

One object ...many images!



This is a simple, introductory activity referring to the semantic elements around a pictured object and the corresponding intervention by the film director who creates the picture. It also introduces the concepts of documentation and of the target audience of a media text. Young participants may become aware of the various interpretations which result from photographing the same object in different contexts and may further realize the significance of background details in a picture.

Material needs: one simple still camera or tablet/smart phone for each group, projector or laptop to screen materials. A color printer can be useful for printing the final photos for an on-wall exhibition.

Step by step procedure: The group is divided in smaller groups, each of which chooses a common, everyday object which they will have to photograph in five different ways:

FIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SAME OBJECT!

1. 'The object as we usually see it'. At this point, several topics that are worth discussing within each group is how they usually see this object, what does this object mean to the majority of people, and how these implicit (unseen) meanings can be translated into an image. Intuitively young participants realize that since they express their own personal opinions, they are actually expressing their own 'truth' and that recording 'reality' is actually reflection of what they consider as reality.

2. 'The object as we would never see it', resulting in a nonsensical/absurd image and illustrating obvious semantic and fictional interventions. Participants will create a nonrealistic image, one which, although can be entertaining, cannot be related to any sense of 'reality' and 'truth'.

3. 'The object as a dominant element of a social interaction'. Participants will create a second realistic image in which people also take part. Each small group will consider how is their object used, who may use it and in what social context. Also how will all these be shown in one picture.

4. 'The object as a main character of a fairy-tale', resulting in a second fictional image. Again, this is an opportunity to create a non-realistic image which will have to be implicitly consistent to some kind of narrative. Here again, the creator's role is explicit.

5. 'The object as a product being advertised', resulting in an image which belongs to the virtual 'reality' of the advertising universe. Each group will consider questions like:

- Who are the potential buyers that we would like to convince?
- What setting will best depict the product? (e.g. where, possible human presence, props, etc.).
- What will be in the background?



Creating each particular picture, the groups will have to shoot a number of photographs and then discuss and decide which of these best expresses their intentions. Also a short discussion may take place regarding how their chosen object is different from one picture to another. This process of reflection, arguing and decision making often can be more important than the actual activity of shooting!

Next follows an activity of realizing the importance of audience's reactions. The purpose is to provide participants with the opportunity to realize the potential interpretations and reactions of an audience:

We usually do this on a projected slide show and participants express their opinion. Then of course if we want to engage a bigger audience we may exhibit each group's images on a wall or uploaded as a whole to some kind of a platform inviting other young participants (audience) to identify and reflect on each theme. The five pictures, printed or uploaded, should be presented **in random order**. A number (1-5) should be assigned below each image-theme. The educator/participants will also need to prepare a separate 'answer sheet', i.e. a form on which the five image topics are listed in random order, for example:

Each object is represented in five different images. Please identify each image, marking the number of the image next to the suitable theme as listed below:

PICTURED OBJECT: (group.....)

- The object represented 'as a product being advertised' is shown in picture number
- The object represented 'as we usually see it' is shown in picture number
- The object represented 'as a dominant element of a social interaction' is shown in picture number
- The object represented 'as we would never see it' is shown in picture number
- The object represented 'as a main character-protagonist of a fairy-tale' is shown in picture number

Hopefully as many participants as possible will respond and each of the groups will collect the answers related to their chosen objects and will check whether their fellow-audience correctly identified the themes and the corresponding

images. If wrong answers are given for some images, the photographers will then have a discussion among themselves in order to identify the specific elements in the pictures that might have confused the audience.

Hints for facilitators / Comments:

- Throughout the activity discussion doesn't have to be sophisticated; participants simply need to reflect on the specific elements that differentiate the five images, given that the same object appears in all of them.
- Through the repetition of the activity, participants will become more aware of the theoretical problems involved in photographing an object. For example, what elements of the object should the image depict? Who will decide whether these elements or some others will better reflect the object's characteristics? How could these elements be highlighted during the photo shooting? How will the object be better placed? How will the background contribute to the intended result? How will the lighting be arranged? What will the dominant colours in the image be?
- Furthermore, participants could also bring to the group paintings of objects and/or photographic representations of objects, which could be analyzed in detail based on the criteria discussed or drawn from the young participants' own creative experience.

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