

Film, arts education and cognition: the case of *le Cinema cent ans de jeunesse*

Reid, M. (2019) 'Film, Arts Education, and Cognition: The Case of Le Cinema Cent Ans de Jeunesse' in C. Hermansson, and J. Zepernick, (Eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Children's Film and Television*. London: Palgrave.

Abstract

This chapter explores the extent to which an international film education programme, *le Cinema cent ans de jeunesse*, might support its participants' developing cognitive skills. It uses the work of Elliott Eisner, in his book *Arts and the Creation of Mind*, to speculate on the kinds of thinking that film-making, watching and discussion stimulate in the programme. It concludes that the programme provides the grounds for explicit and conceptually-based *meta-cognition* strategies in order to make the most of the cognitive dimensions of the programme, while finding significant affinities in the approaches of both Eisner and French film educator Alain Bergala in their conceptions of art education.

CCAJ - its origins; who takes part; how it's designed; sample themes and tasks

Le Cinéma cent ans de jeunesse (CCAJ) began in 1995 as an experiment in film education to recognise the centenary of the birth of cinema, commonly taken (in Europe, if not everywhere!) to be a screening of films made by the Lumière brothers Auguste and Louis, at the Café Royale in Paris in 1895. Alain Bergala, and his colleague Nathalie Bourgeois at the Cinémathèque Française, invited a group of workshop providers – teachers and film-makers – from across France, to make 'Lumière Minutes' – actualité films made in the same way as the original Lumière brothers' films, shot from a fixed camera position (plan fixe), without sound, and a minute long. The experiment was successful enough to encourage Bergala, Bourgeois, and the Cinémathèque Française to run it over subsequent years, and over successive editions a working method evolved, with each year taking an explicit aesthetic focus (asking 'a question of cinema'), and mixing watching, making, and thinking about film in a distinctive 'va et vient', or 'to and fro' movement. (Bergala, 2015)

Each year, the programme begins in September at the Cinémathèque Française in Paris with an initial 'formation', or training event, for a day and a half, in which the year's theme or 'question of cinema' is introduced. Alain Bergala, in his role as 'artistic advisor' for the programme, takes the group of teachers and film-makers through the theme via a typology - a branching set of categories that break down the theme. The typology is illustrated by a series of film clips taken from the history and international scope of film, which are put on a secure Vimeo link for teachers to use during the year. The training session ends with the introduction of three 'exercises' and a final 'film essai', which each workshop will follow through the year. The Cinémathèque also provides reading material for teachers – not for the participating children – to give the programme some intellectual 'heft' to those that are seeking it.

Each workshop begins its programme in October or November; the participants range from 7 - 18 years old, depending on the school partner. In the UK, the partners take the training materials away and re-present them for their own workshop groups, as only a small number of workshop groups from the international partners attend the training sessions in Paris. The expectation is then that workshops will meet weekly to follow the programme, for up to two hours a week, until the final film essays are presented by the children in June in either Paris, London, Edinburgh, Barcelona, Lisbon, or one of the other participating countries. Mid-way through the year there are a series of 'bilans', or reflective meetings, where teachers and film-makers meet to compare progress with their peers.

The programme has become distinctive in a number of ways. First of all, its focus on aesthetic questions (the relation between foreground and background in the shot; the relation between reality and fiction in film; the question 'why move the camera?') is unlike any other film education approach in this author's experience. Second, the explicit movement between making, watching, and reflecting on film through the prism of these aesthetic questions is different from other film education approaches, which might otherwise emphasise watching without making film, or vice versa. The integration of the three modes, in a virtuous and iterative cycle, thus makes Le Cinéma cent ans de jeunesse a distinctive 'film-thinking' pedagogy (BFI, 2014). Third, the nature of the 'curriculum' of CCAJ sets it apart: the programme isn't driven by the desire to achieve a set of desirable outcomes (either learning objectives, or a specified product) but rather by the intention to explore a set of concepts through an overarching framing question. 'Why move the camera?', for example, was a question explored in the 2009/10 edition by comparing the effect of filming moving objects from static camera positions and vice versa; by watching compilations of sequences from the history of film that each used camera movement for different expressive ends (<http://100ans.cinmatheque.fr/100ans20092010/>), and by completing a 'film essai' which as it sounds is an experimental attempt to use the expressive means of camera movement to tell a complete, if short (10 minutes maximum) story. The fact that its creators call the programme a 'film-thinking' pedagogy gives it prima facie a 'cognitive' cast.

The modus operandi that evolved for CCAJ, by about the middle of the 2000s, was codified as a set of 'règles du jeu', or rules of the game, in a typical French pun on one of the most famous twentieth century French films (*La règle du jeu*, Jean Renoir, France, 1939). The fact that there are these 'rules of the game' follows a tendency in French education to 'dirigisme', to a centrally directed curriculum, in which deviation from the rules is frowned upon. And it is true that for the many workshop groups participating in CCAJ (now numbering many hundreds across Europe, with groups also in Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, Japan and India) the rules are a fixed point of participation, a common 'learning situation', albeit one with some local inflections.

The 'curriculum' of CCAJ can be thought of as a 'holistic model', in which a set of values, culture, and assumptions are imbricated in a prescribed set of activities and resources. These values derive to a large extent from French film culture and education, with Alain Bergala himself as their 'passeur', or smuggler (2016, 28). Bergala asserts that "France has one of the oldest and most developed traditions of cinema education, coming out of post-war popular culture movements such as *Peuple et Culture* and *Travail et Culture*, the powerful 'Cine-clubs' movement, and finally by policies, starting in the 1970s, to bring cinema into school and extracurricular systems." (Bergala, 2015). It is well known that France

views cinema as 'the seventh art': an artform on a par with the visual arts, music and theatre, and leading film-makers are given the same respect as leading artists in other forms. Bergala's personal role in the development of film education included being asked "to think up new methods of film education within the *Arts à l'école* (Arts at School) framework set up by Jack Lang, then-Minister of Education, in the early 2000s. The principle was to use projects to set up communities of self-training arts professionals (in our case, teachers and film-makers) shaping precise, rigorous working methods." (BFI, 2014). CCAJ was one of these projects, and Bergala describes how the impulse was explicitly to 'start-up' self-directed and self-supporting groups (Bergala, 2015).

The CCAJ model and curriculum makes no claim to relate to, support, or enhance the formal school curriculum. The 'questions of cinema' don't touch on citizenship, literacy, literature, History, or indeed any formally organised category of school-knowledge. The model is resistant to being mobilised to deliver curriculum outcomes, instead serving only film, film culture, and its distinctive artform characteristics. As Bergala notes in *The Cinema Hypothesis* (2016) film isn't designed to 'deliver' content: "Filmmakers who already have the answer — and for whom film's task is not to produce, but merely to transmit a preconceived message — instrumentalize cinema. Art that is content to send messages is not art, but a vehicle unworthy of art: the same is true for cinema." (2016, 31). Earlier he elaborates, "Primary schools remain massively narrow-minded: they voluntarily screen films, even those whose artistic merit is minimal or nonexistent, merely for the fact that they approach, with a certain generosity of spirit, some big subject which can then be debated among the students." (2016, 30).

Bergala is expressing the French view of cinema as an artform that needs no outside justification, and CCAJ reflects this proud independence by never referencing the school curriculum. During an exchange with Nathalie Bourgeois, director of CCAJ, about a UK research project seeking to find causal links between participation in the programme and improving children's literacy attainment, she was non-plussed: "why would you want to prove that?" Even so, in a contradiction that might seem 'typically French', the majority of the French workshops participate with whole classes in the school day. Bergala explains this conundrum as a paradox: "Is primary school the place for this kind of work? ...primary school, as it currently functions, is not made for such work, but at the same time, for the majority of children today, it is the *only* place where an encounter with art can take place." (2016, 22).

Neither is CCAJ conceived as part of an education in 'visual culture' or 'media literacy' more broadly: "My position simply consisted in affirming that it is necessary...to renounce this overly vague word 'audiovisual,' as it's impossible to know, for example, whether it encompasses slideshow montages with accompanying soundtracks or the programming on French television channel TF1, which evidently have nothing in common, or all the resurgent techniques of combining images and sounds." (2016, 33). Bergala, and the core participants of CCAJ are about film, and cinema – not about the wider moving image; and their focus is on understanding the art of film, rather than countering the ideological freight of images in general.

Instead, Bergala says the impulse behind his approach to film education is: "to teach students to become spectators who experience the feeling of creation itself... by thinking of film not as an object,

but as the final imprint of a creative process, and by thinking of cinema as an art. To think of film as the trace of an act of creation, not as an object to be read and decoded, but rather one in which each shot is like a painter's brushstroke, allowing us to begin to comprehend his process of creation." (2016, 23).

Eisner and cognition: eight different models of arts education

One purpose of this chapter is to look at CCAJ alongside other arts education practices by using a heuristic framework developed for the arts. In his book *Arts and the Creation of Mind*, Elliott Eisner (2003) identifies eight different rationales for arts education, with a focus on the visual arts in particular. Eisner didn't include film in his list of artforms, so an ancillary purpose of using this framework is to situate film alongside other artforms, and test whether the claims made for arts education can include film as well. Eisner's list of rationales covers:

- Discipline-based arts education, in which the value and purpose is securely within developing making skills, connoisseurship, and art historical knowledge – with no view to exporting those beyond the discipline;
- An education in wider visual culture, to challenge the more egregious and aggressive forms of representation, to counter bias and ideology;
- Arts education as creative problem-solving, as exemplified by the Bauhaus in Germany in the 1920s, and with an influence still felt in art, design and technology faculties;
- Arts education for creative self-expression, promoted by Viktor Lowenfeld and Herbert Read, who both saw what they felt was the impact of repressive and conformist education practices on the people of Germany up to the Second World War;
- Arts education as preparation for the world of work – in arts and arts-related spheres;
- Using the arts to promote academic performance, where studies have seen correlations between arts curricula and student achievement more widely;
- Using the arts as a curriculum 'integrator', applying them as a cross-curricula practice, supporting and enhancing non-arts subjects;
- And his preferred model, seeing in arts education opportunities to develop cognition. Arts education programmes he claims can "foster flexibility, promote a tolerance for ambiguity, encourage risk taking, [and develop] the exercise of judgement outside the sphere of rules." (2003, 35).

In Eisner's terms, Bergala's conception of film education, and thus of CCAJ, is close to the 'connoisseurship of discipline-based arts education' rationale for arts education, that he derived from John Dewey; in fact, Bergala's notion of the purpose of art making being "to teach students to become spectators who experience the feeling of creation itself" is close to the reasoning of Dewey, who said "to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent... The artist selected, simplified, clarified, abridged, and condensed according to his interest. The beholder must go through these operations according to his point of view and interest." (Dewey, 1934, 54)

However, for the purposes of this chapter, I want to argue that, CCAJ is also a 'cognitive development arts education programme', one that fosters "flexibility, ...a tolerance for ambiguity, encourage[s] risk taking, [and develops] the exercise of judgement outside the sphere of rules," and one that supports a

kind of cognition that is broader than merely intellectual, but that engages the senses and emotions as well. In fact, the rationales produced by both the Cinémathèque Française and Alain Bergala over the years (for example, BFI, 2014) frequently refer to CCAJ as a 'film-thinking' programme, in which through discussion and reflection, watching and making, the participants develop a critical understanding of the formal operations and aesthetic repertoire of film, while creating stories that reflect their worlds, pre-occupations, interests and feelings.

Cognition: what kinds of thinking do the arts stimulate?

For Eisner, to operate as a 'cognitively-rich' programme, an arts education activity has to have certain characteristics. First of all, it must at some level be dealing with 'concepts', which Eisner defines as "distilled images in any sensory form or combination of forms that are used to represent the particulars of existence." (2003, 3). The process of *representation*, of turning concepts into those distilled images, is a cognitive process - an act of mind, albeit one mediated by the repertoire of the art form that is available to the child, and their level of technical skill in choosing from and applying that repertoire. Representation enables us to 'fix' concepts, so that we can examine, extend, and rehearse them, and then, when we are ready, share them with others. The conceptual, cognitive dimensions of the arts are important for Eisner to counter long held perceptions of the arts as "affective, rather than cognitive, easy not tough, soft not hard, simple not complex." (2003, 35)

Eisner identifies six kinds of thinking that can be stimulated by arts education; they are: judgement in the absence of rules; flexible purposing; using materials as a medium; exercising the imagination; framing the world aesthetically; and transforming the learning experience into language (2003, 35). His examples in the main come from the visual arts; but in looking more closely at these cognitive dimensions below, I will augment each dimension with examples from film.

Judgement in the absence of rules concerns the child's developing ability to take control over their work: to decide what should and shouldn't be in it, when it's finished or ready (the process of 'editing') and how to present it to a public ('communication'). So much of formal education actively disengages children from exercising control and judgement over their learning; teachers, schools, whole education systems decide what constitutes learning and achievement, whereas in the arts, children are more often enabled to choose what they want to do, and to judge what they can and can't do, and when they've finished. As one child on the CCAJ programme asked her teacher: "how do we know when we've got a good shot?" Her anxiety perhaps comes from an experience of schooling in which right answers, modelling, and clear objectives govern her learning.

Flexible purposing similarly is cast against the grain of much of contemporary schooling. A more typical experience of learning is for teachers or the curriculum to determine the ends of a learning process (its 'objectives'), and then to choose and deploy a set of means for achieving that end (a curriculum; activities; resources), irrespective of the different needs, aptitudes, and dispositions of learners - who become the vehicles of the curriculum achieving its ends, rather than its agents. In arts making by contrast, an artist/ child will decide, and revise, the purposes behind their work; and the ends can change, maybe when the child decides their skill doesn't match their ambition, or more excitingly when a new avenue of possibility is opened up. In film, this is most visible when a scene or

sequence is modelled in a storyboard, which is then radically altered or abandoned during the shoot – a not uncommon occurrence.

Eisner sees the notion that elements of the artform themselves might dictate a change of focus as an example of when *a material becomes a medium*. Material, or matter (clay, watercolour, sound, words) is inert until it's mobilised by a human imagination. The point at which the material becomes expressive is when it is being used as a 'medium'. The increasing ability of the child to make inert matter speak, sing, argue, or pretend, is a sign of greater cognitive facility. In film, which Eisner doesn't write about, the material is evanescent: it is captured or encoded light and sound, and time. Even though children know its operations inside out, their explicit grasp of how film functions as a *medium* is much more limited, and depends on frequent, recursive, opportunities to build this knowledge (opportunities which are very rare in a school setting).

The child's use of material-as-medium enables them to '*frame the world aesthetically*', including turning it into stories. An artistic medium can reveal the 'real in the everyday', and it can 'slow down perception' enabling children to see more, differently, or less, in a more focused way. One of the staple activities of CCAJ is to create 'Lumiere Minutes': one minute static shots, mirroring the first film made by the Lumiere brothers in the 1890s, which slowed down or fixed experiences that were previously unrepresentable: the view from a moving tram, or the lapping of waves, or the mobile expressions on people's faces. Lumiere Minutes made by children during the 2015/16 edition of CCAJ concerned the weather: picking out 'weather moments' and representing them in a way that captures their essence. (see <https://markreid1895.wordpress.com/2015/10/28/legsby-meteo-minutes/> for examples).

The transformative use of material-as-medium signals the child *exercising the imagination*: making or suggesting a thing that wasn't already here: when the child "becomes liberated from the literal.. Using metaphor or metonymy..etc." (2003, 10). Film is an unusual medium in that it doesn't operate symbolically (like written language or music) but rather indexically, having a close, but not identical, relationship to the world it is representing. It is "language written from reality," in Pasolini's words (quoted in Bergala, 2016, 25), "time, written in the total and natural language that is action in reality." The indexical nature of film presents a double challenge to both teachers and students of film when they use film as a vehicle for 'exercising the imagination': because film appears to be capturing the 'real', sometimes it is hard to see how film actually manipulates the real, using Pasolini's 'language of reality' to create a new reality. As one child said while making a short Exercise around 'the place of reality in fiction': "how do we know that Maisha [playing a character at a bus stop] is in the story, but the other people [passers by] aren't?"

Secondly, when invited to imagine a new film story, children often default to the film stories they know – ambitious fantasy adventures, created in motion capture studios with sophisticated visual effects, which are impossible to replicate. The structure and ethos of CCAJ very explicitly attempts to address these challenges by enabling children to create stories about people very much like themselves, in familiar locations and scenarios, but conceived through new aesthetic and narrative techniques.

Finally, for Eisner, evidence of the child's developing cognitive capacities can often be gauged by the *language they use to describe their experience* - and their sense of what they have made. It is one reason why art schools follow the practice of 'crits', in which students describe and sometimes defend their emerging work to peers and tutors. In CCAJ, at the final screenings at the end of the year, in different cities all over the world, children 'defend' their work, much the same as in a crit: the whole of their film is screened, and the audience (of peers, on the same programme, following the same rules) are able to interrogate them from a common point of artistic departure. The children are pushed to articulate their understanding of the concept, and of the means they chose to pursue it, in language, often being 'surprised' (in Eisner's sense of surprise as the end product of the making process, "the discovery of ends in process". (2003, 7))

CCAJ 2017/18: 'Places and Stories.'

In the second part of this chapter, I will describe in more detail a full year's edition of CCAJ, as a kind of case study illustrating the model as a whole, reflecting on its potential as a 'cognitive curriculum' in Eisner's terms.

The theme, typology, readings, and film clips

The 23rd edition of CCAJ took as its theme 'Les lieux et les histoires', or 'Places and Stories'. As is often the case, the suggestion was Alain Bergala's, and the CCAJ community of teachers, film-makers and cultural partners all pitched in, with suggestions for Exercises, clips from key films, and reading material. Two pieces of writing were signalled as being key background material for teachers: *Heterotopias*, by Michel Foucault, and *Species of Spaces*, by Georges Perec. The Foucault piece outlines a typology of the distinctiveness of 'place', of how different types of place have a distinctive character: his places have definite boundaries, and their own rules, mores and functions. Perec's piece is typically playful, describing everyday genres of place in strikingly unfamiliar ways.

In summary, the guidance for teachers set out the conceptual basis of the theme, as the differences between generic *spaces* (a garden, a hill, a street, a house) and real specific *places*, that are unique, full of memories and emotions, and which each person who knows them experiences uniquely. (Bergala's outline of the theme can be found here: <http://blog.cinematheque.fr/100ans20172018/annee-encours/le-sujet-de-lannee-le-jeu/>)

Bergala translated Foucault's 'heterotopias' into a typology of places in film, related to their ability to generate stories. The categories are conceptual, rather than concrete, so include for example: 'dangerous, forbidden places; memorial places; recollected places or places in memory; places for outsiders, which separate off one group from another'. This willingness to engage in theory, even in a film education project with some quite young children, could easily be characterised as 'typically French' from an outside perspective, especially an Anglo-Saxon pragmatist position that is more concerned with concrete learning objectives, and a notion of 'what works'. The UK participants in particular, every year notice the appetite of French teachers and film-makers to engage in lengthy philosophical discussion, which is culturally quite alien to British teachers. Perhaps this suspicion also mirrors changes in pedagogy and professionalism in the UK, which is becoming more instrumental, more driven by externally set objectives, and giving less autonomy to teachers. In this year's edition

however, I can report that a group of primary teachers travelling to Paris for the initial training event in September spent the entire journey reading and discussing extract from Foucault's text, and mapping out the concept of *heteretopia* against films they knew; sometimes Anglo-Saxon scepticism can be overcome by more romantic high French theory! More interestingly, there is maybe a closer connection between Bergala's 'cinema hypothesis', and the American pragmatist rationales behind arts education.

The film clips chosen by the programme followed this abstract conceptual typology: the Vimeo channel for the year (<https://vimeo.com/album/5092334>) features film clips of Gothic, creepy places (*Rebecca*, Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1940; *Edward Scissorhands*, Tim Burton, USA, 1990; *la Belle et la Bete*, Jean Cocteau, France, 1946); places revisited by a character after many years (*The Great Dictator*, Charlie Chaplin, 1940; *Dans le Cour*, Pierre Salvadori, France, 2014; *Wild Strawberries*, Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1957); sacred or memorial places (*La Chambre Verte*, Francois Truffaut, 1978), or alternative places, places for outsiders (*Paranoid Park*, Gus van Sant, 2007; *Go Home*, Jihane Chouaib, France, 2015).

Even though the UK participants were initially anxious about how far these abstract ideas could be translated into children's understanding of the cinema, and their own ability to explore it through practical exercises and viewing, in terms of viewing, *Rebecca* was immediately popular, as well as *Edward Scissorhands*, but also *Wild Strawberries*, *Moonfleet* (Fritz Lang, USA, 1955), *Visages d'Enfants* (Jacques Feyder, France, 1925) – all because the places where the action takes place are clearly delineated, but the stories are gripping, and the characters memorably realised.

The concrete particularity of actual places on screen in 'Places and Stories' demonstrates Eisner's assertion that "the concept.. is a distilled image in any sensory form.. that is used to represent the particulars of experience." (2003, 3). In this case, the concept at its simplest, (non-Foucaultian!) form, is that places in films are where stories happen, and that some places give rise to some, rather than other, types of story.

Places and Stories: the three prescribed Exercises

The concepts that children are asked to engage with become more complex when children are asked to attempt the Exercises. Bergala's distinctive pedagogy, and Eisner's sense of the cognitive value of making, have much in common. Bergala (BFI, 2014) sees "making [film] as practical form of thinking cinema", and in *The Cinema Hypothesis* "The real filmmaker is 'engaged by' a question, which his film in turn engages. He [sic]... is someone who is searching and thinking through the very act of making the film." (2016, 31).

In 2017/18, the Exercises to be followed by the workshops on the programme were outlined as follows:

- 1. This exercise is to be performed individually or in pairs, outside of school hours if possible:** Share a Place with us that is important to you. Take 3 or 4 photos, or between 1

- & 4 shots of the space (2 minutes maximum). Try to find ways to convey the sensation that this Place creates. The space should not have any fictional characters in it.
2. **To be performed by a small group:** Choose a location and film how you enter in to this Place. Film the space before it is entered in to and the moment it is entered in to. **The film must last a maximum of 2 minutes.** If possible the location chosen should be one of the Places identified in exercise
 3. **To be performed by a small group:** Film a Place and introduce an element of another time, whether that be the past or the future. This will be mainly, but not exclusively, indicated by the soundtrack, through voice, sounds and music. The sound and the images don't have to be synchronous. **The film must last a maximum of 2 minutes.**

An additional constraint was specified:

The exercises and film should be shot in locations other than school environments. If you're constrained to filming only on school grounds and not able to get out to other spaces, you must find lesser known school spaces and avoid classrooms, playground spaces etc. when filming the exercises.

Each Exercise steps up the cognitive challenge offered to the children. Exercise 1 invites them to choose and film or photograph a place that is special to them - but to 'try to find ways to convey the sensation that this Place creates.' This task seems at first just one of recording, of perception, or noticing; the sting is to make the shots *expressive* - without any of the props film-makers might choose to express feeling (music or voice-over, for example).

The cognitive dimensions of Exercise 2 are maybe less challenging: the 'concept' that it deals with is implicit: that one of the distinctive features of a Place is its entrances and exits, and filming people entering or leaving a Place will enable children to notice its distinctiveness. However, the concept is implicit, and there is no instruction or guidance on what to do with the Exercise once it is completed; not a problem in itself, but maybe a missed opportunity.

Exercise 3 deals with a more challenging film concept: something like 'The same Place can be represented in film in more than one time frame; as effectively two Places at once. And there are film techniques that can realise this 'two places at the same time/ one place in two times.' An implicit instruction in how to achieve this is offered: 'the sound and image don't have to be synchronous' - almost like a clue to finding a solution.

In practice, the overarching constraint for the Exercises - if possible not filming within school buildings or grounds - would prove to be the most challenging constraint to some schools. Implied in the instruction is a desire to broaden out the kinds of Place in which children imagined their stories; every year in the programme, the majority of children's films are shot within the school, and the stories they choose tend to follow familiar patterns: bullying, exclusion, new arrivals. The focus on Place, and the examples provided, was intended to lift children out of default modes of story-telling.

Mid-programme 'bilan', or reflective meeting

In February of 2018, roughly half-way through the programme, there was a 'bilan d'etape', or reflective meeting, in Edinburgh, where teachers and film-makers from eight of the participating workshops presented their Exercises. Other groups presented and discussed their work at meetings in Paris and in the south of France. The workshop groups represented by their teachers and film-makers in Edinburgh were from Scotland and England; France; Belgium; Lithuania and Finland; and Germany and Bulgaria. The ensuing conversation looked critically at the work of each group, holding it up to scrutiny, matching each piece against the criteria – the 'rules of the game' – and comparing between them, picking up patterns, themes, and outliers. The reflections of a couple of participants were written up and posted on the English CCAJ blog site:

<https://markreid1895.wordpress.com/2018/03/18/sandie-jamesons-reflections/>

Some children, people observed, had a tendency to want to tell stories immediately, without thinking about the nature of the Place in which the story was rooted. The proscription around using school spaces was an additional challenge - for some schools, leaving their premises is too risky - or the school itself is risk averse. Some schools chose evocative places - a red sandstone Catholic church in Glasgow, for example, shot in distinctive late Autumn, late afternoon, Glasgow light; an abandoned graffitied building in a desolate field in Lithuania; another Catholic church, this time in Berlin. Children in some groups were stumped when asked to think about places special to them: McDonalds, but little else, was offered in one Bulgarian town; and in Stains, outside Paris, the children resorted to inventing and telling stories voiced over shots of their playground because they claimed there was nothing intrinsically interesting they could focus on.

The 'special places' of Exercise 1 included the interiors of apartments - lots of footage of bedrooms and living rooms, but shot in continuous single takes, sweeping around the room; as someone noted, the children needed to slow down (cf Eisner's 'slowing down of perception', 2003, 13) in order to bring out the defining features of the Place, and to isolate - to stamp or 'affranchir' - the features that made it special, that had a resonance for the children. In fact, in evidence of Eisner's pedagogy supporting 'attenuated perception' (2003, 13), one group had prepared children for Exercise 1 by asking them to take photographs that picked out resonant details; another had children wearing blindfolds and experiencing their chosen Place through their other senses – listening, smelling, touching - before thinking about how to film it.

Exercise 2 gave rise to much debate about whether children were choosing unique 'places', or generic 'spaces'. One group's Exercise 2 was set on a bus – fulfilling the criteria of a place with an entrance and exit into a clearly delineated space. But the question was whether *this* bus was more than '*any bus*'; the point being in the end that the answer to the question is less important than the discussion that the question prompted. To come back to Eisner, cognition and the idea of the 'represented concept', the importance of the Exercises is that children learn something new about 'Places and Stories' by reflecting on the choices they make. The extent to which children, as opposed to teachers and film-makers, have these conversations, is something to return to at the end of this chapter.

Exercise 3 brought a fresh range of debate and concepts into play: how would the children choose and deploy the resources of film to represent Places in more than one time-frame? The workshop of one

small school based in rural Lincolnshire took an innovative – though maybe quite literal – approach to the concept of ‘representing a place in more than time-frame’. Starting with their school greenhouse, the children took close shots of plants and soil there, before intercutting with images taken from a natural history book in their library, some of which referred to Victorian botanists and explorers, but others went back to pre-historic times, with images of dinosaurs. The children were attempting to demonstrate some degree of historical continuity between the contemporary, and the local, and a more generalised sense of the past.

This example also illustrates some of the dimensions of Eisner’s typology of the cognitive actions supported by arts education. Exercise 3 places a conceptual constraint around the film that children have to make, but it doesn’t specify the content. The children therefore have to make a judgement about what is appropriate content here: the dominant interpretation of Exercise 3 in the programme was to make a piece about a place that had personal memories for a character – like the examples offered in the clips, from *Dans le Cour* (Salvadori, France, 2014) where Catherine Deneuve goes back to the house of her childhood, or *Wild Strawberries* (Bergman, Sweden, 1957) where an old man undergoes the same journey. But these children took a different interpretation of ‘past’, into something more schooled, formal, even literary. “In the absence of rules,” as Eisner puts it (2003, 35) the children had to make a judgement.

The groups from Lithuania used all three Exercises to ‘frame the world aesthetically,’ and to ‘exercise the imagination’. Exercise 1 focused on a gnomic graffitied building, in the middle of a desolate landscape, shot from a variety of angles and distances, positing the building as object, maybe even as ‘metaphor’. The group tutor explained that the building had a specific historic resonance for Lithuanians for the part it played during the end of Soviet rule in 1989. One of the Lithuanian groups found a mirror in an abandoned house and explored how it transformed the place, creating different planes, reflections, and spaces within the rooms of the house.

Outside, in the snowy winter landscapes of Kaunas, the students used pre-existing footprints in the snow with the sounds of crunching footsteps to suggest both ‘pastness’ and ‘presentness’ in the Place: an example of seeing the ‘material’ of film and using it as a ‘medium’, whose affordances enable sound and image to reference different times and place.

One question arose in the ‘bilan’ about the impact of a music soundtrack on these Exercises. The ‘regles du jeu’ for CCAJ have always included some implicit rules, one of which is an aversion to add extraneous music if its purpose is merely decorative, rather than supporting the key concept the Exercise is promoting. Teachers bringing work to the annual ‘bilans’ have been abruptly appraised of this ‘hidden rule’ when colleagues call it out in the reflective session. One of the groups in Places and Stories had added music to one of their Exercises and the feeling in the room was that music soundtracks were often generic, rather than specific, and took away the uniqueness of the Place: ‘music kills Place,’ somebody said. In cognitive terms, this move is almost the opposite of ‘framing the world aesthetically’, where ‘aesthetic’ means to express or apprehend through the senses. Eisner calls the truncating of aesthetic perception too quickly ‘recognition’ (Eisner, 2003, 13): where we reach too soon for the explanatory label, the shortcut to meaning, instead of dwelling longer in the ambiguity of

an experience. Maybe adding generic music to images of 'concrete particularity' has the same effect, erasing the singularity of the image and moving it into familiar 'genre' territory.

The 'film essai'

The next stage of the programme every year is for all of the participating children and young people to make a 'film essai', to a centrally devised brief, which focuses on the year's theme, summarising the enquiries, viewing, and practicing the children have been engaged in, almost as an embodiment of Bergala's 'final imprint of the creative process' (2016, 23). But the word 'essai' in French refers to a particular dimension of creativity: 'to try out', or 'experiment', rather than to 'summarise.' John Dewey, in his 1916 book *Democracy and Education* referred to creative work where "doing becomes a trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like." (Dewey, 1916, p134, in O'Donoghue, 107). Again, we see a connection between the high French notions of art/ film education, and the pragmatist tradition that Eisner was working and thinking in.

The film brief in 2017/18 itself is an 'experiment with' Place, 'to find out what it is like':

Make a film where a character brings another character, or characters, into a Place that s/he knows. The discovery of this Place must be linked to an emotional or dramatically significant response for one of the characters.

The work explored in the exercises should inform the way that the Place is filmed.

The film, including credits, will be between 8-11 minutes maximum.

As a way of rounding off the year's programme, I would like to reflect briefly on a day spent with 4 classes of Year 4 and 5 (that's 8/9 years old and 9/10 years old) children in London in May 2018. The children were all at the same stage of the project, preparing for their final film.

Neither school had participated in the programme before; their teachers, and Headteachers, were keen to join, and had allocated up to two hours on a Friday, either morning or afternoon, to the work. Working during curriculum time enabled them to involve all the children in the year group – some 120 children across the two schools.

The brief for the final film sets up several layers of challenge, for both children and teachers. Unlike other workshop groups in the programme, these two schools were not working with a film-maker, and the teachers had little expertise in managing groups of children in making films. School 1 were working with younger children, and in groups of 3 or 4; School 2 had split each class into three film-making groups of 10 children. These different logistics determined different working practices: a group of 10 children needs to find roles for everyone, but it also enables a larger cast of actors – whereas a smaller group of 4 children can be more focused in its decision making, and doesn't have to find roles for everyone, but is stuck if its film idea needs more than 3 actors.

Across all the groups, the issue of which 'concept' each group was trying to articulate was salient. The film essai brief sets out a couple: to represent a Place in a way that makes its 'specialness' to the

protagonist clear; to film the sharing of the Place as having an emotional impact; and to use lessons learned in the Exercises. But each group also had their own conceptual aspirations: one group had filmed rushes of lightning strikes and storms, to create the need for a shelter for the main characters, but also wanted to tell their story in flashback – to communicate the idea that some sort of apocalypse had occurred; another group could only communicate ‘emotional impact’ via exaggerated gestures and facial expressions, not aware (yet) of how in film ‘less is often more’, that juxtapositions of shots can create emotional impact out of neutral expressions (see the ‘Kuleshov effect’, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gGl3LJ7vHc); and that cutting into a shot to film in close-up, in fact cutting closer and closer to a face in close-up is another way of building dramatic intensity.

Some conceptual problems were quite simple, but demonstrated the propensity of film to require ‘judgement in the absence of rules’, as when a child asked “what kind of music should we use for our film?” At another point, one of the teachers showed himself to be adept at asking ‘concept’ questions, pausing the shooting of a scene that was a two-minute long take (a very long shot in film terms) to ask “what do you want to achieve in this shot?” It was clear that the group’s default was to act out the scene – an exchange between pupils and teacher – with the camera positioned at the only vantage point to record the whole scene. There was no thought of moving closer in, repeating shots from different angles, or shooting footage that didn’t just cover action or record dialogue.

Reflection? Or meta-cognition?

Dewey’s sense of when ‘doing becomes a trying’ is further glossed by O’Donoghue as fundamental to children’s abilities to connect what they make to the ways in which they understand the world, or rather that making art should itself be a way of understanding the world. But to achieve this understanding, “it is not enough to just do; it is important to make sense of what doing does, where it leads one, the things it activates, and the possibilities it actualizes.” (2015, 107). The process of making sense isn’t just cognitive, then; it is *meta-cognitive*.

So how far is *Cinema cent ans de jeunesse* a meta-cognitive, as well as a cognitive programme? There are three reflective moments during the programme each year: the ‘bilans d’etape’ bring together teachers and film-makers from the project to watch and discuss the Exercises their students have made; the final screening events in the programme bring children on stage to ‘defend’ their work, by explaining their choices to their peers; and on each evening after the screenings, a group of film-makers and teachers gather for a couple of hours to reflect on the work, and the year.

A reading of Eisner, and his typology of explicit cognitive functions (flexible purposing etc) draws attention to the difference between a simple reflection on one’s own and one’s students’ work, and a more ‘meta-cognitive’ reflection, which might use concepts or categories, or heuristic frameworks, to aid and structure that reflection. In my experience of both the bilan meetings, and the evening post-screening conversations, consideration is given to the *conceptual* work that students are doing, and their level of achievement in expressing those concepts in the language of film. The conceptual framing of these conversations, as opposed to practical pedagogical concerns, are quite unique in my experience of Professional Development. The post-screening conversations on stage with children and students are more variable, as one would expect, as many of the questions are put by children

themselves. But still, the opportunity to stand up in front of an audience and articulate your sense of a work of art you have made, having seen it on a big screen for the first time in front of an audience, is itself “to make sense of what doing does, where it leads one, the things it activates, and the possibilities it actualizes.” (O’Donoghue, 2015, 107).

One is left to wonder whether teacher conversations with the students themselves about their work, back in class, similarly move above this conceptual threshold, considering the work in terms of the types of understanding it might represent. That speculation, however, is for another day.

A final concluding note concerns the similarity of the two models of art education we have been considering: a French ‘art for art’s sake’ model, focused on film, and pursued sometimes at a high level of abstraction, and an American pragmatist approach to the visual arts more widely, deriving pedagogic principles from concrete examples. At the point of considering ‘the act of creation’, it seems that the work of both Bergala and Eisner, despite coming from different intellectual and educational traditions, has strong affinities with each other. These connections and overlaps would similarly warrant further enquiry..

REFERENCES

Bergala, A. (2015) Talk given at the launch of the Framework for Film Education in Paris, June 2015. <https://filmliteracyadvisorygroup.wordpress.com/2015/07/21/alain-bergalas-talk-at-the-launch-of-the-framework-for-film-education/> accessed 29/05/2018

Bergala, A. (2016) *The Cinema Hypothesis*. Vienna: Austrian Filmmuseum.

Bergala, A. (2017) ‘Les lieux et les histoires’. <http://blog.cinematheque.fr/100ans20172018/annee-en-cours/le-sujet-de-lannee-le-jeu/> accessed 29/05/2018.

BFI (2014) *Le Cinema cent ans de jeunesse*. London: BFI.

Dewey, J. (1916) *Democracy and Experience*. New York: Free Press.

Dewey, J. (1934) *Art as Experience*. New York: Perigee.

Eisner, E. (2003) *Arts and the creation of mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

O’Donoghue, D. (2015) ‘The Turn to Experience in Contemporary Art: A Potentiality for Thinking Art Education Differently’. *Studies in Art Education*, 56:2, 103-113.

FILM REFERENCES

la Belle et la Bete. 1946. Jean Cocteau. France.

La Chambre Verte. 1978. Francois Truffaut. France.

Dans le Cour. 2014. Pierre Salvadori. France.

Edward Scissorhands. 1990. Tim Burton. USA.

Go Home. 2015. Jihane Chouaib. France.

Moonfleet. 1955. Fritz Lang. USA.

Paranoid Park. 2007. Gus van Sant. USA.

Rebecca. 1940. Alfred Hitchcock. USA.

La regle du jeu. 1939. Dir.. Jean Renoir. France.

The Great Dictator. 1940. Charlie Chaplin. USA.

Visages d'Enfants. 1925. Jacques Feyder. France.

Wild Strawberries. 1957. Ingmar Bergman. Sweden.