

Constellating Images: Bilderatlases as a Tool to Develop Criticality towards Visual Culture

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ABSTRACT

We live in a predominantly visual era. Vastly expanded quantities of imagery influence us on a daily basis, in contrast to earlier days where the textual prevailed. The increasing producing and reproducing of images continuously compete for our attention. As such, how we perceive images and in what way images are framed or mediate our beliefs, has become of even greater importance than ever before. Especially in art education a critical awareness and approach of images as part of visual culture is of utmost importance.

The Bilderatlas operates as an Artistic Research tool, and offers new ways of seeing and knowing. It is mainly known as result of the groundbreaking work of the cultural theorist Aby Warburg, who intended to present an art history without words. His *Mnemosyne Bilderatlas* shows how the arrangement of images - and the interstices between them, offers new perspectives and ways of seeing. The Atlas as a medium to critically address Visual Culture is also practiced by the German artist Gerhard Richter, and it is in written form used in the *Passagen Werk* of Walter Benjamin.

In order to examine the use of the Bilderatlas as a tool in art education, several experiments with art students have been conducted. These experiments have led to an exploration of different Pedagogies, especially Critical Pedagogy - which help to offer new perspectives and trajectories of learning. To use the Bilderatlas as a tool to develop criticality towards Visual Culture, I proposed and tested a new pedagogy; a Pedagogy of Difference and Repetition, based on the concepts of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze.

In regard to the VIS Issue 5, the research would very well suit. The concept of criticality is developed by Irit Rogoff (professor of Visual Culture, University of London) and connects perfectly with the Bilderatlas as a medium to offer new ways of seeing and looking at what is produced in our visual culture. Furthermore, in offering a new pedagogy, the Bilderatlas as a tool to develop criticality has found a firm basis.

Keywords: Visual Culture, Aby Warburg, Education, Pedagogy, Deleuze