

Mercury Art Project in Brazil: Mercury as a Global Pollutant

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The increasing warning about mercury as a global pollutant has been the objective of several scientific programs in human and environmental toxicology. One of the most important meetings for discussion of recent and relevant scientific results concerning mercury is the International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant (ICMPG). The Eighth International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant (ICMGP) will be held 2006, in Madison, Wisconsin, USA. For this edition, it was proposed the Mercury Conference Art Project, as an additional activity in this meeting: show the mercury problem for students, aging from 10 to 18 years old, from the countries where the conference has been already performed as Japan, Slovenia, Germany, Brazil. The goal of this project is to educate children around the world about the issues and problems related to mercury and have them participate in the conference by producing art work on mercury-related topics, which may be displayed during ICMGP 2006. ICMGP invited The Conference Organizing Committee invited the Center for Mineral Technology (CETEM)- Science and Technology Ministry, to coordinate this project in Brazil. CETEM invited many public schools in Rio de Janeiro State to join in the project. The activities were developed by three schools: "Colégio Sagrado Coração de Maria", "Escola Municipal Roma" and "Escola Municipal Santo Tomás de Aquino".

At the first step, it was organized a meeting between researchers from CETEM and teachers of Sciences from the three schools, for exchanging information and up to date knowledge on mercury environmental and toxicological aspects. Mercury was included on the formal program of Science and Visual Arts disciplines at those schools. The theme was developed, at least, during one month on Science discipline. Dr. Allegra Yallouz, at CETEM, performed some lectures for "Roma" and "Santo Tomás de Aquino" public schools. After, the students visited the Laboratory for mercury determination in fish. At "Sagrado Coração de Maria" School, the lectures were performed for 1° Medium Degree (15-16 years old) at the school. Mariângela Longhi gave lectures to students of 6° Serie (11-12 years old) and 8° Series (13-14 years old). The issues were on mercury origin, its uses and biogeochemistry cycle, some anthropogenic sources, environmental and human health impacts, including Minamata disease, and scientific methodologies for mercury determination in environmental samples, mainly in fish.

Around 400 students from 12 to 16 years old worked in small groups during three months, producing artistic works related to mercury.

Figure 1 shows the project organization and the photos illustrate the schools, teachers, students and their artistic works.

The students produced variable material, such as games, comics magazines, "maquete", albums, multimedia animations, posters, folders, pop-art posters, posters with Maurits Escher re-readings, and others, in a total of around 150 works, from which 100 were selected and sent to 2006 ICMGP.

The results achieved with this work were extremely pleasant and satisfactory, since students were completely involved, working with enthusiasm. Surely, the students could develop self-concepts concerning environmental problems, as a consequence of scientific disseminated information.

The project upholds important values, such as discovering the role of each one in environmental take care, to be responsible with your space, contributing to the increasing of life quality of our planet. This is citizenship practice. In addition, it is important to note the cooperation among students during the project. Through this experience, it should be intensify research institutions and schools network. These activities are highly grateful for the teacher's as for researchers. This kind of project require them to convert the techno-scientific language on a clearly and comprehensive language, increasing the number of people that would understand and transmit this knowledge. In other words, this project attained the democratization of the knowledge.

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Project Organization
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