

Mediation processes in art education

an ethnomethodological research at the RISS

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ABSTRACT

The present research aims to discuss mediation processes in the art education practices. It analyses how students access and assimilate art knowledge in the learning environment. Furthermore, this research stresses the importance of the mediating elements in the process of transferring knowledge and the values being mobilized in art at a classroom level. To do so, a high-school student group, from 16 to 18 years old, at the Rotterdam International Secondary School was investigated. Using an ethnomethodological approach, the data collected through documental analysis, participant observation and interviews revealed there is a considerable gap between what is proposed by art education theorists, the theoretical framework guiding the school and how art education is performed in its practice. In addition, the findings demonstrate the great importance the mediator carries in the process of approximating students to art, being able to influence the way they perceive, engage in and relate to the subject.

KEYWORDS: Mediation, Art, Education, Ethnomethodology, Art Education

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1. Introduction

Art education has been considered by many theorists a means to provide students with precious opportunities to explore their inner self, their imagination and creativity, their communication skills, their ability to co-create meaning and to relate to their social surroundings (Cannatella, 2015; Jagodzinski, 1991; Sueli, 2003; Throsby; 2013; Vázquez, 1978). However, within the education field, there are unresolved questions surrounding what has been theorized and what has been practiced in the daily classroom activities. Little has been found in literature towards the understanding of the relationship between theory and what has been performed in art education at a classroom level (Davis, 2008; Mitchell, 2015; Power & Klopper, 2011). The understanding of how students access and engage in art involves not only their social context, but the comprehension of how they are being mediated into the subject, and vitally, by whom or what.

The aim of this research is to analyze the processes of mediation between art and students through the investigation of classroom practices at the Rotterdam International Secondary School (RISS). In other words, how they access and apprehend art knowledge. To meet the primary goal of this research, it is necessary to understand how art education is proposed theoretically and how it is performed in the in-class practical activities. Therefore, the theoretical framework which guides the school, along with its practices, were investigated to understand the processes of cultural mediation.

Furthermore, how art teaching and learning is approached, accomplished and measured will be examined to further comprehend how the visual arts educational program is developed at the Rotterdam International Secondary School. Consequently, the analysis consists of unraveling how the activities are conducted and the involvement of the students, observing if they are active or passive participants in the mediation process.

Art education, like many other fields of study that strive to please pragmatic educational demands and aim not solely instrumental educational benefits, assumes an eclectic posture in the search of reasoning and identity (Sullivan, 1993; Roege & Kim, 2013). Thus, this research further investigates why art education is important for this School. I focus on understanding what are the general and specific goals of the art education program and if these goals are accomplished successfully, elucidating what

values are being mobilized in its practice.

The object of this study is to focus on the process of mediation and the subject is the group of students of the Rotterdam International Secondary School (RISS). It is composed by international high-school adolescents, predominantly female students between the ages of 16 and 18. The educational grounds of the RISS are guided by the International Baccalaureate Foundation (IB), a non-profit organization that provides curriculums, certifications and international recognition. Accordingly, in this research, the understanding of how the IB provides this educational system theoretically and its practical procedures are vital to comprehend the mediation between art and students at the RISS.

The concept of mediation has crossed many practices in the cultural, social and educational studies (Lamizet, 1999). Authors have shown its great relevance in the means of approximating audiences to art (Beillerot, 2000; Costa, 2009; Lamizet, 1999). Additionally, theorists state that mediation is also constituted of signifying and meaning making processes between art and audiences (Lamizet, 1999; Martín, 1993; Vygotsky, 1991), being significantly susceptible to the actions of the mediating elements. It is under this perspective that the analysis on mediation processes in art education at the RISS will be conducted, focusing on the actions of the mediator in the social context of the school.

Similarly, art has this very social feature as mediation. Many theorists stress on presenting art and the process of transferring art knowledge as a meaning-making construction, rather than focusing merely on the material work; art can be translated into a process of social interaction (Cannatella, 2015; Benjamin, 2012; Menezes, 2006; Sullivan, 1993). Moreover, it is within art education that individuals fundament their apprehension of the world and the life they live (Duarte, 1953). Therefore, the upcoming chapters will discuss why art is important and why art education matters based on this sociological approach to further understand what values are being mobilized in the art education practices at the RISS.

Critical theorists (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Pearse, 1992; Rolling, 2008; Tubbs, 1996) have worked towards systematizing the interests that outline educational processes, using Habermas' (1971) understandings to categorize the intentions of theories and practices. In this research, Habermas' paradigms are presented to classify the interests articulated in what is being proposed theoretically and what is happening at a classroom

level.

To guide this investigation, an ethnomethodological research will be conducted to examine the art educational scope of the RISS, using three different sources: documental analysis, participant observation and interviews. The method is of great relevance for the outcomes of this research as it is an appropriate way to comprehend the social nuances, within theoretical and practical means, of how art education is conceived and implemented at the RISS. With documental analysis, the aim is to understand what is the theoretical framework conducting the practice of art education and what are the goals of their art education program. Through participant observation, it was possible to verify how the mediation processes in art education are unfolded in daily practices, focusing on the bonds created between the students and art in the learning environment. Moreover, by interviewing key actors in the education process – the teacher, students and members of the IB foundation - it was possible to analyze what is the importance of art education at the RISS, the goals and the relationship between these elements in the mediation process was performed. Finally, all three data sources are triangulated to compare patterns and recurrences to reveal the main findings of this research. Throughout the description of the findings, Habermas' (1971) paradigm is highly present to categorize what is being mobilized in art education at the RISS.

This research is structured in four subsequent chapters. Chapter two presents literature review, exposing the ideas of theorists regarding mediation, the importance of art and art education within a sociological perspective. Chapter three provides a further understanding of the methods used in this research, extending the concept of ethnomethodology and explaining the relevance of the chosen data collection sources. Chapter four reveals the findings organized per source, then the triangulation of the results to present the main findings. Lastly, chapter five concludes this analysis giving a retrospective view of the research and the results compilation.

2. Theory and previous research

A noticeable absence of previous research in the practice of visual art education was identified while trying to collect former study cases within the field. In agreement to other authors (Davis, 2008; Mitchell, 2015), it was difficult to find publications relating theory and practice of the discipline. Generally, there is a broad attention given to research in art education discussing the importance of its implementation in schools; however, “there has been a relatively limited focused engagement in the complexities of *how* art education occurs in classrooms on an everyday basis” (Mitchell, 2015, p. 3). To align the main discussion points of this research – mediation, art and art education - it is necessary to understand and expand such concepts. It is important to further understand the social context in which audiences facing culture are inserted into, in this case the students from the Rotterdam International Secondary School (RISS).

2.1. Mediation

Cultural mediation is understood as “one of the several relationships that are characterized by the individual’s approximation with spaces, objects, works and artefacts in the actions of mediators” (Pillotto & Bonh, 2014, p. 292). When addressing this theme, it is necessary to highlight the key concept that underlies this process: the mediation path created for the construction of these bonds that lead to effective learning (Pillotto & Bonh, 2014).

The term seeks to explicitly bring the notion of accessibility, and for the process of cultural mediation to take place it is important to have a cultural production, such as an artwork or a production, and an audience (Costa, 2009, p. 5). Additionally, Beillerot (2000) defines cultural mediation as the set of actions aimed at reducing the distance and straightening connections between the cultural object and the audience. Almeida (2008) complements the idea giving three different perspectives on mediation. Firstly, it represents the binding of an object and a subject; secondly, mediation can be the negotiation of meaning attributed by individuals to different objects; and lastly, it plays a transforming role, creating meanings from individual actions upon socio-historical objects.

According to Martín (1993), when defining cultural mediation, it is essential to understand its communicative nature - its process has a meaning making character rather than merely being reduced to process of circling information. Vitrally, according to the

author, in the cultural mediation process, the receiver is not simply decoding what the sender has deposited in the message, but he is also co-producing what is being articulated. The mediator assumes a position of removing the obstructions between the mediated elements (Martín, 1993) - in this research, the students and art - offering opportunities of a clearer access, orienting their way and influencing them into this meaning-making process. In addition, as presented by Martín (1993), culture can be placed as instrumental mediator of audiences; it can be attributed as a tool of social transformation, appreciation and insertion of the individual in the society. It is precisely the educational, social and communicative character that cultural mediation carries that will be further analyzed in the proposed methods of this research. In the art classes in the RISS, the students are stimulated by symbols that unfold in a reflective medium of what has been presented to them and they apprehend art knowledge through this process. These meaning-making process is thoroughly mediated by the teacher, influencing the way students comprehend, value, appreciate and relate to art.

To mediate in the art educational context, thus, is to act as an intermediary element. It may be articulated by a wide range of actors and elements, from teachers to cultural agents; from printed flyers, text books to museum brochures that introduce audiences to a specific cultural universe (Almeida, 2008). The practice refers to an indirect function (Beillerot, 2000) that approximates individuals to art. Mediation comes to act as a bridge between these two elements, working not merely as a distributor of knowledge but as an intermediary to build an environment for individuals to interact with knowledge and orient how they interact with the proposed content. This is key to understand the apprehension of art education by the students at the RISS as the processes of mediation, vitally involving interaction with the mediator, define how they will assimilate knowledge in the subject.

Theorists have also stated that the mediation process is a complex web of symbolic interaction between individuals and the environment (Martín, 1993; Vygotsky, 1991). The way in which the audiences engage in the environment is directly related to their set of livings: their social class, religion, the place where they live or lived, age (Martín, 1993). These social elements are expressed in individual actions, which can be rooted in collective cultural dimensions. Therefore, the way the students react and interact facing art depends not only on their individual settings, but on a collective social dynamic,

including the interaction with the teacher and among the students themselves that could be seen during the in-class activities during the art classes at the RISS. Martín (1993) states that individuals reinterpret all the stimuli presented to them based on their own experience and knowledge. They are influenced by everything around them: their historical-social context, the people with whom they get involved, their religion, their neighborhood, their school, their work place. This demonstrates the interference in various social, educational, political and cultural factors, which unfolds in the processes of interaction - in other words, shows the interferences in the mediation processes. Furthermore, it incites the way that the students at the RISS relate to the social dynamics in and outside of the class influence in their apprehension, engagement and appreciation of art.

In Vygotsky's (1991) historical-cultural theory, the concept of mediation occupies a prominent place in one's personal development. The theory states that human development occurs through the process in which the world becomes meaningful for the self - in other words, human development proceeds from meaning making of their surroundings (Silva, 2009). This individual becomes a cultural being through the interactions with others; demonstrates that the relationship of individuals with the world is not a direct process but rather essentially mediated, thus requiring the presence of a mediating element (Silva, 2009. p. 1). In the case of this research, the mediating element is the art teacher, whom has enormous influence in the way students learn, relate to and perceive art.

Lamizet (1999) contributes to this social perspective of mediation. To him, mediation represents the “essential social imperative of the dialectic between the singular and collective forms of expression and its representation in symbolic forms” (p. 9). It is through mediation that the constitution of the cultural forms give sense of belonging and sociability. In other words, the mediation process gives the opportunity for the students to assign meaning to the cultural objects through individual and collective associations. This emphasized how cultural mediation is largely a result of social constructions, dependent on its social context and the action of the mediators who guide the process.

This relates to the interaction between students and art in the sense that whoever is relating to these cultural forms not only is considered an individual who passively receives these stimuli, but is also an individual capable of participating in the meaning

making process of art. This is identified in Martín (1993) when he argues about the importance of shifting debates from media to mediation: rather than discussing the cultural forms, the efforts should primarily be on how they are presented. The pivotal point of the investigation should be the processes of mediation and how the receptor is mediated rather than the content of the art piece. According to the author, the reception process is mediated by routine procedures that are rooted within a social and cultural context of individuals receiving and relating to the art work. These practices are constantly permeating the interpretations that students make of the content present in the range of media they are in contact with (Ribeiro & Tuzzo, 2013). This assumes that the students at the RISS, instead of merely passive elements in the social interactional process, are rather active elements in the mediation process.

Therefore, mediation is present to the extent that individuals are constituted in society, in relation to other elements and in relation to the social structure forms (Martinelli, 2003). One can then verify the active human character as it relates to culture, thus proposing a participatory and re-significating scenario. Martín (1993) reaffirms this theory, already making a direct relationship with art. He stresses that one's relationship with art is no longer the access and appreciation of mechanical figurative elements in the art sphere, but the interpretation of themes, which testifies the change of social structures, suggesting new signifying ways of perceiving. The world today includes the artistic participation of individuals not only as spectators, but also as actors, for the concept of beauty in the work of art is replaced by the desire to signify.

Indeed, in the process of mediation, not only it is important to consider the individual in his social context and his active character, but how the subject in matter is being mediated and, vitally, by whom or what. Eglinton (2003) states that the mediator plays a fundamental role in the art education process, being actively responsible for the level of participation in the art-based dialog, creating an engaging and motivating setting for the students; implementing and developing the art-based experience. Teachers are fundamental to establish an appropriate learning environment and to incite the student's desire for knowledge. In addition, mediators may contribute to "modelling the kinds of questions which lead to greater understanding, they may also render insightful evaluative judgments" (Houser, 1991, p. 36).

In the case of art education, according to Michell (2015), teachers tend to be active in the relationship with students, “engaging with artworks and with students in the creation of artworks and their interpretation. (...) moving around the classroom, working with materials, demonstrating, conversing individually and in groups with students and managing the active space of the classroom” (p. 8). Although the transferring of knowledge and skills in the daily practices may be exposed explicitly, according to the author, frequently the knowledge orienting the practice remains at a “tacit level, embodied in practice” (p.8), being articulated in the social scope, whether from teacher to students or among students themselves.

In addition, assuming teachers already have the educational background to sustain their own practices portraying and elaborating “if not explicit, set of beliefs about why their practices make sense, they must already possess some ‘theory’ that serves to explain and direct their conduct” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 111). This suggests that to understand the processes of mediation between students and art, it is vital to analyze the theoretical references guiding the educational practitioner. As confirmed by Carr & Kemmis (1986) “the very identification of an educational practice depends on understanding the framework of thought that makes it count as a practice of that sort” (p. 111).

In this perspective, we define mediation as an essential process that approximates art and individuals and in a larger case, audiences; in this research, the students of the RISS. The contributions of the mentioned theories are positioning the individuals as symbolic producers: the students are not only receivers of messages, stimulations and information - they become active audiences within the scope they are inserted, authoring codes and assigning meanings to these impulses, influenced and guided by the mediator. It is based on this active audience’s perspective that we will understand the processes of mediation between the RISS students and art. The focus is towards the actions of the mediator, which are extremely important to determine the development of this process, as well as the grounded theories that orient their practices.

2.2. Art education

Many theorists evoke a sociological perspective of art education (Cannatella, 2015; Benjamin, 2012; Menezes, 2006; Sullivan, 1993) projecting the processes of transferring knowledge into sensitive learning and individual development. However, art education, similarly to other subjects that has difficulties to meet pragmatic, instrumental and objective educational demands, strives to present elements in its process to prove its purpose (Sullivan, 1993; Roege & Kim, 2013). To further articulate these concepts, it is important to understand why art is chosen as a subject of interest of the school. That is, why is art important? Why does art education matter?

2.2.1. Why is art important?

The process of art making brings together complex processes in which individuals synthesize in practical activities a great range of elements of their experience (Silva et al., 2010). The process of selecting, interpreting, reforming and acting shows how one thinks, how one feels, and how one sees. According to Albinati (2008), a work of art is not the representation of a thing, but the representation of the relationship of the artist to that thing and “the more one advances in art, the more one knows and demonstrates self-confidence, independence, communication and social adaptation” (p. 4). Vázquez (1978) adds that the artistic creation corresponds, therefore, to a complex web signifying intermediate bonds: the needs of expression of mankind in a given context. Precisely because it is the reality of an individual, situated in a specific, historical and particular context, and it is through art that one recognizes and constructs their world.

Every identification that individuals create with art enables the presentation of a specific reality of his environment as an essential condition for the understanding of himself (Barros & Gasparin, 2009, p. 4). This relationship between man and his own creations shows artistic consciousness as a process of human development that encompasses the translation of one’s own expression. According to the authors, this is mainly because in the process of creation and construction of artistic forms, individuals expose their great power of signifying and representing, whether to express the collective universe of social relationships or to represent the universe understood by the individual mind.

Vygotsky (2001) considers that art is resultant of human labor: the outflow of the

intellectual and physical forces which are stimulated in one's mind. Individuals exteriorize and materialize their thoughts into art, reacting upon the influences of the world and their own view of this reflective relationship. Human efforts are evidenced in art in an aesthetic perspective of the consolidation of human life; therefore, art corresponds to the individual and the social manifestations that express the social dynamics. To him, art is an aesthetic representation of the rational mind; therefore, to understand art one must be willing to reach into themselves and recognize themselves through the expressive and creative process.

Cannatella (2015) suggests that art expresses “our entire personality and our entire feeling and thinking of the individual and society, the landscape and the lives that people lead” (p. vii). He states that the materialization of this expression – theatre, music, literature, visual arts – is socially beneficial because they are cultural productions “of immense ethical importance, the way the arts perpetuate, enrich and transform the common good in life” (p. vii). Indeed, art exceeds the concept of materializing expressions – it should be understood as a social phenomenon. According to Fischer (1963), art can be considered as a substitute for life, equilibrating individuals with the surrounding environment. He defends that art contains a fractional recognition of human nature and their needs. Since a permanent stability between individuals and the world cannot be predicted, the author suggests that art is not only necessary but also that art will always be necessary.

Art gives dimension to human expression. At the same time, where there is a producer, there is a spectator, a receiver. One has to relate to the work of art - each with its symbolic singularity, individual or collective - and extract meanings from what is seen, felt and exposed. Fischer (1963, p. 13) proposes that art is the indispensable mean for the merging process of the individual with the whole. It reflects the infinite human capacity for association, for the circulation of experiences and ideas.

Benjamin (2012) understands art as this very social production, which is the reflection of the way in which the sensory perception of individuals is organized. The artistic creation corresponds to the man's need for expression. Now, the relationship between the productive individual and those who are exposed to the production - the receivers - is interdependent. Art, therefore, is collective construction; In which its

structure consolidates with the interaction of the creator and the receiver. In conclusion, art can be translated by social meanings and practices. Jan Jagodzinski (1991) states that we should examine art as

signifying systems, as practices of representation, not as the production of beautiful things evoking beautiful feelings. Art-texts produce meanings and positions from which those meanings are consumed. If we replace production for creation, then we can begin to get at the social conditions; if we replace consumption for reception we can begin to politicize the act of seeing. The entire syllabus changes when we see art as a form of social practice (p. 149).

2.2.2. Why does art education matter?

In the process of art education, Melo & Tosta (2008, p. 55) state that two movements are carried out. First, in which the mediation between the social setting, the articulated practice and the individuals is constituted. So, in the case of this research, the art class environment at the RISS, the students and teachers and the art practice. According to the authors, it is in this movement that the foundation of the individual and collective mindset is formed by this mediated interaction. The second moment of the art education process, according to the authors, is characterized by the mediation process between the word and the image in relation to individual and social assimilation and the possibility that each one has to constitute themselves as individual beings, to re-elaborate by producing new symbols, revealing how education is involved in the contrast between the individual and social relationships. This means that only because individuals relate to their social environment they are able to signify (individually and collectively) stimuli that are presented to them to therefore carry on the historical process of culture and create new symbols. In this respect, exploring the symbolic power of human beings, artistic creation is represented by one's actions based on the experience and interpretation of the social being.

The art learning process happens in the social context – therefore, it is necessary to go further than merely consider knowledge acquisition as a central goal (Sullivan, 1993), it is necessary to consider the social contributions of the process of art education. Furthermore, Menezes (2006) states that art education is performed through the

connection between emotional and intellectual capacities, which allows the unity between human existence and art. In this sense, art reveals an educational and transforming function of valuing sensitive knowledge, aggregating the dimensions of mankind. According to the author, through art education, one expresses values and ideas and discovers the creative self, giving forms and expression to our feelings and thoughts. therefore, what drives education is the possibility to provide artistic instruments that promote the development of human expression, which legitimates the construction of one's personality and sensitivity.

As a mediator element of this process of interaction, schools stand in a privileged place of cultural construction and reproduction, fulfilling the role of weaving the necessary relations of knowledge, as a bridge between the students and the artistic world (Silva et al., 2010). It is within the educational context that we will understand further in this research how art is being mediated among the students to identify not only the processes of learning, but what is mobilized as key values in art education.

One of the goals of art education is to provide students with a cultural balanced experience, presenting them to different artistic expressions, both in theory and practice, which can lead to sensitive personal growth (Sousa, 2003). According to the author, art education can dialogue with other school and life subjects, being an interdisciplinary learning process. Furthermore, the theorist suggests that art education may lead students to contact the real essence of art and to construct humanistic individuals, guiding their ethical and moral values. In that matter, art education should not be discussed solely by its cognitive power, but primarily by its sensitive and creative power. To complement this idea, Houser (1991) adds that “in the visual arts, the process of creating, analyzing, and evaluating in collaboration with others stimulates the development of higher psychological functions in the construction of related meaning” (p. 34).

The practice of art education, from this sociological approach, should relate to the whole spectrum of the student's life – there shall not be limits between art, one's social context and cultural origin (Sueli, 2003). That being anticipated, educators should not ignore the individual and social environment involving the learning process. The author proposes that educating towards a critical understanding of arts and culture is to be aware of the power of representations, texts and images in the production of identities, which implies understanding the persuasive force of art, in the sense of creating and reinforcing

representations that we have as individuals and as collective identity.

The benefits of art education identified by Throsby (2013) are abundant and based on social development, leaning towards constructing “citizens of tomorrow” (p.184). He states that “simple enjoyment of creative and expressive activity; freedom for uninhibited self-expression; self-discovery; skill development for its own sake” (p.184) are individual benefits that can be transformed into social and collective benefits, as art education also “social interaction, greater tolerance and understanding of others, enhanced capacity for cooperation and working in groups” (p. 184). Throsby (2013) also comments on the influence of art education as an interdisciplinary matter, impacting on the student’s performance in other school subjects.

The replications of art education reflected on society, according to Throsby (2013), can be noticed as the encouragement of creativity and the expansion of creative skills in students. It has “an economic payoff both directly, through raising productivity in the future creative workforce, and indirectly, via the diffusion of creativity through the economy. [...] For example, the arts fulfil an important role as a locus for social criticism, a role that is enhanced by arts education which instills in students an appreciation of the many ways in which art holds up a mirror to our society” (p. 185).

Progress in art education takes place when student’s “personal perceptions, thoughts, actions and articulations, their responses, experiences and awareness in this or that way in accordance to the required art exercise” (Cannatella, 2015, p. 15). This means that an art educational program should have as a premise that every student is different and should have their individuality and personal character traits respected. According to the author, without art education the experience of art is not relatable to the student, and therefore one may not create the symbolic web of meanings within the context.

From a more objective perspective, art education may also promote the learning of skills and techniques. However, as the arts experience its educational potentiality, it becomes intertwined in life (Burnard & Hennessy, 2006). More than the practical learning of skills, art should be perceived in its social value. According to the authors, students are not being taught to become artists as much as they are learning that the arts may help them to engage with life; “this means that we need to reflect less on the art than on the life it evokes” (p.13).

The focus of this research is to understand the paths that art education undertake

at the RISS and how art knowledge, both in theory and practice, is mediated within the students. In addition, this investigation presents the values in art education being articulated in-class, categorizing these understandings in educational orientations presented in the following section, and analyzing through the proposed methods what is being mostly emphasized.

2.2.3. Three paradigms

To further analyze on how the processes of mediation of the art educational program at the Rotterdam International Secondary School are grounded, three paradigms of knowledge devised by Habermas' (1971) critical theory are used to structure forms of transferring knowledge in theoretical and practical procedures - also known as 'knowledge-constitutive interests'. Arising in the Frankfurt School, critical theories intend to emancipate and enlighten individuals establishing this structure, bringing awareness of "hidden coercion", thus positioning them as empowered constituents of society: capable of truly distinguishing their interests (Geuss, 1981. p. 55). For Habermas (1971), rather than a pure intellectual outcome, knowledge is a product of human activity that is driven by intrinsic desires and interests, thus, the categorization of the three paradigms evidences the interests that shape the knowledge transference process in human activity (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). As further presented by Pearse (1992), they embody different cognitive procedures with specific values, objectives and they evidence what are the intentions in educational procedures. The choice of using these categories lies on its convergence with the art theorists mentioned in the theory section, who stress on the importance of art education for enlightenment and self-development, as well as its social value. In addition, this social perspective conflues with theories of mediation, highlighting the importance of the interaction among students and their social environment to construct knowledge. These three paradigms will contribute to distinguish in which direction the art educational processes are oriented and what are the main interests of the classes at the RISS.

Firstly, the empirical-analytic paradigm suggests the transferring of technical knowledge to be transformed into skills and practical practices. The paradigm embraces the technical benefits that will reflect the instrumental action, and "it aims to dominate nature and is characterized by measurement and calculation rather than by intersubjective

relations” (Tubbs, 1996, p. 42). Under art education, this orientation is focused more on the product, emphasizing facts and practices (Pearse, 1992); therefore, placing art education in an instrumental perspective.

Secondly, the interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm proposes a more interpretive orientation of the constitution of the learning process, where the learners are constructing meaning of their social worlds (Pearse, 1992). It attempts to perceive reality “with regard to possible intersubjectivity of action-orienting mutual understanding” (Habermas 1971, p. 195). That is, the interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm is “predisposed towards the idea of reconciling people to their existing social reality” (Carr & Kemmis 1986, p. 98). Leading this approach to art education, the focus is on a more holistic perspective of transferring knowledge, focusing on how the student dialogues with art and the cultural elements presented to him. The interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm thus places art as a “system of communication” (Rolling, 2008, p. 3).

Finally, the critical-theoretical paradigm presents a reflective character, where students “analyze and transform themselves and their social world” (Pearse, 1992, p. 245). This paradigm has as its focus the emancipation, human development and active self-enlightenment (Tubbs, 1996) through critical thinking, focusing on the symbolic interaction of students and their social environment – and confirming that the art educational process is socially charged (Pearse, 1992). In this approach, art is given the role to empower students and arise “critical consciousness about a visual world linked inextricably to a social world” (Pearse, 1992, p. 245). It is a form to unite theory and practice, wherein students are knowledgeable, autonomous and critical, and at the same time, thrives to transform the social relationships (Tubbs, 1996). According to Carr & Kemmis (1986, p. 144) the critical-theoretical paradigm is a value wherein the “enlightenment of actors comes to bear directly in their transformed social action”. According to the authors, the students’ emancipation comes from a reflective process of the combination of theory and practice.

Therefore, the empirical-analytic paradigm sets art as a “system of production”, valuing practical learning; the interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm places art as a “system of communication”, valuing the expression of oneself; and the critical-theoretical paradigm defines art as a “system of reflection”, valuing empowerment of the students (Rolling, 2008, p. 3).

According to Habermas (1971), the mediation between theory and practice is understood when distinguishing these three orientations. Thus, they will contribute to rationalize in what terms art education is practiced in the Rotterdam International Secondary School. The analysis is not to be bounded to a single paradigm; rather, the paradigms categorize how the practices being prioritized based on Habermas's (1971) theory to better understand what is being mobilized in the art education process at RISS.

3. Methods and data

To understand the processes of mediation between students and the arts at the Rotterdam International Secondary School, the methodology chosen for this research was ethnomethodology. It is fundamental to comprehend this method and its applications to further understand how the research was conducted. The methodology is of great relevance to the research as it will access in depth information about the mediation processes through the triangulation of three data collection sources: participant observation, interviews and document analysis.

3.1. Method

Ethnomethodology is a method that emerged in anthropology, sharing also heritages in sociology (Bodgan & Bilken, 1982; Gullion, 2016) and it comes to shape the qualitative research into a situational, societal analysis. In priority, it has a descriptive and observational character, focusing on the qualitative elucidation of the social environment (Bodgan & Bilken, 1982). According to Coulon (1995), ethnomethodology is a perspective of research using situational elements to apprehend in an empirical way how we organize our social activities. It is a method that intends to be “closer to the common realities of social life” (p. 17) to relate and analyze the experience more meticulously.

This method has a major focus on practical issues, as stressed by Garfinkel (1967). Ethnomethodological studies intend to “treat practical activities, practical circumstances, and practical sociological reasoning as topics of empirical study, and by paying to the most commonplace activities of daily life the attention usually accorded to extraordinary events, seek to learn about them as phenomena in their right” (p. 1).

Ethnographic research intends to descriptively unfold a certain scene through an in-depth understanding of a specific culture (Gullion, 2016) in which each member collectively “create and maintain a sense of order and intelligibility of social life” (ten Have, 2004, p. 17). Bodgan & Bilken (1982) suggest some basic characteristics that guide qualitative research, which represent a great support for ethnographic procedures. As a constant, according to the authors, through an intensive fieldwork, ethnographic research has the natural social environment as a direct data source and the researcher as its main instrument of data collection. The data collected is largely descriptive and all of the data

should be considered important - including transcripts of interviews, observation field notes, testimonies, as well as other types of documents that communicate valuable information to legitimize the inquiry. According to the authors, the concern with the process is much greater than with the product - the researcher's interest is portraying how particular issues manifests themselves in everyday activities and interactions.

Spradley (1980) claims that ethnography is considered a description of a system of cultural meanings of a particular group, attributing a rather elementary perspective to the concept. In the educational field, the focus of the ethnographer is the process of drawing from the reality lived in the daily teaching and learning practices, the ways of interpreting life, seeking towards a deeper understanding of all the variables it presents - whether in school or other places where the learning processes are effective (Rivero, 2004). It is through ethnomethodology that we will be able to observe the important actors in the art education context, analyzing their actions and interactions, their discourses, productions, opinions, values and visions.

Ethnography is, thus, an immersive experience in a certain scenario or situation, a specific “setting in which social interactions occur” (Gullion, 2016, p. 3). The focus of the researcher is to be attentive to the meaning people give to particular things in their social life – in other words, the symbolic interaction of the elements in their social environment. Within this method, there is always an attempt to capture the way individuals perceive the object of research (Bodgan & Bilken, 1982) – in the case of this thesis, the way students relate to art and the processes of mediation that permeate the art classes. According to Bodgan & Bilken (1982), data analysis tends to follow an inductive and interpretational process. At Rotterdam International Secondary School, the focus is the way students relate daily to art through the processes of mediation. This ethnographic research involves the description of data obtained through the direct contact with the school environment. The process is more emphasized than the product - in other words, rather than analyzing the artistic production, I analyze the art learning process. Therefore, this research is more concerned with portraying the perspective of the participants facing the facts that involve the social context. In addition, using ethnography in the art educational context can contribute to discover relationship degrees as diverse as power relations, the impacts of policies and organizational culture (Atkins & Wallace, 2012).

Thus, in confluence with the ideas presented by Mattos and Castro (2011), the research in the social context of the RISS is, firstly, an ethnomethodological work to exercise the analysis of a holistic perspective of culture – where culture is seen not merely as a reflection of the structural forces of society but as a system of mediating meanings between social structures and human actions and interaction. Secondly, the research aims to reveal the functions of the social actors (students, teachers and other actors involved in the learning process), possible modifiers of social structure, with an active and dynamic participation. Thirdly, the research works towards revealing degrees of relationships and interactions between these actors.

Therefore, the ethnographic analysis of the daily life of the school, in combination with document analysis and in-depth interviews focusing on the mediation processes of art education, allowed to elaborate on different perspectives about the learning environment. The analysis will draw meaning from the actions of the teachers and the students, the multiple forms and the relations that are constructed and/or taken from the proposed educational guides used to determine the teacher's practices, as well as the much more accurate understanding of the way by which the student apprehends the systematization of art knowledge (Rivero, 2004).

3.2. Data collection and coding system

In this investigation, three different data collection sources were chosen and additionally triangulated: document analysis, participant observation and interviews.

Firstly, to verify the theoretical approach in art education performed by the Rotterdam International Secondary School, an analysis of an official document provided by the school, the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), was conducted. Documental analysis requires examination and interpretation of the sources to “elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge” (Glenn A. Bowen, 2009, p.27). This is an important step in this research process to determine the theoretical instances which guide the art education practices. In this analysis, I highlight the findings in the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017) and associate them with Habermas' (1971) critical theory and its application to the arts proposed by Pearce (1992), to understand what is being prioritized in the art education program. Furthermore, the findings of the documental

analysis will be compared to the practical development, that is, the daily practices of the art program.

Secondly, I include an analysis of documents extracted from the students' progress book (or progress portfolio): an individual big book, with white thick pages where the students register their ideas, drawings, explore different techniques and write about different artists and artistic genres. As stated by Bauer & Gaskell (2000), while the images and texts in the documents can and do portray signifying symbols that hold meaning to them, they are not autonomous: they are directly connected to the signifier or the producer, in this case, the student. In this section, I attempt to understand what themes are being articulated by the students in the book, the meaning-construction process, as well as what is being valued such as technique, critical writing and comparative skills.

Thirdly, throughout March and April of 2017, I attended 10 art classes at the RISS with the high school group (grade 11 and 12) from the International Baccalaureate program (IB), performing ethnographic participant observation for a total of 17 hours. The chosen high school group for this research consists of 11 international students from 16 to 18 years old and they attend to the visual art classes 3 times a week. As suggested by Atkins & Wallace (2012), I participated in the cultural and social environment of the group being studied (the art classes at RISS) as I interpreted meaning from their actions and activities. The observation field notes, rather than just a diary, are a registry of the observation of the processes that are relevant to my research and the notes were transcribed into interpretative text. The observation field notes contribute to unravel the practices of art education at RISS to understand the processes of mediation between art and the students. In addition, the findings reveal if the theories of art education and the Visual Arts Course Guide are indeed guiding the art program and what values in art are being mobilized in class among the students.

Lastly, five semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in this research with the main actors to the related theme: five female students (one individual interview and two joint interviews) between 16-18 years old, the art teacher and a joint interview with the curriculum manager of the Visual Arts Course Guide of the International Baccalaureate program and curriculum manager of the Theory of Knowledge. The IB members were approached to understand what are the general and formal theoretical orientations for the learning processes of the school focusing on art and how they

implement and maintain these procedures. Along with the art teacher, I analyze more carefully the learning procedures involving her, the students and art and how she incorporates theoretically and practically what is proposed by the course syllabus. With the students, I attempt to understand how the art learning process is being assimilated and what they value when it comes to art education. Out of the 11 students, nine were female; and given their larger presence and their constancy of attendance, five were selected through a simple random sampling to be interviewed. The purpose of collecting this data is to explore the different views on art education, rather than counting their opinions (Bauer & Gaskell, 2011). As mentioned by Atkins & Wallace (2012), interviewing in educational research provides an expressive range of information, “including factual data, views and opinions, personal narratives and histories, which makes them useful as a means of answering a wide range of research questions” (p.85).

A coding system was established to analyze all three data sources and to define the patterns and confluences between theory and practice in the art education program at the RISS and to systematically organize the findings into topics. Coding systems identify the subject of the data that is being analyzed (Gibbs, 2007). According to the author, the coding process involves recognizing parts of data - such as passages of documents, parts of interview transcripts and key phrases of observation field notes - and categorizing them into codes to indicate similarity. Thus, it allows the research to follow an organized, structured analysis and results in quantitative tables representing the constancy of the codes.

To code the collected data, a qualitative computer software, Atlas.ti, was used and applied to code the three different sources to examine the patterns and recurrences. The codes give direction to the analytical process on the data focusing on the interests of the research (Gibbs, 2007). Therefore, the main coding categories were determined following the three paradigms of Habermas (1971), already mentioned in the previous chapter, which will categorize what is being proposed, valued, promoted and practiced in art education at the Rotterdam International Secondary School (RISS). The official documents from the (RISS) provided a basis to expand the coding system into subcategories, as they elucidate how the art programs at the school should be performed. Firstly, the Empirical-Analytic category, which includes a range of technical and practical skills, objectively represented by the subcategory ‘practical skills’; secondly, the

Interpretive-hermeneutic category, which encompasses values in a social spectrum, therefore represented by the subcategories ‘communication’ and ‘sociability’; lastly, the Critical-theoretical category, which refers to self-development and the empowerment of the students, represented by the sub-categories ‘creativity’, ‘critical-thinking’, ‘engagement in art’, ‘moral values-individual development’, ‘theoretical knowledge’. Furthermore, as identified throughout the research, the teacher plays a fundamental role in the process of mediation between art and students. Therefore, a fourth code thematically organized the theoretical expectations and the practices of the mediator, devised in four different subcategories: ‘disciplinary’, ‘empowering’, ‘motivational’ and ‘resource of technique’. The subcategories are descriptive key-words of the representative theme. The categories and subcategories established for the coding system were organized according to the following table.

The difference in quantity of subcategories is related to the degree of subjectivity of each categorial theme. For instance, the Empirical-analytic paradigm only contains one subcategory as it is objectively related to technical competences while the Critical-theoretical paradigm is identified in a greater range of nuances of the educational process. This, however, should not be perceived as an overvalue in one category in detriment of other, rather it translates the possibilities in which these paradigms may be articulated.

Finally, the triangulation of all three data sources (observation, interview and documental analysis) provides ‘a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility’ (Eisner, 1991, p. 110), as it results on the analysis of different perspectives on the same problematics.

Table 1: Coding System

CODING SYSTEM	
Categories	Subcategories
Empirical-analytic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical Skills
Interpretive-hermeneutic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociability • Communication
Critical-theoretical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral values • Creativity • Engagement in art • Critical-thinking • Theoretical Knowledge
Mediator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary • Empowering • Motivational • Resourcefulness - Technique

4. Findings

The following findings are organized per source, following the methods mentioned in the previous chapter. The analysis of three different data collection sources was performed expecting to unravel the questions surrounding this research. Firstly, the document analysis of the Visual Arts Course Guide, provided by the International Baccalaureate program (IB), reveals the theoretical orientations that sustain the art classes and the general and specific aims of the art program. Secondly, the progress book analysis seeks understanding the values in art are articulated by the students during the classes. Thirdly, the observations unfold the processes of mediation in the daily practical activities and unravels the emphasis given to the practices, whether in social, technical or cognitive values. Lastly, the interviews contribute to personally comprehend the relationship between the important actors in the art mediation process and the aforementioned emphasis. All of the findings were coded following the coding system and related to the three paradigms of transferring of knowledge categorized by Habermas (1971), and further triangulated to cluster the main recurrences and vital discussion points.

4.1.Document Analysis: The Visual Arts Course Guide

The RISS adopts the International Baccalaureate (IB) as an official guidance to all its educational practices. According to their Website, the IB is a “non-profit educational foundation” and their program offers an international syllabus and a high quality educational guidance (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2005 – 2017), crediting the international schools that implement this program with the IB certification. Certifying schools in over 140 countries, the foundation proposes flexible educational programs that are adaptable to different national educational requirements.

As stated in the Website, the IB program has as its mission to “create a better world through education”. The program aims to develop in the students “intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills needed to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world” (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2005 – 2017). The chosen document for this analysis was the official Visual Arts Course Guide (2017) elaborated by the International Baccalaureate. The main goal of this examination was to find what is the theoretical framework that guides the visual arts classes, the practical instructions and

the goals that outline the art education program of the school. Moreover, it was possible to verify what processes of mediation in art education were proposed in these documents.

To better understand how the art program functions at the RISS, it is important to recognize what the IB program offers as a theoretical base not only the art practices, but for all of the other subjects. Theory of knowledge (TOK) is the core theory that guides the IB program towards all the disciplines. According to the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), TOK is essentially focused on the process of knowing rather than the process of learning, which means the nature of knowledge is put into question in regard to each subject studied in the curriculum. The IB program adopts this theory encouraging the learners to be critical and to question themselves how they know what they know and how knowledge is constructed. TOK also stresses on the personal development of the students and their relationship with their fellow classmates. According to the IB website (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2005 – 2017), TOK prompts students to “be aware of themselves as thinkers, encouraging them to become more acquainted with the complexity of knowledge” and “recognize the need to act responsibly in an increasingly interconnected but uncertain world”. The Theory of Knowledge was developed by the International Baccalaureate and, as analyzed in the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), does not declare to corroborate specifically with other theories of education and knowledge transferring methods. However, it may be identified that TOK dialogues with theorists expressing this concern for an interdisciplinary learning of subjects in relation to the arts such as Houser (1991), Throsby (2013) and Sousa (2003), who state that art education may interconnect other various disciplines, encouraging students’ reflective and critical capacity, impacting on the way they relate to other subjects. This also demonstrates a great presence of the critical-theoretical paradigm of Habermas (1971) in the TOK guides, wherein students are stimulated to be more investigative and analytical, empowering them with knowledge.

The TOK encompasses a second pillar of the IB program which is the CAS – Creativity, Activity and Service. According to the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017, p. 3), CAS works towards instigating students to build and recognize their own identities, creating and reaffirming their personal ethical values embodied in the ethical and morals of the IB program in confluence with the learner’s profile. In the CAS, Creativity stands for the relationship with art and other sources of critical thinking; Activity stands for

“physical exertion contributing to a healthy Lifestyle” (p.3); and Service stands for volunteer working and community engagement that will benefit the student’s learning process. In practical terms, within the visual arts classes, CAS orients students nurturing their creative process and encouraging them to be active in the artistic activities by participating “in a range of creative activities within the school, such as art projects for school productions, designing publications and promotional materials, exhibiting at showcase events, (...) workshops and exhibitions in collaboration with others outside of the school context” (p.7). Furthermore, CAS places students as active participants in the activities, in which they are asked to plan, develop and present a wide range of school-based arts activities and events involving different audiences.

Moreover, when focusing on the arts program, the visual arts and the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) work together to encourage students to reflect on the nature of knowledge in the arts. As stated in the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), the course categorizes eight ways of acquiring knowledge by: “reason, emotion, language, sense perception, intuition, imagination, faith and memory” (p. 8). The learners explore these sources interdisciplinarily to build their own range of skills and knowledge. The visual arts programs claim to incite in the students a questioning character, engaging them to think about a wide range of themes in the art world, such as the social function of art, the values and aesthetic standards of art appreciation and the responsibilities of an artist. Additionally, by exploring a broad list of materials and technologies, students are stimulated to “develop an understanding of the technical, creative, expressive and communicative aspects of the arts” (p. 8).

Consistent with the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017, p. 6), the IB program envisions that the visual arts are an essential part of everyday life, infusing all stages of human “creativity, expression, communication and understanding”. The visual arts array from traditional forms of expressions surrounded in local and broader communities, societies and cultures, to the diverse and divergent applications connected with a great range of forms of visual language. The IB program believes that the arts “may have sociopolitical impact as well as ritual, spiritual, decorative and functional value; they can be persuasive and subversive in some instances, enlightening and uplifting in others”. They rejoice the visual arts not only in the process of creating art, but also in the way they “appreciate, enjoy, respect and respond to the practices of art-making by others from

around the world”. The visual arts program instigates learners to “challenge their own creative and cultural expectations and boundaries”. Students develop critical and analytical skills while “working towards technical proficiency and confidence as art-makers”. In addition, students are expected to develop a comparative view on the various forms of art expression, and they are encouraged to engage in, experiment and reflect on a broad range of art practices.

Moreover, it is important to notice the effort the IB program puts into helping students develop their personality, stimulating them into being open minded, curious and socially active. The Visual Arts Course Guide (2017) claims that through the arts, students may work on their personal development and self-knowledge, and additionally “effectively connect to others” (p. 8). As stressed in the document, “the arts provide a unique opportunity for students to recognize the dynamic cultural influences around them” (p. 8). Also, connecting students with the visual arts gives them the opportunity to reflect on and engage with a great range of personally relevant themes. In the IB program, students are reinforced to nourish an ethical perspective in school, as well as the teachers should be conscious about sensitive topics, ensuring to create a space for constructive dialogue: “consideration should also be given to the personal, political and spiritual values of others, particularly in relation to race, gender or religious beliefs” (p. 9).

For a more objective overview of the visual arts program goals in the IB program and applied at the Rotterdam International Secondary School, the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017, p. 13) states nine aims of the program, being six specifically for the arts in its different expression forms and three directed for the visual arts. The goals of the arts are “1. enjoy lifelong engagement with the arts; 2. become informed, reflective and critical practitioners in the arts; 3. understand the dynamic and changing nature of the arts; 4. explore and value the diversity of the arts across time, place and cultures; 5. express ideas with confidence and competence; 6. develop perceptual and analytical skills”, and the three aims for the visual arts: “7. make artwork that is influenced by personal and cultural contexts; 8. become informed and critical observers and makers of visual culture and media; 9. develop skills, techniques and processes in order to communicate concepts and ideas”.

The visual arts core syllabus comprises three dynamic and interrelated areas: Communicating visual arts; Visual arts in context and Visual arts method (see Figure 1).

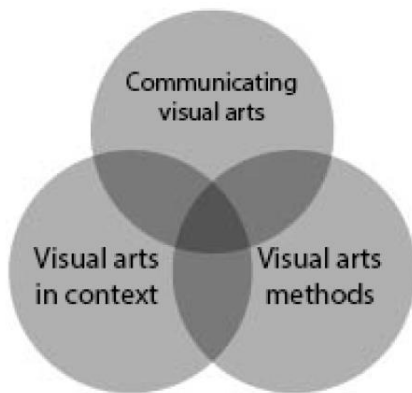


Figure 1. Reference: Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), p. 17

In the Visual Arts Curriculum, the three areas mentioned above guide the syllabus, each one crossing with theoretical, curatorial and art-making practices. A relevant finding in this document is the clear comparison that may be made between the areas the IB program categorizes for the arts program and the three paradigms explored in Habermas (1971). Firstly, the Communicating Visual Arts category focuses on understanding the various ways in which “visual arts can communicate” (p. 19) and additionally, students will be able to make meaning out of different artistic outlets and gain further means to appreciate the arts in different perspectives. This relates to the Interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm proposed by Habermas (1971) categorized the communicative aspect of learning, wherein one’s relationship with the world may be translated by their ability of communicating and “grasping the structure of interpretive meaning” (Pearse, 1992, p. 245). What is valued in this category is the essential structure of the social world, which will therefore underlie the essence of experience the art world: communication, meaning making and socialization.

Secondly, the Visual Arts Methods entails the understanding, appreciation and involvement in a great range of “media, processes, techniques and skills” (Visual Arts Course Guide, 2017, p. 18) that are expected in the process of art making; furthermore, in this area, students will learn how and why these medias and techniques have evolved. This category matches the Empirical-Analytical paradigm in Habermas (1971), where the orientation emphasizes skills and techniques. Throughout the year, students are expected

to work with at least three art-making forms, selected from a minimum of two of the columns presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Technical requirements. Reference: Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), p. 21.

Two-dimensional forms	Three-dimensional forms	Lens-based, electronic and screen-based forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing: such as charcoal, pencil, ink; • Painting: such as acrylic, oil, watercolour • Printmaking: such as relief, intaglio, planographic, chine collé; • Graphics: such as illustration and design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sculpture: such as ceramics, found objects, wood, assemblage; • Designed objects: such as fashion, architectural, vessels • Site specific/ephemeral: such as land art, installation, mural; • Textiles: such as fiber, weaving, printed fabric. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-based and sequential art: such as animation, graphic novel, storyboard; • Lens media: such as still, moving, montage; • Digital/screen based: such as vector graphics, software generated.

Finally, the Visual Arts in Context proposes a broad understanding of the arts world, providing students with theoretical basis and engaging them to think critically and creatively. As indicated by the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), learners “explore perspectives, theories and cultures that inform and influence visual arts practice”. They are stimulated to reflect on a range of art themes and link them to other disciplines and to their own social reality. What is being oriented in this area of the syllabus meets the Critical-Theoretical paradigm in Habermas (1971) as it also stresses that the process of transferring knowledge, understanding and self-reflection leads to critical-analytical minds, which also leads to empowered actions (Pearse, 1992).

Furthermore, regarding outcomes and assessment, the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017) efforts to strives to estimate theoretical, practical and social competences in the process of students’ evaluation. Constituted by 16 to 18-year-old international high-school adolescents, throughout grade 11 and 12 the IB students are required to develop a process portfolio (or a portfolio book), wherein they register what they are learning in

class, experimenting different techniques and exploring their ideas. This portfolio is assessed by the teacher at the end of the school year and it is worth 40% of the student's final grade. According to the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), the evaluation is based on how the students explore and manipulate the range of media and techniques; how the students critically sustain the work throughout the book with the investigation of different artists, artworks and artistic genres and the expression of how these have influenced their own work; the evolution of the theoretical and critical thought, making connections between theory and practice and how the skills are refined over time.

In addition, students develop a comparative study written assignment, where they are expected to analyze and compare different art pieces and artistic movements by their chosen artists. They consider the artist's cultural context, their personal history, their artistic expression and techniques. Students are required to compare at least two different artists, and at least three different art works. According to the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), as part of the assessment of this assignment, which is worth 20% of the final grade, teachers should consider if students are identifying and analyzing the formal qualities, functions and purpose of the art-works; its cultural significance, comparing and connecting the artworks in an eloquent manner; and finally, making connections to the student's' own work.

Finally, for the last 40% of the final grade, students at the RISS are required to assemble an exhibition with 8 to 11 art works, followed by a coherent 500-word (maximum) text presenting each piece, and an overall 700 (maximum) curatorial rationale text explaining the theme and inspirations of the exhibition. These art pieces are resultant of their two-year production (grade 11 and 12), and the exhibition should be presented as a consistent whole. According to the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), the assessment is based on the level of coherence presented in the body of works; the technical competences expressed in the art pieces; and the conceptual and curatorial qualities.

Overall, it is clear that the three paradigms in Habermas (1971) of critical theory are valued in the art education process oriented by the IB program and applied at the RISS. All three paradigms - empirical-analytical, interpretive-hermeneutic and critical-theoretical - are theorized in the Visual Arts Course Guide with the intention to orient the art classes. Using the Atlas.ti analysis program, 434 quotes regarding these paradigms were found (see Table 3) and a total of 30 quotes were mentioned in relation to the

orientation towards the mediator (see Table 4). The use of Atlas.it provides us a complementary quantitative analysis of how many times the paradigms are being articulated in the document, to understand what is being prioritized and valued in art education and expected from teacher’s practice in class.

Table 3: Coding frequency Paradigms – Document Analysis

Document analysis - Coding frequency		
Code (paradigm)	Sub-code	N° of appearance
Empirical-analytical	Practical Skills	71
Interpretive-hermeneutic	Communication	50
	Sociability	43
Critical-theoretical	Creativity	22
	Critical-thinking	92
	Engagement in art	48
	Moral values - Individual developing	66
	Theoretical Knowledge	42
	Totals	434

Table 4: Coding frequency Mediator – Document Analysis

Document analysis - Coding Frequency		
Code	Sub-code	N° of appearance
Mediator	Disciplinary	0
	Empowering	16
	Motivational	10
	Resourcefulness - Technique	4
	TOTALS	30

Firstly, within the empirical-analytical paradigm, the correspondent sub-code, nominated “practical skills”, is articulated 71 times (see Table 3). The value of the practical skills in the IB Visual Arts program can be translated by putting efforts into the

enhancement and stimulation of students' art practice, the development and refinement of their skills, the exploration of different medias and the manipulation of different techniques. This is the least appearing category, evidencing the least valuable interest in the intentions of the art program, representing only 16.2% of the total of coded findings (see Table 3).

Secondly, the interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm represented by the sub-codes "communication" and "sociability" appear together 93 times throughout the Visual Arts Course Guide, representing 21.4% of the codes (see Table 3). In this category, skills regarding expression, communication and socialization are valued, such as clear understanding, communicating effectively, connecting with and relating to different people from different cultures (international mindset), interaction with local artists and being collaborative.

Lastly, the critical-theoretical paradigm, with the sub-codes nominated "creativity", "critical-thinking", "engagement in art", "moral values – individual development" and "theoretical knowledge", appear together 270 times in the document, positioning "critical-thinking" the most mobilized value in art education by the IB program. The expressive appearance of this interest represents 62.2% of the codes found in the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017) (see Table 3). Not only this category has a larger number of sub-codes to characterize the paradigm, referring to possibilities of its exploration, but its great frequency reveals the superior importance of these ideals within the art classes in the proposed document. More extensively, it is important to detail the findings in this source according to the sub-codes in the Critical-Thinking paradigm as it is the most represented code in the document. The sub-code "creativity" represented all the ideas of the students' imaginative qualities and creative production. Sequentially, the "critical-thinking" sub-code, the strongest emphasis of this document, entails the exploration of students' critical interpretation, valuing an investigative and inquiry based reflection of art. Within the "engagement in art" sub-code, a range of ideals was incorporated such as the multidisciplinary character of art, the embodied learning experience, actively relating art to the students' everyday life, the enjoyment and the pleasure taken from the artistic experience. The sub-code "moral values – individual development" refers to the expressions that concerns students' personal growth which are treasured in the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), such as respect, honesty, resilience,

caring, positive attitude, autonomy, independency and self-management. Lastly, the “theoretical knowledge” sub-code highlights the importance of giving the students theoretical background to develop their critical and engaged ways of thinking.

Regarding the practical orientations to the mediator, the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017) expresses a great concern in empowering students through the mediation of the teachers. Analyzing the frequency table, there is an expressive presence of empowering (53%) and motivational (30%) interests in the practice (see Table 4, p. 31). The guide suggests the teacher’s exploration of students’ creativity, their investigative capacities through the comparison of different medias and artistic genres and the encouragement of collaboration between students in different projects. Furthermore, it orients teachers to endeavor the communicative potential in students, instigating them to express themselves through art. The teachers’ importance to give order to the class, in the sense of disciplining students, remains unmentioned. Although the document states to provide a framework for the practice of a holistic education, it gives the teachers autonomy to choose which medias, artistic movements and artists they want to present to the class.

Although the three interests of Habermas (1971) are expressed in the document, there is a gradation of value from the first to the last paradigm. It is noticeable that the highest importance conveyed in the art classes is concerning the Critical-Theoretical orientation, which aims to emancipate the students inciting their individual critical interpretation of art and of other topics in relation to art. Not only individual self-development and self-awareness are valued, but they go hand to hand with the importance of engagement in and critical appreciation of the visual arts.

4.2. Progress Book Analysis

In the progress book, an in-class activity and a mean to register the practices proposed throughout the art classes at the RISS the students explore different techniques, discourse about a wide range of artists and artistic genres and relate them to certain topics. Analyzing four different books, I was able to see recurrences in them concerning techniques such as sketches of the human anatomy, drawings with charcoal and pictures of sculptures students practiced in class. However, it was interesting to see how the range of artists and themes written on the books varied from student to student. According to Bauer & Gaskell (2000), analyzing images through semiology may offer an

impressionistic view of the meaning-making process, so there is no guarantee that other analysis of the same image will produce equivalent results. Therefore, rather than focusing on a semiotic interpretation, I emphasize on what themes are being articulated in the books and what is being valued in the art practice in comparison to the three paradigms in Habermas (1971).

Concerning technique and the empirical-analytic paradigm proposed by Habermas (1971), all of the analyzed books have a great range of skill practices. Students expose their experiments with watercolor paint, photography, charcoal, acrylic and different uses of pen and pencil types (see Figures 2, 3 and 4 in appendix A). They also register the practice of techniques such as stop motion, basic anatomy of the human figure and the studies of texture, depth and dimension (see Figures 5 and 6 in appendix A). When using techniques that couldn't be directly practiced on the progress book pages, students take pictures of their art pieces and glue them in the portfolio, explaining the technical process of the creation. Similarly, when presenting a specific artist - for instance, Piet Mondrian, Amedeo Modigliani, Keith Haring, Damien Hirst and Banksy - students not only write about the artists' lives and the artistic genre, but also about the technique they used. Often, the students tried to reproduce the artistic style in the progress book next to pictures of the artists' original art piece. It is noticeable how valuable it is for the students to be skillful in art-making and how they are critical with their own technique. For example, in Figure 7 (appendix A), a student states: "I like my drawing of the Man, because it is most similar to Modigliani's style of painting"; in Figure 8 (appendix A), a student writes: "Here you can see that my drawing of an arm does not correspond to the actual reality"; in Figure 9 (appendix A), a student explains: "I'm going to make Donald Trump's head out of clay. It's very important that the head actually looks like him, so I need to work on my clay skills".

Regarding the interpretive-hermeneutic orientation and how the students communicate, it is interesting to see how they eloquently explain what is being exposed in the book. Next to every practice, there is a text explaining how the student created the piece, what were the inspirations and motivations behind it, and often what emotions the artwork aroused. In Figure 10 (appendix A), the drawing of two bodies being merged into each other, with the saying "maybe we're helping each other escape".

Also, students critically engaged art with different social-political themes,

showing how the students relate to their social world and translate this relationship into art, evidencing Habermas' (1971) interpretive-hermeneutic orientation. In Figure 9 (appendix A), we encounter a sketch of a political artistic project that consists of Donald Trump's face made out of clay being destroyed by a hammer with the intention to "smash the patriarchy" (see Figure 11 in appendix A). The same project has a page with further explanations, in Figure 12 (appendix A), the student explains she felt inspired to make an art piece about the presidential elections in the US because she found it "disgusting that a man with sexist and racist values actually could be our future president". Sense of humanity and the migration crisis were also present themes in the progress book. One of the students sketches her idea of an art piece that consists of a refugee suitcase (see Figure 13 in appendix A) in which she tries to portray the difficult journey of an immigrant. In the suitcase, we find representative elements such as pictures of the refugee's family, shoes covered in blood, ripped jeans and a map. In the book, (see Figure 14, appendix A) she writes "...this really hurts me! I honestly cannot believe that people have to suffer like this". In another book page, a student describes a street art piece she found in Breda written "Refugees Would Ride", where she presents her thoughts about the distressing immigration crisis in Syria, with glued polaroid's in front of the street art (see Figure 15, appendix A). Present in Figure 16 (appendix A), we find a mouth being used as a cigarette ash tray, painted with watercolor, criticizing the generalized view of smoking and with intention to create awareness with the art piece. Valued in the critical-theoretical paradigm in Habermas (1971), students included theory about the artists and their style, as well as their own opinion and critics of the pieces presented throughout the book.

In general, all three values in the art education process proposed by Habermas (1971) are expressed throughout the students' process books. Image, text and critics are altogether existing in the portfolios and it is visible that the orientations are being met in this practice, however, in a higher degree, technique and skills are more present. Not only the art-making process is portrayed, but the students' desire to achieve a high level of skills and their self-critic in regard to the practice is verbalized into the books. Thus, the analysis reveals the empirical-analytic orientation as the highest interest portrayed in the progress portfolio.

4.3. Participant Observation

Throughout 4 weeks in March and April 2017, a participant observation research was conducted analyzing the art classes of the higher-level international students (11 adolescents from the ages 16 to 18) at the RISS. The benefits of ethnographic field work lie on how it portrays the “complexity of theoretical ideas through imaginative writing and individual stories” (Mills & Morton, 2013, p. 89). The objective of collecting the data from this method, resulting in the observation field notes, was to observe closely how the processes of mediation occur between students and art and what are the main values in the process of art learning to further compare what is observed in practice to what is proposed theoretically. Field notes associate ‘being’, ‘seeing’ and ‘writing’, enabling the researcher to experience thoroughly the study object and providing a highly personal archive for the research (Mills & Morton, 2013, p. 79). The collected field notes were also codified with the same system presented in the methods section to compare the recurrences of each category (see Table 5 and 6). During 10 art class sessions, I collected field notes that hereby are analyzed, describing and interpreting the social dynamics surrounding the art learning process.

Table 5: Coding frequency three paradigms – observation field notes

Observation Field Notes - Coding frequency		
Code (paradigm)	Sub-code	N° of appearance
Empirical-analytical	Practical Skills	70
Interpretive-hermeneutic	Communication	5
	Sociability	17
Critical-theoretical	Creativity	3
	Critical-thinking	10
	Engagement in art	17
	Moral values - Individual developing	11
	Theoretical Knowledge	2
Totals		135

Table 6: Coding frequency Mediator – Observation Field Notes

Observation Field Notes - Coding Frequency		
Code	Sub-code	N° of appearance
Mediator	Disciplinary	51
	Empowering	8
	Motivational	9
	Resourcefulness - Technique	25
	TOTALS	93

The art classes at the Rotterdam International Secondary School are divided weekly in three moments: on Tuesdays, students work together on a common project; on Thursdays, they are expected to work on their individual projects, registering all of the steps of the creative process of the art work in their progress book and executing the project; on Fridays, the students participate in a theoretical class, where they get in touch with different artists and artistic genres and discuss their art pieces. The class gave complete support to the students' creative projects offering all the different material they needed.

During the period I observed the daily activities of the art classes, the students were involved in a group assignment to create a design for a food truck that belongs to the owner of the School's cafeteria. The food truck is originally painted in black and yellow and the students were free to paint over it and create a cohesive design for the proposal. The food truck, when running, will serve all kinds of international food, which the teacher did not yet specify for the task. The project was discussed every Tuesday and the students were thoroughly engaged working on their ideas for the design, thinking about what kind of patterns and colors they should use. Creative ideas were pitched between the students such as making a 'baby burger monster', using the window opening as an opened mouth, to portraying classical characters from art paintings eating burgers, as Mona Lisa and the Girl with the Pearl Earring. In addition, the students were thinking about the details in the truck and how they could make it more attractive, among them: sketches of donuts to paint around the wheel and ideas of how to paint the tables and chairs that would be set around the truck. They also discussed colors and what kind of paint they would use for each part of the truck in order to attract more customers and

preserve the painting for a longer period.

The individual assignments took place on Tuesdays, when I could see an impressive range of different skills being practiced as paintings on canvas, collages, silk screen, carving on wood and painting on cardboard. Students were left freely to choose what project they wanted to work on as long as it presented cohesiveness with their other art pieces, all expected to be exposed in their final exhibition.

On Fridays, the teacher would present artists on videos and different website sources and discuss with the students the art pieces exhibited. During my observations, Damien Hirst and Francis Bacon were the two artists debated in class. In addition, in one of the classes, the teacher carried a conversation about what the students intended to write about for their comparative studies in terms of choice of the artist, topic and research question.

4.3.1. Participant observation and the three paradigms

The following section is presented associating the participant observation findings to each of Habermas' (1971) paradigms of learning orientation. Also, the sections discuss the three major activities – group project, individual work and theoretical classes – focusing on the processes of mediation involving art, the students and the teacher and their relation to the values in learning. The structure provides an organized overview of the importance given to each paradigm in the daily art activities at the RISS.

Participant observation and the empirical-analytic paradigm

The most important value mobilized in the art classes at the RISS was undoubtedly the empirical-analytic paradigm of Habermas (1971), wherein skills and techniques were greatly practiced, discussed and appreciated. Analyzing the fieldnotes, the code appears in a total of 70 times, representing an expressive percentage of 51.8% (see Table 5, p. 36). To demonstrate how technical competences were highly valued in class, I illustrate a few circumstances present throughout the in-class activities. Concerning the food truck, students were elaborating the concept at the same time as the design, none of which were decided clearly throughout the process, as the students had different ideas to share. Furthermore, not only the colors were widely discussed among the students, but the style of the design and the elements that would be painted, as well as who would have the

highest level of technique to be able to draw them. The teacher also stressed about the colors and suggested them to “think about colors that make people hungry”. During the class discussions about the truck, students gave immense importance to the aesthetic achievement and the success of the design. When one of the students commented about painting over the window, another student criticized it saying that it would block the driver's view, when a third student said: “depends on the paint we use”, proving once more the concern about the use of proper material in the project. The teacher also emphasized the care for the size and font of the letters and the elements, seeking harmony for the design.

Shifting to the individual projects, it was noticeable that the teacher was a great resource of advice for the technique used in each of the students’ art pieces. Students would constantly rely on her asking about the appropriate brushes, glues and paints to execute their projects. She would also advise students regarding the design of their pieces, commenting on the size, the colors and the use of certain types of materials. This is also supported numerically, as 26.6% of the coding frequency in regard to the mediator show the relevance of her technical advice in class (see Table 6, p. 37). The students seemed quite appreciative of all of the teacher’s suggestions, as they thrive to achieve a good level of performance in art making and consider her opinions highly valuable.

The theoretical sessions also highlighted the use of technique of the artists being discussed. When presenting a documentary on Francis Bacon, the teacher asked about the colors, the shadowing, the materials and the technical competences of the exhibited paintings and the students seemed intrigued to investigate. Some students were even wondering about the texture and the amount of paint put into the paintings. Furthermore, in one of the classes, Damien Hirts’ recent exhibition in Venice was presented to the students. The artist created pieces that simulated objects found from the profundity of the ocean, covered in sea corals. He also released videos of scavenger rescuing the pieces from under the sea, giving a realistic take on the creation of the pieces. The teacher focused on the manufacturing of the pieces, wherein in the discussion the students would say how they think the artist made them. In addition, when orienting the comparative study project, the teacher also reinforced the importance of comparing the technical procedures of the chosen artists.

Participant observation and the interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm

The interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm revealed a low percentage of appearance among the other categories, representing only 16.2% of the codes, being articulated 22 times (see Table 5, p. 36). It was quite evident during the in-class observations how the social interactions were carried on. For example, during the food truck group project, the teacher left the students quite freely to discuss among themselves all the ideas concerning the design, intervening when the group lost focus or whenever they needed assistance concerning technical competences. The students' strong engagement in the project resulted in harmonic and constructive discussions of their ideas. The brainstorming process resulted in the respectful negotiation of each of the student's thoughts. The teacher would mediate frequently asking for focus whenever they diverted their attention, but the discussions were essentially autonomous and organized. As an example of a positive intervention, one of the students was sitting alone, far from the group; after a while, the teacher encouraged her to join the rest in the discussion, and as she did so, she was integrated and participating with her ideas as well. Furthermore, they organized themselves concerning the tasks: while one sketched the design for the wheels, others would work on the front, back and lateral design of the truck. This fact evidences the social order and the level of effectiveness of communication between the students as well as their in-class bond. Also, the fact that the food truck would be visible to other students and members of the school motivated them even more to work hard on the results.

During the individual assignments, many of the students would wear their headphones to work on their projects while listening to music. However, it was clear that the teacher expected silence and focus from them, intervening whenever they were talking to each other. The teacher's disciplinary character was more evidenced during the individual assignments, permitting very little interaction of the present students, even when they tried to discuss their projects or help each other with a task. This is sustained by the analysis of the coding frequency Table 6 (p. 37): categorizing the mediator in the observations, 54.8% of her actions were disciplinary. Also, there were formalities in class that could not be ignored: the students would always respectfully address the teacher as Miss; they could not wear caps or hats in class, nor chew gum. Whenever these orientations were disobeyed, in addition to chatting to each other, the teacher would discipline them commenting on their actions. The teacher stressed on particularities of

how the students performed their work shaping them into her behavioral expectations, such as asking them to stand up when painting, demanding silence in the classroom and focus on their work. The students remained respectful facing the teacher's disciplinary actions, although they disagreed in the case of discussing the projects and sometimes conveyed disappointment with the teacher's impositions.

When the theoretical classes took place, the teacher normally presented a video or a web-site to present an artist and the students were in general not engaged in the activities. During the Francis Bacon documentary, students were constantly looking at their phones or deviating their attention, looking elsewhere and one of the students even fell asleep. The teacher asked for their attention in several moments. The same happened when presenting a video about Damien Hirst. When debating the artists, students were mostly listening to the teacher rather than actively participating in the discussion. The format of the Friday classes, in combination of how the content was presented, seemed disinteresting to the students; this demonstrates how hands on work and group activities engage the students more than the teacher's theoretical approach to art. Corroborant with the ideas presented by a great range of theorists of mediation (Almeida, 2008; Beillerot, 2000; Costa, 2009; Eglinton, 2003; Michel, 2015), this evidences once more that the way the content is mediated among the students impacts on how much they engage with the subject.

Participant observation and the Critical-theoretical paradigm

The value given to the Critical-theoretical paradigm was relatively low comparing to what is expected by the theoretical orientations. The category appears 41 times, representing only 31.8% of the codes found (see Table 5, p. 36). Throughout the group project, the students demonstrated concern mostly for the design and the technical competences they would apply to the food truck. The in-class discussions were harmonically carried out between the class members and that demonstrates great characters of individual development as autonomy and respect. Furthermore, there was a clear engagement of the students during the activity, wherein they were exercising their creativity suggesting different designs, uses of colors and materials for the truck. When negotiating the ideas, the teacher oriented the students to think about artistic references they had seen in class, mentioning Keith Haring, Basquiat and Banksy. When pitching

the idea of the 'baby burger monster', she criticized saying that monsters scare people away. Also, when the students commented on placing a mustache over the front windshield, the teacher disagreed saying mustaches are not hygienic and shouldn't be associated with food, suggesting the students to think of more attractive elements of design to attract the customers.

The individual projects intend to be more introspective, wherein students are expected to create a series of assorted art pieces that will result in a cohesive final exhibition. The teacher showed great concern in motivating the students to find their own style and clearly elaborate the theme, however, she focused more on the aesthetic consistency rather than stimulating their critical and creative trail of thought. Nevertheless, when discussing the comparative study project, the teacher stressed on the importance to select artists that touches the students somehow – either by aesthetic qualities, personal history or representativeness – encouraging them to investigate closely the artists of choice.

Even though the Friday classes had the intention to be more theoretical, the discussions were still highly dedicated to technique. When presenting Damien Hirts' newest exhibition in Venice, the teacher incited a discussion about the artist being the idealist the art pieces but not manufacturing them himself. The students briefly deliberated if this fact compromises his artist quality or not, and the discussion remained inconclusive. This discussion, although considered encouraging for the students to elaborate their own opinion, again refers back to the importance given to of technical skills as an artist, emphasizing the empirical-analytic paradigm. Furthermore, when being presented to the documentary on Francis Bacon, which presented footages of his work and his life, the conversation surrounded the technical aspects of his art piece, rather than his personal history or the critical messages conveyed the artist's work.

4.4. Interviews

As a complimentary resource of data, 5 in-depth interviews were conducted with key agents in the art education process at the RISS: 5 international students attending the art classes (two of the interviews being with two students at a time, as they felt more comfortable with this setting; one interview with one student only), the art teacher and a joint interview with the curriculum managers of the IB Visual Arts Course and the TOK.

The interviewees responded anonymously to a semi-structured guide and all of the interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded following the same coding system presented in the method section. The interviewees were recognized in the following sections by a single letter – students as S1, S2, S3, S4, S5; Teacher as T1; and IB members, the Visual Arts curriculum manager as I1 and the TOK curriculum manager as I2. The goal of collecting the information among students was to investigate what they personally value in art and how they relate to the processes of mediation of apprehension of knowledge in the art classes. Towards the teacher, the focus of the interview was to understand what theories oriented the art teaching practices and what she emphasized in the art learning process. Finally, by interviewing the IB members, I looked into understanding the theoretical framework that grounds the educational systems that follows the IB program, named Theory of Knowledge, and how the IB program gives support to the RISS and their teachers to pursue the proposed ideologies and goals. The findings were coded (Tables 7 and 8) and associated with Habermas' (1971) paradigms to categorize and comprehend even further what is being highlighted in the art learning process amongst the interviewees.

Table 7: Coding frequency three paradigms – Interviews

Interviews - Coding frequency				
Code (paradigm)	Sub-code	N° of appearance - Students	N° of appearance - Teacher	N° of appearance - IB Members
Empirical-analytical	Practical Skills	47	13	15
Interpretive-hermeneutic	Communication	13	2	24
	Sociability	6	1	15
Critical-theoretical	Creativity	4	1	9
	Critical-thinking	10	2	23
	Engagement in art	6	1	10
	Moral values - Individual developing	11	2	13
	Theoretical Knowledge	2	1	4
Totals		99	23	113

Table 8: Coding frequency Mediator – Interviews

Interviews - Coding frequency				
Code	Sub-code	N° of appearance - Students	N° of appearance - Teacher	N° of appearance - IB Members
Mediator	Disciplinary	16	4	0
	Empowering	3	2	11
	Motivational	2	1	7
	Resourcefulness - Technique	7	8	9
	TOTALS	28	15	27

4.4.1. Interviews: Students

The 5 interviews with the students at the RISS revealed their great passion and appreciation for art from an early age, all being stimulated either by their families, friends or previous art teachers to engage in art making. In agreement to Barros & Gasparin (2009), Cannatella (2015) and Menezes (2006), the students also greatly value the communicative function of art, stating the importance of art as an expressive outlet, translating their emotions into their productions, being able to clearly relate to the interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm of Habermas (1971). According to S1, 18 years old: “I think art is important because of history and as well because of expressionism in the sense of showing people's feelings and thoughts”. The student expands saying that art making is a process of self-identification, stating that she appropriates the arts to convey her emotions and stresses of the struggles of the teenage/young adulthood life. Furthermore, S2, 17 years old, identifies the great communicative character of art as an important means of translating her feelings: “If I get tired or if I'm sad, I paint. I think also art can give a message”. In addition, S4, 17 years old, complements the idea that art may transport messages beyond verbal communication: “Art is important because words do not fulfill our needs of expression. Sometimes words cannot convey the message or the feelings you need to express. Art has a great impact, it can make people think about what they are seeing and interpret however they feel, also... it's interactive”. The student demonstrates how art is a co-creational process, wherein the interpretation of those appreciating the art piece is valid and becomes part of the artwork itself. This reinforces theories mentioned by Albinati (2009), Martín (1993), Vázquez (1978), wherein art is a product of human relationships, a material translation of how the producers make sense of the world.

Moreover, the interviews demonstrated how the students related to exterior topics to the messages in their art works. Themes such as feminism, immigration crisis, human rights and political awareness were present in all of the discourses. For instance, not only S1 uses art to convey an important message as she tries to impact close members of her family with her work (see Figure 13 and 14, Appendix A):

Another project that I was working on was with the refugees, where I just wanted people to reflect on... because for example, my father thinks that refugees are not welcome here because he is paying for them to stay here but that is something I

agree with him in some extent, what the government is doing is not completely right, but taking my dad as an example I want him to see the other side of what refugees are going through and the journey they take upon. Them to get here, and ah... I hope that he gets a better look at it.

Other examples voiced by the students include art pieces as exemplified in the progress book: S4's project of Donald Trump's head being smashed with a hammer to "smash the patriarchy"; S2's work with six hands in prayer, painted in different skin colors, symbolizing harmony among ethnicities; S4's project on woman objectification, comparing the female body to meat. This evidences students' critical thinking process and the understanding of the power of art as a political tool, in agreement with Houser (1991) and Menezes (2006), through art, the students believe they can convey their perception on a wide range of subjects and translate their moral values.

Although Habermas' (1971) critical-theoretical orientation is clearly present in the students' discourse, it is important to understand the processes of mediation that stimulate and orient their critical thinking. During the interviews, it was noticeable that the result of their creative process came from interior motifs as a reflection of their personal experiences. When revealing the teacher's function in relation to this matter, S2 comments:

I think she helps us also with criticizing, because, for example for the comparative studies, we discuss paintings and we criticize them all together, the positive and negative side of paintings. So, she teaches us how to analyze. Because we will need to do that alone eventually. The teacher also teaches us technique, for example today, while doing my flower, I was putting the wooden pieces together and she told me to be creative, but I was too afraid to do it. She gave me some tips and it looks way better now.

The students identify the teacher as a source of orientation and motivation, however, the recognition of her as a vital source of practical advice and technique was prevalent. When asking S1 about what is being articulated in the art classes, she responds: "I wouldn't say I am learning anything. I would say that the teacher lets us be free, but she is also trying to teach us other techniques other than just painting, for example sculptures, or silk screen printing, which I had heard of but I had never really done". All

of the students are self-critic when it comes to developing their practical skills and their own performance, stating they deeply rely on the teacher for her technical advice. Thus, in the interviews, there was a higher degree in value given to the empirical-analytical paradigm of Habermas (1971) and the teacher's importance to orient the art making practices. Analyzing the coding frequency table, the empirical-analytic orientation appears 47 times, representing 47.4% of the total of the coding (see Table 7, p. 44). This means that it was largely stated in the interviewee's ideas the importance of practical excellence and the development of different set of skills.

In addition, the students recognize the teacher as an important disciplinary guide in class. Analyzing the coding frequency, there is an expressive 57% of appearance in their discourse acknowledging the teacher's disciplinary character in detriment of other features (see Table 8, p. 44). They state the teacher keeps the class in order and enables the students to continue their work. As commented by S3: "She disciplines us, which I think is very important (...) I think the teacher is important in class because without her we would only keep talking and not do any work. And... If we are stuck, with her we know what to do, we need someone with more experience to make us move on". In another example, S1 states the teacher helps "keeping the class silent and in order", identifying discipline as an important trait to develop. As commented by S5: "teacher is important to control us, for us to actually do something". On the other hand, S2 sees the differences in how people work and comments on the limiting character that too much discipline in class may have:

I think it's just the way she teaches us, she doesn't like it when we talk and she wants us to put our full capacity into our work. Which is understandable, but then, we like to be social and we like to talk together and I guess it's because people work differently. Maybe she works better when she is quiet and she thinks that's how we do our work better. Yet we still keep on talking.

In relation to the interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm in Habermas (1971), overall, students recognize the importance of the teacher's disciplinary character as necessary, revealing it similarly as a motivational trait, however sometimes limiting important interactions to discuss each other's artworks and ideas. This opposes ideas presented by Elglinton (2003), Lamizet (1999), Martín (1993) and Michell (2015), who rely on the social interaction for a holistic construction of knowledge. In art education, mediators are

expected to facilitate the access into the subject, creating an appropriate environment to stimulate students' engagement. Yet, when disciplinary actions precede constructive social interactions, the involvement in the artistic experience may have divergent effects.

4.4.2. Interview: Art Teacher

The interview with the art teacher from the RISS aimed to understand what theoretical framework orients the classes and how the processes of mediation occur between the students and the arts. Firstly, when being asked about the Theory of Knowledge (TOK), theory stated by the Visual Arts Course Guide as the base of the educational system at the RISS, she declared not being completely integrated with the theory, not knowing how to explain how the theory works in relation to the educational practices. The teacher further commented on workshops provided by the IB program, which in her opinion, did not orient the school members clearly towards performing in confluence to the TOK grounds. In addition, when trying to understand if any other educational theory guides the in-class art practices, she answered:

No, No... I teach them art history, but even then, I try to show them modern art because they tend to stick with Van Gogh and all those clichés, so what I really try to show them is what is happening now. We also go to exhibitions... but I shape it the way they... well I look at the criteria, I see 'look, they need to learn this' and I just make it broader.

What was evident throughout the teacher's interview is that although the TOK does not theoretically orient the classes, she states that the criteria of assessment and the mandatory practices are being followed to attend to the IB expectations and forms of evaluation. The Visual Arts Course Guide gives formal orientation on how to evaluate the three forms of assessments (comparative studies, progress book and final art exhibition) and what is expected is clearly presented beforehand to the students (see section 4.1, p. 33). However, when choosing what artists and themes will be presented to the students, the teacher said she looks for artists on-line, reads the news, and brings into class whatever she finds interesting. The IB gives the educator freedom to choose the theoretical references used in-class, as long as the experimentation of practical skills, as oriented by the course guide and shown in Table 2 (p. 29), is met.

Moreover, I investigated the teacher's personal opinion about the importance of

art and the impact in the students' life. She firstly states that the value in art relies on enjoyment and the happiness of those who appreciate art, understanding that people relate to art in different ways. She further declares that it is a means to express feelings, and that the art making is also about enjoyment and the pleasure of performing manual work - of creating something of your own and being proud of it. In addition, she positions that appropriating the arts as a political tool may be too far of an expectation in regard to the teenage students, due to their lack of discipline and their inexperience.

The teacher affirms that she mediates the art classes with disciplinary actions to, in her words, "make them work, they keep on chatting all the time". It is inferred that she defends that establishing a sense of order and organization in class is crucial for the performance in the arts. The mediator identifies her own disciplinary character, being expressed by 26,6% of the codes found in her discourse (see Table 8, p. 44). Furthermore, she identifies herself as a guide, trying to empower students to maximize themselves: "At the end, I want that they really go to their full potential. I want them to make things that they really feel something about. And at the same time, technical competences. That they feel really secure to make 'oh, I can make this'".

In addition, the teacher comments on the importance of students finding their inner voice, yet emphasizes that without technique, they will not be able to express properly. She focuses on developing the artistic potentiality of the students through technical competences, being a great resource of practical advice. She presents the students with all kinds of different art making forms and give them freedom to choose what they want to work with, as long as the required exploration of techniques according to the Visual Arts Course Guider (2017) is met (see Table 2, p. 29). We can see a great emphasis on Habermas' (1971) empirical-analytical paradigm in the teacher's discourse, valuing skills as the most important learning process throughout the art classes. When analyzing the coding frequency in the teacher's interview, there is a clear overvalue in technique in detriment of the other paradigms devised by Habermas, as it appears in 56% of the codes when referring to the art classes in general (see Table 7, p. 44), and 26.6% regarding her in class participation as a mediator (see Table 8, p. 44). The emphasis in developing skills is not only projected towards the expectation in the students' performance, but it is also self-recognized as her function as a teacher in the art classes.

4.4.3 Interview: IB members

The curriculum managers of the Visual Arts Course and the TOK course were interviewed to understand closely the theoretical framework that sustains the art practices at RISS, how they assess the school and monitor the art procedures, as well as unraveling the goals of the visual art program. Both IB member review the curriculums, conducting research to underpin the changes and leading the curriculum modifications in the syllabus and the support material, as well as conducting training for workshop leaders dedicated to the school teachers. The most significant clarifications were regarding how the IB and the TOK work in theory and practice, the in-class expectations from the teachers and the efforts that the IB undertake to align the schools with their missions and goals.

Firstly, the interviewees gave an overview of the creation of the International Baccalaureate. According to I2, the IB was created in 1968 and it was set up of a combination of educational, philosophical, and practical reasons:

On a practical basis, there were kids that were moving around quite a lot, so there were sons and daughters of diplomats who wanted to go to school in one country and go to university in a different country and they wanted a sort of practical qualification that would allow that mobility. Educationally, people looked for excellence in education – with a broad, balanced, conceptual curriculum. Philosophically, they thought through the whole thing about international mindedness and the mission of the IB of making the world a better and more peaceful place through education. You know, it was post second world war and they wanted to avoid that ever happening again, they thought the best way to lead to peace through education develop to lead to cultural understanding.

Being an International curriculum that works with over 140 schools worldwide, it was interesting to find that the IB is adaptable to national educational requirements, depending on each country's legislation. According to I1, the IB can be adopted in several different contexts:

It can be a state school, it can be privately funded schools, it can be some kind of hybrid, it can be... incredibly large programs, or programs with only a few candidates. So, the goal is always to design a curriculum that is flexible in its implementation, flexible for a school in Rotterdam, as well as a school in the US, as well as a small privately founded school in South Africa.

The interviewees state that there are groups in the IB that assist with the national recognition and equivalencies. Also, when designing the program, as reviewers of the curriculum, the interviewees comment on the importance of being close to the practices of the schools to adapt it to their needs, according to I2: “We think it’s very important that students and teachers get the opportunity to give feedback and give input and to have a sort of co-design program, so we work really closely to schools and teacher on our review processes”.

Regarding the Theory of knowledge, it is not only a theory that links all of the subjects students undertake during their school years – it is also a 100-hour compulsory course taken over the last two years of high-school (grade 11 and 12), to investigate the nature of knowledge, the processes of understanding and to stimulate the critical capacity of the students. Linking the subjects to TOK, the students are expected to, as stated by I2:

(...) think about their own perspective and their own assumptions and their own biases and their perspectives on people, to think about how their emotions might affect the way they approach things, how reliable our senses are and how that affects things. So, all those big concepts like certainty, reliability and truth. It’s an opportunity to explore them but with a very tactical experience of rooted in on the studies. It is not meant to be a very philosophical, abstract, epistemology type course, it’s meant to be really rooted in their experience and in their other subjects.

The TOK proposes to make bridges between subjects, instigating students’ critical dimensions. The TOK was created by the IB and, as stated by the interviewees, is quite unique: “it’s something to get notice. It’s quite high profile. It helps the organization stand out compared to other educational qualifications”. When asked about the theoretical framework that gives base to TOK, I2 states that it is singular from the IB program:

It’s not like it's modeled on anyone scholar or anyone’s position. I’d say that what we do is we have a good overall sense and then we design something that has been fluent to our variety of different thinkers and we come up with something ourselves. So, it is heavily influenced by people all over the world. It was developed with the same kind of goal of all of these theories while trying to make it accessible on a secondary level to both teachers and students.

The interviewee I2 adds saying the TOK isn’t a thread of the critical theory philosophy, but it has many overlaps with the theorists, not announcing a full attachment

to any specific philosophy or theory of education. It indeed matches the ideas explored by the interpretive-hermeneutic and the critical-theoretical paradigm of Habermas (1971), besides being undeclared. This is evident when analyzing the frequency table of the three paradigms, wherein they appear respectively in expressive percentages of 34.5% and 52.5% in the total of the codes (see Table 7, p. 44).

When a school decides to adopt the IB program as their educational system, concerning the direct relationship between the IB and the school “they undergo a series of benchmarks and milestones they need to reach; that involved professional development which will directly lead to the IB program” (I1). Therefore, for instance, when the RISS first got certified with the IB program, they had to align their school structure, processes and practices to the IB’s expectations. The professional development entails a series of workshops and guidance meetings with the teachers and other school members to match their missions and goals, as well as the procedures of practices in each subject. There is an assumption that the teachers and school leaders are going to continuously take part in this professional development. As part of every course cycle, an entire suite of professional development courses is developed as well, and the educators are sent out within the division of the IB to reach as many teachers as possible. I1 adds: “So a guide is not just a document that lays on the doorstep of the school, but involves a sort of continuum of services, that outreaches feedback from its primary users – so students and teachers”.

According to I2: “Because of the size of the IB we obviously don’t have enough staff to lead every school by ourselves, so our model is that we train experienced teachers to become workshop leaders and then they go out and lead workshops for teachers”. In addition, schools go through authorization visits, which means someone from the IB division or trained educators go to the school and make sure they are actually aligning with the IB philosophy and practices. According to the interviewees, every five years the school goes through an evaluation process, sometimes that is a physical visit or sometimes it’s more a towards a self-reflection report. “The IB is very complex and it gives the teachers and the school some flexibility, so we need to make sure we are maintaining that quality and that assurance that schools are engaging with that”, as stated by I2. Unless there are specific and significant changes, for example, the entry of a new teacher, the IB program focuses on the school as a consistent whole, evaluating if it is embracing the IB

principles, rather than working towards constantly training teachers. It is the school's responsibility to identify the needs of the teachers of aligning with the IB procedures.

It is expected autonomy from the teacher to engage with the IB program. According to I1, now focusing on the visual arts course:

For a visual arts teacher part, of their professional development workshop, that they would have via an IB provider, there is always a set of components that involves aspects of the course, so the TOK, the CAS, which is a creative and action oriented part of the students' program, so that is built in in that type of that professional development. In every course guide, including the visual arts course guide, of course there are direct links to the TOK, so this is the concern of TOK in the visual arts: what is the nature of truth in the arts versus, perhaps, the truth in the sciences; do artists rely on a different way of thinking about the world versus a historian, for example.

It is clear that the TOK is expected to permeate throughout all of the art practices and the mediators take part in translating the theory to students. Analyzing the frequency table, the three most articulated categories regarding the mediator are empowering (27%), motivational (25%) and technical resource (33%), recognizing the expectations of teachers' encouraging power and as a significant resource of teaching skills (see Table 8, p. 44). The orientations regarding the teachers' disciplinary character were unmentioned.

Furthermore, concerning the expectations from an IB student and the goals of the visual arts program, I1 states the importance of students to develop the ability to independently and transform a concept, a critical idea of their own into a vast range of art forms that, in I1's words:

is sustained, that is informed by this idea, based on their own experience and their own research, so their ability to have their own sustained and resilient art practice that is not decontextualized from the world or decontextualized from their context as a student. So, when we look at the visual arts course, we don't stipulate the specific kind of media or form that their art must take, we give them a flexibility of choices, which is negotiable. Because the goal is a 21st century artist is someone who is not working in an isolated environment. They are working in a community of artists, they communicate and there are informed by the world. So that is something central from the IB program of visual arts, which is largely different

from other offerings. There is a direct and ideal link to critical thinking and critical practice, and creative thinking and creative practice.

This statement shows a clear intention towards not only the critical-theoretical paradigm proposed by Habermas (1971), but the Interpretive-hermeneutic, in which the socialization is key for the systematization of the apprehension of knowledge. In addition, regarding the value of skills in the art classes, I1 stresses:

This is an ongoing conversation between the visual arts educators whom are deeply rooted in a set of skills and they often align with a specific media or form, and again, the goal is to create a curriculum that allows teachers in the program to put into action and implement it as best suits their purposes, but it cannot only be a visual arts education that is only about the use of oil paint. It has been a critique of other versions of the course. It's about a set of cognitive skills as well.

The IB member adds this idea to a holistic expectation of the students, wherein "They should be able to feel "I am a great technical painter" but I am also a technical painter in the world". Nonetheless, as agreed by the interviewees, the Visual Arts Course is founded on a studio experience, giving emphasis to technical competences and corroborating with the Empirical-Analytic paradigm in Habermas (1971). However, the social construction and interaction are greatly valued according to I1

(...) there is kind of impetus towards more collaboration within the arts and we see this in other art subjects that have been developed more recently through the visual arts course, and that type of collaborative experiences are vital to make sure they understand that as we are doing these individual basis assignments and that there is ultimately value in the ability of working together and having that dialogue and fold that into the artistic process. I also think that a key part of the course is going is to kind of tap into the real power of social engaged art. The social engaged artist is the key artistic orientation in the contemporary world. But how can your art change the world, more than simply represent it."

This shows a great preoccupation of stimulating a conscious, sociable trait in the students. The ideas set by the interviewees agree not only with what is proposed in the Visual Arts Course Guide, but validates all three paradigms discussed by Habermas (1971). The interview coding reinforces the value given to the Critical-theoretical orientation, as it is the most frequent amongst the three paradigms, appearing 59 times

(see Table 7, p. 44). The discourses show a clear emphasis in the Critical-theoretical orientation, wherein the IB program, along with the TOK, are concerned with forming an engaged, critical and empowered student through education.

4.5. Data Triangulation

Analyzing the recurrences in all the data collected, three main findings appear as relevant to understand mediation in the art educational process at the RISS. They all concern how knowledge is translated in the social context of the school: (a) regarding the actions of the mediator and the relationship with the students; (b) the overvalue given to technical skills in these practices and how it influences the process of mediation; and lastly, (c) the gap between what is proposed theoretically and how art education is carried out in the daily school activities.

The mediator

Primarily, the in-class environment plays a vital role in stimulating students' creativity – the school, in combination with the mediator, can influence in the students' artistic potential when encouraging their individuality, adaptability and exploring their sense of expression and self-knowledge (Fowler, 1996; Niu, 2007; Roege, & Kim, 2013). Highly noted during the observations at the RISS and the interviews with the students and the teacher, there is a great concern for order in the art practices. The disciplinary character of the teacher was explicit during the classes, and confirmed by the interviews with the students and the teacher herself. However, throughout the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017) and the interview with the IB members, disciplinary interventions remained unmentioned. By the students, it was recognized as rather socially limiting, yet necessary; and by the mediator herself, as a key role for the development of the in-class activities. Offering an adaptable mediation model, a self-directed, independent learning environment resulting in a playful ambience through art education can foster an adequate creative climate, being propitious to encourage the students to be more critical, curious and artistically active (Roege & Kim, 20013). The active character of art teaching practice is manifested when teachers “exercise professional judgment regarding the application and adaptation of skills and knowledge to take into account a range of factors including context, activity and experience” (Mitchel, 2015, p. 7). Therefore, in agreement to

Lamizet (1999), the way mediators conduct the classes and work around these variables reflect on the way students perceive and retain knowledge – not to be bound to theoretical terms, but considering self-knowledge and critical reflection of their surroundings. However, placing too many boundaries around the students' acts may limit their creative process and their self-exploration.

The practical demonstration of the relationship between the students and the teacher emphasizes the value given to the empirical-analytic paradigm of Habermas (1971), yet was clearly conflicting with the interpretive-hermeneutic and the critical-theoretical orientation. According to the authors who also agree upon Habermas' paradigms (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Pearse, 1992; Tubbs, 1996), rather than focusing on the product and the results, teachers should give emphasis and value to the processes and the efforts, allowing the students to express their originality and exploring their creative self (Roeger & Kim, 2013). As stated by Mitchel (2015, p. 8):

The social nature of visual arts teaching practice involves a process of being with others, a process of becoming for both teachers and students, and a process of becoming other, as teachers and students take on multiple viewpoints and develop approaches, processes and products that reflect deep thinking and engagement with the world as a source of ideas. In addition, for visual arts teachers, teaching practice is responsive to both the classroom environment and the art world and the materiality of its existence, adapting to the particular other-ness of context.

This shows how theorists expect a tight relationship between students and teachers, empowering students to explore their inner-self, stimulating their curiosity and their reflective potentiality (Eglinton, 2003; Melo & Tosta, 2008; Michell 2015; Throsby, 2013). Theories of mediation (Martin, 1993; Martinelli, 2003; Silva, 2009; Vygotsky, 1991) reaffirm that the way one interprets meaning and relates to artistic stimulus depends on one's social context and the interaction with these elements. Therefore, the distance in this relationship aligned with the disciplinary character of the mediator may have a contrary effect. According to Mitchel (2015), art education practice involves a "pathic knowledge in relation to self and other" (p. 8), wherein mediators should adapt their knowledge to practical matters concerning the social context and the sense of being. Furthermore, this sociability – either between the teacher and the students, or among

students themselves – enables collaborative experiences, a participatory drive, and promotes a sense of connectivity and responsibility within the educational context (Davis, 2008). The sociability process in art education creates a bonding atmosphere: proper ambience for the birth of ideas, of confidence in self-expression and of externalizing one's emotions (Sousa, 2003; Sullivan, 1993). When the action of the mediator confines students to discipline and order, limiting results may appear regarding their individual and artistic development.

Focus on technical competences

The combination of the three paradigms proposed by Habermas (1971), combining skills, social and cognitive competences, seek to enlighten the agents inserted in the educational process by enabling the production of a “rational discourse amongst them such that consensus can be produced between the participants who genuinely seek truth” (Tubbs, 1996, p. 45). Yet, what has been empirically identified in this research is the value of skills and practical competences over the critical-theoretical and interpretive-hermeneutic orientations proposed by Habermas (1971) in the art practices at the RISS. It arises questions towards the implications of reinforcing the importance of teaching skills in detriment of social and individual values.

Research demonstrate that while teachers may be a great resource of information, at times it is not articulated considering the social context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2004; Hamilton, 2004; Loughran, 2006; Mitchel, 2015). Furthermore, it is noticed that art teachers may have an extensive implicit range of knowledge, in the sense of showing and practicing what they know, rather than verbalizing, knowledge is rooted in their actions (Schon, 1983; Mitchel, 2015). The theoretical baggage that the mediator in this research carries will remain unquestioned; nonetheless, during the observations and confirmed by the interviewees, although the students rely on the mediator for the process of creation of their work, they turn to her mostly for technical advice. The teacher's actions showed profound knowledge in technical competences in detriment of conveying theoretical knowledge and the stimulation of students' individuality, creativity and sociability.

The issues that arise when skills and technical values dominate critical-thinking and the social construction in art fall upon limiting the educational experience. Previous

researchers reveal the importance of art education in connecting to other subjects, as well as the promotion of a range of positive cognitive outcomes and its reflection of academic performance (Winner, Hetland, Veenema, Sheridan, & Palmer, 2006; Roege & Kim, 2013). Fundamentally, the art education process should consider emotional, individual and expressive aspects of the students' life, rather than pragmatic intellectual competences and skills (Eisner, 2002). When reducing the art educational experience to technique, conflicting with the theorists, students tend to believe that the format is more empowering than the process of creation or the content, which was clearly the case noticed among the RISS students. The students themselves were thoroughly self-critical when it came to technical excellence, embracing the belief that through artistic skills they could convey better their expressions. While that may give them confidence in the art practice, it also confines them to the idea of needing to be technically developed in order to be able to express their ideas – demotivating those who are not up to the “standards”. Art education, however, in its practice, seeks to encourage to translate students' emotions and feeling, promoting emotional stability (Roege & Kim, 2013), wherein technical competence should be placed as a subordinate objective.

This is where concepts of cultural mediation evidence themselves as useful to the art education practice: according to Martin (1993), the focus should be on giving the major importance to the process rather than the product, shifting the attention from media to mediation. This is highly identified in the Visual Arts Course Guide and as the base of TOK, however, as seen, there is a significant discrepancy between theory and practice.

If art education stimulates students' self-development, individuality and social dimension depends on how the processes of mediation occur – in other words, how art is being taught and learned (Roege & Kim, 2013), “if the skills of artistic expression are taught to students in repetitious, imitative, and meaningless formats, then students will not exercise their minds in creative ways” (p. 125). This puts restrictions on students' educational experience, when the art classes should evoke their artistic imagination, individually and collectively, promoting experimentation, self-awareness and critical-thinking (Canatella, 2015; Jagodzinski, 1991; Sueli, 2003; Throsby, 2013; Vázquez, 1978).

Therefore, a process of art education should not be perceived as a “means-ends systems”, with goals that seek solely technical quality (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 36). The

interpretive-hermeneutic and the critical-theoretical orientations should be put to interest in the same balance, providing a holistic experience for the art students.

Falling through the gap: distance between theory and practice

Educational disjunctions occur when the practices conducted throughout the in-class activities are somehow distant from their purpose (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). These problems ascend when there are divergences between educational practices and the proposed theoretical orientations. Concerning this research, one of the most relevant findings is that there is an expressive distance between what is oriented and expected by the International Baccalaureate program, the institute that defines guidelines for the educational system adopted, and the practices in the art classes at the RISS.

The IB provides an extensive support regarding course guides, teacher workshops and school member meetings to align their values to the schools that adopt their educational scheme. The review of these guides is carefully and systematically conducted by the IB members, embedded in research and based on experiences, both positive and negative, reported by the schools. In spite of this intention of creating guides that approximates the schools to this educational system, schools are given autonomy concerning flexibilization of certain orientation to specific needs. In addition, schools are expected to internally identify their necessities and proactively report them to the IB office so that assistance may be provided. This shows a mutual co-dependency between the IB, and specifically, the RISS towards succeeding in the aligning of theory and practice.

The balance between academic accomplishments combined with a drive for instigating individual development enables to ensure a more creative development in educational theories (Roeger, & Kim, 2013). This is demonstrated in the documental analysis of the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), wherein all three paradigms of Habermas (1971) are present – although critical-analytical competences are emphasized in greater value. However, as observed in the daily practiced, the interpretive-hermeneutic and the critical-theoretical orientations seemed obfuscated by the interest in the empirical-analytic paradigm.

As demonstrated by the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017) and confirmed by the interviews with the IB members, the Theory of Knowledge, as well as a theoretical course,

it is a conceptual ground that permeates throughout the learning process of all subjects. Regarding the art classes, TOK comes to encourage students reflect on the nature of knowledge, identifying a range of cognitive means, such as emotions, language and imagination. The TOK has great confluences with both interpretive-hermeneutic and critical-theoretical paradigms of Habermas (1971), as it instigates the construction of knowledge by social interaction and seeks the enlightenment of the students through critical thinking. The Visual Arts Course Guide and the interviewees demonstrate the immense value given to the personal development of the students through the arts, enhancing their critical potentiality. However, as seen during the participatory observations and confirmed by the interviews with the teacher and the students, although the interpretive-hermeneutic and critical-theoretical paradigms were present, the importance given to the development of art making skills were far more emphasized. This shows a clear discrepancy between what is proposed by the IB as ideals of art education and what is being practiced in-class. Not only the students were highly self-critical towards their art making performance, but the teacher revealed herself as being a main source of technical advice. The exploration of different types of artistic techniques, such as sculpture, drawing, stencils, etc., is a specific requirement of the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), still, the focus of the practical activities relies on the process of learning, exploring emotions and expressing their inner self, rather than seek for technical excellence.

Furthermore, the interpretive-hermeneutic (1971) orientation combined with a series of mediation theories reaffirm the importance of sociability for the construction of knowledge. Although the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), as well as the IB members, emphasize the role of the social activities in the students' life, in practical terms we see limitations in the interactivity and sociability. According to Carr & Kemmis (1986, p. 43), the way we relate to our social environment is a reflective process and it "is capable to change our knowledge", therefore, "social and educational theories must cope with this reflectivity".

The processes of mediation rely on all the actors involved in the educational practice, and fundamentally on the mediator, facilitating and making bridges for students to access, think, make and appreciate art (Beillerot, 2000; Eglinton, 2003; Michell, 2015). As confirmed by the interviews with the IB members and the art teacher at the RISS, the

art classes have autonomy to shape the content and the forms of presenting art as a subject. Yet, this independency may go too far and fall into a gap distancing the guidelines and the practices. Therefore, theoretical educational proposals should spare efforts to identify these complications in the social context of art education that frustrate to meet their values, goals and orientations, being “able to offer theoretical accounts which make teachers aware of how they may be eliminated and overcome” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 130). Theory and practice should walk hand to hand, being able to dialogue to succeed in pursuing the same goals.

5. Conclusion

This research unravels how students at the RISS access and relate to art in the action of the mediating elements surrounding the art education process. Although theorists state the importance of art education to stimulate student's individual development, to nurture creativity and meaning making within their social dynamics, the analysis shows limitations regarding this encouragement, especially concerning their social interactions.

The methods applied in this research were fundamental to meet the goals of this investigation. The ethnomethodological approach enabled a close understanding of how art education is practiced in its social spectrum, analyzing the relationship between students, the teacher and art. Furthermore, the document analysis of the Visual Arts Course Guide gave theoretical grounds to understand if what was being proposed was in fact being accomplished practically and the interviews demonstrated how the agents involved in the art education process related to the subjects. Moreover, the paradigms presented by Habermas (1971) applied to art education assisted in categorizing what values are being articulated in the in-class daily activities.

The document that guides the art education practice at the RISS has similar goals to theorists' ideals regarding art education, however, in practical means, there is an evident gap between what is proposed and what has been happening at a classroom level. The most articulated interest in art education was undoubtedly the acquisition of skills and the thrive to achieve technical excellence. As expressed by the Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), the experimentation of different art making practices is a requirement, however, they stress on the process being more important than the product. This means that rather than valuing skills, art education should be focused on the learning process, considering the social environment and encouraging students' individual development. At the RISS, conflicting with what is proposed by the Course Guide and art education theorists, there was a clear overvalue of the empirical-analytic orientation in detriment of the interpretive-hermeneutic and the critical-theoretical interests.

Furthermore, what approximates theory to practice is the action of the mediator. While the IB Foundation is quite flexible and gives autonomy to schools and teachers, a more accurate alignment between the guidance and the practice should be met. As affirmed by Carr & Kemmis (1986, p. 130): "just as all theories are the product of some practical activity, so all practical activities are guided by some theory". This means there

should be a closer relationship between the theoretical framework and the practice of the mediators so art education can succeed in meeting the proposed goals.

This research limits itself to a specific educational setting and may not be applicable to an absolute range of art education practices. However, it derives from this particular case and opens discussions towards how art education is being theorized and practiced and why this issue should be closely analyzed. Further research may broaden the studied object, for instance, analyzing the processes of mediation from different art teachers' perspectives. Also, conducting a comparative research between classes or even further, different schools, may give more complete results in the understanding of how students are mediated in the process of art education. Furthermore, teacher's training activities which value holistic learning of the arts should be investigated to understand its level of efficiency. In addition, studies between how students access and apprehend art knowledge through educational institutes, in combination with a deeper understanding of individual relationship to art, for example, their previous access, their social surroundings regardless of school, considering their backgrounds, may generate interesting results.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Figures

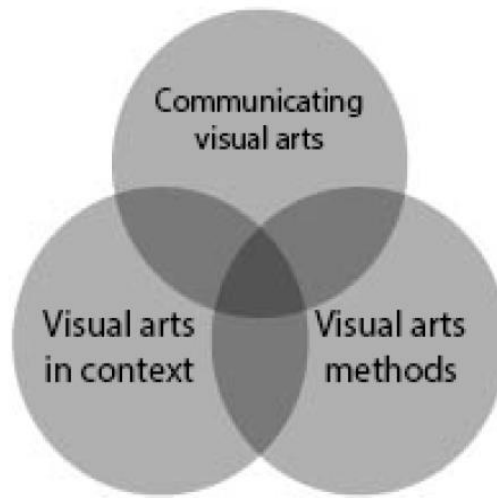


Figure 1. Reference: Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), p. 17

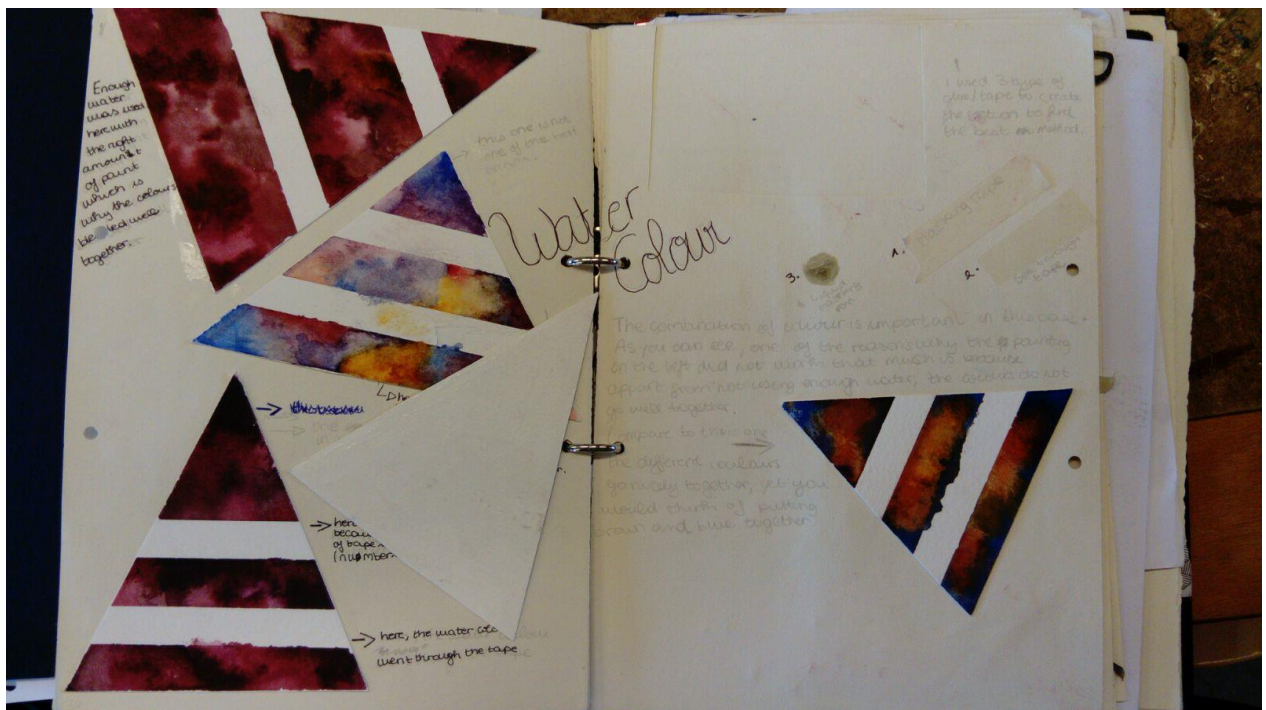


Figure 2. Progress book: water color

Appendix A: Figures



Figure 3. Progress book: acrylic

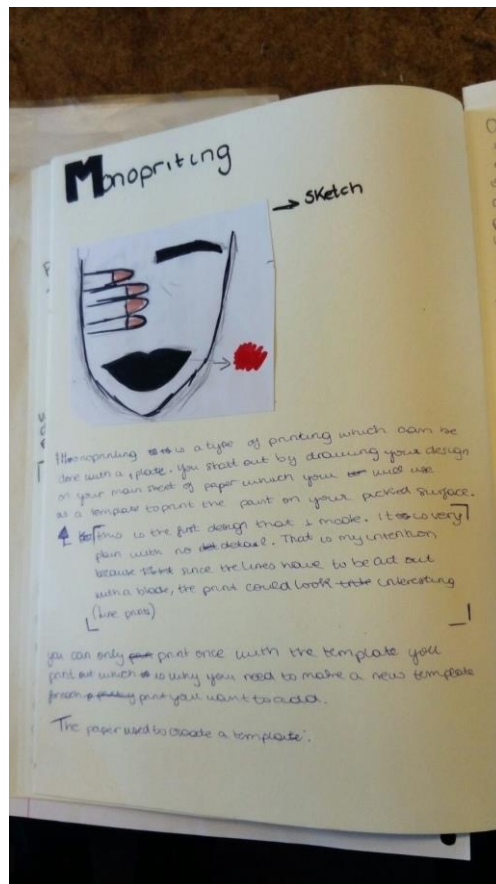


Figure 4. Progress book: monoprinting

Appendix A: Figures

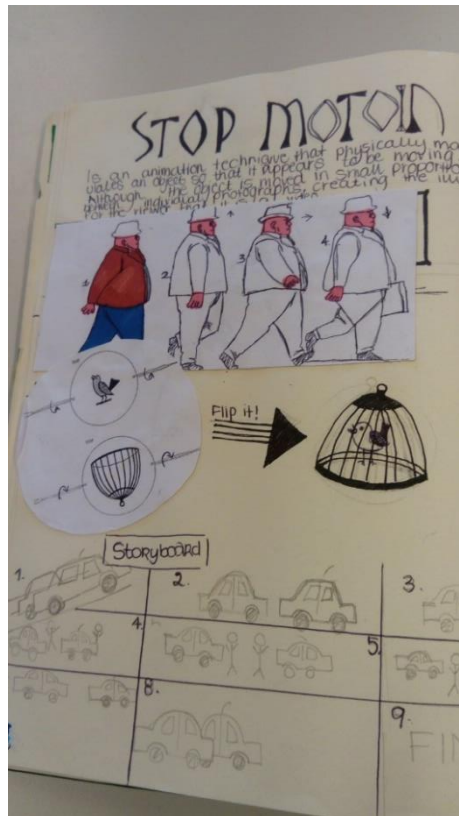


Figure 5. Progress Book: stop motion

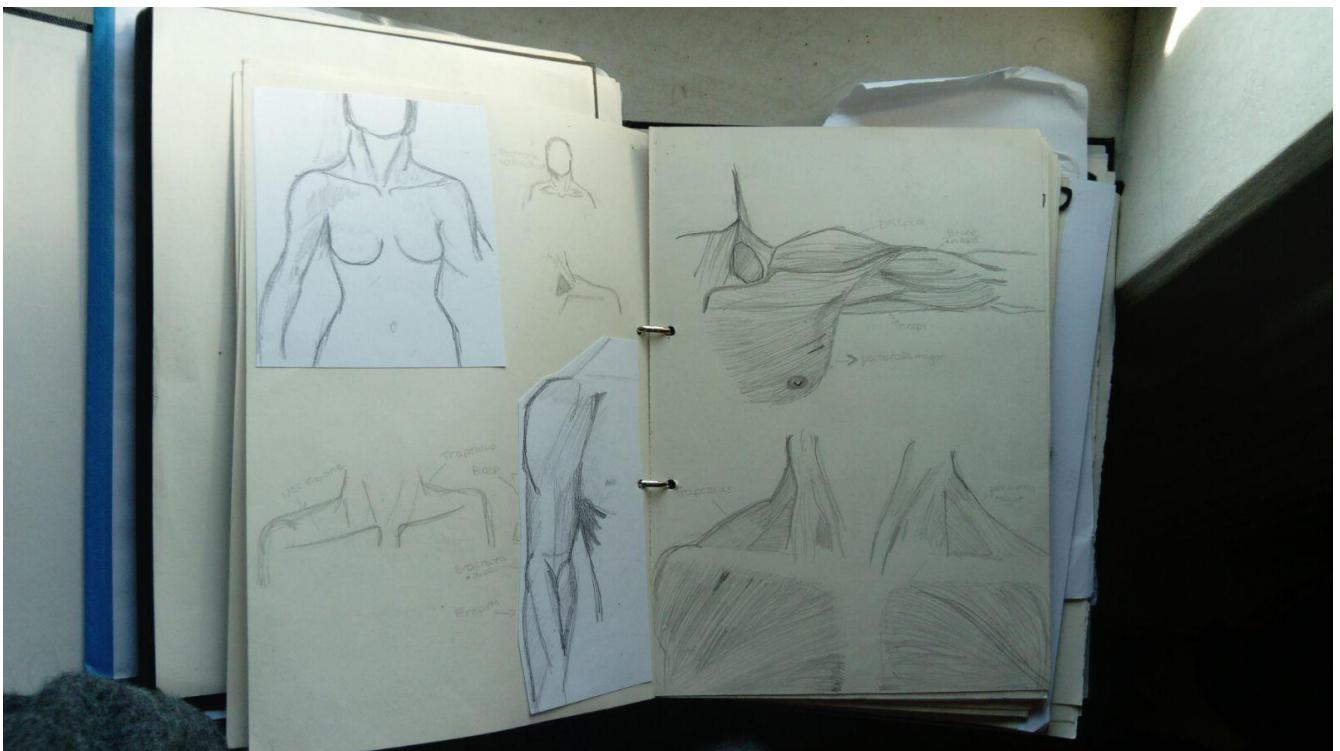


Figure 6. Progress Book: human anatomy

Appendix A: Figures

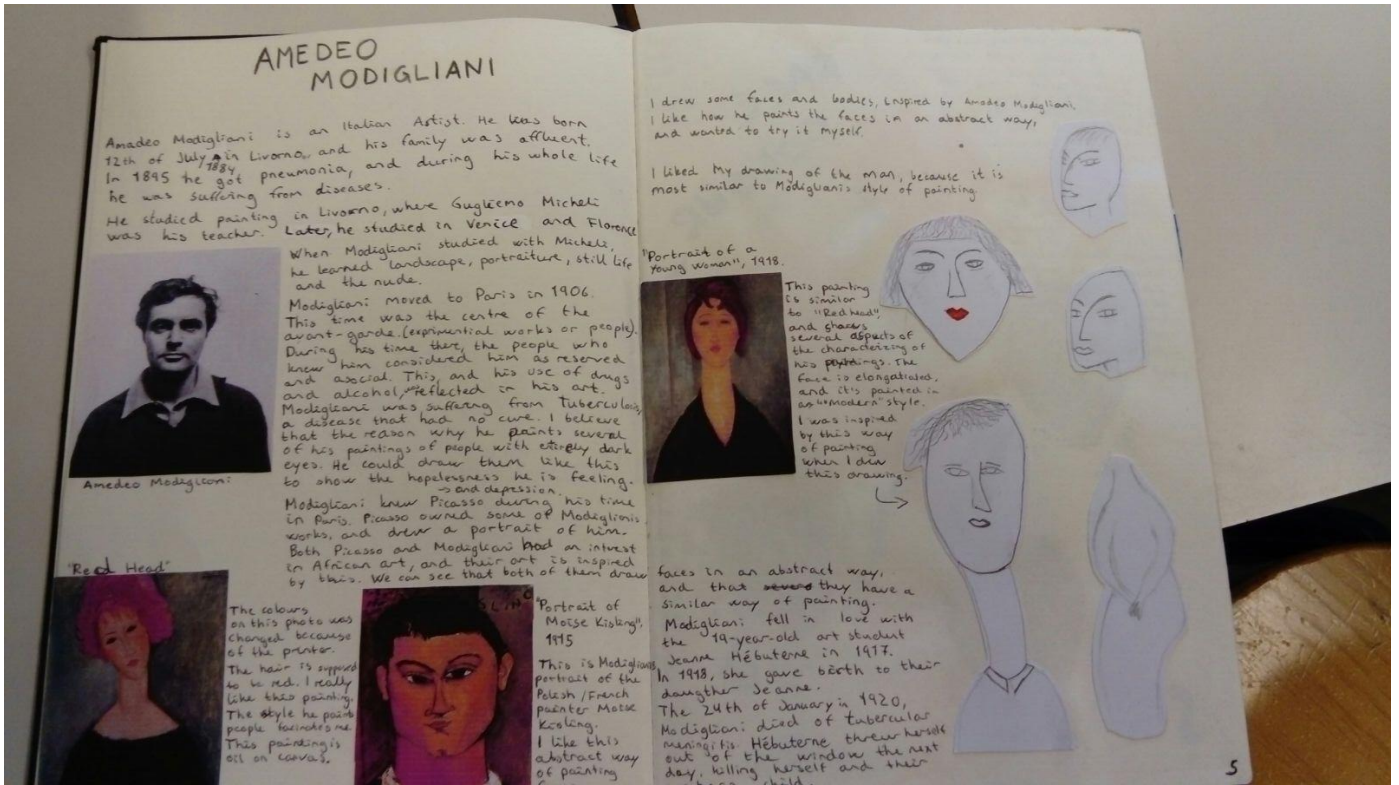


Figure 7. Progress Book: Mondigliani

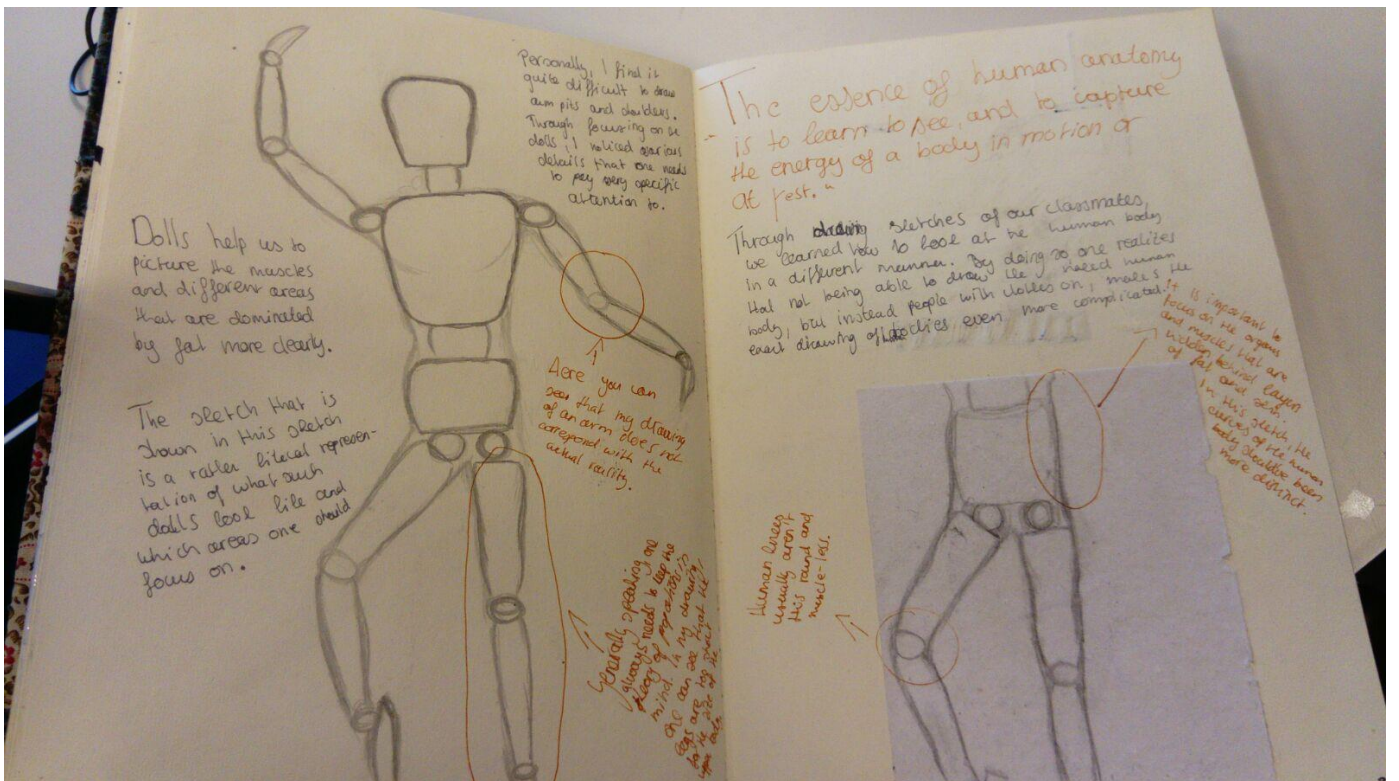


Figure 8. Progress Book: human anatomy

Appendix A: Figures

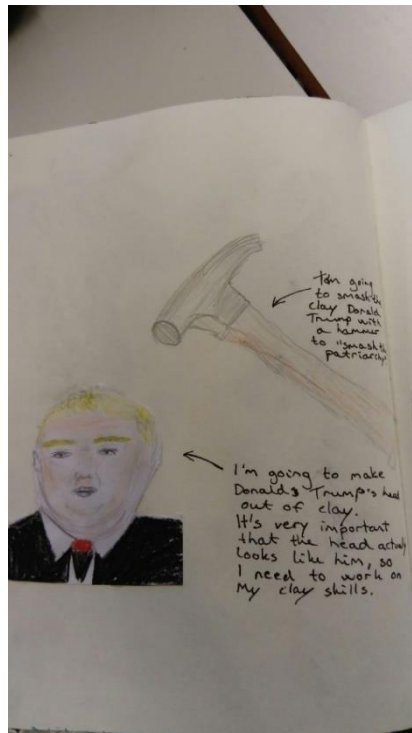


Figure 9. Progress Book: Donald Trump project 1

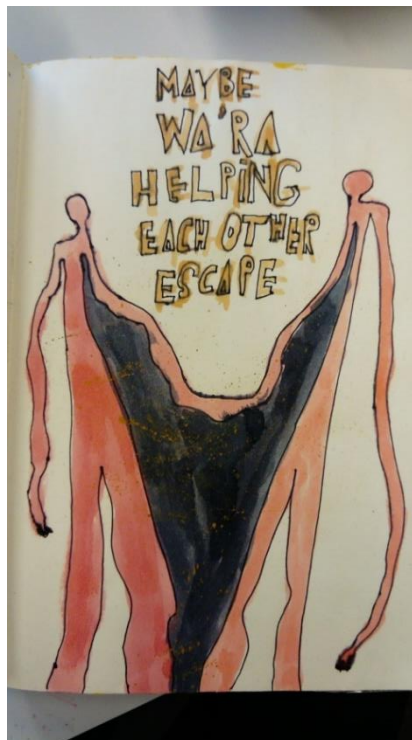


Figure 10. Progress Book: Merging bodies

Appendix A: Figures



Figure 11. Progress Book: Donald Trump project 2

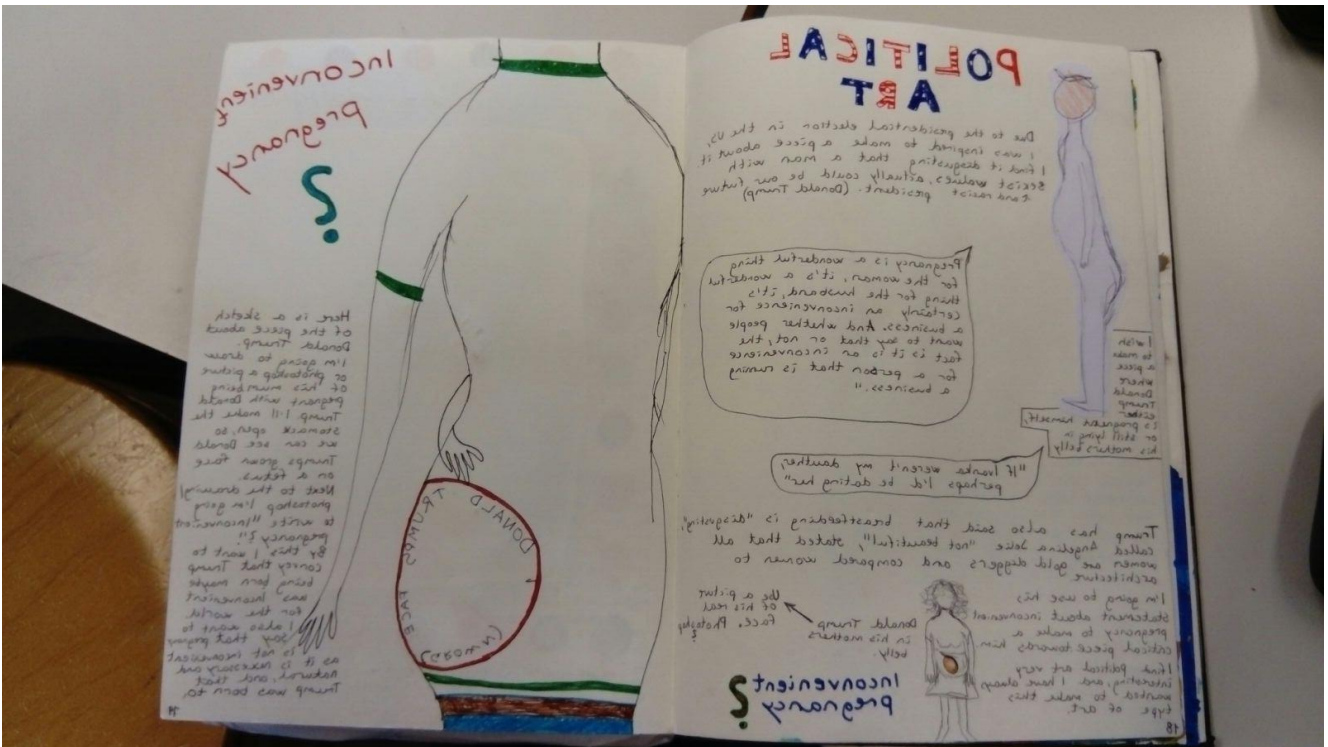


Figure 12. Progress Book: Donald Trump project 3

Appendix A: Figures



Figure 13. Progress Book: Refugee suitcase project 1

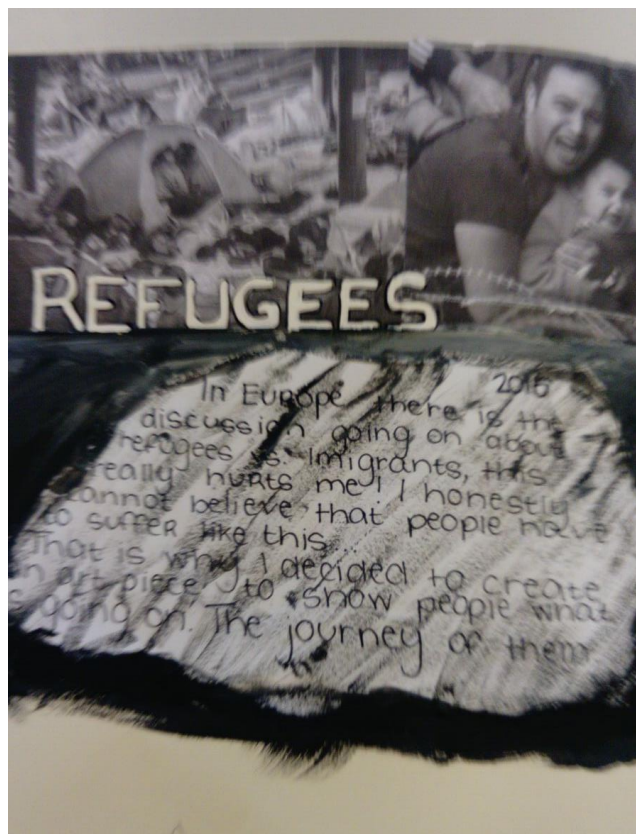


Figure 14. Progress Book: Refugee suitcase project 2

Appendix A: Figures

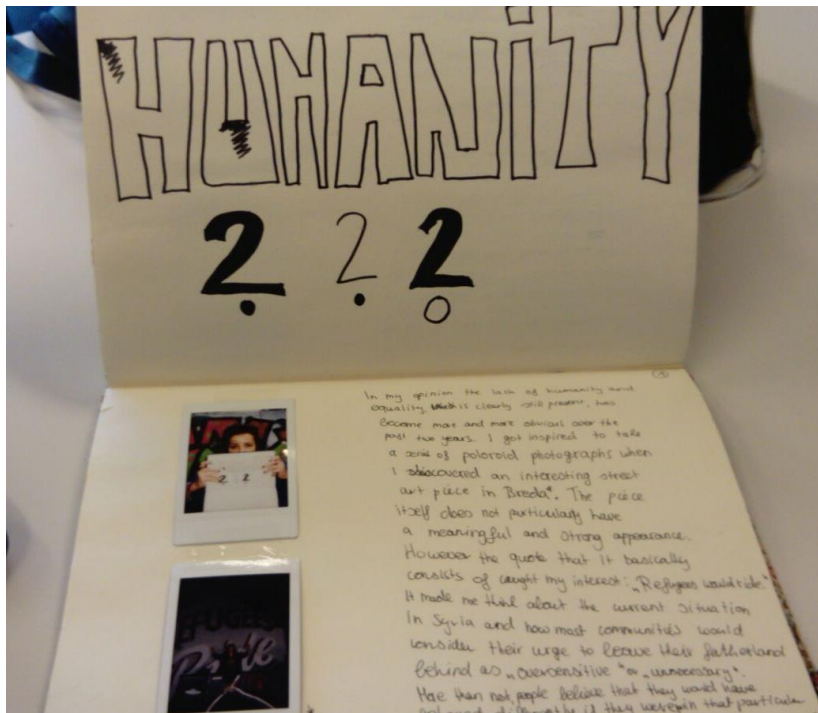


Figure 15. Progress Book: Street art and polaroid

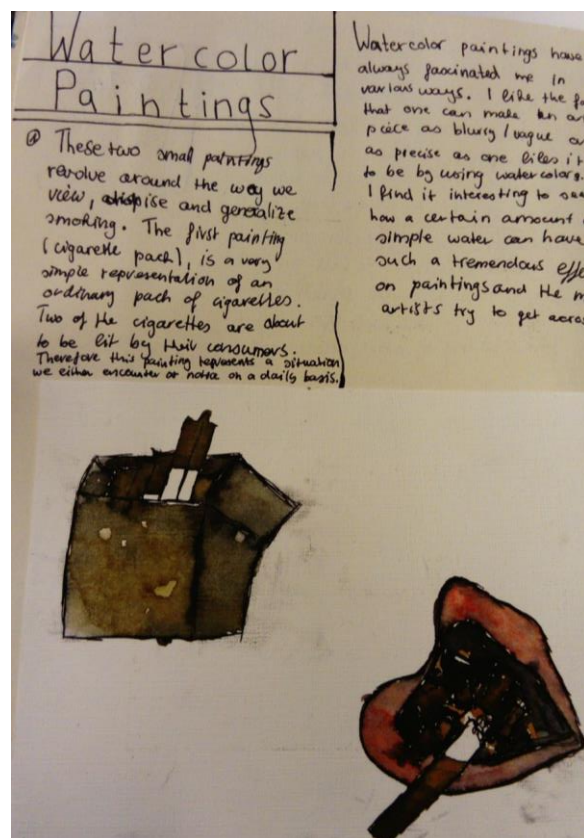


Figure 16. Progress Book: Ash tray

Appendix B: Interview overview and interview guides

Overview - Teacher Interview

Teacher at the Rotterdam International Secondary School; female.

Interview Guide - Teacher

- Conversation starter: Teachers' Background
- TOK – what is it? How does it guide your classes?
- Do you use any other theoretical guides for your classes?
- Did you – do you get any formal training from the IB program to shape the class into their framework?
- Why do you think art matters in life?
- Why is art education important in schools? Goals?
- What are the key values in relation to art you try to pass on to your students?
- Why is it important to teach skills?
- What is the impact of art in the personal life of the students?
- What is the importance of art in the social spectrum of the students?
- What do you expect to accomplish teaching art?
- What is the role of the teacher in the art teaching process?
- How do you assess the students' works? What aspects do you consider?
- How may you evaluate creativity?
- How do the external activities go on? What are their goals?

Appendix B: Interview overview and interview guide

Overview – Students' Interview

Five international high-school students from the Rotterdam International Secondary School; all female; from 16 to 18 years old.

Interview Guide – Students

- Conversation starter: name, age, nationality.
- Where did your interest from arts come from? (had previous art classes, family, visits museum?)
- Why did you decide to take the arts-humanity program in high school?
- Why do you think art is important? What are the goals-possibilities of art?
- Why do you think art is important for your life particularly?
- What do you learn in the art classes?
- What is your favorite thing to learn – part of the art class?
- What - who are your artistic inspirations? How did you access – got to know them?
- Why do you think it's important to learn art – have art classes?
- How do you think art may help us discuss other topics in life? (refer to specific themes he-she wrote about on progress book: feminism, body, immigration, humanity, existence, etc.)
- What is the importance of the teacher in the art classes?
- How do the evaluations go on?
- What do you think about evaluating creativity?
- What do you want to do after high school? Would you like to continue making art-studying art?

Appendix B: Interview overview and interview guide

Overview – IB Members' Interview

Interviewee 1: Visual Arts curriculum manager from the International Baccalaureate Organization; male; American.

Interviewee 2: TOK curriculum manager from the International Baccalaureate Organization; female; British.

Interview Guide – IB Members

- Conversation starter: background
- What is the TOK? Is it inspired by other theories?
- Do you perform any formal training with the school to shape the classes into the TOK-IB framework?
- How is that maintained and evaluated to see if it's done practically?
- Why do you think art matters in life?
- Why is art education important in schools? What are the goals of the art program?
- What are the key values in relation to art that should be articulated between the teacher and the students?
- What are the goals of the art program proposed by IB?
(- Why is it important to teach skills? What is the impact of art in the personal life of the students? importance of art in the social spectrum of the students?)
- What is expected to accomplish when teaching art? What is the role of the teacher in the art teaching process?
- How does the IB program suggest to assess the students' work? What should be considered when evaluating?

Appendix C: Tables

Table 1: Coding System

CODING SYSTEM	
Categories	Subcategories
Empirical-analytic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical Skills
Interpretive-hermeneutic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociability • Communication
Critical-theoretical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral values • Creativity • Engagement in art • Critical-thinking • Theoretical Knowledge
Mediator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary • Empowering • Motivational • Resourcefulness - Technique

Table 2: Technical requirements. Reference: Visual Arts Course Guide (2017), p. 21.

Two-dimensional forms	Three-dimensional forms	Lens-based, electronic and screen-based forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing: such as charcoal, pencil, ink; • Painting: such as acrylic, oil, watercolour • Printmaking: such as relief, intaglio, planographic, chine collé; • Graphics: such as illustration and design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sculpture: such as ceramics, found objects, wood, assemblage; • Designed objects: such as fashion, architectural, vessels • Site specific/ephemeral: such as land art, installation, mural; • Textiles: such as fiber, weaving, printed fabric. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-based and sequential art: such as animation, graphic novel, storyboard; • Lens media: such as still, moving, montage; • Digital/screen based: such as vector graphics, software generated.

Appendix C: Tables

Table 3: Coding frequency Paradigms – Document Analysis

Visual Arts Course Guide - Coding frequency		
Code (paradigm)	Sub-code	N° of appearance
Empirical-analytical	Practical Skills	71
Interpretive-hermeneutic	Communication	50
	Sociability	43
Critical-theoretical	Creativity	22
	Critical-thinking	92
	Engagement in art	48
	Moral values - Individual developing	66
	Theoretical Knowledge	42
Totals		434

Table 4: Coding frequency Mediator – Document Analysis

Document analysis - Coding Frequency		
Code	Sub-code	N° of appearance
Mediator	Disciplinary	0
	Empowering	16
	Motivational	10
	Resourcefulness - Technique	4
	TOTALS	30

Appendix C: Tables

Table 5: Coding frequency three paradigms – observation field notes

Observation Field Notes - Coding frequency		
Code (paradigm)	Sub-code	N° of appearance
Empirical-analytical	Practical Skills	70
Interpretive-hermeneutic	Communication	5
	Sociability	17
Critical-theoretical	Creativity	3
	Critical-thinking	10
	Engagement in art	17
	Moral values - Individual developing	11
	Theoretical Knowledge	2
Totals		135

Table 6: Coding frequency Mediator – Observation Field Notes

Observation Field Notes - Coding Frequency		
Code	Sub-code	N° of appearance
Mediator	Disciplinary	51
	Empowering	8
	Motivational	9
	Resourcefulness - Technique	25
	TOTALS	93

Appendix C: Tables

Table 7: Coding frequency three paradigms – Interviews

Interviews - Coding frequency				
Code (paradigm)	Sub-code	N° of appearance - Students	N° of appearance - Teacher	N° of appearance - IB Members
Empirical-analytical	Practical Skills	47	13	15
Interpretive-hermeneutic	Communication	13	2	24
	Sociability	6	1	15
Critical-theoretical	Creativity	4	1	9
	Critical-thinking	10	2	23
	Engagement in art	6	1	10
	Moral values - Individual developing	11	2	13
	Theoretical Knowledge	2	1	4
Totals		99	23	113

Table 8: Coding frequency Mediator – Interviews

Interviews - Coding frequency				
Code	Sub-code	N° of appearance - Students	N° of appearance - Teacher	N° of appearance - IB Members
Mediator	Disciplinary	16	4	0
	Empowering	3	2	11
	Motivational	2	1	7
	Resourcefulness - Technique	7	8	9
TOTALS		28	15	27

