

Effect of Visual Arts Appreciation Education on Children's Aesthetic Development: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

This study explored the effect of visual arts appreciation teaching on children's interest and feelings about viewing artworks, their perception of and views on artistic work, and their performance in art creation. In this study, 5–6-year-old children were chosen as subjects and works of artists were employed as themes. First, a series of adaptive teaching materials for 16 sessions on art appreciation for children were self-developed. These materials were later used in a 4-month teaching program on a 1-session-per-week basis. Teaching records, interviews and questionnaires, and drawing paper were used for data collection and recording the teaching process. The results revealed that the visual arts appreciation teaching had a strong effect on children's aesthetic development in terms of their feelings on and perceptions of artistic work and performance in art creation. Therefore, further exploration of the impact of art appreciation teaching on early childhood education is worthwhile.

Keywords: art appreciation, early childhood education, ECEC curriculum framework (Taiwan, R.O.C.), preschool aesthetic education, visual arts appreciation teaching

1. Introduction

Looking at beautiful things makes people feel happy. The phrase "visual literacy" was first proposed by John Debes in 1969 and is defined as the "vision-competencies a human being can develop" (cited in IVLA, 2012). Cultivation of the ability to recognize and appreciate visual art is an indispensable task of visual art education. Although visual art education is not exactly the same as aesthetics education, but is the best means of educating in aesthetics (Chang, 2015). The sense of aesthetics should be begun at a young age and developed from a lifetime of perceptions and experiences gained from the surrounding environment (Chen, 2011). If a person begins to store such spiritual feelings in early childhood, they may draw on the sources of beauty as an adult (Jiang, 2006). Aesthetics should be cultivated through education from a young age; therefore, childhood is the most crucial stage of aesthetics cultivation. In the "ECEC curriculum framework (Taiwan, R.O.C.)" (hereafter referred to as "curriculum framework") issued by the Ministry of Education (2016), aesthetics is defined as experience of the perceived good and instances of beauty that are autonomously constructed deep inside the mind of an individual, which is to interpret external information through the keen senses and connect with imagination and experience, which triggers the feeling of moving and joy in the individual's inner soul. The goal of this field is to cultivate the abilities of children to explore and observe, express and create, and respond and appreciate.

However, the researcher, with experience in teaching at kindergartens since 2010, discovered that the current visual art courses in the kindergarten aesthetics curriculum are mostly creation and handcrafts courses; moreover, art appreciation education involves interactions between children in which they explain their artworks to each other, with little in-depth appreciation and discussion of artworks. Not only should visual arts appreciation teaching be incorporated in the "curriculum framework" but also the art education community in Taiwan must pay more attention to art appreciation teaching. The main theme of this study is artworks, which are relatively underutilized resources in the development of visual arts appreciation courses (hereafter referred to as "appreciation courses"). A teaching experiment was implemented in this research. This research had the following aims: first, to develop a set of curriculum materials on art appreciation for children and explore the progress and conditions of teaching; second, to explore the effect of art appreciation teaching on children's interest and feelings when observing artworks, their perception and views on the artworks, and their performance in art creation and other extended effects.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Significance of Art Appreciation Teaching

Eisner (1972), Kostelnik et al. (2004), Lin (2021), Su (1992) and the current "curriculum framework" (Ministry of Education, 2016) emphasized that art education should include both appreciation and creation; that is, both receptive and productive art activities should be considered

equally important. In particular, in order to cultivate the public's taste for their surroundings, aesthetics education should involve aesthetic appreciation based on rational thinking (Su, 1992). Knight (2010), Liang (2001) and Wang (1998) stated the following benefits of arts appreciation: the experiences gained by students through appreciation of artworks and natural objects can help them form concrete critiques, which further enhance their knowledge of visual arts, ability to appraise beauty, imagine and create, and experience of pleasure during aesthetic appreciation, ultimately resulting in balanced emotions and a mindset for appreciating beauty. Echhoff (2008), Jalongo and Stamp (1997) indicated that art appreciation is an important art learning experience for children, teachers must provide them with opportunities to appreciate artworks that are high quality and developmentally appropriate in both content and form in their everyday life. Chen (2005) also reported that daily life is a source of aesthetic experiences. To enhance the benefits of aesthetics learning, teaching strategies should focus on guiding explorations and discoveries, inspiring interest and the imagination, and encouraging the expression of personal ideas. This viewpoint corresponds to the opinion of Dewey (1980) in that art equals experience, the art learning experience of students should be correlated with their daily life experiences so that they can cultivate the abilities to experience, appreciate, and create beautiful things through their life.

Empirical studies have indicated that appropriate art appreciation activities have a positive impact on both teachers and students. Such activities can inspire their interest in art, increase knowledge and understanding of artworks (Aylward et al., 1993; Danko-McGhee, 2006), and instill artistic concepts and develop creative expression (Hsiao, 2010). Despite the positive effects of art appreciation activities indicated by the aforementioned studies, no relevant teaching materials or modules have been established. Consequently, this study aimed to develop a set of teaching materials and explore the impact of art appreciation activities on children's aesthetic-related feelings, cognition, and performance.

2.2. Content and Teaching Strategies of Art Appreciation Teaching Materials

As mentioned earlier, the complete aesthetic experience contain two types: responsive and creative. The art education should cover the creative dimension of production as well as the critical and cultural dimensions of criticism and that both aspects are equally important (Eisner, 1972). Among them, the responsive experience means that children often have opportunities to engage in sensory exploration and observe the beauty in their environment as well as admire different types of artworks and respond. Fontal Merillas (2009) emphasized that the key to truly understanding art is sharing feelings and thoughts regarding the art with others. According to Read (1974), the abilities to observe and appreciate can be obtained through learning. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1957) stated that learning occurs only through sensory experience, which should be a continuous process. According to Lin (2021), the use of sensory perceptions to interact with the everyday environment

and finding pleasure in appreciation and response during the process is one of the most critical channels through which children accumulate aesthetic experiences and feelings. Eisner (1972) stated that art education is especially correlated with visual perception development and that teachers should help children expand their frame of reference so that they can learn to observe and experience the qualities of objects and things not normally noticed. Epstein (2001) discussed that teachers should guide children step by step to use their senses to appreciate artworks they may be interested in and discuss their responses with other children, which eventually improves the children's appreciation ability.

Greer (1987), Mittler (1980) and Wang (1998) reported that the four major stages of arts appreciation are description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment. Based on the above four stages, Huang (2000) later added contemplation as a fifth stage, focusing on young children's visual perception and feelings and even inspires children to experience their emotions. Chao (2005), Grinder and McCoy (1985) and Wang (1998) affirmed that answering questions is an effective means of promoting interactions between students and teachers regarding artworks. Grinder and McCoy (1985) indicated questions that guide art appreciation can be divided into four types: those on memory, convergence, diffusion, and judgment. The 6W problem-solving strategy (what, when, where, who, why, and how) can be used to design the questions. Wang (1998) argued that as many perspectives and senses should be engaged as possible during the appreciation and interpretation of artworks. Asking questions is the best strategy for stimulating observation, discovery, and reflection, which corresponds to the "curriculum framework" (Ministry of Education, 2016) recommends that the curious nature of children who like to ask questions be harnessed.

According to Lin (2021) and Ministry of Education (2016), mastering the essence of games is a crucial strategy in aesthetics teaching, and teachers can evaluate whether a course conforms to the essence of games by assessing the following aspects: whether the subject triggers the interest of children and can be linked to their life experiences, whether it encourages interpretation and expression by the children and respects their opinions, whether the teaching process is more important than the result, whether it provides the children with flexible and autonomous choices as well as sufficient time to make attempts, whether it promotes proactive participation and discovery, and whether it provides children with the complete experience of doing and learning. Furthermore, through an analysis of arts education issues over the years from 2006 to 2016, Chao and Kao (2017) demonstrated that game-based teaching strategies in arts education, as stated by Walker (2015), not only guide learners to think about the world from new perspectives but also, as reported by Han (2015), are more likely to elicit students' self-motivation and peer interaction.

Regarding the art appreciation content, Lin (2000) stated that materials within the existing environment can be used as a medium for aesthetic appreciation activities. Eisner (1972) suggested that the appreciation of artworks address six aspects: experience, forms, symbols, subjects, materials, and background. Smith (1996) believed that art appreciation activities involve the four

major mental activities of perception, affection, cognition, and judgment. In the "curriculum framework" (Ministry of Education, 2016), aesthetics learning addresses emotions and artistic mediums. Emotions refer to the willingness of children to engage in visual arts aesthetics activities and the positive emotions and feelings associated with such activities; artistic mediums address the creation and appreciation of visual arts, wherein appreciation refers to guiding and encouraging children to explore the expressive forms of the artwork including content, colors, shapes, lines, and materials and express their opinions based on their preferences. According to this discussion, art appreciation activities should thus contain both emotional and cognitive aspects.

In summary, three key points for the design of art appreciation teaching materials that the present study and preschool teachers should grasp can be outlined: First, the emphasis should be on children's acquisition of responsive and creative aesthetic experiences, which will enable them to learn aesthetic appreciation in their everyday life. Second, to utilize play and problem-oriented dialog strategies to guide children to explore artwork. Third, to cover a wide range of visual themes, the focus should be on appreciating the forms of expression—including content, color, shape, contours, and the material of the artwork—as well as experiencing emotions and expressions regarding the artwork to ensure a richness of aesthetic experience and the integrity of learning.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Subjects, Tools and Data Analysis

This was a qualitative study. The subjects of the study were 15 children of ages 5–6 years in a kindergarten in New Taipei City. From November 2016 to June 2017, a total of 16 art appreciation teaching interventions were conducted by researcher, and tests were conducted before the intervention, immediately after the intervention, and 3 months after the intervention. The research tools used were teaching records (code tr), interview questionnaires (code iq), and drawing paper (code dp). The entire teaching process was video recorded to serve as a reference for objective postteaching observation and analysis of the children's performance. After each teaching session, the researcher listens to the video recording to ensure the authenticity of the teaching records. To enhance the reliability of data analysis, data were analyzed using the triangulation cross-validation method; the collected data were compiled, compared, and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the visual arts appreciation teaching, thereby enhancing the faithfulness of this study.

3.2. Art Appreciation Courses Design

Artist and artwork selection was conducted by considering the following factors: diversity in the artists' culture and background, which led to the inclusion of artists from different cultures and backgrounds (e.g., Taiwan, the East, and the West); diversity in the subject of artworks (e.g., natural

scenes, cultural scenes, and a combination); diversity in artistic style (e.g., abstract, realistic, and a combination); diversity in creative techniques and formats (e.g., planar and nonplanar forms); and diversity in the creative medium (e.g., watercolor, oil paint, acrylic, ink, colored paper collage, mixed media, wood sculpting, and bronze molding). In terms of the compilation order of the teaching materials, "Multicultural art education" orientation was considered by prioritizing Taiwan's artists followed by artists from the East and then the West, so that children first recognize their own culture and then artworks from other cultural backgrounds, thereby cultivating children's appreciation and respect for multiculturalism. The content of the teaching materials was based on appreciation and response and expected to guide the children to use their senses for artistic exploration and observation. The teaching materials include questions and answers to guide the children's appreciation and responses. Finally, art creation activities are included, which play an auxiliary role in giving children the opportunity to express their inner thoughts.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Design of the Courses and Teaching Implementation

Diversity is a critical concept derived from postmodern art education, in particular, students are encouraged to learn about their own culture as a starting point and then understand and respect the art of other cultures. According to Eisner (1972), a course mainly comprises a series of activities designed to achieve educational effects. In the study, the theme of the designed 16 art appreciation activities (code pl) was "Stop, Look, and Listen to the Artists' World of Imagination," and the principle behind the planning of course content was diversity and serial. This study selected the following 12 artists with different cultural backgrounds and from different art and historical periods: Max Liu, Ju Ming, Liao Chi-Chun, Zhang Da-Qian, Wu Guan-Zhong, Yayoi Kusama, Van Gogh, Ruan Yu-Ting, Mondrian, Moschenko Anastasiya, Matisse, and Miró. The objective characteristics of subject matter, creative style, form of expression, and mediums used were also considered in selection of artworks. A total of 26 artworks were used in the design of 16 art appreciation activities. The appreciation courses not only demonstrate the diverse and vast nature of the curriculum but also, as stated by Lowenfeld and Brittain (1957), provide opportunities for children to enhance their learning and development through continuous sensory experiences offered by arts appreciation. According to Smith (1996) and the "curriculum framework" (Ministry of Education, 2016), children's arts appreciation activities should combine learning, understanding of visual arts, and perception and expression of feelings. The teachers should establish channels through which children can use their sensory perceptions to interact with artworks and enjoy art (Lin, 2015). The teaching activities included in the "appreciation course" are based on the ideas in these theories. Activity 8—Stop, Look, and Listen to the Artist of Dots—Yayoi Kusama's World of Imagination (1) (pl-008)—is used as an example to illustrate the design of the visual arts appreciation teaching

materials, including the aspects of arts appreciation perception and affective learning. In terms of appreciation perception, questions such as the following are used to guide the children's cognitive learning of artistic appreciation: "What do you see in the two paintings created by the artist Yayoi Kusama?", and "What do the fishes in these two paintings look like?". In terms of affective learning, "What do you think Yayoi Kusama was feeling when she made these two paintings?", and "Which is your favorite? Why?" are some of the questions used to guide the children in expressing feelings triggered by the artworks. The art appreciation course design in this study contains the learning orientations of both cognitive and emotional appreciation.

In terms of the teaching process, every activity compiled in the "appreciation course" follow three instructional stages: the preparatory activity, development activity, and comprehensive activity. The purpose of the preparatory activity is to review the children's experience in visual arts appreciation and link it to the new appreciation theme to motivate the children to learn. The development activity focuses on the appreciation of artworks. Teachers use questions to guide the children to explore and observe works through the five stages of Huang (2000)—which comprises sensory description, analysis of perception, deductive interpretation, judgment and evaluation, and contemplation. In the comprehensive activity, questions such as "After admiring the artist's work, who am I now and what is my deepest impression?" are used to guide the children to create an open-ended drawing to express their own ideas. Finally, the children are asked to share their creative experiences among themselves. Thus, the teaching materials are streamlined and have a clear structure. Regarding content connotations, each set of teaching materials includes the artist's story; the theme of the artwork; the form, elements, and features of the artwork; expression of own feelings and evaluation of the artwork, own work, and work of peers; and art creation activities for children. The content of all 16 appreciation activities shares a commonality to provide the children with repeated experiences and continuous learning of the works and creative expression of different artists. For example, Eisner (1972), in his viewpoint on the essence of art education, indicated that a coherent course structure enables students to achieve superior learning results.

Drawing from the viewpoints of Chao (2005), Grinder and McCoy (1985), and Wang (1998) and, this study designed questions that guide children to explore artworks through sensory perception, respond, and express thoughts. Moreover, Fröbel and Montessori have emphasized the significance of games in early childhood education. The game playing process enables young children to not only engage in Dewey's hands-on learning method, "learning by doing," but also learn through sensory exploration, which is advocated by Comenius. In addition to using problem-oriented dialog strategies in the appreciation course teaching materials in this study, a series of questions with art appreciation connotations were designed for stimulating children's observation, perception, feeling, and thinking. Moreover, to attract young children to participate in activities, games were designed such as clue finding games (e.g., pl-001, pl-003, pl-005, pl-008,

pl-009), jigsaw puzzles (e.g., pl-006, pl-007), memory tests (e.g., pl-015), and gamified learning activities (e.g., pl-004) and employed as supplemental learning strategies.

The content of the "appreciation course" not only provides young children with opportunities to learn about different artists and diverse works with various themes, forms, and elements of art but also helps them accumulate experiences in interaction with their teachers and peers as well as expression of their feelings and thoughts. Through drawing, children express their feelings and thoughts. The questionnaire interviews conducted before, immediately after, and 3 months after the appreciation teaching intervention revealed that all children had favorable emotions toward the artworks, and most children indicated that the artworks gave them a positive visual experience. When the researcher said "Now we are going to draw..." most children responded cheerfully both verbally and with body movements. Such a reaction can be attributed to a relatively high degree of interest in artistic creation among children at this age and drawing is something they often find relatively easy. This finding was consistent with the findings obtained from the questionnaire interviews conducted before, immediately after, and 3 months after the appreciation teaching intervention; thus, all children indicated that they like creating art. This discussion indicates that the appreciation course content in this study can support and extend the feelings of affection that children have for viewing and creating art.

According to the results of the teaching experiment, the teaching process planned in the art appreciation course is feasible; it guided the successful completion of 16 teaching activities. For example, the teaching review at the start of each activity helps children to review the artists and artworks previously discussed. Moreover, the incorporation of problem-oriented strategies in the art appraisal process can guide the interaction between children and artworks. However, the teaching experiment revealed that each art appreciation teaching process is influenced by the interaction between different art appreciation themes and the degree of participation of young children during that session. The order of the five stages—sensory description, analysis of perception, deductive interpretation, judgment and evaluation, and contemplation—could be made more flexible to improve the flow of the teaching process. The course content displays wide variation, and the teaching process is structured. Moreover, analysis of the situations and results of the teaching experiment revealed that the appreciation course design and teaching implementation are feasible.

4.2. Appreciation Course Results and the Response of the Children

The results of the interviews conducted before, immediately after, and 3 months after the appreciation teaching were consistent and indicated that all the children enjoyed viewing works of art. Before conducting the post-test and delayed test, we used verbal guidance to encourage the children to express their thoughts: "After guiding the kids to learn about 12 artists and admiring their works, I would like to know what you feel about art appreciation; you can answer slowly using your own ideas..." (iq). The results indicated that appreciation teaching positively influenced the

children's exposure to art and art viewing; however, the extent to which appreciation teaching influenced the children's interest in viewing artworks could not be elucidated.

Through the "appreciation course", we hoped that the children could develop cognition toward artworks. The "appreciation course" expanded the children's perceptions and understanding of the artists' creations. Before participating in the "appreciation course", one child believed that artists only draw (iq-pret-004), but 3 months after the course has ended, he had a different understanding of the works of an artist. He said, "...made from carving, it was actually made using some method, maybe using a little bit of glass to make something" (iq-pret-004) and "using some way to make something to show other people, so people can admire it..." (iq-rt-004). After the "appreciation course", another child used different creative themes to present the different works of the artists: "Drawing, drawing a picture, drawing things, drawing cars, drawing trucks, drawing scenery, drawing people" (iq-postt-009). This indicated that his understanding of creative themes must have developed. According to the results of the interview questionnaires, before participation in the "appreciation course", 46.67% of the children indicated that they had previously seen a piece or several pieces of art selected for the course, whereas 3 months after the course completion, all the children were able to indicate the works that they had previously seen. This shows that the "appreciation course" helped the children experience more artworks and form impressions. All children could provide an example of the name of an artist, and most children could also provide the creative features of the artist. For example, "Yayoi Kusama makes paintings of dots, Ju Ming creates three-dimensional people, Max Liu makes cute 'Puo You Birds'" (iq-postt-005); "Mondrian, he painted his city, his painting is very beautiful, I think Max Liu's 'Puo You Birds' are beautiful, Ju Ming's sculptures are very unique, and Zhang Da-Qian's ink sprays are the most unique; Wu Guan-Zhong's curvy black lines are the most unique" (iq-postt-007).

To explore the concrete impact of the "appreciation course" on the understanding of the artworks, the children were first asked to identify two of their favorite works or the works that they found most attractive, after which, through open-ended questions, they were guided to describe the special features of the artwork, including its colors, lines and shapes, materials used, feelings about the artwork, and the possible creative motivation. Let us consider the example of artist Ju Ming's work "In One Heart." Compared with before the "appreciation course", one child could use a greater range of vocabulary to describe the artwork, such as "up and down," "left and right," "long," and "slanted" to describe the lines and shapes he observed 1 week and 3 months after the "appreciation course" (iq-postt-006). Moreover, the child was able to incorporate creative mediums and techniques into his description of the artworks; he said, "Sculpture...Ju Ming sculpted it from wood" (iq-postt-006). Thus, the "appreciation course" was effective in enhancing young children's understanding of art, as evidenced by Read's (1974) suggestion that acquired appreciation learning is related to the growth of observation and appreciation skills to a certain extent. Compared with

before the appreciation teaching intervention, the children were also able to use more complex phrases and sentences to describe the special features of the artworks. One child he was also able to demonstrate a degree of fluency and causal logic (iq-postt-002 and iq-rt-002) and express his emotional perception toward the artworks as follows: “because I think the drawn pictures are very pretty, I feel a little bit moved” (iq-rt-002). However, before, after, or 3 months after the teaching, the children’s descriptions of colors were simply reports on the colors they directly perceived, that is, they named the colors they saw. For example, “Orange, yellow, white, dark blue, green...” (iq-pret-002); “I see yellow, gray, skin color, red, white...” (iq-postt-002); and “Yellow, black, white, green, blue...” (iq-rt-002). Apart from not naming the colors in any particular order, their observation, categorization, and analysis of the special features and importance of color in the works were relatively weak. Therefore, teachers should determine a method of achieving a breakthrough in children’s exploration and observation of colors.

The artistic creation activities planned in the "appreciation course" are intended to provide young children with a means of self-expression through the language of images to facilitate discussion on the influence of appreciation teaching on children’s artistic creation. In guiding children to create art, no concrete creative themes are provided and the children are not verbally guided to imitate other artworks. Instead, the children are encouraged to draw aspects of an artwork that had the deepest impression on them. Based on analysis of the children’s works, the impact of the "appreciation course" on their artistic creations can be summarized as follows. In the appreciation activities, children tended to use the theme of the artist’s work for their own artistic creation, but they used their own methods to present the art and added other image elements. For example, a blue image element on the left and a red element on the right, similar to the elements in Miró’s work “The Harlequin’s Carnival,” appear in all three children’s works in Table 1. The children imbued new meaning to the half blue and half red image they drew, such as a half blue and half red window (dp-c-015-008), or extended the image to create a new image, such as “Tai Shi Chi” Warrior—a half blue and half red character (dp-c-015-012). One of the children used blue on the left and red on the right image element (Table 2), as appears in Miró’s “The Harlequin’s Carnival,” for artistic creation in Activities 15 and 16, the post-test, and delayed test (dp-c-015-012, dp-c-016-012, dp-postt-012, and dp-rt-012). This indicated that the artwork appreciation course had an impact and extended effect on the theme of the children’s artworks.

In addition to using the subject matter of the artworks to create their work, the children attempted to use the creative techniques or methods used by the artist. As shown in Table 3, three children created drawings by dotting their coloring pens directly on the paper or drawing circles after viewing the works of Yayoi Kusama. An analysis of the children’s works revealed that not only were the content and creative method of the children’s works influenced by the artworks but the children also expressed the meaning conveyed by the artwork in their own creations. As seen in Table 4, three children were inspired by Ju Ming’s “The Queuing Life” and created works rich with

childlike wonder, such as those containing “Four people standing in a line” (dp-c-004-006), “Six castles waiting in a line” (dp-c-004-007), and “Cars queuing” (dp-c-004-011). One of these children used modes of transportation as the theme, and interestingly, after Activity 4, his creative works expressed the element of “queuing” including in the post-test and delayed test (Table 5).

Analysis of the drawings revealed that the art appreciation teaching had influenced the children’s art creation performance and had delayed effects to certain degrees. The artworks of the children not only combined life experiences and imagination to illustrate their life experience or present made-up stories but also connected with the themes of the artworks appreciated in the activity or attempted to reproduce the meanings of the artists’ artworks, which had generated positive emotions. Moreover, the children’s creative methods were influenced by the artists’ creative methods, and the children combined the artists’ creative techniques with their own creative methods to create art. Thus, the children used image creation and verbal expression to interpret and share their individual thoughts and feelings after interaction with artworks. This corresponds to the suggestion of Fontal Merillas (2009) that art appreciation can help children develop a true understanding of the arts and enable them to link this understanding to their own life experiences.

5. Conclusion and Reflections

Through emphasis on arts appreciation, experimental aesthetic appreciation education was implemented in this study to enhance children’s aesthetic experience. Su (1992, p. 29) stated, “How can there be a sense of beauty without appreciation?” Fontal Merillas (2009) reported that true artistic understanding can only be achieved through discussion and sharing with others. Therefore, appreciation is essential for developing an aesthetics perspective, and the understanding of aesthetics can be developed through interaction and discussion with others. This study first described the theoretical basis of visual arts appreciation and then presented the design concepts of an appreciation course, based on which, the “Stop, Look, and Listen to the Artists’ World of Imagination” course was developed. Thereafter, experimental teaching was used to record children’s aesthetic experiences, and the impact of the children’s aesthetics education was analyzed.

The “Stop, Look, and Listen to the Artists’ World of Imagination” course is a visual arts appreciation course designed for the upper kindergarten class. Through the use of 16 sets of systematic appreciation-centric teaching materials, children were guided to admire and discuss the works of artists from various cultural backgrounds. The course content focuses on use of the senses to explore, appreciate, and respond to works of art and then allows children to express their ideas by creating images, so that they can experience artistic emotions and interests, develop cognitive understanding, and express creative ideas. This design echoes the argument of Su (1992) that appreciation leads to creation as well as Eisner’s (1972) theory of the nature of art, according to which the development of artistic ability is the result of learning. In the “Stop, Look, and Listen to

the Artists' World of Imagination" course, arts appreciation is the main focus, with aesthetics learning as the active purpose. Through a discussion of the effectiveness of appreciation courses, this paper summarizes the practical significance and value of appreciation teaching in children's aesthetics education. First, aesthetics education triggers positive emotional perceptions in children and increases their interest in visual arts appreciation, as evidenced by the children's enjoyment of the artists' works reflected in the post-test interview and delayed test. Second, it promotes children's observation and understanding of artworks, including the work done by artists, their creative characteristics, their artistic creations, and the elements and emotions their artworks evoke. Third, it provides young children with subjects and ideas for artistic creation, as evidenced by the finding that the children's artistic creations presented the same themes, ideas, or techniques as those in the artists' works. Fourth, the course has an immediate effect and delayed effect on children's understanding and expression of aesthetics.

The contributions of this empirical study are as follows. First, visual arts appreciation teaching exerts certain effects on children's sense of aesthetics, and its use should be promoted to boost aesthetics education. Second, appreciation teaching has practical educational value, and the research results can serve as reference for kindergartens and parents in the implementation of visual arts appreciation teaching for children. They can also be used in practical applications of children's visual arts teacher training. Third, the results can be used to slightly reduce the deficit in academic exploration on visual arts appreciation teaching and could also act as a basis for follow-up research. Possible future research directions include the following: art appreciation course content can be linked to children's life experience, children's art appreciation experience can be extended or repeated, children's use of art materials can be consistent with the artwork, and children could create artistic works in groups.

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Table 1*Artwork for Appreciation and Children's Drawings in Activity 15*

Joan Miró, The Harlequin's Carnival



dp-c-015-008



dp-c-015-012



dp-c-015-013

Table 2*Children's Drawings Expressing Elements from Miró's Artwork*

dp-c-015-012



dp-c-016-012



dp-postt-012



dp-rt-012

Table 3*Artwork for Appreciation and Children's Drawings in Activity 9*

Yayoi Kusama, Pumpkin



dp-c-009-002



dp-c-009-004



dp-c-009-008

Table 4*Artwork for Appreciation and Children's Drawings in Activity 4*

Ju Ming, The Queuing Life



dp-c-004-006



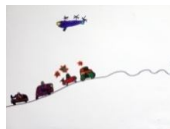
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Table 5*Children's Works Displaying the Idea of "Standing in a Line"*

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