

My Pillow Fort

First I built the support structure
(the walls). Then I built the roof.
I made it from Pillows and a
blanket. Now it just needs some
decorations, then the pillow fort
is ready to play in.

Luis
(9 years old)

**Graduation project by Jesse Greulich
2023**

Master Education in Arts
Piet Zwart Institute
Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences

Table of Content

- ∅ Abstract
- ∅ Introduction
- ∅ Origin, Intention, Approach
- ∅ Pedagogical Framework
- ∅ Pilot Study
- ∅ Describing the Elements
 - ∅ Time and Temporality
 - ∅ Agency in Making
 - ∅ Rhythms of Creation
- ∅ The Methodology
 - ∅ Deconstruct
 - ∅ Reconstruct
 - ∅ Reclaim
- ∅ Field Research at the International School
- ∅ Six Weeks of Building Pillow Forts
- ∅ The Inconclusive Celebration
- ∅ Thank You's
- ∅ Bibliography

Abstract

The primary context of research takes place within the four walls of a maker space at an international school. It is a shared experience, co-created and shaped through the contributions of 177 learners between the age of 8–9 years old and one facilitator, me. What started with the question of 'what does it mean to own a space?' in relation to the learning environment, lead to the pursuit of a methodology designed to deliver an embodied learning process. This research strives to build the confidence of learners by deconstructing, reconstructing and finally, reclaiming the classroom space as their own across a period of six weeks. The aim is to collapse the way much of traditional school learning has been shaped as through the training and disciplining of the body of the learner. Together with the student makers, and using the combination of body, space and materials, an embodied learning experience was successfully delivered through guidance, engagement, reflection, sharing and spark a joy in making.

Introduction

“Space comes into being only when we form situations.”

Lukas Feireiss (2020) *Feireiss, L., & Baier, F. X. (2020). Space is the place: Current reflections on art and architecture: BNKR 2018/2019. Spector Books.*

Building a pillow fort is universal, something everyone understands. We use objects in our space, such as tables, chairs, pillows or blankets in order to build a context to play in. Building pillow forts is forming situations. By contrast, educational institutions often propose and present as given, already existing situations, ie. the classroom, as a context to learn in. The reality of learning, however, is that it is fluid. It is not solely defined by a context, but an embodied experience. The learner is the vessel of learning not the space.

My practice, as a designer and educator, finds itself in this state of connection. For example, connecting people to materials to form space. The point where the body meets the material to form a situation, creating space. My motivation as an educator is to raise awareness that the body, space and materials can facilitate embodied learning experiences.

This research encapsulates these three elements as parameters to bringing this process closer to learners. When describing the body, we are talking about the physical learner in relation to the spaces they move through, the environment/s they learn from, and the materiality they interact with to enable the act of learning. The goal of this research is to explore with, and show, encourage and empower the learner to recognise and utilise that the act of learning is free from locality (from the classroom setting). Thus understanding that with the right tools, any space can temporarily be claimed, reclaimed and inhabited as a learning space.

Origin, Intention and Approach

8 While facilitating experiences with fashion and textiles for students between the ages 12–15 in a preparatory course at the art academy in The Hague, it became very evident that locality and the learning experience are strongly interconnected. These lessons took place in a transitional space where we were required to unpack, explore and explode our curiosity in the subject, only to then have to leave the space in the same state it was in when we entered. It raised questions, which were to establish the initial framework for my research.

- ♣ What does it mean to ‘own’ a space in relation to learning?
- ♣ What is the relationship between learning and space?

These questions continued when I was also engaged to facilitate art lessons for primary age students at an international school. Unlike the previous learning environment, at the school there is a dedicated space. With the comparative experience of both a temporary and a dedicated space, I recognised how much of the learner experience was in the hands of the educator to didactically gestalt. It raised additional questions about the purpose of pedagogy for learning.

- ♣ Is it possible to detach learning from a specific locality and the notion that it must happen a certain way in a certain setting?
- ♣ Is it more effective and/or beneficial to ‘give’ the learner what it is they are supposed to learn, or to provide them with an opportunity to ‘unpack’ and ‘repack’ their own form (or experience) of learning?

On the basis of these experiences and questions it became the intention of this research paper to answer: How can we create a pedagogical approach/ method to encompass the elements of the body, space, and materials to facilitate a more embodied learning experience?

In order to do this, the research approach (method) has been to:

1. Investigate pedagogical theories and concepts and experimentally applying these in practice within the context of the art academy and the international school, starting with the parameters of the body, space and materials.

2. These parameters were used to create the initial exercise of building pillow forts in the context of the art academy, as a first trial of the embodied learning process for the learner to engage with.

3. As a result of this exercise, three elements were created in the process: time and temporality, agency in making and rhythms of creation. In relation to the research, these are used to guide the process as well as a form of evaluation.

4. Next, using these three elements in relation to the body, space and materials, I began to create the 'building pillow forts' methodology. The context moved to the international school as a fruitful framework for testing. The experiments tested out with the learners include a variety of techniques, such as collaging, drawing, small scale and large-scale models, building up a process of engaging with the body, space and materials on different scales.

5. Finally, through this process of testing, I define the method into three core stages: deconstruction, reconstruction and reclaiming. These three stages are used to facilitate the process of developing tools for a transferable embodied learning process in collaboration with the learners.

Pedagogical framework

The Learner

10 The pedagogical framework of this thesis is positioned between the context of the body and the context of the space. The body is the first point of experiential contact for the learner and thus should be the first point of consideration in the act of learning. Before unpacking the meaning of the body, space and the learner, we need to briefly examine learning and what it means to learn. In the publication 'How learning works: Seven research based principles for smart teaching', the act of learning in relation to the learner is defined by: "a process that leads to change, which occurs as a result of experience and increases the potential for improved performance and future learning" (Ambrose et al, 2010, p.3). The change in the learner may happen at the level of knowledge, attitude or behaviour.

As a result of learning, learners come to see concepts, ideas, and/or the world differently." Ambrose, S.A., Bridges, M.W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M.C., and Norman, M.K. (2010) *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Thus, a fluid act initiated within the learner themselves.

The Learner and the Body

In contrast to the belief in an embodied learning process, the historical evolution of institutional education focused on the role of the teacher rather than that of the learner, determining the familiar image of how the learner, or the static body, was placed in the context of a classroom. The singular line of learning was drawn between the body of the learner and the body of teacher, with potentially a board, book, and writing merely being extensions of the same line.

"Most of the western population only inhabits its head and uses the rest of the body to keep the head working, fed and entertained. We have forgotten that our body is so much bigger than our head and that the surface of our skin is a membrane that is in constant touch with everything around us." Bouchez, H. (2020) *Wild Thing. S.L.: Ape. p., 75*.

In Sherry Shapiro's *Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body* she uses the words of critical social theorist Brian Fay (1978), who describes this institutional discipline as "oppression [leaving] its traces not just in people's minds but in their muscles and skeletons as well."

Shapiro, Sherry B. (2015) *Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body: A Critical Praxis* Routledge.

Furthermore, in response and agreeing with this view, Don Johnson (1983) captures how through schooling, the physical bodies of students are patterned to fit our social and economic structures. He states that "education is primarily designed to train docile citizens and workers and this is partially achieved through forming bodily behaviour."

Shapiro, Sherry B. (2015) *Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body: A Critical Praxis*. Routledge.

This idea is reinforced in the silent position of the body in a classroom, facing the front, static, in a passive mode. The *Hidden Curriculum* by Annette Kraus agrees with this notion and as a result strives to reimagine the static learning environment by "activating in-between spaces or spaces that normally have their relationship with the body restricted to a particular use." Krauß, Annette. (2008) *Hidden Curriculum*. Episode Publishing.

For example, how when you're sitting at a desk your legs just fit underneath, "in the everyday experience both the space under your desk and the legs go completely unacknowledged", if we do not intentionally seek to break this habit of the position of the body in relation to the object.

While the researches above acknowledge that advances have been made with regards to addressing these critical observations, it seeks to reinforce that more can be done in mainstream education as educational spaces and the practices within them continue to dominate and limit the lives of learners. As such the focus on developing a methodology to provide the body of a learner with a more active or interactive stance/role through the reappropriating/reclaiming of a or any learning environment aims to provide a simple but impactful approach to reinforce the learner's own capabilities in the learning process.

The Learner and the Space

To continue with this point of reasoning, as the body does not exist in isolation, but in relation to space, it is necessary to understand the most common learning space, the classroom. The subject of the classroom has naturally already drawn significant discussion in education, one view being that of Reggio Emilia. Their philosophy views elements of the learning environment as crucial not only functioning as a place of learning, however also for fostering engagement and interaction. This approach encapsulates the notion that "children explore visual and expressive languages in strict synergy with verbal, body and logical ones". *Brown, Madeline F., (2020) The Third Teacher: An analysis of aesthetic and intentionality of space in the classroom, Senior Honors Projects.*

This highlights the effectiveness of the physical and visual design of the learning environment to enhance the learning of students, even during 'officially' required lessons. Moreso, "in its attention to how space can be thoughtfully arranged, the Reggio Emilia approach has reconceptualized space as a key source of educational provocation

and insight." *Teresa Strong-Wilson & Julia Ellis (2007) Children and Place: Reggio Emilia's Environment As Third Teacher, Theory Into Practice, 46:1, 40-47.*

12 This highlights that the idea of space, its locality and how the space is curated through objects, tools and furniture, is in fact an absolute necessity, and understanding how space can activate learning. While the learning associated with a designated or specialist space can be directed, it should not be limited by the perceived need for a specific space. Instead, the learner should also experience that learning can extend beyond this; and not simply because this space does not exist and it is necessary to adapt, but because learning can be translated in many contexts as an embodied process.

Contemporary examples of the Learner, the Body and the Space

To give a more contemporary example of moving beyond the concept of the traditional classroom is the Tree School, developed by Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti (DAAR - Decolonising Architecture Art Research). The Tree School is a result of a lack of permanent space, embracing the concept that a space is an "entry point, a way to set up the context". It is an approach with outcomes that can only exist with the exchange of knowledge and "requires being open to the essential ways in which each context it appears in informs it". In this concept, with the absence of specific spaces, it is the body which plays an important role. It becomes a signifier of the space, it builds and holds this space as its own. *Pethick, E., Martinez, P. and How, W. (2022). Artistic Ecologies. MIT Press.*

A further example is the project 'Making Futures', "a nomadic, oscillating group that explored and discussed questions of space production in different places over a period of three years."

Bader, M. (2022). Making futures. Spector Books.

This project is cooperation between Raumlabor and the architecture degree at the Berlin University of Arts. It is an experimental construction laboratory and workshop; 'a wandering classroom'. Over the period of the project, Making Futures travelled to Istanbul, Palermo, Oberweißbach, Tel Aviv and Chicago. Likewise, to the Tree School, Making Futures became a mobile universe, creating temporary spaces in which a variety of different interest-driven spheres were curated without any affiliation to institutions or other social or political structures. The most important value of this practice was the mixed group of individuals who came together to temporarily hold space for, and deal with a context related question as a temporary collective of learners.

13 Where both these projects overlap is the idea of the body temporarily holding space and embodying the learning. In the Tree School, the body literally becomes the walls of the space. In Making Futures, the body is the constant, not the space, taking with it what it holds or knows, into the next learning contexts. In contrast to the institutional learning environment, both these projects highlight the idea that learning first takes place in the body. Thus, it would seem that we can in fact detach the idea of learning to a literal space if it is our intention to do so. With this research, I have had the opportunity to test the boundaries of the traditional classroom by deliberately with the learner. With their full knowledge and awareness, learners had the opportunity to test and activate their own sense of spatial needs for learning. Thus, understanding that they themselves are the source of learning.

Pilot Study

To initiate the practical aspect of my research into space in relation to the learner, I created an experiment called 'Building Pillow Forts'. The idea of this exercise is based around the previously mentioned frame of reference in relation to (re-) appropriating the space. However, while the Tree School and Making Futures essentially rely on the body as a vehicle or spatial facilitator, this exercise extends this to experiment with all the elements, the body, the space and materials. This is to examine how each of them play a role in (re-)appropriating a space considered in normal terms to be a classroom. Is it possible to create and if necessary recreate a learning experience that does not lose relevance, direction, engagement or learning outcomes, simply because the learner remains at the centre of the experience?

The exercise was held in our temporary classroom space at the art academy I teach at in The Hague. As a transitional space we are required to unpack, explode our curiosity and efforts, then repack to leave the space in the same state it was in when we entered. 'Our' room is typically used as a theory room and thus filled with tables, chairs and a white board; a traditional classroom. The group of learners consisted of 12 learners between the ages 14–15 years old at a course called the Kunstplan. This course is a three year preparatory course for learners to participate in during their high school period. The idea is to give the learners the opportunity to explore the different programmes and workshops offered at the academy. The background of these learners varies depending which of the four schools they come from.

To go back to the exercise, the prompt given was to build a space within our space. This exercise would be repeated four weeks into the course to see how the handling of the material and outcome would be different from the first round. The material provided was left over textiles from an atelier in Leiden. Tools that could be used were scissors, tape, clips and some paint, which accidentally got thrown into the mix. The main process of investigation was the observation of how the learners took agency of their space, and how they would react to the already present, static objects (tables, chair and the whiteboard) in the classroom to build their own, new space.

14

The first exercise took place in the first lesson with these learners, thus this specific exercise required a moment to check in with the group and also take note of their dynamic towards each other. The goal of this first exercise was to get an understanding of how the learners would approach elements in their environment and morph

these into a new space. Within the interaction of making, the group dynamics became clear quite early on. Although everyone started the interaction together, as the construction developed, choices by individual learners were made. The material of the textile was handled in a two-dimensional way, draped over a whiteboard, which was moved into the middle of an already circular table constellation. Some of the chairs were used to hold the textile in place. Towards the beginning of the building, after trying to make a plan of action, someone took the initiative and multiple group members followed. The construction outcome was given the label of a tent. A summary comment about the process and outcome, as the observer, would be that it was a 'conventional' approach and outcome with little initiative did not challenge the established parameters of the space.



Four weeks after the first exercise, we repeated the act of 'building a pillow fort'. Between the first and the fourth lesson we worked on exploring different techniques of handling textile. One of these techniques was Quipus, also known as the 'talking knots'. It is a form of documentation and record making used by the Inca Empire through the use of knotting coloured, spun and pied threads or string of llama hair. A further two methods were weaving and braiding, two forms of connecting textile to create solid and dense forms. What all these techniques offer and require is the intense engagement of the body.

1



Quipus is an individual act of binding two pieces together. Weaving and braiding on the other hand can become a collective activity. Robin Wall Kimmerer, author of *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013), describes this motion as "reciprocity between you, [...], the holder as vital as the braider." *Kimmerer, R.W. (2013) Braiding Sweetgrass: indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Milkweed Editions.*

During the second round of building a space, the learners reciprocated this collective action as a self-initiated choice. Observing the relationship between the individual and the collective moments of making, it becomes clear that in the first instance each learner chose an individual approach they felt suited the activity, for example choosing a piece of textile and how to handle it accordingly. The next step was then observing

16

what others had done and adding on to this. Some learners did this by asking each other for help with the act of connecting. Others did this by handling the textile in motions that needed more than one person. Referring to the quote by Kimmerer, taking the position as a 'holder' and a 'braider'. Essentially, this introduction of techniques and simple actions for the manipulation of the core material, allowed the learners to approach the textile as a tool. Beyond that, it was their choice about what role the textile would play in the exercise.

2





In comparison to the initial round of 'building pillow forts', it was interesting to observe how the learners used these techniques of handling textile to encapsulate the entire room, integrating curtains, tables and chairs. There was a bigger focus on technique in handling the material in a three dimensional way in comparison to the first round. The act of making was more intuitive, responding to materiality and reflected in the actions of individuals. It became a reciprocal process between the individuals, the group, the material, and the space. One of

the students later expressed that what happened between round one of the exercise and round two was 'feeling liberated'. During the first round there was a strong focus on manipulating the textile through the use of tools, such as scissors, tape and paint. In round two, the spatial element was at the core of the exercise, **"we used the tables, chairs and curtains to our advantage"** (Mimi, age 14). Although these tools would have been an option, the group immediately began handling the textiles as the manipulating force to change the space. The role these techniques played within the exercise was that the textiles became the tools. Additionally, learning how to handle the textile over the previous weeks leading up to the second round of the exercise allowed the learners to activate their embodied knowledge and thus reflected in how it was used to influence and build the space.

18

Reflecting back on these actions of how material and space were used so contrastingly between the first and second round of the experiment, it is relevant and important to mention that I as the facilitator did not provide ideas that suggested they go beyond the boundaries of the context to which they were first introduced and in which they then operated.

However, through the facilitation of my lessons and management of the transitions in the unowned space, the students may have been influenced in feeling 'allowed' to explore, thus the stark contrast in outcome.

Furthermore, in order to reflect on what happened in round one versus round two, I used the methods of observation and reflection as a group. The question, what does it mean to own a space, was central to our reflection rounds, in relation to its effects on the learner and their learning. This question originally came up as it is very much related to an ongoing issue we are facing at the arts academy. It is an issue associated with having the purpose of facilitating the exploration and exploding of creativity in a space and then requesting it be packed up, to leave the space spotless for the next class; as if the very thing that is encouraged, is then also limited. The elements of time and temporality in learning become additional considerations: How can a learning environment extend beyond a limited timeframe and space?

These are questions and factors we reflected on at the end of round one, sitting in our 'tent'. They became the driving force in my research due to the answers by the learners. The relevance of answers turned into a conversation about how we can temporarily claim a space, without losing the learning: **"when having to take [the pillow fort] down again we have the ability to do it over and use what we learnt from making next week"** (Nicole, 14). Although some of the learners agreed that it could be demotivating to always have to disassemble a space, the consensus was that you become more creative in finding **"a way to make it easier, make something fast, refine your skills"** (Azul, 14). **"You can't do everything because you have a timeframe and have to disassemble everything as well"**, so you have to become more imaginative and resourceful. It seems that while a space was temporary, if used effectively, the learning, if properly captured by the learner, is ongoing and cumulative.

To conclude, the results of 'building pillow forts' highlighted that enclosed spaces on temporary loan to learners were limited not only by the walls but by the perceptions of those using the space. These perceptions were affected by the concepts of time, temporary ownership of space, and their current understanding of how a traditional classroom could or should be used. Challenging their perceptions of these concepts over a period of time in this first experiment, with repeated experiences, new perspectives, empowering agency, and allowing each individual to develop their own rhythm of learning, seemed to unlock for them the experience of embodied learning; whereby they established the meaning and value

19

of the learning for themselves. With these elements now evident, it became possible to explore them in greater depth. Furthermore, strategies devised and taken from this exercise was to allow the learner to explore the given material in relation to different techniques over a period of time. This allowed them to use the materials as tools and their body in relation to the techniques. The first exercise was a lot more modest and situated in doubt while the second opened an opportunity for conversations and expressing actions through materials. The transferral of knowledge from the technique I was teaching the learner to how they used this for the exercise formed a co-creative opportunity on how an embodied learning experience can be more than an individual and isolated moment.

2. Describing the Elements

Ultimately, this first experiment of 'building pillow forts' further guided the parameters of my research on how we can create ingredients to temporarily claim space for learning by intentionally connecting it to the body and materials. Furthermore, the first exercise of 'building pillow forts' developed three elements to help inform the meaning of an embodied learning experience. These elements are time and temporality, agency in making and rhythms of creation.

To describe how these elements derived from the first exercise, the first point is time and temporality. This component came about through perceived successes and failures in the exercises; once the learner agency was engaged, all participants agreed that what they thought of as the 'initial failure' attributed to time pressure in round one no longer applied or played relevance in round two. The element of time became part of the exercise and an opportunity to demonstrate resourcefulness. Furthermore, through the repetition of the exercise, what was initially limited interaction during the first stages of teamwork, blossomed into individual making moments, which lead to a collaboration in the overall space; **"we saw more space to move and the islands started being created and then we connected them"**. So, allocated time, even if relatively short, is not necessarily a limitation but an opportunity.

The next point of reference is agency in making, how it can liberate the act of making from the head to hand. Agency allowed the group to view and use the space and materials in their environment as an opportunity rather than limitations based on their initial, more hesitant approach. When asked, one person stated that if the exercise were to be repeated a third time, the pillow fort would be more extensive, using the the ins and outs of the space, ie. the walls, windows and door.

Thus, breaking down the traditional idea and meaning of a classroom and taking on the approach of claiming space for learning. The final aspect is the rhythm of creating. This specifically references the learning and production flow of the individual learner over a longer period of time and series of experiences, as they engage with the project. While agency in making can be viewed as isolated instances, this element can be defined by stringing together these isolated moments. It refers to a period of time.

The initial three parameters of the body, space and materials are quite broad subject areas. Now, through reflections on the first pillow fort exercises, the three elements help outline these parameters in more detail to assess the meaning of an embodied learning process.

TIME & TEMPORALITY

The first and most crucial variable discovered through the first exercise is the aspect of time and temporality. In education, learning is often defined through a certain timeframe. In the context of primary, middle school and secondary education, for instance, the school day starts at 8:30 and ends at 15:00. Within those 7 hours we equate learning to 45 minute intervals. Similarly, within the conditions of the Kunstplan programme of the art academy, our framework of learning happens for around two and a half hours. It starts from the moment of entering a classroom to sitting down to listen for further instruction. Within education, time is referenced in blocks. In previous examples such as the Tree School and Making Futures, time is fluid. Overall, time can be viewed as a mechanism for organising learning, can be varied for reasons not only related to the learning itself, and generally corresponds to decisions about gathering (an expression of) knowledge in different forms during this time. To give a more concrete example, in art education, this gathering of knowledge can be practised in learning a skill. This reference of time is then expressed in translating the skill into making, whether this is through drawing, models, performance, etc. Within my practice as an educator, I work with the blocks of learning time as fluidly as possible. I try to limit instruction to allow for learner experience, which we then specifically reflect upon after each block of time. This reference time can be even further divided into motions of the body. Within my lessons the body goes through different stages, reflecting blocks of time. For example, after entering the classroom, the learners sit facing the front of the classroom for instruction. Then they move to focus on and engage with their space, their frame of creation. The final stage of the body is to move to an open space in the classroom where we gather in a circle to have a conversation about what we did and what we learned. With regard to the body and space, time becomes a vital element, an invisible reference of space.

AGENCY IN MAKING

Agency in learning means that learners play an active role in what and how they learn, thus defining their own objectives. In this element, agency is actively present in bridging the gap between thinking and making. It is closely related to the body and material, being stimulated through curiosity. However, this does not necessarily mean that we are literally affecting and consuming space, but it can also be represented as little gestures of the head to hand, such as drawing. Applying this back to the first two pillow fort exercises, this component is found in the process of embodied learning, ultimately providing the knowledge which feeds back into the process.

For example, the difference between the first exercise and how materiality was handled two dimensionally versus the second exercise where gained knowledge and experience allowed the learners to handle material differently. In Tim Ingold's 'Making and Growing' (2016), this was described as engaging the whole body, "materials had to be sounded out, tasted, smelled, and touched through the bodily senses, a process that was often conceptualized as gaining knowledge through bodily union". Hallam, E. and Ingold, T. (2016) *Making and growing : anthropological studies of organisms and artefacts*. London: Routledge. Similarly, in Richard Sennet's 'The Craftsman' (2009), C. Wright Mills describes it as "the worker can control his or her own actions at work; skill develops within the process; work is connected to the freedom to experiment."

Sennett, R. (2009) *The craftsman*. London: Penguin.

As mentioned above, in relation to this research it is about training skill as muscle memory within the body, specifically enhancing this bodily sense, and closing the fear of doing something right or wrong and instead imparting curiosity of trial and error.

RHYTHMS OF CREATION

This element strongly connects to all of the above. The difference between agency in making and rhythm of creation is that agency in each lesson is like laying with individual notes, while the rhythm of creation is playing with the notes to create a melody. Where agency in making takes an active role in each individual lesson, this is measured over the time frame of multiple lessons. It is a parameter defined by the process of creating. Where did the learner begin their journey and how have they grown within this process? Taking the pilot study as a whole it became clear that what happened between the first exercise and the second one was that the learners gained confidence the more they engaged with the material. The first exercise was defined by the awkward beginning that a group experienced when they first had to work together. Being given the same instruction the second time round, and having gained confidence in subject and handling of material, the learners individually approached the act of creating, which turned into an ongoing, beautiful, reciprocal process of reacting to each other's work. Overall, the three elements of time and temporality, agency in making and rhythms of creation in relation to the body, space and material, inform the next step of the overall research by guiding the creation of the methodology and being used to evaluate the case study I will be describing in the next part of this thesis. Furthermore, at this stage of the research I recognise that 'building pillow forts' not only describes the first exercise, however becomes the stepping stone of the entire research. Thus, the decision to call this methodology 'building pillow forts'.

The Methodology

“Space comes into being only when we form situations.”
Lukas Feireiss (2020)

This quote by Lukas Feireiss has become a central quote to this research, highlighting the aspect of space only being created through forming situations. The goal of this research is to create a methodology, which allows the learner to actively and intentionally (re-) appropriate space through the body and the use of materials. This quote by Feireiss strongly speaks to this. ‘Forming situations’ in relation to this research, defines the active engagement of creating a learner based space and context. The question at hand in this stage of the research is how to claim and reclaim a temporary space.

There are many aspects that have informed and inspired the making of the ‘Building Pillow Forts’, such as observations of the learning environment in correlation with inspiration of design thinking and the creative process. An example of how this looks can also be drawn from Rudolf Steiner’s 3H model proposing that effective learning activities engage the Head, the Hands and the Heart. The Head is responsible for knowledge, the Heart influences reflection and the Hand encourages active participation and involvement. Similarly, this recipe is built on the idea of head to hand. The reason behind this is to positively impact the learner in bridging the gap that slows us down between the stages of thinking to making. This is valuable to stimulate learner agency and bridging the divide between the body and the space of learning.

This trajectory of subject area is inspired by publications such as *Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body: A critical Practice*, *Artistic Ecologies: New compasses and tools*, and *The Wandering Maker*. ‘Artistic Ecologies’ examines the relation of institutions and the emancipation of learning. The publication offers multiple essays and references around the themes of engaging pedagogies and collective learning. For the implementation of the ‘building pillow forts’ methodology, it helped me question the types of learning happening in the classroom in relation to an artistic practice. For example the relation of building a pillow fort, turning this into a collage and then further deconstructing it into a drawing. These brief examples will be further described in the next part of the research.

24

In relation to this, the publication ‘Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body’ offers perspectives and an understanding on the oppression of the institutional discipline of the body. This helped inform the necessity and acknowledgement of the role the body plays within how we are placed into the learning environment. Using this as a strategy, it created a framework for how I designed the exercises, using different scales for the body to explore in relation to the space. In addition to this aspect of the body, ‘Artistic Ecologies’ examines the relation of institutions and the emancipation of learning. Finally, the next reference is ‘The Wandering Maker’. Inspired by the translation of the creative process into simple steps, it allowed me to reflect on how my proposed methodology can be turned into simple transferable steps. These three works were an important part in how to create a sustainable framework and use it to set up a feasible methodology, which I am proposing and testing in the next part of this research.

In addition to these three references, a further core value and motivation of what I am building is the relationship between the learner and the act of collective learning. ‘Building pillow forts’ starts with the collaborative act of building. Then as you continue, you encounter individual moments that slowly build up to working in pairs, then groups and finally coming together as a collective. This is done intentionally, however allowing the learners to organically develop this process by themselves. The inspiration for this comes from Robin Wall Kimmerer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Kimmerer discusses the importance of collectivity within her work through using the analogy of trees: “The trees act not as individuals, but somehow as a collective ... what we see is the power of unity. What happens to one happens to us all. ... All flourishing is mutual”. *Kimmerer, R.W. (2013). Braiding Sweetgrass: indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Milkweed Edition*

The reason I developed the methodology as I did, is to benefit the learner in understanding both individual learning moments as well as shared, reciprocal ones.

Finally, one of the most important goals of ‘building pillow forts’ is transferability. This methodology is focused on stimulating learner agency by giving them a set of ingredients to help temporarily (re-)claim any space for their own learning. The context of the maker space at the International School is a classroom space to experiment with this recipe and bring it closer to the learners. The value of transferability is a long term consequence and ambition of this entire methodology.

25

With the goal being able to then use these skills and apply them to different contexts, opening up opportunities, extending the limitations of any space, and shifting these to learner needs. Keeping this goal in mind, a starting point in transferability to different spaces, I dissected the methodology into three key aspects: deconstruction, reconstruction and reclaiming.

Deconstruct

The first stage of claiming a space as your own is to deconstruct the elements around you. This does not have to mean literally take apart the furniture in the room, however to explore the boundaries of your space. For example by playing with the furniture in your room. How does it feel when you move every piece of furniture to the edges of the room and stand in the middle? How does it feel to do the opposite? To move everything into the middle of the space? What happens if we place our objects and use them outside the four walls of our space? A further example is acting in contrast to what we have learnt about furniture. What happens when we lie underneath the table or sit on top of it? To explore the spatial boundaries for the methodology, I chose to use the previous pillow fort exercise to initiate this activity. Building the pillow fort allows the learners to shift, change and discover their perception and the dimensions of the space for themselves. Furthermore, it is the first step of taking agency in their making process and creative expression. It is step one to dismantling the archetypical classroom environment.

Reconstruct

The second stage is reconstructing the space, initiating the process of eventually reclaiming the space. It allows the learner to start perceiving the space as their own. How can we make the space fit our potential? As Lukas Feireiss stated, forming situations is what defines a space. In relation to this stage, we are building our 'bricks' to form our space.

26

Reclaim

The final stage in this methodology is to reclaim the space as our own. It can be viewed as creating a full circle by repeating the action of building the pillow fort. First we deconstruct, then reconstruct and finally we come back to the beginning, however fully engaging with the embodied process of learning. Ultimately, this step is a form of acceptance which we lead up to in the reconstructing of space. What the previous steps have allowed us to do is to design / create / construct our 'bricks' that we are now 'building' into our own space.

These three key aspects are then translated into a six step recipe:

Deconstruct

WEEK 1: Building Pillow Forts

WEEK 2: Deconstructing Pillow Forts in 2D using technique of collage

WEEK 3: Shape composition-based on previous week

Reconstruct

WEEK 4: 3D Models based on shape composition

WEEK 5: Designing and Building Elements

Reclaim

WEEK 6: Bamboo Pillow Forts

Field Research at the International School

As previously stated, my role at the international school is to create and teach the art programme for the primary school. Our dedicated space is the Maker space. Previously, this specific space had been a learning support room and an office before that. The majority of my students had never used the space as a learning environment. For this reason it was the perfect opportunity for creating and testing out how this space could be claimed as ours.

For this case study I am working with 8 classes of a total of 177 learners around the ages eight and nine years old. These are international students, the majority from foreign countries. Some were born in the Netherlands, others have only been living here for one or two years. What is interesting in this specific age group is the stage of childhood development they are in. Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget describes this age group between 7–11 as the 'concrete operational stage'. During this developmental stage, children develop advanced reasoning. Their thinking becomes more systematic, logical and organised. At the same time they are only developing an understanding between one or more concepts and how they relate to each other. Finally, in this stage they are also becoming less egocentric and more aware of what is happening around them. In relation to this research it is interesting to observe how aware the learners are of what they are doing in relation to what is happening around them and how others approach the same exercise.

Before unpacking each of the three stages that form this methodology, it is important to mention how every lesson looks as a whole. In my practice as an educator, I see my position as being a facilitator over that of being a teacher. I provide additional knowledge to the learner's own and a helping hand, where needed. Moreover, from the previous experience in my Fashion and Textile classes, during the initial pillow fort exercises, I recognised the strategy of giving the learners the opportunity to explore the materials and techniques earlier on in the process to then use this knowledge and put it into practice. Taking this previous experience into this next context, I built up the methodology in a way which allows the learners to experience the handling of materials on a smaller scale. This can be seen in week four and five. Week four being the building of small scale 3D models and then repeated in week five using similar materials on a bigger scale. I see it as planting seeds of opportunity that inspire future actions. Each lesson begins with a quick reflection of the week before, in connection to that day's activity.

28

The majority of the time is focused on the task. I try to give the learners space to try, make mistakes, fail, learn from these and flourish with their new knowledge.

What is important is that every lesson we have a collective moment to reflect on what we did that lesson, what we learned and to share our experiences. At the end of our lessons we sit in a circle on the floor. Sometimes we have our work laid out on the floor. Other times, depending on constructional integrity, we focus on the memory of what had just happened in the time frame of our lesson. The idea for this reflection moment, and how it is presented, is inspired by the 'talking circle' described in 'Research is ceremony: indigenous research methods' by Shawn Wilson. *Wilson, S. (2008). Research is ceremony: indigenous research methods. Black Point, N.S.: Fernwood Pub.*

In the 'talking circle', group members gather in a circle. The shape represents the holism of Mother Earth and the equality of all of the members present. In some circles, sacred objects or items of representation are passed around. These represent that the holder of the object may speak from the heart and others must listen non-judgmentally until the speaker has finished. The common rule is that members must not speak unless they are holding the object. The 'object' in our case is the individual's creation, whether it is literally there or not. We also hold our standard to not interrupting each other and giving everyone the fair opportunity to speak. In the talking circle, the time frame is usually four rounds, "although time restraints, rules and norms vary". In practice, our reflection circle sometimes needs to be cut short due to the unfortunate limitation of time. Likewise to the talking circle, "it is important that group members feel ownership of these rules." In relation to our context, it is important that everyone feels that they can share if wanted but that it is not a must. Furthermore, if someone does not feel the need to share in words but only in presenting their work, it is important to also give space to them. Overall, the repetition of this moment of reflection in each lesson gives the learner an opportunity to become in tune with the learning that takes place every lesson. It is both a moment of inward reflection as well as outwardly acknowledging what others have gained in this process.

29



De- (Re-)

WEEK 1: Building Pillow Forts



WEEK 2: Deconstructing Pillow Forts in 2D using technique of collage



WEEK 3: Shape composition-based on previous week



Construct (Claim)

The deconstruction stage takes place with three steps. Week one is defined by building pillow forts. As previously stated, the majority of learners come into the maker space as never having been introduced to the environment as a place of learning. The act of building the pillow fort is a strategy to allow the learners to recognise their body in their environment through touching, moving and connecting elements. To engage with the space. This stage of making is very intuitive through reacting to your environment and the other bodies around yours.

The act of building the pillow forts immediately evoked performative interactions between elements in the space and the individual and collective bodies. Each group took action by moving around and flipping tables, pushing chairs aside before beginning textile constructions. There were multiple approaches to how the pillow fort space was defined. One group for instance built several individual islands, which were connected through a string of chairs. In this approach, similarly to the very first exercise of the pilot study, individual actions were taken and responded to in a receiving manner; building connections through reciprocal actions. When reflecting on what happened, the group stated that what they saw as their biggest success was exactly that, building the connections of the islands. They agreed that originally they had all started reacting to the pushing and pulling of tables. This was then continued when adding the textile to embrace the space. Further reflecting on this, if this exercise were to be repeated they would be more in tune with each other and communicate more. The result would allow a stronger connection between the individual islands.

Another group approached this introduction of space by not only building in surface area at eye-level, but building a two floor/story fort by layering tables on top of each other. This specific group worked as a team of around 22 students. There was an initial discussion moment where one person then took the lead and the rest actively followed. The beauty in this approach was seeing a collective effort of supporting each other in order to achieve their goal. This achievement impacted not only the learners but also how the space was used: **"I noticed that we used the space we were given and we are grateful for the space we were given."**

This reflection can also be used to respond to temporality of how the space was used and as a result what it created, “**now we learned how to do it, so we can use our learning to make it better next time.**”

The next step, in week two, was deconstructing the pillow fort in 2D using the technique of collaging. At the end of building in the first week, I asked the learners to each take two pictures of their creation. The specification was to think about the images you are taking of the space and zooming in and out. What this approach did was to focus on details of the elements in the original space, such as tables and chairs as well as the created perimeter through textile. The limitation of taking two images is again a strategic way to draw the learners attention to what and how they had impacted their environment. The results of this in-between step were printed and used as our base for collaging. The approach of deconstructing the space two dimensionally quite literally allowed the learners to reshape what they had done the previous week. It accesses the embodied knowledge less in the active sense, however in terms of agency in making, it accompanied the idea of transferring thinking into making, the thoughts on the constructed space into the action of tearing, cutting and sticking.

The results of collaging varied in how the materiality was approached. One learner reflected on their process as “**trying to consume the entire paper.**” Others took a systematic approach sorting out the images based on different elements in the pictures and then cutting and reconstructing these on the paper. One specific learner initiated 3D building, which evoked that others took this as inspiration to do the same. In the reflection round she stated that originally she planned to make it flat, however when starting to think about what happened the previous week she realised that tables and chairs were three dimensional elements, “**A table is not flat, it is actually raised. So I thought if I raise it, it will look more like a pillow fort.**” In addition to this reflection, another student focused their collage in the centre of the paper, making it “**float like fabric does.**” This acknowledges a sense of material and spatial thinking in relation to the prior week. It brings forward the knowledge and reflections of how the body relates to the space corresponding to the materials, activating consciousness.

What was also interesting was to measure this exercise with the parameter of the value of agency in making. An example of this is two of the learners, who came to me at different times of the exercise with this awareness in relation to the task. The first was at the very beginning after starting the exercise. He stated that he did not know what to do and how to make a pillow fort collage. We dissected his question by

looking around the classroom and seeing how others approached the task. The value of this was to recognise that each individual had their own making approach and so could he. The other learner came at the end of the class, handing me a blank paper and telling me that he did not know what to do. Again, this is where agency in making and the block from head to hand is quite clear. It is noticeable in this particular age group that this self-awareness blocks the intuitive reaction to materiality and making. To summarise, with this age group, learners are mentally able to combine, separate, order and transform objects and actions. They have the ability to apply thought out strategies in working, as seen by the majority of learners during the collaging exercise. Some took on the task intuitively reacting to the given materials while others took a thinking-based approach. Subsequently, each approach evoked interesting creations. At this stage of the overall ‘pillow fort’ methodology, the process of rhythm of creation is very much still in development as this thinking to making relationship is still bound to ‘am I approaching this right or wrong?’ The goal, as the methodology continues, is to unfold this block and turn it into action.

The third and final step of the deconstruction stage is shape composition. The task is to compose what we have previously been doing in drawings. The inspiration for this exercise comes from Machiel Spaan’s *‘The Wandering Maker’ Spaan, M. (2019).*

The Wandering Maker, in which he divides the act of creating in seven steps. This specific activity is derived from step five, ‘Imagine’. In this chapter, Spaans describes the act of sketching as a deeply personal product, “the open ends of hand-drawn drawing allows for interpretation and encourages creativity, experimentation and examination.” In relation to this exercise with the learners, drawing is an embodied process of linking head to hand. These drawings are a form of comprehending and translating the step from the first action of building the actual pillow fort, to the deconstruction in collaging and now representing these on paper. It is a way to slow down and take a moment of reflection on the previous activities.

This act of drawing took on many different forms. Some learners literally translated their pillow fort onto paper, some drew abstractions. Some other learners started developing what they would have done differently, a form of ‘feed-forward’. One learner, for example, focussed on drawing a tunnel, stating that this was something they felt needed more attention in the actual making of the pillow fort. The reason this was not focused on was because they had concentrated the majority of their time building the body of the fort in contrast to the

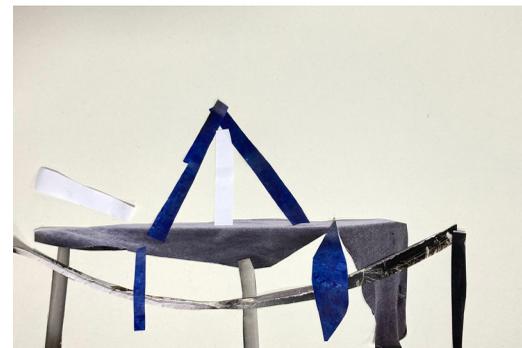
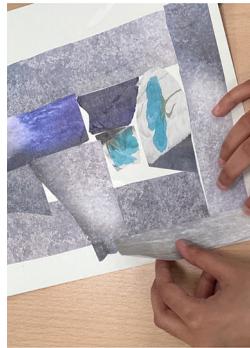
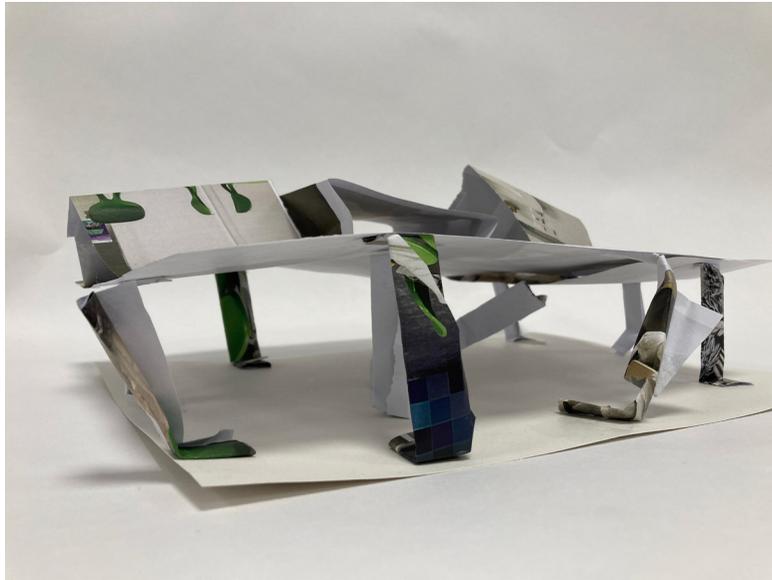
attachments or how to enter it. Therefore, they ended up with quick actions in response to time pressure.

As previously stated, this step in the methodology serves as a moment of reflection. The aspect of time and temporality is at the forefront of this exercise. It is a moment where thinking is translated onto paper as a visual. The variety of results made clear how each individual was in a different stage of the process as a whole, again some reflecting on the previous pillow fort and others taking it as a moment to think about a future pillow fort and how that could look. Personally, I see this exercise as a moment of an introspective, individual check-in. It may be one of the most important stages in terms of touching base in their creative process as an individual, due to the next stages of 'reconstruction' forming a collective effort.

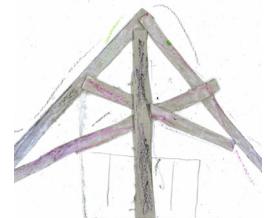
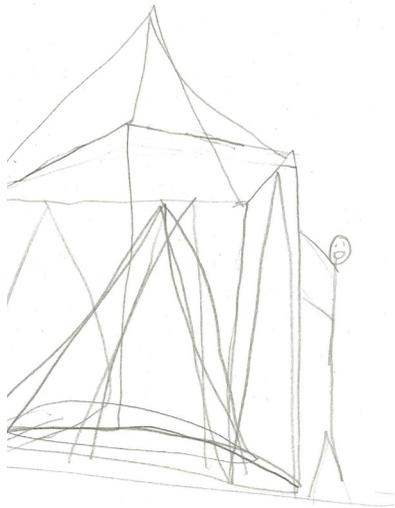
Pillow Forts



Constructing Pillow Forts in
technique of collage



Sarah 4A



(De-) Re-

WEEK 4: 3D Models based on shape composition



WEEK 5: Designing and Building Elements



Construct (Claim)

The next stage of this methodology is 'reconstruction'. It is a vital step in fostering learner agency as it initiates the process of reclaiming the space. This stage has two parts to it: 3D models and designing elements.

In Week 4 the final step of 'deconstruction' closely links to the first step of 'reconstruction'. If drawing exercises 'shape composition' can be seen as an individual 'feedback' moment to oneself, building in 3D can be viewed as 'feed-forward'. This means going from a moment of reflection to a moment of action. There are two steps to this. The first is to individually create an element or a segment. Then as a group, the second part is to build a pillow fort using the individual pieces. The materials given for this exercise are popsicle sticks, skewers, popsicle sticks with holes, pieces of cork, string and a piece of grijskarton to be used as a building base. The approach I took as the facilitator was to give the task and let the learners freely discover three dimensional making. Furthermore, this step offers the opportunity to foster fine motor skills.

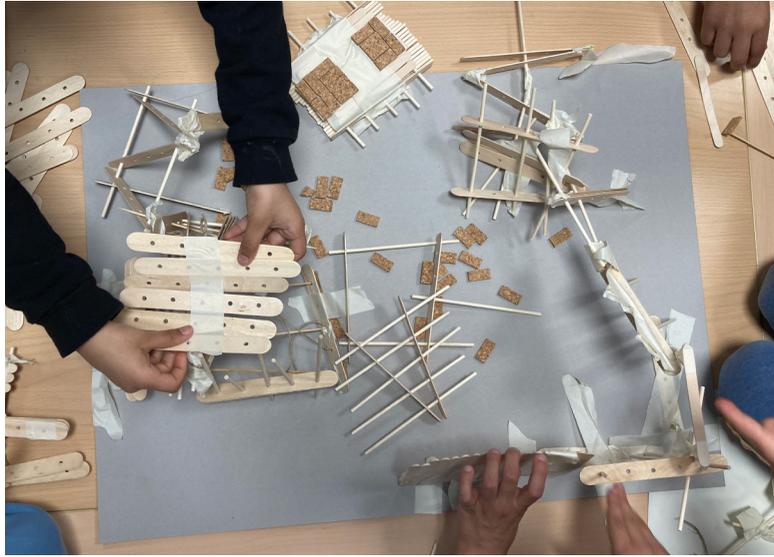
Again, this step was approached in many different ways. Some elements were built as a reaction to how people around them created theirs. Others already focused on three dimensional elements. What was interesting about this exercise was the moment of collective connection. The majority of learners agreed that when making the individual elements they did not take into account that these pieces would be merged into one, although knowing this was the second step. When approaching this collective building moment, some reflected on it as intuitively reacting to each other. Others took a more planned and systematic approach, **"first we separate the pieces into what they could be, like the cork could be floor. Then we started building around it."**

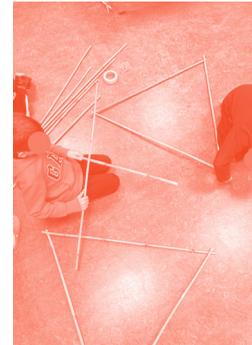
Interestingly enough, working in 3D offered less questions or uncertainty than in the previous collaging exercise. Personally, I choose to believe that it could be an effect of previous steps. Each class is based on this moment of transitioning from head to hand. As this is the fourth step out of six, many of the learners have already begun to engage with 'hand-thinking' rather than thinking through their head. It seems like the gap between thinking and action has become smaller, growing agency through self belief.

Moving on to the second step of 'reconstruction', designing the elements / 'bricks' which would then be connected as their pillow fort. This step literally transfers the previous small scale models into larger pieces. The scale models allow the learners to test out shapes and elements that could be constructionally sound. In the previous step, for example, one student reflected that he originally tried working with squares, however realised when collectively building that these had more structurally weak points than a triangle for instance. This step can be viewed as literally transferring the previously gained knowledge in making, on a larger scale. Additionally, it functions as an embodied collaboration. We went from making small models on the table, using small movements, to now taking up space in the classroom by building elements at least half the size of the learner. The materials in this exercise are bamboo sticks borrowed from secondary. These mimic the popsicle sticks from the previous exercise. Further materials are elastic bands, string, tape and brown rolls of craft paper.

This stage of the making sets the scene for the reclaiming of the space. Observing the learners interact with the materials in a timely manner, some immediately took constructional integrity into account while others built two dimensional squares out of the bamboo. This step is extremely active in making. At this stage thinking and making come hand in hand to taking the material and building connections.

s based on
mposition





(De-) Re-

WEEK 6: Bamboo Pillow Forts



(Construct) Claim

This is the final stage, reclaiming the space as their own. Taking the 'bricks' from last week, this final stage is about fully building their pillow fort. The literal action of what is happening is collectively creating a space. On a more conceptual level, it is a moment of empowerment in the learners through taking up the entire classroom with a fort that they had fully constructed by themselves. One learner commented on the contrast to the first pillow fort at the beginning of the six weeks: **"In the other pillow fort we already had all the materials"** in relation to using objects such as tables and chairs and draping textiles to create walls, **"here we had the materials but built it all ourselves."** The action of taking space became clear in how the learners collectively used their bodies and materials to hold space. At the beginning of the exercise the learners expanded throughout the space laying out their 'bricks'. There was an activation of previously gained embodied knowledge. Starting to build using small gestures of the body to create connections on a small scale. These motions were then transferred into bigger actions of the body holding the entire space. The learners gathered in the middle, using hands and legs to hold the bamboo bricks. These were then connected by others, becoming a reciprocal motion of the 'braider' and the 'holder' as Robin Wall Kimmerer describes, "Linked by sweetgrass, there is reciprocity between you, linked by sweetgrass, the holder as vital as the braider."

To draw another connection, observing from the outside, what the learners were doing can be linked to Tim Ingold's 'Making and Growing', Hallam, E. and Ingold, T. (2016). *Making and growing: anthropological studies of organisms and artefacts*. London: Routledge.

He visualises this collective moment of making by using the metaphor of creating a bird's nest: "For it depends on our understanding of the relation between parts and wholes. Imagine a bird's nest, for example. The bird collects twigs and other materials from here and there. In no sense are these materials parts of the nest until they are assembled there. That is to say, they become parts in the course of the work, and only as they settle—as they adjust themselves and progressively hold each other in place". In relation to the performative collective moment of the learners, the materials used are the 'parts' and the body are the 'wholes'. Only as these two elements come together to form one, can the action of claiming the space take place **"if I did this alone it would**

53

be very different and not have much support", quote by one of the learners. It is clear that the biggest aspect of learning, from this part of the methodology, is the ability of coming together and collectively making. Specifically this collectivity shared an important value as a community accomplishing a moment of claiming the classroom together.

Additionally, the aspect of time and temporality was at the forefront of this specific exercise, the knowledge of knowing that anything created would have to be taken apart again. Sitting around the work they had created and reflecting on it, the majority of the learners described the feeling of being proud of what they had accomplished, **"I am proud because we made it from scratch ... all by ourselves."** They also agreed that although it would be sad to take it apart, it was the moment of creation that would be kept as a memory. One learner went on to explain that although it would be taken apart, we would always hold **"the memory of what we did and then we can rebuild it."** Someone else came into the question of temporality as having mixed feelings: **"It is sad because we worked hard but I am happy because when we take it apart we also have some bamboo left for other classes and other smaller and bigger children to have so much fun and also use their minds and communication like we did."** In relation to working as a team, constructing and deconstructing the pillow fort, it becomes clear that the knowledge they had gained through this action could be transferred into other moments of collectivity as well as in other spaces. This specific statement by the learner holds the opportunity of being able to pass on the value of what they had created to others through passing on the materials they had used.

Pillow Forts



Six weeks of building pillow forts

Let's take a moment to review the entire process of the six weeks in bringing an embodied learning process closer to the learner through the acts of deconstruction, reconstruction and reclaiming of the maker space; using the elements of time and temporality, agency in making and rhythm of creation to define what happened over this period of time.

It is clear that the aspect of agency in making is strongly rooted in the entire six week process, specifically in the deconstruction stage. The aim of this stage was to explore the boundaries of the space through the body and material on different scales. As previously described, this specific age group of 8 and 9 year old's is at a developmental stage of becoming more aware of the surroundings and happenings around them. In relation to this research, it is more specifically about the level of awareness the learners have to how others approach and execute the same exercise. Overall, it becomes clear through the evolution of the exercises that the learners become more confident with their own convictions and decisions. Initially, I describe two learners and how they approached the individual task of collaging and their clear hesitation. Taking these two learners as a specific example and observing their entire deconstruction process, it became apparent that through the repetition of initiating, their confidence grew. I believe this has to do with active repetition of making, highlighting that embodiment is not based on one-off actions, instead something that is learned, processed and transferred through the ongoing growth of the learner.

Furthermore, this aspect strongly relates to the next evaluation element, rhythms of creation, which is determined and measured by time over the collective period of all lessons. Where did the learner begin their journey and how have they grown within this process? During each lesson this gap between head and hand, discussed in the previous element, becomes smaller due to this aspect of repetition. Although each exercise offers a different technique, through the act of continuously transitioning from head to hand each learner begins to understand their own creative process. Again, looking at the two boys as an example, when coming to week three and the drawing exercise, one of them asked for a ruler as a tool, knowing that this can help guide his drawings. He identified this tool as assisting his own process. This growth in independence became clear not just with this specific learner, but also how others began to curate their engagement through the acts of making.

58

As a result of this active and engaged stance to making, the next stage of reconstruction was approached with fewer questions and uncertainties, as the majority of learners had already experienced three previous making situations. Consequently, engaging with 'hand-thinking' rather than thinking through their head, and growing agency through increasing confidence in their abilities. Furthermore, identifying this element in the final phase of reclaiming, the learners now possess the ability to not only translate their own 'hand-thinking' by themselves, but approach it collectively and collaboratively in building the bamboo pillow fort. Concluding with this specific element, we can determine the growth through engaging with an embodied learning process, not only with your own course of making but also the further development through context of collective learning. Overall, both the elements of agency in making and rhythms of creation can be positively evaluated through the evidence of growing confidence and engagement, thus expanding and reinforcing the scope of the embodiment of the learning process by the learner.

Finally, the most crucial aspect is that of time and temporality. Originally, this element was vague and I tried to relate it to agency in making and rhythms of creation. Now, I recognise how all-encompassing this component is in shaping the embodied learning process. While the other two elements are specific as part of the physical process, time and temporality is the figurative connection that brings these two together.

With learner confidence, time becomes a fluid aspect, not a limitation. It is the difference between 45 minutes of art and the experience of one's own making process. In relation to the element of agency in making, the aspect of time clearly perceptively becomes an opportunity rather than a daunting aspect. Learner confidence, highlighted by the time taken from head to hand making was accelerated, and the actions of creation were initiated faster. It is an element I did not yet have the ability to recognise in the pilot study, and only during the later research process did the contribution and value of time and temporality become clear. Evidently, 45 minute art lessons once a week can successfully and fluently flow from one point of making to the next as the makers move through the process of deconstructing the space in collages and drawings, reconstructing in three dimensions, and then reclaiming the space by building their own context. From the outside it may be viewed as isolated 45 minute lessons, however, while in this process of six weeks it becomes a fluid process of embodied learning.

59

The embodied learning process in relation to the body, space and materials.

To finally disentangle the question of an embodied learning experience. Looking back to some of the original questions that created the framework for this research, I recognise, more so than ever, the importance of art education in relation to classroom learning, and the opportunity it offers to unlearn the traditional, institutional discipline of the body and the ideology of what learning is and must look like. Here, enabling the makers to experience and understand their own embodiment of learning, is almost more than an opportunity, it should be an obligation on part of the facilitator. This research started with the focus on undoing the space of an institution (the art academy). As the research evolved, I recognised that the space and its value is strongly linked to the learner and how they enact the learning. More than that, the elements of the body and materials in combination with the space are the seeds of what can grow as an embodied learning experience. We form our initial learning situations according to the space we are in, to the way our bodies are placed in this space and to what we have around us that can be used. In essence an embodied experience can be initiated and determined by any learner who recognises the value of these three elements, and has been guided to the understanding that they have the opportunity to engage. 'Building pillow forts' brings learning to life and places it where it should be, in the hands of the learner.



The inconclusive celebration

I am sitting here in the studio. The 3D printer running in the background. Piles of textiles growing all over the table. In theory the research project has ended, however, I do not feel ready to conclude. What is a conclusion? A moment to look back and celebrate the growth and process of this project, a moment to look into the future with its opportunities. I started this thesis with a quote by Lukas Feireiss, stating "Space comes into being only when we form situations." As I sit here, I realise I have formed my situation, I have co-created my own embodied learning process with the learners, intertwining my practice as an educator and as a designer.

Looking at the process of creating 'building pillow forts', I facilitated a simple exercise, asking the learners to build their own space in the classroom. Little did I know that the effect and outcome of this trial would grow into a methodology to enable my young makers to experience an embodied learning process. At the very end, one of my learners at the international school talked about the reality and sadness of having to take apart their 'bamboo pillow fort', which they had essentially been working towards for the entirety of six weeks. It had been a process of deconstructing the four walls of the maker space, creating connections from head to hand making, experiencing new materials, and using these to create on different scales, reconstructing the space by reflecting on each of these steps in making, and finally reclaiming the space with the learners forming and owning their own situations. What really resonates with me, however, is that this learner went on to say that more importantly than the sadness in the temporality, was the happiness of taking the bamboo pillow fort apart, and leaving the leftover materials to be used by other learners. Giving them the opportunity of the experience she had had. To me, this is the moment to celebrate my work. This specific comment, and others just like it, is what captures the significance and defines the success of my project. It is the recognition that the learners themselves realise the learning takes place in the inner, the individual moments of learning as well as the outer, collaborative moments of sharing this.

How do these collective moments in an embodied learning process impact my own practice as designer and educator? When I started this master, I came with the intention of finding the connection between my practice as a maker and my practice as an educator. Neither role was or is more significant or prioritised, they come hand in hand, they grow together in reciprocity. Interesting for me as part of this research, and more of an observation than a proven conclusion, was that the

majority of conversations about my educational practice took place with practitioners in the art and design field rather than my colleagues at the international school. The former were intrigued by how the process was developing, its impact, growth and implications. This was and is ongoing. Even if they do not find themselves in education, the understanding towards the value of what I am trying to bring to the learners is by far more engaged with and understood. The latter group were very happy with the joy of the children and the obvious success of the program, and while some asked about my research, their reference to the project seemed more static in a way; it successfully served a purpose for the goals of the school, and the learning impact was secondary. In the setting of a primary school, my practice often comes with the assumption that I did not want to continue with my work in design, hence I am focusing on being an educator. There seems a strange disconnect because by comparison mentioning to members of the art and design community that I am in charge of art education for 600 children elicits respect for my practice and for promoting the benefits of design based learning within formal education. Personally, it helped me recognise that although my focus during the past half year has been on educating in art and it has been a wonderful experience, what it has definitely done is solidify my personal philosophy of, and practice as a designer. These co-creative moments with the learners are embedded in my practice and motivation as a maker. Giving the learners the opportunity of stepping into the world of design, allowing them to curate their own learning process - these are the moments I have truly enjoyed connecting in both my worlds.

So I find myself with what seems to be an inconclusive conclusion. Although this research is coming to an end, I feel I have only just opened the door to this exploration. I am aware that my findings have limitations and are confronted by the challenge of systemic education. As such, I have aimed to define two aspects which I would like to continue developing with this research journey, one from my practice as an educator and the other as a maker. The first is to explore this method further with a focus time and temporality. Realising the impact specific frames of 'learning' in traditional education has, I would like to dive deeper into how we can continue to unpack and repack the notion. A context would be to take this methodology back into the Kunstplan, where it all began. To investigate the contrast of being given 2 and a half hours and 45 minutes, for example. The second aspect is based on the traces the learners created during the process of the six weeks. I see a lot of value and potential in their creations and I would like to further explore how to design these as tools to be passed onto other learners.

**So, for now, I sit here in
the studio, recognising
that this conclusion is as
temporary as our Pillow
Forts have been.**



**A celebratory
formed situation.**

A big thank
you to all the
learners who
contributed to
'Building Pillow
Forts'

Enzo
Mark
Miraç
Pablo
Sofia
Gulalai
Wilhelmina
Daniel
Arman
Tom
Alma
Tahmasib
Violet
Anya
Sofia
Finley
Michelle
Frederique
Sofia
Tilo
Luna
Carolina
Nikos
Emanuele
John
Jan
Arthur
Nayla
Haroun
Christina
Yassin
Sofia
Lana
Natan
Faiza
Liza
Nika
Anusha
Rose
Raphaël

Hanna
Rahm
Erin
Zimo
Rayan
Soren
Ginevra
Kyle
Grace
Clara
Fatima
Pedro
Cyprien
Clara
Gwennhael
Joao
Mark
Lorenzo
Sarah
Medina
Apramiti
Swostik
Stefan
Daania
Victoria
Zdravko
Ishaan
Eeleen
Noah
Estra
Ishita
Avi
Lily
Constantinos
Kerem
Nicole
Noah
Theodor
Defne
Lazar

Oliver
Valentina
Mishka
Myroslava
Guglielmo
Anna
Monique
Oscar
Andreas
Adam
Ella
Irene
Sandro
Saoirse
Gais
Nengarip
Avantika
Hugo
Sarah
Enrico
Aila
Mikel
Aditya
Tanay
Eva
Iris
Kristen
Tudor
Deniz
Chinmayi
Sadie
Hanna
Arianna
Augustin
Aleskander
Elmira
Adrija
Elif
Kiara
Leonard

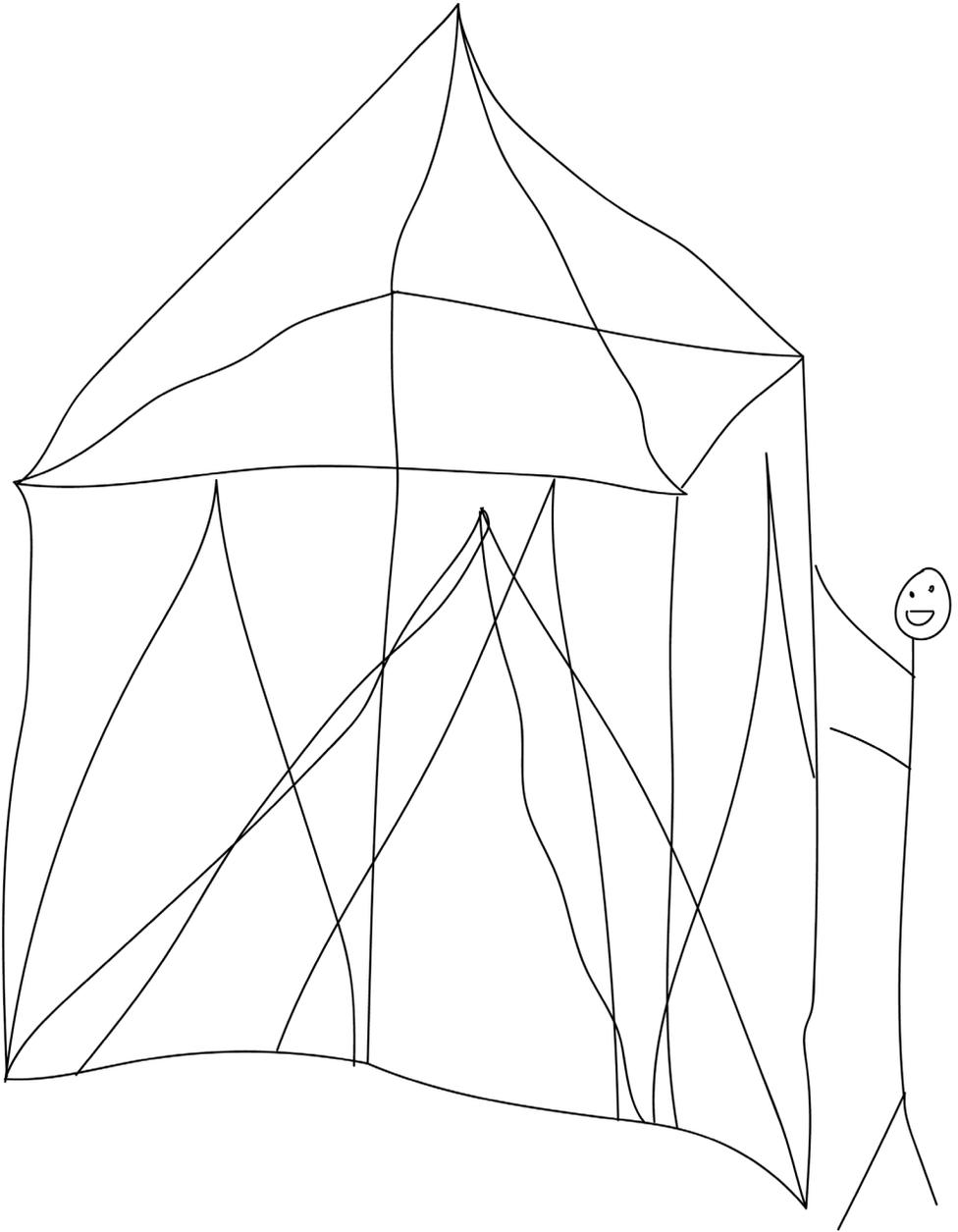
Natasha
Serena
Nirav
Lucas
Sonia
Maram
Toprak
Çinar
Roman
Jovin
Yeasbera
Lucy
Grace
Thomas
Xingye
Vivian
Ike
Emma
Marcellus
Daria
Helena
Milly
Jack
Rayan
Lennon
Yuri
Musadiq
Sakura
Pratham
Kayla
Hein
Mikayla
Nao
Olivia
Prashi
Evelyn
Stijn
Jonathan
Mila
Pontus

Vladyslav
Ignacy
Ivaylo
Amaira
Aleksandra
Tan
Csongor
Livia
Zea
Mihika
Aathmika
Katka
Joshua
Sam
Kayla
Yizheng
Romy
Selisha
Eloïn
Lisa Marie
Azul
Mimi
Nicole
Carl
Noëlle
Laura
Majlen
Severin
Luis

Bibliography:

- Ambrose, S.A., Bridges, M.W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M.C., and Norman, M.K. (2010) How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bouchez, H. (2020) Wild Thing. S.L.: Ape. p., 75.
- Shapiro, Sherry B. (2015) *Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body: A Critical Praxis*. Routledge,
- Krauß, Annette. (2008) *Hidden Curriculum. Episode Publ.*
- Brown, Madeline F., (2020) *The Third Teacher: An analysis of aesthetic and intentionality of space in the classroom, Senior Honors Projects.*
- Teresa Strong-Wilson & Julia Ellis (2007) *Children and Place: Reggio Emilia's Environment As Third Teacher, Theory Into Practice*, 46:1, 40-47.
- Pethick, E., Martinez, P. and How, W. (2022). *Artistic Ecologies*. MIT Press.
- Bader, M. (2022). *Making futures*. Spector Books.
- Kimmerer, R.W. (2013) *Braiding Sweetgrass: indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Milkweed Editions.
- Hallam, E. and Ingold, T. (2016) *Making and growing : anthropological studies of organisms and artefacts*. London: Routledge.
- Sennett, R. (2009) *The craftsman*. London: Penguin.
- Feireiss, L., & Baier, F. X. (2020). *Space is the place: Current reflections on art and architecture: BNKR 2018/2019*. Spector Books.
- Islam, M. A., Haji Mat Said, S. B., Umarlebbe, J. H., Sobhani, F. A., & Afrin, S. (2022, October 14). Conceptualization of head-heart-hands model for developing an effective 21st century teacher. *Frontiers in psychology*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9615563/#:~:text=The%203H%20model%20proposes%20that,during%20teaching%20and%20learning%20activities>
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony : indigenous research methods*. Black Point, N.S.: Fernwood Pub.
- Spaan, M. (2019). *The Wandering Maker*.
- Banchini, L., Feireiss, L., Banchini, L., Feireiss, L., Kahn, L., & Perrenoud, D. (2021). *Shelter cookbook*. Spector Books.
- Meyer, H., & Oswalt, P. (2021). *Hannes Meyer's new Bauhaus pedagogy: From Dessau to Mexico*. Spector Books.
- Gisel, C., Paim, N., & Bergmark, E. (2021a). *Taking a line for a walk assignments in design education*. Spector Books.
- Condorelli, C., Wade, G., & Langdon, J. (2014). *Support structures*. Sternberg Press.
- Hennessey, J., & Papanek, V. J. (2008). *Nomadic furniture: D-i-Y projects that are lightweight and light on the environment ; nomadic furniture 2*. Schiffer.
- Antonius, J. J. J. (2013). *Building with bamboo: A Handbook*. Practical Action Publishing.
- 1 National Geographic . (2018). "Los Quipus, La Escritura Secreta de Los Antiguos Incas." *National Geographic* . Retrieved May 19, 2023, from <https://www.ngenespanol.com/el-mundo/que-es-un-quipu-escritura-inca-epoca-precolo mbina/>.
- 2 Evans, A. (2013). *Sweetgrass Speaks for Her*. *National Geographic*. Retrieved May 19, 2023, from <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/sweetgrass-speaks-for-her>.

Colophon:
Master Thesis: Jesse Greulich
Text & Edit: Jesse Greulich
Edit: Chris Greulich
Thesis Supervisors: Sjoerd Westbroek & Irina Shapiro
Design: Eva Horvath
Typography: Neue Haas Unica, Pleasure Inktrap
Print: De Stencilzolder
Year: 2023



**A special
thank you to:**

For all your contributions
and support in this project!

**Jordan Greulich
Chris Greulich
Aref Dashti**

**Eva Horvath
Stefan Lang**