Art, education, and the bomb: Reflections on an international children's peace mural project

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Abstract
As a community muralist (T. Anderson, 1985) and contextualist I believe that the purpose of art is communication from one human being to another about things that count (R. Anderson, 1990; Dissanayake, 1988; Lippard, 1990). This does not mean that we disregard the aesthetic component—the “wonder”—in an artwork. Rather, it implies that the aesthetic serves an extrinsic function beyond its supposed raison d'être. That function, which is usually both prosaic and symbolic, is to serve as a marker that in some way defines the people who make, use, and view artworks or aesthetically framed objects (R. Anderson, 1990). Art is something people do to give them a sense of themselves, both as a result of the product and the process. Thus, we may use artworks as vehicles for understanding human nature through their displayed visual qualities, the forming process, and their social context (T. Anderson, 1995). This paper follows from that premise. I will consider the reasons for the peace mural project, the processes involved, and the murals’ compositions and stylistic qualities as manifestations and means of initial ingress toward understanding the cultures and people from which they arise. My belief is that peace rests on intercultural understanding and one way to approach such understanding is through art.

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