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Submitted: 21/09/2017 - Accepted: 21/10/2017 - Published: 29/12/2017

Child and the Work of Art

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DOI: 10.26417/ejser.v8i1.p144-155

Abstract

The pupils are allowed, through structured observation and reception of works of art, to develop and improve their perception and intellect, as well as their moral and aesthetic attitudes. Learning to perceive, enjoy and evaluate works of art provides opportunities for creating ideas and thinking on different levels. The subject of this research are the reactions of third- and fourth-grade pupils to the art of Gustav Klimt. The research sample consisted of 282 pupils, of which 142 were female and 140 males. The results indicate high levels of perception, acceptance and interpretation of Klimt's art.

Keywords: Gustav Klimt, visual arts education, work of art, creative process, methods

Introduction

Visual arts are becoming more and more indispensable in modern education, as well as contemporary educational concepts, because of their role in the development of skills such as communication and evaluation, as well as creative and cognitive development of children and youth. Grade-school art classes are useful on many levels because teaching art does not revolve only around learning, but also around the tangible experience of perception, acknowledging and accepting the world of art that stems from the history of humans. Since prehistoric times, humans have been discovering the possibility of thought expression through visual media. That process

led to the discovery of using pictorial symbols as a cypher of meaning and ideas. Visual works of art have become impressive forms that accumulate cognitive values of different historical eras, which makes them crucial for studying human culture. Warburg (Biatostocki, 1986) claims that visual works of art cannot be limited only to their visual aspect, but must be understood through anthropology, psychoanalysis and history, as well as philosophy, religion, ideology and the totality of their historical, political and social background. Even if we are observing specific situations in which an individual's thought and hands made a particular piece, it needs to be projected onto a universal perspective of everyone. As the philosophers of human culture believe, the firm background of cultural events is necessary for understanding any work of art. This leads us to the conclusion that a work of art possesses a cause-and-effect relationship with the time, place and culture in which it was created, serving as a visual story of historical turmoil, social and artistic interests of specific eras. It does carry a certain spirit of that era in itself, but it also goes beyond space and time it was created in, enriching the development of human aesthetic and cultural sensibility. Unlike other products of human work, whose shapes are mostly tied to their practical use, works of art can serve their purpose in their independent configurations of symbols. Because of its universally understood manifestations, visual arts have had many specific functions in different cultures besides the aesthetic value. Telling dramatic, picturesque human and life stories visually has always been the task of art, as well as providing a way to help understand the essence of human truth. This is why visual artistic content stays relevant in educating young generations.

Visual works art, as part of a whole world rich with visual content, are a constant dialogue between the creator and the recipient. Zovko (2009) expresses the need to understand works of art as autonomous persons waiting for someone (the recipient) to talk to, which leads to a degree of understanding, explaining and experience dependent on the quality of work in question and its hermeneutical interviewer. Hauser has a similar view: "A true work of art is not just an expression, but an announcement, and in that sense is not just a monologue, but a dialogue as well." (Hauser, 1986:4) Artistic production and reception are intertwined and mutually dependent on communication and evoking response, emotional factors and social function, as well as cultural constellation.

From these facts we conclude that our relationship to culture is conditioned, and we could even say that our relationship with culture is formed by learning. That is the reason Baković (1985) sees that works of art are not static nor a closed fact, but an open, dynamic reality with its own continuity and identity. The openness of a work of art seeks its recipient/interpreter, and it is a subject of communication that flows both ways, so the pupils need to learn skills that make that communication possible. The works of art were not made primarily for them, so they require perception and reception – otherwise, they do not serve their purpose.

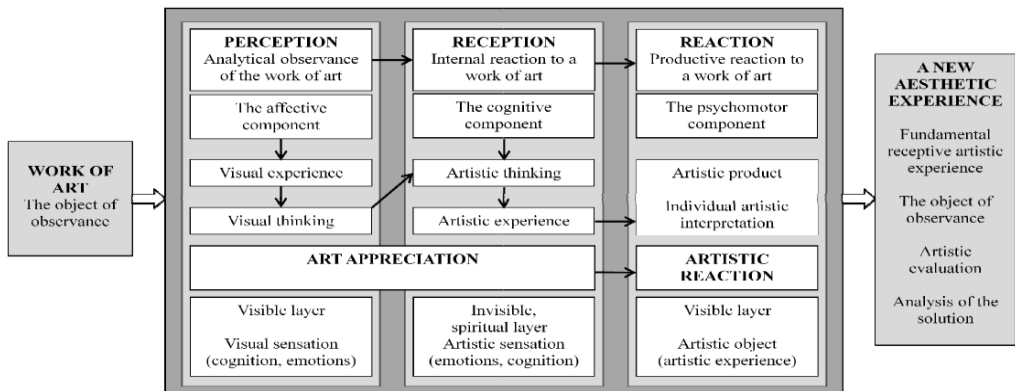
A work of art in visual arts teaching represents an adequate visual stimulation through which the pupils should understand an assignment better, and it can aid the development of a child's experience of the world with its multilayeredness and acceptance. When amplified in such a way, that experience improves the intellectual, moral and aesthetic development of children. For them to understand art that was not primarily intended for them, they need to be led through the layers of the work of art, and within that process develop their visual, cultural and aesthetic sensibility. The reception of visual works of art is a challenging task for pupils. They need to understand the differences of certain styles, learn the language of visual arts, perceive completely opposite eras – which can be difficult and needs to be done gradually, which is one of the goals of visual arts education. Encountering a work of art should be adequately actualized in all degrees of education, so that the ability to aesthetically evaluate develops with the pupils' cognitive and emotional abilities.

The aesthetic transfer method

The aesthetic transfer method in visual arts classes enables not only transfer of information, but also the aesthetic components of a work of art. In applying this method, the presentation of chosen works of art must allow interaction between the observer (child, pupil) and the work of art, as the sensory input is linked to memories, experiences and associations. As interaction is a personal process very different from one child to another, it is very important to generate conditions within a group that allow the children to express their opinions. Children can react on the emotional level, the associative level and the formal intellectual level. These three types of reactions vary and differ, as they depend on the observer and the artwork. The experienced artwork can lead to an artistic reaction, which will be the individual solution of each child and will represent a new aesthetic experience. The fundamental rule relates to the reproduction of works of art. These have to be realistic and of high quality, so that not much original information is lost in the reproduction. To lead to a new aesthetic experience, the method of aesthetic transfer must adhere to principles of quality.

To enjoy the works of art and be able to enjoy artistic expressions, the children and pupils must first notice them. It is crucial that the children involved in artistic activities to adopt techniques of viewing aesthetic objects with regard to their visible qualities. In the method of aesthetic transfer, those processes are expanded to elicit a practical artistic and creative reaction. The method of aesthetic transfer has three phases:

- Perception: perception of a work of art with all senses
- Reception: putting the images into words
- Reaction: activity, productive reaction to a work of art



Picture 1: Diagram of the method of aesthetic transfer (Duh, Zupančič, 2011)

Perception and reception of works of art are the first two phases of the aesthetic transfer method. The former is directed towards children/pupils who get a clear perception of a work of art, and is necessary for triggering the appropriate aesthetic experience. The latter is directed towards the perception outcomes expressed verbally, which makes them planned and internalized. The combination of art work perception and receptive capabilities of children and pupils is called artistic appreciation. Aesthetic transfer method thus stems from artistic appreciation, which is also the basis for a deep emotional reaction. (Duh, Zupančič, 2011).

Methodological research aspect

The problem and objective of the research

The research on the subject of children's reaction to visual works of art is a longitudinal research, one of many that the authors have executed in grades 1 through 4 (primary school), and they include observation of children's reactions to the works of the most famous artists and art movements of the 20th century.

The problem of the research was establishing reactions of third- and fourth-grade pupils (primary school) to the art of Gustav Klimt. Assuming that most of the pupils have not previously encountered the artist, the goal was also to question how ready they are to accept new information and content related to visual arts.

The cognitive objective of the research is establishing whether there are any differences in reactions to the art of Gustav Klimt between third- and fourth-grade pupils, and the possible differences in accepting new content and knowledge.

The pragmatic objective relates to creating new knowledge in visual arts and improvement of visual arts classes. This research highlights the importance of quality visual arts teaching and offers guidelines for a more successful organizing of the teaching process. (Bubić, 2012/13).

The objectives of this research are recording children's reactions to the art of Gustav Klimt and establishing whether there is a difference in their attitudes relating to their age and grade. It is also of importance to establish how the pupils would approach the process of creating Klimt-inspired art of their own.

The variables of the research are independent (sex and grade) and dependent (pupils' experience and thoughts) of Gustav Klimt's art.

Sampling frame and field phase

Table 1: Sex

Answers:	<i>f</i>	%
Boy	140	49,6
Girl	142	50,4
Total	282	100

The participants of this research were third- and fourth-grade pupils (primary school), of which 160 were in third, and 122 in fourth grade.

Table 2: Grade

Answers:	<i>f</i>	%
Third	160	56,7
Fourth	122	43,3
Total	282	100

The research was carried out during the end of May and beginning of June 2014 and it included three schools in Split and the surrounding area.

The research method used was questionnaire. Considering the young age of the pupils, and assuming most of them have not encountered Gustav Klimt's work before, they were introduced to the artist's biography and opus prior to the questioning. They were showed five works of art that continued to serve for the questionnaire and further creative work. The works shown were *Expectation*, *Beech Forest I*, *Tree of Life*, *The Stocklet Frieze* and *The Kiss*.



Picture 2: Expectation, 1905 **Picture 3:** Beech Forest I, 1902 **Picture 4:** Tree of Life, 1905



Picture 5: The Stocklet Frieze, 1905 **Picture 6:** The Kiss, 1907-1908

The research tool was a questionnaire, designed exclusively for the research in question and the pupils' age. The questions were close-ended, and the last one about the art works shown was multiple-choice. The rest of the questions were dichotomous.

Hypothetical research context

The following hypotheses were formulated:

- Hg: It is expected that the students would perceive the art of Gustav Klimt and his manner of painting differently.
- H1: There is a correlation between the pupils' grade and preference for the artist.
- H2: There is a correlation between the pupils' grade and perception of the artist's paintings.
- H3: There is a correlation between the pupils' grade and preference for individual paintings.

Results and argument

At the end of questioning and data collection it was noted that no questionnaire was invalid. After the data collection, all data was entered to be processed into the SPSS – program for statistical analysis. In this part, the results of the analysis are presented.

The first question was about whether the pupils found Klimt's manner of painting interesting or not.

Table 3: Grade / You consider the manner of Gustav Klimt's painting:

		You consider the manner of Gustav Klimt's painting:		Total
		Interesting	Not interesting	
Grade	Third	152	8	160
	Fourth	106	16	122
Total		258	24	282

Klimt's manner of painting is considered interesting by 258 pupils, and 24 consider it not interesting.

Hypothesis H2: There is a correlation between the pupils' grade and perception of the artist's paintings.

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	,854(b)	1	,116
Continuity Correction(a)	,858	1	,128
Likelihood Ratio	,828	1	,116
Fisher's Exact Test			
N of Valid Cases	282		

$$\chi^2 = 0,854 \chi^2_{\text{tab}} [\alpha = 5\%, \text{df} = 1] = 3,84$$

Validity of $\chi^2 < \chi^2_{\text{tab}} \rightarrow H_0$ indicates that the initial assumption of a correlation between the pupils' grade and perception of the artist's paintings may be accepted with a significance of 5%.

Table 5: Pearson’s contingency coefficient for testing the independence of two nominal characteristics with chi-squared test

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal	by Contingency Coefficient	,143	,116
Nominal			
N of Valid Cases		282	

a Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

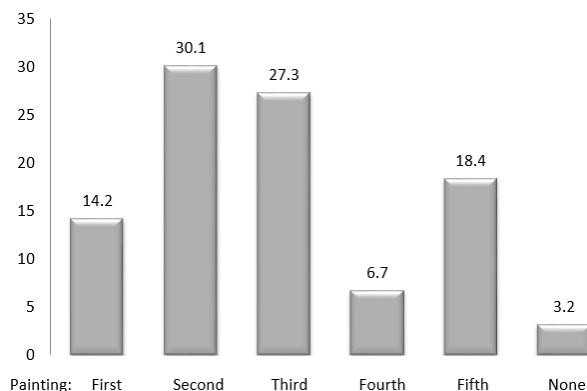
$$C = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{\chi^2 + n}} = 0,143$$

Pearson’s contingency coefficient is

The empirical significance of $\alpha^* = 0,116 = 11,6\% \Rightarrow \alpha^* > 5\%$ confirms that the coefficient is not significant.

This confirms H2: There is a correlation between the pupils' grade and perception of the artist's paintings, while also confirming Hg, the main hypothesis. The third-grade pupils have expressed a higher preference for the art of Gustav Klimt through this question also, with 95% considering them interesting. A negative answer was given by 5% of the third-grade pupils. Of the fourth-grade pupils, 86% expressed an interest and 14 % did not. The second question had the pupils choose their favorite among the paintings they observed. They took more time than for the other questions, studying the details closely.

Picture 7: Of the works of Gustav Klimt shown, I prefer:



The questionnaire results indicate that most pupils liked the second painting (30.1%). The third was chosen by 27.3%, the fifth by 18.4%, the first by 14.2%, while the fourth was chosen by 6.7%. Only 3.2% did not like any of the paintings presented.

Hypothesis H3: There is a correlation between the pupils' grade and preference for individual paintings.

Table 6: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8,216(a)	5	,145
Likelihood Ratio	8,332	5	,139
Linear-by-Linear Association	,222	1	,638
N of Valid Cases	282		

$$\chi^2 = 8,216 \quad \chi^2_{\text{tab}} [\alpha=5\%, \text{df}=5] = 11,07$$

$\chi^2 < \chi^2_{\text{tab}} \rightarrow H_0$ is valid, meaning that the initial assumption of correlation between grade and preference for individual paintings may be accepted with a significance of 5%.

Table 7: Pearson's contingency coefficient for testing the independence of two nominal characteristics with chi-squared test

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient	,168	,145
N of Valid Cases		287	

a Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Pearson's contingency coefficient is
$$C = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{\chi^2 + n}} = 0,168$$

Empirical significance of $\alpha^* = 0,145 = 14,5\% \Rightarrow \alpha^* > 5\%$ confirms that the coefficient is not significant.

Table 8: Grade / Of Gustav Klimt's paintings I have seen, I prefer:

		Of Gustav Klimt's paintings I have seen, I prefer:						Total
		First painting	Second painting	Third painting	Fourth painting	Fifth painting	None	
Grade	Third	24	51	38	11	34	2	160
	Fourth	16	34	39	8	18	7	122
Total		40	85	77	19	52	9	282

The third-grade pupils preferred the second painting (51 pupils), while the fourth-grade pupils preferred the third one (39 pupils). In the third grade the third painting was chosen by 38 pupils, the fifth by 34 and the first by 24. In the fourth grade the second painting was chosen by 34 pupils, the fifth by 18 and the first one by 16 pupils. Pupils of third and fourth grades both liked the fourth painting the least. The painting in question was chosen by 11 third-grade pupils and 8 fourth-grade pupils. Two pupils in the third grade and seven in the fourth grade did not like any of the paintings shown.

Table 9: Grade / I can understand the meaning of Gustav Klimt's art:

		I can understand the meaning of Gustav Klimt's art.		Total
		YES	NO	
Grade	Third	113	47	160
	Fourth	60	62	122
Total		173	109	282

Most pupils questioned, 61.3% of them, expressed understanding of what Gustav Klimt's art represents, while 38.7% think they are unable to understand what his art represents.

By comparing the answers to this question to the answers about the preference among Klimt's paintings, we observe that 92% of the pupils questioned prefer his work and 61% perceives to understand them. We may draw a conclusion that a certain percentage likes the art in question, but is unable to understand it. This may be solved by quality content development in the future teaching process. The

statement “I believe I could paint in the manner of Gustav Klimt.” was confirmed by only 21.3% of pupils questioned, a total of 60 pupils, and 78.7% was self-critical and gave a negative answer.

Table 10: Grade / “I believe I could paint in the manner of Gustav Klimt.”

		I believe I could paint in the manner of Gustav Klimt.		Total
		YES	NO	
Grade	Third	33	127	160
	Fourth	27	95	122
Total		60	222	282

Only 21.3% of pupils (60 in all) agreed with the claim “I believe I could paint in the manner of Gustav Klimt.”, while 78.7% disagreed.

There are differences between third- and fourth-grade pupils. Of fourth-grade pupils, 22% believe they could paint in Klimt's manner, while the same is true for 20% of third-grade pupils.

The eighth question investigates the pupil's wish to try painting like Klimt. Most of them accepted the challenge (85.8%), but a part (14.2%) rejected it.

Table 11: Grade / I would like to try to paint like Gustav Klimt.

		I would like to try to paint like Gustav Klimt.		Total
		YES	NO	
Grade	Third	138	22	160
	Fourth	104	18	122
Ukupno		242	40	282

The majority, 86% of third-grade pupils and 85% of fourth-grade pupils, would like to try to paint like Gustav Klimt.

Table 12: Grade / This is my first contact with Gustav Klimt.

		This is my first contact with Gustav Klimt.		Total
		YES	NO	
Grade	Third	106	54	160
	Fourth	97	25	122
Total		203	79	282

The last question in the questionnaire was related to prior knowledge of Gustav Klimt's opus. Prior to this research, 72% of the pupils have not had any contact with Klimt's art, while 28% have had some contact.

If we observe the third and the fourth grade, we can conclude that 66% of third-grade pupils have had their first contact with Klimt's work during this research, compared to 79% of fourth-grade pupils.

Pupils' art work

The art work was created by the pupils in the third stage of the aesthetic transfer method, the realization phase, and they showed an excellent reaction to the visual stimulus and perceived Klimt's expression as a creative impulse for their own art.



Picture 8: Expectation Picture 9: Expectation Picture 10: Expectation



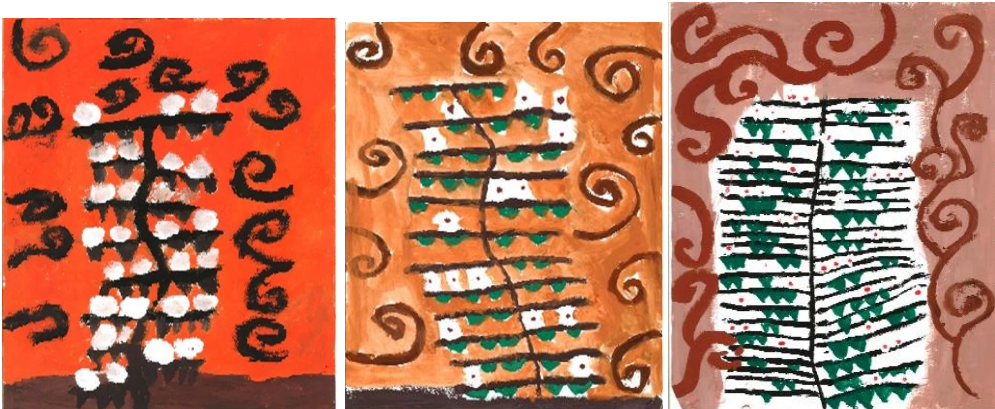
**Picture 11: Beech Forest I Picture 12: Beech Forest I Picture 13: Beech Forest I
Picture 14: Beech Forest I**



Picture 15: Beech Forest I **Picture 16: Beech Forest I** **Picture 17: Tree of Life**



Picture 17: Tree of Life **Picture 18: Tree of Life** **Picture 19: Tree of Life**



Picture 20: The Stocklet Frieze
Picture 22: The Stocklet Frieze

Picture 21: The Stocklet Frieze



Picture 23: The Stocklet Frieze



Picture 24: The Kiss



Picture 25: The Kiss

Final observations

The objective of this research was to introduce pupils to the opus of Gustav Klimt, establish their reactions to his art and develop flexibility to accept new content.

Assuming that the pupils would react differently to Klimt's opus, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- Hg: It is expected that the students would perceive the art of Gustav Klimt and his manner of painting differently.
- H1: There is a correlation between the pupils' grade and preference for the artist.
- H2: There is a correlation between the pupils' grade and perception of the artist's paintings.
- H3: There is a correlation between the pupils' grade and preference for individual paintings.

The research has shown a high preference for the artist's opus, which has also proved the readiness to accept new content.

The first hypothesis was confirmed because the results have indicated that the third-grade pupils have a stronger preference for the art of Gustav Klimt. The difference in percentage, although minor, exists.

The second hypothesis was also confirmed because there was a larger percentage of positive answers by third-grade pupils than those in fourth grade. We expected that the difference will be seen relative to the children's age, but it is surprising that the younger pupils expressed a higher preference.

A part of the questionnaire pertaining to the understanding of Gustav Klimt's art resulted in mostly positive answers. Most of the pupils expressed an ability to understand the artist's work (61.3%), while some (38.7%) expressed a lack of understanding. Even if the difference between those who like and those who perceive to understand the art is minor, it exists and should be dealt with. This may be achieved through increasing the quality of teaching content and the enrichment of the pupils' artistic opus, and should not be limited to those who like the work of art, but every single pupil participating in the visual art classes.

The third hypothesis was also confirmed because the third-grade pupils expressed a better understanding of the art of Gustav Klimt. It was surprising to see the younger pupils expressing a higher degree of perceived understanding, but it is consistent with the previous results, which indicate a higher preference for the artist.

Through parts of the questionnaire relating to the pupils' evaluation of a possibility of painting in the manner of Klimt, their evaluation was mostly negative, but they did express the wish to paint like him.

These results are not surprising because the pupils understand their skill levels, but the positive attitude towards new challenges prevail.

The last question shows that a large percentage of pupils have never before heard of Klimt's opus.

The most valuable asset for this research were the results of the pupils' artistic process, their own paintings inspired by Klimt's works of art of their own choosing. They were highly motivated, and very satisfied and proud after their task was done. It is crucial to emphasize that the reception of works of art does not have replication for its goal, instead it should strive to aesthetic development and strengthening positive attitudes towards art and artistic expression in children.

The pupils are allowed to develop their intellectual, moral and aesthetic values through artistic reception, which is a way of multilevel thinking. Learning through visual arts not only includes receiving knowledge of works of art, but their strategic understanding, as well as an ability to build a cultural heritage for the young. The task of visual arts in education is helping pupils understand themselves and others using visual works of art as a guide. These components help develop a child's personality by raising awareness of themselves, which is essential for any pupil's intellectual progress.

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