

ChildArt

The Magazine of the International Child Art Foundation

October-December 2018



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear reader,

The idea for this issue on Virtual Reality and Education sprung from a conversation I had with Marie Graham who teaches VR at the Mount Vernon Presbyterian School in Atlanta, Georgia. We thank Ms. Graham for taking the lead in producing this issue and are grateful to her brilliant students for serving as editors and interviewers. We thank her devoted colleagues for embracing the idea and Ms. Rikki Hagerty for designing this issue.

It is the notion that your sense of 'presence' is highest in VR than in any screen media like YouTube, movies or television that makes VR the future of education and intervention. While the prospects for VR, Augmented Reality or Mixed Reality are manifold as you will discover in this magazine, we also need to be careful that these new technologies are used sparingly so as not to misshape the brain and are not misused for brainwashing or indoctrination. Bearing this in mind, you can evaluate how you can best utilize VR to enhance your creative potential and freedom of expression.

Happy reading,



Ashfaq Ishaq Ph. D.
Chairman

INTRODUCTION

Virtual and augmented reality are exciting new ways to learn and engage in the world around us, but technology is only meaningful if it is used for the betterment of humankind. **How might we tell each other stories, heal those who are hurt, and find ways to help move closer to one another?** In other words, let's use these new virtual worlds we create to lift each other up and move our society forward. Our cultures and geography may be quite different, but so much of the human experience is shared: friendship, loss, family, and love.

This issue is a special one because it is written and edited by a team of students just like you! Eleven 14 and 15-year-old students were given the amazing opportunity to be guest editors of this magazine, and what a journey it has been! We have spoken to many interesting people, interviewed, listened, researched, written, and edited. We all learned so much from this process, and my students and I, along with the support of our school, Mount Vernon, in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, are beyond grateful for this opportunity.

We are reminded and would like to remind you that learning is best done by doing, by being unafraid of failure, in fact, of expecting and welcoming it. This magazine is the result of an opportunity, the students' willingness to risk, and of our supportive and enthusiastic community coming together.

Virtual and augmented reality is about the experience, and so I encourage you to jump right in wherever you can. Also, remember that creating is most important. If you have an idea, make it come to life! The field of creating VR and AR is new, and you do not have to be a professional to start; most of the software is free. My hope is that you feel emboldened by our taking the risk to edit this magazine, and that you will take risks of your own.

Sending best wishes from all of us at Mount Vernon School to you from Atlanta, Georgia! Happy Reading!

Marie Graham

Published since 1998, ChildArt is a commercial-free arts learning, self-discovery, and global education periodical expressly written for 10- to 14-year-old creatives, but useful as a teaching tool for educators and inspirational for creative individuals of all ages. Subscribe to ChildArt online at www.icafe.org or mail your check to: ICAF, P. O. Box 58133, Washington, DC 20037. All rights reserved. Reproduction of the whole or any part of the contents without written permission is prohibited. ChildArt (ISSN 1096- 9020). Copyright 2018 International Child Art Foundation (ICAF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

ChildArt is published quarterly by ICAF. Submissions may be edited even when accepted. Submissions of artwork and other material to ChildArt are made at the risk of the sender.

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LET'S BUILD A VR

HEAVEN

INTERNATIONAL
CHILD ART
FOUNDATION



You must have imagined what heaven looks like, perhaps the first time when you heard about Eden or paradise. The idea of heaven has been around since ancient Mesopotamia and it still shapes the lives today of 2.4 billion Christians, 1.7 billion Muslims, and people of some other faith traditions.

Recent advances in virtual reality, augmented reality, and mixed reality make it possible to bring an imagined heaven to earth, so you can experience what Eden or paradise looks like. But whose idea of heaven? Schoolchildren's! Heaven as imagined by the world's children.

The late Harvard neuropsychiatrist Robert Coles—who authored more than eighty books and 1300 articles, nearly all of them concerned with human moral, spiritual, and social sensibility and reasoning, relating especially to children—conducted a 30 year project on the inner lives of children. He gathered data from interviews and collected drawings from children initially to document the illusionary quality of religion, but was surprised to witness the positive and often life-changing quality of children's spirituality. In *The Spiritual Life of Children*, Coles describes how his research helped him to see children as “young pilgrims” because across diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious boundaries, children demonstrate themselves to be spiritual beings in their paintings and by their own revelations in conversations.

The International Child Art Foundation—a nonprofit based in Washington, D.C. that serves American children as their national arts organization and the world's children as their global arts organization—plans to build a VR Heaven by engaging some of the world's most creative and imaginative children.

This year the ICAF is organizing its 6th Arts Olympiad—the world's largest art program for schoolchildren. Through school art contests, most artistically creative students in participating U.S. school districts and nearly 100 countries will be selected. These creative students will convene for three days in July 2020 on The



National Mall in Washington, D.C. at their 6th World Children’s Festival (WCF)—the children’s “Olympics” held every four years. Unlike the Olympic Games, the purpose of the WCF is to imbue children’s creativity with empathy through collaborative activities and a celebration of diversity and unity.

Prior to the WCF, two hundred of the young delegates will be selected for the VR Heaven Project. These young artists will be asked to paint their visions of heaven and bring these masterpieces along to the WCF. On the first festival day, they will share their depictions of heaven and examine other’s works. On the second day, they will explore how they can collectively be more creative in depicting heaven. On the third day, they will collaboratively paint ten murals that depict their collective visions of heaven.



These ten murals will provide the basis for the construction of heaven as a VR experience. The VR Heaven will be built by the members of the Virtual World Society working under the direction of its founder, Professor Thomas Furness (see pages 30-31). One of the leading technology companies is likely to join this uniquely important global project.





PLEASE ADOPT THE ICAF AS YOUR CHARITY THIS GIVING SEASON!

Though many problems beset our nation and the world today, a sheer lack of creativity or empathy is too often their root cause. Creativity cultivates ideation, discovery and invention, while empathy grows compromise, consensus and collaborative innovation.

The International Child Art Foundation fosters schoolchildren's creativity and develops empathy through the arts—children's universal language.

Founded in 1997 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, ICAF is independently ranked among the 25 Top Children's Charities in the United States.

Currently, students around the world are participating in the school-based 6th Arts Olympiad—a free program that fosters their creative development. In July 2020, they will convene on The National Mall at their 6th World Children's Festival to develop mutual empathy.

Your support will help the ICAF democratize creativity and develop empathy universally as building blocks for global prosperity and world peace.

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