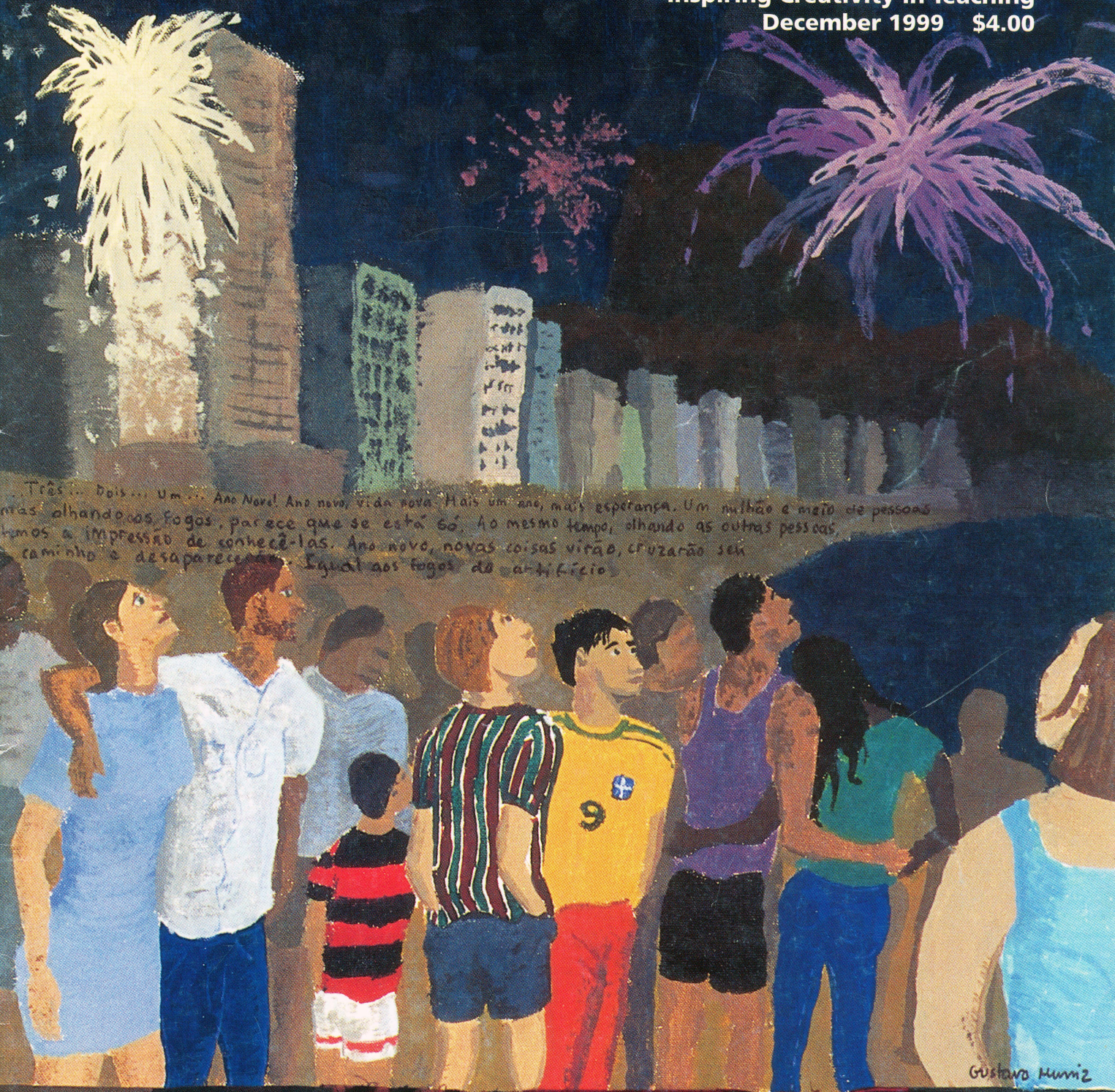


# School Arts

Inspiring Creativity in Teaching  
December 1999 \$4.00



Três... dois... um... Ano Novo! Ano novo, vida nova. Mais um ano, mais esperança. Um milhão e meio de pessoas  
olhando os fogos, parece que se está só. Ao mesmo tempo, olhando as outras pessoas,  
temos a impressão de conhecê-las. Ano novo, novas coisas virão, cruzarão seu  
caminho e desaparecerão. Igual aos fogos de artifício.

Gustavo Muniz

# A Show



**M**aking connections between the arts and other academic disciplines is a vital component of the curriculum of any art specialist. Providing the atmosphere for young minds to discover links between disciplines and create artwork that builds bridges between them is a goal worth pursuing. This helps children, as well as parents and administrators, see the indispensable role the arts play in the global education of a child.

Our elementary school is building a web site which we hope to use more as an instructional tool than an informational one. The "Artroom" page is being constructed to introduce each element of design via a lesson plan. Students' works serve as exemplars. We re-format their creations by means of a digital camera or a scanner to make them web-ready. While there are no funds for such projects within our supply budget, we have explored community

resources through grant proposals.

This means of funding has certainly been an unexpected but vital resource.

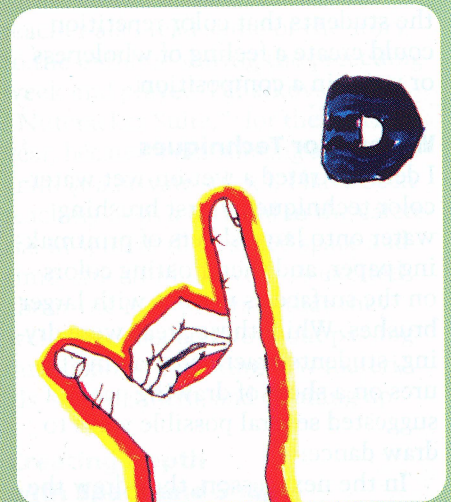
Our next update will focus on the element of line and its qualities. I developed a drawing lesson that provided an opportunity for our young artists to become aware and sensitive to those students with special needs while practicing skills and technique.

## Drawing in Three Dimensions

The unit began the following way: As a class of fifth graders sat eagerly, I asked "How many of you would like to learn a new language in art and create some of your best drawings ever?" The responses were swift and ranged from "Great, let's get started," to "Are we going to get tested on this?" We began by brainstorming ways in which we might improve our drawing skills in rendering three-dimensional objects. "Practice," "use your imagination," and "study great artists" were offered and accepted as answers. We then spoke about how artists are people who often choose to slow down the pace

of life to view objects or feelings that many other people might gloss over. The technique of contour drawing is an excellent vehicle for this as it forces us to observe and record the little "uniquenesses" that breathe life into our art. We discussed our hand as an example of an object that we have seen millions of times but might not really know.

I shared differences I've observed in my own hands and fingers and asked the students to do the same.



Michael Di Marco, grade five

## Handling a Challenge

Children respond to a challenge. I offered the metaphor: Imagine you are an ant with a pencil strapped to your back and are asked to slowly climb over the outline of a hand (its

# of Hands

contour), recording each slight rise, nick, and indentation as you go, concentrating intensely on the hand and not the paper—as it is the hand that has the answers, not the paper. I quickly added that the results might often have funky proportions. This is part of the charm of contour drawing and should not be viewed as a ‘mistake.’ This helps reduce the stress that some youngsters feel when they draw from life. I also offered the suggestion of closing one eye when trying to render a three-dimensional object to remove the depth and thus flatten the object. They were asked to strike a pose and draw their own hand life-size on 9 x 12" (23 x 31 cm) white drawing paper.

## Give Me a Sign

I asked if anyone could see a connection between the technique of contour hand drawings and learning a new language. Many students quickly deduced that the language to be learned was Sign Language. I then put up a large poster of the Sign Language alphabet that I had purchased at a local educational store and asked them to practice signing as they sing the alphabet.

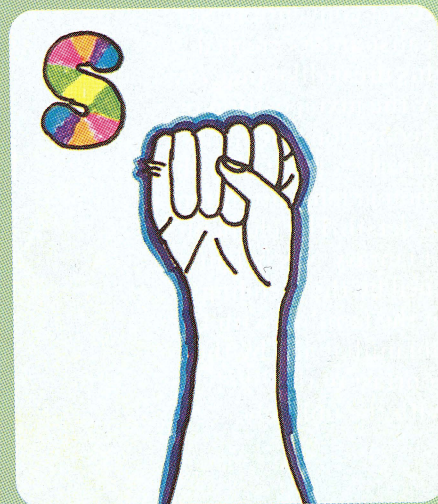
Given that one signs with the right hand, it evolved that each student

should partner with someone and that they should sign for each other. We chose our initials as the focus of the drawing. “Your partner will sign your initials as you draw and then you will sign for him or her.” I learned from experience that each child should sign one initial and then have a turn to draw his or her own. This came about as students were reluctant to sign for a half-hour at a time and perhaps not get a chance to draw before clean-up.

The children worked on this project for three forty-five-minute sessions. Upon completion some students felt their drawings needed a lift so they asked if they could highlight their work with some

color. Many used marker and added bands or rainbows around their drawings. They appeared to glow from the color schemes.

Each student chose appropriate 18 x 24" (46 x 61 cm) colored construction paper to mat their work for display.



*Samantha Sabatino, grade five*

Each young artist learned at least two letters of sign language. Many children quickly absorbed the entire alphabet and in so doing gave themselves another tool in which to communicate. The teaming provided encouragement and fun. The display had a welcomed result. Younger students would stop by the bulletin board on their way to lunch and try to mimic the hand positions. A new language had begun to blossom throughout the school. ▲

*William Grabowski is an art specialist at Center Street Elementary School in Williston Park, New York.*

## NATIONAL STANDARD

*Students select and use the qualities of structures and functions of art to improve communication of their ideas.*

