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The visual arts as a learning tool within an early childhood setting

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

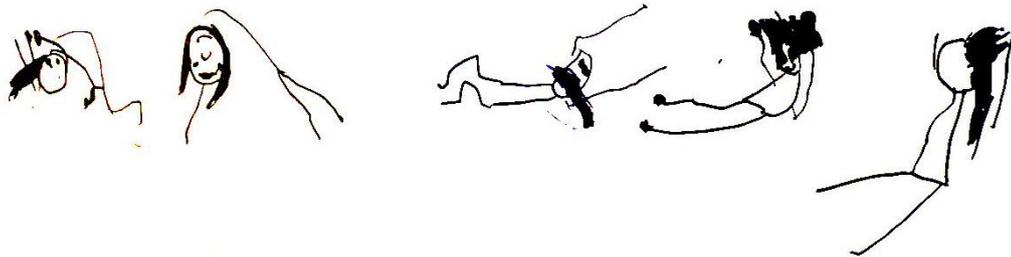
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If education is about technicians transmitting information and skills and delivering predetermined outcomes against predefined norms, then it needs little time for children or educators to think or work. But if it is a democratic process of building knowledge through complex and creative relationships and processes, then education takes commensurate time

(Dhalberg & Moss, 2010, p. xxi)



Acknowledgements

*He aha te mea nui o te ao?
He tangata! He tangata! He tangata!*

*What is the most important thing in the world?
It is people! It is people! It is people!*

This whakataukī reminds me that nothing of value is ever a purely individual effort. Our lives and our work are always inextricably intertwined with the lives of others, and the best work we do is when we acknowledge this and allow others to collaborate on our journey, inviting them to contribute their knowledge and understanding. This idea is one of the underpinning principles that informed this project from the outset.

Fundamentally, this project could not have occurred without the generosity of time and spirit offered by my research participants. The teaching team in the centre where I conducted my research gave so generously of their time and themselves, and were so open to experimenting with unfamiliar methods, such as the participatory art journals. The child participants were also so enthusiastic to share their thinking and their visual art with me. I am very grateful to all my participants for welcoming me into their world.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION – HOW THE RESEARCH WAS FRAMED

This chapter presents the rationale for conducting this small-scale study. It begins with recognition of my influence upon this study, the motivation for it, the aims, and why the research is significant.

1.1 Locating myself in the research

Art goes back to my beginning.

(Morgan, cited in Milory, 1996, p. 9, cited in Veale, 2000, p. 28)

My life-history has been rich in visual arts experiences (Veale, 2000). My work as an educator at a tertiary early childhood education provider has allowed me to understand some of the complex factors that inform my students' pedagogies in the visual arts. My previous role, as an atelierista¹ in an early childhood setting, influenced by the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia, allowed me to see the potential for the visual arts to be used as a tool for learning. As Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) explains, educational social researchers do not choose their research topics in disconnection with themselves, but are usually driven by a desire to provoke change. These varying experiences have influenced my subjective lens on what I have seen and how I have interpreted data in this study. They influenced my decision to be informed by the theoretical ideas of a/r/tography, which allowed my connection with the research to be implicit within the context of 'living enquiry' (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995; de Cosson & Irwin, 2004).

My awareness that a researcher can never be neutral prompted me to conduct a self-study as I endeavoured to position myself within this research. Arts based research "rejects the idea of tools that are neutrally implemented" (Leavy, 2009, p. 3). Having encouraged my research participants to engage in art making and to reflect on images, a method for examining how their own beliefs and values in the arts had formed, I chose to explore my past in parallel. The process of creating art while thinking about art itself, can be a tool for generating new understandings (Kind, 2012; Pohio, 2013; Wilson, 2000, cited in Springgay, 2002).

This art making process allowed me to uncover layers of seemingly contradictory influences that have served to shape my pedagogical beliefs in the arts.² Most significantly, it provoked the realisation that I have held three very different images of the child throughout my lifetime and this has been reflected through my teaching practice.³ The fact that I have walked each of these three central pathways that teachers in Aotearoa-New Zealand travel on when participating in the visual arts within early childhood education has made me more sensitive to

¹ The term atelierista comes from Reggio Emilia and refers to the role of arts facilitator, a teacher who works with children and the graphic languages within their projects and investigations.

² This study highlighted the significance of the adult role models in my life (Veale, 2000), of the images I was surrounded by, and the education I received. My education at first provided a very Westernised view of the arts, but as I moved into tertiary study this allowed me to explore subjective and diverse perspectives.

³ My modernist early childhood experiences were the foundation on which I built an image of the child as innately creative. Conversely, early craft experiences with my mother informed my practice as I planned prefabricated art activities for my own children. My university education and the provocation of visiting and learning about the schools of Reggio Emilia served as a catalyst to reconceptualise my image of the child. I came to understand the possibility and capacity children have to communicate, reflect, and construct knowledge through the arts within collaborative contexts.

the perspectives and narratives of others. These experiences have helped me find my place in this research, as I make explicit that I value visual arts practices that are informed by sociocultural and social-constructivist theories.

1.2 The motivation for the research

There is a long-held belief by the community at large, and by a percentage of early childhood teachers, that the role of visual arts for young children ('child art') is predominantly for pleasure, personal expression and even as a therapeutic function. There is less evidence of the visual arts being used as a 'learning tool'. Yet, it was over forty years ago that Eisner (1973) first challenged a developmental perspective (the productive approach) of children as art makers, arguing that perception is in fact a learned ability.

Many others have contributed to this discourse since 1973, yet current research shows that developmental, modernist ideas and, in some cases a reproductive approach, continue to influence much visual arts practice in New Zealand (Pohio, 2009; Richards, 2007; Terreni, 2010; Visser, 2005; Wright, 2003). This phenomena sits in opposition to the fact that sociocultural theories and practices have become well entrenched within most curriculum areas. There is heartening evidence, however, that some early childhood educators in New Zealand have reconceptualised their visual arts pedagogies, informed by sociocultural theory, and in some cases have been influenced by the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia.

Interest in the schools of Reggio Emilia began in New Zealand in the 1980's (Bayes, 2005; Haplin, 2011; Mawson, 2010; Pohio, 2009, 2013). Of particular significance within this approach is the role the visual arts play, whereby they are viewed as integral to children's knowledge construction and children use the visual arts to communicate, think through ideas, and deepen their understandings (Gandini, 1998, 2005; Malaguzzi, 1998; Terreni, 2010; Wright, 2003; Vecchi, 2010). This sociocultural approach to visual arts education, in which the teacher engages in critical dialogue and reflection whilst supporting children to explore their own ideas and theories through engagement in the visual arts, was named the 'guided learning approach' by Wright (2003). These differing approaches provided the motivation for this research as I endeavoured to find out more about how visual arts practices and pedagogies manifest themselves when informed by social constructivist theories and how they impact on the ways children then use the visual arts as a tool for learning.

1.3 The aim of the research

The aim of this research was to investigate the connections between teacher pedagogy and children's engagement in the visual arts as a tool for learning. The process of researching both teachers' beliefs and values, as well as children's art making in the same setting, endeavoured to provide clearer understanding of the link between visual arts pedagogy and how this affects children's learning in the visual arts. For this research a case study was conducted in an early childhood setting in Auckland, New Zealand, that was influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach, and which valued the visual arts and their role in children's learning. This approach,

which is shaped by sociocultural perspectives, offered opportunities to examine context as a dimension of using the visual arts as a learning tool. The aim was to present a transparent and carefully documented process of how educators, children and a community had travelled to their current practices and understandings of the visual arts as a learning tool, as well as examples of factors that have been significant in shaping the teachers' pedagogy. This rationale aligned with the notion that visual arts practices are strongly influenced by teachers' beliefs and values (Craw, 2011; Gunn, 1998; Lewin-Benham, 2011; McArdle, 2008, 2012; Pohio, 2009; Visser, 2005). It also relates to beliefs that the act of examining these values can be significant in shifting thinking (Lewin-Benham, 2011). A further aim of this research was to provoke discussion and to challenge current beliefs and practices surrounding the purpose of visual arts within early childhood education (Leavy, 2009). The research questions were:

- How are the visual arts used as a tool to support children's learning in an early childhood setting?
- What factors have shaped the teachers' approaches to using the visual arts as a learning tool?

1.4 The significance of the research

The visual arts have been a means through which humans make sense of experience from as early as 1.5 million years ago (Brown, Macintyre & Watkins, 2012; Eisner, 1998, cited in Schiller, 2000; Jensen, 2001). As Trimis and Savva (2009, p. 528) argue, "The importance of creating and observing visual representations and the ability to reflect on them distinguish humans from other species." Children too, are compelled to communicate through visual art (Schiller, 2000). The visual arts have become a more significant domain as we move further into the 21st century and, today, even the youngest children are surrounded by visual images within every facet of their lives. This makes it impossible for children not to be influenced by the visual, thereby becoming exposed to the perspectives and symbols systems of others (Kindler, 1995). As Leavy (2009) argues, "When our normative environment becomes highly visual then the visual becomes a part of how our consciousness develops" (p. 226). It becomes critical, therefore, that early childhood educators consider how best to prepare children to acquire visual literacy and to understand the potential for their own image making (McArdle, 2012).

Despite these arguments, the arts remain marginalised in many educational settings (Dahlberg & Moss, 2010; Jensen, 2001), and numeracy and literacy continue to dominate the agendas of mainstream education (Malaguzzi, cited in Wright, 2003). The continued dominance of Westernised perspectives has meant that the term 'art' often refers to representational work (Kolbe, 2000). Others claim that little value is placed on the notion that visual literacy and values for the visual arts are strongly influenced by cultural values and beliefs (Brown, et al, 2012; Clark & de Latour, 2013; Clark & Grey, 2013). Despite this, creativity and the role it plays in education is currently a popular discourse on a global scale, linked to economic growth and as a means to survive an uncertain future (Eckhoff & Urbach, 2008; Fumoto, Robson, Greenfield & Hargraves,

2012; McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002; O'Toole, 2012; Robinson, 2006, 2010; Wright, 2003). It is claimed that the visual arts play a significant role in the development of creativity with young children because they allow children to develop sophisticated creative thinking (Connery, 2010; Eckhoff & Urbach, 2008; O'Toole, 2012).

A key argument is that further research which offers specific examples of how teachers engage in sociocultural visual arts practices will provoke further shifts in thinking (Mawson, 2010; Pohio, 2009, 2013; Richards & Terreni, 2013). Fler (2004, p. 71) states that "very little research has been directed towards understanding how practitioners can move across educational paradigms." An example is the ideas of Reggio Emilia which have become increasingly popular within New Zealand. A further example is that teachers need to explore their own culturally situated values and beliefs when working with the ideas of another culture (Pohio, 2009, 2013; Haplin, 2011; Bayes, 2005). Mawson (2010) argues that further research will allow better understanding of some of the complexities this brings.

It is hoped that this research, albeit small in scale, will provoke shifts in thinking and provide an example of how one educational community has navigated this journey to develop visual arts practices that allow children to assimilate the visual arts within their thinking and learning.

Chapter 2: THE CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH – WHAT THE LITERATURE REVEALED

2.1 Introduction

Informing this research was a large body of literature which articulates the historical underpinnings that have influenced approaches to visual arts education in early childhood education. While today, sociocultural practices underpin most curriculum areas both modernist and behaviourist ideals still inform much of teacher practice in the visual arts within this sector. While there are several factors that could explain this, there is also evidence that some teachers have managed to move across pedagogical paradigms (Fleer, 2004). Of particular significance for some has been the provocation of the social-constructivist educational approach conceptualised in Reggio Emilia. Visual arts pedagogy, which is fundamental to the manifestation of the visual arts within early childhood settings, was, however, only one part of the puzzle for my research. The value of using the visual arts as a tool for learning (a social-constructivist approach) was also examined. Literature that critiqued both the evolution of teacher pedagogy in the visual arts, as well as the potential of the visual arts themselves as a learning tool, informed the study.

2.2 Historical underpinnings: Approaches to visual arts education in early childhood

New 'rules' for teaching overlay the old and previous ways of thinking and speaking practice; but, at times and in certain places, parts of the original text protrude, making it necessary for the new text to be read as both old and new

(McArdle, 2003, p. 35)

McArdle (2003) uses the term palimpsest as a metaphor to talk about the way in which early childhood visual arts practices have evolved, with a layering of one theory over another and little critical evaluation of the influence of earlier ideas. My examination of the historical developments that served to shape and inform visual arts practices in early childhood can offer some clues as to why previous attitudes continue to remain visible within the palimpsest, informing teacher practices with such dominance (Richards, 2007). Three approaches have manifested themselves throughout the history of early childhood education. Within each, the role of the teacher and their image of the child has had a fundamental effect on what kinds of visual arts experiences children engage in, as well as what kind of learning occurs. These three approaches have been labelled differently by educationalists. Whilst Wright (2003) refers to the productive, reproductive and guided learning approach, Bae (2004) describes them as “the little intervention orientation, (b) the production orientation, and (c) the guided exploration” (p. 247). Each approach also reflects a different understanding of learning and of knowledge.

The Reproductive Approach

One of the oldest texts within the palimpsest (McArdle, 2003) is the reproductive approach. In this approach, the arts are viewed as a means to teach children specific skills and to follow instructions to complete a pre-prescribed task (Bae, 2004; Wright, 2003). Historically, links can be made with the Academy that was inspired by classical tradition and realism (McArdle, 2003). This master-apprentice approach to visual arts education in early childhood education emerged in the first Froebelian schools (1826 - 1837) in the form of predesigned activities known as 'gifts' and 'occupations'. Although Froebel advocated for free play, these activities were strongly reproductive in nature and "the role of the teacher was that of the technician" (Visser, 2005, p. 26). In some contexts these activities were driven by economic need as children learned skills that could support industry (Chapman, 1978). Although reproductive art experiences have been highly contested within educational discourse, specific Froebelian activities influenced the work of architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, who claimed that they trained his eye to see pattern in everything (Veale, 2000). Froebelian ideas and arts practices were widely adopted by pre-war New Zealand kindergartens, an organisational structure that was imported from America and Britain (Visser, 2005).

In the late nineteenth century developmental psychologists began to take an interest in child development and started studying children's art work (Wright, 2003). Perez and Sully, for example, used the method of comparison, measuring the strategies children used to draw against adult approaches and found the children's methods as flawed (cited in Wright, 2003). Visser (2005) contends that many early childhood educators today continue to view children's art making through a deficit lens of comparison with adult art. Other theorists and practitioners argue that children's art strategies should not be measured against traditional representational adult art, and that a new curriculum should be developed to acknowledge emerging scientific understandings of child development (Engel, 1995; Osborn, 1991; Wright, 2003).⁴ Their critiques provided evidence of a new way of understanding 'childhood' that was to lead to the conception of the productive approach.

The 'productive' approach

The productive approach emerged at the turn of the century in response to the dominance of teacher-directed practices (Eisner, 1973; Wright, 2003). The term productive refers to a child-centred approach to the arts whereby the teacher views children as innately creative beings who will unfold and develop if given materials to engage with, and the freedom of time and space in which to explore and express themselves without adult intervention. Four significant influences served as a catalyst for a fundamental shift in how children's visual art was viewed and taught: the progressive education movement; the development of psychoanalysis; the modernist art

⁴ Although Stanley Hall's (1883) scientific study of children, *The content of children's minds*, which included an analysis of children's drawings, was a significant factor in early childhood arts practices moving away from the influence of Froebel, it was also criticised for its comparisons to realism (Engel, 1995; Osborn, 1991).

movement; and developmental psychology (Engel, 1995). Perhaps it was the diversity of these four influences that resulted in the 'productive' approach having such a profound impact on visual arts pedagogy in early childhood. It could explain why this 'text' remains so visible today.

In the art world of the 19th century, the modernists challenged the accepted classical styles that honoured realism, motivating the study of peasant art, tribal art, children's art and the art of the insane (Wright, 2003).⁵ Franz Cizek's (a Secession group painter) interest in children's art was such that he opened his own art school for children in Vienna in 1887 (Efland, 1976; Kindler, 1995; Osborn, 1991; Richards, 2007). Cizek believed that children should not be taught technique but, instead, should value the theory of development that saw children growing creatively "primarily from the inside out, rather than the outside in" (Eisner, 1973, p. 7). Cizek's work became a source of inspiration for progressive educators internationally (Gonzalez-Mena, 2011).⁶ McArdle (2003) explains that:

[W]ith modernist thought came a more laissez-faire approach to teaching art, with teachers providing an attractive array of materials and media, and deliberately abstaining from intervening with the child's 'natural' development, 'freedom' and 'self-expression' (p. 39).

With these highly influential changes happening in the art world, progressive educator John Dewey's argument for the child's rights of self-expression was quickly accepted (Chapman, 1978). During the same period educators interested in psychoanalysis began to view art as a way for children to express inner emotions, thereby introducing the concept of "art as therapy" (Engel, 1995, p. 10).

Developmental psychologist Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory also served to strengthen and influence the argument that the progressive movement made for a reconceptualisation of visual arts practices (Gonzalez-Mena, 2011).⁷ The result was that progressivists advocated that children's development in visual arts should move through a series of universal stages that were not affected by adult influence (Brooks, 2009). However, these theories did not focus on the social significance of children's learning (Aubery, David, Godfrey & Thompson, 2000). Nor did they consider cultural or historical influences on learning (Brooks, 2009). Nonetheless, in New Zealand, progressive ideas were embraced by the playcentre movement that began in the 1940's, in which it was believed that creativity would develop naturally through social reform (Densem, 1980; Terreni, 2010).⁸

⁵ The 'New York Armory show' in 1913 was the first large scale exhibition of modernist works. The implication for early childhood education was that it provoked the realisation that child art could no longer be measured against adult art (Wright, 2003).

⁶ The progressive education movement was founded by John Dewey (1858 – 1952) who advocated for change in the current education system in which children learned very specific subject matter in very controlled environments where teachers held all of the power. It is from Dewey that the term child-centred learning comes from (Gonzalez-Mena, 2011).

⁷ Jean Piaget (1896-1980) is best known for his work in the area of children's cognitive development. He described children's development as occurring through a series of stages that "unfold through maturation" (Gonzalez-Mena, 2011, p. 23) and did not believe adults influenced this process.

⁸ The Playcentre movement began in Wellington, New Zealand in 1941. It is a co-operative early childhood educational structure, where parents play an integral role in all aspects of the centre practices (Densem, 1980).

The 'guided learning' approach

In the 1980's, perspectives about the visual arts in early education began to shift again. Educators became aware of the significance of the complex social and cultural factors that influence children, as well as their families' understanding of the visual arts and the value they place upon them (McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002). A new text began to emerge. This was a result of increased interest in sociocultural theory developed by Lev Vygotsky⁹ who explained human development as the process of engaging with others within an environmental context (Gonzalez-Mena, 2011; Lewin-Benham, 2011; Trimis & Savva, 2009). Another significant influence on this teaching approach was the practices of Reggio Emilia (Visser, 2005), which inspired educationalists to challenge developmentalist, modernist viewpoints.

As a sociocultural understanding of learning gained momentum, Kindler (1995) was one who challenged Lowenfeld's¹⁰ belief that children should not be influenced by external influences, arguing that this idea could never be tested given the image-saturated world in which children exist. Siegesmund (1998) also challenged the Modernist idea that the visual arts were solely for expression and argued that it was also a cognitive act (cited in Visser, 2005). The New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) was also strongly influenced by sociocultural underpinnings and makes many references to all the arts (music, dance, drama and visual arts) and their complex roles within a holistic emergent curriculum model (Pohio, 2006; Visser, 2005).

Vygotsky's proposal that intervention from adults was vital for children to deepen their understanding and to communicate ideas to others meant that teachers were no longer relegated to the fringes of children's visual arts experiences (Brooks, 2009).¹¹ Teachers did not dominate children with their own ideas, either, as behaviourist practices had previously done. Instead, they introduced skills, contextual information, and encouraged children to critically evaluate both their own and others art (Visser 2005). Bae's (2004) research, which focused on a setting in which teachers used the guided learning approach, found that teachers saw their role as multifaceted. This included listening, showing their value of children's visual art, developing skills, aiding transitions between stages of art making, and deepening children's thinking by reminding them of past conversations. Teachers also made suggestions when needed (Bae, 2004). Documentation is an important aspect of this approach because it includes the process of recording children's actions and dialogue (Forman, 1996, Kolbe, 2000, Robertson, 2000). The teacher can be understood as a 'provoker' who deepens children's thinking through questioning, and careful documentation processes allow them to do this.

⁹ Lev Vygotsky (1896 – 1934) developed sociocultural theory and believed that children construct knowledge through their relationships with people, through language, and that adults played important roles in scaffolding children's understanding (Gonzalez-Mena, 2011).

¹⁰ Victor Lowenfeld was a champion of the productive approach, and believed if a child was not engaging in a process, or did not understand a concept, it was because developmentally they were not yet ready to take this step (Wright, 2003).

¹¹ Vygotsky (1932, cited in Brooks, 2009) stated "rational, intentional conveying of experience and thought to others requires a mediating system, a prototype of which is human speech born of the need of intercourse during work" (p. 2).

Teachers also recognise the role relationships play in children's visual arts learning. Robertson (2000) argues that without sound relationships and knowing their students well, teachers cannot know when it is appropriate to step in and ask a question, offer support, or choose to stand back and observe. Wrightson's (2009) research, which focused on two early childhood teachers' strategies for supporting children's thinking through drawing, found that they scaffolded children's thinking as well as engaging in co-construction. The literature which focuses on the 'guided learning' approach provides evidence that the teacher is fundamental in allowing children to deepen their thinking through the visual arts.

2.3 The significance of the role of the teacher

A number of authors claim that the degree to which the visual arts are used as a tool for learning is significantly influenced by the teacher's pedagogical beliefs; that it is these beliefs and values that a teacher holds about childhood itself, the visual arts, and the role the visual arts play in education, that will affect when children create art, which materials they will use, and how they go about this process (Bae, 2004; Clark & de Lautour, 2013; Eisner, 1978; McArdle, 2003, 2012; Wright, 2003). For example, Clark and de Lautour (2013, p. 131) believe that "teachers' attitudes set the climate, contribute to the organisational culture of the setting and, along the continuum, creatively support, or ignore, the child's engagement with all experiences, including the arts". Teachers hold considerable power, but they are also strongly influenced by the cultural values of the context in which they work (Clark & Grey, 2013).¹² Given the significance of the teacher's role in valuing, planning for and facilitating the visual arts as a tool for learning, an examination of the literature on this dimension reveals the complexities of how values and beliefs inform and influence visual arts pedagogies.

2.4 The continued dominance of modernist beliefs in early childhood visual arts

Modernist ideals have been challenged by numerous authors (Gunn, 1998; Eisner, 1973; Kindler, 1995; Richards, 2007, 2009; Richards & Terreni, 2013). Yet, despite this evidence, Richards (2007) contends that "Beliefs such as natural artistic development, adult non-intervention, and the importance of creativity and artistic expression continue to dominate beliefs and attitudes about children's art" (p. 28). Some of the factors that may have caused modernist ideals to remain so entrenched within early childhood education were explored in this review of the literature.

The literature illustrates that previous approaches can still inform teachers in unpredictable and sometimes contradictory ways. Teachers who 'talk the modernist talk' still tend to revert to prefabricated art activities, thus illustrating the gaps that lie between philosophy and practice (Engel, 1995; Kindler, 1995; McArdle, 2012). McClure (2011) argues that the labelling of children's art making as expressive or creative has led to under-theorisation of visual

¹² "Each society has standards for the production and performance of cultural forms. These standards, whether they are overt and articulated or merely covert, can be said to constitute an aesthetic for that society" (Kaepler, 1971, p. 175, cited in Clark & Grey, 2013, p. 2).

arts practices. This could be because “ideas that do not fit into our existing cognitive field cause discomfort” (Eisner, 1973, p. 7), therefore making them difficult to examine.

One modernist myth that remains is a belief that children are innately creative and should be left to ‘unfold’ as they develop artistically. This myth has led to a deeply entrenched fear of intervention, meaning that many teachers do not see the value in gaining content knowledge in the visual arts (Eisner, 1973; McArdle, 2012; Richards, 2007). In contrast, Pendergast, Garvis and Keogh (2011) found that content knowledge was in fact very important when facilitating arts experiences within a holistic curriculum.

A lack of guidance in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996) has been one argument as to why teachers are unclear about how much content knowledge they need, and when and how it is appropriate to teach children (Hedges & Cullen, 2005; Richards & Terreni, 2013).¹³ A non-interventionist approach sits in opposition to the sociocultural framework that underpins *Te Whāriki* but some of the language within the document itself could confuse educators. For example, in *Te Whāriki* it is stated that children should “experience an environment where they discover and develop ... skill and confidence with the processes of art” (p. 80). This statement could be interpreted as a developmental perspective, in which case the teacher’s role is simply to provide materials (Kelly & Jurisich, 2010; Richards, 2007).

McArdle (2012) also identified that many teachers have grown up within a modernist paradigm themselves, and this has contributed to their lack of confidence in their ability to teach.¹⁴ This idea supports the notion that approaches to teaching the arts are strongly influenced by cultural contexts and the values of the community within which they are situated (Clark & Grey, 2013; Richards & Terreni, 2013; Schiller, 2000). Kaepler (1971, p.15, cited in Clark & Grey, 2013, p. 2) explains:

Each society has standards for the production and performance of cultural forms. These standards, whether they are overt and articulated, or merely covert, can be said to constitute an aesthetic for that society.

Richards and Terreni (2013) explain that prior to the introduction of *Te Whāriki* visual arts experiences often depended on support from the community, which meant that community beliefs and values had a role in constructing the curriculum during this period. The influence of the modernist movement has had a profound impact on how society as a whole views children’s art (Engel, 1995; Kindler, 1995; Richards & Terreni, 2013).¹⁵ The residual influence of modernism on both teachers and communities also provokes the question of where educators are getting their ideas from. Kolbe (2000) maintains that early childhood education is still

¹³ “Liberal humanist discourse produces entrenched taboos about structure, copying, and stifling creativity, as well as the developmental age/stage theories that dictate universal expectations of young children’s capacities. Combined, these discourses result in a ‘regime of truth’ (Foucault & Gordon, 1980) that makes teachers reluctant to teach” (McArdle, 2012, p. 100).

¹⁴ McArdle’s (2012) study of pre-service teachers’ beliefs and values surrounding the arts, found that many students experience “art anxiety” (p. 95) due to negative experiences in the arts within their own educational experiences and a lack of examination of how those experiences served to shape teacher’s beliefs and values.

¹⁵ Kindler (1995) states “the “discovery” of children’s art in the beginning of the century, and particularly the fascination with the spirit and process through which children create, made admiration of children’s art a social phenomenon” (p. 12).

strongly influenced by a Westernised view of art that privileges realism. Schiller (2000) reports that in Australia many educators have been influenced by North American educational theorists and approaches to art, with little regard for indigenous culture or Asian values. Together, these influences affect how children's visual art is viewed and valued (Kolbe, 2000).

This continued dominance of modernist beliefs about early childhood visual arts practices has been reinforced by research methods that have been used to gather data which has affected how children's visual art is understood. Kolbe (2000) claims that little research has focused on children's spontaneous art making. Others argue that it has often been studied out of context, with less value placed on the social and cultural influences on art making (Richards & Terreni, 2013). It is evident that further research, which offers clear pathways through which educators could negotiate their own sociocultural art pedagogies, could allow them to reconceptualise their roles when teaching the arts. It has also been argued that children themselves should be involved in the research process (Richards, 2009; Plows, 2013). For example, Robbins (2005, cited in Richards, 2009, p. 28) claims that "children are frequently portrayed as anonymous and decontextualized."

2.5 Reconceptualising practice – How do teachers develop pedagogies that value the visual arts as a tool for learning?

Deep theorisation of young children's art and visual culture will also contribute to the larger repositioning of early childhood education and care contexts as formidable civil forums

(McClure, 2011, p. 128)

Having examined some of the less visible texts within the visual arts palimpsest, enunciated by McArdle (2003), it was important to explore some of the factors which the literature revealed could enable teachers to examine their own pedagogical beliefs and reconceptualise their practices in the visual arts.

McClure (2011) argues for "a repositioning of young children's art and visual culture as legitimate sites of cultural knowledge production in order to ameliorate a restrictive view of childhood" (p. 127). This view positions the visual arts as integral to children's learning, and also highlights the notion that it is the image of the child that teachers hold that is fundamental in informing their practices in the visual arts (Bayes, 2005; Edwards et al, 1993; McArdle, 2003, 2008). It would seem that teachers need a strong philosophy in the arts to inform their practice and that past experiences in the arts, both general and within educational contexts, serve to shape teachers beliefs about the visual arts (McArdle, 2003; Wright, 2003).

A number of authors argue that close examination and reflection on past experiences can begin to help educators become aware of the images of childhood they hold and how their ideas surrounding the visual arts, and its role in education, have come to be (Clark & de Lautour, 2013; Eisner, 1973; McArdle, 2003, 2012; McClure, 2001; Pohio, 2009; Richards, 2007; Wright, 2003). Eisner (1973) believed that this is a fundamental process that will enable

educators to move beyond the long lasting influences of modernism. Bae (2004), however, identified a lack of research that examines the role of the teacher within visual arts education.

It is possible that teachers of visual arts in early childhood contexts might not realise how fundamental adult role models were in their own early years as transmitters of values (Veale, 2000).¹⁶ Veale states that “In these subtle, yet powerful ways, artistic messages are transmitted from older generations to younger ones” (p. 28). Teachers may not realise how diverse cultural views inform the way in which art is viewed and valued (McArdle, 2003). These factors also serve to shape the images of childhood that teachers hold (Edwards et al, 1993; McArdle, 2003, 2008). A lack of confidence in the visual arts has also been identified as a factor that can impact on pedagogy (Clark & de Lautour, 2013; Wright, 2003). Others argue that engaging in practical experiences and, by becoming visually literate, teachers can begin to address this fear (McArdle, 2012; Pohio, 2013). Bae’s (2004) research found that student teachers, who were working within the educational community she researched, gained contextual knowledge through observing more experienced teachers.

The process of engaging with art as a way to reflect on our own understandings of the visual arts can also be a valuable process for developing pedagogies that value the visual arts as a learning tool (Pohio, 2013). Craw and Grey (2013), for example, maintain that “engaging with visual art, including responding to and critiquing artists’ works can create new spaces to think in, through and with art in an early childhood education context” (p. 87). In this way, visual art itself becomes a medium through which new research can be conducted, a practice that has been embraced internationally (Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Kind, 2010; Leavy, 2009).

Veale Vecchi (2010), one of the first atelierista appointed by Malaguzzi at the Diana school in 1970, reflected on the process of unpacking her own palimpsest. She said:

For years, the teachers and myself learned to undo learning. We learned to modify a part of the mental framework we had learned previously in our respective cultural and educational backgrounds and listen to reflections and experience different from our own ways of thinking. However, the largest changes in mental framework and point of view were caused by observing and documenting children’s strategies (p. 108).

Vecchi’s statement illustrates the complex influences that shape visual arts pedagogy and highlights the value of collaborative teaching discussions as part of the process of reconceptualising thinking. This factor was also noted by Bayes (2005) who found dialogue with others was a significant factor in impacting change within a teaching community.¹⁷ Richards (2007) and Pohio (2013) also assert that teachers need to develop wider networks where they can dialogue about visual arts practices.

¹⁶ Veale’s (2000) research of Australian artists’ early artistic experiences revealed complex narratives, where access to provocative materials, a parent as a role model and a parent as a barrier, were uncovered.

¹⁷ Bayes’ research (2005) focused on education communities who through the act of engaging in professional development workshops were grappling with translating some of the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia into their own practice. Bayes states “one explanation for the changes that occurred could be that each team of educators spent lots of time ... discussing the connection between the theoretical aspects of the Reggio Emilia pedagogy and how these related to their practice. The educators reported that reflection strengthened their teams as they were coming together to ‘make meaning’, challenging each other and coming to joint understandings” (p. 128).

The documentation produced by Reggio Emilia has allowed visibility of their pedagogical ideas, and has been a valuable source of inspiration for many educators in New Zealand and Australia. It has acted as a catalyst and provided educators with a means to reconceptualise their visual arts practices (Millikan, 2003; Pohio, 2009, 2013). Millikan (2003) believes that examination of the principles of Reggio Emilia might allow educators to deconstruct and reconceptualise some of the foundational principles of our own educational contexts that have become assumed truths, long uncontested and under-examined. This literature has revealed that examination of past life history, exposure to rich examples of sociocultural visual arts practices, and collaborative pedagogical discussions within and across teaching communities are possible pathways through which teachers could reconceptualise their visual arts pedagogies to value the visual arts as a tool for learning.

2.6 The pedagogy of Reggio Emilia and the role of the visual arts

The educational project, often referred to as 'The Reggio Emilia approach', was conceptualised in response to the effects of fascist rule resulting from World War II. Millikan (2003, p. 3) reports, "There was a conscious awareness of the need, and a will to act, to find ways to prepare their children for living in a democracy." This approach is based on a series of foundational principles that are underpinned by sociocultural theory. Lewin-Benham (2006, p. 12) explains that each element of the approach is "inextricably linked", thus making it challenging to explain in a linear fashion. The principle that was to become critical to my research, however, was the notion that "this approach fosters children's intellectual development through a systematic focus on symbolic representation" (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998, p. 7).

Children, educators, parents and community are all important stakeholders with a voice within the schools (Edwards, et al, 1998; Malaguzzi, 1998), and all learning is based on the "theoretical framework of social-constructivism" (Bayes, 2005, p. 35). The 'child' is understood as 'rich' in their potential to construct and co-construct knowledge. Within this framework, teachers have complex roles. Malaguzzi (1998) challenged the isolated manner within which traditional teaching operated and encouraged teachers to work collaboratively. Thus, teachers organise situations and environments for children's learning and they document, observe and research alongside children as they strive to understand more about how they construct knowledge. Children's ideas and graphic representations are taken seriously, and this value is transmitted to them through what has been coined a pedagogy of listening (Rinaldi, 2009).¹⁸

Collaborative projects play a large role in the Reggio Emilia approach. Children are encouraged to formulate their own theories, to conduct research, to represent their ideas and then to negotiate their conclusions (Lewin-Benham, 2006). It is the children's theories that are valued by teachers. This concept sits in opposition to a didactic model of teaching where only a universally accepted answer is valued (Rinaldi, 2006). Graphic imagery is integral to this

¹⁸ A pedagogy of listening is a term used to describe the way teachers in Reggio Emilia observe children very closely in order to understand their individual working theories about their world. Rinaldi (2009, cited in Probine, 2009, unpublished notes) that "we need to recognise we are not the possessor of truth but we are only a possible point of view".

concept as it allows children to represent and share their thinking both with others as well as to themselves (Katz, 1998). The graphic or expressive languages are just part of what Malaguzzi labelled the hundred languages of children, a metaphor to describe the multitude of ways children express their ideas and construct knowledge. The atelier, introduced in the early 1970's, solidified and formalised the importance of this metaphor and concept within this approach.¹⁹

Atelier now reside in every school in Reggio Emilia. They are spaces where children use the symbolic languages to think through their ideas, and are understood as places of research for both children and teachers. They serve as a physical presence within the schools to communicate the values and philosophy to parents and the importance of the graphic languages within children's learning (Malaguzzi, 1998).

2.7 Reggio Emilia's influence on educators' work in the visual arts in New Zealand

Interest in Reggio Emilia began in New Zealand in the early 1980's and has continued to gain momentum. Bayes (2005), Haplin (2011), Pohio (2013), and Soutar (2000) all note links between the Reggio approach and our own curriculum document, *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996). Both are underpinned by sociocultural theory. *Te Whāriki* refers to an image of the child as powerful and competent to construct their own knowledge, and emphasises socially constructed learning (Bayes, 2005). Both these concepts are integral aspects of the Reggio approach. Soutar (2000), on visiting Reggio Emilia, also observed similarities between Māori pedagogy and the Reggio philosophy. She noted that both the schools of Reggio Emilia and the Kōhanga Reo movement²⁰ were born out of suffering, and that the community in both contexts has played an integral role in their manifestation. Soutar (2000) also noted that the Reggio schools seemed to understand the value of fostering 'mana', and this was reflected through collaborative learning, the aesthetic environment and the implementation of a pedagogy of listening.²¹

While Pohio (2009, 2013) contends that exposure to the ideas of Reggio Emilia has impacted on visual arts pedagogies in New Zealand, McArdle (2008) maintains that there has been little examination of what factors allow educators in Reggio Emilia to use the visual arts as a tool for learning. She refers to contextual influences like Italy's history of celebrating the arts, which is evidenced by the presence of atelierista and atelier within each centre. McArdle also refers to the city of Reggio Emilia's commitment to quality public education, all of which have contributed to the teachers' understanding of the visual arts as a language.

The importance of acknowledging the vastly different cultural context in which the Reggio approach developed in Italy has been expressed by many authors (Carter, 2009;

¹⁹ Malaguzzi (1998) stated "the atelier has protected us not only from the long-winded speeches and didactic theories of our time ..., but also from the behaviourist beliefs of the surrounding culture, reducing the human mind to some kind of "container" to be filled" (p.74).

²⁰ The Kōhanga Reo movement began in New Zealand in 1982. Translated, it means 'the language nest'. Its main goal is to recover the Maori language and it does this within the context of community and culture (Hohepa, Hingangaroa, Smith, L., Smith, T & McNaughton, 1992).

²¹ "Mana has several meanings in different contexts. Its definitions include power, status, prestige, authority, integrity and control" (Soutar, 2000, p.8).

Cadwell, 1997; Haplin, 2011; Millikan, 2003; Pohio, 2009, 2013). These authors believe that educational communities need to have a strong sense of their own identity to make sure they retain authenticity. Haplin (2011) and Bayes (2005) both found in their research that professional dialogue and a strong sense of collaboration was vital to making sense of these ideas in an authentic way. It has been acknowledged that the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia can act as a powerful catalyst in the reconceptualisation of educator's images of childhood as well as their role in enabling children to use the visual arts within their inquiries (Cadwell, 1997; Pohio, 2013). These observations are fundamental, as it becomes clear that Reggio Emilia can play two conversely different roles in influencing early childhood visual arts pedagogies. It can act as a way of examining and breaking down the existing visual arts palimpsest or, if only interpreted at a surface level, it can add yet another layer on top of the palimpsest, blurring even further educators' understandings of the role of the visual arts in children's learning.

2.8 What do the visual arts offer as a tool for learning?

In this research 'learning' was understood as occurring within a social-constructivist framework in which children construct knowledge through their relationships with each other and with more knowledgeable others through a process of negotiating shared meanings (Gonzalez-Mena, 2011; Vygotsky, 1962). Literature pertaining to this question suggests that learning is context-specific and culture plays an integral role in how, when and what children learn (Gonzalez-Mena, 2011). Brooks (2009) argues that a Vygotskian social-constructivist lens allows us to understand the visual arts as a tool for constructing meaning. Whilst Vygotsky (1962) focused on the role of language as a "mediating system" (p. 6), Brooks (2009) argues that this theory can also be applied to the visual, explaining that when visual art is acknowledged as a language in its own right, it too becomes a mediating tool in the creation of knowledge.

Eisner (1978) advocated that the visual arts offer rich opportunities for learning, long before children express ideas representationally. The act of making a simple mark allows children to understand they have the power to transform, or to impact change on materials or the environment. Mark-making can also serve to provoke verbal dialogue from very young children (Robertson, 2000). Moreover, ideas that cannot be communicated or explored verbally have the potential to be examined through the visual arts (Craw & Grey, 2013; Eisner, 1978; Schiller, 2000). Other authors contend that the visual arts, while often valued as creative and aesthetic, are also an intellectual, complex domain through which human experience can be analysed, problematized and communicated (Jensen, 2001; Pohio, 2006; Robertson, 2000; Schiller, 2000).

As children learn that their representations can act as symbols of their experiences and ideas (Eisner, 1978; Wright, 2003, 2012), they understand that they use the visual arts to communicate to others (Eisner, 1978; Gandini, 2005; Pelo, 2007; Pohio, 2013; Wright, 2003). It is the power of the visual arts to enable young children to communicate that justifies why they are often described as a language (Gandini, 2005; Kind, 2010; Malaguzzi, 1998; Pelo, 2007). Kind (2010) further explains that describing children's art making as a language allows us to

rethink art, not just as a means to express 'self', but as a way for children to make their ideas visible. On the other hand, McArdle (2008) warns that we must not romanticise this concept. She contends that children choose *what* they want to communicate. Richards and Terreni (2013) concur that children decide *how* to communicate and are able to draw upon a repertoire of different styles that they use according to the purpose of their work.

The visibility of visual art enables children to exchange ideas with others and to begin to negotiate and build knowledge and understanding within collaborative contexts (Forman, 1996; Pohio, 2006, 2013; Richards & Terreni, 2013; Robertson, 2000). Pelo (2007) calls this building a culture of inquiry within the classroom, and talks of the power of the visual arts to invite engagement.²² This is attributed to how the visual arts can provoke a unique response. Wright (2003) suggests that when we 'read' visual art we extract three kinds of understanding – what is the art saying? (information), what is the aesthetic response? and how does the art relate to our personal experience?

Due to the social-constructivist underpinnings of my approach in this research, the literature on collaboration was of particular importance. Pohio (2006) found in her research at an Auckland kindergarten that when children engage in discussions whilst making art, they were able to adapt and develop their ideas, transforming their understandings, and were more likely to persevere when working within a group. Therefore, visual art is not just another way to represent ideas, but is in fact a transformative act where new knowledge is constructed (Pohio, 2006; Kind, 2010). This action is often referred to as a process of inquiry (Brooks, 2003; Forman, 1996; Gandini, 2005; Kind, 2010; Pelo, 2007; Wright, 2003). Arnheim (cited in Wright, 2003) called this 'visual thinking', a term created to argue that productive thought cannot occur without imagery. Viewed in this way, the visual arts acknowledge children as "active participants in their own learning" (Jeanneret, 2012, p. 17). Brooks (2003) found that children drew upon previous knowledge and through the process of drawing adapted that knowledge, thereby formulating new understandings. She explained that "this is a transformative process that takes place in a social context ... drawing is both the mediator and the record of this process" (p. 2). This notion of negotiating knowledge through visual art allows children to develop an understanding that there can be multiple outcomes or solutions (Allen, 2002). This, in turn, can develop an appreciation of subjectivity and diversity (Vecchi, 2010). The capacity of the visual arts to invite multiple solutions also offers children the ability to develop their critical thinking skills as they construct their own judgements about the success of the work based on their own criteria (Eisner, 1978). In this way the arts play an important role in challenging the didactic learning systems that currently dominate the education system by encouraging children to negotiate their own knowledge (Jeanneret, 2012).

As children learn an appreciation of subjectivity and diverse points of view through engaging in the visual arts, imagination plays an important role. Eisner (1978) and Donelan

²² Pelo (2007) explains how a child uses visual art both individually and collaboratively to explore an idea. "In doing so, she can begin to clarify her ideas, she considers details and wrestles with inconsistencies. When her idea is visible, other children and adults can engage with it, thinking with her about its nuances and complexities, its gaps and incongruities (p. 110)".

(2012) both argue that the visual arts allow children to enrich their imaginative worlds, thereby enabling them to develop empathy for others. As Eisner (1978, p. 7) expressed it, “Empathy requires the ability to imaginatively project; art is a means for cultivating such ability.”

These ideas highlight the potential for the visual arts to act as a domain through which children can also understand different cultural ways of knowing, particularly as art is considered a primary vehicle through which cultural identity and values are transmitted (Eisner, 1973; Jeanneret, 2012; Jensen, 2001). Jeanneret (2012), for example, explored Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, and argued that art experiences embedded with relevant cultural knowledge can offer children access to their own cultures, their ways of engaging in the visual arts, and the beliefs and values embedded within these practices. It is also suggested that culturally relevant art experiences can invite understanding and empathy for other cultures within a setting (Jensen, 2001; O’Toole, 2012). Jensen (2001, p. 64) maintains that

[O]ne of the most powerful benefits of an arts curriculum is the development and sharing of cross-cultural heritage.

The products of children’s art making provide a point of reference to which they can return (Forman, 1996). As this author argues:

To make even their implausible ideas visible helps children later when they attempt to understand more completely. They have a record of their theories and this visible public record helps them negotiate deeper meaning with others (Forman, 1996, p. 57).

Exploring an idea through multiple mediums allows children to formulate new ways of seeing and thinking through their ideas (Forman, 1996; Vecchi, 2010; Wright, 2003). Vecchi (2010) maintains that the visual arts allow connections to be made between experiences.

Teachers and researchers often feel the need to justify the visual arts within the curriculum and refer to the subject’s capacity to aid development in other curriculum areas (Allen, 2002; Copple, 2003; Helm & Katz, 2010). Jensen (2001) argues that we don’t question how much the other subject domains support the visual arts. He believes that educators must stop trying to justify the visual arts in terms of the way they assist other curriculum areas, but rather to consider how the visual arts support learning within its own right. The literature has placed the visual arts as a unique tool within children’s learning and clearly places the visual arts as a domain subject in its own right (Eisner, 1978). Educators must do likewise. This literature has identified that the visual arts offer children the ability to communicate understanding, generate and negotiate new knowledge, understand their own and other cultures and develop an appreciation for subjectivity and diverse views of knowledge.

2.9 Summary

The literature which informed my research has revealed that teacher’s pedagogical ideas regarding the visual arts have a fundamental effect on the degree to which children use the visual arts as a tool for learning. Historically, the visual arts in education have been influenced

by complex social and political forces, as well as the ideas of educationalists, artists and psychologists, and many of these influences remain under-examined. This lack of critique has meant that modernist ideas continue to dominate and underpin many early childhood teachers' practices in the visual arts. On the other hand, it has been shown that teachers can reconceptualise their visual arts pedagogies by closely examining their own beliefs and values. Teachers can also build their content knowledge and confidence in the arts, and they can engage in collaborative discussions. The pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia have also been a significant influence for some teachers within New Zealand, and have proven to act as a catalyst for re-examination of visual arts pedagogies.

An examination of the concept of the visual arts as a tool for learning has made apparent that the ways in which the visual arts make children's ideas visible to others promotes their collaborative inquiries and allows them to develop an appreciation of subjectivity. This literature supports the rationale for my research, in which I explored the connections between how pedagogical ideas in the arts evolve and the potential that the visual arts offered as tool for learning in one early childhood setting. The methodological framework for the research and the data collection methods employed are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology and methods – How the research was undertaken

3.1 Introduction

Chapters one and two offered a rationale for the research and presented the contextual platform that underpins the study. This chapter outlines the research paradigm, rationalising the choice of methodology, methods of data collection and data analysis, and the ethical considerations relevant to this study.

This small scale case study used a combination of traditional qualitative methods (Punch, 2009; Swanborn, 2010) and elements of a/r/tography (de Cosson & Irwin, 2004; Leavy, 2009). A/r/tography integrates and acknowledges the roles of teacher, researcher and artist and enables both text and image to be considered as important sources of knowledge at each stage of the research process (Leavy, 2009). Including the visual as an important component of the research process complemented the topic itself, which aimed to explore the role of the visual arts in children's learning and inquiries. The written word is not always the most effective mode through which a research question can be explored (Ellsworth, 2005, cited in Irwin & Springgay, 2008). A rationale for including the visual in the study was also supported by the theory that art making and engaging in visual imagery can transform thinking and provoke new understanding (Kind, 2010). Springgay (2002, p. 15) maintains that "Art is about revealing what is hidden. It is a way into other realities and other personalities. It is a way of looking at something differently, a form of intervention."

3.2 The theoretical framework

This research focused on the visual arts as a tool for thinking and learning and acknowledged the powerful influence of relationships and context on this process. In particular, there was focus on a context that has been influenced by the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia, an approach informed by notions of social-constructivism (Millikan, 2003). For these reasons the research was underpinned by theories of social constructivism, sociocultural perspectives, and a/r/tography. Sociocultural theory, as social-constructivist theories have also become known, presents a view of cognitive development as the active co-construction of knowledge and skills through social interactions (Hill, 2011). These theories began to influence education in the 1980's and hold particular relevance to the early childhood sector as they underpin the curriculum document, *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996).

Vygotsky's theory of social-constructivism describes learning as strongly influenced by context, arguing that knowledge construction is informed by historic, cultural and social influences. Of particular significance within this framework is the role of the teacher, who Vygotsky saw as the more knowledgeable 'other' who was able to scaffold children as they constructed their own understandings of the world. Bronfenbrenner (1979), who built upon Vygotsky's ideas, positioned the teacher as a key component of children's mesosystem, and

that their role was to make connections with children's microsystems (Hill, 2011). Rogoff (1990, p.14) explains:

[F]rom the socio-historical perspective, the basic unit of analysis is no longer the (properties of the) individual, but the (processes of the) sociocultural activity, involving active participation of people in socially constituted practices.

These theories position knowledge as diverse and contextual. They acknowledge the subjective nature of social research, and that this idea can be applied to both its contextual nature and the researcher's response to the data (Carroll, Adkins, Foth, Parker & Jamili, 2008). Consequently, this research sought to uncover the complexity of one setting rather than a universal view of the visual arts as a tool for learning (Rogoff, 1990).

The focus on the role of the visual arts as a tool for learning led me to consider the theoretical perspectives underpinning *a/r/tography* as I acknowledged the role this could play in my research design and art practice as a component of this research. *A/r/tography* as a methodological approach can be likened to a rhizome, whereby theory is negotiated through practice itself. Irwin and Springgay (2008, p.xx) explain:

[T]heory is understood as a critical exchange that is reflective, responsive and relational, which is continuously in a state of reconstruction and becoming something else altogether. As such, theory as practice becomes an embodied, living space of inquiry.

An *a/r/tographic* view sits comfortably with social-constructivist ideas, as it acknowledges knowing as subjective and highlights doing as a means of knowing more deeply (Irwin and Springggay, 2008). Craw (2011), Kind (2010) and Springgay (2002) provide understanding that the visual arts could act as a vehicle through which participants could explore their own relationship with visual art. Thus, including visual elements in each stage of the research process – what *a/r/tographers* refer to as 'living inquiry' – would evoke a different response from the research audience (Wright, 2003). It is the ability of the visual arts to provoke the viewer to 'see' in another way that Leavy (2009, p. 218) describes as "defamiliarization". Theories about arts-based research, including *a/r/tography*, are aimed at addressing and breaking down the master narratives surrounding current educational practice. Barone (2008, p. 33) contends that:

The political spectacle has allowed the seeds of misperception to be planted deep within the collective subconscious. Indeed, discussions in the media about educational matters almost inevitably betray assumptions built on the imagery within the master narrative.

These ideas support my chosen area of research inquiry that aimed to explore how one setting had moved beyond the 'master narrative' in order to reconstruct their visual arts practices, with their ideas underpinned by social constructivist and sociocultural theories.

3.3 The research setting and participants

This small-scale case study took place in an urban Auckland community-based early childhood centre. To locate a site my supervisor, Dr Jill Smith, consulted with experts from the early childhood sector for centres that fitted the criteria for my research. One criterion was to locate a centre where children and teachers valued the visual arts as a tool for learning, and whose approach was influenced by the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia. A further criterion was that the centre had a session or classroom in which the older children were grouped together, the purpose being to manage multiple ethical consents within one setting.

The community-based research setting selected for the research held to Christian principles and values. The centre's website described these values as collaboration, respect, beauty, wonder, responsibility and openness. The social-constructivist underpinnings of the study meant that I desired a setting which enabled the freedom to observe interactions between groups of children, and of children and their teachers. This was to allow a rich contextual picture to be developed and to acknowledge the importance of interactions within the use of visual arts as a learning tool. Richards (2007, p. 28) asserts that:

What is called for, if we are to build a contemporary understanding of young children's artistic development and teachers' roles in research that honours children's art as related to real people, in real contexts, leading real lives.

The participating centre offered both sessional and full day options to families in their diverse, multicultural community. These groups included Māori, Fijian, Cook Island Māori, Samoan, Southeast Asian, Indian, Chinese, Middle Eastern, African, European, and New Zealand Pākehā. Up to fifteen languages were spoken amongst this community. The centre is licenced for 40 children per session, with 30 of them being present all day and the youngest attending the afternoon session. In consultation with the centre manager and teachers it was decided to conduct the data collection on a Wednesday morning for which ethical consent was sought from parents/caregivers for the forty children who attended this session. (see Appendix A(v) & (vi))

Six full-time teachers were employed and they, too, were ethnically diverse. The head teacher was of Pākehā/European decent with the other five teachers being immigrants from Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, China and India. All the teachers were fully informed about the research process (see Appendix A(iii)), and graciously welcomed my presence as a researcher. Once consent had been gained from the teachers and child participants data collection commenced. One teacher did not take place in the participatory art journal, nor was present during the observations of children due to unrelated personal circumstances. However, all six teachers participated in the final group interview.

3.4 The methodological framework

A qualitative research paradigm

The methodological framework was underpinned by a traditional qualitative social research paradigm. Qualitative research, the most appropriate methodology for my research, is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem. It is based on building a holistic picture, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Punch, 2009; Silverman, 2011). The qualitative data collected from participants employed four traditional methods which enabled me to study, in context, the rich and complex influences that affected both children and teachers in the early childhood setting.

An a/r/tographical framework

The traditional methodological framework was enhanced by including aspects of the innovative approach to social research - a/r/tography. Given that three of the four data collection methods included visual data it was important to include this methodological component which emphasises that similarities between the processes of art making and social research practices work well together (de Cosson & Irwin, 2004). Leavy (2009) maintains that both the sciences and the arts endeavour to make sense of our world and how we exist within it. The difference is that scientists argue that they do this objectively, while artists argue that everything is subjective. The a/r/tographical framework enabled me to take the role of 'artist', as well as researcher and teacher. Following the collection (and analysis) of data from the early childhood centre, I re-interpreted the data in two art works. The visual images collected from participants and made by me are presented in conjunction with textural interpretation in both the findings and discussion sections [see chapters 4 and 5].

3.5 Data collection methods

The four qualitative methods employed to collect data from the participants were designed to answer the research questions with minimal impact on the early childhood setting.

1. Observations of all the children engaged in visual art making

Four, one-hour observations were made of children in the classroom with their teachers each Wednesday morning over a one-month period. This time was selected on the basis of the participating centre's programme. It provided opportunity to observe both spontaneous visual arts making as well as a more teacher-guided, focused group work period that the centre called 'spicy work time.' During that time children engaged in long-term inquiry-based projects in which the visual arts played an integral role. On each occasion I made field notes and took digital photographs of children's art-making processes and art works. When a child's art work was photographed their name was coded and recorded as a single alphabet letter. Photographic data focused on the art work itself, and if children or teachers were incidentally photographed and identifiable their identities were later disguised using photographic techniques.

2. Participatory reflective art journals for the teachers

During the fieldwork the teachers were invited to use participatory art journals provided by me. These comprised either A4 or A5 documents which were returned to them at the completion of data analysis. The aim of these journals was for teachers to reflect on, and record their beliefs and values surrounding visual arts and its role in children's learning. After an initial discussion with the teachers about the journals, prior to the commencement of the data collection, I developed a series of 'prompts' they could use if they wished. Some teachers were unsure about what the journals entailed, and I wanted to allay any anxiety (See Appendix B(i)). They were given the option to record their entries through visual or textual means or a combination of both.

The teachers were also asked to give consent to a selection of 'fragments' from their journals being digitally photographed. The notion of using 'fragments' was influenced by Duxbury (2008) and Stephenson (2004) who suggest that fragments are evocative pieces of meaning that the totality cannot suggest.

3. Interviews with four children and their parents (if they wished to be present) with a selection of the children's art works

Following the four classroom observations all the children and their parents/caregivers were invited to volunteer to participate in a brief, video-recorded individual interview. The purpose was for the child and their parent/caregiver to discuss their dual perspectives on the role of the visual arts in the context of the child's learning. The first four children and their parents/caregivers who volunteered were selected to be interviewed. Ultimately, three of the children's parents opted not to be present for the interview and asked that a teacher participate on their behalf. The remaining child's parent was a teacher at the centre and was happy to do so. The interviews, for which consent was sought, took place in a separate room. A selection of art work for each child was gathered by the teachers prior to these interviews. During the interviews two of the four children took the initiative to seek their individual portfolios and other art works that they wished to share during this time. Although this was an unstructured interview, and was very much led by the children, some informal interview questions were constructed based on the research question (See Appendix B(iii)). Permission to use 'fragments' of images from these interview videos, not the videos per se, as well as the four children's first names, was sought and accepted by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC), and by the children and their parents/caregivers.

4. Group interview with all six teachers

The final data collection method was a focus group interview with the teaching team. The video-taped interview was held after the day's session ended and was approximately 60 minutes long. The interview questions were formulated from the research questions [see chapter one], themes uncovered in the literature review, and an initial analysis of the data collected during the observation periods. The use of video footage was to aid differentiation of different participants, but it was agreed that it would not be presented as visual data in the research report. The

'voices' of the teachers are included in chapter four.

3.6 Ethical considerations and validity of the research

Throughout the process of conducting this research project all ethical procedures required by the University of Auckland were followed stringently. The ethics committee required that the anonymity of the research participants be maintained, except in the case of the four videotaped interviews with children. Because these interviews were analysed for both textural and visual data, permission to use 'fragments' from these videos, as well as the children's first names, was sought and accepted. The identities of all other participants remained confidential. This was achieved by collecting photographic data during the observations that only included processes and products of children's art making. Any images that did inadvertently include a partial or full depiction of a face were blurred digitally. The children's names that were recorded in the field notes were coded with a single alphabet letter. The teacher participants chose pseudonyms for reporting of the data. Although the video-taped focus group interview recorded their faces, this data was only analysed textually.

Issues of validity were approached in several ways. The use of mixed methods for collecting data allowed for a rich picture of a specific contextual setting to be built and for the findings to be measured against each other to ensure validity of the research (Punch, 2009). While this traditional means of ensuring validity was employed, Leavy (2009) maintains that arts-based research has disrupted traditional ways of measuring validity and reliability. She says that "unlike positivist approaches to social inquiry, arts based practices produce partial, situated and contextual truths" (pp. 15-16). In order to establish validity for this research I made each step within the project as transparent as possible. During, and since completion of the data collection, participants were kept informed at each stage and given opportunities to view the findings during the data analysis process. Gauntlett and Holzwarth (2006) explain that the researcher can only speculate on the meanings derived from data. The role of the researcher is to identify patterns and construct theories from the data, but involving the participants in this process allows certification of this analysis.

3.7 Data analysis

Analysis of data generated by the participants

The analysis of the data was approached within an interpretive, qualitative research paradigm (Punch, 2009; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005) and visual data was informed by the methodology of a/r/tography (de Cosson & Irwin, 2004; Leavy, 2009). Themes and concepts emerged from the data, rather than through applying a framework of existing theories to the data. "Data do not provide a window on reality. Rather, the 'discovered' reality arises from the interactive processes and its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 524, cited in Carroll et al, 2008, p. 206). Therefore, data analysis began at the outset of the collection period (Silverman,

2011). An example of this was the way in which classroom observations, as well as the literature, served to inform the semi-structured interview questions conducted in the final stage of data collection.

Three forms of data collected involved both textual and visual elements. These included classroom observations, participatory art journals and interviews with four children (supported by one parent and three teachers). For each data set key words or concepts were identified through subject coding. The data was analysed again to uncover wider themes and concepts which allowed for comparison as I looked for both similarities and differences between the data (Punch, 2009). Significant text was recorded and used verbatim to highlight the teachers' and children's voices in the research. A key component of each data set was the visual imagery collected. The purpose of analysing visual data was not to translate the visual into text but rather "to build a bridge between the visual and the verbal" (Collier & Collier, 1996, p. 169). Visual images were analysed according to Collier's (2001) model of visual analysis. This included four phases. The data was first analysed in its whole form. It was then categorised into groups that responded to the research questions. The third stage was to conduct a more structured analysis of the data and, lastly, meanings or theories were generated from visual imagery (Collier, 2001).

The final form of data collection method was the group interview. This discussion was transcribed and analysed for textual content only. Analysis of this interview was approached in a similar way. The transcript was coded to uncover themes that were later compared with the participatory art journals, interviews with children, and the classroom observations in order to ensure a dense depiction of the case presented.

An a/r/tographical interpretation by the researcher

This research examined the visual as a tool for generating meaning, thus this concept was applied to the data. Following analysis of qualitative data collected from participants, the a/r/tographical component of my research came into play. In order to comprehend the data in visual terms, it was represented visually through the generation of two images by me that responded to the research questions. Irwin and de Cosson (2004, p. 27) suggest that when the roles of artist/researcher/teacher are integrated together "knowing (theory), doing (praxis) and making (poesis) will inform our understanding of ideas and practices". My supervisor, Jill Smith (2009, p. 265) articulates this approach to A/R/T as "art practice, research and teaching interconnecting in an ever-continuing cycle". This notion inspired me to participate as an artist, researcher and teacher, not as someone who merely conducts and reports the research.

My two images not only responded to the research questions and represented my subjective interpretation of the data, but allowed another way of viewing and understanding the patterns and concepts that had emerged from them (Stephenson, 2004). These images were influenced by McArdle's (2003) metaphor of a palimpsest, which she uses to explain the under-examination of the historical theoretical frameworks that underpin visual arts pedagogies. This methodology supports the idea that visual depiction of the data can evoke a more emotive

response from the viewer and that there is no data that remains uncontaminated by the subjective lens of the researcher (Prendergast, Gouzouasis, Leggo & Irwin, 2009). Therefore, a visual representation of the data created by me, made my role in the interpretation of the research more explicit.

3.8 Limitations of the research

A limitation of this small-scale study was that it examined only one case. Although a single case can offer rich information that could be applied to other contexts, or could inform and provoke further studies, it remains within a specific social and cultural context (Flyvbjerg, 2004).

Another limitation was the University's ethical requirements that limited the use of the visual image, so that children's faces and identities could not be recognised. Richards (2009) contends that children are often decontextualized within research. This ethical consideration did limit the presence of the children within the study to some degree, although I was permitted to retain the identities of the four children who were interviewed.

3.9 Summary

This chapter presented the theoretical framework that underpins this research and addressed the ethical issues involved in conducting it in an educational context. I have outlined my rationale for using methods derived from both qualitative and a/r/tographic research paradigms. It has been shown that through including elements of the visual within each stage of the research process, different forms of knowledge can be generated, and the research itself can provoke new understandings to more diverse audiences (Leavy, 2009; Springgay, 2002). The use of the visual in the research also complimented the research questions themselves, which aimed to examine how the visual can be used as a tool in children's thinking and learning. The findings of the research are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

Early childhood education, and the microsystems within this broader community, have their own cultural tradition, their own ways of valuing and interpreting the arts.

(Clark & Grey, 2013, p. 2)

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the connections between teacher pedagogy and children's engagement in the visual arts as a tool for learning. The setting was selected as it presented a context where the visual arts were valued as a learning tool and it was believed that the teachers' practices were influenced by the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia. These criteria allowed for data that showed how the visual arts were being used in children's knowledge construction and how pedagogies that value the arts are shaped and informed.

This chapter reports on the data collected. The aim was not to present a 'recipe' for socio-constructivist visual arts practices, but rather to present a narrative of how one educational context had navigated the journey of coming to use the visual arts as a tool for learning. In doing so, this narrative acts as a provocation for those interested in reconceptualising their own visual arts pedagogies. As Hill (2011, p. 7) explains:

Storyed thoughts are owned thoughts. Storyed and subjective thoughts, paradoxically, enable a more objective viewpoint of early childhood practice in general.

The findings are arranged in order of data collection, beginning with the four one-hour observations of children, the teachers participatory art journals, the four video-taped interviews of children and parents (if they wished) and the final group interview with teachers.

4.2 Observations of all the children engaged in visual art making

At the outset of data collection my aim was to focus on observing how these children, who ranged in age from three to four years, used the visual arts for learning. Although the intention was not to observe the teachers' practice during this period, I realised that the children's art making was intrinsically linked with the planning, provocations and questions proposed by their teachers. These questions, choices of materials and teachers' intentions were, therefore, recorded.

On each of the four observation mornings I was present in the classroom when the children were transitioning into the day and engaged in free play. On each occasion, several tables were arranged with different provocations and two were left empty, with drawing, cutting and adhesive materials close by on low shelving. At another large table paint was set out in small glass bottles, with the colours relating closely to a provocation in the middle, along with brushes and paper. Two small tables were also arranged with provocations, one with clay and the other with pencils and paper. A painting easel and a light table were nearby.

After most children had arrived they were called to the mat and divided into groups for

'spicy work time'. This was a period when they used graphic languages and other materials to work on various long-term projects that were occurring in the centre. The head teacher explained that a decision had been made to choose specific children to work on these projects as a means of supporting a significant transition period in the centre. The five teachers present each took a group of children to separate areas in the classroom or to an outdoor space. I chose to observe the groups specifically working with the visual arts, including those with older children, as this had been specified as part of the ethical considerations.

1. Observation One: 26th March 2014

Engaging with drawing materials within a social setting

During the initial free play period children gathered around one of the drawing tables. They drew pictures of princesses and observed each other's drawings, which sometimes led them to adapt their own work. For instance, one child observing her peer's large sun symbol added a similar symbol to her own page.



Figure 2: Princess with sun symbol by C

The teacher as an 'organiser of occasions'

During 'spicy work time' one group of children explored friendship and emotions. Hannah introduced the session by referring to the images and accompanying dialogue that had been created, the day before, around the concept of friendship. This allowed the children to review and critique their previous work and ideas. Today she asked the children "what kind of friends do you like? Who do you like to play with?" and "what happens if we don't like the same things?" The children were given paper and clipboards and began to represent their ideas.

Co-construction of ideas

As children worked in a group context they influenced each other's thinking. R and A, who were sitting beside each other, used thinking bubbles to represent thoughts. A added shoes to her people and R, observing A, added shoes too. "I can be friends with boys too" R said, and added

a boy to her picture. I observed children influencing each other's visual strategies through images, as well as adapting an idea and then choosing to make it visible by altering their representation of the idea.



Figure 3: A's 'friends'



Figure 4: 'I can be friends with boys too' by R.

Symbols to represent concepts

Another child, R, drew two friends and explained they were running. He expressed this movement by creating a fast spiral symbol.

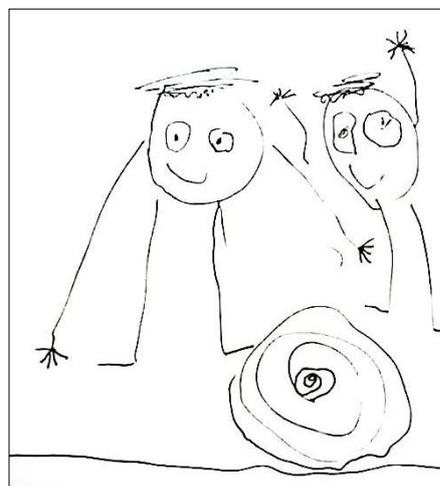


Figure 5: 'My friends are running' by R

Modifying thinking through the process of image making

Another group was making a castle out of blocks and recycled materials. The teacher suggested the boys record their work through drawing "so you can remember how you made it". S and D observed and drew the castle, but D soon realised that something on the castle was not quite right. He climbed a ladder to the top and added a flag. The process of observing and drawing

the castle had allowed him to refine the final design. He returned to his drawing and added a ladder, but explained that he hadn't built that yet. It was evident that representing the building had also allowed D to adapt his thinking and make plans for future building. S's drawing showed great attention to detail, and an ability to observe and translate what he perceived onto paper.



Figure 6: Collaborative castle structure

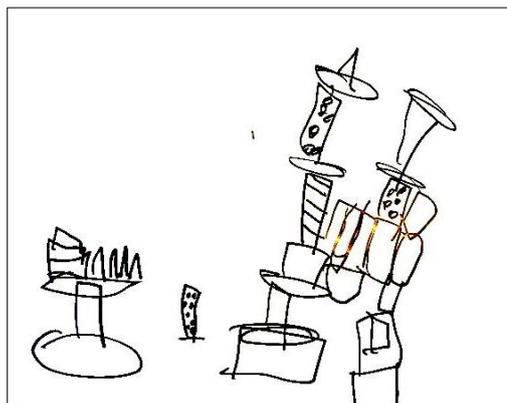


Figure 7: S's castle

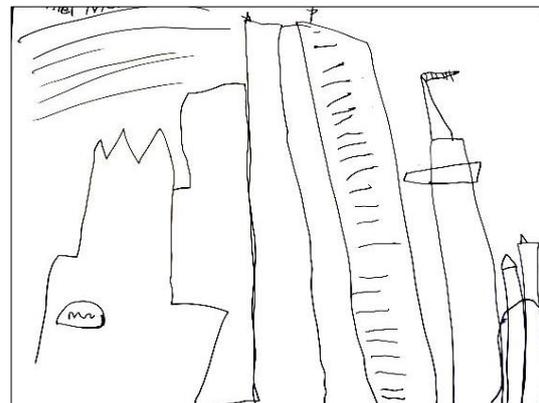


Figure 8: D's castle

2. Observation Two: 2nd April

Making sense of materials and processes through unstructured exploration

During the initial free play period children engaged with a range of media that included scissors and tape, and painting both at the table and freestanding easel. The children who came to this

space demonstrated sound understanding of the processes involved in making a painting. They used the brush provided, returned it to the jar, then decided when they were finished and 'signed' their name before delivering the work to the drying rack.

The teacher as provoker of ideas

During 'spicy work time', two groups continued to explore ideas around friendship and relationships. Lucia introduced the session by encouraging children to reflect on their previous work, highlighting the visual strategies the children had used to represent concepts such as the use of speech bubbles to represent thinking. One child's pictures had several people squeezed onto an A4 page. Lucia proposed working on long sheets of paper so that the children were not limited by having to fit just a few people in. She asked, "I wonder where you would all be in the kindergarten and what you would say to each other?"

Collaborative narratives negotiated through drawing

As the children drew, they began to construct narratives. D drew himself in the playground using soft words and loud words. R and D drew themselves together on the tyre swing. R said "sometimes I get sand in my hair". D responded by drawing sand in her hair. Another child drew himself alone. "I'll come play with you", D said, and drew himself alongside. Later, R drew a bucket by the sandpit. "I am filling it up" she said, colouring it in. "Shhhhhh" she said, making a watery noise.

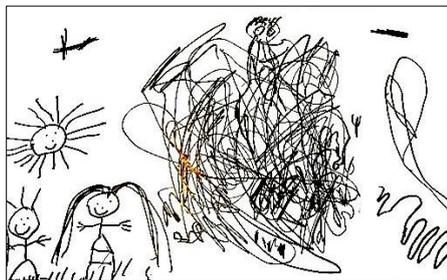


Figure 9: by R, D, C & A



Figure 10: by R, D, C & A

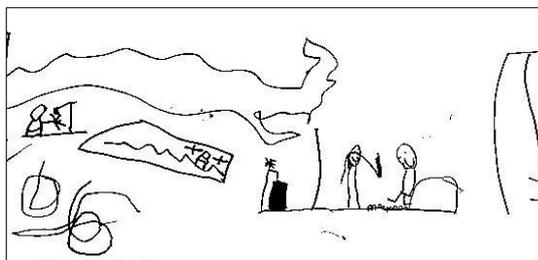


Figure 11: by R, D, C & A

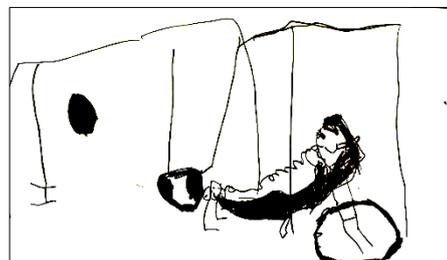


Figure 12: D's soft and loud words

Visual art as an agent for examining diversity

In a separate group Hannah talked about language and ethnicity and how they influenced friendships among the children. She asked them, "Can you notice the difference?" Hannah explained the rationale for provoking the children to think about difference and otherness. At a

professional development day with Harold Gothson²³ he had asked teachers to think about “otherness”. He had challenged them with the question, “How do you as teachers celebrate and encourage an appreciation of diversity amongst children?” Today, the children created pictures of their friends. S said, “Samantha is my friend. She is Indian. Indian friends have long eyelashes and love to see rainbows”. A explained, “Coco is Chinese. She is my friend. She can speak Chinese but I don’t know Chinese. Her skin colour tells me she can speak Chinese”. S. continued to consider just what girls might think about through his drawing (Figure 16).



Figure 13: 'My Indian friend' by S



Figure 14: 'Indian girl' by T



Figure 15: by C

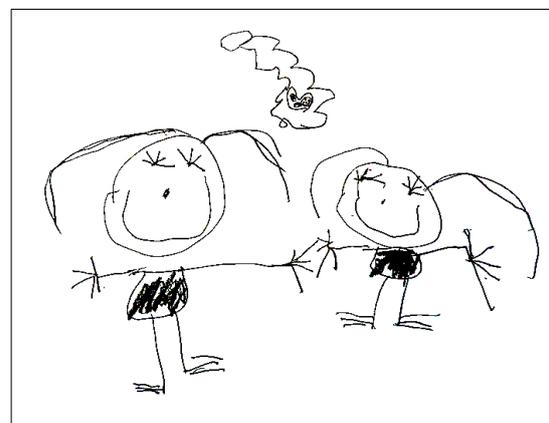


Figure 16: 'Girls think about love hearts too' by S

Constructing understanding through multiple mediums

R continued her work on her 'forward roll'. This was part of an on-going project at the centre where children explored movement and then recorded their movements through the graphic languages. R drew the steps her body moved through as she performed a forward roll. During

²³ Harold Gothson is the head of the Reggio Emilia institute in Sweden.

my second observation, she continued to work on this project using her drawing and photographs as a reference as she translated her ideas into clay.

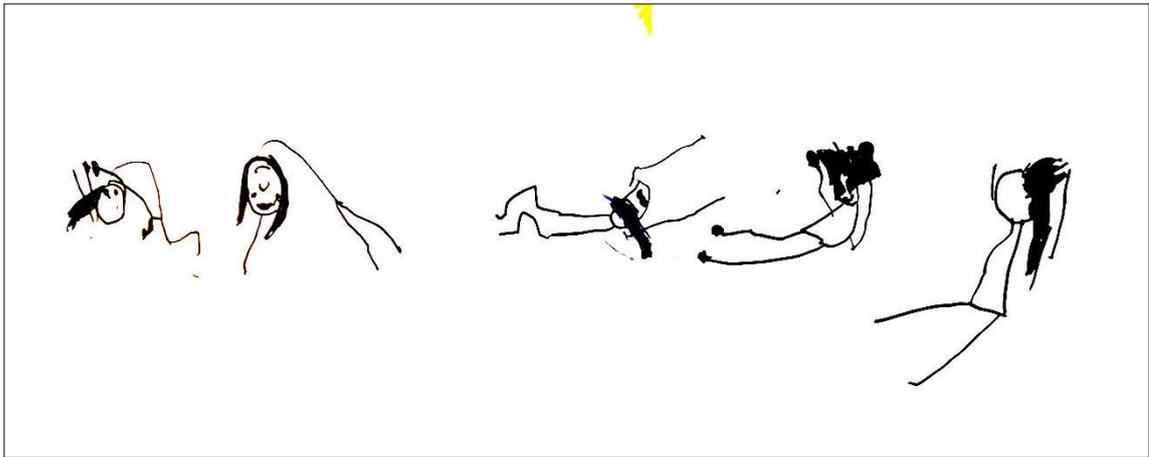


Figure 17: 'Forward roll' by R



Figure 18: R's drawing used as a reference

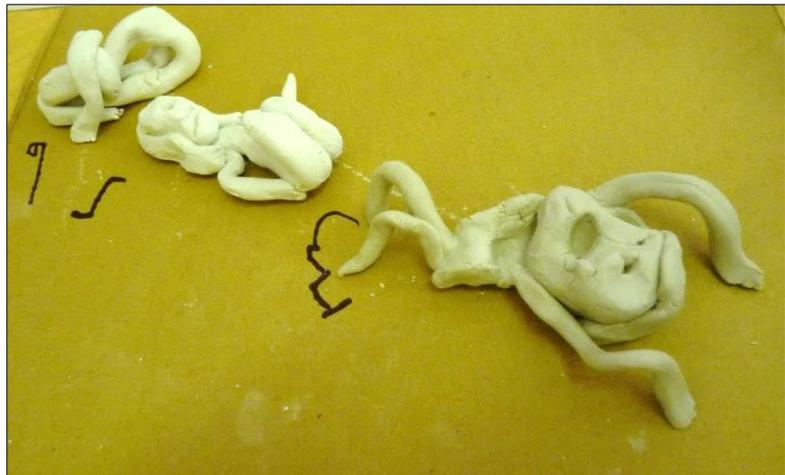


Figure 19: 'Forward roll in clay' by R

3. Observation Three: 9th April

Children began the day, as they had during the first two observations, by choosing to engage with the materials that had been arranged as previously.

Visual art as an agent for examining diversity

During 'Spicy work time' Hannah shared the work the children had done about diversity since my second visit. She had asked the children to represent their friends, but some had chosen to represent friends who were not at the kindergarten that day. She observed that the experience of making art works about friends had brought a sense of harmony to the group, as they engaged in the process of representing and reflecting on their valued relationships.



Figure 20: by S



Figure 21: by H

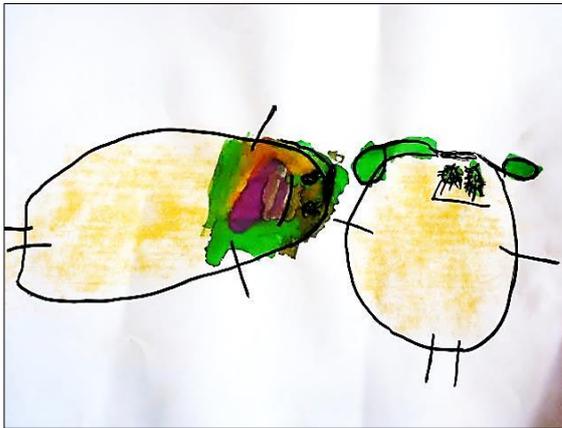


Figure 22: by C



Figure 23: by E

Introducing mediums and teaching techniques

At this observation, Lucia introduced the medium of clay for the children to use as they continued to explore friendships. Lucia suggested the children could create a self-portrait or make a portrait of a friend. Working alongside the children Lucia created a portrait of R role-modelling the process of observing R. She encouraged D to be the model for A, who had chosen to create a portrait of him.

Visual art as a means of communication when language is a barrier

M gestured for me to look at the figure she had created by balancing small pieces of clay on top of each other. I observed that she has created eyelashes, and signalled this by pointing at my own. She nodded and smiled, delighted I had understood. Later, when talking with Lucia, I discovered that M only spoke a little English and that her first language was French.



Figure 24: M's eyelashes?



Figure 25: M's clay figure

4. Observation Four: 16th April

The morning unfolded in a similar pattern to previous observations as children transitioned into 'spicy work'. A small group chose, once again, to work in the visual arts space.

Creating unique symbol systems

Ginger had been working with a group of children who were involved in creating symbols to represent their movements. She began by sharing the previous work the children had created. They were then shown the book, *Dialogue with places* (Vecchi, Filippini, Giudici & Morrow, 2008). She turned to a page that documented children's depictions of movement, saying, "look, just like us". Later, Ginger explained her rationale for this. She wanted to explain to the children the value in this kind of work, by showing them that other children's work had been published in a book. The children continued their work on translating movement into symbol. In Figure 26 G depicted (from top to bottom) hopping, running, and a snails movement. In Figure 27 Q created symbols for a 'roly poly' and 'running around'.

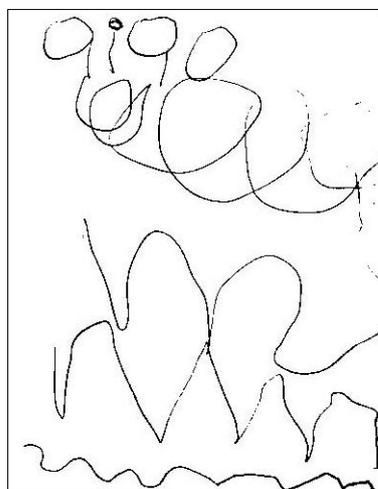


Figure 26: movements by G

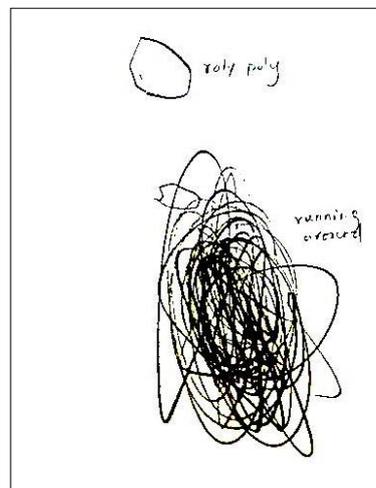


Figure 27: movements by Q

4.3 Participatory reflective art journals – teachers

The second data collection method was via participatory reflective art journals that had been given to the teachers. Five teachers at the centre, who selected the pseudonyms Hannah, Ginger, Lucia, Malin and Cathy, completed their journals using a combination of text and visual images. They had been invited to reflect on factors that shaped their beliefs and values surrounding visual arts and its role in children's learning, as well as their perspectives on the way visual art was used as a tool for learning and their role in facilitating such learning.

Hannah

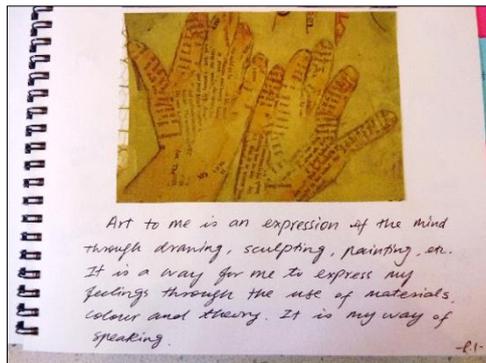


Figure 28

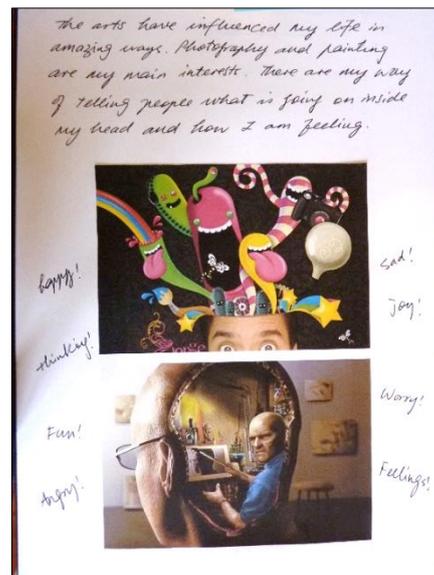


Figure 29

Educational experiences within an Asian cultural context

Hannah was educated for seventeen years in Hong Kong, an educational experience she described as very didactic.

I had to listen to my teachers and did what they asked/said. This one-way teaching made me feel bored and frightened about learning. I did not have enough time to think and did not know how to investigate more deeply the information that I was 'given' and transform that information to something that would make sense of my life. It made me feel I was not capable of learning and I felt too ashamed to ask questions.

It was through art lessons that Hannah experienced at least a small potential in which she could express her creativity, although she still felt very limited as her teacher's approach in Hong Kong was highly directive and there was little room for collaboration or communication with others.

The influence of family

Hannah explained that her family had played an important role in influencing her love for visual images. When she was growing up, her father was passionate about photography, and her brothers both became professional photographers.

Shifting thinking through education

Hannah immigrated to New Zealand and began her 6th form year at an Auckland secondary school where she enrolled in photography. This change of cultural context had a significant influence on her attitudes towards the visual arts as she gained the freedom to explore image making on her own terms.

It was possible to move with my camera and capture with my camera, and to communicate with images. It was a language that did not need any translation because photography can be read in many different languages.

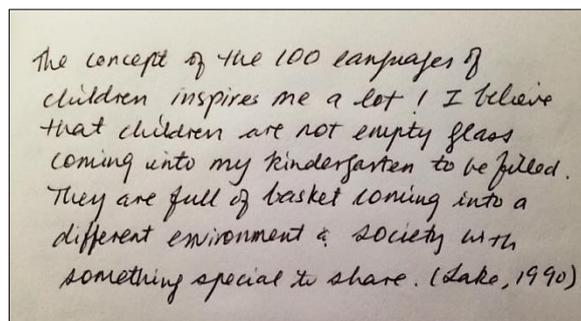
Photography also became a way of seeing. Hannah explained that “Photography also allowed me to see the relationships between people and places in the world”. Education later played another important role when Hannah studied early childhood education at the University of Auckland. Here her thinking was challenged and she reconceptualised her image of the child.

It gave me an opportunity to think about what sort of teaching prepares very young children for life’s challenges and lifelong learning. I believe that learning is most likely to happen when we start with an image of an intelligent child and listen to their thoughts.

Engaging with Reggio Emilia

These ideas were further emphasised by Hannah’s introduction to the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia. She learned about the role of the multiple symbolic languages, particularly visual art as a way to mediate children’s thinking, and to make thinking visible.

I have started to become very interested in art since I knew the principles and philosophy of the Reggio Emilia approach four years ago. Art has become so much more than that. It plays an important role at work. I believe that children can communicate their perspectives of the world through their visual representations.



The concept of the 100 languages of children inspires me a lot! I believe that children are not empty glass coming into my kindersarten to be filled. They are full of basket coming into a different environment & society with something special to share. (Lake, 1990)

Figure 30: Fragment from Hannah’s journal

Becoming an Atelierista

Soon after I completed my data collection, the teaching team made the decision to create an atelier, or art studio, within the centre. Hannah took on the role of atelierista. [This decision is discussed at the conclusion of this chapter in two additional reflections by Hannah and Lucia]. Hannah believed that being an atelierista would provoke further shifts in the way she understood the role of the visual arts as a tool for learning.

Hannah's perspective on the role of visual art in children's learning

Hannah explained that she saw children as confident decision makers and researchers and the visual arts enabled them to demonstrate their knowledge and to share ideas. She believed the process of making visual images allowed children to develop a deeper understanding of the world around them. An example was given of when the children investigated, discussed and represented their ideas about feelings. Hannah believed they understood more about themselves and others:



Figure 31: Fragment from Hannah's journal: "Today my friend Madison is not at kindy. I am thinking of her. I try to make a plan for today when she is not here. I would like to play with R in the sandpit. You know... sunny day and seeing the flowers will make me feel happy too. I want to dress up like a butterfly"

This visibility of ideas was important. It allowed Hannah to know more about who children are and to "understand how they see themselves, the other people, places and things in their world". She also valued the way that the visual arts invite a response from others:

[A]rt is sometimes not about the definitive work that went into each piece, it is about the excitement that comes from people's perception of it and because art has the ability to be interpreted at such a level.

Through engaging in visual art, Hannah believed children develop their sense of identity as well as understanding and valuing others' ideas and identities. She felt that children did this through being allowed time to explore and experiment and to be able to make their own choices.

Hannah's perspectives on her teaching approach when using the visual arts as a tool for learning

Hannah's new role as an atelierista provoked her to think deeply about the role of the teacher when using the visual arts with children. She considered three facets of this role to be: (i) introducing the visual arts as a language; (ii) teaching strategies and beliefs; and (iii) understanding the visual arts as a tool for thinking and learning.

(i) Introducing the visual arts as a language

Hannah believed it was her role to help children acquire skills and appreciate the processes involved in making art, rather than just valuing the finished product. She explained that when introducing clay she encouraged the children to touch it, and showed them how to roll it and put the pieces together with 'glue'.



Figure 32: Fragment from Hannah's journal

Hannah considered it was her responsibility to provide children with opportunities to look at and talk about art. This included exposure to art and craft that was valued by children's cultures and by the surrounding community as a means of teaching children to value diversity and different cultural knowledge.

(ii) Teaching strategies and attitudes

As well as encouraging children to try new experiences, Hannah valued these as a learner alongside the children. She believed her role was not just to teach them the processes involved with working with different media but also to help children think about ideas through visual art, and encourage them to "observe, plan, create, develop skills and reflect upon and evaluate their art works". Hannah considered that it was her role was to scaffold children's thinking throughout these processes. She regarded relationships between children as integral to learning in the visual arts as they co-constructed and negotiated understanding. In her view, the teacher should encourage children to listen to each other's ideas to and collaborate with others.

Hannah appreciated the different ways children interpreted and represented ideas or things. Because she valued the individual perspectives of children she thought it was important to listen carefully to their ideas.

I think teachers need to be competent listeners. We need to take time to watch and listen to our children which helps us understand the ways of learning with materials that the children develop so that we, in turn can support them.

For Hannah, part of practicing a pedagogy of listening was documenting children's work. She said this allowed both teachers and children to reflect on the learning. This was certainly evidenced by the comprehensive documentation she provided in her participatory art journal.



Figure 33: Fragment from Hannah's journal

(iii) Using the visual arts as a tool for thinking and learning.

Having considered her role in teaching children processes with materials and with thinking through ideas with visual arts mediums, Hannah examined her role in using visual art as a tool for thinking. This involved planning experiences that provoked children to inquire and extend on their current knowledge. She also believed her role was to introduce complexity to children. An example was when Hannah introduced a large sheet of paper as a means of encouraging a child to make a record of a tree's shadow.



Figure 34: Fragment from Hannah's journal

Ginger

Educational experiences within an Asian cultural context

Ginger introduced her journal by talking about her Chinese heritage. Her drawing below illustrates the way the Chinese language itself is a series of drawings or hieroglyphics.

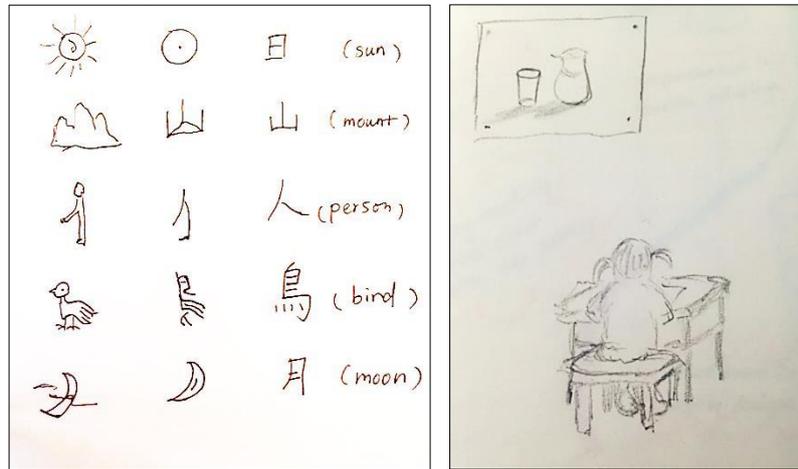


Figure 35: Fragment from Ginger's journal Figure 36: Fragment from Ginger's journal

Ginger went to school in China and as part of her education she attended a visual arts class. At these classes the process of learning about how to create art was through copying art works. In her journal she expressed an interest in photography, reading about art and her experience in textile design. However, she has not gained further experience in painting or drawing.

Shifting thinking through education

It was through her university studies that Ginger began to rethink the role of the arts in children's learning. She recalled 'The story of the triangle tree'.

This was a story told by my professor when I did my teacher training at Auckland University. A mum came to a kindergarten and taught her daughter to draw a Christmas tree. She drew three triangles and a line... It took the kindergarten quite a long time to get rid of this uniformed triangle tree. I remembered this story when the children in our kindergarten were interested in trees. I went out with them and we observed different kinds of trees. Each tree is unique was our finding. Of course then, the trees we drew were all different!

Engaging with Reggio Emilia

Ginger identified her engagement with the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia as the most significant factor in shaping how she now views visual art and its role in children's learning.

Through my experience I think children are able to use visual art as one of the most effective communication tools. Many times I have to say they are better than I in transferring different concepts / senses. For them it is obvious what they want to say – it's up to us (teachers) to understand it.

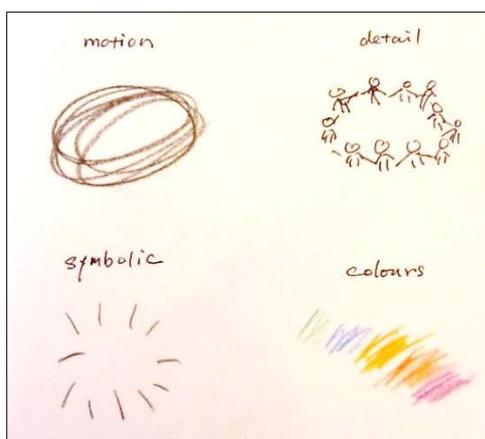


Figure 37: Fragment from Ginger's journal

Ginger's thoughts about the role of visual art in children's learning

Ginger described visual art as a powerful way for children to communicate their understanding of the world. She valued the way visual art allows children to reflect on their thinking, to develop relationships with each other, and to promote the co-construction of knowledge.

Ginger's perspectives on her teaching approach when using the visual arts as a tool for learning

Ginger talked about the importance of encouragement when working with children and the visual arts, but she also believed it was her role to arrange situations where they could extend on their ideas, or to reflect on experiences. On these occasions she would ask children questions and give them opportunities to explore concepts through many mediums (such as their bodies and to use all of their senses). Ginger believed that children needed time in which to develop their own solutions and strategies. She also considered her own role to include three aspects:

(i) A pedagogy of listening

Ginger stressed the importance of trying to understand children's ideas that were expressed through their representations.

Visual art is a valuable way for children to represent their understandings. It requires respectful ears to listen to the young children for the meaning". She explained that the teacher's role is to learn about children's working theories and to be open to children's art-works.

(ii) Co-constructing understanding

Not knowing the answers all the time was also seen as an important component of valuing co-construction of knowledge with children. For instance, the recent project Ginger had been working on, which involved the representation of movement, was an experience where she had no idea what the outcome would be.

It was interesting to see how children visualise the movements. It was also my true curiosity to see how they were to represent running, walking, jumping, hopping... in drawing as I had now idea at all... we spent a long time to think and to try. This was also

a time for us to learn from each other... Children's thoughts are in search of meaning. This is the place where we construct meaning together, where we exchange our theories and strengthen our relationships.

(iii) Encouraging children to listen to each other's ideas and to collaborate with others

As part of the project about movement Ginger gave the example of T's drawing. She considered this boy's drawing to be significant as some of the children used it as a starting point for their own work. She explained, "They accepted some of his symbols and started to make their own ones". This example illustrates the value Ginger placed on helping "children to understand each other and respect each other's points of view".

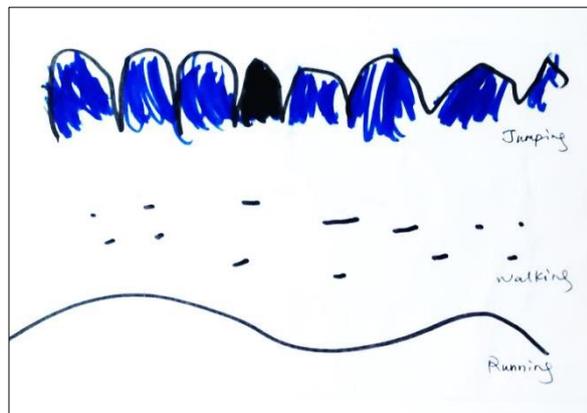


Figure 38: T's drawing of movement

Lucia

A visual processor of information

For Lucia, images were central to how she processed information. As a child she found it easy to recall images, but more difficult to remember information she had heard. As an adult, she had now developed a technique of creating images in her head to "hang information off".

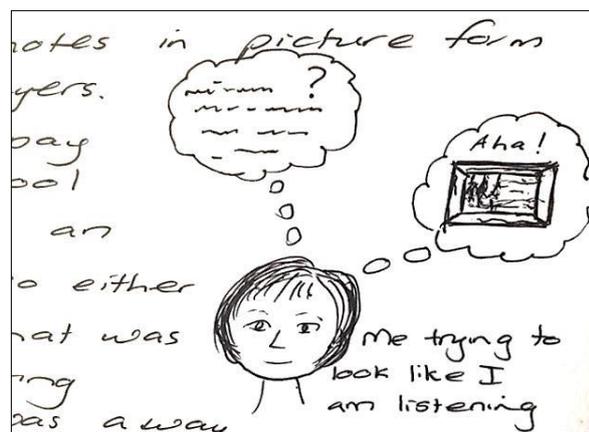


Figure 39: Fragment from Lucia's journal

I don't follow a linear thinking model – so for people who go ABCD... my approach of AZKPL... seems random. I do however address all the letters but it's like being a Jazz pianist who prefers to 'jam' rather than playing strictly to the music.

The influence of family

Lucia explained that her family had been a big influence on the way she valued the visual arts. She said that “My mother always valued my drawing as communicating my ideas and this is the way I see the work I do in our kindergarten”.

Education

Lucia's tertiary education in early childhood occurred during a period when the role of the teacher in the visual arts was still very much a passive one. She explained that she was taught to set up art 'activities' and that the role of the teacher was to observe and admire. She said, “Because I see visual representation as a communicative tool, I found this dissatisfying”. The kind of art activities suggested were experiences like “string painting and marble rolling”.

I failed to see any communicative value in it – and saw it as craft that was produced mainly to satisfy parent expectations. Lecturers talked about valuing the process of these art experiences – but I couldn't connect to the underlying processes of rolling marbles around in paint as having any significant learning value.

Exposure to other pedagogical ideas confirmed and strengthened Lucia's belief that the arts were also a cognitive act. An example she gave was the writing of Lisa Terreni, who explains children's representations as 'first order symbols'. This helped Lucia understand that these symbols require the same cognitive processing as 'second order symbols that are used in reading and writing. She used an example by L of a representation of a dance choreography to explain this idea further:

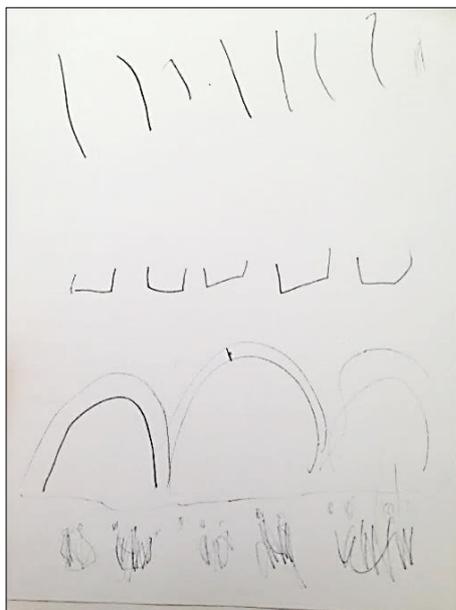


Figure 40: Dance choreography by L

This seems to bring Lisa Terreni's ideas about first order and second order symbols. If L can use these symbols as a way to communicate a dance – what a fabulous first step into the more formal literacy of school.

Engaging with Reggio Emilia

It was later in her teaching career that Lucia was introduced to the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia. She began to read about their work and the role that the arts played within children's learning.

Lucia's perspective on the role of visual art in children's learning.

Lucia created an image to express what the visual arts offered in terms of thinking and learning. She also offered the art work by A to explain how children had developed an understanding of metacognition through visual art. In her drawing, A represented the idea that she is often thinking about more than one thing, and that her thoughts can be connected to each other.

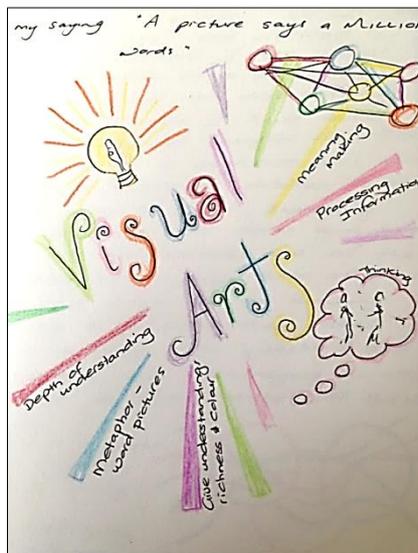


Figure 41: Fragment from Lucia's journal



Figure 42: by A

Lucia's perspectives on her teaching approach when using the visual arts as a tool for learning.

Lucia explained that as a teaching team they have come to value the arts as a way to provoke thinking, explore ideas and to "dig deeper". She also considered her own role to include particular aspects.

(i) Provoking thinking

Lucia believed that one of her roles was to provoke children to develop their thinking over time. She explained that this role "becomes of the 'memory' – reminding them of their previous work and the thinking behind it, bouncing their ideas back to them with questions and challenges, and encouraging the other children to also engage with these ideas".

More and more I have found satisfaction and benefit from seeing the arts as a cognitive tool, where teachers encourage children to draw as a way of both expressing and processing their ideas and theories.

Lucia used an example by A to illustrate her approach:

When A worked on his Gruffalo drawings he struggled to represent the purple prickles on its back – until he worked out that he could turn his work over and draw on ‘the back.



Figure 43: A's Gruffalo

(ii) Offering the materials and skills required for “creative reworking”

Lucia introduced a quote by Vygotsky she valued: “A child’s play is not simply a reproduction of what he has experienced, but a creative reworking of the impressions he has acquired”. Based on this idea, Lucia saw her role as offering the tools required for ‘creative reworking’ and to encourage children to translate or ‘rework ideas through several different mediums.

Offering many different ways for children to represent their ideas has allowed us to see how each new step – or each translation through different languages allows children to deepen their understandings.



Figure 44: Fragment from Lucia's journal

(iii) A pedagogy of listening

Lucia talked about the value of listening as a means of trying to understand what children are trying to communicate through their art. She gave an example of A's troll drawings.

A's drawings of the troll - always with a friend – because if he had a friend he wouldn't be grumpy anymore and he would let the billy goats gruff cross the bridge. This type of drawing gave us the insight into his behaviour and how important it was for him to have a friend. He understood himself, and through this drawing we were able to understand.



Figure 45: A's drawing of a troll

Malin

Malin's journal began with a summary of her understanding of the different theoretical approaches to the teacher's role in the arts. She aligned herself with a social constructivist multicultural approach within an integrated curriculum:

When teachers understand the value of the visual art and visual culture...that they are important in a child's life...we can provide every child with culturally and socially relevant experiences in the visual arts (Greenwood and Wilson, 2006).

Malin did not explicitly state what experiences or influences had shaped her visual arts pedagogy, but her diary was peppered with reference's to a wide range of literature expressing a value for continuous learning and theoretical knowledge as a basis for developing her thinking.

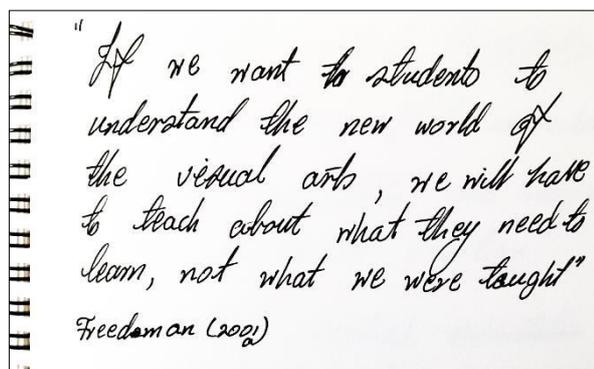


Figure 46: Fragment from Malin's journal

The inclusion of the quote above suggested that Malin may have experienced conversely different visual arts experiences within her own education.

Malin’s perspectives on the role of visual art in children’s learning.

Malin believed that children use visual art to express their understanding and to make their thinking visible. She also thought that the process of representing ideas allowed children to think through and develop their ideas further. To illustrate this concept she gave the example below of D’s process of working out what his heart did when he ran. D had explained to her that “when you run your heart beats fast, and your hair goes up”. In a later drawing D developed a new theory. He now thought that when he ran his heart got larger, and when he slept it got smaller and slower.

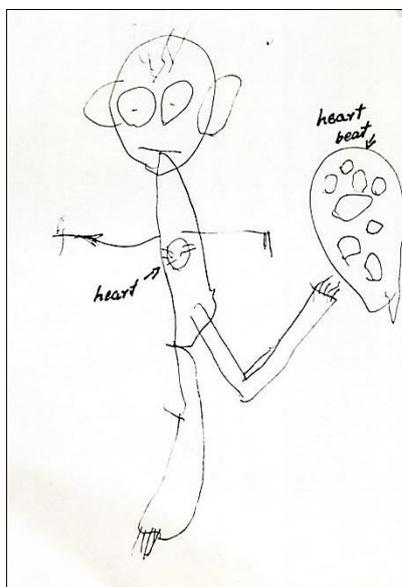


Figure 47: D's drawing of running

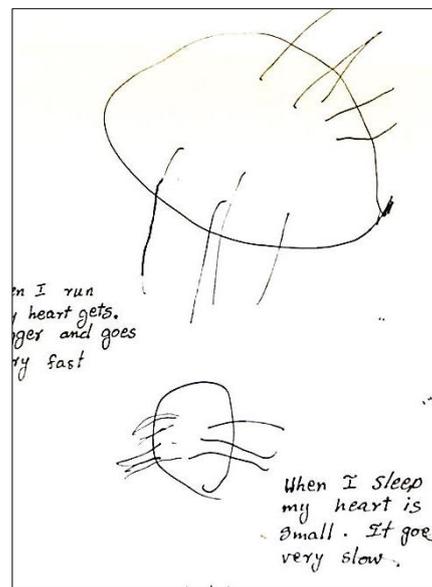


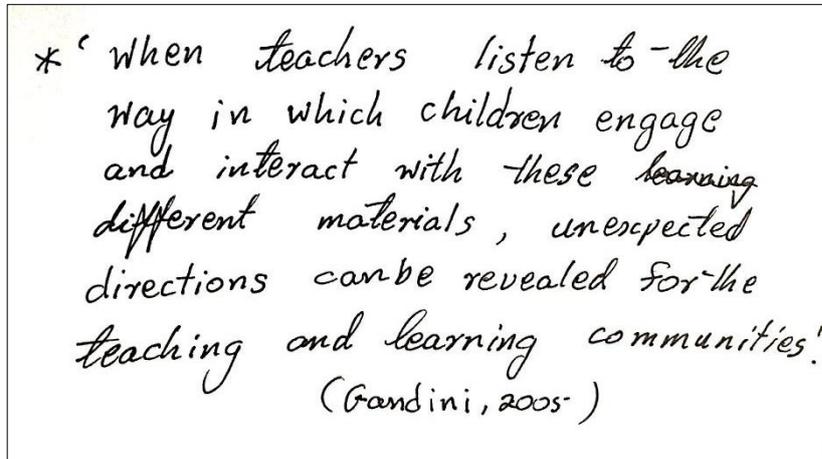
Figure 48: D's drawing of a heart

Malin’s perspectives on her teaching approach when using the visual arts as a tool for learning.

Malin considered that the visual arts should be taught contextually, not as an isolated subject. She thought that children should be encouraged to explore their ideas through the visual arts through this process and they should be encouraged to translate their ideas into multiple mediums in order to solidify and deepen their understanding. In order to do this, however, she explained that children required time to revisit mediums many times in order to develop skills and techniques with a particular media. She gave an example of when children were representing dancing through the medium of clay.

When children continued their art works, their ability to represent the complexity and detail of their figures and features increased.

Malin expressed the importance of relationships within children's visual arts experiences, explaining that the teacher should encourage children's work, but also encourage children to work together. Malin referenced Gandini (2005) as she considered the importance of listening carefully to children's ideas.



* 'when teachers listen to -the way in which children engage and interact with these learning different materials, unexpected directions can be revealed for the teaching and learning communities.'
(Gandini, 2005)

Figure 49: Fragment from Malin's journal

Cathy

Cathy recalled creating 'Chinese paintings' as a child using black ink and a paintbrush. She expressed regret that she had not continued to paint as she grew up:

[A]s it comes to arts in general, I am not really an enthusiast nor did I have many experiences in this subject, in particular visual arts. Through this journal, however, I started to have an interest to know more and read more about it.

She gave an example of how she was thinking about the visual arts and their role in children's learning by recalling a recent interaction with a child who was painting a picture of the rain, the clouds and a fish.

During the time I was with I, when she did the painting, I intently applied the guidelines extracted from my recent readings. Among them was: one of the teacher's roles and responsibilities in promoting creative expression is to "encourage rather than praise". Accordingly, to show my interest in her work, I asked the child questions such as: "What are you trying to paint?" rather than make a comment like: "Oh, what a beautiful picture!" The latter might encourage the child to try to please the adults... it is better to show genuine, personal interest rather than to overdo it with generalised praise.

Cathy's perspective on the role of visual art in children's learning

Cathy explained her belief that the visual arts "assist children to develop and extend their skills/ideas through multiple learning processes". She thought visual art enabled children to communicate ideas.

[C]hildren's sense of belonging can be reinforced through participating in activities of arts related to their own community and other cultures.

She also valued both individual and collaborative encounters in the visual arts. She thought that children had a desire to make their working theories visible.

Cathy's perspectives on her teaching approach when using the visual arts as a tool for learning.

Cathy thought that creating an engaging learning environment was significant. She expressed a desire to develop her capability to facilitate visual arts experiences in particular ways.

I want to improve my role as a responsible facilitator for children's learning and growth, to improve my knowledge about visual arts is necessary... I am keen to encourage children to set their own tasks and goals. Naturally, they should be encouraged to participate in shaping their own directions, engaging in the arts, exploring and creating, and learning to master artistic media may help this cause.

(i) Valuing children's knowledge

Through the story of T's angels, below, Cathy expressed her regard for reciprocal learning relationships. In this narrative, T became the teacher as Cathy sought to understand his working theory that everyone had an angel with them. Cathy asked for his assistance in drawing her own angel and T guided her through this process.

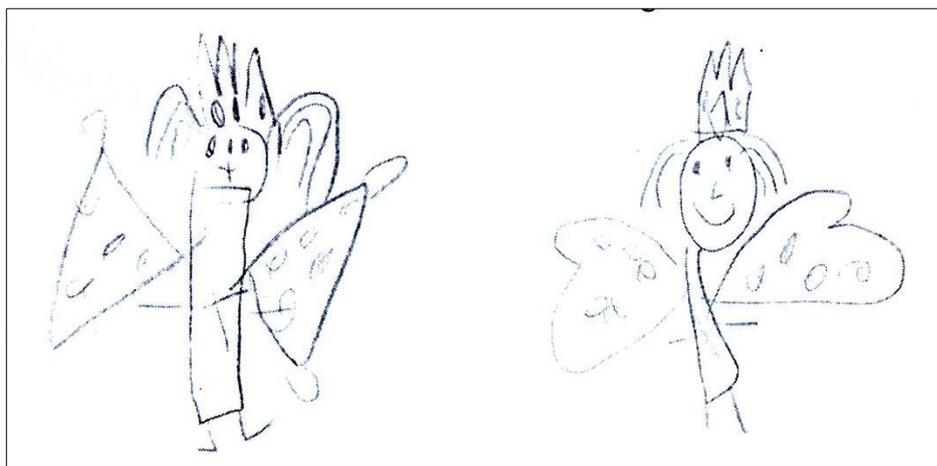


Figure 50: Fragment from Cathy's journal – T's angel (left) C's angel (right)

Cathy reflected on the significance of this experience.

Knowledge, skills, and attitudes are closely related. These aspects combine together to form children's "working theories" and help them to develop dispositions that encourage learning. T develops a working theory through observing, listening, doing, participating,

discussion and representing within the topics and activities provided within the programme.

(ii) Valuing children’s working theories

Cathy saw children’s working theories as an integral part of how children made sense of their world, and thought if children were encouraged to develop their own theories they would develop positive dispositions for learning. She believed that imagination and the visual arts were important parts of this process as children made their own thinking visible.

4.4 Interviews with children with a selection of art works

The short unstructured interviews with each of four children began with an explanation of my interest in children’s visual art and my desire to know more about their perspectives regarding their visual art making and products.

Ryleigh – “I have been doing art for lots and lots of years”



Figure 51: Interview with Ryleigh

Ryleigh, aged four, began by explaining that she was an experienced visual artist. She said “I have been doing art for lots and lots of years at this kindy”. She also said she enjoyed making pictures at home with her sister. We first discussed her representation of her forward roll (see Figures 17-19). I asked her what had motivated her to draw this in the first place. “Cause the teachers told me to” she said, but later added:

I did it cause I liked too... I just like too...it’s my favourite thing. I’m going to do some more drawing after this. I am going to draw a rainbow, and I’ll draw clouds because rainbows have clouds.

On observing her clay forward rolls, Ryleigh was then motivated to see if she could translate her clay figures back into movement. Her representations had provoked her to reflect on the movement itself.



Figure 52: Ryleigh talks about her clay works

Daniel - “My drawings are all about me”



Figure 53: Interview with Daniel

Daniel, aged four, began by responding to some of his previous art works. “This one’s all about superheroes” he told me:

That’s the ice cold breath. It makes everyone freeze into ice cubes. This is his laser eyes that are super-hot that can break through anything...



Figure 54: Daniel's superhero

He explained, "this one (below) is a cat, I did this today". I asked him what had motivated him to make it. "The teacher asked me to" he said and added "the cat has whiskers on his ears"

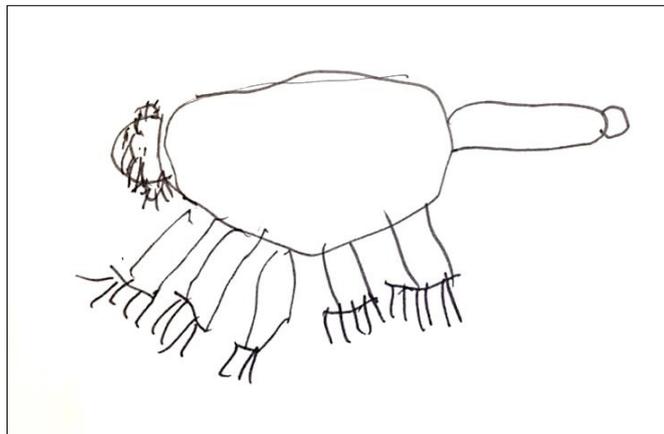


Figure 55: Gingernut the cat by Daniel

Referring to another representation he explained "that's my friends, that's the talking (pointing to the black lines between the faces), it's English". I asked Daniel what he liked about making pictures. He wasn't too sure, but said "my drawings are all about me, there's a lot more in my book" (referring to his portfolio). Daniel went back to the classroom to collect this and together we turned the pages. He pointed out the first painting he had ever made at kindergarten and some of his other drawings. One was about rocket ships, another one where he was "standing", and the most recent, a painting of an autumn tree.

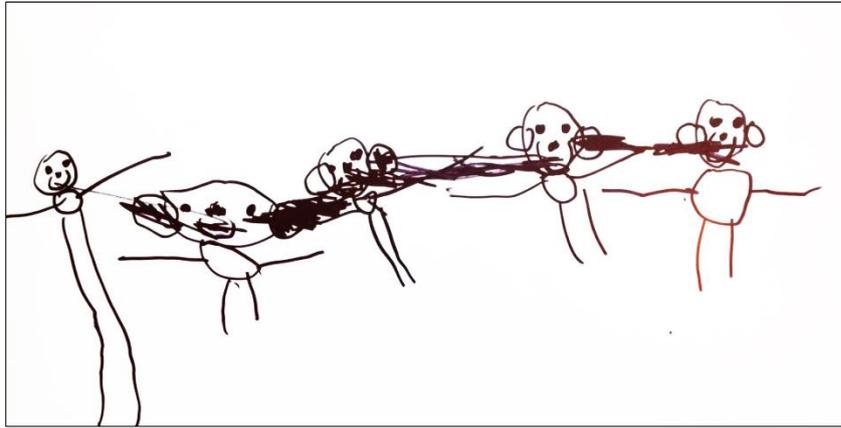


Figure 56: Friends talking in English by Daniel

Hannah - "I like to draw and paint my friends"



Figure 57: Interview with Hannah

Hannah chose to bring her mother, who is a teacher at the kindergarten to her interview. The first picture she chose to talk about was one she had made recently of 'Gingernut', the new cat at the kindergarten.

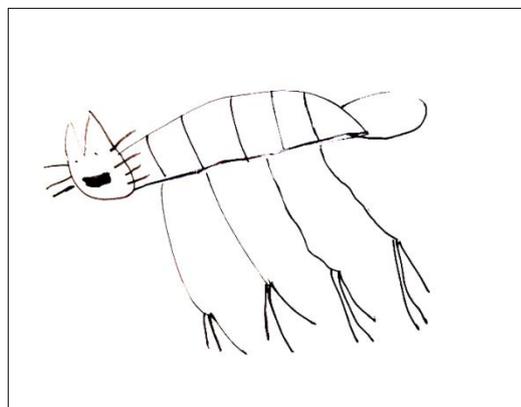


Figure 58: Gingernut by Hannah

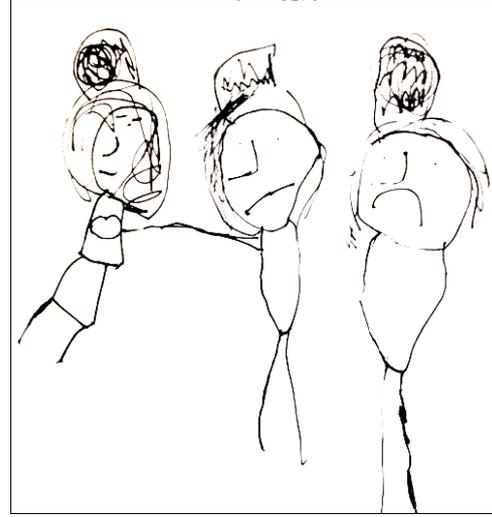


Figure 59: Hannah and her friends on the tyre swing Figure 60: Feeling angry with Mum and Dad

Referring to the drawing, she articulated details she deemed important, referring to Gingernut's sharp claws, and that he had the ability to have a bath by licking himself. Hannah recognised her drawing of herself and her friends on the tyre swing (Figure 59). She explained that another drawing (Figure 60) was of her parents, on a day when she had been angry with them. Later, when I asked her why she liked making art, she replied "I don't know... I like to draw and paint with my friends".

Lucia - "I like to make a frame, then it makes a picture"



Figure 61: Interview with Lucia

Lucia began by sharing the cat picture she had made that day. She too, was motivated to tell

me details about the cat, once she had revisited her drawing.

We have a cat at kindy and I drew it. He had really sharp claws and he has whiskers. They are the same size as the body so if they can fit through then the body can fit through. I forgot to draw the ears though.

I asked Lucia what the little circle on the cat was about. "That's where the cat got bitten by another cat" she explained.

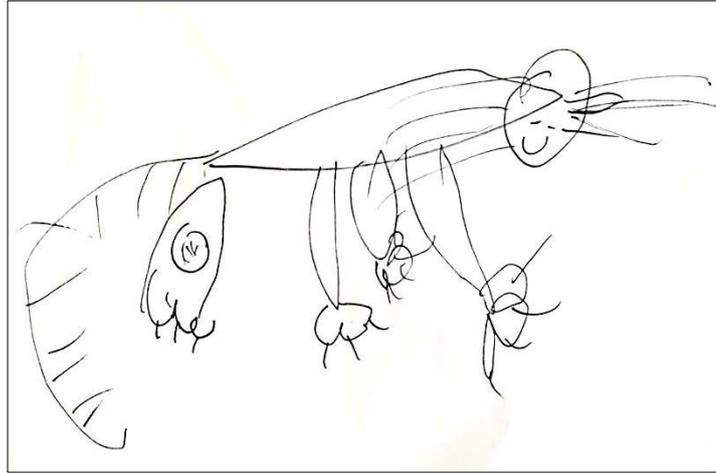


Figure 62: 'Gingernut' by Lucia

Lucia said she liked to draw and then paint over her drawings, but she preferred painting. She said "I like to make a frame, then it makes a picture". Lucia went and found another picture she had created that day. She explained it was a tree man having an idea about how to keep his ears warm. She noted his glasses and springy bottom and found this image very humorous. Through her painting she had been able to play with imaginative ideas, and to then share this with others through the visibility visual art offered her.



Figure 63: 'Tree man' by Lucia

4.5 Focus group interview with all the teachers

All the teachers took part in this focus group interview and went by the pseudonyms Hannah, Ginger, Lucia, Malin and Cathy, and Rebecca. The interview was semi-structured. Although there were some informal questions asked my aim was to allow the teachers the space to lead this discussion. We began with a conversation about how the teachers had approached the task of creating their participatory art journals. The discussion fell naturally into them sharing memories of their earliest visual arts experiences.

Significant early life experiences that shaped initial attitudes about the visual arts

Five of the six teachers had come from diverse cultural contexts and had all been taught about visual art with a reproductive approach (Wright, 2003). They shared stories of learning about visual art through copying pictures, with Ginger saying “it was not about creativity at all, it was all about making the same thing”. Cathy shared a similar experience but she also expressed the impact of criticism she received from a teacher. This had a significant effect on her confidence: “My art teacher was not very happy with me, and so I lost my interest”. Hannah had attended visual art classes while living in Hong Kong. These classes were very didactic, but they left a tiny space for creativity, in contrast to all her other classes. I wondered how these childhood experiences had impacted on the teachers’ current beliefs regarding visual arts education. Hannah explained:

I am not a competent and confident learner because of my own experiences. I don’t want children to feel that.

Hannah had completed her sixth form year at a secondary school in Auckland, and it was here that she began to develop a relationship with the visual, through the medium of photography. She shared her families love for photography and film making, and how these role models within her home context had allowed her to develop a strong love of visual art. Cathy relayed the story of her sister who went to art school and studied Chinese painting. Like Hannah, it was through the influence of a family member that she became interested in painting. However, she lamented that this was not a pursuit that she had continued into adulthood.

Only the head teacher, Lucia, had been educated as a young child in New Zealand. She described herself as a visual thinker, and how she understood how important images were for her as a means to process and remember information. This had helped her to realise how significant the visual is for children. She recalled that as a child she would draw images for her bedroom door that she would use to communicate to her family how she was feeling. For Lucia, art had always been about expressing something rather than making a nice picture. She felt that part of this could have been due to her Mother, who would often challenge her thinking and ask questions about her visual art. She thought that perhaps this had influenced her current teaching philosophy.

Shifting thinking – Factors that enabled reconceptualization of visual arts pedagogies

Lucia shared her memory of when she had first started working at the kindergarten. At that time there was an activity-based programme in place, for which the teachers would set up activities like string painting and cotton roll printing. This productive approach to visual arts education meant that teachers were not supposed to engage with children when working with art materials (Wright, 2003). Lucia explained that it was when she first became supervisor that she was able to impact some change:

The first thing I did was put out painting materials and left them. The parents would ask “don’t you think you should change it so the children can learn more about art”. I couldn’t see what that had to do about art. I found it quite soul destroying because there was no space for creativity. You would watch children paint a single stroke at the easel and then that was it, they were done. I felt it was because we didn’t ever sit, we weren’t supposed to ask “tell me about what you are doing there, or what are you thinking?”... they were meant to be left free to express.

Ginger and Hannah both described their early childhood studies at university which had provoked their first shifts in thinking. Ginger recalled looking at a fellow student’s folder that was covered in her child’s art work and thinking to herself “they are just scribbles”. She recalled the story of the triangle tree (as told within Gingers participant journal – p. 43), and recalled how this story had been fundamental in shifting her thinking about the importance of encouraging children to share their perspectives about what they experienced of the world through visual art. She said, “I realise now that children’s ideas are valuable and they can do things for themselves”. Hannah explained how her university education had allowed her to examine and develop her teaching philosophy and also to consider how she, as a teacher, could help children become lifelong learners.

Engaging with Reggio Emilia

The pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia were unanimously acknowledged as highly significant in changing the teacher’s perspectives on how visual art could be used within children’s learning. They talked about how learning about Reggio Emilia did not provide them with a recipe for practice, but rather disrupted their thinking and challenged them to reconsider what it was that children were capable of doing and thinking. Lucia’s trip to Reggio Emilia, in Italy, had been significant for the teaching team. Hannah said:

When Lucia came back from Reggio, after that I understood more about how children can do it and art could be part of my work, not just my life.

Lucia talked about how engaging with Reggio Emilia had altered her understanding of the role of the visual arts within children’s thinking and learning. She explained how, even though she had

always enjoyed children's art making, she didn't take children's ideas seriously until she saw the work the educators of Reggio Emilia were doing. She said:

It was quite a confronting thing. When I went to the International Network meeting and I worked with an atelierista I came back and we changed again, and we began to encourage children to translate their thinking through multiple media. That was another big leap for us... that every time you expressed yourself in a different medium, your theories about things were evolving.

Rebecca explained that she now understood visual art, not as a separate thing, but as part of life. The teachers all agreed that the most important aspect of engaging in these pedagogical ideas was how these had allowed them to reconceptualise their images of childhood, as well as their understanding of the role of the teacher.

Professional development

Further professional development opportunities that allowed teachers to gain additional content knowledge or to reflect on their own beliefs were also revealed. Hannah said:

Professional development helped to change how I see children, it helped me to examine my past and choose the good things.

Lucia made reference to a professional development day with Harold Gothson that the teachers had attended. She recalled how he had asked if children played with the same children every day doing the same thing, and whether it really was free play? Gothson had challenged them to consider their role as opening possibilities to children that they may not have thought of. This was a provocation they had discussed and pondered over ever since.

A significant success - The first project that used the visual arts as a tool for inquiry

The teachers recalled the first long-term project where children had used the visual arts as a research tool. This was a very significant event for all of the teachers and had occurred soon after Lucia arrived back from Reggio the first time. This factor, combined with the first successful project, was a catalytic moment in the centre's journey in using visual art as a tool for learning. Lucia explained:

It was going to Reggio Emilia and learning something and coming back, getting excited as a team and having that project be so successful. It was a really powerful motivating force.

The project had centred around the children's perceptions of the city and of the sky tower. Lucia explained:

We wanted to know what their thoughts were before we went to the sky tower, so we had a term drawing their city and the sky tower. And then after they had been, we saw

how it had changed. I think that was the first time we thought, “Wow... we were blown away by what we could see in what they drew”. That was a really steep learning curve for us as a whole team.

The teachers agreed that one of the reasons this project was so successful was that they were all at a point where they wanted to make a change. They needed a new challenge and they wanted to dig deeper in their practices. Malin explained that “all the children were suddenly drawing and we could see the collaboration”. The success of this project served to motivate a long-term shift in the way the teachers used the visual arts, and this has informed their practices ever since. Now, within the kindergarten, everything in it is integrated. Malin explained:

Before... thinking we did, building we did, drawing we did, but there was no connection between them, and now everything is always connected.

Leadership and collaborative pedagogical discussions

Throughout the interview, multiple references were made by all of the teachers about sharing their thinking with each other. Lucia had visited Reggio Emilia on two occasions, and on each one fundamental shifts had occurred within the pedagogies of all of the teachers. The others explained that this was because of the way Lucia shared her learning and experience so generously. The teachers said they talk all of the time, sharing the work they had done and wondering, discussing and hypothesising.

The process of being involved in the research project itself

The process of making their participant art journals had provoked the teachers to think deeply about the role of visual art in their work and the impact of what they did, as teachers. They had all approached the journals in different ways. Both Cathy and Malin had turned to literature in order to deepen their understanding. Others, such as Lucia and Ginger, created images alongside their written reflections as a means to explore their ideas, and Hannah had used found images in order to express herself.

Ginger said that the research process had reinforced her belief that visual art is a way for children to communicate, and she had changed the way she saw them. All of the teachers agreed that the process of being involved in this project had allowed them to focus on their practices in this one specific area. Lucia said:

We have been able to see ourselves through your eyes which is a gift, because when you work in a place with other people you don't always see what you do as anything productive. So you have given us a glimpse of seeing from a new perspective and that has been a really powerful thing.

At the end of the data collection period the teaching team had decided to create a specific art studio, or atelier, within the kindergarten and Hannah became the atelierista. Lucia explained

how this decision had been made, based on the discussions with Harold Gothson, and engaging in the research. She said:

That and the stuff with you has empowered us to think about the studio not as constraining children to do something, but as opening up possibilities for them to express their ideas and work deeply on something, rather than just flit through doing the easy thing. We are encouraging them to make some harder choices and to engage in a way that they perhaps have not done before.

How children use visual art as a tool for learning within this setting

Lucia recalled the recent work the children had been doing on representing movement. This had reminded her of the significance of children learning first order representation. Terreni (2005) explains that often children's cognitive abilities are measured in terms of their ability to use 'second order' representations, such as reading and writing, but argues first order representations, which include the visual arts, also requires "cognitive processing" (Jalongo & Stamp, 1997, p.7). Lucia felt developing an understanding of first order representation was particularly important given the exposure children have to images, and she believed children need to be equipped to make sense of them.

The teachers saw visual art as a way for children to make their thinking visible, and then to share their ideas with others. They agreed that this was a process the children enjoyed, because the kindergarten had developed a culture in which the sharing of ideas was valued by the centre community. Hannah said "they can open their minds if they can listen to each other". A valuable part of this practice was the way children would sometimes adapt or change their working theories, through the process of feeding off each other's ideas. The teachers felt that this also enabled the children to build relationships with each other, and sometimes through art making, they would find out that they had shared experiences.

Children's visual art did not just allow children to share their thinking with each other but also enabled the teachers to understand more about the children's perspectives. Lucia said "it gives us a glimpse into what they are thinking about". But she did not think this was an easy process. She explained, "We ponder over children's drawings a lot". She told a story that illustrated this idea within a project where children were exploring their city.

Thinking back to that city project, remember how R drew all of those loops and we struggled and struggled to figure out what the loops were and how they were related to the city. It wasn't until we saw her getting into the car that we actually realised that when she went into the city she couldn't see outside the window because she was too little. For her, the city was a series of loops going around and around in the car. It was those kinds of things where we got to see what they were thinking even if they couldn't express it in words.

Lucia explained that making art in a social context allowed children to relax, and to share their thinking whilst their brain was engaged. She likened this to the experience of sitting and having

a meal with someone. Malin agreed, saying “we can see their thinking and this helps us to have that discussion”. They also offered the view that visual art was something tangible, and so therefore it forced them as teachers to stop and engage with the child. Lucia explained “it is a way of focusing our attention”. The tangibility of visual art also allowed the teachers to reflect on children’s thinking, so that they could then encourage them to dig deeper, and to challenge their thinking further.

Approaches to teaching visual art – growing a culture of inquiry

The way that visual art promoted collaboration was valued by all of the teachers, but they agreed that this was something they intentionally taught the children. As a teaching team they wanted the children to appreciate the collegiality created by group projects and the discussions that transpired. Within this, visual art played a key role, as it made children’s ideas visible and allowed them to learn to value the different perspectives of others. Lucia explained, “They see us get excited and so they draw more. It feeds itself”. The teachers believed that through learning how to make ideas visible, children developed confidence and wanted to share their learning with others. Within this community drawing had become a language.

The teachers also highlighted the importance of collaboration amongst each other. They constantly talked about their work together, but also noted that they observed each other’s work with children, made suggestions and this fed their practice respectively.

4.6 Additional reflections on the Art Studio.

Due to the significant change made in the decision to create a visual art studio at the completion of the data collection period, I asked the head teacher, Lucia, if she would contribute her thoughts on this change. Both she and Hannah, the teacher who had been appointed as responsible for the studio, chose to share their thoughts.

Hannah

Hannah explained that through the process of creating a studio she could see children making their thinking visible, using visual art to plan and tell their stories to each other. She could see the children collaborating through the process of making and sharing visual art:

I could sense the children’s excitement in working together generating and expanding ideas and building on each other’s discussions and explanations. Through exploring a topic in different ways and from different perspectives, children expanded their understanding and deepened their relationships with each other.

Hannah also noticed that children were using a greater range of materials and were developing “languages” with these materials as they expanded on their skills and realised they could represent an idea and develop it further through the use of multiple media.

They learned to refer to the alphabet of one material that they had used and gained the ability to transfer it to another material.

Hannah explained how she was developing her own practices within this space also:

I also began to develop my knowledge and strategies to understand how to recognise the relationship and exchange between children and materials.

Lucia

Lucia described how the research process itself had provoked the teaching team to consider the role of the visual arts more carefully and to celebrate and value the work they were doing with the children:

I knew that we had begun to listen very deeply to children's ideas, expressed both verbally and through the work they were doing – this has been a growing part of the way we work since we began on this journey using some of the approaches I learned about in Reggio Emilia.

She explained that some of the organisational arrangements within the kindergarten were beginning to challenge this work. Over a period of weeks the teachers talked and decided to create a studio space within the centre. At the beginning of next term, following the research project, the space was ready for children. Lucia wrote about the children's response:

What we have seen has amazed us – usually the first week or so of the term is a period where we tease out ideas that might engage the wider group and then the teachers begin to talk about how we might respond. This term there has been an 'explosion' of ideas, and Hannah has captured it right from the first day – interests in the cat, leaves and building have 'grabbed us all by the throat' and propelled us into the most exciting learning adventure ever! We see the children working with such concentration and focus, with passion and joy, with an intensity that we have not really seen before.

4.7 Summary

The findings have revealed that within this setting, children have used the visual arts as an integrated part of their learning and investigations. Children used visual art to make their ideas visible to others. These visual representations were consistently used by teachers as a reminder of sorts, when children returned to their work the next day. Visual art was used to think through ideas, and through this process children were able to develop their ideas further. Knowledge was solidified through representation, and deepened through translating ideas through a variety of mediums. Children were encouraged to explore abstract concepts, such as creating their own symbol systems of movement. Visual art was used as a means to support shared narratives and to facilitate the exchange of ideas and theories amongst the children.

The teacher's roles were revealed as intrinsically intertwined with the ways in which the children engaged in the visual arts. They shared the complex journeys that they had travelled, both individually and as an educational community, as they developed pedagogies that valued and used the visual arts as a tool for learning. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the role of the teacher when supporting the visual arts within a sociocultural paradigm is complex and is

continuously renegotiated. This occurred as teachers reflected on their own pasts and practices, engaged in collaborative pedagogical discussions, and deepened their understandings as they attended relevant professional development sessions and engaged with the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia. Most fundamentally, they developed their ideas based on their work with children. The findings that were produced through the use of four data collection methods will be evaluated critically in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 EVALUATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This research was provoked by my aspiration, as a tertiary early childhood educator, to document a 'case' where the visual arts were used as an integrated part of children's learning. Although some early childhood teachers have developed rich visual arts pedagogies that are underpinned by sociocultural theory, in many cases their approaches are still informed by modernist developmental perspectives and, in others, by highly teacher-directed methods. It was my rationale, supported by the literature (Richards & Terreni, 2013), that further examples of how children and teachers engage with the visual arts within their learning, as well as evidence of how teachers have reconceptualised their pedagogical beliefs in order to value the visual arts as a tool for learning, would be of benefit to the early childhood sector in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Due to the increasing interest of New Zealand early childhood educators in the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia, and the esteemed role the visual arts play within this approach, a centre that had been influenced by these ideas was selected as the 'case' for this research. Throughout the research process, it became apparent that a multifaceted range of influences had informed and shaped the six teachers' pedagogical beliefs in the visual arts. This brought to life McArdle's (2003) metaphor of the palimpsest, which she uses to explain the complex layering of influences that inform visual arts pedagogies in early childhood education. This thread has woven its way through this dissertation. This chapter examines the layers of the palimpsest in order to make clearer the journey one educational community has travelled on in order to develop their visual arts practices. It includes an evaluation of the way in which the teachers and children used the visual arts as an integrated part of their daily inquiries.

5.2 Factors that had shaped teachers approaches to using the visual arts as a learning tool

I found that early life educational and family influences had been instrumental in shaping initial values for the visual arts

Veale (2000) highlights the significance of early life experiences and role models as fundamental in developing attitudes towards the visual arts. She states:

From such early fragmentary experiences, we can begin to discern the personal starting points for the development of artistic vision, as well as its orientation and translation into different forms (p. 30).

Five of the six teachers who participated in this study had experienced a strongly didactic visual arts education within their early years. They learnt about the visual arts through the rote copying of images. These experiences occurred primarily within the cultural contexts of India and Asia, and the teachers' narratives highlighted the significance of the influence that cultural and social

values have on visual arts education (Clark & Grey, 2013; Richards & Terreni, 2013; Schiller, 2000). This reproductive approach was contested within a Western educational context at the turn of the century, as it was argued to be restrictive to children's creativity and artistic autonomy (Eisner, 1973; Wright, 2003). The teachers reinforced this assessment, explaining how these experiences had constrained their creativity and had diminished their confidence to take part in the visual arts. McArdle (2012) found that educators who had grown up within a modernist paradigm had experienced similar barriers, highlighting the powerful influence cultural and community values have on teachers understanding of their own abilities and attitudes surrounding the visual arts (Clark & Grey, 2013; Richards & Terreni, 2013; Schiller, 2000). For some participants, family role models who transmitted an appreciation for image making had alleviated some of the consequences of a reproductive visual arts education (Wright, 2003). The head teacher, Lucia, had also experienced a childhood where the value for visual art as a cognitive act was modelled in her early years. She could trace how these early influences had informed aspects of her current practices (Veale, 2000).

Although the teacher participants subsequently found ways to rethink and reshape their ideas about the visual arts, remnants of the first layer that had been added to their visual arts palimpsests remained partially visible (McArdle, 2003). This was evidenced through the degree to which they felt comfortable with using visual imagery in their participatory art journals. Some teachers were confident in generating images to think through ideas, and others felt more comfortable with a textual form of communication. The extent to which they used the visual could be linked back to some of the earliest stories they told in their journals, and this was later validated in the focus group interview (McArdle, 2012).

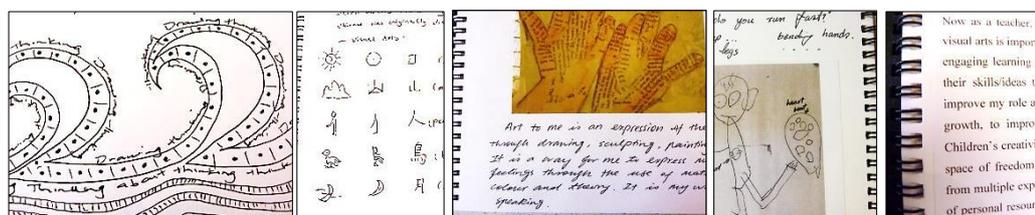


Figure 64: Fragments from the participatory art journals

I found that the theoretical frameworks that underpinned tertiary early childhood education programmes either constrained or helped to develop an understanding of the visual arts as a tool to support children's learning

For several teachers, tertiary studies in early childhood education had been central in shifting thinking about images of childhood, as well as the role of the visual arts in children's learning. Both Ginger and Hannah attended university after the publication of *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996), when early childhood education had developed a stronger awareness of sociocultural theories and practices. These two teachers explained how these educational encounters had allowed them to develop strong philosophies in the visual arts, an outcome which McArdle (2003) and

Wright (2003) contend is important in order to alleviate the long-lasting effects of modernism. Lucia, however, who had attended university some years previously, expressed a very different tertiary education narrative. She shared her dissatisfaction about the dominance of a developmental modernist perspective on the visual arts. These ideas sat in discord with her own experiences. Lucia described herself as a visual thinker and maker. Having already grounded herself as such, she questioned modernist ideals which argue that children should be left to develop naturally in the visual arts, without interaction from adults, ideas that continue to inform many early childhood educators within New Zealand (Richards, 2007).

I found that engagement with the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia challenged images of childhood, children's ability to use the visual arts within their learning, and the teacher's role in facilitating such experiences

The social-constructivist approach to education conceptualised in Reggio Emilia, with its emphasis on symbolic representation as integral to children's knowledge production, has motivated some New Zealand educators to reconceptualise their visual arts practices (Millikan, 2003; Pohio, 2009, 2013). There has, however, been concern that the very different cultural context that this educational project resides within has not been thoroughly examined, and that educators must have a strong sense of their own identity to ensure they maintain authenticity (Carter, 2009; Cadwell, 1997; Haplin, 2011; Millikan, 2003; Pohio, 2009, 2013).

The findings of this research made it clear that this community had not been inspired by these ideas as a 'recipe' or model of practice but, rather, they had disrupted their assumptions about childhood and children's capabilities in the visual arts. Bayes (2005), Edwards et al (1993) and McArdle (2003, 2008) all contend that the images of childhood held by teachers strongly inform their visual arts pedagogies. For the participant teachers, their engagement with Reggio Emilia enabled them to reconstruct their images of childhood and to rethink how visual art could be used as an integrated part of children's inquiries. McClure (2011) has argued that a shift is necessary in how we value the visual as "legitimate sites of cultural knowledge production in order to ameliorate a restrictive view of childhood" (p. 27). I found in this kindergarten that the provocation of Reggio Emilia had allowed this shift to manifest itself and the visual had been repositioned as a dominant language within it.

Exposure to Reggio Emilia had allowed the teachers to relocate themselves as learners alongside the children. Robertson (cited in Millikan, 2003) echoed this experience, as she explained that engaging with this pedagogical approach had given her a framework in which asking questions, not knowing, and research were all permissible. The teachers at this educational community were continuously reflecting on, and renegotiating, their pedagogical approaches (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998). They did not feel they had reached their destination in their practices, but were instead continuously renegotiating approaches to teaching. This manifested itself through engagement in regular collaborative pedagogical discussions, at which the teachers expressed a desire to extend on their content knowledge. These attitudes have been shown in the literature as fundamental to developing visual arts

pedagogies that value the visual arts as a tool for learning. For instance, the examination of how past experiences have shaped teachers beliefs and values in the visual arts has been shown as a key factor in moving across educational paradigms (Clark & de Lautour, 2013; Eisner, 1973; McArdle, 2003, 2012; McClure, 2001; Pohio, 2009; Richards, 2007; Wright, 2003). The teachers demonstrated their value for this process through the way in which they committed themselves to the research process, a dimension that was particularly evident through the degree of reflection demonstrated in the participatory art journals. As Thorton (2013, p. 3) explains:

Embracing of overlap in these identities...can result in synergy in which new identities, thinking and practices can emerge further interrelating or integrating important aspects of the culture of visual art.

Vecchi (2010) regards collaborative discussions amongst teaching teams as a means for reconceptualising thinking, and for making sense of the complex factors that inform visual arts pedagogies. This was a value promoted by Malaguzzi (1998), who wished to challenge the ways that preschool teachers in Italy had previously worked in isolation from each other. The participant teachers explained that they engaged constantly in pedagogical discussions as they tried to make sense of children's representations and thinking. Perhaps this is why the first project, that integrated the visual arts within children's enquiries, was such a powerful catalyst in reshaping their practices. These teachers expressed their excitement about seeing the theory played out in practice. They could see children engaging in visual art as part of their meaning making processes. They were aware that the collegiality they experienced as a centre community allowed them to understand that they were all in a position where they were ready to make a shift in their practices.

I found that leadership was significant in maintaining dialogue and inspiring teachers to want to know more within the centre community

Debate over the degree of content knowledge required to facilitate sociocultural visual arts practices has been addressed by several authors (Hedges & Cullen, 2005; Richards & Terreni, 2013). McArdle (2012) explains that in many cases a lack of confidence in the arts can lead to teachers not pursuing further content knowledge. The participant teachers' demonstration of their desire to learn and know more about visual art, expressed in each participatory art journal, was significant. The motivation provided by the centre's leadership was noteworthy in developing a culture of learning amongst the teachers. This was manifested in the way in which Lucia shared her experiences and learning following her two visits to Reggio Emilia. Her deep regard for the visual arts had enabled the teachers, in turn, to develop their understanding. In response, they demonstrated a thirst for knowledge and appreciation for professional development opportunities that allowed them to examine their own practices.

5.3 How were the visual arts used as a tool to support children's learning?

I found that the teachers had developed a culture in which the visual arts were valued as a mediating device in the construction of knowledge

At the outset of the data collection process I had planned to observe only the children's visual arts practices, focusing on how they used the visual arts as a tool within their learning. What I discovered was that the teacher was integral to this process. Clark and Grey (2013) contend that teacher's attitudes fundamentally influence the way in which the visual arts manifest themselves within early childhood settings. At this centre the visual arts, and drawing in particular, were valued as a language in their own right. Kind (2010) asserts that the use of the word 'language' highlights the way visual art makes children's thinking visible. During all four data collection phases, reference was made to the teacher's intentional emphasis on the visual arts as an integrated part of children's learning. This illustrated the value the teachers placed on the visual arts as a mediating device in the construction of knowledge (Brooks, 2009). At the focus group interview, they discussed their decision and rationale behind their purposeful promotion of the visual as a dominant language within the kindergarten. They cited their value for the way visual art promoted collaboration amongst children, and the empowerment children experienced in being able to make ideas visible. This, they said, in turn developed children's confidence as well as sound dispositions for learning.

The teachers believed in actively engaging with children and their visual art making. Their practices aligned with the guided learning approach (Wright, 2003). In line with Bae's (2004) research, which was conducted within a sociocultural paradigm, the teachers at this setting also saw their role as multifaceted. This meant they would teach children skills and techniques with visual media, and also expressed their role in encouraging children to collaborate and co-construct knowledge amongst each other. This is one of the foundations of social-constructivism and the pedagogical approach of the educators of Reggio Emilia (Malaguzzi, 1998).

The influence of Reggio Emilia was manifested in the classroom in several ways. Although each expressed their teaching approach differently, the teachers shared key values that enabled them to use the visual arts as an integrated tool children's investigations. Each day, the teachers invited children to work together on shared projects and encouraged them to make their thinking visible. During these group times, children were encouraged to formulate and represent theories and to negotiate the answers amongst each other (Lewin-Benham, 2006). The teachers asked provocative questions, facilitated collaboration amongst the children, and encouraged them to revisit and extend on their previous thinking. Children's past representations were often used as a way of reminding them of their previous ideas (Vecchi, 2010; Wright, 2003).

Most fundamental was the teachers shared value of practicing a pedagogy of listening. This concept, articulated by Rinaldi (2009), values children's perspectives and understandings of their world as a foundation on which all learning is built. Underpinning this theory is the

understanding that learning and knowledge are contextual and subjective (Gonzalez-Mena, 2011). Understanding knowledge as such, meant that the participant teachers valued children's images as artefacts through which they could begin to construct understanding about their thinking (Katz, 1998; Rinaldi, 2006). It also meant that most visual arts practices were contextualised within children's daily inquiries. These theoretical underpinnings, which then informed the teacher's practices, profoundly affected the ways in which children engaged in the visual arts at this setting.

I found that the visual arts made children's thinking more visible to themselves, to their peers, and to their teachers, thereby promoting the co-construction of knowledge

Visible thinking

The concept of 'visual thinking' was evidenced through the way children were able to make visible their understandings and reflect on thinking through the representation of ideas (Arnheim, cited in Wright, 2003). Sometimes this meant that they would adapt ideas further, or would change their thinking completely (Pohio, 2006, Kind, 2010). Through making thinking visible, drawing became a record of thinking but also a device through which knowledge was constructed and adapted (Brooks, 2003). Children were also able to examine ideas that could not be explored verbally, such as the work they were engaged in during the creation of symbols for movement (Craw & Grey, 2013; Eisner, 1978; Schiller, 2000). Once ideas were made visible, these were revisited multiple times as children were encouraged to critically reflect on their thinking and representations (Forman, 1996). The children were encouraged to translate their ideas into different media, allowing them to consider ideas from a different perspective and to further establish their understanding (Forman, 1996; Vecchi, 2010; Wright, 2003).

Visibility promoting collaboration, the co-construction of knowledge and an appreciation of subjectivity

Children worked within group contexts on a daily basis. During these group times the creation and sharing of images was a central part of their exchanges. As they made images, they were more likely to engage in dialogue and to co-construct knowledge. The children were observed transforming or adapting their ideas and representations as they watched each other's artwork. Because they were encouraged to engage with each other's visual art, and to share their different perspectives, they came to understand that they all had different ways of seeing (Allen, 2002; Vecchi, 2010). This notion of valuing subjectivity was also promoted through the teachers' decision to explore the notion of 'otherness' with the children because, as a centre community, they had made a decision to celebrate their diverse cultural make up.

Visibility to enable teachers to understand more about children's ideas

Visual representations were not considered by the teachers to be a window into a child's mind. Rather, these were understood as an artefact through which they could begin to dialogue with children about what their thinking might be (McArdle, 2008). These artefacts were used as

teachers pondered children's thinking. They were also offered back to the children at the beginning of each group session, as the teachers endeavoured to find out more and to continue the 'conversation'.

I found that engaging in visual art making allowed children to deepen their understandings and explore complex concepts

The images teachers hold surrounding childhood are fundamental to how children engage in the visual arts (Bayes, 2005; Edwards et al, 1993; McArdle, 2003, 2008). At this early childhood setting the children were understood as powerful constructors of knowledge. The teachers expressed a desire to provoke children to deepen their understanding through image making because they valued the visual arts as a complex cognitive domain through which experience could be explored and communicated (Jensen, 2001; Pohio, 2006; Robertson, 2000; Schiller, 2000) These two tenets meant that the six teachers endeavoured to challenge the children with complex questions based on their multi-dimensional 'listening' of children's ideas and theories.

5.4 What conclusions have I drawn?

This research has reaffirmed that teachers can reconceptualise their practices in the visual arts through examination of their visual arts palimpsests (McArdle, 2003). Although most of the six teachers at this kindergarten had experienced very didactic approaches to the visual arts during their own childhood, they had managed to develop rich visual arts pedagogies that were strongly underpinned by sociocultural and social-constructivist theories. This had manifested itself in several ways:

- Self-reflection that considered early experiences and influences in the visual arts
- Further education that was underpinned by social-constructivist theories
- The provocation of the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia
- Leadership that transmitted a value and commitment for the visual arts as a tool within children's learning
- Continued professional development that provoked collaborative discussion amongst the teachers

Despite having developed rich pedagogical beliefs in the visual arts these six teachers by no means considered themselves to have reached their destination in their pedagogical approaches. They continuously sought new knowledge and opportunities to reflect on their work with children. This attitude made apparent, the notion that sociocultural visual arts pedagogies must be constantly renegotiated otherwise they become isolated from the context in which they operate. The teachers in this centre were in a state of constant renegotiation, and this acceptance of change was fundamental to their teaching pedagogies. Therefore, their work does not provide a model, just as the schools of Reggio Emilia do not. Instead, these teachers

offered a glimpse, during this small-scale study, of possible directions for renegotiation of visual arts practices.

It was evident that within this setting the visual arts had truly manifested themselves as a language. Engaging with Reggio Emilia had not only allowed the teachers to reconceptualise their images of childhood, but had also offered pathways through which they could integrate the visual arts as a contextualised component of children's knowledge construction. Through passionate advocacy for the visual arts, displayed by the teaching team, the children were encouraged to make their thinking visible to themselves, to each other and to their teachers. These practices allowed the children to transform and deepen their understanding, to co-construct knowledge with their peers and teachers, and to develop confidence in their ability to use images as an integrated part of their learning. These children had become proficient in the language of the visual arts as a means to construct and co-construct their own knowledge within a sociocultural paradigm.

5.5 A/r/tographic interpretation by the researcher

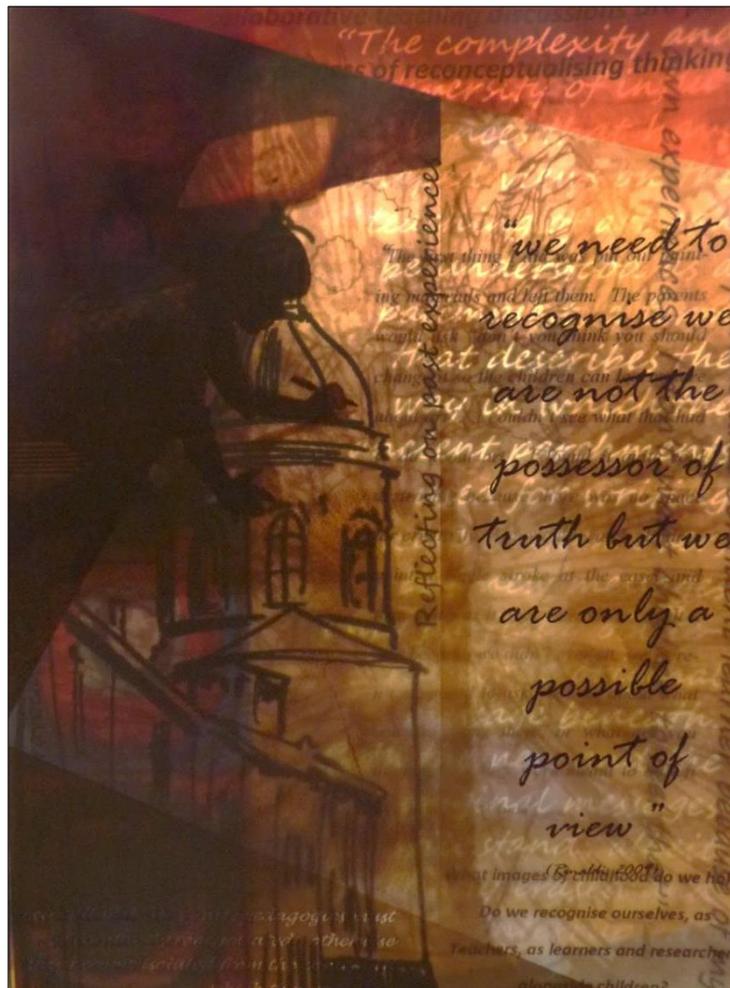


Figure 65: A/r/tographic interpretation of the research: What factors have shaped the teachers' approaches to using the visual arts as a learning tool?

Through constructing this a/r/tographical image, I aimed to build on McArdle's (2003) metaphor of the palimpsest. McArdle argues that without examination of some of the past visual arts events that teachers have experienced within their own lives, they cannot develop practices that truly reflect social-constructivist and sociocultural understandings of the role the visual arts play, when sited within children's learning. This 'palimpsest' represents the layering that occurs as teachers' pedagogies evolve, and makes reference to some of the teachers' perspectives that my research participants shared with me throughout this journey. The most obscured images represent memories and experiences buried deep within the palimpsest. The more visible images illustrate some key factors that had allowed the teachers within this setting to reconceptualise their practices, in order to view children, the role of the arts, as well as their own roles as teachers through a social-constructivist lens. My rationale for using a layered image was to invite the reader to experience, in some way, the complexity of this journey.

Unpacking the palimpsest

While my a/r/tographical interpretation is presented as an art work with five transparent layers printed on clear overhead transparency sheets, in the hard copy of the dissertation, the following figures show how I constructed them to illustrate the palimpsest uncovered within this research.

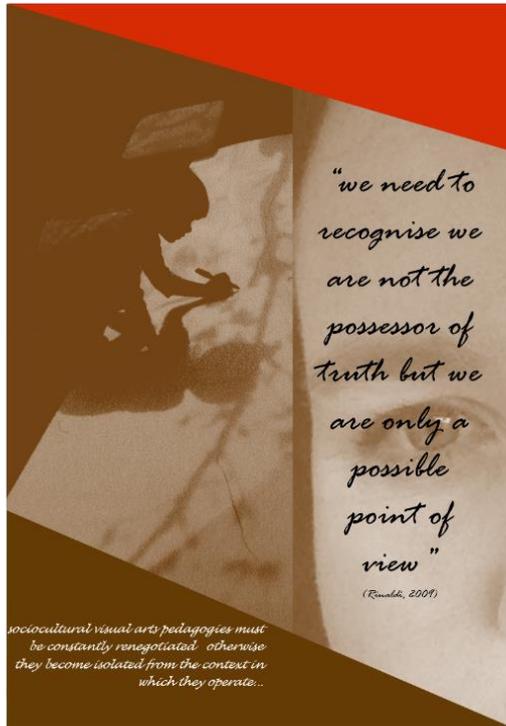


Figure 66: Layer 1

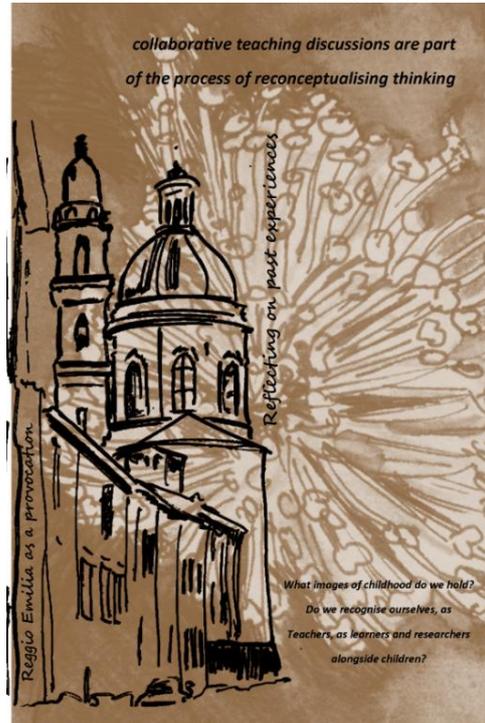


Figure 67: Layer

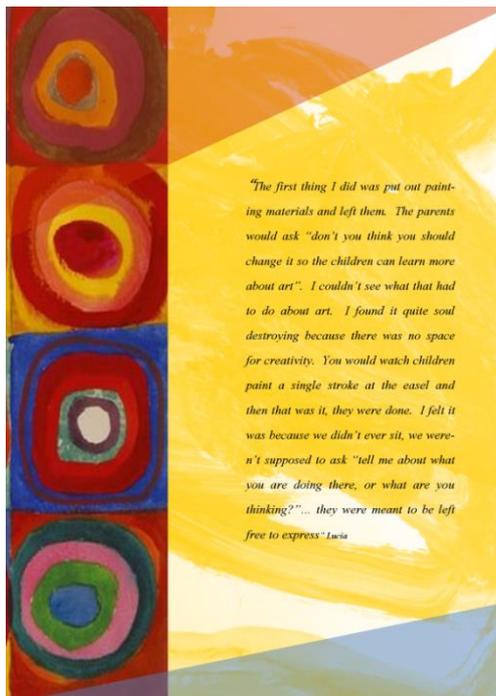


Figure 68: Layer 3

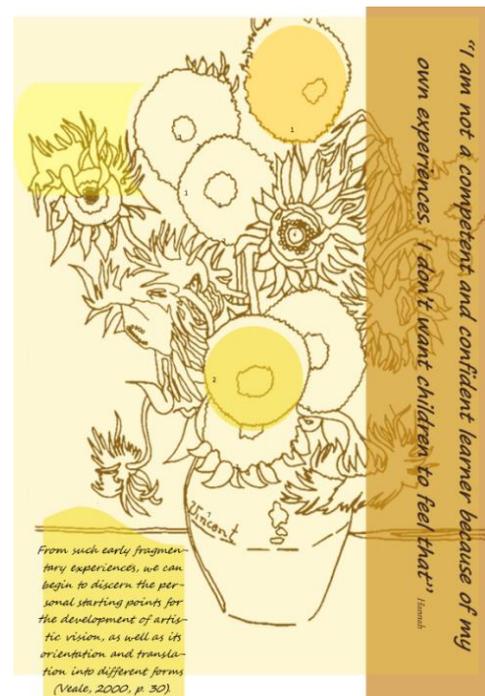


Figure 69: Layer 4

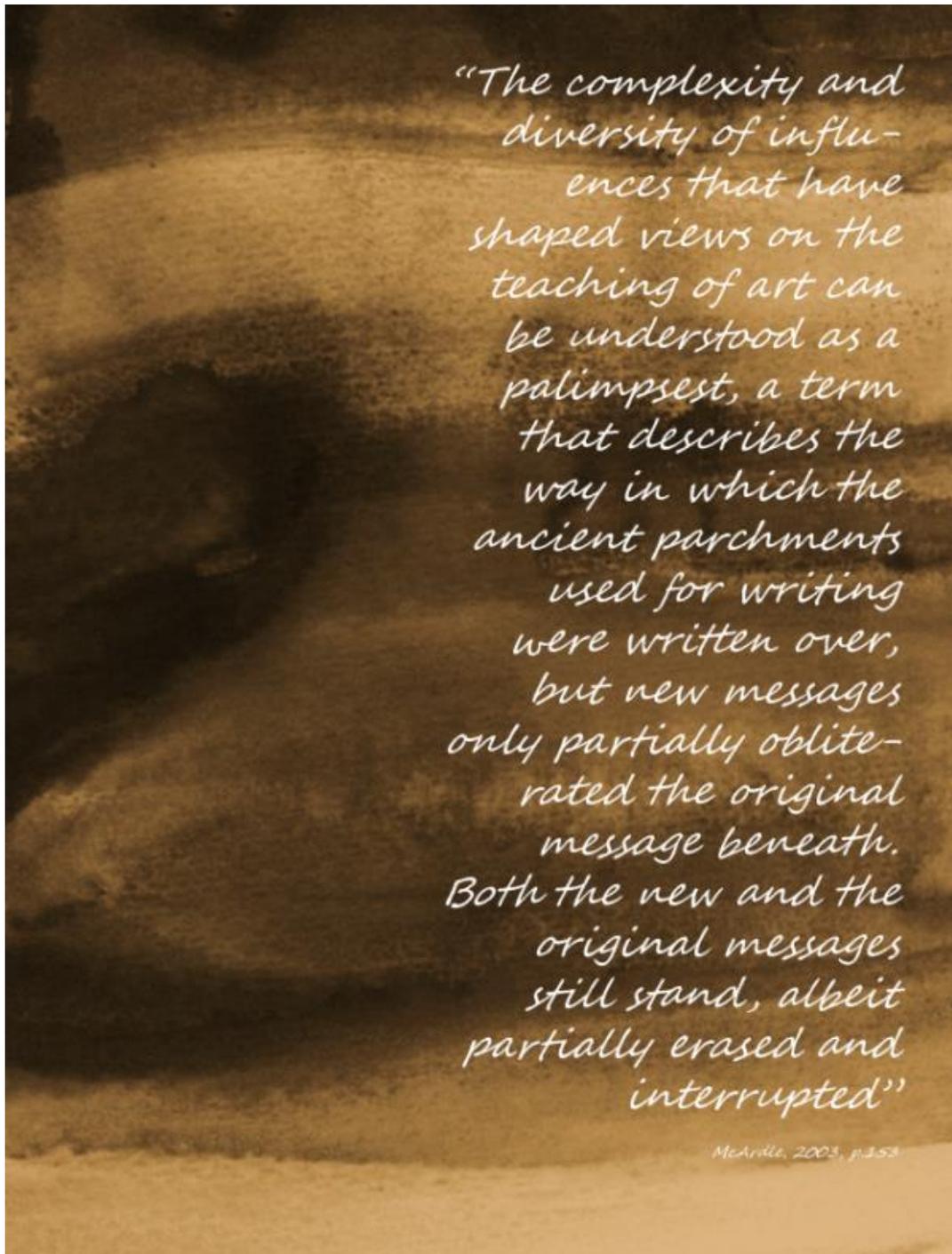


Figure 70: Layer 5

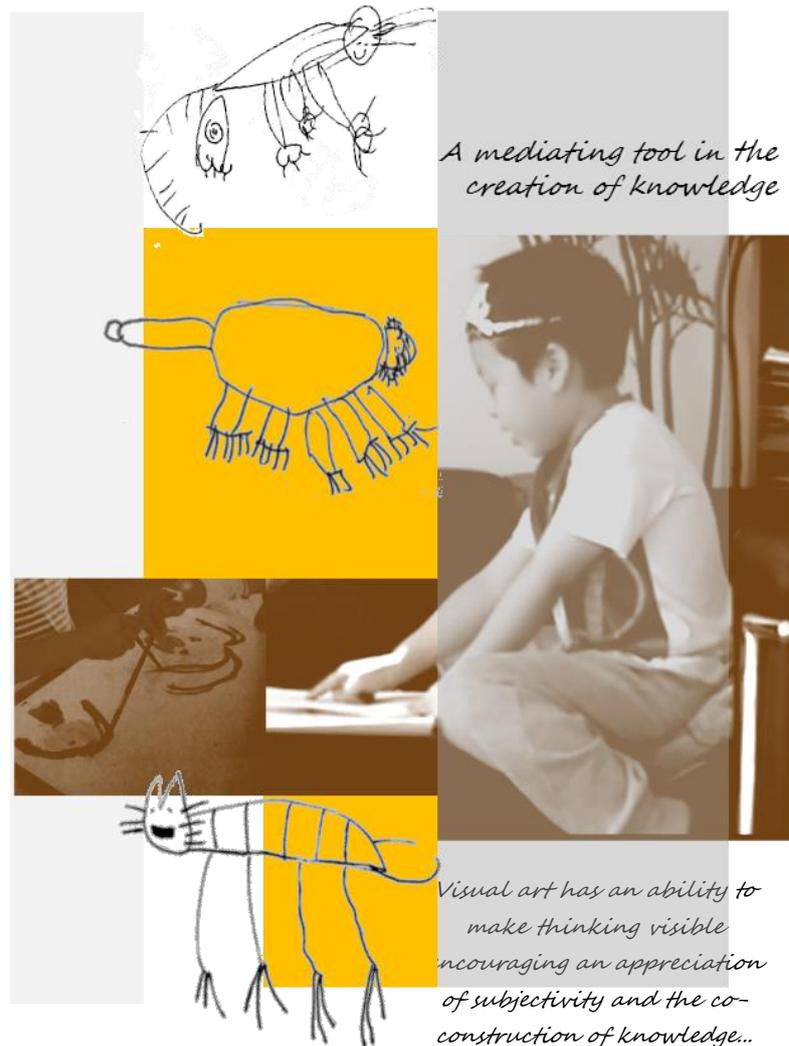


Figure 71: A/r/tographic interpretation of the research – How were the visual arts used as a tool to support children’s learning in an early childhood setting?

My second a/r/tographic image aims to reference the key findings surrounding how children use the visual arts as a tool for learning. It makes reference to the notion that visual art was used at the research setting as a mediating device as children thought through their ideas. It also references how the children used images to communicate and share their ideas with each other and their teachers. I further emphasised the idea of co-construction by using the photograph of children working together collaboratively on one image. The notion that visual art invites an appreciation of different subjectivities was expressed through the three different images of Gingernut the cat, each highlighting different features. I used graphic shapes in varying transparencies to highlight the idea that visual art does not give us all of the answers about children’s thinking, but rather creates an opening through which an authentic dialogue can begin with children. It is a notion that honours their questions about their world and the knowledge they brought to each learning encounter.

Appendices

Appendix A

A(i) Participant Information Sheet: Head Teacher of the Early Childhood Education Service

A(ii) Consent Form: Head Teacher of the Early Childhood Education Service

A(iii) Participant Information Sheet: Teacher

A(iv) Consent Form: Teacher

A(v) Participant Information Sheet: Parent/Guardian (all children)

A(vi) Consent Form: Parent/Guardian (all children)

A(vii) Assent form: Child (all children)

A(viii) Consent Form: Parent/Guardian (four children interviewed)

A(ix) Assent Form: Child (interviewed)

A(x) Notification of observation

Appendix B

B(i) Participatory art journal prompts

B(ii) Interview with teachers – semi-structured

B(iii) Interview with children – semi structured questions.

Appendix A(i)

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy



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Participant Information Sheet Director/manager/head teacher of the Early Childhood Education Service

Name:

Researcher: Sarah Probine

Title of research: The visual arts as a learning tool in an early childhood setting.

Date: 4th March 2014

Dear,

This letter is to thank you for informally agreeing to participate in the small research project I am conducting as part of the requirements for my Master of Professional Studies degree at the University of Auckland, under the supervision of Dr Jill Smith, and to explain the project in full. Your early childhood education service has been selected because I am informed that visual arts is used on a daily/regular basis within your programme, the programme is influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach whereby children and teachers use the visual arts as a tool for learning, and it is a service that separates the children into separate classrooms based on age (e.g. four-year-olds/oldest children).

The research is motivated by my experiences as an early childhood educator and tertiary lecturer. **The aim of the study is to learn about how young children use the visual arts as a tool for learning and how teacher's beliefs and values impact on their practice in using visual arts as a tool for learning.**

The timeframe for the fieldwork for this research is from 24th March to 1st May 2014. At a time convenient to your early childhood education service and the teachers, I plan to collect data using four methods:

1. **Classroom observations:** Over a one month period I wish to make four x one-hour observations of the four-year-old children (or class with the oldest children) with their teachers while they are involved in visual art experiences. During the observations I will make field notes and take digital (still) photographs of children's art-making processes and art works which, with consent, will be used in the reporting and dissemination of the research. Photographic data will focus on the art-making and art itself and if children or teachers are identifiable in the photographs their identities will be disguised using photographic techniques (e.g. blurring and cropping). When a photograph is taken of a child's art work their name will be recorded and coded later. If I perceive that any of the

children do not wish to be observed or photographed while they are involved in art making I will stop photographing. I will provide a notice to put up on the classroom door to advise any visitors that recording is taking place.

2. Participatory art journals: During the month-long fieldwork period I will ask the teachers of the four-year-old children to use participatory art journals, provided by me, to reflect on and record their beliefs and values about visual art and its role in children's learning. I will provide some 'prompts' to assist teachers with what they might explore in these journals, such as past experiences with the visual arts as well as their own practice in supporting the visual arts as a tool for thinking. The teachers will be asked to give consent to a selection of 'fragments' from their journals being digitally photographed and used in the reporting and dissemination of the research. This data will be presented using the teachers' self-selected first name pseudonyms.
3. Interviews (discussions) with four children and their parents/caregivers: Following the month-long classroom observations and journaling the first four children and their parents/caregivers who have expressed their interest will be selected to be interviewed. Parents will be invited to make expressions of interest via my email at the beginning of the research. This will be explained within their Participant information sheet. I will seek consent for the children and their parents/caregivers to participate using a second assent form and participant information sheet for parents/caregivers. The four children and their parents/caregivers will be video-taped talking about the child's art. Each interview, of approximately 10-12 minutes, will take place at a time when other children are not in the classroom. I will also audio-record the children's dialogue (video is not always reliable depending on the positioning of the recorder and the distance from the participant). I will seek consent from the parents/caregivers for the four children as well as themselves to be identifiable, and for first names and the video clips to be used in the reporting and dissemination of the research.
4. Focus group interview: The final data collection method will be a focus group interview with the teaching team of the class of four-year-olds. With your permission, this video-taped interview with teachers will be held at your early childhood service after all children and non-participating teachers have gone home. The interview will be approximately 60 minutes duration. The use of video footage will allow easier analysis of different voices, but will not be presented as visual data in the research report. The interview will be transcribed, and data presented using the teachers' self-selected first name pseudonyms.

At its completion, the research will be presented in two ways: in my Master's dissertation and in a one-hour visual presentation at your early childhood education service attended voluntarily by participants in the study. Visual representations will comprise a careful selection of photographs, narratives and fragments from the classroom observations, teachers' participatory art journals, and video clips of the four selected children and their parents/caregivers. The identity of the child participants will be treated with utmost care and respect. Images of teachers will not be published. All items will be selected in collaboration with Dr Jill Smith. The examples may be used in publications, at presentations and education conferences.

I wish to give you the following assurances. The participation of your service, the children and teachers is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time, without giving a reason. The parents/caregivers also have the right to withdraw their children from this research at any time without giving a reason. Teachers participating in the focus group interview will be advised that they may leave the room where the interview is taking place, at any time during the interview (if they do not want to be video recorded) without giving a reason, or if they choose to withdraw from the study. However, data that teachers contribute at the focus group interview will not be able to be withdrawn after the interview as this would compromise the responses of the other teacher participants.

During the research all data collected will be stored securely in my home. At the conclusion of the research data will be kept for a period of six years and then destroyed (written/visual printed data will be shredded and video/digital audio recording data will be erased.) To protect the identity of participants, consent forms and data will be stored separately and securely by Dr Jill Smith at the University of Auckland. Every attempt will be made to protect the identity of your early childhood education service, though due to possible recognition of the four child participants' and their families' anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

I also seek your assurance that the teachers' and parents/caregivers' decisions to allow the participation or not of their children will not affect the teachers' employment status or parents/caregivers' or children's relationship with you as the director/manager/head teacher. At the completion of the study the service and the participating teachers will receive a summary of the main findings, but I will retain ownership of the data. I have attached the Participant Information Sheets and Consent and Assent Forms. Parents/caregivers of the four-year old children observed in the classroom will be asked to sign a consent form if they agree for their child to be part of this study. There is an assent form to be completed by children with the assistance of their parent/caregiver. A second assent form will be given to the four children and their parents/caregivers who volunteer to be interviewed to talk about their child's art-making. I would appreciate it if you could give the participant information sheets, consent and assent forms to the parents/caregivers of the four-year-old children. I will personally deliver the Participant Information Sheets and Consent forms to the teachers. If you or the teachers would like to meet with me to discuss the research further I am happy to come to your service at a time convenient to you. If you have any further queries please contact my Supervisor.

I was delighted that you informally agreed to your service participating in this research. I hope that you will now give your formal consent. If so, I would appreciate you signing the Consent Form and returning it to me in the envelope provided.

Yours sincerely

My contact details are:

Sarah Probine
Phone: Mobile: 0212949373
Email: spro018@aucklanduni.ac.nz

My supervisor is:

Dr Jill Smith
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Faculty of Education
The University of Auckland
j.smith@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09) 623 8899 extn 48713

For ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair
The University of Auckland Participants Ethics Committee
Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 21st
February 2014 FOR 3 YEARS, Reference Number 011165

Appendix A(ii)

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy



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New Zealand

Consent Form - Director/manager/head teacher of the Early Childhood Education Service

This form will be held for a period of six years

Director/manager/head teacher/ Service:

Researcher: Sarah Probine

Title of research: The visual arts as a learning tool in an early childhood setting.

Date:

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and have understood the nature of the research and why I have been asked to give permission for the researcher to approach the four-year-old children and their parents/caregivers, and the teachers of those children, to participate in this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I understand that data collection during the fieldwork for this research will take place between 1 April and 1 July 2014, at a time convenient to the service and the teachers of the class of four-year-olds (or oldest children).
- I understand that the parents/caregivers of the class of four-year-olds (or oldest children) will be asked to sign a consent form if they agree for their child to be part of this study and that they will be invited to help their children to complete an assent form.
- I understand that the teachers of the class of four-year-olds (or oldest children) will be asked to sign a consent form if they agree to participate.
- I understand the ethical considerations associated with the photographic data collected through classroom observations during visual arts experiences, as explained in the information sheet.
- I understand the ethical considerations associated with participatory art journals the teachers will be asked to use, as explained in the information sheet.
- I understand the ethical considerations associated with the interviews (discussions) with the four children and their parents/caregivers who volunteer to participate, as explained in the information sheet.
- I agree to a teachers' focus group interview being held at my early childhood service at a time convenient to the teacher participants and me, as explained in the information sheet.
- I understand that visual representations of data will comprise a careful selection and that the identity of the child participants will be treated with utmost care and respect.

- I understand that visual examples may be used in publications, at presentations and education conferences.
- I understand that the participation of the class of four-year-old children and their teachers is voluntary, and I give my assurance that their decision to participate, or not, in the research will not affect their employment status (teachers) or their relationship with myself as the director/manager/head teacher (children and parents/guardians).
- I understand that all photographic, video and audio-recorded data will be stored on the researcher's computer until the completion of the research.
- I understand that at the conclusion of the research all data will be kept for a period of six years and then destroyed and that to protect the identity of participants, consent forms and data will be stored separately and securely by Dr Jill Smith at the University of Auckland.
- I understand that the researcher will make every attempt to protect the identity of my early childhood education service, though due to possible recognition of the four child participants' and their families' anonymity cannot be guaranteed.
- I understand that at the conclusion of the research the early childhood education service and the participants will receive a summary of the main findings and that the researcher will retain ownership of the data.
- I agree to a one hour viewing of visual documentation from the research at my early childhood service premises at the end of the study and that attendance will be voluntary.
- I understand that I may withdraw my permission for the early childhood service to participate in this research at any time, without giving a reason.

I agree to the participation of the early childhood service, a class of four-year-olds (or oldest children) and their teachers in this research project (please circle one)

YES NO

Director/manager/head teacher's name

Signature.....

Date.....

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Appendix A(iii)

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy



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New Zealand

Participant Information Sheet Teacher

Teacher:

Researcher: Sarah Probine

Title of research: The visual arts as a learning tool in an early childhood setting.

Date: 4th March 2014

Dear

This letter is to invite you to participate in a small research project I am conducting as part of the requirements for my Master of Professional Studies degree at the University of Auckland, under the supervision of Dr Jill Smith, and to explain the project in full. Your early childhood education service has been selected because I am informed that visual arts is used on a daily/regular basis within your programme, the programme is influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach whereby children and teachers use the visual arts as a tool for learning, and it is a service that separates the children into separate classrooms based on age (e.g. four-year-olds/oldest children).

The research is motivated by my experiences as an early childhood educator and tertiary lecturer. **The aim of the study is to learn about how young children use the visual arts as a tool for learning and how teacher's beliefs and values impact on their practice in the visual arts as a tool for learning.**

The timeframe for the fieldwork for this research is from 24th March to 1st May 2014. At a time convenient to your early childhood education service you, the teachers, I plan to collect data using four methods:

1. **Classroom observations:** Over a one month period I wish to make four x one-hour observations of the four-year-old children (or the class with the oldest children) in the classroom with you, their teachers while they are involved in visual art experiences. During the observations I will make field notes and take digital (still) photographs of children's art-making processes and art works which, with consent, will be used in the reporting and dissemination of the research. When a photograph is taken of a child's art the name of the child who has made the work will be recorded and will later be coded. Photographic data will focus on the art-making and art itself and if yourselves or the children are identifiable in the photographs their identities will be disguised using

photographic techniques (e.g. blurring and cropping). If I perceive that any of the children do not wish to be observed or photographed while they are involved in art making I will move away and stop photographing. I will provide a notice to put up on the classroom door to advise any visitors that recording is taking place.

2. Participatory art journals: During the month-long fieldwork period I will ask you to use participatory art journals, provided by me, to reflect on and record your beliefs and values surrounding visual art and its role in children's learning. I will provide some 'prompts' to assist you with what you might explore in these journals, such as past experiences with the visual arts as well as your own practice in supporting the visual arts as a tool for thinking. You will be asked to give consent to a selection of "fragments" from your journals to be digitally photographed and used in the reporting and dissemination of the research. This data will be presented using your self-selected first name pseudonyms.
3. Focus group interview: The final data collection method will be a focus group interview with your teaching team for the class of four-year-olds. With your permission, this video-taped interview will be held at your early childhood service after all children and non-participating teachers have gone home. The interview will be approximately 60 minutes duration. The use of video footage will allow easier analysis of different voices, but will not be presented as visual data in the research report. The interview will be transcribed, and data presented using your self-selected first name pseudonyms.

A fourth data collection method will be interviews (discussions) with four children and their parents/caregivers. Parents/caregivers and their children will be asked for expressions of interest via email to myself at the beginning of the project. The first four participants will be selected and they will be video-taped during a brief conversation of them talking about their art work and the role of visual art as a tool for thinking. The separate interviews, of approximately 10 - 12 minutes each, will take place at a time when other children are not in the classroom. I will seek consent from the parents/caregivers for the four children as well as the parents/caregivers to be identifiable, and for their first name and the video clips to be used in the reporting and dissemination of the research.

At its completion the research will be presented in two ways: in my Master's dissertation, and in a one-hour visual presentation at your early childhood education service premises attended voluntarily by the participants in the study. Visual representations will comprise a careful selection of photographs, narratives and fragments from the classroom observations, teachers' participatory art journals, and video clips of the four selected children. The identity of the child participants will be treated with utmost care and respect. Images of yourself will not be published. All items will be selected in collaboration with Dr Jill Smith. The examples may be used in publications, at presentations and education conferences.

I wish to give you the following assurances. The participation of the children and yourselves is voluntary. Due to the nature of focus group interviews, data that you have contributed will not be withdrawn after the conclusion of the focus group interview, as this would compromise the responses of the other teacher participants. During the focus group interview you will be advised that you may leave the room where the interview is taking place, at any time during the interview (if you do not want to be video recorded) without giving a reason, or if you choose to withdraw from the study. The child participants and the parents/caregivers have the right to withdraw their children from this research at any time, without giving a reason. During the research all data collected will be stored securely in my home. At the conclusion of the research all data will be kept for a period of six years and then destroyed (written/visual printed data will be shredded and video/digital audio recording data will be erased.) To protect the identity of participants, consent forms and data will be stored separately and securely by Dr Jill Smith at the University of Auckland. Every attempt will be made to protect the identity of your early childhood education service, though due to possible recognition of the four child participants' anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

I also seek your assurance that if you choose not to participate this will not affect your employment status. At the completion of the study the service and the participating teachers will receive a summary of the main findings. As the researcher I will retain ownership of the data. If you have any further queries about this please contact me or my Supervisor.

If you agree to give your formal consent for your child to participate in this study I would appreciate you signing the Consent Form and returning it to me in the envelope provided.

Yours sincerely

My contact details are:

Sarah Probine

Phone: Mobile: 0212949373

Email: spro018@aucklanduni.ac.nz

My supervisor is:

Dr Jill Smith

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy

Faculty of Education

The University of Auckland

j.smith@auckland.ac.nz

Phone: (09) 623 8899 extn 48713

For ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair

The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee

The University of Auckland

Office of the Vice-Chancellor

Private Bag 92019

Auckland 1142

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Appendix A (iv)

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Consent Form - Teacher

This form will be held for a period of six years

Teacher/ Service : *(the name to be inserted here)*

Researcher: Sarah Probine

Title of research: The visual arts as a learning tool in an early childhood setting.

Date: /2014

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and have understood the nature of the research and why I have been asked to participate in this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I understand that data collection during the fieldwork for this research will take place between 1 April and 1 July 2014, at a time convenient to the service and my teaching team.
- I understand that the parents/caregivers of the class of four-year-olds (or oldest children) will be asked to sign a consent form if they agree for their child to be part of this study and that they will be invited to help their children to complete an assent form.
- I understand the ethical considerations associated with the photographic data collected through classroom observations during visual arts experiences, as explained in the information sheet.
- I understand the ethical considerations associated with participatory art journals I have been asked to use, as explained in the information sheet.
- I understand the ethical considerations associated with the recording of and my participation in a teachers' focus group interview as explained in the information sheet.
- I understand that visual representations of data will comprise a careful selection of photographs, narratives and "fragments" from the classroom observations, teachers' participatory art journals, and video clips of the four selected children, and that the identity of the child participants will be treated with utmost care and respect; that all items will be selected in collaboration with Dr Jill Smith; and that the examples may be used in publications, at presentations and education conferences.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I understand that my decision to participate, or not, in the research will not affect my employment status.

- I understand that all photographic, video and audio-recorded data will be stored on the researcher's computer until the completion of the research.
- I understand that at the conclusion of the research all data will be kept for a period of six years and then destroyed (written/visual printed data will be shredded and video/digital audio recording data will be erased.); that to protect the identity of participants, consent forms and data will be stored separately and securely by Dr Jill Smith at the University of Auckland.
- I understand that while the researcher will make every attempt to protect the identity of my early childhood education service, though due to possible recognition of the four child participants' anonymity cannot be guaranteed.
- I understand that at the conclusion of the research the early childhood education service and the participants will receive a summary of the main findings; that as the researcher I will retain ownership of the data.
- I agree to a one hour viewing of photographs, video examples and "fragments" from the participatory art journals for the participants at my early childhood service premises, at the end of the study, and that my attendance will be voluntary.
- I understand that I may withdraw my permission to participate in this research at any time, without giving a reason.

I agree to participate in this research project (please circle one) YES NO

Teacher's name

Teacher 'signature

Date

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Appendix A (v)

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Participant Information Sheet Parents/caregivers

Parents / caregivers: *(the name to be inserted here)*

Researcher: Sarah Probine

Title of research: The visual arts as a learning tool in an early childhood setting.

Date: /2014

Dear

This letter is to invite your child to participate in a small research project I am conducting as part of the requirements for my Master of Professional Studies degree at the University of Auckland, under the supervision of Dr Jill Smith, and to explain the project in full. The early childhood education service your child attends has been selected because I am informed that visual arts is used on a daily/regular basis within your programme, the programme is influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach whereby children and teachers use the visual arts as a tool for learning, and it is a service that separates the children into separate classrooms based on age (e.g. four-year-olds/oldest children).

The research is motivated by my experiences as an early childhood educator and tertiary lecturer. **The aim of the study is to learn about how young children use the visual arts as a tool for learning and how teacher's beliefs and values impact on their practice in the visual arts as a tool for learning.**

The timeframe for the fieldwork for this research is from 1 April to 1 July 2014. At a time convenient to your early childhood education service and the teachers', I plan to collect data about the children during their art making experiences.

Phase One: Classroom observations: Over a one month period I wish to make four x one-hour observations of the four-year-old children (or the class with the oldest children) in the classroom with their teachers while they are involved in visual art experiences. During the observations I will make field notes and take digital (still) photographs of children's art-making processes and art works which, with consent, will be used in the reporting and dissemination of the research. When a photograph is taken of a child's art the name of the child who has made the work will be recorded and will later be coded. Photographic data will focus on the art-making and art itself and if children or teachers are identifiable in the photographs their identities will be disguised using photographic techniques (e.g. blurring and cropping). If I perceive that any of the children do not wish to be observed or photographed while they are involved in art making I will move away and stop photographing. I will provide a notice to put up on the classroom door to advise any visitors that recording is taking place.

Phase Two: Interviews (discussions) with four children and their parents/caregivers: Following the month-long classroom observations I will video record four brief interviews with interested children and their parent/caregivers where they will be invited to talk about their art work and the use of visual art as a tool for thinking. The separate interviews, of approximately 10 - 12 minutes each, will take place at a time when other children are not in the classroom. I will also audio-record the children's dialogue (video is not always reliable depending on the positioning of the recorder and the distance from the participant). I will seek consent for the children and their parents/caregivers to participate, using a second assent form and participant information sheet for parents/caregivers. Consent will also be sought for the children and their parents/caregivers to be identifiable, and for their first name and the video clips to be used in the reporting and dissemination of the research. If you and your child are interested in participating in this phase of the research you can contact me at my university email address, given at the end of this letter. I will select the first four expressions of interest I receive.

At its completion the research will be presented in two ways: in my Master's dissertation, and in a one-hour visual presentation at your early childhood education service premises attended voluntarily by the participants in the study. Visual representations will comprise a careful selection of photographs, narratives and fragments from the classroom observations, teachers' participatory art journals, and video clips of the four selected children. The identity of the child participants will be treated with utmost care and respect. Images of teachers will not be published. All items will be selected in collaboration with Dr Jill Smith. The examples may be used in publications, at presentations and education conferences.

I wish to give you the following assurances. The participation of the children is voluntary. Both the children and yourselves as parents / caregivers have the right to withdraw your children from this research at any time, without giving a reason. During the research all data collected will be stored securely in my home. At the conclusion of the research all data will be kept for a period of six years and then destroyed (written/visual printed data will be shredded and video/digital audio recording data will be erased.) To protect the identity of participants, consent forms and data will be stored separately and securely by Dr Jill Smith at the University of Auckland. Every attempt will be made to protect the identity of your early childhood education service, though due to possible recognition of the four child participants' anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

I also seek your assurance that your decision to allow the participation or not of your child will not affect you or your child's relationship with the teachers or with the director/manager/head teacher. At the completion of the study the service will receive a summary of the main findings. As the researcher I will retain ownership of the data. If you have any further queries about this please contact me or my Supervisor.

If you agree to give your formal consent for your child to participate in this study I would appreciate you signing the Consent Form and returning it to me in the envelope provided.

Yours sincerely

My contact details are:

Sarah Probine
Phone: Mobile: 0212949373
Email: spro018@aucklanduni.ac.nz

My supervisor is:

Dr Jill Smith
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Faculty of Education
The University of Auckland
j.smith@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09) 623 8899 extn 48713

For ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair
The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee
The University of Auckland
Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 21st
February 2014 FOR 3 YEARS, Reference Number 011165

Appendix A(vi)

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy



Epsom Campus
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Consent Form - Parent/ Guardian

This form will be held for a period of six years

Parent/ Guardian/ Service: *(the name to be inserted here)*

Researcher: Sarah Probine

Title of research: The visual arts as a learning tool in an early childhood setting.

Date: /2014

- I understand that data collection during the fieldwork for this research will take place between 1 April and 1 July 2014, at a time convenient to the service and the teachers of the class of four-year-olds (or oldest children).
- I understand the ethical considerations associated with the photographic data collected through classroom observations during visual arts experiences, as explained in the information sheet.
- I understand that if a photograph is taken of my child's art the name of my child will be recorded within the researcher's field notes and will later be coded.
- I understand the ethical considerations associated with the interviews (discussions) with the four children and their parents/caregivers who volunteer to participate, as explained in the information sheet.
- I understand that visual representations of data will comprise a careful selection of photographs, narratives and "fragments" from the classroom observations, teachers' participatory art journals, and video clips of the four selected children, and that the identity of my child will be treated with utmost care and respect; that all items will be selected in collaboration with Dr Jill Smith; and that the examples may be used in publications, at presentations and education conferences.
- I understand that the participation of my child is voluntary and will not affect their relationship with the teachers or with the director/manager/head teacher (children and parents/guardians).
- I understand that all photographic, video and audio-recorded data will be stored on the researcher's computer until the completion of the research.
- I understand that at the conclusion of the research all data will be kept for a period of six years and then destroyed (written/visual printed data will be shredded and video/digital audio recording data will be erased.); that to protect the identity of participants, consent forms and data will be stored separately and securely by Dr Jill Smith at the University of Auckland.
- I understand that while the researcher will make every attempt to protect the identity of the early childhood education service, though due to possible recognition of the four child participants' anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

- I understand that at the conclusion of the research the early childhood education service and the participants will receive a summary of the main findings; that as the researcher I will retain ownership of the data.
- I understand that there will be a one hour viewing of photographs, video examples and data from the teachers will be shown at the early childhood premises at the end of the study, and that attendance will be voluntary.
- I understand that I may withdraw my permission for my child to participate in this research at any time, without giving a reason.

I agree for my child to participate in this research project (please circle one)

YES NO

Child's name

Parent/ Guardian name.....

Parent/ Guardian signature.....

Date.....

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Appendix A(vii)

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Assent form – Child

This form will be held for a period of six years

Child/ Service :
Parent/Guardian:

Researcher: Sarah Probine

Title of research: The visual arts as a learning tool in an early childhood setting.



Date: /2014

This person in the photo, Sarah, will be coming to (name of early childhood service) to watch us do art. She loves art and wants to watch the children making art. Sarah wants to know if I agree to the following things.

- My name will be written next to the photos of me making my art, and my art work.
- Sarah will be photographing children making art and writing what they say.
- Sarah wants to keep the photos of the children’s art.
- I can see the pictures if I go with my parents to see the show (the viewing) at (name of early childhood service).

I agree to this (please circle one)	
YES 😊	NO ☹️

Child’s name.....

Parent’s name

Parent’s signature.....

Date.....

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Appendix A(viii)

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Consent Form - Parent/ Guardian
For four children selected to discuss their art-making.
This form will be held for a period of six years

Parent/ Guardian/ Service: *(the name to be inserted here)*

Researcher: Sarah Probine

Title of research: The visual arts as a learning tool in an early childhood setting.

Date: /2014

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and I have understood the nature of the research and why I have been asked to give permission for my child to participate in this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I understand the ethical considerations associated with the interviews (discussions) with my child and myself, as explained in the information sheet.
- I understand that visual representations of data will comprise a careful selection of photographs and video clips of my child, and that the identity of my child will be treated with utmost care and respect; that all items will be selected in collaboration with Dr Jill Smith.
- I understand that examples may be used in publications, at presentations and education conferences.
- I understand that the participation of me and my child is voluntary and will not affect our relationship with the teachers or with the director/manager/head teacher (children and parents/guardians).
- I understand that all photographic, video and audio-recorded data will be stored on the researcher's computer until the completion of the research.
- I understand that at the conclusion of the research all data will be kept for a period of six years and then destroyed (written/visual printed data will be shredded and video/digital audio recording data will be erased.); that to protect the identity of participants, consent forms and data will be stored separately and securely by Dr Jill Smith at the University of Auckland.
- I understand that while the researcher will make every attempt to protect the identity of the early childhood education service, though due to possible recognition of my child and the other selected children anonymity cannot be guaranteed.
- I understand that at the conclusion of the research the early childhood education service and the participants will receive a summary of the main findings; that as the researcher I will retain ownership of the data.

- I understand that there will be a one hour viewing of photographs and video examples and data collected from the teachers for the participants at the early childhood service premises, at the end of the study, and that attendance will be voluntary.
- I understand that I may withdraw my permission for my child to participate in this research at any time, without giving a reason.

I agree for me and my child to participate in this interview (please circle one)

YES NO

Child's name

Parent/ Guardian name

Parent/ Guardian signature.....

Date.....

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Appendix A(ix)

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy



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Assent form – Child who volunteers to participate in videotaped interview
This form will be held for a period of six years

Child/ Service :
Parent/Guardian:

Researcher: Sarah Probine
Title of research: The visual arts as a learning tool in an early childhood setting.



Date: /2014

This person in the photo, Sarah, will be coming to (name of early childhood service) to video record me and my parent(s) talking about my art. She is very interested in how I use my art work to think about ideas. Sarah wants to know if I agree to the following things.

- My name will be written next to the photos of me making my art, and my art work.
- Sarah will be video recording me and my parent(s) talking about my artwork.
- Sarah will ask me and my parent(s) about how I use art to think about ideas.
- Sarah will keep photos and video clips of me and my art.
- I can see the pictures if I go with my parents to see the show (the viewing) at (name of early childhood service)

I agree to this (please circle one)	
YES 😊	NO ☹️

Child's name.....
Parent's name
Parent's signature.....
Date.....

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Appendix A(x) Notification of observation

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy



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New Zealand

ATTENTION VISITORS

TO _____ (*insert name of early childhood service*) _____

AN OBSERVATION IS TAKING PLACE TODAY

Date _____

From _____ (am/pm) to _____
(am/pm)

Title of research: The visual arts as a learning tool in an early childhood setting.

Date:/...../2014

If you have any queries please contact the researcher:

Sarah Probine. Phone: 021 2949373

Email: spro018@aucklanduni.ac.nz

My supervisor is:

Dr Jill Smith

The University of Auckland

j.smith@auckland.ac.nz

Phone: (09) 623 8899 extn 48713.

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February 2014 FOR 3 YEARS, Reference Number 011165

Appendix B(i) Participatory art journal prompts

4th March 2014

Dear teacher participants

For this study I decided that, as an alternative to individual interviews, I would invite you to use an art journal. A participant art journal is a research tool that allows collection of your perspectives and ideas through both words and images. Over a period of four weeks I would appreciate it if you would maintain the journal, recording your ideas surrounding the research questions - *How are the visual arts used as a tool to support children's learning in your early childhood setting? And, what factors have shaped your approaches to using the visual arts as a learning tool?*

In your journal, you can choose to record your thoughts, collect photographs and drawings etc. that say something about your thinking or you can create your own visual images. The purpose is not to create masterpieces, but instead, to use visual art as a means to explore the role it plays in children's learning within your setting, as well as to explore your own beliefs and values surrounding visual art.

I have offered some ideas about areas you might like to consider but please don't feel limited to explore these ideas; you can explore anything you feel is relevant to the research questions in your journal.

You could consider:

- The role the visual arts play in your life.
- Your role as a teacher when supporting children to use the visual arts
- The factors that have shaped your beliefs and values surrounding visual art and its role in children's learning. Factors could include culture, education experiences, organisation, family, and/or the pedagogical ideas of Reggio Emilia.
- Your image of children as learners and the ways in which they use the visual arts as a tool for learning.

If you need any materials throughout this period please contact me and I will supply them as promptly as possible.

My contact details are:

Sarah Probine

Phone: Mobile: 0212949373

Email: spro018@aucklanduni.ac.nz

Appendix B(ii) Interview with teachers – semi-structured

Indicative Focus Group Interview Questions For Teacher participants

Researcher: Sarah Probine

Title of research: The visual arts as a learning tool in an early childhood setting.

Date:/..... /2014

Duration: 1 hour

Teacher participants: The interview is for the teachers who are responsible for the education and care of the four year old or oldest classrooms child participants.

Teacher participants: *The researcher will remind all participants that for teachers to feel able to express their views all those present will need to take care to maintain confidentiality. Teachers will be reminded that they are being digitally video recorded and that their self-chosen pseudonym will be used in the publication of the research. They will also be reminded that the interview is being video recorded for the purposes of deciphering different voices but will only be transcribed for it's audio content. The visual recording will not be used as part of the data.*

The interview will be video recorded and then transcribed. The purpose of the research project will be explained and there will be a period in which the teachers can share excerpts from their participatory art journals. The interview questions will then be asked and the teachers will be given the opportunity to respond. The interview questions are semi-structured to allow teachers to express their views in their own way.

General questions:

1. How long have you been teaching at this service?
2. How important are the visual arts to you in your life?
3. How important do you think the visual arts at this service and how is this evident?
4. How do you think the ideas of Reggio Emilia influence your thinking and teaching?
5. How do the children's parents/caregivers participate in the life of the centre?
6. Does the service have a relationship with the local community?

Specific questions

7. How do you use the visual arts as a tool for learning with the four year olds?
8. What do you think your role is as a teacher when using visual arts?
9. How significant do you think collaborative teaching relationships are when using the visual arts as a tool for learning?
10. What has influenced your thinking? (This could be past experiences, theoretical knowledge, professional development, collaborative teaching relationships, family beliefs, cultural knowledge etc.).
11. How do you think the children in your classroom use the visual arts as a tool for learning?
12. How have you developed a culture of learning through the visual arts?
13. How do you think the parents value the visual arts as a tool for learning at this service?

Researcher: Sarah Probine. Phone 021 2949373

Email: spro018@aucklanduni.ac.nz

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Appendix B(iii) Interview with children – semi structured questions.

Indicative Interview Questions for child participants and their parents/caregivers

Researcher: Sarah Probine

Title of research: The visual arts as a learning tool in an early childhood setting.

Date:/..... /2014

This interview is for the four children and their parents/caregivers who volunteer to discuss their art work and art making in greater detail. Before the interview begins the researcher will remind the participants that at any time they would like to stop the interview they are free to do so. The interview will be video recorded and then transcribed.

To begin I will explain the purpose of this research project and why this topic is of interest to me. Several semi-structured interview questions have been to allow children and their parents/caregivers to express their views in their own way. A selection of the child's artwork will be available for the child and their parent/caregiver to refer to.

Questions for children

1. Which of your artwork would you like to talk about today?
2. Why did you choose to make art about this idea?
3. How does making art help you to think about ideas and express them in your art?

Questions for parents

1. What do you think about the art your child makes at this service?
2. What are your perspectives on the use of visual arts as a learning tool?
3. How do you think your child is given opportunities to learn through the visual arts?

Researcher: Sarah Probine. Phone 021 2949373

Email: spro018@aucklanduni.ac.nz

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