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CELEIDA TOSTES: CLAY IN ITS SHAPES THROUGH THE CHILD'S EYE: TEACHING PRACTICE IN NON - FORMAL SPACES

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Abstract: This article addresses issues related to the creative process with clay, in an experience in non-formal education, with children aged 02 to 10 years old. Discusses the importance of working with clay with children. Therefore, the objective is to present and understand the plastic possibilities with clay. As a reference to enhance the activities, we used the plastic artist and ceramist Celeida Tostes. As a methodology, we used the qualitative approach. The results obtained from the process were: the development of fine motor coordination, the children's disinhibition through the clay modeling process, the sharpening of the senses, mainly touch and vision, in addition to perception and psychomotricity.

Keywords: clay, non-formal space, education, art.

INTRODUCTION

About education and its different ways of happening, we highlight that in the 18th century Baron de Montesquieu stated that we receive three forms of education: that of our parents, that of our teachers and that of the world. In this speech, he classifies the amount of educational processes we receive in our lives. Education is a complex phenomenon that is always present in human development. Both in the family and at school, but also in different places: on the street, on TV, on the internet, and even in spaces that are not didactic, such as politics, journalism, with artists, co-workers, friends, neighbors and diverse spaces.

Ghanem and Trilha (2017), point out that the school was and is functional in certain societies; however, what is really essential to society is education. The school is only one of its forms, not the exclusive one. Thus, the effects of schooling on the individual cannot be seen as separate from interaction with the world. On several occasions, phenomena

occurring outside of school are transposed into formal education. In this sense, there is a call for the existence of other educational spaces besides the school; not that they are opposed to school, but parallel to it. Despite the emergence of the latter in the 60s and 70s, it was in the 80s and 90s (due to a set of political, economic and social factors) that social education gained greater relevance in Brazil. There is an increasingly systematic participation of children and young people in activities carried out in non-school educational spaces, which has been demanding study and systematization of the educational processes developed in such environments, as well as the expansion of the notion of educational space.

The origin of the popularity of the use of informal or non-formal adjectives dates back to the end of the 1960s, with the publication of the work of P.H Coombs *The World educational crisis* (1968). It emphasized above all the need to develop educational means different from those conventionally schooled. In this book these means have been labeled informal and non-formal. Many of these spaces organize their activities around making and enjoying Art. Which have been registering positive results both with regard to the development of skills and abilities, as well as social interaction and the relationship with the elements of culture (social bond).

A large number of spaces that offered Arts in the dance, music and theater segments were detected. And a minority of spaces that offered the community specific teaching of Visual Arts, on the grounds that there was often a lack of professionals to meet the demand. According to Livia (2008, p.122), when funding agencies invest in a space, they want to use their resources in activities that generate public presentations in a short period of time. That is why it is easier to receive financial support and the preference for activities involving bands, dance, theater

or circus.

The experience shown in this chapter took place in the context of non-formal education, in creative processes with children and the organic clay material.

METHODOLOGY

The main objective was to expand the aesthetic and artistic knowledge of the children. The approach used in this research was of a qualitative nature, as it includes changes in the respective social fields. Thus, the researcher manages to develop his theories through the empirical knowledge obtained in the research space, that is, his insertion in the study environment, in this case, non-formal education with clay. In this context, it allows understanding the processes that contribute to the modification of social phenomena that permeate this place (FLICK, 2009, p. 21). Thus, in order to understand the possibilities in non-formal education, it was necessary to go in loco, in the research space and investigate the phenomena that occur through this interaction between children and clay.

ABOUT CELEIDA TOSTES

The artist chosen to enhance the workshops with children is Celeida Tostes, who was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1929 and died in 1995. According to her biography consulted on the website ``Oficina de Arte`` (2022), she was a teacher and sculptor, graduated from ``Escola Nacional de Belas Artes`` (Enba), in 1955. After winning a scholarship at the University of Southern California, where he specialized in industrial ceramic techniques, between 1958 and 1959. In 1975, he studied at the School of Arts at Cardiff College, in Wales. In 1980, she taught utilitarian ceramics courses at the Feminine Penitentiary in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais. Between 1980 and 1995, she coordinated the Project Formation of Utilitarian Ceramics Centers in communities

on the urban periphery of ``Morro do Chapéu Mangueira``, in Rio de Janeiro.

The artist chose clay as the raw material for her work. Her poetics went beyond the functionality of ceramics, making it a form of experimental exercise in her works on the strength and fragility of the female body, sexuality, fertility, motherhood, birth and death; as we can see in the series of *Venus, of Eggs, of Tools or of Balls*. In the work: ``Rito de Passagem``, in which the artist wraps herself in clay inside an amphora, then comes out as if she were being given birth in this symbolic birth, and is reborn. In the context of contemporary art, it deterritorialized the use of ceramics as a language to present other attitudes towards clay, enabling artists to overcome the limitations and prejudices of art and technique dualism to insert artistic practices that repositioned ceramic making. Costa (2003) says about the artist:

When you want to understand life – and art – through the eyes and heart of Celeida Tostes, collect the earth in the palm of your hand and slowly let it slip through your fingers. You will then discover that life is the action of the spirit, which drives this experience, and of the body, which is this dust that leaves your hand, dances in the air and returns to the ground. As for art, art is the wind [...] (COSTA, 2003, p.33).

According to Hennig (2015), Celeida said that our memory has a deep relationship with clay, a deep bond with this important organic material of the earth. Thus, this organic matter would communicate to the organic that exists in us: an atavistic memory, which is timeless and without linearity, which transmits a tradition or heritage. Memory of our ancestry when we come into contact with the clay that takes us to the intimate and sensory in union with the historical and cultural spaces of our existence. A fact that made the anthropologist Henri Stahl nickname her ``Celeida do barro`` in the 21st. International Biennial of

São Paulo. Thus, clay for her allowed different approaches: the erudite and the popular, such as the appreciation of this material and its belonging to popular culture. With clay, the artist went further, and she used it so much, giving visibility both in popular culture and in contemporary art. The artist treated clay as a noble material, refined with important poetic expressiveness. In this sense, the ceramist attributed a new artistic treatment previously conferred to the material that was usually seen as poor, which served only as an auxiliary material in modeling and finishing.

CREATIVE PROCESS WITH CHILDREN AND CLAY

Clay is a natural, earthy, fine-grained material, apparently inflexible and uniform. It is the result of an age-old action in nature and results from the decomposition of rocks and the breaking of stones that dissolved in water and again crystallized into particles. There are a lot of different types of clay, each one has a different composition. This material can be conceptualized as any earth mixed with water, while clay has the ability to be modeled, to a greater or lesser extent.

When the child handles the clay, his fine motor coordination is enhanced, in addition to experiencing issues of forces and weights with the exercise of the act of modeling. This way, clay is a material easily accessible in nature, being malleable when moistened, becoming a mass. This mass allows tactile exploration for the construction of shapes, in addition to developing creativity and concentration.

The main material used in this workshop was clay, which is easily accessible in many lands, streets or backyards. It was explained to the children that when clay is used to make plates, cups or other objects, it undergoes a treatment to become clay. And that this material has been present in human life for thousands of years. As a natural element, clay

has always been present in human life since ancient civilizations, becoming a utilitarian factor and artistic expression.

These workshops were carried out with 10 children aged between 02 and 11 years old, as part of the Practical Teaching Component I - Non-Formal Space of the Degree in Visual Arts at `` Universidade Federal do Oeste da Bahia``. This research took place in the garage of a residence in the city of Cocos, a city located in the west of the state of Bahia, 878 km away from the capital Salvador. The children present at the site were authorized by their parents or guardians, who were aware of the activities and were also warned about which material would be used and which could get dirty.

In the first meeting, there was a workshop in which several children were introduced to clay and its peculiarities. It was briefly explained in simple language for them to understand how the workshops and objectives would take place. Then, the artist Celeida Tostes and her works were presented so that the children could understand better. As per figure 01.



Figure 01, intern presents video by artist Celeida Tostes. Authors' collection

Something to add is that when the artist's works were shown, there was an exchange with the children, listening to what they would have to say about what they were seeing, seeking to understand what they thought about the artist. At times, they laughed because of some works,

and were even surprised to see Celeida Tostes bathed in clay in one of her interventions, which she mentions: “I felt the immense need to mix with my work material. Feeling the clay in my body, being part of it, being inside it.”



Figure 02: “Rite of Passage”, Celeida Tostes, performance, 1979. Frame from the video “The Reliquary of Celeida Tostes”. Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkDzC5S0W4Q>

In the third meeting, clay was presented to the children, forms of modeling being explained and also, the reason for these processes. From then on, he was guided and left them at ease to build pieces based on their worldviews. At first, there was resistance from some children because they had never dealt with such material, fear of getting dirty, in addition to shyness in the creative process; others were excited, doing whatever came to mind, from a ball, a head, a cow or a loaf of bread.

From these creations, dialogue was held with each one, giving the opportunity to hear them about what they were doing. In the conversations, a certain fear of creating something was verified, fear of others not liking it or of being ugly, among other adjectives used by them, that is, the fear of rejection. After this free process of creation, they were asked to make observation sculptures, both of Celeida’s works and objects close to them. At that moment, the fact that the intern did work

with them encouraged them a lot. Some parts broke and had to be redone, as seen in Figure 03.



Figure 03, boy modeling the clay, authors’ collection.

Images of previously selected works by Celeida were shared, so that they could choose the one that most identified with them, and thus initiate other creative processes. Like them, the intern chose a work that inspired her when she saw Celeida’s intervention, when she rubs clay all over her body. In this context, a face was created, a fact that inspired a girl, who decided to follow the same idea. Follow the image of the work, in figure 04.



Figure 04, girl modeling a face, authors' collection.



Figure 05, children modeling clay, authors' collection.



Figure 06, Girl modeling a pot, authors' collection

After the end of the work with the children and with the processes completed, everyone cleaned themselves and the environment, then sat down to reflect on their experiences in the workshop.

Some children were ashamed to express what they thought; others said how much they “loved” participating. Something that surprised a lot was the statement of a boy: “when I saw you opening that dough, I wanted to leave, it looked disgusting, but after I saw you handling it, I really liked it.” This was something that surprised the intern a lot, making her realize how much a teacher can enhance and change a child’s world view. Other children said they would like to repeat the lesson on other days; others bothered to take their pieces home. Let’s see in figures 05, 06 and 07.



Figure 07, child in the modeling process, authors' collection.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conclusion, we noticed in the children the surprises when seeing the performance of the artist Celeida Tostes, in which she rubs clay all over her body, in addition to being scared, and even thinking she was “crazy”. In view of the entire report, we can conclude that non-formal education is focused on issues that concern the participants' daily lives. The main objective of this educational current is to train citizens capable of solving everyday problems, developing skills, organizing themselves collectively, improving their understanding of the world around them and critically reading the information they receive. This is done by valuing cultural elements that already exist in the community, sometimes mixed with new elements introduced by educators, and through experience in collective actions, often organized along thematic axes, as was the case with workshops with clay. The first idea was to see how the children would act when they had to work with such material. We understand that they are children, and they are still in the process of development. For this, everything was presented in such a way that there was a

good understanding of the subject, without making it boring and tiring. Mainly because I had to bring references from a renowned artist.

Thus, these art classes were moments in which the children could exercise their perceptive, creative and imagination potential. The children expressed themselves both verbally and through plastic, through a desire to discover with clay. In this scenario, the teacher's commitment is to adapt the contents to the development of children's expressions and perceptions. As occurred in these workshops, children were guided to feel, see, observe things in nature and around them.

In the activities, modeling caught the children's attention due to the possibility of creating shapes and textures. This way, it allowed them to sharpen their senses, especially touch and vision, developing perception and psychomotricity, important skills in their training. To model, the intern teaches them to knead the dough, roll it, drill it, twist it, pull it or to make it look smooth, use wet fingers, as the child experiences a series of sensory stimuli when he touches the wet and slightly cold dough of the clay, which moves from experimentation to modeling in its creative flights. Celeida applied nobility to the Brazilian pottery tradition by respecting clay as an expressive force of material researched, elaborated and shown as an artistic product, that is, noble material, of artistic refinement and poetic possibilities. Following the artist, the intern also unveiled the artistic possibilities with clay with the children, dispelling prejudice with such material, an important factor in art education. “Let's celebrate it”.

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