

Teacher Education Institute (TEI)

Director: Dr. David L. Mollet, 6656 Reservoir Lane, San Diego, CA 92115

Tel: 619-463-1270 Email: tei@cox.net URL: <http://members.cox.net/tei>

Colour

The place of the visual arts in our approach is extremely important, especially our relationship with colour. For most of us interaction with colour is nothing more than spasmodic and of a lower priority; no doubt, to a large extent because of the type of education we have received.

Visual impressions may be important to some but few of us have the inclination or time to pay any particular emphasis to the influence of colour in our lives. There are, of course, exceptions and we think of the painter or artist who perceive how the eye needs to be activated through a disciplining of a sense of colour.

How then are we to obtain a more intensive experience and knowledge in the realm of colour? All true colour experience rests upon the harmonious or one-sided distribution of a triad - the three primal colours - yellow, blue, red.

There is a continual struggle in man to create an harmonious balance of this triad and part of his struggle and experience of life is involved in attempting to resolve inner conflict and thus bring about harmony.

We need to seek relationships with colour not through objective processes but in the nature of the organ of sight. If we have little or no experience of colour, attempts to bring about harmony are made that much more difficult. We need to work with colour in a systematic way.

Ideally exercises related to each of the primary colours should start at a very early age; certainly by the time children enter grade 1 they should have had a great deal of experience and enjoyment of working with each of the primary colours. It is obvious that the work set will be appropriate for young children and the teacher who uses our approach will plan many lessons where children can learn and feel experiences of colour.

With adults the process is more difficult but we should be able to nurture within ourselves a feeling for particular colours and the moods they induce. We may need help with certain exercises to do this initially but the attraction to work with colour will always be with us.

Colour can also help us in other ways; when we are in a particular mood, colour can help us to express feelings; assist us to change from one mood to another, or aid us in tempering the effects of negative emotion. However, there is, in the long run, no substitute for working through exercises. For example, to fully experience the effects of colour the eye should be entirely surrounded by one colour; this induces both the eye and mind to be in unison with it.

A whole range of exercises designed around the colour circle will help us to experience the significance and completeness of colour. In nature the completeness is there for all to see; for example, in the morning sunrise and in the evening sunset. With practice we can become submerged in the cosmic world of colour with all its tensions, creative forces, polarities, intensifications, rhythms and so on.

At all times however, we need to keep ahead of intellectualizing the process through involvement with exercises and practice; something that modern man has palpably failed to do. Failure to do this results in attitudes that to some extent ignore the beauty and wonder in the world; experiences that we are meant to obtain and which we ignore at our peril.

Working with Colour

The use of colour can play an integral part in this process. The task of the teacher using our approach is not only, therefore, to enable children gain an appreciation and experience of colour but to help them work with colour so that their psychological development is aided by the process.

The structure within which this occurs is usually different from that which happens in most schools. For example, the emphasis in our approach is on the expression of inner perception. The conventional approach is on outward observation followed by attempts to represent the outward perception through a drawing or painting. If this occurs the emphasis has been on form rather than on colour.

It is far better to start with colour and the teacher using our approach will involve the children in a whole number of exercises. Initially children work with each of the primary colours in turn before progressing to the different ways in which the colours mix to produce other colours.

One of the easiest mediums to use and one which is practical is the application of water colour to damp paper. In this way children can gradually and gently be introduced to feelings for the different hues and tones. The application of water colour to damp paper enables children to work from inner perception and create a variety of form. It is far more satisfying to their wellbeing to create form from colour than to impose form obtained from observation. They will build up an instinct for colour and the laws and processes involved in colours and their interaction.

The therapeutic benefit from continually acting with colour should not be under-estimated especially in relation to the different temperaments. For example, if left to their own devices choleric would probably spread reds and purples in dramatic form over the paper; melancholics would take great care in painting something small in one of the darker colours; phlegmatics would very slowly work out what colour they would use in which place on the paper and laboriously begin to paint; sanguines would attempt to fill the paper, as quickly as possible, with bright colours.

It is therapeutic for children to express themselves through colour in this way although the teacher should be very much aware that the main priority in working with colour is far more than this. One needs to use it for self expression at the emotional level described. However, it is more important to gradually experience the many levels of new insight, perception and satisfaction gained from working with colour.

One of the almost traumatic experiences obtained is the realization that the new horizons appear to be limitless. In this way each one of us can feel the inner life changing and being enriched. It is difficult to describe and quantify enrichment that is almost an entirely a personal inner experience. For anyone who has worked with colour their understanding of themselves and the outer world is different in a way which is non-intellectual. It is indeed important that children from an early age should receive the benefits of working with colour.