

STUDENT-KICK-OFF DESCRIPTION

Shadow Theater

ECTS / Duration	5 working days / 40 hours
Faculty	Magyar Képzőművészeti Egyetem, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Interplay Hungary Egyesület – excursion and input at: Sveuciliste Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku
Study Programmes	Fine Arts · Scenography · Pedagogy in the Arts · Architecture · Critical Studies · PhD
Teaching Method	Hands-on workshop, studio practice, group critique, lecture, digital input
Language	English
Puppet Technology	Shadow theater (projection screens, overhead projector, projector, digital and analogue shadow theater option, sound design (analogue), nails, hammers, drills, dremel kit, sewing equipment, glue, found objects, paper, etc.
Target Audience	Open

Content & Description

The Student-Kick-Off was designed as an easy access point for students unfamiliar with animation in general. Thus the three teaching staff members, Sasa Dosen, Sheron Pimpi Steiner and Nenad Pavlovic, designed the workshop over five days to communicate a general hands-on knowledge about puppeteering and animation. Instead of building rod or hand puppets, they concentrated on shadow theater which offers the inclusion of a stage, animation and the introduction of (abstract) characters. Students were asked to work in mixed groups consisting of students from the three partnering universities and use popular music (songs) as content creators for their short animated pieces.

Pedagogical Rationale

The collective work was to enhance the outcome and communication, staging a real working situation on how scenographers, puppet designers and puppeteers and animation artists, as well as sound designers usually collaborate to bring performative practices into being. English as a working language connected easily the three groups and invited discourse. Apart from the major work load being artistic and practice based the teaching staff (Nenad Pavlovic and Sasa Dosen) further introduced basic puppet art and puppeteering theory and input. Creation (artistic practice), input (theoretical discourse) as well as collaborative work (group work, democratic decision making) were all found on the overall project's idea of discussing and perceiving puppeteering and animation as democracy strengthening tools.

Learning Outcomes

Students were able to:

- Understand and apply appropriate puppeteering, sound and animation, as well as building techniques to create basic forms of shadow theater and sound design
- Animate shadow objects along given narratives
- Critically contextualise shadow play and object-subject relation
- Translate a concept into a animated stage/projected performance



Tasks — Teaching Staff

- Day 1: Briefing session included a short introduction to the art of shadow puppetry. A few pieces of music were presented and shared with students participating in the workshop. Students were given a simple task to choose one piece of music, and to record their own thoughts, associations and feelings related to the chosen piece in writing. In addition to that, students made rough sketches reflecting their emotional response to the chosen piece of music, thus setting the general mood and atmosphere for the future task of creating a short shadow puppet performance.
- Day 2: During the first session of the workshop, groups of 4 to 5 students were formed according to their chosen piece of music – students that have chosen a particular piece would work together, exploring further the possibilities of presentation of a collective idea, derived from individual research and creative dialogue, within the medium of shadow puppetry.
- Day 3: The student workshop aims to research the expressive potential of shadow puppet theatre. Interdisciplinary approach to creating a short performance within a small group teaches the students to freely express and exchange their ideas in a collaborative way, much needed in any theatrical production. The artistic research process combines drawing, mixed media, art installations, light, sound and movement. Music served as a starting point, the initial tool for setting up the mood and defining the emotions that students wish to communicate through their simple yet concise shadow puppet production.
- Day 4: Sound production and special effects in sound and light management were discussed and applied.
- Day 5: The end product were short, complete performances, presented at the end of the workshop by participants themselves. The performances were documented (filmed and photographed).

Assessment & Project Presentation (if applicable)

Students presented a short and public live screening of their shadow theater scenes in Osijek, but also twice in Vienna: during the Focus Module in Spring 2025 and the closing conference and exhibition in January 2026. The shadow theater animations are further documented on IPMAU youtube channel. Assessment was based on active participation throughout the five-day module.

Implementing Institution

Institution	Sveuciliste Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku
Faculty / Dept.	Puppet Design
Contact Person	Sasa Dosen
E-Mail	saadosen@gmail.com
Semester / Year	[Fall / 2024]

Developed within the IPMAU project (Interdisciplinary Puppetry Modules for Art Universities), co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. Project No. 2023-1-AT01-KA220-HED-000156007.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.