

Requirements and Approaches
for Contemporary Teacher Training

edited by

Marijana Županić Benić, Oliver Holz
and Melissa Michielsen

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RHYTHM IN THE CHILDREN'S ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Miroslav HUZJAK

University of Zagreb, Croatia

Rhythm is a phenomenon that is based on repetition and change, which we observe everywhere in visible and invisible nature. The rhythmic structure is built into life itself, repeating breaths and exhalations, heartbeats, steps, changings of day and night or seasons. This indicates that rhythm is always related to time. Rhythm provides security, because it is based on a pattern that is repeated or varied, rhythm is not inclined to improvising or coincidence. Rhythmic motifs appears in different arts, because we find it in repetition of the forms on the surface of painting or bodies in the space of sculptures, the patterns of windows, columns and ornaments in architecture, but we also know about the musical rhythms, dance rhythms and rhythms in poetry. Many artists, using compositional rhythmic syntagms, have built bridges between different arts (for instance, between painting and music). In visual education, the rhythm is very grateful for the creation of interdisciplinary links between different disciplinary languages, primarily by using rhythm as common grammar. This way, the transfer of learning can be achieved. By repeating the same concept in different school subjects, students can accelerate memory and understanding of learning content. However, in order to achieve transfer of learning, the transmitted term must exist in both areas between which the transfer occurs, the transfer must be reciprocal.

Key words: art education, rhythm in different arts, transfer of knowledge

1 Introduction

Visual education can achieve various benefits for a child. Some skills are metacognitive; analytical observation, visual perception, creation of mental images, critical thinking and evaluation of own and someone else's works, analysis of creative process, persistence, independence, self-confidence, risking, individuality, non-conformism, and others (Winner, Hetland, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007). Other skills are psychomotor, for example hand dexterity. Finally, there is also a cognitive benefit; learning and use of terms that appear in theory of Visual Arts. Those are terms such as primary, secondary, and tertiary colors, complementary contrast, composition, domination, harmony and others. Pupils detect those terms in their own surrounding and in visual art works, and use them while creating their own works. "In order to enjoy in artistic forms, a child has to notice them first." (Karlavaris, 1970, p. 8). Theoretical visual arts term can be an origin for a visual arts task. Terms are applied during task execution; intertwining of theoretical and practical work while teaching Visual Arts is the foundation for problem-based teaching. With didactical treatment of basic principles in all arts we ask questions about foundations of arts' phenomenon - about meta-art, which wants to penetrate the very essence of art (Belić, 1997, p. 11)." Discovery of works of art that contain common terms such as rhythm on plane, rhythm in space, and rhythm in time, can be teacher's useful inspiration for assigning tasks to pupils, and such works of arts are desirable for analysis of terms and presenting them to pupils. Also, rhythm as a term is very convenient for achieving transfer of learning. from one mastered activity to new one, still not mastered (Salamon & Perkins, 1989). In that way it is possible to connect knowledge and skills from various areas and creation of so-called *network thinking*, i.e. overflow from one area to another (Sicherl – Kafol, 2008). Boundaries between different disciplines are erased; interdisciplinary worldview is created in which information is in the complex way reflected in disciplines, just like in a kaleidoscope (Choi & Pak, 2006). In this way learning is being accelerated,

because pupils in the same class learn terms from several school subjects (Huzjak, 2009).

2 Rhythm in arts

Rhythm is one of such terms. Rhythm is a regular repeated pattern of certain elements. In the rhythm we recognize a rule, a certain pattern that adjusts mutual relations between those elements. Rhythm is an appearance based on repetition and alteration, which can be noticed everywhere in visible and invisible nature. Rhythmical structure is built in in the life itself, through repetition of breathing in and breathing out, heartbeats, steps, changes of days and nights or seasons. We can find it on a surface, in sound, movement and time. Rhythm offers safety because it is built on varying or repeating pattern, rhythm is not prone to improvising or coincidence.

Rhythm is a term that can be used to connect various areas, because it appears in visual arts, in music, in dance, in literature, comics and film. Let's take a look at few examples:

In painting, we can see rhythm in works of painters belonging to artistic movement called *futurism*. Painters of this movement multiplied characters on their paintings, thus creating impression of movement and time on a flat surface. Giacomo Balla's picture (Figure 1) presents a running girl. Girl has been painted by rhythmic repetition of body with a side shift, similar to an animated movie. Second painting is an abstract one, but it also creates effect of movement. Picture Vega III (Figure 2) contains black and white squares which vary in size and create an illusion of pulsation.

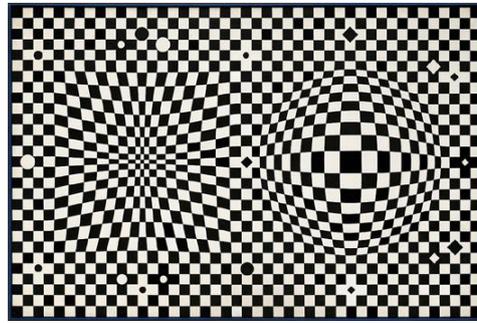
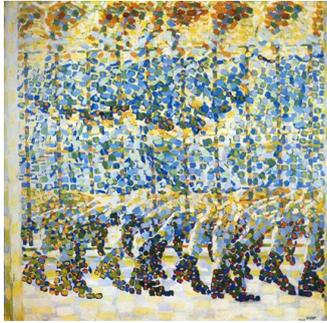


Figure 1. Giacomo Balla: Girl Running on a Balcony, 1912

Figure 2. Victor Vasarely: Vega III, 1957

Some painters have used rhythmical composing of surfaces in order to visualize music. Such paintings are abstract because they represent structure of music, as is connecting of musical composition and paintings' composition. Painters Albers and Mondrian (Figures 3 and 4) connected musical and painter's rhythms. Rhythm in music refers to length of tones and pauses between them. Albers presents a musical form of fugue, which is based on variations. Painting contains vertical and horizontal rhythms of lines of various lengths, and elongation of format suggests horizontal reading of picture by looking from left to right, such as music is listened to in time which lasts. Mondrian also uses vertical and horizontal rhythms of rectangles, of primary colors and different sizes. Name of his painting includes Broadway, street in which various famous theatres with musicals are situated, and Boogie Woogie, a type of music. Significant number of artists were involved in visualization of music, for example Paul Klee, Heinrich Neugeboren, Jakob Weder, Vasilij Kandinski, František Kupka, Robert Delaunay etc. Art school Bauhaus had a lot of artists interested in the idea of translation of musical structure into visual displays (Düchting, 2002).

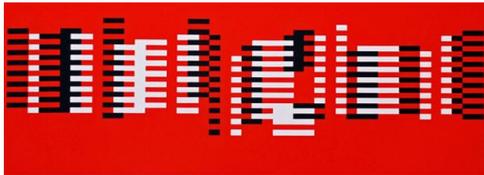


Figure 3. Joseph Albers: Fugue, 1926

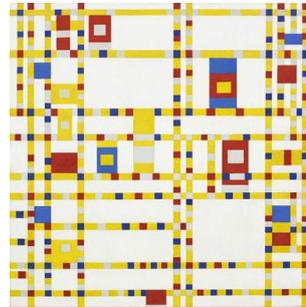


Figure 4. Piet Mondrian: Broadway Boogie Woogie, 1942

A lot of examples of use of rhythmical series can also be found in sculpting. Jensen (Figure 5) has used repetition of limbs, arms and legs, on his figures, in the same way as the artists of Futurism, with purpose of creation of effect of movement. Minimalist C. Andre has, on the other side, composed an abstract sculpture containing a-b-a-b rhythm, an object in space which does not mimic shapes from the nature, but simply offers a structure furnished for viewing, to a viewer.

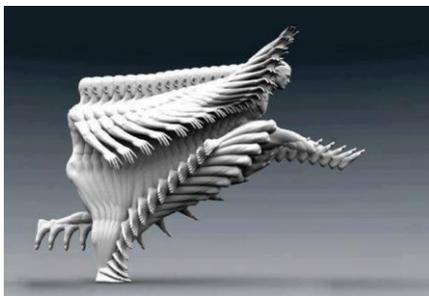


Figure 5. Peter Jensen: Human Motions Animation: Jump 11, 2007

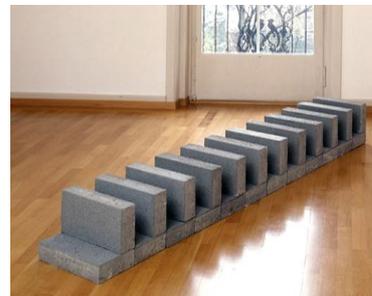


Figure 6. Carl Andre: Lockblox, 1998

These are interesting examples of rhythmical composing in public spaces. Buren (Figure 7) has placed 260 columns of various heights in a yard. Rhythm has been achieved with equal distance between columns, but it is also visible in black and white stripes painted on them. Rhythm of columns communicates with the rhythm of

columns and windows of architecture surrounding the yard. The sculpture of Eliasson (Figure 8) also connects rhythm in sculpting to the rhythm in architecture. Sculpture consists of two spiral staircases about 10 m high, connecting at the top. Staircase contains uniform rhythm in which stairs and voids between them alternate, and also includes rhythms of visitors climbing them. Endless loop suggests motion without purpose.



Figure 7. Danel Buren: Buren's columns, 1986



Figure 8. Olafur Eliasson: Umschreibung, 2004

An Installation in space by M. Creeda (Figure 9) consists of 13 pots with cacti, rhythmically placed in space in equal intervals i.e. distances. Size of cactus grows from the smallest to the biggest, wittingly reminding of growth, advancement or climbing the stairs. The photography presenting ballerina (Figure 10) was created with stroboscopic technique, which has enabled simultaneous marking of many various movements in a row again just like in the Futurism. This photography connects rhythmical movements in dance with typical series of shapes. Dancers' movements interpret musical structure with tempo and rhythm, and photography interprets dance rhythm in time.



Figure 9. Martin Creed: Work No. 960, 2011

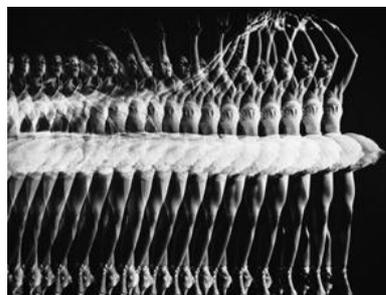


Figure 10. Gjon Mili: Multiple Exposure of Ballerina Alicia Alonso Executing a Pas de Bourree, 1924

Rhythm in time can be even better presented in the film. Since film is art lasting in time, it can present certain repetitions, exchange of frames and shapes. Rhythm in time can be enhanced by rhythmical music or noises. Editing procedure which is characteristic for film can be used in comic books, through rows and exchange of frames. In poetry rhythm is created as regular exchange of accents, length and height of syllables, long and short, accentuated and non-accentuated, and by repetition and exchange of rhymes and meters. Sometimes, in literature repetition appear of the same words or phrases.

3 Rhythm in visual arts education

Examples of tasks (that will be) presented have been conducted in elementary school with pupils aged between 7 and 11, in the first, second, third and fourth grade. Term rhythm has been shown to pupils in nature, in the surrounding, and in examples of works of art. After that they were given an assignment in which, through rhythm, they had to present a certain motive with art material (collage paper, tempera, water color, etc.). At the end they have analyzed their works, and described differences, ways in which rhythm has been achieved, presented motifs, and materials used.

First graders have learnt geometrical shapes in mathematics. Therefore, we have constructed an assignment which includes

rhythmical repetition of geometrical shapes (Figure 10) in order to create a transfer of knowledge of those terms between arts and mathematics. Collage papers have overlapped. Only primary colors have been used. Rhythm has been achieved through alteration of shapes and colors.

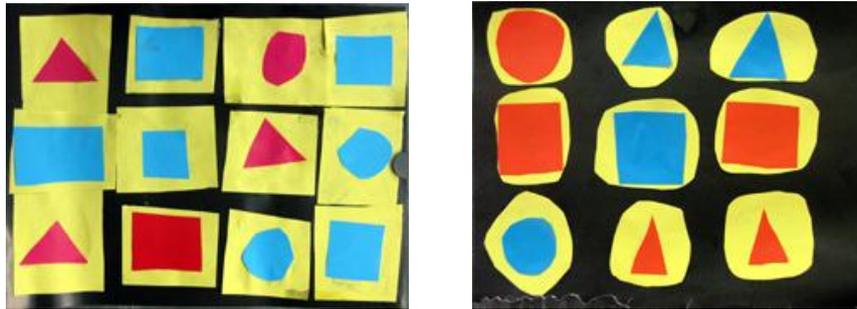


Figure 10. Geometrical shapes of primary colors, collage paper, 1st grade

Third graders were watching photographs of folk costumes. They were finding ornaments and decorations created by rhythmical repetition of shapes on them. They have chosen one frame of costume and painted it with pastel on grey natron paper. They could have varied the seen ornament so that every pupil gets a different, individual painting with the rhythm of the shape.



Figure 11. Ornament, folk costume detail, pastel, 3rd grade

2nd graders have, aside from visual rhythm, learnt the auditory rhythm as well. They were alternatingly clapping their hands and stomping their feet, creating an a-b-a-b rhythm pattern. Search

pattern has been created with collage paper on the board, through alteration of two colors. They were creating, clapping and stomping and visualizing new patterns. They listen to the “March” by Sergei Prokofyev and discussed rhythm in music. They used tempera to paint a picture with their own rhythmical patterns of lines, surfaces and colors.



Figure 12. Musical rhythm, tempera, 2nd grade

5th graders observed and described a caterpillar. They noticed that her body consists of repeating segments, and then used collage paper to paint a caterpillar. They have combined cutting and tearing of paper and overlapping of surfaces for a creative rhythm.



Figure 13. Caterpillar, collage paper, 5th grade

To the third graders we were explaining basics of animated movies. The first and the last position is drawn, and then in between phases were drawn, they create movement. Pupils have drawn their hand in one position on the first part of the paper, and then in another position on the other part. In between those they have drawn rhythmical series of shapes through which the position of hand slowly changes. Phases were painted.



Figure 14. Hand in motion, felt pen, tempera, 3rd grade

Third graders have observed a scarf with red stripes in various colors. Stripes swerved following the shape of a crumpled scarf. Series of stripes created variational rhythm. Pupils have used watercolor to paint the scarf, observing the swerving of lines and interchanging colors.



Figure 15. Scarf, watercolor, 3rd grade

4 Conclusion

Problem-based teaching enables pupils to meet visual Arts terms, to recognize them in works of Arts and to apply them on their own works. Wholesome development of a pupil has been achieved that way - cognitive, psychomotor and emotional.

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Author

HUZJAK Miroslav, PhD is full professor on Faculty of Teacher Education, The University of Zagreb. His professional subject of interest is visual art didactic and theory of visual art.

Contact: miroslav.huzjak@ufzg.hr

