

Metamorphosis
Encounters with paper and its subsequent transformations

Melanie - Jacqueline - Audrey - Faith

EDUC 385 (Spring 2020)

Encounters with Paper

During our first encounter with paper in the studio, our initial instinct was to make markings on it. After some discussion, we begin to interact with paper differently. We want to make a conscious decision of approaching paper as if it were the first time we encountered it. We think deeply with and reflect on what it means to meet in spaces of difference with paper, as “to meet in spaces of difference” according to Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, & Kocher (2017) means “we cannot anticipate or predict what something is, what something means, what will or should happen” (p. 35). And so thinking with this, we wonder:

How might this change the way we see paper? How do we encounter paper without a pen or pencil?

How can we centre paper in it's own experience to resist our instinct to do something to paper? How can paper do something to us?

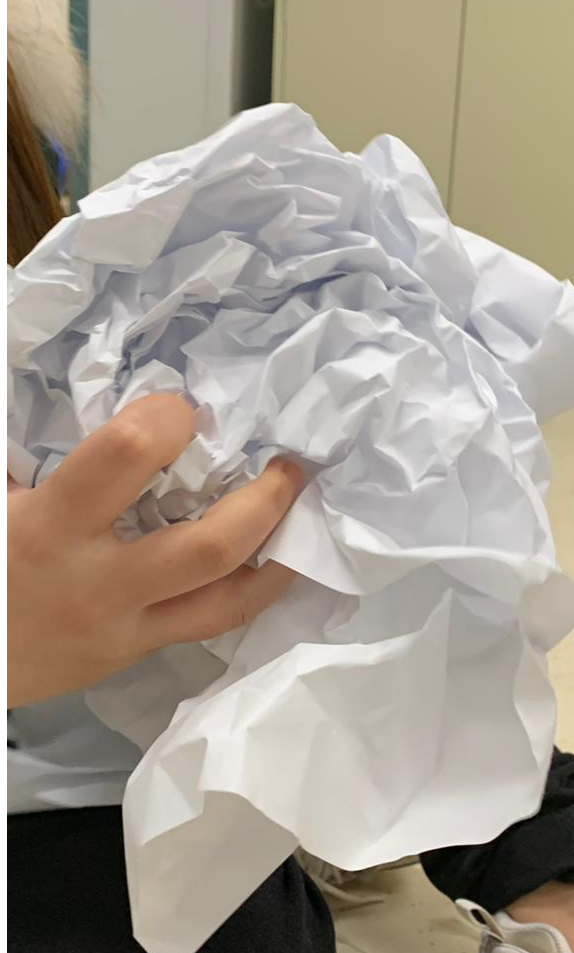
How then will our bodies move in response to paper? What will that look like?

Paper transforms in various ways in front of us: it transforms in shape, weight, sound, transparency. We notice the way paper transforms us in the process as it resisted our assumptions while surpassing our expectations. As paper encounters other materials, elements, and a different environment, it continues to radically shift our perspectives and our ways of thinking.

Paper meets us; our hands, our bodies

Entering the space and encountering paper for the first time as a group was met with lots of hesitations and questions. We agree we want to look at paper with fresh eyes - but without expectations, we didn't know how to begin. There was a collective hesitation - who would make the first rip? The first crumple or fold? How do we *start*?

We begin by responding to different types of paper that we individually feel invites us to be with. And as we gather back into the space, paper begins to work with us. Paper lets us approach through ways that were familiar to us- through ripping, tearing, folding, rolling, blowing, throwing, scrunching.





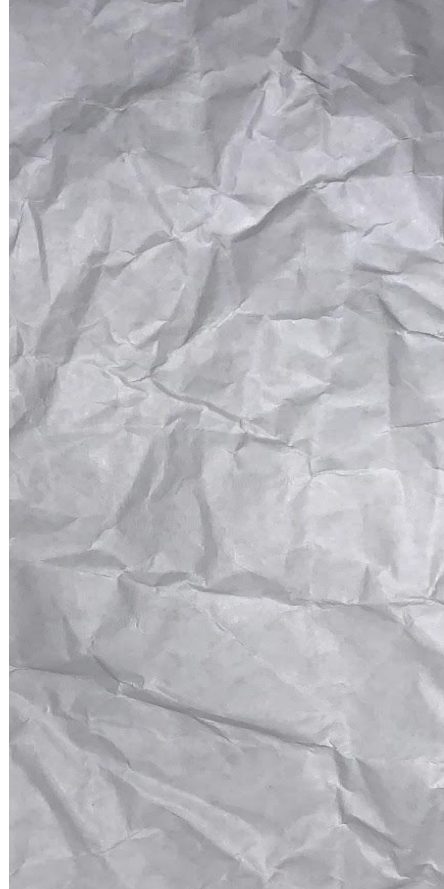
Immersing ourselves in being with paper, we notice the way paper transforms, but all dependant on when it lets us and when it wants to resist. Sometimes, it allows itself to rip in half, while other times, it fights against being broken, no matter how much we pull together and how much strength we put in. As we experiment with paper through twisting, folding, crumpling - we watch paper transform in shape and in texture.

Putting on researcher's lens, as we take note of every characteristic of paper, we notice that paper would continuously go against our preconceived knowledge- ***that paper is light, submissive, delicate.***

Paper's memory

As we continue to work with paper, we realize that paper has also been taking notes of our own movements, responding to us as if paper knew what is going on in our minds and what we are thinking. As every crinkle and fold that we make is being marked down by paper, we become aware of our own movement and what 'we do' to paper. This awareness slows us down, making us think, listen, then respond prior to simply 'doing to'. We negotiate with paper, then finally give in to its demands and acknowledging what it asks of us.

This back and forth of responding and compromising between maker and material becomes rhythmic as the maker learns the qualities and stories of the material in a corresponding relationship (Ingold, 2013) – the material is no longer being acted upon but rather in correspondence with. Bunn (2011) further explains agency of material as the maker simply giving shape to a form that is already present and afforded by the material.





Paper grows

The following week, collectively, we sit on the floor looking at paper with hesitation. The deafening silence is broken as we paper invites us to rip, and so we begin.

The sound of the first rip is distinct and soothing, and once we began we can not seem to stop. Within minutes we watch the stagnant, flat newspaper transform and come alive in movement and in size. The pile of shreds invites us to stand and play - and the way we approach *this* newspaper is now different. Paper invites us to grab, to gather, to pick up, to throw. The heavy newspaper that we drop down on to the floor effortlessly dances and floats in its path to the ground only to invite us to pick it up again once more. Paper continues to grow. Once a flat, 2 dimensional pile, paper is now growing taller and wider as we continue to interact with and play with paper.



“Materials are always and already on their ways to becoming something else” (Ingold, 2013, as cited in Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2017, p. 29).

After some time, we step back and reflect on what has taken place.

We are unable to get paper back to its original state, **it is now forever transformed as each rip, crinkle, and fold serves as evidence for transformation.** As we read through each word and phrase on the individual strips of paper, it now tells of new, different, never before seen or heard of stories in its new state of being. *And then we wonder, how else will paper transform? As paper meets other elements, what will emerge?*



Paper meets water

Paper meets water with intensity. Paper moves with the ripples, going back and forth with the water. Paper does not fight back nor does it give in to the pressures of water. And as water calms down, there is stillness in the atmosphere. The loud, gushing sound is replaced with soothing sounds of droplets. I notice that there is a slow transformation as paper takes the time to be with water. It lingers, awaiting the moments where water will completely seep through paper. I continue to wait and as I interrupt this moment by making circles in the water, paper slowly breaks away. But at this point, paper has become one with water. It becomes soggy, wet, with its previous state completely altered.

There seems to be a pre-existing relationship between paper and water, as paper allows for water to seep into its minute fibers. Paper becomes vulnerable, with its veins becoming more exposed. I wonder about the different ways paper has exposed itself to me. Paper does not resist water, rather paper meets it expectantly. It has formed a cohesive relationship with water almost immediately.

Paper meets fire

Paper meets fire very slowly at first. Paper ignites abruptly, then slowly reveals fire's path. Everything is silent and still as fire takes control - paper is disappearing quickly, transforming into a grey ash that drops to the floor. A dark smoke escapes and floats up towards the ceiling. Mesmerized by the peaceful nature of the burning, I am unsure when to extinguish fire's flame. The growing flame cues me to take a deep breath and blow. I watch the ash escape into the air and I am unable to collect it and I am left with the unique path fire took across paper. It is complex and impossible to replicate in a second meeting. Paper is transformed with fire and forever changed.

Melanie





Paper meets wind

Further thinking about how paper will interact with other elements, paper leads us to the vent right outside our classroom, giving us preconceived ideas of how paper will move. We go to the grate outside the classroom window, ready to explore paper with wind - but to our surprise, there was none. Within a few moments of waiting, excitement is interrupted with disappointment.

One new idea comes to mind when we notice a tree with lengthy limbs standing behind the vent. As we tape the two strips of newspaper on to the tree branch, we take a step back to see what would happen to the pieces of newspaper on the tree. As the air moves paper that is hanging on the tree, it is an amazing thing to watch. Initially we were not attuned to wind, but as we see paper move and sway along to the breeze, we feel chills and soft blows from all around. Paper makes the natural wind become more vivid, living, and visible. The paper movement with wind brings more living to the world. As we watch the wind move underneath the pieces of paper on the tree branch, the wind makes it look like the pieces of paper were dancing on this tree branch. It was almost like watching a dance between paper, the tree and the wind.

Paper reunites with tree

“As researchers, we noticed how things move together, how the material experimentations became a choreography of children, educators, bodies, materials, places, histories, stories intersecting, interacting, influencing, and working together. There were rhythmic movements of doing and undoing, pleasures of gathering and dispersing, composing, and decomposing and of keeping things in motion” (Pacini-Kechabaw, Kind, & Kocher, 2017, p. 32)

This also makes us think about paper and its history with tree. As we reflect, we notice how it seems as if paper is not meeting tree for the first time; that there is already an existing connection, a yearning to be with. There is an entanglement, an interconnection with. Like water, paper does not resist tree, rather paper exposes itself as it hangs on to tree. *We wonder then, if we go back to the same tree in a different time, what experience will we see? What processes are we missing? How can we go further with this reflection?*





But as paper continues to loan itself to the soft breeze and sways along with the music, we continue to add more strips of paper to the tree limbs. There is synchronization in movement and sound, and it seems as if paper starts to produce music of its own to compliment the jazz music. Each strip of paper was unique and played its own part in the orchestra of movement and sound as the tree stands tall and proud.

Paper meets freedom

The strips of newspaper meet the wind. They move with the silent breeze, moving the strips of paper back and forth and rippling the newspaper all around, wherever the wind takes it. The strips of paper move freely and do not resist. As the wind dies the newspaper stands still. As the breeze picks up again the strips of paper dance in the wind. It reminds me of such freedom. The newspaper is not restricted in any way. Sometimes we need to be like the newspaper in the wind and be free with words and actions. We may not know where our journey might lead us to, just like the newspaper had no control over where the wind was taking it. We need to be like the newspaper in the wind and just let go and see where the wind will take us. As educators it will be our job to teach children to take a moment for themselves; to let go and to just be kids. Let them have that freedom to be free and to not have the structure all the time. We need to give children and ourselves that permission, just like the newspaper, that it is okay to have that sense of freedom and to dance like no one is watching.

Jacqueline





Paper meets paint

There are more possibilities of paper encountering diverse materials and gaining more interactive experience. As I start to explore, I roll the newspaper into cylinder and dip the green paint and red paint on to the paper. So often paper hosts paint, but what happens if paper meets paint differently? Paper becomes the tool in which I distribute paint across the grassy canvas - in a way, paper becomes the paint brush. At first, paint hesitates to latch onto the paper cylinder - the newspaper is stiff and not flexible. As I brush the red and green paint across the grassy canvas over and over again, the paper cylinder starts to soften and grips paint more effortlessly. Paper gets softer as I repeat this process again, and I notice pieces of paper breaking off and leaving traces on the grass.

The newspaper paint brush initiates a deeper interaction with the natural elements and natural environment. I notice the red paint, how I use the newspaper paint brush to paint the red colour on the green grass to add more colours, to make the natural environment become more vivid and vibrant. An interesting and deeper interaction occurs between the paint, the newspaper, and the natural environment. Moreover, the three elements are not related to each other originally, the transformation of the newspaper and the paint brush which promotes the deeper interaction.

“The process is living, changing as we change, continuously producing something new” (The Ministry of Education, 2019, p.56).

Audrey



As paper re-meets us, we become undone

Reflecting on our first encounter, we began this exploration noticing the different ways paper transforms in front of us. But as we continue to work with and be with paper, we notice the ways paper was changing and transforming us instead. Giving us new perspectives, paper continuously challenges us, forcing us to unlearn and deconstruct assumptions about paper that we collectively think about in our everyday - that paper is to be drawn on, to be cut, to be ripped, to be read. In this process, we've experienced how paper provokes, confronts, protests. And as we give in to paper's resistance and desires, paper then invites, plays with us, creating rhythm that harmonizes with our bodily movements.

”Listening and attending to the other... is not always comfortable. To really attend to [the other], we must stretch ourselves; we must really strain to listen, to see, to feel - it is not a casual process” (The Ministry of Education, 2019, p.48).

Paper transforms us, and we become undone.

Paper continues to shape and reshape our thinking, our ideas, our perspectives, our emotion.

Paper leads us again and invites us, not to do something to paper, but for us to engage with, to listen to, and be intensely attuned to paper, transforming us more through each process.



Conclusion

As we continuously encounter paper throughout our inquiry, we witness many transformations. These, perhaps, 'unconventional' encounters with paper facilitated new perspectives and ways of being *with* paper that proceeded to transform us individually, and collectively as a group. As we became witness to paper transforming in shape, texture, colour, sound, and size, we became captivated by the relentless nature of *becoming* that paper embodies. Understanding paper as a fluid process of transformation encouraged a more intimate alliance as we began to think about the transformations that happened before our encounters, and the ones that continue to happen long after.

Thinking forward, we would like to think with similar ideas and processes with children. With different lens, perspectives, and perhaps connections, if we were to repeat the same processes with children, what would we notice that we may have missed previously? How will children's insights further enrich our ongoing questions, wonderings, invitations, and experience as we co-construct learning and collaborate? How else can we engage with paper? We also think about the environment, the possibilities of being in different ecologies- what new processes and encounters will emerge?

References

- Bunn, S. (2011). *Materials in the making*. In T. Ingold (Ed) *Redrawing anthropology: Materials, movements, lines*, (pp. 21-32). Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate.
- Ingold, T. (2013). *Making: anthropology, archeology, art, and architecture*. New York: Routledge. (Ch. 2)
- Pacini-Ketchabaw, V., Kind, S., & Kocher, L. M. (2017). *Encounters with materials in early childhood education*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ministry of Education. (2019). *British Columbia early learning framework*. BC Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Children and Family Development, & Early Advisory Group.