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## Aesthetic experiences of making with paper in The (artist-infused) Corner for under eight year olds

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### Abstract:

Artists bring heightened awareness of **sensation** and **material** qualities in the **experience of making**. In this chapter, I portray the sensate experience of making with paper spurred by artists as embedded living installations in The Corner – a play/making space for under eight year olds in the State Library of Queensland, Australia. I look closely at the experience of making as inherently connected to aesthetics (Dewey, 1934); in particular making with paper. Three artists make with paper on different days. Each bringing different insights of the sensuous qualities and making capacities of paper.

Paper is malleable.

Paper has memory.

See the creases.

Pinched paper

Folding with three hands

Poked

Scrunched

Cut

Waxed

Drawn

Torn

Transformed.

Paper leaves, birds, boats, nose and tower.

Children and their families make with the artists. Intense focus is experienced. The unlimited possibilities of paper come to be known in a library – a place of books – preserved entities made of paper – yet in The Corner of the library – paper can be reconfigured – is reconfigured – opening up the wonder of the aesthetic experience of mattering, imagining, and making with paper.

Attention to sensation, matter and making were gathered through sensory ethnography (Pink, 2015), aesthetic sensibilities and understanding of the vibrancy of matter (Bennett, 2010).

Performative accounts of artist making experiences with paper are shared to glean what happens in the experiences of making; what we come to sense, to know, to be and connect across generations and communities. Material literacies unfold.

keywords – artists, aesthetics, children, imagination, libraries, material literacies

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I invite you into The Corner to sense and wonder the aesthetics of the experience of making with paper, with artists and children, to see experience as “the entire organic agent-patient in all its interaction with the environment, natural and social”. What I share with you comes from spending seven days of deep hanging out<sup>2</sup> at The Corner with my research colleagues Roxanne Finn and Catherine Delzoppo in September 2018, to understand pedagogies at play between artists, children, families and matter from differing theoretical positions. [In this chapter, I read the data to explore Deweyan questions pertaining to making and aesthetics.] Our deep hanging out, had its roots in anthropology and ethnography<sup>3</sup> and embraced an open curious practice<sup>4</sup> to see what emerges whilst merging with the culture of The Corner. Whilst being in and with The Corner and its inhabitants, we audio-recorded conversations with artworkers and visiting families, and observed artist, child and family collaborations, recorded with poetic notetaking, photos and video.

The Corner is The State Library of Queensland’s (SLQ) dedicated space for under eight year olds. It is a glassed corner of the State Library, offering a fish bowl like experience for outsiders to look in and insiders to look out. You enter through the main entrance of the library and weave your way through a maze of single seater lounge chairs, with locals reading newspapers, utilizing free internet and curling and bending into folds of lounge chairs. SLQ’s values of providing free and equitable access, sharing, and belonging to community<sup>5</sup> are viscerally sensed. SLQ is a welcoming entity for all, counter to the despairing description Dewey offers of grand museums as a capitalist venture for the elite, segregated from the common life reflecting “the fact that they are not part of a native and spontaneous culture”<sup>6</sup>. At SLQ, especially The Corner, spontaneity and ‘common life’ are welcomed with open arms.

Past the lounge chairs, there is a glass display cabinet wall packed with child/adult/artworker co-constructed creations with their accompanying stories. This is the living collection of ‘art as experience’ in The Corner. It is alive, rich with stories, rich with rawness, rich with the aesthetic of the everyday imaginings of children and artists. Here you can linger and savor the joy expressed in installations such as ‘The Backyard (project)’, ‘The Qwinn’s Palace’ and ‘Three Tree Island’ (to name a few on display at the time) (see Figure 1). As you trace these raw installations you turn a corner and there is a large television set that you can enter on one side for live television show creation. Then past that there is a sunken floor, framed by tiered seating and a zigzagged ramp filled with a ‘Let’s play house’<sup>7</sup> installation of large replicas of home-made play items and varying loose open-ended play things. Here the everyday – the ordinary are magnified.



Figure 1 The backyard project [Phillips, L.G., digital photograph, 2018] The Corner, State Library of Queensland.

<sup>1</sup> John Dewey, “The need for recovery of philosophy” In *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1917), 36.

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Powell & Margaret Somerville. 2018. Drumming in excess and chaos: Music, literacy and sustainability in early years learning. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798418792603>

<sup>3</sup> Peter Wogan. 2004. Deep hanging out: Reflections on fieldwork and multisited Andean ethnography. *Identities*, 11(1), 129-139.

<sup>4</sup> Haraway, D. 2015. A curious practice. *Angelaki* 20(2): 5-14.

<sup>5</sup> The State of Queensland (State Library of Queensland). 2016. State Library of Queensland. About us. Retrieved from <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/about-us>

<sup>6</sup> John Dewey, *Art as experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1934), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Theme of The Corner installation August to November 2018.

The themed installation changes every four months and is designed by SLQ Young People and Families Team Leader, Stella Read and created by artists, who work in The Corner.

Stella: We try to make quite a blank canvas to start with which then changes and develops over the four months installation between the artist and child and the families, and their responses to the space and the work that they are creating, so what we have at the end in The corner is very different to what we have at the start...In terms of the materials we try to create space to inspire the artists and the families to engage. A consciousness of an overall aesthetic brings cohesion and coherence to the theme and space. Especially when working with a team of artists and contractors, it's very important to have a strong vision and palette of what that theme will look like. To consider what artistic materials will be brought in so that the disparate things that everyone brings, be it the artists, or the families, so that everything still layers making a visual aesthetic sense in the space...It's a room of loose parts. The artefacts of play tell a very interesting story of where they have been and what they have done.

As a whole entity, The Corner provides a welcoming sanctuary, a curated experience, and a dynamic playful space in which free play is welcomed and encouraged. The environment is the stimulus for experience. "The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way"<sup>8</sup>. Careful thought is given to the design and ongoing lively invitation to experience that The Corner offers.

To animate and ignite wonder in the space, The Corner rosters artists and program assistants on daily. The artists are entities in the space to extend the invitation of playfulness and exploration with matter. Artists offer materials and shared attention with matter, space and relationality without coercion. They are a living part of the installation. They invite and respond to interactions with others with materials. The artist's purpose is aesthetic, as opposed to the scientist whose purpose is solving problems<sup>9</sup>. Artists make with loose parts and spontaneity, marveling at organicity and vitality. On focusing on the aesthetic "emphasis falls in the constant rhythm that marks the interaction of the live creature with his surroundings"<sup>10</sup>. An artist's thoughts are "immediately embodied in the object"<sup>11</sup>, as illustrated in Tiffany's (one of The Corner's artists) reflections on the baby mats she makes for The Corner installations:

...it morphs into so many different things...The baby mats I must say I really love. I know it's because I do a lot of them but I never ever in my biggest dreams ever thought a baby mat could be so engaging with so many people. And how they would treat that or utilize it. And it's used for story. It's used for sleeping. It's used for play. I just... It's amazing. All the different permutations of it.

Whilst I was researching The Corner, the baby mat for the "Let's play house" installation was a large soft sculpture bath (see Figure 3), about the size of two double beds, with handmade bath toys dispersed. And the artist's offering of embodying the object is resonant in a Grandmother's sharing: "Last time I came, I lay in the bath and he scrubbed me from head to toe with every object in there". There are not many public places in which that can happen.



<sup>8</sup> John Dewey, 1934, op cit, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 16.

Figure 3 *Soft Sculpture Bath* [Phillips, L.G., digital photograph, 2018] *The Corner*, State Library of Queensland.

The Corner provides the liveliness of art as experience. I embrace this liveliness through sensory ethnography<sup>12</sup> and vital materialism<sup>13</sup>. No walls are built around matter and artists. They are there to be interacted and made with. I share with you experiences that aroused my interest and afforded me enjoyment, such as Dewey<sup>14</sup> argues for recognition of, whilst I spent time looking and listening and being with The Corner and all its parts. These are memorable moments of pleasure – all in making with paper. And through these encounters I ask Dewey's questions:

How is it that the everyday making of things grows into that form of making which is genuinely artistic?

How is it that our everyday enjoyment of scenes and situations develops into the peculiar satisfaction that attends the experience which is emphatically esthetic?<sup>15</sup>

And thus, I then ask what are the material literacies, that is how language and literacy practices intersect with the material world<sup>16</sup> that occur in a state funded cultural institution which is "a 'knowledge bank' and vital community resource, as much a physical as well as a virtual place for sharing, learning, collaborating, and creation. As a community hub for democracy in action, here everyone is encouraged to have a voice"<sup>17</sup>. To "see literacies as material is to see them as tied to space and place, and to a sensory experience" with "the analytical gaze...on the objects and the material culture surrounding the literacy practice"<sup>18</sup>.

To remove construction of aesthetic as distant, elite, from distant far lands – to be in the everyday, in the ordinary, in your own backyard, I particularly look to the live creature of paper. Attending to its malleability, its memory, its transformability, its shapes, its forms and its textures—it' sustained vitality from its tree history. I attune to the vitality of the experience of making with paper through sensory ethnography<sup>19</sup>. "Paying attention to the multisensory and emplaced aspects of other's peoples (and the researcher's own) experiences"<sup>20</sup> I came to know experiences of making with paper by being embodied, emplaced, sensorial and empathetic with The Corner and all its parts. It was about being there – being fully present. Playing with parts in The Corner. Talking and making with artists and families through a watchful presence, that is, deep hanging out. I share three vignettes of artists and children making with paper, proposed as 'art as experience' encounters that unfold material literacies and create publics and political action to reconfigure libraries as community hubs beyond print literacy agendas.

#### TIFFANY, AND PAPER RAINBOW LORRIKEETS MAKING

Costume and textile artist, Tiffany sat on the floor in front of the oversized play television screen. She had a box of sorted containers of paper of about twenty plastic trays with different papers (see Figure 4), sorted according to colour, patterns, shapes and textures. Tiffany cut paper. A boy in a striped shirt glued a strip of card. Tiffany leaned forward offering playfully animated instructions for folding and gluing brown paper to cover his strip of card. The boy looked and listened and followed the directions carefully. They were perhaps only a foot away from each other. Their connection was focussed and intense. In this moment nothing else seemed to exist for either of them.

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<sup>12</sup> Sarah Pink. 2009. *Doing sensory ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

<sup>13</sup> Jane Bennett. 2010. *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

<sup>14</sup> John Dewey, *Art as experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1934).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 12

<sup>16</sup> e.g., see Kate Pahl, & Hugh Escott. 2015. Materialising literacies. In J. Rowsell & K. Pahl (Eds.). (2015). *The Routledge handbook of literacy studies* (pp. 489-503). Abingdon, OX: Routledge.

Jaye.J.Thiel, & Stephanie Jones. 2017. The literacies of things: Reconfiguring the material-discursive production of race and class in an informal learning centre. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 17(3) 315–335

<sup>17</sup> The State of Queensland (State Library of Queensland). 2016. State Library of Queensland. About us. Retrieved from <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/about-us>

<sup>18</sup> Pahl, & Escott, op cit, 490, 491.

<sup>19</sup> Pink op cit

<sup>20</sup> Pink op cit, 63.



Figure 4 Tiffany's making sorting system [Phillips, L.G., digital photograph, 2018] The Corner, State Library of Queensland.

Later Tiffany shared with me, that “the most important thing for me to bring is to have the children feel like they are on the same level as I am”. Tiffany starts to make buzzing noises and locates in one of her many packets of sorted paper a piece of yellow and black striped paper and cuts two wing shapes, then gives them to the boy to glue the back side and stick on his strip. The boy was five years old and had been visiting The Corner since he was 5 months old. This was his first interaction with an artsworker at The Corner.

Tiffany: Oh, he was magic! That kid was amazing. He spoke very well but he wasn't a speaking kind of kid. He was holding the thing up to my eyes and saying to me it needed eyes. A lot of that you can communicate physically.

Later, a group of children gather by Tiffany and she asks: “Shall we make a bird? Has anyone heard of a rainbow lorikeet? They are very colourful and beautiful.”

Tiffany then snips coloured card into lots of small strips, then tears off a small piece of stick tape holding the sticky side down to pick up the paper strips, they are then stuck on the sides of a paper bird's body. She asks the children who wants to snip.

Tiffany: Whenever I need little bits of paper and I have kids who want to chop, I teach them how to cut up straight lines and then across. And then I've got a whole box. So, they can learn to use the scissors. Because often people say "Don't chop everything up" and I'm like "Hey, chop everything up!"

Children hold the bird body shaped card pieces bending them between their fingers. Small hands move bird bodies through the air in figure of eight patterns. Tiffany cuts wing shapes and provides two to each child. Wings are stuck to bodies with sticky tape. Small fingers stick to sticky tape. Three girls all hold paperclips – bending them. Tiffany sticks green leaf shaped card on sticky tape and tapes them to paperclip. Five girls now circled around Tiffany all eagerly watching. One child bends her green bird body card between both hands – I see it from so many perspectives – each bend creates a different shape – I see its side arced, I see it diagonally, horizontally, vertically, twisted...

Tiffany: Everything I do. I taught myself how to do. And so, if I can do it, they can do it. So, there's no boundaries. The only boundary for me as a facilitator is if I'm unable to do it or if it's inappropriate to do it. That's the only stop. But there's that sense of freedom and comfort. I'm a maker – a playful maker and a micro-observer.

Through paper rainbow lorikeet making (see Figure 5) with Tiffany, material literacies of paper, glue, sticky tape, paper clips, scissors come to be known. The possibilities of each of these materials are explored. Knowledge of materiality “can be important in developing an understanding of emergent forms of meaning making”<sup>21</sup>. Children self-initiate their attention to these. They were transfixed by what Tiffany could make happen with paper. This was different to a workshop on paper rainbow lorikeet making, in which instructor makes and students follow. Tiffany engaged in her art practice of making with her materials surrounding her and you could choose to join her, to watch, to take her offers of instructions. Tiffany greeted and connected with each child who joined her. Freedom and comfort were key to the art as experience Tiffany offered.

<sup>21</sup> Pahl and Escott, op cit, 500



Figure 5 Made and worn paper rainbow lorikeet [Phillips, L.G., digital photograph, 2018] The Corner, State Library of Queensland.

### WALTER AND PAPER BOATS

A week later, media and assemblage artist, Walter gathers paper and crayons at the same patch on the floor, by the top tiered timber bench. Crayons are rubbed onto A5 pieces of paper. Walter demonstrates rubbing with side, tip and angle of crayon to give different width mark making. Five children aged three to eight and two adults all lean in to watch and learn (see Figure 6). Walter then pulls out his keys from his pocket and scratches lines into his crayon coloring, he shares: "I couldn't find anything else in the store room, so I could pass around my keys to etch lines".

He then looks at a grandparent watching and remembers: "You put me onto coins another time" as he puts his hand into his pocket searching for coin, "but in today's cashless society I do not have a coin." Another arts worker suggests "use your credit card". Walter pulls out his credit card and tries etching with it. I remember that I have some Euro coins in my purse from a recent trip and go and get them to contribute to the crayon etching.



Figure 6 Engrossed in waxing paper [Phillips, L.G., digital photograph, 2018] The Corner, State Library of Queensland.

Walter: I just noticed something all of your coloring is more solid than mine, because you are coloring on rubber, whereas I am leaning on wood, so it seems coloring on rubber is better.

Children and adults stop coloring and look at difference. Sebastian then scrunched his crayoned paper.

"To create and destroy is totally acceptable, that is what I learnt from Walter another time" voiced Sebastian's grandmother, then asked "Do we need to color other side?"

Walter: This is what we are making (shows folded paper boats). So, to make it waterproof with the wax yes, we need to color both sides – at least the middle part that touches the water. Okay it is now time to start folding. It is much easier to fold if you have three hands. Do you have three hands?

Children frown puzzled and cry "No!" Helpful nearby adults offer an extra hand.

Walter: Oh well. This bench is going to be your third hand. What we are doing is nautical engineering – we are building a boat. So, we have to take care to do this properly. We have to make the bow and the stern. Nautical speak for the front and the back of the boat. The folds have to be parallel. They have to be the same direction as the bottom line.

Axel walks around to the other side of the bench, as he sees it will be a better height for him to lean to fold – a more suitably proportioned third hand.

Walter: Paper is malleable. Paper has memory [referring to how the folds are held in the paper]. This boat is going to be symmetrical – whatever we do on this side, we also do on the other side. If you launch the boat from a really high bridge holding it at both ends – the boat usually lands the right way up.

Walter generatively shares material knowledge of paper and paper boats. Children are mesmerized with rubbing wax crayons on paper, and folding to Walter's nautical instructions. They patiently wait instructions, carefully attending to the boat making sequence. Tall, with thick eyebrows, heavy set glasses and German accent, Walter presents somewhat like a caricature of a mad professor. On referring to the front and back of the boat with "It's called a bow and a stern", one child collapses forward laughing hysterically. Know boat by making boat. Material literacies of paper, rubber, wood, keys, coins, crayons and boats come to be known exploratorily, playfully and communally.

Walter: I've always thought that a good indicator for good artwork is that children like it. Because I'm not for, and slightly suspicious of the kind of artwork that is really only unlocked through intellect or on a thinking level. Such challenging of the elitism that is often associated with art, aligns with Dewey's (1934) pragmatism and focus on experience of the everyday, of the ordinary, with insight, with wonder.

#### TIM, BIG NOSE AND THE TOWER OF LONDON

Alongside the making bench by the outside window, performing artist, Tim shreds up strips of paper bag then tapes pieces together at one end playfully suggesting to two girls making: "Eye brows" [placing on his eyebrows] "or dragon fire" [held next mouth with gusty breathing noises], "or a hula skirt" [dances skirt to 'aloha oe'], "ahh in fact it is the tentacles of a jelly fish" [and shakes it in front of the faces of the children]. In this making and imagining frenzy, an irregular shaped piece of paper drops to the floor. One girl notices it declaring "it looks like a big nose". Tim instantly colors the nose red, sticks two eye stickers on and colors the bottom black for trousers (see Figure 7). Then grabs his ukulele and starts to sing a crazy song about Big Nose and Big Nose's friends bringing the two girls into the adventures of Big Nose. Then he invites me to hold a piece of blue furry fabric stretched out to create seascape, as he told/sang story of jellyfish in the sea with the paper jelly fish.



Figure 7 Animated Big Nose [Phillips, L.G., digital photograph, 2018] The Corner, State Library of Queensland.

Later, Tim comes to know that one of the girls used to live in London and misses it, so Tim grabs available paper, a brochure (of which there are many) and pulls the pages apart, and folds and tapes to remodel it into rectangular prism then draws some small windows and cuts and draws spires: “There you are the Tower of London, so you are not so homesick”. A beaming smile spreads across the girl’s face. The paper jelly fish reappears, shaken next to the girl’s ears: “Jellyfish earrings perhaps” Tim offers.

Wild curly haired Tim animates paper and spreads joy.

Tim: Like “there’s a piece of paper” and eight times of ten they’ll go scribble scribble scribble, then they’ll get another piece of paper and go scribble scribble scribble. But then, if you can get them to go ‘what is that?’ And then go ‘oh, it’s a something’. You’ve started the narrative. But then you go ‘it hasn’t got any eyes’, so they put eyes on it and now they’re building a character. So, you go ‘but what does it do?’ ‘Swims, but where?’ ‘It swims in the ocean like that’ ‘Yeah, but there’s a shark in the water going to eat it! What’s it going to do now?’ So, you’re building the story.

It’s not just joy for joy’s sake, but joy in imagining. Tim with paper cultivates children’s capacity to imagine.

Tim: We’ve got to get a generation of kids to grow up using their imagination so they still use it as an adult. It’s no good using it as a kid, and then say now don’t use that anymore. You’ve got to use it, it’s a tool. It’s a wonderful opportunity for human beings to keep themselves happy and in balance with the world and nature and be empathetic. You learn empathy by being imaginative.

Storytelling is understood to have a unique capacity to cultivate sympathetic imagination, to imagine another’s perspective and build a greater understanding of the complexities of humanity<sup>22</sup>. Is this the theorizing of experience that Dewey proposed in his question: “How is it that the everyday making of things grows into that form of making which is genuinely artistic?” If as Vincent Van Gogh is quoted to have written “I feel that there is nothing more genuinely artistic than to love people”<sup>23</sup> than building empathy through nurturing imagination is artistic: empathetically aesthetic (Dewey’s second question). Art as experience “insinuates possibilities of human relations not to be found in rule and precept”<sup>24</sup> but rather by being truly present in the moment and unleashing the imagination to flow.

#### THE MATERIALITY, PUBLICS AND POLITICS OF PAPER

Through attention to the interaction of live creature with environment – “the very process of living”<sup>25</sup> as Dewey defines, I came to know the vibrancy and vitality of paper: the joy of

snipping paper  
gluing paper  
folding paper  
shaping paper  
touching paper  
scrunching paper  
tearing paper  
coloring paper  
and  
animating paper.

I sensed paper’s vibrant materiality through the ideas and hands of artists and children. As vital materialist, Jane Bennett notes Dewey helps us to see “the affective bodily nature of human responses”<sup>26</sup>. And here I have shared brief moments where all present were intensely focused on responding to paper. A public gathered to make with paper. In

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<sup>22</sup> See Clarissa Pinkola Estes. 1992. *Women who run with the wolves: Contacting the power of the wild woman*. London: Rider.  
Martha Nussbaum. 1997. *Cultivating humanity: A classical defense of reform in liberal education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>23</sup> Van Gogh Museum of Amsterdam: Vincent van Gogh The Letters, Letter number: 682, Letter from: Vincent van Gogh, Location: Arles, Letter to: Theo van Gogh, Date: September 18, 1888, *Van Gogh Letters Project database of the Van Gogh Museum*. Retrieved from vangoghletters.org

<sup>24</sup> Dewey, 1934, op cit, 349.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>26</sup> Bennett, op cit, 100.

*The Public and its problems* Dewey<sup>27</sup> defines a public as an unpredictable and temporary configuration. The Corner gathers a public that varies from hour to hour to day to day and though there are regular visitors and it is designed for under eight year olds, its public is very much unpredictable. Dewey suggests publics come together because of the provocation of a problem. For many of the families that visit, they are drawn to The Corner because it provides a space for children to be children and a community for parents. Action in Dewey's sense of publics is a kind of ecology in which Bennett describes as:

No one body owns its supposedly own initiatives, for initiatives instantly conjoin with an impersonal swarm of contemporaneous endeavors, each with its own duration and intensity, with endeavors that are losing or gaining momentum, rippling into and recombining with others.<sup>28</sup>

The materials and makings the artists offer are not owned and didactically instructed by the artists. They are offered initiatives which attract varying configurations of others for varying periods of time and intensity. Likened to Dewey's imaginings of a public, The Corner gathers "a set of bodies affected by a common problem generated by a pulsing swarm of activities".<sup>29</sup>

Like Thiel and Jones, I believe that what "materializes as early literacies is inextricably linked to the materiality of space where children spend time"<sup>30</sup>, as witnessed in the vignettes above. Paper became more than its predetermined socially constructed use through artists making with paper, and children came to know materialities of paper and accompanying matter in a space fertile for making, for 'art as experience', for communality: The Corner. Attention to material literacies offers "a better chance of engaging in more ethical and justice-oriented practices"<sup>31</sup> by including a broader spectrum meaning making beyond the privileged written word woven with imagination, aesthetics and communality.

The invigoration of material literacies in an institution that is known as a collection of printed, preserved and ordered papers aka books, periodicals and newspapers, may be read as political. Political in the deepest sense of the word, that is being "able to negotiate diverse views and interests for the sake of accomplishing some public task"<sup>32</sup>. Artists reconfigure paper in a library. "Dewey (almost) acknowledges that a political action need not originate in human bodies at all."<sup>33</sup> And so, I wonder does the political action of reconfiguring the library as a family hub as an exploratory communal making space initiate in the vitality of paper. Paper catalyzes a public. Artist enhanced awareness of the materialities of paper is a political act that changes what people can see in the possibilities of paper, in the possibilities of making with paper, in the possibilities of joyous intergenerational activity. As Bennett ponders if human culture is inextricably enmeshed with vibrant non-human agencies, and if human intentionality can be agentic only if accompanied by a vast entourage of non-humans, then it seems that the appropriate unit of analysis for democratic theory is neither the individual human nor an exclusively human collective but the (ontologically heterogeneous) 'public' coalescing around a problem.<sup>34</sup>

I see that artists, such as we see with Tiffany, Walter and Tim, cultivate a culture that is "inextricably enmeshed" with "non-human agencies" such as paper, glue, crayons, sticky tape, paper clips etc. to work together to make, bringing joy, knowing and imagining. The beauty and real value are in the artists who subtly and indirectly catalyze publics, material literacies, imagination and community through being child-centric and sensorily relating with matter. In The Corner, I witnessed that by providing a space for playful making with no rules, precept, admonition and administration<sup>35</sup> that access and interest in artmaking happened whilst also ripening material literacies, aesthetics and imagination.

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<sup>27</sup> John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927).

<sup>28</sup> Bennett, op cit, 101.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Thiel and Jones, op cit, 316

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, 333.

<sup>32</sup> Harry. C. Boyte. "A Different Kind of Politics: John Dewey and the Meaning of Citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", *The Good Society*, 12, no.2 (2003), 4

<sup>33</sup> Bennett, op cit, 102.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 108.

<sup>35</sup> Dewey, 1934, op cit, 349.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Links and digital resources:

The Corner - <https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/discover/children-and-families>

The Paper Artist Collective - <https://www.paperartistcollective.com>

People interested in artmaking with children in museums:

Louisa Penfold - <http://www.louisapenfold.com>

Abigail Hackett - <https://abigailhackett.wordpress.com>

## SUGGESTED 'ART AS EXPERIENCES'

Social justice concerns: Make art with paper remnants, collected from artists, from businesses that works with paper. The water footprint alone is estimated to be 2-13 litres of water per A4 sheet of paper<sup>36</sup>. Utilise your local reuse centres for artmaking materials.

Teaching and learning strategies with students: Spend time being with the sensation of paper, many different types of paper, to explore and understand the possibilities of their qualities. Employ artists to incite publics of artmaking with paper. Artists bring indepth understanding of the qualities and potential of materials. Value this knowledge, along with responsive and emergent pedagogies that align with children's interests, energy and flow. Acknowledge and be with the literacies of making with paper, of making books, of deconstructing books, of making (and deconstructing) all that is made with paper (cups, brochures, newspapers, magazines, letters, wrappings).

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<sup>36</sup> P.R. Van Oel and A.Y. Hoekstra, 2010, The green and blue water footprint of paper products: Methodological considerations and quantification, Value of Water Resaerch Report Series No. 46. Retrieved from [https://waterfootprint.org/media/downloads/Report46-WaterFootprintPaper\\_1.pdf](https://waterfootprint.org/media/downloads/Report46-WaterFootprintPaper_1.pdf)