

Abstract

“Intentional sensuous communication”

Intentional sensuous communication is the title of a PhD project in its terminal phase, of which an earlier version has been presented at the 2002 BIN Norden Conference.

The research project investigates the communicational practices, especially so-called drama-pedagogical practices, used at *The Tinderbox*— a cultural facility for children located in the Danish city Odense. *The Tinderbox's* mission is twofold, viz. to serve the role of communicator of the fairy tales of H.C. Andersen, and to facilitate and guide the nascent culture that inevitable arises when children are allowed to be creatively engaged in drama pedagogical activities. The *Tinderbox* is thus an educational activity centre that relies on experimental acquisition of knowledge.

The Tinderbox houses many aesthetic qualities of drama, music, and imagery, and is conceptually based on the idea that for a period of up to one year one of H.C. Andersen's fairy tales is used as the main scenography the theme of which all other cultural activities (i.e.. pedagogical activities of drama, music, and visual art) revolve around. For more than eight years my research has focused on these drama-pedagogical activities through active participation and/or video observations (of the following fairy tales: *The Nightingale*, *The Little Mermaid*, *The Wild Swans*, *The Snow Queen*, and *Thumbelina*).

A typical drama-pedagogical course begins in the storytelling room where the tale is told to a group of children, always tailored in accordance with the specific needs and educational level of the group. Following this, the children are dressed-up in appropriate customs with accompanying make-up. Finally, under the guidance of a professional drama teacher, the children work and play with the tale in an ambient scenography. Sometimes shorter self-composed stories created by the children are used to strengthen the children's imagination and creativity. The communicational practice has been guided by two different discourses, viz. a literal-formative discourse and a children's cultural discourse.

Similar to other educational activity centers *The Tinderbox* has a clear communicational and educational purpose that relies on the idea that physical activity, hands-on experiments, and aesthetic experiences are opportunistic to better learning. Thus, *The Tinderbox* is part of a communicational practice that is becoming increasingly more popular throughout cultural facilities, museums, and in the so-called experience economy.

Although we know that this type of communication is a very popular one, we, however, don't know much about the actual learning processes and educational outcome of these

encounters; *do the children actually learn anything or are these experiences merely comparable to that of visiting a local entertainment park?* Elsewhere, I have termed this type of communication: *'sensuous communication.'*

I have sought to develop a so called *'didactic of sensuousness'* building on the didactical tradition of Carl Aage Larsen and Frede V. Nielsen. Through this concept of the *'didactic of sensuousness'* I have tried to expand common didactical thinking to include aesthetic and bodily-visceral dimensions. Using video analysis of drama courses and relying on the *'didactic of sensuousness'* I investigate how aesthetic idioms are used by the drama pedagogical teachers and the children. The communicational and didactical practices are always seen in the light of the existential qualities of H.C. Andersen's fairy tales. Thus, three aesthetical idioms are present in the drama pedagogical practice, viz. the idiom of H.C. Andersen's fairy tales, the idiom of the drama teachers, and the idiom of the children.

The research project has provided a more elaborate knowledge of:

1. How children's aesthetical idioms are partly strengthened and partly modified by the idioms present in Andersen's fairy tales and the idioms of the drama teachers.
2. The fact that most communicational practices are still confined by a relatively traditional idiom that does not make use of present aesthetic and bodily-visceral potentials.
3. That the idioms of children are more bodily-visceral in nature.
4. That the *'sensuousness of communication'* allows for the opportunity to construe the bodily-visceral and the aesthetic in the context of the communicational/educational.

Kind Regards

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