

CRACKS AND OPENINGS, MURKINESS AND UNKNOWNNS:
DIS/RUPTING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH THE ATELIER/ATELIERISTA MODEL
OF TIMELESS AND EMBODIED LEARNING

by

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Abstract

This thesis interweaves the Reggio Emilia preschool model of atelier (art studio) and atelierista (artist educator), autobiography, timeless and embodied learning. I am interested in exploring approaches in which visual arts education in elementary schools disrupts traditional ways of knowing and learning about art. When an atelierista is embraced in the school environment, a rupture emerges in the landscape of education; one that recognizes the interconnectivity of things, and values difference and unknown. For this reason, I align my research with a form of inquiry – a/r/tography, which acknowledges intertwining roles of artist/researcher/teacher as integral parts of the research process. As such, my own art making is used as a form of inquiry and language in the text of this thesis.

Acknowledgements

If someone had suggested a year ago that I would be writing a thesis about my work as an artist, arts educator, scholar and researcher, I would have disregarded this idea. Having originally enrolled as a Master of Education student, which requires successful completion of ten courses, whereas a Master of Arts in Education requires eight courses and a thesis, my mind began to change in the Fall of 2011. Why? One reason was that I was beginning to understand the value of undertaking a significant research project to probe an area of arts education that was both intriguing and perplexing to me: that of Reggio Emilia preschools' use of an atelierista (artist with a pedagogical background) and atelier (art studio) as part of the preschool educational program. I was perplexed why this approach is not embraced in higher levels of education, specifically elementary school.

It was predominantly the support of my advisor, Dr. Stephanie Springgay, who subsequently became my thesis supervisor, which was the deciding factor for pursuing my MA and undertaking this thesis. Dr. Springgay has been a constant source of support, encouragement, prodding, challenge, advice, provocation, questioning, and always, always, always inspiration. Her contributions to the field of arts- based educational research, namely *a/r/tography*, and *em/bodied curriculum* are what made my own research and artistic inquiries possible. I owe her an enormous amount of gratitude for myriad ways that she has helped me on this journey, and for guiding me into potentials and possibilities. I would like to thank Dr. John P. Miller for his compassionate, wise, and soulful approach to education; Dr. Miller's class and writings inspired me to pursue the holistic and timeless learning aspect of art education, and I am honoured to have him on my thesis committee.

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This *journey* which is ongoing and *rhizomatic* in its flows and ruptures, cracks and murkiness is possible because of love and support of friends and family. A special thanks for their editing, Helena Aalto and Emily Stovel. Christopher Sawchyn: a kindred spirit who shares the way of the artist, my sincere gratitude for you.

I was fortunate to have supportive parents who encouraged my artistic pursuits. To my late step Father John, I give thanks for understanding that I needed to be creative, even if he didn't always get it. To my Dad, I am grateful for leading me into unknowns and back roads of life. And to my Mom, who recognized from an early age that I needed to make art as part of my education, thank you for providing me with opportunities to create and explore; and for always being there.

So much of what I do and who I am now is because I am a Mom. To my kids, Ella and Liam, you are my greatest teachers/students, thanks for sharing your art, struggles and discoveries with me along the way. Alex: *Timshel*, thou mayest. Thank you for supporting my choices and believing in me.

For those that are not mentioned here, you are in the *in between* spaces, surfacing and subsiding in my life, and for *you* I am deeply grateful.

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Entry points

*Each day, our **atelier** supports many experiences and ongoing projects that invigorate the lives of the children and teachers. We have learned to slow down and let events and situations influence how our spaces, including the studio, are used. When children live in a space, they own, feel, and find their place within it. Connections that take place between time and space happen through the rhythms of everyday life, connections to past events, and new experiences that reach toward the future. We aim to inhabit our spaces in ways that focus on variation and difference inside our routines, rather than automatically repeating them. The children and the adults create the **atelier** anew every day as we find the meaning of the place together.* (Schwall, 2005, p. 16, italics are original, bolding added for emphasis)

The need is not to see moral and spiritual values as something outside the normal curriculum and school activity, but to probe deeper into the educational landscape to reveal how the spiritual and moral is being denied in everything. (Huebner in Dhir, 2008, p. 104)

I arrived dressed in black for my graduate class, *Play, Drama and the Arts in Education*, led by Professor Dr. Linda Cameron. Black scoop neck shirt, black dress pants, black shoes and black pea coat. The only part of my outfit that wasn't black was a string of large forest green and black marble stone beads. Usually I came to class in jeans and a comfortable shirt, but that evening we were presenting on the philosopher of our choice, and we were to do this *as* the particular philosopher we had chosen. I had chosen Veia Vecchi, a renowned former atelierista (artist educator) from the northern Italian city of Reggio Emilia, famous for its progressive and highly innovative approaches to preschool education and pedagogy. Having searched the internet for images and YouTube clips of Ms. Vecchi, this outfit was how I envisioned she would look presenting herself to a distinguished crowd of guests. As we mingled around the room introducing ourselves, I received many a giggle at my woeful Italian accent, but I didn't care, I was having fun! My impersonation of Vecchi made not only for an entertaining class that evening, but a memorable experience and attachment to a philosophy that I was intrigued to learn more about.

Later on in my studies, it came time to choose my area of research for my thesis. Through my inquiries into arts based and play based learning I couldn't help but wonder *what would it be like to have an atelier (art studio) in our public elementary schools?* The atelier and atelierista has been a

groundbreaking and successful approach practiced in Reggio Emilia preschools since the early 1970s, and studied by educators the world over, so why would it not have the same resonance for elementary school age children? How could creating in the art studio help children learn in an embodied, holistic and timeless way that could both engage and reinvigorate a system where students and teachers alike are restricted by rigid standards of EQAO testing and meeting curriculum expectations? This became the focus of my inquiry and the basis for my research.

An atelier/atelierista model in elementary education drastically alters the terrain or landscape of a school space. In my thesis, which interweaves the Reggio Emilia preschool model of the atelier/atelierista, autobiography, “timeless learning” (Miller, 2006, p.3), and embodied learning, I am interested in how visual arts education in elementary schools disrupts traditional ways of knowing and learning about art, into processes that invite becoming and unknown. As Sylvia Kind (2010) suggests, “Failure, struggle, uncertainty, and not knowing the outcomes in advance may be difficult concepts for education to embrace, yet these are essential elements of artistic practice” (p. 114). When an atelierista is embraced in public elementary schools, a rupture emerges in the current landscape of art education. For this reason, I align my research with a form of inquiry – a/r/tography - that is engendered with “loss, shift, rupture [as] foundational concepts” (Springgay, Irwin, Wilson Kind, 2005, p. 898). This way of thinking is important because loss and rupture create “openings, they displace meaning and they allow for slippages” (p. 898). Using a/r/tography I question: what is possible when the emphasis is taken from *making art to feeling art*, from an emphasis on producing a product to living the process? When we take the whole person and invite them to have a whole body experience with the artwork or practice, what would be the potential for elementary school students to learn in this way?

As an artist and art educator, I will reflect on my own artistic practice over the past twenty years. As an independent artist educator, and as an artist educator working for Learning Through The Arts (LTTA), and at Harbourfront Centre, both located in Toronto, Ontario, I have explored art with children from preschool through high school age. Additionally as a mother of two elementary school age children, I will be weaving in stories from my experiences in these various roles, while I contemplate these narratives and the possibilities of my thesis through my art making.

An a/r/tographic approach acknowledges the lived experience of the artist/researcher/teacher and uses writing and image as modes of inquiry (Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2005). The autobiography of the artist/researcher/teacher is seen as not separate, but an integral part of how one comes to knowledge (Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2005). As this is an exploration, I am yet unsure of the artistic outcome or even the exact media which will be used, however my intention is to work in the media of photography and clay, acknowledging the murkiness and cracks within education, the openings and obscureness, finding my way and getting lost in both and either.

Working as an LTTA visiting artist in many elementary school classrooms, as an artist educator at Harbourfront, and observing my own children's experience in elementary school, I am concerned with how art, specifically visual art, is taught and taken up with children of this age group. I have witnessed and taught countless art lessons, which essentially demonstrate to children how to mimic a product through technique and skill in ways mastered by adult educators. While in some ways learning to manipulate materials and create a product are productive and necessary skills to possess, I question the underlying messages and constructions that children are absorbing through this method of art education. How much of what the kids are doing is art, and how much is pleasing the adults or making an object of approval?

Borrowing from the atelier model of Reggio Emilia, these observations lead me to contemplate how having an atelier and an atelierista in elementary schools could offer students opportunities and possibilities for accessing knowledge that is embodied and holistic, a timeless learning which emphasizes the interconnectedness of subjects and beings, and connects to the *whole* child, not only to the head. I am particularly interested in why there appears to be a gap between the way art is taught to preschoolers, which largely emphasizes exploration, play, sensations, and embodied learning, and to high school students, which devotes entire courses to subjects in the individual arts of dance, drama, music, visual and media arts. Learning arts is largely de-emphasized in the elementary school curriculum, and takes a back seat to the "core" subjects: math, reading and writing. My thesis addresses the potential for change in elementary school education by 1) using the model of the atelierista to imagine possibilities for art education in Canadian elementary schools as a way of knowledge acquisition; and 2) applying theories of

timeless learning in art education as embodied and holistic forms of learning and knowing. Interconnected to these ideas, I subsequently challenge the notion of what *knowledge* is and what *art* is.

As an artist and art educator, I use my own artwork in clay and photography as entry points and forms of inquiry for my research. Hence, my photographs, which are threaded throughout this thesis, are not listed as separate images but are considered part of the research creation and text in their own right. I explore through my art and autobiographical accounts the potential for learning in the classroom through written text and image, informed by research on the atelier/atelierista in Reggio Emilia preschools. Focusing particularly on the writings of Veia Vecchi in her book *Art and Creativity in Reggio Emilia: Exploring the role and potential of ateliers in early childhood education* (2010), I extend the atelier model by drawing on aspects of timeless learning and investigate theories of holistic education in relation to art education in the elementary school classroom.

The concept of autobiography, inspired by Sylvia Kind's (2006) dissertation, *Of Stones and Silences: Storying the Trace of the Other in the Autobiographical and Textile Text of Art/Teaching* and Stephanie Springgay's (2001) thesis, *The Body Knowing: A Visual Art Installation as Educational Research* are employed as jumping off points for my ideas, and as a situating point through which to explore the ways in which our personal narratives inform our process of knowledge making, placing us in relational proximity to others as we form our identities. I will relate this to the Reggio philosophy and practice of the atelier in education as it pertains to the interwoven nature of student/teacher/artist/researcher, and how this approach needs a more prominent place in education. As this thesis unfolds, the autobiographical narratives and explorations will inform the theoretical and vice versa.

As a form of inquiry, a/r/tography encompasses, but is not limited to, six renderings (Springgay, Irwin, Wilson Kind, 2005, p. 899). These renderings that comprise a/r/tography are not meant to be rigid guidelines but overlapping and flowing into each other, like a kind of conversation within the text (Kind, 2006). The six renderings are *contiguity*, *living inquiry*, *openings*, *metaphor/metonymy*, *reverberations*, and *excess* (Springgay, Irwin, Wilson Kind, 2005). In chapter one, I focus on metaphor/metonymy as a form of inquiry but also as potential for research in and about the classroom space. Metaphor/metonymy

is a powerful tool in education, and I am interested in exploring how it is used, understood and how it can offer other entry points and access to knowledge beyond text.

The model of the atelierista and the atelier is further explored in chapter two. As one of the first atelieristas, Veia Vecchi offers a rich personal account of her three decades of experience within the ongoing project¹ within the preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Much of her work and beliefs centre around the importance of aesthetics and poetics in education. She postulates "to what extent and in what ways the processes of learning and teaching could change if school culture welcomed the poetic languages and an aesthetic dimension as important elements for building knowledge" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 16). In British Columbia, Sylvia Kind currently works as an atelierista in an early childhood centre. Like Kind, I am interested in the ways in which contemporary art and pedagogy can inform and engage one another. I will be referring to both Vecchi's and Kind's, as well as other atelieristas' experiences in these roles as support for my thesis.

In chapter three, I expand on the theories of timeless learning and holistic art education in relation to the model of the atelierista and the possibilities these offer for art education. I explore concepts around teaching the *whole child* and how an atelierista in elementary school offers the possibilities and access points to reach the mind, body and spirit of the student.

Chapter four outlines the potentialities and possibilities for implementing an atelier/atelierista in public elementary school. What would this arrangement look like? How could implementing this arrangement happen? I will explore, in the putative sense, the day-to-day operations when an atelier and atelierista are part of grade school life.

Throughout my thesis are accounts of my own art making. Photography and clay are my foci of inquiry. As metaphor/metonymy, I consider the possibilities of both mediums in what they offer as accessing and disrupting knowledge. I am interested in the openings and murkiness of creating with light

¹ As opposed to having a curriculum, the preschools of Reggio Emilia prefer to identify the educational work in the school as an ongoing project, or research. "[T]he educational work in Reggio Emilia never becomes set and routine but instead is always undergoing reexamination and experimentation. For this reason, the Reggio educators refuse the term "model" when talking about their approach, and instead speak of "our project" and "our experience" (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1993, p.9). See also Gandini et al (2005).

and clay, how the cracks of desire can also be the cracks of disappointment, and the denseness of clay can be grounding at one time, and leave one stuck at another. How is this way of working with materials in and out of the studio a possible way to open up curriculum and engage students more fully and holistically?

Journal entries and personal narratives are also included as a way to enhance and invite the reader to better access my thought processes and research. To differentiate these inquiries from the other text, I *italicize* the Times font. I use these as entry points to my research and forms of knowledge in their own right.

As will be evident in my thesis, the themes, approaches and methodology are interwoven throughout, as is characteristic of the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) and of the ways in which we learn, communicate and live. This tangential (Lichtenstein, 2009) way of writing/imaging I hope will only spur your own thoughts and ideas, inviting a continued dialogue and an ongoing inquiry into the ideas and concepts proposed here. My intention is to ignite, excite and fuel further conversations about the place and space that art occupies in education.

Clay and Photography

A teacher as student as teacher as student...

I've arranged with a local art studio in my neighbourhood to have some lessons on the pottery wheel. Although I have taught clay to school groups, it was all free hand - pinch pots and vessels, masks, creatures and such. I wanted to be "taught", to be in the "student" position and observe what this was like. So I came with my sketches - to make a pair of mugs - ready to be shown how to work on the wheel.

But clay doesn't conform easily to a sketch. Well, not at this stage in the game anyway. And clay on the wheel is not forgiving; it remembers each move, pressure point and slippage that happens. I didn't realize how careful I had to be. My first try at the wheel, I watched my instructor Cheryl throw the clay and form the cylinder shape. Once I tried it myself, I was trying to remember the steps that were involved and knew that I was missing some. But I went with it, instead of envisioning the final product, I just stayed present with the material, informing it as much as it was informing me.

As opposed to working free hand with clay, on the wheel everything must be balanced and even. Both hands work together in a symbiotic relationship; one puts pressure downwards while the other shapes and gently pulls upwards. Slippage causes unevenness and unbalance, as what happened with my first cup. The shape is actually quite appealing, like a drunken vessel, slightly off kilter and asymmetrical.

"Potters try to create this kind of look," Cheryl says, "but it's hard to do successfully".

With mine, the bottom and top halves are too heavy, and the middle is too thin.

"Will it break?" I ask.

"Probably. Or it will crack," Cheryl replies.

So, I'm leaving it for now. But I'm thinking I might want it to crack. I want to see what might happen. Maybe it won't crack? How will it crack? What could it then become?

What happens if we let things crack in school? If we allow students to try something and see what happens as a way of learning? To create a space/place where learning is an organic process of sensual, cognitive, embodied and holistic experiences? What is possible when the knowing is not immediately evident, where the experience of creating is knowing enough? If art is an essential daily process in children's lives, and the art studio is an essential place in their educational experience of school, what is the potential for children's education?

Second try at the wheel. I've got a better handle on it now. You can't rush it. Clay needs time, and pressure. Certainly it needs time between starting and finishing. Cheryl said six weeks until I'll see the final product. How refreshing, I thought. I can't control this process; it is what it is.

What purpose would something like this serve in school? How could slowing things down for students be beneficial to their learning? According to Miller (2000; 2010), this kind of learning brings the soul of the student into the classroom experience. Here I use Miller's definition of soul: "*Soul is a deep and vital energy that gives meaning and direction to our lives*" (Miller, 2000, p. 9, italics in original). Soul is that which lies deep within us, which makes each of us unique individuals. Miller (2000) reminds us that education means to "lead out" (p. vii) what is already in the child.

The stuff that comes with the child, however, is not science, logic, or mechanical skill. It is soul stuff. It is imagination, heart, and creativity. It is spirit and vision. An educated person is someone whose innate being has been led out, enticed and appreciated. Education is not at all the same as teaching. (vii)

He continues:

When we educate for the soul, we must reflect on our own values and expectation and then ask ourselves: Are we making little replicas of ourselves, or are we leading for what we planted in

eternity? Are we cramming what we judge appropriate into the child, or are we loving this new stuff we glimpse in the fresh being in our charge? (p. vii-viii)

I am interested in visual art education as a kind of learning that is “between things” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 25). Deleuze and Guattari write: “Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle” (p. 25). A learning that is based on “sensations” (Deleuze, 2003, p.31) and how the body knows from these sensations is the potential for learning in the atelier.



Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) Body Without Organs (BwO) illustrates a way of existing “when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole” (in Clark, 2012, p. 202). To find your BwO is to “take apart the self” (p. 203), and to have encounters with other bodies (which can be other human or non-human bodies, ideas, concepts) where in these experiences, thinking and self emerge. The atelierista and the atelier provide a

framework for this to happen. As opposed to a “cancerous BwO” which is “one that proliferates and becomes a ‘majoritarian assemblage’; neo-liberal practices of art making, which have pre-established goal for the children to do with the materials, enforced on the child by an educator” (p. 203), the atelierista model is concerned with children discovering with their bodies, in proximity with other bodies, to feel the materials and make connections. What the atelier provides is a space for art to happen without preconceived ideas or outcomes. For Springgay (2005; 2008; 2011); Ellsworth (2005; 2010) and Pink (2009), this is an embodied way of knowing which allows for a deeper level of being with materials, bodies, a knowledge within the body, which is gained from sensational experiences.

"Relax your shoulders." Cheryl advises me, "This involves your whole body not just the hands and arms. Come into the clay with your whole body."

Breathe. Relax. Use the whole body. Balance. Centre. Pressure - not too much. Symbiosis. Feel the clay respond to you and you to it.

For me, being in the studio feels different from any other type of place. There is the residue of clay dust left over from work before and paint drips from previous lessons. There are the tools, machines, artifacts, materials and works in progress. There are finished pieces up on shelves. Broken pieces too. The mini boom box plays Parisian jazz. There's a faint earthy smell. And of course, the sensation of touch becomes heightened to temperature and texture. Even my taste buds feel warmed up. Being in this studio is different from being in a traditional classroom. This is a place to make mess and use the body to learn. A body knowledge (Springgay, 2001) where all the senses are involved.

My research is concerned with re-imagining the elementary school experience. One in which there is a space/place for learning in a new way. A model based on the pedagogy and practices used in the preschools in Reggio Emilia, Italy, where the emphasis is on learning art, in one sense, but in another sense it is about learning in a *timeless, holistic and embodied* way, to offer a counter balance to the current system of logic and “time bound” (Miller, 2006, p.13) learning that is now the standard in most elementary schools. My thesis does not intend to grapple with the historical significance of the Reggio Emilia philosophy or provide exhaustive case studies of this model of education. Rather, I want to think about the atelierista as a potential and theoretical possibility for art education in elementary schools. What is the potential of an atelierista in public elementary school to affect children’s experience towards holistic and embodied learning? It is a way to bring art into the culture of the school, into the fabric of learning for the students and teachers. It is a place to allow for questioning and uncertainty. It is a place/space within the school that is separate in one sense but which works hand in hand with the rest of the school, through interwoven and connected ways.

We need room in school for art and creativity to take a prominent and different position in school, in a way to reach all children at a fundamental level, and effect deeper levels of learning, and transformation. I am interested in exploring the ways in which a timeless learning approach to teaching children can be connected to the work of an atelierista. These include but are not limited to the following learning approaches: *holistic/integrated, embodied, soulful, connected, participatory, flow, non-dualistic, mystery and immeasurable* (Miller, 2005). I will explore how these approaches tie in with the atelierista model.

An atelier space, fostered by an atelierista could provide this space for the *betweenness* in learning. Where there is room for the unknown. Where knowledge forming is in the “sensory becoming” (Manning, 2008, np); this is the possibility of this approach to education. As artist, art educator and art activist Pablo Helguera (2011) stated: "I'm going to do this crazy stuff, and nobody knows what it means and it's okay" (np). To provide a space and an acknowledgment to students that the "crazy stuff" is not only okay, but a way of learning and knowing, even when the knowing is still becoming.

Photography has been part of my artistic practice since my high school years. I began working in clay much later on once I became an artist educator at Harbourfront Centre, in downtown Toronto. Interestingly enough, both mediums play central roles in the pedagogy of the atelier in Reggio Emilia, and they are documented extensively in the literature by scholars and educators in Reggio schools. As I converse with the literature about this subject matter, I will also be exploring and researching through these mediums.

Using a/r/tography I am able to address my questions in a way that is relevant to the subject matter: what is possible when the emphasis is taken from *making art to feeling art*; from producing a product to living the process? When we take the whole person and invite them to have a whole body experience with the art work or practice, how could this look in the elementary school classroom?

What we have now is a very unbalanced system in education. With too much emphasis on logic, finding the right answers and inflexibility in education, students and teachers are, as a result, feeling more anxiety and stress. The arts have been identified with keeping children who are at risk of dropping out or disengaging with school, engaged and interested in the possibilities of what education can offer them (Rabkin, 2011). Access to an art studio and quality art supplies, creating in an explorative and imaginary way, learning through the senses and embodied practices, is a counter-balance to the other areas in school. It is crucial to allow children to learn in this manner, for multiple reasons: for self-expression, for cognition, for building relationships, for the sensation of materials, for stumbling and goofing up, for having that “aha!” moment, for feeling, for questioning, for escaping into the zone, and the list goes on.

I would like to make clear too that when I speak about the studio I am speaking both figuratively and metaphorically. The studio in school is both a physical space that embodies the kind of learning processes that I am advocating, however this type of learning can and does happen outside of the studio space too. It is a way of learning to be with materials and processes that occurs in the studio of which we take with us as we travel through life. In the same way that when I am creating in clay I am in a studio setting, and when I am creating in photography I am usually not in the studio. Yet my processes of

discovery, disappointment, rupture, murkiness, failure, insight, difficulty and triumph are the ways of studio learning of which I refer. The studio can be brought outside as much as the outside is brought into the studio. It is the approach, which is significant.



A/r/tography: rupturing landscapes through metaphor/metonymy

*Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.*

“Anthem”, Leonard Cohen, 1992

They call this technique "milking the cow." You take a ball of clay and work it into a pear shape. Then you turn it upside down and with a bucket of water on hand, to keep the clay wet, you begin to squeeze the thinner part of the "pear." By doing this over and over, you work the clay into a handle shape. This is the traditional way of making a handle for a mug.

The clay looks like an udder, and as I sit perched on the stool, my hands wet and covered in clay, I feel like I'm in a different place; a farm, or back in time. It dawns on me that this process has probably been done for hundreds, if not thousands of years. The milking motion is rhythmic and calming; the sensation of the clay is slippery, wet and sensual. Fleshy. I dip my hand for more water, the clay makes a squishy sound, as I work it into its shape. Phallus. I'm not aroused, just interested. Absorbed. The shape has become more like a bone now, and I play with this and explore with my fingers the surface, side tracking from the purpose (handle) and exploring this shape, this sensation, this moment.

This kind of timeless learning-where the flow of being in the moment and the mystery of the creation-lingers on long after I've left the studio. The process of making art resonates on many levels. I can still feel the rhythm of the motion, feel the slippery surface of the clay, see the glistening texture of the phallus/bone/handle, and hear the squish, squish, squish of my hands working the clay.

In this chapter I explore metaphor/metonymy through text and image, informed by research on the atelier/atelierista in Reggio Emilia preschools, and through the arts based educational methodology called a/r/tography. As a methodology of embodiment, a/r/tography is “never isolated in its activity but always engaged with the world” (Springgay, Irwin, Wilson Kind, 2005, p. 899). Using a/r/tography as my methodology in this thesis, I wish to push out new possibilities, not to rigidly define or capture their meaning, but to engage, disrupt and tease out other possible renderings. I will be exploring metaphor/metonymy through my photographs of landscape, as I navigate my way through the concepts of Deleuzian notions of sensation, aesthetics, affect and representation, and apply this to my idea for the kind of learning that happens in the atelier environment, supported by an atelierista.

Metaphor/Metonymy

I am intrigued by and drawn to the metaphor/metonymy aspect of a/r/tographical inquiry. As a visual artist, speaking and thinking metaphorically helps me to understand in new ways. “Through metaphors and metonymic relationships, we make things sensible - that is, accessible to the senses” (Springgay, Irwin, Wilson Kind, 2005, p. 904). There is a resonance in using metaphor/metonymy for probing the murky areas with/in research and teaching, and likewise for allowing other possible meanings and tensions to exist with learning. However, there is a caution when using metaphor/metonymy that must be addressed as well, and that lies within the premise that metaphor/metonymy are often culturally specific, and passed down from generations, often being *taught* in school, rather than *discovered*. How can we approach metaphor/metonymy in pedagogical situations where the students/teachers are able to feel out, probe, explore subjects, objects, ideas, concepts, in such a way that the learning is open, and even contradictory? Where the difference is not problematic but creates a shift, a rupture in thinking and knowing, as it is in the state of becoming. Where “[a]s we struggle to reveal understandings through the use of metaphor and metonymy, the tensions created in fact do not close down receptiveness but rather,

allow us to perceive the world ‘freshly’, to look for complexity, and to ‘inhabit fields which previously appeared as opaque and unapproachable’ ” (Fiuramara from Springgay, Irwin, Wilson Kind, 2005, p. 905).

To create conditions for metaphor/metonymy, artists, researchers and teachers must be attuned to possible renderings. Listening to, rather than speaking at children is vital in Reggio philosophy. Being attuned to children's languages, adults can learn from them, deconstructing their own knowledge schemas, or as Vecchi (2010) asserts:

One of the most important areas of attention for an atelierista or teacher should be learning to develop journeys for work that do not ‘betray’ children or their different interests and senses: and which learning to use the children's very sensitive antennae, which are capable of lending new and rich ways of seeing the world to adults. In art, metaphors are often used by children. (p. 34).

She continues:

...I believe we can all agree with the evaluation that constructing metaphors is a mental operation giving unusual, unexpected and very often, totally original results. I believe metaphor corresponds to an investigative attitude towards reality, to participation that allows our thoughts to open out and break down the rigid boundaries that are usually constructed. I see metaphor as a genuine system for organization of intellectual development; for this reason and because I think of it as 'celebration thinking', I believe it is useful and amusing to use frequently, naturally and with a light touch. (p. 34)

In Kind's (2006) research, she used metaphor/metonymy as ways to explore issues of loss, disability, death, love and comfort, through wrapping stones in felt. Kind's use of wool for comfort and stone for sorrow is just one use of the metaphor relationship. However, is this not a cultural association that we have with these materials? Wool can also be scratchy and uncomfortable. Stone is also resilient and can be warm (think of stones used to conduct heat). Further exploration of the metaphorical/metonymical meanings of these two materials would have opened up to different interpretations and understandings. However, here is where the contiguity of text/image provided her with another form of communicating; an opening, where metaphor/metonymy, in “the tension provoked by this doubling, between limit/less that maintains meaning's possibility” (Springgay, Irwin, Wilson Kind, 2005, p. 904). Kind's images of the felted stones on the shore were powerful and evocative on their own, and in this sense, the use of image in a/r/tography is demonstrated as holding a different space than the text.

These images are not illustrative of the text. These images speak for themselves, and they speak their own language. They speak metaphorically.

In this sense using images is essential in communicating other possibilities which textual language does not allow in the same way. For children, being able to explore with art making in the studio, using their senses to learn, allows for other possibilities of understanding metaphor. Where one child may find the stone hard, cold and inflexible, another may find the smoothness of the texture of the stone comforting, the shape and form of the stone symbolic, or the weight of the stone compelling. For a teacher to hold out an example of an object to mean one thing is reductive and misses *potential for difference*. In the atelier, “poetic languages” (Vecchi, 2010, p.9) are valued, and metaphor/metonymy holds a prominent place in meaning making.

Learning to unlearn

In this account of my process with image, metaphor and text, I hope to convey my “learning to unlearn” (Vecchi, 2010, p. 57). Using *landscape* as metaphor/metonymy for school and the classroom environment is something I wish to explore further here. Learning to unlearn in a metaphorical/metonymical way allows for a discovery through image and text where I can explore subject matter which is embedded in history, politics and personal experience, and yet attempt to come to new understandings where a new path can be formed. Not a path of clear direction but a path that allows for difference and uncertainties, for openings and ruptures.

The subject of landscape in art, and schooling, are both steeped in histories and discourses of Western ideology and Colonialism. Landscape painting originated in the sixteenth century with the Dutch masters, who captured the familiarity of the land, but with a moralistic tone of man's fragility on this earth (Janson, 1977). Landscapes were the subject for the impressionist painters, such as Monet, who concerned himself with capturing light and atmosphere with colour and brush stroke (Janson, 1977). Photographers such as Ansel Adams used large format photography to create breathtaking images of natural wonders like Yosemite National Park, Yellowstone, Jasper, and the deserts of New Mexico. Landscape in the visual art has traditions in romanticism and idealism. The artist is one (male) who depicts their vision of a

place using their talent and skills in whichever medium, to highlight and emphasize the wonder and beauty of the land. A feminist perspective would critique this historical approach as the male gaze on Mother Nature. The (white, male) artist captures and frames the beauty of the female subject, nature in her finest and most mysterious. Where is the other heard in this?

Feminism will always be disabled by the principal terms of modernist art history: its formalism and historicism, its reverence for the avant-garde and the individual artist-hero, its concept of art as individual expression or social reflection, its sense of itself as objective and disinterested, its pursuit of universal values at once transcendent (of mundane social realities) and intrinsic (to the autonomous work of art, severed from the social circumstances of its production and circulation) Feminism is compelled to contest the established protocols of art history (and cautiously and critically to form alliances with other approaches which seek to undermine the certainties of its discourse). (Tickner 1988, in Schenker 1994, p. 108)

I do not intend to provide an exhaustive history of landscape art here, however, I feel it is important to set the backdrop for the relationship that I have had with landscape art and how this has shaped and informed my approach to my previous and current body of work as an artist, researcher and teacher/student.

The landscape is in one sense a metaphor for the state of the classroom environment; a territory in conflict, rife with history of colonialism, present-day politics, and neoliberal agendas. In another sense, landscape is metaphorical/metonymical for classroom as it is in the state of flux, becoming, in between states, how it is treated like a terrain, which is aggressively navigated, surveyed and developed. On yet another level, the classroom is the landscape of fertile ground, precious and fragile; requiring protection from the consumer and capitalist entities bent on controlling it for marketable profits and gains. While again, the natural and organic qualities of a classroom can be understood as the natural landscape, a space for us to interact with, with respect and pleasure, honouring the sacredness and value of the space, and those individual lives that inhabit it.

Through my process of creating my landscape photos I challenged my own perceptions and associations of landscape photography, to come to a different understanding of what it felt like to contradict my associations and use photography as an entry point to re-interpreting the classroom as landscape. For me, learning to unlearn came through the process of undoing the “correct” ways that I had been taught and practiced landscape photography. In doing so I was also opening up myself to doing things “incorrectly” and creating “bad art”. I struggled with this approach, fearing rejection and judgment,

but persevered through the metaphorical/metonymical associations, in order to arrive at new understandings and possibilities.



How did I come to be here?

I began art classes at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) around the age of ten. I remember the experience very vividly, as being one in which I was encouraged to explore materials, concepts and techniques. There were three stations, which I participated in during our semester of classes: printmaking, sculpture and painting. Out of all three, printmaking stands out the most. I remember the teacher as being very supportive and informative. She showed us technique but left us to create freely. Beyond this experience however, most of my other formal art classes were far more structured and planned.

It was crucial to me that I enroll in an arts-focused high school. In high school I took several art courses: illustration, painting, figure drawing (we were the only high school that had live nude models), and photography. The classes were all taught in an “art as skill” (Kind, de Cossen, Irwin & Gruer, 2007, p.849) manner, whereby the teacher would instruct us on a technique, and we would practice and create a finished piece of art in order to perfect the skill, for which we would get evaluated. While art was my

favourite subject in school, and later photography, it was not a particularly exploratory or experiential activity. It was largely about doing what you were taught, in a creative way (i.e. I could choose the colours, or the objects to go into my art work, but the lesson and objective were preplanned and prescribed). On one hand, I value the skills and training that I received. I became technically proficient in many of the art forms that I learned. Comparing how several people depicted the same subject is a useful and valuable experience. On the other, I feel that I was taught what and how to create, instead of being allowed to explore materials and processes on my own. The main purpose of art class was to become proficient in a creative endeavor so that the teacher would praise you with a good grade. In class, we were told to work on our own; chatting was kept to a minimum or none at all. We were being trained to be ideal artists, who work in silence and from their own imagination, which cannot be tainted or disturbed by outside influence. Art was not a social activity and I barely recall if we had any discussions of each other's work or time to reflect on the processes.

The only class where I feel that I had the most freedom to choose what I was going to create was photography. Ironically, although I did well artistically on projects, the instructor informed me that I would never “make it” as a photographer because I didn't have the technical abilities.

When I entered university, I again chose a school for its good reputation for the fine arts. However, it was not entirely clear why I was taking the degree or what purpose it would have on my career choice. Still, art was what I was good at, so that was the reason to take it. While at university, I enrolled in painting, drawing, and sculpture classes. I also took art history courses, women's studies and psychology.

For my final year, I spent a semester in the Netherlands, studying art history and European studies. If I was going to study art history, I wanted to be able to see the painting in person, not from slides. Reflecting back on that time period, I realize now that I was choosing to have an *embodied and holistic encounter* with my subject area in school. I went to museums and spent time around the paintings and sculptures in their surroundings. I lived on the land where the paintings were created, ate the food, met the people whose history I was studying. Of course, there were centuries separating myself from the

actual time period of the art work I was studying, but the main component was that I was living out my research. This was a *sensual* experience of schooling.

Once I graduated with my B.F.A., having been denied entrance into any photography courses (because it wasn't my major, I was told by the registrar's office), I moved to Martha's Vineyard to work for my father, who ran a small furniture refinishing studio. After a summer and fall learning his craft, I was yearning to learn how to work my camera. I enlisted the help of a local woman who ran her own darkroom and photo lab and began learning photography. While she did instruct me somewhat, for the most part, I played around in the darkroom, and with the camera, and learned through trial and error. This pedagogical experience, of exploring materials and processes, essentially without much outside interference, harkened back to my AGO art classes. I felt what Csikszentimihalyi (1997) terms the *flow* of “being fully immersed in an experience” (Miller, 2006, p. 9). Flow, as one aspect of timeless learning, opens a person up to experiences in the immediate moment (Miller, 2006).

Recognizing that I was not the best photo developer (my images were either over- or under-exposed, with many dust spots on them), I decided to do what I knew how to do confidently and decided to paint over them. These became my hand-coloured photographs. Starting with hanging my first six finished works in the coffee shop where I worked, my art soon turned into a business, and I was selling my photographs and reproductions in stores and galleries throughout Martha's Vineyard, and eventually in Boston, New York, Toronto, and San Francisco.

However, I hit a point where I felt strange about being a specialist in something, which I really didn't know much about. So I decided to learn photography from the professionals. I got a job as a portrait photographer, and enrolled in classes at the New England School of Photography. Later, I took a summer intensive professional photography course at The Rocky Mountain School of Photography. It was here that I learned how to make “good” landscape photographs.

There are certain rules that you abide by when making landscape photographs. First, one must always use a tripod; you want to make sure your horizon line is straight and that you pay careful attention to what falls in the frame of your composition. Second, use a fine resolution, so that the quality is of the highest degree. Time of day is extremely important: shoot either in the early morning or early evening,

when the sun is low on the horizon. Shutter speed should be fast enough to not show blur or movement. Depth of field should be sharp so that there is detail in the foreground until infinity. Use the rule of thirds when composing your image. Don't put subject matter in the centre of the frame, unless you are creating a symmetrical image. Be methodical and pay close attention to detail. Take several images; bracket for exposure.

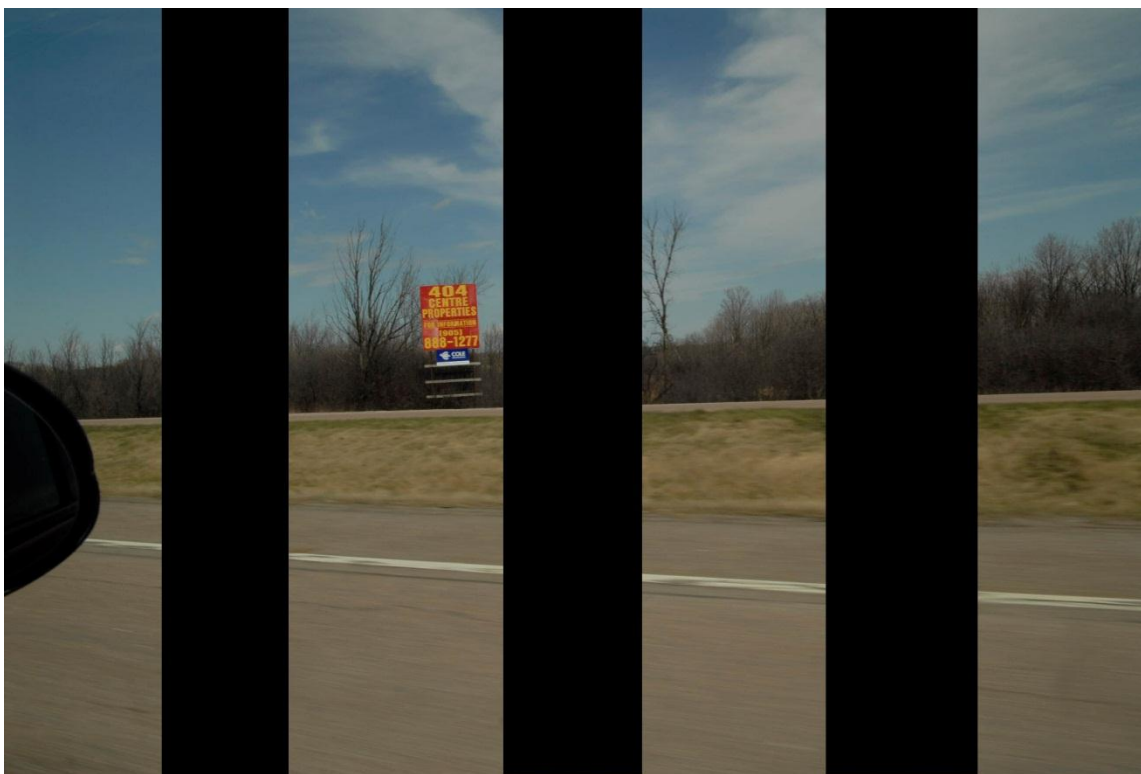
I created many “beautiful” images.

For about ten years, I created, or attempted to create, beautiful images. There is nothing wrong with beauty, and we need beauty in our lives and in education. However, I came to a place in my life where I could no longer “capture” beauty as I felt it was a betrayal of what was actually going on. I also began working as an artist educator, after my two children were born. This too, was for me more important than creating another image to frame and put on a wall. As I engaged in my work, I became aware of several things: the lack of art in children's lives because it was not a core subject in school; the enthusiasm and positive responses that I observed when leading arts classes; the ability of the arts to reach children of various levels, backgrounds and ages; and the way in which teachers were able to both see a different aspect of a student, and even learn and enjoy the artistic activity themselves.



I became very conscious about *how* I taught. I would create a “demo” to demonstrate a technique for a class, but I was also aware of how children looked up to an adult and would try to mimic what they were doing. Over time, my creations became less about me and more about my interest in *what art could do*. If I made something from clay, I would squish it up again and just keep re-making shapes. As I realized my own pleasure in the sensuality of materials, I was also interested in children’s abilities of *feeling their art*, rather than the achievement of the final product as the outcome. Often I found that I was trying to make bad art, as I didn’t want my students to feel that I was teaching them, but more suggesting what could be done.

Back to photography...



So when I created my *Landscape 2011* photographs I was deliberately undoing what I had done when previously making landscape photos. The images are examples of bad photography. They are taken from a moving vehicle, of a generic setting, through a window, barely composed, side mirror in the left hand side, and shooting (there's colonial terminology for you) randomly at “the landscape”. Stuff is then added to them, another layer to take away from the purity of the photograph. This to me is the same level

of care that is being given to children in the public school classroom around art and creativity. Sit 'em down, get them reading, teach them math, behave properly, don't be silly, pay attention, draw a picture to illustrate your story, be sure to colour inside the lines.



Where is the care? Where is the concern? Where is the love? Miller (2010) argues that “Love, or compassion, is also missing in our education. How often do we hear education officials or academics speak of love?” (p. 265). Just as the land that we pave over and establish as much needed real estate for commercial zoning, we neglect the sacredness of that space as habitat, ecosystem, growth, potential, decay, regeneration. The needs of the economy far outweigh the needs of habitat and the ecosystem that is there. The classroom similarly gets paved over in the politics of curricular discourse; outcomes and standards. When surveying a landscape/classroom the tendency is to look at the potential, the future, as if children/habitat were commodities. Instead of allowing decay and conflict to arise and rear its ugly head so that we may mend and heal and carry on, we push the pain of our children/habitat under the surface and cover up with big box style government-approved mandates and objectives. We take the landscape of the classroom, and rather than honour the beauty of the individual lives of the children who spend their

days there, we subject them to test preparations and rigid standardizations, so that on paper, the school looks like a nice big- box store facade of success and achievement. Or not.

Informed by Deleuze’s theory of logic of sensation and, I was propelled to explore the landscape in a way that ruptured, disturbed and dismantled my understandings of landscape/school, nature/curriculum, representation/affect. Zepke (2010) states that for Deleuze, the emphasis in art is on the non-representational. “The task of art is to produce ‘signs’ that will push us out of our habits of perception into the conditions of creation. When we perceive via the re-cognition of the properties of substances, we see with a stale eye pre-loaded with clichés; we order the world in what Deleuze calls ‘representation’” (Smith and Protevi, 2008, np). Deleuze was interested in an art encounter as “being of the sensible” (np) and “artwork that created an effect on the nervous system, not on the brain” (np).

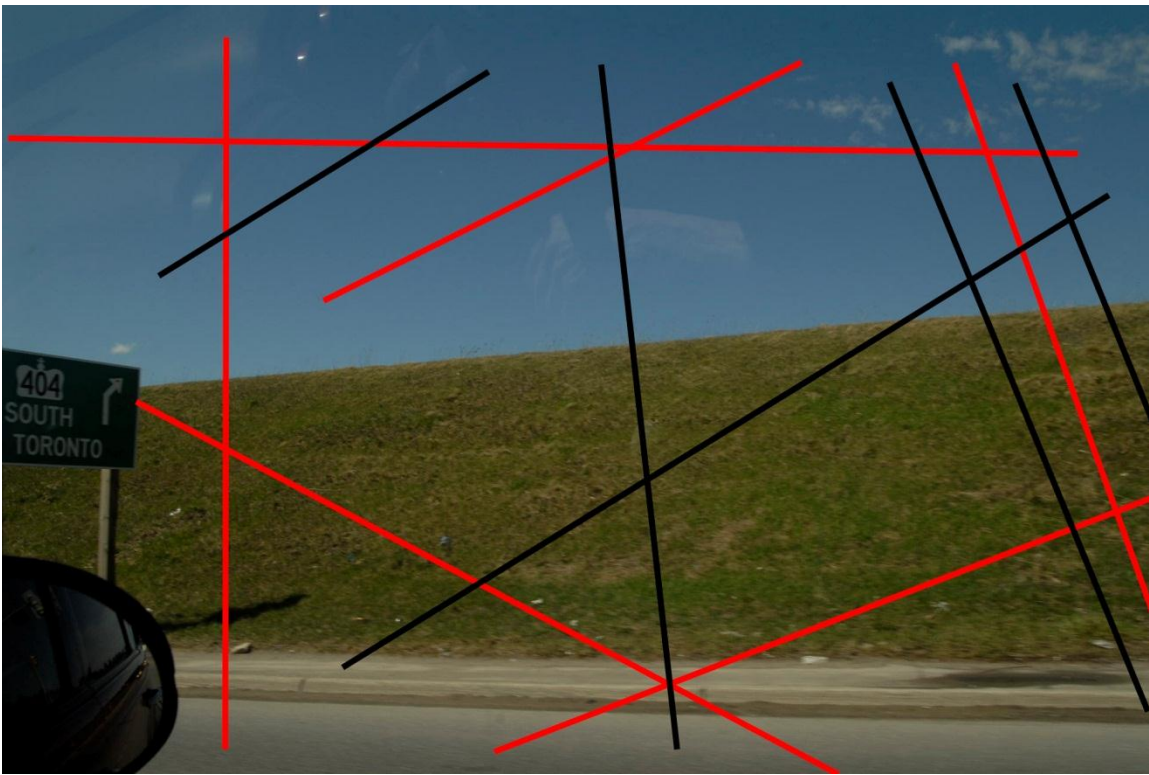


Equally propelled by Deleuze’s assertion that photographs are too representational (Zepke 2010), I wanted to explore the way in which art, particularly photography, could achieve an *affective* response, one that could be felt on the skin. How could this affective application towards metaphor/metonymy in my art work disrupt, open and allow for other meanings to emerge? In school, where is there space to

show our ugliness, our scars, our wounds, so that we can learn from them and heal, grow and change? We need a space to allow for creative exploration to be able to flow as it will. Sometimes this will be rushing and surging, hardly containable. Other times, it will be quiet and serene, hardly noticeable. The space, the atelier, is a sacred space where beauty and decay both can exist, both informing the other. It is in this a/r/tographical way that I explored the concept of metaphor/metonymy through my photographs, as my way of inquiring into the territory of the current state of the classroom, and offering a way through this to come to other understandings of what could be.



The rhizome, like metaphor/metonymy, offers connections to and between things. A metaphor knows no absolute meaning, but multiple. By engaging in an a/r/tographical inquiry into my research of the atelier/atelierista, I offer no final conclusions or solutions, only possibilities and potentialities. Metaphor/metonymy allows for understanding of difference. Autobiography allows each of us to have a place in the difference. An atelierista in the atelier space in elementary school allows for the openings, cracks, murkiness and rupture in learning to happen as it will and when it will.



The atelierista/atelier: possibilities for aesthetic and embodied learning

Tracings on a map

Have you ever experienced reading an article and then after a couple of weeks or months you read it again and it seems familiar but completely new at the same time? Reading, re-reading, un-reading, allows for new insights and knowledge acquisition. Because of what happens *in between*. Maybe what was relevant before will not be now. Learning is not linear but rhizomatic. Reading the OISE library's copy of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, is an aesthetic lesson in learning by the book's many readers. The book has words underlined, circled, arrows, writing in the margins, stars, bracketed and boxed in sections. Blue ink, red ink, pencil scribbles. Markings. The markings in the book are like tracings on a map, a way of attempting to navigate through the diagram, which is never beginning or ending. The markings in the book are a way of interacting with the text in a physical, tactile way; engaging with the book to learn and make sense of what is written, at least for a time. Yet it doesn't end there, the learning continues with reading, re-reading, and un-reading. Leaving the words and coming back, new knowledges and ruptures occur. *Don't get stuck with the tracings and instead stay with the map*. It's not about arriving at an absolute understanding but in the continual making and re-making of the map. Tracings capture and make still. The markings are an attempt to find what is meaningful, leaving other areas untouched. But the *in between* spaces is where the continual on-going learning happens. Staying fixed on the markings, keeps knowledge rooted and unchanged. Keep making maps, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) urge us, not tracings. "The rhizome is altogether different, a map and not a tracing. Make a map, not a tracing" (p.12).

The atelier/atelierista offers a "map-like" approach to learning, where connections between things and others are made through engaging in art making, reflecting and communicating through the many languages that are part of our vocabulary. For the map, like a rhizome, allows for endless access points, and in this way is an ongoing project or "performance". "A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to

the tracing, which always comes back ‘to the same’. The map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged “competence” (pp12-13). Had I only read the words marked in the book, I would have missed other possibilities. In school, if we only stay with what we *know* to be “right”, we miss the opportunity to find unknowns and the mysteries within/out us. The atelierista does not *know* what the outcome for the day will be for the students, but provides a safe place/space to explore *knowing* and *unknowing*, in a continuous dance that allows for both and either to exist.

What happens in the studio: possibilities, ruptures

In Reggio Emilia, Italy, all the municipally funded preschools have an atelier and an atelierista who works in a separate studio space but in conjunction with the other classroom teachers (Etheredge, Gandini & Hill, 2008). With a particular emphasis on aesthetics, the sensual, embodied, and relational practice of working with materials, subject matter, self and other is a fundamental aspect of children’s learning in the atelier.

[T]he term ‘atelier’-together with the presence of an atelierista in schools-has come to have a clear shared value. It stands for the presence of something giving direction to educational thinking, in which the aesthetic dimension has a new importance and appreciable pedagogical and cultural value. (Vecchi, 2010, p. 2).

As opposed to an art teacher who teaches to a prescribed curriculum, the atelierista observes and documents children’s strategies (Vecchi, 2010).

The atelier is a space where students can explore the possibilities that exist to them now. Not having identity imposed on them is crucial in the learning stage for students to develop their own language. Giovanni Piazza argues, “It is through interactions between a child and a material that an alphabet can develop” (in Etheredge et al, 2008, p. 13). He continues, “Children acquire a large spectrum of knowledge about materials, and this gives them the chance to use different alphabets in their individual process of representation and give shape to their own ideas” (p. 14). This kind of inquiry into their own languages, rather than absorbing the languages from others is key to children coming into an understanding of who they are, rather than who society wants them to be. Children in the atelier

environment, supported by the atelierista, are encouraged to try on different roles and identities, feeling encouraged by the complexities and interconnections of subject matter and interests rather than dissuaded.

This is modeled by the atelierista themselves, as they are an artist/teacher/documenter/creator/observer/learner/developer...not to mention the personal roles in their lives too. An atelier in the schools is a space where the unknowing is not only okay but encouraged. It is a space that welcomes betweenness.

This model of the atelierista is not only beneficial for students but for teachers as well. As artists, atelieristas acknowledge their “artist selves” who are also comfortable with their “teacher selves” (Kind, de Cosson, Irwin & Grauer, 2007, p.857). As teachers become more comfortable with their artist selves, they become more confident and skillful in their teacher roles. This plays into the concept of the varying identities that we all have, and that children are developing.

Artists and teachers both need support in finding ways to develop artist and teacher selves. In shifting understandings of identity from a single, fixed identity to multiple selves and expressions, teachers can develop "artist selves" and move beyond the outward "how to" or project focus of art education to a deeper more personal exploration of their artist selves. Similarly, artists need support in constructing identities as teachers that do not see a teacher's identity as a single unitary image but that opens ways to develop their teacher selves alongside their artist selves: not giving up one identity in favor of another, but developing multiple identities. (Kind, de Cosson, Irwin & Grauer, 2007, p.857)

The relationship between teacher and atelierista is one of sharing observations, consulting on approaches, supporting ideas and suggesting possibilities, which also includes inclusion of other staff members, parents, administration and of course students themselves. This communal approach to education emphasizes each person's strengths and skills, yet also diminishes the hierarchal nature of the North American structure that is pervasive in most public elementary schools, where the educators are the ultimate authorities on what is best for the child.

The importance of "taking care" and aesthetics in learning

Taking care.

There's something about paying attention to aesthetics that effects how we learn. Being in an environment that is cared for seems to create a sense of caring about your environment.

I looked at the backyard and decided to do something about the dust and debris from the winter and began to sweep. My daughter Ella joined in. She commented on how dry things are and that she wanted to water the plants. She started to set up little pots of life where things were dead, to make it "look nicer". Essentially what Ella was doing was taking care of a space that has meaning for her in her life.

In school, if we take the time to take care and value the aesthetics of learning it goes a long way for how children will learn and embody the learning. Caring while learning is much more effective than learning in an uncaring, utilitarian way.

In Reggio Emilia schools, “taking care” is an essential part of the pedagogy, and the atelier is a place/space where attention to aesthetics, in a multitude of ways, lies at the core of what makes it different from schools in other parts of the world (Vecchi, 2010). All the municipally funded preschools have an atelier and an atelierista who work in a separate studio space but in conjunction with the other classroom teachers (Etheredge et al, 2008). With a particular emphasis on aesthetics, the sensual, embodied, and relational practice of working with materials, subject matter, self and other is a fundamental aspect of children’s learning in the atelier. Vecchi (2010) emphasizes the “aesthetic dimensions” (p.5) which are explored and fostered in the atelier as an attitude of taking care.

The aesthetic dimensions are an essential aspect of the atelier and the broader framework of Reggio schools in general; "For among Reggio pedagogy's most original features is an acceptance of aesthetics as one of the important dimensions in the life of our species and, therefore, also in education and in learning" (p.5). Aesthetic dimensions in education open one up to the *inter/connections* between things, allowing us to see the *fluidity* of subject matter rather than the separateness of things. How do aesthetics enable us to do this? How is the atelierista able to support this kind of learning? How is the atelier the space/place for this to happen?

Before attempting to answer these questions, it is important to note that the atelier/atelierista is not able to operate in a separate world from the rest of the school teachers and staff. The role of the atelier is one in which there is overlap and flow, support and guidance which involves the community both within the school and without. The atelier is not an “add on” to the rest of the school but an integral part of the educational process, recognizing the essential role of the expressive arts to learning and being in the world. As Malaguzzi, the founder of Reggio schools states: "The role of the *atelier*, integrated and combined within the general framework of learning and teaching strategies, was conceptualized as a retort to the marginal and subsidiary role commonly assigned to expressive education" (Gandini, 2005, p. 7, original emphasis). In reading his interview from 1988, in which he speaks of the original concepts for an atelier and atelierista, it unfortunately holds much relevance to our current educational system. Malaguzzi continues:

First of all, the atelier was viewed as instrumental in the recovery of the image of the child, which we now saw as richer in resources and interests than we had understood before, a child now understood as interactionist and constructivist. This new child had the right to a school that was more aware and focused, a school made up of professional teachers. In this way we also rescued our teachers, who had been humiliated by the narrowness of their preparatory schools, by working with them on their professional development. (p. 7)

In other words, a school based on respect, where the child is not seen as a vessel for knowledge to be poured into, nor the teacher as the ultimate authority, but recognizing the value of the adult and the child as holding valuable skills and capabilities, and the ongoing process of learning that occurs within school for both teacher and student, with the atelier as an essential component in this equation.

In what way does the aesthetic dimension achieve this goal? According to Vecchi (2010) it is primarily a "process of empathy relating the Self to things and things to each other" (p. 5). She continues: "It is an attitude of care and attention for the things we do, a desire for meaning; it is a curiosity and wonder; it is the opposite of indifference and carelessness, of conformity, of absence of participation and feeling" (p. 5). And it is much more than this too.

In the atelier, stimulated by “the aesthetic vibration” (Malaguzzi in Vecchi, 2010, p. 6), students are opened up to knowledge of the body, mind and spirit; from building relationships between

themselves, others and each other, there is an empathetic understanding to the way in which all things are connected.

Nel Noddings (2005) speaks about the ethics of care in education with her discussion of the *inferred* and the *expressed* needs of the student, with *inferred* coming from the care giver, and the *expressed* coming from the cared-for. According to Noddings, if the expressed needs of a child are not being provided, then learning the *inferred* curriculum is difficult at best as it does not acknowledge the intrinsic needs of the student. She further explains that if schooling is to be effective, there needs to be an overhaul to the current system. After all, “Children who are in pain, afraid, sick, or lost in worry cannot be expected to be interested in arithmetic or grammar” (p. 153). She calls for an integrated approach to education, where schools provide a space that is teaching life skills and where “balancing expressed and *inferred* needs is of central importance” (p. 154). This holistic approach to education acknowledges the life of the student inside and out of the school walls, connecting curriculum to the expressed needs of the child.

Students need to know how schooling is related to real life, how today’s learning objective fits into their own interests and plans, and even whether there is any meaning to life itself. These questions - spoken or merely implied in the initial challenge - should induce deep and lively discussion. Addressing them is not a distraction or waste of time. On the contrary, such discussions are at the heart of what it means to educate. (Noddings, 2005, p. 154)

How does the atelierista provide an approach that addresses the expressed needs of the child? By providing materials, resources, space and a supportive environment, students can come to understandings about things through an embodied experience of art making. This does assume that the basic needs of the student are being met (shelter, food, clothing, etc.) and I am not attempting to overlook that there are those needs in schools that are not being met. This is a much larger issue that I cannot address in this thesis. However I am suggesting that because students are entering the classroom bringing with them a range of emotional, psychological and physical differences, that the atelier is a space where each student can approach art through the means that are available to them. To provide children the creative freedom to explore and be involved in the act of art making provides a space of caring; a space that while in one sense connects subject matter, people, environment, also allows for access to the unknown and difficult

issues. The atelier is a space where dialogue is encouraged; where difference is welcomed. In the caring environment of the atelier, the atelierista provides the space where art making can be explored in a supportive, non-judgmental manner, allowing each child to come to the studio in their own way in their own time.

Just completed a week of working at an arts camp where another artist and I ran the visual arts component of the camp for 7 to 12 year olds. The theme of the camp was “storytelling/bookmaking”. I met with the other instructor to create our curriculum for the week. We came up with an agenda that began with accordion books, ‘traditional books’, masks, something that I came up with which I called the “Story Train”, and then wrapping up with a day to finish anything that was left to do. The concept behind the Story Train was to have stations with various materials on them. The kids would work in small groups, develop an idea for a story, and in those groups they would have 10 minutes to visit the stations to create props/costumes for their play, which they would perform at the end. It was an experiment. The other instructor seemed reluctant to try it. She was concerned that the kids would rush through and that we’d have a bunch of time left over. I was pretty sure that if we gave the kids some structure to work around that they would actually become immersed and engaged with the act of creating their artwork. The idea too was to get away from us as the educators demonstrating what to make, and let the kids come to it on their own and collectively. We would be more of a support to them rather than leaders. Luckily the woman who ran the camp, and the other artist educator, who were the drama leaders for the week, liked the idea and so it was a go.

Having read Vanessa Clark’s article “Art Practice as Possible Worlds”(2012) after the fact, I was intrigued by the similarities of approach and philosophy towards the act of art making and the opportunities this allows for art as being a vehicle for becoming as a Body without Organs (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). “My purpose is to demonstrate that art may present an opening onto possible worlds,

worlds that might traverse, mix, and disrupt binaries that maintain marginalized positions. Art practice from this intersection of rupture is both intensely creative and deeply political” (Clark, 2012, p. 200). Although we were asking the kids to create with a goal in mind, my intention was to take the emphasis away from relying on the adult educators for direction, and to create a space for the becoming of process to be prominent, or what Deleuze and Guattari describe as full BwO. In providing the materials and space for children to be artists, it is crucial to not have an imposed upon outcome. Providing materials and space, and in this case a theme, provided the children with a foundation upon which to explore the materials and establish a becoming process of and between bodies.

Art, the event of art, is not about an essential thinking subject who acts on materials through her body. When an artist meets with paint, she feels the paint, embodies the paint, and becomes with the paint. It is a process with few organizing thoughts; it is more about finding pieces with which to connect and experiment. (Clark, 2012, p. 203)

While there was the aspect of imposing ideas for creating a final product, the difference was that the idea came from the children and from the educators, and not purely from the educators only. There was a back and forth motion of creation/thought/action/thought/creation occurring. We, the art educators, still gave our ideas and help but we were much more on equal footing with the kids than in our other lessons. I felt the energy was more charged and explosive in this lesson than previously. There was less asking “Is this good?” and more asking “Can you help me with...” or “How can I do this?” Often my reply was to ask the others in the group to come to me with the idea for which I would make suggestions. I find it is unavoidable to get away from being an authority figure. However, where I can affect a difference is how I act out my authority and be a support for kids rather than an ultimate source of knowledge. Had we had more time, I would have liked to explore in much greater detail the stories, the symbolism, the use of materials, embodied learning, and creating without an imposed outcome from the teacher. The feedback from the other instructor and our helper was extremely positive. “The kids are so engaged!” “The boys are so into it. Before, they complained about not getting the activity and feeling frustrated. They really enjoyed themselves.”

Over the course of our daughter's experience in second grade, I observed the tensions that existed for her teacher between her teacher self and artist self. The demands of delivering the curriculum, meeting Ministry standards, ensuring that each child was up to the expected level of learning for their grade, testing, evaluating, marking and grading left very little room in the day to allow for exploration and discovery of art or creative endeavours. As a mother I was concerned for my child who was equally feeling the tensions of having to satisfy the curricular expectations of school and mourning a loss of playful, creative, artistic time that had been a constant in her preschool, kindergarten and first grade years. There was virtually no space, save for recess, where my daughter could be in the process of becoming; where her learning was an embodied exploration through the senses, or where the goal was to feel materials and experience sensations as a form of knowledge acquisition. The learning was largely prescriptive, with outcomes clearly defined. Art projects were few and were predominantly about colouring in pre-made pictures or pasting pre-cut shapes to make a replica of something the teacher had done. Oftentimes, teachers believe that they are covering art by handing out cut and paste types of projects, or colouring within the lines. However, these are "assembly tasks" (Isenberg and Jalongo, 2010, p. 106), activities with predetermined outcomes and are an exercise in following directions, a necessary skill to possess but it is not art.

Yet I do not blame my daughter's teacher. She is doing her job as a teacher within a system to fulfill the mandate of ensuring that children are learning the expected subject matters in school. She can also not be expected to teach about art when that is not her skill set, background or comfort zone. She was doing her best to meet the demands of the curriculum. Nor is this an exceptional situation either. In her pivotal paper on the crisis in the modern day classroom, Maxine Greene (1995) outlines how the current emphasis on "high level" learning has meant that the teachers and students are adhering to standards that treat students like "human resources" rather than creative, choice making individuals (p. 3). She posits that it is not merely good enough to have exposure to a work of art but to be involved with the creation of art. "Mere exposure to a work of art is not sufficient to occasion an aesthetic experience. There must be a conscious participation in a work, a going out of energy." She continues, "Knowing about, even in the

most formal academic manner, is entirely different from creating an unreal world imaginatively and entering it perceptively, affectively, and cognitively.” (p. 4). This also brings the possibilities for uneasiness and tensions, which we must provide space for in school.

In her experience as an atelierista, Kind (2010) describes a situation where an art project that she initiated in the preschool where she works was met with unease and discomfort. This “art as provocation” (p.119) was different from what educators at the school were accustomed to experiencing as art. However, as Kind argues: “Art is not easy, it is not always calm and nice and pretty.” (p. 119). Having this experience changed how the educators viewed art. It opened them up to understanding the possibilities that art offers to us. Instead of looking at visual art as technique, this event opened up the ideas of the relationships between what the children were exploring and the investigations of contemporary artists. Kind (2010) explains:

A key change since that day has been a shift in the educator’s conceptual frameworks and understandings of visual art and the beginning of juxtaposing our thinking about the arts and the children’s engagements with artistic processes alongside contemporary artists and their processes and investigations. We began to discuss different contemporary artists with the goal of attending to the questions, suggestions, and invitations of art. It has not been an exploration into what an artist does as copying their forms and images, but an engagement with their ways of thinking and with the provocation of contemporary art practices. (p. 120)

An atelierista in elementary school

Imagine now that there is an atelier/atelierista at my daughter’s school. The students in her class will have a rotation in their day when they go to the atelier. The atelierista would work with the classroom teacher in identifying issues, insights, and approaches to try with the class and individual students. If the teacher was adamant about teaching their way, the students would still receive the exposure and experience of art and accessing the poetic languages in the atelier.

An ideal and desirable outcome is that the teacher gives up some of their control to the learning/teaching process, and welcomes the insight of the atelierista, while simultaneously contributing their knowledge and experience of their students, working together with the atelierista for the betterment of the students foremost, but for themselves too. The landscape of the classroom, and the school, could look very different. Rather than imposing capitalistic needs of big-box style teaching where one size fits

all, we could have a place of organic, holistic growth; where one child/plant/organism/ grows in one way, which is very different from its neighbour that grows another way. It cannot be predicted how and when learning occurs in an individual, yet it is necessary that a structure exist which feeds the way in which the brain learns, not in a linear, tree or root like way but in a rhizome-like way. This rhizome-like way of looking at the elementary classroom space, with the placement of an atelier and atelierista, hones in on the connections between things; “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 7).

In the atelier, when my daughter presents a drawing of a person, the response is not “A person doesn’t have arms like that!” or “Why doesn’t your person have a neck?” Instead the drawing is looked at as an opening, an invitation for inquiry. “I’d like to know about this person” or “Can you tell me how you did that?” could be the entry point. Then we can listen to the story. And the story doesn’t have to be “real” but telling it is *real*. Drawing is one of her languages and a way for her to come to know the world.

A Bodied Curriculum

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the challenges and difficulties that arise sometimes when making or participating in art. Art can be frustrating, challenging and difficult. Whether working with materials to achieve a certain technique, working with a concept to achieve a desired outcome, or working with others in a confined space, art is not easy (Kind, 2010). Art “can be messy, disruptive, and unsettling” (p. 119). Yet it is through tensions, difference and unease that we grow, learn, and move forward. As a space of sensuality and proximity to others, the atelier supports “a (post) re-conceptualization of curriculum as bodied curriculum where the relationality between self and other performs curriculum as difference” (Springgay & Freedman, 2009, p. 32). The atelier is a place/space where the senses are fundamental to learning; “children learn through their bodies” (Vecchi, 2010, p. 56). A curriculum that provides for this space and type of learning enables learning within difference and embraces tensions, not as obstacles, but as givens in a world of change, otherness, and unknowns. As Springgay and Freedman (2009) challenge, “Bodied encounters, we argue, in and through touch, produce

intercorporeal understandings and in doing so imagine and intimate curriculum premised on difference”
(p. 28).

When I'm feeling doubtful or questioning myself, my inclination is to turn to outside sources to fill the void. What should I do? Not trusting that I have the answers already or the ability to find the answers, I seek knowledge from others, from books, from articles, from conversations. Yet if I step back and go into myself, trusting that through my creative process I can find the knowledge that I need, I am in a much safer and secure place. Today I am setting up to do clay at home. I think I will go in the backyard. I will not read any more articles or chapters. I need to feel the clay and let go in the process of creating. I need to get away from my brain trying to figure out everything, from wanting outcomes and results. Being with my brain too much is causing me to lose sleep, worry, become down and despairing. Yes, I need to find a job. Yes, I need to finish my thesis. Yes, I need to plan when to pick up the kids from camp. ..and the list goes on. There will never be a pause in my day to do my art unless I carve out the time and the space. Okay, here I go.

Later...

Much better now. Played. Just played with the clay. The forms were informed by the clay and my body. That's just what happened. How often do kids get to touch and feel in school; to explore and allow for unknowns? Often when I taught, there was a template - even if the template was loose. Every lesson in art had to be tied to an outcome or expectation from the curriculum. Where do we leave space for the living curriculum? Where do we allow time for the bodied curriculum? To feel, sense, and be present with materials. To be messy and gooey. To make something that falls apart without fear of being reprimanded or penalized.

Somehow, somewhere along the way, education became about “a Cartesian privileging mind over body” (Leafgren, 2011, p. 36) where “the institution of school has embraced a ‘rejection of the reliability of sensation as a foundation for understanding’”(Chojnowski in Leafgren, p.36). Leafgren elaborates:

Keeping children apart-apart from nature, apart from the materials world-and especially apart from one another-is an overt mechanism of school. Spend time in an elementary classroom, and you will hear, “Keep your hands to yourself,” “Mind your own business,” “Keep your eyes on your work,” “Don’t touch,” and “Put that down!” Children are placed behind desks, on lines, and under one’s thumb. Manifestations of the body, its unpredictability and messiness, are resented as principals bemoan the effort to control children during the “worst” times of the school day: Lunch, restroom visits, and recess (in schools where recess remains). (p. 36)

If children are being conditioned to behave “appropriately” in school without an opportunity to allow for the incorporation of the senses and corporeal encounters as part of their knowledge acquisition and general state of being, a vital force is being shut down and reprogrammed. “Those involved in setting norms of swaddled dismemberment do not seem to realize-or possibly care-that the consequences of imposition of these norms are the stagnation of the humanity and joy” (Leafgren, 2011, p. 46).

When children are in the atelier, they are practicing a bodied curriculum (Springgay & Freedman, 2009); a place/space where the “practice of being oriented to others, to touch, to reflect, and to dwell with others relationally” (p. 25). What the atelierista tries to do in the atelier is to provide opportunities for ongoing investigations with children and art in their relations with materials and encounters with others. Thus it is not that that the atelierista is looking for meaning in the child’s artwork as something that represents their thought process, but rather is interested in the encounter with the other. Kind (2010) suggests that perhaps instead of placing a small clay slab in front of the child to make into an object, why not leave the block of clay out and observe how a child interacts with the clay. “We might see a young child sitting on a large slab of clay on a mat and begin to imagine how the clay becomes a medium for negotiating power and strength” (p. 125). She describes what happens:

The child presses into the clay, working her hands and feet and body into the dense clay. As she presses in, the clay resists, it doesn’t bend easily. In its resistance the clay speaks back-in its strength, density, weight, heaviness it is a force to be struggled with. In this sense clay also has a voice and a presence. It is not a medium that one does something to as an instrument for an

artist's purpose, but a medium for negotiating and interacting with. The clay becomes a partner in the creative process, an object of encounter rather than a medium for representing thought. (p. 125)

In this respect, the messiness of the body and the residues of touching, feeling, sensing, have a place within the curriculum as both student and teacher learn together as bodies exploring possibilities.

Observation and Documentation

Language, according to Reggio pedagogy, is not only verbal and written but encompasses the multitude of ways in which humans express themselves. Poetic languages, such as dance, music, song, photography, are characterized by their aesthetic qualities (Vecchi, 2010). Learning aesthetically enables a different entry point to knowledge acquisition. The role of the atelierista is to create a space for the multiple languages, or what is referred to as the *100 languages of children* by Malaguzzi, to exist in an aesthetic dimension. Key to this role is also one of observer and documenter.

The particular form of educational observation and the documentation of processes used in Reggio schools for some time, testifies to the fertile relationship between poetic languages and pedagogy. During this documentation and analysis of processes, the aesthetic dimension expresses its powerful energy, and demonstrates its ability for developing new connections. (Vecchi, 2010, p. 9)

Rather than coming into the classroom with prescribed lesson plans, the atelierista comes with artistic skills and experience, along with a pedagogical background. Through observing and documenting student's processes, the atelierista is able to tap into each child's individual learning, taking cues if you will, of where the child is at, and where they are going with their project. Projects can last from a day to several months. Children can work together or individually. There is also the involvement of those outside the classroom, as learning does not start and stop there.

Scroeder-Yu (2008), an arts specialist working in the elementary schools in the Chicago area, realized the potential for documentation in her own practice after visiting Reggio Emilia. "The Reggio Emilia approach sees the family, the child, the teacher, and the artist as all being integral parts of learning. The element of documentation in Reggio Emilia creates a dialogue between these groups" (p. 127).

Whereas, in many North American schools artwork is displayed showing the final product, the atelierista and the teacher are interested in showing the process (Scroeder-Yu, 2008).

The children and the adults are seen as equal participants in learning, with each having an equal voice. Documentation occurs through photographs, transcribed conversations, the graphic arts, and video recordings. Documentation also provides an inside view of the interests, needs, and experiences of children. (p. 127)

While I agree with an approach that embraces both the student and educator in the learning journey, I am cautious when there are claims of children and adults as “equal participants” as Scroeder-Yu states. This position overlooks the social construction in educational settings, and the roles that adults and children play are not equal.

In her chapter, “The art of methodology: a collaborative science,” Kathleen Gallagher (2008) discusses her methodology and the dilemmas that arose from an ethnographic research project that she led with a team of researchers. While she is speaking primarily from the viewpoint of a researcher and not as a teacher, I find she raises some important issues pertaining to the role of observation and interpretation in a classroom context. She also raises the issue of surveillance, which although her research took place in high schools, brings forth the topic of the ever watchful eye of authority which is applicable to all schools. I would like to address these two areas: observation and interpretation in relation to the role of documentation in the Reggio Emilia atelier² and challenge that these notions while introducing the aspect of surveillance as disrespecting a child’s right to privacy and autonomy.

Authors Will Parnell and Jackie Bartlett (2012) discuss the use of Smartphones and Tablets for documenting in preschool and primary classrooms. While they do acknowledge the subjective nature of documentation, they advocate for recording children’s art making as having a “tool for interpretation” (p. 52). While in one sense I am supportive of the role of documentation for interpreting children’s artwork, I caution the intention that is placed on children to find meaning in their work when perhaps the meaning is unknown? By placing emphasis on interpreting work, rather than simply allowing the work to be, are we not forcing a judgment on that child’s work? The child is learning to provide what the adult wants to hear. The child is learning to provide what the adult deems essential in documentation.

² Observation and documentation are used in both the classroom and atelier in the preschools of Reggio Emilia. However for the purposes of my thesis I am restricting my critique to the atelier only as that is my area of research.

Further in the article, Parnell and Bartlett (2012) describe the value of documenting children's work through digital records posted on a password protected blog, in the forms of photos, quotes, scanned work samples, commentary, and so forth, for the teachers, families (including extended families), and children to "make sense and build on their own learning" (p. 52). However by doing this, there is a danger in exposing the child's discovery to the scrutiny and opinion of the adults in their lives. Where is the sense of privacy and autonomy in children's learning if so much of what they do and create is available for many an adult to see and hear? Is it acceptable for a child to request not to be documented? Is there space for a child to use their voice in opposition to being constantly recorded and monitored? I advocate for careful scrutiny in these matters when we as educators claim that what we do is for the good of the child and the child's learning. While in our view we may see the child as progressing in language articulation and expression of self, how do we address the child who does not speak the same language as us? How do we show respect to the child who does not want their work photographed or their process videotaped? How do we value a child who says what they feel they think they should say rather than what they want to say (or not say).

What interests me about the Reggio approach of an atelierista and an atelier is that there is an attitude of openness, questioning and inquiry. While there are numerous documents that demonstrate the positive attributes of observation and documentation, I feel it imperative that we do not get too comfortable believing that this is the only approach or method of learning and appreciating the artwork and artistic processes that occur in schools. If anything, I am in favour of a less-supervised art making and knowledge making environment where trust in process, the unknowns, and mystery are fostered versus an over-saturation of meaning making and interpretation. This is where children and adults can be on equal footing; we are all *in flux* (Gallagher, 2008), figuring out our course of next action, an in the between space of knowing and not knowing.

Cautioning against the notion of the researcher as possessing an all knowing interpretation of a subject or site, Gallagher (2008) used an "open reading" in her study: "An open rather than a closed reading means that there are limitless possible interpretations of a moment" (p. 68).

A class assignment

In the qualitative methodologies course that I took this past winter, we were required to conduct two interviews with the same person(s), adapting our questions, methods, and approach from the first to the second. I interviewed four children from my children's school, inquiring how they felt about art in their school and their experiences with art. My intention is not to provide an extensive analysis from those interviews, but what I learned from the process of interviewing.

For the first interview, I deliberately wanted it to be more traditional and in a formal setting. I used an office in the school and met with each child for approximately 10-15 minutes each, asking them a set of questions. There were four kids, two in grade one, one in grade two and one in grade three. I met with each one individually. The interviews were recorded and I made some notations about body language, disposition, etc.

The second interview was much more informal. This time I brought the children in pairs (both the first graders, then the second and third grader), into a large room. I had put out an ample amount of art supplies - large and small paper, paints, markers, glue, magazines, coloured pencils, pastels, silky crayons, textured paper, pipe cleaners, scissors and tape. My instructions were for the kids to create whatever they wanted for about 30-45 minutes and then I would be asking them some questions. I informed them that I was available to them if they needed my help with anything but I wasn't there to instruct them.

Then I observed them.

Just watching the kids create was very revealing about them as people and as creators. From body language, to how they explored the materials, to how they interacted with each other, with me, and their awareness of their environment, the time. Paying attention to them without telling them what to do. This

wasn't the first time I had done this but this time I was aware that I was not instructing, moreover self-analyzing how this felt and what the experience was like for me.

What I found particularly interesting is that from that brief time of observation and documentation, was how much I gleaned from and about the kids. There is a wealth of information to learn from observing children creating: from their choice of where to sit, how they make the first mark on paper, do they ask for approval, how do they experiment with materials - do they mix or keep them separate, how long do they spend on each piece, what do they make their artwork about, particularly what stories and narratives come out of creating?

Later, after completing the assignment, I sent their parents copies of the transcripts, along with photos of the kids creating and their artwork. The parents commented on how informative and interesting it was for them to read this about their child; how much insight it gave them into how their child created and how they interacted at school. This gave them a point of entry to dialogue with their kids about what they had done in school, beyond "what did you do in school today?" to a deeper, meaningful connection into what their child experienced, how they behaved and interacted without their parents present.

Teachers spend so much time writing report cards and summarizing what they know about each student, but what does this do for the student, or for the teacher? Often these reports are intended for the parents, as if the child is performing for the adults to evaluate and approve/disapprove their progress, behavior, learning abilities. If educators were to involve the kids, share their observations with them, ask them what they thought, how they felt, how would this change how children felt about their role in school? If they were involved with how their contributions were evaluated, not by a mark or a grade but by dialogue and critique, how would this allow for them to feel ownership and responsibility in their own

education? How would this allow for continued conversations to occur, instead of finite results and definitive outcomes, which essentially means a final destination has been reached, good or bad?

Instead of art projects being about creating a product, art could be about the journey, the exploration, the stories, the inventiveness, the collaboration, and in all this, yes, the learning - the continued non-stop rhizomatic learning. A learning that doesn't stop with the final grade but is an ongoing search and exploration.

Today I wanted to work with clay without the wheel, and without tools. I took a ball of clay and decided to start with a pinch pot. As an artist educator at Harbourfront I taught clay many times; how to make a pinch pot is one of the basic foundational techniques that are taught in order to make many things, namely vessels and creatures. Today I wanted to start with a pinch pot and see where it led me. Once I formed the basic pot, I noticed a slight dip in the rim, where the clay was thinner than the rest of the pot. Had I been teaching the right way to make a pinch pot, this would have to be corrected; instead I allowed the weakness of that area to inform the shape of the rest of the pot, and began to change the shape of the pot itself according to this deviant area. How freeing this was, to allow something to occur instead of trying to control it. This acceptance of difference allowed for other possibilities and outcomes; I was in process with the material, in flow with the moment and act of creating. The material informed me as much as I informed it. What could this teach me about life? I believe a great deal. There are often times in life when it is beneficial to “go with the flow”, to pay attention to what is occurring, to take note and observe, responding with ease rather than force.

Vecchi (2010) speaks about the relationship between aesthetics and epistemology and how there is a danger in ignoring the epistemological and pedagogical potentialities of art by “museumizing” it

(Ceruti in Vecchi, 2010, p.14). Keeping art in a realm of aesthetics *only* does a huge disservice to how the process of art making allows us to access other ways of knowing, relating and being/becoming.

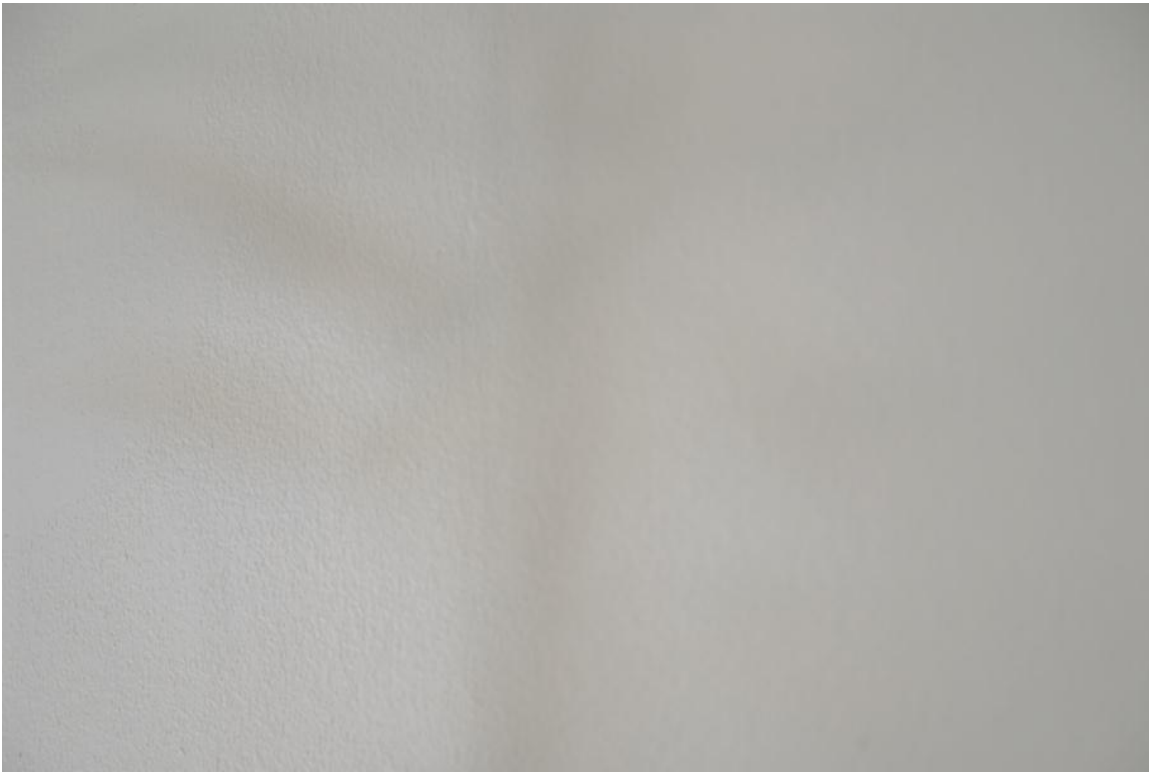
Relegating art to the outside of the everyday, as an experience reserved for special occasions cuts off the deeper meaning and learning that occurs from being with art every day. Working with the clay that afternoon helped me loosen up my perception of what I had *known* of a pinch pot, to what was *possible* for the pinch pot.

As I sat there in the studio working - or rather playing - with the clay, the pot had now turned into a pitcher-like vessel with a curving, flowing-like rim. I kept smoothing the surface over and over, absorbed in the texture and the appearance of the surface. On the table I had also taken out my mugs to dry and they were sitting near where I was working. A few women had come in to tour the studio. One of them came over to me and complimented me on what I was making. She asked if the mugs were mine. She also asked how long I had been doing this. I replied that I was pretty much a beginner on the wheel but had more experience with freeform clay. Her reply was interesting.

"He's a very good teacher then isn't he?" She was referring to the owner of the studio, who was not my teacher.

"Yes, he is," I replied not wanting to explain that he actually hadn't taught me anything. What I found compelling about her comment is the attitude that if a student creates something that is considered 'good' it must be because they have a good teacher. Her question/comment symbolizes the 'master-disciple' perception that is so pervasive in our Eurocentric pedagogical culture. The student is the receptacle for the learning which is taught to them by the teacher.

As students we are taught, it is true. But are our creations not worthwhile to pay attention to, as coming from the student who is also a teacher to the teacher? For a teacher who observes a student can take some of that learning back into their practice, and carry on in a Deleuzian- Guattarian *rhizome structure of being*. The rhizome, like crab grass, knows no beginning or end, but moves in lines that connect and are in process of becoming (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). This process of becoming is what in Reggio takes place in the atelier, with the atelierista as a facilitator and documenter of a child's process. The relationship between atelierista and student is different from that of art teacher and student. In the former, the atelierista is a partner in learning, giving the student a presence which provides structure, safety and support. The atelierista is not there to promote one way of doing something but to ensure that materials, environment and resources are provided and that the child is able to freely explore both individually and collectively, so as to experience their education in an embodied, relational, and holistic way. Learning is done from trying things out, as in the case of using the overhead projector (see Vecchi, 2010) to find shapes, and understand the properties of light, and how putting oneself in the light reacts to the shadow that is created. Learning in and from shadows.



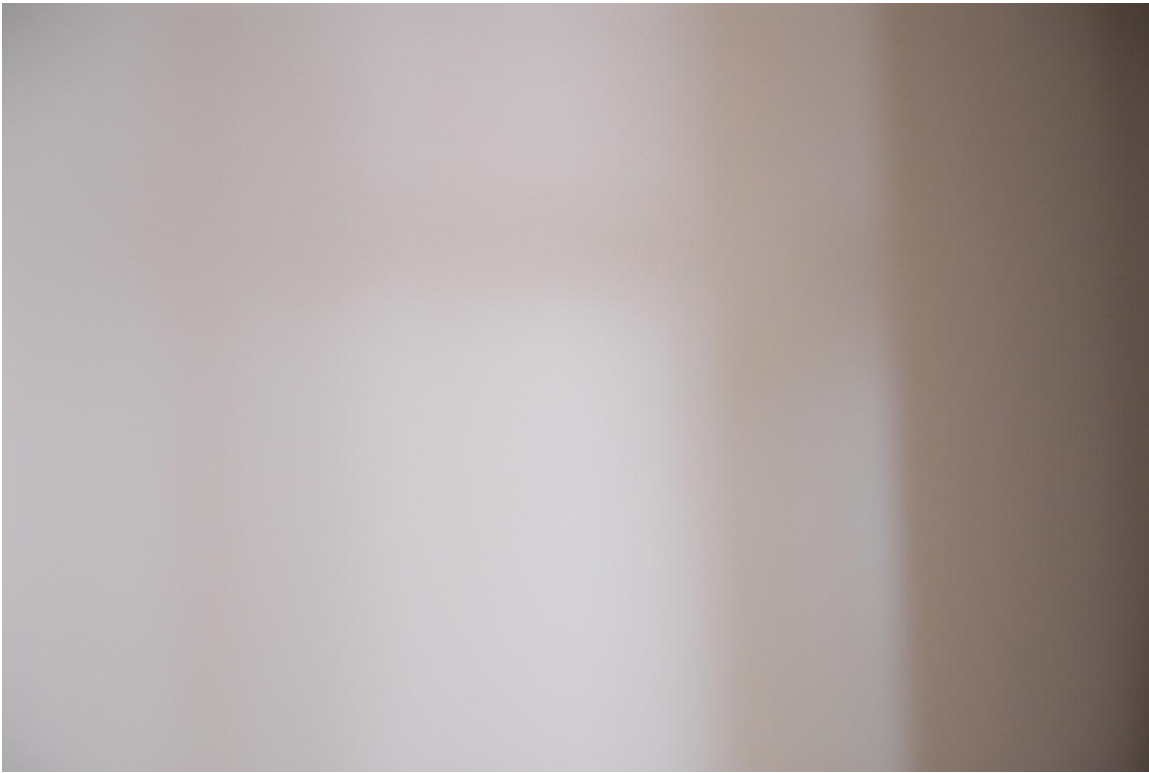
The atelier: light/openness/flow/accessibility

Photography AND...

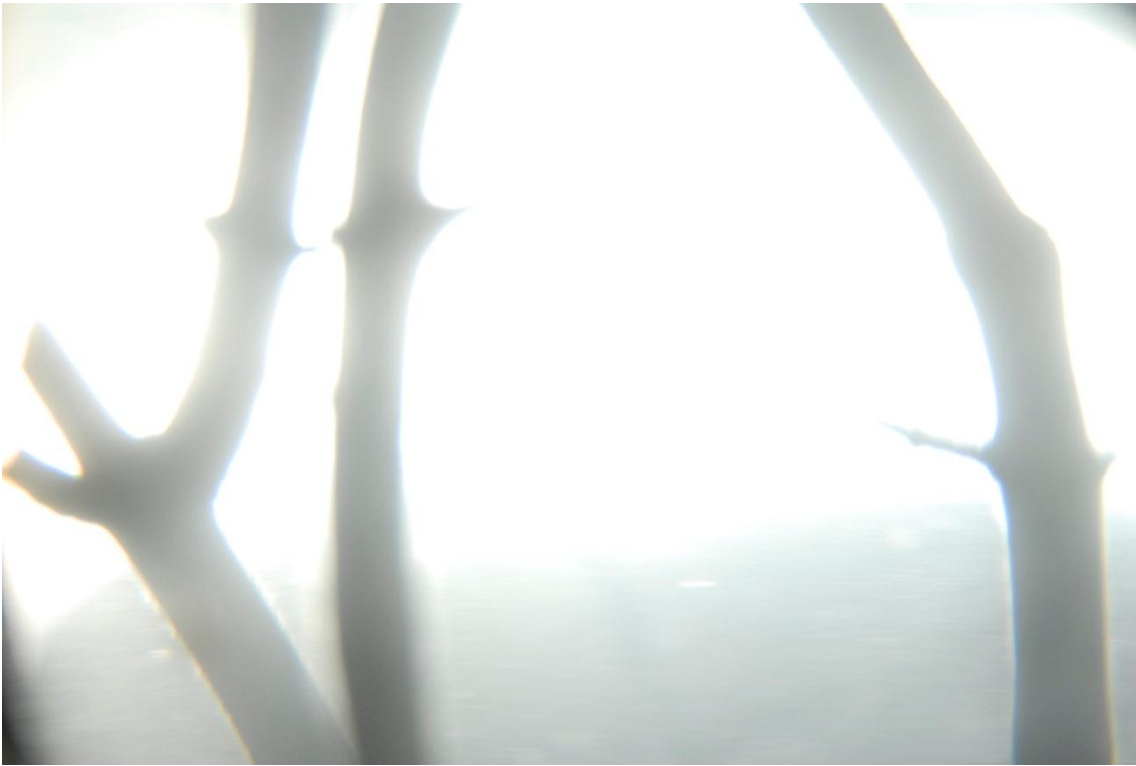
By controlling settings on the camera, the photo that is taken is not what appears to the naked eye; this is the beauty of the camera. What is reality becomes distorted and altered by the camera's controls (shutter speed, aperture) but is not actually distorted. Yet when we see the image, this is then a fixed reality because it is now frozen in time. If it had not been for the machine and the artist, this new reality would not have existed. But it is not really real, it is only an image, a visual illusion of an object/subject in life. If we see it, does it really exist? Does it matter? If this image of the possibility of something inspires us, how much does it matter whether it is real or not? A part of it exists, or else there would be nothing to capture. But to go back to find the thing that exists is futile as it cannot be seen without the use of the machine, the camera.



Allowing children to play with light, lenses, ways of seeing frees up what is possible. In Reggio ateliers, digital cameras, overhead projectors and ways of playing with light are essential components in children's learning (Vecchi, 2010). If I try this AND this happens, then I can try this AND this happens, AND, AND AND...it is the conjunction that is the crucial part between the other words (Zepke, 2010). The AND is the middle and like the “rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*”(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.25). The atelier is a space/place for the *betweenness* of learning.



The vase on the coffee table was catching the light from behind it which made it appear as if it were glowing. I picked up my camera and went up close, not interested in depicting the vase or the lilacs, but rather in pushing the camera's capabilities of capturing light, reflections, glares and glow. Yet in order not to capture the trueness of the light, I had to overexpose - create excess of light - so that what I was feeling, envisioning, sensing as possible, could come to light (no pun intended).



Adjust settings. Look in view finder. Take a shot AND examine AND adjust settings again AND take another shot AND examine image AND change the angle AND slightly change angle AND, AND, AND... I am in the flow of the moment. As Miller (2010) would say I am experiencing timeless learning; where for a moment I am completely engaged in the act of creating. Other people call it the zone. I only have an idea of what I'm looking for, but it is the constant back and forth between looking, thinking, doing, seeing, adjusting, trying, looking, thinking, doing, and seeing that I get somewhere. Not like a destination but a journey. There is no prescribed outcome. There is process AND being, becoming AND arriving.

“Between things does not designate a localizable relation from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 25). Even though there is an abundance of light, it is hard to see what it is in the image. Too much light can be blinding, just as is too much knowledge can be dumbing.



Saturating children in formulas and projected outcomes leads to boredom and disengagement. The eye needs to come back to the darkness in order to rest in the shadow. Light informs the shapes, and the shapes offer solace from the light. Both need the other. Just as time-bound learning needs its sister timeless learning, so there is a foundation to rest secure with the openness of the unknown and untouchable aspects of things and being.

Remaining only in the light or only in the darkness leads to burning out or fading away. In the darkroom, if you expose too much light, the image will be overexposed and create too much black. If you don't give the image enough light, the image will be too faint. Yet it is also the play of light and dark in the darkroom that creates stunning final prints, the light controlled by its balance.



I think what first attracted me to the darkroom was the element of being in the dark, a place of mystery and the unknown. Using film, the images were not seen until developed in a completely dark room, only able to be seen once the chemical processes were complete, taking approximately 20-30 minutes. At that time, only the negative of the image was available to be seen, so the opposite of what I saw at the actual moment I took the picture. And it was black and white, another removal from reality. After drying off the film and cutting into strips, the negative was placed in the enlarger. There, light would be exposed through the negative onto the paper for a period of time, anywhere from 10 seconds usually to 30 seconds sometimes. A test strip in increment of 5 seconds would help narrow down the exposure time. After making the first test strip, a sense of the actual image would start to come into view. This process of trying AND examining. Adjusting, trying AND examining. AND, AND, AND. The image and the artist becoming in symbiosis through process.



A couple of days after taking the vase photos I looked over them on my camera. There is definitely pulsating and throbbing in some of the overexposed images. I feel a response with my body when looking at them. My eyes see the white areas in contiguity with the black twig forms, each informing the other, yet in tension which is felt in my body; a tension that suggests knowing and unknowing boundaries of existence. Movement between what is felt and what is known, between what is there and not there. It is a feeling of possibility and potential, a tingling and excited sensation rippling through my body.

These tensions, which are aesthetic tensions, could be considered "activators for learning" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 9) and which need to have a place in education.

I believe a teacher's task is to stand by children's sides and with thoughtful intervention when needed, promote the quality of relations children readily have with things around them and what they are doing. I would like to repeat: an aspect I find detrimental to children's education is proposals for creating things with hurried actions, in too short a time, and insufficient quality of relationship to the subject of their work, too often in this way allowing standardization and purely formal relationships to develop. This 'hurriedness' often leads to actions with little meaning, to learning a mechanical use of materials and techniques. without emotion, without intense or gratifying relationships. (p. 31)

Whether creating conditions for flow (Czikszentmihalyi, 1997) moments to occur, or using playing with metaphor (Vecchi, 2010), through observation and documentation of children's art making, the atelierista offers an approach to art education at the elementary school level that is rich with potential and possibility.

Timeless learning: the atelier/atelierista as holistic art education

Engagement with the arts is one way hope is being offered to education to become something more than a rational, intellectual endeavor where children's minds are developed at the expense of their bodily, emotional, and spiritual well being. (Kind, Irwin, Grauer and de Cosson, 2005, p. 33, emphasis added)

Schedules, tests, rotations, deadlines, timelines, periods, the calendar, first bell, second bell, recess bell, announcements, shifts...all of these are part of the average day for most primary age school children. The school day is heavily structured to meet curricular demands, establish order, set routines, and maintain organization. Some of this is absolutely necessary; we need to know where children are in the day, that they are safe, and that there is a semblance of routine. However, over- scheduling, consistent testing, continual grading and evaluating tend to see the child as a liability or an asset, rather than a person with a soul (Miller, 2000). With so much emphasis on time-bound learning in school, children are not receiving a properly balanced approach to learning (Miller, 2005). Instead, the focus is on excellence and achievement, becoming the best, and being competitive. School has become a place where testing and evaluation are the primary concern, and children are feeling the effects of academic and social pressures (Miller, 2000).

The atelierista and atelier can offer another option into elementary schools that uses aesthetics and the poetic languages of children as a way to bring the pleasure and love of learning. In this Chapter I will explore theories of timeless learning and how this applies to my thesis of proposing the model of an atelier/atelierista in public elementary schools. My primary focus will be from the literature written by John P. Miller, professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. During my last semester at OISE/UT I enrolled in Dr. Miller's class, *Spirituality in Education*. As I engaged with the readings and the class discussions, the connections between my thesis idea of the atelier/atelierista as holistic and embodied learning became apparent. The space of the atelier and the role of the atelierista relate precisely to what Dr. Miller has written and speaks about passionately: addressing the whole child, acknowledging the body, mind and soul of the student/teacher in school, the interconnectedness of disciplines and subject matter, and the flow of learning.

Miller (2005) defines the characteristics of timeless learning, which include but are not limited to the following learning approaches: holistic/integrated, embodied, soulful, connected, participatory, flow, non-dualistic, mystery and immeasurable. How are these approaches related to the work that is being done by an atelierista in the atelier setting?

Learning through shadows and light



As a photographer I have come to know shadows and light. Through manipulating the controls on the camera, in the darkroom and later using photo editing software, I have come to see that there are details in shadows where I had not seen before, and loss of information in the extreme highlights of objects/subjects. Through the camera I experience light and shadow differently than how I do with my naked eye. As a teacher, I have experienced the opening of interpretations when students learn the limitations and opportunities of working with shadows and light. To work in the darkroom is often disorienting for a new student, who is accustomed to working in the light, relying on vision to guide them. Here, trust of the other senses opens up and becomes heightened. One uses sound, touch, and even smell,

to navigate in the darkroom. It is a mysterious place and full of unknowns, and yet, so often I witness the transformation of students who enter the darkroom for the first time and leave with a yearning for more discovery within the darkness. To me, being in the darkroom-a studio of sorts-is representative of the explorative nature of learning in a holistic way. Discoveries are made through sensing, attempting and intuiting. Connections between subjects are made through the process of creating and making art; as one works on the aesthetics of the photograph, one must work with the chemicals (science), and the timing (mathematical) elements. Yet, nothing can be predetermined in this environment. Working in the shadows and in the light, allows for learning in a timeless way.

Shadow is often seen as a negative thing in Western culture. Shadows are dark, menacing places, where light is absent and the unknown exists. Unknown is not looked at favourably in North American society. What can we do with unknowns? What do we make of unknowns? In the shadows, what is tangible? What is graspable?



Yet shadows are a part of our existence. To deny them or try to avoid them is denying a very real part of living. To not want to “go there” because of what the shadow represents or does not offer, does not

make the shadow go away, it only increases the fear of the shadow, and the emphasis on the solid object illuminated in the light. By only focusing on the object in the light we are missing out on the beauty of what lies in the shadow; the mysteries and the potentialities. Miller (2006) would refer to the shadow in education as the spirit/soul of the student, and that by acknowledging both the things that we can see, and those that we cannot is recognizing the whole child, and teaching holistically.

Timeless learning is not limited to the intellect; it also is connected to the emotions, the body and soul/spirit. Soul/spirit is defined here as a vital, mysterious energy that can give meaning and purpose to our lives. Timeless learning recognizes that all these elements are linked interdependently. (p. 5)

An atelierista offers this type of timeless learning to their students.

Being able to link the different parts of ourselves and be integrative is also a quality of timeless learning. "Too often we compartmentalize learning into different aspects such as the intellect and the physical and they are left separate. In timeless learning they are seen as connected" (Miller, 2005, p. 6).

In Reggio terminology, the understanding and use of languages, or what Malaguzzi referred to as the hundred languages of children which is not limited to verbal or written language but includes visual, musical, physical and so forth, is how knowledge is both formed and acquired, in an interconnected, integrated way (Vecchi, 2010). Children naturally make connections between disciplines:

It is sufficient to listen to children for us to understand that transdisciplinarity, the way in which human thinking connects different disciplines (languages) in order to gain a deeper understanding of something, is not a totally separate theory from reality or a teaching commandment: it is a natural strategy in thinking, which is supported by our initial hypothesis that opportunities for combination and creativity in a plurality of languages enriches children's perceptions and intensifies their relations with reality and imagination. (p. 20)

More specifically but not limited to the visual arts, in the atelier, aesthetics are where connections are made between elements, between the artist and the object. Using a leaf as her analogy, Vecchi (2010) discusses how the connections to be made from studying a leaf, leads to a broader connection to the "pulse of life" (p.7). "Leaves appear to be a favourite subject for school work for various justified reasons. But too often too quickly the leaves become corpses far removed from the 'pulse of life' which ought not to be lost during the course of investigation, whether in drawing, natural sciences or other" (p. 7).

In her book *Art in the Classroom: An Integrated Approach to Teaching Art in Canadian and Middle Schools* (1998), Irene Naested advocates for a “non-linear curriculum” which “is more like a mind-map or sphere, with no beginning or end, but the continual addition of connections, like spokes in a wheel or a spider’s web” (p. 5). She continues:

This non-linear method of curriculum organization has many variations and few definitive answers as to how to “do it right.” The main concern is planning for learning that connects or unites, whether it be focused on themes, specific programs, or within the context of a “real-life” project. (p.5)

In the atelier, because the learning is ongoing and evolves as the project(s) unfold, this criteria of non-linearity is fulfilled, and aligns itself with the Deleuzian-Guattarian philosophy of the rhizomatic model for learning.

As a natural extension of holistic and integrated learning, timeless learning is embodied, rather than knowledge that just stays in your head (Miller, 2005). In the atelier, the atelierista observes and documents children as they experience materials with their senses and bodies; creating expressively what is understood emotionally, physically and intellectually.

Atelierista Charles Schwall (in Gandini, 2005) describes an experience working with 4 and 5 year olds in the atelier. Overhead projectors are frequently used in Reggio schools and in this case, the children had explored with it in their classrooms with their teachers, to discover the ways in which natural and artificial light behaves. The projector then moved into the atelier, where Schwall began by asking the children to reflect on their experience with the light projector in their classroom. At this point he invited the students to go around the studio to collect objects to place on the projector. The children collected various small items - beads, shells, plastic geometric shapes, a spoon, and a pair of scissors - and were ecstatic when they began to place the items on the projector to be enlarged, and see the effects. Then the children began to play with movement as they placed themselves in the light, and the activity became a dynamic experience as they created different effects with their bodies and the reflections of the objects on their clothing.

In this example, the learning experience of the children (and the atelierista) moved from what occurs with seeing light (watching something outside of you) to being one with light (feeling connected

and part of something inside you). This is an initial stage in making connections to things and feeling the connections. From this the students then went on to create a snowflake from a doily placed on the overhead projector and tracing the outline and all the little shapes within onto a large piece of paper taped to the wall. The snowflake was then coloured collectively, which then led to stories and further ideas. This sense of connection leads to feeling empathy for others - their ideas, their input, their collaboration - as well as empathy with things, relating to things whether living or inanimate in order to create stories and imaginings. While these examples refer to work done with younger children, the need for embodied learning does not end at the preschool age.

For the atelierista, embodied pedagogy is when an adult has respect for children's timeless approach to learning . "As teachers we need to embody qualities that are conducive to timeless learning such as caring, mindful presence, and conveying a sense of respect to the student" (Miller, 2005, p. 6). Children's encounters with "materials are generally extremely rich in suggestive qualities, memories and meanings, without much intervention on the part of the teacher" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 32). Embodied teaching is practicing the knowledge of the head into a living practice as a whole person.

Referring again to when she spoke about the “pulse of life”, (Vecchi, 2010, p. 7) and how in creating representations of one object, that there is the natural connection to another, and another.

An empathic attitude, the sympathy or antipathy towards something we do not investigate indifferently, produces a relationship with what brings us to introduce a 'beat of life' into explorations we carry out. This 'beat of life' is what often solicits intuitions and connections between disparate elements to generate new creative processes" (Vecchi, 2010, p. 8).

There is also connection between others. In the atelier, one of the major principles of Reggio Emilia is the connections of the child with other children, exploring materials, nature, concepts and ideas, together.

Barbara Burrington, in her chapter from *In the Spirit of the Studio* (Gandini, 2005), shares her story of creating an atelier at the University of Vermont's Campus Children's Center, after being inspired from her visit to Reggio Emilia. In this story she talks about the process of building the atelier, and the work and effort that went in to making it happen. After three years, the atelier's "soul became obvious" (p. 56). "Early on, the space had a physical essence and it served many people and purposes, but it lacked enchantment. The studio needed to be invented first, then it needed to be lived in to absorb some spirit so

that it could, in turn, inspire others" (p. 56). Burrington recognized that a space can be functional and look good but lack a certain essence, which comes with time, with communal involvement, with stories and from the presence of people - of their souls.

Loris Malaguzzi saw each child as being an individual capable of extraordinary things, and he conceived of the atelier and the role of the atelierista as a way to celebrate the languages of the child, and the deep connections to the wonder of learning.



Sometimes the changes that occur in education are evident and immediate, other times they are not so noticeable and can take considerable time to happen. Regardless, "timeless learning can lead to profound change in the individual" (Miller, 2005, p. 8). Transformation, likewise, in creating art occurs in a timeless way through the making of art; "visual arts knowledge is transformative...[it is] recursive and constantly undergoes change as new experiences 'talk back' through the process and progress of making art" (Sullivan in Kind, 2010, p. 125).

The Reggio philosophy is one in which learning, for both children and adults, stays fluid. The emphasis in the atelier on observation and documentation is a key component of this philosophy, where one of the roles of atelierista is seen as a researcher, evolving and developing along with each child.

Vecchi (2010) states, "ateliers should be guarantors of processes in which cognitive and expressive aspects are never separated, where the rational must never be divided from intuition and where we seek to keep alive the wonder and excitement learning produces" (p. 30).

The process of documentation demonstrates the changes and transformations that take place within and by the child (Etheredge et al, 2008; Vecchi, 2010), which are informative for the atelierista, teachers, parents and the students themselves. Eva Tarini shares her experience observing four year olds in the Diana School, and documenting the creation of a painting by a particular girl named Elisa:

All this makes very concrete the importance of listening and observing while children are working and playing. It is not enough to look at the finished painting and to ask, "What did you paint?" and perhaps to even add, "It's beautiful. You did a good job."

Having followed this painting throughout its construction, we are permitted not only to see better, but our understanding of the richness of children's work is heightened. (Etheredge et al, 2008, p. 117)

Transformative learning is not a process reserved only for the student but occurs in the educator as well.

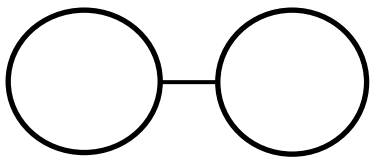
Kind (2006) speaks about the shift from teaching to transformative learning:

The focus shifts from teaching to a receptive attitude of learning which often takes place in nonverbal, inarticulate, artistic and expressive ways as not everything needs to be understood rationally or completely. Transformative learning draws on emotions, dreams, images, the senses, imagination, creativity, and artistic ways of knowing and often takes place unconsciously. Transformative learning requires courage to embrace mystery, un/certainty, and un/knowning. It engages emotional and intuitive ways of knowing and personal subjectivity and finds a place for arational knowledge as well as rational and critical modes of thought. It highlights humility, respect, compassion, and gentleness and provokes response and action. (p. 43)

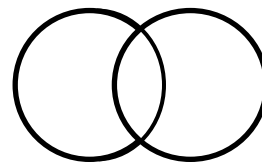
I'm not done learning. There is always an opportunity to open up, change the focus, rupture givens. It is difficult sometimes. Pushing boundaries and going into unknown feels unsettling and unnerving. Yet in the fear, the murkiness, the shadow lies potential to grow and uncover mysteries within/out myself. Experiencing difference opens me up to difference.

In their article, David Hutchison and Sandra Bosacki (2000) explore definitions of experiential education. They suggest an approach that moves beyond the cognitive forms of consciousness towards an

embracing of the interconnectedness of parts and systems in the universe, and honouring the “state of being” alongside “acts of doing.” “[T]he transformation orientation is associated with a spiritual approach to instruction allied to holistic education” (p. 178). They illustrate two concepts of learning theories: transaction and transformation, with two circles (see fig. 1). In transaction theory, the two circles are side by side connected with a line, thereby emphasizing the individual space of each circle and the connection is *outside* of each to the other. In transformation theory, the circles are overlapped, as in a Venn diagram, and therefore can be seen in various ways; as two circles overlapping, or as two half moons with an oval shape in the middle or as entirely new shape morphing together (Hutchison and Bosacki, 2000).



Transaction Orientation



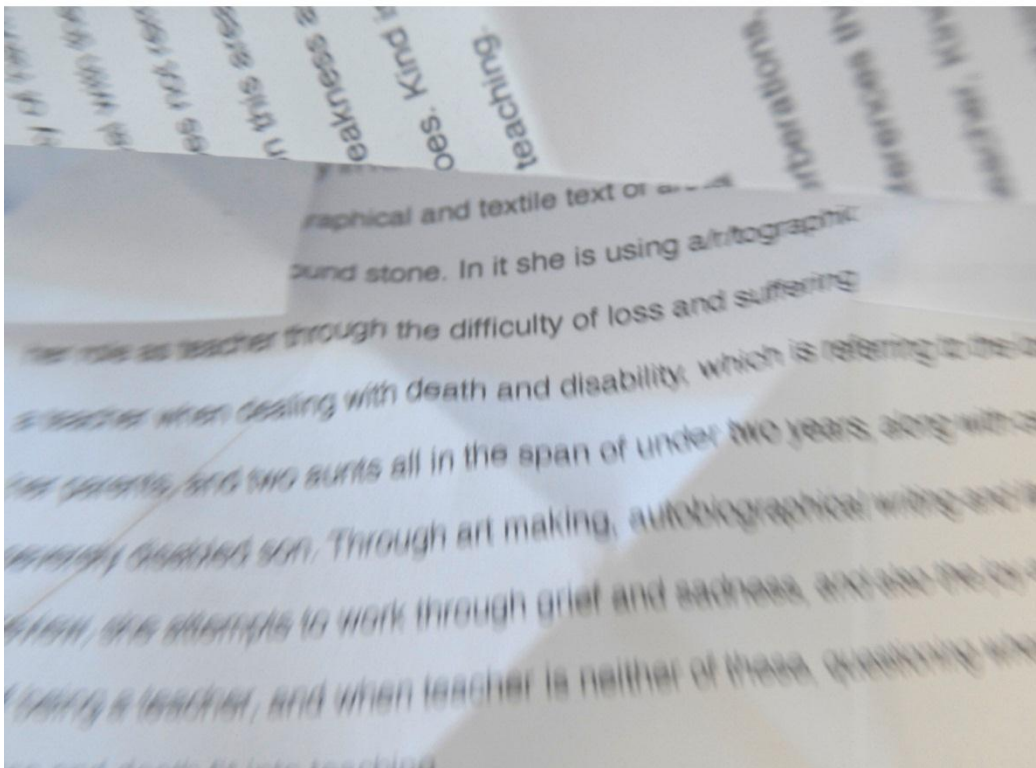
Transformation Orientation

Figure 1.

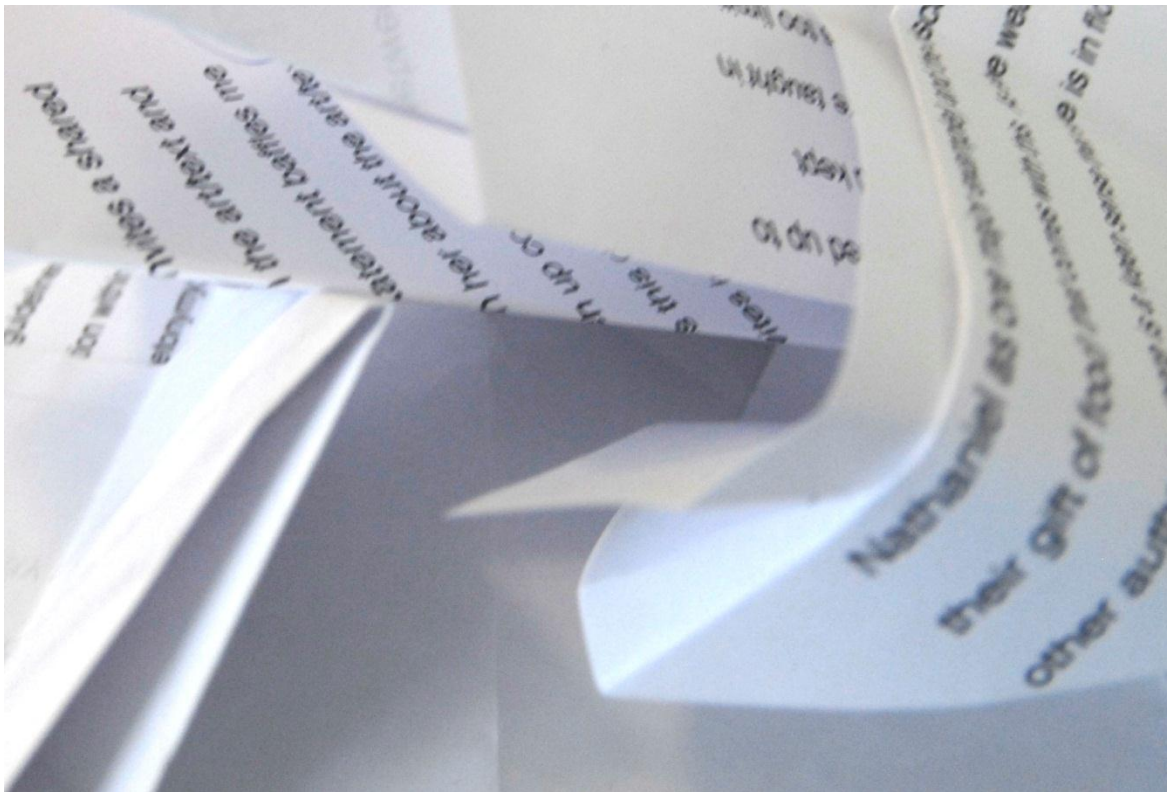
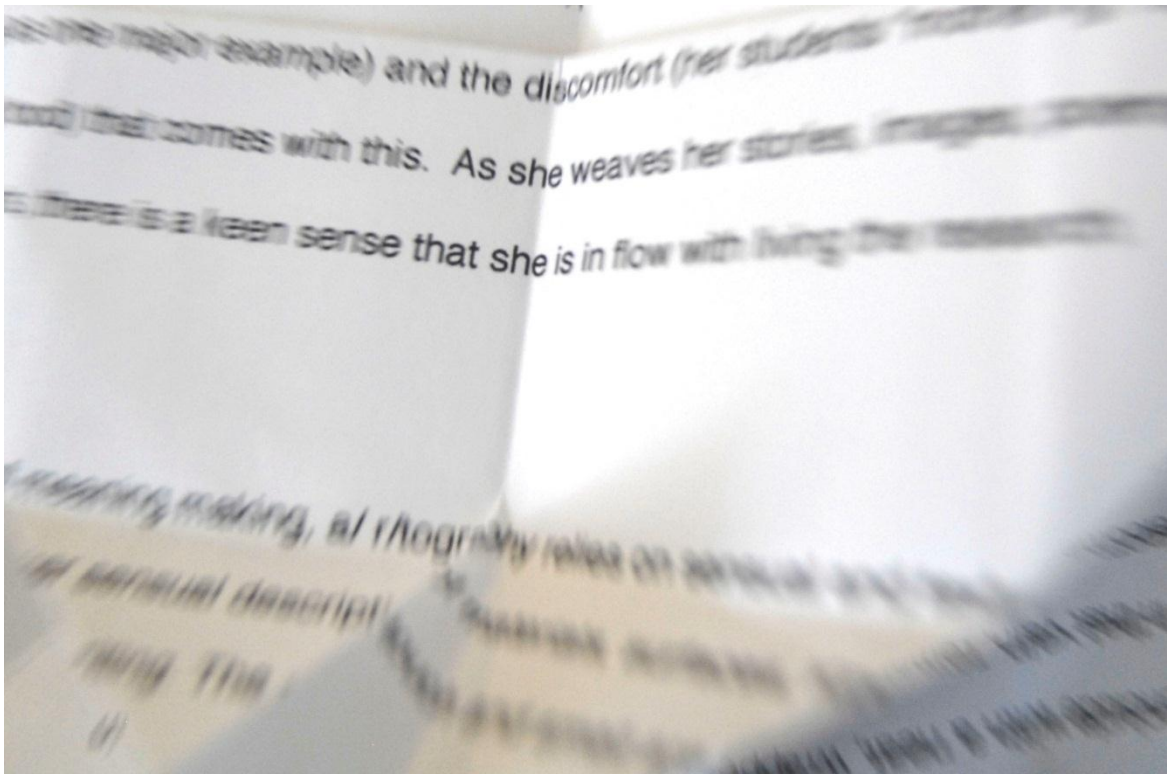
Similar to the atelierista’s nature of investigation about the interconnectedness of subject matter, in transformation orientation, “phenomena can only be fully understood in relation to the larger system or whole of which they are a part” (p. 178). In looking at the circles metaphorically, holistic educators are concerned with how the shapes are reflected in the other. In the transaction orientation, the two circles inhabit their own space, and are clearly two distinct entities. Whereas in the transformation orientation, the two circles inhabit a shared space, where many formations can be detected and various relationships can be imagined. This circle example illustrates the type of learning in the atelier, of how “the holistic learner is embedded in the world and learning moves to new levels through the processes of identification, connection, and differentiation with oneself, the world, and the universe as a whole” (p. 181).

A re-reading/un-reading, transformative learning through art making

As a way to explore text, I decided to photograph a draft of a class assignment. By folding/unfolding/refolding the paper, I was interested in new ways of “knowing” the text, during shooting the photos, and afterwards viewing the photos. For me it was the mixing together of written and visual texts to come to a different meaning of my research. Shifting perspectives brought attention to certain words, but also played with how the words were read. And how the words become something else too: blurs, fuzzy lines, reverberations...



Since I used a slow shutter speed and movement during zooming in or out of the text, there is a vibration in some of the images. Vibrations that can be felt on the skin and resonate differently on the body (Deleuze , 2003).



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(Aoki,
... her role as teacher through the study of her own
... a teacher when dealing with both her students and
... her parents, and two aunts all in the town of...

After our daughter Ella completed grade two, I asked her if she would like to take all her classroom worksheets, and create something with them. She loved the idea and began immediately to sort through her papers, creating two piles: one for things she wanted to keep as a souvenir, the other was a large pile of her numerous worksheets that she had done, mainly math and language, that for the most part had been sources of frustration, anxiety or boredom during the year. She set to work on creating the Worksheet Monster, made entirely from these pages. For her, this was an opportunity to transform learning of one kind into another (for as she created she also reviewed her work and was able to reflect on her learning), and to heal from an experience that was largely unpleasant for her. It is not that she was relearning the subject again per se but that she could take hold of a situation that had been unpleasant in many ways and transform it into something different and more positive; to grow and be active in her learning journey rather than be merely a vessel that fills up on someone else's prescribed notion of knowledge.

Art takes time

In the atelier, both the student and atelierista are in the position frequently to experience flow in learning/teaching. Rather than being solely in a position of instruction, the atelierista observes, guides and documents the student's work, exploration, discoveries; being careful not to disturb flow. In many situations in North American schools, artist educators are brought into the schools to teach an art lesson, usually integrating art with another subject area. However, because of factors such as time limited placement in a school, inadequate training, or prescribed outcomes for art projects, artists often interrupt the flow of a child's artistic process so that they are brought back to the lesson objective (Kind, de Cossen, Irwin & Grauer, 2007).

As an artist educator, I worked in many schools through the Learning Through The Arts (LTTA) program. I had a set amount of visits, depending on the program that I taught, between 3 to 5 visits, ranging from 50 minutes to 75 minutes for each visit. The work was rewarding and meaningful, but in

almost every situation I felt the pressure (as did often the teacher and the students) to have a completed project, ready to present, and be able to articulate. Often these projects were quite ambitious and involved the full attention of the students. While teachers would sometimes give some extra time to work on the art projects, to me it seemed as though I was expected to reach the expectations of covering the curriculum, along with ensuring that the students achieved a satisfactory result on their project. I often felt torn because I understood that art cannot be rushed and because a student doesn't produce something that looks "good" or "finished", doesn't mean that they didn't learn. I wished that I could spend more time with the students as it all too often felt that I was only scratching the surface with them as far as the potentials for what making art could do. The flow was interrupted in more situations than I would have liked.

In the Reggio atelier, the atelierista works in conjunction with the students, to both allow their own discoveries and learning to happen, and to document this experience, so as not to disrupt but to add, comment, and share with the children later, in order for reflection to occur and knowledge to take place. Interrupting the flow of the moment when children are creating in the atelier, to bring them back to the lesson plan, or the intention of the activity disrespects the rhizomatic and interconnected way that meaningful learning occurs and knowledge is acquired. The atelierista is a role designed to observe, document and support the unplanned, tangential ways of learning. In Malaguzzi's terminology, children are in flow when they are able to communicate in their language.

While flow is an individual experience for the learner, in the sense that the person experiencing it is in their own world, the conditions for this to occur in school must be supported by the philosophy of the institution and those within it. In a school system where tests scores and summative evaluation are the priorities, it will be difficult for some educators, administrators and policy makers to imagine a system of schooling which is not dependent on marks and measurable methods of classifying students. However, this is exactly what a timeless learning is about, an approach that "cannot be easily measured and certainly not in the short term" (Miller, 2005, p. 12). Yet this is what is missing from school; a space for children to exist in school where they can learn in their own way in their own time, at their own pace. The atelier is an environment that supports a student's way of approaching subject matter in an explorative,

experiential way, through the creative process. This type of learning is crucial. However placing a grade value on it diminishes the effect and purpose as it pressures children to produce a product, to please adults, and hold up to a standard of evaluation. What Malaguzzi envisioned with Reggio schools and in the atelier specifically is a place where there is not the rigidity of standards and expectations but a place which honours and respects the child, and their many languages of expressivity and learning (Bredekamp, in Etheredge et al, 2008). By constraining children's learning to grades and judgments, we are effectively limiting their ability to communicate, imagine, question, innovate and be able to teach us, the educators, too.

In the atelier, an atelierista, by observation and documentation, works with teachers, school staff, administrators and other educators, to offer a different point of view which can illuminate those aspects of the student's learning and communication that are lost on others (Vecchi, 2010). In the atelier, a student uses materials in a way where they can express their very personal language. When referring to the multiple languages of children, Malaguzzi cautioned, "our fear is that children have the chance to use only twenty of these languages" (in Vecchi, 2010, p. 110), as a result of the inadequate educational systems and curricula in place.

Collage project as participatory learning

Miller (2005) states that, "timeless learning often occurs in a context where we are participating in the co-creation of knowledge" (p. 10). The atelier is a space where learning occurs in conjunction with others and with/in the individual. As an example of this, I have included a brief description by an atelierista, of children working with clay.

On this day in January, a small group of children chooses to work with clay in the studio. As soon as they sit down, they begin to discuss their plans. "I'm going to make a horse," says one. "Me, too", decides another and another. "Let's make one big horse," someone suggests. They all think that this is a good idea, but as they discuss the possibility the plan evolves. They decide, instead, to make a horse family, and then assign themselves particular members of the horse family to make. I am intrigued by the children's apparent expectation of collaboration-such a big part of all they are doing at this time of year-even in a medium that so easily lends itself to individual endeavor. (Pam Oken-Wright in Etheredge et al, 2008, p. 102)

The learning, as illustrated in the example above, is a result of the children adding their own ideas and simultaneously feeding off another's ideas, creating a symbiotic relationship where creativity and knowledge creation occur in a kind of dance between partners. As in partner dance, there is an interplay of each individual to create the performance.

While the above example is from a pre-school situation, in my own work with elementary age children, I experienced a similar kind of participatory learning with the art projects that I did in the schools. One such project involved creating a large collage from recycled and found materials to illustrate the effects of global warming. The grade two classroom I worked with was divided into groups of four. At the beginning of the project I asked the teacher to have each group research together their specific global warming issue. As well, I asked the groups to bring in materials from home, or from outside that we could use. Once they began working, I noticed how the children seemed to feel really proud that they had each contributed something individually to the group (and because I wasn't requiring them to buy anything or ask their parents to help out, each child was able to contribute something), and then using the materials and discussing the ideas in their groups, they each worked collaboratively to produce their project. When presenting too, it was common for someone to speak out about what they had added or when viewing the other group's project, they would see an item that they had brought in and would bring attention to this fact. In this sense, I saw their value as having meaning in both the individual contribution that they had made and in how their work with their own groups-strategizing, planning, problem solving to collectively come up with the final collage-and in the classroom community when seeing their items used in other groups projects. In the words of Malaguzzi himself:

The theoretical dispute is among those who sustain that intelligence grows from a social situation and those who say that intelligence grows inside every child seen in some way separated or disconnected from the other children. This is what exists on the level of theoretical debate...Therefore, I believe, the development of sociability, of a social exchange, and of intelligence necessarily happens in a social situation. It's not so much that we need to think of a child who develops himself by himself but rather of a child who develops himself interacting and developing with others. (in Etheredge et al, 2008, p. 38)

"Timeless learning participates in the grand Mystery of being and the cosmos. There is always some unexplainable and mysterious element to timeless learning that can leave us with a sense of awe and

wonder" (Miller, 2005, p. 11). Not having a definite outcome planned for a lesson is perhaps an uneasy notion for some teachers and educators, but it is the way in which new knowledge and meaning occur within learning. Where is the joy in discovery if the outcome is already known?

In the atelier, the mystery of the creative process is alive and thriving. No two people will depict or experience something the same way. It is this aspect of discovery that keeps children engaged and interested. Lella Gandini (2005) discusses how, through the use of materials and technology in the atelier, children can constantly develop their language(s) keeping an element of the unexpected.

We have to convince ourselves that it is essential to preserve in children (and in ourselves) the feeling of wonder and surprise, because creativity, like knowledge, is a daughter of surprise. We have to convince ourselves that expressivity is an art, a combined construction (not immediate, not spontaneous, not isolated, not secondary); that expressivity has motivations, forms, and procedures: contents (formal and informal); and the ability to communicate the predictable and unpredictable. (p. 8)

In the atelier, children are able to experience the mysteries of life, given the richness of materials, technology and an atelierista to facilitate the journey.

The model of an atelier and atelierista in an elementary school setting could allow for the kind of learning that bases education in artistic practices to involve the whole of the child. Laurel Campbell (2011), through her teachings and research on holistic curricula and art education, with her graduate students began to make the connections from their own research between holistic education and art practice. What she and her students list as fundamental attributes for holistic art education have many affinities with the approaches that are found in the Reggio atelier. These include ideas like self-inquiry and self-expression, spiritual awareness, learning empathy for others, promoting a sense of purpose, valuing relationships with all living things, learning responsibility for the well being of others and the environment, and promoting personal transformation (Campbell, 2011). As Campbell affirms: "Holistic approaches to art teaching and curriculum planning address post-modern educational concerns such as multiculturalism, diversity of perspectives, respect for the individual learner, and critical thinking as strategies for helping students interact with visual images" (p. 22). In other words, bringing education in line with the needs of the student of the 21st century, and moving away from outdated and time-bound

learning structures that do not fit with the needs, learning styles or potentials of today's educators and students.

The arts have been identified as having the capacity to reach and connect students (and teachers) to the curriculum in a way that is different from other subjects (Irwin, Gouzouasis, Leggo, & Springgay, 2006). From their study of the Learning Through the Arts (LTTA) program in Canadian elementary schools, Irwin and Grauer (2000-2004), (cited in Irwin et al, 2006) found that:

involvement in the arts did not come at the expense of achievement in mathematics, reading and writing. Rather, the arts offered students opportunities to be fully engaged in learning. By engagement, we mean being completely involved as a *whole* person: the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. (np, emphasis added)

However, the need for a qualified artist with pedagogical training who is a permanent member of the school staff is required in order for the integration of the arts with the rest of the school is to be achieved otherwise "attempts to make significant curricular linkages will remain superficial" (np). In other words, continuing with the current trend of artists in the schools programs which are temporary, short term and time fixed does not satisfy the educational needs of the whole child. As educators, our responsibility is not only to ensure that students become knowledgeable in reading, writing and arithmetic, but that they are developing as a whole person, mind, body and soul. The Reggio model of the atelier/atelierista offers an opportunity to achieve this kind of holistic learning, alongside with teachers, so that the needs of the student, the *whole* student, are being met.

Possibilities and potentialities for atelier/atelierista in elementary school today

The presence of an atelierista would be filling a current gap in the public elementary school system, a gap that leaves children feeling unfulfilled, disengaged, disinterested and dissatisfied. Not to mention the loss of opportunity in having children reach potentials that are currently not being attained. We could be doing a much better job of having kids feeling alive with potential, able to confront their fears, handle tricky situations, solve problems, imagine possibilities, speak up for themselves, take care of each other, feel connected to community, love the earth, respect themselves and sit with the unknown. We have swung so far the other way on the pendulum that our logic and fear is practically dominating the field of education. In North America, this Cartesian model of education, which separates body from mind, is set up to train children to trust logic over emotion, thought over touch, head over heart. Chojnowski, (as cited in Leafgren, 2011) claims: “With Cartesian models of things...nothing resonates; nothing follows the grain of the created human embodied psyche: To build bombs, it is useful; to build boys [and girls], it is not” (p. 35).

The aspect of the Reggio approach that most excites and gives me hope is that Reggio Emilia is an actual place, where the atelier/atelierista has existed in preschools for close to half a century, proving that a philosophy of education that embraces the ‘expressive’ languages - visual, musical, physical - is possible and yields inspiring results and potentials (Vecchi, 2010). While Reggio Emilia is a specific geographic region and there are conditions that relate only to this place, I believe that most of the practices and work performed there have a universality in the approaches to children and youth education.

How could an atelierista and an atelier become a part of elementary schools? In this climate of budget cuts and staff layoffs, many may see having an artist and an art studio as a frivolous, or luxurious addition to schooling, more appropriate for private schools or an alternative school environment³. Yet I argue how can we not afford to have an atelier and an atelierista in the schools? In their research on artists

³ Currently I am aware of two private schools in Toronto, the Bishop Strachan School and Acorn School who teach according to the Reggio principles and approaches to early childhood education. I have not come across Reggio pedagogy being implemented in other schools, namely in public schools. While I am encouraged that Reggio approaches are in two private schools, I am advocating for the atelierista/atelier in public schools specifically as I do not believe that an arts based approach to learning in school should be reserved for only those who can afford it.

in the schools through the LTTA program, Irwin et al (2006) found that artists teaching in the schools helped improve students' achievements across the board. Imagine if this were a daily or even weekly occurrence in school. How many more children and youth would be engaged in school? How many adolescents would stay in school rather than drop out? How many children who struggle with meeting language requirements or math scores would find enjoyment in creating out of clay as their mode of language, a connection between photography and science as their way of understanding, or the feel of textured fabric their entry into understanding patterns and mathematics?

The atelier is a place/space that offers multiple access points and entry ways for learners. Through the senses, children are encouraged to explore and investigate, rather than sit idly and absorb information. Through creating art, children are expressing multiple languages, not on a predetermined schedule, but coming to it in their own time. Students who are English Language Learners (ELL), children with special needs, children suffering emotional trauma and students with physical and mental disabilities are all welcome in the studio for it is not a place of competition but a place of inclusion and openness.

As a place of unscripted learning, the goal is not to achieve scores for test results but to feed the soul of the child so that they can be better equipped to handle the tests and evaluative components that are inherent in school and in life. The atelier is not meant to replace what is in school but to augment and make better a system that is cracking and failing on many levels.

Be resourceful

While Reggio ateliers emphasize the importance of the quality of materials I am more inclined to emphasize resourcefulness of materials and work with what you can. High quality paints, inks, papers, cameras and various other equipment and materials are simply not an option for many public schools to obtain without funding. According to the annual report by the People for Education (2012), the Program Enhancement Grant intended to "provide a well-rounded education" (2011, np) was cut this year (for 2012). The Grant of \$9,650 per school was to be used towards covering the costs for things like the arts and physical or outdoor education (2011).

So as educators, parents, teachers, administrators, principals, policy makers, we must be resourceful but we must also be vigilant. If we only rely on money from government to support the arts, then surely it will be too late for students who are in school right now. Instead, use the spaces that are available or clear out clutter to create space. To begin, it is best to be resourceful; use what there is. Create a space in a room, preferably one with ample natural light. The walls and furniture should be painted in a light colour, off whites or pale yellows, with the intention being that the colour comes from what the children create and not what is imposed on them. Plants and textured fabrics, such as beaded curtains, woven baskets, chiffon curtains, should have a prominent place in the atelier space. There should be various work areas and options for children in the centers where they create. Bring in materials that people have-from the recycling bin, extra fabric from sewing kits, pebbles, stones, pine cones, and so forth-and begin with an approach: an approach of discovery. Allow students time in the day to be with materials and to come at them in their own way. Some might jump right in, others might hesitate, while others may observe. This is part of learning. Teachers join in the process, also as an explorer. With a camera, begin to document. Hand the camera to a student and ask them to document. Ask the student teacher to jot down some observations. Near the end of the day, give students fifteen minutes to discuss ideas for future projects and have them write down a list which will be displayed in the classroom.

Changes do not have to be drastic or sudden. They can come in small increments, bits of time that introduce an approach that at once may be foreign but in another is reminiscent of a way in which we all began exploring our world; through touch, taste, smell, sound and sight. An embodied learning; a body knowledge. Starting with something is better than nothing at all.

Until the atelierista, or a similar model of artist pedagogue, is implemented in the school with an atelier, adapting the approaches and philosophies from the Reggio Emilia model can be done in small, yet I believe, meaningful ways. Giving students time in the day where the learning is not prescribed, predetermined or judged but that is acknowledging the unknown and unpredictable in life. Children who learn to work through the challenges and frustrations, along with the joys and accomplishments, learn that often there are no givens or certainties, and failing or passing doesn't determine the possibilities or potentials of who you are or what you can do.

The atelier is the ideal space for an embodied, holistic and timeless way of learning. The atelierista is an exemplary partner in the learning community for children; a facilitator in the aesthetic and interconnected ways of knowing and sensing the world. It is in the best interests of those involved in education to remain open to the possibilities of this type of arrangement in schools, and to continue the ongoing project for giving voice to the *100 languages of children*.

Ruptured landscapes

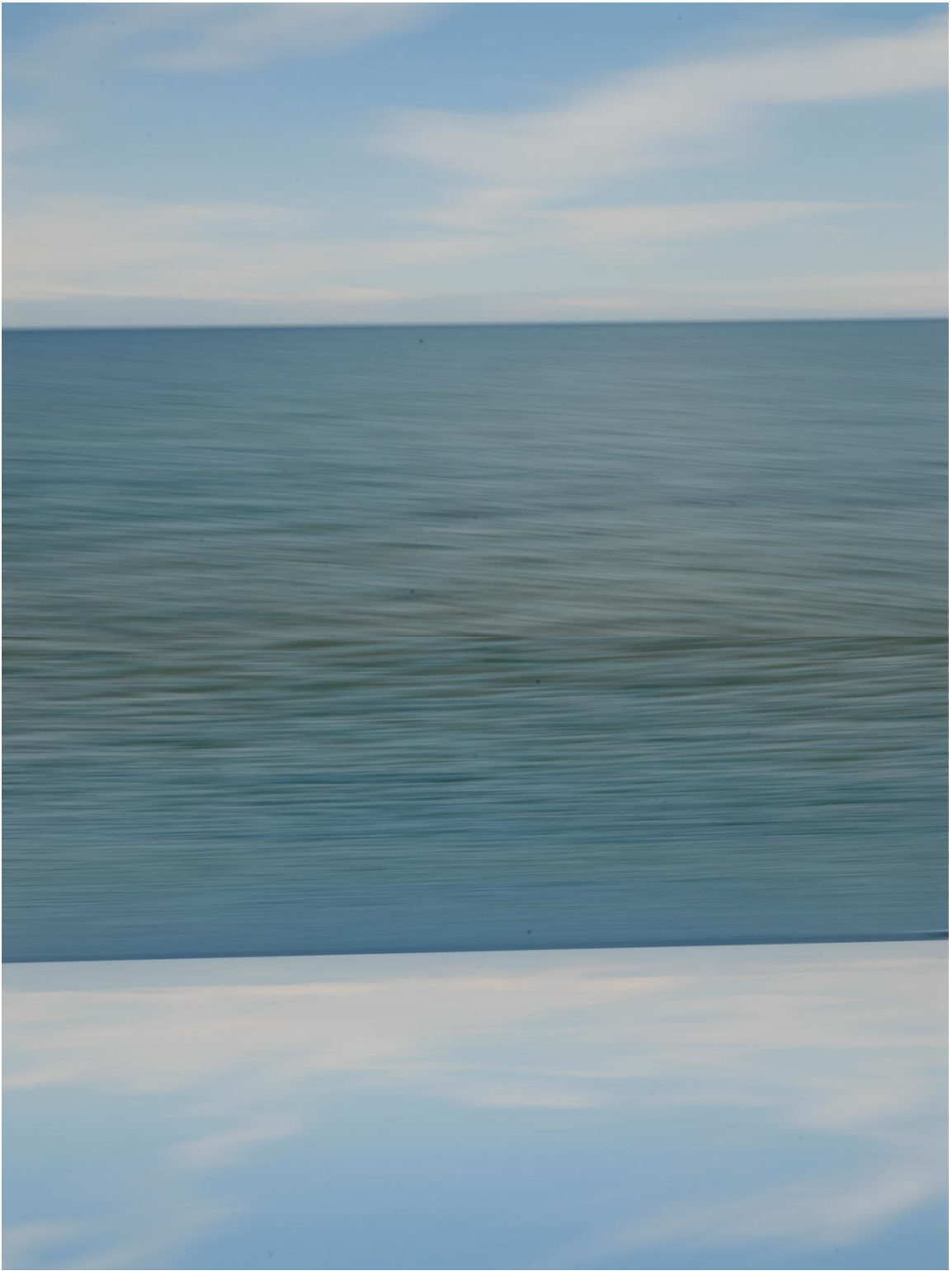


In this thesis, I have emphasized the need for an atelier and atelierista in the schools. I have demonstrated how this arrangement offers access to learning that addresses the needs of the whole child, in an embodied and holistic way. Where school is now mainly concerned with outcomes and performance evaluations, through this model of learning in elementary schools, the potentials for teaching to the soul and spirit of the child are accomplished. The addition of an atelierista and atelier in elementary public school is the way to achieve a more effective form of education that reaches all children, in whichever capacity or level they are at. The timeless aspect of this Reggio inspired model allows for students and

teachers to enter into a realm within education that honours the mysterious, transformative, and integrative ways that we learn/teach/know/question/explore/determine/accept/deny in school. School in this way could be a place where tensions and difference have a place to surface and be exposed, rather than fester and mutate. Where metaphorical and metonymical explorations of subject matter inform and ignite without givens or conclusions.



As an a/r/tographical inquiry, my thesis has been an access point to research/art/teaching and learning with/in and with/out of myself. I have come to know myself and others differently in this way, and feel that I rest easier now on one level aware that the answers are not solid. The lived curriculum, like the rhizome cannot be solidly defined but flows and changes, resists and sticks, like clay on my hands. I have the residue of the form that I was working on, a reminder of what I was knowing but away from me; it is not me, but something other. And I wash my hands and start another. Or maybe something else. I don't know. I don't have to know. I just need to try.



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