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Inspiring Our Pedagogical Imagination: Education Through Relationships, Materials, and Images

Shelly Goebel-Parker

So pedagogy implies choices, and choosing does not mean deciding what is right compared to what is wrong. Choosing means having the courage of our doubts, of our uncertainties, it means participating in something for which we take responsibility. (Rinaldi, 2007, p.170)

This permanent movement of searching creates a capacity for learning not only in order to adapt to the world but especially to intervene, to re-create, and to transform it.

(Friere, 2001, p.66)

The authors are educators in higher education settings teaching Art Therapy coursework, one at the undergraduate and the other at the graduate level. Since 2001 Goebel-Parker has studied, presented, and written on the resonant connections between art therapy and the pedagogy and research practices developed by a group of infant/toddler municipal schools in a small town, Reggio nella Emilia, Italy (2004, 2006, in press, Goebel-Parker, S., Evans, M. & Dontrich, A., 2005). The authors of this article met at an American Art Therapy Conference where Goebel-Parker (2005) presented on collaborative research focused on this approach to education that has been described as “an education based on relationships” (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 9).

For several years Richardson has studied and presented the application of this work to her clinical work with children with autism (2006, 2007) and attended a study program in Reggio Emilia in 2008. These authors have sustained an ongoing dialogue with each other about the impact these studies have had on their clinical work and more recently their teaching. This article discusses the application of aspects of this pedagogy and research practice to their classrooms as well as resonant pedagogies and their potential application to other higher education settings.

What does imagination have to do with pedagogy in the higher education classroom?

As professors, what we develop and design in the classroom is shaped and informed by what we can imagine to be possible in the classroom. Our pedagogical choices are aimed at experiences in courses of learning, with aspirations for application of some kind beyond the life of the courses. In our studies, we have been inspired by the way that the perspectives, practices and values of the Reggio approach to learning have expanded our own awareness of what is possible in our systems of teaching and learning.

In her research into this pedagogy and praxis Goebel-Parker (in press) outlined the “easily identifiable art therapy values that are resonant with Reggio values:

- Listening with our “aesthetic sensibilities”-(Moon, 2001, p.145)
- Intentional engagement with materials and environment
- Reflective -staying in process, staying with metaphor
- Artwork as artifact – providing continuity, embodiment, and traces of experience
- Relational value -staying attuned and connected in co-creation of potential space

Art therapist Cathy Moon (2002) discusses the central aspect of art therapy practice that she calls “the relational aesthetic” defined as applying to an “aesthetic concerned with the nature of artistic phenomena and aesthetic sensibilities within the context of relationships” (p.140). She describes this as a state of an attunement to the “poetic” in those around us which “creates an environment saturated with a keen awareness of creative potential” (p.130).

We find this description of art therapy practice to be very resonant and connected with the Reggio inspired pedagogical conceptualization of the studio (they use the French “atelier”) as central to thinking and research in their construct of schools. Though the work of these schools has been developed in the context of their infant/toddler schools, we draw on many of their pedagogical concepts for adults as they use these concepts in their teaching and professional development, (Gambetti, 2001) teaching adults, (Fyfe & Rinaldi, 2002) as well as educating the community about their work. In our discussion of connections we also find it helpful to draw on the meaning of the word *aesthetic* chosen by the Reggio educators – that of Gregory Bateson’s definition “responsive to the pattern which connects” (1979).

In art therapy counseling education the materials of the studio are present and utilized in most coursework. We often build assignments that combine this relational aesthetic and the materials with concepts and experiences. Most of us teaching art therapy have probably drawn upon these aspects to integrate the learning of our students and facilitate their professional training. This helps them to develop a sense of the art therapy experience, of serving others with an attunement and listening that supports growth and potential in the people with whom they will work.

The Reggio Emilia vision of teaching has impacted our capacity to imagine the complexity and depth possible in the classroom. This image has been inspired and expanded by our experiences. Goebel-Parker recalls the first connection she made between her experience of teaching research methods and supporting culminating research projects with art therapy students and the work of the Reggio educators:

The first moment of inspiration for my teaching took place at the Reggio Emilia Schools’ exhibit *The Hundred Languages of Children*. I was standing before a

panel of documentation of a child working with wire and clay. Her enthusiasm for a discovery she had made caused me to smile and nod, saying to myself, “Yes, yes! This is what I want for my students – the embrace of their research and learning with this spirit of discovery and exploration.” That became my challenge and inquiry - what could I do as a teacher to support their reclamation of this drive to learn, this intense curiosity?

The content of what is taught in art therapy is often discussed and written about, but the pedagogical conversation has been more recent. Feen-Calligan (2005) discusses the important work of helping art therapists to develop their professional identities as art therapists. Moon & Kapitan (2008) presented on the contrast of the transmission and immersion model of teaching art therapy. They shared their use of performance art to support the immersion model.

The narrative of this article also challenges a “transmission” model of teaching for our field, but questions it for all teaching. We believe that some of the language, concepts and practices that we have been inspired by can contribute to thinking about the how the complex and integrated aspects of relationships, materials, and images can live in our classrooms and institutions. We believe this can be part of answering an “appeal to educators and administrators to transform their institutions into laboratories where assessment and action are closely connected” (Shulman, ¶ 9, 2006).

In the laboratories of our work as art therapy educators, we integrate constructivist, studio-based methods and the “pedagogy of listening” inspired by our experiences with the Municipal Schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. The “pedagogy of listening and relationships”, as described by Carlina Rinaldi, means teachers are “listening and accepting the changes that take place within us, which are generated by our relationships, or better, by our interactions with others.” (p.88, 2008). Through our listening, and our respectful attention to the work and images of others as we seek to understand their visual language, learning becomes an intersubjective as well as an individual process, building reciprocity through working together. Within the framework of the pedagogy of listening, “theory and practice always connect, and are working together” (Gambetti, 2008).

Languages of Learning

We have observed that the process of learning in art therapy- and indeed of learning HOW to learn in art therapy- involves the use of many “languages” for expression and communication. In Reggio, the use of the word languages is used to capture the fluid communication processes of interpersonal communication, materials and capacities of the studio are referred to as the “hundred languages” that are at the child’s disposal. For students, who are often highly verbal, restoring power to the visual, sensory and kinesthetic

languages in art therapy can present a challenge. “Putting myself on paper. . . .how do I do this?” asked one perceptive student in an early class discussion.

To understand how art therapy helps others, we begin with ourselves, immersing students in what is, as in therapy, a complex process. As Bruce Moon (2008) writes:

The course of change in therapy is an intricate and difficult process. Change happens in the context of a complex weaving of relationship and experience. In the art therapy milieu, many relationships co-exist: to client, materials, tools, images, and artworks. Likewise, multiple experiences, such as tactile, visual, and procedural ones, simultaneously occur in art therapy. The intersections of relationships and experiences are where the curative aspects of art therapy are enacted (p. 117).

The reader will notice that we are beginning to encounter direct “voices” of learners and the individual voices of the two authors. As we begin to move into the realm of intra and interpersonal understanding it becomes important to pay attention to the emergence of theory building from the learners. Once students have some experience of art making in class and in individual art therapy journals, they begin to venture into their own understanding of what art therapy might be, and Richardson’s class talked about their emergent theories of the construct of “art therapy” in a learning group:

“A creative outlet for people to articulate their emotions and their thoughts, to express themselves; what they cannot do through their words or actions”

“Spontaneous pieces of art that talk about the inner workings of the person”

“An emotional language”

“A push/pull with what is on the paper and the relationship”

We have seen how the metaphorical language of art therapy is articulated and understood through our students’ struggles and triumphs with materials and images. Through this learning process, which is carefully scaffolded and supported, both understanding and images become increasingly vivid. The images themselves offer students, “ . . .the possibility to become commentators on their own knowledge” (“The Attelierista Perspective” 2008) as they learn to attend to this rich, subjective, visual language. This is the perspective of Reggio, and indeed, it is this richness that lies at the heart of art therapy.

Art therapy is not simply “non-verbal”, but rather, as Bruce Moon (2008) describes, “metaverbal” and beyond words, working with image, movement, and relationships. In reflecting on their experiences at mid-semester, undergraduate students are asked: “How does your artwork describe your feelings, ideas, or experience, in a way that is different from your words?” They are invited to focus on how their own relationships with materials and

images have changed over the course of the semester, and the different ways in which they have come to better understand their personal imagery.

Our students are beginning learners in art therapy and also developing as beginning professionals. They are learning and being observed, but are also beginning to have experiences as practitioners, who in turn observe their peers and clients. Observation thus happens on many levels, including, and importantly, the meta-verbal level of art therapy, where students begin to learn the art of being with their own imagery and “trusting the process” (McNiff, 1998) of art making.

In reflection on students’ work, we seek to nurture the visibility of our students’ learning and professional growth. Because our discipline is art therapy, we seek especially to build sensitivity to the expressive work of others. To build the observant, supportive attention, and deeply connected perspective of the art therapist, we observe, reflect, and engage in dialogue. The notion of a “language of relationship” (Vecchi, 2001, 212) is a central value for Reggio Emilia inspired education, and also supports our holistic approach to art therapy education.

The languages of relationships, materials, and images interact in a dynamic fashion in Reggio inspired art therapy education. An engaged exploration of materials allows students greater opportunities for expression, and also greater satisfaction with their expressive process as their mastery of the chosen language grows. The “language” of imagery can then evolve; and this language becomes increasingly rich and individual as the intentions of the students are increasingly seen in the work. Observation and dialogue, in turn, then can become more articulate and reflective. In the following sections, we will explore our own Reggio inspirations, and the processes and materials through which we have brought this inspiration into our classrooms. We will reflect on the growth of and visibility of our students as shown in their work, and in their work with others, as the process unfolds for them.

For Goebel-Parker, this questioning has led to a conceptual shift from valuing personal clinical experience and learning of the professor as important to transmit – to realizing how the most important critical learning happens for students at their own personal level of engagement. The pedagogical work then moved away from a heavy reliance on transmission of the experience and knowledge of texts and the professor and moved toward the use of that knowledge to inform the construction of provocations and opportunities created with students in order for them to have their own important personal experiences. Below is an illustration of the shifts

identified in actions and perspective taking:

FROM -----TO

Expecting compliance & “buy-in”-----Expecting participation & questioning

Student work to fulfill teacher requirements---- Student work makes their learning visible

Transmission of established values-----Participation in shaping values
Space and supplies important-----Environment and materials as co-teachers
Academics as theory builders with-----Academics, practitioners and students as
Students & practitioners “below on front lines” partners in theory development
Students as having needs -----Students as having rights
Doing “for” students -----Doing “with” students
Evaluation at the end -----Inquiry and evaluation throughout

These shifts lead to more of a relational stance as a teacher reflecting the relational learning involved in this approach. Cadwell, Geismar Ryan and Schwall (2005) describe this experience:

As teachers we aspire to bring all that we are to school fully present, knowing that if we do, something new is likely to come from our being together and that we will be changed. This is a big idea – that we teachers will be, and in fact want to be, changed by, and through each other and with the children every day. (p.144-145)

Languages of Relationship

Richardson will now relate the following narrative from the first person perspective to better illustrate the position she has had as a learner and teacher. This moving around in perspective can be somewhat confusing, but it speaks to the personal aspect of the learning that is also important to communicate when discussing aspects of relationship and the languages of relationship as they interact with materials and images.

I see one of my tasks as an art therapist with children to “help the child to communicate with the world with all his or her potential, strengths, and languages. . . .” in the words of Loris Malaguzzi (2005, p. 24). As an art therapist, I have long known intuitively that the children I work with may need a myriad of possible materials to engage with and to connect with me, the therapist. This is why, despite the centrality of my art making table in my office, I have always had an ever- increasing array of drums, instruments, scarves and streamers, puppets, and building materials- including sand- in my therapy setting. When I first encountered the concept of the “Hundred Languages” I was captivated, both by the extraordinary artwork of the children of Reggio, and by the idea of a multiplicity of expressive languages for children.

Making art, as both art therapists and artists recognize and share, is a communicative act. Cultural, linguistic, and neurological differences all may pose communication and relationship challenges. These may be supported through the making and sharing of art (Richardson, 2007). Ivana Soncinini (2008), a “psicologista” of Reggio Emilia suggests that, for such children, “our responsibility is to create situations where the child’s inability to express language is substituted by action, by doing something that expresses the child’s desires and

mental images.” This focus on the individual, their images and ideas is an inclusive and integral aspect of Reggio practice.

In the spring of 2008, having studied and worked with Reggio principles for many years, both in my own practice and at my child’s school, I was fortunate to attend an International Study Group in Reggio Emilia as the recipient of a Lesley University Faculty Development grant. Of the hundreds of participants from around the globe, I was the only art therapist present. And yet, I felt as if I was speaking a common language with my colleagues. I was also the focus of unusually well-informed inquiry about art therapy; something in the Reggio way of seeing the potential of children, the importance of building and valuing community, and the significance of languages of expression resonated deeply with art therapy.

As I watched the documentation of “children with special rights”, as children with special needs are referred to in Reggio, I better understood this resonance for myself. I saw a young boy on the autism spectrum, obsessed by his special interest in fish, create a school of transparent fish and slide them gently into the water in the sink in his classroom. A little girl in his class came closer to observe. Quietly, respectfully, and watched by the teacher, she went and got a rubber fish who could “swim” amongst this school. The two children played together, drawn closer by the process of creation and play.

The goal of my own clinical work with children on the autism spectrum has always been to work within a flexible, creative environment and allow art and play to become a focus of attention and interest for a child. This approach, I have found, leads to flexibility and reciprocity, strengthens relationships, enhances communication and expression and allows a child to discover personal strengths and preferences (Richardson 2006). In Reggio, I found deep respect for the potential of all children, and all learners, and an approach to children remarkably like my own.

Strong Image of the Student and the Teacher

The deep personal respect that provides the foundation for the languages of relationship are not necessarily as culturally embedded in the United States. While many people have no trouble imagining this respect in a school for young children, it is a difficult value to uphold and must be a central value in order to sustain the relational language so they remain honest languages, not just the performance of a veneer of collegiality. The increasing discussion around social and emotional intelligences is also being called for in universities (Vandervoort, 2006).

In context of many discussions around diversity and access to higher education taking place, there are pedagogies that have informed the Reggio Emilia pedagogistas and educators. Among these are the social constructivist and critical pedagogies explored by Dewey, 1959;

Vygotsky, 1987; & Friere, 2001. Evolving discussions about these issues remind us that there are many of us asking about how to strengthen the relational capacities of teachers.

In their discussion captured in the book, *Homegrown: Engaged in Cultural Criticism*, writer bell hooks and artist Amalia Mesa-Bains (2006) discuss their experiences as teachers in public education as well as higher education. They discuss how a teacher's negative perspective about a student impacts the student's learning. They discuss strategies for learning to respect student's experience as a major contribution to the student's learning - thus valuing the rich diversity of their experiences and contexts.

Hooks and Mesa Bains (2006) describe "resistance pedagogies" that help teachers to provide respect, connection and "watchful presence" for their students (p.60). They describe teaching that validates the prior experience of the student as worth building upon as providing a "model of engaged pedagogy that works and encourages critical thinking." (p.50). These strategies are similar to those used by the Reggio teachers in their classrooms and in the process of professional development, they provide opportunities for the learners to have their own personal experiences and recognize these as the primary location of the student's learning.

So the Reggio Emilia concept that has been very helpful to us, is the idea of the student as individual filled with capacity, competency and theories. They call this the "strong image" of the child. (Rinaldi, 2007, p.23) We have discussed the idea of seeing our own students as the capable theory builders that they are. This challenges to some degree the traditional role of the professor as the holder of theories.

Part of our learning has been to recognize the moments where our students need support to deconstruct the traditional role of professor in order to reconstruct a role for themselves that is less passive and more in charge of their own learning. Again though, the language of relationship becomes very important and the professor that wants to support relational languages in her classroom has to be prepared to make a commitment to struggle with the inter and intrapersonal work of authentic relationships.

Languages of Materials

Materials and tools are the medium to communicate by making visible.... emotions and experiences. Carefully considering the physical qualities of materials and tools can enrich the creative process. . . .because each substance generates different tactile and visual sensations. (Lopez 2008)

As we teach art therapy, we seek to immerse students in the experience of creating and communicating through art, finding and articulating a personal language of images and materials. Without words, and indeed beyond words, the images created are an expression of

self. The different nuances of emphasis and expression possible with different materials make possible a wider range of expression and sense of mastery with careful observation and practice. Often, this is a revelatory process. Both serious art students and those who may not have painted or drawn since childhood find new ways of using materials to express their inner awareness and emerging imagery, holding, as it always does, “hints of a self-portrait” in the words of the student artist quoted above, Liza Lopez, an experienced artist, discusses the importance of getting to know the “possibilities and boundaries” of different art materials within the new context of art therapy.

Mastery over materials and expression support confidence in one’s expression and feelings of self-esteem. Bruce Moon (2008) discusses the importance of this phenomenon in his “Art as Mastery”, a curative factor of art therapy which resonates with students engrossed in the struggle to make visible what lies within. The process is energizing. Natalie Kramer (2007), reflecting on the myriad of materials she had used over the course of the semester, and the many relationships expressed in her work, discovered that: “Our artwork is Not Shy!” She discussed her understanding of how, “each material has a different voice, . . . each one speaks through the images. . . quite differently”, but that all reveal “an expression of who we are”.

Students often choose to delve into their past history and present relationship with art materials in some depth. Students coming to the course from a counseling or human services background, rather than as an art therapy student or art student, may identify themselves as “non artists”. This was the case for Ashley Heimann (2007) who nevertheless beautifully illustrated her unfolding relationship with pastels.

Inspired by the work of her fellow students, she said, “I began my exploration with chalk pastels. I instantly fell in love with the material: the texture was smooth, the color was vibrant. . . . the possibilities of what I could create for this project (were) countless”. This possibility grew from the inherent nature of the materials. Paint, crayon, marker, clay, and even oil pastels did not offer her the “opportunity for endless change” (Wadeson, 1987) of a medium that allows for spontaneous flow and layering. Ashley began on her midterm project with the goal of forming a more fully realized relationship with pastels through exploration of the material. She challenged and pushed herself to explore light and darkness in her work, and wrote:

Knowing that I am drawn to using the bright chalk pastels, I decided to challenge myself by using dark colors to create the second piece. I started by drawing various shades of black and gray circles, then blending them together to create a cloudy, misty appearance...I felt there needed to be something more... I decided to add cool colors... The blending process was easy, but I found it difficult to know when to stop. Even though there is minimal color, there is still motion and depth to the piece. I love the product and I’m proud of myself for overcoming my own challenge.

Just as clients in art therapy have guideposts to understanding the expressive quality and meaning of their work, which unfolds with support from the therapist and mastery of materials. When scaffolded to develop their own personal relationship with materials, students too come to a greater understanding of this process at the heart of art therapy.

Language of Images

In Richardson's principles of art therapy class, students consider Bruce Moon's (1994) work on metaphor. He writes, "Metaphoric images contain an inherent quality of comparison in which one thing (the art object) is used to shed new light on the character of the artist" (p 23). One student, Brooke Jacom, (2008) was moved by Moon's approach, and decided to portray a series of doors, and her relationship to them, in her midterm project. She began, in true Reggio fashion, with close and careful observation, and explained, "Ever since I have looked at doors differently, the colors, shapes, textures, how they are different from place to place".

As she looked at the doors in her new home environment here at Lesley, and on her travels, she also saw herself "shining through each piece in a new light". The first door of her series she saw as portraying the beginning of her own relationship with art, which deepened over the semester. She explored techniques new to her as she searched for the right material to fully express her metaphor of doors opening. She then created a series of prints with the doors "opening to nature and wildness". She wrote of her experience with new materials and metaphoric images:

Each one represents the elements, earth, fire, wind and water. These represent doors being open to something beyond me, nature; and allowing myself to be in nature with all the elements at my feet. . . . I knew I wanted to create a (final) door that represented me. When opening it there would be bits and pieces about me. I used one of my prints, and cut it in half, so that someone could open and shut it. Inside my door. . . . I drew objects that I loved. . . . It was my door and the first piece that I wanted to show others (personal communication).

Complexity

"Complexity leads away from planning a lesson for what we will teach and toward searching for systems that organize and prepare us to think together" (Cadwell, Geismar Ryan & Schwall, 2005, p.167)

Within the art therapy classroom, we work with the group to build understanding of the work of others. How do we observe? How do we respond? How do we listen and attend to the subjective, visual, language of others? What do we choose to share with others, and what do

we expect from this encounter? An important component of our approach is to begin learning HOW to share and respond to work. Students create art together, create art alongside one another, and present their own work to the group. Both ongoing individual work in a personal art therapy journal and the experiential work created together in class are the focus of our attention. We observe, reflect, and engage in dialogue.

For the student beginning to understand the principles of art therapy, counseling, human services, or teaching, this relational aspect of learning is critical; for, “in a sense, the language of relationships is one that we need to know how to speak ourselves in order to listen to it, to understand and assess it.” (Vecchi p. 212)

Students with more experience move into practicum courses in which they begin to work with others, moving into and sharing with the community with what they have learned in the classroom and through their own work. Shannon Marone (2008) described her process of connecting with a child through art. She began with the child himself, his curiosity, and his energy, and provided the opportunity to create a large self-portrait. The two sat on the floor together, putting themselves on the same level. As Shannon traced his image on a large sheet of board, he enthusiastically came up with an idea, cried out an animated, “I know!” and sprinted over to her materials for cray-pas, his very favorite material. “I was”, she stated, “surprised at how articulate he was”, about the feel of his materials, his image of himself, and his questions exploring his identity and interests. A variety of possibilities were explored. As the portrait unfolded:

“at first he said that this wasn’t really a self portrait. . . .he called his image a robotic warrior. However, as a finishing touch he colored the skin brown, and then stated that it could actually be him now. I was really glad he did this. He found a way to relate to his image and then realized that he could, in fact, be a robotic warrior if he wanted. . . . he said maybe that could be himself in the future. This project really sparked (his) imagination. . . . it was challenging, creating an even greater sense of pride in the end”

By working with this child through the themes of “imagination, exploration, and experimentation” she had explored in her own work, he was able to explore art, which he “hates” at school in a new way: in relationship and in communication. His teacher was able to see, in the process of the unfolding work and the relationship, “the effects and power of the art making process” within an unfolding relationship.

The aspects of relationship are multiplied within a group. In conducting an art group for eight to eleven year old girls, Melissa Pielech (2007) focused on the overarching goal of building community and strengthening relationships amongst the girls. She strove to provide the girls with materials and experiences that would allow the children to explore the “whole picture” of their lives: both their respective cultures and their individuality (Gil, 2006). As she worked, Melissa realized that all aspects of culture, might “influence the content and style of

children's creative activities" and that this would be explored through their artwork. Thus she worked to encourage in the girls the sensitivity and awareness she was seeking to build in her own work and relationships. She endeavored to carefully balance projects that explored individual themes with those that explored interpersonal themes. Together, the girls explored friendship and sharing through their artmaking. As a final project, they began to build a three dimensional community, rich in trees and buildings, roads and pathways connecting one another, and of course, flowing paint tying everything together.

The flow of paint and emotion is a common theme for students in the classroom, building individual relationships through art, and for the connection between the members of a group. Our students learn this both from experience and reflection, as well as gaining an understanding of the philosophy and practice of art therapy. In the end, there is a parallel process of growth within the students' own work and their work with others. As she responded to her experience in a children's art program in her practicum seminar, Elizabeth Tremblay (2008) painted a tree against the sky, with strong roots burrowing into the earth. She reflected on the tree's strength as a metaphor for her work with children, her growing confidence in her work, and the learning she had experienced and shared. She wrote:

The energy felt in this spontaneous experience has made me realize we are like an ecosystem. I am the tree feeding off both the roots and the sunshine to help me grow. The moisture that is absorbed in my education is released to give these children the oxygen through communication and experience.

Making Languages of Learning Visible

A challenge of learning about this pedagogy is that it can look deceptively as though the children, or teachers are being left on their own to make these discoveries. However, there is a structure, a discipline of resisting simplified answers and of holding onto complexity. In discussing the professional development of teachers, Pedagogical coordinator, Tiziana Filipini tells Gandini, (2005) that teachers develop "a mental attitude, a structure" created "with a view that considers at once and keeps together how ideas translate into practice and how, in reviewing practice, we develop new ideas" (p.69).

Filipini (in Gandini, 2005) describes the practice of looking together at documentation of what is happening in the school and teachers discussing together about what they are discovering. This visible learning is then also brought back to the students and becomes a living, evolving image of the process of learning that is taking place. Rinaldi tells of working with children who are so used to adults documenting and deeply listening that she describes an interaction where in her listening to a child he stopped to say "would you like for me to go and get a paper and pencil so you can write this down?" (personal communication, 2001)

In the graduate studio course called “Creative Process”, Goebel-Parker has used digital projection of photographs of works taken in process while students are simultaneously working on their individual studio projects. This serves to make visible, not only the finished aspect of the work but values the emerging, developing work of engaging materials and ideas. Students also work to construct pieces of documentation about their own threads of inquiry related to creative process and this is supported by regular discussion and reflection with the teacher and the class as well as guests to the class.

The aim of this immersion into the studio and into the image is to support and as Filipini describes “activate processes of elaboration and reinvention, metaphoric expression, using analogies and poetic languages to build a personal image.” The process of inquiry emerges through very individual paths and through “an aesthetic and expressive experience that is not separate from the cognitive one... this process of elaboration and reinvention is the same one that the individual uses in the construction of knowledge and understanding.” (Gandini, 2005, p.69). So the construction of complex thinking and rich learning is supported by the complex, continual interaction between the languages of relationship, materials and images, making these languages visible, and at the center holding onto a “strong image” of the student. This inspiration has created within us, a commitment to continue the courage and transformation of our imaginations to create connected, relational and poetic experiences in the everyday classroom.

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