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## **The Chairs of Venice**

*Applying Storytelling as Teaching Method to Understand Material Cultural Heritage*

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**The Chairs of Venice**  
**Applying Storytelling as Teaching Method to Understand Material**  
**Cultural Heritage**

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**Abstract**

To understand the present and prepare for the future, we must remember our past. - And as indicated with the writings of 19<sup>th</sup> century English art critic and writer, John Ruskin; material cultural heritage holds an important lesson and plays an ethical role in establishing such a remembrance. With this paper, we discuss examples of implementing storytelling as a creative-explorative teaching method to critically reflect on- and develop the awareness and understanding of material cultural heritage among students from disciplines of Art History, Architecture, and Design. Our examples stem from a workshop held during the International Art Biennale in Venice 2019 by the Erasmus+ interdisciplinary research project CRAFT.

**Keywords:** Material Cultural Heritage, Storytelling, Problem-Based Learning, Design-thinking, Interdisciplinarity

## INTRODUCTION

*Once upon a time...* such is the beginning of numberless stories told throughout historic time from old to young across cultures. The story possesses a strong emotional power. It has the ability to represent multiple time dimensions simultaneously, instantly bringing us from the present into the distant past, or an unknown future far away. As argued for by Staiff<sup>1</sup>, telling stories draw on the ability of our imagination to make a passage in time; ‘travel’ in our minds and unfold ‘fictive spaces’ moving us beyond ‘reality’. Triggered by the story we use our memories and imagination to ‘transport’ ourselves. We embark on an embodied ‘journey’ full of affective experiences, evoking a series of bodily-sensory impressions and emotional responses, as we absorb and associate ourselves with the characters, moods and landscapes unfolded. Yet, stories are more than this triggering of individual imagination and emotions. Stories are also important *representations* with a meaning-making telling. Often, they contain a kind of educational *morale* – a valuable lesson – to be aware of, learn and remember. Sometimes the resulting morale concerns a grief processing of traumatic events, a reflective promotion of reconciliation, or even the underlying aim to change attitudes and alter human behaviors. In that sense, the story serves as a collective heritage; a cultural mind-set and identity passed on from generation to generation.

We are inspired by this ‘passing on’ of a collective educational morale and the ability to embark on a time travel through storytelling, when debating material cultural heritage. Furthermore, we are curious about the potentials of this storytelling lens for getting a closer understanding of how to *teach* material cultural heritage in the future.

However, before we go into details, we want to open this paper with the stories of the English art critic and writer; *John Ruskin*.

Between the years 1849-1851, Ruskin went on a series of journeys to the city of Venice. He did so equipped with a camera, pen, and sketching book to investigate the architectural qualities inherited in the material stories of (among others) the Doge Palace, San Marco Basilica, and Torcello Cathedral.

Evidence of Ruskins' Venetian explorations can be found in his notebooks, diaries, and the two books; *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853). Writings, which not only criticized contemporary Victorian society, the period of industrialization, and the mid-nineteenth century tourism increasingly governing the city of Venice, but also made a great inspiration on material cultural heritage and socio-cultural topics for a series of architectural thinkers like William Morris and Frank Lloyd Wright<sup>2</sup>.

As argued for by Denis Cosgrove<sup>3</sup>, Ruskin's Venetian wanderings had an almost phenomenological character, comparable to the visual mapping methods later deployed by urban architectural thinkers like Gordon Cullen<sup>4</sup> and Kevin Lynch<sup>5</sup>. Sailing with a gondola while doing drawings of Palazzos along the Grand Canal, Ruskin's fieldwork capture the atmospheres and detailed material cultural fragments of the city. In this way, Ruskin puts emphasis to the historic beauty of Venice, and use it as an example for how to preserve historic truth and design ethics in architecture<sup>6,7</sup>. We are interested in this exemplary story, because we are curious about his special emphasis on the *emotional expression*, *moral structure*, and *ethic role* of architecture – as a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate about material cultural heritage.

### **Does the past speak?**

Ruskin uses Venice as a symbolic landscape pointing to the value of producing, transforming, constructing and construing a 'landscape' of memory and imagination<sup>8</sup>. Hence, Ruskin makes a significant contribution to the discussion on material cultural heritage, weaving together social, architectural and art historic arguments. Consequently, putting forward the important point that certain buildings possess a high architectural value. Like the fictive story, the buildings with their material characteristics and expressions represent a significant moment in history. A building can thus 'speak' to us. This perspective first suggests an interrelationship and 'communication' between humans and material objects. Second, it suggests

that buildings and material objects have a moral role to play. They contain a lesson for the present (and future); a value of historical and cultural significance recorded in the built environment worth remembering.

Critics would perhaps argue that Ruskin, with his writings, ignored the *material* history of Venice<sup>9</sup>. For instance, deliberately overlooking a series of buildings along the *Canal Grande*, while instead zooming in on the ones important to his story. Perhaps this is true. Yet, we are fascinated by the way Ruskin's writings suggest that a building holds a *character*, which can be captured and explored by use of storytelling tools like drawing and writing.

Simultaneously, we have to be aware – according to Staiff<sup>10</sup> – that the embodied responses and emotional content perceived by a ‘reader’ “...*may have nothing to do with the setting and everything to do with individual memories and experiences.*” Hence, the meaning-making of the story a building reveal is a *co-production* between built environment and spectator/partaker. The point is, that stories are not only told, but also *produced*. It is a reproduction by the person experiencing it. Consequently, the structure of the story – or the actual *storytelling* – is not only predetermined by the urban designer, architect, or engineer. The story and act of storytelling grows out of the material condition in collaboration with the spectator/partaker giving depth to the content. Thereby, also touching on the social interactive side of material cultural heritage.

### **Past traditions or modern future?**

In everyday practice, a building/urban site is often objected to modification, transformation, adaptation, and extension. They undergo a continuous series of new functions, new economies, new regulations, and new user groups. Often there is not just *one crucial moment* worth remembering or telling stories about. It is an entangled network of many layers of history. The tricky part (and complex philosophical question) is to decide, which layer or moment to tell a story about. What design strategies should be used to help recall and protect the layers of history, as well as reveal the complexity? Furthermore, in cases of *difficult cultural heritage* (like actions of terror, war,

displacement, violence, and world pandemics) the challenge is both to re-appropriate unpleasant memories, while simultaneously finding a descent way of retrospectively representing these stories in the future<sup>11</sup>. The point put forward by the architect David Chipperfield<sup>12</sup> is not to carefully restore or re-build replicas. Instead, allow for more re-interpretation, reformulation, and gentle transformation.

With previous research projects, we have addressed some of these issues of cultural heritage<sup>13</sup>. With this paper, we take point of departure in the interdisciplinary research project CRAFT and pursue a creative-reflective methodology, which can open up a new set of teaching perspectives on matters of material cultural heritage.

Our overall hypothesis is that new interdisciplinary collaborations - and the inclusion of storytelling as teaching method - can contribute to develop the understanding of material cultural heritage. This with the motivation, to foster a creative mindset focusing on how to *refine*, *reformulate*, and *retell* stories about material cultural heritage, as a topic embracing the temporary with integrity. Thereby *debating* the balance between conservation/protection of historic events and development/transformation of material culture. Lastly, also promoting a more critical-reflective and explorative-creative way of debating the *ethics* in telling stories about cultural heritage.

## **APPROACH & METHOD**

### **CRAFT biennale workshop**

The research project CRAFT is an Erasmus+ project, established as an interdisciplinary strategic partnership connecting partners from different disciplines in higher educational institutions and professional practice across Europe. The partnership was established to collaborate on different matters relating to the overall topic of cultural heritage, and one of the milestones was the development of an interdisciplinary summer school at the International Art Biennale 2019 in Venice. The summer school was planned as a five-day *workshop* testing an educational concept, focusing on the cross-examinations of material cultural heritage.

When entering this debate about material cultural heritage we position ourselves in the middle of a long line of experienced scholars discussing topics of conservation, restoration, historic preservation and architectural transformation. We do so with great respect, especially as we have no formal training in the domain of cultural heritage, but stem from an educational background focusing more on integrated design thinking and the relationship between built environment and human experiences. Our interest in cultural heritage is based on the pedagogical desire to stimulate creativity and innovative thinking when working with form-making. Thus, what we hope to bring to the debate about material cultural heritage is merely thoughts on how to experiment with teaching style, teaching material and learning environment to foster a more critical reflection and curiosity towards the topic of material cultural heritage in the future.

Consequently, our paper takes point of departure in this CRAFT workshop and presents our personal reflections captured with our role as teachers and workshop responsible.

## **WORKSHOP FRAMEWORK**

### **Storytelling and the chair as an example of material cultural heritage**

In order to unfold the understanding of material cultural heritage, we used design thinking and the specific example of a Monobloc chair. During the workshop, the chair functioned as a medium to investigate and discuss different thinking and discourses in cultural heritage. Thereby making cultural heritage more tangible. - This is also where the methodology of *storytelling* became relevant.

Storytelling is originally a form of human expression and is defined by the National Storytelling Network as: “...*the interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener’s imagination.*”<sup>14</sup>. Storytelling presents a story and is interactive, as both the storyteller and the audience contribute with imagination and emotions to the story from different perspectives. In the work of developing

the workshop, we included storytelling as a narrative tool to help train students to spark stories, unfold their imagination and be more alert to different sensuous atmospheres. This is a perspective previously unfolded in other interdisciplinary educational settings<sup>15 16</sup>.

The Monobloc is a mass-produced plastic object known worldwide. It appears in numerous settings and the expression is uniform<sup>17</sup>. In that sense, the Monobloc is often considered anonymous. Yet, it can evoke both positive or negative emotions and memories. Thus, the point in using this chair in the workshop was to trigger students' imagination and creativity, by deliberately using a thought-provoking and often chastened object in the workshop exercises. More specifically, this was done by situating the chair into six particular themes and six careful chosen historic contexts within the city of Venice: (1) 'Full/Empty' at Rialto Bridge 2) 'Mystery' at Borges Labyrinth 3) 'Time' at Arsenale 4) 'Scale' in the City of Venice 5) 'Place' at *Piazza San Marco*, and 6) 'Body' at Santa Lucia railway Station. Initially, each group and a CRAFT project partner had to visit their given site and use this as a point of departure for investigating the comparative historical, cultural, and metaphorical differences, the site and chair embodied. Thereby also testing what happens with the perception of material cultural heritage, when the boundaries of the traditional disciplines deliberately dissolve, mix and blend.

### **Pedagogical and didactic approach**

For the workshop, 30 students from various European universities – across master educations of art history, design, and architecture – were invited to participate. The students were divided into a series of 'project groups', working 4-5 persons together across disciplines. The groups were then given a series of different analytical and creative analogue/digital assignments divided into 6 overall phases: 1) *ESSAY: exploration of 'problem'*, 2) *PLACE: observation of site*, 3) *HISTORY: analysis of cultural heritage*, 4) *UTOPIA: developing 'what if' scenarios*, 5) *PERFORMANCE: moving learning boundaries*, 6) *EXHIBITION: communicating explorations*. These



assignments were tutored by the project partners; belonging to domains of art history, cultural heritage, theatre, interior architecture, and design thinking.

In phase 1, each student was told to submit two short, written essays elaborating on their perception of; 1) the Monobloc, and 2) the city of Venice. This writing task intended to get the students to explore the two themes prior to our first meeting in Venice. Thereby also triggering the first thoughts on cultural heritage, and bring forth personal emotions and memories. Further, to help us – as teachers – get a deeper understanding of who the students were, before we had to get them in the mood for storytelling. A selected handful of the essays were presented by the respective author during the workshop.

Every day each group had to use digital tools to develop at least 20 posters, presenting their understanding and progress on the topic of material cultural heritage. With the digital tools an imaginary landscape can be created, allowing the students to manipulate built environment and re-arranging natural elements, as well as twisting the patterns of social relationships and activities, bringing forth a new set of meanings. Allowing to demonstrate a point in detail.

On the fifth day, in phase 6, 500 posters were displayed at an official open-access exhibition at the international Venice Art Biennale 2019. It was an overwhelming series of posters with great use of wordplay, metaphors, and analogies engaging in topics like *human relationships, personal space, loneliness, consumerism, climate, and capitalism*. They were emotionally effective and with a creative use of the Monobloc to raise critical, provocative or even satirical comments on material cultural heritage and today's increasing tourism contributing to the growing problems of plastic littering all around us.

In the following, we will comment on a few selected examples. Worth mentioning, is for instance the poster '**Canaletto rush hour**' (**Figure 1**) by group no 1. They did a poster, which is graphically well done and use the Monobloc as a tool to experience 17th century Venetian everyday commercial life. In a similar manner, their poster '**Chairs have souls**' (**Figure 2**) was

emphasized in the workshop for reflecting on the relationship between humans and chairs, pointing to the spiritual meaning of sitting and daring to ask the underlying question if chairs make us human?



**Fig. 1.** *Canaletto Rush Hour* 2019. Nikolaj Weberg Rahbek, Noelia Fernández García, Christina Theofanidi, Ramin Dorri, Katarina Richter.



**Fig. 2.** *Chairs Have Souls* 2019. Nikolaj Weberg Rahbek, Noelia Fernández García, Christina Theofanidi, Ramin Dorri, Katarina Richter.

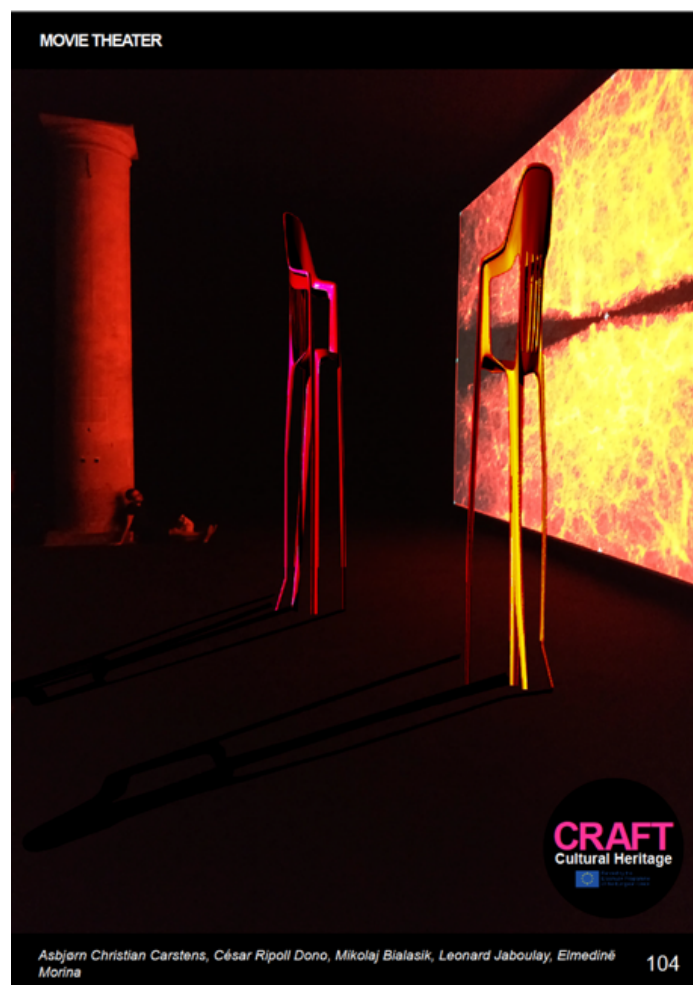
If we move to group no. 2, the poster ‘**Solved**’ (Figure 3) was mentioned for the great inspiration and critical reflection it provides on the process and lifespan of the Monobloc; playing with the perception- and cultural value of the chair. In continuation hereof, the poster ‘**Movie Theatre**’ (Figure 4), produced by group no. 3, unfolds an uncanny side of the Monobloc, as well as the Biennale Art Exhibition. The poster illustrates how the chair by twisting and diverting the place around it pushes the interrelationship between the

exclusive art objects and the observing humans. The teachers agreed it was a provocative approach playing with the question of promotion of art – but also a reflective comment referring to death by the horrors of mindless mass-consumption. A series of similar posters developed across the different groups (not shown here) presented intense images expressing the inevitable condition of life – often framing the Monobloc as a possible cause to the ‘death’ of society. Hence, it warns about the grand pollution deriving not only from the city itself, but also from the unsustainable mass-productions of plastic (chairs).



**Fig. 3.** *Solved* 2019. Even Årslund Anderssen, Mercedes Menéndez Gonzáles, Devrat Chowdhary, Agnes Schulz-Bongert, Ardian Murati.

With these kinds of critical statements, we suddenly find ourselves back at Ruskin and his critical perspectives on industrialization taking place during the Victorian Era. He raged against the rational thinking emerging with the new technologies and the growing machine made, standardized mass-production feeding ‘fake’ mass-consumer behaviors, as opposed to refined craftsmanship and ethics in artistic production. In particular the poster ‘**Fear them**’ (Figure 5), developed by group no. 6 contributes to this topic. This poster was emphasized for its thoughtful and daring approach, illustrating a nice reflection between classical, modern painting in front of modern concerns and thought related to contemporary plastic littering debates and economic ecological considerations. The poster plays with the scream and the fear of the modern world changing too fast.



**Fig. 4.** *Movie Theater* 2019. Asbjørn Christian Carstens, César Ripoll Dono, Mikolaj Bialasiki, Leonard Jaboulay, Elmedinë Morina.





**Fig. 5.** *Fear Them* 2019. Blaise Korpnik, Guilherme Oliveira, Cort Widlowski, Moritz Goetze.

If we move to group no. 3, their posters **'Venice Mascara'** (Image 6) and **'Look Around'** (Image 7) was emphasized by the teachers for their strong graphic expressions, which position the Monobloc in different enriching situations from souvenirs like key-holders and masks, to ornaments on iconic building facades, or even grand monuments shining in the night sky. Seen together, these posters illustrate a clear and easily readable way of playing with scale, form and impact of the Monobloc in different 'iconic' Venetian sceneries. Perhaps also a critical comment on the seemingly limitless commercial design industry fostering an ever-growing hunt for tokens and tourist attractions as places serving the purpose of making money.

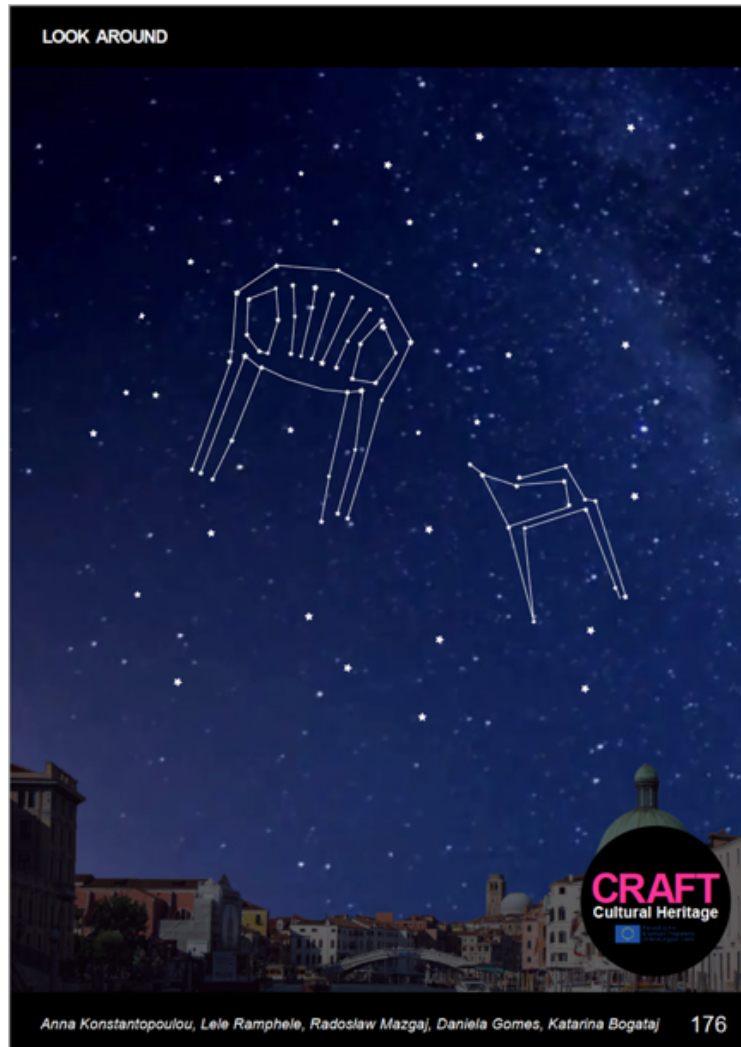


**Fig. 6.** *Venice Mascara* 2019. Anna Konstantopoulou, Lele Ramphele, Radoslaw Mazgaj, Daniela Gomes, Katarina Bogataj.

Finally, we want you to pay attention to the poster ‘**Plague of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**’ (Figure 8), developed by group no. 5. This poster illustrates a great attention to the historic Venetian context and a satirical play of words (again) referring to capitalism, mass-production, and the increasing monoculture. In a post-COVID-19 time, this poster expands our understanding of material cultural heritage even more, with the reference to pandemics and critical reference to the role of plastic chairs in the public domain.

A series of other posters developed during the workshop, further explored this topic. For instance, the posters ‘**Holy Chair**’ (Figure 9) and ‘**Seat of no power**’ (Figure 10) questions the political rules and human

behavior in the San Marco square. Who has which rights? Who decides what you can do where? What is healthy human behavior? What ethical role does material objects play?



**Fig. 6.** *Look Around* 2019. Anna Konstantopoulou, Lele Ramphelle, Radoslaw Mazgaj, Daniela Gomes, Katarina Bogataj.

Common for these posters is the reflection on the political and socio-cultural positions in one of the early republics - and supposedly democratic places - in Europe. Furthermore, these posters also represent the contrast between mass-production and the loneliness of the power, the uniqueness of Venice and the cheapness of the millions of tourists passing by every year. Not to forget, the social interrelationships fostered with such material objects.





**Fig. 8.** *Plague of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* 2019. João Martins, Hana Ceferin, Sara Tacchella, Zhi Min Goh.

With the posters developed by group no. 5, we enter into a theme touching more on the emotions and meaning us as human beings assign to certain objects in specific situations - to trigger, contemporary public phenomena like fear of terror actions or world pandemics. Related to this, the teachers emphasized the groups' strong graphic skills, good humour, and elegant approach.

As can be seen from the above exemplary extract, some of the posters deliberately play around with the chronology of time; mixing up events and historic periods. Others question established socio-cultural rituals by playing around with the tangible and intangible evidences. Yet, another group of posters deliberately utilise the digital tools and analogies of the social media.

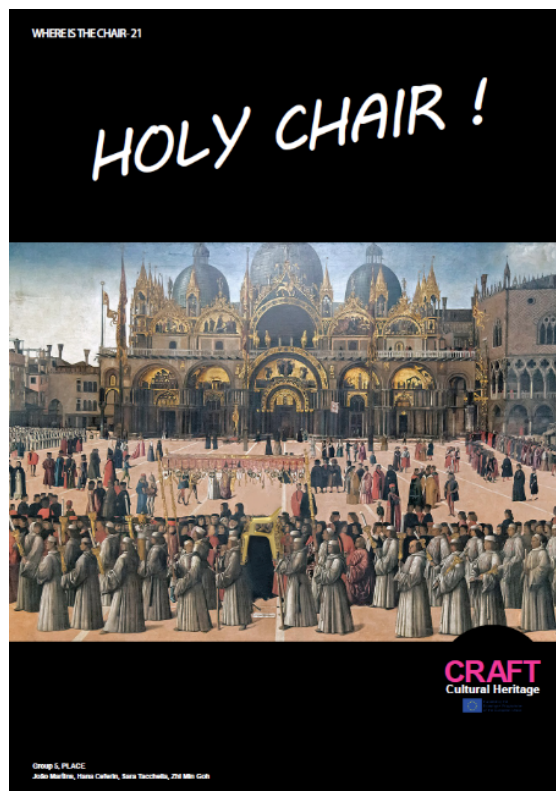


Fig. 9. *Where Is the Chair* 2019. João Martins, Hana Ceferin, Sara Tacchella, Zhi Min Goh.



Fig. 10. *Seat of (No) Power* 2019. João Martins, Hana Ceferin, Sara Tacchella, Zhi Min Goh.

In retrospect, this development in the posters is probably triggered by the rapid increase in use of digital screens/social media in the urban domain. Smartphones and tablets – not to forget the numerous photographs and snapshots produced every minute with features like Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. These features capture each their historic moment. Together it is an ongoing endless stream of big data, on the one hand documenting digital interactions and digital conversations. On the other hand, continuously circulating personal stories; twisting and bending significant events and historic settings. Thereby rapidly adding even more complex layers to the history of material culture. With these devices and this kind of technology the relationship and experience of a place changes significantly, especially compared to the time of Ruskin.

Some would refer to this digitalization as a disassembly or even decline of the role of historic places and material cultural heritage<sup>18</sup>. Nevertheless, perhaps it can also be seen as a new kind of co-production and co-joining of historic moments? A valuable extension to the possibilities in the storytelling of history and material cultural heritage. To embrace the digital technology as a valuable integral virtual part – not a parallel universe – but an important dynamic, ongoing, open-ended - *in the moment* - part of the process. The point is, the posters addressing this topic touch on the conceptual thinking about material cultural heritage. Fostering the idea of an online active process of co-production and co-joining as an element of creative engagement, where the mixing of personal-creativity, identity-making, memory-recording, emotional engagement, and social interaction are crucial for individual experience<sup>19</sup>.

Ruskin was angry about tourism and the transformation of Venice. Today, Venice is still an object of an ever-increasing commercial environment. Some of these posters acknowledge that today Venice is a world of multi-national corporations and still increasing globalization and tourism. They use this tendency of digitalization in a positive way to underline that present everyday life is a changing communal life. We face new types of social relationships and perhaps even new ways of defining psychological wellbeing. Hence, these posters dare to celebrate the multi-cultural, the power of

tourism and question what the qualities of specific local histories and cultural identities are? More importantly, these posters challenge the ‘romantic’ idea that a place should be defined by regional traditions, local craftsmanship, and neighborly communities. Instead, the posters illustrate how such historic places are an intertwined web of meanings and fractured emotions.

Finally, in phase 5, the workshop counted an artistic performance developed by- and with the students in collaboration with the artistic performance group 7/8 CHILI. This artistic performance was meant to add yet another layer of interdisciplinary creative-explorative knowledge to the exhibition and assignments of the posters. This again, with the aim to train students not to be afraid to engage with and apply new (foreign or sometimes obscure) knowledge and skills in a very short time, as well to combine and transfer these competences to other topics in their future education/job. As with the abovementioned process of developing posters, the assignments of the artistic performance focused on pushing established world-views and common sense among students. This was done by a series of group-based dance exercises, role-play and theatre. In the first hours, these exercises strongly challenged the students and brought them out of their comfort zone and their traditional way of thinking. However, this provocative and challenging approach was – in line with the choice of the Monobloc – deliberately utilised to train creative exploration and critical reflection in the workshop.

## **DISCUSSING THE DIDACTIC FRAMEWORK**

### **Interdisciplinary collaboration and creative exploration**

As underlined above, the interdisciplinary perceptive was brought into the workshop by inviting students and project partners from different disciplines to collaborate on material cultural heritage and share knowledge. However, a creative process like the abovementioned poster workshop is often very chaotic. Students need time and space for individual development and growth, whereas the job of the teacher is in such situations often to facilitate, support, provoke and gently ‘push’ students thinking – meeting them at the

specific challenges they face – instead of preparing long lectures and feeding them with textbook material. This was a new experience to both students and teachers/project partners. Whereas, at the workshop new networks were created across disciplines and a broader knowledge sharing slowly emerged during the different exercises and assignments produced. In total, that contributed to a series of collaborative experiences and a wider know-how among both student and teachers.

### **Expanding Problem Based Learning**

The Problem Based Learning method (PBL) was an important underlying approach to include in this workshop to help secure learning and knowledge sharing across disciplines, as well as facilitate the inclusion of practical hands on experiences<sup>20</sup>. More importantly, the PBL approach challenges the traditional teaching environment often focusing on monologue-based lectures with slides, and blurs the boundaries between student and teachers by deliberately focusing on eye-level didactics and creating room for creative exploration and joint discussion<sup>21</sup>. Finally, it provided the students with new collaborative and communicative competencies, learning skills and real-life experiences beneficial for future scientific and practical work<sup>22</sup>.

By introducing storytelling as a teaching approach during the workshop, the students were deliberately pushed into the speculative craft of confabulation; an oscillation between reality and fiction. This methodology encourages students to move beyond the romantic idea of an untouched historic landscape/monument, beyond nostalgia and enter into modes of dreaming and imagination, developing utopian ideas and ask ‘what if questions’. The boundaries between fiction and reality, location and imagination, history and invention are then blurred beyond recognition. It may force them to think outside the box and push established ideas about material cultural heritage. But, it was also a deliberate pedagogical choice to encourage them to start learning across disciplines, sharing knowledge, contributing with new perspectives and inputs in an interdisciplinary collaboration. - At first, it did cause some frustration among students, but as



the complexity and challenges rapidly increased, the students began collaborating and sharing experiences, and thereby slowly develop a new common language and common goal. Consequently, it made them produce new thinking patterns and adapt to new working methods, supporting their learning in becoming ambassadors of cultural heritage.

We find that during the ‘crafting process’ of the posters, the storytelling helped establish a greater sensibility towards communicating different atmospheres and emotions. It encouraged students to see the complexity rooted in the past and present of every single person/object, which makes solutions for the future more tangible. In that sense, we find, that storytelling is a unique approach to include in future educational training. Storytelling stands in contrast to the traditional deductive teaching methods and allow the students to analyse the relations between human beings and material objects.

In continuation of the storytelling methodology, we have to emphasise the importance of using an event-based teaching and learning environment. Having the workshop take place as part of the Biennale Art Exhibition, was a very important training element. First, it provided us with the opportunity to change teaching atmospheres; by using on the one hand different teaching methods, but on the other hand also by changing teaching facilities. For instance, mixing between exhibition spaces, group workplace settings, and the use of different locations around Venice. This mix provided different architectural perspectives, but also different perspectives on social issues and cultural heritage than traditional teaching environments<sup>23</sup>. Second, this mix created different dynamic relationships and collaborative interactions between students and teachers than traditional teaching environments often accomplish.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout history, the chair has signified extraordinary socio-cultural relations, invited for many different bodily encounters, defined habits, and reflected various perspectives on individual personal space. With the

workshop, the different groups unfolded this even further. They creatively played with the scale, form and function of the Monobloc. They endeavoured into a critical exploration of the chair and its' contemporary context, and used this lens to discuss and reflect on the historical Venetian context and current cultural discourses.

During the workshop, more than 500 posters were produced. Many of the posters quickly abandoned the original Venetian sites assigned for critical exploration. Not necessarily due to an insensitiveness to the actual, existing material qualities of the Venetian locations, but with a deliberate choice to investigate their imaginary qualities. Hence, the students quickly managed to use the different elements of storytelling – the written language, visual images and bodily movements in theatre – to move beyond monuments representing a unique moment in history, instead touching on the wider meaning of material objects to cultural heritage and how places are part of people developing traditions and social rituals.

In the end, we are glad to see how, not only the entire workshop, but also, each poster represents a continuous oscillation between critical reflection and creative exploration by challenging the borders of the experienced, remembered, and imagined. - And thereby contribute to broaden our understanding of material cultural heritage. In order to live and understand many aspects of life, one must also understand the stories and life others lived; our shared cultural heritage. It is because of this that applying interdisciplinary collaboration and including storytelling as teaching method is of great importance. The stories of our past and our present also provides understanding of our shared cultural heritage when building, drawing, and designing for the future.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Russell Staiff, “Narratives and narrativity: the story is the thing”, in *Re-imagining Heritage Interpretation: Enchanting the Past-Future* (England: Ashgate, 2014), 96.

<sup>2</sup> Denis E. Cosgrove, “The Myth and Stones of Venice: an Historical Geography of a Symbolic Landscape”, *Journal of Historical Geography* 8, no. 2 (1982): 145-169.

<sup>3</sup> Denis E. Cosgrove, “John Ruskin and the Geographical Imagination”, *Geographical Review* 69, no. 1 (1979): 43-62.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon Cullen, *The Concise Townscape* (London: Architectural Press, 1962).

<sup>5</sup> Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Boston: The MIT Press, 1960).

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Kite, “Watchful Wandering: John Ruskin’s Strayings in Venice”, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 64, no. 4 (2009), 105-114.

<sup>7</sup> Cosgrove, “The Myth and Stones of Venice”, 145-169.

<sup>8</sup> Cosgrove, “The Myth and Stones of Venice”, 145-169.

<sup>9</sup> Cosgrove, “The Myth and Stones of Venice”, 159.

<sup>10</sup> Staiff, “Narratives and narrativity”, 98.

<sup>11</sup> Tenna Doktor Olsen Tvedebrink and Anna Marie Fisker, “Recalling the Past: through an Interdisciplinary and Problem Based Learning Environment”, in *Recall-Euromed Conflict Archaeological Landscape Reappropriation: Recall Book*, ed. M. Bassanelli, V. Gravano, G. Grechi and G. Postiglione (Milano: Politecnico di Milano, 2014), 21-27.

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<sup>20</sup> Aalborg University, Problem-based Learning.

<sup>21</sup> Sam Jacob, “Opening the Black Box – AA Night School”, in *Radical Pedagogies – Architectural Education and the British Tradition*, (Newcastle: RIBA Publishing, 2015), 174-179.

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