



Creative art in a rural school area
by Charles E Whitehead

A THESIS Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Applied Art at Montana State College
Montana State University
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Abstract:

There is a definite need for a creative art program in the field of rural elementary education in Gallatin County.

The current lack of the creative approach in this field appears responsible for a lack of student response and could have an undesirable overall effect upon the entire educational program because of the lack of individual self confidence which could result from the present formal and dogmatic presentation.

Our theory is that a creative art program facilitates the teaching of art and at the same time fosters in the child a feeling of freedom and self sufficiency.

To inaugurate a successful creative program in the rural school area, it is of prime importance that a departure be made from much of the line drawing and figure coloring exercises of the present program.

CREATIVE ART IN A RURAL SCHOOL AREA

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I. ABSTRACT

There is a definite need for a creative art program in the field of rural elementary education in Gallatin County.

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II. INTRODUCTION

An approach to art in the grades should be made through the individual. The presentation should not be geared to making each individual child an artist, but rather making him an appreciator and intelligent consumer of art.¹ The young, flexible mind will become receptive to the field of art when it is shown that all forms of art find their roots in the self-expression of the individual. It could be explained to these new adventurers in the realm of art that their art work is as distinct and different from the art work of others as is their own appearance or personality. If this distinction is properly impressed upon the child, he will immediately realize the tremendous latitude and freedom of operation which awaits the individual in the field of art. A child who thinks independently will not follow set patterns, but instead will strike out for himself in search of new fields, with confidence in his ability to meet and handle new and different situations.² When a child thinks of art, his impressions differ greatly from those of an adult. A child is natural in his use of art when he applies it as a means of self-expression to give visible form to his ideas, dreams and moods. This becomes apparent when we note the manner in which he divorces his work from reality by enlarging and emphasizing, by means of both color and form, the objects which he feels are most important. Such work should be recognized and understood as the natural and normal product

of the young impressionable mind. It must be remembered that if a baby will babble before he talks, a child will scribble before he draws.³ We cannot force a child to create. By forcing imitation we are apt to cause a loss of self confidence in the child which may induce a feeling of frustration and rejection. We find that adult standards of proportion cannot be successfully required in the art work of the elementary student.

Psychologists have found that in many cases a child who has a lack of self-confidence is emotionally or mentally disturbed.⁴ The art teacher is in a position to correct such difficulties in his pupils by proper stimulation of the student's creative ability. Children suffering from such disturbances will respond warmly to the open freedom of sympathetic instruction. Such a student can be greatly aided by a feeling of independence in his art work when he observes the work that he is producing and identifies it as the personal product of his individual mind, containing only such impressions as he wants to release and impart to it.

By allowing the child the freedom of visual expression, the teacher fosters a spirit of independence which will better equip him to meet the many problems he is to face.⁵ To ask a child to copy is to impose upon him the burden of entering unequipped into the world of adult thought. The child who depends upon the teacher for ideas will be restricted in his ex-

