



REVIEW OF A NEW BOOK; "HOW CHILDREN LEARN AND CREATE USING ART, PLAY, AND SCIENCE: UNDERSTANDING THROUGH YOUR HANDS" BY SABINE PLAMPER AND ANNET WETERINGS, ROUTLEDGE PUBLISHER 2024

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"How Children Learn and Create Using Art, Play, and Science: Understanding Through Your Hands" authored by Sabine Plamper and Annet Weterings is a beautifully presented and thought-provoking exploration into the dynamic world of children's creativity. In this insightful book the authors delve into the essential role that art, play and science has in nurturing children's innate curiosity and supporting their learning processes. Drawing from a rich tapestry of disciplines including psychology, education and neuroscience, the book offers a comprehensive perspective on the developmental processes at play when children engage in artistic expression, imaginative play and scientific exploration.

The real strength of this book is in the stunning photography that serves as a powerful storytelling tool, capturing the essence of children's experiences and the dynamic interactions between children and educators. Through carefully curated images, the photographers skilfully convey the joy, curiosity and wonder that characterize children's engagement with art, play and scientific exploration. Each photograph offers a glimpse into the rich and multifaceted world of children's learning, providing viewers with a window into the diverse ways in which children explore, express themselves and make sense of the world around them.

Moreover, the photography in the book goes beyond mere documentation; it tells stories. The images depict children actively involved in hands-on activities, eagerly exploring materials, collaborating with peers and engaging in deep concentration as they immerse themselves in the process of creation. These visual narratives not only capture the spontaneity and authenticity of children's experiences but also convey the transformative power of artistic expression and imaginative play.

In addition to showcasing children's perspectives, the photography also highlights the role of educators in facilitating and supporting children's learning journeys. Images of teachers and caregivers interacting with children reflect their warmth, attentiveness and commitment to creating nurturing and inclusive learning environments. These photographs celebrate the important role that educators play in fostering children's creativity, curiosity and sense of agency, thereby underscoring the collaborative nature of learning and the reciprocal relationships that develop between children and adults.

Process-oriented approaches prioritize the journey of creation over the end result. Plamper and Weterings advocate for valuing and celebrating the process through which children explore, experiment and express themselves. This perspective emphasizes the importance of providing children with opportunities for open-ended exploration and discovery, where they can engage with

materials and ideas without being constrained by predetermined outcomes. By focusing on the process, caregivers and educators encourage children to take risks, make mistakes and learn from their experiences, fostering a sense of curiosity, agency and self-expression.

In contrast, product-oriented approaches place greater emphasis on the final outcome or tangible product of children's creative activities. Plamper and Weterings caution against overly emphasizing the end result, as this can inadvertently stifle children's creativity and autonomy. Instead, they encourage adults to shift their focus towards supporting and facilitating the creative process, allowing children the freedom to explore their interests and ideas in their own unique ways.

By highlighting the value of process-oriented approaches, Plamper and Weterings advocate for a more holistic and child-centred approach to education. They emphasize the importance of creating environments where children feel empowered to engage in meaningful, self-directed learning experiences, free from the pressure to produce predetermined outcomes. Through hands-on exploration and experimentation, children are able to develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities and a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

From the authors' perspective, adults serve as facilitators and guides, rather than directors or controllers, of children's creative endeavours. They emphasize the importance of providing children with opportunities for autonomy and self-directed exploration, while also offering guidance, encouragement and support along the way. By fostering a sense of trust and collaboration, adults empower children to take ownership of their learning experiences and pursue their interests and passions with confidence.

Furthermore, Plamper and Weterings highlight the significance of adults as role models and mentors. They stress the importance of demonstrating curiosity, open-mindedness and a willingness to embrace new ideas and perspectives. By modelling these qualities, adults inspire children to approach the world with a sense of wonder and curiosity, encouraging them to ask questions, seek answers and explore their own unique interests and talents.

Central to the authors' narrative is the concept of experiential learning, wherein children are encouraged to actively participate in their own educational journeys. Plamper and Weterings argue passionately for a departure from traditional didactic approaches in favour of hands-on experiences that allow children to explore, experiment and discover at their own pace. Through a series of compelling anecdotes and real-life examples, they highlight the transformative power of such immersive experiences, underscoring their pivotal role in fostering both cognitive and emotional growth.

Drawing inspiration from luminaries such as Jesper Juul and Arno Stern, Plamper and Weterings introduce us to these lesser-known theorists to emphasize the importance of self-esteem, empathic communication and the importance of the process.

Jesper Juul, a Danish family therapist and author, is known for his work on family dynamics and child development, particularly his emphasis on the importance of empathetic communication and understanding in parent-child relationships. Juul's ideas underscore the significance of supportive and nurturing environments in fostering children's creativity. Juul's emphasis on the role of positive

interaction and emotional connection between children and caregivers aligns with the authors' argument for the importance of empathy and understanding in promoting children's artistic expression and learning.

Arno Stern, a French artist and educator, is renowned for his research on the development of the 'Formulation', a method of painting designed to tap into children's innate creativity and self-expression. Stern's approach emphasizes the value of allowing children the freedom to explore and create without judgment or constraints. Plamper and Weterings incorporate Stern's theories to advocate for a more open-ended and child-centred approach to education, one that prioritizes process over product and encourages children to express themselves authentically through art, play and scientific inquiry.

Juul's insights into the nuanced dynamics of self-esteem, equivalence versus equality and personal boundaries offers invaluable guidance for caregivers and educators alike. By fostering environments that prioritize empathy, acceptance and respect, adults can play a pivotal role in nurturing children's emotional well-being and fostering healthy relationships. These insights dovetail seamlessly with the authors' overarching message of empowerment and inclusivity, emphasizing the importance of creating spaces where every child feels valued, heard and respected. Through the lens of Juul and Stern's theories, the authors underscore the profound impact that positive relationships, empathetic communication and unstructured play can have on children's development, ultimately enriching our understanding of how children learn and create.

At its core, "How Children Learn and Create Using Art, Play, and Science: Understanding Through Your Hands" is a call to action for parents, educators and caregivers to embrace a more holistic and child-centred approach to education. By fostering environments that prioritize autonomy, trust and inclusivity, adults can empower children to unlock their full potential, fostering a lifelong love of learning and creativity. Through its blend of scholarly insights, heartfelt storytelling and stunning imagery, this book offers a compelling roadmap for anyone seeking to enrich the lives of children and ignite their passion for discovery.

Plamper, S., & Weterings, A. (2024). *How Children Learn and Create Using Art, Play and Science: Understanding Through Your Hands*. Routledge.

Price: £ 24.99

<https://www.routledge.com/How-Children-Learn-and-Create-Using-Art-Play-and-Science-Understanding/Plamper-Weterings/p/book/9781032523811>