

ec ART nz

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

Kia Ora Koutou

Welcome to the 12th issue of ecARTnz!

At the end of 2014 Sue Stover and Janita Crow, lecturers at AUT, got very excited about some of the work their students were doing in their visual arts classes at the university. They approached *ecARTnz* about publishing examples of this work. Mary Jane Shuker and I also co-teach an art paper for Graduate Diploma students at Victoria University and, like Sue and Janita, we have written about two student art projects that delighted us this year.

Consequently, this issue has a very different focus from the usual examination of teachers' visual art initiatives in early childhood centres. Nonetheless, it is an important one. What early childhood students learn in their initial teacher education courses is likely to have a big impact on what they teach when they begin to work as qualified teachers.

The examples showcased in this issue illustrate the development of student teachers' confidence and competence in visual art. They also provide examples of projects that might inspire other teachers in the field to implement similar work with children in their own early childhood settings.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Lisa Terreni

Editor *ecARTnz*



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Stories

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Self portraits and ephemeral art

**Sue Stover and Janita Crow -
lecturers at AUT**



Our students at AUT have the option to enrol in the special topic paper entitled *Music and the Visual Arts* which is offered as part of the BEd (ECE) degree in the last semester of their 3rd year of study. In this issue of ecARTnz we are delighted to share what happens when early childhood student teachers engage in a collaborative group project where they work with both visual art and music. For one reason or another, the projects we share are amongst those that stood out for us over the time we have run the course. The art works are witness to some of the exciting processes the students have experienced as they have developed their ideas.

To start their engagement with the projects students form collaborative groups. Each group identifies a concept that they want to work with, and the art medium they will use to explore their chosen concept. At the beginning of the process, it is common for challenging discussions to occur between students and lecturers. For instance, we were all challenged to consider whether a group could choose cake icing as their medium - after all cake icing can be considered a creative endeavour! Sometimes students struggle to ascertain, let alone plan, an agreed direction for their project. Consequently, it is a process that often involves some trial and error for the students, and sometimes requires several group meetings with lecturers to work through the key ideas.

As part of this initial sorting out process, students are required to research New Zealand or international artists, whose work can offer their group something to engage with in relation to their own concepts or medium, or inspires them. Usually at this point the group projects start to gather momentum, often creating an intensity that takes over before they even ascertain the where to, and what next stages.



Sue and Janita's AUT students made moulds of their own bodies for one art project.

Groups are often made up of a combination of students who identify as having some expertise in either visual art or music. It is not uncommon for some students to have studied visual arts at school, or have the ability to play a musical instrument, sing, or be creative in some way - for instance, one student was skilled at fire blowing! Many students are challenged to give some thought to their interpersonal skills because of the group collaboration required. When this happens successfully in the group situation, it often shows in the quality and depth of the students' engagement in the project and in the work that eventuates.

Making connections with each other and ascertaining what they can achieve in the six weeks available to them can be demanding for students. As part of the course requirements, however, they also have to report on their project through some kind of interactive seminar. Preparing for this provides students with opportunities to reflect on their project in relation to possibilities for engaging children in something when they are working in a centre. The formative feedback they receive from the lecturers and other students when they present is also useful as it enables them to revisit their pedagogical documentation which they hand in as a component for the final assessment. At the completion of the paper, selected work from the group projects is shown in an exhibition which is held at the School of Education.

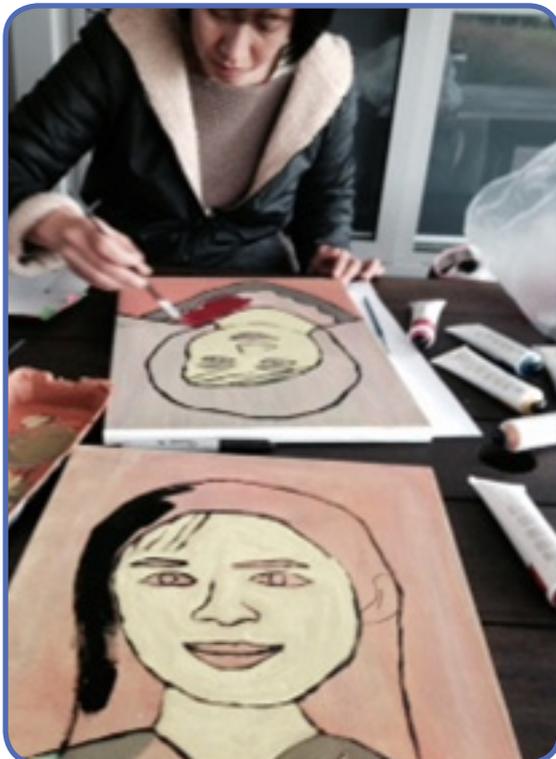
The projects described in this issue of *ecARTnz* are ones that we wanted to share with other art educators because we feel that they are innovative and exciting.



AUT Students engaged in a felting workshop

Self-portrait project

Students: Pwint and Lyn



Concept - Identity.

Medium – Acrylic paint.

The project - Students support each other to paint a self-portrait.

Sticky issue - Foregrounding the self.

This project stood out to us because we usually believe that a group of two students is too small for an art-centred project. We expect there to be more debate and discussion if the group has more members, so we would normally tell a group of two to join with other groups. However, in this instance, the self-portrait group was one of the last groups to come forward as the rest of the class was already established in their groups.

We knew that Pwint and Lyn were friends who, throughout their studies, have shared the experience of being mature immigrant women (Pwint is Burmese and Lyn is Thai). We felt that allowing them to be their own group could mean that we would see leadership and initiative which may have been diminished if they were made to join a larger group.

During the brainstorming phase, Pwint identified that she wanted to work with mosaics. However, Lyn had had a portrait painting experience on a Teaching Experience practicum which meant that she not only had an idea of what to do and how to do it, she also had an expert (her associate teacher) who could mentor them through the process. In their pedagogical documentation of the project, it was clear that having a 'step by step' process already in place was what helped the participants decide to do a self-portrait for their class project, and for Pwint to also paint a portrait of her daughter.

Creating this work led to deep consideration about the challenges of foregrounding 'the self' in the work. Pwint and Lyn discussed whether they actually liked their faces, and if it might be culturally inappropriate to put so much emphasis on themselves. These issues were resolved, and the students agreed to go ahead with the portraits. Learning how to look thoughtfully at your own face was part of the interactive seminar which Pwint and Lyn presented to their classmates. They encouraged participants to look in a mirror and consider:

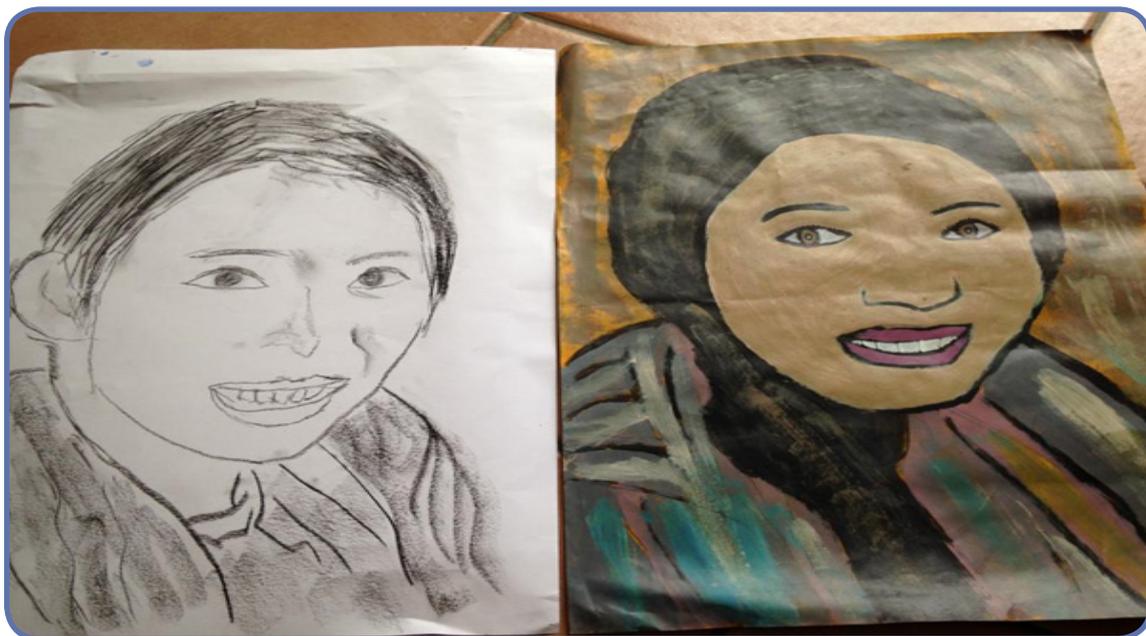
- What do you love about your face?
- What do you see when you look at the mirror?
- What stories does your face tell?
- How would you describe the shape of your face? Your eyes? Your nose and lips?

They followed a step by step process that Lyn had been taught by her Associate teacher:

1. Sketch a self-portrait using charcoal pencil – to be used to compare with the finished painted picture (see image below).
2. Start the actual painting by ‘under-painting’ the canvas or paper by mixing colours to make a background.
3. Project a photo of yourself onto the under-painted paper by using a data projector.
4. Trace the photograph image onto the under-painted paper using a Sharpie pen.
5. Paint the face using the tracing as a guide.

What was interesting about this process was the need to consider how to create an accurate colour for the student’s skin. The opportunity to mix colours – and mix them again and again – was seen as one aspect of the process which would lead to a debate about diversity (and the differences of people’s skin colours) that are evident in many early childhood communities.

What stood out for us was the helpful relationship that was evident between the two students and the Associate teacher who guided and supported their investigation. In addition, the photographic documentation of the project shows many aspects of the processes involved. Especially intriguing to us were the photographs of the participants’ faces being projected on to the screen. This project, grounded in the lived experiences of children in a particular early childhood centre, inspired the students to do their own investigation.



Further reading:

Pohio, L. M.(2013). Revisualising visual arts in early childhood education. In B. Clark, A. Grey & L. Terreni (Eds.), *Kia tipu te wairua toi – Fostering the creative spirit: Arts in early childhood education* (pp.113-121). Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson.

Terreni, L. (2010). Art and ICT: Considering new possibilities for visual art education in early childhood settings. *Australian Art Education*, 33(2), 74–86.

Ephemeral art - Individual journeys

Students: Anne, Briana, Kelly and Sam



Concept: Kaitiakitanga

Medium: Ephemeral Art

The project: Using photography to document site-specific ephemeral art

Sticky issues:

- Complexity of the concept
- Creating ephemeral art in a public place



Another very interesting project that stood out to us was an ephemeral art project. Some projects take on a life of their own, especially when a group demonstrates a depth of curiosity, as was evident in the Kaitiakitanga project. Ephemeral artwork developed in multiple 'site specific' individual projects inspired by Michele Gardner (a local artist) and internationally acclaimed Andy Goldsworthy. The following vignettes are drawn from individual group member's documentation of their personal ephemeral art projects.



Briana introduced the idea of ephemeral art to a group of children in an early childhood setting. They arranged natural resources and photographed them before returning the resources to their boxes. She found that this was a puzzling process for the children as the idea of creating without owning the creation was hard to grasp, as was the idea of arranging, rather than chopping up. She commented:



We shared the resources across two tables to allow enough room for the children's paper and they began creating. It wasn't long before a couple of children went to get some scissors; I had to decide how I would react to this and in the spirit of kaitiakitanga, I asked the children to please not cut any of our resources as they were precious and we needed to protect them so that they could be used again later. When each child had finished their creation I took a photo of them and their artwork, which I emailed to the centre for their use. Then came the fun act of tidying up after our creating; ephemeral art can make quite a mess, and it definitely took a team of us to sweep all of the leaves that had fallen on the floor.





For Kelly, undertaking her ephemeral art project meant having to slow down and notice. After several ephemeral creations on beaches, she noticed bright yellow leaves in a sports park: She remarked:

I decided to stick them together, by poking holes in them and threading each leaf together to make a chain. It took a really long time to get the leaves to stay together, so I could lay the arrangement in a chosen tree. I managed to arrange it in two different ways before the wind blew the leaves apart. I joined them back together, laid them across a massive root at the bottom of the tree, took a photo and then left it there to be blown away with the wind. This experience was a learning curve for me; I am not very patient and get frustrated when something doesn't work out. Being in the natural environment taking things as they come was very relaxing. It dawned on me that it is the purpose of ephemeral art; creating something and watching it be washed away by the weather. Something or someone might also come along and experience it in a whole different way. Fascinating experience!

Gathering up what she could find on a beach, Sam had animals in mind. She stated:

I was keen on making a little Owl or Ruru, after reading about how they used to be kaitiaki for Māori families. It didn't take me long to collect materials and plot a space on the bank. The challenging part was that it was still fairly windy so my materials kept flying away, such as the small amounts of mossy seaweed and leaves. I took a few photos and as soon as I was happy, moved on to try something else. The next idea just came to me, perhaps it was because I was close to water, but I also think it was because I was thinking of my Opa (Granddad) who used to collect drift wood and make his own kinds of ephemeral art. I don't often think of Opa without thinking of a whale, I'm sure if my Opa was reincarnated he would be a lovely big whale so that is what I attempted to make. I found myself humming away quietly, just happy to be doing art and connecting with nature. I took some photos and left my works to blend back into the environment, they were rather small but I hoped that a child might notice them before they washed away.





Further reading:

Terreni, L. (2009). *Using natural and recycled materials: Developing sustainable practices in visual art with young children*. Retrieved from <http://www.educate.ece.govt.nz/learning/exploringPractice/Literacy/UsingNaturalAndRecycledMaterials.aspx>.

Otaki kindergarten (2010). "Existing only briefly": Ephemeral art at Otaki Kindergarten, *ecARTnz*, 3, 8-10.

Kelly, J. (2013). Artfully caring for the environment. In Clark, B., Grey, A. & Terreni, L. (Eds.), *Kia tipu te wairua toi – Fostering the creative spirit: Arts in Early Childhood Education* (pp. 66-75). Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson.

On another beach, Anne carefully arranged and photographed shells that she had collected: She described it thus:

I was really enjoying this moment to myself, exploring the different possibilities with these natural resources, reflecting on how they got on the beach, what would happen to them after I put them back where I found them. Would someone else pick them up? Would they be crushed by people walking on them? I got my camera out of my bag to take a few photos when all of a sudden this huge dog ran out of nowhere. Excited to see me he ran all over the art work destroying my last thirty minutes of bliss in just two seconds. At that exact moment, with mixed emotions, I understood what ephemeral art meant. It does not only disappear when you choose. I also realised one of the many benefits of ephemeral art: it tests and builds your resilience.

The following statement by Anne also captures the concept of ephemeral art really well:

I always believed that visual arts were mainly used to express ourselves, as a way to communicate feelings or ideas. But this project made me realise that art can be used to understand ideas and concepts too, like kaitiakitanga. This event really acted as an imagery of how fragile our environment is. It made me think of how this type of art can make help convey these complex ideas easily to adults and children. Having a much loved artwork destroyed such as I experienced acted as a parallel to having our precious land destroyed. Sometimes we cannot grasp the larger scale of things such as ecological sustainability, and I found ephemeral art was a way to understand part of this idea on a smaller scale. I think of the expression 'think global, act local'.



Ephemeral art - group journey

The group also worked together to explore Kaitiakitanga. During a group trip to the Auckland Museum Carlin, one of the curators, explained the concept and traditional practice of kaitiaki to them. He suggested that families often had an animal such as a Ruru (morepork) as their kaitiaki, whose knowledge of the family kaitiakitanga was handed down through successive generations. Nowadays most families have lost this tradition through living in urban areas, among other things. Carlin also told them that the lizard is seen as a guardian of the underworld, and a lizard's mouth is often used in artworks and carvings to depict the entrance to the underworld (death).

This information prompted the group to create a 'site specific' ephemeral project on the grounds of AUT. Students described aspects of the process and their learning in the written component of their group assignment:

Sam has blue-tongued lizards as pets, so she confidently created a lizard shape with twigs. We pitched in to finalise his outline, and began filling in his body. We placed twigs inside so it would rise up from the ground and then added other collected items such as ferns, petals and autumn leaves. For his face we used pine needles and Erythrina petals and for his eyes and nostrils we used macadamia shells.



While we were creating our art work, the grounds caretaker approached us and asked us to remove our work. According to him, the sticks and other resources we were using could eventually end up in the pond and kill the school of goldfish. We explained how this project was part of our assignment and told him about the concept of guardianship (kaitiakitanga) of the land that we were exploring. We reached a compromise with him by agreeing that we would put the resources back where we found them. It was a reluctant choice for us as we had wanted to see how nature would deal with this art work over time. The caretaker told us that he had been looking after these grounds for many years but over the last five years the university management had given most of his job to external contractors. It was really interesting listening to his story as it really reflected our concept of kaitiakitanga. According to him these contractors had no connection to this place and only did what they had to. Our group discussion about the role of the caretaker caused us to consider him to be the kaitiaki of the AUT grounds.

Once we finished our artwork, we wanted to leave it for as long as possible, as we were not ready to dismantle it. We felt confronted with an ethical dilemma as we had agreed to remove our lizard out of respect for the caretaker's wishes. We realised that, even in a short time, as a collective we were quite attached to our art and the process was not as simple as taking a photo and quickly dismantling it.

We needed time to appreciate what we had created and so we had lunch whilst discussing our art in peace. We sat as the kaitiaki, protecting our artwork for as long as possible. Interestingly, the black birds were quite curious about our creation and on a number of occasions the same bird got very close to our lizard, but instead hopped over its tail and flew off. We also noticed that another black bird had been digging up a pile of leaves next to the fishpond, and the leaves were literally falling into the pond. Evidently it is not only humans that are 'making a mess' in the pond, as the caretaker would have us believe.

Our artwork created much discussion with people who came to see our installation and who were largely unaware that these gardens had a fish pond. Many students were asking "What is Ephemeral art?" It was enjoyable working on a concept that is a mystery to many, and evidentially a learning curve for our whole group.

The students summarised their learning on multiple levels:

Overall, this project caused us to reflect on a concept that we were all drawn to, that was not necessarily new to us but was still unclear. Developing our deeper understanding of kaitiakitanga would not have been so successful without the group research and the help of people who were knowledgeable in this area.

We realised how researching various national and international artists made us feel more connected to the local and global worlds we live in. We came to the conclusion that art can bring us closer to Papatuanuku (Mother Earth) and can clearly show us the importance of taking care of her. Ephemeral art (and art in general) is a great medium to help pass on this message of the fragility of our land and the importance of being a real kaitiaki to our place, and our people. We are not separate from our land just as we are not separate from the people around us. Kaitiakitanga is not just an individual responsibility and through our overall group project and group 'making', we understood that being part of a group can make the role of kaitiaki less daunting.



Māori myths, shadow puppets and pallet gardens

**Lisa Terreni and Mary Jane Shuker –
lecturers at Victoria University of Wellington**



We co-teach a course for Graduate Diploma early childhood students at Victoria University of Wellington called *The multi-literate child*. This course looks at how children make meaning and begin to represent their understandings of the world through engagement in visual art, literacy and literature, music and movement. We currently work with two groups of students enrolled in the course (campus-based and online), who engage in a range of learning opportunities involving theory and practice to explore these literacies. Our work with students this year has involved two new projects – using Māori myths to create a small video with shadow puppets, and the creation of pallet gardens.



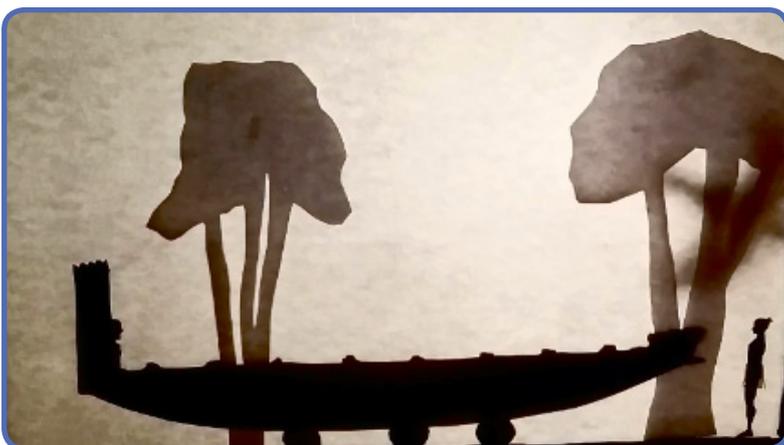
Ngake trying to escape from the lake– image taken from Hannah's shadow puppet video of the legend about the taniwha of Wellington harbour, Ngake and Whātaïtai.

Māori myths and shadow puppets

The first project required both campus based and online students to tell a Māori myth using shadow puppets, incorporating a range of mediums – music, drama, storytelling and visual art. Using the shadow puppet work of Wellington puppeteer Rose Beauchamp as a provocation, the students had to create a shadow puppet theatre, design puppets and a set for the story, narrate the story dramatically, and incorporate suitable music and sound effects to illustrate their story.

As part of the assignment students were also required to make a five minute video of their myth which was submitted for assessment. A further requirement was for the students to use their video (or the shadow puppet story itself, particularly if they were working with infants and toddlers) with young children on their teaching practicum. From this the students were required to use their own story as a provocation for developing multi-literacy experiences for the children, documenting their journey as the final part of the assessment.

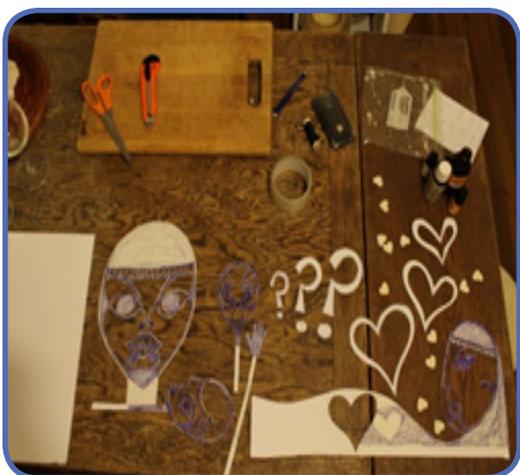
Setting new assignments can sometimes create a degree of uncertainty for us. For example, whether the assignment experience will enable the students to develop the requisite skills relevant to the multi-literacies we want them to learn about in class. When Joie, an online student, reflected on her shadow puppet video *How The Kiwi Lost Its Wings* she acknowledged that she found this assignment very challenging because she did not have much experience with drama or using puppets, let alone shadow puppets. However, during the process of developing her shadow puppet myth, she realised that it was fun and that putting her video together with her friends and family had encouraged team work. It was also a way of giving herself permission to lose some of her inhibitions. She recognised that puppets can encourage self-expression and communication, and that they fascinate children. Joie began to look forward to using her video with children on her teaching practicum and also the shadow theatre itself, and to experiment with the puppets in an early childhood context.



Images taken from Eleanor's shadow puppet video retelling the legend Rata and the Totara tree

Using shadow puppets to retell myths and legends can support teaching that is culturally responsive. All the students used stories that are culturally significant, not only for Māori children but all New Zealand children. Mike Polaczuk, a campus based student, chose the legend *How Maui Defied the Goddess of Death*. He decided to use the traditional story for his shadow puppet video which ends when Maui dies, leaving the earth. Reflecting on his decision, Mike noted that death is often a taboo subject when it comes to parents and their young children so was unsure if this was a suitable legend for an early childhood context. Nonetheless, he recognised that the puppets allowed him flexibility and that if the story was considered inappropriate by the teachers at his centre, then he could use the puppets in a different way.

As it turned out, Mike did use his puppets in different ways in the centre and he changed his story to *Rata and the Waka*. He was able to set up a completely immersive experience for the children by creating a dark area in the 'quiet' room where the children could play and experiment with shadows as well as the puppets. Children discussed shadows but also their fear of the dark and ghosts. They made their own puppets, and experimented with these at the centre and at home. The project generated interest for most of Mike's practicum.



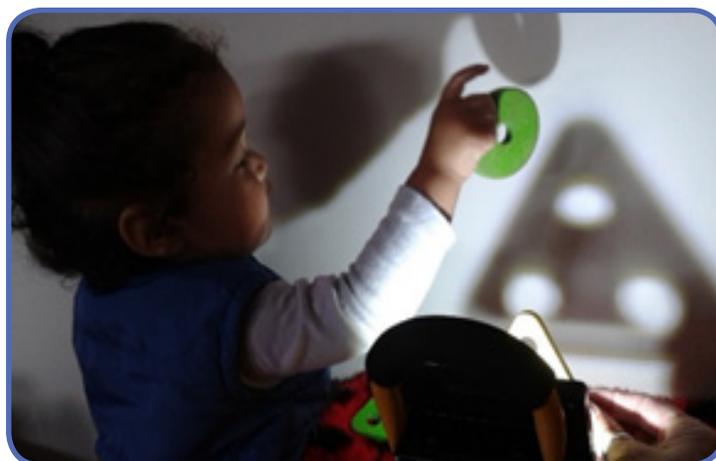
Mike's original drawings for his story involved drawing the images on paper with pen, gluing these onto firm cardboard and then cutting them out. In his video Mike used his cardboard cut outs but also feathers to represent birds, suspending them on coat hangers to enable them to move realistically. For his video the puppets were shot using the sky as a backdrop. When he set up his puppets at the centre, he also used this technique in the 'quiet' room for children to explore the puppets.



On her teaching practicum Loreena Dawson, another online student, used the shadow puppet story of *Awarua, The Taniwha of Porirua Harbour* with infants and toddlers as well as older children. Both groups were interested in the story but in different ways. The toddlers loved exploring the light and shadow aspect of the story which Loreena facilitated in a variety of ways – through exploring the light source itself and then playing with shadows on the wall. The older children viewed the video on the laptop but actually preferred having a hands-on experience manipulating the puppets to tell the story. Practice with this new medium paid off for Loreena and the children because when she used the shadow puppet box for a third time she remarked, “The younger ones seemed a little more understanding of the idea, and the older child was terribly excited about using a puppet to tell a story”.



In conjunction with using her shadow theatre, Loreena spent time exploring the large lamp she used for her light source with the toddlers and encouraging them to explore making shadows with their bodies and different objects.



When it came to the marking the assessments we were totally blown away, not only by the depth of imagination the students had demonstrated in the creation of their shadow puppet videos, but even more so by the work that the shadow puppets had led to with young children. There were so many ‘Wow’ moments when we were assessing the work that we were often in complete awe of our students’ creativity. Consequently, we felt the shadow puppet challenge had been a great success. What was even more heartening was when students who had been nervous about using their puppets on practicum were thrilled by their work with the children and how the children had responded so positively and creatively themselves to the shadow puppet provocations.



Above: Kindergarten children view Eleanor's shadow puppet video on the laptop and then experiment with and make up stories using the puppets and other items found in the block room.



Left: Bo's daughter got very excited about the shadow puppets when she saw her mother developing her puppets for the video. She loved playing with them at home.

Below: Toddlers exploring the puppets that Hannah created for her legend. Hannah commented about her work, "It was an amazing and enjoyable experience for me and the children at my placement centre. Shadow puppets are awesome! I hope to introduce them to the children on my next teaching experience".



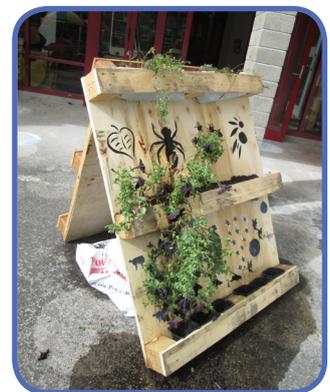
To see some student work go to:
Awarua, The Taniwha Of Porirua Harbour
 By Loreena
<http://youtu.be/Gz1E0cakGck>

Ngake and Whātaimai
 By Daniel
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6O_xc2D9Ms

Pallet garden project

Another project (for the campus-based students) involved the development of several pallet gardens for the Faculty of Education. The students were able to apply practical knowledge and skills they had learned in class about different art-making techniques, such as various ways of applying paint and using stencils, through the decoration of their pallet gardens. They also learned, through this process, about an effective and sustainable way of creating gardens in early childhood centres.

Plants and potting-mix for the gardens were donated by Bunnings, and students and lecturers planted the gardens once the painting and stencilling had been completed. The gardens were planted with vegetables, herbs and flowers and were positioned near the cafeteria for the enjoyment of all of the students attending classes at the campus.



To see the students' work go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLAS1zoQTTo&feature=youtu.be>

Another inspiring video can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yld7E_Pnjxl

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Resources - Arty music

fleaBITE's latest musical animation *No Toast* will debut in the 2015 New Zealand International Film Festival. Check out the Toons for Tots section. *No Toast* features a defiant young boy who sets off for wild adventures at sea, with no time for breakfast.

fleaBITE's album *The Jungle is Jumping* is a finalist in the Best Album category (winner to be announced August 2) in the 2015 New Zealand Children's Music Awards, and our popular music clip *Don't Sit Under the Poo Tree* is also a finalist in the Best Music Video category.

Fatcat & Fishface have a limited edition of their hardback book *The Wreck of the Diddley* available for \$20 within NZ (including postage). *The Wreck of the Diddley* began as a catchy song, then became a fab animated music clip that was invited to screen at festivals in Korea, London and Melbourne.

Here's a link to *The Wreck of the Diddley* on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtlCNN6g6SI>

The book, plus the DVD is being offered for a limited time.

Please contact Fatcat & Fishface directly if you are interested at fatcatfishface@hotmail.com



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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 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), Janette Kelly (UoW), Dr Beverley Clark (Unitech), Nicky de Latour and Janita Crow (AUT), Jannie Visser, Dr Rosemary Richards (ACU) 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 .jpgs are welcomed.

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