



CHESTS THROUGH CENTURIES...

Art workshops done by the school children in two schools:
primary school J.J.Strossmayer and secondary school XI Gimnazija,

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Slightly opened chests...

Chests inspired us also because of their hidden meaning and content. People used to keep material but also spiritual treasure in them. This dusty chest hides many secrets, saves many scents which evoke the memories of past times: the glorious days of our past, past love stories, past youth...

Creative art workshop chests through centuries and their content" (jewellery, dishes, coins, crowns...) was done partly at school during Art lessons (preparation, consultation, evaluation) but mostly as an after school activity.

The aims of the workshop were to observe the development of the chests through historic periods; to discover the talents and inspire the students' creativity so they would develop their interest in the art and ethnographic heritage, acquire the habit of visiting exhibitions and museums, get to know the history of different nations and civilisations and to develop the sensibility for the complete impression and evaluation of a work of art.

Sixty-three students of all school levels participated in the workshop. It was held in the first term of the school year 2003/2004. Twenty-nine chests were made at that time - from Egyptian ones to those from the 20th century. The highest coffer is 79 cm high and the shortest one is only 9 cm high. All the students who had applied managed to realise their idea.

Three hundred and seventeen students took part in the creation of the contents of the chests and it had to be selected because of the great number of items.

At the beginnings of our work the students visited museums where they got introduced to the original chests from the national and world heritage. We visited Ethnographic Museum; Museum for Arts and Crafts and Croatian History Museum where we were given a lecture and a two-hour workshop where the students made sketches of the chests they had seen.

According to their own sensibility the students chose the historic period which motivated them the most.

Sketches for the models were changed and finalized.

After visiting the museums, looking up for information on the Internet, reading articles and books on chests - students approached the implementation of their ideas in different techniques and materials.

They used a few techniques in making chests one group transformed the found cardboard boxes and lined them with paper, coloured and painted them or made relief in



metal. The other group used the wooden chests which had been made according to their ideas at their homes or some furniture factories, and later coloured, painted and carved.

Students in the 7th and 8th grade of the primary school made twenty chests in the technique of lining paper and metal, and students of the 5th and 6th grade made the golden coins in the same technique. Chests were made in smaller dimensions and with the motives Croatian Art Heritage. Forty-three students took part in the workshop and they divided themselves into smaller groups (2-4 students) according to their own wish. Team work was found to be very motivating for the students.

The interior of the chests was coloured, covered (lined) with plush or some other material in order to make the impression of secrecy, authenticity but also the functionality of the items.

The process of their work was digitally recorded and saved on a CD ROM.

The distinguishing features are the techniques, distinctiveness of each style- period, combination of techniques and materials but the common thing to all the students is joy in creation and wish not to copy the historic chests but to create their own finding inspiration in some periods. All the students were successful so all the chests were exhibited.

In a questionnaire about the chests made by the students themselves, a group of students, who made a beautiful renaissance coffer, said: "It was a wonderful experience...!"

We believe that one day some wonderful scents - scents laden with memories from the great school days - will flow out of some of these chests under dust and patina. We should slightly open our chests as shells or our hearts are opened - we will surely find some hidden treasure there...

Dijana Nazor,
Art Teacher