

IN TER STICE



INTERSTICE
Encounters between artists, children
and educators
Thoughts in-between the arts
and education



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children and educators

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INTERSTICE
Encounters between artists,
children and educators

Thoughts in-between the arts
and education

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What is Interstice?

Interstice is a collaborative international project developed by universities, artists and cultural settings from Catalonia, United Kingdom, Italy and Norway to promote spaces of encounter between teachers, artists and children to improve learning processes and to build a pedagogy of cocreation.

The focus of the project is to share and promote inclusive creative artistic experiences for the children -especially those most vulnerable and who have fewer opportunities to experience quality proposals- and to bring the art thinking in the educational environments.

We had created different products and pedagogical materials to facilitate the training and implementation of the artistic experiences in schools and also in educational degrees at University level by incorporating experiences through collaborative learning between students, artists, teachers and children. These results are a book, an audiovisual, different texts and a virtual museum.

You can find all the intellectual results of the project at our website <https://www.interstice.eu/results>

Lead Partner: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, UAB (Catalonia).

Partners: Bath Spa University (United Kingdom); Universitetet i Stavanger (Norway); Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna (Italy); laSala (Catalonia).

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Or you can visit <https://www.interstice.eu/> and [@interstice_eu](https://www.instagram.com/interstice_eu)



WAYS OF UNDER- STANDING ART AND EDUCATION

The purpose of this book

Interstice | Encounters between Artists, Children and
Educators

Interstice is an Erasmus+ project developed by universities, artists and cultural settings from Catalonia, United Kingdom, Italy, and Norway to promote spaces of encounter between educators, artists, and children, to improve our learning processes and to build a pedagogy of co-creation through the arts.

The forms of articulation
used in art should
be integrated into all
educational processes.

—Luis Camnitzer

In collaboration, all participants have been sharing and reflecting on our common experiences and the programmes developed in-between the arts and education. In this Interstice handbook we want to share with you the key ingredients that we think are necessary to build creative approaches to learning. We have learned from each other, and we want to share this knowledge and experience to inspire other arts and education professionals.

This document has integrated different artistic areas, with the aim of empowering other cultural and educational partners to achieve the challenge of creating more creative learning environments. Evidence of this innovative learning methodology, creating hybrid contexts between school and artists, based on the experience of each partner. Each chapter shares examples of how to bring together artistic projects with visual and performing artists in educational settings, building projects with different cultural centres in the community.

The examples are shown through a visual narrative, with evidence of the implementation, documentation, and analysis phases of innovative projects between artistic and educational fields, with the aim of offering strategies to develop future projects in educational contexts.

The main purpose of this handbook is to create hybrid contexts between the arts and education so that children grow up in creative environments, where the arts are included in a significant way inside the educational structure. In order to engage children in authentic experiences alongside their teachers, the school is an ideal context to engage artists as partners. In our projects, children participate with professional artists and understand the arts as a way of learning.

This document promotes the integration of the performing and visual arts in an educational context, with guidance on the different phases of implementation and evaluation. Examples of projects carried out by the partners are included, with experiences that focus on different artistic languages in early childhood settings and primary schools.

The aim of this guide is to motivate professionals from different countries to embed the creative processes framed in this research to ensure the intersection of the arts and education in children's lives.

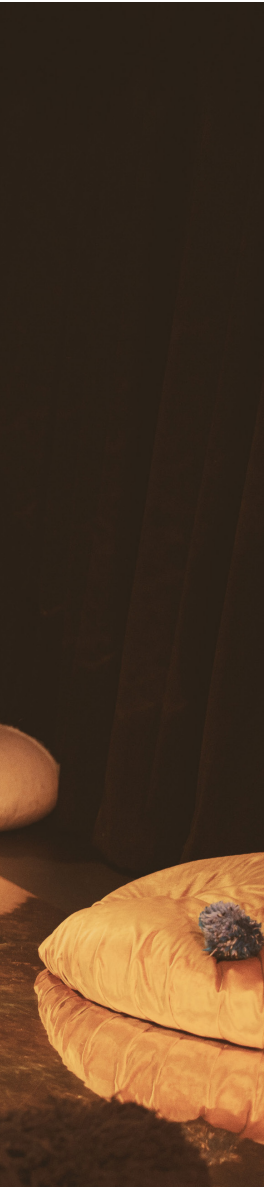
This publication is aimed at education and arts professionals:

- Undergraduate students of early childhood and primary education from universities focusing on Art and Education, inviting a new paradigm of inclusion of the arts in initial training.
- University professors and researchers who support this educational paradigm.

OUR WAY OF UNDERSTANDING ART AND EDUCATION

Show with families by Dybwikdans at Elefantteater, Stavanger
Photo: Tord F. Paulsen



- 
- Teachers and management teams of nursery and primary schools interested in including the arts in a more meaningful way in educational settings.
 - Professional artists interested in participating in artistic projects related to educational contexts.

Our Vision

To influence the learning outcomes of university students of the Early Childhood and Primary Education degree by incorporating innovative experiences that intertwine art and education through collaborative learning between students, artists, teachers, and children.

Our Mission

To share and promote inclusive creative artistic experiences to the entire child population, especially those most vulnerable and who have fewer opportunities to experience quality proposals.

Our Goal

To create products and pedagogical material to facilitate the training and implementation of the experiences for university students so that they, in turn, can train teachers and other education professionals together with artists, to include the art of Integrated form in the university and other educational and cultural institutions.

General Aims

To improve the level of competences among students of Early Childhood and Primary Education degrees of the universities of the consortium, by training them in quality aesthetic practices in education.



Image provided by the company Blink Flash



To bring high quality contemporary art in early childhood education, pre-schools and primary schools, improving children's creativity and critical thinking; to bring high quality contemporary arts closer to early childhood and primary education centres.

To promote opportunities for participation in cultural experiences, reducing inequalities in their access following three principles: interaction, participation, and democracy in educational contexts.

Specific Aims

To offer students of Early Childhood and Primary Education specific training in more diverse teaching styles adapted to contemporary cultural contexts.

To influence lifelong learning through the intersection of cultural agents and educators, in order to develop a more holistic, inclusive conceptual framework of participatory artistic education.

To explore the potential of new training and teaching methodologies, including peer learning.

To promote intercultural awareness through mobility and cooperation between partners.



ARTISTIC PROJECTS AND PARTNERS

espais c

Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona
(Catalonia)

House of Imagination

Bath Spa University
(UK)

**Mestres que es mouen
i Artistes que es
mouen**

laSala
(Catalonia)

**Performing Art for the
Very Young**

Universitetet i Stavanger
(Norway)

**Museo Officina
dell'Educazione (MOdE)**

Alma Mater Studiorum
Università di Bologna
(Italy)



espai c, Arts school, Barcelona
Artist Gina Gimenez
Photography: Maria Sellarès

espai c, Encants school, Barcelona
Photo: Gemma París

espais c

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Catalonia)

Visual arts + primary education (6-12 years)

Project coordinated by:

Institut de Cultura de Barcelona ICUB (Ajuntament de Barcelona), Consorci Educació (Ajuntament de Barcelona and Generalitat de Catalunya), and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB).

espais c is a programme of the Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona, the Institut de Cultura de Barcelona and the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, with the mediation of the Fabra i Coats Arts Center and EART. Different cultural centres in Barcelona participate in the programme (HANGAR, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Fundació Suñol, La Capella, Chiquita Room and the gallery Àngels Barcelona) as centres associated with each space c in state schools in Barcelona (Sagarra, Arts, Eixample, Miralletes, Aldana and Mercè Rodoreda).

Goals of the programme:

- Actively participate in thought processes and educational transformation.
- Strengthen the presence of culture in the educational field and education in the cultural field.
- Emphasize networking and community.
- Normalize the presence of artists and makers in educational centres, starting from the temporary residency of artists in schools and the launch of each espai c as a collaborative space, oriented towards the development of artistic creation processes.

The artist does not hold classes or workshops at the school, but uses the space provided as their own workshop for a year, making themselves present at the centre and sharing this with the students who go there to develop their projects, talking with, and accompanying them while sharing mutual strategies and knowledge.

The space, as it is a workshop that the students share for a few hours, is managed by the space c committee, made up of student representatives, a representative of the teaching staff, the artist and the team programme mediation. This commission is responsible for regulating employment, conditions of use, cleaning tasks, order, material, etc., as well as the detection of needs, the budget, and the management of learning experiences.

The creative processes carried out in espai c, both that of the artist or collective and that of the students who participate, are visible, both in the educational centre itself and in the artistic and cultural system of the city.

Understanding art as 'encounter' space (Bourriaud, 1998), the espai c project invites young artists to engage in a residency in nursery and primary schools in Barcelona, with the aim of creating synergies between education and art for educational transformation. The project enhances the presence of artistic creation processes in the school in a continuous way, through the articulation of a space of creation and interrelation between childhood, educators and artists. The workshop becomes a space for co-creation through different artistic languages, in which decisions are made jointly and horizontally between children and artists, and in coordination with the designated teacher from espai c.

House of Imagination

Bath Spa University
(UK)

Visual and performative arts + primary education (3-11 years)

House of Imagination is a research organisation with a focus on children's and young people's creative and critical thinking. In practice, House of Imagination uses action research to plan and deliver innovative programmes that enable children to shape their lives through creative activity and schools to change their practices through professional development and school-based activity. At its heart is co-enquiry between children, educators, artists and creative professionals.

House of Imagination is driven by a desire for change in both children's lives and in schools, focusing on an exploration of the possibilities that creativity offers. Children need more opportunities to develop their creativity and to experiment and teachers need more support to integrate these skills. Through research and dissemination HOI provides evidence for change and helps to build a strong cultural ecology that in turn supports children, schools and creative professionals.

Forest of Imagination is an annual participatory contemporary arts and architecture event that's free and open to all, with a creative learning programme co-designed by a collaborative team of local organisations in Bath. Forest of Imagination reimagines familiar spaces, inspiring creativity and heightening awareness of nature in an urban context. Co-founded with Andrew Grant, Grant Associates (famous

S



Hidden woods
School without walls, Bath



Forest of Imagination,
Bath

for designing the Supertrees in Singapore) Forest of Imagination is a unique collaboration between the creative and cultural industries and the community of Bath. It creates an arena which invites everyone to have a conversation about the importance of these themes in a playful immersive environment for all ages. The project also shines a light on the importance of global forests, the capacity of Bath as a creative ecosystem, the natural wonder of the city and above all the capacity of forests to inspire creativity in everyone.

School Without Walls, in partnership with the egg theatre, creates an opportunity for educators to think about teaching and learning differently – to inspire learning everywhere, beyond the school walls. Children and young people are engaged in meaningful, creative enquiries in real life contexts, in residence in cultural centres and with the city as a campus for learning. This environment of enquiry transforms learning for both teachers and children.

The approach is underpinned by a clear set of principles developed with House of Imagination: essentially this process involves inspiration, immersion, and invention, to encourage enquiring minds, creative thinking and critical reflection. Developing a high quality, creative and inclusive pedagogy is key to the success of the work in embedding creative and reflective practice in schools and settings.



Festival elPetit 2019

Teachers training by Kirsten Halle,
laSala, Sabadell

Photo: Artur Gavaldà (Platea Films)

Mestres que es mouen i Artistes que es mouen

laSala
(Catalonia)

Performative arts + early childhood and primary education
(0-14 years)

laSala is a creation, exhibition, training, and research Arts Centre aimed at 0-14 year-old children. Its performances are primarily thought to address children and their families, but also teachers and professionals in the field of Arts creation, education, and social action, especially for the early childhood and the young. laSala believes in the transformative power of the Arts. Their mission is to create the right environment and moment, to erase limits, to make oneself ask questions and reflect, to foster interaction and to instill emotions. Their aim is to make people live complete artistic experiences by generating art encounters for children, be it with their families or at school. Their goal is to foster and promote practice in the field of the Arts for children and young audiences. laSala aims to elevate the Arts for the children and the young by placing value on quality and professional rigour. Their lines of action feed on innovation, the exploration of new languages and the invitation to artists to explore the field of the Arts for children and the young. laSala promotes creation through new artistic forms that are nourished by research and dialogue between the following disciplines: Art, Education and Science.



mimesis from Zig Zag Danza at laSala.
Photo: Artur Gavaldà (Platea Films)

laSala Projects:

Festival elPetit

Mission: to celebrate, encourage and promote the Arts for early childhood.

Since 2005, laSala has organised the Festival elPetit, the first international Arts festival in Spain devoted exclusively to the Arts for early childhood (0-5-years).

Festival elPetit is held each November in 11 different cities, featuring both national and international companies in 30 simultaneous locations. Our Festival also offers a growing programme of conferences, discussions, training workshops and networking sessions under the International encounter of Arts for early childhood.



Festival elPetit, Sabadell

Mestres que es mouen (Teachers in movement)

Mission: to build bridges between Art and Education.

LaSala offers a specially designed arts training programme for schools called “Mestres que es mouen” (Teachers on the move). This project brings teachers and artists together and it combines the Arts with Education. While crossing the borders of both disciplines, this programme seeks to generate encounters where new learning forms ‘among equals’ – that is teachers, artists and, most especially, children.

Thinking and research

International Encounter of Arts for early childhood.

The International Encounter of Arts for early childhood is a dialogue arena open to artists, producers, programmers, families and teachers. Through discussions, research, reflections, thoughts and networking sessions, it throws a comprehensive international look at the future of the Arts for early childhood while outlining laSala’s forthcoming purposes.



Workshop at museum,
Bologna

Museo Officina dell'Educazione (MOdE) Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna (Italy)

Visual arts + early childhood and primary education (3-12 years)

Virtual museum of education, which creates collaborative spaces for students, artists, researchers, teachers and children

The Museo Officina dell'Educazione (MOdE), is a digital museum of the Department of Education Sciences "Giovanni Maria Bertin" of the University of Bologna. As well as organizing exhibition events in partnership with other museums and cultural institutions at national and international level, MOdE carries out also scientific and research activities. The main aims of the MOdE are the exhibition, preservation and valorisation of the heritage of the pedagogical sciences. Specifically, the mission of the museum is double. On one hand, it hosts interactive exhibition rooms dedicated to the different fields of the education sciences. These have been thought to support an active dialogue between students and teachers. On the other hand, it documents and spreads educational best practices thanks to a specific repository area. The MOdE is an innovative digital environment that valorizes high-quality artistic processes carried out in real contexts. It aims at spreading knowledge and improving the educational dimension of visual and performing arts, especially in the training of future kindergarten and primary school's teachers (<https://www.doc.mode.unibo.it/en>).



dybwikdans with families
and teachers at laSala,
Sabadell
Photo: Artur Gavaldà
(Platea Films)

Blue Bird Show by dybwikdans with families
and teachers at laSala, Sabadell
Photo: Artur Gavaldà (Platea Films)

Performing Art for the Very Young Universitetet i Stavanger (Norway)

Performative arts + early childhood education (0-6 years)

In the artistic project Scenekunst til ALLE små (Performing Art for the Very Young), we invite small and large people into artistic encounters. Participation, interactivity and democratic form are key words for the project. Through performances for early years, we want to make art relevant both for the child and for the kindergarten's practice. The project takes place in Stavanger, (NO), and in the period from October 2019 until November 2021, 85 Kindergartens were invited into the project through an open call. The performances and workshops in the project are created by dybwikdans/www.dybwikdans.no. Both artistic research and academic research are a part of the project Scenekunst til ALLE små. Through multiple methods we are interested in uncovering perspectives on the child, the performer, the art and how art can be a meaningful practice in the kindergarten.

We believe that experiencing art and working with aesthetic learning processes in the kindergarten gives the kindergarten teacher rich opportunities to stimulate children's holistic development based on bodily experience and sensing. Anchored in the Framework Plan for kindergartens, we link this project to the learning area Art, Culture and Creativity that can form the basis for belonging, participation and creative work. Working with Art, Culture and Creativity will stimulate children's curiosity, expand their understanding and contribute to wonder, research and experimentation. The kindergarten shall facilitate and further develop the children's creative processes and expressions.

In the project Scenekunst til ALLE små we are interested in how the artistic encounter can

live on in the kindergarten practice. To stimulate activities that can support the teachers and children after visiting a performance, we are developing a set of digital tools.

Blåfugl

Research shows that the arts subjects tend to be downgraded in the kindergarten and that the reason can often be linked to the staff's view of their own artistic competence. In this project, we hope to give teachers who work with children's development, play and learning the courage to trust their inherent creativity and creative abilities. We want to support the teachers to further develop their competencies by using the arts in everyday activities that focus on play, exploration, fiction, wonder, expressiveness, sensing, and creative joy.



dybwikdans/Blåfugl
in laSala, Sabadell.
Photo: Artur Gavaldà

Blåfugl dybwikdans

We believe in art encounters, and that regardless of whether we are big or small people, art can touch, amaze, change and inspire. We also believe that art in various forms can tell children something important about themselves and the world and that such experiences can have lasting significance. We still distinguish between art and artistic work. Art in this context is a particularly developed language, a particular creativity developed in particularly creative processes with specific knowledge within the arts. This is how the artist works and this is how works of art are created. In this project we believe that every child is competent in the art encounter.

CONDITIONS
FOR CREATIVE
EDUCATIONAL
SCENARIOS:
CONCEPTS
AND APPROA-
CHES

After reflecting on our individual projects that we had developed over many years in early childhood and primary education through visual and performative arts, we highlighted the key elements that appear when we work with creative and artistic processes in educational settings, alongside artists. These key concepts show how we are thinking together and how we are making these visible. We want to inspire other professionals to work more closely with the integration of artistic and educational processes, understanding education as cultural knowledge and artistic processes as way of thinking.

There are six key concepts that have emerged in our work together:

1. **Creativity**
2. **Critical thinking**
3. **Artistic languages**
4. **Co-creation**
5. **Inclusive spaces of encounter**
6. **Aesthetic environments**



1. CREA TIVI TY

Imagination and purpose;
originality;
value;
questioning and challenging;
making connections
and seeing relationships;
envisaging what might be;
exploring ideas,
keeping options open;
reflecting critically on ideas,
actions and outcomes.
—Sir Ken Robinson

It is the imagination,
above all else, that
makes empathy possible.
Of all our cognitive
capacities, imagination
is precisely the one
that allows us to give
credence to alternative
realities. It enables us
to break with what we
take for granted. The role
of the imagination is to
awaken, to reveal what is
not usually seen, heard
or expected. —Maxine
Greene

We understand creativity as the highest form of intelligence, that is necessary to pursue something new, to generate and create ideas and solutions, alternatives, and possibilities. Creativity is multidimensional and interdisciplinary. Creativity, critical thinking and complex problem solving are identified as three key skills for future society.

Prentice (2000) identifies specific criteria for creativity, including inventiveness, flexibility, imagination, risk-taking and a tolerance of ambiguity. Sternberg (2010) proposes that creativity is a habit of mind and involves elements such as insights, adaptability and synthesis of ideas that are novel and appropriate.

Creativity invites a space of possibility for imagination and expression of creative ideas, and is linked with the artistic thinking and transformation. Creativity is a cognitive process that develops connections between knowledge to create something new. Penny Hay (2023) describes as:

‘Creativity is about taking risks and making connections, and is strongly linked to play. Creativity emerges as children become absorbed in action and in exploration of their own ideas, expressing and transforming these using a variety of materials and processes. Creativity involves children in initiating their own learning and making choices and decisions’ (Hay 2023).

As adults we need to give time and space to creativity and show our confidence in children’s and teachers’ creative power. Findings from Hay’s PhD have led to a distillation of pedagogical characteristics that support a child’s learning identity as an artist and includes recommendations for a repertoire of creative pedagogy. These signal the role of the adult as a ‘companion’ in the child’s learning, valuing

Fantasy is not opposed to reality, but is an instrument to know it. —Gianni Rodari

self-directed inquiry (heutagogy) and with an emphasis on the child's developing ideas and self-concept as an artist. Hay's (2023) research has generated new insights into a pedagogical approach that has wider relevance and educational significance to the future of art education.

One democratic notion is that everyone has the capacity for 'life-wide' and 'lifelong' creativity, and that whilst creativity does not only belong to the arts, the arts manifest the possibility of original thought and valuable action (Robinson, 1999). Craft (2002) comments that creativity is "a fundamental aspect of human nature and that all children are capable of manifesting and developing their creativity as a life skill".

The commitment to the idea of creativity as a part of everyday life is a recognition that all learning involves elements of creativity. In relation to this authentic and creative approach, the concept of 'wise' and 'humanising' creativity has emerged in the last decades (Chappell et al 2008) as an active process of change guided by compassion, with reference to shared values and fluid identities (Chappell et al. 2012). This concept takes into account the embodied nature of creativity, the importance of the relationship be-

tween our identity and our creativity, and shows that as we are making, we are also being made ourselves Carla Rinaldi (2021) describes as

“From a very young age, children seek to produce interpretative theories, to give answers ... the important thing is not only to give value to but, above all, to understand what lies behind these questions and theories, and that what lies behind them is something truly extraordinary. There is the intention to produce questions and search for answers, which is one of the most extraordinary aspects of creativity.” (Rinaldi 2021)

Arts and creativity hold considerable inherent value in the way that each art form uniquely contributes to both cognitive and affective development, as well as aesthetic and artistic education. By understanding the processes involved we can help children and young people identify as artists from an early age, supporting them in their exploration and expression of ideas, helping them develop creative skills and ultimately improving their life chances. This is achieved through creative partnerships with artists, schools, cultural centres, higher education and creative industries.

Craft *et al.* (2006) defines strategies that are important in pedagogical approaches to creativity, including the use of space and time, fostering of self-esteem and self-worth, offering mentors in creative approaches, involving children in higher level thinking skills, encouraging the expression of ideas through a wide variety of expressive and symbolic media, and encouraging the integration of subject areas through topics holding meaning and relevance to the children's lives.

Key processes inherent in creativity are informed by Craft

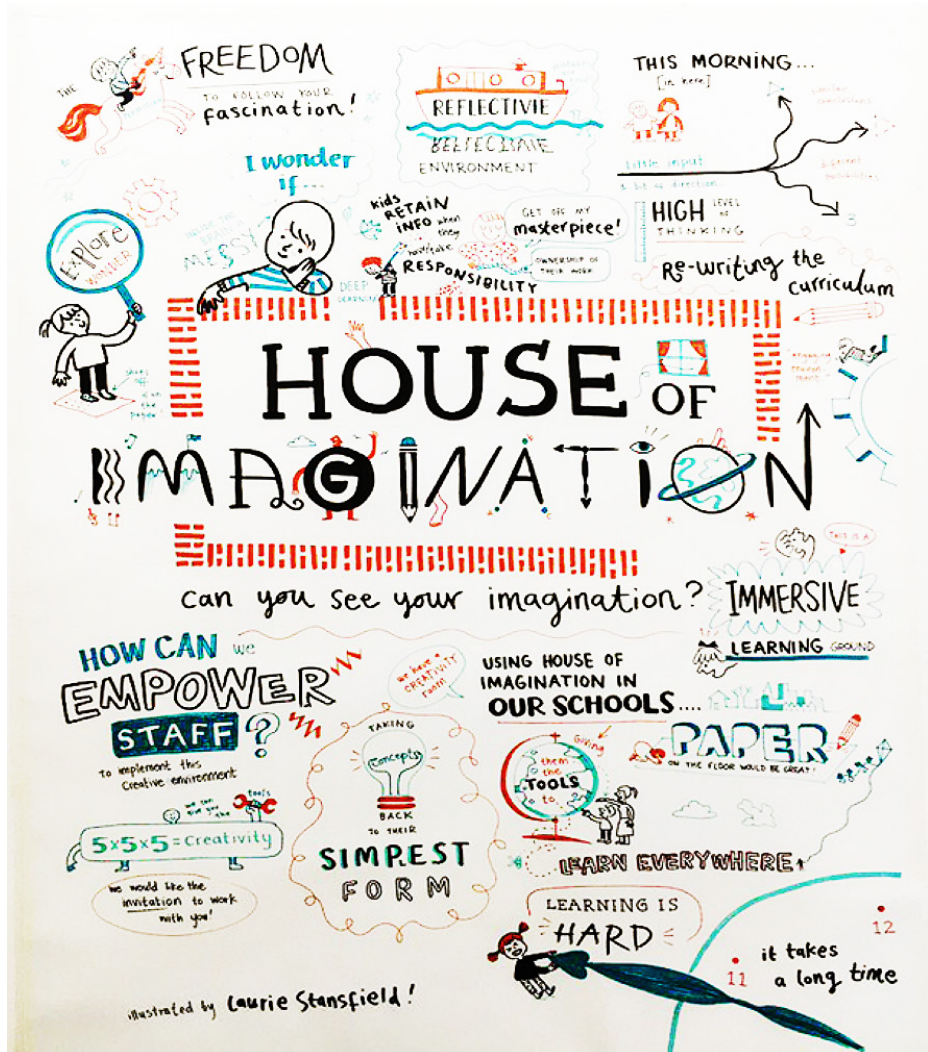


(2005):

- Questioning and challenging conventions and assumptions
- Making inventive connections
- Envisaging what might be: imagining, seeing things in the mind's eye
- Trying alternatives and fresh approaches, keeping options open
- Reflecting critically on ideas, actions, and outcomes

'Creative learning' is distinct from creativity. Craft (2005) argues that the distinctions between learning and creative learning are very fine, particularly where learning is understood in a constructivist frame. The term 'creative learning' signals the involvement of children in 'being innovative, experimental and inventive'; the word learning signifies that children 'engage in aspects of intellectual enquiry' (Jeffrey 2008).

All children have an infinite capacity for creativity. Creativity is about asking questions and having the imagination to do things differently. Creativity does not just belong to the arts. It is about how we use our minds in all areas of our lives. It is our capacity to innovate which will help us make the most of our complex world to create a hopeful future.



House of Imagination (HOI) is a research organisation with a focus on children's and young people's creative and critical thinking. In practice HOI uses action research to plan and deliver innovative programmes that enable children to shape their lives through creative activity and schools to change their practices through

professional development and school-based activity. At its heart is co-enquiry between children, teachers and creative professionals. HOI is driven by a desire for change in both children's lives and in schools, focusing on an exploration of the possibilities that creativity offers. Children need more opportunities to develop

their creativity and to experiment and teachers need more support to integrate these skills. Through research and dissemination HOI provides evidence for change and helps to build a strong cultural ecology that in turn supports children, schools and creative professionals.

Practical examples

House of Imagination, Bath

House of Imagination has four research strands focusing on creative values, relationships, environments, and dispositions and how these may support an individual child's developing identity as an artist.

- **Creative values** - (ethos and priorities of adults): a set of values based on the competence and strength of the child. Children are seen as creative and powerful learners, and as individuals, rather than as people preparing for adulthood. Concepts of participation and democracy, reciprocity between children and adults, the significance of play, flow and deep engagement are central tenets of the research. Emphasis is placed on developing an environment of enquiry, and attention is given to multi-modal learning.
- **Creative relationships** (between adults and children): attentive, respectful adults and children working collaboratively. The quality of attention given to children is vital to develop 'a pedagogy of listening' (Rinaldi 2006). Observing children, listening to their ideas, and documenting their learning are central to this pedagogical approach.



- **Creative environments** (emotional climate, time, space, resources): both physical and emotional environments are important, paying attention to space, time, resources, and attention, and drawing in part on the notion of the environment as the ‘third educator’ (Edwards et al 1998). With a focus on supporting playfulness and the encouragement of self-confidence and self-esteem, this strand works towards the development of a creative learning environment, where learning communities are fostered and shared learning episodes are sustained over time, with adults offering children time and space to develop ideas as companions in learning.
- **Creative learning behaviours** dispositions and ‘schemas’ (behaviours, skills, and capacities): learning includes supporting creative thinking and learning dispositions, with attention to holistic learning, learner agency, persistence, openness, reflection, and willingness to take risks (Craft 2002). Children’s ‘schemas’ (universal patterns underpinning behaviour) and learning dispositions (habits of mind, such as engagement, curiosity, resourcefulness, and perseverance) are observed and supported. Close observation, listening, documentation, interpretation, reflection, and dialogue are central to understanding children’s learning dispositions.



Adults as Companions
House of Imagination, Bath



House of Imagination has identified learning dispositions and 'habits of mind' that have been observed when children are engaged in rich and deep ways. These included, for example, playfulness, imagination, initiating their own ideas, making connections, negotiating, resilience and persistence. Creativity involves questioning, making connections, innovating, problem solving and reflecting critically. In HOI we work with Malaguzzi's idea that if, as adults, we are more attentive to the cognitive processes of children than to the results they achieve, then creativity becomes more visible.



dybwikdans/Bakom stjernene.
Photo: Tord Paulsen

Performing Art for the Very Young, Stavanger

Art for children aged 0-3 has become a well-established phenomenon. It has been a focus of interest nationally and internationally; various programmes have been established in order to stimulate artists to address this age group.

The grant given by the Norwegian Arts Council to the project *Klangfugl*¹, directed by Ellen Os and Leif Hernes, was in many ways the starting point to what we today refer to as art for the very young. 72 projects applied to the Norwegian Arts Council to take part in this. The European project *Glitterbird*² – Art for the very young was developed after *Klangfugl*, both acknowledged as very successful projects.

Many artists addressed the youngest children, and the target group was highlighted and acknowledged as a group of competent art consumers, with specific needs and approaches. In the wake of this, several artistic meetings have been initiated and knowledge about performance art aimed at this specific age group has developed and heightened. *Kunstløftet*, directed by the Norwegian Arts Council, was a

1 *Klangfugl* unfolded in the period 2000-2002, and was evaluated in the report *Kommunikasjonen er kunsten* (Norwegian Art Council 2003)

2 *Glitterbird* – Art for the very young unfolded in the period 2003-2006, directed by Ellen Os.

development project in the period 2008-2015. Its goal was to promote interesting and relevant art projects for children, youth, and young adults in all fields of art. The youngest children were highlighted through this scheme.

This knowledge is currently further developed through several on-going project such as Scenekunst til ALLE små.

How children are given the opportunity to participate and to co-create in artistic events has become more and more common in the field and particularly in this work that we have brought to Interstice. The construction of childhood in our time highlights the relational aspects, also in terms of the artistic experience. Interaction is today a central element in most art productions aimed at the very young. Interaction, participation, and democratic form are terms that are currently widely discussed in relation to art for the young. The child has become an important participant in the artistic event and in many situations this participation is a crucial part of the artwork itself.

The very young are often distinguished by how they approach the artwork and the artist using all of their senses. dybwikdans is in their work very concerned with how the artistic work may offer this group a room or space in which they can experience and develop their own creativity. The artistic processes are also influenced by a more recent view on children and childhood. We regard the child as competent, one who delves into the world with resources and competencies to explore and experience complexity and nuances from a subjective world of discovery. This influences how we in dybwikdans understand artistic qualities and the skills and competencies an artist uses and develops in these artistic rooms or spaces.

Creativity should not be considered a separate mental faculty, but a characteristic of our way of thinking, knowing and making choices. Creativity becomes more visible when adults try to be more attentive to the cognitive processes of children than to the results they achieve.

—Loris Malaguzzi

After almost 20 years in the field, and with experience from various projects, it is obvious to dybwikdans that there is a specific kind of knowledge that the performer possesses in art practices that address the very young. In our work trying to understand what this knowledge consists of, we have researched the performances by focusing on the perspective of the child and how the child forms meaning when meeting the art work and the performer. To unveil the choices of the performer in the interactive meeting, as well as the consequences for everyone involved, is central in the process towards performances. In this form of improvisational interplay, highlighting the suggestions and contributions made by a child is of great importance. At the same time this needs to be carefully balanced with trying to maintain the intention of the performance and the artwork.

Viewing the audience as an important participant in the artistic event challenges us in many ways. In these works, the performers need to maintain the intention of the artwork and in our instance, they will have to relate to the overall composition in terms of music and choreography. It is a constant consideration in terms of working within a more open or a more closed work's form. An artistic work with an open form demands a wider responsibility or an expanded role of the performer that is complex in terms of what needs to be maintained whilst performing.

With experience from multiple works for children under the age of three, we experience that we succeed when we create a social space or gap where the art is in dialogue with the participants as bodily subjects. It is mainly about un-



dybwikdans/Blåfugl.
Photo: Morten Berentsen

understanding and meeting children through the senses. In this close and complex interplay with the children, the performers need a specific sensitive competence in terms of *reading* the children and their presence. This sensitivity, this attentive openness that at best is created in this social gap or space, is vital in terms of whether these meaningful meetings will take place within the art practice that we refer to.

Art for the very young (0-3 years) invites planning for an open experience, but how can we meet children in this experience in an inclusive and creative way?

In artistic practice we are much more interested in how we are offering gifts, for example, sounds or movement, that we can explore together. We believe in the small details, the light, sound, sonography, and how everything merges, how everything goes together, and that is the kind of frame for this kind of interplay. We are interested in how we can open up and take care of what children bring into the space, as a lot of the interaction is symbolic.

Cultivating the imagination is the first thing, but it is not enough to read fairy tales. It is about the imagination that rescues us from the obvious and the banal, from the ordinary aspects of life. The imagination that transforms facts into conjectures. Even a shadow cast on the ground is not just a shadow: it is a mystery. Try to draw a shadow and you will realize it.

—Jerome Bruner

Children often bring something in for sampling, a voice improvisation for example. In this artistic group the performers take so many decisions and invite the children to respond, to see themselves as part of the performance shape. “One boy understood that he could hear himself in this song and he was so proud”. We look for small details that can open up these moments; this kind of complexity between light, sound, text, music, dance, space, objects, and at the same time, use that kind of complexity to be able to invite these magical or golden moments. We are searching for ways to bring children into this kind of relationship between teachers, artists, and children.



dybwikdans/Blåfugl.
Photo: Morten Berentsen

dybwikdans productions meet the child in various ways. What they all have in common is that the dialogue will arise within the range of the choreographic material and the bodily and intuitive interplay with the participants. Improvisational knowledge, strategies for interplay and interaction is at the core of the activity, revolving around bodily expressive qualities.



2. CRITICAL THINKING

The heartbeat of critical thinking is the longing to know—to understand how life works. Children are organically predisposed to be critical thinkers. Across the boundaries of race, class, gender, and circumstance, children come into the world of wonder and language consumed with a desire for knowledge.

—bell hooks

I believe that education has to be absorbed by art and conditioned by it. I believe that art is a way of thinking. Art is a way of questioning established order systems, and of building alternative orders. And I believe that education as it is used today is a way of training for others. Education means training citizens capable of thinking critically, that is, capable of questioning and using their thinking creatively.

—Luis Camnitzer

Critical thinking is a complex skill that implies different cognitive processes such as conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, interpreting, reflecting and evaluating to facilitate reflecting critically on ideas, actions, and outcomes (Craft *et al.*, 2012).

Critical thinking is a way of approaching ideas with the aim of understanding their essence, beyond the surface. In learning processes in which critical thinking is stimulated, interactive thinking processes are created, in which a climate of trust is created where all participants, whether students or teachers, can show their ideas. Indeed, as bell hooks says, the most stimulating aspect of critical thinking in the classroom is that it appeals to everyone's initiative and actively invites students to think passionately and share ideas with an open mind (hooks 2022).

Education in the arts can greatly expand a student's capacity to master complex skills and can support social and emotional learning across the curriculum. It can enhance our human ability to access the experience of others, whether through empathy or the reading of nonverbal clues. The arts also serve to make visible certain truths that are sometimes obscured and can provide concrete ways to celebrate multiple perspectives and interpretations of the world. Artistic expression is often very subtle and grapples with life's ambiguities. Arts in education enables students to learn that small differences can have large effects and when they are willing to surrender to the unknown; students

can learn that everything changes with circumstance and opportunity. “Building imagination, judgment and possibility through arts education” (UNESCO | Reimagining All Our Futures 2021)

The arts enable us to say, show, and feel what needs to be said, shown, and felt and by doing this, they help to advance the horizons of communication in and beyond the arts themselves. Curricula that invite creative expression through the arts have tremendous future-shaping potential. Artmaking provides new languages and means through which to make sense of the world, to engage in cultural critique, and to take political action. Learning can cultivate critical appreciation and engagement with cultural heritage and the powerful symbols, repertoires, and references of our collective identities.

Re-imagining education for a creative future moves away from a subject based approach and ensures integrated creative pathways for learning at all ages through an inclusive methodology where development is led by creativity, critical thinking and complex problem solving.

Children’s critical and creative thinking potential and their playfulness, alongside arts-enriched learning can encourage a creative shift from ‘what is’ to what might be’ (Craft *et al* 2012). Teresa Cremin (2013) also explores how narrative plays a foundational role in children’s possibility thinking, and that reciprocal relationships exist between questioning, imagination, and narrative, layered between children and adults (Cremin 2013).

If, as adults, we are ‘more attentive to the cognitive processes of children’ than to the results they achieve, then ‘creativity becomes more visible’ (Malaguzzi 1998).

Once children are helped to perceive themselves as authors or inventors, once they are helped to discover the pleasures of inquiry, their motivation and interest explode. (...) to disappoint the children deprives them of possibilities that no exhortation can arouse in later years

– Carolyn Edwards

Critical thinking skills include emotional literacy, communication skills, problem solving and collaboration. The impact of artists on teachers' thinking and pedagogic practice (McLellan, Galton, Stewart & Page, 2012) is an important factor in arts education. The 'habits of mind' of artists are explored in Bancroft *et al* (2008), where she describes as artists have enquiring minds, an openness to ideas and to change, lateral thinking skills, and are good collaborators and communicators. House of Imagination is a fine example of artists, adults and children coming together to be researchers of the world, exploring creative ideas. The commitment to working as an artist or creative facilitator necessitates developing professionalism in this area. This involves offering personal skills and modelling creative dispositions with children as well as developing enabling contexts in which the children can develop their own interests and express ideas.

KEY CONCEPTS: CRITICAL THINKING



espais C, 2023
Photo: Rosa Llop

I am interested in the fact that knowledge can be produced in the exhibition space and not only expose the result of a research process. I believe that learning is an exercise in resistance, knowledge is the opportunity to be autonomous and emancipate. And real learning occurs by association, when you relate intellectual things to experiences in your life

—Nicolás Paris

In the spirit of Reggio Emilia, the development of ideas depends often on the social interaction of group reflections and conversations. Drawing on their own skills and dispositions, artists can offer possible structures or ‘holding forms’ for children’s expressivity. Documentation in relation to this process is vital in revealing children’s fascinations and curiosities. So too is the place of provocation or intervention. In response to children’s ideas, artists can offer pivotal moments to extend children’s ideas. This process requires a culture of open discussion about creative processes and the notion of being an artist.

This process requires artists working alongside the child as ‘companions in learning’; in dialogue, listening carefully to their offerings and exchanges; valuing what each child brings to the encounter, validating children’s efforts and engagement without lax praise; supporting children’s creative and critical thinking processes; recognising patterns in and making connections with the children’s ideas; modelling positive risk-taking and creative interactions; ‘checking in’ with sensitivity, by observing and talking with children, and by being in proximity with them.



Practical examples

House of Imagination, Bath

Anna Craft and Penny Hay worked with teams of teachers to distil some of the key characteristics of critical thinking (Craft *et al* 2014). The results can inspire others to have some examples of the sort of questions that can help to develop critical thinking:

Strategies	Which sort of questions?	Examples
Questioning and challenging	Asking why, how, what if, what as if? Responding to ideas, questions, tasks or problems in an unusual way	Asking unusual questions Challenging conventions and assumptions Thinking independently
Envisaging what might be	Imagining and seeing things in the mind's eye Asking 'what if?' imagine if? Visualising alternatives	Seeing possibilities, problems & challenges Looking at and thinking about things differently and from different points of view
Reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes	Reviewing progress Inviting and incorporating feedback Making perceptive observations about originality and value	Asking 'is this good, is this what's needed?' Putting forward constructive comments, ideas, explanations and ways of doing things

To excite children's imagination in order that they can advance beyond present understanding, extend the boundaries of their lives, contemplate worlds possible as well as actual, understand cause and consequence, develop the capacity for empathy, and reflect on and regulate their behaviour; to explore and test language, ideas and arguments in every activity and form of thought ... We assert the need to emphasise the intrinsic value of exciting children's imagination. To experience the delights – and pains – of imagining, and of entering into the imaginative worlds of others, is to become a more rounded and capable person. –R.J. Alexander

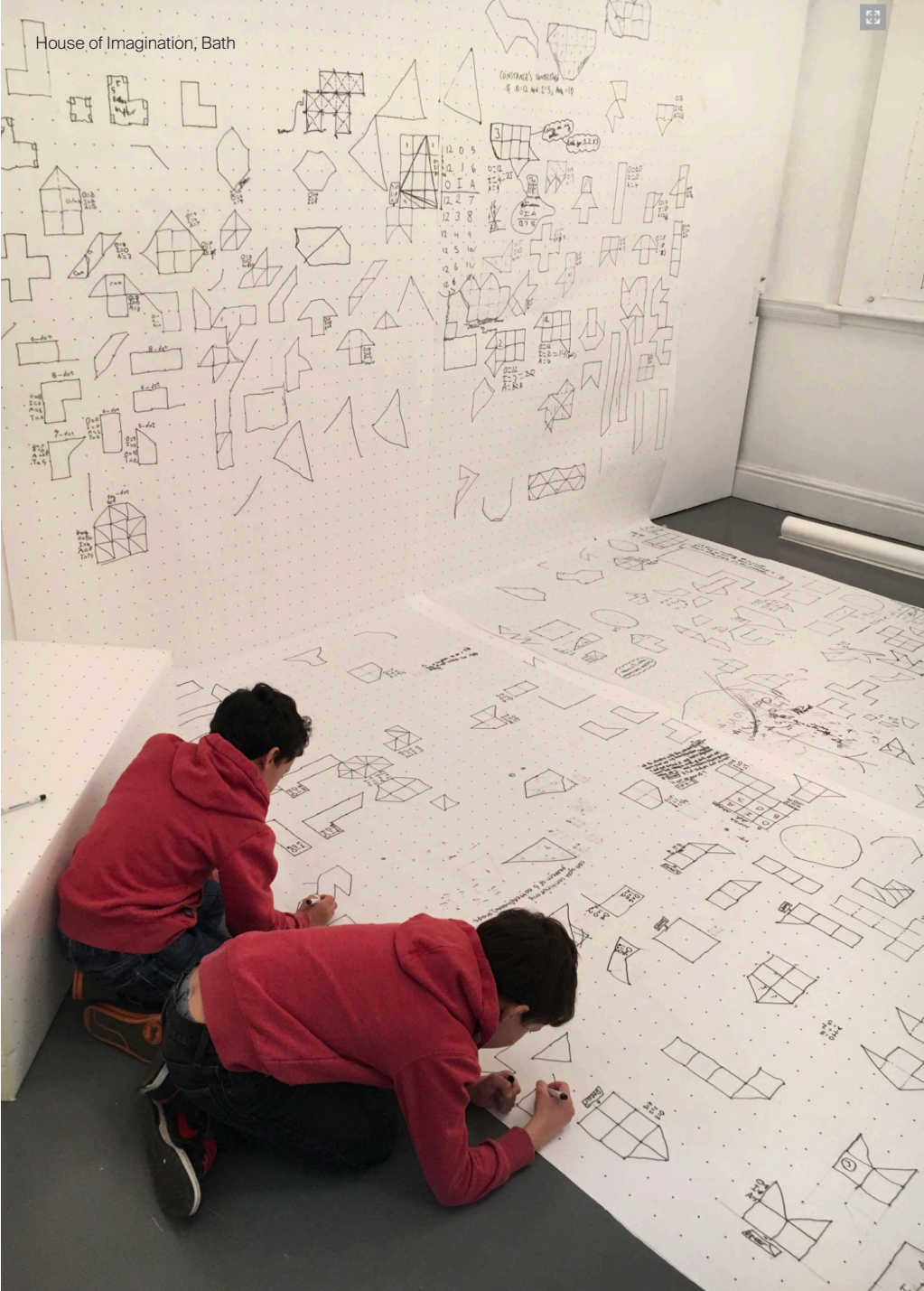
Also, The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) identified some key elements of creativity, some important teaching and learning strategies and some helpful pointers for professional development.

There are 6 key aspects to be considered when designing activities fostering creativity or critical thinking:

1. Create student interest and integrate with other disciplines	Start with a big question or an unusual activity
2. Be challenging	Structure tasks so that they can be undertaken at multiple levels
3. Develop clear technical knowledge	Embed creativity in the context of a subject discipline
4. Include the development of a product	Presentations, performances, and models, for example, help to make creativity visible
5. Give students opportunities to co-design	Engage interest and ownership by creating appropriate chances for students to influence the course of learning
6. Deal with problems that have multiple perspectives	Where there are several possible solutions to challenges there are likely to be several different techniques to solve them
7. Leave room for the unexpected	Teachers do not have to know it all!
8. Include time and space for reflection and feedback	Learning from risk-taking and mistakes is powerful

This chart is adapted from 'Fostering students' creativity and critical thinking' OECD, 2019. p25.

House of Imagination, Bath



Finally, another example is being developed by *School Without Walls*: 6 Critical Thinking Skills alongside teachers:

Enquiry: Students create their own questions around an idea or concept, determine their own direction and hold the content for themselves rather than it being told to them. Creative, critical thinking skills, asking what if, how can I improve this?

Independence: Students being able to self-motivate, being able to work on their own without the need to always ask the teacher. Finding their answers, questions and seeking relevant support e.g., from external experts, another teacher from a different dept.

Problem solving: Students exploring possibilities, testing things out, asking the what if questions and taking risks to find out. A more active way of learning, more hands on. Thinking by doing.

Teamwork: Students being able to work well with others, solving problems as a group without always asking the teacher. Listening, sharing, and negotiating ideas and solutions.

Love of learning: Students finding a love of learning through discovery. Developing habits of research fullness, the habit of needing to know and finding out. Developing the skills of a lifelong learner.

Resilience: Students following their interests, working through the problems and being persistent in finding a possibility or solution.



3. ARTISTIC LAN- GUA- GES

The arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can know.

The limits of our language do not define the limits of our cognition.

—Elliot Eisner

We believe that is necessary to build educational and cultural approaches that demonstrate the multiple aesthetic expression of thoughts, ideas and feelings. Malaguzzi's 100 languages' allow for the development of thoughts and emotions of each individual involved in the process of learning.

The most valuable attitude we can help children adopt – I can best characterise by the word playful ... It begins with nursery rhymes and nonsense poems, with clapping games and finger play and simple songs and picture books. It goes on to consist of fooling about with the stuff the world is made of: with sounds, and with shapes and colours, and with clay and paper and wood and metal, and with language. Fooling about, playing with it, pushing it this way and that, turning it sideways, painting it different colours, looking at it from the back, putting one thing on top of another, asking silly questions, mixing things up, making absurd comparisons, discovering unexpected similarities, making pretty patterns, and all the time saying 'Supposing ... I wonder ... What if?'

It is important that children are invited to explore their ideas in different modalities – to experiment, to play, to create and share their learning through visual and performative modes of expression - through images, through their movement and dance, musical or poetic languages. Every language of expression has its own integrity and form of expressive potential. Artistic languages and aesthetic experience are a form of encounter, exploration, contemplation and expression. The role of artists and the use of artistic languages are both connectors of knowledge and cultural understanding.

It is important that students exploit the entire range of human intelligence and that, as part of our pedagogy, we train them to handle a series of languages that are not exclusively verbal or mathematical. There will be children who find a way to express themselves through images; others, through body movement; others, through musical language. Mastery of a range of languages is necessary for communication to occur beyond certain closed enclosures within one's own culture. —Maxine Greene

Reggio's atelierista Veia Vecchi reflects on *Mind and nature*, by Gregory Bateson, who asserts the connectedness of all things, reflects on the importance of an aesthetic approach as a great connector of elements of reality. Bateson (1979) clarifies

“by aesthetic I mean sensitive to structures which connect. To define artistic thought in this way, I believe it has to relate to things with intensity and empathy. There can be no doubt that his kind of approach can help us to discover and investigate the hidden structures behind reality, to weave maps capable of holding together processes of logic and emotion, of technique and expression. It is an excellent curriculum for learning.”

KEY CONCEPTS: ARTISTIC LANGUAGES



Cardboard Maze
Forest of Imagination,
Bath

Vecchi (2016) continued to question “how learning and teaching processes could change if the school culture welcomed poetic languages and the aesthetic dimension as significant elements for the construction of knowledge. Our intention was to use the imagination as a unifying element of the various activities and to consider the aesthetics of knowing as an energy that has its roots within us and that leads us to choose between models of action, thought, and imagination.”

Paying attention to aesthetics in learning is a sensibility central to the artistic process itself in understanding and communicating the human condition. This also relates to the way ideas are expressed in the world, the relationships between children, art, artists and educators, between objects, materials, environments and places. These natural learning processes are richly productive as children are always ready to instigate and deepen their involvement. The trying out of ideas, free associations, creative connections combine with sustained concentration, collaboration, resourcefulness and moreover passion – exciting ingredients for ‘researching children researching the world’ (Hay, 2023)

The writer David Almond (in París & Hay, 2019) describes children as natural artists. They sing, play, dance, paint, draw, run, write, read. Almond proposes that instead of believing that our adult purpose is to instruct children, we should be open enough to learn from them and to be inspired by them and to work alongside them.

KEY CONCEPTS: ARTISTIC LANGUAGES



Arraona nursery, Sabadell. laSala,
Stavanger & UAB training
Photo: Artur Gavaldà (Platea Films)

Practical examples

laSala, Sabadell

“My objective is to create my own world and these images which we create mean nothing more than the images which they are. We have forgotten how to relate emotionally to art: we treat it like editors, searching in it for that which the artist has supposedly hidden. It is actually much simpler than that, otherwise art would have no meaning. You have to be a child—incidentally children understand my pictures very well, and I haven’t met a serious critic who could stand knee-high to those children. We think that art demands special knowledge; we demand some higher meaning from an author, but the work must act directly on our hearts or it has no meaning at all.” —Andrei Tarkovsky

Sculpting in Time, Isabel Urpí, laSala

The artistic language is a dimension of every human being, an innate language that expresses ourselves through the whole body since birth. The human being uses all its body in that dimension, and there is full engagement of our body’s potential for expression. As humans, we have different languages and levels to communicate with each other and interact with reality.

There is a rational language that interacts with a more practical state or attitude of our mind, which goes to a certain depth of our thinking and feeling, and that is very useful to organize our ideas, to describe and classify our thoughts,

to structure our learning, and to develop future skills and projects; but this way is not the only one, nor is it the most important for our lives as individuals and as a part of a community.

There is this other language, or other attitude: the artistic approach. This has nothing to do with functional or practical behaviour, as it is less rational and more intuitive; it filters constantly without a full consciousness in our movements, our actions, our instinctive responses, our sudden words that are not thoroughly measured, our silences, our screams, our daily little choices that guide our major decisions in life, and that are closely related to playfulness and strongly connected with our most intimate desires and will. We use this dimension to express our inner vision, our feelings, and emotions, to be not only alive but fully alive, upright, and standing on earth, awake, inspired, fully located in ourselves.

Some of us may confuse it and think that this area of ourselves happens to be a non-essential one; some of us may define it as our leisure time, where we develop our pleasures. But research and experience have shown us that true learning, the most valuable ideas, and meaningful thoughts are found not in the activity or the rush of productivity but in a much quieter and apparently (for some) “useless” space and time, where we are with no specific occupation or doing anything “important”: the in-between spaces or in-between moments that are indeed fulfilled of inspiration and problem-solving capabilities, as there is a void that appears to be able to be filled.

When our mind is in no rush and our body is at rest, when nothing occupies us, this kind of miracle appears in front of us and in front of others. And the miracle is nothing else

but the infinite potential of who we are—our true selves, our voice, our meaningful and singular sight of life, our intimate relationship with ourselves, our consciousness—which is revealed and unfolded in front of our own eyes and in relation to others. It is amazing to see how fearful this is for most adults, and amazing to see how children are in that state of being in a natural and fluid way. We adults should pay all our attention to what happens in this playful and creative time of childhood, as it is the closest place where we will be to getting to know each other and really make a true learning who we are and who they are.

Parents and educators who have not used this language for many years tend to forget or deny their ability to be creative and speak a fluent artistic language, but if we want to communicate with children and relate to reality with authenticity, we must remember that this language is latent within us and unlock it. And how do we do that? Well, just by doing it, spending time with it, and practicing it throughout our lives. As Kurt Vonnegut advised an audience of children in Los Angeles, “Practicing any art, no matter how good or bad, is a way to grow your soul. So do it!”

We have all practiced artistic languages a lot during our childhood; in fact, it is the first language we speak, even before we are verbal. So, the challenge is sometimes to recognize that we can express ourselves artistically, metaphorically, through images, through movement, and through our whole body, and to put it to use in our daily lives at home and at school as adults.

Life itself speaks with and through the language of art, and children are profoundly aware of that language in a natural and unintended way.

The rest of the languages—political, social, academic, and scientific—come after artistic vision or sensitive and contemplative attention. I sincerely believe that humans understood what it was to hunt after having painted or represented their experience on the cave’s walls and not before. Before, did they only act without fully knowing what they were doing? Artistic language comes to represent, to make sense, to give us hope and an understanding of what and why we are here and doing what we do: exist. Then we celebrate life, expressing it artistically by drawing it, staging it, or singing it, and only later are we able to think about it, name it, organize it, and describe it with words. I believe that art expresses everything that is still mysterious to our rational thought and therefore prior to thought (such as contemplative vision or intuition). True learning comes from that area of our mind where we can feel life before understanding anything, look at it in the eye without prejudice, and above all, have enough courage to face the unknown, the mystery of our nature.

Through the artistic language, humanity has found the tools and keys to live each time in history, to face the great social changes, to heal and find ways to move forward after experiencing great losses or collective duels, and to understand the times that we are living. Education shouldn’t ignore the immense possibility of learning that art offers us by relegating it to the suburbs of the academic program; on the contrary, it should recognize it as a privileged source of knowledge, devoting a substantial part of school time to promoting and developing in the children this innate ability.

Children’s own expressive language is based on bodily, sensory, emotional, and sound experiences. This is how they articulate their learning and relationships.



Can Puiggener nursery,
Sabadell
Photo: Artur Gavaldà
(Platea Films)

If adults promote this type of language, we establish a deeper peer-to-peer relationship with children. Movement, music, singing, and the aesthetics of objects are very valuable tools to accommodate this type of relationship where different types of learning (cognitive, relational, and psychomotor) can become independent of hierarchies and be self-managed by the children themselves. The comprehensive listening (visual-auditory-body-emotional) of the teachers and the use of voice, singing, and movement in a creative way make the children feel more validated, whole, protagonists, and responsible for their learning. They understand the place they occupy in the group and can connect with their abilities to grow and face new challenges.

Children need adults who are connected, clear, and available to listen, recognize, and contain their full bodily, emotional, sensory, and cognitive potential. Movement, music, and the visual arts are very valuable tools to accommodate this complete state of the adult when sharing space and time with the child. Connecting and recognizing the values present in oneself and in others is the key to an equal relationship with a desire for vital expansion.

espai c, Barcelona, artist Gina Gimenez
Photo: Maria Sellarès



Art is not a discipline created to make objects or a craft, but rather a means to organize and expand knowledge.

—Luis Camnitzer

espai c, Barcelona

An artist's studio is a different space from others. Like all creative professionals, an artist needs a series of objects, tools, materials to develop their actions. When workspaces are shared between artists and children, they are filled up with shelves and boxes that keep pliers, scissors, cutters, rulers, compasses, glass jars, ropes, tapes, cables, paints, brushes, rags, or wool in a certain order. These materials help both the artist and the child to shape their thoughts and can enable them to express their ideas through the various artistic languages.

In the atelier, thoughts and dialogue are constructed not only through verbal language; processes are elaborated mainly in other ways: visually and performatively. Those languages that have historically been at a second level, both inside and outside of school, but allow humans to shape complex and subtle thoughts, that sometimes would remain otherwise undeveloped (Eisner 2008). Vecchi (2016) describes

how most educational approaches are based on the idea of “specializing certain teachers in the artistic area, but there is another one that is to request that artists contribute or come to the school and teach”

KEY CONCEPTS: ARTISTIC LANGUAGES



espai c, Encants school, Barcelona
artists: Judith Cuadros & David Mateos
Photo: Gemma París

espai c, Arts school, Barcelona
artists: Berta Vallvé & Leïa Goiria
Photo: Gemma París

The espai c project was born out of the belief that specialisation is not enough to provide a high-quality artistic education. The project, influenced by other similar programmes, has the aim of permanently introducing art thinking (Camnitzer 2015) into the school, through children's hundred languages (Malaguzzi 1998). A resident artist in an educational context provides technical, conceptual, and strategic knowledge that is different from what the teacher may offer. This artist as a role model can enrich the creative processes of children, and this new learning through artistic languages provokes their empowerment. Schools are designed to share the well-known, they are institutions founded in the past, in contrast, the arts offer children an opportunity to look towards the future, and that's why we strive to introduce art into the educational institution (Camnitzer 2021).

The artist tends to see reality in a different way than teachers and will express it using different languages. One of the teachers participating in the project explained that having an artist in the school helped the teaching team not only to have more knowledge about and access to artistic resources, but also to realise how learning can occur using different strategies and ways of constructing thoughts, which they had found difficult to recognise previously.

KEY CONCEPTS: ARTISTIC LANGUAGES



Blue Bird show by dybwikdans with families
and teachers at laSala, Sabadell
Photo: Artur Gavalrà (Platea Films)

Can Puiggener nursery,
Sabadell. laSala, Stavanger & UAB training
Photo: Artur Gavaldà (Platea Films)

Performing Art for the Very Young, Stavanger

Kirsten Halle and Siri Dybwik have been developing for many years artistic, musical, and theatrical projects designed for young children, which they develop in nursery schools, in the Elephant Theatre, and in the training of Early Childhood Education Teachers at the University of Stavanger. They take care of all the details of their production and staging, considering the needs and abilities of their audience, with children from 0-5 years old, inviting the teachers to reflect on their teaching practice in relation to expression in and through artistic languages in kindergartens, and their conception of creativity and children's learning in this educational stage.

Performing artist Siri Dybwik explains how her heart still beats when she enters an aesthetic encounter because it triggers something. She also sees how children simply plant their bodies in the experience and are open. Instead, she herself wonders why it is difficult to open teachers to the creative world of children. In their scenic projects, immersive environments are created that are like a universe you enter, it's a place you've never been before, the key is to have this common creativity, this space where we're all there together in tune with invite the children and we open this space for the wonder of children. The children's reflection is reflected in this bodily experience that articulates the senses and emotions through the kinaesthetic

empathy of the artists in the moment. They invite teachers to understand more about these contexts constructed with different artistic languages (music, dance, scenography) by offering them this experience of creative encounter with the children, in the artistic space. The artist believes that there are many ways to express yourself and interact, and that they are always meaningful. The space of the artistic meeting allows them to develop.

As part of their projects, they develop professional artistic contexts that they place within educational practice in kindergartens and schools, through the languages of music, voice, body, and dance. Kirsten Halle, music, and music education professor at the University of Stavanger, explains that when music becomes a more natural part of teachers' practice, children also develop their way of communicating and expressing themselves through these artistic languages; their creativity, feelings, and states can more easily take the form of more holistic bodily sensory behaviour in meaningful ways.

From a phenomenological perspective, they examine the bodily presence and subjective experience that children have when they encounter an artistic work, as a symbolic form. They are concerned that teachers and future educators understand the potential of the artistic experiences

In Reggio Emilia we were aware of how discriminatory our school culture was with regard to the so-called expressive languages (visual, musical, poetic language and dance, although in fact all languages have their own need and expressive capacity), for that the workshop has been introduced as one of the guarantees of the defense of the complexity of the knowledge construction processes.

—Vea Vecchi

that children have when they enter these spaces. They observe how children and adults express themselves and negotiate meaning in an artistic context, and what these encounters with art can mean for children.

In their artistic and educational experiences, it becomes visible that even small children discover meanings in front of a work of art. To achieve this discovery, it is necessary that the framework of the experience is organised in such a way that the child feels safe enough to explore the qualities offered by the artistic work. By engaging in this practice, with attention to these qualities, the practice is illuminat-

ed both from within (themselves) and from without (others). Those who share this space of experience can (re)discover aspects of themselves that are not always easy to describe. Being touched by the phenomena is a way to increase well-being, when we are concerned with aesthetics it becomes significant in several ways.

Encounters with art, through the different artistic languages, also require time because they include complexity. By giving children time to explore and immerse themselves in professional artwork, we also give them the opportunity to discover details. Young children have a particular interest and sensitivity to nuances, qualities, and details, which is how they interpret the world (Trevvarthen, 2011). Offering art to early childhood is a way to stimulate and further develop this sensitivity and enhance an attentive look, in a world full of immediacy. Helping children experience the world is as important as helping them understand it (Hohr 2013).

Siri Dybwik and Kirsten Halle visit kindergartens over several years, asking questions:

- How can you reflect on the performer?
- what do you see what do you feel?
- Can you describe the meeting with the performers?
- What is communication?
- What is the creativity here, the exploration?
- How do we explore human companionship in these contexts?

- What did this artistic experience mean to you? what did you do in kindergarten
- Have you changed anything about your educational practice? Are you inspired? How did this affect your work?
- If the experience was magical, what does it mean to develop a language about this kind of experience?

We talk about presence, relationships, how to interact, musicality, how we communicate through our bodies and our sounds sent through our gestures. Entering this context is as important as articulating what is at the core of this experience by developing knowledge among those who work with children.

During these projects they ask:

- What meaning is expressed in this space of experiences where bodily interactions and symbolic form from the content in which children and adults express themselves?
- How do children and adults express and negotiate meaning in an artistic context, and what can these encounters with art mean for young children?

The artists and teachers at the University of Stavanger explain how body language, gestures and actions give them observable data that they interpret and analyse,



Can Ilong nursery, Sabadell
Photo: Artur Gavaldà (Platea
Films)

and how this data can open up our understanding of the meaning of these artistic encounters. They also believe that sharing these spaces of experience with young children can also give the kindergarten teacher an insight into epistemological and ontological questions that can be of help in the pedagogical work with the youngest children in the kindergarten, a work that consists, to a large extent, of understanding and getting to know children through the senses (Johansson and Løkken 2013).

They understand that in examining what artistic experience and aesthetic symbolic language behaviour can mean for children under the age of three, art must first be relevant in the way it must 'affect his life world. Art in general has no meaning without making the other person speak. By understanding art as relational, the child does not become a passive observer but an important participant in the artistic event. Artistic practice must have the child as a corporeal subject, and also its social context as a premise for the encounter to occur and meanings to be discovered. When children's bodily presence is taken seriously and their actions and gestures are welcomed, art can open up new ways of seeing the world. In this artistic context, new narratives can be created because the power or fecundity of artists exceeds any experience of cause or connection (Merleau-Ponty in Dehs 2003).



4. CO-CREATION

However, audiences' role in arts has significantly changed over the years. Audiences does not want to appreciate art just by viewing, they want to be involved in the process of art creation.

—Howard Becker

KEY CONCEPTS: CO-CREATION



Forest of imagination, Bath



School without walls, Bath

Socially engaged art practice engages a community in problem solving by working together through difficult topics and ideas. When this collaboration is democratically shared, collaboration may emerge. —Rita Irwinn

To develop creativity and critical thinking through the art in learning spaces is necessary to co-design spaces and places for children to explore their imagination alongside artists, educators, and cultural professionals.

Artists bring to the school a way of questioning, an open mindset, defining a space that will be safe for children in order to empower themselves, open up and explore through co-creation with others (París and Hay, 2019). Artists act as learners, rather than infallible experts passing on knowledge to others. Artists promote experiential learning, with an emphasis on giving students the opportunity to experiment in a supportive environment (Bancroft, Fawcett and Hay, 2008). Arts, culture and heritage is an important aspect of children's lives. The more these are co-created the more investment the children will have in participation and ownership. Co-designing arts and culture inside and outside the classroom invites creative capabilities and dispositions that children can take through their lives. Inviting multi-dis-

disciplinary co-created experiences invites a space for democratic exchange and dialogue, prioritizing children engaging with the arts in everyday life and bringing a sense of art being in the world, alongside community engagement and pedagogical innovation. This 'environment of enquiry' transforms learning for both teachers and children by focusing on children and teachers' agency and dynamic relationships.

Giving children responsibility for their own learning develops their ability to learn whilst at the same time deepening their knowledge and understanding of the world, alongside adults as companions in their learning. Children find the intrinsic motivation to learn and to understand how they learn, both as a group and as individuals. This approach has shown increased motivation, purposeful engagement, authentic learning, and social empowerment in the children we have worked with. This process also allows them to develop key skills such as how to be effective and confident communicators and how to cooperate and collaborate well with others.

House of Imagination theoretical underpinning involves the following elements to facilitate co-creation:

Co-creation of learning communities of children, educators, parents

- Children and adults learning alongside each other
- Democratic, authentic relationships established
- Everyone's ideas valued; trusting in the ideas of children

Co-design of learning and curriculum (for both children and adults)

- Deeper, more personal and meaningful learning in real life contexts
- Responsibility and ownership of learning
- Breaks down barriers to learning

Co-creation involving following characteristics

- Engagement and immersion
- Testing out ideas without fear of failure
- Embracing uncertainty as a positive quality
- Curiosity and following fascinations
- Process of reflection, exchange and dialogue
- Quality of reciprocity and listening
- Seeking, posing and exploring good questions
- Generating shared questions; exploring them through co-creation

Co-designing creative experiences and manifesting creative arts practice through enabling environments ensures that children's voices and agency are valued. If children are invited to co-create meaningful projects in a diverse landscape of arts, culture and heritage, this journey then begins with listening to children's interests and co-creating opportunities for them to explore and represent their home cultures and lived experience. The creative process itself of action research and co-inquiry, ensures that educators and artists really listen to children's fascinations and interests. Noticing children's curiosities can be fed into ongoing responsive planning for co-creative projects, with children as active agents in their own learning.

It would help a lot in this if we also banned the word “teach” and used the word “learn” exclusively instead. So clearly, teachers and students would learn together and share the risks one faces when exploring new areas.

—Luis Camnitzer

Practical examples

House of Imagination, Bath

House of Imagination places children and young people at the heart of its work as co-creators, co-enquirers, and co-learners. This creative collaborative learning approach focuses on the processes of learning. House of Imagination has researched and supported creative and democratic relationships over the years. Through its action research with artists and creative professionals the role of the artist has been explored and developed: artists seeing themselves as co-creators alongside children 'open and attentive to their ideas and interests and engaging with them in a playful way' (Bancroft *et al.*, 2008). Artists and educators bring together their differing but complementary perspectives to identify children's fascinations through tuning in to their explorations, ways of learning and knowing, identifying rich veins that hold the potential for learning for both children and adults. These veins are richest where children and adults can explore shared questions of interest alongside each other as part of a creative, collaborative learning community.

Creative professionals also introduce contemporary issues through creative provocations or installations. For example, the 'Living Tree Mirror Maze' was an immersive installation which invited participants to enquire into the natural world and the ecological issues; and support the agency for action and hope in response to the climate emergency through reflecting on nature in nature, and themselves in nature. In Forest of Imagination and School Without Walls creative professionals have identified and

explored contemporary issues through co-creation with children. Through this process of co-enquiry and co-creation creative professionals and educators support the exploration and co-creation of knowledge between children, and across the adult learning community as continuing professional learning and the development of pedagogy. Although the role of the artist in House of Imagination is distinct from the role of the atelierista in Reggio Emilia, Preschools, and Infant Toddler Centres the words of Veà Vecchi (2010) resonate with the House of Imagination experience:

Because the atelier is in contact with the world of art, architecture, and design and because the atelierista often has sensitive antennae for contemporary issues, it is her task to receive and bring these interesting cultural flows into school and, where possible, rework them in appropriate ways so that they light up areas which can be used for experimentation with children. It should not be thought that ideas derived from the world of art and design are distant from children's because children live immersed in contemporary life as no one else.

In 'Living Tree Mirror Maze' the co-designers of the installation explained to the children that they were testing out ideas for themselves, seeing how it worked, and were curious to know what it made the children think and how it made them feel? There was an on-going exchange of ideas between the artists and the children, of reciprocity, and co-creation alongside each other. The idea of the Liv-

ing Tree Mirror Maze evolved and was co-created through the collaboration with the children including a pre-session where the children debated the core questions posed by the Living Tree Mirror Maze and experimented with ideas. The children's ideas were shared with the artists and designers as part of their process of design and creation of the installation within the egg theatre. The pre-session in school and the collaboration during the Living Tree Mirror Maze provided an effective exchange and dialogue between all the participants in a democratic and authentic way where everyone's ideas were valued.

Evidences of the co-creative process

'Kate, teacher and Helen, artist, co-created a situation in which the 7 and 8 year old children could come to appreciate each other's skills, talents, ways of working and dispositions. They worked on a collective painting that held different stories within it. Small groups worked on ideas for each panel. Negotiation, differences colliding, collaboration, sharing, borrowing, adapting, ownership and honouring each other's ideas were an integral part of the democratic process of the painting becoming a whole. The children expressed their feelings about the process explaining they felt 'epic', 'free', 'happy about doing whatever their imagination lets them'.

'There were just so many things that I could not describe like it felt exciting for me, and then there was inspiration, new, messy, silly and beautiful. It was all just one big jungle of inspiration for me, it was so hard to write it all down.' Liz Elders, mentor

KEY CONCEPTS: CO-CREATION



espai c, Sagarra school,
Barcelona
artist: Rosa Llop
Photo: Núria Grau

espai c, Arts school, Barcelona
Artist: Neus Frigola
Photo: Neus Frigola

espai c, Barcelona

espai c is a shared learning environment, where a resident artist brings a new perspective on creativity, building creative thinking from artistic languages. Understanding the concept of creativity as a faculty that is not exclusive to artists, but that can be cultivated by all people, the espai c project was born with the desire to build scenarios of democratic creativity (Adams and Owens 2016), where all people can work collaboratively with different creative acts.

In espai c artists and children are co-participants and they share processes, responsibilities, and needs. The artist, as an adult, doesn't decide for children, all the participants share the responsibility about the processes and the relationships between them inside the art studio.

The links that are created between artists and children are cooperative where they all share a common goal, but each of them have their own responsibilities and learn from each other in a symmetrical way (Johnson & Johnson, 2018); both are immersed in their own research, but children learn from artists, and vice versa. In this sense, the studio/atelier appears as a democratic space for co-creation. The presence of the artist provokes changes in the learning of children, which becomes more autonomous, meaningful, and creative.

In this space of co-creation children also provokes influence to artists, who offers from the educational community, especially from children, but also from teachers, a significant approach by artists to the world of childhood. This permanent contact is offering them a vision of fantasy and imagination that is shaking their methodological and conceptual approaches to their artistic work. For artists, children's pro-

KEY CONCEPTS: CO-CREATION



espai c, Sagarra school at Hangar,
Barcelona. Artist: Rosa Llop
Photo: Núria Grau

ductions have the same aesthetic dignity as their own allowing a process of collective creation based on reciprocal stimulation, horizontality, joint learning, and the mixing of ages. Rob Farley coordinator of Room 13 project, explains how resident artists at the school draw inspiration from the wild ideas of young artists and respond creatively in such a way that the entire process is totally reciprocal (in Freire, 2007).

Introducing this concept of co-participation in learning processes through the *espais c* project implies putting into practice an open and innovative understanding of pedagogy.

In-between-thinking: artist in residence Rosa Llop (Hangar, Sagarra school).

In-between-thinking is a methodological toolbox to mediate in generative research sessions and collective thinking actions, where I use artistic practices as a tool to make emerge knowledge, while increasing the participation and satisfaction of the participants thanks to the use of non-discursive languages.

The main objective of the *espais c* program is for students to experience first-hand how an artist thinks and works. And this is very interesting because I think artistic practice produces knowledge from a privileged place: the space of doubt. A space that allows to question everything normative and promote a knowledge that is built not from the description of the world but from the experience of the world, and therefore generate a subtle, free and emotional knowledge.

In fact, contemporary artistic practice is very little about producing and a lot about questioning. And what I have been able to observe during my participation to *espais c*

The problem is not so much to open the frontiers of the different disciplines, but rather to prevent these frontiers from forming.

—Edgar Morin

is that the students at Sagarra's School like challenges and are not afraid to ask questions. And questions are key when activating learning because they trigger curiosity and are synonymous with discovery. Therefore, I think that what is produced in *espais c* are not drawings, paintings or sculptures, but questions. Questions that will eventually become provocations to re-interpret realities and provoke actions of change.

For example, in this in-between-thinking action we did at Hangar, we wondered about the political implications of the representation of time. The girls and boys who participated were able to question the clock as a neutral representation as they were able to contrast it with representations of time from other species such as trees and animals and check how politicized time is in terms of capitalism. Arising these kinds of questions is key to building better futures in terms of coexistence.

In my practice with the In-between-thinking actions, all this critical thinking is built from very diverse languages: objects, images, narratives, light, sounds, body movements,... all this transdisciplinarity is a tool that awakens a more meaningful perception of the world since they are languages very imprecise full of ambiguity and inaccuracies that precisely cause more emotional sincerity, autonomy, and divergent thinking.

For example, when you take a child out of the classroom and take him to a prepared space where there is almost no lighting, you see how suddenly their attitude changes, they speak in a low voice, walk cautiously, take care of their colleagues so they don't fall, empathize with those who are afraid of the dark, respect the turns of speech... Suddenly, just changing the lighting makes them transform into a much more receptive individuals, and stronger relationships between them unfold. In fact, one of the things they valued the most at the end of the in-between-thinking action at Hangar was the tranquility in the room and the respect that was felt there.

For me, the most important is that when a child is faced with the interpretation of sound, light, etc... these non discursive languages allow the childs unfold meanings loaded with personal experiences and subjective nuances about their relationship with the world. These interpretations very often visualize the fissures of dominant ideologies and disturb our assumptions as adults. In the accompaniment they offer to each other in a dark space you can visualize the shadows of classism, racism and exclusion that we normally can't see in a bright and shiny classroom.

Co-creative projects originate in partnership with participants rather than based solely on institutional goals. The idea of shared decision-making.

—Nina Simon



Worshop with artists,
Bologna

A journey with the body and imagination. A White Room created by students in the VAM, Bologna.

The co-creation process is achieved when the user reproduces creatively his/her own knowledge of the heritage, by making new meanings and interpretations. The digital environment of the VAM facilitates the co-creation process because it allows original and informal heritage narrations as well as the active role of the user in the artistic process.

For the following co-creation activity, the students were divided into groups and each group was given an image of a work of art. They were asked to start from this image to first carry out a process of creative reading and then propose artistic paths to the children through the creation of a digital storytelling.

This co-creation process is articulated in the following phases:

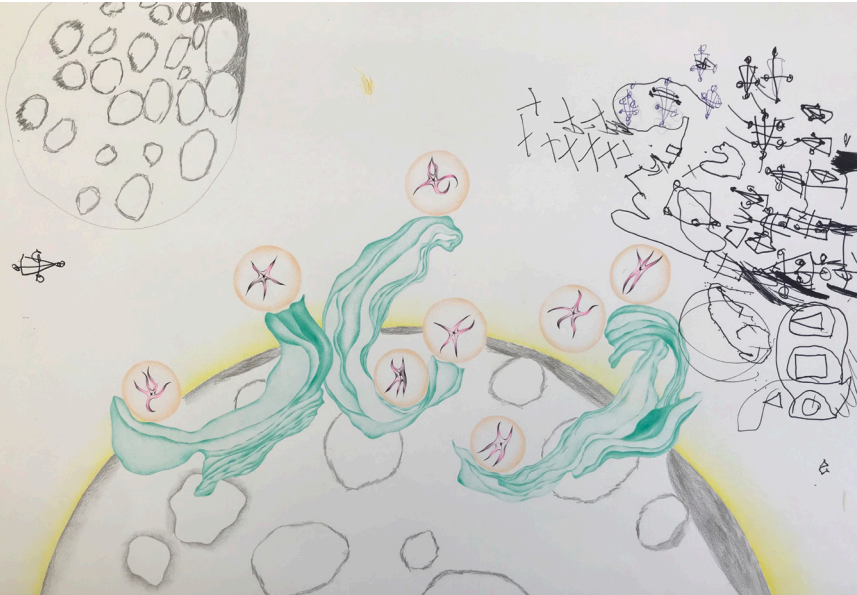
PHASES	ACTIONS
Visual conceptualization	Choice of a social and cultural theme, a practical experience or an object that carries a subjective meaning.
Search for information	Reading and contextualization of the image/experience/theme chosen plus a further possible comparison with similar images/experiences/themes
Design and setup	Design of the exhibition and creation of contents (pictures, mp3 audio files, videos, pdf documents). The exhibition appears as a set of objects connected one another by a narrative thread



5. INCLU- SIVE SPACES OF ENCOUN- TER

To define a space we need architectural elements, but to produce meeting places we need elements such as dialogue, noise, light, hours.
—Nicolás París

The possibility of a relational art (an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space), points to a radical upheaval of the aesthetic, cultural and political goals introduced by modern art. Art as a state of encounter. —Nicolas Borriaud



espai c, Arts school, Barcelona
 Photo: Neus Frigola

Our purpose is to invite everyone into a democratic space of encounter to explore ideas together in and through the arts, understanding art as experience (Dewey, 1943). Every educational encounter is an invitation to explore ideas, thoughts, and feelings together and express them in many different ways, and through co-participation, where everyone is welcome, and every child is equal. In making learning processes through the arts in inclusive spaces of encounter can explore the space between children, art, artists, and educators. Through an open space of dialogue and expression there is more emphasis on the possibility of relational and collaborative artmaking rather than purely individual expression. Art is an inclusive space of encounter, a meeting place for ideas and expressions and where difference is valued. This 'public pedagogy' is art as pedagogy.

It is impossible to be a single individual. The human being is something more than a social being, his condition is relational. You cannot say an I without resonating with a we. Beyond the union/separation duality, bodies continue because they are finite. Finitude as a condition not of separation but of continuation is the basis for another conception of us, based on the alliance and solidarity of singular bodies, their languages and their minds.

—Marina Garcés



espais C, Miralletes school, Barcelona
Artist: Laura Zuccaro, Chiquita room gallery
Photo: Laura Zuccaro

In “Encountering Pedagogy as Relational Art Practices”, Irwin and O’Donoghe (2012) explore ‘socially engaged art’ practice alongside art educators and intending teachers, to rethink notions of teaching, learning and art. In this context the learning encounters create environments for meaningful exchanges between the ways in which artists teachers thought about pedagogy and the nature of artistic learning. Irwin and O’Donoghe draw on Bourriaud’s (1998) theory of relational aesthetics, reaching a notion of *a/r/tography* as a form of living enquiry that opens up possibilities for learning in a community of practice:

Relational aesthetics describes an artistic practice commonly referred to as relational art. This artistic practice invents, produces or reconfigures the social relations between individuals, groups and communities... Relational aesthetics describes an art practice commonly referred to as relational art or relational aesthetic practice (and other times as socially-engaged art, community-based art, research-based or collaborative art). This art practice invents, produces or reconfigures social relations between individuals, groups and communities.

The different cultural and arts contexts that we can offer children can prioritize this attention to inclusive learning in, about and through the arts. Through such co-participation, children and adults share experiences, ideas, and expressions in a connected, relational space. The interconnectedness of ideas in a liminal space are where ideas can grow and be shared. This dynamic, inter-relational, space of possibility then invites a sense of meaningful inquiry in a shared space of inclusive encounter.

KEY CONCEPTS: INCLUSIVE SPACES OF ENCOUNTER



espai c, Miralletes school,
Barcelona
artist: Urgell
Photo: Gemma París



espai c, Aldana school,
Barcelona
Artist Jaume Clotet
Photography: Judith López

The place is necessary as
a space where we need
others, as a meeting space.
—Marc Augé

Practical examples

espai c, Barcelona

Understanding work in the arts not only as a way to create performances and products; but as a way of creating our lives by expanding our consciousness, shaping our attitudes, satisfying our search for meaning, establishing contact with others and sharing a culture (Eisner, 2008), art appears as in need of finding a significant place in the learning that occurs in school. In the espai c project, the school facilitates a space to create a shared artistic workshop -managed by the artists and the children-, where learning appears through contamination, between the adult world and the children's world. In that sense the atelier is a circular learning space/time without limits, of heterogeneous thought. The act of inserting an artistic atelier within schools creates dynamics and relational processes, in which the works and projects are built from the contamination between different people, where the social context of the school and of the artists shapes the project, understanding art as a space for re-encounter (Borraud, 2002).

Bringing these knowledge strategies to school allows children to learn through trial and error, but moreover building a personal search both for the questions they ask in

Relational works of art seek to establish intersubjective trobades in which the meaning is elaborated collectively rather than in the private space of individual consumption. As a discrete, portable and autonomous work of art that transcends its context, relational art is totally s subject to the contingencies of its environment and its public. In addition, this public is planted as a community.

—Claire Bishop



espais c, Aldana school,
Barcelona
Artist: Jaume Clotet
Photography: Judith
López

relation to the world, and a search to formulate their own hypotheses. In this artistic workshop, the child feels accompanied and not judged in the development of their ideas through Malaguzzi's hundred artistic languages. This space allows encounters and cooperation as a strategy for inclusion (Duran and Blanch 2008). Therefore, *espai c* facilitates and promotes the inclusion of different identities, abilities, knowledge, preferences, promoting a positive climate so that all children can fit and being aware that all, but especially those children with academic difficulties or behavioural issues feel comfortable to participate and develop their ideas in this context.

This creative studio emerges as an inclusive space because as it is a space without judgement or evaluation, self-managed by children and artists, it allows students to feel accepted from their own particularities, interests, and ideas (Blanch, 2016). The teachers reveal to us how they are realising that *espai c* is also a place where some children who need more individualised attention, and who have different abilities, are very concentrated. Here they make extraordinary creations, it is a space where they feel capable and can experience their creative possibilities.

We must rethink the training model that is often drawn as the “manufacture” of a human being, instead of understanding education as accompaniment, hospitality and reception of the other in their radical otherness.

—Hannah Arendt



House of Imagination, UK

House of Imagination co-creates inclusive spaces for all adults (teachers, teaching assistants, families, creative professionals) and children where they can learn together through reciprocal and democratic relations. These are socially democratic spaces where HOI values of respect and democracy can be lived out: valuing everyone's potential and dispositions; and seeing all adults and children as strong and capable. House of Imagination co-creates experimental sites of learning where there is a sense of freedom to find and follow fascinations. The nature of the co-enquiry supports children, young people and adults in seeking and posing good questions, and in trying out different ways of thinking and learning. In these immersive spaces of encounter: a space to encounter different perspectives and ideas; to try out new ways of working. They are safe spaces in which to try out ideas in the companionship of others and are by their nature inclusive and welcoming.

School Without Walls creates an opportunity for educators to think about teaching and learning differently - to inspire learning everywhere, beyond the school walls (Hay

2019). School Without Walls is a radical creative learning project that challenges current orthodoxies and informs a shift in the culture of learning, with the arts at the heart of the process. Children's learning takes place outside of the school campus in cultural centres and public spaces across the city where they encounter meaningful, creative enquiries in real life contexts alongside adults as mentors in the learning process. This immersive and inclusive space of encounter provides continuous high quality professional development for the teachers, developing their practice through active research and gives children and young people responsibility for their own learning, as active citizens.

House of Imagination's *Sense of Place* project involved co-participatory research with the families of 2 year olds and early years children. The artists supported families and educators to explore family heritage, culture and narrative, through the co-creation of safe spaces where everyone could be immersed together in creative processes. The quality of relationships was described by the group as authentic, caring, respectful, trusting, non-judgmental, and non-hierarchical. These inclusive community spaces created a sense of being and belonging through the process of making and sharing stories. Parents felt empowered to make their own choices, expressed their own creativity and

Education can be an act of resistance or a protocol to find new ways of being together. I also understand art as an area of knowledge with which we can make being together no longer an obligation.

—Nicolás Paris

culture, which gave them agency. Differences were respected and the diversity and richness of social and cultural experience within families and communities were valued, shared and celebrated. The time and pace of the co-created project enabled parents to take ownership, to have agency, to show their capabilities and creative capacities, their aspirations for themselves and their children and to show their potential as active citizens in their community. Throughout the project, educators and families talked about their experience of working in this space of uncertainty and how different it was to their usual experiences within the centres. Often, they described how their initial feeling of unease at not being told what to do had changed as they worked alongside the artists, eventually coming to see this open ended process as empowering. A key part of the artists' role in each setting therefore, was holding this space of uncertainty, providing the tools and skills to support those involved in finding their path within it. They encountered different creative and cultural experiences together.

KEY CONCEPTS: INCLUSIVE SPACES OF ENCOUNTER



Forest of Imagination, Bath
Photo: HOI

By method and provisionally, we can isolate an object from its environment, but, by method as well, it is no less important to consider that objects, and above all living beings, are open systems that can only be defined ecologically, that is, in their interactions with the environment, which is part of them as much as they themselves are part of it. —Edgar Morin



6. AESTHETIC

The classroom should be a kind of transparent aquarium where ideas, attitudes and people are reflected.

—Loris Malaguzzi

ENVIRON- MENTS

KEY CONCEPTS: AESTHETIC ENVIRONMENTS



espai c, Fructuós Gelabert school,
Barcelona
Artists: Maylis Ayats & Coral
Photo: Gemma París



espai c, Arts school,
Barcelona
Artist: Neus Frigola
Photo: Neus Frigola

If we understand the place as the possibility of encounter and learning it is important to create an environment that optimises creative learning through all the senses. Aesthetic environments invite, nurture, and develop aesthetic sensibilities as an important part of being human, learning in and through the arts, and prioritising thought and feeling rather than mere technique and practice. The aesthetics of a creative educational environment can express and communicate the pedagogical approach of the setting, by 'making learning visible' (Giudici *et al* 2001). In Reggio Emilia's schools the environment is the 'third teacher.' Creating beautiful and aesthetic learning environments invite children to make connections and express their ideas in Malaguzzi's hundred languages.

The aesthetics of learning involves seeking out the beauty of learning through pedagogical documentation as well as in the intelligent materials offered to children. Vecchi (2016) explains that:

Aesthetics and expression are "activators of learning in all children's ways of knowing ... Children have the right to grow up in caring, pleasant places; education cannot be exempted from these tasks. Attention to the aesthetic dimension is a pedagogical method that gives excellent results, given that the search for beauty belongs to the autonomous thought processes, including those of the child."

Co-designing an aesthetic environment with educators, artists and children is an important element in learning that prioritizes the visual pedagogical culture. Inviting parents and carers into a living pedagogical space of creation and reflection can lead to deeper understanding of the artistic

and educational experience. The role of an aesthetic dimension in learning can be transformational in highlighting the community of children, artists and educators learning together. This attitude of care, empathy and attention invites sense making and making meaning through curiosity and wonder. Loris Malaguzzi called this the 'aesthetic vibration' with both children and adults as activators of learning in a vibrant and creative pedagogical philosophy. If the environment is co-created with children's adults as an essential element of pedagogy, then this can also focus on the art of enabling imaginative learning – 'a place to learn together about the real world, and about possible worlds of the imagination' (Dahlberg *et al* 2005).

In Interstice we have been researching children's creative learning dispositions and behaviours within the creative environments that we offer, where creativity can flourish. The significance of an aesthetic, enabling and creative learning environment supports playfulness, encourages self-confidence, self-esteem, and artistic expression. Importantly we want children to engage in purposeful, imaginative, creative learning in and through the arts, to be curious, playful and develop a love of learning.

Both in educational and cultural settings, and learning outdoors, provide environments that are rich in possibilities for children to be artists, explorers and storytellers. In aesthetic environments all modes of creative learning are possible, and children can flourish. As educators we can develop spaces of potential and possibility, in different contexts, offering children both individual aesthetic sensibilities and in a community of practice, learning together, everywhere.

Our intention was to use the imagination as a unifying element of the various activities and to consider the aesthetics of knowing as an energy that has its roots within us and that leads us to choose between models of action, thought, and imagination.

—Vea Vecchi

Practical examples

House of Imagination, School Without Walls, Bath

House of Imagination builds aesthetic environments of learning to build experimental sites of learning for adults and children, reimagining different ways of learning and knowing in schools, offering co-creation of immersive environments for inquiry. The project School Without Walls creates an opportunity for educators to think about teaching and learning differently - to inspire learning everywhere, beyond the school walls. This 'environment of enquiry' transforms learning for both teachers and children. The approach is underpinned by a clear set of principles developed with 5x5x5=creativity: essentially this process involves inspiration, immersion and invention (Hay 2019). Together we design experimental sites for learning that are transformative; inform and change and that re-imagine learning and school. Aesthetic environments that give space and time

KEY CONCEPTS: AESTHETIC ENVIRONMENTS



Forest of imagination, Bath
Photo: Rosa Llop

By aesthetic I mean: sensitive to the structure it connects.

—Gregory Bateson

for self-directed, self-reflective learning and finding your own questions, finding your own path. The sense of freedom this creates is vital in learning. These aesthetic environments connect hearts, hands, bodies, and minds. Children, educators, and artists have expressed after their ideas about how we are learning together in these new spaces of learning:

Forest of Imagination can become somewhere where we will all learn something about ourselves and nature, especially when we reflect upon ourselves in nature. These mirrors give us the opportunity to reflect upon ourselves, in nature, in the theatre. Andrew Amondson, artist

On a hot summer's day in the Museum of Bath at Work, most children were happy to wander and sometimes run, to chat to friends or to find a quiet spot to hide in. Some children sat and sketched. Some children sat and sketched and mused. Liz Elders, mentor

Wyatt looked at the Penny Farthing (a machine the likes of which he had never seen before) and wondered all kinds of wonderings. While he sat, he pondered not only about the bicycle but also about the cyclist. Who was the owner? Who made it? Were the maker and the owner one and the same? Wyatt constructed a narrative, of his own making, from a simple yet rare combination of events. He looked around and saw something he found curious and appealing. He was inspired by the object. He

Artistic education allows us to ensure that education includes the development of actions, instead of tasks, understanding action as the creation of novelty, through which we reveal our identity through metaphor and the aesthetic processes that shape this action.

—Hannah Arendt

had time to study it. He was not limited by a set expectation. He had time to let his mind wander. To imagine. To day-dream. And most excitingly to invent. David, Head teacher and Caroline, educator

The effect of the aesthetic learning environment on adult's and children's learning can have far reaching resonances:

For me this image represents the power of the creative learning process that the children experienced during their seven week School Without Walls residency at the egg theatre. It captures what the process does to children. They could express themselves in ways that up to that point they had not chosen or felt empowered to do so. They had gone from monochromatic characters to a rainbow or self-expression. The creative learning process unlocked children's innate creativity and gave it a platform on which to shine. As the children saw themselves shine, their confidence

grew. This growth then inspired further self-belief exponentially and built the children into more confident and capable people, empowered to take on the challenges of the world. As a teacher and educator, as I was then, this was the most powerful transformation that I have ever experienced. It changed all of the children that experienced it and it changed me as an educator and as a person. Ben, educator

School Without Walls is real learning, this is what we need to be able to do as humans. The stuff like maths and literacy that we do at school is just stuff we need to know. This is real learning. Child, 8 years

There is a sense of freedom created in this creative learning environment:

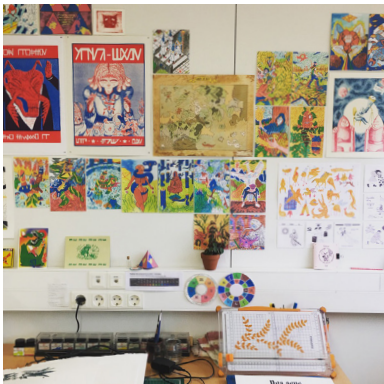
The shared cultural experience – which continued in different forms on return to school – allowed for a common language of learning to develop for all groups of children. Children expressed a sense of ‘freedom’ that they contrasted to a sense of being ‘blocked in’ when they were in school. Their questions and reflections caused us to question the very narrow learning environment of a small classroom and has resulted in an increase in the number of off-site visits into the city, not only widening the children’s experience of the city but resulting in increased engagement of parents and family in those cultural settings. Sue, Head Teacher

It felt as if we were embarking upon an adventure together where learning was life sized and life wide. Liz, mentor

KEY CONCEPTS: AESTHETIC ENVIRONMENTS



espai c, Arts school, Barcelona.
Artists Berta Vallvé & Leira Goiria
Photography: Gemma París



espai c, Els Encants school, Barcelona
Artists: Judith Cuadros & David Mateo
Photo: Gemma París

espais c, Barcelona

The painter Uslé states that what most concerns the artist today is not to give an explanation of or to the world, nor concrete answers, but rather to develop methods to describe and see the world. Having a resident artist in the school provides a new look at reality, incorporating a creative relationship with the world, through the different artistic languages. Artists propose another way of questioning, an open mind, allowing reality to be perceived and things done differently (Adams and Owens 2016). The artist creates a safe space for children to explore through co-creation with others. And for this reason we believe it is necessary to establish an artistic workshop within the school, where children can develop thinking on other aesthetic environments; the artistic studio, where the ideas develop through the shapes that the artist offers with other references of materials, pictures, or about other artists' works.

While Loris Malaguzzi spoke about the school atelier as an impertinent place (in Hoyuelos, 2013), we define it as a singular space, where learning is rhizomatic, multidirectional and complex, where “there is a permanent tension between the aspiration to a non-parcelled, non-divided, non-reductive knowledge, and the acknowledgment that all knowledge is unfinished and incomplete”, which is typical of the field of art. We want artistic practice to appear as a rich terrain for social experimentation, as a space partially

KEY CONCEPTS: AESTHETIC ENVIRONMENTS



espai c, Miralletes School, Barcelona
Artist: Urgell
Photo: Gemma París

espai c, Sagarra School, Barcelona
Artist: Rosa Llop
Photo: Gemma París

The aesthetic
conception that is
promoted from the
Reggio Emilia schools
is a space of visibility
to show an image of
children's culture full
of potential. —Javier
Abad & Ángeles
Velasco

preserved from the standardization of behaviour (Bourriaud, 2002), even within the reality of the school. Through this project we want to contribute to Vecchi's (2021) questioning; "how learning and teaching processes could change if the school culture welcomed poetic languages and the aesthetic dimension as significant elements for the construction of knowledge". As Agirre (2005) defines, the object of art is to condense experience in an aesthetic way and therefore, the object of artistic education must be to generalize sensitivity to make use of said experience, to implement such condensed personal experiences, to intertwine experiences. To do this, we want to bring quality aesthetic experiences that allow the creativity of the little ones to be cultivated, while they investigate reality, inquire about experience, and create knowledge through cultural actions.



CONCLU- SIONS

How does a shadow turn upside down?

One day when the psychologist Jerome Bruner was visiting a school in Reggio Emilia, a child asked him “How does a shadow turn upside down?”.

This question condenses the reason for the Interstice project, and all the previous projects that we, as artists, researchers and university professors have developed during the last decades: the urgent need to allow children to speculate, investigate, imagine, understand, create their own solutions and metaphors in their particular learning in the world. And for this, it is necessary that children can develop in creative and inclusive learning environments, in which their investigations are accompanied by curious and creative adults, who know how to use their imagination and understand the ideas that children are building in their conceptual learning and relational with the environment and with others.

Bruner (1990) warned us a long time ago that society

was wrong and that it was necessary to change it, and for that we needed creative people, people who knew how to use their imagination. As educators, and also as artists, we have the desire to improve the situation in the world that we all share. We understand that we can no longer be satisfied with reproducing the current state of things, and the arts allow us to rethink the world we inhabit. If the arts allow us, as Maxine Greene says, a more vibrant way of being in the world, it is necessary that the arts do not continue to develop outside the experiences of most children, but are part of the common learning scenario to all children and the school.

Interstice has the intention of bringing the arts closer together in educational settings to allow children to have another way of living in the world, to draw and imagine it again, together with creative adults. We have designed the Interstice project as a place of encounter between children, teachers and artists, where all of us have the opportunity to co-design learning scenarios where the arts allow creativity in inclusive spaces of encounter and aesthetic environments.

The experience of each partner working on the project has revealed the need to visualise the importance of art in education and different ways to include them on a daily basis, in the children's lives, at home and at school. We have learned in this project that we have to create a movement together with children, parents, teachers and artists. When we take an unexpected or creative position the system reorganises and generates new and beautiful reactions. Art is

the major perturbation; it comes to question us, to awaken us, to realise and be aware of what we are doing, how we are doing it and with whom. We must find a way to meet in those interstitial areas - find the time and space to generate meeting spaces in an artistic aesthetic environment, to share and co-create our daily reality in schools and in our cities - a reality that meets our needs and provides us with a respectful and supportive space where we can live together.

Children today face an uncertain future and so creativity and imagination are more vital than ever before. New spaces of encounter are opening up in the light of the pandemic, the war and the ecological emergency. Together with *Interstice* we now have a shared purpose to offer alternative, creative approaches to learning in and through the arts. We are convinced that it is necessary that the separation between the arts and education must be dissolved. As Camintzer explains, both areas are enriched if they take responsibility - if art assumes the responsibility as an instrument of cognition and if education takes the responsibility of freeing the student as an individual and training them to be able to have their own ideas. *Interstice* wishes to be one more step in this process, but we need to also dissolve this separation in different places and with different strategies. This is the purpose of this book - that together we can collapse this separation, creating meaning between all the creative and critical learning spaces that allow children to grow in a world of possibilities and imagination.

In-between-thinking, Rosa Llop
espai c, Barcelona
Photo: Nuria Grau



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