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Children's Graphic-Visual-Embodied Narratives: The Role of the Interlocutor in Surfacing and Enriching Meaning Making

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This presentation describes the importance of teachers and/or researchers taking on the role of interlocutor when engaging with children during one type of artistic experience, namely, the co-creation of visual narratives. Such encounters enrich and extend these playful experiences, where the child's voice is surfaced through three modes: graphic, narrative and embodied. Of particular interest, and a unique feature of a selected sample of 5-to-8 year old children's visual narratives, was the way in which children's meaning was enhanced by these three modes working in harmony. The visual narratives were spontaneous improvisations which unfolded in real-time on the page, where the children's imaginations liberated them to not only tell themselves, but tell who they would like to be. The cross-over of modes was seen in the embodied way in which the children used expressive vocalisms and gesture to dramatize the narrative, physically enter the artwork to act out the spatial-temporal qualities of drawn events, draw whoosh lines and other graphic devices to animate the action, and use body-based metaphor and aesthetic properties to symbolise emotions, abstract concepts such as the conservation of forests, and physical-spatial-temporal relationships within the surface of the page. Profound examples children's thinking illustrate how many modes and forms of representation help us see children with new eyes and listen to their voices with deep and respectful insights.