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From Child Art to
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Study

# From Child Art to Visual Language of Youth: The Hungarian Visual Skills Assessment Study

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## Abstract

This study discusses assessment methods used in different phases of Hungarian art education, in response to its changing paradigms and cultural contexts. First, we give an overview of the social context o education through arts in a Central European setting, then we describe the contents of the new study area called Visual Culture that replaced the traditional, arts-focused approach in Hungary in the eighties. Structure and objectives of the Basic and Final Examination System and the Dutch-Hungarian Portfolio Assessment Study will give examples of different approaches of the evaluation of visual skills development in European arts education. We discuss how new paradigms in teaching and assessment influenced the training of art teachers and show our new Framework of Visual Skills and Abilities that forms the basis of our current developmental efforts in education through art.

**Key Words: Assessment of Art Education, Final Examination, Portfolio Assessment, Visual Skills and Abilities, Evaluation Framework**

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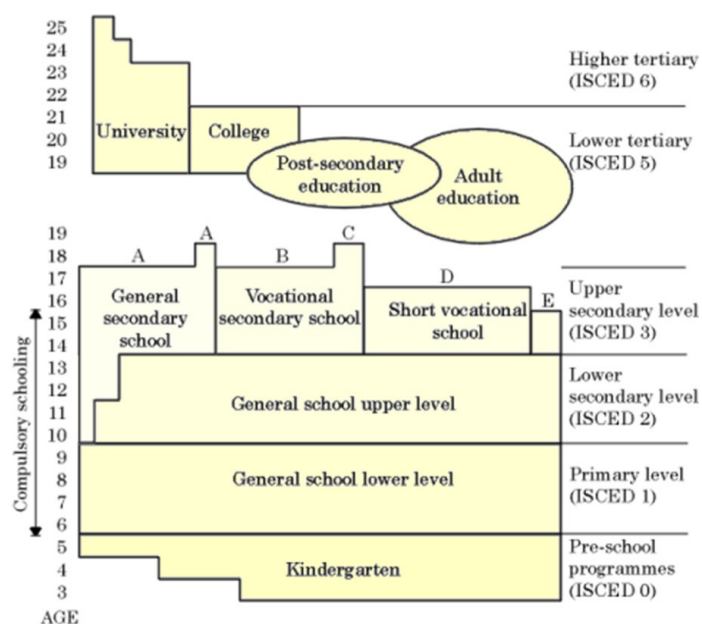of Youth: The
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Figure 1. Google Hungary Art Contest "Design a Google logo that expresses Hungary the best!" by
    Adrian Balogh(8) who is the First Prize of the first group, 2010.

## The Social Context of Hungarian Art Education

### The Hungarian School System

Hungary's population is less than 10 million people. The age pyramid of the Hungarian population is among the most irregular ones in Europe. On 1 January 2005, due to the extremely low number of live births in the preceding years the size of the 0-4-year-old population was smaller than the next age groups of 5-year increments up to the age group 60-64. There are major differences in the size of the various generations. The official language of instruction is Hungarian, but a number of ethnic and national minorities (e.g. German, Romanian, Slovene, Serb and Croatian) have minority educational institutions with their own languages as first or second language of instruction at primary and secondary level of teaching. According to the 2009 survey, the rate of Roma children in the population entering school education in 2011-2012 is expected to be around 18%. Total school enrolment is 1,877,500, and from this, primary school (ages 6-14) 886,500, secondary school (ages 10-18 for the eight-grade type, 12-18 for the 6-grade type and 14-18 from the most widespread, traditional 4-grade type) is 570,000 students (cf. Hungarian Educational System, 2010) .

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Profound educational reforms in Hungary began in the late 1980s, and continued during the change of regime period, 1988-89.    The most important prerequisite for these reforms was the establishment of ideological pluralism through the elimination of subjects reflecting one-sided ideologies and include only general humanistic values in curricula. Through the replacement of centrally commissioned, uniform teaching aids with a free but quality-controlled textbook market, a wide variety of subject matter and teaching methodology was offered. In 1989, the elimination of state monopoly in schooling enabled both legal entities (including all churches) and independent bodies (private persons and associations) to establish and own educational institutions. Another important educational policy measure was the legalisation of a multiplicity of school structures: primary schools of 4, 6 and 8 grades and matching secondary schools of 8, 6 and 4 grades were established. Still, the most typical form of schooling in Hungary remained the 8-grade primary school (for age groups 6-14) and the 4-grade secondary school (for 15-18-year-olds). Decentralisation of the school administration and supervision entitled municipalities to bear responsibility for state school management. To assist with the development of curricula and the organisation of in-service courses, regional educational centres were set up to provide supervision and counselling (Kárpáti,1995, 2009).

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Figure 2.    The Hungarian Educational System.

## From Curricula to Guidelines: the Evolution of A Liberal Framework for Art Education

For the field of arts education, our new *Hungarian National Core Curriculum*, (HNCC, 2007), that replaced a detailed centrally developed and compulsory for all schools of the country syllabus, introduced in 1996, called for major innovations. It is the centrally issued set of goals and thematic guidelines that should act as a regulatory agent and assure that a national cultural minimum be taught in all Hungarian schools. The HNCC describes output attainment targets for up to 50% of teaching material only, while local adaptations and programs at school level may be developed. Contrary to all negative expectations of educational polic-makers who feared that after 40 years under central regulation, teachers would be unable to cope with the responsibilities of freedom, even decades of strict central regulation of teaching methods and contents could not terminate the innovative spirit of educators. Many new curricula overarch several school disciplines as the HNCC favours the "integration of the arts" with other humanities as well as science areas. In the structure of the HNCC, art education is included, along

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with music and dance, in the section called "Aesthetic Education" - thus, not just the possibility but also the official encouragement was given for integrative efforts (Halász, 2010).

## "Art and Visual Culture" – A New Discipline with A New Methodology

In the late 1990s, the Hungarian Core Curriculum changed to include two new content areas that were meant to broaden our professional perspective and enrich our traditionally fine arts-focused art education:

- **Visual Communication** that includes photography, video, graphic design, computer art and focuses on "real-life" tasks of visual language usage.
- **Culture of the Man made Environment** incorporating traditional folk crafts, elements of industrial design and highlighted important aspects of shaping the human environment, like fashion and interior design.

The central curriculum with a fine arts focus was replaced by these two alternative approaches. Both Visual Communication and Culture of the Manmade Environment soon became the names of new disciplines and served as an alternative for the traditional, fine arts-focused school subject called Art Education. They involved the acquisition of new art and design techniques that required innovative teaching methods and along with that, also a new approach to teaching about the history of visual arts. (Curricula for "Visual Communication", for example, included, besides the history and aesthetics of fine arts, also methods of appreciating photography, video, computer art, multimedia and many genres of applied graphic arts. While learning to shape the environment, students also learnt about the history of lifestyles, fashion, furniture and interior design.) The NCC puts an "equal emphasis" on the development of "visual perception" and "creation". The document calls for the teaching of the history and aesthetics of a wide range of genres in the visual arts (fine arts, folk crafts, applied arts, photography, filming and video). It also underlines the importance of teaching children "to do research, experiment with materials, carefully plan and document" their

visual problem solving process. These are activities have never been included in any of the central documents on art education in the last forty years. With this framework for change, by the early nineties, Hungarian arts education has become more diversified, more flexible and called for new methods also in the area of assessment of arts curricula and student achievement. The enrichment of the field of arts education with the above outlined two new content areas and the modernisation of the examination system in the arts were the biggest innovation in the 120-year-old history of this discipline (Kárpáti & Gaul, 1998).

## Central Assessment of Art and Design Skills and Abilities in Hungary

### The Basic Examination – An Experiment in Diagnostic Assessment, 1992-97

The first effort to introduce contemporary methods of assessment in the visual arts dates back to the 1995, when a diagnostic assessment project, the Basic Examination was introduced. This type of national examination was offered as an elective for 18-year-old secondary school leavers. Compulsory subjects includes mathematics, Hungarian and world history, literature and a foreign language and from 2012, a discipline in science. The final examination in "Visual Arts" incorporated tasks to assess knowledge and skills of theory and practice of fine arts, design and visual communication/media. As this examination was "intended for those who have an interest in the history and practice of visual language" but not necessarily plan to embark on an arts-related career, content and methods of assessment do not resemble those employed at art colleges. Basic skills and abilities of perception and creation both had to be evaluated, so the *task structure* of this examination was as follows:

–   **Art History Test** with multiple choice and open-ended questions as well as matching and visual analysis tasks (the latter involve the production of structure and/or colour schemes for works of art). Duration: 45 minutes.

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- **Visual Language Tasks** that evaluate relevant productive skills using tasks adapted from psychological tests. (In 1999, a spatial abilities test was employed as teaching methods in this area, important for many professions, were repeatedly reported to be ineffective.) Duration: 45-75 minutes.
- **Portfolio** of works executed and selected by the student in the course of the last two academic years. The oral examination involves the explanation and self-assessment of this portfolio based on the questions of the local art teacher and the external evaluator. Duration: 15 minutes.

**Testing Knowledge in Art History** – with a special emphasis on traditional and contemporary Hungarian art, local trends and international influences – is highly relevant in a small country the national identity of which resides mostly in its cultural values. Art teachers whose role model was, is and perhaps always will be the creative artist, may not all feel inclined to assume the role of the historian or critic and teach about and not just through art. Examinations, reflecting preferences of our educational policy makers, invite and urge art teachers to enrich their curricula with the appreciation of historic and contemporary works of fine arts, design and architecture. "Teaching for the exam" in this case actually serves a very important cause: the preservation of our national cultural heritage.

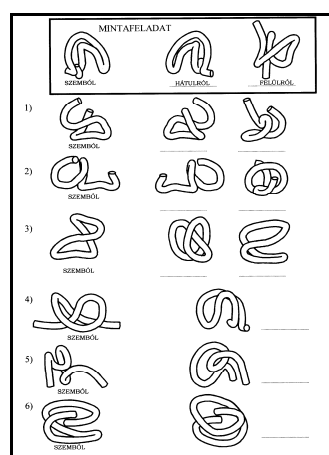Figure 3.   Spatial drawing task by an aged 15 Hungarian boy at Kaposvár, 1968.

Figure 4.   Task sheet from the Spatial Abilities Test by A. Kárpáti & J. Gulyás, 2002.

**Employing Ability Tests for Art Exams** may sound unfit for the purpose of assessing achievement in a school discipline traditionally cherished for its potential in developing creativity. The production of original work is, however, only one of the goals of art education in Hungary – an important target the attainment of which is evaluated through the portfolio task. Another, equally important aim for teaching the arts is the need of "the acquisition of visual language for both expressive and utilitarian, everyday uses". Repeated surveys of spatial representation and perception skills of architecture, engineering and medical students revealed severe problems in these areas. Future professionals whose jobs routinely involve the application of spatial abilities were unable to solve even the simplest mental rotation and completion tasks. At the same time, the majority of art education curricula collected and analysed in the course of these studies emphasise the development of spatial abilities through a variety of two-dimensional tasks. Evidently, teaching strategies in this area are less than successful and urgently need reconsideration in the light of the findings of abilities tests. We decided to employ these as screening features that orient both the student and the teacher, providing an objective assessment of the developmental level of basic visual skills. Needless to say, high achievement in an abilities test is no guarantee for creative excellence – but low scores may be a warning. Future architects, engineers or surgeons are not examined at university entrance on their visual skills – but in the course of their studies, their success will be largely dependent on them. If diagnosed early, preferably before adolescence, insufficient skills may be developed through focused remedial exercises. Art educators need to be constantly informed about the results of their work in order to reconsider teaching strategies and search for new, more effective ways. The basic examination may thus be an excellent "diagnostic tool" both for the student and his/her teacher.

Basic examination in visual arts, developed by a group of teachers and researchers co-ordinated by the authors of this paper, has proved to be a success in its experimental phase. Many students elected to take it to receive information on the developmental level of their visual abilities and thus be assisted in choosing a future career. Parents often encouraged their children to opt for art education as an examination subject because they felt

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the need for a more profound, better organised knowledge in art history as a necessary component of erudition. The skills test in many cases revealed problems of vision and spatial orientation that needed medical care – in other cases they served as tools for the identification of a type of visual talent. This new assessment system was meant to contribute to the appreciation of art education as a discipline that develops important mental and psychomotor domains and transmits basic human values. However, the Basic Examinations were never introduced and the results of this experiment that involved about 800 schools and more than 12000 students were utilised later in the modernisation of the final examination.

**The Final Examination in Art and Visual Culture and Art History**

The first centrally developed assessment system for our discipline, the *final examination* in visual arts was introduced in the 1970s as an elective examination option with exactly the same purpose. Final examinations in Hungary are a version of the German "*Abitur*", the school-leaving exam that terminates secondary grammar school studies. Compulsory disciplines include, similarly as in basic exams, mathematics, world history, literature and a foreign language. The "written part" traditionally consists of centrally developed tests or essays written on topics given on the day of the exam through the radio. Topics for the "oral examination", developed by the National Examination Authority according to a set of achievement criteria worked out by an expert group of the Ministry of Human Resources, are given to students at the beginning of Grade 12 and teachers help them prepare while teaching the new material for the year. Peculiarly, those who opt for art are not only the aspiring artists or art teachers but many students who do not want to take another science subject and cannot speak a second language well enough to take an exam. Thus, students with basic visual skills and those with excellent ones sit for the exams side by side. In the first part of the 20th century, till the 1970s, these examinations closely resembled the fine arts academy entrance exams of the last century. In the system of final examinations for the arts, replaced in 1998, students had three hours to complete one of the following task types specified by the examination committee whose "developmental" role is restricted to selecting of one of the

tasks and giving some restrictive hints about size, lighting or the use of drapery:

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1. Study drawing of geometric shapes.
2. Reconstruction of a given projection.
3. Still-life (using natural or artificial shapes).
4. Interior with figure - a model drawing.


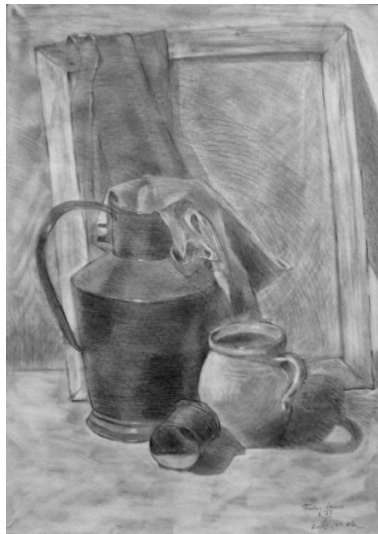
Figure 5.    Final examination work "Masks" by a Hungarian boy(18), 2008.
                     (Teacher: János Csoma).
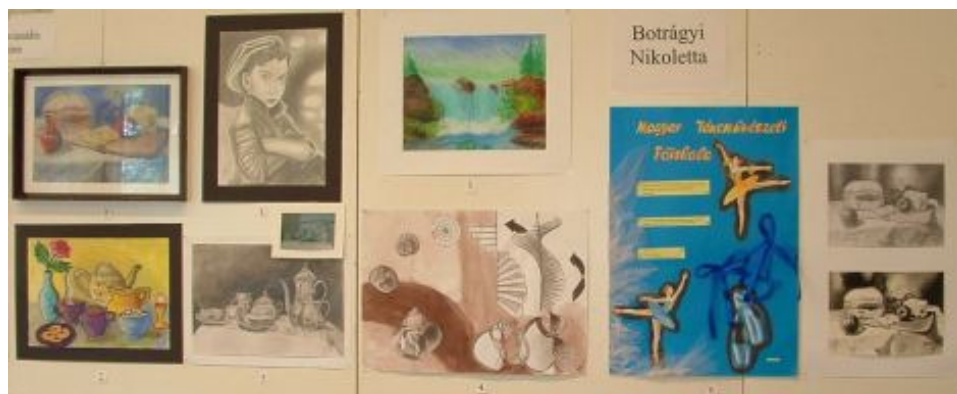Figure 6.    Still life by a Hungarian girl(18), 2009.



Figure 7.    Final examination portfolio of a Hungarian girl, 2008 (Teacher: János Csoma)

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The "oral questions" of the examination were selected by the examiners from a set of 20 topics developed by local art teachers. Students pulled a ticket, received visual materials (slides or prints) of their choice to illustrate their answers and, after 20-30 minutes of preparation, presented a short "lecture" on the three questions that every ticket contained:

1. Description of major art trends of an epoch in art history (all epochs must be represented, there are one or two 20th century art related topics out of 20).
2. Analysis of a work of art   based on a reproduction.
3. Description of a technique (for painting, graphic arts, sculpture or building).

This system has proved more and more unacceptable for both secondary school art educators and university and college staff responsible for entrance examinations of art-related careers. The centrally set drawing task reflected the aesthetic ideal of the last century and revealed skills that were of minor relevance for the assessment of creativity or expressive abilities. Between 1990 and 1994, a Dutch-Hungarian research project was carried out to investigate the possibilities of introducing a "new final examination model" for the arts. This model was elaborated by a group of art educators headed by István Bodóczky and Andrea Pallag. The two components of this assessment model were as follows:

- Centrally developed "art criticism tasks" in a previously disclosed theme in given epochs of "art history", containing both multiple choice and open-ended questions and short art appreciation essay tasks (For example, "The Role of Ornament in Byzantine, Renaissance, Fauvist and Conceptual Art") . The test is evaluated by the local art teacher according to central scoring guidelines.

- Tasks in "studio art" that have to be realised within the school in an examination setting.

- Art, design or media "projects" that develops a theme chosen by the student from a set of 12 central assignments, complete with a collection of sketches, background information leading to the visual solution of the theme. Works and documentation are exhibited and judged by the local

art teacher and a centrally assigned external evaluator. Projects have to be executed within the confines of school under supervision.

## Portfolio Assessment as A Teaching Method, National Competition Task and Examination Format

### The Method

Assembling a "portfolio" of the output of one or more academic years has been a traditional method for the evaluation of visual skills and abilities in Hungary for more than a century. For (aspiring) artists, the compilation of a collection of excellent work means an overview of past endeavours and may inspire them to embark on new creative directions. The portfolio as assessment tool for the average student has an entirely different meaning. It helps to overview techniques and topics learnt and identify strengths as well as weaknesses. With an oral commentary that involves knowledge about and usage of terms and concepts of art criticism, students also manifest their abilities to judge works of art and reflect on their own creative output. Taste and attitudes towards the visual arts are also revealed in the course of these, often very inspiring both for the examinee and examiners interviews.
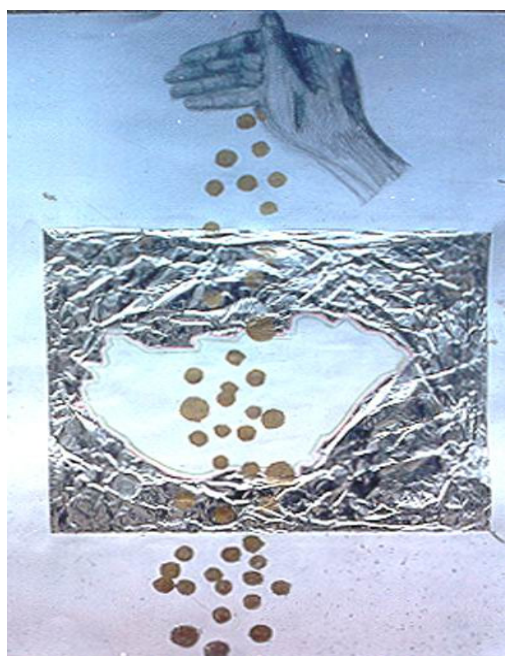
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Figure 8.   Final project work from the Dutch-Hungarian Project Based Final Examination Project "The Money Flows through the Land – Multinational Companies in Hungary", by a 18-year-old girl, Budapest, 1992.

Both the complex test/essay and the project proved to be an excellent measuring tool for the development of visual thinking, planning and creation (Kárpáti & Schönau, 1997). *Projects* are "domain-specific" as they address problems related to a given domain of human experience. This examination task resembles "portfolio-based assessment" (a traditional method of judging artistic merit based on the examination of selected works from a certain period) but it is in many respects more diverse than that. First, a project task enables students to present their ideas in any medium or material they choose while the portfolio usually contains tasks set by the teachers with techniques assigned. A project documentation (also called "process folio") contains varied and reliable data on the development of spatial ability, basic design skills and the knowledge of a wide range of materials and tools necessary for sculpture and construction.

## The National Experiment with Dutch Expert Input

More than a thousand students participated in the experiments that preceded the introduction of this new assessment model. Their work proved that project tasks are not just stimulating but also require a good deal of thinking, planning, experimenting as well as traditional draughtsmanship. The major argument of those who opposed the idea of the Dutch exam - that it will result in "cheap" solutions and an avoidance of demanding visual problems - was not justified. Contrary to the expectations of teachers in favour of traditional drawing and painting tasks like still life or portrait, students worked harder and produced a variety of high quality sketches, works of graphic art, paintings, sculptures, objects and installations. A comparison of a sample of student performance  before the exam with examination output proved that "37 % of examinees actually produced work well beyond their average drawing level". Only a small minority (2%) found project-based tasks intimidating and came up with considerably poorer than usual art works as those in their school portfolios assembled before the start of the project. Challenge resulted in motivation and motivation fuelled intensive experimenting sessions of searching for the right solution. Most students declared in their "logbooks" (that also formed part of the work required for the examination) that they learned a lot during project-based work. Regardless to what extent they were satisfied with their final product, they wished they could have similar, more sophisticated and more demanding tasks for their final examination instead of the traditional, three-hour drawing session. There were of course some students who welcomed the project as a possibility to "get around perspective drawing" (a cherished method of the "old" exam) but even these could successfully find alternative means of visual creation to realise their ideas. Instead of a pen-and pencil drawing in linear perspective, they used photography, computer animation, collage and montage techniques and installation to represent distance and open space. Thus, they utilised media and genres typical for our age and employed a visual language deeply rooted in contemporary art of the last years of the twentieth century.

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**Judging Project Work**

Judging project work manifests a problem few educators are fully aware of. The traditional belief in expertise and sensitivity to quality resulting from training and experience contradicted our findings about the lack of *reliability of the traditional jury procedure* (Kárpáti, Zempléni, Verhelts, Veldujyen & Schönau, 1998). We found that several jury members are *ignorant and/or biased* and produce inconsequent scoring results mainly due to the following reasons:

Many art teachers have a "strong prejudice based on previous output" of their students and judge actual work according to their preconceptions of the students' presumed level of visual skills and abilities. Those who have a bad record in art will be scored lower even if their work is of much better than usual quality manifest in high estimation by judges who do not know the student. Similarly, students with a good record in technical drawing tasks will fare well even if their project work requiring creativity leaves a lot to be desired.

Several art teachers who actively practice art and seem to "prefer styles resembling their own" and appreciate planning and compositional methods that reflect their own way of solving visual problems. These teachers arrive at the scoring session with clear assumptions about the "best solution" of the task and find it difficult to accept alternative approaches.

The "age" of art teachers also seem to play a decisive role in influencing scoring behaviour. Younger, less experienced educators will be more flexible in judging the correctness of the interpretation of the task in question (They will be more ready to accept work based on free associations loosely related to the task than their older colleagues).

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Figure 9.    Peroject protfolio by a Hungarian girl(17), Budapest, 2002.

*Training*, on the other hand, also plays a crucial role in the formation of taste. Teacher training colleges seem to have their own favoured school art styles and will train to appreciate different types of problem solving strategies. Finally, "experience in teaching through projects and judging process folios" is a crucial prerequisite for reliable judgement. Those inexperienced in attending to all aspects of the collection of works exhibited will base their scoring on individual criteria only. (For example, these teachers will often base their judgements on the masterly final work only and let poor manifestation of planning skills pass as "very good". They easily overestimate a nicely done research report through giving high scores on the less excellent technical execution of the same student as well).

These results indicate that "traditional jury methods may lack reliability" and "should not be used for examination".  We planned several teacher training and in-service training courses to see which preparatory methods result in better judgement performance and repeated the project scoring experiment several times. The analysis of the results shows that jurors trained through discussing sample work demonstrating high, mediocre and poor quality is assessing project-based tasks will be most likely to perform well as judges. We found that the "topic and genre of the task also influences reliability". Design projects that involve more clearly definable technical requirements and need less criteria based on aesthetic preference only, can be reliably assessed if at least two, optimally three jurors are employed who base their judgments on a set of assessment criteria and not on their "global impressions" only. However closely related to final results, global impression-based judgments will not assist the improvement of performance

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or education as such because it does not yield information on the development of individual skills and abilities important for visual creation and perception. Global scores will never reveal if the generation of innovative solutions, planning, or the technical execution was found insufficient by the juror in case of poor performance and thus provide no data for the improvement of the teaching process.



Figure 10. Project work from the National Art and Design Competition in for Secondary Schools (NADCO). "1848, A Rising Star – Commemoration of the Hungarian Anti-Hapsburg Revolution of 1948-49". By a Hungarian boy(17), 2000. (Competition Organizer: Béla Zombori)

The "method of assessment" employed by judges proved to be another key factor in our experiments. Vertical assessment - judging a work according to all criteria at the same time, the traditional method used by all fine arts competitions and exhibition jury procedures   - proved to be significantly less reliable than horizontal scoring, which involved judging all the works according to one criterion at a time. This research proves that results of art education can be reliably assessed through sophisticated tasks representing all genres of the visual arts not just drawing. Our work also reveals, however, that traditional jury practices must be altered for the examination procedure. The employment of trained jurors, preferably "one external and one or two internal (school-based) evaluators" who compare all project portfolios according to one given criterion at a time is inevitable for reliable assessment.

(Kárpáti et al., 1998). The mathematical analysis of results proved that the validity and reliability of the jury process can considerably be increased if there are at least two judges for each work and at least one of them is an external observer, unrelated to the school, criteria are described in a more concrete manner, for example, by asking a judgement report, where a reason or an argument has to be given that justifies the chosen category, judgements are made horizontally, applying one scoring criterion at a time for all collections.

There are jury methods, however, that result in much more reliable scores and an assessment based upon solid educational and aesthetic criteria. The new procedures of mathematical analysis, suggested here, facilitate the selection of valid criteria and reveal the biases of jurors that, in most cases, can be overcome by training. Our observations hopefully contribute to the improvement of the jury procedure as an art examination method that can be successfully be employed not only in the classroom, but also at entrance examinations and art and design contests. In the future, we intend to introduce the "horizontal" scoring procedure described in this paper in the final examination system based on the new National Core Curriculum in Hungary.

## Art Teacher Education and the New Assessment Challenges

In the 1990s, Teacher education was modernised in order to suit the new curriculum requirements. At Moholy-Nagy University of Arts, about 900 teachers with an M. A. degree in Art and Design Education have graduated and created a welcome balance between schools with fine arts and crafts and design focus. Changes in teacher education had a profound effect on the content and form of art and design education in Hungary. Some of the factors characterizing education in schools (class size, expenditure per pupil) do not have demonstrable effects on student performance while teacher quality (as measured by skills, knowledge and qualifications) plays a decisive role in students' progress (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Based on an analysis of teacher policies in 25 countries, the OECD (2005) report cogently entitled "Teachers Matter" comes to the conclusion that teacher quality is the most important factor in an education system, and the second most

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important factor (only preceded by family background) among the variety of influences affecting student achievement. McKinsey & Company investigated the factors behind the accomplishments of the most successful education programmes in Asia, Europe, North America and the Middle East as evaluated by the OECD PISA survey conducted between May 2006 and March 2007. In their summary of the research results, the McKinsey report comes to the conclusion that certain education systems achieve substantially better outcomes than others because "they have produced a system that is more effective in doing three things: getting more talented people to become teachers, developing these teachers into better instructors, and in ensuring that these instructors deliver consistently for every child in the system. (…) The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers" (Barber & Mourshed, 2007, p. 36). This appears to be the area that resources should target; knowledge-intensive training institutions and knowledge-rich teacher development centres should be maintained.

Therefore, we have organised our national assessment project and the in-service training programs connected to it with the participation of 9 Hungarian art teacher training institutions. In general, the new assessment challenges found Hungarian art teachers who were used to constant supervision, periodical re-training and detailed guidelines for an overall prescriptive, central curriculum totally unprepared. Highly qualified, academy-trained artist-teachers in secondary schools were willing to experiment with new fields but unable to develop project-based teaching programs entirely on their own. Characteristically, when the Hungarian Academy of Crafts and Design (today: Moholy-Nagy University of the Arts, MOME) , were our research on jury methods was based, opened its in-service training program for art teachers in 1990, there were more than 800 applicants for 25 places). "The institutions of the pre- and in-service training of teachers" play a key role in preparing teachers for their new tasks as curriculum planner and examiner. These roles may be somewhat threatening for teacher who are used to a centrally prescribed, detailed syllabus with goals and objectives as well as teaching content and methods as well as attainment targets pre-formulated. It is evident that, if we intend to

innovate in art education, the training of art teachers has to be changed first. New assessment strategies must be rooted in new perceptions of art and art education in general. Thus, if the in-service and pre-service training of teachers does not include a profound preparation for the role of examiner-evaluator, art teachers will use routines of gallery procedures of judging the merits of works of fine art. These methods, however, as we hope to have proved, are inadequate and unreliable for assessing the development of visual skills and abilities of young people with average motivation and skills. They, the majority of our students, do not entertain desires of becoming an artist but intend to use the language of vision in their everyday lives. Examination of their achievement should be fitted to their goals and the assessment of artistic merit should be left to those higher education institutions that train for art-related careers.

## The New Hungarian Framework of Visual Skills and Abilities

### The Framework

Our recent assessment effort targets 6-12-year-olds. We want to provide tasks for art teachers that are creative, flexible and still produce measurable outputs to reveal the efficiency of the discipline Visual Culture, the Hungarian discipline for art and design education. Documenting continuous development with frequent changes of modes of expression from infancy till the end of adolescence, this model emphasizes the importance of visual language in the interactive and customisable new communication environment of the 21th century.

Table1.  *Skill clusters of the Hungarian Visual Framework (Bodóczky, I., Pataky, G., Zele, J., Gaul,E., & Kárpáti, A.).*

| Observation | Visual study | Representation |
|---|---|---|
| Interpretation | Visual communication | Design and creation of objects and spaces |
| Appreciation (of art and visual culture), evaluation, judgment | Visual expression | Design and creation of images |

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Table 2. *Skills Assessed into the National Assessment of Visual Skills and Abilities, 2009-2010.*

| Skills | Activities | Types of tasks (examples) |
|---|---|---|
| *Observation* | **a.** Observation and recognition of images, spaces etc. **b.** Visual memory, recollection of experiences. **c.** Organisation of visual information, detection of analogies. | Appreciation of works of art Reading visual signs Reading graphs and charts |
| *Creation of 2D and 3D shapes* | Drawing, painting, modelling, construction | map making designing and making an object |
| *Manipulation* | **a.** Reconstruction. **b.** Variation (modification of form and meaning). **c.** Transposition (changing size, location, medium, mood etc). | Completion of ruined building or object Culturally relevant adaptation of signs or things |
| *Abstraction* | | designing patters, maps, signs |
| *Symbolisation* | **a.** Representing non-visual information visually. **b.** Reading and creating graphs and charts. **c.** Depicting a sequence (movement, process, story). **d.** Representation of an imaginary story, a state of mind, a mood, expression of feelings. | |
| *Visual representation and expression* | **a.** Representation of people, things, ideas, actions. **b.** Visualisation, imaging. | Portrait Comic book Scientific visualisation |
| Skills | Activities | Types of tasks (examples) |
| *Representation of space* | **a.** mental and real manipulation, reconstruction, rotation etc. **b.** use of representational systems. | mental, 2D and 3D spatial representation tasks space memory tasks real life and mental manipulations with objects in space |
| *Design and construction* | **a.** Sensitivity to problems (e. g. form and function connections, human needs). **b.** Construction process: planning, tool choice and proper handling, knowing the qualities of and selection of materials, execution of construction tasks. **c.** Fantasy. **d.** Judgment: appropriation of the object constructed to the needs of customers, technology and materials. | analysis of needs of different social groups in different cultures constructing everyday and imaginary objects analysing objects in the immediate environment deciphering the meaning of culturally loaded objects |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Communication** | **a.** visual rendering of different content. <br> **b.** preparing graphs and charts. <br> **c.** modelling and interpretation / of models. <br> **d.** understanding different communication channels (speech, gestures, mimics). | logo, ex libris and coat of arms <br> basic typography <br> posters and presentations <br> still and moving images for science communication | From Child Art to Visual Language of Youth: The Hungarian Visual Skills Assessment Study |
| **Creativity** | fluency, flexibility, originality | open and flexible tasks | |
| **Art appreciation and criticism** | **a.** Observation. <br> **b.** Interpretation, meaning making. <br> **c.** Analysis. <br> **d.** Judgment. | recognition and interpretation of contemporary visual culture <br> art and cultural history tests | |

## The Survey

Between 2009-2010, a national survey of visual creation and perception took place in Grades 2, 4 and 6 (ages 8, 10 and 12). From among the 200 tasks developed. 67 schools with 8000 students in total. No special art school was selected, and classroom teachers (non-art specialists) took the assessment tasks with their own students. Most tasks did not resemble "tests" at all, so the procedure was authentic and the results reliable. Evaluation of student work was based on scoring sheets with examples of average, excellent and below average works. Two evaluators scored all sheets and in case of disagreement, a third scorer was involved.

The evaluation process was culture fair as it observed specific values and expressive forms of youth subcultures, idioms of national minorities and individual uses of visual language. Results suggest a new, multimedia model of child art development that integrates traditional and digital means of expression. Tasks are now being implemented in an online, searchable database with descriptors that enable teachers to retrieve tasks according to grade, age, medium, level of difficulty and disciplinary area (Visual Communication, Crafts and Design / Environmental arts, and Fine Arts / Art Criticism).

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Figure 11.    Task sheet from the Hungarian Assessment of Visual Skills by Péter Báli,
                2009-2010.



Figure 12.    Task sheet from the Hungarian Assessment of Visual Skills by István
                Bodóczky, 2009-2010.

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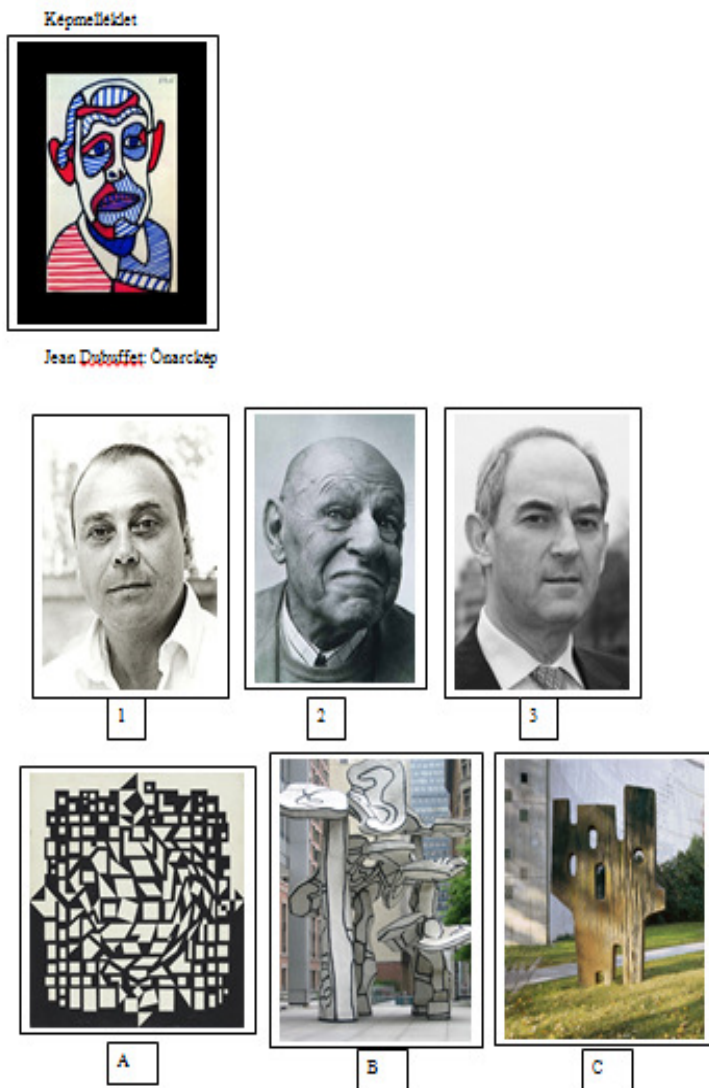Hungarian Visual
Skills Assessment
Study



Figure 13.　Task sheet from the Hungarian Assessment of Visual Skills by Éva
　　　　　　Szappanos-Szuhány, 2009-2010.

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of Youth: The
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