

the
enquiring
classroom

Values, Identity, Exploration



Prof. Aislinn O'Donnell
Dr. Patricia Kieran
Assoc. Prof. Lovisa Bergdahl
Stephanos Cherouvis

Contents



This is an extract from The Enquiring Classroom Training Manual focusing on The Rough Guide the Sacred. For the full Training Manual please visit ; <http://www.enquiring-project.eu/project-outputs.html>

The Project (principles and philosophy)	The Rough Guide to the Sacred (the religious and the secular)	Living Values (the ethical)	Encountering the World (the aesthetic)	Project Resources (digital supports)
			3	
Making Democracy (the political)	Thinking Together (the philosophical)	Engaging with Tradition (the past and the historical)	Difficult Conversations (moments of stuckness and perplexity)	23



(the aesthetic)

Encountering the World

Encountering the World (the aesthetic)



All teachers know that different classrooms and different schools have their own rhythms and sensibilities. They know when the classroom feels dull or flat, when the liveliness threatens to spill into unruliness, and how different students are finding the speed and rhythms of thought, and when to shift this. A local or global event can shift the feeling of the space, and some events linger long either because they have been important milestones or tragedies. Although much educational theory focuses on the relationship between students, teachers and subject, the feeling of the space and time or rhythms of the school can't be reduced to these three factors, important as they are. Sometimes too much focus on them can lead a neglect of embodied life in classrooms, the ways in which different bodies respond to each other because of their biographies and the histories that they express and are caught up in, or the ways in which gender, class, religion, and race are read differently through the gestures, movements and inter-relations of these bodies.

So too the nature of school spaces inflects the experience in space and time. Too long a time spent sitting may lead to agitation unless children and young people are particularly absorbed. Lines of bodies at desks create possibilities for different kinds of educational experiences at different times, desks facing walls may allow for contemplation, group work for solidarity or distraction or collective enquiry, circles for particular kinds of listening and dialogue. Teachers do often think about the aesthetics of their classroom spaces, considering the work they place on walls and corridors, the rhythms of time they impose, the nature of different activities, the gestures or inclinations that circulate through the space, and the nature of the

material encountered and its own demands. We encourage further openness to changing the sensibilities of schools and classrooms by exploring the idea of classroom as 'assemblage' or 'ecology' following philosophers, Deleuze and Guattari (1987), where all kinds of bodies are in inter-relation, and adding, subtracting or changing relations changes the atmosphere of the space.

Jean Oury (2007) describes the role of the psychotherapist as one of "working the invisible" and describes the importance of an ethics of the singularity of the other that doesn't reduce the other to a statistic, a label, or even just another individual child or young person. Working the invisible is what teachers do all the time, responding constantly to the complex relations, feel or atmosphere of the classroom. Philosopher Spinoza sees life as a kind of experimentation. We never know what we are going to come to love, which is why encountering the world is so important. Each of us will be different. Some of us will come to love engineering, perhaps through tinkering with an old radio, or others biology by observing the creatures in a garden or park, or others poetry and the richness of language, or others still the physical disciplines and joys of sport. Schools are all about encountering the world. This is the nature of the educational space where all sorts of things can be put on the educational table for exploration in multiple ways. The rich lifeworlds and stories of children can become part of this expansive curriculum opening children to worlds beyond their own. Atmospheres make a big difference to what is encountered.

Encountering the World (the aesthetic)



These can be precious spaces that allow for encounter through the full range of the senses. We don't think of the educational space as necessarily a 'creative' space but rather as one where the world opens up through different pedagogies, allowing us to encounter the world through different disciplinary practices that involve different ways of seeing and sensing, from the archaeological dig with five year olds and tracing letters in the air to sense their movements to the study of old newspapers or objects whose use is no longer clear to us. We think of these as enquiring spaces in which there are shifting and modulating relations of time and space and that allow for the different bodies in them to open up different possibilities for experiencing and encountering the world. The educational space is a special place that invites different ways of encountering, questioning and renewing the world. This educational work is the task of the teacher, shared with students and the wider community.

Encountering the world and educating the senses are both central to the educational experience. We are not brains in vats. We are embodied historical beings that are open to the world as we breathe, as we think, as we imagine and as we feel. Developing an 'ecological sensibility' is one part of this project to foster a deeper sense of connection to the world in the different ways it reveals itself to us, from the material to the cultural to the digital. Understanding that we are born into this world that long preceded us and will long outlast us is at the heart of Hannah Arendt's vision for education, with special responsibilities given to the teacher in fostering a real sense of this through the curriculum that tells the story of our common world.

Arendt, however, doesn't reflect sufficiently on pedagogies; she thinks that too much emphasis is placed on them as detached recipes and techniques. Although, we keep in mind her vision of education, we also pay attention to those creative pedagogies that cultivate and enable experiences of deep listening, dialogue, imagination and attention. Creative and critical exercises can help us to notice and to pay attention in different ways through the different senses, encouraging us to open our senses to the world and to sense its different temporalities and rhythms. Just as the research process of artists, engineers, chefs, historians, scientists, philosophers, etc. is driven by curiosity and interest, by experimenting with new ways of experiencing, looking close, looking far, touching lightly, with different parts of the body, sensing the body.., we can come to notice and imagine new connections and patterns. In these exercises, we ask children and young people to document and archive what they notice, collecting inventories of sounds, gestures, images, movements, smells, tastes.

We also notice how many disputes and difficult moments in classrooms are driven by *visceral* reactions to bodies, movements and gestures. Tones of voice are received in different ways. Returning to this idea of a common space, we support practices of interruption of everyday habitual reactions, asking us to pay attention, however briefly to our own responses, allowing oneself to be surprised or curious, before reaction sets in.

Encountering the World (the aesthetic)



This kind of practice can also become part of a practice of noticing in philosophical enquiry, as such visceral reactions can come to drive lines of enquiry and reasoning. Pedagogically, it is also important to incorporate contemplation, silence, and stillness into the busyness of the day. Children tend to respond with openness to engaging in re-staging or experiencing classic conceptual or performance pieces like Abramovic's *The Artist is Present* or the short version 2'33" of Cage's classic work. Being able to imagine with the body or enact different kinds of movements is part of this exploration of reason and imagination of the lives of other beings, human and non-human.

This section is about 'putting something on the table', sometimes quite literally putting objects on the table as pedagogical devices or prompts to allow us to approach questions of values and beliefs differently. Some of these exercises are designed for gallery and museum spaces but can be modified for the school. Part of their purpose is to develop an "expanded sensibility" rather like Arendt's idea of critical thinking as "enlarged mentality" whereby participants sense what the encounter of their bodies with other bodies feels like, the kinds of relational qualities that arise from these encounters, and then come to sense imaginatively how other bodies inter-relate. This 'ecological sensibility' can deepen a sense of connection to, and wonder in respect of, life, and indeed all matter, on this planet. It also allows for a deep sense of connection with a variety of spaces, including sacred spaces.

A number of these exercises have been co-designed with Katy Fitzpatrick as part of **Art and Philosophy in the Classroom. Elements have been adapted for *The Enquiring Classroom*.*





Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 1: Experiencing the Everyday

Description:

These are exercises that children and young people can do in preparation for further exercises in classrooms, museums, galleries, and indeed in everyday life. They are exercises in attention and observation that encourage a more careful and open engagement of the senses, cultivating capacities for discrimination, observation and imagination. This can be developed further through arts education, including literature, and by encountering with art works in galleries.

Aims:

Participants will learn to take up different relationships to the world and their ordinary lives, fostering greater curiosity and interest in the everyday.

Learning Outcomes:

- Greater capacity for careful observations and sensing through all of the senses.
- Development of ability to describe experiences orally and through writing.

Preparation:

Each child or young person should choose a **very ordinary** living or non-living object, something that they might not normally notice and that others would not normally notice. Ask them to choose something that you'd normally walk by or ignore. No humans allowed, unless under two years old.

Intended Age Group: From 8 Years old to adult.

Duration: Over a week and 30/45 minutes in class.

Resources: Each participant should be given a piece of paper with the daily instructions.

Method 1:

- *Observe* your chosen object for 30-60 seconds every day.
- *Think* about your chosen object twice a day.
- See what you notice. Does it change over the days or at different times of the day? Look at it up close and from a distance. If you can see how it feels.
- Write down your observations on a piece of paper and bring them to the session in class at the end of the week, alongside a rough sketch of your chosen object.
- If you speak more than one language, write in both. Or you can decide which language you would like to write in.

Day 1: A noun and three adjectives to describe your object.

Day 2: Two verbs to describe your object (what does it do/how does it act/how does it move?)

Day 3: One line on its story: Where did it come from? (You can make it up). Write in the first person. (I...)

Day 4: What does it need? If it could speak what would it say to you?



Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 1: Experiencing the Everyday

Method 2: Encountering the World

This exercise can be a very good way to invite students to engage with Museum Collection or Art Collections. It can also be undertaken, with modification, in natural environments.

- Spend 10 minutes walking through the gallery/museum/outdoor space and allow an object to call to you as you walk. Keep walking through the space for the full period of time. (10 minutes)
- Come back to that object and do the following:
 1. Observe it carefully, giving it your absolute and undivided attention in silence. Approach it through all the senses, imaginatively. How would it feel to touch? What sounds would it make if moved? How might it smell? (3 minutes)
 2. Think about its origins and its journey to arrive here. Write an existential piece from the perspective of the object telling its story. If you wish, you can draw key moments in that journey. Use both the detail provided and your imagination. Why was it created? What was its relation to the earth? Whose hands would it have passed through? What political systems would it have witnessed? What might its original role have been? How do people relate to it now as opposed to before? Does it feel alive or dead? Does it feel like it is fulfilling its purpose or is it cut off from it? Think also of your own questions. (10 minutes)

3. Take a step back and walk again through the collection. Ask yourself “What is a museum?”, “What does this museum make possible in terms of experience, knowledge and memory?”, “What do museums make impossible?”, “Do these objects belong together? If so, how and why?”, “What is the purpose of a museum in relation to the public sphere?”, “What would a world without museums be like?”. “Where might these objects return and what would their ‘experience’ be like in those places now?”.
4. Invite participants to jot notes as they wander. You might like to use tracing paper and pencil to create a little diagram of these ideas with text and image (7 minutes).

Variations: Variations on this in the art gallery or natural environment simply replace these questions with questions relating to the art institution or the natural world. For example, what is nature? What is the relationship between humans and nature? What kinds of experiences, perceptions and feelings do the living beings around and under me have? What would a world without the human be like? Etc.





Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 2: Sensation Exercises

Description:

These exercises are ideally undertaken both inside and outside, encouraging children and young people to 'collect' multiple sensations by moving their bodies and touching other kinds of objects and bodies in ways that may be at odds with ordinary everyday engagement with the world, where we may pay little attention to our surroundings or even our embodied experiences. We sometimes ask students to imagine being a newly born child, or an alien arriving on earth for the first time in order to make the familiar strange. It is important that even if some students don't wish to participate, they don't break the silence or disturb others, so we agree this in advance.

Aims:

These exercises focus on paying attention and 'educating the senses' in order to explore the material world and find affinities, resonances, and connections between diverse material objects and sensations.

Learning Outcomes:

- Cultivation of the ability to sense the body's movements.
- Creative engagement with the material world, making distinctions and finding resonances between different material objects and with one's own body and different kinds of matter.
- Extension of the imagination by exploring the relationship between one's physical body and the earth and world.
- Developing curiosity and interest in the natural world and in the relational qualities of different sensations.

Preparation:

Little preparation is needed other than instructions on the spaces that the students are allowed to move through.

Intended Age Group: From 8 year olds to adult. Particularly suitable for 8-12 year olds.

Duration: 20-25 minutes

Resources: Each participant should be given a piece of paper with the daily instructions.





Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 2: Sensation Exercises

Method:

The following are the 'sensation' exercises. These aim to help students better notice and attend to sensations, materials, the different qualities of matter, and the relations between different kinds of bodies (e.g. hand and stone, flesh and air).

Sensation exercises

Outside

Moving and Breathing Exercise 1: Breathe in slowly, bringing arms up, standing on tiptoe and hold it. Then breathe out slowly returning to a normal stance. Notice the sounds and the touch of the air through your fingers. Repeat as a group five times.

Walking Exercise I: Walking Outside.

Walk very slowly in silence across different surfaces, noticing the different sensations underfoot as you move.

Touching Exercise I: Sensing Outside.

Explore as many different surfaces and textures as you can, in silence. Spend 10-30 seconds on each surface with each point of contact, exploring the sensation of different parts of the hand on different surfaces at different speeds. Listen closely for the different sounds of different surfaces.

Inside

Touching Exercise II: Sensing Inside: Choose a surface: wood/metal/fabric/face/hair or own hand (own skin). Move the palm of your hand, fingertips, back of your hand slowly for ten seconds each. Then make noises by banging or drumming the different objects and see what you can learn about the material from this.

Write: A noun, three adjectives and a verb to describe the experience.

Tips:

If the students start getting giddy, bring them back to silence. Invite them to whisper on the way back to the classroom.

You might give them a card on which they can document their observations. Noting words and sentences can be used to write a collective poem.



Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 3: The Temporary Ethnographer

Description:

This exercise can be modified for different spaces and institutions. It involves building on sensation exercises in order to look on and experience the present through unfamiliar eyes, as though looking through the eyes of a stranger or newcomer. Sometimes, the device of the Martian Anthropologist can also be a useful one to ask question and explore what everyone thinks is 'common sense' or 'obvious' about the way we humans do things, like education or school. These can be modified for all ages.

Aims:

These exercises aim to develop children and young people's capacity for careful observation and discrimination in respect of experience. It builds on Living Values exercises.

Learning Outcomes:

- Enable students to make distinctions between what they see and what they add to this experience through interpretation, comparison, projection, judgement, and fantasies.
- Encourage clarity of observation that can also support clarity of thought and the capacity to make distinctions.

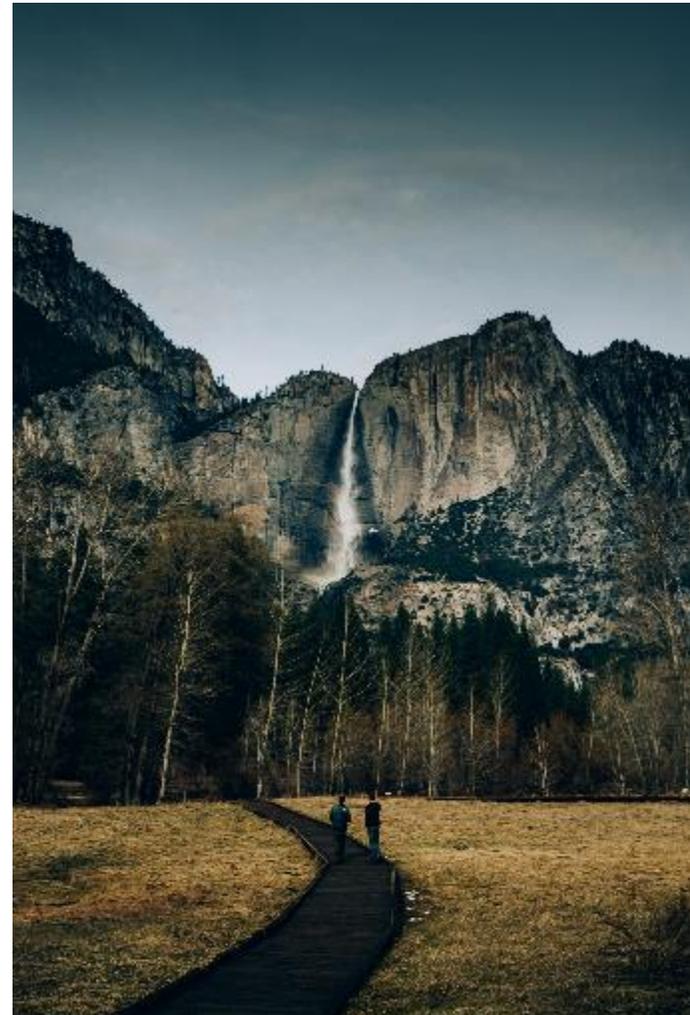
Preparation:

Be clear about the time limit, usually 20-25 minutes and also it helps to create print outs and give clipboards so that students can write. Instructions should be made simple for younger children.

Intended Age Group: From 8 to 18 years.

Duration: 20-25 minutes for each Method.

Resources: Clipboards, A4 paper, A4 cut up into postcard size, pens and pencils.





Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 3: The Temporary Ethnographer

Method 1: Martian Questionnaire

Description: This is an exercise in exploring everyday conventions in schools. It is also a useful way of opening up the wider philosophical questioning. Children can ask one another these questions in pairs. This builds on the Saturnalian classroom.

Martian Anthropologists Investigating Schools on Earth.

Please help us carry out our research. We find schools very confusing and we don't really understand how they work or what they are for. There are so many bells, timetables, sitting up, hands up, screaming in playgrounds but not in classrooms. If you can make further suggestions or can add questions to our survey, that would also help us. Please add diagrams to explain schools to us.

- What happens in schools?
- What are timetables and why do you have them? Do you have timetables for life outside school?
- Why do you keep ringing bells?
- We notice that teachers keep saying you have put up your hands to speak. We don't understand why. What is going on?
- Why do children stay still most of the time whilst teachers move around?
- Why do teachers have comfortable chairs and children have hard wooden chairs?
- Why can't children go for walks and chat when they feel like it?
- Why are boys and girls in classes of same age group?

- Who chooses what subjects are to be studied and why? Is it your Great Leader who decides?
- Why are the classrooms and schools rectangles? Why do schools look the same?
- Why can't you have a sleep when you feel tired?
- Why can't you play if you feel bored?
- Why do you have to sit at a desk?
- Why do you have to move everywhere in lines?
- What are the rules and what happens if you break the rules?
- Why do you all wear the same clothes? Or why do you all wear different clothes?
- Who decides the rules?
- Why do children have to learn things? What would happen if there were no schools?
- Who is allowed to speak?
- Why is everyone busy all the time?
- We notice children change when in different places. Why do children behave differently outside school, inside school and in the playground?
- Who has power in schools? Why? How?

Invite students to extend the questionnaire and generate different questions.



Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 3: The Temporary Ethnographer

Method 2:

i. Leave the museum/gallery/classroom/school and walk outside

Do the following:

- Note the colour of the sky and the temperature
- Note the time and date.
- Note the shapes of the buildings and any decorations or accessories that they are wearing
- Imagine them as ancient (or modern) humans. What are their characters?
- Imagine the many feet, human and non-human, that have walked along this stretch of earth for centuries and millenia.
- Stop and contemplate for one minute.
- If you are a little older, imagine yourself as a small child between two and a half to seven. How would you move through the space?
- As a “scientific experiment”, try a little movement that you might have done then, and see how you feel. If you are younger, imagine yourself as a grown up and imagine how you will move.



ii.

- Then, categorise and group the clothes-wearing-bodies that you see.
- Which ones belong together and which ones don't.
- Try different ways of categorising.
- Observe your responses. Think about your classifications.

iii.

- Then simply watch for five minutes.
- Note the movements and gestures as people, living beings, and objects move through the space, as a choreographer might. On a small postcard.
- Draw the lines of their movement (intuitively). Are they tight, broad, loose, zigzaggy, compressed, flowing, open..?
- Write the adjectives and verbs that come to mind.
- Collect gestures and movements by again noting them in words or image.

iv. (For older children from age 14 and adults)

- Create two columns on your white notecard. Now, as you look at the people around you, ask yourself *What do I see?*
- Each time an assumption, cliché, stereotype, fantasy or imagining comes to mind, jot it down with a brief description of the body in question in a column entitled, *What do I think I see?*, then ask yourself again *What do I see?*
- Note how many times you look away because you don't want to see something.



Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 4: Making Worlds

Description:

These exercises all involve engaging with the space of the gallery or the museum and with the objects in collections or on exhibition. Some of the exercises will be more suited to older students, but can be modified for younger groups. They are drawn from workshops in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin and the Hunt Museum, Limerick.

Aims:

To invite imaginative first encounters with collections and exhibitions.

Learning Outcomes:

- Cultivate capacity for creative and imaginative engagement with exhibitions.
- Develop multi-modal responses to exhibitions.

Intended Age Group: 12 years to adult.

Duration: Varies from 15-45 minutes.

Resources: Prepare slips with lines of poetry to be chosen at random.
Offer clipboards with different sizes of paper and a pencil for engagement with the collection.
Array of potatoes.

Preparation:

- Ensure students understand how to move through spaces in collections in line with museum or gallery policies. Ensure they know not to touch the objects, unless there is notification that they can. Ask them to be considerate of other visitors and to try to do the exercises alone and in silence for the first few minutes.
- Ask students to bring to the gallery/museum an everyday object that matters to them or is significant in some way in their lives.





Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 4: Making Worlds

Method :

Task 1: Pockets and Poetry - *Discovering the Collection.*

- Walk through the museum. Allow an object to choose you. Stay with it for 5 minutes in silence.
- Each participant will be given a line of poetry. Find an object or space in the museum that “speaks” to your line of poetry.
- Bring your everyday object with you as you walk through the museum. Find another object in the collection that, for some reason, either resonates or disagrees, with your object. Imagine the conversation they might have.

Share if you wish.

Task 2: The Human Figure - *Making Worlds*

- As you walk and listen to or read the stories of objects, imagine the hands that made each piece. What life might that person have led? What might they have been thinking, hoping or imagining?
- Imagine the world, the landscape, this land on which we stand as it was then at the time the piece was created.
- Imagine mapping the museum’s collection of objects in terms of their lives as lived and the events and worlds that they have witnessed.
- Silently imagine what each object might say about its experiences.

Task 3: An Everyday Object – *Fantasies and Identities (with thanks to Nadia Mousse)*

This exercise should take place in a different room. This time participants do not bring a special object but instead explore how very ordinary and everyday objects can quickly become ‘special’ once stories (and fantasies) are woven around it. They should explore the politics of identity and possession. They should also notice what it means to notice carefully even everyday objects.

- Ask each participant to choose a potato (or familiar vegetable). Invite them to study it carefully through all the senses, and then to imagine its story.
- In small groups, students should tell one another the story of their own potato.
- After they have done so, ask students to place the potato back in the pile. Note if they have become attached to ‘their own potato’.
- Return to group discussion about the experience. Try to unpack the projections, the fantasies, the stories of what was, up to then, a very ordinary vegetable. Explore with them how identities are created and take life as we imagine certain kinds of differences, and the way in which ownership works.
- After this discussion, ask them to return to the pile and find their own potato.

Variations:

These first two exercises can also be undertaken in very different places from schools, to shopping centres, to parks and playgrounds.



Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 5: Autobiography of an Object

Description:

This exercise is particularly effective in gallery or museum settings with older children who can move autonomously through the space, or with families. Building on the sensation exercises, which ask children to explore the qualities of matter through the senses, here the imagination is extended to the story of the object. Diverse and complex cultural and faith traditions can be bridged through acts of fiction and the imagination by writing, in the first person, the story of the chosen object. This exercise asks the person to pay careful attention and to become curious about the object before them, or the object that has chosen them. It is developed through a series of extension activities. This can also be a wonderful way to curate the space of the school 'otherwise', placing objects in different spaces, perhaps accompanied by their autobiographies, avatars, and titles.

Aims:

'The autobiography of an object' aims to create interest and curiosity by engaging the senses in an act of storytelling. Here students are asked to pay careful attention to one particular thing and to imagine its journey through its 'life'.

Learning Outcomes:

- A sense of connection with the long history of humankind and appreciation for cultural artefacts.
- Interest in the materiality of things, both everyday things and those deemed to be special.
- Engaging the sympathetic imagination, de-centring the self and exploring the worlds of other things.
- Fostering the capacity for playful, experimental engagement by imagining oneself into another kind of being.

Intended Age Group:

From 8 years old to adult.

Duration:

Depending on the site and engagement with the extension activities, 40-80 minutes

Resources:

Flashcards, Pens, Plain plasticine (ideally white), Title cards.

Objects, brought by the children, in the gallery space, or discovered in the space of the school.

Preparation:

Children should engage in the sensation exercises prior to beginning so that they have a good sense of the different qualities of matter and some understanding of their geneses and transformation. All children should have access to an object of some kind as a prompt for the exercise. Clear instructions, in particular in relation to the autobiographical dimension – writing in the first person – is essential.

You may suggest for a school-based exercise that students "choose a non-living object (that will fit in your schoolbag) that you think has had an interesting history and has a story to tell. Bring that object into class. (Remember, non-living means not your dog, cat, goldfish or little brother or sister.)"

It can also be useful if there is a lead in to the session to ask the students to do the following in preparation. The instructions can be simplified for younger children.

Preparation continued overleaf



Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 5: Autobiography of an Object

Preparation continued:

Task 1: Choose an (inanimate) object that you would normally pass by. Pay attention to it for a minimum of 1 minute every day.

Day 1: Explore it through all the senses, in particular touch and vision. Move closer and further away... Touch with the fingertips and the back of the hand.. Write a noun and three adjectives to describe the experience.

Day 2: What kinds of movements does it involve? How does it hold itself? Everything has lines, movements, and rhythms. Look at the plates in your kitchen, the doors, light switches, ladders.. (Don't over-think this.) Just look and notice how different things move and express themselves (the wall is very upright, solid and no nonsense). Write a couple of lines describing these objects, and also noting what else comes to mind. (Light switches as quite closed, inflexible beings, they are binary (either on or off), and quite 'tight' with little room for negotiation.) Please be silly and/or imaginative with this exercise.

Day 3: If your object could speak, what would it say, and to whom or what? Two lines. Again, silliness and imagination most welcome.





Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 5: Autobiography of an Object

Task 2: This may be more suitable for age 12+.

Listen to an example from *Living with the gods*.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09c1mhy>

Over the course of the week, locate an object that is an important part of a daily tradition or ritual, perhaps one unfamiliar to you, but about which you would like to learn more in order to understand it. This could be something that you see as either negative or positive. Spend a short time researching or wondering about this object and thinking about its role in the lives of those for whom it may be important. You might like to share some of this with the wider group as we reflect on ritual. This could be a domestic object, something connected with politics, work or faith... really anything goes..

Task 3:

Resonance: *Space 1:* Gallery or Museum space.

Walk through the museum/gallery. Find something (part of the collection/exhibition or in the space) that for some reason resonates with you. Stay with it in silence for five minutes, simply paying attention.

Task 4:

Experiment in Curation: *Space 2:* Classroom/School.

Bring an object that can fit in your pocket that you find interesting, in some way. If you've forgotten to bring something, then dig out something from your bag.

Place your object in different ways and on different parts of your body. Imagine placing it in different areas of the school where it might look a bit strange. Try out different ways of helping your audience to see the object anew.





Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 5: Autobiography of an Object

Task 5: Object as Witness and Agent:

Imagine that not only can you feel your object, it can feel you. How do you think it would feel? What has it experienced?

For both the object in both Task 4 and Task 5, imagine its story and begin to write its autobiography in the first person: fiction is fine. This can be modified and simplified for younger children. The following questions should be shared, ideally individually printed. Make clear that the questions should inspire the writing rather than be answered in a linear manner.

- What are my origins (material and otherwise?)
- Have I changed identity?
- Where did I come from?
- Where have I been?
- Was I loved?
- Whose hands did I pass through?
- How do I feel about being encased, exhibited, or my current situation? How do I feel about these other objects with whom I now live?
- With which other objects do I feel most affinity?
- What are my values?
- What are my favourite rituals?
- How would I like to affect the humans who come to see me?
- What are my hopes and dreams?

Recount this autobiography like an animation or cartoon using text and/or image on a flashcard. You may wish to include drawings or just stick with text. All these different elements can be developed into individual or collaborative poems.

Making Activities: Instructions

Once you have your flashcard with your object's story, build your own exhibition with your objects. Create three activity stations and a space to exhibit the works created.

DRAW: elements of your object on tracing paper for 30 seconds each time, looking at different angles in detail (like a Cubist artist). When you have done 4 or 5 layers, write a message to make someone smile in the future (what would make you smile?). Then decide how you will display this artwork. Will you crumple it, throw it, hide it away, store it somewhere, display it on the wall?

SCULPT: Create a sculpture of your object or add the object to the plasticine to create a sculptural assemblage with your object. Or use it to join your object with others to create a community. (Only distribute small amounts of plasticine as part of the discipline.)

WRITE: Make up a title/label for your object – how will you choose to display your object, where would you put it in a gallery? Would it be hidden or obvious? Place all our objects together on a table.

Tips:

With these exercises, children, young people and adults often need some initial support, modelling and encouragement to be silly, imaginative and experimental. Treat it like an “art crit” and explore ideas together. It's helpful to have another adult in the room.



Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 6: Thinking Visually

Description:

These exercises are drawn from Visual Thinking Strategies (or VTS) developed by Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawin <https://vtshome.org/about/> and from the Harvard project “See, Think, Wonder..” <http://pz.harvard.edu/resources/see-think-wonder-at>, in particular the approach developed by Jenny Siung (Chester Beatty Library). They ask students to engage collectively with a single image, object or art work, supported only by formal prompts. The nature of the exercise means that this can be a helpful way to initially broach difficult themes. Here contemporary artworks that deal with difficult, violent, tragic, or controversial themes, including slavery, colonialism, the refugee crisis, populism, racism, Islamophobia, can enable first responses based on observation that keep the responses relatively “impartial” in line with “What do I see? What do I notice?”. These artworks generally hold sufficient ambiguity to enable multiple responses. This can then open into other exercises and conversations such as philosophical enquiry, perhaps by initially working with concepts and then generating questions.

Aims:

To encourage students to engage with artworks and museum objects, including sacred objects, and to show how this engagement also reveals their own prior knowledge and imaginative capacities. To also enable students to engage with artworks and objects that deal with difficult content.

Learning Outcomes:

- Cultivate skills of careful observation, comparison, and noticing.
- Support oral language skills, higher order and philosophical questioning, and collaborative thinking.
- Deepen wonder and curiosity in respect of a range of secular and sacred objects, and artworks.

Intended Age Group:

8 years to adult.

Duration:

20 minutes to 2 hours.

Resources:

For Task 2, provide coloured images of individual artworks and provide pens and paper.

Preparation:

- If in gallery spaces, ensure students understand how to move through spaces in collections in line with museum or gallery policies. Ensure they know not to touch the objects, unless there is notification that they can.
- You will need to work with images, objects or installations that allow for group perception and responses.
- For Task 2, divide into groups of three and distribute images.





Encountering the World (the aesthetic)

Exercise 6: Thinking Visually

Method:

Task 1: Visual Thinking Strategy

Gather children and young people around an image if in a museum or gallery. If in the classroom, ask them to pay attention to the image. In both cases, ask for silent observation for a short period of time in order to carefully look at and experience the image/object.

Once they have spent some time observing, the facilitator takes the following approach: *She remains neutral but interested, open, and attentive. She paraphrases, is physically expressive in pointing, and mirrors back, making connections. "What I hear you saying is..", "Who haven't we heard from..?", "It seems that..". Can we answer that by looking? (Steer clear of pure speculation and fantasy). Encourage all students to offer some observation, and to build on one another's responses.*

The method is as follows:

Step 1: All look at image in silence for 2-3 minutes

Step 2: What's going on in this picture?

Step 3: What do you see that makes you say that?

Step 4: What more can we find?



Task 2: See, Think, Wonder..

- Print images of objects within a collection or exhibition that you would like students to observe and respond to.
- Divide into groups of three, give each one an image, and give them different roles such as scribe, clarifier, or presenter.
- Each group spends 10-15 minutes discussing the object based on the simple prompts.

Step 1: What do I see? What do I notice?

Step 2: What do I think about what I see?

Step 3: What do I wonder?

Each group presents to the whole group. A variation on this exercise is to focus on only one artwork or image. Facilitator affirms and encourages their interpretations and responses.

Going Deeper: Further Exercises:

- **Storytelling:** It can then help to have expert input on the object/artwork, enabling students to contextualise it and to notice different elements. This dimension builds well on the initial observations and students may have further questions.
- **Philosophical Enquiry:** Students can be encouraged to generate concepts in response to the work and to generate questions that matter. VTS and See, Think, Wonder are excellent exercises to build into philosophical enquiry sessions.

Key Theoretical References Encountering the World



- Avery, G. (2008) *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bhabha, H. (1994) *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Franke, A. (2012) 'Notes on an exhibition', <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/36/61258/animism-notes-on-an-exhibition/>
- Greene, M. (1995) *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts and Social Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Haraway, D. (2015) 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin', *Environmental Humanities*, 6, pp. 159-65.
<http://environmentalhumanities.org/arch/vol6/6.7.pdf>
- Harvard University, <http://pz.harvard.edu/resources/see-think-wonder-at>
- Himid, L. 'What are Monuments for?'
<http://clock.uclan.ac.uk/5086/1/What%20are%20monuments%20for%20.pdf>
and <https://vimeo.com/22938970>
- Latour, B. (1991) *We have never been modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. <https://theparliamentofthings.org/into-latour/>
- Manacorda, F. (2012) 'Monuments or Documents' <http://saltonline.org/en/268/talk-by-francesco-manacorda>
- Margalit, A. (2003) *The Ethics of Memory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Oury, J. with Reggio, D. and Nouvello, M. (2007) 'The Hospital is Ill: An interview with Jean Oury', *Radical Philosophy*, 143, pp.32-46.
- Rice, A. (2012) *Creating Memorials, Building Identities: The Politics of Memory in the Black Atlantic*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Serres, M. (1995) *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Stengers, I. (2012) 'Reclaiming animism' <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/36/61245/reclaiming-animism/>
- Taussig, M. (2012) 'The stories things tell and why they tell them'. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/36/61256/the-stories-things-tell-and-why-they-tell-them/>

Resources

Visual Thinking Strategies <https://vtshome.org/>

Chester Beatty Library Resources <https://chesterbeatty.ie/learning/resources-for-educators/>



Project Resources

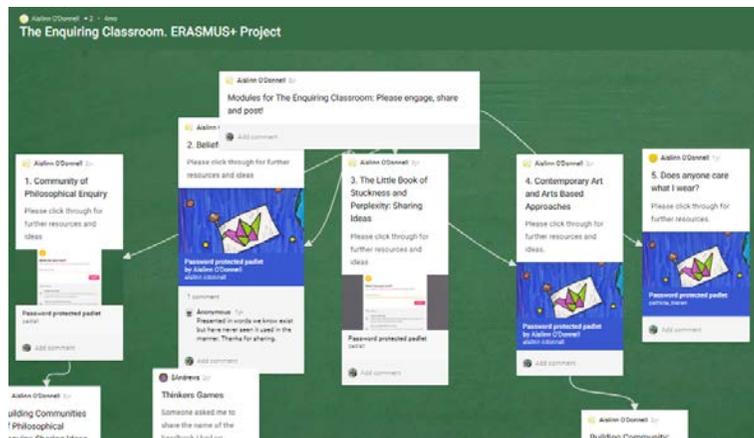
Project Resources



HOME THE PROJECT PARTNERS STRANDS TRAINING SCHOOLS OUTPUTS NEWS AND EVENTS



The Enquiring Classroom project seeks to develop strategies to support teachers and students in engaging in difficult ethical conversations about identity, religions and beliefs, democratic values, diversity, belonging and violence, in order to establish a firm foundation for inclusive and tolerant schools and classrooms.



Website

<http://www.enquiring-project.eu/>

Log on to our website to find all our downloadable resources and links to all online platforms.

Padlet

Please visit our Padlet boards. These provide a visual guide to our methodologies and we actively encourage engagement and participation.

<https://padlet.com/aislinnjodonnell/enquiringclassroom>

Password: Enquiry

Social Media Channels

Facebook: [facebook.com/EnquiringClassroom/](https://www.facebook.com/EnquiringClassroom/)

Twitter: twitter.com/EnquiringClass

Open Discovery Space

Visit The Enquiring Classroom online hub in the Open Discovery Space Online Community:

<https://portal.opendiscoveryspace.eu/en/community/enquiring-classroom-846694>

Teachers Academy: <https://portal.opendiscoveryspace.eu/en/topic-courses/enquiring-classroom-academy>



Project Team

Project Team



Aislinn O'Donnell

Aislinn O'Donnell is Professor of Education in Maynooth University. Aislinn has developed a number of creative research and teaching projects that seek to introduce philosophy to settings like the prison, probation projects, and drug projects. She has an ongoing collaborative project in primary schools called Art and Philosophy in the Classroom with gallery educator and curator, Katy Fitzpatrick and was a founding member of Philosophy Ireland. Aislinn is interested in exploring innovative and experimental approaches to teaching philosophy, fostering cross-disciplinary dialogue between philosophy and other subject areas, such as contemporary art, and developing pedagogical strategies to help us to reflect upon ethics, inclusion, pluralism, and the global refugee crisis in educational institutions and society.
<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/people/aislinn-odonnell>



Patricia Kieran

Patricia Kieran teaches Education about Religions and Beliefs at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Ireland. She is keenly interested in inter-belief dialogue and her current research focuses on the manner in which learners might explore deeply personal, complex and sensitive issues surrounding religions and beliefs in a multi-belief context. Her work focuses on teaching creatively, using religious artefacts in the classroom to explore complex religious themes, and on the representation of religions and beliefs in curricular programs. She has been a visiting ICUSTA Scholar to the University of Saint Thomas in Texas, USA and has published a number of books on religious pluralism in educational practice as well as inter-religious dialogue and Theology in an intercultural context.

Project Team



Lovisa Bergdahl

Lovisa Bergdahl is Associate Professor of education. She is currently conducting the research project "Lived Values: a pedagogical-philosophical groundworking of the value basis of Swedish schools" financed by the Swedish Research Council (2015-2019). The project focuses on what has become of values education in the knowledge society and its overall aim is to seek out an educational language for the formative task of schools. Bergdahl is particularly interested in the value conflicts that arise in schools in postsecular liberal democratic societies and the pedagogical questions that these tensions seem to generate for teachers and students in the classroom.



Elisabet Langmann

Elisabet Langmann is Assistant Professor of education at Södertörn University, Sweden. Placing educational practice and philosophical and aesthetical explorations at the center of her work, her research is situated within the field of ethics and values education. Langmann is particularly interested in developing innovative and creative approaches to fostering values in schools, and in seeking out affirmative ways of engaging in difficult ethical discussions in the multicultural classroom. She is currently working in the research project "Lived Values: a pedagogical-philosophical groundworking of the value basis of Swedish schools".

Project Team



Stephanos Cherouvis

Stephanos Cherouvis has a background in Linguistics and Philosophy of Science and a long interest in open access (OERs) and technology-enhanced education. He has been involved in the implementation and research of online community building initiatives in education, in the framework of large-scale Horizon 2020 & Erasmus+ initiatives (Open Discovery Space, Inspiring Science Education, CREATIONS). He is a cautious enthusiast about the role of social media in education and all things human.



Rachel Ryan

Rachel Ryan in her administrative role as The Enquiring Classroom Project Officer in Mary Immaculate College has used her skills gained working within the marketing advertising industry to design and create materials used for dissemination and publicity within this project. Rachel graduated with a B.Sc. in Multimedia with Computer and Design and has a special interest in information design and usability in both online and traditions formats.

Acknowledgments



This project has been funded under ERASMUS+ Key Action 2. We are enormously grateful for the opportunity and support we have received from all members involved in ERASMUS+ at a national and European level.



Acknowledgements

With thanks to Mary Collins for her help and support since the earliest conceptualisation of the project. With thanks to Triena Delaney for supporting the project over a key period of the project. A very special thanks to Rachel Ryan for the stellar work that she has done throughout the project, in particular through project design, training and summer school support and reporting. Her imagination, skills, enthusiasm, and energy were vital to the success of the project, and she went far beyond the call of duty.

With thanks to all of our partners, participants, and the different organisations and agencies who have engaged with and supported our work, with particular thanks to the Chester Beatty Library (Dublin) and the Hunt Museum (Limerick) for hosting the Irish training schools. Thanks to our universities and school that have provided such a positive atmosphere of support through the project.

Finally many thanks to Erasmus+ for funding the project and Léargas for their vital help, advice and interest through the project.

Disclaimer:

This document reflects the views of the authors and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



THE ENQUIRING CLASSROOM



The Enquiring Classroom methodologies have been developed in collaboration with teachers and other educators. It is underpinned by a philosophy of education that has developed through this engagement. This re-articulates the relationship between values, democracy and education. The Enquiring Classroom's creative pedagogical strategies are designed to engage teachers and students in thinking and talking about the rich stories of our common world, the pluralistic nature of life and society, the existential dimensions of the human condition, and the values that hold us. By being clear about the norms and values that govern educational spaces, it can become easier to navigate difficult conversations, including those about identity, colonialism, ethics, values, religions and beliefs, diversity, belonging and violence. Educational spaces involve 'putting matters on the table' in an educational way. Through culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogies, students are invited to bring their life-worlds into educational spaces, and teachers are encouraged to see this as part of the cultural and educational richness of classroom and school life. By also asking students to face historic and contemporary injustices and conflicts, educational spaces can also become spaces in which we come to understand why the world is how it is and imagine how it might be otherwise. Each new generation can thus come to take on the task of reimagining and renewing our common world.



This project has been funded by ERASMUS+ KA2.
Project Number: - 2016-2-KA201-016892



ΕΛΛΗΝΟΓΕΡΜΑΝΙΚΗ
ΑΓΩΓΗ