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## Re-Imaging City Walls: Engaging Children to Replace Hostile Wall-Chalking with their Drawings

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# **Re-Imaging City Walls**

**Engaging Children to Replace  
Hostile Wall-Chalking With their  
Drawings**

Rabeya Jalil

***Re-Imaging Walls of the City***  
**Rabeya Jalil**  
**February 1, 2016**

## **LESSON PLAN GUIDE/ CURRICULAR GUIDE**

Experience how two art educators lead a community-based initiative by engaging children from suburban districts to revamp public walls; erase hate graffiti and wall-chalking and replace them with interactive drawings.

### **Introduction/ Summary:**

Many public walls in Karachi (Pakistan) are covered in hate graffiti against ethnic groups, wall chalking of political party slogans and unauthorized advertisement texts. Bus stops, heritage sites, parks, building boundaries, side-walks of main roads, underpasses and flyovers are some of the most common places to publicize these mass messages. The core objective of our community-based art initiative was to creatively reclaim these public spaces. It was a city-wide movement to eradicate hostile and negative writings from the city and replace them with images representing positivity, unity and peace – with children’s artistic expression and creative interpretation of public and private spaces. It was a three-tiered project (*The Stencil Art Project, Wall Project with Children and Individual Artists Project*), that enables individuals to engage with the city and generate a dialogue through visual communication.

One of the projects (the *Wall Project with Children*) was the extension of an on-going initiative, *Bachon se Tabdeeli* (Making a Difference through Children) led by two art educators (Rabeya Jalil and Shahana Rajani) who have re-interpreted drawings made by children from three suburban localities of Karachi (*Shireen Jinnah Colony, Lyari and Pechs*). The drawings evolved through a series of art workshops (conducted as a pilot project, under the same initiative) that facilitate public school children to understand and visualize their engagements with public spaces. Children went through creative practices of drawing and mapmaking.

### **Phase 1\* (discussed in detail later/ divided into 8 sessions)**

WORKSHOPS enabled children to understand and visualize their engagements with public spaces in their neighbourhoods through creative practices of drawing, mapmaking and other artistic mediums. Workshops explored how these public spaces represent infinite possibilities for play, imagination, adventure and friendships. Children identified public spaces that are part of their daily life and the activities done in those spaces. Mapmaking allowed children to creatively express, make sense of and connect with their immediate surroundings, including play spaces, secret places, the natural world and pathways and routes between places. Children were also encouraged to

verbally and creatively advocate to others about the importance and value of public spaces.

### Phase 2

MAP LEAFLET was published, based on the information collected from children's maps. These maps represented children's use of public spaces in the selected neighbourhoods. Accompanying text explained the project, highlighted the importance of public space for children and explained its benefits.

### Phase 3

EXHIBITION displayed children's art work made during the workshop and the documentation of the workshops, video clips of children and interactive activities for children and adult visitors. Visitors learnt about the different public spaces in the different areas of Karachi.

### Phase 4

For the *Re-Imaging Walls of the City* project, these drawings were enlarged and, after the State's (Government's) consent, recreated on large public walls in collaboration with a billboard painter. The aim of this art education initiative was to highlight children's role as dynamic agents/ advocates in society who actively produce and make use of spaces in their vicinity. Through this process, children gradually discovered the potential functions of communal places, identify spaces for play and friendship and celebrate experiences of cultural diversity in their respective regions. They also reflected on the socio-environmental issues affecting public spaces. With the support of a strong team of students, artists, educators and the wider community, we attempted to help create vibrant communities that supported equitable access to quality learning through art education.

## **Core Objectives**

1. Embrace the city as a classroom; a school without boundaries
2. Highlight children's role as dynamic agents/ advocates in society who actively produce and make use of spaces in their vicinity; explore the production of public spaces by children
3. Explore the potential functions of communal places, identify spaces for play and friendship and celebrate experiences of cultural diversity in different regions.
4. Reflect on the socio-environmental issues affecting public spaces
5. Create vibrant communities (with the support of a strong team of students, artists, educators and the wider community) to support equitable access to quality learning through art education.
6. Design a curriculum that assimilates integrated and project based learning
7. Engage with the Arts through public discourse; create spaces and opportunities for extending transformative learning in art and humanities to wider audiences

**OUTLINE WITH STEPS TO FOLLOW**  
**FOR CARRYING OUT A SIMILAR PROJECT IN ONE'S OWN COMMUNITY:**

Total number of workshops at each school: 8

Each session: 2-3 hours

Name of Schools:

Government Boys Primary School

Cantt No. 1

Shireen Jinnah Colony

Karachi, Pakistan

Government Girls Primary School

Shireen Jinnah Colony

Karachi, Pakistan

Pak Jamhooria, Girls Primary School

Shireen Jinnah Colony

Karachi, Pakistan

**Phase 1\*: WORKSHOPS**

**Summary: 8 sessions**

**Introduction/ dialogue**

Pay attention to the ways in which children value, find meaning in and make sense of their immediate public environments.

Allow children to creatively express, through drawing and other activities, the relationships they have with their immediate public environments.

Artist-educator will identify the public spaces that are part of children's daily life.

- What routes and paths do they regularly walk through?
- Where do they play?
- What are their imaginary and/or secret places?
- Where do they meet new people and make new friends?
- Where do they hangout with their friends and/or family?
-

Identify the activities done in those public spaces.

Understand how public spaces represent infinite possibilities for play, imagination, adventure, friendships, social and cultural exchanges.

### **Session 1:**

Map an aerial view of their daily route from home to school (with graphite pencils only on cartridge sheet, 20 x 15 inches)

List the public spaces that have been identified by students as part of their daily lives, and the activities done in those spaces?

*Spaces:*

The railway track

Mosques

School

Park

Buildings

Buildings in Construction

Road

Shops

Food stalls, carts

Water tanks

Lorries, trucks, rickshaws, motorbikes, cycles

Beach

Hamza Masjid

Haqqani Masjid

Mustafa Masjid Ayesha Masjid

Bilal Masjid

AbuBakar Masjid

Amna Masjid

Madina Masjid

Mavia Masjid

Sadia Masjid

Kosar Masjid

Laal Masjid

Shaheed Benazir Park

Clifton Park

Zamazama Park

Aladdin Park

Sahil Samandur

Marine Center

Shopping Centers/ Shopping Malls: Chase Up, Hyper Star, Charya Chok, Masan Chok, Kaladar

*Activities:*

*Kunchay, Buntay* (Playing with round marbles)

Cricket

Shopping

Football

*Gulli Danda*

Dining, eating out

Leisure trips with family

Roaming/ walking around with friends

Helping their fathers and brothers in their work

Escorting, chaperoning their younger siblings to and from school

**Session 2:**

Observational and memory drawings of one public space/ space that they occupy or see frequently (with colored markers only on cartridge sheet, 20 x 15 inches)

**Session 3:**

Identifying ways in which children occupy public spaces,  
choosing one activity from them  
and then visualizing/ interpreting/ expressing it (with pencil and oil pastels).  
(on cartridge sheet, 20 x 15 inches)

**Session 4:**

Exploration of acrylic paint with brushes  
Learning about color mixing, color exploration, paint application  
(on cartridge sheet, 20 x 15 inches)

**Session 5-6:**

*Collaborative Mapping Project*

Feeding off from and taking inspiration from their 'Session 1' mapping project, the students will collectively (and in groups of 5-6) be working with mixed media (pencils, coloured markers, oil pastels, and acrylic paint) on a white-based large 8 x 4 feet *lasani* sheet.



## **Session 7-8:**

### *Advocacy Project*

Identify elements/ issues/ concerns that are unfavourable in their public spaces and visualize, interpret and represent them through materials and mediums of their choice on cartridge paper, 10 x 7.5 inches

If they were given complete authority for a year to work for the development of their locality and immediate public spaces, how would they improve, build and reinvent their spaces?

Also, how could they improve the status quo of the problems identified in their first task of the advocacy project?

Reflecting on tasks 2 and 3, they would visualize, interpret and represent them through materials and mediums of their choice on cartridge paper, 10 x 7.5 inches.

Identify and *drop a pin* on their collaborative *lasani* sheets at their drawn places/ areas and spaces where they want to make and see those changes and improvements.

Make a Key corresponding to their *dropped pins* and connect it to their two advocacy drawings/ art works (that will be places adjacent to the collaborative *lasani* board during the work exhibit).

### **Practical problems in the workshops and some of the solutions**

Children were unfamiliar with some of the art mediums and materials they were given and hence combining content with the ability to handle new material was challenging.

I tried to overcome this problem by introducing one medium/ material at a time along with a set of content based and inquiry based ideas for each day.

Also, they struggled between how to draw and *expressing* what they felt they wanted to draw. A dialogue before and during their art making activity facilitated their creative and artistic process.