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Young children’s construction and expression of meaning when engaging with and responding to artworks

Julia Wren

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Young children’s construction and expression of meaning when engaging with and responding to artworks

J Wren
PhD student at Melbourne University
Supervisors:
Professor Susan Wright,
Dr Marnee Watkins

Pre-primary children responding to art
Pre-primary children responding to art (August 2012)
### Significance & background of this study

**Works of art can:**
- Provoke aesthetic experience
- Offer unique processes of inquiry
- Engage an individual’s intellect and emotions to explore, create and develop views about self and the world

**Works of art are:**
- Considered as one of the many languages of young children
- Distinguished from other forms of communication by ineffable qualities
Significance & background of this study

Recognition that responding to art benefits young children’s learning; when children responding to artworks, they are developing their mind.

Educators require greater understanding of how children make meaning by responding to artworks, so they can structure relevant experiences to respond to artworks, so they can structure relevant experiences to support depth of learning.

ACARA states that arts responses is one of two interconnected domains. Children need to ‘apprehend’ and ‘comprehend’ art to express personal and social perspectives.
Aims of study

• This mixed methods study identifies ways in which young children explore, construct and communicate meaning by looking at and responding to visual artworks.

• Through facilitated art response-sessions this research specifically examines children’s embodied learning; responses to various artworks; the extent to which music accompaniment elicits different responses; how social/cultural interactions influence group and individual responses; and the impact response-sessions have on art making.
Social – cultural constructivist
- Art is in essence a social activity even if it is performed individually
- Teaching and learning as co-created activity
- Audience is enabled beyond their individual realities to a collective experience and a more profound comprehension
- ZPD
- Culture contributes to the development of individuals
- Meaning is influenced by the particular contest in which artworks appear (semiotic theory)

Vygotsky

Embodiment
- Our bodies contribute to our sense of what is real
- Children use a range of modalities (Kress & van Leeuwen; Lakoff & Johnson)

Imagination and aesthetics theory (Dewey)
Proposed research design and methods

• Participants

- 6 x (5 yo) children within their pre-primary class
- Their parents
- Two teachers

School with a strong Arts curriculum and pedagogical focus
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Overview of analysis</th>
<th>Relationship to research Q</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 children</td>
<td>Video taped</td>
<td>5 x approx 20 mins</td>
<td>Studio code</td>
<td>Coding of individuals over time, frequency...</td>
<td>Embodied; formal qualities &amp; content, narratives, imagination, sophisticated over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 children</td>
<td>Observation by teacher</td>
<td>3-4 days</td>
<td>Anecdotal notes</td>
<td>Naturalistic, coding,</td>
<td>As above + impact on subsequent art making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 children</td>
<td>Obs by teacher only</td>
<td>2 weeks (part of regular T activity)</td>
<td>Anecdotal running record, ongoing notes, T briefing notes</td>
<td>Coding patterns, comparisons, themes, clustering</td>
<td>As above + play, conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational doscs</td>
<td>Class journal, T records</td>
<td>Sticky note memos</td>
<td>Content analysis</td>
<td>Subseq. Art making/play-choice of books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs of children’s art works</td>
<td>As they occur</td>
<td>Sticky note memos</td>
<td>Content analysis</td>
<td>Transfer of content, form used, narratives, iconography etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Approx 30 mins</td>
<td>Transcript verification by T. Audio recorded</td>
<td>Coding (generalise natural units of meaning, classify, categorise and order units of meaning, structuring narratives to describe ...</td>
<td>Children’s learning preferences, visual, embodied, narrative characteristics of indiv; PP context, interactions between C/C C/A, PP env. Learning prefs. Impact on pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews x 5</td>
<td>Approx 15 mins each</td>
<td>Transcript verification by T. Audio recorded</td>
<td>Coding (generalise natural units of meaning, classify, categorise and order units of meaning, structuring narratives to describe ...</td>
<td>Ongoing impact of R-S on children; art making; play; ripple effects on T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Standard measure</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td></td>
<td>quantitative</td>
<td>What conditions affect how children make meaning in response to original adult artworks? - family-home social context - interactions between adult/child, child/child-home physical env/attitudes/values of parents individual child personal preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coding by researcher/ coding by participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews x 2</td>
<td>30 minutes each</td>
<td>Transcribing – verification by participants</td>
<td>Code (generalise natural units of meaning, classify, categorise and order units of meaning, structuring narratives to describe interview, interpreting interview data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers</td>
<td>Declare myself in the research</td>
<td>Regularly</td>
<td>Document my role as a co-learner. Journals, field notes, Researcher Self interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>how has it affected my own pedagogy – what have I learnt that has impacted on my understanding of how children learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of artworks</td>
<td>Consider cultural b/ground of artwork (provide rationale)</td>
<td>Tool artwork participants</td>
<td></td>
<td>Does regular exposure to original adult artworks develop a young child’s capacity to make meaning? How artwork is chosen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music provocations</td>
<td>After some arts-response sessions</td>
<td>5-10 mins</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Method

- Arts response-sessions (fortnightly for about 20 mins) with artworks brought into the classroom; VTS response framework used in combination with Artful Thinking (Project Zero, Harvard) + music provocations

- Artworks stay for 3-4 days for children to continue to engage with

- Teachers; parents; researcher; artworks
Conclusion

• Uniqueness of this study
• Limitations of this study
• Feedback welcome

Thank you

Pre-primary girls responding to an artwork