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ART EDUCATION IN PUERTO RICO

Some reflections and suggestions concerning the introduction of an experimental teaching program centered about the visual arts in the University High School of the University of Puerto Rico.

IN the first chapter of his report on *Culture and Education in Puerto Rico*, Dr. Mellado cites Professor Counts:

When we begin to seek a firm base for an education suited to our age, we encounter at once a most obvious and, at the same time, a most fundamental truth: education is always a function of some particular civilization at some particular time in history. It can never be a purely autonomous process, independent of laws. It is as much an integral part of civilization as is an economic or political system. The very way in which education is conceived, whether its purpose is to free or enslave the mind is a feature of the civilization which it serves. The great

differences in educational philosophies and practices from society to society are due primarily to differences in civilization.¹

As a continental helping to set up an art program in Puerto Rico, I have found that I, not only have had to study education and philosophy of education as applied in Puerto Rico; but also have had to re-examine my own philosophy of education. This paper is my attempt to verbalize, to organize logically and thus to justify some conclusions reached piecemeal and perhaps to a great extent intuitively rather than intellectually, while teaching industrial arts at the University of Puerto Rico. It is the result of reading and study as well as of teaching and the practice of the arts.

I. FORMING A PHILOSOPHY OF ART EDUCATION FOR PUERTO RICO

Formulating a theory of art education for Puerto Rico requires consideration of all the factors involved. There is, first of all, Puerto Rican civilization itself. Then, there is the Island's system of education and the quality and extent of art education already existing within that system. It also requires a look at contemporary trends in art, as well as a study of the aims and goals of modern art education.

A. *The Puerto Rican factors*

Puerto Rican civilization must be understood by anyone, but particularly an outsider, who enters its field of education.

It is certainly not within the capabilities of the author, nor within the scope of this paper, to attempt a definition of Puerto Rican civilization. It is necessary, though, to cite a few of the

¹ George S. Counts, *Education and the Promise of America*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1945, pp. 23-24, as quoted in Ramón A. Mellado, *Culture and Education in Puerto Rico*, San Juan, P. R., Bureau of Publications, Puerto Rico Teachers Association, 1948, p. 7.

many factors which seem pertinent and which my personal observation seems to substantiate as containing considerable truth.

While most cultures are mixtures of several elements as is certainly that of the United States, Puerto Rican culture is peculiarly bifurcated, each element pointing to an alternate way of life, neither of which is quite adequate to present conditions in Puerto Rico.²

There has always been a dominant foreign culture and a submissive native culture. The dominant culture, being more influential, has always imposed its patterns on the submissive native culture. This imposition has not always resulted in the cultural enrichment of the Puerto Rican people.³

The problem facing the North American teacher is not just the study and understanding of Latin American culture, although this surely is a part of it; rather it is a study of the social, economic, aesthetic structure of *this* group the Puerto Rican people.

There are, according to Dr. Mellado, four important trends in Puerto Rican culture:

1. Puerto Rican society is moving from a state of confusion in political thinking to a more enlightened situation. Everything seems to indicate; (1) that the people desire complete political liberty and a democratic form of government, either as a state of the Union, as a dominion, or as a republic; (2) that they request economic security together with political liberty; and (3) that they are inclined to closer and closer relations with the United States of America, but on a plane of good will and mutual cooperation.

2. Puerto Rican society is moving from traditional individualism to socialization.

² C. Wright Mills, Clarence Senior and Pose Kohn Goldsen, *The Puerto Rican Journey: New York's Newest Migrants*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1950, p. 3.

³ Mellado, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10,

3. Puerto Rican society is moving from religious intolerance to religious freedom and from a conservative to a liberal interpretation of the religious experience.

4. Puerto Rican society is moving from idealism to experimentalism.⁴

Dr. Mellado believes that this indicates four moral commitments on the part of the Puerto Rican people as well as a responsibility for educators:

The Puerto Rican people, especially those of the younger generation, are facing the future with four great moral commitments: (1) a strong desire for complete political liberty with economic security; (2) a strong desire for a better distribution of property and the benefits of production; (3) a great faith in the basic principles of Christian ethics; and (4) an ever increasing faith in the experimental method. The responsibility of statesmen and educators—American as well as Puerto Ricans—is to incorporate these four moral commitments into the educational philosophy and curriculum of the school system of the Island. If they do it properly, the things which are now most prized by the Puerto Rican people will have a chance to grow and survive, and democracy will show its worth to a group of people who have lived in a colonial climate for more than four hundred years.⁵

Art exists in the Puerto Rican educational system. But its scope is limited; its influence is restricted by many factors. Art education, education in all the creative arts, lags behind other subjects. There seems to be an understanding that it is necessary, a desire to increase its part in the curriculum, but a feeling of inadequacy, of hesitancy about how to correct this lack, about exactly what plan of action to follow.⁶

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁶ The Institute of Field Studies, Teachers College, Columbia University, *Public Education and the Future of Puerto Rico: A Curriculum Survey, 1948-1949*, New York, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1950, pp. 167-199.

Perhaps this lag can be traced back to the training of teachers and educators.

In sharp contrast to the inertia of a generation ago, they (the people of Puerto Rico) now assert that, within limits imposed by nature and world-wide interdependence, they can make themselves masters of their own destiny. But I cannot find that professional students of education have played any material part in the creative impetus behind this transformation. On the contrary I am very much concerned with the persistent lag in the education of teachers behind the cultural renaissance. It is true that there has been a "reform" of the first two years of the University program. A Division of General Studies has been created, very much on the pattern of the University of Chicago reorganization. General basic courses are offered in the sciences and humanities and students of education (four-year students at least) are required to take them. This definitely seems to me to be an improvement on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century programs in the liberal arts.

But this is no more than its label suggests. It is reform, not reconstruction in the very foundations of education and that is what is so seriously needed.⁷

To summarize: Puerto Rico is a country with a definite culture of its own. Many of the seeming conflicts, dualities, within the existing culture can be traced to a long period of colonial status. There is a strong desire for political liberty and economic security. The Puerto Rican people are a deeply religious people in the Christian tradition; they have great faith in Christian ethics. The educational system is a product of the same forces which have formed the Puerto Rican cultural pattern. Art education, while existent, frequently falls short of its aims.

⁷ Harold Rugg, "On the Education of Teachers", Eighth Memorandum, Rio Piedras, P. R., University of Puerto Rico, 1954, pp. 2-3.

B. *Trends in Contemporary Art*

Harold Rugg describes the general trend in modern art when he mentions a great dichotomy —“thing people” vs. “force people”, substance vs. relationship.⁸

Modern art, attempting to swing back the pendulum, is concerned greatly with the relationship between things. Perhaps it emphasizes relationship and change to the detriment of being and the thing. There is in some modern works a terrifying absence of substance. Perhaps a cry of fear and protest against today's rapid pace and continual change.

There is more feeling for space around and between things; relationship of forms not only to other forms but to spaces between them. Findings of science on the structure of nature, the organization of the atom, etc., have greatly sensitized creative thought to the importance of structure in space.

However the majority of us do not respond as the modern artist does —

...visually the majority of us are still “object-minded” and not “relation-minded”. We are the prisoners of ancient orientations imbedded in the languages we have inherited.⁹

Something of the quality of a child's delight in playing with colors and shapes has to be restored to us before we learn to see again, before we unlearn the terms in which we ordinarily see.

To cease looking at things atomistically in visual experience and to see relatedness means, among other things, to lose in our social experience, ... the deluded self-importance of absolute “individualism” in favor of social relatedness and interdepend-

⁸ Harold Rugg, *Foundations for American Education*, New York, World Book Company, 1947, p. 468.

⁹ S. I. Hayakawa, “The Revision of Vision”, in an introduction to Gyorgy Kepes, *Language of Vision*, Chicago, Paul Theobald, 1948, p. 9.

ence. When we structuralize the primary impacts of experience differently we shall structuralize the world differently.¹⁰

Today, the dynamics of social events, and the new vistas of a mobile, physical world, have compelled us to exchange a static iconography for a dynamic one. Visual language thus must absorb the dynamic idioms of the visual imagery to mobilize the creative imagination for positive social action, and direct it toward positive social goals. Today, the creative artists have three tasks to accomplish if the language of vision is to be made a potent factor in reshaping our lives. They must learn and apply the laws of *plastic organization* needed for the re-establishing of the created image on a healthy basis. They must make terms with contemporary spatial experiences to learn to utilize the *visual representation* of contemporary space-time events. Finally, they must release the reserves of creative imagination and organize them into dynamic idioms, that is, develop a contemporary dynamic iconography.¹¹

Thus modern visual experience is tied to social experience. A broad education is most necessary if man, whose world has suddenly grown larger, is to be able to live with his vast new world.

The art educator has an important place in this work, the carrying of this new vision over into the experience of the public.

These trends in art not only affect the artist's vision and thus his way of working, they reach over into the field of appreciation and understanding. They suggest a new way of "looking" for the public; they suggest that art has meaning and significance in the life of the average man.

This new movement in art illustrates the effect of all genuine acquaintance with art created by other peoples. We understand it in the degree in which we make it a part of our own attitudes;

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹¹ Kepes, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

not just by collective information concerning the conditions under which it was produced. We accomplish this result when, to borrow a term from Bergson, we install ourselves in modes of apprehending nature that at first are strange to us. To some degree we become artists ourselves as we undertake this integration, and, by bringing it to pass, our experience is reoriented.* Barriers are dissolved, limiting prejudices melt away, when we enter into the spirit of Negro or Polynesian art. This insensible melting is far more efficacious than the change effected by reasoning, because it enters directly into attitude.¹²

All that has been said on modern trends in art could be summed up in the word "integration". This one word, used thus, has a profound and far reaching meaning. Contemporary art is aware of modern learning, modern living, modern society. It is inseparably linked to it.

How foolish it is then to think of "modern art" as an art apart, or to consider art education which includes only the tradition of the past:

Contemporary art is not only a product of its times; it tends to act as a force integrating these times. It tends towards the integration of social experience. Its implications reach into such concepts as man's understanding and tolerance of his fellowmen, his social make-up, psychological adjustment.

C. *Aims and Goals of Art Education*

In the United States present day trends in art education are based on two fundamental concepts:

* Pepper suggests a similar theory: "...the cultivation of taste for areas of delight that are still beyond you is most quickly and pleasantly done by getting lots of enjoyment out of the areas you like most, and by sympathetically exposing yourself to the objects just beyond your line of liking." Stephen Pepper, *Principles of Art Appreciation*, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949, p. 37.

¹² John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York, Minton, Balch and Company, 1934, p. 334.

All people have the hidden power to see and enjoy such harmonies and the right to that enjoyment.¹³

...art experiences are the right of every person. If art has values to contribute to living, then in a democracy all should enjoy them and profit by them.¹⁴

These concepts could be re-stated as:

1. Everyone has some creative ability.
2. Everyone has a right to the exercise and development of this ability.

Art education in the American system aims to reach all, the whole school, the whole community.

But what is it expected to do for those it influences? Dr. Ziegfeld has suggested the general and most important goals as:

1. To nurture a balance between the scientific and aesthetic.
2. To emphasize individuality and uniqueness.
3. To emphasize freedom.
4. The development of integrity.¹⁵

If as Herbert Read suggests:

...the individual will be 'good' in the degree that this individuality is realized within the organic wholeness of the community.¹⁶

¹³ Ralph M. Pearson, *The New Art Education*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1941, p. 5.

¹⁴ Commission on Secondary School Curriculum, Committee on the Function of Art in General Education, *The Visual Arts in General Education*, New York, D. Appleton-Century Co., Inc., 1940, p. 15. Hereafter cited as *Secondary School Curriculum Report*.

¹⁵ Dr. Ernest Ziegfeld, lecture on goals in art education, Ed. 283 Bh, September 1, 1954, Teachers College, Columbia University.

¹⁶ Herbert Read, *Education Through Art*, New York, Pantheon Books. (n. d.), p. 5.

then certainly, art education is of prime importance in any democratic society. It is of prime importance in the school curriculum.

Art is not the handmaiden nor the servant of any other subject. It will justify its existence by what it does to and for the child. As a subject itself it has educational value when it is concerned with developing aesthetic, individual and social values.¹⁷

The conclusion which follows this line of reasoning is that the most important concern of art education is the growth of the individual. We are convinced that the welfare of the child comes first and that the demands of the subject matter should be subordinated. That the individual should experience art and hence grow to understand its meaning, becomes more important than that the individual turn out a perfect work of art. (Although a better product frequently results from such emphasis!) The concept of the child as artist leads us to look beyond the idea of art as a product and to look upon art as a way of living.

The experience, then, is established as more important than the art product. But the experience is important not for the mere act of doing but for the effect of this doing upon the individual. Through the experience the child grows and develops; he improves his humanity, he acquires the virtue of art. He also becomes aware of and cherishes the beauties, the resources, the potentialities in his environment.¹⁸

Modern experimental psychology has reinforced our faith in the importance of art within the school curriculum by establishing evidence for the need and importance of creative activity.

Dr. Mattil who made a study of the benefits of creative activity in relation to adjustment states:

¹⁷ Virginia French, "Correlation Can be Creative", *Art Education*, 7: 2-4, June 1954.

¹⁸ *Secondary School Curriculum Report*, pp. 16-18.

This study has shown that two elements, adjustment and mental ability, are directly related to creative products. It can be seen that the relationships between these three elements is such that a change in the position of one would bring about a change in the position of the others. There are undoubtedly other elements which enter into the creative work of children.

This study indicated that the subjects were a normal population with no known deviates. The fact that there was a strong similarity between the finding of the pilot study and the larger study would indicate that this technique is effective at average classroom size. It may further indicate that the teacher may be able to improve the level of the child's creative work, by paying attention to his personal and social adjustment or, by paying attention to his creative work, the teacher may see the opportunity to improve the child's personal and social adjustment.¹⁹

Thus, art education today is concerned with the education of all students, both individually and collectively; in the development of individual and unique persons and in the orientation and integration of these individuals as related to the world they live in.

D. *What All This Adds Up to:*

At the beginning of this paper reference was made to the fact that education functions always within a particular civilization, at some particular time. Modern education to be effective must not only develop the whole person, but also fit him to live in his particular civilization.

Puerto Rican society is a democratic society. It seems also to be moving towards experimentalism. The aims of modern education, in the United States are based on a belief in democracy and extensive use of the experimental method. Thus, there is in all probability, a similarity between the general goals

¹⁹ Edward Lamarr Mattil. "A Study to Determine the Relationship Between the Creative Products of Children, Age 11 to 14, and Their Adjustment", *Eastern Arts Association Art Education Bulletin*, 11:144, October 1954.

of education now in practice in Puerto Rico and those in the United States.

Art education it was earlier stated is of importance in realizing the aims of a democratic educational system. Therefore art education should be important in the Puerto Rican educational system.

However, to be effective, this art education must meet the creative needs of the Puerto Rican people. Puerto Rican culture differs considerably from the culture of continental United States. It would seem then, that Island needs may vary considerably from Mainland needs.

Modern art activities reflect modern trends in science, government, philosophy, etc. There is an interaction between modern man's creative achievements and all his other activities. Contemporary art proposes a new vision in keeping with contemporary scientific and social advance; it proposes a world wide vision. Puerto Rico is a small but vital part of the contemporary world. Certainly then, recent art activities are of great concern for the Puerto Rican people.

Thus, a philosophy of art education suited to the Puerto Rican culture would be one involving the following:

1. Art education immediately directed towards personal individual development and growth; and ultimately, towards integration within an organic, creative and democratic social structure.

2. Art education directed toward the satisfaction of varying individual needs as well as the particular overall needs of the Puerto Rican student within the Puerto Rican culture.

3. Art education concerned with and utilizing not only the creative efforts of the past, but also those of the present; and even those as of yet only beginning and projecting into the future.

4. Art education which stresses creative activity not merely as an activity of the schoolroom but as a way of seeing, a way of doing, a way of living, a daily habit.

Art education, creative art education, has a most important part to play in the development of the Puerto Rican child. Only in so far as a working philosophy of art education is formulated and then effectively put into practice can the cultural renaissance much desired by Puerto Rican educators take place.

II. ON PRACTICING WHAT IS PREACHED: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKSHOP IN THE CREATIVE ARTS AT THE UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL

It has been proposed that a new program in the arts be established within the College of Education of the University of Puerto Rico for the development of the creative life; that a beginning be made by the inauguration of a workshop in the graphic and plastic arts within the University High School. What it is hoped is a workable philosophy of art education for this program has been set forth in the first part of this paper.

Now let us consider the curriculum, the pupil and the teacher.

A. *Why the Visual Arts.*

It is hoped that the new art program will eventually include all the areas proper to the creative arts, that it will reach out and encompass all areas of living. But there must be a beginning somewhere. An immediate beginning as general as one including all the creative arts at the outset would, in this case, be in danger of failure from its very vastness.

Particularly as this is a new kind of venture, it is possible that its aims and ideals might at first be misinterpreted and confused. It is imperative that it remain within an area which it is possible to watch, that its direction be kept inviolately along the path of true creative activity; that it does not degenerate, as can so easily happen, into another hobby class in which

crafts are taught in a "how-to-do-it" fashion to keep the children out of mischief.

A start might be made with several broad areas within which there is some allowance for individual preferences and deviations. While a control or limit such as a restriction to work within the area of several media may be found to be theoretically undesirable in creative teaching situations, it is also practically and materially impossible to include every area. Then there are the age and the interests of the children to be considered.

Line, form and color are the basic elements of art and it is through a study of them that one develops an appreciation of all arts. The more the young artist learns to use these elements in new creative experiences the greater will be his understanding of them. Pastels, crayons, tempera, ink, charcoal and oil should provide ample means for expression in two dimensions. Clay, paper maché, dry paper sculpture, experiments with wood, wire and plaster of Paris can supply for initial experiences in three dimensions.

There must be adequate opportunity for experiences in novel and intriguing methods and media because a combination of mechanical and creative processes appeals to young students. To sustain interest some of the simpler processes in the graphic arts and in ceramics might be introduced.

However, it is not the mechanics of a process which we are trying to teach, rather we are trying to cultivate an aesthetic awareness within the student. We must emphasize sincerity, originality, integrity as well as clarity of expression. The student must learn the discipline of good design; he must learn to evaluate his own work, to understand the results of his efforts. He must analyze and discover his own errors.

This practice is the best kind of discipline for the student or the artist, because it comes from the individual's own realization and discovery. It is self-discipline.²⁰

²⁰ Victor D'Amico, *Creative Teaching in Art*, Scranton, Pa., International Textbook Co., 1942, p. 152.

From a modest beginning centered about certain basic media it is hoped that within the span of a year a broad program can be set up; that work in pottery, silk screen, etching, metal working, weaving, etc. can be steadily introduced until the curriculum encompasses the whole area of the visual arts.

B. *Some Conclusions.*

1. *Regarding Creative Art in the Schoolroom:*

Mearns gives us a very good picture of the creative classroom situation and the mechanism of the creative experience in his works.

When visitors were admiring the fifty paintings in the annual exhibition of the work of the Children's School of Action and Design, in New York City, one of the directors was heard to say, "Oh, but you should have seen the two hundred awful ones we threw away!"

The Creativist, however, likes the bad stuff, if it is the right sort of bad stuff. He gets to know that it represents one of the stages upward and rejoices and admires and pins it up on the wall. Smudges of inconceivable comicality one finds him adoring, to the mystification and disgust of the conventional person who has been taught that the only admirable result is a perfect pattern. Even those attempts which he eventually "throws away" have a quality that is really worthy of admiration—artists who drop in know what it is right off and talk about it understandingly—but it takes time and much experience before one learns to see this good side of the bad ones.

Here is one of the visible differences between product education and creative education; the former turns out really good patterns in large quantities, seemingly every hour on the hour; the other brings forth a continuous mass of low-grade stuff. Another visible... difference is the degree of interest and sincerity; the most splendid absorption of the workers in the standardized product manufactory cannot hold a candle to the

fierce self-motivated stirrings of genuine creative activity. But, granted a superior personal urge to do, the creative systems, we all freely admit, turn out a comparatively ragged product; one must pick here and there with care to uncover a "find".

Another vast difference between the two systems, we agree, is that each has its own notion of the use of time; and one must regard this difference, or disappointment and depression are sure to follow those who set up to practice the new way. The standardized curricular education requires "results" each day, each week, surely each month, with an accumulated measurable outcome at the end of each semester; creative education thinks in terms of years, and even in span of years. The *creative school* cares *not* how inept and slovenly a lad may be this whole term if it sees something personal and fine taking slow possession of him.²¹

Further, fact education has always insisted upon drill, education in feeling comes through experience. One appeals mainly to memory; creative education demands an exposure to an influence.

One sees, therefore, why the creative, when he would explain his unique effects upon the personalities before him, insists so much upon "environment" rather than upon courses-of-study-the same-for-all.²²

We discover, too, what seems to be a law of the creative spirit, that it does not, except on rare occasions, give forth its best at once. The sad part of the mystery of creative effort is that... the product is not always good. Here is where a sympathetic understanding of the forces at work is imperatively needed from teacher or friend... Out of the mass of not-so-good may come enough material to build on; or, at least, some obstruction to the creative spirit is got out of the way. Inferior work seems sometimes to appear of necessity before the deeper best may reach expression.²³

²¹ Hughes Mearns, *Creative Power*, Garden City, N. Y., Doubleday, Doran and Co., Inc., 1929, pp. 36-37.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

²³ Hughes Mearns, *Creative Youth*, Garden City, N. Y., Doubleday, Page and Co., 1925, p. 6.

While the creative environment is the most essential element, the physical environment is also important.

The flexibility of the modern art program is exemplified in the use and choice of equipment. With the formal art program being affected by the introduction of the many crafts, the art instructional area must now provide space for many diverse activities. Planners must continually observe the fact that the informal atmosphere now pervading all art activity should be emphasized by the facilities which are offered and the equipment which is placed within these facilities.²⁴

Art educators in Puerto Rico face a problem similar to that faced by any teacher away from a large metropolitan area. They are in dire need of examples, hundreds of them, pictures, slides, films, ordinary everyday modern kitchen utensils, to illustrate what is going on in art and design in the contemporary world. Jessie Todd and Ann Gale writing of the continental United States express a point of view which could be echoed by many teachers in Puerto Rico.

1. The theory of showing the child no designs or pictures falls down before the fact that they see billboards and atrocious statues advertising clothes and daily products. If we, therefore keep from them the excellent examples, the poor examples are the only influence.

2. If children are shown few designs and pictures they may become too much influenced by these types. We should therefore, show them many excellent examples.²⁵

The same little children who have always known the radio, the airplane, and other modern things are still looking at Raphael, Rembrandt, Corot, and the Greeks as being the only good art.²⁶

²⁴ "Art Facilities", *Eastern Arts Association Art Education Bulletin*, 2: 1-3, November 1954.

²⁵ Jessie Todd and Ann Van Nice Gale, *Enjoyment and Use of Art in the Elementary School*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1933, p. 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Whenever possible students should be exposed to good native art and design, past and contemporary. But the island is small. Examples from the past are not plentiful. World wide art activity must be shown as a background against which native work can be critically appraised.

2. *Regarding the Pupil:*

Viktor Lowenfeld describes the importance of creative activity to the adolescent:

During this period, most important and forming in human development, art can only be effective if it meets the needs of the growing adolescent. Above all, it must provide him with opportunities for expression of his ideas and emotions. The child must, without imposed perfection, be motivated and encouraged to *experiment* in materials and art media in his own striving for "adventure" and discoveries. Adolescents have a real need to express themselves, whether it is in art, music, writing, dramatics or dancing.²⁷

There is also the problem of discipline which becomes especially important when art is taught to the whole class as a required subject.

The most beautiful creative work has been done by children in private classes in this country, in Mexico, and in Vienna. In talking with the teachers they have always stressed this point, "Discipline is not considered. We simply exclude any child who is troublesome, or any child who is not enthusiastic." The public-school teacher and the teacher in laboratory schools in universities and normal schools cannot exclude the troublesome child. He must be disciplined. She cannot exclude the unenthusiastic child. The troublesome child and the unenthusiastic child lower the efficiency of the group, but they must be blended into the group so that harmony results if we are to get the spirit necessary to make the best children want to create.

²⁷ Viktor Lowenfeld, *Your Child And His Art*, New York, Macmillan Co., 1954, pp. 172-173.

This is the teacher's task. It is a supreme one, and no good teacher ever feels that she has mastered it. She is alert to improve.²⁸

The Puerto Rican differs little from the North American. Perhaps he is a bit quicker, but his attention is quickly and easily averted. He has an intense interest in the now, the present. He is intensely absorbed in that which holds his interest at the moment. His patience with a tedious medium is paradoxically, endless. He is at once a challenge and a delight to the art teacher. He catches enthusiasm readily, motivation is easy. But the teacher must call on all her resources to keep interest up to the initial level for any length of time.

Once a pupil understands that he is called upon to be original, to invent and not to copy, he is likely to go at the task with furious intensity. The result is not always happy.

If people aim at being original and try to get there too quickly, the result is an atrocity... Any originality developed in children should be of a natural kind.²⁹

But for all the above generalizations, the pupil is always an individual and he must be treated as such. There is a danger in generalization; the teacher can so easily stereotype her pupils according to preconceived notions of racial temperament and character. It is necessary to constantly re-search self in an attempt to avoid this tendency.

3. *Regarding the Teacher:*

The teacher to be successful in her chosen profession must know what she is doing and why.

Our first concern as teachers of art, both for our own gain and to aid in our enlightenment of the perplexed parent, is to

²⁸ Todd. *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

set up clearly marked goals. Before we can teach art lessons which are convincing to ourselves, our pupils, and their parents, we must know just what results we wish to achieve.³⁰

Art does not lead, it reveals. It requires us to look and learn. Let us, if the word "art" has outworn its meaning, name it "looking, learning, doing." Those who look and learn need no "Leaders", nor are they easily deceived.³¹

To teach in a creative field successfully, one must create. The teacher himself must be an artist. How else can he be sensitive to imagination and originality? The teacher who is too conservative will not be able to develop originality in children. A creativist is one who is willing to experiment, to dare, to stand alone. Children will be creative and original if their teacher is creative and original.

The teacher must, if a creative program in the arts is to be meaningful, also enlist the aid and allegiance of all the teaching personnel.

The teacher must have the backing of the supervisor and principal. Many a teacher has had the originality taken out of her by a principal who has emphasized (1) the saving of paper (2) the neatness of the schoolroom, and (3) a quiet room more than (1) experimenting with paper, (2) the scraps of paper and spotty floor of an art room which is a real workroom, and (3) the noise of a busy place with children creating something of their own. By emphasizing the wrong things he has taken away the most important mission of any school — that of making children creative independent workers, happy because they regard the rights of others.

Art in the public schools, like music and perhaps health education, moves forward through the united efforts of the specialist and the general classroom teacher.³²

³⁰ Nicholas, Florence Williams, and others, *Art Activities in the Modern School*, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1937, p. 12.

³¹ Minnie McLeish, *Beginnings: Teaching Art to Children*, London and New York, The Studio Publications, (n. d.) p. 2.

³² Todd. *op. cit.*, p. 60.

Herbert Read describes, beautifully, the task of the teacher:

For the teacher, if he is to act consciously, must act "as if he did it not". Merely a raised finger, a questioning look, is the limit of his proper activity. Through him the selection of a feasible world reaches the pupil; but the teacher fails to get the right response from the pupil if he forces this selection on him in an attitude of intervention. He must have made his own harvest of experiences; and what he gives from his store must have an air of quiescence. Active intervention splits the being in his charge into a listening and a resenting part; but the secret influence of the whole personality has the power of completion, of unification.³⁴

This paper was written primarily to satisfy a personal need. It is an attempt to take in, in one broad survey, three vast fields, in order to extract from them seemingly dissimilar and scattered factors and by bringing them together to illuminate, perhaps a very particular and personal situation — my work at the University of Puerto Rico. Its writing has been a satisfaction.

But this paper would not have had to be written had more material been available concerning art education as related to Puerto Rico. This paper serves, therefore, as but an indication, a guide, to future work in art education on the Island.

³³ Ray C. Maul, "Art Teachers For the Future" *Art Education*, 7:3-5, May 1954.

³⁴ Read, *op. cit.*, p. 282.