

JAPANESE

ART and

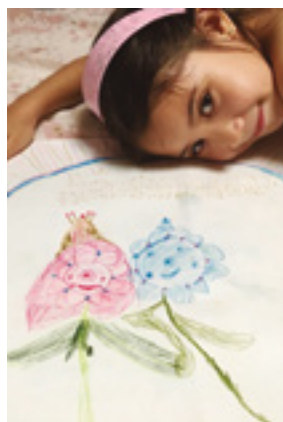
CULTURE for

CHILDREN

A WALK THROUGH JAPANESE ART

日本の美術

Sonia G Caballero
SGC



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CULTURE for

CHILDREN

A WALK THROUGH JAPANESE ART

日本の美術

A book that brings children closer not only to art but also to a philosophy of Japanese life and thought that will help to model the child's personality in terms of respect, in accordance with the current environmental situation.

Sonia G Caballero
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FOREWORD

PEDAGOGY OF ART AND ARTISTIC LITERATURE

We find ourselves within a difficult dilemma of definition when presenting this ambivalent treatise, both written and ordered, with great clarity and spectacularity (for the record: I have not yet been able to see the definitive version) by an artist who has had the opportunity to develop her work, in the two great traditions that gave rise to contemporary art, in the two centuries that have preceded us. On the one hand, Western art, what better school, as Eugenio d'Ors would say, than strolling through the Prado Museum, and this is precisely what I try to do on all my trips to Madrid. Sonia G Caballero, had the opportunity to start with her grandfather when she was a child. As she well knows, (Art teacher at the Yokohama Montessori School with students from 3 to 12 years of age), children are like a sponge, and therefore more than one image from these visits have stayed with her. *Ut pictura poesis*, as the poet Horacio used to say, a lapidary phrase that has remained a motto of the interdisciplinarity of the arts in the West and that well reminds us of the great European writers, in my opinion, who I have always read with great pleasure, from the XIX century, (John Ruskin, English); XX (Mario Praz, Italian); and XXI (Paul Virilio, French).

On the other hand, if we add to this the opportunity to develop her art in Japan during the last 21 years, it would be necessary to add the other factor that coincides with the one that gave rise to European avant-garde art at the end of the 19th century, in the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist period, who with the contact of geographically distant cultures, such as the African and the Japanese, completely changed the art of their time, ranging from controversial figures such as Gauguin or Van Gogh. Japonism was more than a fashion or a commercial operation in its day. It was an aesthetic that inspired a new art, thanks to the osmosis of two cultures, the Western and the Japanese, and they explained it well, at the time, in the headquarters of CaixaForum, in the thesis exhibition titled 'Japonismo'. The fascination of Japanese art, presented in Barcelona and Madrid in 2013, highlighting both equidistant and complementary values, in short, giving a special feature to the work of the artist Sonia G Caballero and author of the artist and author of this book, Sonia.

The author is a very recent addition to my catalogue of favourite artists, and I had the honour of presiding, in the absence of my Cercle President Dr. Josep Fèlix Bentz, the ceremony of donating the painting "The Year of Tolerance" to the

government of United Arab Emirates, in the presence of the UAE Consul General in Barcelona, the Honorable Mohammed Abdullah Ali Alshamsi. There I met her at the Reial Cercle Artístic, where she offered her work in person, on October 26. I don't remember the various speeches, including mine, fortunately. Just a few words from Caballero, and the delicacy and meticulousness with which she wrote the name of the Golden Ghaf (tree that precisely represents Tolerance in the UAE), with brush and gold, on the canvas of the painting to be delivered. That for me, was the highlight of the event.

Returning to the beautiful object at hand, this is a book based on experience as both teacher and artist. Japanese themes worked from the heart and knowledge. The learning of a culture, as a positive and transcendental contribution to the artistic work itself, without forgetting environmental education. An art made with precious materials (Japanese lacquer, gold pigments); oriental techniques, Western knowledge and philosophy of Japanese Ikigai life, formative elements of her own personal technique, the "Kourinhaku-oil" and "Neo-naturalist" style. After all, with this book, based on the classes taught, the important thing which is intended is to share experiences so as to improve the classes.

Its practical content, mainly art projects for already experienced children, moreover it is confirmed by the profuse illustrations. It is a self-referential text, since her work in most of the book, is proposed as an example and an exercise. In a total of 19 tests to be developed, 10 of which are directly referenced with her work and a further 9 to concepts of Japanese culture that structurally affect Caballero's artistic work. Let us mention for information only, what any prologue, as I was told at the time, worth its salt should contain. The sixth exercise whose title is Ukiyo and dedicated to portraiture, has a meaning which is comparable to the Latin locution attributed to Horacio (we seem to be drawn to this precise Latin poet, seeing that the years provoke this type of affection) Carpe Diem, which has great 'goliardesque' significance to enjoy the present. Caballero uses it to tune into some samples of her portraiture and the work carried out by Japanese artists, who from the 18th century knew how to transfer daily views of life and landscapes of their country. These are the same works that flooded the markets of Paris and London a century later, contributing to the aforementioned foundational aesthetical change of our modernity. Works by Utamaro (also famous for his erotic themes or in many of his directly pornographic works, which were, of course, highly sought after) or by Hokusai, author of the "Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji", an exercise of geographical self-absorption that was later practiced by the inspirer of the cubists, Cézanne, with the Sainte-Victoire mountain in Aix-en-Provence, which he came to paint more than 40 times at the end of his life. Hokusai is even more well-known

for the iconic work, the "Great Wave", which we all have in mind and that, thanks to Caballero, I found out that there is a copy in one of my favourite and closest-to-home museums, the MNAC in Barcelona. My first visit, as part of a religious pilgrimage plan, and also after the current sanitary confinement, will be to see it after humbly requesting that my friend, Director of the entity, make this possible.

All these references, more cultural than just artistic, help the author to present her work called Sofia (2013, oil on panel and 24K Gold), dressing her with all these complicities, and proposing a timely exercise. And successively, although I only mention those that have had the greatest impact on me, with concepts such as Utsuroi (the beauty between light and shadow) and her work Eclipse (2009, oil on canvas 3D and aluminum, 40cm x 120cm); Shiki and Kanzashi (Beauty in the Four Seasons. Colour) and her work Hair Slide | 12 Months Collection | Collection of 12 hair pins for the 12 months of the year (2013, Jet, Malachite, Lapis Lazuli, Nacre, Platinum, 24k Gold and Oil); Urushi (traditional Japanese lacquer) and her work Twilight | Jewellery Box (2013, 14cm x 27cm x 30cm, silver powder, and Urushi in wooden jewellery box); Spawning Coral | Coral Spawning and her homonymous work Coral Spawning (2017-2018, Natural Coral, Oil, Platinum and 21 Diamonds).

To all of the aforementioned we must also add other peculiarities of Japanese culture which facilitate the understanding and learning of the student. However, we will only mention: Edokomon, the Edo drawing patterns, used in the logo of the Tokyo 2021 Olympics, and in the ancient kimonos; Sumi-e, a style of Japanese painting that invites relaxation through the projects to be carried out, and moreover proposes, among several other things, that of Blown Drops, which recalls the dripping technique of Pollock and the Suminagashi Technique, currently used to create kimono fabrics; Minimalism through Zen Philosophy and Japanese culture as the main influence contrasted with her work Wisteria (2016); Omen, the Japanese masks; Washi Paper or luxury paper; the Origami; Japanese Architecture; or the Wabi-Sabi, the idea of finding beauty within imperfection.

Therefore, and going back to the initial dilemma, bringing Japanese Art and Culture to Children by Sonia G Caballero, is a multi-faceted book that contains both art pedagogy, a catalogue of her own work, and artistic literature on Japanese art and customs. A beautiful and careful volume, which promises not to be the last, and which in my opinion will be fruitful and useful, not only for children but also for older adults.

Joan Abelló Juanpere, Historian and Art Critic.

INTRODUCTION

As an educator, mother of three children and Art teacher for children ages 3-12 at Japan's Montessori College, I became aware of where the authentic artist can be found and discovered that art is loved by all children. However, this interest begins to fade as the child matures. They just need to have the materials and tools. This 'great-little artist' emerges from carrying out a project with enthusiasm and freedom. As adults we strive, unnecessarily on many occasions, to try to mould the child by encouraging him/her to do things that we consider to be correct. However, by trusting their autonomy and letting them investigate and perform a task on their own, they can surprise us with fabulous results. On the other hand, it reinforces their self-worth and acceptance when feeling loved and useful: "Joy, feeling your own worth, being appreciated and loved by others, feeling useful and able to produce, are factors of great value to the human soul." Maria Montessori.

In this book you will find a very useful tool to develop a strong personality in the child and contribute to building a solid self-esteem, with values that will allow him/her to be a successful adult in life, which can only be translated by the word 'happiness'. This is also true because when the basis of a person in their social integration is respect for oneself and everything that surrounds him/her, together with a Japanese IKIGAI philosophy of life, the result is none other than to give meaning to our life. The unique concepts of Japanese culture are detailed in a practical way to apply to the child. All this is achieved through the elaboration of projects that bring him/her closer to Japanese Art. Using their unique techniques and styles will help fuel their creativity.

Children will witness that with small decisions and constant effort, great achievements are reached. On this occasion, with small-great works of art.

Sonia G Caballero
SGC

SONIA G CABALLERO

SGC

Sonia G Caballero, artist, designer, creator and entrepreneur, she was born in Madrid in 1976. Her first contact with painting was in her childhood at the age of seven, in private lessons on the recommendation of one of her teachers. In addition, her grandfather often took her to the Prado Museum and other museums in Madrid, which awakened in her a great interest in the world of art since her childhood.

In 1997, she travelled to Japan for the first time, and the Japanese culture had a great impact on her. In 1998, she finished her studies in Advertising, Marketing and Art Direction and moved to Japan to live there, captivated by the contrast between the ancient and the modern, the ancestral with its temples, kimonos and nature, preserving the most sacred of its culture in contrast to the most luxurious and impressive buildings of its cities like Tokyo.

After her first visit to Kyoto in 2000, her artistic vocation began to take shape.

Undoubtedly, her works are directly influenced by Japanese art. Her life in Japan allowed her immersion in the various traditional techniques of the country, while, at the same time she was developing them, resulting in eight collections all different from each other. Some, such as the SUMI COLLECTION created with totally Japanese techniques with applications of 24K GOLD and PLATINUM, and others like the PLATINUM COLLECTION or the JAPAN COLLECTION, in which she makes use of her own techniques, fusing in some occasions the Japanese Rinpa School with PLATINUM, 24K GOLD, SILVER and URUSHI lacquers, with her own techniques and European oil painting techniques.

Her work bears a stamp, both personal and universal, with a clear influence of Japanese art and culture, combining Eastern and Western oil painting visual techniques.

In doing so, she has managed to develop an original and exclusive style, both in painting and in the use of traditional Japanese Urushi lacquer. She has created the "Kourinhaku-oil" technique and "Neonaturalism".

Sonia G Caballero has developed a genuine pictorial language, bringing together diverse elements in her works. Her compositions include bright colors combined with precious metals such as GOLD, SILVER, COPPER, which reveal a strong influence of Japanese artists such as Ogata Korin, Hokusai, Zeshin and European artists such as Klimt, among others.

In her portraits she seeks perfection with the processing of photographic images. The most important characteristics are her high concentration of naturalism along with the care of details with 24K GOLD, PLATINUM and oil.

Since 2014, she has extensive teaching experience in the subject of Art at the Montessori school in Yokohama (Japan), with children from 3 to 12 years of age. This has led her to write her book JAPANESE ART and CULTURE to CHILDREN. Vol. I.

In 2017, she started working on a new Art and Jewellery project with Rose Gold, White Gold, Yellow Gold and Diamonds, giving rise to her own High Jewellery line, inspired by the DESIRE COLLECTION.

Since 2018 she has been working on coral sculptures with PLATINUM, 24K GOLD and DIAMONDS in combination with oil colours, promoting marine reforestation projects committed to the environment.

With more than 20 years living in Japan, she has self-taught herself the delicate Japanese art.

An established artist in Japan, with eight collections covering different themes. Her work -with a distinctive and unique stamp-, fusion between Eastern and Western art, was exhibited at the Spanish Embassy in Tokyo, on the 400th Anniversary of Spain-Japan Relations, in 2014. Selected as one of the artists representing the fusion of both countries.

She has five exhibitions in one of the most renowned galleries in Japan, The Bunkamura Gallery in Tokyo, where she had her fifth exhibition, in September 2019 on the occasion of the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the gallery, which concluded with an influx of more than 4,000 people in just one week.

In 2019, she gave the Government of the United Arab Emirates her work THE YEAR OF TOLERANCE, a work that currently remains in that country.

In 2020, she published her first book Bringing Japanese Art and Culture to Children. Vol.I, based on the art projects created by herself and taught at the Montessori school in Japan. More than 1,500 copies have been sold in only 8 months.

In 2021, she has just published her book KOTODAMA 言霊. The Heart of Japan, Art and Culture.

Sonia is in continuous innovation creating new works and developing new projects.

*“I love creating alternative worlds
from my dreams.”*

Sonia G Caballero



POINTS TO CONSIDER AND HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

“Sow good ideas in children, even if they don’t understand them; the years will take care of deciphering them in their understanding and make them blossom in their hearts.”

María Montessori

I would like to emphasize the importance of art as a way for the child to release emotions. In myself in my works, I have been able to appreciate how in difficult moments I have used dark colours and the results, without intending it, have been sadder works, as well as colourful works that express enthusiasm and joy in happier moments.

As I have mentioned in the introduction, educating in sensitivity and respect is essential to forge a strong personality, and not allow yourself to be influenced by social pressure when making decisions. This I have been able to observe in my own children, especially at difficult ages, such as adolescence.

We will find projects to sensitize and educate the child, within a framework of being one with this planet and with the awareness that what we do to nature we are doing to ourselves. By educating in projects of sustainability and responsible consumption, the foundations of adults who care for and value their environment will be created, providing what is necessary.

Valuing art from a therapeutic point of view is a premise that we cannot ignore for emotional well-being. (M. Hauschka / P.V. Der Heide)

Develop ability to observe and appreciate the beauty that surrounds us.



NOTE

This is a book to work together with the author. In each project there will be a space for the children to paste the photo of their work and write their names and date. This book is in itself a collaborative project, a unique book between the child and Sonia G Caballero.

PREPARATION OF ARTISTIC MATERIALS

We will use recycled materials as much as possible, things that we have at home to encourage the child to avoid consumerism and to collaborate in a "Zero Waste Project", one of the projects that you will find in this book. This project can be carried out at home and it will be a lot of fun.

As far as possible, attempts have been made to use materials that are easy to find and as safe as possible.

- It is advisable to cover the work-area with a sheet of plastic or cardboard and use an old garment to protect the clothes.
- Projects must **always** be carried out under the supervision of an adult.
- Additional information can be sought if the child shows interest. At first, I wanted to create a book of ideas and concepts that help open the child's mind to something new and unknown, without falling into an excess of explanations and therefore, possible boredom. And remember this phrase by Maria Montessori:

"Any unnecessary help is an obstacle for the child."

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY

In each project you will find a level of difficulty indicator.

- Low Difficulty 
- Medium Difficulty 
- High Difficulty 

NEED HELP (YOUNG CHILDREN)

In some projects with medium or high difficulty, depending on the age of the child, they may need help.

SKILLS THAT CHILDREN DEVELOP THROUGH THE ARTS

It is a shame to see how art classes are being reduced every year. This school year, 2019-20, with no more than half an hour weekly in public education in some provinces of Spain. The poor training of teachers in ART and the current focus on Science, Mathematics, Engineering, and Technology, prevents us from thinking about the skills that young people can develop by studying the arts.

I would like to present you with a synthesis of the 10 skills, which Lisa Phillips shares in her book "*The Artistic Edge: 7 Skills Children Need to Succeed in an Increasingly Right Brain World*", where it is shown how the arts develop significant skills for academic success and daily life.

CREATIVITY

Thinking and acting quickly in specific situations and performing focus tasks from different perspectives will set one child apart from the rest. If children practice thinking creatively, over time they will do so naturally.

CONFIDENCE

Skills developed through art build the self-confidence necessary to complete a project successfully. This is especially achieved by vacating the comfort zone, doing new things, making mistakes and learning from them while practicing projects.

TROUBLESHOOTING

How can I turn this piece of clay into sculpture? Artistic creations are born through problem solving; Children who participate in the arts constantly face this challenge. All this problem solving practice builds your reasoning and comprehension skills.

PERSEVERANCE

When a child picks up an instrument for the first time, he/she knows that playing a Bach composition is not possible, it takes practice. Children learn techniques and develop skills which help them not to give up. In a competitive world like that of today, perseverance is the basis of success

FOCUS

Recent research has shown that participation in the arts improves children's ability to concentrate and focus on other aspects of their lives.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Through experiences in theatre and dance, children learn to use the mechanisms of body language; these movements communicate emotions.

• CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

When receiving constructive feedback about an art project, children experience that these feedbacks are part of their learning and should not be offended or take it personally when they make mistakes. Each discipline has set up various parameters to ensure that criticism is an invaluable experience that contributes to the success of the final product.

• COLLABORATION

Through the arts, children practice collaborative work, share responsibilities and engage with others to achieve a common goal. When children take part in a play, dance production or musical orchestra, they begin to understand that their contribution is necessary for the success of the group. With these experiences, children learn to have confidence in themselves and realize that their contribution within the group is just as valuable as that of the rest of the team, even if they do not have the main role.

• DEDICATION

When children are used to practicing artistic activities in which the result ranges from a final product to an interpretation, they learn to associate dedication with the feeling of achievement. During this practice they develop work habits such as striving for the success of the final product.

• RESPONSIBILITY

If children practice creating something collaboratively, they know beforehand that their actions affect the end result. Through the arts children learn that it is important to admit that they have made a mistake and that they must take responsibility, since mistakes are part of the learning process of the arts. (G. Pérez, 2013).

A BOOK TO MAKE TOGETHER

Completing a creative project improves personal satisfaction and self-esteem. This is one of the objectives that I intend to achieve with this book.

I have made a book, in which children can include an image of their completed project, in a specifically reserved space for it. Moreover with the name of "MY PROJECT", they can write their names and the date next to the image of the project that is presented in the book.

Not only will they clearly benefit, either physically or cognitively, but also emotionally, since art requires a dose of **patience and perseverance**, and as the result is visible, pleasing satisfactions are obtained. (E. Tramuns)

The time dedicated to carrying out each project becomes a moment of tranquility, isolation and relaxation, and this **reduces stress and anxiety, promoting concentration.**

I invite you to join the Facebook group in which children can share their projects in addition to receiving complementary information on the points covered in this book, especially created for this purpose. Named after the title of the book, "Japanese art and culture for children Book | 本"

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/JapaneseArtandCultureforChildrenbook/>



CREATIVITY AND EFFORT

“Creativity is intelligence having fun.”

Albert Einstein.

Creativity is basic, as we all know, because it allows us to take advantage of the possibilities that reality offers to create a playing field that opens up new opportunities for you.

Creativity is inherent to the human being, and therefore it is present in each one of us. There is not a single human being who is not creative. However there are many beings who do not think they are creative and do not create anything new because they do not consider that they possess this potential.

The key to creativity is **passion**, we have to find that emotional lever, that reason, that illusion that wakes us up in the morning hungry to do something new, to find the relationship between things that apparently are not related. So the state of mind is key, believing in ourselves and in our potential.

We must create an idea that we are passionate about, that excites us, that pulls us, and from this moment onwards begin to build towards the present.

I have to mention the importance of afflictive emotions. These are those that do not give us anything valuable. Being afraid in situations that do not threaten survival, emotions such as anger or hopelessness paralyse us. It is essential therefore that we understand how to start managing these distressing emotions. For this it is necessary to understand that there are three great liabilities that make it difficult to reach an exciting future. Firstly '**ignorance**': If I am not aware of my

talent and my potential, how dare I? Number two '**laziness**': how many times is the right way not in fact the easy way?. And the third is, '**fear**', one of the most powerful afflictive emotions. Fear must be managed physically.

There is one thing we have to recover. We think that success happens alone. The culture of effort, the **culture of work**, has been lost. Einstein said "*Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% effort*". It is in times when things start to get difficult that we have to keep trying. When we put up with tension and feel uncomfortable, the brain automatically has to solve the problem, because its mission is to avoid pain.

How do you solve it? **Open the window of intelligence and creativity**. You have to make an effort, reach the limit. That is why **determination, persistence, insistence** are such great values. The human being needs to strive for what is worthwhile in his or her life.

We urgently need to recover the values. Values that do not depend on a creed or a culture, values that are implicit to human nature. They are everything that, as human beings, perfect us and give us a point of reference in a world marked by complexity and uncertainty and these values are going to be our beacon.

The world situation is complex and serious. We must highlight the **importance** of the use of **freedom** and **potential** as human beings. This eliminates any feeling of helplessness. In mythology, in the story of Sisyphus, we see this situation reflected. Sisyphus was condemned by Z eus to carry a stone to the top of a hill, and when he had done so, the stone itself rolled down and he had to repeat the action.

This can be continually seen as “whatever I do is useless”, a confusing idea. Of course it isn't useless! Nevertheless, if you think that it is a waste of time, you will stop trying as hard as you can, then you can fall into despair. Today's drama is the feeling of **helplessness** that accompanies us. This comes from our **limiting beliefs** that **I can't**...

The Delphic Oracle. It is very important to know that we hear two voices, one is that of the 'madhouse', 'you cannot', 'you are not capable', 'you have no way out'... you must not listen to that voice! A second is that of the inner teacher who tells us, 'trust yourself', 'believe in yourself' ... Differentiating them is very easy, the inner teacher gives us peace, security, trust.

Finally, it is important to mention '**attitude**', which is the position that I take when I confront a reality. Attitude affects my emotions, and these emotions are chemical processes in the body, molecules of enthusiasm or discouragement that adhere to a lymphocyte, for example. Cells react radically differently depending on the emotion molecule that fits. (Dr. M.A. Puig.)

Nelson Mandela said: *“The last element of freedom that will be taken from you is your inner freedom, your creative freedom”.*

We can not fail to mention **our own will**.

“There is a driving force more powerful than steam, electricity, and atomic energy: the will.”

A. Einstein.

We must educate the child based on these pillars, with the necessary tools to face this world with a positive attitude, believing in the awareness of being valuable,

loved and supported, while promoting creativity and effort, reinforcing his/her will. All this will help us forge a strong personality, capable of facing all the challenges of life from a perspective of courage and bravery.

I remember when my eldest son faced some entrance exams at a very famous school in Japan. We had been changing schools and countries in the last 4 years. He had a deficit of 3 years in Japanese writing, Kanji, and only two months to catch up. But he wished with all his heart to enter this school because there was a robotics club where they held competitions nationally and internationally. Robotics was his childhood dream and practically his world, at that time his dream in life. However, it was very difficult to pass that exam.

He wrote the following sentence by Einstein *“The most important decision we must make in life has to do with a belief, that of deciding whether we live in a friendly or enemy universe, in a friendly universe or in a hostile universe”.*

The second tactic was to tell him the story of Hernán Cortés, in 1519, about the conquest of Mexico. He proposed to burn the boats to his men so as not to leave any possible way back.

Either we go forward or we go forward, there is no going back. This was what determined his total effort. In Japan, several private schools are chosen to sit for exams in order of preference. Children do not always manage to enter the most desired. My son was already finishing sixth grade at the Montessori school where I taught my art classes and where there was no secondary school, so the children had to go to either the public secondary school or choose a private centre. We decided to increase the chances of success by eliminating Plan B. He only applied to the college he wanted to enter. The result

was that in a few months he was already the Head of the Tamagawa Gakuen Robotics Club. Kanji's 3-year deficit had been overcome in two months and in that same year he received the first Gold award in Japanese writing of his course. He also received other prizes such as the First Prize in Art with his drawing in Japanese woodcut, hanga 版画 (Ukiyo-e).

Each of my three children has had similar experiences, but they have always had our full support and we have always fully trusted in their abilities. That is our job as parents. **"SUPPORTING OUR CHILDREN TO THE MAXIMUM IN FULFILLING THEIR DREAMS"** is the basis for self-confidence.

Sonia G Caballero



First Prize in Art in Japanese woodcut, hanga (Ukiyo-e), courses from 5th to 8th, in Tamagawa Gakuen, Tokyo.



*«The child who has freedom and opportunity to
manipulate and use his or her hand in a logical way,
with consequences and using real elements, develops
a strong personality.»*

–María Montessori–