

# Art Education Research No. 15/2019

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## Flight of Riddles – Thinking Through the Difficult Heritage of Progressive Art Education in Austria

In the framework of the *intertwining hi/stories of arts education* project, initiated by the *Another Roadmap for Arts Education* network, its Vienna group (Carla Bobadilla, Andrea Hubin, Barbara Mahlkecht, Karin Schneider) began searching for Austrian art education's colonial traces, a heritage that all members of the group had come in contact with through their work. The search for traces first led to the history of *Child Art*, whose theoretical foundations were partly conceived in Vienna in the first half of the 20th century, and from there back to the present, where it pays critical attention to the usage of exoticizing symbols that can be observed in the field. This text does not intend to provide a critical review of this history, but rather to provide an insight into the course of our explorations. We do not claim a direct, conscious connection between the art education programs of the 1980s/90s of the *mumok*<sup>1</sup>, *Museum Moderner Kunst* in Vienna and the *Child Art* of the artist and art educator Franz Cizek (1865-1946). Our reflections on the use of exoticizing metaphors that refer to children in the museum as the 'animated' or 'savage' encouraged us to look into this history. We do not understand such historical cross-references as clear lines of tradition. Rather, they are unconscious or hidden, or even more shaped by boundaries, aversions, distortions, interruptions and contradictions.

Thanks to the kindness of *mumok*'s curator for art education, Claudia Ehgartner, we received the project report of *Rätselflug* (Flight of Riddles), an 1984 art education program for children developed and carried out by the group *... das lebende museum ...* (... the living museum ...), which had been preserved in the small emerging art education archive of the museum (Arbeitsgruppe *... das lebende museum ...* 1984).

The title page of the report shows the collage of a hot air balloon hovering above the forecourt of the *Liechtenstein Palace* in Vienna. The baroque castle housed part of

the *mumok* collection from 1979 to 2001 and was one of the places where *... the living museum ...* experimented with new methods of visitor-oriented art education. Although the initiative itself has nearly fallen into oblivion in Austria, its experiments with methods of art education and perhaps more importantly their documentation and theorization, were fundamental to further developments in the field. The project was conceived by Heiderose Hildebrand, Hadwig Kräutler and Dieter Schrage, who were protagonists of the 'museum education' and 'art education' field emerging in Austria at the time (1980s). *Flight of Riddles* was carried out as part of the *Wiener Ferienspiel* (Vienna Holiday Games) – an ongoing initiative for children supported by the city of Vienna, offering children affordable or free access to cultural programs during the holiday season.

At this point, it is worth dwelling on the names of *Flight of Riddles* and *... the living museum ...* for a moment. The name of the group suggests that the quality of 'liveliness' is not an inherent characteristic of museums. It may even imply that the museum is only brought to life through specific measures that shift the focus from the dead – because stiff and taken out of every-day life – objects, towards the visitors and their activities. Instead of quiet contemplation in front of equally mute and motionless works of art, the image of children roaming the holy halls is being evoked. The museum becomes 'alive' by changing the way in which objects or works of art are looked upon, understood, presented and thought to function. In this sense, the name *... the living museum ...* can also be understood as a task and a challenge: the art educators working here enliven the museum; anyone who lets them operate freely can expect the museum to become alive, if only because they stimulate group discussions and interactions and were an autonomous project group acting here and there. The image of the old, dusty, 'dead' museum of the past is being replaced by the new, the childlike, the living – the future versus the past.

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<sup>1</sup> At the time the museum was known as *Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien im Palais Liechtenstein* (MMKSLW).

The *Flight of Riddles* and its hot air balloon also carry a number of interpretive possibilities, so both the name of the program and its visual representation are riddles in themselves. The balloon flight suggests that it is a journey, in fact one that is all but ordinary: a journey full of riddles that may lead to a land which, from the perspective of the traveler, may seem enigmatic, or maybe the balloon itself is packed with riddles. But it could also be that the *mumok* and its building, the Baroque Palais, are being evoked as places where riddles (in the form of modern works of art) are hidden. The balloon then either brings the children to them, or brings the riddles out into the world (a world that lacks mystery?) with the children's help.

These first few associations with this archival material alone enable us to capture central concepts and assumptions of this form of art education: The idea of liveliness is linked to the idea of an open, participatory museum and educational concepts that imagine (even physically) active participants and conceive of young children as visitors to be taken seriously. From a methodological perspective, a riddle is being reclaimed as something positive. A form of open access to museums and art should be created, which does not only aim at imparting knowledge, but rather at stimulating one's own thoughts, associations and emotions: arts education should not solve the riddles, but rather stimulate them.

The project report also includes some worksheets filled out by children as part of the activity. Even though the mediation methods were not quite as radically dedicated to 'open-interpretation' as later methods in this lineage (being employed until this day), the worksheets did not only feature questions about the artists' names but also some that did not evoke a simple answer, but rather encouraged the children to imagine something: "What could these two guys be talking about?", "How would you color them in?", "What does this remind you of?", "We eavesdrop on the gods having a feast. Write the collected snippets of conversation you picked up in the speech bubbles." , or "An exciting menu – what do you think has been consumed there?" (in reference to Max Ernst, *The Feast of the Gods*, 1948, Arbeitsgruppe ... das lebendee museum ... 1984: n.pag.).

The project report shows that the initiative laid essential foundations for this new kind of art education not only on a conceptual, but also on a practical level: they worked with small groups with a maximum of 17 children, there were distinct, obligatory rituals at the beginning of each gathering, as well as exercises to get to know each other; there were breaks, food and drinks were provided, a circumstance that the report emphasized as an essential part of successful arts education work. From a methodological point of view it encouraged the free formation of chains of association inspired by works of art. Along the lines of 'less is more' information about a work of art is only provided when participants had selected it themselves out of personal interest or in response to an associative question. The methodology also approaches artworks via practical, creative activities and the handling

of different materials. This was supposed to enable the children to express themselves freely while creating non-verbal references to the art works as well. However, the intention is not to teach certain artistic techniques or to lead children to imitate the style of the art works. Rather, they are described as 'researchers' on an exploratory voyage 'examining' a particular work of art; the today much-debated concept of the potential connection between research, arts education and the co-production of knowledge by and with visitors is inherent in this approach.

There is another conceptual image to be found here, that will henceforth shape this approach of art education: The metaphor of travel in connection with the 'enigmatic' and the 'unknown' of art. The 'living' does not only vibrate, but starts to travel. It leaves the place of the ordinary, the everyday, and heads off to discover something new and to awaken curiosity (about the extraordinary). These are conceptual images that we, the authors of this text, know all too well from arts education practices around us, or because we have even used them ourselves. And it is precisely these images and their implications that we would like to bring up for critical discussion in the context of writing Austrian history. We will try to show that it is not exactly possible to work with metaphors of 'travel' and 'discovery' without evoking and reproducing colonial thought.

The *Flight of Riddles* project for example features the image of the 'expedition' as the starting scenario of one of its workshops, which lands the balloon in a "land of contradictions and riddles" where creative interaction with its dwellers is encouraged, who can "put on any face they wish" (Arbeitsgruppe ... das lebende museum ... 1984: n.pag.). The fact that the 'journey into foreign, strange lands' held its ground as a metaphor for the encounter with modern art in the realm of arts education practices of this kind, becomes apparent when looking at the titles of workshops for children in the *mumok* in the 1990s such as *Fantasia – A Journey into the World of Art* (1995) or *Strange Territory* (1999). The concept of the *Strange Territory* workshop (which can also be found in the arts education archive of the *mumok*, and which was co-conceived by one of the authors of this text, Karin Schneider) projected the museum as a 'strange land' with its own native language, namely the language of images. Methodically, the concept therefore envisaged translation steps, such as the association of works of art with small everyday objects to generate non-verbal commentaries. The participatory exhibition *Weltenbummler. Abenteuer Kunst* (globetrotter. The Adventure of Art), conceived by the *Essl Museum* arts education department and realized in co-production with pupils and visitor groups in 2015, represents a more recent and extraordinarily innovative project. The project concept, which can be found online in several press articles, stated the following: "The term 'globetrotter' combines the longing for the afar, curiosity for the 'other', discovery for the sake of discovery. Through imagination and art, the whole visible

world can be traveled, even new worlds can arise. The international works of art in this exhibition offer inspiring suggestions”.<sup>2</sup>

The methods proposed by these concepts aimed above all at opening up spaces of imagination, creating playful approaches and activities inspired by artistic practices (Sturm 2011). Visitors should be encouraged to leave their own thought patterns for a moment and to use the irritations and foreign experiences brought about by their interactions with modern and contemporary art to create new ways of thinking. However, by employing terms like ‘expedition’, ‘unknown worlds’, and ‘strange lands’, these attempts also evoke a repertoire of images from a certain body of knowledge of European popular culture – that of adventurous or exploratory journeys to *white*<sup>3</sup> spots on the map, where one encounters ‘strangers’ who practice ‘strange customs’ and speak ‘strange languages’. In her analysis *Imperial Eyes – Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt illustrates the degree to which these narratives are interwoven with discourses that enabled European acceptance of colonial violence and imperial exploitation practices. She examines,

“[...] how travel books written by Europeans about non-European parts of the world created the imperial order for Europeans ‘at home’, and gave them their place in it. I ask how travel writing made imperial expansion meaningful and desirable to citizenries of the imperial countries, even though the material benefits of empire accrued mainly to the few. Travel books, I argue, gave European reading publics a sense of ownership, entitlement, and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in, and colonized. Travel books [...] created a sense of curiosity, excitement, adventure, and even moral fervour about European expansionism. They were, I argue, one of the key instruments that made people at home in Europe feel part of a planetary project; a key instrument, in other words, in creating the domestic subject of empire.” (Pratt 2008: 3)

The conceptualizations and image productions for the self-description of the arts education approaches outlined above, also feature starting points for figures of thought which enable the Othering of the Global South and project the non-intellectual, the fantastic and ideal images of diversity upon ‘other countries’ and ‘strange territories’.

One of the groups that thought up new approaches to art at *mumok* (which influenced our practice as well) first called itself *Kolibri flieg* (Fly Hummingbird) and was

founded by gallery owner and artist Heiderose Hildebrand in the late 1980s together with a group of students from the University of Applied Arts Vienna (Höllwart 2005: 108). Hildebrand was one of the central figures of Austrian museum education and the co-founder of ... *the living museum* .... In her 1987 publication on this project, Hildebrand explains the origin of the name:

“[The Palm Book] owes its title [...] to Heiderose Hildebrand’s and Eva Sturm’s decision to leaven the rather dry text for readers with drawings of palms. The illustrations are part of a collection by the media theorist Christoph Eiböck who over a number of decades has been asking people he encounters in his daily life – be it on the tram, at the snack bar or at a concert – to draw palms for him. This collection of sketches perfectly reflects the various creative opportunities offered by the palm and also serves as a metaphor: The variety of visual concepts of a palm highlights the diversity of perspectives from which an art work can be viewed. As Heiderose Hildebrand commented insightfully: “People often think that they are drawing THE palm, but, of course, there is no such thing as THE palm!”” (Kolibri Flieg 1987: 10)

Another example for the emergence of exotic metaphors is *Das Palmenbuch* (The Palm Book, Eiböck et al., 1991), a manual for new perspectives on the museum, its visitors, and the communication with them. It was co-written by Heiderose Hildebrand and Eva Sturm, who played a central role as practitioner and theoretician of this tradition of art education for our own theory and practice.

The new edition of the publication (Eiböck et al., 2007) and its presentation at *documenta 12* in 2007 (Jentzsch 2007, Fliedl 2010) demonstrates its lasting importance for theoreticians and practitioners. In the first issue, each booklet – which is just tall enough to fit in the palm of a hand! – had a real palm leaf inlaid.

“The palm book got its title because Heiderose Hildebrand and Eva Sturm found their own, unadulterated text too prosaic for the reader and therefore decided to loosen it up with palm drawings. The illustrations are part of a collection of media scientist Christoph Eiböck. For decades he has asked passers-by who he encountered in everyday life – whether in the tram, at the food stall or at the concert – to draw a palm tree for him. These collected sketches reflect a whole range of different design possibilities of a palm tree and serve as a metaphor: The variety of the imagined conceptions of a palm tree illustrates the variety of perspectives from which a work of art can be considered. Heiderose Hildebrand commented plausibly: ‘People often believe they are drawing THE [sic] palm tree, but THE [sic] palm tree does not exist!’” (Jentzsch 2007)

But why the PALM anyway? Could it not just as well have been called “Draw your apple tree!” or “Draw a car!”? In Vienna palm trees are difficult to come across outside of glasshouses. The palm houses and butterfly houses in Vienna serve the edification of city dwellers, who are in need of a vacation and convey images of a ‘South Sea

<sup>2</sup> To be found here: <https://www.meinbezirk.at/klosterneuburg/lokales/weltenbummler-mit-ai-wiwi-im-essl-museum-d1141471.html> (retrieved on: September 8, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> *white* is here written in italics, since the term refers to a political position in the power structure, which marks the superiority with at the same time alleged neutrality (here known as metaphor for the open, empty, unmarked). Being *white* is a privileged position that is defined and racially codified. This also works if the individual subjects or institutional structures are unaware of it, or do not officially state this (Arndt 2005).

paradise' or even of Southern Europe as a projection surface for the desire for an invigorating 'elsewhere'.<sup>4</sup> These fantasies of 'exotic' retreats and nature metaphors derive from colonial discourses. In *The West and the Rest* Stuart Hall describes the development of notions of 'paradise' in the following way:

"In [the] images and metaphors of the New World as an Earthly Paradise, a Golden Age, or Utopia, we can see a powerful European fantasy being constructed. [...] When Captain Cook arrived in Tahiti in 1769, the same idyll [...] was repeated all over again. The women were extremely beautiful, the vegetation lush and tropical, the life simple, innocent, and free; Nature nourished the people without the apparent necessity to work or cultivate; [...] The West's contemporary image of tropical paradise and exotic holidays is still much to this fantasy." (Hall 1992: 302)

Another example of this kind of exotic language in arts education is the name of the Viennese theatre for a young audience, *Dschungeltheater* (Jungle Theatre). We want to emphasize that when talking about arts education in *mumok*, the *Essl Museum*, or the *Dschungeltheater*, we also talk about places that have played a role in our own lives, places with which we share a positive professional and personal bond, places that make important contributions to cultural education for children in Vienna, that seek inclusion and, in many ways, promote critical, emancipatory content and serious participative processes. Nevertheless, or maybe for that very reason, we propose to problematize such exotic expressions as signposts pointing to the history of the construction of the European 'other' and to examine their emergence in the arts education context of Austria with regard to an unreflected connection to its history. This proposal is based on our assumption that, in the last instance, the symbols and metaphors used in the arts education programs' self-presentation also have an impact on the contents they negotiate. The question for example is, who amongst the visitors feels (or does not feel) addressed as part of the 'self'. Especially in a context that works so intensely with word meanings, images, concepts and with unconscious thought connections, the names and image motifs of self-representation are by no means trivial, especially if they are linked to a past and present shaped by exclusion, othering, oppression and exploitative power.

An exploration of this history and its continuities, which would also mean exploring all chains of association around one's own image and metaphor production, is rarely part of the everyday practice of art education.

The group *Fly Hummingbird* called itself *StörDienst*<sup>5</sup> from about 1991 onwards, partly to replace the image of the 'lovely' little bird with a more critical or even more rebellious attitude towards the institution and its tendency to disdain the work of the new arts education with children (Sturm 2002; Schneider 2002: 53-55). In a brochure in which the *StörDienst* presents its working method, the author of the introduction locates this work in the museum in the following way:

"Our kind of arts education work is not really integrated into Austrian everyday museum practice, our work does not have a tradition. Therefore we work in the historical space of the museum, without a history." (Zechner ca. 1992)

Although this attitude of vehement distancing – from the museum's ignorance and more established arts education methods which were dismissed as too didactic or scholastic – may be understandable, it did not allow for a critical positioning in the history of arts based museum education. It contributed to the invisibility of its problematic traditions: We<sup>6</sup> saw ourselves as part of the pioneer generation and as such we perceived ourselves to be free from any tradition.

There is, however, a connection between children, art and colonial patterns of thought to which art educators subscribe, particularly when they are unaware of it. As we tried to show in this first part of this text, they for example subscribe to it by using metaphors from the colonial notions of 'primitivism' and 'exoticism' to find symbols for virtues like 'curiosity', 'fantasy' or 'sensuality', that are important to their approach. Through the critical impact of the *Institute for Art Education in Zurich (IAE)*<sup>7</sup> and the immensely valuable opportunity to engage in a shared exploration of knowledge resources with our colleagues in the network *Another Roadmap for Arts Education – intertwining hi/stories*, we have faced this history with critical attention towards those concepts, images and symbols that we suspect to be inherited from colonial and racist patterns of thought. This is what led us into the discourse production around *Child Art* and child creativity in Vienna in the first half of the 20th century.

## CHILD ART AND FRANZ CIZEK

"It is strange that scarcely anything done by children has been preserved which is older than a hundred years. [...] We have hardly anything from anonymous young children,

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4 As one of several examples see the film *Unter Palmen am blauen Meer* (Under the palm trees of the blue sea – 1957, Germany/Italy, director: Hans Deppe). The storyline is driven by the protagonist's desire for an Italian folk singer.

5 *StörDienst* (literally 'disruption-service') is a German word that refers to emergency services that can be called in case of a serious problem in a facility; as in the Austrian context this service is usually named "Störungsdienst" and due to the capital D in the middle of the word the name evokes here also the idea of a service that aims to create disruption.

6 The "We" in this text refers explicit to us authors. Karin Schneider was a member of *StörDienst* from 1992/93 onwards and both of us have been shaped by its discourses and practices as much as we have shaped them ourselves.

7 We especially thank Carmen Mörsch for her succinct advice.

whereas we, fortunately, possess a great number of documents of primitive art, some tens of thousands of years old. We have in our museums examples of peasant art, executed centuries ago. Why no Child Art?" (Viola 1942: 7).

*"The best way to understand Child Art is to study primitive art, both of races that lived tens of thousands of years ago and the art of living primitives. The most superficial observer must be struck by the similarity between the art of primitive man and Child Art."* (Viola 1942: 16)

These are the opening lines of the book *Child Art* (1942), published in English by the Viennese author Wilhelm Viola. The quoted passages are taken from the book's introduction titled *The Discovery of Child Art*, and the subsequent chapter *Child Art and Primitive Art*. The book is largely based on Viola's studies on the teachings of the Viennese artist and arts pedagogue Franz Cizek, who is considered as one of the 'discoverers' of *Child Art*. Cizek was born in the Czech town of Leitmeritz in 1895 and moved to Vienna in 1885 to study at the *Academy of Fine Arts*. Shortly thereafter he began devoting himself to art lessons for children. He opened a painting and drawing school for children, which was privately run at first and later integrated as a training course for "prospective freehand drawing teachers" (Laven 2006: 86) and as *Jugendkunstklasse* (juvenile art class) at the Vienna *Kunstgewerbeschule* (today's University of Applied Arts) in the academic year 1903/04. In this context Cizek developed his own method of arts education for children between the ages of 3 and 14. The children visited him twice a week as part of their free time to paint, draw, plaster, and make paper or linoleum cuts. For Cizek, it was central to take the children's work seriously as an independent, 'primal' artistic expression. He perceived himself to be an artist more than a teacher. Cizek ran the *Jugendkunstklasse* until his death in 1946, working on a private basis after his retirement in the mid-1930s. A close collaborator of his, Adelheid Schimitzek, who he designated as his successor, continued the class after Cizek's death until 1955.

The above-cited author, Wilhelm Viola, was the first general secretary of the *Austrian Youth Red Cross*, founded in 1922. The institution was one of the main sponsors of Cizek's *Jugendkunstklasse* and publisher of another book by Viola on Franz Cizek, *Child Art and Franz Cizek*, which was first published in 1936 and underwent several reprints. As an author, Viola spent some time in Cizek's classes and took field notes of the lessons, later publishing the results in 1942, when he had already emigrated to England. Both books were published in English. From a Viennese perspective it was remarkable to us that Viola was able to internationally promote Cizek's work, an art pedagogue who actively practiced in Nazi Germany (which Austria was part of from 1938 to 1945), and at a time in which Nazi Germany and England were at war. International researchers on arts education received Cizek's work largely through English-language secondary literature, and above all through Viola's publications,

and usually didn't conduct research in Viennese archives. The passages quoted above give an impression of Viola's rendition of a central argument of Cizek's approaches and are historical examples of the connection between the art of children and the racist depiction of people in the colonies as 'primitives', whose artistic production was deemed similarly 'primal' and unencumbered by education.

In his 1936 publication, Viola describes one of Cizek's central thoughts, namely the claim that the creativity of children is exposed to problematic influences:

*"Too many people meddle with these children. If he [Cizek] were living with his children on a desert island in the ocean and could let them go on creating, he is convinced that he could bring all his children to the purest development of their creative ability. But his children are living in a civilized world with many unfavourable influences."* (Viola 1936: 26)

What are the negative influences of the 'civilized world' referred to here? Elsewhere Viola notes:

*"Prof. Cizek finds that children from the poorer sections of the city are generally more original and more creative than the children from the wealthy parents. A richer environment is as a rule destructive to what is creative in the child. Too many books, pictures, visits to theatres, cinemas etc. are bad for the child."* (Viola 1936: 20).

Although many of Cizek's students came from the more affluent, often Jewish, urban bourgeoisie milieu, according to him it is precisely their exposure to cultural education that corrupts children and destroys their 'pure' creativity. In this context, it is above all the traditional school with its focus on intellectual education that plays a large part in preventing children from acting as creatively as they would ultimately be able to. This school, "the intellectual school":

*"gives nothing to the child but deprives him of something, so that these children generally leave such a school poorer than they entered it. That kind of school is part of the tragedy of our modern civilization. – A child is so pliable. How easy it is to make patterns and comfortable 'citizens' out of these little children's bodies and souls!"* (Viola 1936: 22)

For Viola, the critique of schools and the critique of civilization are directly related and lead him to projecting his concerns onto those he calls 'primitives':

*"Why does the work of the primitives appear to us so strong, despite the lack of perspective? Why do the works of ancient Egyptians appear to us so strong? Because they are created according to the same laws as children's drawings. By the way, another opinion of Cizek's is, that there is a relationship, even an absolute parallel between the art of the ancients and primitives and the art of the child. Only with the ancients and the primitives there is no break in creative power at the age of puberty. Cizek believes that the unbro-*

ken art of the primitives is due to the fact that they are not spoiled by schools. It is a fact not to be denied that many city children lose their creative ability in drawing and painting in the years of puberty. (Rural teachers have however, assured me that they have not noticed this phenomenon with peasant children.)” (Viola 1936: 25)

Even the contemporary notion of *unschooling* appears in this context, based on the idea that school destroys creativity. Viola quotes Cizek as follows:

“I have extricated children from school in order to make a home for them, where they may really be children. I was the first person to talk about the ‘unschooling of the school’. School is good only when it commits suicide and transforms itself into active life. Parents and teachers should preserve the child from transforming creativeness into mannerism, or imitation. Among the old Egyptians the illusionistic was punished.” (Viola 1936: 38)

A connection between the supposedly ‘pure’ and ‘unspoiled’ creative potential of the people of the Global South, ancient Egyptian culture, and Austrian children – especially those who come from less well-to-do families or rural areas – is being established here. The children’s potential is allegedly being endangered by too much classical cultural education in the parental home, popular cultural distractions of the big city (like the cinema) and above all the ‘old school’, which purely aims at intellectuality. Several discursive figures are apparently connected and necessitate each other: The criticism of the school education system, of raising children too quickly to become adapted citizens, goes hand in hand with a general critique of civilization and a scepticism towards, or even a rejection of, modern urban lifestyles and values; underpinned by exoticizing, primitivist desires projected onto racialized and working class ‘others’.

The same line of thought equates those living in the colonies, as well as the peasants (the ‘Volk’),<sup>8</sup> with supposedly unspoiled children. All of them – the colonized, the children and the ‘ordinary people’ – need to be educated in a manner that does not ‘spoil’ them but ‘protects’ them from the bad influences of education, modernity and intellectuality. Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa describes the powerful influence of precisely these phantasmatic constructions for the African context in the framework of her study on Margaret Trowell (1904-1985), who founded one of the first art schools for black colonized students in the Uganda Protectorate in the 1930s:

“What [Trowell] felt was required [...] was ‘the vigorous craftsmanship of a healthy peasant population’, and it was Europe in the twelfth, and not the twentieth century that she deemed the most appropriate model. The Middle Ages were, Trowell claimed, the ‘door [...] best fitted’ to East Africans’ ‘stage of development’ – a view which closely reflects the social evolutionist ideology that underpinned British imperial policy in this period, according to which, the brain structure and intellectual capabilities of Africans were believed to be far less developed than that of Europeans. ‘The African’, according to the colonial administrator Lord Frederick Lugard’s famous formulation, ‘[held] the position of a late-born child in the family of nations, and must as yet be schooled in the discipline of the nursery.’” (Wolukau-Wanambwa 2014: 104)

Social Darwinist constructions like those outlined above also characterize Cizek’s own publications.<sup>9</sup> Contrary to the depiction in Wilhelm Viola’s texts though, his primary reference system for the construction of ‘primal’ creativity, unspoiled by school and urban life, is not art production from the Global South, but Austrian folk art, the art of the peasants. Assigning a ‘positive’ primitivism to their artistic expressions, he equates them to the art of children or the youth that he holds in such high esteem. In one of his few published texts, *Children’s Coloured Paper Work* (1927), he establishes this theoretical framework right at the beginning.<sup>10</sup> The “cut paper work of the people (...) was work made by the population of villages and small towns, to meet the simple artistic tastes of the country-side. Up to this day it has kept the primitive character special to all folk-art, and its great charm lies in its revelation of the psychology of the people.” (Cizek 1927: 3).

The designs of the paper cutouts from his *Juvenile Art Class* in this publication depict Central European fairy tales, mostly rural everyday life of children in Austria and Christian (Catholic) holidays and figures. In the 1920s and 1930s, graphics with these motifs are often found on the title pages of the journal of the *Austrian Youth Red Cross* or as a postcard edition for Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. From our perspective it can be argued that these pictures, through the depiction of a ‘typical everyday life’ and children’s worlds as being predominantly rural-catholic, contributed to the construction of Austrian identity at a time when it was uncertain, disintegrated and had to be continually re-established (for Cizek’s references to Austrian identity constructions see Smith 1996: 75). Likewise, in a not further published lecture on

<sup>8</sup> The last third of the 19th century saw the emergence of the notion “Volk” (translate “a people”) in the German speaking context, which took common biological descent as its foundation. In the framework of social Darwinist ideas, this term was embedded in racial theories, depicting “Volk” primarily as a German blood community.

<sup>9</sup> There are only a few published texts by Cizek but manifold manuscripts, fragments and notes in archives in Vienna. This can in part be attributed to the fact that Cizek’s ‘opus magnum’, on which he worked for more than a decade, was never published. Cizek did, however, consider himself a researcher and would have liked to share his views with a larger audience.

<sup>10</sup> The text was first published in 1912; in the Austrian National Library other editions from 1914, 1916 and 1925 can be accessed. The English translation was published in 1927 in Vienna. We thank Dr. Rolf Laven for granting us access to these documents.

the *Juvenile Art Class* at the *Vienna Educational Society* in 1911 he states that,<sup>11</sup>

*“youth art is a free expression of the youthful creative urge and will to create, that is uninfluenced by learned skill and scientificity. It is the purest and most wholehearted artistic revelation of humanity. The products of youth art are human documents, self-awareness. This is, on the one hand, what distinguishes it from ‘academic art’, and what, on the other hand, reveals its affinity with folk art.”* (Cizek 1911: 2 self-translation)

Cizek’s contempt for scholastic learning – which he perceives to be in opposition to his own conception of a creativity that draws on one’s intrinsic innovativeness – is already surfacing here, as well as in Viola’s publications. It became even more explicit in later texts, and corresponds to an anti-intellectualism and anti-urbanism that can also be found in anti-Semitic thought.<sup>12</sup> His praise of rural folk art as more ‘humane’, inasmuch as it is unaffected by an academic or other formal education, has connection points with Austrofascist ideology. The Austrofascist state was a dictatorial system established in Austria by clerical parties and associations from 1934 until the transfer of power to the Nazis in 1938. It was targeting the Left and social democracy, and their ‘Red Vienna’. Austrofascism was strongly supported by the Catholic Church and by farmers’ associations; its ideologues regarded the Catholic peasantry as the epitome of Austrian nationality, and considered a (fantasized) medieval sovereign state as their ideal of peaceful coexistence. On the ideological-cultural-political level, the Austrofascist regime was concerned with aligning Austrians to ideas transferred through buzzwords like ‘folklore and homeland’. Folklore studies as well as different forms of folk art were effective, harmonizing vehicles for this purpose (Puchberger 2013: 144).

Cizek was certainly not in open opposition to the Austrian fascists. The networks of the reigning unitary party *Vaterländische Front* (Fatherland Front), such as education and youth associations, helped establish the *urbane Heimatkultur* (urban homeland culture), which by then also provided models for a nationally propagated popular culture, as “a culture of feeling and experience that is opposed to an intellectual spirit and culture of knowledge” (Puchberger 2013b: 140) – this describes another shared discursive space with Cizek’s ideas.

Even during the Nazi period (in Austria 1938-1945) Cizek’s *Juvenile Art Class* did not experience any specific political repression, but rather economic and war-related restrictions: Although the class at the *Kunstgewerbes-*

*chule* had to close in 1939 because the school’s rooms were reassigned to another institution, the *Staatsgewerbeschule*, and the city administration did not immediately find alternative premises. From January 1940 onwards he was provided with the former festival rooms of the Viennese company *Heller*, which was expropriated by the Nazis as ‘Jewish property’, and hence he was able to continue his work – now partly privately and partly city funded (Laven 2006: 126). Even after 1945 Cizek wanted to continue the activities of his “work, care and research center of instinct driven form creation of the youth” without interruption. Among other things he envisioned merging his *Juvenile Art Class* and his folk art collection in a “Museum for Form-Creative Design”. Youth art to him was “living folk art”, as he stated shortly before his death in 1946. (Seber 2001: 120)

The scope of this text does not allow for a detailed historical elaboration of Cizek’s links to National Socialism and Austrofascism. It should, however, be mentioned briefly at this point, that his last assistant, Adelheid Schmitzke proposed Cizek’s book manuscript *Triebhaftes Bildendes Schaffen der Jugend* (Instinct Driven Form-Creation of the Youth), to the Viennese publisher *Verlag für Jugend und Volk* (Youth and People Press) around 1955. The manuscript underwent several review steps, and in the process it was noted that parts of Cizek’s philosophy are “related to the so-called ‘ideology’ of race theory”, and that it would be “necessary to eliminate everything of this kind” before publication, which was never realized. (Seber 2001: 139) The manuscript is considered lost today (Laven 2006: 136). A formulation in another 1941/42 manuscript that can be found in the Cizek estate at the *Vienna City Library Manuscript Collection* may give an impression of the racist categories that show up in some of Cizek’s writings. Reading such texts is disturbing and publishing them risks reproducing these racist thoughts. However, as we consider it necessary to have an insight into Cizek’s point of view in this context, we have decided to cite some quotes nonetheless.

Reflecting on his encounters with the artists of the *Vienna Secession*, which belonged to his circle of supporters, he summarizes their reflections critically:

-- TRIGGER WARNING--

*“Some suggested that the impulsive Japanese should be an example to be followed, others thought it would be better to draw inspiration from the Chinese, who were more original and older than the Japanese. Others found Asian art styles too over-developed and advised to seek Peruvian and N\* arts, whose primitiveness at the time was so strongly and impressively contrasted with our lasciviousness and super-saturation. Hence, the discussion had entered the immediate vicinity of my personal endeavors, and I declared: Why gaze into the distance, since these arts are fremdrassig and blutsfremd [Nazi terminologies for deeming something to be ‘foreign to the Aryan race’ and ‘alien to the blood’] to us Central Europeans.- Especially considering the creations of children, in which art constantly re-emerges at the*

<sup>11</sup> We thank Dr. Rolf Laven for granting us access to these documents.

<sup>12</sup> For the connection between anti-intellectualism and anti-Semitism see, among others, Braun 2001: 446-479; see Gilman 1993: 25f. for the construction of the ‘Jewish mind’ as being ‘reproductive’ in contrast to the ability for genuine creative imagination. For the connection between anti-Semitism and resentment against the city see Kahmann 2016.

surface, which represent an eternal rebirth of everything truly artistic.” (ZPH 489/1, Archivbox 1 Map 1.1.2 Manuscript without title 1 / 2, 1941/42: 23f. selftranslation)

In this quote, Cizek appears to distance himself from the ‘primitivist’ movement of modern art, which makes use of references to non-European art forms in style or (supposedly) in attitude, but he does so by nonetheless applying explicitly racist patterns of argumentation. He represents a National Socialist ideology that is based on the ideal of purity. Cizek finds his opinion, that the art of a country should be spared from “foreign influences” and should “be left alone to develop independently from within its own people’s soul and mature in itself”, confirmed by the “14 Points of the National Socialist Program” (self-translated quotes from his manuscript). The latter states that “the creation of art [...] emerges from the spirit, blood and soil and thereby obtains a strong racial character” (ibid: 96f., self-translated quotes from his manuscript, see also Seber 2001: 148).

Again one can find connections between this line of argument and a tradition of anti-intellectualism. During a visit to the *Royal College of Art* and the *Victoria and Albert Museum* in London as part of *The III. International Art Education Congress* (1908), where works of the *Juvenile Art Class* were shown as well (Laven 2006: 99, 243), Japanese and Chinese art included in the exhibition made a strong impression on him: “How miserable the Europeans with their intellect-guided approach to art seemed to me, how very much did those strong, racial designs confirm my own art education problem.” (ZPH 489/1, archive box 1 folder 1.1.2 manuscript without title 1/2, 1941/42: 70)

What impact did this history of the interconnection between racist, colonial, ethnic and anti-Semitic constructions of meaning have on ideas of child creativity, free form, sensuality, school criticism and progressive arts education? To even consider this connection and the idea that concepts of free form-creation and open learning methods can be located in exactly this context seems to be particularly difficult to acknowledge for practitioners and researchers in this field (including ourselves).

In any case, art educators who officially took on Cizek’s legacy in the Second Republic carried Cizek-inspired ‘child creativity’ and ‘free form-creation’ into classrooms and into the *Museum of Modern Art* (contrary to Cizek’s own intentions), and they did not critically address the implications of this heritage. From 1970 to 1991, the museum activities “Museum einmal anders” (experience the museum differently) and “freies Malen” (free painting) took place on Sunday mornings at the *Museum of Modern Art*. The initial impetus for the institutionalization of these activities by the art educator Ludwig Hofmann came from an exhibition of children’s works staged in 1970 by the then director of the museum, Alfred Schmeller (Safer 1991: 6f; Höllwart 2005: 106f). The longtime colleague and secretary of Ludwig Hof-

mann, Elisabeth Safer, supervised this activity for several years and published the brochure *Begreifen heißt Erfinden (Understanding Means Inventing)* in 1991. The pictures and some of the descriptions in this booklet suggest an approach similar to ... *the living museum* ... although it seems that Safer and colleagues are less concerned with encouraging free association and imagination. It is interesting to note that Elisabeth Safer clearly cited Cizek as a reference in her publication on children’s activities in the *Museum of Modern Art* (Safer 1991: 7, 34, 38, 40). In 2006, she gave a lecture on Franz Cizek at the *ISSA’s Academy for Holistic Art Therapy* at the *Art University Linz*, where she talked about his method and the classroom atmosphere. Safer also ran the “First Viennese Children Gallery”, *Lalibela*, from 1981 until her death in 2008. *Lalibela* was a kind of children’s atelier for free artistic creation. In Safer’s words:

*“We did not want to limit ourselves to fostering the child’s creativity – a kind of self-realization, so to speak – we also wanted to instill a global solidarity in these children. Creativity, in our opinion, can not lead a life of its own, but must rather be geared towards life experience and coping with life. The name Lalibela helped us to achieve this creative solidarity. Many people think that the word is suitable for children and an appropriate invention. But that is not the case. There is a place in Ethiopia that is called Lalibela. An Ethiopian king called Lalibela founded this village and built beautiful monolithic churches in the area. Our name obliges our gallery to work towards a global creative experience.”* (Safer 1996)

Such a statement uses ‘Ethiopia’ as a projection surface for creative experiences and paternalistic concepts of solidarity to be learned by Viennese children. The explanation of the gallery name and whom it is addressed to as tutelage to solidarity suggests the exclusion of, for instance, African children in Vienna or children who feel familiar with these contexts by way of family relationships or because they have been there. The fact that Safer accepts that *Lalibela*, the name of a real place in Ethiopia, is considered by many to be an invented sound from children’s language, neatly points to the discursive fusion of children’s art with art from formerly colonized African territories.

The idea of a “global experience” resonates with the version of Cizek that Wilhelm Viola introduced into the international debate. It is the ‘Cizek’ that is seen as more closely associated with the colonial-racist notion of ‘primitivism’ than with that of ‘folk and homeland’ art, and thus allows for an incorporation of a related *Child Art* engagement into discourses of modern art that consider themselves as transnational.

The arts educators of the 1980s and 1990s, which we earlier presented as belonging to our own professional context, in contrast to the above, did not make any references to the specific history of Franz Cizek and the Viennese *Child Art* Tradition. This history – as far as



we know – played no role in their texts and concepts. They either distanced themselves from the activities that Ludwig Hofmann and Elisabeth Safer established at the *mumok*, or ignored them altogether.<sup>13</sup> How can we evaluate the fact then, that despite this distancing from or dismissal of local arts education traditions, they nevertheless drew on symbols of colonial and primitivist mindsets? From our vantage point, this might coincide with the shift we have already observed in Wilhelm Viola's work. At the very least, there was a tendency within the Austrian arts education field to oppose anything that had an air of 'homeland nostalgia' and provinciality, and to rather seek metaphors for the 'wide world' that could underline their effort to distance themselves from the own national context and its history.<sup>14</sup> Consciously or intuitively, such connections to the discursive field of modernism, at least in post-Nazi Germany and Austria after 1945, were regarded as a bulwark against internal fascism, against anything *völkisch*, against any thought that was solely focussed on one's own nation, as it dominated cultural policies, at least in Austria, until the mid-1990s if not beyond.

At the beginning of her analysis of negotiations of cultural differences in German art production before 1990, art historian Kea Wienand (2015) points out the need to deal with and acknowledge the link between Germany's colonial history, its widespread denial or marginalization in the hegemonic discourse of history, and the history of National Socialism. To her, it is central to question,

*"to what extent (the colonial) strand of history is intertwined with that of the Nazi past, but also to what extent the effects of this history and its ideologies are intertwined with and into each other, how they complement, contradict or react to one another. How, for example, images of colonial fantasies can serve to cover up problematic recent history, to imagine oneself in the distance or as the 'other' and to represent oneself as cosmopolitan."* (Wienand 2015: 15)

At this point we would like to put forward the thesis that the use of symbols and metaphors from the pictorial repertoire of colonial fantasies in the field of progressive arts education in Vienna from the late 1980s onwards, served precisely that function. It enabled its proponents to elude dealing with the involvement of their professional field in the history of Austrian fascism, National Socialism and its *völkisch* ideas, and to cast themselves as cosmopolitan, as distant 'others', or to imagine that they referred to these 'others' in a positive manner. The symbolism used to illustrate these imaginations (palm trees, hummingbirds, jungles, travel and discovery metaphors, ...) was not accidental, but directly linked to the colonial impli-

cations of the project of modern art and its perceptions, as Kea Wienand (2015) demonstrates in the context of Germany after 1945:

*"After the National Socialist defamation of artists who had turned to abstract and expressionist modes of representation with reference to supposed 'primitive art', their art was celebrated as 'antifascist' and 'cosmopolitan' per se."* (Ibid.)

In our opinion, this finding is even more relevant for the Austrian context, since the defamation of modern art and the open, urban, worldly lifestyle to which it is symbolically linked, was already practiced by the reactionary forces that dominated the country from the 1930s onwards, and remained hegemonic into the 1970s, enabled by an anti-modern climate.

In Austria it is precisely the refusal to deal more intensively with one's own National Socialist history, which until today enables the trivialization of colonial-racist production of meaning. An examination of National Socialism would bring to light the greater but self-contradictory interweaving of national and global racism, which became apparent in the quotes from Cizek's manuscript cited above.

Instead of distancing oneself from 'the Nazis' or 'the fascists' – we propose to critically analyze their ideological, educational, cultural-political, scientific and spiritual components and their constructions. This would enable the exposure of the subtle, racist and anti-Semitic continuities in the construction of the Christian-Austrian, as well as its links to colonial-racist phantasms and thought.

However, the new generation of progressive art educators – rather than dealing with the past – tended to activate a subconscious knowledge about the fact that the national discursive environment of the 'Nazi Cizek' (as the 'father of "Child Art"'), who in his unpublished archival texts is opposed to the primitivism of Modernity and references folk art) is conveniently 'forgotten' when one intuitively draws on the international discursive context of the 'primitivism Cizek' (as the 'father of children's art' the way Viola imagines him).

The fact that we, the progressive-minded, left-wing arts educators of the 1980s and 1990s were even able to hold on to these colonial metaphors and in the same vein to the myth of our own ahistoricity, was also due to the hegemonic, *white* subject positions of the majority of the arts educators of those generations. The fact that the racist implications behind 'harmless' designations did not catch the attention of most of us and that the protagonists of this field could, and still can afford not to deal with those historical continuities is a direct consequence of these subject positions. This, in turn, has an effect on the consolidation of who feels included or excluded by these self-representations of the cultural field, who feels unwell or who does not feel addressed at all. These 'care-free' qualities reveal the still almost unbowed *whiteness* of this professional field.

<sup>13</sup> The connection between these activities and those of *...the living museum...*, *Kolibri flieg* and *StörDienst* and the reasons for this dissociation still need to be studied. It appears to be likely that criticism against Hofman and Safer was raised both from art pedagogical and political contexts.

<sup>14</sup> We thank Prof. Barbara Putz-Plecko for pointing this out to us.

At the end of this *Flight of Riddles*, things may seem more complex, but not really all too enigmatic. Finally, we arrive at the question of how much of an impact these discourses continue to have on our practice.

## CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

The question remains, what do we want to do with all this history? A first step should consist of closer examinations. We have seen that historical strands of our practice have – unconsciously – also found anchors in realms we would rather not refer to – such as the ideologies of colonial racism, national racism, anti-Semitism, Nazism. But even in the less alarming context of the history of *Child Art* and progressive arts education, conscious historical work has not been part of the practice of those arts educators in whose line we see ourselves. Here, we have tried to show that obliviousness to history and diffuse, reflexive demarcations provide entry points for colonial metaphors.

To conclude, we would like to emphasize again that the names of arts education programs and the symbols they employ alone, do not yet give an immediate indication of their practice. On the contrary, the programs we have mentioned were often designed in a very sensitive and methodical manner, striving to provide everyone with a space where they can have a voice. The groups and places we have mentioned have been and still are important references for open, participatory work that takes institutional power mechanisms and issues of representation in the museum seriously, and the *Jungle Theater* is one of the few cultural institutions in Vienna

that encourage political and anti-racist educational work. If this were not the case, a critical examination, which also scrutinizes the small gestures of self-representations, would not be of particular interest or even necessary. However, taking the symbols, metaphors, names, images that represent arts education seriously is just as important to us. In a field whose central task is the creation of pictorial-textual chains of associations, the often unconscious effects of symbols should not be underestimated. Such carelessness tends to have concrete effects on the inclusions and exclusions of those from the Global South who have become projection screens of these fantasies. Ignorance of such symbolic violence is not only the result of *white* hegemony in the field of art education, but also tends to reproduce it.

What do these findings mean for contemporary practices? How can this field be constituted in such a way that historical work and thus the visualization of links to local and global racism, colonialism, anti-Semitism and National Socialism can be perceived as components of one's own critical practices? How can historical work listen to the voices of those who are affected by the effects of symbolic violence without pushing the burden of historical work onto them? All this points to the importance of more research in this area that operates with an accuracy that could only be hinted at in this text. The questions this historical research would have to engage with need to be developed both for and from within the practice of arts education. They could thus be asked by people who act as mediators, artists and educators in different contexts and should thus include their own entanglements in this history.

### Learning Unit

#### DECONSTRUCTING THE WILD >< CHILD

Working Group: Vienna

Authors: Karin Schneider, Andrea Hubin, Carla Bobadilla

<https://another-roadmap.net/intertwining-histories/tools-for-education/learning-units#>

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