VALUING CHILDREN'S
EXPLORATIONS
OF THEIR VISUAL WORLDS
– LEARNING FROM EXAMPLE

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ABSTRACT

Young children develop and grow in socio-cultural environments that are rich with artefacts and visual images. Some children, whose preferred play experiences include drawing and artmaking, scrutinize their visual worlds to support their exploration of graphic images, drawing techniques, ideas and approaches. This article examines two young children's perspectives on their art experience – with special focus on some of the ways in which they developed their art skills through learning from example. The notion of encouraging or discouraging children to develop their own artworks by emulating others' artworks is one that can create tensions for educators, but an examination of research related to how children learn through interactions and examples, and get artistic inspirations from their popular culture, prompts a reconsideration of the place of drawing from example in some young children's lives. It also leads to a consideration of the benefits children might experience from drawing from example, and what educators might consider when actively supporting and extending young children's interest in such approaches.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that children are born into social and cultural worlds and, as the Australian early years learning framework points out, even "before birth children are connected to family, community, culture and place. Their earliest development and learning takes place through these relationships, particularly within families" (Council of Australian Governments, 2009, p. 7). All humans are in constant dialogue with themselves and others as they make sense of the world around them. Furthermore, educators who are aware of the ways in which the socio-cultural environment may 'speak' to young learners and invite responses, deliberately arrange resources to provoke children's active and creative engagement. Adults need only spend time with young children to be reminded of the power of the everyday environment to excite the senses – for example, adults may see a wet bench, while children may see a stage for performance. Adults may also see the ways in which young children learn ways of doing and being through mirroring and interpreting others' actions – even when the initiator may be unaware of their influence.

The New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017), recognizes the central role that children's socio-cultural experiences play in their growth and development

and positions educators (kaiako) as key participants in children's learning and development. It also acknowledges that children's interactions within their physical and mental worlds, in terms of materials, artefacts, tools, signs and symbols, are crucial in children's development of identity and understandings about their worlds.

Before sharing some of the ways that two children's interactions with materials and artefacts influenced their artistic learning and development (Richards, 2012), the following section will give a brief overview of some of the research and literature associated with children collaborating on artworks, learning from observing others or being motivated to artistic expression by their visual culture.

CHILDREN'S ART AND LEARNING FROM EXAMPLE

Traditional views: children's learning from example should be discouraged

Young children's naive style of artmaking has received attention in the adult artworld, such as when modernist art movements of the early 20th century sought a new aesthetic order and the avant-garde embraced the arts of indigenous peoples, peasants and children. Children's art provided a source of inspiration for renowned artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee. Some artists also collected children's drawings and copied them in much the same manner as they did the paintings of the masters (Pernoud, 2005). Within the Western world, this valuing of the naive style of young children's drawings has endured and may influence beliefs and attitudes about young children's artmaking and artworks (Richards, 2007). The belief that if children "copied from others [they] would lose their innate creativity" (Wilson, 2007, p. 9) has also been apparent. Indeed, over two decades ago it was acknowledged by Lamme and Thompson (1994) that "teachers have been trained to discourage children from copying artwork from each other or the teacher" and that these beliefs had become "conventional wisdom and theory, supported by several research studies that have supported such practices" (p. 46).

Rhoda Kellogg, who was an influential American art theorist in the 1960s, collected, analysed and categorised vast numbers of children's drawings between 1948 and 1969, from which she created and advocated developmentalist models to explain children's artistic progressions. She firmly promoted children's unhindered access to drawing opportunities, and she condemned adult intervention, colouring-in books, templates and other "adult gestalts" (Kellogg, 1969, p. 145) such as comic books. However, her work was based primarily on analysing drawings, as opposed to interacting with children, and there has been little documented research-based evidence that suggests colouring-in, adult-child interactions or learning from examples are detrimental to children's artistic development.

Sociocultural views: children learn through interactions

Socio-cultural perspectives on learning recognise the situated nature of learning, the influence of the world around learners and learning that develops through social interactions with others. In New Zealand, the education curriculums and educational approaches are influenced by bicultural lenses, and both a socio-cultural lens and Māori world views underpin *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017), the New Zealand early childhood curriculum.

The sociocultural perspectives that underpin the early childhood curriculums in New Zealand and Australia were influenced by the seminal work of Lev Vygotsky (1978, 1986), who maintained that

children learned and developed through interactions with people and objects. Children's social interactions and language were regarded as important mediating tools in the negotiation of knowledge and joint understandings (Vygotsky, 1962) – and communication forms including dance, song and art could be thought of as forms of culturally shared languages. In terms of human development, as children interacted within their social and physical worlds their actions and thoughts worked in concert as they arranged and organized their physical worlds with the aid of tools, and advanced their mental worlds with the aid of symbols (Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky & Luria, 1934).

Children learn through interactions, especially when supported within their zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is "the distance between the actual developmental levels determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The term scaffolding has been used in relation to the ZPD and has been understood as "a support system for children's efforts that is sensitively tuned to their needs" (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 20). Through an Aotearoa New Zealand bicultural lens, valuing learning within families and communities is central to promoting holistic development. Long before Vygotsky's notions of ZPD became popularised in the Western world the indigenous Māori concept of *tuakana-teina* acknowledged how, for example, an older sister and more expert *tuakana* helped and guided her younger and less expert *teina*. It is also apparent in learning environments that recognise the value of *ako* (reciprocal learning) that *tuakana-teina* roles may be reversed at any time or in various situation. As such, learning between novices and more capable others should be supported rather than discouraged.

In art education, and in other fields, the concept of scaffolding has been extended to consider how educators and children may become co-players or co-artists (Veale, 2000) and to appreciate the value of collaborations between children and others (Cutcher & Boyd, 2016; Knight, 2008, 2009, 2010; Kouvou, 2016). Also, the generation of new ideas or artefacts, including children's artistic explorations, can be conceptualised as a progression of ideas and innovations that is influenced by people, objects and events. Learning from example has a place in creative art experiences. As Freedman (2010) noted when describing seven aspects that creativity should be thought of as including "creativity depends on previous knowledge, and therefore, depends to some extent on reproduction. As a learning process, creativity builds on old ideas, images, and objects in the production of the new" (p. 13). She comments that learning from copying is a starting rather than an end point and urges educates to, "think of the didactic importance of copying, and then learning to move away from the copy, as an increase in knowledge" (p. 13).

Interactions between children and capable others during artmaking can generate creative outcomes. For example, Kouvou (2016) investigated the meaningful drawing collaborations between Greek student-researchers and children, which involved verbal dialogue, narrative engagement and graphic exchanges. The research examined the "cognitive accomplishments of young children involved in graphic dialogue with adults" (p. 275) and concluded that, rather than suppressing children's artistic expressions, the adult-child interactions, through both talking and drawing, led to "telling stories that mattered" (p. 288). Similarly, Sunday's (2012) American research with four- to five-year old children, examined children's peer-mediated drawing episodes as they observed and responded verbally and graphically to each other's work. This research also found that "new ideas and meanings form[ed] through spaces of shared knowing" (p. 1).

In my own research and teaching I have conceptualised these types of interactions and practices as being within zones of co-construction – creative spaces or outcomes that form when two or more people make cognitive and creative connections, where participants negotiate and expand on new directions that were unknowable before their collaborations. This research (Richards, 2012) investigated young children's perspectives on their art experiences. Through it I developed greater awareness of the ways in which co-constructions may not always be between living humans, but also between children and cultural artefacts – such as visual images, television programmes, popular media, books, artworks and objects. In such 'interactions' a child was able read or access an understanding about the cultural artefacts that then led to an advancement of their own interests and artistic accomplishments. Thus, interaction with materials and artefacts positively supported their artistic learning and development.

This point aside, the previously discussed examples of Kouvou (2016) and Sunday (2012) are those in which the social structure and environment were set up to promote joint drawing episodes and a degree of learning from others and examples. Research suggests that in their home environments, when engaged in art activities, young children may readily ask for and receive help from older siblings and parents (Anning, 2002; Burkitt, Jolley, & Rose, 2010; Kindler, 1996; Richards, 2009, 2018a; Ring, 2006). For instance, in survey-based research undertaken with 270 five- to fourteen-year-old British children, 44 teachers and 146 parents, Burkitt et al. (2010) found that 49% of parents of children aged five- to seven-years engaged in shared drawing experiences daily. They also noted that "children whose parents spent longer in shared drawing time with them enjoyed drawing more and had a higher perception of their drawing ability" (p. 264). Fourteen percent of the children, when asked what additional help they needed, requested "more pictures to copy" (p. 265).

In the New Zealand context, a group of early childhood educators engaged in action research that investigated the ways "visual art and a project approach to curriculum contribute[d] towards building a community of learners" (Wright, Ryder, & Mayo, 2006, p. 6). One teacher reported on the tensions associated with working alongside children during art experiences and children copying:

> Together the research associate and I proposed the question, "Is copying a valid technique for learning?" I already had some preconceived notions. I did not think that copying was a valid technique for learning. I felt it had negative connotations; it made me think of forgery and theft. (Wright et al., 2006, p. 78)

In critically observing children's peer engagement during art learning activities, however, it was recognised that rich dialogues developed between children as they copied and extended ideas and images. This environment that supported socially-constructed learning also promoted the young students' engagements and their "sense of belonging" (p. 80).

The social value of shared arts experiences, including learning from example, was also recognised by American elementary school art specialist, Laroche (2015). When reflecting on the values of promoting collaborative art experiences, Laroche maintained that "children ought be allowed and encouraged to copy and interact, for it is through these actions—along with singular focus on the drawing, painting, or sculpting—that children develop thoughts and ways of being together" (p. 19).

Children learn through interactions and observations: inspiration from popular culture

These two research sources (Laroche, 2015; Wright et al., 2006), suggest that children may benefit from interactions with peers and observations of their artworks – as not only do these practices develop their perceptual skills but also their social, emotional and communication skills. These positive examples are, to some extent, based on peers' interactions, in *tuakana-teina* relationships, in Vygotsky's notion of children learning best when working with a capable other within their zone of proximal development.

At home, children, especially those who may not have ready access to more knowledgeable siblings or adults, can turn to the images that are available in their cultural environment. Wilson (2007) pointed out that when children "make their own leisure-time visual culture it is often derived from comics, cartoons, and other narrative sources – from images often not classified as 'art'" (p. 7). I was fortunate, during a sustained period of research, to spend 10 months with four young children, who photographed and discussed their art experiences that they had in their homes, early childhood centre and school (Richards, 2012). This provided many insights into the nature of young children's art experiences, from their perspectives, including art generated through learning from examples and reimaging aspects of their visual worlds.

Young children's art experiences: Two case studies

Lee and Lilly were participants in a longitudinal study, aimed at extending understandings about the nature of children's art experiences, especially from their perspectives (Richards, 2012). The Australia-based research involved two boys and two girls, aged four- to five-years at the beginning of the research, who each had a digital camera. Over a ten-month period, in their homes, early childhood centre and schools, they photographed their art experiences and talked with the author about their photographs during regular home-based visits. These discussions were digitally recorded. In the first research phase each child was visited on alternate weeks at preschool or at home. Once the children started at schools, they were visited at their schools and in their homes after school hours or in the weekend. Siblings, and at least one parent, were usually present for those visits.

Research methodologies associated with narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in my research (Richards, 2012), ensured that the children's stories of art experiences, as they crafted them around their photographs, were central to building an understanding about their art experiences. Their narratives of experience led to the "the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance with respect to a research topic" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42). As their photographs provided evidence of their artmaking experiences and prompts for their discussions, the research also subscribed to a visual ethnographic approach (Pink, 2001), in that the children used photography to produce images that were significant to them, and shared their interpretations of these photograph.

Throughout the research the many digital files were viewed and re-viewed, and the children's discussions about their photographs listened to again and again. Photographs, and corresponding audio files, were coded and saved digitally in at least two forms of storage. As the narrative of children's art experiences grew it was possible to identify categories based on their exploration of materials, reoccurring graphic formats (such as making maps) and evolving themes and children's bigger ideas (such as a focus on relationships). Analysis of data was a matter of both zooming out

from the data, to see patterns, similarities, differences, connections and relationships across the data set, and zooming in to generate deeper understanding of each child's experiences.

The children's photographs and narratives generated the research data and Dewey's notions of *Art as Experience* (1934) was central in framing the analysis of these qualitative data. Although Dewey made just passing reference to children's arts experiences, his philosophies on art as experience provided some useful frameworks for understanding the nature of young children's art experiences. For example, in making sense of the children experience it was helpful to consider to what extent their artmaking activities promoted perception over mere recognition, a sense of completion over distraction, and a sense of unifying quality of experience over of fragmented activity. It was in recognizing and experiencing these qualities that artmaking activities might be considered to be more meaningful 'art experience' and in the realm of aesthetic experience (Dewey, 1934). A fuller description of application of this framework is outside the scope of this article, but examples can be found in other publications arising from the wider research (e.g., Richards, 2018b).

The research with the four children was undertaken with full ethics approvals from a university Human Ethics Committee, in accordance with the Australian *National statement on ethical conduct in human research* (Australian Government, 2007), and an approved NSW State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP) application. Written consent was given by the children and their parents to share their stories and photographs.

This article examines two young children's perspective on their art experience in terms of some the ways in which they developed their art skills through learning from examples and reimagining aspects of their visual worlds of pictures and artefacts. Of the four children, Lee and Lilly (pseudonyms) were the most prolific drawers. Both children lived in two-parent families and each had one sibling. Lee, a Chinese-Australia boy, was aged four-years eleven-months old at the start of the research, and had a sister Penny, who was older by 27 months. Lilly, an Australian Caucasian girl, was aged four-years seven-months at the start of the research and had a sister Raewyn, who was 21 months her junior. Lee and Lilly attended the same early childhood centre for two to three days per week. In the later part of the research, they attended different primary schools.

Amongst their many drawings were some that they had created in response to pictures and artefacts in their environments. To follow is a small selection of Lee's and Lilly's drawings and how they reimagined images through responding to existing artworks and artefacts.

THE CHILDREN

Lee

Inspiration from popular culture, artefacts, and cultural events

Drawing was one of Lee's preferred play activities and he created numerous drawings every day. In terms of learning from images he was inspired by popular culture and elaborated on these in series of drawings over several months. The following images, which are a fraction of the many drawings that he drew, were inspired from popular media, such as television, film and animations. For example, *Happy Feet* was a popular movie at that time and Lee had talked about the movie. However, it was a children's television programme that demonstrated drawing techniques that

acted as a scaffold, leading to him draw the style of penguins featured in Figure 1 (left). He also owned a Transformer action figure, which he played with often, and Figure 1 (centre) features Optimus Prime and another Transformer. Lee drew numerous pictures of Transformers, which he did free hand and as copied from cartoon images, videos and observational drawings of his own Transformer toy. The third drawing (Figure 1, right) depicts three popular media characters, Transformers, the Joker and Batman, amongst other characters and objects.

Figure 1 - Drawings inspired from popular media – penguins, Transformers and Batman (Drawings and photographs by Lee)

Although popular media, toys and images provided Lee with inspiration and something to draw, he did not attempt exact copies but rather created dramatic elaborations and scene settings – for example, in the drawings in Figure 1, a polar bear devours one of the penguins and the Transformers collaborate with Batman to fight the Joker, as (in Lee's words) "a monkey does exercises in the tree" (Figure 1, right). Kouvou (2016) had observed that verbal and graphic exchanges between children and adults lead to telling and drawing stories that mattered to the participants. In a parallel of this, it was observed that Lee, as a bilingual Chinese/English speaker, was a reluctant conversationalist with children and parents outside of his family. However, he was able to communicate in generally coherent and elaborate narratives when describing the graphic stories that he created. Therefore, being able to draw from examples he was able to combine images into more complex compositions in ways that conveyed narratives about the interactions between the figures. His drawings also appeared to support his confidence to verbally share, in English, quite complex narratives.

Figure 2 - Attempting similitude – Titanic, Doraemon and calculator (Drawings and photographs by Lee)

At times Lee looked for greater similitude between his own drawings and the images he copied from books or cartoon illustrations. In the above examples (Figure 2), Lee drew images of the Titanic, based on a book he owned, and his sister wrote some words on the paper. The cat

drawing was based on 'Doraemon', which was used as an emblem by the Tokyo 2020 Olympics bid. This character also featured in Chinese cartoons, which Lee watched. Both of these artworks were part of the dozens that the siblings drew to create a home-based art exhibition (for more on this sibling colloration see Richards, 2018a). Lee's copying of images also included drawing of objects, as evident by the photograph he took of his drawing next to the calculator (Figure 2, right). While difficult to affirm, one might assume that drawing from examples of flat images may have provided scaffolded support towards observational drawings of three-dimensional objects, such as toys and household objects.

Figure 3 - Drawings based around celebrations and commemorations – Christmas, Easter and ANZAC (Drawings by Lee, photographs by Lee and his sister)

Easter, Christmas, ANZAC[i] and the Chinese New Year were just a few of the occasions when Lee copied ideas from established motifs and modified these to create such things as Christmas cards, Easter hats and the ANZAC parade (Figure 3). Lee also benefited from watching others drawing. While his teachers seldom drew alongside the children, around Christmas time Lee joined in a teacher-supported Christmas card making session with other children. This session included his teacher demonstrating how to fold a card and where to place the drawing. Lee was clearly motivated by this experience, and in my home-based visit he was keen to also teach me how to make Christmas cards – thus the pupil became the teacher. The Easter hat (Figure 3, centre) was created once Lee had started school. He had participated in a colouring competition and he and his classmates had engaged in several Easter related craft activities. The children, and their families, were tasked with creating an Easter hat for a school-based Easter parade, and while his classmates (with the help of family members) created quiet elaborate hats from craft shop supplies, Lee was determined to make his own hat. He designed and decorated several cylinder-style hats and selected his favourite for the parade. For Lee, who was a prolific drawer, the school-based craft and colouring-in activities did not dampen his creativity but instead provided him with a range of Easter-related motifs that he could then develop in his own artworks.

Figure 4 - Drawings based on school worksheets and books (Drawings and photographs by Lee)

As a regular feature of home-based routines, Lee and his sister had after-school learning time. Lee, who had become skilled at reinterpreting commercial drawings for his own graphic and verbal narratives, had a selection of his sister's and his own school worksheets, and he reproduced many of these to create worksheets for himself and his sister to complete (Figure 4, left). On his school orientation day, the children were given a commercially produced worksheet, which Lee later used as a model to create his own worksheet (Figure 4, right). Over the course of the research Lee produced numerous worksheets that were either replicas of the originals or more elaborate versions. He also progressed to reinterpretation of coloured versions of book covers (Figure 4, right) and children's books.

Lilly

Inspiration from illustrations, others' drawings and toys

Drawing was also one of Lilly's preferred play activities and she created numerous drawings every day. Lilly also took inspiration from the visual culture but not to the same extent as Lee. To follow are a few of the ways she developed her drawing skills and interests through drawing from examples.

She was the elder of two girls, and as such she did not have a more experienced sibling to emulate. While she sometimes asked an adult to draw with or for her, she often returned to previous drawings to add more details, based on visual information she had picked up from her immediate environment. For example, in terms of finding more visual information to inform her drawing of clothes she looked carefully at real clothing and then copied the decorative patterns. Lilly created drawings as part of her bed-time routines, and this also promoted close observation of her physical environment – thus she created numerous drawings that included items of her bedroom furniture (Figures 5) and fictional interiors.

Figure 5 - Drawing and designing interiors (Drawings by Lilly, photographs by Lilly and her mother)

Toys and models also offered sources of motivation for Lilly's artmaking. For example, one entry in Lilly's preschool journal showed how she had created a representational drawing of a toy robot (Figure 6, left), when she was aged 4 years 3 months. Her teacher described Lilly's drawing process and commented that she "has a very good eye for detail." Lilly's interest in observational drawing and fine detail mirrored her home-based experiences, but based on observations and conversations with teachers during regular research -based visits to her early childhood centre, these skills and interests were not deliberately supported or extended at preschool. These journals, however, made children's art experiences more memorable, bringing their artmaking episodes into social realms, which in turn made these episodes more emotionally rewarding for children and for others. As a case in point, over 14 months after Lilly drew the robot (Figure 6, left), she showed me a similar robot she constructed at school with connector rods. Later, when we discussed these photographs, Lilly referred to the robot drawing she had made at preschool. Thus, her preschool journals prompted social and cognitive connections between her art experiences over time and place. Christmas gifts also provided her with new sources of ideas for her drawings. For example, Raewyn's mermaid doll inspired Lilly to draw several drawings of mermaid families (Figure 6, right).
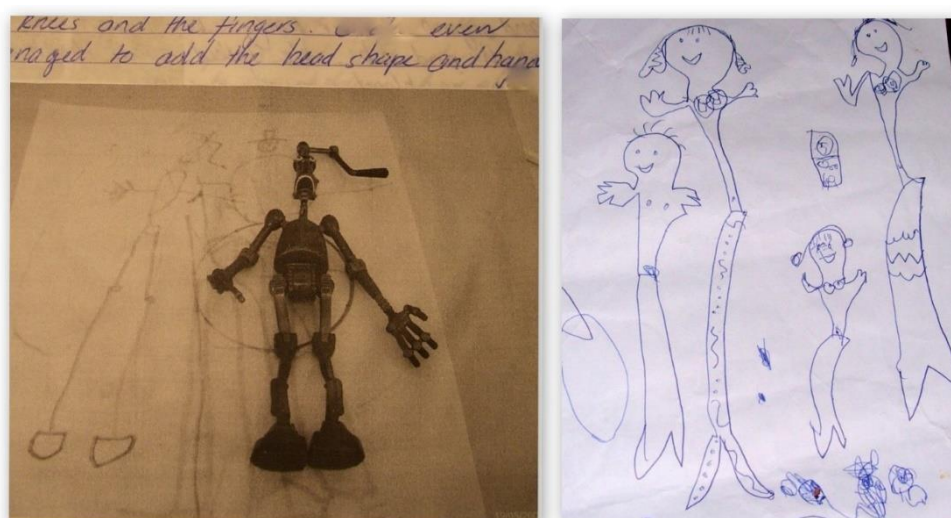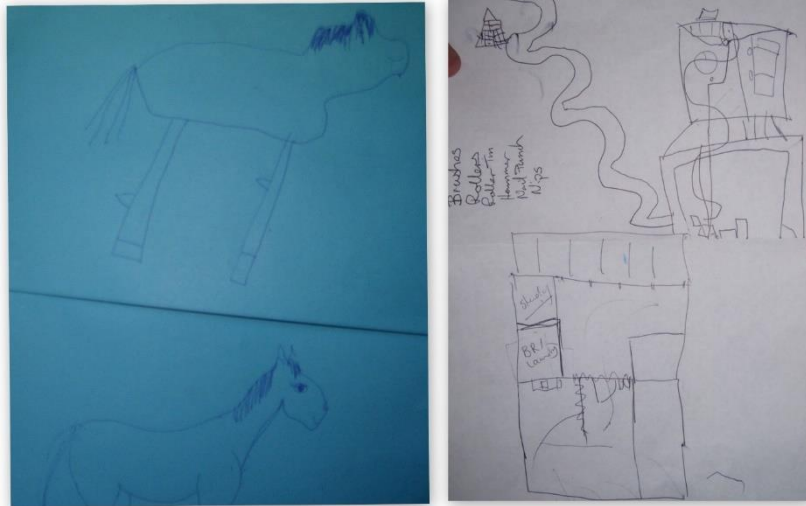

Figure 6 - Drawings of toys (Drawings and photographs by Lilly)

Lilly experimented with various visual effects and strove to develop the technical aspects of her drawing skills. She had favourite books and scrutinized the illustrations, animated pictures, designs and graphics with the intention of adopting graphic conventions that might assist her to extend her own drawings and visual narratives. Lilly's access to authentic graphic images from books and animated movies, coupled with her strong interest in developing her drawing styles, provided valuable visual information that she translated into graphic effects in her own drawings. Lilly's progressive development of drawing skills through careful observation, copying drawings and then developing her own themes revealed how she used the work of other artists and illustrators to help her to co-construct new understandings about ways of drawing (Figures 7). Although no person specifically supported Lilly's scrutiny of illustrations, her keen interest in art, and the research processes, which involved her in regular discussion about her art, were part of her construction of new understandings and on-going artistic development.

Figure 7 - Drawings derived from illustrations (Drawings by Lilly, photographs by Lilly and author)

Lilly's parents sometimes joined in their children's art activities, and Lilly engaged in joint drawing episodes with her parents, sister or grandparents. For example, Lilly created a booklet and asked her grandmother to draw a horse. Lilly then used this model to draw a horse on the adjoining page (Figure 8, left). Lilly also learnt a new drawing approach when she watched her father draw a plan for house alterations. Later, she added her own drawings to this page and employed some of his drawing conventions (Figure 8, right). For example, he had drawn squiggly lines intersecting another line, to show where walls might be removed, and drawn ladder-type marks to denote decking. Lilly used similar marks in her drawing, which she then described as a building plan. This type of architectural plan drawing varied from her usual drawing style and themes, but Lilly was very responsive to her graphic world. Lilly retained and extended this aspect of her drawing experience in the years to come - three years later, she communicated and showed some plan-type drawings of houses she was designing.

Figure 8 - Drawings based on adults' drawings (Drawings by Lilly and her grandmother, Lilly and her father and photographs by Lilly)

Lilly would also draw pictures and construct items alongside or with her younger sister, and at times Raewyn scrutinised her sister's drawing actions and produced drawings that may have exceeded what she would have produced during independent drawing sessions. In figure 9 (left) Raewyn shows her original drawing of the bug, and the one drawn by Lilly (centre). A week later Raewyn shared her own wriggly bug drawing (right) she was proud of this drawing. Thus, the skills that Lilly had developed through drawing from examples, were then shared with her younger sister through modelling, and Raewyn learned from examples.

LEARNING FROM EXAMPLES: BENEFITS AND CONSIDERATIONS

As discussed earlier, my research (2012) suggests that children may benefit from interacting with others, scrutinising and innovating on the images of their peers and others. This is especially beneficial to a child's artistic growth and development when it builds on his or her current interests and skills. Recognising the value of learning from example moves the focus away from mere imitation, to acknowledge the role of children's interactions with others and their cultural surroundings to expand their artistic expressions. As young children develop a system of "second-order symbolism" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 110) they understand that their graphic representations independently denote objects. They also become aware that other graphic representations, such as drawings, words and illustrations, have meanings that they can make sense of and learn from. Thus, their own and others' artworks, can become tools through which they can expand their repertoire of symbol systems. The New Zealand early childhood curriculum reminds teachers that they need to "understand the importance, for young children's learning, of materials, artefacts and tools and the signs and symbols of societies and cultures" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 61) and, as such, children's interest in learning from the artworks of others is worthy of support.

My research findings, as described above, demonstrate that two children who valued drawing as preferred play activities benefited from learning from other visual images and artefacts. A closer examination of their practices exposed that they did not seek to merely copy other's works, but used these as scaffolds to co-construct new understandings and graphic languages. Some of the benefits these children experienced included:

- Scrutinizing and replicating a variety of artistic styles and formats extended the children's drawing repertoires and drawing styles.
- Drawing from other sources helped the children to 'read' artworks and to translate marks into their own actions – a unity between thought and action that could be done in their own time and without pressure.
- The objects and visual media from within children's visual and cultural worlds provided motivation and inspiration for graphic and verbal narratives that contributed to prolific artmaking for these two children.
- Artworks and artefacts based around the children's interests gave the children guidance without demanding similitude – and they were more interested in telling meaningful and exciting stories relevant to their interests.

A consideration of the myriad ways that these two young children explored their graphic words, adds weight to the suggestion that "showing graphic models does not produce stereotyped drawing but enhances children's drawing skills" and "teachers should feel free to show a wide variety of graphic models to children, particularly those that inspire children in their drawing activities" (Burkitt et al., p. 268). Capitalising on children's interests for motivating engagement in art-making is fundamental to a successful visual art programme but complexity and richness needs to be added by teachers to extend children (Kindler, 1995; Terreni, 2005). This means teachers need to notice and recognise the learning that is taking place for children, and then respond by planning for a 'what next' visual art experience or related opportunity to support and extend them. In the spirit of co-construction, it is important to recognise that visual art learning experiences can also be driven by teachers' interests as well as family and community interests if they relate to and enhance children's learning.

Given that children may benefit from joint drawing episodes, learning from each other, and scrutiny of artefacts and artworks, consideration should be given to how educators might actively support and extend young children's interests. When critically reflecting on her teaching practices, Laroche (2015, p. 21) recognised that her attitudes helped the children towards working as a community of artists:

> Though I never directed my students to copy from each other, I did encourage it indirectly by presenting examples of other students' drawings, by providing an opportunity for students to present their work, and by never discouraging what appeared to be a natural inclination in some students toward copying. I would often tell my students that we all learn from each other and that it was fine to get ideas from other people, including those sitting nearby. In retrospect, I created an environment that was collaborative. Students sitting next to each other shared ideas, images, concerns. A dialogue developed and they came to know each other better.

Art galleries provide rich sources of artworks that children might engage with, but teachers' interests in using educational resources outside of the centre, and their fears and anxiety about using art museums and galleries with young children, can limit such opportunities (Terreni, 2017a, 2017b). Nevertheless, research with teachers and young children using art museums for educational opportunities has identified a range of successful teaching strategies in this context (Weier, 2004). These strategies could be extrapolated for use within the centre's own visual art environment. These approaches ranged from non-directive teaching strategies such as being

physically close to children, listening, acknowledging, commenting, encouraging and praising, and modelling positive attitudes towards their artwork and the other's artworks. More actively scaffolding children's engagement with artworks might include approaches such as such focussing their attention, posing and answering questions, prompting inquiry and encouraging multiple and intense viewings. Weier (2004), points out that "young children do not feel they have to be experts to respond to artworks" (p. 106) and as teachers gain confidence in engaging children in conversations around art, they too will develop skills and enhance their engagement with children's visual art learning experiences. For children like Lee and Lilly, these types of learning experiences may support their interests in drawing from examples and support the development and expansion of their graphic approaches.

While this article reinforces advocacy for supporting children's interests in drawing from examples, this support should be undertaken through a critical lens. Some of the questions that educators could ask themselves, and as appropriate, the children, include:

- Why are children drawing from other media sources? What are they trying to achieve?
- Is drawing from other artwork examples of value to them? Are there other ways to scaffold this activity?
- Are we aware of the material that we deliberately or unconsciously make available for children to draw inspiration from?
- Do the available materials offer images reflecting a diverse range of genders, ages and cultures?
- When supplying artworks and artefacts, do they offer a range of art styles and formats?
- The messages that surround copying/drawing from examples are very important. Are children receiving positive attitudes about a variety of ways to explore art?
- How might drawing from other examples be enhanced to become 'dialogues' with artworks and how might this lead to co-constructions?
- Do teacher attitudes about drawing from examples, or children's engagement with artworks, inhibit some children's interests in exploring their visual worlds?

CONCLUDING COMMENT

Accessing children's perspectives on their art experience has provided some insights into innovative ways two young children enhanced their drawing skills, experiences and interests through drawing from examples. Traditional notions of copying, where replicated images may be judged as 'good' or 'bad', depending on their similitude to the originals, has no value in early childhood art education. However, the notion of learning from examples does, especially when such support aligns with a child's interests and graphic explorations. Likewise, the value of working alongside and with others, where artists learn from each other, has a place in early childhood education. The challenge for educators is to provide such support for children's artistic interests, and it is hoped that this article may provide some scope for reflection and action.

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[i] ANZAC stands for the Australian New Zealand Army Corps. 25th April is an annual national day of remembrance, especially in relation to soldiers who fought and died in Gallipoli Turkey in WW1.