

A Case Study :

Capitalizing the values of child art

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Art for children seems to be intrinsically pleasurable, by which they interrelate interior and exterior courts of life and give outward expression and shape to their thoughts and feelings. On one hand, art is a representative of reality, at the same time it is interpretive and expressive while certain meanings can be deduced with help of line, colour, shape and space used by children. When children create visual representation, they combine various elements of design on the basis of their own judgments, which provide a particular meaning to their creations. Thus, children's art is instrumental in fostering, their identity, uniqueness, self-esteem and accomplishments. All these virtues of art can be utilized by parents and elders, in a manner that would nourish the wholesome and balanced development of child's personality.

Art for a child is self-initiated and satisfying activity that needs no external motivation to sustain. During the process, child gets absorbed totally and reflects inner mental state in his creations hence it serves as a window into the mind and emotion of the child. Read (1945) asserts that art is "the only human activity that can establish a universal order in all we do and make, in thought and imagination". The effect of art activity on children's self-concept and general personality development can be very beneficial. Art can provide a means for children to develop their inherent creative abilities and, in the process, to integrate other personality dimensions, such as the emotional, social and aesthetic. Child art is often seen as instrumental in fostering and preserving each individual's identity, uniqueness, self-esteem and accomplishment.

Art has been approached as:

- Representative of reality
- Interpretative or expressive, and
- Abstract.

Representation is essentially illustration, recreation of some image or impression. Expression is often illustration plus purposeful distortion or selection to create an effect for both artist and viewer. The abstract is, in a sense, decorative; satisfaction for both artist and viewer is in the use and interrelation of colour, line, shape and space.

Young children rarely draw objects directly from observation, and even if we put an object in front of them and ask them to draw it, they may not look at it very carefully. Writers such as Golomb (1993) has pointed out that a picture cannot be a copy of the object because of the intrinsic differences between the properties of the two dimensional medium and the three dimensional object. In fact, Luquet (1927) argued that children actually draw from an 'internal model', whether or not a real model is available. The real model serves simply to activate the internal model. In forming this, internal model children are not copying the object but are engaging in a creative mental act. Although the internal model 'contains' the whole object, some parts of it are more focused and important and these parts may not be the same ones each time the child accesses or generates the model.

In particular it is unclear how the child 'translates' it into a drawing and although Willats (1997) has suggested a way that children might choose appropriate marks and shapes (picture primitives) to represent particular elements in the scene, this may not be universally applicable.

As children create visual representations, they are required to combine the elements of design into structure with meaning and then to judge

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