



Miran Erič



THE CINAGE COURSE WILL BE IN ITSELF AN ACT OF ACTIVE AGEING

Miran Erič is a painter, researcher of underwater cultural heritage, lecturer and has been active at Slovenian Third Age University as a mentor of study circles of painting. Within this university, and upon the initiative of his older students, he founded a group of older learners-painters with an eloquent name *The Turtles*. He is a keen and innovative observer of active ageing, an expert of active ageing and a militant in this field. In his foreword to the monograph *The Turtles*, he keeps asking himself about the role of older adult education, education as an activity and a possibility for older people to progress and to be in a transformational contact with themselves and the world around them.

D.F. What is active ageing is in your eyes?

M.E. As I view it, it is about being able and being supported and being expected to take a transformational, a decisive role in society, communities and in one's individual life.

D.F. You keep asking yourself why your students who over years have become excellent and innovative painters, have exhibited their paintings in professional galleries, have acquired their own author style are still being looked down by professional circles and critics as if their creativity were less valuable than the creativity of others, who are younger and formally educated?

M. E. I think it is all about the social construction of old age. I keep asking myself how one can be active in later life if society and culture are implicitly or overtly against one's activity. Shouldn't we better try to produce a strong and constant impact on society, pushing it to change and dismantle its stereotypes about old age?

Today the visual culture has become the culture of majority

D.F. *You have accepted our invitation to take part in the CINAGE focus group. Why?*

M. E. Ours is a visual society and younger generations have been born into it. Today, at a very early age, one starts amusing oneself producing films. One is not formally educated to this end, of course not, but due to the fact that one has been in touch with hundreds or thousands of visual presentations, that one has been learning autonomously, one can tell the difference between what is beautiful and what is not. What is more, the quantity of visual images younger people have been touch with has enabled them to develop aesthetic criteria. This is not the case of older people who quite often are not that much included in this visual culture and society, or at least are less included than younger people. Older adults have well developed cognitive abilities, therefore they should be taught about the visual images and their power of expression.

D.F. *Will that be enough?*

M. E. What I also like about the CINAGE project is that older learners will learn how to visually convey *their* understanding of active ageing. They could even produce publicity for active ageing. Now, we are all confronted with new media, since they are at a reasonable price, and new technological possibilities. So, older people

should first learn about them, to see what they can do using them. And this will be the case in the CINAGE project. Therefore, I think that in our focus group, we should also have a film maker, somebody who knows about how to use the film tools and technology and also for the course, there should be a film maker.

D. F. How will the CINAGE project affect the CINAGE course participants ...?

M. E. Well, we are all film viewers, literally all of us. Annually, we view at least from 5-10 featured films, but the participants in the CINAGE course will hopefully develop the understanding of both films and active ageing. This will be specific and the course in itself will be for some of them an act of active ageing.

By analogy with my students who learn how to paint and acquire a certain ability to look analytically at paintings, I expect that the CINAGE course participants will develop the understanding of film and of its power of expression. Study circles of painting enable their members to attribute a meaning to the paintings and the process of painting and the CINAGE course will enable the participants to attribute a meaning to film and cinema.

Now, in visual society it is not enough to talk about active ageing. It is necessary to convey messages using films and other visual media. The course will enable the participants to live as film viewers or film makers like my students of painting are taught to live as painters which are far more than holding a brush for an hour or two a day.

D.F. What do you think the CINAGE course may offer to the participants?

M.E. I hope the course participants will learn about the possibilities the new technology can offer them; the visualisation may offer them a possibility to

penetrate their own psychic world and the world around them and to better understand beauty. They will learn about film tools and the contents and how they are related. The tools are important! If somebody is asked to paint he should know about the tools needed, if somebody is asked to write, to take photos, again somebody should know how to handle the tools.

D. F. *What do you think about the film Good to go which you and the focus group viewed when you met last Friday?*

M. E. Well, I think that we have started building together a new view of ageing. The script writer of the film Good to go is probably much younger than the featured main characters; therefore there are so many stereotypes about old age in this film but also active ageing competencies, of course. There is a mix of them. For instance I can hardly believe that in reality older people are as grumpy and grudgy as Ivan is. In any case, I have not met anyone like Ivan so far.

There is nothing like generally valid active ageing

D. F. *I was amazed at the dynamics of the focus group*

M. E. So was I. I would appreciate, if we could view more films together. What we say as a result of thinking together, could lead to our new understanding of older people and their position in society. First and foremost, we should stop thinking about active ageing in general. There is nothing like generally valid active ageing. It can be very different, depending not only on one's social and cultural environment not so much on older people's age, but mostly on their socio-economic condition, on their status, on the fact that they live alone or in partnership, are healthy or not, have children or not, work or not. If I am a young retiree my active ageing would be



different from someone's who is not healthy. Well, I really appreciated our meeting and how the focus group is being composed and moderated.

Dušana Findeisen

