

AESTHETIC PREFERENCES OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS IN RELATION TO WORKS OF MODERN ART

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ABSTRACT

Teaching about artistic heritage is essential for developing artistic and aesthetic competence in pre-university education. The key question in art education is how to effectively introduce art to children and youth, selecting and adapting content to their age and preferences. This study examines the alignment between the artistic-aesthetic preferences of elementary students and adults. A survey including 450 students (grades 5–8) and 450 adults (parents and teachers) and aiming at assessing preferences in relation to modern art was conducted in Belgrade, Sombor, and Novi Sad in the period from 2020 to 2022. Results showed general agreement on preferred artworks but it revealed differences in evaluation based on artistic style, form, and content. Children focused on formal aspects, while adults valued the theme and the method more. The knowledge gained from this research can be used as a useful guideline for further research and planning of methodical procedures for the mediation of art to children, providing valuable support for learning and development, while respecting children's individual and age-related capabilities and preferences in the process of learning and development.

KEYWORDS:

teaching methodology, art-aesthetic preferences, art education

INTRODUCTION

The primary function of art is the aesthetic–creative function. Fine arts and their quality reflect the social situation while at the same time they influence social trends with the ideas and novelties they introduce. Therefore, fine arts have a

social function, and have no meaning without society and people since the human need for beauty and creativity is the basic social characteristic of fine arts. Karlavaris, Kelebli and Stanojević-Kastori (1982) state that “it is impossible to form a modern man without solid roots in cultural tradition, but also in developing visual sensitivity, humane and creative impulses.”¹ Furthermore, Karlavaris (1986) states, “The dialectic of human development is conditioned by two different human activities, which nevertheless form the unity of the activity of rational production and the activity of creativity, and change everything around us. Without the second, the first activity would die exhausted by the monotony of repetition.”²

Art education as a pedagogical activity is conditioned by social factors and ideals, as well as the characteristics of art as a social phenomenon. Therefore, art pedagogy explores new ways of learning, and ways of educational work, thus influencing both art and society. In his *Art Education* (1986), Karlavaris singles out three functions of art education: the humanization of man (knowing oneself-spirituality), raising the quality of life (life worthy of man/humanism) and democratization of society (raising the culture of consciousness of all people to an equal level). Regarding art's role, Karlavaris believes that art cultivates the personality and activates children's positive abilities. Provided with art, an individual strives for better and more beautiful things, striving to creatively change the state of things, to shape and bring new ideas, to be filled with warmth and enthusiasm, and to become an active being.

1) Bogomil Karlavaris, Jovanka Kelebli and Miroslava Stanojević-Kastori, *Likovno vaspitanje za 2 razred pedagoške akademije* [Art Education for the 2nd Year of the Pedagogical Academy] (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 1982), 3.

2) Bogomil Karlavaris, *Likovno vaspitanje za 2. i 3. razred pedagoške akademije* [Art Education for the 2nd and 3rd Year of the Pedagogical Academy] (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 1986), 29.

Artistic creative processes have the function of liberating a person from stereotypes, repetition, and mechanical actions, and they have the function of emancipating the person. Art is a catalyst for developing new personality traits that personify it. Art encourages positive activity, and it is always engaged, either directly or indirectly. There is no neutral art or neutrality to aesthetic phenomena.³

The connection between fine art and fine art education is manifested in many aspects. One of the basic ones is that fine art education and training are not only based on what we know about the child's capabilities and needs, which is what science deals with, but also on the fine art experiences stemming from upbringing and education. "Art is a dynamic and unifying activity, with a potentially vital role in the education of our children."⁴ Art education is acquired throughout schooling and represents the process of introducing young people to visual and artistic culture. If we define culture (in the broadest sense) as a way of life, then art culture is a way of life in which valuable art content contributes to a fuller and better-quality life for the individual and the community. Visual culture, as a broad concept, encompasses, besides other things, communication through aesthetic-artistic signs (artwork).

Nevertheless, what still occupies the attention of experts who deal with the methodology of art education is: How to bring art closer to children and young people? How to adapt teaching content to the age and individual characteristics and preferences of students? Answers to these questions could serve as guidelines in planning educational outcomes, content and activities in the process of art education, in order to ensure

3) Ibid.

4) Viktor Lowenfeld and William Lambert Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), 3.

the full development of all aspects of the student's personality, especially in the field of aesthetic education and emancipation.

DEVELOPMENT OF AESTHETIC CRITERIA IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Teaching aesthetic assessment implies the development and cultivation of aesthetic feelings, criteria, and preferences through interactions with objects, people, the living world, and works of art. Art expression is information that is transmitted to the viewer through art media, but to perceive and understand that message, preparation is necessary, that is, the viewer's ability to receive and experience certain art content needs to be developed. All people have the potential to develop the ability to perceive a work of art. It is a process that contains creative components, whereby the observer's consciousness receives and experiences a work of art in a manner that, more or less, reflects the creator's original intent. "Experiencing works of art is a specific psychological process that includes primary, anthropological sensitivities for the shapes and colours of our environment, but also certain life experiences, cultural habits and understanding of the language of art. Education should help in acquiring the habit and the need to experience a work of art."⁵

In the educational process, children are introduced to the world of linguistic and artistic communication, while artistic creation represents a synthesis of many factors and encompasses a range of psychological actions. Creativity depends on the cultivation of the entire personality through the development of all abilities. Graham Wallas (1926) defines creative processes

5) Graham Wallas, *The Art of Thought* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1926), 79–85.

as problem sets including preparation, incubation, illumination (creative idea, discovery), realization, and verification.⁶

Herbert Read believes that education through art, i.e. aesthetic education, is very important in childhood, because, according to research, the structure of a child's personality is closest to that of an artist. Read also believes that art represents and explains reality, and based on that belief he formulates his basic thesis, according to which "aesthetic activity is an organic process of physical and mental integration, the introduction of value into the world of facts," and consequently the aesthetic principle should enter into science, permeating above all the social and practical aspects of school life.⁷

Jean Sieb (1957) investigated children's attitudes towards works of art and determined that children between the ages of five and six appreciate children's drawings less and show more interest in artistic pictures. He also determined that the content/form and colour of the artwork are of decisive importance. Children between the ages of five and seven are attracted to pictures of houses, flowers, the sea, nature, and animals, bright and vivid colours, encompasses, Impressionist paintings, primitive art, modern art, and realism. The aesthetic ideal of children at a certain age is close to the form of their artistic expression, so teachers and educators must rely on these principles when working with children. Children of a certain age can accept the messages of those works of art that correspond to their life experiences, thoughts and emotional structures.⁸

6) Ibid., 85–86.

7) Sanja Filipović and Milica Vojvodić, "The effect of aesthetic education on the formation of the personal identity of children and young people," *Sociological Review*, no. 2 (2019): 561.

8) Jean Subes, "Sensibilité esthétique enfantine et influence du milieu" [Aesthetic Sensitivity in Childhood and the Influence of the Environment], *Enfance*, no. 10/1 (1957): 43–65.

Viktor Lowenfeld (1975), in an attempt to emphasize the difference between aesthetic preferences and aesthetic judgment, poses the question – why would anyone want a child under the age of twelve to understand the aesthetic value of anything? He believes that many students at this age, if given the chance, can point to a picture and say whether they like it more or less, but they cannot perform a formal aesthetic analysis of the picture. He states that it is easier to change what a child says than what he or she thinks. What is most often assessed in the educational process is the level of alignment of the student's answer with the teacher's position or what is found in the textbook and not the student's true attitudes and opinions about the surrounding world. Lowenfeld also provides research examples.⁹

Irvin L. Child (1964) concluded that through systematic work with elementary school students, it is possible to influence their aesthetic criteria for evaluating a work of art and eventually align their opinions with those of experts. However, when it comes to children's personal preferences, which are closely linked to their age, children's attitudes remain essentially honest and unchanged.¹⁰

E. E. Rump and Vera Southgate (1966), in a study with groups of children aged seven, eleven, and fifteen, found that 77% of the students agreed with their teachers' preferences for the pictures shown by the teacher. However, in the absence of the teacher 71% of the same students had a different opinion.¹¹

9) Lowenfeld and Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth*, 387–396.

10) Irvin L. Child, "Development of sensitivity to esthetic values," unpublished report, *Cooperative Research Project No. 1748*, (Office of Education, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1964), 1.

11) E. E. Rump and Vera Southgate, "Variables affecting aesthetic appreciation, in relation to age," *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, no. 1 (1967): 58–72.

In his study, Pavel Machotka (1966) analysed the criteria children use to evaluate pictures, and he found that children like pictures of increased purity and realistic representations until about the age of eleven. They can emotionally connect with such pictures since they connect their contents to their own experiences and because children up to the age of eleven or twelve create representations that symbolically define their environment. They have no interest in shadows, atmosphere, spatial or colour relationships, which is also reflected in their preferences for works of art. After the age of eleven, students slowly begin to emotionally connect with the image that is outside of them, that is, the connection refers to the atmosphere or character of the image as a whole. Machotka links these changes to the reduction of egocentrism, which occurs after the age of eleven when thinking becomes less dependent on concrete data.¹²

Changes in aesthetic criteria are also related to changes in the student's personality. Research by numerous authors has shown that there is a close connection between students' personalities and their preferences for works of art, in the sense that these preferences depend on personality. In his research, Harlan Hoffa (1964) found the combined effect of the creativity of a person and his or her extensive artistic experience.¹³

In one of the conducted studies, preferences for artistic motifs were investigated among fourth-grade elementary school students from different cultural environments, taking into consideration data on gender, age, and social status. It was found that boys preferred dynamic and fantastic motifs, while girls preferred motifs reflecting motherhood and tenderness.

12) Pavel Machotka, "Aesthetic criteria in childhood: Justifications of preference," *Child development*, no. 4 (1966): 877.

13) Harlan Hoffa, "The relationship of art experience to conformity," in *Creativity and art education*, ed. William Lambert Brittain (Washington, D.C.: The National Art Education Association, 1964), 37–43.

No differences were observed in the preferences for art motifs based on social class. However, the results of the study raise completely new questions about preferences for works of art and cultural traditions. The novelty is that regardless of their social class, students of the same age within the same cultural context and country do not show any differences in terms of preferences for works of art. Such differences, however, were observed between the students from two different countries, that is, students coming from different cultural backgrounds. “Regardless of the similar tradition of art education, similar planning, implementation and evaluation of art-educational processes, evaluation of children’s works of art and relatively small cultural differences (in the case of the aforementioned research, between Slovenian and Croatian students), the study found differences in artistic preferences between students from the two countries.”¹⁴

When talking about the methods of development of artistic expression as well as aesthetic development, Michael D. Day (1969) found through his research that high school students who were simultaneously studying artistic heritage and engaging in practical artwork at school had better results in acquiring knowledge, building attitudes and aesthetic criteria, as well as in understanding art and creating personal meaning. He believes that discussions and analyses of art-related issues using artworks from different art history periods, which students simultaneously apply in independent artwork, enable them to find the meaning of creativity in different contexts.¹⁵ Viktor Lowenfeld criticises the school and states that it turns its back

14) Matjaž Duh, Jerneja Herzog and Miroslav Huzjak, “Popularity of Art Motifs among Fourth-Grade Primary School Students in Slovenia and Croatia,” *The New Educational Review*, no. 43 (2016): 101–102.

15) Michael D. Day, “The compatibility of art history and studio art activity in the junior high school art program,” *Studies in Art Education*, no. 2 (1969): 57–65.

on the importance of aesthetic development in circumstances in which students need to participate in dialogue, engage in abstract thinking, as well as materialise their views through independent practical work.¹⁶ In this context, the competences of teachers to mediate art to children have an important role in the development of appreciative abilities from the earliest age. “Teachers must be able to establish communication between children and the work of art. The attitude of the child towards a work of art must be seen from two points of view. On one side there is the child’s innate feeling for visual order, and on the other side the acquired feeling for the beautiful and aesthetic.”¹⁷

RESEARCH PROBLEM, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The basic research question in this study is based on identifying the level of coincidence between the art-aesthetic preferences of elementary school students for works of art and the preferences of adults regarding the art-aesthetic evaluation of artworks. Based on the results of previous research, this paper aims to investigate whether there is a statistically significant difference in the preferences of children and adults for fine works of modern art. Also, the paper aims to investigate whether certain formal or conceptual (ideal) aspects of modern art are especially valued as aesthetic qualities by children and adults and whether there are differences in their preferences. The research methods are quantitative. Respondents were surveyed using a questionnaire specially prepared for this

16) Lowenfeld and Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth*, 373–374.

17) Tomaž Zupančič and Matjaž Duh, *Likovni odgoj i umjetnost Pabla Picassa. Likovno-pedagoški projekt u Dječjem vrtiću Opatija* [Art Education and the Art of Pablo Picasso. Art-Pedagogical Project in Kindergarten Opatija] (Opatija: Dječji vrtić Opatija, 2009); cited in Matjaž Duh, “Art Appreciation for Developing Communication Skills among Preschool Children,” *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, no. 1 (2016): 73.

research. In the questionnaire, the respondents evaluated selected works of modern art in accordance with the set criteria (value scale from 1 to 5), as well as by deciding whether they liked the displayed works or not in relation to the set criteria (*colour, shapes, method/style, and theme/idea*).

The null hypothesis H1 reads: The assumption is that there are no differences in the preferences of children and adults in relation to works of modern art. The null hypothesis H2 reads: The assumption is that there are differences in the preferences of children and adults for works of art in terms of their formal aspects, such as *colour, shapes, the method/style of the artist's work or the theme/idea*.

The first task (Z1) is based on the reproductions of the selected works of art. The survey included children and adults (parents, teachers...) who needed to rate the selected works of art on a scale from 1 to 5 in relation to their personal preferences – whether the work is liked/attractive or not (1 – *I don't like it at all*; 2 – *I slightly like it*; 3 – *neutral (both yes and no)*; 4 – *I mostly like it* and 5 – *I like it very much*). The second task (Z2) was to compare the responses of the two groups of respondents and find similarities and differences in their preferences for selected works of modern art: what would they particularly single out as the quality in the displayed works: *colour, shapes, the method/style of the artist's work or the theme/idea of the artist*.

The research was conducted during the two academic years 2020–2022 as part of the art education teaching methods course held within accredited programmes for the education of artists, future art teachers, at the Faculty of Applied Arts of the University of Arts in Belgrade, the Academy of Arts and the Faculty of Pedagogy of the University of Novi Sad. Materials were collected systematically through surveys administrated to

respondents across a wider area of the cities of Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Sombor.

The research sample included 450 children and 450 adults, which makes a total of 900 respondents. The population of children consisted of elementary school students aged 8 to 14, while the sample of adults consisted of children's parents and teachers with no age restrictions other than the requirement of adulthood. For this research, apart from age, other factors were not specifically monitored.

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire prepared for this research and distributed to surveyed respondents. The artworks used in the questionnaire include Pablo Picasso, *Girl in Front of a Mirror*, 1932 (**Fig. 1**), Marc Chagall, *Village and I*,



Fig. 1. Pablo Picasso, *Girl in Front of Mirror*, 1932, oil on canvas, 162.3 × 130.2 cm, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York City, NY, USA.

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/pablo-picasso/girl-in-front-of-mirror-1932>

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Fig. 2. Marc Chagall, *I and the Village*, 1911, oil on canvas, 192.1 x 151.4 cm, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York City, NY, USA.

<https://www.flickr.com/-and-photos/lespetitescases/4850293540> © Gautier Poupeau, CC BY 2.0



Fig. 3. Vincent van Gogh, *Still Life – Vase with Fifteen Sunflowers*, 1888, oil on canvas, 92.1 x 73 cm, National Gallery, London, UK. <https://www.wikiart.org/en/vincent-van-gogh/still-life-vase-with-fifteen-sunflowers-1888-1> © Public domain US



Fig. 4. Rene Magritte, *The Human Condition*, 1935, oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm, Private Collection. <https://www.wikiart.org/en/rene-magritte/the-human-condition-1935> © Rene Magritte. Fair Use

1911 (**Fig. 2**), Vincent Van Gogh, *Sunflowers*, 1888 (**Fig. 3**), Rene Magritte, *The Human Condition*, 1935 (**Fig. 4**), Kazimir Malevich, *Suprematist Composition*, 1915 (**Fig. 5**), and Hans Hinterreiter, *Study on Opus 39*, 1951 (**Fig. 6**).

The artwork selection was made by four independent art pedagogues based on their intersubjective agreement about the criteria. The selected works of art exhibit different formal characteristics in terms of the use of artistic elements and principles of composition, and this research focussed on the artistic elements of colour and shape. The artworks differ in term of method, i.e. the artist's authentic artistic poetics and style of work (Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Suprematism, Surrealism, Optical Art), as well as in terms of the subject matter (figuration, genre scene, still life, landscape, abstract motifs). The selection



Fig. 5. Kazimir Malevich, *Suprematist Composition*, 1915, 88.5 × 71 cm, oil on canvas, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suprematist_Composition#/media/File:Suprematist_Composition_-_Kazimir_Malevich.jpg
© Public domain



Fig. 6. Hans Hinterreiter, *Study on Opus 39*, 1951, ink on paper, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. <https://www.wikiart.org/en/hans-hinterreiter/studie-zu-opus-39-1951> © Hans Hinterreiter. Fair Use

of works was made based on the characteristics of each of the artistic movements to which these works belong.

The assumption was that the characteristics of the selected works of art in this research would give an insight into the different preferences of the respondents, but also the possibility to identify differences in respondents' answers that might be characteristic of each of the two samples, in this case, the sample of children and adults.

Data processing was conducted using measures of central tendency of average frequency values, while the Chi-square test, Yates' correction for observed frequencies and the contingency coefficient were used for the hypothesis testing.

RESEARCH RESULTS WITH DISCUSSION

The null hypothesis H1 was tested as part of the first task and it reads: The assumption is that there are no differences in the preferences of children and adults for works of modern art. As part of the conducted survey and interviews with the respondents through the questionnaire and based on the six proposed examples of works of art, the respondents rated their personal preferences – whether they like the work/it is attractive or not on a scale from 1 to 5 (**Chart 1**). The following results were obtained in relation to the research task and hypothesis (**Table 1**):

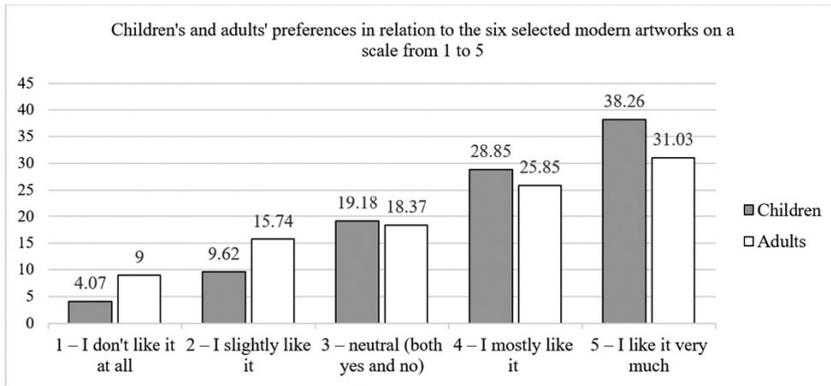


Chart 1. Results for the two independent samples a) children and b) adults in relation to personal preferences – whether they like the work/it is attractive or not for all the six artworks for the two groups.

Examples of modern artworks	Frequencies of preferences for both groups of respondents (children and adults) within the collective samples for all the six proposed modern artworks $\sum f_{0i} = 900$; $f_i = 90$			
	a) Children $\sum f_{0i} = 450$		b) Adults $\sum f_{0i} = 450$	
Ratings on a scale 1-5	f_{0i}	%	f_{0i}	%
1	18.33	4.07	40.5	9.0
2	43.33	9.62	70.83	15.74
3	86.31	19.18	82.66	18.37
4	129.83	28.85	116.33	25.85
5	172.16	38.26	139.66	31.03
χ^2 – individual samples	$\chi^2 = 174.05$; $p > 0.01 = 13.3$; $df = 4$; $f_i = 90$; $C = 0.52$		$\chi^2 = 67$; $p > 0.01 = 13.3$; $df = 4$; $f_i = 90$; $C = 0.35$	
χ^2 – between two samples	c) Children and adults $\sum f_{0i} = 900$ $\chi^2 = 18.836$; $p > 0.05 = 16.9$; $df = 9$; $C = 0.14$			

Table 1. Results for the two independent samples a) children and b) adults in relation to personal preferences – whether they like the work/it is attractive or not for all the six artworks for the two groups.

a) When it comes to children, the majority declared that they liked all the six modern artworks very much (38.26%) or the most (28.85%), which shows an extremely high probability of the association of the population of children with answers in the Chi-square test $\chi^2 = 174.05$; $p > 0.01 = 13.3$; $df = 4$; $f_t = 90$, as well as a high degree of association, with the contingency coefficient being $C = 0.52$.

b) In the group of adults, the overall results for all the six modern artworks also showed that they mostly liked the works very much (31.03%) or the most (25.85%), which is also supported by the result of the Chi-square test $\chi^2 = 67$; $p > 0.01 = 13.3$; $df = 4$; $f_t = 90$, which confirmed the probability of association of the population with the answers they gave, as well as a high degree of association, with the contingency coefficient being $C = 0.35$.

c) All of this is supported by the result of the Chi-square test for the group of children and the group of adults $\chi^2 = 18.836$; $p > 0.05 = 16.9$; $df = 9$; $C = 0.14$. The result confirmed the connection between the two variables, that is, the population of children and adults with the answers they gave, showing also a moderate degree of association, as indicated by the result of the contingency coefficient, which is $C = 0.14$.

When it comes to all the six works of art that were evaluated with the highest score of 5 on a scale of 1–5 (**Chart 2**), the results are as follows (**Table 2**):

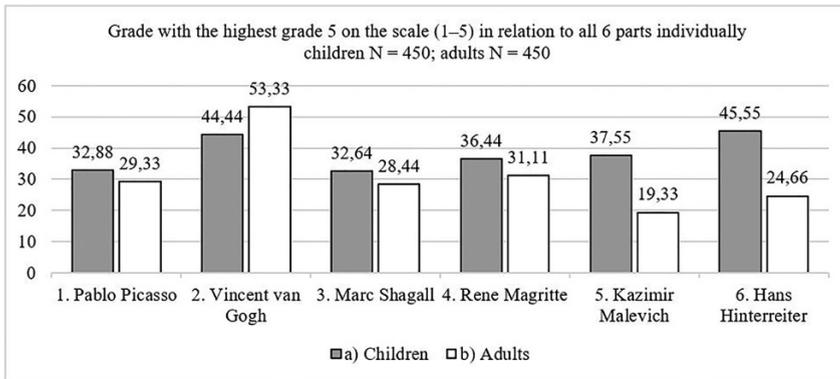


Chart 2. Results for the two independent samples a) children and b) adults in relation to the highest score of 5 on the scale (1–5) for all the six examples of artworks for the two groups.

Examples of artworks collectively 1-6	Frequencies of preferences for both groups of respondents (children and adults) within individual samples for all the six proposed modern artworks valued with the highest score of 5 on the scale of 1-5			
	a) Children $\sum f_o = 450$		b) Adults $\sum f_o = 450$	
	f_o	%	f_o	%
1. Pablo Picasso	148	32.00	132	29.33
2. Vincent van Gogh	200	44.44	240	53.33
3. Marc Chagall	147	32.66	128	28.44
4. Rene Magritte	164	36.44	140	31.11
5. Kazimir Malevich	169	37.55	87	19.33
6. Hans Hinterreiter	205	45.55	111	24.66
probability of association within individual samples	$\chi^2 = 18.277$; $p > 0.01 = 15.1$; $df = 5$; $f_t = 172.16$; $C = 0.13$		$\chi^2 = 117.49$; $p > 0.01 = 15.1$; $df = 5$; $f_t = 139.33$; $C = 0.33$	

Table 2. Results for the two independent samples a) children and b) adults in relation to the highest score of 5 on the scale (1–5) for all the six examples of artworks for the two groups.

a) The largest number of children (45%) who gave a score of 5 on the scale (1–5) opted for the work of the artist Hans Hinterreiter, *Study on Opus 39, 1951–72 (Fig. 6)*. This result is statistically significant as confirmed by the result of the Chi-square test $\chi^2 = 18.277$; $p > 0.01 = 15.1$; $df = 5$; $f_t = 172.16$, which also confirmed the probability of association of the population with the answers they gave, as well as a moderate degree of association, with the contingency coefficient being $C = 0.13$.

b) The largest number of adults (53.33%) chose the work of the artist Van Gogh, *Sunflowers*, 1888 with a score of 5 on a scale (1–5) (**Fig. 2**), which is supported by the statistical significance of the Chi-square test results $\chi^2 = 117.49$; $p > 0.01 = 15.1$; $df = 5$; $f_t = 139.33$, which also confirmed the probability of association of the population with the answers they gave, as well as a high degree of association, with the contingency coefficient being $C = 0.33$.

Based on the obtained results, it can be said that the null hypothesis H1 is accepted and that there are no differences in the overall results regarding the preferences of children and adults in relation to selected modern artworks that they particularly like. Both samples, children and adults, show an almost equal preference for the works of modern art used in this research and rate them with the highest scores on a scale of 1–5. The obtained result is statistically significant.

Differences were observed in the number of respondents who gave the highest score of 5 on the scale (1–5) for each work individually. The largest number of children gave a score of 5 to Hans Hinterreiter's work (**Fig. 6**), while the largest number of adults gave the highest score of 5 to Van Gogh's work (**Fig. 2**). The results are statistically significant in both cases, i.e. for both samples of respondents.

Hypothesis H2 was tested in the second task and it reads: The assumption is that there are differences in the preferences of children and adults for works of art in terms of formal aspects of the work, such as colour, shapes, the method/style of the artist's work or the theme/idea.

When it comes to all the six works of art, respondents from both groups singled out particular qualities in the displayed works: *colour, shapes*, the artist's *method/style* or the *theme/idea* that

the artist conveyed in the selected works of art. The frequencies of the results within the individual groups (**Chart 3**) showed the following preferences of the respondents (**Table 3**):

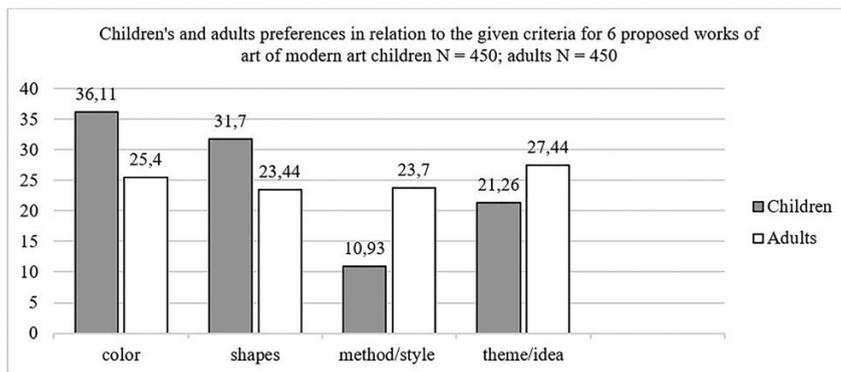


Chart 3. Results for the two independent samples a) children and b) adults in relation to personal preferences for individual criteria – colour, shapes, the method/style and the theme/idea for all six examples of artworks for the two groups.

Examples of artworks collectively 1-6	Response frequencies for both groups (children and adults) for individual criteria				c) χ^2 between two independent samples of children and adults for individual criteria $\sum f_o = 900$ Yates' correction: $f_o < 5 + 0,5$; $f_o > 5 - 0,5$ probability of connection
	a) Children $\sum f_o = 450$		b) Adults $\sum f_o = 450$		
Criterion	f_o	%	f_o	%	
colour	162.5	36.11	114.33	25.4	$\chi^2 = 72.119$; $p > 0.01 = 6.63$; $df = 1$; $C = 0.11$
shapes	142.66	31.7	105.5	23.44	$\chi^2 = 43.968$; $p > 0.01 = 6.63$; $df = 1$; $C = 0.08$
method/style	49.166	10.93	106.66	23.7	$\chi^2 = 153.8$; $p > 0.01 = 6.63$; $df = 1$; $C = 0.52$
theme/idea	95.66	21.26	123.5	27.44	$\chi^2 = 27.7$; $p > 0.01 = 6.63$; $df = 1$; $C = 0.07$
$\sum \chi^2$	$\chi^2 = 68.483$; $p > 0.01 = 11.3$; $df = 3$; $f_t = 112.5$; $C = 0.36$		$\chi^2 = 1.184$; $p < 0.5 = 5.99$; $df = 3$; $f_t = 112.5$; $C = 0.06$		

Table 3. Results for the two independent samples a) children and b) adults in relation to personal preferences for individual criteria – colour, shapes, the method/style and the theme/idea for all the six examples of artworks for the two groups.

a) The majority of children opted for *colour* (36.11%) and *shapes* (31.7%), and slightly fewer for the *method/style* (10.93%) and the *theme/idea* of the work (21.26%). The statistical significance of the result is also corroborated by the very high result of the Chi-square test $\chi^2 = 68.483$; $p > 0.01 = 11.3$; $df = 3$; $f_t = 112.5$. This confirmed the probability of connection between the population

of children and their preferences examined in this part of the research, which also confirms the high degree of association, the contingency coefficient being $C = 0.36$.

b) Adults distributed their choices relatively evenly across all the four categories: the *theme/idea* (27.44%), *colour* (25.4%), the *method/style* (23.7%) and *shapes* (23.44 %). It was determined that there is no statistically significant difference between the categories, not even at the trend level, because the result of the Chi-square test is $\chi^2 = 1.184$; $p < 0.5 = 5.99$; $df = 3$; $f_t = 112.5$. The result did not confirm the probability of connection between the population of adults and their preferences examined in this part of the research as the degree of this association is low with the value of $C = 0.06$.

c) When it comes to preferences between the two independent samples, children and adults, for individual criteria for all the six works of art collectively, the Chi-square showed a high degree of association with regard to all the four criteria. For *colour* $\chi^2 = 72.119$; $p > 0.01 = 6.63$; $df = 1$, indicating a moderate degree of association with the contingency coefficient $C = 0.11$. For *shapes* $\chi^2 = 43.968$; $p > 0.01 = 6.63$; $df = 1$, indicating that the degree of association is weak because the contingency coefficient $C = 0.08$. When it comes to the *method/style* $\chi^2 = 153.8$; $p > 0.01 = 6.63$; $df = 1$, the degree of association is strong because the contingency coefficient $C = 0.52$. Values for the *topic/idea* are $\chi^2 = 27.7$; $p > 0.01 = 6.63$; $df = 1$, indicating that the degree of association is weak because the contingency coefficient $C = 0.07$.

Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that the results for all the four categories (*colour*, *shapes*, *method/style*, and *theme/idea*) within the group of children are statistically significant, while this significance was not determined within the group of adults for the same four categories.

The results for these two groups of respondents, in relation to the overall results of the monitored categories for all the six works of art, show that children favour the criteria of *colour* and *shape*, while adults favour the criteria of *method/style* and *theme/idea*. Therefore, the hypothesis H2 is accepted — which reads: The assumption is that there are differences in the preferences of children and adults for works of art in terms of formal aspects of the work, such as *colour*, *shapes*, the artist's *method/style* or the *theme/idea*. While children prefer *colour* and *shapes*, adults prefer the *method/style* and the *theme/idea* of the work.

CONCLUSION

Starting from the theory of modern pedagogy claiming that every child has a potential to develop the ability to perceive, experience, evaluate, and create beauty, it can be noted that, when we talk about the requirements of aesthetic education, which is mainly based on general educational goals, there is less focus on studying aesthetic sensitivity in children and the influence of education on it. Mitrović (1982) points out that the consequences of this approach are clearly visible in educational practice. It is widely believed that the development of intellectual abilities leads to the decline of aesthetic sensibility and creativity, as well as that spontaneity and experience are the most suitable paths for aesthetic education in childhood. However, understanding how aesthetic taste develops in certain periods of children's lives is not sufficient to build a coherent theory of aesthetic education.¹⁸ When it comes to the role of museums and museum didactics, one study focusing on the emancipatory potential of art in the educational process

18) Darinka Mitrović, *Problemi estetskog vaspitanja* [Problems of Aesthetic Education] (Beograd: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika Socijalističke Republike Srbije, 1982), 51.

confirmed that the field of qualitative educational discourse offers museums a valuable perspective on connecting theory and practice, i.e. the potential for more immediate application of scientific results to improve educational practice.¹⁹ “The difficult task that education in schools should accomplish is to focus on a more sensitive student who will later be ready to create change. This is a goal worth striving for.”²⁰

Children’s artistic creativity should be nurtured through art and enriched with extensive and diverse experiences. Works of art contribute to sparking the child’s interest, nurturing and developing the need for art, acquiring basic aesthetic criteria for works of fine arts, as well as acquiring visual and art culture.

The results of this research unequivocally showed that collectively the preferences of children and adults do not differ regarding the fine works of modern art that were used in this research, but that there are differences in the preferences and evaluation of the quality of individual works, as well as in the criteria, with children valuing *colour* and *shapes* more than adults, while adults showed a higher degree of preference for the *method/style* and the *theme/idea* of the work. These findings are significant from multiple perspectives in relation to methodological issues and procedures of mediating art to children in the educational process. Preferences of children and young people for modern art are changing, indicating the importance of incorporating such content in working with children within an educational context. The findings also

19) Olivera Gajić and Jovana Milutinović, “Vaspitanje umetnošću – emancipatorni potencijal u društvu znanja” [Art Education – Emancipatory Potential in the Knowledge Society], in *Zbornik radova: Daroviti u procesu globalizacije*, eds. Grozdanka Gojkov and Aleksandar Stojanović (Vršac: Visoka škola strukovnih studija za obrazovanje vaspitača „Mihailo Palov”; Arad: Universitatea de Vest „Aurel Vlaicu”, 2011), 173–184.

20) Lowenfeld and Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth*, 396.

indicate that there is a need to adapt methodical procedures to those new trends. This research shows that children prefer *colour* and *shapes* to the *method/style* and the *theme/idea* of the work, which certainly points to the need to pay attention to strengthening knowledge, critical thinking and building aesthetic criteria in children and young people in educational work through systematically planned activities in an educational context. Certainly, this research has opened up a series of questions and possibilities for further work on defining more precise criteria. For that purpose the research question should be expanded to encompass the methodology of working with children and young people in the field of art.

