International seminar Aslect, EU

"Seniors and education - what role for cultural organizations?"

Darina Hlinkova – Phototherapy in senior education

Project Photography 55plus under Mendel University Museum in Brno

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

I am very glad to be in here. Let me introduce myself. I am Darina Hlinkova, PhD student from Masaryk University, Faculty of Education. I am dealing with education of seniors and elderlies. The main subject of my thesis is Phototherapy in museum and gallery field dedicated to aging attendees 55 plus.

The program is aiming mostly educational perspectives. It is not a therapy in common sense, in spite of it could be confusing because of its name. We decided to transfer typical features of phototherapy into educational methods. The basis lays in Judy Weiser approach. She is the cofounder of this therapy methodology, dealing with memories, impressions, feelings and self-understanding via medium of photography. She started to deal with this method in Vancouver in 8O´s and she established a PhotoTherapy center which I have been a trainee in during my research and work stay in Vancouver.

Judy Weiser methodology has 5 main points.

The first one is dedicated to self portraits of clients. The projective technique uses photographic images to receive emotional responses, mostly accompanied with verbal descriptions. Any type of photography could be used. The very important role is played by personal snapshots or just family album photographs. Working with self portrait could be also very metaphoric.

It is not only the picture of us, but also our self-representation, self-image, personalizing our individuality. We took the main features of this method and have transferred it into educational part of the series of lectures Photo 55plus.

At the very beginning we meet seniors with the topic of postmodern art, postmodern styles and tendencies from 50´s. It is very complicated topic for them, not only because of the controversy it often brings, but also for its diversity which could be sometimes very confusing for them. During the first part they got known famous personalities in a field of postmodern photography as Cindy Sherman, Pierre et Gilles or national ones – Dita Pepe or Milena Dopitová. It was shown to them the main and typical features of this kind of photography approach with the attention to building self-image and searching for identity via portrait photography.

The second technique is called Working with Photos of Clients Taken by Other People. We chose typical postmodern artists who work with this aiming. Jo Spence or Matthew Barney illustrated the great examples of such a kind of creative photography. The lecture also consist analysis of collages from former lecture when clients had to create their own portrait using this technique. It is the first building community activity aiming on establishing their friendly relationship.

The third activity is inspired by the topic of Working with Photos Taken or Collected by Clients. At the beginning of the lecture we went through clients own photographs which they wanted to display as example of their most important part of their life. The whole lecture was focused on the topic of collecting, collectors and documentation without emotions. They were taught about Becher's School in photography, Candida Hofer or Andreas Gurski.

The fourth lecture is dedicated to the topic of Family Album and time collecting documentary. Not only sharing family stories, but also very interesting stories behind famous photo documentaries are mentioned in this lecture.

The Projective process is the last of our topics. Clients meet new tendencies of recent photographers to react on classical master of visual arts. Steven Meisel or David LaChapelle set a great example of these tendencies.

Because we are nearly out of time, let me add you can find all the information on the web of Mendel Museum. There are special websites dedicated to education for seniors 55plus.

I hope you´ll enjoy it. If you have any further question, please, don´t hesitate to ask me.