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School art and free-time art – a case study of children's art as communication

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The purpose of this study is to analyse art made by children and young people at school and in their freetime as social meanings and communication. The focus is on what kind of communication and what communicative needs children's and young people's art represents and serves, and what the implications for art education at school could be. The theoretical approach is based on semiotic analysis as suggested by the multimodal applications of critical discourse analysis (e.g. Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) and Halliday's systemic-functional theory (Halliday 1978). A sample of four drawings by a child in comprehensive school are analysed in detail, using the chosen theoretical framework. The chosen material and theoretical approach raise elementary questions about the nature of art. The analysis would seem to show that there might be differences in the communicative purposes represented in children's school art and free time art. Most importantly, the present study would seem to indicate that the chosen method of analysis would prove useful in further studies with a wider set of data, thus yielding important information about children's communicative needs and their implications for art education.