

REVIEWS

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**Developing Passion in Pre-School Children –
Museum Lessons**

**Rozwijanie pasji u dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym –
lekcje muzealne**

What is passion? When searching for the answer to this question, firstly, abilities should be defined because both of these concepts are closely linked. In pedagogical literature, *abilities* “is a term to determine possibilities for doing something by an individual, a relatively permanent property of intellectual processes, the level of functioning of the individual in terms of e.g. speed and capacity of cognitive processes, memory, quality of mental operations in comparison with other individuals, that provide diverse achievements in a given field.” (Kupisiewicz, Kupisiewicz, 2018) Passion uses abilities to acquire knowledge in a given field and its main goal is to enjoy the pleasure of these actions.

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Regarding the above definitions, it can be concluded that nothing motivates action and development as much as passion. It adds strength them, allows people to feel satisfaction, gives joy, teaches perseverance, helps overcome weaknesses, and strengthens strengths.

The period of life between three and six years, the stage of preschool education, is an extremely important time and place in human life, in which children can discover and develop creativity, activity, and interests in a way that is free from patterns, schemes, and limitations. As D. Lewis (1998) notes, “a child is born as comprehensively talented, with the full possibility of development in all directions, potential outstanding intelligence and dedication for developing great creativity and a great social talent. The opportunities for their maximum development should be created.” It was his statement that became an encouragement to use the activities proposed by the National Museum in Cracow as part of the Art Available Program in work with children in kindergarten. Museum lessons are great opportunities to get in direct contact with works of art and an active form of visiting the gallery.

In Poland, especially in Cracow, an intensive development of museum education can be observed. New institutions and cultural projects that dedicate their activities to the youngest generation are being created. The offers of cultural institutions are a response to educational needs, a kind of attractiveness that motivates to acquire knowledge. In a book entitled *Museum education – museums for children and youth* (2016), Renata Pater notes, that “an important method used in the museum is the way of presenting, an arranging objects and developing a topic. The content is transferred on various levels of difficulty involving <head, hands, heart>. Intellectual activity is supported by requirements and shaping of skills such as reading, writing, counting, and abstraction. Interpersonal communication, cooperation in a group, establishing dialogue and conducting discussions and disputes are also activated. Activities are often connected with the need to take physical effort, exercise; manual skills are practiced, people are encouraged to take up their own activity, get involved.” Therefore, in cultural institutions, children have the opportunity to acquire information, experiment and for multi-conceptual learning of works of art in another way than every day.

In the offer of the National Museum in Cracow for kindergartens, three thematic blocks have been distinguished: (1) art, time and space; (2) nature; and (3) topics related to traditions and customs.

ART. Topics in this block are aimed at the presentation of various aspects of the visual arts. Activities bring children into the world of art through observation and independent creativeness. At the same time, through experience and playing together, they learn about the basic concepts of art and art materials. They learn about the structure of a work of art and the secrets of artist workshops and studios from various eras, including the creators of contemporary art. During classes, young viewers learn about what a museum is, what its tasks are and why it is important that they visit exhibitions both with the group and independently.

TIME AND SPACE. Lessons are related to various stories, which have their source in exhibits gathered in the museum. The classes bring their history closer – ones from school books, but also different “stories,” more private and individual ones. Subjects are also the testimonies of human memory and beliefs – legends, myths, fairy tales. Thanks to those various sources, children learn about old customs, rituals and changing fashions. Classes, developing the imagination, are also an opportunity to shape attitudes of respect towards the past and historical mementos, including those related to their own family and environment.

NATURE. Classes related to nature introduce children into the colorful world of nature, the seasons, atmospheric phenomena, sounds, as well as the behavior of domestic, native and exotic animals. They learn about ancient and contemporary landscape painting and why nature was such an important source of inspiration for artists. They learn to notice the mood and the psyche of an artist told through his way of presenting a landscape. The seasons and atmospheric phenomena, which are common experiences of everyone, acquire additional meanings filtered by the sensitivity of artists from different eras.

Education in the museum was perceived by children with great joy. Curiosity to discover other museums in Cracow and the secrets hidden in them, inspired them to develop and test their painting skills and expand their knowledge of art and nature. Artistic education turned out to be important in this age group. It influences the development of cognitive

sensitivity, teaches observations, shapes social competences, and gives a wide range of expressing feelings in contact with art. Children behavior during classes can be summed up by the statement of Albert Einstein: “The most beautiful thing we can experience is the enchantment with the mystery. It is a feeling that stands at the cradle of real art and real science. The one who does not know it and cannot be surprised, cannot experience the admiration, is dead, like a blown-out candle.” (Calaprice, 1997)

The ability to feel the beauty that is born in contact with art is the beginning of every passion. Sensitivity to seemingly ordinary things helps, as Janusz Korczak wrote, to play curiously and with fantasies in the fire brigade, trains, hunts, Indians... and at the same time discover what really adds wings and follow it.

Classes in cultural institutions, education through works of art and the use of museum resources offer amazing opportunities to develop children’s passions. Whether they will be noticed and properly directed towards development or not depends only on adults.

References

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