

1. Brown paper – perfect material for artistic creation

Big sheets of brown paper and some string (hemp string works very well) are at the group disposal. The leader demonstrates individual steps of constructing the puppet. First, the participants are asked to make the paper more flexible and softer through crumpling and crushing it, so that it becomes similar to fabric – soft and flexible. Next, they form the shape of a head (ball), cover it with a wide paper sheet and tie a string around the puppet “neck”. The rest of the paper below the neck should be twisted up into two arms. The same must be done with two other long pieces of paper which will be used for legs. All parts must be tied up with string. It is also good to twist a length of cord around each limb to make it stronger. Thus the basic structure of the puppet can be made.

The whole puppet making process was filmed and it can be observed step by step in the video material accompanying this description.

2. Puppets – image and functionality

The next step after making the basic structure of the puppet is to further explore its capability to move and act. First of all the flexibility of a head and legs/feet and arms/hands has to be checked and improved if necessary. This can be done through extending individual limbs or making them shorter. Moreover, loosening or tightening string wrapped around individual parts of the puppet body can help.

Also, an individual look of the puppet is important in terms of building its personality and character. The course participants discovered many ways of equipping their heroes with distinctive features, like for instance funny hair or a dress. Two examples are especially worth mentioning. An additional figure – a walking alarm clock was invented by one participant and it played a crucial role in her scene. Another participant, while working on his puppet, discovered that a certain way of rolling up the paper for the arms will allow to transform them into wings during the action. It resulted in a great theatrical effect.

3. Narrative structure – story without text

Parallel to puppet making, the participants were drafting their stories. First, each of them worked on this task individually, describing planned actions in detail, scene by scene. The main focus was on showing what the puppet exactly does and what happens on stage, eg: The character is lying in a bed, sleeping. Snoring can be heard. An alarm clock rings and the puppet springs out of bed; etc. Next, everyone presented her/his story to the others and the whole group discussed the clarity of the plot, suggesting specific actions to make the story better understandable and more meaningful.

Learning outcomes/results

All participants managed to build their own puppets, even though they never did it before. They highly appreciated playful atmosphere of this kind of work and were impressed by the final outcomes.

As a result of the implementation of this module, the participants learned:

- how to use paper and string for puppet construction,
- how to create a puppet personage equipped with distinctive features,
- how to structure a story suitable for purely visual narration.