



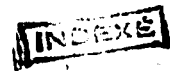
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SEMINAR ON THE TEACHING OF VISUAL ARTS IN GENERAL EDUCATION

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Art Instruction in Italy

It is only natural that, in a country world-famous as the home of the arts, the teaching of art should occupy in the general educational system a far more important place than is usually the case.

The purpose of this instruction is not merely to satisfy the spiritual and cultural needs of a people instinctively drawn to the ideals of beauty and harmony, but to encourage the growth of new forces that may revive and perpetuate the Italian tradition of art and civilization.

Art teaching in Italy is greatly assisted by the fact that nearly all the towns, large and small, have priceless treasures in their museums, churches, public buildings and private homes, as well as monuments representative of every period and style.

To this must be added the beauty of the natural scene which prompts the children - who are specially gifted - to make sketches of landscape and figures in movement.

THE NURSERY SCHOOL

The present curriculum encourages children to make free drawings, on paper or slates, with the traditional materials: coloured pencils and chalk.

In addition, pupils make group compositions on the ground or on some flat surface with any material that comes to hand - branches, leaves, flowers, shells and different-coloured pebbles.

THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The 1945 curricula, modelled on those of 11 November 1923, which were drawn up as the result of the Gentile reform, itself modified in 1934 for political rather than educational reasons, urge teachers to discipline artistic talent, but at the same time to leave pupils the utmost freedom to draw what they think best or what they like most.

Even if they are somewhat crude, the first efforts should not be disparaged; it is the teacher's duty to judge them on their strict merits, giving the pupil any necessary advice and endeavouring to find out what he is feeling and has attempted to express in his simple way.

As for free drawing, other subjects as well may suggest themes and means of expression. Furthermore, the teacher should enable his pupils to grasp such details as are often poorly conveyed - proportions, perspective, colour and shape.

The purpose of drawing technique is to enable pupils to represent what they wish to with the fullest possible mastery. They should be shown various objects in different positions, so as to give them a keener or at least a better sense of proportion and to develop their powers of observation.

Geometric design based on actual objects is very useful either for the application of geometry lessons or as a practical exercise.

Open-air schools or any lessons held outside offer great scope for drawing, as pupils may be left free to copy from nature whole landscapes, or such details as trees, etc.

The taste of schoolchildren is improved by an intelligent study of the works of the great masters of Italian painting, sculpture and architecture down the centuries.

Satisfactory results are also obtained with the help of good colour or black-and-white reproductions.

The primary school curricula do not set aside a great deal of time for art teaching. However, it should be added that this subject is intimately linked with the general syllabus and keeps pace with the pupil's general development.

## SECONDARY SCHOOLING

### "SCUOLA MEDIA" (Middle School)

On leaving the primary school, pupils spend three years of their secondary school-life at the "Scuola Media", where they receive two hours' instruction in drawing a week.

In the first form they are encouraged to develop their powers of self-expression which were defective at the primary school level. All self-expression is prompted by thought and by feeling - which provide the impetus for movement and bring into action not only the vocal chords but also the hands and arms, so that voice and gesture combine in an effort to convey words and forms. Bearing in mind these reflexes, teachers encourage their pupils to trace with their forefinger, over and over until the movement becomes instinctive, the outline of certain forms which attract their attention or appeal to their feelings.

In the second year's drawing lessons, the representation of objects is facilitated by the use of such aids as surfaces ruled in squares, which help to keep the details of the drawing in correct proportion.

By the third year, pupils taught by this method acquire some proficiency in the drawing of figures.

The teacher may give guidance in technique and in the method to be adopted to make the best use of colours (oil and water-colour). The less gifted pupils will morely do simple decorative drawings and geometric designs, exercises in perspective, graphs, and drawings of machinery, etc.

"LICEO SCIENTIFICO" (Science High-School)

In the first and second years of the "Liceo Scientifico", three hours are set aside for drawing each week, as against two hours in the third, fourth and fifth years.

Pupils in these schools pass from the observation of nature - on which the "Scuola Media" concentrated - to the study of the most important monuments, from ancient times down to the present. Faithful black-and-white and colour reproductions or films are used.

Pupils can thus study the different styles and manners of the most famous artists and, once they have grasped a work as a whole and in all its details, and it has taken clear shape in their minds, they are anxious to copy it, using their own means and favourite techniques. Every work of art must, of course, be studied in relation to its particular historic setting.

The teaching of art history goes hand in hand with the teaching of general history and drawing, so that the three subjects become a joint study, each shedding light on the others.

"ISTITUTO MAGISTRALE" (Teachers' Training College)

At teachers' training colleges, under the present system, two hours' tuition in drawing and art history is provided each week throughout the four-year course.

Here the guiding principle of drawing instruction is to give the prospective teacher ease and skill in the use of drawing as a means of expression, so that he may make his lessons clearer and more concrete and be instrumental in inculcating a finer aesthetic appreciation in the home, the school and the country as a whole.

The sole aim of instruction in drawing theory is to develop talent and skill.

In present-day syllabuses the attention of pupils is directed to the special applications of art in the typical and best-known industries of Italy. The "Scuola Magistrale" concentrates mainly on drawing from nature, especially in the first year, and the copying of compositions, decorative motifs and ideographs.

"SCUOLA PROFESSIONALE" (Vocational Training School)

In the vocational training schools four hours are set aside for drawing each week in the first year, and two in the second. The present syllabus prescribes linear drawing of simple motifs composed of segments and geometric figures, applicable in simple craftwork.

Observation and drawing from nature are the favourite exercises. In the second class, geometric figures and drawings from nature may be combined in geometric compositions based on decorative patterns found in tiling, mosaics and materials.

"ISTITUTO TECNICO INDUSTRIALE" (Technical Industrial Institute)

These schools set a syllabus of technical design, varying according to the course taken (6 hours in the first year, 4 hours in the second, third and fourth years and 6 hours in the fifth year of the industrial course for mechanical engineers; 6 hours in the first year, 4 hours in the second, third and fourth years and 5 hours in the fifth year of the electricians' course).

"ISTITUTO TECNICO AGRARIO" (Technical Agrarian Institute)

In these establishments, 4 hours a week are set aside for drawing. Pupils do free-hand drawings, drawings from prints of decorative motifs, or drawings from nature and geometric designs.

ISTITUTO TECNICO PER GEOMETRI (Technical Institute for Geometricians)

In the present educational system, 4 hours are devoted to architectural and decorative designing in the first year; 4 hours in the second; and in the third, 2 hours, the syllabus including geometrical problems and plan-drawing.

The same applies to the "ISTITUTO TECNICO AGRARIO" (Technical Agrarian Institute).

ART EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENTS

These establishments at present include "Scuole d'arte" (Art Schools), "Istituti d'arte" (Art Institutes), and "Licei Artistici" (Art Secondary Schools).

In view of their special character, we propose to give details of their organization.

The SCUOLE D'ARTE, which give a three-year course, prepare their students for work in the traditional arts and crafts, related to the particular industries and raw materials of the locality.

The ISTITUTI D'ARTE (Art Institutes) provide two courses of three years each, a junior course (corresponding to that of the "Scuole d'arte") and a senior course. Their students, after a more specialized theoretical and practical training, become "Art Masters" qualified to hold administrative posts in craft training centres, and to teach practical subjects in the schools where they themselves were trained (Scuole d'arte and Istituti d'arte).

In these schools an important place is occupied by drawing, modelling, applied painting and domestic architecture.

The present syllabuses do not stipulate a fixed number of drawing lessons a week. The time devoted to drawing varies from school to school, although, as a rule, drawing, with other closely related subjects (architecture, modelling and history of art) occupies about two-thirds of the total teaching time.

The LICEI ARTISTICI (Art Secondary Schools), which have a four-year

course, teach painting, sculpture and theatrical designing in preparation for study in the fine arts Academies; also architecture, as a preparation for study in the training colleges. The students in these "Licei Artistici", besides receiving a general education, study the following branches of art: figure and decorative drawing, figure and designing in relief, geometrical drawing, perspective, elements of architecture, anatomy. Here, too, art education takes absolute precedence over all other subjects.

The main features of the "Istituti d'arte" and the "Licei artistici" have been given because their work includes the important task of training future drawing teachers for secondary schools.

#### ART EDUCATION IN ITALIAN TEACHING ESTABLISHMENTS AFTER THE RECENT REFORM

As we know, the reform of education in Italy is just being completed.

Full and accurate details of the new syllabuses, and in particular of the syllabuses for art education, cannot yet be given.

However, the new Italian schools, whilst bearing in mind the requirements of general education, will devote great attention to art education.

The reasons for this are twofold: firstly, the fact that the leading authorities on modern teaching have recognized the special formative role of drawing in the intellectual development of children; and, secondly, the fact that drawing has proved to be of great value in view of its application in many different artistic and technical occupations.

In reorganizing art education, particularly in the primary schools, account has been taken of the most successful experiments made in Italy in recent years. In speaking of these experiments, special mention should be made of those carried out at the Saint Gersolò School, near Florence.

Although the work of this school is very well known, we nevertheless outline some of the principles on which its teaching is based.

"A school must provide knowledge, not merely the illusion of knowledge. The key to such knowledge is to regard education as a guide, which teaches us to see and to understand.

It is our task to discover and apply a method of teaching; a method which offers variety and a wealth of themes and expressions, which appeals at once to the heart and to the mind, and which engenders the wish to see more, understand more and love more - love being the ultimate purpose of education.

In pursuing this aim, the teacher may use observation themes, and observation may be crystallized in two ways: by drawing - a quick and complete method; or by the written word, which, to achieve its object, must obey the laws of drawing: truthfulness, order, precision and attention to detail."

Such is the definition of the importance of graphic expression, in the form of drawing, writing, or other methods of representation. Observation may start from the simplest objects - a modest twig picked up along the road

to school, a dry leaf, a dead insect - and it is concerned with the outline, the most minute details, the subtlest, barely perceptible shades of colour. Study of the simplest objects leads on to objects more and more complex, and finally to the panoramic view of a landscape, a rural scene, a village fair.

Though it is true that we are not yet in a position to give precise information regarding the new syllabuses for art education, we can nevertheless outline their general principles.

### INFANT SCHOOLS

Free drawing, regarded as a spontaneous revelation of the emotional and intellectual life of the child and an indication of his development, must be carefully supervised.

Whilst the teacher will correct free drawing, making observations and pointing out his reasons, he must never superimpose his judgment on the child's. Supervision must also be exercised over the ordinary types of handiwork and the simple crafts known in Italy by the term "miniature arts".

### PRIMARY SCHOOLS

An important place is occupied by graphic expression and ideographic drawings, which are even used to illustrate oral and written themes. The main practical work in these schools is as follows: drawing from nature; use of pastels to teach colour-differentiation and harmonize the tinting of drawings; elaboration of simple, rhythmical ornamental motifs. These exercises, in more advanced form, are used also throughout the three years of the upper primary school course.

### SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The aims of drawing teaching are to provide an invaluable means of expression, to train the pupil's taste, improve his sense of form and proportion, stimulate his powers of observation, train his sense of method and indicate his aptitudes for purposes of further education and choice of vocation.

In secondary schools emphasis is also laid on the drawing of everyday articles or nature subjects, the difficulty being carefully graduated, and colour being used in moderation.

In addition to drawing from life, pupils also draw objects from memory and make entirely spontaneous imaginative compositions on easy themes.

### SENIOR SCHOOL

#### "MAGISTERO PER IL DISEGNO" (Doctorate in Drawing)

The recent school reform, besides concentrating on the problem of art education, has also paid attention to another equally important problem - that of training teachers to provide this education.

The art institutes (Istituti d'arte and Licei scientifici) existing

for this purpose have now acquired a more standardized character, since their syllabuses have been revised and their courses extended.

In addition, there is now a new advanced course termed the "Magistero per il disegno" (Doctorate in drawing).

This course will last two years and, in view of its purpose, will deal with drawing both from the artistic and the technical standpoints. The course will usually be taken by students who have graduated from the two institutes mentioned above, or who have passed the special entrance examination after first graduating from a senior high school (Istituto Tecnico Industriale, etc.)

Such are the essentials of art teaching in Italian primary and secondary schools. Even under the old system, great importance was attached to this subject; the effect of the reform will certainly be to emphasize its importance still further.

The fact is that drawing is an educational instrument of great value; it provides a language common to all, linking together the most widely diverse peoples in understanding of the universal heritage of art and civilization.