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VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION FOR DESIGN STUDENTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MUSEUM EDUCATION IN A SOCIAL CONTEXT

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Abstract. The article is a theoretical-practical study, focused on valorization of the visual arts education for design students in the context of museum education. The paper reveals fundamental concepts, identifies certain perspectives to researches in the targeted field. Additionally, it specifies and describes several essential educational aspects, such as the objectives of visual arts education; the value axes centered on visual arts education; cognitive processes developed by design students during activities carried out in museums; educational actions regarding the optimization of visual arts education for design students; strategies and methods (scientific documentation, analysis and synthesis, conversation, product study, etc.) of enhancing visual arts education for design students. The study specifies, analyzes, and validates the positive impact of activities conducted in museum spaces on the visual arts education of design students, focused on achieving these aspects in the context of university-museum collaboration. In conclusion, an approach to visual arts education of design students from the perspective of national and universal artistic heritage can ensure both the optimization of initial training for design students and lifelong education.

Keywords: *visual arts education, museum, museum education, museum pedagogy, art collection, artwork, values.*

Rezumat. Articolul reprezintă un studiu teoretico-practic, axat pe valorificarea instruirii artistico-plastice a studenților-designeri în contextul educației muzeale. În lucrare sunt dezvoltate conceptele de bază, sunt analizate esențializate unele viziuni ale cercetătorilor din domeniul vizat. La fel, sunt precizate și descrise câteva aspecte importante educaționale, precum: *obiectivele educației artistico-plastice; axele valorice centrate pe instruirea artistico-plastică; procesele psihice dezvoltate la studenții-designeri în cadrul activităților desfășurate în muze; acțiunile educaționale cu privire la optimizarea instruirii artistico-plastice a studenților-designeri; strategiile și metodele (documentarea științifică, analiza și sinteza, conversația, studiul produselor etc.) de eficientizare a instruirii artistico-plastice a studenților-designeri.* Studiul dat precizează, analizează și validează impactul pozitiv al activităților desfășurate în spațiul muzeal, asupra instruirii artistico-plastice a studenților-designeri, accentul plasându-se pe realizarea acestor aspecte în contextul colaborării universitate-muzeu. Concluzionând, o abordare a instruirii artistico-plastice a studenților-designeri din perspectiva patrimoniului

artistic national și universal poate asigura atât optimizarea formării inițiale a studenților-designeri, cât și educația pe tot parcursul vieții.

Concepte cheie: *instruire artistico-plastică, muzeu, educație estetică, educație muzeală, pedagogie muzeală, colecții muzeale, operă de artă, valori.*

1. Introduction

Building upon the study of established literature [1-5], it is revealed that museum institutions have undergone significant changes throughout the entire evolutionary-historical trajectory of humanity, continuously adjusting their mechanisms and strategies to new social, cultural, and technological challenges. Consequently, transitioning from elitist models, museums have gradually transformed into institutions that are open and accessible to all social strata, highly valued in the process of providing education to the entire society through and for shared values.

During the transitional period between the 19th and 20th centuries, the museum was recognized and affirmed as a social and cultural entity, significantly influencing the configuration and development of museum pedagogy on a scientific level [6]. Museum pedagogy, with the ultimate goal of achieving museum education [7], focuses on creating relevant and interactive educational experiences within the museum space, targeting various fields such as arts, science, and culture. These experiences aim to encourage a profound understanding of the national and universal cultural heritage.

Contemporary museums have evolved beyond mere repositories of artifacts, becoming open platforms for cultural dialogue, reflection, and addressing various socio-educational challenges. They promote history, inclusion, tolerance, intercultural relationships, including the realization of visual arts education, stimulating the development of creativity, an interest in culture, beauty, etc., fostering the understanding and the appreciation of the art.

According to Romanian researcher C. Cucoș, museum pedagogy encompasses plastic education, defining the acquisition of plastic language elements for communication with artworks, becoming one of the crucial avenues for the reception, appreciation, and integration of artistic values into the lives of the younger generation [8, p. 116]. Along the same lines, S. Cristea notes that museums also impact the aesthetic cultivation of individuals through artistic education, a fundamental component of aesthetic education for students by conveying the values of artistic beauty [9, p. 53].

In conclusion, the overarching goal of visual arts education in the presented context is to shape and develop a personality capable of creating, appreciating, assimilating, and promoting the values of artistic beauty. The museum space, in turn, provides the necessary means to manage this complex process. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that postmodern museums are expanding and strengthening their areas of interest, diversifying collections and exhibited content. They facilitate inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary connections in the education process through the use of new communication media, powered by interactive digital technologies, to offer attractive and accessible experiences to a wide audience, especially design students. Thus, museums boast an extensive variety of curated collections and artworks that convey valuable messages from artistic, historical, aesthetic, and design perspectives, including interior, industrial, and fashion design.

Given that contemporary society places art and design in a prominent position in global culture and the economy, the role of museums in promoting art and design is undisputed. Visual arts education for design students, focused on the valorization of national

and universal artistic heritage preserved in museum collections, becomes a priority, involving a multitude of factors, contexts, and educational circumstances. Russian pedagogue B. A. Stolyarov asserts that the educational activity of an art museum allows students to broaden their cultural horizons and contributes to the development of erudition, skills in artistic analysis of artworks, providing extensive knowledge in the field of art history [10]. Therefore, this form of education aims at the personal efficiency and professional development of design students, fostering the progressive assimilation of knowledge, stimulating imagination, artistic creativity, aesthetic receptivity, etc., through their interaction with authentic artworks.

2. The museum as a pedagogical environment and source of artistic inspiration for design-students

Visual arts education conducted within a museum space provides design students with opportunities to explore cultural and artistic diversities, experiment, and engage with notable personalities in the fields of painting, design, architecture, pedagogy, etc. The methodology of visual arts education is centered on achieving two objectives:

- a) *progressive acquisition of specific techniques;*
- b) *initiation into the reception of artworks, centered on discerning the difference between the natural object and its artistic representation* [9, p. 56].

In line with the aforementioned, educational-artistic actions in the field of visual arts initiated by museums stimulate the active participation of the target audience (students) in exhibitions, thematic conferences, and cultural events, thus fostering the development of an open, inclusive, and culturally informed society [11]. In this context, we confirm the museums' potential in terms of aesthetic and visual arts education for design students, as we have implemented an institutional project titled *Creating educational partnerships in promoting national and universal heritage from the perspective of museum education for school and university students*, which has resulted in great success.

As a result, the museum institution is recognized as a cultural institution of significant importance in the visual arts education of design students, providing a formal and non-formal framework for learning/investigating national and universal artistic heritage in a specific environment dedicated to art and culture. This can be achieved through the prism of two value axes:

- **The theoretical axis** provides students with knowledge of basic concepts and theoretical foundations, incorporating:
 - the evolutionary process of visual arts, artistic styles based on the studied museum heritage;
 - perspectives of researchers or visual artists regarding the understanding and interpretation of artworks;
 - theoretical concepts related to plastic language - elements of plastic language (point, line, shape, volume, plastic value, color, etc.);
 - means of plastic expression and principles of plastic composition (harmony, balance, proportion, rhythm, symmetry, etc.);
 - theoretical aspects concerning techniques, technologies, materials, and methods applied in creating artworks found in museum collections;
 - complex information about the structure and specificity of the addressed museum heritage, etc.

- **The praxiological axis** complements the theoretical aspects of visual arts education, focusing on a holistic learning experience involving practical and applied learning through:
 - direct contact with artworks to describe the evolutionary process of visual arts and artistic styles based on the studied museum heritage;
 - deciphering and narrating the elements of plastic language featured in selected works exhibited in the museum;
 - analysis and explanation of how artists use plastic expression to finalize the compositional space in the elaboration of works from the proposed collections;
 - practical activities centered on comparing materials and technical means used in traditional art with those used in contemporary art;
 - interaction with researchers, visual artists, educators in scientific-practical conferences, creative workshops, etc., encouraging the exchange of experience and leveraging the specific language of visual arts and museum education;
 - direct involvement in documentation and restoration activities of museum heritage pieces, etc.

At the same time, by investigating the recipes used by our predecessors for preparing colors, primers, supports, and materials associated with artistic techniques, we can take on responsibilities for creating or optimizing vital conditions for the recovery, conservation, presentation, and promotion of masterpieces constituting the museum treasure. This helps prevent the degradation or complete destruction of these artistic values [12, p. 6].

In this line of thought, it is necessary to specify that the issue of preservation, valorization, and ensuring the authenticity of cultural and artistic heritage remains a priority of state policies, with our country aligning the national regulatory framework with international conventions and protocols [13].

As we have observed from the above and based on our experience, the implementation of visual arts education for design students within museums involves the interconnection of the two previously described value axes. In this context, the aim is to optimize the harmonious development and professional formation of design students, which includes:

- *Development of critical and analytical thinking through:* *observation and detailed description* of the elements of plastic language that constitute the artwork; *objective analysis and interpretation* of artworks: their meanings, symbols, and conveyed messages; *analysis and comparison* of various techniques, technologies, approaches, and artistic periods in which the artworks were created; *subjective and reasoned interpretation* of specific works, historical periods, representatives, etc.; *critical evaluation of artworks* from the perspective of relevance and impact on contemporary art.

- *Stimulating creativity through:* *stimulating creativity and personal expression* by exploring, researching, and experimenting in the creation and realization of one's own artistic compositions or projects inspired by museum collections; *fostering divergent thinking* by launching creative challenges to discover multiple solutions or ideas in the application of unconventional materials and techniques or the nonconformist and personalized approach to artwork creation; *collaboration and exchange of ideas* among students as well as visual artists, extending one's own creative resources; *reflection and feedback* - essential aspects for self-assessment and creativity stimulation.

- *Understanding and appreciating cultural diversity and artistic context through:*

studying works of art in the evolution of humanity, which includes aspects such as: political, social, religious, and philosophical influences on artistic production; *examples and models* of important artworks for certain historical periods, created by renowned artists that serve as sources of inspiration in the development of one's own creations; *leveraging the plastic and museum language* through the use of specific terms and concepts in communication, such as composition, perspective, luminosity, symbolism, museum exhibitions, collections, treasure, etc.; *identifying and comparing contemporary artistic trends* by establishing connections between current artworks and those from the past in a contextualized perspective reflected in personal artistic practices.

➤ *Artistic and aesthetic development through:*

exploring museum objects and collections, interacting with genuine art and cultural artifacts; *appreciating and evaluating the technical quality, expressiveness, and artistic message* conveyed by a truly authentic work, *enhancing the reception, evaluation, experience, and creation of the values of beauty of nature, society, and art* [14].

➤ *Learning through experimentation:*

design students can learn from masters by integrating elements and techniques observed in original artworks displayed in museum exhibitions into their own artistic practice.

Therefore, harmonizing the content of artistic-plastic education for design students with museum education programs is essential for both their initial and ongoing development, serving as a catalyst for professional advancement through unique artistic skills, creativity, and aesthetic sensitivity focused on *beauty*.

3. Materials and Methods

As a result of conducting various formal and non-formal activities within museums, was determined that, to ensure high-quality learning experiences targeting the artistic and plastic education of student-designers, it is essential to develop and implement educational actions based on the following aspects:

- *Definition of educational objectives*: establishing clear and relevant objectives regarding the development of specific professional skills and transversal competencies of the target group.
- *Selection and preparation of exhibits in accordance with curricular requirements*: identifying artistic creations that would rise interest, allow exploration of technologies and working techniques, knowledge and understanding of artistic concepts, and meet the requirements of learning content.
- *Development and implementation of a coherent and structured program*: designing teaching activities based on well-established criteria targeting the progressive construction of knowledge, the development of creativity, and the practice and consolidation of practical skills through exploration, research, and cultural interference.
- *Collaboration with professionals and museum guides*: involving specialists from various fields (visual artists, designers, educators, etc.) and museum guides, to provide useful information and experiences to support the implementation of artistic and plastic education activities in an interesting and productive manner.
- *Monitoring and evaluating the educational program*: monitoring and assessing learning outcomes regulated by student feedback, provides opportunities to

optimize the program and adjust teaching tasks to both, professional training requirements and personal interests.

At the same time, we emphasize that the design of artistic and plastic education activities for student-designers, conducted within museums, must be correlated with the criteria for classifying learning as follows:

- *perceptual learning*;
- *motor learning*;
- *verbal learning*;
- *concept learning*;
- *social learning* [15, p.18].

Equally necessary is the establishment and pursuit of a well-defined trajectory from an inter-, intra-, and transdisciplinary perspective that would optimize the promotion of positive and authentic values, playing a decisive role in shaping the personalities of future designers and ensuring lifelong learning [16].

4. Results and Discussions

Our study on the artistic and plastic education of student-designers in the museum context [7, 17] allowed us to establish that the operational adjustment of museum resources to educational ones can enhance the performance outcomes achieved by students, especially within the framework of creating bilateral educational partnerships between higher education institutions and museums. Institutional-level collaboration involves a wide range of activities in both museum spaces and academic environments, such as organizing and conducting specialized courses, seminars, or thematic conferences with the active participation of students, researchers, designers, museum professionals, and more. Student-designers can collaborate with peers from various disciplines, such as architecture, interior design, graphic design, painting, etc., to create interdisciplinary projects within museums. They can participate in interactive exhibitions that blend visual arts with spatial design, information technologies, and more. Similarly, student-designers can engage in cooperative projects with museums to develop graphic and visual exhibition products, design and arrange museum spaces, and conceive and develop intriguing concepts for dynamic presentation of temporary or permanent exhibitions, thereby gaining valuable professional experience.



Figure 1. The teacher's explanations for students and pupils.

Following, will be provided examples of good artistic and plastic educational practices focused on a synergistic and productive collaboration conducted by us at the *National Museum of Art of Moldova* (NMAM). There, students from the *Technical University of Moldova, Faculty of Urbanism and Architecture, Interior Design Program*, together with students (potential TUM students) from the *Center of Excellence in Construction in Chisinau* (CECC), accompanied by professors Zestre Lilia and Manea Nicolae, were involved in artistic activities within the *Form Study* discipline, followed by constructive communication and the exchange of opinions among them, Figure 1. Thus, capitalizing on the curriculum content in the *Form Study* discipline within the museum context has had a positive impact on institutional, professional, and personal dimensions. About the fact that museums can offer students a highly productive learning environment and opportunities for internships or technological practice programs within research laboratories, restoration of museum artifacts, or creative workshops alongside notable figures, we have become convinced by frequently participating with design students in lectures, exhibitions, and meetings held by educators, art critics, and visual artists including Dmitri Shibaev (Figure 2), Florina Breazu (Figure 3), and others.



Figure 2. Dmitri Shibaev, assistant professor *Academy of Music, Theatre, and Fine Arts* with TUM student-designers and CECC pupils.

Familiarizing students and pupils with the artwork of visual artist Ilie Bogdesco–100 years since his birth, during the lecture delivered by visual artist Dmitri Shibaev, proved to be highly successful, as they discovered details about the life and creative activity of the master.



Figure 3. Florina Breazu, Ph.D., artist, *President of the Plastic Artists' Union of Moldova*, together with TUM student-designers.

The viewing of the personal exhibition *MultiVers* by artist Florina Breazu and the initiation of TUM students into various techniques of interpreting the messages conveyed in the painter's works inspired future designers, prompting them to develop their own works and projects.

Similarly, TUM student-designers, along with university faculty members Tatiana Filipski, Ph.D., senior lecturer, Elena Zagaevschi, assistant professor, and Stela Plămădeală,

assistant professor, demonstrated that they can act as moderators for workshops and practical activities for younger museum visitors. These may include sessions on drawing, painting, sculpture, collage, photography, etc., guiding participants and sharing their artistic knowledge and skills. An exemplary case can be seen in the *Creative Workshop* conducted for first-grade students from the *Gheorghe Asachi Theoretical High School in Chisinau*, accompanied by teacher Lidia Cherdevară, held at the *National Museum of Art of Moldova*, Figure 4.



Figure 4. Student-designers, together with students, crafting umbrellas during the Creative Workshop at NMAM.

This pedagogical experience and educational practices with students from the *Technical University of Moldova, Interior Design* specialty, conducted in a museum context, have led to an understanding of the pressing need to align curricular content with the national and universal values preserved by museums and to revitalize activities to meet educational goals. Museums can become an open exhibition platform for the general public, showcasing artworks and projects by student-designers, encouraging communication and intergenerational collaboration focused on promoting the museum's treasures in the context of art and design education.

In this context, should be mentioned several effective strategies in the artistic and plastic training of student designers:

- strategy for planning teaching and extracurricular activities from the perspective of leveraging museums in art and design education;
- strategy for selecting and applying educational methods in accordance with the specific curriculum content;
- strategy for verifying and evaluating artistic and plastic activities conducted in museums;
- strategy for stimulating students' creativity.

5. Conclusions

These strategies target the following teaching methods and procedures: storytelling, explanation, conversation, discussion, brainstorming, observation, discovery, demonstration, sketches, portfolios, presentations, PowerPoint slides, etc. Consequently, using these effective pedagogical methods, the artistic and plastic training of student-designers can be a captivating and valuable experience that prepares them for a successful career.

In confirmation of the above, can be concluded that through artistic and plastic education focused on both formal and non-formal activities in museums, the aim is to promote cultural, artistic, and intercultural values, foster creativity, facilitate dialogue, understanding, and tolerance. The primary goal is to shape the professional, self-efficient, and resilient personality of student-designers.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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