

UE A : Art and architecture

Art as practice and experience.

Drawing and painting
as traces of an encounter
and a collision with the world.



Premise.

The discussion around art is overcrowded with words. Through them we try to describe practices, explain intentions, convey desires, develop thoughts. Even this presentation is made up by words. Sometimes though we forget that art is shaped by its own language. Not only does an artist express himself through the art language, but his thoughts are molded by the specific elements of this language as well. The art language is developed through the art practice.

Deleuze talks about the filmmaking thought process as a process that is made up by blocks of time-images, Cezanne affirms the importance of thinking through painting.

The artwork is an organic body, not just a container to be filled up by intentions expressed through words on a piece of paper. This body relates to the one who creates it as well as to the viewer, through the complexity of its nuances, its passages and its creases.

Teaching art becomes an attempt to trigger this practice giving way to the possibility of reflecting and thinking through the eye, through the hands and through the form of the matter being shaped. I have seen many architectural projects and I often found myself baffled by the abundance of digital stylizations presented in the various renderings and obtained from models already codified on a computer screen.

In these projects I found a shallow detachment and the intention to trick the eye rather than a proposal of a model based on a profound knowledge of the materials and of the territory where it was being built.

With this course I would like to offer the students a point of view that's not dominated by the digitalization and its polished appearance.

In the vastity of the art languages I've decided to focus on drawing and painting as expressions that are both essential and yet embedded with a strong historical background.

1 In the beginning was the gaze.

The first organ activated in the pictorial experience is the eye. You could also, in a way, say that we mainly paint through the sight.

To train our painting we must, first and foremost, train our gaze. Our eyes don't just take note of what happens around us; they select, focus on, caress, become inflamed. Learning to draw or paint means learning to see. To see a shape, to feel its volume, to sense its lines, its sharpness and its smoothness, its chromatic richness or its chiaroscuro; all of this, and so much more, is determined by the heightening and the discernment of our ability to see.

Seeing is never just about what's outside. It's about interiorizing what's outside while externalizing our subjectivity, it's a process where the eye is the threshold of an exchange that's never just mechanic, but it's enriched by memories and affections, imagination and fantasy.

The eye is activated before the world to receive its signals and with that same intensity and care, approaches the matter with which the artwork is build, the paper, the traces, the colors, all elements which are full of a potentiality that lures the artist's gesture to be activated and be shaped in the artwork.

2 Hands

Matter is molded through our gestures. The hands are that part of our body that allows us to physically relate to the matter, to mold it, to shape it.

We take our first steps into the drawing and painting practice "walking" on our hands. Manual labor, handwork, are often viewed as something that's not qualified as intellectual, but if we escape a narrow and simplistic view and consider handwork not just in its pure physical aspect, we'd realize that our hands are capable of transmitting sensibilities, knowledge and thought.

We're all aware of the existence of a body language. Our hands allow us to enter in a physical relationship with the world in order to make out its language, but by doing so they also allow us to discover our own bodies and listen to and understand their language as well.

Through drawing and painting we discover the physical porosity of the world, but we also discover our own bodies, as well as the body of the matter we are working with.

The artwork becomes in a way the field where the world is body, the body of the matter and our own body are able to relate to one another in a dense tangle of physicality and what is left it is the trace of this encounter. In this entanglement, our hands are the ones that touch, articulate, manipulate and, why not, think. Thus,

thinking with our hands becomes not only possible but also necessary to fully experience the artwork.

Reading list: *The Craftsman*, Richard Sennett.

3 Narrating

Art is not just an aesthetical production of objects and artifacts. It stems from experience and it generates experience. From this prospective, the artwork becomes a means through which to convey a story.

The artist presents itself as the witness of something he has lived through, and he narrates his experience through his artwork. The art narrative is never just a simple passing of information. The artist doesn't narrate facts but the astonishment they cause in him. Art becomes a way to give shape to the meeting with the "Other". It's not the meeting between what's alike but with the otherness that produces an experience and art is activated to narrate the tensions and the attractions that happen in this meeting.

The artwork, through the process of the narration, marks the passage of the experience into the language.

Gathering the complexity of an experience, acknowledging its potential and bringing it into the language in order for the artwork itself to become a presence that evokes that experience, this could be the function of a narrative.