

ARTICLE

Art, photography, and museums for senior students

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Abstract

The present research approaches the need to bring art closer to adult students, analyzing the process and the results of a course in a university program for the public over 55 years old. The interest of these students in art is given in most cases because they would have wanted to study art in their youth. Beyond the usual focus either on art history or artistic workshops, this program generates a multidisciplinary experience, introducing concepts and practices such as urban derive or performance. Aspects such as visual culture or digital technologies and art education are also integrated. This study adopted a research methodology of mixed nature, combining case study with arts-based research. The photographs acquire an important value as a result of the research. The benefits of lifelong learning were evaluated based on the participatory practices taking into account the previous experience of students and their knowledge in this regard. The information collected through individual surveys and focus groups highlighted a positive and rewarding result, according to the students.

Keywords: Education; Lifelong learning; Photography; Museums; Heritage education; Sustainability

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1. Introduction

Some Spanish universities, mostly public, have implemented academic programs designed for senior citizens. Several interconnected factors that lead to the implementation of these programs are follows: (i) it is considered necessary to meet the demand of certain students who no longer study for work or initial training purposes since they are retired or choose to retire early, after having worked for decades. (ii) With this type of face-to-face program, public universities can maximize the potential of teaching staff to cater to a social demand while teaching actual students. (iii) Many people developed abilities during their lives out of imperative necessity, having always postponed their desire to study humanities subjects, such as art, history, or philosophy, something they have always wanted to learn.

University training programs for older people are usually created by connecting with conventional subject areas and courses, so that they can share learning experiences with much younger students. In addition, complementary programs are also offered, usually made up of workshops or subjects of a more practical nature. In 2022, a complementary program called "Photographing the city's museums" was developed at the University of Valencia. The present study was conceptualized based on the experience derived

from this innovative training, through which each step of the process carried out was observed, to examine the important moments and the creative potential manifested during the sessions.¹

The course investigates the students' creative possibilities, attending to innovative pedagogical approaches that contain a critical social load, and observing aspects related to differences and inequalities.² The content of this course lies in photography learning while visiting and getting to know different museums in the city, thus turning the practice into an authentic performance – a promenade – and at the same time, an artistic urban drift.³ What is truly complex is taking advantage of this academic environment to turn the experience into a space that generates creative images.⁴ This is possible thanks to the attitude of all the people involved (students, teachers, and museum mediators), since the experience accumulated by these senior students in a relaxed academic environment, can achieve a high degree of creative maturity.⁵ It is a very appealing photography workshop, which increased creative and visual capacities and skills, thus influencing visual culture, as defended by Paul Duncum.⁶

The project offers the possibility of getting to know the city itself better, enjoying the spectacle of its museums and other urban heritage elements.⁷ To achieve this, a device set in urban derive is elaborated, organizing actions of various types that involve walking and derive through the city, emulating the figure of the *flâneur*, who links with the tradition of art that leads us reviewing Charles Baudelaire.⁸

This research highlights the value of museums as spaces of cultural intensity, places full of educational possibilities,⁹ something that is linked to the importance of heritage education. According to the latest definition approved by ICOM on August 24, 2022, at its General Assembly held in Prague, “museum is a non-profit, permanent institution at the service of society, which investigates, collects, preserves, interprets, and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible, and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. With the participation of communities, museums operate and communicate ethically and professionally, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and the exchange of knowledge.” It is clear, therefore, that museums promote citizens' education, and it is from this intention that we promote creative thinking,¹⁰ with strategies for creative and critical teaching perspective.¹¹

In a group of people over 55 years old, we especially value maturity and acquired knowledge, encouraging their concerns and desires. As instructors at the university, we encourage them to experiment, while strengthening their skills and expertise with the camera and encouraging

them to capture images and to reflect on the power of photography¹² and post-photography, as well as interpret the meaning of images.¹³ The empirical part of this project is fundamental, as theoretical classes foster their creativity. Photographs will be analyzed in the classroom.

There were 17 members, consisting of 6 men and 11 women, in the group. These members are dentists, administrative workers, businessmen, designers, and chemists, with the majority being teachers although some of the participants have opted for early retirement or have already retired. Their photographs express a great sense of composition, demonstrating their expertise, aptitude, and ability to generate images, sometimes with virtuosity and mastery. Their works manifest the integration of their knowledge and experiences with creativity; the combination of which, as shown through this innovative pedagogical approach, increases their self-esteem and capacities, nurturing healthy habits among these senior students. In their feedback during classes and also in the questionnaires given at the end of the course, they rated the course as being able to elevate their self-esteem and nurture healthy habits.

2. Methodology

The methodology applied in this study is of a mixed nature, combining case study¹⁴ with arts-based research.¹⁵ As teachers, during the process, we assumed the role of participating observer. When inquiring into teaching with senior students (over 55 years old), we opted to create spaces for participation, both from reflection (dialogue, debate) and from artistic creation, taking photographs that are used in the classroom as elements of analysis, favoring learning from their creations. The creation of images and the analysis of these images is one of the defining characteristics of the arts-based research methodology, which encompasses a range of research approaches and strategies that utilize arts in investigation. The richness of the opportunities created by the utilization of arts in conducting research brings collateral challenges. Thus, we offer a space for the construction of knowledge, prioritizing problems, through the study of factors offered by the images themselves, both in their formal aspect and in the construction of content. This qualitative study applied participatory action to research design, giving the participants dual roles, namely researcher and study subject. This study used techniques such as brainstorming, museum visits, urban *derive* (drift), image creation, or critical reflection.

The experience studied combines a theoretical part with a series of practical sessions.¹⁶ This combination serves to adequately train students, both in the creation of

images and artistic education, as well as in the knowledge of museum spaces and art galleries. Contemporary art and other artistic expressions, including museums of different types, were approached. Combining theoretical and practical elements, and incorporating derive as an element that enhances creativity,¹⁷ participants were trained to create photographs with a communicative intention to establish and legitimize spaces that combine debate and training. Guy Debord defines the derive as a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society. Derive literally means drifting, referring to wandering through an urban area in small groups of people.

We offer the possibility of learning about museum processes from a broad cultural vision, with the intention of promoting flexible areas of participation, thus bringing them closer to the mechanics of art and images from a current perspective. We also promote a model of workshops among adult audiences to train them when it comes to creating photographs and facing the challenges of the future of museums as spaces for dialog.

We encourage students to observe and create images, establishing a schedule of sessions with original titles in each of them:

- Session 1. *Identity* (presentation of participants and explanation of the course, dynamics, and intentions of each planned activity)
- Session 2. *Territories* (visiting the websites of the city's museums)
- Session 3. *Voluptuousness* (first visits with practical photography workshop)
- Session 4. *Privacy* (visits with photography workshop)
- Session 5. *Memory* (theoretical class on the creative possibilities of photography, based on the work that the students are doing)
- Session 6. *Collecting* (visits and discussion groups, analyzing images created by participants)
- Session 7. *Derive/Drifts* (students are organized in pairs or teams and they are assigned museums to visit)
- Session 8. *Practice* (new drift and preparation of the final work, i.e., a group video)
- Session 9. *Vanity* (theoretical class with issues related to the current situation of digital museums)
- Session 10. *Memories* (last session to review and comment on the students' work).

The main objective of the pedagogical activity analyzed is to promote an approach to learning art and images in museums and other heritage environments in an enjoyable mood. Among the subsidiary objectives, we highlight the following: (i) Approaching the main concepts of photography, and applying the theoretical basis to the possibilities of creating images in exhibition

spaces; (ii) understanding the importance of museums from the perspective of cultural transmission; (iii) designing and creating images coherently through lived experience; (iv) encouraging personal artistic practice in the workshops that are given during classes and visits; (v) addressing the city's museums as a key element of visual culture; (vi) walking around the city as an esthetic practice; (vii) creating images, and photographing details, elements, objects, interiors, landscapes and exteriors; (viii) revisiting the city as a typographic museum, and detecting the esthetics of urban letters; and (ix) observing the lights and shadows of the city, and appreciating the magic of the liminal zones.

We emphasize the use of arts-based research in creating images and encouraging observation.¹⁸ A paradigm shift is proposed to change the focus from the interpretation of images toward a transformation of reality that promotes their use, through a performative approach, exploiting their pedagogical possibilities. Issues of gender and diversity are also incorporated during the explanations and debates in class, using a virtual museum, which the students can consult both on their mobile phones and through the projected presentations.

The study used a mixed research methodology, combining a descriptive-exploratory qualitative one and an artistic methodology, and adopted a socioeducational approach, taking into account incidence factors such as students' age and teacher involvement. An ethnographic perspective of the research was adopted, focusing on teaching innovation to promote educational change. As the research takes place at the same time during teaching, awareness of the interactions that take place in the group as a whole that constitutes the educational event and the people involved can be made.¹⁹ Data were collected while teaching was ongoing, and in an inductive way that a participant's observation of the critical moments of learning, both the difficulties and the benefits, is developed during an educational activity or a tutoring session. The responses of the participants, their expressions, and narratives are collected in the teaching-learning processes.²⁰

The research data were collected mainly by means of analyzing the images created by the students and critically reviewing them in different teaching work sessions. The information collected is classified into two main aspects: (i) the artistic results of what has been learned and (ii) the artistic results of the didactic activities as an observed environment. For the study sample, the teaching experience itself, as well as the past materials prepared by the students, was taken as a reference. Through learning and participation in artistic activities, healthy habits are promoted, favoring interaction with senior students.

We propose drifting for museum visits to students, as conceived by Guy Debord, as an act of subversion, very political, linked to the action of walking through varied environments with a playful-constructive behavior. Francesco Careri emphasizes his theory of walkscales or esthetic walks. Walking a territory with no other previous plan than following those impulses, stimulus, and given conditions prompts us with the first triggered experiences of an arts-based work method named after the late 60s situationist practice of the *derive*. This type of *derive* is raised with awareness of the psychogeographic effects it generates, effects that the activity has on the person who performs it, and therefore with notions different from those of the trip or walk. Numerous artistic collectives have practiced drifting since the beginning of the 20th century, such as the Dadaists, later in the wanderings of the Surrealists, similar to the urban explorations of Walter Benjamin, or in the psychogeography of Letrist and Situationist artists, as well as in the “wanderings” of Land Art, or the experimental practices of groups like the Italian Stalkers in the 1990s.

The city is the perfect place to practice drifting. Urban environments are full of spaces that stimulate the development of learning experiences, thus becoming places where each artist acts as an archeologist of the city itself to investigate elements extracted from urban life with an artistic perspective. In this way, we break certain prejudices that we have regarding places where we can express ourselves without coercion,²¹ since these students are not familiar with art production. Museums are urban spaces suitable for drifting, especially when the students leave the classroom and walk to the indicated site in a group, although each participant can establish his/her own particular itinerary, with complete freedom and autonomy, occupying their own space of power to transform the educational experience.²² Based on artistic experiences, it is essential to define new methods that can be used to develop innovative research approaches, from broad and diverse conceptual frameworks.

3. Results and discussion

The drifting (derive) and photography are the two artistic discourses that methodologically frame the educational experience that was investigated, leading to the formulation of a teaching approach intended for promoting creativity in image generation. Both written documents and records of the students' opinions, along with images created by the students, constitute the results of this study. During the course, the group visited different museums in Valencia (Museum of Fine Arts, IVAM, MuVIM, Casa Museo Benlliure, Ceramics Museum, Fallero Museum, Silk Museum, Museu de Prehistòria, L'Etno, Museu de l'Arròs, Museu de les Ciències, L'Íber,

MHV), as well as some heritage spaces (l'Almoina, Ciutat de les Arts i les Ciències, La Nau, San Nicolás, El Patriarca, Centre del Carme, Las Naves, Center d'Artesania, Palau de les Arts, Grau Cemetery). The participants took thousands of photographs, using their smartphones,²³ or using their digital SLR cameras. Each student must choose a photograph (only one) of all those taken in each museum.

The most intense and rewarding part of the process is choosing a single photograph, forcing students to question many aspects of their own creations. Selecting a photograph (only one) means making a decision, which has an impact on the importance that the image acquires, thus recalling the concept of *punctum* developed by Roland Barthes.²⁴ The number of photographs uploaded (17 per museum) allows for an explanation in the classroom, with enough time to analyze each image, encouraging the teacher to initiate debate among the students, and promoting interdisciplinarity in training practices.²⁵ It is from their images that we address formal issues, content, semiotics, and symbol. For example, in the case of the images of Arcadi Cotelí (Figure 1), the importance of geometry in the creations of this mathematics teacher was commented. In addition, we take advantage of some elements of each photograph to talk about artists who use photography as a means of expression.

The art teacher María José Tamarit uses an expressive resource for her photograph of a detail from the Calatrava's building in the Valencian City of the Arts and Sciences (Figure 2), accentuating the intensity. This decision allows us to reflect in class on the use of filters and effects in photography. This analysis is based on demonstrating the pedagogical capacity that this type of research practice has in students in the construction of their personal identity,



Figure 1. Photograph of the Valencia Ceramic Museum. Author: Arcadi Cotelí Melià.

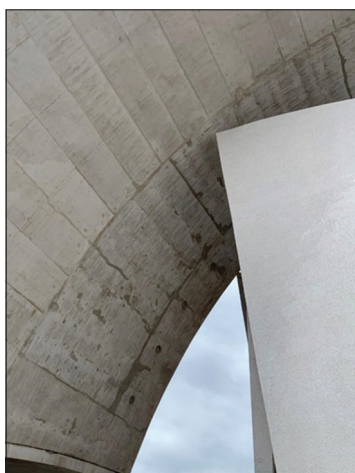


Figure 2. Photograph of a piece from the Valencian City of Arts and Sciences. Author: María José Tamarit Moradillo.

as well as in understanding the identities of their cultural reality, thus promoting a global understanding of the social environment from proposals for active and participatory methodologies.²⁶

The work develops an analysis of the value of the photographs taken during the drift, as a means to investigate the social environment from the lived experience.²⁷ It is investigated from an ethnographic, narrative, and artistic perspective, involving all the research agents in the construction of an active story that is complemented and built in different phases: search, analysis and selection of images, discussion, analysis, and joint reflection with the group.²⁸

The analysis of images is carried out through educational research actions with senior students, where the artistic gaze plays a priority role in their practice, with a process consisting of: image search through inquiry; selection, compilation, and analysis of these images;²⁹ elaboration of a personal proposal from the images; collective exhibition and analysis through discussion groups of the results of the images; and finally systematization and joint debate of the result of the discussion groups on the images.³⁰ In some cases, images offered us details and close-up captures of any pieces exhibited in the museum, as reflected in the work by Miguel Marín (Figure 3).

Capturing photographs taken at the exhibitions in museums allows us to prepare detailed reports on the discussion processes, based on the analysis of the photographs presented by the students. It is convenient to influence this process as one of the keys of the investigation since it generates a pedagogical practice in which the result is a conscious learning process, based on an autoethnographic visual story. The use of digital

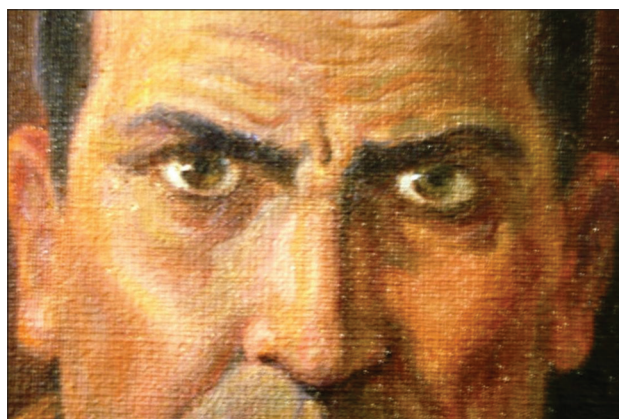


Figure 3. “Familiar tragedy” (1937) by Ángel Tévar Orozco. Painting detail in the permanent exhibition of the Valencian Museum of Fine Arts. Author: Miguel Marín Jiménez.

technology to take the images and share them with the group promotes an exchange of mutual knowledge.³¹ It is advisable to adapt our educational practices, bringing them closer to the possibilities offered by the digital universe.³²

To promote the development of critical and creative thinking, it is important to give students spaces and moments for debates that promote analysis, synthesis, interpretation, inference, and the issuance of judgments, mostly when the students are back in the classroom and the group discusses the photographs. In this way, a more daring and disobedient education is promoted, through innovative experiences that allow them to express their ideas, formulating ethical and esthetic questions.³³ Creative skills that contribute to looking at current challenges with different perspectives are also required, especially for senior students, who come to the classroom with an important baggage, due to their accumulated life experience. A process of creative reflection must be included in the activities, inside and outside the classroom, to give students the ability to propose innovative solutions to specific problems.

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze and reflect on facts objectively, to form a judgment or opinion, solve problems systematically, and understand the logical connections between ideas, values, and beliefs that are based in society. The necessary data must be collected to analyze and understand situations, reaching logical conclusions. When people have the ability to use critical reflection, they are not easily manipulated. The psychologist Joy Paul Guilford points out sensitivity to problems, fluidity, flexibility, novelty and originality, elaboration, analytical and synthesis capacity, reorganization or redefinition, complexity, and evaluation as proper aptitudes for success in the development of creative thinking.³⁴ Both in the classroom and during the drifts in museums, the students have been able to experience these skills by

incorporating said baggage into their creations, developing an artistic discourse through images, and reflecting on said narratives. When commenting in class on the images taken during the visit to the Anna Boghiguian exhibition at the IVAM, the majority highlighted the motivation that caused them to be able to “enter” the works of this octogenarian artist. Themes like climate change are commonplace in exhibition museum, as the fish with plastics remind us the Sustainability Development Goals. Since these works directly communicate ecological and political messages, it seems over-claiming to argue that photographing them involved the development of critical thinking (Figure 4).

We observe how the images that are part of this research connect us with the human, which has implications in the conceptual and pedagogical approach to these images. Photographs bring us closer to the forms of life, their behaviors and roles, and their relationship with others and with the world, allowing us to investigate this research process from personal and lived experiences. The personal experience forms part of the collective experience of the society, showing us the symbolic visualization of what we know, and from it emerge stories and discoveries that tell us about social relations, how we observe the city, the way we live in it. In educational research, it is convenient to establish and connect with educational practices, since these same practices, based on ethnographic and artistic visual research, are articulated in turn in the double axis of research, teaching, and the improvement of their own, integrating practices in their environment. Observing the public in the visits, documenting the fact of museum visitors does not, in itself, imply learning critical visual or cognitive skills (Figure 5).

In addition to the details of art works, exhibition rooms, pieces on display, and other elements typical of museums, another facet that is reflected in the students’ photographs of urban landscape is the environment of museums visited.

Engaging in arts-based research offers adult students the enormous possibilities of a research methodology as a pedagogical construction process through which they learn about themselves and the society of which they are a part. In addition, it allows them to inquire about the creativity generated by their own history and collectively reflect on burning issues that include the city, museums, collective heritage, and knowledge of art from artistic practice.³⁵ Using drift as an activating element turns them into flâneurs, observant walkers aware of the esthetic capacity generated by the urban environment. The results are, finally, esthetic, since reflection allows them to obtain surprising and attractive images, beyond the document that certifies their visit to the museum, as portrayed in the photograph presented by Miquel Valls after his visit to the History Museum of Valencia (Figure 6). It is not a work



Figure 4. “Karma. Marine Debris” (2021) by Nayra López and Vinz Feel Free, in the exhibition “Emergency on Planet Earth”, Centre del Carme, Valencia. A big fish with plastics explains the ecological problems, evidencing the senior student’s interests. Author: Maria Alonso.



Figure 5. People observing the photography exhibition by Zanele Muholi in the IVAM Valencian Institute of Modern Art. Author: Gemma Pla.

exhibited in the museum, but the compositional game that light generates with the exhibited pieces, objects, and artifacts in context.

By creating a visual discourse from their own images, students can offer topics that are dealt with in the classroom, incorporating issues that really interest them, or that emerge from the images. In this way, knowledge is born directly from the photographs they have created, and also from their embodied memory of taking these photographs, images linked to the environment visited, which tell us about the museum as an institution, which responds to specific sociocultural and personal conditions. We detected that there is an artistic intention in these images, an esthetic element that is articulated in this case as an ally of the research process, as we have remarked in the description of the methodology, facilitating and allowing a



Figure 6. Image that becomes an assembly between objects and ancient photograph, created by Miquel Valls Marco taking advantage of the gloomy lighting of the Museu de Prehistòria de València.

greater depth in some of the aspects that each person who intervenes wants to stand out above others. By analyzing the results of the focused groups, several issues can be determined in relation to the comments from the sessions for viewing the photographs, reinforcing the conclusions of the research process. The impact caused by the images themselves affects the analysis prepared by the participants in the discussion groups, since these are photographs taken by the group of students, allowing them to deepen and learn about issues related to the history of photography, the characters that generated it, and their own involvement in the process.

The great diversity of the museums visited also makes it possible to understand the potential of these institutions, since beyond their collections, their architecture, or the distinction that may emanate from the image they offer, what matters in this case is that the senior students enjoy, learn, and above all create, practicing an exercise in artistic production that empowers them as inspired designers.

A case that we consider interesting to highlight is the visit to the Benlliure House Museum, because it is the place where the brothers Mariano and José, sculptor and painter, respectively, lived and worked. These artists are an important benchmark of Valencian art, but the most attractive thing about visiting this house-museum is that it is a space that preserves the workshop where José Benlliure painted. Walking through the artist's studio means having within reach both the large window (facing north) through which light entered the workshop, as well as numerous materials that the artist used to paint, highlighting elements of costumes and props with which he dressed their models. It is also worthwhile as a space to photograph the cemetery, a place where memory is very present (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Image taken during session 4 "Privacy", in the garden of the Benlliure Museum. Author: Maite Rabena Pérez.

According to Alessandro Luigini, the ability to use graphic skills, and in general the ability to integrate the use of the visual, the mind and the hand (perception, thought, representation) to solve problems and create effective products, facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge³⁶ (Luigini, 2020: 89). The Italian author also reminds us, referring to the advice of Edgar Morin, his definition of art as the human capacity to create works, shapes, colors, and sounds give or should offer esthetic emotions. For Edgar Morin, esthetic emotion is the mirror of creative emotion. The artist, to create, appeals to unconscious (inspiration) and conscious (corrections) forces. In the same way, the esthetic emotion that seizes us in front of a work is both rational and irrational, since it appeals to both feeling and intelligence. And is this esthetic emotion useful? Echoing Aristotle's poetic catharsis, the author demonstrates how, in these times of crisis that we are going through, beauty is a formidable antidote against fear, horror, anguish, and death.³⁷

Based on the debates in the classroom, and the answers to questionnaires, a synthesis of the results of the analysis of the work sessions has been prepared, systematizing the issues based on the theme. Some issues prevail in their observations, and therefore in their learning, which helps us understand how interests are involved in the making of one type of image or another (Figure 8). This revealed several realities. First, how the images themselves built a series of meanings, with narratives that were implicit in the photographs on a recurring basis. This remarkable facet allows us to make generalizations and reach consensus based on the experience arising from the images themselves and not only through the institutional discourse in which we usually engage, thereby reinforcing our perspective and our conviction about certain social, cultural situations,



Figure 8. Interior of the Museum of Patriarch in Valencia. Author: Vicente Zaragoza Dolz.

political, and economic of our environment, marked by the very image of the museums visited.

The students expressed their preferences in relation to artists, commenting and reflecting on the works and experiences of great photographers such as Ramon Masats, Robert Capa, Dorothea Lange, Ron Galella, Cindy Sherman, Del LaGrace Volcano, Francesc Jarque, Sebastiao Salgado, Chema Madoz, Spencer Tunick, David Hamilton, Brassai, Man Ray, Ouka Lele, Sally Mann, Henri Cartier Bresson, and Luis Calvente. We see a great variety of styles and origins, which configure an eclectic value to the whole, allowing greater freedom in teaching, and reinforcing the opinions during debates. It is important to know the students' preferences. At the same time, they know the work of great photographers.

The students' interests stated in the questionnaires were examined. To the first question in the questionnaire (why did you choose this course), most responded that the program that combines photography and museum visits appeals to them, although three persons, who were the most experienced students in photography, thought that it would extend beyond a conventional course of photography (Figure 9). To the second question (what has the course given you), six answered that the course led them to discover museums that they did not know existing, two cases considered photography learning interesting, while the rest indicated that they have discovered their creative and artistic facet. To the third question (what would you highlight on a positive level from what you have experienced during the course), all respondents agreed that the experience as a whole was both rewarding in terms of learning and enjoying.

To the fourth question (what aspects could be improved or changed), six people indicated that the afternoon

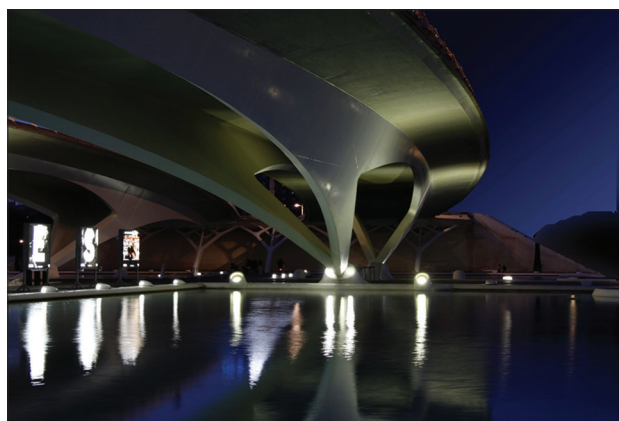


Figure 9. Photograph of a bridge in the Valencian Science Museum. Author: Dolors Enrique.

schedules did not allow them to visit the museums more thoroughly, because of a lack of time; four indicated that the theoretical part of photography and the history of photography should be expanded; while the rest highlighted the need to extend the hours of the course. Question 5 pertains to finding out the museums that they were not aware of and discovered as a result of the course: most of them were unaware of the Casa Museo Benlliure, the Centre d'Artesania, the Grau Cemetery, and the Museu de l'Arròs, but all agreed that they rediscovered some that they had already visited, such as the Fallero Museum, the Silk Museum, the Museu de Prehistòria, L'Etno, and the Museu d'Història de València MHV. In the case of the L'Íber museum, which is a museum of miniatures (tin soldiers), they were surprised by the novel idea of the program. When asked about the aspects of photography teaching that they found interesting (question 6), they especially value the aspects of composition and the technical possibilities offered by cameras, even those of their mobile phones. Regarding their feedback on the visits with the group (question 7), they stated that sharing these experiences is one of the most positive elements of the experience. For a group of senior adults, a pleasant chat on a terrace or in a cafeteria organized spontaneously after the visits is very common. Question 8 is an open question that explores the respondents' views on the role of museums and photography in their life, leaving us with a true life story of each participant, something that teachers would value extremely. Question 9 is about whether there is any aspect that they would like to highlight; the students expressed agreement, again, that assessing experience is an example of participatory teaching that provides artistic results and enhances the creativity of those who have experienced it.

A notable aspect of the results obtained is that the participating senior students have developed their capacity for observation, something that we consider especially

important, considering the value that we currently place, and how we take advantage of it (or not) by being so impregnated by the presence of digital devices. For Byung-Chul Han, among the practices that require time, being careful and meticulous observation stands out to be the important one since “the perception attached to the information excludes long and slow observation.” The philosopher continues arguing that “the careful contemplation of things, attention without intention, which would be a formula for happiness, recedes before the hunt for information”³⁸ Recovering the concepts of studium and punctum elaborated by Roland Barthes²⁴ when reflecting on photography, Han insists that greater attention to things goes hand in hand with forgetting and losing oneself. When the ego weakens, it becomes receptive to that silent language of things, say Han. In fact, “things allow us to see the world. They create visibilities, while non-things destroy them”³⁸ The students derive, and their museums re-read using images, allowing them to activate new sensations and sensitive learning.³⁹

4. Conclusions

Some issues should be highlighted as a conclusion and final balance of the investigation. Senior students have shown their creative ability to generate speeches through images, creating photographs from lived experiences. These photographs tell us about their interests and their way of understanding life, something that fits with the long-life experience that characterizes them, which fits with their desire to materialize this acquired knowledge. They had never had notions of photography before (except in one case, that of a student who is a graphic designer and has practiced as such for decades), but this has not prevented the results from being optimal. They were able to re-explore their city through museum visits, with the images made during a series of drifts to different urban spaces, especially museums.

Combining different people offers us an interesting result that we can approach from different perspectives. We detect particular ways of deciphering social rituals, depending on the perspective taken, something that is revealed especially in identity aspects, both through personal and collective reasons. It is also clear that this type of research, carried out based on teaching experiences, allows for innovation in education, demonstrating the theoretical and practical foundation it contains, and incorporating a certain margin of risk, always necessary, as it is an artistic subject. The emotional impact multiplies the educational effect of the action, and this is made possible by the visits to museums, some of which are more well-known, together with people unknownst to the students. The senior participants

prefer very intense and enriching reflections, which take into account their life experience and their desire to share ideas in the debates. The images that they have created and shared constitute a great element to better understand the interests of these students.

This study investigates the critical and creative thinking among senior students, who had no knowledge of the practice of the arts. The students developed artistic and creative skills for different points of view from a critical position. To achieve this, visits to different museums, as part of the course, allow the students to take photographs. The museums serve as a starting point to work on the different situations and themes, as they did not possess broad knowledge of what critical thinking and creativity mean and characterize. This participatory action research took into account the time, participation, means, dedication, and responsibility of the students, who have known how to take advantage of each planned and lived experience. Arts-based research methodology is a potential transformer of a concrete reality, involving observation, reflection, and creation from the role of the actors in the research, offering new visions of learning. This research addressed that incipient knowledge about creativity stems from the perspective of the experience carried out among senior students.

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Author contributions

This is a single-authored article.

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