



KIDS' GUERNICA - International Children's Peace Mural Project (Greece)

Summary

The KIDS' GUERNICA International Children's Peace Mural Project was inspired by the famous Spanish artist, Pablo Picasso who painted "Guernica" out of protest against the brutal bombing of the town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. The main purpose of the KIDS' GUERNICA project is to promote peace consciousness among people in the world through paintings realised on huge canvases (of the same size as Picasso's Guernica 3.5 x 7.8m). These paintings are created by children, youth and adults in different places around the world. Through these paintings, children convey powerful messages of peace with their creativity and imagination.

The project

One of the elements leading to war is the lack of dialogue and mediation between different parties. Children need to develop, from an early age, notions of peace and dialogue. KIDS' GUERNICA facilitates this by letting children, young people and adults enter a collaborative learning process by painting a peace mural on a canvas. Through these artistic activities, the project initiates bottom-up peace processes in areas of conflict and/or war to prevent the abuse of children and promote intercultural dialogue. The main target group is composed by children suffering the consequences of war, but it also includes children with special needs (the Blind Boys of Kolkata), youth (particularly those not integrated into the local community as in Martinique) and adults.

Sector(s) covered

Main Sector

Society: conflict resolutions and mediation, peace building.

Other Sectors

Arts and Creative Industry

Approach

KIDS' GUERNICA project was initiated by ART JAPAN NETWORK in 1995, on the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II. KIDS' GUERNICA includes both workshops and exhibitions organised all over the world. In Greece POIEIN KAI PRATTEIN, a non-profit making organisation, organised a Kids' Guernica exhibition in Kastelli, Crete (April 2006), in Chios (May 2007) and Athens (October 2007).

The practical approach of the project is explained by Thomas Economacos, arts' coordinator of POIEIN KAI PRATTEIN as follows: "on a piece of paper write some words and/or sentences about peace. Transform these ideas into pictures, give shapes and colours to them, and continue with some drawings, even sketches by using techniques like collages, prints, different materials, mix media, photos. Finally, prepare to work in a group by transferring all these individual pieces into a final composition".

It is not easy for artists to fill such a big canvas but children have shown great talents. They adapt very easily to the space provided. On such a huge canvas they can express all their feelings linked to conflicts and wars they have either experienced or heard about. Once the paintings are completed, Kids' Guernica organises exhibitions around the world to exhibit the murals in public.

In 2006, the Greek NGO POIEIN KAI PRATTEIN ("to create and to do") organised, on behalf of Kids' Guernica International, an exhibition of 15 paintings in collaboration with the mayor of Kastelli, Crete. It involved the local schools, women's association, the local development agency and the church.



In 2007, the kids' Guernica exhibition in Chios was supported by the prefecture and realised in collaboration with the island's municipality. The exhibition consisted of 18 peace murals from Japan, India, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, USA, Greece, New Zealand, Nepal and Lebanon along with Peace Posters from the UK. The paintings were described by the responsible coordinators. The exhibition concentrated around the Peace Murals brought from Japan, in particular the one from Nagasaki called 'Re-Constructing the City after the Atomic Bomb'. The 'Blind Boys' mural created by children in Kolkata (India) and a special peace mural from Lebanon called "Enough. We want to live" also received a lot of attention.

The programme in Chios also included various activities involving children, teachers and parents. A delegation of 30 Japanese pupils, parents and students of an art college, visited a primary school and exchanged experiences on art education. An 'Education for Peace' event and "Peace Workshops" were also organised. During the workshops, a video entitled "living in different cultural worlds" was shown to the audience. The workshops also contained peace games for children, dances and a special discussion about 'art and religion'.

Finally, a group of children from Chios started a new Peace Mural, which was then completed together with children from Izmir in Turkey in September 2007. The mural was dedicated "to cultural bridges based on friendships and understanding". It underlined that intercultural dialogue between the Greek and Turkish cultures is possible. The children and youth involved stated that, thanks to this activity, they discovered that painting can be a common language even when the two sides do not share the same language.

The Chios-Izmir peace mural, together with other murals were then showed at a Kids' Guernica exhibition organised in conjunction with the ECCM (European Network of Cultural Capitals and Months) Symposium 'Productivity of Culture' held in Athens in October 2007.

Element of innovation – the process

KIDS' GUERNICA is an approach combining informal art education and peace-building. Some of the innovative pedagogical elements used are: finding solutions with non-violent methods / imaginative dialogues / listening to what children and youth have to say / friendships development / promoting intercultural learning and intercultural dialogue.

KIDS' GUERNICA is not an individual art work but a collaborative process. In each workshop, children work together and paint peace images on a huge canvas. This process requires much time and patience. They learn the importance of collaboration by integrating the proposals and works of art of others into the painting. In this way the KIDS' GUERNICA is a symbol of collaboration: working together towards a more peaceful world.

Key successes

(outcomes, results, impacts)

Since 1995 more than 10,000 children from different nationalities, cultures and religions have participated in the KIDS' GUERNICA workshops and countless people saw the children's wonderful paintings expressing their strong wish for peace through very different images. Overall 250 peace murals have been produced around the world. KIDS' GUERNICA has set up an international network based on friendship and collaboration starting a bottom-up democratic process. The network is based on the collaboration between children, co-ordinators, arts educators, and of the community at large.



KIDS' GUERNICA has produced as well videos (one of which can be seen on youtube) while documentations to complement the peace murals can be viewed on the websites www.kids-guernica.org and www.poieinkaiprattein.org/kids-guernica/. They show how children can respond through their imagination when confronted by conflicts and wars.

Transferability and sustainability

Sustainability is guaranteed through the support of people and organisations involved in the project.

Next year, a Kids' Guernica Exhibition within the Florida State University in Tallahassee will be organised. Furthermore, an international Kids' Guernica festival shall take place in August 2010 in Ubud, Bali. A Kids' Guernica USA NGO has been set up in Chicago to prevent violence between children and youth within poor city areas in the US. Finally, a proposal has been made to include Kids Guernica's activities into the children and youth program organised by the Flemish government as part of Belgium's EU Presidency in 2010.

Special Highlights

KIDS' GUERNICA is an international project involving children living in conflict or war areas. Through workshops, children work together and paint their images of peace on a huge canvas. This process requires much time and patience. Thanks to the project, the children can learn the importance of collaboration throughout the whole process of painting. In this way KIDS' GUERNICA is a bottom up democratic process involving children, youth, adults and the whole community. As a collaborative work process, it allows children to work together towards a more peaceful world. The participant children convey powerful messages of peace with their creativity and imagination.

Key characteristics

General purpose of the practice	Free the imagination to develop empathy for others and learn to work together in order to advance a bottom up peace process
Target group	Children, youth and adults but also parties in conflict and at war
Type of learning	Informal
Level of implementation	Local/National/International
Funding	Public, Sponsorship
Time frame	On-going
Leading organisations	International Kids'Guernica Committee in Japan: Takuya Kaneda (co-ordinator) Poiein kai Prattein: Hatto Fischer (Co-ordinator)



Further information

Website of the project

www.poeinkaiprattein.org/kids-guernica

www.kids-guernica.org

Contact details

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Additional Information

Promotional video of Kids' Guernica on youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUEzEEqT92k>

Kids' Guernica international www.kids-guernica.org

Poiein Kai Prattein www.poeinkaiprattein.org/kids-guernica

ECCM Symposium 'Productivity of Culture' which entailed a Kids' Guernica exhibition

www.productivityofculture.org