

VIANA DO CASTELO – STUCCO ART AND ARTISTS

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Abstract: -

This project describes an Art Project carried out at the Higher School of Education of Viana do Castelo Polytechnic Institute, Northern Portugal, in a class of the 2nd year of the Basic Education course within the curriculum unit "Artistic and Cultural Animation Techniques" in the academic year 2020/2021. The main aim of this article is to disseminate a project that combines cultural and artistic animation with the promotion of cultural heritage and, in particular, with the valorization of an artistic tradition from Alto Minho that tends to disappear – the stucco art.

Methodologically, the action research method was used in combination with the service-learning model, using the interview as a research technique to collect data on the problems that affect this hiddenstream art form. A number of games were developed to address the art of stucco for 1st cycle primary education children, as well as a video recording on the history of stucco. The imaginative and innovative responses of the university students help to highlight the need for the protection and appreciation of such a tradition in the general population and among 1st cycle children.

Keywords: *stucco art; hidden stream art; cultural animation; service-learning.*



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INTRODUCTION

The involvement of Higher Education students with the methodology of Art-Based Service-Learning (ABSL) was the motto of this project on artistic practice in a subject entitled 'Techniques of Artistic and Cultural Animation', as part of the training course for teachers of Basic Education, which included an action research method at the Higher School of Education of the Viana do Castelo Polytechnic Institute (HSE-VCPI), Northern Portugal. The project described here, based on an Art -Based Service-Learning methodology to promote an active citizenship, was carried out in a class of the 2nd year of the Basic Education Degree Course of Viana do Castelo Polytechnic, as part of the curriculum unit "Techniques of artistic and cultural animation", in the academic year 2020/2021, during COVID's confinement period.

The main purpose of this article is to disseminate this project, which combines artistic and cultural animation with the methodology of Service-Learning and the promotion of cultural heritage through the valorisation of a hiddenstream art tradition of the Alto Minho that needs to be protected and safeguarded – plasterwork or stucco art, associated with the municipality of Viana do Castelo and which, according to Vasconcelos e Sousa (2021), is an art that "was very popular in Portugal in the second half of the 18th century, throughout the 19th century and part of the 20th century...." (p.9). The same source states that it had a great success as an ornamental expression of interiors (Figs. 1 & 2), and the major depictions were "vegetalist elements, arabesques, zoomorphic decorations and certain everyday features.... mythological or even Christian evocations.... musical instruments) (p. 10)

Statement of Problem

The curricular activities, developed online and face-to-face, aimed to help students in this class to understand how ABSL can be an effective strategy of education, based on participants' experiences and combining community service with academic learning. The project combined the experience of learning, reflection on concepts of Service-Learning and social entrepreneurship associated with the role of the animator, and emphasized hidden current traditions in the arts, or 'hidden' traditions, without the necessary social recognition (Collins & Sandell, 1987), as in the case of stucco art. Araújo (2021, p. 177), son of a plasterer and connoisseur of this decorative art, points out that in modern times "the profession of plasterer is considered a dying craft, as it can be seen in the small number of active plasterers in the municipality of Viana do Castelo".

It is well known that undefined educational and cultural policies over many years have contributed to portraying arts education as unable of performing its true function in the field of formal and non-formal education. In the last 42 years, Portugal has put all its effort into the development of its economy, which has led to an improvement in living standards that are still far from European economic levels (Moura & Almeida, 2010, p.100).

Definition of Key Terms

The concept of animateur has been interpreted by the action team as someone with specific functions, which according to Serrano and Puya (2007, In Fonte, 2017, pp. 266 & 267) are related to the concepts of: (i) educator - education becomes a tool of change and personal and social development, stimulating action and bringing people out of their isolation; (ii) agent of social change, working with groups of different natures to engage them in a common action. Someone that evaluates, feels and acts in the social reality to change it; (iii) mediator who stimulates and builds relationships and establishes positive communication between people, groups and communities and also who facilitates personal and social improvement; Moreover, he/she is an intercultural stimulator, who prevents cultural conflicts and improves mutual understanding between communities of different origins.

Service-Learning is understood by several researchers and educators (Moura, 2019) as a pedagogical approach that combines learning objectives with community service to create new educational standards for students that address real-life needs in their community.

Hiddenstream art forms, is related to art forms that do not have social recognition, (Moura and Cruz, 2005, p.243), such as popular art.

Stucco means decorative plasterwork. According to several researchers (Freitas, 2021; Araújo, 2021 and others), the first great moment in Portugal was in the 18th century, when the Marquis of Pombal created the plaster school and the Italian Swiss plasterers, such as João Grossi, came to Portugal (Freitas, 2021,p. 119).

Project Aims

The aims of this project were the following:

- To develop knowledge and understanding of new concepts such as animateur, service-learning, hiddenstream art, stucco;
- To reflect on some aspects of art education from a multicultural and interdisciplinary perspective;
- To use a Service-Learning approach together with an action research method, through visual arts and new technologies, in the pandemic time of COVID.

Research Questions

- What knowledge the Higher Education students have about the art of stucco?
- How do the project participants relate Service-Learning to cultural and artistic animation and the appreciation of the Decorative Arts through Art Education?

Methodology

The action research method was chosen because it is the best way to address the issues surrounding this hiddenstream art form. Oral and written testimonies of a researcher (a former MA Art Education student of the Polytechnic of Viana do Castelo and son of a plasterer) were used. What motivated the choice of this method was also the reconstructive social ideal of raising awareness among all participants of the existing prejudices and stereotypes regarding the hiddenstream phenomenon and preparing students for an active role through cultural animation.

The aim of the study was to find imaginative and innovative responses to protect and ensure the continuity of the plastering profession and knowledge about stucco art. Participant responses were supported by documentary analysis, interviews, audiovisual recordings, informal online discussions between all participants, meetings via Zoom, WhatsApp and face to face for the creation of the video and the individual games.

Sample

In this project, two ESEVC professors, visual arts specialists, a researcher, a former ESEVC bachelor and master student (Ramiro Araújo), ten students (n° =10) and two CTESP interns from AT collaborated in the filming and editing of the video.

Description of the action

A former Master's student of Artistic Education, who had graduated in the same institution with a degree in Arts and Cultural Management and had pointed out the problem of the possible disappearance of the stucco tradition, was invited to share his concerns with this class. The concepts addressed in his master's thesis and the stories of stucco artists from his community were shared with the students and from there a working methodology was initiated that included an analysis of the art history and narratives of this stucco researcher, Ramiro Araújo, from the rural community of Carreço.



Figs. 1,2 & 3 Details of ceilings decorated with plasterwork © Oquiniami 2021

At the beginning of this curricular intervention, all the students who participated in this project at ESEVC were completely unaware of this artistic tradition. This has reinforced our decision to describe and report on research that focuses on hiddenstream art and to try to find ways of addressing stereotypes and prejudices related to culture. For Allison (1993) culture covers all aspects of human endeavour that characterize a particular society, and this British researcher explains art as It was negotiated with the students and the representative of the municipality of Carreço how the learning of the service would take place and how they would turn the exploration of such a topic into an artistic and cultural animation with educational tools created with everyone's help (creation of a video and educational games) that would help to make this tradition known to the children of the municipality of Carreço (1st cycle primary school and garden) and the target audience of the exhibition promoted by the municipality of Viana do Castelo.

Description of the project activities


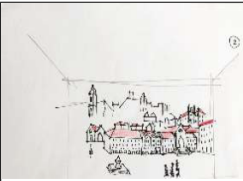



Activity 1






Creation of a video about the history of the stucco.

This activity included the following steps:

1. Interview with a guest.
2. Review of literature (Ramiro Araújo MA dissertation on the life stories of generations of plasterers of the Carreço area.
3. Synopsis of the story;
4. Script for the film about the history of the Stuck (Table 1).
5. Division of the class into groups and working out how to illustrate the different parts of the story.
6. Design of scenarios and characters.
7. Audiovisual recording.
8. Presentation in the primary school of the community of plasterers of Carreço.

Table 1 Storyboard Fragment for the Final Video

Plans	Duration of the Image	Content	Dialogue or Voice-off (narrator)	Sound
 <p>General plan (framing in each area of the scenario the group of characters who intervene in the action)</p>	10 seconds	Living room of Ramiro Araújo residence	Voice-Off (Narrator) The Araújo Family is by the fireplace, at the longest evening meal of the year.	Sound of firewood crackling on the stove room.
Image of purse palace hall	30 seconds		Mr. Ramiro, when you see the picture, ask him:	There's talk of stucco about the sound of firewood crackling
 <p>General plan</p>  <p>Medium Plan</p> <p>(Image of the interior of a church with the figure of a worker)</p>	1 minute	Ramiro narrating	<p>It was the year 1743,</p> <p>At the time of kings and marquis</p> <p>You have no idea what an Italian did</p> <p>At the bourgeoisie's house...</p> <p>Grossi was an artist</p> <p>And I'm going to give you a clue</p> <p>Each building an achievement</p> <p>And a treat for the view</p> <p>....</p> <p>But at that time the Portuguese</p> <p>Lived in his smallness</p> <p>The church stucco he made</p> <p>It wasn't at the level of French stucco yet.</p>	Symphony No. 3 Allegrissimo (Domenico Scarlatti)
 <p>General Plan (Lisbon Image)</p>	30 seconds	Ramiro narrating	<p>Magnanimous was refinable</p> <p>A cultural era</p> <p>They lived with great cheer</p> <p>All the royal house</p>	Symphony No. 3 Alegriissimo (Domenico Scarlatti)
 <p>Medium plan</p> <p>(The palace of Mafra and the king much larger than the people to demonstrate greatness arises)</p>	30 seconds		<p>For our country to transform</p> <p>The bars were more</p> <p>Of a thousand</p> <p>That the arts came to beautify</p> <p>With the gold of Brazil</p>	

 <p>General Plan</p>	30 seconds	Ramiro narrating	<p>But on November 1, 1755, everything changed</p> <p>On the day of the dead the earth trembled</p> <p>Many fled, and nothing sheltered them</p> <p>No one thought, but it happened</p>	Collapsing sound
 <p>General plan (Damaged buildings)</p> 	40 seconds			Sound of revolting sea
<p>Medium plan (The waves come up destroying what's left and people running away)</p>				
 <p>General Plan (Image of destruction and fire behind on paper)</p>  <p>Medium plan (Marquis with Italian and plans)</p>	1 minute	Ramiro narrating	<p>The Marquis wanted to decide</p> <p>With the help of the plasterer</p> <p>The city rebuilds</p> <p>For the sea that local complained</p> <p>part of the Lisbon territory burned</p> <p>and in 5 days and nights everything burned</p> <p>because that fire no one fought.</p> <p>With this horror scenario</p> <p>Bury the dead and save the living</p> <p>It was his goal</p> <p>And the corroded buildings</p> <p>They had to be slaughtered</p>	Symphony No. 3. Serious (Domenico Scarlatti)



 <p>General Plan (General image of Lisbon square)</p>	30 seconds	Ramiro narrating	The new Lisbon emerged Almost by magic A great city That became majestic.	Symphony No. 3 Alleging (Domenico Scarlatti)
	30 seconds		Marquis, the Enlightenment And Grossi, your protégé Open artist's school A dream achieved This decorative art	
<p>Medium plan (Artist school image)</p>			Of apprentices needed And the plasterer To this cause was allied And very actively Leaving Lisbon renewed.	
 <p>Sequence Plan (Image of the master and apprentices)</p>	30 seconds		From Viana they were coming More and more plasterers From Affe, Carreço and Areosa The best workers	

Table 1 Script for a Group

The final video featured the work of the 4 groups.

Activity 2

This second activity consisted of the individual creation of games as an educational tool for the educational services of the Museum of Decorative Arts of Viana, addressing the tradition of stucco art. The students researched textbooks, children's games, national programs for different basic education disciplines and artistic techniques.

Selected example: "The Magic of Stucco!"

Materials: markers in different colours (depending on the number of players) and a given explanation: give each player a marker and the player who scores more points when throwing the data before the game starts gets to start the game at house 1. Advance the number of houses indicated by the data, perform the suggested mission in that house, and move on. The player who reaches the 45th house first is the winner and already knows a little more about the magic of stucco "Hearing, stuccoing we create art"!

Table 2 The Magic of Stucco Game Guidelines

House	Question	Mission	
		Hit	Missed
1	What mixture do you get the stucco with? (Mixture of plaster and lime)	Advance four houses.	-----
5	When did this art come up in Portugal? (In the reign of King John V)	Advance three houses.	Back off one house.
8	What kind of art is the stucco? (Decorative Art)	Advance four houses.	Stay in the same house.
10	What happened to there being an increase in works of this kind? (There was an earthquake, marmot, and a fire in Lisbon)	Advance two houses.	Back two houses.
12	What was the city hit by the earthquake? (Lisbon)	Advance four houses.	Go back to the beginning.
16	Who was the driving force behind these works? (Marquis of Pombal)	Advance three houses.	Back up four houses.
20	What was the name of the Italian who introduced the stucco into Portugal? (Giovanni Grossi)	Advance three houses.	Go back to house 12.
23	Where did the apprentices who arrived in Lisbon come from? (Aife, Carreço and Areosa)	Advance four houses.	Back off one house.
27	How were these men going to Lisbon? (Alone and By Ship)	Move on to house 30.	Stay in the same house.
30	What were these men doing in the short rest? (Went to the Theater)	Advance four houses.	Back up three houses.
34	What's the name of the workshops that came up? (Baganha, Meira and Laginha)	Answer the questi on and stop playing twice.	
37	What means of transport did they use to return to Viana? (Train)	Advance five houses.	Go back to house 27.
39	What have you done in Viana not to disappear this art? (They created a workshop to teach this art)	You're under arrest ! Answer the questio n, but you don't go ahead until everyone passes this house.	
41	What innovation have Viana's men made in this art? (Perfected and improved, in addition to walls, plastered ceilings)	Play again.	Stop playing once.
43	Do you still teach this art? (Yes, very little)	It goes straight to house 45. You're the winner!	Back five houses.
45	Stucco is an art made with... (love)	-----	-----

Fig. 2 Game

Findings and Conclusions

From the analysis carried out by all the action research participants, it emerged that this tradition was completely unknown for them and that such traditions did not merit adequate attention in heritage studies at primary, secondary and higher education levels. A need was identified for extensive reflection on and debate about this topic.

This project led to imaginative and innovative responses to the protection and enhancement of this tradition in the general population and among school children through artistic and cultural animation. LC said:

Following the work developed in March, we made the script for the creation of a theater related to the stucco, informing how and where it arose and the importance it had for the people of Viana. The activity that motivated me the most was the creation of this "story". We chose to do in verse, since it is intended for children, and we believed that the message passes better in this way, staying in their ears. (2021, June)

Previous Art-Based Service-Learning approaches (Moura, 2019) have shown in other curricular interventions that the support of local organizations, associations or public institutions can strengthen the social and educational quality of the projects. Through the self-reflection and self-analysis that the students used to make visible their career as generalist Basic Education teachers of art, showed a gaze that became much more attentive, aware and critical, reflecting their relationships with the world and the society that surrounds them. Assumptions underpinning this project are that one way of addressing discrimination and prejudice that exists both in society and in art field is to explore relationships between art and culture through education (Moura & Cruz, 2005, p. 243).

The interaction between the participants of the Higher Education Institution (ESEVC), rural community of Carreço via guest researcher, technician of the Museum of Decorative Arts of Viana do Castelo, teaching teachers of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education of Carreço, and the European Observatory of Service Learning in Higher Education Institutions, produced some cultural impact of this project in the surrounding community. Araújo (2021) said:

Projects such as these 1, which involve training in the ancient know-how of local arts and crafts, will enable this and other traditions to become better known. On this basis, it will be possible to innovate, which could encourage the younger generation which has focused on creating micro-enterprises and using corporate project incubators, a sector in which the Viana do Castelo Polytechnic Institute has made a considerable investment (p. 194)

We consider that this project provided the reflection on new ways of promoting art and culture, continuing the research of Ramiro Araújo, based on the Service-Learning methodology, which strengthened the cooperation between a Higher Education Institution and the community of Carreço and its local artistic culture. LC stated,

it is relevant as educators to become aware of the different ways of transmitting and conveying the cultural heritage of a people. The theoretical foundation of his intervention also allowed a reflection on the contribution of arts and culture in the community. Participation in a project of a local community has contributed to awaken the social awareness of civic responsibility and heritage protection and safeguard, as can be read in the reflection of LQ

this task model becomes motivating, challenging even, leading me to look for the best solutions to the proposed challenges.

Final Comment

The final dissemination of this project aims to give visibility to a tradition that is expected not to disappear and share some resources created throughout this small-scale research, which is intended to serve to strengthen the taste for local heritage and challenge possible stereotypes related to this hiddenstream art. In sectors full of contradictions, such as education in general and artistic and cultural animation in particular, it is not enough to recognize weaknesses, existing gaps, being fundamental to face changes through actions that give access to our heritage legacy.

This project reconciled animation, cultural mediation, art, and education, sensitizing students and the community to build their identity, strengthening social relationships, and framing the needs of everyday life, as fundamental components of the social, intellectual, and economic development of societies, through a strong cooperation of the school with the community, which was understood here as a form of cultural activism, which deals with problems, sharing experiences, skills, actions, and knowledge, working for common interests and objectives. The horizontality of relations and dialogue between contexts, resulting from an adequate cooperation, stimulated the participation of all (students, teachers, community members, organizations, associations and other partners of the arts and culture). The final video was sent to the European Observatory of Service Learning at the level of Higher Education and is available here [online https://www.eoshe.eu/viana-do-castelo-stucco-arts-and-artists/](https://www.eoshe.eu/viana-do-castelo-stucco-arts-and-artists/)

We hope that this experience can contribute to the enrichment of the training of future animators of the arts and culture, critical and interventional, and specifically to the strengthening of the cooperation resulting from the Service-Learning model, which values the arts and culture as a source of human enrichment and a starting point for further reflections on the training of arts professionals.

Stereotypes and biased cultural trends are inherent in the way heritage and cultures are transmitted and collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching/learning strategies were facilitating vehicles in the sharing of cultural, scientific, and technological values, which despite the confinement and telework we experienced during this period, did not prevent us from questioning reality, rethinking education, and confronting the challenges of today's world hand in hand with our community.

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Note

1. Araujo was mentioning this project and his project entitled “Plaster Arts and Artists in Viana do Castelo”, within the scope of the Master’s degree in Art Education at ESEVC-IPVC