

ART CONNECT

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The Arts Education Conference: Contexts, Concepts and Practices in Schools —An Overview

The IFA Team

Photographs by Shai Heredia and Irfan Mohammed show scenes from *Simple Dreams*, designed and directed by Dadi D. Pudumjee and performed by The Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust on 11 December 2009 at the venue of the Arts Education Conference

That cultural diversity is as necessary for the human race as bio-diversity is for the natural world was formally recognised by the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, Paris, 2 November 2001. That the arts are not a luxury but an entitlement has been tacitly recognised by every progressive individual and organisation working in education in India. Thus the 'Arts Education Conference: Contexts, Concepts and Practices in Schools', jointly organised by India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) and the Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan Bangalore on 11 and 12 December 2009, took it as self-evident that arts education is not a mere ancillary to education but is crucial to economic advancement and, indeed, a means of fostering global understanding and togetherness.

The IFA Team provides an overview of the debates and deliberations and experiences shared during this pioneering two-day conference.





Kali-Kalису:
Learning to Teach through Art

Usha Rao

All photographs, by P.K. Ramesh, Ninasam, show scenes from Kali-Kalису workshops

Throughout 2009, Kali-Kalису, a joint initiative of the India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) and the Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan Bangalore, fed the creative impulses of about 420 government school-teachers in Karnataka's villages and towns through a series of twenty arts pedagogy training workshops. The workshops were designed in collaboration with five partner organisations: Ananya GML Cultural Academy, Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts, Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi (BGVS), Gombe Mané (Puppet House) and Ninasam, all major arts institutions in Karnataka.

As a designated observer at some of the workshops, Usha Rao got a ringside view of the proceedings, and when she later visited some of the teachers on their home turf, she was able to see how they had put their learning into practice.

A Preamble to an Educational Drama

Shiv Visvanathan

The Right to Education Bill was avidly discussed at the Arts Education Conference, and while most participants examined the ways in which it could be rendered most effective, Shiv Visvanathan turned his attention to the roots of its key words: 'child', 'right' and 'school'. In this essay, which expands on his talk at the conference, he argues for the need to liberate 'right' from its arid prison of officialdom and place it in a living, sensory semiosphere. A polysemous right to compulsory school education is a right to one's culture, ecologies, and the memories of one's society, he says. The school must mediate between the diversity of cultures.



Saying Goodbye to the Worksheet and the Colouring Book

Zakiya Kurrien

All photographs courtesy The Centre For Learning Resources

The Centre For Learning Resources (CLR) is a resource centre in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as well as elementary education. It acts as a technical support organisation providing training and materials to NGOs working at the grassroots level, and to government and private schools. It works primarily with teachers,

teacher-trainers, and others involved in the education of economically and socially disadvantaged children at the pre-primary and elementary stages of education, in school and out-of-school. It also works with trainers and field workers involved in the care and development of children in zero-to-three age group.

Zakiya Kurrien, Co-Director of CLR, provides a glimpse into the work her organisation does with children at Anganwadis (ECCE centres set up by the government of India), with an emphasis on the fruitful role that art can play in early childhood education.

CLAY PLAY: The children are given plain mitti, clay, and a theme around which they fashion objects.

Embodying Dharithri: Ways of World-making

Arzu Mistry

Project Vision is a design and education research collective that develops educational alternatives focussed on the urban Indian context. On invitation from the Dwarkanath Reddy Ramapuram Trust and the Association for Voluntary Action, an organisation working in the slums for twenty-five years, Project Vision designed three learning centres, called Drishya Kalika Kendras, in different slums in Bangalore. Arzu Mistry, a research associate at Project Vision as well as an artist-in-residence at the Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore, gives us a ringside view of these centres, which she describes as “located between school and not-school”.

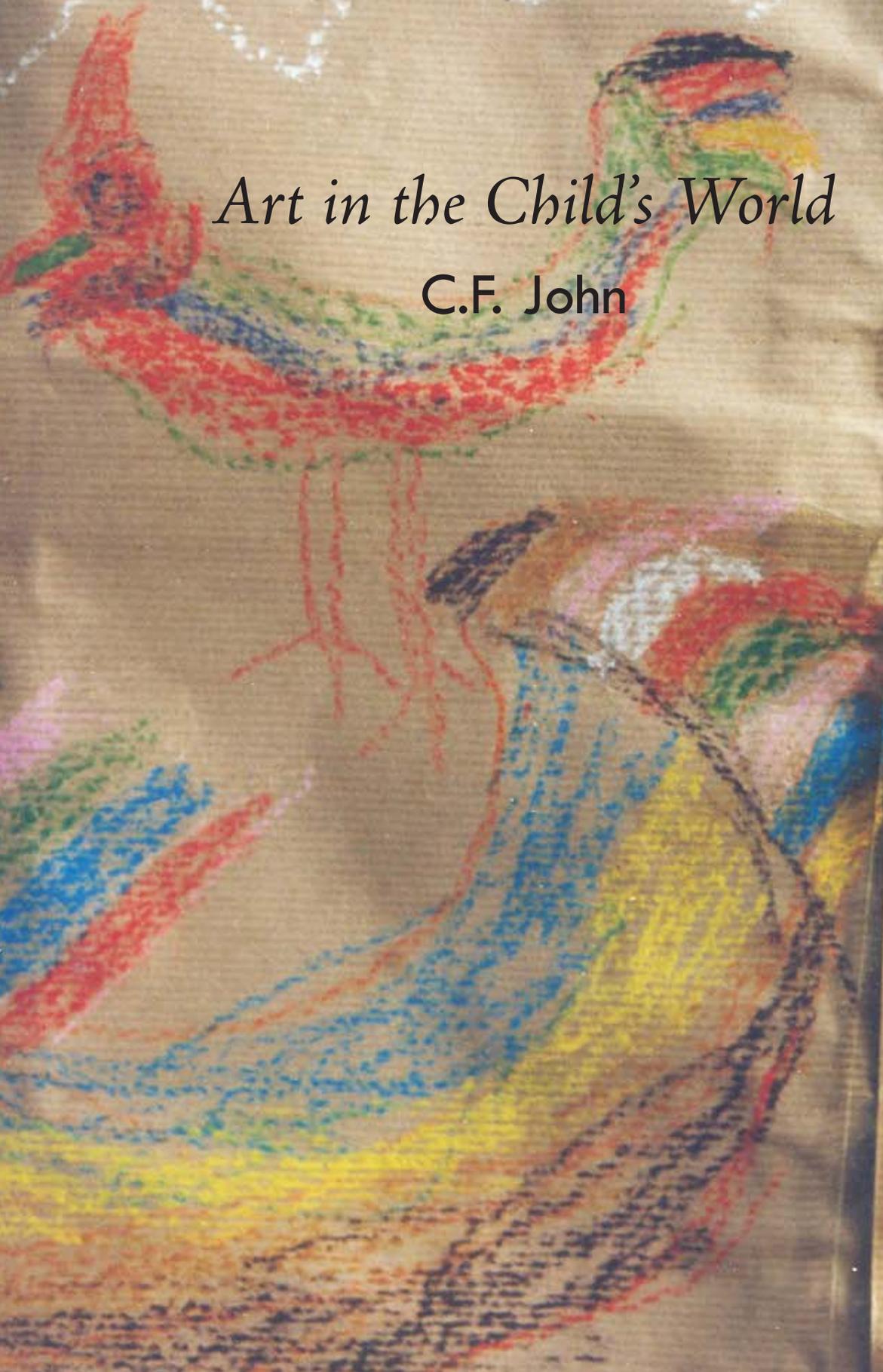
Participatory Theatre: Live, Risky, Rewarding

Maya Krishna Rao

All photographs, by S. Thyagarajan, show scenes from *Pandita Ramabai*, conceived, scripted and directed by Maya Krishna Rao and realised by Sanskaar Rang Toli, the theatre-in-education company of the National School of Drama (NSD). A programme for Class Nine and above, it is currently touring Delhi schools

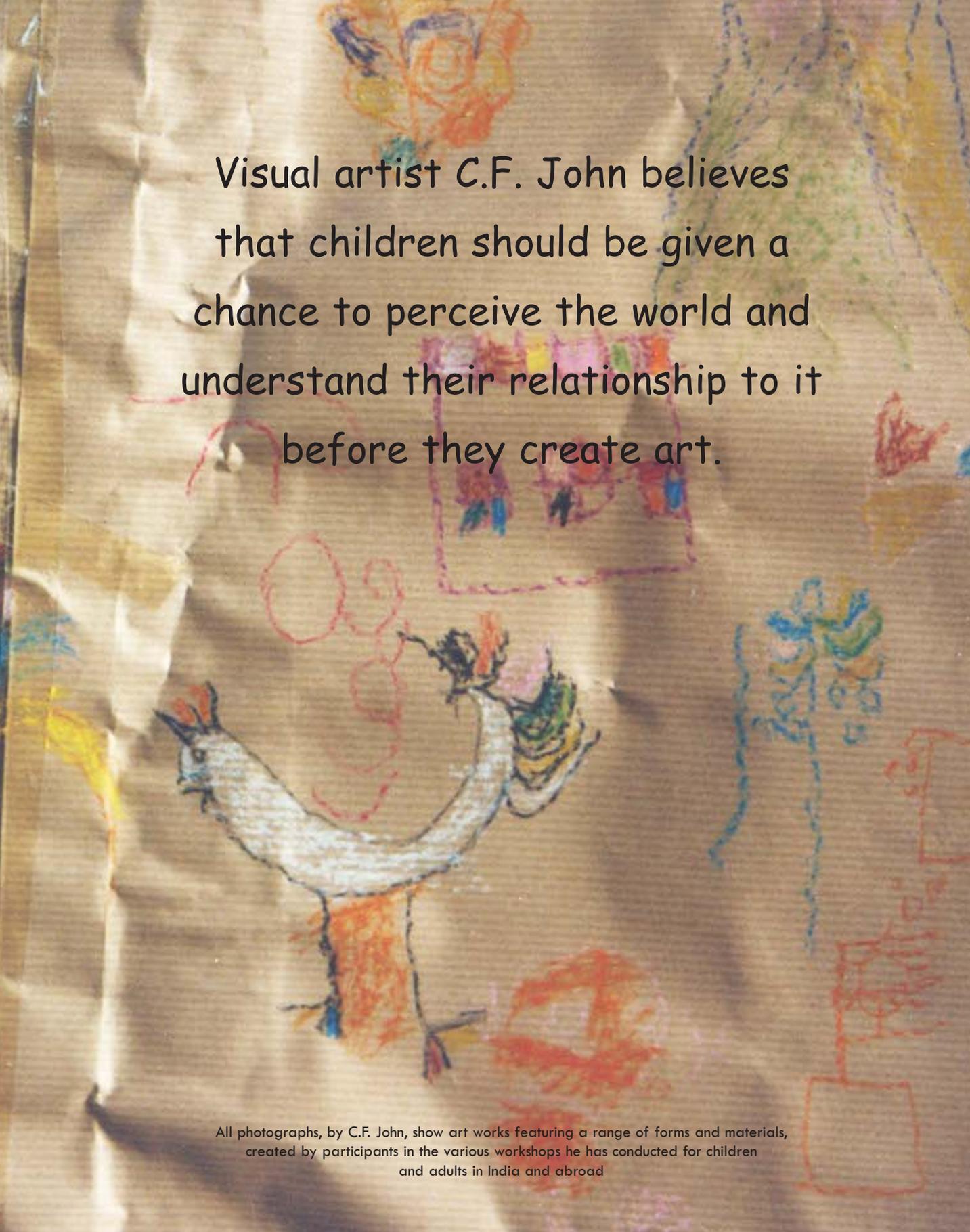
Some of the most far-reaching lessons learnt in the classroom can emerge from a skilful use of participatory theatre, says Maya K. Rao. In its highest form, it can prove to be an invaluable and rewarding teaching method, where teachers and students start off on an equal footing and create knowledge together. The classroom becomes a microcosm of the world. Maya describes one such project in Leeds, England, which she was involved in, and which turned out to be a lesson in History, Civics, Biology and Sociology—all rolled into one.





Art in the Child's World

C.F. John



Visual artist C.F. John believes that children should be given a chance to perceive the world and understand their relationship to it before they create art.

All photographs, by C.F. John, show art works featuring a range of forms and materials, created by participants in the various workshops he has conducted for children and adults in India and abroad