

A special workbook for children

EXTRA-CURRICULAR activities at our schools have always included visits to various museums. Such visits require planning beforehand. It takes phoning up the museum to inform of the visit, it requires preparatory work in the classroom, explanations at the museum itself and a follow up activity in the class.

The need for an organised pack, which can assist both teachers and students alike at all levels has long been felt to render museum visits more rewarding. Education in the arts in Malta is gaining momentum, yet there is still much to be done.

The Museums Department has room for special art educators permanently assigned to perform the job initiated at St James Cavalier with its inaugural exhibition. Very little material is available to help students benefit from the unique experience of encountering an original work of art. The responsibility remains on the teachers to perform this task.

This pack, entitled *Workbook for Children*, is the fruit of collaboration between specialists from the field of art and the curriculum development area, and aims to address Maltese primary and secondary schoolchildren to encounter and appreciate works of art in a systematic and organised manner.

The whole concept develops on a very organised structure, which invites discussions, participation and writing upon seeing art. It encourages our students to listen to others, investigate art forms, and learn how to see and read a picture. Imagery has a special role in learning; it helps students to develop skills in the use of language, learn concepts, values and attitudes. The strategies recommended in the workbook are indeed very crucial in

JOSEPH PAUL CASSAR, curator of the Art in Malta Today exhibition, on the special educational programme devised for children of different ages and abilities in connection with the first inaugural event at St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity.

fostering aesthetic education.

The pack consists of practical worksheets, which offer an open approach, leaving ample room for creativity. The content offers multiple adaptable ways of analysing, experiencing and interpreting works of art. The questions, exercises and discussions are designed to stimulate and develop the visual, mental and psychological well being of our students through the unique experience of standing in front of the work, more or less within the same parameters that the original maker stood in producing it.

Each worksheet is a unit in itself. It focuses on a particular painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramic piece, video or installation from the *Art in Malta Today* Exhibition. The reproductions serve as an easy available point of reference for the students in class or at home. The exercises which follow are graded, each simple question leads on to the next. The strategy is varied to maintain an element of curiosity, interest and maximum participation.

Various checklists are provided to help students understand the nature of the work and appreciate art and develop a critical eye. The glossary at the back of the Teacher's Notes is to assist the teachers and the more senior students as a quick reference art dic-

tionary related to their visit. Teachers are encouraged to follow the proposed procedures as well as to adapt, change, create and design their own worksheets.

Each worksheet is available in Maltese and English and is designed in such a way as to be examined, studied and shared with other subject teachers to provoke discussions, foster thinking procedures and bring forth learning through involvement in the arts. At the back of the pack, there is an evaluation form for teachers and parents to fill. They are encouraged to send or leave them at the reception desk of St James Cavalier.

A special gallery animator, Katharina Bonisch from Munich, who conducts such sessions at the Städtische Galerie in Leubachhaus, has been invited to provide this educational experience to Maltese students between last Wednesday and October 21. A special classroom has been fully equipped with various materials to conduct practical workshops. The children's works will be also put on display.

Ms Bonisch will be conducting a seminar for art teachers on Saturday at 10 a.m. at St James Cavalier and another for B.Ed (Hons) Art students on the same day at 6.30 p.m. Entrance is free and everyone is welcome. This project was possible through the support of Playmobil.