

THE ARTS AS A WAY OF THINKING

When the arts come to mind, it is often viewed as either an opportunity for children to get messy, a way for children to express themselves and be creative, or simply as an activity for children to participate in. The arts are a subject of intent, they withhold purpose and meaning. The arts do not exist separately, away from others; rather they ceaselessly surround us. We believe that there is much more richness, complexity and value to the arts than meets the eye. Through provocations and materials, children are presented with broader perspectives to explore. The arts are a way of thinking.

PROCESS

It embodies our dynamic thinking, lives through what we create and makes learning visible. In working with the materials, we can begin the process of articulating our thinking. It encourages our thoughts to come alive, not just in our heads but as a manifestation and entanglement of our ideas. It allows a relationship to be formed through this experience of the arts. A relationship consisting of reciprocity amongst child and educator is born through the experience and materials at hand. As the educational philosopher Loris Malaguzzi expresses, the arts live in a hundred languages.

ENCOUNTERING PROBLEMS

Beyond the formation of ideas generated through materials, there are encounters with problems. Problems that do not terminate the process unravelling, but cultivate it. These quandaries generate questions and possess endless opportunities. They challenge ideas, influence further steps, and generate alternative perspectives and solutions. When encountered, we can begin to know and come to know ourselves through the solving and overcoming of these problems. We should not view them as mistakes or detours as they guide us and allow for more adventures and journeys. Through the solving of these problems, we are able to add knowledge to our pre-existent thoughts and ideas by generating new ones. Therefore, the arts, if thought of in this context, can be seen as a journey. A journey with which the focus is detracted from arriving at a particular destination, rather the focus is on the process. Given this, we can change our focus and view the arts as a map where, through this map, we are guided by this intricate process of the arts.

INTERCONNECTIONS/ SOCIAL

Interconnections can also be created; we can think not only as individuals but as a collective. We believe that the arts are not singular - that is, it is a collective way of thinking that intersects through and crosses the boundaries of materials, cultures and experiences. When children work together, their ideas intersect, thus allowing opportunities for interpretations to be shared, acknowledged, and respected. It communicates through different forms, and when thought of as

improvisation and as a social practice, the arts encourage us to think through the intersectionalities of different ways of thinking.

It also allows us to create from materials for others to visualize and relate to. It encourages relationships to form between materials, thoughts, and persons. This turns relationships into experiences that will help further develop the growth of the individual child. The entanglement of these different spaces and temporalities give rise to an abundance of possibilities in relating with others.

REVISITATION/ CONTINUITY

The arts help us to express our thoughts and allow us to live with them through revisitation. Through this way of thinking, children are able to express themselves freely and openly through materials that are worked with again and again. This also allows the opportunity for children, educators, families, and communities to work together and support one another with their learning. Within this collaboration, new ideas are formed and the sharing amongst others is able to take place. This ultimately guides children in offering boundless opportunities in each aspect of their thinking processes.

Art inspires others. It is shaped as an inspiration within the artist as it exists before it is recognized and put into action. It has always been alive and it lives on, through and with others, even when we do not seek its presence. When an artist connects with the work, it helps to bring in the audience so that they, too, can become inspired. The arts invite us to take the risk of appearing before others and to share our knowledge so that radical dialogue arises. It leaves marks for people to remember, revisit, and continue. The fluidity of the arts allow for this to happen.

CONCLUSION

Art is a way of thinking which holds many values as it broadens thinking and unites us. It also brings to us the possibility to evolve and live beyond the different temporalities and cultures that exists in this world. The arts are a way of intimate and raw thinking. By acknowledging the arts around us, we allow ourselves the time to pause, reflect, be moved, and to move others into action. This acknowledgment can enrich the learning of not only the child, but also extend its effect on other children, educators, and families. Our hope is that all of us can begin to think, to ponder, to question, to value, to acknowledge, to respect, to be open minded and to live within and with the arts. We value arts as a way of thinking, and hope to share those different, multimodal ways of thinking with you. Children and educators can begin to acknowledge and appreciate the multifaceted ways of thinking as they live with, amongst and with the arts.