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36th Year

## Learning Art In a Park In Rio de Janeiro

By Tom Murphy

Special to the Brazil Herald

RIO DE JANEIRO — Art for art's sake is not the motto of most art schools.

Art for academic credit's sake is.

At the Escola de Artes Visuais, however, located in Rio's magnificent Parque Laje, the former sentiment is prevalent.

For one thing, the school grants no academic credits of any kind.

"There are no requirements, no age limits, no diplomas," says school director Rubem Breitman. "We are here for people who are interested in developing their artistic abilities."

The school is literally wide-open. "We have students here from age 17 to age 70," says Breitman.

Students pay monthly fees averaging about Cr\$2,500 per course. Courses generally meet two or three times a week. Many

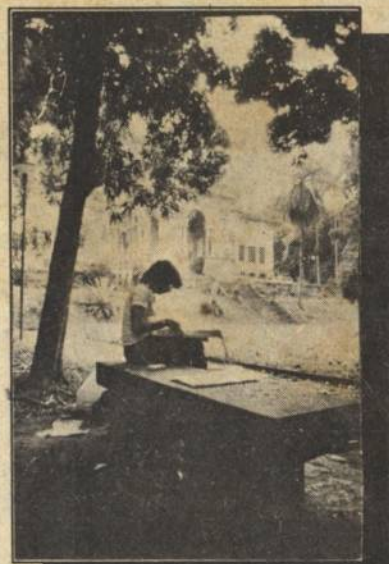
are conducted in the open air; others take in the school's *Oficina Permanente*, i.e., in the many equipment and art material-packed workshops located mainly in the school's basement.

The range of courses offered at the Escola is ample; and many of the subjects are fascinating. Students can sign up for "foundation courses" such as Sculpture for Beginners, Tapestry Art or Lithography; for more advanced and/or daring would-be artists, there is Puppetry, Interpretation and Liberation Techniques for Actors, and a course called Conceptual Art. For children there is a course called simply Creativity for Children.

The school currently has a total of 400 students and 30 professors.

### English Speakers

Two of those professors, Charles Watson and John Nicholson, are native English speakers. Watson is British and



"Atmosphere" is a key concept at the Parque Laje Visual Arts School. Students study in lush, tranquil surroundings.

Nicholson American. Watson begins a course in History of Art this month (Cr\$500 registration fee, Cr\$3,000 per month), which will be taught in English. He may offer other English language courses later in the year.

Watson is limiting his course to only six students per group. The course will be offered during various time schedules. "The course will be primarily audio-visual," he says, "trying to give the students a background in the



A 19th century mansion located in exceptional surroundings is the setting for Rio's largest and most interesting "free" arts school.

history of art." He is particularly interested in up-dating art lovers "on the developments in art during the last 20 years. This is an area where people tend to get left behind." Contemporary art may have to wait for a separate course, however, says Watson, who may also wish to teach on that subject in English.

Some of the school's teachers are employees of the State Education Secretariate, Breitman explains, "but many are active artists. These are the people I like to deal with. It's not sufficient to be simply a good teacher. You have to know your subject. In art you have to be an artist in order to be a good art teacher."

Most professors at the school are actively engaged in various



Françoise Galle's outdoor tapestry class is one of the most sought after at the Parque Laje Visual Arts School.

kinds of commercial and creative art ventures. Virtually all of them have already mounted exhibits of their work in Brazil and overseas. "The system is fairly simple," says Breitman, "somebody comes to me with an idea for a course. We discuss it. If I feel the idea is valid and that the person has the necessary abilities then we go ahead."

### Ideal Locale

The school itself is located in a 19th century Italian-style mansion in Rio's Parque Laje. The mansion features the kinds of monumental statuary, arches and gargoyles, pools and fountains one might associate with a Frankenstein movie.

The interior salons and offices



Numerous work shops function from early in the morning until late at night at one of Rio's most interesting arts institutions.

are bright, airy and full of artistic bric-a-brac. The students range from Bohemian-looking teenagers in paint-stained jeans to middle-aged women enjoying the open-air tapestry class offered by noted French tapestry artist Françoise Galle.

The park itself is one of Rio's most beautiful leisure spots. Much more rustic than Jardim Botânico the park has a rugged trail leading into the foothills just below Corcovado. The view from the elevated trail embraces much of Rio.

"The advantages of the school can be summed up simply," says Breitman, "It's in Zona Sul; it's beautiful; the atmosphere is relaxed and creative; the teachers are tops."

Photos Lupe Cunha