



Education is Not an Island

A Educação Não é uma Ilha

Revista Portuguesa de Educação Artística,
Volume 13, N.º 2, 2023
DOI: 10.34639/rpea.v13i2.235
<https://rpea.madeira.gov.pt>

Kristýna Říhová

National Gallery Prague; Charles University in Prague
kristyna.rihova@ngprague.cz

Anežka Kantorová

National Gallery Prague; Charles University in Prague
anezka.kantorova@centrum.cz

Eliška Jelínková

National Gallery Prague; Charles University in Prague
el.jelinkova@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to present the process of conception and implementation of the gallery educational programmes accompanying the exhibition of Eva Kořátková, which was presented in CAPC – Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux and at the National Gallery Prague.

In her work, Eva Kořátková combines sculptures, objects, collages, costumes and texts into vast, playful, poetic and colourful installations, to suggest how deeply our personal lives are shaped by our social environment. This approach is materialised by complex pieces of machinery that constrain the body whilst holding possibilities for its transformation. Taking its cue from theatrical devices, a critique of psychiatric ethos, and certain forms of experimental education, Kořátková's work develops in tight connection with narratives – a narration in fragments, scattered across the exhibition, that make up the image of the world. *My Body is not an Island* expands and elaborates upon issues that have been present in the artist's work for many years. This project, specially conceived to be shown in the nave at the CAPC, is shaped like a gigantic body, half-fish, half-human; it both contains and mediates for a myriad of stories, whose entrancing litany will echo throughout the whole exhibition space.

The educational concept is created in collaboration between the artist, curators, educators, teachers and students. This paper explores the challenges posed to the institution by collaborating with contemporary artists who themselves perceive and define their exhibitions as inclusive and educational.

Through the activation of the spectator's empathy and imagination, Eva Kořátková offers a space for understanding and tolerance. The main focus of interest lies in the communications didactic transformation of narratives from art to learning. We were concerned with what themes the exhibition can offer to schools and which pedagogical practices of gallery education would suit this purpose.

Keywords: Gallery Education; Contemporary Art; Personal and Social Education through Art; Didactic Transformation; Pedagogical Content Knowledge

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar o processo de concepção e implementação dos programas educativos da galeria que acompanham a exposição de Eva Koťátková, apresentada no CAPC – Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux e na Galeria Nacional de Praga.

No seu trabalho, Eva Koťátková combina esculturas, objetos, colagens, figurinos e textos em instalações vastas, lúdicas, poéticas e coloridas, para sugerir quão profundamente as nossas vidas pessoais são moldadas pelo nosso ambiente social. Esta abordagem é materializada por máquinas complexas que restringem o corpo ao mesmo tempo que mantêm possibilidades para a sua transformação. Inspirando-se nos dispositivos teatrais, na crítica do ethos psiquiátrico e em certas formas de educação experimental, o trabalho de Koťátková desenvolve-se em estreita ligação com as narrativas – uma narração em fragmentos, espalhados pela exposição, que constituem a imagem do mundo. Meu corpo não é uma ilha expande e elabora questões que estão presentes na obra do artista há muitos anos. Este projeto, especialmente concebido para ser exposto na nave do CAPC, tem a forma de um corpo gigantesco, meio peixe, meio humano; contém e medeia uma miríade de histórias, cuja fascinante litania ecoará por todo o espaço expositivo.

O conceito educacional é criado em colaboração entre o artista, curadores, educadores, professores e alunos. Este artigo explora os desafios colocados à instituição ao colaborar com artistas contemporâneos que percebem e definem as suas exposições como inclusivas e educativas.

Através da ativação da empatia e da imaginação do espectador, Eva Koťátková oferece um espaço de compreensão e tolerância. O principal foco de interesse reside na transformação didática comunicativa das narrativas da arte para a aprendizagem. Estávamos preocupados com quais temas a exposição pode oferecer às escolas e quais práticas pedagógicas de educação em galerias se adequariam a esse propósito.

Palavras-chave: Educação em Galeria; Arte contemporânea; Educação Pessoal e Social através da Arte; Transformação Didática; Conhecimento Pedagógico do Conteúdo

Introduction

In this paper, a case-study is introduced to illustrate the process of creation and implementation of the educational program in the exhibition *My Body is Not an Island* by contemporary Czech artist Eva Koťátková presented by the National Gallery Prague (NGP) from 12 December 2022 to 4 June 2023.

The alternative pedagogy and criticism of systematic oppression and discrimination in educational and healthcare institutions have been the long-time interests of Eva Koťátková. She has focused on these phenomena both in her research and teaching activities and in her artistic work. The diversity of depicting these phenomena is

very apparent also in the exhibition *My Body is Not an Island* – from objects that serve as materialized metaphors for oppressive systems and cages, to highlighting the stories of those who are disadvantaged by the normative system.

From the beginning, the NGP education team has been conscious of its responsibility to ensure that educational programmes are appropriate for the specific age group they are aimed at, particularly given the themes of the exhibition which address the pressures of our society, including education and mental health care and which are viewed (by the exhibition) as potentially traumatic.

Gallery as a Space for Education, Discussion, and Experiences

It is clear from interviews with teachers whose account is supported also by media reports and mental health professionals that children's mental health has deteriorated significantly since the COVID lockdowns. Therefore, it has to be taken into consideration that there might be some pupils under the care of psychologists or psychiatrists in the classes attending the gallery educational programme.

"Specialists from child psychiatric outpatient clinics and inpatient wards are talking about extreme increases in mental health problems and addictions among schoolchildren in recent months. They say a large number of new patients have been coming to them, while at the same time previous problems have intensified. [...] Anxiety, depression, difficulty controlling emotions and suicidal behaviour have all increased by leaps and bounds. The most pressing problem is self-harm and eating disorders. [...] Since the autumn, the increase has been enormous: a three-to fivefold increase in the number of children who have these serious psychological problems," (Kordík, 2023).

An exhibition can function as a trigger for strong emotions that can open up topics for which the student may not be prepared. Thus, from the outset, the question of providing a safe environment has been at the heart of defining the educational programmes curriculum. It was crucial to set up the pedagogical situations in such a way that the programme would not open up too much reflection on the pupil's experience of the intersubjective body, but would rather focus on entering social and ethical themes. To have a comprehensive view of the exhibition, it is important to introduce the layout of the gallery, the education department and the statements of the NGP.

"The National Gallery in Prague is an institution that manages art collections from medieval art in Bohemia and Central Europe to the present day. Its collections include 399,000 collection items containing exquisite art from all time periods. On top of that, the best works are regularly on display in permanent exhibitions and short-term expositions. The National Gallery Prague hosts exhibitions in seven buildings in the city centre. Our yearlong exhibition programme presents a vast variety of subjects and personalities, covering not only the Czech art scene but also striving to introduce crucial aspects of Central European, European and world art to the Czech audience" (National Gallery Prague).

The exhibitions and displays themselves usually include interactive studios. These are spaces that creatively convey and interpret the content of exhibitions and are accessible to all visitors. They can be part of the concept of the whole space or a separate space. In the case of contemporary art exhibitions, interactive spaces also appear, defined by the artists themselves as artworks intended for visitor intervention.

The NGP offers a wide selection of programmes: permanent exhibition programmes and exhibition programmes for schools, guided tours, lectures, discussions, seminars, art studios, and courses for children and adults.

It also prepares several formats of didactic support for teaching in the form of study materials for teachers, online inspirations, book publications and professional articles and presentations at various educational forums and conferences. These also function as another tool to bring art outside of the gallery walls.

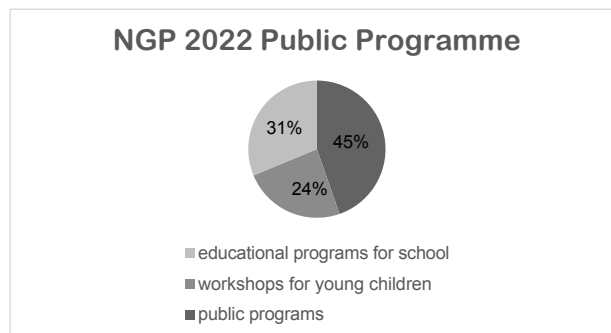
Our team of permanent and external co-wor-

kers includes university graduates and students of Art History, Aesthetics and Fine Arts, young teachers and visual artists.

The tradition of education at NGP dates back to the early 1970s¹ (Bystřický & Muráňová, 2022). Some statements are present from the beginning. For example, the position of the child visitor, who is perceived as an autonomous individual who perceives the artwork thanks to his or her own ability to look and make connections. In this context, we can refer to the fact that Czech gallery pedagogy has been progressive and very forward-looking in terms of the emancipation of the child viewer since its beginning.

In the current post-COVID era, the gallery hosts an average of 1730 public programmes per year, including 750 educational programmes for schools and 405 programmes for young children with adult accompaniment. Educational and public programmes are handled by a team of nine educators and 50 lecturers, one production manager, one assistant and the head of the department of audience development.

¹ "It was the first time, in 1975, when [...] we tried to find out in the National Gallery's exhibitions to what extent a child aged 5-6 is able to perceive works of art from different periods, from Gothic art to the Cubist movement, to what extent he understands them, what is his ability to hold impressions of paintings and sculptures in his memory. [...] Very often we had to hear from adult visitors the question «what can these children get out of it» [...] The conversations in front of the artworks showed how children can relate to the work. Their observations were far more accurate than those of the adults, and they were unashamed to talk about their discoveries" (Bystřický & Muráňová, 2022).



Esquema 1 – Scheme of representation of public programmes in the NGP in 2022.

Gallery Educational Programmes for Schools

Our study is focused predominantly on the work with school groups, that is gallery educational programmes for schools which is a widely used traditional format. In today's post-COVID era, there are about five to nine programmes taking place per day at NGP.

The educational programmes are based upon similar principles and structures. Each programme is predefined by a scenario that is provided to the lecturer. The basic structure divides the programmes according to the following parameters: with a creative activity; workshop; movement/drama elements; talking about art. However, these indicate only the rather dominant component of the specific programme. For example, the part that focuses on "talking about art" can be found in all of the programmes. However, we use the category "talking about art" to refer mainly to programmes of a dialogical nature or guided tours. The gallery offers a wide range of programmes targeted at all age groups and types of schools.

"The gallery is a meeting space – ideal for a dialogue. In the gallery, it is possible to divest yourself of the impression that there is a single truth, as the

wide spectrum of art offers various perspectives on reality. Art dialogue teaches us to be open and to think in context. Artwork interpretation is not dogmatic – art may be discussed collectively. No one will judge you for your opinions in the gallery.

Our programmes bring artworks into real life in reaction to current events and trends. They offer you the opportunity to find out how artworks are created, try your hand at various techniques and methods, and decipher artists' original approaches. You will never be handed all the information – you will be given the space to discover it individually. We learn along with you – together” (National Gallery Prague).

In addition to the educational programmes themselves, the gallery provides specific didactic support for teachers which is available online for free. These contain study materials for educators, online prompts, and short instructional videos presenting connections between the artwork and a specific art technique.

About the Exhibition Eva Koťátková – My Body is Not an Island

“In her work, Eva Koťátková combines objects, collages, costumes, and texts into vast, playful, poetic, and often performative installations, to suggest how deeply are our personal lives influenced by our social environment with its codes and norms. This influence materialises itself through complex machineries constraining the body, but also holds possibilities for its transformation. Taking its cue from theatrical devices, a critique of psychiatric ethos, and certain forms of experimental education, Koťátková’s work develops in tight connection with narratives – a narration in fragments, scattered across the exhibition, that make up the image of the world.

My Body Is Not an Island takes the shape of a gigantic body, part-fish, part-human; each part tells a myriad of stories whose entrancing litany

echoes throughout the exhibition space². With its inscrutable, troubling identity, and the way it unfolds like an immersive landscape, it is accessible to any visitor willing to lend an ear to its many stories. Every Saturday afternoon during the course of the exhibition, the installation will be inhabited and activated by performers, who will share with the public the different stories it contains: that of a child bullied at school, of a shrimp being boiled alive, or of a bush torn away from its native surroundings to be replanted in the suburbs. As a whole, the spirit of the installation seems to rest upon the cry for a life with more empathy and less normative pressure uttered by one of its protagonists: «I dream of a body endowed with many skins».

The fragmented body holds within its belly an assortment of boxes and crates from which beast-like and human-like creatures seem poised to escape. Bodies in flight, transient and transitory; bodies that refuse to be named; bodies that cannot be ascribed any label; bodies that won't keep quiet; bodies that express freely what they feel and what they dream of. The recurring motif of the crate is a symbol both of mobility and movability – whether voluntary or forced – from one place or state to another, and of normativity and codification, typifying our urging desire to put everything into neat boxes, to contain, as it were, our fear of ambiguity, rather than to think outside the box. The installation proposes a platform opened with empathy to those whose voices – human, vegetal, animal – are reduced to silence, whose condition is challenged, whose life has been uprooted, and who undergo forced labelling and stigmatisation” (Patron & Ištók, 2022).

2 Eva Koťátková responds to the space of the CAPC Museum in Bordeaux, for which the exhibition was originally created. The Musée d'Art Contemporain in Bordeaux is housed in a former warehouse building from 1824, which was originally used to store colonial goods (coffee, tea, cocoa, spices, etc.), which were subsequently used to bind the so-called “warehouses”. Eva Koťátková in her installation on this history, the theme of postcolonialism, the memory of place and the location by the sea, deliberately built on with the motif of the shipping crate, which combines the legacy of the to this history and the idea of a certain “pigeonholing” of beings.

Photo documentation of the exhibition is attached to this article, particularly the figure 1 and 2.

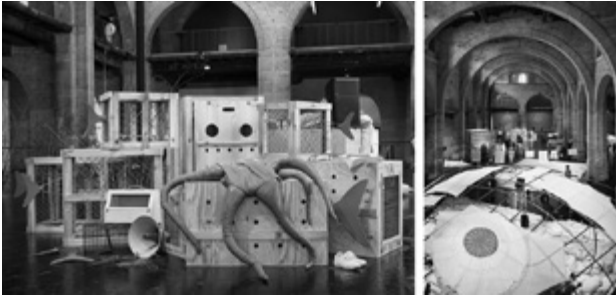


Figure 1 – Eva Kotátková: *My Body Is Not an Island*; Capc Bordeaux France, [Photo: Arthur Pequin, CAPC 2022]



Figure 2 – Eva Kotátková: *My Body Is Not an Island*, National Gallery Prague, Czech Republic, [Photo: Adéla Márová, NGP 2022]

In relation to this curators' viewpoint on the exhibition a transcription of a reflective dialogue from an educational programme for secondary schools is provided to draw attention to possible parallels and connections.

The children are given some time to stroll through the exhibition and discuss it with their classmates (after being suggested to pay attention to all the different sensory channels, i.e. visual, auditory and kinaesthetic, through which are the narratives accessible). Then follows reflective dialogue which takes place in the fish head – the monumental metal construction filled with soft feather blankets serving as a meeting point during the educational programme (and listening hub with audio material containing stories for other visitors). There the pupils share with each other their excitement; they did not expect what they have just seen. Exhibition in which they do not have to just stand still in front of the painting and be silent! They can touch things; they can lie down in the fish head and rest. Everything is different – the sounds of the exhibition, they seem scary. It's like a dream but quite scary. A nightmare, don't you think? After a while, the group quiets down and the reflective dialogue guided by the lecturer can take place:

Pupil: "There are shoes everywhere. Lots of skins and suits. Dummies made out of boxes."

Another pupil follows: "It looks like people are being tortured here."

Boy: "Torture chamber."

Girl: "Lots of cages, chairs – school chairs, cages, like rabbit hutches. Also there are giant scissors and giant pills. They look real. They're cool."

Lecturer: "If you have noticed all this, what could it mean? Can you describe what the exhibi-

tion is about?”

Boy: “The water world, what’s in the sea – but also something about people. I don’t know how to say it.”

Girl: “It’s about injustice, the animals can’t decide what happens to them.”

Lecturer: “Good point. How did you come up with that?”

Girl: “It’s written here too.”

Lecturer: “Good point – the text. Did anyone notice the text as well?”

Boy: “Yeah – It says a lot in there. Feelings, moods, states.”

Girl: “It said, for example, that someone was labelling them, assigning them what they are. And they didn’t feel that way. And then they got traumatized by it. It was in their childhood and now it’s written to make other people beware of that, that labelling. Like a girl or a boy.”

Lecturer: “You’ve described that very beautifully. It’s like it’s all playful and sweet at first but underneath that we feel and recognize stories of injustice and oppression and those need to be listened to. It’s not an easy task, but it is good to be able to listen to such stories. Does anyone know what this exhibition is called?”

(Nobody really knows)

Lecturer: “My body is not an island. What does that tell you? Why is it called like that?”

Girl: “We only have one body.”

Boy: “That bodies are different and need compassion.”

Lecturer: “What else could it be, or even what could be the theme of the exhibition?”

Boy: “Compassion for the stories.”

Boy: “Why are there shoes everywhere?”

Lecturer: “Why do you think?”

Girl: “Kidnapping!”

Boy: “A human footprint!”

Boy: “Why are there houses, boxes and cages?”

Lecturer: “What do you think? What is a cage?”

Boy: “Oppression.”

Girl: “Boxing.”

Girl: “A crate.”

Lecturer: (tells the story of the original installation and the context of the Bordeaux exhibition – see above)

Now, it is time to get up and leave the fish head. The children put on their shoes, which have acted as part of the installation for the time they have been sitting in the blankets. Then they wander through the exhibition to the next activity.

Methodology

The case study presented is an example of qualitative research that focuses not only on the creation of specific educational programmes and their implementation in practice but especially on the processes of creating educational content in the team of gallery lecturers. It is a strategy that uses elements of action research, *The Reflective Practitioner*³ and a research-embedded interdisciplinary approach (Schön, 1991; Fulková, 2018; Sty-

3 A similar question is addressed in a study by Stynes et al. (2018, p. 153-167) “that knowledge work is complicated not only by the dynamics of socially constructed enterprises and the actors involved therein, but by the positioning of the researcher. The case describes an evaluative study of a university program where students engaged in directed experiential learning in group-integrated learning settings. The researcher was also the course lead-tutor and this gave rise to some concern, on later reflection and in discussions among critical friends, when issues of researcher positioning were considered. Together, through questioning the topic, the literature, the research experience and the role of the researcher, we developed a reflection-on-action rubric”.

nes et al., 2018). Interdisciplinarity⁴ is a principle of the theoretical and pedagogical background of the programme and it becomes an appropriate principle in the field of research. It was chosen as a starting point mainly because of the overlapping roles of researcher, educator, lecturer and guarantor of the educational field, who initiates gallery education, collaborates with the team to develop the programme, partly implements it, archives and analyses it. The basic literature in the field of qualitative research in the Czech Republic (Hendl, 2016; Švarčíček, 2007), presents research methods and strategies from the position of the researcher, who is significantly distanced from the researched process itself. In a way, he/she is on the other side, from where he/she observes, archives, research and analyses. In the practice of art education didactics, especially in students' final theses and dissertations, the question arises of how to deal with a situation in which teaching is analysed, in which the researcher is simultaneously in the role of researcher and in the role of teacher, artist or practising student. As a possible solution, the concept of Donald Schön's reflective practitioner comes to the forefront of the field research, which in the context of Czech field research was presented by Doctor Marie Fulková. This approach directly focuses on the active role of the practitioner as teacher and researcher in one person, performing reflection on the activity, reflection on the activity taking place, and

4 The adjective interdisciplinary here refers to the interaction between two or more different disciplines, where the relationship can vary from a simple exchange of ideas to a mutual integration of concepts, methodology, procedures or terminology. In our case, it is the interconnection of pedagogy, art, art history, social sciences, and cognitive linguistics of visual studies.

reflection on the reflection of the activity⁵ (Schön, 1991; Fulková, 2008; Stynes et al., 2018). This is seen as a starting point for our research as well, for the overlapping of roles is not necessarily an obstacle to research, on the contrary, it can serve as a valuable basis for reflective pedagogical growth – in this context, we also consider action research. Thus, among the core research materials, in addition to lesson observations, feedback from students and teachers, in-depth interviews, e-mail communications, and especially capturing the process of dialogues within the NGP team of tutors are among the primary research materials. Thus, the researcher's insight into the issues, from the design of the educational process through its implementation and reflection on the goals being met, is comprehensive.

Gallery educators have been part of the dialogues in the process of creating the exhibition from the very beginning. They are part of the NGP team and have the opportunity to enter the dialogue from the perspective of working with the audience. They conceive active zones, make requests for specific architectural treatments, and make suggestions on the overall concept of the exhibition.

During the preparation of the programme, the team of collaborating lecturers, teachers, curators and artists go through a process of joint research and discovery of connections. An analysis of the exhibition's key themes and the selection of appropriate educational topics is underway. A contextual network is then created, which becomes the basis for both the public program itself – from the child viewer to

5 A similar situation of overlapping roles is encountered in art-oriented research. The methodology of such research is well known. For art-based research, the current designs are A-R-Tography or Art based research.

the adult audience – as well as the educational program for schools and accompanying study materials for educators and university students. The process of creating a gallery educational programme is accompanied by constant revision, including self-reflection, self-evaluation, and self-management by individual members of the team. It is also a process of conceptualisation. Concepts are created on the basis of learning together through mistakes. High demands are placed on the research team's openness and ability to collaborate; however, the individual roles such as supervisor, assistant or lecturer and their respective competencies are clearly defined.

At the time of writing this study, the research aforementioned is still in process and the exhibition *My Body Is Not an Island* is to be on display for two more months. The daily presence of the school groups attending the educational programmes, the collaboration with teachers, the evaluation of the creative activities by the children, different types of feedback and the course of the programmes themselves all create a basis for possible further inquiries. Thus, the research project does not end with the introduction of the educational programme in the gallery, but rather at the moment of the feedback which shows how the school has followed up on the programme in the gallery.

Research Project Phases

The research project could be divided into the following phases:

1. *The preparatory phase* – before the exhibition, the exploration of the theme. Defining the educational potential of the exhibition. Defining the active zones, studies or interactive elements

of the exhibition. A selected team of educators, curators, architects and a network of engaged external lecturers are involved in this process.

2. *First defining of the project* – creation of active zones, first conception of educational themes and design of the public program and exhibition programmes for schools. Structure of study materials. Study materials are a didactic format of accessible online⁶ support for teachers and student teachers. Teachers can use them as a basis for an independent visit to the exhibition without an educational programme, or as a basis for preparatory and follow-up teaching to an educational programme.
3. *Field research* – self-reflection of the exhibition, interviews, observations, discussion and revision of part 2. Pilot launch of the training programme, followed by reflective dialogue with students, teachers, lecturers helps to revise and finalise the programme for school groups.
4. *Testing* – first launch of pilot exhibition programmes for schools, working with student and teacher feedback – modifying content. Finalising and testing learning materials for teachers.
5. *Ongoing feedback from schools and training of teachers.*
6. *Project evaluation and team feedback.*
7. During the research and the implemented project, there is a continuous presentation of outputs. Both at local and international conferences and during lecturing activities for universities.

⁶ <https://www.ngprague.cz/vzdelavaci-programy/pro-pedagogy/studijni-materialy>.

Disciplinary Didactics and Pedagogical Transformation in Practice

The process of curriculum development begins with interdisciplinary research across various documents. Attention should be paid particularly to the contexts originating in the NGP collections, as well as disciplinary didactics and their source theories, and their relationship to the curriculum at a general level. The analysis of the contents of the exhibition and the search for possible content for education are also of high importance. These two areas are described in more detail in the next subchapter. It is important to understand that it is not the aim of the educational programme to cover all the contents of the exhibition. The Department of Education is an autonomous unit within the gallery which selects the topics and the definition of the objectives of the educational programmes offered.

Themes of the Exhibition vs. Themes of the Educational Programmes

It has been taken into consideration that the educational programmes open up themes that lead towards fulfilling general learning objectives especially themes of Personal and Social Education and Environmental Education.

In the following table, a summary of the selected key themes of the exhibition and the key topics of the gallery educational programmes is presented in relation to the aforementioned description of the exhibition.

Principles of the Educational Programmes

At the level of themes, the previous paragraphs focused on contributing to general learning objectives. In this part, the following principles used in our gallery educational programmes that contribute mainly to the curriculum area of Arts and Culture (*Other dimensions of internationalisation in early childhood and school education: Czech Republic, 2023*) are described:

- Artistic expression of emotions
- Forms of sharing narrative
- Imagination
- Metaphor

Themes of the Exhibition	Themes of the Educational Programmes
Somatic experience of bodies	Emotions and naming them
Body and physicality	Empathy
Gender stereotypes	Inclusion of otherness
Narratives of the oppressed	Different points of view/perspectives
Labelling and stigmatisation	Labelling
Analogy between the colonialism and the fishing industry	Perspectives of all creatures not only human
Testimonies of anonymous actors	Body and physicality
Critique of psychiatric <i>ethos</i>	X
The pressure of normative systems	X

Table 1 – Comparison of Exhibition Themes vs. Educational Programme Themes.

During preparations, the theme of metaphor crystallised as a crucial tool for both the artistic expression of the author and for the educational programmes. Three types of educational programmes are offered for the exhibition. For primary and elementary school pupils, it is a programme with creative art activities. The focus is, for example, on skin as a metaphor for a protective layer providing its wearer with various qualities. For the secondary school students, there is a programme with dramatic elements focusing on developing empathy. This programme is targeted on working with metaphors and narratives of others as well as the opportunity to step into a role, collaboration and developing a story together.

The Objectives of the Gallery Educational Programmes⁷



Figure 3 – Workshop for families with children – „Emotional jackets“ [Photo: Ida Muráňová, NGP 2023]

⁷ Photo documentation of the exhibition is attached to this article, particularly the figures 3, 4 and 5.



Figure 4 – Educational Programme using movement and drama elements – “Like a fish out of water” [Photo: Katarína Hudačínová, NGP 2023]

Primary School; Programme with a Creative Activity^B – “Dream of more skins”

The aim of this programme is to look into some of the ethical themes presented in the exhibition and to explore ways of understanding otherness, including the perspectives of all beings, not just human beings (linking with environmental education themes).

Secondary School; Programme with a Creative Activity – “In someone else’s shoes” (Literal translation from Czech is: “In someone else’s skin”)

The aim of this programme is to contribute to the development of empathy and to experience a wide range of viewpoints of other beings. Through

8 Each student is given one box. Collectively, spatial installations are created by building, rhythm is suggested by the formations of the boxes, and the understanding and arrangement of texture are approached. Rhythm is used, clapping marks the creation of change. Examples of assignments: line, stairs, scales, randomness... The objectives of this activity are to safely explore social experiences and become aware of their relationships. Creating skins. Then the text “The Dream of Multiple Skins” is read aloud. The students are already divided into groups and seated at desks. Each student creates a “skin-costume design (part of it)” for himself/herself by considering the characteristics he/she would like to portray – choosing appropriate materials – photographs of textures of fur, skins, or other textures of animals, plants and various miscellaneous materials (tin foil, foil, sandpaper, fabric, ...)

Focus is on the haptic aspect, the sound, and the feeling (soft, hard, soft, hairy, sharp, wet, dry... etc.) This experience communicates the qualities that the new skin should have. Each student creates a design for the costume/new skin by making a collage on paper – (characters of different superheroes can be mentioned). Students tailor-make for themselves – what super-features they would like to have and use materials they have collected. They cut, they glue, they use a stapler – they “sew” a costume (part) that in their eyes has clearly defined properties and therefore they choose this or that material: defensive, waterproof, prickly, invisible... The collages are placed on the ground. Together we will look at all the new skins. We discuss the features and properties of the new skins and of the materials used.

The feelings that the exhibition has evoked can be discussed with the students. If anything has changed for them in their perception of their surroundings.

The objectives of this activity are empathising with “someone else’s skin”, visualising the idea of the inner layer and expressing it with emphasis on the other senses – touch, sight, and hearing. Through critical thinking, the students choose the “right” option for them, conditioned by their own exploration. They become aware of the uniqueness of their own being through acquired knowledge – the mark of otherness implies uniqueness, originality, and each mark of otherness has a practical reason why this or that works as it does.



Figure 5 – Educational Programme “Dream of more skins” [Photo: Katarína Hudačínová, NGP 2023]

a creative activity, the students try to name different emotions and focus on finding ways to express them.

The aim is fulfilled through a reflective dialogue in the exhibition, small pedagogy *etudes* and a collage/assemblage-making workshop activity leading to the design of a specific super skin. In the *etudes*, themes of pigeonholing and labelling are opened up, through a kinaesthetic game with boxes.

Secondary School: 8th and 9th Grades and High School – Programme using Movement and Drama Elements – “Like a fish out of water”

The aim of the program is to help develop empathy, express feelings through metaphors, step into different roles, collaborate and develop a story together.

The goal is fulfilled through a series of dramatic *études* and their reflection.

Theoretical Framework of the Gallery Educational Programme

The theoretical framework is based on the aforementioned interdisciplinary research and ties together the contexts of NGP, educational aims and their application. Furthermore, it is offered to the public in the form of study materials for teachers, which are available for free and can be used as an inspiration or for further development of the topics presented via the educational programmes.

In the following subchapters, the leading topics of the theoretical framework are presented; firstly, the approach to experiencing art formulated on the basis of the affective turn acquired from the philosophical and educational discourse, secondly, the context of the artwork of Eva Kořátková both from local and global and historical and current perspectives and thirdly, the tools of both creation of art and experience of the perceiver, namely empathy and imagination.

The “Affective Turn”

Bodily Capacities to Affect and be Affected

The attention which the artist Eva Kořátková pays to the body is dual – on the one hand, there is a metaphorical grasp of the body as a container for inner emotional life and on the other hand, the exhibition strongly activates and emancipates the viewer’s “body” and its somatic experience through affects and emotions. At the same time, the objects are costumes intended for performance, or for evoking performative ideas of one’s own body in another skin.

The Relationship of Affect to the Experience of Art

Since the 1960s the theoretical discourse has witnessed a significant “affective turn” in various forms from philosophy to art (Řihová, 2022), (van Alphen, 2018) (Kesner, 2018; 2021). For context, the work of one of the most prominent performative artists, Marina Abramović, can be mentioned as her work consists of uncompromising performative work with her own body and confrontation with the audience and the mutual interaction of these. From the Czech environment, the immersive installations, objects and performances of Marie Tučková can be mentioned.



Figure 6 – Affective Operations Scheme (van Alphen & Jirsa, 2019, p. 5)

Imagination

Eva Kot'átková perceives imagination as a tool of emancipation. Imagination in this sense goes beyond mere "artistic creativity" but becomes a means of breaking down established schemes and opening up new paths. If societal norms bind and pigeonhole us, and traditional education is supposed to "flatten" us so that we fit in and adhere to them, art can be a space for freer thinking.

In the installation itself, Eva Kot'átková is trying to encourage visitors to do the same. That is, to dream of a world that is more inclusive and in which actions need not be governed by how effective a strategy is in already defined conditions. It, therefore, offers a certain reversal of perspective, to model the dream world in such a way that all bodies feel comfortable and secure, rather than to adapt diversity to an idealised, "rigged" world of pragmatism and expediency.

This practice is not unique; the power of imagination as a tool against conformity and power structures is highlighted by, for example, the acclaimed science fiction author and theorist Ursula K. Le Guin (2004). The theme of imagination and dreaming also appeared at this year's Venice Art Biennale, which was entitled "Milk of Dreams". According to curator Cecilia Alemani (2022), the title refers to Leonora Carrington's book in which the surrealist artist describes a magical world in which life is subject to constant revision through imagination. The entire exhibition is thus an imaginary journey full of transformations and metamorphoses of bodies and definitions of man⁹. It is in the reference to surrealism and the thematic focus on the transformations of the definition of man and his relationship to technology and nature

that parallels can be traced to Eva Kot'átková's contemporary work. As well as exploring the possibilities of alliances between different non-human beings and the responsibilities, that are inherent in it.

The connection to surrealism is reflected even in the thematic context of the exhibition *My Body is Not an Island*. Another reference can be found in the context of the Czech surrealist scene, namely in the work of Toyen (born 1902, died 1980). In her/his work, similar themes are addressed. Such works espouse the idea of the power of imagination as a tool of emancipation. We can encounter the representation of both Czech artists aforementioned – Kot'átková and Toyen at art shows worldwide¹⁰.

From the perspective of another context, the work of Eva Kot'átková corresponds with the tendency of many contemporary artists to envision the end of anthropocentrism, celebrating a new communion with the non-human, with the animal world, and with the Earth.

Relationships of Feelings and their Expressions through Metaphors

Lastly, it is referred to as "metaphors we live by" a notion which characterises and at the same time names the publication by Lakoff and Johnson (2002) (Lakoff, 2006) who have devoted their research efforts to cognitive linguistics and multidisciplinary investigations of language. From this theoretical framework, they consider the links between feelings and the possibilities of expressing them through metaphors. In the educational

¹⁰ Photo documentation of the exhibition is attached to this article, particularly the figures 7 to 11 [photos in <https://www.ngprague.cz/vzdelavaci-programy/pro-pedagogy/studijni-materialy>].

⁹ Biennale Arte (2022), retrieved 10.1.2023.



Figure 7 – Eva Kotátková, *My Body is not an Island*, [Photo: Adéla Márová, NGP 2022]



Figure 8 – Marina Abramović and Ulay, *Breathing In/Breathing Out*, 1977



Figure 9 – Ursula Uwe/Marie Tučková, *Monuments of Love*, 2017

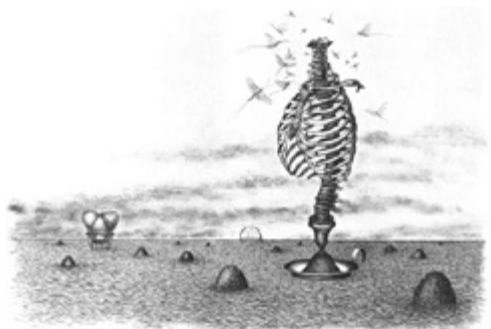


Figure 10 – Toyen Untitled. 1944. From *Hide, War!*



Figure 11 – Felipe Baeza, *Emerging in difference*, courtesy Maureen Paley, London and La Biennale di Venezia, 2022

programme, the metaphors are described as the environment in which we live.

Metaphors interconnect visual perceptions and often stimulate and facilitate the development of our imagination. Metaphors are used in everyday speech, and people would probably not be able to express some complex feelings or sensations accurately without it. Metaphors are opted for when one wants to express figurative meanings in art, or perhaps when trying to describe what one feels or experiences.

Conclusion

Education is Not an Island.

“The encounter with art, and the subsequent affections and affects increase our capacity to act, to think in a new way” (Atkinson, 2018, p. 49). “Exhibition and gallery education could show that art and artists can help us imagine new modes of coexistence and infinite new possibilities

of transformation” (Alemani, 2022, p. 51). This kind of approach to education may fulfil selected educational aims not only at the level of art education but also at the general level of the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education (Bláha, 2020); (Fulková, 2018); (Říhová, 2018, 2020).

The gallery is not the only place where you can learn something about art, but you may learn much more there. We believe that if you open yourself to art, art will change you. It may make you more sensitive, warm-hearted, open, tolerant, and considerate. Education is not an island.

Special Thanks To

Oldřich Bystřický, Radka Neumannová, Strategy and Planning, NGP Rado lištok – curator and Eva Koťátková.

Marie Fulková, Magdaléna Novotná, Head of Department of Art Education, Charles University. Team of gallery educators and lectures.

Anna Hůlková, Alena Kotyza, Jana Machalíková, Ida Muráňová, Eva Novotná, Kateřina Řezáčová, Tereza Šimková, Barbora Šupová. This study was published with support from a Grant for the Long-Term Conceptual Development of a Research Organization of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.

This publication was supported by the Cooperation Program provided by Charles University, research area Subject Specific Education Research, implemented at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University.

Bibliographic References

- Alemani, C. (2022). *Biennale Arte 2022 – The Milk of Dreams*. Milan: Silvana.
- Atkinson, D. (2018). *Art, disobedience, and ethics: the adventure of pedagogy*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Biennale Arte* (2022). <https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2022/milk-dreams>.
- Bláha, J. (2020). “Interdisciplinary Literacy as Complex Communication with Reality” in *Gramotnost, Pregramotnost A Vzdělávání*, IV (3/2020), 35-57.
- Bystřický, O., & Muráňová, I. (2022). “Mezi kurátorem, pedagogem a edukátorem: dialogy napříč časem
- Bystřický, O., & Muráňová, I. (2022, October 10). “Mezi kurátorem, pedagogem a edukátorem: dialogy napříč časem” [Between curator, teacher and educator: dialogues across time.] [Conference presentation] Aktuální trendy v muzejní prezentaci a edukaci VI: Proměny profese muzejního pedagoga, Moravské zemské muzeum. Brno, Czech Republic.
- Fulková, M. (2008). *Diskurs umění a vzdělávání*. [The discourse of art and education.] Jinočany: H & H.
- Fulková, M. (2018). “Pomalé pozorování a neúsilné soustředění: Několik poznámek k didaktické výstavbě obsahu učiva v galerijním vzdělávání” [Slow observation and weak concentration: some remarks on the didactic construction of the content of the curriculum in gallery education.] in *Otvorená galéria. Zborník z konferencie galerijnej pedagogiky* [Open Gallery. Proceedings of a conference on gallery pedagogy.] (12-22). Bratislava: Kunsthalles.
- Hendl, J. (2016). *Kvalitativní výzkum*. [Qualitative Research] Praha: Portál.
- Kesner, L. (s.d.). Afektivní odpověď na vizuální umění: propojení uměnovědného a neurovědného pohledu. [Affective response to visual art: linking art and neuroscience perspectives.] <https://www.muni.cz/en/research/projects/30423>.
- Kesner, L., Adámek, P., & Grygarová, D. (2021). “How Neuroimaging Can Aid the Interpretation of Art. *Frontiers*” in *Human Neuroscience*, 15, doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2021.702473.
- Kordík, J. (2023). “Psychické potíže u dětí podle specialistů

- výrazně rostou. Ministerstvo kvůli tomu zřídilo speciální tým" "According to specialists, psychological problems in children are increasing significantly. The ministry has set up a special team because of this" in *CT24*, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/3429010-psychicke-potize-u-deti-podle-specialistu-vyrazne-rostou-ministerstvo-kvuli-tomu>
- Lakoff, G. (2006). *Ženy, oheň a nebezpečné věci: co kategorie vypovídají o naší mysli*. [Women, fire and dangerous things: what the categories say about our minds.] [Praha: Triáda.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2002). *Metaforý, kterými žijeme*. [Metaphors We Live By.] Brno: Host.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. (2004). *The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination*. Boston: Shambhala.
- MŠMT (2021). *Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání* [Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education.] <https://www.edu.cz/rvp-ramcove-vzdelavaci-programy/ramcove-vzdelavacici-program-pro-zakladni-vzdelavani-rvp-zv/> [Not referred within the text!]
- National Gallery Prague (s.d.). *About*, <https://www.ngprague.cz/en/about>.
- Patron, S., & Ištók, R. (2022). "Eva Kotátková: My Body Is Not an Island" in *NGP*, <https://www.ngprague.cz/en/event/3473/eva-kotatkova-my-body-is-not-an-island>.
- Říhová, K. (2018). "Proces interpretace uměleckého díla dětským divákem" [The process of interpretation of a work of art by a child viewer] in *Výtvarná Výchova*, 58/2018(3-4/2018), 28-46.
- Říhová, K., Bláha, J., Fulková, M., Fišerová, Z., & Vargová, P. (2020). "Galerijní edukace jako součást vzdělávacího procesu v kontextu vizuální gramotnosti" [Gallery education as part of the educational process in the context of visual literacy] in *Výtvarná Výchova*, 60/2020(1-2/2020), 70-97.
- Schön, D. (1991). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think In Action*. Michigan: Ashgate.
- Stynes, M., Murphy, T., McNamara, G. & O'Hara, J. (2018). "Reflectionon-action in qualitative research: A critical self-appraisal rubric for deconstructing research" in *Issues in Educational Research*, 28(1), 153-167. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier28/stynes.pdf>.
- Švarčíček, R. (2007). *Kvalitativní výzkum v pedagogických vědách*. [Qualitative research in educational sciences.] Praha: Portál.
- van Alphen, E. (2018). *Art in Mind: How Contemporary Images Shape Thought*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill.
- van Alphen, E., & Jirsa, T. (2019). *How to Do Things with Affects: Affective Triggers in Aesthetic Forms and Cultural Practices*. Leiden: Brill Rodopi.

