*Aesthetic education and social networks: Cultivating receptive attention in adolescents*

**EXPANDED SUMMARY**

Marie-Pierre Labrie

Tradução de Alexandra Martin

**Introduction**

The hyperconnectivity in which adolescents evolve has a significant impact on the forms that take their social presence and their attention to content available on social networks, and by extension, to artworks that may be shared on these platforms. Aesthetic appreciation, which requires time and receptive attention, can represent a challenge in such a context. This article examines this issue based on a doctoral study (Labrie, 2024). It sets out a theoretical framework around the notions of connected copresence, attention, education of the glance and pedagogical *détournement*. Then, it proposes the analysis of a narrative of appreciation activities that took place in visual and media art classrooms at secondary schools in Quebec. Based on this narrative, pedagogical perspectives that enhance intersubjectivity, differentiated attention, and the processual nature of copresence for educating the glance are identified.

**Development**

The article first outlines theoretical landmarks, repositioning definitions of connected copresence, presence, and attention as respectively perceptual, processual, and collective phenomena (Grabher *et al.*, 2018; Licoppe, 2012; Citton, 2014). Interconnected through social networks, individuals are influenced by algorithmic dynamics and operate under a regime of hyperattention (Hayles, 2007); online content that only slightly captures interest is less likely to be seen (Citton, 2014). It thus becomes crucial to educate attention toward singular artworks in this context of hyperconnectivity. Domenech (2023) suggests considering pedagogical guidance toward a form of differentiated attention, enabling them to experience deeper encounters with artworks in a more collective way. The author also emphasizes raising students’ awareness on contemporary art. This study focuses particularly on directing them toward digital contemporary artworks (Manovich, 2017). The pedagogical *détournement* of a social network is proposed to support the processual and collective phenomenon of intersubjectivity (Astier, 2012). This strategy encourages students to think for themselves, to critique the network as a system, and to share and engage in dialogue with the rest of the group.

The study was conducted through design-based research (McKenney & Reeves, 2019), which involved designing and implementing a pedagogical intervention focused on the *détournement* of a social network to support artmaking and aesthetic appreciation. Led with four groups of students and two teachers in visual and media art classes at the secondary level in Quebec, the intervention took place during the pandemic period in 2020 and 2021, requiring distance learning and intensifying hyperconnectivity.

Next, the narrative of the appreciation activities is analyzed based on previously established theoretical framework and connected to testimonies from both students and teachers. It explores the various artworks and art practices presented to students and examines their logical integration into an appreciation-centered learning process aimed at educating the glance in the post-digital era. It also underscores the articulation between these appreciation activities and the discussions held with students regarding their use of social network. During the appreciation activities, the notion of *détournement* is first introduced through iconic works that embody its principles (*Fontaine*, 1917, by Marcel Duchamp; *La Joconde est dans les escaliers*, 1969, by Robert Filliou). Then, artists' practices (Nadia Vadori-Gauthier; Stephen Mueller) woven into the very dynamics of networks are highlighted and discussed with the teenagers. These practices reveal ways of transforming connected platforms into genuine spaces of shared humanity through art. Finally, works addressing the notion of presence (The Artist is Present, 2010, Marina Abramovic) and connected copresence (The Artist is Kinda Present, 2010, An Xiao) are proposed for appreciation and discussion. The analysis suggests that online teaching adds a challenge to students’ attention to these works and to in-depth pedagogical engagement. However, these sensitive artworks appear to have had an impact on some students’ understanding of altered presence in the age of hyperconnectivity.

The results present certain limitations, as the study originally focused more specifically on digital artmaking within social networks. Nonetheless, perspectives highlighting the potential of such appreciation activities can be pointed out to promote an attentive aesthetic experience. Intersubjectivity, essential for profound appreciation, was limited by online teaching. However, this intersubjectivity did emerge during the artmaking activities in the social network, suggesting that a focus on more structured discussions and questioning strategies could foster more substantial dialogue about the artworks and among students. Furthermore, integrating appreciation moments as a central part of the creative experience highlighted post-digital, relational, and conceptual artworks. This likely contributed to a shift in ways of seeing (« *conversion du regard »*, Domenech, 2023), introducing a different conception of art through practices of *détournement*. Offered **opportunities to underscore the relevance of these artworks were experienced as meaningful moments. These appear to be relevant conditions that could stimulate differentiated attention. Lastly, the pedagogical device set up in a closed social network** helped direct students’ attention toward artworks that typically fall outside the usual content of adolescents’ newsfeeds, prompting discussions about their practices on social networks. In this sense, the appreciation activities contributed to transforming the experience into a process that went far beyond informal browsing on social connected platforms.

**Conclusion**

The practices of adolescents developed in the post-digital era are profoundly reshaping the way we approach education. Aesthetic education must be central to the reflections of educators and researchers, to explore pathways that bring adolescents closer to genuine, attentive, and receptive aesthetic experience, fostering deeper and more critical thinking about the world they navigate[[1]](#footnote-1).

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1. English translation from French by Alexandra Martin, research officer at Laboratoire 1P1, Université du Québec à Montréal. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)