

Art for Our Age

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SEE BEAUTY! Reflect Beauty! Create Beauty! Around these facets is built an art program which attempts to touch the lives of children and adults. Stated in specifics, it says:

See Beauty. The beauty of the world about us is waiting for us to enjoy—the silhouette of trees against a winter sky, the slope of windswept hills, the holly—red, and the cool bright notes of snow upon the frozen earth. What have your children seen of the beauty in their surroundings?

Reflect Beauty. First we must see beauty in order to reflect it. Loveliness needs to replace ugliness. Those who endeavor to find beauty in simple things, to express beauty in their own dress, surroundings, and speech, will be reflecting beauty and at the same time radiating beauty to others.

Create Beauty. To create beauty is to express, in visual form, your innermost thoughts and feelings so that the whole is complete, unified, and honest.

A Living Experience for All

Through these points of emphasis, art in the Spokane Public Schools endeavors to carry into action in the school program the values of the arts to individuals and to the society which these individuals create. The arts are more than objects which are produced from materials. They offer a way of working and a way of being which is significant in a democratic society. Individuals are affected by the development of the arts or the lack of it, and greater confidence is gained along with happiness and satisfaction.

Art experiences are an inevitable part of human experience. The visual arts make social studies and science a living, colorful experience to the child. Greater appreciation of the works of man has been gained by the child's own experience. The beauties of nature are unfolded as the individual learns to see instead of to look and to use his environment as subject matter in his composition of a picture or a design.

Children's pictures are matted and framed for the school rooms and halls. The administrative offices and children's room of the public library also have framed children's pictures. Beauty spots arranged by the children may include materials connected with their science, social studies, reading, and craft objects.

Ten exhibits of pictures by the boys and girls of Spokane travel from school to school throughout the year. Three pictures from each grade, kindergarten through the eighth, include a variety of techniques. These serve to stimulate creative expression and convey the ideals, aspirations, observations, and impressions of the young artists. An art exhibit is a problem in design. It means selecting, mounting, arranging, and placing material well within a given space.

During National Boys' and Girls' Week an exhibition of children's framed pictures, crafts, and murals was held. The pictures were selected for their spontaneous expression and individual interpretation. The hostesses were chosen from the parents of children from all the schools. The community found that common clay in the hands of children may become a thing of beauty—that children's own products are made lovelier in a fine setting—that beauty may be shared with others—that art is a useful thing beautifully made. Those who helped with the display gained practical and valuable experience in grouping objects, in appropriate backgrounds, and in arrangement of the whole.

Outlets for Expression

The last few years our concentration has been on the war effort, but with peace, our efforts should provide children the opportunity to develop the skills, understandings, attitudes and ideals essential to living in a society dedicated to the principles of liberty in thought and action. With peace should come a feeling of release, a sense of gratitude mixed with joy plus the important responsibility of helping to shape a future culture.

An art supervisor tells us about her job. Basic to her working principles is her conviction that art is a part of almost every phase of living and that as such it enters into all aspects of the school program and community life. How a public school art program seeks to encourage creativeness and open paths to more satisfying living among both children and grown-ups is described by Dorothy S. McIlvain, director of art in Spokane, Wash.

An age of art made by the people and for the people as a happiness to the maker and user enriches living. We have found that creative effort has a therapeutic effect on the individual. That we may use it as a means of interpreting our culture is a possibility.

If creative experiences are to function in total living, the schools must work with leaders of youth in Boy Scout, Campfire Girl, Girl Scout, YMCA and YWCA groups. Constructive ways of using materials are taught to the children in our communities by these leaders who have an interest in the activities of the children. Profitable and enjoyable hours outside of school are spent with these groups. Many leaders welcome suggestions for guiding children in creative effort. A workshop in crafts designed to give training in the best use of materials, various techniques, and ways to plan for fitness and beauty resulted in adults becoming more interested and confident in their abilities.

Parent-teacher groups, working with a supervisor of art or a person with like understanding, may gain a sympathetic appreciation of child art, of the true values of art education, and of the importance of good taste in the community. Pre-school parent groups also ask for aid in developing an understanding of child art.

Plans have been made through community art services to coordinate the activities of artists, patrons of art, and school groups. Through such an organization, an understanding of the art of today in all fields—painting, sculpture, household design, architecture, and industry—can be encouraged. Native arts may be developed by workshop method. The objectives of this group are an art gallery, the beautification of the city, and furtherance of the creative abilities of members of the community and the cultural values of art.

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Monthly illustrated talks on art and workshop meetings are open to the public. A loan exhibit of original paintings by Spokane artists was on exhibition for National Art Week. These pictures will be housed for one year in the Public Library. An individual, firm, or institution may borrow a picture for one month. The purpose is to establish a desire for ownership of an original painting by a living artist. Close contact with original works of art increases the degree to which the individual may assimilate art in everyday life. The youth and adults of this century need first to understand the art of this age in order to appreciate and enjoy its products.

Boys and girls in high school art classes have painted colorful pictures for the nursery schools. Posters for community use to encourage swimming, victory gardens, War Bond sales, and community attractiveness have been made in the high schools. The Junior Red Cross Art Projects for men in hospitals have been organized as a part of the art program according to age levels and abilities of children as well as special skills of the teachers.

Sketching trips have been organized for soldiers and civilians. Paintings inspired from these trips have been on exhibition. As a result, many children of junior and senior high school age have realized that their community is full of inspiration to the painter, and that sketching out-of-doors is fun and a worthy use of spare time.

Art in Our World

A quality that is perhaps most indisputably and completely modern is intensity. The current of life has deepened, the rhythm has quickened, improved means of communication multiply the sensations that crowd upon us. Machines toughen our nerves. Lights are brighter and noises louder than ever before. With the conquest of air, artists see the face of the earth from the sky. Movements and light create a new visual world, and the lens of the camera searches out the texture of flower petals and looks into a drop of water. The expressions of the artists cannot remain static, for art must not be merely a refuge from life. It must live up to its age. For generations art has seemed separate from ordinary life because the impression was given that the picture on the wall was art and the articles of everyday use such as cars, kitchen

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utensils, and various other industrial products were only useful. Today industrial products have been designed to bring a maximum of efficiency for their use. The beauty of the object is dependent not upon ornament added to the outside surface, but on simplicity and the relationship of its lines and volumes.

The children of our schools are the builders and designers of the future. Youth needs

encouragement, stability, and understanding from adults. Both must realize that the art of today is a record of this age, rooted in the soil of life and expressed in present-day materials. The challenge to schools to envision and put into reality education for this era is an integral part of any program of supervision dealing with the arts as they are found in modern life.

A Study in Classroom Visitation

AN IMPORTANT SUPERVISORY ACTIVITY has been that of classroom visitation. Teachers react to this type of supervision with varying degrees of increased tension and mental pressure, although most teachers pride themselves on apparent ability to keep this nervous speed-up from becoming obvious to the class members.

What about the students? Do they, too, have an inner surge of excitement during the visit? Recently a 12B shorthand class received a visit from the principal who is also the supervisor. He stayed for the first part of the period. After he left, the teacher asked the class to "put down the feelings and reactions you had when the principal walked in to visit."

These are typical of the answers of the seventeen members of this class in a public high school of 1,600 pupils:

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"I didn't feel as relaxed as I usually do when taking shorthand so fast. He makes a person feel nervous and it is quite strenuous when taking notes, because you don't take all of them. I missed most of it."

• • •
"The instructor becomes a little tense. He wants the class to be on their best behavior and he watches himself carefully, too."

• • •
"You seemed as if you were being real dignified which you usually aren't!"

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"I don't believe I was affected at all. At any rate, it didn't affect my shorthand ability. I don't think it makes much difference if you know your work and just keep at it."

• • •
"I believe the instructor wasn't his usual friendly self. He really couldn't be as we weren't supposed to be. However, I did notice that he explained more and more fully than ordinarily as though he was trying to acquaint the visitor with the work. He seemed like he didn't mind too much."

• • •
"The class tensed and held up very well, but I, myself, didn't like the feel of his eyes on my back. It made me nervous."

• • •
"I think the class work was very good. But we weren't ourselves. I felt a little nervous and was afraid that if you called on me, I might make a mistake. Otherwise if I make a mistake, I'm not afraid."

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"It didn't bother me at all if a visitor was here. I can work as long as he doesn't stand and watch over my shoulder at what I'm doing. If he sits quietly, I forget he's there."

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