

The Image as a Communicative Medium-

A phenomenological Study of Children's Drawings through a Cross-cultural Interaction

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The question that dominates the study is about the nature of perception: What is happening when a child sees a picture that: a) captures her/his attention and stimulate response to it? b) What kind of 'responsive impulses' can be identified in the drawings created by children?

This study explores the philosophical aspects of drawing as a language for children to represent their interactions with the world in a visual form. The primary focus of this study is to investigate the ways children from two different nations, Iran and Germany, engage in communication through the medium of drawings. The study explores the potential of drawing as a medium that: a) enables children in expressing their thoughts and emotions in a significant way, b) through its connection with perception and imagination, facilitates sensitivities in children to get aware of and responsive to the experiences of others, c) provide researchers and educators with new insights into the use of children's drawings as a tool for reflexivity in art education practice, and d) generates the knowledge contribute to a better understanding of the experience and responsiveness of visual representations (image).

The study contributes to the 'Theory of the Image',¹ underlying principle is that by examining the process of 'seeing something as something' as outlined in the 'phenomenological image theory', we can gain insights into how children perceive and respond to visual stimuli. The field of image analysis encompasses a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches to examine various types of visual materials.² However, a common challenge in practical applications is the transition from descriptive to a properly analytical or adequately interpretative engagement with images. This gap manifests as the disparity between the image's inherent content and its transformative phenomenological potency, between the image in its presented form and its encompassing experiential significance.³ This study proposed an innovative phenomenological research methodology which would move us beyond the fixation of the compositional evidence of image (*form*) and force us to focus on the responsiveness of the image in performing a particular affect (*content*)⁴. Therefore, the focus is on the perceptual and experiential aspects of pictures (drawings) that trigger ideas, arouse action, and encourage artistic and creative interaction between children from two different nations, namely Iran and Germany.

¹ Rampley, Matthew. *Bildwissenschaft: Theories of Image in German-Language Scholarship*, in Mathew Rampley, Thierry Lenain, Hubert Locher, Andrea Pinotti, Charlotte Schoell-Glass, Kitty Zijlmans, eds., *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks*, Leiden: Brill, 2012, pp. 119-134.

² Rose, G. (2001). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*. London: Sage

³ Hook, Derek and Glăveanu, Vlad Petre (2013) *Image analysis: an interactive approach to compositional elements*. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 10 (4). pp. 355-368. ISSN 1478-0887

⁴ Waldenfels, Bernhard (2008). Von der Wirkmacht und Wirkkraft der Bilder. In: Boehm, G. & Mersmann, B. & Spies, Ch. (Hg.): *Movens Bild. Zwischen Evidenz und Affekt*. München: Wilhelm Fink, S. 47-63

The research methodology employed in this study is a combination of qualitative social research methods, phenomenological approaches, and aesthetically hermeneutic orientations which provided a means of challenging assumptions and offering novel and creative interpretations of familiar events. In this context, the researcher employs a dialectical process that involves both suspending preconceived notions and utilizing them reflectively as a means of transformation and gaining insight. The findings may inform efforts to rethink assumptions about early childhood education and improve how we teach and interact with children.

In this context, "Memory images" (*Erinnerungsbilder*)⁵ are a possible methodological approach to moments of aesthetically educative experience that are based on special moments of perception or an unusual experience. This technique involves engaging in reflection on a detailed and vivid memory of a past experience as a means to gain insights into the present experience under investigation. Within the process of re-engagement, there exists the potential for interpretation of the experienced event, which can contribute to a shift in perspective and the possibility to step out of previously taken-for-granted modes of perception and interpretation.⁶

The use of children's drawings as a tool for reflection has gained increasing attention in recent years, as educators and researchers recognize the value of incorporating visual elements in the learning process. By engaging with children's drawings, educators can gain insight into the child's perceptions, emotions, and experiences, and use this information to guide further learning experiences. Thus, this study focuses on the potential of children's drawings to facilitate reflective processes in art education. This reflective approach to learning and teaching in art education aligns with the experiential-reflexive approach, which emphasizes the importance of perception, experience, and reflection in the learning process. In the forthcoming research colloquium, I will be presenting my methodical approach referring 'Memory images', which aims to explore the potential of children's drawings as a tool for the reflective process in art education.

Biography

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⁵ Engel, Birgit *Erinnerungsbilder – Annäherung an eine leibphänomenologische Systematik der Förderung professionsbezogener Bildungsprozesse*, in: Brinkmann, Malte / Türistig, Johannes / Weber-Spanknebel, Martin (Hg.): *Leib – Leiblichkeit – Embodiment: Pädagogische Perspektiven auf eine Phänomenologie des Leibes*, Wiesbaden 2019

⁶ Engel, Birgit *Spürbare Bildung. Über den Sinn des Ästhetischen im Unterricht*, 2., überarbeitete Online- Aufl. mit neuem Vorwort, 2011 <<http://www.pedocs.de/volltexte/2011/4887/>>, 29.04.2019 (1. Aufl. Münster/ New York / München / Berlin 2004)