

**CONTEMPO-  
RARY ART,  
MULTIMEDIA  
AND  
INNOVATION  
IN EDUCATION**

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the potential as well as the current and possible future outlook of art, multimedia and innovative techniques in the field of education. The authors aim to offer insight into the potential of discipline fusion and conceptual approaches. At the same time, the perceived limitations of the role of art and media in education are introduced through the arguments of renowned authors in this field. In the following text, the authors introduce the conundrum of relying on modern technologies with absolute trust in the education process. The conclusion of this chapter is that modern technology is to be used as it strengthens the creative side in pupils and students. However, the means of use are absolutely vital and being oblivious to traditional methods of creation is not what we should seek.

## THE TREND

The main trends not only in contemporary art but also in education include interdisciplinarity, intermediality (multimediality, transmediality) and interactivity. These tendencies are not only about art pedagogy and gallery education but also about other school subjects and disciplines.

This text is a combination of two main points of view. Prague City Gallery as the museum of contemporary art has participated in the App your school project bringing a specific approach with discovering new competencies during special practices in unique gallery space: contemporary art, its relationship with the media, technologies and education. Part of Czech digital ateliers was realized by the educational department of the Prague City Gallery - an important Czech gallery (administered by the Prague City Hall), which focuses on modern and contemporary Czech art (20th and 21st centuries). Thanks to its orientation towards progressive art, the gallery provides space for the realization of educational activities with transitions and crossovers to other disciplines, which is, among other things, a significant tendency in contemporary art. The second point of view is situated at Elementary art school Music Art, where were the other parts of digital ateliers realized. Elementary art schools are the type of schools that are a specific part of the Czech educational system (arts education). It is a world-unique network of schools in the Czech Republic and Slovakia that provide the basics of education in several artistic disciplines: musical, artistic, dance and literary-dramatic. There are ideal conditions (compared to classical schools) for the implementation of digital ateliers - it is mainly due to the possibility of sufficient time subsidy and better background (specialized classes with better material and technical equipment).

These mentioned transformations of contemporary art and education (interdisciplinarity, intermediality, interactivity) are influenced by important factors. „Changes in student populations and the visual culture that is forming them are another important influence on this art education reform movement. Teaching visual culture is, more multicultural, interdisciplinary and technological than art education in the past. It addresses a wide range of challenging issues that lead professional artists and students to make powerful visual statements. Fundamentally, it is about art as a form of cultural production and seeks to reveal the creativity (by both makers and viewers) that gives images and artefacts their meanings.” (Mason, Eca, 2008, p. 45)

The basic concept for the character of contemporary times and art is also visual culture. „Visual culture is a focal point for many, diverse concerns, but all have in common the recognition that today, more than at any time in history, we are living our everyday lives through visual imagery [...]” (Hickman, 2005, p. 151)

“However, visual culture has its own pitfalls - above all, the predominance of form over content. Both developments - a visual way of life and culture of self-referential, depthless images - cause much angst among scholars, many of whom [...] deplore the ascendancy of images over words. [...] Postmodern images privilege form over content, signifiers over signification, surface play over narrative, spectacle over characterization and plot.” (Hickman, 2005, p. 152)

## CONCEPTUAL ART

In addition to the concept of visual culture, the concept of conceptual art is also used here. Conceptual and post-conceptual art uses overlaps to other disciplines, links art with science disciplines, etc. Here is not an important form, but on the contrary, the content - the concept, the work is often a multimedia character. In the youngest art, video art and the use of new media appear in a creative way, or the work itself becomes a medium in itself - a means of communicating certain important ideas. Interactive works are also typical of 20th and 21st-century art. The viewers are actively drawn and involved in the creative process, they are often co-authors of the work or they react directly to them, for example, in the context of changing movement, voice, body temperature, etc. Artefacts are also intended for gradual completion (e.g., visitors' works, etc.) sometimes. Just the fact that each viewer interprets his work of art with his unique angle of view, is illustrated by the fact that they are, in the broadest sense of the word, the co-creators of the work in question. Conceptual dimensions are a typical attribute not only for contemporary art but also for education. Just as in contemporary art, content, idea and concept is more important than perfect form and craftwork, similarly to art pedagogy: „The goal of art education ceases to be merely the creation of an aesthetically impressive work, but rather a testimony that, besides the form of a material artefact, can also take the form of a work of action, interactive, multimedia or intermediate.“ (Babyrádová, 2007, p.11)

It is often not the creation of the resulting physical work and the resultant artefact, but the process, course, development, action, multimedia output. The key current features and attributes of art and education are therefore essentially the same - they mirror and copy each other, they use similar ways and means, there are many similarities, but also some differences. „Contemporary artists and art educators in general work in interdisciplinary, artistic contexts applying and combining different modes of expression.“ (Mason, Eca, 2008, p. 198)

However, the fields of art and education have consistently been reflected throughout history. Art always reflected and captured the world around us, one of the sources of knowledge. „In earlier centuries artists were seen as contributing to the whole spectrum of human knowledge by picturing human and non-human spheres of existence in iconic, indexical and symbolic images. Artists produced visual and spatial images and narratives that were modes of analyzing and describing the world - showing us different aspects of the world, how human beings are in the world, what we do and how we think and feel about ourselves and the world about us.“ (Hardy, 2006, p.79)

Art and science connect the world we live in. „The 'same reality' that links art and science is life itself and the world we inhabit.“ (Hickman, 2005, p. 85)

## INTERDISCIPLINARITY

Inter-professionalism and related project teaching is the ideal platforms for acquiring knowledge in broader contexts and deeper contexts. It is a highly effective way of teaching when pupils get comprehensive information about the issue in the context of larger projects. Incorporating new media into learning is, in turn, an attractive way to make content accessible to pupils and students. Current technologies, not just the information, break the barrier of technological complexity in different areas and thus open up the possibility for pupils to use this potential adequately. Pupils are in daily contact with them in their personal lives, and therefore their engagement in teaching is logically the next step in which a learned educator can make the most of the possibilities of new technologies for the delivery of educational content. Ideally, it can inspire and lead to reflection on their existing use beyond school. It is important to be able to use popular channels, networks and media to mediate important topics. At the same time, it is important to inform them of the dangers and pitfalls on the Internet and social networks. An interactive way of teaching primarily develops creative thinking, which is an important foundation for all disciplines. Creative thinking is beneficial for the study of many disciplines and for the performance of most professions - non-artistic, scientific and technical (for example, scientists, doctors, architects, lawyers). These learning methods also better fix the memory information: „The history of interdisciplinarity, in the sense of the practice of the natural interconnection of artistic expressions, extends to the very beginnings of the emergence of art. Individual artistic species existed already in the prehistory of interconnection and only the strengthening of the representative function of art was the reason for their gradual separation. Until the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, individual art began to interconnect again and the nature of a number of avant-garde works had an intermediate character, although this designation for interdisciplinary artistic expressions appeared only later - in the 1960s. In the field of art pedagogy, the interdisciplinary manifestations began to enter more systematically only at the beginning of the nineties, when the dialogical character of artistic creation.“ (Babyrádová, 2014, p. 34)

The development of interdisciplinarity in art and education is closely related to multimedia creation: „Contemporary art scene dominates multimedia art. This is an absolutely natural consequence of the tendencies that strive to overcome the boundaries between artistic species that have been enforced at the very beginnings of avant-garde art. [...] It has greatly contributed to the abolition of the boundaries between artistic Dadaism [...] and the whole process culminated in the second half of the 20th century.“ (Bláha, Bláhová, 2014, p.147)

The current integrative theoretical tendencies adequately reflect the area of pedagogical practice: „We are responding to the growing influence of current theoretical tendencies in the field: there are tendencies of interdisciplinary and integrative approaches of contemporary educational directions [...]. The discourse of art and education is currently addressed by an interdisciplinary field in which influences from the fields of philosophy, semiotics, cultural anthropology and gender studies are influenced.“ (Fulková, 2001, p.7)

The interaction between disciplines is a kind of parallel to interaction and communication among people: „As well as the emerging forms of interaction between humans, similar interactions occur between the fields. Interrelationships between fields then take place in practice - in specific cases, often quite spontaneously and spontaneously. This is how the theory reacts to the situation in the discussions about the newly-formed practical changes and begins to use new tools to reflect this situation in the form of transdisciplinary discourse. As far as the relation between the individual disciplines in contemporary art is concerned, today's time is characterized by the fact that, of course, we are moving between the languages of different types of art. We find ourselves in situations where it is very difficult to assign one piece to one or another type of art.“ (Babyrádová, 2013, pp.13-14)

One of the current forms of education is the so-called Intermediary Workshop: „The intermediate workshop, the most striking feature of which is the natural intermingling of various media - means of artistic expression [...], is one of the earliest forms of education practised in arts and arts and pedagogical schools.“ (Babyrádová, 2005, p.144)

The current curriculum of the tendency mentioned above, including so-called “project teaching”, adequately reflects: „It is gratifying that the current curriculum calls for transdisciplinary overlaps and the creation of educational projects that would naturally bring together the knowledge of different disciplines and their different cognitive practices. [...] The isolation of individual educational disciplines can effectively overcome the thoughtful interconnection of educational contents, in pedagogy solved both theoretically and as a problem of inter-subject relations

and project teaching. The new curriculum does not only support the integration of educational content but formally, integration also creates a combination of individual disciplines in wider learning areas. [...] The basis of integrated teaching and the demanding task of teachers is, therefore, to find and develop specific themes that can be opened from different subject-matter perspectives and to link them to projects.“ (Šobá ová, 2015, pp.14-15)

Project implementation and so-called project teaching is, therefore, a concrete fulfilment of the vision of interdisciplinary use and the overlapping of various disciplines in teaching. It is, therefore, an effective tool for applying these theoretical tendencies to teaching and pedagogical practice: „One of the possible tools for conducting active creative learning is the principle of project teaching. Project teaching is based on the solution of complex tasks - problems, through active student activity.“ (Raudenský, 2009, p.82)

The ideal area for the realization of interdisciplinary overlaps is the subject of art education, which is a crossroads, where an unlimited number of paths can be encountered and their borders can easily be crossed. Art and literature can be taught, for example, literature and linguistics, biology and chemistry, ecology and the environment, history, geography, mathematics, multicultural education, civic education, basics of social sciences, or transcendence to photography, film, and theatre, etc. The attribution of art education is creativity and flexibility, so that it can be easily linked to other objects and adapted to their needs and parameters. „The design method applied in the sphere of art, but also with the creation of only remotely connected activities becomes a means of environmental, multicultural and intermediary creation. Its advantage is that it can become a connecting bridge between artistic and non-visual disciplines and the interconnection of these disciplines is always part of a creative act that we cannot imagine without multidisciplinary.“ (Babyrádová, 201, pp.74-83)

Within the framework of art education combined with other fields using new media, many types of literacy can be successfully developed - e.g. visual, digital, media, literary, emotional, etc. „Visual literacy is increasingly important because of ICT but the concept must be redefined. Strategies for teaching literacy and developing a critical understanding of the new modes of cultural production are needed in post-industrial societies. These competencies must be developed in formal schooling to the same standard as traditional ones. The term ‘multiliteracy’ refers to the skills people need to understand current forms of multimedia communication and the way social, economic and institutional power structures network to breach the divide between experience inside and outside of a school. It implies a critical literacy that enables dynamic relationships between praxis and systematic thoughtful understanding.“ (Mason, Eca, 2008, pp.121-122)

## ART AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSION

Art education is also an appropriate means of integrating disadvantaged (disabled or socially excluded and excluded) persons or people who do not know the language of the country. Art is an international universal language. It is a specific, unique and autonomous communication system, where you can communicate through visual characters and elements. The essence of the outputs within the subject of art education is also originality, uniqueness, freedom, own approach, manuscript and style. This openness and clarity of the artistic language thus fulfil the vision of the availability of art to all - regardless of their origin, belief, education, social inclusion, etc. “Culture is a basic human right“ (INSEA, 2018), as it’s highlighted in the INSEA (International Society for Education through Art) Manifesto.

Linking art theory and practice is a challenging platform for the development of many areas. „The combination of art theory and practice, therefore, serves to develop a sense of inquiry, an ability to take practical and intellectual risks, to be conscious of decision-making in a reflexive manner, to seek for and evaluate creative responses in self and others, to be able to articulate reasons for preference, qualitative judgments, or comparative aesthetic values, and engage with art and nature in the public word“ (Hardy, 2006,pp.17-18)

„Art and other subjects serve to develop proactive, creative thought and action, sensitivity to difference of approach and outcome, e.g., gender, culture, ability, age, etc., a flexible understanding of changing values in different societies and periods, the ability to use a specialised vocabulary effectively within other forms of communication, a broad view of what constitutes culture and pleasure and satisfaction in such forms of life.“ (Hardy, 2006, pp.17-18)

In spite of the arguments mentioned above, art education is not devoted to many countries of such attention and space as it deserves. It is often considered a second-rate subject. With the current society, which we can regard as a “society based on visual features, information and communication“ (Fulková, 2008, p.196), has something to offer. “Thus, arts education in a semiotic sense can be presented as a subject of comparative importance, such as languages.“ (Fulková, 2008, p.196)

## NEW MEDIA

Involvement of new media into education has gradually begun in education not only at technical but also at art schools in the fields of graphic design, photography and graphics, where the demands for the teaching of these disciplines were logically required. „Graphic art [...] has been inseparably linked to the development of technology from the very beginning. What has happened in the past is of course also true today, at the time of the general digitization, when the computer's ability to integrate the image, movement and sound gained graphic art of a multimedia character. The younger generation of visual creators perceives this constant shift in different stimuli as a natural part of everyday experience.“ (Raudenský, 2009, p.80)

At present, multimedia education is a matter of course, and in most subjects, it is commonly used in various types of schools. Developing new methods and ways to use ICT effectively and meaningfully in education. The main medium remains the computer, but even more, possibilities are being used. „Along with the computer as the leading media technology comes a surplus of control. Next Art Education's focus is on the cultural techniques that are necessary to deal with this.“ (Mateus-Berr, Götsch, 2015, p.91)

There are various projects where new ideas and questions arise. „The project team understand the computer as a flexible, creative medium rather than a static machine. Overall it addresses two linked questions. First, how to integrate digital media creatively into arts education in schools in a holistic, interdisciplinary way and, second, how to effect more practice-oriented initial art teacher training at university level.“ (Mason, Eca, 2008, p.132)

„It proved that digital media can be used to facilitate interdisciplinary media art education in a project-oriented context at the elementary school level. Aesthetic forming processes brought together drawing, painting, text and animation as well as the development and communication of stories. The project has shown that integrating digital media into art classrooms opens up new possibilities for learning. Working in centralized computer rooms with inflexible scheduling and immobile equipment and single workplace systems is not the answer.“ (Mason, Eca, 2008, p.137)

Increasingly, mobile phones or tablets are included which, for their multimedia character (integrated camera / video camera, recorder, player, etc.), for the use of various applications and, last but not least, for ease of manoeuvrability and portability, are instruments that, under the competent leadership they can be very effective.

The new media and its tools bring endless benefits, in many ways make teaching easier and more effective, but their use also has its own pitfalls and negative impacts. Teachers should constantly be educated in this area if they want not only to take advantage of their strengths, but also to draw attention to the weaknesses and threats. „If we want to eliminate the limitless admiration for digital media, we should learn how to work with them. Where else better than at school? If we understand art education as an opportunity for pupils and students to react to the world around us, it is clear that art education must offer the right tools to reflect all reality, including the reality of the media world. The computer is one of the tools for creating visual information and communication, so we have to offer students the opportunity to learn how to work, understand and create visual communication. The computer cannot and must not replace the classical art techniques; it only stands next to them as an equal partner expanding the range of artistic means.“ (Švr ek, 2009, pp. 93-94)

The uniqueness and specificity of art education create great potential for the integration of multimedia into teaching and learning. „The enrichment of arts education with multimedia resources is closely related to the new sense of art education as a unique subject with unique cognitive and communication content.“ (Švr ek, 2009, p.94) The use of new media and applications in teaching can increase the attractiveness of the art subject as a whole: „It is certain that if a teacher can incorporate new methods using new technologies in addition to existing methods in art education, this connection can only benefit the development of the popularity of art education as an object.“ (Švr ek, 2009, p.94)

Avoiding the media as well as seeing the only negative aspect of their nature would not be the right decision. „An art education that neglects any page and the possibility of using these new means of expression, the pupils suffer from experience and various creative experiences. None of the creative possibilities should be neglected. Since computers are more than pencils to our lives, we must not overlook them. But it would be a mistake if we forgot about pencils, colours, or ceramics.“ (Švr ek, 2009, pp. 93-94)

## CONCLUSION

New media and technologies are constantly evolving, shifting their options and also posing new questions and topics for discussion. Opinions of their supporters and opponents are constantly confronted with opinions, euphoric and apocalyptic visions. All these phenomena, advantages and threats reflect art - not only art but also films, literature, etc. Art has been and will always be a reflection of society and current topics and is, therefore, one of the important ways to get to know the current world and has their well-founded place in formal education.

Today's artists like artists in history try to find their own way of expressing ideas and attitudes towards the world around them, while opting for the past, they have the opportunity to use the unprecedented wide range of means to achieve them. And so coexist works of various forms, from purely traditional to highly multimedia and interactive. In spite of the plurality of forms, their content and their views on what is contemporary art, the essence of art remains the same - and that is the creation. A creation that can relate to a variety of themes and new media to achieve a variety of forms. Consequently, art education in connection with contemporary art and technology is the space where a student pupil or user of new media can become a pupil-maker. Therefore, lead from passive to an active approach to technology. It is also necessary to inform about the negative impacts of new media and, above all, social networks.

Despite all possible threats, new media remains a valuable opportunity and a feasible option for making learning. It is a more attractive and creative way how to effectively communicate quality content and clarify important themes to pupils and students.

Digital ateliers implemented in the Czech Republic were oriented towards art education and gallery pedagogy and their spillover to several fields and subjects: biology, ecology and the environment, photography, history, literature and linguistics. These digital ateliers and all digital ateliers in common, it can successfully develop many types of literacy in children, pupils and students: not only visual, literary and emotional literacy, but also digital and media literacy. It can also develop communication skills and key core competencies. These digital studios contribute to the development of visual literacy and sensitivity of the participants in terms of better decoding of visual images around us that can be manipulated in the news, advertising, eventual propaganda, etc. Strengthening visual literacy can, therefore, play an important role in the development of civic engagement, in which it's desirable that every person is able to orientate himself correctly in a very fast and visibly saturated environment of our globalized civilization. During its implementation, most of the goals were met. The project App Your School shows, that a combination of the use of classical art with the involvement of new media is very important, useful and it has great potential. Thanks to it, education can be more attractive, interesting and effective. Concepts of digital ateliers were trying to keep up with the availability aspect - that is, working with materials and technologies that are financially and universally accessible to as many schools as possible. There were found many various ways for the beneficial and creative use of new media in education. All the existing parts of the project - the concept, realization and evaluation of the so-called "digital ateliers", model six-hour workshops, have been fulfilled, thanks to which the effective use of ICT and new media in teaching and gallery education can be developed. All these things together are the added value that contemporary art brings to digital ateliers.

Interdisciplinarity, intermediality and interactivity are trends that, as has been said, resonate not only in contemporary art and art education but also in other areas of education. To further enhance the potential of new technologies in learning, teachers' experience of mutual interchange of experience not only in the implementation of new practices in a creative way, as is the case with App Your School, but also, for example, sharing experience with testing, selecting and evaluating applications, or even collaborating on their own development.

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