

Visual Journal in Coronavirus Time

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Abstract: To create a visual journal is a usual proposal in Art Education. In this case, the project was made at Oviedo University (Spain) for future teachers of Primary Education (2019-2020 academic year). The briefing was: to get a visual journal as an exercise book, strategies carried out in the classroom or created for the subject (paste exercise, photos, etc). This visual contribution is divided into three sections. First, the instructions given to the students. Second, first results, with mastery of traditional techniques and topics related to the subject. Finally, results in coronavirus time: SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus was observed like a new moment; more stereotypes; family becomes a character in visual diary; photography becomes an important tool; new topics appear. In conclusion, increased number of crafts and stereotyped themes, but at the same time we get a channel for the expression of ideas and emotions.

Keywords: visual journal, art journaling, art diaries, sketchbooks, art education in Covid-19.

Introduction

The visual diary, interviews and self-evaluations, as well as the portfolio are recording and evaluation instruments for education. Sometimes they convey information beyond the merely academic. This occurs especially with the visual diary, with which it is possible to record ideas, feelings and experiences through images created in traditional techniques and photographs too (Cruickshank & Mason, 2003; García-Doval, 2005 Jurado, 2011). In Art Education subjects, it is very common to propose the creation of a visual diary because its great pedagogical value. This task has been proposed to students of the Degree of Primary Education of the Faculty of Education (teaching training programs) for this purpose. During the 2019-2020 school year, the results have been different before and after the pandemic generated by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus.

1 Art diaries, sketch books and visual journal

In the process of artistic work it is usual to capture the first ideas and essays on loose sheets of paper. These sheets are sometimes filed in folders. Other times notebooks are used, since their functionality makes easy to have those sheets grouped together and take them anywhere. Many artists have used diaries or workbooks over time as a place to draw, sketch, write ideas and record references (See Fig 1. Eugène Delacroix's workbook and Fig.2 Isidro Ferrer's workbook).

These work diaries become works of art, as in the cases of Frida Kahlo's notebooks, Miquel Barceló or Salvador Dalí (Brereton, 2009 and Herrero, 2008).

Sometimes, this format is extended to other different formats both in materials and dimensions. Nowadays, the format is spreading with the help of audiovisual media and digital media. Then audiovisual diaries and audiovisual work portfolios are created (Corral & Cacheiro, 2016). According to Chappel (2003) when this happens, the artist's diary becomes an e-artist book. This name indicates that they are books in digital format and created for digital environments. E-artist books can reach more people, so they give the possibility of being private or public works of art (Sicilia, 1999; White, 1988; Zabalza, 1991).

Sketchbooks and art's diaries are not the same as artist's books. Artist books is an artistic genre that began more than four decades ago. The format does not always conform to that of a traditional book or a personal journal. It is an artistic object and its design is understood as a whole work. When manipulating an artist's book, the information reaches all sensory channels (Carrión, 2003). These books are sometimes a single object and some other times they are serial items. Crespo (2010) explains that the character is varied: grouping of thoughts, proposals for action, documentary character, etc.

1.1 Visual journal and artist's diary at education

Sketchbooks and visual diaries are increasingly being used in the teaching of arts. In those notebooks students work on topics of the classes, develop their own ideas and train their own abilities. All this helps them to believe in their creative and communicative power. They are tools for registration, experimentation and creation and later evaluated by the teacher.

The visual journal differs from the sketchbook in including expression of emotions and it is made to "be shown and shared." But in practice these differences are not clear as it can be seen in those classic examples from artists diaries.

Those proposals from the classrooms are more in line with the idea of a sketch book. But it is very possible that those topics that interest students will be filtered and become a visual journal.

These art works are carried out at different educational levels from the age of seven or eight years old and including university level. In Great Britain it is a much more common practice than in Spain. But the interest in these activities is growing more and more.

2 Development of the experience

For all these reasons, it was decided to implement the activity of creating a work and research art diary for the subject "Art Education". The subject is taught in the training of future Primary Education teachers, those ones who in the future will teach pupils between six and eleven years of age.

2.1 The subject

The subject chosen for the adaptation proposal is "Art Education". This subject has been taught for about five years at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, within the studies of the Degree in Primary Education in the bilingual modality.

It is a compulsory and annual subject, of the 2nd year. It is important to point out that previously in these studies are not taught other subjects in the Didactics of Plastic Expression Area. As a result, the students have the basic theoretical and practical knowledge acquired in secondary school, which as we have observed are very different. Throughout the year teaching takes place in the form of a theoretical class (1 hour 30 minutes, weekly) and workshops (2 hours a week).

Classes take place in the Classroom of Arts, the space where practice is usually taught and everyone shares experiences. Besides that it is a place for the development of artistic practice and experimentation with techniques and materials and also a place for group work, cooperation and fellowship.

2.2 The proposal

The proposal has been the creation of an art diary, as a mandatory and individual activity, with the following objectives: to deep in the concepts of the subject, improve the student's capacities and work with traditional techniques.

Some of the indications have also been: free presentation format; possibility of working with color and black images, texts integration and evocative elements, creative freedom, optional linearity, reflection on the subject and the educator's job, enjoy homework by approaching it as an artistic act.

It has been requested that after completing the paper notebook it would be converted to a digital format.

3 Results since and before coronavirus time

On December 2019 we dedicated a session to share this experience and show the notebooks. The students discussed about their work and spent some time explaining what they liked best. The first results were very satisfactory and they met the objectives of the proposal.

Brereton (2009) believes that artist diaries include work secrets and when showing them we contribute to the acceptance and appreciation of the work. In this case, students accepted their proposal and worked better.

But due to the Covid-19 health crisis, from March 2020, the confinement was established throughout our country. Students had to continue their studies from home.

This situation generated different inconveniences. One of them was that there was no work in the Classroom of Art Education (the space where practice is usually taught and one lives with others). So, students had to work individually, with the spaces and materials they had at home.

Perhaps all students didn't have the facility of working at home. And the space generated resistance to the development of processes and activities. This meant they made different art proposals and produced a renewal in the art diaries (See Fig.3-Fig.6)

In the sketch book "reality" was integrated in different ways: incorporation of thoughts and phrases of encouragement and positive approach; use of stereotyped images of the pandemic; the themes "pandemic", "virus", "nature" came up in most works; changes in technique, with plenty of photographs.

So, they became authentic visual diaries.

There has also been a transformation from a paper notebook to an audiovisual and photographic product. According to Arañó (2006) and Eisner (2004), these tools help develop creativity and critical thinking.

Conclusion

With this task students have used art to liberate themselves. The art diary has been a channel to convey emotions and thoughts. We have observed a high interest of students towards the task. In some cases, the results have been of remarkable artistic quality and in others they have not. Finally the line of an ordinary activity has been crossed.

In art diaries, photography became much more integrated and the interest in showing reality also grew. The art diary became a journal diary. In some cases, photographs from the media were taken and incorporated. In other cases, they took pictures of nearby places and people. The notebooks became spaces for communication and expression of concerns beyond the subject. The experience transformed the original task, the results of the first installment and the second have been very different and also positive in coronavirus time.

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