

Shared Identities: Our Interweaving Threads

Conversation with art using multiple intelligences

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Creative imagination inspired by the arts in the curriculum of language classes is important in the sense that it contributes to the development of essential mental skills, such as perception, critical analysis, and aesthetic awareness. Through appreciating art, students have a chance to understand the issues addressed in the art, as well as the cultural heritage, beliefs, and identity of the artist. Integrating arts into the curriculum through Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences provides several windows for appreciation of art (Davis & Gardner, 1999). Moreover, raising self-awareness through the theory of multiple intelligences contributes to personal growth in the process of integrating identity. This paper reports on a classroom project integrating the arts into university English classes. Through communicating with the art and the artist's self-expression in the art, students were inspired to talk and write, using their multiple intelligences. The lessons were effective in enhancing student motivation, English skills, imagination, and critical and creative thinking, while raising students' awareness of the global issues addressed in the art and the concept of multiple intelligences.

言語学習において、芸術からインスピレーションを得た創造的イマジネーションは、知覚、クリティカルな分析、美的意識の発達を促すという意味において重要である。芸術作品を鑑賞することにより、学生たちは作品に託された問題、文化的遺産や価値観そして芸術家自身について理解する機会を得る。ハワード・ガーディナー氏の多元的知能理論は多様な芸術鑑賞の方法を提供し、又、多元的知能理論より自己認識を高めることはアイデンティティ形成の過程に寄与する。本稿は芸術と多元的知能理論を大学での英語の授業に取り入れた試みについての報告である。芸術作品そしてそこに表現されている芸術家自身と対話することにより、学生達は、話し、書くことへのインスピレーションを得た。レッスンは学生のモーティベーション・英語のスキル・想像力・クリティカル・クリエイティブな思考を伸ばし、作品の背景にある問題や多元的知能理論への認識を高めることに効果があった。

If the painter presents us with a field or a vase of flowers, his paintings are windows which are open on the whole world. (Jean-Paul Sartre, 1949)



Through the course of art history, artists have inspired each other, even transcending the categories of painting, music, and literature. Paintings have inspired musical composers. For example, in 1874 Modest Mussorgsky composed *Pictures at an Exhibition*, inspired by the exhibition of his friend, the painter Victor Hartman. Literary works have also inspired artists. John Everett Millais painted *Ophelia*, inspired by Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. Paintings have inspired poets and novelists, such as when the Polish poet Stanislaw Przybyszewski wrote the poem *Vampire* inspired by Edvard Munch's painting *Love and Pain*. There is a long history of how one art form can inspire another.

The Japanese artist Senju (2006) suggests that human beings are artistic in the sense that art is essentially the act of communicating one's imagination to others. He further claims that art is a continuing process of creating peace. In this project Marc Chagall's *I and the Village* and Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* were the two main artworks used to inspire students to think about peace. Chagall tried to build bridges between different religions, ideologies, and communities and satisfy humanity's longing for everlasting peace as one brotherhood (Metzger, 2006). Picasso's *Guernica* is a powerful appeal for peace and liberty, and displays anger at human barbarity; even today, thousands of visitors at the Prado museum are shocked and transfixed by the appalling drama that unfolds itself before their eyes (Hensbergen, 2005).

Recognizing and nurturing multiple intelligences contributes to the betterment of the world and a sustainable future, through enabling people to understand that each

individual is uniquely different because of different combinations of intelligences (Gardner, 1993). Recently art museums as educational institutions for "individual centered-learning" have been enthusiastically applying the concept of multiple intelligences, which provides several gateways to the appreciation of art (Davis & Gardner, 1999).

Howard Gardner's lecture on multiple intelligences given in the summer 2003 at Teachers College Columbia University and my personal visit to the museum in Hakone (Chagall: My Story) were the two inspirational events for this project. The primary goal of this project was to inspire students to talk and write using multiple intelligences, while raising student awareness of the global issues addressed in the art.

Literature review

Art education, arts in language classes

In 1900 John Dewey presented his ideal educational model, in which a museum is at the center of the school system, providing a spirit of unity and vitality, and maintaining an organic flow with society (Dewey, 1990). Along these lines, some educators and researchers advocate using an arts-based integrated curriculum (Parsons, 2004), so learners can release their imagination for creativity and personal growth (Green, 1995). In classrooms and museums, experiencing art through different dimensions helps learners in integrating different dimensions of themselves (Hubard, 2007a). Spectators and learners can be empowered to explore layers of meanings through group dialogues (Burnham, 1994). Moreover, teachers can help students use contextual

knowledge productively as catalysts for making meaning in having dialogues with art (Hubard, 2007b). These “visual narratives” help youngsters form continuity between their creative imaginative inner worlds and real life experiences (Burton, 2000). Art in the context of social issues and global issues gives teachers a range of potential choices to raise learners’ “critical consciousness” so they will become active participants in society for a sustainable future (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2000). In this vein, Hein (2004) suggests that judging the educational value of experience through art should be made based on how it allows the learners to apply their experiences to the real world.

Regarding arts in language classes, Bresler (1995) suggests that the integration of arts to English instruction can contribute to the development of essential mental skills, such as perception, critical analysis, and aesthetic awareness. Art-based activities offer a number of ways to integrate multiple learning styles in language classes (Catalano, 2006) and enhance motivation and creativity (Hayes, 2007).

Multiple intelligences in art and language classes

In 1983 a psychologist, Howard Gardner, broadened the conventional view of intelligence by introducing his theory of multiple intelligences (MI theory), based on his research into brain injuries. According to his theory, we humans are all equipped with several autonomous intelligences in the separate domains of our brains (Gardner, 2006). Although Gardner continues to explore other additional possibilities (Gardner, 1999) his current model of multiple intelligences outlines the following eight intelligences: linguistic intelligence (the ability to use language effectively both

orally and in writing); logical-mathematical intelligence (the ability to use reason, logic and numbers); musical intelligence (the ability to produce and appreciate music); bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (the ability to control body movements and handle objects skillfully); interpersonal intelligence (the ability to relate to and understand others); intrapersonal intelligence (the ability to know about and understand one’s own feelings, strengths, and weaknesses); and naturalist intelligence (interest in animals and plants, and the ability to analyze similarities and differences) (Gardner, 1983).

Researchers suggest that MI theory leads teachers to a greater understanding of students’ potential abilities and strengths (Christison & Kennedy, 2001) and offers teachers a wide range of various innovative teaching strategies (Armstrong, 2000). According to research, integrating MI theory into English classes increased student independence, developed multimodal skills (Campbell, 1990), and enhanced motivation (Cluck & Hess, 2003).

In 1971, Howard Gardner established a research team on arts education (Harvard Graduate School of Education Project Zero; originally founded by Nelson Goodman in 1967), which was devoted to the systematic research of artistic creativity and artistic thought, regarding the arts as a gateway to analytical and logical thinking, verbal reasoning, and the testing of hypotheses (Pearson, 1998). Integrating the arts via the theory of multiple intelligences provides educators with various instructional approaches (Johns, 2008). The concept of multiple intelligences provides ample “entry and exit points” for the appreciation of art, such as narrative, quantitative, logical, aesthetic and hands-on (Davis

& Gardner, 1999). Some museums, such as the Junibacken Museum in Stockholm, Sweden, are organized around MI theory and other museums are incorporating MI theory to differing degrees (Gardner, 1999) for educational purposes.

Setting and participants, goals of the project

The institutional setting of this project was a university in the Tokyo area with a student body of about 4,000. The participants of this study are sophomores, majoring in science. A total of 70 students (in two classes) participated. Their proficiency level was low intermediate to intermediate. We met once a week for 90 minutes. The course was called Academic English for the Second Year Students.

The goals of the project were to enhance motivation, English skills, imagination, and critical/creative thinking, and to raise awareness of multiple intelligences and of the issues addressed in the art, while interacting with the art.

Procedure and timeline

The project lasted four weeks during the middle of a 15-week semester. Course outcomes were measured by means of post-project surveys, with open questions such as *please comment freely on lessons on art using multiple intelligences*, and *please comment freely on group presentation and individual essay writing*. Most of the students wrote their comments in Japanese and I translated them into English for this paper. Students' essays are quoted exactly as the students wrote them. The questionnaires were anonymous and pseudonyms are used to identify individual students. I devised the worksheets to stimulate conversation

and to enable students to apply MI theory as entry points to the appreciation of art. It was expected that through raising awareness of MI theory, students would have a chance to broaden their perspectives on their own intelligences and find a new way of appreciating art, both of which would contribute to their personal growth.

Week 1

In the previous week, I had asked the students to write down the names of their favorite artists. Through incorporating their preferences into the classes, it was hoped that students would have the feeling that they were participating in building the curriculum. Based on the results of the survey, I collected photos of the artworks of the students' favorite artists from the Internet, made a PowerPoint file, and introduced them in class. According to the survey, Pablo Picasso was by far the most popular artist among the students. The works introduced during the class as the preliminary stage of the project included *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci, *Self-Portrait* by Vincent Van Gogh, *Souvenir de Mortefontaine* by Camille Corot, *Woman with a Parasol-Madame Monet and Her Son* by Claude Monet, *Bal du Moulin de Galette* by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *The Scream* by Munch, *The Bridal Pair with the Eiffel Tower* by Marc Chagall, *Girl Before a Mirror* by Picasso, among others. First, students looked at the paintings projected on the large screen and were encouraged to have individual inner conversations (mental talk) with the art. Then students in groups exchanged opinions, collected adjectives, described what was happening in the scene, and imagined what happened before and after the scene depicted. Lastly,

students shared their ideas in class. After a brief introduction of Howard Gardner, the theory of multiple intelligences was introduced using a chart. It was explained that we all have eight intelligences in the separate domains of our brains and that in this project we would try to use all eight intelligences as entry points to maximize the effective use of our brain power to appreciate art. Generally, students showed interest in MI theory and several students were already familiar with MI theory from the educational psychology classes which are a part of the teacher training program.

Week 2

I explained to the students that they were first going to have mental talk (inner conversation) with the art and the artist's self as expressed in the artwork, and then they would be asked to appreciate the work using multiple intelligences. Students seemed to get the idea and had mental talk with the artwork *I and the Village* (1911) by Marc Chagall, which was projected on the large screen. Then, to provide some background knowledge of the Jewish community in Russia around the time of Marc Chagall's childhood, students watched part of the film *Fiddler on the Roof* (Jewison, 1971). The students then read a short passage on Chagall, which was based on several book sources, and viewed the relevant paintings projected on the screen. The reading included the fact that with the Nazi occupation of France and the deportation of the Jewish people during the World War II, Chagall and his family emigrated to the United States. Next, students watched part of the DVD *Chagall* (Kultur, 2004). This had the dual objectives of enhancing their English skills and providing more background knowledge.

Next, students in groups exchanged opinions on the artwork, applying the concept of multiple intelligences as an entry point to appreciate the arts, using worksheets 1 and 2 (Appendixes 1 and 2). For example, students asked questions like *What are the people (animals) in the painting talking to each other about?* (linguistic intelligence); *What are some of the geometric shapes?* (spatial intelligence); *Do you hear the music? What kind of music do you hear?* (musical intelligence); and *Does the painting remind you of something in your own experience?* (intrapersonal intelligence). The questions were organized so students would be able to appreciate the art using each domain of their multiple intelligences.

Week 3

Students first had inner conversations with the artwork *Guernica*, accompanied by the symphony *Guernica*, composed by Balada (1966). To provide some background knowledge of why and how Picasso decided to paint the mural *Guernica*, students watched part of the video *Guernica* (Kultur, 1999). Students in self-selected groups shared opinions on the art, remaining conscious of multiple intelligences, using worksheets 1 and 3 (Appendixes 1 and 3). Then students shared their opinions with the class. Then students chose either *I and the Village* or *Guernica*, and formed self-selected groups of four to five members and collaboratively created a dialogue, a story, or their original interpretation of the artwork. Some groups autonomously decided to work on an artist of their choice such as Renoir.

Week 4

Students in groups presented their dialogue, story, or original interpretation of the artwork while it was projected on the large screen. At home, students individually wrote dialogues, stories, or essays, which they submitted the following week. Some students built onto what they had presented in groups and some students created completely new works. Some of the best works were introduced during the following class.

Outcomes

Motivation, English skills, critical thinking

Students found the activity fun, interesting, meaningful, and stimulating. In the open questionnaire, students commented that they enjoyed the activities and their motivation was enhanced, especially because this lesson was something totally new to them. Students commented that they felt their English skills were enhanced through exchanging opinions with peers, presenting in groups, and writing dialogues, essays, and stories in English. For example, a student commented:

In creating the conversation, I tried to imagine and read the intention woven into the painting. Then I tried to put them in order and explained along the storyline. I felt that I made progress in arranging sentences in a coherent way. (Hiro)

Moreover, exchanging opinions with their peers sharpened students' critical thinking attitudes and skills. Students found it exciting that multiple interpretations are possible from a single painting. In addition, students noticed that critical thinking skills are applicable in other fields as well. Students commented:

It was interesting to listen to the various interpretations of the picture. I thought it was important to exchange opinions in order to broaden the scope of view and sense of value. (Aki)

I thought all artworks have multiple dimensions so they can be appreciated with multiple perspectives. Also, I think not only paintings but also other things can be looked at with multiple perspectives. (Nao)

They found joy in deciphering the painters' intentions and adding new layers of interpretations as they exchanged opinions and shared ideas with their peers.

Imagination and creative thinking

Through having conversations with art, students showed much interest in the inner world of the painters. They interacted with the artists' selves as expressed in the artwork, and they felt the strong emotions and great imaginative power of the artists. For example, students commented:

It was interesting that through looking at the picture closely, it seemed that I was able to clearly see what the painter was imagining. It was like looking into the brain of the painters. (Tatsu)

I thought the painter's worlds can be grasped through characteristic features of their art and I thought painters live with intense emotions. (Masa)

I felt that painters have a tremendous amount of imagination. (Ken)

Through exploring the artists' inner world and feeling the power of imagination and the creative power of great artists, students showed imaginative creativity themselves. Students commented:

I felt that my creativity and imagination were stimulated and stirred. (Yuu)

It was interesting that through looking at the picture carefully various conversations just came to my mind. (Kei)

Most of the students who worked on Chagall's *I and the Village* created stories, whereas most of the students who worked on *Guernica* wrote a critical analysis of the artwork in an essay. Through having conversation with *I and the Village*, students created a heartwarming story of the green man and the cow on the theme of friendship, trust, promise, and love for nature in a peaceful quiet atmosphere.

Students felt great freedom to imagine through the artwork, giving it life and creating stories extending the world inside the canvas to the broader outside world. A student commented:

I thought that the painting had a story like an animation and I felt a great freedom as the painting seemed to come alive and broaden itself. (Tomo)

Contextual knowledge and global issues

Many students commented that the background knowledge and biographical elements provided during the classes helped them understand both the artwork itself and the painter's feeling and message. Students commented:

Through learning the background of the picture, we can understand the painter's personal feeling and the messages well. (Jyun)

It was impressive and interesting that we can deepen our understanding of art through learning the background, though it is hard to understand what is expressed in the painting, *Guernica*, at first sight. (Hide)

The contextual knowledge added depth to students' understanding of the artwork, both as the painter's personal work and as the artwork embedded in its socio-cultural historical context. Background information provided during the classes raised their awareness of the global issues addressed in the art. Moreover, many students were impressed with Picasso's strong anti-war message in *Guernica*. Students wrote:

The war, which inspired Picasso to paint such a mural, filled with sorrow and agony, must have been a real tragic one. Picasso put a strong anti-war message in *Guernica*. (Ryu)

I think Picasso wanted to express his sadness and anger about the war. I can hear the screams of the people and animals. (Kazu)

Contextual knowledge stimulated students' interest and some students autonomously started to do research on the bombing of *Guernica*, the catalyst for Picasso's painting. A student wrote:

After that I researched *Guernica* using the Internet. I thought a lot about the cruelty of Nazis. (Rie)

Many students expressed their desire to go to museums to see the actual artworks. Noticing the importance of contextual knowledge, they commented that they would like to study and get some information before visiting the museum. Indeed, a few students did visit museums during the summer vacation and had wonderful experiences. Other students expressed their wish to read biographies of the painters introduced in the classes and other painters' biographies as well.

Multiple intelligences

Students enjoyed appreciating art using multiple intelligences. Many students commented that appreciating art using multiple intelligences was more interesting than just viewing. Students commented:

Through being conscious of the multiple intelligences, I found a new way of appreciating the art. It was fun. (Taka)

I thought that spatial intelligence and interpersonal intelligence are important in appreciating art. Spatial intelligence is important in understanding the form and interpersonal intelligence is important in reading the painters' mind and intentions. (Yuri)

During the group presentations and in the essays, stories, and dialogues they individually wrote in English at the end of the project, many students demonstrated their multiple intelligences quite effectively. They imagined a dialogue, using interpersonal intelligence; asked many why questions, using logical-mathematical intelligence; tried to decipher the

geometric structure, using spatial intelligence; tried to feel the movement using bodily-kinesthetic intelligence; and so on. Some students noticed the geometric composition of the paintings and extended their thinking to decode the meaning of the shapes and structure of the painting. For example, using spatial intelligence, these students wrote in their essays:

I see black and sorrow in the picture. The geometric structure tells us about the misery of war (Mako on *Guernica*).

When I saw this art, I felt so sad because humans and animals look very painful. The colors of the art are black and white. I can see triangles and squares. In the art, I can see odd shapes structures. I think colors and structure tells us pain and sadness (Koji on *Guernica*).

Some students asked why-questions to logically decipher the meaning of monotone, using logical-mathematical intelligence:

Guernica is painted only in black, which stands for sadness of war. Generally, "war" makes us think of "blood." Blood is red. But picture doesn't have that color. Why? I guess, Picasso thought that the "war" removes colors. The "war" removes not only the red of "blood" but also many colors: colors of town, nature, people, children, joy and smile. We are deprived of all the colors of happiness in wars (Yoshi on *Guernica*)

Some students, using naturalist intelligence, paid attention to the natural objects, such as flowers and trees in the

artwork, and tried to figure out what these natural objects symbolize. For example, a student wrote:

The flower the dead soldier has means the reproduction of life. This is painter's wish for the future (Taro on *Guernica*).

Other students felt the movement in the artwork using bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. For example, one student wrote in his essay titled *Run Away*:

This world is full of confusion and despair. The beauty of flowers break(s). Soldier's hand tell(s) us of the defeat. Electric light leads people to another world. Everything, everyone is trying to escape. Horse, cow and people try to run away from something (Kazu on *Guernica*).

Generally, students wrote powerful original interpretations of the artwork, using their imagination and multiple intelligences.

Conclusion and discussion

Integrating art combined with multiple intelligences into English classes was effective in enhancing motivation, English skills, imagination, critical creative thinking, and raising awareness of global issues addressed in the art. Art successfully stimulated conversation and inspired students to write. Impressed by the artists' creativity and imagination, they themselves showed confidence in expressing their rich inner imaginative world through creative writing. Contextual knowledge of the artists and the issues addressed in their art added depth to the students' understanding of the art as

well as stimulated their interest to do research on the issues portrayed. Students read about the painters' intense emotions and strong appeal for peace. Students applied the theory of multiple intelligences as entry points for appreciating art and broadened their concept of intelligence, which enabled them to write powerful and original critical analyses of the art. They successfully used insightful inferences (logical-mathematical intelligence), care for living creatures (naturalist), feeling for movement (bodily-kinesthetic), and metaphorical expressions (linguistic) in their observations. I believe raising self-awareness through the theory of multiple intelligences has contributed to their personal growth in the process of integrating identity. Additionally, students expressed their wish to apply what they experienced in the classroom to the real world, for example, to appreciate art using multiple intelligences the next time they go to a museum.

The arts served as windows on the sea of imagination. Students felt the living dynamism of ebb and flow within the art and extended their imaginative thinking to the wider world of infinite space. Both contextual knowledge and multiple intelligences served as stepping stones to stimulate imagination and offered new interpretive possibilities. Artists turn their personal crystallized moment of fragility into the eternal beauty of art. That crystallized moment of the artist's inner landscape transcended time, space, and socio-cultural context and inspired the students. The dialogues existed at multiple levels: personal dialogue between the individual students and the art as genuine aesthetic beauty, personal dialogue between the individual student and the artists, conversation among peers, collective dialogue among peers

embedded in the fabric of contemporary society, and the artwork and artist embedded in the socio-cultural historical context of that particular time. Through these dialogues and with imagination, sensitivity, and multiple intelligences, students appreciated the artist's inner fragile moment and created their own stories, dialogues, and original essays, which I believe became their personal art.

The theme of the JALT2008 conference was *Shared identities: our interweaving threads*. Through having conversation with art, students interacted with the artists' selves expressed in the art and shared their identities much in the same way readers identify themselves with the characters in a novel, interweaving threads with the artists' selves as well as their peers as they had an aesthetic experience.

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Appendix 1

Worksheet 1

Conversation with Art using Multiple Intelligences

Intelligences	
Linguistic	<p>What are the people in the painting talking to each other about?</p> <p>What story is depicted in the painting?</p> <p>What do you think happened just before (after) the scene?</p>
Logical-mathematical	<p>Why.....?</p> <p>Why did the painter paint the picture?</p>
Spatial-Visual	<p>What are some of the geometric shapes?</p>
Bodily Kinesthetic	<p>Do you feel the movement?</p> <p>What kind of movement do you feel?</p>
Musical	<p>Do you hear the music?</p> <p>What kind of music do you hear?</p>
Intrapersonal	<p>Does the picture remind you of something in your own experiences?</p>
Naturalist	<p>Do you see any natural objects in the picture?</p> <p>What are they?</p>
Interpersonal	<p>Share your ideas with your friends!</p>

Appendix 2

Worksheet 2

Conversation with Art using Multiple Intelligences

***I and the Village*, by Marc Chagall, 1911. Oil on canvas.
192.1x151.4 cm.**

Museum of Modern Art, New York

1. Enjoy inner conversation with the art and the artist's self which is expressed in the artwork.
2. In your groups, share your ideas and opinions.
3. Write an essay, dialogue, short story or a poem.

[Image has been removed from this worksheet.]

1. What colors do you see?
2. What can you see in the picture?
3. Why are the white cow and the green man looking at each other?
4. What are they talking to each other about?
5. Why is there a line connecting the cow and the man? What does it symbolize?
6. What are some of the geometric shapes?
7. What does the geometric structure tell us?
8. Do you feel the three dimensional quality?

9. What do you think the larger circle symbolizes?
10. What do you think the smaller circle symbolizes?
11. Do you feel the movement? What kind of movement is it?
12. Why do you think the woman is floating upside down?
13. Do you hear the music? What kind of music is it?
14. Does the picture remind you of your own experiences?
15. What does the flowering tree symbolize?
16. What do the windows symbolize?
17. Do you feel the magical, dream like quality in the picture?
18. What is the message in the picture?

These pages have the same meaning as a painted surface.
If there were a hiding place in my pictures, I would slip them into it...

(My Life by Marc Chagall)

もし私の絵に隠し場所があったら、私はそこにこれらのページをすべりこませただろう。さもなければ、おそらく私の作中人物の背中に、あるいは私の壁画の音楽家のズボンに、これらのページを貼り付けただろう。(わが回想：シャガール自叙伝)

Memo

Appendix 3

Worksheet 3

Conversation with Art using Multiple Intelligences *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso, 1937 Canvas, 351x782cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado

1. Enjoy inner conversation with the art and the artist's self which is expressed in the artwork.
2. In your groups, share your ideas and opinions.
3. Write an essay, dialogue, short story or a poem.

[Image has been removed from this worksheet.]

1. What colors do you see?
2. What can you see in the picture?
3. What does the geometric structure tell us?
4. What does the electric light symbolize?
5. What does the tree symbolize?
6. What does the horse symbolize?
7. What does the soldier's hand symbolize?
8. What is the meaning of the flower?
9. What is the meaning of the torch?
10. Why is the woman walking toward the light?

11. Why did Picasso present each figure in these forms?
12. Why did Picasso create this mural?
13. Why did Picasso create the mural in monotone?
14. What was the situation of the world then?
15. How did Picasso express his emotion and identity in this artwork?
16. Do you hear the music? What kind of music is it?
17. Do you feel the movement? Describe the movement.
18. What is the message of *Guernica*?

Memo

Picasso said,

....In the panel on which I am working which I shall call *Guernica*, and in all my recent works of art, I clearly express my abhorrence of the military caste which has sunk Spain in an ocean of pain and death...

Everything you can imagine is real.

Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.

The world today doesn't make sense, so why should I paint pictures that do?