

emagazine of professional practice  
for early childhood educators  
in Aotearoa New Zealand

## Kia Ora Koutou

### Welcome to the 17th issue of ecARTnz

The articles in this issue describe exciting creative work with children using a wide range of materials and technologies. As Malaguzzi once said, “the wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivations and the richer their experiences” (1998, p. 79).

Donna Williams describes the process of creating a wild and wonderful storybook with the children at Elm Street Early Learning Centre. Donna worked intentionally to support the children to be collaborative authors and illustrators, cleverly combining storytelling, drawing and digital technology.

The rich possibilities of woodwork are celebrated by Peter Moorhouse from the UK, who explores early childhood learning and creativity through this traditional material.

*Awarua and the Dragon* was an innovative story-based project carried out between two kindergartens on opposite sides of the world, one in New Zealand and one in China. Lisa Terreni, Jane Zhou, Judith Loveridge and I worked together to research emergent learning for children, teachers and families when exploring local myths and stories through the language of art.

Margaret Brooks has written about the International Association for Art in Early Childhood. Read about this fabulous organisation and the bi-annual conference which we are incredibly excited to be hosting in January 2019 at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

Finally, Robin Nathan gives us an update on the latest creative offerings of FleaBite - marvellous music that is adored by young children throughout New Zealand. Check out the YouTube link Robin has shared to hear one of FleaBite’s hilarious tunes.

I hope you are inspired by this issue.

Rachel Denee

Guest Editor.



# ec ART nZ

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**Issue 17, 2018**

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## Stories

### **For the love of language, literacy, art and lunatic stories**

by Donna Williams

### **The art of woodwork in early years education**

by Peter Moorhouse

### **Awarua and the dragon**

by Lisa Terreni, Rachel Denee, Jane Zhou and Judith Loveridge

### **The International Association of Art in Early Childhood**

by Margaret Brooks

### **Arty music: FleaBite's latest musical offerings**

by Robin Nathan

8th International  
Art in Early Childhood Conference  
Art as Dialogue



# For the love of language, literacy, art and lunatic stories

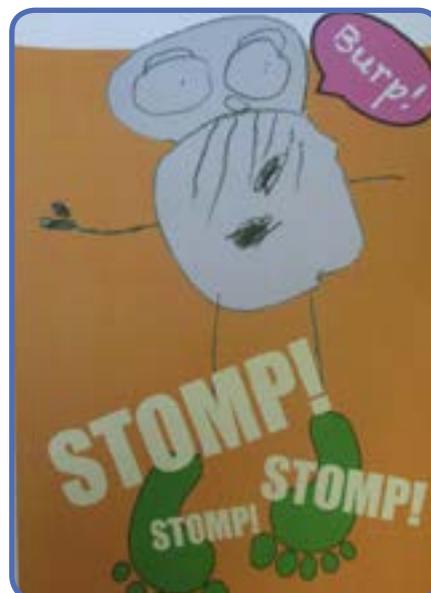
**Donna Williams**

Storytelling in-the-round (where everyone takes turn telling a story in a circle) is something my husband and I enjoyed initiating with our three boys when they were young and we were travelling long distances. It alleviated the tedium, broke the chant of "Are we there yet?", and the imaginativeness of these stories kept us sane. Unfortunately, I didn't get around to documenting the wonderful imaginings we came up with on those trips. However, at Elm Tree Early Learning Centre the children are more than willing to keep this type of storytelling rolling, and thus I have begun another journey of children's wackiness for all to enjoy. This type of storytelling is a fun way of encouraging the children to express their ideas, think on their feet, draw wonderful creatures, and expel all their nuttiness through words and images.

This tale begins with a small group of four children and myself huddled in a circle under the veranda while the rain gushed down into the playground. I had a picturebook in my hand and enthusiastically attempted to enlighten them about the inspiring work of authors and illustrators, and how cool it could be to have their names printed in the books that they had worked on. What child doesn't want to see their name in lights (or ink)? As a result of this warm up, I had a ready and willing team of authors begging to start.

I handed over the task of beginning our story to John, one of the boys who enjoys telling a good yarn but, alas, he shrugged his shoulders and his mouth (that is usually open and extremely vocal), stayed firmly shut. So, I offered the usual prompt of, "Once upon a time...", but was again met with silence. "Okay" I said. "How about I begin the story?" and all their little faces lit up with great expectation. With a flash of insight about the Centre's worm farm, I began with "Long, long ago, in a land where there was mud and slime, and not much else, there was a giant worm. His name was Wilbur."

Then I handed the continuing sentence over to John, who piped up loudly with "poo, poo, poo". Curiously, I felt that this didn't quite fit in with the previous text, so I prompted him to think of what Wilbur's world might be like, or what other characters Wilbur might come across in his land. Sitting next to John was a Sam who asked if she could have a turn. I was thrilled she wanted to participate and keen to hear how she might add to the story. "And Wilbur went poo, poo, poo!" she said, having a good old giggle along with everyone else. Clearly my message wasn't getting through so I suggested that we keep poo out of the story and instead talk about who Wilbur might meet.

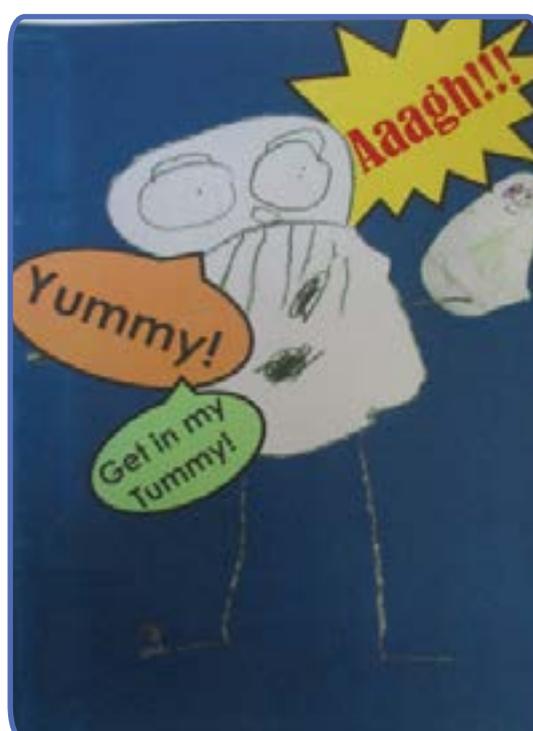
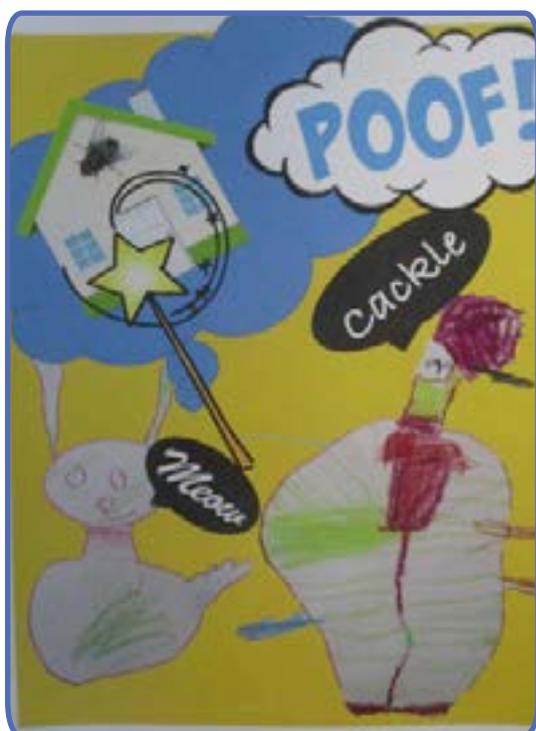


I asked Sam to give it another go. “Wilbur met a witch. She turned his house into a cat” she said. “Yes!” I exclaimed, grinning like a crazy lady. “That’s wonderful!” And so, we continued ... “Then she turned Wilbur into a frog” and “The frog ran away and the witch brought a monster out, and the monster ate the frog.” They were getting the hang of it, and it was very exciting for all of us. We finished with: “The monster had big, stomping feet, and there was no giant worm again” and “The witch is still there in the land of mud and slime.” I couldn’t have been happier, and the children were very excited when I read their story back to them.

Now that we had the words to our story, we needed to enthuse some children to take on the role of illustrators. I printed out black and white pictures of worms, cats, frogs, and witches (but not the monster as I wanted to see what could be produced without prompts). I chose to print the pictures in black and white so the children felt free to use any colours they wished. The reason for using these prompts was simple – to deviate away from the children’s “I can’t do it” malady. Using the prompts, I could investigate the images with the children by pointing out the simple shapes. For example, a cat has triangular ears, a circular head, a bigger circular body, and a long curvy tail. The result of a little bit of guidance was spectacular. We had five illustrators and each of them drew and coloured a masterpiece, fit for their quirky story.

Putting the book together took a bit of time and patience. Although I’ve had a lot of experience using Photoshop and Publisher, I chose Powerpoint as it is simple to use. Most teachers know this application and so it can assist them to give this process a go. In addition, Powerpoint can remove the backgrounds from most images, and it is easy to position images and text together on a page. To enliven the storyline and support the children’s illustrations I searched the internet to find straightforward graphics, and combined them to make a colourful montage that the children could mull over and discuss.

A “big book”, as well standard A4 sized books were printed and bound for our children to enjoy, and each child involved in the process took home their own copy to enjoy with their families. The process of making up a story, creating the art work, and then developing and producing the book was a wonderful co-construction between children and I and gave us all a great deal of joy.



### Further reading:

Shuker, M.J. & Terreni, L. (2013). Self-authored e-books: Expanding young children’s literacy experiences and skills. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 38(3), 17–24. Available from [https://www.victoria.ac.nz/education/pdf/Terreni\\_Shuker-Self-Authored-ebooks.pdf](https://www.victoria.ac.nz/education/pdf/Terreni_Shuker-Self-Authored-ebooks.pdf)

# The art of woodwork in early years education

**Peter Moorhouse**



Woodwork has a long tradition within Early Years (EY) education ever since the days of Froebel over 180 years ago. Right from the onset of nursery education in the UK woodwork was firmly embraced. There was even a monthly journal *Hand and Eye* (published 1882 to 1902), which was dedicated to promoting woodworking and other craft work in kindergartens. In New Zealand woodwork (called carpentry) was, and continues to be, considered an important part of an early childhood education programme in many early learning services.

These are exciting times and I have witnessed a surge of renewed interest in woodwork provision in EY education right around the world. This can be seen by the increasing sales in workbenches and tools from EY educational suppliers. The benefits of woodwork are immense across all areas of learning because children often show the most extraordinary levels of concentration and engagement for sustained periods of time when they are engaged in this type of learning experience. Anyone who has witnessed young children deeply engaged, tinkering away with tools will know just how magical it can be.

The increasing popularity of woodwork is because there has been a reaction by many teachers and parents to our increasingly digitised world. In my view we are seeing a new generation of children that have learnt to swipe before they can walk. Children are often surrounded by complex digital technologies that have limited their experience of basic technology, having fewer opportunities to watch, learn and understand hands-on processes with materials such as wood. Today many children may never use tools throughout their entire education, and in recent years there has been a marked decline of woodwork in UK primary and secondary schools. Woodwork in the early years, however, can be seen to engage children's hands and minds, allowing them to actively explore their physical world.

There is something really special about woodwork. The smell and feel of wood, using real tools, working with a natural material, the sounds of hammering and sawing, hands and minds working together to express their imagination and to solve problems, the use of strength and coordination all go together to captivate young children's interests. Woodwork really stands out for me because of the high and sustained levels of engagement and the sheer enjoyment it provides. It is hugely popular with children and provides a profound learning experience. To come into a setting and hear the sounds of children happily hammering and sawing away, and to see them deeply engaged is a real delight.



For a combination of reasons woodwork is a powerful medium for building self-esteem and confidence. Children feel empowered and valued by being trusted and given responsibility to work with real tools. They accomplish tasks that they initially perceive to be difficult and they persist at challenging tasks. They show satisfaction in their mastery of new skills and take immense pride in their creations. This sense of empowerment and achievement provides a visible boost to their self-esteem and self-confidence. Children have a natural desire to construct and build. They learn how things work and discover that they can shape the world around them by making. This imparts a can-do attitude and imbues children with a strong sense of agency – having a proactive disposition towards the world – a belief they can shape their world.

Woodwork really can be central to the EY curriculum. It incorporates mathematical thinking, scientific investigation, developing knowledge of technology, a deepening understanding of the world, as well as physical development and coordination, communication and language, and personal and social development. Woodwork provides another media through which children can express themselves. Creative and critical thinking skills are central both in terms of imagination and problem-solving as children make choices, find solutions, learn through trial and error and reflect on their work.

With woodwork children can develop their learning at their own pace and find their own challenges. Once they have mastered basic skills, they move into open-ended exploration - tinkering, exploring possibilities and then making unique creations. Their imagination, creative thinking and problem-solving skills really flourish as they meet and conquer new challenges. However, it is important that we keep standards of good teaching practice high so that woodwork is a safe learning experience, and one which provides rich learning opportunities for all our children. It does take some effort establishing woodwork (gathering tools and resources) but when you see the children's enthusiasm and exceptional levels of focus, engagement, enjoyment and pride in their work it makes all the investment worthwhile.



### **Further reading:**

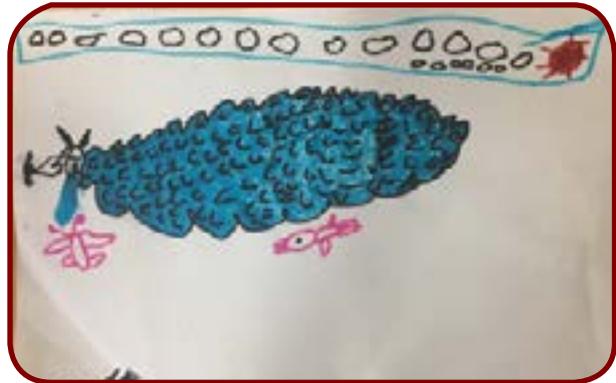
Moorhouse, P. (2018). *Learning through woodwork: Creative woodwork in the early years*. Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge.

For resources go to <https://irresistible-learning.co.uk/resources/>

**Peter Moorhouse will be presenting at the 8th International Art in Early Childhood conference**

# Awarua and the Dragon

**Rachel Denee, Lisa Terreni, Jane Zhou, Judith Loveridge**



During 2017 a joint art and storytelling research project took place in two very different kindergartens – Plimmerton Kindergarten in New Zealand and Sanyili Number 1 kindergarten in Beijing, China. The project involved teachers in both kindergartens using a children's story, *Awarua and the Dragon*, as a provocation for encouraging learning through a range of multi-literacy experiences.

The story involved two mythical creatures, a New Zealand taniwha and a Chinese dragon, who accidentally meet and develop a friendship. The story, written by one of the researchers involved in the project, draws heavily from an existing Māori legend about a taniwha called Awarua who once lived in the Porirua Harbour where Plimmerton kindergarten is situated. The story was written with an ending that was open-ended so that children (and teachers) from both kindergartens could investigate what the creatures in the story might look like, and how they lived their lives. Because the creatures were mythical rather than real, the opportunities for encouraging imaginative thinking were enhanced through the storytelling and related art learning opportunities.

The story generated opportunities for children and teachers to explore aspects of their own communities and countries through their work, and it created an exciting opportunity for cross-cultural exchange between the two kindergartens. For instance, the kindergartens used Skype to share their learning experiences with each other. They were also able to sing to each via the internet.

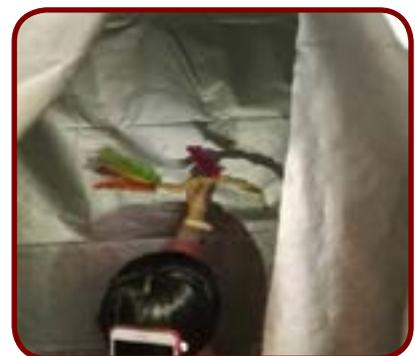


*Children at Sanyili No. 1 kindergarten create a palace for the dragon*



Children at Plimmerton Kindergarten create a large collaborative mural about their taniwha

The work created by the children from both kindergartens was rich and varied. Art-making opportunities included: drawing, painting, clay, construction and collage. Because the project was a long one, the children had the opportunity to really explore materials and become skilled at using them. New learning opportunities, such as the development of large murals, generated collaboration and group work where children shared their ideas and skills with each other. Other materials were used to explore aspects of the story, for example, blocks and playdough were used in both kindergartens to recreate aspects of the story. However, the sandpit was a favourite place to act out the story for the Plimmerton children, whereas in China the children explored telling the story through the use of light and shadow.



Importantly, the storytelling project supported teaching goals of both the Plimmerton and Sanyili No. 1 kindergarten teachers. For the teachers at Plimmerton, the project helped them to develop a stronger connection with the local community and a better understanding of local Māori history and the stories of symbolic, cultural, and social significance for this community. Strengthening their connection with the Chinese families that were using the kindergarten also occurred. For the teachers at Sanyili No 1 Kindergarten, the project gave teachers new opportunities to explore their own culture alongside the children. New directions for the writing of narrative assessments (Learning Stories) were generated. As their programmes were also changing from teacher-directed teaching to child-led and play-based teaching and learning, opportunities were opened for teacher dialogue and reflection on what was happening in these areas. Overall, the project created stimulating and exciting learning opportunities for the children and the teachers.

### Further reading:

Terreni, L., Loveridge, J., Denee, R. & Zhou, J. (2018). Awarua and the Dragon: Enhancing young children's, teachers and parents' sense of place and cultural identity through art and storytelling. *International Art in Early Childhood Research Journal*, 6, 1-11. [http://artinearlychildhood.org/journals/2018/ARTEC\\_2018\\_Research\\_Journal\\_1\\_Article\\_1\\_Terreni\\_Loveridge\\_Denee\\_Zhou.pdf](http://artinearlychildhood.org/journals/2018/ARTEC_2018_Research_Journal_1_Article_1_Terreni_Loveridge_Denee_Zhou.pdf)

These authors will be presenting at the 8th International Art in Early Childhood conference

# International Association of Art in Early Childhood

**Margaret Brooks**



## **What is the International Association of Art in Early Childhood?**

The Association is a non-profit organisation that aims to connect those around the world who have an interest in the visual arts for young children. It aims to:

- Provide a forum for an exchange of ideas about young children and the visual arts
- Encourage and support the visual arts in early childhood
- Connect researchers in the field
- Support a biennial international conference of art in early childhood

That sounds a bit formal so, simply put, the organisation is a big, noisy family of volunteers, artists, teachers, parents, researchers and educators who are passionate about the possibilities the visual arts hold for young children. This diverse group of people comes together at the International Art in Early Childhood Conference which is held every two years to celebrate, play and discuss art and young children. Participants can submit their ideas and research to the organisation's online academic journal so that those who could not join in the conference can at least read about the amazing work being done in local and international communities (see <http://artinearlychildhood.org/journal/>).

## **A little bit of history**

The first Art in Early Childhood Conference was held in London at Roehampton University in 2005. I (a Senior lecturer at University of New England, Armidale, Australia) and my Ph D student Rosemary Richards (now a Senior lecturer at Te Ohomai, Rotorua, New Zealand) attended this conference and soon realised that this was too good to be a one-off event. So with the permission of Tina Bruce, the conference organiser, we took this event back to the University of New England in 2007 where we were overjoyed when 165 people from 22 countries turned up. From the interest shown about early childhood art research (and on the smell of an oily rag) the International Association of Art in Early Childhood was formed in 2007. This was followed by the International Art in Early Childhood Research Journal which was set up in 2009. With help from enthusiastic colleagues around the world, I continue to encourage and support the bi-annual conferences and the journal. I also try to ensure that the focus stays on the visual arts and I always encourage educators from different cultures to be involved.



### **Conferences with a difference**

I think everyone who attended the 7th Art in Early Childhood conference in Bhutan in 2017 would agree that not only was it an excellent conference but it was also a trip of a lifetime. The stunning location combined with Bhutanese hospitality left participants with many warm memories. A few changes to the traditional format of a conference were made and well received. For example, we decided to make the conference more democratic by not having keynote speakers. Given the nature and practice of the visual arts we also increased the number of hands on workshops and offered longer sessions for paper/workshop combined sessions.

### **The 8th International Art in Early Childhood conference**

Victoria University of Wellington, in New Zealand will be the hosts for the 8th conference in January 2019. The creative juices of the new conference committee have been flowing and an amazing program is emerging. Under the vibrant and radical leadership of Lisa Terreni, they are extending the notion of inclusion and collaboration with some inspiring new formats for presentation. They also have a few surprises for us – yes, you will be singing! The conference committee has capped the number of participants to 200 to ensure that the sessions are not overcrowded. The conference website is full of information, not only about the conference themes and programme but also with where to stay and activities to do in the city.

I think that going to New Zealand is like going home. Its warm hospitality, beautiful scenery and rich culture are amazing...and their new Prime Minister, Jacinda Arden, is also the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage. There's a rumour that she has been invited to open the conference.

So get ready for the conference of a lifetime...and see you there!

To register for the conference go to <https://artinearlychildhood2019.co.nz/>



**Margaret Brooks will be presenting at the 8th International Art in Early Childhood conference**

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## Resources - Arty music

Since we last caught up with *ecARTnz*, fleaBITE won 2015 Best NZ Children's Album with *The Jungle Is Jumping*. We also won Children's Video of the Year for the popular *Don't Sit Under the Poo Tree* (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZ-YNzU2Um8>).

Rainbow's End theme park produced a professional fleaBITE dance show using our music, and there have been two new music clips developed. *Cat Scratch Fever* is a domestic drama with a happy end, and *Liver Lover* (finalist for Best NZ Music Video 2018) is a ridiculous litany of all the animals that have a liver.

We are currently working on a new album called *BITE ME*. This album has something of an animal theme (rodent parties, new puppies, bad tempered horses, and the love life of slugs), but we also include an anthem to living in South Auckland (*Probably Papakura*), and the enthralling tale of *The Skellingtons of Wellington*.

You can expect to see the new album and a *Skellingtons* video in the latter part of 2018.

Here is a link to the fleaBITE *LiverLover* song <https://fleabite.bandcamp.com/>

Robin Nathan (writer and producer).





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## Contact details

### Editorial Board information

ecARTnz, an emagazine of professional practice for early childhood educators, is a quarterly publication developed to generate new interest in visual art education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The intention of the recently established editorial board is that ecARTnz will showcase examples of teaching and learning, literature, and conferences of interest to educators in early childhood education and beyond.

Members of the editorial board are: Lisa Terreni (VUW), Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips and Janette Kelly (UoW), Beverley Clark (Unitech), Nicky de Latour and Janita Craw (AUT), Jannie Visser, Rosemary Richards (Toi Ohomai) and Lesley Pohio (UoA). Eleanor Denton is the current designer and typesetter for the magazine.

The board is responsible for promoting the magazine, writing, reviewing and editing contributions, and ensuring that the emagazine is of a consistently high standard. The views in this journal do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial board members.

The guest editor of this issue is Rachel Denee. She is a PhD candidate at Victoria University of Wellington, studying ECE teachers' practices and perceptions about art through a professional learning community. Her research interests include educational leadership, professional learning, and visual art in early childhood.

Contributions are invited for the next issue of ecARTnz. Submissions of 500-1000 words accompanied by up to 8 photographs sent as .jpgs are welcomed.

For further information please email Lisa Terreni at [lisa.terreni@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:lisa.terreni@vuw.ac.nz)