

## Caldonazzo the Lexicon of all Good Stories

The great Spanish artist Pablo Picasso once said that it took him four years to paint like Raphael, but it took him a lifetime to paint like a child. If we were asked to describe a painting or a drawing made by a child, the first adjective that would probably come to our mind is “simple”. However, sometimes we make the common mistake to see the simplicity of children’s works as an index of banality or lack of skill. How many times do we hear someone saying: “A child could have done it” in a derogatory way? It is only when we actually try to free our mind and paint like a child that we realize that we are no longer able to do it. The simplicity which characterizes children’s art is not synonymous of obviousness, but is the result of spontaneity and purity. Children’s works are “simple” because they are essential. We are no longer able to paint spontaneously because with time and experience we created barriers and filters in our mind. If you put a blank paper in front of a child and another one in front of an adult, the child will start filling it with colours and lines without giving it a second thought, while the adult will be staring at the blank space for an indeterminate period of time before grabbing the pencil. Adults overthink, children speak directly without any circumlocution or turn of phrase and so they paint. **They have their view of the world and they have their voice and way to express it. We cannot speak for them because they can see the world without barriers and they can tell about it without any filters.**

This reflection inspired the project “Our Home, My Voice, Hear Me Out” organized by the team of Ubuntu and set at the SOS Children’s Villages Summer Camp in Caldonazzo. The project of this year consisted in building a house of wood made of four panels, that is to say, eight facades, on which wooden postcards



printed by children and educators have been attached. Children have been asked to paint or draw or write what they have to say about the world they live in; what they love about it, what they hate about it, what they wish for it or what they expect from it. The Ubuntu team explained to the participants that their postcards would complete the house which would become the testimony and loudspeaker of their thoughts and wishes.

Children of all ages and from different countries and backgrounds participated with enthusiasm to the project. Some of them told us their stories and others let their works to speak for them.

A little girl from Germany combined different colours because she liked the way they looked together and because they made her happy. An Italian teenager dedicated his postcard to a person who worked in Caldonazzo and inspired him for the way he approached people and for the fact that he was willing to spend time with

children who do not get the chance to spend the holidays with their families.

Some of the older children expressed their wishes for the world putting their thoughts into words. A girl from Italy wrote she wants everyone, but children in particular, to be happy and that bad things stop to happen. Another boy wrote that he wishes people could love and get along with each other. These thoughts are powerful and profound because they come from children who lived or are still living family distress; children who have been through difficult family situations and learned what a privilege and luck it is to have someone who loves you. However, even if SOS children come from similar backgrounds, their personal experience is different from all the others. In fact, there have been children who, instead of

expressing their wishes for the future, decided to make the postcard the testimony of their anger and disappointment. A teenager girl (Italy) wrote “you write mom and you read love; you write dad, but you read pain” expressing and then telling how hard it has been for her to stop being a child at the age of eight to take care of her siblings and her mother who could not stand out against the problematic husband. She said she would love to go back and live the childhood she never had, so we asked her to paint a second postcard imagining she could and to show the world how her childhood would have been. She did an amazing job and the comparison of the two postcards was extraordinarily powerful.



She was not the only one expressing her sadness. A boy used colours and lines to transmit the frustration he feels living in an SOS Children’s Village away from his family. It is very delicate and complicated to explain to some of the children that the SOS Children’s Village is trying to help them and even if it looks unfair to them, it is only a temporary solution and it is for their best. Some children understand or at least perceive that SOS Children’s Village takes care of them when their family cannot and some of them expressed their love and affection for the SOS Children Village coworkers in their postcards. Some of them consider them as family and are enthusiastic of the summer they spent in Caldonazzo.

Looking at the house one can notice that there is a large number of flags that decorate the panels. Some children painted their nationality flag and gave the house a multicultural aspect and an international voice. A girl painted on her postcard three flags: the Italian one, the Syrian one and the Swiss one because she felt part of all these countries since she lived in all of them with her family and her siblings.

At the end of the workshop the Ubuntu team gave the children a wooden-speech-balloon pendant that they were allowed to paint and take home as a souvenir they could keep as memory or give it to someone as a gift. A little boy asked if he could have five because he wanted to dedicate and give them to his siblings, so he painted a black background and a series of white stars. Each pendant had a different number of stars which was tantamount to the age of the siblings. Other children painted a smaller version of what they painted on the postcards so that they could keep spreading their voice and their message throughout the world. Some children decided to live us their pendant which have been attached to the house around a painted mouth. A mouth and an ear were, in fact, fixed on the same panel but opposite to each other and connected through a hole in the wood to symbolize the message that the house aims to transmit; that is to listen to what someone has to say and then spread their voice.



A German participant painted a postcard summarizing the Ubuntu project of this year in one sentence. She wrote: “Caldonazzo the lexicon of good stories”. She understood and decided to express the fact that Caldonazzo is a meeting point for children from all around the world where they can share their stories and be altogether part of a bigger and happier one. The wooden house which represents Caldonazzo and SOS Children’s Villages is the set, the whole, of all good stories that are worth to tell and worth to listen to.

Laura Cadonna  
Student of History of art  
University of Canterbury, London