



The Interactive Book, a personal experience

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Reference

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Abstract

Illustrated books and visual activities/experiences are tools that help children's growth up without frustrations, through the education of sight and touch. Within the universe of illustrated books the object-book or interactive book explore the language of arts by creating a visual narrative. From the "Pre-books" to the "unreadable books" by Bruno Munari (1981), where the support is exploited to the limit; the "blank books" and "space books" of Kveta Pacovská, creating architectural spaces through color and volume; game books like "O Cavaleiro Coragem!" by Delphine Chedru that allow the reader to go back in the story and create different narratives; quarterly notebooks by Calouste Gulbenkian Museum "Viva ao Museu" and the magazines "Aprender a Olhar", use short stories for the reader to understand and analyze the works of portuguese and foreign artists through games and activities proposed for reflection, interpretation and creation; games/activities like the creations of Mon Petit Art, Djeco, Mini Labo where the child can explore the three-dimensionality and the game of make-believe; among others. All these references are products of visual and tactile experience, full of stimulations for the children to be able to explore and communicate, linking the two-dimensional to the three-dimensional, the rule and the randomness, shape and "no shape".

We intend to approach this hybrid concept of book (illustrated/interactive) with a wide perspective since we have come to see that there is an increasing openness to this kind of edition. In fact, you can find this type of book, both in the section of child and adult, in any bookstore. In his article for the Revue Annuelle de la Bibliothèque de Caen, TIRELIVRE, the editor of "MØTUS" considers the success of these products (object-book or interactive book) is due to its reprint or republication. We illustrate our study with portuguese examples of successful interactive books such as Orpheu Mini books "Dias felizes, um imaginário para ler" by Moreau and Laurent and "Caderno de pintura para aprender as cores" by Pascale Estellon. Books that escape the traditional coloring book plan due to the richness of its images. Another example is Planeta Tangerina with the graphical album "Todos fazemos tudo" by Madalena Matoso where the illustrations speak for themselves, without text, where the reader plays with the pages and creates new characters.

It is our aim to confirm the adjustment of these proposals to the National Curriculum for Basic Education, where the skills to be worked include, among others: the ability to manipulate and experiment with different materials, shapes and colors, development of personal ways of expressing and representing reality, developing dexterity and his aesthetic sensibility.

Keywords

Interactivity, experience, expression and graphic/plastic manipulation.



Introduction

In what concerns children's literature, illustration is a tool to assist the learning of reading and writing. This fact is considered by the Portuguese National Reading Plan as it provides a list of books organized by levels, following a criterion of progress taking into account age, stage of development and characteristics of the child. The purpose is that the child achieves the competence of an experienced reader following a path with several steps. In the first level the illustration is a support to the simple text presenting the book in a suggestive and entertaining manner. Looking at the books for children and for first readings, illustration occupies a prominent place where the visual language corresponds exactly to the subject that is treated in verbal language (Ministério de Educação, 2006). When the child becomes a skilled reader the illustration starts to decrease the reinforcement of the verbal language, as a complement or illumination, and the image is gradually removed from the book. This leads to a situation where the scarce illustration that exists is not always explored or worked to stimulate all the senses of the reader.

This project intends to investigate and explore the role played by interactive books in the development of skills and competencies of the child allowing a deeper understanding of the object, the book. The investigation was based on official documents of the Portuguese Ministry of Education (Plano Nacional de Leitura, Orientações para Atividades de Leitura and Currículo Nacional do Ensino Básico), in the history of the book and particularly the children's book, thesis and studies on the impact of the illustration, picture books, illustrated albums and art in the child's progress.

As a result of this study, we created a theoretical that will allow us to design a prototype of a book for a children's book containing an illustrated story with activities and fun games. It is our intention to involve the reader by enabling him to conduct games and other activities, so that he also becomes the creator, author/illustrator of the book, complementing it, producing a unique and personal object. In such book the reader/writer will be encouraged to develop skills such as reading, writing, drawing, painting, cutting, etc.

Illustration, book and experience

The picture book has evolved due, mainly, to the needs of its readers. In the sixteenth century specifically literature for children was rare and the existing one was related to education, moral and religious teachings. The use of the image is reported as a tool or utensil of value to the student of the XVI century:

"We have a fairly large body of information, including citations by Sahagun's informants, that indicates that painted books and recitation of verse were major parts of education. As teaching tools the books were probably used to engrave myth and history, in a form that could be internally visualized in the minds of students. Their purpose, then, was not to remind readers of things they might otherwise forget, but to help make those things unforgettable. The brilliant and simple colors, the decisive black frame line, the striking clarity of icons, and the vibrant paratactic compositions - the basic qualities of indigenous style - are perfectly suited to this purpose. Students would embed innumerable myths, histories, genealogies, prayers, etc. in verse form in their minds along with the visual images in the books. The words and images need not have explained or commented on each other - each may have balanced, complemented, or extended the other, and each probably gave the student something the other couldn't." (Young, 2000: 27)

The recognition of the power of image as support for education and learning was strengthened in the seventeenth century by the theologian, philosopher and educator Czech Jan Amos Comenius in his work "Orbis Pictus". This book describes a visible world with drawings to teach Latin, which many refer to as the first didactic book illustrated for children. "La presencia de las imágenes en los libros destinados a los niños posee una larga tradición que se remonta al Orbis Pictus de Comenius publicado en 1658." (Bajour e Carranza, 2005). By that time the illustration was passive and corresponded exactly to the text, merely to describe or inform through the design, color, texture the information of verbal language. The big change, describes Burlingham (1997), occurred in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when texts on education by authors as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau started to emerge, reflecting the needs of children and their learning. Books like the pocket book "A Little Pretty Pocket Book" by John Newbery, 1744; or Charles Perrault's, 1697, "Histoires or contes du temps passé" which contains



the earliest written versions of Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Little Red Riding Hood, Bluebeard and Puss in Boots, were the first stories written specifically for children; or even the popular books by Lothar Meggendorfer, 1880, considered the creator of the mobile toy book and the three-dimensional book.



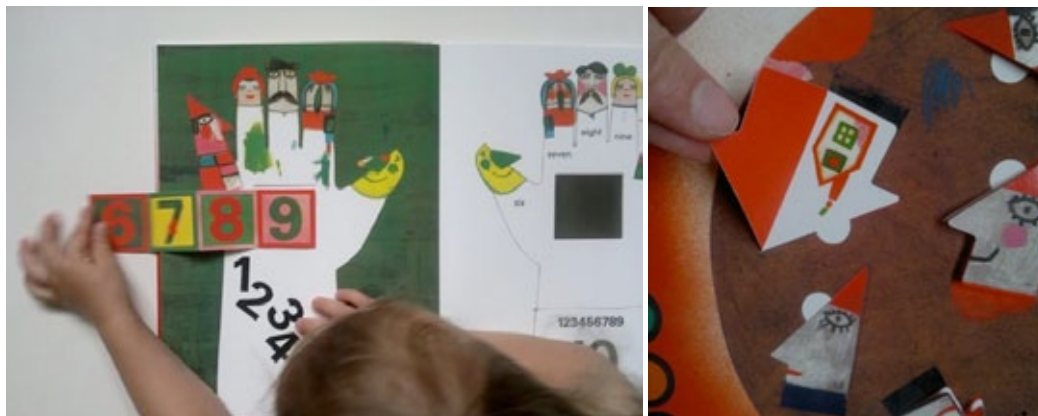
Figure 1. Lothar Meggendorfer, Grand Cirque International (1890).Pop-ups.

This last author invented and produced books with movable figures, where the pop-up recreates the three-dimensionality of a circus or a house, all through ingenious mechanical devices created for fun and to overcome the imagination of the reader.

It is not until the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the new theories of child development, an increasingly literate society associated with the technological advances in book production relatively cheaper and faster printing processes, that a demand for books, in particular books for entertainment, began. A new market emerges - the book for children - books with shapes, structures, objectives and different functions such as book-game, pop-ups, illustrated stories, picture books, interactive books, among others.

This genre of books, with its two languages, text and image, is often presented as a stimulus for children to learn, speak and read. The literature allows the children to know and understand their native language to communicate with the world; illustration ceases to be a decorative element or a complement to the text, and assumes the function of illuminating the narrative, not translated nor explained, but recreating it and completing it. "Enquanto, tradicionalmente, o texto e a ilustração se moviam em planos paralelos, sendo que respectivamente um contava a história e o outro a ilustrava, hoje assistimos a uma fusão dessas duas formas de linguagem." (Rodrigues, 2009:3)

The illustrated/interactive book allows the child to have a complete appreciation of the object because it uses the two languages: verbal and visual. The match between image and text, the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional, the visual and the tactile experiences, the rule with the randomness and the shape with the "no shape", all together narrating a story, a moment, creating incentives for the children to experience, discover and develop aesthetic, emotional and intellectual skills.



Figures 2 and 3. Kvetá Pacvoská, Number Circus: 1-10 and Back Again! (2011). Detail



To trigger such emotions the illustration seeks references present in our life and culture, using the language of comics, film, animation, advertising, painting, sculpture, among others, functioning as a stimulus for the emotional and cognitive skills of children, as they read, unriddle, touch and enjoy this game. "El niño necesita ayuda para cultivar su mundo interior: aprender a "leer de verdade" y adquirir el hábito de detenerse a contemplar, por un lado; aprender a reconocer y gobernar los propios sentimientos, por otro. Al perseguir ambos objetivos, tan importantes para los niños (y para los adultos...), los mejores álbumes tienen distintos niveles de lectura que los hacen apropiados para un público de cualquier edad." (González, 2000)

Development and teaching pedagogies growing interest in artistic and visual activities is due to its ability to stimulate the capacity to look, the intelligence, the creativity, the development of manual and motor dexterity, the education, the aesthetic and critical sense while exploring the image. "O contacto da criança com álbuns ilustrados de qualidade surge como um excelente exercício de educação visual, iniciando-a numa percepção ativa e crítica da arte, permitindo-lhe, ainda, alimentar-se de referentes culturais, fazer descobertas e educar a sua sensibilidade e o seu gosto estético." (Rodrigues, 2009:6 e 7).

We find that the interactive nature of the books that we studied present a balanced way of stimulating and encouraging artistic creation, where the reader involved become the creator and the writer of the story. Therefore, it is important that educators, those who are involved in mental and physical growth of children, encourage personal work full of stimuli in order to educate the eye of the child and teach her to explore all ways of individual expression and the endless and possible solutions.

As Pacovská (1992), we believe that the illustrated / interactive book will and can be the first art gallery that the child visits, or a space, a workshop where she has the opportunity to experience and express herself. "For me, the book is architecture; it is a given space into which I compose the painted, written- on, cut-through and empty pages." (Pacovská, 2007:8)

Conclusion

The current development theories, present in education and society, advocate evolution as a sequence of steps, within which children have different characteristics. In this context the picture book was adapted to each stage or age group. Nowadays children's literature is comparable to the adult literature in its breadth and diversity of genres, existing books for all stages of development of the reader from childhood to adulthood (Burlingham, 1997).

The extensive use of the image in the picture book is associated to an age group that is not yet accustomed to master words and whose the first competency to be acquired is the decoding and exploitation of images. But when the child becomes familiar with reading and all the verbal competence needed, the image is gradually removed from the book. The question is whether the two languages should work together for a richer and strong learning. We find it important that the child continues to explore the visual language along with the verbal, to read and understand the images that surround us. "Si las imágenes siempre han sido básicas en la enseñanza de los niños, hoy son un vehículo más usado y más poderoso para llevarles no sólo conocimientos sino también numerosos estímulos sentimentales." (González, 2000)

Hence we conclude that the illustrated/ interactive book can be the instrument to stimulate and promote experimentation and learning allowing a deeper understanding, rich and full of exciting moments for both, the child and the adult. In such an environment, the reader becomes a more active agent that interacts with the image and text, exploring the way for action and creativity while enjoying this object. This tools will help determine the future adult in a society where visual language has value and is present in our daily life, where the need to explore, decipher, interpret, criticize and understand images is vital.

This paper outlines the beginning of our research. Starting with the ideas raised by the authors, illustrators, books and scientific papers already studied, we intend to expand our investigation to others not yet approached. This will work as a scientific platform for a practical project, where we will study the design and the production of the prototype of a book, and its implementation in the book market.



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