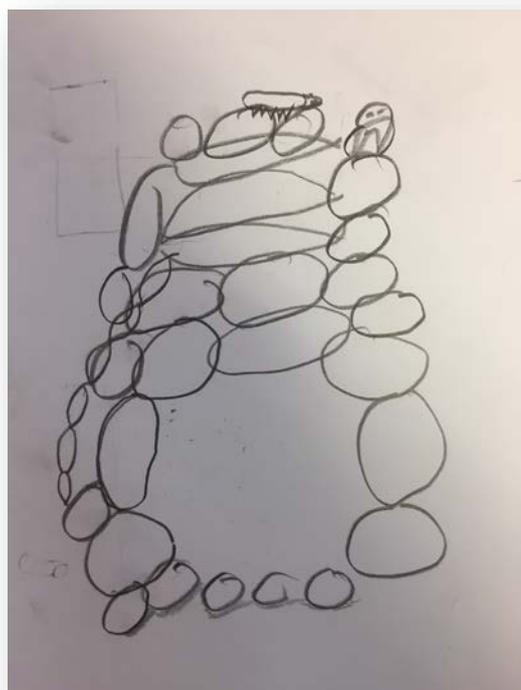


Childhood Studies in Aotearoa New Zealand

# 5<sup>th</sup> Childhood Studies Colloquium Aesthetics and Childhood Research and Practice



*Artist/Image maker: Siddhesh Patel*

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Toilet training is usually constructed as dominance of the social body over the instinctual body. Though considering toilet training through medical, moral and aesthetic discourses over several points of time space “to think otherwise” is enabled, this being, that the body being toilet trained has the opportunity to shape the social body.

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#### Child-friendly urban design aesthetics: Testing a ‘shared dialogue’ approach

*Susan J. Wake & Wenjin Zhan*

Andy Field is an English performance artist who develops interactive projects that often bring people together in unusual settings and/or couplings to explore relationships between people and place (Field, 2016). For example, the Lookout project, which he took to several UK and world cities in 2017, including Auckland. At the Auckland Fringe Festival in March 2017, 16 central city schoolchildren (8-10 years) took part in three days of performances (three performances per day), following seven days of two hour workshops and some rehearsals. Each performance session consisted of one child conducting a conversation about Auckland with a single adult audience-member that they had never met. This was simultaneously repeated with other couplings of one child and one adult. The site was the top of the Central Administration Building, overlooking the CBD and beyond, so that the conversation was centred on the child’s and the adult’s memories and perceptions of the city, past, present and imagined into the future - including consideration for climate-change catastrophes. Some material was recorded and the adult participant listened to it, while some of the 30-minute performance was spent talking together, following prompts from the child.

As researchers, our interest is multi-purpose - covering the disciplines of environmental education and urban design, both with aesthetic aspects. This summary concerns itself with an urban design perspective since the process considered what the children thought about their city, how it worked for them, and how it compared to other cities. In turn, these questions were also posed to the adult participants, and this provided a rare situation where different generations and complete strangers shared their memories of, contributions to and improvement wishes for their city.

Through focusing on the ‘shared dialogue’ approach taken in this performance project our research will investigate the potential contribution of the Lookout project in Auckland to urban design aesthetics, specifically through creation of a more child-friendly city. For this purpose,

the children's experiences were captured via focus groups and interviews were held with four adult participants, the key teacher at school and the performance artist. Examples of writing/drawing school work from a follow-on design-centred project that the teacher carried out were also captured. The intention is to code and analyse these data sources for themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) that will be integrated, by Wenjin Zhan, within an urban design process.

The importance of children having a say in the design of their environments has been acknowledged for many years, following the drafting and widespread international ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNHCHR, 1989). Auckland Council, in its strategic Auckland Plan, declared it would 'put children and youth first' as a 'fundamental transformational shift' (Auckland Council, 2016). Methods for eliciting children's design opinions have been developed, although even the most well-intentioned generally suffer severe limitations in the level of real design input possible by children. Attempts to distinguish between consultation and co-design has been helpful in clarifying those terms (Parnell, 2014), although Hart's plea (Hart, 2008) that his ladder of children's participatory input should not be interpreted to mean that the top rung (child-initiated, shared child-adult decision-making) is always the most appropriate, is still regularly ignored. As suggested by Malone and Hartung (2010), perhaps the most useful aspect of the ladder model is that it identified four main types of non-participation, which is a valuable tool to apply.

A popular method for involving children in a design process is a brainstorming charrette or visioning session as, for example, outlined by Sanoff (2001). Fiona Robbé, a landscape practitioner, uses a variation of Gulliver's Mapping, as defined by Driskell (2002), in order to capture a relevant wish list from kids when she is designing play spaces. Wake and Wang (2016) used a series of workshops with children to develop posters and models towards a design for school ground greening. Carroll and Witten (2017) gave children cameras and then led them through a workshop process to develop this into design suggestions for Freyburg Square in Auckland CBD.

One difference with the project being proposed here is in including adults' perspectives through the shared dialogue that took place during Lookout. This was a process of both stirring memories and valuing imagination, with adults hearing things from children's perspectives and referring to their own memories and experiences. This has some similarities with Francis and Lorenzo's (2006) 'proactive process', although their process brought people together with the goal of tackling a defined design project, which Lookout did not. This will make our project somewhat more interpretive, but may suggest an interesting new approach.

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## Motivating students in creative writing: Teacher experiences and pedagogy

Phillip Simpson

Creative writing. Some would argue that there is no greater beauty. Is it poetry? Is it stories? Creative writing can be almost anything that we can imagine and produce and read on paper or a screen. From the works of Shakespeare, Faulkner to literary giants like Banks, Catton, McCarthy, there is almost an endless supply of aesthetics in the form of creative writing. Practitioners, masters of the word. Artists all, skilfully crafting stories, their skilfully crafted words becoming skilfully crafted sentences becoming skilfully crafted narratives. Words, sentences and stories that are capable of eliciting almost any emotion or inspiring any act, whether it be revolutionary or driven by love, anger or hate. Writing that we live and work and breathe every day. When beauty like this is so powerful the question then is how to inspire or motivate it? How do we instil the love of it in the next generation? How do we teach it? How do we create learners in our own image - to love words and sentences and stories the way we do? What is the key to unlocking this? Perhaps it is the teacher. No-one knows for sure but it is certainly a question worth exploring.

Teachers are central figures in the education process, shaping the learning environment which enhances, sustains and engages students' motivation and learning (Hornstra, Mansfield, van der