WORKING WITH CULTURAL HERITAGE.
ACHIEVING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION BY MEANS OF COLLECTIVE DRAWING AND DESIGN ACTIVITIES

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In this paper, we examine selected keys to the appreciation of cultural heritage: first, the use of different languages, and in particular drawing, in approaching heritage; and second, the importance of actively engaging audiences in heritage appreciation projects, right from the planning stages. In presenting and working with heritage, with audiences spanning school students to the general public, one strategy that has proven extremely successful is to explore the intentional design process underpinning artistic creations. Focusing on the conceptualization, creation and execution of works (from design to sculptures and paintings and from architecture to landscapes) has been shown to offer much scope for inquiry, allowing the individual consumer to connect more deeply with the cultural heritage being encountered. This exercise in discovering and closely observing the conceptual and material aspects of heritage works has also informed the design of a range of tools, in some cases co-designed with audiences; the practical aspect of this process has proven to be of particular value.

EMBARKING ON A HERITAGE APPRECIATION
JOURNEY, ONE SMALL STEP AT A TIME

Since 2014, the faculty of the Image Education course at the University of Milan-Bicocca has emphasized the importance of engaging with local cultural heritage, constantly pursuing opportunities for conducting collaborative action research (Marani, 2014) with heritage managers and audiences. This continuously evolving and expanding trajectory has gone through phases of review, further study, in-depth analysis, and comparison with other contexts, leading to the development of a range of projects and materials.

The first step in this journey was driven by requests from heritage sites for guidance in enhancing their audience engagement actions.

An initial monitoring period was followed by the joint design of tailored strategies for individual heritage sites. Over time, we developed an operational method comprising a series of key steps, or phases, some consecutive and some parallel. These are: targeted observation of existing practices and actions, alongside the definition of a shared language and clarification of the desired outcomes; initial experimentation including the collection of new data; development of provisional test materials; implementation and testing of the materials with the collection and analysis of further data; and design and production of the definitive material for the targeted audience engagement action (albeit with built-in flexibility to accommodate future developments). During the observation phase, several different tools have been used, selected as a function of the different heritage sites. The most frequently implemented include paper-and-pencil observations of audiences and their patterns of movement around cultural heritage spaces, video footage, checklists, interviews with key informants involved managing the heritage site and interviews with heritage consumers.

Throughout this rich and intricate journey, from the earliest actions undertaken with different heritage sites, one

key aspect has been the development of new materials, whether tangible or digital objects, which were designed to enhance audiences' connection with the site and to draw out aspects it that often go unnoticed during an initial, frequently solitary, visit.

In the next section, we offer a more detailed description of some of these materials, which have been used at two very different types of heritage sites: first, heritage sites in Milan linked to the world of design; second, three different sites that lend themselves to drawing connections between art and science, that have jointly identified different modes of fruition and participation (Bishop, 2006). The journey towards developing new tools has evolved into an increasingly collaborative endeavour, involving not only representatives of the heritage sites themselves but also their target audiences and the community at large. This has prompted more in-depth, mindful and documented exploration of the concept of participation.

THE INTERGENERATIONAL SUITCASE, A JOURNEY INTO DESIGN BASED ON DRAWING AND STORYTELLING

One of the first stages in this journey involved a project on the theme of design, funded by the *Cariplo Foundation*, and organized with the Milanese design 'circuit' comprising the Franco Albini, Achille Castiglioni, Vico Magistretti and *Triennale Milano Foundations*. Preliminary research on visitor profiles suggested that these sites were almost exclusively accessed by a specialist audience. The foundations were therefore interested in exploring the potential for expanding access and creating novel avenues of engagement for attracting new audiences (Zuccoli et al., 2016). Among the segments of the population that the foundations had previously found difficult to engage, the project team identified specific groups as target users and active contributors to the project. These were lower secondary school students
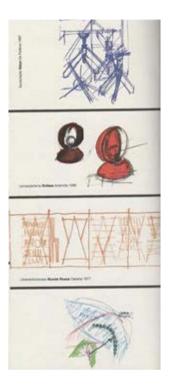
Fig. 1 Vico Magistretti's concept design expressed through synthetic drawings/designs. From the catalogue *Vico Magistretti. Illustrated Words*, 2010, Grafiche Mariano.

(specifically fifteen classes, totalling 350 students, from two groups of schools located in the suburban Bicocca and Gratosoglio districts) and older adults with no background in design (specifically 15 individuals who participated in all stages of the project work). The action research paradigms informing this project were design-based research (Barab & Squire, 2004; Design-Based Research Collective, 2003; Wang Hannafin, 2005) and art-based research (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Sullivan, 2010). The trajectory, involving numerous encounters in the participating schools and museums with educators, teachers, and members of the theatre company (and project partner) *Teatro degli Incontri*, resulted in the joint creation of four sets of customized materials, one for each foundation. These suitcases evolved over time, with the addition of new physical and digital contents.

Among the various aspects of this project that we set out to explore in this paper, in addition to the development of a language to be shared among the action research participants —a step that was key to identifying shared goals and collaboration strategies— is its focus on the importance of drawing. First, drawing as a tool used by the designers themselves, in distinctive ways that reflect their individual personalities. Second, drawing as a tool for designing and documenting the process of change as it evolved. Third, drawing in the context of designing the different suitcases that travelled around the city, entering and exiting the foundations, arriving at the schools, and finally returning to the *Triennale* for a closing exhibition.

Fourth, drawing as the drawing products of the various target audiences. In sum, the language of drawing became an active mediator (Bruner, 1988; Damiano, 2013) of knowledge contents, as well as a form of knowledge and knowledge content in its own right. The great potential displayed by drawing as a language of exploration, discovery and reflection was a partly unexpected outcome.

In considering the diverse approaches to design and drawing among designers themselves, learning about, an-

alysing, and appreciating these differences, as well as understanding how they may be interrelated, may be viewed as key to understanding the design process and its implications. This requires participants to grasp the importance of design, and to recognize its value and role in their own lives, even though –as in the case of many older adults, but also many lower secondary school students– (Bonaccorsi, 2022) they may never have previously had occasion to reflect on the theme. By way of example, Vico Magistretti's habit of quickly sketching down ideas, including on tram tickets held in the archives of his foundation (Kaplan & di Lenardo, 2020), and later describing them to the manufacturer on the telephone, stands in contrast with the engineering-like precision of Franco Albini, who would spend long hours drawing and wore a white coat to avoid staining his clothing in the process (Albini & Albricci, 2023). This coat was included in the suitcase developed for his foundation as an unequivocal representation of a distinct approach to design.

Magistretti's way of thinking, drawing and designing evokes ethics, rigor, cleanliness, and a focus on playing with the relationships between forms and spaces (Jones, 2007).

From a didactic perspective, further insights may be drawn from observing the close relationship between teaching in general and subject-specific teaching (Martini, 2020).

Using archival drawings and objects to illustrate the steps in the designers' work, and leveraging drawing as a tool for producing thought (Innocenti, 2014), as a conceptual instrument, enabled us –as consumers of a given

work– to retrace its creator's steps and to peer behind the scenes of the creative process. It should be underlined that all these designers were also university lecturers and had therefore devised a specific teaching method based on their own work. For example, Pier Giacomo and Achille Castiglioni (Polano, 2001) are remembered for presenting their students with a vast collection of objects to be exhibited, touched and commented upon. Achille Castiglioni's ironic and close observation of each object he brought into class was both a teaching method in itself and at the same time a method for understanding his work. "It was this same approach that rendered Achille Castiglioni's university teaching and lectures distinctive and remarkable. He would notionally –or, like a magician, physically– extract various objects from a suitcase, captivating his audience with vivid descriptions of features and solutions" (Bassi, 2019, p. 98). The same methodology was systematically deployed with young students and older adults visiting the Castiglioni Foundation, who were then invited to produce a design drawing for a futuristic object.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES: FROM USING IMAGES
TO DESIGN VIP KITS TO SUBSEQUENT ACTIVITIES
WITH ADOLESCENTS AND CHILDREN

The second project, another action research initiative (Mariani, 2014; Mortari, 2003; 2010) , whose final output was the VIP (Visitor in Practice) kit, leveraged the overarching concept of cultural landscape to promote three extremely diverse heritage sites and types of heritage (De Nicola & Zuccoli, 2016). Indeed, the leading aim of this project, funded by the Lombardy Region, was to educate audiences about Villa Carlotta, Comacina Island and Bergamo Botanical Gardens. The first two of these places are located on Lake Como, while the third is situated in Upper Bergamo and the Astino Valley.

The first case study in this project is thus a delightful villa overlooking Lake Como. It is home to several modern

painting masterpieces (by artists including Canova, Hayez and Thorvaldsen, to name only the most famous) and surrounded by different kinds of garden – Italian, romantic, Japanese and agricultural; a place which, to paraphrase Emilio De Marchi, embodies a Pandean relationship between art and nature, leaving the visitor in doubt as to the connection between them and, above all, as to how the one disguises the flaws of the other.

Comacina, on the other hand, is Lake Como's only island, which has been inhabited since Roman times. Its early medieval archaeological ruins recall the skills of the local masters, but also the bloody warring between the communes and the Church or the exploits of Frederick Barbarossa. These ruins stand alongside three artist's houses built during the so-called thirty years in the style of Como rationalism (D'Amia, 2010) and designed to blend respectfully with the natural landscape of the lake and to boost the creativity of the resident artists.

Finally, Bergamo Botanical Gardens is distributed across the Bergamo area. The site's administrative headquarters, show laboratory, historical archives, herbariums and research collection are located in a historic building in Bergamo's Upper Town, with the original arboretums occupying a large terrace overlooking the local valleys. The more recent collections of food plants are located in the Astino valley (half an hour's walk from the old town), a landscape of great environmental importance which was redeveloped on the occasion of the 2015 Universal Exhibition in Milan.

The study, conservation and promotion of different kinds of heritage require the input of different disciplines and languages. Thus, after analysing the needs and behaviors of the visitors to the three places, as well as data from interviews with those involved in the day-to-day running of the sites (from volunteers to gardeners and from educators to directors), it was decided to deploy graphic language to produce a set of infographics as the main output

Fig. 3 High School Students at work on their collective extend drawings. Drawing as a metacognitive tool (with adolescents struggling to express themselves).

of the project. These infographics had two main purposes: to engage the widest possible range of audiences; and to facilitate observation, exploration and interpretation activities. Such activities, which are typical of cultural heritage education and mediation, were offered at all three places with a view to affording visitors a truly active role in their personal experience at a given site and to encouraging them to visit all three sites.

The graphic dimension of the project consisted variously in:

1. coming up with graphic representations of the activities that it is possible to do at the site;

2. using a photographic device to investigate particular points of view/ideas or to record a detail or scene that bears personal meaning;

3. using botanical illustrations, drawn from the Leonardi archive (Leonardi & Stagi, 2018), to encourage visitors to reflect on the changing shapes of trees across the season;

4. drawing one's own personal landscape on a transparent sheet, or using the frottage technique, or even creating

a personal collage using small objects collected during the visit.

Unlike in the first project described above, where drawing was used as an educational tool to investigate the meaning of doing design, in the current project, drawing, and in part photography, served as a medium for observing, analyzing and cognitively appropriating the landscape with the same spirit that has guided the great masters since the teachings of Leonardo da Vinci.

Whether the images produced represented a real or imagined landscape –or whether they were the result of a process of abstraction (Luigini, 2020), a painstaking effort to provide a faithful likeness, or a hasty sketch (Dalisi, 2008)– the visitor was invariably induced to remain focused for longer than in the 'snap and run' approach of the souvenir shot collectors that we identified across our research with different audiences.

From 2016 to the present, the VIP kit has been used in a variety of ways and with different audiences, with or without a mediator or educator. Among these usages, let us briefly report on a work experience project with school students during which the kit was used as a stimulus for drawing and image-based activities.

During the summer holiday period, three groups of high school students from Como City (classical studies, human sciences and languages curriculums respectively) and a group of vocational school students from the greater Como area, were tasked with identifying new exhibits for the recently founded Lake Como Landscape Museum. The first phase in this activity involved training, via an active and participatory process that lasted four days, during which the VIP kit was used to informally investigate the concept of landscape. The participants were guided to work on drawing, self-representation and representing one's perceptions of the landscape via an extended drawing technique (Grevenstein & Kleijn, 2011). The students were invited to come up with an abstract representation

Fig. 4 Drawing as a tool to collect
the children's point of view (a
teenagers' proposal).

of their own idea of landscape, based on a reflective ap-
proach and a kind of drawing that transcended the tra-
ditional limitations built into any medium and tools. We
thus focused on using alternative media and formats and
on overcoming spatial boundaries. Furthermore, inter-
preting the body as a scientific mediator of the learning
process, we adopted an embodied cognition approach

(Gallese, 2005; Gomez Paloma et al., 2013; Rittelmeyer, 2022), inviting students to work with peers on the relationship between body, sign, sheet and landscape. At the end of the training course, the students identified four different thematic areas and relative target audiences with which to work. One such theme was 'children's relationship with the landscape of the lake'.

In this case, the students decided to make use of the VIP kit (unlike their counterparts in other groups who came up with other themes/strategies) to prompt visiting children to discuss the landscape in the context of an interview –halfway between autobiographical and geographical– that included drawing as a narrative tool.

CONCLUSIONS

This article[1] has briefly explored the themes presented at the *4th International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Image and Imagination Imagin(G) Heritage*, through the paper 'Heritage fruition and interpretation. A journey of kit construction: the importance of images'. The paper was awarded *Best Paper* for combining 'the core values of disciplines such as education, design and graphic representation. The integration between the methodologies leads to a clear innovative edge'.

In particular, we focused on experimenting with the image of different cultural heritages. We have shown its use as a tool for direct cultural experience, which has been reduced by an educational perspective based on workshop methodologies (Dewey, 2020; Frabboni, 2004; Panciroli, 2010; Zuccoli, 2020). In particular, the work with the different types of audiences has been rejected in favour of the valorisation of the design aspects hidden, in the case of the first project described, behind the artistic realisations, in the case of the second, behind the specially designed supports for fruition.

The content objectives identified, such as the conception, creation and execution of the works (from the objects of fruition – design, sculpture and painting to architecture and landscapes) and the kit were the result of the research accomplished, allowing each person to make a participatory and personal contact with what they observed. Design was interpreted as "a language, process and approach – to enhance the creative learning and imagination of children (aged six to thirteen) in formal and informal multicultural educational contexts, such as schools and museums" (Camuffo, 2021, p. 88), extending this perspective to adult audiences. In this sense, we dedicated ourselves to drawing, understood as a familiar tool for all generations to come into personal contact with reality. In the second case, in addition to focusing on a more personal visit based on an understanding of the logic underlying the interpretation and mediation of cultural heritage, we described the use of the image as an invitation to direct experience in the different landscape contexts. In this case, the actions were declined through a phenomenological approach (Merleu-Ponty, 2003) in which the body, the first technical object (Mauss, 2017) available to every human being thanks to sensitive perception and its representation through drawing, became the protagonist of the experience.

From Leonardo to the 'contemporary' pedagogist Joseph D. Novak, D. Bob Gowin, drawing is also a means of knowledge. For Novak and Gowin, the first theorists of the concept map, a graphical representation of knowledge "is a way of bringing out the meanings inherent in the material to be learned" (1984, p. 19).

Drawing promotes knowledge because its practice makes it possible to understand the logic and existence of things.

NOTES

1 The article was conceived collectively, but the individual paragraphs were written by Franca Zuccoli for *Embarking on a heritage appreciation*

journey, one small step at a time and *The intergenerational suitcase, a journey into design based on drawing and storytelling*; Alessandra De Nicola for *Cultural Landscapes: from using images to design VIP kits to subsequent activities with adolescents and children* and *Conclusions.*

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