

# THE OBSERVATION AS THE CORE PROCESS ON DOING ART

**Ikbale KALAJA**  
**Rina (Gera) MUKA**

University “ Luigj Gurakuqi ”, Sheshi “2 Prilli”, Shkodër, [ikbale\\_kalaj@yahoo.ca](mailto:ikbale_kalaj@yahoo.ca)  
University “ Luigj Gurakuqi ”, Sheshi “2 Prilli”, Shkodër, [gerarina@yahoo.com](mailto:gerarina@yahoo.com).

## **Abstract**

To everyone could happen at least once in his life to be in front of a work of art and to say “ I would wish to make it by myself, but I am not a gifty person” This happens to me every beginning of school year with my students when I present them the syllabus and they admit the same thing. This is the reason I am spurred for my study. Is it true that the hand makes the artist or the painter paints with the eyes according to Maurice Grosser? In this point of view the study analyses the process of observation. Is it the process that makes the difference between an artist and a normal person or furthermore, helps us to understand the reality? To answer all these questions and to integrate the students to try themselves the truth or not about their statements at the beginning of the school year I made an experiment with some drawing exercises. In the experiment were included different ages from 18-55 years old students and the experiment concluded successful. The conclusion was the same with that of Maurice Grosser. The aim of this study is that what the students achieved after the experiment (to feel pleased, self-confident, self estimated and they understood that the creativity and being artist belongs to all of us) is to be transmitted to everyone, beyond my auditor, that everyone who wants to deal with art can make art, even to the teachers or parents who work with their children. I want to transmit the message that everyone can draw if he wants if he learns to observe deeply and of course has to practice.

Key words: artist, eye, hand, observation, Stereotype,

## **Introduction**

To lots of people have happened at least once in their life to be in front of an artwork and have said “I wished to make one of these!” and at the same moment their desire is followed by a statement which fade the desire’s claimed, seeing it as impossible “I wished to do art, but I am not talented, I am not an artist.”

Are true these statements?

Is it fair to attribute everything of being a painter and a drawer to a hand?

Is it true that to be a painter you have to be for sure talented? Is it enough? How can we know if we are artists or not without trying?

## **The analyze of the problem**

For about 30 years I have been an art professor at the University “Luigj Gurakuqi”, not in an Art Faculty, but in an Education Faculty, where the students have no access toward the art, they don’t have earlier experiences in art or are gifted in this field

Teaching this group of students I have faced continuously the same facts, the same confirmation, same doubts with almost all of them, but we have done a hard, systematic, passionate and well structured bilateral work and I have faced positive results that surprised me wonderfully all the time.

This does it mean that’s no true that our hand have to have some special abilities to make art.

If this confirmation would be true, then even the human world history wouldn’t know many facts that are well known, that people with no hands make art and astonish us. They do art with feet, mouth and with everything they can, except of hands they miss.

This fact confirms once again that it is not necessary to have a special hand with special abilities to do art. Practicing it can acquire its skills.

This experience with my students makes me trust on their desire, the ability to observe for a long term and deep and of course on the work

...and this trust fortunately didn’t disappoint me during all my teaching period. On the contrary, it make me doubt to the attribute we attach traditionally to the people born to do art.

...and normally I have started to believe also that (art) drawing it is not only a gift for the special people marked as born to make art, but it can be everyone’s property who want to do art and can practice hardly to reach the goal. I have started to believe and I have already proved that the artist ”sleeps” inside of everyone of us, it is born with us, but not everyone has the chance to wake it up, not everyone has the chance to try such a thing.

Not everyone, especially in the Albanian conditions (at least many years ago when the conditions have been those we all know), had the possibility to have art materials to practice, to Not everyone, especially in the Albanian conditions (at least many years ago when the conditions have been those we all know), had the possibility to have art materials to practice, to have the opportunity to have an art course or to have another special possibility to test himself and of course not all the Albanian families have had the culture to create the conditions to their children for something like that, or to understand the importance that art has on their children development. So the different economical, social and cultural conditions have deprived many people to do this. Because of that, the talent of many people in the world remained “sleepy” or “died” inside the person who carried it,

without giving the opportunity “to wake up, without having the chance to blossom”. On the other hand to many people who have this opportunity as in my students’

### **One student’s point of view on the subject**

It is not the first and the last case when a student chooses a faculty that is not the first choice. The same happened to me many years ago. I never liked Math and I never wanted to choose a faculty with arts (Painting), but (un)fortunately both these subjects were part of the Faculty of Education curricula. Ok, I could study math, but what to do with drawing? I was a spoiled pupil during my school years because my best friend could draw the best bouquet of flowers in the class, so she could help me...but at the university who could help me? My friend was studying to be a doctor and I was like a fish out of water... At the beginning everything seemed difficult, frustrating, exhausted, the class of art seemed to be more difficult than math.

...but I faced the same as the others, even though some of my friends were more “talented” than I used to. So we were a group and I wasn’t the only one... and we had support, trust and art lovers to look at our shoulders. Day by day all the tries, the embarrasses, entrusts were transformed in art. We could use water colors, oil colors in our classes, we knew how to mix them, how to match them and how to use the art in our everyday life, in dressing, in surveying the “miracles” of the nature and to appreciate them. ...and we had a feedback. At the end of the school year, our faculty celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Part of the celebrations was an exhibition, not of our professors, but ours, of the students. I think all of us were proud to have one of our works done during the school year on the walls that day. We felt happy and spoiled...and we were thankful to our professors who gave us a chance and appreciated our try.

..But I think I was the most spoiled student of that school year. Three years after I was graduated as an elementary school teacher I had a big surprise, on the teachers day, I received a gift that astonished me so much...it was “the best” work I had done during my school years...It was my painting...it was my real art...I could do it without my friend’s support...

In that time I was a teacher and I tried to do the best for my pupils, because I didn’t want they face a day my same “problems”.

case, the talent is born on them. And it is also true *the borned talent dies, if it is not practiced.*

I read somewhere that *a good teaching has the same value and it is equal to talent* and I proved it with my students. This experience and that of my colleagues all over the world make me think that the statement “you need talent to draw” it is not necessarily true. Then what is the core of doing art?

### **The experiment**

Every academic year I present the programme to my students and every year is the same leitmotif “I want but I don’t know how to draw. I want but I don’t have the hand. In school we had a friend who made the drawing to all the class. Only that friend could draw... etc ...etc...” As everyone professor I was forced to find a way how to start the work with them, how to treat them to feel better, to not be afraid by the programme, how to

be motivated in the way they could follow me with trust in themselves that they could do it and with the desire to do what was planned to be done with them.

My point to start my work I found to the statements "I WANT". That was the best part of their statements and it was a very good support for me to begin of my work. But the other part of their statements was "I have no appropriate use adapted hand to make art".

So that was the point I started my survey.

- Is it true that a hand makes an artist, or a painter paints with his eyes and not with hands according to Maurice Grosser?

In this point of view this study analyses the process of observation and its role on doing art.

- Is it the core process that influences the results on art?
- Is it a process that makes the difference between an artist and a normal man?
- Or more than that, is it a process that helps us to understand the reality and influences on our feelings in it?

To answer to all of these questions but also to integrate my students to prove themselves if their statements at the beginning of the academic year are real or not, I experiment with them the art exercises. I ask them to draw by heart some simple motives such as house, flowers, trees, butterflies ect., convinced that their first drawings would be stereotypes and similar to each other. And it is true. That gives me a point to start with them and make them feel equal and not some of them the superior or inferior between themselves, as the students confirmed me and that is a fact that I hear often. For me this was a situation that gives calm and relaxes to my students and created a positive climate in the auditorium. After I collect the drawings and I regroup according to the similitude we analyze together.

The start is the same for all. I conserve these first drawings with the aim to compare them later with other drawing after they pass the preparatory phase. After that I ask them to tell me according to them, which can be the causes they have such a schematic drawings and why are those with no details and the reasons of the similitude between their drawings. The answers are the same with the statements at the beginning as: "Because I don't know how to draw and this is clear now, it couldn't be differently.", "My kindergarten teacher never showed my drawing in front of the class, only that of..., because I didn't know to draw and she only highlighted this." "No one in my family practices art, it is not heredity, that's why I don't know." , " My elementary school teacher always said to me I was a good pupil, but I didn't know to draw.", "My kindergarten teacher always said to.... You are the painter of the group, but she never said to we others".

All these answers made me understand beyond that I had thought, beyond what I had pretended. Beyond the absence of the observation I understood another cause of their inferiority to draw, or their naif and infantile character in their drawings.

Their process of drawing has stopped there, in their childhood, there were really it could start blooming

It has stopped exactly because of a quite wrong way of teaching art. Kindergarten and school teachers of my students had created "elites" in groups or in classrooms, identifying "the

artist” or “the painter”, identification that indirectly gave to the others the message that they weren’t like them, they made them believe this fact and to lose the courage to try again in art and to lose the chance to “wake up the artist” inside them

That kind of teaching is “dangerous” in art. The wrong teaching can destroy the creativity. Instead of doing our children to believe that they could never learn to draw or to paint, let’s make them first of all to feel art as an entertainment and to learn it like this, and what is very important to give them trust. So I had to work with them in two parallel directions:

First of all to return the trust lost on doing art.

To do this first of all I had to get over the paralyzed convention that the talent is a necessary request to do art. I had to make them understand “*An artist is not a person of special kind, but everyone is a kind of a special artist*” as Meister Eckhart mentioned.

All of us can speak, we all can write if we don’t have problems to stop us, and also we all can draw and paint if we wish to do this and we practice on it, even though it is not going to be easy, even though it doesn’t mean we are going to be famous artists. Drawing, painting and doing things is a natural human activity, but in most of them it remains as a seed that never becomes a flower, simply as a possibility or a desire. We have to find a way to protect or feed this seed allowing growing and changing into a powerful tree, full of hope flowers. It was my job to grow these seeds. I had to teach them to discover and to show up the light inside the seeds to grow them. I had to teach how to trust in their own first impressions and first of all to trust on themselves.

For this could help me the second direction, that’s the core.

I had to make them understand the value of the process of perception and the observation on doing art, basing the art teaching and the artistic culture on the knowledge and using of the bilateral functions of the brain.

We are used to think always using the language function of our brain and of course this function resulted effective for many centuries. But now in the modern times the visual function has gained “the citizenship” if we can call it like that, we have started to understand more and more the bilateral complex of our brain, the verbal and linguistic capacity, which give us the opportunity to understand and to perceive the world.

I believe that fact of opening the doors of perception, to liberate the creative potential, is a double process, which is very important on the context we are talking to. The perceptive potential associated with the verbal function is the foundation of the human creative thought.

In fact both the directions of my work mentioned before (the creating trust and the understanding of the perception role) were linked together inextricably between them.

Because of that, after the answers of my students about the cause of their schematicism and the absence of details in their drawings, I thought the exact reasoning and the argumentation of the cause. I explained them that their drawings with those characteristics as theirs and so similar between them are called stereotypes and have only one reason, *not their disability to draw as they admit, but the absence of observation*. So to overcome these stereotypes in their

drawings, first of all they need to be attentive observers, able to recognize and analyze every detail of the object they are drawing, of course, surely this process guided by me.

We started quite simply, learning how to see. We needed some practice to refine the ability to see, or before that, the ability of waiting to see (to) what happens in different periods of time. First of all I had to teach them to give up seeing in the way they used to, superficially, globally and judging things in this way they were used to leave many details of the objects out of their perception, they were used to give up. "I know what is this, I have seen it hundreds of times" so they have lost the complex reality and the details. Because of that their drawings were stereotypes.

So I had to teach them how to observe analytically to discover as much details they could. To teach them to observe longer and deeper.

So I had to teach them to be watchful and vigilant in every single detail and about all the details of everything. So, I had to teach them how to see as they were not used to see before. To see everything around and to talk about everything they see.

They had to understand that we never know everything totally. The things change continuously and we have seen the object for five minutes and we think that we know it, but now it is completely different. To be able to understand and to be used of these delicate changes and almost invisible, means to see again carefully and to distinguish the changes happened during the object's absence. We have to be informed on everything we don't yet know. Matisse said *to look at something as though you had never seen it, requires great courage.*

This was the first step, this was the core. But how could we do this to be as attractive as possible?

For this helped me an wonderful lesson of Corita Kent" Find a child" and I proposed it to them. They were attracted and enthusiast to do this.

Her lesson was this:

"If you have a child of two or three, or can borrow one, let her to give you beginning lesson. It takes just a few minutes. Ask the child to come from the front of the house to the back and closely observe her small journey. It will be full of pauses, circling, touching and picking up in order to smell, shake, taste, rub, and scrape. The child's eyes won't leave the ground, and every piece of paper every scrap, every object along the path will be a new discovery.

It doesn't matter that this is a familiar territory-the same house, the same rug and chair. To the child the journey of this particular day, with its special light and sound, has never been before. So the child treats the situation with the open curiosity and attention that it deserves.

The child is quite right."

After this first lesson learned by the children they had to try to see in the way a child see things, always as it was their first time and I was convinced that after that experience they would feel revived and awaked, as they never thought it before.

After this lesson they were asked to find" *the lost child in themselves*".

We started observing the shadows and we understood that you can continue to see forever and you can see nothing.

All the time you can discover an infinity of things. We continued to observe different things, the same things as for example the leaves of the same tree and we have discovered lots of

changes. We continued to describe infinite details we discovered on the objects we observed , we discovered new relations and links turning this activity in an adventure worthwhile to live.

We were conditioned by the time we had and not all the instructions and work given over every new way of seeing I proposed was practiced in the class, some of them were homework.

Strangely, to my passion these last years answered with the same level of inspiration my part time students where the composition is extremely heterogeneous, which have not only a cultural diversity, but especially different ages. They were from 18-55 years old and older than this age group.

After this adventure where the observation changed into a process that gave to my students satisfaction, because they were learning not only to see in details, but they were learning to read the messages translating in different contexts and giving different meanings and this changed into an entertainment too.

Now they were ready to try again to draw.

They had to draw watching carefully the object. During their work I took care to observe and counsel them to see carefully the details, for not forgetting them. I remind all the time that child's journey and so they reacted in the way they observed. As long they improved the quality of their observation, as longer and deeper they observed, more details they could add in their drawings, and more shaped it became, and the drawing was nearer and more similar of the object observed.

Meanwhile they worked and time after time they see with pleasure the results of their work and with more pleasure they continued to work. More and more they were astonished and surprised beyond all limits they imagined, even more I observed in their eyes and in their being how the self-confidence grow inside them. It was something really fantastic that both of us were enjoying. Seeing this in an adult age, I can say without doubts that their pleasure was transformed into an exaltation which was almost childlike. What we shared with each other was indescribable and incomparable to anything.

After they finished their work, we compared the results with their drawings at the beginning and they could distinguish the difference...and feels the emotions.

After the conclusions of the experiment, the students almost unanimously, together replaced the first statement with the new one" Yes, I know how to draw, because I learned to observe deeply". In the experiment were included students of the full time and part time system, students of different ages and we were successful. The conclusion was the same with that of Maurice Grosser.

Even after they have finished the art class, I continue to have wonderful feedback from them and this give me lots of pleasure and make me to work with more passion. My pleasure raises more and more when they tell me that they practice art at their working place...and this process goes on and on for many years with new students, new situations, different one from the other , but with something in common, the pleasure and the emotion of the process and the miracle of the results.

The aim of this study is , all that my students achieved after such work every year (the feeling of being satisfied, self confident, self estimated and the understanding that creativity and being artist is part of everyone of us), to transmit beyond of my auditorium , to everyone who

wants to practice art, also to the teachers or parents who work with their children. To transmit the message that everyone can draw if he/she wants to do it, if learns how to observe deeply and of course if he/she practices hardly. If someone wants and wishes to draw and to paint, then this experience will motivate and help to fulfill it.

Because of that I say to everyone to believe on the education of observing and...trust on your wishes.

## **Bibliography**

Qendro Gëzim, *Gjuha pamore (pjesa e parë)*, Universiteti Polis, Tiranë

Corita Kent & Jan Steward, *Learning by heart*, Bantam books, New York, August, 1992

Maurice Grosser, *The painter's eye*, New American Library, 1956

Betty Edwards, *Disegnare ascoltando l'artista che e'in noi*, Longanesi&C., Milano, maggio 2004

Ken Howard, *Disegnare & Dipingere*, Vallardi, Milano, Settembre, 1993

Rudolf Arnheim, *Pensieri sull'Educazione artistica*, Aesthetica, Palermo, 1992

Branduardi Moro, *Laboratorio artistico i linguaggi visivi*, La nuova Italia, Firenze, 1993

Gianni Carlo Sciolla, *Insegnare l'arte*, La nuova Italia, Firenze, 1992

P. Ovary, *Kandinsky: The language of the eye*, Elek Books, London, 1969