

ec ART nz

[Welcome](#)[Stories](#)[Resources](#)[Contact](#)**Issue 13, 2016**

**emagazine of professional practice
for early childhood educators
in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Kia Ora Koutou

Happy New Year!

Welcome to the 13th issue of ecARTnz, the first for 2016. This issue showcases three exciting visual art education stories from early childhood centres around the country.

The first story comes from Early Years Nevis Street in Petone, Wellington. Penny Burgess and Sheryl Davies describe how, with their children, they developed a wharehau in their centre. The space has transformed the centre's environment and become a place for rest and reflection, and one which celebrates the rich diversity of their community. Much of the inspiration for the art work in the wharehau was drawn from their local Maori legend *Ngake and Whatataitai, the Taniwha of Wellington Harbour*.

In our second story Kirsty Tod from St Clair Corner Early Learning Centre, located in the centre of Dunedin, describe how they used the work of the Austrian artist Hundertwasser to inspire the children's art explorations of plants they were growing in the centre. The vibrant and unique art work created by the children culminated in a small exhibition for the children's whanau and friends.

Our last story by Rod Eales from Early Childhood on Stafford (also in Dunedin), examines her process of developing a children's story book using illustrations by the four year-old children at her centre. The project highlights how drawing can be a really important platform for children's investigations, observations, discussions, and reflections.

ecARTnz is delighted that Eleanor Denton will be working with us again this year doing the design and typesetting for the magazine. We are always interested in receiving stories for publication so please send them through to lisa.terreni@vuw.ac.nz

We hope that you will enjoy this issue, and that it will inspire your own visual art education programmes.

Lisa Terreni

Editor ecARTnz



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Stories

The Development of Te Puna Ora te Whare

Life and Colour in Our Urban Space

When Pokey Popped Out: A collaborative effort



The Development of Te Puna Ora te Whare

**Written by Penny Burgess and Sheryl Davies -
teachers at Early Years Nevis Street, Petone.**

When Tess, one of our registered teachers, returned from a Māori leadership professional development course, she was inspired to look at the way our centre acknowledged, respected, and supported te reo me ngā tikanga Māori. As a result of the experience, Tess and Penny (the Head Teacher) began discussing the purpose of one of our play spaces that was also a sleeping space at certain times of the day. The discussion led to the idea of developing this area into a wharenui, a meeting place. Alongside Kerry, our in-centre artist and teacher, we started to bring our ideas to life ... and so our journey of transformation began.

To involve children in the planning process a trip was organised for eight children to visit the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa so that they could examine both traditional and contemporary wharenui that are displayed there. The teachers wanted to integrate children's insights, views and ideas into the planning. Following the discussions of the teaching team and the children and with the support of our manager Sheryl, we decided to dedicate this space for whānau times, sleep times, quiet learning experiences, dancing, and storytelling throughout the day. Together the teaching team and children developed a concrete plan for creating our wharenui through incorporating traditional Māori ideas as well as those of the children.



We started by creating a wall panel for each of our tamariki using bamboo as a divider. In each panel we placed a kete for each child's profile books and a whānau page which was designed by their family to represent them.



Next, the team built a central spine for our wharenui. Using felt pens on long wooden planks, that were then joined together, the children drew their families and whānau. These became the ancestors of our wharenui.



The wharenui space has two entrances which were incorporated into the design. The artwork for our main entrance was decorated with silver ferns and koru. These represent the children and also symbolise new life, growth, strength, and peace. The name of our wharenui, Te Puna Ora te Whare, is also written there.



The side entrance is decorated with the children's drawings of the taniwha Ngake and Whāitaitai who created Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington Harbour. Inside the wharenui there is also a mural showing the children's interpretation of this local pūrākau (traditional Māori legend). The legend is important to us because of our location in Petone at the far end of the harbour. It also gives us a powerful connection to, and knowledge about, features of the area of physical and/or spiritual significance to the local community (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 56).



Inside the wharenuī we created heke (rafters) by tie-dying four strips of fabric - two green and two blue. Within the wharenuī, the heke symbolises the ribs of our ancestors. On the green one we printed fantails and on the blue we printed eels. They hang across the spine to represent all of our maunga (mountains) and awa (rivers).

Along the walls we have displayed the New Zealand national flag, the Early Years Nevis Street Preschool Treaty, and the centre's korowai (cloak). On the end wall teachers have also displayed flags from the various countries of the children who attend Early Years Nevis Street. While wanting to integrate a sense of New Zealand's bicultural heritage, the wharenuī has also been developed to ensure a strong sense of belonging for every child's whānau and cultural background within preschool.



To ensure the importance and authenticity of the wharenui and to value the development work that was done we invited Kura Moeahu, a Kaumatua from the Open Polytechnic, to join us for our opening ceremony. Kura gifted us with a name for our wharenui, Te Puna Ora, and blessed the space. He welcomed children and whānau, community, and guests to enjoy and admire our work and to appreciate the aspects of Māori culture and heritage that the wharenui represents. During the opening ceremony the tamariki did an amazing performance of *Ngake and Whātaimai*, their special story.



The name Te Puna Ora means the bringing of life and the essence of vitality. Kura told us that “Our children are the essence of whānau and bring life, energy and happiness to this place. Therefore, as our tamariki are the ones who are welcoming new friends and whānau to our centre this name represents their whare”. We all agree because we see that our tamariki are the life essence of their families, as well as being the life and spirit of vitality within our centre.

While this space has been transformed from a busy play space to a place for rest and reflection the transition has not always been smooth! But with lots of hard work and collaboration between team members, whānau and the children, our wharenui has developed and grown into what we have today. Te Puna Ora will continue to grow and develop over time as the walls become decorated and the history of the room is brought to life and celebrated.

Our plan from here is to develop a way to build this special space into the centre’s celebrations to ensure the knowledge of Te Puna Ora is carried from child to child as they spend their time learning and growing at Early Years Nevis Street.

Recommended reading:

Rau, C. & Ritchie, J. (2011). Ahakoa he iti: Early childhood pedagogies affirming of Māori children’s rights to their culture. *Early Education and Development*, 22(5), 795-817.

Life and Colour in Our Urban Space:

Exploring the inspiration and works of Friedensreich Hundertwasser

Written by Kirsty Tod, St. Clair Corner Early Learning Centre, Dunedin



Within the walls of our central city early childhood centre in Dunedin we celebrated the end of the cold, grey winter by sowing a selection of vegetable and flower seeds. These were placed on the windowsills to drink in the warmth of the early spring sunshine and it wasn't long before the first of the seeds had germinated and pushed their way through the soil to greet our excited children. Each day we welcomed a new variety of seedling, and discussed its height, shape and colour. We learned about the process of growth and how to care for plants at each stage of their life. We put coloured water into a vase of white daffodils from the garden and observed the way they sucked up moisture, watching the vivid colours seep through the veins in their petals. Over a couple of weeks, our space had been transformed. Our room had become more alive, vibrant and exiting, and the urban view through our windows was now framed by life and colour; the perfect inspiration for some new artwork!



I was reminded of the works by Friedensrieche Hundertwasser, an eccentric Austrian artist who settled in New Zealand during the latter part of his life. Hundertwasser was a humanitarian, environmentalist, and architect who dedicated his life to the beautification of the world we live in. He believed that people are not happy when they lose their connection with nature and that people should be able to enjoy green surroundings and be close to nature even if they live in the middle of the city. In his distinctive artworks Hundertwasser used the organic lines and vibrant colours of nature to create magical worlds that contrasted with the harsh and stark straight edges of urban environments. I felt that he was the perfect artist to inspire our children at this time.



Hundertwasser once said, "The spiral grows and dies like a plant - the lines of the spiral, like a meandering river, follow the laws of growth of a plant". So we started our art project by experimenting with the element of shape. We discussed Hundertwasser's representation of plants and trees and his use of flowing, curving, spirals and circular forms. In response the children created sets of nesting circles to represent the foliage of trees, using cotton tips and black acrylic paint. This technique proved to be a successful way to create thin, organic lines, and enhanced children's control of, and skill with, our chosen medium.





As the circular trees were drying, we reinvestigated the works of our chosen artist (see examples of his work at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fDVVUp9xc8>), taking particular notice of his background shapes and lines. The children used interesting words such as, “lumpy”, “wavy”, “bumpy”, “smooth”, “hilly” and, “like pathways” to describe the space beyond Hundertwasser’s circular tree forms. Paintbrushes were used to create bold black lines on large sheets of card, and the children enjoyed the flow of the paint as they wound their brushes up, down and around across their picture plane.

Hundertwasser’s work is perfect for provoking discussion about primary and secondary colours. These ranges of colour are visible in his works and come alive as they weave their way between black outlines. We studied Hundertwasser’s colour choices and the children used their new knowledge to mix a palette of vibrant secondary colours. With great care, we applied our individual colour choices to the spaces between the background lines. One of the children exclaimed, “This is like a big colouring in book!” Our circle nests were next in receiving the addition of colour. It was inspiring to observe the variety of decisions being made by the children, and to listen to their discussions as they worked ... “Mine looks like a target”, “Mine is a lollipop”, “I’m not doing colour, white will look better”.

To accentuate the black lines and deepen the cooler colours - blue, purple and green, we used a clear enamel varnish, applying a slick glossy coat to our backgrounds. This was also another technique to create contrast between background and subject matter. Then, using scissors, the circular tree-tops were carefully cut out and were attached to the backgrounds using double-sided foam tape. Working individually with each child, I placed their tree-tops in front of them, asking them to consider how each piece would fit on to the picture plane. We looked at Hundertwasser’s work again, taking note of how he arranged his trees. I asked several questions: “Do his trees overlap?” “Are they in a straight line?” “Are they close to the top or bottom of the painting?” With their answers in mind, each child carefully attached their tree-tops to their backgrounds.





It was very interesting to observe the range of final compositional decisions that were being made. Some children took inspiration directly from Hundertwasser's works, constantly referencing the examples provided as they placed the tree-tops with precision. Others followed their own design methods, using straight lines or following reference points from their backgrounds. The final stage of the art process involved using a sauce bottle to squeeze out lines of thick, black, glossy paint. Running from the base of each tree-top to the bottom of the painting, these vertical lines represented tree-trunks and made for an interesting juxtaposition against the horizontal lines of the background.

The array of beautiful, vibrant, interesting and unique paintings created by children was more than enough to brighten the hallways and foyer of our centre. We displayed the works as a small exhibition, to share our new knowledge and achievements with whānau and friends. The works inspired much conversation from our viewers, who appreciated the colours and techniques we had used. Some were able to contribute their own stories about original Hundertwasser works they had seen.



This art project has direct links to the Exploration strand in *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand early childhood curriculum where teachers are tasked with creating learning opportunities through which "... children develop confidence in using a variety of strategies for exploring and making sense of the world, such as in setting and solving problems, looking for patterns, classifying things for a purpose, guessing, using trial and error, thinking logically and making comparisons, asking questions, explaining to others, listening to others, participating in reflective discussion, planning, observing and listening to stories" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 88).

The project resulted in some exciting learning opportunities for children, teachers and their families and our centre was now full of life, art and colour!

Recommended reading:

- ecARTnz (2014, Issue 9). *Can you believe it? Albany Kindergarten has a Hundertwasser wall.*
- Reggio Children (2004). *Children, art and artists: The expressive languages of children, the artistic language of Alberto Burri.* Reggio Emilia, Italy: Reggio Children.

When Pokey Popped Out: A collaborative effort

Rod Eales, teacher at Early Childhood on Stafford

When Pokey popped out is a children's story book that I wrote recently. It was illustrated by a group of 4 year-olds at Early Childhood on Stafford in Dunedin where I work. The development of the book about Pokey is a unique story in itself - how the journey began, how the work unfolded, and finally how it culminated in the publication of a story book. This article describes the journey instigated by 4 year-old Alice who has an insatiable passion for wildlife of every kind. She inspired her peers and I to embark on an in-depth exploration into the lives of penguins. Little did we know what lay ahead!

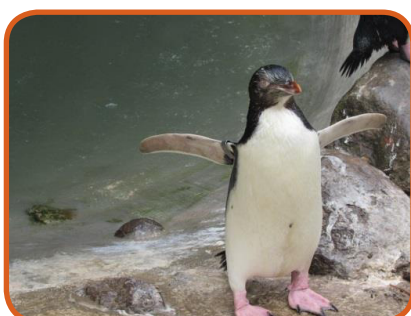


Alice has always lived and breathed wildlife, and has an absolute passion for the natural world. Her pockets are always bulging with precious natural objects and she is constantly scanning the environment for more. Often found immersed in reference books about the wildlife of the world, she will stay focused on these books for up to an hour at a time. She has coordinated the construction of two aquariums at home, and amassed a zoo-like collection of almost all of the soft toy wildlife animals available (courtesy of the Otago Museum Shop). According to her family, shopping with Alice for this type of wildlife is indeed a dangerous pursuit!

Alice was delighted when she found that some of her peers and I shared her interest in penguins. Together we began researching different kinds of penguins until we narrowed our interest down to the Yellow-Eyed penguin found on the Otago Peninsula (see for instance <http://www.otago-peninsula.co.nz/penguinplace.html>) which is part of our local Dunedin environment.

Drawing became the main platform for children's investigations, observations, discussions and reflections. Through this medium, children were able to visually communicate their understandings about a range of 'things penguin' – their habitats, behaviours, molting, feeding and nesting patterns, as well as information about their predators. During our research we sourced information from the internet, library books, videos, figurines and the Otago Museum. Throughout this research process Alice and her peers documented their learning by being prolific drawers.

Alice's desire to see a real penguin was the catalyst for our trip to Penguin Place, a penguin conservation reserve for the protection of the Yellow-Eyed penguin, on the Otago Peninsula. This experience offered the children a rich learning opportunity. They were filled with awe by the realities of these rare sea birds and their previous learning was reinforced. We saw penguins during the moulting season and observed twenty five of them convalescing in the penguin hospital (see <http://www.penguinplace.co.nz/conservation-project/>). Our guide highlighted the dangers of predators on the Peninsula, and took us to see one of the traps laid for rats and stoats – a grim sight for us all.



Later, children expressed their concern for the penguins and their precarious existence at Penguin Place. The need to eliminate cats and dogs from the area became apparent to children, so we had to differentiate between their pets and the wild cats and dogs that hurt penguins. Nonetheless, they recognised that the feeding habits of sea lions and leopard seals (who love a penguin snack) were a natural part of living in that environment. Every wild animal has to eat! In a series of dramatic re-enactments of the penguin experience using puppets, children began to tell their stories about penguins living with their families and being hunted - either by barracuda, sharks, sea lions, or stoats. For several weeks we played out numerous ideas using puppets that we had either made, or puppets that children brought from home.

All these experiences started to shape my story 'When Pokey Popped Out'. After a weekend of personal hibernation, I returned to the centre with the story written and children judged it a success. Over the next few weeks they became familiar with the plot, the rhyming sequence of the text, and the characters in the story.

Back at the drawing table, children began representing various aspects of the Pokey story, which inspired me to present them with a new challenge - how about we each draw parts of the Pokey story? How about we turn it into a book? With a huge amount of commitment and enthusiasm, this group of passionate drawers wholeheartedly rose to the challenge.

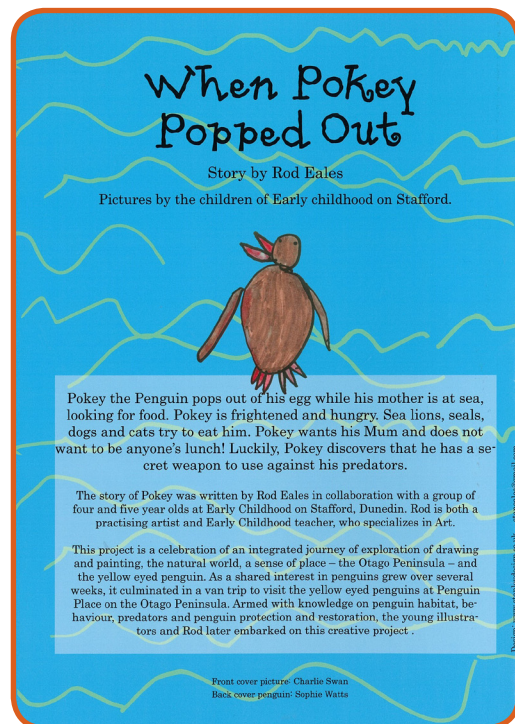
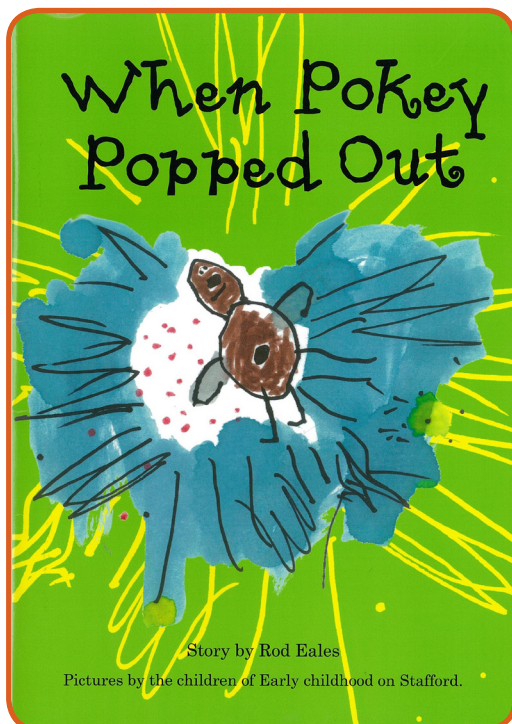




Children's familiarity with the story, their identification with Pokey, and their knowledge of predators that prey on penguins, gave considerable richness and meaning to the representations of each scene drawn from the story. The illustrations took shape relatively quickly and, with the text of the story, these were tested out with a wider audience at mat times. It was a hit!

Witnessing children's dedication and sustained interest throughout this project provoked me to risk moving into unknown territory and get our book published! So over the following month the book was compiled by myself, designed by Stan Eales, and printed by Dunedin Print. Our book about Pokey was complete and ready to share with the world - our centre families and our community all loved it!

The book has become a celebration of children's art and a tangible reminder of the power and beauty of the natural world. It symbolises the importance of fostering children's dispositions to strive for knowledge and understandings, and to believe that anything is possible. We all have been empowered by this wonderful process. Thank you Alice and your peers for your unending passion.



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Contact details

Editorial Board information

ecARTnz, an emagazine of professional practice for early childhood educators, was developed to generate new interest in visual art education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The intention of the editorial board is that ecARTnz will showcase examples of teaching and learning, literature, and conferences of interest to educators in early childhood education and beyond. We endeavour to produce an issue two or three times a year.

Members of the editorial board are: Lisa Terreni (VUW), Janette Kelly (UoW), Dr Beverley Clark, Nicky de Latour and Janita Craw (AUT), Jannie Visser, Dr Rosemary Richards (ACU) and Lesley Pohio (UoA). Eleanor Denton is the current designer and typesetter for the magazine.

The board is responsible for promoting the magazine, writing, reviewing and editing contributions, and ensuring that the emagazine is of a consistently high standard. The views in this journal do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial board members.

Contributions are invited for the next issue of ecARTnz. Submissions of 500-1000 words accompanied by up to 8 photographs sent as .jpgs are welcomed.

For further information please email Lisa Terreni at lisa.terreni@vuw.ac.nz