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“Fair of fantastic imagery /A Feira do Imaginário”- Community

**directed work, developed through the practice of the a n the
community.**

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Abstract

MUS-E project in Évora (a historic city in the south of Portugal) is part of the international network MUS-E – artists in school Programme, founded by Yehudi Menuhin over a decade ago. MUS-E Évora has been focusing its activities in Cruz da Picada Elementary School, working towards the integration of ethnic minorities into society through the practice of the arts at school, struggling against social and cultural exclusion.

This paper will point out the methodologies used in the particular *training in action* process of MUS-E artists, who work both with children and teachers from an interdisciplinary perspective and approach to: music, drama, dance and the visual arts.

In the last academic year (2004-2005), that intensive work resulted in a “Feira do Imaginário” (Fair of fantastic imagery), which was assembled in different public spaces throughout the city. This fair composed of extraordinary *out of this world things* was thought, created and given life by children and artists, with the precious help of “PIM-Teatro” Theatre Group and EPRE (Évora Detention Centre), and also teachers and families. In such a peculiar fair one could find just anything for sale: fears and magical potions; wishes and flying hats; dreamed chairs and talking books. There, one could encounter musicians, jugglers, acrobats, and monsters...a setting so familiar to most of these children, many of them descendants of gypsy sons of shrewd merchants.

We will expose how this intervention resulted in the creation of a particular aesthetic and artistic object of interdisciplinary nature, how it opened up to new bounds of artistic intervention in the community, and how it managed to mobilize partnerships with local cultural/social agents and institutions.

We will continue to question about the artistic objects produced by children.
Should it follow aesthetic and formal patterns pre-conceived by adults?

Keywords: intercultural and interdisciplinary issues; teachers/artists, inclusion; partnerships; community intervention through practice of the Arts.

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PAPER

This paper will firstly focus on relevant aspects of a **supervised training process**, which developed through an investigation/action project in the area of intercultural Education in the context of MUS-E Project. Secondly, it will give you an account of the creative process of a spe vention – **A Feira do Imaginário** (Fair of Fantastic Imagery), which was co-produced with PIM Theatre Group; it will point out its important and positive implications in the community.

We are certain that this type of intervention, achieve via the creation of a artistic and aesthetic object of interdisciplinary nature, will empower community intervention and reinforce partnerships with local agents and institutions.

The **investigation/action project** in question took place at Cruz da Picada Elementary S in Évora, where different social groups live, namely the gipsy community. Not only did the project involve students and teachers, did it also implicate a group of 4 “*teachers/artists*”, who work in a interdisciplinary perspective in the areas of music, drama, dance and the visual arts, embodying the MUS-

E International Project (Artists in School). The project was structured into three phases: in the first and in the last teachers and artists were interviewed, whereas in the second and phase a process of collaborative training in action was carried out by the “*teachers/artists*” team.

Due to the project extension, the present paper will only refer to the more relevant results of the monitoring process to which the artistic intervention submitted, and which lead to the assembly of a supervision cycle.

It is imperative to debate the relevance of this kind of action, as it may be portrayed as an anti-chamber of ***community intervention trough the arts*** that opens to an outdoors, with artistic manifestations where family and neighbours participate.

Let us begin by drawing out the context of its realization:

The MUS-E Project (Muses Europe / Artists in school) is an artistic, social and educational project created by Yehudi Menuhin, a great musician, and, above all, a great man.

An outstanding violinist since childhood, a world acclaimed maestro on the second part of his long life, Yehudi Menuhin, at the age of seven, started an extraordinary musical career in the USA, which took him to most of the world’s musical stages. He considered himself a citizen of the world. His career was built over a fundamental vision of universality in music parameters. He worked over a vast repertoire from Bach, Ravel, Beethoven to modern music, with passages through baroque music and jazzy improvisations. He enjoyed sharing and spreading all music diversity. His deep interest and respect for all different cultures and musical genders led him to play with Ravi Shankar, as well as with anonymous gypsy musical groups, whom he helped to promote.

As a true humanist, all through his life he worried with the great issues of the century born with him. He made it his mission to lead the course of actions to ensure the practice of democratic education and to guarantee the protection of the rights of the minority groups. This constant struggle for the defence of the more fragile made him entitled Lord and gave the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1979.

To give voice to those who need it the most may stand for his great accomplishment in Life. And, along with all his great actions is the start of a project – MUS-E Project.

He defended the idea of a plural Europe that could grow peace inside. He believed that, by the practice of the arts since early childhood, it would be possible to form more tolerant european citizens. *“C’est en rebellion contre les phenomenes de reduction, qui touchent la dignité, la valeur, l’originalité, la créativité des êtres humains, que j’ai créé une Fondation Internationale qui porte mon nom.”*(MENUHIN, 1999)

Today Yehudi Menuhin’s dream is being developed in 12 european countries.

MUS-E Project Portugal

MUS-E Project Portugal celebrates this year its tenth year of activity. Progressively, and since 1996, when a protocol was signed between Lord Menuhin, mentor of the project, and the Ministry of Education, MUS-E Project Portugal has had a chance to grow and strengthen its intervention.

It all started in nº1 Algés Elementary School, in the same year of the protocol’s signature. Followed by Marrazes and Quinta do Alçada School in Leiria, Lagarteiro and S. Gens School in Porto and Cruz da Picada School in Évora.

When in Portugal, directing the Expo 1998 Overture Concert, Yehudi Menuhin got to know in greater depth MUS-E Project Portugal, referring to nº1 Algés School as “ *l’école de mës rêves!*”.

Today, MUS-E Project Portugal is formed by a multidisciplinary team of 25 artists (teachers/artists), whom, daily and throughout the school year, with students and teachers of these five schools, begin to make sense of concepts such as: ***respect for the different, cooperation, solidarity***, via the practice of expression and art in the field of music, dance, drama, visual arts, cinema animation, creative writing, puppets, arts and crafts, etc.

MUS-E Project supports its intervention in the school and community over the idea that the inclusion of cultural diversity, through the experience of art expression, contributes to the increase of greater respect between individuals.

To value native cultures is to establish the possibility of presenting oneself the pride of ***being*** and ***belonging*** to a specific culture and, in that sense, and at the same level as everyone, being able to discover and reinvent new ways of ***doing*** and experiencing culture.

By giving special attention to the context of socio-cultural diversity where each school is set, as well as taking special care in the process of recruiting artists (teachers/artists) to be part of a team, the MUS-E Project assures the conditions for respect and tolerance to flourish.

Childhood is an important time for social learning (Heik, 1990) and the School is one of the most privileged place and time where children are more likely to apprehend skills related to social attitudes and interaction. Lord Menuhin believed that a child's early artistic practice induced in a school environment, by teachers and the artists and their art, and the definition of an artistic object, would enable children to promote their self-valorisation as individuals, therefore contributing to the construction of a more tolerant world (Menuhin, 1998).

According to Ardouin (1997), the access to artistic culture is the setting of humanity, specially from the moment when the individual sees himself as a singular being that becomes conscious of the fact that knowledge and conduct have origin in a culture, and are, on top of that, results of a reflection on the paths and the memory of men.

While intervening in the development of children and adults, and while intervening in the school itself, as it establishes a system of practices, relations, norms and values, MUS-E Project reveals to be a fertile ground for research involving the experiences of its participants: children, teachers, artists and family.

The specificity of our case study – a multicultural school in Évora, with children from different cultural backgrounds – leads us to a question:

“How can the valorisation of cultural diversity contribute to a better development of expression and artistic practices in school context?”

It was from the core of this question that we made our work evolve. We aimed for a better grasp of the school context, by developing different strategies and finding the accurate answers, in order to better understand by what means could MUS-E artistic expressions, which preserve the valorisation of cultural diversity (including native cultures and others), alongside with the reflective work of a group of teachers/artists, have a more positive impact on the school.

We see one's personal reflection as an essential training condition. Thus we may begin to grasp what for Dominicé (1985) is self-training: ***“...when an educative action becomes training, it is really the training of adults that take place. Training belongs exclusively to those who are trained. Clearly everyone depends on external support (...) however we should not undervalue the fact that it is up to each adult to resume the variety of external influences and make training process his own.”***

Supportive guiding was given to artists in their dance, drama and music interventions, and continuous thought and reflection of their actions led to its adaptation of that specific multicultural context.

Literary revision prior to the launching of interventions, had a double purpose: in one hand, it helped to situate our research problematic; on the other, it led to a deeper understanding of, for instance, the specificities of gypsy culture, whilst feeding artists (teacher/artists) with sources of motivation for their work.

A series of methodological procedures were undertaken, such as direct observation, interviews and monitoring support of artistic practice.

This monitoring process was realized through a supervision cycle, connected to the study of the needs expressed in the interviews, as a way of overcoming the difficulties detected by the artists (teacher/artists).

We believed that by studying these different sources, the contribution of different perspectives collected in the field of our project, we would put together relevant data that might allow us to find answers to a few questions:

1 – What are the teachers' and artists' (teacher/artists) perception and opinion on cultural diversity? In what way is it valued? In what way is it absorbed by their pedagogical practices?

2 - How can we assess, in an intercultural perspective, the beneficial effect caused by the work developed by MUS-E artists (teacher/artists) in the school?

Questions 1 and 2 lead to a third:

3 – How to establish and introduce reflection practices that allow that beneficial implication in the school?

We crossed our studied data, registered in the course of the project, with a theoretical analysis from bibliographic revision. It was then possible to proceed to the discussion of the obtained results, which made way to a conclusive draw out of the characteristics of this kind of intervention. Also, it was possible to elaborate a set of guidelines towards a better experience of school and community.

Study Guidelines

When studying the problems related to cultural differences, one has imperative need to understand the part played by socio-economic differences over different social groups. The social issue gains greater significance in the affirmation of cultural identity.

"Acknowledgement, self-esteem and respect are issues less complicated for the more favoured groups or even for the socially more diverse, than for those less favoured. It is precisely because of the last group's less favoured social condition, that difficulties emerge in what concern social and cultural affirmation".(Wieviorka 1999)

We are in the borderline of a cultural shock. Tavares, Pereira & Sousa (1997) illustrate this fact in the following: *"Due to the increasing circulation of people, a cultural system's coherence and homogeneity is questioned; this can be designated as a cultural shock. This endangers the natural tendency for conservation, stability and continuity inherent to all culture."*

In fact, typical situations of uprooting – and culture confrontation – lead to creation of *ghettos*.

"To leave behind the native cultural system and confront with another, whilst living in the confluence of both, bears emotional movements that have important implications in the cognitive development."

Many of these feelings are directly connected with the notion of *fidelity/treason*, with the byname *connection/rupture* and also with the concept of *identity*.

Moreover, there is an issue that concerns the education system itself that raises certain questions that need be stated. These have to do with the difficult relation between school culture and family culture.

"Work has been carried out recently in Portugal on the nature of the relation between the school and its surrounding environment suggesting that (...) there is, on the other hand, a dynamic that is based on ethnical origins that produce a difference in the social and cultural pattern related to gypsy and/or

african culture and school culture that is punitive towards children/youngsters, whose ethical origins diverge from the established norm (that is, white, catholic, urban and luso-portuguese).” (Stoer, 1993)

This opposition between two education systems that privileged different competences (family and school), not rarely incites the child to produce breakouts of anxiety and of real aggressiveness.

To this purpose we are confronted with a question similar to that announced by Cortesão e Pacheco (1991), stated as follows:

“In regard to a group that lives outside almost all social mechanisms, that survives thanks to a strong internal unity and to the practice of a certain aggressiveness, how can we deal with the violence that these children naturally use against each other and use collectively against the non-gypsies, whenever one of them is in a situation they consider of danger?”

In fact, the work we carried out through the use of methodologies of intercultural approach of the different forms of artistic expression, tries to deal, within the possible, with these kind of aggressive behaviour towards the *other* and towards what is different.

To frame our intervention it became necessary to look at the contemporary perspectives in multicultural artistic education.

Taking from James Banks’ work (1989), in the heart of artistic education, we should find and promote cultural *pride* and, especially, ensure that the same range of opportunities in the field of art is offered to all children, thought the use of a shared diverse artistic programme. In a socio-anthropological perspective of artistic approaches, Sthur (1994), Adejumo (2002) e Daniel (1990) believe that the cultural representation of minority groups inside the structure of the school programme, will have true impact in terms of student valorisation. Moreover, it will play an important part in the building of a cultural conscience and social development, which are determinant factors for a more informed and more adequate decision-making. Stout (1997) stands for the idea that artistic programmes should be thought with diverse contents, suggesting, at the same time, that the process should enhance skill acquisition directly related to critical thought in opposition to social equalitarian vision, which has to do with reconstructionists’ perspectives.

Important aspects of a multicultural artistic approach:

Several questions are raised in this field of study. One of great relevance concerns individual differences, and the valorisation of the contribution of individual performance, apart from the group of belonging.

This is an issue of particular importance when seen in terms of the individual richness of personal expression, creativity and art creation.

In intercultural artistic education processes, the existence of projects that promote a better knowledge of multicultural art production, such as “**Artists-in-Schools Projects**”, is extremely positive. Equally, a source of positive outcome will be parent inclusion and participation, as a way to rescale the levels of sharing specific cultures and specific arts.

Here are the aspects we considered important to take in consideration in the course of our intervention. This intervention should focus on the factors inherent to the valorisation of cultural diversity, through the inclusion of elements and materials of diverse cultural expression in MUS-E artistic performance.

We assessed feedback on this thematic from the artists and teachers implicated in the work of 4th year’s students from elementary school, and identified the motivations and supportive needs in the development of the artists’ work. Following that, a training programme involving the whole team was drawn out.

Taking from the difficulties expressed and identified, the process of setting out a key educational objective – *developing group expression from the incorporation of individual expression elements* – over which a monitoring cycle was assembled.

Immediate willingness to start up a cooperative training programme was felt amongst all elements of the team, who spontaneously came up with workable material from different sources and designed a preparatory plan for the work sessions.

After the assemblage and conclusion of the first formal work cycle, the project came to a point of no return, winning the will to continue.

This process developed over the all extent of the school year. The work sessions began to be assisted by outside observers and recorded. Team meetings were planned for every two weeks, in order to prepare and assess the work sessions.

Because this process was entirely built over the idea of team communication and exchange of real experiences, the whole project gained consistency and blurred the borderlines of the different areas of expression, drawing a path of confluences towards performative public events, with the participation of the whole school.

Finally, a second period of interviews with artists and teachers was carried out, to assess if any chances had occurred, in relation to the starting point of the project, in what concerned opinions on the valorisation of multicultural diversity, inherent to the newly applied expressive and artistic practices.

Study impact:

It is important to underline the *“motivation aspect”* present throughout the work, felt not only by the artists but also by the children and teachers, which revealed decisive for a *“well-being atmosphere at school”*.

For the artists, this process contained a chance to *“feel as active elements of a team”*, and also to *“become aware of their social and educative part”* along with the artistic part, which defined the intervention itself. By finding a direction and by *“making sense”* of their work in the context of a collective shared work process, the artists were repositioned in a plan of belonging, which levelled their position to that of other elements who intervene in the school context. The views, opinions and suggestions of artists towards events that take place in school *“took up weight and respect”*.

This experience proved to be an exceptional opportunity to try out the practice of new methodologies in art education. In the case of drama, for instance, the planning of the experience worked as an encouragement for the artist to take on research and update his knowledge, and prepare his pedagogical intervention from a solid conceptual and theoretical support.

As the work developed in the three areas was built over the concept of stimulating cooperation between children, and also over the idea of exploration and valorisation of various field of interest through collective artistic construction, the project led to a more efficient behaviour regulation and children motivation. Children who more frequently missed school, not seldom did come to school for the purpose of attending a dance or drama session.

We can also consider that children's expressive/artistic skill improvements had its cause in the change and adaptation of methodologies in specific situations: *“I picked up some gypsy short stories and started working them, not quiet knowing how it could be done, and I was completely struck by the children feedback and with the perspective of really starting some serious work with them (...). And such commitment... the children gave so much of themselves to the work and in such an intensive way! Then one thing led to the other and it was a truly unexpected surprise... They planned, looked at pictures, began to tell me stories, share their lives with me (...)*

According to the experience of artists and teachers, the relations between children and between children and adults increased substantially, contributing for a better, healthier school environment: *“...there is great enthusiasm going on, a different way of experiencing school, I think there is something extremely positive about that, there is a certain joy amongst the boys and I think that is amazing, it may seem like nothing, but it is something!”*

Let us now focus our reflection on a specific artistic intervention – “A Feira do Imaginário” (The Fair of Fantastic Imagery)

“**A Feira do Imagirário**” is a story of a creative adventure shared by artists and children, not easily defined:

. A partnership between artists and the community?

. Art education experience?

. Formation or transformation action?

. Experience of creative processes for contemporary art or for children’s art?

Not one of these items could be separated from the others...

Let us introduce the multiple partnerships involved in the project and the frame of their intervention:

School – MUS-E + ACIME (Ethnical Minorities Integration High Committee)

MUS-E – artists – PIM Teatro

Artists – PIM Teatro

PIM Teatro – EPRE (Évora Detention Centre)

Artists – children/school community

This work was only possible thanks to all these partnerships, which created the right human, artistic, technical, financial conditions.

Let us now focus on **PIM Teatro** (PIM Theatre Group)

PIM Teatro is a theatre company that, since its foundation in 1993, carries out research on contemporary art creation methodologies, new dramaturgy and forming new audiences.

“We soon got seduced by children and youngsters’ artistic and aesthetica education, and started to experiment new ways of promoting this encounter, where all are (or might become) artists and apprentices.

We took up creation / research / education projects in schools, associations and informal groups, always seeing drama as a performative space, where ideas can freely expressed, where wishes come true, where (other) personal and personal intercourse is experienced, where the world is seen under new perspectives.

In a multidimensional relation, we make our creative and technical tools and skills available to the personal and cultural use and development of communities that surround us.”

In a partnership with Évora University – Paulo Freire Education Research Centre –, PIM Teatro develops a project of artistic intervention in Évora Detention Centre – **Além Grades** – that became truly established with the showing of a theatrical performance: **A Ilha dos Caídos**.

“Since we are actively connected with that community we considered their participation in this project of great importance. This allowed prisoners to be positively bond to life outside prison walls, valuing them through the direct appliance of their know-how.”

We should bear in mind that some of that children have or have had relatives in prison, and that some of those prisoners have family attachments with children from that school.

“We believe that an active experience of the arts (drama, movement, visual arts, music) is actively transforming of individuals, therefore contributing for the cultural (artistic, civic, aesthetic) development of communities. This encounter between artists is also profoundly enriching for contemporary art. That is the case when artists find a way of connecting their singular productions and researches to that encounter with the community.

Equally, it should be underlined that PIM Teatro’s experiences in this field, were built on the nourishment of close relations that conduce to artistic sharing, and, essentially, the realization of artistic products. Rarely do we conduct the commonly named workshops, when these find support on fugacious

contacts and successfully applied “recipes” that never happen again. We rather invest in true «encounters» that lead to lasting relations, where complicities can flourish. This, we believe to be fundamental to artistic creation.”

We will make a brief exposition of some of the experiences carried out by PIM Teatro within school context in the city of Évora:

In 2002, under the influences of experiences lead by Catherine Dastée, in the Theatre de la Pomme Verte, PIM Teatro started looking for a group of children that would help the company creating a theatre show.

They found a teacher that seemed to take some interest in the project, in Convento Novo Elementary School, Évora. There, they also found a 3rd year class, whom which the work begun. A real adventure started there, and the experience revealed that drama, visual arts and music as unblocking mechanisms of expression, could make access to the essence of stories, which fill a Fantastic Universe devised by children. *“we took them things from our own imagery (music, objects, poems, images of paintings by Kandinsky, watercolours by Mário Botas and Greta Stern’s photographic compositions. From the four months that we worked together and the many stories they invented, we selected four and produced a theatre performance **Universo Fantástico**- (Fantastic Universe), which is on tour up to this day.” **

The whole experience was so overwhelming, and the emotional relation established with those children and their teacher found such consolidation that, PIM Teatro was back the following year. This time the work process was structured as follows: the same group of children, now in 4th class, were set in a search for the images and spaces where stories happen; from sound stimuli children visualized spaces that reflected their everyday lives and references, and transformed those spaces using their fantastic imagery; through drama those spaces gained a certain atmosphere and became inhabited by characters. The visual arts and techniques transformed the spaces in three dimensional model boxes, which constituted the very essence and starting point for **Conferências Fantásticas (Fantastics Conferences)** performative event. These model boxes were then used as reference for the design of Palácio dos Contos (Storys Palace) – a cultural space for children and adults.

In 2004, PIM Teatro was called to collaborate in an intervention pilot-project to be undertaken with a group of youngsters (taken out of school environment), using an alternative curricular programme. The project was the outcome of a partnership established between St.^a Clara Preparatory School in Évora (via the Child Labour and Exploitation Eradication Programme) and the Government Professional Training Centre.

The group’s needs were identified: individual self-concept transformation, promotion of respect for the other, development of effort commitment and overcome of frustration, generate the need to wish, conceive and realize work together as a group. A theatre workshop was carried out. Using drama techniques, they dealt with the idea of a common identity consciousness and promoted the sharing of personal universes. In an intimate relation with Pim Teatro team, these youngsters took on the production/creation of the whole show: characters, text, set design, lighting, sound design, etc. The result was a theatre production project entitled ***Quem não foge more! (who didn’t run away, die!)***.

Since 2000, PIM Teatro integrate MUS-E Project at Cruz da Picada School.

These are some of the examples of PIM Teatro educational practice, which takes in its hands to develop the individual sense of belonging to a group and its transforming force inside a certain community. And that is concerned with the evolution of an art culture, of creativity and aesthetic sense, whilst opening breaches to creative experiences, liberating experiences, as sources for the shaping of hopeful and dynamic individuals, and their renewed views of the world.

*Source: PIM Teatro

“A Feira do Imaginário” conception

In such a peculiar fair one could find just about anything for “sail”: fears and magical potions; wishes and flying hats; dreamed chairs and talking books. There, one could encounter musicians, jugglers, acrobats, and monsters... a setting so familiar to most of these children, many of them descendents of gypsies, sons of shrewd merchants.

We thought of a fantasy fair because we wanted to create a truly new fair, made especially for us, completely thought out by each one of us... each artist work, according to their own set of methodologies and techniques, towards the realization of this artistic object, full of uncertainty and unknown...

We made it into a fair because in way it was pertinent to take that specific community's socio-cultural characteristics (gypsies and merchants) into perspective. That community's main professional occupation has to do with fair commercial activity.

We thought of a fair where children could sell their products, in an environment of freedom and creativity, reflecting some experiences well known to them – the fair, their preferred place of meeting and mingling, their place of initiation in terms of social, professional and family spheres...

One can observe in the texts written by these children their prospective will/wish of having financial profit out of their sale.

This was a matter of careful examination for we considered ways of preventing real money be used.

In the end, we chose to invent a sort of currency, which was not real money, and at the same time was not fictitious. So we created a rather real, useful, valuable currency made of glass bits and pieces, and silver nugget imitations, precious little things no child can resist.

The theatre structure we used for this project seemed to be really the most appropriate, as it was absent of most small constraints of a show production. It is not necessary to rehearse a fair!

A fair is the place of improvising, of strange unpredictable noises, words. It is a place of effective communication, face to face. It is a chaotic place of colour and contrast.

The creative processes

Each artist worked creativity/imagination with their groups (teacher and students), in concordance with their age, school level interests and skills, and according to the artist's own appetencies (artistic memory of past experiences, "pedagogical briefcase").

Also, the artist's own personal work, carried out in a non-school context, positively contaminates his work with the children. Let us look at an example: *"While a PIM theatre artist, I can identify two moments where my artistic practice was pulled to and by my work at school:*

- *during the re-showing of an object manipulation theatre performance: LUZ (LIGHT)(January/February 2005), I proposed children the use of this theatre technique in storytelling;*
- *during the creation process of a theatre show – BICHO PARA-LIVROS (EATING BOOKS STRANGE ANIMAL), we did a research on the concept of book/case, book/object, which might have been of some influence to children, who created a Magical Book stall."* Alexandra Espiridião

A process registered on a daily basis. Extracts.

*"1st year – we started up by building our **LITTLE BOX OF FEAR**. Just for ourselves. Where we put what made us feel afraid; what is huge, horrible and possess magical powers; what is strange; what is different, not like us; what we look up to because is so fantastic and terrifying – we created our own gallery of monsters. Then we decided to share these fears with other people, with really a lot of people. So we put them for sale.*

*4th year – the **CHAIR PROJECT** consisted on starting from the classical form of an object – in this case, a chair – and then deconstruct, break up, dismantle it in order to find new ways reassembling the object fixing it in a different form and in a different space.*

I was interested in working the mutable condition of an object in terms of its function or usability. And doing so through the alteration of the initial object (cutting off part, assembling new odd ones, etc...), and consequent attribution of a name, a new range and fruition possibilities.

The work was fast and intense. More importantly, it was well accepted by the children. For the first time with this class, I felt a real sense of fulfilment, as we managed to accomplish something, take the work from start to finish. They were truly motivated.

This experience was only possible thanks to the presence of one artist/teacher to every two students. Not only because their ability to focus on an activity it short, but because of the potential danger in the use of electric equipment. This might have been an important success factor, as it de children feel highly responsible for their actions. "That was for real!" It was a risk certainly worth taking."

Inês de Carvalho – theatre designer and artist (PIM Teatro)
MUS-E artist

"3rd and 4th years – I took the challenge of working towards story creation, with a globalization of artistic expressions (drama, movement and visual arts). For this purpose I used different devising resource, in various approaches. And took the children and some of the teachers with me, in a journey through a troubled see, from January to May.

1st PHASE: Devising stories from objects – from December to January

The worked focused on the creation of narratives and their drama improvisation (individual or pared creation) through object manipulation (puppet theatre), d through the construction of spaces and atmospheres.

2nd PHASE: Devising stories from the arc of storytelling – from February to March

*(the arc of storytelling contained playing cards with al elements selected from Évora's popular tradition – a work realized by PIM Teatro in 2001 for the theatre performance **Era uma vez uma velha-Once upon a time an old lady**). The Arc of Storytelling: animal characters / fantastic characters / human characters / magical objects / demands.*

Creation of narratives / story appropriation and exploration

The story, devised individually or in small groups (with 3 or 4 elements), was told to the whole class, and improvised by all the children, arranged in a circle (a central scenic space). The group who devised the story would start the story telling, whilst the rest of the children improvise it, step by step, simultaneously, using their corporal expression, objects and the space itself.

This narrative/active process contributes to the story's enrichment and evolution ailed description of spaces, better understanding of character relationships). The stories where then taken to the classroom and registered on paper with the teacher's assistance.

3rd PHASE: Dramaturgy + construction of character identification/impression sheets - April

Story exploration via drama led to a better analysis of the given dramatic circumstances (conflict-resolution), led to a more complete understanding of t characters and their intercourse, of the spaces where they happen. So, the next step was an approachin characters through the visual arts. This was achieved with the CHARACTER IMPRESSION SHEETS: the impression of a character is fixed for the first time, formally and emotionally, in a external supportive medium. It is a sort of impressionist photograph of an idea of a character that, by exteriorization, gains form. It is retained in a image. We can then take our time to examine it more carefully, think about it in terms of its physical characteristics, as an autonomous entity (external to the individual th gined it).

4th PHASE: Elaboration of bi-dimensional projects – May

The stories were then part of our world. We had played freely with them. It was time to make choices, keep just a selection. Take it and bring it to life, into ing that can be seen, touched, sold. The children selected one or two objects from the stories d planned its construction: made projects and drew plans, wrote small texts to go with it (explanatory briefings); made extensive lists of materials.

5th PHASE: Building the objects - June

bi-dimensional objects' construction and planning projects for the stalls.

Improvisation form objects.

Appropriation, sharing, creating and playing new stories.

Defining oral discourse (sayings, shouts and poems).

And...full working days in an untied room (where brushes were left unclean, odd materials and odder objects popping up here and there) inhabited by excited children and overwhelmed adults...

The objects happened, different, special, unique.

Themselves.

Personal. Like a toothbrush is.

Filled with life, story and powerful magic.

Common objects, looked before as vulgar trash, now unique phenomena. That anyone would want to possess."

**Alexandra Espiridião – Actress, director (PIM-Teatro)
MUS-E artist**

“A FEIRA DO IMAGINÁRIO” STALLS

Imagined and projected onto drawing plans, built by a of prisoners from EPRE (Évora Detention Centre), assembled by Inês de Carvalho, PIM Teatro theatre designer and MUS-E artist.

CLOTHING, SHOES AND ARMOURY STALL

“Come and look what we have for sale!”, magical swords and shields, a pair of shoes that can that you anywhere, enchanted clothing for your protection. Hung up or casually left around in drawers, under the gaze of happy salesmen. One after the other all the precious objects found their new owners, who purchased them in exchange for a strange valuable currency...

FRIGHTS AND MONSTERS STALL

Here, one could acquire big monsters and little monsters. The younger children (1st year's) thought out and built body extensions and applications that had the power to transform their big friends (4th year, older students) into spectacular creatures. In this stall, one could get incredible, frightful monsters for amazing prices. Monsters that anyone would dye to have in their homes.

MAGICAL BOOKS STALL

A book is an object that can make access to wider worlds, enabling us to live parts of other lives, observe and understand the things of the world with wider opened eyes. The children built book-boxes (objects inspired PIM Teatro's theatre performance Bicho Papa-Livros - *EATING BOOKS STRANGE ANIMAL* and the workshop Histórias Dentro de uma Caixa – *STORY'S INSIDE THE BOX*).

POTIONS STALL

Magic preserved in pots, little bottles, kept in small boxes

HAT STALL

If a hat is enough of an object to makes us feel and look like another person, a witch, a warrior or a gardener, then a magical hat can do so much more...

CHAIRS STALL

After our magical intervention, chair can become aeroplanes or carriages and by saying the right words, they can takes us where no travel agency dear imagine...

To “A Feira do Imaginário” came parents, other relatives and friends, people from our community a from further out. All surrendered to the fair, let be touched. All bought objects and addressed teachers and school workers with a friendly smile and words.

It was one of these rare moments where parents / relatives come together and feel really proud for their children's school achievements.

In the end we ere left with empty stalls and everyone something precious inside their pockets!

CONCLUSIONS /QUESTIONS

What we present here today is an experience, which reflects the maturing of an artistic-pedagogical proposal resulting of a partnership between PIM Teatro and MUS-E Project.

To conclude, we would like to make and approach to the problematic of the result. Public presentation of a performance (as a result of the project/research) is quite often very desired by the project participants and its outside community, as well as by the project financial sponsors. Quite frequently this constitutes an obstacle to the practices considered more effective to the relation artist/community.

It is too often observed that practical situations imposed by this kind of pressure, commonly felt by artists in the context of their professional environment, reveal as restraining factor to the children (part distribution – the fixed characters and theatre scenes, the repetitiveness of rehearsals). Something is sacrificed in the course of this process, sometimes the pleasure, sometimes the quality of the artistic product, sometimes even the process itself...

We aimed for the balance between the quality of the process and that of the result, standing for the idea that drama practice should be a source of pleasure. Promoting manifest artistic and aesthetic quality that reaffirm the group as a whole and that permit successful experiences.

Although we always take the challenge of maintaining a partnership to the last consequences, we consider that the best outcome of the presence of artists in the school context happens at the creative process level, which is conceived in research projects (for artists/practitioners) and of learning (for the children).

We hope that those moments/experiences be liberating, transforming, revealing, and that can lead to new forms of learning.

It was indeed a successful experience, that excited us and continues to do so, and that we want to share with others.

- is it theatre, performance?
- Art, Contemporary, Multi and Interdisciplinary, certainly!
- May we name it children's art?

We would like to believe that there was, clearly, **intention** in the fact that children want to tell their stories, share their world with others. And it is clear that these stories bear the weight of their liveable experience, becoming a creative, expressive communication.

We consider that there was, in fact, a creative, guided, evolutionary, individual and collective, interdisciplinary process.

There was creation, appropriation, reflection, projection, realization and, finally, communication.

“A Feira do Imaginário” is the result of a dreamed that had the opportunity to come to life. And did.

Surpassing all expectations.

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