

## **Enhancing Cultural and Environmental Awareness in Children**

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### **Abstract**

Education of architecture mainly starts with establishing an understanding of one's relation with its environment and the built world. Sensing the place and learning to think spatially are the first and fundamental steps into the conceptual world of architecture (Varnelis, 1998: 212). In Turkey, common places are rich of cultural and historical assets, a context feeding architectural setting. Understanding of space is a culture specific construct, if stimulated at younger ages proves to be fruitful in many ways. It is the argument of this paper that if children are stimulated through culture and environment, their spatial perceptions grows, become culturally more aware, and builds a belonging towards the place they live in.

In Fall 2008, a collaboration started to foster between Kadir Has University, Graduate Program for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage (GPCH) and The Culture Awareness Foundation (CAF) to create awareness for cultural heritage in children through exploitation of cultural heritage. CAF has been applying "Culture Ants" education program for the students in primary schools with narrow circumstances. This program is delivered by licensed volunteers in five modules expanding to an entire academic year. Volunteers from Kadir Has University, in a graduate seminar, with varied backgrounds, discussed the ways of creating consciousness in children towards the city surrounding us. In a way, it is the first step towards architecture education.

**Keywords:** culture awareness, children, space, environment, Culture Ants, spatial perception, Kadir Has University