

Drawing and Music. An experience on Art Teaching.

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*My soul is full of stars;
my heart of colored music.*

The present writing gives some guidance to the art education in a multicultural context and promotes the coexistence of East and West Traditions. The dialogue and investigation show us that there is a tolerant, “advanced”, art and art teaching: reciprocal influences rather than a polarity, cooperation among people, mediums of expression and diverse cultures are possible. The approach is focus on artistic methodologies, characteristic to dance, drawing and music.

This writing exposes some ideas and recent experiences introduced in my program Drawing II at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Altea, of the University Miguel Hernández (Elche, Spain). Believing that creative artistic methodology links body and brain, we placed physical and mental training at the centre of our teaching. A large number of artists, who, in many cases, became art teachers, realized by their art work that the attitude toward his work and materials are fundamental in art processes. The curriculum only provides the frame for teaching encouraged students to work on experiences and feelings, on scientific method and intuitive sensibility. From an empirical point of view, human experience is extremely important in art.

Grasping movement through Dance (body) and Drawing (eyes-hand)

In May 2004 we did a workshop in the Studio Drawing II produced by Pilar Viviente (artist, writer and professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the UMH) and Jack Waters (artist, writer and professor at the Hampshire College in New York), and directed by Jack Waters with Dance Tube group from New York City, which was extremely successful with the students in the faculty and contributed to link the academy with the society. The workshop had an important social impact in local news and televisions. (1) One year later the prestigious contemporary art magazine *El Temps d'Art* published some pictures in the number 19, a special publication in Art Education focused on the Mediterranean Spanish area. (2)

We introduced first yoga exercises and spontaneous dance and after we discussed the nature of movement in theoretical and historical terms. The students did specific exercises in the morning before starting to draw the human figure in action. The achievement of the experience of movement was essentially a self free interpretation. We insisted that form and specifically movement, should be grasped by the student before the visual representation and analysis of the image. There is no visual representation and artistic expression at this first “stage” of the workshop.

On the other hand, those exercises are linked with art therapy, treating through art everyday nervous tensions and emotional conditions, tendencies or disorders with both physical and mental symptoms (such as stress, anxiety and depression). After those exercises the students are relaxed to start with artistic representation. In 1919/1920 professor at the Bauhaus School Johannes Itten (1888-1967) used morning exercises for similar purposes. As said Itten: "In this way born in the classroom the necessary receptivity and I could to begin to the study of the mediums of artistic representation". (3)

The drawings produced by the students in a second "stage" of the workshop show the evidence of the training methods. Physical movement and music provides the students with the sense of rhythm. Exploring the potential of music in their drawings, the expression and variety of lines stands out even more richly. In this discovery the type of drawing we employed is purely linear. In brief, the time element becomes a spatial element. The formation of contours in a perceptual process incorporates more than just the sensation of "seeing", it includes also the sensation of feeling and denotes integration. Perceiving sound-music and human figure in action, the students understand the parallelism of the arts. The representation moves away from the traditional way and introduces vitality in works on paper, such as small-scale and big-scale. Spatial disorientation appears with synesthetic shapes. Obviously it remains the need to preserve structure, geometry, but not in a rigorous order, within strict linear outlines.

Music (hearing) and Drawing (seeing). The Parallel Sense.

This parallelism between music and visual representation was emphasized in the Bauhaus School curriculum. The Bauhaus School of Applied Art and Architecture in Weimar, Germany, opened by the architect Walter Gropius in 1919, had several abstract painters, employed to teach students the elements of design theory, such as László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946), Josef Albers (1888-1976), Johannes Itten (1888-1967), Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) and Paul Klee (1879-1940). As said Anna Moszynska, "Many pioneering abstract artists were drawn to music as a model - both in their theorizing and in the titling of their compositions. Kupka, Kandinsky, Delaunay and Paul Klee (1879-1940) were only some of the artists to make such links." (4) The parallelism of music and art is something universal. The musical analogies could inspire painters and designers, especially to those painters and designers with musical education. In formal terms, as a piano composer and performer, it easy for me to see lines, colours or tones when I am performing. Music offers not only an atmosphere for art creation, themes and melodies generate images in our brain and these images provoke our themes and melodies.

For instance, this synesthetic experience "of seeing colours and lines simultaneously with the music" should be a basis for further practices on the interaction of visual effects and sounds, such as multimedia and digital productions. We get engaged to the digital revolution, more and more living and training students in an "audio-visual culture" rather than "visual culture". New media (Computer Design, Net art, Multimedia) occupies with design (Graphical Design,

Corporate Identity Design, Industrial Design) a primary place in our society. (5) Learning and teaching art with synesthesia is convenient for the development of multiple intelligences. Synesthesia comes from the Greek *syn* (meaning union) and *aisthēsis* (sensation), literally interpreted as joining of the senses. Synesthesia is an involuntary joining in which the real information from one sense joins or parallels a perception from another. (6)

Each music provokes a different impression on our senses. We enjoy different cultures and particular ways to perceive and express. The different kinds of musical perception can be a medium for experiences, variety of cultural heritages, like in visual perception where “the whole history of art is a history of modes of visual perception” (Herbert Read). Music brings people together and can serve as a bridge between various cultures. Through this experience we learn to tolerate contrary opinions, we adopt a more relaxed attitude towards others. Plurality is required for social development and progress. That is because it is important for the student to appreciate the various ways in which other human beings perceive and express the world.

For instance, in august 2002 I recorded some cross-cultural piano compositions in EEUU under the guidance of one of the most famous South Asian classical musicians, Dilshad Hussain Khan (7). Where the sounds and melodies come from in these piano compositions? Basically it is a mix of *ragas/raag*, which is the basis of South Asian classical music, Western classical music and Spanish Andalusian popular music. It is a music that provides freedom, well-being, and unites different cultural elements through improvisation. The music can evolve also to the New Age music and Jazz fusion in each improvisation. As ragas and other genre such as New Age music, modern ambient and Jazz fusion, this piano compositions can be used for relaxation purposes, as a stress reliever or as an intellectual stimulus. This offers a stimulus for one’s intellects, transcends entertainment toward a reflection of one’s soul and provides a quiet haven for one’s soul. At the present time, this music is a stimulus for the drawing practice in the Studio Drawing II at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Altea. It helped clearly the students to draw the human figure in repose and to concentrate on their works. They grasped better the basic structure of the representation or *schematic realism*. The achievement of a basic structural order in visual realism requires a deep and high mental concentration.

I met Dilshad Hussain Khan at the World Festival of Sacred Music, programmed by the musicians and producers Richard and Marc Eagleton. The World Festival of Sacred Music was a part of a global celebration initiated by the Dalai Lama as a means to manifest humanity’s non-violent interdependence in the new millennium. Diverse cultures and religions, many expressions of the divine, musicians, artist and spiritual teachers from around the world came and were part of this event, offering beauty and hope for the reaffirmation of our human community. (8) This experience encourages me for other initiatives. I created a similar situation in an individual exhibition in the art gallery Sala XIII in Madrid (November-December 2004). The same approach was applied in a digital video in 2002 (The Dream of an Eye, 6’) and in a recent work about global warming in 2007 (Sweet Water, 3’). I created the track “Sounds from the Nature”, which I mixed with John Cage and Natasha Atlas.

What I am trying to find is an organic relationship between the visual and the sounds, provoking the feeling that the music is also painted, with a style of music that reaches down into the self. But also a music that comes from a cross-cultural context, a multi-cultural dialogue, where coexistence and cooperation among people and diverse cultures are not only possible but a real and precious social need. There is no doubt, at the age of the communication, when boundaries breaks down and create new cultural fields, that we have to develop a better international understanding of arts and art education. In such circumstances the artists must necessarily commit oneself, get engaged with the society, discovering and exploring the different traditions and carrying with it theoretical, technical and aesthetic knowledge to offer others. This way, also the spirit of research and invention is encouraged. (9)

References

1. For further information see the press package: - Redacción. Workshop de Jack Waters en la Facultad de BBAA. Canfali, Periódico Marina Baixa, jueves, 13 de Mayo de 2004. - Redacción. El teatro de Jack Waters en la Facultad de Bellas Artes de Altea. Tribuna Siglo XXI, Periódico semanal gratuito, Nº 53, 14 al 20 de Mayo de 2004. - N.A. Los alumnos de Bellas Artes disfrutarán del Workshop de J. Waters. Noticias Altea, Periódico independiente de información local, viernes, 14 de mayo de 2004. - MGR. Estrategias de intervención teatral en Bellas Artes. Diario del Mediterráneo, viernes, 14 de mayo de 2004. - Redacción. Jack Waters workshop in the Belles Artes de Altea Faculty. The Canfali, English Marina Baixa Weekly News, May 19, 2004. - E.N. Bellas Artes, con la vanguardia neoyorquina, Noticias Altea, Periódico independiente de información local, viernes, 21 de mayo de 2004. - CANAL 55 BENIDORM. Noticias Informativo de las 20:30 y las 22:30 h. (emisión de 2'50 minutos), Reportaje Magazine "De Marina a Marina" de 21:15 a 22:15 h. (emisión de 13'50 minutos), jueves 20 de mayo. - TEVÉS ALTEA. Noticias Informativo de 21 a 21:30 h. (emisión de 5'05 minutos), jueves 20 de mayo.
2. Magazine *El Temps d'Art*, n.19, maig-juny 2005: "Ets artista quan acabes Belles Arts?", pp.20-23. Thanks to *El Temps d'Art* for include the workshop and the Faculty of Fine Arts of the UMH in the magazine. Thanks also to my colleagues Ramón De Soto, Santiago Delgado, Filiberto Siscar, Asención González and Raul Colomer for helping to set up the workshop in the Faculty of Fine Arts in May 2004.
3. Johannes ITTEN. *Le dessin et la forme*. Paris: Dessain et Toldra, 1995. (Original title: "Mein vorkurs am Bauhaus. Gestaltungs und formenlehre).
4. Moszynska, Anna. *Abstract Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1990. P. 38-39.
5. About this subject see: Viviente, M. P., *Drawing Teaching in the 21 st Century. East and West*. "InSEA on Bridge" Proceedings Book, Istanbul, July 1-6, 2004, Gazi University & Visual Arts Education Association (ed.), 2005. See also: Viviente, M. P., *Fine Arts at the Turn of the Century: Curricular Approaches for the 21st Century*, Revista *Reencuentro, análisis de problemas universitarios*, nº. 20, 1997. Vol. Reflections on Science, Technique and Art, 1997. Ed. Rectorado de la UAM, Méjico. This publication is a reference of the new Spanish European Curriculum (Proyecto de Ley por el que se regula la organización de las enseñanzas artísticas superiores en Aragón -BOCA núm.272, 13/11/2002-; Ley 17/2003, de 24 de marzo -BOE núm.109, 7/5/2003-).
6. Richard E. CYTOWIC. *Synesthesia. A union of the Senses*. Springer Series in Neuropsychology. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1989. ISBN 0-387-96807-5 Springer-Verlag New York Berlin Heidelberg. Dr. Cytowic reports extensive research into the physical, psychological, neural, and familial background of a group of synesthetes. His finding findings form the first complete picture of the brain mechanisms that underlie this remarkable perceptual experience. His research demonstrates that this rare condition is brain-based and perceptual rather than mind-based, as is the case with memory or imagery. *Synesthesia* offers a unique and detailed study of a condition that has confounded scientists for more than 200 years.
7. A prestigious violinist from Pakistan who has studied and travelled world-wide and now resides in Reston, VA, E.E.U.U. "Dilshad Hussain Khan, a violinist from Pakistan, performing South Asian classical music at recital halls and at universities and recording his compositions on CD. Coming from six generations of musicians, Dilshad is five-time winner of the Amir Khusro Award and the recipient of the National Award (equivalent to the Grammys), he is the only violinist to win the Graduate Award in Pakistan (...). He also presented lectures on South Asian music at Oxford, Cambridge, Radford University and Columbia University."
8. This festival brings to Altea (Paulau Altea, November, 8, 9, 10, 2001) some of the greatest artists alive, such us Tibetan Monks, Ali Akbar Moradi (Iran), Dominic Miller (Sting's guitar), K.J. Yesudas (India), Zahawy Group (Hussein Zahawy, Kurdistan, Irak), Tùmata Group (group founded in 1976 by Doctor Oruc Guvenc), Dilshad Hussain Khan or Rosa Zaragoza (Jewish, Muslim and Christian songs from the Spanish 15th century). Doctor Oruc Guvenc was Director of the Department of Ethnomusicology, Research and

Music Therapy of the Istanbul University from 1991 to 1996. Mr. Guvenc is Sheik of six Sufi paths, one of them the Mevlevi tradition. (The Whirling Dervishes).

9. At the present time, as responsible of the research line "Interdisciplinary Research. Artistic Methodologies", in the Faculty of Fine Arts in Altea, I provide tutorial assistance for students in postgraduate research projects. One doctoral student called Cynthia Pedrauvilla is fascinating by the topic "painting and music". Thanks to her for developing this ideas. I want also to especially thank Professor Kosme de Barañano, for his friendship and valuable help with his writings about this subject.



