

Jonathan SHIMONY – Jula WILDBERGER

Teaching Classics Through Art

Visual Arts as a Tool for Enhancing Text Comprehension and Appreciation

We wish to present experiences made with a unique course format called “Englishbridge”, which allowed us to apply cross-disciplinary methods of teaching ancient literary and philosophical texts to an extremely diverse multi-cultural group of undergraduate learners with below average English proficiency. After close reading of texts in class and study trips to museums to view and discuss painted and sculpted representations of the various subjects treated, the students were asked to draw or paint their own versions of what they had understood.

We would like to show how visualization through individual creative work not only serves as an incentive for heightened comprehension efforts but also reveals deficiencies that the instructors can thus tackle better; how the comparison of artistic representations of the same topics in a variety of techniques sensitizes the students to the possibilities and limitations of each medium; how the drawing and exhibiting of Platonic and other classical myths can become the starting point of lively and highly philosophical discussions, and conversely, how those discussions can enhance the power and meaning of visual documents.

Jonathan SHIMONY graduated from Harvard College’s Visual and Environmental Studies Department with highest honours in 1987, whence a Luce Foundation Scholarship sent him to Japan. He obtained his MFA in 1991 from the MCA, Boston and taught at Harvard’s Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts from 1991 to 1994. He came to France on a Fulbright Scholarship, where he now teaches art at the American University of Paris. He exhibited at the O Museum, Tokyo, where he shows at the Artlive Gallery. In Paris, he exhibited twice at the Mona Bismark Foundation and is represented by Galerie Méta-noïa. He has created land art pieces in Tokyo and Miho, Japan, and has built monumental sculptures in Shanghai for the city’s sculpture biennial. He has numerous commissions in the U.S.A and Europe. E-mail: j.shimony@gmail.com.

Jula WILDBERGER (Dr. phil. Würzburg, habil. Frankfurt am Main) is Professor of Classics at the American University of Paris. She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (UK) and, before coming to AUP, has had ample teaching experience and training in Germany and the UK. Her current research focuses on ancient Stoicism and literary or other cultural tools used by ancient philosophers to promote their ideas and ideals. For a full CV and bibliography see <http://www.aup.edu/faculty/dept/clen/wildberger.htm>. E-mail: jwildberger@aup.edu.

