

CREATIVE SCHOOL PROJECTS

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Hello there!

I am pleased to present the educational and creative projects that I have designed for Art and Design courses that have been taught to children between the years 2018 and 2020. The lectures designed in these projects have been delivered in French to Chinese students of different ages, in a school in Beijing.

The presentation of this document is organised by teaching methods that have been applied transversally to the different courses (primary and secondary school), taking into account the different disciplines being taught (drawing, design, architecture, etc.).

Thomas Verbal
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CONTENT

■ Method

01 From one to many

02 From plane to volume

03 From fusion to creation

04 From still to motion

05 From history to symbol

06 From near to far

07 From concept to poster

08 From mess to order

09 From reality to fantasy

10 From problem to solution

■ Language

Method: Project-based pedagogy



The prepositions of time “from / to” define the beginning and end of a project. Between them, the process is characterised by phases of change as a project evolves by steps. This change may vary from a method to another.



There are constants in the projects done with the students that can be analysed, communicated and used repeatedly. They are revealed in ten methods, which I will define later, being at the core of more than forty projects. Once they were made explicit, they started to lead to a structured experimentation. At times, a project may even have combined two different approaches. There will certainly be more methods to unfold as there are always more projects to work on.





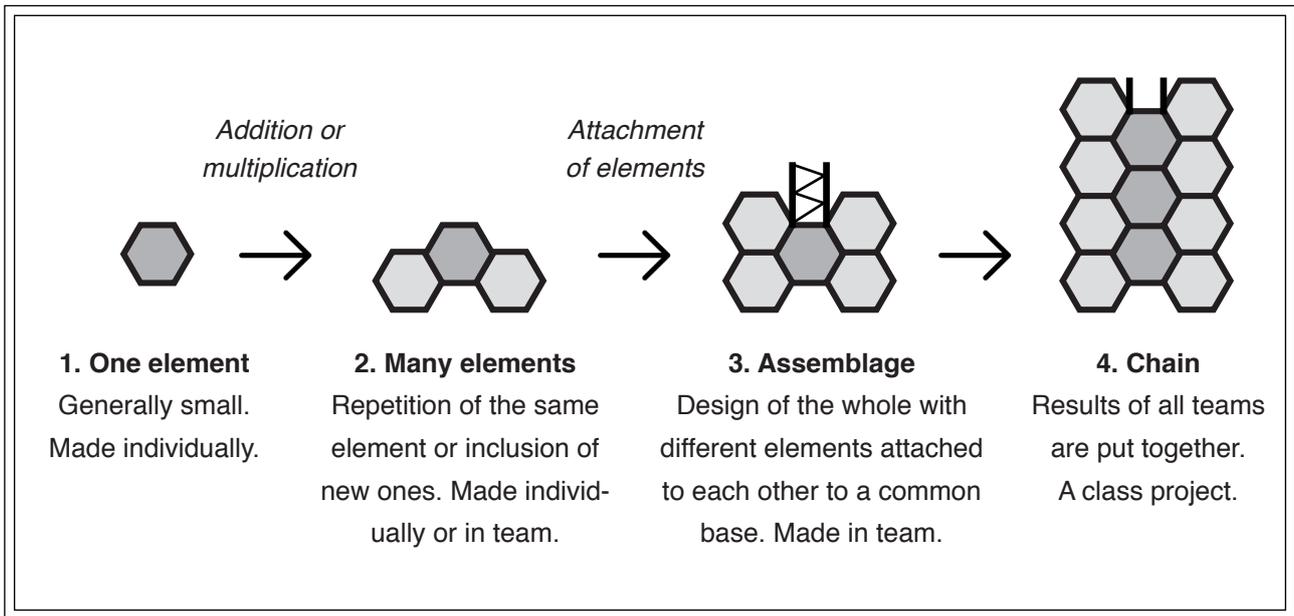
As designer and pedagogue, I have a vocation for experimentation and I am driven by curiosity for what students may do to respond to the challenges exposed at each step of a project. Methods guide them by posing a stable base on which their creativity may be unleashed. Methods also allow students to see the work process as essential as the result. Let's take a look to what has been done with them so far.



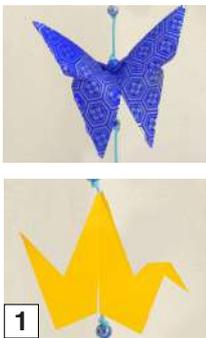
01

From one to many

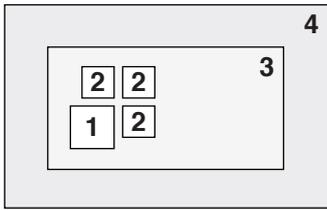
The project starts with one element and ends with a bunch of them. Each student's work can be assembled to those of others producing an impressive result. Projects of this section scale up in the process.



Project 1: The Art of paper



Students had to start making origami butterflies and birds on their own. Then, they had to make flowers with their partner and, together, they had to assemble their productions to a wool yarn. The project ended when all teams gathered their garlands.



From one origami to a decorative curtain. From one house to the model of a neighbourhood. Students start working individually and continue planning with their team, until the whole class exposes the results.

1. A butterfly or a house
2. New origamis or houses
3. A garland or a street
4. A curtain or a neighbourhood

Project 2: The Art district



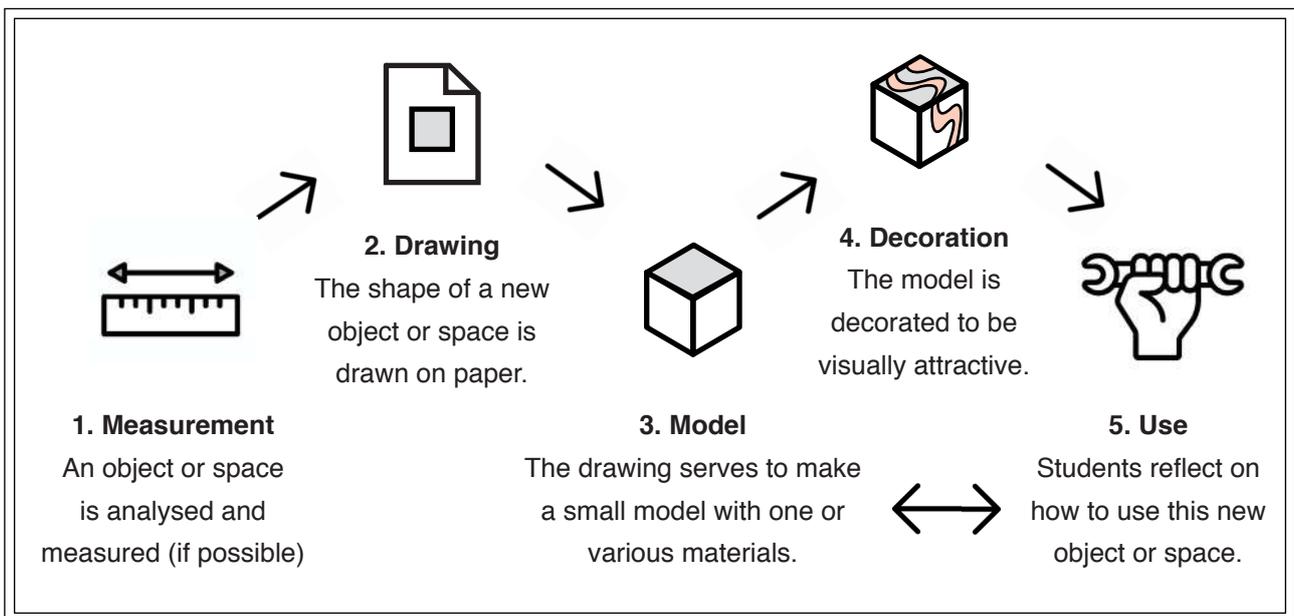
Students started to make the model of a house with paper and to decorate it while designing their own garden. In teams, they had to add up trees, cars, sculptures, pedestrians, among other elements. Together, they had to decide where to display them on a piece of cardboard that would become their street. The project ended when all teams connected their roads between each other to form a new district.



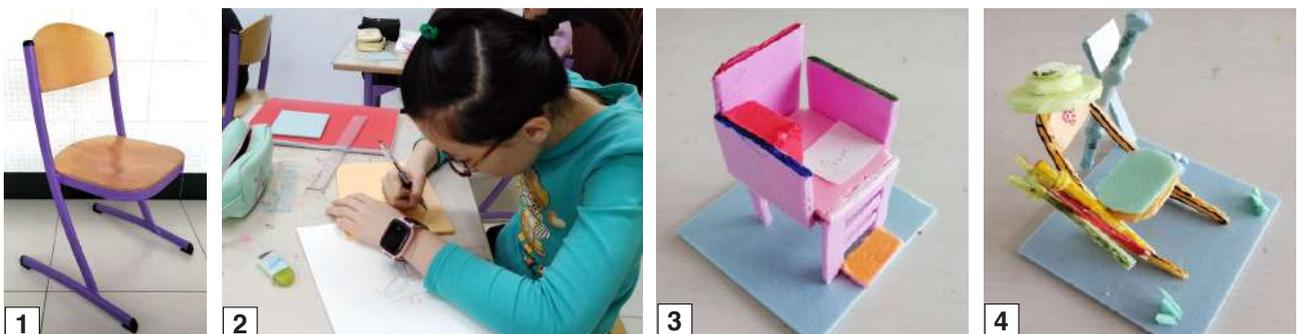
02

From plane to volume

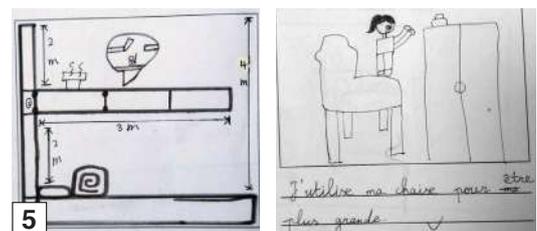
Real objects and spaces may be observed, analysed and represented in many ways. They may also inspire new designs to be drawn and shaped, in a process that moves from 2D to 3D, from plane to volume.



Project 1: My chair



Students first learnt to draw a chair by measuring the one used in class. They were asked to draw a new chair and to make a 1/6 foamboard model of their invention, later embellished with crepe paper and other elements. Students also had to reflect on different ways of using their new chair.

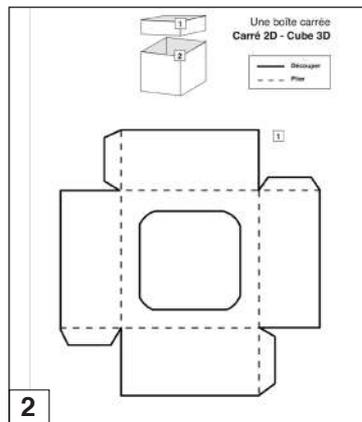


- 1 real object / space
- 2 5 work on paper
- 3 4 work on model

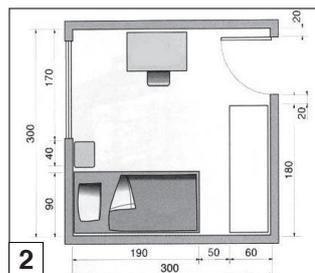
The project starts with a 3D element, a real object or space, and then students move from 2D, a drawing, to 3D, a model, to 2D again, an explanation of use. Hence, all phases are interconnected all along.

Project 2: My cardboard box

Students learnt how to make a box by reusing pieces of cardboard and following the instructions of a simple pattern. Once the box was finished, students had to embellish it by putting into practice the technique of collage, which is also an artful way to reuse materials. At last, students had to present their boxes while reflecting on how to use it.



Project 3: My ideal room



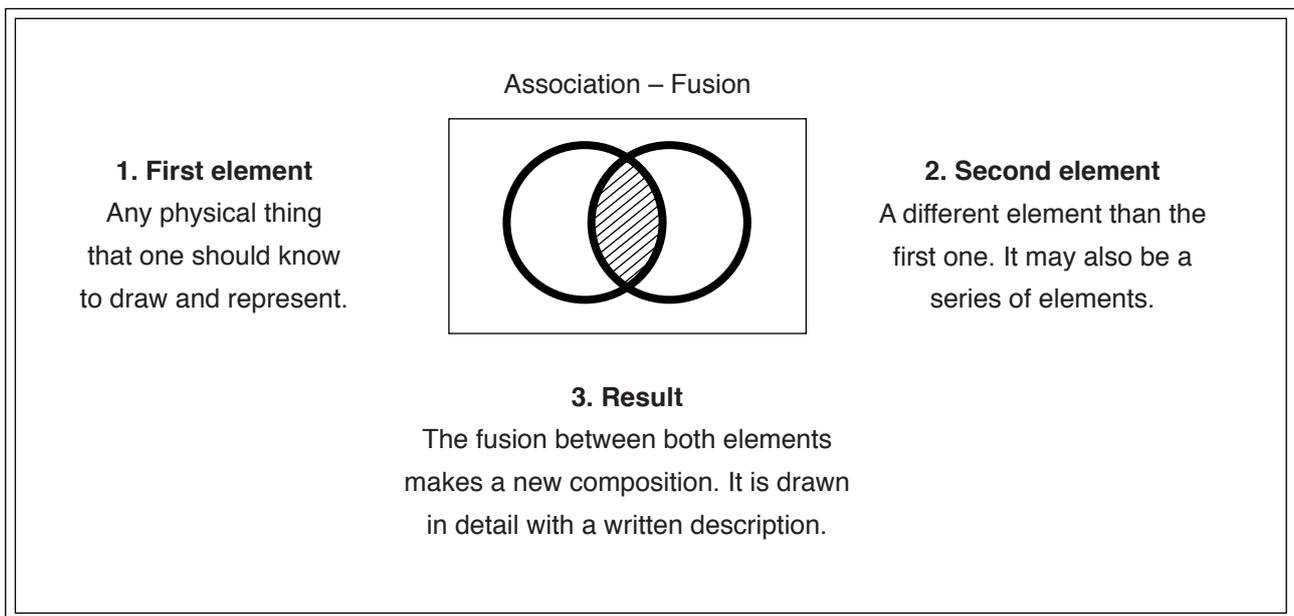
Students had to draw a floor plan of their ideal room as well as the furniture imagined within the space. Then, they made a model of that room and they decorated it by using different materials. They finally had to describe the different elements composing their space and to reflect on its everyday use.



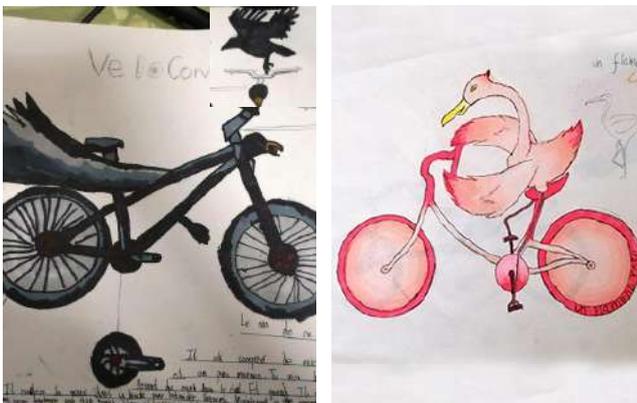
03

From fusion to creation

The combination of two distinct elements may produce an unusual result. These projects encourage students' inventiveness in drawing differently while learning how to present their ideas to a wider audience.



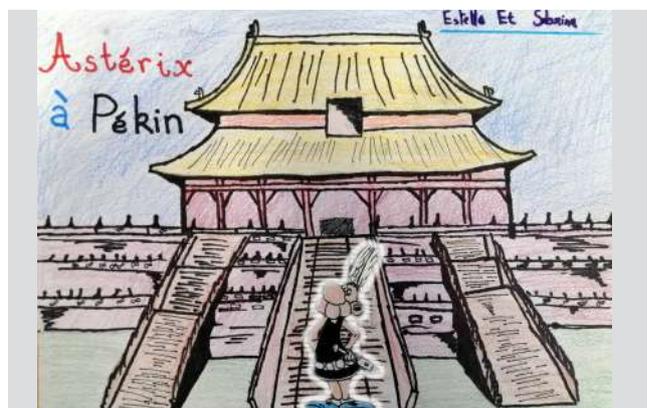
Project 1: Bike and nature

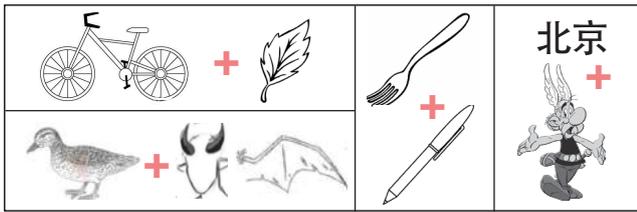


Students had to invent a bicycle, whose parts had to come from the natural world, whether it is by form, function or colour.

Project 2: Astérix in Beijing

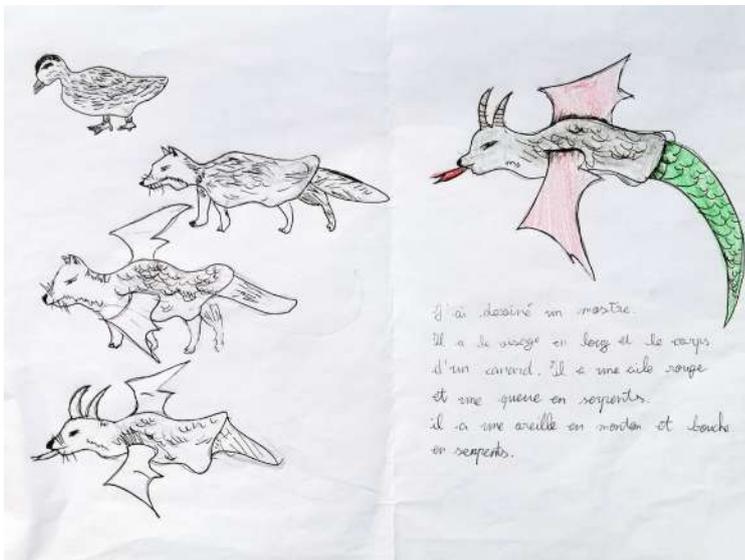
Students started to draw in teams the cover of a new Asterix album. They had to imagine the French character visiting a Beijing monument.



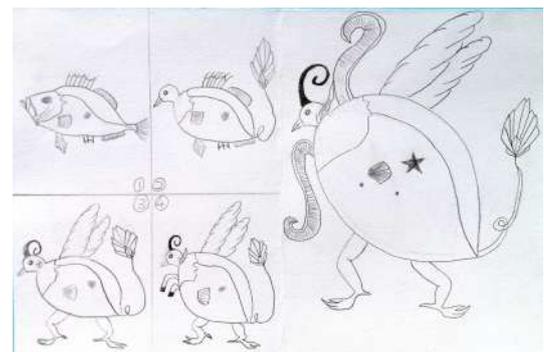


In this creative process, there is an addition of elements, although a subtraction or multiplication of shapes could also be carried out.

Project 3: Imagine a monster

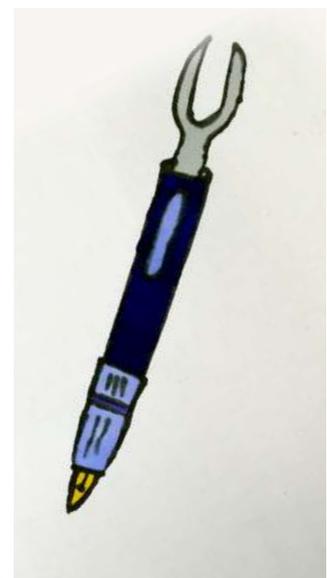
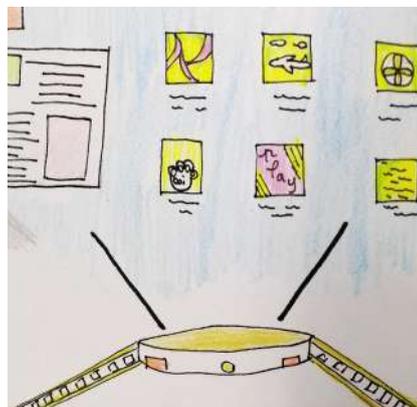
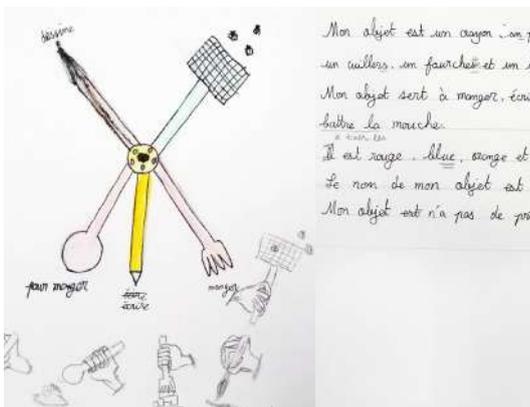


Students had to metamorphose an animal into a monster. They had to draw the different stages of its transformation by adding horns, wings, tails, among other elements.



Project 4: The multifunction object

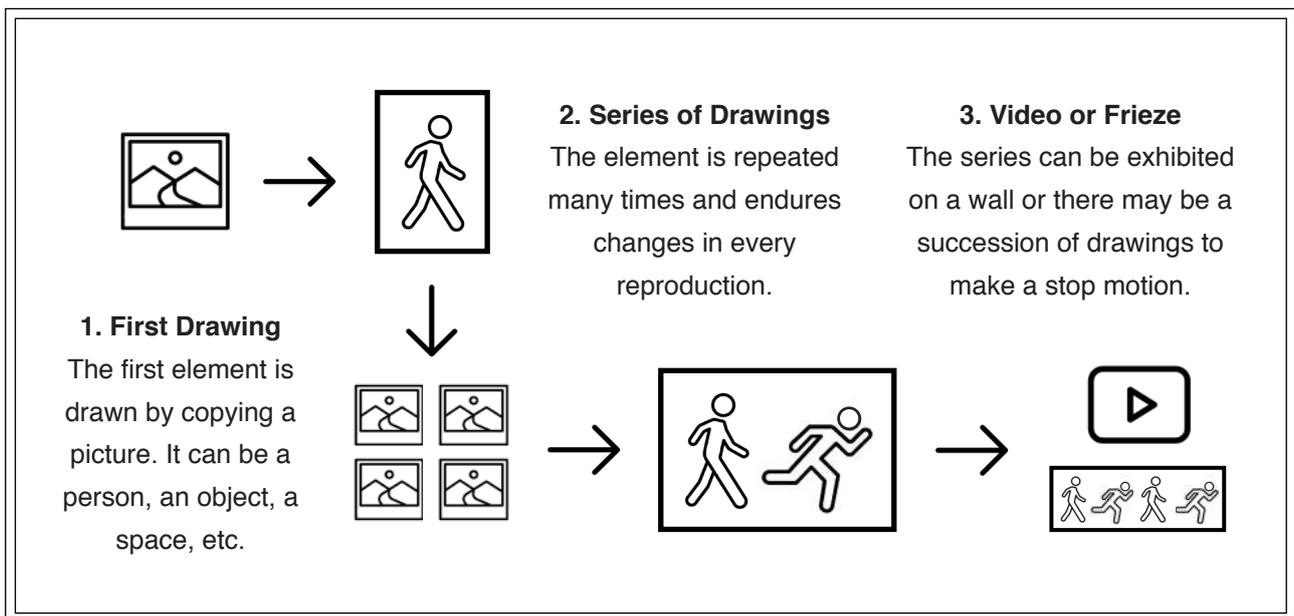
Carelman's catalog of unfindable objects (1976) has enabled students to become inventors of complex objects that have multiple functions. They had to associate two or more needs with shapes that answer to these needs.



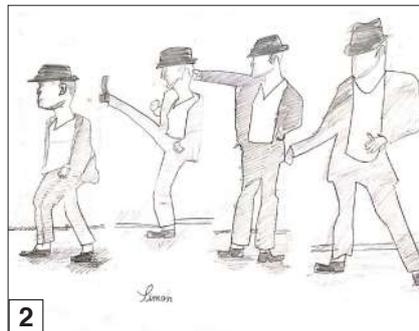
04

From still to motion

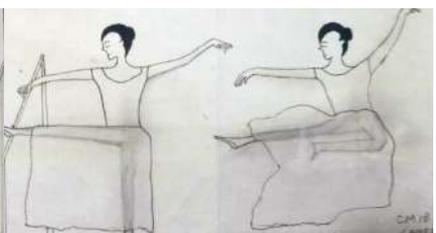
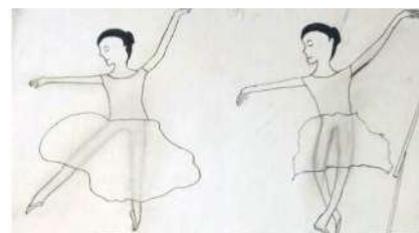
The project starts with one still image and ends with a series of images depicting movement. The main element will be seen changing step by step. The result reveals the frame by frame process in all its details.



Project 1: Body in motion



Students had to draw a body in movement, whether dancing or doing sport. After that, they had to continue the series with three other postures of the same body.



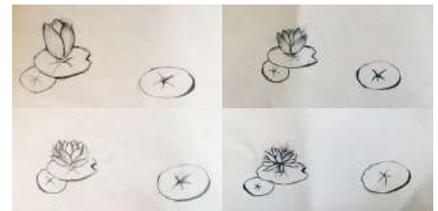


It seems preferable to use the stop motion technique to present these works but it could also suffice to display them in a frieze on a wall.

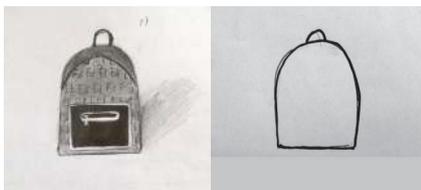
Project 2: Water lilies



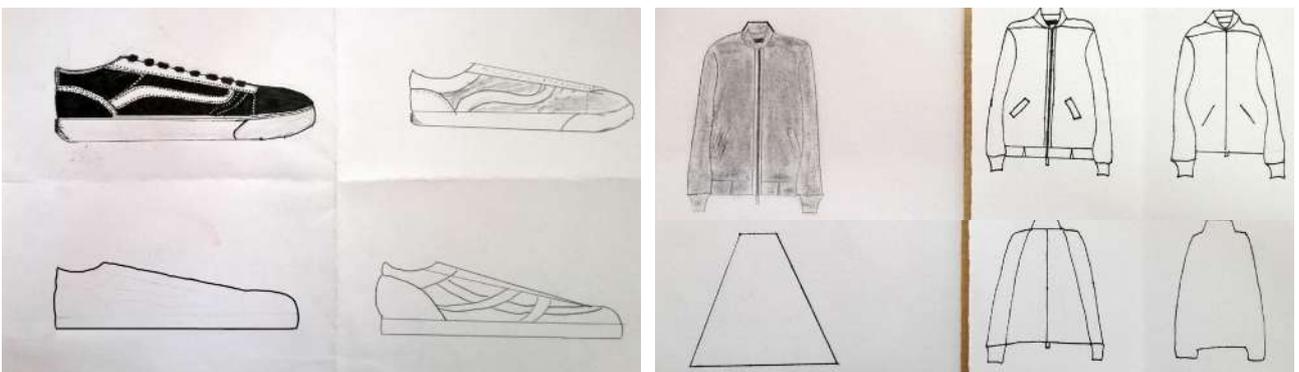
Students had to draw a water lily while describing Monet's artworks. Then, they had to draw four opening states of the flower.



Project 3: The lines of an object



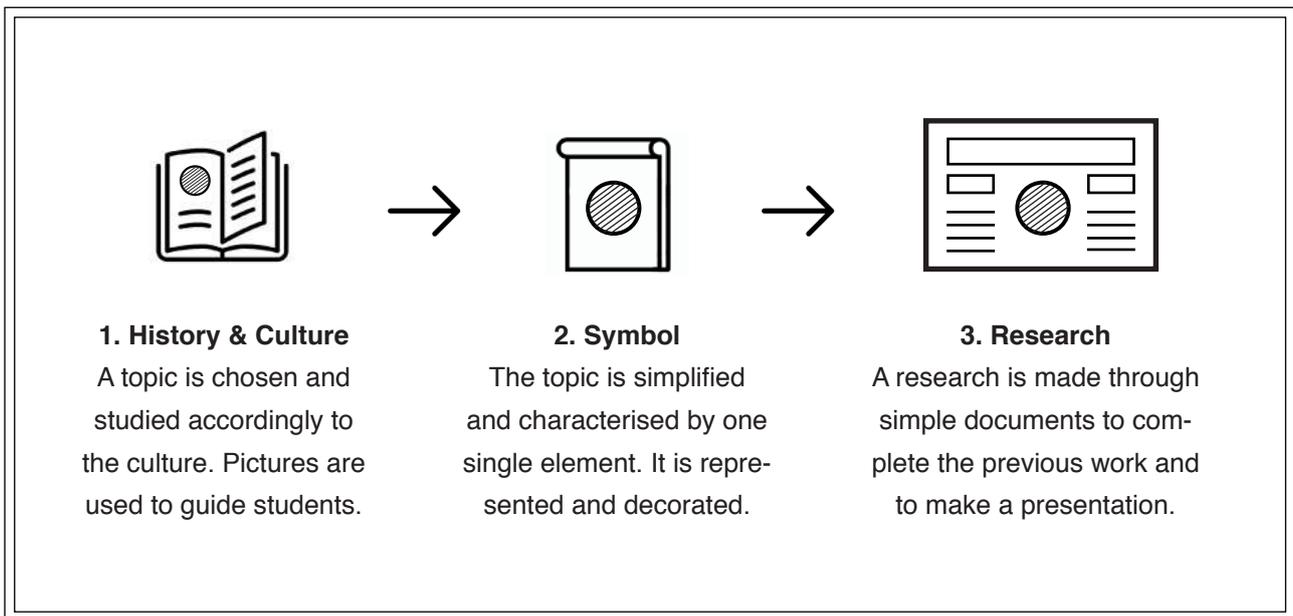
Inspired by the bulls of Picasso and the successive stages of abstraction of the animal, students had to choose an object and start drawing all its details, lines and shadows. Then, they had to simplify their object while showing the different stages of that line deconstruction.



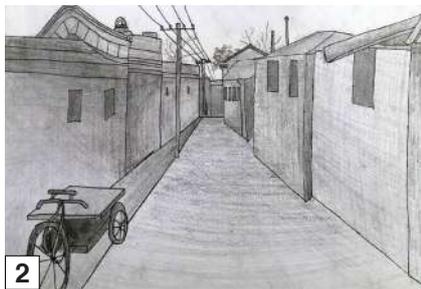
05

From history to symbol

When one studies ancient cultures, their material and immaterial heritage may bring up topics to reflect in art projects. It is to say that these topics always have a distinctive element that may portray well the culture.

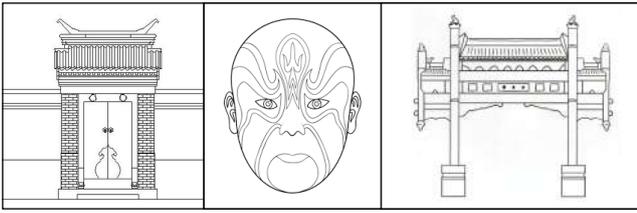


Project 1: Hutong of Beijing



Students had to draw a hutong in perspective and in detail. They had to choose the best drawings to expose them while doing their own research to describe these old streets of Beijing.





These key elements may in turn induce a group research, in which information is simplified, structured and displayed for a presentation.

Project 2: Peking Opera



While studying Peking opera and its characters, its costumes, its instruments, its theaters, students had to draw and paint a new face on a cardboard mask. They also had to do a group research on the opera to arrange a presentation in which the mask had a central position of visual communication.



Project 3: The Chinese gate

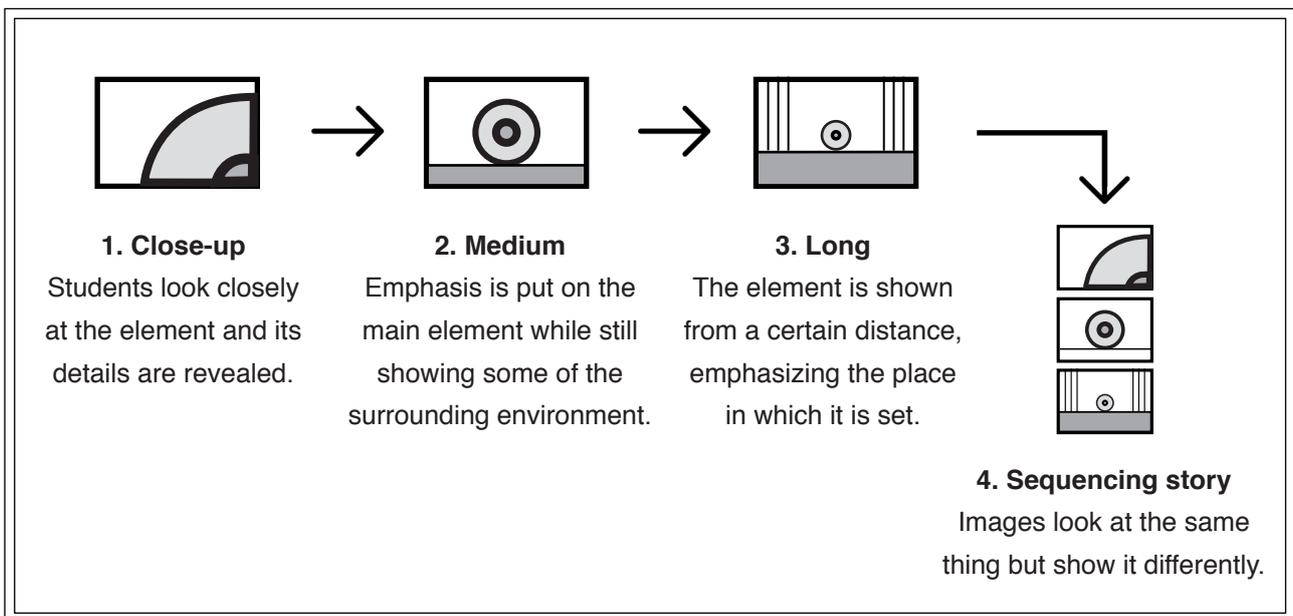
Students had to draw the Chinese gate of Guozijian by reproducing the principal structure and its decorative patterns while paying attention to the symmetry of these architectural piece of Art.



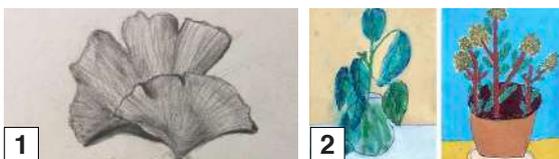
06

From near to far

It is only a matter of scale. One may observe an element from close up, in all its details, and then from farther until seeing the whole. It may also work inversely. As a result, it seems that time has stopped.

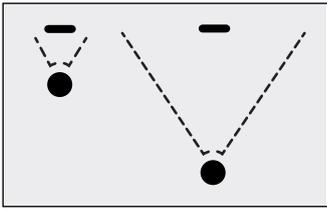


Project 1: Leafs and flowers



Students had to draw leaves from very close, then the plant on the table as a whole and finally the class with all the plants in the background. The same was done outside.





If the scene is real, students may move along to observe and represent the object from near or far. If it is just an image as in the projects below, students should imagine the rest of the sequence.

Project 2: From closer to farther



By studying for the first time different movie shots, students worked in groups to represent two portraits and two still lives art works, well-known in art history, from closer to farther drawings according to the original painting.



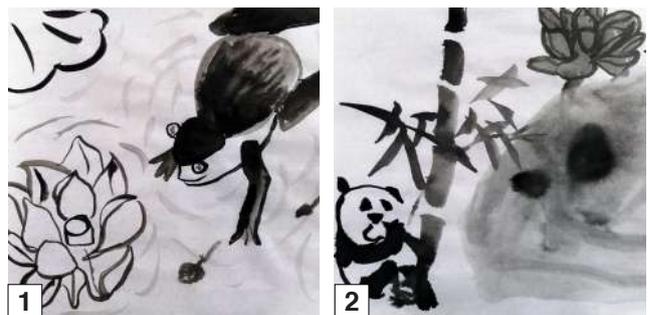
Project 3: Hutong of Beijing

This project could also fit in this category if students start drawing a door, then the house and the street.



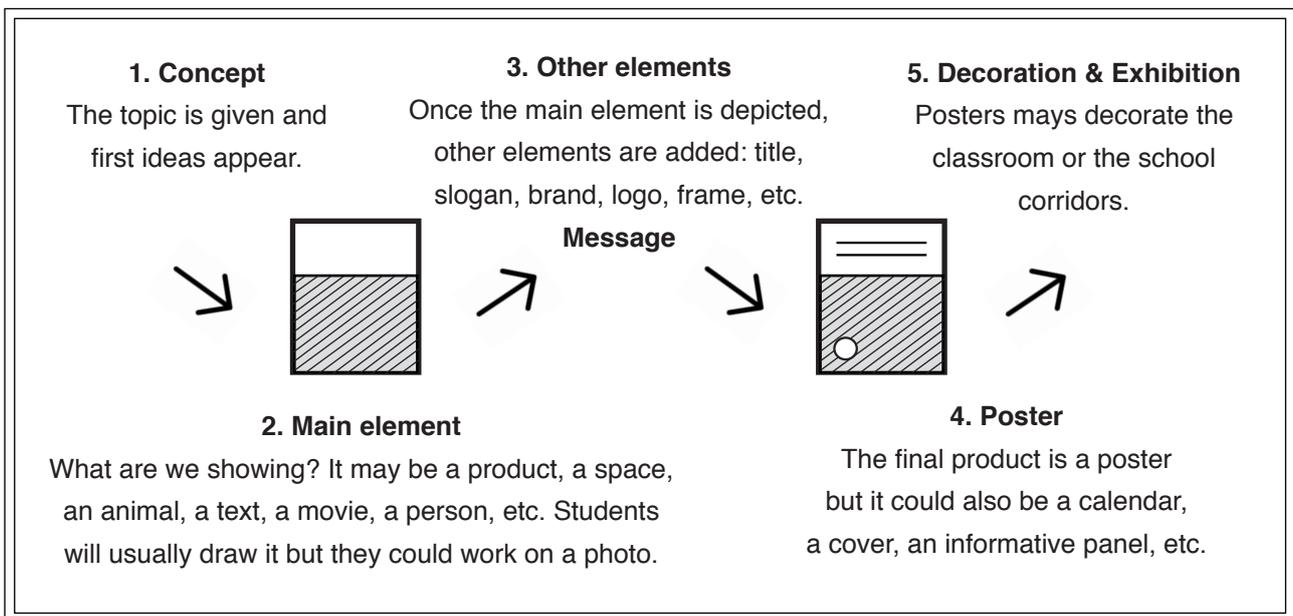
Project 4: Chinese Painting

Students start drawing a plant, then an animal near-by and finally its habitat to make three postal cards.



07 From concept to poster

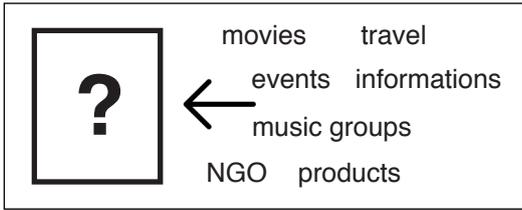
Some ideas are worth being neatly presented on a poster. In this process, students learn about visual communication by including textual and graphic elements. Results should be eye-catching and informative.



Project 1: I invent an object

Students had to invent a new object through associations (ex: a flower lamp), to then sell it on a poster by showing its main attributes.





Students' posters may be used for many purposes: to promote invented objects, an event, a movie, to do activism, or to communicate a complex message, etc.

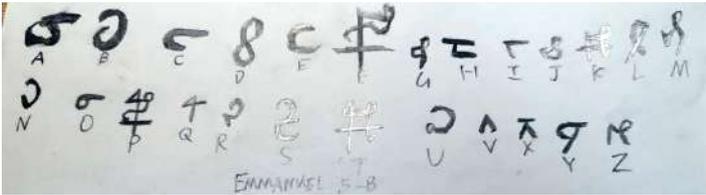
Project 2: My favourite animal



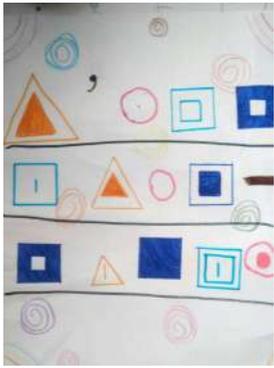
Students had to choose an endangered animal and draw it. Thus, they learnt how to make a poster by adding the WWF logo and a slogan to make people aware of the loss of biodiversity.



Project 3: A new alphabet



Students had to design a new alphabet that could be readable or completely illegible, to apply to a sentence of their choice with which they had to make a poster.



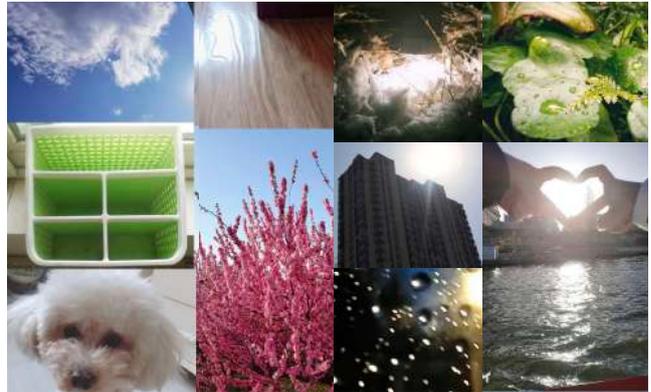


Topics have their own subtopics, which may be studied very differently by each person. As such, results are varied in their approach.

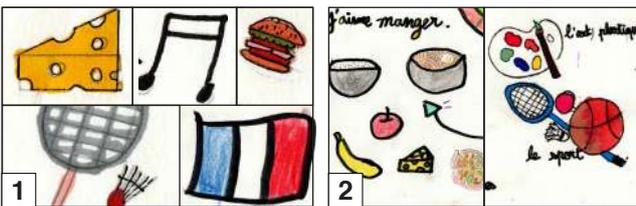
Project 2: My daily life in pictures



Students had to take a series of pictures of their routine during holidays by adhering to four rules: symmetry, repetition, lights and colours.



Project 3: My tastes



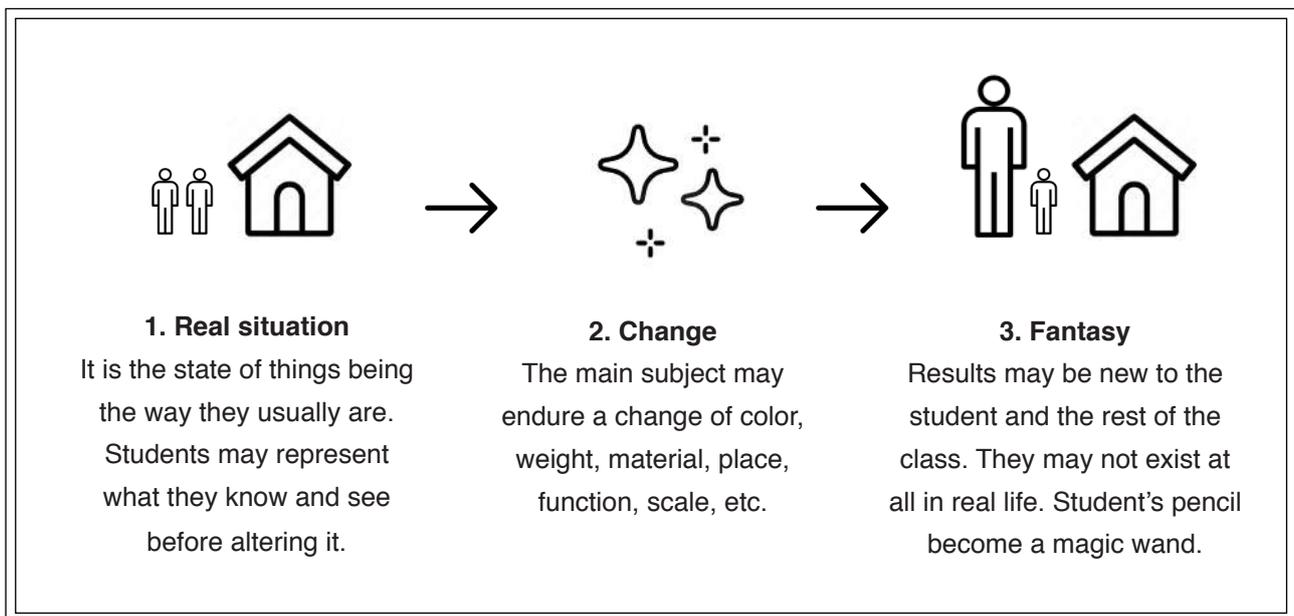
On their first day of class, students had to present themselves by analysing what they like and dislike in different domains (sports, food, school, etc.). At last, they had to present a mind-map of their tastes.



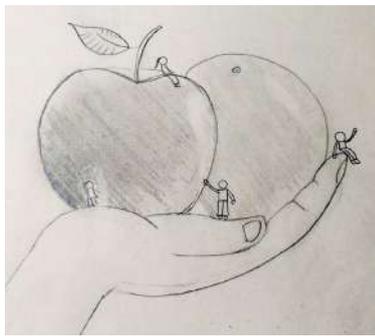
09

From reality to fantasy

Inspired by Bruno Munari's book, "Fantasy" (1977), there may be real situations considered normal that go through different forms of changes to then become surreal scenes that are new to everyone.



Project 1: Change of scale

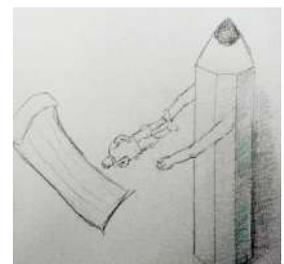


Students had to enlarge and shrink persons, animals or objects in a real world scene.

Project 2: Change of situation

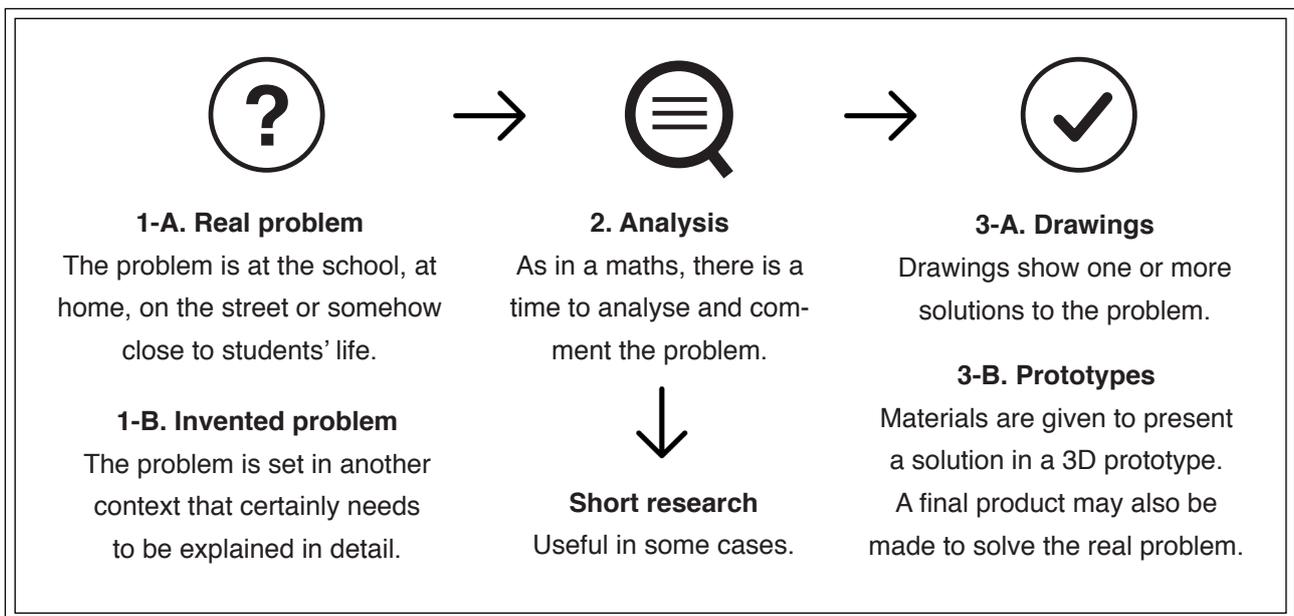


Students had to imagine a world where there is an upside down situation. Cats have human pets, pencils write with humans, etc.



10 From problem to solution

There are plenty of small daily life problems that can be resolved by inventive students. Once the need is defined and analysed, solutions may be presented through drawings or prototypes.

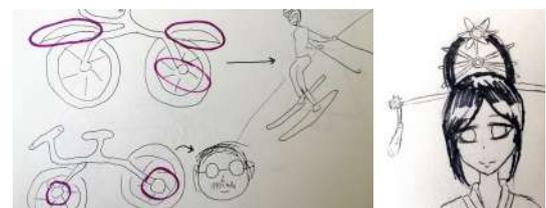


Project 1: An everyday object

How to improve an object you have at home? Students had to analyse an object and write down its technical attributes. Then, they had to think and draw how it could be improved in the future.



Project 2: How to reuse bicycles?

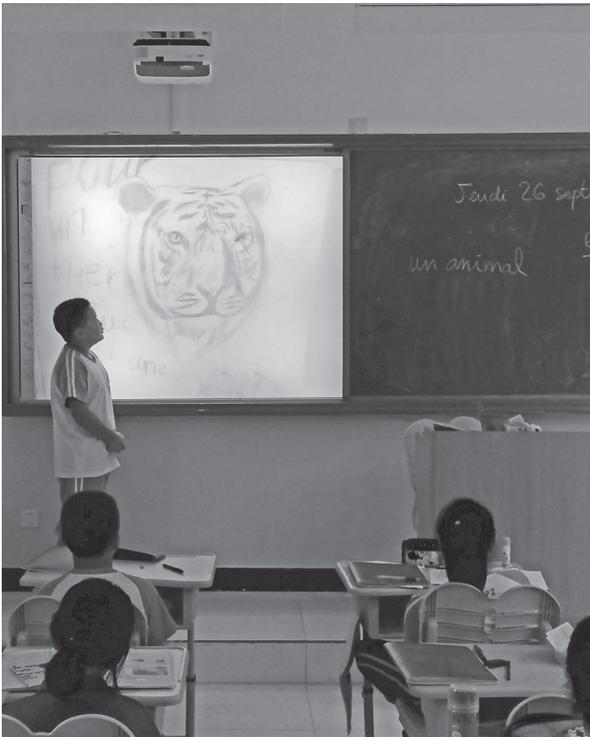


Last one!

How may a short student erase the upper part of the blackboard? Yes, with a ruler! In China, students clean their classroom every day. Here is a smart way to solve small real problems.



Language: How to teach it?



While working on creative projects, students are also able to learn a foreign language. They are taught a new vocabulary that may strengthen their oral and written skills. Most of the words may vary according to the topic chosen and others are constant, regardless of the project. These last ones are technical terms regularly used in creative fields (tools, colours, verbs of action, etc.). As there are methods to design projects, there are also methods to practice a language in an Art context.

Les instructions de l'exercice

1. **Prends** une feuille.
2. **Regarde** la vidéo et les étapes à suivre.
3. **Fais** trois papillons.
4. **Dessine** sur les ailes.



Language is present before the project begins, during the process and when it ends. First, students may be asked to follow project instructions, which arouse their comprehension skills. Once it is all completed, they may be asked to explain how they made the project by presenting the process and its stages.

Students can solicitate orally their teacher or their classmates to get help and advice while doing their project. Once finished, they may describe the result in all its details, by writing it down and presenting it orally in front of the class.



Projects' topics may find an echo in Art history and stimulate the study of artists, designers and architects' works. As such, students learn to observe, analyse and describe artworks. They also learn to express an opinion or feeling, to discuss their likes and dislikes. After few years, they may even know to justify their answers, taking part in a wider debate. As it is to be noticed, students works are of great inspiration to continually develop inventive teaching methods.

