



# International Journal of Educational Methodology

Volume 10, Issue 3, 455 - 463

ISSN: 2469-9632

<https://www.ijem.com/>

## Artist Teacher and Fine Art Education Support Activities in Prison: The Key to Awareness and Self-Esteem

Alenka Vidrih 

University of Ljubljana, SLOVENIA

Barbara Szőke

Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, HUNGARY

Lavra Ambrož

University of Ljubljana, SLOVENIA

Gabriella Pataky

ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School  
Education, HUNGARY

Robert Potočnik 

University of Ljubljana, SLOVENIA

*Received: April 12, 2024 • Revised: May 16, 2024 • Accepted: June 13, 2024*

**Abstract:** The main purpose of this study is to present the practice, opportunities, and challenges of fine art education activities in a prison setting. Prison is primarily a form of punishment, a place where prisoners are disempowered and excluded from the outside world. Art is, therefore, extremely useful as it empowers prisoners and brings them contentedness and relaxation. In this research, we present a case study of Hungary and Slovenia. Through meaningful fine art education support activities, we can impact the awareness of the personal situation of prisoners and empower them to cope with various emotional and social challenges. By systematically incorporating fine art concepts, diverse and user-friendly fine art techniques, and content that can engage users where emotional and social skills are identified, strengthened, and indirectly reinforced, it is easier and better to endure the daily challenges of the prison environment. The presented fine art activities in prisons show that it would be useful to think in the direction of systematic involvement of artist teachers or students of fine art education within practical training to create a stimulating environment that helps to strengthen the affective, psychomotor, and cognitive development of juvenile and adult prisoners.

**Keywords:** *Art therapy, coping with crisis, fine art education, fine art support activities, penal institution.*

**To cite this article:** Vidrih, A., Szőke, B., Ambrož, A., Pataky, G., & Potočnik, R. (2024). Artist teacher and fine art education support activities in prison: The key to awareness and self-esteem. *International Journal of Educational Methodology*, 10(3), 455-463. <https://doi.org/10.12973/ijem.10.3.455>

### Introduction

In the past, the sole purpose of deprivation of liberty was physical restraint. With the advent of the modern penal system, the nature of the prison has shifted to the goal of becoming a useful part of the individual within society (Foucault, 1990). According to this, it is not the body that is the target but the inner self that needs to be corrected and changed. An individual is removed from a certain environment to be "corrected" and later become a useful part of society again (Boros & Csetneky, 2002). In prison, however, there is a system of rules that is very different from our civilian life. Prisoners lose their independence; the only purpose is punishment. Such an environment undermines the success of prisoner reintegration (Ruzsonyi, 2015). The correctional institution should be organized to provide prisoners with programs and activities that improve their lives in the institution and in society after serving their sentence (Zakon o izvrševanju kazenskih sankcij [Law on Execution of Criminal Sanctions], 2000). Studies show that the use of fine art education support in prisons helps improve mood, behaviour, and problem-solving skills (Gussak, 2007, 2009; Sullivan, 2013). It is a fact that the content of leisure activities is carried out in the form of artistic activities in prisons, but the question arises for what purpose and in what form, especially about the focus on individual needs and artistic qualities. The presentation of the results of this study provides an example of the implementation of high-quality artistic activities with the aim of treating individuals emotionally through artistic activities. Furthermore, the study provides an overview of the activities and concludes that it would be useful to involve fine art educators in the prison environment as they would contribute to the quality of the artistic activities while empowering people through

\*Corresponding author:

Potočnik Robert, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education, Slovenia. ✉ [robert.potocnik@pef.uni-lj.si](mailto:robert.potocnik@pef.uni-lj.si)

the fine art process. The study we present has not yet been conducted in this context in the countries mentioned and represents the first contribution to this content.

### Literature Review

Prison is understood to be a total organization or total institution, which American sociologist Goffman defines as a social organization in which individuals are isolated from the outside world and from permanent contacts and ties with family, relatives, friends, and colleagues (Goffman, 2019). Examples of total organizations include prisons, correctional institutions, institutions for the mentally disorders, institutions for people with disabilities, religious institutions etc. (Goffman, 2019). The separation of prisoners from society reinforces their inadequate image. People treat them differently because they are condemned, so they are considered "worthless," "guilty." Negative experiences with prisoners after incarceration only increase, further distancing them from society. Separation from society and emotional injury increase the likelihood of re-offending (Fiáth, 2012). Imagine a life where for years we do not have the right to choose what we eat or where we can go. We have no privacy and are constantly watched in the presence of others as well. There are threats and suspicions all around us. Love or even gentle human contact is met with problems. We are separated from family members and our friends. We have a set agenda and activities (Fiáth, 2012).

Prison is primarily a form of punishment, a place where prisoners are stripped of their power and forced to live with their inner pain. Fine art education activities are therefore extremely useful as they empower prisoners and bring them contentedness and relaxation (Djurichkovic, 2011). Fine art activities in the penitentiary system are thus an attempt at coordination and are available as art education or as a way or tool for education support (Djurichkovic, 2011). Prisoners and juveniles in prisons spend their free time in a variety of organized activities carried out by prison employees. Leisure activities represent a very important part of the daily life of prisoners during their incarceration, especially for juveniles. They provide an active use of time, the opportunity for creation and positive self-affirmation, the resolution of tensions and the reduction of differences based on cultural, ethical, religious, and social dimensions of life (Jerina et al., 2019). The best way to a fine art activity that creates a favourable atmosphere for the participants is to create such content (tasks) that attract people, motivate them to work and thus bring less different challenges within the activity (Kay, 2020). Usually, the artist teachers of fine art activities in different institutions are specially trained people who help users to overcome different challenges (T. Tacol & Šupšakova, 2019; Güler, 2021). The process of fine art education activity in the prison environment alone can help to bring about an improvement in wellbeing, behaviour and generally the ability to solve problems. It also helps to improve states of depression and beliefs about the causes of certain events or allows users to experience situations more confidently (Gussak, 2009). As the process of fine art activity works towards human well-being, the general educators in prison settings should be aware of these features and increase collaboration with professionals - artist teachers - in the field of fine art support and offer ways to strengthen and to express the various emotional and social contents of the individual (Gamman & Thorpe, 2018). Fine art education activity, supervised by artist teacher, promotes self-awareness, increases confidence in self and others, and allows the individual to communicate nonverbally. Fine art activity can help the individual solve various life problems. When a person creates a fine art product, they take ownership of it, which in some cases is the only way to express themselves. Through expression alone, it can affect a life situation in some way. Whether the contribution to personal consciousness is great or modest, a person's self-esteem will improve (Ruyter, 2017). Visual expression through fine art education activity is a special form of communication that provides the user with just the right amount of security and relaxation that is not always found in conversational based approaches. Many important contents appear in the artwork rather than in conversation (Kariž, 2010). Using different fine art materials and techniques for people facing various illnesses, traumas, or life challenges, as well as for people who want to improve their personal development, can help raise awareness of life situations that combine their beliefs with the added value of creating fine art (Kay, 2020). Fine art education support focuses on the image, and the process involves the connection between the creator, the art product, and the artist teacher. As with all forms of fine art support, it assumes that unconscious feelings will emerge, but here the richness of the fine art symbol and metaphor further emphasizes the entire process (Wylie, 2007). In fine art education support, we explore emotions, calm inner conflicts, promote self-confidence, develop social skills, reduce anxiety and depression, and address inappropriate behaviours and addictions (Pamelia, 2015).

After reviewing the literature, we can see that various studies emphasize the benefits of different activities, especially fine art education activities. This raises the question of how it is possible to implement appropriate fine art content with users when prison staff do not have the appropriate knowledge or training (Potočnik, 2023). There is also the question of what these activities are (T. Tacol, 2003). From the literature presented, it appears that the guidelines for artistic activities are in the direction of strengthening the individual's emotional and social skills, relaxation, or active leisure, etc., with the aim of raising awareness of the personal situation and personal adaptation to life in a particular environment, which corresponds to art therapy activities (Potočnik, 2023). Therefore, we are interested in the specifics of the activities and the reactions to them in selected prisons in Hungary and Slovenia, or whether the trends of the topics discussed are in line with the trends around the world.

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

The main purpose of this study is to present the practice, opportunities, and challenges of fine art education activities in a prison setting in a selected group of female prisoners from Hungary supervised by an artist teacher and define different fine art education support activities in all penitentiary institutions in Slovenia and opportunities for the inclusion of artists' teachers in their programs. In this study, we focused on the following research questions:

1. How have fine art education activities supervised by artist teacher helped to raise awareness of the personal situation of female prisoners and empower them to cope with various emotional and social challenges?
2. In what way and how often are fine art education support activities carried out in all Slovenian prisons?

### *Sample and Data Collection*

In this study, a descriptive method of the qualitative research approach was used, namely a comparative case study. We studied a single case or a small number of cases, which we compared with each other. We also chose qualitative research because we are interested in the process of how things happen and not just the end results (Vogrinc, 2008). We contacted the management of the facilities, who assigned us an interview partner (a specialist from each prison). The conversation took the form of a semi-structured interview in which all participants were asked the same questions and given the same conditions for answering them. For the comparison, we selected a purposive sample - all six (6) Slovenian prisons for adults- institutions for serving a prison sentence (Dob, Ig, Koper, Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje) and one (1) re-education home for minors in Radeče, where minors are sent with the educational measure of being sent to a re-education home, and interviewed professionals who provided us with information about various activities, mainly in the areas of fine art education and elements of support with fine art activities. The purposive sample also represents the implementation of fine art educational activities with a group of 7 female juvenile prisoners aged between 17 and 21 years supervised by artist teachers during the period of 12 meetings (10 activities, introductory and closing meeting), 90 minutes (Kecskeméti Bv. Institute at the Juvenile Department and EMMI Rákospalota Correctional Institution, Budapest, Hungary). The group met weekly (or every 14 days, depending on the prior agreement of the prison), and the group usually consisted of the same people (sometimes one person was missing, mainly because of the assigned educational sentence, which included a ban on attending fine art activities). Impartiality was made possible by the same conditions for arranging fine art activities (theme, motives, fine art materials, and accessories) and questions (before the start of the art activities, during the process itself, and in the final phase) - when all participants carried out the activities under the same conditions.

### *Analyzing of Data*

For the requirements of a semi-structured interview, we designed basic questions that we supplemented during the interview (type, number, and frequency of fine art support activities, art fields, techniques and materials, ways of expressions, age groups and participants, space, and professional profile of the educators, users' previous experiences in working with fine art materials and techniques, the interest itself or their strong areas (concrete contents) to design activities close to their interests or strengths. The main contents of the workshops were activities (use of different materials, fine art techniques, and artistic expressions with the aim of raising awareness of the personal situation of female prisoners and empowering them to deal with different emotional and social challenges).

The obtained interviews were transcribed and analysed using the method of content analysis and coding procedure: 1) editing material, 2) determining coding units, 3) coding, 4) selection and definition of relevant concepts and formation of categories, 5) definition of categories and 6) formation of final theoretical formulations (Mesec, 1997; Vogrinc, 2008). The research was monitored using quantitative techniques: direct observation of female prisoners making fine art products and recording data (notes, photographs, fine art products). All authors conducted an analysis of the interviews, and codes were determined. The codes were then discussed, and the agreement was 94%. In cases where the authors assigned different codes to certain data, the discussion led to agreement on how a code should be assigned for certain data with open-ended questions. The data were included in a narrative description of the results.

## Results

### *How Have Fine Art Education Activities Supervised by Artist Teacher Helped to Raise Awareness of the Personal Situation of Female Prisoners and Empower Them to Cope With Various Emotional and Social Challenges?*

Specifics, goals, and findings of fine art education support activities within each realization. We present the specifics of fine art education support activities in Table 1.

*Table 1. Specifics, Goals, and Findings of Fine Art Education Support Activities Within Each Realization*

Activity 1: Crochet work (group crochet painting) was chosen by the participants themselves. The aim of the activity was to create within the group the possibilities of one's own decision (to raise awareness through artistic activities about the possibilities of one's own decisions within the group and the environment). Findings: lack of perseverance, hierarchy, waste of material, aggressive problem solving.

Activity 2: A postcard for their loved ones (individual work) was chosen by the participants themselves. The aim of the activity is to arouse interest in fine art activity, as Activity 1 (crochet technique - the complexity of the technique led to a sense of failure and disinterest). At the same time, they were supported by the motif itself (designing a greeting card for loved ones and, at the same time, reflecting on their own life situation and strengthening emotional and social skills). Findings: a greater sense of achievement, hierarchy, and establishment of an appropriate relationship between participants and researchers.

Activity 3: A patchwork (group patchwork painting) was chosen by the participants themselves. The aim of the activity was to strengthen teamwork as problems can be solved more easily and quickly. The aim was also to loosen hierarchical relations in terms of equal opportunities in solving artistic challenges, reflecting on one's own life situation, and strengthening emotional and social skills. Findings: aggressive problem solving, hierarchy.

Activity 4: Paper masks (individual work) were chosen by the participants themselves. The aim of the activity was to focus on talking about the experience of life situations (through the motif of masks) and, in general, in the context of different emotional and social challenges. Findings: Less hierarchy, more help among participants (in the process of making fine art and in empathising and understanding the other person's situation).

Activity 5: Motif My Pet (sewing the image on the fabric) was chosen by the participants. We limited the fine art material and included didactic material (animal photos) to facilitate the experience of the motif. Through discussions, we tried to become aware of the different experiences (with people and animals in general and specifically in the prison environment). Findings: Lack of perseverance, more help among participants (in the process of making fine art and in empathising and understanding the other person's situation).

Activity 6: Continuing to implement the My Pet motif (sewing the image on the fabric) by adding more sophisticated, new stitches and composing decorative elements. Through discussions, we tried to become aware of the different experiences (with people and animals in general and specifically in the prison environment). Findings: Realisation of own visual solutions (transforming templates), more concentration and perseverance in the work, continuing and empathising and understanding each other's situation.

Activity 7: Easter decorations (painting templates) were chosen by the participants. The aim of the activity was to focus on the discussion about the persons for whom the decorations are intended and, at the same time, to reflect on one's own life situation and strengthen emotional and social skills. Findings: more concentration and perseverance in the work, interest in creating gifts and giving.

Activity 8: Textile Self-Portraits were chosen by the participants. The aim of the activity was to focus on their characteristics and strengths. The task aims to experience the motif according to the imagination, with the aim of strengthening the reflection on their own life situation and reinforcing emotional and social skills. Findings: independent creation, less help from researchers, often a constructive exchange of opinions, and mutual help.

Activity 9: The Mini Me Doll motive was chosen by the participants. The aim of the activity was to reflect on their attitude toward themselves, to think about the inner dialogue they would like to exhibit with the Mini Me Doll, to show the doll the peculiarities, feelings, and other senses with a reflection on their own life situation and to strengthen emotional and social skills. Findings: independent creation, less help from the researchers, often constructive exchange of opinions and mutual help.

Activity 10: Continuing to implement the Mini Me Doll. The aim of the activity was to reflect on their attitude toward themselves, to think about the inner dialogue they would like to exhibit with Mini Me Doll, to show the doll the peculiarities, feelings, and others with a reflection on their own life situation and to strengthen emotional and social skills. Findings: Their activity slowed down; they were less in a hurry than at the beginning of the study. A relationship based on trust and respect developed between the participants and the researchers.

#### *In What Way and How Often are Fine Art Education Support Activities Carried Out in All Slovenian Prisons?*

To understand the specifics and differences of various forms of fine art education support activities among different types of prisons in Slovenia, we decided to contact all correctional institutions in Slovenia. We present the results in Table 2.

Table 2. Specifics and Differences of Various Forms of Fine Art Education Support Activities Among Different Types of Prisons in Slovenia

Frequency and form of implementation, age of participants	Fine art forms, techniques, materials, ways of expression	Place and profile of educators
<b>Prison Celje</b> - male juveniles from the entire state of Slovenia who have been sentenced to juvenile imprisonment and younger adult convicts (up to 23 years of age) who are sentenced to imprisonment for a term from one year to five years; (up to 97 persons).		
Two times per week (45 minutes) in groups, up to 8 people; individually every day in their room (limited, safe fine art material); mostly permanent users, average age 23 years (younger people refuse fine art activities)	Most often, drawing and painting with crayons, tempera, and acrylics by observation; rarely designing of statues and other objects from cellulose clay, polymer clay, and other materials (ropes, wood, synthetic materials) by observation and imagination.	Multipurpose space; social workers and occasionally outsourcers
<b>Prison Ljubljana</b> - male prison for serving sentences of up to one year (over the age of 26 years), from Ljubljana region; (up to 135 persons).		
Occasional thematic workshops (e.g., architectural drawing course); several dates of the same workshops so that everyone can attend (up to 6 persons), interest among all age groups	Most often, drawing and painting (crayons, tempera, acrylics, collage) mostly by imagination; sculpting with clay by imagination; according to periods (design of festive ornaments, souvenirs, greeting cards)	Multipurpose space; social pedagogue with additional fine art knowledge
<b>Prison Dob</b> - the largest prison dedicated to serving the sentence of adult male convicts and younger adult convicts (up to 23 years of age) sentenced to a sentence of more than five years, from the entire state of Slovenia; (up to 449 persons).		
Every working day; 13 persons paint and draw; 5 persons sculpting; age between 30 and 50 years	Drawing, painting, clay modelling, carpet weaving and making various objects (decorative and other objects); they mostly prefer to draw according to suggestions or observation, less according to imagination	Art studio and larger rooms; occupational therapist, social worker, social pedagogue, psychologist
<b>Prison Ig</b> - adult female convicts and younger adult female convicts (up to 23 years of age) and juveniles sentenced to juvenile imprisonment from the entire state of Slovenia; (up to 99 persons).		
Every working day; group work with an individual approach, attended by 3 to 10 people; all age groups	Drawing, painting (crayons, tempera, acrylics, pencils, markers), clay modelling (polymer clay), wire, textile; variety of modes of expression	Art studio; art historian
<b>Prison Maribor</b> - adult male convicts sentenced to up to one year and six months (over the age of 26 years) from Maribor region; (up to 140 persons).		
Three times a week (90 minutes); thematic activities four times a year (New Year's, Valentine's Day, Easter, autumn workshop); group up to 8 people; of all ages (usually people who do not have to perform other obligations due to illness)	Drawing, painting, clay modelling, and making various objects (decorative and other objects); variety of modes of expression	Art studio; occupational therapist and occasionally outsourcers (artist teacher)
<b>Prison Koper</b> - adult male convicts sentenced to up to one year and six months, from coastal Slovenia region; (up to 106 persons).		
Once per a week (90 minutes) in groups, up to 5 people; individually every day in their room (limited, safe fine art material)	Drawing and painting; different modes of expression, but they usually prefer a given frame (e.g., colouring books)	Multipurpose space; social pedagogue and occasionally outsourcers
<b>Prison Radeče</b> - re-education facility for female and male minors aged 14 to 23 from the entire territory of Slovenia; (up to 47 persons).		
Several times a week according to a previously developed program, depending on the interest of minors, in groups of up to 5 people; all age groups (from age 14 till 23)	Mostly drawing; variety of modes of expression; making various objects (decorative and other objects)	Art studio; social pedagogue without additional fine art knowledge

## Discussion

### *How Have Fine Art Education Activities Supervised by Artist Teacher Helped to Raise Awareness of the Personal Situation of Female Prisoners and Empower Them to Cope With Various Emotional and Social Challenges?*

We designed the fine art tasks in the form of a project approach (T. Tacol, 2003) - with the projects, we wanted to bring the fine art education support activity closer to the users with a specific purpose or function so that a specific object or objects are created (Gamman & Thorpe, 2018). We carefully selected the content (motifs) to create important products (useful objects) for them to be interested in and to reinforce the feeling that the activity can be exciting and fun while having a successful outcome and, at the same time, can make mistakes (T. Tacol & Šupšakova, 2019). One of the basic goals of each activity was to ensure the possibility of free, independent decision-making or the exercise of free will, as they are deprived of such an approach to functioning within the prison (Martín-Andrés & Villalobos Manriquez, 2017), which reduces their interest and self-image (Slayton, 2012). The activities should help raise their awareness of their personal situation and empower them to deal with various emotional and social challenges. In designing the research, we had to consider three important contents. The first was to familiarize the participants (7 female juvenile prisoners aged between 17 and 21) with the purpose of the research and our getting to know their characteristics or needs. The first part also represented a semi-structured interview about the users' previous experiences in working with fine art materials and techniques, their interests, or their strong areas (concrete contents) in designing activities that are close to their interests or strengths. Another important aspect in planning the activities was the selection of appropriate (limited) materials and tools. Due to the special situation of the participants, the factor that is the requirement that the materials and various accessories comply with safety regulations was also important. There is much less physical contact and opportunities for psychomotor and affective experiences with different materials in the prisoners' lives, so we started with materials they knew (especially paper and textiles). Paper is an art material that is familiar to participants, can evoke fond memories, comes in a variety of designs, and provides a colourful tactile sensation with its texture (Hogan & Coulter, 2014). Another ideal fine art material is any textile that is essentially tied to functionality, such as clothing, a material that overlays other objects or has the function of decoration. Working with textiles can evoke positive emotions; we usually associate them with warmth, tenderness, and protection, so working with textiles can evoke positive emotions (Malchiodi, 2006). The third important step in the planning was the selection of fine art education support activities, through which they will be able to strengthen the affective and psychomotor areas while benefiting from the experiences already accumulated, which we were able to realise in a safe environment where mistakes are not criticised but are a field of learning and acquisition of skills (T. Tacol, 1999). We aimed to design or adapt the activities so that participants could design a fine art product through all stages or phases, with the goal of realising that they could do their best to create an art product, thus increasing awareness and empowering them to deal with different emotional and social challenges (Kay, 2020). We had to individualise the activities while aiming for the goal that the challenge was not too high or too low. If the challenge is too high, participants reject the task and associate it with the experience of failure (Wylie, 2007). If the task is too easy, there is no challenge, so they will not experience success in completing it. The ability of fine art creation represents pleasure in a person, but only if the activity is adapted to their level of fine art experience, a relatively demanding but feasible task (Bukovec & Potočnik, 2019). To arouse the interest of the participants, we had to direct them to the project of creating fine art products that are "beautiful or useful". The fine art motifs or fine art activities were selected and upgraded according to the participants' wishes expressed in the survey. We offered them several options within each activity, and they self-selected the one that presented them with the greatest challenge. The results showed that with artistic activities that focus on content, people are encouraged to take an equal position within the group, make independent decisions, face failures constructively, recognize and describe emotional states, strengthen manual skills and experience creative successes, etc., have contributed to the development of constructive problem solving, empathy, and loose hierarchical relationships in terms of equal opportunities (Potočnik, 2023). The fact is that for such a process - the selection of appropriate activities, art materials, and tools aimed at the users, with the aim of raising awareness of their own emotional and social states and creating quality art solutions - the merit of the artist-teacher (T. Tacol, 2003).

### *In What Way and How Often are Fine Art Education Support Activities Carried Out in All Slovenian Prisons?*

#### *Frequency and Form of Implementation, Age of Participants*

From Table 2, it can be summarized that support activities for fine art education in Slovenian prisons are carried out differently. Most frequently - every day, in the two largest prisons in Slovenia, for men (Dob) and women (Ig). Several times a week (up to three times), in Maribor Prison and Radeče minors re-education facility. On average, 90 minutes per week in other prisons, only in Ljubljana Prison, fine art education support activities take place in the form of occasional thematic workshops. On average, fine art activities are conducted in small groups, around 6 persons. In Koper and Celje correctional institutions, inmates can create artworks in their rooms every day. The Fine art education support activities are attended by all age groups. Only in Celje Prison do the oldest users (about 23 years old) take part in the activities, as the younger ones think that fine art is something "for children". In all Slovenian prisons, prisoners most often draw and paint, using different techniques and materials. The motifs used in drawing and painting are often chosen by the users; less often, motifs are used as approaches to depicting specific themes and content intended to

address users or to trigger reflections of life situations in users (Pivac & Zemunik, 2020). Users also often create by observation or drawing on various templates. Different stencils tempt some users to create fine art (Malchiodi, 2013). Educators who work with them support the creation of fine art solutions based on imagination, with the aim of strengthening new ways of expression (Kay, 2020). In prisons, users also design various sculptures from natural, cellulose, or synthetic clay. There are many thematic art creations, e.g., postcards, ornaments, and gifts, which also arouse users' interest in the fine art creation itself (Gamman & Thorpe, 2018). Products are also donated or created with a specific purpose or function. More than half of the prisons have a place dedicated exclusively to fine art creation, the rest conduct activities in a room dedicated to various activities, including religious (Koper Prison). All institutions carry out fine art education activities with the support of educators who have special knowledge for working with the mentioned population (e.g., social workers, occupational therapists, social pedagogues), but do not have practical knowledge or experience in fine art creation (are not artist teachers). In Ljubljana prison, art activities are carried out by an educator with additional fine art knowledge, and in Ig women's prison, the educator is a graduate art historian. In none of the Slovenian prisons fine art education support activities are conducted by experts in the field of art education (artist teachers).

### Conclusion

As part of fine art education support activities, we wanted to create a safe environment for the creative process. Participants were presented with various tasks, and through the creation of artworks, individuals gained positive experiences in solving artworks, raised awareness of personal situations, and empowered them to deal with various emotional and social challenges. The positive experiences gained in this way can boost their self-confidence and spark an interest in their own fine art solutions and in solving various emotional and social challenges. The experiences and challenges can later be used in other life circumstances, which can increase the success of their reintegration when they leave the prison environment. All institutions in this research carry out fine art education activities with the support of educators who have special knowledge for working with the mentioned population (e.g., social workers, occupational therapists, social pedagogues) but do not have practical knowledge or experience in fine art creation (are not artist teachers). Artistic creation is, therefore very limited or impoverished in terms of learning the specifics of artistic language, the particularities of using art materials and tools - art techniques, and experiencing and depicting art situations - art motifs (Potočnik, 2023).

### Recommendations

The presented fine art activities in prisons show that it would be useful to think in the direction of systematic involvement of artist teachers or students of fine art education within practical training to create a stimulating environment that helps to strengthen the affective, psychomotor, and cognitive development of juvenile and adult prisoners. By systematically incorporating fine art concepts, diverse and user-friendly fine art techniques, and content that can engage users where emotional and social skills are identified, strengthened, and indirectly reinforced, make it easier and better to endure the daily challenges of the prison environment (A. Tacol et al., 2019).

### Limitations

When we collected data on the specifics of artistic activity in prisons, we faced major challenges. We found it difficult to find employees (people who work in prisons) who were willing to give us an insight into their activities. Also, sometimes we were not allowed to enter the facility, or we needed to adapt our activities to the various unpredictable dynamics of the prison environment.

### Ethics Statements

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the University of Ljubljana. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

### Authorship Contribution Statement

Vidrih: Analysis, writing. Szőke: conceptualization, editing / reviewing. Ambrož: Data acquisition. Pataky: Critical revision of manuscript. Potočnik: Conceptualization, design, analysis, writing, supervision.

### References

- Boros, J., & Csetneky, L. (2002). *Börtönpszichológia* [Prison psychology]. Rejtjel Kiadó.
- Bukovec, A., & Potočnik, R. (2019). Elementary school student's attitudes on teaching artist' monochrome picture book without text and graphite technique. *Teaching Artist Journal*, 17(3/4), 86–102. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15411796.2019.1680230>
- Djurichkovic, A. (2011). 'Art in prisons': A literature review of the philosophies and impacts of visual arts programs for correctional populations. UTS Shopfront in the Student Series. <https://bit.ly/4aMoYtX>



- Fiáth, T. (2012). *Börtönkönyv, kulturális antropológia a rácsok mögött* [Prison book, cultural anthropology behind bars]. Háttér Kiadó
- Foucault, M. (1990). *Felügyelet és büntetés. A börtön története* [Supervision and punishment. History of prison]. Gondolat Könyvkiadó.
- Gamman, L., & Thorpe, A. (2018). Makeright—bags of connection: teaching design thinking and making in prison to help build empathic and resilient communities. *The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation*, 4(1), 91–110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sheji.2018.02.010>
- Goffman, E. (2019). *Azili: eseji o socialni situaciji duševnih bolnikov in drugih zaprtih varovancev* [Asylums: essays on the social situation of the mentally ill and other inmates]. Založba / \*cf.
- Gussak, D. (2007). The effectiveness of art therapy in reducing depression in prison populations. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 51(4), 444–460. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X06294137>
- Gussak, D. (2009). The effects of art therapy on male and female inmates: Advancing the research base. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 36, 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2008.10.002>
- Güler, E. (2021). Social justice perception of pre-service visual arts teachers: visual inquiries. *International Journal of Educational Methodology*, 7(3), 517–545. <https://doi.org/10.12973/ijem.7.3.517>
- Hogan, S., & Coulter, A. (2014). *The introductory guide to the art therapy. Experimental teaching and learning for students and practitioners*. Routledge.
- Jerina, A., Kotnik, A., Majcen, B., Peteh, B., Ferbar, U., Salecl Božič, E., Pahor Mohorič, J., Vrhovšek, J., Musić, J., Lampe, K., Božikov, L., Prijatelj, P., Friškovec, R., Šturm, S., Skobir, S., & Wolf, D. (2019). *Letno poročilo Uprave Republike Slovenije za izvrševanje kazenskih sankcij* [Annual report of the Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for the execution of criminal sanctions]. Uprava Republike Slovenije za izvrševanje kazenskih sankcij. <https://bit.ly/3WXV6b3>
- Kariž, B. (2010). *Likovna terapija za otroke* [Art therapy for children]. Svetovalni center za otroke, mladostnike in starše.
- Kay, L. (2020). *Therapeutic approaches in art education*. Davis Publications.
- Malchiodi, C. (2006). *Art therapy sourcebook*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Malchiodi, C. (2013). *Expressive therapies*. Guilford Publications.
- Martín-Andrés, C., & Villalobos Manriquez, N. (2017). Fanzine as a tool of artistic expression in prison contexts: visual A/R/Tography with a group of prisoners in module 6 at the Albolote penitentiary center in Spain. *Teaching Artist Journal*, 15(3-4), 114–123. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15411796.2017.1386051>
- Mesec, B. (1997). *Metodologija raziskovanja v socialnem delu I* [Research Methodology in Social Work I]. Visoka šola za socialno delo.
- Pamelia, E. M. (2015). *Therapeutic artmaking and art therapy: Similarities and differences and a resulting framework*. Indiana University.
- Pivac, D., & Zemunik, M. (2020). The self-portrait as a means of self-Investigation, self- projection and identification among the primary school population in Croatia. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 10(4), 143–164. <https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.927>
- Potočnik, R. (2023). *Strengthening the emotional and social skills through fine art activities: art therapy approach in fine art classes*. Faculty of Educational Sciences University of Sarajevo.
- Ruyter, M. (2017). Ethical tensions in prison art education. *Teaching Artist Journal*, 15(3–4), 135–137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15411796.2017.1386054>
- Ruzsonyi, P. (2015). A Börtön mint veszélyforrás, [Prison as source of danger] In G. Gyula & Z. Hautzinger (Eds.), *Modernkori veszélyek rendészeti aspektusai* (pp. 23–33). Magyar Hadtudományi Társaság Határőr Szakosztály Pécsi Szakcsoport.
- Slayton, S. (2012). Building community as social action: An art therapy group with adolescent Males. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 39, 179–185. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2011.12.010>
- Sullivan, R. J. (2013). *Breaking into prison: art education in action*. University of Florida. <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00017332/00001>
- Tacol, A., Lekić, K., Konec Juričič, N., Sedlar, N., & Roškar, S. (2019). *Zorenje skozi to sem jaz: razvijanje socialnih in čustvenih veščin ter samopodobe: priročnik za preventivno delo z mladostniki* [Maturing through this is me:



developing social and emotional skills and self-esteem: A handbook for preventive work with adolescents]. Nacionalni inštitut za javno zdravje.

Tacol, T. (1999). *Didaktični pristop k načrtovanju likovnih nalog. Izbrana poglavja iz likovne didaktike* [Didactic approach to planning art tasks. Selected chapters from art didactics]. Debora.

Tacol, T. (2003). *Likovno izražanje, didaktična izhodišča za problemski pouk likovne vzgoje v osnovi šoli* [Art expressions, didactic starting points for problem-based art education in primary school]. Debora.

Tacol, T., & Šupšakova, B. (2019). *Likovni razvoj in simbol v vizualni komunikaciji otroka* [Art development and symbol in the visual communication of the child]. Debora.

Vogrinc, J. (2008). *Kvalitativno raziskovanje na pedagoškem področju* [Qualitative research in the pedagogical field]. Pedagoška fakulteta.

Wylie, B. (2007). Self and social function: Art therapy in a therapeutic community prison. *Journal of Brand Management*, 14(4), 324–334. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.bm.2550076>

Zakon o izvrševanju kazenskih sankcij [Law on Execution of Criminal Sanctions]. (2000). <https://pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO1223>