

## FOCUS MODULE DESCRIPTION

# Expressing Abstract Terms and Sentiments with Puppetry

ECTS / Duration	5 working days / 40 hours
Faculty	University of Fine Arts Budapest (MKE)
Study Programmes	Fine Arts · Scenography · Pedagogy in the Arts · Architecture · Critical Studies · PhD
Teaching Method	Hands-on workshop, studio practice, group critique, lecture, invited guest (puppeteer)
Language	English
Puppet Technology	Open (nails, hammers, drills, dremel kit, sewing equipment, glue)
Target Audience	Open

### Content & Description

This module explores the expressive potential of matter, material, and physical form as a vehicle for communicating abstract concepts and sentiments through puppetry. Rather than designing characters for existing dramatic texts, students are invited to approach character-building from the inside out: starting with an assigned word or concept, they seek puppet forms of expression through the intrinsic properties of different materials.

### Pedagogical Rationale

Bypassing the constraints of classical dramatic narratives and primary anthropomorphic character-associations, this module challenges students to explore puppetry as a performative and visual art form in its own right. The core question driving the module is: how can abstract ideas be made visible and tangible through form, material, and movement? By beginning with a concept rather than a story, students are pushed to think beyond conventional character design and to discover the communicative and aesthetic power inherent in materials themselves. The module situates puppetry within a broader contemporary art context, drawing on references such as Eric Mottram and Gyula Molnár, and supports interdisciplinary approaches relevant across fine arts, scenography, and performance education.

### Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Understand and apply appropriate puppet technologies and forms of expression
- Create and animate objects/subjects within a narrative framework
- Critically discuss and contextualise the art form of puppetry
- Translate an abstract concept or sentiment into a coherent visual and performative puppet form



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## Tasks — Teaching Staff

- Day 1: Assign words/concepts to students and facilitate getting to know them. Guide creation of a planar collage using pre-printed photo details and materials of the students' choice (textiles, paper, and other media). Present a short introduction on material knowledge, alternative uses, and examples of approaches by artists such as Mottram and Gyula Molnár.
- Day 2: Guide students in creating a spatial model from simple brown cardboard, using only form and light to perceive their chosen expression in three dimensions. Deliver a lecture on the basics of puppet animation with a focus on simple materials and shapes.
- Day 3: Facilitate a summary and group review of the collages and models produced. Support students in selecting final materials for their puppet and making visual designs using flat or three-dimensional methods.
- Day 4: Coordinate the creation and animation of final puppets with the support of an invited puppeteer. Guide students in developing a short situation or happening for their puppet and storyboarding a one-minute scene.
- Day 5: Organise the presentation of one-minute scenes to the group. Facilitate random pairing of students for improvised scenes exploring how two abstract characters interact. Oversee video documentation of all independent works.
- Invite and coordinate a professional puppeteer as a guest instructor for Day 4.
- Ensure video documentation of all works and support the creation of a photo portfolio documenting the process and finished works.
- Provide constructive feedback throughout the week and facilitate group discussions at each stage.

## Assessment & Project Presentation (if applicable)

Students present a one-minute live puppet scene to the group showcasing the personality and movement spectrum of the puppet created by them. Assessment is based on active participation throughout the five-day module, the quality and conceptual coherence of the final puppet, the storyboard, and the one-minute scene. Final deliverables include: a video installation of the scenes, an installation comprising storyboards, concept drawings, and finished puppets, and a photo portfolio documenting the process and finished works.

## Additional information

Two videos available on youtube portrait students who participated in the module:

Jake Conroy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXns4s-n3UA&t=1s>  
Muireann Okeefe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-1weYIE99M>

## Implementing Institution

Institution	Magyar Képzőművészeti Egyetem (MKE) – Hungarian University of Fine Arts, Budapest
Faculty / Dept.	Fine Arts / Scenography dept.
Contact Person	Patrícia Pajor
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Semester / Year	Winter Semester 2025

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