

Poetics of education in context

MimesisLab – *Laboratorio di Pedagogia dell'espressione* – was born in the *Dipartimento di Progettazione Educativa e Didattica* and has carried out, since 2008, several research and experimental projects characterised by there-evaluation of mimetic dynamics and aimed at the care of man's humanity¹. They took place in different venues, not only in school classrooms, and share the *method* to enhance understanding and expressing.

Following are the titles of some projects, together with short notes of introduction about them; interested readers can find an appropriated scription of them on the related web pages.

Mimopaideia as therapeia: metaphorical nurturing to reactivate dormant relational activities in patients with eating disorders.

Venue: Centro Italiano per i Disturbi della Condotta Alimentare, Umberto I General Hospital, “La Sapienza” University, Rome.

¹MimesisLab is coordinated by Gilberto Scaramuzzo the listed projects were carried out with the collaboration of or the editing by: Elisa Muscillo, Karen Medici, Valentina Tinelli, Luana Carmen Foti, Tullia Della Moglie, Giuseppe Fassari, Stefano Bacchetta, Tullio Visioli, Cécile Papillon, Cosimo Costa, Gabriella Nocita, Vittoria Albin, Valerio Malorni, Federica Arlotti, Francesca Boschetti, Natalia Magni and the participation of personalities from the world of sport and show. Please see the publications areas of the single projects for all details concerning their implementation.

This therapeia was focused on relational and body skills at a primitive level, and was carried out through the recovery of an initial apprehensive/comprehensive/expressive condition: the mimetic principle. People suffering from food disorder, who were hospitalized or in day-hospital, were offered several opportunities to incorporate and then metabolize something other from themselves - not physical food, but spiritual food. Body interpretations, created by the patients through mimesis, allowed them to experience new vital shapes for their body. The research was developed through the expression of different energy qualities, derived from the contact with the natural elements that were proposed by the guide, and allowed the exploration of a new way of staying in one's body and experiencing a feeling of free domin one's own body in relation to the other's. Encouraging relational skills helped the emergence of an affective dimension, which allowed a gradual transformation of the destructive traits in possible therapeutic factors of change. A questionnaire was designed to evaluate the satisfaction of the lab and administered to patients in their second participation².

Publication:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

²Project and notes are edited by E. Muscillo.

Word and body. Experimental paths in search of an expressive authenticity: mimesis in a fourth grade class.

Venue: “Guicciardini” Comprehensive School, Rome.

The project was carried out by the Laboratorio and was mainly aimed at encouraging the initial apprehensive/comprehensive/expressive condition, the mimic principle. A game was proposed to enable children to identify themselves with the surrounding reality (whether an object, a natural element or another human being). The mimetic principle allowed the awakening of children’s creative core and encouraged the experimentation of their expressive and creative dynamisms and the search for a harmonious relation with the word.

The laboratory was experienced by the children as a recreational and educational research area where mimic practice, body expression and body dialogue were the focus of the work. Mimic practice and body expression were based on the child’s constant search for instinctive correspondences between his/her body and the rhythms, shapes and changes of natural elements (air, water, earth and fire). Self-perception and the activation of all parts of the body were stimulated: the child thus learnt to free the vocal expressive channel and to modulate sounds harmonizing them with the mimic-plastic conditions gained through body movement. The work on the word helped the child develop natural, although little used in teaching practices, relationship between vital meaning of the word and gestures of

the body. Finally, the work on body dialogue allowed the children to experience other communication channels that can be used with peers, which intensified the ability to feel each other and to be felt by the other³.

Publication: http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

Mimic and body expression for mathematics learning in a first grade class.

Venue: “Brasile” Primary School.

The aim of our study was to initiate children aged between 6 and 7 to the understanding of curricular mathematics through mimetic games and exercises. We wanted to verify if this kind of learning was possible through body mimesis.

The answer, after this first experience, seems to be positive: children’s drawings, teacher’s observations, and the positive response of pupils to the exercises have shown the effectiveness of the work done⁴.

Publication:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

³Notes by E. Muscillo, project editor.

⁴C. L. Foti was in charge of the work in the school, wrote the notes and collected the experience of the teacher, C. Pecoraro, which made it possible to carry it out.

Zerodistanza. Mimic paths in the different other, the same other.

Venue: “Stendhal” State Vocational School, Rome.

The project, carried out by Laboratorio di Pedagogia dell’Espressione, mainly aimed at the social integration of young people with disability in the peer group. The integration was obtained through the exercise of the expressive potential.

The main objectives concerning mind and body, conceptual - creative and emotional levels were achieved.

The work on body dialogue allowed an integration between the self-referential (mainly felt in the disability) and the relational dimensions. Increasing basic confidence allowed to develop more relational skills, which were evident both in the quality level of non-verbal exercises and from the statements made in the workshop on verbal confrontation. A video shooting of the workshop was made, with the help of professionals and participants, and, at the end of the year, a video was made with the help of E.Badino⁵.

Publication: http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

Mimetic writing experimental workshop.

Venue: Diped

The workshop was held with adult volunteers of both sexes and aged between 25 and 35. Purpose of this

⁵ Project and notes edited by E. Muscillo.

experimentation was to detect the effects of body and relational expressive work, done indoors and outdoors, on the activity of creative writing, both by establishing a direct and immediate relationship between body expression and writing expression, and by introducing the mediation of reading between the two activities.

Many exercises were proposed. The most frequent was the one in which the participants, after the mimesis of natural elements (eg. air, water) and essential qualities (eg. softness, liquidity), were invited to write different types of texts, choosing any theme or with a given theme (eg. a story, a letter, a leaflet, a dream), on the basis of creative stimulation and the activation of energies and suggestions of mimetic and body work.

The texts produced by the participants and their feedback, collected at the end of each meeting, testified an interesting interaction between body work, relational work and writing activities. The participants emphasized that body and mimetic work released their creativity from pre-existing blocks, fear of one's own and others' judgment on the quality of their writings, stimulating imagination, ability of invention, mastery of language and clarity in written expression. A sense of ease and pleasure in the act of writing was reported. Participants also underlined that the work of body relation both interpersonal and with the space, together with the exercise of collective reading and commenting, had a positive impact on self-confidence and creativity itself, thus emphasizing more the collective nature of creative writing, if compared to the subjective-

authorial nature which is generally more pronounced. The work outdoors proved to highlight and strengthen the same effects of the work done indoors⁶.

Publication:http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

Mimesi in infancy. Connections between body and sound.

Venue: “Papageno” nursery school, music classes. *The workshop was carried out with children from birth to 3 years, with the aim of encouraging body and verbal expressive freedom through a pedagogy that has its origin in the mimic method from Orazio Costa Giovangigli.*

The natural mimetic capacity of children was allowed as much freedom as possible and the relationship between the articulation of sounds(vocalizations, wordsand/or sentences) and variations of rhythm and shapes of body movements were promoted.

Mimetic exercise, body expression(including facial and vocal expressions) and body dialogue were the focus of the work and of the teacher-child relationship. Non-verbalcommunication between adult and child progressively became sensorial communication; through music, sounds and vocal sounds of the guide, the child was encouraged to express emotions with his/her body and voice. At the end of the meetings, the operators of the nursery

⁶Project and notes were edited by T. Della Mogliewith the help of E. Muscillo.

*found a greater richness in spontaneous language and an improved confidence in the relationships with others*⁷.

Publication:http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

Mimopaideia in the different meanings of mental distress.

Venue: Psychiatric Diagnosis and Treatment Division (SPDC), Umberto I General hospital, “La Sapienza” University, Rome.

In a therapeutic service of emergency, such as a SPDC, our intervention was conducted as an artistic – educational therapeia which aimed to offer patients the opportunity to get out of their estrangement and disorientation, which are typical of acute psychiatric moments, and allow them to re-discover an inner world still accessible and comprehensible.

Patients were encouraged to use mimesis to express their relationship with objects, natural elements and other human beings.

*A positive result of our intervention was tested out by the administered questionnaires and confirmed by the health officials in charge of the division*⁸.

Publication:http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

⁷Project and notes were edited by V. Tinelli.

⁸The answers to the questionnaires are available on the web page of this publication, edited by E. Muscillo who was helped by C. L. Foti. Another part of this same project was edited by K. Medici.

Humanising communication. Hermeneutics of a mystery.

Publication in the press (Aracne editore)

Four wise men investigate the mysterious aspect of human/humanising communication in four works: a place for teaching, a subjective diary, a movie, a transcript of the lessons of a philosopher. The authors in question: Edda Ducci, Etty Hillesum, the Dardenne brothers, Epictetus are united by the thread that binds men who, at all times in all places and under all circumstances, have in their hearts a true passion for man and know how to embody it: their own infusion in the work they create. And on that thread, which is mystery, it is possible to rest, hang on and gain momentum to design one's own being in the present, without fear of failure or hesitations⁹.

A film club to educate to legality.

Venue: "Guicciardini" Comprehensive school,
Rome.

During the exhibition, the projection room was proposed to children aged from 6 to 13, not so much as a physical place, but as a field of action, a temporal extension, a dimension that each viewer was given the opportunity to share with the others but at the same time to "live" in a different way. A shared space in which words and film images were

⁹ Project edited by G. Scaramuzzo, co-authors: M. G. Nocita, G. Fassari, C. Costa.

mixed, thus creating different ways of emotional understanding and participation. In this “image gym” particular attention was given to the selection of some scenes that were considered meaningful for the human and relational aspect that the concept of legality implies - not reduced to the simple “rule of law” - and for a reflection on an education to coexistence both as physical and daily, besides rational, exercise, which cannot be separated from our body and its many communicative potentialities¹⁰.

Publication:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

French and Mimesis.

Experimental workshop on the use of mimesis in the teaching of French.

Venue: Immacolata Language Institute, Monza street, Rome.

The project was carried out with students of upper secondary school. It meant to experience mimesis by using the mimic method of Orazio Costa applied to learning French. The idea came from the study of Anthropology of Gesture by Marcel Jousse and from the belief that language is the expression of the whole being. The aim was to obtain an improvement

¹⁰ Project and notes were edited by G. Fassari; helped by V. Malorni, M. G. Nocita, V. Tinelli.

in learning French, through a more fluid and lively comprehension and expression.

The introduction of mimetic exercises in French Conversation lessons are used many reactions among students: there were arguments regarding the usefulness of the method in view of the school leaving examination, categorical refusal to use the body in ways not traceable to known patterns, but also curiosity, excitement, enjoyment, pleasure, up to a reale motional involvement and the realisation of having felt more, understood more, memorized more thanks to the achieved mimesis. It was a great challenge to starts an unusual path in a school context where little room is left to expression, where the students' evaluation is built on logical-rational performances¹¹.

Documentation:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

“Generazioni”Project (collaboration)

Venue: Columbus hall Roma Tre, Valle Theatre (Rome), La Pergola Theatre (Florence)

A projectled by Riccardo Caporossi involving students from the three state universities in Rome and which was an exceptional educational opportunity to deepen and assimilate complex disciplines that constitute the field of elaboration in the creative processes of contemporary

¹¹Project and notes were edited by Cécile Papillon.

entertainment. A journey of creation, therefore, a path to knowledge, that led to the creation of as how staged at Valle Theatre (Rome), and Pergola Theatre (Florence).

A film titled *L'università entra a Teatro*, documenting the project, was made by Elisa Muscillo:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qu1oCnnuMsI>

Other documents¹²:

<http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ricerca/workin/progetto%20generazioni.pdf>

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_at_i_neffabile.php

Non-formal theatre and non-formal education. Side notes to Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2010.

Venue: Edimburgh (UK).

The Project aimed to describe, through images, the street performer's work in its relational and communicative aspects, in order to highlight those aspects in his/her action that can be used to make the educational activity, whether formal or non-formal, more effective.

Specifically, the project aimed to achieve images that:

1) described how the artist creates the space where he/she can implement his/her action: that includes

¹² The documentation, also including a photoshoot by F. Coltellacci, was edited by F. Arlotti.

space for the actor's theatrical action and space for the audience attending the show;

2) documented the ways in which the artist creates, holds, increases the audience attending his/her show;

3) detected the characteristics of the audience who assists the show, with respect to age, culture, gender, ethnic origin;

4) made it possible to observe the audience's listening, in particular an heterogeneous audience by age and culture of origin, during the action of the artist;

5) detected the procedures through which the artist obtains a reward from the audience for his/her work;

6) made it possible to identify common characteristics to all the shows, and facilitated the attempt of finding a common structure to all the shows regardless of the specific peculiarities of each one;

7) made it possible to start a reflection on what features of the street performer's work can be used in other educational contexts, whether formal or non-formal.

The following photographic sections were made:

- street performers Edinburgh Festival Fringe

- documentation of the communion of feeling that characterises the listening of a heterogeneous public by age and /or manifest different ethnicity

- restitutio

- performative action of an artist

Documentation:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

The creative knowledge of the body: body encounters with naturalistic object as a stimulus to creativity.

Venue: Mazzano Romano Primary School (Roma).

The overall objective of the project was to create a show with the pupils from the third classes in the municipal theatre of Mazzano Romano, through a course as theatre director and body work which also involved parents and teachers, intended as an educational subject throughout the project life cycle. An introductory activity to the use of the body in theatre works, based on relational theatre and on mimetic exercises, was suggested to the pupils. They worked with enthusiasm, and gave life to an artistic product that they felt as their own. The body activity allowed the pupils to manage the staging autonomously, building a semi-professional work. Pupils understood the dialogue that undergoes between an actor and his/her audience, and were able to transmit it on stage: they were able to express lightness, poetry, mystery of mimetic capacity. The relational theatre gave pupils from different classes the opportunity to meet; the work on breath and voice allowed to create a show that communicated to parents and also to the pupils of

*the entire school, making them feel the magic of theatre*¹³.

Documentation:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

Calicanto: a mimetic journey for a poetic body.

Venue: 244° Circolo Didattico Primary School - Marino (Rome).

The workshop was intended for a fourth class of primary school and took place in two-hour meetings every two weeks.

The experience attempted to guide children to discover poetry through mimetic exercises, relational theatre and dance-movement, following the text of Calicanto. Poems involved were by Zamponi and Piumini.

The text was chosen because it combines the study of poetry to that of the body: starting from the use of the body as the first instrument to write poetry, the authors lead us to the discovery of the surrounding reality, which, passing through the inner reality of the poet, is transformed into poetic art.

Children were encouraged to feel their body as an instrument of knowledge to interpret and create words, and got to write their own thoughts and emotions, releasing their creativity.

¹³Project and notes were edited by V. Tinelli.

Pupils created a space of expression in which body, emotions and creativity found a unique language. Each student achieved a personal interpretation of the analysed poems, sharing it with the others; opening up to the possibility of feeling with their body, the children lived simple and complex emotions that modified the relational plans in the class; finding a space in which the body could be released and with held, poetry stimulated in them fantasies that changed their perception of themselves; had the opportunity to be expressed in this new school space¹⁴.

Documentation:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

I express myself reading.

Nati per Leggere meets mimesis for an expressive research in a nursery school.

Venue: Mazzano Romano Nursery school (Rome)

The workshop comes from the desire to offer an experience of reading and listening to stories addressed not to a specific cognitive purpose, but at the pleasure of listening and identification, to get to the expression of emotions.

The Nati per leggere project, promoted by Biblioteche Italiane with the aim of promoting the importance of reading aloud to children from 0 to 6 years old, joins the workshop on mimesis, with the

¹⁴ Project and notes are edited by V. Tinelli.

objective of giving space to the mimetic capacity of children. Children could experience, process and interpret the stories through their body.

The children filled with their attention the space devoted to the reading of stories.

The teachers were involved in the observation of the mimetic act of children, providing them with new teaching tools.

The children could approach the content of books feeling a living part of the narrated story.

The expressive capacity of children could thus live in a space of game shared with their teachers.

The children finally made some creative works with which an exhibition in the Library of Mazzano Romano was set up, and which allowed them to share the experience with their parents, and allowed the project leader to raise awareness in the parents on the value of expressive work. The project was sponsored by the Province of Rome and built in collaboration with the Library of Mazzano Romano and with the invaluable help of Dr. Patrizia Peron and the teachers of Mazzano Romano¹⁵.

Documentation:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

Mimo quindi leggo: mimesis to read and understand

Venue: 244° Circolo Didattico Primary school, Marino (Rome).

¹⁵ Project and notes are edited by V. Tinelli.

The project was inspired by the work started years ago in the Circolo, which experimented with different ways of educational applications of mimesis, and was included in the experiences of philosophy with children and girls and boys called “Il Filo di Sofia”. The Project “Mimo quindi leggo” is to be considered in all respects an emanation of that ‘philosophizing with children’, that has been spreading in schools for years. In our case, that is to say regarding the paths that go under the name of “Il Filo di Sofia”, the learning environment is essential, and it must be philosophical before the projects that come out of it. Philosophical environment indicates a specific attention to human dynamics - and therefore especially communication between pupils and teachers, involving as a consequence institutions and families. This is reflected in a particular way to relate, communicate and educate the others and ourselves¹⁶.

Documentation:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_wor_kin.php/

L2 Learning path through the Pedagogy of Expression

Venue: “Daniele Manin” Comprehensive School, Rome

The project’s objective was to offer a new method of learning a second language through the use of

¹⁶ Project and notes are edited by S. Bacchetta.

mimetic learning. The project was addressed to: students from D. Manin school, from nursery school to secondary school; students from CTP(Centro Territoriale Permanente – state school for adults); teachers of the involved classes, and all the other teachers in the school.

The main objectives for each age group were achieved: an activity of mimetic communication for nursery school; for primary school an experimental expressive activity for the achievement of a better understanding of the text and the consolidation of reading and writing in L2 and learning of reading and writing in L1; for secondary school an experimental expressive activity for the achievement of a better understanding of the text and for the consolidation of reading and writing in L2; for the CTP (level C1) a path of learning, consolidation and deepening of Italian through the expressive reading of classics and, in particular, of L. Pirandello¹⁷.

A documentation video was made by Elisa Muscillo:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahslKBedVBs>

Other documents:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_at_percorsoL2.php

Pedagogy of Expression at Valle Theatre

Venue: Valle Theatre - Rome

¹⁷ The project was carried out under the scientific direction of G. Scaramuzzo and the collaboration and editing of E. Muscillo e V. Tinelli. In the school, the project was coordinated by the Head of training E. Zabeo.

Within the project ARCIPELAGO U – The Theatre of opportunities, where “U” stands for Utopia, which was held at Valle Theatre from 2nd to 11th December during the “Permanenza artistica” by Riccardo Caporossi, MimesisLab presented “Nuovi possibili scenari per l’azione educativa”, an answer from university research to the crisis that marks the present time, event carried out by G. Scaramuzzo. During the evening at Valle Theatre it was possible to present our research in an interactive way, allowing the participants to a live experience of the basic elements.

Documentation¹⁸:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_at_pedagogia.php

Performative dialogues at Bilotti Museum

Venue: Bilotti Museum - Villa Borghese - Rome

A group of women students from the Faculty of Education at Roma Tre University took part in the project, and, under the guidance of experts in different artistic languages (cinema, art, drama), performed workshop activities.

The objective was to provide the students with tools for listening and dialoguing with the work of art, using different perspectives and languages, in order to open to a relationship with the work, becoming in turn creative act. The CorpiParlanti –Installazione

¹⁸ The documentation of the event was edited by F. Arlotti.

vivente e dialogante performance, developed as a result of the work, was presented to the public in the Bilotti Museum on 20th and 22nd December 2011¹⁹.

Documentation:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_at_dialoghiperformativi.php

Dance Theatre Music... Poetry creating University
Venue: Roma Tre University

The proposal arose from the idea to draw on the various forms of artistic expression (dance, theatre, poetry, music, cinema...) in order to reinvent, in the crisis that marks the present time, an educational act which awakens the best human energies and works for the foundation of a coexistence on a human scale. The project was carried out thanks to the collaboration of international artists (dancers, choreographers, actors, directors, musicians, singers ...) who are exclusively dedicated to artistic activity or who, starting from it, have developed educational paths.

A video was made by Maria Vittoria Manzoni.

Documentation:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=fOax609K6bY

¹⁹ At the museum the project was documented and edited by F. Arlotti; with the artistic/didactic collaboration of G. Fassari, N. Magni, F. Boschetti. E. Muscillo and M. Monaco made two videos describing the activities and the performance.

Other documents²⁰:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_attivita.php

Adolescence, violence and services(Collaboration)
Venue: Department of Juvenile Justice (headquarters of Catania, Naples, Turin)

The training course promoted by the Central Institute of Education at the Department of Juvenile Justice at the Ministry of Justice, headed by Dr. Cira Stefanelli, was held in the headquarters of Catania, Naples and Turin. The training course, starting from the assumption that critical situations may bring out more clearly the resources and the criticalities of the organizational functioning of the services, aims to analyse the organizational ways of juvenile services in the interaction with the most extreme violent crimes.

Documentation²¹:

http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/mimesislab/ri_wor kin.php/

²⁰ A video documenting the activity was made by M. V. Manzoni.

²¹ The documentation was edited by E. Muscillo who collaborates to the project.