

**Geometry at Fine Arts and Design Faculties**  
**European Encounter of Erasmus Partner Faculties**  
**7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

Opening remarks

On behalf of the Drawing Department, I would like to say what a great pleasure it is for us to welcome all of you to our School, to exchange experiences and work together for a few days on this stimulating field. Let me extend these first words to congratulate the organizers. It takes courage and a healthy unconsciousness to organize a conference such as this in a school of fine arts, bringing together geometers, architects, mathematicians, artists and designers. It is reassurance to see that there is some degree of unconsciousness even in geometry. Thinking about geometry in the training of an artist and designer is recognizing its fundamental role in visual and spatial thinking, in composition and creativity. What practices, ideas, skills and techniques of geometry are still relevant to fine art and design training? How can they help us shape attitudes, solve problems, generate new ideas? How can they provoke us beyond our routines in thinking and making in art and design?

A few drawings made around 1855 by John Ruskin, regarding the perspective of clouds, could be used as visual provocation to address these issues. To be “in the service of the clouds” was Ruskin formula for the force underlying the mind’s search not for things, but for the relationships that held things together. This is a good metaphor to picture this encounter. There is only evolution – in reasoning as well as biology – when different species meet: diagrams and clouds.

From one part, geometry shapes an abstract form of reasoning with visual images. It creates a common ground and a common language through which complex situations can be envisioned and communicated in an art or design project.

But it also reminds us that intuition and reason are constantly interacting in drawing; that creative thinking also implies systematicity and rigor. Geometry give us a method to address complexity in art, in a generative, transformative and critical way.

To some extent, there is an underlying idea in geometric reasoning that is, at the same time puzzling and provocative: that the opening of possibilities in a creative mind happens in tandem with the discovery of limitations. Problem-solving skills such as visualization and spatial reasoning are also important for artists and professionals in math, science, and technology.

Let me now close by wishing you a delightful and inspiring meeting. We are looking forward to see the outcomes and stimulating ideas that will emerge from this encounter.

Paulo Luís Almeida