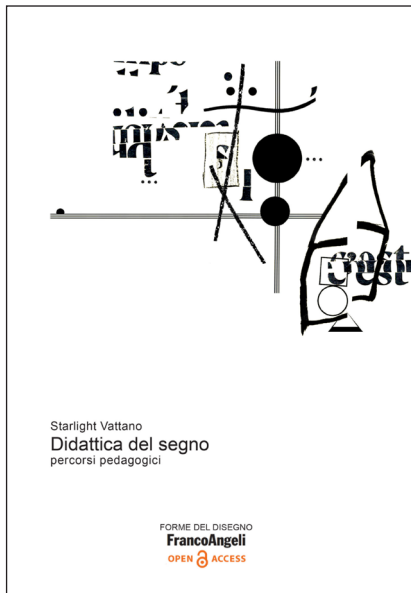


## Reviews

Starlight Vattano  
**Didattica del segno  
 percorsi didattici**  
 Franco Angeli  
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Francesca Fatta in the *Preface* of the book *Didattica del segno, percorsi pedagogici* by Starlight Vattano, published by Franco Angeli in the open-access edition, writes that children drawing “can visibly and durably express the imagination, emotion, sensation and thought of the person who performs it, almost as if to draw a tangible sign of himself”. Communication of the world and themselves is an important topic in the disciplines that deal with representation. When the subject is the child, this topic becomes interdisciplinary specificity since in addition to the graphic expression, all the processes of expression that affect cognitive development are triggered. It is in this topic that the need to research for didactic methodologies that educate and lead to the vision of reality and to the manifestation of one’s ego lies. The topic of child drawing, of the process of building an image (of the world and of themselves) and the educational research, is treated in a systematic and methodical way through the fascinating pedagogical studies described in the first chapters of the book.

In the first chapter titled, *Evoluzione del disegno infantile*, the phases of graphic-figurative development of the child are explored, from the construction of the line “in simple structures around a center” [p. 21] to control the ‘space’ of the drawing, to recognize one’s own drawing which takes place by repetition of the same sign.

Studies around the ‘scribble’ show how it is not only the first instinctive form of

expression but the first communication test with the outside world.

The research for a pedagogical code is investigated through the study of figure deduced from the graphic vocabulary of childhood. The investigation of the phases of visual realism and the representation of the world are treated through a careful and detailed analysis of studies on the visual and representative perception of the child in different developmental stages. The author, scrupulously, analyzes how the sign, from a communicative expression (replacing the verbal form), becomes mimesis of reality (visual realism) and finally aesthetic expression. She investigates the processes of ambiguity that are configured in the reading of the form and in its interpretation.

The construction of the graphic message, from the ‘big head man’ to the way of placing all objects within a continuous line “confirms the priority of information on spatial relations over those relating to the draughtsman’s point of view” [p. 51]. Even the construction of the alphabet letters, first received as a graphic element “repeated and placed on the sheet with the primary aim of obtaining a decorative drawing” [p. 52] is intended as a graphic-symbolic element with the aim of expressive communication towards the observer, even before verbal communication.

Children’s drawing is compared with the works of artists and analyzed in the declination of the sign present in art of the adult.

We cite the comparison and analysis of some Paul Klee's drawings, in which the process of synthesis and selection highlights the simplification of the world in the symbolic dimension of the sign "intended as a synthetic form of investigation of reality" [p. 56].

To conclude with a summary of the considerations of the cognitive and gestaltic sciences and to affirm with Arnheim that every trace marked portrays the vision that the child (but also the adult) has of the world.

The second chapter titled, *Disegno infantile e codici figurativi*, deals with how the perceptions of the self-observer are transferred into the dimension of the image through figurative codes capable of narrating the external world. The author analyzes the works of Edward Hopper and Marc Chagall looking for the emotional dimension that leads to represent one's own image of the world, through the space-experiential theses of Arnheim and Gombrich opposed to those of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget who claims "that the child draws what he knows and not what he sees" [p. 71], while the Froebelian and Pestalozzian processes lead to the simplification of nature through the gradual recognition of the primary components and the geometric elementarization aimed at disassembling "the order of the elements to focus them, observe them, and rethink them more clearly" [p. 85].

The different types of representation, emphasized proportions, lines that connect objects, open and closed lines, overturned objects, forced three-dimensional objects, are indices of the emotional research that pedagogy investigates to decode the emotional relationship that the child establishes with the world.

In research of a pedagogical code analyzed in the first part of the book, the following two chapters deal with the research for teaching methods suitable for leading the child towards the construction of figurative languages that manifest the expression and creativity of each young individual.

The author skillfully searches for references in the teaching methodologies of the technical schools that led to the birth of the artistic Avant-Gardes of the XX century. The innovative teaching methodologies where the study of visual experimentation, the fragmentation of reality and the recomposition of the form, bring the image back to the communicative connotation.

In the third chapter titled, *Il metodo pedagogico Vchutemas e Bauhaus*, the topic is the "pedagogical principles through which it would have been possible to outline a process of univocal study of the artistic disciplines" [p. 92].

It is a detailed description of the Vchutemas Technical-Artistic Laboratories where the reform of artistic education implements didactic experiments in which the production is the main purpose of the preparation of "new type of artists" [p. 93].

The theory of color, visual perception, light, volume, geometry are studied "trying to bring the most current acquisitions of technique closer to artistic production" [p. 94]. The didactic model, based on composition and construction, proposed the integration of individual disciplines for design resolution and product production.

The didactic phases, of the Russian school, first envisage a theoretical-cognitive type of instruction, while the second phase concerns the realization of the object. The author identifies in this didactic method a "real pedagogical manifesto" in which "the line, the geometric shape, the

color, the structure and the movement constituted the grammatical elements through which to construct an abstract art aimed at formulating laws own, but on a scientific basis" [p. 98]. She explains it in the description of the exercises conducted by the illustrious teachers of Vchutemas. The same one who moved to the Gropius Bauhaus years later: "When we talk about Bauhaus pedagogy we are referring to those aspects relating to the teaching of applied art, the planning process and design that have defined new visual values, which can be found in the synthesis of art, architecture and industry" [p. 106]. In Rudolf Bosselt's synthesis, the pedagogical training system of the Weimar school is explicit: if art is not teachable then all the technical activities to produce it must be taught.

Compositional awareness is achieved through the transdisciplinary organization of pedagogical units and didactic methodologies that favor the ability to break down the form into graphic units to exercise the understanding of geometry and the exploration of space, and recompose "the image to reach its possible transcriptions."

The fourth chapter titled, *Allegorie di segni*, shows figurative didactic paths based on three macro-themes: surfaces, texture, space. The visual experimentation passes through the fragmentation in abstract schemes of forms drawn directly from nature, through allegorical compositions in which there are words and images, photomontages that involve the treatment of surfaces, photographic experiments in which the reconfiguration of the image passes through expressive sound fields and verbal.

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