# Beyond The „U Shaped Curve" : The Beauty Of Adolescent Art

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**Outline of the presentation:**

Adolescent art is often disregarded as inferior to „child art": fabulous images of children under 12. The developmental model of the Project Zero research group of Harvard University describes the production of teenagers as the bottom level of the U shaped curve that starts high up in childhood and ends in inspirited, unwilling usage of visual language for all but the talented few. This paper argues that **instead of "adolescent art",** we should consider the **visual language** of teenagers as the final phase of "drawing development". Creating expressive images is only a small part of the rich variety of visual output observable in youth subcultures, home and school environments, in shaping, texturing and colouring of self and the intimate environment. When describing skills and abilities in the age of multimedia, traditional techniques of child art (pencil drawing, painting, collage, clay sculpture etc.) should be considered parallel with a variety of new expressive means. Those who cannot draw spatial illusions may be able to photography or represent space in a computer-aided design (CAD) environment.

The present paper proposes an illustrated **iconography, content and stylistic analysis** of art and design work of average (non-talented in art) Hungarian teenagers realized in a variety of media. Expressive qualities will be shown in "**visual diaries**" - logbooks of life that manifest the events and emotions, thoughts and worries of a day. Drawing, painting and text alternate with photography, collage, montage and special effects: application of real objects, burning of the corners of the page showing the rich texture of visual language of adolescents. Symbolization competencies will be further demonstrated through **concept visualization tasks**. Design skills will be revealed in **"creation of the self"** exercises in fashion, make-up and interior design. Photography and computer art will be analyzed as media with a special importance for adolescents and techniques that should be studied in terms of skills development the same way as drawing skills have always been.

The works shown here will hopefully convince viewers that adolescent art is equally exciting, sometimes even beautiful, but always revealing and mysterious as child art. But why is it important to prove that? - Decisions on the exclusion of art and design in curricula as a foundation (obligatory) discipline is largely based on the assumption that "drawing skills" are at their best in childhood and they cannot and/or should not be further developed in adolescence. Adolescents clearly do not draw and paint as much as their kid brothers and sisters do - but produce just as many visual utterances. **The role of visual language in adolescence** has to be studied in order to justify teaching art for those who are not talented but still feel inclined to use this form of expression.

**English outline of the presentation:**

(1)  The "U-shaped curve" model of child art - adolescents at the bottom:
      an assumption based on traditional media and concepts of art

(2)  Form, function and dominant techniques of the contemporary visual language of
      adolescents:  visual language, not "child art"

(3)  Examples of creativity of adolescents with no special talent in art: visual diary,
      concept symbolization tasks and design exercises

(4)  Adolescent aesthetics: relativity of the Beauty and the Beast

(5)  Why teach / study art in adolescents? The functions of visual language

(6)  "Child art" versus  "adolescent multimedia":  research problems to write about
      the last stage of the development of visual expression