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**“ARTISTIC  
DEVELOPMENT  
OF MEXICAN  
INDIGENOUS CHILDREN”**

EL DESARROLLO ARTÍSTICO DE NIÑOS EN COMUNIDADES  
INDÍGENAS MEXICANAS

## ABSTRACT

This paper explains the actual circumstances of indigenous people in Mexico related to the art education of their children, there is a lot of evidence that most indigenous communities produce or make art, mainly art crafts. We can also see that while some of the members of the communities are making these art crafts or preparing paintings or modest sculptures to perform some rites, children are learning the skills to do that too. This is the art education we find in the indigenous community; this text compares it with a formal art education and gives an overview of what can we learn from an informal art education practice and from their artistic development.

## KEYWORDS

**Art education, Indigenous communities, Mexico, Informal education**

## RESUMEN

Este documento explica las circunstancias de los pueblos indígenas en México relacionadas con la educación artística de sus hijos, hay muchas pruebas de que la mayoría de las comunidades indígenas producen o hacen arte, principalmente artesanías. También podemos ver que mientras algunos de los miembros de las comunidades están haciendo manualidades, o preparando pinturas o esculturas modestas para realizar algunos ritos, los niños también están aprendiendo las habilidades para hacerlo. Esta es la educación artística que encontramos en las comunidades indígenas, este texto la compara con una educación artística formal y ofrece una visión general de lo que podemos aprender de una práctica informal de educación artística y de su desarrollo artístico. Una conclusión general es que incluso a pesar de las circunstancias difíciles en las que viven; el desarrollo artístico les ayuda a sobrevivir y enfrentar la vida y su realidad.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

**Educación artística, Comunidades indígenas, México, Educación informal**



# ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF MEXICAN INDIGENOUS CHILDREN

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“Have we in our educational system really put emphasis upon the human?”  
Viktor Lowenfeld, *Creative and Mental Growth*

It seems rather difficult to believe that at the beginning of the 21-century, there are people living in precarious conditions that remind us of the first stages of the great civilizations. It is also difficult to understand why our technological world -that is just like the future in the science fiction novels of the beginning of last century- is not suitable for everybody. “Comfort is a privilege” and some other sentences seem to avoid the reality of other people. But is in this awareness of the hardest conditions, where we find some of the purest representations of the human spirit. This present paper is about some of those people that live like in the past, to be precise like 500 years ago. These people are the Mexican indigenous people. As in many of the primitive cultures, in this one we can discover meaningful forms of art. And it is through this indigenous Mexican art that we will search for clues about the artistic development of their children.

If we understand how the art education in the indigenous cultures is, and how the Mexican indigenous people developed artistically, we certainly can put in use indigenous techniques or elements in our school programs. Since some of them are as rudimentary as the human soul and we all have human souls.

We have to agree with scholars about these rudimentary features:

“If children developed without any interference from the outside world, no especial stimulation for their creative work would be necessary. Every child would use his deeply rooted creative impulse without inhibition, confidence in his own kind of expression. We find this creative confidence clearly demonstrated by those people who live in the remote sections of our country and who have

not been inhibited by the influences of [...] ‘education’” (Lowenfeld & Brittain (1966, p. 20).

It is important for modern art educators to get acquainted with these features, what would happen if we travel and get in touch with people that only create unsophisticated art, art with no intervention from our common world, are we going to be able to recognize that as art? Isn't it useful to know the creative process that molds it?

## INDIAN CULTURES

‘It would be better not to be born,  
we do not fit anywhere’  
Fernando Benitez, *What is an Indian?*

It is difficult not to generalize when talking about the indigenous people of Mexico, even when they are from more than 60 different cultures. Common bibliography tends to unify criteria about them. This is because most of these cultures share many characteristics, some in relation to their main problems, their current way of living, their education, and their relationships with the national government and policies. Talking about art, we also can see a lot of similarities: in the materials, the processes and the motifs.

We must start by explaining who these people are. The word “Indio” has its origins in an error, when Columbus arrived to America thinking he was in India, this word was used as a pejorative one, mainly describing an inferior being (from the Spanish superior posture of course), and even in the dictionaries of 17 and 18 centuries, “Indio” was defined as silly person or nor clever at all. The word “indigena” has some proper

connotations but still does not define the culture or any feature of the people that the word describes. This word hides the true origin and peculiarities of the people (Montemayor, 2000, pp. 23-27).

In Mexico, to this day, there is not an official or legal definition of what the indigenous population is. There are not biological or racial features that can apply to them either. The terms 'indigenous peoples', 'indigenous ethnic minorities', 'tribal groups', 'scheduled tribes', describe social groups with social and cultural identity distinct from that of the dominant society which renders them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the process of development (INEGI, 1990).

The most common element to define who is an indigenous individual in Mexico is related to the language, although we can also say that to be an indigenous person has a lot to do with belonging to an indigenous community, with all the relationships to the people and to the environments that this means (Caso, 1971, p. 2).

There is a great deal of information about the life, culture, art and education of indigenous people, although art education is not considered at all. The statistical information about the present situation of the Indian cultures in Mexico is very illustrative. There is a total of 201, 138 settlements of Indian population in Mexico. The core of indigenous identity is the language; there are more than 60 different languages in all the country. Indigenous people represent a population of more than 4 million people and almost half of them cannot read or write Spanish (INEGI, 1990).

"They don't have any of the comforts we consider essential, such as electricity, running water, hygiene, or a suitable dwelling" (Aldana, 1993, p.8). Their families have a lot of children but they "become ill frequently, and the child mortality rate is quite high [...] in some communities it is estimated that about 20% of the children die by the age of four and many older women report having lost more than half of their children" (Modiano, 1973, p. 37). Almost 30% of the population does not have access to education. There are not schools in most of the communities with less than 100 inhabitants (INEGI, 1990). The situation of poverty is bad and "occasionally very poor Indians give or sell their children" (Modiano, 1973, p. 39).

The historical information tells us that the Indian education before the Spanish conquest was very well organized and even institutionalized. Every culture (Aztecs, Mixtec, Olmecs, and Mayan, among others) had its own schools.

"The Aztecs demonstrated a considerable understanding of child development. Natural inclination was respected, and training was adjusted to the various age levels. Education in the crafts was mandatory. The program was rigid; the method, perceptive; the content, rich in ceremonials and folklore" (Kneller, 1973, p. 10).

The education was focused in the knowledge and awareness of the inner self. Art education was contemplated as painting, drawing, sculpture, silver craft, golden craft, feather crafts and pottery or ceramic.

When the Spanish people arrived, education changed drastically due to the disappearance of the ancient schools. Spanish clergy –to whom Spanish kings commended the evangelization of the natives– main concern was to teach Spanish language and catholic religion. They did not put much emphasis in art education, although they accept that Indians kept on drawing and painting but in the European style (Kneller, 1973). After the Spanish and Criollo (Spanish people born in Mexican territory) population settled down, Indians and their education were forgotten; even when some schools were already created especially for them by the Spaniards (Robles, 1981, pp. 30-31). From colonial times we inherited educational and language policies against the maintenance and recognition of native languages among the indigenous peoples who, in isolation, have maintained their own informal systems of education under the tutelage of the family and the community (INEGI, 1990).

After the independence, the Government tried to unify the Mexican culture. That did not work, and finally, the natives were pushed away as non-citizens and forgotten again in the mountains or jungles. With the revolution, one hundred years later, the indigenous essence was taken into account, but just for a few years, again after some years the indigenous communities were seen as remote and inaccessible places and the mission to help them was again suspended and substituted by the creations of some governmental departments. To this day,

these departments have been working on the creation of schools for indigenous children. The main principles of indigenous education are related mainly to literacy, bilingual methods (the teaching of Spanish language) and basic math. Nowadays, there are schools in most of the larger Indian communities, but the situation is not favorable for everyone yet (Acevedo Conde, 1996, pp. 17-23).

The school has been also an external influence and never seen as a part of the indigenous culture or Cosmo vision. Parents that send their kids (not all they want) (Modiano, 1973, p. 116), is because they had been told that is the only way to stop being poor. The national programs are applied to the school in indigenous regions. But as in any other place of the country, the art education programs -never well developed- are substituted by playtime activities that allow the teacher to rest and to prepare the next activity. Nevertheless, in the indigenous everyday life, art has a very important place.

### THE PROGRAMS FOR ELEMENTARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN MEXICO

Mexican elementary education is defined by eight goals to be pursued: strengthening of personality, knowledge of scientific methods, acquisition of "democratic habits", encouraging the preservation of "values and traditions of national culture" (which not necessarily mean indigenous culture), socialization, self-sufficiency, understanding that the "present is a product of the past and of the continuous heritage of several generations", and forming an "attitude of change in the consciousness of children in order to generate flexibility when facing changes produced in society, in science and culture" (Gutierrez, 1999, p. 63). However, the programs do not explain how to achieve these goals.

Due to the lack of information, and the lack of trained teachers, these Mexican programs show important deficiencies (that also affect the art education field): The relation of pupil to teacher tends to be distant, student guidance and personal counseling are casual, not an integral part of the school program, school administrators blame the ministry for shortcomings and deficiencies, whereas individual initiative and resourcefulness are what is needed, a premium is still placed on artificial forms of competition and competitive types of learning at the expen-

se of co-operative effort, there is a tendency for school officials to be distrustful of students, the schools lack adequate and sufficient statistics or studies that help to see real problems, and there is a need for better-planned and more efficient procedures (Kneller, 1973, pp. 227-228).

When the national programs are applied to Indian communities, we must add to the deficiencies previously mentioned: difficult access to indigenous zones, insufficient budget to accomplish the programs and projects, and the lack of teachers that speak the indigenous languages (Mena, et al., 1999, pp. 36-37).

Besides, even when the government has implemented some bilingual programs, some of the teachers that speak the Indian language, are most worried about finishing the programs than about the students learning process. Sometimes, the teacher does not use the language of the community or cannot speak it and then, children do not understand. Insensible teachers and continue laughing of the classmates provoke that children abandon the ineffective formal system of Mexican indigenous education. This formal education in the indigenous communities educates for the failure and for marginality, since precisely at school is where they learn the "superiority" of the city life (INEGI, 1990).

Parents are aware of the absence of children in school, the common arguments to justify the situation are the difficulty of the Spanish language, the rudeness of the teachers, the economical problems and the fact children must help in the house with the work. However, most indigenous children really have a strong wish to learn (as we will see), the problem is frustrating, when they want to go to school but cannot, people do not have money to eat; learning is not a problem of education, but of money (INEGI, 1990).

Besides this, the more time children spend at school, the more things of their traditions they neglect to learn (INEGI, 1990). The utopian idea that "primary education should have as its ideal an individual in whom all the mental functions grow harmoniously together" (Read, 1958, p. 224) is not applicable here.

With all these problems about the national programs of education it is not difficult to understand why these programs do not work properly.

According to these programs, art education must be a stimulus to enrich children's play and the use of free time. These programs do not have mandatory contents or pre establish sequences. They are only suggestions about spending time doing something "creative". Evaluation is focused in the interest and participation. They also suggest stimulating the child to visit places of "cultural diffusion". Teachers are not trained in the arts. And most of them prefer to expend the 15 minutes each week, recommended in the program, doing something else. Even if they were trained it would be impossible to achieve any of the main purposes in only 10 hours a year (SEP, 1993).

In 1993 (same year of the last publications of the Mexican programs of art education), the National Art Education Association (NAEA) published the main purposes and principles for School Art Programs. There, we read that "Art education programs that developed the ability to make qualitative judgments are needed to help each citizen to assume a personal responsibility for the improvement of the aesthetic dimension of personal and community living" (Wygant, 1981, p.3). We will see how this emphasis in judgment is not necessarily required in the indigenous art education to improve the community artistic scope.

The mayor objectives proposed by the NAEA are: "perceiving, producing, knowing and evaluating" (Wygant, 1981, p.4). Again, some of these characteristics wouldn't be recommended to indigenous people since for example, they are not used to evaluate their own art or to demonstrate they can "make intelligent visual aesthetic judgments" (Wygant, 1981, p.5).

In comparison with the Mexican programs of art education, the NAEA propose a total of 100 minutes weekly of art education in the school (Wygant, 1981, p.26), and the use of specialized materials to achieve the programs, "it is certain true that an effective art education program cannot be carried on without proper materials" (Winslow, 1942, p. 148). However, as we will see, after comparing the materials used by the indigenous people, the word proper will have another meaning.

"It is assumed that the general purpose of education is to foster the growth of what is individual in each human being, at the same time harmonizing the individuality thus educed with the organic unity of the social group to which

the individual belongs" (Read, 1958, p.8). This is the true for the indigenous people's ideas about the relation between art and the environment. Indigenous people respect their natural surroundings, "In their view, nature is a living and sacred entity with which people interact, dialogue, and negotiate throughout the production process" (Modiano, 1973, p. 84).

We are told, that this relation is better if we introduce art education to children education, the individual that lacks artistic inner resources "will have difficulty in his relationship to the environment" (Lowenfeld, 1966, p.6), and if children have a deep relation with art, their relation with the environment would be successful (Lowenfeld, 1966, p.18).

Some basic principles to achieve artistic development are related to the adequate use of materials, i.e. the relation between materials and artistic expression (Lowenfeld, 1966, p.35). The teacher must introduce the appropriate materials at the appropriate time according to the children growth, the teacher is not able to "help" the student because that would restrict the child's individual approach, children must experiment with various materials to be sure they want to use them with the appropriate projects, and be sensitive to different possibilities of creation, the search for perfection is also expected (Lowenfeld, 1966, pp. 39-40).

These ideas are fundamental to start talking about indigenous Art and art education; art in indigenous communities serves as an approximation to reality (how to do things that work), about how to learn, how to help at home, how to play, and how to be adult.

## INDIGENOUS ART

Contemporary Mexican rural life  
is a precious world apart;  
a living museum of pre-Cortesian Mexico;  
a history-laden treasure.

Goerge F. Kneller. *The education of the Mexican Nation*.

Indigenous Art is made with a great diversity of materials, forms, colors, motifs, and uses. Most of the art pieces are not ornamental but for daily use. Here are some examples: religious masks, clothes, pottery, brocaded huipiles (blouses), grinding stones, mats, woodcraft (sculptures, bowls, spoons), hats, hammocks, ceramics,



basketry, textiles, carpentry, leatherworks (like sandals), wood jugs, plates, and spoons, furniture, horse ornaments, string, knives, tapestry, hats, and toys.

One of the ways to make a living in the indigenous communities is the production of art crafts. They are created to be sold in the markets or for the family use; these activities are practiced not only by professional art makers, but by most of the families that also work in the fields or doing some services (Chamoux, 1992, p. 73). The indigenous economy is mainly based in agricultural production, art crafts and commercial activities (Mena, 1999, p. 89; Caso, 1971, p. 219; Kneller, 1973, p. 8).

To this day, indigenous Art has kept the same processes, topics, materials, techniques and traditions for centuries. Some of the brocade patterns have seen in robes of Maya figurines dated 1,000 years ago. And some actual pottery is identical to that excavated in pre-conquest sites (Kneller, 1973, p. 205; Nash, 1993, pp. 2-14). "Popular art is hand made or with very simple tools, this production is generally made at home" (Caso, 1971, p. 222). The designs in the indigenous arts are created by the artist's imagination, and sometimes he put traditional inherited patterns in it (Caso, 1971, p. 224).

Festivities or celebrations, called fiestas, are the major occasions to express their artistic abilities: piñatas, masks, flower and paper ornaments, special hats, clothes, food and skulls are the most common examples (Caso, 1971, p. 234).

The festivities are the crucial encounters between spirit and God, they seem to transcend the daily life and reach another reality. They are magical moments, when the expression of their feelings, joys and fears is fundamental (INEGI, 1990). "Every day of every month, in some region, in some village, a 'fiesta' is held in honor of that village patron saint" (Aldana, 1993, p. 14). Everything is specially done for the celebrations and they prepare everything by themselves.

It is commonly heard that indigenous people of Mexico have an

"extraordinary artistic temperament [...] There is not other country, -except the Chinese- where you

can see such an extraordinary manual ability as that of the Mexican Indians, masterly expressed in the essential artistic works as in the simplest everyday works: prodigal manual ability to the service of a sharp perception, clear intelligence and deep esthetical feeling" (MacLean, 1960, p. 143).

People from other countries really feel that indigenous people from Mexico are gifted in the arts (Nash, 1993, p. 4).

## **ART EDUCATION IN MEXICAN INDIGENOUS CULTURE**

'And so we shall be able to do what our mothers did  
and what our fathers did  
here where our Holy Father sees us...'  
Indian prayer (fragment).

The indigenous artist is seen as a creative person, someone that can transmit his inner richness and feelings (MacLean, 1960, p. 152), indigenous artists reveal a part of their identity when creating art (Nash, 1993, pp. 4-20). The common thought is that "the Mexican is intuitively an artist..." (Kneller, 1973, p. 205). What is relevant for us, art educators, is the way they teach each other to create with feelings and to create transmitting their cultural and personal inner richness.

It is this activity of creating art that we are going to see thru the indigenous informal pedagogy: the art education of the indigenous people of Mexico. Among these determined social groups, the pedagogical techniques are very precise, even if they are very hard to notice. This is called informal pedagogy. Even though, it is taught outside the educational institutions, it is socially very well organized and the word "informal", here, does not mean it is just a natural or instinctive form of teaching (Chamoux, 1992, pp. 73-74). An example of this informality in the community is that the members hardly know or remember their age. They are not registered in the national population system (Chamoux, 1992, pp. 78). So, they do not care about age or complete name. And certainly, they do not expect a written certification of what they know, indigenous people "believe in learning by doing and making learning meaningful in the broader context of common life" (Modiano, 1973, p. 84).

In the indigenous communities the art production is familiar, and children intervene (Caso, 1971, p. 224). "Production is still tied to the household unit and skills are transmitted from mother to daughter or father to son" (Nash, 1993, p. 4). There are not special places to teach the informal pedagogy, and there are not schedules either. In the informal education, times and places are given by concrete circumstances. It could be taught at any time and in anyplace. It could be developed during free time as well as while doing some other activity (Chamoux, 1992, p. 75). Informal education is given by the parents, the relatives and neighbors, that is to say, by the community, the substantial function of telling tales and myths corresponds to the oldest (INEGI, 1990).

For some indigenous communities, "education is a long-lasting process that starts when the baby is born and ends when his existence ends" (Chamoux, 1992, p. 77). According to these cultures, learning is the acquisition of the soul. The acquisition of perfection, that arrives with maturity and more commonly with old age. The normal rogueries of children are always attributed to the lack of soul (Chamoux, 1992, p. 77).

There are some educative models in the informal education, but they are not intended to judge the aptitudes of the community members, they are intended as the transition of adult experience to younger members of the same group (Chamoux, 1992, p. 77; Modiano, 1973, p. 84).

Repression or punishment in indigenous societies is very hard to see, and it is established and differentiated in three different ages they take into account: early childhood, childhood and preadolescence. Hard or rude tone of voice, as well as shouts, is almost never used. This shows a very important difference with the formal education in the school where we can observe teachers with large groups that shout or yell at children all day long (Chamoux, 1992, pp. 79-80).

It is important to mention that these cultures tend to believe that it is impossible to teach the babies or small kids (around two years) anything, the reason is that they are little, they cannot know. The person who treats them badly is seen as a low and vile person and rejected. They wait until the child is mature enough to imitate the behavior of his older brothers or

parents (Chamoux, 1992, p. 80).

Besides, they find illogical to push the children into more advanced stage of learning, although precocity is very celebrated (Chamoux, 1992, p. 79). When the child seems to understand, around three or four years old, it is time to start working. Childhood is the only period of life when they combined work with play. "When the children are three or four, they must start carrying wood, or the merchandise from the market. This cargo is proportioned to the child strength. The purpose of this activity is to teach them how to work, not to use their strength as a benefit" (Chamoux, 1992, p. 80). They also start to do tortillas at this age.

In the Indigenous cultures, physical punishment –when occasionally occurs– is related to the work techniques, as to carry the wood again, to prepare more tortillas, or to repeat the weaved pattern. The common punishment is the simple laugh, a humorous joke about what is doing badly. Then, they start again doing the same task properly, and they have learned (Chamoux, 1992, pp. 82-83; Modiano, 1973, p. 64). Rewards are also verbal and positive, and they do not stop with adulthood, they praise each other even when they are grownups (Chamoux, 1992, p. 83).

The basic principle of informal education is the awakening of the wish to learn, they achieve this through plays, stories, prayers and advices directed to be better persons. And it is expected that young members of the community have some work with their inner selves and mature (Chamoux, 1992, p. 84). Once this wish is achieved, they start to learn, the most common learning technique is the observation, and they have to observe gestures, order, effects, and consequences on the material used. The only adult advices are: "look carefully and concentrate!" Verbal lessons are infrequently taught. To memorize without practice seems absurd and inefficient to the "students" (Chamoux, 1992, pp. 84-86; Modiano, 1973, p. 64).

Indigenous children learn through imitation, "they imitate their mothers at work, and boys also try to imitate their fathers" (Modiano, 1973, pp. 36-41). Educators and psychologists have demonstrated that imitation is an essential factor of learning (Lowenfeld, 1966, p. 21). In indigenous communities, people keep on imitation and observing to learn during all their lives, when they are little, they manipu-



late almost all the household objects, as they grow older, they get acquainted with new objects, and achieve new goals (Modiano, 1973, p. 41).

Due to this process of observation, the young artist does not necessarily have a “try and fail and try again” process, it is astonishing, but most of them can handle the whole procedures with perfect confidence and almost not errors on the first attempt (Chamoux, 1992, p. 87). “Literally, concentration is a vital part” (Chamoux, 1992, p. 92). However, to avoid hard or difficult task, the adult that is teaching, gives the younger a not so difficult project, a napkin to be brocaded instead of a blouse, a miniature pottery piece instead of a normal one. They also give them much more time to do the work. The best way to show children they did well is the immediate effective use of the piece, even if it is not perfect at all. If the artistic object has a use inside the family, or can be sold in the market, the new apprentice feels he has achieved the knowledge and desire, in that instant, to achieve perfection. Fathers or mothers never help with his/her own hands on the piece of the “student”. This is a logical behavior if they believe the child himself must do it (Chamoux, 1992, pp. 88-89; Modiano, 1973, p. 66-67).

When they are little, indigenous children made almost everything, houses with mud and sticks, and with roofs made of corn leaves, tortillas of mud, trucks with benches, knives with pieces of broken glass, toys, jugs or cooking pots with clay, dolls with pieces of cloth, and crowns of flowers. If we agree with the idea that “because perceiving, thinking, and feeling are equally stressed in any creative process, art may well provide the necessary balance for the child’s intellect and his emotions” (Lowenfeld, 1966, p.6), we have to agree that even in their difficult social situation, this indigenous children grow as creative adults, able to respect the environment and to achieve any kind or sensitive task they face.

### **ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF MEXICAN INDIGENOUS CHILDREN**

In the process of art, the child has given us more than a picture or a sculpture,  
he has given us a part of himself.  
Viktor Lowenfeld *Creative and Mental Growth*

In the first instance we have to accept that in the indigenous world. There is not structured or clear vinculum between formal and informal education, but a silent confrontation of values and criteria (INEGI, 1990). This indicates us that education has nothing to do with the school, but with the indigenous daily life, if we compare this with the educative systems that prefer the factual information than the artistic one (Lowenfeld, 1966, p.2), we can see that even the lack of factual information, indigenous children develop in a normal way inside their societies. However, we must understand that the artistic development of indigenous children will vary due to the kind of education they have.

According to Lowenfeld (1966), at the age of 2 to 4, children develop the scribbling stage, and in order to accomplish this development they must be given the materials. He recommends crayons on paper (Lowenfeld, 1966, p.93-114). At the same age, indigenous babies are walking free in the land and they start to play with earth and mud. They dig and draw with sticks on the dry earth (Modiano, 1973, pp.43-51).

At the age of 4 to 7 years old, children start to draw their first representations of real life, in the pre schematic stage. Their first reality forms. Paint on absorbent paper is recommended as well as clay (Lowenfeld, 1966, pp. 115-137). At this stage, indigenous children are also using clay, and they are imitating the creative process of their parents, the pottery, the tapestry, toys and artificial food (Modiano, 1973, pp.42-50). They build houses and stables with mud.

In the next stage, 7-9 years old, we have the achievement of a form; children represent concepts of man and his environment. They start to paint the Base Line and to understand the meaning of color. They can start using poster paint or tempera (Lowenfeld, 1966, pp. 138-181). By this age, indigenous children are creating arts crafts for the use of the family (Modiano, 1973, p.47). They also can recreate human figures in sculptures made of clay, and patterns in clothes and paper. Their use of color is related with what they have at hand.

When children are 9 to 11 years old, they start creating designs and crafts, they are aware of their environment and they can start using watercolor, wood or papier-mâché (Lowenfeld, 1966, pp. 182-213). During this time, the indi-

genous child is already selling his pieces of art, if he/she has not started earlier. They are working with wood, cloth, clay, and papier-mâché (Modiano, 1973, p.49); and they prepare their own costumes, hats and mask for the festivities.

The indigenous child grows up surrounded by the materials he uses. Up to the age of three years old, children are free to do what they want. They can play with mud, draw lines on the earth with sticks or stones and feel those materials. This is a good beginning; indigenous children do play with materials a lot when they are kids. From there, come the extraordinary ability that scholars mentioned, it is not in their blood, it is not in the culture itself, but in the feelings of the materials when they are young. They spend much time constructing and creating; they have at hand the colors of nature in comparison for example with the grayness of some urban cities. It is essential to notice that even if the physical development is slow due to the bad nutrition, the artistic development seem to follow or be according to the stages in the study mentioned above.

Topics related with nature, as animals and plants, appear in indigenous art earlier, as well as the realistic constructions of simple houses (Modiano, 1982, pp.490-495). Group work is also fully developed due to the number of brothers and sisters. They share their constructions and all play together to prepare food with mud (Modiano, 1973, p.27).

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The artistic development of indigenous children does not seem to be very different from children studied in the cities; it is significant if we consider that most of them don't have formal education at all. This is quite interesting since we are used to see formal education as a fundamental factor in the development of social and emotional behavior.

The main idea that comes from the fact that indigenous children have a normal artistic development in their crude situation (poverty, illiteration, sickness and lack of scientific knowledge), is that art conforms an important part of their lives as much as any other daily activity (play, eat or sleep). Children nature tends to be artistic in all senses.

Art is something natural inherent in the human being, we can learn it through the informal education. It works. Indigenous people do not need Art Schools. They need to be respected and given support to their artistic activities nowadays existing. Nobody can teach the indigenous child to create, he already knows, because he has seen his parents creating art since he was a baby. The question is, then, why we, the urban people, need art programs in the schools? And if we need them, couldn't they be more related with the inner self and daily use like those we discovered there in the mountains and jungles?

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