

In this special issue of the *Journal of Childhood Studies*, each of the authors considers how we might be provoked by serious engagement in the visual arts—and how an educator’s role, children’s explorations, and curriculum, materials, and environments might take shape in response. Rather than seeing young children’s engagement in the visual arts as recreation, as self-expression, or as necessary to an individual child’s creative or sensory development, each author proposes a perspective of art as *relational*, as *collaborative*, and as a *social practice*. Each offers ways that educators and children might reimagine living and learning together. Each looks for avenues to enable emergence, build intensity, provoke sustained attention to particular ideas, and engage in prolonged investigations while using visual arts as provocation and process of inquiry.

Art as a collaborative social practice situates art as a shared exchange, a relational form of thinking, narrating, investigating, making meaning, and articulating experience. Visual art becomes a language and an unpredictable process of collaboratively working through ideas, constructing understandings, and communicating perspectives. Art as a social project also considers the generative encounters between contemporary art and pedagogy.

In this special issue on young children and the visual arts, Maria Iafelice explores an artful pedagogy shaped in response to children’s unpredictable engagements with contemporary art practices. Her article brings into focus implications for visualizing conversations with young learners through art. Lisa Terreni considers the visual arts in the context of the development of New Zealand’s national curriculum. Her article demonstrates how, through imaginative teaching strategies, art can be a vehicle to support young children’s growing knowledge and understanding in areas such as social justice and awareness of their local environment. Raewyn Penman and Rachael Maiden describe a series of children’s art projects provoked by a natural phenomenon that became a rich source of learning in a kindergarten. Their article highlights artistic ways of knowing as they describe how the children used visual arts to voice their ideas and thoughts and to document and assess their own learning. Natalie Kauffman’s Blank Canvases art program was inspired by the Reggio Emilia atelier. Her article explores the potential of the studio in schools to support artistic processes of speculation, research, creation, reflection, and dialogue. Finally, Adrienne Argent gives insight into the creation of a living curriculum provoked by contemporary art. Rather than contemplating objects of art as finished pieces with inherent meanings, her article shows how materials and themes are in a constant state of becoming. Detailing what was produced by an encounter with an art exhibit, she describes how the encounter enlivened the children’s spaces, materials, and unfolding artistic processes, and how she too felt entangled in the artist’s work in an embodied response.

The authors’ experimentations with the visual arts invite us to create innovative spaces where we, and young children, can imagine the world in alternate ways.

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