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Fragments, Kant, Lyotard, and Earthquakes: A mosaic of memory and broken pieces

Key words: Fragments, sublime, memory, Lyotard, Kant, art, affect, pedagogy, mosaic, earthquakes

Abstract: This paper explores the responses by a group of children to an art project that was undertaken by a small school in New Zealand after the September 2010 and February 2011 Christchurch earthquakes. Undertaken over a period of two years, the project aimed to find a suitable form of memorialising this significant event in a way that was appropriate and meaningful to the community. Alongside images that related directly to the event of the earthquakes, the art form of a mosaic was chosen, and consisted of images and symbols that clearly drew on the hopes and dreams of a school community who were refusing to be defined by the disaster. The paper 'writes' the mosaic by placing fragments of speech spoken by the children involved in relation to ideas about memory, affect, and the 'sublime', through the work of Immanuel Kant and Jean-Francois Lyotard. The paper explores the mosaic as constituted by the literal and metaphorical 'broken pieces' of the city of Christchurch in ways that confer pedagogic value inscribed through the creation of a public art space by children.

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Introduction: Writing a mosaic

This paper explores the responses by a group of children to an art project that was undertaken by a small school in New Zealand after the September 2010 and February 2011 Christchurch earthquakes. The purpose of the project was to capture and memorialise both the collective trauma suffered by the children and wider school community, and the accompanying notions of hope and resiliency that became an important dimension to the collective project of rebuilding lives and communities in the Canterbury region. Over a period of two years, the school undertook a project to build a mosaic in the corner of the school grounds. Every child in the school and every member of staff, including administrators and caretakers, contributed to the project in some form. After a ceremony that included a member of parliament laying the last tile, the mosaic was officially opened to the school and community as a space of collective commemoration that testified both to the trauma of the event of the earthquakes and the trauma-legacy that occurred in its wake.



However, the mosaic also consisted of images and symbols that clearly drew on the hopes and dreams of a school community who were refusing to be defined by the disaster. The interviews that that inform this paper were conducted a couple of months after the opening ceremony and over two years since the beginning of the project. As such, the paper enters into the dialogue

with the students when the process of making the mosaic has finished and the space itself has become absorbed into the everyday built environment of the school.

Following an ethnographic approach to interviewing that places value on the embodied relationality between the interviewer and informant (Okely, 1992), the interviews were conducted at the site of the mosaic. Selected children made the trek across a sodden playing field to talk with me about their role in the production of the mosaic. Split into four circular panels on the ground, each panel from the mosaic



corresponded to a moment that was deemed significant in the narrative trajectory of the 'story' of the disaster. Placed in the centre of the circle delineated by the panels was a hexagonal chair that itself circled a planted tree, and it is here that the 'story' was told to me by the students as we sat at and wandered around the tiled



mosaic space. One panel depicted the town, Kaiapoi, before the earthquakes. The broad smiles on the townsfolk as they go about their



business, and the sun is shining, there are

Kaiapoi River is gleaming in the sun. The next panel captures the major earthquake as it is happening. Houses are seen to be off kilter with falling chimneys, people are falling over, the iconic Christchurch Cathedral loses its spire, and an image of the seismograph as recorded for the Kaiapoi area, cuts dramatically across the panel. The next panel is more circumspect. There are still broken houses and not everything looks harmonious, but there is an image of a 'helping hand', and messages in Maori about keeping strong. The colour palette has shifted from the dramatic pairing of red and black of the previous panel, and once again incorporates bright colours that are found in the pre-Earthquake panel, symbolising hope and restoration.

The final panel is the 'future-perfect' panel. It depicts Kaiapoi in a state of complete recovery. The Tuhoë boat sails triumphantly down the river. The houses are built, there are children laughing,



and rather curiously, new animal forms populate the banks of the river. The river gleams in the sun and the panel depicts a version of Kaiapoi that is simultaneous rebuilt and unbroken.



The following paper presents fragments of statements taken from the interviews that occurred as the children spoke about the panels and as we strolled around the circumference of the mosaic in the bright sunshine with heat emanating from the brick tiles. The purpose of the paper is to explore the fragments of memory that appeared with the children like the shining pieces of tiles that on this day had the gleaming quality of polished jewels. While ostensibly speaking about the process of making the mosaic, through the act of talking and interacting with the artwork the children moved to topics that they associated with the memory of the earthquakes. During these sometimes-fantastic meanderings, the children spoke of their emotional experiences and memories of a time 'before' the physical-geographical and emotional ruptures of the earthquakes. They also spoke of a fearful, anxious time during the earthquakes, an altered present context, and a sometimes-hopeful articulation of a projected better future. As such, the paper tries to honour these fragments of memories through incorporating the mosaic as 'writing apparatus' (in the Deleuzian sense of (dis)ordered structure) (Deleuze, 1986) in which different pieces of dialogue and memory are placed side by side. The aim of the paper is to 'write the mosaic' by utilising these fragments to draw a bigger picture that speaks to the discontinuities between the trauma and triumph of the children's lived experiences of a significant natural disaster. The paper reads the fragments of dialogue alongside the work of Jean-Francois Lyotard and his work on memory, the sublime, and aesthetic affect.

A sublime rupture in the present

"And it's broken, so it can't get any more broken"



What happens to the way we interact and view the world when that world starts moving under our feet? There is a small but growing literature on post-disaster responses and the role education plays in alleviating trauma and the cohesive role that schools play in the wider community in response to trauma (for two recent examples see Mutch, 2014a, 2014b; Mutch & Gawith, 2014). In the context of this fragment of the paper, the statement ‘And it’s broken, so it can’t get any more broken’ refers to a moment in the interview with a group of children when the conversation turned to the constant aftershocks that have occurred in Christchurch since the two major earthquakes (Marlow and Bogen’s paper in this series refers to the official recording of tens of thousands of aftershocks of significance since the 2010 earthquake, the last of which was recorded 36 hours before the writing of their current paper). This statement was spoken when the group of children and I walked the perimeter of the mosaic site and the inevitable queries surfaced as to whether the mosaic itself was safe from the aftershocks or more earthquakes. This statement can be read in the literal sense of the mosaic consisting of broken pieces in the form of broken tiles so any further earthquake-induced ‘breakages’ become null in void, or even impossible. However a reflexive approach to research, in which the self-referencing mechanism of retelling the interview has the capacity to produce alternative readings, provides the space for a different and less literal interpretation of this statement to emerge (Davies, 1999). To do this, this fragment of the paper recalls another response to an earthquake that occurred over 250 years ago alongside the present statement about brokenness, and one person’s answers to the implications of the shifting of the earth beneath his feet.

In 1755 the city of Lisbon suffered a devastating earthquake whose aftershocks were felt across Europe. According to Jones (2013), a lesser-known reaction to the disaster was from Immanuel Kant who, at this stage in the early phase of his career, set about writing three ‘earthquake essays’ with an aim to present the best available research at that time on their causes. While Jones challenges the overall efficacy of this research in terms of its relevance to contemporary understandings of earthquakes, she places the significance of the essays in the context of their continuing impact on Kant’s wider philosophical thinking. The Lisbon earthquake, says Jones, ‘continues to send tremors through Kant’s later writing’, specifically in relation to his developing notion of the ‘sublime’ (Jones, 2013, p. 274). Jones goes on to define the Kantian sublime as the terror felt when one is confronted with either ‘nature’s apparently uncontainable infinity or by its awe-inspiring power’ (274). The oft-quoted depiction of the sublime in nature with which Kant takes his inspiration and where the legacy of the earthquake as a natural disaster can be seen in his later work, is the dramatic mountain range or

the thundering waterfall. This is for Kant a terrifying experience where the magnitude of the sublime encounter with nature is too big for the mind to synthesize in all its vast expansiveness, and instead we are left in a state of being that is, literally, awe-struck. 'In such an encounter the subject confronts that which is "excessive for the imagination" and which, Kant says, is like "an abyss in which the imagination is afraid to lose itself"' (Kant cited in Jones, 2013, p. 274).

While the 'terror' Kant articulates through the notion of the sublime resonates with many of the children's statements about the anxiety and fear experienced during and after the earthquakes in Christchurch, the statement under analysis here about the way the mosaic can escape destruction 'because it's already broken' can now be reread in a more triumphant, even pleasurable way. The resilient psychological stance and the wilful defiance of adversity was a quality that was constantly reinforced throughout the conversations with the children. When the student articulated this positive statement about brokenness, it was met with resounding approval and agreement from the other students. While not wanting to belittle the terrifying aspects of experiencing a natural disaster, as these children certainly did, this more triumphant tenor that was struck by the students when talking of the resilience of the mosaic points to an added dimension to the Kantian sublime. 'The delight in the sublime does not so much involve positive pleasure as admiration or respect', Kant tells us. As such it 'merits the name of a negative pleasure' (Kant, 1952, p. 495). In some interesting ways, it was this 'negative pleasure' – in surviving, in living through, in seeing the destruction and then witnessing the eventual reconstruction - that added such a vibrancy and vitality to the children's recollections, and the mosaic itself. Instead of interpreting the panel of the earthquake 'in motion' with the jet black image of the seismograph surrounded by the deep blood red as brutally violent, the students instead spoke of their pride in the black and red colours of the Canterbury rugby team (which also happened to be the colour scheme of their school uniforms as pointed out immediately after first acknowledging the Canterbury Crusaders!).

To further develop this idea of the sublime as a 'negative' pleasure and the intriguing mix of defiance, pride, fear, and triumph that the students so effectively conveyed during the interviews, we turn now to the mosaic as an affective artwork in its own right. While the Kantian version of the sublime would take a prominent place in the *Critique of Judgement* particularly, it is an appropriation by Lyotard of the sublime placed in the service of art that helps extend the discussion towards the affectivity of the mosaic. According to Lyotard, art derives its power from an encounter that involves 'magnitude, force, quantity in its purest state, a 'presence' that exceeds what imaginative thought can grasp at once in a form' (Lyotard, 1994, p. 53). Drawing on the Kantian notion of the sublime as an encounter beyond the synthesizing capacities of the mind, Lyotard instead focuses on the sublime

encounter within art as involving sensorial affect that pierces daily reality and ‘moves’ us in ways that are unique and site-specific. Like Kant, the sublime for Lyotard occurs when the encounter cannot be represented. Kant’s awesome feat of nature, such as the mountain range or thundering waterfall, for Lyotard is transplanted to the shuddering affect one feels when confronted with a work of art. Rather than locate the sublime in nature like Kant, Lyotard instead locates the infinite dimension of the sublime in the most immediate and subtle sensations of a sensorial event. Such an event is singularly irreplaceable and infinitely unique. Lyotard explains the openness to nuance the sublime initiates in the following:

‘a singular, incomparable quality – unforgettable and immediately forgotten – of the grain of a skin or a piece of wood, the fragrance of an aroma, the savour of a secretion or a piece of flesh, as well as a timbre or a nuance... They all designate the event of a passion, a passability for which the mind will not have been prepared, which will have unsettled it and of which it conserves only the feeling – anguish and jubilation – of an obscure debt’ (Lyotard, 1991, p. 141).

In line with the mosaic as experienced as a sensorial event, throughout the day of interviews every student at some point spoke of their pride in the mosaic. This pride was intermingled with a sense of achievement at the completion of a project well done, but there was also a pervading sense from the students that the mosaic *belonged* to them. ‘People can come here and spend time here and it’s like our own place that we can share with others sort of thing’ one student explained. However alongside this sense of belonging and ownership was the way one student in particular spoke about the mosaic panels as if they were living entities that affected her by being both really interesting to look at and spend time with, whilst also providing a sense of solidity and security. She explains:

‘I come here quite a lot, like after school and stuff like that. Like I’ve got this thing . . . after school today I’ll come down and say ‘see ya, see you on Monday’. Because I always come and see them after school. So I quite like it because I feel like it’s home to me sometimes’.

In a Lyotardian context, this student articulates the encounter with the mosaic as a work of art that draws on the ‘negative pleasure’ of the sublime that speaks to an inherent loneliness or solitariness that is awakened or nudged into being by the artwork. However, the student is also signalling an ‘excess’ to the mosaic that speaks to a presence that obliges her to say goodbye and to reassure the mosaic that she will back ‘on Monday’ to wander about and soak in the different colours, images, and feelings. By talking to the mosaic the student is tacitly acknowledging that the mosaic speaks to her, thus fulfilling the ethical dimension of the sublime encounter that demands a response, but carries with it the obligation to ‘address and carry forward’ (Lyotard, 1997, p. 229). To return to the

opening fragment, the already 'broken' of the physical form the mosaic as made up of lots of fragments, exists alongside an excess that shares with its interlocutor the resilience of being unable to be broken, or break, any further. To 'carry forward' is seen in the return of this student, and children from her school, to the mosaic every day to continue their interaction and 'conversations' further.



Pieces of Memory

“An alligator brushing his teeth by the swamp”



After a morning of interview groups of children, the school then organised individual students who had been involved with the mosaic from its inception to completion to come and speak to me. Like the group interviews, these individual interviews were conducted at the site of the mosaic. The very last student to be interviewed provided some of the most intriguing statements in relation to her memory of the earthquakes and the nostalgia she felt for a world and life that had been altered significantly and had perhaps even disappeared in the aftermath of the disaster. When asked at the top of the interview about her school history, it transpired that this student had moved to the school in Kaiapoi because the family had been forced to relocate to Kaiapoi from their badly damaged house in a nearby suburb. As we were standing

looking at one of the panels in the mosaic the student recounted a favourite activity that belonged to the old house (and her life 'before') that was prompted by reflecting on the artwork:

'I had good memories in that place. It was quite hard ... like my mum's bedroom was right next to my bedroom and in the night when I used to start crying mum used to bring me into her room 'cos I missed her... And we used to lie in bed and mum used to put the torch on. And we had this roof and it had all these, like, decorations sort of things on it. And I always used to find this alligator! It looked like an alligator was brushing his teeth by the swamp. So that was my challenge. Whenever I'd go into mum's bed I'd see if I could see it'.

This activity for the student, even though it was prompted by night terrors, was recalled with fondness. The activity for this student involved the imagination where out of nowhere, mysterious animal-like forms with even more mysterious and incongruous habits would appear. A unique dimension to the mosaic as a school project was the way the children designed the layout and content from the very beginning, allowing for some life forms to appear on the banks of the Kaiapoi River in the 'future' panel that were indecipherable to the adult gaze. Standing in the middle of the space surrounded by the four mosaic panels, this student did not hesitate to articulate her creative desire to form shapes out of formless, thin air. This was a pleasurable thing for her to do, and as we continued to walk amongst the panels as we were talking, the student continued the activity recounted in the story by stopping to point out different tiles and shapes in the mosaic that related to other memories. A piece of broken pottery salvaged from the destroyed house was singled out; an unknown entity with the name of a 'crockfish' that was meandering the border of one of the panels was introduced to me.

Throughout this interview it became apparent that the mosaic itself served an important function in the preserving of small, and perhaps insignificant, fragments of the everyday that had disappeared and existed now only through the prompting of an artwork that was itself made of broken pieces of pottery, tiles, and bricks, remembered in a previous time and context to the earthquakes and in different forms. Within Lyotard's lexicon, another dimension that is linked to art as a sublime and affective encounter is the testimony art provides to memory. For Lyotard, this testimony involves a lack of representation that bears witness to 'apparition over appearance. Yet, in appearance and through the means of appearance' (Lyotard, 2004, p. 103). In some interesting and perhaps unintentional ways, the mosaic provides its own 'apparitions' akin to the alligator brushing his teeth in the variety of images the children drew and created. To move a step further, perhaps too these apparitions 'appear' through the broken tiles and smashed pottery in ways that 'testify' to lives, memories and experiences of the past that are no longer represented in the present. Seen from this

Lyotardian perspective, memory is 'hidden' in the discontinuous pieces and fragments of pottery that appear in another form, and in doing so, add to the affective potentiality of the mosaic as a 'means of appearance'.

Related to the notions of appearance and memory is the extent to which the decision to create a mosaic at this school differed from other responses from schools towards the earthquakes. In the same interview, the student talked of how incredibly lucky she felt that she belonged to a school that was brave enough to attempt such a large project. Rather than a photographic record of the earthquakes and its effects, the school opted for a form of artwork that existed as far back as Ancient Greece. This also has resonance in Lyotard's analyses of art in that unlike digitised technologies such as photography and the ubiquitous iPhone video, there is instead a 'permanence' and concreteness to the mosaic which means it cannot be easily deleted. For instance, in the *Postmodern Condition* Lyotard talks of the way certain forms of knowledge and experience are under threat because of their inability to be put to use for productive means. As such, anything that cannot be quantifiable or turned into 'data' can disappear so that room can be made for new information. Accordingly, 'the pragmatics of scientific knowledge replaces traditional knowledge or knowledge based on revelation' (Lyotard, 1984, p. 44). In an important way, this student and many other students articulated their delight that the mosaic would be there when they had moved on to high school and they would always be able to return:

'Other schools have ... made like photo albums and dvd's. Our one is different. And it's permanent'

Hidden Desires and Meanings

"A place to talk about boys"

Sitting on the wooden seat at the centre of the mosaic with one of the older girls, muddy cowboy boots and scuffed school shoes poking at the grouting between red bricks, there was a break in conversation as we silently meditated on the bright colours of the mosaic and the school vista in the distance. I turned to the student and commented how easy it was to be contemplative in this spot. The vibrant colours of the mosaic and the lush green of the playing field set against a luminous blue sky echoed the contrasting colours and energy of the mosaic tiles. The student agreed and began talking about how she engaged with the space alongside her friends away from the surveillance of adults as, among other things, 'a place to talk about boys'. This hidden dimension of what the children spoke about away from listening adults hints at the absorption of this site into everyday realities where the artistic vibrancy of the mosaic space has become entangled with the dynamic and layered ebbs and flows of the lived lives and everyday realities of the children. The student gently

elaborated her encounters with the mosaic space, her friends, and their casual conversations in the following:

Well sometimes when my friends are here it starts off with boys and then it switches when we all just take the time to look at this. We all start cracking up laughing about those times we all did something funny here. And then those times back in the earthquake.

This comment spans a temporal and emotional trajectory that charts a present engagement with the mosaic that involves hopes, dreams, desires, and the hint of unknown futures. It also traces back to ‘those times’ when the earthquakes occurred and in so doing, encompasses the emotional maelstrom of terror and bewilderment and the transition to acceptance and absorption of the disruption and event of the quakes into daily reality. This timeframe also includes the process of making the mosaic, where the students kneeled and sat together when they were placing the mosaic pieces made of their crockery from their own homes onto the demarcated spaces in the ground. As the story telling portrayed by each mosaic panel became clearer to understand and articulate through the construction of images, the children chatted and made jokes so that their lived experience of making a work of art was infused through the artwork in ways where lives and art intermingled and conjoined. The statement above also points to the transition of living ‘through’ the artwork as construction and artistic process, to living ‘on top’ of the site. Next to the mosaic site is a wooden fitness structure from which the students would sit in pairs or small groups and look from above down onto the mosaic space. Taking the time to look, to contemplate, to remember the jokes and fun for the students also prompted reminders of the confusion and unease of the earthquakes but in ways that made meaning for the children away from adult narrations and meaning-making processes of the quakes.

Recalling Lyotard’s appropriation of the Kantian sublime, the children’s interactions with the mosaic as a process of art making and construction through to an engagement with a completed artwork, signify a shift from perceiving the ground as a site of terror into a space of wonder where images tell stories through dynamic and imaginative interactions with the space. For Lyotard, “the inadequacy of images, as negative signs, attests to the immense power of Ideas” (1991, p. 91), and while the mosaic panels tell a ‘story’ of the earthquake experience for the children, it also points to the inadequacy, or ‘negativity’ of a stable and all-encompassing narrative that fits all stories, memories and interpretations of the earthquakes, the aftermath of the earthquakes, and the responses through art that the mosaic in this context symbolises. As ‘a place to talk about boys’, the site of the mosaic blends, ‘glues’, and juxtaposes the fragments of memory in ways that animate the present.

Sublime Fright and Wicked Delight

“A Story without words”



The process of making the mosaic was a long one, involving many different steps that developed the competencies of the children to the point where completing the project could become a reality. The group of three photos that head this section tell a story of the complexities involved in developing the artistic skills of the students. The first photo is a collection of drawings the first group of students made that involved a brainstorming of all the images that the children remembered as being important to the days of the earthquakes. There are fire trucks, ambulances, and buildings that have partially collapsed. At the left hand side of the first photo there is a pencil sketch of a small child crying. The child has no facial features, yet the gesture and positioning of the arms and the cradling of the face in the hands conveys very clearly a sense of agony and emotional turmoil. As one of the very first sessions with the children, this group of preliminary sketches provided the initial blueprint for the first mosaic panel and many of these images, including the crying child, would be incorporated into the design of the mosaic. The second photo of this image is a later stage in the pedagogical process of teaching the students, and is a paper collage that prepared the students for the technical aspects of laying tiles. However, in this collage the small child now has bright blue eyes and a large red mouth that enhance the agonised but faceless previous sketch. The outline of the body and the bodily gestures are exactly the same, yet the child has been reworked and filled in with colour, thus making the anonymous child-figure somehow both more universal and more ‘human’. The final image depicts the child in mosaic form, head slightly askew, eyes welling with blue tears and hands framing a mouth in an oval shape of bright red horror. The emotional vibrancy of this image, and the development by different children over time to this vibrancy and energy in the different iterations of the image, echoes Edvard Munch’s iconic *The Scream* (1893). Importantly the original title given by Munch was *The Scream of Nature (Der Schrei der Natur)*, where the confrontation between inner human turmoil and the outward violent unpredictability of nature is depicted by a

lone figure in the foreground surrounded by a swirling blood-red sky, face frozen in an expression of unmitigated horror as two figures in the background walk into the distance leaving the lone figure to suffocate in desolation and isolation in their wake.

The emotional intensification of the crying child that occurred in the process of transferring pencil sketch to completed mosaic signalled a direction the children spoke about in the interviews as we continued carousing the different panels. Speaking excitedly and passionately in a small group, one student pointed out the mosaic was 'a story without words'. The other children enthusiastically agreed, and each one added another statement in support:

It's just like a story of pictures without words!

It's our picture book!

It's our human picture book!

The depiction of a 'story without words' when read through the development of the first sketches signalled more than simply an absence of words for the children, but also an 'excess' of feelings and imaginings that went further than the visual representations of the earthquakes. Just as each image developed toward a conceptual whole in the form of the completed mosaic, the narratives and collective articulations of the stories of the quakes also accumulated more emotional intensity as the fragments of different memories, crockery, and images began to speak of things beyond what the children were prepared or even capable of saying. While the mosaic can be read as a series of troubling and sad perceptions and interpretations of the human cost of the earthquakes, there was also present in their interactions with the mosaic space an engagement that reached beyond the negative to something that resembled more of a 'wicked delight' that seemed to dwell and swirl in the emotional and physical fissures opened by the earthquakes. The exuberance with which the children recounted their stories as they skipped and jumped, giggled and squealed, ran and leapfrogged from one panel to the next, was filled with energy and joy; these were sad images and stories that spoke of very 'grown up' and adult dimensions of loss and tragedy, but for the children, the mosaic site overflowed with potential to challenge dominant (adult) interpretations with their own interpretations. *This is our picture book* stakes a claim about owning the mosaic, but implicit within it is also the demarcation of the space away from the 'adult' anxieties and worries of the earthquakes and post-earthquake reactions. To quote Jones's interpretations of Kant's earthquake essays, the 'earthquake as abyssal event' (2013, p. 298) for the children was certainly present in terms of terror and catastrophe, but also entwined within the 'sublime shock' of this event there also opened spaces for adventure, excitement, and the spaces for 'wicked delight'.



Conclusion

“I feel like it was made for me”

This paper has placed different fragments of speech, memory, ideas, and feelings of a group of children in an attempt to ‘write’ the mosaic in a way that echoed the artistic process the children undertook when they committed to designing and making their own artwork. Lyotard’s work on the Kantian sublime explores the ‘negative pleasure’ involved in an engagement with aesthetic experience. Through artistic expression and through the long process of making a significant work of art, the children interviewed for this project displayed a myriad of complex and often complicated responses to the trauma of the earthquake events. Not all of these responses, feelings, and interactions with the mosaic space can be read as purely painful; in fact, the children displayed incredible amounts of resourcefulness, resilience, and even pleasure during the long journey of making the mosaic and through their continuous interactions with the space in their everyday lives. Lyotard’s interpretation of the Kantian sublime emphasises its double-sided dimension that intermingles pleasure and pain in ways that produce the feeling that accompanies evocations of the ‘unpresentable’, as a lack of presentation, through art. This notion has been utilised in this paper in the context of the unthinkable shock these children underwent in their lived experiences of the quakes and the continuing trauma of living on unstable ground, but also importantly in the creation of an artwork that produces its own testimony to the Lyotardian aesthetic notion that through art, “something happens rather than nothing” (1991, p. 90). Through art, the collective and individual memories of the quakes are embedded into the work in ways that bare witness to what cannot be articulated by the children, but are ‘said’ through images and artistic affect.

It is this point in the paper that pedagogical questions may be asked, particularly: what can we learn from the process? While this paper is not advocating a 'scaling up' of this process to all communities who experience significant trauma, there are however some important pedagogical implications that can be drawn from the construction of this mosaic in Kaiapoi. Of particular significance is the pedagogical value conferred through the way that this type of artwork, in this instance a mosaic, is permanent. While photos and videos have their own form of life, the children spoke of their happiness with the solid 'concreteness' of the mosaic. In an age where digital images and recordings have become as instant and accessible as any hand-held phone or tablet, and are constantly under threat of 'deletion' as Lyotard observes, the tangible, touchable, static dimensions to the mosaic offered the children a space of continuity and stillness at a time when the ground they stood on, the buildings, and life as they knew it, were constantly shifting and moving. Another significant aspect to the creation of the artwork was the way in which children were at the very centre of every step of the process. While teachers, researchers, artists, and many more adults were intricately involved, it was the children who led the design, who decided on the themes of each mosaic panel, and who smashed, sorted, and laid the tiles and crockery to form the work. It has also been the children who continue to animate the art space by playing, wondering, imagining, and living their lives on top and in the spaces of the artwork. This living, crucially, is also predominantly away from adults, allowing the site to be interpreted and engaged with in ways that lie outside the remit of adult forms of meaning making. This is a space that allows casual conversations about boys, about memories of times before the quakes, of quiet times for contemplation, and rambunctious times for revelling in the joys of living. It is a space, according to one child, that feels 'like it was made for me'.

Finally, as a work of art that memorialises a significant trauma in the lives of those who lived through the earthquakes, the mosaic at the heart of this paper opened a space that, drawing on Kant and Lyotard, offered a passage where the moving earth and the concomitant shock involved in the earthquakes provided a 'sublime' encounter through art that was not limited to horror and trauma. Instead as the fragments of this paper attest, the promise provided through the artistic process and the completed artspace were imbued with the promise of transformation and shared adventures wherein the earthquakes have not been the defining event in these children's lives, but a shaking out and beginning of wonders and delight to come.

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