

MEMORY ATLAS



C L E V E L A N D 2 0 2 1

∴ CREATIVE
∴ FUSION
ART HOUSE
A N A Q U I R O Z

SPECIAL THANKS

Eduardo Rodríguez for his continuous support and trust in my work.

Art House: Laila Voss, Erica Raby, Rebecca Kempton and all its teachers and committee members for their excellent work and making me feel the best in Cleveland.

Thanks to the artist Hector Castellanos, for his company and support in this experience.

Erica Raby for her excellent work, advice and amazing company.

Comité Mexicano de Cleveland for their support and welcome.

Katie Beck, Co-Director Gumdiptheater, for allowing the experience to work with this amazing group.

Andrea Doe and all the volunteers and teachers for their help at Natividad Pagan International Newcomers Academy.

Marisol Burgos, Head of Natividad Pagan International Newcomers Academy for allowing me to work with the students.

Creative Fusion and Cleveland Art Foundation for their support.



Art House, Cleveland. 2020

Images: Erica Raby & Ana Quiroz

Design: ErnestoFerrand.com

Translation José María Moreno González



CREATIVE FUSION

Since 2008, the Cleveland Foundation has brought more than 90 artists from around the world to Cleveland as part of an international arts residency program. Each year, artists from Creative Fusion cohorts are hosted by local cultural institutions during a three-month residency.

Creative Fusion artists collaborate with local Cleveland artists on commissioned projects during their stay, and engage directly with the community, making strong connections and exchanges. Beginning in the 2016, the program strengthened collaboration between local Cleveland artists and the visiting artists by focusing each Creative Fusion cohort along a theme.

CONTAR: The Art of Democracy

Creative Fusion 2020 focused around themes of democracy and civic engagement through narrative and storytelling from the perspective of artists working in a wide range of media, from visual arts to theater, music, and fashion.

This project was based in the Clark-Fulton neighborhood of Cleveland, including La Villa Hispana and provided opportunities for creative place-making from local artists tied to the community, as well as perspectives from visiting artists from Puerto Rico and Latin American countries.

The 2020 program also included other engagement connections such as 2020 Census and Voter Registration awareness campaigns. Despite delays and changes that the COVID 19 pandemic caused, most projects were realized.



ART HOUSE

Art House, Inc. was one of eight organizations invited to host Creative Fusion Artists.

Ana Quiroz from Mexico and Cleveland artist, Héctor Castellanos Lara, worked with different immigrant and refugee communities and completed their Creative Fusion residency projects between 2021- 2022.

ART HOUSE, Inc. Info

Art House, Inc., an arts center with a community focus, is located in historic Brooklyn Centre, between the Ohio City and Old Brooklyn neighborhoods of Cleveland, Ohio. The organization's mission is to inspire exploration and expression through the visual arts. Local artists and residents, dedicated to the belief that the arts enrich lives and create stronger communities, founded Art House in 1999.

The 3,000 square foot studio facility is housed in a 1948 domed, Quonset hut building. Through the Urban Bright Arts-in-Education, classes, workshops, events, and other outreach programs, Art House provides in-depth art experiences directly to over 6000 Cleveland area children and adults every year and many thousand more indirectly through the website, virtual, YouTube, and other social media platforms.

Natividad Pagan International Newcomers Academy Cleveland, Ohio July-August 2021



M E M O R Y A T L A S

Thanks to the kind invitation extended to me by Art House, with Laila Voss as director, and thanks the amazing Cleveland Foundation's Creative Fusion residency program, that has supported both international and local artists and has cultivated the arts in the city of Cleveland since 2008. As a Latin-American artist, I'm honored to have participated in this wonderful project. The 2020, Creative Fusion theme, "The Art of Democracy" focused the democratic process and civic engagement. The Clark Fulton neighborhood was the central location for the Creative Fusion activities. In the face of this extraordinary proposal, I decided to undertake a project for the community, a work of art made by the participants and for the participants.

My interest in the concept of memory and how it is triggered by art has overtaken my artistic endeavors for several years now. That is why my project, Memory Atlas, related to the personal and collective memories of the participants, all of whom are immigrants. The project generated communal dialogues based on their unique histories.

Aby Warburg (1866-1929), German researcher and philanthropist, developed the Memory Atlas that proposes a heuristic method based on the combination of memory and images, following an exploratory process of inconspicuous relations between montage and collage.

Under extreme circumstances like violence, migrations, or wars, memory functions as a trigger, and it has been constituted as a struggle and resistance mechanism throughout history for the many peoples of different cultural backgrounds.

I understand memory to be a device that precipitates dialogues, that helps share experiences within a community and society. I'm thinking about the words of the French historian, Georges Didi-Huberman, who wrote:

[...] It would seem that today the fertile soil of time is nothing more than ashes. The key word is catastrophe, the catastrophe of a land of ruins. When catastrophe and ashes reign, what's most important is to invent, settle the remains, and extract from them a thousand unexpected and new things...



It is a catastrophic event for any person that has to leave her/his country, context, family, history. Memories and the compilation of images and words may constitute a plastic exercise of emotional and intellectual dimensions that activate and preserve that memory, as Didi-Huberman claims: create something new and unexpected that rises from the ruins.

The Memory Atlas workshops are an invitation for the participants to activate their personal and collective histories, their identities, and places of origin through visual dialogues using collage, drawing, and montage. The purpose is to develop a personal cartography, the remembrance of places and histories as they dwell on their personal memory. In what follows I recount the experience I had while sharing these work sessions with such amazing students that come from very diverse countries. Erica Raby, a particularly skilled artist, was my invaluable assistant.

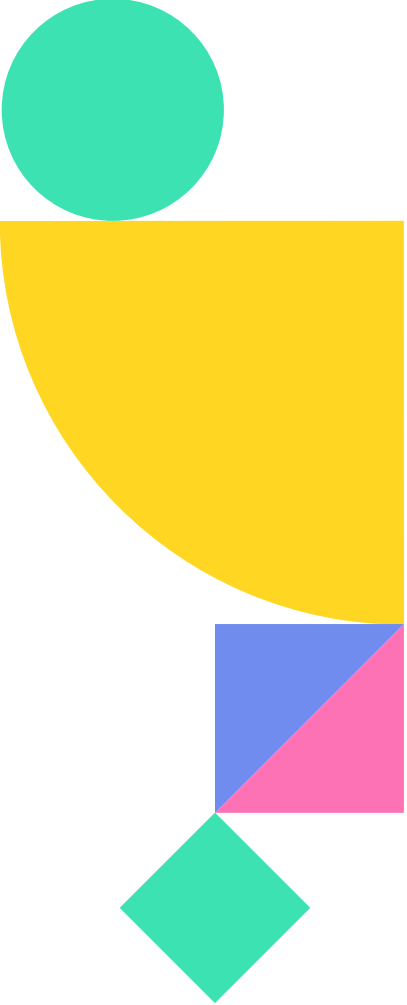
On July 20th of 2021, after months of meetings with several organizations, thanks to Marisol Burgos, the Head of the School, we managed to work with the Natividad Pagan International Newcomers Academy. This school receives immigrant students from all over the world for a period of two years, so that they can learn English, acclimate, and then continue with their education at other schools. Andrea Doe, coordinator of the afternoon summer program, is a very gentle and kind Muslim woman. She organized the student group that enrolled. During July and August, I delivered the workshop to students in fifth, sixth and seventh grades as part of their summer curriculum. All of them are immigrants from Africa, Asia, and Central America.



We started off with four female students: three girls from Honduras -MB, WM, and AM-, and one from Puerto Rico -AL. I began by explaining collage since they didn't quite know what it was. After asking about memories related to their countries, what immediately came to their minds were houses, food, and their national flags. The afternoon group of the fifth through seventh grades was larger. However, that day we had some coordination issues, there were other activities scheduled. Naturally, many of the students preferred to go play soccer! During this first session, AL from Puerto Rico manifested great gifts in regards to the creation of art, showing delicate traces in her drawings and clear recollections. The girls from Honduras started drawing their houses in their cities of origin. Perhaps those houses they drew, with a gable roof, blue and white colored, were not the original ones, but certainly they were an ideal for them. The memory of food also persisted, the Honduran girls spoke about mangoes and litchis.

After some questions, I later realized that a memory is not immediate. In some way it has to be reactivated. But, in the case of AL, the memory of one of her favorite places was tangible. From the beginning she knew what she was going to draw. She remembered a river and some trees, a





place she really liked because she would go there with her family to spend a relaxing and fun day. Her drawing somehow looked like a pre-Hispanic codex, that is to say, a multi-perspective map. AL is a proud girl, but she is also generous. In a gesture of solidarity, she helped WM who had become frustrated after not being able to represent her house, to succeed in drawing her home.

During the second session, besides the girls from the first session, we were joined by four boys, three from Afghanistan –MS, his younger brother, S, and SY– and a boy from The Dominican Republic –YG. The Afghan boys spoke no English whatsoever. A sports instructor came to translate the idea behind the Memory Atlas. When someone is asked about their past, the memories seem to go into hiding. They are hard to capture, perhaps because their tough experiences in life block access to them. The Afghan students made use of a computer in order to find inspiration and information related to Afghanistan. However, the first thing that comes up in an online search is violence. It took them a long while to find images that connected them with their remote memories. Finally they decided to draw the Afghan flag. SY drew a house and his school. They were thrilled with the materials provided, things like wire seemed to be new to them. MS is a playful but clever boy, his younger brother, S, is more sensitive and showed signs of curiosity related to everything at hand. The Afghan students speak Pashtun, which is derived from the Persian language and is present in Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Without English, I couldn't communicate very well with them. I tried asking them questions, but wasn't able to help them to understand.

YG, from the Dominican Republic, is a slender, tall, and somewhat shy boy, who was not eager to reach an agreement with the rest of the class. Showing signs of accentuated sensitivity and patience, he drew a street and a plaza filled with flags that he remembered from Santo Domingo. He then decided to throw the paper away since the drawing was not to his liking. AL, who proved to be the most talented drawer of them all, wanted to be everywhere; she was on a mission and managed to motivate YG, who didn't speak English, only Spanish, to carry on in spite of his frustrations. Even though the group consisted of only eight students, Erica and I were very busy and ended up exhausted, yet, it was uplifting to see the students become so enthusiastic.

July 26th was another busy day, as expected, but I think it went well. A lot of students came to the workshop. There were many boys and girls. A large group came from Africa: Congo, Tanzania, Chad, and Uganda. I was unable to spend a lot of time with them, so I only got to know CF in





depth. She is a really nice girl from Chad who immigrated to Uganda prior to coming to the U.S. CF remembered perfectly the place where she was born. She drew a well from which they extracted water, a woman with a pot over her head, a mango tree, and everything was beautiful, her memory came alive.

During this session, because of the amount of students, it was impossible to speak with all of them for long periods of time. There were new female students from Honduras, FA and KS. Time flew by. AM, from Honduras, worked perfectly all on her own. The girls also explained to me how they refer to the people from Honduras: catrachos. They are



very proud to be from Honduras, which made me happy. Faced with my own ignorance, I searched for the word 'catracho' on Wikipedia. It is a term that comes from the General Florencio Xatruch, who fought against the gringos or filibusters that were looking to annex Nicaragua at the end of the 19th century. The original word was xatruchos, and it then changed to catrachos, that is to say, people from Honduras.

The next three sessions were intense. We had more than 30 students, but not all of them were interested in the work at hand.

The boys from Afghanistan lost enthusiasm for the work, perhaps influenced by the older Afghan boys, adolescents who were not interested in the workshop at all. On the other hand, the boys from Uganda, Congo, and Tanzania were enthusiastic. Andrea Doe transferred the students who showed no interest to other activities. We were then able to focus on the kids who remained engaged.

CF is a shy girl, she worked without bothering anyone. It seemed like her memories were vivid. Out of the girls from Africa, IB was not very talkative either; she was not fond of the project. NK, from Congo, draws very well; he made a drawing of a lion for WK and another drawing for DA. BI, also from Congo, was not keen on working. She is cute and was wearing beautiful African garments. The first day she tried to draw the Congo flag, grew frustrated with her attempts, and to compensate, ate a whole bag of tootsie pops. For that reason, BI joined the collective collage that NK had initiated with four of the African female students. They exhibited a lot of patience as they painted one great scene, later adding flowers, trees, a house, a car, and many other extraordinary details, like sandals resting at the entrance of the house.

All the African students were interested in soccer, they requested pictures of great soccer players, and drew representations of Ronaldo, Pelé, and Mohamed Salah. You could see them searching for pictures of them on their phones. When we asked them about their countries of origin, they had many doubts. Their memories were obfuscated. Following the example of the Honduran students, they decided to search online how the flags of their countries looked like. From Congo, WK and

WH, who wore captivating smiles on their faces, drew animals on their collage: a tiger and a lion. WH, greatly gifted, was able to draw the silhouette of a tiger by just looking at an image on his phone. It was amazing. They explained to me that these beautiful animals live in the Congo.

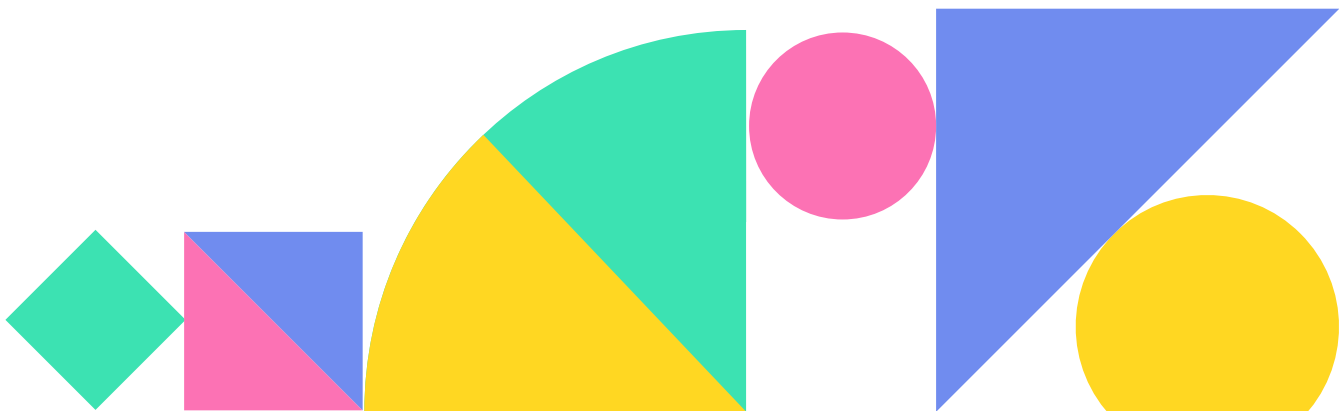
During the last session, Laila Voss from Art House joined us to provide us with some help. Laila spoke to WH, one of the students from Congo, and helped him finish his collage. The girls from Congo who did a collective collage ended up with a beautiful product even though their joint effort was a great challenge. Due to the joint efforts that the Congolese girls put forth towards a challenging project, the collaborative collage was beautiful. The Honduran girls took their pieces home on the last day. I think they were quite pleased.

It was challenging to really connect with so many students. However, during the weeks of the workshop, time facilitated the concepts of the project and of memory, their memories and personal tastes surfaced. Through their tender hands they represented their countries of origin, now so far away.

To wrap up the workshop, I took photos and videos of the stories revealed in their artwork, which made them all feel proud. They were also touched by the short videos in which some students voluntarily narrated their memories according to their collages. For them it is difficult to articulate a series of memories, time is discontinuous and variable. Some of them could not remember how long they have been in the United States or when they left their countries. In almost every instance, the separation of families and other ruptures create deep wounds within that fuel the hope of finding their loved ones again. When I asked them about their future, they all had great expectations and the desire to be part of a happy family. Their words moved me to tears. Their faces were illuminated by their sensibilities. Their smiles were radiant.

The Memory Atlas moved memories, some of which had been buried, having come about at very young ages. When children who go through so much, memory cannot be activated immediately. During these sessions they looked deep inside themselves, they shared memories, and revered their places of origin.

Remembering the past is critical to each individual's development. It is the link that helps us to know ourselves and to build upon our futures. I cherish the time that I had with these remarkable children from so many countries. The experience for me was expansive and rich. I am so grateful to have been able to help these students reconnect to the memories of their original homes, origins to which they may never be able to return.







W.M. HONDURAS

I drew the sun and the clouds of my country, I put dogs and cats. Cats and dogs remind me of Honduras. The trees of Honduras are mancha, plum and mango trees. I sang the hymn in the school. I am from the city of Colon. I am nine years old.





M.B. HONDURAS

I remember my aunt's house and what they did. I remember going to school and leaving school. I put a pineapple, but there is almost no pineapple only watermelons and tangerines, like pears and mango. I have been in the United States for two years with my mother. My brother stayed in Honduras, he is 12 years old. I am ten years old. I would like to be a doctor. I have two cousins, my uncle has a son and my aunt has daughter. I drew my flag. My aunt's name is Celina. I am from the city of Progreso it doesn't have a beach.







K.S. HONDURAS

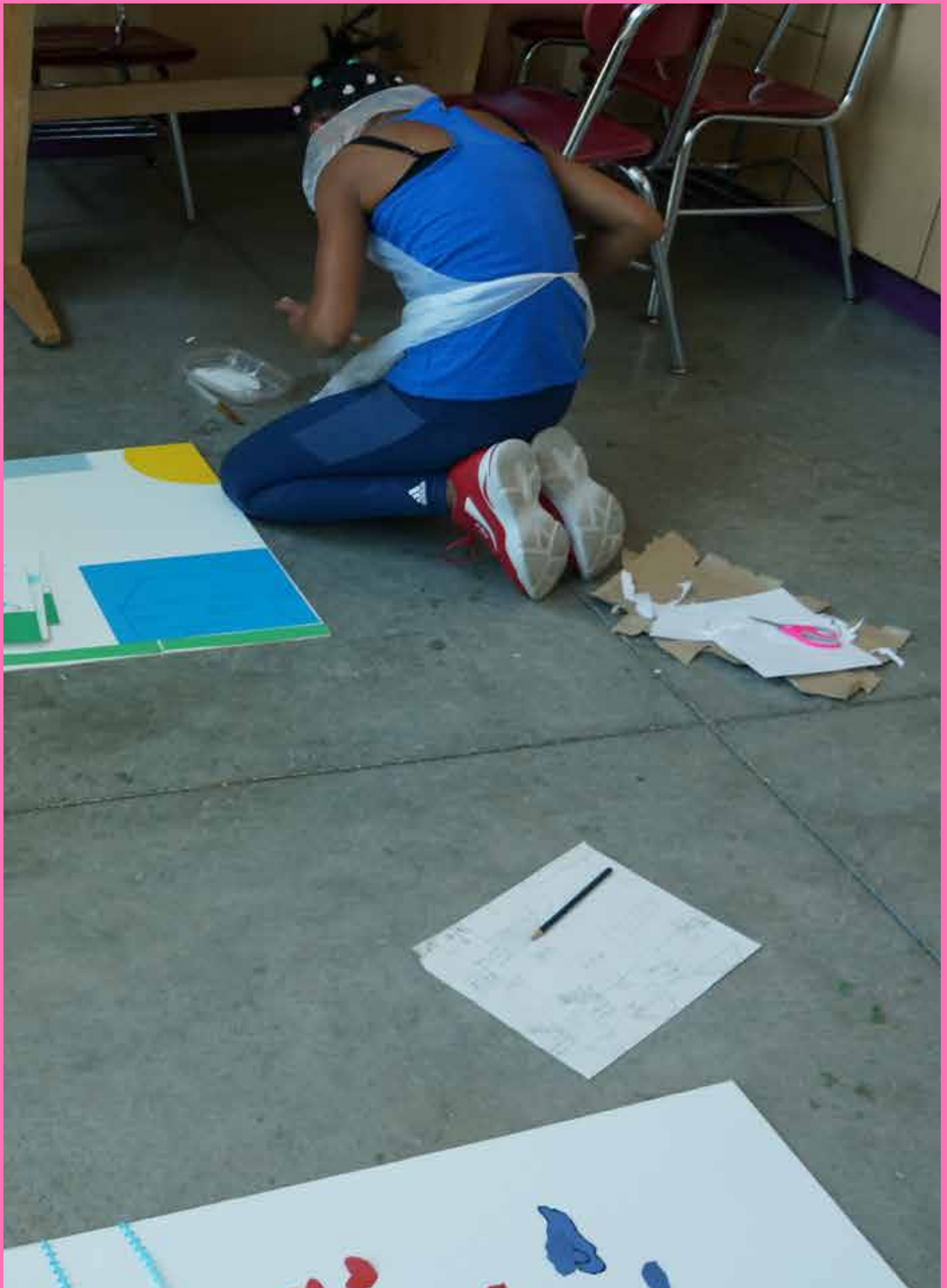
I drew my grandmother's house and the house behind her. I remember the tamarinds, palo, mango and plums and the nuances. I arrived with my four brothers. I am 100% catracha. I want to remember my family and friends, the race. I want to study to be a doctor. My dad is here in the United States and my mom is in Honduras.





A.M. HONDURAS

I painted my grandmother's house and my house with flowers, my mom loves flowers. Then there is my aunt's house, she cooks with fire and smoke. There is smoke coming out of the house. In my aunt's house besides the kitchen there are her three children. The school was close to the house, I would walk with my friends and we would sing the hymn. The path to the school was made of stones. In the United States I am with my mother and my two sisters . I am eleven years old, my sister Wendy is 9 years old, and my little sister Angela is also here at the school.

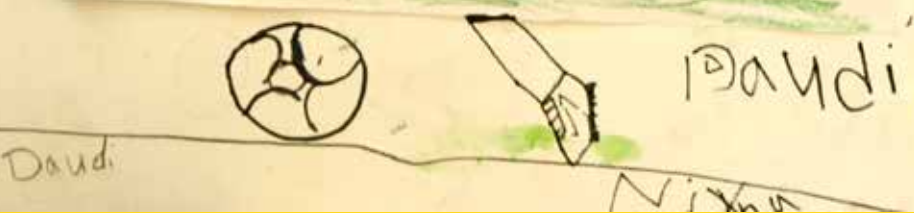


W.K. CONGO

I drew the Congo flag and a lion because in Congo there are lions. I like soccer, and drew Ronaldo. I am eleven years, three years in U.S. with my mom and three brothers and my dad. In America I like being with my family. In Congo it has got a big ocean.

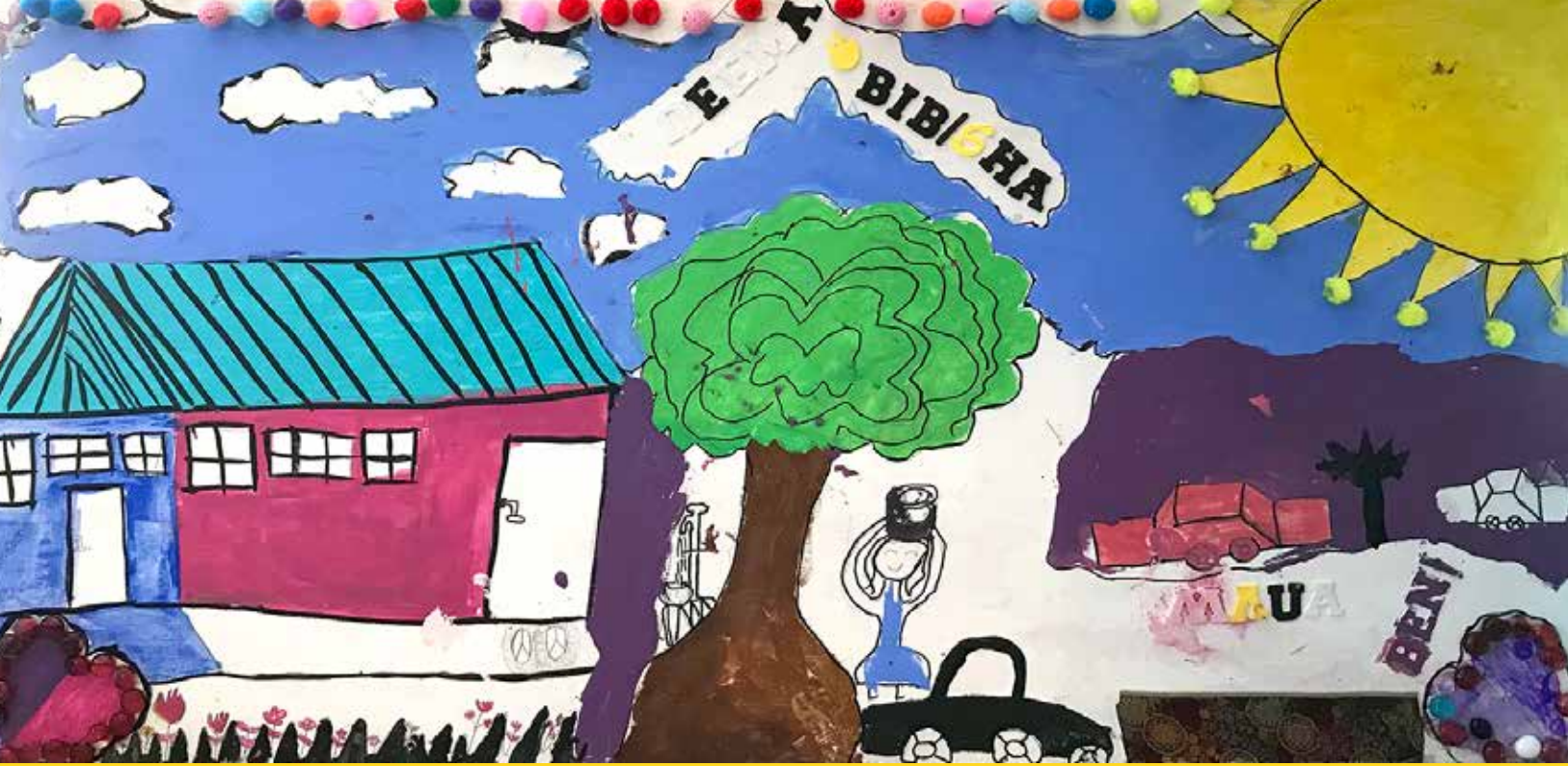






D.A.
CONGO





N.K. COLLECTIVE CONGO

I drew the home country and how it is like, the houses what it used to look like and a tree and the place where I used to fetch water. The cars, the sun, the clouds, and the sky. I am 13 years old. We eat fufu, rice, beans, little beans.

I came with my mother and my dad, and 4 siblings in the house, and a bathroom. The bathroom is where the roof is, the house is pink, and in the front of the house, someone is carrying the water. I did the drawing with B from Congo and X from Uganda. I speak Swahili, English, and Nanja.





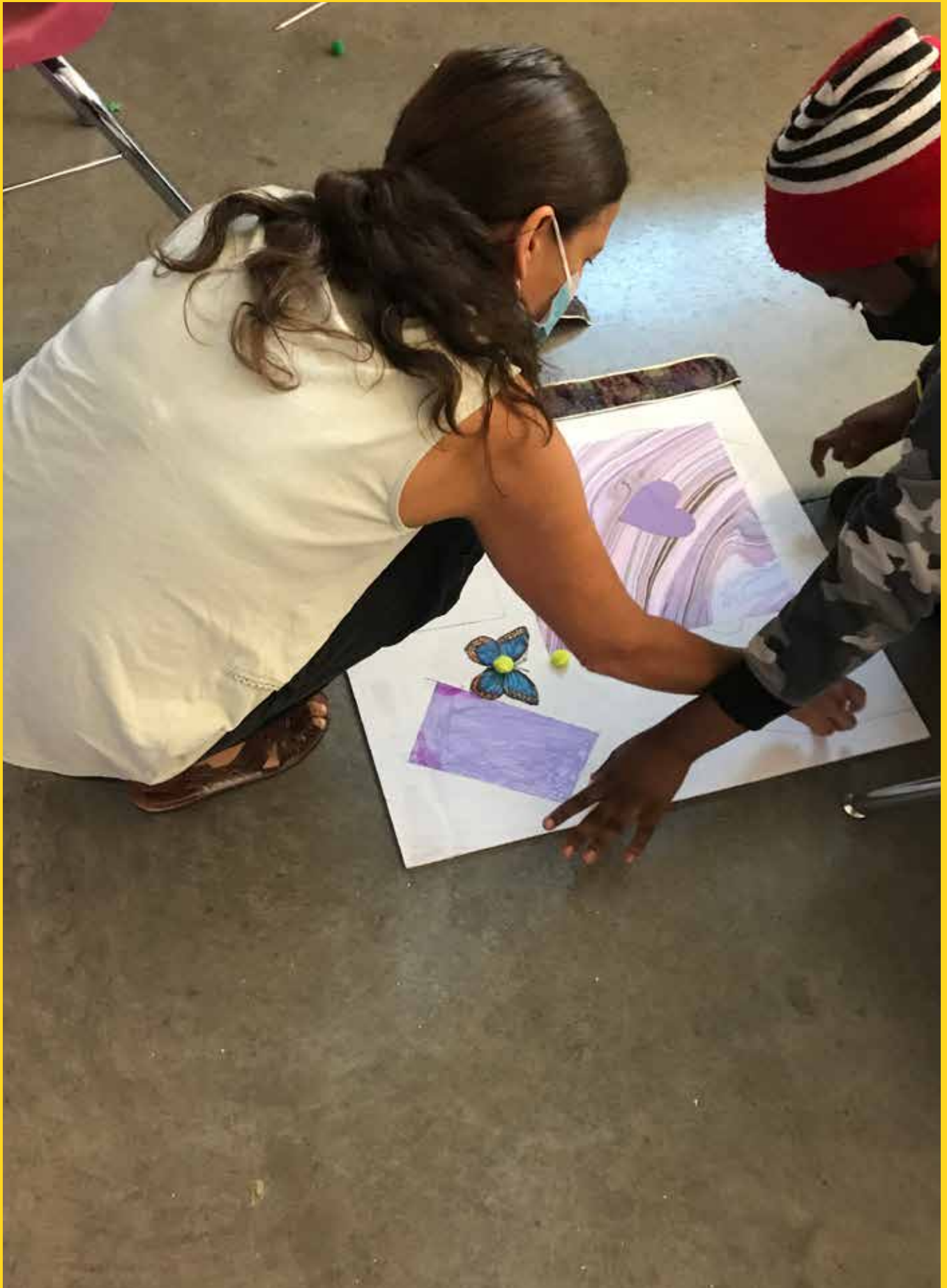
This my drawing that I just I drew about my country. I drew a tiger because in Congo there's a tiger in a country, and some animals, and cats, there is animals in my country, and some people playing soccer, and Pelé he is my favorite. I am eleven. I am here with my mother and my family, but my father is still in Africa,

W.H.
CONGO





I.B.
CONGO





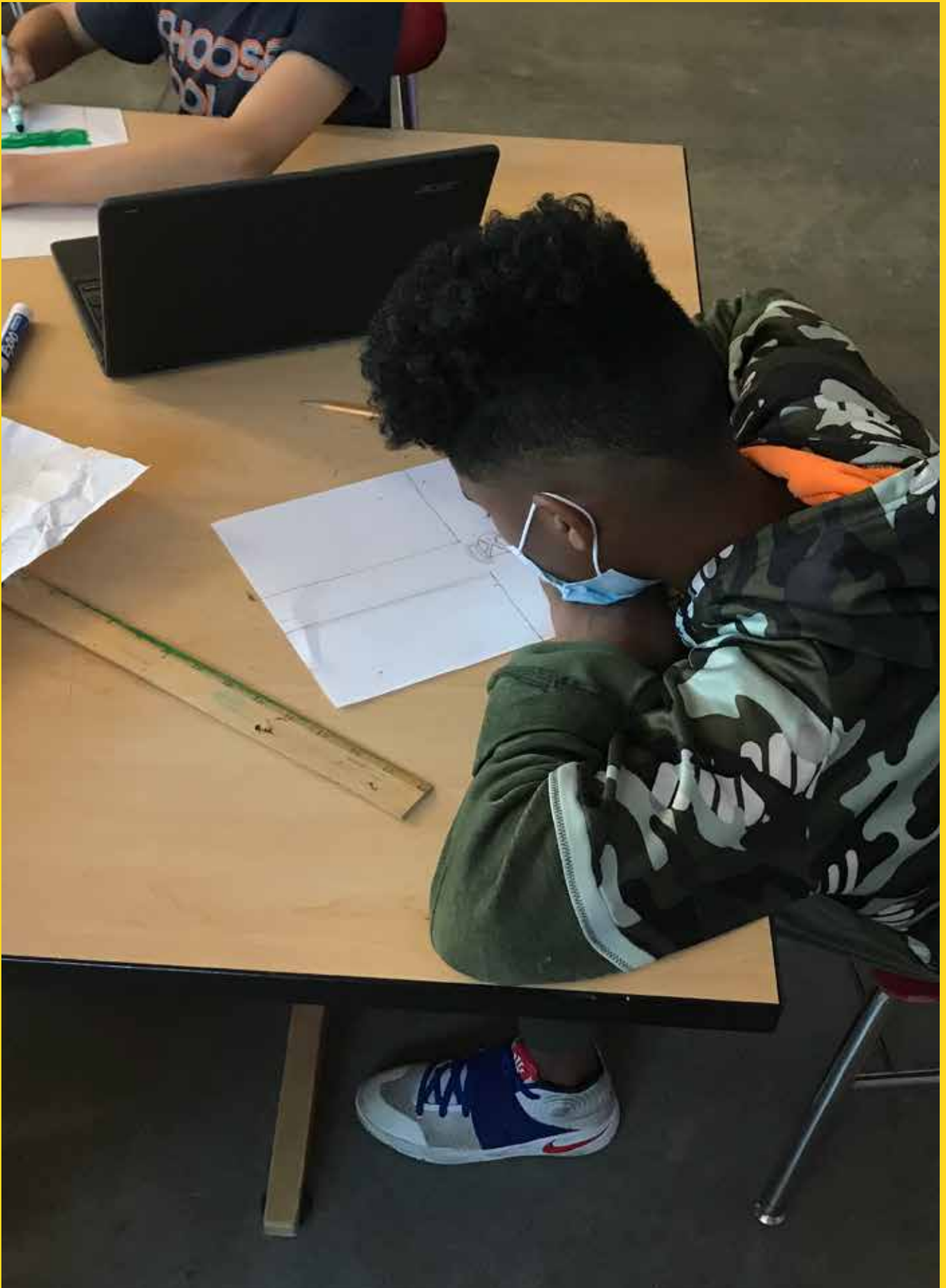
C.F. UGANDA-CHAD

Dig a hole in the ground and get water. Get the dirt out of the water that was dirty from the hole and get the dirt out till it is clear. Then we carry on our heads. The water in a pot in your head. A river that is close to the house. And the clouds, sometimes it rains. There was a river and a lot of trees, a lot of mango trees, all the river is all covered by trees. I am from Chad, my parents are from Uganda. I am 14 years old.





Y.G.
**REPÚBLICA
DOMINICANA**





A.L.

PUERTO RICO

I drew a river where we went very often because it was very hot. The river was dark blue at the corners and green in the center, the sun illuminated the middle of the river. There were stones and they were surrounded with moss and a big stone. Some big trees and a nest in the trees.

I remember that river a lot because I went with my father. I came two years ago with my mother and I have three older brothers. From the food I remember rice, beans and chops. I drew two birds and a heart only as decoration. I like soccer and I do not know what I want to be when I grow old.

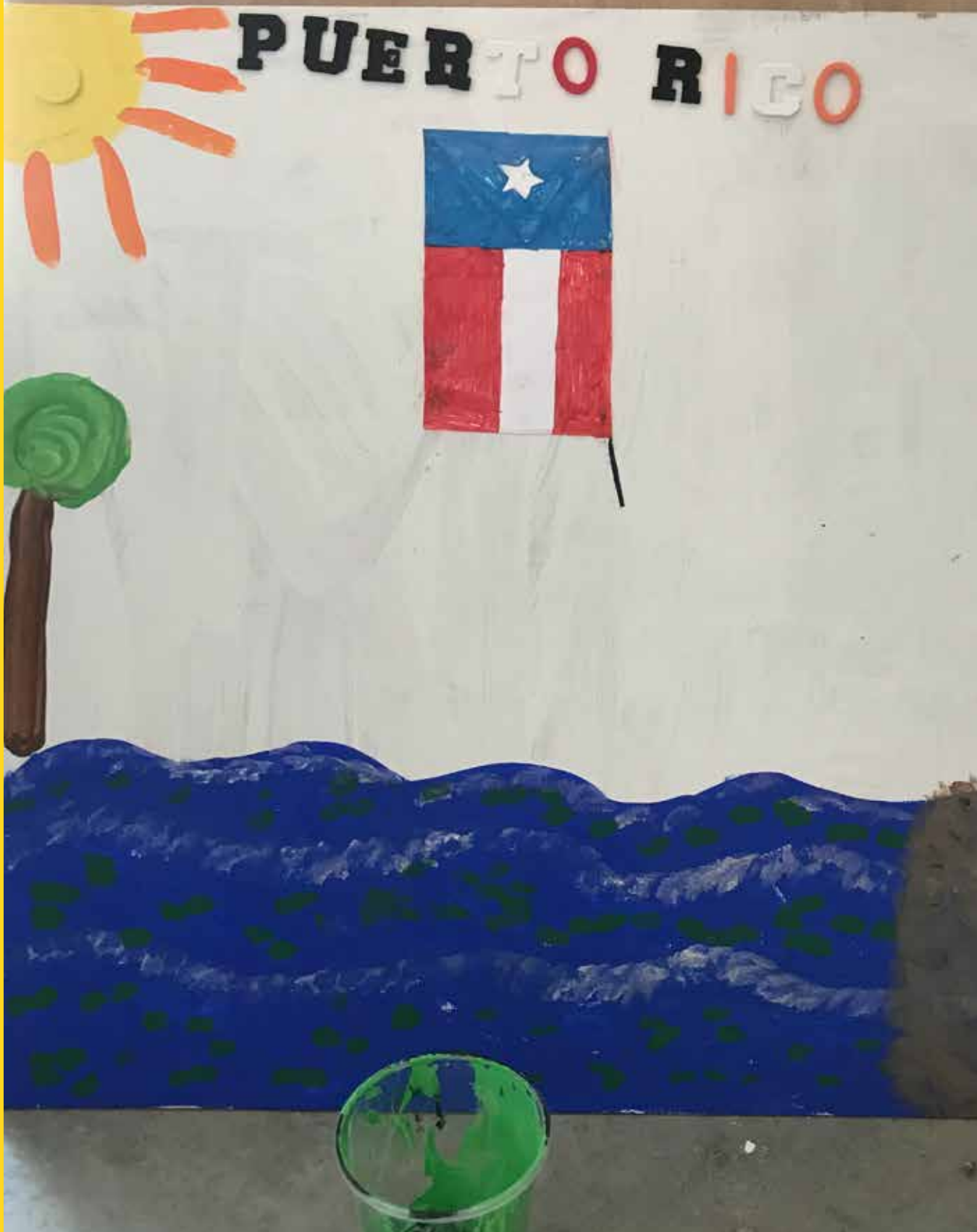




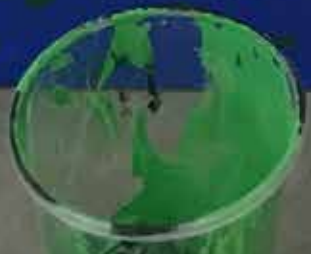
Y.L.

PUERTO RICO

YL a cute boy from Puerto Rico who quickly drew a seascape with the flag of his country. During the sessions of the workshop his father died in Puerto Rico. So YL went to Puerto Rico. Diana the teacher, says that he was calm with his grandmother playing, but then they began to cry and he cried too. When he spoke to Diana, the teacher , he was calm.

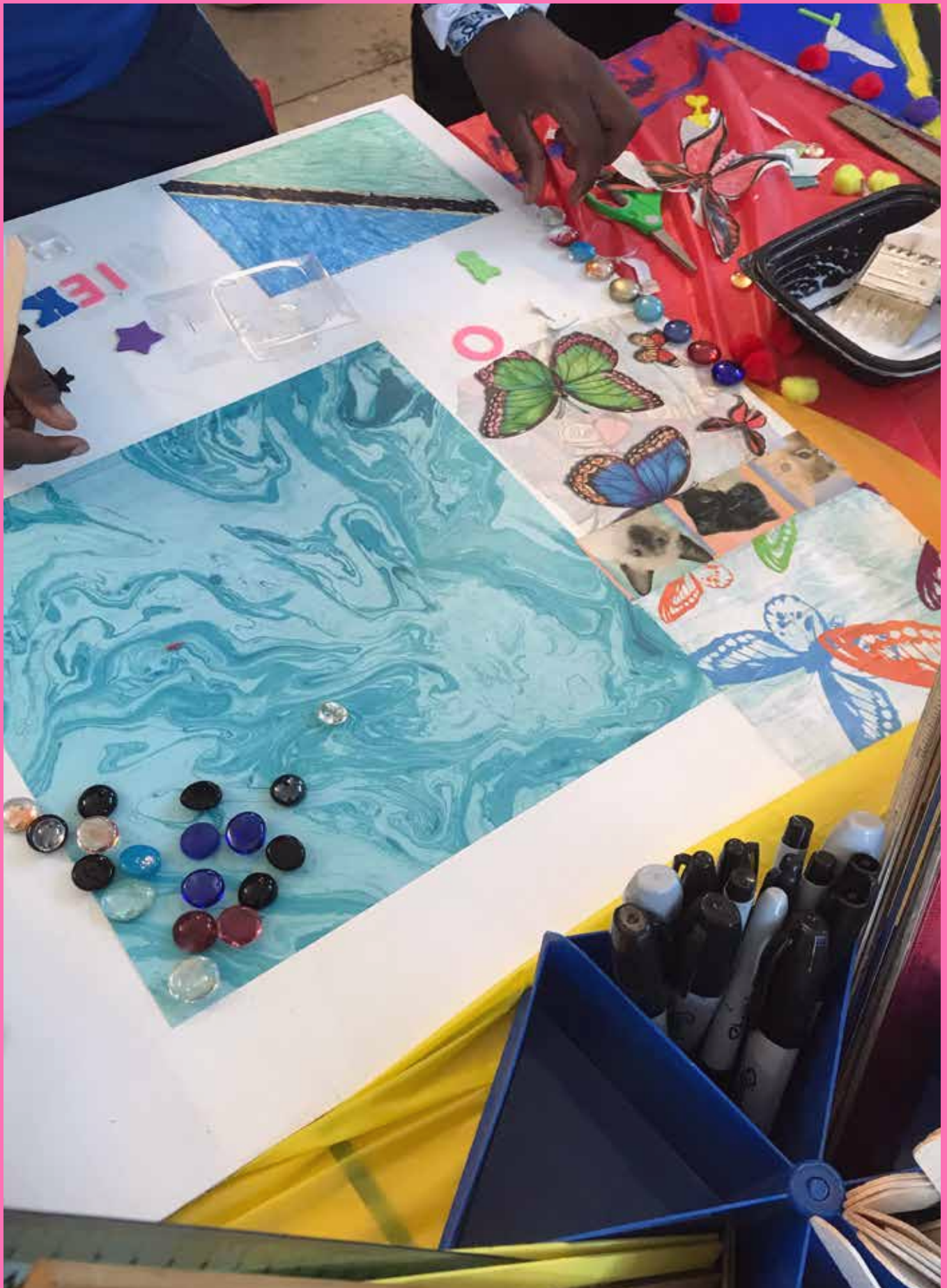


PUERTO RICO



A.G.
TANZANIA

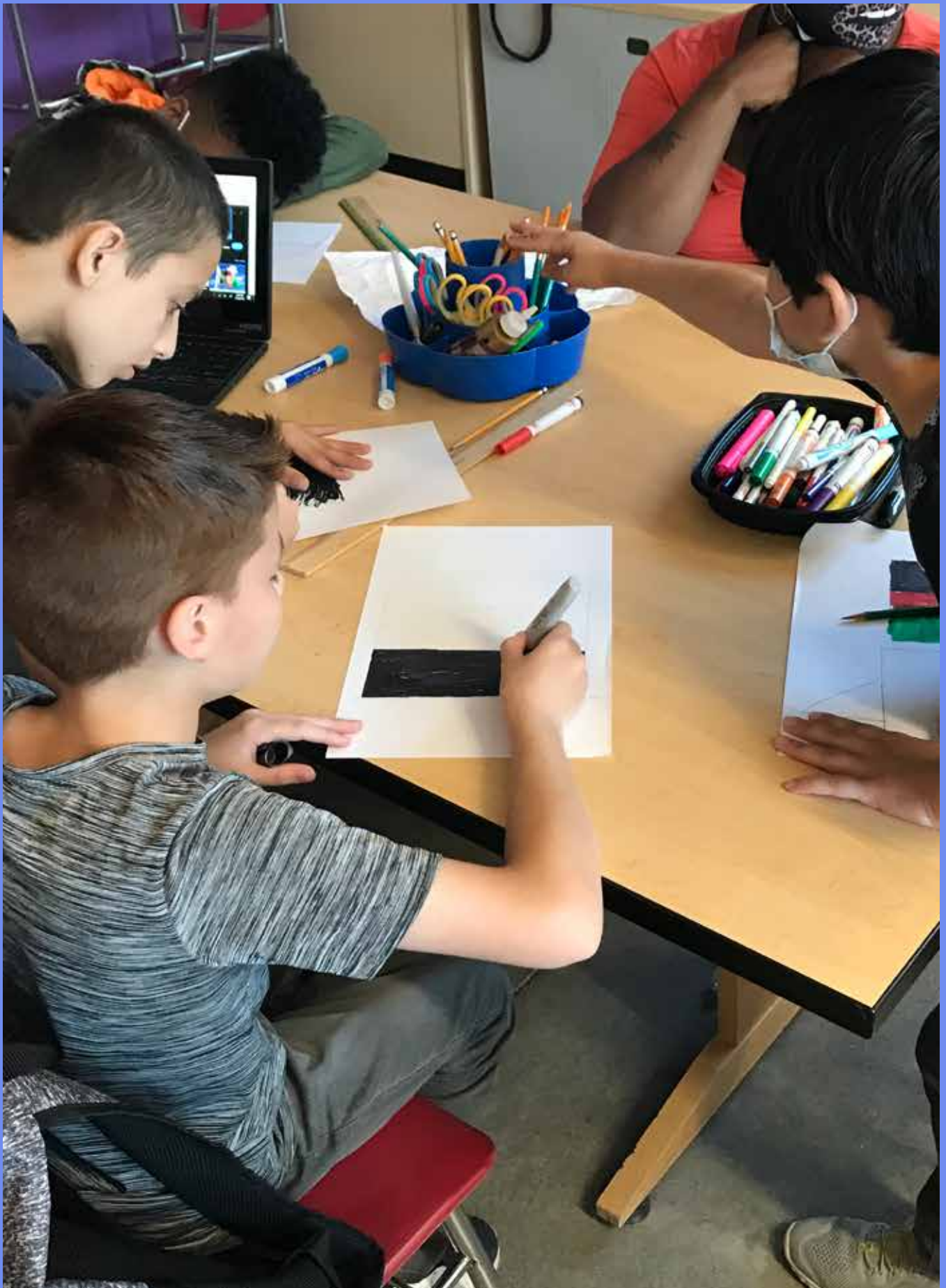






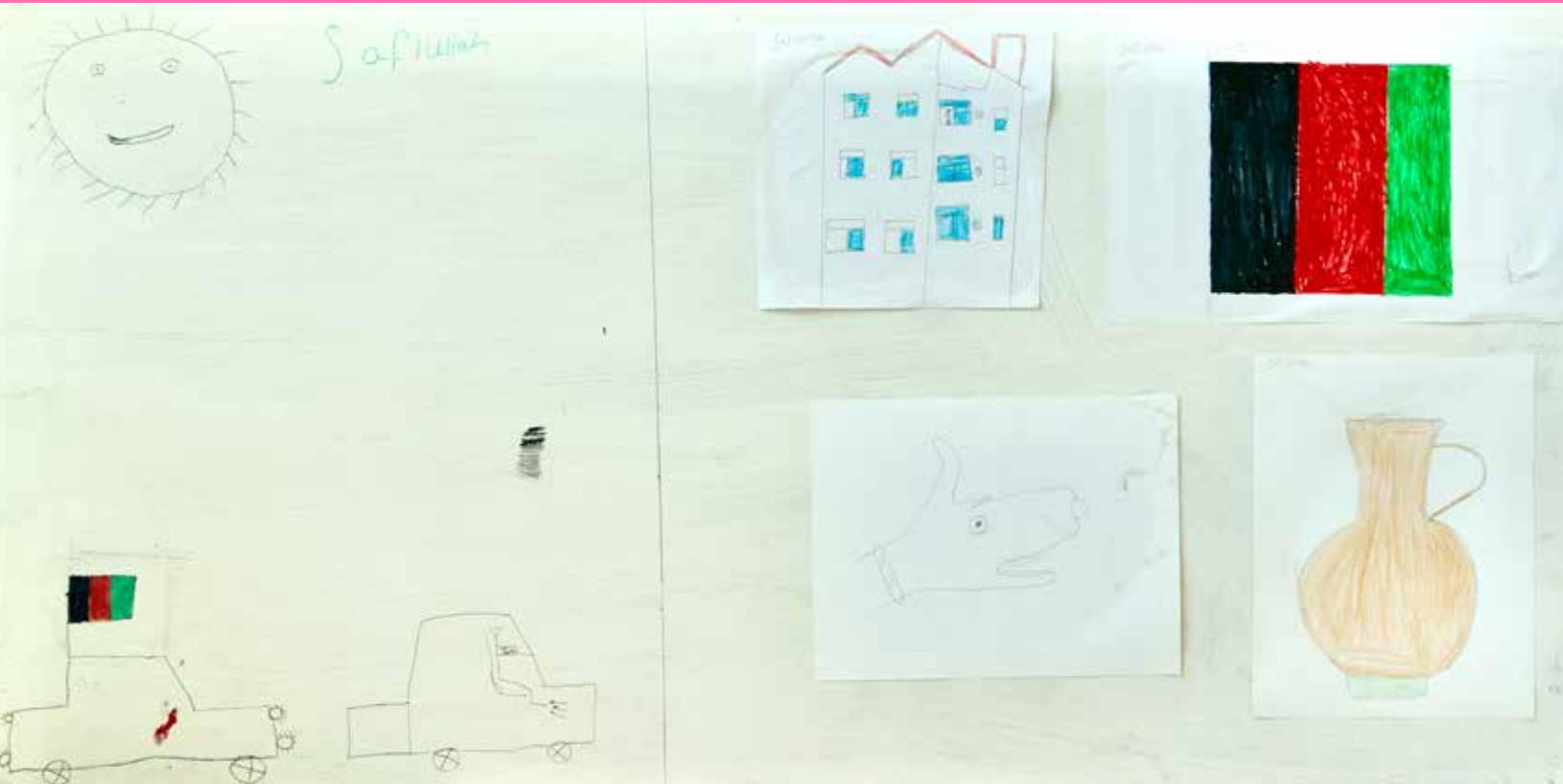


M.S.
AFGHANISTAN



S.Y.

AFGHANISTAN





Gumdiptheatre

Akron, Ohio
August 2021

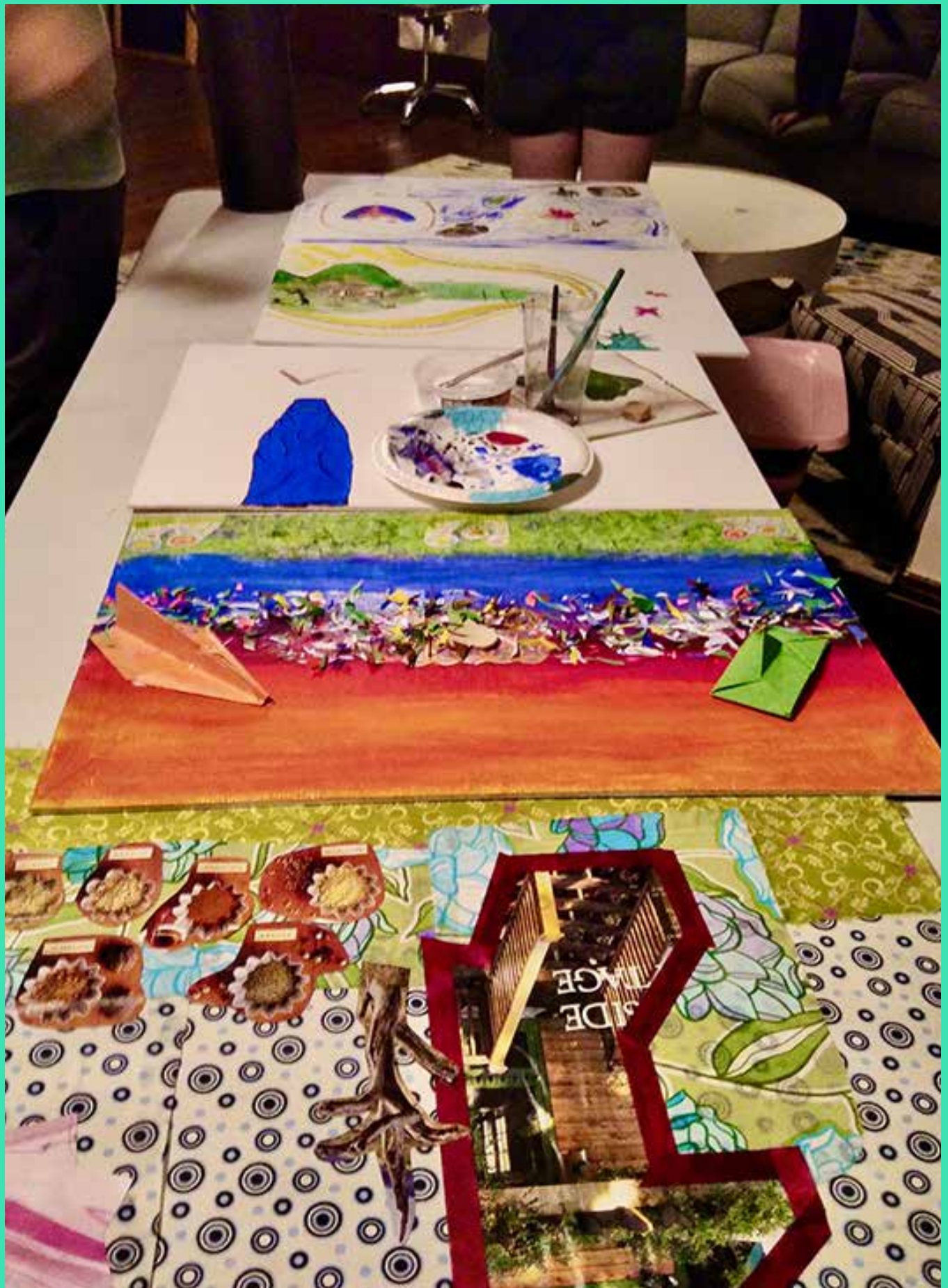


MEMORY ATLAS

During the month of August, for a whole day, I delivered the Memory Atlas workshop to members of the theatre group called Gumdiptheatre in Akron, Ohio. Gumdiptheatre is a nonprofit organization whose director is Katie Beck. The group works in a beautiful space located in Akron, Ohio. Some of the members of this theatre group are immigrants in the United States. Katie allowed me to work with them for this project, and thanks to her I was able to collaborate with five amazing persons: Neema Bal, Samantha Byake, Razya Tazamir, Hsa Win, and Katie Beck. All of the participants, with the exception of Katie, came to the United States from Africa and Asia several years ago, bringing with them parts of their families, so now, they speak English fluently. Each participant worked on a 20 x 30" plywood board.

It was very interesting to realize that the memories of these young adults are vivid, and the memory of their home country is rather present in their hearts and minds. They remember important landmarks and symbolic places from their childhood, dramatic events that led them to flee their countries, and their arrival to the United States. The result of their works of art, their plastic representations, the telling of their memories, and their extraordinary life stories were overwhelming. In what follows I briefly recount pieces of the story that evolved during the workshop.

Neema Bal, who is 25 years old, was born in Burma. Neema has worked in this theatre collective for several years and he's a wonderful actor. His family had to flee Burma because of political reasons. Consequently, he spent his childhood years in a refugee camp in Nepal. The family soon learned that life in the camp meant dealing with many product and service shortages. Today, Neema works for the Gumdiptheatre collective. His development as an actor has been splendid and he has earned awards and prizes for his work. His main memory, the Nepal





refugee Camp, inspired his artwork. Without a second thought, he colored the background with a rainbow and he then started folding and cutting pieces of paper. When we started our conversation he mentioned that he strongly remembered the games they used to play there in the refugee camp. Since they didn't have any materials available, one of their games consisted in making paper planes that carried their wishes on the wings of the planes.

Neema folded several pieces of paper and also cut small pieces of colored paper in the shape of confetti. He glued everything on top of the wooden board. The result was fascinating: an abstract image with the colors of the rainbow and the sunset; he told me these colors reminded him of good things. He also glued on the board an orange folded paper plane and a green folded piece of paper that made an envelope, the final details in a design that combined a rich array of colors and shapes with paper. The memory, the games, and his unconscious mind came back to his present. Neema represented a place with no humans in it: a landscape filled with emotion, color, and movement.



Samantha Byake was born in Congo, she's strong-willed and well-informed. She told me that she is sad and frustrated because the political and social problems in her country continue- and nothing seems to be changing. Sam refers to Congo as the richest country in the world, possessing diamond, lithium, and gold mines, amongst other minerals to be found there. For that reason, there are various forces at play in her country, which cause all kinds of political problems along with violence. Sam had to migrate to various countries in Africa before arriving in the United States.





Showing a great deal of patience and not rushing it, she colored with a brush, for several hours, this veiled woman wearing her cobalt blue garment. In her opinion, the oppression that women face in Afghanistan is terrible; the violence they are submitted to when they sidestep the rules because of not following the rules deeply affects her.

The Taliban regime is a harsh one, and precisely, during the time of the workshop, August 2020, the Taliban were regaining power. Rose told me how her relatives were trying to leave the country and they were being asked charged up to \$5,000 for a supposed seat on an airplane. The struggles in Afghanistan are not over. However, Rose's determination and calmness transcend her deep pain.

Hsa Win was born in Myanmar, but he spent ten years in a refugee camp in Thailand. The political problems and the instability of what used to be Burma continue to unfold, unfortunately, to this day. Hsa didn't hesitate, he quickly came up with an idea and started drawing his place of origin. A beautiful green landscape filled with trees, a wooden house, a shepherd, animals, and a river. His brush easily delineated this heavenly place. Hsa then chose another spot on his board to draw the Statue of Liberty.





The iconic statue, with its torch, lights a path to the Asian landscape. In the flames he wrote a poem by Emma Lazarus: "Give me your tired, your poor. Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. The wretched refuse of your teeming shore, send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door". His past and present lives were there on the board: his place of origin and his inevitable transition to a new country that fills him with hope. Hsa is a sensitive artist with profound insight and many gifts that his colleagues all acknowledged that afternoon. He carries with him his whole being, both present and past, pushing him forward to a possible future filled with blessings.

The visual and oral testimonies of Hsa, Samantha, Rose, and Neema are force fields. Memory breathes life into their new horizons and it is a powerful energy that is not forgotten. Søren Kierkegaard claims that "life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards". Thank you for letting me share these memories.

Ana Quiroz



ANA QUIROZ

Visual artist born in Mexico City, Ana Quiroz works and lives in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato.

Her work is a reflection of her concern for the social and political problems of Mexico, using both sculpture and installation with different materials like recycled glass, resin, bones or plastic. Her interests also relate to collective and social practice, and to the new relations and possibilities of art and education.

Ana Quiroz received in 2021 her Ph.D. degree in Arts and Design at National Autonomous University of Mexico (U.N.A.M) with an Honorable Mention. Her research examines the resurgence of socio-political engagement in Mexican contemporary art. She has taught for over 20 years at a number of universities and art institutions in Mexico. She has received several recognitions and grants for her sculptures and installations.

From 1997 to 2012, she was the co-director of the contemporary art center Kunsthaus Santa Fe in San Miguel de Allende and the Kunsthaus center in Miami, during which time she produced and curated over 90 expositions in Mexico and abroad. Since 2012, she has been organizing independent expositions and projects whose main goal is the diffusion of Mexican contemporary art. In 2020 she joined the Council of Museums of the Cultural Institute of the State of Guanajuato. She is part of the artist collective Rasquache since 2017, and part of the artist collective Veinteparalascuatro from 2011 to 2015.

Quiroz has taken part in art residency programs in France, Argentina, Mexico and the United States. She has participated in numerous group exhibitions in different countries in the Americas and Europe. Her work belongs to private and public collections in Mexico and abroad.



