

Collaborations within Erasmus International Program

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Abstract. The article focuses on university collaborations in terms of organising visual art exhibitions and workshops between our universities and other European art institutions within the frame of Erasmus International program.

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Introduction

The main objectives of the Erasmus+ programme are the improvement of the quality of education in Europe, the development of mobility and cultural links between students from European countries and the EU's neighbouring countries. The programme is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities and access, inclusion, diversity and fairness in all its actions. In order to implement these principles, to facilitate access to funding for a wider range of organisations and to reach more participants with fewer opportunities, the Framework for Inclusion Measures and the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy covering all programme strands have been developed. They have also created the space and the mechanisms for projects that want to work on issues related to inclusion and diversity. The strategy aims to help address the barriers that different target groups may face in accessing such opportunities across Europe and beyond. The following list of potential barriers is non-exhaustive and is intended to help guide action to improve access and reach for the less-advantaged. These barriers may be barriers to their participation either as single factors or in combination: disabilities, health issues, education, culture, social economic and geographical barriers. Priorities of the Erasmus+ Programme - Erasmus+).

Our research on the projects developed and funded through the Erasmus programme may be considered in the cultural, educational and geographical barrier. Art is a powerful bridge. It connects different cultures and promotes peace around the world. Art transcends the everyday barriers of language, politics and geography as a cultural ambassador. It speaks a universal language that can be understood and appreciated by everyone, no matter what their background. The linkages in art context are contemporary, personal, cultural and formal. In education students will use multiple contexts to understand and appreciate how artists incorporate multiple influences and layers of meaning. Collaborating and bridging new practices and perspectives not only enriches the educational system but also the cultural local sector. As an example the lure of new horizons has been a siren call for artists seeking deeper inspiration and new perspectives throughout the rich tapestry of art history. Iconic figures such as Van Gogh, who ventured from the chilly terrains of the Netherlands to the sun-drenched landscapes of southern France,

experienced noticeable transformations in their artistic output after relocating. Techniques, colour palettes, thematic emphases and even emotional depths were often radically altered by the change of location. In addition, their worldviews were broadened and their masterpieces indelibly marked by newfound exposure to contrasting cultures, environments, and aesthetic traditions. More than mere anecdotes, these historical cases offer powerful insights. They reveal how a change of location can reshape and rejuvenate an artist's creative process. By presenting a fresh tableau of sights, sounds and experiences, venturing into a new environment acts as a catalyst, stoking the fires of creativity. It is impossible to underestimate the psychological impact of this change. Immersion in another culture or landscape exposes an artist to new aesthetics, traditions and perspectives (Cunningham).

Action-based research, dialogue art and art-based art research are the main methodologies we have used. Arts-based action research uses art in different ways to explore, intervene, produce knowledge and/or share information. Arts-based research is a mode of formal qualitative inquiry that uses artistic processes for the understanding and articulation of the subjectivity of human experiences. Eisner (1933-2014) was a professor of art and education at the Stanford School of Education and one of America's foremost scholars. It was Eisner who used the term 'art-based research' as the title of a presentation at a conference held at Stanford University in 1993. Later, the concept of art-based research was defined by Shaun McNiff, Professor of Art Therapy at Lesley College, as the planned use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all the various forms of the arts, as a primary way of comprehending and investigating experience by both researchers and the people they involve in their inquiries. It was later additionally defined as the kind of research that uses the arts, in the widest sense of the word, to examine, grasp, portray, and even interrogate human action and experience. (From *Justification to Creative Inquiry* 31).

Extending Eisner's ideas, researchers in Canada developed a discipline they called 'a/r/tography', a hybrid form of practice-based research in education and the arts. A/R/Tography stands for (a)rtmaking, (r)esearching, and (t)eaching. Artists, teachers and creators use this methodology to transform information and the relationship between art, research and theory to inform the public about different topics. For example, Australian artist, art theorist and educator Graeme Sullivan states: "Arts-informed researchers, [artographers] and the like have a similar interest in schools, community and culture, but their focus is on developing the practitioner-researcher capable of imaginative and insightful inquiry". (Graeme).

Methods emerged from the general methodology of research (referred as generally common to the qualitative research paradigm) are: keeping a research journal, document collection and analysis, participant observation recordings, questionnaire surveys, structured and unstructured interviews, and case studies. In our article we will present a few study cases from the Erasmus Projects of the West University of Timisoara and George Enescu National University of Arts, Painting Department, Iași, Romania. These are:

- **Le chanson du Roland Blending Intensive program, Pau, France (Training mobility), 2022/2023 - West University of Timisoara, Romania in partnership with the Unita Alliance.**
- **La Coyotera Taller Estudio art residency program, Morelia, Mexico (Training mobility), 2022- George Enescu National University of Arts, Painting Department, Iași, Romania**

Taking part in Le chanson du Roland Blending Intensive program, Pau, France (Training mobility), 2022/2023.

In 2022/2023 the students of the Faculty of Arts and Design - West University of Timisoara participated from 12 to 16 June 2023 in the Erasmus Intensive Program Rolandopat 2 - Sur le Chemins du Roland, organised within the UNITA Consortium, hosted by Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour (UPPA). The results of the interdisciplinary project between literature, visual arts and applied arts has shown the results in the students' photography exhibition: Alexandra Costea, Gabriel Ban, Tamas Borza, Theodora

Scurtu, Otilia Sfetcu, Mădălina Trofin, Maxim Zaghidullin and Bianca Melian. The exhibition will be open to the public at the Médiathèque Intercommunale André-Labarrère, 10 Pl. Marguerite Laborde, 64000 Pau, France. Coordinators: Claudia Feti and Smaranda Moldovan (West University of Timisoara). Program organisers: Giovanna Hendel and Cecile Rochelois (UPPA). (Figure 1)

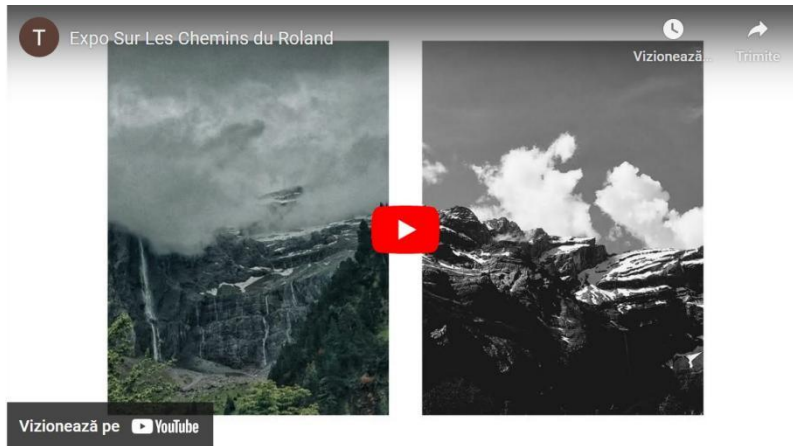


Figure. 1 Image with the video of the works in the exhibition of the students. Courtesy of Tomi Borza (participant) archive.

The program was developed based on the transdisciplinary approach from the two universities. Meeting Giovanna Hendel was a catalyst to adjust an exhibitional concept to other forms of research such as the linguistic one and nonetheless, the topic of mediaeval languages, languages of the cultural heritage, languages that are out of use, and that so few people can understand them. But it was not only the blend with the literature that led to the development of the exhibition, but also the structure of the Blending Intensive Programme which was focused on alternative ways of learning such as recreating the path from the poem *Le Chanson du Roland* into the actual landscape. Together with the other students from the partner universities, Unito - Università degli studi di Torino and under the guidance of Bernard , expert and educator in hiking, we started our journey. Students from visual arts and applied arts were guided to choose medium photography to rewrite the story in a nonverbal way. They were also part of the readings in nature of the passage corresponding to each place visited. In this way oratory, literature and visual arts, history blended together into the landscape between France and Spain.

Taking part in La Coyotera Taller Estudio art residency program, Morelia, Mexico (Training mobility), 2022

In 2022 I took part with a personal art project at La Coyotera Taller Estudio art residency program at the end of which I organised a solo exhibition entitled *Trace* at La Clavijero Cultural Center. My works consisted of a series of figurative paintings on stones which stood for interpreted face features of a few local people, based on a selection of photos done as a result of my research. My intention was to reveal the expressiveness of their portraits and last but not least, I tried to catch a glimpse of their soul. In fact, this is an illusion, because I did nothing but revealing my own soul without doing this one hundred percent consciously.

The pieces of painted rocks have been installed in the gallery in an unconventional way, thus they formed a whole body of works which could eventually breathe.



Figure 2. Trace exhibition, Clavijero Cultural Center, Morelia, Mexico

1.1. Trace exhibition transferred in nature

The artworks lived afterwards another visual experience defined by nature this time which totally changed the overview by redefining them. One can reach to the conclusion that context is very important as it can give the installation an infinite sense of space, causing the sensation that the paintings can merge in nature and become limitless in terms of matter but also energy.



Figure 3. Artworks from Trace exhibition, Umécuaro

Erasmus partnership Iasi, Romania - Morelia, Mexico (Teaching mobility), 2023

The artists Kees Ouwens and Carmen Jacobo organised during their time in Iași a group exhibition entitled *Memoria de los materiales* composed of two captivating installations, along with photography and monotype exhibitions, showcased at apARTE Gallery on December 19, 2023. This activity was possible due concluding an Erasmus partnership between George Enescu National University of Arts, Iasi, Romania and La Coyotera Taller Estudio Art Association, Morelia Mexico, which hosts an international art residency program coordinated by Kees Ouwens and Carmen Jacobo.

1.2. Ceramics workshop

Carmen Jacobo collaborated with students from the Ceramics Department to create a modular ceramics installation featuring approximately 1,500 small rectangular pieces, each kiln-fired and bound with string. Each piece was uniquely individualized through the incorporation of words or specific color patterns. The project was coordinated by Assistant Professor and visual artist Ramona Biciușcă. Following this, the artists conducted a ceramics workshop for the Ceramics and Painting Departments, facilitated by Miss Felicia Balan, a representative of the Erasmus+ international program, which provided an ideal setting for the event. The ceramic pieces were placed in a hole dug in the ground, covered with burning coal, and sealed with a metal lid. After several hours, the pieces were carefully extracted with pliers and placed on a support. While still warm, lines were drawn on the surface with a wooden stick, personalizing each piece and giving it a distinct identity.



Figure 4. Carmen Jacobo organising the ceramics workshop, near Iasi

1.3. Public art intervention

Another fascinating project by the two Mexican artists-in-residence took place in an abandoned building on Ghica-Vodă Street, primarily involving students from the Painting Department. This initiative included several interventions, such as painting the building's walls, windows, and doors, as well as displaying a photography collage in one of the rooms. Various old objects were collected and arranged thoughtfully to reflect the house's history. All activities were carefully documented through professional photography, and local television was invited to conduct interviews with the artists and several students.



Figure 5. Kees Ouwens doing an intervention in the abandoned building, Iasi

1.4. Memoria de los Materiales Exhibition

On December 19th, the apARTE Gallery opened the exhibition titled Memory of Materials, renowned for its complexity. The gallery was divided into two sections: on the left, a ceramics installation by Carmen Jacobo and her students, guided by Assistant Lecturer Ramona Biciușcă, and on the right, an installation featuring found objects by Kees Ouwens. As visitors entered the gallery, they were greeted by a series of photographs on the left, followed by colorful interventions and monotypes on the adjacent wall



Figure 6. Memoria de los Materiales Exhibition, Aparte Art Gallery, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, Iasi.

Conclusion

In the Erasmus projects coordinated by Ioana Palamar there have been several changes in works of art due to the relationship between man and nature and the influence of other cultures on societies. The above-mentioned relationship has led to some changes in the artistic field of various nations, and has created cultural similarities and contrasts in many geographical areas. In the Chanson du Roland project there were also the interactions between nature and students and as well the research on cultural linguistic similarities between the romanian languages.

Both of the projects revealed an outcome on the future development of the participants and the coordinators. Furthermore projects are being developed based on the cultural mapping done previously such as the collaborations mentioned in the study cases.

The Erasmus Collaboration is a great opportunity and a facilitator for research covering a large target of participants and exploring new types of interdisciplinary and transnational encounters that lead of assimilation and amalgamation.

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