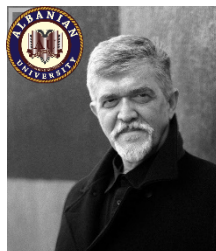




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RESEARCHING NEW METHODOLOGIES FOR ART EDUCATION (THE CASE OF ALBANIA)



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INTRODUCTION

Developments in the sciences of Informatics and Communication Technology in the global society of the twenty-first Century, seem to have created problems concerning:

- the preservation of memory development,
- artistic and cultural expressions on the perspective of History of Art, History of Design and Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Problems of the national identity in the time of globalization and in the Eurocentrist concept of the History of Art, related to artistic and cultural heritage shown at the beginning of this century, which are not only theoretical and methodological ones, but also include geopolitical, economical, religious and military, are displayed on an apocalyptically aggressive scale.

Zeitgeists of twenty-first century globalization seems to be the destructive cosmos of the city's "culture", life and soul, cultural memory, culminating in cutting the heads of the protectors of this memory, which belongs to us all.

These early twenty-first century phenomena, that have to do with the global cultural memory destruction, are just a simple “Déjà vu” for Albanians.

These are phenomena which we experienced within our cultural memory in the last century.

If we are not careful when analysing and reflecting on these global phenomena, we can say that the future is not that optimistic at all.



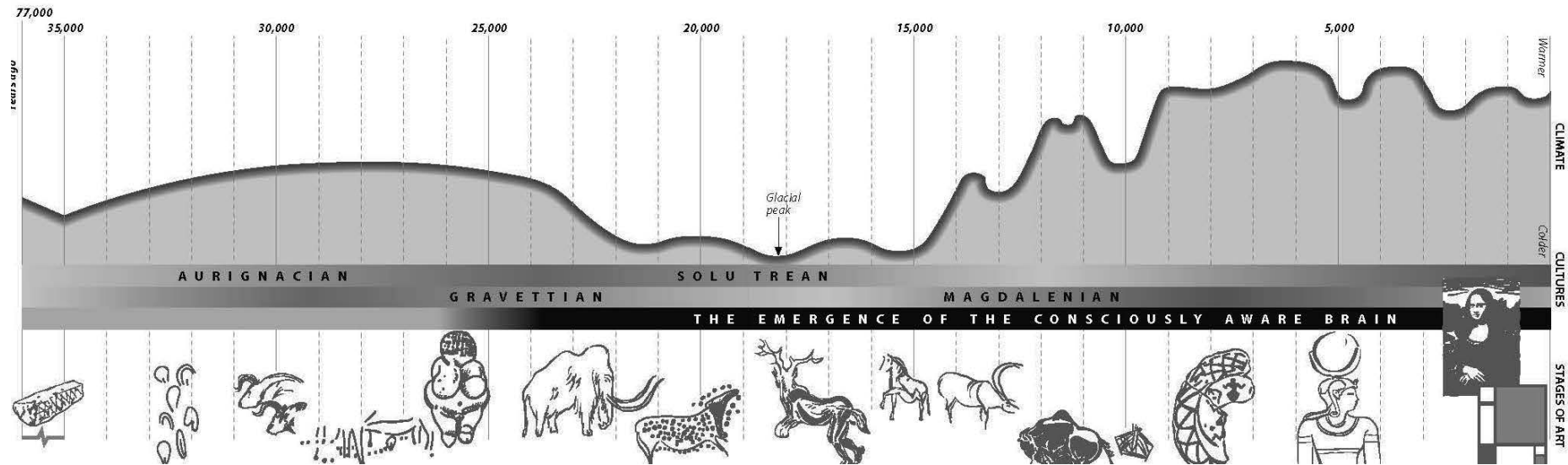
Albania 1967. Destruction of “Vau i Dejës” church



Syria 2014. Destruction of Hazrat Owais al Qarni R.A in Raqqa

According our western mentality, but even that of other people, the history of artistic and cultural expressions is closely related to the history of writing, science and religion.

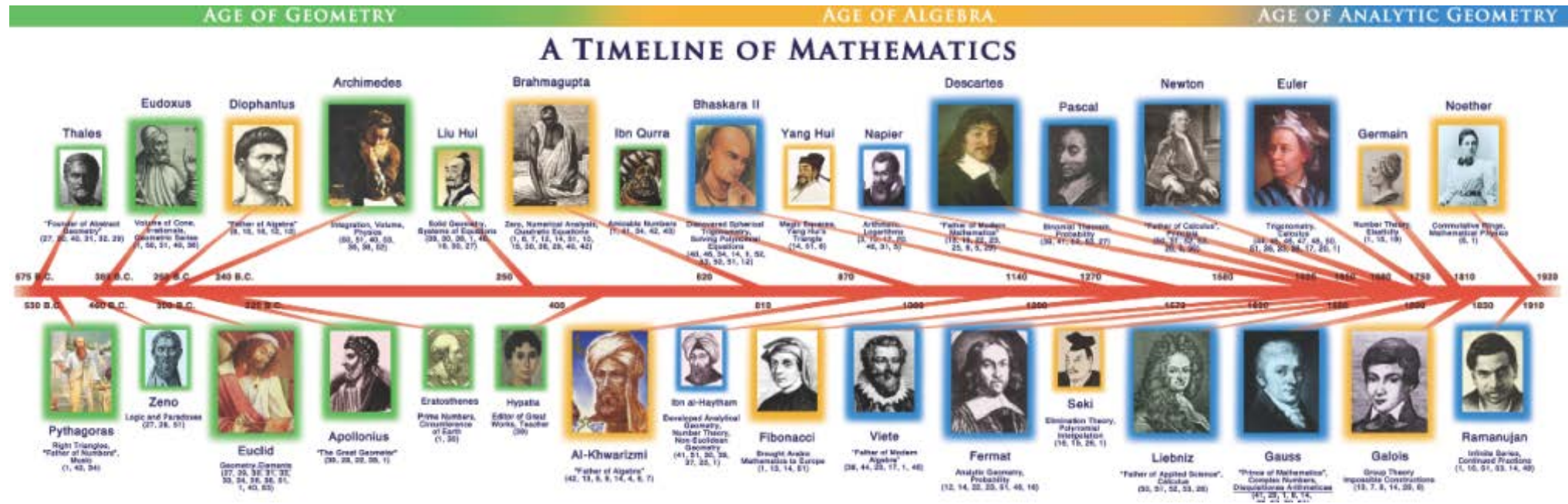
Again, in this light, the method of Art and Science History, which for centuries has dealt with the evaluation of artistic and cultural expression of humanity, remains focused on the conceptual western scheme of Eurocentrism.



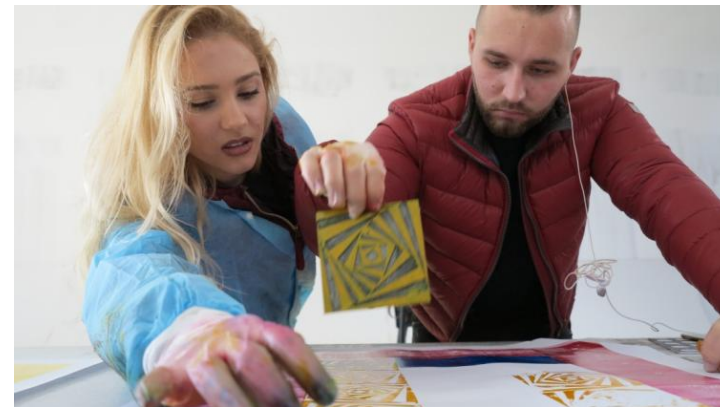
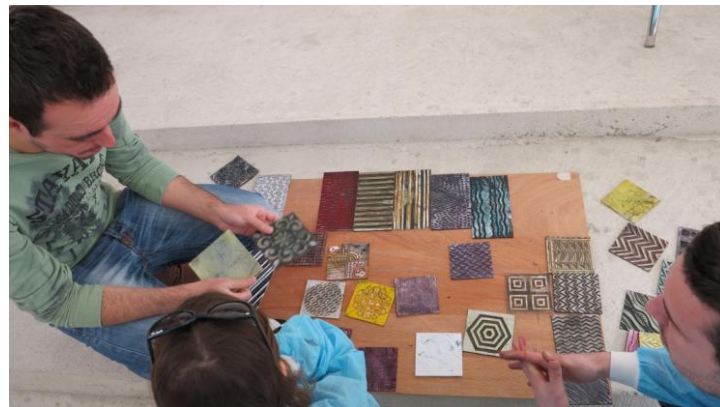
The Eurocentrist scheme of History of Art

Prehistoric art, to art historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, ethnologists, psychoanalysts, and other scholars, offers an important key to the study of objects produced in this period, from which we try to understand the early origins of our art and culture.

Despite an immense amount of work, specialists of prehistoric art, still have not reached a clear conclusion on how, when and why these works were created.



In recent years, during work with Albanian students in multimedia and printmaking, a particular importance has been given to seeking and studying the image, in the chaotic varieties of natural phenomena of nature's cosmos as well as in the role played by textures and patterns in the transformation of chaotic varieties of human data in the cultural cosmos.



In the twenty-first century, the role of art academies which was based on the model of medieval manufactories (*bottega*), is being substituted by art universities, which seek new methods of art teaching, collaborating closely with the human and natural sciences.



A painter of 'funeral portraits' in his workshop sitting by his paintbox and easel.
From a painted sarcophagus found in the Crimea, about a.d. 100

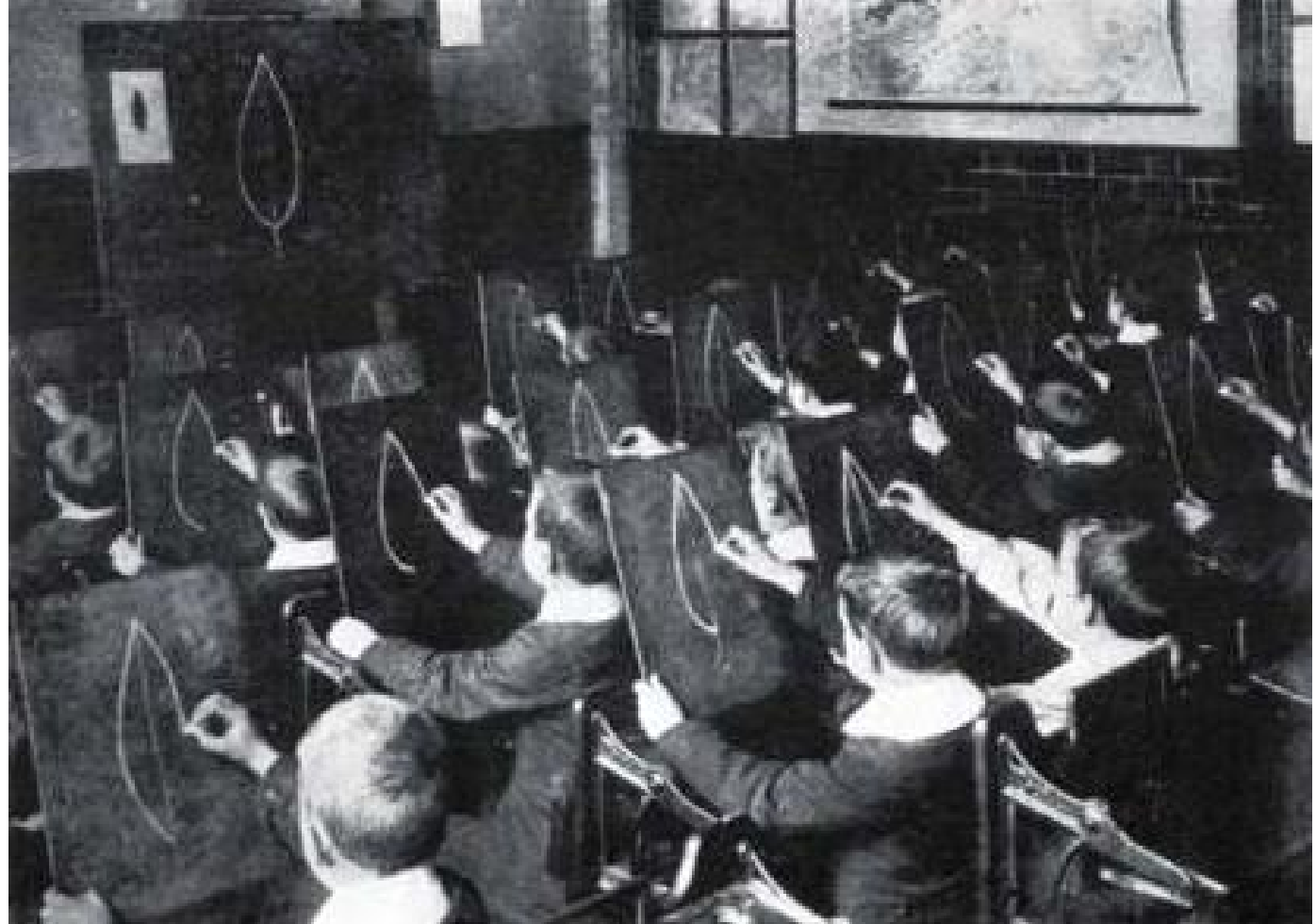
Most of the books and methods of drawing referring to Eurocentrist concept of perception and execution in art focus, only on the accurate nature reproduction and on the reproduction by heart of superficial shapes.

Until today, all drawing methods have so many similarities with each other that it seems only the written language is different.



Many methods use the analogy of universal geometric shapes, which are learned in order to reproduce realities in the most accurate way according to their shapes and not their meaning.

The process of perception learning of visualizing and understanding of realities in the basis of scientific naturalization is cold and superficial, cutting loose in this way – as Hildebrand said - *from the feelings and “memories of touch and movement”*



A Victorian drawing class, in where a 'leaf' is given as a model.

THE NECESSITY OF CONCEPT REVISION OVER THE ORIGIN OF CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS

“This chronicle of graphic design is written in the belief that if we understand the past, we will be better able to continue a cultural legacy of beautiful form and effective communication”

The questions that arise naturally in an art university are:

- 1 - When was art born?
- 2 - How should nature be observed and presented in the subjects of printmaking and multimedia?
- 3 - How should this observation of nature and artistic expressions be treated by other disciplines with which art is forced to share not only the spaces, but even the products and its experiences?
- 4 - How would Elkins, Panofsky, Gombrich, Schapiro, Houser, Białostocki, Kubler, Warburg, Riegl and their theories in teaching of artistic expressions subjects be treated?
- 5 - How did the academic teacher bent on accuracy of representation discover, as he still finds, that his pupils' difficulties were due not only to an inability to copy nature but also to an inability to see it?
- 6 - How should the methods of art history, design and other disciplines that deal with the cultural heritage be seen in the global epoch and in the Albanian multicultural context?



James Elkins



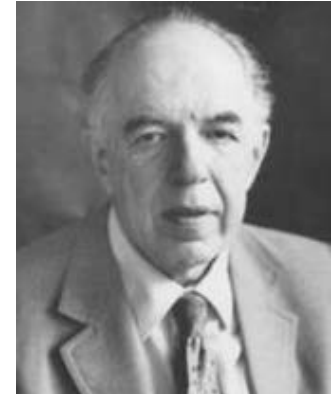
Adolf von Hildebrand
 1847 – 1921



William Dwiggins
 1880 -1956



Erwin Panofsky
 1892 - 1968



Ernst Gombrich
 1909 - 2001



How to see the 'leaf'

BLOMBOS CAVE DISCOVERY

In 1991, archaeologist and scientist Christopher Henshilwood, from the University of Bergen, made one of the greatest archaeological discoveries in the history of mankind, in the Blombos Cave, South Africa.

The Blombos cave discovery brought to light the fact that 77,000 years ago there existed a social group of humans capable of creating and understanding symbols and abstractions.

Such testimonies in Europe belong to the Aurignacean era, almost 33.000 years ago.



“After a hundred thousand years ago, there's this almost explosion of changes in technology, of changes in symbolic material culture, of a whole sly of inventions that were not present before hundred thousand.

That is the basis of all our writing today, it's the basis of our computers today, it's the basis of every single thing we use to symbol today, that is what this is all about.”

“And all of this to place right here, in this region a hundred thousand years ago. It's the beginning of all art, it's the beginning of all science, it's the beginning of all technology, it's the beginning of very strong social systems as well.”

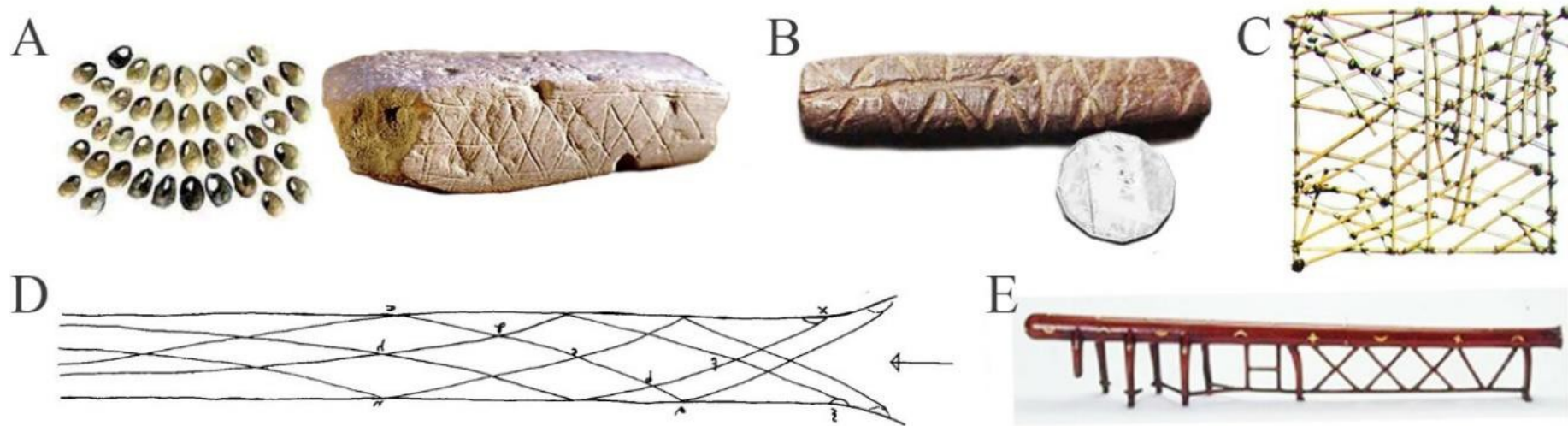
Christopher Henshilwood



The greatest discovery consists of an riddle ochre stone, in which is carved a symmetric petroglyph in a net-shape with crossed lines, as well as a number of seashells, precisely pierced and painted with riddle and having different tonalities.

They belong to the period of early Pleistocene, almost 75 000 – 70 000 years ago.

Reconstruction of the perforation method indicates the motions were careful and controlled.



A - Seashells Blombos Riddle (ochre) stone / B: Australian aboriginal distance message sticker / C - Nautical Polynesian map (in a net shape) with birches and seashells in 1862 / D - Da Vinci's analysis of water flow in a river / E - Hawaiki

THE ORIGIN OF PREHISTORIC DESIGN. BLOMBOS ABSTRACTION OF THE SEA MAPS AND STRING GAME

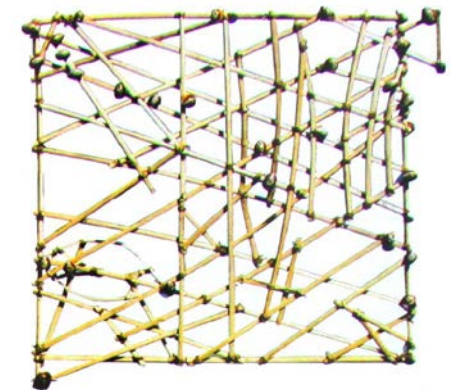
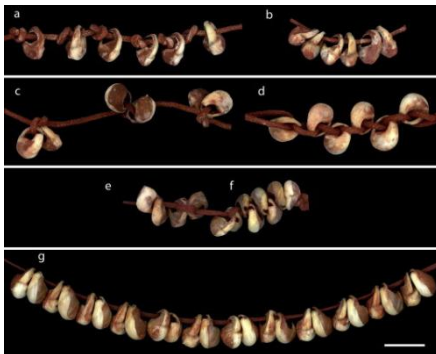
If it is to be accepted that the man of Blombos used bricolage through string and knot to create jewellery with seashells, so we can easily assume he could have been familiar with string games.

According to Henshilwood, the purposeful carving has the shape of a scratched net with quadratic space motives.

The riddle ochre stone petroglyph shows that people in the Paleolithic Period, had complex behaviours, thousands of years before it was thought.

The man of Blombos was capable of creating abstract symmetric symbols (which he saw in nature).

He is also likely to have used language through his speaking apparatus.



The Stone of Blombos, which is only one element of the whole archaeological set found in this archaeological site along with the pierced seashells and other elements, shows a man possessing a sophisticated skill in this early period, to produce and manipulate objects for his own interest, through rational, abstract and symbolic thinking, questioning, so, even the birth of symbolism, almost 50.000 years ago.

Researchers admitted that the man of Blombos had quite a knowledge of the bricolage technique, which serves to assemble objects with one another.



1 – Findings in Blombos Cave 75.000 years ago: Riddle stone, seashells.

2 – The usage of a simple net by Kealakekua fishermen in Hawaii, discovered by Capitan James Cook in 1778

It is thought that in the Blombos cave, nets and baskets could have been used to preserve and transport goods.

According to Clark, the string and the node have been used since the Mesolithic and High Paleolithic period.

This assertion indicates that the man of Blombos knew the production of string and node usage, realization of which requires sophisticated thinking, no matter how simple it can be.

The researchers believe the seashells were string-tied and the inhabitants of Blombos used one of the most important design techniques, bricolage, in which string and node even today remain the most important elements.

Almost all researchers see the function of seashell piercing as a decorative element, even though they claim that for the Paleolithic man, the objects and tools that he used to create must, firstly, fulfill his life-needs, and later the aesthetic and hedonistic.

Initially, Hishelwood found it difficult to accept the geometric patterns of the image of Blombos petroglyph as a form of art.

After long deliberations he reached the conclusion that these patterns are art forms and their makers are artists and he assert that these images are spread almost entirely in the prehistoric and present world.

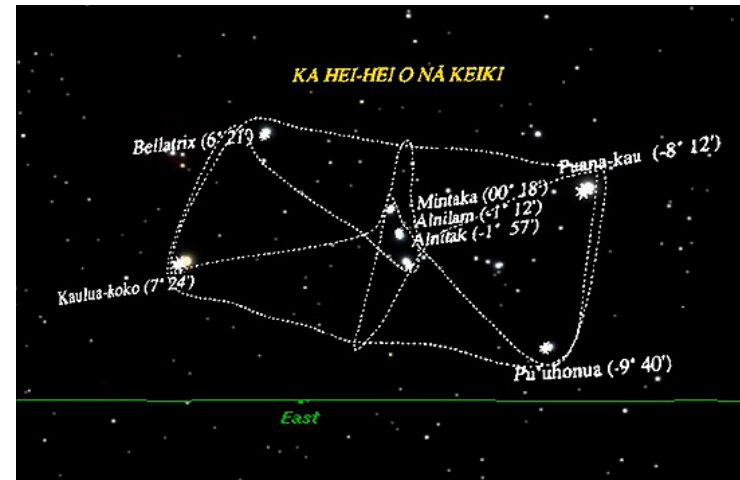
Intangible Cultural Heritage shows that objects used for decoration lost their function a long time ago.



- 1 – The Blombos petroglyph
- 2 – A little Australian aborigine girl playing “the string game”. Photo by: Ludo Kuipers, 1981.
- 3 – Grandmother Suzana (gagudju) explaining to her nephews the picture of lighting.
- 4 – The string game at the Hawaiian inhabitants

For example, Polynesian nautical maps and string games show us that even today sea people do not use them for decorative purposes or for the simple present game, but for practical ones.

This questions what could have been the prior function of the seashells found in the Cave of Blombos, and if they could have served, like the rattle stone, as markers of space and time?



1 – Tradition preservation of time and distance memorization in Hawaiian Intangible Heritage.

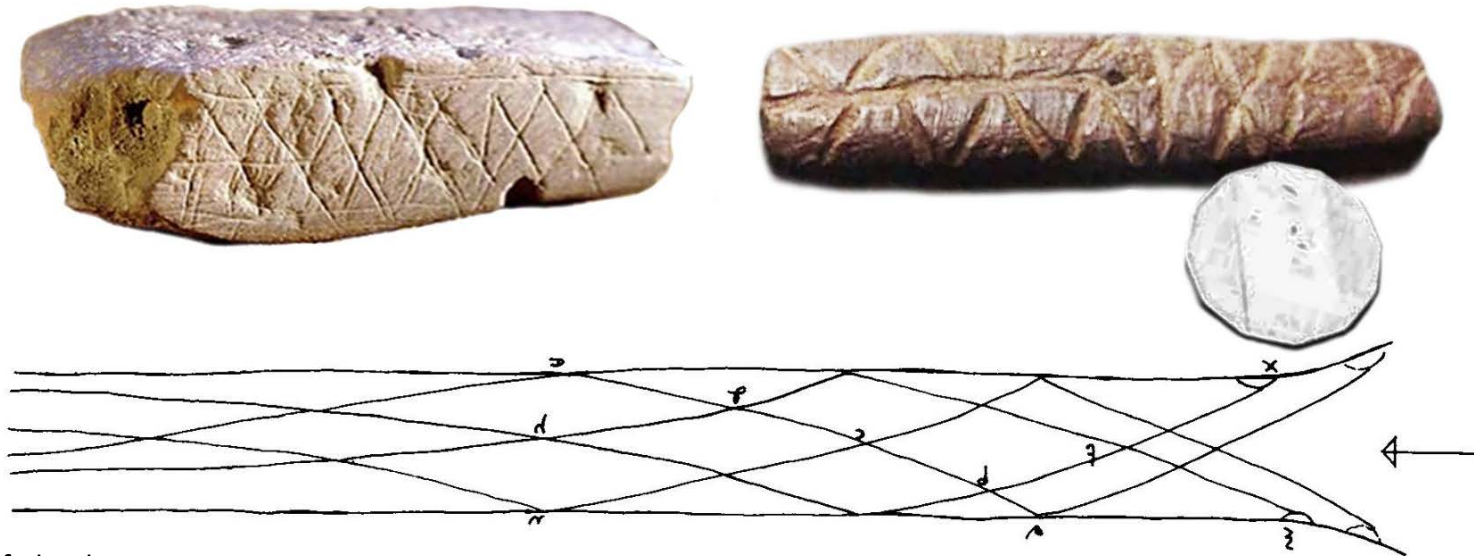
2 – “Ka Hei-hei o na Keiki” string game


“Ka Hei-hei o na Keiki”. This is the string game for the Polynesian children, through which they exercise themselves to get orientated through stars while sailing in the night. In the above shown scheme, through the geometric figures created in the string game, they must find the stars which are situated in the Orion belt.

In this case, the game is no longer a game, but it is more an exercise used for practical purposes of the spatial-temporal orientation.

The data gathered from research and the interpretation of findings in the Cave of Blombos, can raise many questions for the scientific disciplines that deal with cultural and artistic expressions.

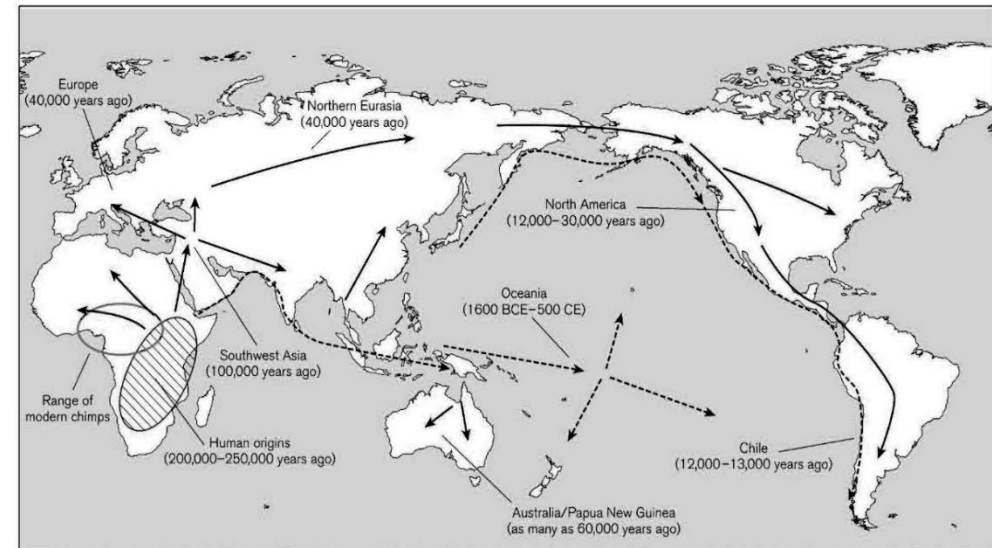
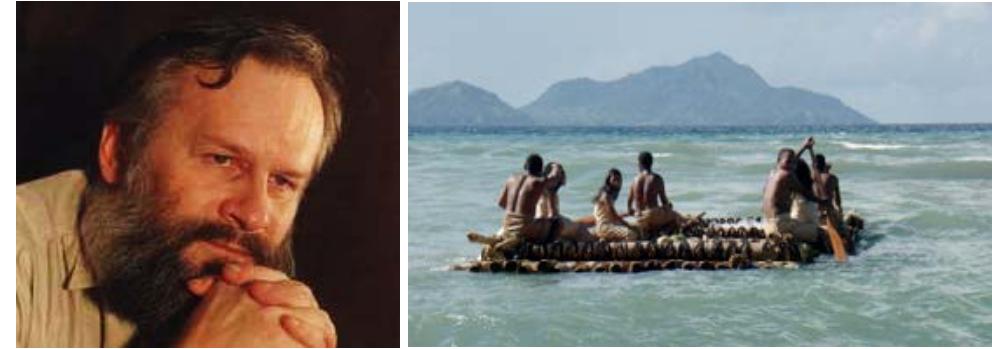
These data imply that the evolution and the first industrial revolution, as well as art, culture, design, language, astrology, religion, mathematics, geometry, communication, and others, have an earlier origin than previously believed.



- 1 – Riddle stone of Blombos.
- 2 - Australian Aboriginal Distance Heritage 
- 3 - Leonardo Da Vinci. Analysis of Water Flow in a River.

The first Blombos discoveries, particularly in consideration of Robert Bednarik's claim that the Pleistocene man started migrating about 100.000 years ago, may raise some questions:

- How old are the sea maps of the sea peoples?
- How old is the string game?
- Did Pleistocene globalization ever exist?



- 1 – Robert G. Bednarik, the Australian archaeologist and ethnologist.
- 2 - Pleistocene seafaring began about one million years ago in southern Asia
- 3 - Map of migrations of Homo sapiens from 100.000 BP.

"We will never know about the ideas of those that no longer exist, but there are several hundred that we can know more about".

Twenty-first Century globalization and information technology development highlight the fact that the cosmos of our culture is almost the same in the whole world.

Despite that the diversity of this lookalike cosmos shows us that even similarities have some unique values that have developed, independently in certain cases, in different cultural and temporal contexts.

"Where traditions changed slowly or persisted for a long time, we speak about them using the conventional idiom of "the ethnographic present," ...that is, we describe them at some unspecified time when the traditional culture held sway".



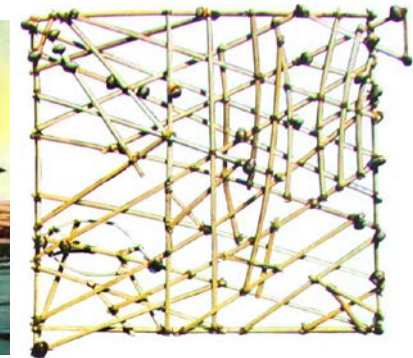
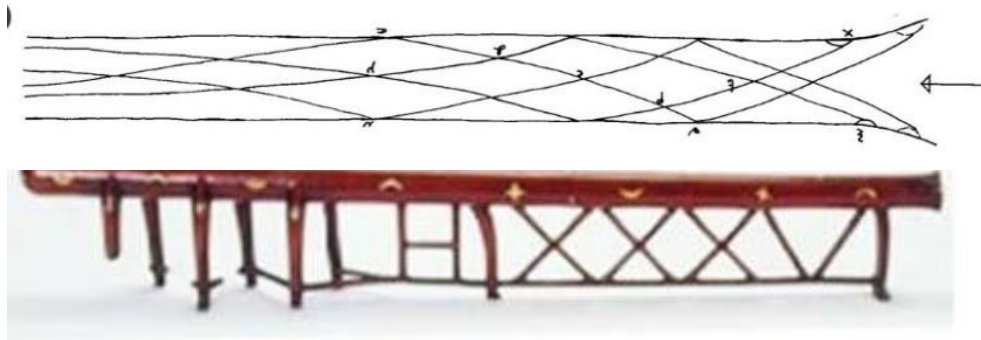
String usage was also widespread among Arabians and Polynesians who used it to get orientated in their voyages

The same question arises as we analyse Leonardo Da Vinci's drawings of water flow analysis.

Maps made by sailors from the Pacific Islands' are among the most unique ones in the history of cartography, made of palm birches and connected with the threads of coconut palms, they show a variety of directions.

The seashells fixed in the links of the palm threads show the position of the islands. To use these kinds of maps, it was necessary for the sailors to know in details the wave system called swell.

By knowing this wave system, through the above-mentioned instruments, Polynesians were able to explore thousands of miles with their canoes, from one island to the other.



1 – - Da Vinci's analysis of water flow in a river.

2 - 3 - 4 - Nautical Polynesian maps

The usage of sea maps is closely connected to the string game practice, for which the Polynesian children have some names, calling it after the star position in the Polynesian skies.

Only after being trained with this game, will they be able to use the maps of their ancestors.

To Polynesians, the string game is not just a game but part of religious belief systems.

Like the Astragal game in Greece and ancient Rome, even in this case, the string game practice is not just a simple game, but it represents exercise and belief.

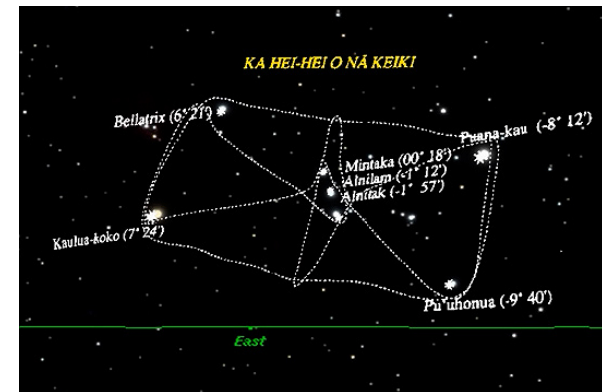


To Polynesians, it has the same importance as their language, because these people (like Albanians) had their own alphabet for a long period of time, by being classified in the group of people who did not give importance to the alphabet.

“Ka Hei-hei o na Keiki” is the string game for Polynesian children, through which they train themselves to orientate by the stars while sailing in the night.

In the above shown scheme, through the geometric figures created in the string game, they must find the stars which are situated in Orion’s Belt.

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“Ka Hei-hei o na Keiki”

ART AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE CULTURE

The ethnographic present in the Intangible Heritage of people of Africa, Pacific Islands or Australian aborigines (who just like Albanians didn't use an alphabet until the beginning of the 20th century) show that the messages in the design models of *ishango* bone, Hawaiian nautical maps as well as the stickers of Australian aborigines still serve today as tools to memorize time and space.



The production of string and knot is one of the greatest inventions in the history of mankind.

String and knot production are a very complex process, requiring the cooperation of some complicated mental processes, through which man must produce a homogenic, resistant and easily maneuverable product using a certain amount of chaotic fibres, but also tie it with other materials such as stone, wood and leather.



Evidence exists showing that string manipulation was developed since the High Paleolithic era.

During this period, strand [hair] nets have been found in graves, which indicate the fishing nets dated to the Mesolithic era might actually have a different origin connected to the High Paleolithic.

Nets interlinked strings were related among them through simple way nodes.



Maori woman weaving taniko, circa 1910. Photo by: Marjorie Ingram

THE STRING GAME AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE CULTURAL MEMORY

One of the elements that makes us conscious of the relationship that our cultural cosmos has with other people worldwide, is the string game, which is thought to originate in prehistoric times, in the end of late Paleolithic.

In the European context, the most popular game is called “Jacob’s Ladder” or “Cats’ Cradle,” whose figure patterns looks like that of the engraved net petroglyph, in the Blombos Stone.



“Jacob’s Ladder”



“Cats’ Cradle”

The extinction of land and sea games is a global phenomenon in modern societies, which have begun to become aware of the values of these games as an important asset of their Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Recently some associations and universities have undertaken projects for the preservation and popularization of these two important elements of the Polynesian ICH, such as the string game, which belongs to the category of ethnic-mathematical games of different people and cultures.

The string game is found in every part of the world.

Until today, there have been approximately seven hundred and fifty documented variants of the string game, from the North Pole to the islands of Pacific Ocean .



There are a lot of collections of string games in many important museums, realized in different times by different people, for example in Europe, Africa, the Arctic, Northern and Southern America, Pacific islands, Australia, New Zealand and in South-East Asia.

Until now, it was thought that the practice of tying knots in the string game belonged to the period of 40 000 - 10 000 years ago in the High Palaeolithic in the period when mankind lived in shelters and caves, but the discovery of the Blombos Cave indicates a more distant origin.

Spread across the entire world, the string game, has the same structure, but it takes different names and meanings according to the context and cultural heritage in which it developed.

Also, the origin of the string material affects the interpretation of the patterns' symbols which are associated with the shapes that the cultural and natural context provides.

Studies in History and Philosophy of Science 36

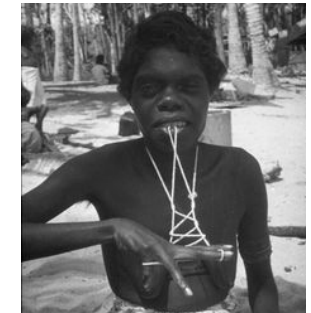
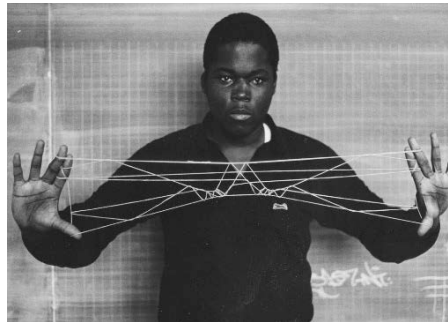
Eric Vandendriessche

String Figures as Mathematics?

An Anthropological Approach to String
Figure-making in Oral Tradition Societies

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APPLICATIONS OF VISUAL STUDIES IN THE SUBJECTS OF GRAPHIC DESIGN AND MULTIMEDIA

Nowadays, digital technology and virtual reality seem to completely disconnect the contact between humans and nature, as well as with the spiritual world of our ancestors.

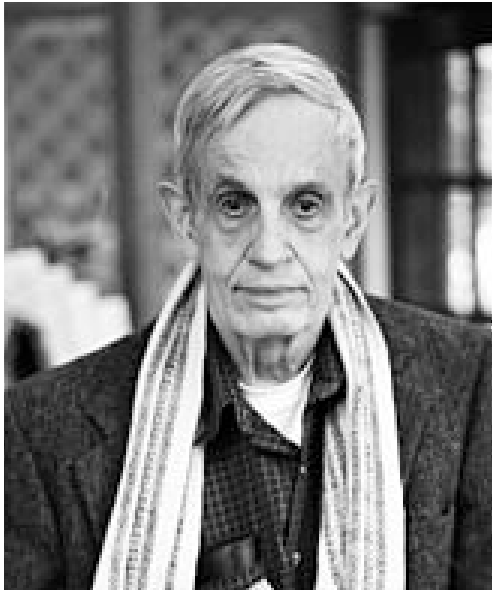
The spread of digital technology, also including the vast number of applications that this technology has attained, has created some severe problems in the concept perception of reality for the twenty-first century millennia's homovidiens.

Drowning in virtual reality has brought a modification of the viewing process which detaches people from the senses that the natural cosmos offers, leading also to consequences for the cultural cosmos.



Game theory, which has its first origins in the seventeenth century, has been an important element in the teaching practices of some of the most well-known universities all around the world.

In 1944, John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern, two mathematicians who were relying on the vision of pan- mathematics, showed the “Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour,” which was later applied in IBM-s first computer productions.



John Forbes Nash, Jr.
Nobel price on Economy 1994



John von Neumann

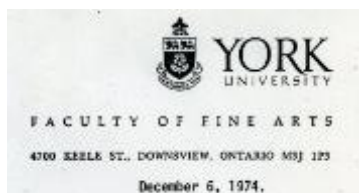
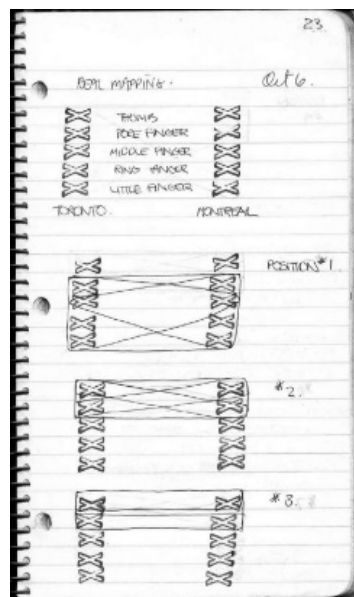


Lloyd Stowell Shapley
Nobel price on Economy 2012

The beginnings of collaboration between art, intangible heritage and technology are recorded during the 1960s.

In 1974, Bell Enterprise attempted real time streaming of video conferences for the first time.

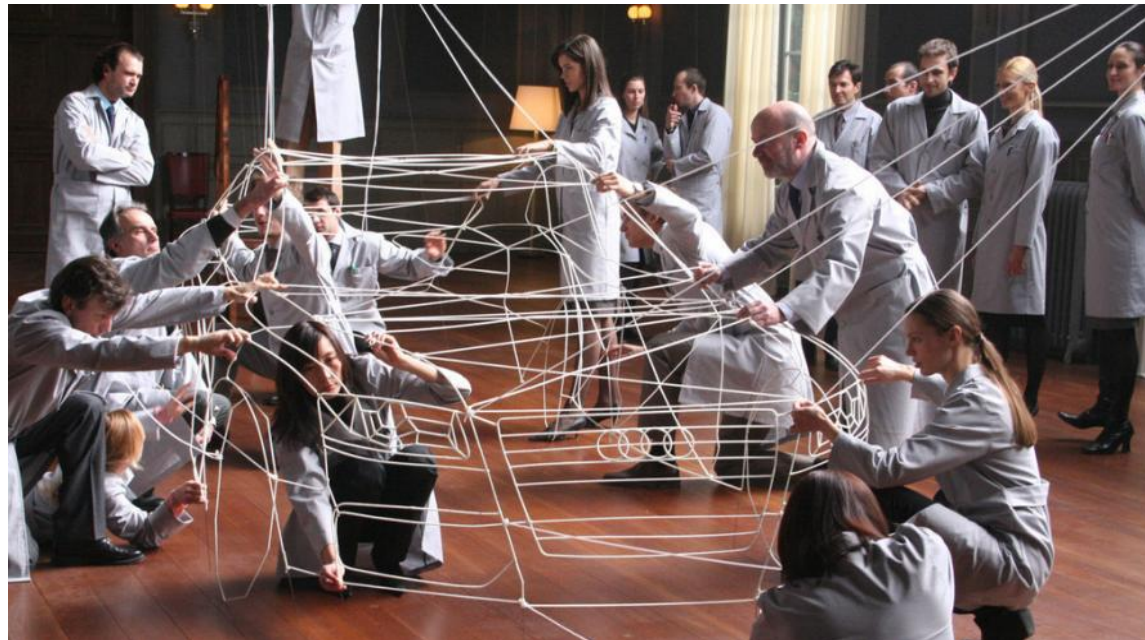
Vera Frenkel, an art researcher of the art faculty of the University of York in Ontario, choose the string game to demonstrate to the Bell Enterprise, the functioning of the first real time video streaming.



String game application, used by Vera Frenkel, in 1974.

The television spot was realized through the help of Philip Noble, an Evangelist pastor, also founder of the International Association of the String Games and the cooperation of Dr. Hiroshi Noguchi, a professor of Mathematics in the University of Waseda, as well as a member of the Japanese Association of the String Games.

This model, which was realized within two months, was based on the game of the Jacob's Stairs.



The A4 Audi model realized for a television spot.

THE STRING GAME IN ALBANIA'S INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

One of the most important elements of the cultural memory in the Albanian intangible heritage are the folk games, one of which is the string game.

Like in the games of other nationalities, in the Albanian version we find the first patterns created by the human mind, which allowed our ancestors to rationalize and manipulate space and time or their natural and spiritual universe throughout their history of development until today.

Objects of Albanian intangible heritage, rich in their symbols and motives, are products of Albanian craftsmen and belong to the knowledge and crafts inherited from one generation to another.

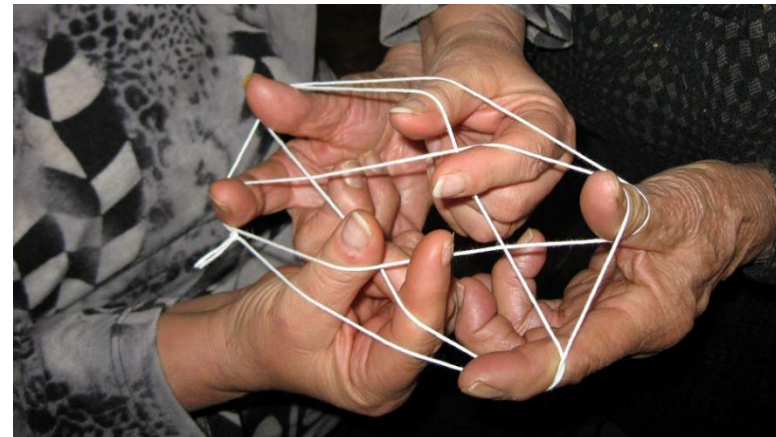
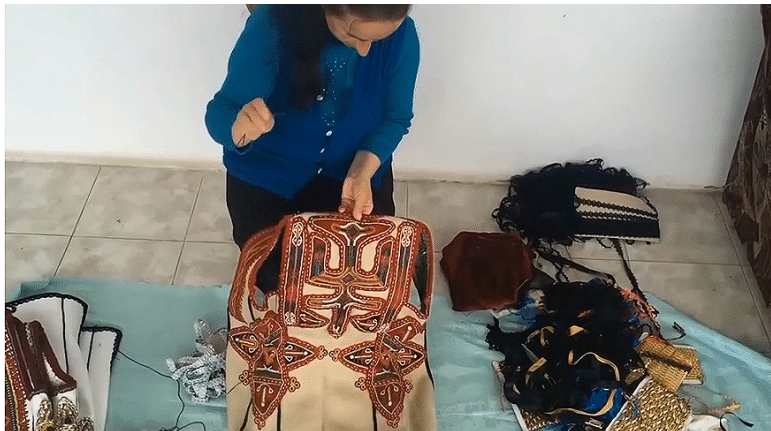


Many of these Albanian design objects that still belong to the ethnographic present, are part of some of the most important world museums and collections.

In Albania, the string game has its own specialty, depending on the natural and cultural context, but unlike other cultures, it has lost its name as well as the figures that were created with it.

The most famous name is the string game, while the names of figures in the Albanian multicultural context vary according to the spaces and cultures where they are practiced.

In the twenty-first century Albanian society, this important element of the intangible heritage is at risk of extinction.



The names of the string game are disappearing from the Albanian language, as did the various names that existed in the last century. In urban areas it is called “the baklava game” while in rural areas it is called “the game with the rhombus”.

In Kosovo, the game is also called the “game with veg”.

Also, the lack of use of the game has considerably reduced the number of figures that can be created with it, which is now fewer than ten.



THE CASE IN ALBANIA: CONCLUDING APPLICATIONS.

Seeing the importance of the cooperative nature and displaying the functions of the string game, as well as considering the important place that it should have in the Albanian intangible heritage, Albanian students undertook the initiative to make this game not only part of the teaching curriculum, but to preserve it from the danger of extinction.

The cooperative and displaying typologies this game offers encourage the collaboration of skills among students, as well as symbolic and abstract thinking, the creative imagination, and so on.



The creation of geometric (abstract) patterns during the game encourages the concepts of associating, thinking, the ability of mathematical and geometrical thinking, of two and three-dimensional rationalization through patterns that are the same in intangible heritage of Albanians and other nations alike.

The graphical image of triangular patterns in a net shape as it was in Blombos could have served as an analogue device to measure distance and time while nowadays it is one of the main artificial intelligence systems in use for the development of virtual realities.

Furthermore, the two dimensional and three-dimensional patterns allow the students to have a better understanding for the origin of some of the most important elements in the subject of graphic design and multimedia.

Above all, the game gives the students a better knowledge of reality, during the pattern manipulation and creation, which is realized through touching and movement.



Through computer programs using the net, designers can now create textures and shapes which are based on the basic geometric shapes that compose our universe.

Everything is a matter of fantasy and manipulation.

A student can create endless textures, if he/she knows the program, but they lack the ability to distinguish a texture if they have not seen it, touched it, and felt it in nature.

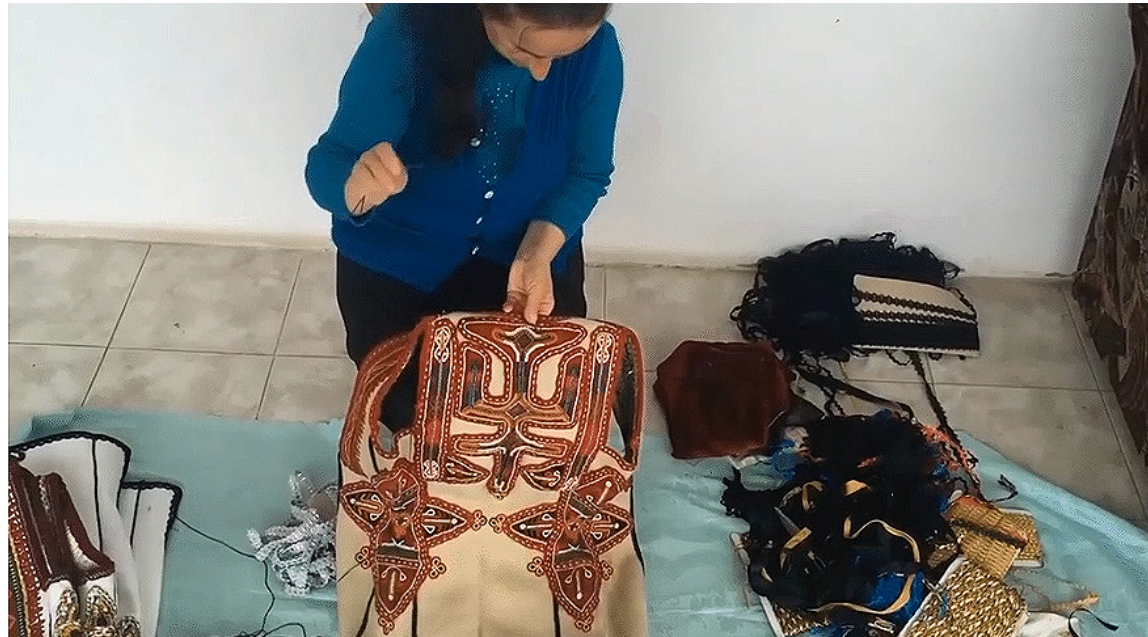
If the student concentrated only on the computer work, contact with the surrounding reality would be lost.

Only concrete knowledge of the natural universe gives the designer more complete information about the shape, movement, sound and smell of the material, which cannot be taught by any machine regardless of its high perfection.



For this reason, in the subjects of graphic and multimedia, a special importance is dedicated to the knowledge and manipulation of the textures found in nature, as well as to the creation of geometric patterns which are created not only through seeing, but through senses of touch and movement.

The imagery of myth, therefore, can never be a direct presentation of the total secret of the human species, but only the function of an attitude, the reflex of a stance, a life pose, a way of playing the game.



Where the rules or forms of such play are abandoned, mythology dissolves—and, with mythology, life.



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If the student concentrated only on the computer work, contact with the surrounding reality would be lost.

Only in this way, they are capable of successfully manipulating the textures created through the string game, techniques of frottage, printing, collage, bricolage, photography and video.

All the students' works must be put in a portfolio and will serve them throughout the ideation and design processes of a product.



The design should be in harmony not only with the object's function, but also with its impact during its creation, usage and recycling.

For this reason, in the subjects of graphic and multimedia, a special importance is dedicated to the knowledge and manipulation of the textures found in nature, as well as to the creation of geometric patterns which are created not only through seeing, but through senses of touch and movement.



The design should be in harmony not only with the object's function, but also with its impact during its creation, usage and recycling.

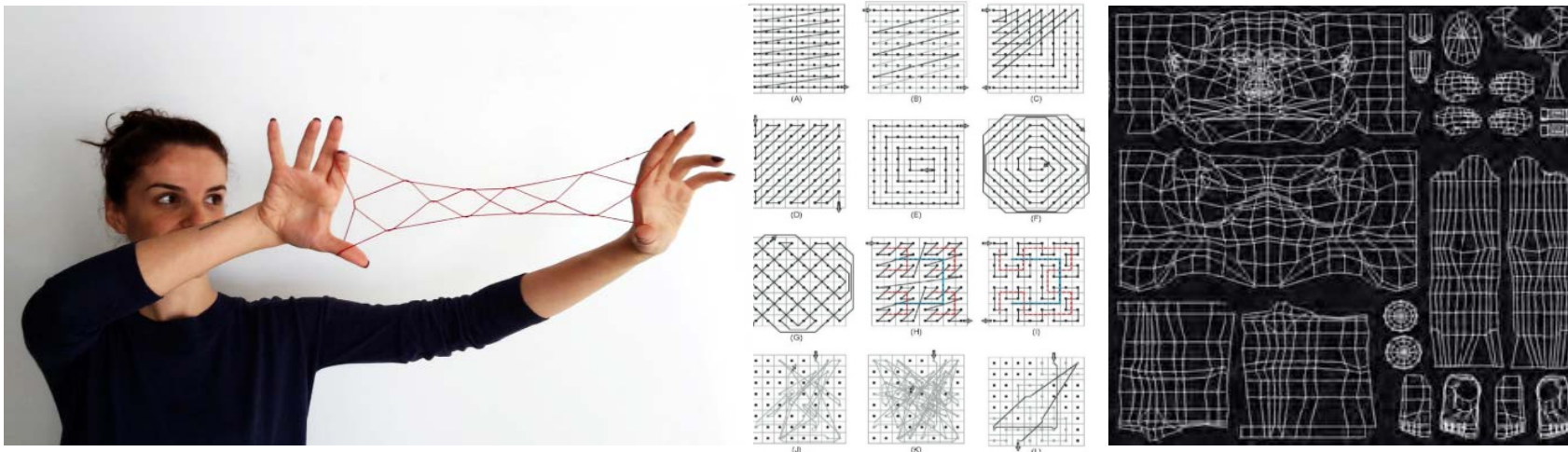
Apart from the practical work in finding the patterns, the students are given the relevant literature that has to do with getting to know the patterns and their geometric and graphic structure. In this way they further deepen the study of nature and their inner spiritual world, a study which is realized not only through viewing, but even through touching.



To know the natural universe, the Albanian students pass certain stages while creating their portfolio with analogue and digital textures.

While the students were preparing this portfolio with various textures from nature, they get to know the basics of the fractal and gestalt theory, which helps the student not only to understand the order in the natural universe structure, but also the usage of this order in the laws of figure composition.

To attain a better understanding of the movement processes and modelling, the students of multimedia and graphic design, have recently started to study the lost patterns at the Albanian string game, similar with those of other nations.



Lectures related to conceptual anthropology, as shaped by Emmanuel Anati, have been held, regarding the importance this game has in the intangible heritage.

During the study of the string game, through the space manipulation operations using the strings, the students develop a deeper perception in figures which are created through movements and touch.

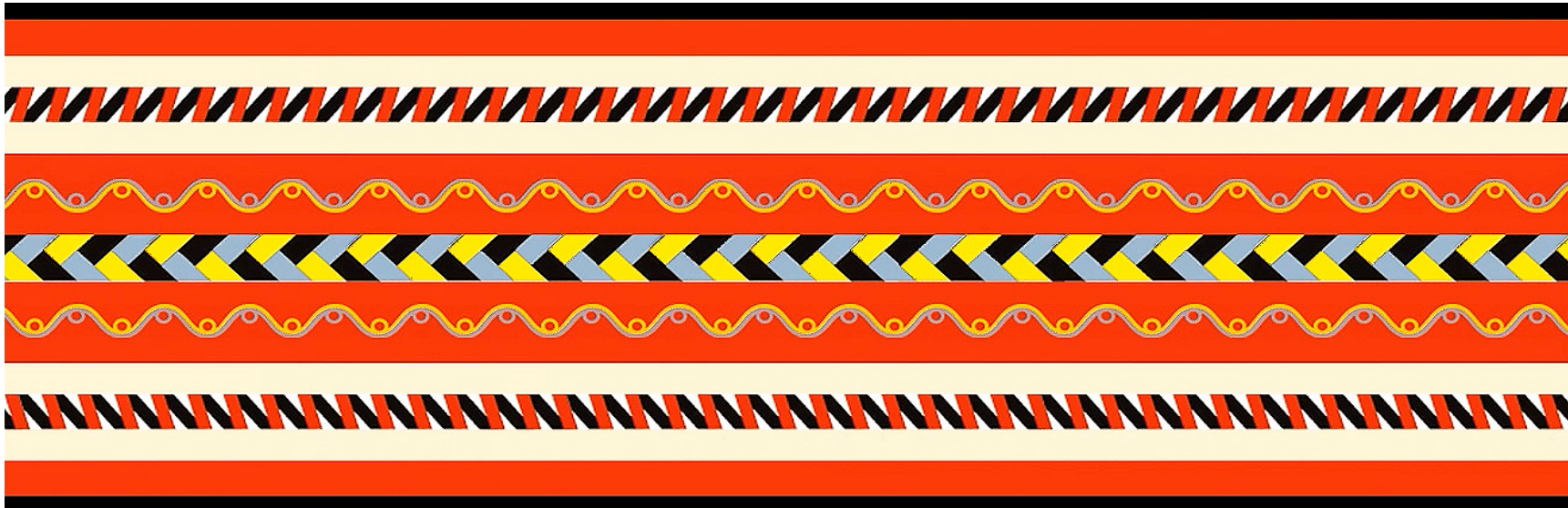


1 - Images of fractal and natural patterns.

2 - Albanian students' works with the manipulation of natural and geometrical patterns using the monotype technique.

The string game helps them create a fuller and multi-faceted image of matter, space and movement.

Also, the figures created while using the string game allow the creation of geometric patterns, which they apply during the techniques of printmaking, interlinking those techniques with the patterns that the students have taken from nature.





THANK YOU