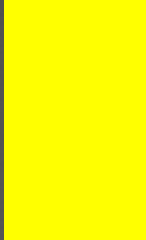




# Artist as a Superhero

AUTHOR: PETRA FILIPOVÁ

- 
- ▶ Abstract:
  - ▶ This contribution represents a particular experience from the pedagogical practice, which is focused on a connection between the art and popular culture. Within the framework of the project, pupils created superheroes action figures equivalents according to their own design concept, to which were given an appearance of chosen artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. This allowed pupils to apply visual information about the artists and their specific characteristics of their work processes, which are known from the field of popular culture in a way that fans of the artist recognised their hero and the figure was able to become a collectible item.
  - ▶ The assignment and its realization took place in a period of coronavirus distance education at schools in the Czech Republic. Each of the students had a different reaction to the assignment, but what all the works have in common is that the students would get acquainted with so far unknown artistic personality, his or her artwork and discover that all of these artists indeed were and are (super)heroes of visual art.



# Play and Reality

## Play, Figurine/ Puppet and Space



- The creative work of the students was focused on the personality and work of a chosen artist. As a part of the assignment, they obtained a list of notable 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century artists from which they selected one person and made an action figurine of him/her as a superhero.

A. H. (16 years)





T. D. (16 years)

The figurine (including the additional items) was supposed to reflect the distinctive features of the artist's personality (appearance, typical clothes, typical attributes...) and also formal and motivic aspects characterizing his or her artistic expression.





K. L. (16 years)



T. A. K. (16 years)

- Furthermore, a package for the figurine was a part of the final result. As for the package, the emphasis was placed not only on its external look, but also on the internal design which was supposed to represent a situation or environment connected with the artist's life.





- The motive of the action superhero figurine encompasses children's play, the puppet show tradition, but also comics methods and the contemporary pop-culture film and series production. This enables the students to incorporate their own experiences related to children's play and puppet shows (puppet shows on TV) into their creative process.



E. V. (16 years)

- Moreover, they can use their experience with pop culture represented mainly by films and series thematising super-heroism, which is really close to the generation of high-school students today. This influence manifested itself in the form of the citation of typical features and pop-culture references. For instance, a yellow overall and a brush as a “weapon” of Keith Haring which are references to the costumes and attributes/props of superheroes and in this case, to the iconic movie of Quentin Tarantino – Kill Bill.





- In spite of, or maybe thanks to these dominant influences, the assignment gives the students space to create their own image of the personality and work of their chosen artist.

A. B.(16 years)



# A Story of an Artist, Art History and the Internet

- ▶ The creative work itself was preceded by the students' individual research work and by collecting visual and textual information about the artistic personality. Subsequently, the results were consulted during the online lessons of Art History. The Covid 19 situation, the state of emergency in the Czech Republic and distance learning provided an interesting opportunity to reflect on the presentation of art on the internet from the students' point of view. The internet, which is an everyday medium for high schoolers (and not only for them), in this case enabled the students to get new possibilities of movement in virtual cultural space. By means of the internet, the students gained important knowledge about the presentation of art and artists in the online environment.



J. Z. (16 years)



# Spatial Design, Design, Modelling and Work with Non-traditional Materials



During the modelling of the figurine and the portrayal of human body, the students used for example disproportionality of individual parts of the body. They purposefully worked with artistic exaggeration and with highlighting of certain parts of human figure. Furthermore, they worked in the same way with colour contrast, with the characteristic physical, optical and haptic features of the utilized materials and also with props which they considered as important on the basis of their previous cultural experience.

E. V. (16 years)





A. H. (16 years)



- The task was assigned to the students during online classes, so they were able to choose their materials freely (for example synthetic hair, wigs, wires, aluminium foil, cloth, felt, sprays, modelling clay, anilin and acrylic colours and so on) They naturally utilized the materials that were accessible at home.





A. T. (16 years)

- They sometimes came across some serially manufactured objects and transformed them into their own creation. The example of this may be the usage of LEGO pieces for the joints of the figurine or an old Barbie doll, which in one case became the frame of a figurine of the artist Judy Chicago (the feminist artist would certainly be glad that the serially manufactured visually uniform doll with an anorectic figure, which symbolizes the negative impact of stereotypes on the lives of young women, was transformed into a strong, exceptional female fighting for the rights of women and artists).

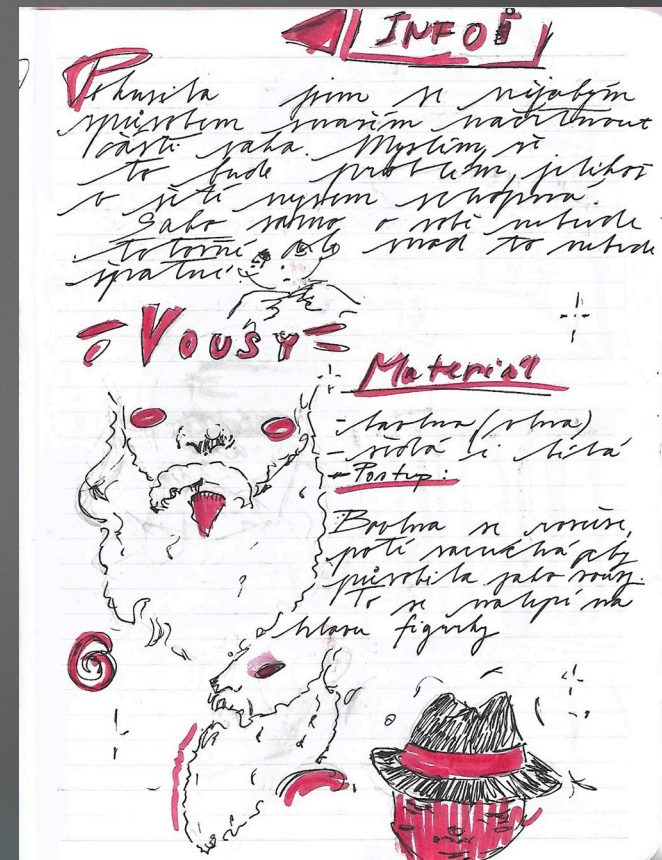
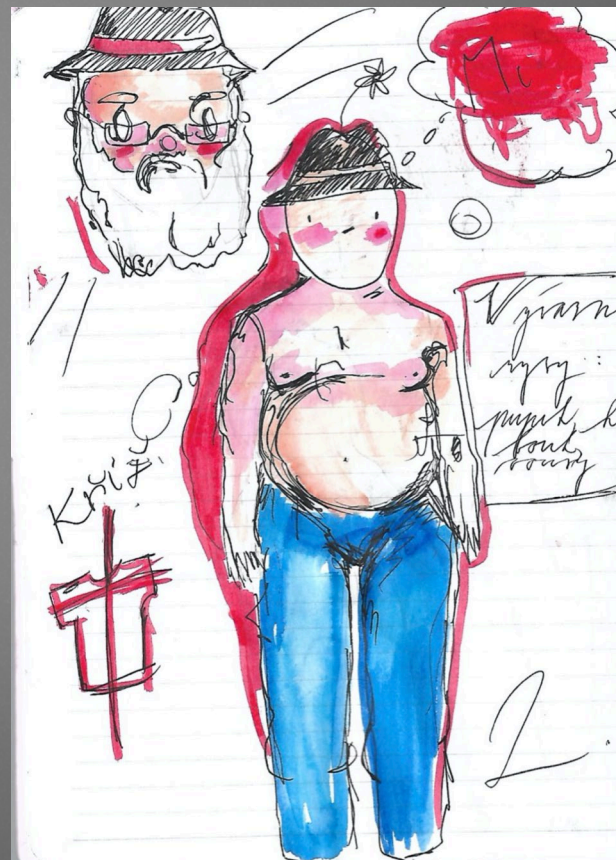
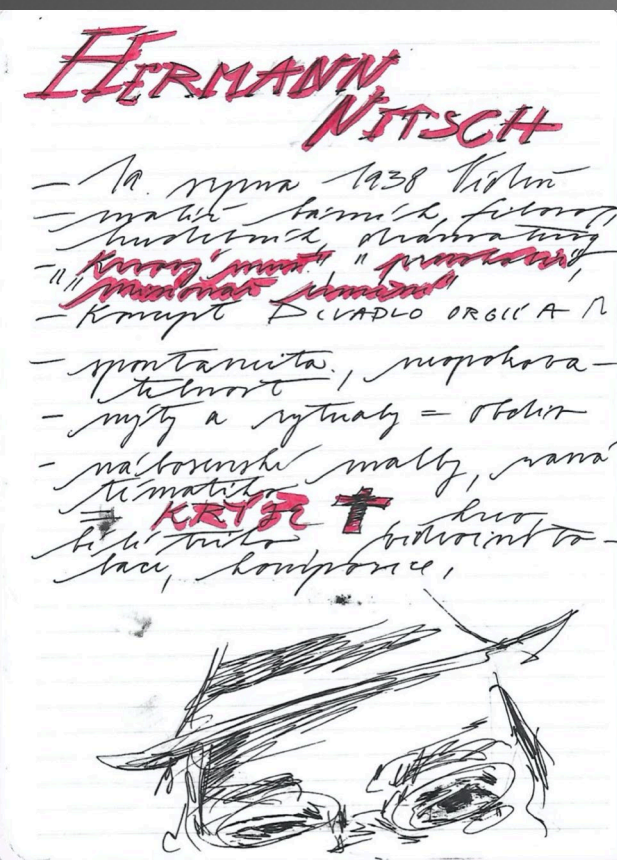


The reflection on the creative process was a part of the presentation of the complete works of art. The following quotations were selected from it:



M. B. (16 years)

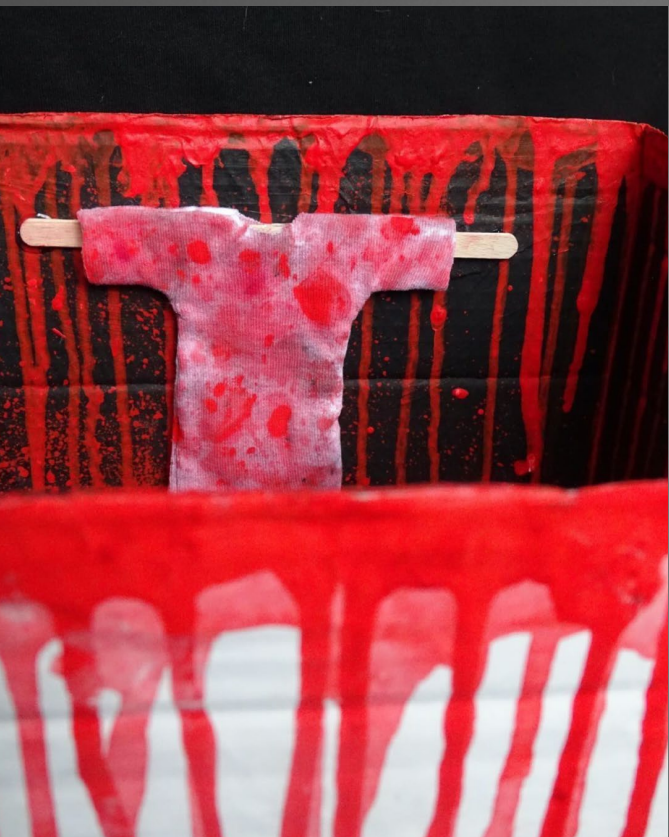


[illegible][illegible]



Student T. S. (16 years):

At first, I created the intestines, but they were not good, so I focused on the flesh. It took me 2 days to prod myself into making new intestines.



The figurine was without clothes for a week, because I was supposed to sew them with my grandma.



Student K. K. (16 years):

...after gathering the information, I was happy that this artist was assigned to me because, among other things, he represented the LGBT+ community as early as in the first half of the 20th century. Furthermore, his work captured my interest because its part was the exploration of gender identity.



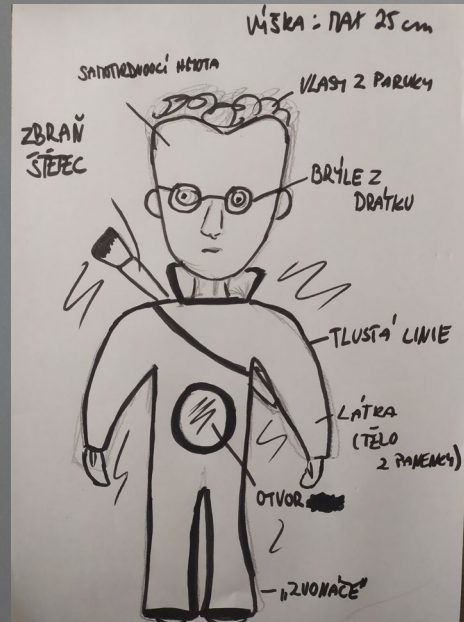






Student E. V. (16 years):

Like every proper superhero, mine has his own weapon. I chose a brush tainted with black paint for him, because it was an integral part of his work.





Student N. B. (16 years):

My first and also last design was Keith Haring sitting on a figure which represents his work. In relation to the topic, the figure is a superhero costume. I was mainly inspired by Iron Man, whose costume is made of metal. As it is in the case of Iron Man, the figurine of the artist has normal civil clothes when he is not wearing the superhero costume.





Student A. T. (16 years):

The main theme in the work of this American artist is an abstract portrayal of sexual organs. In the combination with the superhero topic in the assignment, I chose a satin overall as her clothing. For the cloak, I used the motive of a plate from her collection called The Dinner Party.

The work of Judy Chicago appealed to me in such a way that I have seen tens or maybe hundreds of her works on the internet. I like her conception of colour and the colour blending expressing deeper feelings.





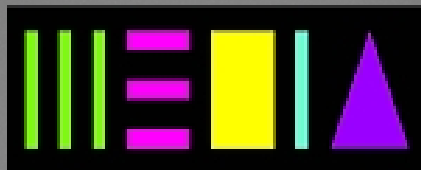
Student M. Ž. (16 years):

I learned a lot about the artist whose work I am interested in. The situation in which we were creating was far from being ideal; however, it taught me to be more independent.





- ▶ All works were created by students of SOŠ Multimediálních studií Poděbrady.



- ▶ Finally, I'd like to finish by thanking you all for your attention.

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