



MADGE SEXTON K I N D E R G A R T E N *McLaren Vale*

About our atelier.

The word “atelier” is the French word for “workshop” or “studio”. In English it is used primarily for the private workshop or studio of a professional artist. In Reggio Emilia in Italy, each municipal preschool has a space called the atelier and the figure of an atelierista, a “teacher” with an arts background. In working this way, the expressive and poetic languages become part of the process by which knowledge is built. The atelier thus becomes the place of research, invention, and empathy, expressed by means of “100 languages”.

After seeing some ateliers in action on her Study Tour to Reggio Emilia in 2012, Leanne saw the importance and value of having this specialised space and expertise in place for the children to support them to be able to create, learn and express their current working theories about the world around them, and brought this back to the Madge Sexton Kindergarten staff team to reflect on.

“Reggio Emilia” principles and philosophies are inspiring, however, it needs to be said that “Reggio Emilia” cannot be copied or replicated in any way. Each Reggio Emilia school is unique to and reflects its own context and culture. With this in mind, we worked as a staff team with a Reggio Emilia atelierista, Caterina Pennestri, to begin to create our own art studio / space (atelier) reflecting our very own culture. During 2012 we began our “atelier” program. Our Madge Sexton Kindergarten “atelier” is unique to our context, and is not a replication of an atelier in Reggio Emilia. Our atelier space can take on many forms, but for the most part, it’s a place for the children to let their creative voice run wild. The way we work with the children in our atelier changes frequently, based on the group of children we are working with, and with staff’s new learning, we are all researchers.

In our atelier you’ll find: marking tools; an array of adhesives including sticky tape, masking tape, staplers, glue sticks, PVA glue, hot glue guns, blue-tac; different sized, shaped and textured papers and cards; scissors; brushes; watercolour paints; acrylic paints; as well as a vast amount of natural mediums and materials available for the children to use every day.

We don’t keep things in the cupboards in the atelier. Having things hidden away can unintentionally stifle the children’s own imaginations, expressions and creativity to explore things in their own way, using their own processes. We also don’t aim to “set up” experiences in a way that “tells them” how to use the materials, the children’s “voice” is the foundation for everything we do.

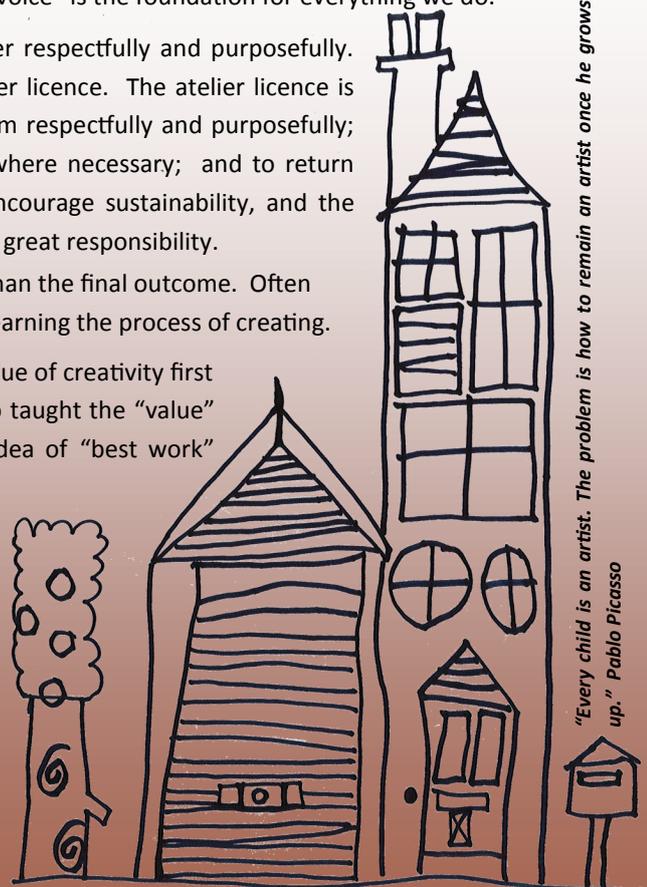
At the commencement of each year, the children learn how to use the atelier respectfully and purposefully. They do this by working with an atelierista in small groups towards their atelier licence. The atelier licence is achieved when the children have learnt: where to find things; how to use them respectfully and purposefully; how to refill and reuse; to gauge risk and engage supervision and support where necessary; and to return things to where they were found, ready for the next person to use. We encourage sustainability, and the children learn that having so many amazing things at their fingertips comes with great responsibility.

We favour “process art” whereby the experience of making is more important than the final outcome. Often there is little emphasis placed on the final product, but rather on enjoying and learning the process of creating.

Our atelieristas place great importance on the ability of the child to learn the value of creativity first and foremost, without wondering if their work “looks good”. Children are also taught the “value” of their art works, we must produce our best work to share, however the idea of “best work” is determined by the child, not the adult, or in some cases, collaboratively.

We encourage undirected art where the atelierista is a means of facilitation; of supplying the tools and media, and leaving the thinking/doing to the child rather than issuing direction and creating 90 identical works, in which all they have learned is to follow explicit instructions and look to an adult for approval.

The aim of our atelier program is to open up your child’s mind (and maybe yours also) to the act of expressing themselves through the arts. To use art as a voice, a way to represent thinking, to convey a message and to let children prove time and time again, how incredibly capable and competent they are.



“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.” Pablo Picasso