**Introduction**

Nowadays, art is introduced in basic education in many parts of the world. In some cases, it is a mandatory subject, while in others it is treated merely as an optional subject. In any case, it is true that art, by nature, internalizes enormous possibilities to expose one’s hidden talent and potential if it is correctly introduced in education. By showing a number of pictures drawn by students of various ages in Brazil and in Europe as examples, this essay illustrates how the nature of art could be more effectively used in basic education if one truly perceived the essence of art. It illustrates the propriety of teaching art in education and how instruction could be achieved without destroying the potential of individual human ability.

**Background to the Issue**

Some 20 years ago, there was a trend towards reducing if not removing the time given to teaching art at medium school level in Belgium. Today in Brazil, at the Faculty of Education, some advocate the reduction of theoretical courses in favor of more practical lessons. As this text on art in basic education shows, nowhere is the error of such views more evident than in the use of art in early education.

In Brazil and in many European countries such as Italy, France, England, Poland and Belgium, the authors found that most adults, when asked to draw, would shyly refuse. They would say ‘I don’t know how to draw’ or ‘I have not drawn since I left primary school’, as if one would have to ‘learn how’ to walk in order to use this natural means of locomotion. Or as if one would have to be taught how to laugh, how to cry, how to keep silent etc, before expressing these emotions as human beings have done since the beginning of mankind. Whatever their age, those whom the authors asked to draw expressed fear of making ‘mistakes’, as if a ‘mistake’ in a drawing had any real and lasting consequence.

When agreeing to draw, for example a cat, adults from different countries tried hard to make the picture...
they had been ‘taught’ at age 5 or 6. They began their ‘Do it yourself’ representation of a ‘cat’ with two circles (Figure 1). The same ones would be used to show a snow man or an overlarge Arabic number 8. The bottom circle, they all explain, is the body. The top one, most often but not always slightly smaller, is the head. A thin curvy line like an ‘S’ often lying on its side is the tail. The idea that the body should hide the beginning of the tail does not occur to the adults. Two small triangles serve as ears. The mouth shows a ‘Say cheese’ smile. A few straight lines are supposed to represent the whiskers and so on. Their cats have no lips, no tongue, no dangerous teeth, no frightening claws, no fur and no life. In a nutshell, there is no link with reality.

A teacher defended her ‘8’ cat by saying: ‘If I did a different cat than the ‘8’ shape one, the children would not understand.’ What do they think they are seeing then when they observe a real cat sleeping or running? Or a cat drawn by, let’s say Walt Disney. In the ‘8’ cat nothing appears of the drawers’ experience, knowledge or feelings about the feline he has so often in his life observed directly and seen represented in books, gift shops, and on TV.

Everybody who agreed to draw for fun and for the experience tried hard to remember and to reproduce the stereotypes imposed by adults who considered children’s creative and expressive drawings as incorrect, childish, ugly, and wrong. It is an almost universal preconception that art needs to be beautiful. However, it does not need to be so. Moreover, what is beautiful to one person may not be beautiful to another.

Their ‘know-it-all’ school masters had forced them to memorize the only ‘right way’ to draw a cat! This indicates that, regarding art, their first educators had replaced natural ability to draw—an activity that should grow with time and experience—with something simplistic, fossilized, and inhibiting, such as the ‘8’ shape cats drawn by school teachers and students aged 26, 25 and 53 (Figure 2). After the first cat, they were asked to draw one as they would for children. The result is deceivingly similar.

In contrast to the spontaneous and large pictures children draw with pleasure, the images adults worked at painfully are almost all very small. This results from the fact that the majority of first grade teachers (and

Figure 1: Examples of drawing cat in two circles by an adult
of school program makers) have no notion of the essential difference between teaching things such as writing, reading, spelling, mathematics etc and art.

For one thing, generations of teachers have tended to understand art lessons not as a creative activity but as a discipline whose purpose is to ‘improve’ a child’s motion control and thus prepare him to write 0 o O a b c d etc. For this training children are usually given clearly outlined printed images and are asked to ‘color’ them without crossing the boundary. They are given a rubber eraser to ‘correct’ any ‘mistakes’. The criterion of quality then and after, unfortunately, is not imagination, spontaneity, and stimulating adventurous experiences, or true and personal expression of one’s knowledge and feelings, but boring, dull ‘cleanliness’.

As one can see in the next drawing (Figure 3), before being ‘disciplined’ and drilled to hold their pencil with only three fingers, children enjoy experiencing what their hand and the tool it holds can trace on the sur-

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**Figure 2:** 8 -shape cats drawn by school teachers and students aged 26, 25 and 53

**Figure 3:** Drawing of a child before being ‘disciplined’ and drilled to hold their pencil with only three fingers
face at their disposition. Sometimes, in a matter of minutes they improve their abilities without any help because they draw without being afraid of making ‘mistakes’.

The next drawing of ‘My father and my mother’ (Figure 4) was made by a 4 and a half-year-old boy. It shows how freely he uses his abilities to create his own drawing of a man and his wife.

![Figure 4: Drawing of ‘My father and my mother’ drawn by a 4 and a half-year-old boy](image)

Asked to draw a man or woman, students of pedagogy, some of whom had already been teaching children under age 6 for years, did this:

How different are these pictures (Figure 5) from the couple drawings (Figure 4 and 6)?

The drawing on the right looks like a painted Indian on the war path (Figure 6). Instead of experiencing ‘teaching the correct way to draw a human figure’, he was asked ‘What is the purpose of the dots and lines

![Figure 5: Drawing of a man or woman by university students of pedagogy](image)
inside the man’s face and body?’ The 5-year-old boy explained, ’It is what is inside the body: seeds for the hair and beard, nerves, pipes that bring air from the nose, the cable that transmits sounds from the ears to the brain. These are the tubes through which food, drink and air go down through the throat. I also drew the bones and many joints.’

Looking at this drawing, it can be found that it is a striking example of how drawing can be a way of learning and of verifying knowledge and understanding.

Among other ‘teachings’ that destroy one’s self-confidence and ability to draw are the use of the eraser and of the ruler when drawing other things than geometric figures that need ‘perfection.’ Such drawings are deprived of life and personality. To artists, ruled lines bring to mind the famous phrase of a 19th century US army general: ’The only good Indian is a dead Indian.’

**Importance in Drawing**

Now, one must understand that in a drawing, as in many things, the relationship between one part and another is of the greatest importance. However, most people erase the line they are drawing before giving themselves the chance to choose which line is the best in relation to the next line. Erasing a line before having finished the drawing hinders the most natural way of improving ourselves and what we do: learning from our mistakes.

Tracing with a ruler or a compass not only depersonalizes the ‘handwriting’ but during the process, the relationship to the other elements of the drawing is partly hidden. The process brings inspiration to a standstill as we will see. Instead of being sincere and saying ‘Today we will draw squares’, teachers seem to be taught to present drawing ‘the house’ as the ideal pretext for preparing children to make ‘good’ geometrical figures. The result is poverty of ideas even when the grown-up students are deprived of a ruler as in the three drawings by different students grouped in the middle illustration. On the right is a child’s drawing, so
it is more free, alive, true and thus original; not because he forces himself to be different, but simply because he is allowed to be himself.

The next picture on the left is a ‘drawing’ taken from a book of examples for Brazilian school children (Figure 7). It shows typical examples produced by pretentious, ignorant, thoughtless adults. Not only is the picture ‘simplistic’ instead of ‘simple’, but regarding the shaded parts, it completely lacks logic.

The three drawings presented on one sheet in Figure 7 in the middle, surprisingly and disappointingly show houses with steep sloped roofs, although most houses in Brazil have low if not flat ones. Moreover, most students live in and see through their window, tall apartment buildings, such as in the second drawing in Figure 8.

Encouraged to think and even dream a bit, one 25-year-old student draws a more plausible Brazilian house. It has two floors, a balcony, shutters and flowers and a typical Brazilian symbol of comfort: a hammock.

**Fundamental Question in Art Education**

Here arises the crucial question of whether it would be better not to ‘teach’ art to children. As we have
seen, imposing simplistic clichés instead of favoring creativity is a striking example of how action based on insufficient knowledge about something, in this case the essence of art, can be more damaging than doing nothing.

Would it be more advisable to invite children to copy a photo or to copy elaborate pictures such as those found in museums and art books?

Copying is a good and instinctive way to learn. All children play at being a mother or a soldier etc. However, it all depends on how one understands copying. If it is to be scrupulously faithful to the model, the mental effect would be about the same as with the ‘8’ cat or the ruler-made house. Also, without the appropriate motivation or the appropriate counseling, few people and surely no children could copy what they are taught to draw. Most copying exercises done by adolescents consist of making a ‘hand-made’ photo. This is just as completely opposite to creativity or to art as the ‘8’-shaped cat.

Children’s creativity is enriched when they are left to copy freely, such as when a 6-year-old boy who visited the Prado Museum in Madrid drew ‘from’ Titian’s famous painting of Emperor Charles V on his horse (in Figure 9). This amusing anecdote is that after having finished his drawing, the boy went straight to his father who was studying another portrait of Charles V which was located a little further away (therefore, he had left the boy to draw by himself) and said: ‘You are looking at the poorer portrait. Come and see this one’, and he brought his father in front of the Titian painting. This shows once again that children are not as most adults imagine them.

However, like all good ideas, copying from life, photos or from artwork should not be done to excess. It is important to leave room for other experiences, and stimulate the drawer to think or remember what they have experienced about the subject by talking about it before drawing it or by showing and commenting on

Figure 8: Drawing of a more plausible Brazilian house by 25-year-old student
several photographic and artistic documents of the subject. Furthermore, it is essential to encourage those who appear confident and are willing to show their abilities on the blackboard for everyone’s benefit, demonstrating how they made their artwork or would make understood graphically what has been said or what they know about the subject.

After drawing ‘spontaneously’ an ‘8’ shaped cat, a 19-year-old and a 23-year-old student were encouraged to remember what shape the body of a real cat had. The results were shown beside the ‘8’ shaped cats (Figure 10). It was then proposed that they close their eyes and caress an imaginary cat, then open their eyes
and follow the movement of their hand caressing the imaginary cat. Only the 23-year-old girl agreed to do so. Her third drawing shows what the memory of her hand brought to her mind.

Rather than ‘teaching’ ‘the one and only answer’ to ‘How to draw a cat’ or a house or whatever, the teacher gives a more lasting and beneficial lesson through showing and reminding the student that one can enrich one’s drawing by holding the pencil or the brush in different positions, and by applying different levels of pressure to it the 23-year-old student did after having been shown many black and white photos of cats as well as paintings by artists such as Renoir, on the left, and Picasso, on the right (Figure 11).

![Figure 11: Paintings by artists such as Renoir on the left and Picasso on the right](image)

**Essence in Art**

Drawing only for the purpose of gaining approval and ‘points’ from the teacher discourages people forever from drawing spontaneously, intelligently and with pleasure, although this skill could be as useful as any other means of communication.

Just as the objective of teaching aims to enable people to read and write a diversity of things that are of interest to them until the last day of their life, the objective of art in school should be to improve one’s ability as a whole. It would be wrong to join the losers and pessimists by advocating that it is better to teach nothing than little, since the real problem is not one of quantity but of teaching the basic things with multiple uses.

A few theoretical lessons could open up future teachers’ minds to the fact that art is completely different from other academic subjects. It benefits from freedom, ‘mistake’ stimulation, joy, interest, comprehension, and respect, but not from judgment. Judgment, in terms of attributing good or bad ‘points’ kills in individuals one of humanity’s most spontaneous and enjoyable ways of allowing people to make their Knowledge and ideas visible to themselves and eventually to others.

In writing, mathematics and the like, the teacher shows the single correct way to trace a letter, to spell a word, to add numbers, etc. Any other answer to 1+1=2 is a mistake. In art, things are the opposite. The mistake is to end by doing the same drawing as the teacher, the book or one’s neighbor. That is because, de-
pending on one’s knowledge of the subject, one’s emotional reaction to it, one’s manual abilities and imagination and daring, each person, child or adult invited to draw a cat will draw his own. Even if he lacks imagination, knowledge and creativity when he does a second drawing of the same subject, even on the same day, he will produce a drawing at least slightly different in shape, size and ‘perfection’.

When inviting children to draw, the teacher should not impose his model nor his taste or and ideals. Make those who draw understand they do not need to be afraid of making mistakes, since they are only drawing on piece of replaceable paper.

How can this be ‘taught’ by someone trained and convinced that there is only one correct way to draw; someone who ignores the fact that at each step in human development, each culture, each epoch, each artist, has drawn cats, houses, trees, faces in very different ways? The result may look like a cat, but it is not a cat. It is a drawing that opens fantasies of all sorts.

Hearing they were going to have a course given by a professional artist, many students at the Faculty of Education panicked. Many thought it would not interest them or would be of no practical use for them. However, half an hour later, having been shown the diversity of images created by pre-school children, fellow students, famous or unknown artists, they agreed to give it a try. They were surprised they could draw ‘what they wished to draw’. After seeing their work being looked at positively by the teacher and receiving favorable comments, many became enthusiastic. For example, a student commented that, ‘Before this lesson I thought I could not draw. Now I see I can, and I can enjoy doing so.’ All that was needed was to free their mind from preconceived ideas about art and about themselves, their abilities and imagination.

**A General Case in Japan**

In contrast to the cases in Brazil and in Europe, art teaching at school is conducted quite differently, and generally speaking, pupils in art classes at Japanese schools are just given the theme of the drawing by their
teachers and the rest is entirely left up to the students. Pupils are never forced to follow a typical example of drawing, and therefore they are entirely free from anything. In that sense, art teaching is provided with a freer spirit at Japanese schools, respecting the individual abilities and imagination of the students themselves. However, when it comes to assessment, most teachers encounter similar issues as described in the cases of Brazil and Europe. Furthermore, as shown in this study, it has not been taken for granted in the school curriculum that the nature of art is fundamentally different from other subjects, and therefore it should be treated more seriously in school education, considering the essence and features of art. However, there has not been a crystal-clear answer to the debate on ‘how to make the most of art in school education’ and there is still room to develop ideas in this respect.

**Concluding Remarks**

This brief essay implies that the nature of art could be more effectively used in basic education if one truly perceived the essentials of art. Introducing a number of drawings by students of various ages from Brazil and Europe, it asks whether or not art can be taught in school, and if so, how this can be achieved without destroying the potential of individual human ability. It is suggested that what is required is ‘to free the students’ minds from preconceived ideas about art and about themselves, their abilities and imagination.’

Further studies could include more comparative viewpoints using practical examples from all over the world of using art in teaching, through the perspectives of both professional artists and educationalists.

There is of course much more to say on the subject of the use of art in education. As a conclusion to this article, here is a watercolor painting of a cat by a 9 or 10-year-old girl who was shown the advantage of making shapes with colored surfaces rather than by filling in pencil or pen outlines (Figure 13).

![Figure 13: A watercolor painting of a cat by a 9 or 10-year-old girl](image-url)
概要

本稿は、基礎教育において芸術はいかにその特性が活用されるのかという視点に立ち、筆者によるブラジルの教育現場での実践例を中心に、芸術家と教育者の双方の視点から論じたものである。

現在、ブラジルの他、欧州の複数の国々（英国・フランス・ポーランド・ベルギー等）では、教育における芸術理論が以前と比較してあまり重視されておらず、他の学問と比較して芸術だけが持つ特質に関する議論やそれを活かした教育が十分になされていない傾向にある。具体的には、芸術の本質を理解していない誤った教員の指導によって、猫をただ単に〇二つを縦に並べた8の数字のような形を基礎に描こうよう示されたり、実生活とは全く異なる異国の事例が見本として示されたりするなど、対象となる学生自身の自由な発想の余地が十分に与えられず、逆に感情のコントロールの手段として描画が取り入れられるなど、本来あるべき姿とは異なった形で芸術が教育に取り入れられている。

そうした経験から、多くの（芸術に従事していない一般の）成人は非常に典型的な絵を描くことに終始しかちで、失敗を恐れるあまり、自由に自身自身の想像力を駆使して与えられたテーマを描くということに抵抗を示す傾向にある。そして、こうした誤った教育における芸術の導入により、多くの人々は、人間が元来その性質として内包する無限の潜在能力や、ある対象物に対して感じとる本来個人差の激しい能力を矮小化され、十分に発揮できずにいる。

本稿は、以上のような問題意識のもとで、いくつかの描画を描かせる具体的な実践例を参照しながら、どのように芸術を教育に導入すれば、個々人が本来持つ諸能力が発揮され、大きく飛躍させられるのかについて論じている。そして、芸術が、その本来の特質を十分に発揮できる形で教育現場に導入されたならば、対象となる多くの人々にとって、彼らの生き方や考え方にも啓発を与える手段となりうることを指摘している。その際重要なことは、『対象者が芸術』、『自分自身』、『自分の能力』、『創造性』といったものに対する固定観念にとらわれず、心を自由にできるよう促すことだという提起がなされている。

日本においては、いわゆる義務教育における美術の時間に描かせる描画にはさほど制約がなく、一般的に子どもたちは思いのままに描く自由があり、本稿で述べられている事例のように簡略化された絵を示され、それをもとに描かされているわけではない。しかし一方、その芸術作品を通して一人ひとりの人間をいかに精神的に解放させ、失敗を恐れさせず、その過程で体験する様々な苦悩を成長につなげさせていくか、といったいわば芸術を通じた人格的発達の視点を持つつつ、美術教育が行われているかどうかについては、個々の教員の裁量にゆだねられている面が多いように思われる。また、評価法についても、他の教科と同様に数値によって評価される場合も多く、「芸術は本質的にそれ以外の学問分野とは違うため、特別なアプローチが必要とされる」、といった認識にもとづいて、全体のカリキュラムの中に位置づけられているわけではない。したがって、芸術を（美術教育という枠を超えて）教育全体の中にその特性を活かしながらいかに取り入れていくことが可能か、という観点からは、今後より深めていく余地があるといえよう。
人間としての個々人が持つ無限の可能性とその能力の開花を促進できるよう、教育の場で芸術の特性がいかに効果的に活かされうるのかという点について、芸術家と教育者の双方の視点からその本質を見せ極め、今後多くの国々との比較研究の中で、より効果的な導入の在り方についての考察を深めていきたい。