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CNL & Arts Education

Aesthetic-artistic research on the subject of gardens in art

The most important resonance spheres of modernity, art and nature, are brought together through aesthetic-artistic research using agile university didactics on the subject of gardens. On the basis of research into garden culture and the natural sciences, primary didactics students develop their human-nature relationship in an independent artistic process. This creative research process through art and design promotes the development of Anthropocene competence and thus ensures cultural sustainability in the students' professionalization process.

Art and design, resonance, aesthetic-artistic research, garden, creativity, human-nature relationship

Topic: Aesthetic-artistic research on the subject of gardens

Agile university didactics (Arn 2020, 19 ff.) is used to address the topic of gardening from the perspective of the subject of art and design and cultural education so that interdisciplinary approaches can be grasped and further developed in aesthetic research (Kämpf-Jansen 2001). This is because the choice of topics forms an alliance with the natural sciences, which manifests itself in interdisciplinary thinking. The Anthropocene concept forms the thought bracket from which transformative educational processes are evoked in the students (CNL & Anthropozän). The concept of the garden in the Anthropocene as an aesthetic-artistic research topic is explored by the students by means of narration. The theme of the garden in the Anthropocene as an aesthetic-artistic research topic is explored in its conceptualization through narration by the students. The cultural history of the garden offers research opportunities to analyze historical, country-specific differences. The perception of nature opens up the view of fauna and flora in the garden. Through the method of aesthetic-artistic research, students individually approach the topic field artistically by finding their personal area of interest and developing learning scenarios for their teaching practice.

WHAT is it about? WHO is it about?

Narratives are part of being human, because storytelling is a basic anthropological need. Stories are told not only in oral and written form, with the help of words and texts, but also by

means of body language, signs of all kinds, animated or static images, dances and music (Lieber & Uhlig 2016, 9). From this perspective, garden design can be described as a form of narration.

Numerous definitions try to capture the phenomenon of the garden. If you start with the word itself, you are catapulted into other linguistic worlds, cultures and times. The Hebrew word *gan* and the Old High German *garto* derive from the Indo-European *ghorto-s*, which means *wickerwork, fence* and *enclosure*. The term *paradise* goes back to this meaning (Ohlsen 2007, 14). A garden is usually understood as a piece of enclosed, domesticated nature, as a living artifact within an environment that is either perceived as too wild, i.e. too natural, or too cultivated, i.e. usually too urban (Ullrich 2010, 137). The complex educational subject of gardens also offers definitions that shed light on the action in the garden and the artistic will to create: Gardening means shaping nature and overcoming the natural urge to do only that which serves existence and utility. The design of the garden not only conveys the need for beauty but is also an expression of spiritual freedom (Ohlsen 2007, 11). The principle of a garden can be interpreted in different ways. The interpretations of the metaphor are open, variable depending on context, religion or time reference, and thus also the narratives (Vogt 2011, 6 ff.)

These definitions illustrate where art education can connect to natural and cultural scientific knowledge. Gardens are designed natural spaces that offer opportunities for perception, learning and knowledge and thus manifest fields of research in the Anthropocene. Garden design reveals historical and cultural practices and thus multi-perspective narratives.

Didactics

The learning scenario is dedicated to aesthetic-artistic research on the topic of gardens in art education. This means that primary didactics students deal with the topic as part of a research process in order to independently develop learning scenarios for their practice.

Aesthetic artistic research is a form of learning in which the researchers independently develop a question or hypothesis relevant to them on the topic of the garden, search for answers using various methods (observation, documentation, research in books, interviews, on the Internet, etc.), design the artistic-aesthetic research process (painting, drawing, photography, filming, collaging, sculpting, etc.) themselves, reflect on it, prepare and present their results. Learning is not understood as a mere accumulation of knowledge, but as an open-ended and dynamic process in which the researching individual takes center stage. Research-based learning can take place anywhere: in this learning scenario, ideally also in different gardens (public, private, historical gardens, botanical gardens, kitchen gardens, etc.). Interdisciplinary thinking and transmedia work are not exceptions but rather integral components (Kämpf-Jansen, 2001).

WHO is the target group? WHO are possible cooperation partners?

The learning scenario is intended for students and teachers in primary didactics, as well as higher education didactics.

WHY is this topic relevant to *CultureNature Literacy*? WHERE is it going?

Human perception is in a process of transformation through the individual's search for identity and is therefore directly linked to Anthropocene competence. Socialization and educational interventions shape the self in early phases of life. In artistic-aesthetic processing modes, it is possible to establish subjective interests as the starting point for research, focusing here on the topic of resonance according to Hartmut Rosa (Rosa 2017, 472 ff.). The topic of the garden, explored through the method of aesthetic-artistic research, uses the combination of precise perception *Wahrnehmung* (CNL & Visual Literacy) of text and nature with literary learning (CNL & Literarisches Lernen), mindful handling (CNL & Ecological Awareness) and aesthetic (CNL & Arts Education) with scientific-empirical research CNL & Science Education/Scientific Literacy to promote *CultureNature Literacy*.

The *GreenComp* (Bianchi, Pisiotis & Cabrera 2022) provides a reference framework for sustainability competencies, thus serving as a guide for the development of tasks in aesthetic-artistic research:

- Embodying sustainability values: In the context of aesthetic-artistic research, awareness of sustainability is awakened through processes that promote knowledge, and this is accompanied by an appreciation of the same. Topics such as justice and nature-promoting measures are discussed and implemented in the form of projects.
- Embracing complexity in sustainability: Aesthetic-artistic research requires an independent examination of self-imposed tasks. Problems are recognized and described, enabling a clear formulation of the problem. Systems are analyzed and critically questioned. Through this process, possibilities for innovation are developed through aesthetic-artistic research.
- Envisioning sustainable futures: Documentation in an aesthetic-artistic manner, for example through the study of nature (drawing), photography and other techniques, trains the eye for conditions and situations in the here and now. This process triggers research-oriented thinking. The topic of adaptability is recognized as a competence in relation to the future and thus fires the imagination of how the future can be shaped.
- Acting for sustainability: Aesthetic-artistic research through the theme of the garden manifests itself in different social contexts. The creative process unfolds differently on an individual and collective level. The subjective reference to the garden builds a bridge to the experience of nature. Cognition and emotion are intertwined through internalized learning processes, making it possible to experience qualities that bring about lasting changes in attitude, which in turn can manifest themselves in political design processes.

Aesthetic artistic research offers an opportunity for students to develop into emancipated teaching personalities with a stance, who will implement the competence areas of the *GreenComp* in their future teaching.

WHEN, in which period does this take place?

The learning scenario is suitable as a thematic block within the framework of an art didactics seminar. Students should already be familiar with artistic techniques, i.e. have basic skills in art didactics.

HOW to proceed?

Step 1: Students are familiarized with the method of aesthetic-artistic research. The following impulse video is suitable for this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQ4Z2hdeRiQ> (Accessed: 12.02.2024)

The phase model of aesthetic-artistic research is subject-oriented and a dynamic structure in which new questions can constantly arise. It is a challenge for teachers to find a balance between guidance and freedom. Many criteria are determined jointly in discussions. In this learning scenario, the topic of the garden is defined, but the specific research question must be determined by the students in the first phase. In the second phase, researchers investigate, collect, and experience. They explore the four research fields: everyday experience, art, science, and aesthetic practice. In phase 3, the material is processed aesthetically and artistically. Innovative forms of presentation are found, always keeping the research process in mind. In this phase, an artistic product with transmedial aspirations is created. In transmediality, perception, observation and documentation determine the initiation. Drawing, photography, filming or describing in words (use of foreign languages) represent narrative processes. The use of color, various printing techniques and plastic-sculptural and performative implementations, collages or assemblages should be known and mastered in their diversity. In aesthetic-artistic research, students have the opportunity to theoretically deepen the technique of art with which they resonate, with thematic reference to the garden, and to implement it creatively and practically. The best motivation is the enthusiasm that is evident in all students right from the start or that develops during the work process. In the fourth phase, the research process and results are presented. Appreciation of the work is experienced (Balzarek 2016, 202 ff.). In the next steps, a path of aesthetic-artistic research is described.

Step 2: An approach to the topic by means of narration in aesthetic-artistic research can be undertaken through an excursion to a garden. The respective season and weather conditions are decisive for how the researchers perceive their experience of nature in the garden. Associations with their own garden are found and described. Garden experiences are recounted. The garden is documented in different ways: Drawings, photographs, films, descriptions etc. The result is a collection of memories, experiences and adventures through artistic and aesthetic exploration.

Step 3: The excursion addresses the students personally and involves them biographically. They research their individual positions on the topic of gardens and bring them into an oral group exchange by showing and discussing their documentation. Memories are compared and emotional states are discussed. What sensory impressions are brought to mind? What

significance does different socialization have in terms of interest in the topic of gardens? (Oelkers 2016, 39 ff.) This subjective field research is expanded to include group field research, thereby consciously experiencing and strengthening the sense of "I" and "we" in the group.

Step 4: Using a collaborative mind map, the various thematic areas that constitute a garden are elaborated and expanded upon. After this preliminary work, the students continue their research independently and document their findings in a research diary. These individual collections are presented and discussed by the individual students. The very personal ways of focusing on topics manifest the diversity of positions (Leuschner & Knocke 2012, 28 ff.). Subsequently, the task is given to develop a learning scenario for primary school using aesthetic-artistic research, which can be interdisciplinary across subjects such as art and design, natural history, and cultural techniques. The first step is a dialog about the topic in order to explore a common working approach and subsequently establish this (Oelkers 2016). Exchange, discussion and a compromise that is equally supported by both students is essential, as the aim is to achieve a resonance experience (Rosa & Endres 2016, 116 f.).

Step 5: Students work in tandems and are free to choose their topic. The following topic bundles can serve as orientation:

- Living organisms (e.g. insects: Appearance, way of life and habitat, changes in populations due to climate change)
- Plants (differentiation between useful and ornamental plants, effects of climate change)
- Recyclable material (waste problem around/in the garden, objects for garden design with different functions in relation to plants, animals, pure aesthetics without further function)
- Climate change - seasonal reference (focus on the whole year, differentiation into the seasons)
- Garden design (e.g. spatial design: creating habitats for animals, planting in climate change, creating a dream garden)
- Art observations (various approaches with exercises for artwork analysis, artist gardens, garden art)

Aesthetic artistic research in practical implementation: In all learning scenarios, there is a requirement for transmedia learning processes that are to be developed individually in the work setting. Students draw on prior theoretical and practical knowledge and the key competence of creativity with regard to areas of artistic expression.

Step 6: Concrete learning scenarios are defined. Awareness of how different work phases can be carried out in primary didactics must be developed through discussion, exchange of experience and reflection processes. The students present the learning scenarios and their artistic products. In the large group discussion, there is joint reflection and critical exchange. Adaptations can then be made. The students then have a collection of learning scenarios that they can put into practice.

WHAT is being worked with?

The portfolio or research diary can be kept analog in a notebook or notebook, but also digitally in a Word file or with other digital tools. Analog tools such as a clipboard and digital tools such as a cell phone camera are useful for documenting the research process. All materials for the following activities should be available for aesthetic-artistic research: Drawing, painting, printing, photography, filming, plastic-sculptural and performative realizations as well as material for collages or assemblages.

WHERE does the learning scenario take place?

The learning scenario is carried out in the seminar room and on the university premises. As an external learning location, visiting a garden is recommended.

Literature

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Quality criteria | SDGs

Sustainability: Artistic-aesthetic research in relation to the Anthropocene leads to diverse forms of knowledge on rational, pre-rational, subjective and general levels. This leads to sustainable learning processes that focus on the relationship between humans and nature. Changes in attitude lead to conscious behavior towards nature.

Inclusion: Aesthetic-artistic research implies transformation processes of topics and content that offer access to all learners. They can choose the aesthetic-artistic approaches themselves according to their skills. Empathy is trained and new creative paths are explored.

Digitality: All possibilities of digital communication are open to those involved, so digitality is intrinsically integrated into process development and a basic prerequisite.

Target group correspondence: The article is intended for students and teachers of primary didactics, but also for university didactics, in order to understand approaches and developments in how aesthetic-artistic research can work.

SDG: SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), SDG 15 (Life on land)

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