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**Art to Grow**

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Art created for children must start from a deep understanding of the intended audience: an audience in constant development, rapidly moving through different stages of cognitive, emotional, and sensory development. It's not just about entertaining or simplifying the world to make it accessible, but about offering tools for interpreting it, enriching sensitivity, and opening doors to imagination and thought. Creating for children, therefore, implies a huge responsibility.

It's essential to avoid reductionist views that view art for children as a simple educational vehicle, as a means of transmitting explicit content, often cloaked in a moralizing or manipulative tone. Art aimed at children should instill values, but with subtlety and respect, with symbolic richness and emotional exploration... not with sermons or dogmas.

Children's abilities are often underrated, treating them as a minor, limited audience who can only understand the obvious or the predictable. This condescending view is counterproductive. Experience has shown that children are capable of processing surprising levels of complexity, provided the approach is honest and sensitive. Art can help awaken in them questions, concerns, and emotions that even adults cannot put into words.

Of course, it would be useful to establish segments in children's artistic creation, taking into account the different stages of development. What stimulates a three-year-old will not be the same as what challenges an eight-year-old. However, there are also works that manage to transcend these age groups and engage with a broad spectrum, appealing to universal codes and multiple layers of meaning.

There should be no taboo subjects when it comes to creating for children. What matters is not so much the subject matter as the approach. Difficult or complex issues—such as death, loss, inequality, fear, love—can and even should be addressed, as long as it's done with the sensitivity required by these ages. Art has the ability to open spaces for these necessary dialogues, helping children understand and integrate fundamental experiences.

It's also necessary to distinguish between children's art and art for children. The former can include expressions

created by children themselves—valuable due to their spontaneity and their formative process; the latter, on the other hand, implies professional production intended for a child audience. This distinction is important to avoid confusing levels of demand or objectives.

From an early age, art can and should contribute to developing critical thinking, a perspective that learns to prioritize, to distinguish the authentic from the superficial, the beautiful from the empty. It's not about imposing tastes or categories, but rather fostering an openness that allows for a greater and more profound enjoyment of the symbolic world.

A playful approach—though not banal—can be a particularly fertile path. Play is one of the natural forms of learning in childhood, and art that incorporates play is not only more accessible but also more effective in its formative capacity. Playing with languages, with the senses, with symbols, can be a platform for a deeper understanding of art and life.

Art for children is no lesser art. It demands special sensitivity, a deep understanding of child development, and a genuine vocation for dialogue with a demanding, open, and surprising audience. Creating for children is investing in the future; it's sowing roots of beauty, meaning, and freedom.

### **A good recent example**

The recently ended edition of the Happy Heart International Meeting, held in Havana, reaffirmed its commitment to a full art form, committed to the formation of values. Far from conceiving art as mere entertainment or educational embellishment, the event was projected as a space for spiritual and ethical growth, where sensitivity, respect, and imagination stand as essential pillars. Through performances, workshops, and spaces for exchange, the idea that children deserve challenging and enriching cultural offerings was consolidated.

One of the successes of the meeting was its inclusive approach. Music, theater, literature, dance, visual arts, and oral storytelling were articulated in a coherent and comprehensive proposal, which engaged with the world of children through diverse artistic languages. This comprehensive approach allowed not only for a playful and participatory experience, but also for the multiplication of meanings, reinforcing the vision of an art that does not divide, but rather summons the entire being in formation.

The humanistic vocation of Corazón Feliz was evident in every activity: in the respectful view of children as subjects of rights, in the promotion of inclusion, in the encouragement of critical reflection from an early age. In a context where creation for children is often trivialized, the gathering established itself as a serious and loving platform for the defense of an art that educates, dignifies, and transforms.

**Translated by Amikal Labañino / CubaSi Translation Staff**