

## ARTISTIC EXPRESSION : A MEANS OF PERSONAL RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

### Introduction

Artistic expression, whether through drawing, pottery, dance, music, theatre or role-play, can stimulate creation, inventiveness and imagination. It is a way to bring out what is within oneself, to assert one's identity, to take initiatives and thus be a source of personal and social development. The child expresses what he cannot put into words. Artistic expression enables him to exorcise anxiety often caused by traumatic events he has experienced or continues to experience.

With this in mind, the association CONSTELLATION has developed a world-wide network of painting workshops for very disadvantaged children. Its activities may well be of interest to you which is why we asked the association to explain to us. Martine Berge.



# THE EXPLANATION GIVEN BY CONSTELLATION

## What is CONSTELLATION?

The artist, Sylvaine Rémy, created the association in 1996 to help underprivileged children to gain self-confidence through artistic creation.

CONSTELLATION is, at present, working with 1500 children in 23 countries (Latin America, Asia and Africa) in 45 different workshops.

## WHY?

These children feel inferior for the following reasons : they are street children, child soldiers or school failures (when they go to school!), cultural differences (when compared to developed countries) and the economic difficulties of their families or their neighbourhood.

We help children to recognize their personal value, their usefulness, their place in the world and to feel acknowledged. They gain self-confidence and, little by little, they can recuperate elements of their lives, their flag, their customs and religion while learning that this has become immensely valuable irrespective of the country from which they come.

In 2007, a collective study by all groups, based on the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' led to works of art that are the subject of several exhibitions in 2008, the year of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration.

## HOW?

The children are grouped in workshops led by local artists, sometimes in collaboration with teachers.

**The rules of these workshops are based on important principles :**

**The voluntary commitment of all Constellation workers.**



**Progress in the work of all the children while respecting the rhythm of each child.** The desire for progress and the valorisation of the child are essential elements for long-term pedagogical benefits.

**Non-competitiveness** : all children, whatever their age and level, receive the same attention. The objective of Constellation is not to select the best but to propose the development of all the children who participate in the workshops. The role of the artists is essential, going far beyond mere artistic techniques, with them the children learn respect for others, to listen, to discuss what they will do during the classes, react to paintings and allow everyone to talk without fear of being different. They also learn to manage a budget

- **The exchange and the setting up of links between groups and children from all the countries where Constellation is at work.**  
Communications, the relationship with others, the exchange of cultures are the foundation stones of the activities of Constellation.

## THE ROLE OF CONSTELLATION

Constellation has four main functions :

- **It creates groups**, finds painters and monitors and insures that the rules are respected.
- **It provides the groups with the means to carry out their activities** by providing materials that they are unable to procure themselves.
- **It organises the exchange of paintings and facilitates communication between the groups** through a journal which prints and comments on the different works of art. The exchange of paintings gives new ideas suggests different techniques.
- A network of travelling volunteers (to suit their own timetables) provides transport of works of art as well as the equipment supplied by Constellation.
- **The paintings and works of art are given extra value** through exhibitions in France and in the countries of origin, organised by Constellation, which also pays for the printing of postcards of the paintings which are sold to the public. All the funds thus raised are entirely used to finance the running of the workshops.

**CONSTELLATION is extending its active partnership with other associations**, which are running development projects (in Bolivia, Peru, Nicaragua, Brazil, Madagascar, Angola, India...).

“In some countries, our activities are integrated into local structures with a broader vocation and also working with underprivileged children (Nanta and Free Voices in Bolivia, Cano Arte in Peru, Mamabe in Madagascar, Mulemba in Angola, and Dorika in the DRC...).

Membership of the REPER network is therefore an exceptional opportunity for us to develop new partnerships

**Please do not hesitate to consult our website :**  
[www.constellationart.org](http://www.constellationart.org)

Many contacts have been established and new groups have been set up thanks to this intermediary.

**Please contact us** if you are able to transport equipment during your travels, find places for our exhibitions, sell our cards or establish new partnerships for us.

**You can contact us through :** Sylvaine Rémy,  
Constellation, Villarbernon, 73140 Saint  
Michel de Maurienne or  
<mailto:constellation@constellationart.org>

Or: [frpetitpre@tele2.fr](mailto:frpetitpre@tele2.fr)



## TESTIMONIES OF FROM OUR COLLABORATORS

The **Canoa sin fronteras** which works with the street children of Iquitos in Peru writes “Thanks to the partnership with Constellation since 2004, a significant momentum has been created around the workshops as soon as they were set up. The supplying of material, the suggestions for themes, the valorisation of the children’s work through the organisation of exhibitions, the reproduction of their paintings in a magazine, the exchanges with other groups are all means for the children to discover other realities, to feel as if they exist, to express themselves, to think and lead to self development. The actions of Constellation have enabled us to open a second workshop in Peru. We very much thank Constellation for all their work”.

<mailto:estjacquet@yahoo.fr>

**INTI Solidarity with the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean** has been active since 1992 in various towns in Nicaragua. “In 2001 we met Constellation which, through its workshops, coincided directly with what the Nicaraguans created and were called ‘Self-esteem Workshops’ to escape poverty at all ages. We therefore suggested that Constellation create a workshop with a local painter, who, attracted by the project has proposed to direct it and train other leaders. Today there are five very dynamic groups in three different cities. In 2007 the works of art created in the workshops were been shown in a big exhibition in the historic city of Grenada and the Post Office has printed Christmas cards for sale, the profits of which are given to finance the workshops. Looking at the works of art, reading the testimonies of the leaders and their loyalty, we are convinced of the justice of our common vision and will continue our collaboration with Constellation by producing a joint calendar for 2009”.



# NEWS OF THE NETWORK

## LATIN AMERICA

**AMAR, Brazil**, is living a year of transition. Pierre, because of his health, can now rely on two new people who are already participating in the activities. The socio-educational activities will be regrouped in a popular district and the committee decided to allow a group of youths, as responsible adults, to run them. The accompaniment of the young people according to the activities (theatre, crafts, socio-educational workshops, school coaching lessons) have been divided according to the availability of each person. A think tank has prepared guidelines for the financing of the project by both public and private enterprises.

<mailto:pierredemou@hotmail.com>

**REFUGIOS PANA, Venezuela** now looks after 60 young people (boys and girls) separated in two centres in Valencia. School coaching lessons, professional training and, above all, assistance for each young person to prepare a project for his/her future.

<mailto:refugiospana@hotmail.com>

## ASIA

**ASHALAYAM, India** gave a theme to study at the summer camp entitled “Young today and responsible citizens tomorrow”. 300 adolescent boys and girls participated. 250 younger children were devised into small groups with an adolescent at its head.

**NANBAN, India.** The theme of the camp this year was “Have confidence in yourself”.

The young people themselves chose and carried out the activities including moments of sharing and evaluation. It was a great success. Another success this year was that a 100% of the pupils of Nanban passed successfully their school-leaving certificate.

<mailto:james@nanbanindia.org>

**CAMELEON, Philippines** celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday. On this occasion, the Zanzibar circus

inaugurated the brand new Cameleon sports complex by opening the first circus school in the Philippines. The new Director of Cameleon in Iloilo, Fatima Agbe, takes up her new duties amidst a fanfare!.

<mailto:ass.cameleon@wanadoo.fr>

## AFRICA

**ADQ** (Association for Neighbourhood Development), Niamey, **Niger** has undertaken a training programme for its educators to teach them how to listen to the children as well as technical methods to make the population aware of possible problems. 8 vigilance committees as well as sub-committees have been created. Talks and debates, as well as sketches and meetings have also been organized. 37 children aged from 10 to 16 years have been reintegrated into their families. A regional meeting and workshop on the capitalization of experiences in combating trafficking and the early exodus of children was organized.

[mailto:adq\\_niamey@yahoo.fr](mailto:adq_niamey@yahoo.fr)



**CAM** (Welcome centre for minors), Pointe Noire, **Republic of the Congo**, Brazzaville. The centre houses 30 children and 50 others are assisted in their schooling and learning various trades (carpentry, car mechanics, painting and welding). A separate centre receives children during the day. Family reinsertion is encouraged according to African cultural values.

<mailto:cficcam@yahoo.fr>

**CAS** (Catholic Action for Street Children) Accra, **Ghana** has carried out an 'inventory' of children living on the streets of the city. The information collected on their numbers, their provenance, the reasons why they left their families, their papers. A rigorous methodology must be established prior

to the 'inventory' so as to ensure the reliability of the information collected by the different investigators. Please write to us for a full report on this activity. <mailto:ficcas@ighmail.com>

**FOJEDER** (Centre for disinherited street adolescents and children), **Cameroon**, recently joined REPER. The centre promotes access to education, health and food. It encourages creation and professional training. It sponsors orphaned children in foster homes. It also makes the population aware of the dangers of AIDS. <mailto:fojeder@yahoo.fr>

**MAREM** (Action for the reintegration of marginalized children), **Togo**. After a difficult first year, Marem hopes to set up a small shelter and transit house in the months ahead. The difficulties encountered, the limited funds and the attitudes of national and international authorities have led to a sad record. We are all invited to visit the site :

[www.marem.gainvision.net/page\\_le\\_marem.html](http://www.marem.gainvision.net/page_le_marem.html)

**REEJER**, Kinshasa, **Democratic Republic of the Congo** wrote to us on 15 May 2008 after the raid which carried away street children in Kinshasa on 9 May. 45 of them were locked up in a cell in the Lufungula camp. REEJER managed to extract 8 of the children and return them to their families. The others went up before a judge who sent them *temporally* to a prison 15 kilometres from the tribunal. The only complaint was that they were vagrants! During the whole procedure they received no food. [mailto:reejer\\_cg@ic-rdc](mailto:reejer_cg@ic-rdc)

**SOURIRES DE LA RUE**, (AAED) Kinshasa, **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, receives assistance from Switzerland. Composed of young volunteers without much financial assistance, the association, created 3 years ago, is forced to limit its activities to sponsoring about thirty children, in particular to ensure their schooling. <mailto:souriresdelarue@yahoo.fr>



## FRANCE

**ACPE** (Associatin against child prostitution, based in Paris, France, continues to sue those guilty of sexual exploitation of children and paedophiles. Several trials are underway. Numerous steps are taken by the association to draw the attention of the general public, students, schools and travel agencies to the problem. Contact them to find out what can be done to fight against this scourge.

<mailto:www.acpe-assoc.org>

**EDM** (Infants du Monde) in Marseilles, **France**, supports 29 centres in **Madagascar** which run schools, canteens, orphanages and social contacts with the deprived population.

<mailto:info@edm.org>

**TQM** (Trois Quart Monde) provides assistance to the association Solo Mujeres in **Guatemala** where violence is increasing every day. A programme “Health” has been set up for young prostitutes and their children. Each of the two homes receives about thirty young women. Education and vocation training is proposed, especially to become assistant nurses as there is a great shortage of them in rural areas.

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## REPER

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[www.street-children.com](http://www.street-children.com)