

In Singapore, art has a role to play in education. Art education has moved from the peripheral to a more central place in a balanced school curriculum. The Ministry of Education revised the art syllabus for all schools in 1981. The art programme is geared to meet the needs of an increasingly technological world, with sufficient emphasis on oriental and local aspects of art.

Art is taught as a compulsory subject up to secondary two in all schools in Singapore. The art curriculum is common to all schools. From secondary three to pre-university, it becomes an elective subject for the Singapore/Cambridge GCE 'O' and 'A' Level Examinations. Pupils can pursue the subject at post-secondary level at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, La Salle College of Art or Baharuddin Vocational Institute.

In March 1982, the Art and Crafts Project Team was set up in the Curriculum Development Institute of Singapore. The team develops and produces quality and innovative art and crafts instructional packages to meet the pedagogic demands of both the primary and secondary schools. The instructional packages developed include the Pupil's Resource Books, Teacher's Guides and Educational Television Programmes. The team also conducts in-service courses and school-based workshops to upgrade teachers' skills and teaching methodology. Consultancy services are also provided to ensure effective implementation of the new art programme in schools. During the implementation stage, close monitoring is carried out to ensure that effective teaching and learning take place at school level. Feedback from practising teachers of the subject is periodically called for.

THE PRIMARY SCHOOL ART CURRICULUM

The primary school art programmes aim to stimulate children's



Vegetable printing is fun, especially outdoors.

imagination and develop creativity through drawing and painting activities. Opportunities are provided for children to explore their environment and teachers help them to perceive aesthetic qualities in nature, in the man-made environment, and in works of art.

Foundational concepts and skills are introduced in the eleven Primary Pupil's Resource Books and accompanying Teacher's Guides, one for each level of the Normal, Extended and Monolingual courses.

In addition to print materials, there are 12 Educational Television Programmes that are used as supplementary materials to reinforce the concepts introduced in the Art Books. The video programmes are telecast regularly over the local television station and teachers are provided with the telecast schedules. These programmes are intended to be used at the teacher's discretion.

The teachers are allowed considerable latitude for implementation of the child-centred art curriculum,

Art Education in Singapore

by Aurelia Ang

but for a balanced art and crafts programme, the weighting on Table II is recommended for teachers' consideration when planning the programme for the schools.

Teachers are encouraged to deviate from the lessons in the books where appropriate so as to meet the needs and interests of the children. This flexible approach makes the learning and teaching of the subject more enjoyable, interesting and meaningful. The activities and concepts are organized according to the children's cognitive abilities. Every

unit of the teacher's guide includes specific objectives, time allocation for parts of the lesson, materials required for the lesson, and instructional resources and strategies. Guiding questions for critical analysis of pupils' work are also included.

SECONDARY SCHOOL ART CURRICULUM

The approach to secondary art education is different from the approach adopted for the primary art programme. The individual art teacher, a professionally educated art

specialist, determines what is taught, but the inclusion of art production, art history, art criticism and aesthetics is mandatory. Each domain develops children's visual sensibilities and skills that encourage them to describe, analyze, and interpret works of art. They learn how to perceive and discuss visual art, what to look for, and why works look as they do.

Art lessons in the lower secondary classes are of an enjoyable and exploratory nature aimed at developing a critical and visual awareness of the natural and man-made environment. The children are exposed to a wide range of aesthetic visual and tactile experiences in a variety of media so that they would have no difficulty selecting their more specialised subjects for concentrated study in the upper secondary classes.

Teachers' schemes of work are based on the following areas of art, and to ensure a balanced programme, they have to take into consideration the recommended weighting:

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Drawing and painting | 30% |
| Design | 30% |
| Project work | 20% |
| Art Appreciation | 20% |

The secondary art curriculum is contained in four Pupil's Resource Books and their accompanying Teacher's Guides. In addition, 23 Educational Television Programmes supplement the units in the art books. These programmes provide cultural, historical and aesthetic motivations to the children.

Artistic creativity is effectively promoted, if not directly taught. Activities and contents of the art programme include:

I. Drawing & Painting

- Basic Drawing
- Drawing & Painting from Still Life & Nature

| Level | Themes |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| Primary One | Myself |
| Primary Two | My Family |
| Primary Three | My School |
| Primary Four | My Neighbourhood |
| Primary Five | The Republic of Singapore |
| Primary Six | Our Wonderful World |

Table I. General themes for Singapore's developmentally sequenced art curriculum

| | Normal Extended Course | Monolingual Course |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Drawing/Painting | 30% | 20% |
| Design | 20% | 15% |
| 3-dimensional activity | 20% | 20% |
| Handicrafts | 20% | 35% |
| Art Appreciation | 10% | 10% |

Table II. Recommended weighting for teachers' consideration when planning their primary school art programme.

| Course | Level | Time allocated |
|-------------------|-------|------------------|
| Normal & Extended | P1-P6 | 1 hour per week |
| Monolingual | P4-P5 | 2 hours per week |
| Monolingual | P6 | 3 hours per week |

Table III. Recommended curriculum time for primary schools.



Teachers' in-service training is a hands-on affair.

- Portrait/Figure Drawing & Painting
- Indoor/Outdoor Drawing & Painting
- Free Composition
- Chinese Painting

II. Design

- Basic Design
- Graphic Design
- Forms & Construction
- Environmental Design
- Design for Textile, Costume & Jewellery



Graphics is part of the art curriculum.

III. Project Work

- General project, e.g. printing, photography
- Three dimensional projects, e.g. ceramics, sculpture
- Environmental projects, e.g. gardening, mural
- Projects related to textiles, costumes & jewellery
- Projects related to other subjects, e.g. electronics, woodwork

IV. Art Appreciation

- Painting
- Sculpture
- Architecture

THE ART ELECTIVE PROGRAMME

Every year, about 400 artistically talented and bright pupils whose abilities need to be nurtured participate in a special Art Elective Programme. This programme emphasises both the practical aspects of Art such as training in drawing, painting, craft skills and design, and the theoretical aspects such as Art History and Criticism.

Enrichment programmes which broaden their art experiences and



Some primary level exhibits.

deepen their understanding of art forms include participation in art camps, art exhibitions, field trips to galleries, museums, art studios and other places of interest. Enrichment and educational tours to Europe, America and Japan are also conducted.

The teachers, who are Fine Arts graduates, draw up interesting programmes for their pupils to research, draw and paint, or to interact with artists at their studios and art exhibitions. They encourage experimentation, exploration and creativity in their pupils. It is hoped that these pupils will in the future exercise leadership favourable to aesthetics and creativity in society.

CONCLUSION

In Singapore today, increasing numbers of school leavers are enrolling in schools of art or are taking art as one of the courses in post-secondary institutions. Their art studies can lead to the architecture course at the University, diploma courses in adver-



Some Art Elective Programme exhibits.

tising, interior design, teacher training or art-oriented jobs.

Art education is having a great influence on young people. It is preserving or encouraging interest in art, particularly contemporary art. There

is considerable interest in art competitions and exhibitions in art galleries. Generally, art lessons in schools are not too far removed from ordinary life. Besides making meaningful use of slides, reproductions, films, reference books and art periodicals to promote creativity, self-expression and humanism, teachers also plan field trips to museums, architectural sites, artists' studios and design centres. Often, children are given opportunities to see local events of artistic significance.

All in all, art education in Singapore aims to help children to recognise the distinctive values in art works so that they will be able to appreciate and enjoy good standards of design and craftsmanship. It is hoped that children will be able to relate their experiences gained in art and crafts lessons to their environment and have a coherent view of art. The ability to talk adequately about art in any form and enter into a meaningful discussion is an asset that enhances gracious living. ■



Kite flying is all the more exciting when the kite is self-made.