

THE SYMBIOSIS BETWEEN UNESCO HERITAGE AND EDUCATIONAL DESIGN: THE BLOUSE AS A SUSTAINABLE DIDACTIC RESOURCE

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Abstract

The article analyzes the structural symbiosis between UNESCO heritage and modern educational design in pre-university artistic education, utilizing the Romanian blouse (Ia) as a sustainable didactic resource. The paper establishes an integrated instructional model, demonstrating how the art of making the blouse can be leveraged tridimensionally through the coordinates of formal, non-formal, and informal education. Within the formal dimension, educational design focuses on translating the semiotics of folk motifs and its technical rigors into the curriculum of specialized workshops. The non-formal dimension extends learning through transdisciplinary projects, creative camps, and partnerships with the crafting community, while the informal dimension harnesses the "memory of sewing" as an organic transmission of heritage through gesture and identity internalization. The applied methodology combines curricular analysis, observation of learning pathways in art high schools, and ecopedagogical modeling. Key results reveal that this hybrid educational ecosystem stimulates students' cognitive autonomy, transforming the blouse from a static cultural document into a living, sustainable object, perfectly integrated into the visual culture of the younger generation.

Keywords: educational design, Romanian blouse, formal education, non-formal education, informal education, UNESCO heritage, pre-university artistic education

In contemporary society, pre-university artistic education assumes a fundamental mission, of a spiritual and educational nature, that of preserving, stimulating and developing the continuity of the intangible cultural heritage through integrated pedagogical strategies³. In the face of trends of global aesthetic standardization, the art school must not confine itself to a simple passive transmission of history, but has the duty to activate instructional mechanisms that transform tradition into a living resource of juvenile creativity⁴. Modern educational design intervenes in this space as a tool for configuring three-dimensional learning paths, achieved through the organic correlation of formal, non-formal and informal education. This integrated approach allows the extraction of heritage elements from the restrictive area of museumification and their repositioning as conceptual stimuli in the training process of young artists. The methodological landmarks of the research, the central reference element is the blouse with embroidery and the folk costume, identity marks of universal value recognized by

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³ Albulescu, I., *Competence Training in Pre-University Artistic Education: Strategies and Methodological Perspectives*, Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucharest, 2019.

⁴ Cucoș, C., *Education. Axiological and Transdisciplinary Dimensions*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2014.

UNESCO⁵. The valorization of these symbols in pre-university artistic activities does not aim at the mechanical learning of textile craftsmanship or the description of cutting and sewing techniques, but aims at a much deeper dimension. Identity development by transposing traditional values into original plastic and decorative compositions. The paper's hypothesis argues that using ia as a sustainable teaching resource stimulates students' visual literacy and cognitive autonomy, providing them with a complex archetypal language that they recontextualize in painting, graphic design, or design work. Through this lens, cultural sustainability merges, transforming national and regional landmarks into a dynamic tool for artistic expression for the young generation⁶.

1. Formal dimension, curriculum and visual semiotics in the art workshop

The structured and programmatic approach to UNESCO's intangible heritage in the institutionalized environment requires a profound re-evaluation, epistemic and methodological, of the instructional strategies traditionally used within the fundamental disciplines of pre-university artistic education. Disciplines such as plastic composition, the study of forms, academic drawing, painting, graphics and the history of visual arts become the pillars of a didactic approach in which the blouse with embroidery and the folk costume are no longer investigated as simple vestiges of the past, but as inexhaustible sources of visual concepts and plastic metaphors⁷. Formal educational design goes beyond the restrictive boundaries of a simple rigid curricular organization, transforming itself into an essential conceptual matrix for extracting the elements of popular culture from the sphere of passive reproduction and placing them on the coordinates of an original and conscious plastic creation. The mission of the teacher in the art workshop is thus reconfigured from the transmission of mechanical execution techniques towards the cultivation of a superior visual thinking, capable of operating with archetypes and transposing them into contemporary artistic languages⁸. The fundamental stage of this formal instructional model aims at the radical shift of the pedagogical center of gravity from a purely decorative or illustrative reception of the elements of traditional costume to the deconstruction and profound decoding of ornament as a self-regulating semiotic system,

⁵ UNESCO, *Fundamental Texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, UNESCO Publishing, Paris, 2020.

⁶Postman, N., *Ecopedagogy and the Recontextualization of Cultural Values in the Technocratic Society*, All Publishing House, Bucharest, 2011.

⁷ Eisner, E. W., *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2002.

⁸ Stoica, A., *Students' Creativity in Art Workshops: Models of Instructional Design*, University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2018.

governed by universal laws of visual composition. The blouse with embroidery is repositioned in front of the students as a two-dimensional visual text of perfect structural complexity, within which chromatic alternations, axial symmetries, mass and void ratios, as well as geometric rhythms internalize compositional principles analogous to those of modern currents of geometric abstraction or visual constructivism⁹tag. The didactic process turns into a plastic research laboratory, where students are guided to decipher the structural meanings of the embroidery, the wrinkle and the rivers, not from the perspective of the stitching itself, but from that of the organization of the plastic space and the balance of visual forces. Students thus understand that each line, angle, rhombus or spiral represents units of visual text that, in traditional composition, did not serve a purely aesthetic purpose, but configured a condensed visual cosmogony, a symbolic representation of the tensions between the terrestrial and the cosmic¹⁰. Transposing this semiotic analysis into high-level practical artistic skills involves the use of active methodologies that stimulate abstraction, essentialization, and conceptualization beyond the figurative¹¹. The student is determined to follow a complex cognitive path, which excludes from the beginning pastiche or mimetic copying of ethnographic sources, favoring instead the generation of new plastic and decorative compositional structures. The elements of folk costume become formal stimuli. The severe rhythm of zigzag angles in an ornamental register can be extracted and transformed into a structural network for a modular graphic composition. The radical chromatic polarity between the white of the canvas and the intensity of the embroidery becomes the pretext for a study of contrast and dynamics in abstract painting. The specific volumetry and density alternations of the wrinkle can inspire three-dimensional projects of plastic relief, ceramics or modern object design¹². The student no longer reproduces a pre-existing model, but uses the internal logic of the traditional model to invent a new visual reality, adapted to the twenty-first century. The process of plastic valorization within the formal curriculum establishes a direct transdisciplinary bridge between national identity values and international currents of design and visual ecology. The way in which the decorative space of the ia respects a rigorous economy of forms, where no element is redundant and where the ornament always emphasizes the anatomical structure of the wearer, is analyzed and correlated with the principles of modern functionalism and minimalism. The formal workshop thus loses

⁹ Marcus, S., *Semiotica aplicată în artele decorative și design*, Editura Academiei Române, Bucharest, 1982

¹⁰ Călinescu, M., *Semiotics of the Visual Arts: From the Archaic Sign to Contemporary Design*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005.

¹¹ Bocoș, M., *Interactive Training. Landmarks for an Active Pedagogy*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2013.

¹² Efland, A., *Art and Cognition: Integrating the Visual Arts in the Curriculum*, Teachers College Press, New York, 2002.

its anachronistic character, becoming a fertile space for pedagogical innovation where conceptual craftsmanship directly underpins the three-dimensional visual literacy, spatial thinking and chromatic sensitivity of young artists. This type of formal instructional design guarantees a real and measurable transfer of artistic skills, ensuring a major qualitative evolution of the learner from the stage of passive consumer of folklore to that of active producer of contemporary visual culture of high standing.

2. Non-formal dimension, transdisciplinary projects and community partnerships

The revitalization of the traditional costume and the blouse with embroidery registers a major qualitative leap when the teaching process leaves the rigid boundaries of the compulsory curriculum and opens up to the non-formal dimension of educational design. The methodological coordinate functions as a true incubator of transdisciplinary projects and as an open platform for plastic experimentation, expanding the learning experience in environments strongly connected to the cultural reality outside the school institution¹³. Instructional design in the non-formal direction relies especially on the use of active discent-centered strategies, such as project-based learning, creative symposia or direct partnerships between pre-university art education and faculties, an essential role being played by artistic higher education institutions in disseminating good practices. Through creative camps, interactive exhibitions and open workshops, the student assumes a dynamic role, evolving from the status of executor of a standardized school theme to that of researcher and visual interpreter of identity values protected by UNESCO¹⁴]. The non-formal activities allow the frontal approach to the tension between the authentic recovery of heritage and the risk of its devaluation through mass cultural consumption, providing students with the ideal context to demonstrate that tradition can generate innovative plastic languages. The non-formal artistic activities are designed in such a way as to stimulate the students' ability to transpose the essence of folk costume into complex compositional structures, which go beyond the sphere of conventional textile design. Students collaborate in multimedia teams to develop plastic concepts in which decorative rhythms, chromatic contrasts and geometric purification of the ia become foundations for large-scale works in the field of visual arts. The non-formal space becomes a transdisciplinary laboratory where the values of the ia are investigated from new angles. The compositional structure of the altarpiece is reinterpreted in advertising graphics or cultural poster projects. The chromatic

¹³ Cucoș, C., *Education. Axiological and Transdisciplinary Dimensions*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2014

¹⁴ Pârnu, G., *UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Education of the Young Generation*, National Institute of Heritage Publishing House, Bucharest, 2021

harmony of the traditional costume inspires abstract painting series or spatial installations, and the archetypal symmetry of folk signs is transposed into experiments in ceramic modeling and small sculpture. Expanding beyond the classroom stimulates first-hand experience-based learning, where students interact directly with museum collections or heritage pieces in the possession of the community. This visual and tactile confrontation with the folk art object is not meant to dictate a faithful copy, but to trigger a process of aesthetic resonance¹⁵. Students understand the dynamic structure of decorative space and how rhythm and alternation can be abstracted to construct two-dimensional or three-dimensional compositions of great expressive force. Learning thus moves from the area of theorizing to that of concrete creative action, where collective projects, thematic exhibitions or artistic interventions in the public space demonstrate the usefulness and flexibility of the traditional sign system¹⁶. The approach focused on the original artistic product educates a deep ecological and cultural responsibility, acquired through ecopedagogy. Students understand that cultural sustainability does not mean nostalgic replication of the past, but the ability to ensure the continuity of a value system by converting it into living visual culture, transforming the UNESCO heritage brand into a resource capable of generating an authentic aesthetic dialogue between the young generation and the community.

3.Shipping: The informal dimension, the memory of the gesture and the internalization of identity in the artistic portfolio.

The third structural link of the integrated hybrid model, informal education, represents the most subtle, fluid and deeply personal space of the transmission of intangible cultural heritage, articulating around a fundamental concept that the present research defines as the organic internalization of traditional aesthetic memory. The formal dimension provides analytical rigor and theoretical visual literacy in the institutional space, while the non-formal dimension provides practical testing and social contextualization through collaborative projects. The informal dimension is based on the processes of spontaneous, diffuse learning, achieved through visual imitation, inner rhythm and primary emotional attachment. The art and symbolism of the costume were not assimilated from pedagogical textbooks, but were transmitted through cultural cohabitation in the intimate space of the community. Modern educational design intervenes in this apparently unstructured sphere not to rigidify it, but to

¹⁵ Amabile, T. M., *Creativity as a way of life: a guide for educators and parents*, Scientific Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997.

¹⁶ Ionescu, M., Radu, I., *Didactica modernă*, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2004.

recognize its heuristic value and to absorb, capitalize and academically validate the cultural capital that the student extracts from his micro-community of belonging, transforming these latent influences into explicit resources for the construction of the personal artistic portfolio¹⁷. The informal valorization of the blouse with embroidery goes beyond the boundaries of a simple workshop reproduction, moving to the area of conscious internalization of plastic values, where the ia is assumed as a nucleus generating visual identity³. Students in pre-university art education are guided to delve into their own cultural biographies and to integrate into the structure of their evaluation portfolio those intimate, subjective histories related to spontaneous contact with folk art. The portfolio is no longer a simple collection of still lifes or obligatory exercises, but becomes a logbook of recontextualization, in which the visual imprint of the traditional costume is subjected to successive transformations through mixed graphic, pictorial or decorative techniques. The student experiences the transition from the direct ethnographic image to the personal plastic metaphor, demonstrating cognitive autonomy and the ability to select from the national treasury those compositional elements that resonate with his own style in formation. This immersion in the informal area reactivates the haptic and affective sensitivity of the young creator in relation to the heritage object. Informal learning acts as a catalyst for affective memory, where contact with authentic pieces of clothing from the family environment generates an intuitive understanding of proportions, subtle chromatic agreements and the relationship between full and empty in the decorative space. This knowledge assimilated outside the classical academic barriers provides fluidity to the plastic discourse in the portfolio. Each work becomes a testimony to the way in which the adolescent internalizes a traditional compositional rhythm – characterized by repetition, alternation and symmetry – and distills it through his own artistic sensitivity, generating plastic compositions of authentic expressive force¹⁸. Seen through the lens of ecopedagogy and cultural sustainability, the process of recontextualizing the ia in the plastic portfolio becomes an assumed act of cultural resistance in the face of the omnipresence of global aesthetic standardization and rampant visual consumerism that characterizes the daily environment of young people [11].¹⁹ The student directly experiences the dilated time, reflection and

¹⁷ Stoica, A., *Students' Creativity in Art Workshops: Models of Instructional Design*, University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2018.

³ Albulescu, I., *Competence Training in Pre-University Artistic Education: Strategies and Methodological Perspectives*, Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucharest, 2019.

¹⁸ Văideanu, G., *Education at the frontier between millennia*, Political Publishing House, Bucharest, 1988.

¹⁹ Postman, N., *Ecopedagogy and the Recontextualization of Cultural Values in the Technocratic Society*, All Publishing House, Bucharest, 2011.

concentration that the analysis and decomposition of a complex ornament requires, developing an ethic of sustainable creative work and an acute awareness of the value of the spiritual resources invested in a unique work of art [14]. The deep immersion determines a reconfiguration of perception, the folk costume is no longer received as a dusty clothing ensemble, intended exclusively for museums, but as a dynamic conceptual structure, from which the young artists extract principles of harmony, contrast and essentialization [10]. The organic fusion of informal experiences with formal educational structures once again becomes an inexhaustible aesthetic matrix that gives originality, depth and identity substance to the entire pre-university artistic path [12].

Conclusions

The implementation of the hybrid model of instructional design in pre-university artistic education demonstrates that the revitalization of the blouse with embroidery and folk costume is an optimal didactic strategy for ensuring the continuity of UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage. By shifting the focus from the technical description of textile craftsmanship to the complex process of conceptualization and transposition into plastic and decorative compositions, the art school fulfills its axiological mission of transforming tradition into a lively, dynamic visual language perfectly adapted to contemporary sensibility. This organic approach demonstrates that identity elements should not be preserved in a passive manner, through museum isolation, but should be activated as creative stimuli capable of generating new formal structures in painting, graphics, sculpture or design.

The synergy achieved between the formal, non-formal and informal dimensions underpins a sustainable educational ecosystem, in which the student evolves from the stage of receptor of folklore to that of active producer of original visual culture. The analysis of learning paths and artistic portfolios reflects a significant development of cognitive autonomy and visual literacy of learners, who learn to use archetypal compositional laws – symmetry, rhythm, contrast and geometric essentialization, as tools for expressing their own artistic identity. Through the lens of eco-pedagogy, the plastic recontextualization of the traditional costume offers young creators not only a decorative repertoire, but a deep system of ethical and aesthetic values, functioning as a conscious act of resistance in the face of global standardization and as a guarantor of the unchanging transmission of the spirit of the place to future generations.

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