

PAINTING FOR CHANGE

a CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION RESOURCE
about mural painting, public art, citizenship and
partnership



background to project

Mayfield Community Arts Centre, Newbury House has been working for a number of years on delivering a Global Citizenship Programme in both formal and non-formal educational settings.

We develop and use innovative creative processes that facilitate the learning methods that are foundational to development education such as experiential, participatory and reflective learning. Our links with dynamic and forward-thinking, creative, social organisations in Latin America have given us drive and passion for our work and inspiration for how we can do it better and in partnership.

In Jan 2007, with support from Irish Aid, Trocaire and the European Youth in Action Programme, we had the opportunity to travel with 6 young people and 6 youth workers to learn about the role of mural painting in global citizenship under the guidance of facilitators and young representatives from *Funarte*. This organisation was born out of the long history of mural artists, who used their talents during the revolution to promote the rights of the people of Nicaragua.

The young people that participated represented different youth groups, mostly from the Mayfield area, who we were keen on integrating global citizenship and creative processes into their work. The young people traveled to Nicaragua for 10 days on the understanding that they would bring back their knowledge and experience to share with their peers. This was based on the model of *Funarte's* 'representantes'; young people who share their skills and knowledge to help other young people have a voice. They came back and worked with their groups to paint murals on the theme of peace, a theme chosen by the young people themselves.

using this RESOURCE

This resource tells the story of the journey of our young people, what they learned through their training and how they shared their newly acquired skills. It is interspersed with facts and background information on mural painting in Nicaragua, on our partner organisation *Funarte* and it also explains the steps to painting a mural.

We hope you will be inspired to paint a mural....but if you don't have that opportunity the activities in the resource can be used on their own to explore the theme of global citizenship.

The resource also includes photo images to help you relate the story to your group and worksheets to help the young people to engage with the themes.

fact file.....

Nicaragua

Nicaragua is situated in Central America and borders Honduras in the north and Costa Rica in the south. The country has six million inhabitants and most of its economy depends on agriculture. It is rising in popularity as a tourist destination, the main attractions being the beautiful beaches, scenic routes, the architecture of cities such as León and Granada and most recently, ecotourism, particularly in Northern Nicaragua.

The country has had difficult periods in its history, but the strength and determination of its people has helped to overcome these. The Somoza dictatorship reigned from 1936 - 1979, holding power and wealth while many people lived in extreme poverty.

A revolutionary movement known as the Sandinistas managed to overthrow the dictatorship. However the United States of America illegally financed a movement called the Contras to fight against the Sandinistas causing many lives to be lost and initiating an economic blockade that caused further hardship and poverty.

MURALS in Nicaragua

With this background, murals became an important part of life in Nicaragua as people used them to express opinions and beliefs. They were used as tools to educate the public about their rights, especially in relation to issues like health and education.

WORKSHEET 1

What messages are these murals trying to communicate?

Funarte

The artists who painted during the revolution to promote rights to education and literacy, decided to train young people in mural painting so that they could express their opinions and have a voice. This was the start of the Esteli Children's Workshops in 1993, later to be known as *Funarte*, an arts organisation which not only paints murals with children around rights issues but also works in prisons, pre-schools and with parents and community leaders.

Many children in the city are involved in weekly workshops where they learn about their rights, whilst learning painting techniques to enable them to share their ideas with the public. They have been commissioned to paint murals on public buildings all over Esteli. With over 140 murals painted to date, the city has officially been declared... "Esteli-City of Murals"

how to DEVELOP a MURAL idea

Aminta explained to us about how they come up with ideas for their murals...

"We explore legends and stories from our culture. We use dance and sculpture, discussions and drama to come up with ideas. The themes that are very important for me are the rights of children, the environment and the culture's of different towns. When we worked on our mural we used drama as a method to explore legends and values from our culture."

photo image 1 Using drama to come up with an idea for the figures in a mural

In our workshops in Mayfield we also use drama and photography to explore themes. Often our murals are about being active and trying to make a change, so we think of issues that are important to us locally and also on a global level.

We make a short drama to represent the problem or the issue. Then we try to turn it around and think about positive actions we can take to make a difference. Taking photos of the process helps us find images that we can use in our murals.

and now into into action...

Once you have a general idea of the issue that you want to explore, split your group into small groups, ideally of 4 or 5. In each group one person is appointed as 'sculptor' and the others as 'clay'. It is the sculptor's role to move the other people into position, like a photo-still, representing the problem or the issue to be explored.

This stage is used to find and name the problem.

Have each group present their photo-still while the others are invited to describe what they see, what emotions connect to the image and the individuals involved and what the root of the problem might be.

The next stage of the process is to move towards positive images... Everyone is invited, one by one, to become the 'sculptor' and to change the scenario to their vision of how things should be. Make sure that different people have the chance to contribute to this process.

Look at the new image.

Invite the young people to describe what they see.

What might the characters involved be feeling?

What has changed?

Invite the young people to brainstorm what processes and actions were required to effect the desired change.

Depending on the time available, all the different groups can present their original photo-stills to follow the same processes.

A camera at hand during this activity will give you a wealth of source images for your mural design.

from ideas to design

There are many ways to come up with ideas for the mural; using stories, painting or drawing. The main thing is that everyone in the group has the opportunity to express themselves and that you have a lot of ideas on paper to work from.

At this stage you will need to know your wall and have measured it.

Draw it to scale noting any features eg. doors, windows etc.

A scale of 1:10 is recommended, for example if your wall is 3 metres by 8 metres draw your wall 30 cms by 80cms.

Divide into small groups and give each group a photocopy of the scale drawing of the wall.

Each group should start by drawing the 'harmonic lines' in pale colours, as a basis for the design (see worksheet). These lines are just a background to help position the elements of the mural.

The small group should then work on creating their own design including as many ideas as possible from the whole group.

Look at everyone's design together and see if you can pull all of the ideas into one final design with the consensus of the whole group.

It's not possible to say everything on one mural but make sure that the mural contains the ideas the group feel most strongly about.

The final design should be coloured with coloured pencils or watercolours. A grid should then be drawn over the design. If you are using a scale of 1:10 draw your grid with lines 3cms apart.

You will then need to number each square of the grid and make several colour copies of your final design.

WORKSHEET 2 Stages of a design

from design to wall

To prepare the wall make sure it has a smooth finish primed with acrylic paint. Draw a grid on it the same as on your design only scaled up, with lines 30cms apart and the corresponding numbers to your design.

When your grid is ready you can begin to transfer your design to the wall using orange or sepia coloured chalk, by using the grid to scale up your drawing from the design to the wall.

When the drawing is complete you are ready to paint.

You will need:

Buckets of water, a range of brush sizes, rags, palletes, acrylic paint in the 3 primary colours and black and white. It is really important that the primary colours are pure base colour. If they are you can mix any colour you want!

If the wall is high you'll need step-ladders or a small scaffold.

Paint the mural by painting in layers of washes of colour. Start with the background and then move onto the objects and figures.

Remember to start with washes of colour using big brushes and add the details later!

sharing what WE LEARNED

Before we left Nicaragua we talked to our new friends about a theme that we could bring home and share with our youth groups here. We decided on the theme of peace because we felt it was important within our own communities and that we could all identify with it. It is also an important theme within a global context of how we get along together. We talked about the right that children and young people have to live in a peaceful environment and then painted our murals on large canvases so that they could be displayed in the city. Here are some activities that we used with our peers to explore the theme of peace before creating our mural

and now into into action...

To explore personal peace...

Ask the group to reflect on things, people or places that make them feel at peace.

Each person makes a 'Peace Globe' using layers of paper mache over a blown-up balloon, which has been covered in vaseline to stop the paper mache from sticking. Leave to dry then pop the balloon and paint the globe white. Use paint, pastels and collage to add on all the things that you feel are important to your personal peace.

To explore peace in our communities...

Ask the young people to identify things that cause conflict in their community...Brainstorm and list them out.

The big issue we identified was bullying and we used a game called 'Culture Club' to explore feelings of exclusion and conflict.

Divide into groups of no more than 6. Each group make up their own 'culture'; ways of saying hello, goodbye, walking, etc. Ask all the groups to move around the space greeting each other in their new 'culture'. Take one person from each group while this is going on and swap them into other groups, leave there for a minute or two and then put them back in their own groups.

Stop the game and reflect with questions such as, "How did it feel to enter a new group?", "Were they welcoming?", "What did you find difficult?" "How was it to have a new person join your group?"

To explore global peace...

Look at examples of murals from Northern Ireland and Nicaragua. In small groups identify the negative images in them and draw a 'route to peace' on a large sheet of paper showing how the negative images could be transformed to show something positive.

photo image 3

You can see our murals on display. We chose a place that was very public and it was during a festival so lots of people got to see them.

WORKSHEET 3

Use the worksheets to think about what we were trying to express through our murals.

Publicising your mural

Painting a mural is all about communicating a message but who do you want to communicate the message to?

If you are working about children's rights, it's important that children see your mural so they can be active in demanding their rights, but it is also really important that people who make decisions about issues that affect children and young people hear your message too. When we painted our mural in Nicaragua there were representatives of the local government there. It was important for us that they could see us working together in solidarity with the Nicaraguan young people. Sometimes people in positions of power can be persuaded to come if they have a role ...like making a speech. If you are not sure that their message will match yours...maybe ask them to cut a ribbon!!! The main thing is that they listen to your message.

photo images 4 & 5

Launching the mural

Launching the mural gives you a chance to celebrate your hard work...but it is also a big opportunity to say something using your voice, drama or music. Think about what would keep people's attention and help them remember what it is that you want to communicate. It's an important cultural event... so make it as cultural and as much fun as you can!

And now into into action...

If you have completed a mural you will need to think about doing these last steps for real...but it is also a useful exercise.

If you are still thinking about the process, select a topic that you would be interested in painting a mural about and interested in communicating a message about.

Make a mailing list of who you would like to invite.

Using a postcard size piece of card, design an invitation to the launch of your mural.

You could also try working on a poster design.

What other types of publicity could you do?

Could you use texting or the internet?

funded by Irish Aid, Trocaire and LEARGAS

Mayfield Community Arts Centre, Newbury House, www.mayfieldarts.org

what is a REPRESENTANTE?

In *Funarte*, young people are supported in their development to become active citizens who can make a difference in their communities. Each 'barrio' (neighbourhood) where *Funarte* workshops take place, vote every year for a 'representante' (representative). Here's an explanation from one of the representantes about their role...

photo image 2

Jessica from Mayfield with Elyin from *Funarte*

"My name is Elyin... I am a respresentante and I am 13, Being a representante means that I respect the other young people and I respect their work. I understand the needs of the others and listen to their opinions.

I also know about the themes we discuss, about the right's of children, and about the environment.

I also know a lot about my history and culture.

I really like to share my knowledge with others and I like to show others how to paint."

TRAINING FOR THE JOB

The representantes meet as a group every week to explore important themes and to develop their creative and communication skills.

time FOR RESEARCH

Can you find out any information about young people being involved in representing the voices of other young people in your own country?

Can you think of any way that you could be involved?

Hint... If you live in Europe perhaps you could explore the European 'Youth in Action' Programme. They fund youth initiatives and youth democracy projects. If you can't find something happening ...maybe you need to make something happen! The projects can include training as well as activites. Follow this link:

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/yia/index_en.html

If you live outside of Europe maybe there are other funding opportunities for this type of initiative.



photo image 5

Juanita and Manaces perform a traditional Guatemalan dance at the launch of the mural



photo image 1

Using drama to explore themes and images



photo image 2

Jessica from Mayfield with Elyin
from Funarte



photo image 3

Our murals on display to the public



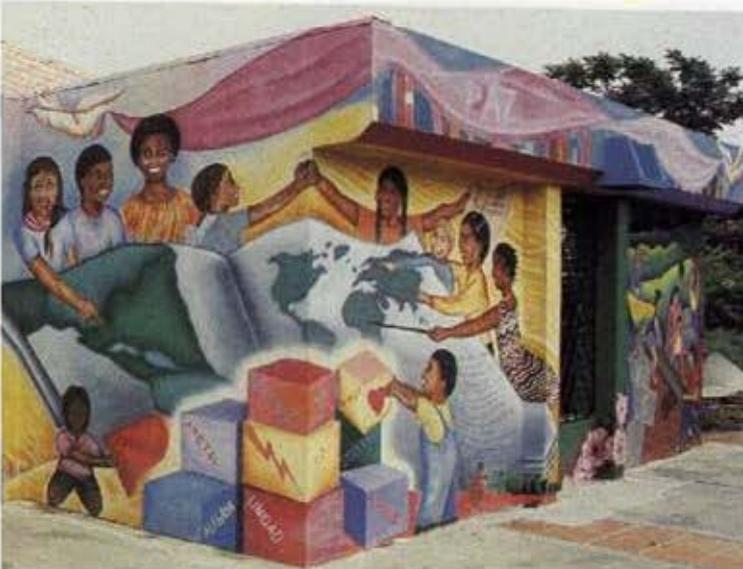
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photo image 4

Janice working on painting a banner for publicity

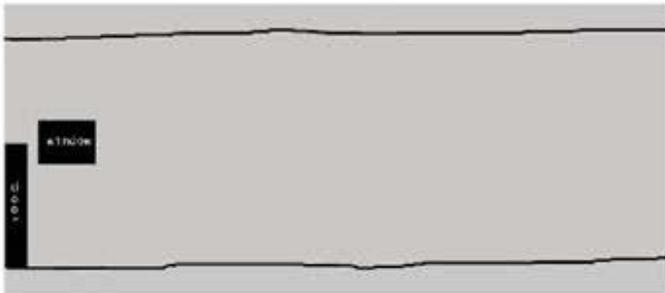
What messages do you think these murals are trying to communicate?



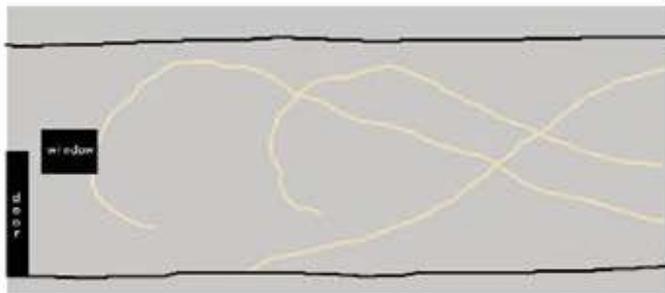




Stages of a design



Make a scale drawing of your wall e.g. if the wall is 3m x 8m then make your drawing 30cm x 80cm. Make sure you draw in any features such as windows or doors.



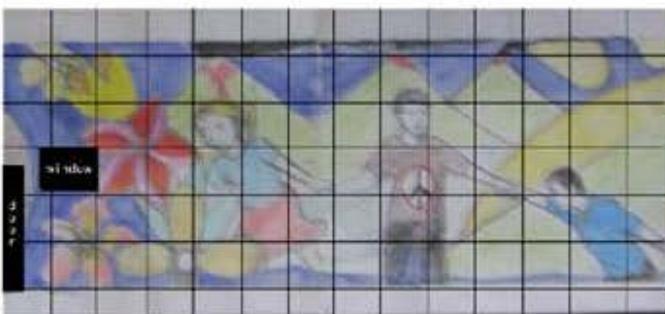
Draw in the 'harmonic lines' in a pale colour. These are lines which flow through the design and will help you to decide where to position important elements of the mural.



Next, draw in the figures and all the other details of the mural. Make several copies when you are finished so that you have some spare, which you can use to try out different colour schemes.



Once you are happy with the overall design of your mural, draw a grid over the whole thing, with lines 3cms apart if you are using a scale of 1:10. This will help you transfer your design onto the wall.



Lastly you will need to colour the design so that when you are painting on the wall everyone will know which colour to paint where. You can work in small groups on different copies and then decide on one that you all like. Have several copies made of this for when you begin painting the wall.

