



COME2ART: Introducing a collaborative scheme between artists & community members fostering life skills development and resilience through creative placemaking

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Erasmus + project, Partnerships for Creativity



“A life skills curriculum through arts
in the context of creative placemaking”



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Module 3: Digital tools for creative expression

Introduction

This module focuses on uses of readily available digital tools for creative expression. The module offers methods, examples of best practices and basic theoretical background on the uses of simple and affordable digital tools to foster creative expression that participants can use with their community. A key aspect of this module is to highlight the importance of employing digital tools in ways that are commensurate with and enhance the emotional and conceptual impact of creative expression. Emphasis is given on imaginative, affective and thought-provoking uses of digital means, so that simple tools can have impact. Digital technologies (especially high-end methods such as virtual or mixed reality) can offer spectacular visual representations. However, the main aim of this module is to make optimal use of affordable means in ways that foster the meanings and affective potential of creativity avoiding emphasis on the spectacular. This module will also provide tools and methods for employing simple yet effective digital solutions in collective artistic expression pursuits. This module consists of three units.

Unit 3.1: Artistic expression and digital tools

This unit introduces learners to the relationship between material-based ways of expression and digital tools that often result in immaterial artworks such as screen-based of digital projections, video or audio installations

This unit includes:

- Issues about the digital vs material divide in art
- Technology as tool for artistic expression





- How to apply digital tools that include and not exclude

Unit 3.2: Creative uses of digital tools with emphasis on issue-based artistic practice

This unit covers the following topics:

- Approaches for including digital tools in issue-based art with emphasis on engaging communities
- Expressing and communicating meaning through digital means
- Developing life skills through uses of digital artistic means

Unit 3.3: Enhancing life skills through collaborative expression through the use of digital tools

This unit covers the following topics:

- Digital means as an empowering factor for individuals and communities in collaborative expression
- Case studies of specific art projects that used simple digital technologies

The main learning objectives of this Module are:

- Creative uses of simple and affordable digital tools
- Describe and discuss main theoretical and practice- related underpinnings of employing digital tools in artistic expression
- The effect of digital tools as expressive means, on meaning-making processes.
- Description and evaluation of instances (case studies) of artistic practice that employs digital tools in relation to its ability to foster life skills development.





Assessment

The level of achievement of the learning objectives will be assessed through:

- Analysis of assignments' results in the form of art practice (mini art project/small scale artworks)
- Short discussion of case studie(s) in the form of essay
- Group conversation





Unit 3.1: Artistic expression and digital tools

Introduction

This unit introduces learners to the relationship between material-based ways of expression and digital tools that often result in immaterial artworks such as screen-based of digital projections, video or audio installations.

This unit includes issues about the digital vs material divide in art. Moreover, it addresses technology as tool for artistic expression, and the ways in which it may enhance the viewer's experience, provide solutions that empower expression, especially for people who do not have skills in more traditional artistic media such as painting and drawing.

The main focus is how to apply digital tools that include and not exclude; that is to say, how to overcome the so-called digital division between those who have access to ICT tools and pertinent know-how and skills as opposed to those who do not. Therefore, the key aspect of this unit is to propose simple, affordable and readily available solution that will enhance and foster creativity. ICT will be introduced as means that are widely used in contemporary art often in simple and subtle ways, e.g., video projections on old buildings, that may convey feelings and ideas.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this unit, the learners will be able to:





- Identify simple and affordable digital tools for creative expression such as digital photography, video projection (on screen or e.g., on items or buildings), use of simple software, video or sound installations, simple sensors and elements of interactivity, that can be used by community members in artistic projects.
- identify uses of simple and affordable digital means in the wider field of contemporary visual arts that can offer inspiration for community-based artistic projects.
- Identify at least 3 artworks that employ digital tools exclusively or in conjunction with material-based (non-digital) creative forms of artistic expression
- Identify and discuss issues on the relation between material and digital tools for artistic expression and possible impacts on the emotional and cognitive aspects of creativity
- Design a proposal for a small artwork with a very basic use of digital tools (in terms of technological sophistication) and identify its concept as well as its emotional and conceptual effect in a short text
- Evaluate an art project design that involves digital tools (exclusively or in combination with other artistic means) on the basis of its envisaged impact (emotional and in relation to meaning-making) with your community
- Acknowledge the emotional impact of an artwork that employs digital tools as fulcrum of thought processes

This unit focuses on the uses of available digital media for creative expression. It provides methods, examples of good practice and basic theoretical background for the use of simple and cost-effective digital tools that participants can use with

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their group or community to promote artistic expression.

Key Points of Section 3.1

- The importance of applying digital tools in ways that match and enhance the digital and conceptual impact of creative expression.
- Emphasis is placed on creative, emotional and thought-provoking uses of digital media so that even simple tools can have an impact
- Optimal use of cost-effective media can enhance the meanings and emotional potential of creativity, and it is important to emphasize the spectacle.
- This module offers tools and methods for implementing simple, yet effective digital solutions for collective artistic expression pursuits.
- This chapter introduces learners to the relationship between material-based modes of expression and digital tools that often result in intangible works of art, such as screen-based digital projections and video or audio projects.
- This chapter includes:
 - Issues related to the digital-material dichotomy in art.
 - Technology as a tool for artistic expression
 - How to implement digital tools that include and don't exclude

Note: Chapter 3.1 can be taught in conjunction with Chapter 3.2: Creative uses of digital tools with an emphasis on issue-based artistic practice





3.1.1. Issues of the digital versus material dichotomy in art

Introduction

For Vygotsky (2004) [one of the most important and influential experts in education] creativity is the basis for continuous change, imagination is its engine. People use cultural tools (emotional, mechanical, semiotic) to rearrange materials to transform the social environment. In this sense, our relationship with the world is also mediated by the tools already available to us through culture...It turns out that human interaction with the world is never straightforward...

(ADDISON N. 2014)

The following is a quote from Nicholas Addison, probably the most important theorist in the field of art education today. He continues by stating:

...culture expands the possibility of what it means to be human by inventing additions and projections (from pencil and paper to artwork), imaginary extensions that, once acted upon, enter reality. Hence, the culture in which individuals grow up provides multiple resources in the form of tools, which can respond to emerging contexts...

Addison, N. (2014), Doubting Learning Outcomes in Higher Education Contexts: from Performativity to Emergence and Negotiation. International Journal of Art & Design Education, 33:

313 325. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jade.12063>





Technological progress and visual arts

In the visual arts, the available media, materials and techniques affect the outcome in terms of the form and content of the artworks.

A representative example is the influence of the invention of paint tubes on landscape painting which helped and, to some extent, enabled painting in the open rather than the interior of workshops. Likewise, the invention of photography affected the form of painting in terms of the transformation of forms, but it affected the thematic as well as the conceptual dimension of the artworks produced. In a similar way, digital media create new possibilities in terms of both form and conceptual content.

There have always been reservations about how new technologies might affect artistic production, from Walter Benjamin stating in his influential essay: *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935) to today, there is an ongoing debate about what can be lost of the aura and authenticity of the artwork as technology advances. Nevertheless, new tools bring new possibilities that do not necessarily mean that the immediacy and potential of encounters with art will suffer because technologies become increasingly intrusive. In any case, the focus is on how the tools will be used. As long as the priority is on influencing and creating meaning rather than easy charm, we are still "safe".

Digital media is just another tool that nevertheless can offer new solutions, create different influences and transactions, i.e. expand possibilities.





In fact, digital media do not necessarily represent the sharp end with pre-existing tools, as they very often co-exist in the same artwork or digital forms of creation such as animation are based on "traditional" techniques such as drawing (especially in animation artwork fixed image – stop motion, as in the work of William Kentridge, whose artistic production we will refer to later).

Artistic media available for creative use

Some indicative cost-effective digital media are, in summary, the following:

- Digital photograph
- Digitally created or edited images (for example, with Photoshop or with free online tools such as Photopea)
- Display the symbols (images) using video display on surfaces
- Animations (for example, still image animations in drawings)
- Artwork with simple sensors and/or devices, for example, audio and visual artwork that triggers stimuli as a viewer approaches (for example, creating a narrative in a "haunted" space)
- Combining the above with "analog" art, for example murals or constructions



3.1.2 Technology as a tool for artistic expression

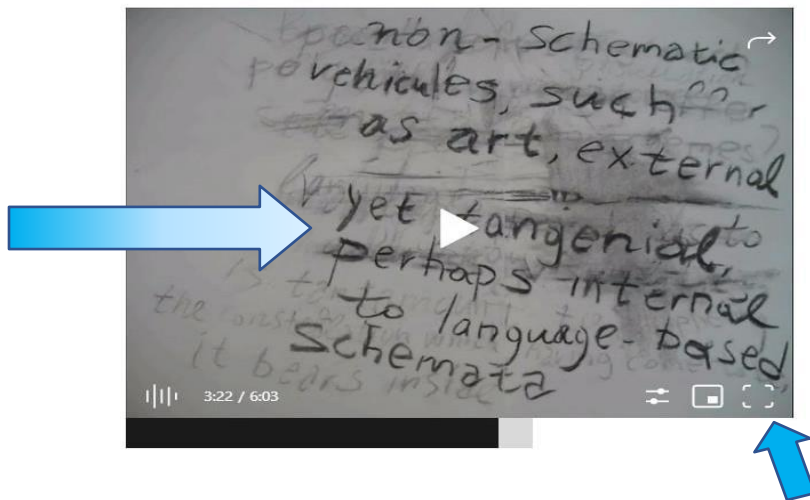
This unit introduces learners into the “still image animations” by providing examples and case studies

Case 1: Stop Animation

This is an example of a combination of still image animation (created by a very basic program, namely Windows Movie Maker) and some video footage "stitched" with the same software (for example, Windows Movie Maker).

This is a combination of text and image that conveys some ideas about art education and the separation of image and language in academic thinking – part of an inquiry based on art in education. Dafiotis P. 2008-2011. Duration: 6 minutes.

Animations



LIVE LINK FOR ANIMATION, Below, Press PLAY button and zoom:

<https://practiceledresearchdotcom1.wordpress.com/animations/>



Case 2: Panagiotis Dafiotis

This is an example of combining the physical and the digital. Duration: 0.5 minutes.

LIVE LINK FOR ANIMATION, Below, Press PLAY button and zoom:

<https://practiceledresearchdotcom1.wordpress.com/2008-installation/>



Figure 1 Dafiotis P.

IOE Art Studios, London, 2008

Case 3: William Kentridge

William Kentridge is world-renowned for his time-based art (still-image animations created from charcoal drawings) as well as other two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of art. His work is political, but also poetic and often has personal approaches that go beyond the rules as well as political doctrines that combine the personal with the collective, and analog media with digital tools with open influences and ideas offered to the viewer to feel and extend to them.

Although not a collective artistic production, in the context of this chapter it is a prime example of using simple digital technologies with imagination and sensitivity

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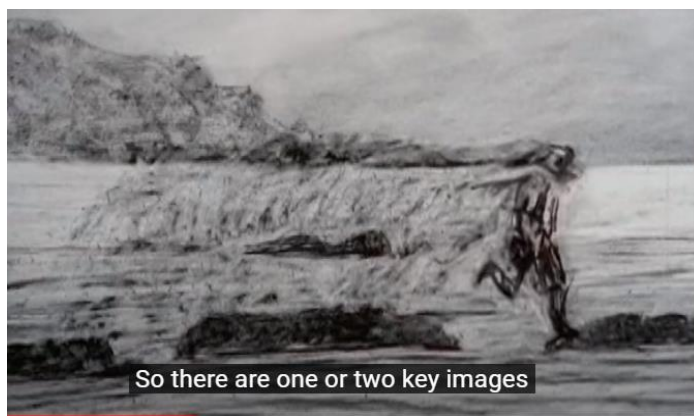
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to address collective, social issues without losing the personal, subjective experience of which it is in any case a part, or more correctly, it constitutes the collective social sphere.

This is an example of combining animation and other digital and non-digital art forms within the same artwork.



Artist William Kentridge talks about the repetitive process of erasing and reworking charcoal drawings to create the familiar still-image cartoon films.



LIVE LINK FOR ANIMATIONS Below, please use subtitles:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_UphwAfjkh&ab_channel=SanFranciscoMuseumofModernArt





This is another example of Kentridge's work

Duration: about 1 minute



LIVE LINK FOR ANIMATION, Below, Press PLAY button and zoom:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEaQ0h72GNg&ab_channel=travellogger

FOCUS ON STILL ANIMATION TECHNIQUE: 'Drawing Like William Kentridge'

This is a one minute video showing the Kentridge-style stop-motion technique (uploaded by someone else) used here for illustrative purposes on the technique



#HirshhornInsideOut
Sketching like William Kentridge

LIVE LINK FOR ANIMATION, Below, Press PLAY button and zoom:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KWmQPEhgW8&ab_channel=Hirshhorn



Case 4: Tony Ousler

Tony Oursler examines, through his work, what is considered normality from the perspective of society and science in relation to mental health. In addition, it examines the influence of technology on social perceptions and culture.



Figure 2 Tony Oursler (*American, b. 1957*), *MMPI (Self-Portrait of the Artist in Yellow)*, 1996. Artwork with video on video projector, VCR, video cassette, small fabric figure and folding metal chair. Dimensions are variable. Milwaukee Art Museum.

For Oursler, creating this false separation between those who are psychologically "healthy" and those who are not was done with the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (or otherwise, MMPI). This infamous series of yes or no questions created by a group of psychologists in 1939 has been used for decades as one of the primary ways to assess mental health.

To familiarize himself with these questions, Oursler took the test himself and then





made a brave decision. Instead of trying to diagnose himself, he left the interpretation of the results in the hands of the public.

As Ousler characteristically commented:

“That was the good thing about the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). It is written in the form of a question that you must answer with true or false. This is what I believe can make a successful piece of art. To challenge people to answer a question.”

Read the text below about Ousler's work:

Endless script: a dialogue with Tony Oursler and Mike Kelley,
<http://tonyoursler.com/tonyourslev2/main.html>

About the project

The projection is on the empty head of a doll with the expressionless face of a grown man saying a series of short phrases slowly and deliberately.

"Sometimes I don't get the jokes."

"I get angry easily and let it pass just as quickly."

"There are some things I regret."

"I'm not an easy person to approach."

"I like watching TV."

"I would be much better off if it weren't for that particular family member."





"I'm a leader, not a follower."

"Sometimes I can't feel the top of my head."

LIVE LINK to Ousler's work in the VIDEO Below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkSOLImTFoc&ab_channel=MarkJ.Berg

Case 5: Shimon Attie

Attie's work is about memory and, specifically, collective memory. He examines how space, memory and identity are interconnected and through his projections, he can strip away the background of today to reveal stories that lie beneath."

<https://artsandplace.org/case-studies/shimon-attie/>

Digital projection in facilities

Shimon Attie's art consisting of projections on buildings connect the photographic images of the past of people subject to persecution, exile and even extermination, with the present as a bridge to memory in a strange and deeply emotional way.

The buildings are a projection of the image that combines images of the past that seem to haunt the dilapidated facades of the buildings.

This is a representative example of minimal use of technological means in terms of equipment requirements. Nevertheless, based on a purely artistic vision, these projections can influence viewers who can relate to them, based on their



experiences and insights into the "human condition", regardless of their cultural background.



Figure 3 Shimon Attie, 1992. Photograph. Slide show. View of a former Jewish residence.

Your turn!

Suggest to groups your own ideas for creative uses, either still images (stop motion) or video projections.

- Discuss possible topics or issues for discussion
- Discuss visual/audio solutions and ideas for your proposed artwork
- What do you want to achieve and communicate?
- What are the best means or tools to achieve your goals?
- THINK OF A COLLECTIVE ART PROJECT PROPOSAL





Unit 3.2: Creative uses of digital tools with an emphasis on issue-based artistic practice

Introduction

This unit introduces learners to the relationship between digital tool-based ways of expression and issue based artistic practice, relating methods to conceptual content. In specific approaches for including digital tools in issue-based art with emphasis on engaging communities will be investigated. Moreover, emphasis will be put on expressing and communicating meaning through digital means, as opposed to using casually ICT investing in their ability to offer spectacular results that nevertheless may not communicate ideas effectively or provoke thought. These uses of digital means to convey meaning and feelings through art, offers significant communication skills, critical skills, and opportunities for reflexive thinking as well as a degree of familiarization with digital technologies and contemporary art methodologies at the same time. The unit will address the above issues and will aim to map out ways for developing life skills through uses of digital artistic means for participating members in collaborative art projects.

Upon completion of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- Identify key instances of art practice that employ digital tools in issue based, e.g., socially engaged, and collaborative art
- Identify at least 3 meanings or ideas communicated through an artwork that employs digital tools
- Create a mini artistic project (small scale artwork) that employ digital tools and addresses an issue (issue-based artwork); identify its emotional as well as conceptual aspects in a short text.





- Analyse an issue based artwork that employs digital tools with emphasis on the interrelation of its form and the meanings it communicates in relation to an identifiable (specific) issue
- Acknowledge the emotional aspect of digital forms of art as fulcrum of meaning-making in relation to a specific issue that is important to the participants in a collaborative art project, commenting on an existing example/case study

Issue-based artistic practice that uses digital tools

William Kentridge's art that we talked about in the previous presentation is a very good example of a creative use of simple digital tools which, at the same time, touch on social issues while making reference to the artist's personal perspective and psychological landscape.

We will consider examples of this perspective that makes reference to social and community problems, but focuses on personal feelings.

William Kentridge – “Art must defend uncertainty” | Interview with the artist | TateShots





In this video, Kentridge (after the 2.33 minute mark) explains that addressing social issues does not mean that artists should adopt a certain stance and tell others what to think. He champions uncertainty and ambiguity and art as a way to generate thought rather than convey information or "certainties."
Link: <https://youtu.be/Dnweo-LQZLU?t=153>(use subtitles)

What do you think?

The emancipated viewer

As Jacques Rancière explains in his influential text, artworks of the “emancipated spectator” that are normative and amenable to a single valid interpretation allow no room for viewers to breathe to make sense and think clearly. As such, they have a depressing influence on viewers rather than opening their horizons to alternative ways of thinking.

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Thus, polysemy is to perceive the ambiguity of a work of art as a potential strength rather than an inherent weakness.

Issue-based art that defines what and how we should think can be considered indoctrination. According to Rancière, artists should allow space for interpretation by viewers.

What do you think?

Additional examples

Optional issue-based artwork examples from Kentridge:

- The Mine (1991)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXBxB6-YdG8>



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- Pain and compassion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1oK5LMJ3zY>



Digital media available for creative use

Cost-effective digital media are, in summary, the following:

- Digital photo or video
- Digitally created or edited images (for example, with Photoshop or other free online tools such as Photopea)
- View images using video projection on surfaces
- Animation (for example, still image animation based on sketches)
- Artwork with simple sensors and/or devices, for example, an audio and visual art piece that triggers stimuli when the viewer approaches (for example, creating a narrative in a 'haunted' place)





Unit 3.3 Enhancing life skills through collaborative expression through the use of digital tools

Introduction

Chapter 3.3 essentially concerns the connection between Life Skills and the possibilities of an artistic project mentioned in Chapters 3.1 and 3.2. Therefore, this Chapter (3.3) is based on discussions and proposals and can be seen as an opportunity to start a meaningful collaboration in order to create art collectively.

Learning outcomes:

Upon completion of this chapter, learners will be able to:

- Identify 2 case studies of art projects related to life skills (or art education) that use digital tools
- They describe key features of collaborative, creative practices based on digital tools aimed at enhancing life skills
- They describe methods for developing interpersonal communication, negotiation and empathy through collaborative art that uses digital tools
- Design a collaborative art project that uses digital tools, describe and support its methodology to reinforce key life skills
- Evaluate a collaborative art project that uses digital methods on the basis of its ability to enhance life skills
- Recognize the emotional benefits as well as the challenges in relation to the acquisition of life skills in specific examples of collective artistic practice that use digital tools,





- Comment on the emotional perspective of participatory, small-scale art projects using digital tools and their potential to empower or enhance the life skills of a specific group of people

Connection of life skills with digital artistic forms

This presentation also links Chapters 3.1 and 3.2 to life skills as discussed in Unit 2. Emphasis is placed on the collective nature of the envisaged artistic projects in which digital media may be used.

1. Discuss what Life Skills (see Unit 2, Chapter 2.3) would be developed through a collaborative art project in the style of, for example, Tony Oursler and William Kentridge and in related subject areas (for example, issues they are also concerned with) .
2. Work in groups and propose an art project based on the knowledge gained from the previous discussion.
3. Life skills and collective artworks based on the issues (issue-based) and related to information and communication tools.

Assessment exercises

Exercise 1

If you were to collectively co-create a work of art related to your own personal feelings and ideas interwoven with the feelings and ideas of the people in your





group, what life skills would be promoted through the art project your group proposed? Discuss in groups and comment on each life skill:

- Problem solving
- Critical Thinking
- Effective communication skills
- Decision making
- Critical Thinking
- Interpersonal skills
- Abilities to develop self-awareness
- Empathy
- Coping with stress and emotions

Exercise 2

Start by completing a small art project

- Create groups
- Discussion of possible issues to settle
- Discussion of visual/audio solutions and ideas for your proposed artwork
- What you wish to achieve and communicate
- What might be the best means or tools to achieve your goals
- THINK OF A COLLECTIVE ART PROJECT PROPOSAL
- Connect the project to personal and social issues (in the broadest sense)
- Work with the instructors and start completing the small art project





Notes for section 3

- Please note that creative enhancement of public space requires digital solutions to be projected or shown in physical facilities, such as a building or venue. This means that even moving images or digital art must be relevant to the real space.
- The examples are indicative of individual artists whose practice may nevertheless be exemplary of the issues concerning artistic projects that can be developed into collective artistic projects
- The negotiation of tools, themes and emotional strategies can enhance a wide range of social and life skills – especially empathy and critical thinking as artistic projects should be open-ended but at the same time emotional.

