

Art Paint Activities and Cross-curricular Exercises in Literature: A Case Study in Seasonal Modern Art Exhibition

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to investigate the role of an Art Museum Exhibition to Literature as; they can both convert into an experiential teaching, multisensory experience, and a “meeting place” for the viewer. The project involved 160 students studying in the Department of Primary Education of the University of the Aegean (first and fourth year of training), during the winter semester of 2013. Also the study seeks to demonstrate the great importance of the cooperation between the Universities of the Aegean and the National University of Athens in Arts. Many forms of cooperation, as scientific and educational between Greek Academic

Institutions are relevant and complementary, in a spirit of reciprocity, integrated interdisciplinary approach and collective work. At the end of the project, students were asked, to one of the works they had to carry out, to connect ten paintings they were given in card postal with a literary text, prose or poem. Students managed to discover numerous literary works containing common symbols with the paintings and also common elements between Art works and Literature. (Kokkinos & Alexakis, 2002).

Keywords: art museum exhibition, interdisciplinary of art and literature, painting transformation

1. Introduction

The relationship between Art and Educational process is very important. Art and especially the observation of Art works promote the critical and creative thinking of Academic students. The coupling of Art and Literature through a visible and Artful thinking promotes a teaching practice certifying dynamic observation of Art works in the activation of multiple skills of students (Gardner, 1990; Dewey, 1934; Perkins, 1994). Arts and specially Paintings can contribute the identification intuition use of different functions of Literature in a variety of contexts and also helps students to translate the emotional experience, focus into a transferred experience and new creation. The interweaving of Art Painting through the implementation in the whole project, recreated a new quality dynamics within Academic class, which gave students the chance to achieve simultaneous cognitive and artistic goals (Fox & Gardner, 1997).

2. The Exhibition, Characteristics of Artworks

Starting with the Painting exhibition of Mrs L. Kakissi, Artist and Professor of Arts at University of Athens, interactive actions were decided involving students of the Department of Primary Education of the University of the Aegean. The project concerned the lesson of Art Education and Artistic creations forms. The Paintings were exhibited at the Museum of modern Art of the city of Rhodes, entitled “Figures through time” and included artworks in various sizes, representing her latest work and some older ones. They generally express deepest thoughts, feelings, truths, symbolic images and scenes in peace and war. Simple moments of daily life witch passes and go, leaving behind memories and small joys. Such as, human figures, women, meetings, groups of people who “stayed” there and nothing can happen to change them. Forms left in time without memory, vision or future like statues, motionless, riveted over time (Kakissi, 2013). The paintings were simple and true, without glaring colors, shapes and tricks that aim to pay attention and admiration of somebody uninvited in Arts.

3. Arts and Literature

The relationship of Visual Arts and Literature are inseparable, as they are closely on many levels and interact. Many Art paintings inspired great literature and many literature inspired great painters. Furthermore are both creations cases except one based on words, while the other on the work (Roe & Ross, 2005). Although Arts differ by their nature, their approach in combination can be the occasion for the discovery of common elements and symbols between

them. Even more, somebody can discern common features between language and image.

The goal of the project was to engage Academic students to the Art of Modern Painting so they can be able to:

- Understand the process of creation.
- Be able to apply techniques of creative thinking that they can become co-authors or even rebuilders of an artistic work.
- Learn to decode artworks and their symbols.
- Recognize the techniques, the “strength” of a form and substance of the content.
- Realize the importance of peacetime and the communicative aspect of the project.
- Learn to “read” and interpret the philosophy and rationale of the creator.

Combine Paintings with Literature.

Find common elements between paintings and literary works or even symbols (Kampourpoulou, 2002).

3. Method

The project included the visiting of the Exhibition twice and the presentation of the Paintings by the Artist herself. Students observed the Paintings and tried to discover all the characteristics of creative, such as flexibility of thinking, originality, organization of space and forms, style performance, variety of colors, ideas etc. Then they were given card postal especially created for them and for a number of artworks, which at the back was a description of an action according to the painting. The card postal were displayed with a series of step by step so for them to be initiated in the artistic process and creativity. Even more in those way students were able to understand the timeless and value of the Paintings within time and space. One of the activities assigned to them was to combine one of the Paintings with a literary work (poem or prose), comment their selection and try to give the symbols or find contrasts between them, (Brommer & Kinne, 1988). Also to describe their emotions about the specific artwork and create themselves an activity that could assign to their future students as teachers in relation with Art and Literature (Bowkett, 1997).

4. The paintings used for the project

The card postal included a number 10 paintings of the whole Exhibition with the necessary explanations for the students to pay attention of:

“Dialogue”: The color is the display for the painter to highlight (Gage, 1999). Many times as in this painting, the absence of strong colors in the forms is replaced by strong shapes.

“Waiting for the subway”: The common scene of waiting contains a very silent time. The imprinting of such a common movement (drinking water, rummaging in a bag, maundering) in a substation, gives immediacy and drives the viewer there, so he can be a witness of a simple, daily, repeated event.

“Café at night”: In café t night the atmosphere changes and the lamps are the only protagonist in the street and inside the café. The café has already recorded by this time of the day whatever happened the hours passed.

“Leisure”: With simple, but strong descriptive brushstrokes the forma are unfolded outside the café and meanwhile they carry the sound of association and companion around it. The attitude of the bodies, the movements and the expressionist performance of the surrounding area, create an atmosphere with deep emotion.

“Beach with trees”: The expressionist nature of the painting is much pronounced here in this artwork of landscape because; it drives eyes to escape with the outspread of brushstroke and the intense “outline” of the environment.

“Always together”: The craftsman of the sketch meets the color rendering tumor of the forms. This outlines the forms with subtractive purity and honesty in space. The two forms coexist in a Byzantine writing rigor and palette of colors (cherry, blue, purple, ocher) and color volumes occupy the space with magnificence. The message they send is coexistence-tightening-dignity-silent communication.

“Woman in blue”: The form is ever so sharply designed, that it has the displacement of a sculpture and seems to occupy the whole space. It challenges the viewer aesthetically and sensuously in such a way that finally seems to converse with him.

“Home by the sea”: The house is spread in space and time with nobility. With slight brushstrokes the painter paints the geometrical surfaces of the house that “absorbs” the outline with red, brown and blue colors accompanied with a balanced white.

“The Contemplation”: Landscapes of contemplation with lamps reflections illuminated. Lamps like moons that repeated signaling a calm and enigmatic atmosphere. It may be evening, it may be early morning.

“Composition with bicycle”: The bicycle is a symbol a group, of fleeing, a way of companion, route. With intense expressionistic performance of many moments and aspects, the painting unfolds in time and space with large brushstrokes composing an artwork of quiet strength (Kakisi, L. 2013).

5. The results of the project

We will now represent 55 of the results of the project, the Literature choices the student made, their commons in brief and also brief explanations students gave for their combinations between paintings and Literature.

1. Painting entitled “Contemplation”, combined to the poem, “In the same place”, written by Kavafis, K., in which the poet shows the way he faces the environment that he created for himself, both in joys and in sorrows.

2. Painting entitled “Home by the sea”, combined with the literary book, “Adventure on the island of Odysseus” written by Mavrokefalou, L., in which she describes the lives and adventures of two heroes living in a house next to the sea, in the island of Ithaca. The symbol

in both painting and poem is the sea, as it represents the adventure of the unknown, something that both, heroes and Odysseus faced.

3. Painting entitled “Home by the sea”, combined with the literary book, “The house next to the river”, written by Manta, E. The basic element of the book is the river, far from the city which represents the constant values of peace and harmony. Common element is the peace and calm the sea and the river bring in somebody’s soul.

4. Painting entitled “Contemplation”, combined with the excerpt of the literary book, “The old neighborhood”, written by Deimezi-Kaliotsou, A. In the excerpt there are a number of memories describing the old way of living and the simplicity of life unlike today’s life which is characterized by loneliness and isolation.

5. Painting entitled “Café at night”, combined with the poem “Decibels”, written by Manthopoulos, D., referred to the sound, noise and intense bustle as opposed to the painting that symbolizes the peace and serenity that night brings.

6. Painting entitled “Port”, combined with the poem by Solomos, D., “The Blondie”, who according to two lyrics of the poem “came in a boat to go to foreign lands”. Sea is the symbol of unknown places, travelling and adventure of life.

7. Painting entitled “Always together”, combined with the poem “I love you”, Myrriotissa as it is given in it the whole feeling of love between two people. Love is the symbol in both painting and poem of eternity.

8. Painting entitled “Contemplation”, combined with the book of famous writer Seferis, G., “Six nights on the Acropolis”. It is divided into six chapters corresponding to one night all spent in Athens by the hero and his six friends. In the painting the loneliness and deep thoughts show the feelings of somebody whenever entertainment and friends do not exist anymore.

9. Painting entitled “Beach with trees”, combined with the poem “Gazing at the sea”, by Varnalis, K., which distinguishes the razing pulse and strong social content.

10. Painting entitled “Home by the sea”, combined with the poem “The Sea” by Christianopoulos, D., as the sea is paralleled with love in which someone walks in and does not know whether he will go out.

11. Painting entitled “Composition with bicycle” combined with the literary work of Pen, R. “The quest of happiness in two wheels”. The book captures the erotic relationship with the bike and his journey to construct the bike of his dreams.

12. Painting entitled “Contemplation” combined with the literary work “The long walk of Peter”, by Zei, A.. The book is referred to a little boys’ life over the Second World War and the darkness of the war is parallel with the darkness of the painting.

13. Painting entitled “Contemplation” combined with the poem “As a bunch of roses”, by Kariotakis, K., in which is described the bad mood of the poet, parallel to the darkness of the painting.

14. Painting entitled “Home by the sea”, combined with the poem “My home”, by Palamas, K., referred to somebody’s wish to build a house somewhere quite and peacefully. Home is the symbol of shelter for the body and the soul, in both painting and poem.
15. Painting entitled “Beach with trees”, combined with the poem “Our place”, by Ritsos, G., with lyrics full of love for Greece, as the poet was exile because of the dictatorial regime. Through the poem he presents images of Greek landscape that reveal the poet’s nostalgia and internal concerns.
16. Painting entitled “Tree in spring”, combined with the poem, “Agreement with a tree”, by Krokos, G., describing a kind of agreement between a man and a tree, which is his best friend. The tree symbolizes the friendship and company, a friend who is always there and a good listener.
17. Painting entitled “Streets with trees by the beach”, combined with the poem “The summer”, by Palamas, K., as the sea the symbol of the summer and holidays, relaxation and lazing.
18. Painting entitled “Contemplation”, combined with the poem “The last Station”, by Seferis, G. Both painting and poem hide the feeling of melancholy and the only “crevice” of happiness and optimism is the moon. So, the moon is a symbol of the tireless companion and unique natural light in a person’s life.
19. Painting entitled “Waiting for the subway”, combined with the literally work, “In a border”, by Samarakis, A. The text describes the dream of a child to become a stationmaster and how often he used to go to a station to watch trains passing by. The train symbolizes life’s journey.
20. Painting entitled “Beach with trees”, combined with the poem, “Sea in the morning”, by Kavafis, K., as the sea symbolizes a part of nature and his memories and idols of pleasures.
21. Painting entitled “Tree in spring”, combined with the poem, “The spring”, by Troupis, Th., as spring symbolizes love and joy and the tree with the deep roots, the stability of them.
22. Painting entitled “Contemplation”, combined with the literally work “A child counts the stars”, by Loudemis, M. The two lighted lamps next to each other symbolize the companionship. The man in the painting wears the same color trousers as the tree next to him, brown. So, his loneliness is the same as the trees. The text describes a child whose life was very tough as he had to work from little and felt ever so different from the others and meanwhile very lonely.
23. Painting entitled “Always together”, combined with the poem, “Confession”, by Polydouri, M., in which the poet describes the confession of a big love started in a bridge where a couple sits there without talking until one of them confesses his love to the other. The painting includes two persons who do not talk and they communicate with the silence of their faces. The symbol in both painting and poem, is the silence through which, sometimes, great feelings or ideas are expressed.

24. Painting entitled “Always together”, combined with the poem, “One star is for all us”, by Livaditis, T., in which a great love is described and it is such a great love, that if the poet whispers her name, the spring will come. Spring symbolizes the beauty in creation such as his love.
25. Painting entitled “Beach with trees”, combined with the poem, “In the sea”, by Iliadis, V. The poet builds his little tower using the sand of the beach, which symbolizes his dreams and how easily they can be destroyed by the sea in a moment.
26. Painting entitled “The dialogue”, combined with the literary book, “The day I met you”, by Manda, L. The common symbols in the painting and the book are not only the two persons but the distinctive feature of coffee, an everyday moment which can hide many secrets. In the book a couple starts an affair just drinking coffee every day, a coffee on the coals.
27. Painting entitled “Leisure”, combined with the poem, “Monotony”, by Kavafis, K. The common element is the absence of tomorrow for the people in the painting, as they are doing nothing actually. The poem describes the meaningless sometimes life to such an extent that tomorrow ends up without the meaning of tomorrow.
28. Painting entitled “Home by the sea”, combined with the poem “My home”, by Palamas, K., with common element the house which symbolizes for both painting and poem, peace, shelter and security.
29. Painting entitled “Beach with trees”, combined with the poem, “The nightmare of Persephone”, by Gatsos, N., which is a cry for ecological destruction because of the human intervention in nature.
30. Painting entitled “Always together”, combined with the literary work, “Hours with my mother”, by Psarafi, L., with common element the endless love, which in the painting stems from the couple and in the text stems from the mother to her own child.
31. Painting entitled “Contemplation”, combined with the poem, “Dangerous loneliness”, by Christianopoulos, D. The common element is the erotic loneliness in the poem which matches with the silent contemplation of the painting.
32. Painting entitled “Always together”, combined with the poem, “O love you”, by Kavafis, K. Common element is love which in the painting is expressed by the silent body language and in the poem by the strength of language focused in the lyric “Neither a book of thoughts is enough for me to express as many as this phrase”.
33. Painting entitled “Beach with trees”, combined with the literary work “Dream on soil”, which describes an unfulfilled love story. The painting could be the “canvas” of the poem as the beach is empty and deserted as the heart of the lonely lover. Meanwhile the mountain in the painting symbolizes the difficulties and obstacles in this unfulfilled love.
34. Painting entitled “The dialogue”, combined with the poem, “Only because you loved me”, by Polydouri, M., a silent dialogue to her only love, addressing to the second singular person

i.e. you.

35. Painting entitled “Always together”, combined with the quote from erotic reason, by Seferis, G. The common symbol is the common fate of two people.

36. Painting entitled “Children”, combined with the poem, “Peace”, by Ritsos, G. which is a hymn to peace. Children symbolize the future of the world in peace.

37. Painting entitled “Composition with bicycle”, combined with the poem, “The cyclist”, by Elytis, O., as the bicycle is the symbol of natural life and a way to express life’s journey as it is described to the poem.

38. Painting entitled “Always together”, combined with the poem, “Only because you loved me”, by Polydouri, M. The symbol in both painting and poem is love, the driving power of the world.

39. Painting entitled “Leisure”, combined with the poem, “The Fatality”, by Varnalis, K. The common element between painting and the poem is the hope that life is going to change and a miracle will take away cowardice, irresolution and fatal.

40. Painting entitled “Beach with trees”, combined with the poem, “Gazing at the sea”, by Varnalis, K.. Sea symbolizes the endless and the sudden changes (calm or wavy) just like as it happens with our lives.

41. Painting entitled “Home by the sea”, combined with the poem “The navigator”, by Bouri-Papa, R. The boats left into the painting next to the house symbolize unfulfilled dreams. In the poem the boats symbolize the books that can travel somebody all over the world and can be by reading books, an armchair dreamer.

42. Painting entitled “Always together”, combined with the excerpt of the literary book “Who leads?”, by Rontari, G. The two persons in the painting symbolize the value of a family; the peace in a family and how important is love and trust between two parents.

43. Painting entitled “The dialogue”, combined with the poem, “The friends are singing”, a Cretan couple. The common element between the painting and the poem is the trust and the dialogue whenever people need each other or they are real friends.

44. Painting entitled “Beach with trees”, combined with the poem, “Sometimes the sea”, by Saradaris, G. The sea with the waves can take away all the problems and gives calm and happiness to people. It symbolizes the strength of God according to the poem because, God can offer joy and happiness and take away problems and sorrows.

45. Painting entitled “Always together”, combined with the poem “Erotokritos” by Kornaros, V. The way the two bodies stand in the painting shows their endless love and in the poem one of the lyrics mentions that it is better to die being with his love, than live a life without her.

46. Painting entitled “Beach with trees”, combined with the poem, “Voice coming from the sea”, by Kavafis, K. in which the poet mentions that the sea brings messages in the souls. In the other hand the waves in the painting give the impression that the sea wants to whisper to

us or sing with lyrics that rejoice our souls and emit peace.

47. Painting entitled “Always together”, combined with the poem, “The –r- of Eros/ by Elytis, O., a hymn to Eros and love. In the painting the embraced bodies of the couple give the impression that they “dance” harmoniously and the poem could be a simply song for them to dance with.

48. Painting entitled “The red tree”, combined with the poem, “The tree”, by Blanas, G. In the poem the tree is described as a listener, a watcher to everybody’s words and actions and the same happens in the painting, but also beatifies the area. So, in both poem and painting the tree symbolizes the observer and silent listener of life.

49. Painting entitled “Contemplation”, combined with the poem “Waiting for the night”, by Livaditis, T. The symbol and common element in both the poem and the painting is the night which most of the times brings solitude and oblivion.

50. Painting entitled “Contemplation”, combined with the poem, “I will take an uphill”, by Pallikaridis, E. in which the poet describes the thoughts of a man who wants to leave everybody and everything back, just to go and fight for freedom up to the mountains. The symbol in the painting and the poem is the freedom for someone to leave everything back and for someone to think freely.

51. Painting entitled “Home by the sea”, combined with the poem, “The house near the sea”, by Seferis, G. The house in the painting seems deserted and in the poem is mentioned that a man lost everything time by time, “all the houses”. The houses are symbols of a man in both painting and poem, as they “stubborn easily if you leave them”.

52. Painting entitled “Waiting for the subway”, combined with the literally work, “In a border”, by A. Samarakis. The text describes the dream of a child to become a stationmaster and how often he used to go to a station to watch trains passing by. The station in both poem and painting is a symbol of the limits of one’s dreams.

53. Painting entitled “Contemplation”, combined with the poem, “Nights”, by Modis, K. The common element between the painting and the poem is the concern of human beings that they follow them everywhere, at home, in bed, over the night. When fun with friends is over, contemplation is everywhere, irremovable as the tree in the painting next to the man.

54. Painting entitled “With no tomorrow”, combined with the poem, “The old man”, by Kavafis, K. which describes all the chances and challenges an old, lonely man had and refused in his whole life, thinking always of tomorrow. The common symbol of both painting and poem is the word “tomorrow” as, in fact, that there is no tomorrow without living and planning in the current time.

55. Painting entitled “Home by the sea”, combined with the poem, “The sun the Iliatoras (meaning the emperor sun), by Elytis, O. The sun in the painting is all over, embracing the whole landscape and in the poem the sun embraces Greece. The common element is the sun protecting everything, houses (symbol of human beings), landscape and sea (nature).

6. Conclusions

The goal of this study was to prove the great connection between Arts and Literary and how Academic students can discover symbols in Art and common elements with poems and prose. Art includes a wide range of activities connected with to the inner world of human beings, like creations and modes of expression and in the other hand; literary is seen as a means of various actions and interactions of people, understanding, feeling, expression (Kampouropoulou et al., 2003). The project proved that Arts can contribute to identify and intuitive use of the different functions of literary and they can help students to “translate” the emotional experience of a painting and crystallize it into a creature. From the whole procedure it is obvious that the interweaving of creative Arts to an organized project creates quality dynamics within academic class, which motivated students to achieve cognitive, literary and artistic senses.

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