

ec ART nz

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

Kia Ora

Welcome to the 14th issue of ecARTnz!

This issue showcases three very different visual art journeys undertaken by teachers in New Zealand and Australia.

Gaye Jurisich discusses how the teachers and children at her centre explored different print-making techniques, and how this resulted in the discovery of a new art 'language' for the children.

Loretta Davis, from an early learning centre in Sydney, shares epiphanies about extending the visual arts programme, the importance of reflection, and the provision of enough time to provide a range of art learning experiences for children.

Maree Gray describes how her centre used local street art to build connections with their community, and to inspire and provoke children's own art-making experiences.

All of the stories have the common themes of active teacher engagement in the provision of visual art education. These strategies include: working alongside children, intentional teaching, and a commitment to providing quality visual art education.

We hope you will enjoy and be inspired by these stories!

Lisa Terreni



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Stories

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Street Talk: Exploring art in the centre of the city



Creating the opportunity to experiment with printmaking

By Gaye Jurisich

I have been teaching in the early childhood education sector for 30 years and in the past many teachers have said to me that their children do silk screen printing (sometimes) but most almost never seem to try out any other print-making methods. This article showcases some of the possibilities print-making can offer teachers and children. It is my hope that through this example of practice other teachers will be inspired to give simple print-making methods a go within their own teaching and learning settings.

I am currently teaching at a childcare centre in Ohaupo, south of Hamilton (see <http://www.ohaupochildcare.co.nz/>). The centre caters for 3 to 5 year-olds, and our team is made up of three qualified teachers. We have all been keen to offer the children opportunities to explore the visual arts in a significant way. Inspired by Einstein, who once said "I never teach my students. I only provide the conditions in which they can learn", our team embarked on a series on new learning opportunities for the children by venturing into an exploration of print-making processes. My thinking was that the children needed to have a chance to first explore simple print-making so that they could gain expertise and competence. As an artist myself, I know that the skill acquisition of: following a process, setting a goal and persevering through to the end, designing a print that reflects creative thinking, and mastering the skills of holding a pencil, scissors, and painting tools are all useful transferable skills. However, as the project transpired I began to consider the dispositions of learning more deeply and wondered what we might learn as a group because through watching the engaged and sustained work of children I realised they were teaching me just as much as I was teaching them!



And so began a partnership between the children and teachers. I know that teachers should not succumb to thinking that there are fixed stages and products that qualify as 'the right way' in printing because children do not need these adult-determined limitations. I also know that the value of engaging in a process can outweigh any product which is a result of a process, and I believe that when children are left to design and implement their own ideas the creative possibilities are likely to far exceed any learning process that I can teach. However, I also believe that in early childhood teaching there needs to be a balance of teacher-led and child-initiated play so that when children show an interest in something, particularly art, the teacher can extend and scaffold their learning (as Vygotsky suggests) by sharing their own expertise.

It is my view that if teachers do not do this then children might not be offered the chance to explore new concepts and ideas that lie outside of their current understanding. I was confident that in our situation the children would take the challenges of learning new print-making methods into their stride because I had already seen that our children are able to do screen printing completely independently and competently.

An example of a child's confidence and competence with this medium occurred when I was watching one of the girls doing a silk screen print. I watched as she placed an image under the screen that she had drawn quickly and cut out haphazardly. Confidently she put the screen down on top and watched the paint ooze up through the screen. She then placed another paper on top of the screen and used a roller to paint the paper a different colour. Once she had rolled it for some time she lifted the paper off, looked at the two sides of it and seemed thrilled with the results. She went back to the screen, lifted it and took her work out from underneath, took it to the table, and put it down on her roller-painted paper. She pressed it down so that it would stick, and then proceeded to paint it again with a different colour. The finished work looked connected and vibrant with an amazing array of colours squeezed together.

As I observed this process I remembered the Einstein quote and realised that I had just seen child-initiated experimentation at its very best. This child had been actively investigating this type of printing process as she tested the materials. This showed me how methodical and courageous she had been in her creative activity.



Following this example, and after some teaching team discussions about other print-making methods, we made the decision to investigate more complex processes to teach the children, for example, PVA prints, mono prints using leaves, printing thin card cut-outs, and using sewn cardboard block prints. The teachers guided children through the initial processes of all of these different types of print-making methods by demonstrating and modelling techniques (see images of the finished and displayed work on the next page).

As the exploration continued each day, I noticed that the children were looking for ways to become involved. Firstly, we tried doing leaf prints, which is certainly the easiest of the types of print-making but perhaps not quite so exciting to watch. However, we made this more interesting by offering water-based printing inks rather than paint because the inks create a different dimension to print-making, and the subtle and delicate nuances of colour these produce can be very beautiful.

An important part of this printing process involved having two rollers – one for inking up the leaves, and clean one for pressing onto the paper that was laid over the leaf to create the print. We used two old baking trays to roll out the ink (which helped contain it). One of the things we learnt is that printing ink is slow to dry and also slow to dry out, so you can leave it for days in the trays and it can still be alright to use a few days later.

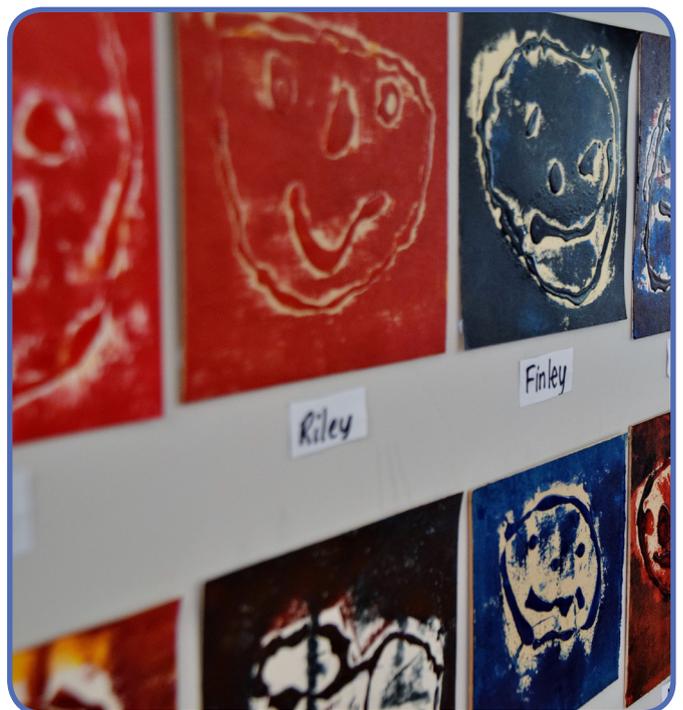
The next printing-making process that was introduced was making printing blocks using sewing. These were initiated by the children's current interest in using needles and sewing processes. By using cardboard we were able to sew thread through the card to make patterns. We used the same printing process as in previous methods, using inks and plain cartridge paper. The whole process became quite inventive - with some children sewing, others printing their works, and some just sewing through the card for fun.

The prints that resulted are delicate, contemporary and innovative. The framed prints now hang on our wall as an inspiration and for us all to enjoy. We have been astounded by the work as well as the children's ingenuity. They found endless ways to extend their own methods; they simply needed the resources and to be encouraged to experiment.



In another example a group of boys, seeing the already painted leaves on the table, began selecting other leaves and made choices based on the size and variations of shape. They rolled the leaves with paint and then pressed them onto the newspaper that was covering and protecting the table, turned them over and rolled them again. Their experimentation mainly involved swapping rollers back and forth between themselves, mixing colours, talking about leaf variations, discussing their friendships, and laughing at their own jokes. Watching their resourceful and ingenious methods made me feel very satisfied, and I felt lucky to be privy to their thinking made visible through their use of this medium.

Through my work with young children I see wonderfully expressive, creative thinking in many areas of play on a daily basis, especially in the visual arts. I strongly feel that our role as teachers is to offer many different art learning opportunities to children as we did with the print-making experiences, so they can have a range of 'languages' to express themselves with. The different 'languages of art' help them make meaning of the world, and to learn skills that will help them on their future learning journeys. Einstein also said "Education is not the learning of facts but the training of the mind to think", and this was exactly what happened through this work.



Arts and pedagogy: A journey of professional growth and discovery

By Loretta Davis

Handprints Early Learning Centre is a small service in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. We are a long day care setting, catering for ages 0-6 years. Our philosophy advocates for connecting children with nature and creating a lifelong love of learning. At our centre we encourage and support the individual learning journey of each child. As a teacher in the preschool room, explorations with art-based pedagogies has enabled me to find strengths in my teaching, and has also supported the development of strengths in fellow educators. This article tells the story of a shared artistic journey that spanned several months. It was a journey that involved deep reflection about practice, and one which had significant input from children and their families.

The learning project began with a child-led challenge to bring art outdoors. I was asked, "Miss Loretta, can we paint outside?". This one little query sparked a substantial journey of discovery that had a deep impact on my educational practice. We had recently made small easels that were suitable for the nursery children to stand at, so we brought these over to our yard and the children helped set up a painting station. While a seemingly minor event, this moment presented an opportunity to challenge my own practice and that of my fellow educators regarding our intentional support for children's development and learning.

I found myself reflecting on my practice and my perceived limitations with the visual arts, despite a passion for being creative and embracing experiences. Honest discussions with my colleagues about this initial experience, unveiled the confronting truth that too often in the rush of daily practice, visual art experiences could be rushed or tokenistic. I felt we were missing important moments for shared learning with the children.



This is when I decided to slow down. I decided to step out of the box. I thought to myself, "When I present art and craft experiences with children, what am I doing?". Many answers came to mind, such as providing opportunities for learning, chances to get messy, and time to experiment. Yet when I asked myself "HOW am I doing that?" I began to see room for improvement. I realised that too often, without thinking, I reverted to shallow ways of presenting art experiences to children, including routine painting at a table or simply providing variety in materials such as pastels or water paints. I began to consider experiences that would bring value and genuine moments of learning to the children.



During the weeks after this moment of reflection, we explored using materials such as string to incorporate motion and texture. For example, by embracing monochromatic paints the children explored tone and shades rather than using the traditional colours put out for them. Challenging our own and the children's gross motor skills, and creating a sense of team work, we precariously danced across sheets of paper with bubble-wrapped feet dipped in paint. The children soon discovered holding hands was a great way to keep each other upright.

Reconnecting with the outdoors, we visited our park across the road and collected all sorts of treasures - such as sticks, seeds and moss, and brought them back to use with clay in our yard environment. These moments were all so beautiful. The children became deeply involved. They were enthusiastic and I revelled in their growing confidence to try something new, and to explore their creativity. It was clear that given time to build their engagement with materials, the children felt supported and were encouraged to try new things.

I swelled with emotion as this artistic journey progressed. I shared these feelings with my colleagues and encouraged them to try new things too, in order to experience these emotions and understandings for themselves. I was beginning to understand the importance of these valuable moments, and became obsessed with trying to document all aspects of the experience. I wanted to value the pedagogical growth in the process. There was so much meaning in all of the things we were doing, and my fellow educators and management team also recognised this. Expressing this journey honestly with families at the end of each day was also a most rewarding experience.



I was supported to organise an evening to share our new intentional art practice with our families. We carefully recreated some of the art experiences that the children had been so engaged with during the past few months. In groups, the families rotated through the experiences and put themselves in their children's shoes. They got messy playing with coloured shaving foam, challenged themselves in creating their own self-portraits as their children had done, created clay formations and danced with bubble wrapped feet through paint. I tried to absorb the joy of the evening as best as I could. To see the families engaging enthusiastically with staff, having hands-on interaction with experiences their children had been so passionate and fascinated with, was just so amazing.



At the end of the evening I was moved by the opportunity to share with families the discoveries I had made about my own teaching practice and beliefs, the things I had learned, and the documentation that had formed from observing and working in partnership with the children. To reflectively share this experience with the most important people in those children's lives was a precious moment of advocating for the arts, advocating for mess, advocating for persistence and creativity and, most of all, advocating for children's right to experience art in many ways and in many places.

For my fellow educators and teachers, I urge you to be honest. I urge you to reflect. I urge you to listen and hear what the children are saying. Absorb the moments of beauty along with the moments of challenge in order to discover yourself and children as co-learners and co-teachers. When I embraced the idea that children can teach and teachers can learn anew, I found the children developed a stronger sense of identity as they expressed themselves through art and visually shared stories about what was important to them. They were able to explore and discover their values, passions, challenges, choices, decisions, and to control and input in beautiful and genuine ways. Connecting with our environment, each other and our families really brought the journey together and highlighted the importance of listening to children and reflecting upon practice.



Editors note: I would like to thank Loretta and her team for contributing this article. It is always interesting to find out about art experiences and personal learning journeys from teachers in other countries. More information about Handprints Early Learning Centre can be found at <http://handprintselc.com.au/>

Street Talk: Exploring street art in the centre of the city

By Maree Gray

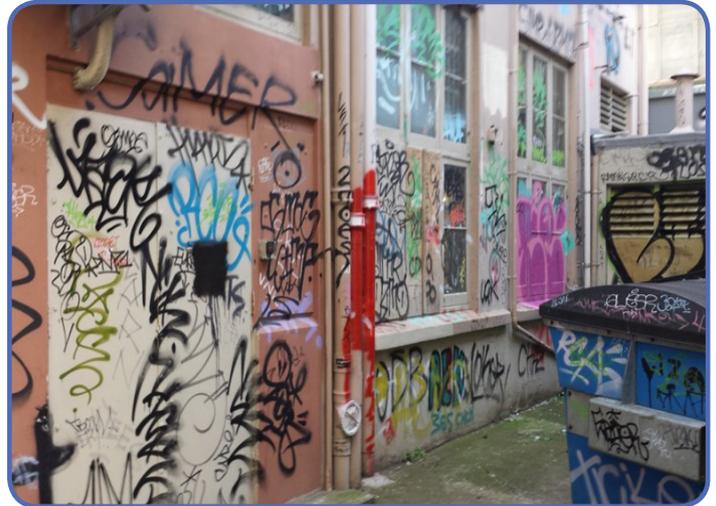


Early Years Leeds Street is a full day early childhood centre that is located in the Cuba Street arts quarter of Wellington city. The area has many small art galleries, restaurants, and funky shops. There is even a chocolate factory! Leeds Street itself (which joins up with Eva Street) is full of interesting, and often publically funded, street art. This makes it a vibrant and exciting area to have a early childhood centre and, because it is located in an office building upstairs, the city is an important extension of the learning environment. Maree Gray, the centre manager, describes the learning journey the centre took when they began exploring street art in the area.

We started looking at the street art in Leeds Street as a way to understand our community more and as a way to make stronger connections to it. Our children have a strong interest in various types of art-making in the preschool, so it seemed like a way of extending the children's art experiences by studying this unique type of city art.

As teachers we wondered what the children would learn from this journey we were taking. Some of things we hoped the children would think about to help them form working theories and ideas of their own were: What is street art and what is tagging? How are they different? What is involved in creating street art? We all went on several excursions out into Leeds Street and Eva Street to look carefully at what was on the walls. Once we even saw a street artist at work up a ladder, painting a large mural. The art work was rich and varied, with many different styles and techniques used by the artists.

The children often had very animated conversations about the art they were seeing. In the photo below, Claudia and Andine were having a conversation about what was tagging and what was art. Andine noticed that “the colours a bright in that one, it’s lots of letters”. Some of the children thought the tagging was bad, but a group of girls found it had some appeal, especially when it was purple! The children also began to notice advertising art on different vehicles. After a walk back to the centre Mitchell said, “You know there is art all around!”.



With all this investigating we decided that the children should create their own street art using the working theories we had developed on our trips. We found a large piece of cardboard to be our wall, and began brainstorming, looking at pictures of street art from around the Wellington. After these discussions, the children painted their own images onto the cardboard wall.



Because we can observe street art so easily from our centre, the children were able to go outside to view a mural directly across the road. Using chalk on the sidewalk, they made their own work in response to it. We chose a designated area defined by a large rectangle and the children let their imaginations run free - inspired by their own ideas, the environment, and their peers. The freedom to draw on a large scale resulted in their drawings travelling across the pathway to interlock with their friends' creations.

The project continued over several months and much later Rosanna, one of our teachers, asked the children about their recollections of the street art from their explorations the previous year, and what other types of "walls" could have art on them. By giving them hints, they remembered that fences, by weaving on them, could also have art on them. So Geof, with many interested helpers and onlookers, made a weaving frame for the children to experiment with this type of art in the centre.

We also revisited our original question "What is Street art?" with the children to see what they had learnt from their explorations. Mitchell said that there was, "nice and not so nice art because artists paint what they want". Emi said it was "painting things on fences and houses", and Isaac said it was, "art on buildings". However, Mitchell told me that his favourite thing was sharing the street art with his mummy and getting photos of himself with it.

This work led us to explore more art in the city, not just in the streets but also in our local art galleries and Te Papa Tongarewa, the national museum of New Zealand. We decided to go even further afield and take a bus ride to visit the Dowse Art Museum in the Hutt. This was great experience because we met up with a member of the Dowse education team who talked to us all about the exhibition *Alphabet Street* (see <http://dowse.org.nz/exhibitions/detail/alphabet-street>) which consisted of lots of different artists' interpretations of the letters of the alphabet. Most significantly, on the way to the Dowse Art Museum, Andy asked "What is a sculpture?" So now we are exploring sculptures, which will take us on a whole new path of investigation that still connects us to street art and our community.

We wonder if this investigation will ever end because we have younger children coming through to the preschool on a regular basis. I feel that it will continue to grow and extend in many different directions. And because our teachers are interested in art and nature, they will also continue to share their passion with the children as well.

Editors note: This art project inspired REID (Reggio Emilia Inspired Dialogues), a Wellington-based professional learning group, to run its own workshop exploring street art with early childhood teachers. More information about Early Years Leeds Street can be found at <http://www.best-start.org/centres/early-years-leeds-street>



Journals and websites

If you are interested in reading more about visual art education research in early childhood here is a link to an excellent free online journal

<http://artinearlychildhood.org/journal/>



If you want to look at other issues of ecARTnz these can be found ELP's interesting and informative website



http://www.elp.co.nz/ecartnz_e_magazine_on_arts_education.cfm

Free art, music, and culture videos that may interest art lovers can be found here:

CREATIVE BOOM



<http://www.creativeboom.com/resources/50-awesome-art-music-and-culture-documentaries-full-length-and-free-on-youtube/>

7th International Art in Early Childhood Conference, 15 – 18 April 2017

Center for Educational Research & Development Paro -Bhutan



The International Association of Art in Early Childhood biennial conferences aim to connect those around the world who have an interest in the visual arts for young children. These conferences provide a forum for an exchange of ideas about young children and the visual arts, they encourage and support the visual arts in early childhood and they connect researchers and practitioners in the field.

The 7th International Art in Early Childhood Conference will be held at the Paro College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan. Bhutan provides a unique and stunning venue for a conference. Bhutan is a small democratic kingdom of about one million people set high in the Himalayan Mountains. It is often called the 'last Shangri-La' and is known worldwide for its policy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). In Bhutan, the arts, Buddhism and daily life are intertwined. The thirteen arts and crafts of Bhutan represent the tradition, culture and history of Bhutan.

The Royal University of Bhutan was established by the King in 2003 and consolidates the eleven colleges throughout Bhutan. It offers a wide range of disciplines at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The language of instruction in schools and colleges in Bhutan is English.

The organising committee extends a very warm invitation to the conference. We believe our conference programme will challenge and extend your professional growth as an early childhood educator as well as arm you with new perspectives and skill sets in the arts.

<http://www.pce.edu.bt/Conference-2017>



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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 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), Janette Kelly (UoW), Dr Beverley Clark, Nicky de Latour and Janita Craw (AUT), Jannie Visser, Dr Rosemary Richards (Waiariki Bay of Plenty Polytechnic) 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.

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

For further information please email Lisa Terreni at lisa.terreni@vuw.ac.nz