

THE ARTS AND ITS DIRECT EFFECT ON AN ADOLESCENT'S DEVELOPMENT

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STATEMENT OF INTENT

My aim is to explore the positive aspects of the arts on a child's mental and emotional well-being. Discussing topics such as art used as a form of therapy, its state in education and how it is utilised, and how society views it as a platform of personal expression. I will also discuss my personal experiences with art in education and how it has affected my mental development.

INTRODUCTION

In this body of work, I will explore an abundance of books, articles, journals, newspapers and websites surrounding the issues and positive aspects of the arts on an adolescent's development. I have chosen this topic due to my personal interest of an individual's education, e.g. why someone studied art, how they studied, how it has affected their learning capabilities in their adult life, and when they discovered art in their life. I personally did not explore art as a child, and I feel as though it has affected my long-term motor abilities, communication skills, and self-confidence. While learning art as a child might not have improved my skills as an adult, I feel that it would have influenced my motivation to create and learn. To start, chapter one will explore the positive influences that art in education and therapy has on a child's mental development. In chapter two, I will discuss how it has been funded, explored and taught in education alone; and chapter three will be dedicated my research on societies expectations and outlook on the arts in the working world, as well as looking at current practitioners. I hope to find more up-to-date studies, as the arts are constantly evolving alongside societies progression, but I will look at past studies to determine how far we have come as a whole, what we could possibly change, or whether or not we need to change how we study, teach or approach art at all.

CHAPTER ONE

MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

The whole foundation of organisation upon which art teachers have worked – freedom for children to develop their own ideas, opportunities for choices, encouragement of originality and unconventional thinking (however much modified and weakened in action) -- is one conducive to the exercise of creative abilities. (*Field, D. 1970, p.7*)

It has been studied and shown that an education enlightened by art is that of a successful one. The child in question leaves their studies with a knowledge and confidence unparalleled to that of an education in the sciences alone. Their original and conceptual thought process continues to develop throughout their lifetime, with their brain acting like a sponge – constantly taking in new information and keen to do so. A child lacking practical artistic skills will always take something from this type of education, as they are still able to think the way that an artist does; solving difficult issues with experimental thoughts and ideas. Children would be led towards the understanding that they might use art as a way of influencing their capacity to learn in their later years.

From personal experience, I have struggled through higher education because I was not encouraged to pursue art at a young age. I have felt as though I was not intelligent or able to articulate my thoughts correctly during a discussion in class, struggling to understand words over a nine-letter count. I feel as though my confidence was knocked when I attempted to make a comment in class, knowing that other students might have known better because they had been introduced to these topics at a young age. I believe it is imperative that children be encouraged to study the arts at a steady pace to avoid these situations, as such blows to a child's confidence could possibly influence significant mental health issues such as anxiety and/or depression as they grow up. Not to say that it would almost certainly influence such

an outcome, but the chances are likely to be higher if someone has not had the same type of education as their peers.

“We must observe that the young adolescent, in becoming more self-aware, becomes more consciously critical of himself and of his creative work.” (*Field, D. 1970, p.26*) Whilst becoming critical of one’s creative work is essential, not every student needs to practice art to benefit from this mindset. From this teaching, the student might develop positive traits such as attention to detail, the ability to dissect information, and the ability to both apply and extract context from things such as movies, games, books, and conversations with other people. Obviously, at this time and age one must be aware that too much influence is a hindrance to the child’s psychological development. The child must experience a sense of independence to fully take advantage of this teaching; if they are too directly influenced, they might imitate work that is shown to them, rather than creating an identity for themselves.

In my research I came across Miluše Hutýrová's writing, wherein she speaks about using art therapy to communicate and explore the issues of a child’s psyche. Her research areas are based around children and adults with specific behavioural and emotional disorders, ADHD, and those with socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds (original information translated from Czech). She wrote in ‘*Utilization of Narrative Approach in Art Therapy in Children with Behavioural Problems*’ (2016. p284-7), that a child’s reflection on their behavioural manifestations is essential in their personal development. If the child needs to change, or at least improve their attitude in the learning place, it is imperative that they form a mutually positive relationship with those around them e.g. their peers, teachers, siblings, and parents. The attitude of these people must be positive for the growth of the child. If they were to use

art as a form of communication, between themselves and the child, they would hopefully improve the child's social, emotional or development issues.

Realistically, one can only do so much to help the child with their art, as it is an expression of the child's own emotions. Nevertheless, leaving them to create their own work in a calm, therapeutic environment, might also influence their ability to engage in conversation without issue, enabling a fluidity in their language and a confident persona. It is a great tool to express ideas and creativity.



Fig. 1: *Bobo Doll Experiment*

Exploring the influence that adults can have on children, I found the work of Albert Bandura and his colleagues. Bandura is a Canadian innovative scholar whose work in social cognitive therapy served as a powerful source of information for academics alike. If we look at Bandura's work with the '*Bobo Doll experiment*' (1961), wherein Bandura and his colleagues Sheila A. Ross, and Dorothea Ross tested 36 boys and 36 girls from a Stanford nursery school, exposing different temperaments to the children over 3 groups. 1 group observed aggressive

behaviour from the adult model, another group observed non-aggressive behaviour, and the last group was not exposed to any behaviour models. The behaviour from the adult models was directed at an inflatable “bobo doll”, to see what the children observing would learn from adult behaviour. With this experiment, they found that what a child is exposed to can ultimately influence how they behave in a modern society. In my opinion, if they were to be exposed to a healthy education and a daily creative output, the likelihood of a child showing aggressive behaviour is very slim, as art has been proven to be a very useful type of therapy when dealing with troubling emotions. This shows that an adult’s influence is a major factor in a child’s upbringing, whether it be a teacher, parent or guardian.

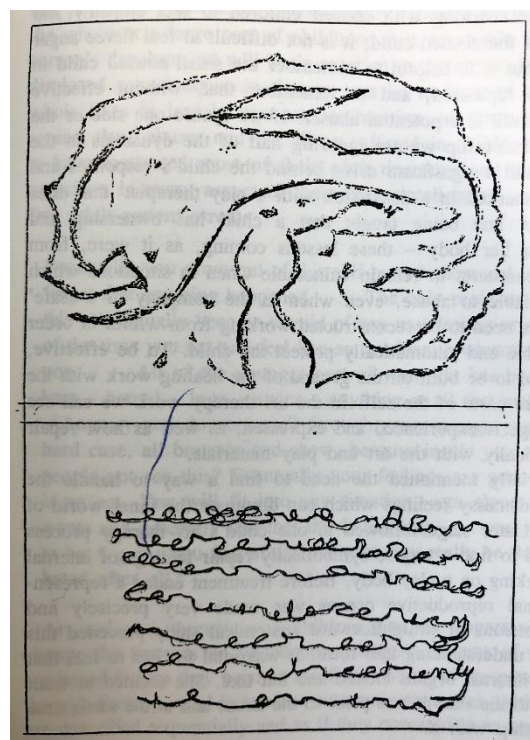


Fig. 2: *Secret Map and Secret Letter*

To approach the world of art therapy I wanted look at different scenarios experienced by different practitioners. Carol Sagar was a senior art therapist in child and adult psychiatry at the Bethel Child and Family Centre, and currently works part-time giving supervision to members of the Creative Arts Team for the Norfolk Mental Health Care NHS Trust. In '*Working*

with Children in Art Therapy' (1990, p89-95) Sagar speaks about working with cases of child sexual abuse; in the 1980s there was a rapid increase in this type of abuse which observed through child and family psychiatry, social services and other agencies monitoring children's welfare. Using art as a therapy to deal with the trauma, she works with a girl of 6 years old and documents the progress and patterns. In the fifteenth session with the young girl, she produced a drawing showing a "*secret map and secret letter*" (shown above). Sagar states that a pattern arising from child sexual abuse is that of becoming an adult abuser. Art and play therapy, in a sense, interrupts the process and pattern by giving the children involved an opportunity to draw and talk about what happened, without the problem becoming a fixed issue too fast. Without the intervention of therapy, the patterns sit and become automated responses. Abuse is almost certainly likely to breed more abuse. Art therapy has shown that one can improve the patient's relationship with the psychologist and family after such trauma, and that the child is able to speak about their case of abuse after working through so many sessions. It is not the easiest task to persuade children to talk about such things, as the abuser might still hold some influence over them, but with the help of art therapy it makes it just a little bit easier for the psychologist to help them heal.

"Fortunately, most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling from others." (Bandura, A. 1977, p.22)

Moving on, I have read through Viktor Lowenfeld's theories and accounts of assisting children with their exploration in art. To explain briefly, Lowenfeld was a professor of art at Pennsylvania State University, he helped define and develop art education in the United States and was more seriously involved in his research as a scientific venture after a personal visit from Sigmund Freud. His work and writing influenced many students to study at Penn

State, and its graduate programme became one of the largest in art education in the United State by 1960. In *'Your Child and his Art' (1954)*, he briefly explores the damages of "helping" the child with their work. While one might be tempted to help them create, imposing their idea of "art" into the child's mind might make what they are creating completely meaningless to them, e.g. they might ask for assistance with a painting of flowers, the adult's idea might be to paint the flowers realistically, whilst the child's might be to paint them taller, brighter, with an array of colours; a child only wants to draw and paint what is important and interesting to *them*. When we assist, they assume they can come to us any time they hit a block, which in turn takes away that individual creative expression that we are so desperately trying to instil. The work we have created in the child's drawing becomes a foreign body *per se*, serving as a standard to which they cannot uphold, and eventually creating a lack of confidence and motivational attitude. This attitude is a major factor in the psychological development of the child, influencing the way they work for the rest of their lives.

"Undue criticism is more harmful than undue praise. Since our criticism is based on our adult taste, it will not fit the child's needs." (*Lowenfeld, V. 1954, p.20*) Whilst constructive criticism is desperately needed for the growth of a child's motor and mental skills, it is only used to a certain extent. Criticising *how* a child creates is counterproductive, as is criticising their ability to express themselves on the subject matter. To yield better results, one would want to challenge the child's perception of their work, asking them questions about it and how it came to be. We do not want to question the reality of their work, as their reality is much different to that of an adult. It is wholly based on feeling and emotion, rather than the objective views adults adhere to. If we were to ask the child to adjust their art to please our eyes, we would warp or distort their sensitive connection to their experiences rendering the whole process

completely void. This is another dangerous factor we must consider avoiding, as a child's emotional experiences are fundamental to their growth and development.

To successfully criticise a child's work, one must do so during the process of creating, rather than after it has been completed. The child's interest will only truly peak during their time working and will quickly vanish after they have finished. They must be able to grow from the creation rather than the completion, as too much definition on the final piece stresses it beyond its subliminal significance. We must also realise that we are not encouraging the child to become an artist; rather, we are encouraging them to create a sense of self that they are lacking in their youth, and reinforcing positive behaviour, i.e. child completes task given to them, reward is given for completion, child wants to create more to work for more rewards. We must enforce that doing and completing is important – regardless of whether we deem the outcome “beautiful” or “lovely” – and we do not encourage a lack of trying.

CHAPTER TWO

EDUCATION

Self-discipline, the discipline which grows out of the child's own desire for expression, is much more vital for growth than the restricting, imposed discipline of colouring books which is derived from outside forces. (*Lowenfeld, V. 1954, p.66*)

When speaking about self-discipline, we instil the idea that we must create each day from our own creativity as adults. So why would we push a different ideal onto that of a child's work ethic. We want the child to grow from their own creations and not create a persona where they must finish something that is already halfway done. So rather than giving a child a colouring book, where an adult has most likely created the art given to them, instead give them blank pieces of paper, or a sketchbook, where they can create to their hearts content. It is important that one keeps what they have made, so they might see where they have

improved or can improve in the future, as a practicing artist might do. Not to say that they might become an artist in the future, but with the idea instilled that anyone can improve on something so long as they see their previous work, they are bound to become a much more confident person.

Children must take risks to learn from these experiences and develop personal skills, and art is an excellent platform for them to take said risks. This goes to show that what the child feels about their work, how they create it, how they communicate it with others, are all factors of their happiness. It is undoubtedly up to the adult – whether they be the teacher, parent, or guardian – how the child reacts to the practice of art in their education.

If the child is unable to express themselves in their work, it is highly likely that there is an external issue interfering with their motivation. It is imperative that these issues either be incorporated into the work or talked through before the work is officially started. One main function of the arts is a means to communicate. If a child is unable to communicate something through a drawing they have made, a lot of psychological issues may go unresolved. Therefore, it is important that after something is created, it is to be spoken about in a constructive context, rather than critically analysing a brushstroke gone wrong, or questioning why they have scribbled in the corner and called it the sun. If no feedback has been given, the child will ultimately deem the drawing exercise pointless, and nothing will have been achieved.

Very few of us realise how many of our most fundamental ideas about life are drawn from artistic experiences—from literature, the drama, movies, music, painting, and the allied arts. (*Mendelowitz, D. 1963, p.2*)

In life, we tend to forget that the basis of our knowledge comes from the studies we thought we did not need when we were children; everyone must start somewhere. If we were to

incorporate more funding into the arts, it is highly probable that we would see a rise of intelligent and confident youths, ready and eager to learn more. Such youths might be more interested in involving themselves with communities, hold more positive ideals for their adult lives, and they might want to pursue careers that their parents might not have even considered.

All these possibilities stem from a well-balanced curriculum, including not only subjects based around literacy, mathematics and the sciences, but the rich education that only creative subjects can bring to each individual child. We must uphold these types of curricula as a society if we want the absolute best for the children of the future. To achieve this ideal we would need a massive surge in funding; teachers are grossly underpaid, and despite their motivation to teach, they cannot do so without the proper supplies (some might pay for supplies directly out of pocket); some might feel that they are not being properly paid for the hours that they work, which in turn creates an overall sense that they are underappreciated by society; they might need extra funding to work with more difficult children, or children from impoverished families.

Considering these factors, we may underestimate how much one individual can cope without proper assistance and must learn to adapt to meet their needs at a steady rate. If we, as a society, do not learn, we cannot expect children and young adults to come out of education ready to take on the aspects of a working adult's life, as no one has been able to teach them to think and create for themselves when we have the capacity to do exactly that.

LETTER TO MICHAEL GOVE MP SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION
 25 JULY 2011 IN MEMORY OF LUCIEN FREUD AND AMY WINEHOUSE WHO DIED THIS WEEK END
 DEAR MICHAEL GOVE ART IMAGES ARTIFACTS SONGS CULTURE ARE THE PRINCIPLE MEANS BY WHICH HUMAN BEINGS DEFINE THEMSELVES. MICHAEL A LOOK AT YOUR TIE AND SHIRT COMBINATION IN IMAGES OF YOU ONLINE INFORMS ME YOU ARE NOT A VISUALLY MINDED PERSON. YOU DO NOT CARE HOW YOU LOOK. LOOK AROUND YOU. WHAT DO YOU SEE? EVERYTHING IS MADE. EVERYTHING HAS BEEN FASHIONED BY HUMAN BEINGS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED ALL ASPECTS OF WHAT THEY HAVE MADE. IMAGE IS EVERYTHING: VISUAL WORTH COMMERCIAL VALUE. MORAL VIRTUE AUTHORITY AND INTEGRITY. FROM BIRTH HUMAN BEINGS SEEK TO UNDERSTAND. FIND THEIR PLACE IN SOCIETY AND CONTROL THEIR WORLDS THROUGH LOOKING AND UNDERSTANDING THE CHILD INTERPRETS THE WORLD. GIVE A CHILD A PIECE OF PAPER. A BRUSH AND SOME COLOURS AND YOU PUT THEM IN CONTROL. CHILDREN'S ART IS SO APPEALING BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH BEING IN CONTROL OF IMAGES. AS SCHOOL PROGRESSES POOR TEACHING IN SOME SCHOOLS IMPRESSES ON THE CHILD THAT THEY ARE NOT IN CONTROL. NOT ONLY ARE THEY NOT IN CONTROL. BUT THEY ARE THE MOST INSIGNIFICANT COG IN A SYSTEM OF CONTROL IN WHICH THEY MAY NEVER PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART FROM GALILEO TO DARWIN FROM CARAVAGGIO TO AMY WINEHOUSE CREATIVITY IS REBELLION. YOUR INITIATIVE AWARDS CONFORMITY AND WILL CAUSE STAGNATION. THE REBELLIOUS CHILD. THE ARTIST THE INNOVATOR THE INVENTOR. THE ENGINEER THE ARCHITECT. CLINGS ON TO THEIR PROWESS WITH PAPER. DOES ART & MUSIC AT SCHOOL GOES TO ART SCHOOL OR STUDIES DESIGN AND CONTRIBUTES TO THE LIBRARY OF IMAGES AND FORMS. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHEETS OF BLANK PAPER PENCILS AND INNOVATION IS UNDENIABLE. ART SHOULD BE THE CENTRE OF A NATIONAL CURRICULUM BASED ON CREATIVE THINKING. PITY THE OBEDIENT CHILD IN A SYSTEM OF EDUCATION. OBSESSED WITH VOCATIONAL SKILLS HE OR SHE CAVES IN. THE CHILD WHO BECOMES INHIBITED IS INDUCED INTO THE MEDIOCRE MAJORITY OF THE VISUALLY ILLITERATE OF WHICH YOU, MICHAEL GOVE (IN YOUR ILL FITTING SHIRT AND UNMATCHED TIE) ARE A PART. BUT EVEN THOSE WHO HAVE CREATIVITY BEATEN OUT OF THEM BY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS OF THE TYPE YOU ADVOCATE. NEED ENJOY AND CONSUME IMAGES. EVERYTHING IS VISUAL: ART YES BUT ALSO DESIGN. MONEY NUMBERS; EVEN THE EBB AND FLOW OF COMMERCE HAS TO BE MADE VISUAL IN RECENT YEARS CHINA HAS OPENED 400 SCHOOLS OF ART AND DESIGN YOUR GOVERNMENT HAS WHITTLED BRITAIN'S ONCE DIVERSE VARIED CULTURE OF SCHOOLS OF ART TO JUST 12 INSTITUTIONS THIS REDUCTION IS A DISASTER FOR BRITISH DESIGN BRITISH COMMERCE BRITISH ART AND BRITAIN'S ABILITY TO COMPETE IN THE WORLD
 TAKE ART OUT OF SCHOOLS AND YOU SHUT THE DOOR ON CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT AND EMASCULATE BRITISH CULTURE. WHERE ARE OUR FUTURE DESIGNERS ARCHITECTS CRAFTSMEN/WOMEN ENGINEERS TECHNICIANS SOFTWARE DESIGNERS AND MATHEMATICIANS GOING TO COME FROM IF NO ONE CAN DRAW? YOU SHOULD REALISE BRITAIN IS AMAZING IN CULTURAL VISUAL DEMOCRATIC MUSICAL DESIGN PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND LITERARY TERMS BRITAIN IS A GIANT. ART IS NOW PART OF THE LANGUAGE OF FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY. REPRESSIVE IDEOLOGICAL REGIMES RESTRICT ARTISTS. YOU MUST REALISE THAT ART IS NOT A CHOICE MADE AT SECONDARY SCHOOL RATHER WE ARE ALL CULTURAL BEINGS TO REMOVE THE REQUIREMENT OF SCHOOLS TO TEACH ART TO KIDS AT PRIMARY LEVEL IS QUITE WRONG THE ITALIANS CRAM THEIR CHILDREN INTO MUSEUMS THEY SAY LOOK THIS IS ITALY THIS IS YOUR CULTURE YOU ARE ITALIAN HUMAN BEINGS HAVE CULTURE YOUR GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE TO MONETIZE THE EPISTEME WITH ITS ASSAULT ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES COUPLED WITH YOUR INCLINATION TO REMOVE ART FROM THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM IS DEEPLY CONCERNING YOUR REFORMS WILL CRIPPLE FUTURE BRITISH DESIGN. IN ADVANCE OF YOUR REFORMS UNIVERSITIES OFFERING CERTIFICATES IN TEACHER TRAINING ARE WITH-DRAWING THEIR COURSES IN ART AND DESIGN TEACHING THIS IS DISGRACEFUL. YOU WILL BE OPPOSED BY ALL PEOPLE INTERESTED IN ART DESIGN. FREE SPEECH. FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY AND PROBABLY ALSO BY A FEW BANKERS AND INVESTORS INTERESTED IN BRITISH PRODUCTS AND EXPORTS WHO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE COLOUR OF THEIR MONEY. YOU PREACH AUSTERITY AND DESPAIR. GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DEVELOPE A DISCOURSE OF HOPE AND CREATIVITY WHERE HUMAN BEINGS FEEL EMPOWERED TO USE THEIR INGENUITY TO GET THEMSELVES OUT OF THE CRISIS WE FACE THE LONDON RIOTS WERE A RESULT OF A YOUTH CULTURE THAT HAS HOPELESSNESS AND AUSTERITY FORCED UPON IT. GOVERNMENT OFFERS YOUNG PEOPLE LITTLE TO LOOK FORWARD TO. DESPAIR LACK OF OPPORTUNITY LACK OF HIGHER EDUCATION LACK OF JOBS YOU ARE REMOVING ALL THE LADDERS TO THE DISENFRANCHISED YOU NEED TO RETHINK THE ROLE OF CREATIVITY IN SOCIETY AND REALIZE INNOVATION COMES FROM OPTIMISM CREATIVITY RISK TAKING AND **ART**
 BOB AND ROBERTA SMITH

Fig. 3: Letter to Michael Gove

Over the past decade, we have seen an abundance of school's curriculums being shrunk down to include more socially accepted subjects based around the sciences, literature and mathematics. The main points being that there is a lack of interest in artistic subjects, or that there is less of a chance of finding a career after finishing school/university. While this might be understandable for some schools who lack the funding, it does not do the children attending the school's justice to completely cut the arts out of the curriculum; as Bob and Roberta Smith said in 'Letter to Michael Gove' (2015): "Where are our future designers,

architects, craftsmen/women, engineers, technicians, software designers and mathematicians going to come from if no one can draw?”

Patrick Brill, or better known by his pseudonym Bob and Roberta Smith, is a British contemporary artist, writer, musician, author, art education advocate and keynote speaker. Most of his artwork is purely word based, focusing on the dire political situation in Britain. He has written “letters” to David Williams, Michael Gove, Nigel Farage and Nicky Morgan, encouraging those who follow his work to forward the letters to those named above. In *‘I Should Be in Charge’* (2011, p194-5), the artist writes about the drastic rise in fees of higher education, despite protest from the creative public. They spoke about an increase in wealthy, well-connected ‘kids’ becoming an empty decoration of the art world, instead of encouraging real cultural innovation. They speak about cuts to the Arts Council, and how the government essentially calls war on British culture, despite many famous creators coming from their homeland. Why would the British government not want children and young adults to learn about these creators? In the arts, Britain will always be at the top of the food chain, with millions flocking to the Tate, The National Gallery, and the V&A every year. The Tate published its official annual report back in 2016/17 with a record of 6.4 million visitors that year alone, along with the annual report for 2018/19 showing numbers of over 8.1 million visitors (Tate, 2019). What the British government does not realise is how incredibly lucky they are to have such innovation in their culture—they will need to stop cutting funding to the arts, or they will ensure a dangerous amount of backlash from the public. When art in the curriculum is taken away, one takes away a child’s control of their image. This could make them feel insignificant in a system created with control over every element of life, of which they might never play an important role in. They speak of art not being a choice one makes in secondary school, as humans we are all cultural and thrive from creating.



Fig. 4: *Biennale Educational*

Speaking from personal experience, I have seen first-hand the influence that art and culture has on a child's mind as I visited the bi-annual Venice Biennale with my university. I saw hundreds of school children roaming the halls of the Venetian Arsenal and the Giardini in awe of every piece they were shown. The adults with them explained in depth of what each piece meant and how it came to be, speaking of the artists lives and what they were inspired by. The children had the freedom to ask and enquire, and I was astounded that I had never received such an education, feeling envious that these children are exploring the world's culture and politics at such a young age, and are wholly encouraged to do so. With the Venice Biennale as a general example, the outreach programme they have with schools fosters a growth in interest with children and art in education. They have workshop opportunities and guided tours for each school interested in the programme. The organisers want to encourage visiting as a chance for personal growth and interests for the families and children living in Venice as well as those living outside of the city. The Biennale's very existence thrives from

the experimentation and life brought by the countless educational visitors, so its goal is to encourage the growth of this livelihood in others.

If those in charge of state education around the world took some influence from the Biennale's programmes, or at least the interest coming from the schools attending every two years, I truly believe society could be less divided on so many aspects of life. The teachings that come from these types of visits, or at least the teachings one would learn from each piece they might see, truly do stick with you. They allow you to perceive other people's way of life without living it, giving you the opportunity to adjust your ways of thinking to consider other's feelings.

Exposure to skills and processes through the arts has been found to evoke positive emotional cognition, allowing the learner to recall the knowledge learned at any point in their life. Arts integration can be effectively used amongst learners to transfer knowledge across different disciplines, i.e. using music to remember information that one would struggle to retain initially, using the human body to create a particular letter to help adolescents enhance their literary skills through dance, or painting/drawing locations or maps to create a visual association. It is also beneficial to the enhancement of self-efficiency, critical thinking skills, cooperation with other learners, and motivational skills. While it has been researched that integration of the arts in a learner's academic studies can improve their cognition, it's unfair to say that the positive results are wholly based off the integration itself, other likely reasons are exposure to the arts in general, strong beliefs and instruction from those who teach the learners, or a combination of all.

In an article for the New York Times (*Klass, 2019*), Mariale Hardiman – a professor at the John Hopkins School of Education – states that, “Arts allow for elaboration, allow for repetition.

Memory is certainly enhanced through repetition, the more you revisit something, the more you remember it.”

While believing that arts integration is key in studying other subjects, it should not replace arts education; those who wish to specialise in arts should have the choice, as culture and society thrive off what the arts has to offer. It can still offer the creative ability of solving one’s own problems, which every child should be able to do without the assistance of an adult. Adults sometimes overcomplicate their thought processes, which can be too much for a child to handle, so the freedom of being able to problem solve by themselves can also help adults alongside the development of the child.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIETY

An argument that has been circling the modern art world over the last decade is that modern artists exhibiting their work in galleries are not skilled enough, or their work is not in depth enough to even be considered art. The phrase, “my child could do that” comes into play quite frequently. Susie Hodge explores this theme in her book *‘Why your five-year-old could not have done that’* (2012), with a wide variety of artist’s works shown alongside notes and comments on exactly why a child could not have created that specific piece of modern art. Hodge is a British artist, author, journalist and art historian with a specialty in writing about the history of art and design. Her book explores the term used, examining 100 works of contemporary art that critiques have unjustly mistaken for the works of an inexperienced child. While the pieces may lack technique, they do not lack expression and thought-provoking ideas that could only come from the logic of artists in their own time. The term

comes across as derogatory when they are talking about artists who have completed dedicated their lives to their practice; saying a child could have done something that might have taken someone months, or even years to complete might also give someone the impression that they do not think much of the creative work the child produces. They would not do well to incorrectly criticise a child's work if they are to become an exceptional member of society—if one truly wants to create a positive relationship with the child and what they create, it is a phrase they will want to avoid when visiting any art gallery.



Fig. 5: *Improvisation 21a*

Hodge looks at Kandinsky's work '*Improvisation 21a*' (1911) and discusses how Kandinsky was probably one of many artists who might have been pleased by the assumption that his work was created by a child. Kandinsky was a pioneer of abstract art, his work with colour and composition is admired by many active artists across the world; he was one of the first artists to consciously create an impression of movement without showing an object in motion, and

he believed that art should not be restrained to a representation of life around us, so he explored its connection to music. His work was created in the hopes that it would demonstrate the feelings of wonder and discovery that a child would experience. However, every piece was intricately thought out with many complex ideas and emotions behind every colour and stroke. Arguing that a child could make this piece of work with the intensity of an adult's emotions would be an insult to both the artist and the child. Kandinsky experienced synaesthesia (*Hodge, 2012, p.57*), which means that he saw colour when he read words or heard sounds. He created a concept within his work in which he would represent the experience with colour, line and form. In the same year of creating '*Improvisation 21a*', he wrote his first major theoretical text '*On Spiritual in Art, and Painting in Particular*', which explored his theosophical thought process. While a child might understand that there are different religions or spiritualities in the world, they probably could not comprehend what Kandinsky was exploring with his works. It takes years of exploration and thought to achieve a certain level of artistic expression, and while children have the freedom of creative and emotional expression, it is completely unfair to assume they could achieve something of this magnitude at such a young age.



Fig. 6: *Hirondelle Amour*

Hodge also explores Joan Miró's '*Hirondelle Amour*' very briefly. Miró's work sought to liberate the functioning mind through that of a pure psychic automatism. His innovative use of line, colour and organic shapes was a major contribution to the Surrealism movement, and influenced many American painters including Mark Rothko and Arshile Gorky. While much of his line work and shading resembles that of a child's attempt at drawing, every stroke is completely deliberate, unlike the momentary scribble that a child would achieve. These strange occurrences in each piece represented Miró's feelings, which he then called the 'sparks of the soul'. He flicked and poured paint onto his canvases, painting lines and forms that he had planned prior in his studies. He created his works subconsciously, painting freely first, and calculated later. Miró commented that at one point his automatism was purely led by hunger-fuelled hallucinations. '*Hirondelle Amour*' clearly illustrates his "*peinture-poésie*", or painting-poetry, in which organic form and words seem to float over a blue space indefinitely. He created a new language of painting and paved the way for Surrealism and Dadaism. His work could initially be compared to that of a child's drawing, but after some

research one will find that a child could probably not achieve the same result as Miró, with every bit of context and feeling behind his creations, anyone could have trouble trying to imitate them.



Fig. 7: *The Poet*

Adults might feel that a child will not work hard to create a painting or drawing, which is where I assume the saying “my child could draw that” came from. They might take a visit to Peggy Guggenheim’s collection and view Pablo Picasso’s *‘The Poet’* (1911); and while it might not be to everyone’s taste, and some might truly believe that their child could recreate it, I do not believe anyone should consider contemporary art to be childish or lacking skill. Children can still show skill when creating, but it is a different type of skill at their age. They might be able to paint or draw something that their classmates cannot—this is their way of

showing the development of their manipulative skills. When they grow up, they might consider continue practicing art, or they might decide to study a more academic subject, but it is important that they make that choice themselves. Removing art in education is eliminating the choices they have. Art has been considered the easy way out as anyone is able to practice it, but if those who assumed this considered the amount of time that went into every individual piece of art made by someone, or even their thought process before creating something, I sincerely hope they would reconsider their stance.

Before the 21st century, art in education was considered a privilege. Before it became accessible to those of a lower class, and women, only wealthy families had access to good schooling and tutoring which emphasized on cultural values and the arts. For other families, they were lucky if they received any schooling in the arts; crafts were only taught to young children for future work in small factories in 18th century Britain, and drawing was taught as a manipulative motor skill (*Paine, 2000, p.9-10*). Drawing being taught as a developing skill might still be handy to parents and teachers, as some children might have difficulty adjusting to using certain objects, especially those with physical or mental disabilities. We, as a society, must consider every possible way of teaching the young mind how to create with a complete sense of freedom and self-control. We cannot forget that the children we teach will lead the world in their adulthood, and we cannot blame them if they do not understand certain issues if we have not educated them properly. Older generations have assumed the youth of the world do not like to work hard, have radical thoughts and ideas, and create politically correct ideals just to anger those who do not understand, because they were taught a different way (*Ruggeri, 2017*). These are probably the people who would not support the decision to fund the arts in a standard curriculum, which would wholeheartedly encourage the youth to think, speak and act as individuals out of their own free will. It is these people we must convince or

encourage to change their minds; else society will continue to grow around them, and they will eventually be isolated.

Now we look at this year's Turner Prize—wherein 4 artists who were 2 shortlisted for the prize came to meet for the first time in a white walled meeting room. They discussed with each other of how they would approach the judges and ask to be considered as a collective. The idea came as a way of “hijacking” the prize, so there would be no singular winner. The winners; Lawrence Abu Hamdan, an artist dealing with sound and its intersection with politics; Helen Cammock, a photographer exploring the relationships of the individual and collective as a lived experience; Oscar Murillo, a contemporary painter and installation artist whose work is noted for its use of text and recycled materials collected from his studio; and Tai Shani, whose practice includes film, photography, performance and sculptural installations quite frequently structured around experimental texts. Their work as individuals could be quite similar, despite exploring their topics with different medias. They personally believed that pitting them against each other for one individual prize would have defeated the purpose of their work: “to show a world entangled” (*Joint statement for the Guardian, 2019*). The proposal was an act of resistance and solidarity, and they did not expect anything to come of it when they brought it to Tate Britain. Eventually they were told by the jurors that the prize would be offered to all of them as a collective, splitting the prize equally among them at £10,000 each. The act of symbolism is one of an artist's greatest tools, and they have utilized it to its fullest. Shani commented that she lives in fear of having to give up being an artist just to make ends meet, with Cammock stating that people have asked him how the arts can become more accessible for those from poorer backgrounds—but art is not isolated from society, it accommodates anyone who wishes to practice. The only issue is that artists are not being funded for their work, and if people are not being paid properly; they will lack

motivation to create. Everything in the art world is connected, and every artist relies on support from their government if they wish to succeed.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, through exploring the benefits of the arts on a child's mental development; arts in education and how it is being funded; and societies expectations of artists in the working world, I have found that the study and practice of art is fundamental for our learning capabilities, creative thinking that leads to the development of problem-solving skills, ways of communication, and our individual and original thought processes. Through my research, I have highlighted the positive influences that a funded arts programme can have on one's development from adolescence to adulthood, as well as negative impacts that an un-creative society can have on the possibilities and choices a child should have when growing up. I personally believe the arts within education and society is of the utmost importance, as without, civilisation has no means for expression or culture. Humanity needs creative thinking for innovation, progression and further development.

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