

Symbol and its place in children artistic expression

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Abstract

The paper presents a theoretical view on the issue of the symbol and its design in children artistic expression.

Introduction

Children artistic expression is in its rich, unique and mysterious content interesting for teachers. Who of us does not attract insight into children's drawings, paintings and creations and so understand what the child wanted to express through them? How about the importance of the use of colors? Why the child used in their drawings this or that shape? What is the object in the artwork? What symbolizes the princess in the artwork? These are all questions that are closely related with the use of visual symbols in children artistic expression.

The symbol issue in children artistic expression is a very interesting and still not fully explored issue. It is up to us whether we will cover it, and try to understand what the individual through the visual symbols wanted to convey. If we create conditions for children artistic expression, we will be able to track and discover interesting moments, signs and symbols in their artistic expression.

Symbol analysis

In our time, time full flood optical stimuli, is a great danger that our ability to think figuratively will be depleting. The interest in symbols can help us to find means and ways to see, so to speak "for" and how things connect visual and verbal demonstration of our wonderfully diverse and multi-layered world. (Becker, 2002, p. 6).

Symbol definition

When you say the word "symbol" our mind produces several associations, but not in the everyday life. Such associations as an allegory symbol, archetype, metaphor, parable or attribute hieroglyphs. Each concept can be said to belong to a single multidisciplinary area of research. On this fact is based the fascination and potential interest in studying human symbols. Because it is a part of our inseparable since time immemorial. In today's modern, bustling and on traditional practices quite forgetting time just symbols help us to return to its roots. If we follow the current tradition as to the beginnings of what we find diverse, intertwined and sometimes contradictory may there be different symbolic statements.

The word symbol is derived from the Greek word *syμβάλλειν*, which means "put together", respectively fold, folded. The figurative meaning of this word has its roots in ancient customs, when the contract concluded between the parties was recorded on clay tablets. This was subsequently broke into parts, each side got a splinter of it. And when after some time all those who had gathered to share contract, the pieces could fit together like a puzzle. These fragments are called *symbola*, which arose today's meaning of the symbol. Accordingly, we can consider a symbol as something that represents something else, but it points to a missing, invisible part that is needed to achieve wholeness.

Manfred Lurker in his Dictionary of symbols offers a different interpretation of the origin of the word symbol. According to him, "symbol" comes from the word *symbolon*, which means "a sign of identification." So when two friends parted for a longer period, they broke a coin, ring or clay tablets - already mentioned. When someone from the friendly family came after years back, they joined pieces to acknowledge that the wearer of one of them is entitled to entertainment. Therefore, we can understand the word of a symbol as something that is connected, respectively composed in what is manifested a differently elusive semantic filling. The symbol is only a visible sign of an invisible reality.

We can find the word *symbolon* for the first time in the history of the ancient Egyptian lead-label, which in ancient times was used as a sure sign, latin *tessera*. The original meaning of *tessera* was identical with the word *symbolon*. Until a little later, the concept condenses on the sign, respectively a figurative saying, carried by *tessera*.

Throughout the history a number of scientists and experts studied the history of symbols. Depending on how you understand the meanings they are divided into four groups:

- **Symbol as an synonym of sign:**
A. N. Whitehead, Ch. D. Laughlin, Ch. D. Stephens, Ch. K. Ogden, I. A. Richards, N. Frye a J. Pohl.
- **Symbol as a conventional sign:**
Ch. S. Peirce, K. Bühler, E. A. Cassirer, J. Piaget, Ch. W. Morris, L. Hjelmslev a S. K. Langerová.
- **Symbol as an iconic sign:**
I. Kant, G. F. W. Hegel, R. Wellek, T. Todorov, U. Eco, F. Saussure a napokon J. Maritain.
- **Symbol as a connotative sign:**
C. G. Jung, P. Ricoer, J. W. V. Goethe, J. R. Firth, S. Freud, G. Durand a D. Sperber.

At the same time we can find in the literature several definitions of the symbol. Here are just a few of them.

Karl Bühler separates the symbol from the sign and the the signal. A hint of a signal is a matter of fact and an expressive appellation function, while the symbol represents something specific.

According to **Burke** a man is the only being who uses symbols. The word symbol he sees as the center of the human semiotics.

Umberto Eco separates the symbol from a metaphor. Assumes that the metaphor applies only transferred meaning of the word, but a symbol retains its primary meaning. As an example he shows that

Achilles is indeed like a lion, but it is not obviously a lion in the true meaning. However, the Jewish star is still a star.

Sigmund Freud and his interpretation of the symbolic language of dreams, myth and fairy tales also contributed to the enrichment of the discipline of semiotics, and by that time a completely not mentioned area. Rational and technically minded Europeans of modern times, at the time when Freud lived and today have a tendency to throw the interpretation of dreams in one bag with black magic, divination crystal ball and card predicts. Freud thus contributed the fact that such simplified ideas were at least partially disrupted. (Černý et. al., 2004).

Erich Fromm banded the theories of Freud and Jung. Like them, Fromm was also interested in the field of symbolic language of dreams. He divided symbols into three groups, depending on what they represented in dreams and myths. According to his theory of myths and dreams they are all written in the same language, symbolic language of dreams. This language represents a universal language which can be understandable by all people. His *conventional symbols* in dreams, art and mythology can hardly be applied. If so, only when behind them is a more figurative meaning. *Random symbols*, which are individually created and quite randomly appear in mythology or in fairy tales. Matter of fact they would be incomprehensible. The last group is the group of *universal symbols*; they are based on common characteristics of a human reason and the senses. Between the universal symbol and its meaning there is some intrinsic relationship. Because they are comprehensible to all cultural communities they have their application in dreams, but also in fairy tales and mythology.

Carl Gustav Jung considered the basis of symbols as some unconscious archetypes which submissions form symbols.

Immanuel Kant defined symbol as the concept of an indirect representation.

Charles W. Morris, like Peirce, he is inclining to the triadic conception of semiotics. He divided semiotics into semantics, syntax and pragmatics. According to Morris, the semantics examines the importance, and therefore possible relationships between the characters and labeling of objects and phenomena. Syntax deals with the relationships that exist between the characters themselves. Finally, pragmatics examines some relationships that exist between the characters and their users.

Charles Kay Ogden and **Ivor Armstrong Richards** see exactly the same signs in symbols of human communication. They may be words, gestures, as well as paintings, drawings and mimicked sounds.

The definition of symbol as a possible conventional character, which is opposed to the depicting and referring character is presented by **Charles Sanders Peirce**. As the founder of semiotics Peirce deserves the allocation of characters to icons, indices and finally symbols. Symbols are signs that are with labeling articles connected by the convention only. It is a vast majority of language characters, but also the chemical, mathematical and logical symbols, as well as a variety of symbols which have their application in religion or in art.

Jean Piaget sees the increase of conventionality, as well arbitrariness in the transition from the signal indication and iconic symbol, and ending with an arbitrary character.

Ferdinand De Saussure argued that the concept of the linguistic sign is dualistic. He distinguished the two essential, inseparable ingredients that are *indicated* and *indicating*, that are focused to a certain term. Saussure defined the three key characteristics of the linguistic sign, namely linearity, arbitrariness and discontinuity. Arbitrariness means that the two basic components of the linguistic sign unites same convention, among them there is no logical relationship. Saussure characterizes symbol, which according to him is never quite arbitrary and empty. As an example, the "symbol of justice" which, according to him, could be replaced by some other arbitrary symbols such vehicle. (In Frötscher, 2008).

The difference between a symbol and a sign

According to **O'Connelly** and **Airey** each symbol consciously or unconsciously identifies certain connection, which in turn give rise to something grater than a set of individual parts.

Sign suggests otherwise something in a much more direct way. It arises in order to provide information on a particular subject, respectively idea, while the symbol usually raises a number of impressions, beliefs and emotional reactions. For example, the word "tree" in the definition of character is a kind of plant that creates a permanent ligneous skeleton and consists of roots, a trunk and a crown. However, the word "tree" as a symbol can be a carrier of a wide range of meanings, such as fecundity and fertility of nature or durability. Respectively, it is symbolizing a network of family ties. Another meaning is attributed to him by different religions.

According to **Becker** besides symbols we distinguish more between allegories, emblems or attributes. The differences between them are often difficult to capture. However, unlike *symbol* from allegories, metaphors and attributes provide a coherent statement. But it is not simple to clearly define differences between those signs.

According to **Cooper** a symbol is a higher expression of truth, but at the "lower" level, it is a mean of telling the facts. The symbol has a nature of a sign; it is never a simple form. It can be understood only in the context of cultural, religious or metaphysical background from which he grew up. Symbol does not remain limited to one level: it must express something substantial from what symbolizes, that could lead to understanding; it contains enormous and ever-growing number of options and allows you to perceive the essential connection between seemingly disparate forms or forms (Cooper, 1999, p. 8).

The symbol is so different from the character that expresses or that it crystallizes a particular aspect or direct experience of life and truth. In this way, the symbol refers beyond itself. A character usually captures something specific, but can also embody a certain symbolic quality.

According to **Lurker** a symbol is something that can be perceived through the senses, and which represents a different reality. Several scholars who have dealt with the examination of symbols concluded that all symbols are signs, but not all the features are instead symbols. Symbols are signs that are with its importance pooled into one coherent internal unity.

The symbol participates in the reality of that which is symbolic; red color is semantically related to the blood, and blood is related to life: in this symbolic function it could not be freely exchanged in a different color. As the character is rational to grip, the symbol has its roots in an irrational sphere; character appeals to the intellect of man, a symbol rather emotional sphere. It is therefore understandable that science, mathematics and computing using symbolic of character, despite the fact that it was in this terminology

referred as a symbol. Then a symbol belongs to the sphere of philosophical - religious and into the sphere of art. (Lurker, 2005, p. 589).

According to **Becker**, a symbol is of a complex nature. Like Cooper, he argues that it is rooted in an irrational sphere. It appeals to both - thinking and feeling. On the intensity of survival, symbol is based on vibrancy as one of the important characteristics.

Symbol in the children artistic expression

The graphic symbol for the child is one of the most natural means to self-presentation in the world. An individual uses it to communicate with the outside world, points to own thoughts, opinions and feelings.

Children artistic expression is not affected by "the art market" and therefore is not influenced to what requires art in the days. Child draws what he cares about and what fascinates him. The graphic symbol is very important especially at the time when a child has not acquired skills of speech and writing. The intensely felt intuitively can transform the world just to a graphic symbol.

By "the real symbol" we understand a graphical morpheme, which occurs in all developmental stages of children artistic expression. The most interesting morphology of a child symbol is considered the artistic expression of a child in the age range of 5-10 years. Mentioned morphology bears some signs of fine arts modernism. The graphic symbol in this period serves as an expression of unconscious integration of the individual with the world.

The morphology of children's artistic expression is analyzed from the perspective of an adult, whether a parent, a teacher or an artist. Children's drawing is examined in terms of psychometrics development, and thus whether it corresponds to the children's speech. The drawing corresponds to the child's age. However, when examining the possible occurrence of a symbol in the children's drawings, it should be exercised responsibly. The area of children's creativity requires a deeper insight into the issue.

Even if an individual has full control of speech, there is in his feelings something that cannot be expressed through words. Therefore, the child tends to return to drawings and uses graphic symbols. This is the case of children in the "artistic revival", aged 15 years.

Morphology of children's drawings, however, is not only determined by its symbolic nature, but also affordable in monitoring the occurrence of individual motifs in the artwork, as well as compositional processing of a morpheme in terms of developmental psychology (In Babyrádová, 1999).

If you want to watch symbols in the children artistic expression, it is important to know the basic elements of the construction of a work of art. They are divided into two groups. The first group consists of those that exist in the particular subject-artistic reality, and fine art work brings them through the media. They are *shape*, *light*, *color* and *surface* in the form of *structures*, *textures* and *invoices*. These are the basic elements of expression. The second group consists of elements arising by abstraction in a non-artistic reality. In the connection with media they have become less visible and they created meaning structures. Here we deal with these elements: *line*, *stain* and *mass* (Banaš et. al., 1989).

Shape as a symbol in children artistic expression

Children artistic expression has some geometric shapes, which may be attributed to the meanings.

The most fundamental symbol is the **point**. It is an expression of stopping. If you are located in the middle of another object, it symbolizes the center or source, in which the life began and to which he must one day go back. It is the first sign of existence, as well as the source of power. It is in the center of the pupil of the eye and the belly button in the middle of the body. In Islamic mysticism it is characterized as a symbol of eternity and the creator. In terms of the symbolism of numbers it is similar to a zero value.

Lines and **curves** are also considered as symbols. Horizontal line follows the direction of the horizon; it represents some imaginary boundary between the earth and the heaven, between the living people and the empire of gods. Horizontal line symbolizes the movement through the Earth's plate, and also at the time of movement. It is linked to the mass, balance and stability. It is associated with the female principle; except of China, which connects it with the masculine principle "yang". The vertical line is associated with the masculine principle which constitutes as an active approach to life. Between related symbols there are included the spinal of a human body, a crutch, trunk of the Tree of life, as well as a number of different male symbols. In the Latin alphabet it is the letter "I", which bears the symbolism of authority - "me". The Greek alphabet consists of the letter "iota", which symbolizes the embodiment of fate. In mathematics, the vertical line represents the equivalent number one.

The curve symbolizes a snake or water. In ancient Egypt was the curve a hieroglyph for water. Two vertical parallel curves again symbolized in Western mythology, the water carrier - Aquarius.

Parallel lines have become a symbol of opposites, as well as balance and equality. In the cuneiform, parallel lines represented friendship and two crossed lines represented enmity.

According to **Babyrádová** it is a general tendency to symbolize things in children's drawings, demonstrated the frequent occurrence of the ring. Ring has a matter of fact in the children artistic expression a deeper meaning as ascribed to him. This ring is not only a symbol of the head, the sun or kneecap; it involves a lot of other meanings. Ring as a symbol of eternity, perfection, and absolute integrity. It is also a constant cycle of seasons, as well as endless passing of the sun across the sky. Also it involves the importance of faith and hope. Ring through its closeness symbolizes the protection afforded by anyone who resorts to its interior. In Christianity, using concentric circles shows the hierarchy of angels. Child forms often in their first scribbles a circular composition. Creates in his drawings, respectively paintings, different elemental modified circular shapes that multiplies rhythmically, internally divided or even hosting again the circular compositions. Frequent tendency to ring formation follows a child from a rich symbolic meaning of this form. The circle is the most frequent symbol in children artistic expression. (Babyrádová 1999, p. 59).

A cross is one of the oldest symbols in art at all. Along with point, circle and square it belongs to the four most basic symbols. A cross creates integrity. It represents strength and power. The point where the two lines intersect can be seen as the unification of the male and female principles. By the intersection of horizontal and vertical lines there is formed a "dummy", which is a common theme displayed on young children's drawings. The four arms of A cross can symbolize phases of the moon, four cardinals or nature elements. A cross in the T-shape stands in children's drawings as a figure. It is associated with the sun, eternal happiness, but it is also a symbol of the gallows and suffering.

A square is one of the most abstract symbols and represents the earth, the very existence of planets and creatures. A square image symbolizes towns, settlements as opposed to circular building nomads. It is a

symbol of organization and order, anchoring, but perfection, absolute and constructive and rational thinking. The symbolism of the square itself is based on its four corners, which may be significant points of the compass, the seasons, but also the period of human life and not least the four elements. The Islamic religion is a square human heart. In contrast, in Hinduism it symbolizes certainty, which maintains the world order.

A **triangle** symbolizes the light, God, infinity, motion, pyramids, mountains, but also fertility or a trio of different phenomena, such as: past - present - future, where applicable: birth - life - death and others. A triangle together with a square are considered significant shapes which are linked to the symbolism of numbers three and four. In Christianity equilateral triangle is a symbol of the Holy Trinity, in Islamic art of change it is a symbol of the principle of harmony. Upward pointing triangle symbolizes the move upwards, and lives so associated with the aspirations, achievement of certain goals. The downward triangle symbolizes the reception, but even meditation. (O'Connell et. Al., 2008).

Color as a symbol in the children artistic expression

Its place in the symbolism of children's drawings also has color. Color is associated with mental and emotional state of the individual, and can be largely controlled. Using of different colors can briefly describe the emotional state of mind, or even gender, or social status of the man. Children frequently work with rich, warm colors, especially with yellow, red and purple color. Psychologists are of the opinion that the effect of color is directly linked with the world around us, for example, the blue color is the color of the sky, yellow color of the sun, and so on.

The red color

It is associated with life and heat, as it's the color of blood and fire. Along with the black color was once considered one of the most important colors in ceremonies and rituals. The color red symbolizes love and fertility. In ancient Rome, brides wore a red veils, this tradition is still maintained in some countries. In India and Western countries it symbolizes passion, energy and speed. However, it is also associated with danger, aggressiveness, evilness or rage. In paintings it symbolizes the red light of dawn, sunset, as well as love, war and the devil.

The yellow color

Its importance derives from the symbolism of the gold color, and so is the yellow color associated with the sun and its life-giving force. It is also a symbol of wealth, fame and generosity. In China, is associated with the center of the universe, and according to one myth were the first people created just from clay yellow. For Australians the yellow color is a symbol of death. In the Islamic religion it symbolizes wisdom. In contrast, light yellow color indicates betrayal. In Egypt was the yellow color considered as a symbol of jealousy, infidelity and shame. Even today it attaches importance of cowardice.

The purple color

It's a combination of two colors, blue and red. It is a symbol of mediation and balance of the power and authority of red and wisdom of blue. Purple is the color of constancy and fidelity. In Christianity it is used as a symbol of the suffering of Jesus Christ, it is the color of Advent and Lent.

The green color

It is the color of flora and constitutes growth, awakening, and a new beginning. In Japan and China, the green color is associated with the arrival of spring. It is a symbol of hope and immortality. In the Islamic religion is green most important of all the colors, because Muhammad's robe was actually green. And that robe was a symbol of paradise, renewal and a spiritual cleansing. In Chinese symbolism it is associated with the female principle of "yin". In Christianity, the color green symbolizes hope and the return of man to the paradise. It can be as well a negative symbol as the bearer of meaning, as the color of the devil, poison, but also the color of jealousy.

The blue color

It symbolizes intellect and contemplation. The blue color of the sky represents the male principle, distance and divinity. In contrast, the calm deep blue of the water is associated with the feminine principle. It is the color of the blessed Virgin Mary, and so it symbolizes purity and peace. It is the color of the endless sky, a symbol of water and coolness. In Arab countries, it is said that just the blue color can protect humans against the evil eye. In poetry a blue flower is a symbol of romantic longing.

The black color

This color is a symbol of the absolute, the color of authority and power. In Western countries it symbolizes death and mourning. However, in ancient Egypt it was the color of resurrection and eternal life. In China it is a symbol of the female principle and its opposite is yellow. Black is also the color of the night and can express the mystery and signal fertility. As a symbol of evil, it is used in black magic.

The white color

Is the color of light and because of that it is considered as a lucky color. It is a symbol of purity and perfection. It symbolizes the beginning and the end. In Western countries the brides dress in white robes, but in Japan it is a symbol of mourning and death. In Africa it is associated with the ability to heal. The color white is associated with the afterlife in some natural nations (Black, et. Al., 2004).

Conclusion

The interpretation of symbols used in the children's artistic expression is a very difficult thing. It is not easy to analyze properly used characters and symbols. This requires the study of literature and also constantly observing art works of children.

When analyzing and interpreting visual symbols, it is important to confront the visual with the verbal. Under the understanding what the child expressed through visual symbols in their drawings and paintings, it is necessary to relate these facts to that they tell us about the visual symbols. Because only in this way can we fully understand what a child wanted through his own artistic expression to tell.

It is up to the teacher how he would approach to the children's artistic expressions. Whether he would see these expressions just from a visual-aesthetic site, or he attempts for a deeper sight into the very essence of the artistic representation.

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