

ИНТЕРАКТИВНИТЕ ИЗЛОЖБИ – ПРИЛОЖЕНИЕ В АРТТЕРАПИЯТА И ПЕДАГОГИКАТА

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Темата разглежда иновативния формат на визуалните изкуства – интерактивни изложби в контекста на приложението им в арттерапията и педагогиката. Изведени са някои рефлексии и психологически характеристики, наблюдавани в интеракциите на различни групи от публики в изложбеното пространство. Обобщени са предимствата на тази съвременна и високотехнологична медийна форма на визуалното изкуство. Описани са някои терапевтични ефекти от приложната част на интерактивните изложби в арттерапията и педагогиката.

Ключови думи: интерактивни изложби, допълваща реалност, интелектуално поле, символно моделиране.

INTERACTIVE EXHIBITIONS - APPLICATION IN ART THERAPY AND PEDAGOGY

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Abstract: The topic deals with the innovative format of visual arts - interactive exhibitions in the context of their application in art therapy and pedagogy. Some reflexions and psychological aspects observed in the interactions of different public groups in the exhibition space are brought out. The advantages of this contemporary and high-tech media form of visual art are summarized. Some therapeutic effects of the applied part of interactive exhibitions in art therapy and pedagogy are described.

Keywords: interactive exhibitions, augmented reality, intellectual field, symbolic modelling.

1. Features of Interactive Exhibitions as a Presentation of Art and as an Intellectual Practice

Over the last decade, alternative presentations of art, one of which are the *interactive exhibitions*, have been increasingly in demand and enacted.

Obviously, every modern artist understands the importance of this type of presentation of art. These exhibitions provide him with the opportunity to avail of non-standard media formats to present his works.

In doing so, the viewer receives *feedback* from the creator of the visual works, expressing his attitude or engaging in a dialogue with the author, creating *an augmented reality* of the visual space.

Moreover, by creating elements of an augmented reality, interactive exhibitions can be the basis for inspiring a specific cognitive-aesthetic continuum, thanks to which the viewer will not simply observe certain works, but can *immerse* oneself in a specific world, time period, shape a certain attitude, supplement existing knowledge about one or another phenomenon of human activity, as well as engage in a situational emotional *flow* set by those participating in the interactive space.

The practice of holding interactive exhibitions is not limited to the interpretive freedom given to the artists and the well-prepared to perceive modern art viewers.

Like most modern high-tech forms, interactive exhibitions can enjoy their lively application in the field of pedagogy, art therapy and psychological counselling. With these practical goals, a wide range of combined models of interactive exhibitions is allowed, and the selection is performed by artists, curators, art critics, cultural scholars, educators and therapists according to the age and psychosocial characteristics of the audience.

The interaction between the presenters of the respective interactive exhibitions and the interested target groups is of importance.

In particular, they can be tutors and learners to supplement the school curriculum (example: programmes for gifted children; programmes for children with special educational needs, etc.) or children from creativity development centres and/or art studios.

The adult audience of these exhibitions is also diverse: artists, art critics, clients of art studios, art therapy centres or psychological counselling centres.

Contemporary interactive exhibitions can be organised in three main forms, each of which is positioned in view of the above target groups in mind. The categories include:

- interactive exhibitions games;



Interactive exhibits



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This format is defined by the primary users (children) and the pre-set goals. In some cases this type of exhibition may also be of interest to adult users.

An *intellectual field* is constructed in which the particularities of art or the social processes reflected through art in a certain period of time, no matter whether past, present or future, are *examined* in the form of game (video art, net art, sound art, maze installation, sensory theatre, etc.).

- dialog interactive exhibitions;

This is an interactive syncretic space that *creates* a plot from the context of the situation in which it occurs. Often it takes on a polemical character and comes to a *clash* of viewpoints.

The interactions of the participants expand in two directions: formally responding to pre-set *instructions* and informally *involved* in the process of creative *discovery* of their potential.

In addition to being useful for establishing a feedback loop with authors, interactive exhibits can support educational needs and the conduct of therapeutic intervention.

- thematic interactive exhibitions;

Mood exhibitions (sensory theatre), *situational* exhibitions, etc. can be attributed to this category. This type of interactive exhibitions focuses attention on a particular emotional or cognitive phenomenon, giving the opportunity to experience certain events, emotional states or explore specific social or natural phenomena.

1. *Interactive Exhibitions and Art Therapy*

The use of reflexive summaries and analysis during visits to interactive exhibitions opens up new opportunities for stimulating and transforming personal experiences. The stimulating element is conditioned by the possibility for the art therapy client to *immerse* himself in the dynamic world of art (sometimes virtually), to observe the visual media not as a static image but as a kind of call for independent *creativity*. At this point the natural reflex of *imitation*¹ is triggered, which is one of the earliest conscious impulses in the human psyche. The desire to work alone is activated, and together with this the client of the art

¹ Vonk, Jennifer, Shackelford, Todd K. (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Evolutionary Psychology*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

therapy practice can accept the *reversibility* in the image and this can direct him towards personal change.

Visiting the interactive exhibition together with the therapist has an additional stimulating effect on the client. This ensures a smooth transition of the preparatory stage of the art therapy activity, allowing for a more effective verbalization of the client's opinion.

The targeted perception enables the therapist to engage the client's attention to a significantly greater extent, gaining further insight into the client's preferences and in some cases revealing the real possibilities of development.

With some categories of customers, interest is aroused in accomplishing their own creative projects with the use of digital technology, which allows overcoming the fear of additional workload when working with specialized software products, which is necessary with some clients².

The therapeutic effect of interactive exhibitions is related to the original artistic modelling. The process affects the intellectual and emotional component of the human psyche. Observing the dynamics of artworks, the client, on the one hand, chooses those of them that are most closely associated with his emotions and can manifest themselves not only within conscious ones, but also as unconscious preferences for a particular artistic style or emotional attitudes created by the corresponding images. The interactive nature of the images creates an opportunity for the development of projective skills, i.e. the possibility that a particular element of the image may satisfy the psychological needs of the client to a greater extent than a static image.

² Wilson, S. *Information Arts: Intersections of Art, Science, and Technology*. Cambridge, MA; London: The MIT Press. 2003.



Conglomerate is an interactive pavilion that combines an architectural installation and a virtual exhibition. Through augmented reality (AR) technology, the audience is able to view hidden content invisible to the naked eye in a real environment. Using digital devices provided in the exhibition, the viewer "scans" the hexagonal elements on the walls of the hive as interactive stage visuals emerge from them. Ten of the set productions were filmed using virtual reality (VR). The pavilion is an architectural installation, impressive in its detail, scale and organics, made up of numerous micro-spaces that any visitor can "open" and view 53 stage and screen works by 46 artists in 6 categories: drama, cinema, opera, puppet theatre, dance and performance. Chief curator is Ogniana Serafimova with co-curators Peter Mitev and Hanna Schwartz.

Modern interactive images allow one and the same image to receive a binary interpretation both in the process of discussion of the exhibition, and in the process of independent work of the clients,

Thus, the image of the human body in its interactive performance can acquire different *shades* - vigour, tension, etc. The client's preferences can also provide serious information about the problems to be solved in the course of art therapy³.

The dialogue with the therapist can be helped with the algorithm for the creation of the image, the discussion of the individual elements and their connection into a harmonious system.

Interactive exhibitions are also essential for the symbolic modelling, part of the art therapy practice.

The dynamics of the overall composition allows the individual symbols within it to be distinguished, and this in turn provides further opportunities to *penetrate* into its essence and internal communication.

The symbol is saturated with a certain content for the client and becomes better understood both as an artistic element and as a designation of the respective phenomenon.

The feedback with the artist is an element in most interactive exhibitions, which provides a real comparison with one's own understanding of the symbol and that of the artist. Thus, the client develops criteria for evaluating the artistic experience, which consequently he can then use fully in his own thoughts and behaviour.

Visiting thematic interactive exhibitions has a significant therapeutic effect. They allow the client to immerse himself not only in the artistic space of the respective works, but also to *connect* this space to certain emotions, events or facts. This is an invaluable experience of varied, analytical interpretations of representation through art, which he can not only master but also discuss with its author. It is appropriate to hold a preliminary discussion with the art therapist before visiting the respective thematic exhibition, which would not only lead to the better structuring of the observation, but would also provide a preliminary emotional preparation of the perception.

³ Franco, F. *Generative Systems Art: The Work of Ernest Edmonds*. New York: Routledge, 2017.

2. *Interactive Exhibitions in Pedagogy*

The ever-increasing volume of information that needs to be digested by different audiences: schoolchildren and students, requires the search for new methods in formatting and transmitting information. Traditional verbal-textual systems for perception of information have retained their significance in the fundamental aspects of scientific disciplines, but however they are insufficient to meet the needs for the transfer of a significant volume of practical and rapidly changing information.

The research done in the field of perception indicates that the visualization of information yields positive results, which not only complements the verbal-textual ways of teaching, but in some cases (in practical aspects of the material or in the perception of complex abstract structures) can be of leading importance⁴.

In this sense, interactive exhibitions are extremely important. All three types are essential, and each of them shows a high degree of effectiveness in the respective age group.

Thus, playful interactive exhibitions have the highest degree of sensitivity with younger students, while thematic exhibitions are most effective with high school courses, or with students and adults.

The application of dialog interactive exhibitions requires a higher degree of familiarity with the relevant idea, concept or object; in this case, the availability and progression of the learners' creative abilities are of leading importance.

The main mechanism that stimulates the understanding of the concept in interactive exhibitions is the cognitive visualization of objects and space. In this technique, the visual perception fulfils an illustrative function and, together with this, triggers the *natural* intellectual process of working out the relevant information.

In interactive exhibitions, the *natural* process is complemented by the possibility to transform the image, to achieve different variants for its presentation.

In the process of preparation, alternative models of algorithms for the cognitive process (not the information, but precisely the process) can be developed in order to *allow for* the variability of the demonstrated images.

The interactive exhibitions combine a thematic and game profile in the relationship between trainer and trainees and have didactic grounds for the connection between the topic and the material studied. The *role* transference and *empathy* in art are essential for the development of the general intellectual abilities of the students as well as for the education of

⁴ Balcetis, Emily, Lassiter, G. Daniel (eds.). *Social Psychology of Visual Perception*. Psychology Press, 2010.

certain, admissible forms of emotional reactivity. They enable the activation of abstract thinking, the use of images as a synthesized information source, as well as the development of *compositional* abilities of the trainees. The perception of inherently complex situational material and more flexible elaboration of role positions is gradually achieved.

The interactive nature of the presented visual media stimulates children's curiosity, enabling them to find expression for their destructive impulses and a corresponding outlet through the *motivated creation* of images.

This is an effective didactic and psychosocial approach that creates conditions for modelling inner freedom and the opportunity to master any intellectual challenge through one's own capabilities⁵.

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⁵ Tinio, Pablo P.L., Smith, Jeffrey K. (eds.). *The Cambridge Handbook of the Psychology of Aesthetics and the Arts*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.