes (referencing paprika, the foodstuff)



Photo 7. patakygabriella

Following a poll of students as to which was their favourite food ever...we cooked great vats of paprikáskrumpli – the winning choice – as a complete performance in the art studio for all the people of the university.



Photo 8. patakygabriella

On a little aside, the students were self-critical about their daily choices to take the easy option of unhealthy fast food. This resulted in paper sculptures of food stuffs, denoting the valueless nature of much of such food.



Photo 9. patakygabriella Project of Szabados Dóra

One student chose to express her social empathy by baking gingerbread men, not in traditional cutesy form, but in the sadly recognisable untidy or baggy shape of most homeless people. She then handed out these provocative biscuits to passers-by in one of the main gathering points for these people to help to expose this major problem of homelessness in Budapest.



Photo 10. Project and Photo of Buzás Alíz

We also created a symbolic object saved from one of our exploding happenings on the Danube. This we called "the travelling pepper" as we took it on all our excursions, documenting each event. It travelled the whole country, not only Budapest, even at weekends and during the holidays. The main thing was not the travel itself, but through this action the students connected with each other in order to transfer care of this object, thus there was face to face communication and contact constantly.



Photo 11-12. patakygabriella

One student has to make a journey every day with 10 public transport changes, taking over an hour. Recognising that it isn't easy to go to school when entertainment beckons, she made a photographic list of all of these buses etc, with pictograms alongside of the alternative occupation at the change point, if she were to decide just to get off the bus or tram right then.





Photo 13. patakygabriella Project of Kovács Bettina

This project looks at the layout of the furniture in the rooms of the student hostels. The student asked her peers about their rooms and the circumstances of use. A colour code denotes the everyday importance of these basic objects (bed, chairs, table, wardrobe). The picture below shows in an aesthetic way the findings: objects are reduced to simple lines overlaid on transparent layers on a lightbox.

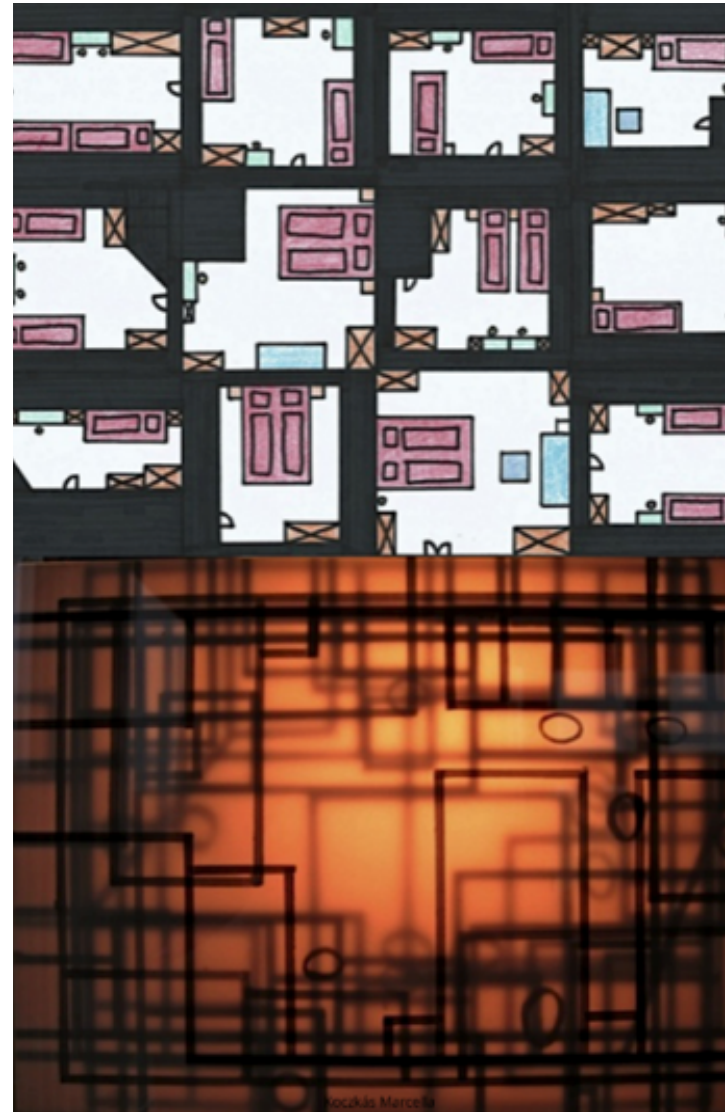


Photo 14. patakygabriella Project of Koczás Marcella

Instead of crying because we are poor and the houses are in a bad condition, one student decided to find the stories visible in their crumbling plaster and peeling paint. She went up close with a telephoto lens and documented some of the tales that anyone can see just by looking. Here we have a Japanese princess, and a two sea creatures...



Photo 15. Project and Photo of Lehofer Noémi

Inventory of the contents of students' bags: one student chose to photograph and photogram all the objects contained in our bags. A dominant statistic is that we have many keys, as we have to lock everything because of the high national crime rate. We also see evidence of a national hypochondria: there were medicines and pills in every bag...

"Unequal" is the title of a project in which a student matched photographs of two kindergartens in two very different areas within the city with photographs of housing near to each, and then added alongside photographs of pairs of children's shoes

from each place. This showed very clearly the social inequality of these areas.



Photo 16. Project and Photo of Takács Johanna

Here we wanted to show that there are four very different seasons in our country – as compared to the extremely long winter and brief bright summer of Lapland, for example, so this action-documentation collected examples of shoes worn in each of the four seasons by students here, and placed them for photographing on the beautiful staircase of the faculty.

Now here is a project for which a student made a photographic survey of the variety of chairs on campus. She then asked the students by means of a questionnaire, which one was their favourite.

Action: Dog-Face. Realizing that few of the students knew much about any of their classmates, this project was created to remedy this fact. For one whole day, all the owners of a dog wore a dog-face mask of their own making. This led to many conversations and new friendships.



Photo 17. patakygabriella Project of Boros Zsófia

Prosthetic limbs, ...magical regrowth of crudely cut off tree branches. One student, so upset by the brutal chopping of branches on large trees in the city, chose to recreate their natural growth virtually.

These slides you have just seen is a narrow selection of projects from the PAPRIKA group of teacher training students in Budapest.



Photo 18. patakygabriella

Now we hand over to the PAPRIKA group of students from the Lapland University in Rovaniemi. Where is Lapland? Santa Claus lives there, in the northern part of Finland, on the Arctic Circle. I was a guest of the University of Lapland and Seija Ulkuniemi, and there I was able to continue the project, with Finnish students.

In Lapland every living organism is fighting with nature: it is hard to survive. Everything has created a unique way to survive, and there is thus an interconnectedness with the natural environment. Perhaps this is the reason that most of the 73 works by the students are related to nature: in first place about trees, and in second, snow.

Ella Niemiaho's work is only one example of all the tree works.

There are two seasons - a short, intense summer – and a very long and cold winter: Finnish people are not afraid of snow.

Eevi Häyrynen and Esaia Lahti made a fishing themed community art project: this required participation in traditional and specific skills for survival during this bitter winter season.

"Guardian Angels!" by Anni Kenttälä: for this student, friendship amongst the students is as vital for survival as food and warmth. Tekijä Meeri Kiviniemi was inspired by the lightboxes of our Hungarian PAPRIKA message to produce her own, combined with the native elements of snow – a vernacular building material – and light, with text. "ONNI" (meaning 'happiness', joy, luck) was the word she chose to represent the core value and experience of her life. For me this is the most emblematic work of all, as it brings together these natural i.e. elements and the community – her family who worked together on this project.

Marika Kumpula entitled her project "Summer in the Middle of Winter", bringing together her personal interest - make-up – and the natural environment. It shows in a powerful contrast the brevity of an arctic summer - local flowers bloom transiently on bare legs planted on the edge of melting snow.

"Little Lights" made by Paula Kankainen, reflects small happinesses found in everyday life that lighten the darkness of much of her winter and student existence: her loving dog, a cup of tea with friends, and the evocative flicker of the aurora borealis. "It's funny", she said, "that my dog is actually just the same colour as the pieces of my broken (favourite) teacup in my work".

Perttu Grönfors created a photo montage of the process of fire making and cooking food over it: two essentials for life in this frozen climate.

Ana Muurikainen's work connects an essential warming material, wool, with the new ideas she uncovers at university: "it's all about the brain".

Warm boots are required outside in Lapland, but everyone changes into slippers – "reinos" – so Riitta Alasuvanto arranged her favourites into a heart shape on the doormat. Here I am unable to resist mention of a work by Maria Huhmarniemi of Rovaniemi University, entitled Kuvitteellinen sukupuu / Imaginary Bloodline, 2007.

This descriptive photograph, entitled "Weekday Feast" by Tommi Nurmesjärvi celebrates both the official waterproof coverall

garment that students wear in a variety of ways, and his partying delight at the prospect of no lectures tomorrow!

Tiia Fenner, "Grey Area": the Sami people co-exist with modern culture, and this project reflects aspects of this traditional heritage. The black and white images create a sense of nostalgia as well as representing the 'grey area' of the student's knowledge – how much she has yet to learn of this exotic and richly textured folk art.

"473,31 €". The topic of Eerika Karppinen's work is a very common concern among students: money. 473,31€ is the amount of student allowance she gets per month, and she made it from a readily available material – receipts – that we rarely look at, but representing the precious money we spend. The piece is like the cloud of receipts that always floats in the back of every student's mind. "Art is process-oriented tool. With the help of this tool, you can better understand life's complexity." Yoko Ono

Can we not see how these works fulfill not only the criteria of contemporary art as stated at the start of this presentation, but also allow glimpses into lives, and ways of living not easily written in words? If you have been inspired by the works you have seen, and would like to collaborate or create your own expressions of life and living, then please do join the PAPRIKA project where you are.

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Seija and I are planning an exhibition for the work of the Budapest and Rovaniemi students, to which everybody is invited to contribute and continue the work.

Please, join in if you are also interested!

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Photo 19. patakygabriella