

Making art matter-ings: Engaging (with) art in early childhood education, in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract: This article examines the special nature of *Te Whāriki*, Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood national curriculum, as a dynamic social, cultural document through an exploration of two art-inspired imaginary case studies. Thinking with *Te Whāriki* retains the potential to ignite thinking post-developmentally about art, pedagogy and practice in teacher education, and in the field. It offers examples of how creating spaces for engaging (with) art as pedagogy acts as a catalyst for change, art offers a dynamic way of knowing, and being-with the different life-worlds we inhabit. While new paradigms for thinking and practicing art in education continue to push the boundaries of developmentally and individually responsive child-centred pedagogies, an emphasis on multiple literacies often gets in the way. This prohibits opportunities for engaging in other more complex approaches to pedagogy and art as subject-content knowledge, something essential for developing a rich curriculum framework. The article draws on research that emphasises the importance of teacher education in opening up spaces for thinking about (the history of) art in/and of education as more than a communication/language tool. It considers an inclusive and broad knowledge-building-communities approach that values the contribution that art, artists, and others offer the 21st early learning environments we find ourselves in.

Key words: early childhood, curriculum, art, teacher education, New Zealand.

Introduction

I love *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996): it is a New Zealand early education curriculum that was constructed to avoid any prescriptive, static approaches to theories and practices that abound in early education (Nuttall, 2003). For all its limitations, and it inevitably does have some, I am hopeful *Te Whāriki* will continue to act as a catalyst, to borrow from Moore, Edwards, Cutter-McKenzie and Boyd's (2014) reiteration, for thinking post-developmentally about both pedagogy and content knowledge. Thinking post-developmentally about pedagogy and content knowledge/s offers something dynamic, it opens up different kinds of spaces for examining learning and teaching experiences for children and teachers. It is not only responsive to a broad range of complex philosophical and theoretical influences that abound in and across the social, cultural communities and the wider landscapes that children, their families and teachers inhabit, it is considerate of the different disciplinary content knowledge/s that contribute to, if not determine, how these influences are known, understood and enacted, or not. This article considers *Te Whāriki* as a curriculum framework for problematizing and thinking about the complexities involved in engaging with art,¹ and the provocations this engagement might offer early (teacher-)education (Bacchi, 2012; Marshall & Donahue, 2014; Sunday, 2015). It draws on my ongoing interest in developing research and teaching-learning practices in education, and consequently in 'the field' that advocate for a connected-up, in-touch, education system (Carr, Smith, Duncan, Jones, Lee & Marshall, 2010), one that centralizes art, making art matter, giving art greater agency and a vibrant future in education (Fleming, 2010; Stover & Craw, 2015; Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013).

This article captures my interest in making visible a deeper more complex engagement with (contemporary-) art-centred pedagogy and subject-content knowledge in teacher education (Kelly & Jurisich, 2010). Early education in New Zealand, and perhaps internationally, not unlike that of the middle years education, remains vulnerable to the ever-increasing emphasis on

¹ *art* is used throughout this article to refer to the disciplinary practices of 'contemporary art' - or what is often referred as 'visual art' in early childhood education (see Clark, Grey & Terreni, 2013). However, given the dynamics of the contemporary artworld where art related philosophies, theories and practices continuously challenge the way that art might be understood, the nature of contemporary arts are forever changing: not all art is visual, some contemporary practices emphasise imaging through (audio) sound, others are interested in the performative body, others are less interested in making but in doing something in the world (e.g. many international contemporary artists are interested 'walking as seeing' the landscape - see, for example, <http://www.walkingartistsnetwork.org/publications/>).

young children's literacy and numeracy achievement, or lack of (Thrupp & White, 2013). This emphasis on literacy and numeracy frequently occurs at the expense of maintaining, let alone developing a broader pedagogical content knowledge for developing curriculum (Morton, McMenamin, Moore, & Molloy, 2012). While Kelly & Jurisich (2010) identify a number of authors in New Zealand who are endeavouring to develop new paradigms for thinking, practicing art in early (teacher-) education, pushing the boundaries of the dominant developmentally and individually responsive, child-centred pedagogies remains challenging. In spite of efforts to promote different ways of thinking and engaging with art in early education, an increasingly narrow and economic approach to curriculum subject-content knowledge continuously threatens to limit opportunities for (student-) teachers to develop, what McDowall (2013) describes as 'knowledge building communities'.

A knowledge building communities approach works with knowledge as something that is actively and collaboratively built in communities. Here ideas are valued 'as things' that are held in a collective rather than, or as well as, in the (embodied) minds of individuals (McDowell, 2013). McDowell (2013) insists learning how to build knowledge communities involves "opportunities to think about, talk about, and work with knowledge in ways that are similar to those of knowledge workers, such as...", in this instance, artists and other artworld experts, curators and critics "in the out-of-school world" (p. 30). In this article, I offer two examples of art-inspired case studies to call attention to the special nature of *Te Whāriki* as a dynamic social cultural document, one that supports creating spaces for engaging with art as a dynamic way of knowing, and being the different life-worlds we might inhabit. When these opportunities are greatly reduced in significance, building knowledge and understandings of art, with art, in deeper and more complex ways, like that of any endangered species, is marginalized. As a result, as the case studies presented here reveal, this complexity becomes increasingly difficult but not impossible to ignite in (teacher-) education's 21st century flexible learning environments (Craw & Stover, 2015).

Studying *Te Whāriki*, in context

It is expected that education will do things with knowledge (McDowell, 2013). I work in a university School of Education that focuses largely on teacher education, and research. The undergraduate early childhood student-teachers I work with, who study at the university, are encouraged to develop a knowledge and understanding of art and pedagogy as it is articulated in the New Zealand curriculum documents: in both *Te Whāriki*

and in *The New Zealand curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007), a curriculum developed for New Zealand's compulsory education (i.e. school) sectors. While these documents present an overview of the seamless life-long learning ideology that underpins education in New Zealand, they are full of competing discourses about pedagogy and about subject-content knowledge (Cooper & Aiken, 2006; Kelly & Jurisich, 2010; McArdle, 2008). However, student-teachers undertaking three-years of undergraduate study, over this time, have very few opportunities for engaging in developing a deeper, broader knowledge and understanding of the different disciplinary subject-content knowledge, including art, within these documents, let alone opportunities for making meaningful connections with the social, cultural practices of art as they might be understood in the wider worlds of art in New Zealand.

Any efforts to examine what it means to 'engage (with) art', as a centralized practice in research and in learning and teaching, involves developing an integrated approach to early (teacher-) education; the kind of integrated approach that connects the world of education, research, philosophy, and pedagogy with the different subject-content knowledges identified within the curriculum documents (Craw & Stover, 2015; McDowell, 2013; Marshall & Donahue, 2013; Sunday, 2015). The integrated curriculum framework *Te Whāriki* provides is underpinned by a socio-cultural constructivist approach. Hence, as Nuttall (2013) stresses, teachers need to be exposed to a range of theoretical and ideological positions, as well as curriculum models, and with Lev Vygotsky in mind, the social-cultural tools that contribute to children's abilities to negotiate and navigate the possible complex worlds they (the children and the families, communities and artworlds), work with or encounter. Nuttall (2013) suggests, this "means teachers' negotiation of their curriculum enactment, including those practices they consider more or less appropriate in implementing a socio-culturally based curriculum, is itself part of the 'weaving' of life in the centre" (p. 179). Her research reveals how teachers' approaches to curriculum fall back on what they learned during their initial teacher education. Consequently, significant responsibility is placed on teacher education for how teachers 'in the field' might weave the theories and knowledge made available to them (or not) during their studies into their everyday practices. Weaving an art-full life that values, for example, aesthetics, creativity, and imagination, *inside* early education settings is dependent then on the connections teachers (and teacher educators) develop, and any expertise that emerges as a result, within and across a range of complex sites, *outside* early education settings. It is these connections that contribute to the different and dynamic learning experiences

and outcomes identified in *Te Whāriki*, or any other influential New Zealand curriculum documents (McDowell, 2013).

Knowing art

A work of art does not exist until it has reached a state in which it can make its impact on the sensory perceptions of others – people we can call spectators or audience (Newton, 1961, p. 71).

When British artist-art critic Newton (1961) initially proposed an understanding of ‘art as communication’, he described it as an ambitious and almost unforgivably old-fashioned idea that could only exist if there was some kind of unspoken agreement between artist and audience. Years later, this theoretical premise remains crucial to understanding a language-based approach to art and education as a fundamental principle in both *Te Whāriki*, and to the arts as they are articulated in *The New Zealand curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2000, 2007; Peters, 2003). Within an ‘art as communication’ pedagogy there is an expectation that teachers provide opportunities for children to learn different ways to communicate “languages and symbols of their own and other cultures” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 72). An important element of this approach articulated in *Te Whāriki* is an expectation that teachers have the know-how to create environments for children that are “rich in signs and symbols... and art” (p. 73). Though art, by all accounts, is a big and extremely complex idea that is noted as an entity in its own right, the semiotic phenomena of signs and symbols is inclined to overshadow a much larger concept of art. While *Te Whāriki*’s aspirational goals are important in incorporating an understanding of art as “a complex symbolic or semiotic system of communication” (Binder, 2011, p. 367), this approach reinforces a limited understanding of art as communication or rather as one of many multiple literacies. In my work in teacher education, I am interested in opening up other spaces for building alternative ways of ‘engaging (with) art’ in initial teacher education, and consequently, in thinking about and practicing art in early education settings.

Art is no longer a special, privileged domain but simply a way of communication – as common as talking or writing and just as much a part of the fabric of everyday life. (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2002, p. 51)

Art is largely positioned within *Te Whāriki* in a strand of communication that emphasises a multiple literacies paradigm. This theoretical approach promotes the idea that there are different but interconnected literacies, mul-

multiple modes of expression, and different ways of conceptualizing, knowing and communicating. A multiple literacies approach has been transformative; rather than reinforcing a traditional and limited understanding of literacy as pertaining to reading and writing, it has challenged many to reconsider the potential of young children (and others) to think and communicate through a multiplicity of creative languages (Haggerty, Simonsen, Blake, & Mitchell, 2007; Kelly & Jurisich, 2010). As Fleer (2013) stresses language, or text, “is a conceptual tool for navigating complex, rich and culturally contextualized principles” (p. 223). The interconnectedness of children’s textual and non-textual modes of meaning-making are valued, such as visual images, movement, and gestures; so too are the contributions these different modes make to the increased complexity of their engagement with the different ‘texts’ they encounter in their life-worlds (Binder, 2011; McKenzie, 2007; Purvis, 1973).

The multiple literacies approach embedded in *Te Whāriki* is based on good intentions, it aims to situate art in some equally valued manner as language or text, alongside other important ways of knowing, and becoming visually or otherwise literate in the world. However, creating multi-literacies environments inevitably reproduces inclusions and exclusions (Rowan & Honan, 2005), it excludes other ways of knowing, understanding and engaging with art as something that exists in the world as more than, or indeed other than, a language or text. As Bracey (2003) once protested:

It is at best misleading and at worst quite wrong to say that the arts are languages. And if it makes no sense to speak of the arts as language, it makes no sense to speak of an arts education that aims at enabling students to become literate in them. (Bracey, 2003, p. 183, emphases in original)

Peters (2003) notes that informed critics queried whether a theory of art in education founded on language could be considerate of the particularities of all things that pertain to the visual, in particular to art. Some things get lost. He notes difficulties in the very distinctive ‘structuralist’ philosophical approach established for art in the 1990s education curriculum developments. He argues, that while language is essential to knowing and understanding art, the narrow philosophically problematic language-based approach to art reduces ways of knowing, understanding, experiencing, and/or enacting (contemporary-) art theories and practices. It diminishes the potential for difference and diversity (Peters, 2003). Though a multiple literacies language-based approach offers a commonly shared discourse to

engaging with art in education, it compromises other endeavours to develop a valuing of what might be called a holistic approach to understanding art, contemporary or otherwise, in education.

Holistic development is one of the foundation principles offered in *Te Whāriki*. This principle is framed within a developmental framework that makes other post-developmental ways of conceptualizing holistic somewhat problematic. Cognition is defined in this document as ‘knowing and thinking’ (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 99), something that is also referred to as a mode of meaning-making in much of the early education literature. Cognition, or the acquisition of habits of the ‘mind’, are valued as central to understanding children’s learning, their working theories, thus giving greater precedence to developing cognitive skills (Carr, et. al., 2010; Peters, 2003). Yet without an inclusion of what many writers and researchers refer to as *affect* (something akin to sense-making), meaning-making, as philosopher Clair Colebrook suggests, remains static, “a conceptual or other (linguistic) order imposed upon the world” (cited in Craw, 2011, p. 49). *Affect* as sensation is understood as something that is “an outside stimulation, somehow hitting... the body and... the cognitive apparatus” (Knudsen & Stage, 2015, p. 4), a force that involves embodied movement that is difficult if not impossible to capture with a language-based approach. *Affect* exists beyond language categorization, and children’s cognitive abilities to represent their (im-)material life-worlds; it is something that artists, poets struggle to portray. Yet through encounters with art lies the power to ignite a (sensational-) pedagogical approach that is open to affect, the (dis-)connections and intensities it produces through experience. This approach goes beyond representation, it enables that which has yet to be put into words, the invisible, to emerge (Craw & Stover, 2015; Downs, Marshall, Sawdon, Selby & Tormey, 2007; Vecchi, 2010).

A tangle, of mapping modes

To map a world is to appropriate it... to begin to bring it under control. (Fisher & Johnston, 1993, p. 13)

My preoccupation with mapping my engagement with art, and with what contemporary artists do, begins with and alongside my experiences as a teacher in a local suburban kindergarten, in Auckland New Zealand, in the late 1980s, and up until the mid-1990s. In and around the same time, I was studying towards a diploma in mathematics teaching and learning. I worked on a Ministry of Education ‘implementing *Te Whāriki*’ professional develop-

ment contract. As with any new curriculum development, for many years the Ministry of Education made government funding available to support early childhood teachers with the implementation of *Te Whāriki*, something that began sometime after 1993, when the initial draft was circulated and well before the current document was ratified in 1996. This involved taking a leadership role with a group of teachers in the broader neighbourhood in order to support these teachers unpack the newly developed curriculum. Our efforts to understand *Te Whāriki* were focused on how we might relate it to what we knew and understood early education to be, and how we might make these understandings visible in our everyday practices. It was at this time I developed an interest in attending art events. There is a growing body of international research evidence that suggests those who participate with culture (art is included alongside dance, music, drama, as well as film, literature) experience good health and higher life satisfaction than those who do not (Mowlah, Niblett, Blackburn & Harris, 2014). The art-related cultural experiences and activities that New Zealanders engage with – or not, have been statistically noted in 2011:

In total, 58% of New Zealanders... attended a visual arts event in the past 12 months.

30% of New Zealanders... attended at least one Māori arts event in the past 12 months.

29% of New Zealanders attended at least one Pacific arts event in the past 12 months

33% of New Zealanders were actively involved in visual arts during the past 12 months

14% of New Zealanders involved in one or more Māori artforms in the past 12 months

10% of New Zealanders were actively involved in Pacific arts over the past 12 months. (Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa, 2011, p. 37, 39, 41, 43)

Alongside these advisory and other teaching responsibilities, in my spare time, often with my three children, I began frequenting galleries and artists' events as a way of challenging my thinking, and my practices that involved 'engaging (with) art – and culture' with young children. Seeing and thinking about what artists were (not) making or doing often made me very uncomfortable (Marshall & Donahue, 2013), yet forced me to reconsider, to think differently about what it was that children might (not) be making or doing – and what I might need to (not) do/think as a result. I was challenged to reconsider the 'engaging (with) art – and culture' legacy I'd been left with

having studied and qualified with a diploma of early childhood education, or kindergarten teaching as it was called back then, in the late 1970s at Wellington Teachers College (New Zealand), well before *Te Whāriki* came into being.

Making history matter

In the late 1970s, Wellington Teachers College offered a range of both required and extra-curricula papers that were considered essential for developing 'well-educated' teachers. As a result, I had the opportunity to study 'Victorian Literature' as a self-selected elective with English-literary expert, Patrick *McCaskill*. This paper left a lingering legacy that to this day continues in my interest in the British Bloomsbury group of artists, and writers, including Roger Fry whose contribution to the history of understanding child art is significant. While I can remember little to do with studying art per se, although I can remember engaging with finger paint. At the time I was studying, early education in New Zealand was greatly influenced by the theories of child-psychologist/psychoanalyst Susan Isaac (May, 2013), and by New Zealand born Margaret May Blackwell, a qualified Karitane nurse who studied early childhood with Isaacs in the 1930s. Blackwell was an early advocate of finger painting as a necessary social-emotional, psychodynamic therapy for children. A direct influence perhaps of the prescriptive, methodical approach to finger painting that Ruth Faison Shaw, a US progressive educator, developed in the 1930s. Shaw's method promoted finger painting as something essential to young children's health and well-being, it received considerable international attention and popularity (Scott, 1973; Stankiewicz, 1984).

To this day, in many New Zealand early education settings, finger painting remains a valued activity offered to young children. Teachers' broad art-relevant knowledge and understanding of the richness and potential for working with the aesthetics of, for example, paint and painting is central to young children's learning experiences in early childhood: teachers offer young children experiences with paint that utilize a range of different formats, with a range of different cultural tools (Wright, 2003). On occasion when visiting student-teachers undertaking their practical study component in early education settings, I encounter finger painting experiences. These experiences are articulated, by student-teachers and teachers who work with them, as something that engage children in an art activity, yet these articulations indicate that finger painting continues to be understood and offered to children as vital play, a term used by New Zealand author

Gwen Somerset in 1976 to describe a form of messy play (with paint) that children need in support of their healthy, self-expressive, socio-emotional development (Kuhaneck, Spitzer, & Miller, 2010; Sunday, 2015); something that contributes to their holistic development, as noted in *Te Whāriki*. Any attempts to draw on or from (contemporary-) art practices to develop a more complex understanding of the richness of finger painting as an art form has yet to gain prominence in early education discourses. Finger painting, as a result, remains a common yet a somewhat fossilised form of traditional practice (Fleer, 2013).

Finger painting as an art form has an interesting history. Researchers interested in paleolithic *finger flutings* are adamant that young children with and alongside adults engaged in painting, i.e. drawing lines with fingers on cave walls way back in the dark ages (Van Gelder, 2015). Cave and rock arts (i.e. paintings, drawings, carvings) have long been recognized as offering important insights into our indigenous histories, they are testimonies to our abilities throughout time to engage in expressive and art-full practices. Stankiewicz (1984) suggests Shaw's finger painting method did very little back then to promote children's self-expression or any engagement in the richness of art, something that is attributed to Shaw's lack of any formal art education. This resulted in her being unable "to introduce students to aesthetic qualities, historical styles, or critical appreciation of art" (Stankiewicz, 1984, p. 23). The issue of teachers having a depth of specialist subject-content knowledge and understanding, art or otherwise, remains a significant issue for many authors and researchers in early education (Craw & Haynes, 2007; Hedges, 2013; McArdle, 2008, 2008a; Woodrow, 2008).

Finger painting is alluded to in a recent discussion about young children's acquisition of early literacy skills, yet any reference to aesthetics and/or art remains invisible. But rather, Silcock and Bridges (2015) highlight the impact of *neuroscience* research when they promote the benefits of painting, "in the finger sense" (n.p.). They suggest (finger-) painting as one of several old media that has something valuable to offer children's learning: it contributes to "[t]he tactile, physical act of writing by hand [because it] recruits the visual area of children's brains used in letter processing, and the motor regions seen in letter production". Finger painting is attributed a valuable function in this discussion that is intent on challenging early childhood teachers to consider children's experiences in relation to the contemporary digital worlds they live. In particular, young children's keyboard use is emphasized. There are a number of researchers who are interested in children's learning through the comparative qualities of young children's mark

making with finger paint as a free messy, sensory experience in relation to the increased phenomena of their technology-mediated touch-based interactions (Matthews, & Seow, 2007; Price, Jewitt and Crescenzi, 2015). Whereas others are interested in young children's use of electronic computerized painting as a contemporary creative media that "might rejuvenate, rather than replace, the act of painting" (Matthews, & Seow, 2007, p. 262). However, discussions in and around finger painting are often more tightly constrained within a narrower developing literacy-skill-based focus.

The government sanctioned narrow literacy-numeracy focus expects to ensure that all children are successful in one way or another in the multifaceted life-worlds they (we) live in. However, O'Connor (2011) warns, "a grinding never-ending focus on literacy and numeracy [is pushing] hard against other curriculum areas, in particular against the arts" (n.p.). A different kind of discussion is needed to indicate what it is that forms part of the creative processes, finger painting or otherwise, that young children might engage in what we could refer to as 'art'. A return-to-art as both a pedagogy and a content-subject knowledge opens up spaces for the kind of critical discussions that examine how something akin, in this instance to finger painting might be (re)configured within a contemporary early childhood relevant art theory and practice.

Gleaning, the world of art

The first expressive gesture... is that of the child. In other words, the first painting is that of the child! (Kittelmann, 2002, p. 14)

Painting appears today liberated from concrete limits. Painting is changing its modes of organization. Painting is emerging from the static, dogmatic influence of art history and by virtue the influence of its own culture. The time has come... when the equation 'a lot of color' = 'painting', that is, 'painting' = 'picture'... is no longer valid. (Kittelmann, 2002, p. 16)

Painting continues to be a big area of interest in the world of art (Dunn, 2003; Kittelmann, 2002). As art curator Udo Kittelmann (2002) reiterates, "art's immanent quality... is that it is constantly changing" (p. 14), a quality that continuously leads to new concepts, new ways of understanding painting. In the early education world, Wright (2003) proposes, painting exists "[a]t the site where a young child is learning about art, there are points where ideas about the child, art, and teaching meet, sometimes connecting,

sometimes colliding, sometimes competing” (p. 153). Connecting, colliding, competing ideas about art vary. The different discourses about (contemporary-) art and the practices they promote in and around painting, are diverse and ever changing. In the 1970s when non-figurative abstract painting was very popular (for example, see New Zealand artist Gretchen Albrecht), Vecchi (2010) notes that young children’s non-figurative painting was then not. At about this time, non-figurative abstraction in the artworld was called into question because it was perceived as inaccessible, too demanding for many culturally diverse viewers (Dunn, 2003). In contrast, the dominant early childhood discourses that determined the way young children’s non-figurative image making endeavours were understood was largely preoccupied with children’s developing aged and staged abilities to represent the ‘real’ life-worlds they live in (Vecchi, 2010).

The concept of gesture has re-emerged independently over time as an interest in both the world of early childhood and in the artworld. Gesture in early childhood is understood as something that is deeply connected to other multi-modal shared communicative acts that involve the gaze and the posturing of the body (Franco, 2013; Kupfer, 2011). Developmental psychologists have explored gesture in interesting ways in relation to both spontaneous and intentional forms of communication that human infant’s, chimpanzees and other apes or other animals, might engage with (see e.g. Tomasello, 2007). *Te Whāriki* contextualizes gesture as a learning experience that engages non-verbal pre-linguistic communication, an eye-body coming-to-know language that infants enact in joint attention with responsively competent adults through, for example, “waving goodbye or pointing... turning their heads away from food, stretching out hands, or screwing up faces” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 75). Thinking with philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s concept of *infancy* in mind where the experiences of gesture, like play, is attributed significant importance; gestures as movements of the body offer a display of mediation that is essential to ascertaining the ethical and relational dimensions of being (non-) human (Prozorov, 2014). Gesture is big, too, in the artworld: artists, writers engage with gesture as an energizing act that is central to igniting new coming-to-life forms of images, and image-making (Didi-Huberman, 2009; Harris, 2011).

Many artists are revisiting and reigniting gestural abstraction painting as a form of aesthetic expression, communication and participation with art, with interesting results. One such artist is New Zealand’s Judy Miller, reputed to use both finger and hand to achieve her rather large paintings (Hurrell, 2006). She explains,

The first works of art that I saw as a child were examples of Māori art, in these works, there was always an intimate connection between the painting or sculpture and the architectural spaces in which they were placed. Painting never took place on a flat surface; instead, it followed the curve of a wooden beam or rafter. Carved figures also had complex relationships between their forms and heavily incised surfaces. (Miller, in de Jongh, Gold, & Romagnini, 2011, p. 52)

Bringing the world of the child, children's engagement with painting, and of art together is nothing new: the Modernists did it to great effect (Fineberg, 1997, 1998). Robert Leonard (2005), a contemporary-art writer and curator, in conversation with Millar emphasizes these connections when he suggests Miller's paintings are really large somewhat aggressive, colourful gestural abstract paintings (see figure 1), evocative of an oversized child's finger painting. In the art world, making such connections with the multifaceted nature of childhood as an area of in-depth study, continues to have considerable influence (see Craw & Leonard, 2005).



Figure 1: Judy Millar, *I, Would Like to Express*, ex. cat., 2005 (Auckland Art Gallery Exhibition, 2005)

Marshall and Donahue (2013) highlight how encounters with contemporary art practices, including new ways of thinking about art, for example, as 'social practice', often unsettle ready-known, accepted definitions and expectations of what we think art is or might be, leaving viewers troubled. It is these unsettling or troubling experiences that open up spaces "for work

that can be meaningful and groundbreaking – for building understandings in new and creative ways” (Marshall & Donahue, 2013, p. 7). It is my hope then that the approaches we adopt for thinking about and enacting (contemporary-) art in (early) education are responsive to the encounters we might create with the dynamic ever-changing artworlds that we make available to us, the children and families we work with. Such artworlds, and others yet to be made available to children and their families, can be experienced as significant social, cultural spaces and places where they engage with the new and innovative, often informal learning approaches that are emerging in museums and galleries. It becomes import then to consider the transitional spaces, and places that exist in-between, for example, a) the art(worlds), the ‘real’ worlds of galleries or museums; b) the imagined worlds, the art-full conceptual spaces we might inhabit; and, c) the early (teacher-) educational worlds, communities we find ourselves in. Thinking of these in-between spaces as transitional can be understood, to borrow from Margaret Carr (2012), as creating a borderland of contested spaces, a meeting place of different ways of knowing, understanding, experiencing, and engaging with art.

Assembling, the flux and flows of the social, and the cultural

The relationships that exist between art and (teacher-) education in New Zealand have a valuable history (Smith & Warden, 2010). As Smith & Warden (2010) note, “the pursuit of humanist and progressive ideals, and holistic, broad, and balanced curriculum development, gave increased important to the arts” (p. 5); what became known as the ‘Far North Gordon Tovey project’ (under the leadership and guidance of artist, educator, Gordon Tovey) is attributed for the emergence of the highly valued and influential Māori art and craft movement in New Zealand (Craw & O’Sullivan, in process; MacDonald, 2010; Skinner, 2008; Smith & Warden, 2010). It seems particularly important to evoke this ‘history in the now’ given the emphasis on systems of testing and accountability that threaten to reduce the status of art in education, perpetuating a narrow understanding of both art and education (Fleming, 2010; Smith & Warden, 2010). Contemporary art was of great significance and interest to the progressives, to both artists and educators who were involved in education back in the early 1950s in New Zealand (Craw & O’Sullivan, in process; MacDonald, 2010). An innovative approach to education and art, not unlike that promoted by Herbert Read in his book, *Education through art* (1956), is evident in the work of progressive educator-scientist Elwyn Richardson, documented in his book, *In the early world*

(1964). He describes the approach he adopted to developing the curriculum that emerged when he worked for some eleven years as a solo teacher, yet with others on occasion, including New Zealand artist/art advisor-educator, Jim Allen, with young children (as young as four years) in attendance at Oruaiti School, in the Far North, the North Island of New Zealand. Richardson quotes a child engaged in conversation with an expert other-adult in attendance:

Did you know that that man Ralph, the Māori man, is a relation of mine, Miss F.?

Yes, he is 'cause he's going out with my big sister.

He paints pictures. Freda calls him an artist. (p. 6)

The man 'in the picture' being discussed in this conversation is the recently deceased New Zealand artist, Ralph Hotere (1931–2013), who was back then, in the 1950s as a young student-teacher, studying art amongst other things at Auckland Teachers' Training College. Hotere continued to specialize in studying art and went on to develop a highly productive career as a professional artist in New Zealand; he is now regarded as one of New Zealand's most significant contemporary artists (Skinner, 2008). Hotere's non-figurative, gesturally inclined abstract artworks often emphasis the colour black, a colour that is often understood as representing something depressive, a dark mood (Harvey, 2013). This black aesthetic is captured for children, and others, by picture book author and illustrator, Pamela Allen, in her book, *Black dog* (1991). Whereas, enacting an alternative responsive and integrated pedagogical approach within this social, cultural context enables the colour black to be perceived as a somewhat celebratory colour: at the very least, many young New Zealanders come to know, understand and favour the colour black (Read, 2009) with their families and communities through sport, for example, through New Zealand's incredibly popular, internationally reputed and highly valued 'all black' rugby team. Others may come to know and experience the colour black through the renaissance of Māori moko kanohi (i.e. tattooing specifically on the face), and/or other Pasifika forms of tattooing where blackened inked drawings are inscribed on the face or body. While tattooing can be reminiscent of heritage art forms and social, cultural practices common to many Pacific peoples (Clark, Lima Tu'itahi, 2009), contemporary forms of tattooing that draw on cross-cultural influences, as forms of, for example, spiritual, poetic and self-empowering expression, are more popular now internationally, in and across different social cultural contexts, than they have ever been (DeMello, 2014; Sherman, 2015)

Te Whāriki, as a socio-cultural curriculum document, anticipates that teachers will have the art and other relevant subject-content knowledge that enables them to integrate the socially and culturally valued and potentially connected life-worlds we, teachers, children and their families, artists and other experts (or knowledge workers), inhabit. So too, does the document expect that teachers will ensure all children be given “the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritages of both partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9). This treaty of Waitangi references a crucial part of New Zealand’s constitutional make-up and is reinforced in New Zealand’s Education Act (1989). The treaty challenges all those who work in New Zealand education systems to consider how they value and incorporate traditional and/or contemporary Māori knowledge, culture, and skills into their everyday policies, principles and practices. Hotere’s work is contextualized here as something that offers a significant contribution to developing a knowledge and understanding of both the cultural heritage of people, places and things Māori (including art), and of other New Zealanders (i.e. non-Māori or *Pākehā*) in relation to the place and value of engaging with (contemporary-) art - as well as other knowledges that emerge in the coming to know art, for example, popular culture, sport, history (Fleming, 2010; Marshall & Donahue, 2013). Hotere’s work offers this discussion an opportunity to make the complexities of engaging (with) art visible and valuable in ways that enable or challenge all children and families, teachers, and others, to build inclusive art-inspired and informed knowledge communities.

Oh, what’s love got to do with it²

Invoking a love for and with *Te Whāriki* in this article acknowledges the potential it offers all those who work with it to enact an inclusive yet open-ended relationship-based curriculum. As long as it continues to provide a catalyst for all those who work with it to build knowledge communities with porous boundaries, (teacher-) education can be held responsible for ensuring that all (student-) teachers have opportunities to build a deeper shared subject-content knowledge and understandings relevant to the complex social, cultural, aesthetic, art-full, and other worlds we live in. These knowledges and understandings will always be in motion, always in the process of opening up other knowledges and understandings. This article pres-

² Lyrics borrowed from *What’s love got to do with it*, a song written by Terry Britten & Graham Lyle, and released by (US) Tina Turner in 1984, her most successful single hit tune. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/What%27s_Love_Got_to_Do_with_It_%28song%29

ents a number of case studies that reveal something about how this might unfold for some teacher educators, (student-) teachers, children and their families. These case studies indicate how engaging (with) art through the work of (just two) significant contemporary artists, Judy Miller and Ralph Hotere, bringing their work into the heart of education creates a number of points of rupture. These points that come together in, for example, finger painting, gesture and the colour black, have the potential to ignite other valued and more complex knowledges and understandings. However such opportunities are often diminished by limited subject-content knowledge and understandings of art, as nothing more than a language, a form of communication. Yet the history of art and education in New Zealand is rich. This richness is charged with very contemporary knowledges and understandings of art and of education that continue to have an impact in and on 21st century understandings of art, if not in and on the future of art in education.

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