

Artist Tool / Icebreaker Magritte's Pipe

Artisttb004 / "Magritte's Pipe" Storytelling #2 / CNAM

Title	"Magritte's Pipe" – Storytelling icebreaker #2
Purpose	Develop the creativity, "thinking out of the box" and flexibility of the participants as well as their skills of co-creating a story.
Description	This icebreaker exercise can be used online as well as in class. It is a group exercise that aims at developing the creativity as well as the capacity of building a collective story in a limited time. The principle of this exercise is to show photographs of simple objects or real objects (depending if you do this icebreaker online or in class) and to ask the participants, previously divided into pairs or threes, to describe what it could be and develop a story. For example, showing a photography of a glass, you ask them to start their sentence by <i>"This is not a glass.... this is a super dome used to protect crops during floods"</i>. The participants hand the object or the photography back and forth, coming up with different uses for it and eventually coming up with a sensemaking story.
STEM topics covered	Collaborative innovation / Open innovation / Responsible innovation
Arts topics	Photography / Visual Art; Storytelling, Surrealism
STEAM approach explained	Use photography / visual art for developing creativity and divergent thinking as well as convergent in a very limited time and constrained environment.
Setting	Online / In Class
Time frame	15 mins + 20/30 min for feedback from each group
Group size	Groups of 3 students
Schedule and activities	1. Split the students randomly per groups of 3 in different breakout rooms 2. In each breakout room, you provide a picture of a simple object or a still-life painting 3. The first participant starts describing what this object could be (and not what it is!), starting his/her sentence by "This is not a XXX, this is a ..." 4. Then the next participant in the group starts over with another use or description of what it could be. 5. Once everyone in the group has given at least three different descriptions, the group stops and selects one description upon which they will start developing a story as a pitch for a potential innovation 6. Stop the activity after 15 minutes 7. Return all participants in general room and pick up randomly one or two groups to ask them to tell the audience the usage and story they made up from the selected picture or object. 8. General debrief with the students on what they thought about the exercise, how it can help to develop certain skills of storytelling, pros and cons of such exercise...
Age group / level of study	BSc, MSc, PhD
Preparation needed / pre-requirements	Prepare a set of pictures or objects that will be given to the groups. It could be interesting to give the same picture / object to two different groups to see the differences they come up with. No pre-requirement needed except imagination!
Instructions for students	Don't limit your imagination and try to forget the initial usage of the object.

	While finding original, out-of-the-box ideas for the object, try to think about sustainable innovation outcomes if possible, or at least innovative solutions.
Instructions for facilitators	This icebreaker was first used in an online context and worked very well thanks to the creation of breakout rooms and random repartition on Zoom or Teams. It can also be used in class but requires therefore a larger space or different spaces or classrooms as it might be a bit noisy. In the case of in-class participation, you can place the different pictures or objects on a table and ask each group to come and pick up one object. For the debrief, it could be interesting to show the painting of Magritte “<i>this is not a pipe</i>” and briefly explain the surrealist movement. Surrealism was intended to encourage the imagination of viewers and create perceptions without any conscious and rational control. It also talks to emotion which we aim at developing with STEAM approaches. You can also show the other painting, the “<i>Treachery of Images</i>” to go beyond the mere representation of a product and its reality and to think differently.
Lessons learned	Increase personal creativity, development of communication skills, empathy and visualization skills, presentation and critical thinking. Enhance connection between the participants, especially if it is a new group.
Additional materials	Pictures or simple objects to be shown
Inspiration if any, sources	Magritte’s Pipe TACIT project Erasmus +
Show me more (button)	 
Author / organization	Anne Berthinier-Poncet / CNAM Paris