

# ChildArt



# ChildArt

## Editor's Corner

Dear Reader,

The 4th Arts Olympiad is underway across the United States and in nearly 100 countries. Amazing works of art have begun to pour in at the International Child Art Foundation. You can participate until March 31, 2010. Visit [www.icafe.org](http://www.icafe.org) and download the free Arts Olympiad Lesson Plan.

The Arts Olympiad lead to the creation and elevation of masterpieces produced individually by children. This issue of ChildArt is about co-creation. Some of the articles discuss co-creation as a basis for innovation. If the last century taught us that our brains matter the most, the 21st century is informing us that a single brain, however brilliant, is not sufficient to tackle the increasingly complex problems in an inscrutable world. We must be team-players, co-create and collaboratively innovate. Our team must be diverse as well, beyond the usual definitions to incorporate an array of cultural, social and religious experiences.

We hope you enjoy this issue and wish you a happy, creative, and peaceful 2010.



Ashfaq Ishaq, Ph. D.  
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Co-creating Peace,  
Page 4

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### INTERNATIONAL CHILD ART FOUNDATION

The International Child Art Foundation (ICAF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that prepares children for a creative and cooperative future. ICAF is the only national art and creativity organization for children in the United States. ICAF is also the only

worldwide umbrella organization promoting children's creativity and imagination through the arts.

To subscribe to *ChildArt* magazine, call 202-530-1000, fax 202-530-1080, or e-mail [childart@icaf.org](mailto:childart@icaf.org).

*ChildArt* is published quarterly by ICAF. Submissions may be edited even when accepted. Submissions of artwork and other material to ChildArt are made at the risk of the sender.

*ChildArt* quarterly magazine, published since 1998, is a commercial-free arts learning, self-discovery, and global education periodical.

You can also make a donation to ICAF by sending a check to:

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# Collaborative Innovation

The making of art can be a lonely activity. Much like working on an invention. The creative processes underlying art and those underlying scientific or technological invention are similar.

Dipping your brush in paint before an empty canvass, mixing a new set of chemicals in a laboratory, or constructing fresh binary codes on a blank computer screen—anything new begins with an idea. Imagination provides wings to the idea. Persistence makes it soar. Experimentation clears its course.

In explaining why he dedicated over sixty years to the history of architecture, Harvard Professor James Ackerman (who is 91 this year) noted: “What interests me most in works of art has nothing to do with their “aesthetic” features...What interests me is witnessing an exceptional outcome of the imagination and invention.” Reaching more than half a mile (0.83 km) into the sky, Burj Khalifa in Dubai is the latest example of the fruition of human imagination. Architecture is one example of co-creation. Innovation that requires teamwork is another.

Co-creation is an activity that makes creative individuals appreciate the following: what they can do or produce as a team they cannot on their own. The process that leads to co-creation is important because teamwork can instill innovation. You can read on page 28 how a co-creation activity

proves inspirational to mentally and physically challenged children. Sometimes the outcome is as important as the process. The end result of co-creation represents a fusion of individual imaginations into a collective, meaningful whole. You see great examples of co-created murals throughout this issue. Peacemaking, the most serious challenge facing mankind, is also a co-creation as the article on pages 4–9 illustrates.

Novelist Mohsin Hamid believes that a reader co-creates read-



ing a novel. *“In a novel, all you get is paper and ink and you create images in your own mind. So my novels have tried to maximize the possibility of co-creation: you have to play a part in them, to judge. In so doing, you become a character and a co-writer as well, and the novel can function not just as an entertainment but as a mirror.”* On pages 23–24 you learn from Abby Remer how to co-create a museum experience.



Co-creators must possess two higher-order abilities: they must be creative and they need to be empathic. People are creative in different ways: some generate new ideas while others plan optimal ways to execute them. If one believes in team creativity and discovery through unity, then co-creation can spark one’s latent creative potential. Co-creators must be empathic as well in order to succeed in producing something new, extraordinary or incredible. Human beings are complex creatures but capable of finding viable solutions to common problems through cooperative problem-solving. To be acceptable to all team members, the solution must respectfully and transparently address competing equities in a search for common ground and compromise. Creative individuals who demonstrate empathy are therefore more capable problem-solvers and co-creators. Empathy is the ability to understand and enter the feelings, thoughts and motives of another; it does not imply acceptance or agreement, or losing oneself to become another, but rather identifying with and understanding another’s reasons and reactions.



This issue of ChildArt aims to provide you insights into co-creation. There are many things we can achieve as individuals. But the solution to complex problems of the day often require team analysis, collaborative innovative, and co-production. Co-creating art in one’s childhood can be an essential first step towards shaping an innovative future. Artist Mark Cooper has tips on co-creating art on page 26.





# co-creating Peace

*Individuals collaborate for different ends.* Sometimes to overcome grief. Sometimes to build understanding. Other times to produce something new. Or to fuse individual perspectives into a collective vision, sometimes a vision of peace. Collaboration, if successful, can lead to innovation, a new way of thinking woven from existing knowledge. A new product is produced, a new understanding is constructed, and a new perspective is sculpted. Here are a few examples.

## Co-creating the World in 1999

Imagine for a moment that you have to work with other children whom you do not know and who don't speak your language. You are one of the 51 national Arts Olympiad winners from 51 different countries, and you have travelled from far to be in Washington DC for a large international festival. Soon you learn that this is the very first World Children's Festival and the organizer, the International Child Art Foundation, is only a two-year old nonprofit organization. Your mother is with you but you don't know anyone else. It is difficult to communicate with others and you wonder if you will make any friends. Everything is new here for you. It is your first visit to USA. You are excited and anxious at the same time.

*Top down: World Children's Festival on the National Mall; Viviana Astudillo (age 10; Canada) sketching alongside a boy; another Arts Olympiad winner thinking what to paint; Yu Keren (age 9; China) concentrating on the mural, and so is Hina Inam (age 12; Pakistan).*

“Collaboration, if successful, can lead to innovation, a new way of thinking woven from existing knowledge.”

The first day passes. You photograph anything nice you see and try to understand the words and gestures of others. The following day is different. They bring you to this huge open space—The National Mall where a dozen white tents shine in the sun. The area is lined by tall trees, beyond which the Smithsonian Museums stand like temples. Gingerly, you sit down on the grass in the shadow of the U.S. Capitol. Gradually, other children come and sit down beside you. Your mother meets two other parents and they leave to view the children's art exhibition which hangs in the largest tent. The artwork you made for the new millennium is on display there, along with your national flag.

The workshop begins. Professor Mark Cooper from Boston University introduces himself. He explains that all 51 children have to work together to produce a gigantic mural. After a while you begin to draw sketches on paper. You show your sketch to the girl and boy sitting beside you. You use art as a universal language to communicate. Soon all of you agree on what to paint, and pick up the brushes.

When the mural is complete, and erected on the National Mall, it amazes you. You are surprised how creative the group was as a team. No one could ever have produced such a masterpiece on their own.

When the mural was complete, and erected on the National Mall, it amazed us. We could believe how creative were as a team. None of us could ever have produced such a masterpiece on our own.







Left to right: The World Mural on display at the World Bank/IMF Annual Meetings in Dubai, UAE in September 2003; the mural (below) being erected after it was completed at the National Mall in Washington DC

### World Mural Construction

Constructed by Mystic Scenic Studios of Dedham, Massachusetts, at the cost of \$22,442, the mural has 12 face panels of ¼ inch lauan tropical plywood with 2 ½ x 5/4 inch pine frame. The frames are bolted on the panels and the back is painted with gray latex and flame retardant. Face panels are quick spackle filled, then prime painted with a tinted latex paint. A line drawing of the seven continents is painted on the primed surface. The scaffold fabrication comprises of 1-¼ inch square tube flat frames bolted together to create a 26 x 20 x 4-foot scaffold frame. The scaffold has eight tether points at 45 degree to ground level, and ¼ inch aircraft cable and turnbuckles to erect the mural using ground spikes.

“The atmosphere created by ICAF at the festival with workshops held by famous artists and the making of new friends influenced me to continue drawing and painting.”

— Tamara Mamedova (age 12) winner  
Azerbaijan Arts Olympiad (1999)







The little Picassos in Houston

“Many children made art, individually or collaboratively. The language of art speaks to everyone.”

black and white mural-size canvas painted in oil shows the horrors of war and the suffering it inflicts on innocent civilians. The artwork has become an embodiment of peace, an anti-war symbol.

### Guernica in 2001

Any episode of war and destruction creates a need to understand why the world is the way it is. We begin to ask questions which are sometimes difficult for teachers and parents to answer. Take the case of the seminal tragedy of September 11, 2001. Students in every school responded to the attacks in their own ways to understand what happened and why. Many children made art, individually or collaboratively. The language of art speaks to everyone.

Students at the Spring Branch Middle School in Houston, Texas painted “Guernica” as a tribute to Pablo Picasso’s famous mural and as a reminder that war and destruction has yet to be conquered by humanity. Picasso painted his Guernica to document the horrors of war after the bombing of the town of Guernica in Spain in 1937. German and Italian planes bombed the town at the behest of the Spanish nationalists during the Spanish civil war between the nationalists and the republicans. The blue,

The students spent two months painting 200 individual paintings on a hallway floor at their school. The process of mural-making was important, but so was the final product. Art teachers David Butler and Suzy Greene selected 20 images from these individual works to be collaged into a Picasso-like composition. The finished mural is 12 x 30-foot—slightly larger than Picasso’s original which hangs in the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid. You can view it on Google images. Do the two compare?



The Cyprus Peace through Art participants with Mrs. Francis Hesselbein, chairman of Leader to Leader Institute, who lectured them on how to be peace leaders in their communities.



## Cyprus Peace through Art in 2002

The island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean is a divided nation since 1964. The north is Turkish-Cypriot while the south is Greek-Cypriot. At the crossroads of civilizations, ancient and modern, Cyprus is one barometer of whether the world can live in peace.

ICAF organized a Peace through Art Program in June/July 2002 which brought twenty 14–15 years olds Cypriots to Washington DC for an intensive month-long peace training. None of the ten Greek-Cypriots had

met any of the ten Turkish-Cypriots before. They viewed each other as eternal enemies. ICAF's Peace through Art approach inspired them to re-think who they are and their relationship with the other. Art exercises were an exploration and discovery of the past, which helped the Cypriots understand each other. They made self-portraits as gifts to each other. They created mandalas as symbols of wholeness and completeness. They made face masks, which required that they touch the other's face. And at the very end they worked as a team to co-create the peace mural. The quality of the

mural reflects the success of the mural-making process that led former enemies to join hands to collaboratively innovate and co-create. Peace may not come to Cyprus this year, but this mural shows the desire of Cypriot youth to co-exist and live in harmony.

## The Blue Dog of Peace in 2003

In his play *Julius Caesar*, William Shakespeare wrote "Cry 'Havoc!,' and let slip the dogs of war." He was referring to releasing the "dog"—that human restraining mechanism which prevents war. Today, the dogs of war are abound. Can there be a dog for peace?

Have you ever seen a werewolf, a man who transforms into an animal? The Cajun of Louisiana, descendants of French-speaking settlers, use the myth of loup-garou (French for werewolf) to instill fear and obedience in children. Artist George Rodrigue grew up in New Iberia, Louisiana, the heart of Cajun country. Drawing upon the loup-garou he created his iconic "Blue Dog," transforming the werewolf into a child-friendly pup with curious yellow eyes.

For the World Children's Festival held on the National Mall in Washington, DC, Mr. Rodrigue designed and constructed a 3-dimensional pyramid. Its base is longer than 10-foot and height nearly 8-foot. All the 150 Arts Olympiad winners from 30 U.S. states and 70 countries joined in the mural making. On September 9 Mr. and Mrs. Rodrigue offered art workshops. On September 10, the children began painting the mural. On September 11 the mural was complete. Washington's Mayor Anthony Williams came to see the





“The festival was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Being in Washington on September 11 was very significant as we reflected on the events two years earlier. Serving as the representative from New York took on special meaning for Diana that day. Meeting government officials and military officers exposed her to those in key decision-making roles. The awards ceremony was clearly the highlight of the week, and of Dianna’s life, probably only to be rivaled in the future by her prom night and wedding day!”

—Deborah T. Mazzone, parents of New York Arts Olympiad winner

children and presented them an Official Proclamation designating 9/11 as Children’s Peace Day.

In the mural, the Blue Dog with his yellow eyes stands guard over children’s art. The mural is called “Art for Peace Pyramid.” The werewolf has transformed into a peacemaker.



Top down: Mr. and Mrs. Rodrigue hosting an art workshop for children; an Arts Olympiad winner proudly displays the panel he painted for the mural; the mural construction; Mr. Rodrigue with the mural; and the young artists he worked with.

# joy and resistance in Opotiki

**K**ia Ora, or welcome to Opotiki, a small New Zealand town at the Bay of Plenty. Before the arrival of Europeans, Opotiki was a populous Maori center. Today nearly 10,000 people live in Opotiki and more than 50,000 people visit every year because of the town's scenic beauty and outdoor sports. The district has 34,000 books in its library, more than 25,000 cows in its dairy farms, and kiwifruit is the major crop.

The New Zealand Children's Art House Foundation Trust (national partner of the International Child Art Foundation) designed the Opotiki Youth Art Mural Project which has led to a controversy. Shona Hammond Boys, founder of the Trust, believes that art education is the vehicle for the development of a culture of peace. Therefore, an artist must respond to the community in which he or she lives.

Young artists connect with each other by expressing what they want, not what they are told. Mural making becomes an exercise in learning how to work in teams because each individual has a uniqueness to add to the whole. This results in patience, tolerance and respect of each other, while friendships and belonging create meaning and vitality. Since children need support, praise and encouragement to grow and thrive, mural projects can be a good way to bring a community together.

So, the children painted the town with scores of murals as their public art. Soon a controversy erupted. Some criticized the merits of the project as conceived and executed. A few went so far as to describe the art as ugly. The Opotiki newspaper stories were republished across New Zealand. The crime experts were thrilled with the drop in youth crime in Opotiki following the mural project. But there were also strong voices of dissent. The debate raised questions on the very meaning and purpose of art. Supporters started arriving in Opotiki just to view the murals. An American came to New Zealand just to see the murals. She felt that there must have been a special shift in consciousness for a town to allow itself to be painted by children.

*"Art is a journey all youth take, our job is to provide the ship not the navigation,"* says Shonna Boys. *"What does art mean to you?"* she asked each mural participant. About 89 percent said they were passionate about art and enjoyed it. They said that the youth need new symbols. They want a positive mark left behind for the world to be encouraged by. The Senior Youth Judge emailed her a message: *"Paint the whole town Shona and do not stop for the traffic..."*

Hard work, risk taking and meeting challenges are essential for art. These qualities are also necessary to overcome obstacles and for succeeding in life. You can evaluate the mural on the opposite page and decide if they are beautiful and meaningful. These murals portray the history, the present and the future of Opotiki—the years 1900, 1950, 2000 and 2050. *Would you support such a youth mural project in your hometown?*





“Art is a journey all youth take, our job is to provide the ship not the navigation.”

| Elaine Thomas, Any Lee,  
Ellie Kreischer and Alicia Brown |

# Cross-cultural understanding through art

Cultures vary widely across countries and continents, sometimes art can be a bridge between different cultures. Take something plain and simple, like a wooden figurine or mannequin that you see in department store windows. What if we ship 20 plain wooden figurines to 20 different cities across the globe and ask the children to dress them up or paint them to reflect their own culture? This is a project that the International Child Art Foundation organized to produce a cultural figurine exhibition in Munich, Germany, to be held during the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Munich. The idea was to see how children interpret and share their culture to gain others' understanding.



"Ms. America" with Opie Otterstad  
and his team of co-creators.

In the United States, the Canyon Ranch Middle School in Austin, Texas, and St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School in Washington, DC were invited by ICAF to take part in the exhibition.

Eighteen students in Austin—six each from area elementary, middle, and high schools—collaboratively designed "Ms. America." Artist Opie Otterstad worked with this team of 6 to 18 year olds. "We spent the first day just talking," said Otterstad. "The idea of 'Ms. America' was discussed for the title. 'Ms. America' references the culture of political correctness and what the Miss America pageant has meant to this country and objectification of women." The students chose the underlying themes of freedom, diversity and progress for the figurine.





Students decoupage images on the figurine's arms to show America's history and symbolize how popular tattoos have become. "I gave them some history textbooks, and they cut out the pictures and put them right onto the arms," Otterstad said. "We pride ourselves on being accepting of other people."

Using acrylic paint, the students gave the figurine rainbow-colored hair and varied skin tones to exemplify diversity and acceptance in the United States. To show freedom of religion, students decorated a belt with proverbs from a variety of religions.

Two wings were added to the figurine; one resembling an eagle's and the other symbolizing technological progress. "I thought it was really brilliant on their part," said Otterstad. "While

natural resources

were a strength at the beginning of our country, the students felt that America's strength now is technology." Instead of eagle's fathers, children used turkey feathers on the wing.

Popular symbols of American life, such as logos for Coca-Cola, Nike, Apple, and Mickey Mouse, were painted on the figurine's tank top, and a McDonald's arch was stitched on the blue jeans. This showed how students' lives are inundated by corporate logos. "The inclusion of logos was not in tribute. Corporate logos become measuring sticks of children's identity. Children are aware of this. Do you like Target or

Ms. Lee discussing the project with her students in Washington, D.C.



Wal-Mart? Do you like McDonald's or Burger King?" Otterstad commented.

"The beautiful thing about working with children is that no matter what you expect from them, they'll

**"The beautiful thing about working with children is that no matter what you expect from them, they'll always surprise you."**

always surprise you," Otterstad said. "I told them, 'I want you to come up with a concrete idea, then abstract it to a visual output.' I was really impressed with the depth of their thoughts. People say 'oh they're just kids,' but they're little information sponges. Children understand a lot. Every inch of the figurine is symbolic. It was outstanding."

The creative process for the second American figurine was lead by art teacher Kyu-Jin Lee at St. Patricks. Twenty seventh graders decorated "Shadow of America" for the exhibition. The students painted the figurine's legs and feet to represent the American flag. New York City's skyline and some of Washington, DC's famous monuments were drawn on the figurine's legs. *After discussion about the figurine's face looking "too Caucasian," students voted to cover the face with plaster strips for a multicultural appearance. Varying shades of color painted*







DC schoolchildren making the Washington Figurine.

The figures produced in Lagos (Nigeria) and Sharjah (United Arab Emirates) through a similar co-creation process are below:

*on the face represent the diverse melting pot of the United States.*

At the Tockington Manor School in Bristol, England, the figurine was based upon the theme of the British landscape. The children discussed British landscape painters such as J.M.W. Turner and John Constable, and wanted to include hills, fields, coastline and rainbows. They also wished to include an oak tree, flowers, butterflies and animals. The figurine includes very decorative elements, and the children were inspired by patterns from Celtic art, which can be found on ancient illuminated manuscripts. The word 'illuminate' means 'to light up' and, like the artists of long ago, the pupils used gold to make their figurine 'light up'.

Upon the head of the figurine is a model of a famous ancient British monument, Stonehenge, which is known throughout the world. Have you ever seen a photograph of it or visited it? It is a fascinating and very special place. The head of the figurine is painted entirely in gold. The hair took hours of work to create, using tissue paper, card and glue. Into the hair are woven pieces of corn and wheat, to represent the beautiful



fields of crops in Britain. Behind the Stonehenge crown on the figurine's head is a circle of reflective gold, which mirrors the image of the stones. On either side of the Celtic border around this gold are clouds, moon and stars, and also oak leaves.

The figure is clothed in a gown, which the children created using wire, card and papier-mâché. The skirt of the gown curves up to look like the waves of the ocean, and a three-dimensional mermaid dances in the waves. The girls who made the mermaid painted her hair pink because they liked the color, and decorated her with ribbons and beads.

A rainbow rises from the waves of the ocean, wrapping around the skirt of the figurine. The children wanted to make rainbows a prominent feature, because the British



Young artists at Tockington Manor, Bristol, England.

weather is so changeable between sunshine and showers. Rainbows are incredibly beautiful, and the children wanted their figurine to hold a paintbrush which looked as if it had painted the colors of the rainbow in the air around her. Can you see in the photographs that the right arm of the figurine is painted in rainbow colors? Around it is curled another section of card painted to look like a rainbow. This turns into a beautifully papier-maché paintbrush created using a wooden stick, paper and glue.

The children once again used rainbow colors on the papier-maché painting palette held in the figurine's left hand. Out of the rainbow colors on the palette jump various creatures—a blue dolphin diving out of the blue paint, a red ladybird walking out of the red paint, a green frog leaping out of the green paint, a yellow butterfly flying out of the yellow paint, and a golden starfish floating out of the orange paint. Can you see these creatures in the photographs? The children also created more butterflies with wings which opened and closed, and attached them all the way up the left arm, so that they looked as if they too were flying out of the palette and into a starry night, which was painted on the figurine's left shoulder.

The young artists wondered what to put on the back of the painting palette. They decided to use some still life paintings which they had created, entitled 'Tea by the Sea' (as cups of tea are another thing that people seem to associate with Britain!). Small photocopies of these paintings were made, which were glued onto the back



of the painting palette. Other children created hundreds of oak leaves and also little figures of surfers and swimmers, as well as animals. Every

These figurines were produced in Pakistan and India.



The Indian figurine made in Bangalore by the Chandana Art Foundation



child created something to include on our Lady of the Landscape.

The back of the figurine was painted to look like an oak tree, and copies of leaf paintings created by pupils were collaged around it. All the children have signed their names at the very top of the oak tree, behind the figurine's head. It carries this message on a golden banner: 'Great oaks from little acorns grow'. All the young artists involved, and all of you young artists reading this, are rather like those little acorns, full of potential to grow and develop into the wonderful artists and leaders of tomorrow.

The name of the figurine is 'Loveday, the Lady of the Landscape'. 'Loveday' is the name of the school headmaster's grandmother, who was the daughter of W.H.Y.

Titcomb, a well-respected English painter who worked in St. Ives in Cornwall, and created some lovely landscape paintings which hang in Tockington Manor School. Everyone felt that the name Loveday was a beautiful and perfect name for our figurine, who the children all love.



The Korean figurine was made by children in Seoul at the Let's Art club.



Children unwrapping the figure from its wooden crate.



In San José, Costa Rica, two dozen students came together on a sunny day to create one piece of art. The children came from each the seven provinces of the country, converging on this central city for the day. The meeting spot was the *Museo de Los Niños*, or the children's museum. As they filtered into the room, they all noticed a large cardboard box in the center, surrounded by tables, paints, brushes, clay, shells and more. They seemed eager to begin, but first some planning was needed.

They joined together in a circle and met the art director of the project,

*Gina Marin Rojas*, the art education consular of Costa Rica. First, the children first introduced themselves because they had never met before, and came from very different regions.

They discussed what they felt were representative symbols of their provinces, and what makes them unique places. Some students spoke about coffee, banana, or pineapple farms, others mentioned volcanoes, waterfalls, and beaches. Collectively they had to decide what images were the most important to convey to the world.

*Jorge Jiménez Deredia* joined the discussion. He is a famous Costa Rican sculptor, who spoke of the importance of this project because for him art is the best way to express oneself. He asked the students to think of

one image that best represent everything about them, and to paint that on the figurine.





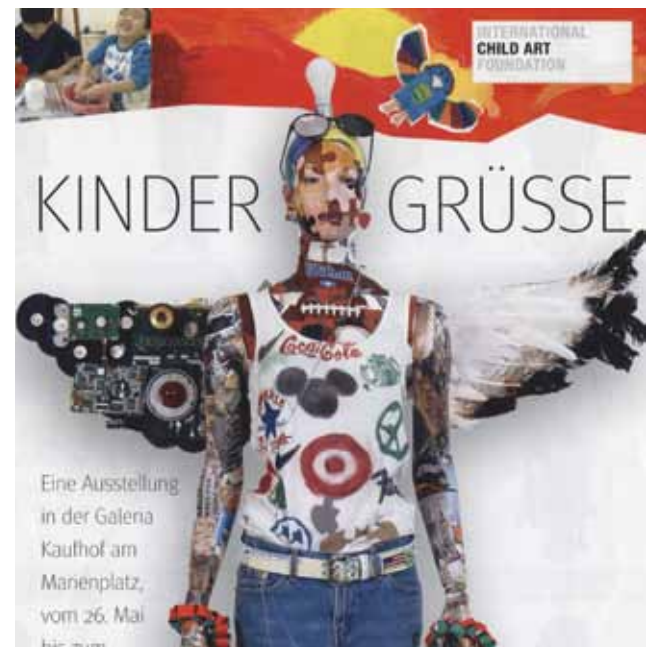
It seemed like a big task, but the students jumped right in by sketching their ideas on paper. Each group of students were given a part of the figurine. The arms, legs, and torso lay on separate tables, shining white, ready to be converted into art.

The white of the mannequin didn't last long. The students began to cover each part of the body with the images they had generated, working in teams to integrate these pictures together. They enjoyed using the landscape of the body to enhance concepts. For example, the collar bone became a corral snake (one of the most poisonous in Costa Rica), or the hair was made into a waterfall.

Paints of every color were used covering the entirety of each body part. It seemed fitting, as Costa Rica indeed has every color of the rainbow found in its landscape. You can find color everywhere, from parrots to flowers, fish or the traditional dresses. Then the artists used clay and shells to add more texture to the figurine. A small palm tree grew out of the figurine's forearm.

The students worked hard for five hours, hardly noticing that the TV cameras and newspaper reporters were there to capture this important event. Somehow it all seemed to come together at the same time. After each group put their finishing touches on their appendage, and then brought them together and the figurine was finally constructed. It stood seven feet high in the middle of the messy tables,

dirty brushes, and papers. The students glowed as they inspected the other parts of the body. A beautiful golden glow came from the sculpture as the sun set and the final photos were taken of these artists. Satisfied, each child said goodbye to their artwork as they left for their homes in the jungles, beaches, and mountains of Costa Rica.



The exhibition brochure and the display at Galeria Kaufhof at Marienplatz in Munich.



"The FIFA World Cup in Germany was a global event, and while grappling with this theme, only one global solution came into consideration. In cooperation with our partner, ICAF, we gave birth to this idea as an art project. For us, even though the artists are children, this is art in it's purest form...For us, this exhibition was a huge success and was very well received by our customers," said Mr. Reimund Baumheier, Managing Director, Galeria Kaufhof.







## a tribute to innovative leaders

Our role models inspire us. Innovative and creative leaders stimulate creativity and innovation. At the World Children's Festival 2007, the world's best child artists employed their talents to pay tribute to their innovative leaders. During the three-day festival on the National Mall in Washington DC, fifteen amazing murals were produced on stretched and framed canvasses 3x4-foot in dimension. A diverse range of innovative leaders were selected, from Nobel Laureate Nelson Mandela to soccer star David Beckham.





Most of the innovative leaders were chosen by the children because they oversee very creative companies—Adidas, Apple, Disney, eBay, GE, Google, Lego, Microsoft and Yahoo!. Two leaders from the Middle East were chosen, one for his business acumen (Prince Alwaleed of Kingdom Holding) and the other for her dedication to children’s education (Sheikha Mozah of Qatar Foundation). The last two murals were a tribute to two U.S. first ladies—Mrs. Bush and Mrs. Clinton.

The Arts Olympiad winners (ages 8 to 13) co-produced the murals under the guidance of International Child Art Foundation’s Youth Board Members (ages 15 to 18). The ICAF Youth Board is comprised of the Arts Olympiad alumni who had participated in previous Arts Olympiads and ICAF festivals.

The young artists from 25 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and 32 countries—all winners of the Arts Olympiads in their respective states or countries worked on the murals. Nearly a majority of them did not speak English but they were able to communicate using





art. No adults helped them, except for the mural in honor of Mrs. Bush in which a professional muralist from Chicago, Augustina Droze, guided the young children from the United Arab Emirates.

Narmina Veliyeva, ICAF Youth Board Member from Azerbaijan, was discussing with the children what they should paint. A boy suggested they make a portrait of George Washington. Someone took out a U.S. dollar bill. They studied the image and began copying it to the canvas.

When the mural was complete it looked phenomenal. They dedicated it to Google for placing information and knowledge at their fingertips.



The murals are children's masterpieces. The paintings represent cooperation and co-creation across the divides that afflict our world. American children were delighted to learn about and from children from other countries. Boys and girls worked in harmony, and so did children from different nations, races and religions. It was an opportunity for all to learn and experience that innovative art can be a bridge.







# Co-creating a Museum Experience

| Abby Remer |

**W**hat in the world does co-creation have to do with art? After all, don't all artists create their work alone in a studio without anyone else around? Isn't art a lonely activity? Let's test out the idea that co-creation is an element of an art experience. At the end of your museum visit with your parent you'll see if you do or don't agree with the idea.

## Co-creation with the artist

Maybe when you first think about "co-creation" you think about multiple artists working on one piece. For example look at the team of young artists who created the mural "Save the Earth" Interestingly not only did the four artists paint the image, but they depicted many hands of

different colors on the globe which may indicate that it takes many people to "co-create" and "save" the earth. Printmaking can also be a co-creative process. Here the artist creates the image on metal, stone, or wood and then usually a printer runs it through the printing press to transfer the image to paper. It takes both the artist and the printer to make the artwork. There are also instances in which one artists uses the work of another or others in her or his work, which becomes a co-creation of something entirely new.

## Co-creation with the audience

Looking at art is also a co-creative process. Together with the viewers make meaning of the art. It may or may not be the artist's meaning, but that's okay as long as you can identify what



**Save the Earth:** How do you think these four young artists collaborated to create this mural? How Would you do it with a group of friends?





in the art makes you think this way. Another part of co-creation is empathy; this occurs when in some way you make a personal connection to the work. It may be that the colors in a landscape make you feel a certain mood or that an expression on a sitter's face makes you feel like you are entering the person's very being, experiencing her or his feelings and/or life. Looking at art, by its nature, is a collaboration (partnership) between you, the work, and the artist(s).

You can also take your parents to a museum to co-create a collaborative experience. If you can, explore the museum's website to prepare for your experience, or call the museum up. Find out where the museum is and how to get there, its hours, and whether they have a place to eat or you'll need to go out nearby. Also check to see if they have any special programs or activities when you're going to be there.

## The Visit

Here are some key tips to help you to together create a very imaginative and exciting visit:

### Come up with a discussion question

Stand before an artwork and together create a question you'll both think about when looking at the art. For instance, why did the artist choose these particular colors, or why did the artist create an abstract work rather than portraying the subject very realistically? After looking for say 1–2 minutes quietly by yourselves, turn to one another and have a give-and-take discussion about your answers to the question. (Make sure you don't skip the quiet time to look at the work before you start talking, and not rush your experience.) Remember there is no ONE correct answer, even if the artist had a different idea than what you think. You and your parent and the artist may all have different ways of understanding the art. This is great as long as you can support what you say by specific things in the work itself. See the questions in



## Map out a plan

Right off, go to the information desk and get a museum map. Ask the staff to help you map out a walking plan that will take you through what you want to see.

## Don't try to do TOO much

An hour to an hour and a half is plenty of time. It's better to come back another time if there's more you want to see.

the caption for the huge Chuck Close painting, "Lyle."

## Look at different media

Don't just look at one type of art. Try to find sculpture, prints, drawings, and/or multi-media (e.g., video art) pieces. Think about who it took to make the art show. Exhibitions are collaborative processes. The artist makes the work, a curator chooses which art to display, and an exhibition designer decides what the space will look like from the wall paint color to the lighting.

## The End

So look back at the statement that co-creation is a part of an art experience. Did your own collaborative experience create a richer visit because it was shared among you, your parent, and the artwork itself? Did the combining of all these elements create a more meaningful experience? We hope it did, but remember, there are no right or wrong answers, as long as you can support what you say!

Abby Remer is an art and cultural education consultant based in New York City who has worked with many museums and authored three books. [www.virtualforum/aremer](http://www.virtualforum/aremer)









# Tips on Co-creation

Collaborative art can teach you what you need to learn, while also being exciting and fun. The following five principles are important in a successful collaborative project:

- a A Master Artist:** Any individual can take on the role of 'master artist' to lead a group through the art process. Most of us are visually literate. We make visual decisions about how we dress, our living spaces, the architecture we pass, the dashboard of our cars, streets signs, and virtually everything in our world on a daily basis. A master artist should give opinions to the best of his or her ability and let the group know it is only an opinion.
- b A Framework:** Physical frameworks such as a map of the world give the group one space to focus on. Everyone recognized the image of a world map. The visual information within that map could be filled with polka dots or information related to people, plants or animals.
- c Collaborate all the way:** Everyone must discuss the painting and contribute ideas, like in a democracy. At each stage you should have the opportunity to discuss decisions such as should we create a sculpture or a mural? Should everyone work on separate pieces that are fitted together, or should more than one person work on each piece? The master artist's job is not to make these decisions but to help the group discuss various options.
- d Use ideas from contemporary art:** Contemporary art is made of a wide range of materials from bee pollen to bubblegum. This means almost anything can be considered art. It is also important to have closure at some kind of public event, whether it's a school assembly or a class exhibition. It helps to reinforce the new skills you have learnt and might even help you use those skills in other areas of your life.
- e Tie the artwork to a larger world:** Collaborative art is a great way to get people interested in art, as well as help them learn important life skills such as cooperation. Collaborative art as a process is a powerful community builder. The finished collaborative art object is the physical form of an agreed upon idea. And remember, you don't need to be an artist to co-create a masterpiece.

Professor Mark Cooper is author of **Making Art Together: How Collaborative Art-Making Can Transform Kids, Classrooms, and Communities** (Beacon Press, 2006).

# Innovative Therapy



Is the artist-athlete ideal of a creative mind and healthy body relevant to children with mental and physical disabilities?

The Arts Olympiad of the International Child Art Foundation promotes this ideal through its free lesson plans. Houston teacher and coach David Butler and his wife, Jody, who is also a teacher, believe that any child can be an artist-athlete.

They arranged an event for 44 students with physical and intellectually disabilities. Eric Thomas, a 2000 USA Olympian in Track and Field, was invited as special guest. The event started with a torch lighting ceremony. Then came boxing with painted gloves, painted feet hurdles, archery with painted nerf arrows, and shot put with foam Frisbees. Sport became art, and then art became sport as children collaboratively painted a mural.

Children painted sixteen canvasses, a few with their wheelchairs. They had great fun. The emphasis was on the creative and collaborative process, not the aesthetics of the final product. At the end, Eric Thomas gave awards to the children and told them they were better than any Olympian because they were artist-athletes.





## Global Competitiveness Forum, Riyadh (January 23–26, 2010)

### The ICAF Children's Panel on the Building Blocks of Sustainable Competitiveness

“We understand that innovation is a fundamental characteristic of the world's most competitive nations, and that the best way to ensure ongoing innovation toward creating a most competitive nation is to recognize and support creativity and imagination as early in the human development process as possible. We are pleased that some of the world's most creative and imaginative children have agreed to address global leaders at the 2010 Global Competitiveness Forum, and we are especially looking forward to their insights.”

H.E. Amr Al-Dabbagh  
Governor and Chairman

#### The following children will make presentations on the themes below:



Arts education: Bogdan Zagribelny (age 12; Kazakhstan)

Winner of the Kazakhstan Arts Olympiad who has written for newspapers, Bogdan plays the guitar, reads encyclopedias and is eager to join any physics or chemistry competition.



Creative experiences: Qanita Qamarani (age 14; Indonesia)

Winner of the Indonesia Arts Olympiad, Qanita has won several art competitions that have taken her to Japan, Norway and the United States for the World Children's Festival 2007. An environment activist, she enjoys playing the piano.



Overcoming adversity: Nicholas Goyette (age 14; USA)

A Hurricane Katrina survivor who had to live in a small travel trailer with his family for 2½ years, Nick is a certified soccer referee, writes poems and stories and was Mississippi Arts Olympiad winner and delegate to the World Children's Festival 2007.

Competing for Excellence: Yootha Tiki Yong (age 11; Malaysia)

A winner of essay and story-telling competitions, Yootha has been practicing classical ballet since she was 3 ½, has been studying violin since she was 6, and has been taking creative writing and piano lessons over the past two years.




Collaborating for Success: Abdullah Anwar Hobrom (age 12; Saudi Arabia)

Enrolled in a gifted children program, Abdullah is captain of his school basketball team and was named best player in a Riyadh soccer championship. He wrote his first story when he was in 2nd grade and is fond of hip-hop music and protecting cheetahs.



#### Children's Masterpieces Exhibition, The Hewar Art Gallery, Riyadh (January 23–27)

Exhibition of murals co-created by Arts Olympiad winners at the World Children's Festival 2007. Gallery owner Shatha Al Tassan is exhibition sponsor.



Did you know that if a child's creativity is not nurtured, it could be lost forever? Visit [www.icafe.org](http://www.icafe.org) to see what actions you can take.

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