















Art Lab x Kids: art as an instrument for discovery and knowledge

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DOI: 10.24981/2414-3332-7.2019-13

“Art Lab x Kids” is an inclusive cross-training project created by Professor Katia Pangrazi after a long experience in the field of Fine Arts and Visual Communication in over ten years she started “Art Lab for Kids” in Narni, a beautiful city in the green heart of Italy. The idea was born in 2017 as an experimental project on the occasion of the International Week of Artistic Education promoted by UNESCO. and then continued its journey in other places.

The aim of the project is to create a “traveling place” for creativity and knowledge, experimentation, discovery and learning through the game of art. Cognitive skills are fostered through the journey in privileged places where knowing is called to action. It is also a place for educational meetings, training and collaboration. A space to train the ability to look with the eyes and with the hands; to learn a reality with all the senses and know more, to stimulate creativity and “creative design thinking” since childhood.

Children are born “artists”, rich in inventiveness in the widest sense of expression. Intuitive art goes beyond simple play. Art communicates stories that color the imagination, enrich the memory and promote the multiplication of meanings in a traditional society. The search for meaning through fun, for the child, is the beginning of the natural intuitive process of cultural learning. It precedes and stimulates the understanding of how to speak and think through words; it has times and emotional forms that fill all the gaps between languages and cultures.

“Art Lab for Kids” wants to offer to young people the right tools so

that they can express themselves freely and independently through graphic-pictorial and manipulative language.

The project aims to initiate young people to visual education through the recognition of forms and primary, secondary and complementary colors, developing the ability to distinguish and associate them harmoniously. A good sensory development improves and is refined through observation, comparison and experience.

Children are artists naturally, they represent the world with a pencil and a piece of paper, driven to do, to model, to repeat and to copy, overflowing artists. Some never lose their innate artistic ability, despite the educational machines we feed them, which often seem designed to produce a sort of trained conformity that drains their creativity.

“Art Lab for Kids” aims to encourage the meeting of young people with art, through the involvement of perception as an instrument of knowledge of the external world, and above all of the inner sphere.

Through this kind of double knowledge is it possible to set confidence in one’s expressive abilities and develop individual creativity.

The special value that graphic-pictorial activity possesses consists in the narrative element that it contains, because when a child, draws or paints, always says something about himself or herself, that is, COMMUNICATES.

While scribbling lines and circles, he or she paints with his (her) fingers, glues, tears, molds clay, dances, sings and plays. The child is discovering and developing his own language with a double meaning: he or she learns something for and about himself and looks for, at the same time, a way to communicate with others.

If the teacher’s intervention is calibrated on the pupil’s evolutionary process, the pictorial activity can become a useful tool for the identification and understanding of things, for the knowledge of oneself and of the reality that surrounds him.

We need to believe and rediscover poetic languages such as visual arts, dance, music, literature, architecture, design and recognize them

the ability to anticipate times and capture the essence and the deep nature of things. The poetic languages can weave together the rational, the imaginary and the emotional, facilitating a richer and complete learning. There is a poetic presence in every language or discipline, even in those that seem not related to artistic experiences, such as mathematics, chemistry, physics, engineering.

Therefore Art represents a primary need for human beings, as well as the basis of development, learning and life itself.

Artistic creation reinforces the personality of the individual, opening at the same time the way to learn any kind of notion and ability, including those contemplated by a more rational and formal education.

The most complex science and the most advanced technology would not make progress without creative ability.

Children are creators just like artists. Give them a piece of paper and a pencil and they will start scribbling. We adults are frightened by the spontaneity of children. Adults should try to rediscover, in the child, an element of their lost paradise of free fantasy and unbridled creative urgency.

The key to understanding all this is the human instinct for the game, to do things for the pure joy of doing them, regardless of age, origin and culture of belonging.

In my work with children and teachers I found many suggestions from the art world, but my attention has always focused more on the processes of construction of work than on finished works.

"Art Lab for Kids" proposes to teach mainly how to experiment with art. Visual art should not be told only in words, it should be experienced: words are forgotten, experience no. "If I listen I forget, if I see I remember, if I do I understand" said Munari (1973), citing an ancient Chinese proverb. Ideas are not proposed by adults, but arise from experimentation, according to the teaching principle: "Do not say what to do, but how". The method is based on doing, so that young people can express themselves freely without the interference of adults, becoming independent and learning to solve problems on their own. "Help me do it myself" is also the motto of Maria Montessori

(1949).

The intensity of the relationship is perhaps the first, instinctive and important form of approach to things that the art world suggests, but it is also the one that teaches gestures of attention and leads away from indifference, which is one of the worst ways to learn. Children naturally approach things with a strong empathic sense. Respecting empathy, considering it a valuable vehicle for learning, suggests educational proposals that train and nurture knowledge by looking for connections, alliances and solidarity between different categories and languages or different disciplines.

The "game of art" is so important for the optimal development of the individual, since childhood, so much to be recognized by the United Nations as a fundamental right of every child contributing to the well-being, both from a physical and cognitive point of view, social, both emotional-affective.

Making art through play, in fact, allows to express creativity, explore the imagination and allow to try new conquests, fostering self-esteem and overcoming anxieties and fears.

Playing is a serious matter!

References

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