

forget that the child's work with creative materials is the child's experiment. He is learning to select and to reject, where to splash and where to be delicate. He is learning tactilely, visually, creatively, and morally. He scribbles first, learns to control the tool, advances to representation (within his understanding, just as scribbling means something to the young child), to a projection of himself. Technique comes after he has played with the forms of his childhood, as grammar comes after speech is learned. It must be remembered that even among great artists details like perspective are not always honored. Perspective is believed by many painters to have done as much harm as good. But this is a digression. To return to the child: he is seldom interested in putting in details. Sometimes he will outline the bricks of a house. Usually he fills in the outline or, if he is drawing on a wall, may paint the mass without outline. Children who have had the orthodox public school art very seldom paint without outline. But children of more progressive schools draw trees in mass, rather than with branches and leaves. It is my belief that the former is more natively childish and nearer to art. The child's work is a simple, unembellished statement of the fact of his sight or imagination. Often it resembles great art, but this should not betray us into a "cult of the child." The resemblance is due to the fact that all fundamentals are related.

HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN

Of all God's gifts to the sight of man, color is the holiest, the most divine, the most solemn. The purest and most thoughtful minds are those which love color the most.

JOHN RUSKIN

Art is not an enjoyment, a pleasure, an amusement—Art is a mighty thing. It is a vital organ of humanity which conveys conceptions of reason into the domain of sentiment.

TOLSTOY

ART AND CHILD'S ESSENTIAL NATURE

"With every liberation of the spirit a corresponding control must be gained or the result is pernicious."
—Goethe.

EVERY child is born with the power to create; that power, if released early and developed wisely, may become for him the key to joy and wisdom and possibly self-realization. Whether he becomes an artist or not is immaterial.

This awakening is impeded because teachers put their chief interest into helping the pupil produce a good drawing or painting. This emphasis on the product makes criticism external. Definite concrete alterations are constantly suggested, but no effort is made to discover what habit of the brain or hand is at fault. If we observe the pupil we may discover it. The limitation usually lies in a partial functioning of his whole being. The physical, emotional, and intellectual life should all play their parts, and whichever is dormant should be brought into play. This method of awakening the functions develops a natural technique. Spirit creates its own form.

Neither can this awakening be won in the method adopted by some extreme moderns who just turn the child loose to potter about entirely unguided and who admire all his immature products equally. Very little development occurs, his ego becomes inflated and thereafter creation ceases.

But there is a third way, a middle path where the teacher no longer desires his pupil to excel, where he no longer desires him to be utterly free, but where the teacher's rôle becomes that of a lover and student of human beings, whose aim is to release the essential nature of the child and to let that nature create its own form of expression, beginning in play and growing into effort. The integrity of the child is

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preserved and the art produced is genuine, primitive, and true.

Brancusi said of the artist: "It is not so difficult to create, as it is to maintain the conditions from which one may create." From this conception I find a definition of the teacher's part: to maintain conditions from which the children may create.

What are the conditions I try to maintain? I will outline them, beginning with the physical ones which include environment, materials and the use of the body.

The room should be still when the children enter—expectant; materials ready, plenty of space and light, walls white and undecorated, a fertile world for the imagination to play in; no reproductions of masterpieces on the walls to dull the children into a sense of inferiority, rather some of the most living of the children's work is placed there where the color and rhythm and honest crudities stimulate the more sluggish to effort. A few pieces of pure colored velvets are seen about. Some fruits or vegetables or perhaps the presence of a live animal key up unconsciously the latent sense of color or form much more than the work of masters. It is the ingredients of art that stimulate, not the art itself.

The materials used should liberate, not confine. Large sheets of paper are therefore used. Small ones tend to cramp the work. Crayons and chalks should be rich colored and soft enough to mark easily. Hard crayons block the intention of the artist, the softer ones accelerate it. For the same reason tempera paints and large brushes are better than the small hard pans of color and little brushes. Charcoal often responds better than pencils, and lithographer chalks and oil crayons are all extremely successful in making the work more broad, daring and individual.

The whole process of creation is extremely complex, but first we must realize that the body is the instrument through which it occurs. The muscular understand-

ing or kinesthetic sense is the link between conceiving and doing. In our civilization most of us use our bodies in a tense cramped manner or in a drooped flaccid one. Both are useless. We are also accustomed to using chiefly our fingers to draw with, because we have done so in writing, whereas the whole body should be the instrument. The finger tips are after all the last delicate part to convey the message of the mind to the paper, but we are inclined to make them carry the whole burden. A child sitting at his desk in his accustomed position may be blocked in his drawing and totally unable to express himself. If he is placed before a large upright board in a well-balanced position, using large gestures from the shoulders, the problem may be easily solved and the expression of his idea flows out freely. I have even placed a child's work high up on a mantel with a ladder to reach the upper parts and to stretch his body and arms to the furthest reach, with remarkable results. The new position, the wide reach, altered muscular habits changed the blood stream and the pulse. The effect was to uncover primitive levels in his being, to produce work on a different plane, inaccessible to him during habitual movements. Therefore I have developed a few simple exercises by means of which the child learns a conscious use of his shoulder, elbow and wrist movements. Some of the exercises are for freedom and some for control. I have seen greater changes occur as a result of them in both children and adults than from any verbal instruction I have ever given. There is doubtless a great deal more for us to learn about the organic functioning of the body with mind and emotions than we have any conception of yet.

The second condition concerns the emotional life of the child. There should of course be such sympathy between the teacher and pupil that he loves to come to the studio and is at peace there. Giovanni

Gentile, the Italian educator, went so far as to say no teaching can take place without love between the teacher and pupil.

One of the ways of liberating the child's feeling is to permit him always to choose his own subject. The individual life with its own emotional content will come forth, acting as a motor power to carry him through difficulties with a vigor totally different than when the direction comes from the teacher. For example, a boy with a great wish for power painted horses for a whole year, making them larger and stronger each time until finally he painted a pair of very large, strong ones and then was satisfied. He had simultaneously acquired a new power in his work and in his life.

Another instance for the connection between feeling and expression was this. A girl was painting the birth of Christ. She chose a starlit night, snow scene, a few hamlets half hidden by snow, and three angels floating in the sky. I found her crying and when I asked her what the trouble was, she looked up and said: "The sky looks as if Christ were being born, but I can't make the snow look as if he were being born." From there on I questioned her to find out what quality she wanted in the snow and then to help her find out how to do it. So the problems of technique appear and are struggled with individually as necessity arises.

The third and most important condition I try to maintain within the child is an awakened spirit. This depends largely on his faith in himself. If one can teach that true knowledge comes from within, one has laid the foundation stone. By my faith in him his own faith grows; by my recognition of individual values each one gains strength to stand against the more external social influences in the world. By encouragement in the use of his imagination, he is enabled to find the language of his inmost being, and enters into the sacred passages leading into infinity. There is no measur-

ing the possible development when that door is open. My work is to find ways of keeping it open when technical problems come to the fore.

By exercises in memory and perception I try to develop experience that will help him solve his own problems; but if he finds an insurmountable one, he must then have an assurance that there is a solution, that by effort on his part and some new light from the teacher he will come through. For there is a low point of discouragement in most work. This is the psychological moment when I try to help with fresh stimulus of some sort, but never when the pupil is working to his satisfaction. It may be an intrusion on my part to interrupt at such a time, it may even cut off the stream of interest and the child's power entirely.

A certain balance within is also necessary for him to become expressive. If he is overstimulated, he should be calmed by sitting with his eyes closed, recalling visual images; if he is lethargic or barren, some question may stir him, such as "If you were a great artist and could paint anything you wanted to, what would you paint?" or "How would you like to play with colors and shapes and do just what you want with them?" Such questions often throw off inhibitions when nothing else will; they are an open sesame to unformed but living visions.

In my work with the children I have observed the creative process unfold in sequence as organic and as physical growth. The impulse to create originates in play, pure joy in activity; only later does the desire or the power for sustained effort appear. Adults sometimes forget the intense inviolable quality of play and may not know that the genuine energy to labor grows only out of the fulfillment in play. The growth of the child may be divided into four periods; they alternate in character. The earliest is dominated by native elements in the child; the second by sociological influences; the third is a renaissance of

the native quality, and the fourth a new sociological period.

The first extends from about three to eight years. The child's essential nature appears unrestrainedly. The chief motive is play, pleasure in the activity of covering a paper with bright marks of crayon or pools of paint. He begins with joy in the movement similar to the joy of kicking or clapping the hands. Next the color excites his sensation; following that, the dabs and pools of accidental shapes excite his imagination. These forms in turn link with his own experiences and bring his emotions into play.

The essential nature of a young child's drawing is fantastic and inchoate. A formless pool of paint in one picture he calls a house, and a similar one in the next he calls a moon; or the form may have purely subjective meaning to the child. I heard one little girl of five say about her painting: "This looks just the way I feel inside."

An onlooker may ask: "Then does the teacher do nothing with children under eight?" My experience has been that practically no teaching in the old sense is required at this age. It is seldom asked for, and if offered is usually rejected. The discrepancy between the child's concept and the teacher's is so wide that the suggestion may bewilder him. But I do teach them two things. First, how to use their materials well. Many failures and discouragements are due to lack of that knowledge. The second thing I teach them is the free use of the body that I have already mentioned.

The second period indicates a sociological influence. It extends from about eight to twelve years. The child is more social and conforming; his native self is beginning to be covered over. Group games and plays take the place of his more solitary inventions. At this time his reasoning power increases and his perception becomes keener, his interest in facts more acute. The

boys at this time wish to draw animals, engines and airplanes, and people doing things. The desire to communicate objective experience to one's fellows now becomes important. Here the teacher has a different problem; to meet the legitimate wish for more accurate expression in drawing without losing the earlier qualities of daring and unconscious beauty of color and design.

If the interest in art survives this age, it usually lasts; but at ten or twelve many children, especially boys, lose interest. It is hard to say how much is natural and how much sociological, for it is obvious in these days that parents and society emphasize the value of science and practical matters for boys.

The third period is adolescence, twelve to sixteen years. A spiritual search, aspiration, prayer, an effort to understand the meaning of life, a wish to communicate with his own soul, to know himself, are the motivating forces at this time. They bring forth symbolic paintings of these struggles or frequently self-portraits of serious young faces. The imagination is rekindled, the mind perceives new vistas, and sensation is quickened so that this becomes the most flourishing period, the richest in content and expression.

The fourth period begins at about seventeen years. The swing is again towards reality and the demands of society; it is the beginning of the adult life. Now the student realizes the need of greater technique, the need to develop the objective values to the degree that the subjective ones have grown. The pupil becomes dissatisfied with everything he has done. Large rhythm, rich color and beauty of design do not satisfy him; there is a hunger for perfect form, exact knowledge, history of art, history of costume, printing and accurate techniques in each medium, all are wanted now. At this time the teacher's problem increases in difficulty. The chances are he will find himself inadequately equipped to

meet the real appetite and tremendous capacity for knowledge and work that the young people with this healthy background demonstrate. He will struggle to give the needed techniques and simultaneously to prevent the young workers from losing their balance by making their technique their god, an error that thousands of art students have made. It remains to be seen in the future whether they too will topple into that abyss where the true purpose of art is completely lost, or whether their experience will lead to self-realization.

FLORENCE CANE

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ART APPRECIATION

The article which follows was assembled as a part of a study in the psychology of art appreciation. It does not profess to be an exhaustive piece of research, but it is hoped that it may be suggestive. The authorities quoted are, as a rule, men and women in the field of general education, superintendents, professors of psychology, education, etc., people who are striving to make our schools function happily and efficiently in modern society. Some of these people may not know art as well as those especially trained in the field, but they have studied education, children, and society, and their opinions should be suggestive and valuable, not only to teachers who are working in the field of the arts, but to the general educator.

THERE are two causes of inefficient teaching in appreciation lessons, according to the authorities examined: first, a failure on the teacher's part to know for what he is striving; and second, a failure to apply the principles of psychology in striving toward any aim. Judd says ¹"the art teachers must give up the practice of indulging in rhapsodies over art and its value, and must learn to define the types of appreciation which they wish to cultivate. They must show that they know when they have produced one of these approved types of appreciation." Colvin be-

lieves ²"The teacher, above all persons, must know the way along which he seeks to direct others." Of course these men are right as to having a goal, and we are glad that tests are being worked out, now, to help us in determining just how much the child really feels, the more difficult of Dr. Judd's two requirements. Minor writes ³"The first requisite in conducting a lesson in appreciation is to know the purposes which underlie this phase of school work. The general purpose of any appreciation lesson is to enable the child to enjoy the contributions which are the social heritage of our present age. The specific purpose varies with the individual subject." The important word in the last is "enjoy." Mr. Arthur W. Dow, who rendered invaluable service to Art Education in the United States, and who so ably directed the Art work in Teachers College, Columbia University for so many years, in speaking of Art courses in general, wrote: ⁴"Courses should be planned for a progressive growth in appreciation and power of expression . . . the Art course . . . must stand, first and last, for growth in critical judgment and appreciation of harmony. There should be opportunities for choice." If the teacher who is attempting to develop appreciation in any subject would sit down calmly with herself and determine just what it is she wishes to arrive at with her pupils, her problem will be well on the way to solution. It is nothing more nor less than the "teacher's aim" of practice teaching days of years ago, and like many old things it is good, though old. Unless we know where we wish to go, no cock horse, or even limousine, will get us to Banbury Cross.

²Colvin, *Introduction to High School Teaching*, p. 164.

³Minor, *Principles of Teaching Practically Applied*, p. 213.

⁴Dow, *Theory and Practice of Teaching Art*, 600.

¹Judd, *Psychology of High School Subjects*, pp. 363, 364.