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Art and creativity in times of pandemic: "illustrating dreams from home". Its social and educational impact

Arte y creatividad en tiempos de pandemia: "Ilustrando sueños desde casa". Su impacto social y educativo

Arte e criatividade em tempos de pandemia: "Ilustrando sonhos de casa". Seu impacto social e educacional

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ABSTRACT

The wide experience of community work in Cuba undoubtedly reveals a particular way of conceiving the culture, managing it and implementing it for the sake of social development. An example of that are the results obtained during the last decades by sociocultural community projects throughout the country. The reality established by the global pandemic state since March 2020 has brought important consequences for life of all Cubans, including community projects. The present article is precisely about the virtual art workshops "Illustrating dreams from home", an initiative promoted by the project *CreArte : Crecer con las Artes* during the social isolation provoked by Covid - 19. Based on an interpretive- descriptive methodology of basically qualitative character, the foundations of the conception assumed for the virtual workshops as well as the main coordinates followed for managing the processes carried out; on the other hand, the main results derived from the experience as well as the social impact for direct and indirect project benefactors, are presented

Keywords: arts; culture; community projects; impact.

RESUMEN

La vasta experiencia de trabajo comunitario en Cuba revela, sin lugar a dudas, una

manera particular de concebir la cultura, gestionarla e implementarla en función del desarrollo social. Muestra de ello lo constituyen los resultados alcanzados en las últimas décadas por los proyectos socioculturales comunitarios a lo largo del país. La realidad impuesta por el estado de pandemia global desde marzo 2020 ha tenido trascendencias importantes para la vida de los cubanos y cubanas, incluidos los proyectos comunitarios. El presente artículo versa, precisamente, sobre los talleres virtuales: "Ilustrando sueños desde casa", una iniciativa promovida por el proyecto *CreArte: Crecer con las Artes* durante el período de aislamiento social provocado por la COVID-19. A partir de una metodología descriptivo-interpretativa de carácter básicamente cualitativo, se presentan las bases de la concepción asumida para los talleres virtuales y las coordinadas principales seguidas en la gestión de los procesos desarrollados; asimismo, se describen los principales resultados derivados de la experiencia, así como su alcance social y educativo para los beneficiarios directos e indirectos del proyecto.

Palabras clave: arte; cultura; proyecto comunitario; impacto.

RESUMO

A vasta experiência de trabalho comunitário em Cuba revela, sem dúvida, uma forma particular de conceber a cultura, geri-la e implementá-la com base no desenvolvimento social. Exemplo disso são os resultados alcançados nas últimas décadas por projetos socioculturais comunitários em todo o país. A realidade imposta pelo estado de pandemia global desde março de 2020 teve consequências importantes para a vida de homens e mulheres cubanos, incluindo projetos comunitários. Este artigo trata justamente das oficinas virtuais: "Ilustrando sonhos de casa", uma iniciativa promovida pelo projeto

CreArte: Crescer com as Artes durante o período de isolamento social causado pelo COVID-19. A partir de uma metodologia descriptivo-interpretativa de natureza basicamente qualitativa, apresentam-se as bases da concepção assumida para as oficinas virtuais e as principais coordenadas seguidas na gestão dos processos desenvolvidos; Da mesma forma, são descritos os principais resultados derivados da experiência, bem como seu alcance social e educacional para os beneficiários diretos e indiretos do projeto.

Palavras-chave: arte; cultura; Projeto comunitário; impacto.

INTRODUCTION

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced the level of a global pandemic due to the spread of the COVID-19 disease across the five continents, caused by the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. In a few days, many countries, including Cuba, passed to the epidemiological health phase and established social quarantine.

For more than a year, the pandemic has generated serious consequences for the social, economic, family and work life of Cubans. This health crisis has had a particular impact on culture, a key sector for the country's development project.

In the midst of the adverse circumstances imposed by the confinement and the almost total closure of socio-cultural institutions, many initiatives have been promoted throughout the country, basically through virtual platforms, to keep culture alive: *online concerts*, visits guided from digital networks to museums or heritage sites, virtual presentations of books, plays, exhibitions, craft fairs, contests and festivals,

etc. In keeping with this reality, other groups of social actors, among which community projects stand out, found it necessary to readjust their habitual practices to the new conditions.

The resizing of the management of community projects within the framework of the current pandemic conditions has, however, implied multiple challenges from the didactic-methodological, organizational, technological, communicative, and even conceptual point of view.

Community projects in Cuba, their cultural conception in terms of development

Culture is an essential part of the life of human beings, a marker of identity of peoples. In its current vision, as a universal good, it is defined as the set of distinctive spiritual and material, intellectual and affective features that characterize a society or a social group, and that includes, in addition to the arts and letters, the ways of life, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs (UNESCO, 1982).

As an expression of the social system, of the development and self-development of human beings, of the degree of dominance over the forces of nature and society, culture is inserted in an integrating conception of development (Salazar Y., 2018), according to which every human being has the right to fully access it and, at the same time, participate in solidarity in the achievements that promote well-being and enjoyment of the spiritual and material goods inherent to human dignity (UNDP, 2004).

Development, as Torres *et al.* (2018) constitutes a process of social construction and structural change that, from an innovative territorial environment and led by local governments, develops capacities to manage public policies, strategies, programs

and projects aimed at taking advantage of endogenous and exogenous resources, promoting economic transformations, social and natural in localities on sustainable bases, with active and leading citizen participation, in order to raise the quality of life of the population.

Legitimizing culture as an indispensable agent for development management (Rodríguez S. *et al.*, 2020), has involved, above all, placing human beings, their feelings, attitudes, values, daily practices and identities as the center and end of development processes (Bugallo, 2016). This vision is transcendental for countries like Cuba, where culture is valued as one of the fundamental links of the nation, linked to the practices of individuals, institutions, and social groups (Juliá, 2016) In its projection, Cuban culture stands out from the narrow margins of a specific artistic event, assuming a holistic integrating character through basic principles such as:

- The defense and development of the national identity and the universal and deeply Latin American and Caribbean vocation.
- The conservation and dissemination of cultural heritage.
- The recognition of cultural diversity.
- The promotion and encouragement of artistic and literary creation.
- Respect and support for the leadership and creativity of communities in conducting their socio-cultural processes.
- The role of culture in promoting and guiding socioeconomic processes (Ministry of Culture of Cuba, 2020).

From this developing cultural conception, the gaze focuses on the potentialities at the local and community level, where the fundamental weight of change falls on citizen participation, and where culture becomes a driving element of spiritual well-being, the promotion of values, the safeguarding of

traditions and the strengthening of identity; where the role of institutions, social groups and individuals is resized based on transformation and social practice based on their ability to participate actively and responsibly in their development.

Among the wide range of cultural entities and agents of greater prominence in the local context, community projects stand out: non-profit socio-cultural initiatives, of a participatory, inclusive and transformative nature that bring together actors from various professional and social backgrounds, with the common goal to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of the community from strategically planned actions.

Community projects involve the rational use of human and material resources for the production of goods or services; In general, they are characterized by:

- The participatory dimension as a basic condition of management processes.
- The systemic, dialectical and integral character.
- The need to locate the actors involved as subjects of their own transformations.
- The stimulation and development of skills and abilities.
- The empowerment of the educational dimension and the development of values.
- The incorporation of an approach with technical and methodological rigor.
- Recognition and consideration of the context where the project is developed.
- The articulation with processes and strategies of greater scope (Juliá *et al.*, 2006, pp. 7-8).

The social scope of community initiatives is inevitably expressed in the improvement of the quality of life of the beneficiaries, their spiritual well-being; in the level of involvement of the participants for the sake of the community and the achievement of common goals; in the development of values, change of attitudes, behaviors, ways of being and lifestyles.

Harmonizing all the mechanisms and frameworks that are part of a community project, however, constitutes a complex task, whose performance is influenced by multiple objective and subjective factors, such as those highlighted by the basic methodological conception, functional capacity and creative management of its promoters and coordinators, the level of articulation between the various social actors, as well as the implementation of a continuous evaluation and systematization system of the process.

The objective of this article is to describe the experience developed by the *CreArte community socio cultural project: Growing up with the Arts* of Pinar del Río, during more than a year of social confinement in Cuba. The study focuses on the analysis of the conception on which the organization and implementation of the virtual workshops "Illustrating dreams from home" was based, the results derived from the practice and the impacts caused in the direct and indirect beneficiaries of this draft.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is descriptive and explanatory. The dialectical method was used as a general method, based on the historical-logical, the analysis-synthesis and the systemic-structural, to assess the theoretical assumptions that support the conception of

community projects from the cultural and educational point of view.

From the qualitative methodology, the ethnographic method was used, with the aim of interpreting the behaviors derived from the experience developed through the virtual workshops, the reactions of the participants, their levels of involvement in carrying out the promoted actions, their personal appreciations and value judgments.

To obtain the information, the following empirical methods were used:

- Documentary analysis: the calls prepared to promote the different virtual workshops were reviewed; Similarly, all the documents derived from each experience developed (messages shared in the WhatsApp group, socialized collective exhibitions, journalistic articles published in the written and oral press).
- Survey: applied to the selected sample of the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project to find out their evaluative criteria about the experience.
- Composition: as part of each workshop developed, the participants exchanged their assessments through compositions referring to the moments lived and shared, their motivations and incentives during the process of creating the works and interaction in the group.

From the descriptive statistics method, inferential logic was used to establish regularities and trends from the interpretation of the information found.

The investigation comprised five fundamental stages:

- Conceptual analysis of the object of study of the investigation.
- Determination of the methodological bases of the impact evaluation study.
- Design and application of the instruments.
- Processing of the information obtained.
- Analysis and evaluation of the results.

The study covered the universe of 47 participating children and adolescents (direct beneficiaries of *CreArte virtual workshops*), nine members of the Management Group, made up of the main coordinators and art instructors, 34 indirect beneficiaries of the project (23 relatives who served as a communication bridge for the workshop facilitators and 17 community representatives, nine of them from institutions allied to the Project and eight artists associated with the initiative).

The selection of the study sample was estimated at a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, using the stratified random technique. A significant group of the universe, of the direct beneficiaries of the project, were part of it: 39 participating children and adolescents; the managers and instructors (nine members of the Management Group, including the two instructors); of the indirect beneficiaries: 21 family members and 17 community representatives. The amplitude of the sample was in correspondence, fundamentally, with the availability of the subjects to collaborate with the investigation.

RESULTS

The information obtained from the application of the different instruments, after being organized and processed, led to a descriptive synthesis of the experience developed through the virtual workshops

"Illustrating dreams from home". In order to facilitate preliminary understanding, a brief reference to general aspects of the Project as a community initiative is presented.

CreArte: Crecer con las Artes is a community socio-cultural project attached to the "Pedro Junco" House of Culture, with a legal framework approved in January 2016 by agreement of the Pinar del Río Municipal Administration Council. Likewise, it is recognized as an Artistic Project by the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC) and as a Children's Creation Group by the National Council of Houses of Culture (CNCC).

Based on a pedagogical humanistic conception, *CreArte* is part of the articulated alliance of educators and artists (with didactic training as instructors), family members and community representatives; all based on a common goal: to contribute to the development of ethical and aesthetic values in the children and adolescents of the community, through artistic creation workshops. This conception is revealed through basic precepts that support its management, organization and operation system.

To enhance its harmonious development, continuity and sustainability as a community initiative, *CreArte* assumes the following as basic precepts of its operation:

- Consideration of the project and its artistic creation workshops as a developing cultural and educational space.
- Appreciation of art as a tool to promote personal growth, the development of creativity, talent and, above all, human values.
- Respect for the ethical principles of volunteerism of the members, the inclusive and non-profit nature of the

project, the rational use of available material resources.

- Recognition of the leading role of the family, the articulation and synergies of work with the different social actors of the community.
- Permanent search for opportunities to foster the creative capacity of the workshop participants and promote their results (participation in exhibitions, cultural galas, competitions and festivals).
- Appreciation of the role of art instructors for their community vocation, their educational training and desire for professional improvement.
- Propensity for creative management, collective decision-making and the use of a participatory and dialogical style of coordination.
- Defense of cultural identity, respect for interculturality and freedom of creation, in correspondence with the social project of the nation.

In practice, *CreArte* has two permanent spaces for appreciation and artistic creation: the drawing workshop "Illustrating Dreams" (instructor: Nestor M. de Oca), the engraving workshop "PekeGrafía" (instructor: Odeibys Gato); and a third, basically temporary-itinerant: the "CreArte Summer School".



Fig. 1- *CreArte* permanent workshops: "Illustrating dreams", "PekeGraphía" and "CreArte Summer School"

Initially inserted in the "Hermanos Barcón" and "Cuba Libre" communities, in the city of Pinar del Río, and based in the "Ramón González Coro" Provincial Library and the

"Hermanos Loynaz" Center for the Promotion and Development of Literature, *CreArte* was born and developed under the permanent support of the Community Initiative Reference and Exchange Center (CIERIC) at UNEAC, the "Pedro Junco" House of Culture and the Provincial Center of Community Culture (CPCC).

Likewise, *CreArte* is distinguished by its permanent articulation with important institutions and socio-cultural entities of Pinar del Río, with which it maintains solid alliances and work synergies: the Directorate of Culture, the Provincial Center for Books and Literature, the Provincial Council of Visual Arts, the Center for Education and Promotion for Sustainable Development (CEPRODESO), the Computing Palace, the Provincial Museum of History, the Center for the Study of Educational Sciences of the University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Sáiz Montes de Oca", the "José Martí" Cultural Society and the Municipal Directorate of Education, among others.

Socially appreciated for being part of the systematic cultural programming of the Directorate of Culture of Pinar del Río and for its high social-community impact, the project accumulates, during its five years of sustained operation, a wide range of sociocultural activities carried out, participation in festivals, individual and collective exhibitions, fairs, in addition to multiple awards and recognitions at the local, provincial and national levels.

***CreArte* facing the challenges of COVID-19**

With the start of the pandemic in Cuba and the establishment of the social quarantine as of March 23, 2020, the community activity of *CreArte*, for the first time since its creation, was physically stopped, being restricted in real time and space. The search for alternatives to revive the project, in the new

conditions, started from the claim of the members themselves and their families to restart the workshops, in addition to the certainty of the coordinators regarding the role of the arts as a factor of resilience and a tool to contribute to the emotional balance of people in confinement.

After exploring multiple options and under the advice of CIERIC, the Casa de Cultura "Pedro Junco" and the CPCC, on May 2, 2020, as a pilot test, *CreArte* launched its first call for virtual workshops "Illustrating dreams from House".

The call for the I Workshop "El Duende Pintor" was open and inclusive and was based on the story of the same name by the renowned writer from Pinar del Río Nersys Felipe, following the didactic approach of Néstor Montes de Oca of integrating literature and the plastic arts. for the sake of maximizing the imagination and creativity of infants.

Without extensive prior knowledge in the use of social networks, the promoters of the new initiative created a WhatsApp group to which 12 boys and girls signed up, most of them belonging to the usual workshops of the project, in correspondence with their real possibilities of access to Internet and use of social networks.



Fig. 2- Photo collage of the I Workshop "Illustrating dreams from home", "El Duende Pintor" (May 2020)

The impact of that first experience encouraged the continuity of the virtual workshops. The II Workshop, "Dear Mother", was dedicated to Mother's Day. Its call, in addition to including the story of Néstor Montes de Oca himself "The light painting", was co-sponsored by the Ibero-American Network of Pedagogy (REDIPE), of great international prestige, which for years has had several affiliates, members of the project.

The fact of having this new strategic alliance, without a doubt, implied not only the endorsement and support of an educational entity of international prestige for the educational conception of *CreArte*, but also an important step in promoting the call and the results of the workshop in terms of participants, to which were added children and adolescents belonging to other municipalities and localities of Pinar del Río (Consolación del Sur, Mantua and Herradura), provinces (Havana, Matanzas, Sancti Spiritus) and countries (Mexico, Italy,

Canada, Spain and Argentina). As a result, the usual geographical limits of the project were expanded, the concept of "community" was resized and new bonds of interaction, appreciation and artistic creation were created, which, without a doubt, significantly favored the affective climate of the workshops, the values and intercultural dialogue.



Fig. 3- Photo collage of the II Workshop "Illustrating dreams from home", "Dear Mother" (May 2020)

The impact of the first two workshops in artistic-creative terms transcended the virtuality generated in the group: thirteen of the resulting works were selected, among many others at a national level, to be part of the CREACION-LINE gallery of the National Museum of Fine Arts, in homage to International Museum Day, an event that became a high recognition of the talent and creativity of the workshop leaders (<http://www.bellasartes.co.cu/exposicion/galeria-creacion-line>).

The III Virtual Workshop, "Our Martí", was dedicated to the celebration of the 125th

anniversary of the fall of the Apostle and was co-sponsored by the "José Martí" Cultural Society of Pinar del Río, an institution with which *CreArte* has maintained a strong alliance since its foundation, given Martí's conception that distinguishes its theoretical and practical foundations as a sociocultural project with artistic and pedagogical dimensions. This time the call included as inspirational texts the story of Nersys Felipe "Una noche en Nueva York", combined with the poem "Notas de amor" by Néstor Montes de Oca, dedicated to Ismaelillo.



Fig. 4- Photo collage of the III Workshop "Illustrating dreams from home", "My Martí" (May 2020)

The development of this workshop marked important guidelines, not only in terms of the number of participants, which by June had already reached the figure of 37 (many of them new members of the project), but also in terms of the need to define the organizational and management forms to be assumed in the future regarding the operation of virtual workshops. As a strategy in this sense, the creation of a coordinating group was proposed, called to become the

legitimate management body that would be in charge of making decisions regarding the general coordination of the workshops, promotion and communication, alliances and cooperation, evaluation and monitoring. This proposal, very much in keeping with the collective nature of management that has always characterized *CreArte*, was quickly acclaimed and supported by the representatives of allied institutions and family members who actively participated in the virtual group.

The open and participatory nature of the coordinating group made it possible to include members such as Malena Rodríguez, professor at the University of Havana; Mónica Perlingieri, retired Argentine teacher; Olga Pacheco, a Mexican social worker, and the Spanish Mercedes Fernández from the Monachil Public Library, Granada, among others.

The initial experience, developed during the first three workshops, laid the necessary foundations regarding the forms of organization and general methodological conception of the initiative and also regarding the particular strategies to be followed for each workshop. The following 11 workshops developed revolved around topics of particular cultural interest and, in each case, had the support of educational and socio-cultural institutions with which there were already consolidated alliances and new ones that happily joined the initiative:

- IV Workshop, "My family", co-sponsored by the Ibero-American Network of Pedagogy (REDIPE) and the International DVV (Deutscher Volkshochschul Verband - Institute for International Cooperation of the German Association for Adult Education), dedicated to the family and the role it plays in our lives.
- V Workshop, "For a better world", in greeting to World Environment Day, co-sponsored by the Center for

- Education and Promotion for Sustainable Development (CEPRODESO).
- VI Workshop, "Friendship and hugs", dedicated to friendship and hugs as a physical expression of important human value.
 - VII Workshop, "Between letters and brushes" (artistic-literary contest), co-sponsored by the Provincial Library "Ramón González Coro" and the Provincial Center for Books and Literature, dedicated to assessing the importance of the habit of reading, as well as artistic and literary creation.
 - VIII Workshop, "My love for animals", co-sponsored by the Center for Education and Promotion for Sustainable Development (CEPRODESO), dedicated to the value of animals and the importance of providing them with protection and affection to live in a world of respect and harmony with nature.
 - IX Workshop, "Vuelos lilas", dedicated to the birthday of the writer Nersys Felipe (National Literature Award), co-sponsored by the Provincial Committee of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC) and the Organization of Pioneers of Cuba (OPJM).
 - X Workshop, " Let's redraw the world", inspired by a world of peace and harmony, love and solidarity, environmental balance and respect for diversity among human beings.
 - XI Workshop, "The colors of our America", co-sponsored by DVV International, dedicated to the traditions and roots of our peoples, their festivals, culinary customs, rituals, crops, costumes, icons and historical sites.
 - XII Workshop, "Painting the world color hope", **co-sponsored by the** Telepinar Territorial Television Channel, on the value of *CreArte* `s *virtual workshops* during the social confinement caused by COVID-19.
- XIII Workshop, "Dreams and lullabies", co-sponsored by the Electronic Bulletin "El Bohío", inspired by the work of the young Spanish writer Guaxara Alfonso González.
 - XIV Workshop, " Fantasies in full color ", co-sponsored by the Center for Education and Promotion for Sustainable Development (CEPRODESO), the Provincial Library "Ramón González Coro" and the Electronic Bulletin "El Bohío", conceived with the intention of Systematize, through a collective exhibition, the work developed by the children of the Project since the beginning of COVID-19.

DISCUSSION

By analyzing in detail, the experience lived and shared for more than a year and a half through the virtual workshops, reviewing the hundreds of messages exchanged in the WhatsApp group, and after processing the criteria exposed in the surveys carried out as part of the investigation, the most relevant aspects of the initiative are the following:

- The virtual workshops meant a break with the usual way of operating *CreArte*, in terms of the frequency of interaction of the boys and girls. Weekend meetings in the workshops were replaced by daily virtual "meetings", which sometimes took place several times a day, characterized by a high level of interactivity not only from the artistic-creative point of view, but also from the personal-family point of view. This gradually influenced the development of a new group identity, a sense of belonging to the group.

The concept of "family of dreamers" appeared and was gradually consolidated.

- The usual artistic manifestations of the *CreArte workshops* (drawing and engraving) were expanded, now encompassing not only other modalities of the plastic arts such as handicrafts, photography and installation, but also other manifestations such as literature, theater, audiovisual production.
- It changed the role of the family in the life of the project, its level of influence and protagonism. One of the first experiences derived from the initiative was the need to promote a different form of work from home: the group, which encouraged the realization of collective works, the result of the joint work of the boy or girl with other members of the family.
- They always maintained a predominantly participatory character based on open and sincere exchange between children and adolescents, including family members, all with a voice and a vote in collective decision-making regarding the operation of the workshops. Thus, for example, to define the theme of each call, the dialogue was previously opened in the chat to find out the interests and motivations of the workshop participants. Among the most important selection criteria, considered by themselves, was the celebration of historical events (birthday of José Martí), dates of universal importance (Mother's Day, World Environment Day), as well as reasons of special connotation and sensitivity (family, friendship and hugs, love for animals).
- Literary texts by national and international writers were included in each call, with the purpose of serving as a source of inspiration for the participants and also as an incentive to motivate, through reading, analysis and assessment of essential aspects treated by the author. (a): friendship, love for nature, family, animals, traditions, history, the country, its heroes, etc.
- The WhatsApp group, created as a fundamental space for the virtual workshops, became an interactive platform in which not only artistic creation was promoted, but also mutual knowledge and exchange between the workshop participants, under the principles of respect and mutual understanding. To do this, whenever possible, the way to motivate the participants, provoke them, both in their artistic creation and in the investigation and deepening of the chosen theme, the authors, as well as the interesting passages about which they could read and discuss in the family context.
- Assumed with a developer didactic-pedagogical approach, with a flexible, open and inclusive nature, the workshops not only provided the option of presenting works of personal creation, but also collective. As a result, on several occasions joint works were carried out involving two brothers (Daniela and Dariana; Edwin and Yazmin), two cousins (Nilito and Fabián), a boy, girls and parents (Leonardo and his mother Graciela; Fabio and her mother Malena; Trini, her mother Mónica and her father Juan).
- They became a space for intercultural exchange in which an affective environment prevailed between boys and girls from different countries, their families; always with a spirit of acceptance of cultural diversity, respect, mutual understanding, gender approach and equity.
- In addition to encouraging artistic creation, the exchanges stimulated guessing games, voice messages and

videos of the participants themselves reading poems, sharing ideas and assessments of collective interest.

- Each workshop closed with the presentation of all the works, shown in a virtual exhibition format. The publication in the group of this audiovisual, made with modest technological resources, was a moment of enjoyment, personal and collective joy, which strengthened the sense of belonging and identity of each participant in the project.
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In artistic-creative terms, the virtual workshops encouraged not only the realization and exchange of plastic works, but also literary ones such as poems and stories.

by chance of life I joined CreArte it was something amazing I never imagined it.	united we stand in thought We share drawings And nice moments.
have friends at a distance it's something great when we interact We give each other hands.	the quarantine made us drift apart But CreateArt He was able to avoid it. <i>Kevin Munoz</i>

A total of 318 works was derived from the 14 virtual workshops of *CreArte*. To them are added another 83 presented by the "Illustrators of dreams" to competitions at the provincial, national and some international levels, deserving of important recognitions, prizes and mentions by entities

such as UNICEF, the National Council of the House of Culture, the Center of Studies and Environmental Services of Villa Clara (CESAMVC), the UNEAC and the Organization of Pioneers "José Martí", among others.

The impact of virtual workshops, however, is not limited to the individual dimension of the participants, it encompasses above all the family, a space in which the epidemic contingency has led to the necessary reevaluation of interpersonal relationships. In this sense, virtual workshops seem to have become fortuitous drivers of affective exchange between children and adolescents and their parents, in a healthy pretext not only for evaluative dialogues about art and life, but also for respectful and appreciative rapprochement, for learning, fun and personal growth.

CreArte -acknowledges Jarmilka Cándano-, more than a project is a great family, where the most beautiful dreams are cultivated. Our little ones have been filled with joy and fantasies and together with them so have we. With the pandemic, *CreArte* once again it reinvented itself and thanks to social networks it allowed us not only to share again with our usual friends: children and mothers, fathers, grandmothers, instructors... but the family grew, others arriving from other countries, different land same dreams. The colors now come not only in the children's drawings but also in all the nuances of poems, songs, verses from Martí and the thousand joys shared in the chat. My son Israel David is very happy to have so many friends and he doesn't want to miss any comments from them, neither do I, who once again feel like a girl and want to fly in Nilito's tiger magic balloon to see Trini's cat sun up close Let's go Lize, Amelia, Salet , Maykol , Shaidely ... let's go, let's all go.



Fig. 5- Looking at you (Trinidad Quintana Perlingieri)

The virtual workshops have generated a beautiful exchange full of colors and celebration for each painting made. It is a group of dreamers that in these times of COVID-19 comforts and makes isolation more bearable, especially at a time when it is difficult to hold out the hope of returning soon to hugs, meetings, celebrations... little was the birthday of our daughter Trinidad. He received so much love from that wonderful country far away, that at the end of the day he felt that everyone was here. Art breaks down borders and unites peoples (Juan Quintana and Mónica Perlingieri).

A determining factor for the proper functioning and performance of the initiative is the fact that it is based on strategic alliances with socio-cultural and educational institutions and entities. This covers not only the already consolidated joints but also the new ones, with organizations such as CECE, REDIPE, DVV, among others. Although, unfortunately, during the entire experience, material support was never obtained from any institution in terms of technological facilities, internet access or artistic materials, the role of inter-institutional relations was relevant and highly significant.

Accompanying from the pedagogical political conception of popular environmental education - Betty Hernández points out - has been a primary objective of the Center for Education and Promotion for Sustainable

Development (CEPRODESO) in its alliance with *CreArte*. A relationship has been woven that has involved reinforcing senses, untying knots, sharing moorings from a human fabric that has managed to articulate children, families and experiences to put them in dialogue and make them grow without borders, being aware of the scope of each action in the current context. Joint work has allowed us to build logic to gain ground in raising awareness in institutions and communities with the socio-environmental reality that we live in, building together, from respect for diversity, a better life on a daily basis, which multiplies our commitment to transform ourselves in order to transform our environment. These have been hard months in every sense and for everyone, but COVID-19 did not penetrate *CreArte*'s vision, today it is a new project, impressively enriched and together we will continue to contribute to that better world that we know is possible, convinced that one star is the same as a million, which is why it is not a closed project, but an open dream in which there is room for many



Fig. 6- The joy of a hug (Marcelo Morales Hernández)

Regarding the communication strategy followed by *CreArte*, it is valid to recognize the important role played by the mass media at the local level, with which the project has always maintained strong alliances: TelePinar, the radio station Radio Guamá and the "Guerrillero" newspaper. The continuous monitoring of these media to the virtual workshops led to different journalistic works dedicated to the project and its protagonists.

For their part, for the managers of the initiative, the virtual workshops have had a special meaning, the scope of the experience goes beyond the initial idea as an artistic and educational alternative to revive the project, its community action in conditions of social isolation caused by the pandemic. Its effect transcends the almost fifty participating boys and girls, and almost the same number of families involved: it goes beyond the works carried out by the workshop facilitators, including drawings, poems and short stories, or even the dozens of awards and mentions awarded in 20 months of operation by important cultural entities such as the National Council of Houses of Culture, UNICEF in Cuba, all as well-deserved recognition of talent, high degree of creativity, motivation and artistic inspiration of the "dream illustrators".

For the promoters and coordinators of the initiative, the most important contribution of this virtual platform has been in the developed, dynamic and creative environment promoted, which has generated high levels of motivation for the arts, for the sincere, spontaneous, respectful exchange, from the affective interaction between the participants.

Each of the environments promoted by CreArte flows in the direction of well-being and fertile roots. The project has made it very clear the spirit that it intends to cultivate in children and families... that which advocates cultivating thought, forging character based on responsibility and respect, enlarging the soul by sheltering sensitivities and opening the heart to love from justice and good faith. From this Project we continue to receive lots of strokes, dream colors, ingenious scenarios, different techniques and deep conceptions about the peaceful coexistence between humans, plants and animals; and each time, adding members from other parts of the planet. Our little artists have shared their multiple family and social environments, making clear the

civil responsibility and the urgency of staying united (Yania Collazo).

This new way of continuing CreArte has opened the possibility of participation to other children and young people from around the world who are united by a taste for art and the illusion of being creators. It is only enough to read the WhatsApp group for 5 minutes to realize the good atmosphere that is breathed, they are children, young people, parents, artists and coordinators among whom there are always words of love, comfort, encouragement, overcoming and a lot of joy for being part of something so beautiful. One of the activities carried out is an artistic guessing game in which conversations worth reading arise to understand that these little people will become adults with big hearts. The workshops that have been carried out during the quarantine and that still continue, are dedicated to a specific topic. If you want to know what "Illustrating dreams from home" is, it is a place where dreams can come true (Mercedes Fernández).

Undoubtedly, it is difficult to assess all the dimensions of the impact of the virtual workshops "Illustrating dreams from home", promoted for 18 months by the *CreArte project*. The most feasible and consistent way to do it is based on the evaluations and experiences of the main protagonists of this artistic-pedagogical experience, which differs in content and form from the traditional ways of developing community social work and even of educating in many of the schools of these times. They mark a different path to knowledge, learning, growth as human beings and as a society, and the development of ethical and aesthetic values.

In general, the COVID-19 pandemic and the isolation restrictions derived from it have imposed a great challenge for all dimensions of current life, including community practice. Also, for *CreArte: Growing up with the Arts* as a community socio-cultural project. The

initiative promoted since May 2020 through the virtual workshops "Illustrating dreams from home" has clearly been an alternative response to social confinement, a way to continue contributing to the comprehensive development of children and adolescents from Arts.

The experience developed to date has necessarily involved transforming the basic precepts of management and its usual methodological conception, without this, in any case, meaning disassociating itself from the community, participatory, voluntary, inclusive and supportive social character, nor from its educational essences and in defense of the humanist and Martian principles that distinguish it.

The impacts achieved by this initiative transcend the participating children and adolescents, for whom the experience provided a flow of positive emotions and a wide catalog of artistic works of incalculable value; the effects extend to the families, the managers themselves and the entire community.

The results also demonstrate the determining role of inter-institutional alliances, the role played by the articulation of a community project with cultural and educational entities at all possible levels, mainly the local regional.

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