

Art as a Global Necessity: MoMA's International Children's Art Carnival as a Catalyst for Globalization

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ABSTRACT

The recognition of individual creative potential is a concept of global importance because it resonates with the very essence of human existence. Satisfying the need of developing that individual creative potential has been the basis of many experiments in art education. The Children's Art Carnival, created by Victor D'Amico (Director of Education at the Museum of Modern Art [MoMA] from 1937 to 1969), is one of these experiments. Created in 1942, the Carnival provided a conducive atmosphere that stimulated the child and provided materials for an individually-led art-making experience.

Once the Carnival had proven itself successful as a catalyst for children's creative growth at MoMA, it was considered worth spreading internationally. The Museum of Modern Art presented the Children's Art Carnival at the International Trade Fairs in Milan (1957), Barcelona (1957), the Brussels World's Fair (1958), and travelled throughout different cities in India (1963).

The Children's Art Carnival is an example that resonates with current studies on how globalization interfaces not only with art and education, but also with local and regional cultural practices and identities, economies, political strategies, and environmental concerns of people around the world. Whatever shape art education initiatives take (international cooperation projects, worldwide exchanges or online courses of worldwide use), the challenges and lessons learned at the Children's Art Carnival in its international iterations are worth reviewing today.

KEYWORDS: education, The Museum of Modern Art, Victor D'Amico, globalization, hybridity, national pride, individual expression

Anthropological and philosophical studies suggest that art is common to every culture, everywhere, throughout time (Langer, 1966). This description makes art in itself borderless. Art has a deep connection to the human experience as it "satisfies the inescapable human hunger for imagined experience in all of its imaginable variations" (Scharfstein, 2009, p.3). Art is a precondition of the human existence: a necessity (D'Amico, 1961).

While art has a global presence, it nonetheless simultaneously hosts a multiplicity of expressions at the local and individual level. This elastic

quality of art makes it particularly interesting to observe through the lens of globalization, where the increasing interaction between people on a worldwide scale has permeated all aspects of life. Globalization's characteristic shift of focus from a Eurocentric discourse to a global one is an opportunity to rethink global and local power structures. To take advantage of this opportunity we need to establish strategies. The success of globalization relies on working "collectively and persistently to turn it into strategy-driven rather than crisis-driven" (Spivak, 2012, p. 105). Strategies are necessary for art to become a schema for imagining alternatives to how authority is distributed between people and within groups, governments, nations, institutions, organizations or societies.

This research investigates strategies for art to be a framework for rethinking global and local power structures in the context of globalization. These strategies have been extracted from a historical case study: The Museum of Modern Art's International Children's Art Carnival. Created by Victor D'Amico at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (USA), this art education project toured in different countries of Europe and India from 1957 to 1963.

The time period in which the Children's Art Carnival toured internationally is marked by the Cold War, during which globalization slowed down (Wolf, 2001) and then re-emerged through the rapid increase in the speed, scale, and scope of transnational linkages, fueled largely by developments in communications, transportation, and international agreements that had occurred during the years 1945 to 1989 (Hyung-Gu, 2013). A discourse in defense of US values in opposition to communist nations affected how culture played a role in defending democracy and capitalism. The pedagogy of the Children's Art Carnival was profoundly impacted by this polarized reality when it travelled to different countries.

In this research, I focus on the conflicts that arise when an art education program produced by a dominant culture hybridizes with another culture. The strategies presented in this paper respond to the negotiation of the tension between the expression of individuals and the representation of a collective national identity in the context of the Cold War. First, I study the concept of cultural hybridity as it relates to art and art education. In the context of New York becoming the center of the art world, the tension between the expression of the individual and the search for a national identity in art are at the core of the analysis. Secondly, I study The Children's Art Carnival in New York and each of its international versions. The traveling component of the Carnival makes it an ideal case from which to analyze a program that hybridized in each location. In each hybrid implementation, I observe the tension between an art education philosophy that championed the expression of the individual and the display of the Carnival as an object of national pride. MoMA's International Children's Art Carnival

provides an opportunity to observe an art education program in which different features of globalization interacted and reacted to a specific art education philosophy.

Globalization and hybridity as they affect art education in a context of national pride are the backbone of this research. MoMA's Children's Art Carnival in its iterations in New York, Milan, Barcelona, Brussels and India illustrate these concepts as they took shape in this particular project. Combining a conceptual approach with the analysis of this historic case study, I highlight the strategies that made art a suitable framework for rethinking the relationship between the expression of the individual and the representation of national pride.

Art Education, Globalization and Hybridity: A Theoretical Framework

Globalization is the development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked especially by free trade, free flow of capital, the tapping of cheaper foreign labor markets and the increasing interaction between people on a worldwide scale ("Globalization," 2018). The mixing of cultures, or hybridity, is part of globalization. Hybridity has been defined multiple times in different fields. From biology to linguistics to racial theory, the common denominator is the recognition of difference and mutuality. From the combination of both of these, hybridity appears as something new. When dominant and subordinate cultures are part of the process of hybridity, the recognition of difference and mutuality becomes an opportunity to reflect on power relationships. According to Bhabha (1994), hybridity is "the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal" (p.42). It displays discrimination and domination first so as to "turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (Bhabha, 1994, p.159). For the aforementioned definition of hybridity to operate in practice, a critical consciousness is needed. This critical consciousness was defined by Paulo Freire (1974) as a sociopolitical educative tool that engages learners in questioning the nature of their historical and social situations. The mechanisms behind analyzing art and art making involve deep conceptual and interpretational ways of thinking that are necessary to transform existing structures of dominance. Art fuels "the belief that human beings can make and remake things, that they can transform the world" (Freire, 1974, p. 128). I define a critical consciousness as the capacity to establish an individual expression that affects and changes a collective identity. "The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2). The historical context that concerns this research is marked by the blossoming of the modern art movement, the search for an American art expression, and the Cold War.

The tension between individual expression and national pride discourses was particularly palpable in the beginnings of the modern art movement, and extended throughout the World Wars and the Cold War. Artists felt that the most important element in modern art was the expression of the individual (Zorach & Zorach, 1979, p. 332). Kandinsky (1913) claimed that remaining true to "the inner voice" (p. 44) was paramount in art. Matisse (1995) tried to encourage his students' individuality while freeing them from preconceived theories and ideas. This was a pedagogical attitude that he may well have derived from his own teacher, Gustave Moreau, and which was at the core of his own ongoing self-education. Gleizes & Metzinger (1912) even claimed that "there is nothing real outside ourselves, there is nothing real except the coincidence of a sensation and an individual mental direction" (p. 13). They believed that we can only have certitude with regard to the images that blossom in our mind. The development of the individual had freedom at its heart, "[b]ut in the sense of a freedom which merely demands its rights, the right to develop, as great Nature herself develops" (Klee, 1924, p. 98). Modern art education responded to the need of modern artists finding their own way in making sense of the world around them and expanded it to all kinds of people in schools, museums and other educational settings.

The role of modern art education was for "the individual to observe life and express his reaction to it" (D'Amico, 1948, p. 6). According to Dewey (1934), "the real work of art is the building up of an integral experience out of the integration of organic and environmental conditions and energies" (p. 67). Those conditions and energies nurture the individual act of expression. Regarding child education, Lowenfeld (1950) departed from the fact that "the child brings together diverse elements of his environment to make a new meaningful whole" (p. 1). The child was to be stimulated towards a personal expression through the exploration of materials. For the professional artist, the search for individual expression included "freeing himself from the academic point of view, to see the world with a view as primitive and unsophisticated as a child and then go on from there to build his own art forms and see color with a new vision" (Zorach, 1967, p. 73). The academic world that many modern artists rejected had been crafted primarily in Europe. In response, modern artists started looking at other parts of the world for inspiration, especially Africa and Asia. However, several modern art movements emerged in Paris, and many American visual artists went there to make art.

In the US, the formation of various artistic assemblies like the Ashcan School, the Stieglitz circle, and the New York School led to the development of art practices toward an American modern art expression. US artist Marguerite Zorach observed that "one can at least expect a nation's art to have some individuality, or at least to express something of the atmosphere and character of the country" (Zorach &

Burk, 2009, p. 26). Abstract Expressionism emerged from obscurity in the 1940s and 1950s to become one of the movements which established New York as the center of the art world (Effland, 1995). The dominance of Europe was challenged by the increasing influence of the United States of America. By the end of the 1950s, MoMA's Children's Art Carnivals toured in Europe as part of International Fairs and in 1962 in India. At this point in history the Carnival was a representation of the dominant art culture to an international audience.

In the discussion of a nation's art identity and its artists' personality, the concept of national pride emerges when artists' individual expressions are displayed in international platforms as proof of a country's achievements. Zimmermann (1771), in discussing national pride, considered that "every nation contemplates itself through the medium of self-conceit" (p. 1). National pride draws conclusions to its own advantage, producing a discourse of continuous progress. As a result, people are at risk of confounding and interweaving their individual self with their national identity. In this process, "nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 1). In the context of the American search for an identity in modern art throughout the Cold War, the tension between the expression of the individual and a discourse of national pride is palpable.

In this context, art education trends like social reconstructionism found fertile ground. Social reconstructionism "saw the artist-teacher as a member of the community, a citizen patriot in time[s] of war" (Effland, 1995). In reaction to the use of art as part of a discourse of national pride, many artists claimed that art should be *political*, but not *politicized* by institutions or nations. While national consciousness is the only thing that will give us an international dimension (Fanon, 1967, p. 221), national pride in its unified conception of national culture challenges the inclusion of the 'other.' In highlighting a constant national progress, a discourse of national pride in art within the context of globalization hampers the opportunity of reevaluating existing power structures.

In this paper, I explore the Children's Art Carnival as a program designed at MoMA for children in New York City and its iterations for international audiences. In doing so, the Children's Art Carnival faced the challenges that appear from inserting a program designed for one specific context into a different one. While in New York City, the expression of the individual was the only aim; when inserting the program in a different location, a desire for hybridizing appeared.

I present each adaptation in Milan, Barcelona, Brussels and different cities in India through the lens of D'Amico's search for an answer to whether the Children's Art Carnival provided the right atmosphere for satisfying the necessity of art for children around the world. I observe

the elements at play when this art education project hybridized in each place and analyze the effects on a pedagogy that championed the expression of the individual in a context of national pride. With the intent of understanding how this art education program hybridized in each location, I identify the strategies used in each Carnival.

Children's Art Carnival at MoMA in New York City

The Children's Art Carnival (also called Holiday Circus, Holiday Fair and Holiday Carnival), organized since 1942 by Victor D'Amico, the Museum of Modern Art Director of Education, introduced children to the fundamentals of modern art through play and creative techniques. It was a laboratory where the child's reactions to art were studied (The Museum of Modern Art, n.d.) and new media was explored in an informal way.

The child entered the Carnival through a gate shaped from the contour of an eight-year-old. Once through the gate, the child was surrounded by works of art and creative opportunities. The design was based on the principle that appreciation in young children is best developed through actual contact with works of art chosen for their particular interest in texture, color, and subject matter, integrated with creative opportunities. It used play appeal because for "the young child, play is an important element in learning, since the child's creative impulses are more acute and his sensitivity more alert in a play experience" (The Museum of Modern Art, 1949, p. 2).

The Children's Art Carnival's space was divided into two sections (D'Amico, 1960): a motivational area and a studio for direct experimentation with the materials. In the motivational area (see Figure 1), the child found sculptures and playthings like the *Plastic Clown*, *The Fish*, *The Bird* and the *Wind Machine* designed by Toni Hughes. These hung from the ceiling, casting shadows on the walls. The *Furry Cat* that arched his back when stroked and a *Dancing Rooster* by Ruth Vollmar were placed on the floor so that children could touch them. *Color players* for "painting with light" (The Museum of Modern Art, 1957, p. 2) – an elastic string design or a magnetic board for children to experiment with color and design – were also available.



Figure 1. Installation view of the exhibition *New Children's Holiday Carnival of Modern Art*. Photographer: Soichi Sunami. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY

The studio workshop (see Figure 2) gave children the opportunity to try out for themselves the use of color, texture, pattern and movement seen in the toys. Easels were set up around walls, equipped with large brushes, large sheets of paper, and poster paints, all suitable for children between the ages of four and eight (The Museum of Modern Art, 1950). In the center of the room was a large table on which a great variety of materials were arranged (feathers, pieces of tin foil, scraps of velvet, and silk). On the walls of this section of the Carnival hung modern paintings selected to give the children an understanding of the great variety that existed in the art of the time. It included African sculptures and paintings by Louis Vivin, Darryl Austin, Fernand Leger, Carol Blanchard, Camille Bombois and Karl Priebe (The Museum of Modern Art, 1955). The works of art were selected on the basis of the children's interest and were hung at their eye-level, where they were able to experience them.



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Figure 2. Participants at the exhibition, "Children's Holiday Carnival." December 10, 1956 through January 13, 1957. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Photographer: Soichi Sunami.

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Adults were not allowed inside the Carnival, but over the years, the Carnival's design adapted to its users' needs and portholes were devised so that adults could observe (The Museum of Modern Art, 1960). The only adults present in the Carnival were the artist-teachers that helped the children in making the most of the experience.

The Carnival became an annual activity at MoMA that had far-reaching results. The Carnivals stimulated parents to find creative schools and school administrators to enrich their art programs. Through the Carnivals, the museum attempted to raise the standards of toy manufacturers as well as to introduce new ideas for art equipment. By 1957 the Carnival was so successful that it had been replicated by Museums in many parts of the USA and several large toys had been borrowed by other institutions (The Museum of Modern Art, 1955).

In 1957 the opportunity of testing the Carnival in Europe came as part of the International Samples Fairs of Milan and Barcelona. For six

months in 1958, the Carnival was part of the US pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair. In 1963 the Carnival traveled to the major cities of India.

In the following sections, I explore the iterations of the Carnival in each destination. Each adaptation of the Carnival operated within the tensions between globalization, hybridity and art education. In the actions and reactions, I highlight strategies learned from each experience.

***Il Paradiso dei Bambini* in Milan: Brotherhood Between Nations**

Il Paradiso dei Bambini (as The Children's Art Carnival was called in Milan, Italy) was open from April 12 through April 27, 1957 as part of the International Samples Fair inside the United States' pavilion. It was created under the sponsorship of the Office of International Trade Fairs, the U. S. Department of Commerce, and the Museum of Modern Art. To give a sense of the general atmosphere of the Fair, suffice to say that visitors were greeted by a carousel, with music, cartoons, and voices which set the mood and gave the general theme of the fair: productivity.

The presence of *Il Paradiso* was explained through the notion that productivity means: "the more you produce the more there is for everybody to share. Those who benefit most from productivity are the children" ("I Nostri Bambini e la produttività," 1957, para. 2). Therefore, the Carnival was presented as a commodity and a consequence of adults' productivity. The notion of "productivity for everybody to share" stresses the national collective need over the individualistic approach.

The asymmetrical influence of US culture is clear; in the official brochure, the Carnival was described as a display that "illustrates how our children share in the rewards of the American system of high productivity" ("I Nostri Bambini e la produttività," 1957, para. 6). According to the New York Times, *Il Paradiso* had packed "a powerful propaganda punch by giving visitors a visual demonstration of the rewards that can be obtained from free enterprise and the mass production system existing in the United States" (The New York Times, 1957, p. 29). The Children's Art Carnival in Milan was to "demonstrate to Italian teachers and parents the Museum's extremely successful method of art education" (The Museum of Modern Art, 1957, para. 1).

The Fair in which *Il Paradiso* in Milan was contextualized presented ideas that contrasted with the intentions of the Carnival in its original form in New York. First, art education was presented as a commodity instead of a necessity. Secondly, the Carnival was presented as a tool to demonstrate instead of a place for shared experimentation. Finally,

the Carnival itself was not to celebrate productivity but rather the enjoyment of individual processes and discovery.

All three contrasts had a fundamental conflict at their heart that relates to globalization: the national discourse versus the individual narrative. From a national discourse, if people produce enough they will have access to art; from an individual narrative, art is part of everyday living regardless of national economic agendas. A collective notion led to the presentation of the art experience to "the other" as if participants of *Il Paradiso* were outside or beyond the organization, but in practice the project hybridized forcefully within the community that organizers and participants formed. An individual narrative evolves in response to other individual narrations and produces a shared space for experimentation. Productivity at the Fair was the national discourse while the individual narratives related to personal growth and discovery.

A coincidental situation was pivotal in providing a chance to transmit the original aims of the Carnival that were present in *Il Paradiso*. Victor D'Amico was the child of Italian migrants and as such, he was seen as a prodigal son. This produced a great interest on the part of the media. They described D'Amico as the inventor of much needed devices for the Italian child for "eliminating worries" and facing "the problems created by school and life, with a head free from prejudice." The motivational objects were described in the press as "machines for eliminating anxiety" (D'Amico, 1957, p. 1). The therapeutic use of the *Il Paradiso* was never a priority for D'Amico, but the fact that he did not speak much Italian led to this kind of misunderstanding (D'Amico, 1957).

The press attention and the general interest in the Fair made many people attend *Il Paradiso*. Thankfully, the Carnival did not rely on spoken word, but rather provided a full experience to the senses. According to letters sent by the participants, the attempt to "demonstrate" was overshadowed by the atmosphere of the Carnival itself that encouraged an enjoyment of art with eagerness and absorption. This "American way of teaching" (Poinelli, 1957, p. 1) was relevant to its participants because it provided a place in which they could "play and draw without being afraid of spoiling anything!" (Cattuzzato, 1957, p. 1). Along with Victor D'Amico, other members of the educational team included Mabel D'Amico, (artist and Head of the Art Department at Rye School and wife of Victor) and other local art educators. This relationship constituted a source of mutual exchange of ideas and methodologies that can be read in the vast correspondence maintained after the Carnival was over. An Italian reporter expressed this feeling as follows:

In a world where there are so many devices being
invented and tremendous machines built for

destroying both people and property, what better way can there be to foster a feeling of brotherhood between nations than to develop the creative possibilities of their children. ([The Museum of Modern Art, 1957, para. 6](#))

This idea of “brotherhood between nations” relates to hybridity in the sense that its starting point is the recognition of difference (of two different nations) and mutuality, which ultimately provides a space of coexistence and co-creation. The strategy we extract from *Il Paradiso* is the consideration of the ambivalent figure of the nation in its transitional history, its conceptual indeterminacy, and its wavering between vocabularies. From that, art education needs to provide a space to ask ourselves what effect does *nationness* cause in individual narratives and discourses. Local media and one-to-one relationships with the people taking part in the art programs constituted an important way of establishing conditions for common trust. While no upfront local resistance was experienced in Milan, the Carnival in Barcelona showed a very different situation.

***El Festival del Arte de los niños* in Barcelona: A Cultural Collision**

After the Milan presentation, the Children’s Art Carnival was sent to Barcelona with the American section of the Fair to be exhibited from June 1 through June 20, 1957. On this occasion, the Carnival was called *El Festival del Arte de los niños*.

At *El Festival* in Barcelona, the idea that “production benefits our children and gives them better life” (Maser, 1957, p. 3) was again the framework. Even if the previous experience in Milan provided excellent information on how to contextualize *Il Paradiso* within the Fair, this was not the main challenge *El Festival* faced in Barcelona. Spain in 1957 was under the Francoist dictatorship, a conservative and authoritarian regime that suppressed opposition and dissent and banned culture seen as non-Spanish.

From the Francoist perspective, the International Fair was to highlight the superiority of Spanish productivity over the other participating countries. With this theme, the organizers of the Fair wanted to display the children as producers. A completely open glass wall was put on both sides of the Museum of Modern Art exhibit that completely destroyed the dramatic toy entry for the motivational area, and removed the privacy of the creative area (Maser, 1957, p. 1). At the Trade Fair’s request, the design of *El Festival* had to shift to attract more public attention. The image of the children producing was meant to be used as a tool for the Spanish propaganda targeted at the Fair visitors. *El Festival* was expected to hybridize in Barcelona to satisfy the political

agenda of the destination country. Indeed, the space design shifted in that direction.

As for the mass media coverage, the presence of the US as well as other international pavilions was quite limited. The No-do (the regime news program) only showed a few seconds of *El Festival*, coincidentally with visits of ambassadors, military, civil and governmental leaders, teachers, and public officials. Even the dictator Francisco Franco and his wife María del Carmen Polo visited *El Festival*. On this occasion *El Festival* was presented on the national news briefly as a “playground” (“Noticiero Documentales Cinematográficos No-Do”, 1957). According to Moreen Maser (1957), the educator in charge of the Carnival in Barcelona, “some indirect notice of MoMA *niñas* and Franco was given in the papers with the usual political twist” (p. 17).

The fact that Maser (1957) had to dismiss the official photographer of the Fair because he was asking the children to write *Viva España* (p. 8) on their drawings is only one example of the tension between preserving *El Festival*’s integrity and the intention of turning it into an instrument for national propaganda. With such limitations to communicate the goals of *El Festival* and the end-of-school term dates in which *El Festival* took place, only orphanages responded to the call for participation.

Both the political context and the orphans as primary participants made MoMA educator Moreen Maser (1957) write in her diary about her fear that “these Spanish foundlings and orphans would be sad, repressed youngsters” (p. 2). That expectation was quickly proven untrue. In the following days Maser (1957) described the children as “fascinated, eager, creative and as the Spanish observers said ‘muy content[os]’” (p. 1), meaning very happy. The catholic Nuns who accompanied the orphans were eager to know about the materials and ideas behind *El Festival*. Even if the premise of *El Festival* was that adults were not allowed, nuns in many cases refused to leave the children alone (Maser, 1957). When that happened, they were allowed to stay inside *El Festival* and the nun’s wimples (headwear consisting of a large, starched piece of white cloth), became a motivational tool for children to experiment with.

The cooperation with Spanish locals was excellent. There were three local educators (Montserrat, Ana María, Gayle Aboucher) and technical help (Rafael and Trinidad) that were present throughout *El Festival*. Approximately 2000 children from 9 orphanages enjoyed *El Festival* in Barcelona (Maser, 1957).

El Festival incurred the same conflicts of notions of productivity as seen in *Il Paradiso*. In addition, the Spanish political situation represented a major challenge: during Franco’s dictatorship, freedom of expression was strongly repressed. In contrast, MoMA’s pedagogy

of cultural production and consumption relied on the recognition of the individual's expression in choice and art creation.

The strategy we extract from *El Festival* is related to the fact that art provides a safe framework for conflict within the context of globalization. The cultural differentiation and local resistance based on political differences was omnipresent as it contrasted with MoMA's fundamental pedagogies. There was a concern that the cultural collision would hamper children's potential for creative development. This concern proved reasonable in the many interventions of adult political influence. The reason the troubled existence of *El Festival* was possible relies on one-to-one relationships. *El Festival* met the people where they were and was built from common ground. Individual narratives provided the key to contradict preconceived "single stories" (Adichie, 2014) of collective narratives. The hybridity that emerges from the understanding of differences and making of space for building something new are an opportunity for common growth. This speaks for the project as well as for the necessities of the destination users.

The Children's Creative Center in Brussels: A Statement in Americanness

The Brussels World's Fair 1958 was the first one held after World War II. It was seen as the first occasion in which Europeans could compare the achievements of two superpowers: the USA and the USSR (Efland, 1995). Both nations built large and impressive pavilions, which faced each other on the grounds of the exposition.

The US pavilion made quite an impact on Europe where it highlighted its "American Way of Life." The relationship between American parents and their children and the attention devoted to encouraging youthful interest in the creative arts and in cooperating within a community were illustrated by placing in the pavilion the *Children's Creative Center*, as the Children's Art Carnival was known in Brussels (The American Way of Life, 1958).

Alistair Cooke, a popular TV host and moderator made the following statement in a narration on the Exposition shown on the Omnibus show for May 4, 1958: "One American triumph which will rock no headlines is a play hall that is heaven for the children of all nations" ("Omnibus," 1958). The presentation of the Creative Center as an "American triumph" revealed that the Creative Center was seen through the lens of the nation that created it. America was presented as a unified concept, stressing its position as a dominating superpower delivering something that was suitable for all nations.

The *Children's Creative Center* opened to the public on April 17, 1958 and remained open for 6 months. The installation, methodologies, and

ideas needed to work toward building a certain image of the country to visitors coming from all parts of the world. The theme "The American Way of Life" suggests a unified idea of America, but the *Children's Creative Center* presented a diverse human dimension of the American population.

Because of the length of the Carnival, two teams of art teachers were involved: for the first three months, the staff, under the supervision of Lois Lord, included African American artist J. Eugene Grigsby, Jr. and Susan Lynn. Charles Alston, African American artist, and Margaret Stark, supervised by Jane Cooper Bland, took over during the second three months. Two teachers from Brussels facilitated the correct functioning of the program and provided a bridge for the exchange of ideas in art and education. All of these efforts were led by Victor D'Amico, an Italian descendant, and his wife Mabel, a leading artist-teacher.

"The American Way of Life" was represented by diverse groups based on origin, gender, and race. The diverse team in charge of the *Children's Creative Center* translated into individual narratives of learning. The members of the team for diversity were challenging the stereotype of the force behind an American triumph.

Just as the team behind the "American triumph" was not a unified discourse of US power, the "children of all nations" did not respond to a sole definition. Narrations of experiences of individual development were carefully documented. Each one of the narratives enriched the vision of how each child's particular situation provided a completely different experience at the Center. The length and detail of these narratives makes it impossible to relate here, but I choose to present one child whose circumstance challenges the idea of the child at the Creative Center.

A 5 ½ year-old blind girl, hereinafter referred to as Anna, went to the Carnival with a group from a deaf and blind school. Eugene Grigsby (see Figure 3) and Françoise (a local educator) took her in tow. The furry cat, designed by Ruth Vollmar, provided a tactile experience that could be surprising given that it arched its back when it was petted. With this sculpture, Anna "was quite shy and self-contained" (Grigsby, 1958). Next, they took Anna to the three-dimension string game. Designed by Victor D'Amico, in this toy the child was meant to make a three-dimensional construction out of six pieces of elastic string, each fixed at one end in a large shadow box. The other end of each string was equipped with a small ring which attached to any one of a number of hooks in the walls and ceiling of the shadow box. After creating his design based on tension rather than gravity, the child could then hang a variety of three dimensional decorations on the string. In this, Anna was "a bit awkward but seemed

to like the feel of the balls and the pull of the elastic” (Grigsby, 1958).



Figure 3. Installation view of the exhibition, “Art Education for Every Child, May 6, 1960-August 14, 1960.

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Their next adventure was with the string picture maker which the young girl appeared to enjoy. Her actions became more outward, and she seemed to express herself more vocally. The string picture maker consisted of elastic bands spaced at intervals horizontally and vertically on a peg board. The child was meant to invent her design by pushing golf tees into holes and bringing the elastic bands around them.

Then they took her to the collage table. They let her feel various materials and asked what she would like to do. She said she wanted to make a bird. So with pipe cleaners and feathers, Grigsby helped her fashion a bird. Next she tried a collage and “became so fascinated with the stapler she could hardly contain herself” (Grigsby, 1958). She would staple feathers on burlap and rub the effect over her face. “Two of her works were quite good in color as well as texture” (Grigsby, 1958). Then she asked what else was being done and Francoise mentioned painting. “This was a mistake because this little girl just had to paint.

We let her start and realized it was a mistake so an excuse was made to stop her” (Grigsby, 1958).

Anna wanted “to return to the striped foam balls and then back to the string picture maker with holes. She was extremely interested in putting the pegs in the hole” (Grigsby, 1958). As Grigsby points out in his letter, “she was successful in putting the simpler puzzles together” (Grigsby, 1958). But more importantly, when the Anna left the Carnival, “she was a different girl. No shyness, no soft voice but rather loud, husky voiced blind girl pulling on me to go to the next toy and showing off what she had made to the teacher” (Grigsby, 1958). Victor D’Amico expressed his satisfaction to Grigsby saying that he felt “that Europe has a good impression of America if it judges it on your spirit and performance” (D’Amico, 1958).

This is only one example of the type of experience the 16,472 children and 2,036 teachers who visited the *Children’s Creative Center* had. The personal stories like the one related in this text highlight the value of one-to-one experiences and challenge the view of a unified concept of America in the World’s Fair.

The story presented here provides the concept of “children of all nations” with a case that challenges the stereotypical view of the kind of child that might take part in the *Creative Center*. The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. In including this narrative in the general discourse of children of all nations, there is an invitation to imagine the complexity behind each individual at the Center from the perspective of the narrative first, and secondarily from the notion of nation.

Both Anna and the educators were embarking on something new in which their nationality had no influence. Anna had never been to the *Children’s Creative Center* before, and the educators had never had to facilitate such an experience to a visually impaired person. The Carnival provided a flexible framework for hybridity to happen at the level of the expression of the individuals implicated. National identities took second place behind the purpose of individual expression. I wonder whether the definition of *The Children’s Creative Center* as an American triumph influenced the experience of the children as it had no presence in the reports the educators produced. However, The Children’s Creative Center was definitely seen as an American triumph by the media (see Omnibus). When the Carnival was portrayed in pictures or in film, women, immigrants, and African Americans were representing the US national discourse. The strategy we extract from the *Children’s Creative Center* in Brussels is that diversifying human power in any educational activity with people whose backgrounds and origins differ not only provides for more creative teams, but also makes a statement that challenges global assumptions and provides a framework for

acknowledging individual stories.

Children's Art Carnival in India: Hybridity in the Making

It was at the Brussel's World's Fair in 1958 that Indira Gandhi (then president of the Indian National Congress), along with Dorothy Norman, saw the *Children's Creative Center*. Indira Gandhi was so impressed by the *Center* and its philosophy that she asked Dorothy Norman to investigate the possibility of acquiring a Carnival for India. At this time, Indira Gandhi was also the chairperson of a semi-autonomous government organization called the Bal Bhavan Board. The Bal Bhavans were conceived as national institutions devoted to the creative and recreational development of children in India. The *Children's Creative Center* that Indira Gandhi saw in Brussels fit perfectly with the plan envisioned for creating a chain of Bal Bhavans that would host MoMA's Carnival (Shasrabudhe, 1995). Indira Gandhi's main argument was:

Everyone knows that thousands of people are in desperate need of food, but we also need spiritual food which you supply in your Art Carnival. Mr. D'Amico, we want an Art Carnival of our own and we want you to come with a staff of teachers and train our teachers so that we will be able to carry on creative teaching for our children. (Gandhi, 1958)

Between the winter of 1958 and the winter of 1962, people at the Museum of Modern Art, the Kennedy White House, as well as Victor D'Amico, Dorothy Norman, and Paul Sherbert of the Asia Society of New York worked towards making the Children's Art Carnival in India a reality. The Children's Art Carnival in India was a gift from the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art to the National Children's Museum in India.

In the winter of 1962, First Lady Jaqueline Kennedy symbolically presented the Children's Art Carnival to Indira Gandhi (Shasrabudhe, 1995). This was the first time that the Children's Art Carnival was requested by another nation and presented as a gift by the United States. This was also the first time the Carnival was to be housed entirely in its own structure (Architectural record, 1962). The building for the Carnival was to be designed so that it was portable and able to travel to different cities in India. The structure was fabricated in New Delhi from designs and working drawings by Frank Vitullo and Victor D'Amico. The Children's Art Carnival in India was located in two octagonal rooms joined along one side that communicated the motivational and studio areas.

The Children's Art Carnival opened in New Delhi on October 28 for a six-week run, continuing seven days a week through December 7, 1963. During the Carnival's stay in New Delhi, 5403 children from 141 schools participated in it (see Figure 4). Victor D'Amico, Mabel D'Amico, Arlette Buchman, Howard Michette, and Ethel Rosgood as staff of the Museum of Modern Art conducted all classes the first three weeks (Bal Bavan and National Children's Museum Publication, 1963-64). During the second three weeks the Bal Bhavan staff members who had interned with the MoMA staff for the first three weeks, took over the entire operation under the supervision of Prabha Sahasrabudhe, Director of the Bal Bavan and National Children's Museum in New Delhi.



Figure 4. Victor D'Amico with the Children's Art Carnival in India, 1963. Modern Art Archives, New York International Council and International Program Records, I.B.888. The Museum of Modern Art Archives. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY

The Carnival program in New Delhi was supplemented with workshops in "creative art teaching" (Bal Bavan and National Children's Museum Publication, 1963-64, p. 49) for teachers of the New Delhi Schools and two conferences on art education. The school teachers' workshops were comprised of structured observations through the Carnival's windows, working with materials under the direction of Victor D'Amico and his staff, and discussions of what teacher/participants saw as children

worked with these materials.

The first conference invited school administrators, artists, art critics and other decision makers to meet with D'Amico. The theme was: "What can school administrators do to promote art education?" The second conference was devoted to art teachers from the greater New Delhi area's municipal and private schools. The theme of these meetings was: "Art Education in India now - the scope and significance of creative art education." The *Hindustan Times* of October 29, 1963 wrote that teachers and administrators, "recognized the absence of art in the Indian educational system and determined to make a beginning" (The *Hindustan Times*, 1963, p. 12).

After its New Delhi stay, the Carnival went on a tour of the Indian cities of Hyderabad, Madras, Bangalore, and Ahmedabad. During these three months in five Indian cities, the Carnival worked with 546 school groups, 10,057 children, and 3997 adult visitors, and trained 85 teachers in Victor D'Amico's pedagogy.

There are many aspects that make the Carnival in India different from the Carnivals in Milan, Barcelona, or Brussels. To begin, the Carnival in India was requested by the destination country. India's request included that the presence of the Carnival not be an activity with a clear beginning and end, but rather was to be expanded through the teachers that were trained in the Carnival's methods. The carefully designed plan allowed for the Carnival to become a framework for exchanges in art education on many levels: school administrators, artists, art critics, art educators, and children.

Finally, it was Indira Gandhi's interest in D'Amico's philosophy and its application in the Carnival design that made her think it would be a good element to include in Indian art education, and not the fact that the origin of the idea came from the USA. The country that originated the idea took second place behind the ideas promoted in its design: personal creative growth, the design of a conducive atmosphere, and the recognition of the individual's creativity that does not depend on nationality. This provided a strategic reversal of the process of production within a framework of *hybridity*. The hybridity between D'Amico's original idea and its application in this context created a Carnival that maintained elements of the original but was distinctly new. The team in India got to define the terms in which art as a necessity was satisfied in their particular context.

The strategy I extract from the Carnival in India is that art can engage learners in questioning the nature of their historical and social situation. Art can serve as a framework for developing the critical consciousness necessary to transform existing structures of power. The experience in India confirmed what D'Amico signaled as being the two

main factors that emerged in the previous Carnivals: (1) children can develop creatively regardless of their backgrounds, and the freedom and dynamic quality of the creative approach is able to overcome years of academic and rote methods of teaching; and (2) ethnic and national background have no bearing on the child's creativity (Sahasrabudhe, 1995). In the context of globalization, these two factors are key for art to act as a catalyst for transforming the world.

Conclusions

There is no question that programs and methodologies developed in the United States of America have global impact. There are many examples of programs created in the USA that have served as inspiration for programs elsewhere. The strategies learned with the Children's Art Carnival are still of interest today to help understand the mechanisms operating behind the adaptation of methodologies created in one place and adapted elsewhere.

A program that believes in "art as a human necessity" is a relevant framework as it works from the belief that art applies to humanity as a whole. It is a paradox that this globalizing idea of art would be the one chosen to represent the uniqueness of the United States of America in the International World's Fair in Brussels, at Barcelona's and Milan's Trade Fairs, and in India.

Victor D'Amico presented the Children's Art Carnival as a viable formula for providing an atmosphere that enhanced the creativity of children in different countries. However, something major was at stake. The question is not figuring out what art and art education mean as a human necessity, but who gets to define the terms in which that necessity is satisfied. In Milan the spirit of brotherhood of nations provided an opportunity to work from the recognition of difference while privileging the mutuality of aims (a spirit emphasized by D'Amico's Italian ancestry). In Barcelona, the cultural collision enhanced national and political differences and the MoMA organization prioritized its agenda of individual expression over the intentions of the Spanish propaganda. In Brussels, the discourse of national pride acquired a complex meaning through a diverse representation of what the American way of life looked like. In India, the terms in which art as a human necessity were agreed upon were negotiated by both nations' representatives from the beginning. It is undeniable that The Children's Art Carnival was used as a way of announcing the USA's cultural maturity that would parallel the nation's superpower status. However, The Children's Art Carnival as a methodology provided a different narrative: it activated creative processes in children regardless of their nationality. Therefore, the ones who got to define art and art education were the children themselves.

In the case of the Carnivals that were presented in International Fairs (Milan, Barcelona and Brussels), there was a risk of presenting “America” itself as a unified concept. These fairs had a focus on the exceptionalism of each nation, and in the case of the United States of America, it had the potential to encourage generalizations that could potentially exclude communities.

The Children’s Art Carnivals in their international iterations presented an asymmetrical influence of the US culture over the destination countries. The Museum of Modern Art brought the design of the Carnivals along with the methodology to be taught and shown to the participants of the cities it visited. In practice however, sometimes out of conviction and sometimes out of necessity, the Carnivals transformed in each destination. On one hand, the individuals who took part in the Carnivals transformed and expanded the initial possibilities. On the other, practical issues like finding supplies, technical issues, working with locals in each destination, and struggles in communication made it impossible for the Carnival to remain unaffected by the context. In both cases, instead of fighting against the circumstances, the Carnival turned out to be a flexible framework for action that hybridized with each location.

Studying cases like The International Children’s Art Carnival can help us understand the need to recognize individual narratives that exist within a globalizing discourse. Art is one of the many ways we have to understand our world and to transform it. Understanding and transforming our world is a global necessity. Art has no borders but has different ways of operating in each person. Victor D’Amico’s balancing act in the International Children’s Art Carnivals exemplifies that only when acknowledging individual narratives is a borderless Art Education possible.

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