

## Art and culture give children a life that works

Teachers and pedagogues have a special responsibility to make sure that all children have an opportunity to come into close contact with art and culture every day. At a fundamental level, cultural and aesthetic experiences shape us as human beings, strengthen our ability to learn, and cultivate us as democratic citizens.

The Danish Agency for Culture's new publication, *Children Art Culture*, provides a wealth of inspiration for how teachers, pedagogues, and cultural operators can best tackle this job. The book also contains many examples of specific activities, links, and bibliographic references.

"It is important for children to gain access to quality art in many different contexts and, at the same time, to have the opportunity to test out their own abilities to produce art. Through creative and playful processes, they look at the world with new eyes and gain new knowledge and new skills," maintains Danish Minister for Culture Marianne Jelved (the Danish Social Liberal Party) in the publication's preface.

This consistent point is shared by 60 (Danish and non-Danish) experts, practitioners, and artists and six Danish government ministers in their articles about attitudes, research results, and practical experiences. Each of the publication's seven chapters has its own focus and an ocean of good arguments for prioritising art and culture to children.

The publication's seven chapters focus on:

**\* How we create an optimal framework for children to encounter art and culture in their everyday lives.**

"Art helps make sure we become whole human beings," observes Rune Gade, chairperson for the Danish Arts Council 2011-13. "Art is also connected in a fundamental way with a human being's inherent desire to play. Children must have an opportunity to come into close contact with high-quality art, so they absorb into their bones a sense of the special potential in the artistic process," he emphasises.

**\* Why children's encounter with art and culture strengthen democracy.**

A childhood that is rich in artistic and cultural activities is an important key to making sure that children have the best foundation for developing personal attitudes and values and participating as competent citizens in a democratic community. Therefore, as researchers point out, schools and day-care institutions have a special responsibility to make sure that all children have this opportunity.

**\* Why art and culture should be an integrated part of day-care institutions and all subjects taught in general-education schools – and should be conceived more broadly in teacher education programmes.**

"Not only children but teachers and pedagogues will also benefit from this because their work in education will be more successful," observes Bennyé Düranc Austring, who is project leader at University College Zealand's research and innovation department:

"The skills children learn through aesthetic activities are crucial for their development because all other learning is based upon them – in particular, the very desire to learn something new. At the same time, artistic activities enhance children's well-being and the joy they take in being at their school or day-care every day."

**\* How we can ensure children's digital skills.**

"Children today are digital natives, but not digital geniuses," says Stine Liv Johansen, Ph.D., assistant professor at the Department of Aesthetics and Communication at Aarhus University. "That is why it is important that teachers and pedagogues guide children to become conscious of themselves as media consumers and develop skills that allow them to relate reflectively, critically, and selectively to the boundless opportunities of the virtual world."

**\* Why an everyday interaction with art and culture in school or day-care has a positive effect on societal development and socioeconomic conditions.**

"Children and young people will be the ones to create the future – and innovation and creativity are the two pillars on which the development of society rests. Therefore, our ability to affect the future is dependent on the opportunities we give our children to develop their creativity – from nursery school all the way through childhood," says culture-innovator Trevor Davies.

**\* What particular potential Nordic children's culture contains, and how it can be integrated into everyday activities in practice.**

"It is obvious for the Nordic countries to collaborate to develop cultural opportunities in kindergartens and schools because we have a common Nordic view of children, education, culture, and democracy," says Danish Minister for Education Christine Antorini (the Danish Social Democratic Party):

"The Nordic view of children's culture is unique because it is based on the idea that everyone – regardless of background – is to have an equal chance and an equal opportunity to develop within the framework of the community. Because it is in our encounter with others that we acquire a common understanding of the society of which we are a part."

**\* How people can best collaborate in practice when teachers, pedagogues, artists, and cultural operators are blazing new trails together.**

"We need a more coherent effort to make sure that all children and young people have an opportunity to encounter art in their everyday life. Let's use this publication to make a difference!", urges Danish Minister for Culture Marianne Jelved (the Danish Social Liberal Party) in the concluding chapter, which presents a wide array of networks specialising in children's culture that share educational experiences and specific activities with teachers, pedagogues, and cultural operators. At national, regional, and local levels.

<You can download the publication here. (Possible addition about print edition):

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<*Proposed caption:*>

- Art and culture are not leisure-time entertainment activities or vapid decoration – they are worldviews and language that make us wiser as people, provide us with forms of expression through which we can live our lives, and help us to navigate on an existential plane, so we have a better and richer life, observes author Knud Romer in the new publication of the Danish Agency for Culture, *Children Art Culture – in an Everyday That Works*.